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Title: Vote Likelihood and Institutional Trait Questions in the 1997 NES Pilot Study
Date: March 20, 1998
Dataset(s): 1997 Pilot Study

Abstract

This report on examines two sets of experimental survey questions included in the 1997 NES Pilot Study. The first set of two questions concerns respondents' likelihoods of voting for their congressional representatives in upcoming elections. The second set of about 20 questions taps respondents' assessments of traits possessed by the three branches of the national government. These items are substantively related because they connect evaluations of representatives and political institutions to electoral responsiveness. Despite these connections, we have chosen to analyze them separately because of their different foci. The first set of questions assess respondents' intentions about their voting behaviors in a hypothetical electoral contest. As such, they may be viewed as self-predictions that are derived from an array of internal political attitudes that may assessed indirectly through other questions. The second set of items seeks to quantify respondents' evaluations of major political institutions. These opinions may or may not translate into behavior, but still provide insight into political legitimacy as they attempt to discern why citizens approve or disapprove of the president, Congress, and Supreme Court. Based on simple analysis of the responses to all of these questions, we make recommendations about which are valuable enough to be retained in future NES studies.