

Survey Research Center
University of Michigan

November 9, 1948

Project No. 46

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE ELECTION

Instruction Booklet

WHAT THIS STUDY IS ALL ABOUT

On November 2nd, President Truman was returned to the White House by the American people. Messrs. Gallup, Roper, Crosley, et al headed for the doghouse. Now the problem is, why were the pollsters so far off the mark after 12 years of success in predicting the national elections?

The Survey Research Center made no attempt to predict the outcome of the 1948 election. We did, however, include a question at the end of the Personal Data sheet on Study 41 asking our respondents how they intended to vote. Most of them mentioned one party or the other although a good many still didn't know how they would vote.

Since we have these pre-election statements of intention to vote we are in a position to make an investigation of some of the factors that may have led the newspaper polls to miscalculate the vote. Here are the main questions we want to answer:

1. How many of the people who said they were going to vote now say that they actually did vote?
2. Were the people who stayed home mainly Republicans or Democrats?
3. How did the people who didn't know how they would vote in October actually vote in November?
4. How many people changed their minds at the last minute, after the newspaper polls had been completed?
5. How many people split their ticket and were these people mainly Republicans or Democrats?
6. What reasons do people give for voting for Truman or Dewey and what kind of policies do supporters of the two parties approve?

THE INTERVIEW IS SHORT

Because the objectives of this study are much more limited and specific than is usually true in our surveys, you will find that the questionnaire is quite short and the interviews will not run more than 20 minutes in most cases. Since many of the questions require only a brief answer we are setting the interview up on a fill-in form. You will simply fill in the form as you take the interview and usually no re-write will be necessary. Please do not rewrite the interviews, unless it is actually illegible.

We are anxious to have the interviewing completed as soon as possible. We feel that people's memory of the campaign and how they voted will soon begin to fade and we are hurrying to get the interviews taken.

WE RE-INTERVIEW OUR STUDY 41 RESPONDENTS

The respondents on this study are the same people we interviewed on Study 41. You will receive an identification sheet for each respondent, giving his address and enough information about him so that you can make sure you are getting the right person. Make sure you are interviewing the same person who was interviewed before. He will remember the previous interview and if you took the previous interview you will doubtless remember him.

Make every effort to locate and interview each of the respondents whose address you have. We are very anxious to re-interview all of the Study 41 respondents if that is humanly possible. Don't give up on anybody until you have made at least three calls and if you think there is hope of getting your man, try, try, again.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE INTERVIEW

When you interviewed your respondents last month on Study 41 they didn't think they would be seeing you again so soon (and neither did you). You will find, however, that nearly everyone is interested in talking about the election these days. If you start out by saying something like the following you won't have any trouble:

"You remember I (one of our interviewers) talked to you last month. Now we're interested in finding out how people feel about the election and we're going back to some of the same people we talked to before to get their opinion. I only have a few questions this time and I won't need more than ten minutes or so."

Don't start out by saying you want to ask him how he voted. You will notice that the interview starts with some questions on issues that will face Congress. We didn't have anybody who refused to tell how he voted when we pretested this study but if you run into such a person try to get as many questions answered as possible even though you never find out how he voted.

Don't remind your respondent that you asked him last month how he was going to vote. Act as though we had never asked him anything about it before.

IF THE RESPONDENT ASKS YOU HOW YOU LOCATED HIM AGAIN

You may encounter some respondents who will wonder how you were able to find them again as you did not know their names. Since most of you will be interviewing the same respondents, you can tell them that blocks in each town and city were selected and that the interviewer was given definite instructions to start at a particular corner and list every dwelling unit in the block. After this he was told to go to every "so manyeth" line on the sheet. This will help to explain that we can locate him again. It is important to stress the point that we do not take the respondent's name on any of the interviews.

HOW SINCERE WAS THE RESPONDENT

Often the interviewer gets an impression of the relative sincerity of his respondent that doesn't get written down anywhere in the interview. In this study it is especially important to take note of these impressions and write them down. On each interview form we are leaving a space for a THUMBNAIL SKETCH where you can jot down your judgment as to whether the respondent took the interview seriously and whether you feel he was telling you the truth when he said he voted or didn't vote. Any little items about the respondent are welcome; they give us a better understanding of your interview.

If your respondent makes any reference to the failure of the polls to predict the election, please include this in your thumbnail sketch, especially if he seems at all reluctant to be interviewed.

NUMBER OF CALLBACKS

We would like you to make as many calls as necessary to interview all the respondents that were interviewed before. Since most of you will have interviewed the person before, you will know the best time to find these respondents at home. We are putting a box on the face sheet showing the time of day at which the previous interview was made. You may use this as a guide as the best time to locate the person.

SENDING THE INTERVIEWS IN

Before you send your interviews in to us, read them through to see if there is anything that isn't written out fully. Be sure to clip the identification sheet to the interview that goes with it.

DATES FOR THE SURVEY

As you will realize, peoples' reactions to the election results and to their own behavior is apt to fade rapidly. We are rushing this survey to you in order to get the information while it is still uppermost in peoples' minds. It is most important that you complete the interviewing in just as short a time as possible. For this reason we have given you a very short questionnaire with no re-writing necessary. The survey must not take longer than one week to complete and we would prefer that it take much less time than this. Your last interviews must be completed by November 19. I dislike making this so emphatic but we feel strongly that any interviews taken after that time will lose their value.

FACE SHEET

You will receive a package of interview forms with filled out face sheets attached. The face sheet will contain the address and the composition of the household as the interviewer found it in Study #41. The sex and age of each member of the family will also be shown in the table. The columns of the table labeled "education" and "income" will be filled in only when we feel it is necessary to help you identify the respondent. This is a problem particularly in open country segments where the family compositions may be similar. If you are unsure as to whether or not you have the right household, you could ask for the family composition, age and sex again just to check as to whether or not you have the right family. If you are still not sure, the education and income will help you. The person who was interviewed in this household is the person checked in the extreme right column. He is the person you are to re-interview. The blank space at the right of the table will be used to give you further descriptions of the household or addresses in case we think you will have trouble locating them.

The time of the interview is given so that you may use this information in planning the best time to catch this respondent at home. The rest of the face sheet is self-explanatory. While it is not likely that the respondents will have moved between the last interview and this one, you may find some. If they have moved and you can locate them within reasonable distance, you should do so since it is important that we catch as many of these reinterviews as possible.

You will notice that we asked that a report of the refusals be sent in one a special form. You will find these refusal forms and instructions along with your materials.

SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

We are returning to you the maps which you used on Project #41, and also the address cards from this project. The addresses which we sent you on Project #41 at which no interviews were obtained are crossed out in red pencil. This means that you should have a questionnaire for each address which has not been crossed out. If you find addresses for which you do not have schedules, please let us know right away.

In some places we have not received maps and photographs from Project #41. We assume that you still have these and they should be used on this study.

Question-by-Question Objectives

The first three questions are designed to determine R's attitude toward several of the major campaign issues, and to provide an easy introduction to the interview.

Question 1 deals with rent control. We want to know whether R thinks that rent control, which is now in effect, should be continued, or whether rents should be set by property-owners without any restriction by the Government. You may find some people who feel that rent control should neither be continued as it is nor dropped, but should be modified in some way. In such cases, get an explanation of the changes which R advocates.

Question 2 refers to price control of basic consumer goods -- food, clothing, and so on. We want to know whether R feels that prices of such commodities should be set by the Government, as was done during the existence of the OPA. If the question arises, explain that we are not inquiring about attitudes toward rationing, and that price control has nothing to do with rationing. Don't be satisfied with answers which merely give back the wording of the question. For example, "Yes, the Government ought to do something to control prices," or "Yes, Government controls just make matters worse." Try to get R's ideas on why price control is desirable, or why Government control makes things worse.

Question 3 is intended to exclude those people who are not sufficiently well informed about labor legislation to discuss it. If R does not recognize the Taft-Hartley Act as an act dealing with labor-management problems, unions, etc., omit 3a. If R identifies the Taft-Hartley Act, we want to know whether he feels it is too hard on labor, too hard on management or just right. If R says "nothing should be done about it," you will have to probe further, since that response does not indicate the attitudes which lead R to that judgment. If R says "it should be changed" you will need to ask in what way they think it should be changed.

Question 4 introduces the subject of the election itself, and inquires who R thought would win the election.

Question 4a is to be asked, regardless of the answer to 4. Try to get the reasons for R's pre-election opinion of who would win. Answers to this question may be in terms of R's estimate of the attitudes of the people as a whole -- "I thought everybody wanted a change" -- or they may be in terms of factors which influenced R -- "Well, all the radio commentators and newspaper reporters said he would win."

In the pretest we found that many respondents answered this question when we gave the introduction to the survey. Many people are so surprised at the results of the election that any introduction to the topic brings a flood of information. Other people answered many of the other questions on the survey when we asked this one. They told us for whom they voted, why they voted as they did, etc. If you get the information in the introduction or somewhere else along the line, enter it under 4a.

Question 5 is aimed at R's opinion of what influenced people as a whole to vote for Truman. We are not inquiring at this point as to whether or not R voted for him, or why he did so. Answers to question 5 will fall into two main groups -- those relating to Truman's personality, personal conduct, etc.; and those relating to the Democratic platform and the things Truman stands for. In other words -- personal characteristics and issues. Many people will answer in terms of only one of these types of reasons. You should probe this question to get other reasons. Use an "anything else" probe.

Question 5a is intended to bring out additional response in terms of the kind of reasons omitted by R in answering 5.

In this sequence of questions we are interested in R's ideas about people in general. Many respondents will answer in personal terms and give responses of their own feelings. When this happens try to get a more generalized response by some question such as "How do you think other people feel about this?"

Question 6 will give R an opportunity to mention any specific negative points, although here again we do not want points which influenced R alone, but rather R's estimate of what influenced the American people.

Question 7) These questions cover for Dewey the identical material
Question 8) described in connection with Questions 5 and 6.

Question 9 separates voters from non-voters. The introductory statement serves to prevent any feeling of embarrassment or guilt on the part of non-voters, and should not be omitted.

Question 10 requires only the name of the presidential candidate voted for.

Question 11 requires a definite statement of time, such as "since the convention," "only a day or two before the election," etc. While it is not necessary or even desirable to force a reply in terms of actual dates, there must be reference to an approximate time period. General statements such as "quite a while", "all along," are not satisfactory.

Question 12 is intended to determine the number of people who were actually undecided about the way they would vote during the campaign. Some people may reply to this question by saying that they "considered" all candidates before making up their minds. Such responses are not the aim of this question. However, we want to include all people who at some time planned to vote differently than they finally did.

Question 12a is self-explanatory. If more than one candidate is mentioned here, write in the full response.

Question 12b should bring out the reasons why R changed his mind and did not vote for the candidate mentioned in 12a. Reasons here may be negative, in terms of the decision not to vote for a candidate, or they may be stated in terms of the qualities of the candidate R finally selected.

Question 13 should be answered as completely as possible. It is here that we want all the factors which influenced R's final decision. Some of this may already have been stated by R, particularly in answer to question 12b. Even at the risk of repetition, however, ask question 13 and give R an opportunity to sum up all the things which led him to make up his mind.

Question 14 provides a count of all persons who split their tickets. No details are necessary here, and any vote which was not an "X" for all the candidates of a single party is considered a split ticket.

Questions 15, 16, and 17 are to be asked only of those people who did not vote.

Question 15 requires only the name of the presidential candidate for whom R would have voted. This answer is to be obtained even if R never votes or is ineligible to vote. We are interested in his preference nevertheless.

Question 16 should bring out the basic reason for R's not voting. Habit, ineligibility, inability to pay poll taxes are acceptable reasons. "Didn't register" should be explained more fully; why did R not register?

Question 17 will provide a count of the people who were registered but did not vote, and those who were not registered. It is not necessary to get reasons for failure to register, although if R gives such reasons they should of course be recorded.

Questions 18, 19 and 20 are to be asked of everyone.

Question 18 is a straight factual question which should present no problems. Most people can remember without difficulty whether or not they have voted in previous presidential elections.

Question 18a asks for R's "usual" vote -- Democratic or Republican. No details as to how R voted in particular elections are required. His identification of himself as a "usual" Democratic, Republican, or independent voter is sufficient.

Question 18b calls for recollection of the 1944 presidential election. It is possible that some people may have difficulty recalling that election, and how they voted at that time. If so, it is not necessary to probe.

Question 18c is asked only of those people who recall voting in 1944. The name of the presidential candidate voted for at that time is all that is required.

Question 19 asks about the occupation of the head of the household. Find out the kind of work the Head does, in order to get clear occupational classifications, such as "music teacher", "tool and die maker," "grocery store proprietor," etc. It is not enough to find out the kind of business. For example, if R says "I work in a restaurant," that tells you the kind of business he works for but does not tell you the kind of work he does. He

may be a restaurant manager, cashier, waiter, or dish washer -- all different occupational classifications. If you have difficulty getting an occupational title, get a description of the kind of work the Head does.

Question 20 separates people who belong to a labor union from those who do not. It is not necessary to inquire into positions held in labor organizations, or into the particular labor union to which the Head belongs.