# **Trust in Government**

2006 American National Election Studies Pilot Report

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The 2006 NES Pilot contains various questions assessing trust in government that were designed with two main purposes. The first is to improve upon existing wording of the ANES trust question, mainly by exploring alternative response options. The second is to evaluate the extent to which responses vary according to the object of citizens' trust. These trust objects include the decision-making process, the resulting policy outcomes, and the level of government (national versus state).

#### Theoretical Foundations and Measurement of Political Trust

Political trust is helpful, if not essential, for democratic government. In fact, democratic society is unlikely to emerge without political trust (Dahl 1971). Trust makes everyday life easier, less complex, and more orderly—increasing democratic stability and lowering citizen angst (Barber 1983). In addition, trust increases voluntary compliance with laws, without which democratic government would be untenable (Tyler 1990, Tyler and Degoey 1995, Levi 1997, Scholz and Lubell 1998). In short, it makes democracy work (Putnam 1993).

Despite considerable scholarly attention paid to political trust, there is no consensus on how to measure the underlying concept. Most measures of trust have been derived (in some fashion) from the original battery of five questions included in the National Election Studies (NES) in 1958: trust the government to do what's right, whether government is run by a few big interests, how much tax money the government wastes, whether those running government are crooked, and whether those running government are smart.

The earliest research by Citrin (1974) and Miller (1974a, 1974b) employed a trust index comprised of these five questions. Since then, the bulk of the research on political trust has used a "standard" four-item NES index, omitting the question about whether government officials are

smart which was only asked until 1980 (e.g. Hetherington 2004). Others, however, have used three (e.g. Bennett 2001) or two (e.g. Citrin and Green 1986) items to construct their measure, usually with minimal justification for using one measure over another. Thus, it is perhaps to be expected that debate continues over whether the trust index conflates the causes and effects of political trust with the underlying concept (Craig 1993; Owen and Dennis 2001).

Given this mishmash of trust measures, it is not surprising that some recent research has used the (single-item) standard trust variable (e.g. Alford 2001; Citrin and Luks 2001; Hibbing and Smith 2003) which asks "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" (The volunteered "never" response is also recorded.) This question has the advantage of measuring the latent concept of a citizen's general orientation to government (Owen and Dennis 2001). As Cook and Gronke (2005) point out, the other questions tap into attitudes that may be related to political trust, but that are clearly distinct.

#### **Problems with the Standard ANES Trust Question**

We believe that even this standard ANES trust question is problematic for several reasons. First, with only three on-the-scale responses, the standard ANES trust question is a rather crude measure of political trust that does not sufficiently distinguish respondents according to the frequency with which they trust government. This makes it especially difficult to examine change in political trust, since considerable movement can occur within each of these expansive response options. Since much research on political trust makes the normative claim that increased trust would benefit democracy, the ability the discern change in trust is especially important.

Additionally, the responses are not balanced. While there is a "just about always" response option, there is no explicit "just about never" option. While there is a "most of the time" option, there is no "little of the time" option. A related problem is that the range of the trust distribution taken up by each response is highly variable. For example, the "only some of the time" response option covers a large swath of the trust spectrum while "just about always" would appear much narrower. For example, it is unclear whether someone who trusts the government slightly more than half of the time trusts "just about always" or "only some of the time." By including two trust-heavy response options ("just about always" and "most of the time") with no counterbalancing responses at the other end of the scale (e.g. "just about never" and "little of the time"), the standard question implies that greater trust is desirable. We believe this leads researchers to conclude hastily that current levels of political trust are dangerously low.

This problem is further underscored by including the expansive and normatively-loaded "only some of the time" response. Some who select this category might be fairly trusting of government, but are not willing to claim that they trust government most of the time. Others, however, may have very little trust. Recall, too, that the "never" response must be volunteered by the respondent. Therefore, those who infrequently trust government but nonetheless want to follow the survey directions are likely to select the "only some of the time" option. Yet nearly all research on the subject relegates those citizens who trust the government "only some of the time" to the distrusting category and/or consider their attitudes as deleterious to democracy.

To reiterate, a significant problem exists with examining change in political trust due to the expansiveness of the "most of the time" and "only some of the time" response options. For example, an individual might trust the government five percent of the time when initially surveyed and then forty percent of the time during a subsequent survey. Yet, such an individual

is likely to respond "only some of the time" in both instances despite what would appear to be a substantively significant increase in trust. The five-point trust items should be more discerning of changes in trust and the 101-point items certainly even more so. Unfortunately, since the 2006 pilot study is the first survey on which these items appear, any assessment of such change is problematic. What we are able to do is to provide evidence of the prevalence of change among respondents receiving the standard NES version who also participated in the 2004 study.

#### The Object of Trust: State vs. Federal Government

In addition to measurement concerns, the extant research on political trust has paid insufficient attention to the object of citizens' trust evaluations. That is, what aspect of government are citizens are asked to evaluate in order to determine how much of the time they trust the government? Trust research has focused almost exclusively on the national government as the object of citizens' trust evaluations. While the national government may be the most visible and most powerful government in contemporary America, it is by no means the only government. In our federal system, state governments retain their own sovereignty and have significant (and arguably, increasing) policy responsibilities. Therefore, when one considers the relevance of political trust, attention should also be given to state governments. To date, there is some evidence that citizens are more trusting of state governments than they are of the national government (Hibbing and Smith, 2001). This research is only suggestive, however, because it looks at approval and not political trust. Clearly, trust research should explore the causes of trust in state government vis-à-vis the national government. While some of the same forces likely influence state trust as influence national trust, there is no reason to assume that the determinants are identical across the two levels.

#### The Object of Trust: Process vs. Outcomes

Extant research has been conducted using policy outcomes as the implicit object of citizens' trust evaluations. For example, the standard ANES question asks respondents how much they trust the government "to do what is right," thereby shifting the focus of the question from the underlying concept of trust to the public policies that result. For example, the actual and perceived conditions of the economy are often used to measure government performance and have been found to affect trust (Citrin and Green, 1986; Hetherington, 1998; Miller, 1983).

Government actions on other policy issues important to citizens also influence trust (Craig, 1996). More generally, citizens are more trusting of government when they believe it is pursuing policies that reflect their own preferences. For example, greater continuity between citizen policy preferences and government outcomes contributes to higher levels of trust (Citrin, 1974; Miller, 1974; Citrin and Green, 1986; Miller and Borrelli, 1991; Hetherington, 1998; Kimball and Patterson, 1997).

While it is certainly reasonable to believe that citizens may base their trust evaluations on policy outcomes, citizens' may also base their trust calculations on other factors such as the process by which policies are enacted. Thus, trust evaluations may be ay be traced to citizen perceptions that politicians lack integrity (Lipset and Schneider, 1987; Black and Black, 1994) make decisions inefficiency, or are too easily influenced by special interests trust (Blendon et al., 1997). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995, 2001, 2002) have extended this line of reasoning, focusing on the role of governmental processes as the root of citizen mistrust. They claim that most Americans do not value democratic processes such as deliberation and compromise.

Political debate is thought to be little more than petty arguments that hinder government's ability to act; compromise is equated with selling out on principles.

Thus, another goal of the 2006 ANES Pilot is to explore how varying the object of citizens' trust evaluations between policy and process affects citizens' responses.

#### 2006 ANES Pilot Design and Questions

In order to examine alternative question wording and to explore variations in responses according to the object of citizens' trust calculations, the 2006 ANES Pilot included ten questions divided into three subsamples. Each subsample contained measures of trust at both the national and state levels. One-third of the respondents were randomly selected for each subsample.

### **Subsample 1: Standard ANES Trust**

**Standard National ANES Question:** "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" [Never—VOL]

**Standard State ANES Question:** "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?" [Never—VOL]

#### **Subsample 2: Five-Point Trust Scales**

Five-Point National Process-Based Trust: "How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?" [Always, most of the time, about half the time, once in a while, or never? / Never, once in a while, about half the time, most of the time, or always?]

*Five-point State Process-Based Trust:* "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to make decisions in a fair way?"

*Five-Point National Outcome-Based Trust:* "How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?"

*Five-Point State Outcome-Based Trust:* "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to do what is best for [STATE]?"

#### **Subsample 3: Percent-of-the-Time Trust Scales**

**Percent-of-the-Time National Process-Based Trust:** "On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way?"

**Percent-of-the-Time State Process-Based Trust:** "What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to make decisions in a fair way?"

**Percent-of-the-Time National Outcome-Based Trust:** "What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?"

**Percent of the Time State Outcome-Based Trust:** "What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to do what is best for [STATE]?"

#### Standard ANES Trust in the National Government

One-third of respondents to the 2006 ANES Pilot were administered the standard trust question. The response distribution for these individuals in included as Table 1 and is similar to the responses observed on previous administrations of the ANES. Most respondents (72%) select the "only some of the time" response, with the bulk of the remaining respondents selecting "most of the time." Very few respondents indicated that they trusted the government "just about always" (fewer than 1%) or volunteered that they never trusted the government (about 2%). Clearly, this question is a blunt instrument that fails to adequately discern between respondents according to the frequency with which they trust the government in Washington.

[Table 1 about here]

### **Five-Point Scales Measuring Trust in the National Government**

One alternative set of response options for measuring trust in the national government that we believe have the potential to address the concerns outlined above are the five-point trust scales, ranging from "never" to "always." These frequency distributions are included as Table 2. The five-point format performs slightly better than the standard ANES version, but also suffers from a dearth of respondents in the "always" and "never" categories. For process-based trust, 4% of respondents indicated that they never trusted government, while fewer than 1% indicated that they always did. A similar pattern emerges for outcome-based trust, with 3% never trusting the government and 2% always trusting the government.

#### [Table 2 about here]

There is considerable improvement, however, in the ability to discern the degree of political trust respondents indicate using the middle three response options. For process-based trust, 28% trusted government "once in a while," 49% trusted government "about half of the time," and 18% trusted the federal government "most of the time." For outcome-based trust, 26% trusted the government once in a while, 36% did so about half of the time, and 33% trusted government most of the time. Thus, when compared with the standard ANES response options, the theoretically superior five-point format yielded an increased ability to discriminate by the degree of political trust. Furthermore, a quick glance at the standard format is likely to lead to the conclusion that citizens typically do not trust government, while a quick glance at the five-point format suggests that such an interpretation may depend on whether one is examining process-based or outcome-based trust.

Because the evidence shows that few respondents select "always" or "never," we believe that future administrations of this five-point format should include a modified set of response

options. Specifically, we propose: "almost always," "frequently," "about half the time," "once in a while," or "almost never." With the 2006 ANES Panel wording, "always" and "never" are discrete points, whereas the other three points are actually ranges (e.g. *about* half the time). Adding the "almost" to these two response options makes each of the five response options take on parallel structure. Our second proposed change relates to the "most of the time" response option, which we believe should be changed to "frequently." It seems to us that "most of the time" is too close to "always" (or "almost always") on the trust continuum. In other words, there is a smaller difference between "(almost) always" and "most of the time" than there is between "once in a while" and "(almost) never." We also believe that "frequently" is a better compliment to "once in a while" than is "most of the time."

#### Percent-of-the-Time Scales for Measuring Trust in the National Government

The second alternative set of response options asks respondents to indicate how much of the time they trust the government using a 101-point "percent-of-the-time" scale. We believe the percent-of-the-time trust question format is theoretically far superior to the standard NES trust measure and is an improvement over the five-point alternative tested on the 2006 ANES Pilot, partly because each response option covers an equal portion of the trust spectrum.

An examination of the frequency distributions for these three question formats suggests that the 101-point scale seems to be straightforward and easy to use, with only one respondent failing to provide a response to the question. We believe this is because citizens are used to using percent-of-the-time assessments in their everyday conservations. Additionally, the percent-of-the-time question is similar to feeling thermometer measures that have become a staple for research on feelings toward political figures and groups; it is a natural extension to use

this format to measure feelings toward government itself. While respondents tended to clump at five-percent intervals (e.g. 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, etc.), they were clearly able to provide finer distinctions in their trust frequency than they were with the relatively blunt standard ANES and five-point formats. A modified frequency distribution for both process-based and outcome-based trust is included as Table 3, with response options grouped into deciles.

#### [Table 3 about here]

From Table 3, it is clear that response options for both trust objects follow an approximately normal distribution, with about one-quarter of respondents locating at near the 50% mark and the remainder spread throughout the distribution. This matches our theoretical expectations about the frequency with which citizens trust the national government. While the respondents "clumped" in the "only some of the time" category using the standard measure, they are nicely dispersed using the percent-of-the-time format.

We should also note that the pattern of response options is somewhat different for the percent-of-the-time version compared with the five-point version, with respondents indicating more frequent trust when measured using the 101-point format. We believe this is due to the lack of ambiguity about the meaning of the response options when using the percent-of-the-time format.

Because the "percent-of-the-time" format is easy to use, it avoids the problems associated with both the standard and the five-point versions and greatly improves our ability to discern the frequency with which citizens trust government. We believe it is both theoretically and practically superior to the two alternatives formats included on the 2006 ANES panel. In short, it better approximates the underlying continuous variable and, therefore, should add precision to research on political trust.

#### The Object of Trust at the National Level: Process vs. Outcome

Another goal of this research is to evaluate how the object of citizens' trust influences response options. It is likely that citizens will provide different responses when they are asked to evaluate the extent to which they trust the government to make policies compared and the process by which those policies are made. That is, citizens will likely give different responses when asked if they trust the government "do the right thing" (or "to do what is in the best interest of the country") than when asked if they trust the government "to make decisions in a fair way." Indeed, the distributions for process- and outcome-based trust in Tables 2 and 3 are clearly different. Consistent with research by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995, 2001, 2002), Table 2 suggest that citizens are more trusting when asked to evaluate outcomes than when asked to evaluate the process.

To further examine the similarities and differences between these different measures, Table 4 includes correlations between each of these 2006 national-level trust measures and the standard ANES trust question from the 2004 panel respondents. In addition, Table 4 includes correlations between the 2006 variables included within the same subsample. (Due to the split sample design, we can not correlate the alternative trust measures with the 2006 standard ANES item.) As expected, all of the available correlations are both statistically and substantively significant. The correlations between the 2004 standard ANES trust measure and the 2006 variables is moderate at best, ranging from 0.317 to 0.465. So while the variables likely tap into similar concepts, they are clearly distinct. Additionally, it is important to note that inter-year correlations should theoretically be smaller than intra-year correlations, since political trust is fairly malleable over time.

#### [Table 4 about here]

The intra-subsample correlations, however, are considerably stronger. The correlation between process-based and outcome-based five-point items is 0.612, while the correlation between the process-based and outcome-based 101-point items is 0.802. Thus, the extent to which citizens are able to distinguish between outcome-based and process-based trust remains unclear. The evidence suggests that a few respondents take note of the object being evaluated and adjust their response accordingly, but that most evaluate process- and outcome-based trust similarly.

#### **Measuring Change Over Time**

For the reasons discussed previously, a problem with the standard ANES trust measure is its inefficiency for capturing change in trust over time. To examine whether or not the alternative trust questions are better for measuring change over time, the alternative questions would need to be included on two waves of a panel design. Unfortunately, these data are simply not available. Nonetheless, it is worth examining change in political trust using the 2004 and 2006 standard ANES items. This crosstabulation is included as Table 5.

## [Table 5 about here]

Table 5 shows that 65% of respondents gave the same response in the two years. While this means that 35% of individuals did move from one response category to another during this period, we suspect that this still understates the number of individuals who experienced some shift in their levels of trust. This is partly because the standard trust measure does not capture change within the expansive "only some of the time" category.

This conjecture is addressed, in part, in Tables 6 and 7, which illustrate the distributions of responses to the five- and 101-point items by respondents' trust in 2004. The second and third columns of Table 6 contain 2004 respondents who trusted the government "only some of the time" and "most of the time," respectively. These panelists' 2006 five-point trust responses can then be read down the column. This shows a large range of 2006 responses for "only some of the time" and "most of the time" 2004 respondents and is suggestive of change. In addition, it points to our more general argument that the standard ANES response options are vague and overly broad. The same general finding is evident for both process-based trust (i.e. "making decisions in a fair way") and for outcome-based trust (i.e. "doing what is best for the country").

#### [Table 6 about here]

A similar pattern emerges for both process- and outcome-based trust in the second and third columns of Table 7. For example, about 7% of respondents trusted the government "only some of the time" in 2004 and trusted the decision-making process less than 10% of the time in 2006, while 15% of respondents trusted the government "only some of the time" in 2004 and about half of the time in 2006. These results once again suggest that considerable change may be occurring beyond that which can be measured using the standard ANES trust question.

### [Table 7 about here]

### The Object of Trust: The National and State Governments

Citizens are likely to evaluate state and national governments differently. Table 8 compares each of the five trust measures included in the 2006 NES Pilot across levels of government. While not reported in the table, the correlations between state and national trust are strong and statistically significant, and, as might be expected, the mean values are similar.

Nevertheless, however, the difference in mean values across levels of government is significant for four out of five variables with trust being higher at the state level for each of these questions, as anticipated. Thus, citizens gave similar (but not identical) responses across levels of government, suggesting that these questions are likely to tap into slightly different underlying concepts.

#### [Table 8 about here]

#### The Relationship between Trust and Other Attitudinal and Behavioral Variables

In addition to the theoretical and conceptual problems with the standard ANES trust item, the standard item may entail some empirical shortcomings. As discussed above, it can mask changes in individuals' levels of trust over time and is generally a relatively crude measure with expansive response categories. This crudeness may affect the performance of trust as both an independent and dependent variable. Namely, the relationships between trust and other variables may well be attenuated by the inability of the standard ANES item to make even moderately fine distinctions in levels of trust. Another goal of proposing new trust items, then, is to improve our ability to undertake empirical analyses of the causes and consequences of trust.

As an initial means to explore the effectiveness of the pilot trust items in this regard, we examine the correlations between those items (and the standard trust item) and seven other variables included in the pilot survey. Table 9 presents the results. Perhaps the most striking feature of the results is the similarity between the standard trust items and the five- and 101-point alternatives. None of the items asking respondents about trust in the national or state governments are significantly correlated with respondents' interest in government and politics, their attention to government and politics, their interest in the 2006 campaigns, or how closely

they follow politics. Conversely, all of the trust measures (with the exception of the five-point state outcome-based trust measure) are correlated with approval of President Bush with a significance of better than .01. While the significance levels of these correlations are the same, it is worth noting that the magnitudes of the correlations are higher with the more discerning 101-point trust items. Furthermore, in contrast to the standard trust measure, the pilot alternatives are significantly correlated with respondents' assessments of the economy. Together, these results suggest that the more discerning trust measures tested here will ultimately permit researchers to improve on empirical models with trust. Unfortunately, the nature of the 2006 pilot survey does not allow us to do so since the survey does not include most variables typically found in multivariate models of trust

#### [Table 9 about here]

Finally, Table 9 also points to the importance of distinguishing between the object of individuals' trust, at least in regard to the national versus state governments. Looking at the final two columns of the table, it is evident that there is a much stronger relationship between trust in the national government and economic perceptions than there is between state-level trust and economic conditions. A similar pattern holds also for the relationships between trust and approval of President Bush. These results make intuitive sense since both the economy and the president are national referents and illustrate that individuals have at least some ability to judge levels of government in our federalist system according to appropriate criteria.

#### Recommendations

We believe that the standard NES measure is flawed and should eventually be replaced by the percent-of-the-time measures. Furthermore, we believe that the trust questions included on the 2006 ANES pilot are improvements over the standard ANES trust question. This is particularly true as they relate to the response options provided to respondents, and somewhat less so for the objects of citizens trust (process versus outcome and the level of government). Based on the results presented here, we recommend including the following questions on future ANES surveys:

- 1. On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decision in a fair way?
- 2. What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to make decisions in a fair way?
- 3. What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?
- 4. What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in [STATE] to do what is best for [STATE]?

While we believe that there are strong arguments for measuring both process- and outcome-based trust, we recognize that the ANES is a limited resource and that the trust questions may need to be further parsed. If this is the case, we propose that the federal and state questions be stripped of references to either process- or outcome-based evaluations. That is, we would propose simply asking respondents "On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington." Adding object of citizens' trust ("to do what is right," "to make decisions in a fair way," or "to do what is best for the country") is simply not unnecessary and may do more harm than good by leading respondents to evaluate government using criteria that might not be as relevant for them. The streamlined version is straightforward and would allow respondents to determine for themselves the criteria for determining their trust in government. While some may argue that "to do what is right" should be added to help maintain some semblance of time-series continuity, we believe this is an insufficient reason for sticking with wording that may lead respondents in their responses.

While the five-point scale is an improvement over the standard item, we believe that it still needs to be refined. As outlined previously, the response options should be changed to indicate ranges rather than a discrete points and the wording for the most-of-the-time response should be reconsidered. Specifically, we argue that the response options should read "almost always," "frequently," "about half the time," "once in a while," or "almost never." However, this is essentially a moot point since the 101-point question wording is clearly preferable to the five-point version, both theoretically and practically. The percent-of-the-time question is straightforward, more precise, does a better job of discriminating by frequency of trust, and performs at least as well (and frequently better) than the alternatives.

Although we believe the standard ANES question is flawed and should be phased out, we believe it warrants inclusion on the ANES along with the percent-of-the-time question at least through 2008. This is partly because it is a mainstay of the ANES and is widely used in academic research on elections. More importantly, however, including both the standard and the percent-of-the-time questions on the same survey will allow for a close examination of what voters really mean when they report that the trust the government, say, "only some of the time." This will be helpful because the traditional response categories are vague and overlapping. To illustrate, someone who reports that he trusts government "only some of the time" may trust the government about 10% of the time. Another person also reporting he trusts the government "only some of the time," may trust government about 50% of the time. Additionally, the difference in trusting "just about always" and "most of the time" is unclear. In short, including both questions will tell us what respondents mean when they answer the standard NES trust question. This will be invaluable for researchers who wish to use the standard NES trust measure for analyses of past elections.

Furthermore, the standard NES trust measure may obscure individual-level change in trust. That is, someone who says she trusts the government "only some of the time" may be trusting about 10% of the time. If her trust level increases to 50% between survey administrations, she may still respond "only some of the time" (since she is unlikely to consider a 50% trust level to be trusting "most of the time," the next closest response option). Thus, the traditional trust measure would not indicate any change, while the percent-of-the-time option would show considerable change. Thus, the extent to which change in trust is obscured by the standard measure can be determined by including both questions in a panel design, such as the 2008 ANES.

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Table 1
Frequency Distribution of Trust in Government Using Standard ANES Trust Item

Never (Volunteered)	2.3% (5)
Only Some of the Time	74.2% (164)
Most of the Time	22.6% (50)
Just About Always	0.9% (2)
Total	100% (221)

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Question: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Trust in Government Using Five-Point Items

<u>-</u>	Trust Government to Make Decisions in a Fair Way (Process-Based Trust)	Trust Government to Do What is Best for the Country (Outcome-Based Trust)
Never	4.0% (9)	3.1% (7)
Once in a While	27.8% (63)	25.6% (58)
About Half the Time	49.3% (112)	36.1% (82)
Most of the Time	18.1% (41)	33.0% (75)
Always	0.9% (2)	2.2% (5)
Total	100% (227)	100% (227)

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of Trust in Government Using 101-Point Items

	Trust Government to Make Decisions in a Fair Way (Process-Based Trust)	Trust Government to Do What is Best for the Country (Outcome-Based Trust)
0-9	8.4% (18)	7.0% (15)
10-19	4.7% (10)	6.5% (14)
20-29	8.4% (18)	5.1% (11)
30-39	7.4% (16)	8.8% (19)
40-49	9.8% (21)	5.6% (12)
50-59	21.9% (47)	22.3% (48)
60-69	15.3% (33)	12.6% (27)
70-79	12.6% (27)	17.2% (37)
80-89	7.0% (15)	5.1% (11)
90-100	4.7% (10)	9.8% (21)
Total	100% (215)	100% (215)

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Table 4

Correlations of Trust Items

	Standard, 2004	Standard, 2006	5-Pt Fair Way (Process-Based)	101-Pt Fair Way (Process-Based)	5-Pt Best Country (Outcome-Based)	101-Pt Best Country (Outcome-Based)
Standard, 2004	-	.343 (209)	.317 (219)	.460 (205)	.414 (219)	.465 (205)
Standard, 2006	.343 (209)	-	-	-	-	-
5-Pt Fair Way (Process-Based)	.317 (219)	-	-	-	.612 (227)	-
101-Pt Fair Way (Process-Based)	.460 (205)	-	-	-	-	.802 (214)
5-Pt Best Country (Outcome-Based)	.414 (219)	-	.612 (227)	-	-	-
101-Pt Best Country (Outcome-Based)	.465 (205)	-	-	.802 (214)	-	-

Notes: Cell entries are Pearson bivariate correlation coefficients; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country? On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Table 5

Crosstabulation of Trust in Government Using Standard ANES Item, 2004 and 2006

		Trust, 2006					
Trust, 2004	Never (Volunteered)	Only Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Just About Always	Total		
Never	0%	1.4%	0%	0%	1.4%		
(Volunteered)	(0)	(3)	(0)	(0)	(3)		
Only Some of the Time	1.9%	49.3%	6.2%	0.5%	57.9%		
	(4)	(103)	(13)	(1)	(121)		
Most of the Time	0.5%	22.0%	14.8%	0%	37.3%		
	(1)	(46)	(31)	(0)	(78)		
Just About Always	0% (0)	1.4% (3)	1.4% (3)	0.5% (1)	3.4% (7)		
Total	2.4%	74.2%	22.5%	1.0%	100%		
	(5)	(155)	(47)	(2)	(209)		

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Question: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

Table 6 Crosstabulation of 2004 Trust in Government Using Standard ANES Item with 2006 Five-Point Trust Items

		Trust,			
Make Decisions in Fair Way (Process-Based)	Never (Volunteered)	Only Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Just About Always	Total
Never	0%	4.1%	0%	0%	4.1%
	(0)	(9)	(0)	(0)	(9)
Once in a While	0.9%	17.8%	9.6%	0%	28.3%
	(2)	(39)	(21)	(0)	(62)
About Half the Time	0%	24.7%	22.4%	1.8%	48.9%
	(0)	(54)	(49)	(4)	(107)
Most of the Time	0%	5.5%	11.9%	0.5%	17.8%
	(0)	(12)	(26)	(1)	(39)
Always	0%	0%	0.9%	0%	0.9%
	(0)	(0)	(2)	(0)	(2)
Total	0.9% (2)	52.1% (114)	44.8% (98)	2.3% (5)	100.0% (219)
Do What is Best for Country (Outcome-Based)					
Never	0.5%	2.7%	0%	0%	3.2%
	(1)	(6)	(0)	(0)	(7)
Once in a While	0.5%	19.2%	6.9%	0%	26.5%
	(1)	(42)	(15)	(0)	(58)
About Half the Time	0%	21.0%	14.2%	0.5%	35.6%
	(0)	(46)	(31)	(1)	(78)
Most of the Time	0%	7.8%	22.8%	1.8%	32.4%
	(0)	(17)	(50)	(4)	(7)
Always	0%	1.4%	0.9%	0%	2.3%
	(0)	(3)	(2)	(0)	(5)
Total	0.91%	52.1%	44.8%	2.3%	100.0%
	(2)	(114)	(98)	(5)	(219)

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Table 7 Crosstabulation of 2004 Trust in Government Using Standard ANES Item with 2006 101-Point Trust Items

Panel A	Trust, 2004					
Make Decisions in Fair Way (Process-Based)	Never (Volunteered)	Only Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Just About Always	Total	
0-9	1.0% (2)	6.8% (14)	1.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	8.8% (18)	
10-19	0.0% (0)	3.4% (7)	1.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.4% (9)	
20-29	0.0% (0)	6.3% (13)	2.4% (5)	0.0% (0)	8.8% (18)	
30-39	0.0% (0)	5.9% (12)	2.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	7.8% (16)	
40-49	0.0% (0)	7.3% (15)	2.9% (6)	0.0% (0)	10.2% (21)	
50-59	0.0% (0)	15.1% (31)	20.5% (42)	1.0% (2)	36.6% (75)	
60-69	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	
70-79	0.0% (0)	2.4% (5)	9.3% (19)	0.0% (0)	11.7% (24)	
80-89	0.0% (0)	1.5% (3)	4.4% (9)	1.0% (2)	6.8% (14)	
90-100	0.0% (0)	1.0% (2)	3.9% (8)	0.0% (0)	4.9% (10)	
Total	1.0% (2)	49.8% (102)	47.3% (97)	2.0% (4)	100.0% (205)	

Table 7 (cont.)

Panel B	Trust, 2004
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Do What is Best for Country (Outcome-Based)	Never (Volunteered)	Only Some of the Time	Most of the Time	Just About Always	Total
0-9	1.0%	5.4%	0.5%	0.0%	6.8%
	(2)	(11)	(1)	(0)	(14)
10-19	0.0% (0)	5.4% (11)	1.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	6.8% (14)
20-29	0.0% (0)	4.4% (9)	1.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	5.4% (11)
30-39	0.0%	6.3%	2.4%	0.0%	8.8%
	(0)	(13)	(5)	(0)	(18)
40-49	0.0%	4.4%	1.5%	0.0%	5.9%
	(0)	(9)	(3)	(0)	(12)
50-59	0.0%	15.6%	18.1%	0.5%	34.2%
	(0)	(32)	(37)	(1)	(70)
60-69	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
70-79	0.0%	2.9%	13.7%	0.5%	17.1%
	(0)	(6)	(28)	(1)	(35)
80-89	0.0%	3.4%	1.0%	0.5%	4.9%
	(0)	(7)	(2)	(1)	(10)
90-100	0.0%	2.0%	7.8%	0.5%	10.2%
	(0)	(4)	(16)	(1)	(21)
Total	1.0%	49.8%	47.3%	2.0%	100.0%
	(2)	(102)	(97)	(4)	(205)

Notes: Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics for National and State Government Trust Items

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Standard Trust					
National	2.22	0.49	1	4	221
State	2.37***	0.58	1	4	220
Make Decisions in					
Fair Way, 5-Pt					
(Process-Based)					
National	2.84	0.79	1	5	227
State	2.94**	0.82	1	5	227
Do What is Best for					
Country/State, 5-pt					
(Outcome-Based)					
National	3.06	0.89	1	5 5	227
State	3.11	0.78	1	5	227
Make Decisions in					
Fair Way, 101-Pt					
(Process-Based)					
National	48.42	24.60	0	100	215
State	50.97*	23.95	0	100	216
Do What is Best for					
Country/State, 101-pt					
(Outcome-Based)					
National	51.85	26.02	0	100	215
State	55.78***	24.64	0	100	216

<sup>\*</sup>Difference in means significant at .10 in paired differences t-test.

Notes: All variables are coded so that higher values indicate greater trust. Cell entries are percentage of valid responses; number of respondents in parentheses. Text of Questions: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in (R'S STATE) to do what is right? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in (R'S STATE) to make decisions in a fair way? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country? How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in (R'S STATE) to do what is best for (R'S STATE)? On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in (R'S STATE) to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in (R'S STATE) to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the government in (R'S STATE) to do what is best for (R'S STATE)?

<sup>\*</sup>Difference in means significant at .05 in paired differences t-test.

<sup>\*</sup>Difference in means significant at .01 in paired differences t-test.

Table 9
Correlations of Trust Items with Other Relevant Items from ANES 2006 Pilot Study

	Interest in Gov't & Politics	Attention to Gov't & Politics	Interest in Campaign	Follow Government	Vote in 2006	Perception of Economy	Approve of President Bush
Standard Trust			1.2. (1.0.7)				
National State	003 (114) 063 (113)	.041 (114) .033 (113)	133 (107) 127 (107)	109 (107) 103 (107)	148** (221) 044 (220)	.095 (219) .144** (218)	.387*** (219) .135** (219)
Make Decisions in Fair Way, 5-Pt (Process-Based)	021 (102)	029 (102)	021 (124)	012 (124)	012 (227)	1(0*** (227)	222*** (22()
National State	.031 (103) 014 (103)	.028 (103) 021 (103)	.021 (124) .096 (124)	.012 (124) .120 (124)	.012 (227) 009 (227)	.168*** (227) .151** (227)	.223*** (226) .134** (226)
Do What is Best for Country/State, 5-pt (Outcome-Based) National State	.001 (103) .118 (103)	092 (103) .022 (103)	.009 (124) .050 (124)	.019 (124) .020 (124)	001 (227) 032 (227)	.180*** (227) .096 (227)	.295*** (226) .082 (226)
Make Decisions in Fair Way, 101-Pt (Process-Based) National State	.044 (118) .105 (118)	135 (119) 039 (119)	035 (96) 014 (97)	.070 (96) .054 (97)	.054 (215) .118* (216)	.301*** (215) .168*** (216)	.418*** (213) .181*** (214)
Do What is Best for Country/State, 101-pt (Outcome-Based) National State	075 (118) .034 (118)	145 (119) 028 (119)	050 (96) .028 (97)	.005 (96) .056 (97)	.007 (215) .039 (216)	.206*** (215) .131** (216)	.446*** (213) .202*** (214)

# Table 9 (Cont.)

Notes: Cell entries are Pearson bivariate correlation coefficients; number of respondents in parentheses. Variables are coded so that higher values indicate more interest, more attention, greater approval, etc.

Text of Questions:

Trust Items: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country? On a scale from 0 to 100, what percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to make decisions in a fair way? What percent of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington to do what is best for the country?

Interest in Government & Politics: How interested are you in information about what's going on in government and politics? [Extremely interested, very interested, moderately interested, slightly interested, or not interested at all?]

Attention to Government & Politics: How closely do you pay attention to information about what's going on in government and politics? [Extremely closely, very closely, moderately closely, slightly closely, or not closely at all?]

Interest in Campaign: Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been VERY MUCH interested, SOMEWHAT interested, or NOT MUCH interested in the political campaigns this year?

Follow Government: Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs [most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?]

Vote in 2006: Summary variable (MOD26\_2summ) built from different initial question wordings. See MOD26 in survey questionnaire.

Perception of Economy: Now thinking about the economy in the country as a whole, would you say that over the past year, the nation's economy has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse?

Approve of President Bush: Built from two different versions of branching question format to produce a 7-point approval variable. Root question for both versions is "Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?" See MOD27 in survey questionnaire.