

NOTE: The following documentation is an excerpt from the 1996 NES Codebook. Please refer to the complete codebook, available on the NES website (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes>) for more information.

>> 1996 STUDY DESCRIPTION FOR THE AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDY

The 1996 American National Election Study was conducted by the Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research, under the general direction of Steven J. Rosenstone, Donald R. Kinder and Warren E. Miller. M. Kathryn Cirksena was the Director of Studies for the National Election Studies and oversaw the study from early planning stages through release of the 1996 data collection. She was assisted by Santa Traugott, retiring Director of Studies, Patricia Luevano, Michael J. Horvath, and Daniel Unger. This is the twenty-fourth in a series of studies of American national elections produced by the Center for Political Studies and the Survey Research Center, and it is the tenth traditional time-series study to be conducted under the auspices of National Science Foundation Grants (SBR-9317631, SES-9209410, SES-9009379, SES-8808361, SES-8341310, SES-8207580 and SOC77-08885) providing long-term support for the National Election Studies. Since 1978, the National Election Studies have been designed by a national Board of Overseers, the members of which meet several times a year to plan content and administration of the major study components. Board members during the planning of the 1996 National Election Study included Larry Bartels (Princeton University), Gary Cox (University of California, San Diego), Charles Franklin (University of Wisconsin), Donald Kinder, ex officio (University of Michigan), David Leege, Chair (University of Notre Dame), Warren Miller, ex officio (Arizona State University), Wendy Rahn (University of Minnesota), as of September 1996, Steven Rosenstone, ex officio (University of Michigan), Virginia Sapiro (University of Wisconsin), W. Phillips Shively (University of Minnesota), Laura Stoker (University of California, Berkeley) and John Zaller (University of California, Los Angeles). As part of the study planning process, a special planning committee was appointed, a pilot study conducted, and stimulus letters sent to members of the scholarly community soliciting input on study plans. Board member Larry Bartels chaired the Planning Committee for the 1996 National Election Study which included from the Board: Donald Kinder (Michigan), Warren Miller (Arizona State), Steven Rosenstone (Michigan), Virginia Sapiro (Wisconsin), Laura Stoker (Berkeley), and John Zaller (UCLA) and four other scholars, R. Michael Alvarez (Cal Tech), Jonathan Krosnick (Ohio State), George Rabinowitz (North Carolina) and Wendy Rahn (Minnesota), as well as Kathryn Cirksena and Santa Traugott (NES staff).

A pilot study was carried out in September of 1995 for the purpose of developing new instrumentation for the 1996 Election Study. New items were tested in the areas of the environment and environmental politics, media exposure (including new media), issues, candidate evaluation, and new questions included as part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Data from the 1995 Pilot Study are available through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR 6636). Results from the Pilot Study (summarized in Appendix C "1995 Pilot Study Reports") were used by the Planning Committee in formulating recommendations to the Board about study content for the 1996 Pre- and Post-Election Survey. Copies of the Pilot Study Reports are available on the NES Website (www.umich.edu/~nes), or may be obtained by contacting the NES project staff.

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>> 1996 STUDY DESIGN, CONTENT AND ADMINISTRATION

STUDY DESIGN

The 1996 National Election Study entailed both a pre-election interview and a post-election re-interview. About three-fourths of the 1996 cases consist of empaneled respondents who were first interviewed in the 1994 or 1992 National Election Study. A freshly drawn cross-section sample makes up the balance of the 1996 cases. (Details of the sample design are given in "Sample Design of the 1996 Pre/Post Election Studies", in Appendix B.) Altogether, 1714 citizens were interviewed in the 9 weeks prior to the November 5, 1996 election. To permit analysis of the impact of the unfolding election campaign, the pre-election sample was divided into four subsample replicates, which were released approximately two weeks apart. 1316 of the pre-election interviews were conducted with panel respondents; 398 with cross-section respondents. In the weeks following the election, 1534 pre-election respondents were reinterviewed: 1197 panel, 337 cross-section. This post-election survey included a mode experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to be interviewed either by telephone or face-to-face. Further details of the administration of the surveys are given in "Study Administration", below.

The two components of the study -- the panel and the new cross-section -- were designed to be used together to create a combined nationally representative sample of the American electorate. The 1996 NES data set includes a weight which incorporates sampling, nonresponse and post-stratification factors, (V3), for analysis of the 1996 NES combined sample (Panel component cases plus Cross-section supplement cases). A Time Series Weight (V5) which corrects for Panel attrition (but does not incorporate sampling, nonresponse and post-stratification adjustments) should be used in analyses comparing either the panel respondents or the combined panel and new cross-section respondents to previous (unweighted) National Election Studies data collections. See "Sample Design of the 1996 Pre- and Post-Election Study" and the documentation for V3, and V5 for further information. The frequencies that appear in this codebook are unweighted. A set of files, data, weights, and data documentation, designed to enable panel analyses of the 1992-94-96 data become available sometime late in 1997; announcements concerning the release of data for panel analysis are found at the NES website, www.umich.edu/~nes. The present release has been prepared for cross-section and time series analyses.

STUDY CONTENT

Substantive themes

The content for the 1996 Election Study reflects its double duty, both as the traditional presidential election year time-series data collection and as a panel study. Substantive themes represented in the 1996 questionnaires include:

- * interest in the political campaigns; concern about the outcome; and attentiveness to the media's coverage of the campaign
- * information about politics
- * evaluation of the presidential candidates and placement of presidential candidates on various issue dimensions
- * partisanship and evaluations of the political parties
- * knowledge of and evaluation of House candidates
- * political participation: turnout in the November general election; other forms of electoral campaign activity
- * vote choice for President, the U.S. House, and the U.S. Senate, including second choice for President
- * personal and national economic well-being
- * positions on social welfare issues including: government health insurance; federal budget priorities, and the role of the government in the provision of jobs and good standard of living
- * positions on social issues including: abortion; women's roles; prayer in the schools; the rights of homosexuals and the death penalty
- * racial and ethnic stereotypes; opinions on affirmative action; attitudes towards immigrants
- * opinions about the nation's most important problem
- * values and predispositions: moral traditionalism; political efficacy; egalitarianism; humanitarianism individualism; trust in government
- * social altruism and social connectedness
- * feeling thermometers on a wide range of political figures and political groups; affinity with various social groups
- * detailed demographic information and measures of religious affiliation and religiosity.

Several new themes are included in the 1996 study:

THE CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN: To better understand the dynamics of congressional campaigns, the pre-election wave contains a core battery of campaign-related congressional items (including candidate recall, thermometer ratings, ideological placements, and vote intention).

ISSUE IMPORTANCE AND UNCERTAINTY: Several issue questions include "uncertainty" and "importance" follow-ups for both respondent self-placements ("How certain are you of your position on this scale?" "How important is this issue to you?") and candidate placements (e.g. "How certain are you of Bob Dole's position on this scale?" "How important is this issue to Bob Dole?").

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: An eight-minute module of questions developed by a consortium of electoral scholars from 52 polities is included in the post-election interview. Designed to facilitate comparative analysis of political attitudes and voting behavior, the same questions are being asked in similar form in national election studies around the world, and the resulting survey data will eventually be merged with contextual data on electoral laws and political institutions to produce a rich cross-national data set. This module is included as questions T1-T16 in the post-election survey.

ISSUE COVERAGE: New issue items in the areas of crime, the environment, gun control, and income inequality are included. A six-item battery carried forward from the 1995 Pilot Study taps respondents' reactions to proposed trade-offs among domestic spending, deficit reduction, and tax cuts.

THE ENVIRONMENT: New items from the 1995 Pilot Study tap perceptions of

environmental conditions (air quality and the safety of drinking water in the nation and in the respondent's own community), environmental priorities (ranging from global warming to cleaning up lakes and parks), self-placements and placements of candidates and parties on environmental issues (trading off environmental protection against jobs and living standards, and supporting or opposing government environmental regulations on businesses), and the relative effectiveness of national, state, and local governments in dealing with environmental problems.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: Several measures of social connectedness are repeated from the 1992 survey. Items tapping trust in people and trust in government are repeated in the pre- and post-election waves to facilitate analysis of the effect of the campaign and election on broader social attitudes. A battery of items on membership and activity in a wide variety of social, political, religious, and civic organizations is included in the post-election questionnaire. This battery includes several questions on as many as four groups in each of twenty-two categories of organizations. Because of the large number of variables produced from these questions, two means of accessing these data are provided; one set of variables which summarize the groups data is available without any unusual effort by the user. A full complement of variables of interest to the specialist in groups membership and participation is also readily available by following instructions provided in Appendix A.

MEDIA EXPOSURE: New media exposure, reception, and attention items developed in the 1995 Pilot Study include talk radio items, more specific exposure items for network and local television news, and reception items asking respondents to match news anchors with the networks they work for. A battery of exposure items for entertainment television programs provides an indirect measure of exposure to campaign advertisements. There is also a new open-ended item on recollection of a memorable campaign ad, some expansion and reorganization of items tapping attention to the campaign in various media.

Congressional Ballot Cards, Candidate Lists, and Candidate Numbers

In the usual NES Post-Election survey, and for 1996, in the Pre-Election survey as well, respondents are asked several questions about their particular Congressperson and Senators. In previous years, interviewers pre-edited questionnaires to fill in the names appropriate for the state and congressional district in which the respondent was living (or was living during the pre-election interview). The use of Computer-Assisted Interviewing software means that information about respondents' congressional district and about candidates and incumbents names (including retiring incumbents) and parties is maintained and periodically updated in a computerized database; this information is loaded into the laptop computers used by interviewers and accessed to provide the correct CD and candidate information for displaying and entering responses to the relevant questions. Each candidate and Senator is assigned a unique number that reflects his or her incumbency status and party. Particular questions in the survey, which include feeling thermometers for the various candidates, automatically appear on screen with the correct name filled in. The Candidate Lists stored in the database, which show which candidates are associated with which congressional district and with which numbers they are tagged, can also be found here, as can a sample ballot card. Candidates' names were identified by referring to the results of primary elections published in Congressional

Quarterly. In the Pre-Election survey there is the additional complication that a number of states held their Congressional primaries after the Pre-Election field work had started. In these cases, the names of those candidates with the greatest chance of winning their party's nomination were loaded into the database. Forecasts of likely winners assumed that incumbents were likely to win their primaries and that unopposed non-incumbents would win. Other races were forecast by Board member Charles Franklin, using a probit model of all 1996 contested primacies involving non-incumbents and utilizing FEC data from August 1, 1996. As soon as the outcome of the primary was known, the correct candidate information was entered into the database and the new version was loaded onto the appropriate interviewers' laptop computers. In nearly all races the forecasted winner was correct. Further details can be found at the documentation for Pre-Election questions B2a and B2b.

Features of a CAI questionnaire

Using the capabilities of computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) in the 1996 NES enabled the introduction of several features that would not be feasible using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The most significant of these for users of this data are: randomization within batteries or sequences of questions; application of half-sampling to some questions; and random order of presentation of blocks of questions. Randomization within batteries refers to presenting, in a randomly determined order, a series of questions about the same objects (or people). An example would be the questions about the respondent's likes and dislikes of the three main Presidential candidates where the names of Clinton, Dole and Perot were inserted randomly as the first, second or third person to be asked about in this series. Randomization of names/objects in this way avoids ordering effects that might be obtained if, for example, the candidates were always asked about in the same order in every series of questions where a parallel question is asked about each of the three. Questions where randomization of order within a series was in force are clearly identified in the codebook. Randomization variables, which allow the user to identify the order of presentation, are provided for all instances of randomized presentation. A few questions, primarily open-ended questions, were half-sampled, so that a randomly selected half of respondents were asked the question. Finally, an order experiment, where a sequence of closed-ended questions was asked early in the interview for a random half of respondents and late in the interview for the other half, was included as part of the mode comparison experiment described below. For both of these features, the relevant codebook entries contain explanatory notes. All random selections were programmed into the computer application of the questionnaire and occurred automatically and independently of other circumstances of the interview. CAI eliminates the preparation of a paper and pencil version which would previously have been published in the codebook.

STUDY ADMINISTRATION

Interviewing for the pre-election survey began on September 3, 1996 and concluded on November 4, 1996. The average length of interview in the pre-election survey was 74 minutes. The overall response rate was 71%. (See "Response Rates" below for a complete discussion.) The post-election interviewing occurred between November 6 and December 31, 1996 inclusive, with

an average interview length of 70 minutes. The overall reinterview rate was 90%, with further details available in the Response Rate section below.

Sample "Releases" in the Pre-election survey

Both parts of the sample (panel and cross-section) were randomly subdivided into four quarter sample releases, each of which is a proper, random subsample of the NES sample. Two additional 'reserve' replicates of cross-section cases were held in abeyance until it was determined that the additional sample lines would be needed to attain study goals. Replicates 1 through 4 were considered the "base sample," certain to be released. The release dates for sample replicates were:

Replicate	Date of release
1	September 3, 1996
2	September 12, 1996
3	September 26, 1996
4	October 10, 1996
5 (Reserve)	September 26, 1996 (with replicate 3)
6 (Reserve)	October 10, 1996 (with replicate 4)

For a full description of the sample design and implementation, see the 1996 NATIONAL PRE/POST-ELECTION STUDY SAMPLE DESIGN.

Pre-election study: assignment to telephone mode

One of the administrative problems in fielding a panel study is that respondents have had an intervening period of time in which to relocate, perhaps at some remove from areas where field study staff are available to interview them. We estimated that between 40 and 80 respondents might have moved to areas in which SRC did not have interviewers in the field. Our priority was to interview as many panel respondents as possible, but we did not want to incur the additional costs associated with interviewer travel. Accordingly, panel respondents who had moved 'out-of-range' for a face-to-face interview were converted to phone mode. The criterion set for deciding if a case was 'out-of-range' was 90 minutes driving time one-way from the interviewer's home to the respondent's address under local usual driving conditions. The total number of panel respondents that we interviewed who were "out of range" for this reason was 47.

Post-Election Mode Experiment: Design and Implementation

In contrast with the usual NES practice of conducting all post-election interviews in person, half of the respondents in the post-election wave of the 1996 survey were interviewed by telephone, with post-election respondents randomly assigned (except in extreme circumstances) to phone or face-to-face administration. The telephone mode used the same computerized questionnaire developed for the face-to-face post-election interviews and was conducted by the same interviewers. The mode experiment provides a direct comparison of the effects of mode of interview on important indicators of data quality and comparability.

Cases were assigned to either telephone or face-to-face mode at the sample segment level. Every effort to retain randomly assigned cases in their assigned mode was made. Respondents who had been interviewed by telephone in the pre-election study were disqualified from random assignment to mode; all those reinterviews were done by telephone, a total of 47 cases. Respondents

who did not have telephones and respondents who were not able to participate in the mode experiment because of a physical limitation that prevented them from being interviewed by one mode or another were also excluded, which totaled 130 additional cases (24 of these were completed by telephone). No changes in mode of interview because of respondent preference or for ease of administration were permitted.

All prospective respondents received two incentives in the mail: a check for \$10 and a small gift. Included in the mailing to telephone mode respondents was a sealed respondent booklet with the candidate ballot folded inside. The contact letter instructed respondents to set these materials aside until told to open them by the interviewer. Interviewers followed procedures to ascertain that respondents were using the booklet and ballot card appropriately and to note deviations from the instructions.

Evaluation of problems in study implementation

Two implementation problems arose in the post-election field administration. This resulted in two unintended systematic deviations from standard administration. 145 cases in the phone mode were mailed a respondent booklet that included the wrong ballot card. As soon as this problem was discovered, new respondent booklets with correct ballot cards were mailed by overnight mail to these respondents. Approximately 50 interviews were conducted where the respondent had the incorrect ballot card; in these cases interviewers read the correct ballot card information to the respondent. A full report to be issued will analyze these data to identify any systematic differences related to this implementation error. It was discovered early in the data collection period that 39 interviews were completed using the training version of the survey instrument, due to a technical problem in transmitting files to the field. The training version contained no randomized presentation of questions and lacked several last minute changes to the interview. Call-backs to 37 of these 39 respondents allowed us to collect data on the several missed questions. A report analyzing these cases for differential impact of the use of the training questionnaire is in preparation.

RESPONSE RATES

The response rate in the pre-election study was 71%. Among panel respondents the response (reinterview) rate was 76%; among cross-section respondents it was 60%.

The overall reinterview/response rate in the post-election interviewing was 90%. Among panel respondents in the post-election survey, the response rate was 91% and among cross-section respondents it was 85%. The response rate in face-to-face mode (including all cases in this mode, experimentally assigned and excluded) was 89% and for telephone mode it was 91%.

INTERVIEW COMPLETION RATE

Completion rates for the pre-election sample releases, for pre-election time periods, and for post-election time periods are presented here. Table 1 presents the percentage completions per quarter sample replicate (replicates 3

and 4 include the reserve cases added to those replicates); table 2 shows the percentage of completions per two week time period in the pre-election survey. Table 3 lays out the number of interviews taken for each week elapsing after the Nov. 5 General Election. In 1996, 29% of the interviews were completed in the first week after the election and 86% in the first three weeks; progress was evenly divided between face-to-face and telephone modes.

Table 1: % Completions by release (pre-election survey)

RELEASE	Total	Panel	Cross-section
1	28%	28%	18%
2	27	27	24
3+5	23	23	23
4+6	23	22	25

Table 2: Percent Completions by two week period (pre-election survey)

DATES	Total	Panel	Cross-section
9/3-9/16	19%	20%	18%
9/17-10/1	24	24	22
10/2-10/16	23	23	23
10/17-10/30	24	24	26
10/31-11/4	10	10	12

Table 3: Number of and Cumulative Percent of Interviews Taken in the Post-Election Study by Week of Interview

DATES	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS	CUMULATIVE PERCENT OF INTERVIEWS
Nov. 6-Nov.12	449	449	29%
Nov.13-Nov.19	551	1000	65
Nov.20-Nov.26	314	1314	86
Nov.27-Dec. 3	91	1405	92
Dec.4- Dec. 10	84	1489	97
Dec.11-Dec.17	32	1521	99
Dec.18-Dec.24	10	1531	99
Dec.25-Dec.31	3	1534	100%