

Author(s): Jacobson, Gary

Title: New Congressional Questions from the 1985 Pilot Study

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Dataset(s): 1985 Pilot Study

Abstract

This paper describes and evaluates the 1985 Pilot Study experimental questions relating to respondents' congressional representatives. Jacobson concludes that: (1) The new citizen-initiated contact question format produces a distribution of responses similar to the traditional question format. Jacobson argues that the traditional wording should be retained to preserve survey continuity. (2) The experimental question that measures how well representatives keep in touch with their constituents is worth adding to ongoing survey efforts because it uncovers significant House/Senate differences. (3) The traditional question gauging agreement or disagreement with members' votes should be replaced by the experimental question series measuring congressional action on issues important to the respondent. (4) The questions that ask respondents to identify congressional positions held by their representatives should not be included in future surveys. Few respondents volunteer answers and even fewer give accurate replies. (5) The questions asking whether representatives have done anything to "stand out" are useful for House-Senate comparisons, but add nothing to the information already amassed through existing questions concerning perceptions of incumbents.