



New Policy on Access to ANES Panel Study Data

We write to announce a policy change regarding who can see ANES Panel Study data before they are released to the public. Our current policy, which continues to apply to ANES Time Series data, is that the Principal Investigators do not have access to the data until they are released to the public. This assures that all researchers have equal access to the data and that the PIs have no advantage in publishing from the data. This policy affirms our commitment to providing public goods.

In the process of planning the 2008-2009 ANES Panel Study, we have been asked by the National Science Foundation and a wide range of scholars to consider revising this policy. The design of the ANES Panel Study entails many innovations while maintaining best practices is questionnaire design and representative sampling. Like any extended panel study, attrition (which occurs when respondents drop out of the sample) is a concern. It is therefore essential that sample composition be closely monitored as each wave of data collection is collected. Incoming data can be inspected for signs of biased attrition and/or panel conditioning. In addition, performance of questions can be checked to be sure they're working as expected and to prevent any problems identified in early waves from being repeated in later waves. But current policy prevents the PIs from taking part in this process.

After consulting with a wide range of scholars, as well as NSF and the ANES Board of Overseers, we developed a proposal to change the policy. We did so with the following project goals in mind:

1. Maximize data quality.
2. Prevent any use of the data that could affect the current election.
3. Avoid the fact or appearance of a conflict of interest between the public good aspect of the study and the interests of the ANES PIs and staff.
4. Give researchers equal opportunities to use the data for publication.
5. Help interested parties to understand and evaluate the study.
6. Release completely accurate data as quickly as is consistent with the above priorities.

The policy is as follows and applies to the Panel Study only:

- 1) ANES staff may share with the PIs aggregate statistics that can be used to evaluate attrition and conditioning. Such data will include demographic and non-demographic information. The PIs will not have individual-level data and may not seek to publish anything that uses these analyses until after such data are released publicly. The PIs may not distribute aggregate results to others

except in cases where it wishes to solicit the advice of Board Members regarding interpretations of such data or remedial strategies.

- 2) ANES staff may provide aggregate attrition-related statistics to members of the Attrition Subcommittee of the ANES Board of Overseers.

This change will allow the PIs, along with the ANES staff, to monitor the panel data as they are collected to watch for warning signs of problems. As always, we are interested to know the views of others on such matters. If you have comments on this or related topics, please send a message to anes@electionstudies.org

Sincerely,

Jon A. Krosnick and Arthur Lupia
ANES Principal Investigators