



Restricted Data Access: Memorandum for IRBs

To: Institutional Review Boards/Human Subjects Review Committees
From: American National Election Studies (ANES)
Re: Review of Proposals for Analysis of ANES Restricted Data

Since 1948, the American National Election Studies (ANES) project has been collecting survey data from United States citizens of voting age. The ANES project consists of both public datasets available for unrestricted use, and Restricted Data that are available only under special agreement with researchers who meet rigorous conditions.

ANES public datasets, which can be downloaded from our website (<http://www.electionstudies.org>), have been sufficiently purged of identifying information that we believe they pose no significant risk to respondent confidentiality.

Our Restricted Data, however, contain information that we believe increases the potential risk of identification of our survey respondents. It is because of this potential risk that we request your review of proposals to use ANES Restricted Data, using the same standards you would use for surveys of live human subjects. Although researchers using ANES Restricted Data are conducting secondary data analysis, the increased potential risk of identification of ANES respondents (who are, for ANES, live human subjects) makes inappropriate the usual "exemption" applied to secondary analysis of anonymized datasets.

We request that you review specifically the Disclosure Protection Plan, Data Protection Plan, and those aspects of the Research Plan that deal with issues of respondent anonymity and data security, if any. By the time of your review, ANES will have approved these Plans, but we ask for your review because you will be better able to judge the extent to which, in your institution's physical and computing environment, the Plans are adequate to ensure participant anonymity and limitation of access to the Restricted Data to the persons specified in the ANES agreement.

We are not asking that you review the entire ANES project, as that review has already been done.

If you have any questions about the nature and scope of what we are asking, please contact us at:

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