

ANES Announcement: The ANES 2012 Time Series Study July 14, 2011

On June 30, 2011, the American National Election Studies (ANES) began accepting proposals for questions to include on the ANES 2012 Time Series Study. Proposals may be submitted through the ANES Online Commons. The following describes the goals of this study and the opportunity to include questions on it.

About The ANES 2012 Time Series Study

The ANES's core mission is to promote cutting-edge and broadly-collaborative research on American national elections. The heart of the ANES is its presidential year time series surveys. The time series legacy is well known, serving as a model for election studies around the world and having generated thousands of publications. Every four years, a large representative sample of American adults has been interviewed on two occasions, first between Labor Day and Election Day, and again between Election Day and the onset of the winter holidays. The two face-to-face interviews will last approximately one hour each in 2012. Pre-election interviews focus on candidate preferences and anticipated vote choice; an array of possible predictors of candidate preferences, turnout, citizen engagement; and an array of indicators of cognitive and behavioral engagement in the information flow of the campaign. Post-election interviews measure a variety of behavioral experiences people might have had throughout the campaign (e.g., turnout, mobilization efforts), plus additional posited predictors of candidate preferences, turnout, and citizen engagement.

Some of the questions asked during these interviews are categorized as standard (also known as core) items, meaning that they have been asked regularly over the years. These questions are scheduled to appear on subsequent editions of the ANES Time Series in order to permit comparisons across elections. The purpose of categorizing items as standard is to assure scholars who conduct longitudinal analyses that they can continue to depend on ANES to include variables that have been shown to perform well in the past.

Although recognizing the importance of continuity, ANES has also sought to develop the time series in innovative ways. The non-standard component of each questionnaire has routinely focused on matters of interest to the current election cycle. These items are often selected from an "ANES Question Inventory", which includes the standard questions and questions that have been asked in past ANES surveys but are not part of the standard battery of questions.

The non-standard content of questionnaires has varied over the years. For example, candidate positions on issues of government policy are recognized as predictors of candidate preferences, but two one-hour interviews do not permit measuring positions on all of the many issues enjoying government attention at any one time in history. So from year to year, different choices have been made about which issues to include in the questionnaire.

As in the past, ANES will continue to emphasize best practices in sample design, respondent recruitment, and interviewing. As always, we aim to provide top-quality service in many respects, including: (1) the careful and extensive planning that must be done before the field work begins, (2) the hard work that will be done by interviewers, supervisors, and study managers during data collection to monitor productivity and make adjustments in strategy to maximize the quality of the final product, and (3) the extensive data processing efforts (including integration of an extensive contextual data file) that will be required to assemble and document the final data set.

About the Online Commons

Content for the ANES 2012 Time Series Study will primarily evolve from two sources: previous ANES Time Series questionnaires and new proposals received via the ANES Online Commons (OC). The OC is an Internet-based system designed to promote communication among scholars and to yield innovative proposals about the most effective ways to measure electorally-relevant concepts and relationships. The goal of the OC is to improve the quality and scientific value of ANES data collections, to encourage the submission of new ideas, and to make such experiences more beneficial to and enjoyable for investigators. In the last study cycle, more than 700 scholars sent over 200 proposals through the OC.

Proposals for the inclusion of questions must include clear theoretical and empirical rationales. All proposals must also clearly state how the questions will increase the value of the respective studies. In particular, proposed questions must have the potential to help scholars understand the causes and/or consequences of turnout or candidate choice.

The ANES Online Commons will accept proposals until 3:00pm Eastern Time on August 30, 2011. The deadline for members of the Online Commons community to comment on proposals is September 8, 2011. The deadline for revisions to proposals is at 3:00pm Eastern Time on September 14, 2011.

For additional information about how to submit a proposal, please visit: <http://www.electionstudies.org/>

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will guide the PIs and the ANES Board in evaluating proposals made through the Online Commons. We strongly encourage anyone who is considering making a proposal to read the following carefully.

1. **Problem-Relevant.** Are the theoretical motivations, proposed concepts and survey items relevant to ongoing controversies among researchers? How will the data that the proposers expect to observe advance the debate? What specific analyses of the data will be performed? What might these analyses reveal? How would these findings be relevant to specific questions or controversies?
2. **Suitability to ANES.** The primary mission of the ANES is to advance our understanding of voter choice and electoral participation. *Ceteris paribus*, concepts and instrumentation that are relevant to our understanding of these phenomena will be considered more favorably than items tapping other facets of politics, public opinion, American culture or society.
3. **Building on Solid Theoretical Footing.** Does the proposed instrumentation follow from a plausible theory of political behavior?
4. **Demonstrated Validity and Reliability of Proposed Items.** Proposed items should be accompanied by evidence demonstrating their validity and reliability. Validity has various facets: e.g., construct validity, concurrent validity, discriminant validity and predictive validity. Any assessment of predictive validity should keep in mind criterion 2, above. Reliability can be demonstrated in various ways; one example is test-retest reliability. We understand that proposals for novel concepts and/or instrumentation will almost always lack empirical evidence demonstrating validity and/or reliability. Proposals for truly "novel" instrumentation might be best suited for the series of smaller, cross-sectional studies ANES will field in the period 2010 through the summer of 2012; as a general matter, we are highly unlikely to field untested instrumentation on the Fall 2012 pre-election and post-election surveys.

5. Breadth of Relevance and Generalizability. Will the research that results from the proposed instrumentation be useful to many scholars? Given the broad usage of ANES data, we may be unable to accommodate requests to include items that are relevant for one -or only a few- hypothesis tests. Ceteris paribus, items that are potentially relevant for a wide range of analyses will be considered more favorably than items that would seem to have less applicability.

When the 2012 questionnaires are designed, the status of the standard questions will be central considerations. Standard questions do not have an infinite shelf life -- Science advances and new insights can reveal more effective ways of asking important questions or can show that some questions do not in fact meet the requirements of remaining a standard question. However, proposed changes made to standard questions will be scrutinized with recognition of the value of continuity over time. While we will welcome proposals to change standard questions, the burden of proof required for making such changes will be high. We will take most seriously arguments that are backed by concrete evidence and strong theory.

All proposals that include a change to a particular question (standard or non-standard) should name the specific question that would be altered and provide a full explanation as to why the ANES user community will benefit by such a change.

Tools To Assist Your Proposal Development

As previously mentioned, researchers can access the ANES Question Inventory at: <ftp://ftp.electionstudies.org/ftp/anes/OC/CoreUtility/ALT2010core.htm> (no longer a valid link). This Inventory provides the list of standard and non-standard questions that have been part of the Time Series, and includes frequencies for the most recent studies.

We have also created a second resource to review questions that have been asked previously. The ANES Time Series Codebook Search utility searches existing codebooks from studies in the ANES Time Series. You can access the utility at <http://ftp.nes.isr.umich.edu/backup/searchANES.htm> (no longer a valid link). (Please note that there are some limitations to the utility that are documented on the search help page, the link to that page is at the top of the utility page.)

We hope that you will find these tools useful as you prepare your proposals.

The opportunity to submit proposals is open to anyone who wants to make a constructive contribution to the development of the ANES 2012 Time Series Study. Feel free to pass this invitation along to anyone (e.g., your colleagues and students) who you think might be interested. We hope to hear from you.

For additional resources and information on how to submit a proposal, please visit <http://www.electionstudies.org/onlinecommons.htm>