

WEB APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING FROM SURVEYS

ITEMS FROM THE 2005 ANNENBERG SUPREME COURT SURVEY (FOR THE U.S. SUPREME COURT ANALYSES)

Politicization

1. Which of the following statements comes closer to your beliefs about the Supreme Court? (1) The Court is fair and objective in its rulings or (2) The Court is sometimes politically motivated in its rulings.
2. Judging by its recent decisions, do you think the Supreme Court is generally liberal, generally conservative, or is it making decisions more on a case-by-case basis? Note: for purposes of coding this variable, responses of “generally conservative” or “generally liberal” were coded as high in politicization, while “case-by-case basis” was coded as low in politicization.
3. Thinking about the current Supreme Court, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement—The decisions of the Supreme Court favor some groups more than others.
4. Thinking about the current Supreme Court, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement—The Supreme Court gets too mixed up in politics.

Trust in Courts

1. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the Supreme Court to operate in the best interests of the American people—a great deal, a fair amount, not too much or not at all?
2. Thinking about the current Supreme Court, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement—The Supreme Court can usually be trusted to make decisions that are right for the country as a whole.

General Approval

1. How do you feel about the way the Supreme Court is handling its job? Is it doing a very good, good, fair or poor job?

Elements of Diffuse Support

1. Thinking about the current Supreme Court, please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following—If the Supreme Court started making a lot of rulings that most Americans disagreed with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether. [4-point scale used]
2. To start, US Supreme Court Justices are appointed for their lifetime and they do not have to retire at a certain age. Do you think there should be a mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court Justices, or not? [responses options were “yes” or “no”]

Media Exposure

1. Now, I would like to ask about where you go to your news during the past week. Please tell me how many days in the past week, if any, did you read a daily newspaper?
2. How often, if at all, do you listen to radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues or politics—almost every day, every week, twice a month, once a month or never?
3. Now, I would like to ask about where you go to your news during the past week. Please tell me how many days in the past week, if any, did you watch cable news, such as CNN, Fox News Channel or MSNBC?

Sophistication

1. Do you happen to know who the current Supreme Court Chief Justice is?

2. There are currently two Supreme Court Justices who are women. Do you know the names of either or both of these Justices?
3. Can the US Supreme Court declare an act of Congress unconstitutional or not?
4. If the Supreme Court rules on a decision 5 to 4, does this mean the decision is final, the decision is too close and needs to be sent to Congress, or the decision is too close and needs to be sent back to the lower courts?
5. How well do you feel that you understand the Supreme Court's rulings—very well, somewhat well, somewhat poorly or very poorly?
6. And to what extent do you follow the decisions of the US Supreme Court?

Demographics, Party Identification, and Ideology

Age: Respondents were asked how old they are (in years).

Race: The survey asked respondent's race or ethnicity. We coded whether people were White, Black, or Hispanic. Only 2% of the sample were of Asian descent.

Education: The survey asked what the highest degree respondent completed in school: (1) high school or less, (2) some college, (3) college graduate, (4) graduate course work, or (5) graduate degree.

Party Identification: "In politics today, would you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?" Respondents who indicated no preference were asked whether they leaned toward being a Republican or Democrat.

Ideology: "In politics today, would you describe your views as very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, or very conservative?" We use a 5-category scale.

ITEMS FROM THE 2006 JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE SURVEY (FOR STATE COURT ANALYSES)

Politicization

1. Turning to the court system in [state respondent lives in]. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: The courts get too mixed up in politics.
2. Turning to the court system in [state respondent lives in]. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: The courts are legislating from the bench rather than interpreting the law.
3. Which of the following statements come closer to your beliefs about the courts in [state respondent lives in]? (1) The courts are fair and objective in their rulings. (2) The courts are sometimes politically motivated in their rulings.
4. In your opinion, to what extent do you think a judge's ruling is influenced by his or her personal political views—to a great extent, moderate extent, small extent, or not at all?
5. Do you think the courts in [state respondent lives in] are generally liberal, generally conservative, or are they making rulings more on a case-by-case basis? Note: for purposes of coding this variable, responses of "generally conservative" or "generally liberal" were coded as high in politicization, while "case-by-case basis" was coded as low in politicization

Trust in Courts

1. Generally speaking, how much do you trust the courts in [state respondent lives in] to operate in the best interests of the American people—a great deal, a fair amount, not too much or not at all?
2. Turning to the court system in [state respondent lives in]. Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: The courts can usually be trusted to make rulings that are right for the state as a whole.

3. Now thinking about the ethical practices of judges in [state respondent lives in], in your opinion are the ethical practices of judges in [state respondent lives in] very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?

Elements of Diffuse Support

1. How important do you think it is to be able to impeach or remove a judge from office if the judge makes an unpopular ruling—essential, very important but not essential, somewhat important, or not too important?
2. How important do you think it is for the legislature to be able to cut a judge's salary if it disagrees with the judge's rulings—essential, very important but not essential, somewhat important, or not too important?

Media Exposure

Judicial Independence Survey

1. How many days in the past week, did you read a daily newspaper?
2. How many days in the past week, did you listen to talk radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues or politics—for example, Rush Limbaugh, Don Imus, Al Franken or Diane Rehm?
3. How many days in the past week, did you watch cable news, such as CNN, Fox News Channel or MSNBC?

Sophistication

1. Do you happen to know who the current Supreme Court Chief Justice is?
2. To the best of your knowledge, do Supreme Court justices usually give written reasons behind their rulings or do they NOT usually give written reasons?
3. Do you happen to know any of the three branches of government? Would you mind naming any of them?
4. How well do YOU feel that you understand the purpose and role of the court system—very well, somewhat well, somewhat poorly or very poorly?

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