Political Advertising in 2012
Wesleyan Media Project
Release Version 1.1 (September 2016)

This collection provides detailed tracking data on when and where political ads aired during the year 2012. It covers all broadcast television stations in all media markets in the United States. Ads aired in U.S. Senate, U.S. House and gubernatorial races are also coded for their content. Presidential ads are not included in this release. They will be available after November 2016.

DATABASES

The data collection comes in four different files (unlike 2010, *estimated* spending information is available for each ad within each file):

1. wmp-senate-2012: contains information on all ads aired in U.S. Senate races
2. wmp-house-2012: contains information on all ads aired in U.S. House races
3. wmp-gov-2012: contains information on all ads aired in gubernatorial races
4. wmp-downballot-2012: contains information all ads aired in other races. Only information about when and where each ad aired is listed. The Wesleyan Media Project did not code the content of these ads.

CITATION

Publications based on this data collection should acknowledge this source by means of bibliographic citation. The bibliographic citation for this data collection is:

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SUPPORT

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DATA COLLECTION AND CODING

The source for the ad data is Kantar Media/CMAG. This commercial firm specializes in providing detailed, real-time tracking information to corporate and political clients. These tracking data represent the most comprehensive and systematic collection on the content and targeting of political advertisements. The data include two types of information. First, frequency information tells when and where ads aired. It contains precise and detailed information on the date, time, market, station, and television show of each airing. Second, the data provide information about each ad's content in the form of a video file for each unique creative or individual ad.

CMAG gathers such data by using a market-based tracking system, deploying "Ad Detectors" in each media market in the U.S. In addition to all local advertising activity, these detectors track advertisements on the major national networks, as well as national cable networks. The system's software recognizes the electronic seams between programming and advertising and identifies the "digital fingerprints" of specific advertisements. When the system does not recognize the fingerprints of a particular spot, the advertisement is captured and downloaded. Thereafter, the system automatically recognizes and logs that particular commercial wherever and whenever it airs. Studies that examine advertisers' "buy sheets" obtained from television stations and compare them with this CMAG data find that the company's system is highly reliable in tracking the universe of ads aired.

After receiving the data from CMAG, the Wesleyan Media Project processes and codes the ad tracking data from all media markets in the United States. In this process, using videos of ads captured by CMAG, project staff first research the entity responsible for airing each political spot, distinguishing between those paid for by candidates, parties, and interest groups. Finally, the Wesleyan Media Project codes the content of each ad on an extensive battery of questions using a web-based content analysis platform called Academiclip, a CommIT media research application.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

The Wesleyan Media Project is providing these data as a courtesy to the academic community, and not as a polished commercial product. The nominal fee you pay is for administrative expenses. We've worked hard to clean the data that we've coded, but as with all datasets this large, there may be some errors that remain. For CMAG variables marked with an asterisk below, WMP corrects errors as we find them, but we don't systematically review/clean these variables. All other CMAG variables are not cleaned at all by WMP. We do not have information on how CMAG variables are collected/coded.

We have provided reliability statistics at the end of this document for your reference. The sample of double-coded ads includes ads for President, US House, US Senate, and Governor. Reliability statistics can be misleading when almost all observations take on the same value, such as when a characteristic is absent in almost all ads. We thus urge users of the data to use caution when interpreting reliability statistics under these circumstances.

Due to the legacy of many of the variables in the WiscAds/WMP time series and the desire of many to do their own additional coding, we have provided many variables in the public release that have reliability statistics that do not meet traditionally acceptable levels. Therefore, we also urge users to read the material carefully and use caution when using variables below traditional thresholds.

Depending on resource availability, we do occasionally update the data files to correct errors and issues brought to our attention by users. If you notice issues with the data, feel free to share the information with us at mediaproject@wesleyan.edu.

VARIABLES

Provided by CMAG
For CMAG variables marked with an asterisk, WMP corrects errors as we find them, but we don't systematically review/clean them. All other CMAG variables are not cleaned at all by WMP.

creative: name of specific advertisement
l: length of ad in seconds
market: media market where ad aired
dmaid: media market ID
station: name of television station
affiliate: name of television affiliate
airdate: date on which ad aired
airtime: time at which ad aired
media: television medium
daypart: time of day during which ad aired
program: television program during which ad aired
programtype: type of television program during which ad aired
category*: category of race
categorystate: state in which the race took place, identified by CMAG
election:
      Primary
      General
      N/A
issue: key issues discussed: identified by CMAG
level*: level of race
tonecmag: tone of ad (different from WMP's AD_TONE variable)
      Positive
      Negative
race*: type of race
adtypecmag*:
      Candidate
      Candidate & Party
      Issue-Election
      Issue-Policy
      Party
      Private Citizen
sponsorcmag: ad sponsor
district*: congressional district (for House races)
party*: party of favored candidate
est_cost: estimated cost of ad airing

WMP Variables

sponsor:
      1 Candidate
      2 Party
      3 Coordinated between a candidate and party
      4 Interest Group/other

sponsor_name: name of group or party sponsoring the ad

cand_id: Name of the favored candidate

tgt_id: Name of the targeted candidate

mag_wrd: Does the ad mention any of the following *specific* words or phrases: vote for, elect, support, cast your ballot, [Smith] for Congress, vote against, defeat, or reject?
      0 No
      1 Yes
      2 Yes, But Only in the Paid for By (PFB) tag

Does the ad provide a….
      0 No
      1 Yes
phone: Does the ad provide a phone number to call?
website: Does the ad provide a website to visit?
mail: Does the ad provide a mailing address?
twitter: Does the ad provide a Twitter handle?
youtube: Does the ad provide a YouTube channel?

approve: Where does the candidate's oral approval of the spot appear?
      0 No Oral Statement of Approval/Authorization
      1 Beginning of the Spot
      2 Middle of the Spot
      3 End of the Spot

vid: Does the candidate physically appear on screen and speak to the audience during oral approval?
      0   No, Authorization Stated in Voiceover
      1   Yes

Excluding the "oral approval," is the…
      0 No
      1 Yes
f_mention: Favored candidate mentioned by name in the ad?
f_picture: Favored candidate pictured in the ad?
f_narrate: Favored candidate narrating the ad?
o_mention: Opposing candidate mentioned by name in the ad?

o_picture: Opposing candidate pictured in the ad?

narrate: Is there someone doing a voiceover (narrating the ad) separate from a candidate?
    0 No
    1 Yes, a female
    2 Yes, a male
    3 Yes, both female and male voiceover

ad_tone: In your judgment, is the primary purpose of the ad to promote a specific candidate, attack a candidate, or contrast the candidates?
    1 Contrast
    2 Promote
    3 Attack

cnt_prp: If the ad is a contrast ad, what proportion of the ad promotes (as opposed to attacks) a candidate?
    1 More Promote Than Attack
    2 About Equal Attack and Promote
    3 More Attack Than Promote
    4 Only Contrasting Element is Brief Statement in Oral Authorization

cnt_fin: If the ad is a contrast ad, does it finish by promoting a candidate or attacking a candidate?
    1 Finishes by Promoting
    2 Finishes by Attacking

ad_civ: In your judgment, are the attack portions of the ad mostly civil or mostly uncivil?
    1 Mostly civil
    2 Mostly uncivil

prty_mn: Does the ad mention the party label of the favored candidate or the opponent?
    0 No
    1 Yes, Favored Candidate's Party
    2 Yes, Opposing Candidate's Party
    3 Yes, Both Candidates' Parties
    4 Yes, Favored Candidate's Party but Only in Paid For By (PFB) line

per_ply: In your judgment, is the primary focus of the ad personal characteristics of either candidate or policy matters?
    0 Neither
    1 Personal Characteristics
    2 Policy Matters
    3 Both Personal Characteristics and Policy Matters

flag: Does an American flag appear in the ad?
    0 No
    1 Yes

Are any of the following mentioned or pictured in the ad?
    0 No
    1 Yes, in a way to show approval or support
    2 Yes, in a way to show disapproval or opposition
    3 Yes, unclear whether in support or opposition

prsment: Is Barack Obama mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gbush: Is George W. Bush mentioned or pictured in the ad?
reagan: Is Ronald Reagan mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gophse: Is John Boehner mentioned or pictured in the ad?
demhse: Is Nancy Pelosi mentioned or pictured in the ad?
gopsen: Is Mitch McConnell mentioned or pictured in the ad?
demsen: Is Harry Reid mentioned or pictured in the ad?
congmt: Is Congress mentioned or pictured in the ad?
democrats: Are Democrats mentioned or pictured in the ad?
republicans: Are Republicans mentioned or pictured in the ad?

Does the ad cite any of the following sources to bolster various claims?
    0 No
    1 Yes

cite1: Does the ad cite a newspaper to bolster various claims?
cite2: Does the ad cite a website to bolster various claims?
cite3: Does the ad cite another media source to bolster various claims?
cite4: Does the ad cite an opponent's ad to bolster various claims?
cite5: Does the ad cite legislation to bolster various claims?
cite90: Does the ad cite another source to bolster various claims?
cite90txt: Description of other source

op_media: If an opponent's ad was mentioned, did the ad cite a media source that speaks to the accuracy or fairness of the ad?
    0 No
    1 Yes

Are the following seen endorsing in the ad?
    0 No
    1 Yes

endorse1: Law enforcement
endorse2: A politician
endorse3: A labor union
endorse4: An interest group
endorse5: A teacher group
endorse6: A celebrity
endorse90: Another person
endorse90txt: Description of other person endorsing in the ad

Please assess the intent of the ad maker (not your own personal reaction) below. Does the ad make an appeal to the following emotions?

    0 No
    1 Some appeal
    2 Strong appeal

fear: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?
enthusiasm: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?
anger: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?
pride: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?
humor: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?
sadness: Does the ad make an appeal to fear?

music0: There is no music in the ad
    0 There IS music in the ad
    1 There is NO MUSIC in the ad

If music is played during the ad, how would it best be described?
    0 No
    1 Yes

music1: Ominous/tense music
music2: Uplifting music
music3: Sad or sorrowful music
music90: Another type of music
music90_txt: Description of other type of music

Are any of these words/phrases *specifically* mentioned in the ad?
    0 No
    1 Yes

mention1: Tea Party
mention2: God
mention3: Hope
mention4: Change
mention5: Experience
mention6: Liberal
mention7: Conservative
mention8: Special Interests
mention14: Dirty or negative campaigner
mention15: Main Street
mention16: Wall Street
mention17: Big Government

Issue mentions: Are any of the following issues are mentioned in this ad?
        0 No
        1 Yes

Economic Policy
issue10: Taxes
issue11: Deficit/Budget/Debt
issue12: Government Spending
issue13: Recession/Economic Stimulus
issue14: Minimum Wage
issue15: Farming
issue16: Business
issue17: Union
issue18: Employment/Jobs
issue19: Poverty
issue20: Trade/Globalization
issue21: Housing/Sub-prime Mortgages
issue22: Economy (generic reference)
issue23: Economic disparity/income inequality

Social Issues
issue30: Abortion
issue31: Homosexuality/Gay & Lesbian Rights
issue32: Moral/Family/Religious Values
issue33: Tobacco
issue34: Affirmative Action
issue35: Gambling
issue36: Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia
issue37: Gun Control
issue38: Civil Liberties/Privacy
issue39: Race Relations/Civil Rights

Law and Order
issue40: Crime
issue41: Narcotics/Illegal Drugs
issue42: Capital Punishment
issue43: Supreme Court/Judiciary

Social Welfare Issues
issue50: Education/Schools
issue51: Lottery for Education
issue52: Child Care
issue53: Health Care (not prescription drugs)
issue54: Prescription Drugs
issue55: Medicare
issue56: Social Security
issue57: Welfare
issue58: Women's Health

Foreign/Defense Policy
issue60: Military (generic reference)
issue61: Foreign Policy (generic reference)
issue62: Veterans
issue63: Foreign Aid
issue64: Nuclear Proliferation
issue65: China
issue66: Middle East
issue67: Afghanistan/War in Afghanistan
issue68: September, 11th
issue69: Terror/Terrorism/Terrorist
issue70: Iraq/War in Iraq
issue71: Israel
issue72: Iran

Environment/Energy
issue80: Environment (generic reference)
issue82: Global Warming
issue83: Energy Policy
issue84: BP Oil Spill

Other
issue90: Campaign Finance Reform
issue91: Government Ethics/Scandal
issue92: Corporate Fraud
issue93: Term Limits
issue94: Pledge of Allegiance (restrictions on)
issue95: Immigration
issue96: Local Issues
issue97: Other
issue97_txt: Description of other issue mentioned
issue98: Government Regulations

cantcode: Was the ad able to be coded? (video/audio issues)
> 0 Ad coded
> 1 Ad unable to be coded

gov: Ad aired in gubernatorial race
> 0 No
> 1 Yes

house: Ad aired in House race
> 0 No
> 1 Yes

senate: Ad aired in Senate race
> 0 No
> 1 Yes

spanish: Spanish-language ad
> 0 No
> 1 Yes

state: postal service abbreviation indicating the state the race in question is based in

vidfile: Expected filename of corresponding .wmv video (if a file exists). Filename generated by WMP based on creative name. Actual filenames may vary (they were generated by CMAG).

Reliability Statistics for WMP Coding Variables

See below for a table showing various coding reliability statistics for 2012. Our WMP coding team, double coded 903 ads (sample includes ads for Governor, U.S. House, U.S. Senate, and President). Please read "**A note about the data**" on Page 2 for important information about this section.

% Agreement – Indicates the percentage of time the raters assigned the same value for a given ad.

Kappa - We computed kappa statistics for all nominal variables. For ordinal variables we computed weighted kappas, which are indicated with an asterisk in the Kappa column of the table.

Kappa with recoding - Two sets of variables (mentions of people/groups and emotions) were recoded as binary variables and kappas were run on the recoded variables.

Krippendorff's alpha – Krippendorff's alpha statistics were computed for all variables, though they were run in two batches, depending on the variable type (ordinal vs. nominal).

Avg freq. in ICR set – These values indicate the average instances of a non-zero code in our ICR set. For example, the favored candidate was identified in an average of 886 ads out of 903. Taxes (issue10) was identified in an average of 274 ads out of 903.

Variable	Label	% Agreement	Kappa (*weighted kappa)	Kappa with recoding	Krippend-orff's alpha	Avg freq. in ICR set (N=903)
cand_id	Fav. candidate ID	89.1%	0.9212		0.9212	886
tgt_id	Opp. candidate ID	89.9%	0.8990		0.8991	487
sponsor	Sponsor	94.9%	0.9110		0.9110	902
mag_wrd	Magic Words	74.1%	0.6012		0.6033	525
phone	Phone	98.3%	0.8765		0.8766	66
website	Website	87.2%	0.7322		0.7322	360
mail	Mailing address	99.0%	0.1768		0.1773	6
twitter	Twitter	98.8%	0.6146		0.6147	15
youtube	YouTube	99.0%	0.4657		0.4659	9
approve	Oral approval	93.0%	0.8936		0.8826	502
vid	Onscreen approval	91.9%	0.8512		0.8513	193
f_mention	Cand. mentioned	93.5%	0.8527		0.8527	594
f_picture	Cand. pictured	93.2%	0.8566		0.8543	574
f_narrate	Cand. narrating	94.5%	0.8665		0.8665	265
o_mention	Opp. mentioned	92.4%	0.8469		0.8470	470

Variable	Label	% Agreement	Kappa (*weighted kappa)	Kappa with recoding	Krippend-orff's alpha	Avg freq. in ICR set (N=903)
o_picture	Opp. pictured	93.6%	0.8680		0.8725	406
narrate	Narrator	87.9%	0.8300		0.8301	691
cnt_prp	Proportion promote	89.5%	0.6158		0.6959	160
cnt_fin	Finishes by	93.2%	0.7822		0.7830	160
ad_civ	Ad civility	92.2%	0.2098		0.2055	487
ad_tone	Ad tone	93.5%	0.8961		0.8978	903
prty_mn	Party mentions	84.8%	0.5646		0.5647	184
per_ply	Personal vs policy	66.4%	0.4576		0.4859	884
flag	Flag	87.2%	0.6955		0.6957	273
cite1	Newspapers	88.3%	0.6960		0.7018	239
cite2	Website	96.3%	0.5934		0.5928	43
cite3	Other media source	89.9%	0.5035		0.5071	103
cite4	Opponent's ad	97.1%	0.5915		0.5913	33
cite5	Legislation	95.2%	0.7818		0.7818	113
cite90	Other sources	87.8%	0.5793		0.5740	157
prsment	Barack Obama	94.6%	0.8687	0.8791	0.8687	244
gbush	George W. Bush	99.7%	0.7986	0.7983	0.7987	8
reagan	Ronald Reagan	99.9%	0.8883	0.8883	0.8884	5
gophse	John Boehner	100.0%	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	3
demhse	Nancy Pelosi	99.3%	0.9139	0.9310	0.9140	30
gopsen	Mitch McConnell	100.0%			1.0000	0
demsen	Harry Reid	99.8%	0.9086	0.9085	0.9087	5
congmt	Congress	86.0%	0.3340	0.3672	0.3322	103
democrats	Democrats	94.9%	0.5403	0.6330	0.5401	52
republicans	Republicans	91.4%	0.4880	0.5708	0.4880	81
op_media	Opp. ad media	96.7%	0.5035		0.5036	887
endorse1	Law enforcement	100.0%	1.0000		1.0000	1
endorse2	Politician	99.0%	0.8564		0.8564	33
endorse3	Labor union	99.8%	0.6657		0.6657	3
endorse4	Interest group	98.1%	0.5048		0.5050	18
endorse5	Teacher group	99.9%	0.0000		0.0000	1
endorse6	Celebrity	99.8%	0.4989		0.4992	2
endorse90	Other endorsement	97.2%	0.6335		0.6337	36
fear	Appeal to fear	81.7%	0.2884	0.2907	0.2963	123
enthusiasm	Appeal to enthusiasm	66.3%	0.5224	0.6330	0.6127	465
anger	Appeal to anger	63.6%	0.4454	0.5281	0.5202	429
pride	Appeal to pride	85.4%	0.2336	0.2298	0.2357	87
humor	Appeal to humor	95.2%	0.4589	0.4505	0.4568	36

Variable	Label	% Agreement	Kappa (*weighted kappa)	Kappa with recoding	Krippend-orff's alpha	Avg freq. in ICR set (N=903)
sadness	Appeal to sadness	91.4%	0.3588	0.3776	0.3818	60
music0	No music	98.1%	0.7573		0.7574	37
music1	Ominous	83.9%	0.6571		0.6572	337
music2	Uplifting	88.8%	0.7762		0.7785	462
music3	Sad	89.5%	0.4539		0.4623	98
music90	Other music	89.9%	0.3934		0.3934	83
mention1	Tea Party	99.3%	0.8202		0.8202	17
mention2	God	99.9%	0.0000		0.0000	1
mention3	Hope	99.0%	0.6039		0.6039	12
mention4	Change	97.3%	0.6704		0.6705	38
mention5	Experience	98.8%	0.6795		0.6797	18
mention6	Liberal	99.8%	0.9572		0.9572	24
mention7	Conservative	98.0%	0.9022		0.9023	104
mention8	Special Interests	99.6%	0.8801		0.8802	18
mention14	Dirty or Negative Campaigner	99.4%	0.2830		0.2833	4
mention15	Main Street	99.8%	0.4992		0.4992	2
mention16	Wall Street	99.0%	0.8423		0.8424	30
mention17	Big Government	98.7%	0.6604		0.6601	18
integ11	Tough	99.3%	0.3972		0.3970	5
integ12	Fighter	99.2%	-0.0032		-0.0033	4
integ51	Honest	97.5%	0.2458		0.2455	16
integ52	Dishonest	98.8%	0.4702		0.4703	11
integ53	Corrupt	98.9%	0.2802		0.2805	7
issue22	Economy (Generic Reference)	94.8%	0.5098		0.5074	51
issue10	Taxes	94.8%	0.8767		0.8768	274
issue11	Deficit / Budget / Debt	95.8%	0.8753		0.8753	194
issue12	Government Spending	94.4%	0.8166		0.8166	172
issue13	Recession / Economic Stimulus	97.0%	0.7409		0.7410	56
issue14	Minimum Wage	99.9%	0.8566		0.8567	4
issue15	Farming	98.9%	0.6373		0.6374	14
issue16	Business	91.4%	0.5040		0.5042	87
issue17	Union	99.7%	0.6650		0.6652	5
issue18	Employment / Jobs	92.7%	0.8473		0.8449	344
issue19	Poverty	99.1%	0.4958		0.4958	8
issue20	Trade / Globalization	98.0%	0.6696		0.6438	27

Variable	Label	% Agreement	Kappa (*weighted kappa)	Kappa with recoding	Krippend-orff's alpha	Avg freq. in ICR set (N=903)
issue21	Housing / Sub-prime Mortgages	98.4%	0.6421		0.6423	20
issue23	Economic Disparity / Income Inequality	98.7%	-0.0067		-0.0061	6
issue30	Abortion	99.1%	0.8748		0.8749	37
issue31	Homosexuality / Gay & Lesbian Rights	99.6%	0.5978		0.5980	5
issue32	Moral / Family / Religious Values	97.5%	0.4261		0.4263	21
issue33	Tobacco	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue34	Affirmative Action	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue35	Gambling	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue36	Assisted Suicide / Euthanasia	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue37	Gun Control	99.6%	0.7978		0.7979	10
issue38	Civil Liberties / Privacy	99.4%	0.4417		0.4420	5
issue39	Race Relations / Civil Rights	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue40	Crime	98.8%	0.2627		0.2609	8
issue41	Narcotics / Illegal Drugs	99.8%	0.4992		0.4992	2
issue42	Capital Punishment	99.9%	0.0000		0.0000	1
issue43	Supreme Court / Judiciary	99.7%	-0.0015		-0.0011	2
issue50	Education / Schools	99.1%	0.9451		0.9452	80
issue51	Lottery for Education	99.9%	0.0000		0.0000	1
issue52	Child Care	99.0%	0.1768		0.1773	6
issue53	Health Care (not prescription drugs)	93.1%	0.7634		0.7635	159
issue54	Prescription Drugs	99.4%	0.4420		0.4420	5
issue55	Medicare	98.9%	0.9585		0.9585	143
issue56	Social Security	99.4%	0.9564		0.9564	62
issue57	Welfare	99.8%	0.8560		0.8561	7
issue58	Women's Health	99.2%	0.8166		0.7956	20
issue60	Military (generic reference)	96.9%	0.5725		0.5724	34
issue61	Foreign Policy (generic reference)	99.2%	0.3600		0.3601	6
issue62	Veterans	98.4%	0.8028		0.8028	37
issue63	Foreign Aid	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue64	Nuclear Proliferation	99.9%	0.6662		0.6663	2
issue65	China	99.1%	0.8575		0.8527	29
issue66	Middle East	99.4%	-0.0027		-0.0022	3
issue67	Afghanistan	99.6%	0.7756		0.7757	9

Variable	Label	% Agreement	Kappa (*weighted kappa)	Kappa with recoding	Krippend-orff's alpha	Avg freq. in ICR set (N=903)
issue68	September 11th	100.0%	1.0000		1.0000	3
issue69	Terror / Terrorism / Terrorist	99.8%	0.6657		0.6657	3
issue70	Iraq / War in Iraq	99.3%	0.7240		0.7241	11
issue71	Israel	100.0%	1.0000		1.0000	1
issue72	Iran	100.0%	1.0000		1.0000	1
issue80	Environment (generic reference)	98.8%	0.4700		0.4703	11
issue82	Global Warming	99.9%	0.7995		0.7996	3
issue83	Energy Policy	96.5%	0.7376		0.7376	63
issue84	BP Oil Spill	99.9%	0.0000		0.0000	1
issue95	Immigration	99.9%	0.9085		0.9086	6
issue90	Campaign Finance Reform	99.8%	0.4992		0.4992	2
issue91	Government Ethics / Scandal	94.5%	0.5394		0.5396	58
issue92	Corporate Fraud	98.6%	0.1261		0.1266	8
issue93	Term Limits	99.6%	0.3311		0.3315	3
issue94	Pledge of Allegiance (restrictions on)	100.0%			1.0000	0
issue96	Local Issues	94.5%	0.3304		0.3304	39
issue97	Other issues (please specify)	71.3%	0.2975		0.2933	257
issue98	Government Regulations	97.9%	0.7755		0.7756	45