

The Wesleyan Media Project Population Health Messaging in Political Ads 2012 & 2016 Data Codebook

This is the codebook for a project examining population health messaging in political ads from the 2012 and 2016 election cycles, which was featured in the following publication: Fowler, E.F., L.M. Baum, E. Jesch, D. Haddad, C. Reyes, S.E. Gollust, and J. Niederdeppe. 2019. Issues Relevant to Population Health Messaging in Political Advertising in the United States, 2011–2012 and 2015–2016. *Milbank Quarterly* 97 (4): 1062–1107. [Link](#).

The data file contains one row for each unique English-language political TV ad from both the 2012 and 2016 election cycles, along with content coding variables created by the research team. Please note that in contrast to our other publicly available files, this data set is at the creative/ad level, not the airings level. This file does not have information on the date, time, media market, etc. where an individual ad aired. It does not come with video files for each ad. If you are looking for that information you can purchase separate airings-level data sets for the 2012 and 2016 election cycles from the Wesleyan Media Project.

CITATION

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

Fowler, Erika Franklin, Laura Baum, Emma Jesch, Dolly Haddad, Carolyn Reyes, Sarah E. Gollust and Jeff Niederdeppe. 2019. “Population Health in Political Advertising, 2012 and 2016.” Version 1.0 [dataset]. Middletown, CT: The Wesleyan Media Project, Department of Government at Wesleyan University.

SUPPORT

Any published writing that is in any way based upon, or that in any way makes reference to, these data shall contain an acknowledgment similar to the following: “The data were obtained by the Wesleyan Media Project from Kantar/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. The data were collected as part of a project that was sponsored by a grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant Number 73619. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Wesleyan Media Project, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation or any of its affiliates.”

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 data represent the most comprehensive and systematic collection on the content and targeting of political advertisements. 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 Kantar/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 Kantar/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. Coding reliability is assessed by double coding approximately 20% of the ads.

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. We have provided reliability statistics at the end of this document for your reference.

VARIABLES

Provided by CMAG

creative: name of specific advertisement

WMP Variables

wmplevel_4cat	Level of office Pres Congress Governor Down ballot (all candidate-related election ads from other races)
office_wmp	Based off of race/category CMAG variables. A cleaned "office" variable.
office_state	State in which the race took place

cycle	Election cycle 2012 = 2011-2012 2016 = 2015-2016
airings	Approximate airings of the ad in the election cycle
pophealth_narrow	Narrow conceptualization of population health. See Fowler et al. (2019) for more about this variable.
pophealth_expansive	Expansive conceptualization of public health. See Fowler et al. (2019) for more about this variable.

Population Health Topic Classification – see Fowler et al. (2019) for more about how these topics were generated. See the table at the end of the codebook to see which content-coded variables went into each category.

ph_medical	Medical
ph_hcpolicy	Health Care Policy
ph_hbehav	Health Behaviors
ph_lwcond	Living & Working Conditions
ph_ses	Socio-Economic Status / Social Determinants
ph_healthed	Health Education
ph_nthbehav	Non-Traditional Health Behaviors
ph_power	Power & Marginalization
ph_env	Broader Environment
ph_urplann	Urban Planning

Content-Coded Variables - see Fowler et al. (2019) for more about how coding was conducted. These variables below are from the “stage 2” coding described in the manuscript.

0	Issue is not present in the ad
1	Issue is present in the ad
H_ACA	ACA / Obamacare
H_MCR	Medicare
H_MCD	Medicaid
S_ABO	Abortion
S_PPA	Planned Parenthood
H_HEA	Health (generic)
H_WH	Women’s Health
H_CHH	Children’s Health care
H_PD	Prescription Drugs (excluding Obamacare & Medicare)
H_VH	Veteran’s Health care
H_IC	Insurance Companies (excluding ACA/Obamacare”
S_DRB	Disability Rights, Benefits & Services
H_TFH	Taxpayer-Funded Health care for Public Servants

H_HRR	Health-Related Research
S_CONT	Contraception
H_HOS	Hospitals (generic)
E_PSH	Pollution & Environmental Safety / Health
H_WSH	Workplace Safety, Benefits & Health
L_DLC	Drugs / Drug Use and Legalization / Criminalization
H_SA	Substance Abuse
S_FPO	Food Policy (Excluding Food Stamps)
H_TB	Tobacco
ED_FN	Food & Nutrition in Schools
EC_EJ	Employment / Jobs
ED_GE	(General) Education, School Funding & Class Size
EC_MWF	Minimum Wage / Fair Wage / Income (generic) / Equal Pay
ED_CHE	College / Higher Education / Career Readiness
EC EDI	Economic Disparity & Income Inequality
S_SSE	Social Security
EC_HSP	Housing & Sub-Prime Mortgages
S_SEN	Seniors (excluding Health care, Social Security & Pensions)
EC_COL	Cost of Living
ED_PE	Any Public School / Education Mention
EC_PD	Personal Debt
ED_CCC	Common Core, Curriculum & K-12 Programs
ED_EC	Early Childhood Education & Kindergarten
S_CFL	Child Care & Family Leave
S_WFS	Welfare & Food Stamps (excluding Medicaid)
ED_SCV	School Choice / Vouchers / Private / Charter Schools
ED_AS	After School
L_CIS	Crime & Incarceration / Sentencing
S_GDE	Gender Discrimination & Equal Rights for Women
S_RCR	Race Relations, Civil Rights & Affirmative Action
S_QRI	LGBTQ Issues / Rights
L_CJR	Criminal Justice Reform / Prisons / Prisoners
L_BLM	Black Lives Matter
S_GC	Gun Rights, Regulation / Control & Policy
L_DVS	Domestic Violence / Sexual Assault / Harassment / Child Abuse
ED_SS	Safety in Schools
S_RBT	Roads, Bridges & Transportation
E_CNP	Community / Neighborhood Parks & Playgrounds
E_CGW	Climate Change / Global Warming
E_EPA	EPA / Environmental Regulations

Reliability Statistics for WMP Coding Variables

See below for a table showing Krippendorff's alpha reliability statistics for variables that were part of human content coding.

Population Health Topic Classification	Variable Name	Variable Label	Krippendorff's alpha	Narrow Pop. Health Conceptualization	Expansive Pop. Health Conceptualization
Health care policy	H_ACA	ACA / Obamacare	0.98	1	1
Health care policy	H_MCR	Medicare	0.96	1	1
Health care policy	H_MCD	Medicaid	0.91	1	1
Medical	S_ABO	Abortion	0.97	1	1
Medical	S_PPA	Planned Parenthood	0.96	1	1
Medical	H_HEA	Health (generic)	0.76	1	1
Medical	H_WH	Women's Health	0.92	1	1
Medical	H_CHH	Children's Healthcare	0.77	1	1
Medical	H_PD	Prescription Drugs (excluding Obamacare & Medicare)	0.73	1	1
Medical	H_VH	Veteran's Healthcare	0.91	1	1
Medical	H_IC	Insurance Companies (excluding ACA/Obamacare)	0.69	1	1
Medical	S_DRB	Disability Rights, Benefits & Services	0.81	1	1
Medical	H_TFH	Taxpayer-Funded Healthcare for Public Servants	0.94	1	1
Medical	H_HRR	Health-Related Research	0.86	1	1
Medical	S_CONT	Contraception	0.95	1	1
Medical	H_HOS	Hospitals (generic)	0.71	1	1
Living & working conditions	E_PSH	Pollution & Environmental Safety / Health	0.87	1	1
Living & working conditions	H_WSH	Workplace Safety, Benefits & Health	0.78	1	1
Health behaviors	L_DLC	Drugs / Drug Use and Legalization / Criminalization	0.76	1	1
Health behaviors	H_SA	Substance Abuse	0.92	1	1
Health behaviors	S_FPO	Food Policy (Excluding Food Stamps)	0.87	1	1
Health behaviors	H_TB	Tobacco	0.86	1	1
Health education	ED_FN	Food & Nutrition in Schools	0.86	1	1
SES/social determinants	EC_EJ	Employment / Jobs	0.88	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_GE	(General) Education, School Funding & Class Size	0.8	0	1
SES/social determinants	EC_MWF	Minimum Wage / Fair Wage / Income (generic) / Equal Pay	0.89	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_CHE	College / Higher Education / Career Readiness	0.91	0	1
SES/social determinants	EC EDI	Economic Disparity & Income Inequality	0.85	0	1
SES/social determinants	S_SSE	Social Security	0.95	0	1
SES/social determinants	EC_HSP	Housing & Sub-prime mortgages	0.86	0	1
SES/social determinants	S_SEN	Seniors (excluding Healthcare, Social Security & Pensions)	0.86	0	1
SES/social determinants	EC_COL	Cost of Living	0.88	0	1

Population Health Topic Classification	Variable Name	Variable Label	Krippendorff's alpha	Narrow Pop. Health Conceptualization	Expansive Pop. Health Conceptualization
SES/social determinants	ED_PE	Any Public School / Education Mention	0.92	0	1
SES/social determinants	EC_PD	Personal Debt	0.75	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_CCC	Common Core, Curriculum & K-12 Programs	0.9	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_EC	Early Childhood Education & Kindergarten	0.96	0	1
SES/social determinants	S_CFL	Child Care & Family Leave	0.94	0	1
SES/social determinants	S_WFS	Welfare & Food Stamps (Excluding Medicaid)	0.87	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_SCV	School Choice / Vouchers / Private / Charter Schools	0.87	0	1
SES/social determinants	ED_AS	After School	1.00	0	1
Power/marginalization, Incarceration	L_CIS	Crime & Incarceration / Sentencing	0.77	0	1
Power/marginalization	S_GDE	Gender Discrimination & Equal Rights for Women	0.92	0	1
Power/marginalization	S_RCR	Race Relations, Civil Rights & Affirmative Action	0.68	0	1
Power/marginalization	S_QRI	LGBTQ Issues/Rights	0.87	0	1
Power/marginalization, Incarceration	L_CJR	Criminal Justice Reform / Prisons / Prisoners	0.76	0	1
Power/marginalization	L_BLM	Black Lives Matter	0.86	0	1
Non-traditional health behaviors	S_GC	Gun Regulation, Control & Policy	0.94	0	1
Non-traditional health behaviors	L_DVS	Domestic Violence / Sexual Assault / Harassment / Child Abuse	0.83	0	1
Non-traditional health behaviors	ED_SS	Safety in Schools	0.72	0	1
Urban planning	S_RBT	Roads, Bridges & Transportation	0.91	0	1
Urban planning	E_CNP	Community/Neighborhood Parks & Playgrounds	0.83	0	1
Broader environment	E_CGW	Climate Change / Global Warming	0.96	0	1
Broader environment	E_EPA	EPA / Environmental Regulations	0.89	0	1