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**Survey of City Council Members in Large  
American Cities, 1982**

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Susan Welch and Timothy Bledsoe

ICPSR 8655

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**ICPSR**  
**Inter-university Consortium for**  
**Political and Social Research**

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SURVEY OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LARGE AMERICAN CITIES, 1982

(ICPSR 8655)

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### Acknowledgement of Assistance

All manuscripts utilizing data made available through the Consortium should acknowledge that fact as well as identify the original collector of the data. The ICPSR Council urges all users of the ICPSR Data facilities to follow some adaptation of this statement with the parentheses indicating items to be filled in appropriately or deleted by the individual user.

The data (and tabulations) utilized in this (publication) were made available (in part) by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data for SURVEY OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LARGE AMERICAN CITIES, 1982 were originally collected by Susan Welch and Timothy Bledsoe. Neither the collector of the original data nor the Consortium bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

In order to provide funding agencies with essential information about the use of archival resources and to facilitate the exchange of information about ICPSR participants' research activities, each user of the ICPSR data facilities is expected to send two copies of each completed manuscript or thesis abstract to the Consortium. Please indicate in the cover letter which data were used.



Welch, Susan and Timothy Bledsoe

SURVEY OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LARGE AMERICAN CITIES, 1982  
(ICPSR 8655)

SUMMARY: This datafile consists of the responses to a mail questionnaire sent to randomly selected city council members in large American cities. The study was designed to explore the relationship between local political structure and the personal characteristics, representational styles, and policy perspectives of city council members. The respondents were asked questions about a broad variety of topics, such as factors influencing their decision to run for council, perceptions of sources of conflict within the council and community, the political structure of their city, and perceptions of how well they represent the variety of constituencies within the community. Background information, such as age, sex, political party, principal occupation, and highest level of education attained is also provided on each survey respondent. CLASS III

UNIVERSE: City Council members in large American cities with populations between 50,000 and 1,000,000.

SAMPLING: Stratified random sample.

NOTE: In order to preserve the confidentiality of respondents, certain variables have been omitted from the datafile and codebook.

EXTENT OF COLLECTION: 1 data file

DATA FORMAT: Card Image

FILE STRUCTURE: rectangular

CASES: 975

VARIABLES: 73

RECORD LENGTH: 80

RECORDS PER CASE: 2

RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

Bledsoe, Timothy, and Susan Welch. "The Effect of Political Structure on the Partisan and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Urban City Council Members." AMERICAN POLITICS QUARTERLY 13 (October 1985), pp. 467-483.

Welch, Susan, and Timothy Bledsoe. "The Partisan Consequences of Nonpartisan Elections and the Changing Nature of Urban Politics." AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE 30 (February 1986), pp. 128-139.



8655  
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SURVEY OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LARGE AMERICAN CITIES, 1982

These data are based on a mail survey of local elected officials conducted in the Spring of 1982 by Susan Welch and Timothy Bledsoe of the University Nebraska. The data have been carefully analyzed for biases in response rate, and one significant bias has been discovered. Council members elected in an at-large contest were more likely to respond to the survey than district-elected council members. Therefore, to make this sample representative of the universe of council members in cities over 50,000 population a weighting scheme must be used with the district/at-large variable, including individuals elected in the different ways in "mixed" cities. This can be done by weighting at-large council members by a factor of .896; and district council members by a factor of 1.12.



Codebook

SURVEY OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LARGE AMERICAN CITIES, 1982

Deck/Column

Question

1/1-5  
VAR 01 A sequential identification number for each case in the file (1-975).

Q1. We would like to know why you initially decided to seek election to the city council. Please rate the importance of each of the following factors in influencing your decision to run for a council seat.

1/6  
VAR 02 A. Because I was persuaded by a political party organization.

- 82 1. Very Important
- 167 2. Somewhat Important
- 726 3. Not Very Important

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*  
\* Investigators' Note: In responding to questions which \*  
\* offered "NOT VERY IMPORTANT" as an option, many \*  
\* individuals left the item blank. Given the \*  
\* very small numbers of missing data in other \*  
\* questions, we assume nearly all of the respondents \*  
\* who did this are signifying a lack of importance of \*  
\* the item in leaving it blank. Therefore, all items \*  
\* left blank are coded "NOT VERY IMPORTANT" and there \*  
\* are no missing cases for these items. \*  
\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

1/7  
VAR 03 B. To serve my neighborhood.

- 491 1. Very Important
- 290 2. Somewhat Important
- 194 3. Not Very Important

1/8  
VAR 04 C. As a stepping stone to some other political office.

- 39 1. Very Important
- 179 2. Somewhat Important
- 757 3. Not Very Important

1/9  
VAR 05

D. To serve the city as a whole.

793 1. Very Important  
145 2. Somewhat Important  
37 3. Not Very Important

1/10  
VAR 06

E. To increase business contacts.

31 1. Very Important  
115 2. Somewhat Important  
829 3. Not Very Important

1/11  
VAR 07

F. Because I enjoy politics and I was looking for a worthwhile activity.

419 1. Very Important  
316 2. Somewhat Important  
240 3. Not Very Important

1/12  
VAR 08

G. Because of a strong concern I had about some specific issue.

395 1. Very Important  
121 2. Somewhat Important  
459 3. Not Very Important

Q2. There are always conflicts in a community. How would you rate the importance of each of these listed below in your own city?

1/13  
VAR 09

A. Tax cutters vs. Opponents

265 1. Very Important  
442 2. Somewhat Important  
268 3. Not Very Important

1/14  
VAR 10

B. Business vs. Neighborhood groups

308 1. Very Important  
409 2. Somewhat Important  
258 3. Not Very Important

1/15  
VAR 11

C. Democrats vs. Republicans

114 1. Very Important  
250 2. Somewhat Important  
611 3. Not Very Important

1/16  
VAR 12

D. One geographical area of the city vs. Another

194 1. Very Important  
377 2. Somewhat Important  
404 3. Not Very Important

1/17  
VAR 13                   E. Whites/Anglos vs. Others

114 1. Very Important  
258 2. Somewhat Important  
603 3. Not Very Important

1/18  
VAR 14                   F. The political machine vs. Reformers

115 1. Very Important  
239 2. Somewhat Important  
621 3. Not Very Important

1/19  
VAR 15                   G. Liberals vs. Conservatives

188 1. Very Important  
393 2. Somewhat Important  
394 3. Not Very Important

1/20  
VAR 16                   H. Development Interests vs. Others

430 1. Very Important  
399 2. Somewhat Important  
146 3. Not Very Important

1/21  
VAR 17                   I. Business vs. Labor

118 1. Very Important  
318 2. Somewhat Important  
539 3. Not Very Important

1/22  
VAR 18                   Q3. In general, would you say there are blocs or  
                          factions on the council that persist in voting on a  
                          number of issues?

182 1. No, there are no real cleavages on the council.  
                          (Go to Q4)  
352 2. Yes, there are some cleavages but they are not  
                          very strong.  
427 3. Yes, there are sharp cleavages within the council.  
14 9. Missing

                          Q3A. From the list of conflicts in Question 2, please  
                          rank in order the three most important sources of  
                          cleavages within the council.

1/23-24  
VAR 19                   Cleavage mentioned first.

117 1. Tax cutters vs. Opponents  
91 2. Business vs. Neighborhoods  
58 3. Democrats vs. Republicans  
62 4. One area of the city vs. Another  
52 5. Whites/Anglos vs. Others  
62 6. The political machine vs. Reformers  
68 7. Liberals vs. Conservatives

161 8. Development Interests vs. Others  
 19 9. Business vs. Labor  
 46 10. Other  
 239 99. Missing/ N.A.

1/25-26  
 VAR 20

Cleavage mentioned second.

55 1. Tax cutters vs. Opponents  
 140 2. Business vs. Neighborhoods  
 46 3. Democrats vs. Republicans  
 79 4. One Area of the City vs. Another  
 38 5. Whites/Anglos vs. Others  
 33 6. The political machine vs. Reformers  
 119 7. Liberals vs. Conservatives  
 132 8. Development interests vs. Others  
 27 9. Business vs. Labor  
 30 10. Other  
 276 99. Missing

1/27-28  
 VAR 21

Cleavage mentioned third.

78 1. Tax cutters vs. Opponents  
 82 2. Business vs. Neighborhoods  
 34 3. Democrats vs. Republicans  
 71 4. One Area of the City vs. Another  
 49 5. Whites/Anglos vs. Others  
 38 6. The political machine vs. Reformers  
 86 7. Liberals vs. Conservatives  
 110 8. Development interests vs. Others  
 42 9. Business vs. Labor  
 19 10. Other  
 366 99. Missing

1/29  
 VAR 22

Q4. In your judgement, what percent of the council decisions that you consider important are made either unanimously or nearly unanimously?

411 1. Over 75 percent  
 297 2. 50 to 74 percent  
 137 3. 25 to 49 percent  
 119 4. fewer than 25 percent  
 11 9. Missing

1/30  
 VAR 23

Q5. With the budget cutbacks and financial stresses in most communities over the past few years, would you say that conflict on the council has:

341 1. Increased  
 491 2. Stayed about the same  
 96 3. Decreased  
 39 4. No cutbacks or stresses  
 8 9. Missing

1/31-32  
VAR 24

Q6. Approximately how many hours a week do you devote to your job as a member of the city council?

<Number of hours encoded>

13 99. Missing

1/33-34  
VAR 25

Q7. Of this amount, how much do you spend doing services for people?

<Number of hours encoded>

35 99. Missing

1/35  
VAR 26

Q8. On the whole, would you say that voters are more interested in your taking care of their personal needs for them or are they more interested in your stands on issues before the council?

- 217 1. They are primarily concerned with my issue positions, servicing their needs is less important.  
465 2. Constituent service and issue positions are about equally important.  
286 3. They are primarily concerned with my servicing their needs, my issue positions are less important.  
7 9. Missing

1/36-37  
VAR 27

Q9. How many years, including the present one, have you served on the council? (Please circle one)

- 181 1. One  
89 2. Two  
180 3. Three  
83 4. Four  
99 5. Five  
71 6. Six  
71 7. Seven  
47 8. Eight  
28 9. Nine  
22 10. Ten  
25 11. Eleven  
19 12. Twelve  
55 13. Thirteen or more  
5 99. Missing

1/38  
VAR 28

Q10. Do you schedule any type of regular gathering to meet with your constituents and if so, how often do these meetings occur?

- 666 1. I schedule no regular meetings.  
136 2. I schedule one or more meetings each month.  
158 3. I schedule regular meetings, but less than one a month.  
15 9. Missing

Q11. As an elected city official, what issue or issues do you see as being the most important facing your city in the next few years?

1/39-40 Issue mentioned first.  
VAR 29

1/41-42 Issue mentioned second.  
VAR 30

1/43-44 Issue mentioned third.  
VAR 31

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* THE CODING SCHEME FOR THESE VARIABLES \*  
\* IS NOT AVAILABLE \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

1/45 Q12. Some people view politics in terms of liberals  
VAR 32 versus conservatives, where liberals are seen as those who favor a greater role for government in helping people and conservatives are viewed as people who want to minimize the role of government so that people can get ahead on their own. How would you describe yourself on this liberal conservative dimension?

- 68 1. Very Conservative
- 254 2. Conservative
- 160 3. Slightly Conservative
- 188 4. Middle of the road
- 144 5. Slightly Liberal
- 105 6. Liberal
- 33 7. Very Liberal
- 23 9. Missing

1/46 Q13. In general, how would you describe your city's  
VAR 33 fiscal situation?

- 259 1. The city is not faced with serious fiscal problems.
- 441 2. The budget is tight and we may have to make a few cuts in services in order to get by.
- 270 3. The budget is very tight and serious cutbacks are being or will have to be made.
- 5 9. Missing

1/47 Q14. How is the mayor selected in your city?  
VAR 34

- 794 1. Elected by the voters on a mayoral ballot.
- 165 2. Chosen by the council.
- 5 3. Is the council member receiving the largest number of votes.
- 11 9. Missing

1/48  
VAR 35

Q15. Does your city have a city manager?

559 1. Yes  
400 2. No  
16 9. Missing

1/49-51  
VAR 36

Q16. What is the salary of members of the city council  
in your city?

<Salary is annualized and coded in hundreds of dollars>  
59 999. Missing

Q17. Please express your agreement or disagreement with  
each of the following statements about urban policy.

1/52  
VAR 37

A. I would prefer to raise taxes rather than cut back  
city services.

79 1. Strongly agree  
313 2. Agree  
185 3. Neutral  
294 4. Disagree  
83 5. Strongly disagree  
21 9. Missing

1/53  
VAR 38

B. It is important to have a city plan that shapes the  
nature of development in the city.

617 1. Strongly Agree  
320 2. Agree  
16 3. Neutral  
11 4. Disagree  
4 5. Strongly Disagree  
7 9. Missing

1/54  
VAR 39

C. Unionization of city employees seriously damages  
the ability of elected leaders to govern the city.

192 1. Strongly agree  
227 2. Agree  
189 3. Neutral  
264 4. Disagree  
91 5. Strongly Disagree  
12 9. Missing

1/55  
VAR 40

D. Generally, I approve of unlimited development in  
this city; if business wants to invest in new housing  
or new businesses, the city should go along.

107 1. Strongly Agree  
288 2. Agree  
96 3. Neutral  
335 4. Disagree  
138 5. Strongly Disagree  
11 9. Missing

1/56  
VAR 41

E. Our city's resources should be distributed on the basis of need -- even if this means that some parts of the city will get more than others.

169 1. Strongly Agree  
497 2. Agree  
112 3. Neutral  
150 4. Disagree  
25 5. Strongly Disagree

1/57  
VAR 42

F. Federal aid to cities should be increased.

183 1. Strongly Agree  
254 2. Agree  
196 3. Neutral  
228 4. Disagree  
97 5. Strongly Disagree  
17 9. Missing

1/58  
VAR 43

G. I believe we should generate new city revenue through user charges rather than through new taxes or tax increases.

172 1. Strongly Agree  
486 2. Agree  
172 3. Neutral  
94 4. Disagree  
35 5. Strongly Disagree  
16 9. Missing

1/59  
VAR 44

Q18. Thinking of the way people in your city vote in partisan elections, which of the following best characterizes the partisan division in your city?

64 1. Strongly Republican: Republicans win almost all elections.  
129 2. Republican: Republicans win most of the time.  
288 3. Competitive: Both Republicans and Democrats win frequently.  
252 4. Democrat: Democrats win most of the time.  
213 5. Strongly Democrat: Democrats win almost all elections.  
29 9. Missing

Q19. Council members represent many different constituencies. In your own view, how important is your representation of each of the following constituencies?

1/60  
VAR 45

A. A geographical area of the city or a neighborhood.

456 1. Very important  
263 2. Somewhat important  
256 3. Not very important

1/61  
VAR 46

B. A racial or ethnic constituency.

143 1. Very important  
221 2. Somewhat important  
611 3. Not very important

1/62  
VAR 47

C. A partisan or ideological constituency such as  
Republicans, liberals, etc.

111 1. Very Important  
308 2. Somewhat Important  
556 3. Not Very Important

1/63  
VAR 48

D. The city as a whole.

772 1. Very important  
175 2. Somewhat important  
28 3. Not very important

1/64  
VAR 49

E. A single issue group such as abortion, tax-cutting,  
government reform, etc.

52 1. Very important  
201 2. Somewhat important  
722 3. Not very important

1/65  
VAR 50

F. A business constituency.

124 1. Very important  
458 2. Somewhat important  
393 3. Not very important

1/66  
VAR 51

G. A labor union or public employee constituency.

73 1. Very important  
303 2. Somewhat important  
599 3. Not very important

1/67  
VAR 52

Q20. Elections to the council are:

325 1. At-Large  
318 2. By district or ward  
329 3. Some at-large, some district  
3 9. Missing

1/68  
VAR 53

Q20A. If at-large, are candidates nominated from  
districts? If mixed, which way were you  
elected?

44 1. At-large with district nomination  
276 2. At-large  
175 3. Mixed -- By district  
147 4. Mixed -- At-large  
333 9. Missing or coded '2' to question 20

1/69  
VAR 54

Q20C. If mixed, is there conflict between members elected by districts and those elected at-large?

- 18 1. Yes, there's conflict on many issues.  
76 2. Yes, there's conflict on some issues.  
232 3. No, there really isn't much division along these lines.  
649 9. Missing or coded '1' or '2' to question 20.

1/70  
VAR 55

Q21. Elections to the city council are legally:

- 653 1. Nonpartisan  
281 2. Partisan  
41 9. Missing

1/71  
VAR 56

Q22A. If nonpartisan, would you say that parties play an active role "behind the scenes"? If partisan, which statement best describes the influence of parties in nominating candidates and running council campaigns.

- 201 1. Very active  
442 2. Somewhat active  
276 3. Not active at all  
56 9. Missing

Now we would like to know something about your campaign for office.

1/72  
VAR 57

Q23. How would you describe your margin of victory in your last campaign?

- 92 0. I was unopposed.  
132 1. It was a close contest.  
234 2. I won by a moderate margin.  
506 3. I won by a large margin.  
11 9. Missing.

Q24. How important were each of the following in your last campaign in terms of giving money, helping in your campaign in some way, or providing other kinds of support?

2/6  
VAR 58

A. Your political party.

- 121 1. Very important  
208 2. Somewhat important  
646 3. Not very important

2/7  
VAR 59

B. Organized labor.

- 73 1. Very important  
224 2. Somewhat important  
678 3. Not very important

2/8 C. Business groups or leaders.  
VAR 60  
223 1. Very important  
364 2. Somewhat important  
388 3. Not very important

2/9 D. Neighborhood organizations.  
VAR 61  
318 1. Very important  
327 2. Somewhat important  
330 3. Not very important

2/10 E. Organized racial or ethnic groups.  
VAR 62  
93 1. Very important  
149 2. Somewhat important  
733 3. Not very important

2/11 F. Groups organized over a single issue.  
VAR 63  
128 1. Very important  
115 2. Somewhat important  
732 3. Not very important

Finally, we would like to know a few things about  
your own background.

2/12 Q25. Your sex:  
VAR 64  
752 1. Male  
222 2. Female  
1 9. Missing

2/13 Q26. Your ethnicity:  
VAR 65  
893 0. White/Non-black  
82 1. Black

2/14-15 Q27. Age:  
VAR 66  
<Number of years encoded.>  
12 99. Missing

2/16-17 Q28. How many years have you lived in your present  
VAR 67 community?  
<Number of years encoded.>  
16 99. Missing

2/18  
VAR 68

Q29. Your religion:

493 1. Protestant  
334 2. Catholic  
14 3. Mormon  
49 4. Jewish  
72 5. Other or none  
13 9. Missing

2/19  
VAR 69

Q30. Roughly in which of the following categories is your family income?

42 1. less than \$15,000  
126 2. \$15,000 to \$24,999  
216 3. \$25,000 to \$34,999  
204 4. \$35,000 to \$44,999  
366 5. \$45,000 and over  
21 9. Missing

2/20  
VAR 70

Q31. Which term best describes your political party identification?

294 1. Strong Democrat  
145 2. Weak Democrat  
106 3. Independent/ leaning Democrat  
57 4. Independent  
75 5. Independent/ leaning Republican  
98 6. Weak Republican  
187 7. Strong Republican  
13 9. Missing or other

2/21  
VAR 71

Q32. What is your principal occupation, what do you actually do in your work?

194 1. Owner of a business  
200 2. Manager or white collar worker  
46 3. Blue collar worker  
254 4. Lawyer or other professional  
89 5. Homemaker  
10 6. Student  
72 7. Retired  
30 8. Full time council member  
80 9. Missing or other

2/22  
VAR 72

Q33. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

80 1. High school or less  
47 2. Post-high school technical training  
213 3. Some college  
276 4. College graduate  
346 5. Professional or graduate school  
13 9. Missing or other

2/23-24  
VAR 73

Region Code

1. Northeast (includes ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, and PA)
2. South (includes DE, MD, VA, WV, KY, TN, NC, SC, GA, AL, MS, FL, LA, AR, OK, and TX)
3. West (includes NM, AZ, CA, CO, UT, NV, OR, WA, ID, MT, WY, AK, and HI)
4. Midwest (includes OH, MI, IN, IL, WI, MN, IA, MO, KS, NE, SD and ND)

NOTE: For reasons of confidentiality, ICPSR has provided a region code for each case in this dataset instead of a state code. Those analysts seeking more information on specific cities involved in this study should contact the Principal Investigator: Timothy Bledsoe, Department of Government, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. 29208