The McCourtney Institute *Mood of the Nation Poll*
Poll Director: Professor Eric Plutzer
Mood.of.the.nation.poll@psu.edu

How the poll was conducted (updated March 16, 2017)

The questionnaire was designed by the McCourtney Institute polling team and the fieldwork was conducted by YouGov, an online polling organization. The YouGov panel includes over 1.8 million individuals who agree to complete occasional surveys. The 1,000 individuals who completed the McCourtney *Mood of the Nation Poll* were matched to the joint distribution from the Census's American Community Survey in terms of age, sex, race/ethnicity, and years of education. The frame was augmented by matching to the November 2010 Current Population Survey and the Pew Religious Life Survey in order to include voter registration, political interest and party identification in the selection model. The unweighted data are broadly representative of the US population in terms of age, education, and region.

The data have been weighted to adjust for variation in the sample from the adult United States population with respect to demographic variables such as geographic region, gender, race/ethnicity, age, and education, and political variables such as voter registration status and political interest. Weighting details are described in Ansolabehere & Rivers (2013).

Each poll will have a slightly different demographic distribution, but all three Mood of the Nation Polls have been representative of the adult population of the United States. The following table reports the demographic profile of those who responded to our June, 2016, poll.

Sample Characteristics - McCourtney Poll Jun 15-22, 2016

Sex	Unweighted	Weighted	Education	Unweighted	Weighted
Male	49%	49%	No HS	4%	5%
Female	51%	51%	High school graduate	36%	40%
			Some college	20%	20%
Age			2-year degree	10%	10%
18 to 29	18%	21%	4-year degree	19%	16%
30 to 44	27%	25%	Post-graduate	11%	9%
45 to 64	37%	35%			
65 & older	18%	19%	Party Identification		
			Democrat	40%	31%
Race/Ethnicity			Republican	24%	25%
White	72%	67%	Independent	27%	35%
Black	11%	12%			
Hispanic	10%	14%			
Others	6%	7%			

There were two versions of each poll, each administered to 500 respondents. The layout of the two polls is illustrated at the end of this report.

In non-probability polls, as in probability based telephone polls with very low response rates, the reported "margin of error" requires the assumption that post-stratification weighting eliminates major sources of bias, so that repeated administrations of the same polling methodology would yield results centered on the "true" population value.

The matching methods utilized by YouGov have been validated in several national elections, using actual state-by-state results to evaluate the accuracy of poll estimates based on respondents from those states (see, for example, Rivers and Bailey 2009) These evaluations show that poll results, plus or minus the nominal margin of error includes roughly 95% of the actual election results. As a result, we utilize the convention formula for unweighted data:

$$MoE = \pm\sqrt{1/n}$$

and for weighted analyses:

$$MoE = \pm\sqrt{(1 + CV^2)/n}$$

In theory, in 19 cases out of 20, overall results based on such samples will differ by no more than 4.4% percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by taking the average result after repeating the study over and over and over again with many thousands of respondents. This margin of sampling error takes into account the increase in uncertainty that is due to weighting (the *Design Effect*).

For smaller subgroups, the margin of sampling error is larger. For example, when restricting analyses to all Republicans or Independents, it is plus or minus 9 points; for all respondents answering ballot 1 or just ballot 2, it is plus or minus 6 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of the public may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variation in the wording and question order, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

The McCourtney Institute *Mood of the Nation Poll*

Questionnaire Layout and Question Wording for Polls Conducted in November 2016 or later

Ballot 1 (500 respondents)	Ballot 2 (500 Respondents)
Q1 What is there about **American politics today** that makes you feel **proud**?	What has recently **been in the news** that makes you feel **proud?**
Q2 You said **<<short phrase>>** makes you proud. How proud does that make you feel? [5 point scale]*	
Q3 What is there about **American politics today** that makes you feel **angry?**	What has recently **been in the news** that makes you feel **angry?**
Q4 You said **<<short phrase>>** makes you angry. How angry does that make you feel? [5 point scale]*	
Q5 Looking ahead, **what makes you most hopeful** about where America is headed **in the next 12 months**?	
Q6 You said **<<short phrase>>** makes you most hopeful. How hopeful does that make you feel? [5 point scale]*	
Q7 Looking ahead, what **worries you most** about where America is headed **in the next 12 months**?	
Q8 You said **<<short phrase>>** worries you the most. How worried does that make you feel? [5 point scale]*	
Vote Thinking back to the recent presidential election, which of the following statements best describes you?	
Supp Topical supplemental questions are included in each poll	

How to administer the questionnaire: The Mood of the Nation questionnaire is designed to be administered using a *planned missing* design. In the initial part of the questionnaire, there are two emotions (pride, anger) and two question stems ("American politics today" and "in the news") that appear in all four combinations. To avoid fatigue and encourage longer and expansive responses to open-ended questions, each respondent is randomly assigned only two of these. The ballot systems illustrated above is one way to achieve this. Other researchers may use other forms of randomization. In our poll, 100% of the respondents are asked the questions about "what makes you most hopeful" and "what worries you most."

Permission to use the questionnaire: We encourage scholars and journalists to use and adapt these questions for their own research. We request that you give credit by noting, "These questions were adapted from the Penn State McCourtney Institute *Mood of the Nation* Poll."

* Scaler follow-ups: Each open ended question is followed by a forced choice question asking about intensity of feelings. Taking "angry" as an example, respondents could select from *Extremely angry, very angry, somewhat angry, just a little angry,* or *nothing made me angry.* These scaler items should not be combined into a simple additive scale to get a summary measure of negative to positive mood. Rather, they should be decentered first to purge the measure of person-specific intensity. Feel free to contact poll staff for questions about using scaler items to construct summary scales.