Appendix B: Protocol for coding open-ended answers

Overview

The questionnaire contained the following six open-ended questions. Analysis of answers to these questions is central to the study findings. This section details the procedures researchers used to code the data.

[FEELS]   How would you say you are feeling today?

[GREWUPCITY]   When you were growing up, what was the big city nearest where you lived?

[CITYVISIT]   When you visit a new city, what kinds of activities do you like to do?

[COMPUTER]   How do you decide when your computer is too old and it's time to purchase a new one?

[RETIRE]   In retirement what skill would you most like to learn?

[GETDONE]   What would you like to see elected leaders in Washington get done during the next few years? Please give as much detail as you can.

Coding blank, gibberish, don't know/refused, responsive or non sequitur

In the public dataset, the variables FEELS_CODE, … , GETDONE_CODE provide the codes used to categorize each answer as blank, gibberish, don't know/refused, responsive, or non sequitur. The codes are defined as follows:

0 = Blank   Response field is completely blank. No characters or emojis.

1 = Gibberish   Answers that are gibberish. This includes answers that are only punctuation or letters not forming real words. Examples: "ahhjfvadvasdv," "-----," "." and "5ry6754etdvhuyji"

2 = Don't know/Refuse   Answers expressing that the respondent does not know how to answer or is unwilling to answer. Examples: "Don't know," "Dunno," "idk," "Not sure," "No opinion," "No comments," "Not sure," and "?"

3 = Responsive   Answers that are responsive to the question. Examples: "Feelin aaaight," "Just want to relax," and "Bring the BIBLE back into schools"

4 = Non sequitur   Answers that do not follow from (are not responsive to) the question asked. Example: Q: *How would you say are you feeling today?* A: "I love this product!" or "Ceiling Pop"
Answers consisting of numbers or emojis that are not responsive to the question are assigned this code as are answers found to have been plagiarized from another website.

General principles

Coders were instructed to adhere to the following principles.

Principle i. Employ a generous, permissive definition of answers that are responsive to the question. Give the respondent the benefit of the doubt. For example, the following answers arguably don't make perfect sense but are close enough to be coded responsive:
Q: *How would you say are you feeling today?*   A: "good live," "secure," "depends"

Principle ii. Disregard spelling and/or grammatical errors. Many answers contain spelling or grammar errors. As long as it is possible to discern roughly what the respondent was trying to say, code the answer as responsive if it is on topic. For example: "gr8," "grate," and "hapyp" all count as responsive answers to FEELS.

Principle iii. Curt or sarcastic responses should be coded as responsive provided they make sense based on the question asked. For example, the following answers should be coded 3: Q: *How would you say are you feeling today?* A: "about what?," "with my hands," and "meh"

Principle iv. Several answer characteristics may warrant coding as non sequitur. In particular:
● If the question asks about the respondent *personally* (see FEELS, CITYVISIT, RETIRE) but the response focuses on an object (e.g., "I like it," "it's fast"), a non sequitur code may be appropriate
● If the answer expresses satisfaction (e.g., "amazing," "Very satisfied," "good") but that does not align with the question, a non sequitur code may be appropriate. This applies to all open ends except FEELS.
● If the question asks about the respondent personally (see FEELS, CITYVISIT, RETIRE) we

would generally expect answers from the first-person perspective, though pronouns like "I" and "me" do not necessarily need to be used. If answers to such questions inexplicably use second person (e.g., "Develop your skills") or third person (e.g., People enjoy learning about it"), a non-sequitur code (4) may be appropriate. But in all cases, best judgment should be used.
● If the answer just repeats a few words from the question but does not elaborate or give a coherent answer, code as non sequitur.

Principle v. For answers containing both gibberish and words, focus on the words.
● If the answer contains responsive words and some gibberish, code as responsive.
● If the answer contains words unconnected to the question and some gibberish, code as non sequitur.

Considerations specific to individual open-ended questions

Coders were provided with the following guidelines that are specific to individual questions.

[FEELS] **How would you say you are feeling today?**
● This question was asked after several political items, leading many respondents to interpret it as "how are they feeling today about politics." To address this, all politics-related answers to FEELS should be coded as responsive even if they do not specifically refer to the respondent's feelings. Such answers are arguably responsive given the context in which FEELS was asked.
● For this question only, percentages (e.g., "75%") and letter grades (e.g., "B") should be counted as responsive answers since those are common ways for people to articulate how they are feeling.
● Answers like the following should be coded as refusal: "Don't know," "Not sure," "No comment," "None of your business," and "n/a"
● Answers like the following should be coded as non sequitur: "Yes," "No," "never," "none," and "nothing"

[GREWUPCITY] **When you were growing up, what was the big city nearest where you lived?**
● Answers indicating that the question is not applicable should be coded as responsive because there are legitimate reasons why some people might feel it does not apply to them. Answers that reference moving, being in a military family, not living near any big cities, living in a big city (as opposed to near one), or the ambiguity of "big city" should be counted as responsive. For example, responses like the following should all be coded as responsive: "Military brat," "What do you mean by big city," "Moved around," "Several different cities," "Boston or Chicago," "Multiple," "I lived in the city," "None" and "n/a"
● Common city abbreviations count as responsive. For example: "OKC," "NY," "NYC," "PHL," and "SLC"

● The question asks for a city, so answers that are a state or a country should be coded as non sequitur.
● Answers like the following should be coded as refusal: "No comment," "Unsure," "idk," "don't want to say"

[CITYVISIT] **When you visit a new city, what kinds of activities do you like to do?**
● Answers indicating that the question is not applicable should be coded as responsive because there are legitimate reasons why some people might feel it does not apply to them. For example, answers referencing not liking cities, not traveling, or a disability count as responsive. Similarly, count answers like "n/a" responsive even if there is no explanation.
● Curt or sarcastic responses should be coded as responsive if they are on topic. For example: "Anything," "Nothing," "Leave," "Everything," "Whatever," "Historic," "A lot," "All," "Cheap," "Depends," and "None" count as responsive (3).
● Answers like the following should be coded as refusal: "Don't know," "Not sure," "No comment," and "None of your business"

[COMPUTER] **How do you decide when your computer is too old and it's time to purchase a new one?**
● Answers indicating that the question is not applicable should be coded as responsive because there are legitimate reasons why some people might feel it does not apply to them. For example, answers referencing having no computer, just using a smartphone, having a new computer, not being the person who decides, or never having replaced a computer count as responsive. Similarly, count "n/a" or "none" type responses as responsive even if there is no explanation.

[RETIRE] **In retirement what skill would you most like to learn?**
● Answers indicating that the question is not applicable should be coded as responsive because there are legitimate reasons why some people might feel it does not apply to them. For example, answers referencing already being retired, will never be able to retire, have never thought retirement, don't want to retire, or retirement is too far into the future count as responsive.
● Many respondents gave some type of "I don't know" answer. Some made clear that they did not know because retirement is too far away or because they have never given it any thought. Others did not offer a reason. Because "don't know" is such a common, arguably legitimate reaction to this question, all answers along those lines should be coded as responsive. This means that no answers to RETIRE shall be coded as don't know/refused.
● Answers like the following should be coded as responsive: "none," "n/a," and "nothing"

[GETDONE] **What would you like to see elected leaders in Washington get done during the next few years? Please give as much detail as you can?**

● Answers that express feelings like frustration, lack of faith in the political system, or belief that politicians will just do what they want should be coded as responsive.

● Answers that start with something like "I don't know" but offers some answer like "cut taxes" should be counted as responsive.

● Answers that are just a name or list of names such as "Barack Obama" or "Bernie" should be coded as non sequitur.

● This question was asked after a question on volunteering, which seems to explain why some answers are just people describing the volunteer work that they do. Those should all be coded non sequitur. While this is a departure to the guideline for FEELS, any reasonable reading of this question makes clear that it is asking about elected officials not volunteer activities that the respondent may be doing.

● For this question "none" and "n/a" should be coded as refusal, while "nothing" should be coded as responsive.

Coding non sequitur answers

In the public dataset, the variables FEELS_NONSEQTYPE, ... , GETDONE_NONSEQTYPE provide the codes used to categorize each non sequitur answer as positive product evaluation, negative product evaluation, common expression, conversational, plagiarized, or other non sequitur. The codes are defined as follows:

5 = Positive product evaluation	Answers that sound like a customer evaluation of a product, specifically a positive evaluation. This includes responses that are simply descriptors (e.g., "Great," "Awesome," "Good," "Cool," "Like," and "Nice") as well as more elaborate answers, such as ("love it," "is great," and "excellent brand")
6 = Negative product evaluation	Answers that sound like a customer evaluation of a product, specifically a negative evaluation. This includes responses that are simply descriptors (e.g., "Bad" or "Poor quality") as well as more elaborate answers.
7 = Common expression	Answers that are solely or primarily comprised of the following words or phrases: "Yes," "Yeah," "No," "OK," "Thank you," "I agree," "None," "Nothing," "Never," "Hi," "Hello," "Hey," or "What." Variations such as "Nope," and "not really" are included. Note that this is an exhaustive list, not a set of examples. Also note that common expressions that are positive or negative in tone should generally be coded 5 or 6.

8 = Conversational text	Answers that sound like part of a conversation between people. In general, these answer sound informal and they often, but not always, contain repeated phrases. Examples: "You can please just hang in there and I look forward to hearing from you soon," "5AM said he had no plans for the warehouse but," "Thank you for the update and for the update and for the update," and "Greg and I are are you?"
9 = Copied from a website	Answers that sound like they were copied and pasted from a source outside the survey. These answers have one or more of the following characteristics: (i) Sounds like marketing/advertising. Examples: "SEO provides the very bedrock and foundation for skyrocketing your sales," and "Explore by Foot. VirtualTourist members agree that the best way to see a new destination is to experience it by foot" (ii) Sounds like it came from a Wikipedia entry, a news story, or other information-based website. Examples: "George Washington was commander in chief of the Continental Army…," or "Administers education programs for children in state institutions" (iii) Sounds like it came from an online Q&A website, chatroom, etc. Examples: "Hello! Tell me please what is the difference between 'How are you feeling today' and 'How do you feel today'? As for me…" (iv) Unusually stilted or formal. Examples: "An illegal act by an officeholder constitutes political corruption"
10 = Other	Answers that do not fit any of the other categories. Examples, "California," "Can I just get my points," Bedroom Pop," "content://media/external/file/738023," "$25," and "new." This category also include answers that appeared to come from an English as second language respondent who may not have understood the question.