

Elections and Voting Research



Designing election systems, helping them operate effectively, and understanding voting behavior are significant and ongoing challenges, with both new and old democracies undergoing rapid changes in the way they run elections. RTI International brings to bear our objective, state-of-the-art research and expert technical assistance to solve problems in voting in the United States and around the world.

At RTI, we combine a deep understanding of election administration and voting behavior with expertise across a broad range of methodologies—including survey research, program evaluation, statistical and policy analysis, project implementation, and development of training programs. RTI's election experts and their colleagues, including top methodologists in a wide variety of fields, tackle tough problems in this sensitive and dynamic policy area.

Research Areas

Surveys

RTI conducts election research in the United States and internationally through telephone, face-to-face, Web, and mail surveys. Our experienced survey staff provide a full range of support, including study design, implementation, and analysis. Our research supports efforts to better understand voter Election Day experiences, voter attitudes toward election reform initiatives, and voter preferences.

In collaboration with the University of Michigan and Stanford University, RTI conducted the data collection for the 2008 ANES Time Series Study as part of the American

National Election Study, the oldest continuous survey of electoral behavior and attitudes in the United States. Before and after the 2008 election, RTI researchers interviewed in person more than 2,400 participants from across the country. Also in 2008, RTI helped the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) collect and analyze election data from more than 3,000 local offices as part of EAC's Election Day Survey and helped state election officials design data collection programs to report, for the first time, precinct-level information on voting to the EAC. Overseas, our staff have participated in USAID-funded surveys around the world, from Bangladesh to Bolivia and Kazakhstan to Kenya.

Training Program Development and Evaluation

Scholars and practitioners cite poll worker recruitment and training as a vulnerability in the rapidly changing environment of elections. The task of recruiting and effectively training hundreds of thousands of people to work for one long day in a polling place is an increasingly important job as voting laws and technology become more complex.



RTI has developed training programs for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Housing and Urban Development, and many health and educational organizations. We have conducted training workshops for local officials following elections in Guatemala, El Salvador, Benin, Mali, and Morocco, among other countries.

Electoral Reform and Civic Education

Election laws and processes are changing quickly as local and national governments adjust to new technologies and new demands for transparency and efficiency. Particularly in transitioning democracies, the success of elections often rides on civic engagement and voter education. In such countries as the United States, Iraq, Indonesia, and Peru, RTI pursues innovative approaches and builds on best practices to create the foundation for and promote democratic governance.

Through our Guyana Democratic Consolidation and Conflict Resolution Project, RTI has sought to modernize the Guyana Elections Commission, focusing on the task of strengthening political competition by reducing ethno-political tensions. In South Africa, RTI has been involved from the start in building the postapartheid political system, developing and strengthening a web of indigenous organizations to help the South African government encourage the participation of all citizens.

GIS and Spatial Analysis

With cutting-edge geographic information systems (GIS) capabilities, RTI is well equipped to utilize the spatial nature of election data to improve the ballot casting process and study voting behavior across many geographic scales. Using the Web to provide wider access to mapping and using geovisualization techniques are just two ways that RTI has successfully served clients seeking to leverage advances in geospatial technology.



RTI's researchers have used such techniques to study cancer rates for the National Institutes of Health, hazardous wastes emissions for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and crime patterns for the Department of Justice. States seeking to build custom redistricting databases or to use GIS to manage their election systems will find RTI an able partner. For other clients, RTI's GIS capabilities can be combined with our expertise in demographics and voting to develop redistricting plans that follow the criteria developed by the locality.

For more information, please contact

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