

Online Appendix for:

Citizen Evaluations of Legislator-Constituent
Communication

A Measures of Responsiveness

Measures of response quality collected from audit studies on legislative responsiveness to constituent communication. Studies were culled from a meta-analysis of audit experiments on elite responsiveness (Costa, 2017) which includes every published and unpublished audit study up until February 2016, with a few more recent studies included to be as comprehensive as possible.

Table 1: How Response Quality is Coded in the Literature

Study	Content	Tone	Timeliness
Bishin and Hayes (2016)	“...any response that would have led to information that would have proved helpful to the constituent’s request.” p.12	NA	NA
Broockman (2013)	“...provided the website, email address, physical address, or telephone number of a person or agency that could help a person register for unemployment benefits.” p.2 SI	“...invited further contact from the alias in order to provide this information (some replies that ask Tyronne for his phone number so that the legislator could call him).” p.2 SI	NA
Butler (2014)	“...whether the official’s response answered the question that was asked” p.30	NA	2 weeks
Carnes and Holbein (2019)	“the length of each reply and whether officeholders provided the requested information or meeting.” p.7	“an indication that the email was from the legislator herself and not an assistant, a thank you, an offer to provide follow-up help, and/or encouragement to register.” p.16	2 weeks
Chen, Pan and Xu (2015)	Deferral– reply but no answer; Referral– contact information for someone else; Direct Information– provides answer p.11-12	NA	10 days
Dynes, Hassell and Miles (2018)	word count of response p23	“thanked the constituent” p.24	NA

Einstein and Glick (2016)	NA	“whether the emailer is addressed by proper name” p.13	24 hours
Gell-Redman et al. (2018)	NA	NA	2 weeks
Grohs, Adam and Knill (2015)	0-8 scale measuring whether the questions were answered and the “comprehensibility and preparation of the responses” p.4	0-3 scale measuring “the thoroughness of the response, a friendly and courteous tone of the response, and the mentioning of additional contact persons for further questions.” p.4	15 days
Hemker and Rink (2017)	“we constructed a substantive quality variable based on whether the two questions contained in the request were answered appropriately. ” two scales; 0-5 and 0-2. p. 792	friendliness was “coded subjectively by both coders on a 7-point scale” as well as “whether the response contained a formal greeting or goodbye, or both”	NA
Adman and Jansson (2017)	“How many of the three questions are answered? How much information does the public official provide in answer to the three questions? Does the public official give more information than asked for?” p.14	“Is the contact made more personal by using the sender’s first name? Does the public official invite further contact? Is the sender welcomed to the municipality?” p.14	NA
Jilke, Dooren and Rys (2018)	“...included the requested information”	0-7 scale from “written in an unfriendly manner” to “written in a friendly manner”	2 weeks
Kalla, Rosenbluth and Teele (2018)	“Qualitative assessment by coded that the email contains real content.” and “Coded as containing either practical advice... or personality/image advice” p. 3 SI	offering “praise” or being “willing to meet, to talk on the phone, to email further, or a general offer to follow-up” p.3 SI	NA
Lajevardi (2018)	“...aid the fictional alias in attaining the service they asked for”	NA	NA

Lavecchia and Stagnaro (2019)	NA	NA	48 hours
McClendon (2016)	“...if the politician supplied the requested information directly or provided the contact information for the bureaucrat, through a carbon copy.” p.7	NA	NA
Terechshenko et al. (2019)	“...provide actionable information”	NA	NA
White, Nathan and Faller (2015)	“...provided links to state websites with official instructions about voting requirements.” p. 13 SI	“explicitly friendly language, such as use of the senders’ name in the salutation or sign-off. Examples included ‘Dear (name),’ ‘Let us know if you have any more questions’ and ‘Have a great day.’” p.36	NA

B Descriptive Statistics of Respondent Samples

Table 2: Demographics of Respondent Samples

	Study 1 (%) (YouGov-CCES)	Study 2 (%) (YouGov)	Study 3 (%) (MTurk)
Female	57.6	54.0	41.8
Male	42.4	46.0	58.4
Democrat (incl. leaners)	49.5	46.5	52.0
Republican (incl. leaners)	31.1	31.7	24.5
Independent	15.8	18.1	22.5
White	68.0	70.4	78.1
Non-white	32.0	29.6	21.9
N	1,000	1,000	1,000

C Images of Vignette Emails in Study 1

Below are the email images used in each experimental condition in Study 1. In Study 2, the images were the same except the constituents name in the Friendly conditions was “Jane” instead of “Jake.”

Answer

From: Representative Matt Johnson <MJohnson@malegislature.gov>
Subject: Re: Question on Voting



You must first register to vote. Once you are registered, you will have to provide an acceptable form of identification at the time of voting. I suggest checking our website (<https://malegislature.gov>) for more information about the voter registration process.

- Rep. Matt Johnson

Friendly Answer

From: Representative Matt Johnson <MJohnson@malegislature.gov>
Subject: Re: Question on Voting



Dear Jake,

You must first register to vote. Once you are registered, you will have to provide an acceptable form of identification at the time of voting. I suggest checking our website (<https://malegislature.gov>) for more information about the voter registration process.

Let me know if you have additional questions.

- Rep. Matt Johnson

Contact

From: Representative Matt Johnson <MJohnson@malegislature.gov>
Subject: Re: Question on Voting



I suggest contacting the elections office clerk. They can give you more accurate and up to date information about the voter registration process. You can email the office at atelections@ma.gov or call them at [\(413\) 555-7842](tel:413-555-7842).

- Rep. Matt Johnson

Friendly Contact

From: Representative Matt Johnson <MJohnson@malegislature.gov>
Subject: Re: Question on Voting



Dear Jake,

I suggest contacting the elections office clerk. They can give you more accurate and up to date information about the voter registration process. You can email the office at atelections@ma.gov or call them at [\(413\) 555-7842](tel:413-555-7842).

Let me know if you have additional questions.

- Rep. Matt Johnson

D Regression Tables: Study 1 and 2

In the main text, I focus on the results for evaluations of overall response quality. In this section, I present the results for all three dependent variables: evaluations of overall

quality, friendliness, and helpfulness. Tables 3 and 4 present the effects of the treatments on the evaluations estimated using ordinary least squares. The models include two indicator variables for whether the email response included (1) the answer to the constituent’s question rather than contact information for someone else and (2) the named greeting and invite to follow up. The models also include a variable for the number of days until the state legislator responded to the constituent request (which was a randomly assigned integer from 1-30 days).

As shown in the main text, respondents mostly care about the friendliness of the email; the only consistently significant predictor of response evaluations is whether the email included a named greeting and invitation to follow up. This effect is robust across both experiments. If those “friendly” items were included in the legislator’s response, it was rated 9 points higher in overall quality, 11.2 points more friendly, and 6.3 points more helpful in Study 1. In Study 2, these effects slightly decreases in magnitude but remain statistically significant. The content of the response –that is, whether the legislator answered the question or pointed the constituent somewhere else– did not have a statistically significant effect on any perceptions of the legislator’s response in either study.

Table 3: Effects of Random Treatment Variables on Email Evaluations: Study 1

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Overall Quality	Friendliness	Helpfulness
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Greeting + follow up	9.023* (1.582)	11.189* (1.587)	6.245* (1.675)
Answer vs. contact info	0.058 (1.581)	−0.299 (1.587)	−0.322 (1.674)
Days until response	−0.357* (0.090)	−0.123 (0.091)	−0.190* (0.096)
Constant	53.456* (1.944)	47.251* (1.948)	58.206* (2.055)
Observations	992	994	995
R ²	0.048	0.050	0.018
Adjusted R ²	0.045	0.047	0.015

Note: * statistically significant using the (Holm, 1979) multiple comparisons correction.

Table 4: Effects of Random Treatment Variables on Email Evaluations: Study 2

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Overall Quality	Friendliness	Helpfulness
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Greeting + follow up	6.130* (1.694)	9.971* (1.719)	5.418* (1.772)
Answer vs. contact info	-0.707 (1.693)	-1.800 (1.718)	-2.538 (1.771)
Days until response	-0.296* (0.098)	-0.021 (0.100)	-0.225* (0.103)
Constant	53.001* (2.110)	46.875* (2.141)	60.487* (2.208)
Observations	996	996	996
R ²	0.022	0.034	0.016
Adjusted R ²	0.019	0.031	0.013

Note: * statistically significant using the (Holm, 1979) multiple comparisons correction.

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