# Extended Notes for GUN\_CONTROL5G

You have permission to use this exercise and to revise it to fit your needs. Please send a copy of any revision to the author.

The Field Poll is a poll of registered voters in California conducted by the Field Research Corporation. The Field Poll was established in 1947 by Mervin Field and covers a wide range of political and social topics. It’s one of the major statewide public opinion polls in California and is conducted approximately three to seven times per year. An archive of reports can be found on their [website](http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/index.html).

## Methodology[[1]](#endnote-1)

Sampling. Prior to 2006 the Field Poll was a sample of adults in California. From 2006 on it is a sample of registered voters in California. Some questions were asked of all respondents while other questions were asked of a random portion of the total sample. That means that for some questions the sample size is larger and for other questions the sample size is smaller.

Data Collection. The poll was conducted by telephone in English and Spanish. Up to six attempts were made to reach respondents in the sample while varying the day and time of the week they were called.

Weighting. A weight variable was constructed by the Field Research Corporation so the data would better represent the population from which the sample was selected. This weight variable should always be used when analyzing the data.

Data Access. Students, faculty and staff at the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) may use all available Field Poll data. However, the Field data are subject to a two-year embargo period for the general public and those at other academic institutions. This means the general public may access the poll data two years after the date of the polls. [[2]](#endnote-2)

Questions and Variables.The Field Poll included questions on a variety of topics. Topics vary from poll to poll.

Missing Data. The Field Poll includes two different types of data – opinion data and demographic or background data. Opinion data includes questions that ask a person’s opinion about some issue such as gun control. Most respondents will either favor or oppose a particular approach to gun control. But some respondents will not have an opinion or they will say they don’t know or refuse to answer the questions. Demographic questions ask respondents about their age or income or marital status. Some respondents will refuse to answer particular questions. Missing values are assigned to missing data. So respondents who refuse to tell interviewers their age are assigned a missing value for that variable. But what about those who say they have no opinion on a question such as gun control. The Field Poll does not consider this to be missing data because they are telling us an important piece of information about themselves. They haven’t formed an opinion on this issue yet. So no opinion answers are not considered missing data and are not assigned a missing value. Missing values can be changed.

## Notes on this Exercise

## This exercise is different than the first four exercises in this series in that it does not use the data set (Field\_2013\_subset\_for\_classes\_GUN\_CONTROL.sav) used in the first four exercises. Rather it gives students practice in searching for Field Polls that deal with gun control. It also shows students how to use SDA (Survey Documentation and Analysis), an online statistical package. Finally, it offers an introduction to trend analysis.

It’s important to make sure that students understand the importance of making data comparable. In this exercise we use a question on gun control that was identical in several polls. However, the 2013 poll was a sample of registered voters while the 2002 and 2000 polls were samples of adults in California. (Note that in the 2013 Field Poll all variable names must be lower case. This is only the case for the 2013 poll.) The 2013 poll asked the question of all respondents while the 2002 and 2000 polls asked the question of a random half of the sample. In the exercise we adjust for these differences to make the data comparable from poll to poll.

There is another Field Poll that used this same question on gun control. This poll was conducted between December 15, 2015 and January 3, 2016. If you are accessing the Field Poll from a CSU campus that subscribed to the social science data bases or from a University of California campus, then you can utilize this poll. But if you are accessing the polls as part of the general public, then this survey falls within the two-year embargo policy described in the exercise and you will not be able to access this poll. For comparison purposes, you might want to tell your students that in this poll 57% felt that there ought to be greater control on gun ownership, 38% thought that protecting the right to own guns was more important, and 5% had no opinion.

There is a table at the end of the exercise that students are asked to fill in. Below are the correct percents that students ought to enter in the table.

|  | **2013** | **2002** | **2000** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Right to Own Gun** | 36.8 | 39.7 | 40.2 |
| **Control Gun Ownership** | 57.8 | 54.8 | 54.5 |
| **No Opinion** | 5.3 | 5.5 | 5.4 |
| **Total** | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| **Base** | 834 | 326.3 | 295.3 |

## Permission to Make Modifications

Feel free to revise the exercise in any way you want. Just recognize the source of the original exercise. Please send me a copy of the revised exercise so I can see how others are using it. If you find errors in the exercise or the data set, please email me and I’ll make corrections and post the corrected version on our website.

## Contacting Me

If you would like to contact me, please email me at [ednelson@csufresno.edu](mailto:ednelson@csufresno.edu). I’m Professor Emeritus at California State University, Fresno in the Sociology department. I taught research methods, statistics, and critical thinking before retiring and now teach a critical thinking course part time.

1. A more detailed description of the methodology for the Field Poll can be found on their [website](http://field.com/fieldpoll/methods.html). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. CSU campuses must subscribe to the social science data bases in order for their students and faculty to be exempt from this two-year embargo. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)