Gauging The Impact of Growing Nonresponse on Estimates From a National RDD Telephone Survey

March 30, 2007

Scott Keeter, Courtney Kennedy, Michael Dimock, Jonathan Best, Peyton Craighill
## Overview of Study Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Approach</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Rigorous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct 5-day, N=1,000 survey using regular PRC/PSRAI methodology.</td>
<td>Highest response rate possible retaining most key elements from 1997 Rigorous survey; keep content and other elements of design same as Standard survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**extended-Standard**

After standard field period ends, continue working standard sample in parallel with rigorous study.
## Overview of Study Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Rigorous</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field Period</strong></td>
<td>June 4 – 8, 2003</td>
<td>June 4 – October 30, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Size</strong></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent selection method</strong></td>
<td>Youngest male/oldest female</td>
<td>Same as 1997; modified random by age within household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>English only</td>
<td>English &amp; Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample</strong></td>
<td>List assisted, in banks with 3 or more listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Overview of Study Design

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Standard</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rigorous</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advance Letters</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>All receive letter; half get $2 incentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-contact letters</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>$2 to households where no contact has been made; 114 letters mailed on July 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Messages on answering machines</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Late in the field period, leave a message on answering machines describing the study and providing a callback number.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overview of Study Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refusal conversions</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Rigorous</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standard practice (1 during 5-day field period; more during extended period)</td>
<td>2-3 where ethically feasible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Refusal conversion letters | Send letter matched households in both samples starting June 1. No incentive included. One mailing to 27 Spanish refusals on July 31. |
## Final Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Rigorous</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Rate 3</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coop. Rate 3</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact Rate 2</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
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## Final Response Rates

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate 3</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coop. Rate 3</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Rate 2</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Response Rate Trend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate 3</td>
<td>36 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coop. Rate 3</td>
<td>43 %</td>
<td>34 %</td>
<td>29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Rate 2</td>
<td>90 %</td>
<td>79 %</td>
<td>79 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison Groups

- Standard sample
- Rigorous sample
- “Hardest to reach” -- refused at least twice or required at least 21 calls to complete (N=494)
- Break-offs: N=282 who terminated (115 eventually completed survey)
Race: Percent White

- Population parameter: 83
- Standard survey: 82
- Rigorous survey: 81
- Hardest to interview: 74
Age: Percent 18-34

- Population parameter: 31%
- Standard survey: 28%
- Rigorous survey: 26%
- Hardest to interview: 29%
Education: Percent High School or Less

- Population parameter: 52%
- Standard survey: 42%
- Rigorous survey: 44%
- Hardest to interview: 42%
Housing: Percent Homeowner

- Population parameter: 73
- Standard survey: 70
- Rigorous survey: 66
- Hardest to interview: 61
Differences Between Standard and Rigorous Samples

![Bar Chart]

- Size of difference between standard and rigorous samples (main category of interest)

- Number of survey items (out of 84)

- The bars represent the number of items for each size of difference:
  - 0 items: 15
  - 1 item: 24
  - 2 items: 19
  - 3 items: 9
  - 4 items: 10
  - 5 items: 4
  - 6 items: 2
  - 7 items: 0
  - 8 items: 1
Differences Between Standard and Rigorous Samples

The graph shows the number of survey items (out of 84) and the number of significant differences in the size of the difference between standard and rigorous samples. The x-axis represents the size of the difference, ranging from 0 to 8, while the y-axis indicates the number of items. The bars represent the number of survey items and the number of significant differences for each size category of interest.
Most people can be trusted

- Standard survey: 35
- Rigorous survey: 31
- Hardest to interview: 28
No Significant Difference

- Many people to turn to for help
- Neighborhood not safe
- Been a victim of property crime
- Been mugged or assaulted
- Worry about computers invading privacy
Voted Republican in 2002 House race

- Standard survey: 47
- Rigorous survey: 44
- Hardest to interview: 39
No Significant Difference

- Government is wasteful & inefficient
- Poor people have it easy
- Business makes unfair profit
- Elected leaders care about me
- We should accept homosexuality
- Ban dangerous books from schools
- Protect gun owner’s rights
- U.S. should be single world leader
African-Americans mostly responsible for their own condition

- Standard survey: 64
- Rigorous survey: 62
- Hardest to interview: 58
No Significant Difference

- Immigrants are a burden on the U.S.
- Islam encourages violence
- Most Muslims are anti-American
Lifestyle: Go out in evening 3 or more days per week

- Standard survey: 42
- Rigorous survey: 45
- Hardest to interview: 49
Lifestyle: No Significant Difference

- Exercised yesterday
- Attend church weekly
- Goes online
- Watches reality TV shows
- In excellent or good health
- Ever smoked marijuana
- Not enough money for food or health care
Voted in 2002 Congressional Elections

- Standard survey: 56
- Rigorous survey: 48
- Hardest to interview: 46
Registered to vote

- Standard survey: 72
- Rigorous survey: 67
- Hardest to interview: 64
Knew GOP had majority in U.S. Senate

- Standard survey: 63
- Rigorous survey: 62
- Hardest to interview: 57
Mean number of “don’t know” responses to 19 attitude questions

- Standard survey: 1.22
- Rigorous survey: 1.33
- Hardest to interview: 1.56
No Significant Difference

- “Always” or “nearly always” vote
- Read newspaper yesterday
- Watched TV news yesterday
- Listened to radio news yesterday
- Regular viewer of “O’Reilly Factor”
Analysis of Breakoffs

- About 10% of PRC respondents terminate in a typical survey and are never recaptured.
- In this study, 282 terminated (115 eventually completed survey).
- Examined 15 demographic and attitude questions placed early in survey.
- Higher DK responses.
### Differences Between Completed Interviews and Breakoffs (excluding “DK” responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Partial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school grad or less</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people can be trusted</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam not violent</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOP has majority in Senate</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample size</strong></td>
<td>(1,741-2,328)</td>
<td>(125-282)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No significant difference

- Government is wasteful & inefficient
- Poor people have it easy
- Business makes unfair profit
- Elected leaders care about me
- We should accept homosexuality
- Ban dangerous books from schools
- Protect gun owner’s rights
- U.S. should be single world leader
- Immigrants are a burden on the U.S.
- African-Americans mostly responsible for own condition
**Conclusions**

- Little evidence of bias within range of response rates compared here
- Political engagement overstated
- Decline in contact and cooperation occurred despite much greater level of field house effort
- Findings consistent with other research, but based on a single experiment