

Sample Abstracts

Substantive, example #1: Following the Impact of the ACA in Minnesota

Minnesota embraced Affordable Care Act (ACA) reforms, including a state-based marketplace (MNSure) and expansion of the Medicaid program. National research shows steeper declines in uninsurance rates for states adopting these policies. Minnesota monitors health insurance coverage and access in a biennial survey, next scheduled for 2015. Because other studies show declines in uninsurance, Minnesota focused on understanding how insurance coverage changed for non-elderly Minnesotans who were uninsured (N=763) or had individual coverage (N=749) at the time of the 2013 survey. This re-contact study provided a way for us to learn about differences between people who gained coverage, and who did not; how many people changed coverage between 2013 and 2014; and how people gained information about health insurance. About half of Minnesotans who were uninsured in 2013 had gained coverage in the late summer of 2014. Meanwhile the majority who previously purchased coverage on the individual market retained insurance but only a small percentage moved to gain coverage through MNSure. We contrast changes in access, affordability and use of services for those who gain coverage versus remain uninsured. The advantage of the re-contact survey is that it allowed us to look at change in coverage and access over time among Minnesotans that stood to benefit the most from the ACA reforms. The challenge is that these Minnesotans represent a disadvantaged population who are easily lost to follow-up. This led to complications around weighting the data and our confidence in conclusions that can be drawn, particularly given political contention surrounding the ACA.

Substantive, example #2: When Do Religion and Science Conflict?

Is there an inherent conflict between science and religious belief? There are well-documented opinion differences among religious groups on a handful of science topics including beliefs about evolution and stem cell research. Little is known about the extent to which religious group differences underlie views about other science topics. We use a new representative survey by the Pew Research Center to examine the extent to which religious group differences explain public attitudes about science across a wide range of science topics including: views about evolution, bioengineering of human organs, genetic modifications, and opinions about animal research, climate change, and energy issues. We use multivariate analyses to test for the independent effect of religious group, while controlling for factors such as political orientations, science knowledge and training, gender, age, socioeconomic background, race and ethnicity. The survey also addresses the public's perceptions of conflict between religion and science. Findings show that those who are less religiously committed tend to perceive more conflict between religion and science than do those higher levels of religious commitment. Opinion differences among religious groups while typically quite large when it comes to topics with a clear link to views about the origins of life tend to be modest or not statistically significant on a range of other science topics. Thus, the findings show a surprising degree of consensus among religious groups about many science topics while at the same time underscoring areas where there are fundamental disagreements among religious groups in U.S. society today.

Methods-Based #1: Effects of ACASI Voice Choice and Voice Persona on Reports to Questions about Sensitive Behaviors among Young Adults

Audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) – in which respondents answer pre-recorded questions during an in-person interview – is the preferred method for administering sensitive questions in face-to-face interviews because it often yields higher reports of sensitive behaviors (Tourangeau and Smith 1996; Turner, Ku, et al. 1998). In addition, the inclusion of audio may overcome barriers to reading among respondents' with low literacy levels. However, research raises doubts about whether respondents actually use the audio and whether the inclusion of audio has any effect on survey

responses. In order to increase the likelihood that respondents would refrain from turning the audio off, we implemented an experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to hear one of three types of prerecorded voices versus being presented with the option of selecting from among the three voices. Voices were selected to represent different personas, including an empathetic-sounding voice, a professional-sounding voice, and a synthetic (text-to-speech) voice. We hypothesized that providing respondents with the choice of voice would mitigate the tedium of listening to the audio and emphasize the importance of the audio component. We examine the effects of voice choice and the type of voice listened to on levels of reporting about sensitive behaviors, item nonresponse, and the proportion of audio listened to. We also examine the effect of literacy on respondents' propensity to turn the audio off. Data are from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study in which 727 foster care youth (aged 17 in 2013) participated in an in-person interview about their experiences while wards of the state (RR=95.3%). Questions asked about a variety of sensitive topics including delinquency, violence, and sexual behaviors. Our analysis adds to the small body of research on voice effects in surveys using ACASI, with important findings on measuring sensitive behaviors, particularly among young adults.

Methods-Based #2: SHOW Me the Money? Effects of Preincentives, Differential Incentives, and Envelope Messaging in an ABS Mail Survey

Mail surveys that use address-based sampling frames are an increasingly important method for collecting health-related data from random samples of the general population. Identifying methods for ABS mail surveys that yield high response rates and data quality while remaining cost-effective is needed. While systematic reviews indicate incentives are effective in increasing response rates in mail surveys (e.g., Edwards et al. 2002), more research is needed to determine what monetary thresholds are most cost-effective and to examine the effects of incentives and other methods on other measures of data quality. This presentation reports on results from an experiment conducted to evaluate the effects of varying amounts of preincentives, differential incentives, and envelope messaging on response rates, costs, and data quality in an address-based mail survey. The experiment was conducted as part of the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin (SHOW). Households (N = 2,608) were randomly divided into experimental groups using a 2 (amount of preincentive) x 2 (differential incentive) x 2 (envelope message) design. The two levels for the amount of the cash preincentive were \$5 versus \$2. The two levels for the differential incentive were \$2 versus none. Households were only eligible for the differential incentive if they failed to respond to the initial mailing. The two levels for the envelope message included a message that read "Thank You! A cash gift is enclosed" versus no message. The final response rate was 67.1% overall. Analyses examine the effects of the treatments on unit and item nonresponse, costs, and nonresponse bias. Results indicate that larger preincentives are associated with significantly higher response rates and lower item-missing data. The use of additional incentives and envelope messaging appears to have no effect on outcomes. Results from this presentation add to research about choosing the most cost-effective incentive combinations in mailed self-administered questionnaires.

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