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The Effects of Introductory Scripts and Respondent Incentives on Overall Participation and Subgroup Participation in an RDD Telephone Survey

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Overview of the Presentation

- Background of the Research
- Experimental Design and Procedures
- Results of Initial Experiment
- Design of Subsequent Experiments
- Results of Subsequent Experiments
- Conclusions from All Experiments
- Next Steps

Background: Declining Smoking Estimates

- The NY ATS observed a decline in quarterly smoking estimates from 2004 through 2005, while the NY BRFSS smoking rates remained steady over this same period.
- We compared the NY ATS and BRFSS protocols to determine:
 - (1) what features differed between the surveys?
 - (2) which of these features could likely affect smokers' participation?

Smokers' Participation

- The NY ATS and BRFSS protocols were nearly identical on most dimensions, except two:
 - (1) Introductory Script – NY ATS mentioned tobacco use

Some evidence that focus on tobacco use might discourage smokers from participating, or from reporting smoking when interviewed (Cowling, et al, 2003; Fernandez, et al, 2007)
 - (2) Incentive Offer – NY ATS offered refusal conversion incentive

Data indicate smokers are over-represented in the NY ATS among those who initially refuse and then complete an interview when offered \$20 incentive (Currivan, 2005).

Overall Participation

- What affect might the introductory script have on other sample members, including non-smokers?
 - Limited research on effects of introduction wording in phone surveys (Vaden-Kiernan, et al, 1997; DeLeeuw & Hox, 2004)
 - Non-smokers often assume that the NY ATS is intended only for smokers (anecdotal)
- What affect would offering an incentive have on other sample members?
 - Incentives generally improve telephone survey response (Singer, et al, 1999)
 - Some evidence incentives are effective in RDD surveys, but mostly after screening phase (Cantor, et al, 2007)

Experimental Design

Incentive Offer

Introductory
Script

1 Original / \$ 0	2 Original / \$ 20
3 Alternative / \$ 0	4 Alternative / \$ 20

Two Introductory Scripts

- Original NY ATS introductory script:
 - “Hello, this is _____ calling on behalf of the New York State Department of Health. We are conducting an important research study about adults’ beliefs and experiences with tobacco use. I would like to speak to a member of the household who is age 18 or older ... ”
- Alternative NY ATS introductory script:
 - “Hello, this is _____ calling on behalf of the New York State Department of Health. We are conducting an important research study about factors that affect adults’ health status and their beliefs about health conditions. I would like to speak to a member of the household who is age 18 or older ... ”

Two Incentive Conditions

- Original NY ATS incentive offer:

\$ 0

- Alternative NY ATS incentive offer:

“Each eligible participant who completes an interview will receive **\$20** as a token of our appreciation.”

Experimental Procedures

- Q1 2006 were cases randomly assigned to one of the our experimental groups when sampled.
- CATI was programmed to present one of four protocols based on experimental group.
- Other scripts were revised to be consistent with each of the four protocols for other modes of initial contact:
 1. Advance letter
 2. Answering machine message
 3. Privacy manager message

Experiment Results - All Respondents

Experimental Groups

<i>Survey Outcomes</i>	1 - Original Intro / No Incentive	2 - Original Intro / \$20 Incentive	3- Alternative Intro / No Incentive	4- Alternative Intro / \$20 Incentive
Completed Interviews (%)	23.0	27.6	21.8	27.7
Refusal Conversions (%)	24.1	21.5	24.2	22.8

** Numbers are percentages of completed cases for each experimental group.*

Experiment Results - Smokers

Experimental Groups

<i>Survey Outcomes</i>	1 - Original Intro / No Incentive	2 - Original Intro / \$20 Incentive	3- Alternative Intro / No Incentive	4- Alternative Intro / \$20 Incentive
Current Smokers (%)	12.5	18.3	15.2	15.9
Refusal Conversions (%)	27.5	18.9	28.8	25.6

** Numbers are percentages of completed cases for each experimental group.*

Further Experiments: Incentive Offer

- The NY State Dept. of Health preferred to move forward with the alternative introductory script because it was more similar to the BRFSS introduction.
- The impact of the incentive on participation argued for further tests of the impact of an incentive offer, while holding the introductory script constant.
- For Q2, Q3, and Q4 2006, we randomly assigned 25% of the sample to \$20 incentive condition, producing two versions of the alternative introduction.

Incentive Experiment Results - All Respondents

Survey Quarters

Survey Outcomes	Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)
Completed Interviews (%)	69.6	30.4	71.4	28.6	70.5	29.5
Refusal Conversions (%)	29.4	24.6	29.4	25.2	31.9	26.2

*** Numbers are percentages of completed cases for each experimental group.**

Incentive Experiment Results - Smokers

Survey Quarters

Survey Outcomes	Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4	
	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)	\$ 0 (75%)	\$ 20 (25%)
Completed Interviews (%)	14.0	18.9	14.4	16.3	15.7	13.0
Refusal Conversions (%)	34.2	19.3	36.1	25.3	32.2	25.7

** Numbers are percentages of completed cases for each experimental group.*

Conclusions: Overall Participation

1. Modifying the purpose of the survey in the introduction itself produced no significant differences in overall participation.
2. The incentive offer increased participation (compared to no incentive) for both versions of the introductory script.
3. The incentive offer appeared to reduce the refusal conversion effort compared to no incentive in most quarters.
4. The effects of incentives on overall participation were modest, but consistent across quarters.

Conclusions: Smokers' Participation

1. The alternative introduction did not appear to have a significant impact on smokers' participation.
2. The lack of impact of the alternative introduction may reflect the difficulty in (quickly) presenting the study purpose in RDD surveys.
3. The \$20 incentive led to greater participation among smokers' for Q1 and Q2, but this did not hold for Q3 and Q4.

Next Steps

1. Expand analysis to include key subgroups for both overall and smokers' participation under the different experimental conditions.
2. Conduct analysis that directly compares the cost of offering an incentive to all sample members to the value of the increased yield.
3. Compare NY BRFSS to NY ATS to get a more detailed picture of how participants in each study differ, especially on factors related to smoking.

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