University of Southern California
Understanding America Study Internet Panel

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Panel Methods Overview
Detailed documentation at uasdata.usc.edu

Understanding America Study – a probability-based internet panel of 6000+ adults founded at USC in 2014

- Representative samples of U.S. households
    - Address-based sample frame
    - Multi-phase recruitment (mail, phone)
    - All materials, communications, and surveys in English and Spanish
    - Provide internet-connected tablets as needed
    - Results adjusted to U.S. Census Current Population Survey distributions
    - 32 hours of collected data available for use of registered users

UAS Data Collections

Economic and social research e.g. panel experiments
2016 USC Daybreak Tracking Poll

- Sensors
- Mobile apps for question prompts
- Health / activity monitoring
- Diaries
- Survey games
- Administrative data

UAS Adaptive Sample Design

Random selection of addresses from zip codes across the United States

Each sample wave is adjusted to account for differential non-response in prior wave

Zip codes with higher proportions of non-responders are sampled more heavily than those with proportions similar or greater than population proportions

UAS recruitment protocol

- Advance notification, followed by mailed packet
  - Cover letter, paper survey, return envelope, $5 bill

- Non-response conversion: (1) reminder post card, (2) second mailing of the survey (3) phone calls

- Responders are sent a welcome packet
  - Brochure, Refillable $15 debit card, login information
  - Invitation to other household members to join

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Provide Internet and Tablet Computers
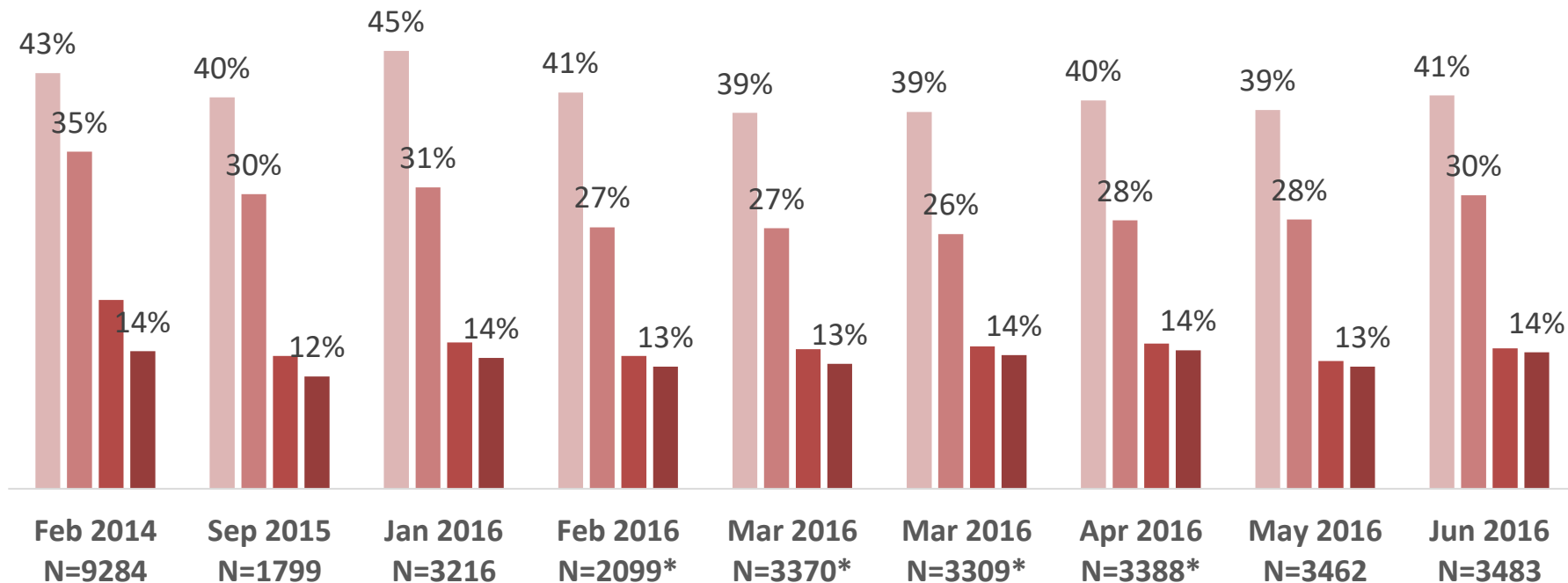
Out of 6000 active panel members

- 310 received an internet-connected tablet (5.2%)

- Recruitment rate among this group about half compared to those with internet

Thus mainly consistent with %15 of US population who do not have internet

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Understanding America Study National Recruitment Waves 2014 - 2016

Recoded Variable	Categories
gender	1. Male; 2. Female
age_cat	1. 18-34; 2. 35/44; 3. 45/54; 4. 55-64; 5. 65+
bornus	0. No; 1. Yes
citizenus	0. No; 1. Yes
marital_cat	1. Married; 2. Separated/Divorced/Widowed; 3. Never Married
education_cat	1. High School or Less; 2. Some College; 3. Assoc. College Degree; 4. Bachelor; 5. Master/Professional/Doctorate Degree
education_cat2	1. High School or Less; 2. Some College; 3. Bachelor or More
hisplatino	0. No; 1. Yes
race_cat	1. White; 2. Black; 3. Others; 4. Hispanic
work_cat	1. Working; 2. Unemployed; 3. Retired; 4. On leave, Disabled, Other
work_cat2	1. Working; 2. Unemployed/On Leave/Disabled; 3. Retired
work_cat3	1. Working; 2. Not Working
hhmembers_cat	1. One Member; 2. Two Members; 3. Three or Four Members; 4. Five or More Members
hhmembers_cat2	1. One Member; 2. Two or Three Members; 3. Four or More Members
hhincome_cat	1. <$30,000; 2. $30,000-$59,999; 3. $60,000-$99,999; 4. $100,000+
hhincome_cat2	1. <$35,000; 2. $35,000-74,999; 3. $75,000+

Sample adjusted to U.S. Census population distributions based on respondent socio-demographics (updated quarterly)

2016 Recruitment Experiments

3 Categories of Recruitment Experiments

1. **Pre-notification post card**
    -   "$5" v. "small token"
    -   Larger text, smaller amount of text

2. **Mailing Envelope**
    -   colorful v. black and white logo on US Postal Service envelope
    -   regular USPS envelope vs. Priority Mailer
    -   Specific name v. "current resident"

3. **Paper Questionnaire: Adding sign-up-online option**

Pre-notification Post Card
"small token of appreciation" (c) or "$5 bill" (t)

In a few days, you will get a brief survey in the mail, as part of an important study we are doing at the University of Southern California. We would like to find out how households are getting by these days. This study is important because it helps public agencies and researchers to take into account the needs and opinions of individuals and families.

Filling out the survey takes no more than 15 minutes and we include a small token of appreciation with the survey.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It is only with the help of people like you that our research can be successful!

En unos pocos días, recibirá una encuesta breve por correo, como parte de un estudio importante que estamos realizando en la Universidad del Sur de California (University of Southern California). Nos gustaría averiguar cómo va la vida en los hogares de familia hoy en día. Este estudio es importante porque ayuda a las agencias públicas y a los investigadores a tomar en cuenta las necesidades y opiniones de los individuos y las familias.

Completar la encuesta no le tomará más de 15 minutos, e incluimos un pequeño regalo de agradecimiento con la encuesta.

Gracias por su tiempo y consideración. ¡El éxito de nuestra investigación depende de la ayuda de personas como usted!

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Filling out the survey takes no more than 15 minutes and we include a small token of appreciation with the survey.

Filling out the survey takes no more than 15 minutes and we include a $5 bill with the survey.

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Pre-notification card:
"$5 bill" (t) v. "small token of appreciation" (c)
Differences not significant

Experiment 49 (MSG5): Postcard $5

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.321	0.328	−0.007	0.015	−0.46	0.6443	4003
Enrollment (0/1)	0.113	0.110	0.003	0.010	0.31	0.7589	4003

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Pre-notification card:
Less text, larger font (t) v. original (c)
Differences not significant

Experiment 55 (MSG7): Modified personalized postcard and letter

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.337	0.339	−0.002	0.015	−0.13	0.8941	4034
Enrollment (0/1)	0.103	0.095	0.008	0.009	0.90	0.3701	4034

Pre-notification card
Less text, larger font (t) v. original (c) *repeated*
Slight suppression of initial response
No significant impact on enrollment

Experiment 56 (MSG8): Modified personalized postcard and letter

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.313	0.344	−0.031	0.015	−2.09	0.0366	4067
Enrollment (0/1)	0.076	0.067	0.009	0.008	1.14	0.2534	4067

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USPS Mailing Envelope Logo:
Color logo label (t) v. plain text label (c)
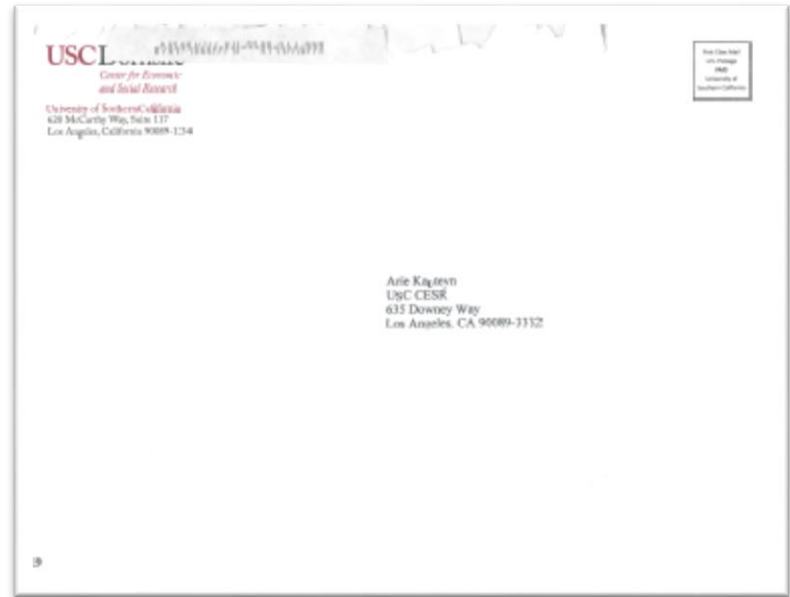
Envelope
Colorful logo label (t) v. Plain text label (c)
Higher initial response
no significant impact on enrollment

Experiment 39 (MSG1): Colorful label

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.390	0.343	0.047	0.022	2.17	0.0299	2000
Enrollment (0/1)	0.122	0.116	0.006	0.014	0.39	0.6931	2000

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ESRA - Lisbon – July 19, 2017
Probability-based Research Panels 1

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Envelope
[Resident name] *or Current Resident* (t)
v. [Resident Name] (c)

Differences not significant

Experiment 37 (MSG1): Name + current resident

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.398	0.392	0.006	0.023	0.27	0.7843	1753
Enrollment (0/1)	0.123	0.126	−0.002	0.016	−0.15	0.8779	1753

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Priority Mail (t)
v. US Mail (c)

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Priority mail (t) v. US Mail (c)
Increased initial response, no significant increase in enrollment

Experiment 46 (MSG4): Priority mail

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.375	0.315	0.061	0.015	3.93	0.0001	3840
Enrollment (0/1)	0.127	0.111	0.016	0.011	1.53	0.1271	3840

No sign up online (c)
v. Online sign up option (t)

Online sign up option (t)
v. No online sign up option (c)
Differences not significant

Experiment 43 (MSG2): Direct signup

Outcome	Treatment	Control	Diff	StdErr	t	p	N
Initial response (0/1)	0.385	0.405	−0.019	0.016	−1.21	0.2265	3706
Enrollment (0/1)	0.125	0.131	−0.006	0.011	−0.54	0.5883	3706

Summary

- Adaptive address-based sampling resulted in response rates of 12%-14% after multi-phase mail and phone recruitment

- Providing tablets and internet decreased sample variance from benchmark for lower income, older, and rural residents

- Experiments varied elements of pre-notification, mailing envelope, and online enrollment options

- Priority mail envelope and color logo each increased initial response phase but no significant impact on overall enrollment

- Next steps: use sample-level data to continue to examine non-response, experiments to decrease drop-off between consent and enrollment

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