The SSRS Probability Panel

Methodology Statement

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THE SSRS PROBABILITY PANEL

The SSRS Probability Panel is an online panel designed to be representative of and projectable to the U.S. population. SSRS Probability Panel members are recruited randomly from a dual-frame random digit dial (RDD) sample, through the SSRS Omnibus survey. The SSRS Omnibus survey is a national (50-state), bilingual telephone survey designed to meet standards of quality associated with custom research studies. The SSRS Omnibus runs six waves each month. Each wave consists of 1,000 interviews, of which 600 are obtained with respondents on their cell phones, and over one-third of Hispanic interviews completed in Spanish.

Because the SSRS Probability Panel recruitment relies on an existing, high-quality survey platform, the result is an affordable probabilistically-sourced sample. Respondents of the SSRS Omnibus represent the full U.S. adult population (English and Spanish speaking). From this base, SSRS screens for Internet access and then recruits those who have access to be part of the SSRS Probability Panel.

From each SSRS Omnibus wave of about 1,000 respondents, approximately 85% are identified as having Internet access and are invited to participate in the panel. Of these, approximately 45% agree to participate in the SSRS Probability Panel and provide their email address. These numbers vary slightly from wave to wave.

DATA COLLECTION

Surveys conducted using the SSRS Probability Panel are self-administered web surveys. Respondents are invited by email, which includes survey log-in credentials that are unique to each respondent. In appreciation for their participation, panelists receive a modest incentive for participation (in the form of an electronic Amazon gift card or cash sent via postal mail according to respondent preference). Depending on the field period, reminder emails are sent to panelists who do not complete the survey after being sent the initial invitation

DATA PROCESSING AND WEIGHTING

After the completion of data collection using the SSRS Probability Panel, the data are thoroughly cleaned through use of a computer validation program written by one of SSRS's data processing programmers. This program establishes editing parameters in order to locate any errors. After these quality control procedures have been carried out, top-line frequency distributions and arrays are run, as needed.

Each SSRS Probability Panel survey is weighted to provide nationally representative and projectable estimates of the adult population 18 years of age and older (or other population, depending on the study needs). The weighting process takes into account the recruitment of panelists through SSRS Omnibus, thus the disproportionate probabilities of household and respondent selection due to the number of separate telephone landlines and cellphones answered by Omnibus respondents and their households, as well as the probability associated with the random selection of an individual household

member. In addition, for studies that interview Internet households and project to national households, a propensity score is also incorporated into the base-weight.

Following application of the above weights, the sample is post-stratified and balanced by key demographics such as age, race, sex, region, and education. The sample is also weighted to reflect the distribution of phone usage in the general population, meaning the proportion of those who are cell phone only, landline only, and mixed users.

Specific base weight and post-stratification steps are provided below:

Baseweight:

(1) Probability of Selection (phone number): A phone number's probability of selection depends on the number of phone-numbers selected out of the total sample frame. For each landline number this is calculated as total landline numbers dialed divided by total numbers in the landline frame and conversely for the cell phone numbers this is calculated as total cell phone numbers divided by total numbers in the cell phone frame.

(2) Probability of Contact: The probability that the sampling unit (households on landlines or respondents on cell phone) will be reached is a product of the number of phones (by type) a respondent (on cell phones) or household (on landlines) answer.

(3) Probability of Respondent Selection: In households reached by landline, a single respondent is selected. Thus, the probability of selection within a household is inversely related to the number of adults in the household.

(4) The product of the three corrections above is then adjusted so that the share of respondents answering landlines only and those answering both types of phone is representative of this distribution in the most recent account from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Similarly, the weights are adjusted so that the share of respondents answering cell phones only and those answering both types of phone is representative of this distribution in the most recent NHIS.

(5) Propensity scores were created via logistic regression model run on our Omnibus for parsing out effects due to not covering non-Internet households, where applicable.

The final base weight is a product of the base weight arrived at in step 4 with the propensity weight of step 5.

Post-stratification weight:

(1) With the base-weight applied, the sample undergoes a process of iterative proportional fitting (IPF), in which the sample is balanced to match known adult-population parameters based on the most recent March Supplement of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS).

The population parameters used for post-stratification are: age (18-29; 30-49; 50-64; 65+) by gender, Census region (Northeast, North-Central, South, West), Education (high school graduate or less, some

college or more); race/ethnicity (white non-Hispanic; Black non-Hispanic; Hispanic; Other non-Hispanic); marital status (married/not married), and phone-usage (cell phone only, landline only, both).

(2) Weight truncation ('trimming'): To limit variance introduced by weighting, the weights undergo truncation (or 'trimming'), as needed.

The sum of weights is balanced to equal the sample N.

COOPERATION RATE

As of August 2016, there are more than 10,000 panelists in the SSRS Probability Panel. Specific study cooperation rates can range from 15% to 50%, depending on the topic, population, and field period.