

# Transition from Telephone Mode to Mixed Mode Surveys:

## A CASE STUDY

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**AAPOR**

Annual Conference

**2022**

*Chicago, IL*

May 12, 2022

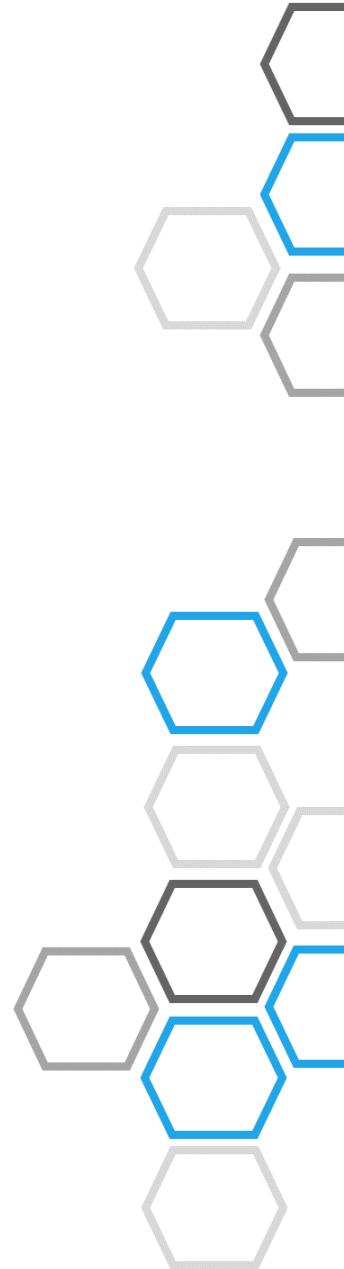
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# AAPOR Task Force Report on Mode Transition

- Report of the AAPOR Task Force on Transitions from Telephone Surveys to Self-Administered and Mixed-Mode Surveys Task Force Report October 2019.
  - <https://www.aapor.org/getattachment/Education-Resources/Reports/Report-of-the-Task-Force-on-Transitions-from-Telephone-Surveys-FULL-REPORT-FINAL.pdf.aspx>
- Transitions from Telephone Surveys to Self-Administered and Mixed-Mode Surveys: AAPOR Task Force Report
  - *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology: Volume 9/Number 3. June 2021*

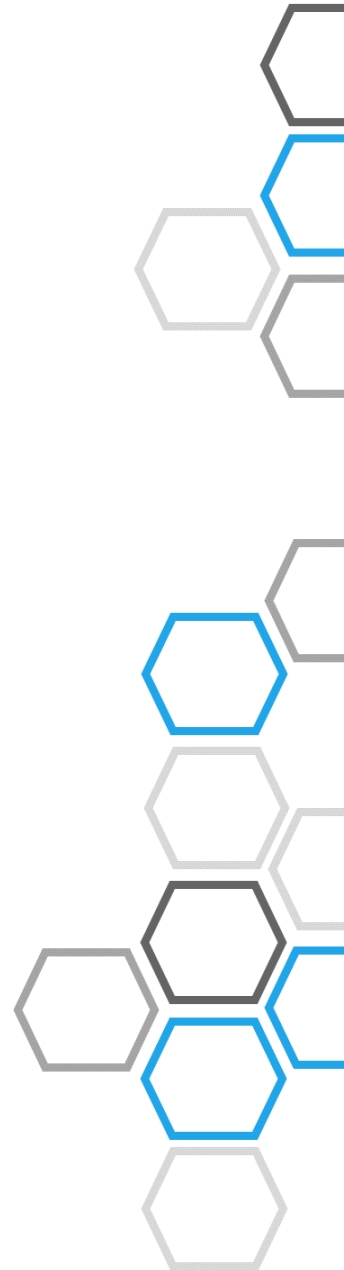
# Outline

- Why transition from phone to mixed mode?
- Benefits of Transition from Phone to Mixed Mode
- Considerations in Mode Transition
- Mode Transition Case Study
- Mode Transition Guidance and Takeaways



# Outline

- **Why transition from phone to mixed mode?**
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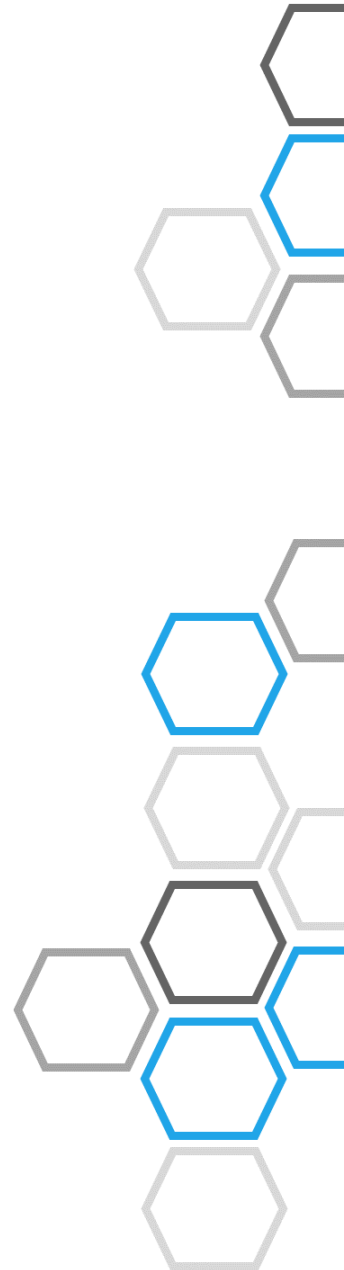
# Why transition from phone to mixed mode?

- **Increasing Cost:** Continued growth of cell phone only households reduces operational efficiency and increases cost of data collection (65.8% of adults live in wireless only households per latest National Health Interview Survey data).
- **Frame Challenge:** RDD Landline frame is progressively becoming less representative.
- **Geographic Targeting Challenge:** Difficulty of geographic targeting for cellular phone sample.
- **Declining Response Rate:** Decline in response rate for phone surveys and reduced representation of hard-to-reach population in telephone polls (Lower educated, Hispanics, African Americans).
- **Increasing Internet Usage:** People are more reachable on-line than phone. Ninety-three (93%) of American adults use Internet as of 2021 (Pew Research Center report).



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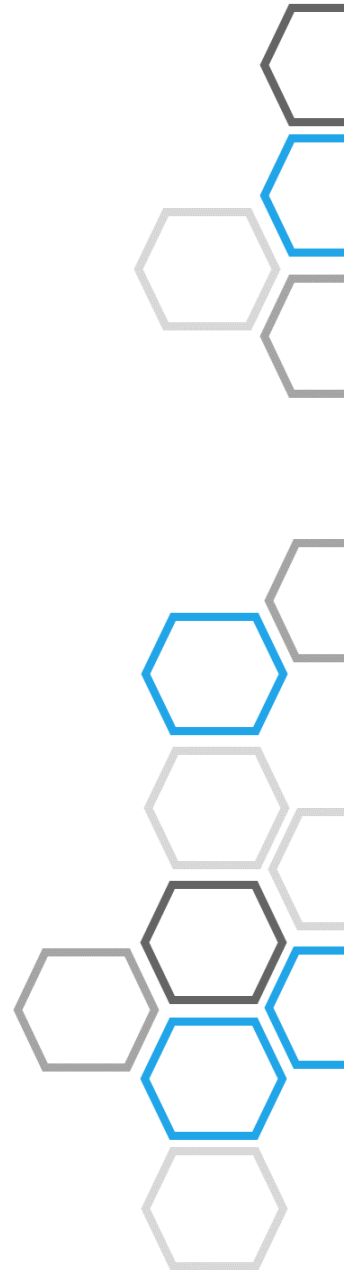
# Benefits of Transitioning from Phone to Mixed Mode

- **Improved Frame Coverage:** Ability to target smaller geographic areas, improved ability to target rare ethnic groups.
- **Improved Response Rates:** Concurrent or Sequential Mixed-mode surveys have yielded higher documented response rates than recent RDD phone surveys.
- **Flexibility in Use of Incentives:** A combination of pre- and post- incentives can be effective in increasing response rate.
- **Innovative Measurement Possibilities:** Use of visual scales plus ability to test audio-visual stimuli. Use of mapping functions such as Google maps API.
- **Potentially Lower Costs:** Lower productivity and increasing interviewer costs result in phone mode being more expensive compared to self-administered modes.



# Outline

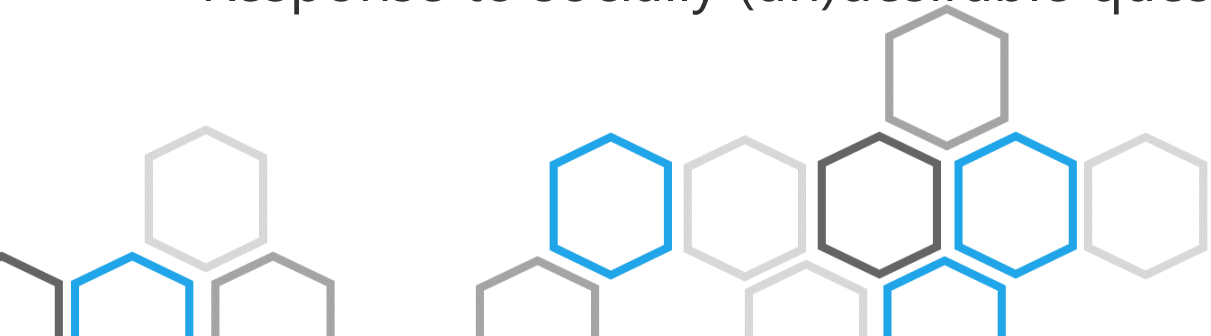
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# Key Considerations in Mode Transition

- **Respondent Selection:** Two stage vs. single stage respondent selection
- **Questionnaire Length:** Shorter length 15 to 20 minutes more appropriate for self administered mode.
- **Questionnaire Design Decisions:** Complicated questionnaire logic and skip patterns may be problematic for mail mode questionnaire.
- **Potential Impact on Tracking Questions with Mode Transition:**
  - Item non-response may be impacted with Don't know/Refused volunteered categories for phone vs non-existent or explicit response categories for self-administered mode.
  - Response to knowledge questions may be impacted for self administered mode.
  - Response to socially (un)desirable questions may be impacted.



# Key considerations in mode transition

- **Language of administration:** For multi-lingual surveys, transition all languages to mixed mode or retain non-English languages on phone?
- **Increased difficulty of interviewing Children and Teens:** Collect data from child proxy or from children and teens. If children and teens, address parental consent and teen hand-off issues.
- **Increased difficulty of collecting non-survey data:** Interviewer observations, biological measurements, specimen collection. Sending separate teams for these may result in lower consent rates.



# Increased Use of Probability Panels and Related Products

## PROB PANEL BASED CUSTOM STUDIES

- Standalone/longitudinal surveys.
- Cognitive interviews.
- Virtual focus groups.
- Diary studies.

## TEXT MESSAGE PANEL

- Point-in-time data collection.
- Quick reaction polls.

## PROPRIETARY PANELS

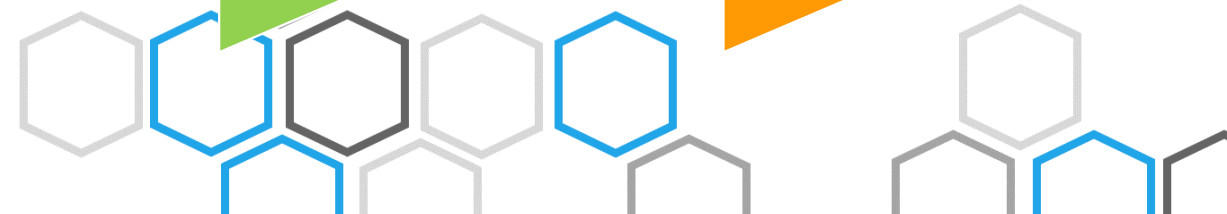
- Custom panels for exclusive institutional use.

## HYBRID PROB PANEL AND NON-PROB POLLS WITH CALIBRATION

- Balance rigor and cost efficiency.
- Rare population studies.

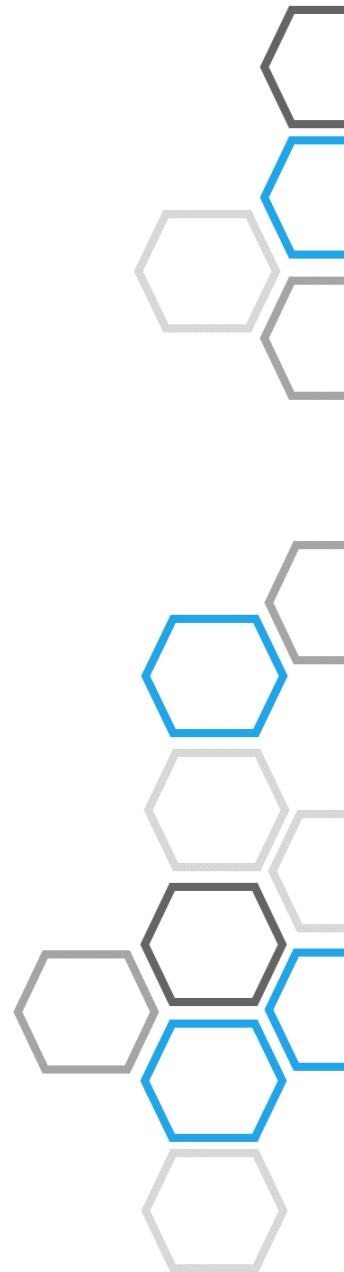
## PROBABILITY PANEL OMNIBUS

- Cost effective shared data collection platform.
- Ideal for short surveys.
- Tracking polls.



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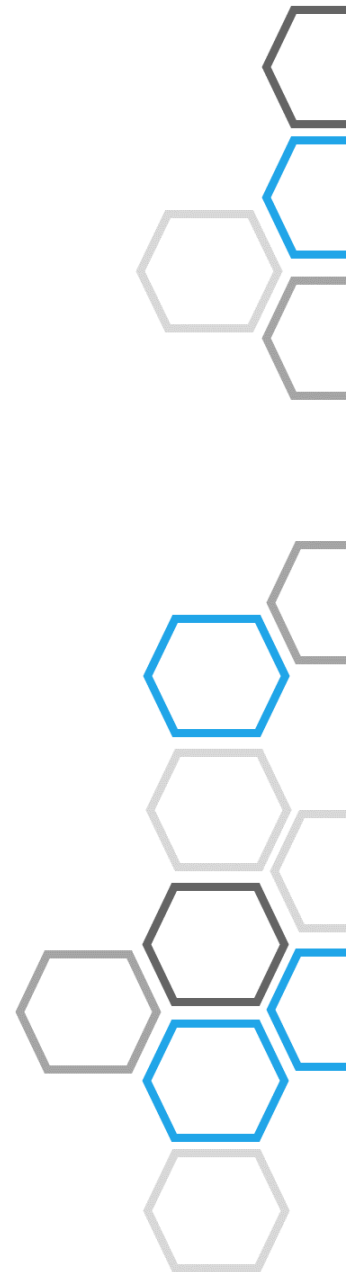
# CASE STUDY:

## Transition From RDD to Mixed Mode ABS

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# RDD and ABS Study Specifications

	RDD	TRANSITIONED MIXED MODE ABS
MODES	Telephone	Mail push to web
		Inbound telephone
		Outbound telephone
SAMPLE FRAME	National RDD (Adults 18+)	National ABS (Adults 18+)
SAMPLE SIZE	1,005	2,119 (1943 web, 176 phone)
FIELD DATES	October 23 - 26, 2020	August 3-September 7, 2021
SURVEY LENGTH	Avg phone: 13.7 minutes	Median web: 20.6 minutes
		Avg phone: 35.1 minutes
INCENTIVES	None	Pre-incentive: \$1.25 in mailed invitation letter
		Post-incentive: \$10 virtual gift card for web, \$10 mailed check for phone



# How Mixed-Mode ABS Can Tackle RDD Challenges

## GEOGRAPHIC PRECISION

ABS Study was stratified by Census region at the census block group level:

- Northeast
- Midwest
- South-Atlantic
- South-Other
- West

## TARGETING POPULATIONS

ABS Study was further stratified at the census block group level based on:

- Density of African Americans or Hispanics.
- Model-based predictions of address-level party identification.

Appended telephone numbers for targeted dialing.

## RESPONSE RATES

ABS Study was able to proactively address potential response rate issues by:

- Mailing letters to legitimize the survey. Contained cash pre-incentive and offer of post-incentive, survey link and unique password, FAQ, and SSRS website link.
- Allowing for mixed modes (web, inbound calls, outbound calls).

# Case Studies: Demographic Comparison (Unweighted)

Parameter		RDD Unweighted (n=1005)	ABS Unweighted (n=2119)
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	48.5%	53.0%	49.7%
Female	51.5%	47.0%	49.0%
<b>AGE</b>			
18-24	11.5%	6.9%	<b>5.1%</b>
25-34	18.0%	11.1%	<b>15.9%</b>
35-44	16.4%	12.5%	<b>17.4%</b>
45-54	15.7%	16.0%	16.1%
55-64	16.7%	20.0%	19.9%
65+	21.7%	32.5%	<b>25.6%</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
HS grad or less	37.6%	29.7%	<b>19.3%</b>
Some college	27.6%	26.2%	32.4%
College graduate +	34.8%	43.5%	48.2%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>			
White, non-Hispanic	62.8%	71.2%	71.3%
Black, non-Hispanic	11.9%	10.0%	<b>7.3%</b>
Hispanic	16.7%	10.0%	11.2%
Other, non-Hispanic	8.6%	7.3%	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>PARTY ID</b>			
Dem	n/a	34.5%	32.4%
Ind	n/a	35.3%	36.9%
Rep	n/a	30.1%	30.7%



# Response Rates



- **RDD:**
  - Sponsor with global name recognition was revealed to respondents.
  - More sample required, lower response rate.
- **ABS:**
  - Blinded sponsorship. Only SSRS name revealed to respondents.
  - Less sample required, higher response rate.

	RDD Phone (LL)	RDD Phone (Cell)	ABS
<b>Completes</b>	349	656	2,119
<b>RDD: Total phone numbers used</b> <b>ABS: Total records contacted</b>	23,871	20,135	28,638
<b>RR3</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

# Mode Differences

**RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CAN BE **VERY SIMILAR****  
**WHEN SAME ANSWER CATEGORIES ARE USED**  
**AND FOR QUESTIONS WHERE ITEM NON-RESPONSE IS**  
**LOW.**

***DATA FROM A TRANSITIONED MIXED MODE ABS  
(WEB/PHONE) AND AN RDD POLL.***

# RDD and ABS Response Patterns on Key Question

QUESTION: HOW WELL DO YOU FEEL THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON REPRESENTS THE VIEWS OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF?

	NET Well	Very well	Somewhat well	NET Not well	Not too well	Not at all well	No opinion
Mixed-Mode ABS: Aug. 3-Sept. 7, 2021	<b>30%</b>	5%	26%	<b>69%</b>	36%	34%	*
RDD: March 4-7, 2020	<b>31%</b>	8%	23%	<b>66%</b>	32%	34%	3%

# Mode Differences

**RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION CAN BE DIFFERENT  
FOR QUESTIONS WITH “OFFERED” RESPONSES  
FOR WEB VS “VOLUNTEERED” RESPONSES FOR PHONE.**

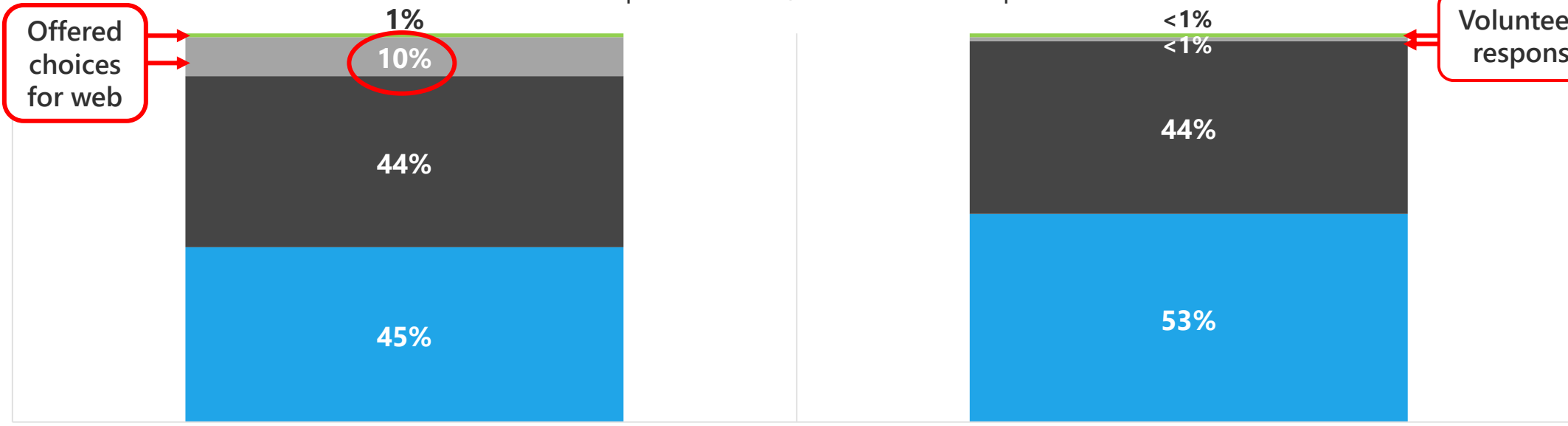
# Congressional Generic Ballot

**IF THE ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS WERE BEING HELD TODAY, WHICH PARTY'S CANDIDATE WOULD YOU VOTE FOR IN YOUR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT? / IF THE ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS WERE BEING HELD TODAY, AS OF TODAY, DO YOU LEAN MORE TOWARD:**

■ Dem ■ Rep ■ Neither/Other ■ Don't plan to vote

Offered choices for web

Volunteered responses



MIXED MODE WEIGHTED

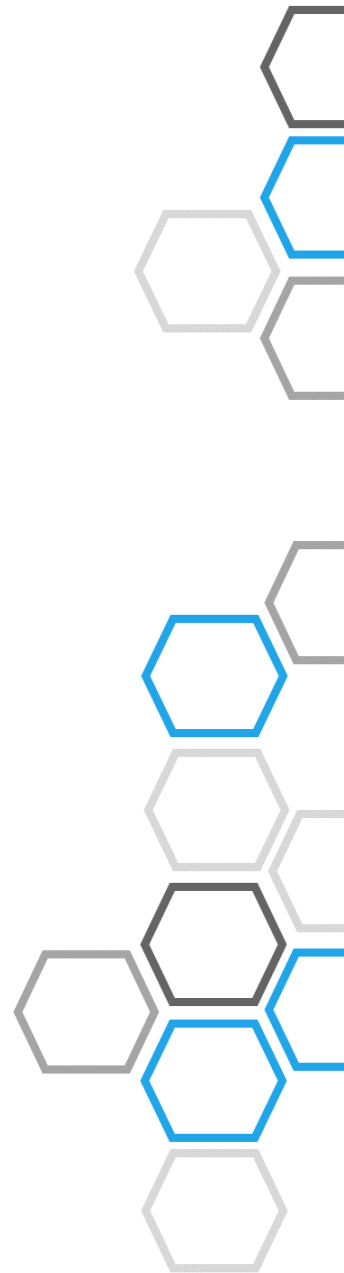
PHONE WEIGHTED

Compared to RDD registered voters, significantly larger portion of mixed-mode registered voters, where majority were web respondents, report Neither/Other.



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# Mode Transition Guidance and Takeaways

- **Auxiliary Data and Stratification:** Use Auxiliary ABS data to improve representation of hard-to-reach population.
- **Predictive Modeling:** Increasing use of predictive modeling to target hard-to-reach groups such as Less than High School.
- **Consider Simultaneous Fielding of Old and New Modes:** Identify questions with mode differences.
- **Cognitive Testing:** Do not assume that the question will be understood the same way for phone and online mode. Important to conduct cognitive testing to identify respondent comprehension issues.



# Mode Transition Guidance and Takeaways

- **Response Options:** For trend questions with volunteered responses, evaluate past data to determine whether explicitly offering those options in new self-administered modes is warranted (e.g., both or neither options).
- **Multi-item Batteries:** Present one item at a time, rather than in a grid/matrix. This ensures the same presentation across new modes as for original phone-only studies. Grid/matrix questions are also not advisable from a data quality perspective.
- **Skip Patterns:** Avoid complicated skip patterns for studies involving mail mode.
- **Tracking Studies and Trends:** Even after all the measures, some disruption in trends is inevitable. Document it and communicate the same to end users.





# Thank You, AAPOR

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