



INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE: THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND INTO THE FUTURE

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Dialing In

Current State of Survey Research

- » Massive changes in polling and survey research
- » Biggest is drift from live CATI to online methods
 - Fast, inexpensive
 - Self-administered
 - Multi-media capabilities
- » BUT non-probability online methods lack representativeness
 - Non-coverage issues
 - Not randomly selected
- » Another option: Interactive Voice Response (IVR) for both data collection and probability panel construction



Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

Advantages and Disadvantages of IVR

- » Advantages
 - + Perhaps closest to national population
 - + Avoids social desirability
 - + Cost-effective
 - + Higher reliability due to large sample sizes

- » Disadvantages
 - Higher non-response
 - Survey must be shorter
 - Some design limits
 - Reputation
 - Intrusiveness



Accuracy of Results

- » Rob Ford election as recent illustration of IVR success
 - Coverage issue (older, vulnerable)
 - Social desirability issues (closet supporters)

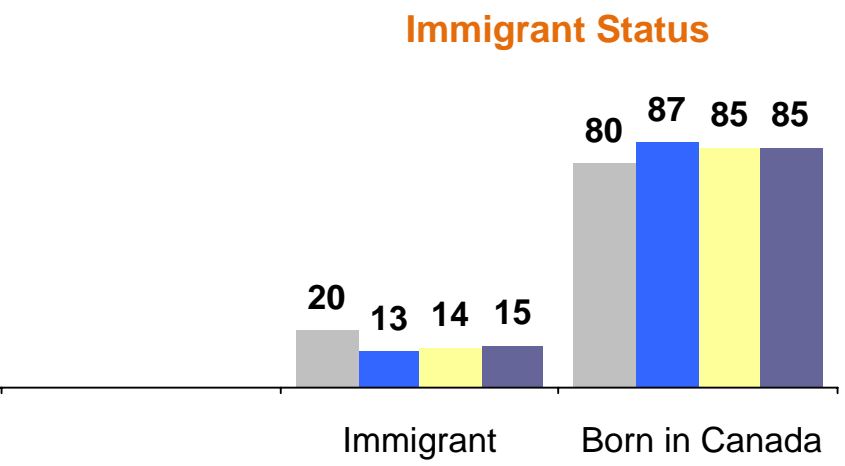
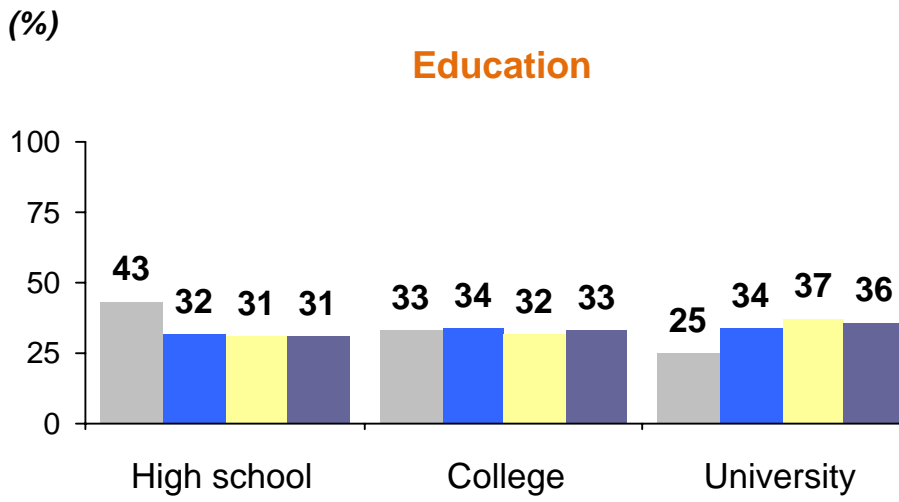
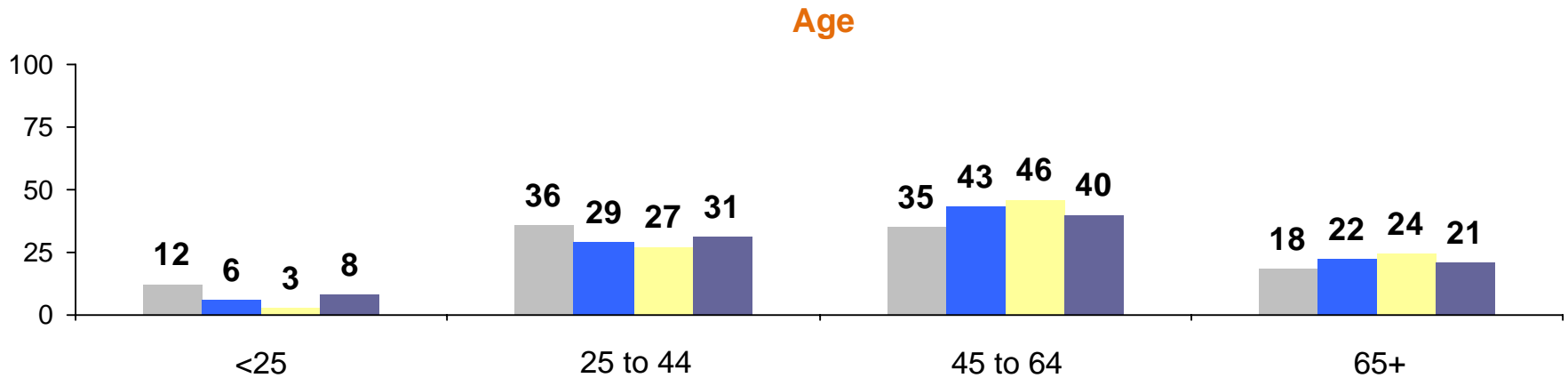
- » 2008 federal election (EKOS results most accurate of RDD polls – see <http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/results.html>)

- » U.S. mid-terms (mixed results – clear lessons)

- » IVR is good for short polls and for population seeding a panel, BUT live follow-up is crucial:
 - Verification
 - Explanation
 - Create dossier of key demographics



Demographic Analysis – IVR vs. CATI



Response Rate – IVR vs. CATI

	IVR Landline Sample	Live Interviewer CATI Landline Sample
Final Disposition		
Unused	0	0
A Invalid numbers	14,395	4,829
B Unresolved	5,707	8,083
C Non-responding (unknown eligibility)	0	0
D Ineligible (language barrier)	2,200 (estimated)	1,129
E Non-responding (eligible)	37,922	12,009
F Completed interviews	1,976	3,009
TOTALS	60,000	29,059
Response Rate		
Empirical Method $(f+d)/(b+d+e+f+c)$	8.7%	17.08%



Conclusions

Considerations

- » IVR in and of itself is not a polling method
 - Still need rigorous sampling, callbacks, etc.
 - But provides excellent equilibrium of cost and quality in appropriate circumstances

- » Hugely neglected area (largely reputational), but will improve

- » IVR is vastly superior to non-probability online polls or even live CATI omnibus (purpose built IVR versus uncertain context of omnibus)

- » Response rate issue overstated; non-response about half live CATI

Capabilities

- » In the United States, when pollsters had the accuracy of their results tested during the 2008 primary and election year, the two companies employing IVR were rated first and eighth among more than forty companies by the leading website monitoring polling in the U.S.
- » AAPOR has indicated:
 - “...the use of either computerized telephone interviewing (CATI) techniques or interactive voice response (IVR) techniques made no difference to the accuracy of estimates...” (in U.S. pre-primary polls)*
- » The Pew Research Center has reported:
 - “...the mean error among IVR polls [in the 2008 U.S. election] was slightly lower than among those with live interviewers.”*

Emerging Issues

- » Education and civic literacy/interest bias
- » Better sampling and weighting
- » No long form census?
- » The cell phone only household
- » Broader credibility of scientific samples/evidence based research





For more information:

Frank Graves

EKOS Research Associates

fgraves@ekos.com

(613) 235-7215

www.ekos.com