

PolicyInteractive
Nov-Dec 2017 Survey Ideological Consistency and Political Typology Study
Description of Study Purpose & Methodology

PolicyInteractive (PI) seeks improved understanding relating to the following objectives:

1. Replicate and extend examination of Pew Research Center's 2014 Ideological Consistency and Typology study
2. Introduce current event questions and update several PI question batteries for examination, using a sampling of Pew's scales for comparison and fresh insights
3. Examine why public support for redirection of a portion of fuel tax revenue towards reducing the need to drive wanes if it requires an amendment to the state constitution
4. Continue investigation of PI's ongoing question: Is carefully employed internet surveying a valid representation of a general target population?
5. Testing the utility of additional states which share Oregon's political culture for ease of obtaining sufficient statistical respondent numbers

A brief expansion of each of these objectives by numerical category:

1. Build familiarity with Pew's Ideological Consistency and Political Typology theories:
In 2014, Pew Research Center (Pew) interviewed social attitudes of over 10,000 random dial telephone respondents, its largest single study across decades of research of classic worldview type questions. Pew's purpose was to consolidate and extend their ongoing study of ideological and political typology analysis of the U.S. public, drawing on a long history of social questions used by Pew and others. The unusually large 10,000 respondent count, coupled with approximately 200 questions (some to all respondents, others divided into a tercile split sample), along with Pew's open source data policy makes their data attractive to work with. After preliminary review of the original Pew data and replicating some of Pew's prior analysis, PI repeated their core 2014 "Ideology" and "Political Typology" question constructs (scale modifications noted below) and thereafter introduced several fresh batteries of current events and specialized research of interest to PI. The PI survey was fielded to ~ 1200 respondents in late November and early December 2017.
2. Introduce or replicate prior topics of interest:
PI introduced several additional question batteries after the initial Pew questions were asked, to avoid order influence on Pew's original questions. The additional questions were both general (a ranking of current social interest topics) and specific (updating a battery of trending questions about climate change policy choices and health care policy choices). A standard battery of demographic questions were also included. PI's principle interest with this survey is to: a) test the utility of the Pew items for explanatory strength of attitudes and behaviors on topics of PI interest; b) expand PI's repertoire of explanatory social science questions; and c) continue to develop an integrated theory of understanding drivers of public policy choices.

3. Testing a very narrow policy puzzle:

In a prior 2017 survey we found strong majority support for redirecting road fuel tax fees to reducing the need to drive. Retesting that for consistency, we introduced a downstream question about public support for amending the state's constitution to allow such redirection to occur. At the midpoint of the previous survey we found that while the initial finding of support held, the willingness to change the constitution did not. Hence, we introduced a multiple-choice question about why there was support for the redirection of the tax fees but not for changing the constitution to allow it to occur; this also included an open response to capture volunteer answers outside of our multiple-choice selections.

4. Examination of internet survey methodology validity:

Development of a set of matrix output tables showing side-by-side comparisons of different data sources is displayed through a matrix table of source material (when data existed):

Benchmark Reference Comparisons (where available):

- 2014 Pew Survey $N=10,013$
- 2014 Pew Survey results of 4 states; CA, CO, OR & WA
- Prior PI random dial telephone surveys
- Other reputable survey sources
- Governmental data sources (e.g. Census, Secretary of State voter demographics)
- 2017 PI Survey internet Mechanical Turk (Mt) 4 states $N=510$
- 2017 PI Survey internet Research Now (RN) 4 states $N=650$
- 2017 PI Survey combined Mt + RN $N=1161$
- 2017 PI Survey combined Mt + RN (filter out problematic responses) $N=1103$
- 2017 PI Survey combined Oregon only (filter out prob. response) $N=518$

Random dial telephone sampling has been the technological choice for statistical sampling for about seventy years, owing to very high telephone use by the target population. The well-documented decline of telephone response rates has caused the reliability and respectability of telephone sampling to lessen across the past decade. A steady rise in random telephone interview sampling costs has reached the point where the ratio of telephone to internet sampling cost is about 10:1. For example, our cost per random dial telephone interview is \$25-30 while internet sampling costs are \$1-3. Uncertainty about the justifiability of costs for telephone sampling has inspired us to repeatedly conduct validity tests.

PI's five-year series of multi-modal surveys contributes evidence that internet sampling can be equivalent to telephone sampling. Meanwhile, both telephone and internet sampling face ongoing challenges as means to make inferences about culture-wide attitudes. This December 2017 project continues the pursuit of a viable low-cost means of sampling target populations.

Because the Pew 2014 $N=10,013$ survey is both a source of key questions and result comparison benchmarks, several caveats must be mentioned. The Pew 2014 results possess three distinctive differences from our 2017 survey data:

- Pew's dichotomous (forced choice) questions offer two choices, requiring a stark A/B choice. Our PI version replicates Pew question phrasing, but employs a 4-point dichotomous scale instead. (Pew did not offer an intermediate choice but accepted volunteered "other" types of responses.) This difference is partly explained in that a read-aloud four-point scale is cumbersome in auditory telephone interviewing, whereas the internet's visual interface functions easily with a 4-point scale ("Strongly" or "Lean towards" for both statement A and statement B), allowing more dimensionality

of response and less respondent angst over black and white characterization of complex social questions.

- Some Pew questions have various levels of social stigma or political correctness implications. Other research has found that personal conversation with another person introduces elements of survey error called *social desirability responding*, wherein a respondent errs toward what they think others might want to hear rather than what the respondent might actually think if left entirely to their own devices (e.g., anonymous ballot box) or act within in-group situations. Internet sampling exhibits much less social desirability response error exhibited in face-to-face interviews - the respondent treats the question choice more like a private ballot question.
- The Pew questions are intended to have strong political ideological resonance, yet when comparing current survey results with 2014 survey responses, one must recognize that the ideological response characteristics may differ from near the end of the Obama presidency and a year into the Trump administration - both surveys collected during times of politically intensity but with very different political climates.

We thus caution that although the Pew 2014 survey is of high-quality random telephone sampling, comparisons should be viewed with knowledge that methodological and temporal differences can make direct comparisons tenuous. We are waiting for Pew to release raw survey data of the same questions run in December 2017, nearly the same time this survey was completed, resolving a good part of the temporal problem, although not the methodological ones.

5. Obtaining larger numbers of internet respondents:

Making reliable inferences through sampling requires a range of quality control objectives to be met. A standard objective of sufficient numerical count of respondents to obtain inferential strength within reputable internet sampling addresses from sample suppliers continues to be problematic in a small state like Oregon. In recent years, various companies have developed techniques for aggregating large populations of internet addresses, although even this is tiny compared to publicly available telephone numbers. We have found it difficult to reliably obtain sufficient respondent counts for Oregon and are exploring a hypothesis that combining certain states with a shared political culture can act as an effective surrogate for Oregon alone.

Testing this within this survey employs the utilization of data from four states sharing a common political culture: Colorado, Washington, Oregon and California. To avoid a large population state with perhaps a bit higher liberalism like CA overwhelming the mix, the counts of the states were managed such that California respondent count was kept low and Oregon was sampled more to compensate for size differences. Simply put, PI maximized Oregon respondent sample size and supplemented with respondents from Washington, Colorado and California. This approach is being evaluated for utility using side-by-side comparisons with Oregon-only results as well as key selected quality benchmark sources on appropriate variables.