

Survey Attention and Self-Reported Political Behavior

R. Michael Alvarez and Yimeng Li*

California Institute of Technology

Click [here](#) for the full article on APSA Preprint.

Abstract

Survey research methodology is evolving rapidly, as new technologies provide new opportunities. One of the areas of innovation regards the development of online interview best practices, and the advancement of methods that allow researchers to measure the attention that subjects are devoting to the survey task. Reliable measurement of subject attention can yield important information about the quality of the survey response. In this paper, we take advantage of an innovative survey we conducted in 2018, in which we directly connect survey responses to administrative data, allowing us to directly assess the association between survey attention and response quality. We show that attentive survey subjects are more likely to provide accurate survey responses regarding a number of behaviors and attributes that we can validate with our administrative data. The best strategy to deal with inattentive respondents, however, depends on the correlation between respondent attention and the outcome of interest.

*We thank the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation for supporting our research, and the Orange County Registrar of Voters for providing access to administrative data. We thank Jian Cao and Ines Levin for their collaborations with us on related projects. This paper was presented at the 2021 Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting; we thank panel participants for their comments and feedback about our research.