



Is Anyone Out There? *Response Rates and Telephone Surveys*

Government of Canada Telephone Response Rates



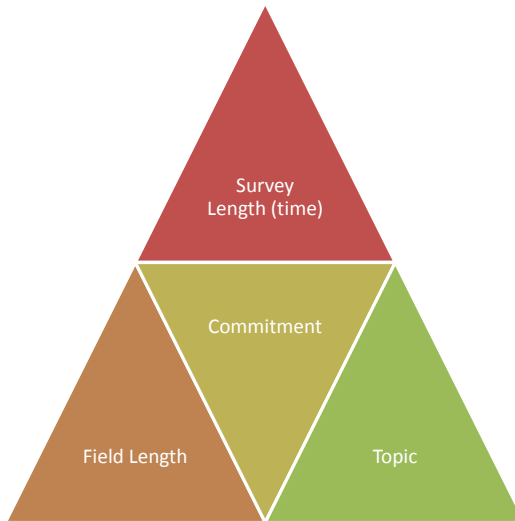
Method:

- Examine telephone surveys conducted by government departments available online (<http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/>)

Conditions

- The survey must be of the general public (no business surveys, clients) and must be close to 100% incidence.
- They must be national surveys.
- They must be custom surveys so as much as possible (if identified) omnibus and syndicated research was excluded.
- The information in the report must include response rate information (record of call). As much as possible only those studies that report ROC consistent with the MRIA/ Government of Canada requirements were included.
- 101 studies met all conditions between 2005 and 2009 (25 different departments; 9 different suppliers)

Accounting for Response Rates



- There are 4 survey attributes that account for differential response rates:
 1. Shorter surveys (time) have better response rates
 2. Shorter field periods have lower response rates
 3. Interesting topics have better response rates
 4. Clients and/or survey firms can influence response rates by their desire for a higher rate through influence 1 and 2 but also more generally (e.g. field call practices; interviewer training).

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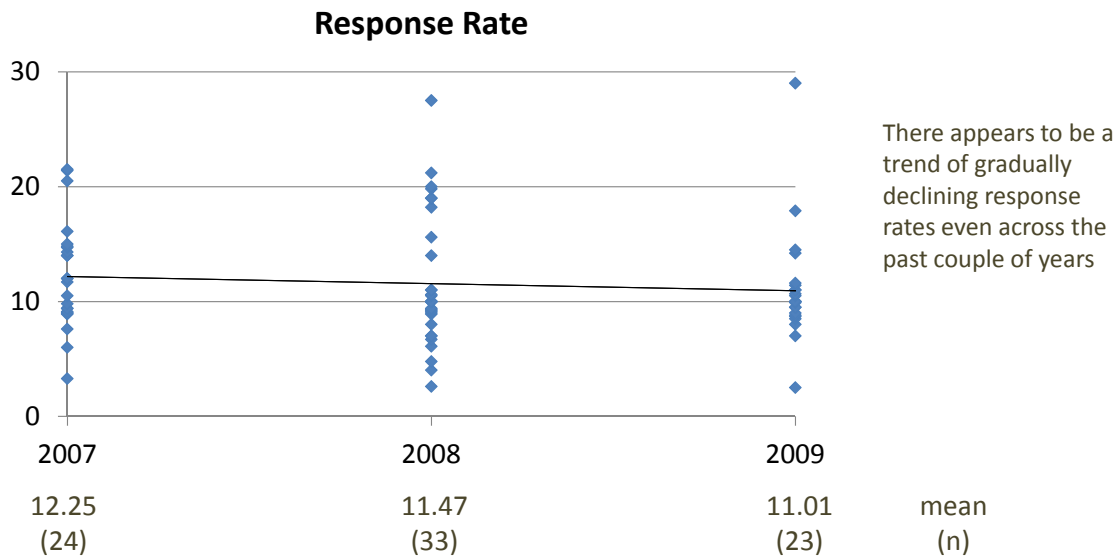
The Findings



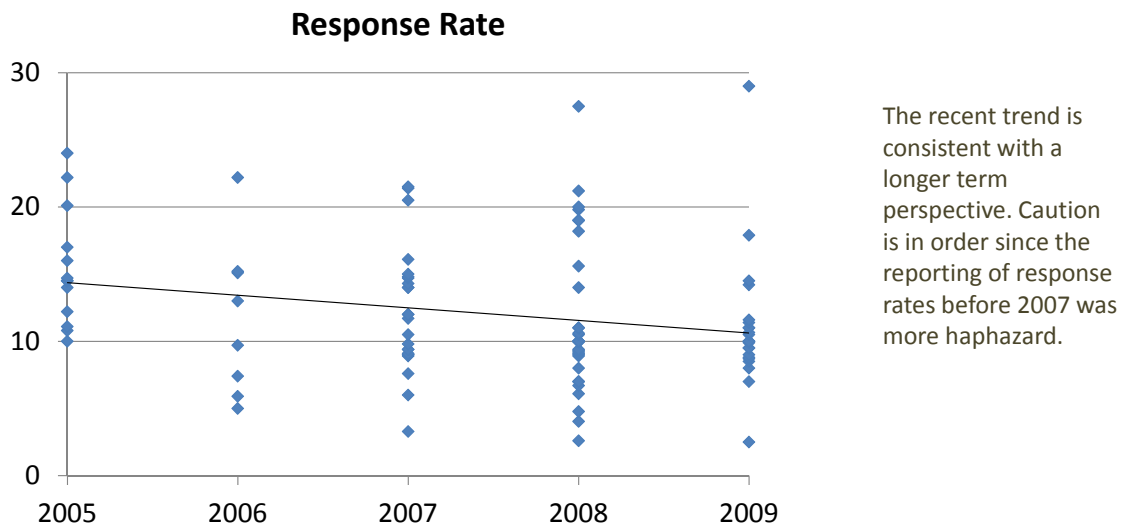
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Declining Response Rates: 2007-2009



Declining Response Rates: 2007-2009



Outliers



What is striking about the graph are the outliers.

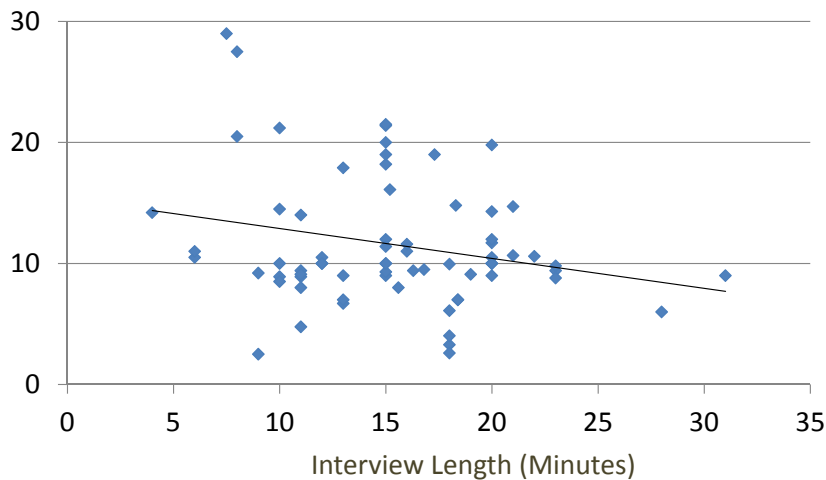
In 2009, there was a survey that registered a 29% response rate and one at 2.5%.

- The 29% was achieved with a short survey (7.5 minutes) and a long field period (30 days)
- The 2.5%, might just look like an omnibus survey rather than custom but was a 9 minute survey over 14 days according to the report.

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Response Rates by Interview Length: 2007-2009

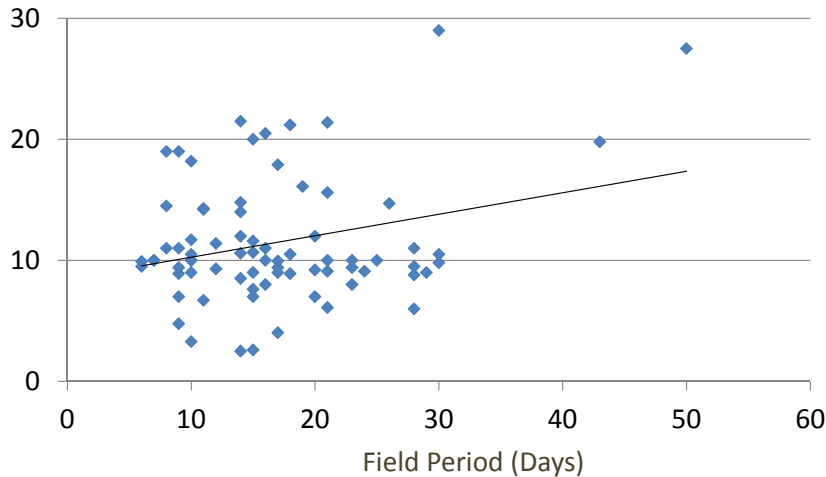


Between 2007 and 2009 there is a negative (though not significant) Pearson coefficient (-.224, n=50), which is significant looking across the surveys from 2005 to 2009 (r=-.296, n=88)

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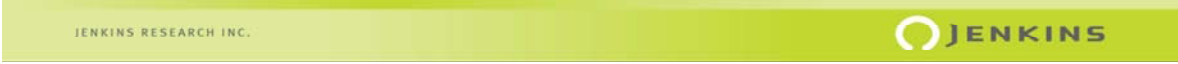


Response Rates by Field Length: 2007-2009



Longer field means higher response.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is +.379 (n=55)



Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
(Constant)	14.956		.000
Interview length	-.381	-.358	.001
Field length	.167	.266	.010

Adj-R²= .14 (n=89)

Both Interview length and field length are significant predictors of response rate but the model only explains some of the variation.

Based on the past five years of data:

- A 10 minute survey conducted over 7 days is predicted to be 12.3
- A 20 minute survey over the same time would be 8.5



What is means....



Government clients have always been one of the client groups most committed to representative and quality surveys.

- Rates are declining... is there any point in maintaining this commitment?
- Since variation in response rates cannot be accounted for in terms of survey length or survey field length... is there anything that could be done?

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