

Exploring the relationship between social factors and government survey participation

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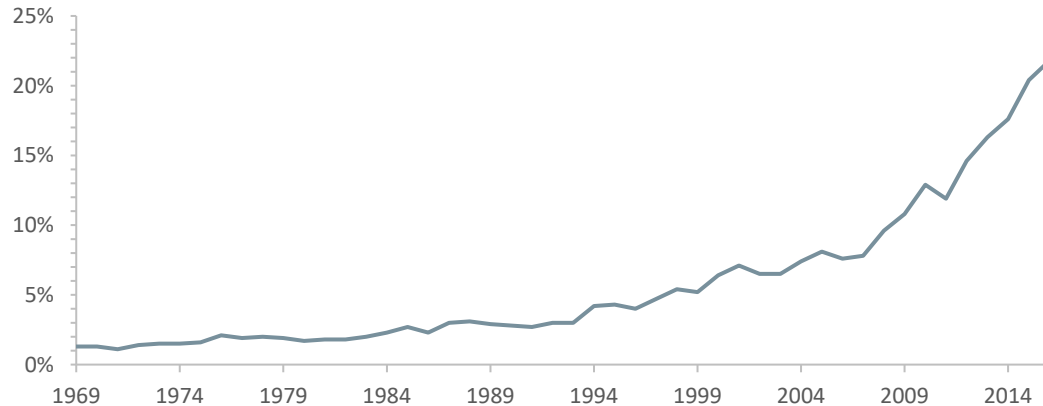
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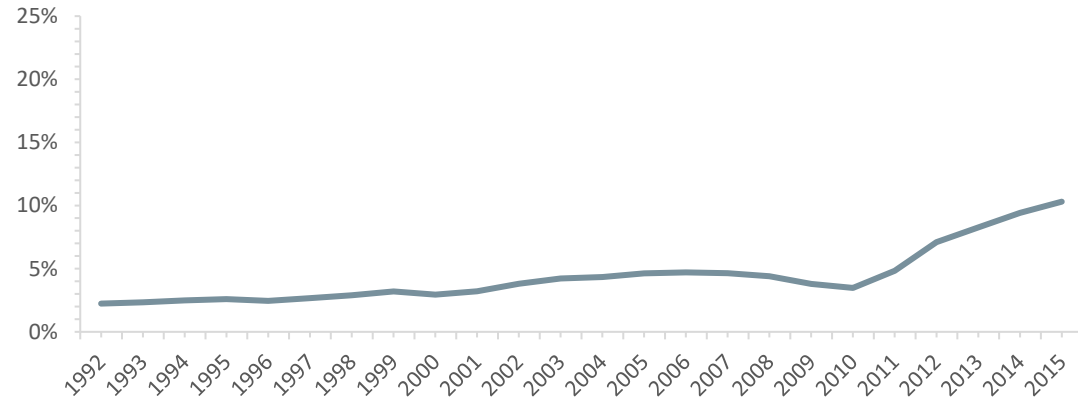
Outline

- Background
 - Increasing survey nonresponse
 - Previous research
- Theoretical framework/research agenda
- Data source
- Building the model
- Findings
- Discussion

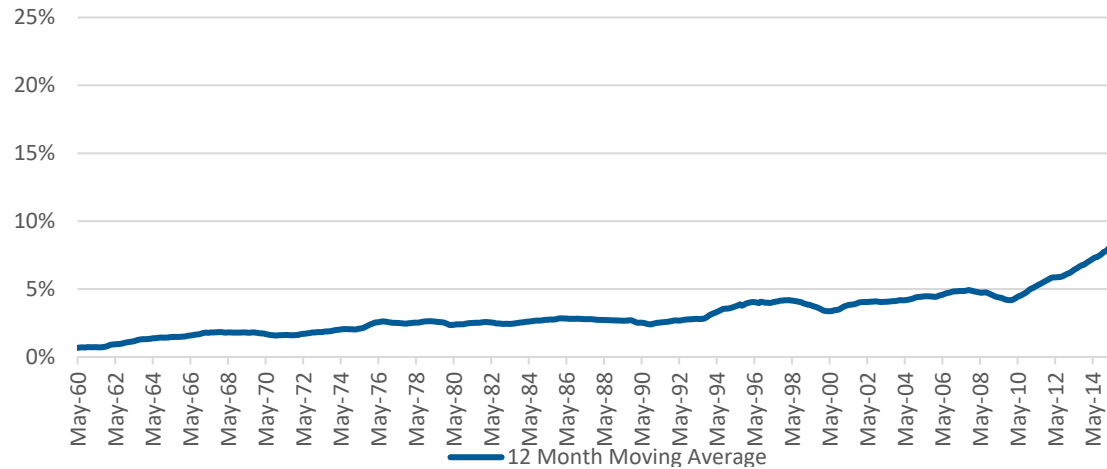
Increasing survey nonresponse



National Health Interview Survey Refusal Rate by Year



National Crime Victimization Survey Refusal Rate by Year



Current Population Survey 12-month Moving Average Refusal Rate by Month

Previous research –

Using time-series regression, we explored the relation between economic and political conditions on Current Population Survey (CPS) refusal rates over the period 1960-2015 (Larsen, Lineback, and Reist, 2020)

Predictors:

- Presidential approval rating
- Consumer sentiment score
- Census year indicator
- March supplement indicator
- GDP
- Not in labor force rate
- Number of jobs added
- Inflation index
- S&P 500 index

Findings:

- Lower refusal rates were associated with increases in presidential approval
- Higher refusal rates were associated with:
 - Increases in jobs added
 - Decreases of share of population not-in-labor force
 - Decennial year

Research agenda

1. Explore the economic-political construct of survey participation in the context of the Census
2. Explore the relationship between social factors, such as volunteerism, religious service participation, and political advocacy and intent to participate
3. Investigate whether empathy may also play a role in intent to participate

Data source: Census Tracking Survey

- Purpose: Tracked public awareness of the 2020 Census
- Design:
 - Nationally representative telephone sample *
 - Monthly October-December 2019, then weekly January-June 2020
 - In addition to awareness and intent to participate, asked about:
 - demographics
 - intended mode of participation
 - likelihood of encouraging others to participate
 - confidentiality concerns
 - civic engagement module
 - Embedded a few questions from major government surveys to measure data quality
 - Imputation and weighting adjustments used to adjust for item and unit nonresponse, respectively

**Also a nonprobability web component that's not discussed here*

Question about 2020 Census participation

Leading up to the Census-

- **(Intent)** In 2020, the Census Bureau will mail nearly every household in the U.S. a questionnaire and an invitation to participate online. How likely do you think it is that you or someone in your household will mail back the questionnaire or submit it online?

Once the Census was underway-

- **(Answered)** *Have you or someone in your household answered the 2020 Census questions, or has your household not answered them yet?*

Economic/political questions

(fielded in October 2019 and again March-June 2020)

- Economic:

- *How would you rate economic conditions in this country today – as excellent, good, only fair or poor?*
- *Thinking about the job situation in America today, would you say that it is a good time or a bad time to find a quality job?*

- Political:

- *Thinking about the way things are going in the country today, do you think things are generally going in the right direction or the wrong direction?*
- *On the whole, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the nation is being governed?*

Social/emotional questions

(fielded in October 2019 and again March-June 2020)

- Social:
 - *Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?*
 - *Please tell me whether or not in the last 12 months you have contacted or visited a public official-at any level of government-to express your opinion?*
- Empathy (Davis, 1980):
 - *Do you believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both?*
 - *Do other people's misfortunes usually disturb you a great deal?*

Building the logistic regression model

- Included:
 - Race, education, home ownership, sex, marital status, and language, as well as their interactions
 - Age
 - Census regional divisions
 - “Tracking month” starting at 1 for September 2019 and ending with 10 for June 2020
 - 2 attitudinal variables:
 - Trust in federal statistics
 - Fear of government using Census responses against respondent
 - 8 civic module questions
 - Volunteering question

Findings: Demographic, geographic and temporal variables

- Date mattered - as 2020 progressed, uptick in those who said they had completed/intended to complete
- Age mattered - young people less likely to say they had completed/intended to complete
- Education, marital status, and home ownership all matter - those who were educated, married, or owned their homes were more likely to report they had completed/intended to complete
- Depending on the model:
 - Non-white race, and other than English language at home, were sometimes significant and sometimes not, depending on the model
 - A couple of the interactions between the demographic variables also showed significance in the final model
 - Divisions did not seem especially significant. The Northeast showed higher than average intention to complete

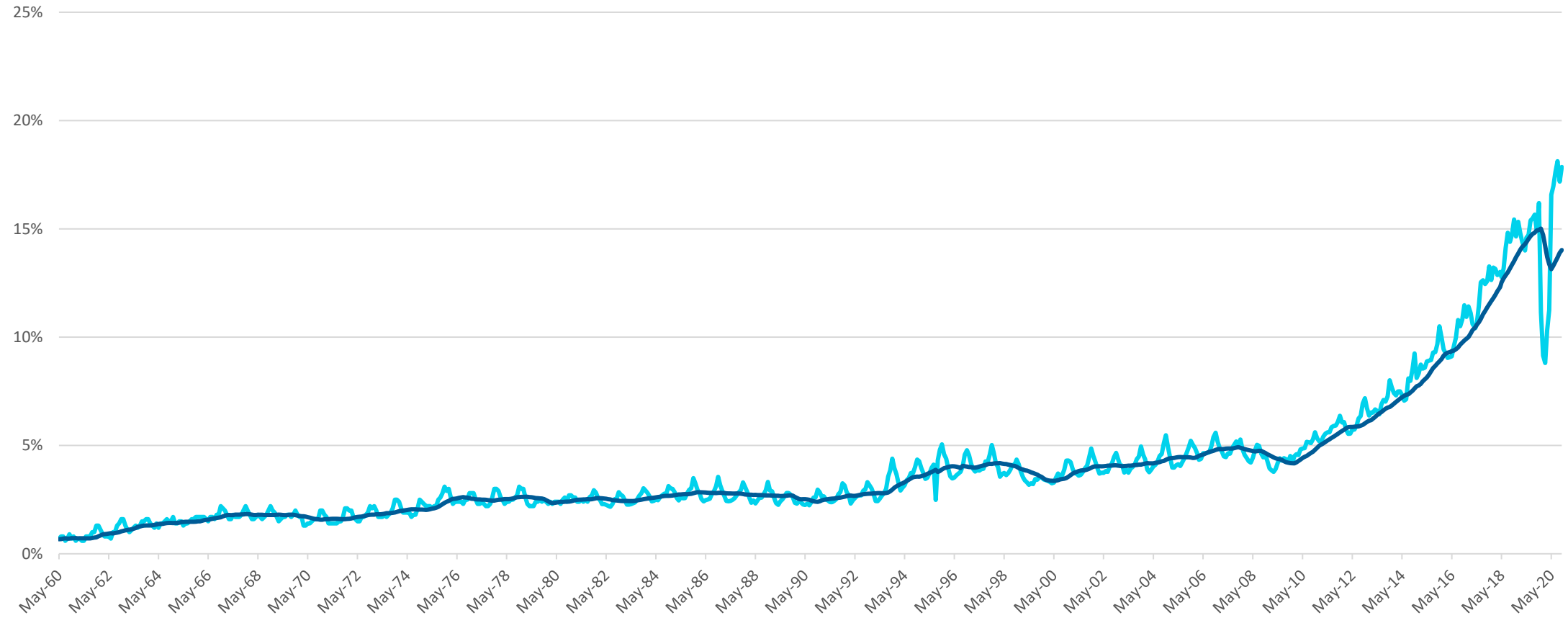
Findings: Civic module, attitudinal questions, and volunteer question

Factor	Type	Intent
Good job situation	Economic	Less Likely
Don't trust federal statistics	Political	Less Likely
Fear census responses will be used against them	Political	Less Likely
Satisfied with way country is governed	Political	Less Likely
Did not attend religious services	Social	Less Likely
Did not contact a government official	Social	Less Likely
Don't volunteer	Social	Less Likely
Don't strongly say try to see both sides of issue	Empathy	Less Likely
Others' misfortunes don't disturb them	Empathy	Less Likely

Discussion

- Hypotheses supported by the findings
- Results make sense if one considers that as society has become more individualistic, people may see less need to participate in government surveys
- Limitations:
 - People who intend to do something or say they did something might be different than those who actually do it
 - Results may not extend to other countries or other types of government surveys
- Effects of pandemic on survey participation

CPS Refusal Rates, January 1960-February 2021



Thank you!