

Appendix A: Survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a national panel of randomly selected U.S. adults living in households. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Members of the American Trends Panel were originally recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, a large (n=10,013) national landline and cellphone random-digit-dial (RDD) survey conducted Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014, in English and Spanish. At the end of that survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The invitation was extended to all respondents who use the internet (from any location) and a random subsample of respondents who do not use the internet.¹⁵

Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel. A total of 5,338 agreed to participate and provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

For the ATP, the questions used in this report were asked on different waves of the panel, which are fielded roughly once a month. Estimates for each question are calculated using the respondents to the wave in which it was asked. Some items such as demographics were measured at recruitment and updated periodically, in which case they do not belong to any individual wave. For these kinds of questions, the respondents to Wave 10 were used to produce the estimates in this report.

For all but Wave 5, ATP panelists who self-identify as internet users and who provided an email address participate in the panel via monthly self-administered Web surveys, and those who do not use the internet, do not have an email address or refuse to provide their email address participate via the mail.

Wave 5 featured an experiment comparing telephone and web-based survey administration. For this wave, half of the respondents who are usually interviewed online were surveyed via the telephone. All of the panelists who are usually surveyed by mail were also surveyed by telephone. In order to minimize mode effects, the internet panelists who were surveyed by telephone were excluded from this analysis. The non-internet panelists were retained in order to ensure that the offline population was still represented in the sample. The proportion of the sample with and

¹⁵ When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

without internet access was then corrected as part of the weighting process described in Appendix B.

For the nonprobability surveys included in this report, sample was obtained from the vendors, but the survey was administered using the SurveyMonkey platform in order to ensure that respondents all experienced identical survey instruments. The exception is sample I, which was not able to interface with the SurveyMonkey platform and was administered using vendor I's proprietary survey software.

The field dates and sample sizes for each ATP wave and nonprobability survey are presented in the table below. For the ATP, we report the cumulative response rate that incorporates the response rate for the 2014 Survey of Political Polarization (10.6%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity as well as nonresponse to the individual waves. No response rate is provided for the nonprobability surveys as it is not a meaningful metric in the absence of random selection from a population frame.

Summary design and outcome metrics

Sample	Interviews	Field dates	Cumulative response rate	95% margin of error ²
ATP: W5	1,857	July 7-August 4, 2014	3.7 ¹	3.0
ATP: W6	3,278	August 11-September 3, 2014	3.6	2.3
ATP: W7	3,154	September 9-October 3, 2014	3.5	2.7
ATP: W9	3,212	November 17-December 15, 2014	3.5	2.3
ATP: W10	3,147	March 10-April 6, 2015	3.4	2.4
A	1,022	February 25, 2015	N/A	3.5
B	1,049	February 26-March 3, 2015	N/A	4.2
C	1,178	February 25-27, 2015	N/A	3.8
D	1,005	February 25-27, 2015	N/A	3.6
E	1,022	February 24-March 8, 2015	N/A	5.2
F	1,008	February 25-26, 2015	N/A	4.4
G	1,010	October 1-6, 2015	N/A	4.7
H	1,007	October 2-8, 2015	N/A	4.3
I	1,000	August 19-31, 2015	N/A	4.3

¹The cumulative response rate for Wave 5 is for the full sample.

²The benchmarking analysis in this report indicates that these 95% margins of error underestimate the actual margins of error at least for some survey estimates, such as those related to civic or political engagement.

Precision estimates

Precision estimates for this study were computed using the Taylor series approximation. The estimates treat the nonprobability samples as if they were drawn as simple random samples from the population. This is not an accurate description of the sampling mechanisms, but it allows us to attempt to quantify and compare the variability observed in these samples. The precision estimates for the nonprobability samples account for the increase in variance due to weighting (design effect).

The precision estimates for the ATP reflect both the actual sample design and the raking adjustments. Specifically, the ATP weights reflect the differential probabilities of selection for the recruitment telephone survey, a propensity model to adjust for differential likelihood of joining and participation in the ATP, as well as differential nonresponse to the individual ATP wave.

The precision calculations assume that the survey estimates are approximately unbiased, which was shown in the benchmarking analysis to be a flawed assumption. It is important to bear in mind that these precision statements only reflect sampling error and do not account for other sources of error such as noncoverage, nonresponse, or measurement error.