

ABSTRACT

PLACEMENT OF SENSITIVE AND NONSENSITIVE DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Although survey research is widely used, most texts that describe survey research rely on conventional wisdom rather than empirical evidence regarding where demographic questions should be placed in surveys. Little research has empirically evaluated where demographic questions are best placed to maximize response rate. To address this question response rate to sensitive and nonsensitive survey questions was examined when sensitive or nonsensitive demographic questions were placed at the beginning or at the end of a survey. Results revealed that response rate to sensitive survey questions was lower than response to nonsensitive questions regardless of whether demographic questions were placed at the beginning or end of the survey. Finally, response rate for nonsensitive survey questions was higher when demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey rather than at the beginning, but there was no difference in response rate for sensitive survey questions regardless of placement of demographic questions. Implications of these results for survey research are discussed.

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