Quality or Quantity? The Impact of Reducing the Number of Contacts on Response

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*Any views expressed are my own and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.
Background

- Survey:
  - National Survey of College Graduates
  - Longitudinal
  - 6-month data collection cycle
    - Web invite, paper questionnaire at week 8, telephone follow-up at week 12
  - Sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics within the National Science Foundation

- Sample cases can receive:
  - Prenotice
  - 6 unique invitation letters (2 with paper questionnaires)
  - 4 reminder letters (same content)
  - 1 reminder postcard
  - 3 reminder emails (same content)
  - Unlimited phone calls
Question: Can we reduce the number of contacts sample cases receive while maintaining response rates and key estimates?

Goal: Reduce costs and burden
Experiment

- Contact Strategy Treatment Groups:
  - New letters/envelopes/emails
    - 10 unique letters
    - 6 emails (timing different than current procedures)
  - Infographic
  - Call limit of 10
- Fully factorial design
- Sample size: ~46,000
Evaluation Measures

- Response rates (AAPOR RR2)
- Key estimates
- Costs
Results – New Materials

No sig diff - 72.9 vs 72.2
Results – Infographic

No sig diff - 69.1 vs 67.2
Results – Call Limit

No sig diff - 68.5 vs 67.8
Results – Overall Best Strategy

- New Materials, No Infographic, Call Limit
  - Similar response rates
  - No impact on data quality across 14 key estimates
  - Costs reduced - $7.94 savings/case

- Additional findings
  - Larger, non-standard-sized envelopes and perforated envelopes particularly successful
  - Email directly following mailing successful
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