Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology

# Give it Time?:
# Sample Composition by Completion Date

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# Study Background

**People who respond earlier to a survey invitation can differ from those who respond later (e.g., Fricker & Tourangeau, 2010).**

**For example, we often find that older, female, urban, and White respondents are more likely to respond earlier in a field period.**

**Though younger, male, rural, Black, and Hispanic respondents respond in lower proportions early on, these harder-to-reach groups tend to increase participation with longer time in field.**

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# Study Background

**In political polling, many have advocated for leaving a study in field for a longer amount of time to try to ensure that hard-to-reach respondents might be more likely to complete the survey. This then provides more diversity and representativeness to a sample.**

**Others have suggested that many people change their minds about candidates closer to an election (such as in the 10 days prior to election day) and that the bulk of the sample should complete the survey within this shorter time frame for better predictions of election outcomes.**

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# Study Background

**Since address-based sample (ABS) studies typically employ mailing invitations, often with mail-back surveys, ABS studies may be more difficult to field and complete in a manner in which the data are still fresh and predictive of voters' choices.**

**In collaboration with the New York Times, we conducted an ABS study on the 2022 midterm election in Wisconsin to investigate how early responders differ from the overall sample in terms of sample composition and vote choice. We were interested in the election outcomes and the representativeness and bias of the sample overall and at different points during the fielding period.**

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# Method

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# Study Design: Fielding Details

**We conducted a study of Wisconsin adults (age 18+) using address-based sample (ABS).**

**Sample was selected randomly from all residential addresses, with an oversample of rural addresses (38% rural and 62% urban; benchmarks indicated 28% rural and 72% urban).**

**Field period: 9/9/2022 to 11/7/2022**

**Each sample member received 4 mailings:**

1. **Invitation letter with a mail-back survey & return envelope ($5 prepaid incentive)**
2. **Reminder postcard 1**
3. **Reminder invitation letter with a mail-back survey & return envelope**
4. **Reminder postcard 2**

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# Study Design: Fielding Details

**ABS modes of completion:**

- **Mail-back paper survey: Enclosed in mailings 1 and 3 with a return envelope – 1,497/1,610 completed by mail (93%)**
- **Online survey: Offered in mailings 3 and 4 (reminder invite and reminder postcard 2) – 113/1,610 completed online (7%)**

**Survey incentive: $20 for responding to the survey**

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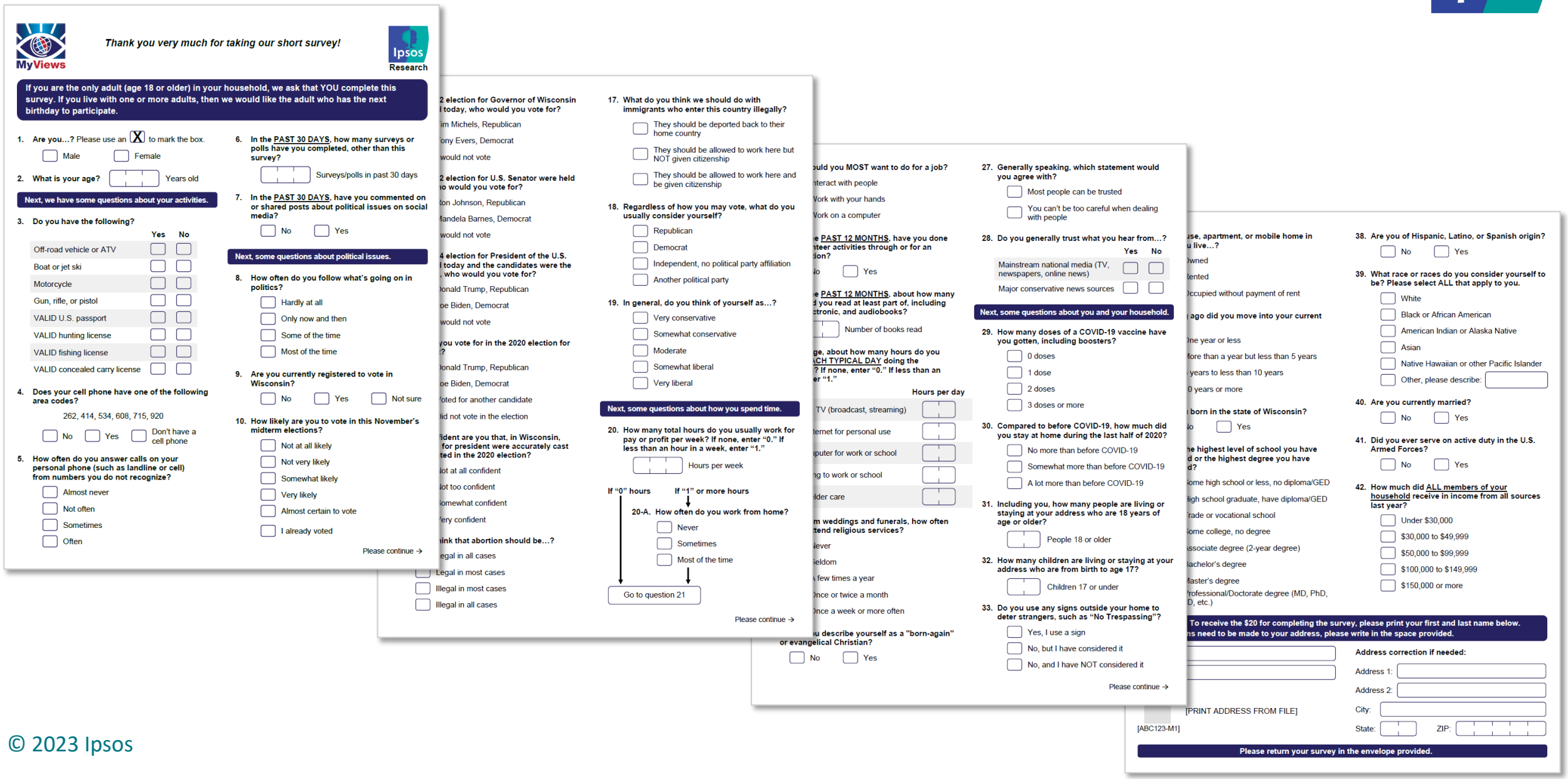
# Study Design: Mail-back Questionnaire



MyViews

*Thank you very much for taking our short survey!*

Ipsos Research

**If you are the only adult (age 18 or older) in your household, we ask that YOU complete this survey. If you live with one or more adults, then we would like the adult who has the next birthday to participate.**

1. **Are you…?** Please use an [X] to mark the box.
   ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. **What is your age?** ☐☐ Years old

**Next, we have some questions about your activities.**

3. **Do you have the following?**

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Off-road vehicle or ATV | ☐ | ☐ |
| Boat or jet ski | ☐ | ☐ |
| Motorcycle | ☐ | ☐ |
| Gun, rifle, or pistol | ☐ | ☐ |
| VALID U.S. passport | ☐ | ☐ |
| VALID hunting license | ☐ | ☐ |
| VALID fishing license | ☐ | ☐ |
| VALID concealed carry license | ☐ | ☐ |

4. **Does your cell phone have one of the following area codes?**
   262, 414, 534, 608, 715, 920
   ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Don't have a cell phone
5. **How often do you answer calls on your personal phone (such as landline or cell) from numbers you do not recognize?**
   ☐ Almost never
   ☐ Not often
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Often
6. **In the PAST 30 DAYS, how many surveys or polls have you completed, other than this survey?**
   ☐☐ Surveys/polls in past 30 days
7. **In the PAST 30 DAYS, have you commented on or shared posts about political issues on social media?**
   ☐ No ☐ Yes

**Next, some questions about political issues.**

8. **How often do you follow what's going on in politics?**
   ☐ Hardly at all
   ☐ Only now and then
   ☐ Some of the time
   ☐ Most of the time
9. **Are you currently registered to vote in Wisconsin?**
   ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure
10. **How likely are you to vote in this November's midterm elections?**
    ☐ Not at all likely
    ☐ Not very likely
    ☐ Somewhat likely
    ☐ Very likely
    ☐ Almost certain to vote
    ☐ I already voted

Please continue →

**2 election for Governor of Wisconsin l today, who would you vote for?**
im Michels, Republican
ony Evers, Democrat
would not vote

**2 election for U.S. Senator were held o would you vote for?**
on Johnson, Republican
Mandela Barnes, Democrat
would not vote

**4 election for President of the U.S. l today and the candidates were the , who would you vote for?**
onald Trump, Republican
oe Biden, Democrat
would not vote

**ou vote for in the 2020 election for ?**
onald Trump, Republican
oe Biden, Democrat
oted for another candidate
id not vote in the election

**ident are you that, in Wisconsin, for president were accurately cast ted in the 2020 election?**
ot at all confident
ot too confident
omewhat confident
ery confident

**ink that abortion should be…?**
egal in all cases
Legal in most cases
Illegal in most cases
Illegal in all cases

17. **What do you think we should do with immigrants who enter this country illegally?**
    ☐ They should be deported back to their home country
    ☐ They should be allowed to work here but NOT given citizenship
    ☐ They should be allowed to work here and be given citizenship
18. **Regardless of how you may vote, what do you usually consider yourself?**
    ☐ Republican
    ☐ Democrat
    ☐ Independent, no political party affiliation
    ☐ Another political party
19. **In general, do you think of yourself as…?**
    ☐ Very conservative
    ☐ Somewhat conservative
    ☐ Moderate
    ☐ Somewhat liberal
    ☐ Very liberal

**Next, some questions about how you spend time.**

20. **How many total hours do you usually work for pay or profit per week? If none, enter "0." If less than an hour in a week, enter "1."**
    ☐☐ Hours per week

If "0" hours / If "1" or more hours

20-A. **How often do you work from home?**
   ☐ Never
   ☐ Sometimes
   ☐ Most of the time

Go to question 21

Please continue →

**uld you MOST want to do for a job?**
nteract with people
Work with your hands
Work on a computer

**e PAST 12 MONTHS, have you done nteer activities through or for an ion?**
o ☐ Yes

**e PAST 12 MONTHS, about how many d you read at least part of, including ctronic, and audiobooks?**
☐☐ Number of books read

**ge, about how many hours do you CH TYPICAL DAY doing the ? If none, enter "0." If less than an er "1."**

| | Hours per day |
|---|---|
| TV (broadcast, streaming) | ☐☐ |
| ternet for personal use | ☐☐ |
| puter for work or school | ☐☐ |
| g to work or school | ☐☐ |
| lder care | ☐☐ |

**m weddings and funerals, how often tend religious services?**
Never
Seldom
A few times a year
Once or twice a month
Once a week or more often

**ou describe yourself as a "born-again" or evangelical Christian?**
☐ No ☐ Yes

27. **Generally speaking, which statement would you agree with?**
    ☐ Most people can be trusted
    ☐ You can't be too careful when dealing with people
28. **Do you generally trust what you hear from…?**

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Mainstream national media (TV, newspapers, online news) | ☐ | ☐ |
| Major conservative news sources | ☐ | ☐ |

**Next, some questions about you and your household.**

29. **How many doses of a COVID-19 vaccine have you gotten, including boosters?**
    ☐ 0 doses
    ☐ 1 dose
    ☐ 2 doses
    ☐ 3 doses or more
30. **Compared to before COVID-19, how much did you stay at home during the last half of 2020?**
    ☐ No more than before COVID-19
    ☐ Somewhat more than before COVID-19
    ☐ A lot more than before COVID-19
31. **Including you, how many people are living or staying at your address who are 18 years of age or older?**
    ☐☐ People 18 or older
32. **How many children are living or staying at your address who are from birth to age 17?**
    ☐☐ Children 17 or under
33. **Do you use any signs outside your home to deter strangers, such as "No Trespassing"?**
    ☐ Yes, I use a sign
    ☐ No, but I have considered it
    ☐ No, and I have NOT considered it

Please continue →

**se, apartment, or mobile home in u live…?**
Owned
Rented
Occupied without payment of rent

**ago did you move into your current**
One year or less
More than a year but less than 5 years
years to less than 10 years
0 years or more

**born in the state of Wisconsin?**
o ☐ Yes

**he highest level of school you have d or the highest degree you have d?**
Some high school or less, no diploma/GED
High school graduate, have diploma/GED
Trade or vocational school
Some college, no degree
Associate degree (2-year degree)
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Professional/Doctorate degree (MD, PhD, D, etc.)

38. **Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?**
    ☐ No ☐ Yes
39. **What race or races do you consider yourself to be? Please select ALL that apply to you.**
    ☐ White
    ☐ Black or African American
    ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
    ☐ Asian
    ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
    ☐ Other, please describe:
40. **Are you currently married?**
    ☐ No ☐ Yes
41. **Did you ever serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?**
    ☐ No ☐ Yes
42. **How much did ALL members of your household receive in income from all sources last year?**
    ☐ Under $30,000
    ☐ $30,000 to $49,999
    ☐ $50,000 to $99,999
    ☐ $100,000 to $149,999
    ☐ $150,000 or more

**To receive the $20 for completing the survey, please print your first and last name below. ns need to be made to your address, please write in the space provided.**

[PRINT ADDRESS FROM FILE]

[ABC123-M1]

**Address correction if needed:**
Address 1:
Address 2:
City:
State: ☐☐ ZIP: ☐☐☐☐☐

**Please return your survey in the envelope provided.**

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# Study Design: Fielding Details

## We randomly divided the sample into 3 replicates for mailings:

| | Replicate 1 | Replicate 2 | Replicate 3 | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sample Mailing Size | 610 | 2,745 | 2,745 | 6,100 |
| First Mailed | 09/09/2022 | 09/19/2022 | 09/23/2022 | 09/09/2022 |
| First Returned Complete | 09/12/2022 | 09/23/2022 | 09/28/2022 | 09/12/2022 |
| 50% Response Date | 09/22/2022 | 09/30/2022 | 10/03/2022 | 10/03/2022 |
| 75% Response Date | 10/04/2022 | 10/11/2022 | 10/14/2022 | 10/11/2022 |
| 100% Response Date | 11/01/2022 | 11/07/2022 | 11/07/2022 | 11/07/2022 |
| Total Completes | 171 | 699 | 740 | 1,610 |
| Cooperation Rate | 28.0% | 25.5% | 27.0% | 26.4% |

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# Study Design: Analysis

**We categorized respondents in each replicate as early responders using two different criteria:**

- **Comparison sample 1: First 50% of each replicate**
- **Comparison sample 2: First 75% of each replicate**

**We then compared these "early responder samples" to the overall sample to assess how they compared on sample composition and bias.**

**Each sample was weighted using demographic values for Wisconsin for the following: Age by Gender, Race-Ethnicity, Education, Income, and Region of State.**

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# Study Design: Analysis

**We examined differences in the sample composition of the early responder samples to the overall sample by comparing demographics and responses to behavioral questions, including vote choice.**

**We then assessed bias by calculating the average absolute deviation from 15 benchmarks for Wisconsin:**

- **Calculated the absolute difference between each benchmark and the estimate from each sample**
- **Averaged across the absolute differences for each benchmark to obtain the average absolute deviation for each sample**

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# Results

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# Results: Effect on Weighting Demographics

**Do demographics used for weighting become more representative with a longer field period? First, we looked at the average absolute deviation by category among the weighting variables.**

**Average Absolute Deviation from Unweighted Data Across Variable Categories**

| Weighting Variables | Extent of Completeness | | | Bias Reduction? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 50% | 75% | 100% | |
| Age-Gender (8 categories) | 5.9% | 5.5% | 5.0% | Yes |
| Race-Ethnicity (3 categories) | 3.1% | 2.7% | 2.3% | Yes |
| Education (3 categories) | 7.0% | 7.4% | 7.9% | No |
| Income (4 categories) | 3.9% | 4.0% | 4.2% | – |
| Region of State (7 categories) | 2.4% | 2.4% | 2.3% | – |

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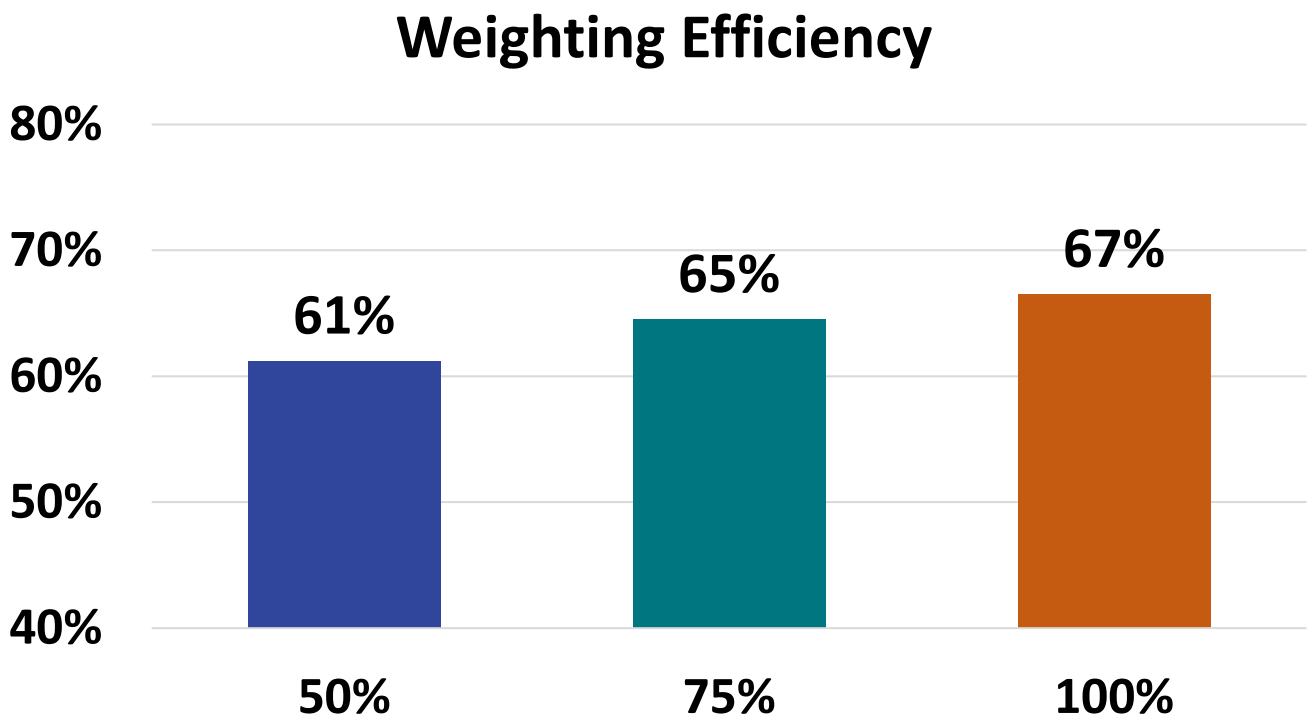
# Results: Effect on Weighting Efficiency

**A summary measure of demographic imbalance can be obtained by looking at the weighting efficiency values of the weights we computed for each sample. The full sample had highest weighting efficiency.**

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# Results: Effect on Bias in Other Variables

## How do the samples compare on 15 weighted estimates for Wisconsin benchmarks?

| Benchmark | Benchmark Value | Extent of Completeness | | | Absolute Deviation from Benchmark | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 50% | 75% | 100% | 50% | 75% | 100% |
| Veteran | 6.6% | 9.1% | 8.5% | 8.2% | 2.5% | 1.9% | 1.6% |
| Valid concealed carry license | 10.6% | 13.6% | 13.5% | 11.9% | 3.0% | 2.8% | 1.3% |
| Has a motorcycle | 13.2% | 12.5% | 11.9% | 11.4% | 0.8% | 1.4% | 1.8% |
| Valid hunting license | 13.9% | 22.5% | 22.2% | 20.8% | 8.6% | 8.3% | 6.9% |
| At least 1 child under 18 in household | 27.6% | 32.4% | 32.4% | 32.3% | 4.8% | 4.8% | 4.7% |
| Vote for Governor for 2022 WI – Republican | 28.7% | 29.4% | 30.4% | 30.4% | 0.7% | 1.7% | 1.7% |
| Vote for Senator for 2022 WI – Republican | 30.3% | 30.7% | 31.3% | 31.3% | 0.4% | 1.0% | 1.0% |
| Valid fishing license | 30.5% | 29.4% | 31.1% | 30.5% | 1.1% | 0.6% | 0.0% |
| Valid U.S. passport | 42.4% | 50.1% | 48.7% | 49.0% | 7.8% | 6.3% | 6.6% |
| Works full time | 50.1% | 56.8% | 57.2% | 56.4% | 6.7% | 7.1% | 6.3% |
| Currently married | 52.8% | 56.1% | 56.0% | 55.5% | 3.3% | 3.2% | 2.7% |
| Born in Wisconsin | 70.8% | 71.0% | 72.4% | 71.5% | 0.2% | 1.6% | 0.7% |
| Own their own home | 75.2% | 77.9% | 76.5% | 75.3% | 2.7% | 1.3% | 0.1% |
| Currently registered to vote in Wisconsin | 81.7% | 82.2% | 81.8% | 81.0% | 0.5% | 0.1% | 0.7% |
| Received at least 1 dose of a COVID-19 vaccine | 83.7% | 76.8% | 77.0% | 77.6% | 6.9% | 6.8% | 6.1% |

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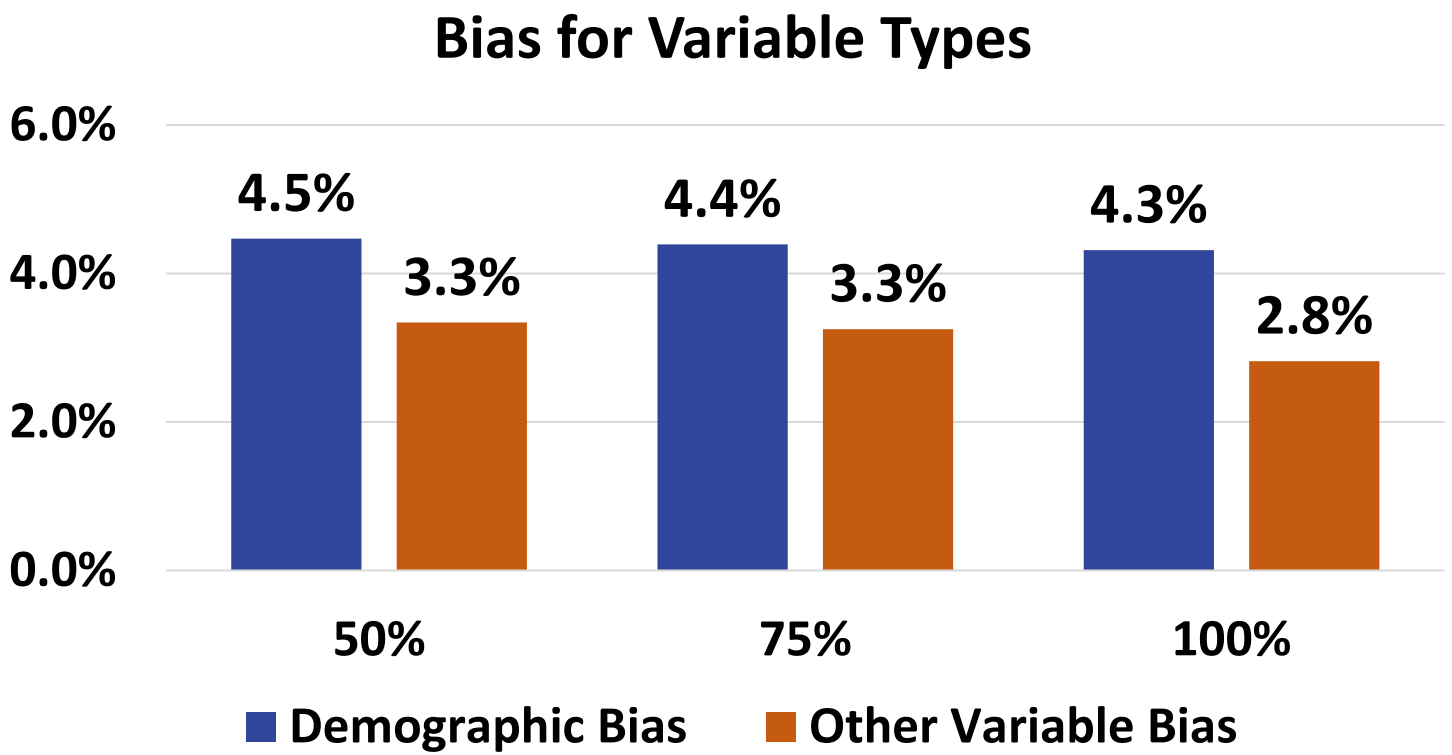
# Results: Effect on Bias Overall

**Average bias somewhat declines as the proportion of sample that completes the survey increases, both for variables needed for weighting and other variables, reflecting general bias.**

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# Discussion

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# Discussion and Conclusions

**We examined how time in field for an ABS study could affect the extent of bias in the sample. Our study lasted for a total of about 8 weeks in field.**

**Shorter field periods could reduce the accuracy of the results. Limiting time in field could increase bias for both weighting variables (affecting weighting efficiency and effective sample size) and for other substantive variables of interest. However, a shorter field period could work given that the reductions in bias were relatively small.**

**Based on these results, we would recommend longer field periods, up to some limit determined by the last mailing (typically, we found almost zero completes 8 to 10 days after the last mailing).**

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# Thank you!

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