

Reaching Across the Political Aisle: Overcoming Challenges in Using Social Media for Recruiting Politically Diverse Respondents

Abstract

A challenge for public opinion surveys is achieving representativeness of respondents across demographic groups. We test the extent to which ideological alignment with a survey's sponsor shapes differential partisan response and users' choice of whether to participate in a research study on Facebook. While the use of Facebook advertisements for recruitment has increased in recent years and offers potential benefits, it can yield difficulties in recruiting politically representative samples. We recruit respondents for a short survey through two otherwise identical advertisements associated with either New York University (from a liberal state) or the University of Mississippi (from a conservative state). Contrary to our expectations, we don't find an asymmetry in completion rates between self-reported Democrats and Republicans based on the survey sponsor. Nor do we find statistically significant differences in attitudes of respondents across the two survey sponsors when we control for observables.