



Timing is Everything: What we can learn from "survey procrastinators"

Presented by:

Lauren M. Conoscenti, Ph.D.

Tufts University

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- ◆ Tufts, like many institutions, relies heavily on online survey platforms to collect data.
- ◆ Online survey platforms have many advantages over paper-and-pencil surveys.
 - ◆ Inexpensive
 - ◆ Easy to use
 - ◆ Improved distribution

- ◆ A major advantage: busy respondents can complete surveys at their convenience.
 - ◆ More time = better data?
- ◆ Low response rates compromise data quality.
 - ◆ Not a representative sample

Why Don't They Participate?

- ◆ Online non-response might be because...
 - ◆ Unread email routed to spam folder
 - ◆ Student temporarily too busy (e.g. exams)
 - ◆ Student forgot
 - ◆ Student doesn't want to participate

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 - ◆ Student forgot
 - ◆ Student doesn't want to participate
- ◆ These students benefit from reminders.

Survey Reminders

- ◆ We send reminders to intervene in passive nonresponding...
 - ◆ ...and maybe a little active nonresponding, too.
- ◆ We assume people who complete a survey after the reminder are similar to those who completed it before the reminder.
- ◆ Is that a valid assumption?

Nonresponse Error

We know that people who do not respond to surveys differ from those who do in several key ways.

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- GPA

This is known as “nonresponse error,” and can lead to erroneous conclusions.

Late Responders

- ◆ Could late responders – or “procrastinators” be different, too?
- ◆ Past research on this topic has found differences...
 - ◆ But most is based on mail surveys...
 - ◆ ...and findings are mixed.
- ◆ Some evidence that late responders display more problem behavior.

Who are “Survey Procrastinators”?

- ◆ Who, exactly, are survey procrastinators?
 - ◆ How much time must pass in order for someone to be considered a “late” responder?
- ◆ Two definitions initially considered
 - ◆ Late = responding 12+ hours after an invitation or reminder issued
 - ◆ Late = responding after a reminder issued
- ◆ Responding = starting a survey

Procrastinators: 12+ hours after Invite/Reminder

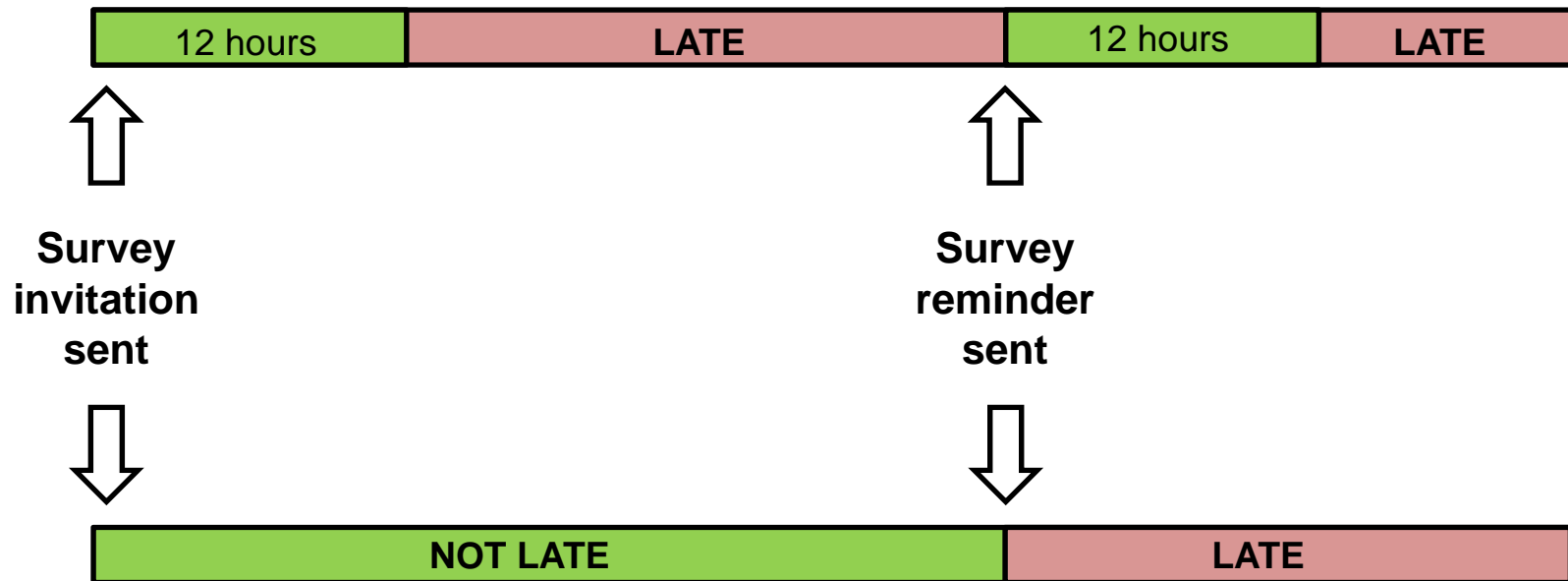
- ◆ A large percentage of survey participants do so in the first 12 hours after receiving a survey invitation.
 - ◆ Students are constantly connected.
- ◆ But...
 - ◆ Students have competing responsibilities
 - ◆ Can't do survey right away
 - ◆ Students are forgetful

Procrastinators: Only after a reminder is sent

- ◆ Reminders generate surveys, too.
- ◆ Reminders necessary because...
 - ◆ Students are busy
 - ◆ Students are forgetful
 - ◆ Email is discarded or in spam folder
- ◆ Did not want to participate... but will now

Timeline of Definitions

Late = Respond 12+ hours after a survey invite/reminder is sent.



Late = Respond only after the reminder is sent.

Research Questions

- ◆ Are procrastinators different from “regular” responders?
- ◆ How does the survey incentive impact procrastination (and the procrastinators)?
- ◆ Is there a “better” definition of procrastination?

- ◆ Analyzed data from two undergraduate surveys at Tufts
- ◆ Tufts University...
 - ◆ Private Research University – Very high activity
 - ◆ Entering class size ~1300
 - ◆ Competitive admissions
 - ◆ 4-year Liberal Arts & Engineering undergraduate schools

The Surveys

- ◆ Sophomore Survey
 - ◆ Administered sophomore spring

- ◆ 2012 Survey:
 - ◆ Highly incentivized – high response rate (93.3%)
 - ◆ Initial email & 2 reminders
 - ◆ Advising, majors, student life, services, civic engagement

- ◆ 2013 Survey
 - ◆ Low incentive – lower response rate (64.0%)
 - ◆ Initial email & 6 reminders
 - ◆ Added “flourishing scale”, removed advising questions

The Students

- ◆ 2012: 1073 Liberal Arts sophomores
 - ◆ 54.5% female
 - ◆ Not different from population
 - ◆ GPA not significantly different

- ◆ 2013: 718 Liberal Arts sophomores
 - ◆ 61% female
 - ◆ Different from population
 - ◆ Mean GPA higher than nonresponders

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

- ◆ Started within 12 hours of an email: 59.1%
- ◆ Started before a reminder issued: 58.7%
- ◆ Both groups, procrastinators:
 - ◆ Are typically male
 - ◆ Reported more difficulty choosing a major
 - ◆ Less likely to make an appointment to see academic advisor...
 - ◆ ...and more likely to drop in at the last minute.
 - ◆ ...and more likely to feel the time spent with their advisor was inadequate.

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

- ◆ Both groups, procrastinators:
 - ◆ Less likely to participate in student organizations and community service
 - ◆ Less likely to know their professors outside of class...
 - ◆ ...and to feel comfortable asking them for help (e.g. rec letters, academic advising)

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

Procrastinators = after 12 hours:

- ◆ Less likely to indicate study abroad plans
- ◆ Less likely to believe alcohol on campus is a problem

Results 2012 (High Incentive)

Procrastinators = after reminder issued:

- ◆ Less likely to choose Tufts again
- ◆ Took less time to complete survey
 - ◆ Proxy of how engaged they were?
 - ◆ Open-ended questions

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

- ◆ Started within 12 hours of an email: 88.2%
 - ◆ Keep in mind, there were 7 emails total!
 - ◆ Not useful...
- ◆ Started before first reminder issued: 48.7%
 - ◆ Six reminders to get the other 51.3%...
- ◆ Started before second reminder issued: 67%

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators = after 1 or 2 reminders

- ◆ Less time to complete survey
- ◆ More difficulty choosing a major
- ◆ Less likely to know their professors outside of class...
 - ◆ ...and to feel comfortable asking them for help (e.g. rec letters, academic advising)

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

Procrastinators = after 1 or 2 reminders

- ◆ Less likely to participate in student organizations and community service
- ◆ Less satisfied with sense of community on campus
- ◆ Feel less able to contribute to the campus community
- ◆ No differences in flourishing scale

Results 2013 (Low Incentive)

- ◆ No differences:
 - ◆ Likelihood of choosing Tufts again
 - ◆ GPA
 - ◆ % Female

- ◆ Procrastinators different from nonresponders.

Take Home Points

- ◆ Procrastinators were different from non-procrastinators
 - ◆ More academically adrift
 - ◆ Less engaged on campus
 - ◆ More dissatisfied
- ◆ Procrastinators different from nonresponders?
- ◆ Those who waited for a reminder spent less time on the survey

Take Home Points

- ◆ Reminders are good! Send them.
- ◆ Dissatisfied and less engaged students procrastinate – wait for them!
- ◆ Plan your survey administration carefully.
 - ◆ Incentives?
 - ◆ When to send reminders? How many?

- ◆ We don't really know why people procrastinate
- ◆ Homogenous sample
 - ◆ Did not analyze based on ethnicity
- ◆ Many other variables of interest
 - ◆ Qualitative data
 - ◆ Majors
 - ◆ Prematriculation data



That's all, folks...

Question Time!



Contact Information

Dr. Lauren M. Conoscenti, Research Analyst, Office
of Institutional Research & Evaluation,
lauren.conoscenti@tufts.edu

Thank you to:

Dr. Jessica Sharkness

Dr. Dawn Terkla