the Generation Lab

Effect of Incentive and Length of Online Surveys on Drop-Off Rates: An Examination of Undergraduate College Students

Rebecca Oh (rebecca@generationlab.org)
Matin Mirramezani (matin@generationlab.org)
Cyrus Beschloss (cyrus@generationlab.org)

the Generation Lab

the Generation Lab

INTRODUCTION

- Survey drop-off rates rise as survey length increases, and incentives are an effective way to increase responses (Galesic, 2006; Hogg et al., 2003; Saleh et al., 2017; Revilla et al., 2017; Revilla et al., 2020).
    - Saleh and Bista (2017) found that 91.1% of respondents agree that they are more willing to complete a web-based survey if the length is less than 15 minutes, and 94.1% of respondents agree that they are more willing to complete a poll if it is short and concise.

- However, if the incentive increases as the survey length increases, will there be a significant impact regarding the response rate?

the Generation Lab

INTRODUCTION

Goals of our study:

- Expand on the findings from the previous analyses of survey length and incentive on response rates, focusing on the undergraduate student population
- Uncover potential underlying factors of survey drop-off by exploring various demographic segmentation of colleges or universities
- Make conclusions on real-life decisions that survey professionals have to make regarding the trade-off between survey length and incentive

the Generation Lab

II METHODS

Data: The Generation Lab's comprehensive panel of undergraduate college students in the United States for the 2021-2022 academic year

Method: Prior to email contact, we selected a random sample of 20,000 students from the student panel and randomly assigned them into one of two survey groups

- **Group A ("Long"):** 10,000 students who received email requests to complete a **10-minute** survey for a direct incentive of **$4**
- **Group B ("Short"):** 10,000 students who received email requests to complete a **5-minute** survey for a direct incentive of **$2**
  - Questions randomly generated from the pool of questions given to Group A
  - Half the length and half the incentive of Group A

the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

Table 1. Contingency table showing number of undergraduate students who either fully completed or did not fully complete their surveys for each survey group

	Fully Completed	Not fully completed	Total
Long	466	110	576
Short	421	111	532
Total	887	221	1108

- 19.1% of those who took the “long” survey dropped off
- 20.9% of those who took the “short” survey dropped off
- 19.9% of total respondents dropped off
- No statistically significant difference of drop-off between survey groups

the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

- Differences in response rates (4.66% for “long” vs 4.21% for “short”) are not significant

- Fisher’s exact test reveals a p-value of 0.4984, and chi-squared test of independence shows p-value of 0.6579 with 1 degree of freedom
  - Association between survey groups (i.e. 10-minute survey with $4 incentive vs. 5-minute survey with $2 incentive) and survey completion status (fully complete vs not fully complete) is considered to be not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

- We can’t conclude that one survey group is more likely to have higher survey response rates by undergraduate students than the other.

the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

- Segmentation across college/university character
  - Residential area (city, town, suburb, rural)
  - Public/private school
  - 4-year/2-year institution
  - Predominate degree program (Bachelor's or certificate-degree granting)
  - Region (Far West, Great Lakes, Mid East, etc.)
  - Admissions rate categories

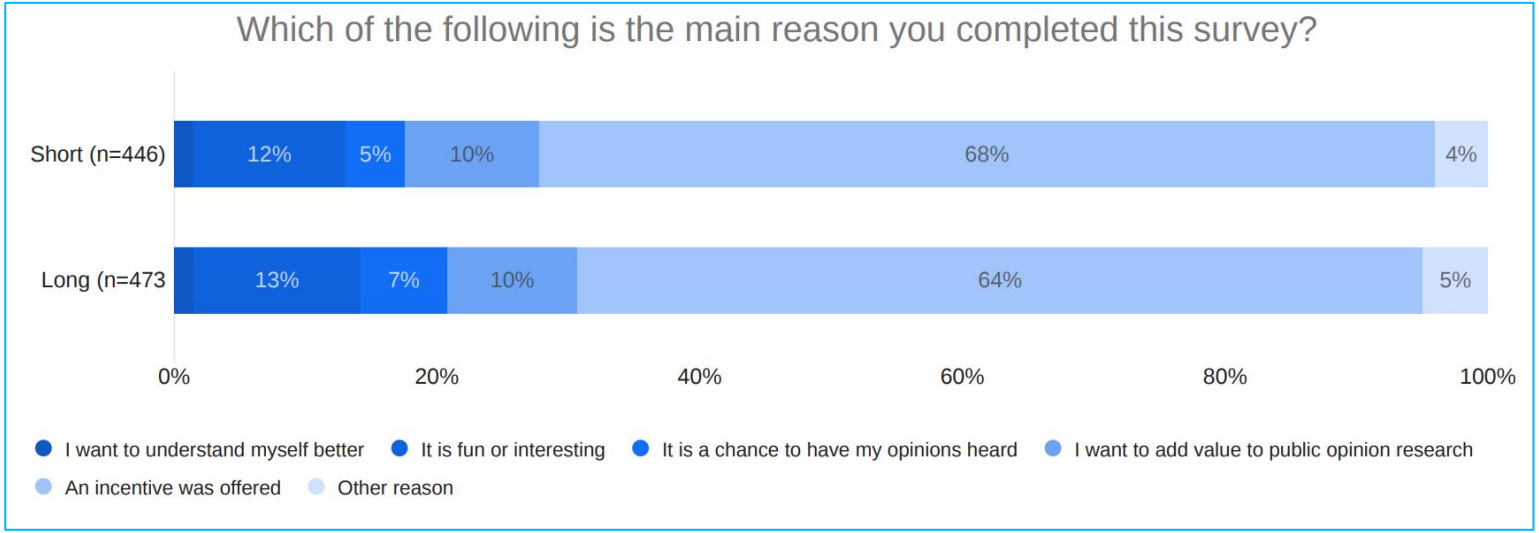
- No significant differences between survey groups and response rates among undergraduate students at the 95% confidence level.

- We can't conclude that one survey group is more likely to have higher response rates of undergraduate students among each segmentation than the other survey group.

the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

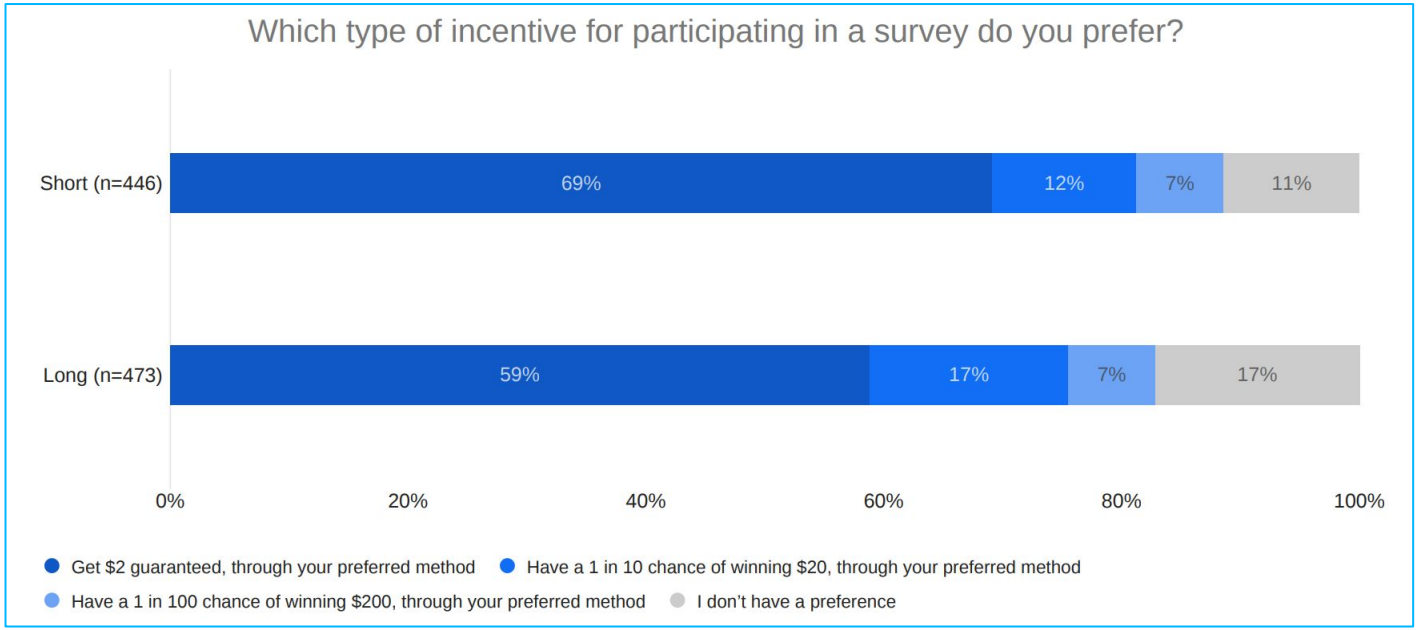
Although not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that a greater percentage of "short" survey respondents completed this survey due to an incentive compared to "long" survey respondents.



the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

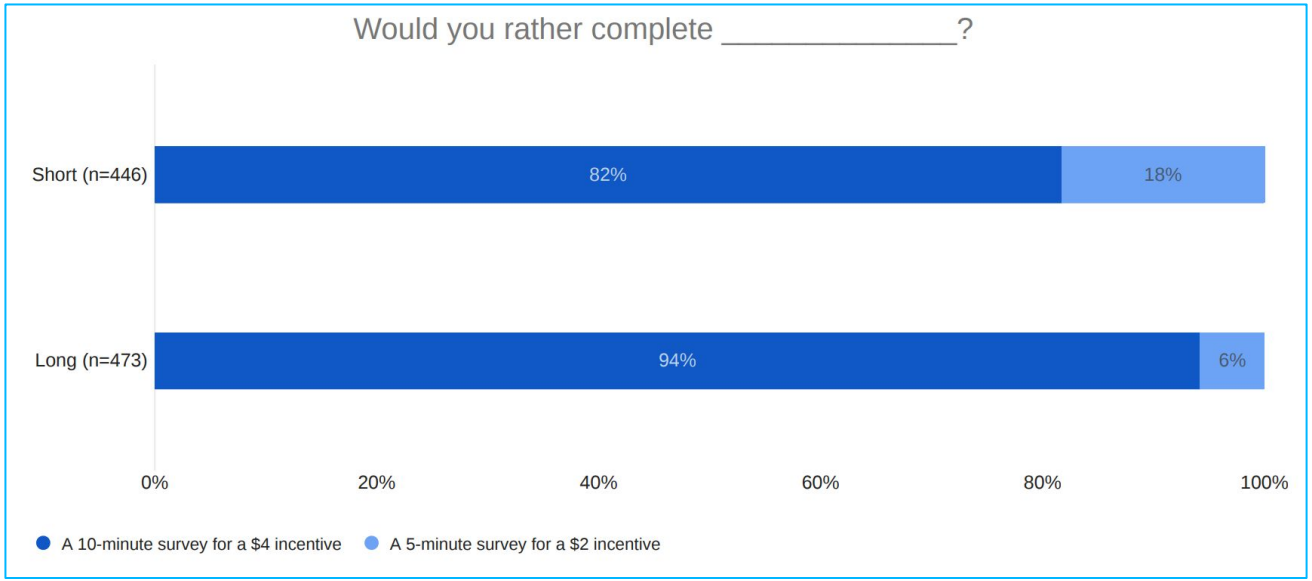
A significantly greater percentage of "short" survey respondents prefer to receive a guaranteed $2 compared to "long" survey respondents.



the Generation Lab

III RESULTS

A significantly greater percentage of "long" survey respondents would rather complete a 10-minute survey for $4 than "short" survey respondents. On the other hand, a significantly greater percentage of "short" survey respondents would rather complete a 5-minute survey for $2 than "long" survey respondents.



the Generation Lab

IV SUMMARY & PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- We conclude that there may be no significant differences in response rates between a 10-minute survey with a $4 incentive and a 5-minute survey with a $2 incentive

- If funding is an issue and there is concern that a research firm will not receive many survey responses, fielding a 5-minute survey with a $2 incentive can be just as effective in terms of response rates as a survey that is double the length with double the incentive.

the Generation Lab

IV SUMMARY & PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- A significantly greater percentage of respondents from the “short” survey group prefered to receive a guaranteed $2 incentive than those from the “long” survey group.

- A significantly greater percentage of respondents who took the 10-minute survey for $4 would rather complete a 10-minute survey for $4 than those who took the 5-minute survey for $2. On the other hand, a significantly greater percentage of respondents who took the 5-minute survey for $2 would rather complete a 5-minute survey for $2 than those who took the 10-minute survey for $4

IV SUMMARY & PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

One limitation is the lack of funding for a significantly larger sample where we could have tested response rates across surveys with more dramatic incentive differences on a larger scale. A 10-minute $4 survey is not too drastic of a difference compared to a 5-minute $2 survey, but a 30-minute $12 survey compared to a 5-minute $2 survey could yield more interesting, significant results.

the Generation Lab

V REFERENCES

Galesic, M. (2006). Dropouts on the Web: Effects of Interest and Burden Experienced During an Online Survey. *Journal of Official Statistics*, *22*(2), 313–328.

Hogg, A., & Miller, J. (2003). *Study shows impact of online survey length on research findings*. Quirk's Media. Retrieved September 25, 2021, from https://www.quirks.com/articles/study-shows-impact-of-online-survey-length-on-research-findings.

Krosnick, J. A., & Presser, S. (2010). Questionnaire design . In J. D. Wright & P. V. Marsden (Eds.), Handbook of Survey Research (Second Edition). West Yorkshire, England: Emerald Group

Revilla, M., & Höhne, J. K. (2020). How long do respondents think online surveys should be? New evidence from two online panels in Germany. *International Journal of Market Research*, *62*(5), 538–545. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785320943049

Revilla, M., & Ochoa, C. (2017). Ideal and Maximum Length for a Web Survey. International *Journal of Market Research*, *59*(5), 557–565. https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2017-039

Saleh, A., & Bista, K. (2017). Examining Factors Impacting Online Survey Response Rates in Educational Research: Perceptions of Graduate Students. *Journal of MultiDiscipinary Evaluation*, *13*(29).

the Generation Lab

Thank you!

Rebecca Oh (rebecca@generationlab.org)
Matin Mirramezani (matin@generationlab.org)
Cyrus Beschloss (cyrus@generationlab.org)