



Will You Open the Envelope? Improving Recruitment Materials for a Probability- Based Panel

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SSRS

CIPHER 2026

February 25-27, 2026

Motivation

- Over the past decade, public opinion researchers have been increasingly relying on probability-based panels to gather generalizable survey results.
- Building those panels begins with **effectively communicating with a random sample of households why they should respond to surveys** and join a panel.
- The recruitment materials should be designed to be compelling and persuasive to all, regardless of education level, race, age, political persuasion, etc. in order to attract a representative panel.
- Qualitative research can help identify improvements to design of panel or survey recruitment materials (Holzberg et al, 2021; Martin et al, 2022; Harcombe et al, 2011; Bertoni, 2025)



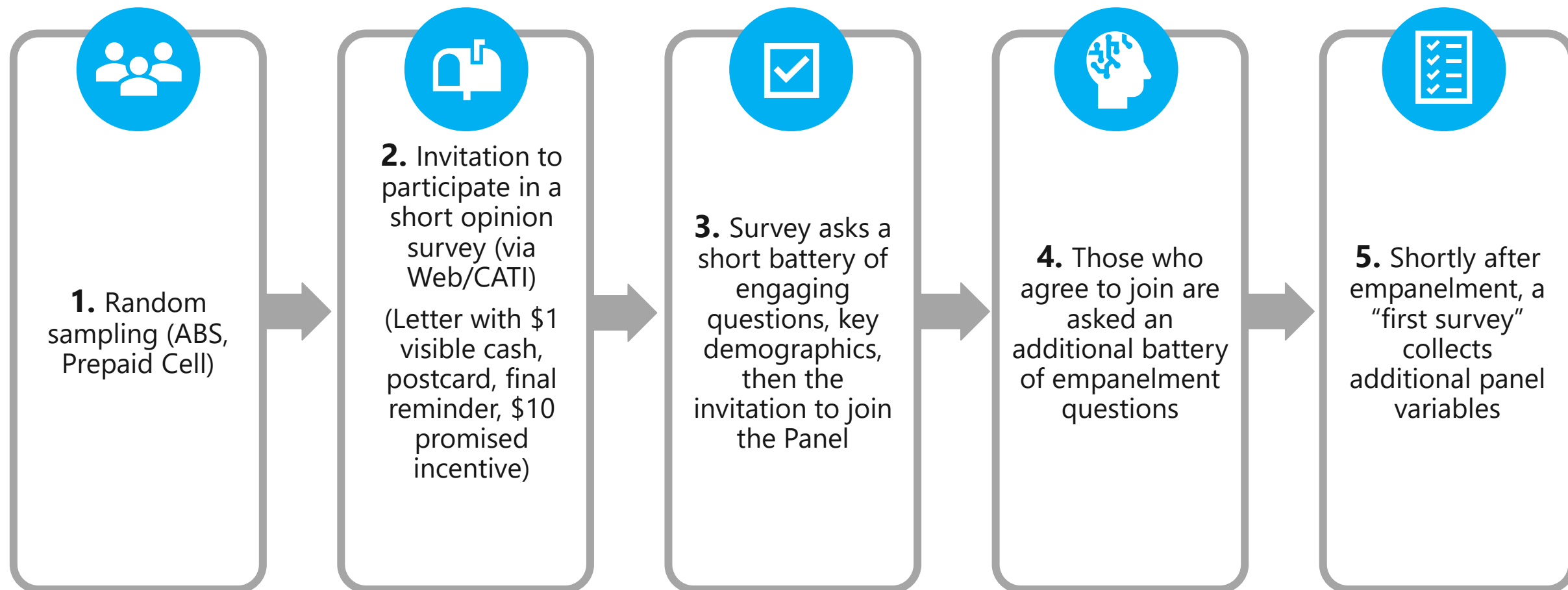
- Probability-based
- Nationally Representative of U.S. Adults 18 and Older
- Recruited via ABS with Prepaid Cell RDD Supplement
- Multi-mode Capability
 - Most respondents participate online
 - Live telephone interviewing available to those who don't use the internet or who prefer phone surveys
- English and Spanish

GET MORE INFO
[SSRS.COM/OPINION-PANEL](https://ssrs.com/opinion-panel)

ssrs.com/opinion-panel | [@ssrs_research](https://twitter.com/ssrs_research)



Overview of SSRS Opinion Panel Recruitment



Methodology

- **Phase 1:** Qualitative IDIs
- **Phase 2:** Quantitative Experiment

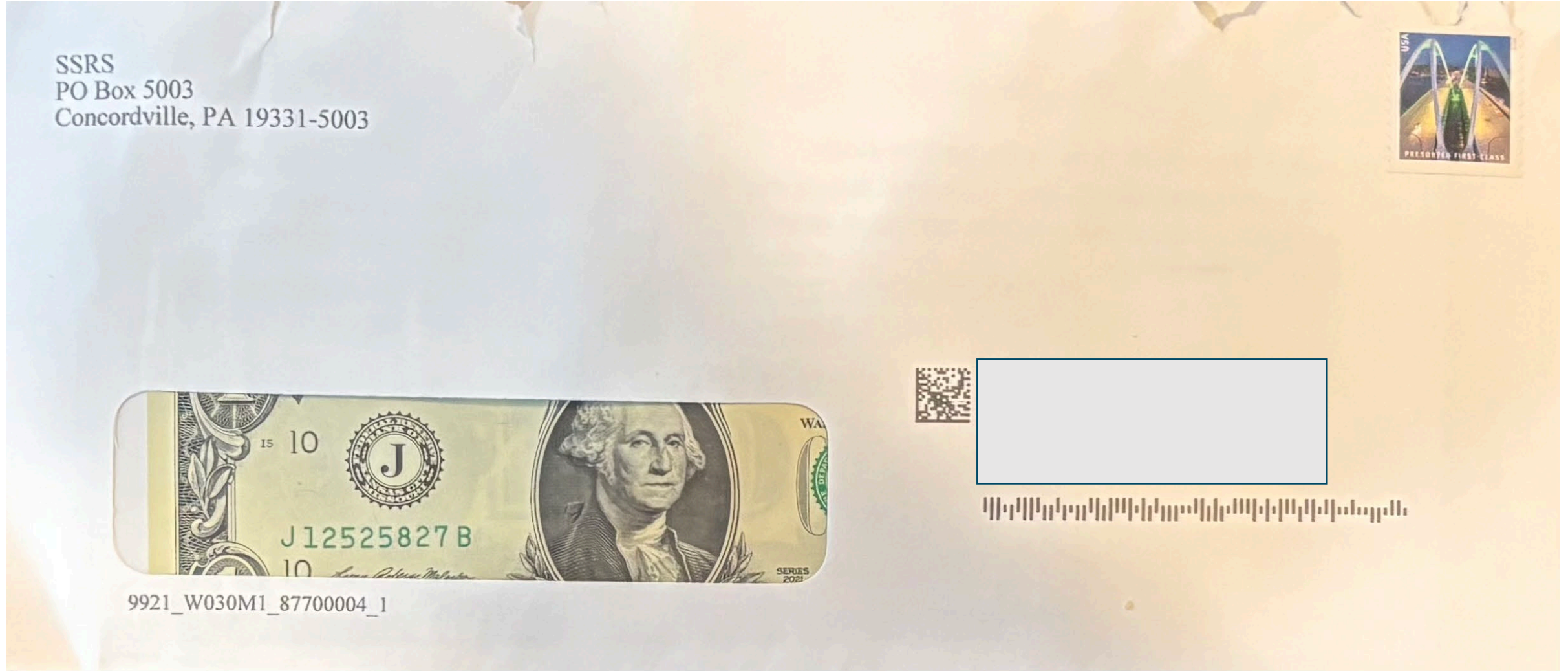
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Qualitative Methodology

- 10 in-depth interviews
 - SSRS Opinion Panelists who were NOT recruited using the current ABS design
 - ABS using older recruitment design
 - Other ABS surveys
 - Prepaid cell
 - Friends/family
- Mix of age/gender, race, education level, 2024 vote behavior, ideology
- 45-minute interview, \$50 incentive
- Participants were mailed materials in advance and were instructed to only open them at the start of the interview
- Interviewers used a concurrent probing strategy to gather feedback on each material


Envelope Design



Invitation Letter



ORIGINAL






||
<<CITY>> Resident
<<Address1>>
<<Address2>>
<<CITY>>, <<STATE>> <<ZIP>>

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,


SSRS is a research firm that has been studying important topics in the U.S. for more than 30 years (www.ssrs.com). We invite you to participate in our newest research by filling out a survey to share your opinions on current topics. Please keep the enclosed \$1 as a small token of our thanks and also **receive a \$10 reward** after you complete the survey.

¡La encuesta también está disponible en español! Todos recibirán \$10 por completar.


 Why should I do this?	This is an opportunity to have your opinions be heard about issues and events affecting the United States today. The survey is short, and we hope you will find the questions to be interesting. We are not selling anything.
 How do I get started?	Please have the adult (age 18 or older) in your household who had the <u>last birthday</u> complete the survey. <u>If that is not you</u> , please share this letter with that person. <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"><p>1. Scan the QR code or go to: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com [INSERT QR SURVEY CODE HERE] Escanee el código QR, a la derecha o visite: 2. Enter this access code: <<PASSWORD>> Introduce este código de acceso:</p></div>
 What if I prefer to respond by phone?	Call us toll-free at 888-614-3988 to respond to the survey by phone. We will ask for your access code (in Step 2 above) and the best phone number where we can reach you. Llámenos gratis al 888-614-3988 para responder a la encuesta por teléfono.

Any Questions?
Please email us at nationalopinionsurvey@ssrspanel.com.

Thank you in advance for helping us with this important study!


Sincerely,

Melissa Herrmann
President, SSRS


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Dear <<city>> Resident,

SSRS has been conducting surveys of the American public for more than 30 years (www.ssrs.com). We have randomly selected your address to be part of our next survey about current issues in the U.S. Please keep this **\$1 as a thank you**, and we will send you an **extra \$10 if you complete** the survey. (The survey takes about 10-12 minutes.)

 **Why should I do this?** This is a chance to share your thoughts about issues affecting Americans like you. **We are not selling anything**, and your responses will be kept confidential.


 **How do I take part?** Please have the adult (age 18 or older) in your household who had the most recent birthday follow the steps below. If that is not you, please share this letter with that person.

1. Scan the QR code or go to: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com
2. Enter this access code: <<PASSWORD>> [INSERT QR SURVEY CODE HERE]
3. Complete the survey.
4. Get your **\$10** reward!

 **Can I respond by phone?** Yes! Call 888-614-3988 to connect with a live interviewer. We will ask for the access code in Step 2 above.

Any Questions?
See the enclosed Frequently Asked Questions or email us at info@SSRSopinionsurvey.com.

Thanks for your consideration and we hope you will participate!

Sincerely,

Melissa Herrmann
President, SSRS

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FAQ

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is SSRS?

SSRS is a non-partisan public opinion research firm that conducts surveys. It is located in Glen Mills, just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Our clients include major universities, private businesses, media and entertainment companies, and non-profit organizations. For further information on SSRS, please visit us at www.ssrs.com.

How did you get my information?

Your household was randomly selected from a list of addresses in the United States to participate in this survey.

How do you use my opinions?

SSRS conducts survey research on various topics including social issues, consumer attitudes, politics, and general life experiences. Findings from our research help our clients improve policies, products and services. In addition, the findings also inform and educate Americans on public and social policy issues.

We value your privacy.

Information we collect remains confidential and your personal information, such as your name, phone number or email address, is not associated with your answers. Participation in this survey is voluntary.

How do I receive the \$10 for completing this survey?

You will be paid instantly via an electronic gift card code once you complete the survey online. If you opt to complete the survey over the phone, we will mail you a check.

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ssrs.com | @ssrs_research



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Frequently Asked Questions



What is SSRS?

SSRS is a nationally-known research organization that has been conducting surveys for over 30 years to understand the way people think about their lives and society. Read more about us at www.ssrs.com.



How did you get my information?

Actually, we didn't target *you* specifically. We randomly selected your *address* from a U.S. Postal Service list of all the addresses in the nation. By choosing addresses from all parts of the country, we make sure different types of households have the chance to take part in the survey.



Why should I respond to the survey?

This is your chance to share your opinions and have your voice be heard about different topics that may matter to you and your community. In exchange for telling us what you think for about 10 minutes of your time, we'll send you \$10 as a thank you!



What will you do with my answers?

We will combine your answers with other people's answers to help tell the story of how people in the U.S. are feeling about their lives and their communities. We do not sell your personal data to anyone and will not try to sell you anything either.



Why did you give me \$1?

We put a dollar in our invitations as a thank you for taking the time to open and read the letter. You can keep the dollar even if you choose not to take the survey.



How can I get the \$10?

If you complete the survey online, you will be paid instantly via a gift code. You will be able to choose between a few gift code options. If you opt to complete the survey over the phone, we will mail you a check.



Are my answers private?

Yes! Your answers are confidential. We combine everyone's responses when we collect the data, and we never attach your personal information to the results we share. Taking this survey is voluntary.

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Postcard Reminder



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<p>SSRS PO Box 5003 Concordville, PA 19331-5003</p> <p>«City» Resident «Addr» «Addr2» «City», «State» «Zip»</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">ssrs</p> <p>Dear «City» Resident,</p> <p>Recently you should have received a letter inviting you to take a survey with SSRS. If you have not completed the survey, please take a few minutes to respond now. You will receive \$10 as a thank you immediately after completing this survey.</p> <p>Please follow the steps below to complete the survey online:</p> <p>Step 1. The adult in this home aged 18 or older who had the <u>last birthday</u> should take this survey. If this is not you, please share this postcard with them.</p> <p>Step 2. Go to this website: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com</p> <p>Step 3. Enter this access code: <<PASSWORD>></p> <p>Step 4. Complete the survey and <u>receive \$10</u>.</p> <p>NO INTERNET ACCESS OR PREFER TO PARTICIPATE VIA PHONE? You can also complete the survey by calling 888-614-3988. We will ask for the access code in Step 3.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>For further information on SSRS, please visit us at www.ssrs.com.</small></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">ssrs</p> <p>Estimado(a) residente de «City»,</p> <p>Hace poco debe haber recibido una carta de invitación para completar una encuesta con SSRS. Si aún no ha completado la encuesta, tómese unos minutos para responder ahora. Recibirá \$10 como agradecimiento tras completar la encuesta.</p> <p>Siga los pasos que se indican abajo para responder la encuesta en línea:</p> <p>Paso 1. La persona adulta de 18 años o más que viva en este hogar y que sea la <u>última en cumplir años</u> debe responder esta encuesta. Si usted no reúne estas condiciones, comparta esta postal con la persona indicada.</p> <p>Paso 2. Visite este sitio web: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com</p> <p>Paso 3. Ingrese este código de acceso: <<PASSWORD>></p> <p>Paso 4. Complete la encuesta y <u>reciba \$10</u>.</p> <p>¿NO TIENE ACCESO A INTERNET O PREFIERE PARTICIPAR POR TELÉFONO? También puede completar la encuesta llamando al 888-614-3988. Le pediremos el código de acceso que le proporcionamos en el paso 3.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Para obtener más información sobre SSRS, visítenos en www.ssrs.com.</small></p>	
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<p>SSRS PO Box 5003 Concordville, PA 19331-5003</p> <p><<city>> Resident <<Address1>> <<Address2>> <<city>>, <<state>> <<zip>></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"></p> <p>Dear <<city>> Resident,</p> <p>It's time to share your opinions! Recently, we invited you to respond to a SSRS survey. If you have not completed it yet, please take a few minutes to respond now. We will send you \$10 as a thank you once you finish it.</p> <p>Please have the adult (age 18 or older) in your household who had the <u>most recent birthday</u> follow the steps below. If that is not you, please share this postcard with that person.</p>	<p>1. Scan the QR code or go to: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com</p> <p>2. Enter this access code: <<PASSWORD>></p> <p>3. Complete the survey.</p> <p>4. Get your \$10 reward!</p> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"><p style="font-size: 8px; text-align: center;">INSERT QR SURVEY CODE HERE!</p></div> <p>Prefer to respond by phone? Call 888-614-3988 to connect with a live interviewer. We will ask for the access code in Step 2 above.</p> <p>Any Questions? Visit www.ssrs.com for more information or email us at info@SSRSopinionsurvey.com.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"></p>
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Final Reminder

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[INSERT QR RETURN CODE HERE] <<CITY>> Resident
<<Address1>>
<<Address2>>
<<CITY>>, <<STATE>> <<ZIP>>

¡La encuesta también está disponible en español! Todos recibirán \$10 por completar.

Dear <<CITY>> Resident,

Recently, you should have received a letter from SSRS inviting you to take a short national opinion survey. If you have not completed the survey, please take a few minutes to respond today as the survey will close soon.

This is an opportunity to have your opinions be heard about issues and events affecting the United States today. You will earn **\$10** after you complete the survey. We are not selling anything.

How do I participate?
Please have the adult (age 18 or older) in your household who had the last birthday complete the survey. If that is not you, please share this letter with that person. (If a person in your household has started but not finished the survey, please give this letter to that person.)


1. Scan the QR code or go to: www.SSRsopinionsurvey.com [INSERT QR SURVEY CODE HERE]
Escanee el código QR a la derecha o visite:

2. Enter this access code: [INSERT ACCESS CODE]
Introduce este código de acceso:


What if I don't have internet access?
Call us toll-free at **888-614-3988** to respond to the survey by phone. We will ask for your access code (in Step 2 above) and the best phone number to reach you.

Questions?
For questions about this survey, please email us at nationalopinionsurvey@ssrspanel.com.

We hope you will find the questions to be interesting!


Melissa Herrmann
President, SSRS


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[INSERT OR RETURN CODE HERE] <<city>> Resident
<<address1>>
<<address2>>
<<city>>, <<state>> <<zip>>


Dear <<city>> Resident,

Recently, we sent you a letter and a postcard, inviting you to **earn \$10 by taking a short survey**. We are getting ready to wrap up the survey, so we wanted to give you one last chance to take part. If you haven't already, please respond in the next few days in order to make sure your opinions get counted.

 **Why should I do this?** This is a chance to share your thoughts about issues affecting Americans like you. **We are not selling anything**, and your responses will be kept confidential.


 **How do I take part?** Please have the adult (age 18 or older) in your household who had the most recent birthday follow the steps below. If that is not you, please share this letter with that person.

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Any Questions?
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Sincerely,


Melissa Herrmann
President, SSRS

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Methodology

- **Phase 1:** Qualitative IDIs
- **Phase 2:** Quantitative Experiment

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Quantitative Methodology

- ABS stratified by geography and modeled demographics of household members
 - Sample size 34,404
 - Half received original materials
 - Half received revised materials
 - Field period: November 10, 2025-January 6, 2026

Results: Yield

Metric	Relative difference*
Registration survey response rate	+15.9%
Panel join rate	-8.3%
Overall recruitment yield	+6.2%

*Relative difference = (RR with revised materials-RR old materials)/(RR old materials)

Results: Composition of Joiners

Characteristic	% of Joiners: Relative Difference*
Male	-7.7%
Age 18 – 29	6.3%
African American	-8.3%
Hispanic	-5.6%
Hispanic – immigrant	0.0%
Took survey in Spanish	50.0%
No college education	6.7%
Not registered voter	4.8%
Did not vote in 2024	3.2%
Republican or Republican leaner	2.2%
Independent	4.3%
Voted Trump in 2024	8.2%

Takeaways and Next Steps

- Qualitative research is a cost-efficient, helpful tool for redesigning survey materials
- Simple improvements to the design of recruitment materials can make a difference
- We will continue to experiment with more design tweaks in future waves, where feasible
- Our next step is to experiment with the wording of how we are asking respondents to join the panel to see if we can counteract the decrease in joining with the new materials. Stay tuned!



Thank You

Darby Steiger

VP of Innovation & Solutions

dsteiger@ssrs.com

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