Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel

Local News

Methodology Report

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Nick Bertoni

Pew Research Center

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IPSOS PROJECT DIRECTOR: Nicole Neuenschwander

IPSOS ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE: Wendy Mansfield

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# Summary

The American Trends Panel (ATP) is a national, probability-based online panel of adults living in households in the United States living. On behalf of the Pew Research Center, Ipsos Public Affairs (“Ipsos”) conducted the Local News panel survey from October 15 to November 8, 2018. For this survey, we sampled all active members of ATP and all active members of Ipsos’ KnowledgePanel (KP). In total, 10,655 ATP members and 24,243 KP members (both English- and Spanish-language survey-takers) completed the Local News survey. Survey weights were provided for the total sample. The margin of sampling error for the weighted estimates is ± 0.82 percentage points.

# Sample Definition

The overall target population for Local News was non-institutionalized persons age 18 and over, living in the US, including Alaska and Hawaii. The sample consisted of 14,029 members of the ATP and 48,728 members of KP. There was no form split for this survey.

# KnowledgePanel Methodology Information

KnowledgePanel is the largest online panel that relies on probability-based sampling techniques for recruitment; hence, it is the largest national sampling frame from which fully representative samples can be generated to produce statistically valid inferences for study populations. KP provides samples with the highest level of representativeness available in online research for measurement of public opinions, attitudes, and behaviors. The panel was first developed in 1999 by Knowledge Networks, a GfK company. Panel members are randomly selected so that survey results can properly represent the U.S. population with a measurable level of accuracy, features that are not obtainable from nonprobability panels (for comparisons of results from probability versus nonprobability methods, see Yeager et al., 2011[[1]](#footnote-1)).

KnowledgePanel’s recruitment process was originally based exclusively on a national RDD sampling methodology. In 2009, in light of the growing proportion of cellphone-only households, GfK migrated to an ABS recruitment methodology via the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File (DSF). ABS not only improves population coverage, but also provides a more effective means for recruiting hard-to-reach individuals, such as young adults and minorities. Households without Internet connection are provided with a Web-enabled device and free Internet service.

After initially accepting the invitation to join the panel, participants are asked to complete a short demographic survey (the initial *Core Profile Survey*); answers to this survey allow efficient panel sampling and weighting for future surveys. Upon completing the Core Profile Survey, participants become active panel members. All panel members are provided privacy and confidentiality protections.

# Questionnaire Development and Testing

The questionnaire was developed by the Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The Web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data which was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey. The Pew Research Center has a copy of the final instruments in English and Spanish.

# Data Collection Protocol for Local News

Prior to Local News, ATP panelists were recruited from three large (n=10,013, n=6,004 and n=3,905), national, overlapping, dual-frame landline and cellphone random-digit-dial (RDD) surveys and one (n=9,103) national address-based sample (ABS) survey conducted for the Pew Research Center. At the end of each recruitment survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The first recruitment was conducted from January 23 to March 16, 2014, the second recruitment was conducted from August 27 to October 4, 2015, the third recruitment was conducted from April 25 to June 4, 2017, and the fourth recruitment was conducted from August 11, 2018 to October 28, 2018, all in English and Spanish. For Local News, we sampled panelists from the ABS survey that completed and agreed to join the panel through October 7, 2018. Sample for the RDD surveys was obtained from SSI and sample for the ABS survey was obtained by MSG. The RDD recruitment surveys were conducted by Abt SRBI.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The first 20 waves of the ATP featured a simultaneous mixed-mode design, in which panelists who used the Internet and provided an email address participated via self-administered web survey, and adults who did not use the Internet (or did but did not provide an email address) participated via a mail survey (Waves 3-4 and 6-20) or computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI, Waves 1 and 5 only). Wave 18 was the first wave where a subset of the non-Internet panelists was converted to web mode. The conversion process involved calling all active mail mode respondents (n=616) and asking them to report their Internet and device status and then asking them to convert to web. Those who already had the means for taking web surveys were simply asked to convert. Those without the means for taking web surveys (no device and/or Internet access) were offered an Internet-connected tablet computer at no cost to the panelist. Tablets were shipped to the panelists who accepted, and they were given a follow-up call to ensure they understood how to use the tablet to access the ATP surveys through a pre-installed Mobile Panel Application.

Wave 21 was the first wave conducted only in web mode. However, the conversion effort was ongoing through Wave 26. By Wave 26, 238 of 616 (39%) mail panelists had converted to web. Of these, 197 received tablets and 41 made the mode switch using their own devices.

**Data Collection Protocol**

The data collection field period for Local News was October 15 to October 28, 2018 (the field closed at midnight PST) for ATP and October 17 to November 8, 2018 (the field closed at 5pm EST) for KP. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on October 15, 2018.

On October 15 and October 17, invitations to Local News were sent out in two separate launches for ATP: Soft Launch and Full Launch. One hundred-twelve ATP panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on the afternoon of October 15, 2018. The panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining ATP members were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on October 17, 2018. For KP, we sent out invites in three separate launches: Soft Launch, Partial Full Launch, Remaining Full Launch. The soft launch occurred on October 17, 2018 and was used to determine the LOI of the survey after receiving 750-1,250 completes. After cutting a few questions to reduce the LOI to 15 minutes, additional sample was released for KP on October 22 and October 24.

All ATP members with an email address received an email invitation and up to four email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists that consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to four SMS reminders. All KP members received email reminders on the third, seventh, and tenth day of field. We also sent last chance reminders offering $5 incentives (5,000 survey completion points) to KP members on November 7.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Invitation and Reminder Dates for Local News ATP Members** | | |
|  | **Soft Launch** | **Full Launch** |
| Advance Post Card | October 15, 2018 | October 15, 2018 |
| Initial invitation | October 15, 2018 | October 17, 2018 |
| 1st reminder | October 18, 2018 | October 19, 2018 |
| 2nd reminder | October 22, 2018 | October 22, 2018 |
| 3rd reminder | October 24, 2018 | October 24, 2018 |
| Final reminder | October 26, 2018 | October 26, 2018 |

ATP panelists who completed their survey in Spanish and all converted panelists who had received a tablet were offered a $20 post-paid incentive for completing the Local News survey. Panelists who were age 18-29, African American, with high school education or less, were not registered to vote, or reported being Hispanic but taking the survey in English in the RDD recruitment survey were offered a $10 post-paid incentive for completing the Local News survey. All other panelists who completed the survey were offered a $5 post-paid incentive. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. The differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities. KP panelists who completed the Local News survey were eligible to win an in-kind prize through a monthly Ipsos sweepstakes. Non-responders that did not complete by November 7 were also offered a last chance incentive worth $5 if they completed by November 8.

# Data Quality Checks

As part of the effort to ensure the highest quality data, the Pew Research Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. Pew Research Center requested to remove 84 cases from the final data. Note that this request was after completing the final weights, so the weighting was based on 34,982 completes before removing those 84 cases.

# Weighting

Survey weights are needed to support reliable inference from the panel to the target population of US adults. The final survey dataset contains a total sample weight variable (WEIGHT). The design of this weight is described below.

Start with the combined base weights of ATP and KP sample, respondents are weighted to represent the ages 18+ population with respect to the following characteristics:

* Gender (Male, Female) x Age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+)
* Gender (Male, Female) x Education (HS grad or less, Some college, College grad +)
* Age (18-34, 35-54, 55+) x Education (HS grad or less, Some college, College grad +)
* Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West) by Metropolitan Status (Metro, Non-metro)
* Race/Ethnicity (White Non-Hisp, Black Non-Hisp, Hispanic, Other/Multi-race Non-Hisp) by Education (HS grad or less, Some college, College grad +) and education is not broken out (but collapse) within Other/Multi-race Non-Hisp]
* Accesses Internet by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider (Yes, No) [this variable replaces the Internet user variable; benchmarks are from 2016 ACS]
* Party ID (Republican, Democrat, Independent/Other/DK/REF)
* Volunteerism (Volunteered, Did not Volunteer)
* Registered Voter (Yes, No)

The weighting benchmarks are provided by Pew Research Center. Weights are trimmed on the overall level and scaled to sum to the un-weighted sample size of total respondents.

***Weights Definition:***

WEIGHT:  Local News completes (KP+ATP) (trimmed weights)

***Trimming:***

(0.51%, 99.51%)

***Approximate Design Effect:***

Overall: 2.47

## *Base Weight*

A base weight was computed for all ATP members. The base weight adjusted for factors affecting the probability that the individual was selected for the panel. This probability came from the survey in which the respondent was recruited.

For panelists recruited via RDD, the process of creating the ATP base weights starts with base weight computed for each telephone recruitment survey. Those telephone recruitment survey base weights accounted for (i) the overlap of landline and cell frame sampling frames and (ii) the number of adult in the household for landline cases. The base weights for the Typology Survey were then adjusted to account for the initial subsampling of non-internet users at a rate of 25% up until February 5,2014. The base weights for the 2017 Panel Refresh Survey were also adjusted to account for the subsampling of non-Hispanic white internet users with more than a high school education at a rate of 50%. Then, separately for each of the three RDD recruitments, those base weight values were re-scaled to sum to the effective sample size of currently active panelists in the cohort. Those re-scaled weight values serve as the ATP base weights for the panelists recruited via RDD.

For panelists recruited via ABS, the process starts with the base weight from the recruitment survey, which accounted for the probability of selection of the address from the U.S. Postal Service Computerized Delivery Sequence File frame, as well as the number of adults living in the household. Those weight values were then scaled to sum to the effective sample size of currently active panelists from the ABS recruitment. Those scaled weight values serve as the ATP base weights for the panelists via ABS. Finally, the combined base weight is then scaled to the nominal sample size of the ATP.

## *Calibration to Target Population Controls*

In the final stage of weighting, the ATP base weights for the panelists responding to a particular panel survey are calibrated to population benchmarks using raking, or iterative proportional fitting. This adjustment is designed to reduce the risk of nonresponse bias stemming from nonresponse at the various stages of the panel design. The raking dimensions and the source for the population parameter estimates are reported in the table below. All raking targets are based on the non-institutionalized U.S. adult (age 18+) population.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Raking Dimensions and Source for Population Parameter Estimates** | |
| **Raking Dimension^** | **Source** |
| Gender(2) x Age(6) | 2016 American Community Survey |
| Gender(2) x Education (3) | 2016 American Community Survey |
| Age(3) x Education(3) | 2016 American Community Survey |
| Education(3) x Race/Ethnicity(4)\* | 2016 American Community Survey |
| Census Region(4) by Metro Status(2) | 2017 Current Population Survey ASEC March Supplement |
| Internet Access(2) | 2016 American Community Survey |
| Party Affiliation(3) | Average from the three most recent monthly surveys conducted for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press |
| Volunteerism(2) | September 2015 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement |
| Registration(2) | 2016 Current Population Survey Registration Supplement |
| ^ The numbers of categories (prior to any collapsing from small cell size) are shown in parentheses.  \*note that Education is collapsed for “Other/Non Hispanic” | |

The raking for internet access was included in the algorithm so that the panel survey estimates reflect the target population with respect to the proportion of people who use the internet and the proportion who do not. In Local News, all interviews were completed via self-administered Web survey. Therefore, there was a concern that internet access could be over-represented in the survey estimates if this dimension was not controlled for in the raking. For this study, panelists were asked in field if they had internet access to correct for this potential over-representation. Other dimensions that are not typically used in weighting protocols for general population household surveys in the US are volunteering and voter registration. These variables were included in the calibration to adjust for some potential bias due to the over-representation of more politically- and civically-engaged adults of the panel.

# Design Effect and Margin of Error

Weighting and survey design features that depart from simple random sampling tend to result in an increase in the variance of survey estimates. This increase, known as the design effect or *deff*, should be incorporated into the margin of error, standard errors, and tests of statistical significance. The overall design effect for a survey is commonly approximated as 1 plus the squared coefficient of variation of the weights. For this survey, the margin of error (half-width of the 95% confidence interval) incorporating the design effect for full sample estimates at 50% is ± 0.82 percentage points. Estimates based on subgroups will have larger margins of error. It is important to remember that random sampling error is only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as question wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error. A summary of the weights and their associated design effect is reported in Table 5 below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 5. Design Effect and Effective Sample Size** | | |  |  |
| **Weight Variable** | **Completed Interviews** | **Approximate Design Effect** | **Effective Sample Size** | **Margin of Error (95% confidence level)** |
|
| WEIGHT | 34,982 | 2.47 | 14,151 | ± 0.82 |

# Dispositions

The final dispositions and AAPOR rates are reported in Table 6. The survey cooperation rate for Local News itself was 55.6%. Table 7 reports the cumulative response rate for Local News when all of the stages of recruitment into the panel are taken into account.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 6. Final Dispositions for the Local News Web Survey** | | |  |  |
| **Final Disposition** | **AAPOR Code1** | **ATP**  **only** | **KP**  **only** | **Total** |
| Completed interview | 1.1 | 10,655 | 24,243 | 34,898 |
| Logged onto survey; broke-off | 2.12 | 379 | 1,154 | 1,533 |
| Logged onto survey; did not complete any items | 2.1121 | 11 | 37 | 48 |
| Never logged on (implicit refusal) | 2.11 | 2,984 | 23,294 | 26,278 |
| **Total Panelists in the Local News Web Survey** | | **14,029** | **48,728** | **62,757** |
| Completed interviews | I | 10,655 | 24,243 | 34,898 |
| Partial interviews | P |  |  |  |
| Refusals | R | 3,374 | 24,485 | 27,859 |
| Non-contact | NC |  |  |  |
| Other | O |  |  |  |
| Unknown household | UH |  |  |  |
| Unknown other | UO |  |  |  |
| Not eligible | NE |  |  |  |
| **Total** |  | **14,029** | **48,728** | **62,757** |
| AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO) |  | 75.9% | 49.8% | 55.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 7. Cumulative Response Rate** | **ATP only** | | | **KP only** | **Total** |
| Weighted Response Rate to Recruitment Surveys^ | 10.2% | | | 12.2% | 11.8% |
| Percent of Recruitment Survey Respondents Who Agreed to Join the panel, Among Those Invited | 64.2% | | | 61.0% | 61.7% |
| Percent of Those Agreeing to Join Who Were Active Panelists at Start of Local News | 75.8% | | | 32.8% | 42.4% |
| Response Rate to Local News Survey | 76.0% | | | 49.8% | 55.6% |
| **Cumulative Response Rate for the Local News Survey** | **3.8%** | | | **1.2%** | **1.8%** |
| ^ Weighted by the total phone numbers/addresses used in each survey | |  |  | | |  |  |

# Key Personnel

Key personnel on Local News include:

Jim Bernier –Vice President, Panel Transition Manager.

Phone number: (917) 446-3164

Email: [jim.bernier@ipsos.com](mailto:jim.bernier@ipsos.com)

Wendy Mansfield – Senior Vice President, Liaison.

Phone number: (202) 686-0933

Email: [wendy.mansfield@ipsos.com](mailto:wendy.mansfield@ipsos.com)

Larry Osborn – Vice President, Panel Management Consultant.

Phone number: (312) 281-2469

Email: [larry.osborn@ipsos.com](mailto:larry.osborn@ipsos.com)

Randall K. Thomas – Vice President, Panel Methodologist.

Phone number: (703) 485-5384

Email: [randall.thomas@ipsos.com](mailto:randall.thomas@ipsos.com)

Mansour Fahimi – Senior Vice President & Chief Statistician.

Phone number: (240) 244-4570

Email: [mansour.fahimi@ipsos.com](mailto:mansour.fahimi@ipsos.com)

Elisa Chan –Vice President, Statistician.

Phone number: (650) 285-6574

Email: [elisa.chan@ipsos.com](mailto:elisa.chan@ipsos.com)

Nicole Neuenschwander – Senior Research Director, Panel Project Director.

Phone number: (312) 962-0103

Email:  [Nicole.Neuenschwander@ipsos.com](mailto:%20Nicole.Neuenschwander@ipsos.com)

# Appendix A: Benchmark Distributions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***18+ Population Benchmarks*** | |
| ***Provided by PEW*** | |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Gender by Age | percent |
| 18-24 Male | 6.35 |
| 25-34 Male | 8.82 |
| 35-44 Male | 8.05 |
| 45-54 Male | 8.42 |
| 55-64 Male | 8.02 |
| 65+ Male | 8.66 |
| 18-24 Female | 6.13 |
| 25-34 Female | 8.91 |
| 35-44 Female | 8.33 |
| 45-54 Female | 8.79 |
| 55-64 Female | 8.69 |
| 65+ Female | 10.83 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Gender by Education | percent |
| HS grad or less Male | 20.14 |
| Some college Male | 14.41 |
| College grad + Male | 13.78 |
| HS grad or less Female | 19.65 |
| Some college Female | 16.69 |
| College grad + Female | 15.34 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Age by Education | percent |
| HS grad or less 18-34 | 11.29 |
| Some college 18-34 | 11.25 |
| College grad + 18-34 | 7.67 |
| HS grad or less 35-54 | 12.43 |
| Some college 35-54 | 9.86 |
| College grad + 35-54 | 11.30 |
| HS grad or less 55+ | 16.07 |
| Some college 55+ | 9.99 |
| College grad + 55+ | 10.15 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Education by Race | percent |
| HS grad or less and White Non-Hispanic | 22.56 |
| HS grad or less and Black Non-Hispanic | 5.34 |
| HS grad or less and Hispanic | 9.26 |
| Some college and White Non-Hispanic | 20.50 |
| Some college and Black Non-Hispanic | 4.14 |
| Some college and Hispanic | 4.26 |
| College grad + and White Non-Hispanic | 21.22 |
| College grad + and Black Non-Hispanic | 2.26 |
| College grad + and Non-Hispanic | 2.16 |
| Other/Multi-race Non-Hispanic | 8.30 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Region | percent |
| Metro Northeast | 16.47 |
| Metro Midwest | 16.48 |
| Metro South | 31.66 |
| Metro West | 21.54 |
| Non-Metro Northeast | 1.29 |
| Non-Metro Midwest | 4.37 |
| Non-Metro South | 5.97 |
| Non-Metro West | 2.21 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Internet Access | percent |
| Does not access the Internet by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider | 16.28 |
| Accesses Internet by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider | 83.72 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Party ID | percent |
| Republican | 25.50 |
| Democrat | 30.70 |
| Independent/Other/DK | 43.80 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Volunteerism | percent |
| Volunteered | 24.75 |
| Did not volunteer | 75.25 |
|  | 100 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Registration | percent |
| Registered | 67.89 |
| Not Registered | 32.11 |
|  | 100 |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***PEW ATP Local News Sample (Final Weights)*** | | |
| ***Weighted by WEIGHT*** | | |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Gender by Age | Frequency | Percent |
| 18-24 Male | 1834.031 | 5.24 |
| 25-34 Male | 3032.144 | 8.67 |
| 35-44 Male | 2827.045 | 8.08 |
| 45-54 Male | 2958.307 | 8.46 |
| 55-64 Male | 2866.639 | 8.19 |
| 65+ Male | 3112.125 | 8.9 |
| 18-24 Female | 2054.936 | 5.87 |
| 25-34 Female | 3175.623 | 9.08 |
| 35-44 Female | 2981.181 | 8.52 |
| 45-54 Female | 3146.987 | 9 |
| 55-64 Female | 3120.482 | 8.92 |
| 65+ Female | 3872.499 | 11.07 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Gender by Education | Frequency | Percent |
| HS grad or less Male | 6605.628 | 18.88 |
| Some college Male | 5086.54 | 14.54 |
| College grad + Male | 4938.124 | 14.12 |
| HS grad or less Female | 6877.066 | 19.66 |
| Some college Female | 5967.977 | 17.06 |
| College grad + Female | 5506.665 | 15.74 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Age by Education | Frequency | Percent |
| HS grad or less 18-34 | 3426.993 | 9.8 |
| Some college 18-34 | 3927.011 | 11.23 |
| College grad + 18-34 | 2742.731 | 7.84 |
| HS grad or less 35-54 | 4317.222 | 12.34 |
| Some college 35-54 | 3539.652 | 10.12 |
| College grad + 35-54 | 4056.647 | 11.6 |
| HS grad or less 55+ | 5738.479 | 16.4 |
| Some college 55+ | 3587.855 | 10.26 |
| College grad + 55+ | 3645.411 | 10.42 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Education by Race | Frequency | Percent |
| HS grad or less and White Non-Hispanic | 7778.463 | 22.24 |
| HS grad or less and Black Non-Hispanic | 1755.91 | 5.02 |
| HS grad or less and Hispanic | 3175.736 | 9.08 |
| Some college and White Non-Hispanic | 7297.277 | 20.86 |
| Some college and Black Non-Hispanic | 1446.502 | 4.13 |
| Some college and Hispanic | 1523.982 | 4.36 |
| College grad + and White Non-Hispanic | 7615.37 | 21.77 |
| College grad + and Black Non-Hispanic | 808.0972 | 2.31 |
| College grad + and Non-Hispanic | 776.7954 | 2.22 |
| Other/Multi-race Non-Hispanic | 2803.868 | 8.02 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Region | Frequency | Percent |
| Metro Northeast | 5756.501 | 16.46 |
| Metro Midwest | 5856.418 | 16.74 |
| Metro South | 11151.62 | 31.88 |
| Metro West | 7523.458 | 21.51 |
| Non-Metro Northeast | 450.4236 | 1.29 |
| Non-Metro Midwest | 1493.36 | 4.27 |
| Non-Metro South | 2014.658 | 5.76 |
| Non-Metro West | 735.564 | 2.1 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Internet Access | Frequency | Percent |
| Does not access the Internet by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider | 5187.612 | 14.83 |
| Accesses Internet by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider | 29794.39 | 85.17 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Party ID | Frequency | Percent |
| Republican | 9071.11 | 25.93 |
| Democrat | 10848.13 | 31.01 |
| Independent/Other/DK | 15062.76 | 43.06 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Volunteerism | Frequency | Percent |
| Volunteered | 8851.364 | 25.3 |
| Did not volunteer | 26130.64 | 74.7 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Registration | Frequency | Percent |
| Registered | 24208.03 | 69.2 |
| Not Registered | 10773.97 | 30.8 |

1. Yeager, D., Krosnick, J., Chang, L., Javitz, H., Levendusky, M., Simper, A. and R. Wang (2011). "Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted With Probability and Non-Probability Samples." Public Opinion Quarterly, Winter 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Visit <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/american-trends-panel/> for more information on American Trends Panel recruitment and methodology. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)