

Establishing **Evidence** Elevating **Standards** Enriching **Policy**



Logos and Dollars: How Procedural and Incentive Payment Changes Can Increase Response Rate

**2009 Annual Conference of the
American Association for Public Opinion Research**

May 14-17, 2009

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Motivation

- Response rates to telephone surveys have been declining¹
- Researchers must use creative methods to gain cooperation of respondents
- Monetary incentives and advance letters can increase response rate²⁻⁴

Study Background

- **List-frame survey part of nationwide evaluation of United States Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration (USDOL-ETA) program**
- **Sample members were unemployed in the past few years**
- **38 minute CATI survey administered by trained interviewers**

Incentive Structure

20% offered \$25 post-pay (n = 152)

40% offered \$50 post-pay (n = 367)

40% offered \$75 post-pay (n = 372)

Advance Letter Types

- Switched from Mathematica (MPR) letterhead to USDOL letterhead
 - MPR letter written and signed by MPR project director (n = 1704)
 - USDOL letter written and signed by federal project officer (n = 152)



Data Analysis: Incentive Structure

- **Response Rate**
 - Compare \$25, \$50, \$75 incentives at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months

- **Level of Effort to Complete**
 - Compare mean number of calls to complete for \$25, \$50, \$75 incentives at 1 month, 2 months, 3 months

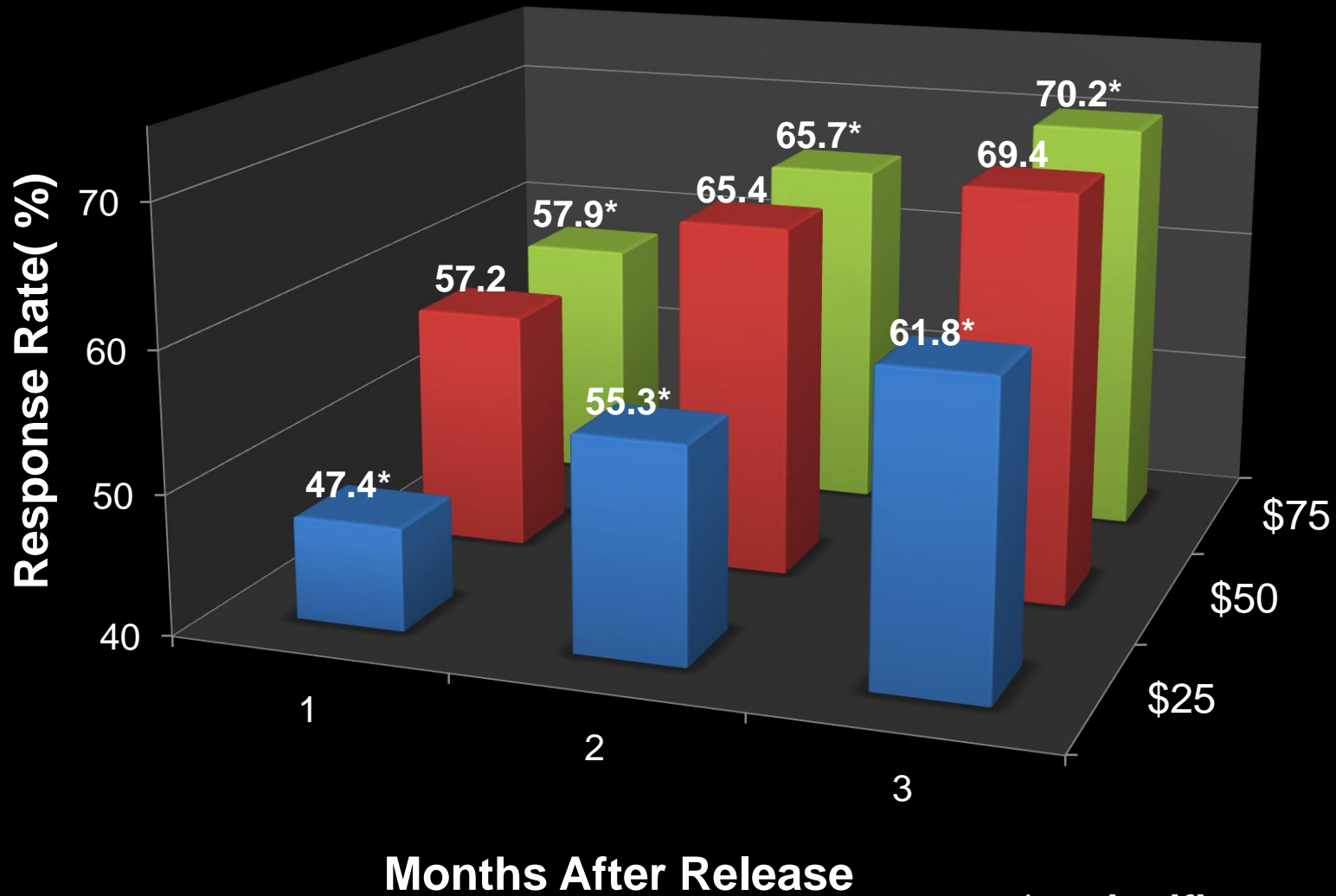
Data Analysis: Advance Letter Type

- **Response Rate**
 - Compare MPR letter to USDOL letter at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months

- **Level of Effort to Complete**
 - Compare mean number of calls to complete for MPR letter and USDOL letter at 1 month, 2 months, 3 months

Response Rate by Incentive Amount

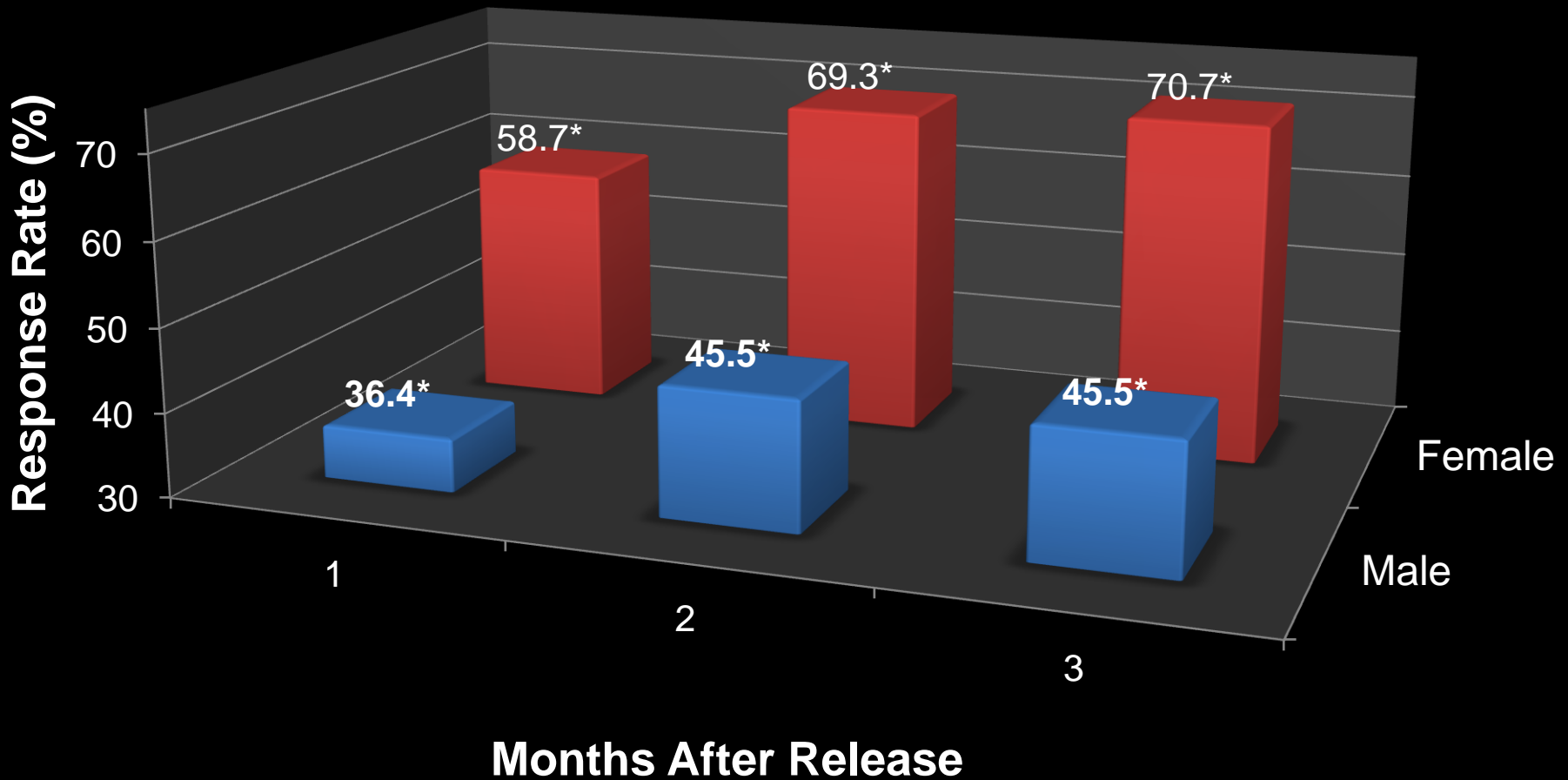
■ \$25 ■ \$50 ■ \$75



* = significant at $p < 0.01$

Response Rate by Gender (\$25 Incentive)

■ Male ■ Female



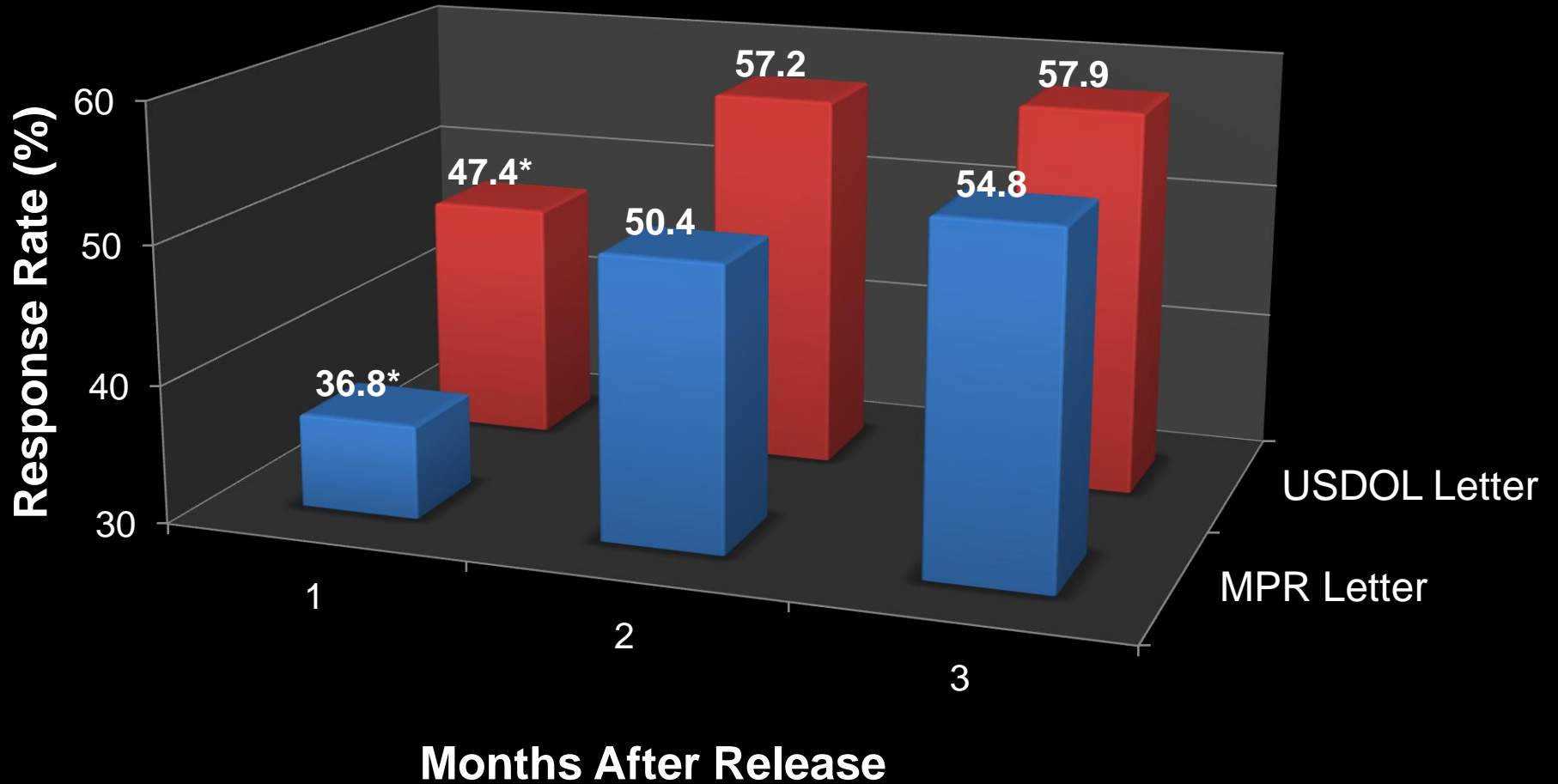
* = significant at $p < 0.01$

Level of Effort to Complete by Incentive Amount

Mean Number of Calls				
	\$25	\$50	\$75	p<
1 month	4.5	4.2	4.1	0.74
2 months	5.9	5.2	4.8	0.11
3 months	6.0	5.2	4.7	0.06

Response Rate by Letter Type

■ MPR Letter ■ USDOL Letter



* = significant at $p < 0.01$

Level of Effort to Complete by Letter Type

Mean Number of Calls			
	MPR Letter	USDOL Letter	p<
1 month	3.3*	4.5*	0.01*
2 months	4.2*	5.9*	0.01*
3 months	4.9	6.0	0.06

* = significant at $p < 0.05$

Discussion: Incentive Structure

- **Results suggestive of a direct relationship between response rate and incentive amount**
- **Results may be indication of the value sample members place on their time**
- **Gender difference in \$25 group warrants further investigation**

Discussion:

Advance Letter Types

- Advance letters from sources deemed most legitimate may be better at gaining cooperation in the short-term
- Inverse relationship between level of effort and response rate highlights important trade-offs between maximizing response rate and budget concerns

Limitations

- **Smaller sample sizes may have limited the ability to detect differences between groups**
- **Sample members who received the MPR letter and the USDOL letter lived in different states**

Summary

- **Monetary incentives and advance letters can impact response rate**
- **Highest incentive amount associated with highest response rate in this survey**
- **USDOL letterhead associated with higher response rate over the short term**

References

- ¹ Curtin, R., Presser, S., & Singer, E. (2005). Changes in telephone survey nonresponse over the past quarter century. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69(1), 87-98.
- ² Singer, E., Van Hoewyk, J., Gebler, N., Raghunathan, T., & McDonagle, K. (1999). The effect of incentives on response rates in interviewer-mediated surveys. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 15(2), 217-230.
- ³ Goldstein, K. M., & Kent Jennings, M. (2002). The effect of advance letters on cooperation in a list sample telephone survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(4), 608-617.
- ⁴ Yammarino, F. J., Skinner, S. J., & Childers, T. L. (1991). Understanding mail survey response behavior: A meta-analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 55(4), 613-639.