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# The Impact of Incentive Form and Size on Survey Response and Demographics

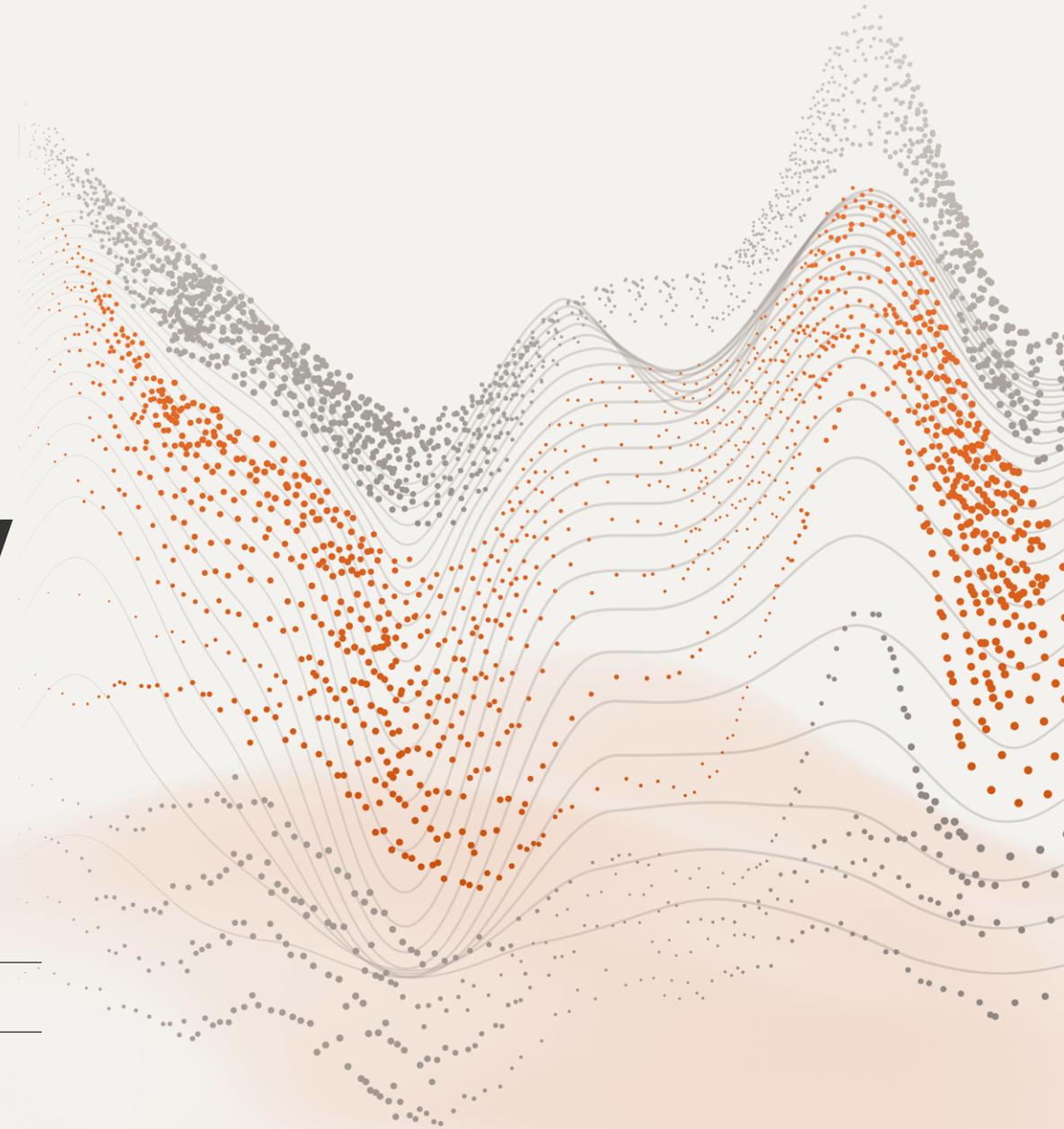
Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey

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# Agenda

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**01** Literature Review on Incentives

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**02** Introduction to the RLS

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**03** Analysis 1: One \$2 bill vs. Two \$1 bills

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**04** Analysis 2: \$2 vs. \$5 pre-incentive

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**05** Insights for Future Research

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# **NORC** Research Science

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The influence of monetary incentives on respondent profiles and response rates has been extensively studied.

- **Studies have also shown that the form of the incentive also affects respondent behavior** (Bilgen et al., 2024; Mills, 2019).
  - A \$2 bill, being less common, might signal extra effort by the researcher.
  - Some respondents might view the \$2 bill as counterfeit, which could deter participation.
- **Studies comparing a \$2 pre-incentive with a \$5 pre-incentive indicate that higher amounts generally improve participation** (Dykema et al., 2015; Han et al., 2013).
  - There are diminishing returns beyond certain thresholds (Edwards et al., 2005).
  - Survey mode and incentive delivery timing also play an important role in the effectiveness of incentives (Mercer et al. 2015).
  - Higher second incentives tend to result in more completes (Dykema et al. 2022).

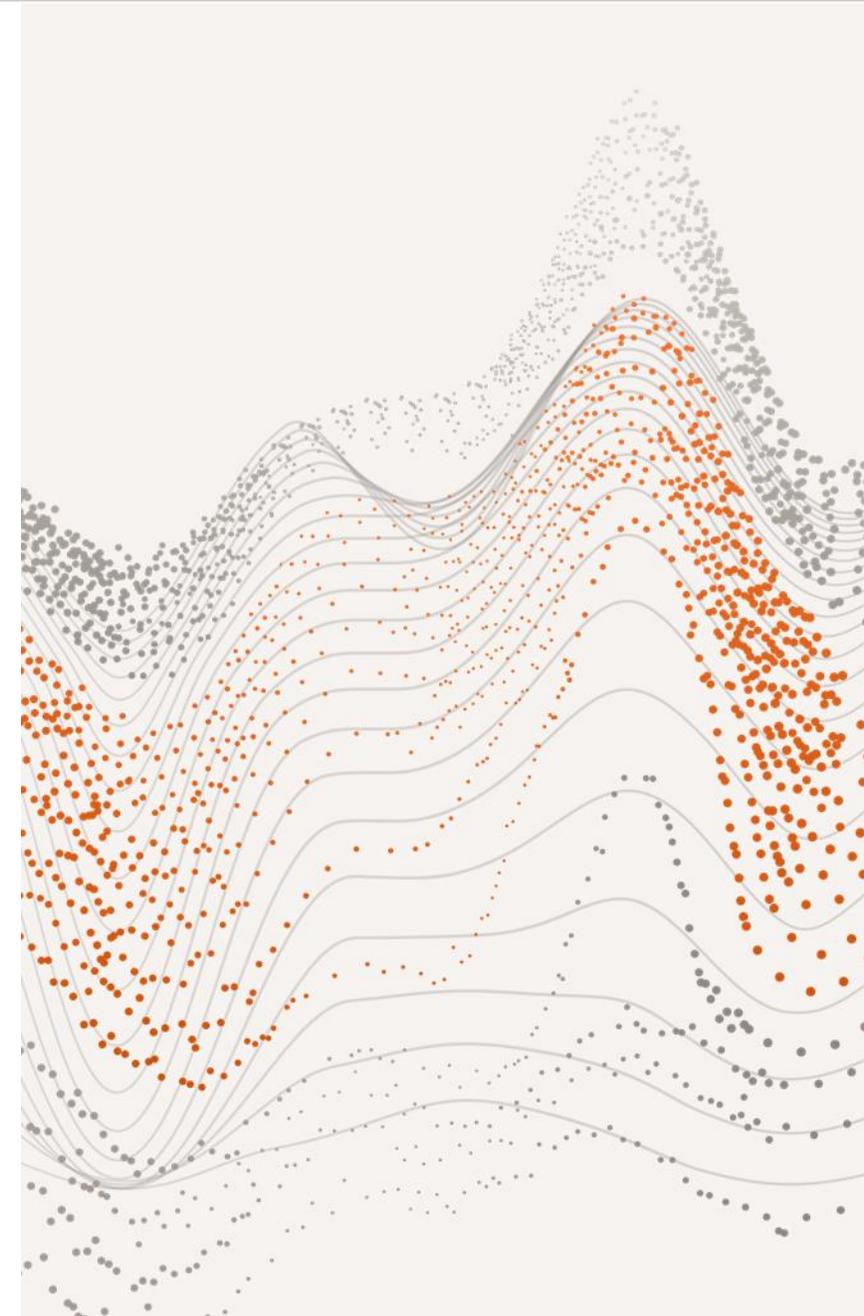
# Religious Landscape Study III

## Background

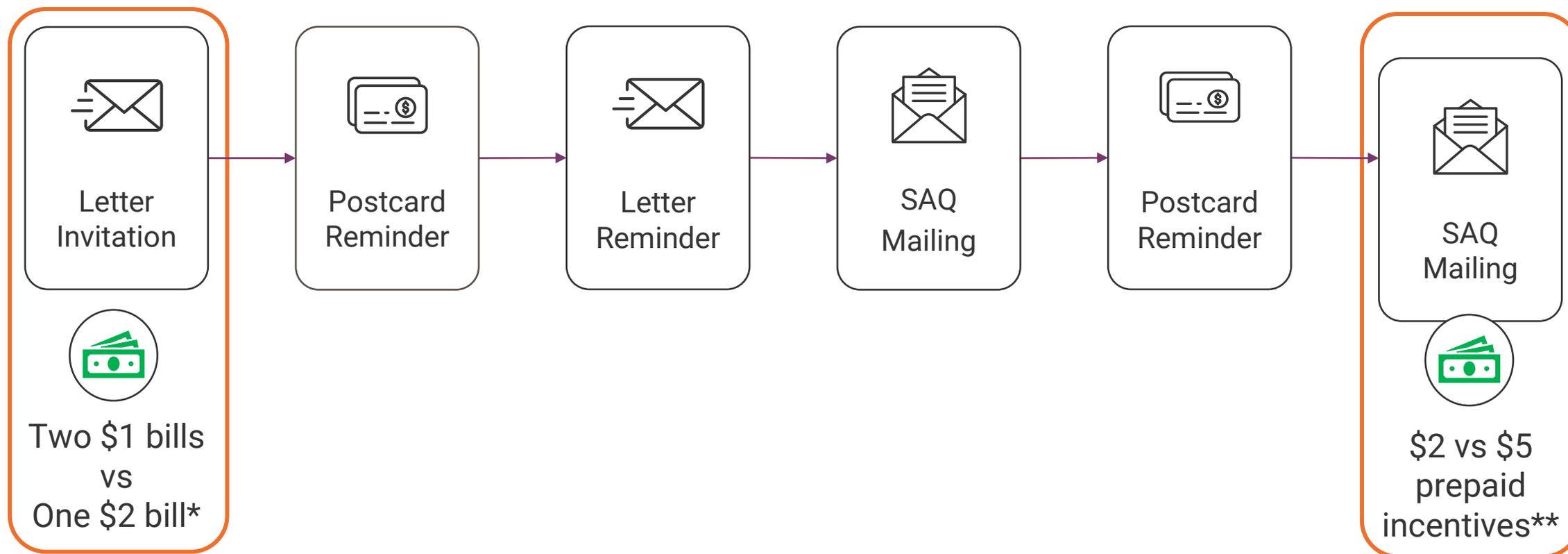
- Conducted on behalf of Pew Research Center
- Comprehensive survey of religion in the U.S., conducted twice previously
- Comprised by a nationally-representative ABS survey, involving over 35,000 respondents

## ABS Survey

- Conducted between July 2023 and March 2024
  - Interviews were conducted via web, phone, and paper.
  - Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish, depending on the respondent's preference.
  - Sample released across two batches.
  - All respondents were offered a \$10 incentive upon survey completion.



## Experiments imbedded in contact sequencing for RLS III



\*In replicate I, the initial letter was in an envelope with a “peekaboo” window displaying the one \$2 bill pre-incentive, there was no “peekaboo” window in replicate II.

\*\*A subsample of 60% of nonrespondents were randomly selected to receive the second SAQ mailing. Of those, one-sixth received the \$5 pre-incentive and five-sixths received the \$2 pre-incentive. Those who received the higher incentive were identified as the hardest-to-reach nonrespondents. Respondents on the 2nd experiment were all in the \$2 bill letter invitation group. Those on the second experiment were excluded in our analyses of the first experiment.

## Key Takeaways from Analysis 1

- **Question:** What is the impact of using one \$2 bill versus two \$1 bills as the prepaid incentive in an **initial invitation letter**?
  - Invitations sent with two \$1 bills yielded more completes
  - Those with lower levels of education were more likely to respond to the one \$2 bill letter than the two \$1 bills letter, though the difference was modest at only 2 percentage points.
  - We recommend offering two \$1 bills for improving response rates and one \$2 bill to reach respondents with lower levels of education. .

## Key Takeaways from Analysis 2

- **Question:** What is the impact of using a \$2 prepaid incentive versus a \$5 prepaid incentive in a **final mail contact attempt**?
  - The \$5 pre-incentive group had a higher response rate, compared to the \$2 pre-incentive group.
  - Offering the \$5 prepaid incentive costs twice as much per complete than offering the \$2 prepaid incentive.
  - Offering the \$5 prepaid incentive helped reach more harder to respond populations.
  - We recommend survey methodologists to determine their recruitment approach based on their target sample and budget.

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# Analysis 1:

**What is the impact of using one \$2 bill versus two \$1 bills as the prepaid incentive in an initial invitation letter?**

We received slightly higher yields when sending two \$1 bills compared to when sending one \$2 bill.

	One \$2 Bill	Two \$1 Bills
Completed interviews	8,162	7,066
Total cases	114,033	89,879
Yields	7.2%	<b>7.9%</b>

\*The relationship between yields and incentive form is statistically significant.

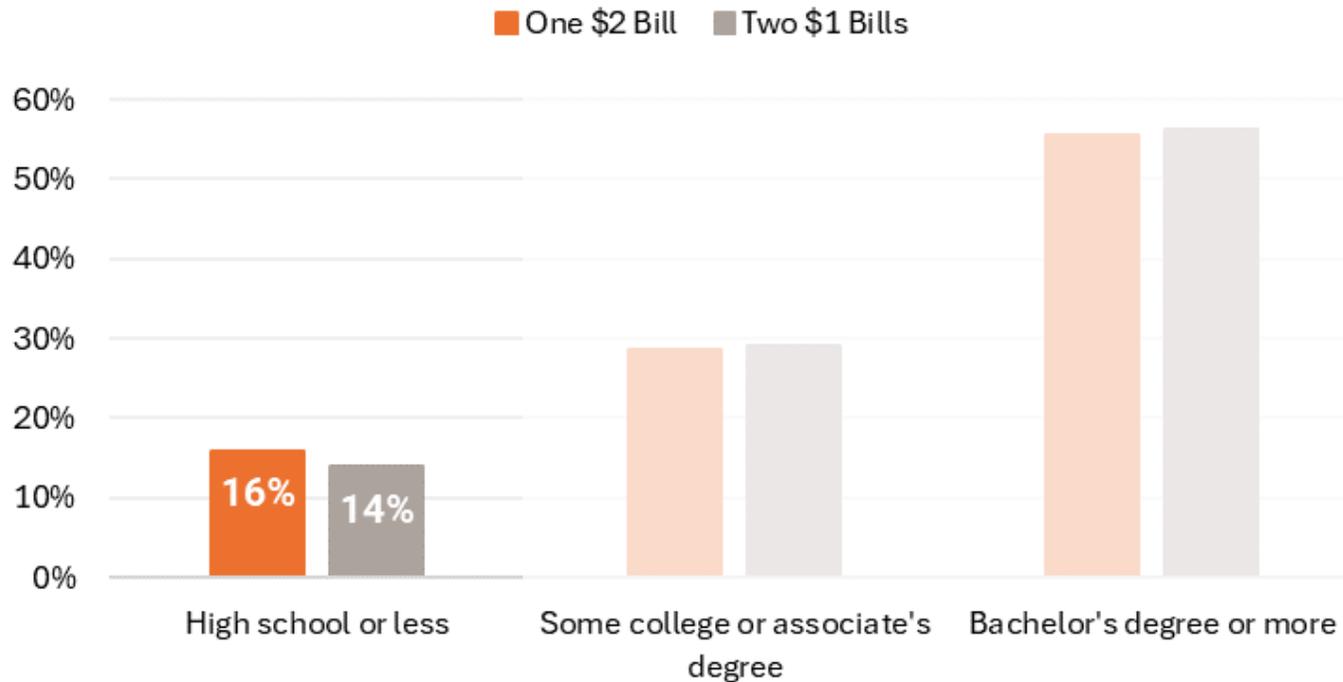
We compared one \$2 bill respondents to two \$1 bills respondents, using weighted Chi-Squared tests.

- **We explored the effects of incentive form on respondent composition, incorporating a Bonferroni adjustment factor to account for multiple comparisons.**
- **The relationships between incentive form and the following sociodemographic characteristics were not statistically significant.**
  - Age group
  - Sex
  - Ethnorace
  - Nativity
  - Voter registration\*

\*We examined the relationship between self-reported voter registration and incentive form, subsetting down to respondents who are citizens.

We compared one \$2 bill respondents to two \$1 bills respondents, using weighted Chi-Squared tests.

Educational Distribution by Pre-Incentive Form



**One \$2 bill respondents are more likely to have fewer years of education.**

We also examined the relationship between incentive form and key estimates, which we found not to be significant.

- **Key estimates we examined included**
  - Religion
  - Religious services attendance
  - The importance of religion in one's life
  - Belief in God

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## Analysis 2:

**What is the impact of using a \$2 prepaid incentive versus a \$5 prepaid incentive in a final mail contact attempt?**

The \$5 pre-incentive group had a higher response rate, compared to the \$2 pre-incentive group.

	\$2 Pre-incentive	\$5 Pre-incentive
Completed interviews	5,762	1,356
Total cases	46,231	9,161
Yields	12.5%	<b>14.8%</b>
Cost per complete ratio (prepaid incentive)	1	2.12

We compared the demographic composition of the \$2 respondents to \$5 respondents, using weighted Chi-Squared tests.\*

- **\$5 respondents tended to be:**
  - In the 65+ age group
  - Male
  - Non-Hispanic Asian
  - US territory or foreign born
  - Not registered to vote\*\*

\*The \$5 incentive group targeted those with lower response propensities (typically hardest to reach). The weights used are the sampling base weights and do not account for these response propensities at this moment.

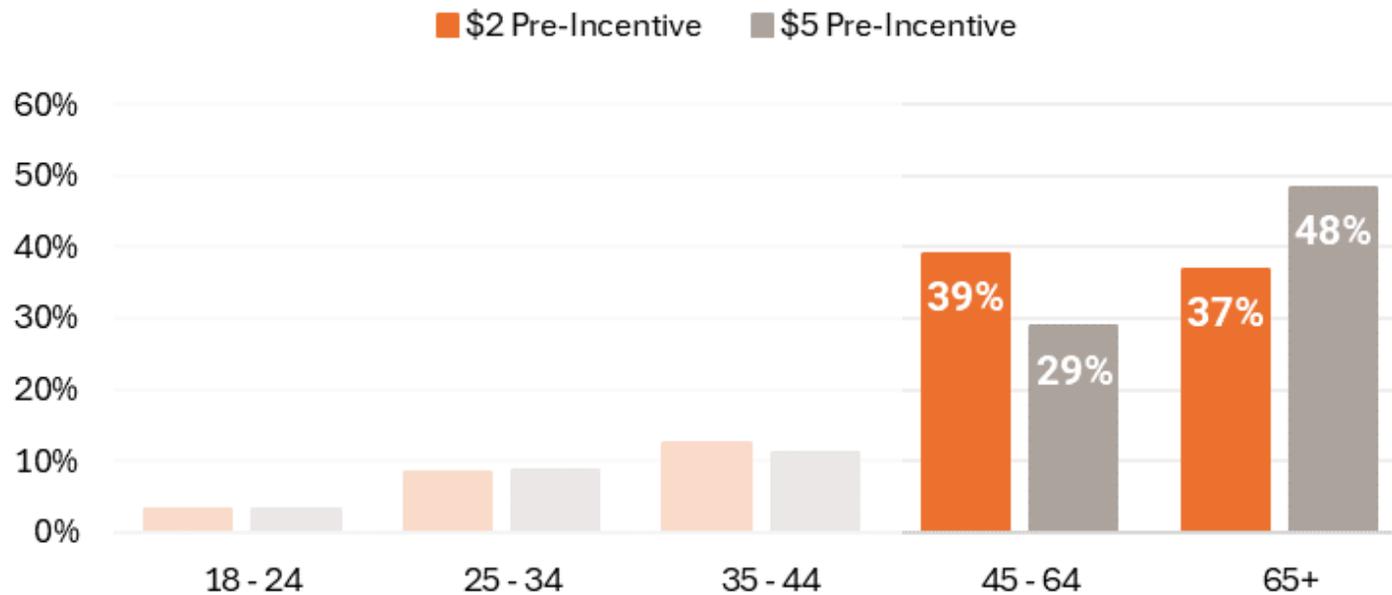
\*\*We examined the relationship between self-reported voter registration and incentive form, subsetting down to respondents who are citizens.



**The relationships between impact amount and educational attainment and political ideology were not found to be statistically significant.**

We saw the biggest difference among respondents in terms of age.

Age Distribution by Pre-Incentive Amount



**\$2 respondents are more likely to be in the 45-64 age group while \$5 respondents are more likely to be in the 65+ age group.**

We also examined the relationship between incentive amount and key estimates, which we found not to be significant.

- **Key estimates we examined included**
  - Religion
  - Religious services attendance
  - The importance of religion in one's life
  - Belief in God

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# Conclusions

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## Experiments imbedded in contact sequencing for RLS III



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\*\*A subsample of 60% of nonrespondents were randomly selected to receive the second SAQ mailing. Of those, one-sixth received the \$5 pre-incentive and five-sixths received the \$2 pre-incentive. Those who received the higher incentive were identified as the hardest-to-reach nonrespondents. Respondents on the 2nd experiment were all in the \$2 bill letter invitation group. Those on the second experiment were excluded in our analyses of the first experiment.

We conclude with recommendations for future studies based on our findings.

### Analysis 1: One \$2 bill vs. Two \$1 bills

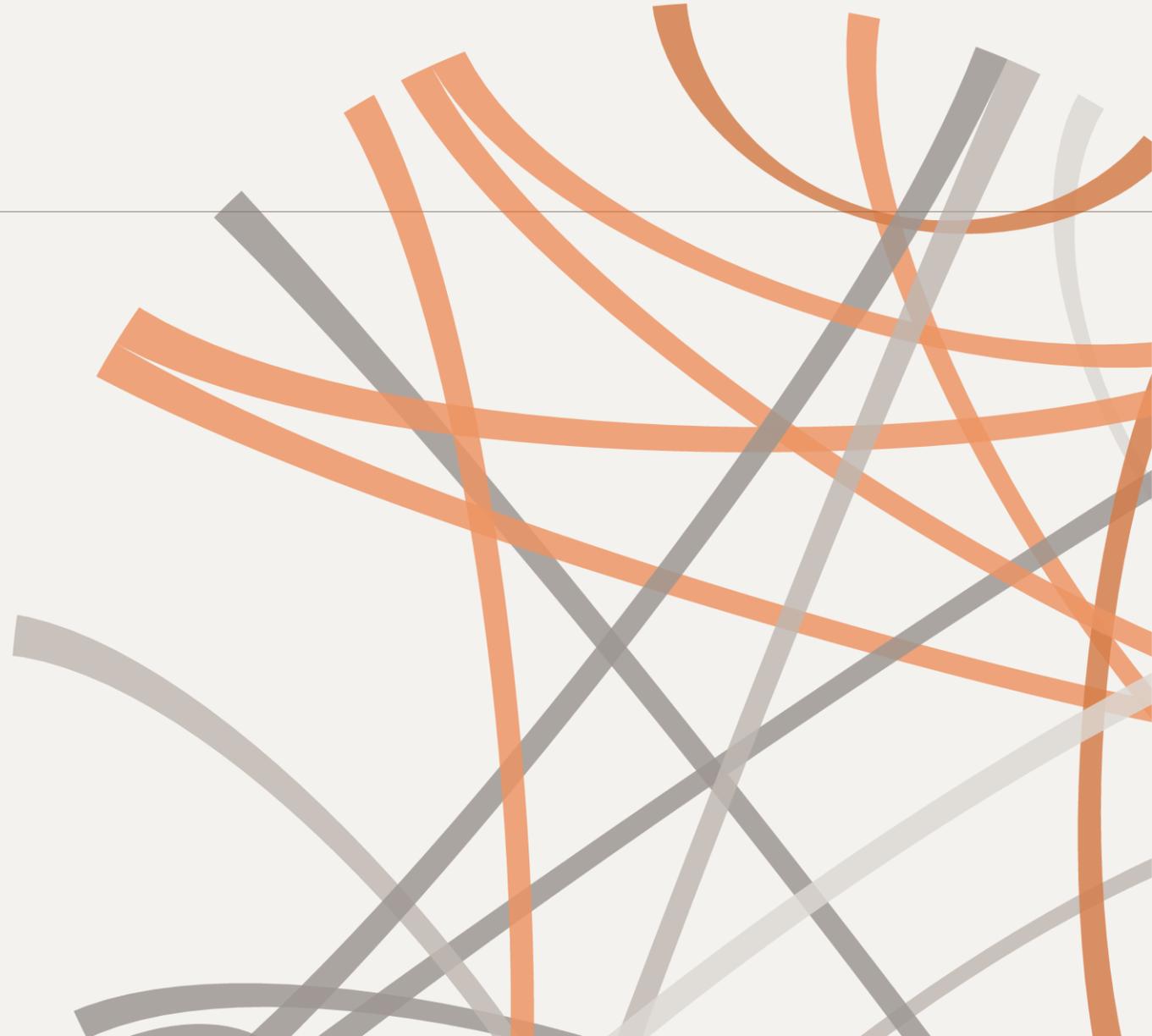
- Sending two \$1 bills had higher yields.
- Sending a \$2 bill had higher response from those with lower levels of education.

### Analysis 2: \$2 vs. \$5 pre-incentive

- The \$5 prepaid incentive helped reach more harder to respond populations.
- Still, it is twice the cost per complete than a \$2 pre-incentive.

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Questions?



# Thank you.

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