



Central Arkansas Transit Authority

Rock Region METRO

Central Arkansas Transit Authority Voter Survey

June 2015



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Central Arkansas Transit Authority Voter Survey, June 2015

Introduction

The Central Arkansas Transit Authority (CATA), in collaboration with The Communications Group and Nelson/Nygaard, commissioned a survey of registered voters of Pulaski County to determine a) peoples' perspectives of transportation in the current community context; b) transit as economic development; c) perspective of current and proposed CATA services; and, d) support for a sales tax and increased funding for CATA.

Major Findings

- There is definite, tangible **support for a sales tax** to support increased and expanded CATA services.
- There is **widespread support for improving or expanding transportation services** offered by CATA
- The potential of **economic development and increased or enhanced employment prospects** underpins much of the support for increasing and expanding CATA services
- Public **transportation services are deemed very important** to the community

Summary of Results

Support for an increase in the Sales Tax and Increased Funding

There is substantial and intense support for an increase in the sales tax to provide funding for CATA services. Across two questions asking specifically whether one will vote for or against a sales tax and one question asking about one's support or opposition to a quarter cent sales tax, there is consistent confirmation in favor of a sales tax (see Questions #3, #10, & #16). Over 50 percent of respondents would vote for or support the sales tax. Given the approach to questions on this survey – whereby respondents are asked if they would self-place in a more intense category, i.e., whether they strongly oppose, or strongly support versus simply support or oppose – these results provide meaningful information on the intensity of one's perspectives on raising a tax or increasing spending. These percentage differentials in intensity – whether being “definitely for” or “definitely against” a tax – provide insight into the positions of those individuals who are definitely for or against a tax; currently those differentials average 19 percent across questions. These results provide ample evidence that there is strong support among respondents to vote for a sales tax to expand and improve CATA services.

Perspectives of Current and Proposed CATA Services

Speaking of transportation services, there are a lot of questions gauging peoples' perspectives about specific services and the overall perception of CATA. There is widespread support for improving or expanding transportation services offered by CATA, which included substantial support for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (63%), new routes, new busses, and community shuttles

(see Questions #5, #11, #12, & #13). While there is much support for public transportation, the support needs to translate into regular use. Though a lot of people use public transportation services, they do not do so a lot (see Question #7). Well over half the people interviewed said they use public transportation services, but only about one-fifth do on a somewhat regular basis. The improved and expanded services being proposed may be the collection of services that moves public transportation use past 50 percent. Evidence of seeing this support translated into the use of services is offered in the overwhelming endorsement to ensure that sufficient transportation services are available for specific constituent groups in the community; these are supported quite vigorously by about two-thirds of respondents (see Questions #15A-#15E).

Public Transportation and Transit Services as Economic Development,

One of the greatest assets according to respondents' perspectives is the potential of economic development and increased or enhanced employment prospects for area residents. As "Transit Oriented Development" has long demonstrated the economic benefits of public transportation services for local communities, that perception of economic promise is well supported in Pulaski County. This sentiment is demonstrated by the 66 to 75 percent of respondents being supportive of expanding public transportation services to attract businesses and expand job opportunities for area residents. Similar support for more transportation services across Pulaski County is apparent across various constituent groups—local businesses, employers, young job-seekers, and young professionals – perceived to catalyze economic activity, create jobs, and retain talent.

Perspectives of Transportation in the Current Community Context

Those issues common for local communities emerged from these results as the most pressing here (crime, jobs, and schools). Transportation is simply not foremost among those issues deemed important by people in Pulaski County; out of the eight issues asked about, transportation placed seventh in importance (see Question #1). The fact that transportation-related issues are not among the top tier of issues of importance in this community signals that people may be satisfied with transportation (*they are not*), or the other issues are simply more pressing in the current context (*these are*).

As evidence that people are not satisfied with transportation issues, a battery of questions are presented about transportation issues on which people indicate these to be of high priority, especially maintaining streets and roads (see Questions #6A through #6J). In asking about these ten transportation projects or programs (Questions #6A-#6J) – four are transit oriented, while six are roads oriented – it is easy to discern that this community is car-centric, which is especially evidenced by most respondents' selection of "more roads" as being the primary focus for transportation in Pulaski County (see Question #4). Of the programs and projects rated (as low, medium, or high priority), most of those rated highly (as a "high priority") are short term transportation solutions that come with high costs of construction, continued maintenance, and eventual replacement.

Apparent in these ratings is that people in Pulaski County view public transportation services as separate from transportation solutions to reduce traffic, ease congestion, and mitigate road construction and maintenance costs. Public transportation must become part of the “streets, roads, and highways” lexicon in order to be perceived by the general public as *part* of the solution to transportation issues. Yet, the survey does offer proof that there are people in Pulaski County who do value public transportation services and consider it part of a viable transportation strategy. These survey results show that the public views public transportation as an integral and needed aspect of transportation in this community (see Question #2). Overall, taken together, these results suggest a sense of understanding about public transportation services available in the community, but these results also indicate that work remains if public transit is to be universally perceived as part of the overall future transportation strategy for Pulaski County.

Survey Questions and Results (in order of administration)

Respondents are first queried with regard to the most important local issue affecting residents of Pulaski County. Respondents indicated that crime and public safety (23%) is the foremost issue in the county. The next two most important issues – jobs and the economy and schools – are mentioned by residents at about the same percentages, 20 percent and 19 percent respectively.

Q1-When thinking about issues that impact Pulaski County residents, which of the following local issues is most important to you? [these issues listed for respondent and rotated]

| | Percent |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| (2) Jobs/Economy | 19.7 |
| (3) Schools | 18.7 |
| (1) Crime/Public Safety | 22.7 |
| Healthcare | 10.2 |
| Environment | 3.2 |
| Streets/Roads/Transportation | 6.2 |
| Quality of Life | 8.2 |
| Taxes | 8.7 |
| Other | 1.7 |
| None of these (v) | .5 |

As this survey focuses on the Central Arkansas Transit Authority (CATA) services, residents are asked to rate the importance of these transportation services on a scale of one (1) to ten (10), with one being of no importance and ten being the most important issue. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) rated transportation services as being important to the most important service need in the county (i.e., respondents rated the importance of services as 8, 9, or 10).

Q2- The Central Arkansas Transit Authority, CATA, provides public transportation services

(buses, special need vans and street car system) to the Little Rock metro area serving over 10,000 riders per day. Knowing this background, can you rate the need for this service on a scale of 0 to 10 with '0' being not at all important, '5' being neither important or unimportant, and '10' being the most important.

| | Percent |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Not at All Important | 7.2 |
| 1 | .2 |
| Unimportant | 1.5 |
| 3 | .7 |
| 4 | .7 |
| Neither Important or Unimportant | 11.2 |
| 6 | 5.2 |
| 7 | 7.2 |
| Important | 17.7 |
| 9 | 8.7 |
| Most Important | 39.4 |

Well over half of respondents (55%) support and strongly support a quarter cent sales tax to expand current public transportation services, while almost 39 percent oppose or strongly oppose this sales tax. This nearly 16 percent divide between support and opposition for a quarter-cent sales tax is significant, especially when viewed according to those respondents that self-placed into the strongly categories (strongly oppose or strongly support) – a six percent difference.

Q3-There are currently discussions to raise revenue to expand services offered through CATA to better connect and grow the Little Rock region. Would you support or oppose a quarter cent sales tax to expand our current public transportation system?

| | Percent |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Oppose (combined) | 39.4 |
| Strongly Oppose (p) | 15.5 |
| Oppose | 23.9 |
| Support | 33.4 |
| Strongly Support (p) | 21.7 |
| Support (combined) | 55.1 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion (v) | 5.5 |
| Total | 100.0 |

To explore whether respondents in Pulaski County would chose more road or more public transportation when offered a choice of how to focus spending on transportation, 12 percent

more favored roads to public transit. Thus, while 34 percent favored to spend more on public transportation, 46 percent chose spending more on roads.

Q4-Given a choice, should more roads, or more public transportation be the focus for transportation spending in Little Rock, North Little Rock, and other communities throughout Pulaski County?

| | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| More Roads | 46.1 |
| More Public Transportation | 34.2 |
| Both (v) | 10.7 |
| Neither Option is That Important (v) | 4.2 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion | 4.7 |
| Total | 100.0 |

Upon being given a brief description of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the services included in such a system, respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose having BRT as part of the services offered by CATA . Well over 60 percent (63%) support or strongly support having BRT as part of their transportation options in this county.

Q5- Some public transportation services offer Bus Rapid Transit or "BRT," which as you may know, is a system that offers a premium level of service that includes free Wi-Fi, more frequent service, fewer stops, secure stations with raised boarding platforms, dedicated travel lanes, and traffic signal priority. Knowing this would you support or oppose having Bus Rapid Transit services as part of CAT services?

| | Percent |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Strongly Oppose (p) | 8.7 |
| Oppose | 18.2 |
| Support | 42.1 |
| Strongly Support (p) | 20.9 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion (v) | 10.0 |

Next, respondents are presented with a host of transportation projects or programs to prioritize; each respondent is asked to rate a project or program as being “a high priority, a medium priority, a low priority, or not a priority at all.” Across a host of projects or programs (see below), respondents rated several as being a “high priority” issue or option. Respondents are obviously concerned about street and road repair and maintenance, as “Maintain Streets, Roads, and Highways” received the most ‘high priority’ ratings (84%) and 70 percent rated “Improve Local Streets” a ‘high priority’. Four other projects or programs are rated as a ‘high priority’ by between 45 and 55 percent of respondents: Reduce Traffic on I-30 and I-40 (53%); I-30 Bridge Replacement Project (51%); Widen Existing Roads (47%); and, More Direct Bus Routes that Run More Frequently (45%). Interestingly, despite the tendency toward Roads, only about one-third of respondents (34%) rated “Build More Roads” as a ‘high priority’. Public Transportation oriented projects and programs are rated a ‘high priority’ by between 30 and 45

percent of respondents - More Direct Bus Routes that Run More Frequently (45%); Start Bus Service Earlier and Run Later (41%); Expand Commuter Hour and Midday Express Bus Routes (36%); and, Start Bus Rapid Transit Service (30%). All but one of these public transportation projects or programs garnered more 'high priority' ratings than "Build More Roads".

Q6A-Q6G: I'd like to read you a list of public transportation projects and programs. For each one, please tell me how much of a priority it should be. Please tell me whether it is a high priority, a medium priority, a low priority, or not a priority at all.

| | No Priority at All | Low Priority | Medium Priority | High Priority | Don't Know (v) |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| <i>Q6A-Build More Roads</i> | 9.2 | 21.9 | 34.2 | 33.7 | 1.0 |
| <i>Q6B-Widen Existing Roads</i> | 6.2 | 12.2 | 32.9 | 46.9 | 1.7 |
| <i>Q6C-Expand Commuter Hour and Midday Express Bus Routes</i> | 4.7 | 20.4 | 33.2 | 35.9 | 5.7 |
| <i>Q6D-Maintain Streets, Roads, and Highways</i> | 1.2 | 2.2 | 11.2 | 84.3* | 1.0 |
| <i>Q6E-Reduce Traffic on I-30 and I-40</i> | 5.2 | 11.0 | 25.9 | 53.4 | 4.5 |
| <i>Q6F-Start Bus Rapid Transit Service</i> | 5.5 | 22.7 | 36.9 | 30.4 | 4.5 |
| <i>Q6G-More Direct Bus Routes that Run More Frequently</i> | 5.5 | 17.0 | 30.4 | 44.9 | 2.2 |
| <i>Q6H-Start Bus Service Earlier and Run Later</i> | 3.7 | 17.0 | 32.9 | 41.1 | 5.2 |
| <i>Q6I-I-30 Bridge Replacement Project</i> | 4.0 | 13.0 | 26.4 | 50.6 | 6.0 |
| <i>Q6J-Improve Local Streets</i> | 1.2 | 5.0 | 21.7 | 69.8 | 2.2 |

In an effort to understand how CATA services are utilized throughout the county, respondents are asked about their use of busses, LINKS, and the River Rail. About 60 percent of respondents indicated that they or a family member have used CATA services. Approximately 22 percent of those who indicated they had used these services had done so within the past six months (which includes within the last week, month, or 6 months), but for over half of these respondents (57%), it had been a year or longer since they had used CATA services.

Q7Have you or a member of your family ridden a CAT bus, a Links special needs van, or the River Rail street car?

| | Percent |
|-----|---------|
| No | 38.7 |
| Yes | 60.3 |

Note: If respondent answered no, s/he skips to Q8; if respondent answered yes, s/he is asked Q7A

Q7A-If yes, how recent was that ride?

| | Frequency | Percent of Overall Total (401) | Percent of Question #7 Total (242) |
|---|-----------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Within the Last Week | 29 | 7.2 | 12.0 |
| Within the Last Month | 23 | 5.7 | 9.5 |
| Within the Last Six Months | 47 | 11.7 | 19.4 |
| Within the Last Year | 55 | 13.7 | 22.7 |
| More than a Year Ago | 84 | 20.9 | 34.7 |
| Don't Remember/Unsure/ No Answer (v) | 4 | 1.0 | 1.7 |
| Total | 242 | 60.3 | 100.0 |

Recognizing the need for public transportation to have a guaranteed revenue stream via a dedicated source, several questions are asked to gauge support for CATA funding. These types of questions are often used to assess respondent familiarity with outcomes often associated with CATA services being provided throughout the county; such questions can determine what elements of CATA services resonate with citizens to justify expansion and improvement of CATA service options across Pulaski County. In posing the outcome or service expansion options to respondents, each is followed with a phrase to determine respondents' acceptance or rejection of an increase in their sales tax, or their support or opposition to a funding increase.

From these queries about support of increased funding or a dedicated portion of a sales tax to fund CATA services, respondents never waiver in their support of increased funding, or for a sales tax; support is well over 50 percent across this set of questions. Respondents are quite supportive of increasing funding or the sales tax to support CATA services if it supports expanded employment opportunities or economic improvement for the area. Sixty-six percent of respondents support increased funding to attract large employers. Support for increased funding jumps to 71 percent if it involves expanding job opportunities for residents in the area. Similar support emerges for an increased tax (61%) when respondents are asked about upgrading CATA equipment to grow the economy and reduce environmental impacts. Support for an increased sales tax exceeds 50 percent across questions about the following service improvements:

- new routes, new busses, new shelters - 57%
- more crosstown routes - 56%
- community shuttles - 53%.
-

| | Strongly Oppose (p) | Oppose | Support | Strongly Support (p) | Don't Know (v) |
|---|---------------------|--------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Q8-Knowing that a viable transportation system helps attract large employers and more jobs to our area for existing residents, would you support or oppose a funding increase?</i> | 12.0 | 14.7 | 45.4 | 20.7 | 7.2 |
| <i>Q9-Knowing that a viable transportation system could expand job opportunities for existing residents, would you support or oppose a funding increase?</i> | 8.2 | 14.7 | 50.4 | 20.9 | 5.7 |

Q10-As you may know, cities like Nashville, Tennessee, Austin Texas and Baton Rouge Louisiana have higher levels of funding for public transportation. But in our area, transportation services are limited due to a lack of overall funding. Knowing this, would you vote for or against an increase in the local sales tax to help expand our system?

| | Percent |
|---|---------|
| Definitely For a Tax (p) | 32.4 |
| For a Tax | 22.7 |
| Against a Tax | 20.0 |
| Definitely Against a Tax (p) | 17.7 |
| Depends on the Amount of the Increase (v) | 2.2 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion (v) | 5.0 |

| | Less Likely | More Likely | Don't Know (v) |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>Q11- Funding for transportation service across our communities is largely paid for with local tax dollars - over 12 million dollars annually. This level of funding limits what public transportation services can be provided. Increased funding would allow for additional bus routes, more and better bus shelters for passengers, and new</i> | 35.4 | 57.4 | 7.2 |

| | | | |
|---|------|------|-----|
| <i>buses. Knowing this information, would you be more likely or less likely to support an increased sales tax?</i> | | | |
| <i>Q12-An increase in local funds would improve existing bus service with more routes providing direct connections across the area without traveling to downtown. Knowing this information would you be more likely or less likely to support an increased sales tax?</i> | 37.2 | 56.1 | 6.7 |
| <i>Q13-An increase in local funds would introduce new community shuttles or circulators in Maumelle, Sherwood and Jacksonville. Knowing this information would you be more likely or less likely to support an increased sales tax?</i> | 40.9 | 53.4 | 5.7 |
| <i>Q14-Upgrading the existing public transportation equipment and investing in new equipment will allow CAT to grow our economy while reducing environmental impacts. Knowing this, would you be more or less likely to support an increased tax?</i> | 33.7 | 60.8 | 5.5 |

This next set of questions seeks information about transportation services for specific constituent groups in the community. For these various groups – local businesses, employers, young job-seekers, young professionals, and older adults – respondents are posed with a statement and asked whether they disagree or agree with it. Similar to the previous questions about support for CATA service expansion, in which support approaches two-thirds of respondents, CATA services that promote jobs and employment garner high-levels of support. Over 60 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree with these statements about transportation services. The highest agreement across all statements involved the provision of more transportation options for older adults and retirees – over 75 percent of respondents agreed with this statement.

I am going to read you some statements about transportation services throughout Pulaski County and I want you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

| | Strongly Disagree (p) | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree (p) | Don't Know (v) |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| <i>Q15A-CAT needs to provide more transportation services to help local businesses compete for jobs in the new economy.</i> | 9.5 | 18.0 27.5 | 47.6 | 19.5 67.1 | 5.5 |
| <i>Q15B-CAT needs to provide more public transportation options to</i> | 6.5 | 19.7 | 45.9 | 22.9 | 5.0 |

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|---------------------|------|---------------------|-----|
| attract new jobs and employers. | | 26.2 | | 68.8 | |
| <i>Q15C-CAT needs to provide more public transportation options to attract Millennials and young job-seekers to our area.</i> | 6.5 | 24.2 30.7 | 42.4 | 22.2 64.6 | 4.7 |
| <i>Q15D-CAT needs to provide more public transportation options to keep our young professionals in the area.</i> | 8.0 | 25.7 33.7 | 41.9 | 20.4 62.3 | 4.0 |
| <i>Q15E-CAT needs to provide more transportation options for older adults and retiree residents in the area.</i> | 5.2 | 15.5 20.7 | 43.9 | 32.2 76.1 | 3.2 |

With the emphasis of this survey to assess respondent support of an increase in the sales tax to fund transportation services in Pulaski County, the final question asked in this regard seeks to understand if respondents would vote on a sales tax increase if presented that option. A question similar in reference was also asked on the November CATA Survey, which permits comparisons between results on that survey and this current survey. Again, as noted, the intensity of support is gauged on these question as respondents are asked whether they will vote against or for a sales tax and, once determined, respondents are asked a follow-up question to determine the intensity of their support or opposition to a sales tax (i.e., depending on their initial answer, they are asked if they are “definitely for/against a tax”). As can be discerned, 58 percent respondents are for, or definitely for a tax; the fact that the “definitely for a tax” group (38%) is 17 percent higher than the “for a tax” group (21%) is indicative of the veracity of the support among respondents in favor of a sales tax to fund public transportation in Pulaski County. Conversely, those respondents against a tax are a sizeable group as well (at 38%); yet, the intensity of opposition is softer than that of those who support a tax, as those “definitely against a tax” (16%) are 6 percentage points less than those “against a tax” (22%).

Q16- Based on what you know about public transportation, if you were asked to vote in an election held today, would you vote for or against a sales tax to fund increased public transportation services for Little Rock, North Little Rock, and other communities throughout Pulaski County?

| | Percent June (N=401) | Percent Nov (N=400) | Difference |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Favor of the tax (combined) | 58.4 | 48% | +10.4 |
| Definitely For a Tax (p) | 37.7 | 16% | +21.7 |
| For a Tax | 20.7 | 32% | -11.3 |
| Against a Tax | 21.9 | 17% | +4.9 |
| Definitely Against a Tax (p) | 15.7 | 30% | -14.3 |
| Against the tax (combined) | 37.6 | 47% | -9.4 |
| Don't Know/No Opinion (v) | 4.0 | 5% | -1.0 |

Note: The comparison question is Q26, table 96, from the November Survey. The question, Q26, is as follows: Currently CATA relies on city, county and federal funds to provide service. Would you be willing to pay additional taxes such as sales tax or property tax to increase the amount of public transportation service in the region? If you were asked to vote in an election held today, would you vote: Definitely for a tax, Probably for a tax, Probably against a tax, or Definitely against a tax.

Survey Methodology

Procedures Used for Conducting the Survey

The survey was developed by The Communications Group, who collaborated with Nelson/Nygaard and CATA staff. American Directions, a polling vendor, handled all survey programming, data collection, and data processing. The CATA Transportation Poll was conducted Wednesday June 24, 2015 through Sunday June 28, 2015. Call periods included both weekends and weekdays. A registered voter list of residential telephone numbers and cell phone numbers from eligible zip codes was procured for the survey. The sample population is of active, registered voters residing in Pulaski County (i.e., has voted in the past six years). For each working telephone number in the sample, at least thirteen attempts were made to reach an eligible respondent. Eligibility criteria for respondents included being an adult age 18 years or older, being registered to vote, and living in specific zip code areas. The representative sample was drawn using quotas; sample quotas were used for gender, age (designated at 60 percent being less than 60 years old and 40 percent 60 years old or older), and geographic location (designated by zip codes with 25 percent being from North Little Rock, 60 percent from Little Rock, and 15 percent from other areas throughout Pulaski County (e.g., Maumelle, Sherwood, and Jacksonville). A combination of 70 percent landline and 30 percent wireless phone numbers were used in determining this sample of registered voters.

The survey was executed by American Directions Research Group using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The CATI system is located at American Direction's interviewing center in Lakeland, Florida. A total of 28 interviewers were trained and selected to conduct the interviews. Each interviewer was systematically monitored and evaluated in order to ensure the highest quality and reliability of the data.

Interviews were conducted with 401 adults from the target population (e.g., Pulaski County registered voters). For a sample size of 401, there is a 95 percent probability that our survey results are within plus or minus 5 percentage points (the margin of sampling error) of the actual population distribution for any given question. For sub-samples, which is a subgroup selected from the overall sample, the margin of error is higher depending on the size of the subsample. Because the survey is based on probability sampling, there are a variety of factors that prevent these results from being perfect, complete depictions of the population; the foremost example is that of margin of sampling error. As with all probability samples there are theoretical and practical difficulties estimating population characteristics (or parameters). Efforts are made to reduce or lessen sampling error, as well as other types of errors associated with survey research; error effects are present in surveys derived from probability samples and, while not all inclusive, examples of such threats and effects include: non-response rates, question order effects, question wording effects, etc.

Questions and Question Order

In releasing survey results, the CATA Transportation Survey provides the questions as worded and the order in which these questions are administered to respondents. One of the more important, albeit an often overlooked element of a survey is the opening that greets potential respondents; wording of the survey introduction, especially if worded poorly, can influence how respondents approach their answers. The survey is opened with information about the survey and why it is being conducted. The opening narrative for this survey is as follows:

Hello. I am conducting a public opinion survey about issues in Little Rock, North Little Rock, and other communities throughout Pulaski County. This is part of a very important study, and I wonder if you would be willing to answer questions to help us understand issues in your community. The survey should take about 10 minutes. All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will not be used for any purposes other than collecting data for this study.

In an effort to provide neutral, non-biased questions, we attempt to observe conventional question wording and question order protocols in this survey. To reduce the threat of question construction and instrument issues that can possibly affect results, several techniques are employed in the administration of our survey instrument.

Probe Technique (p) – Some questions in this survey used a probe maneuver to determine a respondent's intensity of opinion. Probe techniques consist mainly of asking a respondent if their response is more intense than initially provided with the simple dichotomized option. For example, in asking a question that elicits a

satisfaction/dissatisfaction response, the respondent, upon indicating whether s/he is satisfied or dissatisfied, is asked a follow up question that probes for intensity, for example: “would you say you are very ‘satisfied’/‘dissatisfied’”. This technique aids respondents by enhancing the interpretation, recall, and judgment required to answer a question. A probe technique is employed in some questions as opposed to specifying the full range of choices in the question. Though specifying the full range of options in questions is a commonly accepted, necessary practice (for specific questions) in survey research, we sometimes prefer that the respondent determine whether their perspective is stronger or more intense for which the probe technique is used. The use of the probe technique is noted by the lower case ‘p’ in parentheses (p).

Volunteered Response Options (v) – Oftentimes respondents volunteer response options not provided to them as an option. As we typically only offer response options in the questions as presented, some respondents choose to ignore these explicit options provided to them and offer or volunteer another response option; in the event that such more common options can be anticipated, these are noted (by the lower case ‘v’ in parentheses (v)); though not all volunteered options can be accommodated or anticipated, the more common options are noted.

The “Don’t Know” & “Refused” Response Options – Question construction also involves the response option choices made available to the respondent for selection. We typically do not express to respondents that the ‘don’t know’ response is an option for most questions; we do, however, record this response should it be offered. If a respondent indicates s/he has no opinion because s/he does not know how to respond, the interviewer codes the response as a ‘don’t know’ and proceeds to the next question. For questions involving topics that are sensitive or less salient, we oftentimes offer an option that permits respondents to comfortably acknowledge lack of interest or attention, and little or no knowledge or awareness about a topic. Again, as explained previously, this option is provided as part of the question presented to respondent.

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