2012 AIR FORUM

"COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURVEY DATA: THE IMPACT OF QUANTITY AND QUALITY ON INFORMED DECISION-MAKING"

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Why study that which we know so well…?

…because we've exhausted all survey research…no…

Porter and Whitcomb (2005) … students respond as an outcome of gender, social engagement, or personality types;

Asiu, Antons and Fultz (1998) studied *survey saturation* and its effect on response rates;

Goho (2002) … mixed-mode surveys had little positive influential effect on return rates;

Porter and Umback (2006) analyzed survey data from 321 institutions and found that response rates were influenced by institutional characteristics;

Johnson and Owens (2003) studied the impact survey response rates had on *return rate disclosure* information in journal publishing;

Porter (2004) suggested survey non-response has become a problem for researchers in higher education;

Surveys that are perceived as too long or too short influence return rates (Beebe, et al, 2010, p. 2).

**Full text, peer-reviewed, 1960 – 2012, search for "survey":
Academic Search Premiere: 180,803; Business Source Premiere: 51,041; et al…**

…*because* employees and students are robots…no…

…because motivations have significant variance …yes…

Spring 2012 Detailed Report (Excerpt)

DPT 162 (56014): CISCO II ROUTERS/SWITCHES
Response Rate: 20.00% (3 respondents of 15 enrolled)

DPT 161 (56013): CISCO I NETWORK ESSENTIALS
Response Rate: 21.05% (4 respondents of 19 enrolled)

DPT 164 (56017): CISCO IV PROJ BASED LEARNING
Response Rate: 33.33% (5 respondents of 15 enrolled)

DPT 172 (56016): FUND UNIX/LINUX II
Response Rate: 25.00% (4 respondents of 16 enrolled)

DPT 284 (56027): DPT INTERNSHIP
Response Rate: 33.33% (5 respondents of 15 enrolled)

DPT 291 (56015): CASE STUDY COMPUTER SCIENCE
Response Rate: 6.25% (1 respondent of 16 enrolled)

> **Composite: 22/96 or 23%**
> **or…about 1 in 4!!!**

> **Rates ~ 60% in the 1960's to 21% in the late 1980's (Dey, 1997)**

...because we may think our opinions don't matter...no...

Nope

No

Nothing

Not sure

No response

Incentive

I have no idea

Not really

Good luck.

$1000.00

Nearly 10% of the 1,800 responses in this study were in this "general" category, specific to questions about motivation, reasons for responding or not responding to a survey, etc.

Of the scaled responses, for N = 647, the average response rate for the 25 questions was 22% in the Neutral option. Does this mean that participants didn't understand the question, had no opinion, would rather not respond negatively or positively, etc.

… and because …surely so!

"The definition of [survey data] validity [and reliability] is not just an interesting philosophical question; it can be seen to have real ethical, political, and economic consequences." (Moss, 1998, p. 6: *The Role of Consequences in Validity Theory)*

Current Example of "ethical, political, or economic consequence…"

From: The United States Postal "Service®" <survey.research-3149~56803@sendyourfeedback.com>	**Sent:** Tue 06/ 5/12 1:20 PM
To: skinner777@knology.net	**Priority:** Normal
Subject: We want to your feedback on the USPS® mobile app!	**Type:** Text

To skinner777@knology.net:

Our records indicate that you participated in a survey over your experience with the USPS.com® website and were willing to participate in additional research with the United States Postal Service®. The USPS® would like to ask for feedback on your usage of the USPS.com® mobile website (m.USPS.com®) and the USPS® mobile application via a web enabled device such as a smart phone or tablet.

Please complete this 5 minute survey by clicking on the below URL to the survey. If that does not launch the survey, copy the Web address into your browser's address/location line.

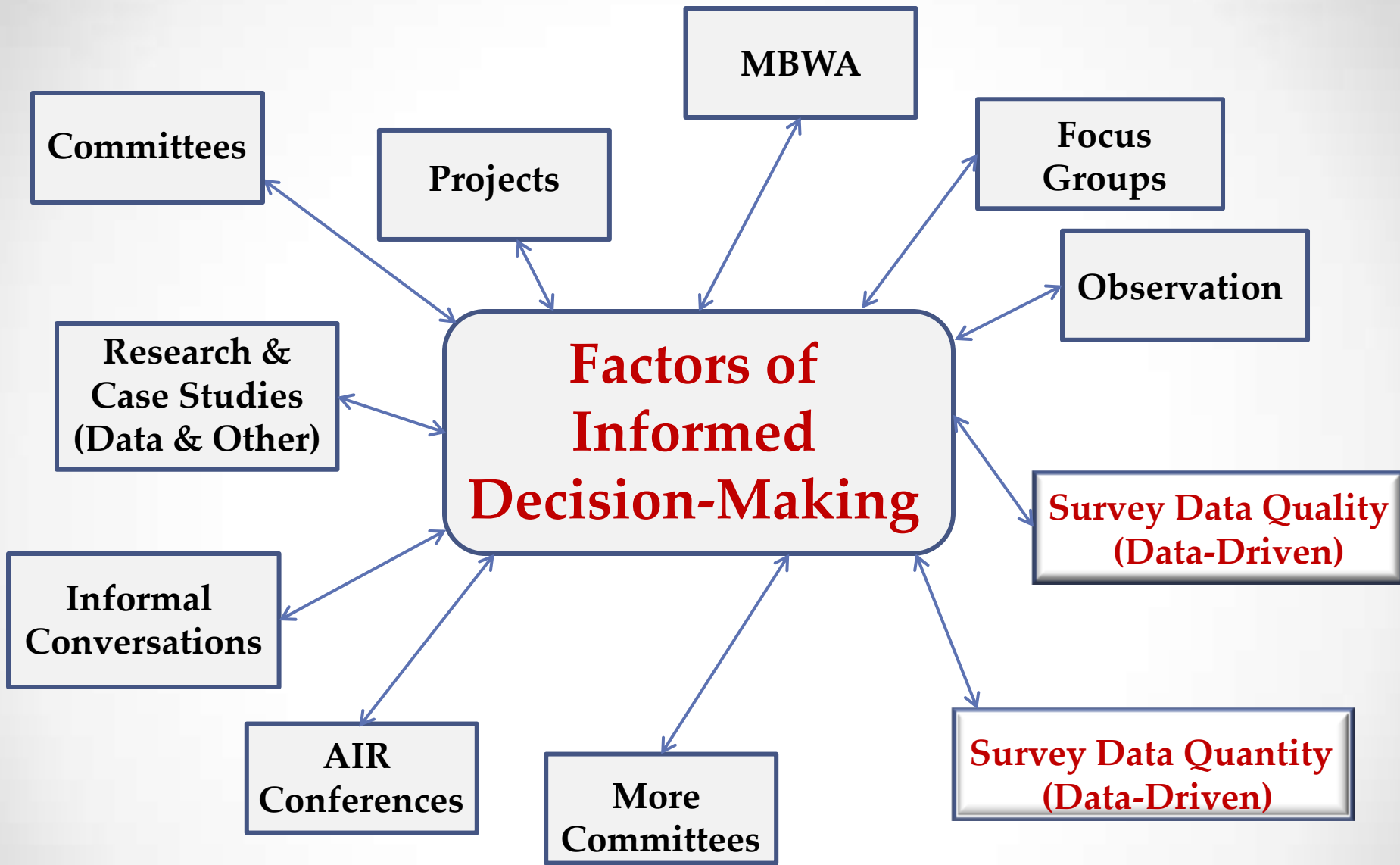http://survey1.sendyouropinions.com/survey.aspx?I.project=w3149&id=56803&password=nqkhn

For your convenience the survey is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through 6/12/2012, from any computer with Internet access. If you have difficulty accessing the survey, please refer to the Technical Assistance link below.

http://survey1.sendyouropinions.com/tech_faq.htm

Sincerely,

The United States Postal Service®

"The Inflection Point"

QQPC Survey Model

(Quality-Quantity Participation-Completion)

Participants Informed of Alignment of Data to Decision

Institutional Significance: QQPC Motivator

Quantity

Quality

Data-Driven Informed Decision-Making
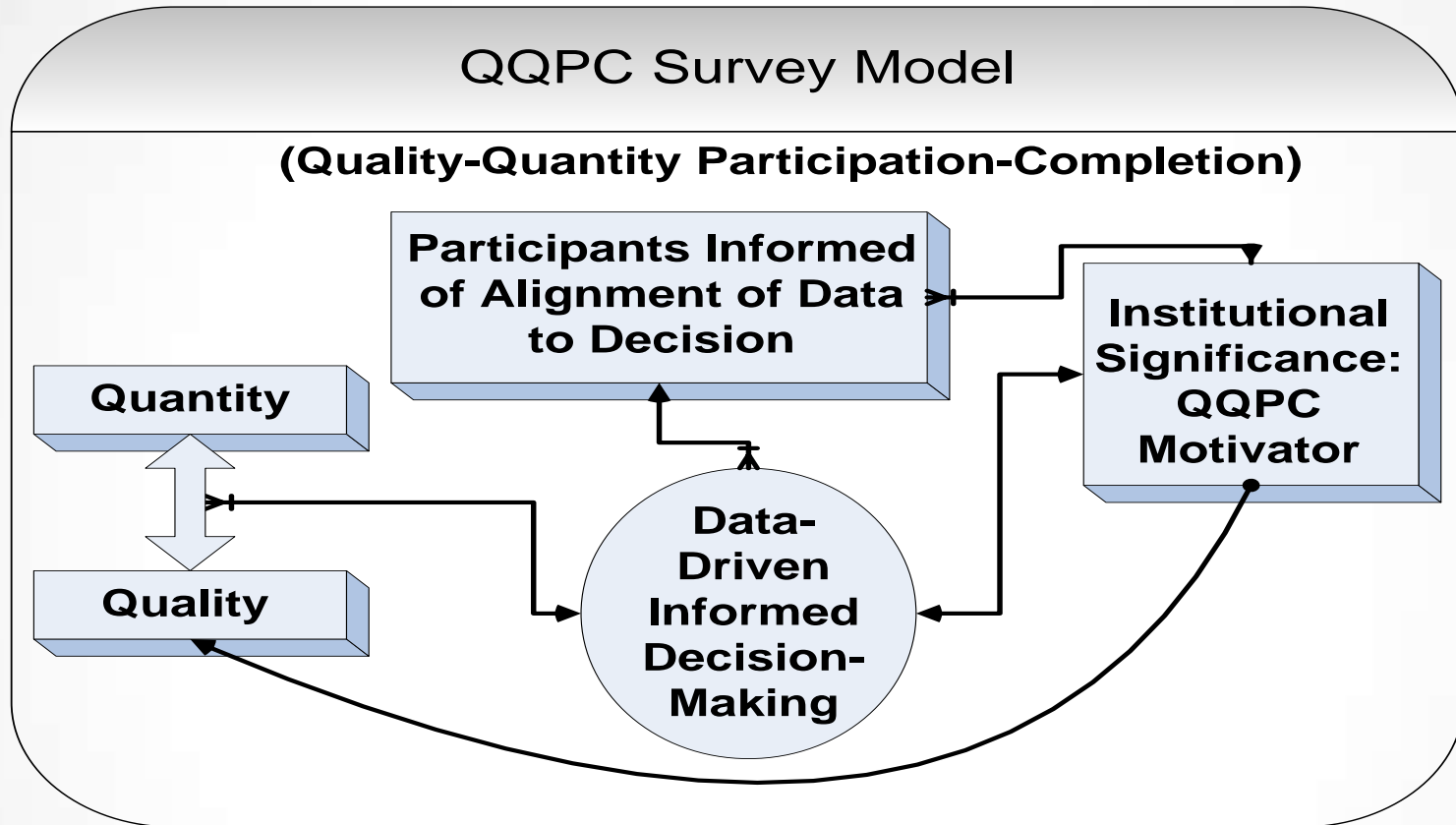
Definition of 'Inflection Point': An event that results in a significant change in the progress of a company, industry, sector, economy or geopolitical situation. An inflection point can be considered a turning point after which a dramatic change, with either positive or negative results, is expected to result. The QQPC Survey Model is suggested to maximize the inflection point at the highest level of quantity and quality in the survey process.

Purpose in the study: Research Question 1 Summary…

Construct	Descriptors
<u>Current practices</u> in responding to surveys	Specific actions taken by individuals to participate or consciously refrain from participation; measurable outcomes such as "as soon as I see a survey, I delete the email" or I am very selective in which surveys I participate…
Perceive the importance of responding to surveys	How does the respondent logically and systematically determine if the survey is important to him/her; can this perception of importance be modified by external means; how does importance (or value) correlate to quality and quantity in survey return rates…
Survey response rates perceived and influenced by institutional research	How do IR Departments perceive response rates, the quality of the responses, and what are they doing to motivate and inspire employees (and students) to participate in surveys and do so with quality as a primary tenet of their responses; what innovative methods are being considered and implemented to increase quantity/quality in survey responses…
Quantity and quality of datasets perceived as impacting informed institutional decision-making	Do return rates and/or the quality of those returns impact and inform the reviewers and users of the dataset to be fully aware of the influence these datasets have on informed decision-making; how do respondents and IR Departments view this construct, from a positive, negative, and neutral reporting outcome; do lower response rates and lower quality responses, in fact, influence informed decision-making…

Purpose in the study: Research Question 2 Summary…

Construct	Descriptors
Current practices in responding to surveys	Specific actions taken by individuals to participate or consciously refrain from participation; measurable outcomes such as "as soon as I see a survey, I delete the email" or I am very selective in which surveys I participate…
Perceive the <u>importance</u> of responding to surveys	How does the respondent logically and systematically determine if the survey is important to him/her; can this perception of importance be modified by external means; how does importance (or value) correlate to quality and quantity in survey return rates…
Survey response rates perceived and influenced by institutional research	How do IR Departments perceive response rates, the quality of the responses, and what are they doing to motivate and inspire employees (and students) to participate in surveys and do so with quality as a primary tenet of their responses; what innovative methods are being considered and implemented to increase quantity/quality in survey responses…
Quantity and quality of datasets perceived as impacting informed institutional decision-making	Do return rates and/or the quality of those returns impact and inform the reviewers and users of the dataset to be fully aware of the influence these datasets have on informed decision-making; how do respondents and IR Departments view this construct, from a positive, negative, and neutral reporting outcome; do lower response rates and lower quality responses, in fact, influence informed decision-making…

Purpose in the study: Research Question 3 Summary…

| Construct	Descriptors
Current practices in responding to surveys	Specific actions taken by individuals to participate or consciously refrain from participation; measurable outcomes such as "as soon as I see a survey, I delete the email" or I am very selective in which surveys I participate…
Perceive the importance of responding to surveys	How does the respondent logically and systematically determine if the survey is important to him/her; can this perception of importance be modified by external means; how does importance (or value) correlate to quality and quantity in survey return rates…
Survey response rates <u>perceived</u> and <u>influenced</u> by <u>institutional research</u>	How do IR Departments perceive response rates, the quality of the responses, and what are they doing to motivate and inspire employees (and students) to participate in surveys and do so with quality as a primary tenet of their responses; what innovative methods are being considered and implemented to increase quantity/quality in survey responses…
Quantity and quality of datasets perceived as impacting informed institutional decision-making	Do return rates and/or the quality of those returns impact and inform the reviewers and users of the dataset to be fully aware of the influence these datasets have on informed decision-making; how do respondents and IR Departments view this construct, from a positive, negative, and neutral reporting outcome; do lower response rates and lower quality responses, in fact, influence informed decision-making…

Purpose in the study: Research Question 4 Summary…

Construct	Descriptors
Current practices in responding to surveys	Specific actions taken by individuals to participate or consciously refrain from participation; measurable outcomes such as "as soon as I see a survey, I delete the email" or I am very selective in which surveys I participate…
Perceive the importance of responding to surveys	How does the respondent logically and systematically determine if the survey is important to him/her; can this perception of importance be modified by external means; how does importance (or value) correlate to quality and quantity in survey return rates…
Survey response rates perceived and influenced by institutional research	How do IR Departments perceive response rates, the quality of the responses, and what are they doing to motivate and inspire employees (and students) to participate in surveys and do so with quality as a primary tenet of their responses; what innovative methods are being considered and implemented to increase quantity/quality in survey responses…
<u>Quantity</u> and <u>quality</u> of datasets perceived as <u>impacting informed institutional decision-making</u>	Do return rates and/or the quality of those returns impact and inform the reviewers and users of the dataset to be fully aware of the influence these datasets have on informed decision-making; how do respondents and IR Departments view this construct, from a positive, negative, and neutral reporting outcome; do lower response rates and lower quality responses, in fact, influence informed decision-making…

Methodology

➡ Developed two independent surveys: (1) AFS; (2) IR
(AFS: Administrators, Faculty Members, Staff)
(IR: Institutional Research Offices/Officers)

➡ Requested distribution with: (1) Alabama Community College System; (2) Association of Institutional Research; (3) American Association of Community Colleges

➡ AFS survey 25 scaled-responses, various open-ended questions; IR survey 2 sets of 20 scaled-responses, various open-ended questions

RESULTS

IR Survey Data Quantity
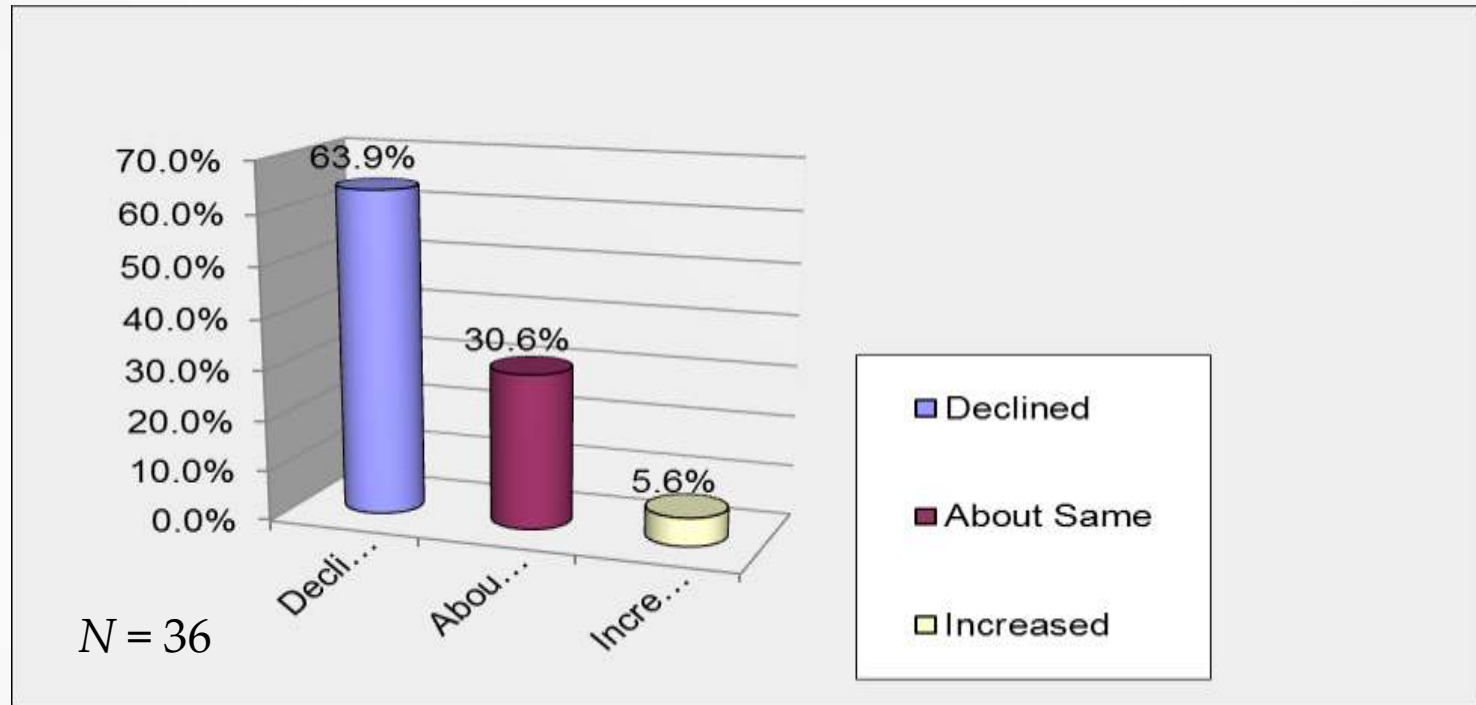
As a matter of IR practice, what is your opinion of survey response rates (quantity) in the past three-to-five years? (e.g., # of surveys submitted)
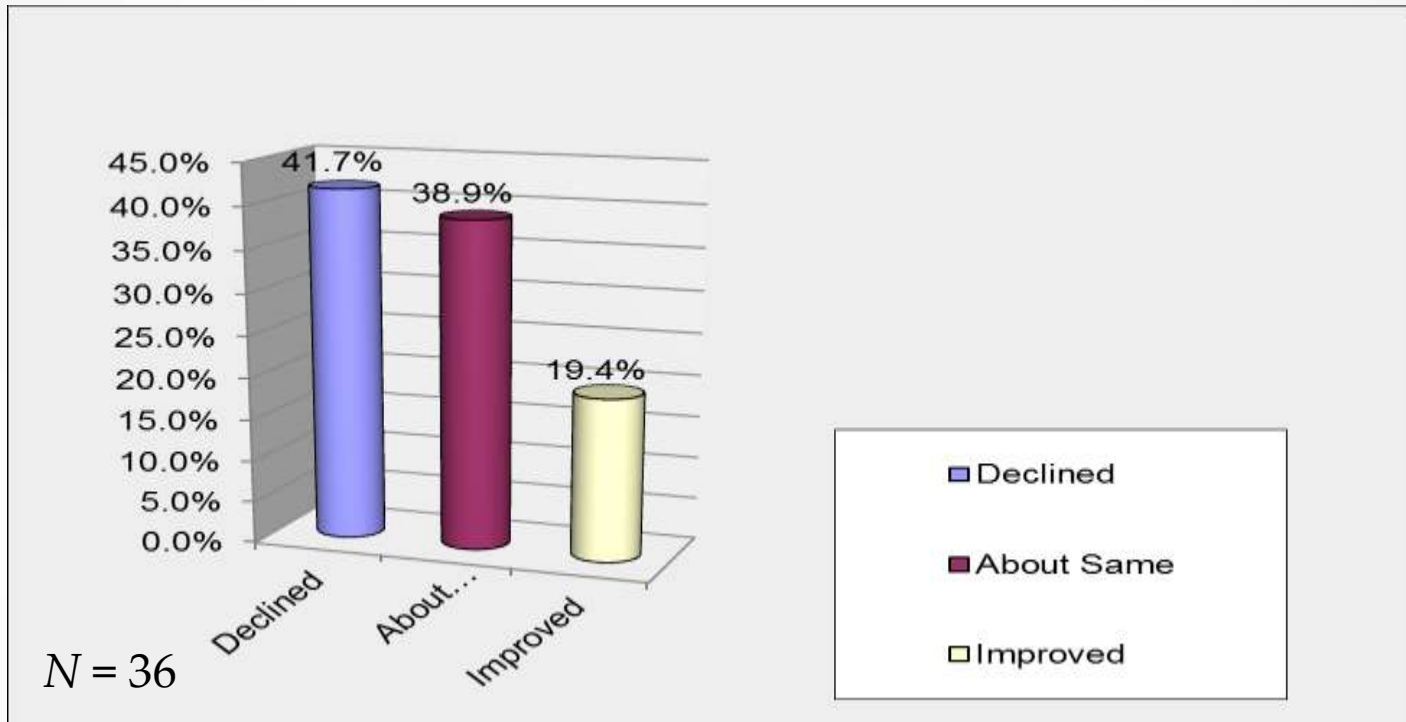
IR Survey Data Quality

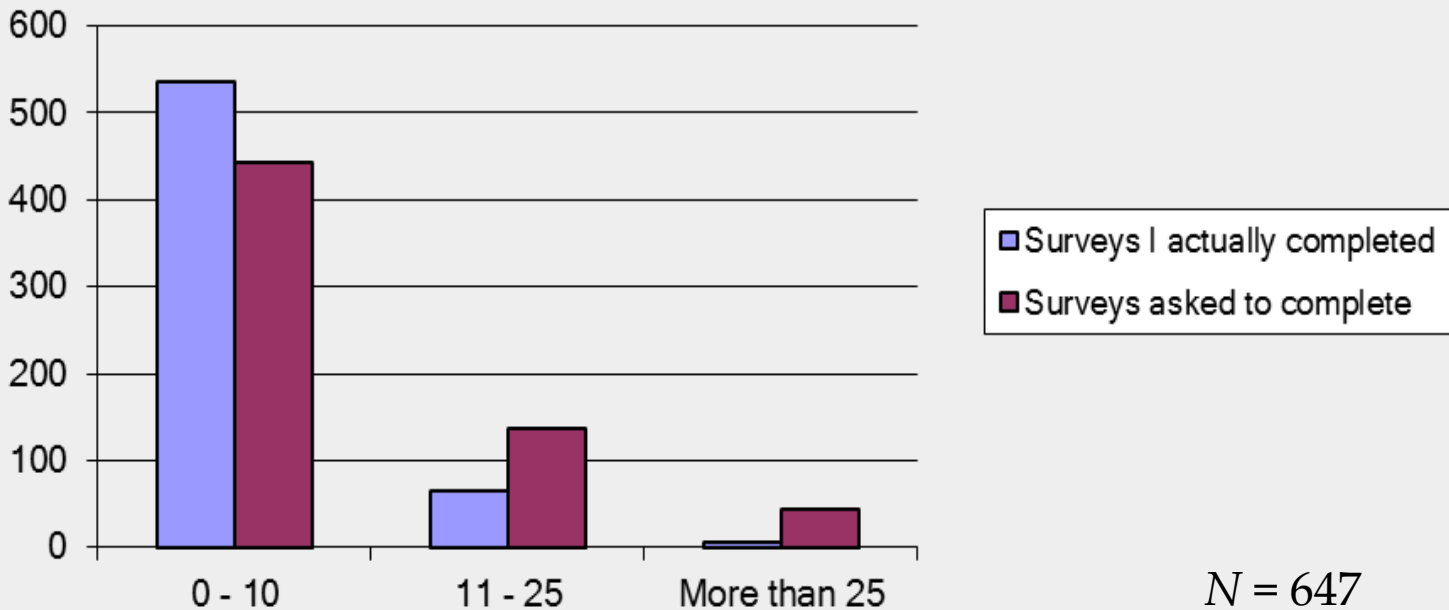As a matter of IR practice, what is your opinion of survey response quality in the past three-to-five years? (e.g., quality refers to all items answered, open and honest feedback, answers appear to be thoughtful and insightful, etc.)

AFS baseline of surveys received/completed

How much time are you willing to devote to a survey?

8.9%   1.6%

89.6%

- 1-15 Minutes
- 15-30 Minutes
- More than 30 Minutes

N = 647
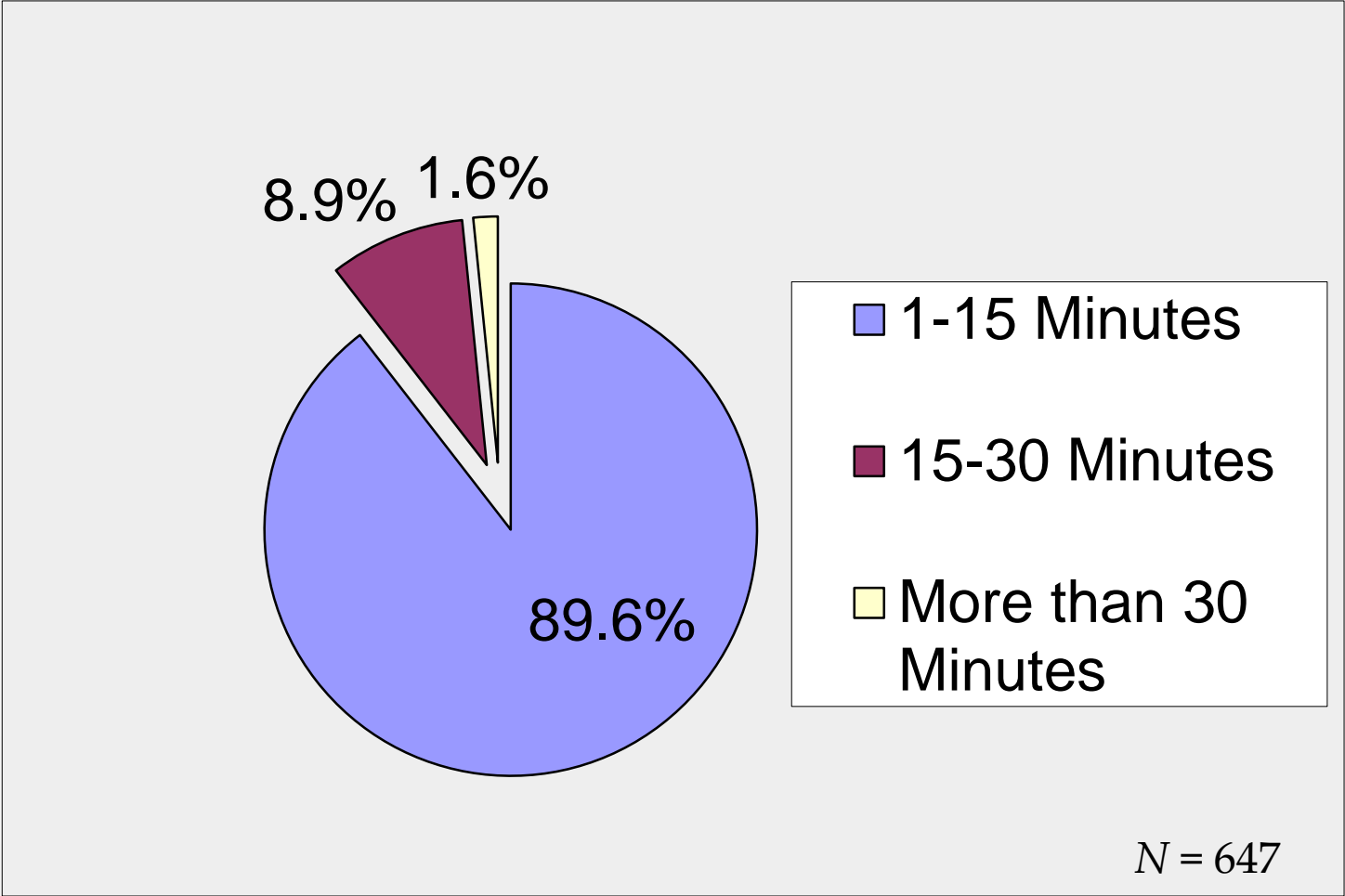
AFS group reported future survey practice…

How likely are you in the future to respond to all questions on a survey by completing each item with carefully thought-out responses? (You may select more than one response)

Not Likely (36/647)
Somewhat Likely (216/647)
Very Likely (248/647)
It depends on the topic of the survey (245/647)
It depends on length of the survey (162/647)

$N = 647$
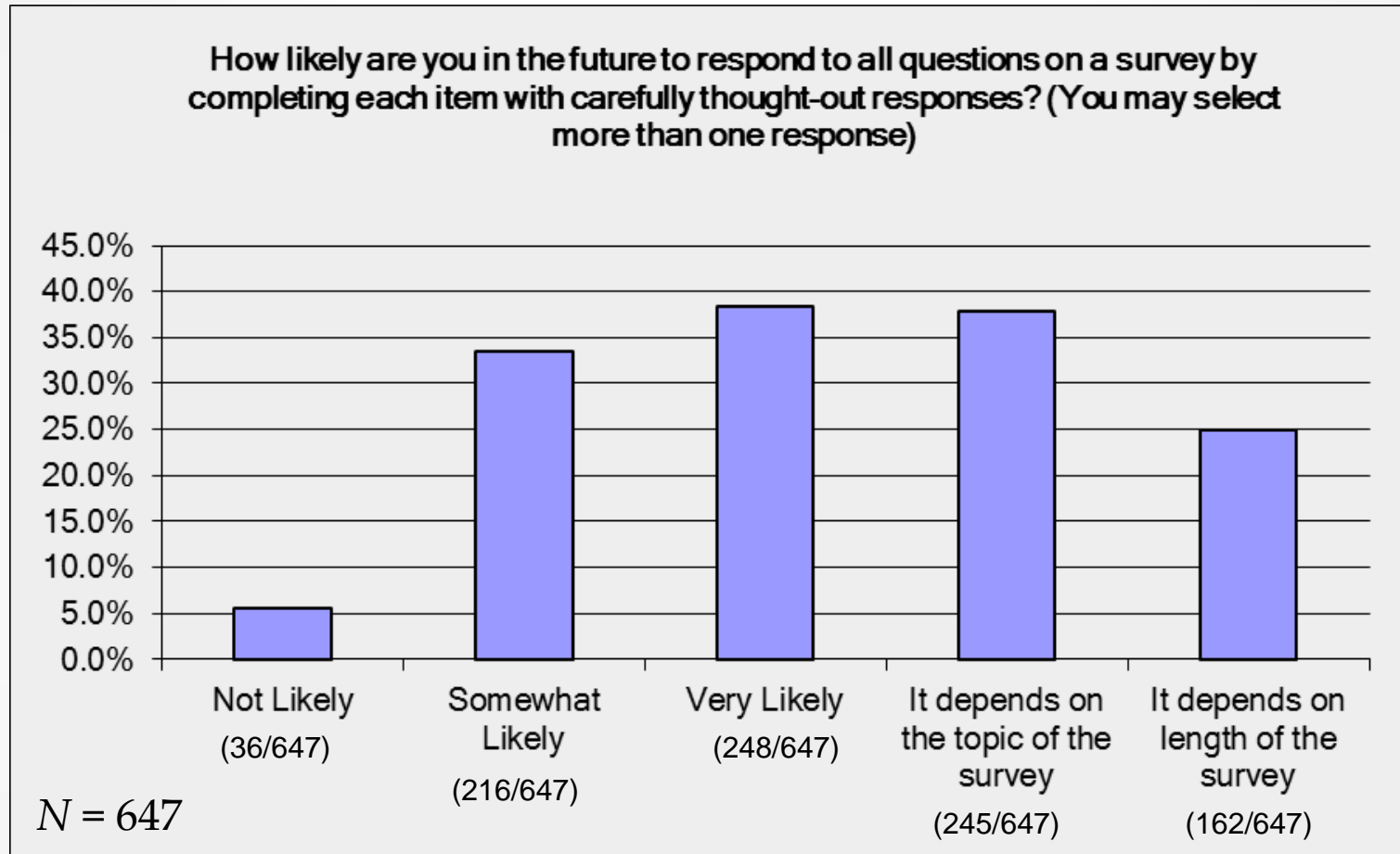
Negative Impact Factors (IR)

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important
Lack of motivation to complete 'another survey'	0%	11%	**44%**	**44 %**
Busy schedules limiting time for survey completion	3%	19%	**56%**	22%
Survey participant identification	25%	19%	**39%**	17%
Responses being used 'against' participants	**37%**	17%	31%	14%
Skepticism surveys actually result in change	0%	17%	31%	**56%**
A lack of trust between employees and administration	11%	31%	**36%**	22%
The lack of incentives to promote participation	26%	**31%**	26%	17%

Executive Summary Overview Handout

	Values shown are percentages.	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	Sig.* AFS	Sig.* M/F
1	When presented with a survey, I make every effort to respond	1.7	7.3	19.0	54.5	17.4	3.81	.626	.037*
2	When answering a survey, I give each item careful consideration	1.6	2.6	9.3	66.7	19.8	4.02	.909	.165
3	Responding to surveys is my responsibility as an employee	3.1	17.1	22.9	43.1	13.8	3.50	.055	.024*
4	I am more likely to complete a survey if an incentive is offered	8.0	24.9	28.5	21.2	17.4	3.15	.435	.558
5	If I'm busy when a survey arrives, I seldom complete it at a later time	6.6	41.1	19.6	27.1	5.6	2.83	.043*	.054
6	I don't want to be identified if I submit legitimate negative feedback	4.7	12.1	22.6	34.5	26.2	3.64	.425	.144
7	The results of survey data are to influence informed decision-making	3.0	4.9	15.3	53.1	23.8	3.89	.586	.942
8	If my schedule is full, even short surveys are likely to go unanswered	8.0	40.5	15.8	30.1	5.5	2.83	.191	.049*
9	I've responded to surveys before without understanding their purpose	7.3	26.6	13.8	44.4	7.9	3.23	.443	.114
10	In general, I think people don't take surveys seriously anymore	1.6	10.9	23.8	49.4	14.3	3.66	.037*	.029*
11	Without a culture of trust in the organization, I will not "open up" on surveys	2.8	20.5	16.0	40.8	19.9	3.54	.024*	.430
12	Survey data MUST be used to guide professional development	2.5	12.1	27.3	41.3	16.7	3.60	.545	.620
13	Regardless of workload, I respond to a survey from the President	2.4	5.6	14.0	42.6	35.5	4.03	.242	.002*
14	If I don't perceive the survey as important, I will not participate	5.2	26.4	21.7	39.7	7.0	3.16	.101	.074
15	I am prone to click any answer to a question if I don't understand it	20.9	52.2	12.3	12.0	2.5	2.25	.700	.960
16	I assign importance to a survey if the topic is of interest to me	3.8	10.5	11.7	53.7	20.3	3.77	.108	.230
17	I don't actively encourage colleagues to participate in surveys	7.2	22.2	31.6	35.0	4.0	3.06	.531	.013
18	I am simply too busy these days for surveys	6.5	38.4	31.1	20.6	3.5	2.75	.854	.818
19	More often than not, the time I could devote to completing a survey is more important to me for other purposes than the issue the survey is measuring	4.3	27.3	31.7	31.5	5.2	3.07	.053	.683
20	College administrators are responsible for promoting the positive practice of survey participation to achieve continuous improvement at the college	1.6	10.7	25.2	51.1	11.5	3.61	.620	.161
21	My experience has been that survey results have changed very little at my institution	1.6	17.4	37.6	28.1	15.3	3.37	.479	.275
22	I prefer a survey that has options for me to voice my opinion, not just multiple choice options	3.0	20.0	30.1	37.1	9.8	3.30	.709	.031*
23	Surveys have the very real potential to influence ethical, political, and/or economic consequences	2.9	14.5	27.8	45.9	8.9	3.44	.900	.988
24	I would volunteer to serve on a committee that develops institutional surveys	17.0	30.1	22.3	24.0	6.5	2.71	.148	.270
25	Self-motivation is a huge factor in my responding to surveys	2.4	8.4	19.4	57.3	12.5	3.68	.030*	.395

N = 647; (1) SD: Strongly Disagree; (2) D: Disagree; (3) N: Neutral; (4) A: Agree; (5) SA: Strongly Agree; p value; M = Mean

Table 2: Experiences, perceptions, or Practices in responding to surveys (AFS) Group, p. 9

Table 4: Group IR (Group I Questions) survey data integrity and informed decision-making, p. 11

Table 5: Group IR (Group II Questions) survey data integrity and informed decision-making, p. 12

Executive Summary Overview Handout
(Pages 12 – 14)

AFS Respondent #33: You can give all the surveys you want to give, and you can have people answering them in any fashion they choose to do so. It's all pointless rhetoric and a wasteful game of smoke and mirrors until someone establishes a means by which CONSTANT flow of perspective, opinion, or ideas (by way of surveys, regular open meetings, discussion boards, blogs, etc.) becomes an integral part of college life. Everyone is so buried in meetings (administrators), paperwork (faculty/staff), and homework/tests (students), that few seldom even take time to consider how they feel about anything...We yearn to simply finish tasks as they pop up and stumble to some sort of respite beyond the walls of education. Communication is a two-way street: surveys seldom serve as a true medium of communication.

1800 AFS Opinion Responses; 62 IR Opinion Responses (*Valuable* resource for survey considerations)

Quality-Quantity Participation-Completion (QQPC)

- Survey length and topic

- Data results actually used in institutional change

- Interruptions are major factor in impacting QQPC

- Trust and actual vs. stated anonymity (technology tracking)

- The influence of institutional culture and politics

- Majority will donate between 0 & 15 minutes for QQPC

- Feedback on results as a consistent outcome of the data

- Self-motivation is prime; all other motivations secondary

- Incentives across the spectrum of $$$ to time off

- Job satisfaction

How Do We Impact Quality and Quantity?
By Listening to our Participants

- **If they say, they will only devote 1-15 minutes to a survey, we should listen.**

- **If they say, we prefer surveys that are short, clear, and of personal interest, we should listen.**

- **If they say, they will participate if they are able to personally witness change in their respective colleges due to survey data, we should listen.**

- **If they say, give us sufficient time to complete the survey without interruptions, we should listen.**

So…why study surveys methods and their outcomes?

"I'll trade you my ray gun for some good survey data."

Q & A

Community College Survey Data: The Impact of Quantity and Quality on Informed Decision-Making

This session presents the findings of a study of community colleges to assess the impact of quantity and quality response rates on informed decision-making. The presentation provides IR professionals a critical analysis of why individuals respond to surveys and to what extent their responses are of value (quality) to an organization in terms of collecting, analyzing, and utilizing survey data in a holistic approach to decision-making and outcomes. A mixed-mode survey methodology was used to collect the sample population dataset. Attendees will better understand how the respondents perceived and responded to surveys to improve institutional survey methods/outcomes.

For a copy of the Executive Summary, Full Report, or the output of the dataset, contact Dr. Ken Scott at kscott@trenholmstate.edu or 334.420.4392; Dr. Novadean Watson-Stone at nwatson@apus.edu or 334-430-1868; or, Dr. Mimi Johnson at mjohnson@trenholmstate.edu or 334.420.4243.