

AAPOR's Transparency Initiative

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American Association for Public Opinion Research

- An organization of individual survey research professionals founded in 1947.
- Governmental, academic and commercial members from its inception. (Morris Hansen, Rensis Likert, George Gallup were founding members)
- Founded to advance the field of survey research
- Standards of methodological disclosure adopted in 1967
- Procedures for standards enforcement adopted in 1975
- Standards and procedures are “living documents”

AAPOR Code Disclosure Items

Report Immediately (a)

- Who sponsored, conducted & funded the research
- Exact question wording
- Definition of the population
- Geographic location
- Sample frame description
- Sample design
- Sample size & error
- Weighting & cluster adjustments
- Results based on parts of sample only
- Method(s) and dates of data collection

Within 30 Days (b-d)

- Interviewer/respondent instructions
- Relevant stimuli (show cards)
- Sampling frame's coverage
- Methods of panel recruitment (for pre-recruited panels)
- Sample design details (eligibility, screening, oversamples, incentives)
- Sample dispositions
- Weighting details
- Data verification details
- Response rates
- All of the above for each if multiple samples or modes

Transparency Initiative

- Concept introduced in 2010, following decades of standards cases - responding to complaints of code violations (the ‘Stick’)
- Incentivizes systemic, routine disclosure practices through public recognition (the ‘Carrot’)
- Members vetted and enrolled beginning in 2014, after long discussions and pretests
- Training modules on disclosure practice
- Periodic auditing and feedback
- Public recognition – seal of approval and media releases
- Original concept envisioned an archive

Current Status of TI

- Over 80 member organizations, large and small, from all sectors of survey research
- AAPOR assuming program expenses – no membership fees
- Organizations need to invest in documentation processes
- Audits to assess compliance among charter members now underway
- Identifying need for more education on routine practices
- Membership rolls may change as audits continue

TI and the Federal Statistical System

- Statistical agencies are not “members,” though some large contractors are
- Some contractors questioned whether federal clients would object to membership, or that TI requirements would conflict with or duplicate contract requirements
- FCSM letter to AAPOR lays out federal commitment to transparency in a variety of standing policies – effort to allay such concerns
- TI requirements align with disclosure requirements of statistical agencies

Lessons for Discussion on Transparency and Reproducibility

- Experience with Transparency Initiative to date suggests that public recognition and education can incentivize documentation and disclosure of methodological elements
- The level of disclosure required in TI is only a step toward what may be required for replication or reproducibility
- The process of implementing requirements for an effort like the TI informs the process of deciding on requirements for replication or reproducibility.

References

- Transparency Initiative materials:

<https://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics/Transparency-Initiative/Latest-News.aspx>

- FCSM Letter to AAPOR re Federal Transparency Requirements:

http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/AM15/Federal-Transparency-Guidances_31DEC15.pdf

Thank you

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