

Public Attitudes towards the Use of Administrative Records to Supplement the U.S. Census

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Disclaimer: Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

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Overview

- Objectives
- Data
- Experiment 1
 - Source and type of information, question frame
- Experiment 2
 - What data? For whom?
- Conclusion
- Future Research

Objectives

- Examine influence of:
 - Demographic characteristics
 - Attitudes towards the Federal Statistical System
- Model likelihood to support administrative record use to:
 - obtain contact information
 - determine occupancy status
 - enumerate as much of the population as possible
 - enumerate only non-responding households

Data Collection

- Questions part of nationally representative Gallup Daily Tracking Survey of 100-200 households nightly
- Both landline and cell phone numbers
- Began data collection in February 2012, still ongoing (with brief breaks in 2014 and 2015)
- Core and rotating questions
- AAPOR RR3: about 8-10% for each wave

Core Questions (Predictors)

- Awareness
 - Orienting respondents: Introduce federal statistics
 - Data user? (key knowledge variable)
- Attitudes towards federal statistics
 - Trust
 - Relevance/Importance
 - Confidentiality and Privacy

Experiment 1

- Source of information
- Type of information
- Frame:
 - Cold ask
 - Save government money (total or per household)
 - Social good (community amenities v. House of Reps)

Source/type of information

Source of Information	Type of Information			
	Generic Information	Name and Age	Income	Contact Information
Social Security Administration (SSA)	X	X	X	
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)		X	X	
Dept. of Motor Vehicles (DMV)				X
Company that provides publicly accessible info (public records)		X		X

Frame: “Cold Ask”

For the next census in 2020, if the Census Bureau got information that you already provided to the Social Security Administration, they may not need to ask you for this information on a questionnaire.

If you knew that this information was being obtained from the Social Security Administration only to produce statistics, and that your personal information would remain unavailable to the public, would you be strongly in favor of it, somewhat in favor of it, neither in favor nor against it, somewhat against it, or strongly against it?



Frames



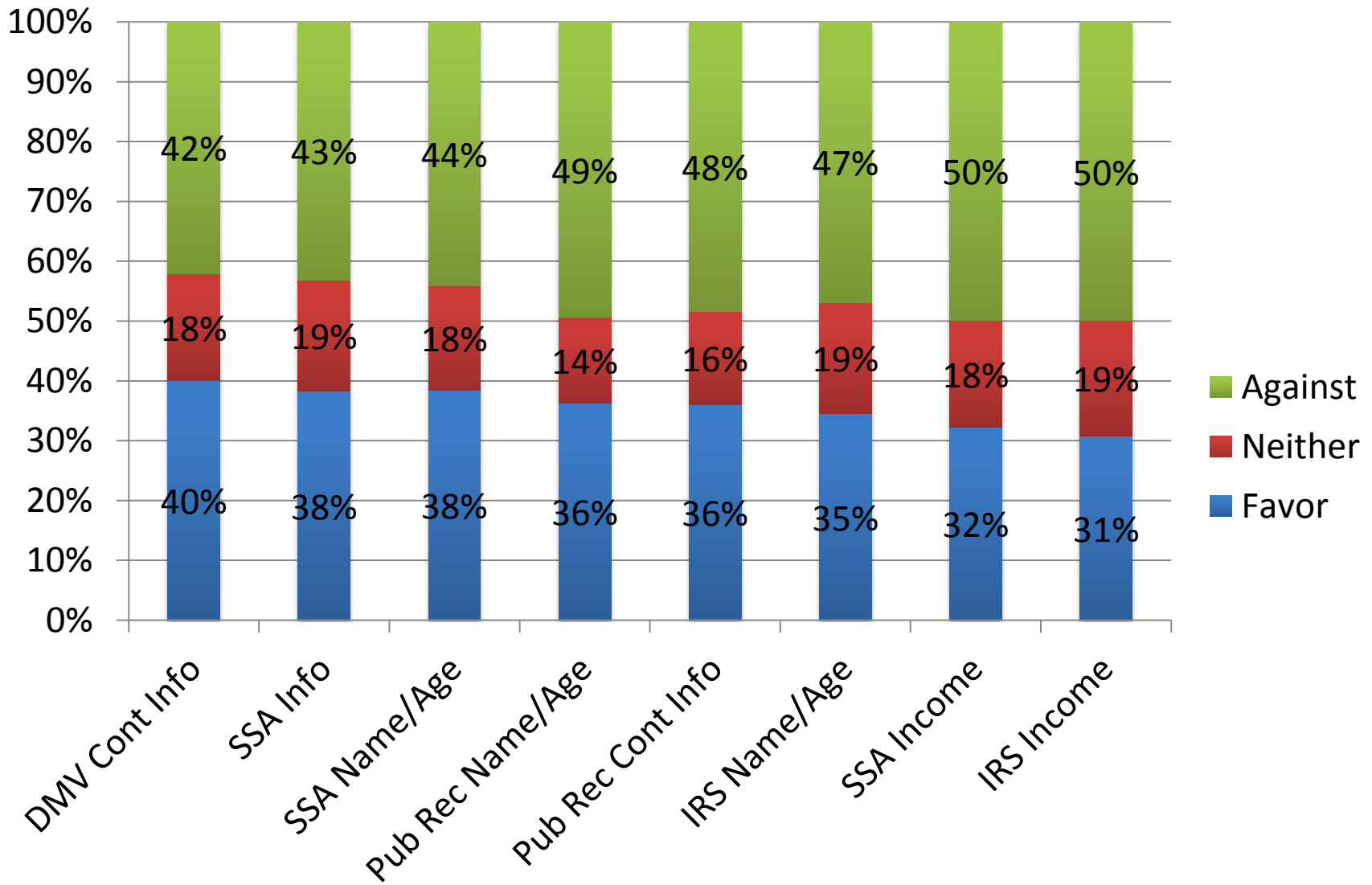
Save Government Money

The 2010 Census cost over **[\$10 billion dollars / about \$100 dollars per household.]** Getting your information directly from the Social Security Administration could reduce the cost for the 2020 Census and save government money.

Social Good

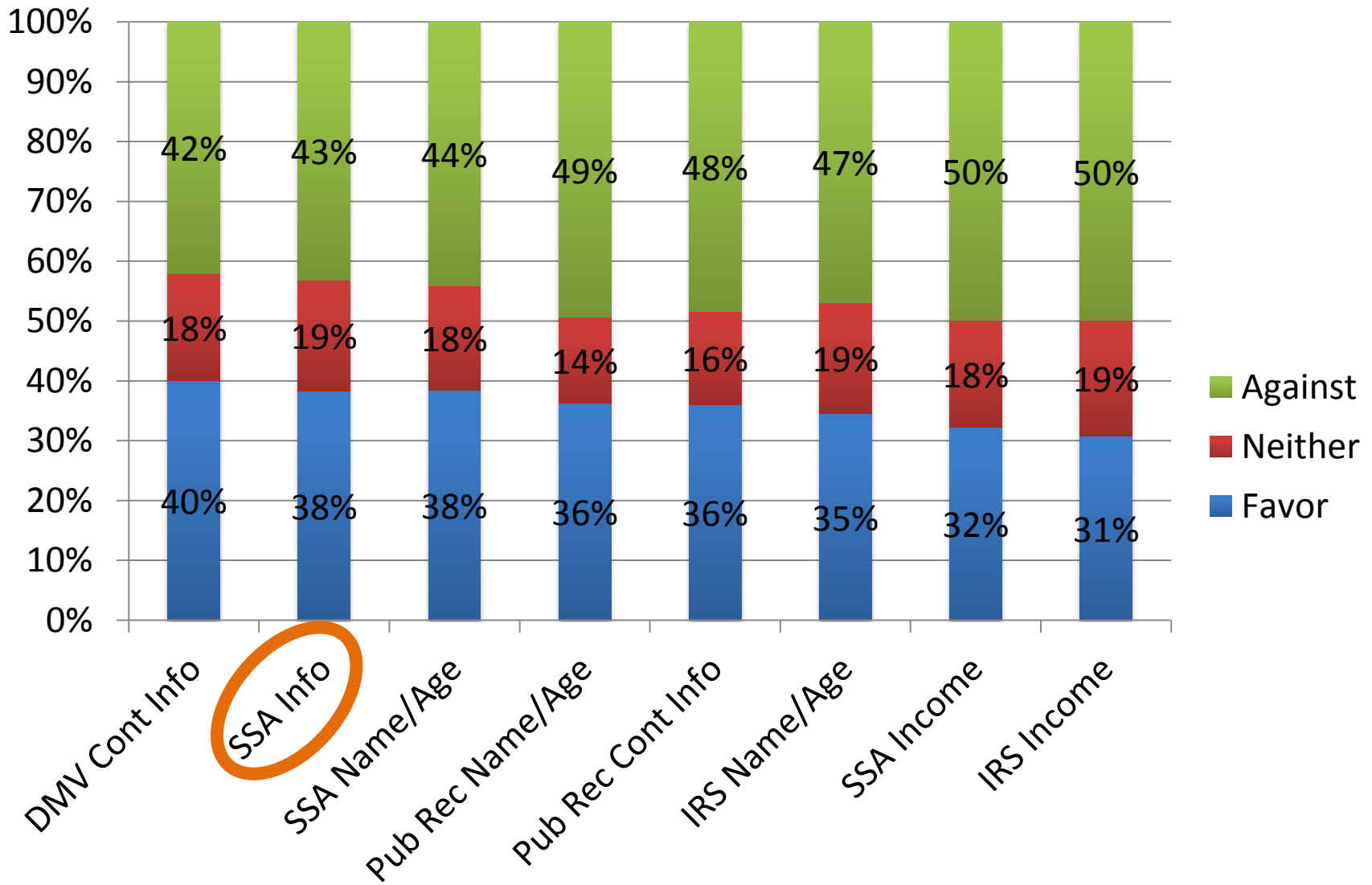
Because some people choose not to respond to the Census, getting information from the Social Security Administration could help the Census Bureau get a better idea of population sizes informing **[where the community should build new schools, hospitals, roads, and firehouses./ how to distribute the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.]**

Favorability of Admin Records Use for Cold Ask By Source



Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, Feb. 2013- June 2013. Not intended for point estimates

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Overall Effects

Compared to “Info” from Social Security Administration...

- Less desirable:
 - Any data from the Internal Revenue Service
 - Income data from Social Security Administration
- No difference for:
 - Getting name and age from Social Security Administration
 - Contact info from the Dept. of Motor Vehicles
 - Data from public records

Frameworks

- Both frameworks improved favorability by an average of about 15%
- Social Good
 - Local > National
 - This result is amplified for:
 - Income data from the Internal Revenue Service
 - Contact information from public records
- Save Money
 - No significant differences between overall and cost per household
 - Encouraging for programs that do not have a high overall cost

Predictors

- Attitudes much stronger predictors than demographics
- Not significant:
 - Race
 - Sex
 - Income
 - Job status (not in work status, unemployed, blue collar, white collar)

Predictors (cont.)

- Favoring use of administrative records predicted by:
 - Knowledge of federal statistics
 - Trust in federal statistics
 - Belief that policy makers need good statistics to make decisions
 - Belief that federal statistical agencies keep information confidential*

Predictors (cont.)

- Being against use of administrative records predicted by:
 - Less confidence in institutions (newspapers/universities)
 - Don't know/Refuse to report income

Why Are Respondents Against the Use Of Records?

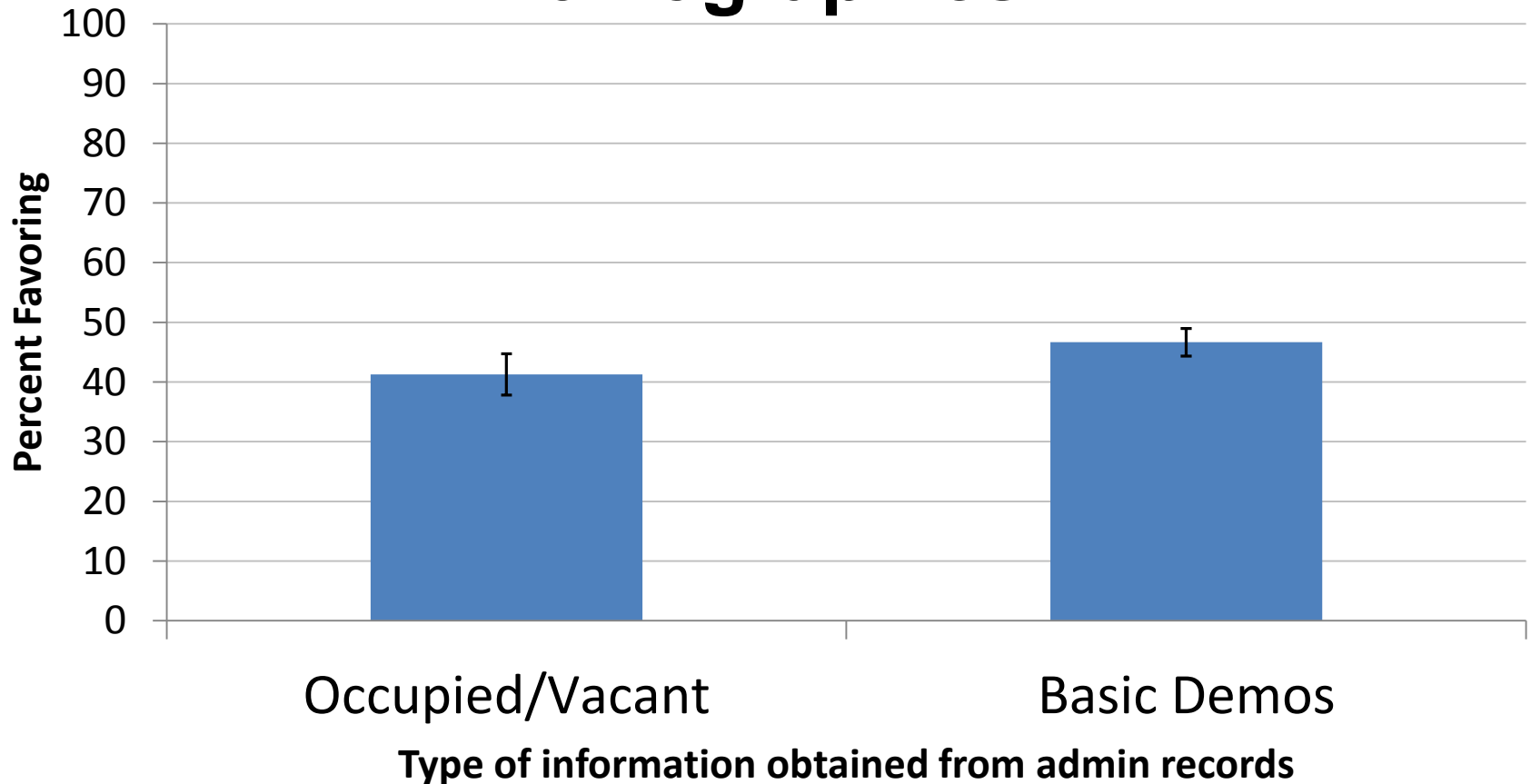
- Regardless of the source, many respondents cited:
 - Privacy/Confidentiality
 - Don't trust the government/Government is too big
- For respondents who mention privacy or trust, most indicated either:
 - Government has too much info about them
 - Concern about an unauthorized person gaining access to their information (e.g., government's ability to protect data)



Experiment 2

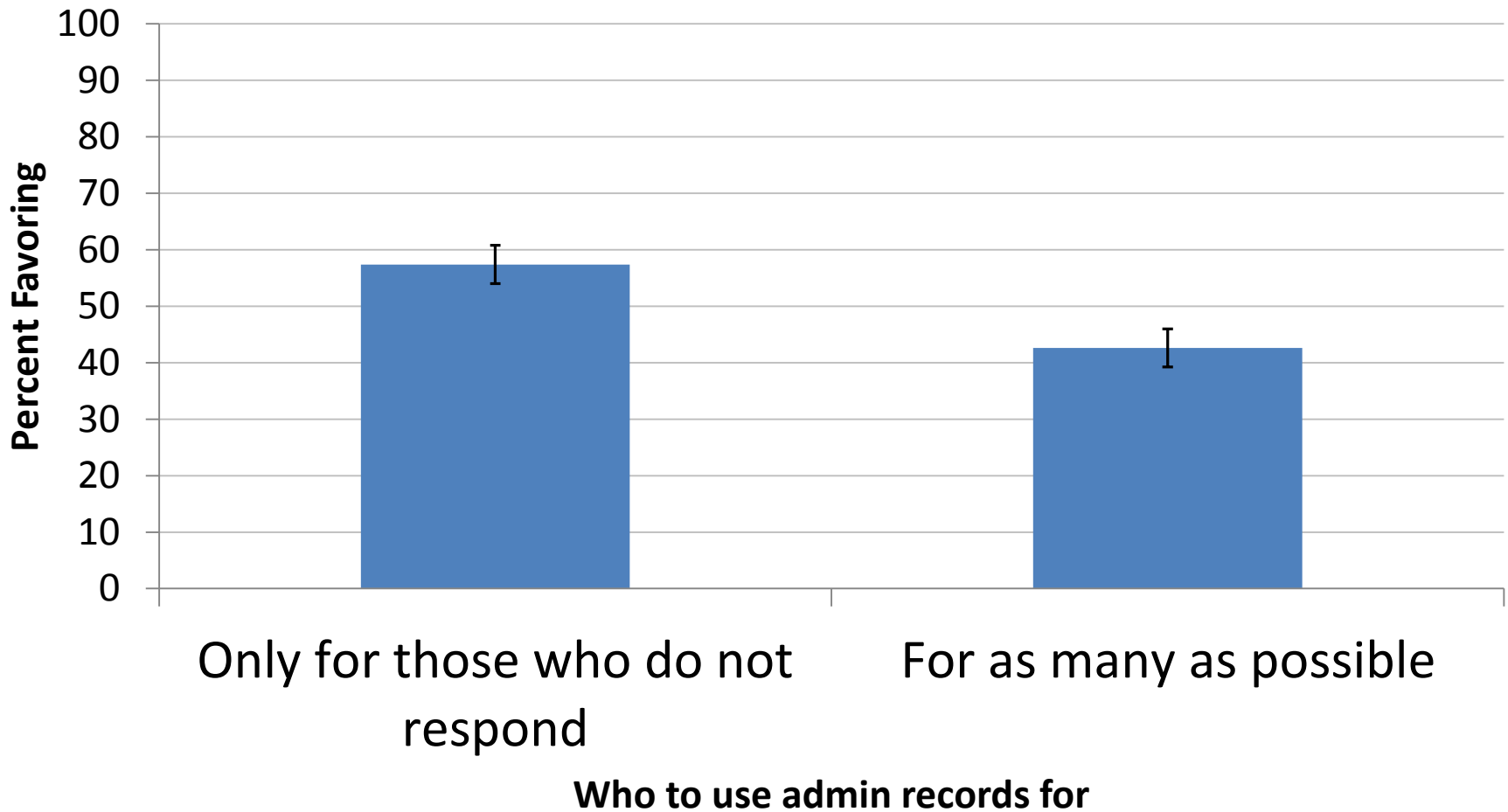
- What kind of data and for whom?
 - Contact information
 - Whether housing unit is occupied/vacant
 - Basic demographics
 - For nonrespondents only, or everyone?
 - Neighbors or records?

Favoring Use of Administrative Records for Occupied/Vacant and Basic Demographics



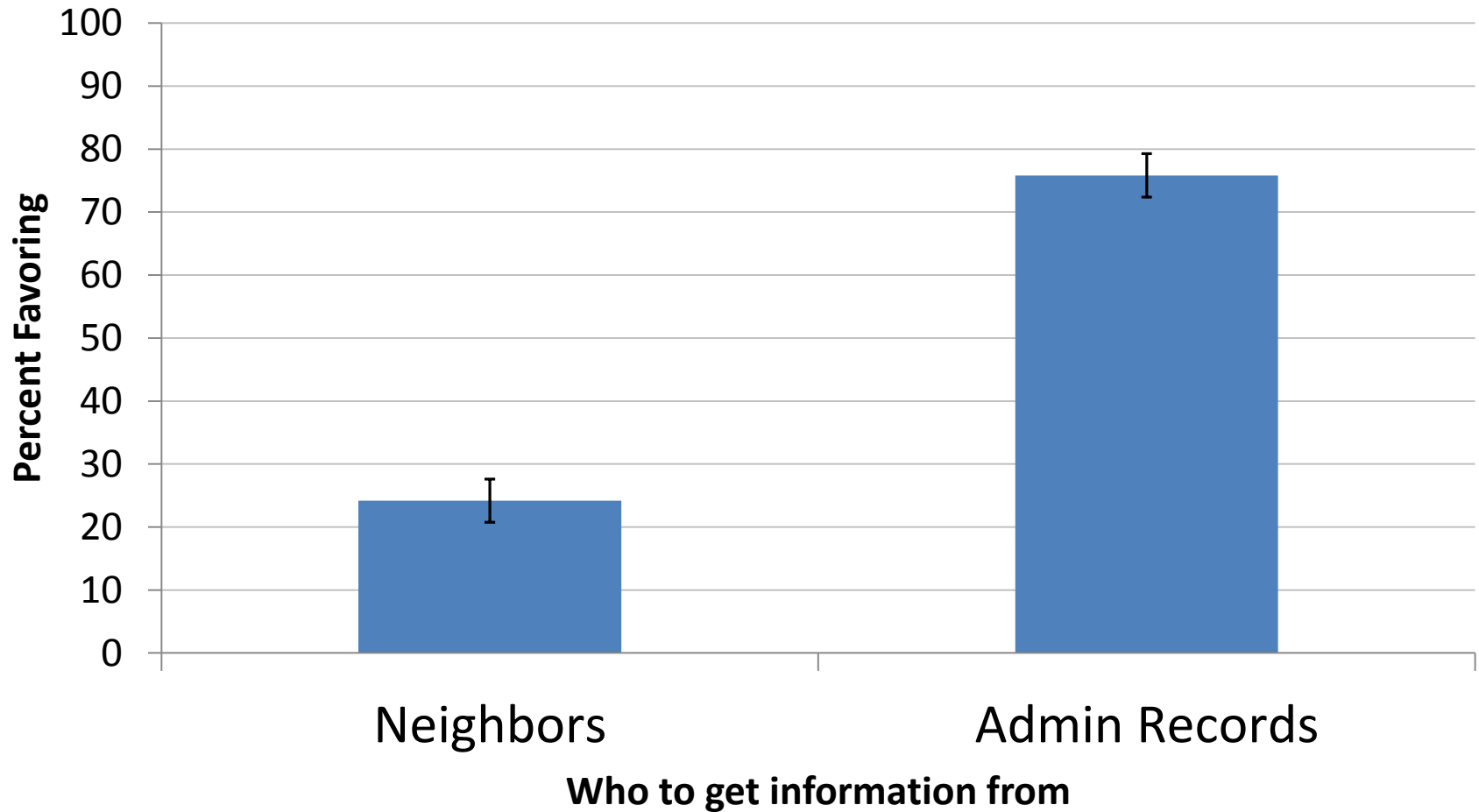
Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, Sept. 2013-Oct. 2013. Not intended for point estimates

To Save Money, Who Should Census Use Administrative Records for?



Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, Sept. 2013-Oct. 2013. Not intended for point estimates

For Non-Responders, Should Census Go to Neighbors or Records?



Source: Gallup Daily Tracking Survey, Sept. 2013-Oct. 2013. Not intended for point estimates

Predictors of Favoring Administrative Record Use

- Greater trust in the statistical system
- More educated respondents were more likely to prefer records over neighbors
- Presence of a child in the home predicts preferring more extensive administrative record use

Conclusions

Focus administrative records messaging on:

- Data uses for social good
 - For policy
 - For local community
- Saving taxpayer money
- Trustworthiness of U.S. Census Bureau
- Confidentiality of data
- Increasing knowledge about census data
- Privacy
 - Only use records for non-responding units
 - Records are a good alternative to visiting neighbors

Future Research

- Experiment targeting messages.
- Monitor data breaches and effects on opinions:
 - NSA
 - OPM

Thank you!

Public Attitudes towards Possible Use of Administrative Records to Supplement the U.S. 2020 Census

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