



Using Surveys and Experiments to Measure Discrimination and Bias

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Using Surveys and Experiments

- Allow us to collect information (ex. beliefs, attitudes, and preferences) that may not be recorded in preexisting data sources
- Can help us better understand what is driving agents' decisions
 - Do they dislike minorities?
 - Do they have concerns about how good of a renter/homeowner they'll be?
- Require careful consideration during the design stage
 - How will you find participants?
 - How will you encourage them to participate?
 - How do you get answers to your questions without giving away the purpose of the study?
 - How do you get them to take your questions seriously?

Example of Survey to Measure Beliefs

- We want to better identify what applicants are the best renters. For this reason, we are reaching out to agents for help. We'd love your thoughts on a renter in your area who has rented a unit in an apartment similar to yours.
- Jamal/John just rented an apartment in your neighborhood. Here is some information he submitted with his application. (Note: We used a different name to preserve his anonymity.)
- Given your renting experiences, what do you believe is the likelihood that this renter will...
 - Be late on his monthly rent at least once?
 - Regularly clean his apartment and keep it in good condition?
 - Be the subject of complaints from neighbors?
 - Use nails to hang a painting without asking permission?
 - Grill food in the patio?
 - Leave the apartment in good condition when he moves out?

List Experiments

- Used to identify beliefs about topics that people may feel uncomfortable openly or directly expressing their true opinions about
- Need two groups
- Group 1 sees x statements. Group 2 sees $x+1$ statements.
 - Some of these statements will be "controversial" or sensitive.
 - Bonus statement relates to the topic of interest
- Asked how many statements they agree with
- Look at difference in # of statements they agreed with
- Creates sense of privacy and helps preserve anonymity

Example of List Experiment to Measure Beliefs

- How many of the statements do you agree with?
 - People who live in California are happier than people who live in New York.
 - The national average monthly rent for a 1 bedroom - 1 bathroom apartment will fall in the next 6 months.
 - Families with young children are more likely to damage an apartment than families without children.
 - Renters should be charged extra if the apartment includes a patio.
 - It should be illegal for landlords to charge renters with cats more than renters with dogs.
- Say people in Group 1 agree with 3.4 questions, on average, and people in Group 2 agree with 4.2 questions. → Difference = 0.8 → 80% of people believe families with young children are more likely to cause damage.

Common Experiments (in Economics)

- Dictator games
 - Player 1 starts out with $\$x$ and decides how much to give to Player 2
 - Measures altruism
- Trust games
 - Player 1 starts out with $\$x$ and decides how much to give to Player 2. That money is multiplied.
 - Player 2 receives $\$x \cdot c$. Player 2 decides how much to keep and how much to return to Player 1.
 - Measures trust and trustworthiness
- Could conduct online or in-person