No more mixed-mode?
Recontacting government officials in a post-fax age

Sarah Mills, PhD
Natalie Fitzpatrick
MAPOR – November 19, 2016
Fax as Mode for Establishment Surveys

• Heyday in 1980s, 1990s
  o Increasingly replaced by scanners, email

• Primary or secondary mode

• Question: Impact of dropping fax recontact on establishment survey response rate?
The Michigan Public Policy Survey

- **Census survey** of 1,856 counties, villages, cities, townships
- **Twice per year** since 2009
- 70%+ response rate (AAPOR RR2)
- **Multi-mode** – online and hardcopy
- **9 week field period** with recontacts by email (weekly), fax (mid-wave)
Methods

• Business-as-Usual
  o Recontact only via fax
    (~40% of hardcopy non-respondents)

• Spring 2016 Experiment
  o Recontact via fax if available (121 of 263 non-respondents)
  o Postcard to others (142 of 263 non-respondents)
Results

Conversion Rate by recontact type

- Fax portion: 5.7%
- Mail portion: 7%

p > 0.6
Results

Conversion Rate by recontact type

- Fax portion: 5.7%
- Mail portion: 7%

p > 0.6

Conversion Rate among all hardcopy recipients

- Fax only (BAU): 2.7%
- Combined: 3.8%

p < 0.05
Discussion

Conclusion

• small n = indeterminate impact of effectiveness of fax vs. postcard

• Regardless, overall RR gains by using postcard since recontacting more of sample

Future Work

• Comparing results from 3 waves (Fall 2015-Fall 2016)
  o Postcard n=402
  o Fax n=216