



Our Brave New World: Ipsos Comment on AAPOR's Statement on Credibility Intervals

The AAPOR statement on "[Understanding a credibility interval](#)" is fair, balanced, and agile in showing the complexity of the issues: in particular, that our changing survey research world demands new approaches and ways of thinking, especially with respect to nonprobability designs. Ipsos, as one of the firms which conducts online polling and employs credibility intervals, believes that a Bayesian approach is one possible way to address the "nonprobability inference conundrum" ([Roshwalb et al](#)).

To further the discussion, we have several additional comments:

(1) We do not purport to have all the answers nor that a Bayesian approach is the only way forward. Here it is important to remember that our field of survey research is in a period of rapid change where old benchmarks are under increasing pressure as humans interact and communicate in new virtual ways. This puts a premium on experimentation – ours is one such attempt. Ipsos does not believe in 'black boxes' nor 'special sauce' and as such all learnings from this polling program which are scientifically relevant will be shared with the larger community in conferences and white papers.

(2) Ipsos believes in complete transparency in the process and is a signatory to the [AAPOR transparency initiative](#). To date, our methods statements on our polls have included an explanation of Bayesian Credibility Intervals as well as a statement that MOE [cannot be used for online polls](#). We will also be including a link to the AAPOR statement on our methods blurb for each poll. We believe it does a good job of educating the consumer.

(3) One of the central concerns raised by the AAPOR statement is with the biases associated with opt-in, non-probability, online surveys. We know that in general all surveys, including online, suffer from an assortment of biases including self-selection, non-response, and non-coverage. Our own correction model attempts to control for each of these types of bias at the design stage as well as at the post-survey weighting stage. Ultimately, we are still refining our model, and these learnings will be one of the outputs of this year's initiative*.

(4) One important point we feel the AAPOR Statement does not fully address is the ever changing world of online research itself: from one of 'single panel' online surveys to one of online surveys with multiple sample sources. In practice, research firms, including Ipsos, no longer exclusively use single opt-in online panels ([Young et al](#)). Our online poll, for instance, includes a 'blend' of multiple panel and non-panel sources, such as social media and rewards sites. In our opinion, this is significant for two reasons. First, we minimize the bias associated with any one panel or source. Consequently, our correction models become potentially more generalizable than panel-specific ones. Second, the long-term possibilities are potentially manifold. Think about this: a research world where our sample frames are virtual and where websites, or 'virtual nodes', are our sampling units. Yes, this is our brave new world of survey research: one of much uncertainty but also one of much possibility!

If you have questions or comments, or would like to get in touch with Ipsos about our approach to online blended sampling, please contact:

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() The Reuters / Ipsos Online Election Polling Program:*

Ipsos is undertaking an unprecedented polling engagement with our media partner Thomson Reuters which includes daily online tracking polls. By the end of the electoral season, we will have conducted approximately 150,000 interviews which allow for micro-targeting and other subgroup analyses together with the daily horserace numbers. Even now, users can access the micro data at <http://elections.reuters.com/#poll>