

## *Social scientists turn to Knowledge Networks for high-quality research on the longterm effects of 9/11*

### **Challenge**

Social scientists at The University of California at Irvine sought to examine the degree to which specific factors—over time—influence psychological reactions to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The research team needed to tap respondents' immediate emotional responses to the crisis – requiring rapid locating of people in specific geographic areas – and also followup with the same respondents to determine their long-term feelings about 9/11. In addition, the sensitive nature of the topic required a research medium that enhanced a sense of privacy and comfort.

### **Background**

Academics and social scientists demand a level of research quality that most Internet survey companies cannot deliver. But prestigious institutions such as Research Triangle Institute (RTI), the University of California at Irvine, and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) have found that Knowledge Networks can deliver the reliability they need at reasonable costs and on a demanding schedule. KN maintains the only Web-based, nationally representative consumer panel in research today, enabling high participation rates from a diverse U.S. population that answers questions in the privacy of their own homes at any time of day. KN also offers the longitudinal capability of re-visiting study participants at will, allowing for in-depth tracking research on almost any subject.

### **Knowledge Networks solution**

Knowledge Networks quickly identified potential respondents—both within New York City and in other key regions—and surveyed them at home. By the end of September, all participants had completed abbreviated versions of two well-known psychological scales on coping, stress and trauma. Two months after the attacks, KN re-visited respondents living outside New York to gauge their reactions; and four months later, KN resurveyed as many of the initial panelists as possible.

Respondents provided candid, confidential answers to questions about their mental and physical health histories; prior exposure to stressful life events; and their 9/11-related experiences. The first two study waves yielded an average within-survey completion rate of 87% (even though the Wave 2 questionnaire was some 25 minutes

long), and The University of California at Irvine received data for the first two waves in 49 days. A total of four study waves have been completed, and there are plans to follow the respondents for another two years.

### Results

Knowledge Networks' high-quality survey system delivered striking results on how 9/11 affected a random sample of the U.S. over time. An article based on the research appeared in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association* and was covered in national print and broadcast media. The sample used tracked the known national population with unusual precision

The research gave UC Irvine, and mental health professionals everywhere, significant insights on the effects of terrorism in the U.S. – most notably, that even those who experience such events via television can manifest trauma symptoms usually associated with “firsthand” exposure. The study also suggests that those who responded by “giving up” or with denial or distraction in the weeks immediately following the attacks may have suffered more persistent effects.

KN will continue to contact respondents on a semiannual basis for a period of five years, measuring physical and emotional health and stress levels, as well as documenting coping strategies.

*The Knowledge Networks panel combines the accuracy of random digit-dial (RDD) research, the speed of the Internet, and the ability to track respondents over time –making it an invaluable tool for social and academic research.*

**For more information, contact your Knowledge Networks representative or Mike Dennis at (650) 289-2160.**



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