

## Stanford University Comparison of Major Online Research Vendors Affirms Superiority of Knowledge Networks Approach

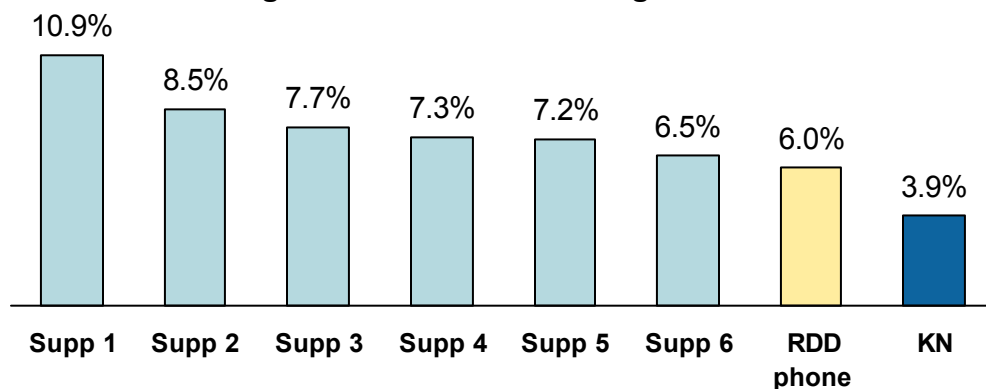
The research community has long known that different Internet research methods – from respondent recruitment to panel maintenance – yield varying levels of quality; yet the effects of these practices have never been rigorously compared or quantified. As marketers and policymakers apply this data to decisions of various kinds, two key questions need to be answered:

- Do online panels yield accurate results relative to known and trusted benchmarks?
- Are there clear differences in the quality and consistency of data from various online panel vendors – differences that could have a direct effect on client decision making?

To offer reliable, systematic answers to these questions, Stanford University undertook a groundbreaking comparison of seven major Internet research vendors to accepted benchmarks – Census data and other sources. The participating online vendors were GoZing, Greenfield Online, Harris Interactive, Knowledge Networks, SPSS, SSI, and SurveyDirect. Most online research vendors were solicited for the study, but some were not interested or proved too expensive for the budget. The compared data were for identical questions.

The findings show that the Knowledge Networks Panel comes closest to the standard benchmarks, both overall and in many individual categories; the KN overall error rate of 3.9% was substantially lower than those for prominent competitors – besting some by 100% or more. (In some instances, the KN Panel was more accurate than the high-quality telephone study.)

**Chart 1: Average Absolute Error Among Research Vendors**



*\* Includes primary and secondary demographics as well as product usage and attitude items*

This pattern held true for a variety of specific metrics that could be essential to understanding marketing impact, including:

- **Membership in a frequent flyer program:** KN (22.6%) was by far the closest among online firms in replicating the benchmark of 17.8%; the other online vendors averaged 32.7% – nearly double the benchmark. *(See Table 1.)*
- **Smoke every day or occasionally:** KN (24%) came closer to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) benchmark of 21.6% than the RDD telephone survey (25.7%). The average for other online vendors was 29.7%.
- **Have current driver’s license:** KN was within a percentage point of the U.S. Census/Statistical Abstract benchmark (89.1% benchmark vs. 88.9% KN), while all other online firms averaged 94.2%.

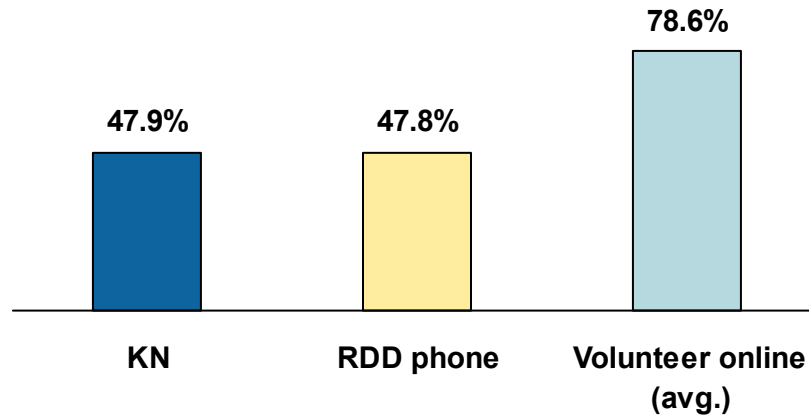
**Table 1: Internet, Telephone Data Compared to Benchmarks**

	Benchmark	Telephone	KN	Volunteer online (avg.)
	%	%	%	%
Smoke every day or occasionally	21.6	25.7	<b>24.0</b>	29.7
Member of a frequent flyer program	17.8	21.5	<b>22.6</b>	32.7
Have current driver’s license	89.1	92.7	<b>88.9</b>	94.2

In addition, the study looked at many data points for which no benchmark exists; if we use the high-quality telephone data as a benchmark in these cases, we see additional proof of the difference between Knowledge Networks and online firms that rely on “volunteer” respondents. For example:

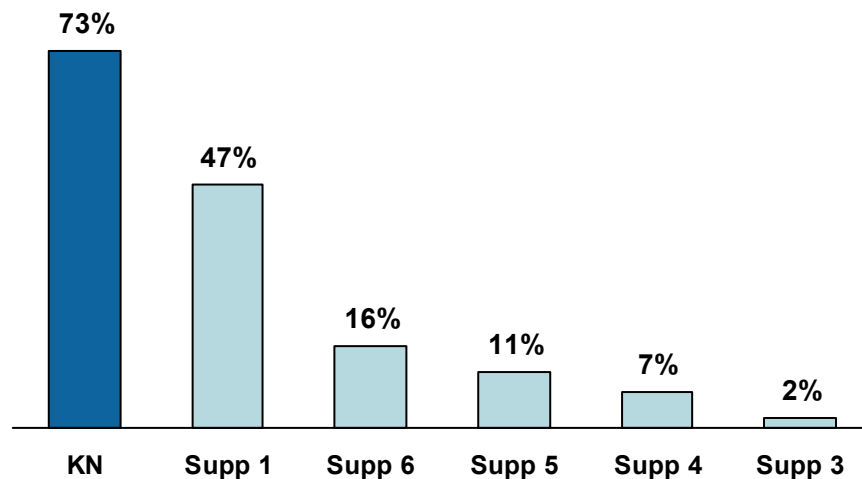
- volunteer samples overrepresent use of coupons by a factor of 100% in some cases; while the KN (49.6%) and telephone (45.7%) data show that nearly half of respondents do not use coupons in a typical week, the volunteer firms came in with a much lower average estimate of 26.7%.
- volunteer samples overrepresent those consumers who consider themselves very comfortable with computer technology; while the KN and telephone surveys arrived at statistically identical estimates of about 48%, the average for volunteer firms was 78.6% who consider themselves technologically adept. *(See Chart 2.)*

**Chart 2: Technological Bias in Volunteer Samples  
("Extremely/Very Comfortable" Using Computer)**



The Stanford research also shows how low cooperation rates dramatically alter the effective panel size of all-volunteer panels. (See *Chart 3*.) The Knowledge Networks in-survey cooperation rate was 73%, compared to 2% for one prominent supplier – meaning that 98% of those who received that supplier’s survey did not complete it. Since higher response rates are essential to lowering research bias, these findings have important implications; the volunteer panels are introducing much greater levels of bias than KN does.

**Chart 3: Cooperation Rates Among Research Vendors**



*Source: "Comparing the Results of Probability and Non-Probability Sample Surveys," presented at 2005 AAPOR Conference*

**More information on the Stanford study, contact your KN representative or David Stanton at (908) 497-8040 or [dstanton@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:dstanton@knowledgenetworks.com).**