

**Getting Closer to
Your Customers:
Using Online Survey
Panels to Support
Program Design and
Implementation**

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Rapid Response Survey Panel concept

- Online panel of utility residential customers
- Expected recruitment rate: 3 to 4%
- 1 – 2 survey requests per month
- 5 – 10 minutes to complete
- Each survey in the field for one week
- Expected response rate per survey: 30 – 40%
- Panelists accumulate points toward rewards
- Real-time survey results



Substantive drivers

- Identify customer preferences for DSM program design – improve customer response to programs
 - Energy efficiency
 - TOU CPP
 - AMI
- Market segmentation and product development for segments – increase revenue
- Gauge attitude change on climate issues



Market research drivers

- Access hard-to-reach customers – younger adults, higher income customers, highly educated customers
- Timing – gather data near in time to key events/announcements
- Quick turnaround – have data in 5 to 7 business days
- Stretched resources – get and stay ahead of internal clients' needs



Business panel drivers

- Hard to reach customer segment – small and medium businesses
- Support specific program design objectives
- Timing – gather data immediately after events
- Quick turnaround – 5 to 7 business days
- Stretched resources – get and stay ahead of internal clients' needs

Survey topics

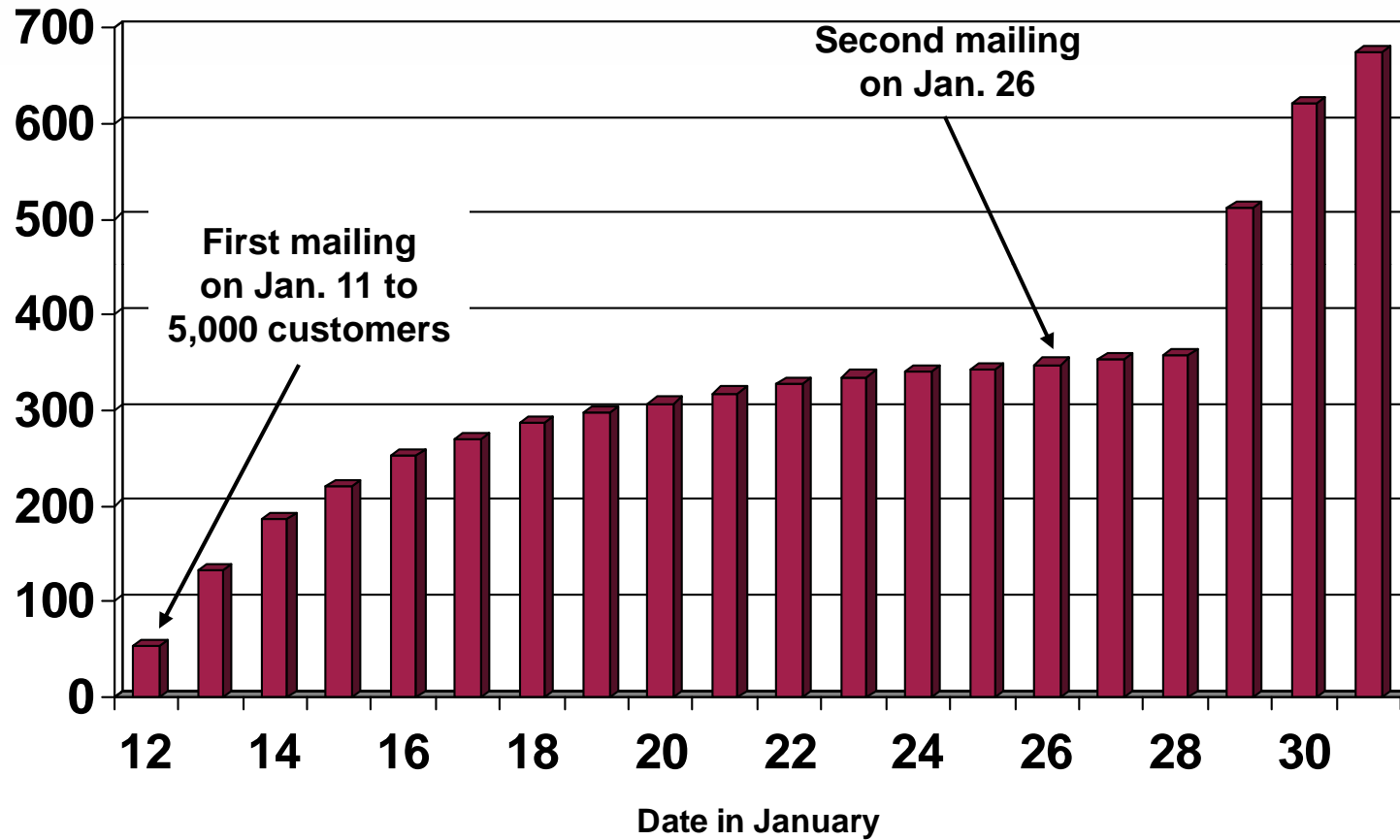
- Interest in energy efficiency programs
- Interest in online energy information for their household
- Support for local energy utility taking a more active role in environmental issues
- Support for local utility economic development activities
- Reaction to new TV commercials for the local utility
- Satisfaction with current communication with local utility
- Awareness of and reaction to various local utility names and brands
- Reaction to account information available on the local utility website
- Concern about climate change
- Reaction to rising electric prices
- Interest in online outage information
- Interest in including energy use information on monthly bills
- Interest in in-home energy use information
- AMI—Customer interest in programs where utility control appliances
- Interest in participating in demand response programs
- Community involvement – What customers want their utility to do to benefit the community.
- The usefulness and value of online energy efficiency information and tools
- Increasing adoption of online bill payment
- Feedback on naming new products and services
- Rating customer service and outage communications
- Interest in utility gift card program
- Appliance saturation

Case Study - PPL

PPL Sample Design and Panel Recruitment

- Target sample: 500 residential customers
 - PPL provided customer list
 - Energy Insights prepared mailing list
 - PPL set constraints around age and regional location of customers
 - Also monitored income levels and education
- Recruiting process
 - Direct mail on PPL envelopes and letterhead
 - Personalized message to customer, with PPL phone number for questions
 - Mailed letters in two waves
 - Response rate on first wave was 8%
 - Final panel size is 672

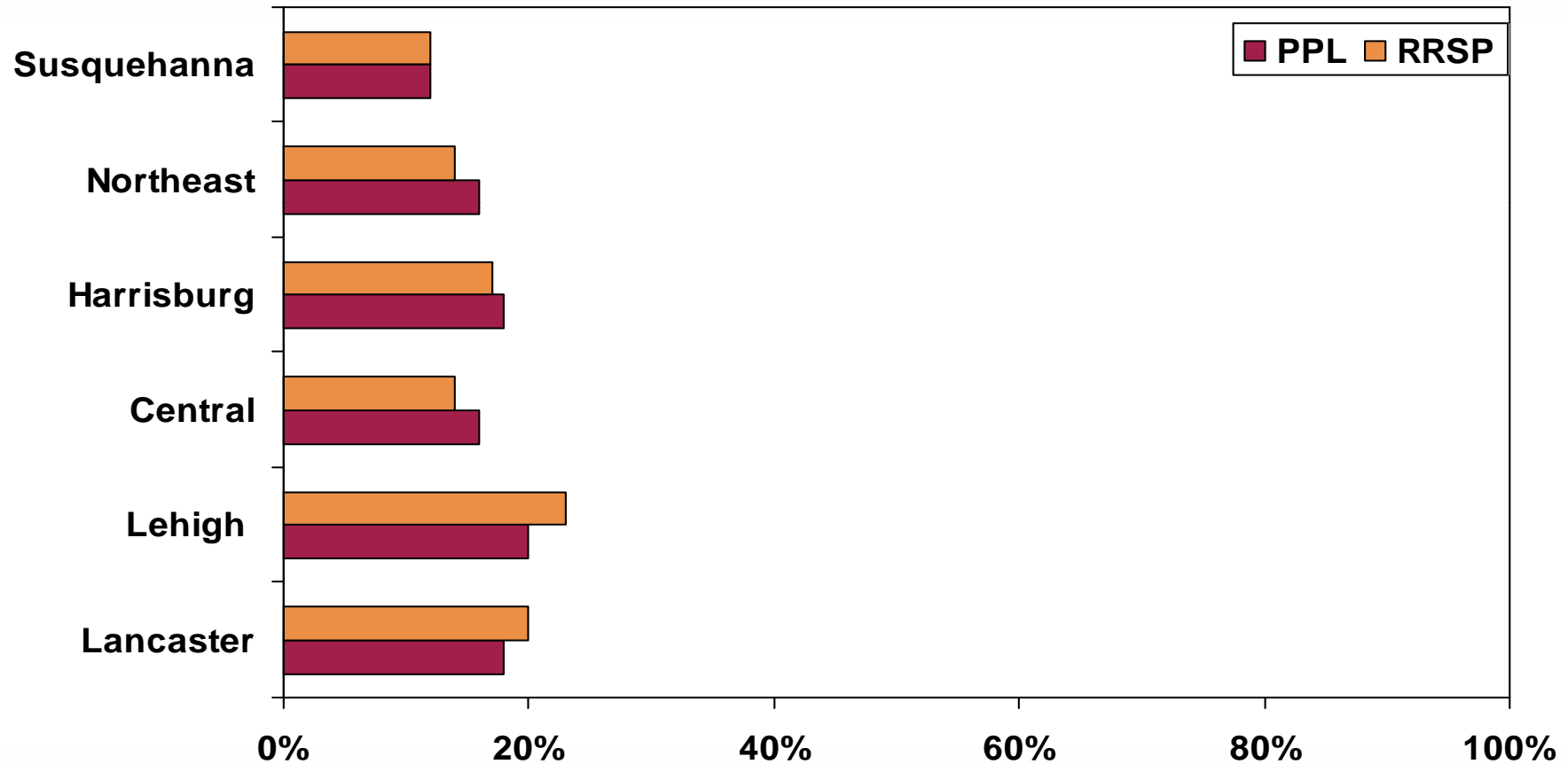
Recruitment Rate



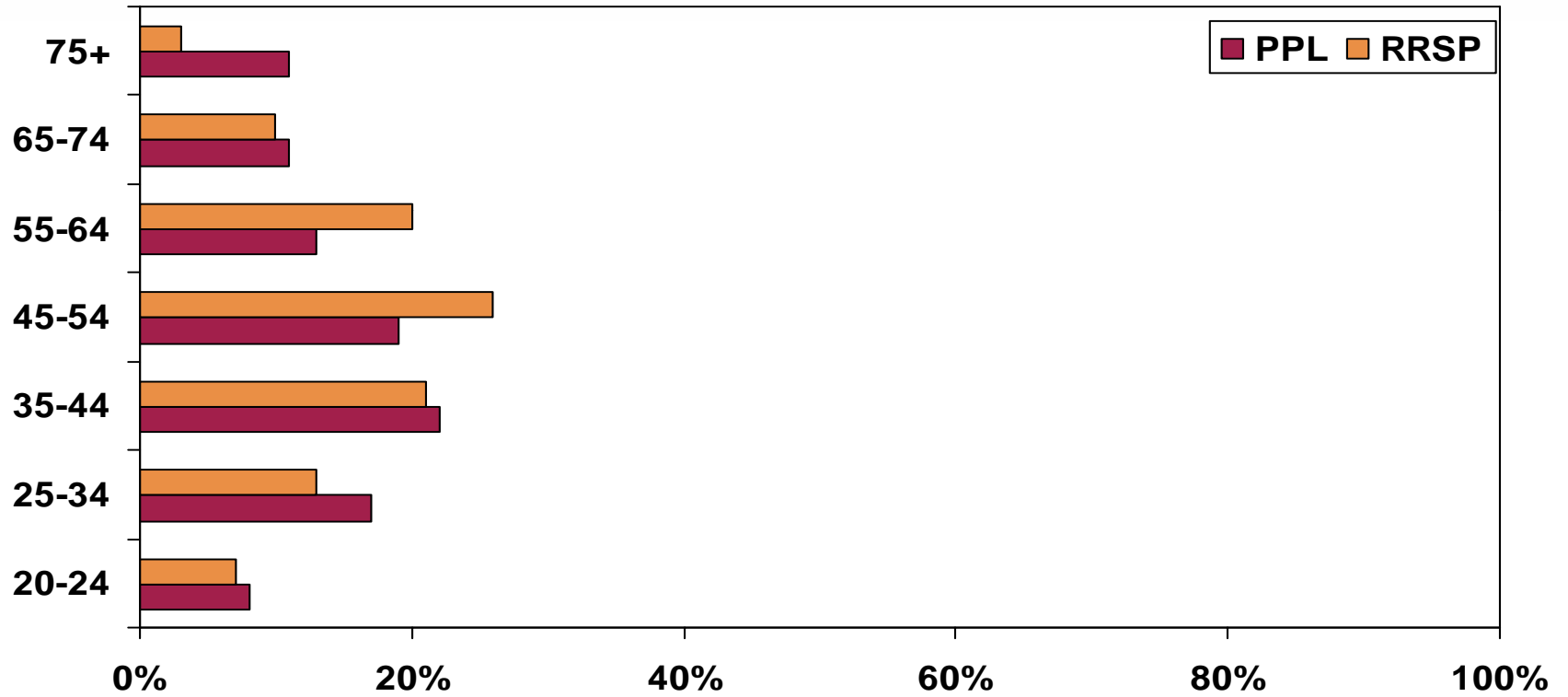
PPL Panel Composition

- Reflects population demographics fairly well
 - Main criteria were age and region
 - As we expected, somewhat under represents low income, low education, and minority segments
- Is useful for the programs PPL is testing
- PPL may elect to weight respondents

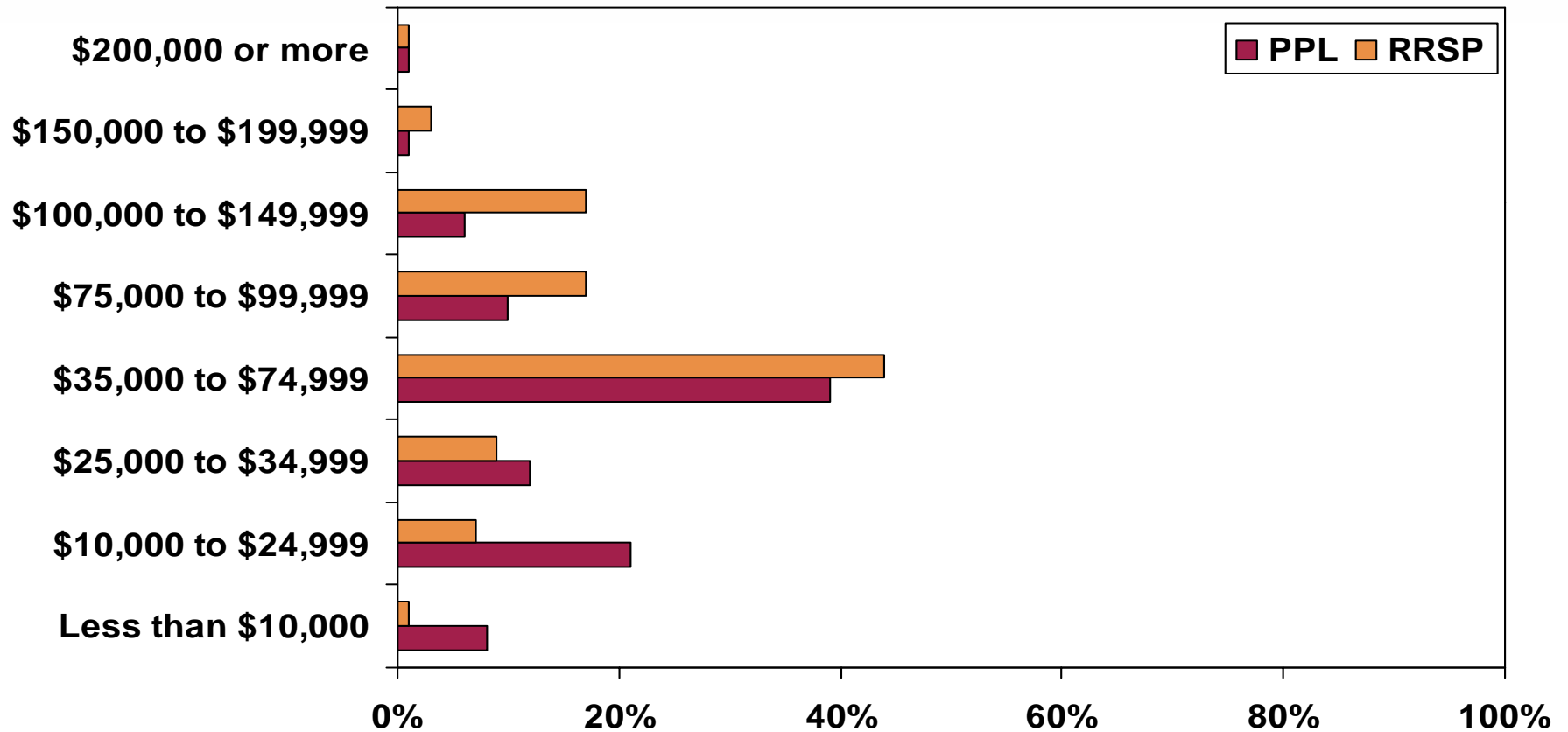
Panel Composition by Region



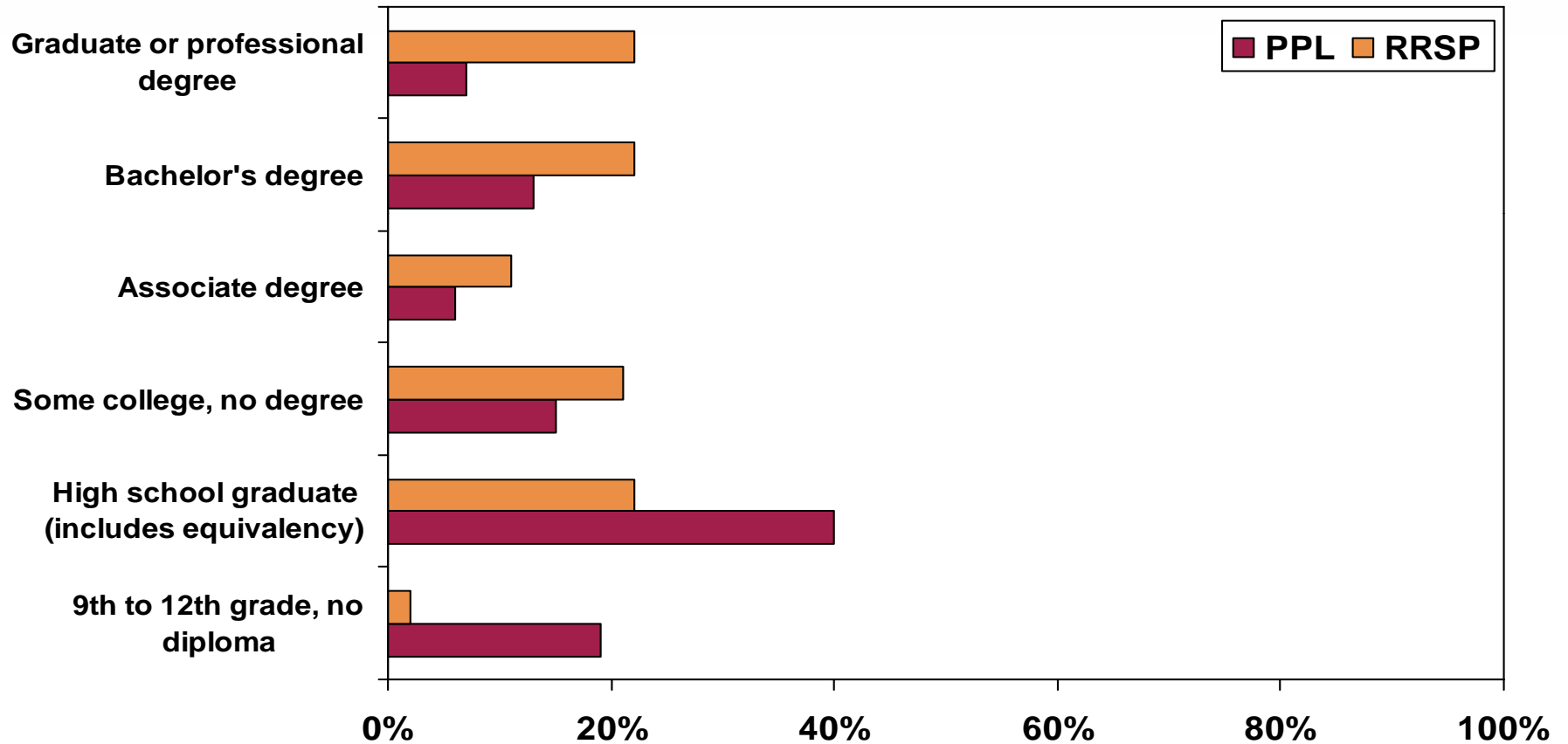
Panel Composition by Age



Panel Composition by Income



Panel Composition by Education Level

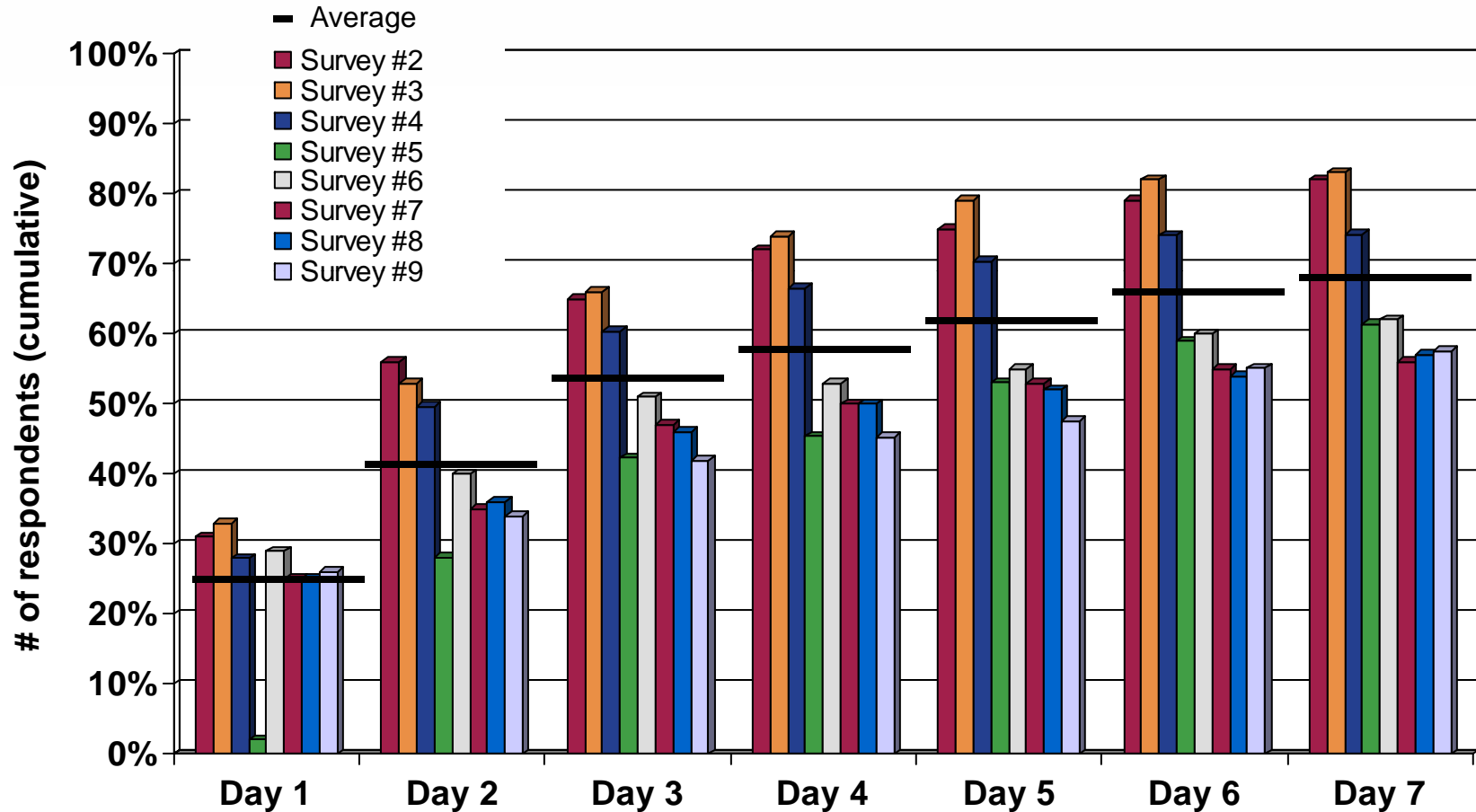


Types of Survey Questions

- Survey tool handles all types of survey questions
 - Single and multiple responses
 - Rating
 - Ranking
 - Required answers
 - Drill down
 - Tables
 - Fill in the blank
 - Essay
 - Complex branching
 - Question piping
 - Randomization of choice selection lists
 - Rotating questions within a block of questions
 - Prefilling profile data
- **Allows reaction to visual stimuli**
 - Image placement enhances the survey
 - Video clips
 - Charts and Graphs
 - Web screen shots



PPL Survey Response Rates



The Customer Experience

- Recruiting letter from PPL Electric Utilities
- Online survey in PPL EU template
- Survey invitations via email
- Rewards
 - Points are redeemed for gifts
 - Thank-you notes from PPL EU executives
- Feedback from panelists

The Customer Experience: Feedback from Panelists

21: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning "not at all satisfied" and 10 meaning "Very satisfied", how satisfied are you with your experience on the panel?

(Respondents could only choose a **single** response)

Response	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	Frequency	Count
1 Not at all satisfied						0.0%	0
2						0.3%	1
3						0.9%	3
4						0.6%	2
5						9.4%	33
6						7.7%	27
7						13.6%	48
8						21.3%	75
9						16.2%	57
10 Very Satisfied						30.1%	106
Not Answered							2
						Mean	8.111

20: Why did you decide to become a member of the PPL Research Panel? (Check all that apply)

(Respondents were allowed to choose **multiple** responses)

Response	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	Frequency	Count
I enjoy taking surveys						20.3%	72
I want to help PPL						46.6%	165
I want to help make changes in the utility industry						39.3%	139
I like to receive incentives/gift certificates						53.4%	189
I am interested in energy issues						62.1%	220
Other (please specify:)						7.6%	27
						Valid Responses	354
						Total Responses	354

The Customer Experience: Comments and Suggestions from Panelists

- Please use the information you get to strike a balance between PPL's need for generating revenues and the needs of the working class families of the region. *Please don't gouge us to death when regulation ends.*
- It was informative and fun
- I hope that some question that I've answered has helped you make a more informed decision
- *It might be helpful to let us know what changes you may have instituted as a result of the data you've gathered.*
- I have enjoyed doing the surveys and *I am happy that PPL is asking their customers what they think.*
- *I do not normally like surveys, even with an incentive, but I decided to give yours a try and have found it to be painless, not a chore like most surveys are.*
- Send the surveys more often and not as long
- Restaurant Coupons not of much value in our area. Montoursville.
- Do away with the points system.
- Instead of giving certificates for restaurants, give certificates for payment toward the utility bill.
- Wish the option of "does not apply" was available as an answer for questions, instead of being forced to choose a possible inappropriate answer/rating.
- *I enjoyed being a panel member and would not hesitate to participate again in the future if asked.*

The Internal Client Experience: Comments from PPL EU Management

- Outstanding support and excitement about ability to reach to customer group quickly and with very limited expense
- Have found input very timely for rate case issues and other “hot” items where customer input can be very valuable
- Some challenge to getting questions, but realize that opportunities for customer input will cycle

Broader experience highlights

- Recruiting rates settling at 3% to 4%
- Response rates per survey vary across surveys and utilities
- Recommended awards approach:
 - 60 points = \$5 Amazon gift certificate
 - 120 points = \$15 Amazon gift certificate or energy efficiency kit

Business panels

- Direct-mail campaign to person that opens utility bill
- Asks that letter be handed to person knowledgeable about day-to-day operations and energy requirements for the facility
- Incentives to respond to recruiting letter:
 - Personal reward earned at simply filling out profile
 - Or donation to charity in respondent company's name
- More frequent incentives for responding to surveys

Pros and Cons of Proprietary Online Survey Panels

Pros:

- Survey your own customers exclusively on your own topics
- Speed and lower cost
- Access via telephone declining
- Surveys can be sophisticated
- Visual display of stimulus material
- Convenience for respondents
- Reduced data entry error
- Responses tend to be more consistent across multiple surveys
- Panelists may better represent the traditionally hard-to-reach populations (younger, more affluent)
- Improve understanding of methodology

Cons:

- Does not include customers who do not have internet access
- May under represent some segments of population
- Respondents are more likely to manipulate qualifying criteria
- Panelists may view this as opportunity for “income”
- No interviewers to probe respondents
- Overuse may generate skewed response due to familiarity

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