

Reasons for Late Response and Nonresponse in Surveys of Government Agencies

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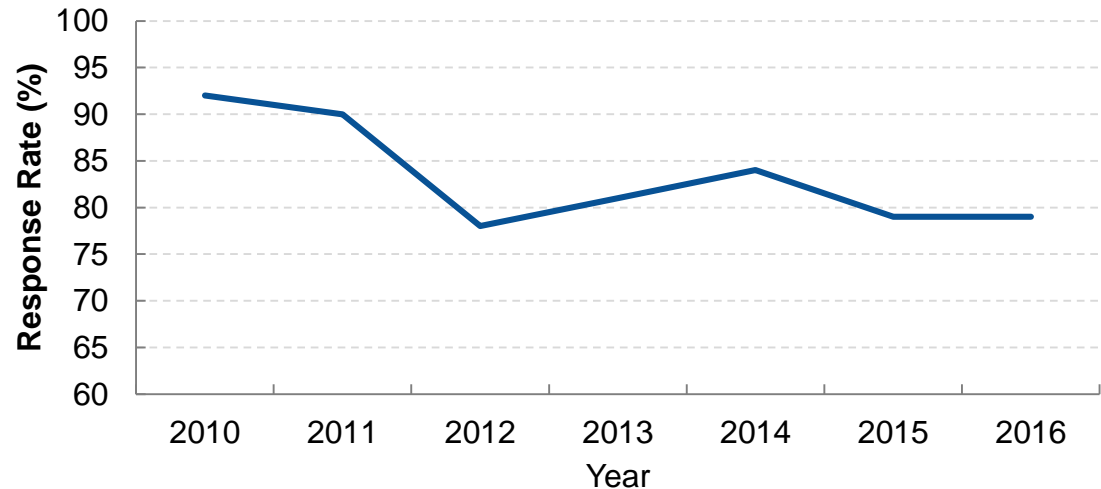
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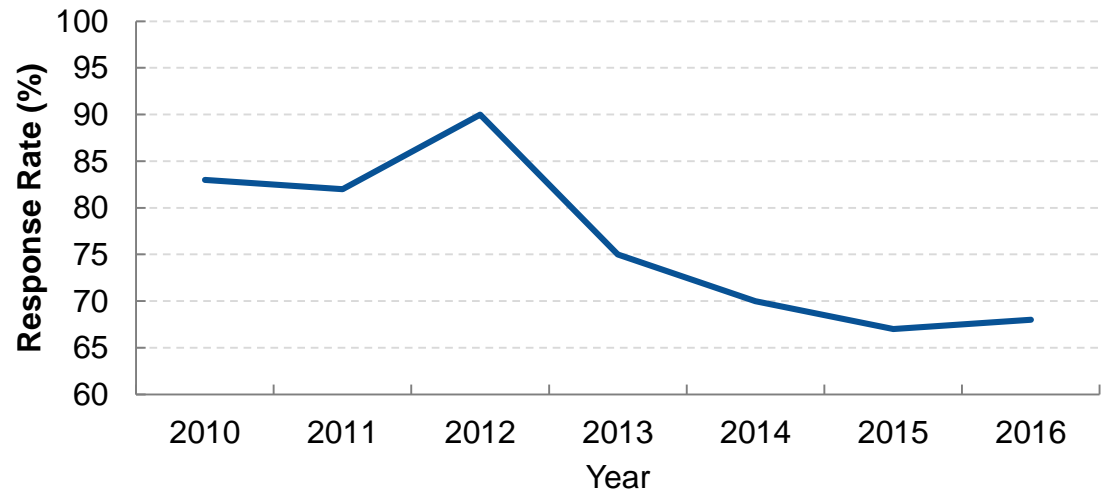
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Establishment Response Rates

- Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll (n=50 state governments and about 90,000 local governments)

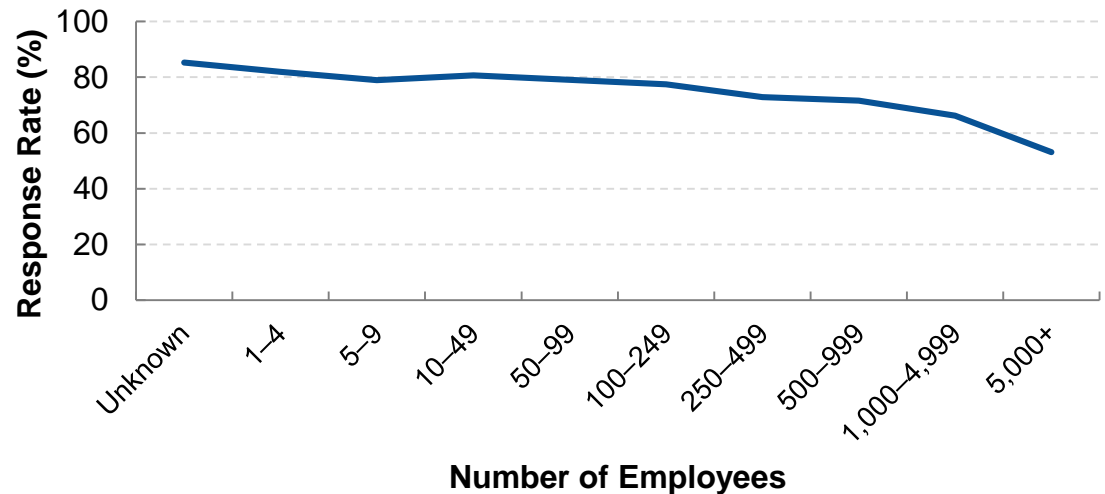


- Medical Expenditure Panel Survey – Private Sector Establishments

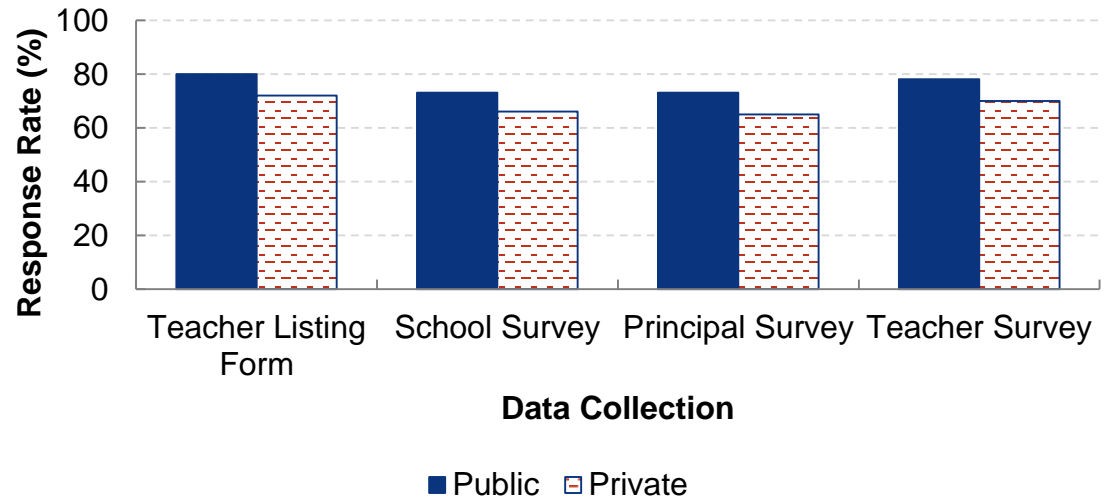


Establishment Response Rates

- 2015 Occupational Information Network (O*NET)



- Schools and Staffing Survey (SSAS) 2011-12



Risks Due to Late Response/Nonresponse

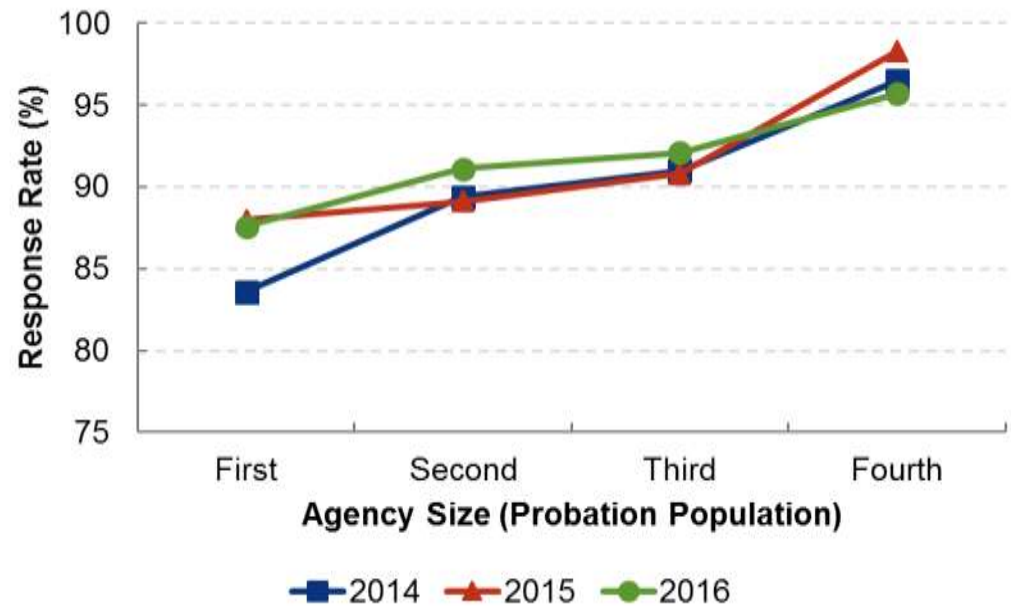
- Higher data collection costs
- Longer data collection period
- Lower data quality
- Staff turn-over
- Biased estimates

Research Goals

- Identify reasons for late response/nonresponse among probation and law enforcement agencies
- Assess differences by agency size and other characteristics
- Define tailored strategies to encourage survey participation

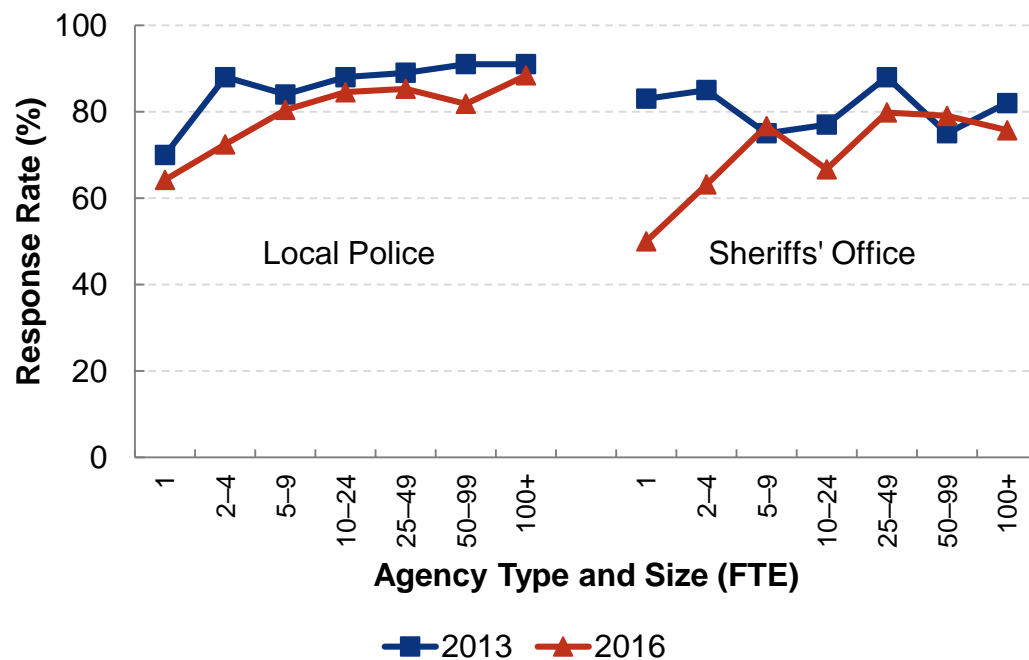
Methods – Focal Studies

- Annual Probation Survey (APS)
 - Census of 456 agencies nationwide
 - 42 provide state-level data
 - 13 provide data for multiple agencies
 - 401 provide data for a single agency
 - Burden between 30-90 minutes
 - Annual confirmation of agency head contact information for survey pre-notification
 - Web survey, with telephone follow-up
 - 5-month data collection period
 - 92% response rate



Methods – Focal Studies

- Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Core Survey
 - Sample of 3,500 state and local law enforcement agencies
 - 50 state agencies
 - 2,640 local police departments
 - 810 sheriff's offices
 - Burden of 3 hours
 - Online search for agency head contact information for survey pre-notification
 - Web survey, with telephone follow-up
 - 7-month data collection period
 - 80% response rate (2016)



Methods – Reasons for Late Response/Nonresponse

- Codes based on experiential/anecdotal evidence
 - Perception that limited resources (e.g., budget and staff), benefits, and role of federal government in state/local issues might impact cooperation
 - Tested on 2016 LEMAS Body-worn Camera Supplement Survey
 - Verbatim reasons
 - Double-coded into 21 categories, with adjudication
 - Refined for APS and LEMAS-Core

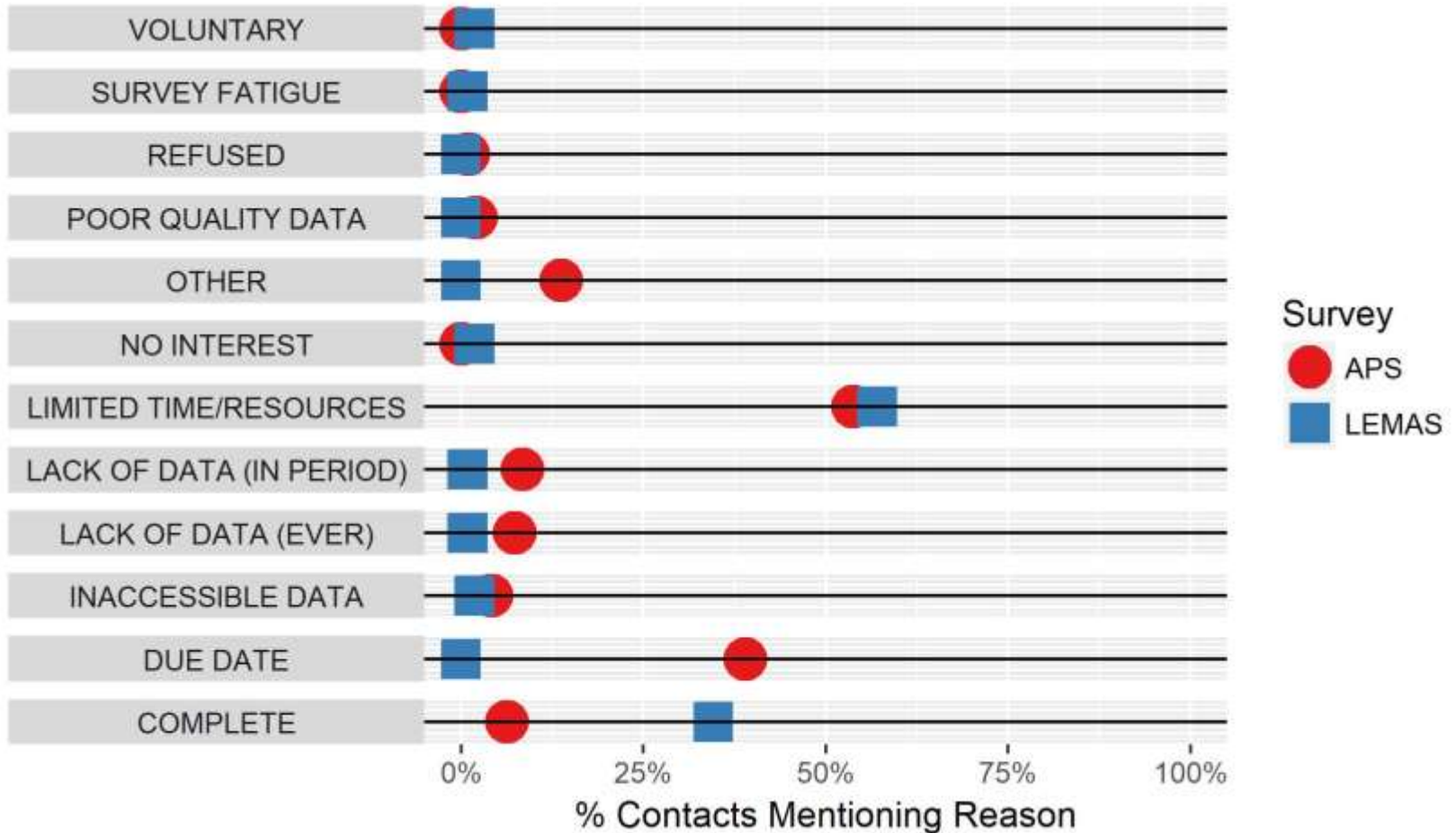
Methods – Reasons for Late Response/Nonresponse

- Final code list
 - COMPLETE — Claims that survey has been submitted
 - DUE DATE — Cannot respond by due date
 - LIMITED TIME/RESOURCES — Not related to due date
 - APPLICABILITY — Thinks survey does not apply to agency
 - NO INTEREST – Uninterested in survey topic/goals
 - NO BENEFIT – No benefit to agency from participation/survey
 - VOLUNTARY – Participation is not mandated by law
 - SURVEY FATIGUE — Agency receives too many survey requests
 - LACK OF DATA (IN PERIOD) — Data are not available during survey period
 - LACK OF DATA (EVER) — Data do not exist or are not maintained
 - INACCESSIBLE DATA – Data exist, but are not easily accessible
 - POOR QUALITY DATA – Data exist, but are of questionable/poor quality
 - CONFIDENTIALITY – Data cannot be shared outside of agency/authority
 - FEDERAL ROLE – Federal government should not be involved in local issues/operations
 - JURISDICTION RULE – Jurisdiction does not participate in research
 - OTHER
 - REFUSED TO GIVE REASON FOR DELAY/REFUSAL

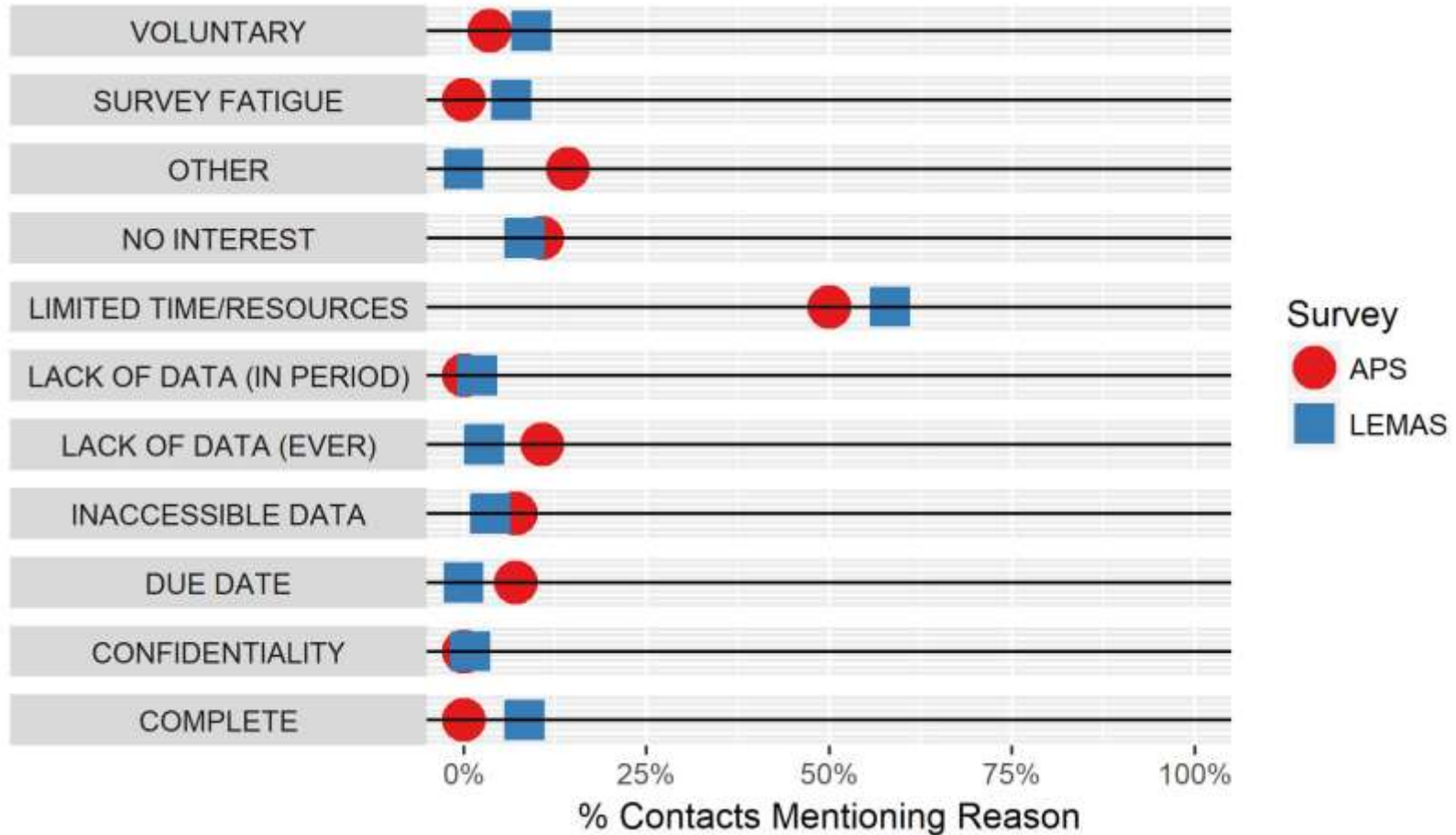
Findings – Overview

- Late respondents
 - APS: 165 cases; 129 contacts gave reasons
 - LEMAS: 679 cases; 339 contacts gave reasons (240 “did not receive”)
- Nonrespondents
 - APS: 38 cases; 29 contacts gave reasons
 - LEMAS: 572 cases; 310 contacts gave reasons (223 “did not receive”)
- Five reasons were not cited by late respondent or nonrespondent contacts on either study
 - APPLICABILITY — Thinks survey does not apply to agency
 - NO BENEFIT – No benefit to agency from participation/survey
 - CONFIDENTIALITY – Data cannot be shared outside of agency/authority
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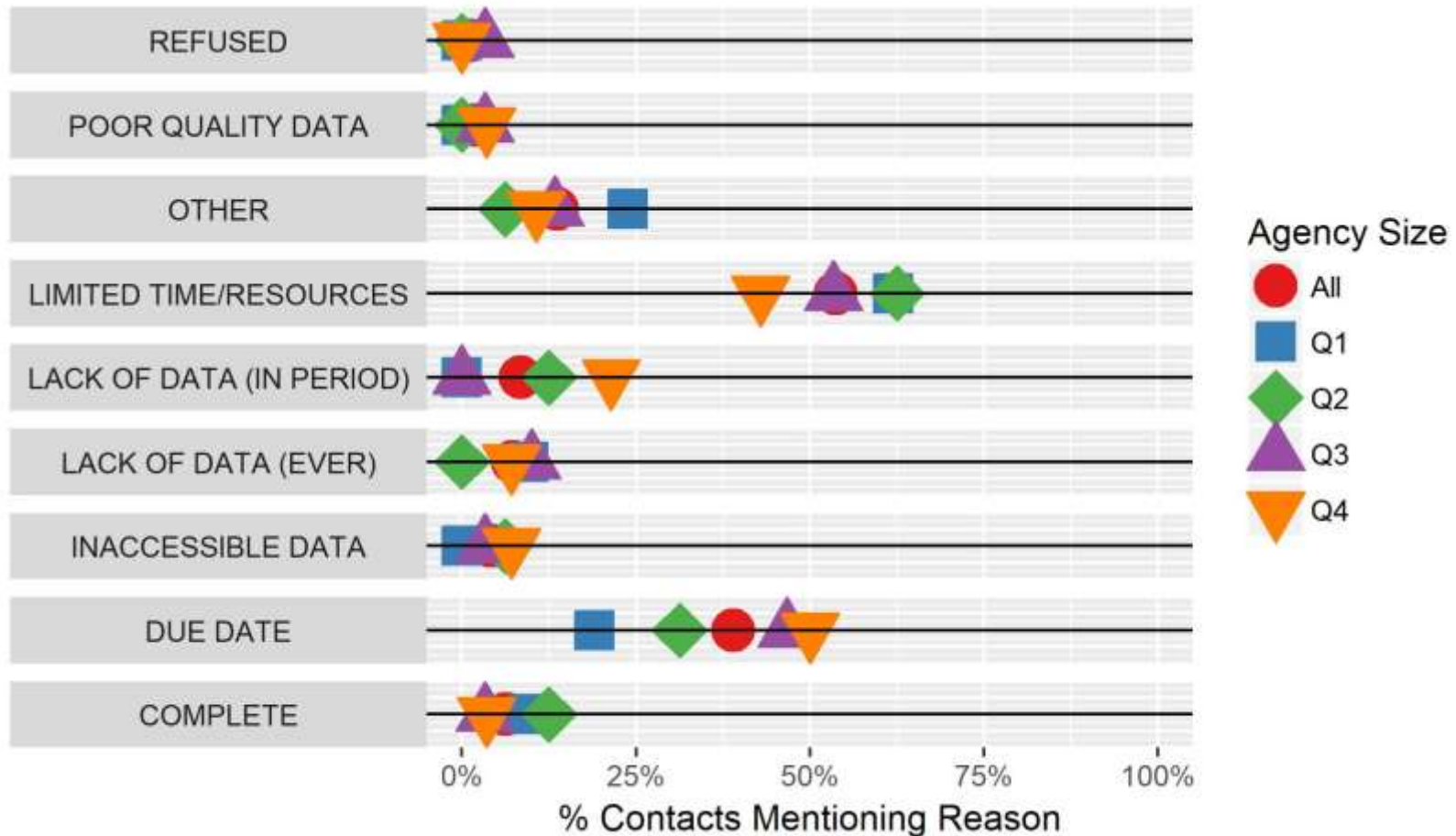
Findings – Late Respondents



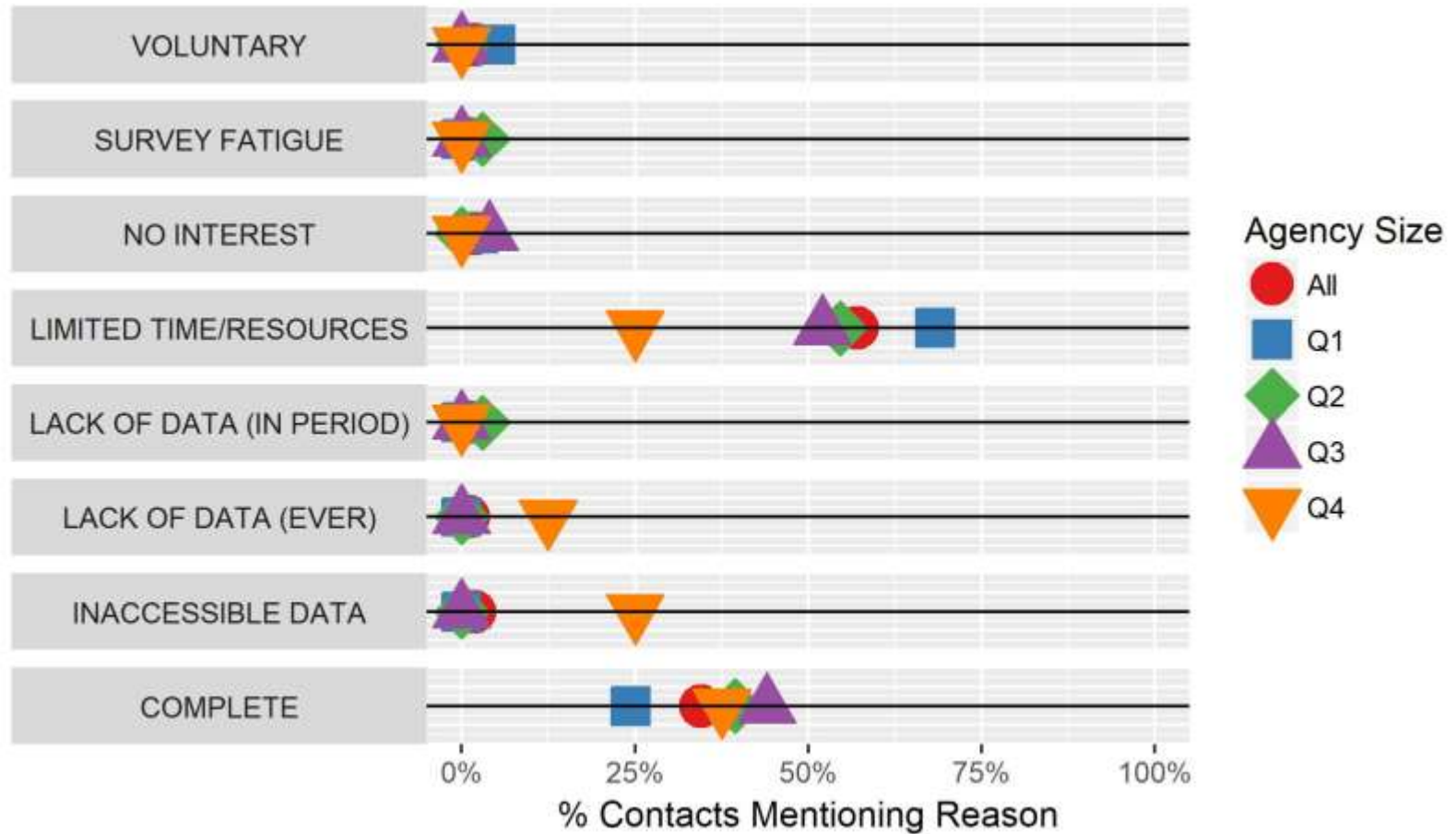
Findings – Nonrespondents



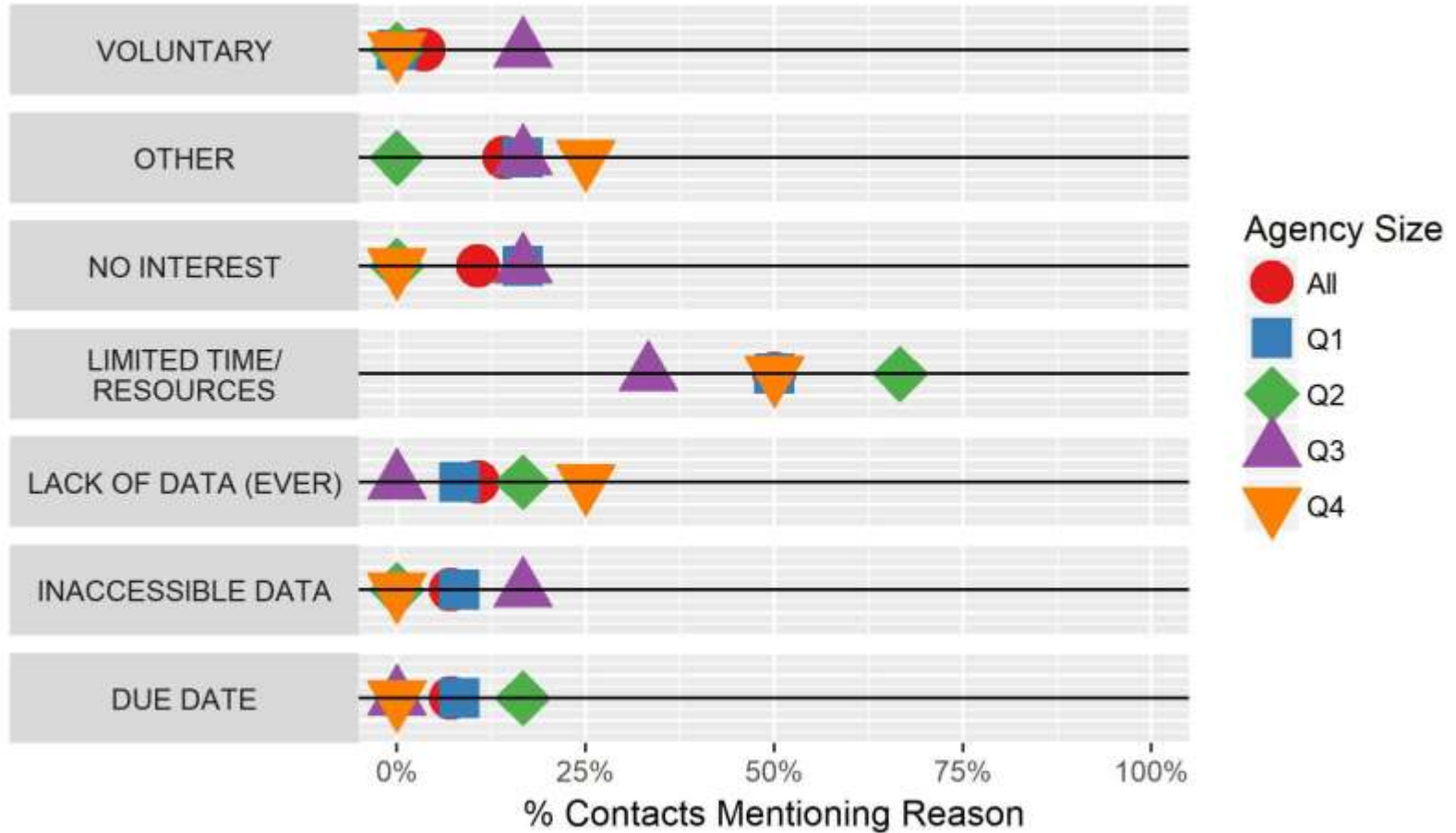
Findings – APS Late Respondents, by Agency Size



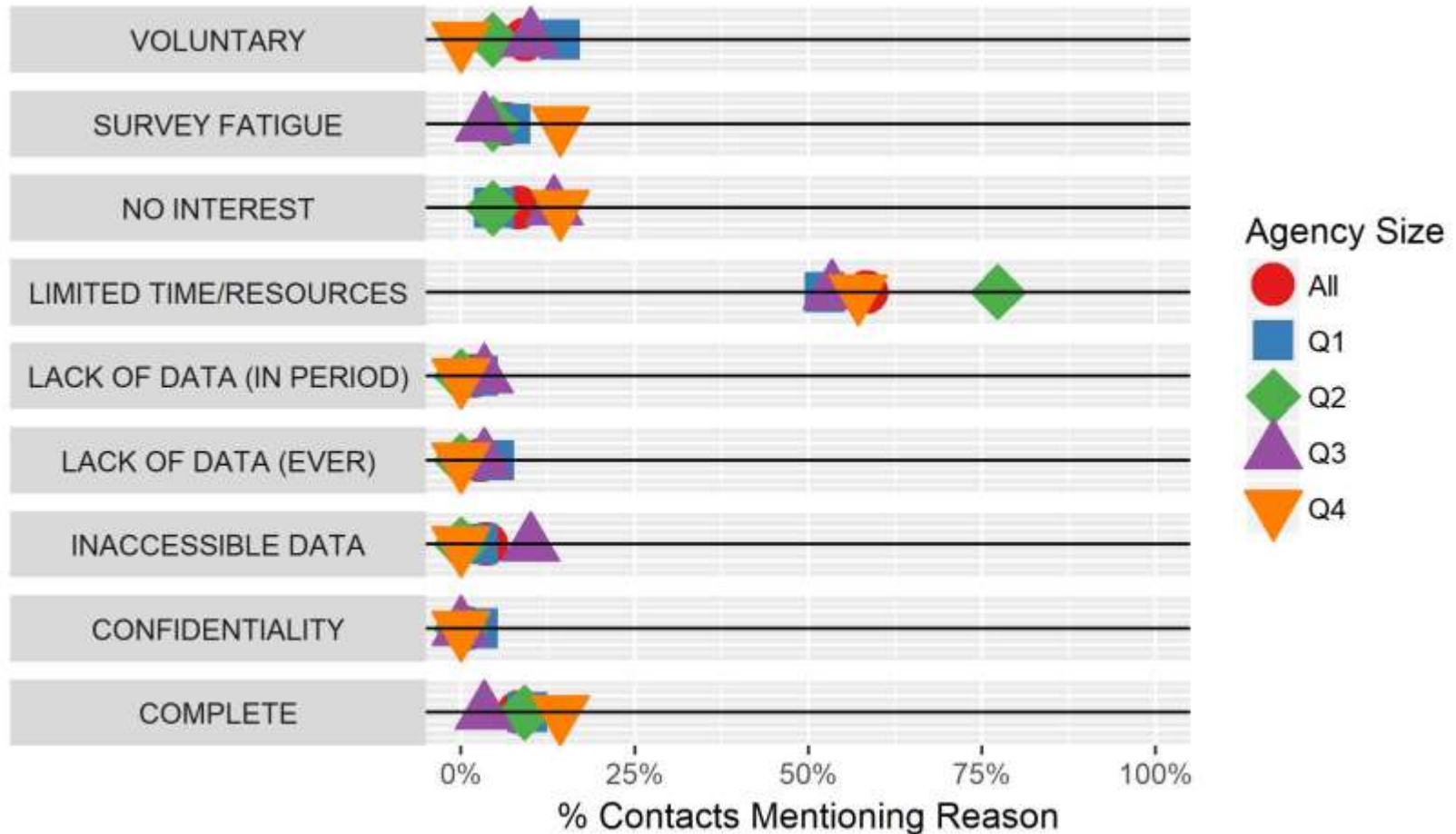
Findings – LEMAS Late Respondents, by Agency Size



Findings – APS Nonrespondents, by Agency Size



Findings – LEMAS Nonrespondents, by Agency Size



Findings – LEMAS - Did Not Receive Survey Request, by Agency Size



- Respondent, Did Not Receive
- Non-Respondent, Did Not Receive
- Non-Respondent, Received
- Respondent, Received

Summary

- APS and LEMAS demonstrated differential response rates by agency size
- Many experiential/anecdotal reasons for nonresponse are not borne out by evidence (e.g., no benefit, confidentiality, federal role)
- Reasons for late response and nonresponse vary by agency size
 - Large agency late respondents often report data availability
 - Small agency late respondents often report staff resource limitations
 - Frame address quality did not influence response, even though LEMAS agencies (especially small agencies) often reported not receiving survey materials

- Test data availability when defining survey content
- Communication should stress flexibility/support for due dates and mode of data submission
- Confirm receipt of survey materials early

Limitations

- Data are from only two specific kinds of government agencies
- Data on reasons restricted to those contacted
- Analysis to-date only related to agency size
- Solutions are undefined/untested
 - Restricted survey content
 - Tailored survey correspondence/communication
 - Interviewer procedures/materials

Next Steps

- Identify/analyze additional characteristics
- Develop tailored communications strategies
- Conduct randomized tests
- Investigate with other establishment/agency populations

More Information

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Information on RTI data collection on criminal justice projects:

https://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/brochures/rti_data_cj.pdf