FrameWorks Institute Methodology: Culture Change Project

Quantitative Research

About the Surveys. As part of the Culture Change Project, we administer three main types of surveys: mindset tracking surveys, descriptive surveys, and experimental surveys.

> ***Mindset Tracking Surveys:*** Since August 2020, the *Mindset Tracking Survey* has measured cross-cutting mindsets, such as individualism and systemic thinking, as well as mindsets on the economy, race and racism, government, democracy, and gender. These surveys ask how strongly people endorse specific mindsets and include questions about support for policies (e.g. a wealth tax, Medicare for All, reparations). The mindset tracking surveys are fielded monthly, varying which mindsets are examined. Each mindset is measured three times a year.
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> ***Descriptive Surveys:*** From time to time, we use one-time descriptive surveys to dive more deeply into the mindsets surrounding a specific issue. The approach and methods for one-time descriptive surveys are identical to those of the tracking surveys, with the exception that descriptive surveys are only fielded once. On occasion, key mindsets from one-time descriptive surveys may be added to the mindset tracking surveys for long-term observation.
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> ***Experimental Surveys:*** We use experimental surveys to test frames designed to foreground more productive mindsets about an issue, and background unproductive ones. Experimental methods help us understand the framing choices that shift public thinking in productive ways.

Data Collection and Sampling. All surveys are completed online. Data collection and hosting of all surveys is facilitated by Dynata. Participants are recruited from a combination of sources, including proprietary loyalty panels, open-invitation, and partnerships with publishers or social networks. To build a nationally representative sample, we set quotas according to national benchmarks for age, gender, household income, education level, race/ethnicity, and political party affiliation. At times, we choose to oversample certain demographic groups to ensure adequate statistical power for targeted subgroup analyses.

> ***Mindset Tracking Surveys****:* The minimum sample size for mindset tracking surveys is N = 1000. Data collected for the tracking surveys are weighted to ensure consistent demographic representation over time. Beginning in late 2024, the tracking surveys include oversamples of groups that make up a smaller share of the general population, including Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American participants, as well as adults aged 18-29.
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> ***Descriptive and Experimental Surveys:*** Data are not weighted for one-time descriptive surveys or experimental surveys. Oversampling for specific demographic groups depends on subgroup analysis needs.

Quality and Fraud Checks. Dynata verifies participants' identities at several points during sign-up, using tools like third-party validation and digital fingerprinting to catch bots, fraud, and other suspicious activity. To ensure data quality, we remove responses that were completed in less than a third of the median

completion time, show evidence of straightlining, or include nonsensical answers to open-ended questions.

Survey Design. All surveys begin with informed consent followed by a series of standard demographic questions. To prevent order effects, the order in which participants see the remaining survey questions is randomized. Participants are required to provide answers to all survey questions.

> ***Mindset Tracking and Descriptive Surveys:*** After completing consent and answering demographic questions, participants taking the mindset tracking surveys and one-time descriptive surveys proceed directly to answering the survey questions.
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> ***Experimental Surveys:*** After completing consent and answering demographic questions, participants taking experimental surveys are randomly assigned to one of several experimental conditions. Participants assigned to a treatment condition read a short, framed message before answering the survey questions. Participants assigned to the null control condition do not see any message, and proceed directly to answering all survey questions. Halfway through the survey, participants assigned to a treatment condition are re-primed with the message they read at the beginning of the survey. After this re-prime, they answer the remaining survey questions.

Item Development. Across all surveys, we tend to develop three main types of measures. The first are batteries. We begin by developing a set of statements that capture the core assumption(s) of each mindset or attitude we want to measure. Participants are asked to rate their agreement with each set of items, measured on five-, seven-, or nine-point Likert-type scales. During analysis, the items in each battery are combined into composite scores that indicate participants' average endorsement of the mindset or attitude. For ease of interpretation, composite scores are then rescaled to a 100-point scale, with 50 indicating neutral feelings. The second type of measure uses single Likert-type items to measure average support for specific policies or principles. The third type of measure is forced-choice questions, which ask participants to choose between two statements that represent competing mindsets. These forced-choice questions are especially useful in tracking shifts in the relative dominance of mindsets over time.

Data Analysis. After data collection is complete, we conduct standard psychometric testing[1] on all Likert-type items to ensure that each battery is adequately and reliably[2] measuring what it is intended to measure.

> ***Mindset Tracking and Descriptive Surveys:*** For the mindset tracking surveys and one-time descriptive surveys, we rely on descriptive statistics, primarily averages, to understand how strongly mindsets are endorsed in the general public. T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) are used to identify significant differences in endorsement between demographic groups. Correlations show us how mindsets relate to one another, and how they relate to support for

[1] For new batteries, we conduct exploratory factor analyses using oblique promax rotation, dropping Items with factor loadings below |.40|. For previously tested scales, we conduct confirmatory factor analyses using Maximum Likelihood Estimation with Robust Standard Errors to account for potential deviations from normality and model misspecifications. Model fit is assessed using multiple fit indices, such as the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), with thresholds of < .050 for close fit and < .080 for reasonable fit; the Comparative Fit Index (CFI); and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI5), with thresholds of > .900 for acceptable fit and > .950 for excellent fit.

[2] Cronbach's alpha (α) and McDonald's omega (ω) are used to assess reliability/internal consistency, with scores of .60 considered acceptable. Higher scores indicate higher reliability.

policies[3] at the population level. Once we have multiple data points on mindset endorsement from the tracking surveys, we use trend analysis to see whether mindsets are shifting over time and in what direction.

Experimental Surveys: For experimental surveys, we use multiple regression analysis to test whether participants who saw framed messages differ on target outcomes compared to participants in the null control group. We take a holistic approach to understanding the effectiveness of each message, considering patterns of both statistically significant and marginal differences[4] across outcomes.

Qualitative Research

About Qualitative Methods. As part of the Culture Change Project, we use two main types of qualitative research: peer discourse sessions and cultural mindsets interviews.

Peer Discourse Sessions: Peer discourse sessions are a form of focus group. We conduct them 3–4 times per year to understand how mindsets are being used to make sense of the upheavals of the moment.

Cultural Mindsets Interviews: We use cultural mindsets interviews to identify the cultural mindsets – the deep assumptions and implicit understandings – that members of the public use to think about particular issues (such as democracy or gender).

Data Collection and Sampling: Recruitment of all qualitative research participants is done by market research recruiters, drawing on panels of participants. We conduct this research virtually, using Zoom, and record them with participants' consent. Participants are recruited to represent variation across demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, political identification, residential location (urban/suburban/rural), geographic location (city/region), and education. Participants of color are typically oversampled to ensure that common patterns across the sample hold across racial groups. At times, peer discourse sessions are split by group (e.g., by party affiliation or gender), and sampling for sessions and interviews is sometimes adjusted to enable researchers to focus on specific groups' views.

Peer Discourse Sessions: For each round of peer discourse sessions, we run 6–9 sessions with approximately 6 participants each. This number allows researchers to identify patterns and draw generalized conclusions, taken in combination with quantitative data.

Cultural Mindsets Interviews: For cultural mindsets interviews, we typically conduct 20 interviews, which suffice for saturation and enable researchers to reliably identify mindsets.

Research Design. Qualitative research typically starts with general, open-ended questions to elicit top-of-mind thinking and becomes more specific as sessions or interviews progress.

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[3] A threshold of $p < .05$ is used to determine whether two variables are significantly correlated.
[4] A threshold of $p < .05$ is used to determine whether the treatment conditions had any significant effects on target outcomes when compared to the null control condition. We also consider $p < .10$ to determine whether the treatment conditions had any marginal effects when compared to the null control condition.

Peer Discourse Sessions: Sessions typically last two hours. They generally begin with an open-ended conversation among participants about the state of the country. Focus groups then proceed to dive into specific issues or debates of the moment, covering core issues of the project including democracy, government, the economy, work and labor, race and racism, and gender. At times, frames are introduced into the conversation to enable researchers to analyze their effects on thinking and talk.

Cultural Mindsets Interviews: These interviews are one-on-one, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately two hours. Interviews are designed to allow researchers to capture broad sets of assumptions, or cultural mindsets, that participants use to make sense of a concept or topic area. Interviews consist of a series of open-ended questions covering participants' thinking on those topics in broad terms. Researchers approach each interview with a common set of topics to explore but allow participants to determine the direction and nature of the discussion.

Analysis: Analysis examines patterns in talk and interactions to understand public thinking and frame effects.

Peer Discourse Sessions: Researchers use cultural mindsets analysis to identify the underlying assumptions that shape and structure conversation. Analysis explores how mindsets are contested and negotiated in and through conversation, attending to group dynamics. Frame analysis is used to determine how frames influence the conversation and participants' thinking.

Cultural Mindsets Interviews: To analyze cultural mindsets interviews, researchers use analytical techniques from cognitive and linguistic anthropology to examine how participants understand issues related to the topic area. Researchers identify common ways of talking across the sample to reveal assumptions, relationships, logical steps, and connections that are commonly made but taken for granted throughout an individual's dialogue. The analysis involves discerning patterns in both what participants said and what they did not say, and centers on ways of understanding that are shared across participants, as cultural mindsets research is designed to identify common ways of thinking that can be identified across a sample.

As with all research, it is important to remember that research findings are based on a sample of the population, not the entire population. As such, all results are subject to margins of error.