



# How to ask sensitive multiple choice questions

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March 2018

## Abstract

Motivated by recent failures of polling to estimate populist party support, we propose and analyse two methods for asking sensitive multiple choice questions where the respondent retains some privacy and therefore might answer more truthfully. The first method consists of asking for the true choice along with a choice picked at random. The other method presents a list of choices and asks whether the preferred one is on the list or not. Different respondents are shown different lists. The methods are easy to explain, which makes it likely that the respondent understands how her privacy is protected and may thus entice her to participate in the survey and answer truthfully. The methods are also easy to implement and scale up.

*Keywords:* Randomised response techniques, Non-randomised response techniques, Survey design, Anonymity, Privacy

## 1 Introduction

When asking someone about a personal deed or preference one would expect her to be less truthful, or willing to provide an answer, the more she thinks that that deed or preference is illegal or shameful. This could be one of the reasons many opinion polls have underestimated the public support for populist parties and candidates in several countries in recent years. The concrete example that motivates us is the larger than expected support for the Sweden Democrats (SD), a nationalist party, in the Swedish general election 2014.

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