

Understanding Trust in Official Statistics in the United States

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Acknowledgements

- Ryan King and Aleia Clark Fobia, U.S. Census Bureau
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- Michelle Smirnova, University of Missouri, Kansas City



Overview

- Developing a Framework to Measure Trust in Official Statistics
- Qualitative Methodology and Findings
- Quantitative Methodology and Findings
- Implications for Building Trust
- Time Series Analysis
- Conclusions



Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group



- Measure trust in official statistics
- Produce model survey questionnaire to gather comparable statistics internationally
- Cognitively tested in 6 member nations (Brackfield 2011)
- Questions are inadequately understood by U.S. respondents (Willson 2010)



Trust in Statistical Products

- Accuracy
- Reliability
- Credibility
- Objectivity
- Relevance
- Timeliness
- Coherence

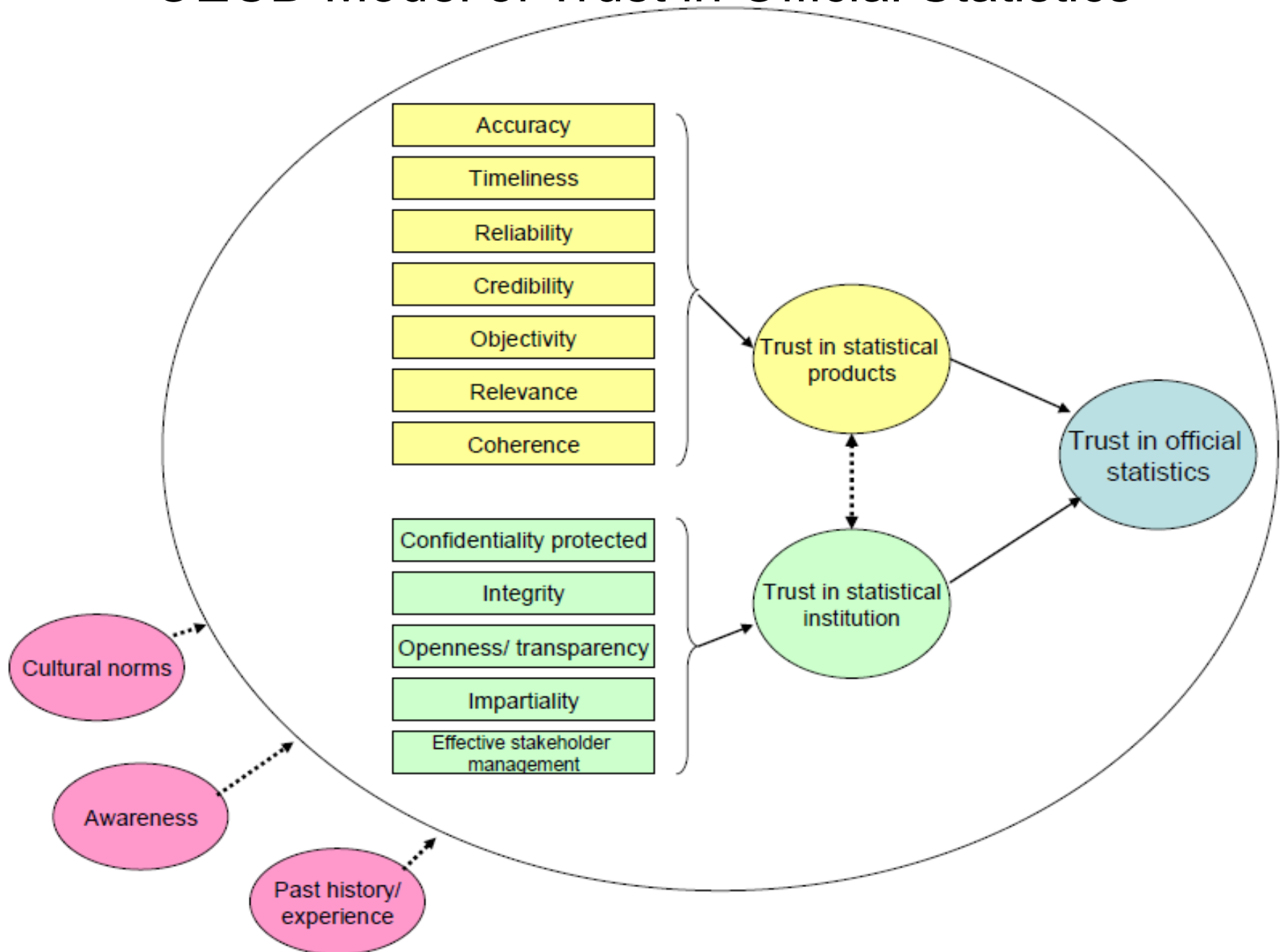


Trust in Statistical Institution

- Confidentiality Protected
- Integrity
- Openness/Transparency
- Impartiality
- Effective Stakeholder Management



OECD Model of Trust in Official Statistics



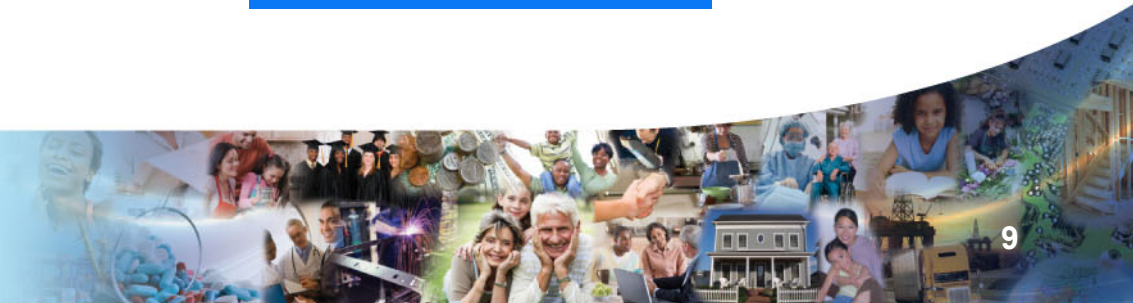
Qualitative Findings in US

- **Overall lack of knowledge** about federal statistics led to:
 - Shifting Interpretations
 - Not thinking about statistics
 - Interpretations limited to examples given



Recommendations from Qualitative Testing

- Define concepts up front
- Be specific
- Keep it simple



Awareness

- **Knowledge of Statistics**
- **Data User**
 - Found to be best predictor of question comprehension in past cognitive testing by NCHS



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Eurobarometer measure

Personally, how much trust do you have in the federal statistics in the United States? Would you say that you tend to trust federal statistics or tend not to trust them?



Data Collection

- Gallup Nightly Survey
 - 200 responses daily
 - Subsample of National RDD Sample
 - Landline and Cellphone
- Initial Gallup contract was 25 questions collected Feb. 2012
 - September 2013
 - 19 question core, 6 rotating questions
- Contract extension was 10 questions collected October 2013 – March 2014
 - 5 question core, 5 rotating questions

GALLUP
GALLUP

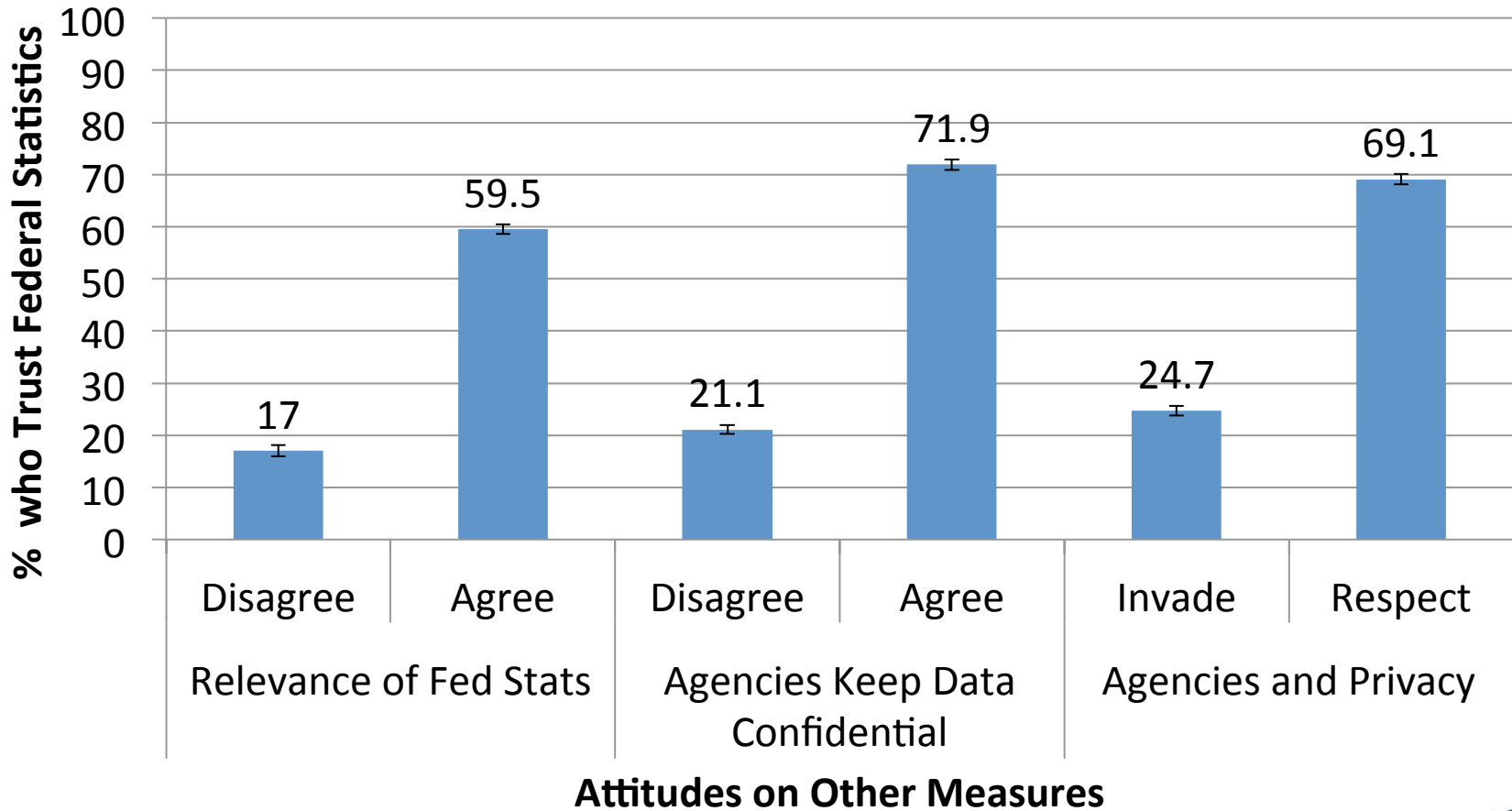


Quantitative Findings

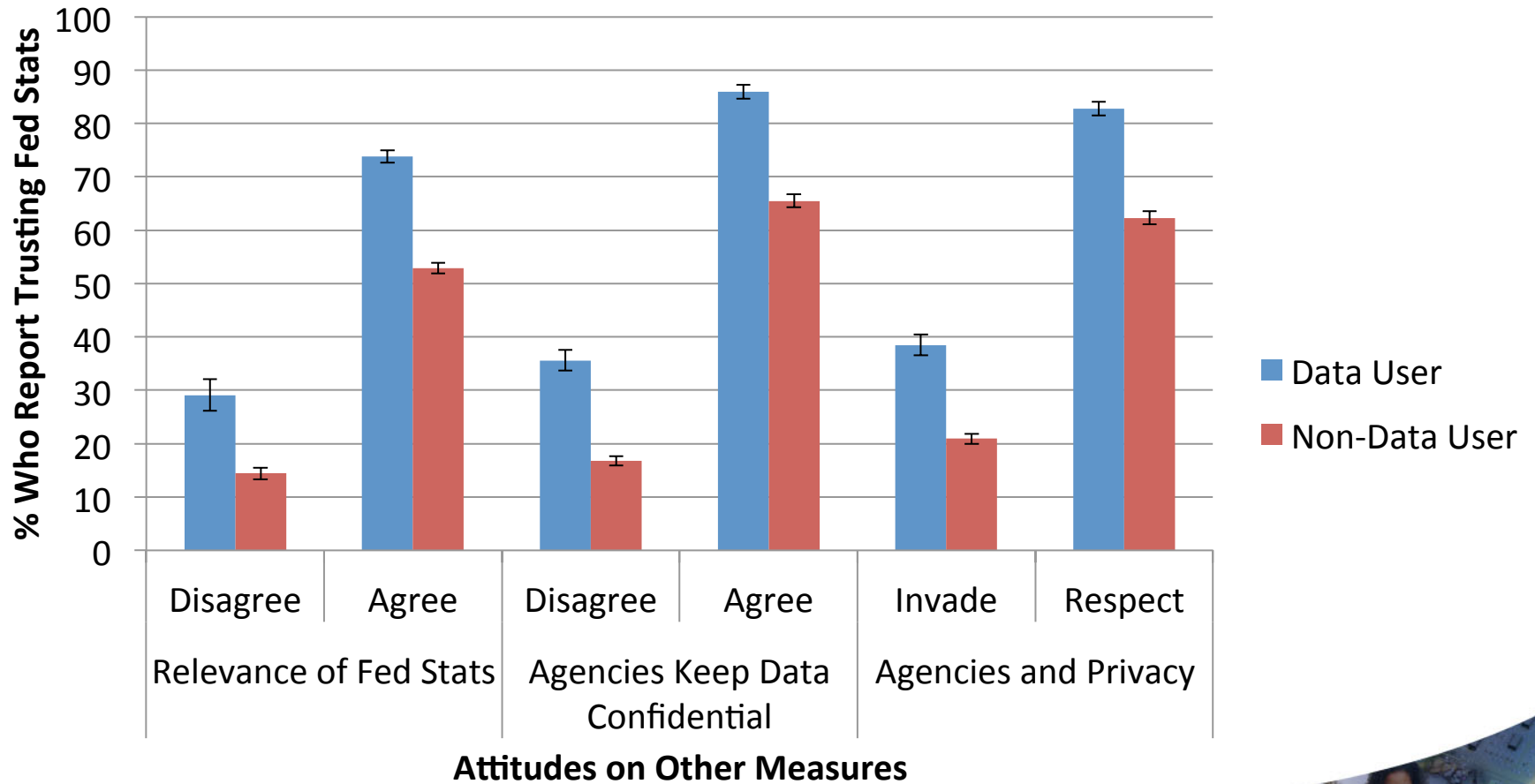
- Relationships with trust
- Confidence in institutions



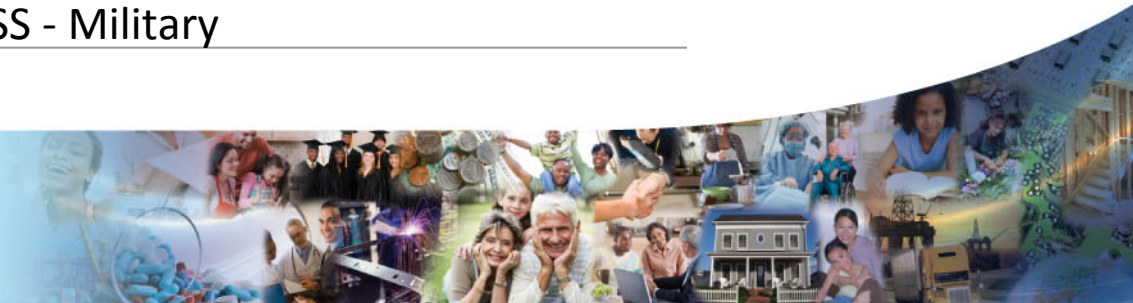
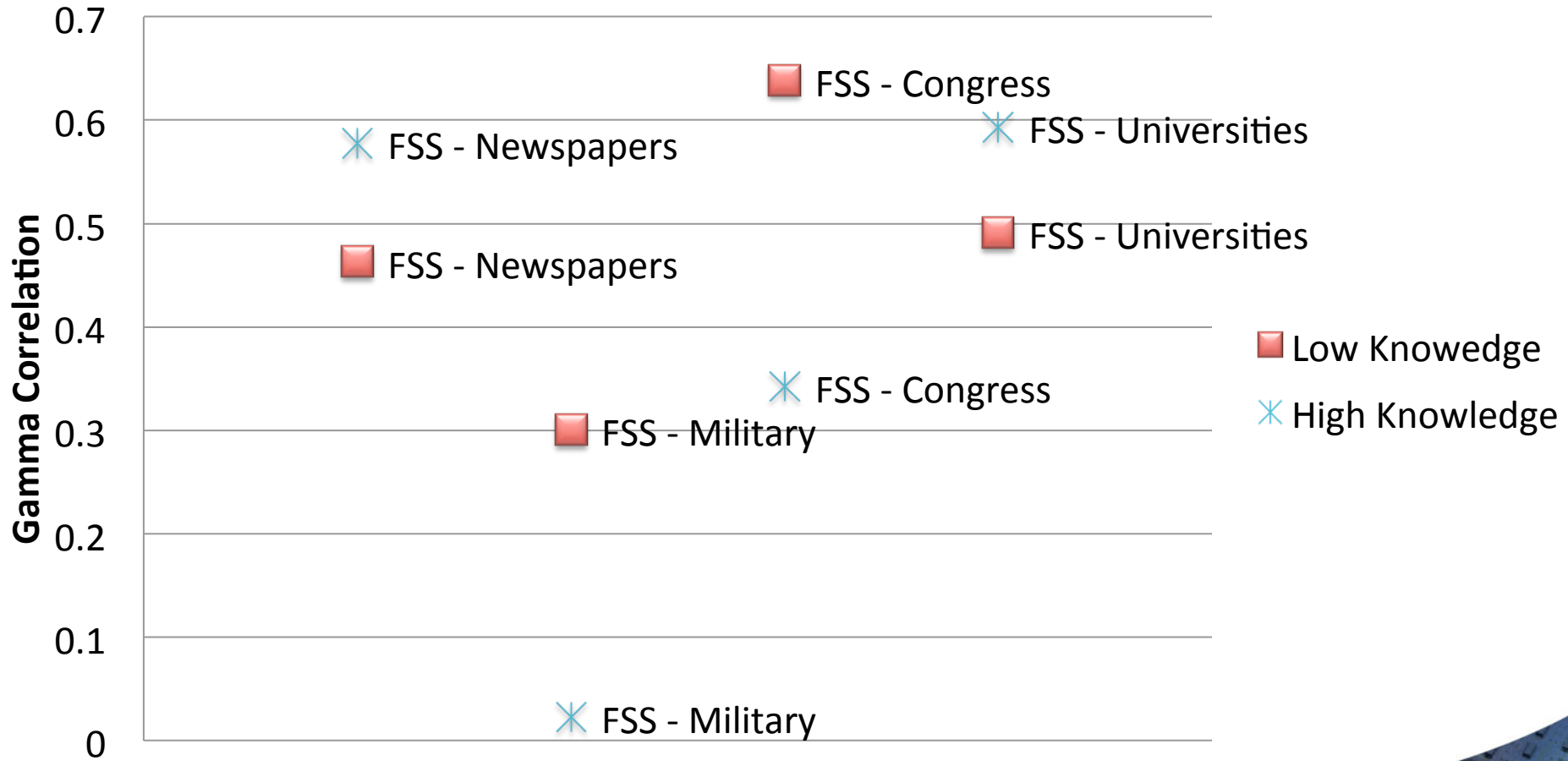
Relationships between Overall Trust and Other Measures



Effects on Trust by Data User

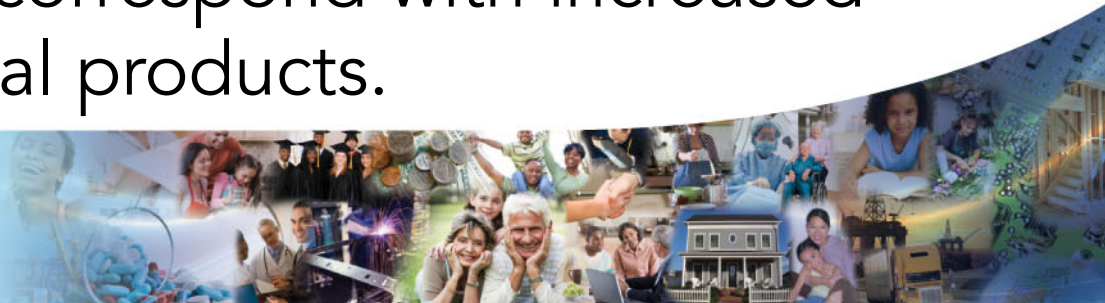


Relationship between Confidence in Institutions by Knowledge of Federal Statistics



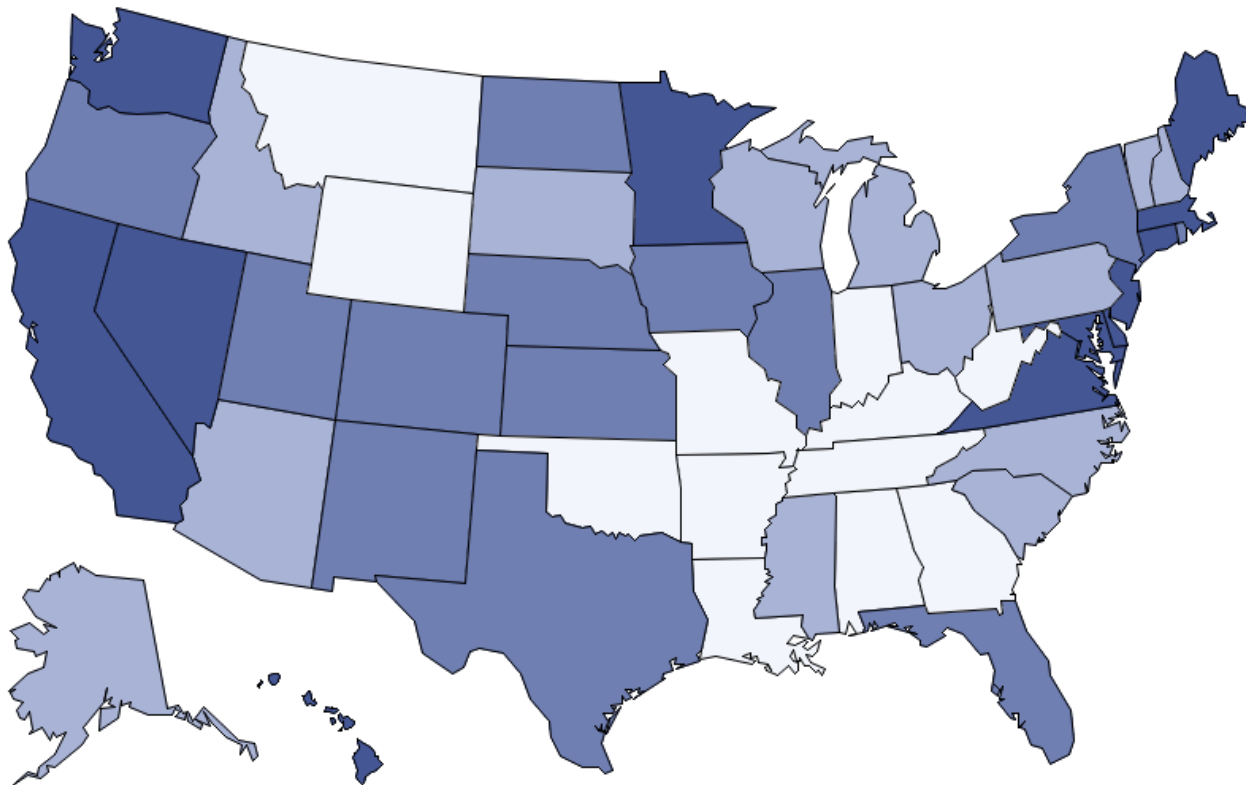
Implications for Building Trust

- In a time when confidence in Congress is particularly poor, increasing knowledge about the statistical system and increasing data users could help people differentiate between sectors of the government, thus increasing confidence in the FSS.
- Overall, knowledge of the statistical system, as well as using data, believing the data are relevant, kept confidential and that agencies respect privacy all correspond with increased trust in the statistical products.



Trust

Trust



trustY (Mean)

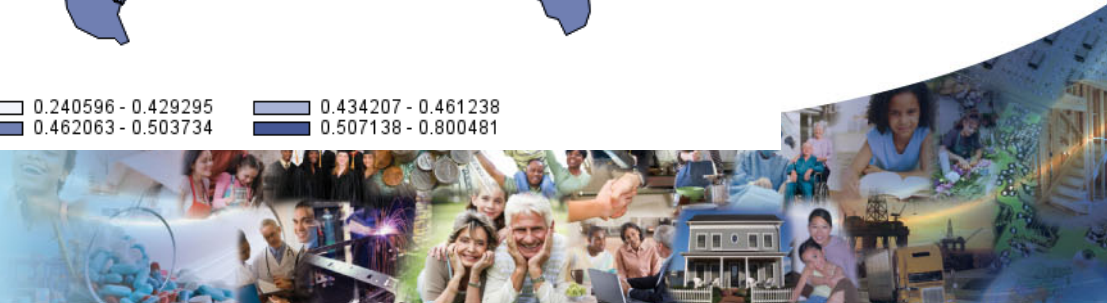
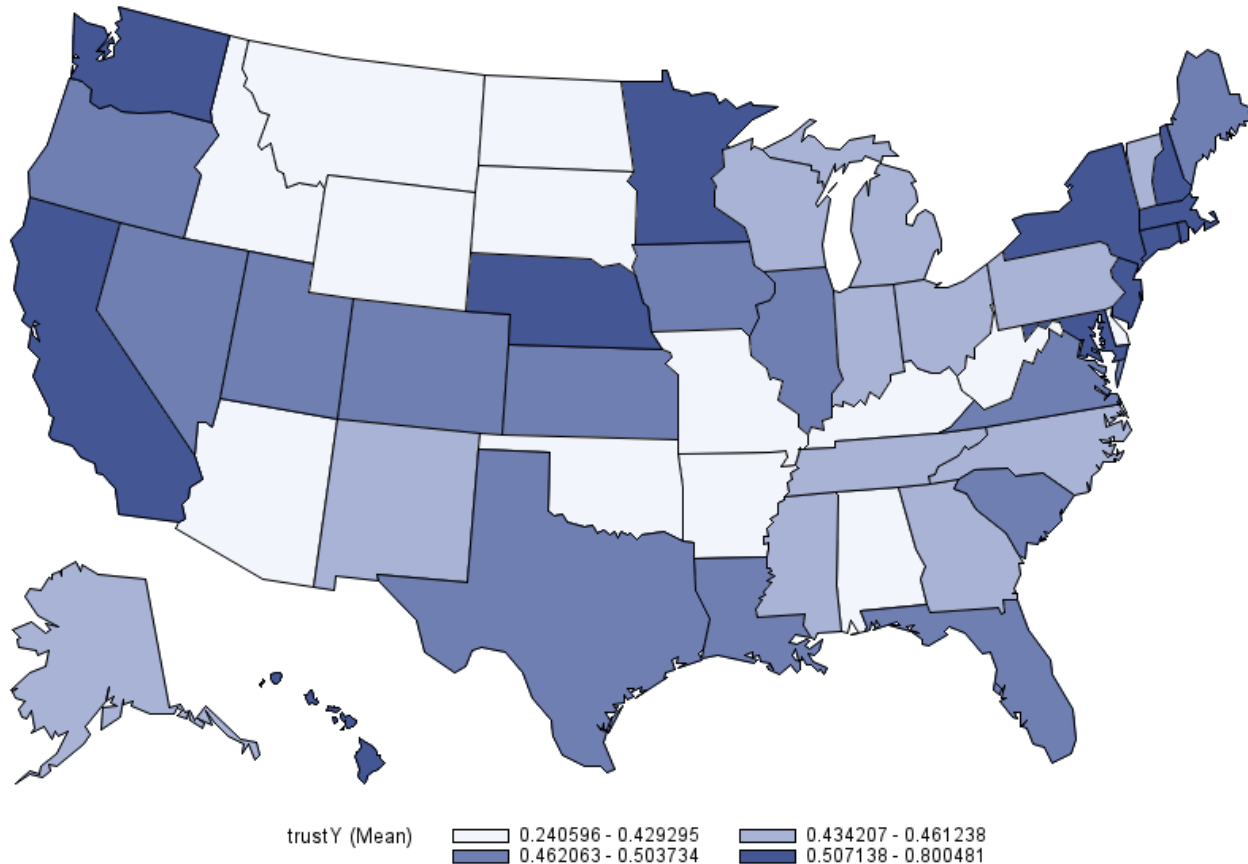
0.428293 - 0.510896
0.544035 - 0.577978

0.512261 - 0.539717
0.578618 - 0.769807



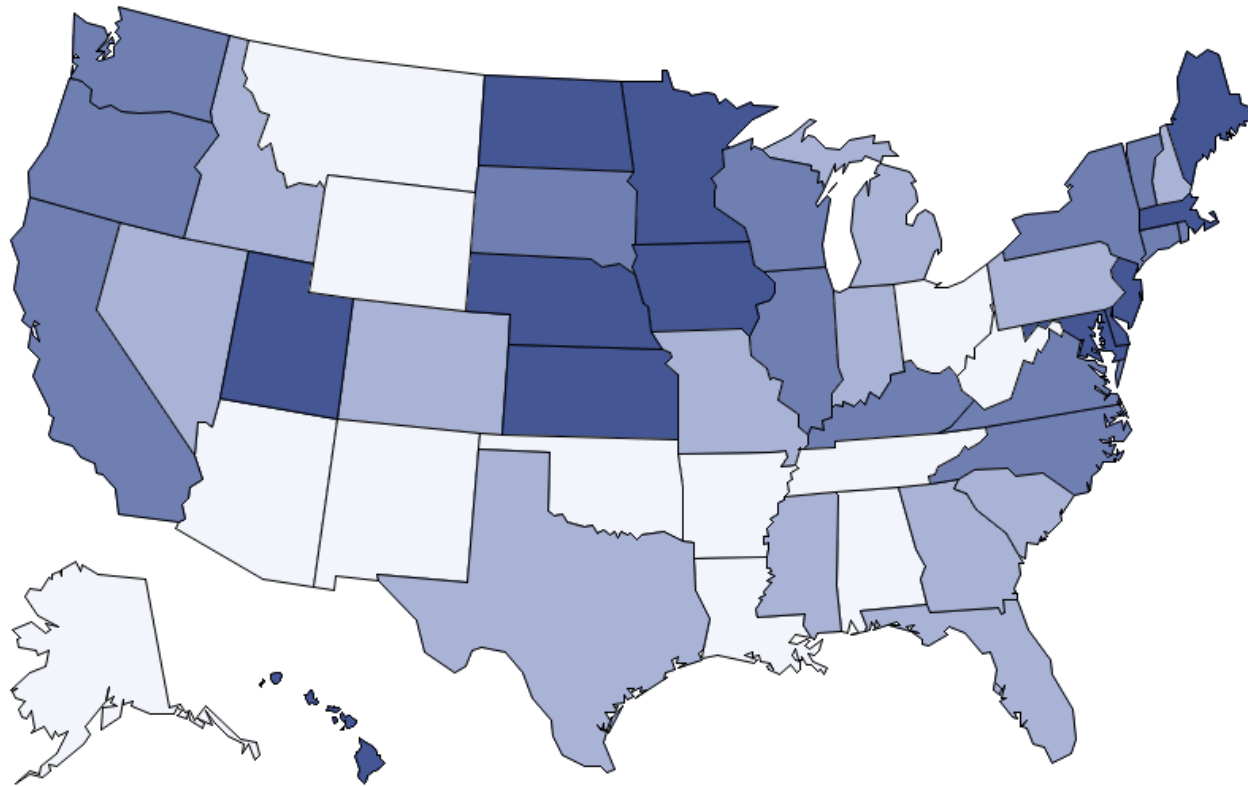
Trust Post Shutdown

Trust Post Shutdown



Confidential

Confidential



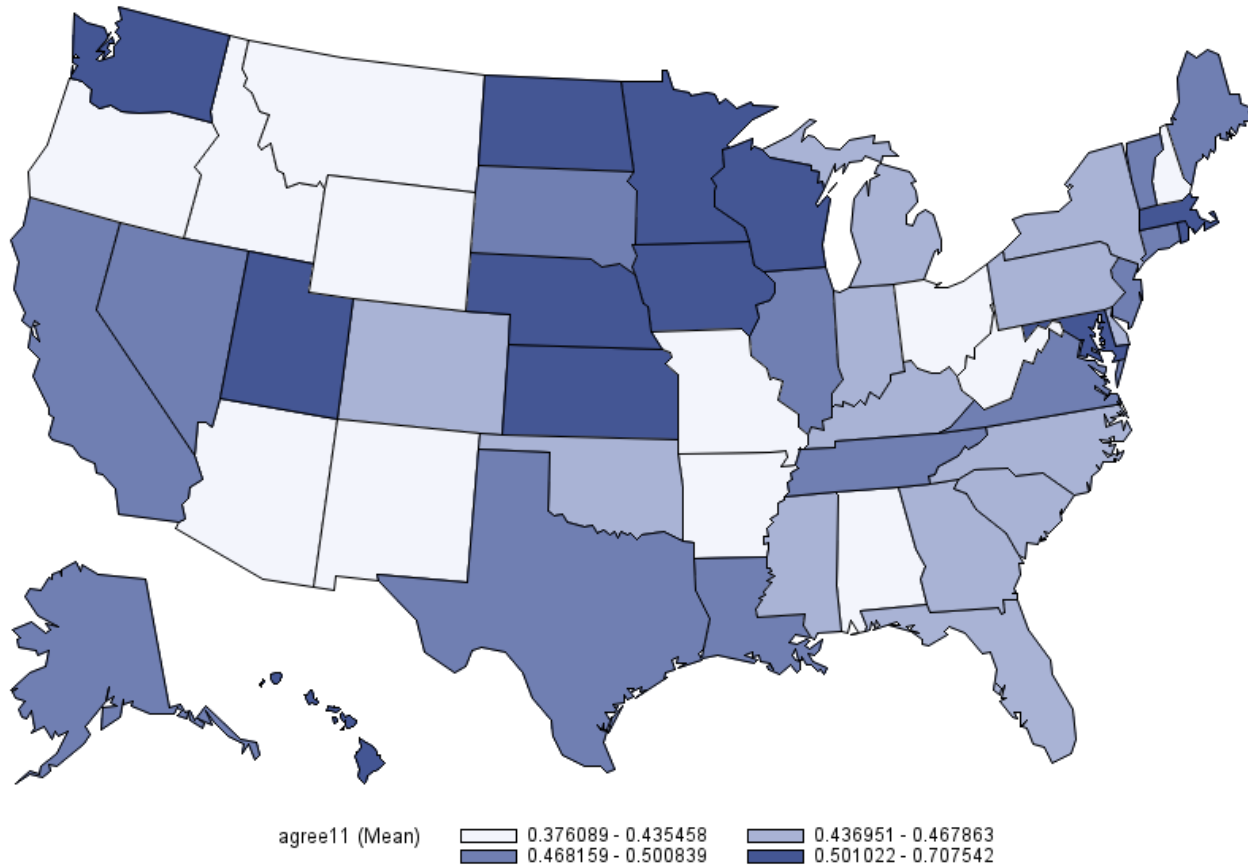
agree11 (Mean)

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 0.440695 - 0.493258 | 0.495162 - 0.529608 |
| 0.529959 - 0.552953 | 0.553405 - 0.700048 |



Confidential Post-Shutdown

Confidential Post Shutdown



Time Series Analysis



Do levels of trust change during times of negative publicity?

October 5, 2012



Jack Welch
@jack_welch



Unbelievable jobs numbers..these Chicago guys will do anything..can't debate so change numbers

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May 10, 2013

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IRS admits targeting conservatives for tax scrutiny in 2012 election



Video: Asked about reports that the IRS unfairly targeted the tax-exempt status of conservative groups during the 2012 election, White House press secretary Jay Carney said the actions were inappropriate.

By Zachary A. Goldfarb and Karen Tumulty, Published: May 10. E-mail the writers

June 6, 2013

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National Security

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'No Such Agency' spies on the communications of the world

By Anne Gearan, June 06, 2013



Members of Congress and The White House are defending a top secret NSA program...

The National Security Agency, nicknamed "No Such Agency" because of its ultra-secrecy, is the government's eavesdropper-in-chief.

Charged primarily with electronic spying around the globe, the NSA collects billions of pieces of intelligence from foreign phone calls, e-mail and other communications. But in the past two days, the focus has shifted to its role in compiling massive amounts of the same information on millions of ordinary Americans.

Regarded as the most secretive of the nation's intelligence agencies, the NSA is part of the military but answers to the director of national

October 1, 2013

theguardian

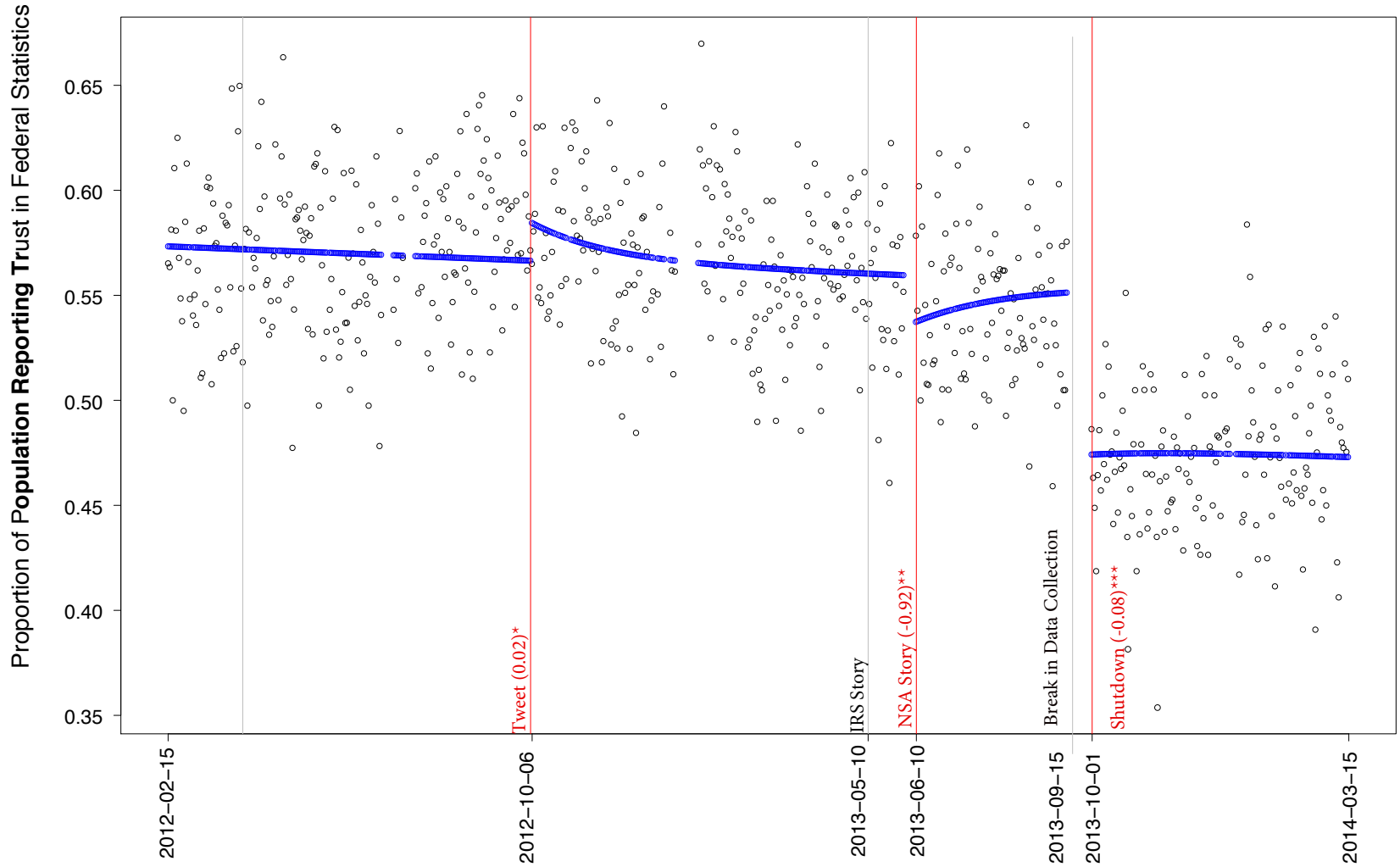
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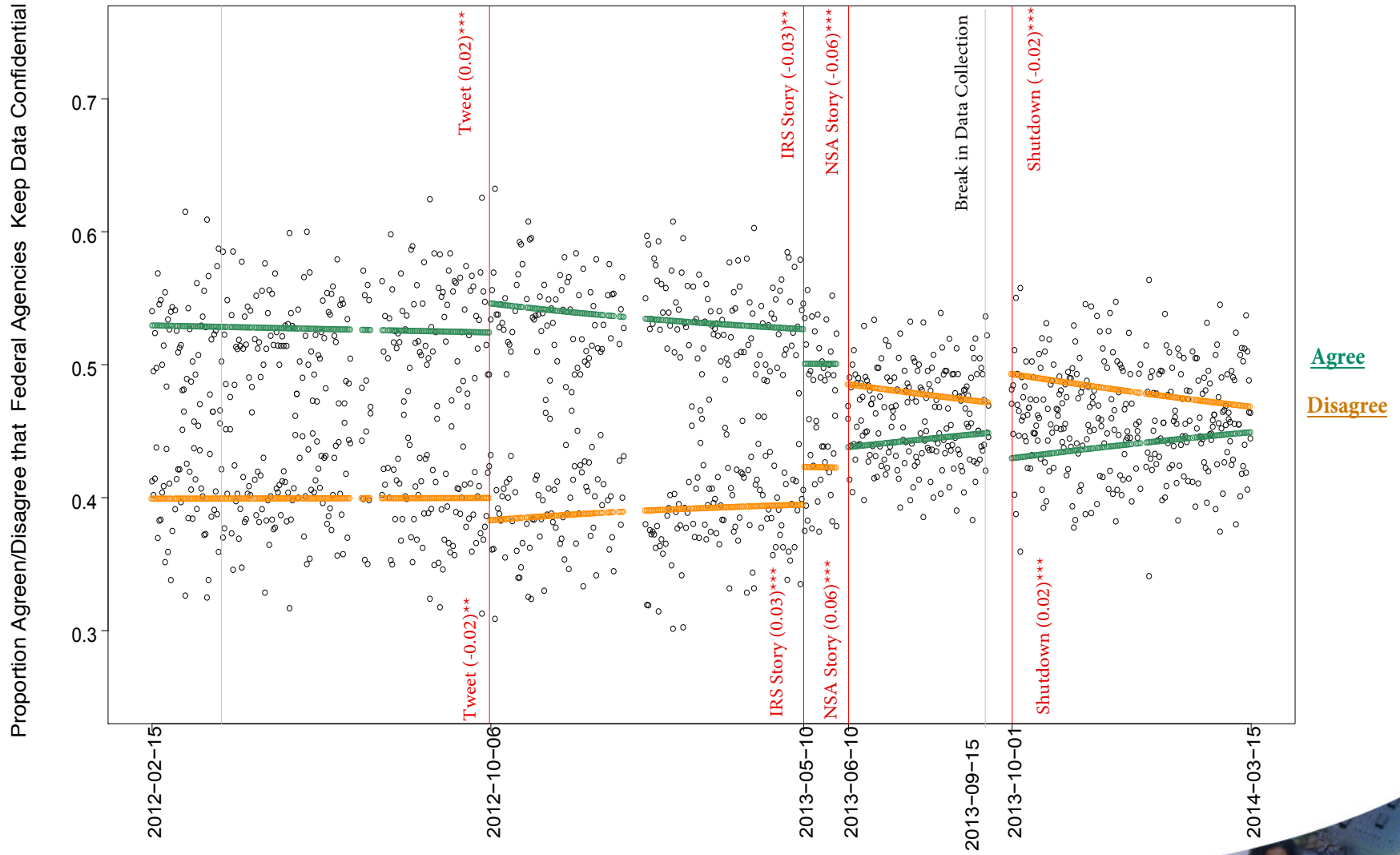
Government shutdown: no spending deal reached



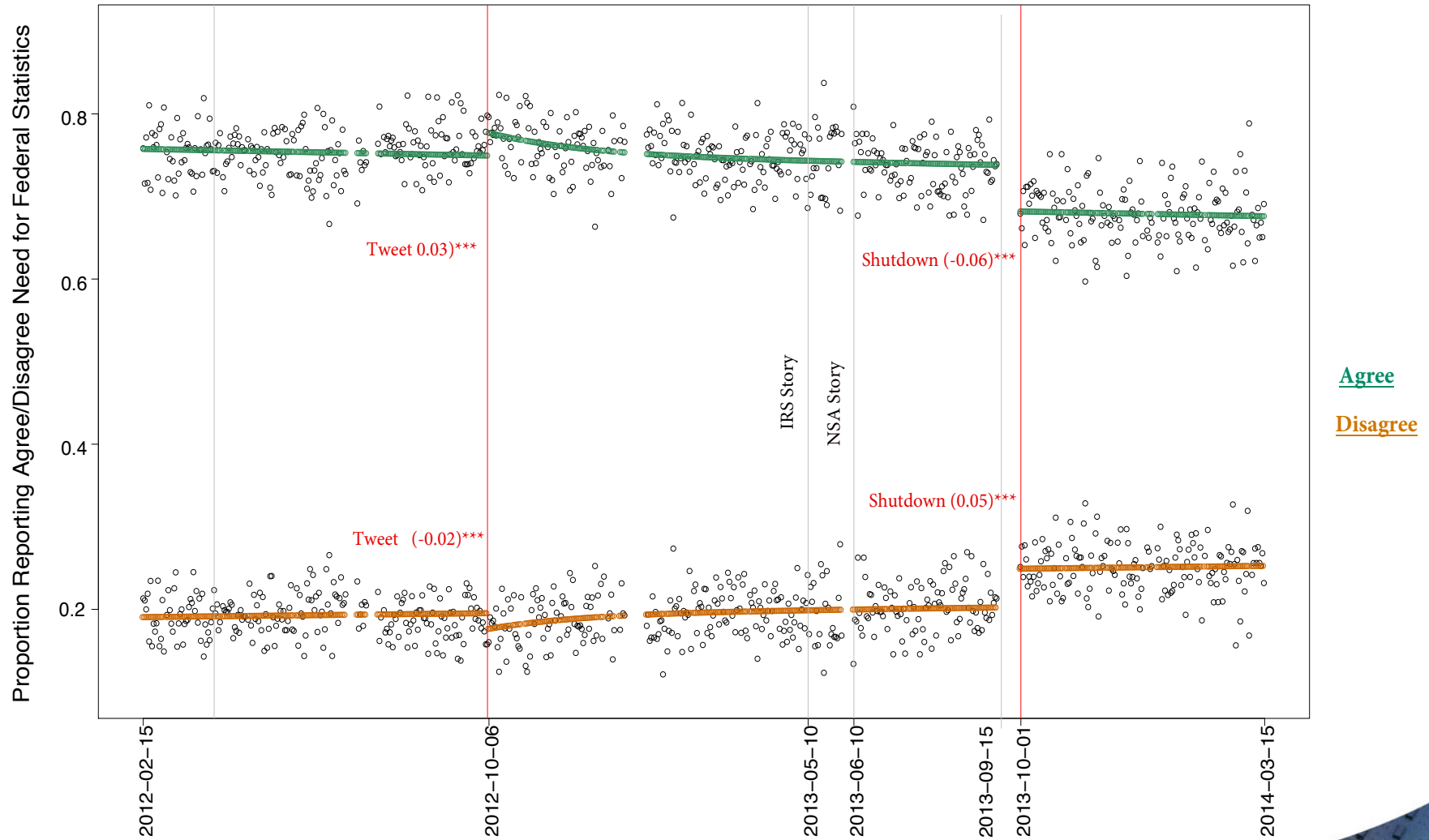
Reported Trust in Federal Statistics Over Time



Belief that Federal Agencies Keep Data Confidential Over Time



Reported Belief that Policy Makers Need Federal Statistics Over Time

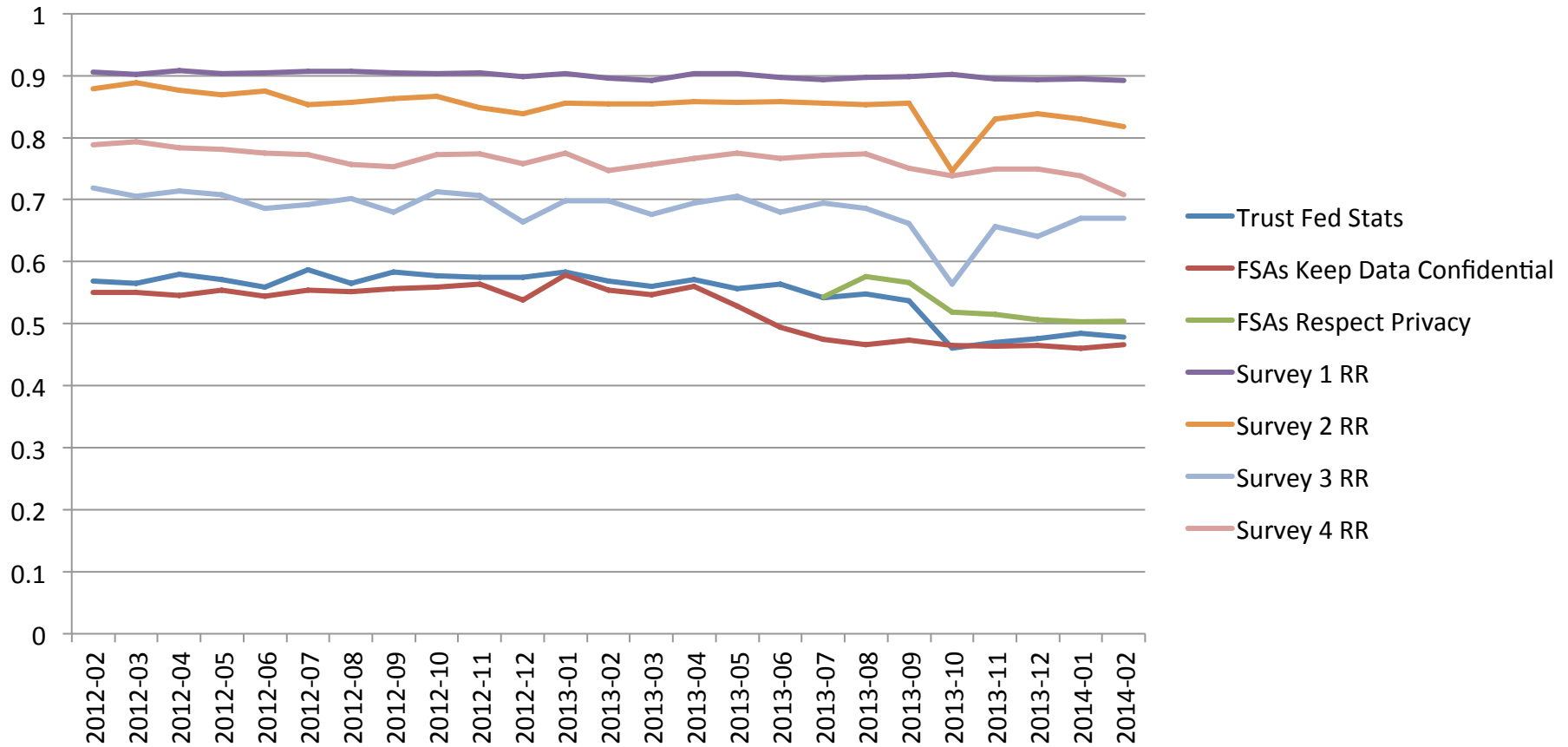


So What?

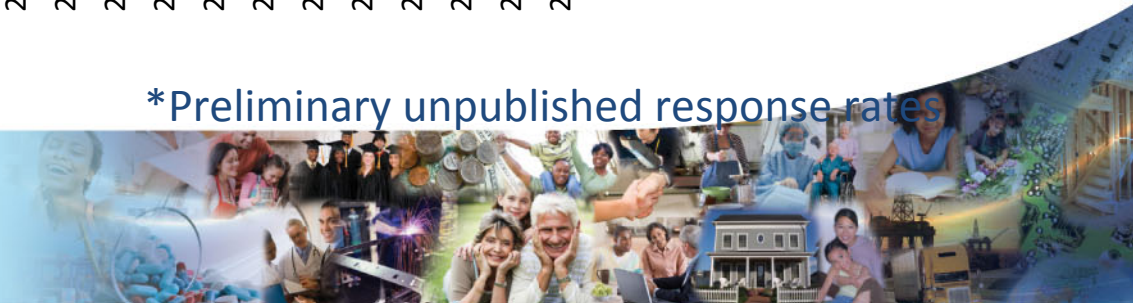
- Does this impact response rates?
- Correlation DOES NOT imply causation, but it's something we can look at



Trust and Belief in Confidentiality along with Survey Response Rates*



*Preliminary unpublished response rates



Correlations between “Trust” and Response Rates and “Confidential” and Response Rates

Survey 1 RR

- Trust $r = 0.62$, $p = 0.001$
- Confidential $r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$

Survey 2 RR

- Trust $r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$
- Confidential $r = 0.58$, $p = 0.002$

Survey 3 RR

- Trust $r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$
- Confidential $r = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$

Survey 4 RR

- Trust $r = 0.70$, $p < .001$
- Confidential $r = 0.55$, $p < .01$



Conclusions

- “Breaking news” *can* impact how the public views the statistical system.
- This *can* impact how they view our use of administrative records for statistical purposes.
- These news stories, or another unmeasured yet related factor, seem to be correlated with survey response rates.

Thank You!

Contact Information

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