

Sample surveys routinely ask for respondent consent to link survey information with administrative databases, but not all survey units agree to the linkage. Efforts to study whether placement of the linkage consent question influences consent have been undertaken. However, these studies have only been performed in interviewer-administered household surveys. Whether placement matters in self-administered modes (e.g., web) and for other types of target populations remains an open question. We present results of a placement experiment in a web survey of establishments in Germany and offer insights and contribute to “best practice” guidelines for maximizing online linkage consent rates for establishments. The focus of the survey was to collect information about establishment hiring practices and whether short-term qualified labor shortages influence hiring of less-qualified employees. A sample of establishments were invited (by email or postal letter) to participate in the online survey by accessing the provided link. Responding establishments then completed the online questionnaire, which included a consent request to access and link administrative information from Germany’s Federal Employment Agency to their survey records. The consent experiment included three placement manipulations. Establishments were randomized to receive the linkage consent question either at the beginning, middle, or end of the survey interview. We show that the beginning of a survey is the best placement for achieving a high rate of consent, followed by the middle-, and end-placement. The result appears to be robust across different subgroups. To our knowledge, this is the only linkage consent experiment that has been conducted on a sample of establishments, and the only study that has manipulated more than two placement locations in a web survey.