



# **BORINGLY RELIABLE:**

EVIDENCE OF THE  
CONSISTENCY  
OF OUR MARKET  
COMMUNITY SAMPLE

maru/BLUE

# SOMETHING THAT IS RELIABLE IS USUALLY BORING AND WE DON'T THINK MUCH OF IT

When we cross a bridge and it doesn't collapse, do we applaud? When the office building you are sitting in doesn't suddenly become a splintered mass of glass, concrete and steel girders, do we send a thank you note to the architects and engineers? Nope. We just take these things for granted and assume that we can count on the science behind them.

In the world of market research and public opinion polling we tend to take sample reliability for granted. But that trust is, these days, easily misplaced. We have done extensive research in this area and have shown that many of the sample sources that dominate our industry are not very reliable.



# EXCITING, BUT NOT IN A GOOD WAY

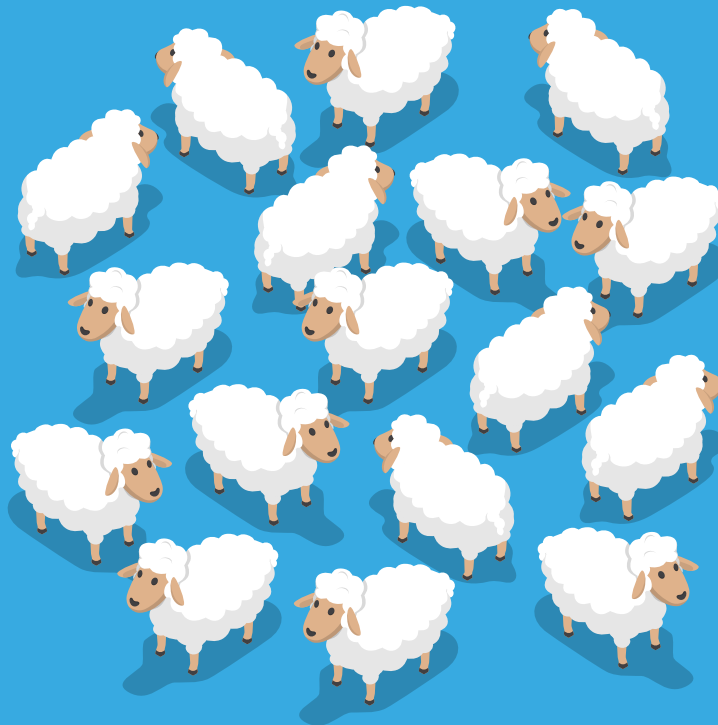
We have demonstrated that “river” sample, aggregated from social media, publisher sites, click through ads and other sources often does not produce the same results over time.<sup>1</sup> We also have reported on how the vast majority of the sample sold through large “panel” companies is, in fact, repackaged “river” sample.<sup>2</sup>

Sample recruited from specific sources, like a loyalty card, have also been shown to distort results—sometimes quite dramatically—because people who use a specific card are often different in their habits than the general public.<sup>3</sup>

We have demonstrated that when you treat the people like sheep that can

be herded into answering a few questions the results are less than reliable. A recent test of one well-known consumer survey platform, which sources its respondents from publisher sites, produced results that are wildly inconsistent over time. Not only was it erratic, the results underestimate the use of different social media platforms by between 50% and 80%.<sup>4</sup>

**These are exciting differences, but not in a good way. Not if you want to use the information to help you make intelligent decisions.**



# TESTING, RETESTING AND TESTING AGAIN

We test the validity and reliability of our market communities in a few ways. One is by comparing our results to known “realities” like election results.<sup>5</sup> Forecaster Nate Silver’s rating of online sample sources shows Springboard America is the most reliable in matching election results.<sup>6</sup>

Another way we test our communities is by tracking the same measures over time, to see if our results are consistent. We have a set of questions we ask on a regular basis.<sup>7</sup> They are designed to measure things that we don’t expect to change very much. They cover four topics: going to the dentist in the past 6 months; owning a car; ratings of your health; and whether you prefer things that are sweet or sour.

We tracked these measures on omnibus surveys on our market communities in the U.S. and Canada. The samples are balanced to be representative of the general population. The sample size was generally 1,000 people per question in the U.S. and 1,500 in Canada. These questions were asked between January and May of 2016 and then again in January through March 2017.



The results are, well, boring. We see nothing we would not expect if we used a margin of error at a 95% confidence interval—aka the proverbial 19 times out of 20. As boring as that is, it's yawn inducing in a good way.

### Tracking on Springboard America



Health



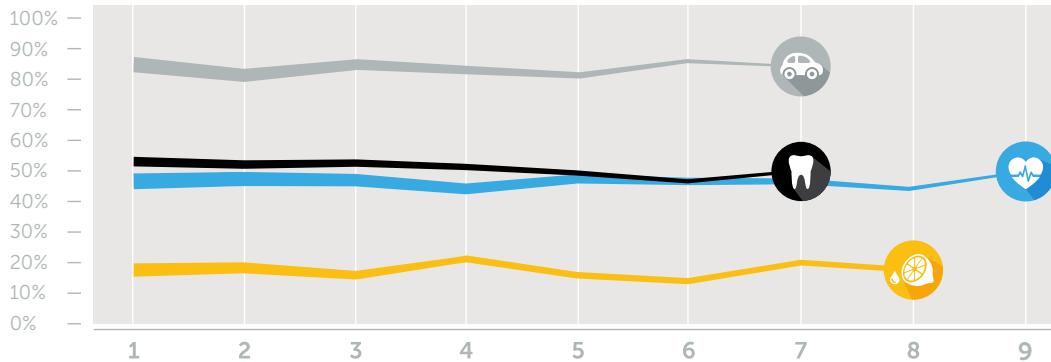
Dentist



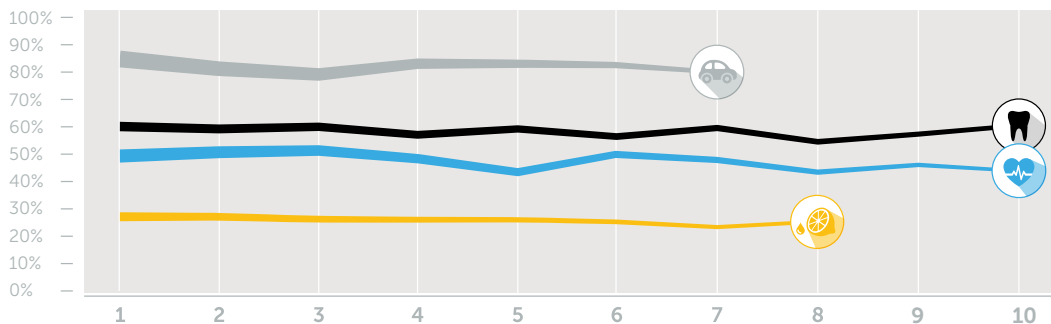
Car



Sour



### Tracking on Maru Voice Canada



The reliability and validity of these communities means they can be counted on to provide results that reflect the real world.

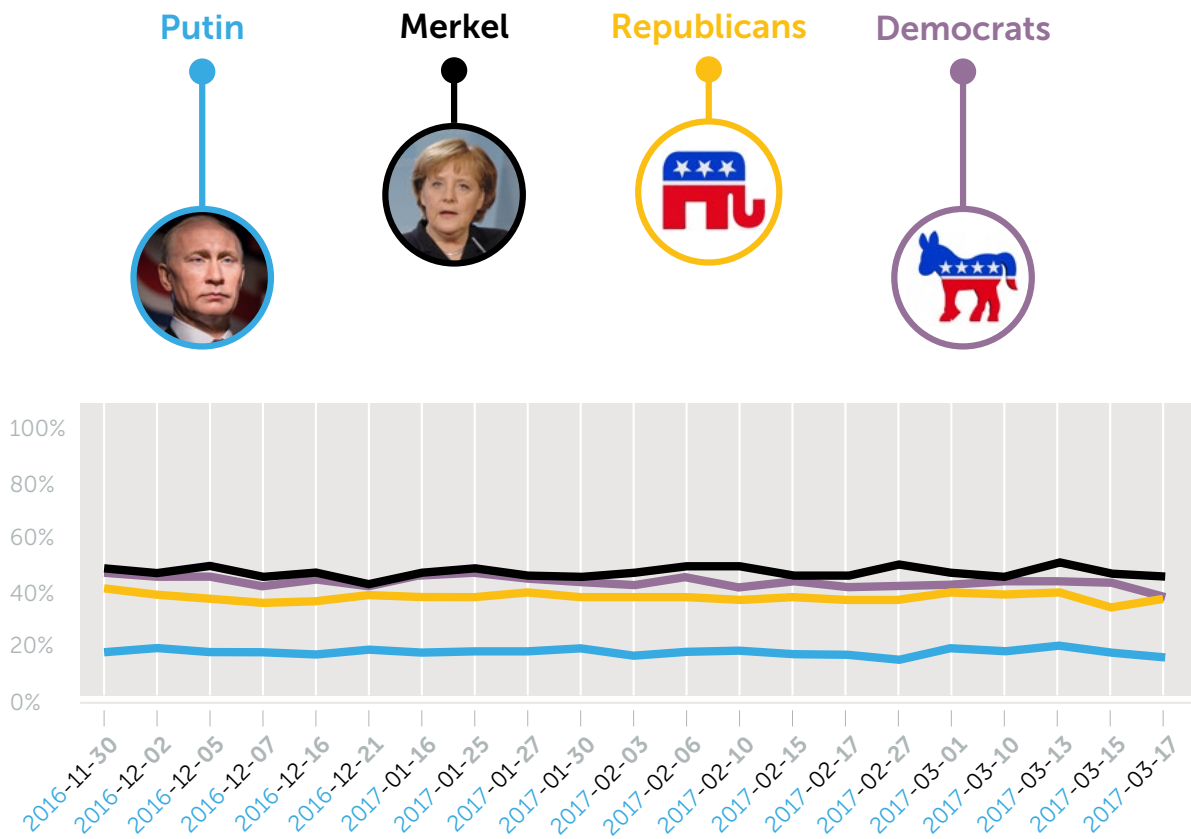
# TRACKING OPINION IN THE POLITICAL WORLD

In our research and development efforts for a new approach to tracking, we measured—using our U.S. omnibus—whether or not people have a favorable or unfavorable view of various political actors like Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the Republican and Democratic parties. We also included figures whose favorability we expected to be more volatile: U.S. President Donald Trump

and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. We expected the favorability of Putin, Merkel and the political parties to be—barring major world events—pretty stable. We tracked these measures from the end of November 2016 through to March 2017.

**The results are, shall we say, sturdy. Maybe not exciting, but definitely stable.**

## Tracking favorable opinion of political actors on Springboard America



# BORING LIKE A BRIDGE

When you are using research to help make the right decision, you need results that are reliable in the way that bridges and buildings are. Our market communities are sources of dependable information because we carefully recruit from a vast array of sources—to ensure we don't introduce a notable source of bias. We also take great care in how we engage the people that join our market communities. We create true communities where we value people's opinions, respect their time

and show them how their feedback makes a difference. For us, they are not just "sample," they are people.

**As a result, we get the representativeness and consistency our clients want and need. It may not be exciting, but it is vitally important.**



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<sup>1</sup> [Last Call at the Sample Oasis: sample sources and the impact on validity and reliability](#). Maru/Matchbox, 2017

<sup>2</sup> [Art of Science?](#) The Perils and Possibilities of Survey Sampling in the Evolving Online World. Maru/Matchbox, 2016

<sup>3</sup> [Wine, Cheese, Scotch and Sample](#): Know the Source. Maru/Matchbox 2017

<sup>4</sup> [The High Cost of Cheap Sample: evaluating the reliability and validity of a publisher-driven online sample source](#). Maru/Matchbox 2017

<sup>5</sup> [Electoral Record Continued](#). Angus Reid Institute blog. The Angus Reid Institute uses the Angus Reid Forum and Springboard America as their sample source

<sup>6</sup> [Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight Cites Springboard America's Polling Accuracy](#). Maru/Matchbox, Nov 2016

<sup>7</sup> We'd like to extend a special thank you to Daniel Faziluddin who makes sure we continue to track these measures. "It may not be exciting, but it is vitally important."