2018 Pittsburgh Today / UCSUR Regional Quality of Life Survey
Detailed Survey Methods

The 2018 Pittsburgh Today / UCSUR regional quality of life survey was conducted in June, 2018. A web-based online survey was sent to members of the *UCSUR Research Registry* residing in Allegheny County for whom an email address was available. The registry contains community members recruited through UCSUR surveys and research studies who have agreed to be contacted for future research studies. These studies used to recruit registry members employed a combination of probability and non-probability sampling designs. Email addresses are available for approximately 75% of the registry members. Those without emails tend to be older, African-American, less educated, and lower income. However, these demographic factors were adjusted for in the weighting of the data (see below).

On June 8, 2018 an initial email invitation with a link to the survey was sent to 4,934 registry members. The survey contained 101 questions covering a variety of quality of life topics, and took respondents an average of 19 minutes to compete. Follow-up reminders to non-respondents were sent on June13 and June 18, with a notice that data collection would end on June 30. As an incentive, respondents were entered into a lottery drawing for one of four mini-IPADS. This resulted in 1,881 completed surveys, for a 38.1% response rate. Note that this is technically a *non-probability* sampling method, as registry / panel members are volunteers. Thus, statements about "margin of error" are not appropriate, as these apply only to probability sampling designs. To reduce potential bias, the data were adjusted using statistical "raking" methods for age, sex, race, education, income, and political affiliation to make the sample more representative of the Allegheny population age 18 and older. This is the standard approach in the survey industry when relying on survey registries and panels for population estimates. We are encouraged that our weighting method resulted in estimates that closely matched external population benchmarks for home ownership, unemployment rate, and overall perceived health.

Data are compared to the 2011 regional quality of life survey. This probability sample telephone survey (including both landline and cell phones) was conducted using random digit dialing (RDD), and resulted in 799 respondents from Allegheny County. The 2011 data was also weighted for probability of selection, age and sex to make it more representative of the county population age 18 and over at that time. Using the weighted data from 2011 and 2018 allows comparisons of trends over time.

The decision to use a non-probability web-based survey of research registry members rather than a probability sample RDD telephone survey (the 2011 method) was based primarily on costs and the continuing reduction in response rates to RDD telephone surveys. While both data sets were adjusted to be more representative of their respective populations, some caution is warranted when interpreting trends over time due to the different methods employed.