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Lying about Borrowing^{*}

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November 2007

ABSTRACT

We compare survey self-reports with administrative data and find that nearly 50% of recent borrowers do not report their high-interest consumer loans. Under-reporting appears to be correlated with several characteristics of interest, in particular gender: 62% of women, when interviewed by men, under-report whereas 42% of women interviewed by women under-report. On the other hand, 40% of men under-report, irrespective of the gender of the interviewer. As such relying strictly on self-reported data may lead to biased inference, and we outline some methodological implications for identifying impacts of credit access on borrower behavior and outcomes. Matching female surveyors to female respondents appears to be a low-cost mitigating strategy, but clearly the best strategy is to make sure one has administrative data from a lender to measure actual borrowing history.

Keywords: survey methodology, data accuracy, credit data
JEL Codes: C81, D12, O12

^{*}Contact: dean.karlan@yale.edu, jzinman@dartmouth.edu. Thanks to Kathleen Johnson, an anonymous referee and the editor for comments, to Jonathan Baichet, Luke Crowley and Doug Parkinson from Innovations for Poverty Action for excellent research assistance, to participants at the 2007 European Economic Association meetings in Budapest, and to USAID-BASIS and the University of Wisconsin, NSF (CAREER SES-0547898 and SES-0424067), and the Financial Access Initiative and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for funding. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of USAID or NSF. All errors, except the lies reported herein, are our own.

Lying about Borrowing

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Research brief also available [here](#).

November 01, 2007