

ALMOST A POLICY: TRANSMISSION THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE HANDOFFS

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WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC QUESTION?

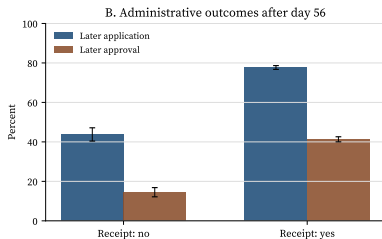
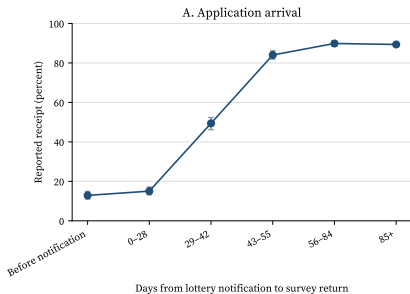
Which records should an agency preserve for a given evaluation question?

- A policy offer travels through invitation, application, approval, receipt, and later outcomes.
- Each administrative release can erase distinctions required by a target estimand.
- The paper studies identification and precision under a record-linkage budget.

WHICH HANDOFFS MATTER IN OREGON?

- Approval following invitation loses one aggregate target direction.
- The grouped target loses four directions across the declared groups.
- Person-link retention is allocated before evaluating the group covariance criterion.

WHERE DO APPLICANTS LEAVE THE ADMINISTRATIVE PATH?



Appendix timing of reported arrival and subsequent administrative outcomes.

HOW CAN AN AGGREGATE RELEASE ERASE A GROUP TARGET?

- Suppose two groups have different approval rates after the same randomized invitation.
- An aggregate approval rate preserves their weighted average and erases the between-group direction.
- Retaining one group-linked score can restore that contrast; several group targets can require several directions.

WHAT ENTERS THE HANDOFF LEDGER?

- A source experiment and a sequence of administrative reporting operators.
- A target estimand with its score directions at each handoff.
- A retention budget that allocates person links across groups and stages.

HOW CAN A POLICY BECOME ONLY ALMOST OBSERVABLE?

Randomized offer



Administrative handoffs



Evaluation target

HOW MANY RECORD DIRECTIONS PRESERVE IDENTIFICATION?

Theorem (Minimum identification-preserving retention)

At a handoff, the minimum repair dimension equals the rank of the target directions lost through the reporting operator. Retaining a basis for those lost score directions restores local identification.

The dimension is target specific and can differ across aggregate and group-level questions.

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM IDENTIFICATION REPAIR?

$$k^* = \text{rank } C(\mathcal{I}) - \text{rank } C(\mathcal{I} + L)$$

- $\mathcal{I}$ is upstream information and L is the information retained at the handoff.
- C maps score information into the declared target.
- The rank loss counts the target score directions that the release must repair.

HOW IS AN IDENTIFICATION REPAIR IMPLEMENTED?

- Find a basis for the target score directions lost by the handoff.
- Retain or link one regular Gaussian channel for each basis direction.
- For precision, expand the retained span to attain the upstream covariance bound.

HOW DOES A LOST ESTIMAND BECOME A REPAIR PLAN?

- The handoff is represented as an information operator acting on target scores.
- The rank loss counts the number of missing score directions and yields a matching lower bound on repair channels.
- A basis construction attains that bound and a larger span recovers the upstream precision benchmark.

HOW DOES PRECISION CHANGE THE RETENTION PROBLEM?

Proposition (Minimum precision-preserving retention)

Preserving the target variance requires the score span relevant for the declared precision criterion. This span can exceed the directions needed for point identification.

Identification repair and precision repair therefore receive separate ledgers.

HOW SHOULD A LIMITED LINK BUDGET BE ALLOCATED?

Proposition (Vector repair frontier)

The optimal retention rule allocates links across target score directions and groups to minimize the declared covariance criterion at each budget.

The frontier makes the value of targeted retention comparable with uniform retention.

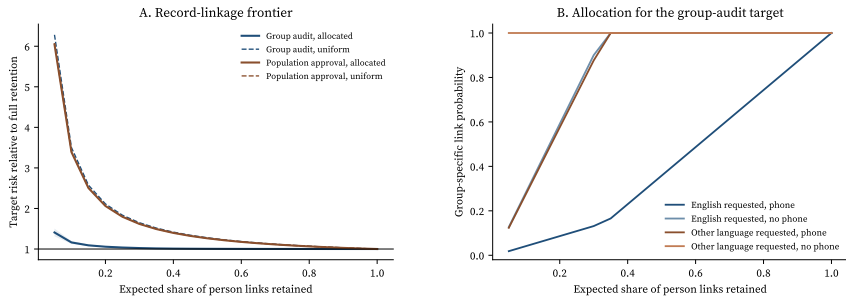
WHAT DOES THE OREGON EXERCISE TREAT AS DATA?

- Lottery selection supplies the randomized source event.
- Application, approval, coverage, and outcomes occupy different administrative stages.
- The constructed release and Gaussian summary model determine the rank and covariance calculations.

HOW DOES THE ABSTRACT LEDGER MAP INTO OREGON RECORDS?

- Lottery selection defines the experimental source score.
- Application and approval records define successive reporting operators.
- Group links determine which target score directions survive into the evaluation file.

HOW MUCH PRECISION DOES TARGETED LINKAGE RECOVER?



Main-text precision frontier under alternative link allocations.

WHAT DOES A 25 PERCENT LINK BUDGET DELIVER?

- Under independent-person information, targeted retention gives an equal-weight group covariance criterion 1.04 times full linkage.
- Uniform retention gives 1.83 times full linkage under the same criterion.
- The comparison concerns the constructed release and declared group target.

WHICH LITERATURES HELP PLACE THE QUESTION?

- Finkelstein et al. (2012): the Oregon lottery, coverage, utilization, and first-year outcomes.
- Baicker et al. (2014): Medicaid coverage, labor-market activity, and program participation.
- Bhargava and Manoli (2015): administrative frictions and benefit take-up.
- This paper treats each administrative handoff as an information operator for a declared evaluation target.

HOW FAR DOES THE ALLOCATION RESULT TRAVEL?

- Rank statements depend on the reporting operator and target scores.
- The numerical frontier uses a Gaussian summary model and independent-person information.
- Stage selection and the causal effect of a downstream intervention remain separate questions.

WHAT SHOULD THE READER CARRY FORWARD?

1. Administrative handoffs are information operators.
2. Identification and precision can require different retained directions.
3. A link budget should follow the target score geometry.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

HOW DO THE MAIN RESULTS BUILD ON ONE ANOTHER?

Minimum identification-preserving retention



Minimum precision-preserving retention



Vector repair frontier

WHICH FORMAL RESULTS SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT?

- Theorem: Minimum identification-preserving retention
- Theorem: Minimum precision-preserving retention
- Theorem: Vector repair frontier
- Proposition: Loss-acquisition ledger
- Proposition: Stratified link retention
- Proposition: Gaussian limit of a conditional-rate release
- Corollary: Reception regret

WHICH SCOPE CONDITIONS GOVERN THE CLAIMS?

- Rank statements depend on the reporting operator and target scores.
- The numerical frontier uses a Gaussian summary model and independent-person information.
- Stage selection and the causal effect of a downstream intervention remain separate questions.