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Presenters are underlined.

Targeted procedures in self-completion surveys

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Targeted survey procedures are those which treat different groups of sample members differently, depending on known characteristics. The aim is typically to improve the relationship between a desired outcome (such as response rate or sample balance) and cost. However, most existing UK research on this topic is in the context of interviewer-administered face-to-face surveys. Self-completion surveys, especially web surveys, are becoming increasingly common, but there is little or no experience with targeted procedures for such surveys in a UK context. We will review the literature on the effects of targeted procedures and will seek to identify effective practice. We will also aim to set out the issues involved in developing targeted approaches for self-completion surveys, drawing upon knowledge from face-to-face surveys where appropriate."

Keywords: targeted procedures, self-completion surveys

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Within-household selection methods for surveys without field interviewers

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The Covid-19 pandemic, along with the declining quality of interviewer-administered survey data collection, has prompted many social surveys to transition or consider transitioning to self-completion methods. However, this is not without its challenges. In probability-based surveys, the random selection of respondents within households is difficult in the absence of field interviewers. This is particularly the case for sampling frames with no named lists of individuals, such as address-based sampling frames. In interviewer-administered surveys, the Kish grid method is commonly used for respondent selection. However, this method is too complex to implement in the absence of a field interviewer. As a result, quasi-random or non-random methods are often employed, with implications for respondent selection.

This review aimed to summarise current UK practices for selecting respondents within households in surveys conducted without field interviewers, evaluate evidence of the performance of the different methods, and develop a best-practice guide for survey practitioners. It draws on information from a sample of self-completion surveys conducted by major UK survey agencies and evidence from literature focusing on address-based sampling frames.

The review examines the prevalence of different within-household selection methods in the sample of UK surveys. It explores the rationale behind survey agencies' choices and the implications of these selection methods for different surveys. Additionally, the review compares and contrasts survey practices in the UK with evidence from the literature, focusing on outcomes such as selection accuracy, sample composition, representativeness, and response rates.

Keywords: within-household selection, self-completion, address-based sampling, selection accuracy, sample composition

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Social surveys without field interviewers in the UK: An evidence review

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Data collection organisations are shifting toward new approaches, with social surveys undergoing significant design and implementation changes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, agencies have increasingly moved to online data collection due to increased internet penetration and mobile ownership but also decreasing response rates and rising fieldwork costs. A key challenge for self-completion general population surveys is the absence of field interviewers to facilitate recruitment and to guide participants though the questionnaire if needed.

In this paper, we examine recruitment practices in social surveys conducted without field interviewers in the UK, aiming to identify strategies for optimising design characteristics and achieving more representative samples of the general population. We contacted nine survey agencies and government organizations to gather information on high-quality, large-scale, probability-based surveys conducted without field interviewers between 2018 and 2024. The collected data includes technical and methodological reports, questionnaires, and communication materials. Our evidence review covers 152 instances from 60 longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys, as well as 241 pieces of communication materials, such as letters, postcards, leaflets, and email messages.

Our review represents the first coordinated effort to systematically collate and summarise recruitment strategies for surveys conducted without field interviewers. It examines key aspects such as sampling design, communication strategies and materials, incentivisation methods, fieldwork procedures, and response rates, across various studies. By offering insights into the current state of survey practices in participant recruitment, we also provide recommendations for improving the reporting of results. These recommendations aim to enhance the clarity and interpretability of survey findings, fostering a deeper understanding of the methodologies and outcomes.

Keywords: self-administered surveys, online surveys, survey recruitment, response rates, representativeness

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Assessing methods for within-household selection in self-administered push-to-web surveys

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For self-administered postal push-to-web surveys in countries such as the UK, where only address frames are available, it is challenging to devise a method for within-household respondent selection that has both desirable statistical properties and high compliance levels. Several methods are currently used, with no consensus about their relative merits. This presentation reports a research project that aims to provide much-needed evidence about the relative effectiveness of alternative methods of within-household selection in the absence of an interviewer.

A commonly-used non-random method with cost advantages will be implemented alongside a random method, with sample units randomly allocated to each experimental group. Each is believed to be the most practical of its kind. The non-random method requests that up to two adults from each household respond to the survey, meaning that in households with more than two adults selection is not random and the probability of selection is unknown. The random method requests that the adult with the next birthday complete the questionnaire. Research questions address differences between the methods in population representation, precision of estimation, compliance, and costs.

Keywords: experimental examination, self-administered surveys, survey practice, within-household selection, total survey error

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Assessing the impact of video interviewing on survey measurement and data quality: Evidence from an experimental study

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Amid declining response rates and rising survey costs, identifying reliable and cost-effective data collection methodologies is crucial. Technological advancements and widespread technology adoption offer promising opportunities for this goal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, video interviewing surged when in-person interviewing became unfeasible. In the UK, video interviewing was adopted in studies such as the National Child Development Study, the 1970 British Cohort Study, and the European Social Survey.

The novelty of video interviewing means its impact on measurement and data quality remains underexplored. Although literature on this topic has gradually emerged, experimental evidence comparing data quality between video, web, and in-person surveys is still lacking. This study addresses this gap using data from an experiment where participants (N=1,510) were randomly assigned to complete a survey via video, web, or in-person. We compare various aspects of measurement and data quality across the three modes, including completion time, item nonresponse, satisficing, and social desirability bias.

Much is known about mode differences between web and in-person surveys. Video interviewing shares features with both, and as such our analyses aim to determine whether data collected by video more closely resembles web or in-person data. Understanding the impact of video interviewing on measurement and data quality is vital to assess its potential as a post-pandemic survey data collection mode.

Keywords: data quality, video-Interview, survey experiment

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Mode differences in propensities to consent to data linkage

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Many surveys link to administrative records, with respondent consent, and many surveys now use web as a primary mode of data collection. However, respondents are substantially less likely to consent when asked online than in person. In panel surveys, respondents who decline a request for data linkage once often do consent when asked again in a subsequent wave. Many longitudinal surveys therefore routinely re-ask consent questions of those who do not consent initially.

In this paper we examine the research question: Is this re-asking of non-consenters as effective in the web mode as it is in face-to-face interviews?

We analyse data from repeated consent requests made in different modes in a major UK household panel survey (Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study). As well as raw differences by mode of completion — the 'as-treated' analysis — we can use experimental allocation to web-first or face-to-face-first in the Understanding Society Innovation Panel to calculate intention to treat (ITT) differences based on mode of allocation, and to estimate causal effects of mode. As consent to link to a variety of domains of administrative data have been (re)asked in Understanding Society, we replicate aspects of our analysis with consents relating to different domains.

Our initial findings suggest that while some non-consenters do provide consent when asked a second time in the web mode, the proportion who do so is lower than the proportion of non-consenters who consent when re-asked face-to-face. These findings mirror typical mode differences in initial data linkage consent requests.

Keywords: consent, data linkage, mode differences, experiments, causal analysis

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How do household panel members react to multiple requests for different types of additional data over time?

Authors: Jasmine Mitchell* and Annette Jäckle*

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Enhancing panel data by linking to digital data or using methods that do not rely on self-reports is increasingly of interest. All such methods, however, rely on the respondent's willingness to participate in the respective data collection task. As respondents are increasingly being asked to do more than answer survey questions, the overarching question is how to design and implement a multi-modal set of tasks to gather data on different concepts using different methods, in a way that panel members will cooperate. This paper is the first examination of how panel members react to multiple requests for different types of additional data over time. We used data from 14 additional tasks, implemented in the *Understanding Society* Innovation Panel over a 10 year period, for which respondents had to use mobile apps, supply bio-measures, and consent to data linkages. The results indicate there are high rates of churn in the sample, with individuals flowing in (due to household joiners and refreshment samples), tending to participate in just under half the tasks they were invited to, and then possibly leaving the sample (mainly due to attrition). There are no clear patterns of participation across task type, topic, and whether they are incentivised; the more tasks respondents were invited to, the more different types they participated in. However, the more tasks individuals were invited to, the less likely they were to participate in the later tasks and in the later annual interviews. Therefore, inviting respondents to additional tasks might be detrimental to panels.

Keywords: panel data, additional tasks, participation

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Reducing mode effects by good questionnaire design

Authors: Richard Bull*, Aditi Das*, Zac Perera*, Jo d'Ardenne*

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Many probability-based surveys, which have historically only been conducted face-to-face, are now transitioning to online or mixed-mode designs. A key issue for such transitions is how to change the survey mode without introducing measurement effects.

This session presents an interim update from the ESRC-funded Survey Futures programme on reducing mode effects. Researchers at the National Centre for Social Research (UK) have conducted a literature review, and consulted with survey practitioners, to develop guidance on how to assess survey questions against a checklist of criteria associated with measurement non-equivalence. The framework considers, amongst other things, question sensitivity, question complexity and visual presentation. This framework includes practical recommendations, for a non-technical audience, on what mitigations can be taken during the questionnaire design phase to reduce the risk of measurement effects occurring.

In this session we present findings from these activities, demonstrate our draft questionnaire review framework and provide information on how practitioners can access this resource in their future studies.

Keywords: questionnaire design, mode effect, practitioner guidance, measurement

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Good practice guides – what makes a practice guide good?

Organised by: Sierra Mesplie-Escott*

Moderated by: Thomas O'Toole†

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†University of Manchester

The panel discussion will bring together representatives from leading UK social research agencies to discuss the use and relevance of practice guides within their organisations. The panel will explore whether their organisation uses such guides and what makes a useful guide. Many of the Survey Futures' strands aims to provide guidance for practitioners, covering areas of survey design such as enhancing sampling frames, within-household selection methods in self-completion surveys, computer video interviewing data collection, complex measures in self-completion methods. However, many of these guides will not be written by practitioners. The panel will reflect on what attributes of an effective good practice guide within their organisations, touching on areas such as content and format. The panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A from the audience.

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Driving efficiency: Optimising Knock-to-Nudge data collection for the Transformed Labour Force Survey

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*Office for National Statistics

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been developing a transformed, online-first version of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) as the long-term solution to falling response rates and quality challenges on the LFS. The ambition of the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) is to create a more adaptive, user-focused survey that enhances respondent experience and improves the quality of labour market statistics.

In 2022, the TLFS achieved a 38% response rate through online and telephone modes—a promising start, but significant differential non-response bias remained. To tackle this, "Knock-to-Nudge" (KtN) data collection was introduced. KtN involves field interviewers visiting non-responding households to encourage participation via remote modes (either online or telephone). This was implemented using an Adaptive Survey Design (ASD), which involves targeting the KtN resource at non-responding addresses in 'hard-to-reach' areas to reduce bias and improve data quality. While the initial iteration of the ASD showed small but significant improvements in data quality, it also revealed challenges in operationalising KtN data collection, leading to less positive results than expected.

Analysis of field operations data highlighted key issues and opportunities to improve the efficiency of the current design. In May 2024, we launched the 'Knock-to-Nudge Optimisation Project,' a collaborative effort between research and operational teams. This project aims to refine the KtN operation in a rapidly changing environment. Therefore, this presentation will introduce the project's aims and explore the early outcomes being used to drive changes in the field to enhance TLFS data quality.

Keywords: knock-to-nudge, adaptive survey design, response rates

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Options for integrating survey and non-survey data

Authors: Thomas O'Toole*, Alexandru Cernat*, Nikos Tzavidis^, Natalie Shlomo* and Joe Sakshaug†

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The integration of survey data (i.e. probability and non-probability samples) and non-survey data (i.e. administrative records, geospatial characteristics and digital trace data) can provide researchers with access to a breadth of rich and detailed information for use in applied and methodological fields. This practitioner guide provides a comprehensive overview of integrating survey and non-survey data. It is intended for a broad audience, including researchers, research commissioners and survey practitioners. The guide aims to help readers determine whether, when, and how data integration can address their research questions or operational objectives.

This presentation will cover purposes of data integration, including the improvement of representation (constructing and improving sampling frames, improving responsive and adaptive survey designs, monitoring and adjusting for non-response bias) and the improvement of analyses (assessing measurement error, improving estimation and efficiency and enhancing substantive research). We will also cover integration methods and data sources and will discuss the added value of integrating survey data with administrative, geospatial and digital trace data, and conclude with recommendations for future data integration efforts.

Keywords: data integration, data linkage, survey data, administrative data, geospatial data, digital trace data

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Do we still need nonresponse follow-ups to web surveys of the UK general population? An analysis of cost-quality trade-offs

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In the last decade, some high-quality surveys have adopted web as the main mode for data collection, paired with an interviewer-administered mode such as CAPI or CATI to cover the part of the population without internet access or that finds it difficult to respond online. However, a web-first mixed-mode design entails some challenges: the fixed costs are higher than when using a web-only survey and the estimates can suffer from measurement error since respondents might answer the questions differently in different modes. In the last several years, we have seen how internet access has grown in the United Kingdom to cover almost the entire population whilst the level of internet literacy has improved considerably. This raises the question of whether it is now feasible to conduct web-only surveys of the general population without compromising representativeness.

The presentation will provide an overview of the Survey Futures phase II project: Do we still need non-response follow-ups to web surveys of the UK general population? An analysis of cost-quality trade-offs. The project investigates 1) whether follow-ups in other modes for web non-respondents are still needed to improve the representativeness of the sample, 2) the quality trade-offs between the improvement in representativeness of supplementing web with another mode and the measurement differences between modes, and 3) the cost implications for the different mode strategies. Then, we will offer some early results about how internet access has changed in the last decade in the United Kingdom and how the level of representativeness of web-only surveys has evolved. The analysis uses data from the Innovation Panel and the main study of Understanding Society, the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS).

Keywords: web surveys; mixed-mode; non-response; response bias

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Considering the impacts of (mixed) mode survey design on the performance of UKHLS COVID-19 Study datasets

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To reduce costs, many surveys now seek to utilise web rather than in person (computer aided personal (face to face: CAPI) or computer aided telephone (CATI)) interview modes. However, to minimise non-response biases and precision loss, in person follow-up of web non-respondents may be needed e.g. a web first sequential mixed mode design. Research on the UKHLS COVID-19 Study has also found that allocating non-regular internet users (NRIUs) to web may may have little impact on datasets. This raises the possibility that not doing so may have reduced costs without affecting biases, and also that biases may have been further reduced by using the resources saved used to instead expand CATI. In this paper, these questions were further investigated in COVID-19 Study. The impacts of CATI and not allocating NRIUs to web were evaluated in terms of biases and precision loss after non-response weighting. The impact of expanding CATI was investigated in a simulation study, with extra respondents added to empirical datasets and weighted dataset performance evaluated. CATI improved datasets, supporting the use of web first sequential mixed mode survey designs. Allocating NRIUs to web had little impact on some datasets, but improved the performance of others, suggesting that not doing so could not have been undertaken to reduce costs without reducing performance. Expanding CATI did not improve datasets given the web: CATI cost ratio in the Study, but sometimes did so if the ratio was smaller and more respondents could be added. The implications of these findings for survey design are then discussed.

Keywords: mixed mode surveys, dataset performance, non-response bias, precision loss, non-response weighting, UKHLS.

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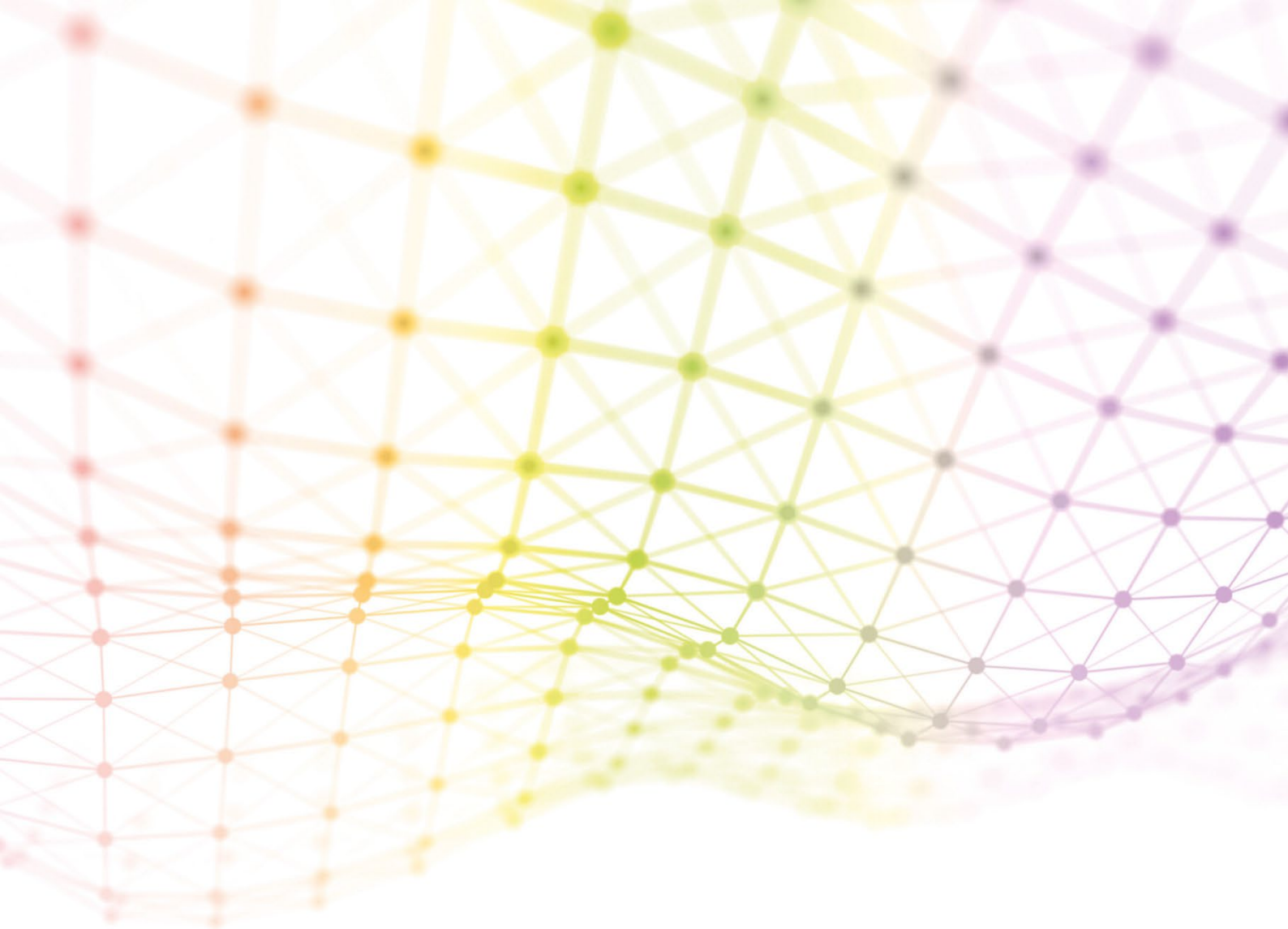

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UKRI Economic and Social Research Council

NCRM National Centre for Research Methods

Office for National Statistics

UCL

Warwick The University of Warwick

Manchester 1824 The University of Manchester

City University of London Est 1894

National Centre for Social Research

LSE The London School of Economics and Political Science

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