

# Declining Response Rates Across Different Modes of Data Collection

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In the realm of survey research, obtaining accurate and timely estimates of key survey outcomes is paramount. While survey methodologists and statisticians wield considerable control during the design stage, data collection introduces complexities due to nonresponse. This analysis delves into the phenomenon of declining response rates across various modes of data collection, drawing insights from relevant literature as discussed in the article by Groves and Peytcheva (Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, n.d.).

## Discussion

Response rates have been steadily declining across all modes of data collection, we will discuss each of these methods as highlighted in the article:

### Face-to-Face Interviews (Williams and Brick 2018)

Williams and Brick conducted a comprehensive analysis of cross-sectional and first-round longitudinal face-to-face national studies conducted in the United States spanning from 2000 to 2014. Their investigation shed light on a troubling trend: a consistent decline in response rates over this time frame. Their findings underscored a significant challenge facing the field of survey research, as face-to-face surveys, once hailed as the gold standard for data collection, are not immune to the downward trajectory observed in response rates. This decline poses serious implications for the reliability and representativeness of data collected through such traditional methods, prompting a critical reassessment of survey methodologies and a search for innovative approaches to address the issue.

## **National Telephone Surveys (Dutwin and Buskirk 2020)**

Dutwin and Buskirk’s analysis spanning 2008 to 2018 reveals a consistent decline in response rates across all modes of national telephone surveys in the United States. Factors such as the prevalence of robocalls, caller ID usage, and the dominance of mobile phones contribute to this trend. Despite declining response rates, weighted estimates suggest no significant increase in bias over time, presenting a paradox of diminishing engagement without compromising estimate quality. However, this paradox underscores the necessity for deeper exploration into evolving survey methodologies. As traditional telephone surveys confront mounting challenges, it becomes imperative for researchers to reassess their efficacy in the contemporary survey landscape. This requires innovative approaches to adapt to changing communication norms and overcome the limitations posed by declining response rates. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maintaining the reliability and relevance of survey research in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven society.

## **Web Surveys (Daikeler, Bošnjak, and Lozar Manfreda 2020)**

The studies conducted by Daikeler et al. and Daikeler and Dohmen shed light on the evolving landscape of web survey response rates over the past two decades, particularly in the context of Germany. Daikeler et al.’s meta-analysis spanning 1997 to 2016 consistently showed that web survey response rates lag behind other data collection methods. However, an intriguing observation emerged between 2012 and 2016, where the difference between web and other modes stabilized. On the other hand, Daikeler and Dohmen’s examination of German web surveys from 2005 to 2015 unveiled a concerning trend: a continuous decline in response rates across various types of web surveys, attributed to factors such as smartphone ubiquity, survey fatigue, and the saturation of online surveys. These findings underscore the challenges faced by web surveys despite their increasing popularity. The call for a reassessment of the role of web surveys in the modern survey landscape and the exploration of innovative strategies to tackle declining response rates emerges as a crucial imperative from these analyses. Addressing these challenges will be pivotal in maintaining the effectiveness and relevance of web surveys in the years ahead.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the analyses underscore the pervasive challenge of declining response rates across various modes of data collection, posing significant threats to the reliability and representativeness of survey data. This necessitates a critical reassessment of traditional survey methodologies and the exploration of innovative approaches to overcome these challenges. As the field of survey research grapples with these implications, interdisciplinary collaboration becomes essential for navigating this landscape. A holistic understanding of the survey response mechanism and adaptive methodologies will serve as our compass in addressing these multifaceted

issues. Embracing innovative strategies as highlighted by Groves and Peytcheva (Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, n.d.) such as PMAR and SMAR techniques, and leveraging the potential of mixed-mode surveys, will be pivotal in overcoming the challenges posed by declining response rates. This will enable the field to maintain the reliability and relevance of survey research in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven society.

## References

(R Core Team 2022)

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