

The Evolution of Response Rates Across Different Modes of Data Collection and Its Implications for Survey Quality

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Abstract

The fundamental aim of sampling in survey research is to derive accurate and timely estimates of key outcomes. However, the changing landscape of response rates across different modes of data collection poses significant challenges to achieving this goal. This document explores the trends in survey response rates, focusing on the transition towards web surveys and the implications for survey quality and nonresponse adjustments.

Introduction

Surveys are essential tools for collecting data in various fields, but their effectiveness is contingent on the response rates of targeted populations. Recent trends indicate a decline in response rates across all modes of data collection, raising concerns about data quality and the validity of survey results. This document examines these trends and their implications for survey methodology, drawing on recent research and analyses presented in the Special Virtual Issue on Nonresponse Rates and Nonresponse Adjustments of the Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology.

Declining Response Rates: An Overview

Face-to-Face and Telephone Surveys

Williams and Brick (2018) Williams and Brick (2018) and Dutwin and Buskirk (2020) Dutwin and Buskirk (2020) document declining response rates in face-to-face and telephone surveys,

respectively, highlighting a broad trend across traditional modes of data collection.

Web Surveys

Daikeler, Bošnjak, and Lozar Manfreda (2020) Daikeler, Bošnjak, and Lozar Manfreda (2020) provide a meta-analysis comparing web survey response rates to other modes, noting that while web surveys often have lower response rates, the gap has stabilized in recent years.

Implications for Survey Quality

Lower response rates are generally associated with increased potential for nonresponse bias. This section discusses the implications of declining response rates for survey quality, drawing on the insights from Groves and Peytcheva (2008) Groves and Peytcheva (2008) and the papers from the special issue.

Future Directions in Nonresponse Adjustments

With changing response rates, there is a need for innovative nonresponse adjustments. Särndal and Lundquist (2014) This section explores future directions, including the integration of adaptive designs and the use of auxiliary variables for improving survey representativeness and reducing bias.

Conclusion

The decline in response rates across different modes of data collection presents ongoing challenges for survey research. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of methodological innovation and adherence to best practices in survey design and implementation.

References

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