

Dimensions of Data Collection Modes

Degree of interviewer involvement

- Interviewer-administered
- Interviewer present, self-administered
- Self-administered

Degree of contact with respondent

- Direct: face-to-face
- Indirect: telephone, mail, Web
- None: direct observation, administrative records

Channels of communication

- Aural only: telephone survey
- Aural + visual: face-to-face with show cards, Web
- Visual only: mail survey, web survey

Dimensions of Data Collection Modes

Degree of privacy

- Low privacy: exit interviews, intercept surveys, group-administered surveys
- Medium privacy: in-home interviewer-administered surveys
- High privacy: self-administered, computerized questionnaire

Technology use

- No technology use: mail, paper-based methods
- Data collector uses technology: computer-assisted interviewing
- Respondent uses technology supplied by survey organization: computer-assisted self-interviewing
- Respondent uses own technology: Web surveys

Two Approaches to Selecting a Mode

What is the impact of a particular method of data collection on survey errors and costs?

Most often asked at analysis/evaluation stage

Given a particular mode, what effects to expect, and how to overcome them

Or, how to maximize benefits of a particular mode

E.g., given that one has decided on a telephone survey, what decisions should be made regarding the design of the questionnaire?

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Implications of Modes

Affects sources and types of survey errors that can occur

Both errors of observation and nonobservation

Both variable errors and biases

Affects other constraints, such as costs, time, mix of personnel

Learn more on errors and costs associated with each mode in our course on [Data Collection: Online, Telephone, Face-to-Face](#)

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Implication of Plurality of Modes

Need to be more explicit about which modes being used

Harder to make broad generalizations about mode

- May depend on particular combination of methods used

- Research literature does not (yet) cover all variations

- Need theory to form expectations about effects

Increasingly, combinations of modes being used

- Mixed-mode surveys or hybrid designs

Think about it: which mode or type of data collection is best for ...

...a survey of members of a professional association

...a survey to compare the nutrition needs of those below the poverty line with those above

...a survey to elicit the public's views on a key piece of environmental policy

...a survey to measure the satisfaction of visitors to the National Zoo

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