The Impact of Alternative Mixed-Mode Strategies on Non-Response in a Complex Household Survey: Constraints and Experiments

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Surveys which administer multiple instruments to the members of a household present some particular challenges in the design of mixed-mode approaches. Additional issues arise when the survey is a panel survey.

The presentation is motivated by issues that have arisen in the development of the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). The first four annual waves of UKHLS are CAPI but mixed modes will be introduced at wave 5. Multiple instruments are administered to each sample household at each wave. The household enumeration grid can be administered to any responsible adult and must be completed before subsequent instruments can be administered. The household questionnaire can be administered to either the household reference person or his/her spouse/partner. An individual questionnaire is administered to each person aged 16 or over, as is a 'self-completion' questionnaire to each person aged 10 or over.

Questions arise regarding which modes should be attempted for which instruments and for which household members, and what criteria should be used to trigger a switch from one mode to another. For example, suppose we want to give priority (on grounds of cost) to CAWI, followed by CATI, followed by CAPI. There is some evidence that sequential CATI-CAPI designs tends to produce lower response rates than a CAPI single mode designs, but there is no equivalent evidence for CAWI-CAPI relative to CAPI or CAWI-CATI-CAPI relative to CATI-CAPI. In other words, we cannot predict the marginal effect on response propensities of an additional, prior, CAWI attempt.

Also, possibilities for approach in different modes may differ between households and between individuals within a household. We may hold email addresses for some, but not necessarily all, members of household. We may or may not have a telephone number for the household and we may or may not have one or more personal phone numbers for each household member (mobile, work, etc) as well as 'stable contact' details. There are thus many options regarding how these contact details should be used.

This presentation will outline some of the design options and the constraints that may affect design decisions, with a focus on response propensities. A series of experiments, designed to inform design decisions, will be described.