

The prevention of non-response in longitudinal surveys: an overview of the literature and some ideas for future research

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Scope of presentation

- Unit non-response
- Preventing non-response
- Non-response rate

- Face-to-face longitudinal surveys
- General population longitudinal surveys
- Panel and cohort longitudinal surveys

- Survey methods literature
- Review paper

Non-response....

- is inevitable
- can lead to bias in survey estimates – but does not necessarily
- important to minimise
- has been increasing over time
- has been becoming more difficult and/or costly to minimise over time
- has multiple sources, each of which have different causes
- is not necessarily a permanent state

Sources of non-response in longitudinal surveys

- Location
- Contact
- Co-operation

Conceptual frameworks for non-response

(Groves and Couper, 1998; Lepkowski and Couper, 2002, Couper and Ofstedal, 2009)

- Separate conceptual frameworks for location, contact and co-operation
- Key distinction between:
 - Factors outside researcher control
 - Social environment/societal level
 - Respondents
 - Factors within researcher control
 - Interviewers
 - Survey design features

Location

Survey design factors affecting location

- Duration between waves
- Population and following rules
- Tracking methods
 - Retrospective/prospective
 - Remote/field
 - Batch/case-level
- Between-wave mailings
- New technologies
- Administrative data

Suggestions for further research on location

- Tracking methods
 - Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness
 - Optimising tracking effort
 - Tailoring tracking effort
- New technologies
- Administrative data

Contact

Cost-effectiveness of interviewer calling strategies

- Timing and pattern of interviewer calls
- Extended efforts to make contact
- Using prior wave data to inform best time to call
- Using additional contact methods
- Respondents initiating contact

Suggestions for further research on contact

- Using prior wave data to inform best time to call
- Using additional contact methods
- Respondents initiating contact

Co-operation

Interviewer level factors affecting co-operation

- Experience
- Behaviours
- Characteristics
- Continuity

Survey design level factors affecting co-operation

- Survey topic
- Interview length
- Data collection mode
- Advance notification
- Respondent incentives
- Interviewer incentives
- Re-issuing/conversion attempts

Suggestions for further research on co-operation

- Interviewer level
 - Behaviours
 - Continuity
- Survey design level
 - Interviewer incentives
 - Non-monetary influences

Recent trends in research on non-response – and how longitudinal surveys can contribute

- More focus on non-response bias (Groves, 2006)
- Use of para-data to study non-response (Kreuter, 2013)
- Responsive or adaptive designs (Groves and Heeringa, 2006; Couper and Wagner, 2011)
- Case prioritisation (Peytechev, 2010)
- Targeted response inducement strategies (Lynn, 2015)

Thank you

Some advice to longitudinal survey practitioners

- Learn from existing evidence
- Think about how to minimise each of the different sources of non-response separately
- Consider running experiments to evaluate impact of different fieldwork interventions on non-response
- Focus on sub-groups most likely to drop out
- Use different interventions for different sub-groups
- Look at impact of intervention on non-response at both current and future waves
- Write-up your results so others can learn from them