

# 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