



Participation and engagement in web surveys of the general population: An overview of challenges and opportunities

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Web surveys for the general population: How, why and when?
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Motivation for theme 2:

1. What are the barriers to participation by web, and how do these differ across population subgroups?
2. What do we know (and conversely, not know) about maximising participation and engagement in different types of survey using web-based data collection?
3. What can we learn about designing web surveys to enhance participation and engagement?

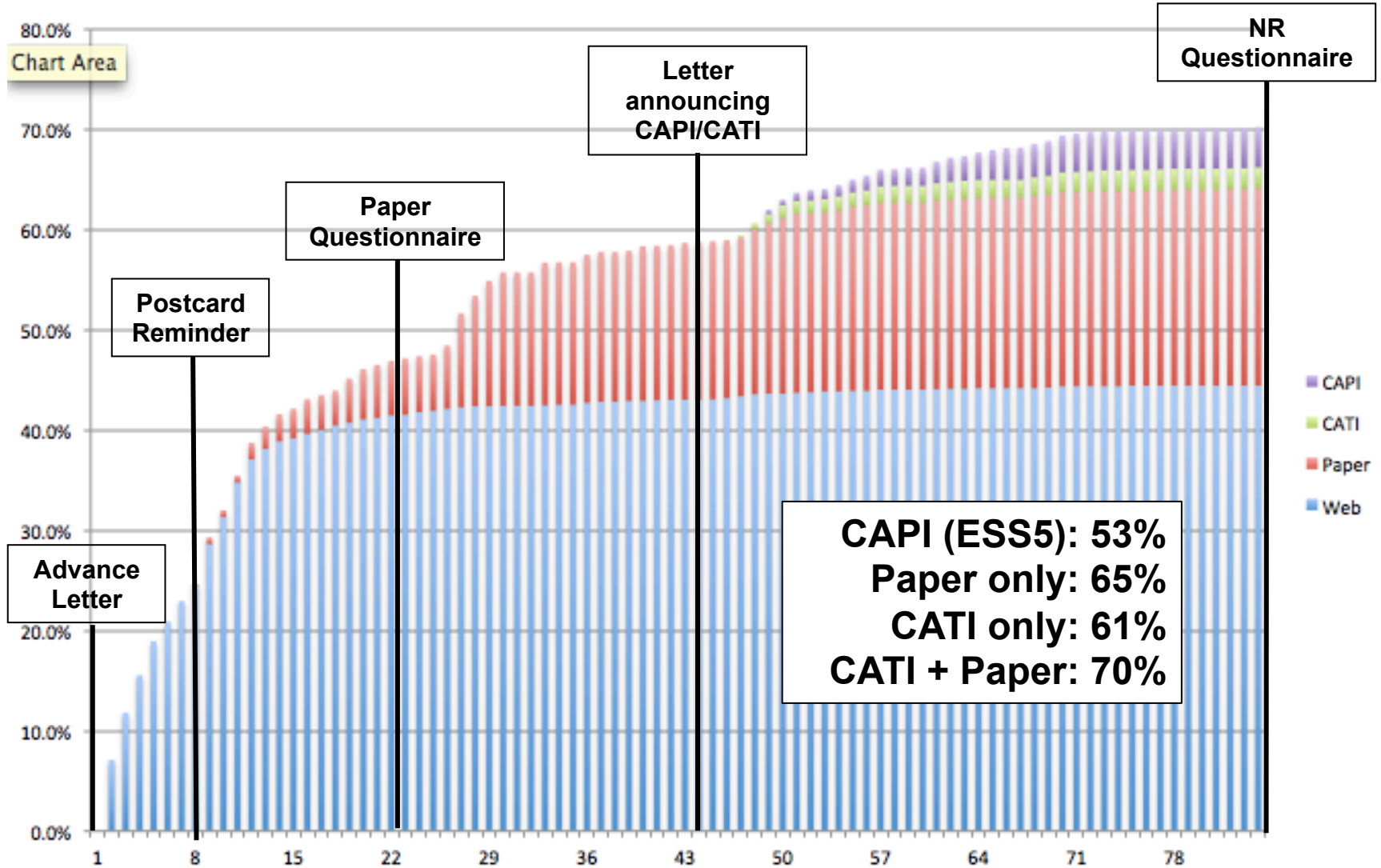
Survey designs under consideration

1. Ad hoc or repeated cross-sectional surveys (first wave, or following a mode switch)
2. Existing longitudinal surveys (household panels, cohort studies)
3. Purpose-designed Internet Panel Surveys
 - Focus on UK context – especially mixed mode requirement

Challenges in ad hoc/ repeated cross-sectional designs

- Response rates lower than in other modes (Manfreda et al., 2008)
- Propensity to respond may vary across subgroups
- Mixed mode requirement due to non-coverage & possibly differential non-response
- How to mix?
 - Sequential designs starting with web may offer cost savings (Messer & Dillman, 2011; Miller & Dillman, 2011)
 - RR improvements with additional modes, but may undermine cost advantages

A Swiss Example



Challenges in ad hoc/ repeated cross-sectional designs

- Other modes still work better than web
- Possible barriers to participation:
 - Not addressing target individuals personally (incentive delivery)
 - The extra step of going online
 - Questionnaire length (Swiss example 30 mins)
- Research needs:
 - Studies to identify optimal mix of ‘multiple response inducing techniques’ – a ‘tailored design method’ for the UK context (Dillman et al., 2009)
 - Detailed investigations of variation in response across groups, and how different mode mixes and RITs can help to improve representativity and reduce bias

Challenges in longitudinal designs

- Primary participation & engagement challenges:
 - Impact of mixed mode wave on response rates
 - Effect on attrition over the long term
 - Optimal mixed mode protocol (e.g. timing, treatment of household members in household panel)
- Mixed mode results so far:
 - Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (DoE, 2011)
 - Minimal impact on RRs and attrition among young people
 - Understanding Society Innovation Panel (Lynn, 2011; 2012)
 - Reduction in RRs persists over rounds, but depends on protocol
 - British Crime Survey re-contact study (Fong & Williams, 2011)
 - Web RRs low (but better when web is offered first); respondents supplying email addresses younger & better educated

Challenges in longitudinal designs

- Research needs:
 - Understand barriers to participation by web – e.g. the influence of other household members; concerns about disclosing email addresses
 - More detailed analysis of characteristics of web respondents & nonrespondents
 - Challenge expectations about which subgroups would respond best
 - Expect differences between loyal/cooperative panelists and the less committed
 - Explore opportunities to tailor mixed mode designs based on known subgroup characteristics

Challenges in Internet Panel Surveys

- Initial response rates and sample representativity
 - Mode of recruitment matters
- Preventing drop out after recruitment
 - E.g. ANES 68% recruits @ W1; LISS 48% recruits registered
- Maintaining engagement over the long-term
 - E.g. Bringing people back in
- Impact of efforts to recruit respondents on cooperativeness
 - Are efforts 'worth it'?

Response inducement methods

- Incentives –
 - How much? How? When?
 - E.g. Token incentives (\$5 in Messer & Dillman, 2011) vs. £30 effects in Understanding Society IP4 refreshment sample
 - Impact on survey errors, including nonresponse and measurement error (Singer & Ye, 2013)

- Boosting intrinsic motivation to participate and respondent engagement
 - Designing for handheld devices
 - Gamification?
 - Or just improving survey design in the old-fashioned sense:
 - Shorter questionnaires, salient topics, reduced burden (Downes-LeGuin et al., 2012)

Questions for Discussion

1. How concerned should we be about low response rates in web surveys?
2. How should we assess the effectiveness of different RITs - are response rates enough?
3. What quality criteria should we be using to assess quality?
4. Is – or should – web be viewed as a cost-saving data collection option?

Thank you!