

**Covid-19 Pandemic and Transitioning to
Online Data Collection:
GenPopWeb2 findings**

Olga Maslovskaya
(University of Southampton)

26 October 2021, Research Methods eFestival 2021

GenPopWeb2 project

- ESRC-funded project: February 2020-September 2021
- Team: Olga Maslovskaya (University of Southampton), Lisa Calderwood (UCL), Gerry Nicolaas (NatCen), Laura Wilson (ONS)
- Network of UK-based academic and non-academic partners which worked together to share knowledge and collaborate in the area of online data collection in social surveys as well as to set the research agenda in the area

<https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/genpopweb2/>

GenPopWeb2 Activities – Literature Reviews

Literature Reviews

1. Selection of individuals within households
2. Recruitment and participation: Maximising participation in cross-sectional and longitudinal contexts
3. Utility of probability based online surveys: push-to-web vs online panels

GenPopWeb2 activities - Events

- Within-household selection methods for probability-based web surveys
- Complex Measurements:
 - Measuring cognition in online surveys
 - Collecting data consents in online surveys
 - Occupational coding in online surveys
- Designing and delivering online surveys
 - Transitioning long questionnaires to online
 - Designing, developing and testing online questionnaires
- **Covid-19 and transitioning to online data collection in social surveys**
- Adjustments for mode effects

Covid-19 and Transitioning to Online Data Collection in Social Surveys

- Paradigm shift (low response rates, increasing survey costs, increase in use of Internet and devices)
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Expectations that some surveys will transition quickly and easily
- However, this is not what we have been observing
 - Some surveys paused data collection in absence of face-to-face interviews
 - Some surveys moved to telephone mode
 - Some surveys moved to online mode with some follow up modes

Examples of transitioning to different modes during covid-19 pandemic

- **Health Survey for England:** 2020 paused, 2021 – telephone interview with postal follow up for self-completion elements plus knock to nudge
- **ESS Round 10:** paused by a year first; retained f2f approach with video interview option and push-to-web with postal follow-up in countries where f2f was impossible
- **Understanding Society** – longitudinal context – telephone and web
- **Crime Survey for England and Wales:** telephone survey
- **Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents:** telephone survey
- **British Election Study:** push-to-web with postal follow-up
- **Food and You 2 Survey:** push-to-web with postal follow-up (transitioned before pandemic)

Barriers to Transitioning to Online Data Collection

- Not enough time to re-design interviewer-administered instrument to self-administered one
- Concerns about length of questionnaire (but reassuring evidence from ESS experiments)
- Concerns about accessibility

We are planning to investigate these issues further during the new project

Innovations

- Mode of contact:
 - Knock-to-nudge
 - Interviewer knocks on the door but does not conduct an interview, just encourages the respondent to complete questionnaire either online or via telephone survey
- Mode of administration:
 - Video interviewing (CAVI)
 - Interviewer/interviewee interaction is possible
 - Visual help is possible
 - Electronic questionnaire device
 - Provision of a tablet at the doorstep with simplified version of questionnaire
 - Can help capturing offliners
 - Additional costs for devices

Future

- Online data collection is not going to take over all social surveys but will be used in appropriate contexts
 - Barriers to transitioning to online data collection should be further investigated and understood better
- Innovations trialled during pandemic (modes of contact, modes of administration) will be used wider in appropriate contexts after we obtained enough evidence suggesting their effectiveness
 - But they will need to be investigated further
- Face-to-face interviewing is here to stay! However, changes and necessary adaptations will be trialled and implemented

New Project

- ESRC-funded project “The impact of Covid-19 on survey data collection methods in social sciences” – under NCRM infrastructure – 1 November 2021- 31 October 2022
- Team: Olga Maslovskaya (PI), Gabi Durrant (CoI), Lisa Calderwood (CoI), Gerry Nicolaas (CoI), Laura Wilson (CoI)

Main focus: Explore current data collection landscape in social surveys

- Issues associated with return to f2f interviewing (role of interviewers)
- Issues associated with mixing modes and mode effects
- Barriers to online data collection
- Important issues to consider for successful transitioning to online data collection
- Further investigation of innovative ways for mode of contact and mode of administration of surveys

New Project Planned Outputs

- Events to address issues associated with different aspects of current data collection landscape
- Reports to review existing material (grey literature, unpublished reports)
- Best practice guides
- Qualitative interviews with different data collection organisations will be conducted to explore barriers of transitioning to online data collection

- New website will be created
- Mailing list for GenPopWeb2 will be used for communication

Thank you very much!
om206@soton.ac.uk

