

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

Online questionnaire testing

How has the pandemic changed our approach at NatCen?

Dr Emma Berteen – Methods Team, NatCen

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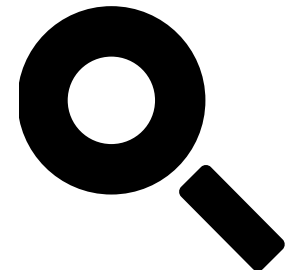
Pre-pandemic questionnaire testing practices



1.

Pre-COVID practices

- Cognitive and usability testing – hybrid or separately
- Chiefly face-to-face in office/home/work/lab
- Observed participants completing web questionnaire on own device
- Audio recorded using a dictaphone
- Data gathered from in-person observations, ‘think aloud’, and concurrent or retrospective probing



Document camera



- Participant's device placed under camera
- Video feed to a laptop
- In-person interviewer observation
- Less physically intrusive
- Potential positional issues

Why face-to-face?

- In-person interviewer motivation and assistance
 - Interviews typically 60 minutes - it was felt F2F better for longer interactions
- Participant less likely to miss appointment or request rearranging
- Allows in-person observation
- More control over and awareness of a participant's immediate environment; fewer distractions
- Previous lack of common technological knowledge and software

What changed due
to COVID-19?



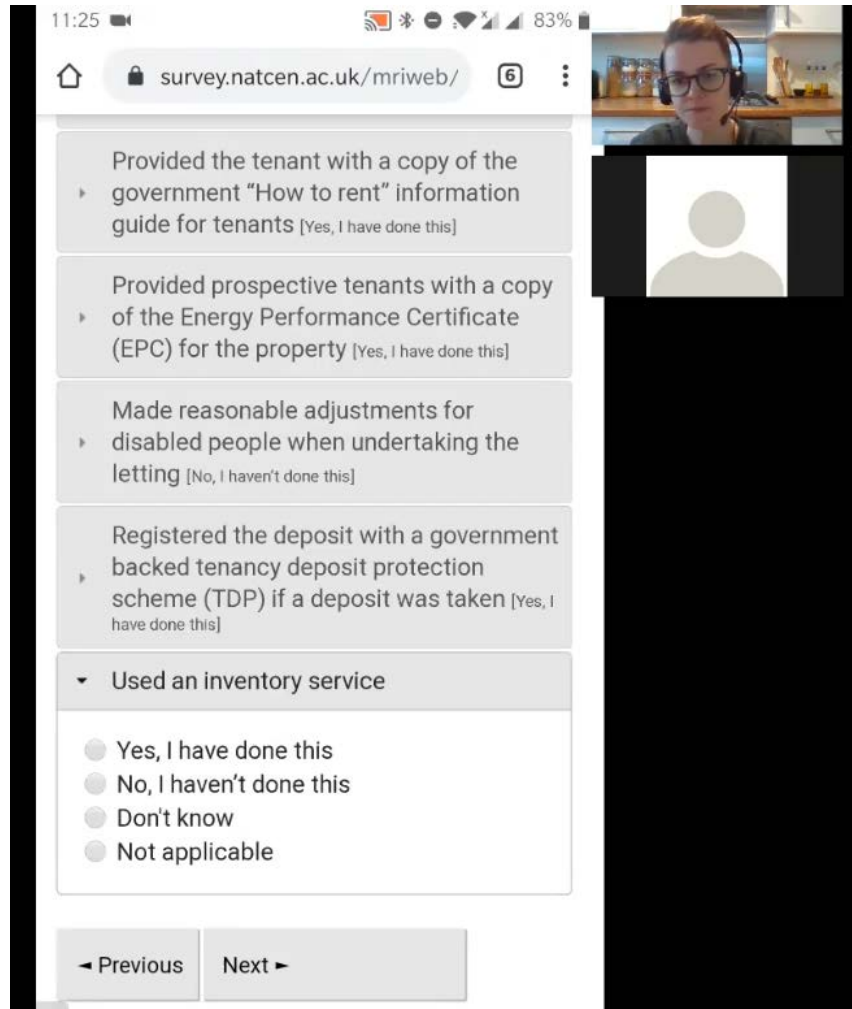
2.

Changes to questionnaire testing

Mode

- Transition from F2F to video conferencing interviews
 - Zoom (or Teams)
- Telephone alternative (cognitive testing only)
- Screen sharing
 - Self-administered surveys: observe participants' screens
 - Interviewer-administered surveys: share visuals, e.g. showcards

Example mobile screen share



11:25 83%

survey.natcen.ac.uk/mriweb/

Provided the tenant with a copy of the government "How to rent" information guide for tenants [Yes, I have done this]

Provided prospective tenants with a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property [Yes, I have done this]

Made reasonable adjustments for disabled people when undertaking the letting [No, I haven't done this]

Registered the deposit with a government backed tenancy deposit protection scheme (TDP) if a deposit was taken [Yes, I have done this]

Used an inventory service

- ☐ Yes, I have done this
- ☐ No, I haven't done this
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Not applicable

◀ Previous Next ▶

The image shows a mobile screen share of a survey form. The form is displayed on the left side of the screen, with a video call overlay on the right. The video call shows a person wearing a headset. The survey form contains several questions with radio button options. The questions are: 'Provided the tenant with a copy of the government "How to rent" information guide for tenants [Yes, I have done this]', 'Provided prospective tenants with a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property [Yes, I have done this]', 'Made reasonable adjustments for disabled people when undertaking the letting [No, I haven't done this]', 'Registered the deposit with a government backed tenancy deposit protection scheme (TDP) if a deposit was taken [Yes, I have done this]', and 'Used an inventory service'. The 'Used an inventory service' question has four radio button options: 'Yes, I have done this', 'No, I haven't done this', 'Don't know', and 'Not applicable'. At the bottom of the form are 'Previous' and 'Next' buttons. The video call overlay is on the right side of the screen, showing a person wearing a headset. The person is looking at the camera. The video call is partially obscured by a black bar.

Changes to questionnaire testing

Sampling and recruitment

- More use of recruitment from existing databases rather than street recruitment or door knocking
- Typically employ same quotas as before pandemic
 - Age / gender / formal qualifications
 - Device type (laptop vs. mobile / Apple vs. Android etc.)
 - Factors relevant to questionnaire topic / target population
- No geographic constraints

Changes to questionnaire testing

Fieldwork practice

- Observation, 'think aloud' and probing all used as in a F2F interview
- Audio-recording replaced with audio and video-recording (including recording of screenshare)
- Letters and information leaflets emailed in advance of study
- E-vouchers sent after the interview

Benefits and limitations



3.

Benefits of remote interviewing

- Geographic reach
- Access to some hard-to-reach groups
- Reduced burden for participants and interviewers
- Cost reductions
- Environmental benefits
- Easier to observe small screens
- Use of screen sharing and chat
- Built-in audio and screen recording
- Clients able to observe remotely – less intrusive

Limitations of remote interviewing

- Limited access to offline population for usability testing
 - However, can combine with other remote modes e.g. also use telephone interviews to test web/CATI
- Technical difficulties - audio, video, internet connection
- Greater reliance on participants during interviews
 - Installing Zoom/Teams
 - Joining the interview
 - Screen sharing
- Potentially less privacy, potential distractions
- Possible effect on rapport with interviewer

The future of questionnaire testing at NatCen



4.

Will we continue to use this method post-pandemic?

- In general a success. Remote testing could become default method for testing web-only surveys
- Mixed-mode testing (mixture of remote and F2F interviews) will still be beneficial for:
 - Testing mixed-mode questions with offline communities / groups of interest who are reticent to take part in a video-conference interview
 - Testing measures that rely on equipment or hard-copies of documents (e.g. anything where the screen-share does not provide sufficient visual cues to how well a task is being performed)
- This assumes that post-pandemic participants themselves still want to engage in video-conferencing

Contact

Dr Emma Berteen

Senior Researcher, Methods Team

E. emma.berteen@natcen.ac.uk

Visit us online, natcen.ac.uk

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