Maximizing Respondent Cooperation
Challenges and Best Practices

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Statistics Canada
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Outline

- **What are our main challenges?**
  - Changes in external and internal environment

- **Where do we focus our efforts to address those challenges – best practices**
  - Improving communications strategy with respondents;
  - Improving contact rates during collection;
  - Improving participation rates after contact;
  - Improving non response follow up (NRFU) during collection; and
  - Increase offering of multi-contact and collection mode to yield higher response rates.
Main challenges – Falling Household Survey Response Rates Negatively Affect Quality

• **Changes in the external environment**
  • Harder to reach respondents due to increase of cell-phone only households, increased use of caller ID and new telephone technologies;
  • Increased privacy concerns;
  • Greater respondent burden due to increase in telephone marketing and solicitation calls by other organizations; and
  • Decreased willingness to participate due to a decline in civic responsibility

• **Changes in the internal environment**
  • Introduction of cellular phone in the frame used for household surveys
Composite Response Rate Index (CRRI) – Household Surveys (Jan 2006 to June 2014)

Yearly Composite Response Rate Indices
Social CATI Surveys, 2006-2014 (June)

Census

Weigthed CCRI

Unweigthed CCRI

2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014
Framework to Improve Response Rates and Maximise Respondent Cooperation

- Before data collection
  - Sample design and communication strategies (1)
- During collection
  - Improving contact rate and communication strategies (2)
  - Improving participation rate after contact (3)
  - Improving NRFU strategies (4)

> Response rate = contact * participation (3 & 4) rates for in-scope units
Objectives

- Improve communication with survey respondents
  - Encourage/value participation to Statistics Canada’s surveys
  - Increase respondents’ awareness to the importance of surveys
  - Demonstrate the relevance and the usefulness of collected and published data
  - Show benefits of participating to surveys
Pyramid of survey communications needs

- Proactive targeted communication approach
- Classify surveys according to 3 levels of communication needs
- Communication package available for each level
## Pyramid of survey communications needs, cont’d

### Level I
Base for all surveys
- Invitation, refusal, no-contact, reminder letter/email
- Survey participants module
  - Q & A on website
- Interviewers’ material

### Level II
Increased comm effort – Level I+
- Brochure
- Social media
- Magazine articles
- Blogs

### Level III
At risk – Level II+
- Comm plan
- Local & regional media
- Videos
- Chat with an expert
- Other materials as required

**Note:** Communication material is selected and included as per the requirements of the individual survey and may not include all materials listed above.
Communication needs pyramid
Household surveys

Risk

Burden

1
2
3

CHMS
SHS
OCHS
CPI
GSS
CTADS
CCHS
LFS

Statistics Canada • Statistique Canada
Rating scales for household/business surveys

**Risk** (response rate)
- Mission Critical (MC)
- Contribute to MC
- % targeted group/geo
- Sensitive topic
- Frame for other surveys
- Take-all non EPM
- Longitudinal/2nd phase
- Continuous collection

**Burden** (respondents)
- Collection mode
- Responding unit
- Complexity & effort
- Time per unit
- Number of instruments

Response Rate Issue Index

Communication Needs Index
The message matters

- Redesign: letters/emails/survey introductions
  - Engage respondents
  - Keep in mind: « What’s in it for me? » (from respondent perspective)
  - Underlying importance of confidentiality to reassure respondents
  - Plain language
  - Presentation and layout
  - Ensure materials meet Statistics Canada standards
New CCHS

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Canadian Community Health Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, collects information from Canadians about their health and well-being, the factors that affect their health, and their use of health care services.

Your participation is important
The results from this survey will help communities as well as provincial and territorial ministries of health to better understand and address issues such as:
- access to local health care and home care services
- lifestyle choices affecting health
- chronic health conditions.

Participating is easy and secure
- Sometime in the next few weeks, a Statistics Canada interviewer will contact you, and someone from your household aged 12 years or older will be randomly selected to participate in an interview.¹
- To accommodate participants’ busy schedules, our interviewers work days, evenings and weekends.
- This voluntary survey is conducted under the authority of the Statistics Act, which ensures that the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your information may be used by Statistics Canada for other statistical purposes.

For more information
If you have any questions, please contact Sam Payadachee toll-free at 1-800-387-0714 (TTY: 1-866-753-7083). You can also consult the enclosed brochure or visit www.statcan.gc.ca/cchs.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Name
Director
xxx Region

Encl.

Old CCHS

Dear Sir or Madam:

Your household has been selected to participate in the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). This survey collects information from Canadians about their health and well-being, factors that affect their health, and their use of health care services.

Your contribution is important because you can provide health information right down to the community level, enabling decision makers to address your community’s health care needs. Results from this survey will address issues such as wait times, access to health care and whether local health programs are effective.

The CCHS is conducted under the authority of the Statistics Act, which ensures that the information you provide will be kept strictly confidential, and will be used only for statistical purposes. We do not release any information that could identify you or any member of your household.

Sometime in the next few weeks, a Statistics Canada interviewer will be calling your home and someone from your household, aged 12 years or older, will be randomly selected to participate in an interview. If the selected respondent is less than 16 years of age, we will seek verbal consent from a parent or guardian. Participation is extremely important to ensure that the results are as accurate and reliable as possible. In order to accommodate respondents’ busy schedules, our interviewers work days, evenings and weekends.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact us toll-free, at 1-866-445-4323 (TTY, telecommunications device for people who are deaf: 1-866-753-7083).

For more information about this survey, please review the enclosed brochure or visit our website www.statcan.gc.ca/cchs or www.statcan.gc.ca/health-sante/index-eng.htm.

We realize your time is valuable and thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Name
Director
xxx Region

Encl.
Qualitative testing: invitation letters

- Exploring **Behavioral Economics**, “**NUDGES**” and “**Persuasive writing**” strategies
- Using “choice architecture” to successfully nudge people toward decisions without restricting their freedom of choice
- Goal: increase survey participation
Qualitative testing: invitation letters

Project details

- 23 one-on-one interviews, 8 focus groups
- Locations: Vancouver, Calgary, Mtl, and Toronto
- Dates: January 26 to February 12, 2015
- 6 invitation letters, 3 for CCHS, 3 for CTADS
- Participants were asked
  - Key messages
  - Personal preferences
  - What would convince you
- Results to come
Information for survey participants module on StatCan website

- Each survey in collection on ISP module (about 230/year)
  - Collection period(s)
  - Collection method(s)
  - Participation: mandatory or voluntary
  - Confidentiality
  - Data Sharing agreements and record linkage
  - Topics
  - Facts and Figures
  - Definitions and methods (link)
  - Other information – when available (brochure, video, infographic)

  → Referenced in invitation letters/brochures
Communication support for interviewers

- Interviewer training
  - Generic training
  - Survey specific training (before collection)
  - National Interviewer training

- On-going communication with interviewers and feedback mechanisms to identify requirements;
  - briefing questionnaires, Interviewers’ Newsletter

- Tools for specific needs
  - Landlord package for restricted buildings, Qs and As
Communication products to address specific survey needs

- Communication plan
  - Brochure
  - Press release
  - Social media campaign
  - Video
  - Infographic
  - Etc.
Social media campaigns

- Reaching specific groups of respondents to inform them of survey collection activities using selected adapted messages and hashtags

https://twitter.com/statcan_eng
Social media campaigns

https://www.facebook.com/StatisticsCanada
Social media campaigns
Videos

https://www.youtube.com/user/StatisticsCanada
Infographic

- Journey of StatCan data
  - Field test conducted, Fall 2014
    - Survey mail out
    - CAPI interviewers
    - Social Media

- Results
  - Overall: very positive Interviewer feedback
  - Impact on response rate minimal at national level, some impact at regional office level
Some projects for next year

- Special Regional communication strategy to help promote Statistics Canada surveys in general areas where collection is more challenging
- Returning results to respondents
- New invitation letter templates based on results from qualitative testing (behavioral economics)
- Etc.
Improving contact rate during collection – Best practices

• Use customized contact mode approaches
  • Take advantage of the numerous contact sources (land and cellular phone #, dwelling address, email address,…);
  • Investigate new contact strategies (e.g. text for cellular phones);
  • Increase multiple contact mode strategies (letter, phone call, personal visit); and
  • Adapt the contact strategy based on sub-population characteristics (e.g. young adults) or on previous survey cycles collection information (e.g. Labor Force Survey, Job Vacancy Survey).
Improving participation rates during collection — Best practices

- Reduce the number of questions before the questionnaire content and invest efforts in areas where we are losing more respondents – e.g. introduction, roster, telephone evaluation;
- Develop more efficient time slice strategies;
- Customize collection approaches based on respondent preferences;
- Adapt collection strategy for new collection vehicle (EQ, cellular phone);
- Investigate the use of incentives; and
- Test the impact of mandatory surveys.
At what survey step, are we losing our respondents?

- Between 14% (EICS) and 29% (SEPR 201404) of respondents are lost before or just after survey introduction
  - Depending on the frame and survey topic (e.g. ECIS versus CFCS)
  - Cell phone (42%) vs land line (27%) for an average of 29% for SEPR
- The loss in subsequent modules (i.e. phone, hhld info) varies by survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common hhLD frame</th>
<th>LFS rotate out frame</th>
<th>CCHS Resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GSS27 201308</td>
<td>GSS27 201310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact at all</td>
<td>5.5%  5.2%</td>
<td>0.9%  2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost after the 1st question &quot;Hello, I'm calling from STC...&quot;</td>
<td>4.9%  5.7%</td>
<td>3.4%  2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost after the 2nd question &quot;May I speak to an adult...&quot;</td>
<td>7.3%  6.6%</td>
<td>8.0%  7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost after the 3rd question &quot;Language preference &quot;</td>
<td>3.5%  3.2%</td>
<td>3.8%  3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost after the survey introduction &quot;I'm calling regarding..&quot;</td>
<td>10.9%  8.7%</td>
<td>8.4%  8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost during phone evaluation</td>
<td>5.9%  6.0%</td>
<td>5.9%  5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost during household module</td>
<td>2.2%  2.4%</td>
<td>2.5%  2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost after roster completion</td>
<td>13.7%  13.2%</td>
<td>9.7%  10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one question of the content</td>
<td>46.0%  49.1%</td>
<td>57.2%  57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost during the content</td>
<td>3.9%  3.5%</td>
<td>3.6%  3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
<td>42.1%  45.6%</td>
<td>53.6%  54.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improving non-response follow-up during collection – best practices

- Increase *non response follow up* (NRFU) efforts;
- Improve conversion strategies for refusal and special cases;
- Provide specific interviewer training for refusal conversion; and
- Dedicate interviewer resources to refusal conversion process.
Increase offering of multi-contact and collection mode to yield higher response rates – Best practices

- Prepare integrated multi-contact and collection mode strategy for respondents;

- Redesign of collection systems to have a common survey collection integrated system that facilitates the transfer of information and units between the different collection modes – development and implementation of the Integrated Collection Operation System (ICOS);

- Possibility of offering multi-collection mode – telephone, personal interview, electronic questionnaire and paper; and

- Possibility of offering multiple contact mode to respondents—letter, email, telephone, personal visit.
For more information, please contact

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