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Online survey: an opportunity for a better communication with the respondents

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Abstract and Paper

In France each year new statistical surveys are going to the internet: for example the census, some enterprises surveys or households surveys. The traditional way to answer (face-to-face interview, phone interview, self-answer on a paper questionnaire) is still possible but the online answer is a new possibility.

When a statistical survey proposes an online questionnaire, the communication unit is more implicated in the process: this improves the communication with the respondents in several ways.

The user support team in the communication unit is called by respondents to an online survey. It is impossible to avoid it because people do not want to have to know several phone numbers / e-mails for contacting the institute of statistics: they use the user support's phone number and e-mail. So the data collection and communication units have to work together to define who will answer depending on the questions. This may require to anticipate the questions of the respondents before the survey, and to prepare the answers... The data collection unit knows the questions and the answers about the specific content of the survey, the user support knows the general questions about a survey and knows how to write answers that are not too technical and easy to understand.

The user support answers very quickly (immediately by phone, within 24 hours by e-mail) from Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm non stop. It monitors its activities in a real time and assesses them every month. The data collection units appreciate these practices especially the quality of answers and the fast feedback.

The user support can give advice to improve the process of a online survey and the communication with the respondents: the wording and the presentation of the documents sent to the respondents (letter to warn a household of the survey, on-line questionnaire), a more proactive communication, changes in the website of the institute.

The user support can propose an interactive FAQ that gives an even more efficient and adaptable communication with the respondents. An interactive FAQ is a sort of search engine that gives automatically some answers to a question: if there is the expected answer among the automatical answers, it is all right. If not, the question will be sent to the user support for a manual answer. An interactive FAQ can be optimised during a survey. For the census in January 2015, we used an interactive FAQ for the first time: only 10% of the questions had to be sent to the user support.



Joint session between the Communication Workshop and the Data Collection Workshop, Unece - 29 April - Washington

(i) Linking Data Collection and Communication

Online survey: an opportunity for a better communication with the respondents

François Brunet, Insee, France

1. In France each year new statistical surveys are going to the internet: for example the census, some enterprises surveys or households surveys. The traditional way to answer (face-to-face interview, phone interview, self-answer on a paper questionnaire) is still possible but the online answer is a new possibility. It improves the communication with the respondents because a part of the population do not want to answer our surveys if they are not online. However the online surveys have to be modern and user-friendly, otherwise people will not answer them, and they will have a bad opinion of our institut. When a data collection unit wants to build a statistical survey online, a cooperation with the communication unit is necessary to conduct a modern and user-friendly online-survey, and to communicate well with the respondents.

2. In Insee (National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, France), the user support is a part of the communication unit. For years, the user support has answered thousands of questions sent to Insee. In 2014, people contacted the user support about 200 000 times to ask questions:

- 180 000 times by phone: the IVR (interactive vocal response: "If you want to do this, press the '1' key, if you want to do that, press the '2' key, if...") automatically answered most of them, the user support manually answered 30 000 of them.
- 20 000 times by email: the user support manually answered all of them.

The questions are very varied: to find a statistical information, for an explanation about statistics, an inscription in the companies' register (cf. appendix: Questions received by Insee's user support on January 22th between 11:00 and 11:30). In 2014, 10% of the questions answered manually were about statistical surveys (about their collection, asked by respondents): is this survey really an official survey . Are my answers confidential ? Where is the survey online...?

In 2010, four years before, the questions about statistical surveys had represented only 1% of the questions manually answered. They have been multiplied by ten in four years because statistical surveys get more and more online.

3. It is very simple to ask the Insee's user support a question. On each page on the Insee website, there is a mention "Contact us" on the top of the page.



The screenshot shows the Insee website interface. At the top right, the navigation bar contains links for "Contact us", "Pres", and "Français". The "Contact us" link is circled in blue. Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text "Search the website" and a Google logo. A horizontal menu below the search bar includes buttons for "Home", "Topics", "Databases", "Publications", "Regions", "Definitions and methods", "INSEE and official statistics", and "Publics". The "Databases" button is highlighted in red. The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail "Home > Databases > Population census results" and a section titled "Population census results" with a sub-section "Official populations". A news box on the right contains the text "News: keep track of online census result publications (in French)".

If you click on it, you arrive on a page who gives you the telephone number of the user support and a link to email a question.

Publications and services

Home > Publications and services > Services > Contact us

Contact us

Are you looking for statistical information, a study or a publication ?

Before writing to us, we invite you to look at the replies in the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) section. Some topics already online may answer your questions.

However, if you don't find a satisfactory answer, please don't hesitate to ask the "INSEE Contact" service, which will guide you through all the available information:

- To email a question
- By phone: +33 972 72 4000, Mondays to Fridays from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

For all other contacts (competitive examinations, training periods, pollster jobs,...)

4. The user support team in the communication unit is spontaneously contacted by respondents to an online survey. It is impossible to avoid it because people do not want to have to know several phone numbers / emails for contacting the institute of statistics: they use the user support's phone number and email. So the data collection and communication units have to work together to define who will answer depending on the questions. This requires to anticipate the questions of the respondents before the survey, and to prepare the answers... The data collection unit knows the questions and the answers about the specific content of the survey, the user support knows the general questions about a survey and knows how to write answers that are not too technical and easy to understand. Usually, the data collection units ask the user support to answer the most frequently asked questions: for these questions, it is (time)efficient for the data collection units because the time the data collection units spend to form the user support about these questions and their answers is less time than the time they would spend to answer these questions. Sometimes a data collection unit gives all the questions to the user support, when the survey is very simple. The aim is to be the most efficient for the institut.

5. The user support can take a new online survey after a joint preparation with the data collection unit. Three to six months are required: for determining the questions the user support will answer, enrichment of the website, training of the user support team by the data collection unit, preparing model answers and instructions for the user support team, and testing. The user support is going to build a protocol and a service contract showing the commitments of both sides (user support and data collection unit) for the integration of a new survey.

The user support needs visibility on the timing of all surveys that are going to get on the internet in order to verify that the user support team will absorb the load.

6. At Insee, the user support answers by saying where the answer is on the internet, especially on our website. This principle of orientation forces to put more information on our website when a data collection unit asks the user support to answer questions about a statistical survey. It is a good principle that improves the communication with the respondents because it forces to clarify the answers in advance and to make more information available on the Internet. It is also efficient because it encourages users to seek information first on the Internet: it makes them therefore more autonomous and many of them find the answer by themselves on our website.

7. The user support answers very quickly (immediately by phone, within 24 hours by email) from Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm non-stop. It uses professional equipment to answer by phone and email. It monitors its activities in a real time and assesses its activities every month. The data collection units appreciate these practices especially the quality of answers and the fast feedback. This allows them to better perceive how their work is received by the public, as well as the importance of the quality of the communication on the image of Insee. Also this allows them to improve the communication with the

respondents during the collection and to improve the process (and the communication with the respondents) for the next collection.

8. During the collection, the user support can give to the data collection unit the list of frequent questions that were not anticipated in order to improve the communication (for example by adding the answers on the internet) and if possible the process of the collection.

Before the collection (or before the the next collection), the user support can give advice to improve the process of a online survey and the communication with the respondents: the wording and the presentation of the documents sent to the respondents (letter that warns a household of the survey, on-line questionnaire), a more proactive communication, changes in the website of the institute...

Some examples of advice are described in the points 9 to 13.

9. When you ask someone in one mode, it is better to stay in this mode to communicate with him: if you ask him to answer online, you should communicate with him by email or internet, but not by phone or letter. It is not always possible for an online survey: the data collection unit often needs to contact the households by letter first.

When you send a letter for an online survey, it is better to be brief, to show clearly how to go online to answer the survey, and to include a QR code.

A QR code is a picture that opens a URL address in your internet browser if you flash it with your phone or your tablet.

You can easily design a QR code online for free: you just have to write the URL address of your site.

This QR code opens the URL www.insee.fr ->



10. It is better to spread on several days the reminders towards the non-respondents in order to prevent a too big peak of questions during one day or two.

It is better to start a new survey online little by little to avoid an excessive influx of questions if there is something wrong (bug...): by experimenting, testing, starting with a part of the sample and / or a part of the questionnaire...

11. It is better to give easy access to the online survey, otherwise people will not answer online (and even not at all). The website of the institute should contain a page that presents the ongoing online surveys, and the homepage of the website should contain a link to this page.

It is important to open an online survey several days before the collection of the data, because search engines need time to reference new online pages, otherwise people will not find the survey on their search engine on the first days of the collection, and they will not answer the survey.

It is better to have a user-friendly online survey to encourage people to answer (online).

12. When someone has just completed to answer a survey online, it is better to send him an email for confirming that he has finished answering (and also for thanking him). With a paper survey it is too expensive to do this: an online survey allows to do this for almost nothing and allows to improve the communication with the respondents.

13. The user support can propose an interactive FAQ that gives an even more efficient and adaptable communication with the respondents. An interactive FAQ is a sort of search engine that gives automatically some answers to a question: if there is the expected answer among the automatic answers, it is perfect. If not, the question will be sent to the user support for a manual answer. An interactive FAQ can be optimised during a survey in real time. The following paragraphs will explain it with the example of the interactive FAQ we used for the census 2015.

14. For the French census in January 2015, we used an interactive FAQ for the first time because of the very high number of households that are interviewed by the census and because of the very high number of questions the user support would received if we did nothing.

In France there is a census each year -during six weeks in January and February- for a part of the population, for 4,5 millions of the 30 millions of French households.

15. In 2014, the census allowed 250 000 households to answer online. Before this census, the user support built a classic (static) FAQ in order to reduce the number of received questions. This FAQ contains 100 questions/answers in the internal version (only for the user support). For user-friendly reasons, only the 15 most frequent questions were shown in the online FAQ for the respondents. They were classed in six topics:

- *Anonymity and confidentiality*
- *The census survey*
- *The internet census survey*
- *The methodology of the census*
- *The questionnaire in detail*
- *Enumerators*



The user support changed the FAQ three times during the census 2014 to add a question, or to modify an answer.

The user support received 500 questions about the census 2014. It analysed them and found that 250 questions depended on the number of households that can answer online and 250 questions that did not depend on this number.

16. In 2015, the census allowed all the 4 500 000 households of the census to answer online (twenty times more than in 2014). The user support anticipated that it would receive 5 250 (= 250*20 + 250) questions in 2015. Usually the user support answers 5 000 questions in a month. It would be impossible for it to answer to the double of questions because of the census. Moreover most of the questions would arrive in the two first weeks of the census. So the user support needed to do something to avoid this situation: it decided to build an interactive FAQ.

An interactive FAQ is a traditionnal FAQ with a sort of search engine that works with a semantic analysis of the words that people write to ask their questions and of the words that are in the answers of the static FAQ.

The user support filled the interactive FAQ with the 100 questions / answers of the (internal) static FAQ 2014. This interactive FAQ is on the web <http://www.le-recensement-et-moi.fr/rpetmoi/vos-questions> (in French). The next paragraphs in point 17 explain how it works.

17. Let us take an example. You want to know if your answer to the census is a secret between you and Insee. You go on <http://www.le-recensement-et-moi.fr/rpetmoi/vos-questions> and write 'secret' (or 'is my answer secret?'... like you want) to ask your question.



Then the interactive FAQ proposes several answers. For the example of 'secret', there are the five following answers:

- 1 Les réponses sont-elles confidentielles ?
- 2 Est-il obligatoire de répondre ?
- 3 Peut-on avoir confiance dans le recensement ?
- 4 Quelles garanties a le citoyen que les fichiers du recensement ne seront pas utilisés par d'autres administrations ou par des entreprises commerciales ?
- 5 Le recensement respecte-t-il ma vie privée ?

- 1 Are the answers confidential?
- 2 Is it compulsory to answer?
- 3 Can we have confidence in the census?
- 4 What guarantees a citizen that census files will not be used by government or commercial enterprises?
- 5 Does the census respect my privacy?

If you mouse over the title of an answer you can read the complete answer. For example, if you mouse over *Are the answers confidential*, the answer is:

Réponses trouvées

- 1 **Les réponses sont-elles confidentielles ?**
- 2 Est-il obligatoire de répondre ?
- 3 Peut-on avoir confiance dans le recensement ?
- 4 Quelles garanties a le citoyen que les fichiers du recensement ne seront pas utilisés par d'autres administrations ou par des entreprises commerciales ?
- 5 Le recensement respecte-t-il ma vie privée ?

Les réponses sont confidentielles. Elles sont transmises à Insee, seul habilité à exploiter les questionnaires. Les informations recueillies ne peuvent donner lieu à aucun contrôle administratif ou fiscal. Toutes les statistiques produites sont anonymes. Toutes les personnes ayant accès aux questionnaires, et notamment les agents recenseurs, sont tenues au secret professionnel. Traitées et diffusées de manière anonyme par Insee, les informations sont protégées par deux lois :

- la loi du 7 juin 1951 modifiée sur l'obligation, la coordination et le secret en matière de statistiques, qui impose le secret sur toutes les réponses fournies par le recensement et interdit leur communication à quiconque pendant cent ans.
- la loi du 6 janvier 1978 modifiée relative à l'informatique, aux fichiers et aux libertés, qui est applicable au traitement des informations recueillies lors du recensement. Ce traitement est encadré très étroitement par le décret en Conseil d'Etat du 5 juin 2003, sous le contrôle de la Cnil.

Contactez-nous
Si ces documents ne correspondent pas à votre attente, vous pouvez poser une question.

The answers are confidential. They are transmitted to Insee, who has the exclusive right to exploit the questionnaires. The information gathered can not give rise to any administrative or fiscal control. All statistics produced are anonymous. All persons having access to the questionnaires, including the enumerators are bound by professional secrecy. Processed and anonymously disseminated by Insee, the information is protected by two laws: [...]

You can click on the title of the answer and you will get to a new page that gives the answer.

Les réponses sont-elles confidentielles ?

Les réponses sont confidentielles. Elles sont transmises à Insee, seul habilité à exploiter les questionnaires. Les informations recueillies ne peuvent donner lieu à aucun contrôle administratif ou fiscal. Toutes les statistiques produites sont anonymes. Toutes les personnes ayant accès aux questionnaires, et notamment les agents recenseurs, sont tenues au secret professionnel. Traitées et diffusées de manière anonyme par Insee, les informations sont protégées par deux lois :

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Pour en savoir plus ["le recensement, c'est sûr"](#)

[Retourner à la recherche](#)

Votre avis

Ce document a été noté par 23 visiteurs ⭐

Cela répond-il à votre question ?

OUI (1) NON (2)

Non satisfait

Si cela ne répond pas entièrement à votre question, vous pouvez contacter Insee [\(Contactez-nous\)](#)

If you find the answer at your question in the list of the automatic answers, the interactive FAQ has worked.

If you do not find the answer at your question in this list, you can click on the *Contact us (Contactez-nous)* button and send your question to the user support.

■ **Fill out the contact form**

All fields on this form is required.

Please complete the fields below:

Your Email (*):

Confirm your email address (*):

You are:
- Public Type -

Your town:

Your comments (2000 character limit)

The user support will read your question and the answers that the interactive FAQ had proposed. And it will answer you!

18. During the census 2015, the user support changed five times the content of the interactive FAQ to add questions, or to improve an answer. For example, many people contacted the user support the first day to know how to access to the online questionnaire. In the afternoon of this day, the user support added this question and the answer in the FAQ. This question has been the most viewed question of the FAQ!

The interactive FAQ has worked well because the user support received only 800 questions about the census 2015, of which 300 came from the interactive FAQ (and 200 by phone, and 300 from our website)! While 3 000 questions were written in the interactive FAQ: so the interactive FAQ answered automatically 90% of them.

The user support will try to developp new interactive FAQs for other topics. It seems that it is better to developp one interactive FAQ for one topic, otherwise a too large interactive FAQ will not answer correctly.

Appendix - Questions asked to Insee user support on January 22th between 11:00 and 11:30

The names of people and places have been changed for confidentiality reasons.

1. my contact: Mr S. 76 rue xxxx 75003 Paris. I sent you a paper letter in the mail on 3/12/2012 to indicate a misspelling of my first name Tumara that was misspelled "Tommara" during registration. This error now produces a data release for the payment of an invoice addressed to the Ministry of Justice. Can you correct the spelling of my first name to Tumara as soon as possible? I thank you.

2. Hello, Can you tell me if it is possible to find consumption per household in a city and department for sport and recreation services? Thank you for your return. best regards.

3. How do we get the *RNA number* of our association?

4. Hello,I work in the Central Statistics Office in Ireland. Some of my colleagues use *Insee's SAS-macro CALMAR* for their work. We use SAS Enterprise Guide, having previously used PC SAS.My colleagues have found that CALMAR works with PC-SAS, but that it does not work with SAS Enterprise Guide. Can you tell me if CALMAR is compatible with SAS Enterprise Guide, and if so, are there any changes we need to make in order for CALMAR to work with SAS Enterprise Guide?Thank you

5. As part of a study on the difficult teenagers, I am looking for a map or data on the living areas of the region of Franche Comté and specifically Haute Saône

6. Madam, I want to reactivate my *No. Siret* inactive since 2006 following my return to work from 01/07/2014. What are the steps? Thanks in advance, Regards

7. As students in Master II *Conduct of Organisations and Integration Appliances and Reclassification* at the University of Amiens, the integration of young graduates with a Master's degree in Human Sciences. Our project, entitled "How to optimize the employment of Master II graduates in Humanities in Picardy? "It would be useful to obtain information on the following points: - the rate of insertion of Master II professional graduates in Humanities - the time of the insertion-the difficulties encountered by students - their research practices jobs - the needs of companies or sectors - the characteristics (gender, age, social environment.) of these graduates - the type of contract signed by these young workers and the number of hours worked and wages - the adequacy of training, and employment levels found

8. Hello, I would revalue the work done since 1969 by my mother. This is part of an estate. What evidence do you recommend? Knowing that my lawyer told me that he is not entitled to use the index of support. Thank you for your help

9. Hello, student in business school, I wish to have information about the deaths in France / ile de France to realize my memory graduation. The subject deals with the funeral and strategy on the issue of religious type of burial (funeral services offered to Muslims and Jews. I want to know how to use the tools available on the site to get information on rates mortalities in France / IDF based on certain criteria such as origin of parents (immigrants or not), the number funeral in France / IDF. Is it possible to have an interview with a structural engineer specialist in mortality in France so he can help me relaiser my end of study. Thanks for your help

10. Hello I would like to have a list of schools in Paris (public and private sub-contract) with contact details and No. of Education identification. We develop an experiment with the City of Paris for school doctors, and would facilitate their task by allowing you to select the colleges they are responsible. I did not find this list, but I've seen other statistics on the number of school establishment in France. Note: the file "France" is also suitable Sincerely

11. Could you, please, not come to Ms. Luigina XXXXXX, 8 Rue de Gaulle XXXX_D_ 13000 Marseille. She is very old and open to noone, without our presence. In advance thank you to note this fact. Ms. Marcelle, her daughter

12. Hello, I am currently a *pupil in Terminal STG* and I would like to know the percentage of stress during the last 10 years. I need these statistics to realize my study that I will present to a jury at the end of the year. Thank you for your understanding.

13. Hello, I have received a notice of the social security who informed me that I was dead. ERROR of person probably but since 2 January and despite the various letters my card of social security is not yet enable. I need urgent medical care and I can not have them because I still waiting for my insurance card is active. THANKS to consider my urgent request. No. SS 2 49 xx xx xxx xxx xx, XXXX Marie