

Summary for Panel Survey Methods Workshop, July 14-15, University of Essex

- Title:** Survey Attitude as Determinant for Panel Dropout and Attrition
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The validity of *any* longitudinal study can be threatened by dropout. In traditional longitudinal studies, respondents are contacted at regular interval, but the frequency is relatively low. However, in online panels respondents are contacted far more frequently, which may in turn cause feelings of being over exposed and experiencing panel fatigue, leading to incidental nonresponse and final drop-out much quicker than in traditional longitudinal studies. If the dropout is *selective*, if the missing data are not missing randomly, than the results may be biased. When one knows who the dropouts are and why the dropout occurs, one can statistically adjust for dropout. But this is far from simple and the more one knows about the missing data, the better one can adjust. So, the first step in good adjustment is to prevent dropout as much as possible, and collect as many data as possible of people who may eventually drop out. Identifying the potential dropouts in an online panel is the goal of this study.

We developed a nine-item survey attitude scale measuring three construct: survey enjoyment (3 questions), survey value (3 questions), and survey burden (3 questions). This survey attitude scale was based on earlier work by Cialdini, et al (19991), Goyder (1986), Singer et al (1998), Stocke (2006), and Rogelberg et al (2001). A first version of this questionnaire was implemented in a well-established, ongoing Dutch online panel (CentERpanel, see www.centerdata.nl, located at Tilburg University) in week 9 (February 26) 2007. The results were encouraging, the three proposed factors could be identified and the scale had an overall reliability of 0.83.

At present a new Dutch online panel is established, the LISS panel. The LISS online panel is unique in two ways. First of all, it will be a true longitudinal panel, in the sense that a set of repeated measures is being collected at regular intervals. In addition, panel members receive occasional requests for ad-hoc surveys. Secondly, the starting point of the LISS panel is a probability sample of Dutch households; those households that are willing to participate but have no Internet access are equipped with a user-friendly computer with Internet access.

The survey-attitude questionnaire is part of one of the longitudinal core modules of the LISS-panel. We expect that 'stayers' will score relatively high on the subscales survey enjoyment and survey value (saliency), and low on the subscale survey burden in comparison with "'leavers'. It should be noted that 'survey burden' is an attitude measure, not a measure of the actual burden, which is also available through the central panel administration. In addition we have biographical data available for each panel member.

As mentioned the LISS-panel just started, and we now still have preliminary results about the development and construction of the questionnaire. We encourage comments and suggestions, and we plan to follow-up on this in the coming years.

References

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