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Transforming social survey data collection in the UK - opportunities and challenges

Ed Dunn (Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom)

ed.dunn@ons.gov.uk

Abstract

ONS has embarked on an ambitious project to transform the way it collects social survey data. The Data Collection Transformation Programme was launched a year ago to deliver changes including: moving data collection online; integrating survey and administrative data; and modernising the interviewing field force.

Considerable investment requires significant benefits in terms of cash savings and long term benefit to the UK statistical system.

This presentation will outline the individual elements of the transformation activity and will highlight both the opportunities offered and the challenges faced. For example, rationalising surveys and integrating them with administrative data sources offers opportunities to achieve efficiencies, reduce what is being asked of respondents and improve the quality of data collected. On the other hand, moving online presents a challenge for communicating with respondents, who will not have contact with an interviewer who can 'sell' participation in the survey or tailor explanations to meet their different needs.

We acknowledge that, as we move towards our future vision, we still need to improve the way we do things today. Even as we adopt online data collection, there will still be a role for an interviewing field force for some time. So we are modernising the way they work: the tools available to them and the types of contracts used to employ them.