

Running complex surveys on different devices: What's the challenge?

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Abstract

There is an ongoing discussion on the future of data collection in social surveys in Official Statistics. The debate is rather complex, as there are several perspectives to be taken into account: Firstly, the general question, if we still need any data collection, as data are possibly available by other sources and technics (e.g. administrative data, big data, sensors). Secondly, if surveys are still considered to be as relevant, by applying which mode(s) and questionnaire designs. Thirdly, if Online-First is to be taken seriously, which device should be of main impact. Finally, if Smartphones and possibly Apps are of main relevance, can we still apply our survey designs as adopted in the past.

At the moment, there are two main population surveys and their design to be discussed at Destatis: Online questionnaires for the Census in 2021 and the modulized Labour-Force-Survey (LFS). The two projects are driven by different perspectives: The Census 2012 applied the mobile first approach and reacting responsive, whereas the LFS meets the requirements of long and complex surveys, based on interviewer administered data collection and applying web data collection as the "second mode". These two projects show the radical change in survey methodology, which official statistics are facing these days and feed the discussion at Destatis too.

Additionally, these challenges have been investigated in the ESSnet project Mixed Mode Designs in Social Surveys (MIMOD), conducted in 2018/2019, coordinated by ISTAT in partnership with CBS (Netherlands), SSB (Norway), STAT (Austria) and Destatis (Germany). MIMOD aimed at supporting NSIs in facing challenges when implementing multi-mode and multi-devices data collection within social surveys at the European Statistical System (ESS). While five work packages cover the entire topics from mode-strategies and -organization to design alternatives across modes, one work package addressed the use of smartphones for social surveys. The latest will be captured by this presentation: Based on fitness criteria which have been developed to assess the social surveys to be fit for smartphones, MIMOD concluded for several social surveys, redesign is recommended, either on the total survey design, questionnaires or questions, while mixed-mode data collection will be still needed in the future.

Hence, further discussion on the future of social surveys will be a prominent topic in the ESS.

Keywords

Multimode data collection

