

Implementing Alternative Modes of Data Collection to Overcome Covid-19 Challenges

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Who are Industrial Price Field Economists?

- Secure cooperation and collect data for PPI and MXP
- Telephone survey respondents to schedule appointments
- Conduct interviews mostly in-person
- Select products and services to be priced over time
- Explain the repricing process
- Struggle to obtain cooperation – surveys are not mandatory



The Impact of Covid-19 on Data Collection

- March 2020 – BLS suspended personal visit data collection
- Shift from personal visit data collection to telephone and email
- Many respondents have been unreachable
- Respondents may not be receptive to personal visits in the future
- Some businesses use video communications, as does BLS



Alternative Modes of Data Collection

- First, shifting to telephone supplemented by email
- Developing standardized emails to communicate with respondents
- Using video collaboration tool in data collection activities
 - ▶ Video tool is encrypted
 - ▶ Supporting materials developed internally
 - ▶ Field Economists participated in training



Training New Hires & Quality Assurance Checks

- Core PPI training class converted from in-person to virtual learning
- Use collaborative video software and telephone conferencing for:
 - ▶ On-the-job training
 - ▶ Quality assurance such as observation interviews



Challenges

- Respondent accessibility
- Time spent collecting data has been greater
- Training Field Economists on video collection took time
- Many respondents opt for telephone initiation
- Respondents are more likely to turn off their cameras
- Field Economists more comfortable with telephone and email



Conclusion

- Field Economists will become more comfortable using video
- Continue to adjust our training program to virtual learning
- Video and telephone conferencing will continue to be used
- In-person visits will likely still play a role in the future



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