

Multimode data collection in household surveys at Statistics Portugal

Pedro Silva; Tânia Correia; Filipa Lidónio (Statistics Portugal)

pedro.silva@ine.pt; tania.correia@ine.pt; filipa.lidonio@ine.pt

Abstract

Multimode data collection has been a reality for household surveys at Statistics Portugal since the introduction of CATI in 2006. Along with the introduction of CAWI, several important dimensions of its operationalization have since evolved substantially, with current approaches to mode management differing markedly from earlier practices. The main features of multimode data collection for recent household surveys will be outlined, focusing on the ICT survey as an example.

The consolidation of an integrated management system underlies the feasibility of several management choices, such as those concerning mode changes for a given household. This system integration has allowed for a transition from multimode data collection with mode changes only from wave to wave to a much more flexible paradigm with the possibility of a specific household changing mode multiple times during the fieldwork period (both as a result of data collection management options aiming at response rate improvement and respondent requests). ICT survey will be used as an example to present how such flexibility is operationalised in a survey that has since 2018 involved three modes of data collection (CAWI, CATI, and CAPI) based on a common questionnaire (unimode design), and with both sequential and concurrent mode organization features. In addition, the use of specific information available prior to each fieldwork period is presented, namely information regarding the specific household (e.g., response history in previous waves) or geographical (e.g., CAWI response rates for different PSUs).

Recognising that communication with respondents is another central dimension for proper mode management, a multimode contact strategy is commonly used at Statistics Portugal, and some of its features will be presented. These will include elements of adaptive/responsive design with segmentation of initial advance letter/e-mail and reminders, along with the use of SMS and continuous respondent support with online survey help and telephone helpdesk availability (including the possibility of online visualisation of respondents questionnaire progress/difficulties and, if necessary, immediate change from CAWI to CATI for response conclusion). While we currently opt to focus our communications with respondents on promoting the specific mode the household is associated at a given time (starting with a global push-to-web in a CAWI first design), exceptions will be discussed, including those preceding planned large scale mode transitions or attempts at postal recovery of invalid CATI phone numbers. Furthermore, communication with respondents will also be considered regarding our experiences of data collection allowing for simultaneous independent answers for each mode and within a setting allowing only one mode at a time.

Still regarding communication with respondents, aiming for its optimization we have also run several experimental tests and some examples are presented. These will be mentioned considering a multimode framework and include the content of initial communications and reminders, use of SMS or efforts at improving between-wave engagement with a feedback/thank you email in a longitudinal perspective.

Finally, some challenges for the future are identified and discussed, such as dealing with mode transitions within shorter fieldwork periods, optimizing fieldwork preparation with available paradata (namely mode transition history of each household in panel/longitudinal surveys), the update of household contact information and confidentiality assurance in flexible multimode settings.