



Understanding Society

THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Targeted designs in longitudinal surveys: prospects and definitions

Peter Lynn,

ISER, University of Essex

An initiative by the Economic and Social Research Council, with scientific leadership by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, and survey delivery by NatCen Social Research and TNS BMRB

Targeted Designs



- One or more design features are varied between subgroups of sample members
- Aim is to beneficially affect the relationship between survey costs and survey errors
- Variation(s) in design feature(s) are identified and planned in advance of data collection
- No adaptations are made during field work (static design)
- Longitudinal survey context

Aims



As implemented on longitudinal surveys to date, aim is usually to achieve one of the following:

- Reduce one or more components of nonresponse error;
- Reduce one or more components of measurement error;
- Reduce survey costs

Treatments I



When the aim relates to nonresponse error, treatments (design variations) can include:

- Differential incentives, monetary or otherwise;
- Differential field time (i.e. prioritising certain types of cases) or call scheduling;
- Differential methods to encourage keeping in touch / notifying changes of address/phone/email;
- Differential communications (advance letters, information brochures, between-wave mailings, etc).

Treatments II



When the aim relates to measurement error, treatments (design variations) can include:

- Varying motivational statements;
- Varying question wording or question structure;
- Repeating questions/instruments at a subsequent wave, depending on previous response to same questions/instruments.

Future Prospects



- Targeted procedures to become a routine part of survey production?
(May require survey organisations to modify their systems)
- Treatments to become more sophisticated?
- Aims to become more sophisticated (e.g. multiple error sources/ components?)

Terminology



- Should targeted designs be considered a subset of adaptive designs?
- Should designs that aim to influence measurement error rather than nonresponse error be included?



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Innovation Panel



To test and develop new methods, including both data collection and measurement methods, in order to :

- Maximise the value of *Understanding Society* by informing decisions regarding methodology and design;
- Contribute to developments in the methodology of longitudinal survey research.

Key design aspects of UKHLS are replicated, as far as possible, to provide appropriate context

Approx. 1,500 responding households at wave 1 plus 500 new each 3 waves (wave 4, wave 7,...)

Innovation Panel II



At waves 1 and 2 the IP was designed by the *Understanding Society* team to serve the development and testing needs of the survey

From wave 3 an (annual) open competition was instigated to identify studies and tests to incorporate

Open to all: call made in March each year, with proposal deadline in early June

No cost of data collection to the proposer

Innovation Panel III



The inclusion of any design feature, test or experiment ('study') on the IP should meet the following criteria:

1. The issue addressed should be specific to the longitudinal research context or of particular importance to longitudinal surveys
2. Studies should draw strength from, or at least be relevant to, the household design
3. Studies should not unreasonably endanger the future of the panel

There is also guidance on priorities

More Information



www.understandingsociety.ac.uk

especially:

www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation

www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers