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SOLUTIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES: USING PROCESS DATA FOR RESPONSIVE DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Survey organizations world-wide have seen an increase in survey nonresponse (Groves and Couper, 1998; O'Rourke etal., 1998; DeLeeuw and deHeer, 2002; Johnson and Owens, 2003; Sangster, 2003; Groves etal, 2004; Tourangeau, 2004). In an effort to counter these trends, most organizations have responded by increasing contact attempts with a resulting increase in costs. However, allocating resources to increase overall response rates may be an ineffective way to reduce nonresponse error in the face of growing evidence that response rates may be a poor predictor of nonresponse error (Groves, 2005).

Survey process data or paradata can be used to inform design decisions during the course of data collections in order to reduce survey costs while also reducing nonreponse error (Heeringa and Groves, 2004). Such paradata includes call-level histories, sample, household and contact observations, and external information about the sample areas (e.g., urbanicity, population characteristics). These data are used in conjunction with key survey questionnaire variables to inform 'responsive design' decisions.

Other paradata include interviewer characteristics and performance, instrument characteristics (audit trails), and other quality indicators that are used in statistical process control monitoring.

This paper will discuss the types of paradata that can be collected and will describe the systems that process, integrate, and report on these data. Examples will be provided of the uses of these data in responsive design decisions as well as in ongoing quality monitoring.

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