

# Response problems in surveys

**Improving response &  
minimising the load**

# Why is non-response a problem?

- **introduces error into estimates**
  - *increases sample error if random*
  - *introduces bias if non-random*
- **impact can be reduced by imputation**
- **impact varies with use made of data**
- **difficult to measure & advise users**

# How does it arise?

- **non-contact of selected units**
- **refusal to participate, in full or part**

# Key factors influencing response

- **quality of survey frame**
- **method of data collection**
- **response load of questionnaire**
- **followup**
- **legal obligations**
- **experience & ability of collection & followup staff**
- **communication strategy & relationship management**
- **track record on protection of confidentiality**

# Communication & relationship management

- **pre-notification**
- **explain value of survey in terms likely to understand**
- **provide help**
- **get stakeholders support**
- **provide feedback of results**
- **have a high public profile for the organisation**
- **staff need good relationship skills**

# Sound processes for household surveys

- **Good frame information**
  - *clear listing instructions if area based*
  - *update process*
  - *contact information*
- **training**
- **set standards for no. of calls, how to handle refusals, etc**
- **match interviewers with respondents**
- **supervision & regular quality checks**
- **control size of questionnaires**
- **use pre-notification letters**

# Sound processes for business surveys

- good frame information
- establish contact person
- collection & control system
- large business unit
- respondent liaison
  - *provide help*
  - *followup*
- sample rotation & overlap control
- timing of contact & time given for response
- get key units

# Characteristics of non-responding persons

**More likely to be**

- **younger**
- **in employment**
- **in smaller households**
- **from target policy groups (eg indigeneous population)**



***significance for different types of surveys***

# Some aspects of non-response

- tends to deteriorate slowly overtime
- but can usually 'stop the rot'
- need to monitor and take action

 ***Management issue***

***(beware of made up responses & sample substitution if push interviewers too much!)***

# Measure & monitor indicators

- Overall response rate
- noncontact rate
- refusal rate
- no. of vacant dwellings
- mail returns
- slippage rate

# Why do we need to minimise reporting load?

- **data supply is our lifeblood**
- **less load helps achieve high response & quality**
- **co-operation keeps costs lower**
- **load can become a political issue & solutions imposed**

# Ways to minimise reporting load

**Need a combination of**

- ***corporate strategies &***
- ***individual collection strategies***

# Corporate strategies

- **one frame + coordinated samples**
- **consolidate collections**
- **respondent management system**
- **respondent liaison unit**
- **key provider management**
- **provide multi-modal collection methods**
- **measure & monitor load**

# Individual collection strategies

## Design

- use administrative records
- use (efficient) samples
- reduce scope/frequency/content
- use modelling/synthetic estimation for detailed estimates
- impute for missing information

# Individual collection strategies

## Collection

- test forms
- tailor forms
- accept responses in way desired by respondents
- approval to collect direct from eg bank



*understand impact on quality*

# Respondent management system

- **calculate & monitor respondent load**
- **show total load on a business**
- **understand & better target nonresponse problems**
- **manage key & significant respondents**

# Some other aspects

- **co-ordinate collection demands across agencies**
- **approval process for new collections**
- **establish a provider advocate**
- **monitor load from oversampling key sub-populations**
- **Service Charters**