Session 2B - Surveys and Data Combinations

Interviewer like interviewer? Do interviewer characteristics matter for obtaining informed consent to data linkage?

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Abstract

Linking survey data to administrative data is becoming a common practice in the UK. Data linkage enhances research opportunities as it can provide more data at lower (survey and respondent) costs while, in principle, providing information that could also be used to detect measurement error (i.e., by carrying out validation studies) and therefore improve methods of data collection. In the UK, informed consent must be obtained from respondents in order to link administrative data at the individual level to survey data. Much of the research on this topic has addressed issues regarding consent rates and consent bias connected to respondent socio-economic characteristics (Dunn et al., 2004; Jenkins et al., 2006; Tate et al., 2006). However, very little is known on other issues regarding data linkage, such as the role played by interviewers in obtaining consent from the respondents. Our experience from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) Wave 18 shows a high degree of variation in interviewer's success in obtaining consent: The average consent rate across interviewers is 42 percent (standard deviation: 22), the 10 percent least successful interviewer (p10) achieved a consent rate of 12 percent while the 10 percent most successful interviewer (p90) obtained a rate of 70 percent. What are the drivers of these differences, and can they be controlled?

In this paper we explore the interviewers' role in obtaining consent to record linkage on the 18th wave of BHPS. Using a logistic regression model we estimate the effect on consenting of interviewer socio-demographic characteristics, their personality traits ("Big Five"), their job motivation and their attitude to persuading survey respondents (Lehtonen, 1995), controlling for respondent characteristics and interviewer-respondent match. For instance, interviewers who think that they shouldn't try to persuade a reluctant respondent or who are sensitive to possible privacy concerns may be less likely to obtain consent or be less convincing when they try to. This analysis will help to clarify issues that are not well researched as well as provide practical guidance for survey designers on briefing or selecting interviewers who will be asking for consent.

We use a unique matched dataset for this analysis which has never been used before: (i) the BHPS Wave 18 individual interviews, (ii) an interviewer survey which was administered during Wave 18 interviewer briefings and (iii) a unique dataset on all interviewers who ever worked on the BHPS provided by the survey agency.

Literature

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