



Office for  
National Statistics

# **Social Survey Response: What can be done?**

SOMB 20 February 2013

# How can we improve response?

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- What can interviewers do?
- How can we help at headquarters ...  
... through interviewer management?  
... in other ways?
- How can survey design help improve response?
- How can our systems and processes help improve response?

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Response

Contact

Co-operation

# What can we do to maximise contact?

Interviewers	Interviewer Management	Systems, Processes and Survey Design	Headquarters
Call at the right days and times	Ensure enough interviewers to cover work	Connect interviewers with HQ & each other	Seek respondent insights
Share best practice	Manage interviewers hours and working patterns	Provide early warnings (as part of performance mgt)	Communicate with respondents ( <a href="#">encourage appointments</a> )
	Provide evidence about effective calling patterns	Have systems that work (eg allocation and reissue)	Be joined up in the way we work
	Liaise with LAs and 'gatekeepers'	Improve our sample designs	
	Train interviewers		
	Manage performance		

# What can we do to maximise co-operation?

Interviewers	Interviewer Management	Systems, Processes and Survey Design	Headquarters
Inform themselves about how to persuade and 'sell' the survey	Provide information to help 'sell' the survey	Connect interviewers with HQ and each other	Influence the wider survey environment
Share best practice	Train interviewers	Provide early warnings (part of performance mgt)	Communicate with respondents (persuade, inform, provide incentives)
	Manage performance	Provide information on case history (eg reasons for refusal)	Seek respondent insights
		Survey design (questionnaire length; repetition of questions; mode)	Be joined up in the way we work

# Maximising contact ...

Ensure enough interviewers to cover work	Recruit (the people we want, using social media to target); ensure availability of the people we have; manage the 'time bomb'
Manage interviewers' availability and working patterns	Hours, annual leave, sickness and working patterns;
Provide evidence, training and guidance about calling patterns	MI about calling patterns and relationship with response; analysis of TO call scheduler . Under-represented respondents?
Liaise with LAs and 'gatekeepers'	Help interviewers gain access to buildings to make contact – using census work
Interviewers to call at the right days and times	Incentives: payment by results? Bonuses or sanctions? Better MI for managers – and interviewers - to effectively monitor calling patterns
Have systems that work (eg allocation and reissue)	Make sure work is available to interviewers when they are available to do it; support (from SEL and FTS) when they need it
Have survey/sample designs that help	Changes to LFS field and reissues periods to make more use of weekends. Smooth out samples to avoid fluctuations in local areas
Communicate with respondents (encourage appointments)	Use cognitive interviewing to explore best way to do; making contact first at weekends? Review policy about using phones (inc text, email and interviewing) in field.

# Maximising co-operation ...

Provide information to help 'sell' the survey	Connect survey with its outputs, eg on the website state which survey an output is based on; Liaise with OGDs/charities who commission surveys and use results;
Interviewers to inform themselves about how to persuade and 'sell' the survey	Using social media to keep up-to-date with latest outputs. Use CARI for interviewers to reflect on own performance
Provide information on case history (eg reasons for refusal)	To better understand progress of a case and how best to persuade. Record calls/interviews to better understand what works
Survey design (questionnaire length; repetition of questions; mode)	Compulsory participation; shorter questionnaires; online/paper options (at least for basic information about non-responders)
Communicate with respondents (persuade, inform, provide incentives)	Branding (same for respondents and users?); value of incentives (£10 in 1985 worth less than £4 now); respondent insight to address concerns (eg on confidentiality/security?). Cog. testing of letters/leaflets ; target our approach
Influence the wider survey environment	Needs commitment of top of ONS and Statistics Authority. Social marketing; using social media /TV etc to reach public

# Addressing common issues ...

Interviewers need to share best practice	Opportunities to meet and discuss: pay mentors / experts to share best practice? Coaching / buddying opportunities?
We need to train interviewers and manage their performance	Continue to improve MI and train interviewer managers and Field Offices to use; clear roles and responsibilities about managing performance; evaluate training and know what happens at SGMs
We need to be better connected to interviewers	Need two-way email contact with interviewers: long argued for but never achieved! Extranet will help, but it's the only success so far.
We need systems that provide early warnings	Of problems with response before it's too late to do anything about – or of successes, where we can avoid doing unnecessary work. Joining up data collection and survey data.
We need to understand and communicate with respondents	Focus on customer service. Use various methods to collect respondent insight: OPN module; probity checks; feedback mailbox; CNRLS; paper form; cognitive testing?
We need to be joined up in the way we work	Common practices across sites; sharing information; protecting the reputation of Social Survey



# Additional ideas ...

Communications: have a specialist working with/for us (for internal and external communications)	External: Engage 'big' figures to increase awareness and good will – eg Cultural Groups; Local MPs and councillors; Boris. Do they know what we do and do they champion it? Target community liaison on the hardest areas (like London) Interviewers to play a role in promoting Social Survey (on local radio or newspapers) – with help from HQ
	Internal: Review the way we 'bombard' interviewers with information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comms Pack is unfocused.</li><li>• Messages to and from: SEL; Field Office; Coding and Editing; FMs; Audit; FTS; Allocations etc.</li></ul>
Exploit Beyond 2011	Keep involved and try to benefit from the greater resources that will be thrown at this Programme: publicity; systems etc. They will be branded as ONS rather than Census.
Different strategies in different places	There are some areas that are always more difficult than others. Try a different strategy in those areas: for communication and for the way interviewers work (different hours; working in pairs; community liaison for example).

