

Challenges of assessing the quality of a prerecruited probability-based panel of Internet users in Germany

GESIS Online Access Panel

Target: German-speaking Internet users 18+
Sampling: RDD
Mode: Mixed (CATI recruitment interview, online questionnaires)
Fieldwork: Feb 2011 – May 2012
AAPOR3 RR (CATI): 17.1%
Incentive: 0, 2, 5, 10, bonus 20 EUR (experimental variation)
% Internet users (unweighted): 71.5%
Completion rate online: 55.6%
N for comparison (unweighted): 787 (long interviews)

Reference Surveys

ALLBUS (German GSS)	ESS (German subsample)
Target: residents private hh 18+	Target: residents private hh 15+
Sampling: register	Sampling: register
Mode: face-to-face	Mode: face-to-face
Fieldwork: May – Nov 2010	Fieldwork: Sep 2010 – Feb 2011
RR: 34.4%	RR: 30.5%
Incentive: 0, 10 (interviewer tailoring)	Incentive: 20 EUR
% Internet users (weigh.): 67.1%	% Internet users (weigh.): 72.5%
N for comparison (unweigh.): 1869	N for comparison (unweigh.): 2038

Comparison of Internet users 18+, all graphs based on design-weighted data, 99% confidence intervals



Summary

- Absolute average difference on selected demographics (age, sex, education, marital & employment status, immigration background):
 - OAP & ALLBUS: 5 percentage points
 - OAP & ESS: 5 percentage points
 - ALLBUS & ESS: 2 percentage points
- Statistically significant differences on most demographic & attitudinal variables (i.e. trust, life satisfaction, interest in politics, health status)
- OAP has wider confidence intervals

Discussion

- Despite the number of significant differences, judging by confidence intervals, OAP estimates don't seem „too far off“ from those of f2f surveys
- Problem of choosing variables for comparison / alpha-inflation
- What to do with cases where two reference surveys significantly differ (e.g. working for pay, self-rated health, life satisfaction)?
- Are other surveys an appropriate benchmark in the absence of data from official statistics?
- Further research: disentangling nonresponse from mode and context effects