

IBUC 2012 Paper Abstract

Developing and Testing A Complex Mixed Mode Questionnaire Instrument – Richard Boreham

Understanding Society is a complex longitudinal survey which has stretched and strengthened our approach to development and testing. During the study's early development:

- It had separate questionnaire instruments for CAPI and CATI
- It had separate CAPI instruments in Northern Ireland (where fieldwork is carried out by NISRA) and GB (where fieldwork is carried out by NatCen) because each organisation has a bespoke sample management system requiring slightly different Blaise code.
- The questionnaire was translated into 9 other languages and administered using an alternative data entry program running the compiled Blaise code.

As a result, any change to the questionnaire had to be implemented in all versions. It therefore made sense to create a single questionnaire that worked in CAPI and CATI modes, in GB and Northern Ireland, and in all languages.

Having achieved this, we then needed to introduce web interviewing. This presented particular challenges because the questionnaire instrument consists of household enumeration, a household questionnaire and individual questionnaires for each adult in the household aged 16 plus:

- For CAPI and CATI these are all programmed within one instrument because of the way that NatCen's sample management systems work.
- However for CAWI these needed to be split into separate instruments because of concern about the performance issues of hosting one very large instrument.

Finally, the Understanding Society individual questionnaire consists of over 50 different modules and must be programmed in a way which allows both internal and client testing with complex scenarios.

This paper will describe some of the lessons learned during this complex process. For example, it will illustrate the approach taken to create instruments using common source code and will demonstrate the way that the code has been structured to be able to develop and test the questionnaire on a module by module basis.

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