

Implementing Audio Computer Assisted Self Interviewing in Basil

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Abstract

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is sponsored by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). The NHIS provides information about the prevalence and distribution of illness, its effects in terms of disability and chronic impairments, and the kind of health services people receive.

As far back as 2004, the NCHS had talked to the U.S. Census Bureau about the possibility of using Audio Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (ACASI) technology to ask sexual orientation questions in the NHIS instrument. In September 2010, a research group at the NCHS began discussions with the Census Bureau about conducting an ACASI pilot project.

The NCHS's initial plan was to have the Field Representative (FR) who conducts the NHIS interview provide the respondent with a touch screen device (e.g., iPad) on which the ACASI portion of the interview would be administered. Unfortunately, the time frame for deploying the pilot project precluded the use of such a device. As a result, the pilot project had to run on the FR laptops. Considering this constraint, the Census Bureau recommended to the NCHS that the pilot project use the ACASI functionality in Blaise. After some investigation, the NCHS researchers decided that the Blaise user interface could not be customized sufficiently to meet their needs. The NCHS methodologists wanted a user interface that would be easy for respondents with limited technical knowledge to use when answering the questions in the ACASI module. After communicating with Statistics Netherlands, the NCHS researchers decided to develop the ACASI module in Basil.

This paper will discuss some of the methodological and technical challenges encountered while the NCHS and the Census Bureau worked on the ACASI module. It will also discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of using Basil for a project of this nature and results from the first field test.