

MEMORANDUM

TO: Office of Management and Budget

FROM: Brad Hesse, HINTS Project Officer

DATE: November 26, 2007

RE: HINTS 2007 Nonsubstantive Change Request
OMB #0925-0538

This memo summarizes the Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) 2007 pilot study and resulting decisions about the study design plan, in accordance with the stipulations in the OMB approval letter for HINTS 2007 received on August 2, 2007. The changes described below can be classified as either reductions in OMB-approved instruments or the elimination of OMB-approved embedded experiments. None of the changes that are being requested are substantive or contain new elements. NCI is therefore requesting that these changes be considered under the Nonsubstantive Change Request procedure.

As outlined in the Supporting Statement of the OMB package submitted for HINTS 2007, the HINTS target population is all adults aged 18 or older in the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. The sample design for HINTS 2007 consists of two samples with each sample being selected from a separate sampling frame. One sample will be a list-assisted random digit dial (RDD) sample selected from all telephone exchanges in the United States, following the design of HINTS 2003 and HINTS 2005. This will result in a nationally representative sample of households with a landline telephone. The second sample is comprised of addresses selected from a list based on U.S. Postal Service (USPS) administrative records. The purpose of using the dual-frame approach is to directly address the increasing migration of landline telephone to mobile-only telephone households in a cost-effective manner. Pilot testing was conducted on both the telephone and mail samples.

1. Mail Survey Response Rates

The mail pilot survey (USPS sample) was conducted from August 23 through October 15, 2007. The pilot study included:

- mailing advance letters to households;
- mailing a 1st package of instruments to households;
- mailing a postcard reminder to households that had not responded;
- mailing a 2nd package of instruments to households that had not responded; and
- conducting telephone follow-up interviews with a randomly selected adult in households that had not responded to the mail survey.

Results

The overall response rate for the mail survey was 27.6%. The rate differed significantly by sampling stratum. Those in the low minority stratum had a rate of 31%, while the rate in the high minority stratum had a rate of 18.7%. Most of the responses came from the mail survey, with only a small proportion being picked up during the telephone follow-up (see table below).

	Overall	Low Minority	High Minority
Overall Response Rate	27.59%	30.97%	18.73%
Mail Response Rate	23.74%	26.03%	17.75%
Telephone Follow-up Response Rate	3.85%	4.93%	0.99%
Household-level Mail Response Rate	31.32%	33.86%	23.84%
Within-household Mail Response Rate	77.24%	78.91%	75.03%
Proportion of delivered mail with listed phones	53.43%	56.95%	43.05%
Household-level Mail Response Rates for Households with Listed Phones	37.62%	37.01%	40.00%
Telephone Response Rate	9.27%	10.93%	2.56%

Decisions

- Because overall response rates for the pilot mail survey are in the range expected, NCI will continue the dual-frame study design as originally planned.
- Because response rates for the telephone follow-up portion of the mail pilot were much lower than expected, NCI will not continue this follow-up in the main study and will instead focus resources elsewhere (see number 2 below).

2. Incentive and Mail Mode Experiments

Two embedded experiments were conducted during the mail pilot. The incentive treatment consisted of including a \$2 incentive in the initial mailing of the questionnaires for half of the sample. The other half did not receive any money. The express mail treatment consisted of mailing the 2nd mailing of the questionnaires using an express mail carrier (Federal Express) to half the sample. The other half received the 2nd mailing via USPS.

Results

Both the incentive and mail treatments significantly increased the return of the mail survey. Each of these treatments increased the household-level response rate by approximately 10 percentage points. The two treatments seem to complement each other. When each is applied separately, the household-level response rate increases from 22% to 31%. When both are used together, the response rate goes up an additional 10 percentage points to 41%.

		Incentive		
		\$2	\$0	
Express Mail	Yes	41.1	30.9	36.1
	No	31.0	21.8	26.3
		35.8	25.9	

Decisions

- Because these 2 treatments appear to have a significant impact on household response rates, NCI will eliminate the experimental status of these 2 treatments and instead will send all mail respondents the \$2 incentive in the first mailing and will send all second mailings via Federal Express.

3. Short vs. Long Form

In the mail pilot, an experiment was conducted to test whether sending a shorter questionnaire would increase the response rate. For this purpose, two questionnaires were designed. The long instrument included all items that were on the CATI interview. The short instrument cut the instrument 25% - 30%.

Results

There was no difference in the response rates for the two different questionnaires (30.8% vs. 30.8%).

Decisions

- The long instrument was shortened to keep it compatible with the CATI instrument which was also shortened. Please see Attachment A for the mail instrument with changes from the pilot highlighted in yellow.

4. CATI Extended Timing

The CATI pilot test was conducted from September 17 through October 15, 2007. One of the main purposes of conducting the pilot of the RDD study was to get an accurate estimate of the amount of time the extended CATI interview takes to complete.

Results

The CATI extended instrument took an average of 40.12 minutes to complete.

Decisions

- A number of items were cut from the CATI extended instrument in order to bring the time down to 30 minutes. Please see Attachment B for the revised CATI extended instrument, with cuts indicated in yellow.

5. Type of Letter and Telephone Introduction

Two different experiments were conducted with the telephone sample. One experiment tested which of two different letters would increase the response rate. One letter had a text format, which discussed different aspects of the study. The other letter included a set of bullets highlighting results from the study.

Two different introductions for the screener were also tested. One introduction characterized the study as a “national study on people's needs for health information”. The other introduction characterized it as a “national health study”.

Results

Neither of these experiments yielded statistically significant results. For the type of letter, the rates were 29.0% vs. 25.4%. For the introduction, the two response rates were 27.9% vs. 26.5%. There were approximately 400 cases in each of the experimental groups.

Decisions

- Based on results from the cognitive testing which was conducted prior to the pilot test, NCI will use the bulleted letter (see Attachment C—with no changes since the pilot).
- Both introductions will be provided to interviewers on the screen of the RDD and interviewers will be allowed to select whichever introduction they feel is most appropriate