

Attachment 7. Development of the SCV Design

Traditional methods of interviewing include the in-person and over the telephone interviewing strategies. There are strengths and weaknesses associated with both methods. Telephone interviewing tends to be less costly than in-person interviewing as this mode does not involve travel time to and from the household, and because telephone interviewers are generally paid less than interviewers in the field. However, the telephone mode generally results in increased partial interviews since respondents may easily break-off the conversation. Visual aids, which can be helpful to respondents in remembering long lists, are difficult to incorporate in a telephone interviews. Telephone interviewing is not conducive to administering lengthy informed consent and assent procedures. Compared with face-to-face surveys, telephone surveys have also been found to yield lower response rates (Groves and Kahn, 1979; Cannell et al., 1987; Sykes and Collins, 1988; Hox and de Leeuw, 1994). Though in-person interviewing is more costly, this form of administration generally results in higher response rates resulting from increased rapport between the interviewer and respondents. Rapport in the face to face context also makes the in-person approach amenable to longer interviews. In-person interviewers can be cross-trained as telephone interviewers, thereby eliminating the need for centralized, facility-based telephone interviewing; however, traditional monitoring activities, one of the hallmarks of centralized administration, are not feasible with this approach.

The self-administered modes, such as mail and Web surveys, tend to have lower per-unit costs because no paid labor is involved—the costs for responding fall almost entirely on the respondent (Groves et al., 2004). With their growing proliferation, Web surveys are increasingly popular in mixed-mode surveys and are notably cost- and time-efficient (Dillman 2000; Couper 2000). The Web mode combines the advantage of computer-assisted response with the advantages of self-administration, providing a data collection option that is both convenient for respondents and cost-effective. With strictly cost in mind, a data collection approach that emphasizes completion via the Web or mail is preferable. Research indicates that self-administration elicits more honest reporting on sensitive topics than interviewer administration (Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski, 2000), but self-administered modes are generally characterized by lower response and higher break-off rates compared to interviewer-administered modes (e.g., Gribble et al., 2000; Tourangeau, Steiger, and Wilson, 2002). Thus, they are often offered in combination with other modes, such as CATI.

Given these mode considerations, and the objectives of the study, the SCV will deploy a mixed-mode, multi-wave design that attempts to take advantage of the strengths of the modes while recognizing their limitations. The design will blend a primary, interviewer-administered contact mode for the household respondent (CAPI or CATI) with less costly options (inbound CATI and Web) for (1) interviews with individual respondents in the household, (2) nonresponse follow-up with household and individual respondents, and (3) interviews in subsequent waves. A mail survey mode will not be utilized because of the challenges identified during the cognitive testing of a paper-and-pencil version of the instrument.

Groves et al. (2004) identified three main reasons for using mixed-mode data collection: cost reduction, response rate maximization, and money saving in longitudinal surveys. The use of a combination of data collection methods reduces cost, as it typically involves an attempt to collect data in a cheaper mode (e.g., Web), followed by a more expensive mode (e.g., telephone), and possibly moving to an even more costly mode (e.g., face-to-face interviewing) for the nonrespondent sample persons. Longitudinal surveys also employ mixed-mode data collection to reduce cost in later waves, when rapport between the interviewer and the respondent has already been established in the first wave, usually administered in face-to-face mode.

Moreover, one mode can be used to compensate for the weakness of another (e.g., Massey, Marquis, and Tortora, 1982; Marquis and Blass, 1985; for a detailed discussion, see Groves and Lepkowski, 1985). For example, in-person interviewing can overcome barriers to response caused by not having a telephone number or households using call-screening devices to evade interviewers. Mixed-mode designs are thought to promote response by providing respondents the flexibility and convenience of choice, resulting in more opportunities to respond and in different settings (i.e., at home, at work, or while travelling). By offering multiple modes simultaneously, it is possible both to lower costs and to reduce nonsampling errors, such as nonresponse error and measurement error (Biemer and Lyberg, 2003; Groves, 1989).