

Attachment 7 - Methodological Projects

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The Division of Health Interview Statistics (DHIS) is implementing a redesigned survey instrument beginning in January 2019. New rotating and supplemental content will be introduced in the survey in 2020. For example, a new survey module about injuries will be introduced in the 2020 NHIS. The NHIS team is currently in the process of designing these questions and considering the best way to ask about injuries on a person level rather than injury event level. To inform and support decision making for these types of development activities, a number of short, web- and/or mail-based, quick-turnaround methodological, cognitive and field testing projects are anticipated for 2018.

The aims of these projects are to test new and updated questionnaire items, evaluate the impact of different response options on response frequencies, and measure respondents' comprehension of health care-related terms and concepts. To this end, these projects will build on information learned in prior NHIS follow-back surveys and methodological research. We outline research below.

Research using a commercial web panel

Respondents from commercial web panels can be used to test conceptual understanding of key terms in surveys. DHIS previously tested web panel respondents' comprehension of key terms related to health insurance through a brief web questionnaire that took approximately 10 minutes to complete. For example, respondents were asked questions to measure their understanding of deductibles, co-pays, and premiums. We would like to continue to use this method to aid in the development of new and revised content in the redesigned questionnaire.

Follow-back surveys with NHIS respondents

DHIS has obtained e-mail addresses from respondents who completed the NHIS. This information can be used to recontact NHIS respondents to participate in additional follow-back surveys where we can test new versions of survey questions. This would involve testing components of the full NHIS instrument with new or revised content, or penetration and uptake of different, innovative modes of collecting data. Specifically, we would use follow-back surveys to explore the following research questions:

1. How does alternate question wording affect respondent comprehension of the constructs to be measured?
2. What is the test/retest reliability of newly-developed questions?
3. What are preferred answer choices for categorical questions?
4. What probes (*e.g.*, time frames or date ranges) work best to promote recall of medical visit dates?
5. What is the validity of new or existing questions and are there alternative methods to collect data? (*e.g.*, do NHIS respondents use wearable activity monitors, are they willing to share access to data from those devices, and do the data correlate with reported physical activity?)

The sample for these projects will consist of current- and prior-year (2013-2018) NHIS respondents who provided a valid email address and are not in the MEPS sample. NCHS has several thousand email addresses.

Lab and field pretesting

Cognitive testing will be used to understand how respondents interpret new and revised survey questions for the redesigned survey (*e.g.*, stressful life events for children; adult pain management). DHIS uses the cognitive lab through the Collaborating Center for Question Design and Evaluation Research (CCQDER) at NCHS to conduct this testing. These and other similar cognitive testing projects typically involve recruiting 20-30 research participants through advertisements to visit the lab. An interviewer administers the questions and observes the participants' answers. The interviewer will then ask follow-up questions to understand how the participants processed the question and any problems that the respondent had answering the survey questions.

In addition, a small scale field pretest will be conducted in June to July 2018 to ensure the final functionality of the redesigned computer instrument. Between 100 and 300 households will be included in this systems test, which is a dress rehearsal to ensure that the instrument is working properly in preparation for the larger field test at the end of the year. Participating households will represent a convenience sample drawn from one to two Census regional field offices that are located in proximity to NCHS and Census headquarters, to facilitate observations of interviews by NCHS and Census staff. Selected households will be contacted using the same recruitment procedures and computerized instrument that will be used beginning with the larger-scale test in the last quarter of 2018 and into 2019 and 2020. NCHS and Census will review the output from the field test to ensure the instrument is functioning properly. For example, it will be important to identify any issues with the skip logic or routing of respondents through the instrument. We will also conduct interviewer debriefings to identify any major issues with the instrument, and to pinpoint any specific training points that need addressing prior to launch of the redesigned questionnaire.

Requests for continued permission to conduct developmental studies (such as pilot, feasibility, methodological and other developmental testing) for future NHIS will be submitted through non-substantive change requests. Special projects would be submitted for approval using a non-substantive change request or full revision, as appropriate.