Surveys and use of Statistical Methods

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When should an agency complete Part B?

- If you are doing any kind of sampling
- If you are doing any kind of estimation, imputation, or weighting
- If you are collecting data using any survey methods
- If you are doing pretesting or field testing for a survey, including cognitive interviews or focus groups

Common Statistical Issues or Questions

- Is the research design suitable to the research questions being asked?
- Is there sufficient information or documentation about methodology to assess its quality?
- Are analysis plans clear and are the data being used appropriately?
- Are response rates adequate and are methods used to maximize rates and evaluate bias?
- Are incentives justified?
- Are OMB standards being followed; e.g., measures of race and ethnicity

What should be reported in Part B?

1. Universe and respondent selection
2. Procedures for collecting information
3. Methods to maximize response
4. Tests of procedures
5. Contacts for statistical aspects and data collection

1. Universe and respondent selection

- Target population
- Sample frame being used and its quality
- Sample size and precision requirements
- Sample Design including stratification and design effect
- Precision for subgroups or minimum sample sizes for subgroup analyses
- Power to detect differences between groups (if applicable)

2. Procedures for collecting information

- Provide sufficient information so that study could essentially be replicated with same methods
- Provide copies of all materials that respondents will receive
  - Letters, brochures, FAQs, etc.
- Provide information on number and content of contact attempts
  - Relevant information on interviewer training

3. Methods to maximize response

- Some elements clearly related to #2
- Provide expected response rates
  - Make clear how calculated
  - Provide basis for this expectation
  - Provide recent actual response rates if this is an ongoing collection
- Describe follow-up procedures, use of refusal conversion, special interviewer training, etc.
- Refer to incentives (from A9) if applicable

Is the agency doing everything they can to Achieve High Rates

- Maintaining high response rates takes vigilance as well and resources
- Following well-established methods to achieve high rates
  - E.g., Increase number of contacts, use multiple modes, improve interviewer training, use refusal conversion
  - Test new procedures to improve
    - E.g., different modes or incentives, if appropriate

Is potential nonresponse bias being addressed?

- What information is available from the sample frame?
- What analyses are being done to examine potential nonresponse bias?
- What adjustments can be made to attempt to reduce bias?
- What special studies have been/are being done to examine potential nonresponse bias?

Incentives

- Agencies should provide "an explanation for a decision for any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees"
  - 5 CFR 1320.5(a)(1)(iii)(D)
- Agencies should not shift the burden of a collection of information from respondents to taxpayers at large.

How to Justify Incentives

- Demonstrate need for incentives to improve response rates, validity and reliability.
- Demonstrate higher “out-of-pocket” costs to respondent or unusual, intrusive demands.
- Provide data showing impact of incentives on response rates, costs, and survey responses.
- Conduct experiments to demonstrate whether incentives work as hypothesized.
- Demonstrate need due to special populations, such as control groups for longitudinal studies

4. Tests of procedures

- If not documented elsewhere, describe
  - sources for items taken from existing surveys
  - Items developed specifically for this survey (first-time surveys)
- Describe pretesting, cognitive testing, and expert review of survey items
  - Are reports available?
- Describe field testing or experimentation of survey or collection methods
  - Are reports available?

5. Contacts for statistical aspects and data collection

- Individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design.
- Contractor(s), grantee(s), or others who will actually collect or analyze the data.

Extra things that can often be helpful for us to see

- Mapping of research questions onto survey items
- Methodology Reports
- Recent (i.e., since last clearance) ASA or similar research papers or internal reports
- Examples of substantive reports from survey—shows how data are being used

*Can include in package or provide web link