

IAB-DiskAB

Invitation
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Mechanisms of Reporting to Dependent Questions in Panel Surveys

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Panel surveys are used to measure change over time, but previous research has shown that simply asking the same questions of the same respondents in repeated interviews leads to overreporting of change. With proactive dependent interviewing, responses from the previous interview are preloaded into the questionnaire, and respondents are reminded of this information before being asked about their current situation. Existing research has shown that dependent interviewing techniques can reduce spurious change in wave-to-wave reports and thus improve the quality of estimates from longitudinal data. However, the literature provides little guidance on how such questions should be worded. After reminding a respondent of her report in the last wave (“Last time we interviewed you, you said that you were not employed”), we might ask: “Is that still the case?”; “Has that changed?”; “Is that still the case or has that changed?”; or we might ask the original question again: “What is your current labour market activity?”. In this study we present experimental evidence from a longitudinal telephone survey in Germany (n=1325) in which we experimentally manipulated the wording of the dependent questions and contrasted them with independent questions. We report differences in the responses collected by the different question types. Due to the concern that respondents may falsely confirm previous information as still applying, leading to underreporting of change in dependent interviewing, we also test hypotheses about how respondents answer such questions. In these tests, we focus on the roles played by personality, deliberate misreporting to shorten the interview, least effort strategies and cognitive ability in the response process to dependent questions. The paper provides evidence-based guidance on questionnaire design for panel surveys.

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15:00

Room 126a