Surveys of Students, Graduates, and Employers

David DesRoches
Mathematica Policy Research

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Overview

 Review of data collection requirements

 General principles
  – Getting data from the right people
  – Using appropriate survey methods
  – Asking the right questions

 Examples

 Planning ahead

 Summary
DOL Data Requirements

- Key evaluation outcomes
  - Entered employment
  - Employment retention
  - Six-month earnings

- Potential progress and implementation measures
  - Employer involvement
Getting Data from the Right People

- Who is the best respondent for….
  - Student-level data
    - We’ll talk about treatment and comparison groups tomorrow
  - Employer-level data
    - Head of establishment, front-line staff, supervisors or managers
Choosing and Locating Respondents

- Choosing respondents
  - Determine who would be the best respondent
    - Who has access to the information
    - Who can provide most accurate answers
  - Make this decision during the design phase

- Locating respondents
  - Important to obtain and maintain up to date contact information
  - Use the web as a resource
  - Parent address
Using Appropriate Survey Modes

- DOL requires comprehensive data
- Response rates are important
  - Choice of mode depends on several factors
    • Saliency of survey topic
    • Mandatory vs. voluntary
    • Complexity of questionnaire
  - Tips for increasing response rates
    • Use incentives such as gift cards
    • Follow-up with non-respondents
      • By phone, email, or mail
  - Want similar respondents and non-respondents
    • Fed expects 70% or analysis for response bias
      [link](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/inforeg/statpolicy/standards_stat_surveys.pdf)
# Survey Modes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>• Inexpensive</td>
<td>• Respondent could incorrectly enter information</td>
<td>• Data entry expenses</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>• Interviewer can confirm responses</td>
<td>• Requires good telephone numbers</td>
<td>• Who will conduct interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can be good for sensitive information</td>
<td>• Requires interviewers</td>
<td>• If responses entered on paper, data entry needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web</td>
<td>• Inexpensive</td>
<td>• Limited flexibility</td>
<td>• Determine where responses stored and how you can access them</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Simple to implement</td>
<td>• Not always secure for sensitive information</td>
<td>• Consider email invitation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fast</td>
<td>• Requires respondents have web access</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Choosing Survey Modes

- Considerations when choosing survey mode
  - Number of individuals you are surveying
  - Confidentiality issues
  - Accuracy and type of contact information
  - Best way to reach your population
  - Budget

- Can choose more than one mode
  - Determine modes during design phase
  - If multiple modes, can let respondent choose or “force” cheapest mode first
    • Requires advance planning
Example: College Experiences Survey

- Career and attrition outcomes of graduates, transfers, and dropouts at 3 public universities
- Web with telephone follow-up
- Response rate: 67%
- For more information, see:
Example: Employer Survey

- Longitudinal survey of new businesses started in the same year about strategy, organization, benefits, finances, work behaviors

- Web and CATI

- Response rate: 43% at baseline; over 80% each year thereafter

- For more information, see:
Designing Survey Questions

- Survey length is important
  - Limit survey to most important items
  - Assume 2 to 3 questions per minute
  - Inform respondents of time to complete at beginning of survey administration
  - Overburdening respondents affects data quality
    - Refusals or breakoffs
    - Higher item nonresponse
    - Satisficing
Writing Your Survey Questions

- General Design Considerations
  - Keep questions clear and concise
  - Remember your audience
  - Use of don’t know or refused options
  - Use open-ended questions sparingly
    - One open-ended question = three close-ended
  - Place sensitive demographic questions at the end
Planning Ahead

- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
  - Who needs it?
  - What is the process?
  - Tips?

- Piloting your survey
  - Why is this important?
  - What is the process?
  - Tips?
Summary

- General principles
  - Get data from the right people
  - Use appropriate survey methods
  - Ask the right questions

- Plan ahead!
  - Obtain IRB approval if necessary
  - Pilot your survey