

The application of alternative modes of data collection in UK Government social surveys

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Outline

- Context and drivers
- Single alternative modes v mixed modes
- Response issues
- Mode and other effects
- Other methodological and management considerations
- ONS initiatives
- Broad trade offs – cost v quality

Context and drivers

- Government social surveys
 - high quality
 - inform policy/planning
- Change drivers
 - declining response rates
 - efficiency pressure
 - new technology: internet, portable computing/communications
- Hence this project

Single modes or mixed modes?

- Single mode internet and telephone problems
 - coverage, sampling frames
 - lower response rates
 - selection effects, nonresponse bias
- Use mixed modes
 - probability sampling framework
 - mixed mode survey systems: mix communication and data collection
 - maximise cheaper modes

Mixed modes: response and cost issues

- Unlikely to increase response rate
- Concurrent design
 - paradox of choice
 - mode at hand
- Sequential design
 - overall rate not increased
 - a proportion by cheaper modes
- Little knowledge of cost models and optimal strategy in UK context

Mixed modes: mode and other effects

- Mode effects
 - interaction between mode features, question type/design, task, respondent ability & motivation
 - satisficing, social desirability bias
- Question construction traditions
- Visual design
- Mixed mode questionnaire design
 - unimode; mode-specific; mode-enhancement
- Uncertainty and inconsistent evidence

Other methodological considerations

- Impact on estimates, comparisons, time series
- Controlled testing
 - magnitude, direction, impact
 - weighting and adjustment
 - reduces savings
- Redesign questionnaires - simplify data needs
- More proxy, item NR, partial unit response?

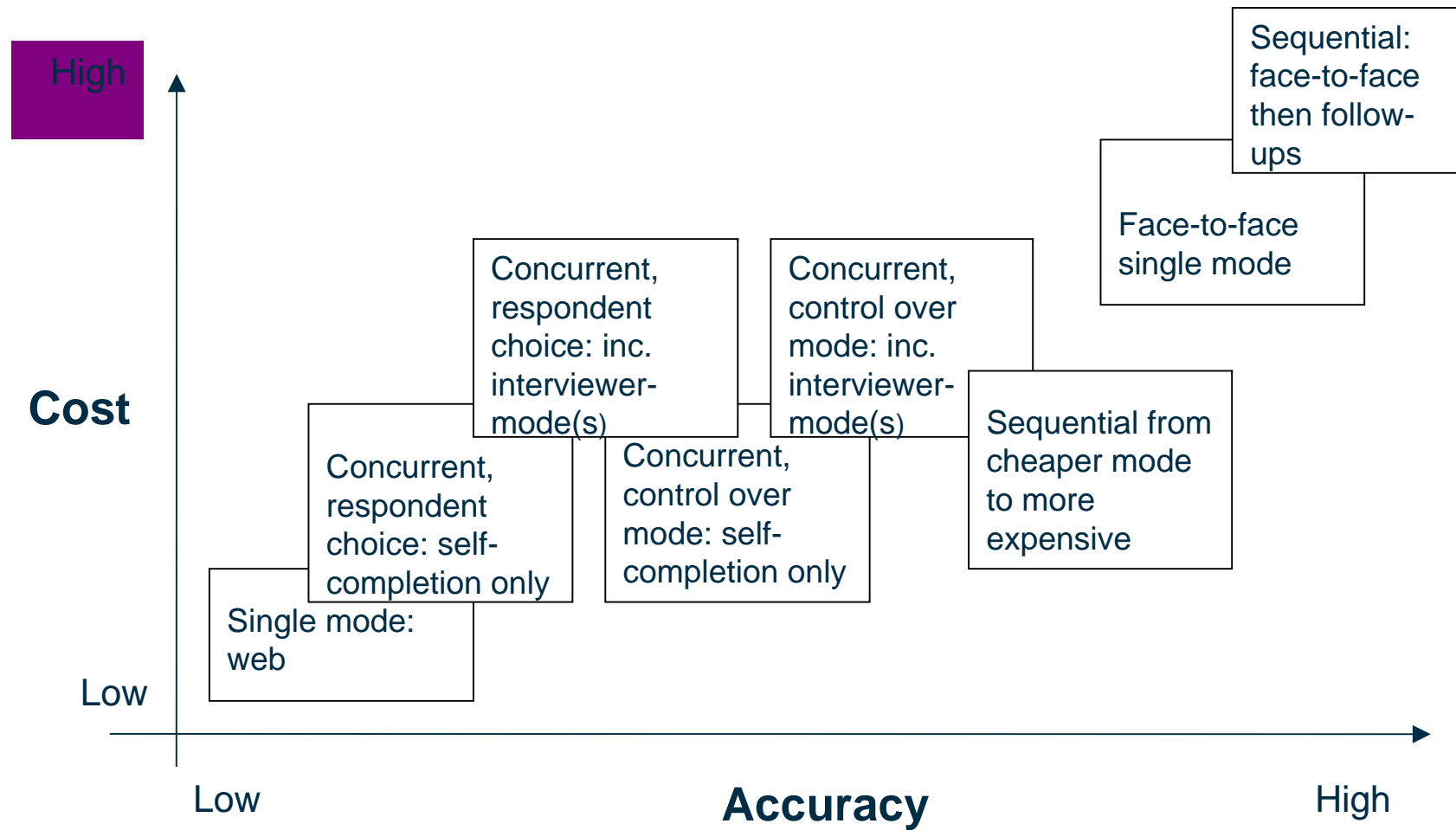
Management & cost considerations

- Systems development
- Questionnaire maintenance
- Longer fieldwork, more processing
- Access: language, disability
- Future social, technological, strategic change
- Costs:
 - lower data collection?
 - development, testing
 - set up, maintenance
 - printing/postage, processing

ONS internet tests/pilots

- Opinions survey 2008
- Opinions survey 2010
- LFS 2011
- Dual frame sampling?

Broad trade-offs between cost and quality – conceals much complexity!!!



More information

- Project outputs (GSS report; literature review/consultation; workshop report):
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/who-we-are/our-services/data-collection-methodology/reports-and-publications/alternative-modes-of-data-collection/index.html>
- Paper on Opinions survey 2008 pilot (Ashton & Dunn, Survey Methodology Bulletin 65, Sept 2009)
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