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ADDRESS BASED ONLINE SURVEYING (ABOS)

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What is ABOS?

- ABOS = Address Based Online Surveying

  - Stratified random sample of addresses is drawn from the Royal Mail's postcode address file

  - Invitation letter is sent to the address, containing username(s) and password(s) plus survey website url

  - Lots of variants possible! (see later…)

Originally conceptualised as lower cost alternative to increasingly difficult dual-frame RDD

- More flexible with regard to both size and shape than interview surveys

- Builds upon ABS designs in the US and push-to-web strategies utilised on many surveys

First test with *face-to-face* interview survey Community Life in 2012 (Cabinet Office, now DCMS)

Kantar has used it for six other clients and Ipsos uses a variant for Sport England's Active Lives

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Questions about ABOS (see also article in *Social Research Practice Vol 3*)

- Q1: If the sample is of addresses, how do you convert this into a sample of individuals?

- Q2: How do you verify that the data is from the sampled individual(s)?

- Q3: How do you cover 'offline' individuals?

- Q4: What RR does the ABOS method get & what is the impact of the design features you have tested?

- Q5: How does response rate vary between subpopulations, and what (if anything) can you do about it?

- Q6: What evidence do you have for non-response bias?

- Q7: How much does it cost?

Questions about ABOS (see also article in *Social Research Practice Vol 3*)

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- Q7: How much does it cost?

Q1: How do you convert a sample of addresses into a sample of individuals?

- No control over which household in multi-household addresses (but few of these in England)

- Initially tested last/next birthday methods but substantial non-compliance

- ESS/NatCen tested 'proper' random sampling but experienced similar problems

- Tested 'all adults' method to overcome problem

  - Clustered data but statistical value similar to sample that requires within-household sample weights

  - Lower printing/postage costs

  - Risks of 'contamination' (like most whole-household surveys) and of multiple completions by one resident

- Other options include 'take first two' (see Active Lives) and post hoc within-household sampling procedures

- Still a live topic for research

Q3: How do you cover offline individuals?

- 17% of the adult population in GB has either never used the internet or uses it so infrequently that they are effectively not covered by an online survey method

- Shrinking but particularly distinctive with respect to birth cohort and educational level

- Government studies can't usually miss them out!

- Most ABOS studies use paper option (usually 'on request' and in selected 2nd reminder packs)

- Paper option enforces simple questionnaire design or version limited to headline measures

- Alternative is parallel interview survey limited to offline/not-very-online

- This option costly unless rather small (& then risk of tokenism)

Q4: What response rate does the ABOS method get?

- Response rate depends on sponsor, topic, design features etc.

- In our experience, has ranged from 7% to 25%+

- Conditional incentives increase RR and tend to pay for themselves through lower printing/postage costs

- Adding paper questionnaires to one of the reminders is even stronger incentive (but not cheap)

- Government sponsor – clear on envelope! – is a major advantage

- Kantar's current focus is on limiting between-strata variance in response rate

    - Targeting reminder packs that include paper questionnaires is the single most effective tool we have

    - Varying the number of reminders also works well (some evidence for varying *type* too)

    - Varying message strategy has more limited effect

Response rate for subpopulations (Community Life 2016-17: online & on-demand paper & targeted paper)

| Stratum (IMD)	Method	(Est) Person-level RR (both modes)	(Est) Person-level RR (web only)
Most deprived 20%	Paper q'res in **all** 2nd reminders	19%	10%
2nd quintile	Paper q'res in **all** 2nd reminders	22%	12%
3rd quintile	Paper q'res in **60%** of 2nd reminders	24%	17%
4th quintile	**No** paper q'res in reminders	21%	20%
Least deprived 20%	**No** paper q'res in reminders	24%	23%

Q6: What evidence do you have for non-response bias?

- Most survey data lack benchmarks which makes (non-demographic) bias hard to quantify

- For some variables, interviews and s/c questionnaires would produce very different distributions from the same sample so high RR surveys are not *necessarily* suitable benchmarks for ABOS studies

- Three year parallel run with Community Life provided an opportunity to assess 'whole system' effects

- System effects of variable size but sometimes large, especially if rating scales used

- ABOS-style follow-up of interview respondents suggested that most (not all) system effects are due to measurement differences rather than differences in sample characteristics

- These sorts of study are very valuable when considering a new data collection system like ABOS

Scatter-graph of estimated measurement effects (x axis) v system effects (y axis) – Community Life
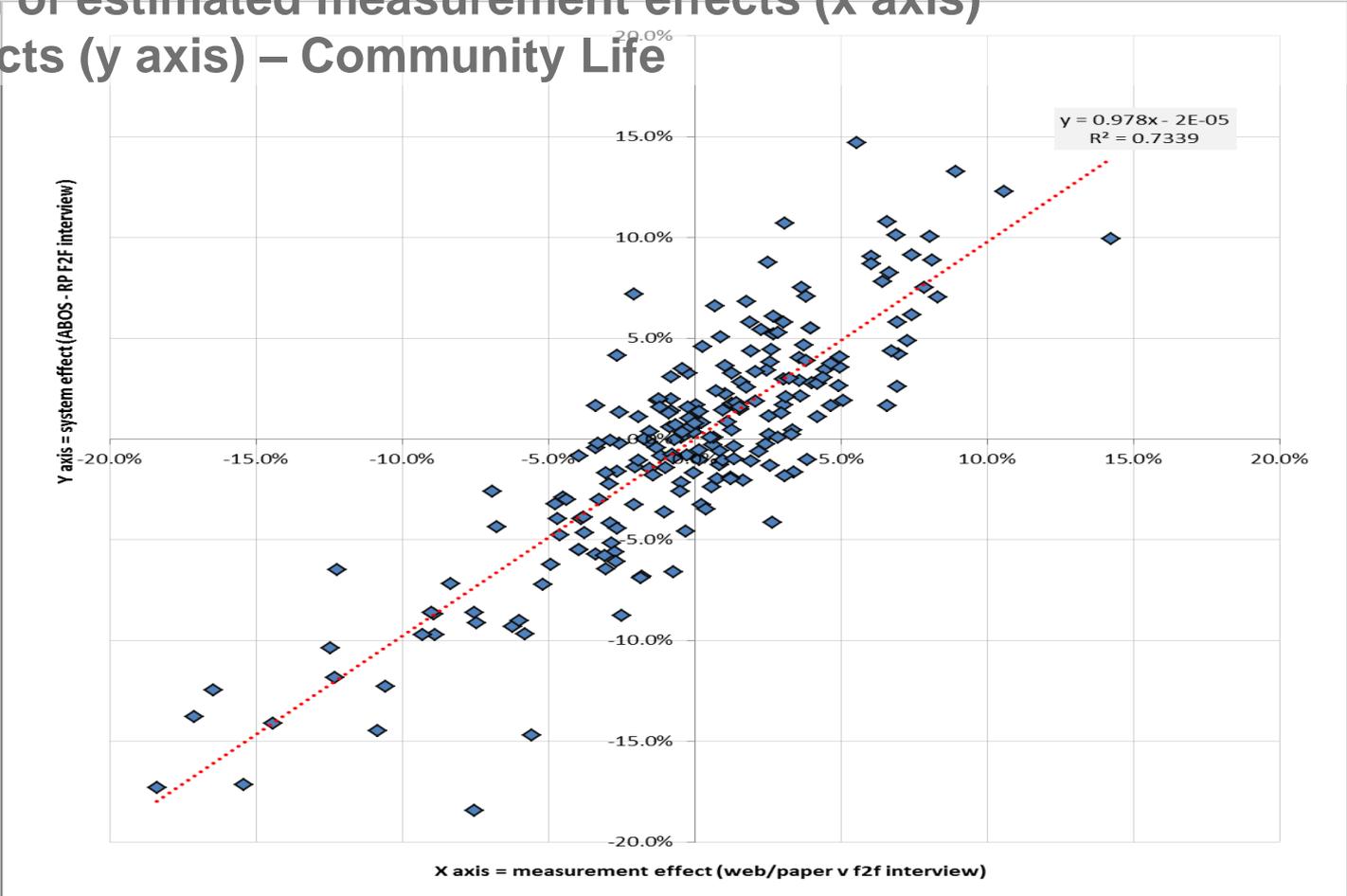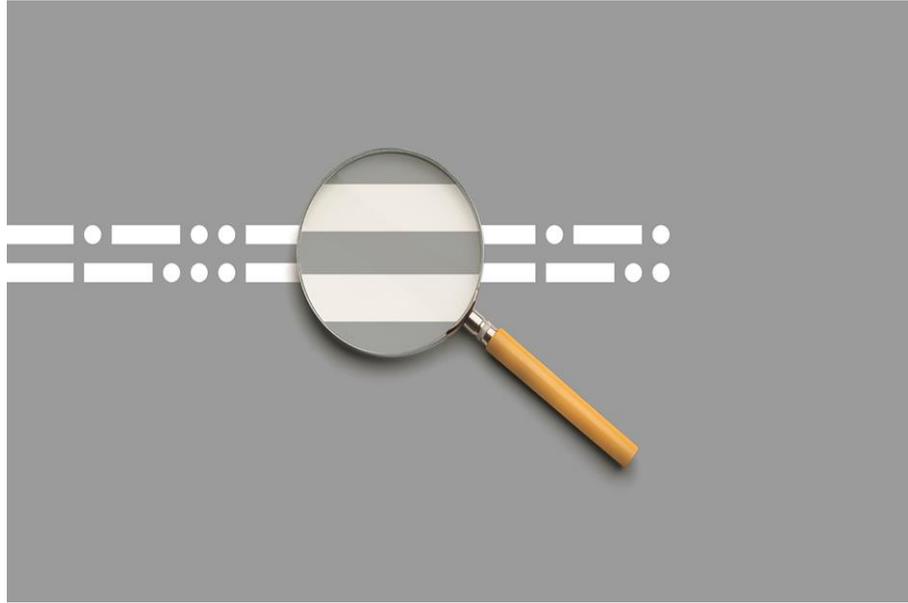
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