

Assessing validity of surveys across data collection modes

Valid and reliable public health data are becoming more difficult to obtain through surveys, especially random-digit dial (RDD) telephone surveys. As a result, researchers are evaluating different strategies and survey designs (i.e., sampling frame and survey mode combinations) as complements or alternatives to RDD. These include the use of cellular telephones, mail, web, RDD, and some of these in combination. Traditionally, mail surveys of the general public have been limited by lack of a complete sampling frame of households. More recently, however, advances in electronic record keeping have allowed researchers to develop and sample from a frame of addresses (the U.S. Postal Service Delivery Sequence File), which appears to provide coverage which rivals that obtained through RDD sampling methods. Testing these potential modes for surveying adults aged 18 years and older, was conducted as part of several pilots using the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). We discuss the details of these procedures and demonstrate how inclusion of other surveillance modes can help to improve the representativeness of the overall sample and reduce potential bias in the survey estimates.

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