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Title: Comparing Telephone and Face-to-Face Surveys in Terms of Sample Representativeness: A Meta-Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

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Abstract

Primarily for reasons of practicality, telephone interviewing has replaced face-to-face interviewing as the principal method of survey data collection in the United States during this century. In order to explore the potential costs of this shift in terms of sample representativeness, we conducted a meta-analysis of all published studies comparing the results of telephone and face-to-face surveys done simultaneously by the same investigators. In general, telephone survey samples contained greater proportions of the well-educated, the wealthy, and whites. This has been partly because people with little education and with lower incomes were less likely to have working telephones in their residences. Also responsible were the facts that people with lower incomes and non-whites were more likely to refuse to participate in telephone surveys than to refuse to be interviewed face-to-face. Comparisons with population data revealed that face-to-face samples were more accurate than telephone survey