

Innovation in online longitudinal data collection for scientific research: the Dutch LISS panel

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Abstract

There are compelling reasons to expect that Internet interviewing will become the dominant survey mode in the social sciences in the next 10–20 years, largely replacing written, face-to-face, and telephone interviewing. Internet penetration is increasing fast all over the world and among all socioeconomic groups. The technological developments not only make Internet interviewing cost effective but also create opportunities for innovatively asking questions or collecting data in other ways than through survey questions.

Based on earlier experiences with an online scientific panel (the CentERpanel), an advanced data collection environment for the social sciences was started in the Netherlands in 2007: "An Advanced Multi-Disciplinary Facility for Measurement and Experimentation in the Social Sciences" (MESS). MESS is an innovative data collection facility intended to boost and integrate research in various disciplines—such as economics, social sciences, life sciences and behavioral sciences—in the Netherlands and abroad. The central element of the facility, the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences (LISS) panel, is a representative panel of about 5,000 households who answer monthly interviews over the Internet. The LISS panel is based on a probability sample

drawn from population registers. Households that could not otherwise participate are given a computer and broadband access. Other key elements of the MESS project are: (1) a longitudinal core questionnaire and experimental modules proposed by researchers from all over the world; (2) synchronization of content with major other social and economic data collection efforts; (3) innovative forms of data collection (such as weighing scales linked to the Internet, accelerometers, and smartphones); (4) linking with administrative data; and (5) surveys of special groups that are often underrepresented in socioeconomic surveys. The facility is embedded in a strong global network of researchers, with close cooperation with the American Life Panel (ALP), a similar facility in the US, and contacts with similar initiatives in several other European countries.

The presentation will give an introduction of (the set-up of) the LISS panel (including issues such as representativity and attrition) and a brief overview of the other key elements of the MESS project.