



Assessment of the Use of Panel Survey Data by NCHS Population Health Survey Planning, Methodology and Data Presentation (PHSPMDP) BSC Workgroup

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Background

- In January 2021, NCHS presented to BSC:

BEYOND PULSE AND RANDS: Integrating Online Surveys into the National Health Interview Survey

Household Pulse Survey

- **Purpose:** To ascertain the impact of the pandemic on individuals and households
- **Health content:** Anxiety, depression, mental health care use and unmet need, health insurance, delayed and foregone care due to pandemic, telemedicine
- **Sample:** Email and cell-phone contact frames matched to Census Bureau's Master Address File (MAF) records
- **Mode:** Email and text invitations to take an online survey
- **Launched:** April 23, 2020
- **Sample size:** Originally, nearly 100,000 adults every 2 weeks, now about 70,000
- **Response rate:** About 10% but has fluctuated; currently about 6-7%



RANDS – Research and Development Survey

- **Purpose:** Methodological survey program that primarily uses web-based survey panels for evaluating measurement and estimation questions
- **RANDS COVID-19 content:** Work loss due to illness, telemedicine, and reduced access to care
- **RANDS COVID-19 dates:** June 9-July 6, 2020 (Round 1), August 3-20, 2020 (Round 2), May/June 2021 (Round 3)
- **Sample:** NORC AmeriSpeak panel, with both internet and phone panels
- **Sample size:** ~6,000 adults
- **Completion rates:** 78%, 69%, 69%, for rounds 1, 2, & 3
- **Response rates:** 23%, 20%, 12%, for rounds 1, 2, & 3



Background, continued

- In January 2021, NCHS presented to BSC: *BEYOND PULSE AND RANDS: Integrating Online Surveys into the National Health Interview Survey*
 - Part of this presentation had been presented to CDC Senior Leaders November 2020
 - CDC Senior Leaders response:
 - Value of timely data
 - Importance of NCHS having a mechanism for producing close-to-real-time data that are responsive to changing data needs
 - Concerns about quality of online survey data

January 2021 BSC meeting

- At the January BSC, NCHS proposed collecting quarterly data from commercial panels for advance estimates of new content or for forecasting existing content, and to have a consistent platform for question evaluation studies
- We acknowledged more methodological research was needed, for example:
 - Comparisons of direct estimates to NHIS estimates
 - Establishment of forecasting models
 - Head-to-head panel comparisons

Questions to BSC January 2021

- Do you think augmenting NHIS with online surveys will yield estimates of sufficient quality for NCHS to stand behind?
 - What paths would you recommend to enhance quality and credibility?
- Will more timely “advance estimates” increase NCHS’ credibility?
 - Would you recommend that quarterly data from commercial panels be a priority relative to producing ER estimates faster?
- How can we effectively communicate the differences in the quality of information provided by different types of estimates?
 - RANDS: “Experimental Estimates”
 - The Census Bureau: “Experimental data”

BSC Responses and Comments January 2021 - 1

- Online surveys are likely to provide better information for trends than levels
- Comparing estimates from multiple panels could provide a measure of robustness
- Even if the levels are wrong, they could be stable
- Traditional and online surveys can be treated as parallel streams of data that serve different purposes and need not be synchronized

BSC Responses and Comments January 2021 - 2

- Which topics are more important for early estimation may depend on the current issues
- Quarterly release may not be frequent enough in a crisis
- It would be “catastrophic” if NCHS released an advance estimate based on the online survey, and the subsequent NHIS estimate was totally different
- (Communication) Follow models used by other federal statistical agencies, such as initial estimates and revise estimates

Real Time Surveys

- NCHS and CDC (*still*) wants to develop an Advance Estimates, or Real Time Surveys program, that would collect and release data by key demographic subgroups from web-based survey panels
 - Focus on new, emerging, and supplemental topics (that is, topics not currently included in other NCHS surveys) **not** on trends/forecasting with NHIS and not on content currently collected on NHIS or other NCHS survey
 - NCHS would continue to employ and develop statistical methods for calibration of panel survey data to NCHS’s “gold-standard” surveys
 - An advantage of NCHS controlling data collection for both the panel survey and the “gold-standard” survey is the ability to coordinate the survey content to improve estimates

NCHS' Questions for the Workgroup's Consideration

- Given the current scientific knowledge, under what conditions would you recommend the use of online panel surveys for emerging or supplemental topics where “gold-standard” survey data may or may not be available?
- What additional research and evaluation is recommended, if any, to increase your confidence in the fitness-for-use of estimates from online panel surveys for these purposes?

Questions for the Workgroup's Consideration, 2

- Possible directions
 - Supplementing online panel data with other modes
 - Supplementing one online panel with other online panels
 - Fielding new questions on gold-standard surveys to provide better calibration measures
 - Improvements in statistical approaches to developing weights
 - Communication of data quality for these relative to core survey data

Parameters discussed by the workgroup to aid relevance and discussion:

- Focus discussion on external panels (i.e., not created by NCHS)
- Maintain control over content
- Focus on new content (emerging and supplemental topics), rather than content already captured by existing NCHS programs
- Objective is to disseminate results through an NCHS Experimental Estimates program

Planned next steps by Workgroup

- Request workgroup invited participants, to include on some workgroup meetings (three identified, one pending)
- Invite brief presentations from existing probability-based panels
- Receive feedback from the BSC at the October 22nd meeting
- Return to the BSC with an outline of approach to generate findings for BSC consideration at the January or May 2022 meeting

Questions & Discussion

