

Modernizing Data Collection – Using Video Data Collection in BLS Surveys

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Abstract

The proposed presentation will discuss how Field Economists from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) adapted to the restrictions on personal visit collection due to COVID-19 by shifting to other modes of data collection including offering encrypted video to survey respondents. The presentation will describe some of the challenges faced and lessons learned by BLS Field Economists and management in the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) and Industrial Price Surveys (IP) when offering video as an option for data collection and will discuss respondent reactions to the video protocol.

BLS Field Economists are dedicated to securing initial cooperation and collecting data from high-level corporate officials. Traditionally, Field Economists have utilized personal visit interviews to explain the relevant survey to respondents to initiate the company into the survey. BLS suspended personal visit data collection in mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19. For BLS Field Economists, this required an immediate shift from personal visit data collection to data collection using telephone supplemented with email. BLS worked to develop collection aids and other tools for interviewers and respondents to both assist in explaining survey concepts and minimize potential impact on data quality. In response to a difficult collection environment, BLS authorized the use of encrypted video for data collection, and BLS Field Economists began offering video as a mode of data collection in August 2020.

The use of video in IP and ORS data collection provides an opportunity to meet the respondent face to face and is more reflective of a personal visit collection appointment than a telephone conversation. Video interviews provide some specific advantages, for example, the interviewer can demonstrate concepts and share documents, which assists in keeping the respondent engaged during the interview, which often exceeds one hour.