

# Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Survey Participation for People with Disabilities

Jason Markesich • Julita Milliner-Waddell  
Anne Ciemnecki • Karen CyBulski

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# Overview

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- **Some data collection methods can lead to the exclusion of people with disabilities and therefore**
  - Introduce bias into population estimates
  - Hinder sample members' rights to self-direction and self-expression
- **Purpose of presentation**
  - To discuss barriers to survey participation for people with disabilities
  - To offer suggestions for overcoming barriers and addressing methodological issues

# Methodological Considerations

Survey Process	Methodological Considerations / Decisions
Sample design	Sampling frame (e.g., intentional exclusions of some populations) Eligibility determination/screening
Proxy decisions	Subjective approach: gatekeeper or interviewer judgment Objective approach: questionnaire screening assessment
Questionnaire design	Wording Format Context Translation 508 compliance
Data collection	Modes (e.g., in-person, mail, telephone, web-based) Adaptive data collection technologies Contact procedures Consent procedures
Interviewer training	Sensitivity trainings Training to overcome communication, stamina, and cognitive issues

# Sampling Frames: Coverage Issues

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- **Deliberate exclusion of nonhousehold units from sampling frames**
- **Compounding issue: dynamic nature of tenure in some types of housing**
- **Individuals with certain types of disabilities are often excluded from list frames**
- **Random digit-dialing (RDD) frames might under-represent people with disabilities**

# Proxy Selection Methods

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- **Self-response is desirable but not always practical**
- **Proxies facilitate inclusion of those who cannot self-respond**
- **Problem: methods for determining whether a proxy is necessary may not be valid or reliable**

# Problems with Common Proxy Selection Methods

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Proxy Selection Method	Problem
Gatekeeper or interviewer judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gatekeepers may underestimate the ability of the sample member to self-respond</li><li>▪ Interviewers may not be well-trained; may misread cues during survey</li><li>▪ Interviewers may not use the same standards</li></ul>
Formal assessments of sample member's ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Begins interview with a test; might encourage refusals</li><li>▪ Not designed to assess sample member's ability to complete an interview; might produce false negatives</li><li>▪ More stringent test for those with disabilities</li></ul>

# Interviewer Training

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- **People with disabilities might be excluded from surveys by interviewers who:**
  - **Are not sensitive to the issues faced by respondents who have a range of disabilities**
  - **Are not trained on how to overcome common barriers to interviewing people with disabilities, including communication, stamina, and cognitive challenges**

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# What Can We Do to Overcome These Barriers?



# Sampling Frames: Coverage Issues

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- Document and disclose sampling methods
- Review sampling methods to assess what is known about the inclusion of people living in group quarters
- Conduct more research on whether RDD surveys under-represent people with disabilities
- Create guidelines on how to develop sample designs to ensure the inclusion of the broadest range of people with disabilities

# Proxy Selection Methods

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- **Conduct more research on the use of assisted interviews to facilitate self-response**
- **Document proxy decisions during the survey process:**
  - **When a proxy was used**
  - **Why a proxy interview was conducted instead of a self-interview**
  - **Relationship of the proxy respondent to the sample member**
- **Conduct more evidence-based research on proxy selection methods**

# Interviewers and Interviewer Training

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- **Use people with disabilities as interviewers and pretesters**
- **Develop training guides and modules on:**
  - **Basic attitudinal receptivity**
  - **Development of rapport**
  - **Use of adaptive technologies**
  - **Proxy selection methods**

# Overcoming Communication Barriers

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- **Use a normal tone of voice**
- **Use controls on headsets to amplify incoming and outgoing sounds (for telephone surveys)**
- **Do not pretend to understand a response; ask respondent to repeat or clarify**
- **Engage with respondents to learn speech patterns before beginning the interview**

# Overcoming Stamina Barriers

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- **Watch for behaviors that suggest the respondent is fatigued**
- **Ask whether the respondent needs to complete the interview at another time**
- **Set appointments for times when the respondent is more alert**

# Overcoming Cognitive Barriers

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- **Learn nonbiased, nondirective probing methods**
- **Use active listening skills**
- **Remain patient during the interview**

# Final Thoughts

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- **Making surveys more accessible to people with disabilities requires a systematic approach that entails:**
  - Including people with disabilities in research design decisions
  - Using available resources to guide research
  - Making thoughtful and deliberate methodological decisions at each stage of the survey process
  - Documenting and disclosing survey methods
  - Conducting more methodological and experimental research on interviewing people with disabilities

# For More Information

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- **Please contact:**
  - **Jason Markesich**
    - **JMarkesich@mathematica-mpr.com**
  - **Julita Milliner-Waddell**
    - **JMilliner-Waddell@mathematica-mpr.com**
  - **Anne Ciemnecki**
    - **Aciemnecki@mathematica-mpr.com**
  - **Karen CyBulski**
    - **Kcybulski@mathematica-mpr.com**
- **Resource guide on surveying people with disabilities**
  - **<http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/edicollect/1255/>**

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