

The Impact on the Composition of Survey Refusals' Demographic Profile When Implementing Different Classifications

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Abstract : The internationally documented declining survey response rates of the last two decades are mainly attributed to refusals. In fieldwork, a refusal may be obtained not only from the respondent himself/herself, but from other sources on the respondent's behalf, such as other household members, apartment building residents or administrator(s), and neighborhood residents. In this paper, we investigate how the composition of the demographic profile of survey refusals changes when different classifications are implemented and the classification issues arising from that. The analysis is based on the 2002-2018 European Social Survey (ESS) datasets for Belgium, Germany, and United Kingdom. For these three countries, the size of selected sample units coded as a type of refusal for all nine under investigation rounds was large enough to meet the purposes of the analysis. The results indicate the existence of four different possible classifications that can be implemented and the significance of choosing the one that strengthens the contrasts of the different types of respondents' demographic profiles. Since the foundation of social quantitative research lies in the triptych of definition, classification, and measurement, this study aims to identify the multiplicity of the definition of survey refusals as a methodological tool for the continually growing research on non-response.

Keywords : non-response, refusals, European social survey, classification

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