

HOW TO ASK FOR CONSENT TO DATA LINKAGE: THINGS WE'VE LEARNT

Data linkage usually requires informed consent of respondents, whether for legal or ethical reasons. A common problem is that when consent questions are asked in self-completion surveys, respondents are much less likely to consent than when they are asked for consent in interviewer administered surveys. In the existing literature, predictors of consent are mostly inconsistent, between studies, but also between different consents asked within one study. In addition, experiments with the wording of consent questions have often had no or inconsistent effects. Why is this? And what can be done to increase informed consent to data linkage? This presentation provides an overview of what we have learnt from qualitative in-depth interviews and a series of experiments implemented in two UK probability household panels (the Understanding Society Innovation Panel and COVID-19 study) and in the UK PopulusLive online access panel. We address the following questions. (1) How do respondents decide whether to consent to data linkage? (2) Why are respondents less likely to consent in web than CAPI surveys? (3) How best to ask for multiple consents within a survey? (4) Which wording and formats affect informed consent and why? We end the overview with a summary of the practical implications for how best to ask for consent to data linkage.

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