

Section 11 - Metodologia della ricerca (Research Methodology)

Chairs: Luigi Curini, Vincenzo Memoli

Elenco e descrizione di tutti i panels

Panel 11.3 Searching for the unspoken: methodological toolkits for dealing with social desirability and response biases in social and political research

Chairs: Francesco Olmastroni

Social scientists, cognitive psychologists and survey methodologists have long suggested that when a given attitude or behaviour is perceived as a social norm, respondents in a survey may either overreport socially desirable characteristics or, more or less intentionally, opt for nonresponse, self-deception or acquiescence to present themselves in a positive light. Response biases have been observed in a number of both personal (e.g., cheating on taxes, income misreporting, concealment of illegal behaviours, lying about media usage) and socially sensitive issues (e.g., voter turnout, prejudice against minority groups, partisan affiliations), leading to nonrandom deviations of the recorded answers of the sampled individuals from their real position and the erroneous estimation of the population parameters.

Different strategies have been proposed to identify the causes and control for the effects of these problems, including a careful questionnaire design, pretesting of survey instruments, use of different modes of administration, post-hoc assessment via empirical indicators, to name a few. However, some innovations in survey research and emerging technologies for social and psychological experiments (e.g., biometrics, eye-tracking, facial coding, passive monitoring of media consumption, immersive virtual reality, web-based social interaction data, etc.), combined with both qualitative and quantitative approaches, may contribute to unveil the nature and size of the gap between respondents' hidden and revealed preferences.

The aim of this panel is to stimulate interdisciplinary debate and discussion around the issue of response validity in social and political research. By bringing together papers that empirically investigate the problem of social desirability and other response sets from different theoretical, disciplinary and methodological perspectives, the workshop aims to explore the causes, consequences and possible remedies. Papers evaluating the effects of response biases as well as those proposing methodological and empirical innovations to deal with these phenomena are welcome. Proposals using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods and discussing the ethical and legal implications related to new methods of data collection and processing are encouraged.