

## Preface

This issue coincides with the 21st anniversary of the International Workshop on Household Survey Nonresponse. The Nonresponse Workshop – founded by Robert Groves, Lars Lyberg, and Bob Barnes – was first held in 1990 at Statistics Sweden in Stockholm. Since then, it has been convened in many different locations: Washington, DC, U.S.A., 1991; Voorburg, The Netherlands, 1992; Bath, England, 1993; Ottawa, Canada, 1994; Helsinki, Finland, 1995; Rome, Italy, 1996; Mannheim, Germany, 1997, and Bled, Slovenia, 1998. In 1999 the workshop was replaced by a large, international conference on nonresponse, held in Portland, Oregon, the results of which were published in 2002 in the volume *Survey Nonresponse*, edited by Groves, Dillman, Eltinge, and Little. The locations of the workshop in its second decade were Budapest, Hungary, 2000; Oslo, Norway, 2001, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2002; Leuven, Belgium, 2003; Maastricht, The Netherlands, 2004; Tällberg, Sweden, 2005; Omaha, U.S.A., 2006; Southampton, UK, 2007; Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2008; Lausanne, Switzerland, 2009, and most recently, Nuremberg, Germany.

Throughout the years, the International Workshop on Household Survey Nonresponse has lived true to its goal of bringing diverse researchers of nonresponse together to exchange ideas, compare experiences, and discuss research in its early stages. Because it has often been hosted at the offices of national statistical agencies, the workshop has fostered a flow of information between government statisticians and academic researchers. In addition, the workshop has managed to attract a good mix of statisticians interested in adjusting for nonresponse and survey methodologists concerned with the reduction of nonresponse.

With this broader context of the Nonresponse Workshop series in mind, it is a delight to see its different aspects reflected in the articles that form this special issue of the *Journal of Official Statistics*. We have twelve contributions from nine different countries across two continents, some written by survey methodologists, others by statisticians, some from researchers at academic institutions, and others from researchers at statistical agencies. About half of the articles that form this issue have been presented at the 2010 workshop and a majority of the authors have attended the workshop at various points in time. The articles collected here are only a small subset of the many high quality submissions we received in response to our call for papers. It is likely that we will see some of these contributions in future issues of this journal.

The topics discussed at the Nonresponse Workshop have evolved over the years, matching the different periods of nonresponse research. Early works that grew out of the workshop were mostly concerned with trends in changes of nonresponse rates, and the explanation of the nonresponse phenomenon itself. Such studies were followed by others concerned with the reduction of nonresponse, refusal conversion strategies, and refined adjustment techniques.

In recent years the focus of the discussion at the Nonresponse Workshop has shifted towards the assessment of nonresponse bias, in part through the use of auxiliary variables and paradata, the challenges of combining data from different sources to overcome the nonresponse problem, and ways of dealing with nonresponse in data analyses. Several articles in this issue reflect this trend. Rebecca Andridge and Roderick Little propose in their article the use of proxy pattern-mixture analysis for assessing nonresponse bias using sets of covariates that are observed for nonrespondents and respondents. Danny Pfeffermann and Anna Sikov discuss in their contribution an approach for handling nonresponse that is not missing at random where totals of covariates are used, available

from administrative or census records, to impute the missing values for the nonresponding units. Nonignorable nonresponse occurring in a rotating panel design is treated in the contribution by Caterina Giusti and Roderick Little, using pattern-mixture models. Paradata and auxiliary data are key elements in the application of R-indicators, discussed in the article by Barry Schouten, Natalie Shlomo and Chris Skinner. Analysis of longitudinal survey data with nonresponse using generalized estimating equations is the topic of the article by Iván Carrillo, Jiahua Chen and Chanbao Wu.

Another trend we see emerging among nonresponse researchers is the notion that tailored approaches might be needed for successful recruitment and, in the case of panel surveys, retention strategies. Willard Rodgers discusses tailoring respondent incentives based on what is known about sample members. Likewise Marieke Voorpostel and Oliver Lipps assess the possibility of estimating attrition based on information about changes in respondents' life circumstances in prior panel waves. Katherine McGonagle, Mick Couper, and Robert Schoeni report on experiments testing different tracking conditions, and they too support the notion of tailored protocols. If informative prior knowledge about the sample units is available from previous waves, paradata or auxiliary variables, fieldwork agencies could increase their effectiveness by moving away from a one-size-fits-all strategy towards targeted interventions designed to increase response and reduce nonresponse bias; an approach that motivated the research by Joseph Sakshaug and Frauke Kreuter reported in this issue. In interviewer-administered surveys, interviewers develop tailored contacting and doorstep approaches with varying success rates. Annelies Blom, Edith de Leeuw, and Joop Hox analyze interviewer and country effects due to differential contacting strategies and doorstep behavior in the context of the European Social Survey.

Throughout the 21 years of the nonresponse workshop the need for a better theoretical understanding of the nonresponse process has come up repeatedly. The article by Eleanor Singer and the study conducted by Marika Wenemark, Andreas Persson, Helle Noorlind Brage, Tommy Svensson, and Margareta Kristenson give researchers a variety of testable hypotheses that will strengthen our theoretical understanding.

This issue not only highlights a few current topics in household survey nonresponse but is also a way for us to show our appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the workshop activities over the years. This includes the various workshop hosts and in particular those individuals serving as clearing house for the workshop in the past: Lilli Japac, Trine Dale, Fannie Cobben, and Barry Schouten. An overview of the various papers and topics presented at the International Workshop on Household Survey Nonresponse can be gained through a web-accessible database kindly hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia ([www.nonresponse.org](http://www.nonresponse.org)).

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