

Census Tabulation Planning

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Tabulations

- Are traditionally the main output of the census operation
- Should be produced in accordance with a carefully prepared **tabulation plan**
- Tabulation plan decisions are important, but not so important as questionnaire decisions because, with proper management of census records, new tabulations can be produced

Content *versus* Format of Tabulations

- Like questionnaires, tabulations are characterized by **information content** and by **format**
- Decisions on format are necessary for print publication, but should be distinguished in planning from content decisions
- **Our focus will be on content decisions**

The 'How To' of Tabulation Planning

- Tabulation plans deserve more systematic attention than they (usually) receive
- There are two aspects of systematic tabulation planning
- The first is mechanical and consists of procedures for specifying tabulations
- The second is analytical and consists of procedures for deciding what tabulations to produce

Mechanics of Tabulation Planning: Overview

- Specification of Tabulations
- Questions *versus* 'Variables'
- Rules for Tabulation Plans

Specification of Tabulations

- The **domain** of the table, *i.e.*, the set of persons (households) its cells count
- The **dimensions** or **variables** of the table, *e.g.*, age, sex, marital status
- The **codings** of each variable, *e.g.*, age in single years or five year groups
- The **format** of the table

Questions *versus* 'Variables'

- A single question may generate two or more variables
- Age, *e.g.*, gives the variables **age in single years** and **age in five year groups**
- There may be two or more 'age in five year groups' variables with different open-ended intervals
- Variables are 'recodings' of the raw information provided by the questionnaires

Rules for Tabulation Plans

- Distinguish *content* from *format* and consider each in its proper place
- Explicitly identify the *domain* of each table
- Include a list of all variables used in any table specifying recode information
- Specify tables as **domain** by **variable 1**, **variable 2**, ..., **variable n**

Analytics of Tabulation Planning

- Clear understanding of mechanics is necessary for good tabulation planning, but this is the easy part
- The hard part is deciding what tabulations should be produced
- This includes deciding what tabulations should be produced *at what geographical level*

Tabulation Plan Decisions

- If we produce this tabulation, who will use it, and what will they do with it?
- Have we produced this tabulation in the past? If yes, who used it and what did they use it for?
- If produced on request, was it used for and did it serve the purpose intended?

Tabulations by Subject Area

- Grouping tabulations by subject area, basic demographic characteristics, education, economic activity, and so on, is a useful device, *but*
- It risks useful tabulations ‘falling between the cracks’
- *E.g.*, age distributions for ethnic groups may get left out

Good Tabulation Planning

- Is impossible without an understanding of the uses to which proposed tables will be put
- Many census tables are ‘raw data’ that are of very little use without extensive additional processing
- *E.g.*, tabulations of children ever born and children surviving

Overviews Like This

- Are useful to a point, but not adequate preparation for preparing a tabulation plan
- Case studies would be desirable, but none are at hand
- Let's therefore create some in discussion

Questions?
Comments?
Discussion?