

IUSSP Webinar on  
**Digital and computational approaches to study determinants  
and consequences of the spread of COVID-19**

*July 08, 2020*

## Q&As

- 1 Thank you Prof. Diamond-Smith. For clarification: did you use incentives in any of the waves?  
André Grow ([grow@demogr.mpg.de](mailto:grow@demogr.mpg.de))
  - The only incentive was being entered into a raffle for an ipad mini IF people participated in all 4 months of the panel, nothing else for the cross section.
- 2 How do we deal with the issues of ethics when conducting social media survey?  
Oladele Oluwarotimi ([sammyladele@gmail.com](mailto:sammyladele@gmail.com))
  - For our study we have received human subjects approval and the respondents filled out an informed consent at the start of the survey. Respondents filled out informed consent before filling in the survey. We also underwent ethical review through our university's human subjects committee.
- 3 To Nadia: I'm aware that it is still a working paper, from the preliminary results what was the trend in reproductive health patterns in India.  
Adebayo Makanju ([adebayomakanju@gmail.com](mailto:adebayomakanju@gmail.com))
  - We only have data on reproductive health care use and access, and fertility preferences, but stay tuned for results!
- 4 To Jorge: did you get the same figures regarding "clicks" and completion rates as the first speaker?  
Anne Gauthier ([gauthier@nidi.nl](mailto:gauthier@nidi.nl))
  - Thanks for your question Anne. I don't have the hard figures at hand but our survey completion rate ranged from 2% to 10% between countries. That is, around 10% of everyone who started the survey, completed it. We planned it ahead to calculate the number of people who clicked on the Facebook Ad to be able to assess how biased was the starting rate of the survey and the completion rate. For more information on this, you can read some of the preprints of our survey. See for example:
    - <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/medrxiv/early/2020/05/15/2020.05.09.20096388.full.pdf>
    - <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.05.15.20102657v1>
    - <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/ez9pb/> .
  - Hope this answers your question!
- 5 Thank you, Jorge. the distribution of age groups in Italy reported by ESS sound a bit odd to me, especially the oldest group looks under-represented in ESS...maybe in this case Facebook survey can be even more accurate?  
Stefano Mazzuco ([stefano.mazzuco@unipd.it](mailto:stefano.mazzuco@unipd.it))
  - Thanks for your question Stefano. We'd have to cross-check this with the register-level proportion from the Italian Statistics Unit. However, at least for the ESS proportions, we used the appropriate design-based sampling weights that come with the ESS. In any case, I would be very suspicious in interpreting the Facebook age distribution as more

accurate. There are well known age biases in Facebook, especially among older populations. Hope this answers your question!

- 6 Thank you Jorge for your talk. Weighting affects design-based standard errors (SEs) of survey-based estimates, and large weights can inflate SEs quite a bit. Did you look at the impact of weighting on the SEs of FB survey results?

Mark Wheldon ([wheldon@un.org](mailto:wheldon@un.org))

- Thank you for your question Mark. We haven't really looked at the impact and this is certainly something we are beginning to explore. We are also interested in exploring whether we can create more fine-grained weights for different time points with the aim of being able to say something across time. This is certainly something that needs to be thought much more in detail and we are beginning to explore this. Hope this answers your question!

- 7 Thanks @Jorge - interesting presentation. Could you provide more details about how the weights are built?

Francisco Rowe ([F.Rowe-Gonzalez@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:F.Rowe-Gonzalez@liverpool.ac.uk))

- Thanks for your question Francisco. The construction of the weights was very straight forward: we divided the true population counts for each stratum by the number of respondents in the Facebook strata. However, at the moment we are currently experimenting with other approaches to check whether we can make more accurate inferences such as disaggregating the strata even further. Feel free to have a look at this preprint where we briefly discuss the current approach:

- <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/medrxiv/early/2020/05/15/2020.05.09.20096388.full.pdf>

- Thanks - will have a look at the paper. They sound like proportional weights. Would be good to explore other types of weights (Francisco Rowe)

- 8 To Jorge: Very interesting! How good works Facebook stratification ads for countries like Mexico?

Constanza Hurtado ([churtado@umd.edu](mailto:churtado@umd.edu))

- Thanks for your question Constanza. We really don't have any experience working with Facebook surveys in Mexico. I'm afraid I don't have an easy answer for that but this is certainly something that needs to be explored in the future.
- Ok! thanks. I don't know why I thought was on your map!!! i was confused. Thanks! (Constanza Hurtado)

10 To those social scientists who criticise online/social media surveys as being biased towards self-selection of respondents, I am wondering, isn't all surveys (even ESS) biased toward those "who decide to answer us"? As Jorge presented, we can choose from the pool of respondents afterwards by screening/weighting and correcting, while maybe in offline surveys we won't have enough resources to re-sample? Am I missing out on something here? (I have been criticised similarly and I am trying to find better convincing answers for next time I hear that :))

Aliakbar Akbaritabar ([akbaritabar@dzhw.eu](mailto:akbaritabar@dzhw.eu))

- To @Aliakbar on the bias on respondents: All surveys might have some bias, but a good population representative survey will know the size of bias or an estimate of it. So far, we don't have these estimates for all research questions put on social media. There is a danger the analyst include even more bias when correcting by screening/weighting. So, to me you do not have to convince about the representativeness of your data, but need to show how biased it is. We all would gain from knowing more about statistical methodologies.

Suzana Cavenaghi ([suzana\\_cavenaghi@uol.com.br](mailto:suzana_cavenaghi@uol.com.br))

11 What are the best practice to increase participating in online survey using social media and that are also ethical?

Mahesh Puri ([mahesh@crehpa.org.np](mailto:mahesh@crehpa.org.np))

- Incentives of some kind can help, but of course depend on sample size required and your budget.

13 '@Jorge: Thanks: great talk! talking about non-Facebook users, how should one treat people in Facebook which are only simply registered, but not using anymore. Do you think that this % (that I see as an increasing one) could have any effect on the handing of a survey and/or in the computation of the weights for post-stratification? Thanks

Giancarlo Camarda ([carlo-giovanni.camarda@ined.fr](mailto:carlo-giovanni.camarda@ined.fr))

- Thank you for your question Giancarlo. This is also something that I'm concerned about. I'm not entirely sure, but I think Facebook might allow you to stratify users who are 'active'. That could be a way of handling this problem. However, the problem is more about self-selection. Are people who are 'active' on Facebook fundamentally different from those that are? Does that affect whatever research question we are studying? To me that should be the relevant question that social scientists need to answer in my opinion. That's why I think that we social scientists need to work harder to understand the self-selection characteristics of Non-facebook users versus Facebook users. Hope this answers your question!

14 To Dr. Nadia Diamond-Smith et al. The title of your presentation included a question whether India will see a baby boom resulting from COVID-19 lockdown. I might have missed your conclusion, but does your survey give any indication of a baby-boom? And can you extrapolate your findings to those who do not have access to e-mails or computers?

Gouranga Dasvarma ([gour.dasvarma@flinders.edu.au](mailto:gour.dasvarma@flinders.edu.au))

- What we were hoping was to have insight into the mechanism if we do see a baby boom eventually— for example— is it due to wanted babies because of changes in preferences? is it due to unintended pregnancies because of changes in access to family planning? is it due to increased exposure to sexual violence? We are still analyzing the data to gain insight into this! In terms of extrapolation— I think no we cannot extrapolate to other populations.
- Thank you. I look forward to reading your interesting paper when it is completed. Will you upload the paper on an IUSSP website? (Gouranga Dasvarma)

15 Dear Dr. Kashyap, I think you can consider (for conclusion) that people do tend not to change their beliefs when corrected with facts (whether or not it comes from a Scientist)- as established by a few empirical political researches about changes in political beliefs on immigration (e.g. article Published in Jan 2020- Dustin Carranah)

Mayanka Ambade ([mayanka91289@gmail.com](mailto:mayanka91289@gmail.com))

- Thanks for your suggestion. The difference we were interested in was whether the same facts were presented as coming from experts or whether the fact was shown without attribution to a clear source. We found that willingness to update was either no different — or weaker when the same information was showing as coming from experts. In general, we found between 10-45% who were willing to change beliefs depending on the question asked.

16 My question to Ridhi. Did you find any significant difference between virus hotspot and low risk areas? It is interesting to low how the respondents' low risk and high risk think differently on the aspects taken in your survey at different stages of the pandemic? It will be important messaging on public health precautions in India where the pandemic is currently spreading in low risk areas.

Professor Chander Shekhar ([Shekhariips@rediffmail.com](mailto:Shekhariips@rediffmail.com))

- Thanks for your question. We geographically targeted areas for our survey experiment where the outbreak had occurred, and although there was some variation they were still within provinces where there were significant number of cases. In general, we found that while initially there was an increase in information-seeking and reliance on scientists and health authorities — and also a heightened trust in public health authorities and science, prolonged exposure to the epidemic resulted in a weakening of trust. We think this weakened trust with prolonged exposure in areas where outbreaks are hard is a potential mechanism for weakened responsiveness over time.
- Thanks! Great

18 '@Michele: Thanks Michele. Really interesting! A naive question: how Spatial Proximity Network measure works in densely populated areas in which people live within the same radius, but at a different level due to the presence of high buildings? Could the lockdown increase proximity since people were forced to live in a building? Another question: what do you mean for skewed data?  
Giancarlo Camarda ([carlo-giovanni.camarda@ined.fr](mailto:carlo-giovanni.camarda@ined.fr))

- Thanks Giancarlo. The effect of the lockdown is so strong - since it removes all meetings in public spaces - that it is unlikely to be canceled by the increased density in high-rise building. The latter effect is also present in the baseline. With “skewed data” I mean “non-representative”.

20 Thanks to all panelists so far. This is very interesting indeed. Would be great to hear experiences from developing nations especially those in Africa and how the biases can be handled.  
Priscilla Ndayara ([pndayara@knbs.or.ke](mailto:pndayara@knbs.or.ke))

- Hi Priscilla, we've actually had some discussions with the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, facilitated by the GLObal Partnership of Sustainable Development Data, on how to use Google and Facebook Advertising data. (Happy to connect to share some details. My email: [iweber@hbku.edu.qa](mailto:iweber@hbku.edu.qa))
- Hi Ingmar many thanks, great to hear.

21 Great presentation. thank you  
Dwi Nofiana Gita Pertiwi ([dwinofiana.gp@mail.ugm.ac.id](mailto:dwinofiana.gp@mail.ugm.ac.id))

22 '@Jorge. Where can we find more information about your research? Thanks!  
Constanza Hurtado ([churtado@umd.edu](mailto:churtado@umd.edu))

- Thank for your question Constanza. We've released three preprints of our work which you can read from here:
  - <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/medrxiv/early/2020/05/15/2020.05.09.20096388.full.pdf>
  - <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.05.15.20102657v1>
  - <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/ez9pb/>
- Thanks so much!!

23 '@Ingmar, I would be keen to hear if the changes in places' visit trends, you observed, followed more the arrival of the Covid-19 or the government policies (e.g., restriction and limits etc.) More specifically, does changes in visits, follow the temporal trend and start from China, then come to middle east then towards EU and Americas?  
Aliakbar Akbaritabar ([akbaritabar@dzhw.eu](mailto:akbaritabar@dzhw.eu))

- I think for country-level analysis, the type of data that Ugo is presenting is a better fit. See details at <https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/>. - But if you're interested in sub-city analysis then get in touch. Not sure if this is possible given how granular the data is and due to scarcity of data in certain countries/regions, but It may be interesting to look at how

certain events/restrictions affect public behavior i.e. to look at the effectiveness of policies/govt. restrictions across states/countries specifically in relation to lockdowns, and whether that tells us something about public “trust” in governmental interventions. Furthermore, can spatial points be compared? How does certain political push on reopening of things plays out with public behavior. How does the behavior of misinformed communities (covid deniers) play out with relative change in visits per neighbourhood.

25 Great presentations! Thank you. I have a question about ethical approval of using facebook or other social media to do the experiment or collect data. Does this need IRB approval?

Yuying Tong ([yuyingtong@gmail.com](mailto:yuyingtong@gmail.com))

- We received ethical approval for our studies.

26 To Basellini : did your research just focus on the mobility issues in the covid 19 or consider variety of population density among the workplace and home?

Dwi Nofiana Gita Pertiwi ([dwinofiana.gp@mail.ugm.ac.id](mailto:dwinofiana.gp@mail.ugm.ac.id))

- Thank you for your question. Unfortunately we do not have additional information from the Google Mobility Reports on the workplace and home variables, but we are working to include additional information at the regional level (such as population density, household size) in our regressions the regression would be more sensitive if the spacing issues can be included in the research. thank you ...

27 Doesn't the use of spatially explicit models help close the gap? Although it seems not 100% accurate, they are less biased.

Anass Barrahoume ([abarrahmoune1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:abarrahmoune1@sheffield.ac.uk))

29 On incentives, like the example by one of the panelists on a raffle to win something in exchange for participation, how does the use of incentives (or lack thereof) affect participation in these studies.

Priscilla Ndayara ([pndayara@knbs.or.ke](mailto:pndayara@knbs.or.ke))

- That’s a great question that we don’t really know the answer to, i think it increases participation, but we don’t know how it biases the results in terms of who answers. It can also lead to some more “fake” data potentially.

30 I think among the society there is the large variability especially social gratification like income group variation so people who are less income group they are far from that type of technology so they could not participate that type of research, so a big cohort could not be include this study.

Deepak ([Deepakpihal08@gmail.com](mailto:Deepakpihal08@gmail.com))

32 Thanks to all panelists. Really interesting.

Eloisa Norman ([enorman@ua.es](mailto:enorman@ua.es))

33 How do you cross check the reliability of data?

Shashikant Kumar ([gercbrd@gmail.com](mailto:gercbrd@gmail.com))

34 Thanks the panelists and IUSSP. Thanks to Tom. Thanks to Emilio to lead this panel. It is nice to see IUSSP having a leading role in the new techniques to face the research and data challenges from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Jose Miguel Guzman ([josemi.guzman@gmail.com](mailto:josemi.guzman@gmail.com))

35 Thank you for this wonderful session

Muntasir Masum ([muntasir.masum@utsa.edu](mailto:muntasir.masum@utsa.edu))

36 thank you all for the nice and informative presentations.

Vandana Tamrakar ([v7tamrakar@gmail.com](mailto:v7tamrakar@gmail.com))

37 Thanks

Brenda YEPEZ ([brendayeppez@gmail.com](mailto:brendayeppez@gmail.com))