

Out of sight, out of mind?

Panel continuance by tracking and interviewing expatriates

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The poster addresses methodological problems of extending panel surveys to participants leaving the survey due to emigration. As an example, we present the approach of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) to investigate out-migration processes. Since 2003 efforts have been made not only to identify SOEP drop-outs as expatriates but also to get information on their addresses in their new home countries in order to interview these former SOEP participants, asking questions about their migration motives and their current living conditions. Until 2005, 228 individuals could be clearly identified as expatriates who left Germany since 2002. For 53 of them it was possible to get information about their new address abroad and to send them an especially designed questionnaire. Finally, 23 completed questionnaires returned.

An extension of existing national surveys on participants leaving the survey due to emigration could be of particular interest for migration research. Unlike the growing data on immigration and integration, up to now only little is known about the extent of, the reasons for and the outcomes of emigration (at least from Western and Northern Europe). This is not only a result of less interest in the topic of out-migration, but rather a result of certain methodological problems. The poster will not only present the approach of the SOEP to follow up expatriates and solve such possible methodological problems, but will also mention problems of selection bias caused by such tracking procedures introduced as a new survey feature. In addition, the future potential of out-migration extensions of national surveys should be discussed.

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