

# Linking Longitudinal Survey and Administrative Records: Implications for Consent

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In most countries a prerequisite for linking survey records with administrative data is obtaining consent from respondents. Respondent refusal to consent can introduce bias if those who consent are systematically different from those who do not based on key variables of interest; thus, threatening the representativeness of inferences drawn from linked survey and administrative data. Like response rates, consent rates vary from study to study and from target to target (e.g., consent rates for linkages to earnings data may be different than to medical records), and the variation is generally not random. Many studies have identified key factors associated with the consent outcome, including age, race/ethnicity, gender, education, marital status, health status, and employment status. However, the identification of factors affecting consent in longitudinal studies is particularly lacking. Longitudinal surveys offer a unique opportunity to study the mechanisms underlying the consent process as detailed histories of respondents and their interview behavior are available for analysis. Such information may also be used to preidentify reluctant units and mount possible intervention strategies. Examples from the U.S. Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and from the German IAB Survey “Arbeitsmarkt und Soziale Sicherung“ (PASS) will be presented.