

## INTERVIEWERS' INFLUENCE ON BIAS IN REPORTED INCOME

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We investigate characteristics of respondents and interviewers influencing the accurateness of reported income by comparing survey data with administrative data. Questions on sensitive topics like respondents' income often produce relatively high rates of item nonresponse or measurement error. In this context several analyses have been done on item nonresponse (e.g. Essig/Winter 2009), but little is known about misreporting. Existing evidence shows that it is unpleasant for respondents to report very low or very high income. The generally observed high rates of item nonresponse at both tails of the income distribution support this hypothesis (Riphahn/Serfling 2005).

One possible explanation of such misreporting is social desirability bias, which may lead to overreporting of desirable attributes or underreporting of undesirable ones in order to present oneself in a positive light (Stocké/Hunkler 2007). Because an experienced and competent interviewer may be able to inhibit such behavior, interviewer characteristics as well as their interaction with respondent characteristics should be of particular importance. Moreover, the bias should decrease with perceived social closeness between respondent and interviewer (Diekmann 2008).

Using linked survey and administrative data we are able to measure the extent of deviation between reported and recorded incomes and explore the influence of respondent and interviewer characteristics on it. The starting point for the linkage is data from the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS), Starting Cohort 6 (see Allmendinger et al. 2011), which surveys adults from birth cohorts 1944 to 1986. More than 90% of the respondents consented to a linkage of their survey information with administrative data from the German Federal Employment Agency. These longitudinal earnings data are highly reliable as they are based on mandatory notifications of employers to the social security system.

We include interviewer and respondent characteristics as well as their interactions into our model to estimate their respective impact on the incidence and size of any bias in reported incomes. This allows us to control for latent interviewer traits that might have influenced the respondent's answering behavior during each interview of a given interviewer.

### References

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