ARE WE WITNESSING THE END OF RANDOM SAMPLING IN SURVEYS?

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The method of random sampling has an extremely strong position in official statistics. In the past decades, high quality surveys based on random sampling have become more difficult and expensive to conduct due to a hardening survey climate. The issue whether we should prefer random sampling to non-random methods pushes itself to the forefront of the agenda.

Recent research on 'balancing' (Särndal & Lundquist 2014) or 'representativeness' in sample surveys seems promising, although this is still ongoing research. I will argue that this may pull us away from random sampling towards obtaining a 'good' set of data that will allow for reliable inference, no matter whether that good data set has been obtained through a random sampling mechanism or not.

Reference

Särndal, C.-E. and Lundquist, P. (2014). Accuracy in Estimation with Nonresponse: A Function of Degree of Imbalance and Degree of Explanation. Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology, 1-27.