

Web-based questionnaire can be cost-effective tool for survey responses

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Investigators from the Slone Epidemiology Center at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) have reported that the use of a web-based questionnaire can be a cost-effective tool for obtaining survey response.

The study results, published in the [American Journal of Epidemiology](#), were based on data from the Black Women's Health Study (BWHS), a large prospective cohort study of 59,000 African American women from across the U.S. conducted by investigators at the Slone Epidemiology Center since 1995.

The participants are sent paper questionnaires every two years for the purpose of updating health information, but since 2003, they have had the option of completing the questionnaire on-line. According to the BUSM researchers, the cost of developing and processing a returned paper questionnaire was four times that of a returned web questionnaire.

Lead author Cordelia Russell, MPH, points out that the cost savings increased over time as more participants in the study chose to complete a web questionnaire rather than a paper questionnaire. "Between 2003, when we first offered the option of completing a web questionnaire, and our last completed questionnaire cycle in 2007, the proportion of respondents who chose to complete a web questionnaire doubled," said Russell, who is also the project manager of the BWHS.

The doubling of web questionnaire response occurred in all age groups, from those in their 30's to those in the 70's, and even 80's; though, the

web option was much more popular among the youngest participants. However, most participants, even the youngest, still preferred to complete a paper survey. Thus, while there are advantages to using a web questionnaire, the investigators emphasize the need to utilize multiple methods of soliciting responses to the questionnaire.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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