An experimental web survey on income and wealth among the Italian households

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It is well-known that the presence of an interviewer may influence the propensity to respond to a survey, especially when dealing with sensitive issues such as income and wealth. In this regard, Istat and Bank of Italy have collaborated in a research project aimed at evaluating whether the adoption of CAWI in collecting information on household income and wealth can enhance respondents cooperation and improve data quality. As part of the project, an experimental web survey was carried out in 2016, parallel to a CAPI survey run by the Bank of Italy on a subset of households participating to the Survey of Italian Household Income and Wealth (SHIW).

For the web survey a sample of 10,000 addresses was selected from population registers in the same municipalities used for the CAPI survey. A short form of the CAPI questionnaire was used. Besides, an incentive to respond was given to about 80% of the sample, in order to assess the effect on survey participation.

In our paper we will study whether response behavior relating to sensitive topics is different when collected with different modes. Web survey data will also be linked to administrative tax records on income in order to have a measure of potential measurement errors in the web survey.