



Looking Back, Moving Forward:

Lessons learned from an ERC Journey

2 September 2026, SOUNDS Kick-Off

Melanie Revilla | RECSM-UPF

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Project's research questions



1. Can we **improve** web survey **data quality** by using new measurement opportunities?
2. Can we **replace** part of the web survey data by using new measurement opportunities?
3. Can we achieve a **more complete picture** of the reality by **combining** new measurement opportunities with web survey data?

New data types considered

VISUAL DATA



Screenshots, photos, videos taken during the survey or saved on (or accessible from) the device

VOICE DATA



Dictation
Voice recording

METERED DATA

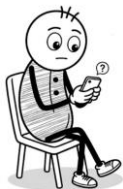


Obtained through a tracking application (“meter”) installed by the participants on their devices to register at least the URLs of the webpages visited

GEOLOCATION DATA

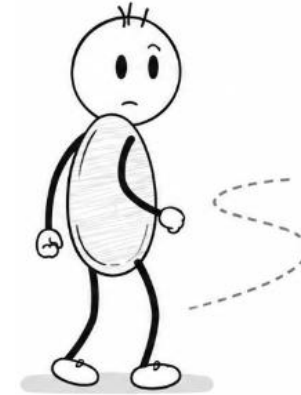


Obtained through a tracking application installed on participants’ mobile devices to register at least the GPS coordinates



IN-THE-MOMENT SURVEYS (ITMS) triggered by passively collected data

Looking back...



Much has changed since I submitted the ERC proposal, 8 years ago...

Much has changed since I submitted the ERC proposal



2018

2020

2022

2023

2026

NEW DATA

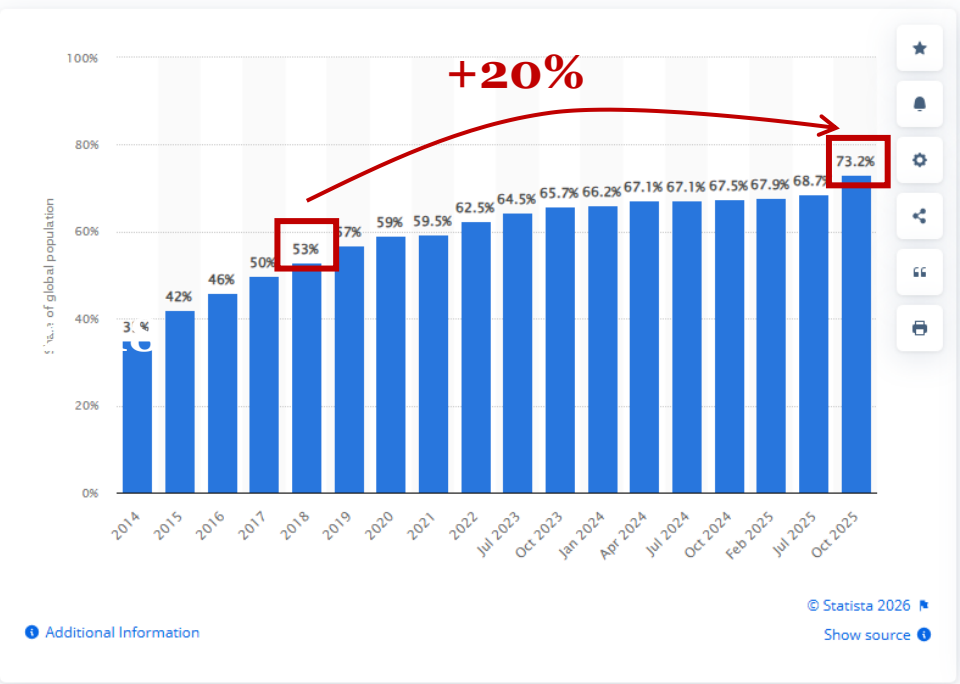


PRE-TEEN DATA

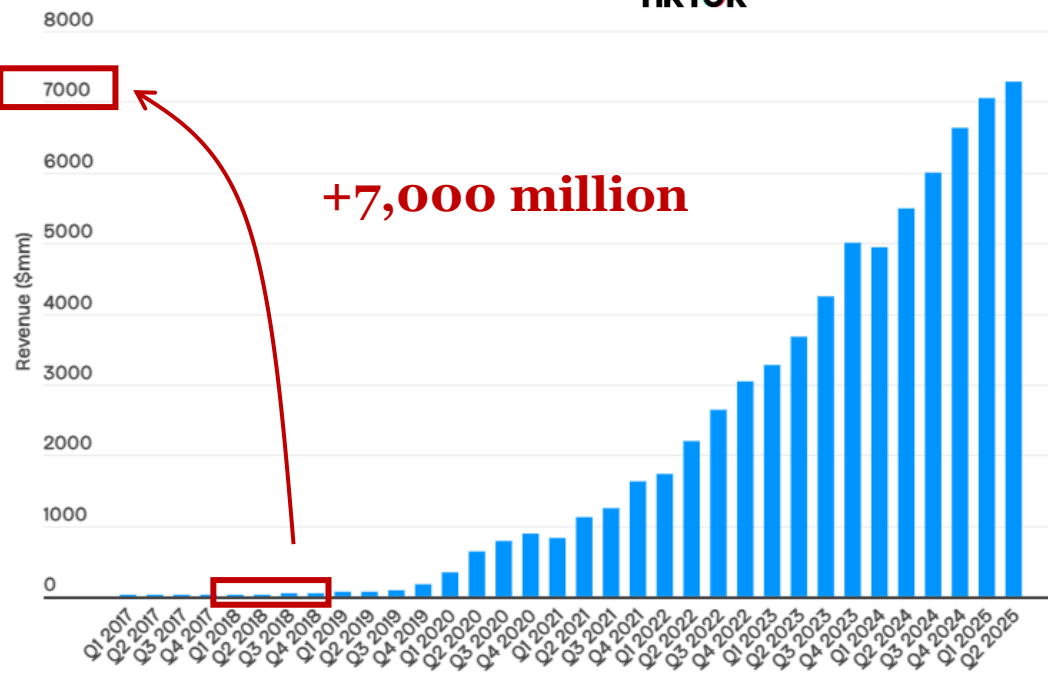


Much has changed since I submitted the ERC proposal

Internet penetration worldwide from 2014 to October 2025



TikTok revenues 2017 to 2025 (\$mm)



2018

2026

NEW DATA



PRE-TEEN DATA





Key takeaways

1. It is feasible



This was **not clear** when the project started

Voice data: existing tools had important technical limitations

- Mobile-only solutions + differences across operating systems
- We had to use dictation only for iOS and voice recording only for Android (Revilla et al., 2020)

ITMS: no adequate tools available → previous pop-up approach was not successful, with only 18 ITM participants achieved (Revilla & Ochoa, 2018)

**Lack of
tools**

**Lack of
infrastructure**

No geolocated panel available in Spain

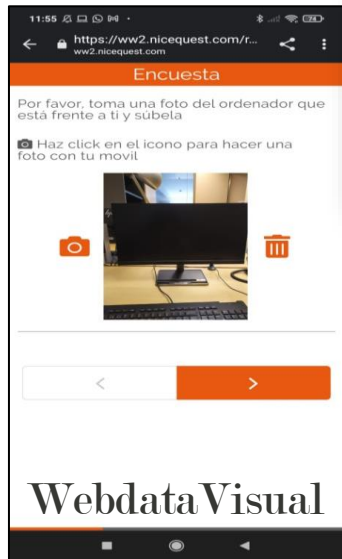
1. It is feasible



**Tools
successfully
developed**

**Sufficient
sample sizes
achieved**

**Rich &
relevant
information
collected**



**>10 data collections
involving new data types**



**In all cases, we achieved
sufficient sample sizes for
our analytical objectives**

**Most participants provided
valid information**



**Photos generally in line with
the requests, most voice
responses addressed the
questions, etc.**

2. It is *already* happening



Several companies but also research institutes collect **metered online data** continuously

Ipsos

Netquest

RealityMine

YouGov

GESIS



Started in 2014

At the start of 2015: 13,500 members

Now: $\approx$ **20,000** only in Spain



>10 years of such data collected

Some also have **geolocated** panels

Netquest

RealityMine

Many can handle **visual data** requests

We need to make the best possible use of all these rich existing data

3. It can benefit a broad range of topics



Books at home



Job search



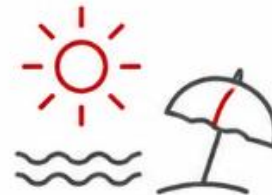
News media consumption



Remote working conditions



Beach visitors



ChatGPT adoption



Living room furniture



Attitudes towards nursing homes



Parental digital behaviours



3. It can benefit a broad range of topics



1

More
detailed
information



Type of chair

2

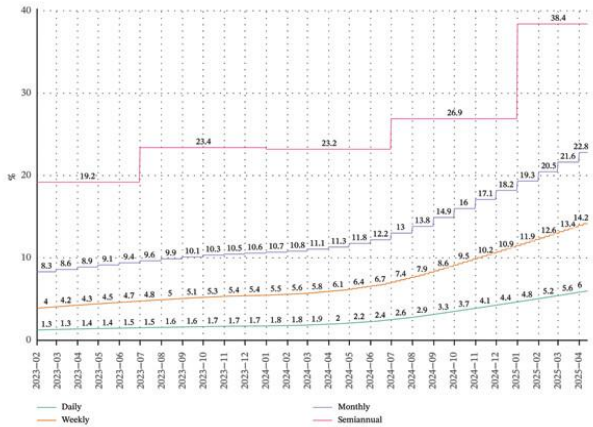
Measure
new
concepts



Books' titles

3

Study
evolution



4. However, it is time and resource consuming



We had to geolocate almost 2,500 mainland beaches in Spain manually...



We had to code thousands of photos, counting books, classifying languages, and much more...

A dying man said as he received the last rites, 'Don't worry, son, you're going to a better place... you'll have everything, good food, drink, etc.' To which the dying man responded, opening one eye... 'Father, there's no place like home'

We had to extract information from thousands of voice transcriptions...

Still, it can be done with a relatively small team and for prices between 3,000 € and 15,000 €

5. Participation is still a clear problem



Around **40%** of participants sent photos of their books at home (Iglesias, 2024)

Around **20-25%** of participants used the voice options when given a choice, and **48-80%** in the push-to groups (Revilla & Couper, 2026)

5. Participation is still a clear problem

Some strategies implemented to increase it were **unsuccessful**

Research Note

International Journal
of Market Research

Framing Effects on Willingness to Participate in Geolocation-Based Research

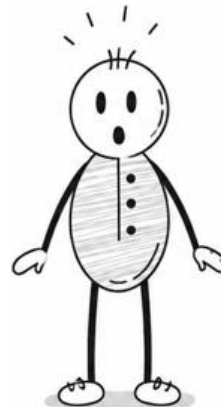
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SAGE

Carlos Ochoa  and Melanie Revilla 
Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain.

Abstract

The Internet's widespread adoption and recent technological developments have provided researchers with the opportunity to capture new data types (e.g., images, passively collected data), which offer several advantages over conventional survey data. Nevertheless, the limited participation rate in projects requiring to share such data may limit their benefits, and even their feasibility. To estimate the willingness to participate in such projects in advance, researchers frequently rely on surveys. However, the way researchers describe what data should be shared and how, and the phrasing of questions asked to participants to obtain their agreement may result in different estimates. This study presents the results of a conjoint experiment that estimates the hypothetical willingness of participants to engage in two research activities that require sharing geolocation data. Three different descriptions of the activities were presented to participants: a neutral one, one emphasizing the necessity to commit to participate, and one emphasizing safe handling of shared data. The three descriptions elicited different levels of willingness, with a maximum effect of 7.0 percentage points (statistically significant). Additionally, the importance given by participants to the attributes of the activities (e.g., project duration or incentives) differed depending on the description. Notably, the description that emphasized data safety produced lower levels of willingness compared to the neutral one. This suggests that researchers should avoid overly emphasizing safety assurances when requesting the sharing of sensitive data, beyond the necessary information required for obtaining informed consent from participants.

Emphasising **data safety**
produced **lower** willingness levels



Providing extra incentives for voice answers to open narrative questions in web surveys

Jan Karem Höhne (DZHW, Leibniz University Hannover)
Melanie Revilla (RECSM-Universitat Pompeu Fabra)
Mick P. Couper (University of Michigan)
Joshua Claassen (DZHW, Leibniz University Hannover)

Abstract

Building on advancements in communication technology to reduce respondent burden and increase data quality, survey researchers have started to employ open questions with requests for voice instead of text answers. Respondents can record their answers through their device's microphone by pushing a recording button facilitating narrations. Research indicates that voice answers, compared to text answers, have some data quality benefits, such as being longer and including more topics. However, a key challenge remains the high rate of item nonresponse associated with voice answers (between 20% and 60%). Therefore, we investigate whether and to what extent extra incentives help to increase the voice answer rate and data quality. We conducted a web survey (N = 2,271) in the Netquest online panel in Spain, stratifying respondents into three groups (low, medium, and high) based on their likelihood of providing voice answers. This grouping was based on respondents' answers to two questions related to their 1) use of voice input in daily life and 2) trust in the confidential treatment of their answers. Within each of these three groups, respondents were randomly assigned to either receive an extra incentive for providing voice answers to two open questions or not. The results indicate that using voice input to answer open questions does differ between the three likelihood groups, as expected. The extra incentives offered do not increase the answer rate but do appear to have some data quality benefits.

Providing **extra incentives** did
not increase the answer rate

5. Participation is still a clear problem

Others helped but *moderately*

A New Experiment on the use of Images to Answer Web Survey Questions

Oriol J. Bosch , Melanie Revilla, Danish Daniel Qureshi, Jan Karem Höhne
[Author Notes](#)

Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A: Statistics in Society, Volume 185, Issue 3, July 2022, Pages 955–980, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rssa.12856>

Abstract

Images might provide richer and more objective information than text answers to open-ended survey questions. Little is known, nonetheless, about the consequences for data quality of asking participants to answer open-ended questions with images. Therefore, this paper addresses three research questions: (1) What is the effect of answering web survey questions with images instead of text on breakoff, noncompliance with the task, completion time and question evaluation? (2) What is the effect of including a motivational message on these four aspects? (3) Does the impact of asking to answer with images instead of text vary across device types? To answer these questions, we implemented a 2 × 3 between-subject web survey experiment ($N = 3043$) in Germany. Half of the sample was required to answer using PCs and the other half with smartphones. Within each device group, respondents were randomly assigned to (1) a control group answering open-ended questions with text; (2) a treatment group answering open-ended questions with images; and (3) another treatment group answering open-ended questions with images but prompted with a motivational message. Results show that asking participants to answer with images significantly increases participants' likelihood of noncompliance as well as their completion times, while worsening their overall survey experience. Including motivational messages, moreover, moderately reduces the likelihood of noncompliance. Finally, the likelihood of noncompliance is similar across devices.

A **motivational message** had a small positive effect



Improving Participation and Data Quality in Remote Workstation Photo Requests

Leyre Padilla, Melanie Revilla, Kieran Sargeant Rivilla

RECSM - Universitat Pompeu Fabra

This study contributes to the literature by testing several **practical strategies** to improve participation in visual data requests while maintaining data quality. Our findings suggest that:

- **Within-survey follow-ups are effective tools for increasing participation**, adding around 9% of respondents with little cost to photo quality.
- **Email reminders recover a further share of non-participants** (up to 8% across groups), with usability holding up well for workspace photos and a small drop for the device-label photo.
- **Extra incentives do not increase participation but do improve photo quality**, with the effect strongest when the incentive is announced upfront.
- **The type of photo has a greater impact than prompting strategy**: workspace photos perform well across conditions, whereas device-label photos remain difficult, except in the reminder condition, where *IncentiveReminder* outperforms *Control* (81.2% vs. 63.6%), despite the small sample.

Including a **follow-up** prompt & sending a **targeted reminder** increased participation

6. It can improve data quality...

Example: Longer/richer answers for voice (Revilla & Couper, 2026)



		Control	Choice	PushDictation	PushRecording
No. themes (avg.)	OQ1	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7
	OQ2	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.8*
No. characters (avg.)	OQ1	109	177	181	227*
	OQ2	93	135	144	227*

Note: Stars denote a significant difference (5% level) compared to the group immediately in the previous column.

Bold numbers highlight significant differences when compared to the *Control* group.

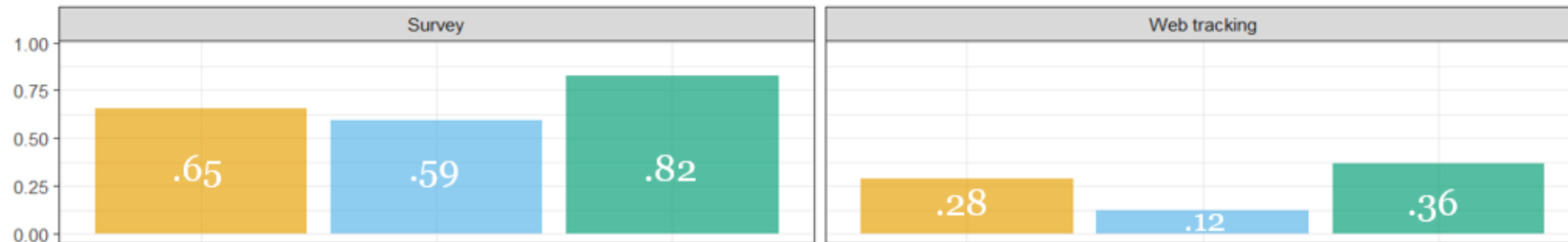
More characters + more themes in voice groups than Control group

→ Suggests **improved data quality**

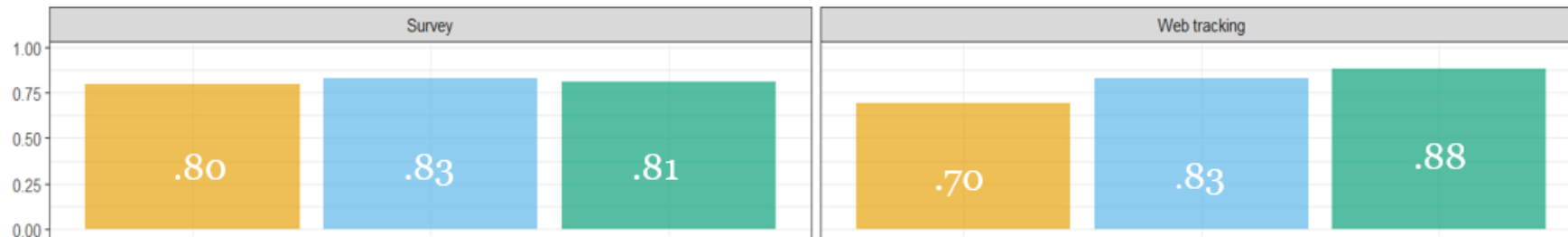
6. ...but *not* always and *not* as much as expected

Example: low measurement quality in metered data (Bosch et al., 2023)

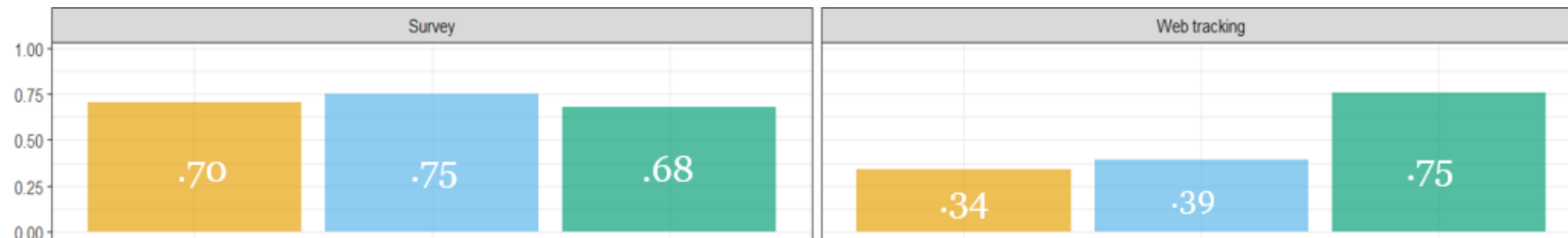
Experiment 1:
News



Experiment 2:
Communication



Experiment 3:
Entertainment



7. Researchers need to make many decisions



Example: measure **Online Job Search Intensity** (Ochoa & Revilla, 2025a)

- 1 Determine a list of **URLs** and **apps** associated with job search
- 2 Select **measurement type** + Measurement **target** → 8 core metrics (M1-M8)
 - Time spent
 - Number of visits
 - Browsing sessions on job search platforms
 - Pages within platforms
 - Job offer pages
 - Application pages
- 3 Apply **operationalisation factors** (e.g., minimum & maximum time)
 - To session-based measures (M1, M5) → 1,296 measures
 - To page-based measures (M2-M4 and M6-M8) → 1,248 measures
- 4 **Summarise** across individuals → Final output:
 - Mean
 - Median
 - **2,592** session-based measures (M1, M5)
 - **2,496** page-based measures (M2-M4, M6-M8)

8. Ethical & data privacy challenges remain



Informed consent is essential, but how can we ensure that consent is genuinely “informed”?



Even when **instructions** are clear, we cannot assume that all participants will follow them

Example: in Ochoa & Revilla (2025b), between **22%** and **32%** of participants, depending on the group, shared private information (e.g., faces) despite being asked not to do so

Unintended disclosure of third-party information must be considered

Example: in Ochoa (2025), the ITMS informed participants that they were invited because they applied at a specific job offer → a screening question on recent online activities including “reading job offers” was added to reduce disclosure risk



9. Panellists do *not* like it much

Despite the rapid growth in the use of voice messages in daily life and the widespread use of visual content in social media & messaging apps, participants do *not* seem to like these formats as much in survey contexts

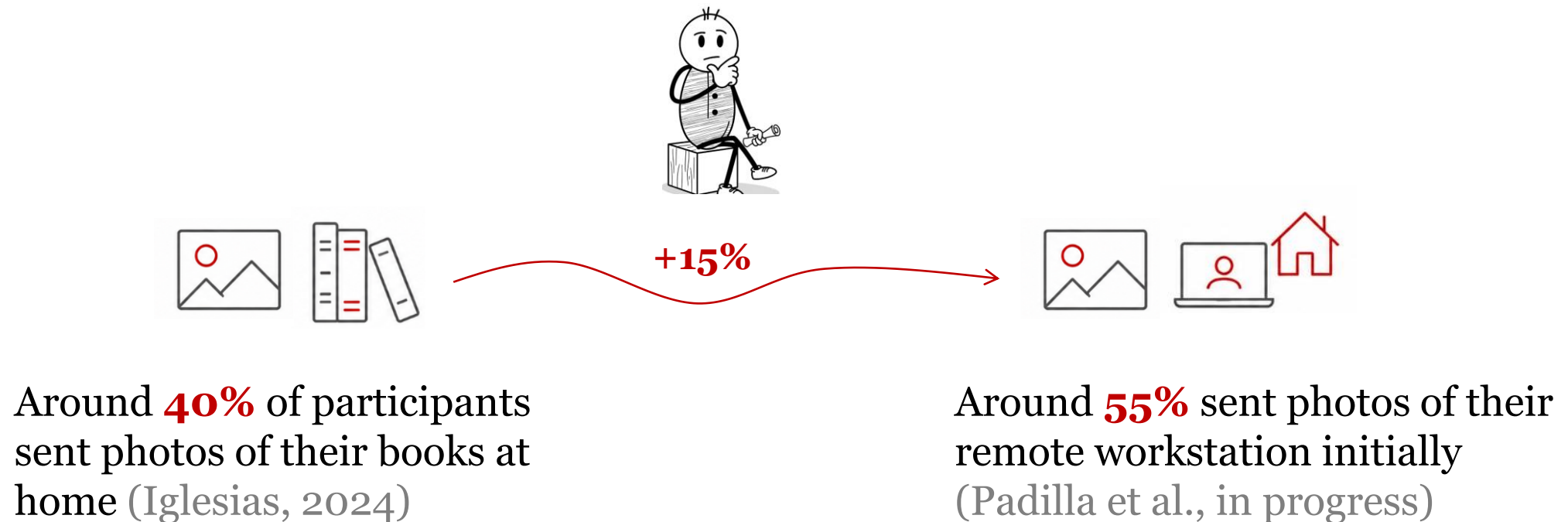
Example: Iglesias (2024) found that **53.5%** of the respondents liked answering the conventional questions, vs only **24.4%** for image-based formats



	Conv.	Images
Like	53.5	24.4
Not like nor dislike	44.8	60.7
Dislike	1.7	14.8
<i>n</i>	891	135

10. The specific topic, task and target population matter

Participation & quality vary substantially across studies, even when the data are collected within the same panel and country



Moving forward...

What's next?



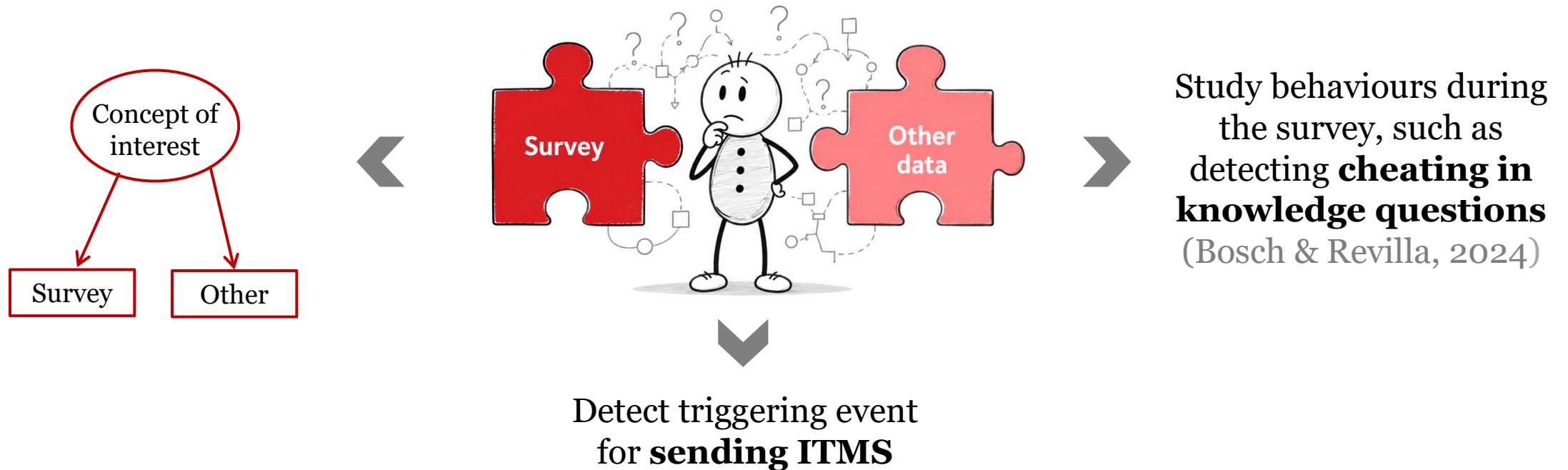
Investigating further how to best combine different data

My conclusion:

We are **not** yet at a stage where new types of data can replace conventional survey questions.

Instead, they should be viewed as **a complement**.

However, **how best to combine them** remains an open question that requires further research.



Implement it in *cross-national* research

All our research has been done in **only one country**



Cross-national research adds substantial **complexity**

Fieldwork companies are *not* consistently available across countries + using different providers across countries risks **non-comparable data**

Example: Claassen & Revilla (2026) use metered data to study 166 pregnant participants
→ feasible in Spain (large metered panel), but not possible in other countries with Netquest

Can AI help?



Probably, but what we have tried so far suggests it is *not* sufficient



Classifying images

Not possible yet to get much of the information we wanted without a lot of effort in developing/tuning existing tools + ethical considerations

Transcribing and coding

Important differences across automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools

Differences between human and ChatGPT coding can be substantial

Classifying URLs

In some cases, the volume of elements to be classified is so high (e.g., parental digital behaviour study) that AI seems the only way

More research is needed on how to integrate AI → could help a lot in the coming years

Conclusion

Progress have been made but there are still a lot of open questions

How can we ensure the responsible and ethical use of these data?

Which findings are likely to remain robust over time?



What other emerging data sources should we be exploring?

How do we avoid leaving out people who choose not to share such data?

Thanks!

Questions?



Melanie Revilla | RECSM-UPF



melanie.revilla@upf.edu



<https://www.upf.edu/web/webdataopp>

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