

Editorial Introduction: Video Survey Interviewing Special Issue

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Video communication was anticipated long before it was available. The idea was first proposed in the 1870s by Bell Labs with the first call placed on April 7, 1927 by then-U.S. Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover to AT&T President Walter Gifford (Figure 1, left panel). Hoover spoke from Washington, D.C., and was seen by AT&T officials in New York City. The 1930s saw early prototypes of two-way calls in Germany with the Gegensehn-Fernsprechanlagen (visual telephone system).

Video communication began appearing in popular culture in the 1960s. In the early sixties, the animated series *The Jetsons* debuted in the U.S. in which the characters regularly communicated via videophone, and in the 1968 movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Dr. Heywood Floyd, placed a video call from a space station to Earth. In 1964 Bell Labs debuted a “picture phone” prototype at the New York World’s Fair (Figure 1, right panel). In all of these cases a user placed the video call, much as one would a telephone call, i.e., without prior arrangement – a “cold call”. As it has turned out, video communication tends to be jointly arranged, i.e., scheduled, by the participants, more like a meeting (a video conference) than a phone call, with a minority of applications such as FaceTime following the phone call model.



Figure 1 Video communication evolution. Left Panel: AT&T President Walter Gifford seeing and speaking with then-U.S. Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover in 1927. Right Panel: Picture Phone from the 1964 World’s Fair. Source: Courtesy of AT&T Archives and History Center

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Both the meeting and phone call models pose challenges for recruiting sample members to participate in video survey interviews. The meeting model usually requires online contact information for sample members such as their email addresses to invite them to schedule an interview; there are generally no frames of email addresses for national populations¹ so researchers have had to improvise to make this approach work. The phone call model is also challenging because sample members would need to be users of the same video platform as the survey organization such as FaceTime, WhatsApp or WeChat, which cannot be assumed. Even if a sample uses the platform on which they are being contacted by the survey organization, it is unlikely they will answer the call from an unrecognized number/user. Nonetheless, video communication is now a standard way to converse for a growing segment of the world.

The Covid pandemic led to an urgent and unplanned increase in video interviewing because in-person interviewing was impossible during this time. Rather than deliberately and experimentally developing video interviewing methods, survey researchers innovated within the constraints imposed by the crisis, finding ways to enable face-to-face interaction between an interviewer and respondent without physical proximity: video interviewing is, in fact, a face-to-face mode, but mediated and remote, i.e., not in person. This innovation is reflected in the scope of papers for this special issue. While some are based on experimental research, several report on experiences and outcomes from “real life” production surveys, often carried out during or in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. It is not yet clear what role video interviewing might play in future research but the pandemic-era experiences provide a useful evidence base for subsequent implementations.

Now that we are five years post-pandemic, survey researchers have some perspective on video interviewing. Thus, now is a good time to reflect on what has been learned about the topic and how video may be implemented in studies moving forward.

The special issue includes articles which report studies in different contexts, using a variety of research designs. More specifically, the special issue includes articles about studies conducted either:

1. before, during, or after the pandemic
2. in laboratory or in field settings
3. experimentally or observationally
4. in cross-sectional designs or in longitudinal designs

¹ One indication that this is changing can be found in the increasing use of “digipost” services in which all residents of a country is provided an official email address for receiving digital correspondence from public authorities. For an example in Denmark see <https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/apps-and-digital-services/Digital-Post>.

5. in comparative (i.e., cross-national) designs or within a single country
6. as comparisons of video to other interviewing modes (in-person, telephone, web, and pre-recorded video) or as an in-depth examination of only live video interviewing
7. using probability or non-probability sample sources
8. to measure willingness to participate in live or in prerecorded video interviews
9. with general populations or with specialized populations (e.g., children, older adults, those with mental health disorders)

This diversity of study contexts and designs suggests that video interviewing is flexible and can be implemented broadly, despite the need for specialized hardware and software. However, none of the studies were conducted in countries that might be considered primarily low or middle income, so we cannot conclude that video interviewing is universally applicable.

Survey researchers and methodologists have demonstrated interest in video interviewing for collecting quantitative data and its future as evidenced by sessions devoted to the mode at conferences of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and the European Survey Research Association (ESRA) between 2021 and 2025. Several initiatives in the UK have explored and promoted video interviewing, including the Surveys Futures (<https://surveyfutures.net/research-programme/research-strand-3/>) collaboration (Research Strand 3: video interviewing) which hosts working papers and hosted a workshop on video interviewing in March 2026. In the US, AAPOR hosted a webinar on video interviewing in 2022 and at least two important surveys have continued to collect data via video interviewing in the post-pandemic era, the American National Election Studies (<https://electionstudies.org/>) and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (<https://meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/>). Internationally, a Special Interest Group on video interviewing has been established, and meets periodically to collaborate and disseminate information, including organizing conference sessions.

Born out of the pandemic-created need for data collection that is both remote and interviewer-administered, the deployment of video interviewing is no longer urgent. Although some video interviewing is currently a component of ongoing survey research, its future may be more likely as one of multiple modes offered to respondents than as a stand-alone mode. More likely, video interviewing will continue as one among many modes offered to respondents or particular sub-populations, as well as being deployed in longitudinal studies in which contact information – especially email addresses which are typically required to invite sample members to participate in video interviews – can be obtained in earlier waves of data collection, or in online panels whose clients might require video

interviewing for particular studies. Whatever contexts in which video interviewing is used going forward, this special issue serves as a collection of researcher experience and evaluation of the approach that can inform decisions about its future use.

As for any new mode, it is important to establish basic principles and nomenclature used by those active in the field. In the special issue, we asked authors to use “video interviewing” to describe live interaction between an interviewer and a respondent mediated by video, although in the context of prerecorded video interviews – a web survey in which a videorecording of an interviewer asking questions has been embedded – authors differentiated the modes as “live video interviews” or “prerecorded video interviews.” We do not use labels or acronyms that imply that interviews are *assisted* by video communication because video mediates but does not assist the parties in their interaction. Similarly, we asked authors to use the term “in-person” rather than “face-to-face” interviewing because video interviewing is also a face-to-face mode. Finally, we encouraged authors to describe legacy modes explicitly, e.g., phone, in-person, and web, rather than by acronyms indicating their implementation on a computer because computerization can be assumed unless something to the contrary is specified and so that readers unfamiliar with the conventional four-letter acronyms for computerized modes can make sense of what they are reading.

Beyond Feasibility of Video Interviewing

Before video interviewing was introduced in response to the pandemic, the first question asked by researchers and survey practitioners was whether it would work. Would survey respondents be willing and able to start and get through a video interview? Would video platforms work sufficiently well to allow the performance of survey tasks?

The early literature on video interviewing focused on testing its feasibility and assessing different design factors (Anderson, 2008; Centeno et al., 2024; Jeannis et al., 2013, Schober et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2020). The general conclusion from these papers, alongside presentations in video interviewing workshops and conference sessions, was that it is possible to carry out quantitative survey interviews by video, while making clear that there are several design choices that need to be considered. This is supported by papers in this special issue.² For example, **Hanson et al. (2026)** found that on the European Social Survey (ESS), most of those who participated by video got through the interview without technical issues, and respondent ratings of their experience of the video interviews

² Throughout this editorial, references to articles included in this Special Issue are indicated in bold.

were in line with those reported for in-person interviews. **Durrant et al. (2026)** explored the feasibility of obtaining consent and conducting cognitive assessments in video interviews and concluded that these special tasks could be carried out in this mode much as in in-person interviews.

The feasibility of video interviewing as a practical data collection method is therefore now well established. Indeed, most papers in the special issue move beyond feasibility and address specific gaps in what is known about video interviewing and how it works in different contexts. **Hupp et al. (2026)**, and **Guggenheim et al. (2026)** examine participation and nonresponse, **Fomby et al. (2026)** and **Carr et al. (2026)** report on video interviews with special populations (children and those experiencing mental health symptoms, respectively), and **Feuer and Schober (2026)** investigate one design feature of video interviews, the presence or absence of a self-view window and how it affects interaction. **Hanson et al. (2026)**, **Zavala-Rojas et al. (2026)**, **Durrant et al. (2026)**, and **Cornesse et al. (2026)** compare data quality between video and other modes. **Sun and Conrad (2026)** explore interviewer-respondent dynamics in video versus in-person interviews, and **Claassen et al. (2026)** investigate hypothetical willingness to participate in prerecorded video interviews.

In the remaining sections, we discuss two key aspects of video interviewing: (1) participation, in particular recruiting respondents and completing the interview, and (2) data quality, in particular comparability of results in video and other modes, primarily in-person interviews but also web surveys and telephone interviews.

Participation

There are (at least) three ways that a sample member and survey organization can initiate a video interview. First, the survey organization can place an unsolicited (i.e., cold) video call to the sample member analogous to a telephone survey invitation/introduction. As indicated earlier, unsolicited video calls are not practical given the dominant meeting model in which video communication is largely scheduled ahead of time and allows users of various devices to join a call, unlike in cold call models.

Second, the sample member can contact the survey organization and ask to be interviewed. Such on-demand interviewing was possible in the 2020 American National Elections Studies (ANES) reported in **Guggenheim et al. (2026)**. Sample members were invited by mail to complete a web screener. Those who were eligible were redirected to a video waiting room where they could ask to be interviewed at that time; if no interviewers were available, they could wait until one was available, or they could schedule a future video interview (DeBell et al., 2022). Most participated in a video interview upon arrival. While **Guggenheim et**

al. (2026) reported that the on-demand model was successful, we note that it is inherently inefficient because interviewers can have periods of down time (for which they are paid) or more demand (sample members in the waiting room) than they can meet.

Scheduling, the third model, has become the default and was by far the most prevalent approach reported in the special issue articles. Two approaches to scheduling have been used: the sample member can self-schedule an interview³ or can schedule the interview with a representative of the survey organization, such as an interviewer. The two approaches can, in principle, be used in tandem, for example a sample member can be both invited via email to self-schedule online and also provided with a link; if they do not follow-through, the organization phones the sample member and works with them to find a good time for the video interview. Once the interview is scheduled (and in some cases rescheduled), the sample member must show up at the appointed time to begin the interview. Both scheduling and showing up are obstacles to completing a video interview that are rarely factors in completing interviews in other modes.

This framework is laid out conceptually by **Hupp et al. (2026)** in the special issue and instantiated by their experimental study. They found that scheduling and showing up for a scheduled video interview are both impediments to completion. However, almost all of the sample members who made it to the appointment completed their interview. **Guggenheim et al. (2026)** reported a higher scheduling rate but this appears to be due to differences in the scheduling procedure between the two studies: in **Hupp et al. (2026)**, sample members received an unsolicited invitation to self-schedule an appointment for the interview, but in **Guggenheim et al. (2026)** an interviewer scheduled a follow-up video interview at the conclusion of an in-person interview.

Participation in video interviews seems to depend on what modes are made available to respondents. As **Durrant et al. (2026)**, report, in interviews where video was the only or primary data collection mode, response rates were notably lower than when in-person interviews were also an option. In the latter scenario, they report that video interviews attracted a higher proportion of younger and more educated sample members than did in-person interviews, with the opposite pattern (higher proportion of older and less educated respondents) observed for in-person interviews. It is possible that a mix of modes might jointly cover the target population more effectively than either mode alone as some respondents, e.g., those residing in high crime areas or who are younger and more familiar with video communication, might opt for video interviews but would decline to participate if in-person interviews were the only choice. Whether and how the inclusion of video interviews in the set of modes offered to sample members

³ See Conrad et al. (2023) for an example of self-scheduling video interviews; see McGonagle and Sastry (2021) for an example of self-scheduling a telephone interview.

results in a more balanced overall study sample than when video interviews are not an option is an important topic for further investigation.

Data quality

Prior to this special issue, the small published literature about video interviewing pointed toward considerable overlap in the quality of survey data collected in video and in-person interviews as well as in the respondents' experience. In particular, Endres et al. (2023) reported the same levels of satisficing and disclosure as well as respondents' satisfaction with the interview in both video and in-person interviews. On the one hand this is not surprising: the features comprising both modes are very similar, e.g., both are face-to-face in the sense that the interviewer and respondent see and hear each other in real time (see Schober et al., 2023 for a feature comparison of video, in-person, and telephone interviewing). On the other hand, the interviewer and respondent are not physically co-located in video interviews, i.e., the interaction is mediated by a screen, which could affect the experience and lead to different data quality outcomes.

Although Endres et al. (2023) found no differences between the two modes in the laboratory, it is possible that in production settings differences might emerge. For example, there may be distractions in respondents' immediate environment that a remote interviewer cannot mitigate. In addition, the respondent may appear to be looking at the camera, and thus engaged in the interview, when they are actually looking at a different on-screen window; this could be good for data quality if they have shifted their gaze to consult records needed to accurately answer a question but it could harm data quality if it reflects their unrelated behavior such as online shopping. The articles in the special issue that measure data quality were primarily conducted in production/field settings and while the story that emerges across these studies is more complicated than what has emerged from the laboratory, there is not compelling evidence of a systematic difference in quality or respondent experience between video and in-person interviewing.

Missing data, straightlining and disclosure. Hanson et al. (2026) compare missing data and straightlining in video and in-person interviews in the six ESS countries that conducted the largest number of video interviews. The authors report small but significant mode differences in the average number of missing answers per respondent in five of the six countries with smaller amounts in video than in-person interviews for four countries and the reverse for the fifth. They also report little difference in the amount of straightlining between the two modes.

Another indication that video interviewing is experienced much like in-person interviewing is that in both of these modes respondents exhibit more socially

desirable responding (less disclosure) than they do when they self-administer the questionnaire, as in a web survey. **Cornesse et al. (2026)** report findings consistent with greater social desirability in video interviews than in a web survey for seven out of nine behaviors. Consistent with **Endres et al. (2023)** and **Conrad et al. (2023)**, these findings suggest that the *presence of the interviewer* is experienced much the same way in video and in-person data collection to positive and negative effect: an interviewer presumably increases respondent engagement and conscientiousness compared to web data collection but inhibits candid responses when they are sensitive or otherwise stigmatized.

Interviewer effects. **Hanson et al. (2026)** report that interviewer effects (ICCs) were similar in size in both in-person and video interviews for most items, with somewhat larger differences for one country, suggesting that whether the impact of interviewers on variance is higher or lower for particular items, it is about the same in both modes. See **West et al. (2022)** for a comparison of interviewer effects in live and prerecorded video interviews.

Measurement invariance. **Zavala-Rojas et al. (2026)** report measurement invariance (i.e., equivalence) across the video and in-person interviews for the same six ESS-participating countries as in the **Hanson et al. (2026)** special issue article. For one concept, social trust, they report measurement invariance in all six countries; for another concept, attitudes toward immigration, they report equivalence in three of the six countries. Thus, in the majority of the comparisons, video and in-person interviews produced equivalent results.

Respondent experience. **Hanson et al. (2026)** report that respondents experience video and in-person interviewing in much the same way across the six ESS countries. They observed no differences between the modes on a post-interview questionnaire about their experience when results from all six countries were combined, although respondents rated in-person interviewing more positively than video interviewing in two countries, the reverse for one country, and no difference in the remaining three countries.

Video self-view. Video interviewing not only allows the interviewer and respondent to see each other but it also allows the respondent to see themselves via the self-view window typically displayed by default. This raises the question of how seeing oneself during the interview affects data quality, especially disclosure. **Feuer and Schober (2026)** tested the impact of the self-view window in a laboratory study in which they compared disclosure of sensitive information (socially undesirable responses) with and without the self-view window. They report no less disclosure when the self-view is present than when it is not and, if anything, more disclosure for some stigmatized behaviors.

Spoken communication in video interviews. **Sun and Conrad (2026)** report that the verbal communication – interaction between the interviewer and respondent – in in-person and video interviews – was largely indistinguishable. For example, the prevalence of respondents' disfluencies (e.g., *ums* and *uhs*) is

the same in both modes. They do report more laughter in video than in-person interviewing, but propose this could be nervous laughter possibly due to technical problems in the video connection and/or display. In earlier work, Sun et al. (2021) reported that respondents establish rapport with interviewers to the same extent in both video and in-person interviews, presumably because the cues on which rapport is based are equally perceptible in the two modes. Taken together these findings suggest that verbal interaction in in-person and video-mediated interviews is largely indistinguishable.

Impact of being able to see the respondent. How might the combination of video and spoken interaction affect outcomes of the interview compared to speech only, as in a telephone interview? Carr et al. (2026) reported greater prevalence of psychiatric disorders measured in video than telephone interviews and suggested this could be due, in part, to the clinical interviewer's ability to see respondents' faces and their physical movements in video but not phone interviews. One implication is that for some respondents, symptoms may have gone undetected and undiagnosed on the phone but detected and diagnosed in a video interview, suggesting higher quality data in clinical interviews conducted via video than telephone. The authors speculate that video interviewing may also have led to more self-reported symptoms because respondents felt greater rapport with interviewers they could see.

What have we learned so far?

Looking across the eleven articles in the special issue makes it possible to assess the different ways video interviewing has been used, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different uses, and to consider where the method may be more or less effectively employed in the future. This allows us to draw some tentative conclusions and identify areas where more research is needed.

It seems clear that the optimal conditions for deploying video interviewing are not as a single mode of data collection. This reflects issues with population coverage (video interviewing appeals more to some sample members than others) and challenges of contact (inviting sample members typically requires a frame of email addresses). Moreover, making and showing up for an appointment involves effort not required for data collection in other modes. But with the current prevalence of mixed-mode designs, video interviewing may be a valuable complement to other modes.

Different uses of video as part of mixed-mode designs can be envisaged. It can be combined with in-person interviewing to bring in people who may have limited availability or be unwilling or unable to take part in an in-person interview. The evidence for near-equivalent data quality between video and in-person interviewing discussed in the previous section may make this combination

of modes particularly strong. But there may also be potential to combine video with web to bring in people who may struggle with the text-based self-administered format of a web questionnaire and would be better able or more willing to complete the questionnaire with a remote – but human – interviewer. Or video could be used in combination with or in place of telephone interviewing in a mixed-mode design, which may help with building rapport and disclosure of certain sensitive information (as suggested in **Carr et al. (2026)**).

Even within mixed-mode designs, there may be different types of studies where video interviewing is a more feasible option than others. It is clear from evidence collected to date, including the papers by **Hupp et al. (2026)** and **Guggenheim et al. (2026)** in this special issue, that a significant challenge with video interviewing is the contact and scheduling process. Most people who start video interviews finish them – but getting them started in the first place can be far from straightforward. This relates to how contact is first made with target respondents. For many studies, email addresses or telephone numbers will not be available and so initial contact will rely on postal mailings or in-person visits. The evidence so far suggests that facilitating video interviews based on postal or in-person contacts is challenging. Video may therefore offer more potential for longitudinal studies, where more extensive contact information can be gathered in an earlier wave, or where rich sample frames include contact details beyond postal addresses. The latter is evidenced in the paper by **Hanson et al. (2026)** based on the ESS, where those countries that carried out a higher share of video interviews tended to be those in which interviewers could make first contact by telephone rather than needing in-person visits.

This special issue provides preliminary evidence on the conditions that may support effective use of video interviewing, which we hope will be helpful for survey practitioners. Yet questions remain. It is not fully clear, for example, to what extent video interviewing can bring in sample members who would not respond in other modes as opposed to enabling people who would likely have responded irrespective of mode. Relatedly, more research is needed on the extent to which including video as part of a mixed-mode strategy adds benefits versus extra costs and complexity. Similarly, more research is needed on how to lower the barriers to participating introduced by the need for self-scheduling. At minimum, however, the range of studies that have incorporated video interviewing in recent years, many of which are showcased in this special issue, ensure we now know far more about this mode. Video interviewing was hardly used as a survey data collection mode prior to the pandemic. It is now established and available for practitioners to use as part of a growing toolbox; we can expect that the conditions in which it can be most effectively used will be refined further over the coming years.

What's on the horizon?

Looking ahead, there are at least two directions in which we believe it is likely that video interviewing will evolve. The first direction consists of refinements of the current paradigm; the second direction extends the mode to technology-mediated self-administration.

The current paradigm was largely developed using existing video platforms that were not specialized for survey interviewing. This was an adequate way to proceed in the midst of a public health crisis but not optimal. Video interviewing platforms that integrate features available in current interviewing software with video capability would help interviewers administer video interviews more efficiently and facilitate adoption. In addition, specialized video interviewing platforms could allow respondents to switch to self-administration to collect sensitive responses, helping to overcome the social presence of a visible interviewer when that is undesirable.

One example of the second direction in which we see video interviewing evolving, i.e., its extension to self-administration is prerecorded video interviewing, i.e., web surveys in which embedded video recordings display interviewers reading questions. Preliminary evidence suggests respondents feel connected to video recorded interviewers, although the sense of connection is greater in live video interviews (Conrad et al., 2023) and this connection seems likely to increase engagement without increasing social desirability (Haan et al. 2017). It may also help support the participation of people who may be less able to complete text-based self-administered surveys (for example, those with low literacy).

The paper by Claassen et al. (2026) in the special issue assesses hypothetical willingness to participate in this type of data collection. They found that the majority of respondents were hypothetically willing to participate in “web surveys in which interviewers read questions to you via pre-recorded videos” especially with responses entered by clicking/tapping or typing. But fewer respondents said they were willing to participate if it required answering by voice or via video. The mode seems to be a hybrid of in-person and video interviewing on the one hand and self-administration as in conventional text-based web on the other, so may be the best of both. The technology required to deploy this mode is widely available.

A second type of video interviewing that does not involve a live, human interviewer relies on embodied (avatar) virtual interviewers, i.e., computer-animated agents that can speak questions and interpret respondents' spoken answers. Earlier tests of this approach either simulated interactivity (Conrad et al., 2015) or deployed non-interactive interviewing agents (e.g., Lind et al., 2013), but the arrival of large language models (LLMs) makes human-like interactivity readily available for driving interaction between virtual interviewers and respondents. We expect the combination of avatar and LLM technologies to result in interviewing agents whose social identities, personalities, and interviewing approach

are under researchers' control and can be chosen by respondents (Conrad et al., 2020). The extent to which sample members will accept embodied virtual interviewers is currently unknown, but likely to increase as AI-driven agents – not just for interviewing – become more ubiquitous. As we have proposed for live video interviews conducted by human interviewers, virtual interviewers may be most effective as one of multiple ways to collect data, presumably more attractive to some groups of sample members than others.

Conclusion

While video interviewing may not make sense as a standalone mode in general, there are scenarios in which it is well suited as the one data collection mode: video interviewing might be a good fit if the data collection requires a live but remote interviewer who can see the respondent and can be seen by the respondent, may require the display of visual information, and is free of the usual challenges of scheduling and recruiting sample members. For example, studies of institutionalized sample members such as prisoners or deployed military personnel, and whose circumstances allow others (wardens, commanding officers) to schedule their interviews may **only** be feasible if those interviews are conducted by video.

But there are other research scenarios in which video interviewing may also make sense in conjunction with other modes: longitudinal studies in which contact information such as an email address for sample members can be obtained in an in-person interview and used to invite sample members to a future video interview; one-off interviews in which respondents are required to choose the mode in which they provide data, including video interviews; a dedicated video panel, perhaps a subset of a larger panel, whose members have agreed in advance to participate in video interviews. And if official email addresses become standard in some countries as in the Danish example mentioned earlier (<https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/apps-and-digital-services/Digital-Post>), this will facilitate the deployment of video interviewing.

When the pandemic pushed researchers to explore video interviewing, the components were already in place, e.g., Skype and other video platforms were already being adopted and smartphones equipped with video capability were widespread. The technology has come a long way from what is depicted in Figure 1. So it was not a great stretch for researchers to consider video as a way to continue data collection despite the public health crisis. Some of the obstacles encountered then and reported in the special issue papers are still challenges but we have learned that video interviews can provide high quality data and the circumstances under which they might be deployed are coming into clearer focus.

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