**Abstract:** How closely field staff are implicated in survey outcomes is not a usual cause of concern for methodologists. We studied the bias from admitting discretion by field staff contracted to undertake a process control survey, but otherwise employed by the agency responsible for the process, as a component in the quality assurance surrounding publication of payment accuracy statements based on survey estimates.

The random sample surveys system (RSS) is used across government portfolios to measure accuracy and reliability in the delivery of welfare payments. Eligibility for payment of randomly selected welfare customers is tested, usually by personal interview. Customer service officers (CSOs), specially selected and trained, undertake these reviews. Inevitably review results reflect both on the design of payments and on the administrative process approving and setting payment. Are controls sufficiently developed to quarantine CSO-agency bias? De-selection is one source of discretionary bias. It is examined, using access to administrative history of selected customers. There is prima facie reason to both implicate and discount bias; our results lend weight to the latter.

I will contextualise the topic with history and current state of Total Survey Error studies as an offshoot to survey quality assurance.