

A Comparison of Consumer Expenditure Surveys

Brett McBride and Nhien To

Division of Consumer Expenditure Survey

CE Survey Methods Symposium

July 16, 2013



Background

- Input for Consumer Expenditure (CE) Gemini Survey Redesign
- Design features of 35 countries' household expenditure surveys
- Surveys selected based on the diversity of their characteristics and the extent of information provided

Information Sources

- Survey information was collected from:
 - ▶ Program websites
 - ▶ Methodology reports
 - ▶ E-mail correspondence with survey representatives

General Survey Characteristics

- For each survey, the following general survey characteristics were collected:
 - ▶ Country and survey name
 - ▶ Achieved sample size and year
 - ▶ Response rate
 - ▶ Data collection method
 - ▶ Reference period

Notable Design Features

- Notable Design Features
 - ▶ Individual Diaries
 - ▶ Receipts
 - ▶ Incentives
 - ▶ Administrative Records
 - ▶ Technology

- Recent Survey Redesigns

General Survey Characteristics: Achieved Sample Size

- Germany had the largest sample size (2008)
 - ▶ Conducted every 5 years
 - ▶ 81,530 target; 55,110 completes
- U.S.' CE had second largest (2010)
 - ▶ Unique in using two independent samples
 - ▶ 72,000 target; 50,442 completes
- Denmark had the smallest (2010)
 - ▶ 858 completes
 - ▶ Data aggregated across three years

General Survey Characteristics: Response Rates

- Lowest response rate: 18% in Luxembourg
- Highest response rate: 89% in Cyprus
- Average across the (33) surveys was 60%

General Survey Characteristics: Data Collection Method

- Almost all countries used at least two instruments (an interview/questionnaire and a separate diary)
- Some countries used individual diaries in addition to household diaries
- Population registries also used as source of data in some countries

General Survey Characteristics: Reference Period

- Interview: Survey question reference periods either 1, 3, or 12 months
- Diary: Almost all countries had respondents enter purchases over 14-day period
 - ▶ Exceptions included periods of 7 days, 1-2 months, or 3 years

Notable Design Features: Individual Diaries

Cyprus, France, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom

- Age of eligibility to complete individual diaries varied, most commonly 15 years old and older
 - ▶ Exception: UK Children's diary (ages between 7 - 15)
- Only France, Ireland required that all fill out diary for household to be counted as a complete
- Spain had (2-week) diary for the 'housekeeper', and separate (1-week) personal expense diaries
 - ▶ 75% of recruited households had all diaries filled out

Notable Design Features: Individual Diaries (cont.)



Notable Design Features: Receipts

Canada, Estonia, France, Hong Kong, Ireland, Romania, Sweden, United States

- Estonia: about 30% of households only provided receipts (2011)
 - ▶ 3-5% of receipts had insufficient level of detail
- Ireland asks households to annotate food receipts
 - ▶ Weight or volume of food
 - ▶ Bought online

Notable Design Features: Receipts (cont.)

Murphys Store, Letterkenny		
Tel No 012 234 456 78 VAT No 123456789		
14-02-2009 12.29		TRANS: 0231 CASHIER: Jane
		TILL: 002 STORE: 003
	S/W MED 800g <i>(sliced, standard white bread)</i>	1.49
	WMEAL LOAF 800g <i>(unsliced wholemeal)</i>	0.95
	4 ROLLS @ 23c each <i>(white bread)</i>	0.92
	WEETABIX x24	1.89
	KERRY LOW LOW <i>(low-fat spread)</i>	2.50
	KERRYGOLD BTR <i>(butter)</i>	0.99
	CHK BRST x4 <i>(chicken - uncooked, fresh)</i>	3.99
	SMALL CHICKEN <i>(frozen, uncooked)</i>	5.49
	SWEET 'n' SOUR PORK <i>(chilled, cooked)</i>	1.99
	HAM <i>(cooked, sliced)</i>	1.26
	DENNYS SAUSAGES <i>(pork, fresh)</i>	2.25
	SALMON <i>(filleted, frozen)</i>	3.29
	MONSTER MUNCH <i>(crisps)</i>	0.60
	WHISKAS <i>(cat food)</i>	0.99
	6 EGGS FREE RANG E	2.25
	CDR CHEESE <i>(cheddar)</i>	1.99
	MILK 2LTR <i>(own brand, full-fat)</i>	1.65
	MILK 2 LTR <i>(low-fat)</i>	2.25
	HELLO! <i>(magazine)</i>	

Notable Design Features: Incentives

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain and the United Kingdom

- Only two countries structured incentives at the person-level (Ireland, United Kingdom)
- Belgium's incentives varied by household size: 75€ (1-2 people) to 124€ (6+) (2010)
- Incentives mainly contingent upon survey participation

Notable Design Features: Incentives (cont.)

- Monetary incentives varied in amount
 - ▶ \$10 min in South Korea to 124€ max in Belgium
- Non-monetary incentives used
 - ▶ Lottery in Denmark
 - ▶ Pen and expenditure information in Estonia
- South Korea offered incentive contingent on completion AND diary type
 - ▶ If paper diary - \$10
 - ▶ If web diary - \$40
 - ▶ If web diary linked to account/bank records - \$50

Notable Design Features: Administrative Records

Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway,
Sweden

- Data taken from administrative records
 - ▶ Income (all countries above)
 - ▶ Education (Denmark, Finland, Norway)
 - ▶ Property tax/taxable benefits (Denmark, Sweden)
 - ▶ Housing (Denmark, the Netherlands)
- The Netherlands also used demographic data from population registries for non-response adjustments

Notable Design Features: Technology

Online: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea

- Belgium found 15%-20% chose to enter data via the website when given option (vs. paper)
- The Netherlands collected 100% of data online (2012)
 - ▶ Developed instructional tutorials
 - ▶ Included downloadable diary, online questionnaire
 - ▶ Found (still) low response rates, but cost savings
- The Netherlands tutorial (in Dutch):

<https://www.budgetonderzoek.nl/Pagina/Instructiefilmpje>

Recent Survey Redesigns

Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain

- Various objectives of household expenditure survey redesigns
 - ▶ Bolster response rates
 - ▶ Minimize respondent burden
 - ▶ Boost data quality and update design
 - ▶ Reduce costs

Redesign: Estonia

- Concern – declining response rates (65% in 2000 to below 50% in 2007)
 - ▶ Limited expenditure entry to one diary
 - ▶ Reduced diary reporting period to 2 weeks (from 1 month)
 - ▶ Removed income questions
 - ▶ Added few additional retrospective questions
- Achieved minor increase in response rates (38% to 42%)

Redesign: France

- Mandatory survey with large respondent burden (three one-hour interviews, a two-week individual diary)
 - ▶ Removed one of the interviews
 - ▶ Reduced diary reporting period to one week
- Saw 2010-11 response rates return to 2000 levels (above 75%)

Redesign: Spain

- Large-scale restructuring of survey design
 - ▶ Moved from quarterly to annual data collection
 - ▶ Increased diary reporting period from one to two weeks (household diary)
 - ▶ Removed some interview questions
 - ▶ Introduced 30€ gift card as incentive
- Response rates 'at similar levels' (71%)
- Some drop-off in reporting of expenditures in second week of diary data collection
- Improved overall reporting (more expenditures)

Summary

- Common themes, innovations in others countries' design characteristics can inform CE Survey program's redesign efforts
- CE Survey shares similar data collection methods, but uniquely uses two independent samples
- Among notable design features, only commonality is CE Survey encouraging respondent use of records and receipts

Summary (cont.)

- Few common notable design features, but similar intentions moving forward
 - ▶ Incorporation of new (online) technologies
 - ▶ Data collection at individual-level
 - ▶ Motivating respondents through incentives

Applications

- Ongoing research has led to suggestions, many of which are also recommended in the Gemini Design Proposal
 - ▶ **Sample size:** explore the use of a single sample
 - ▶ **Individual diaries:** identify various ways to encourage individual reporting (Ireland, Spain)
 - ▶ **Records/receipts:** encourage use of records and receipts (Canada, Ireland)
 - ▶ **Incentives/modes:** boost response rates, respondent use of lower-cost collection modes (South Korea, Estonia, Spain)

Applications (cont.)

- ▶ **Technology:** learn how web can effectively be implemented (the Netherlands, Belgium, South Korea, Germany)
- ▶ **Burden:** learn from redesigns that reduced reporting burden (France, Estonia, Canada)
- ▶ **Administrative records:** consider use of administrative data (Scandinavian countries)

Conclusion

- Survey programs can benefit from communicating best practices for effectively collecting high quality data, and sharing lessons learned from testing new features and implementing new survey designs

Acknowledgments

The following program staff provided information on their countries' budget surveys:

Johanna Janecek (Austria); Véronique Renard, Genviève Geenens (Belgium); Nikolay Valkov (Bulgaria); Jean-Louis Tambay, Johanne Tremblay (Canada); Ivana Miličić (Croatia); Henrik Sørensen (Denmark); Aira Veelmaa, Piret Tikva (Estonia); Vincent Leung (Hong Kong); Eva Menesi (Hungary); Christina Moriarty, Jim Linehan (Ireland); Gražina Žiūrienė (Lithuania); May Offermans, Peter Kruiskamp (The Netherlands); Witold Wozniak (Poland); Šedivý Jaroslav, Vladimír Čičmanec (Slovakia); GooHyun Jung (South Korea); María Valverde (Spain); Åsa Karlsson (Sweden); Linda Williams, Carl David (United Kingdom)

Contact Information

Brett McBride

Economist

Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys
Office of Prices and Living Conditions

www.bls.gov/cex

202-691-5136

mcbride.brett@bls.gov

