Living Costs and Food Survey

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• Key Results of 2009 survey
• Data collection: interview and diary
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Living Costs and Food Survey

- Sample of around 6,000 households
- Interview plus two-week diary of expenditure
- Response (interview plus diary) = 51%
  - decline in response
  - similar trend across social surveys
Sample design

- Stratified by:
  - region
  - ownership of cars
  - socio-economic group head of household

- Clustered: post code sectors are PSUs
Interview: overview

- Expenditure
- Income
- Ownership of consumer durables
- Demographics

- Also part of Integrated Household Survey (IHS)
Uses of Survey

• Retail Price Index
• Consumer price indices
• Spending patterns of population
• Household expenditure for GDP
• Effect of taxes and benefits
• Food consumption and nutrition
Headline figure 2009

• Average household weekly expenditure was £455 (£471 in 2008)

• First drop since current methods implemented in 2001-02
Average weekly expenditure on main commodities and services 2009

Source: Living Costs and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics
Changes over time (percentage of total expenditure)

- Other expenditure items
- Transport
- Recreation and culture
- Housing, fuel and power
- Food and non-alcoholic drinks
- Restaurants and hotels
- Miscellaneous goods and services
- Household goods and services
- Clothing and footwear
- Communication
- Alcoholic drinks, tobacco and narcotics
- Education
- Health

Percentage of total expenditure

- 2001/02
- 2009
Housing-related costs (renters and mortgage holders)

- £71 a week - average net rent paid by renters
  - London £111
  - North East £37

- £133 a week - average mortgage payment by mortgage holders
  - London £203
  - Scotland £112
Households with...

Source: Living Costs and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics
Ownership by income decile 2009

Source: Living Costs and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics
Interview: expenditure

• Expenditure on:
  – regular payments, eg. utility bills
  – insurance
  – licences
  – season tickets

• Large purchases (retrospective). Specified items for 3-12 months:
  – motor vehicles
  – carpets; furniture; holidays; some housing

• Other purchases over £5,000 in last 3 months
Diary: overview

• Two weeks
• All adults (essential that Main Diary Keeper completes diary)
• Children aged 7-15 complete simplified diary
• Diary designed to capture a high level of detail on food and drink purchases, including weights and measures
Encouraging respondents

• Incentive: £10 per adult; £5 per child, for completed diaries
• Information given about uses of survey
  – phone and internet links
  – Advance letter and leaflet
• Interviewers well briefed on importance of survey
Easing respondent burden

- Till receipts attached to diary
- Mini diary issued for recording purchases while eating out etc
- Support from interviewers in completing diary, annotating receipts etc
- Questionnaire content reviewed and streamlined
Diary: interviewers role

- Brief respondents
- Return to check progress during diary period
- Check at end of diary period, and annotate diary and receipts where necessary
- Where information is missing (eg weights and measures) return to retailers to check
- Calling patterns optimised
Diary: HQ processing

• Team of coders transfer data from paper diaries to electronic format (Blaise)
• Check data quality: queries returned to interviewers where necessary;
• Missing data imputed: obtained via web searches and other sources
• Questionnaire and diary data combined
Further developments

- Improved efficiency in collecting “missing” weights and measures; increased use of the internet
- Consideration given to increased use of technology in data collection (scanners)
- Questionnaire review
- Pilot of increased incentive to improve response