

Comparison of Consumer Expenditure Survey Designs

Nhien To, Jeanette Davis, and Brett Creech

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This document summarizes the major design features of international consumer expenditure surveys, as well as U.S. surveys with consumer expenditure questions. The purpose of this document is to present a consolidated overview of major and/or notable design features of various consumer expenditure surveys as input to the ongoing process of redesigning the U.S. Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE). Successful alternative methods for asking questions and collecting information about consumer expenditures can serve as launching points for further research into potential use in the CE. As such, this document does not attempt to capture all design elements; only selected elements to initiate discussion.

Surveys: The characteristics for each survey are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on international consumer expenditure surveys, the second on U.S. surveys with consumer expenditure questions. These surveys were selected because the information was readily available and had design elements of interest for CE's redesign. This document may be updated over time and additional surveys may be added.

- Section 1
- United States, <http://bls.gov/ce/>
 - Australia, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6530.0/>
 - Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/3508-eng.htm>
 - Denmark, http://www.dst.dk/homeuk/Statistics/focus_on/focus_on_show.aspx?sci=404
 - Finland, http://www.stat.fi/keruu/kul/index_en.html
 - Hong Kong, http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/major_projects/2009_10_household_expenditure_survey/
 - Korea, <http://www.kostat.go.kr/portal/english/surveyOutlines/4/1/index.static>
 - Norway, http://www.ssb.no/fbu_en/
 - Singapore, <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/themes/people/house.html>
 - Sweden, http://www.scb.se/Pages/Product_22952.aspx
 - United Kingdom, http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ssd/surveys/expenditure_food_survey.asp
- Section 2
- American Life Panel (ALP), http://www.rand.org/labor/roybalfd/american_life.html
 - Current Population Survey (CPS), <http://www.census.gov/cps/>
 - National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS), http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/DietQuality/food_aps.htm
 - Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), <http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/>
 - Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF), <http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/oss/oss2/scfindex.html>
 - Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), <http://www.census.gov/sipp/>

Characteristics¹: For each survey, the following characteristics are presented.

- a. Country and Survey
- b. Notable Design Features: includes the use of global questions, interview structure, proxy reporting, recall period, split questionnaire design, new technology, and records and receipts
- c. Sample Size: where one sample size is reported, the survey only uses one sample; where two are reported, the survey uses multiple either independent or subset samples. All sample sizes are actual except where target is specified
- d. Data Collection Method: includes the mode, instrument, and level of data collection
- e. Reference Period
- f. Response Rate: dates are indicated where reported

¹ Average interview length has been excluded because it is either often not reported or similar to CE

Section 1: International Consumer Expenditure Surveys

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
United States Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE)	Respondents are encouraged to keep records/receipts to aid recall.	Interview: 35,300 (target)	Interview: 73.8 (2010)	Household Interview (CAPI)	3 months
	Interview: An accordion file is sometimes given to respondents to store/organize receipts. Diary: A pocket is included on the inside of the back cover for respondents to store receipts.	Diary: 14,100 (target)	Diary: 76.5 (2010)	Household Diary (Paper)	14 days
Australia Household Expenditure Survey (HES)	The HES sample of 6,957 households is a subsample of the Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) sample of 11,361 households. The use of a subsample reduces respondent burden.	6,957	71.0 (2003-04)	Household Interview (CAPI)	Not reported
				Individual Diary (Paper)	14 days

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
Canada Survey of Household Spending (SHS)	<p>The SHS integrates detailed food data collected through the Food Expenditure Survey (FES) for cost efficiency.</p> <p>To reduce burden, respondents are given the option to provide their receipts.</p> <p>Respondents are categorized into three groups: those who provided receipts only, those who only provided transcribed expenditures and those who combined the two modes of reporting.</p> <p>Last payment approach and recall periods of one, three, or twelve months for less frequent expenditures are used.</p>	<p>24,000 (target)</p> <p>Due to budget constraints, only a sub-sample of households are asked to report their expenditures in the diary.</p>	<p>Interview: 60.0 (during pilot test)</p> <p>Diary: 66.0 (during pilot test)</p>	<p>Household Interview (CAPI)</p> <hr/> <p>Household Diary (Paper)</p>	<p>1 month, 3 months, and 12 months</p> <hr/> <p>14 days</p>
Denmark Household Budget Survey (HBS)	<p>No incentives are provided but participating households receive a gift and participate in a lottery in return for their participation.</p> <p>To reduce burden, questions regarding topics which Statistics Denmark already have usable data are left out (e.g. income, taxes, dwellings, education, and occupation).</p>	<p>2,449</p>	<p>54.9 (year not reported)</p>	<p>Household Interview (CAPI)</p> <hr/> <p>Household Diary (Paper)</p>	<p>1 year</p> <hr/> <p>14 days</p>

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
Finland Household Budget Survey (HBS)	During the interview, the structure of the household is verified against register data.	8,792	Interview: 69.3	Household Interview (CAPI)	Not reported
	Administrative records are also exploited for the collection of background information (e.g. data on the incomes and education of household members, are obtained from registers).		Diary: 93.2		
	Purchase receipts are accepted to supplement self reported data			Household Diary (Paper)	14 days
Hong Kong Household Expenditure Survey (HES)	The HES is conducted once every five years, for a one-year period which is broken down into 26 cycles (each comprising two weeks)	10,000 (target)	80.9 (2005)	Household Schedule (Paper)	Not reported
	Consists of 3 parts:				
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Household Schedule – collects housing conditions and household characteristics 2. Expenditure Diary – individuals aged 12 and over each kept the diary 3. Questionnaire on Infrequently Purchased Items 				
	A Supplemental Questionnaire is specially designed for non-respondents for analysis of non-response bias			Individual Diary (Paper)	14 days
				Questionnaire on Infrequently Purchased Items (Paper)	3 months

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
Korea Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)	An Interviewer visits a household six times a month for diary distribution, diary collection, and weekly guidance. Monthly cash incentives are provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10.00 for regular paper diary • \$40.00 for e-diary • \$50.00 for B-case who have their e-diary connected to their credit accounts or bank records 	8,700 (target)	82.5	Household Diary (Paper) 60%	3 years
				Household E-Diary (Web)	3 years
				Household B-Case (Web) Diary connected to credit/bank record	3 years
Norway Survey of Consumer Expenditure (CE)	The survey also uses information collected on income and education from other surveys and administrative data.	2,200 (target)	50.0 (2007)	Household Interview (CAPI)	Not reported
				Household Diary (Paper)	14 days
				Individual Diary (Paper)	14 days

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
Singapore Household Expenditure Survey (HES)	PDA's are used in place of hardcopy survey forms to capture remaining information required.	7,441	84.0 (2007-2008)	Household Interview (CAPI)	1 month, 3 months, and 12 months
	Reference period varies based on question (1 month, 3 months, and 12 months).			Household Diary (Paper)	14 days
				Individual Diary (Paper)	14 days
Sweden Household Budget Survey (HBS)	After completing the survey, each household may select a gift, consisting of either a gift certificate to ICA supermarkets, movie tickets or triss lottery tickets (with a value of SEK 100 to 200, depending on the size of the household).	4,000 (target)	56.0 (2007)	Household Interview (Telephone)	Not reported
	Respondents have the opportunity to submit receipts instead of recording in the diary and the inquiry has been replaced by telephone interview. Three telephone interviews to discuss expenditures over the past year.			Household Diary (Paper)	14 days

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
United Kingdom Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS)	Each individual aged 16 or over who keeps a diary (and whose income information is collected) is paid £10, as a token of appreciation.	11,484	53.0 (2007)	Household Diary (Paper)	14 days
	Respondents aged 7-15 who keep a Children's diary are given a £5 payment.		Children's Diary 87.0 (2007)	Individual Diary (Paper)	14 days
	In the last two months of the 1998–99 survey, as an experiment, a small book of postage stamps was enclosed with the introductory letter sent to every address. It helped with response and the measure has become a permanent feature.			Children's Diary (Paper)	14 days

Section 2: U.S. Surveys with Consumer Expenditure Questions

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response Rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
United States American Life Panel (ALP)	<p>The ALP takes advantage of internet technology, which allows a short turn-around time between questionnaire design and the fielding of a survey and facilitates rapid responses to new events or insights. Thus, surveys can be operated at high frequency, reducing risk of missing events or the effects on households. This speed is in contrast to large household surveys where the time from planning to fielding can be as much as a year, and the time from fielding to data availability can exceed a year. Those who do not have access to the Internet are provided with a Web TV, including an Internet access subscription with an e-mail account.</p> <p>Incentive of \$2 is provided for every 3 minutes of survey time.</p>	2,500 (target)	80.0 - 95.0 (December 2010)	Internet Panel Survey (CASI)	Administered monthly for 1 year
United States Current Population Survey (CPS)	<p>The CPS is sponsored jointly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census.</p> <p>Respondents are interviewed to obtain information about the employment status of each member of the household 15 years of age and older. However, published data focuses on those ages 16 and over.</p> <p>For households in sample for the second, third, and fourth months, the FR has the option of conducting the interview over the telephone. Use of this interviewing mode must be approved by the respondent. Such approval is obtained at the end of the first month's interview upon completion of the labor force and any supplemental questions.</p>	60,000/month (target)	92.0 (September 2010)	Household Interview (CAPI)	Monthly, calendar week (Sunday through Saturday). A housing unit is interviewed for 4 consecutive months, dropped out of the sample for the next 8 months, then interviewed again in the next 4 months.

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response Rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
United States National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS) Also called the National Food Study	<p>A household gatekeeper scans a UPC or barcode book, fills out the FAH (Food at home) form, saves receipts, reviews/completes food diaries, and reports by telephone.</p> <p>Additionally, each household member saves individual receipts and completes an individual food diary.</p>	5,000 (target)	Field Test will begin on January 15, 2011	CAPI for 1 st and 3 rd Interview and CATI for 2 nd Interview Household and individual food diaries Scanner and UPCs and barcode book	1 week
United States Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)	<p>MEPS-HC (Household Component) is a household survey that contains individual and household-level estimates of health care expenditures and use, health insurance coverage, and a wide range of other health-related and socioeconomic characteristics.</p> <p>MEPS-HC collect data on individual household members, compared to CE data collection on consumer units.</p> <p>MEPS-IC (Insurance Component) collects data from a sample of private and public sector employers on the health insurance plans they offer their employees. The survey is also known as the Health Insurance Cost Study.</p>	12,811	59.3 (2008)	Household Interview (CAPI)	For each panel, 2 years of data are collected in five in-person interviews over 2 ½ years. The recall period is 3-6 months depending on when the interviews can be scheduled.

Country and Survey	Notable design features	Sample size	Response Rate (%)	Data Collection Method	Reference period
United States Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF)	<p>The SCF is conducted every three years to provide detailed information on the finances of U.S. families. The survey is sponsored by the Federal Reserve and the data have been collected since 1992 by the National Organization for Research at the University of Chicago (NORC).</p> <p>To retain the scientific validity of the study, interviewers are not allowed to substitute respondents for families that do not participate. Thus, if a family declines to participate, it means that families like theirs may not be represented clearly in national discussions.</p>	4,500 (target)	Area-probability sample: Approx. 70.0 (2001 and 2004) List sample: Approx. 30.0 (2001 and 2004)	Household Interview (CAPI)	Respondents are interviewed just one time. Interviews are conducted between the months of May and December in the data collection year.
United States Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)	<p>SIPP interviews the household, not the address. In other words, if the household moves to a new address, SIPP follows the household.</p> <p>The sponsor is the US Census Bureau.</p> <p>The SIPP interview is primarily for individual household members, although there are occasionally some extra household level questions only asked of the primary householder.</p> <p>The survey is currently being redesigned to use an Event History Calendar.</p>	52,301	78.0 (September 2010)	Household Interview (CAPI)	<p>SIPP interviews households every 4 months for 3-4 years. Each interview references the last 4 months.</p> <p>SIPP is being redesigned to use an Event History Calendar and go to a year-long reference period.</p>