Is it worth the effort?

Respondent record use on the British Household Panel Study

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Overview

• The study and the task
• The data sources
• The data
• The conclusions
The Study

- British Household Panel Study
- Longitudinal Survey, interviewing every adult in household
- Started in 1990
- Merged into Understanding Society in 2008
- Approx 12,000 individuals in 7,000 households
The records

- **Specifically requested**
  - Payslip
    - Recorded on data as used to get tax code
  - NB Respondent is asked to consult it, not to show it to interviewer

- **Not specifically requested but often volunteered**
  - Electricity bills
  - Gas bills
  - Rent statements
  - Benefit statements
  - Mortgage statements
  - Building Society books
The Survey

• All Wave 18 interviewers still on the GfK NOP books were sent a CAPI questionnaire
• About 100 questionnaires despatched
• 34 completed
  ➢ GfK NOP not worked on BHPS for 2 years
  ➢ Failure to win new contract upset many interviewers
• Results need to be treated with considerable caution
Extent of use of payslips

% consulting payslips by survey wave
Use of other documents

- Interviewer survey suggests payslips, utility bills and benefits statements were used fairly evenly
- Bank statements used less often
- Reported use of payslips is broadly consistent with actual data
Older respondents more likely to consult payslip
More educated respondents more likely to consult payslip

- Degree or higher
- Some post-secondary
- A, O level
- CSE lower
- none

Used payslip
Larger households, especially those with children, less likely to consult payslip

Larger households, esp with children may have more pressure on time
Not surprisingly, those rated as more cooperative by the interviewers were more likely to consult payslip.

But use of payslip may be part of what makes the interviewer think they were cooperative.
Members of organisations were more likely to consult payslip

Membership = good citizens?
Higher income households more likely to consult payslip

Getting accurate data is probably more important for the lower income households.
Higher earning respondents more likely to consult payslip

Any error is likely to be a greater proportion of the total
What is the impact on data quality?

• Problems with financial information
  ➢ Heaping/rounding
  ➢ Particular problem of leaping on longitudinal surveys
    — Going from one “heap” on one wave to a different one at the next one can give false picture of change

• Some rounding on gross pay but not net pay
  ➢ People more aware of net pay

• Little impact on rounding of use of payslips

• But data more erratic when payslips not used
Distribution of net pay

Graphs by Payslip seen
# Consistency of use of payslips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seen Wave 1</th>
<th>Not seen Wave 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seen Wave 2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>67</td>
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<table>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Not seen Wave 3</td>
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Similar figures over long term

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Respondents took it seriously

• 62% of interviewers said respondents always or usually had documents ready when they arrived

• Usually one member of the household took the lead in ensuring that the relevant documents for the whole household were available
Interviewers agree about consistency

Was it usually the same people each year who did this, or did it vary a lot from year to year?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Usually the same</td>
<td>91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varied a lot</td>
<td>9%</td>
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Strong correlation between use of payslips and long-term survey participation.
Attrition

• No evidence that asking respondents to look at payslips causes increased attrition in later waves

• But this may just be because it is the more cooperative respondents who look at payslips
  - 32% said it was only the easiest to interview who had documents ready
  - 6”% said it was mainly the easiest to interview

• No significant impact on length of interview:
  - 38% of interviewers said it made interview quicker, 24% slower and 38% about the same
Conclusions

- Encouraging respondents to refer to documents is likely to lead to the collection of better quality data at little risk to respondent cooperation