Defining and Measuring Respondent Burden in Establishment Surveys

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Content does not represent BLS policy
Response Burden: Review of the Literature

- Focus on definitions and measurement
  - not burden reduction
- Establishment surveys – unique features related to burden
- Multidimensional nature of burden
  - Actual and perceived burden
- Suggestions and challenges
Establishment Surveys: Unique Characteristics

- Large companies/establishments more likely to be selected into a survey
  - Likely to get many survey requests from many agencies
- Use of existing records
- In complex surveys, can require multiple respondents
- Mandatory/voluntary
  - Large companies most aware of distinction
Why does Response Burden Matter?

- Effect on data quality
  - Nonresponse
  - Measurement error
- Increased cost
- Long-term sustainability of surveys
Survey Design and Burden

- Sampling
- Frequency of collection
- Instrument design
- Mode
- Procedures
  - Contact/recontact
  - Communications
“Actual” Burden

- OMB Paperwork Reduction Act
- Burden hours
  - Time it takes respondents to
    - Review instructions
    - Search data sources
      - Complete and review responses
    - Transmit or disclose information
  - The “search” is usually more complex in establishment surveys
    - Access existing records and aggregate data
“Actual” Burden Collection

- When and where?
  - Pretests, actual surveys
  - Quality assurance/follow up surveys
  - Qualitative/observational studies

- Who is asked?
  - Respondents
  - Data collectors
  - Experts or staff
Common Questions Asked of Respondents

■ One question:
  ▶ Can you tell me how long it took to gather the information requested and to complete the survey?

■ Two questions:
  ▶ How much time did it take to collect all information necessary for completing the questionnaire?
  ▶ How much time did it take you to actually fill in the questionnaire?
What is Included in “Actual” Burden Calculations?

Survey of National Statistical Institutes (N=33), Giesen (Ed.) 2011
“Perceived” Burden

- Respondent assessment of burden
  - Four aspects to monitor (Dale and Haraldsen, Eds., 2007)
    - Perception of time
    - Perception of burden
    - Perceived causes of burden
    - Perceived usefulness to establishment and society (motivation)
“Perceived” Burden Questions: Time

- Time
  - Did you think it was quick or time consuming to collect the information to complete the questionnaire? (5 point scale)
  - What were the main reasons that you found it time consuming?
    - Collection of information from different sources
    - Needed help from others
    - Had to wait for information
    - Other
“Perceived” Burden Questions: Burden

Burden

- Did you find it easy or burdensome to fill in the questionnaire? (5 point scale)
- What conditions contributed to making the questionnaire burdensome to fill in?
  - # questions
  - Messy question presentation
  - Unclear terms/term explanation
  - Complicated or lengthy calculations
  - Information requested did not match available information
  - Difficult to understand response categories
  - Other
“Perceived” Burden Questions: Usefulness/Motivation

- Do you think that the statistics from this questionnaire are useful or useless to:
  - your business?
  - society?

- 7-point scale
What Else — Actual or Perceived Burden?

- At the respondent level:
  - Instrument design seems well covered
  - Frequency of collection, mode, and contact/communication procedures might be added

- At the company/establishment levels
  - Use of sampling procedures
  - Multiple requests
Suggestions

- Question development and testing on burden measurement
  - Actual burden might be place to start?
- Perceived burden
  - Agency paradata might be applicable/further developed
- Assess how burden is measured within and across statistical agencies
Challenges

- Definitions and measurement of establishment survey burden
  - qualitative research, designs have weaknesses, and few studies have undergone peer review

- Need burden measures to assess the relationship between actual and perceived burden and data quality, i.e., nonresponse and measurement error
References

- BLUE Enterprise and Trade Statistics
    - Deliverable 2.1, Inventory of published research.
    - Deliverable 2.2, Report on existing practices of NSIs concerning business burden reduction and motivation enhancement

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