

A Comparison of Consumer Expenditure Surveys

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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		
14-02-2009 12.29	Tel No 012 234 456 78 VAT No 123456789	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
4oz each	4 ROLLS @ 23c each (<i>white bread</i>)	0.92
450g	WEETABIX x24	1.89
500g	KERRY LOW LOW (<i>low-fat spread</i>)	2.50
250g	KERRYGOLD BTR (<i>butter</i>)	0.99
1lb	CHK BRST x4 (<i>chicken - uncooked, fresh</i>)	3.99
450g	SMALL CHICKEN (<i>frozen, uncooked</i>)	5.49
1/2lb	SWEET 'n' SOUR PORK (<i>chilled, cooked</i>)	1.99
1/2lb	HAM (<i>cooked, sliced</i>)	1.26
7oz	DENNYS SAUSAGES (<i>pork, fresh</i>)	2.25
28g	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
450g	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

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

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