Workers' surveys: Challenges and issues

The worldwide *WageIndicator* web survey on work and wages

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Countries

- **2001** **Netherlands**
  (funding from FNV and Ministry of Social Affairs)

- **2004** **Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom**
  (EU funding 6th Framework Program)

- **2005** **Hungary**
  (EU funding Equal)
  Argentina, Brazil, Mexico
  India, South Korea, South Africa
  (funding NL development aid- FNV Mondiaal)

- **2006** **USA**
  (funding Harvard Law School)

- **2007** **China, Russia, Sweden**
  (funding from Monster and Media partner)

- **2008** **10 Latin American countries (portal)**
  10 English speaking countries in Africa (portal)
  10 Post-soviet countries (portal)
  (funding pending)

- **20XX** **Aiming for 75 countries**

The concept

- **National *WageIndicator* websites**
  - with up-to-date work-related information
  - most of them managed by web journalists
  - answering visitor's emails

- **National *Salary Checker* (free of charge)**
  - providing occupation-specific wage information
  - controlling for age, gender, education, region, other variables

- **Volunteer web survey on work and wages**
  - asking the visitors a favor in return (prize incentive)
  - completing a 20-minutes web survey on work and wages
  - data is used for research
  - and as input for the *Salary Checker*

About us

- **The *WageIndicator* Foundation**
  - owns the *WageIndicator* concept
  - is a not-for-profit organization

- **Founded in 2003 under Dutch law by**
  - University of Amsterdam / AIAS
  - NL branch of international career website Monster
  - NL Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions (FNV)

- **National teams**
  - web manager
  - researcher or research institute

Web marketing

- **Websites are frequently visited**
  - worldwide, the public at large shows a great desire for information about wages
  - they use the website for decisions about schooling, occupational choice, wage negotiations, and job mobility

- **Web-marketing is critical**
  - cooperation with newspapers, portals, media, trade unions, , career sites, all with a strong Internet presence
  - more than 40 websites in 20 countries, for example in multilingual countries, for women, elderly workers, IT staff (India)
  - thousands of links in other websites to *WageIndicator*

- **Trust is important**
  - visitors must trust the information provided in the *Salary Checker*
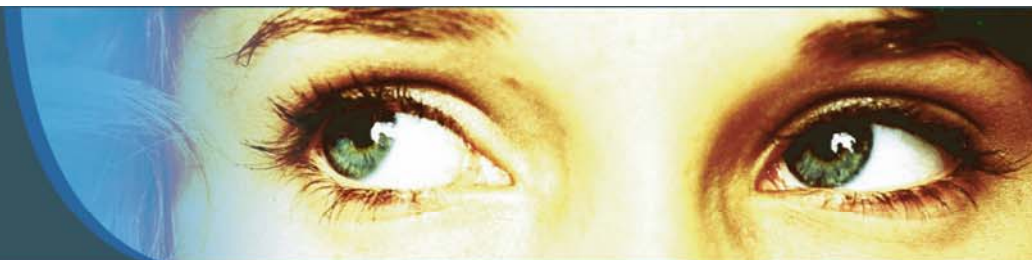 - respondents must trust volunteering their data in the web survey

Web traffic

- **Unique visitors totals**
  - 2005: 5 million
  - 2006: 8 million
  - 2007: 10 million (prognosis)

- **Sample size (fully completed)**
  - <2004   53,000 in NL
  - 2004   43,000 in 5 countries
  - 2005   135,000 in 11 countries
  - 2006   158,000 in 17 countries
  - 2007   250,000 in 20 countries (prognosis)

Population

- **Target population: labor force**
  - wage-earners in formal and informal economy
  - self-employed, free lancers, home workers
  - parallel questions addressing rare groups in the labor force to prevent break-off

- **Survey mode**
  - in all countries: web survey
  - in some countries: postal or face-to-face surveys

Questionnaire

(1) occupation (4 dgt ISCO),
industry (4 dgt NACE), education (ISCED)

(2) workplace characteristics,
firmsize, innovative workplaces, MNE's

(3) employment history

(4) working hours, timing of work

(5) employment contract, wages, benefits

(6) personal questions, household composition,
region, country of birth/ethnic group

– all sections end with a set of attitude items

– many questions similar to EUROFOUND working
conditions survey

– survey has parallel questions addressing rare
groups in the labor force to prevent break-off

– completion takes approximately 20 minutes

Research

- collective bargaining coverage
- gender pay gap
- overtime and working time preferences
- opt out
- work stress
- call center workers
- young workers in supermarkets
- training issues

Selection bias

- **In countries with Internet < 50%**
  - office workers are overrepresented
  - young and well-educated workers are overrepresented
  - worldwide Internet access rates are increasing fast

- **In countries with Internet > 50%**
  - the Internet population is becoming representative of the population at large
  - the marginal groups in the labor force are under- represented, f.e. workers in small part-time jobs
  - elderly workers 55+ are underrepresented
  - low educated are increasingly not underrepresented
  - gender representation varies across countries
  - NL 2002-2006: the under-representation of socio-demographic groups has declined in the past years

Coping with self-selection

- **Web marketing**
  - addressing the target population at large
  - websites for sub-populations otherwise not fully reached
- **Routing through the questionnaire**
  - to prevent rare groups from break-off
- **Weighting with aggregate data**
  - aggregate socio economic LFS data is used for weighting national *WageIndicator* data in EU
- **Weighting with micro data**
  - micro-data from representative surveys will be used to develop weights, using similar questions in *WageIndicator*, currently explored in the US
- **Weighting with a reference survey**
  - using a small reference survey for weighting, currently explored in the Netherlands

Is this new?

- **Yes, because ...**
  - worldwide, neither high quality aggregate data nor micro-data about wages, working conditions, and working hours are available
  - worldwide, *WageIndicator* is the first survey gathering wage data in so many countries
  - worldwide, it is one of the first surveys using web marketing for scientific data collection

- **... and because**
  - the mutual exchange of information between research and the public is rare

Is it crap?

- **Volunteer (non-probability) surveys**
  - respondents have selected themselves into the survey
  - the degree to which the sample differs from the population remains unknown
  - means and frequencies are vulnerable
  - multivariate analyses can very well be explored

- **Volunteer web surveys**
  - development of Internet has changed the nature of volunteer surveys
  - many crap volunteer web surveys: quick and dirty
  - increasingly possibilities of volunteer web surveys are being explored

- **Sampled (probability) surveys**
  - face increasing problems with non-response
  - are expensive

Why volunteer web-surveys?

- **Can be held continuously**
  - web-marketing efforts pay off in the long run
  - thus relatively cheap
  - continuous surveys allow for temporary plug-in questions and for repairing mistakes in the survey
- **Can lead to large sample sizes**
  - allows for analyses of sub-sets
  - allows for random items from a pool
  - allows for questions addressing relatively small groups, thus acting as a screening device
  - mixed volunteer and sampled surveys may develop as a new way of conducting surveys
- **Allow for multi-country surveys**

Challenges

- **Conceptualize measurement issues**
  - review questions in national surveys
  - revise working conditions questions for worldwide surveys
- **Design new questions for measuring**
  - the informal labour market
  - the degree of self-provision
- **Collect data continuously**
  - to trace changes over time
- **Mixed-mode surveys**
  - to manage costs involved with repeated

Contribution?

- **How can _WageIndicator_ contribute?**
  - experienced in designing survey questions
  - translations available in many languages
  - web survey for testing survey questions
  - harmonize survey questions to allow the pooling of datasets
  - could run a worldwide working conditions survey on the Internet, in addition to a paper/face-to-face survey

Thank you

- **Thank you for your attention!**

- **www.wageindicator.org**