

Response Burden Measurement Project in Statistics Finland

According to the European Statistics Code of Practise (CoP), the national statistical authorities are obligated to keep the response burden of data collections proportionate to the needs of the users and not excessive for respondents; minimizing the response burden of data collections is included in Statistics Finland's current strategy as well.

Statistics Finland monitors the response burden of enterprise surveys regularly. The follow-up is made at the level of individual survey and all surveys in total. The burden is calculated based on the average responding times, survey rounds per year and the sample sizes. The result is converted into staff years. In 2017, the estimated total response burden to enterprises was 144 staff years.

Statistics Finland conducts ca 50 direct enterprise surveys yearly. In 2017, 98 per cent of the respondents answered electronically whereas the remaining enterprises responded using other means, such as paper questionnaires or phone interviews. Majority of business surveys are conducted with XCola (XML-based Data Collection Application), an in-house developed survey tool. Besides, there are a few outsourced web questionnaires and some collections that are made by phone or email. In 2016, 68 % of all enterprises received one collection and 7 % received five or more.

Reduction of response burden is aimed e.g. by minimizing sample size and number of variables, making responding as easy as possible and developing the websites, cover letters and other communication related to data collections. Assessment of questionnaire design and usability testing with end-users is done regularly.

Information on responding times is mainly collected by feedback surveys that are attached to web data collections. If data is not collected in web, the time is estimated in Statistics Finland, but the main source of data are the estimations of business respondents. The results are analyzed e.g. by enterprise size and field of business.

The data obtained by response burden surveys is stored in the Register of business data suppliers. In the register, the information on frequency whereby a business is included in samples is also available.

Thus, the total response burden of individual business or e.g. the enterprises of a certain size category can be measured by number of surveys and by the time spent on responding altogether.

My presentation focuses on the perceived response burden (PRB) measurement. The aim is to describe the implementation of a response burden measurement project and the challenges met in data collection. In addition, some preliminary results are presented.

A comprehensive perceived response burden measurement that covered most of Statistics Finland's direct enterprise data collections was last carried out in 2008-2009. The results were used e.g. in choosing questionnaires in a usability development project. After that, the measurement has been renewed in several collections. The counts of the actual burden have also been re-evaluated considering changes in survey forms, content, samples etc.

To update the measurements, during 2018 the PRB questionnaire is attached to all our enterprise data collections in the web. The questionnaire is voluntary and the respondent is directed there after filling the actual inquiry. 30 collections have been included in measurement up to the present and analysis of burden times and other feedback is going on.

The data is gathered by a voluntary feedback survey where the respondent is directed after filling the mandatory inquiry. The respondents are asked to estimate the time spent on collecting the needed information and to fill in the questionnaire, and how burdensome or easy they regard responding. In addition, there is an open question for other feedback. A commercial online survey tool Webropol is used to collect the data and the analysis is done by SAS EG. As the project is still in progress, the focus is on the data collection stage and challenges in receiving feedback data.

Questions for further discussion:

- How to activate the business survey respondents to participate the PRB survey?
- Any experiences of using a raffle or other incentives with PRB/other feedback surveys?