

Social & Vital Statistics BDB on
FA1APP003

Created By: [REDACTED] on 04/08/2004 at 18:37

Title: LFS wave 1 response rate - 1992 to 2004 (GG to BW, July 04)

Categorisation
PROJB LFS\SDCAS Delivery

[REDACTED]
15/07/2004 14:44

To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The response rate for 2003/04 ended up at 76%, as predicted. Response rates for the Mar-May quarter were 73% (fluctuating between 70-76% weekly, 72-74% monthly). Non-contacts are contributing approximately an additional 3% to non-response and refusals 1% above what I would have hoped for at this stage.

The LFS has a separate fieldforce who are covering both LFS and APS and it is the introduction of the latter that has led to the recent reduction in LFS response for several linked reasons:

1. problems in recruiting interviewers on the scale needed for such a major new survey;
2. on-going difficulties caused by the fact that new interviewers are more likely to leave than established ones, and
3. introducing many new interviewers means on average higher refusals.

Recruitment of relatively low paid staff is pretty difficult at the moment and competition is high. Because of the organisation of the fieldwork, it would not have been appropriate to have new interviewers just working on APS only.

There is good and bad news on this. The good news is that a higher non-contact rate should not be a permanent feature. In June, we have had a massive recruitment drive to try to redress the problem and have upped the level of recruitment (almost to daily interviewing now). It has been fruitful in getting applications. The bad news is it has and does take time for this to filter through into numbers on the ground and it may not be until Q3 that we get back on track. There are lessons here for us re: the significant Allsopp boosts that are planned - especially for the London one where there are issues about the quality of interviewers on all of our surveys.

On a more positive note, we do feel that improvement in LFS response is possible and we are not lowering our expectations. Our medium term target remains 80% and should be achievable. The programme set out in the OMB paper is being taken forward.

Happy to discuss this through.

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15/07/04 14:01

To: █
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You asked me to look up this OMB paper from █ - [Notes Link](#) - about survey response. It makes the following reference to LFS response

Levels of response for ONS continuous surveys in 2003/04 are predicted to be LFS 76% (last year 77%, lowest year 74%);

In my note sent to █ this morning █ - [Notes Link](#) - I am quoting the latest March to May 2004 LFS response rate of 73%. The figures are all consistent, but LFS response has got worse faster than █ predicted. The seems correspondingly more urgent as a result.

█
Director, Labour Market Division
Office for National Statistics

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Title: LFS wave 1 response rate - 1992 to 2004

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Date Sent : 15/07/04 11:26:27

Subject : [Link Message: LFS wave 1 response rate - 1992 to 2004](#)

[REDACTED]

As previously emailed, the record low LFS response rate of 73% for the spring 2004 quarter concerns me more than a little.

The chart in this linked document - [Notes Link](#)- shows the track of LFS wave 1 response over the years since we introduced the quarterly survey in 1992.

Response hit the target level of 84% for a year in 1994, but then declined steadily to a low of 74% in 2000, at which point efforts were made, with some brief success, to improve response. However, since 2001 things have deteriorated again and the position is now worse than ever.

There may or may not be a connection between this recent poor survey response and the recent unusual volatility of the key LFS working age employment rate time series, which has been making labour market assessment most difficult over the past 6 months to a year.

This month, for example, the important LFS employment rate indicator is out-of-line with all the other LM indicators. In briefing we have presented this as normal sampling fluctuation, which is entirely credible, but because response is so low I am beginning to have doubts about the LFS at the back of my mind, something which I have rarely had before.

While I understand that response rates for all surveys are a concern, I believe that the monthly LM indicators we publish from the LFS are unusually prominent among our survey outputs. And that the dependence of the Treasury and the Monetary Policy Committee on these LFS time series for the nation's economic management is such, that as an Office we must pay particular attention to their quality.

For me, this means we should urgently prioritise the improvement of LFS response rates.

Is there any way in which I can influence this happening please ?

[REDACTED]