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## INDIRECT TWO-PHASE SAMPLING: APPLYING IT TO QUESTIONNAIRE FIELD-TESTING

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### ABSTRACT

There are several ways to improve data quality. One of them is to re-design and test questionnaires for ongoing surveys. The benefits of questionnaire re-design and testing include improving the accuracy by ensuring the questions collect the required data, as well as decreased response burden. A number of enterprise surveys questionnaires of the Office for National Statistics are currently being redesigned. In this paper we will focus on the questionnaire redesign of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

KEY WORDS: Two-phase sampling; Questionnaire design; Indirect sampling.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is the main source of data on the distribution of earnings in the United Kingdom. ASHE (formally known as the New Earnings Survey prior to 2004) has been run, broadly in the same form, in every year since 1970. It measures the earnings of employees in employment in the UK across the whole economy in April of each year. ASHE is conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for Great Britain and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland.

The major part of the sample of 1% of employees is drawn by Inland Revenue (the UK's government department responsible for collecting income tax), from the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system by reference to the last two digits of an employee's National Insurance number. A small proportion of the sample is identified, using the same selection criterion, directly by employers who return their information electronically to the ONS. The sample design is effectively a panel of employees. The sample size in recent years has been about 240,000 employees. For more detail concerning the ASHE, see Pont (2003).

Selected numbers of national insurance are matched with the ONS Interdepartmental Departmental Enterprise Register (IDBR) at the enterprise level. Matched enterprises are required to fill in questionnaires for each one of their employees matching those selected from the Inland Revenue PAYE file. Data requested about the employees include their earnings, hours worked and a description of their occupation, to name a few. In what follows, we assume that an employee is linked to a single enterprise.

A two-page questionnaire was used up to 2004 to collect these data from in-scope enterprises. A new six-page questionnaire was tested in 2004 with the objective to use it in 2005. This new questionnaire included a number of additional questions, and its layout was an improvement over the two-page questionnaire. Response rate is a one of possible measurements that can indicate whether there has been or not an improvement with the newly designed questionnaire. The sample was split into two sub-samples to test whether there was a significant difference in response rates between the two questionnaires. Part of the sample was mailed out 5,000 redesigned questionnaires (six-page version), and the remaining part of the sample was mailed out 235,000 two-page questionnaires. Sampling was constrained to ensure that each enterprise (or cluster) in scope to the survey would either receive the two-page or six-page questionnaire for its matched set of employees. As we will see further, variance estimation is further complicated by this constraint.

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The paper is structured as follows. We describe in more detail the procedure for sampling the two questionnaires, and develop the required notation in section 2. We develop the variance of the estimated response for either questionnaire in section 3. Testing whether the response rates between the two questionnaire types are different implies that a covariance term is required. We provide this development in section 4. Finally, we summarize findings in the concluding section.

## 2. ASSIGNING THE TWO QUESTIONNAIRES

Let  $U^A$  denote the frame of  $M$  employees (Inland Revenue) with the National Insurance numbers. Let the corresponding universe of  $N$  matching enterprises on the IDBR be denoted as  $U^B$ . Each enterprise on the frame  $U^B$  can be regarded as a cluster of employees linked to enterprises on frame  $U^A$ . A first-phase sample of  $m$  employees (elements)  $s^A$  is selected from  $U^A$  using Bernoulli sampling. In what follows, the estimated variances are derived assuming that  $s^A$  is selected with simple random sampling without replacement from  $U^A$ . Employees are identified by the index  $k$ . The sample  $s^A$  is split into two sub-samples  $s_2^A$  and  $s_6^A$  that are respectively sent the two and six-page questionnaires. The corresponding samples sizes of these sub-samples are denoted as  $m_2^A$  and  $m_6^A$ .

The allocation of the employees within  $s^A$  to the two-sub-samples is such that each enterprise receives a two-page or a six-page questionnaire for its selected employees. The corresponding sample of  $n^B$  enterprises (clusters) on the Enterprise Register matched to the elements of the selected National Insurance sample  $s^A$  is denoted as  $s^B$ , where  $s^B = \{i | k \in i, i \in U^B, k \in s^A\}$ . The sample  $s^B$  is stratified into  $H$  size strata  $s_h^B$ , made up of  $n_h^B$  clusters,  $h=1, \dots, H$ :  $s^B = \bigcup_{h=1}^H s_h^B$ . A simple random sample  $s_{6h}^B$  consisting of  $n_{6h}^B$  clusters is selected without replacement from  $s_h^B$ . Each element within the selected clusters is mailed a six-page questionnaire. The remaining part of the sample  $s_{2h}^B$  consisting of  $n_{2h}^B$  clusters is mailed a two-page questionnaire. The corresponding of elements in  $s^A$  matched to elements belonging to  $s_{2h}^B$  and  $s_{6h}^B$  are denoted as  $s_{2h}^A$  and  $s_{6h}^A$ , respectively, where  $s_{2h}^A = \{k | k \in i, i \in s_{2h}^B, k \in s^A\}$  and  $s_{6h}^A = \{k | k \in i, i \in s_{6h}^B, k \in s^A\}$ . Note that  $s_h^A = s_{2h}^A \cup s_{6h}^A$ ,  $s_h^B = s_{2h}^B \cup s_{6h}^B$ ,  $m_h = m_{2h} + m_{6h}$  and  $n_h^B = n_{2h}^B + n_{6h}^B$ ,  $h=1, \dots, H$ .

The sampling scheme can be described as an indirect two-phase sample design. It is indirect, because employees are initially selected from the Inland Revenue frame, matched to enterprises on the Enterprise Register, and data are then requested about these employees from the matched enterprises. It is two-phase design because the two-page or six-page questionnaires are sub-samples of the matched enterprises. The two-phase design is a way to embed experiments in survey sampling.

Once the data have been collected, we test whether there is a significant difference in the response rates between the two-page and six-page questionnaires. The response rate to the two-page questionnaire is estimated as  $p_2 = \hat{Y}_2 / \hat{M}_2$  where  $\hat{Y}_2$  is the overall weighted response and  $\hat{M}_2$  is the corresponding weighted number of two-page questionnaires mailed out. The total number of two-page questionnaires mailed out to the  $i$ -th cluster within the  $h$ -th stratum ( $s_{2hi}^B$ ) is  $m_{2hi}$ . The set of elements in  $s^A$  that match those in clusters  $s_{2hi}^B$  is denoted as  $s_{2hi}^A$ : these two subsets will be used interchangeably in what follows. The estimated totals  $\hat{Y}_2$  and  $\hat{M}_2$  are respectively

$$\hat{Y}_2 = \frac{M}{m} \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} y_{2k} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{M}_2 = \frac{M}{m} \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} m_{2hi}.$$

The variable  $y_{2k}$  indicates response status: it is equal to one if there has been response to the questionnaire, and zero otherwise. The response rate to the six-page questionnaire, denoted as  $p_6$ , is estimated in a similar way.

The difference between the responses rates between the two and six-page questionnaire response rate is tested using the  $t$ -test given by

$$t = \frac{P_2 - P_6}{\sqrt{v(p_2) - 2 \text{cov}(p_2, p_6) + v(p_6)}} \quad (1)$$

### 3. ESTIMATING THE VARIANCE OF $p_2$

In this section, we limit ourselves to the estimation of the variance for the estimated response rate  $p_2$  for the two-page questionnaire. The development for the variance of the estimated proportion for the six-page questionnaire follows along similar lines. We first linearise the proportion  $p_2 = \hat{Y}_2 / \hat{M}_2$  (ratio estimator), where  $\hat{Y}_2$  and  $\hat{M}_2$  are unbiased estimators of  $Y_2 = \sum_{k \in U^A} y_k$  and  $M$ , respectively. Defining the linearised variable as  $z_{2,k} = (y_{2,k} - p_2) / \hat{M}_2$ , the estimated variance for  $p_2$  is given by  $v(p_2) \doteq v(\hat{Z}_2)$  where  $\hat{Z}_2 = \frac{M}{m} \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k}$ , and  $v(\bullet)$  stands for the variance operator that reflects the sample design.

Let  $\pi_{1k}$  and  $\pi_{1k\ell}$  denote the first-order and second-order inclusion probabilities for the first-phase sample  $s^A$ . Similarly, let  $\pi_{2i|s^A}$  and  $\pi_{2ij|s^A}$  be the conditional first-order and second-order inclusion probabilities for the second phase sample  $s_2^A = \bigcup_{h=1}^H s_{2h}^A$ , given the first-phase sample  $s^A$ . We use the Sen-Yates-Grundy (SYG) variance estimator

for two-phase sampling given in Hidiroglou and Rao (2003) to obtain the estimated variance for  $\hat{Z}_2$ . This variance estimator is less prone to yield negative variance estimates than the Horvitz-Thompson (HT) form for non-fixed sampling designs. The resulting variance is always non-negative for our design. The two-phase SYG variance estimator is given by

$$v_{\text{SYG}}(\hat{Z}_2) = v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\hat{Z}_1) + v_{\text{SYG}}(\hat{Z}_2 | s^A) \quad (2)$$

where  $\hat{Z}_1 = E(\hat{Z}_2 | s^A) = \sum_{s^A} z_k / \pi_{1k}$ ,  $v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\hat{Z}_1) = \sum_{k < \ell \in s_2^A} \frac{\pi_{1k} \pi_{1\ell} - \pi_{1k\ell}}{\pi_{1k} \pi_{2k\ell|s^A}} \left( \frac{z_{2,k}}{\pi_{1k}} - \frac{z_{2,\ell}}{\pi_{1\ell}} \right)^2$ , and

$$v_{\text{SYG}}(\hat{Z}_2 | s^A) = \sum_{k < \ell \in s_2^A} \frac{\pi_{2k|s^A} \pi_{2\ell|s^A} - \pi_{2k\ell|s^A}}{\pi_{1k\ell} \pi_{2k\ell|s^A}} \left( \frac{z_{2,k}}{\pi_{1k} \pi_{2k|s^A}} - \frac{z_{2,\ell}}{\pi_{1\ell} \pi_{2\ell|s^A}} \right)^2.$$

The first-order and second-order inclusion probabilities in phase 1 are respectively  $\pi_{1k} = m/M$  and  $\pi_{1k\ell} = \{m(m-1)\} / \{M(M-1)\}$ . The first-order inclusion probabilities in phase 2 are  $\pi_{2k|s^A} = n_{2h}^B / n_h^B$  if  $k \in s_{2hi}^A$  and  $i \in U_h^B$ . The second-order inclusion probabilities depend as to which stratum and cluster the elements  $k$  and  $\ell$  belong to. The different cases are as follows:

- i. Same stratum  $h$  and cluster  $i \in U_h^B$ :  $\pi_{2k\ell|s^A} = n_{2h}^B / n_h^B$  if  $k, \ell \in s_{2hi}^A$ .
- ii. Same stratum  $h$ , but different clusters:  $\pi_{2k\ell|s^A} = \left[ n_{2h}^B (n_{2h}^B - 1) \right] / \left[ n_h^B (n_h^B - 1) \right]$  if  $i$  and  $i' \in U_h^B$ ,  $i \neq i'$ ,  $k \in s_{2hi}^A$  and  $\ell \in s_{2hi'}^A$ .
- iii. Different strata  $h \neq h'$ , and different clusters across the strata:  $\pi_{2k\ell|s^A} = (n_{2h}^B n_{2h'}^B) / (n_h^B n_{h'}^B)$  if  $i \in U_h^B$ ,  $i' \in U_{h'}^B$ ,  $k \in s_{2hi}^A$  and  $\ell \in s_{2h'i'}^A$ .

The first part of  $v_{\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_2)$  of the variance given by  $v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_1) = F \sum_{k < \ell \in s^A} \sum_{2k\ell|s^A} \frac{1}{\pi_{2k\ell|s^A}} (z_{2,k} - z_{2,\ell})^2$ , where

$F = \frac{M^2(1-f^A)}{m^2(m-1)}$  and  $f^A = m/M$ . Using the appropriate inclusion probabilities given above, the estimated

variance expression for  $v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_1)$  can be simplified to

$$v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_1) = F \left\{ \begin{aligned} & \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \frac{(n_h^B - n_{2h}^B)}{(n_{2h}^B - 1)} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} m_{hi} (z_{2,k} - \bar{z}_{2hi})^2 \\ & + \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \frac{(n_h^B - n_{2h}^B)}{(n_{2h}^B - 1)} \frac{1}{n_{2h}^B} m_{2h} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} (z_{2,k} - \bar{z}_{2h})^2 \\ & + \tilde{m} \left[ \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k}^2 - \frac{1}{\tilde{m}} \left( \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k} \right)^2 \right] \end{aligned} \right\} \quad (3)$$

where  $\bar{z}_{2hi} = \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k} / m_{2hi}$  and  $\bar{z}_{2h} = \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k} / \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} m_{2hi}$  are weighted means for the elements, and

$\tilde{m} = \left( \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} m_{2h} \right)$ . Note that this estimator is always non-negative.

The second part of the variance estimator  $v_{\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_2)$  is given by

$$v_{\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_2 | s^A) = \frac{M^2}{m^2} \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{(n_h^B)^2}{n_{2h}^B} \left( 1 - \frac{n_{2h}^B}{n_h^B} \right) \frac{1}{n_{2h}^B - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \left( z_{2hi} - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} z_{2hi}}{n_{2h}^B} \right)^2 \quad (4)$$

where  $z_{2hi} = \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k}$ .

The HT version of the variance is

$$v_{\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_2) = v_{2,\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_1) + v_{\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_2 | s^A) \quad (5)$$

The first part of  $v_{\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_2)$  is given by

$$v_{2,\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_1) = F \left\{ \begin{aligned} & \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \frac{(n_h^B - n_{2h}^B)}{(n_{2h}^B - 1)} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \left( z_{2hi} - \frac{1}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} z_{2hi} \right)^2 \\ & + m \left[ \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k}^2 - \frac{1}{m} \left( \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{2h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^A} z_{2,k} \right)^2 \right] \end{aligned} \right\} \quad (6)$$

The variance estimators  $v_{2,\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_1)$  and  $v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_1)$  are similar. However,  $v_{2,\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_1)$  may be negative, and this never the case for  $v_{2,\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_1)$ . They are exactly equal if  $\tilde{m} = m$  and the number of elements  $m_{2hi}$  in each cluster is the same. The second component of (5), given by  $v_{\text{HT}}(\widehat{Z}_2 | s^A)$ , is the same as the one for  $v_{\text{SYG}}(\widehat{Z}_2 | s^A)$  in (2).

#### 4. ESTIMATING THE COVARIANCE BETWEEN $p_2$ AND $p_6$

The population difference  $P_d = P_2 - P_6$  where  $P_2 = Y_2 / M$  and  $P_6 = Y_6 / M$  is estimated by  $p_d = p_2 - p_6$ . The variance of the difference is obtained using the linearised versions of  $p_2$  and  $p_6$  given by  $z_{2,k}^* = (y_{2,k} - P_2) / M$  and  $z_{6,k}^* = (y_{6,k} - P_6) / M$ , respectively. Conditioning on  $s^A$  and using Tam (1984)'s results on covariance of overlapping samples, it can be shown that the variance of  $p_d$  is given by

$$V(p_d) = M^2 \left( 1 - \frac{m}{M} \right) \frac{S_d^2}{m} + E \left[ \frac{M^2}{m^2} \sum_{h=1}^H n_h^B \left( \frac{n_{6h}^B}{n_{2h}^B} \tilde{S}_{2h}^2 + \frac{n_{2h}^B}{n_{6h}^B} \tilde{S}_{6h}^2 - 2 \tilde{S}_{26h} \right) \right] \quad (7)$$

where  $S_d^2 = \frac{1}{M-1} \sum_{k=1}^M (d_k^* - \bar{D}^*)^2$ ,  $\bar{D}^* = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{k=1}^M d_k^*$ ,  $d_k^* = z_{2,k}^* - z_{6,k}^*$ , and

$$\tilde{S}_{26h} = \frac{1}{n_h^B - 1} \sum_{i \in s_h^B} \left( z_{2hi}^* - \sum_{i \in s_h^B} z_{2hi}^* / n_h^B \right) \left( z_{6hi}^* - \sum_{i \in s_h^B} z_{6hi}^* / n_h^B \right) \quad (8)$$

with  $z_{2hi}^* = \sum_{i \in s_{2hi}^B} z_{2k}^*$  and  $z_{6hi}^* = \sum_{i \in s_{6hi}^B} z_{6k}^*$ .

Both the estimation of  $S_d^2$  and  $\tilde{S}_{26h}$  require that both  $y_{2k}$  and  $y_{6k}$  be known for the same unit. This is not possible as each enterprise fills up a single version of the questionnaire for each one of its designated employees. An imputed value of  $y_{2k}$  can be used to match to against the  $y_{6k}$  response. Such procedures have been proposed by Dumais and Lavallée (1990), and more recently by Van Brakel and Binder (2001). In our context, since ASHE is a panel survey, the value is generated by assuming that the response pattern is the same as the previous year. Denoting this value as  $y_{2k}^{IMP}$ , where  $k \in s_{6hi}^B$ , one can generate the required variables to estimate  $y_{2k}$  and  $y_{6k}$ . Hence  $V(p_d)$  can now either be estimated using the SYG given by (2) or the HT approach given in Section 3.

The estimators of  $S_d^2$  and  $\tilde{S}_{26h}$  require the linearised versions of  $p_2$  and  $p_6$  defined by  $z_{2,k} = (y_{2,k} - p_2) / \hat{M}_2$  and  $z_{6,k} = (y_{6,k} - p_6) / \hat{M}_6$ , respectively. The corresponding linearised difference is  $d_k = z_{2,k} - z_{6,k}$ . Using the HT version,  $S_d^2$  is estimated by

$$\hat{S}_d^2 = \frac{1}{(m-1)} \left\{ \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{6h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} \sum_{k \in s_{6hi}^B} d_{hik}^2 - \frac{1}{m} \left( \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B}{n_{6h}^B} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} d_{hi} \right)^2 \right. \\ \left. + \frac{1}{m} \sum_{h=1}^H \frac{n_h^B (n_h^B - n_{6h}^B)}{n_{6h}^B (n_{6h}^B - 1)} \left( \sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} d_{hi}^2 - \frac{\left( \sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} d_{hi} \right)^2}{n_{6h}^B} \right) \right\} \quad (9)$$

where  $d_{2hi} = \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^B} d_{2,k}$ . Similarly, the estimator of  $\tilde{S}_{26h}$  is given by

$$\hat{\tilde{S}}_{26h} = \frac{1}{n_{6h}^B - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} \left( z_{2,hi}^{IMP} - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} z_{2hi}^{IMP}}{n_{6h}^B} \right) \left( z_{6,hi} - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{6h}^B} z_{6hi}}{n_{6h}^B} \right) \quad (10)$$

where  $z_{2hi}^{IMP} = \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^B} z_{2,k}^{IMP}$  and  $z_{6hi} = \sum_{k \in s_{2hi}^B} z_{6,k}$ .

## 5. CONCLUSION

Variance computations were complicated given the embedded nature of the survey design, and its associated constraints. Using the  $t$ -test given by (1), we found that the response rates were slightly better for the six-page questionnaire than for the two-page questionnaire. We opted for a four-page version of the six-page questionnaire in 2005, as it was cheaper to process. All the questions in the six-page questionnaire were transferred to the four-page questionnaire. Recent results obtained using the new four-page questionnaire clearly demonstrated its improvements in terms of data quality.

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