Response Burden I: What is burden and why should we care?

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“In most countries in which a national statistical agency carries out periodically recurring economic surveys, businesses and institutions are said to be becoming increasingly restive under the growing burden of response.”

(XYZ, YEAR)
Outline

16:30

Break

18:00

Icons by Guilhem, Stefan Brechbühl & Giuditta Valentina Gentile from Noun Project
Why do businesses complain about official surveys?
A different working environment

Business working time … more precious:

- Global competition
- Pressures on productivity
- Elimination of any “waste” activity
Complete a survey?

Really?!?
Businesses question the need to provide data

Growing demand for data

Alternative data sources

Survey usefulness?!!
What is response burden (RB) and why should we care?
The burden concept

Time needed for a response

Actual RB

Costs of responding

Icon by Jamie Wilson from Noun Project
The burden concept

Feeling related to response

Perceived RB

Time Burden

Cognitive Burden
So what?

Political reasons
• part of administrative burden
• unproductive engagement of resources
• total actual RB at the national level

Methodological reasons
• potentially problematic survey behaviour
• actual and perceived RB at the survey level

Strategic reasons
• business community as a key stakeholder
• RB at the organisational level
Principle 9: Non-Excessive Burden on Respondents

The reporting burden is proportionate to the needs of the users and is not excessive for respondents. The statistical authorities monitor the response burden and set targets for its reduction over time.
Principle 5. Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.
What are root causes of business burden and complaints?
Do you ever count stairs when you walk?
○ Yes
○ No

How many messages did you receive yesterday?
Survey questionnaire: business vs. individual

Specificaties bedrijfsoophangsten

Netto omzet uit de hoofdactiviteit van de onderneming naar artikelgroepen

G.1 Detailhandel in:

- Kruidenierswaren
- Zuivel en melk
- Kaas
- Aardappelen, groenten en fruit
- Wild en gevogelte
- Vlees
- Vleeswaren en salades
- Vis, schaal- en schelpdieren
- Brood en gebak
- Chocolade, noten, snoepgoed o.d.
- Maaieien
- Dierenvoeding
- Alcoholhoudende dranken
- Alcoholvrije dranken
- Tabaksproducten en rookabonnementen
- Dier- en reformartikelen

biografie in 1000 euro:

- 4516
- 4050
- 503
- 700
- 606
- 693
- 607
- 32
- 337
- 309
- 675
Total business survey burden model

How to measure response burden (RB)?
The concept operationalization

Whose tasks in the response process?

- Gate-keeper(s)
- Authority(ies)
- Coordinator(s)
- Data provider(s)
- Respondent(s)

Which tasks of the response process?

- activities beyond questionnaire‘s completion
- initial one-off activities
- nonresponse activities & non-response

What about benefits of responding?
The concept operationalization: Willeboordse

Willeboordse (1997) distinguishes 4 RB dimensions:

- Objective (=actual) vs. Subjective (=perceived)
- Gross vs. Net
- Minimalistic vs. Maximalistic
- Imposed vs. Accepted
The concept operationalization: Standard Cost Model

Burden: actual RB expressed as costs

Tasks:
- list of 16 activities
- initial one-off activities
- full vs. actual compliance
The concept operationalization: Standard Cost Model
Collection of burden data

- **Source of data:**
  - survey participants
  - experts (in-house, business associations)

- **Timing and mode:**
  - as part of the survey
  - separately, after the survey

- **Coverage:**
  - all surveyed units
  - a representative subsample
  - a qualitative subsample

- **Frequency**
Actual RB calculation

Time: \( R \times T \)

Costs: \( R \times T \times C \)

\( R = \) number of respondents
\( T = \) (average) time spent
\( C = \) (average) hourly cost of respondent time
How do NSIs measure burden?

BLUE-ETS survey

Team lead by Deirdre Giesen (Statistics Netherlands). Survey completed in 2011. Response from 41 out of 45 NSIs in 39 out of 43 countries.

Survey topics: burden measurement and reduction practices.
How do NSIs measure burden?

- **Concept measured**
  - actual RB: 34 NSIs
  - perceived RB: 12 NSIs

- **Indicator of actual RB:**
  - time burden: 16 NSIs
  - time + money: 16 NSIs

- **Treatment of nonresponding units:**
  - imposed: 13 NSIs
  - accepted: 11 NSIs

- **Source of data:**
  - survey participants: 29 NSIs
  - experts: 25 NSIs

- **Coverage (& timing):**
  - all surveyed units: 21 NSIs
  - a representative subsample: 14 NSIs
  - a qualitative subsample: 13 NSIs

Inconsistent inclusion of tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks explicitly included in actual RB</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filling in the questionnaire.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrieving, collecting, and compiling the information requested.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading questions and instructions.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative tasks (e.g., coordination) involved in survey completion.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record formation specifically done for reporting obligations.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recontacts with businesses about the data provided.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other sources of response burden.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions on actual RB

- How much time did you spend collecting relevant information before the questionnaire could be completed?
  
  ___ hours  ___ minutes

- How much time did you spend completing the questionnaire?

- Did other people help … ? How many … ? How much time …?

Other questions

Check the complete version!

Dale & Haraldsen, 2007; Haraldsen et al., 2013; Icon by Jamie Wilson from Noun Project
Two main questions on perceived RB

- Did you think it was quick or time-consuming to collect information to complete the questionnaire?
  - very quick
  - quite quick
  - neither/nor
  - quite time-consuming
  - very time-consuming

- Did you find it easy or burdensome to fill in the questionnaire?
  - very easy
  - quite easy
  - neither/nor
  - quite burdensome
  - very burdensome

Source: Dale & Haraldsen, 2007. Icons by Gregor Črešnar from Noun Project
Explanatory questions on perceived RB

• Why did you find it time-consuming?
  information from different sources
  help from others
  wait for information
  other

• What conditions contributed to making the questionnaire burdensome to fill in?
  too many questions
  messy layout
  unclear terms
  complicated or lengthy calculations
  information mismatch
  response alternatives
  other

Source: Dale & Haraldsen, 2007
Questions on perceived benefits / motivation

• Do you consider the statistics from this questionnaire are useful or useless for your business?
  very useful
  fairly useful
  neither/nor
  fairly useless
  very useless

• Do you consider the statistics from this questionnaire are useful or useless for society?
  very useful
  fairly useful
  neither/nor
  fairly useless
  very useless

Source: Dale & Haraldsen, 2007; Haraldsen et al., 2013
Further reading

Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating Business Survey Response Burdens

Dale & Haraldsen, 2007

Designing and Conducting Business Surveys

Haraldsen et al., 2013
Gustav Haraldsen
Statistics Norway
References


• The BLUE-ETS project (www.blue-ets.eu), funded by European Commission (n. 244767).


