



Institute for
Fiscal Studies

ELSA: Lessons for NICOLA

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9th May 2012

Design of the survey: general

- Comparability with the other international surveys
 - Research questions
 - Concepts
 - Question wording: may differ across countries
 - Economic dimensions: largely same institutions as England
- Design questions with the longitudinal element in mind
 - Private pensions
 - Mortgages
 - Income sources (e.g. did you start receiving this in the last year?)
- Linking to administrative data sources
 - Appropriate wording when seeking consent
 - Get agreement from administrative data owners for regular updates of the linkage

Design of the survey: longitudinal

- Baseline questionnaire
 - Which questions will you ask of every refreshment sample/new partners in future?
 - Figure out what this looks like from the start
- Which questions do you want to re-ask at each wave?
 - Trade-off between collecting the most up-to-date (perception of the) answer and the time taken to recollect the same information
- How much do you want to prompt respondents with their answers from last time?

Design of the survey: economic themes

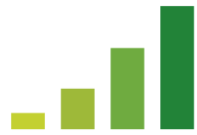
- Large number of questions required to capture level and composition of income and assets
 - Improves the accuracy of information collected
- Use of unfolding brackets
- Necessary if:
 - Want data to be used by economists and publishable in top economics journals
 - Want data to be comparable to the other surveys
 - Numerous papers look specifically at individual asset classes / income sources
- Interviewers often sceptical about respondents' ability / willingness to answer these questions but it does work!

Improving usability of the data (1)

- Feed forward data
 - Used in the survey to limit number of questions re-asked
 - Important to ensure that, for each survey wave, it is easy to find the latest information for each individual
 - Derived variables incorporating fed-forward data and new responses

Improving usability of the data (2)

- Value of income and assets
 - Notwithstanding previous comment about the large number of questions being essential...
 - ...many (non-economist) users find these variables confusing
 - Create easy-to-use summary variables
 - Impute missing values
 - Summary measures: total wealth, total income, quintiles/deciles
 - Exploit code already developed for ELSA?
- Private pensions
 - Collecting information on individual schemes important to capture specific incentives / decision-making
 - But...simplified derived variables required for some users
 - Indicators of pension membership, annual contributions, total current value of funds



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