

# Evaluating the Association of Initial Expressions of Reluctance with Panel Survey Behavior

---

**Brett McBride**  
**Brandon Kopp**  
**Lucilla Tan**

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**69<sup>th</sup> Annual AAPOR Conference**

May 16, 2014



# Outline

---

- Background
- Research Questions
  - ▶ How does initial contact data inform survey behavior?
- Data and Methods
- Findings
  - ▶ Variability in households' overall concerns over survey panel
  - ▶ Response patterns
  - ▶ Respondent effort, reporting quality
  - ▶ Perceived survey burden
- Conclusions & Caveats

# Background

## Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey

---

- National household panel survey that collects information about buying habits of consumers
- Used to calculate the weights of items tracked by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), also used by economists, academics, and market researchers
- Study focus: Quarterly Interview Survey (CEQ) – survey of larger, easier-to-recall purchases
  - ▶ Designed as CAPI survey, with proxy reporting, conducted quarterly for 5 waves
  - ▶ About 1-hour in duration

# Background:

## Doorstep Concern Data

- Contact History Instrument's Doorstep (DS) Concerns
- Interviewer-Assessed DS Concern(s) at Contact

DS Concern Items ('Mark All That Apply')		
1 Too busy	8 Anti-government	15 Hostile/threatening
2 Not interested	9 Talk to specific HH member	16 Survey content not applicable
3 Privacy concerns	10 Intends to quit survey	17 Other HH members say don't do survey
4 Scheduling difficulty	11 Family issues	18 Too many questions previously
5 Survey voluntary	12 Broke appt-puts off int. indefinitely	19 R requests same interviewer
6 Does not understand survey	13 Hangs up/slams door	20 Interview too long previously
7 Interview too time consuming	14 Too many interviews	21 Information previously given
No concerns		Other specify

# Research Questions

---

1. Do households' overall DS concerns vary over survey panel?
2. Are respondents with DS concerns responding throughout survey panel?
3. Do these respondents provide poorer data quality?
4. Do pre-survey DS concerns lead to greater perceptions of survey burden after panel completion?

# Data

- Sample units combined from 6 panels from October 2011 to March 2013 (N=3,000)

	Wave 1 (N=3,000)	Wave 5 (N=3,000)
Unit response (completed interviews)	86%	83%
No DS concerns	52%	46%
Top DS concerns (of HH with DS concerns)	-Too busy (22%) -Not interested (14%) -Privacy concerns (13%) -Scheduling difficulty (12%)	-Too busy (24%) -Not interested (15%) -Privacy, scheduling difficulty, too many interviews (12%)

# Methods

- Developed composite scores for each wave based on 21 DS concern items using principal components analyses (per Henderson et al., 1990), and divided scores into 3 groups:

## Wave 1 DS concern groups:



High concerns (N=715)



Low concerns (N=742)

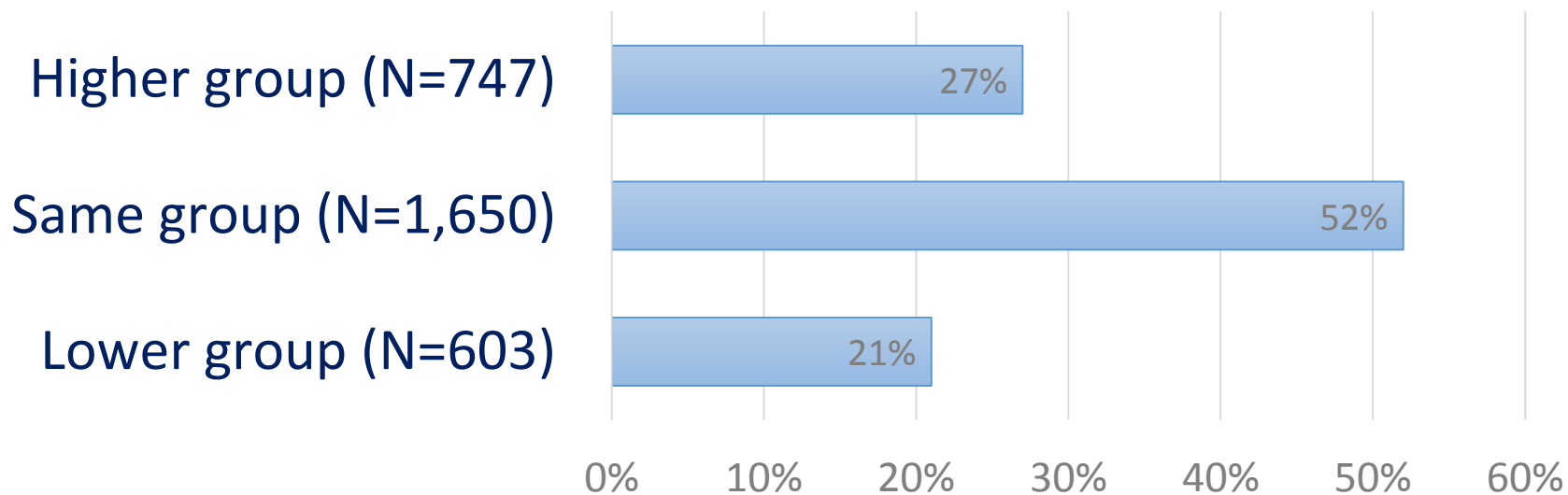


No concerns (N=1,561)

# Findings

## 1. Change in DS Concern Groups Over Survey Panel

- Across survey panel, some households moved to a higher DS concern group (27%) but most remained in same group at Wave 5 as at Wave 1 (52%).



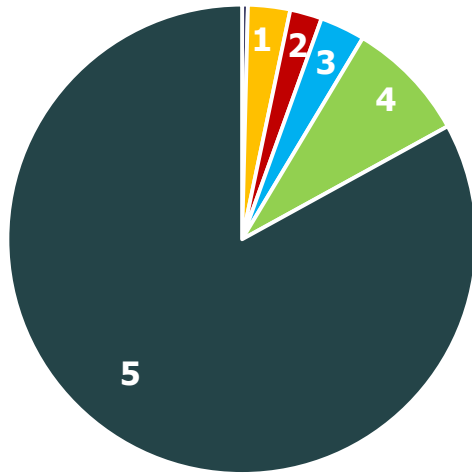


# Findings

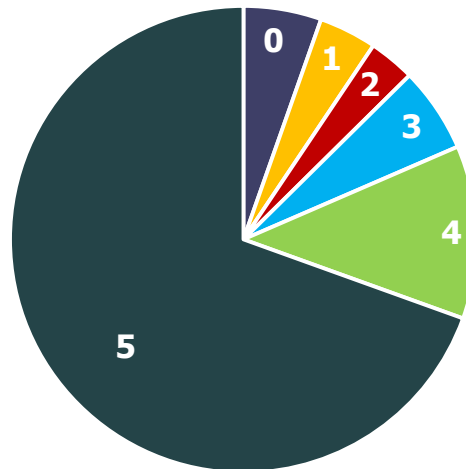
## 2. Panel Response Patterns for DS Concern Groups

- Respondents in High DS concern group completed fewer interviews

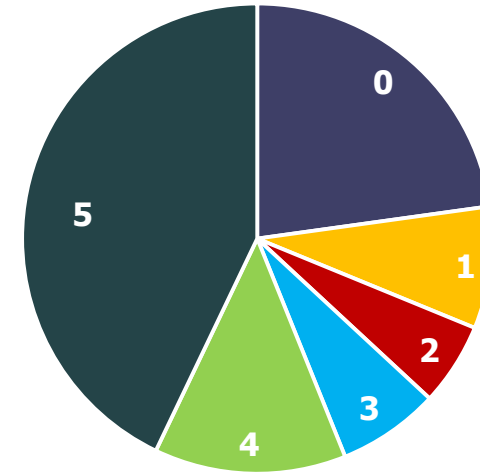
No concerns (N=1,561)  
# of interviews completed



Low concerns (N=742)  
# of interviews completed



High concerns (N=715)  
# of interviews completed



# Findings

## 3. Respondent Effort and Data Quality (Wave 5)

Interviewer rating measures:

- 1) Effort: "How much effort would you say this respondent put into answering the expenditure questions during this interview?"

A lot of effort, a moderate amount of effort, a bare minimum of effort

- 2) Record Use: "Did respondent use records for questions?"

90% of time or more, 50% to 89% of time, 10% to 49% of time, less than 10% of time

- 3) Consult Others: "Did the respondent get information from other household members when answering the questions?"

Yes, No, Don't Know

# Findings

## 3. Respondent Effort and Data Quality (Wave 5)

---

Interviewer ratings for respondents in High DS concern group:

- 1) Effort – Half as many (19%) rated as exerting 'a lot of effort'
- 2) Record Use – Almost half as many (11%) reported to use records at least 90% of the time
- 3) Consult Others – Significantly fewer (11%) reported to get (expenditure) information from other household members

# Findings

## 3. Respondent Effort and Data Quality (Wave 5)

---

Data quality measures for respondents in High DS concern group:

- Significantly higher proportion of edited expenditure records (21%)
- More likely to require refusal conversion (26%)
- Almost twice as likely to be reassigned to a different interviewer (11%)

# Findings

## 4. Perceived Survey Burden (Wave 5)

---

- Used burden composite scores (similar to DS composite scores) based on questions respondents answered in Wave 5
- Found significant correlation between respondents' burden composite scores and their DS concern scores:  
Spearman  $\rho=0.38$  ( $p<0.0001$ )

# Conclusions

---

- Most households did not exhibit significant change in DS concern ranking over survey panel
- Households with higher concern rankings in Wave 1 were less likely to complete all 5 interviews
- Among responding households, those with higher concern rankings were less likely to exhibit optimal reporting behavior and provide high-quality data
- Respondents with higher concern rankings at last interview also perceived survey burden to be higher

# Caveats

---

- Unclear how consistently interviewers record various DS concerns that are expressed
- No data available on the construct validity of DS concern items
- Unclear how often person expressing DS concern is the same person responding to survey
- Did not control for household characteristics in this study

# Contact Information

---

**Brett McBride**

(202) 691-5136

[mcbride.brett@bls.gov](mailto:mcbride.brett@bls.gov)

Disclosure: Any opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors, and do not constitute policy of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

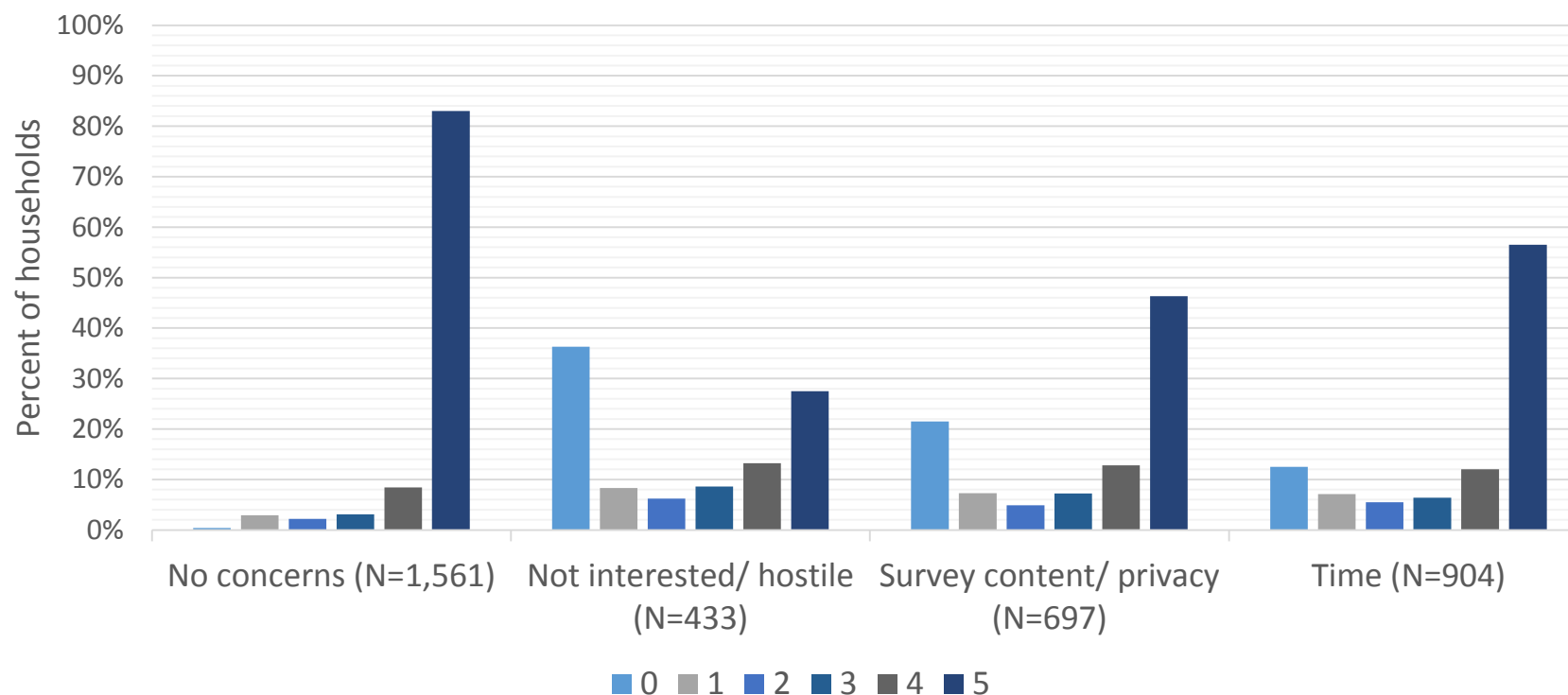


[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)



# DS Concern Themes

- Examined DS concern themes (“No concerns,” “not interested/hostile,” “survey content/privacy,” “time”) and panel response



# Themes by DS Concern Group

