

A Content Analysis of Advance Letters from Expenditure Surveys of Seven Countries

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In a comparative content analysis of seven survey advance letters, the content of these letters is evaluated relative to six social-psychological principles of compliance and one helping tendency. The content of an advance letter can be described in terms of twelve different topics, divided over three categories (background information, benefits and costs), and the presentation of the content can be judged according to the seven principles. The relation between the twelve topics and the seven principles is represented in matrix form.

Content analysis of these letters showed that only a limited number of topics and principles are mentioned. In most letters the main topics are the objectives of the survey, the direct benefits to the respondent and guarantees of the anonymity of the data provided. Of course, all letters mentioned the survey organization. In most cases the request to participate in the survey was formulated by appealing to reciprocation (remuneration), authority (mostly enforcement through reputation or prestige) and a general helping norm.

Content analysis is useful early in the process of determining the content of an advance letter. The development and use of a framework of content categories which are related to compliance principles make the design task easier. The interpretation and evaluation of the letter, however, require further research and should be explored by other means, e.g., by indepth interviews.

Key words: Advance letters; expenditure survey; content analysis.

1. Introduction

The idea of conducting a comparative content analysis of advance letters emerged at the Third Workshop on Household Survey Nonresponse at Voorburg, Holland in 1992 (De Heer and Israëls 1992). The goal of the present study is to compare the contents of advance letters with respect to the persuasive arguments used to stimulate survey participation. This analysis covers topics as well as the compliance principles explicitly invoked.

The relation between the content of an advance letter and the way a respondent is

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stimulated to participate is studied within the conceptual framework described in Section 2.

The countries that participated in the Workshop at Voorburg were asked by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics to provide advance letters from all areas of survey research. A wide variety of advance letters and brochures were provided and we focused on those pertaining to expenditure surveys. The obvious reason was subject comparability. The letters were translated into Dutch so that comparisons could be made in one language and these translations formed the basis of the content analysis. Section 3 gives the results of this analysis.

2. Theoretical Background

The three main reasons for sending advance letters are: to announce the visit of an interviewer; to give information about the survey; to stimulate the willingness of the respondent to participate in the survey. In most surveys the information in advance letters covers the objectives of the survey, its benefits, and the costs to the respondent. In the actual fieldwork these aspects are dealt with more extensively by the interviewer, who may tailor his or her approach to the concerns and attitudes of the potential respondent before that respondent has decided whether or not to participate (cf. Groves, Cialdini, and Couper 1992; Groves and Couper 1992).

Groves (1989) concludes that advance letters vary on four dimensions, namely: The description of the survey (varying from no information at all to a paragraph), the emphasis on social utility or individual rewards, the description of the sample design and the promise of confidentiality. Sobal (1984) found that most advance letters (more than 80%) provided information about the survey organization, the name of the interviewer, and the objectives of the survey. Other kinds of information were provided less frequently (less than 50%). Andersson (1992) uses a list of 27 items which characterize the advance letters of Statistics Sweden. In a Dutch study, Emans (1990) gave a classification of introductory information that embraces most of the classifications of Andersson (1992), Groves (1989) and Sobal (1984):

A. Background information:

1. the objectives of the survey;
2. the responsible survey organization, i.e., the sponsoring organization which may or may not be the organization conducting the survey;
3. the selection process through which the notified person was chosen;
4. the way the name and address of the notified person was obtained (or similarly the address of the household);
5. the reason for conducting the survey at this moment (and place);

B. Benefits of the survey:

6. the publication of the results of the survey;
7. the influence of results on public debate and decision making;
8. the direct benefits for the respondent, e.g., money or small gifts;

C. Costs of the survey:

9. the kind of information requested from the respondent;
10. the burden of the interview, e.g., the duration of the interview;

11. the proposed use of and access to the information provided and the assurance of data anonymity or confidentiality;
12. the direct costs to the respondent, e.g., telephone costs or costs for stamps on reply cards or the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire.

Some respondents, confronted with a written request to participate in a survey, read the information in a heuristic way because of little personal interest and "... consequently, [are] not inclined to devote a large amount of time or cognitive energy to the decision of whether or not to participate." (Groves, Cialdini, and Couper 1992). The heuristic decision whether or not to comply with a request is made according to what is called compliance principles. Individuals use these principles when deciding whether it is appropriate and adaptive to comply. Six compliance principles are distinguished (Groves 1989; Groves, Cialdini, and Couper 1992):

1. *Reciprocation*, the tendency to participate if a reward is given;
2. *Consistency*, the tendency to behave in a similar way in situations that resemble one another;
3. *Social validation*, the tendency to behave according to the norms and values of the social group to which one belongs (or thinks one belongs);
4. *Authority*, the tendency to be more willing to comply if the request comes from an authority;
5. *Scarcity*, the tendency to comply because the respondent gets the feeling of being in a unique position;
6. *Liking*, the tendency to comply with requests from attractive requestors.

For the purposes of the analysis the content of an advance letter and the compliance principles are represented in a matrix where the rows represent the various content topics and the columns the compliance principles. Each cell in this matrix then represents a relation between a topic in the letter and a compliance principle. This matrix is the basis of the coding presented in Figure 1. Three judges assigned coding scores for each of the seven letters (discussed further below).

	Reciprocation	Consistency	Social validation	Authority	Scarcity	Liking	Helping tendency	PRESENCE OF A TOPIC
BACKGROUND INFORMATION – objectives of survey – survey-organization – reason invitation – source name/address – time/place of survey BENEFITS – publication results – influence results – direct benefits COSTS – requested information – burden of interview – anonymity and confidentiality – respondent costs								
PRESENCE OF A PRINCIPLE								

Fig. 1. Coding form for advance letters

In addition to the above six compliance principles, there is another principle, the helping tendency. The helping tendency refers to the extent to which people are willing to help when asked: “. . . it is argued that a helping norm . . . exists in most cultures that motivates individuals to help others who are in need and who are dependent upon them for aid Thus, even a simple request to participate in a survey will be significantly more successful when it includes an appeal to the helping norm” (Cialdini 1990).

3. Description and Analysis

3.1. Choice of advance letters

The countries that participated in the Workshop at Voorburg were asked to send in advance letters from various kinds of survey research (including leaflets, brochures and other material sent out with advance letters). This request from the Statistics Netherlands yielded a wide variety of advance letters and associate materials. Advance letters from Family Expenditure Surveys (FES) were generally available and thus suitable for a comparative analysis. The following seven letters were chosen:

1. Consumer Expenditure Quarterly Interview Survey 1992, Bureau of the Census, United States of America;
2. FES 1987, INS/NIS/SLA, Belgium (three versions, one in Dutch, one in French and one in German);
3. FES 1992, OPCS, Great Britain;
4. FES 1990, Statistics Finland;
5. FES 1992, INSEE, France;
6. FES 1993, Statistics Netherlands;
7. FES 1992, Statistics Sweden.

To further reduce the amount of material included in the analysis, we omitted all enclosures (leaflets, brochures, and so on). This was done to focus on the content of the letters themselves, as not all surveys made use of additional enclosures as complements to the letters. However, any analysis primarily concerned with the total information content of the *message* from the survey organization to the respondent would have to consider all such enclosures. In the present (preliminary) analysis we restrict our attention to the saliency of specific topics in advance letters. For practical reasons we exclude still other aspects of the letters, such as typography, lay-out, tone and level of language used.

3.2. The scoring procedure

Content analysis of the letters required translation into a single language understood by all three judges. In this case the translations were made into Dutch by three native speakers in the original language of the letters who were also fluent in Dutch: the Swedish and Finnish letters were translated by a Finnish native speaker, the French (and Wallonic-Belgian letter) by a French native speaker and the German-Belgian

letter by a German native speaker. In every translation there is inevitably some loss or distortion of meaning. Therefore, the translators were asked to translate as literally as possible. After analysis, the letters were also translated into English (see Appendix A) for the purposes of this article².

The letters were subject to a content analysis based on the classification of topics by compliance principles as noted on the coding form (see Figure 1). The coding form is first used to classify the information content of a letter. Coding the content of a letter according to a closed system of categories entails interpretation by the researcher. Topics in advance letters are reasonably easy to identify, while the scoring of compliance principles are subject to interpretational difficulties. To make the coding task as easy and reliable as possible, detailed coding instructions were used.

The analysis per se followed a three-step procedure. Every sentence (unit of analysis) is first checked against the list of topics to establish which topics are mentioned. This is done sentence by sentence, so in the coding form the column "presence of a topic" is filled in first. Then the letter is checked with respect to explicit referral to compliance principles. This yields a matrix with two filled-in marginals. The intersection of the two marginals, i.e., the cells of the coding form represents combined referrals to a topic and a compliance principle. The number of the sentence appears on the coding form at the relevant cell.

To avoid the problem of multiple interpretations (reliability) the three judges analyzed the letters independently. After scoring the coding forms the results were compared. A classification was assumed correct when at least two of the judges agreed.

In a further analysis we looked more closely at three translated letters from Belgium. The three letters differed only slightly, and the differences could be traced to the translation itself. Eventually the translation from German was selected at random. Similarly, Finland used two versions of the advance letter and both were translated. One mentioned a scheduled visit while the other simply mentioned a visit. Both translations were, except for the introductory paragraph, identical. The one with the mention of a visit was included in our analysis.

3.3. *Results*

Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis (mainly with the sentence as the unit of analysis). In addition to the data from the coding forms for the seven letters, some other characteristics are also shown. The number of paragraphs, sentences and words are based on the counts in the original language of the letters. We did not count the sentences and words at the beginning and the closing of the letter. The Belgian letter is two-page (even though a brochure is also present); all other letters are one-page.

² The standard technique of retranslating into the original language, using an independent translator in order to verify the result with the original is not applied in this study due to capacity constraints. Instead we asked the responsible survey managers to verify our English translations with the original advance letters. In the case of Sweden, Finland, France and Belgium adjustments were necessary in order to obtain a more accurate translation. These adjustments did not affect the results or the conclusions.

Table 1. Characteristics of seven advance letters from budget surveys in seven countries

Characteristics	Country						
	United States of America	Belgium	Great Britain	Finland	France	Netherlands	Sweden
no. of paragraphs	5	9	6	6	5	5	5
no. of sentences	14	25	13	17	7	21	20
no. of words	280	466	357	230	150	380	244
words/sentence (1)	20	19	27	14	21	18	12
no. of topics (2)	7	6	7	6	2	8	5
no. of principles (3)	3	3	3	1	1	2	1
no. of topic-principle combinations	2	2	6	—	—	2	1
no. of sentences with regard to							
— objectives of the survey	1	4	1	1	—	2	5
— survey organization	2	1	1	1	—	1	—
— reason/invitation	1	1	1	—	—	2	2
— source name/address	1	—	1	2	2	1	1
— time/place of the survey	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
— publication results	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
— influence results	2	—	1	—	—	—	—
— direct benefits	—	3	3	—	—	1	4
— requested information	1	—	—	1	—	2	—
— burden of interview	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
— anonymity and/or confidentiality	2	3	1	2	1	3	—
— respondent costs	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
no. of sentences with other topics	4	12	5	9	4	8	7

no. of sentences with regard to	1	1	no	implicit	implicit	1	no	implicit	implicit	2
- reciprocity	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
- consistency	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
- social validation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- authority	1	3	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
- scarcity	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- liking	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- helping tendency	2	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
brochure present	yes (4)	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes
contact for information	phone	phone	phone	implicit	implicit	no	no	no	phone	phone
name contact person	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
announcement of visit	yes	no (5)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
scheduled visit	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
participation is compulsory	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
mentioning participation is voluntary	explicit	explicit	implicit	implicit	implicit	explicit	explicit	implicit	implicit	implicit
type of respondent costs	-	filling out a questionnaire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
type of direct benefits	-	18.300-27.300 Bfrs.	£10	-	-	small present (6)	lottery tickets & calculator	-	-	-

(1) averages in whole numbers; sentences marked '*' in appendix A are excluded in all analysis

(2) no. of topics mentioned at least once

(3) no. of principles mentioned at least once

(4) extra information is not given in the brochure, but is placed on the backside of the letter

(5) people are asked to fill out a short-cut questionnaire, irrespective of their decision to participate or not

(6) the type of presents is not specified

The average number of words per sentence varies from 12 (Sweden) to 27 (Great Britain). The Swedish letter distinguishes itself from the others by its direct style. It uses short sentences and separate headings that sum up the essence of the message (gain an understanding of your household budget; you get lottery tickets and a calculator free of charge, an SCB-interviewer will contact you).

We tried to determine which topics are used to inform and persuade potential respondents. The most salient ones are the objectives of the survey, often mentioned at the same time as the name of the survey organization, the direct benefits and the promise of anonymity and confidentiality. The selection process, i.e., why this household or person was selected and the source of their name and address, occurs less often.

Common principles used to persuade the respondent are the appeal to the authority or reputation of the survey organization and a direct appeal to the general helping norm, and less often to the principle of reciprocity.

As can be seen in Table 2, the combination of a principle and a topic occurs relatively seldom in all seven letters. This table shows the occurrence of either a topic, a principle or a combination of a topic and principle. In Table 2 we have counted the occurrence of a topic and principle in a sentence separately, rather than counting sentences with or without a topic and principle, as we did in Table 1. Authority is referred to and promises of anonymity and confidentiality given (Belgium); the survey organization is introduced (USA, Belgium, Great Britain and the Netherlands). The principle of reciprocity is always combined with direct benefits; reciprocity is defined as a sort of trade-off. Belgium, Great Britain, Netherlands and Sweden offer benefits, varying from remunerations to small presents (see also Table 1). The objectives of the surveys (one of the most mentioned topics) are not related to any of the principles.

Analyzing the paragraphs in the letters by the presence and number of topics, one gets a broad idea of the composition of the letters. Topics which appear more than once in a letter are usually formulated in different ways (see Appendix A). Paragraphs which do not refer to one or more of the twelve topics usually concern aspects like the announcement of a visit of the interviewer, a reference to enclosed leaflets or brochures, and so on.

3.4. Conclusions

Comparative content analysis of advance letters used in different Family Expenditure Surveys reveals some degree of similarity, despite cultural differences. In most letters, the choice of topics is limited to the objectives of the survey, the name of the survey organization, the direct benefits for the respondent if he or she participates, and the promise of anonymity and confidentiality. The use of compliance principles in the letters is almost totally limited to the principles of reciprocity (often in combination with a remuneration), authority (with reference to the law), and helping tendency (a general appeal for help). Differences between the letters are mostly due to the different ways these compliance principles are used. In general, explicit referral to compliance principles occurs haphazardly and infrequently.

Table 2. Topics in the advance letters by compliance principles

Topic in the letters	Compliance principle *)							Total
	Reciprocation	Consistency	Social validation	Authority	Scarcity	Liking	Helping tendencies	
- Objectives of survey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
- Survey organization	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	2
- Selection process	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	5
- Source name/address	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7
- Time/place of the survey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
- Publication results	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Influence results	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
- Direct benefits	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
- Requested information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
- Burden of interview	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
- Anonymity and/or confidentiality	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
- Respondent costs	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	9
- No topic mentioned	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Total	4	-	-	8	1	1	10	53
								122

*) Number of occurrences, counted in seven letters.

For assessing advance letters our coding form appears to be a valuable instrument. Attention can be drawn to the salient topics in a letter and the way these topics are formulated, e.g., the persuasiveness of the message and wording. As a checklist, the coding form may be of help for the design of advance letters. If one uses compliance principles more consciously and tries to combine these with culturally or nationally salient topics, better letters may result. The interpretation and evaluation of the letter, however, should be explored by other means, e.g., indepth interviews, in which think aloud and paraphrasing are used (cf. Tanur and Fienberg 1992). The information from these interviews, together with insights from content analyses, may lead to a better and more systematic understanding of the role of advance letters.

The present study focuses on the letters themselves, without the enclosures and other kinds of information that the respondent finds in his or her mailbox. Further research should go beyond the letter itself, and focus on the "total" message from the survey organization to the respondent. The variety of materials received from the seven national statistical agencies offers ample opportunity for the suggested type of follow-up research.

Appendix A. Translations and Subdivisions of the Original Letters

The following pages contain the English text of the seven advance letters. Dotlines are used to indicate paragraphs. The first column is the sentence number, the second column indicates the topic which is referred to in the sentence, while the third column indicates the compliance principle which is invoked. The abbreviations for columns 2 and 3 are:

Topics (see also Figure 1)

OBJTVE	= objective(s) of the survey
ORGZN	= survey organization
INVITE	= (reason) invitation
SOURCE	= source name/address
TIME	= time/place of the survey
PUBL	= publication of results
INFLUEN	= influence of results
BENEF	= direct benefits for the respondent
REQUEST	= requested information
BURDEN	= burden of interview
ANONYM	= anonymity/confidentiality
COSTS	= respondent costs (direct costs)

Compliance principles

RECIP	= reciprocation
CONSIS	= consistency

VALID	= social validation
AUTH	= authority
SCARCE	= scarcity
LIKING	= liking
HELP	= helping tendency

United States of America

0	*		From the Director, Bureau of the Census
1	ORGZN	—	A Census Bureau field representative carrying official identification will visit you within the next week to ask you to participate in the Consumer Expenditure Quarterly Interview Survey.
2	REQUEST	—	In this survey, we collect information about your expenses for items such as housing, food, education, transportation, and health care.
3	OBJECTVE	—	We will use your responses to update the Consumer Price Index, which indicates the rate of inflation in the country.
4	INFLUEN	—	The Consumer Price Index affects interest rates, wages, pensions, and Social Security benefits for millions of Americans.
5	ORGZN	AUTH	The Census Bureau is conducting this survey for the Department of Labor under the authority of Title 29, United States Code.
6	ANONYM	—	All the information you provide to the Census Bureau is confidential by law (Title 13, United States Code).
7	ANONYM	—	We will use your answers only for statistical purposes, so no one can identify you or your family.
8	SOURCE	—	We selected your household as part of a scientific sample of addresses from the entire United States.
9	INVITE	SCARCE	You are representing thousands of other households similar to yours; therefore, your participation is extremely important to ensure that the results of the survey are complete and accurate.
10	INFLUEN	—	Although there is no penalty for failure to answer questions, your cooperation in this voluntary survey will be very beneficial to our country.
11	—	—	On the other side of this letter are answers to several frequently asked questions about the survey.
12	—	—	If you would like further information, contact the

Bureau of the Census at the following address:
 Bureau of the Census
 Jacob K. Javits Fed. Bldg., Rm. 37-130
 26 Federal Plaza
 New York, NY 10278-0044
 Telephone: (212) 264-3860

13	—	HELP	Thank you for your cooperation in this important survey.
14	—	HELP	The Census Bureau appreciates your help.
15	*		Sincerely,
16	*		Barbara Everitt Bryant.

Belgium

0	*		Dear Madam, Sir
1	—	—	As you probably read in the newspapers, a household budget survey will soon take place.
2	—	—	About 3000 households, selected at random, will be requested, without any obligation, to write down income and expenditures in household-diaries at their disposal.
3	INVITE	—	Your household is also invited to cooperate.
4	ORGZN & ANONYM	AUTH	The survey will be conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), a governmental institution that has conducted statistical surveys of various kinds for more than a hundred years and guarantees absolute confidentiality of the collected data.
5	ANONYM	AUTH	According to the Law on Public Statistics, the NIS is not allowed to pass on data to other persons or governmental institutions under any circumstance. It is only allowed to use the data to compile general, anonymous statistics.
6	ANONYM	AUTH	For the employees of the NIS the oath of secrecy constitutes the highest command; we have never had to report an infraction of this code of secrecy.
7	—	—	The scheduled survey is the fourth of its kind within 25 years.
8	OBJTVE	—	As always the results will also be used this time for a recalculation of the consumer price index.
9	OBJTVE	—	The increase of prices differs a lot for the different categories of goods and services.

10	OBJTVE	—	To be able to determine the average change of the prices correctly, one has to take into account the share that the different categories of expenditures have in the total expenditures of a household.
11	OBJTVE	—	<u>This is the goal of the survey about national accounts.</u>
12	—	—	<u>Details about the content and the objectives of the survey, as well as about practical organization, the way in which to participate, the duration and the confidentiality are given in the enclosed brochure.</u>
13	—	HELP	The household budget survey about the national accounts is important, so your cooperation is certainly as important.
14	—	—	Households are selected at random so as to give a reliable representation of the Belgian population.
15	—	—	To achieve a representative distribution of sampled households over the different social classes, they are selected from the households who participated in the labour force survey in 1986.
16	—	—	In this way we ensure that their expenditures also reliably represent the expenditures of the total population.
17	—	HELP	If, however, certain households refuse to participate, then the representation will be biased.
18	—	HELP	<u>That is why I call upon you for your cooperation in this survey, although you are not obliged to do so.</u>
19	COSTS	—	Regardless of your decision whether or not to participate in this survey, I ask you to fill out the enclosed questionnaire A and return it in the postage-free envelope to the NIS.
20	—	—	<u>Should you have any problems with filling in the questionnaire, please call us at 02/513.96.50, Household Budget Department.</u>
21	—	—	One practical remark to conclude with.
22	BENEF	—	Because cooperation of a household requires a certain amount of time and attention, a remuneration will be given.
23	BENEF	—	The following gross remunerations are proposed to the responsible authority: 18.300 Bfrs. for a household of 1 or 2 persons, 22.800 Bfrs. for a household of 3, 4, or 5 persons, and 27.300 Bfrs. for a household of 6 or more persons.
24	BENEF	—	<u>Filling out three diaries leads to an extra remuneration of 11.000 Bfrs.</u>

25	–	LIKING	I thank you for your attention and hope to welcome you amongst the participants at the start of the survey, probably on May 4th, 1987.
26	*		
27	*		Yours sincerely, on behalf of the minister, the Director-General

Great Britain

0	*		Dear Resident(s)
1	–	–	You may have read about the Family Expenditure Survey in the newspapers or heard about it on the radio or television.
2	–	–	The survey is one of the most important and long established ones done by any government and has been carried out continuously since 1957.
3	ORGZN	AUTH	Social Survey Division is a part of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, a Government Department which carries out surveys for other Departments and official bodies, and is responsible for organising the Census every ten years as well as the registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales.
4	OBJTVE	–	The main use of the Family Expenditure Survey is in drawing up the Index of Retail Prices which provides up to date information on the cost of living for all types of household from one person living alone to those containing several people.
5	SOURCE & HELP INVITE		Addresses are selected at random from the Post Office's list of addresses throughout the country, and this month yours is one of the 1000 chosen for our representative sample, so I am writing to ask for your help.
6	–	–	In the next few weeks one of our interviewers will call on you and ask for an opportunity to explain the survey in detail to all of you.
7	–	–	The interviewer will call during the evening if you are not at home during the day and will be happy to come again if you happen to be busy at the first call.
8	–	–	The interviewer will show an official identification card.
9	ANONYM	–	This information you give is treated in confidence.

			The results will not be used in any way in which they can be associated with your name or address.
10	INFLUEN	HELP	By co-operating in the work you will be assisting the many government departments and other organisations which use the results.
11	BENEF	—	Most people who help us also find the survey an interesting one to take part in.
12	BENEF	RECI & HELP	We are very grateful to everyone who helps us and as a token of our appreciation, a gift of £10 is sent to each of you provided that all members of your household are able to help.
13	*		Yours sincerely
14	*		June Langham
15	*		Family Expenditure Survey
16	*		Field Branch
17	—	—	For further information contact: June Langham on 071-405-2793 (Direct line)

Finland

0	*		Dear Reader,
1	ORGZN	—	It is the duty of Statistics Finland, the national statistical institute, to compile and publish statistics describing developments in Finnish society.
2	—	—	Parliament has provided Statistics Finland with funds for a nation-wide Survey of Living Costs in 1990.
3	OBJVE & REQUEST	—	The purpose of this survey is to collect data on household expenditure on goods and services, such as food, housing, health care and child care, along with data on the distribution of income.
4	—	—	The first corresponding survey conducted in Finland is from 1908–1909.
5	TIME	—	From 1966 on these data are collected at five-year intervals.
6	—	AUTH	Virtually all countries conduct similar surveys based on UN recommendations.
7	SOURCE	—	For the purpose of the present survey, the names of about 12,000 people were drawn randomly from the population registers.
8	SOURCE	—	The survey concerns the households these people are members of.

9	—	—	If food and other similar purchases in your family are not your responsibility, please pass this letter on to the person usually responsible for them.
10	—	—	The survey also includes single-person households.
11	—	—	For the survey to succeed, it is vital that we obtain the required data from each of the households selected.
12	—	—	To obtain your data, we should like to interview you and give you a questionnaire for you to fill in later.
13	ANONYM	—	Your answers will be strictly confidential.
14	ANONYM	—	The data will be published only as statistics from which the data of individual households or persons cannot be identified.
15	—	—	A statistical interviewer, whose business card is enclosed, will contact you in the near future about the date of your interview.
16	—	—	For more information about the survey, please contact the interviewer or call Mr. Kari Djerf on (90) 17341 (operator).
17	—	—	Thanking you for your co-operation.
18	*		Pentti Pietelä, Head Interview Services

France

0	*		M.
1	—	—	I have the honour to inform you that the INSEE conducts an important survey about consumption and the cost of living of families that live in France.
2	SOURCE	—	In this context 10,000 households, from all socio-economic groups and selected in a completely objective way, will be interviewed.
3	SOURCE	—	Your household is one of them.
4	—	—	You will be visited in month . . . by Mr. . . . who will ask you several questions about your costs of living expenditures.
5	ANONYM	—	As a matter of course, your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will only serve to produce statistics which will help to decide better courses of action in production.

6	—	HELP	I am convinced that you will oblige, and facilitate the work of my colleague and that you will receive him well.
7	—	—	Thank you in advance,
8	*		Yours sincerely
9	*		The regional director.

The Netherlands

0	*		Dear sir/madam,
1	ORGZN	AUTH	As you probably know Statistics Netherlands is responsible for a great number of surveys in our country, from which the results are used as a basis for policy decisions, science and public debate.
2	—	—	One of these surveys is the Budget Survey.
3	OBJTVE	—	This survey concerns household expenditure.
4	OBJTVE	—	Questions in this survey concern how much a household can spend, for what expenditures the income is used, and what differences there are in spending patterns between households.
5	REQUEST	—	To be able to conduct this Budget Survey, the CBS asks a sample of the Dutch population to keep a record of their income and expenditures every year.
6	BURDEN	—	During that year some questionnaires and a household diary are filled in.
7	BENEF	RECIP	An interviewer of the CBS offers you assistance (and will surprise you in that year with some nice presents).
8	INVITE	—	To have a successful Budget Survey, it is necessary that the participating households and singles form a representative part of the Dutch population.
9	SOURCE	—	This is accomplished by randomly sampling all dwellings in our country.
10	INVITE	—	It is important that as many sample households as possible participate.
11	—	—	Your address occurs in the sample of the Budget Survey 1993.
12	—	—	Therefore we invite you to participate in the Budget Survey 1993.
13	—	—	One of these days one of our [female] interviewers will contact you (on some occasions it can be a [male] interviewer).

- 14

—

—

She will ask you if you are prepared to cooperate in principle.
- 15

REQUEST

—

If you respond positively she will ask you a couple of questions to determine the number of persons belonging to your household and the socio-economic group to which your household belongs.
- 16

—

—

You will find the name of our interviewer and her proposed appointment at the end of this letter.
- 17

—

—

Naturally the interviewer will be happy to make another appointment if the proposed time does not suit.
- 18

—

—

Finally please note the following.
- 19

ANONYM

—

The information the CBS asks from you and from other persons is intended exclusively for the production of statistics.
- 20

ANONYM

—

From those statistics, no identifiable information can be extracted about individuals, also not for other government departments.
- 21

ANONYM

—

The CBS takes great care to assure that your answers will never be used for other than statistical purposes.

22

*

Yours sincerely

23

*

Subst. Head of the Department

24

*

Socio-economic Household Surveys

25

*

(W.F. de Heer)

[The interviewer’s proposal of the Dutch advance letter; the interviewer fills in an appointment and sends the letter to the respondent. The text of the proposal is not analysed separately].

Ms/Mr. , telephone

address

would like to visit you at (day)

. (date)

in the morning/afternoon/evening.

Sweden

0

*

To the household,

1

—

—

GET A HOLD ON YOUR HOUSEHOLD BUDGET

2	—	—	Get a hold on your household budget and help us at the same time to map private consumption in Sweden.
3	BENEF	—	Most households who participated earlier in our surveys of household expenditures hold the view that it is of great value to keep records of one's expenditures.
4	OBJTVE	—	It is not your particular household budget which the central statistical bureau is interested in, but we need your help to get answers to questions like:
5	OBJTVE	—	Which households win and which households loose in the tax reform – Is there anything left for pensioners once the rent is paid – How are the expenditures of singles affected?
6	OBJTVE	—	How much do young people spend on clothing?
7	OBJTVE	—	How much does it cost to have a car?
8	OBJTVE	—	What is more expensive, living in the city or in the country?
9	BENEF	—	YOU GET LOTTERY TICKETS AND A CALCULATOR FREE OF CHARGE
10	BENEF	RECIP	Every household participating in the survey gets, by way of recognition of its help, a calculator and two lottery tickets with chances of winning 100.000 Skr. per ticket.
11	BENEF	RECIP	The lottery tickets are sent to the household as soon as the data are received.
12	—	—	AN INTERVIEWER FROM SCB WILL CONTACT YOU
13	INVITE & SOURCE	—	Your household was randomly selected to participate in the survey on household expenditures in 1992.
14	INVITE	—	Your household cannot be replaced by another.
15	—	—	One of our interviewers will contact you in the near future and will explain the survey.
16	—	—	With a little help from our interviewer, it is all quite simple.
17	—	—	If you want to know more about the survey, read the enclosed brochure or call us.
18	—	—	Our telephone number is 019-176000.
19	—	—	Ask for someone working with "Household Expenditure".

20	COSTS	–	For long distance calls – ask to be called back.
21	*		With kind regards,
22	*		Gunborg Johansson
23	*		Survey Manager

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