



Measuring the costs of claiming benefits

Lessons from an online survey experiment

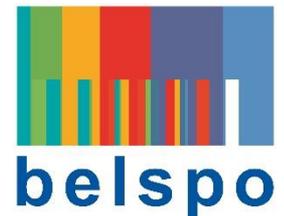
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Expert workshop on non-take-up and coverage
Brussels, 12 March 2019

TAKE

*Reducing Poverty Through Improving
the Take Up of Social Policies*

Universiteit Antwerpen





Outline

- Motivation for this study
- Research questions
- Sample and procedure
- Results
- Conclusion



Motivation

- TAKE Survey
- Measuring claiming costs   
- Likert scales for all three types of costs (<> proxies)
- Faced with design-related choices
 - Effect on low-income sample?



Response biases

- Different types
 - Acquiescence response bias
 - Extreme response bias
 - Midpoint response bias
- Consequence of
 - Survey instrument
 - Respondent's characteristics (e.g. nationality, gender, personality)
- Inclusion reverse-worded items to reduce response biases
 - "Inconsistent response bias"



This study

- Online survey to test the validity and quality of indicators of claiming costs
- Focus on information costs and stigma
- Interested in three questions:
 - (1) Are response biases present?
 - (2) Does reversing a portion of the items help to reduce response biases?
 - (3) Overall quality resulting scale



This study

Procedure

- Test survey in collaboration with “Research Now”
- Preselections & selection criteria (low-income population)
- Incentive
- Fieldwork first 3 weeks of September 2017



This study

Sample

- Quota sample with 1200 respondents (including 114 partial responses)
- Questionnaire in Dutch and French
- Online survey with random assignment to different versions of likert scales



Information costs

Alternating scale (AS) (n=291)	Consistent scale (CS) (n=277)
I know the benefits of the SA benefit	I know the benefits of the SA benefit
I do <u>not</u> know where to go for asking a SA benefit	I know where to go for asking a SA benefit
I have a fairly good idea whether or not I am entitled to a SA benefit	I have a fairly good idea whether or not I am entitled to a SA benefit
I find it <u>difficult</u> to find all the necessary information on the SA benefit	I find it easy to find all the necessary information on the SA benefit
I know the procedure for applying for a SA benefit	I know the procedure for applying for a SA benefit





Stigma

Alternating scale (AS) (n=301)

Consistent scale (CS) (n=255)

It is better that other people do not know if you receive a social assistance benefit

It is better that other people do not know if you receive a social assistance benefit

If someone receives a social assistance benefit he or she **should not** be ashamed
People I see regularly, would look down on me if I would receive a social assistance benefit

If someone receives social assistance benefit he or she **should** be ashamed
People I see regularly, would look down on me if I would receive a social assistance benefit

When I would receive a social assistance benefit, this would give me the feeling that I am begging

When I would receive a social assistance benefit, this would give me the feeling that I am begging

Society is **understanding** towards people who are receiving a social assistance benefit

Society is **not understanding** towards people who are receiving a social assistance benefit

When you receive a social assistance benefit, you receive negative reactions about it from others

When you receive a social assistance benefit, you receive negative reactions about it from others

If I would receive a social assistance benefit, I **would not be** ashamed

If I would receive social assistance benefit, I **would** be ashamed





Results

Are response biases present?

	INFORMATION	STIGMA
Acquiescence response bias	41,9%	43,7%
Extreme response bias	7,75%	3,8%
Midpoint response bias	8,27%	9,2%
Inconsistent responses	7,57%	15,1%



$$\mathbf{Bias} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{scaledummy} + b_2 * X + E$$

With X = age, gender, hhsiz, n of children, neighbourhood, activity status, educational level, monthly disposable hh income, able to ends meet, financial stress



Results

$$\text{Bias} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{scaledummy} + b_2 * X + E$$

Are response biases present?

INFORMATION	+	-
Acquiescence response bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number of children- French speaking- Financial stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Higher disposable monthly income
Extreme response bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Financial stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Some</i> literacy problems
Midpoint response bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Financial stress: neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Woman
Inconsistent responses	-	-



Results

$$\text{Bias} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{scaledummy} + b_2 * X + E$$

Are response biases present?

STIGMA	+	-
Acquiescence response bias	- Financial stress	- French speaking
Extreme response bias	- Difficult to make ends meet	
Midpoint response bias	- Financial stress: neutral	
Inconsistent responses	- Larger families - <i>a lot</i> of literacy problems - <i>no</i> literacy problems	- Financial stress: neutral - <i>Some</i> literacy problems



Results

$$\text{Bias} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{scaledummy} + b_2 * X + E$$

Does reversing items help to reduce response biases?

INFO	Acquiescence	Extreme	Midpoint	Inconsistent
<u>Alternating scale</u>	-.080 (.046)	-.042 (.065)	-.016 (.489)	.117 (.000)
R square	.160	.064	.083	.075

STIGMA	Acquiescence	Extreme	Midpoint	Inconsistent
<u>Alternating scale</u>	-.012 (.785)	-.014 (.368)	-.014 (.581)	.199 (.000)
R square	.043	.079	.076	.130



Are response biases present?

- Yes
- Response biases related to respondent characteristics
- Role of financial stress

Does reversing items help to reduce response biases?

- Yes, however not significantly
- And at the mere cost of more inconsistent responses
- => Preference for consistent scale



Claiming costs scale

It is a lot of work to apply for the living wage

The procedure for applying for the living wage is difficult

People have to answer a lot of intrusive and personal questions while applying for a living wage

Everything in total, it takes a lot of time to claim a living wage

I know the benefits of the living wage

I know where to go for asking a living wage

I have a fairly good idea whether I am entitled to a living wage or not

I know the procedure for applying for a living wage

People I see regularly, would look down on me if I would receive a living wage

When I would receive a living wage, this would give me the feeling that I'm begging

When you receive a living wage, you receive negative reactions about it from others

If I would receive a living wage, I would be ashamed



Claiming cost measure

<i>Model estimates</i>		Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef. ^a
factor loadings PROCESS COSTS	Time	0.71 ^{***}	0.04	0.76
	Question	0.66 ^{***}	0.04	0.66
	Easy	0.85 ^{***}	0.03	0.89
	Work	0.84 ^{***}	0.03	0.89
factor loadings INFORMATION COSTS	Proc	0.99 ^{***}	0.06	0.81
	Eligible	0.88 ^{***}	0.06	0.78
	Who	0.80 ^{***}	0.06	0.75
	Benefits	0.95 ^{***}	0.06	0.82
factor loadings STIGMA	Lookdown	0.88 ^{***}	0.07	0.76
	Beg	1.02 ^{***}	0.06	0.88
	Negreaction	0.60 ^{***}	0.06	0.62
	Ishame	1.08 ^{***}	0.06	0.87
<i>Measures of model evaluation</i>				
AVE		.63		
Jöreskog's rho		.95		
Cronbach's Alpha		.76		
Model fit		CFI=0.965; RSMEA=.031 (.025-0.038); Chi ² =131.642; df=51; p=0.000; Chi ² /df=2.581		

All items values recoded to 1: "totally agree" ... 5: "totally disagree".

^astandardized regression coefficient

*** p < 0.001



Conclusion

- Response biases present
 - Related to socio-demographic characteristics of respondents
 - Role of financial stress
- Reversing a portion of the items...
 - ... reduces response biases, however not significantly (exception: acquiescence response bias in case of information)
 - ... and at the mere cost of a substantial higher proportion of inconsistent answers
- Consistent formulated claiming costs measure



