



Surveying Children: Consumer Expenditure Individual Diary Test

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Overview

- Consumer Expenditure Diary Survey
- Problem
- Test Idea
- Results
- Conclusions



Consumer Expenditure Diary Survey

- Diary survey is designed to capture expenditures on small, frequently purchased items that are normally difficult for respondents to recall
- Detailed records of all expenses:
 - Food at Home
 - Food Away from Home
 - Clothing
 - Other
- In the survey, respondents are asked to keep track of all their purchases made each day for two consecutive 1-week periods



The Problem

- CE only asks one person in each household (HH) to report expenses for the entire HH
- Known underreporting (compared to ‘gold standard’ data)
- May be due to proxy reporting
 - specifically, underreporting of teenage expenses because of unknown teenage spending by respondents (parents)



The Problem

- 36.3% of teenagers work (Northeastern Univ., 2005)
- Teenagers spend more than \$160 billion dollars per year (TR Research, 2000)
- Teenagers spend an average of \$100 per week (TR Research, 2000)
- Teenage spending is on the rise, increasing 40% from 1999 to 2004 (Window on State Gov't, 2005)



The Idea

- Reduce proxy reporting, give each HH member his/her own diary
- One main diary for Primary Respondent – to record all HH expenditures
- One individual diary for each HH member over 12 to record personal expenses



Past Work

In 2004, Westat did a small (n=60) feasibility test of individual diaries

- Low response rate (41% vs. CED production rate > 75%)
- Each case required a lot of field time/costs
- + Positive debriefing results
 - + Respondents didn't mind completing multiple diaries per HH
- + Significant expenditure reporting seen in individual diaries



Feasibility Test

- Re-test feasibility using Census interviewers
 - experienced with CED collection
 - able to obtain high response rates
- Goal: Complete 100 cases to determine if
 - individual diaries are feasible using Census FRs
 - respondents are willing to complete more than 1 diary per HH
 - teenagers are willing to participate & what they contribute
 - amount of field time required for each case
 - impact on data (secondary interest)



Test Methodology

- 2 week diary period
- 1 diary per HH member over 12
- Identify a “Main Diary Keeper (MDK)”
 - complete the main diary, with HH level expenditures and their personal expenses
 - train other HH members how to complete the diary
- Verbal permission from parent/guardian for HH members under 18 to participate
- \$20 debit card per HH



Results

- Are individual diaries feasible? Yes!
 - 63% response rate
 - Large increase in overall expenditures
 - Higher, but manageable, field costs
 - Positive reactions from interviewers and respondents



The Interviewers Said...

- Many MDKs kept diaries for all CU members
- Saw a lot of “teenage” expenditures like fast food
- Some parents said the diary was great because they could finally know where their kids’ money went



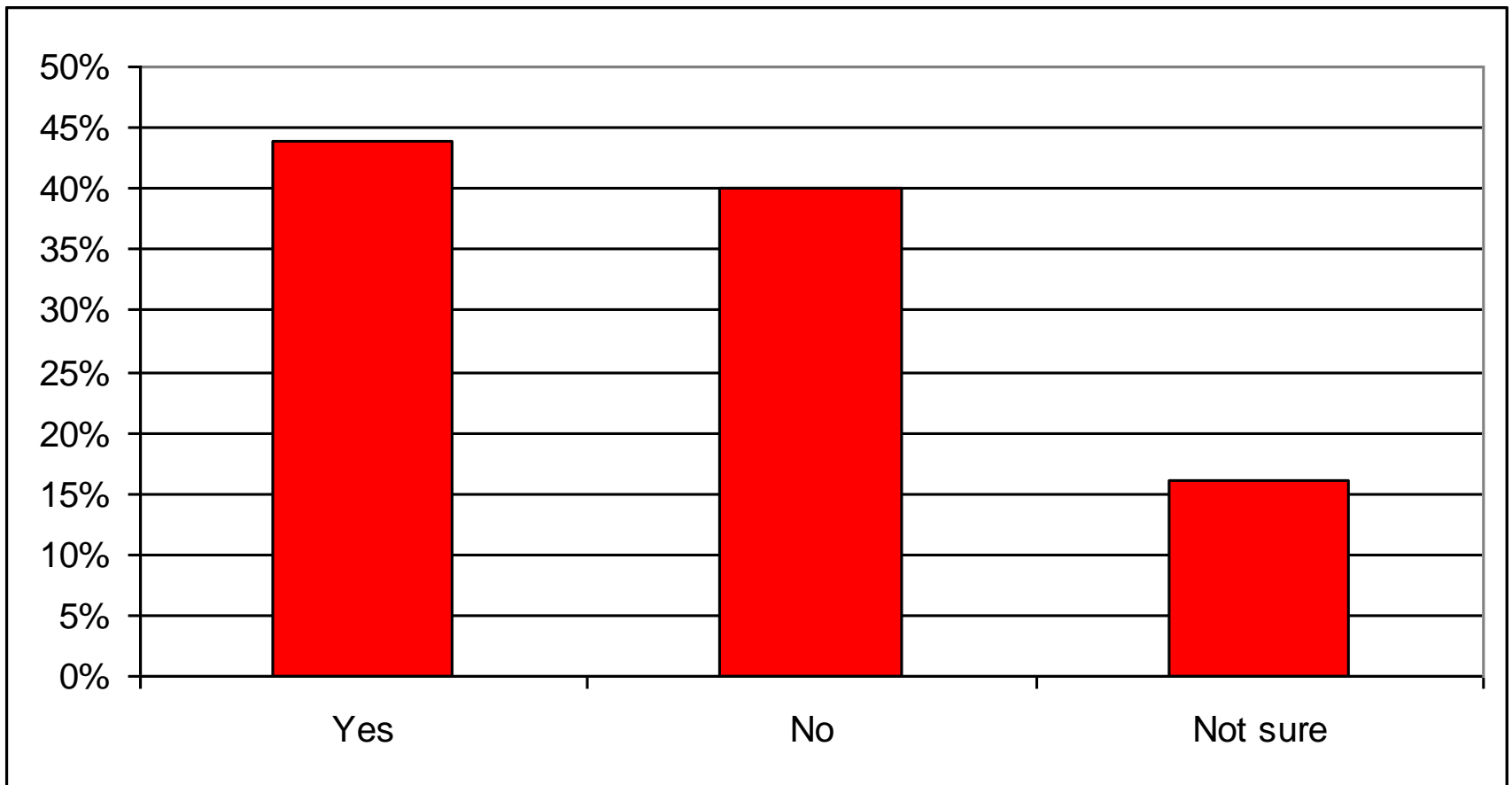
The Interviewers Said...

- The younger teenagers were very eager to participate in the survey.
 - Older teenagers did not want to do it but younger teens were enthusiastic about completing the diary.
 - Some teenagers wanted the debit card but refused to complete the diary.
- When the children didn't complete the diaries, the MDK (mother) made their entries



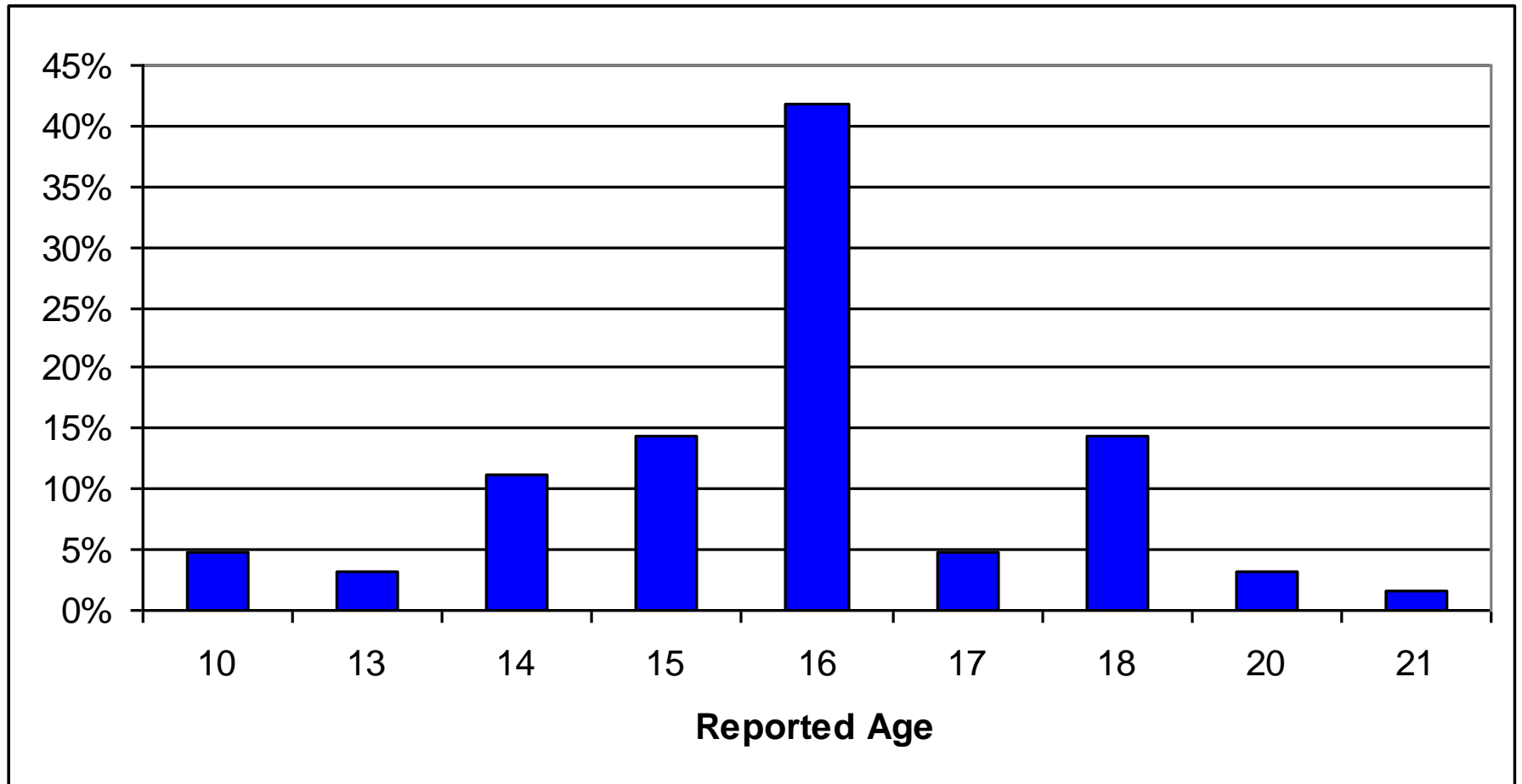
The Respondents Said...

Should we ask 12 year olds to keep a diary?



The Respondents Said...

What age should children be asked to participate?
(n=62)



The Data Said...

Mean Number of Purchases by Section

	Under 18	19-35	36-55	56+
Food at Home	0.27	1.39	1.71	1.11
Food Away from Home	3.27	3.68	3.38	1.22
Clothing	0.20	0.40	0.37	0.21
Other	1.24	3.96	2.95	2.57
Total	4.98	9.43	8.40	5.11



The Data Said...

Expenditure Amount By Section

	Under 18	19-35	36-55	56+
Food at Home	\$1.13	\$8.31	\$8.70	\$7.45
Food Away from Home	\$12.20	\$24.35	\$27.28	\$10.64
Clothing	\$3.90	\$11.12	\$7.55	\$12.68
Other	\$51.88	\$128.63	\$201.84	\$114.93
Total	\$69.10	\$172.41	\$245.36	\$145.68



Personal Privacy

- Though the interviewers expected respondent concerns, privacy within the HH wasn't a problem
- Kids left their diaries with the MDK to turn in at end of week
 - Even teenage diaries with reports of potentially private items, such as cigarettes



Parental Permission

- FRs said no parents were concerned
 - even those that wouldn't give a DOB for the kids
- Some thought the diary was a good idea to keep tally on their kids
- “I finally know what my kids spend their money on!”



Conclusions

- Teenagers were willing to complete a diary
- Significant expenditures were captured from children over 12
- Parents had no concerns about their children participating
- Children had no concerns sharing their purchases with their parents



Questions? Comments?

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References

Previous Research on Individual Diaries

Estimates of Teenage Spending

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