EFFECTS OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS ON ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION AND POVERTY, AND ON SURVEY COSTS: EVIDENCE FROM AN EXPERIMENT IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Discussion
IARIW conference
Lots to like about this paper

• Convinced NSO to experiment with different collection methods

• Provides convincing evidence to substantiate growing call to move from diary to recall
  • Average consumption and poverty are generally similar for recall, PAPI diary, and CAPI diary
  • Except low-monitored PAPI diary gives substantially lower consumption / higher poverty estimates

• I’m sympathetic to overall argument that countries should move from diary to recall
Comments

- Is there strong evidence that diary-keeping surveys give data of worse quality than the status quo?
  - Highly monitored diaries appear to give similar results to recall
  - Status quo in the pacific is “somewhere between low and high-monitored diaries”
  - Diary fatigue could be balanced out by other benefits of (highly monitored) diaries such as more disaggregated information
- Strong argument that recall is a better option anyway
  - Because gives similar results at much lower cost
Comments

• Could tablets for a diary be provided directly to households?
  • Interviewer transcription costs are a key cost of CAPI diaries
  • Tablets are cheap (~$35 at Walmart), small share of even cost of recall surveys ($290 per household urban, $580 rural)
  • Would this make diaries much cheaper than status quo PAPI or experimental CAPI by eliminating data entry costs?
  • Could tablet be made an incentive to keep up the diary?
Comments

• How robust are profiles to different methods of welfare data collection?
  • Are discrepancies between methods higher for different types of households?

• Can alternative welfare indicators be used to informally assess quality of different methods?
  • Presence of kids in school? Labor market outcomes? Share of food consumption? Asset ownership or purchase?
Minor comments

• Choice of poverty line
  • How much does choice of method affect extreme poverty rates?
  • Maybe try $1.00 + half of median to be consistent with WB societal poverty line?
  • Would national poverty rate differ across methods if national poverty line was re-estimated?

• Details
  • How many EAs in experiment?
  • Were standard errors clustered on EA?
Where to go from here?

• What can NSO do to facilitate move from diary to recall?
  • What can be learned from experience of other countries who have made the switch?

• Can these experimental results be used to back out trends in the event of a switch?