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Approach of CAWI – ready, steady, go

Preface

This paper tells about the approach of the web data collection mode in the Finnish LFS. The way has been long and partly rocky. The beginning of the mixed mode LFS has a long time been near, and it still is.

The history is a lesson to learn, and our path to apply the web certainly is that. Finland as a country has often welcomed the cutting edge technology, especially in the section of wireless communication and the use of internet. According the governmental initiatives, the possibility of the internet usage in public affairs has been one of the top priorities. In NSO, we have tried to follow that principle and to offer the web option in surveys – but not at the expense of the quality, for example.

In this presentation, I will shortly describe the path we have walked along, not to forget to mention the situation we are the moment. The ongoing project and its methods will be explained here.

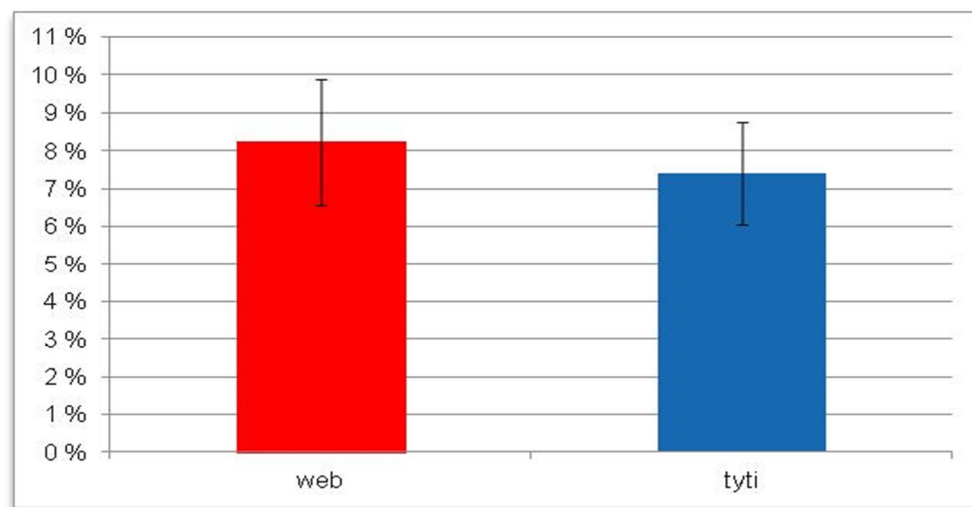
History: web pilot and mixed mode pilot

In 2013, the first time the LFS questionnaire was introduced as a web questionnaire. This only was the web data collection: a test without more than one round. And because of the lack of the mixed mode, the system was quite easy to operate. The main task was to adjust the questionnaire to the web mode and to analyse the data by comparing to the official LFS results. All in all, 30 per cent of the sample responded, of the original sample size of 8,000. It is noted that the answering period was extended and also, interviewers made reminder calls (no interviews).

Figure 1 shows the main result for the unemployment rate for the web pilot project (*web*), comparing to the regular telephone data collection (*tyti*) at the same time. As it can be seen, though there is a difference in estimates between two samples and modes, the confidence interval overlaps. This means that pilot studies are difficult to interpret because of the limited sample size: to be honest, the sample size for unemployed is often restricted in the regular survey also.

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Figure 1: Unemployment rate in a pilot survey and in a regular survey (tyti) with 95% confidence interval, Finnish LFS October 2013.



The first web experiment was naturally insufficient to help to understand the conditions of the mixed mode in the LFS. The next pilot project was soon on the list but the data collection in the mixed mode was put off to the end of 2016 for many reasons.

During 2016 and 2017, CAWI-CATI mixed mode pilot was aimed to apply by three rounds. We started with strictly *sequential mode*: the web was open four days, and if there wasn't completed online questionnaire by the respondent, then the interviews went to the telephone solely. I.e. interviewers took contact after the web option if the web was not used.

However, the pilot was interrupted due to technical problems during the second wave, and overall response rate was low. Despite that, the valuable information on the web answering was achieved.

E.g., did the respondent encounter sort of problems with the web answering was one of the respondent feed-back question. The table 1 shows the classification of problems, if any. The respondent could mention one or more problems.

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Table 1. Problems encountered in web mode, share of all mentioned problems. Finnish LFS mixed mode pilot 2016-2017.

	share
No problem	70.2
Difficulties in choosing categories	11.9
Understanding of questions / categories	4.6
Finding of instructions / additional information	1.0
Log in the questionnaire	5.4
Network connection	3.0
Suitability of questionnaire at the screen	1.8
Other problems	7.3
All in all:	105.2

We can classify issues for the three dimensions, with the respective share:

- LFS content related problems ~17.5%
- Technical problems ~10%
- Other problems ~7%

Thinking same the other way, we got results from the question "What was it like (i.d. web answering)" (Tabel 2):

Table 2: what was web answering like, share of respondents (n=477), Finnish LFS mixed mode pilot 11/2016.

All	Fluent	Some issues	Troubled
100.0	82.0	16.5	1.5

In addition to the closed-ended questions, we gave opportunity to write an open feed-back. We found answers with positive and negative attitudes. With negative attitude the drawback is that there is no an interviewer to explain the survey if the person is guided solely to the web mode. This was one lesson to learn in this pilot.

Due to problems with the content of the survey and partly the negative feed-back, we began to think to start the survey with the telephone option, and during the following waves, to give a web option in the next phase.

Today: 2nd mixed mode pilot and IESS (break in time series)

Living 2019, main reasons for the delay of the introduction of web are technical; building the new system architecture for the mixed mode collection, including the pre-filled data, which is in our mind basic nature of the LFS. Data from the first round should be in use at the later round – this is called as dependent interviewing.

On the other hand, the IESS content renewal means that the new questionnaire is basically necessary. The designing of the IESS questionnaire, although the logic of the LFS under the IESS is still the same as before, demands a pile of work.

The second mixed mode pilot, as we call it, was originally planned to start in February 2019, but it was deferred to May 2019.

At this time in the pilot, the yearly and quarterly variables will be collected, including minimum set of variables (household) in telephone first. No web option is possible at the first round, but after that, interviewees are actively guided to take part in web. The second round will be first offered with the CAWI mode, when the CATI mode as a second option. In the end of this pilot, there will be third round with the same principal.

We have connected the second mixed mode project with the IESS break in times –project. The project compares IESS questionnaire results with the current LFS results. This will be done by taking data from one mode (telephone) in both the IESS pilot and the current LFS results. Then we are able to calculate correction factors backwards. In this paper, however, the methodology of the calculation is not presented. It is possible that we can tackle the mode effect, though we hope that the mode effect does not really exist.

Future mixed mode

When the field work of the pilot will be over in the end of 2019, there is a time to conclude if the model in the pilot for the data collection is appropriate for the new LFS data mixed mode collection.

If our presume is right, it means that the first round of the LFS is the most “heavy” with the ad hoc module and the minimum set of variables (household survey), from the beginning of the 2021 with the IESS content.

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The IESS LFS will be then conducted with the CATI method and interviewers will suggest the further rounds (2.-5.) primarily the web option. However, we believe that possibly the major part of the responding will still be made by CATI mode in the future also.