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**Factors Affecting Response to the HILDA Survey Self-  
Completion Questionnaire**

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## Introduction

One of the five survey instruments used in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey is a self-completion questionnaire (SCQ). This questionnaire consists mainly of questions which are difficult to answer in a time effective manner in a personal interview (e.g., expenditure) or which respondents may feel more comfortable completing on their own without the aid of an interviewer (mainly attitudinal questions). While the response rates to the interviewer-delivered components of the HILDA Survey have generally improved over time, the rate of response to the SCQ has mostly been in decline, but with some evidence that this decline has come to a halt in recent waves. This paper documents the SCQ response rates achieved and strategies used to improve these rates, and examines the factors associated with response.

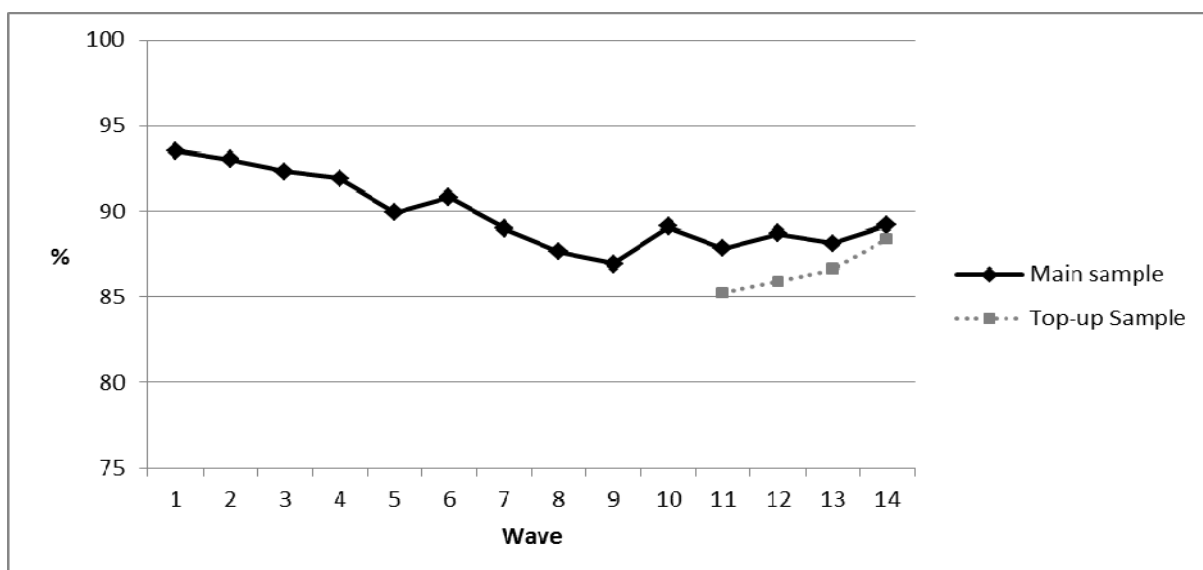
## Response rates

The SCQ response rate is calculated as the percentage of people providing an individual interview (i.e., completed the Person Questionnaire or PQ) who also returned a completed SCQ. Figure 1 shows the SCQ response rates for the main sample (solid line), which began in 2001, and the top-up sample (dotted line) introduced in wave 11 (in 2011).

The SCQ response rate for the main sample ranges from 93.5 per cent in wave 1 to 86.9 per cent in wave 9. From wave 10, the downward trend in response rates has been halted and the rates appear to have stabilised at around 89 per cent.

By comparison, the SCQ response rates for the top-up sample were substantially lower in the initial wave (85.2 per cent) but have improved with each subsequent wave, reaching the highest rate in wave 14 (at 88.4 per cent). Nevertheless, this wave 14 response rate for the top-up sample, while only being 0.8 percentage points lower than the rate recorded for the main sample in wave 14, is substantially lower (3.5 percentage points lower) than the rate achieved in the main sample at the equivalent point in the sample's evolution; that is, wave 4.

*Figure 1: SCQ response rates by wave*



### *The role of telephone interviewers*

In part, the decline in the SCQ response in the main sample over the first nine waves reflects the gradual rise in the proportion of respondents interviewed on the telephone and hence to whom the SCQ had to be mailed (see Table 1). Among this sub-group the SCQ response rate averages around 60% to 65% for the main sample, which, while quite high relative to other postal surveys, is much lower than the rates achieved among respondents interviewed in person. This large difference is expected, and reflects both the tendency for many SCQs to be completed while the interviewer is still in the household and the practice of sending interviewers back to households to pick up SCQs that were unable to be collected at the time of the interview.

Table 1 also shows that the SCQ response rate for respondents interviewed by telephone in the top-up sample, at around 50%, is noticeably lower than the rates typically achieved among telephone respondents in the main sample.

### *The interviewer pick-up rate*

Most respondents (over 90%), however, are interviewed face-to-face, and for these persons what is most critical is the collection of the completed SCQ by the interviewer. As alluded to above, a key feature of the HILDA Survey is that interviewers are required to make at least one return visit to households to collect any completed SCQs that they were unable to collect at the time of interview. This is what ensures response rates in the vicinity of 90%.

As can be seen in Figure 2 (a graph of the last row in Table 1), this pick-up rate for people interviewed in person was very high in wave 1 (82.6%) but fell markedly in the years that followed, perhaps reflecting a growing realization on the part of both respondents and interviewers that non-completion of the SCQ did not affect entitlement to the participation incentive.<sup>1</sup>

There was a particularly sizeable decline in the pick-up rate in wave 5 (of 8 percentage points), which we believe was a function of the increase length of the SCQ (it increased from 16 pages to 20 pages in wave 5) and possibly also the nature of the additional content (in particular, the inclusion of questions on household expenditure).

The decline in the pick-up rate was then substantially reversed in a number of waves, especially waves 6 and 10 coinciding with particular changes in fieldwork practices. Unfortunately, the rise in wave 6 not sustained, and by wave 9 (when responsibility for fieldwork changed to a different provider) the pick-up rate was back to where it was in wave 5. In contrast, the marked rise in wave 10 has been sustained, and by wave 14 the pick-up rate was back to a level that was only exceeded in wave 1.

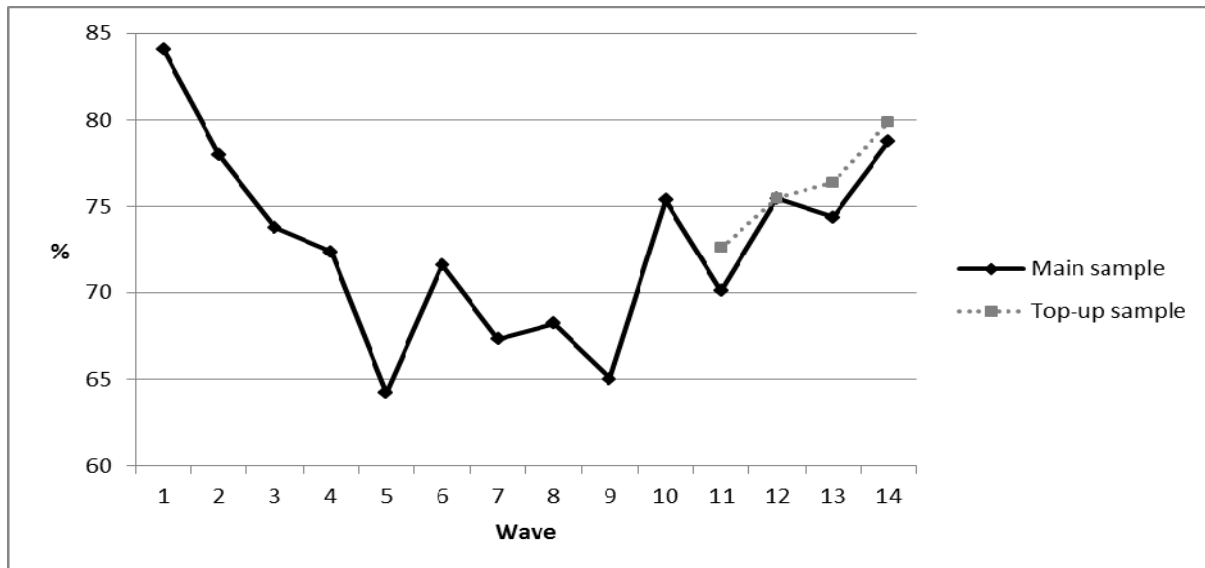
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<sup>1</sup> To encourage response, respondents are paid small amounts each year for their participation. In waves 1 to 4 an amount of either \$20 or \$50 was paid, depending on whether all household members were interviewed. In wave 5 the incentive was changed to \$25 per completed personal interview, with a \$25 bonus paid to households where all household members were interviewed. This payment was increased to \$30 in wave 9 and \$35 in wave 13. In no wave has completion of the SCQ had a bearing on the amount paid, though it was not until wave 9 that this was made explicit to interview respondents.

*Table 1: SCQ response rates by wave*

Wave	Main Sample														Top-Up Sample			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	11	12	13	14
Face-to-face interviews	93.7	93.9	93.5	93.3	91.8	92.7	91.5	90.7	89.3	91.6	90.5	91.4	90.9	92.1	85.7	87.6	88.8	90.6
Phone interviews	52.7	63.3	68.1	68.2	62.3	64.1	62.2	59.7	63.0	62.8	59.6	61.4	59.3	59.7	56.2	50.0	48.6	49.3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>93.0</b>	<b>92.3</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>89.9</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>86.9</b>	<b>89.1</b>	<b>87.8</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>88.1</b>	<b>89.2</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>85.9</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>88.4</b>
Percentage of phone interviews	0.5	3.0	4.6	5.6	6.5	6.9	8.4	10.1	9.1	8.7	8.6	8.9	8.9	9.0	1.8	4.5	5.3	5.3
SCQs picked up as:																		
% of all respondents	82.3	74.6	69.3	67.2	59.0	65.7	61.0	60.6	57.4	67.5	62.8	67.3	66.2	70.4	68.0	69.7	70.1	73.7
% of all persons interviewed face-to-face	82.6	76.7	72.2	71.1	62.9	70.2	66.2	66.8	63.1	73.7	68.6	73.7	72.7	77.2	69.1	72.9	74.1	77.6
% of all persons interviewed face-to-face and given SCQ	84.1	78.0	73.8	72.4	64.2	71.6	67.3	68.2	65.0	75.4	70.1	75.5	74.4	78.8	72.6	75.5	76.4	79.9

*Figure 2: SCQ pick-up rate by face-to-face interviewers (of SCQs given)*



### *The different experience with the top-up sample*

The differences in response rates for the top-up sample in wave 11 compared to wave 1 most likely reflects differences in the role of incentives, in SCQ content, and in interviewer attitudes and behaviour.

- (i) Incentives: As previously noted, in wave 1 all respondents were informed that they would receive a small cash payment (in the form of a cheque posted to the respondent four to six weeks after the individual interview) if they participated in the HILDA Survey. What was not made explicit was that this payment was not conditional on return of a completed SCQ. In wave 11, however, the incentive was distributed as cash immediately after interview, and as such it was obvious to respondents that the return of the SCQ had no bearing on receipt of the incentive payment. The lower return rate among top-up sample members in their first wave of participation may thus reflect the absence of any obvious financial incentive.
- (ii) Content: The wave 11 instrument was 20 pages in length, which compares with 16 pages in wave 1. In addition, and unlike the wave 1 instrument, the wave 11 instrument included questions on household expenditure which we believe are more difficult and time consuming to answer, and as a result the SCQ is less likely to be completed while the interviewer is in the household.
- (iii) Interviewers: The great emphasis on obtaining a high interview response rate in wave 11, together with higher interviewer workloads in that year as a result of the introduction of the top-up sample, may have come at the expense of lower priority tasks, such as promoting the importance of completing the SCQ and returning to collect the form.

### **Strategies to improve response rates**

A range of strategies have been used to help boost the SCQ response rates. These are summarised in Table 2 and each of the strategies are discussed in more detail below.

*Table 2: Fieldwork practices to increase SCQ response rates*

	Wave													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>Training activities</b>														
Give feedback to ivwr on previous wave SCQ RR	NA	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Special focus at training	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y
Interviewer incentive	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Small prizes	iPad prize	Voucher prize
Changing the look of the SCQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Re-design front cover	-	-	-	Shrink wrap, FAQ & pen
<b>Giving / sending out SCQ</b>														
F2F ivwrs give out SCQ before PQ if appropriate	-	-	-	-	Y (very limited)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Phone ivwrs send SCQ with incentive cheque	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y <sup>1</sup>	Y <sup>1</sup>	Y <sup>1</sup>	Y
Phone ivwrs make courtesy call to check SCQ arrived in mail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Respondent incentive	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iPad draw	iPad mini draw	Tablet, multiple draws
<b>Following up the SCQ</b>														
Pick up of SCQ	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Extended F2F follow up	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Telephone reminder calls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>

Notes: 1. This practice was not explicitly mentioned in fieldwork company's report, but we assume the usual procedure was followed.

2. The telephone reminder calls are either to face-to-face interviewers (who would follow up with the respondent) or to respondents directly.

## ***Training activities***

### ***Interviewer feedback***

Starting in wave 4, interviewers have been provided with individualised written feedback on their performance in a range of different areas in the previous wave, including their SCQ response rate and how this compares to the overall rate. This feedback was provided to interviewers prior to or during the training sessions at the start of each wave, and interviewers were encouraged to share with each other methods to improve response.

This feedback was not provided in wave 9 due to the change of fieldwork companies at that time (see Watson, 2010).

### ***Special focus at training sessions***

In recent waves, the interviewer training has included a component focused on the SCQ and the strategies interviewers can adopt to increase their pick-up rates. These strategies include: i) highlighting the importance of the SCQ to the respondent; ii) placing the SCQ with the respondent when setting appointments; iii) encouraging respondents to complete the questionnaire while others in the household are being interviewed; iv) pointing out the prize draws (introduced in wave 12 – see below); and v) picking up the completed questionnaires within a week of completing the individual interview.

### ***Interviewer incentives***

From wave 12 onwards, the interviewers with the best SCQ response rates were recognised and awarded a prize.

## ***Changing the look of the SCQ***

While the look of the SCQ has been relatively stable over time, two specific changes were made to the design to help improve the SCQ response rate. First, in wave 10, the front cover of the SCQ was redesigned to make it more inviting and to make the pick-up date stand out. Second, in wave 14, the SCQ was parcelled in a resealable clear plastic envelope with the pen, an A5-sized card, and the paper envelope. The card outlined why the SCQ was important. This same approach has been used in wave 15.

## ***Giving or sending out the SCQ***

### ***When the SCQs are given to respondents***

In the first four waves, respondents were asked to complete the SCQ after completing the PQ. In wave 5, however, participants in households where multiple interviews were scheduled for a particular day were given the SCQ just prior to the commencement of any interviews, thus enabling persons to complete the SCQ while another household member was being interviewed. This practice was considerably expanded in wave 6, with interviewers encouraged to provide the SCQ to respondents prior to the date of their individual interview. As a result, the likelihood of an interviewer leaving the household with completed SCQs was much higher. This was reflected in a marked jump in the proportion of SCQs that were picked up by interviewers in wave 6 (as shown earlier in Figure 2).

Nevertheless, it was not until wave 9 that we began collecting information on the date the SCQ was completed and so enabling comparisons with the individual interview date. Table 3 shows that while only a minority of SCQs are completed prior to interview, the proportion has gradually been growing, rising from less than 9% in wave 9 to over 23% by wave 14. We



suspect this change has been a significant factor behind the reversal in the SCQ pick-up rate documented in Figure 2.

At the other extreme, about 5 per cent of SCQs are completed more than 21 days after the individual interview. Nearly a third of these are respondents interviewed by telephone and hence to whom the SCQ had to be mailed.

For the top-up sample, we can also see a marked increase in the proportion of respondents who complete the SCQ prior to their PQ interview – from 5.5% in wave 11 to 24.2% in wave 14.

**Table 3: Timing of SCQ completion compared to PQ interview date  
(PQ interview date – SCQ completion date)**

Wave	Main sample						Top-up sample			
	9	10	11	12	13	14	11	12	13	14
More than 7 days before	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.7	2.9	4.1	1.5	2.5	3.1	4.7
1-7 days before	7.1	8.0	6.6	11.3	14.1	19.3	4.0	12.7	15.8	19.3
On the same day	43.1	46.0	41.4	43.2	42.4	41.0	38.8	42.4	43.8	42.9
1-7 days after	32.8	31.2	34.2	28.2	26.8	22.8	42.2	30.7	25.8	21.8
8-14 days after	5.2	4.7	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.9	5.5	4.0	4.3	3.3
15-21 days after	2.3	1.7	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.4
More than 21 days after	5.6	4.4	5.1	4.6	4.8	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.7	4.2
SCQ completion date not recorded	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.9	2.7	1.8	2.3
Total SCQs	11563	12052	11949	12006	11989	12163	3416	3382	3372	3430

#### *Telephone interviewers sending the SCQ with the PQ incentive*

Persons interviewed by telephone are sent both an SCQ and an incentive payment (a bank cheque) in the mail. Prior to wave 10 these mailings occurred independently. From wave 10 onwards they have been combined into the one mailing. Also from wave 10, the telephone interviewers were given a specific script to use to introduce the SCQ to the respondents in a way that was appropriate to the telephone situation. This script states that the interviewer will post out the SCQ, that they will call the respondent in a week to check the package has arrived, and that the package will include the cheque.

#### *Telephone interviewer courtesy calls*

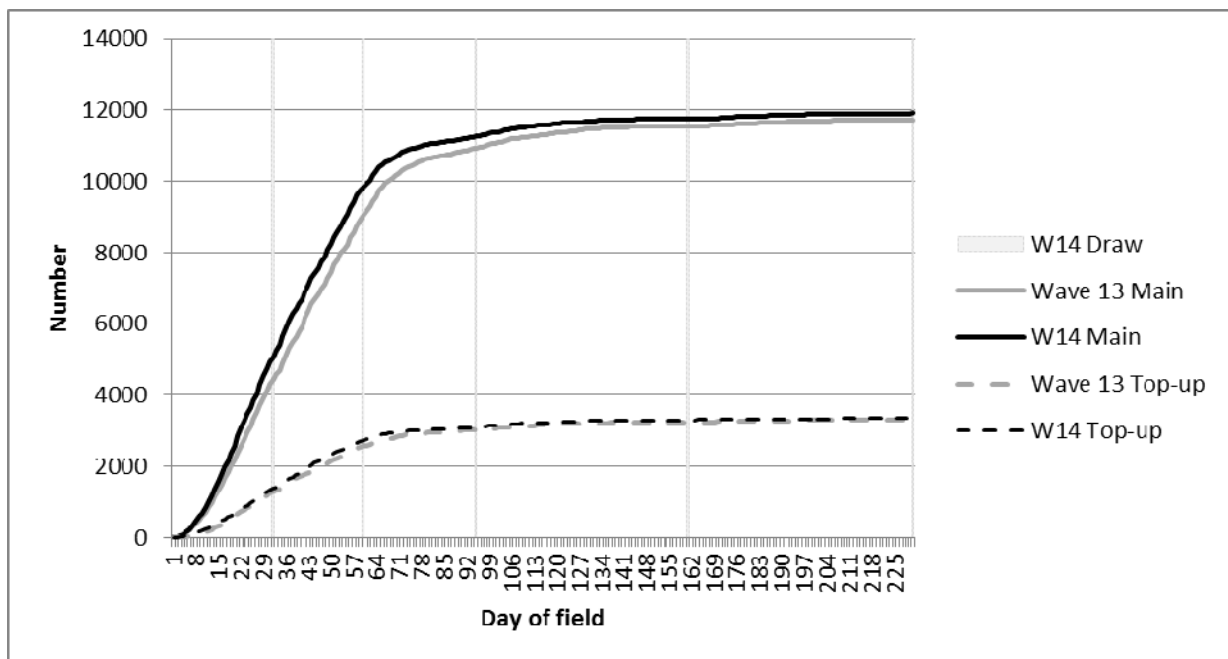
From wave 8, the telephone interviewers make courtesy calls to respondents completing the individual interview by telephone to check the respondent had received the SCQ / cheque package in the mail 7 to 14 days after it was sent. They send out any replacement materials at this stage if required.

#### *Respondent incentives*

Up until wave 12, no specific incentives were offered to the respondent to encourage them to complete the SCQ. In wave 12, we offered respondents the chance to go into a prize draw to win one of five iPads. In wave 13, this was changed to five iPad Minis and in wave 14 the five winning respondents could choose between an iPad Air or a Samsung Galaxy tablet.

In wave 14 a notable difference was made to the structure of these prize draws, with five separate draws held staggered throughout the fieldwork period. This gave the respondents an added incentive to complete and return their SCQs quickly, with all respondents who did not win in one prize draw automatically entered into the next draw. As shown in Figure 3, this modification to the prize draws resulted in more SCQs being returned earlier in the fieldwork period, with the maximum difference occurring just before the second prize draw two months into the fieldwork (there were over 1000 more SCQs returned by the end of second month in wave 14 compared with wave 13). A portion of this increase in the number of SCQs returned was maintained throughout the fieldwork period, yielding higher response rates overall in wave 14 compared to wave 13.

**Figure 3: Cumulative number of SCQs completed by respondents, waves 13 and 14**



### **Following up the SCQ**

#### *Pick up of the SCQ*

The return of the SCQ is followed up in a number of ways. Most importantly, for the interviews conducted face-to-face, the interviewer can pick up the SCQ when they are in the household to interview other household members. As already mentioned, interviewers are also required to return to the household at least one more time after the last interview to pick up any remaining SCQs. This contact with the household usually occurs over a period of up to three weeks. From wave 10, telephone reminder calls are made to interviewers who have not returned to pick up the SCQ from respondents within three weeks of their PQ interview (apart from those respondents who indicated they would return their SCQ by mail). The interviewers then follow up with the respondents as appropriate. These reminder calls to interviewers are likely also to remind interviewers of the importance of picking up SCQs in general.

As mentioned earlier, this pick-up strategy is critical for maintaining high response rates. Where the face-to-face interviewers have not been able to pick up the SCQ, they remind the

household members to return any outstanding SCQs by mail. By comparison, the telephone interviewers are more limited in how they can follow up the SCQ, and the respondent will almost always need to return it by mail.

#### *Extended face-to-face follow up*

Face-to-face interviewers may also return to households later in the fieldwork period (between October and February) to follow up individual interviews. They also take this opportunity to follow up with others in the household who had been interviewed earlier in the wave but who had not yet returned their SCQ.

#### *Telephone reminder calls to respondents*

Telephone reminder calls have been used in all waves to remind respondents with outstanding SCQs to return them. Differences have occurred across the waves as to when and to which respondents these reminder calls were undertaken.

For the first eight waves, the telephone reminder calls were made to households with outstanding SCQs where all of the individual interviews had been completed. This typically occurred in October (after the initial fieldwork has been completed in August and September and just before interviewers were sent back to follow up other households in the area). Face-to-face interviewers would return to households where the respondent asked for their SCQ to be picked up or where the office could not contact the household by telephone to follow up the SCQ.

In wave 9, the telephone reminder calls were made to respondents with outstanding SCQs approximately two weeks after the SCQs were provided. Where a face-to-face interviewer was sent back to follow up individual interviews in an area (between October and February) they were also required to visit some households where the respondent asked for their SCQ to be picked up or where the office could not contact the household by telephone to follow up the SCQ.

From wave 10, the telephone reminder calls are made to respondents with outstanding SCQs who indicated they would return the SCQ in the mail (as mentioned above, for those respondents where the SCQ was to be picked up by the interviewer, the reminder call is made to the interviewer). These calls are scheduled to occur three weeks after the respondent's individual interview.

#### *Most effective strategies*

We have seen marked increases in the SCQ response rates in the main sample in waves 6, 10, 12 and 14. The improvement in the SCQ response rate in wave 6 is almost certainly due to changes in protocols that permitted (indeed, encouraged) interviewers to provide SCQs to sample members prior to completion of an interview. This change resulted in a substantially higher pick-up rate by the interviewer.

We suspect the improvement in the SCQ rate in wave 10 reflects the greater importance placed on picking up the SCQs in that wave (through the greater reinforcement of pick-up procedures in the interviewer training sessions, the redesign of the front cover of the SCQ, and the reminder calls to interviewers to pick up outstanding SCQs). The proportion of SCQs that were picked up by face-to-face interviewers rose from 63% in wave 9 to 74% (see the second last row in Table 1).

The improvement in the SCQ response rate in wave 12 is likely attributable to the introduction of the prize draw associated with the return of the SCQ. This effect was further

enhanced in wave 14, when the timing of the prize draws encouraged early return of the SCQ resulting in an overall improvement in the SCQ response rate.

## **Online SCQ trialled in 2007 Dress Rehearsal**

In 2007 we tested the delivery of an online option for the SCQ. This test was undertaken using the Dress Rehearsal sample, a longitudinal sample that at the time was about one tenth the size of the main sample, and which is used routinely to test questionnaire content and fieldwork procedures. Prior to the start of the fieldwork, half of the households in the Dress Rehearsal sample were systematically allocated to a treatment group and the remainder to a control group.<sup>2</sup> The treatment group were offered the option of completing the SCQ online or on the paper version if they accessed the internet on a reasonably frequent basis for personal use. If they had limited or no access to the internet, they were given the paper version of the SCQ to complete. The control group received the paper version of the SCQ as per the normal practice.

A total of 486 respondents were given the option of either completing the SCQ online or on the paper version. Of these, 247 respondents elected to do the SCQ online, though only 183 actually completed it online.

Offering respondents multiple modes for completing the SCQ should, in theory, increase response rates given survey participants have greater freedom to choose the option most suitable and convenient for them.

The reality, however, was very different, with the inclusion of the online SCQ option actually resulting in lower SCQ response rates than would have been obtained if only a hardcopy questionnaire were available. Table 4 summarises the key finding from our split-sample test. Among the control group – persons in households that were only provided a hard copy SCQ – the SCQ response rate was 84.3%. The comparable response rate for the treatment group -- persons in households that were provided a choice between online completion and hard copy – was 75.4%, or almost 9 percentage points lower (a difference that was statistically significant).

The take-up rate for online completion was also quite low. Of those offered the online option, only 51 per cent opted for it over the traditional hardcopy method. A logistic regression model was used to test if there were any significant differences in the take-up rates by age, sex, marital status, whether the respondent was employed, and whether English was the respondent's first language. The take-up rates only differed with age; people aged 55 and over were less likely to take up the SCQ online option. Of those respondents who chose the online option, 74 per cent actually completed an SCQ.

There is one notable difference in the characteristics of the respondents who complete an SCQ within the treatment and control groups. Employed respondents in the treatment group (where either the hardcopy or online SCQ was offered) were much less likely to return their SCQ than those not employed (70% return rate for those employed vs 84% for those not employed). This effect was absent in the control group (where only the hardcopy SCQs were offered).

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<sup>2</sup> Also during the wave 7 Dress Rehearsal, we tested an alternative mode for the interviewer-delivered questionnaires (computer-assisted personal interviewing or CAPI versus pen-and-paper interviewing or PAPI). The households offered the online SCQ were selected independently of the mode of their interviewer-delivered questionnaires.

**Table 4: Results of Online SCQ Trial, 2007**

	Control group: Provided hardcopy SCQ	Treatment group: Offered choice of response mode
PQ respondents	657	716
Offered online	-	486
Chose online	-	247
Completed online	5 <sup>a</sup>	183
Completed hard copy	549	357
Total SCQ respondents	554	540
SCQ response rate (%)	84.3	75.4

Note: a. There were a small number of households that were allocated to the control group but the interviewer then incorrectly offered respondents the option of completing the SCQ online, resulting in five SCQs being completed online.

We believe there are several reasons why the hardcopy SCQ response rates were superior to those obtained from respondents opting for the online method. First, with online survey administration the likelihood that a survey will be completed immediately (that is, on the day of interview) is markedly reduced. This contrasts with hard copy distribution where respondents, at least those in households where more than one person is being interviewed, are encouraged to complete the SCQ while other household members are being interviewed.

Second, with the online method the role for interviewers in encouraging and facilitating SCQ completion and returns is severely limited. In effect, the only role for the interviewer, when a participant elects to complete the SCQ online, is at the initial point of contact when the offer of online SCQ completion is made. In contrast, hardcopy completion is accompanied by a drop-and-collect distribution method, with interviewers playing a central role in the collection of completed forms. As already noted, interviewers encourage respondents to complete the SCQ while the interviewers is still in the household. If this is not possible, the interviewer is expected to return to the household at a later date (agreed with the respondent) in order to collect the completed form. The setting of such a date provides a target for respondents that many will comply with. In contrast, there is no similar external source of discipline encouraging completion of the form when it is available online.

Third, having a physical copy SCQ in respondents' homes may also act as a more visible reminder to participants that the SCQ still needs to be completed.

Finally, the hardcopy SCQ is more versatile in where it can be completed, whereas the online version requires the respondent to be sitting in front of a computer.

Should we revisit the option of an online SCQ in the future, we will need to reconsider how respondents are invited to complete the SCQ online and how they are followed up. In this particular test, the respondents were given a sheet of paper with the URL, login and password details on it for them to login and complete the SCQ. One reminder email was sent to them if they had not completed it.<sup>3</sup> Now that we are undertaking the individual interviews by computer-assisted personal interviewing, it would be feasible to send respondents an email

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<sup>3</sup> For the individual interviews completed by CAPI, this reminder was sent 7 days after the individual interview. For those completing the individual interview by PAPI, the reminder email was sent several weeks after the individual interview. The SCQ response rates for those completing the individual interview by CAPI was 77% compared 74% for those completing it by PAPI.

invitation to complete the SCQ with an appropriate link that they can simply click on to begin the SCQ. Also, more than one reminder to complete the SCQ is probably required. That said, we would still expect the availability of online completion to lead to a marked reduction in the overall return rate.

## **Characteristics associated with SCQ response**

Are persons who return a completed SCQ systematically different from other interview respondents who do not? To answer this question we estimated a pooled data logistic model predicting SCQ response in the main sample and in the top-up sample. Parameter coefficients and mean marginal effects are reported, along with their standard errors, in Table 5. The estimated standard errors assume SCQ response is correlated across observations on individuals over time and across individuals associated with the same wave 1 household (or with the same wave 11 household for those in the top-up sample).<sup>4</sup>

Focusing first on the results for the main sample, we find that independent of the influence of other variables, the probability of SCQ response has indeed been declining over time. By wave 8 the SCQ response rate is estimated to have fallen by 3.1 percentage points after controlling for observed differences in individuals. There were some improvements in subsequent waves (notably waves 6, 10 and 14), but by the next wave, other things held constant, the SCQ response rate was again lower (in waves 7 and 11).

As expected, we also see that telephone interview respondents are associated with markedly lower SCQ response rates (almost 17 percentage points lower) than otherwise comparable face-to-face interviewees.

Table 5 also reveals that SCQ non-respondents differ from SCQ respondents in many ways. SCQ non-respondents are, other things held constant, more likely to:

- be living in Sydney (compared with a Melbourne resident, residents of Sydney on average have SCQ response rates that are 1.7 percentage points lower);
- be male (though the size of difference is relatively small; just 0.9 of a percentage point);
- have been born overseas in a country where English is not the main language;
- (among immigrants) not speak English well;
- be an Indigenous Australian;
- be unmarried;
- have completed relatively little education;
- rent their home; and
- have a moderate or severe long-term health condition or disability.

Non-response also declines with age until age 60 and thereafter increases – the average response rate of a 60-year old is 4.6 percentage points higher than a 20-year old and 3.6 percentage points higher than an 80-year old. Further, non-response rises with the number of children in the household, and (among the employed) rises with the number of hours worked.

Further, and as we would expect, SCQ non-response is associated with attitudes towards the survey, as assessed by interviewers at the time of the interview. Thus persons assessed as being relatively uncooperative or suspicious, or to have relatively little understanding of the survey, turn out to be far less likely to complete an SCQ.

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<sup>4</sup> This involves linking all individuals in the main sample waves 2 to 14 to a wave 1 household and all individuals in the top-up sample to a wave 11 household.

SCQ non-response is also associated with non-response in the household to the individual interviews – individuals living in households where at least one adult did not provide an individual interview were 6% less likely to return their SCQ compared to individuals in households where everyone completed the individual interview.

Finally, and most obviously, previous wave respondents that did not complete the SCQ at the previous wave are far more likely to not complete the SCQ again, and the magnitude of the effect is huge – 30 percentage points. Indeed, a previous respondent that did not complete a SCQ in the previous wave is 17 percentage points less likely to complete a SCQ in the next wave than a previous wave non-respondent that returns to the study.

The results for the top-up sample are largely consistent with those for the main sample, but we do find two important differences. First, even after controlling for the influences of other variables, the SCQ response for the top-up sample are increasing over time. Second, the SCQ non-respondents in the top-up sample are most likely to be living in Melbourne (compared with Sydney residents, those living in Melbourne have an SCQ response rate that is 3.2 percentage points lower).

### **SCQ weights in Release 14**

In Release 14, available in December 2015, we plan to include, for the first time, cross-sectional weights for respondents completing the SCQ component. This will provide researchers with a consistent means of adjusting for differential non-response to the SCQ. We anticipate including (at least some) longitudinal SCQ weights in Release 15 (available in December 2016).

### **Reference**

Watson, N. (2010), 'The Impact of the Transition to CAPI and a New Fieldwork Provider on the HILDA Survey', HILDA Discussion Paper Series 2/10, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne.

**Table 5: Determinants of SCQ response: Logistic regression model results**

Variable	Main sample (waves 2 to 14)				Top-up sample (waves 12 to 14)			
	Coeff	SE of coeff	MME	SE of MME	Coeff	SE of coeff	MME	SE of MME
<i>Survey design features</i>								
Current ivwr workload (/10 <sup>2</sup> )	-0.202**	0.095	-0.014	0.007	-0.317	0.347	-0.029	0.035
Current ivwr workload sqd (/10 <sup>4</sup> )	0.076**	0.035	0.005	0.002	0.168	0.111	0.015	0.014
Area of residence (base = Major city - Sydney)								
Major city - Melbourne	0.224***	0.058	0.017	0.004	-0.296**	0.136	-0.032	0.017
Major city - Brisbane	0.394***	0.072	0.031	0.006	0.013	0.188	0.001	0.019
Major city - Adelaide	0.253***	0.076	0.021	0.006	0.176	0.23	0.017	0.023
Major city - Perth	0.456***	0.078	0.035	0.006	0.663***	0.221	0.060	0.022
Major city - other	0.557***	0.072	0.042	0.005	0.203	0.195	0.019	0.019
Inner regional	0.345***	0.056	0.025	0.004	0.291*	0.151	0.026	0.015
Outer regional	0.323***	0.065	0.027	0.005	0.443**	0.184	0.043	0.019
Remote and very remote	0.370***	0.117	0.033	0.010	0.908**	0.37	0.094	0.040
Wave (base=Wave 2)								
Wave 3	0.006	0.07	0.000	0.004				
Wave 4	-0.054	0.065	-0.003	0.004				
Wave 5	-0.270***	0.062	-0.016	0.004				
Wave 6	-0.104	0.064	-0.006	0.004				
Wave 7	-0.372***	0.063	-0.023	0.004				
Wave 8	-0.465***	0.062	-0.031	0.005				
Wave 9	-0.434***	0.063	-0.029	0.005				
Wave 10	-0.186***	0.063	-0.011	0.004				
Wave 11	-0.449***	0.063	-0.029	0.005				
Wave 12	-0.346***	0.064	-0.022	0.004				
Wave 13	-0.436***	0.064	-0.028	0.005	0.204*	0.105	0.018	0.018
Wave 14	-0.230***	0.064	-0.014	0.004	0.555***	0.106	0.045	0.034
<i>Interview situation</i>								
Cooperative	0.445***	0.063	0.031	0.004	0.631**	0.256	0.058	0.039
Understanding	0.628***	0.048	0.044	0.003	0.455***	0.138	0.041	0.027
Suspicious	-0.403***	0.076	-0.028	0.005	-0.494**	0.212	-0.045	0.031
PQ length (/10 <sup>2</sup> )	1.362***	0.27	0.095	0.019	4.072***	1.033	0.370	0.287
PQ length squared (/10 <sup>4</sup> )	-1.148***	0.28	-0.080	0.019	-2.942***	1.035	-0.267	0.177
PQ length missing	-0.419***	0.159	-0.032	0.014				
Telephone ivw	-1.606***	0.039	-0.166	0.006	-2.031***	0.136	-0.291	0.137
Partly responding HH last wave	-0.742***	0.041	-0.062	0.004	-0.685***	0.144	-0.073	0.045
<i>Respondent characteristics</i>								
Type of respondent (base=previous wave non-respondent)								
Prev. wave respondent w SCQ last wave	1.479***	0.046	0.132	0.006	1.874***	0.189	0.248	0.326
Prev. wave respondent w/o SCQ last wave	-0.855***	0.05	-0.168	0.010	-0.28	0.197	-0.056	0.039
Child turning 15	1.106***	0.083	0.152	0.009	1.175***	0.294	0.206	0.047
New entrant	0.529***	0.06	0.081	0.008	0.505**	0.22	0.094	0.042
Previous wave overseas	0.839***	0.123	0.129	0.016	0.387	0.586	0.073	0.109
Female	0.136***	0.022	0.009	0.002	0.142**	0.059	0.013	0.011
Age (/10)	-0.785***	0.137	-0.054	0.009	-0.671*	0.397	-0.061	0.054
Age squared (/10 <sup>2</sup> )	0.254***	0.029	0.018	0.002	0.209**	0.082	0.019	0.014
Age cubed (/10 <sup>3</sup> )	-0.021***	0.002	-0.001	0.000	-0.017***	0.005	-0.002	0.001
Country of birth (base=Australia)								
O/S: Main English speaking	0.054	0.054	0.004	0.004	0.045	0.132	0.004	0.012
O/S: Other + speaks English well	-0.375***	0.049	-0.028	0.004	-0.419***	0.123	-0.042	0.023
O/S: Other + does not speak English well	-1.586***	0.093	-0.169	0.014	-1.544***	0.209	-0.201	0.089
Indigenous Australian	-0.417***	0.079	-0.029	0.005	-0.729***	0.17	-0.066	0.041



Variable	Main sample (waves 2 to 14)				Top-up sample (waves 12 to 14)			
	Coeff	SE of coeff	MME	SE of MME	Coeff	SE of coeff	MME	SE of MME
Marital status (base = Married)								
Defacto	-0.129***	0.046	-0.008	0.003	0.167	0.149	0.013	0.015
Separated	-0.307***	0.072	-0.018	0.005	-0.152	0.203	-0.012	0.017
Divorced	-0.141**	0.065	-0.008	0.004	0.168	0.191	0.013	0.016
Widowed	-0.194**	0.083	-0.011	0.005	0.126	0.215	0.010	0.017
Single	-0.182***	0.053	-0.012	0.004	-0.049	0.145	-0.004	0.012
Number of children aged 0-14	-0.167***	0.02	-0.012	0.001	-0.123**	0.061	-0.011	0.008
Two or more adults in household	0.291***	0.045	0.021	0.003	0.498***	0.132	0.049	0.060
Group household	-0.215***	0.083	-0.016	0.006	-0.538*	0.31	-0.056	0.048
Education (base = Year 11 and below)								
Year 12	0.157***	0.037	0.012	0.003	0.077	0.114	0.009	0.012
Certificate	0.153***	0.036	0.011	0.003	0.147	0.106	0.014	0.011
Diploma	0.313***	0.052	0.022	0.004	0.244*	0.146	0.023	0.015
Graduate	0.430***	0.044	0.029	0.003	0.355***	0.119	0.033	0.016
Employment / labour force status (base = Not in labour force)								
Unemployed	-0.186***	0.049	-0.014	0.004	-0.275*	0.148	-0.027	0.021
Usual hours (/10 <sup>2</sup> )	-1.068***	0.072	-0.074	0.005	-0.975***	0.212	-0.089	0.052
Irregular hours	0.017	0.031	0.001	0.002	-0.119	0.111	-0.011	0.012
Renter	-0.220***	0.035	-0.016	0.003	-0.107	0.098	-0.010	0.009
Index of disadvantage (base = Lowest quintile)								
2nd lowest quintile	0.094**	0.045	0.007	0.003	-0.134	0.137	-0.012	0.013
Middle quintile	0.031	0.047	0.002	0.004	-0.213	0.143	-0.020	0.015
2nd highest quintile	0.045	0.05	0.003	0.004	-0.12	0.145	-0.011	0.014
Highest quintile	0.173***	0.051	0.012	0.004	-0.125	0.144	-0.012	0.013
HH moved since last wave	-0.147***	0.029	-0.010	0.002	-0.317***	0.102	-0.029	0.019
Low life satisfaction	-0.168***	0.031	-0.012	0.002	-0.211**	0.098	-0.019	0.014
Long term health condition (base=no or mild condition)								
Moderate	-0.262***	0.034	-0.018	0.002	-0.161	0.11	-0.015	0.013
Severe	-0.632***	0.069	-0.044	0.005	-0.427*	0.223	-0.039	0.027
Constant term	0.958***	0.247			-0.832	0.755		
Pseudo log-likelihood	-41,864				-3302			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.263				0.259			
N observed	169,963				11,609			
N individuals	22,612				2,525			

Notes: 1. SE=Standard error. MME=mean marginal effect.

2. Significance of the coefficients shown as \* for p<0.10, \*\* for p<0.05, and \*\*\* for p<0.01.