

Issues in Changing the Measurement Methodology for the Quarterly Tax Survey

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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

Introduction

- National Research Council (2007) *State and Local Government Statistics at a Crossroads*
- 21 recommendations
- One specifically for Qtax

Three Components of QTax

- F71- sample which collects local government property tax data
- F72- census of state governments to obtain all state taxes
- F73- sample which collects local government non-property tax
 - Non-probability panel of 111 local governments
 - Moving to a probability sample
 - Currently collects 3 categories of tax data
 - Adding 8 more categories

Methods

- 2 rounds of cognitive interviews
- Research questions

Methods (cont'd)

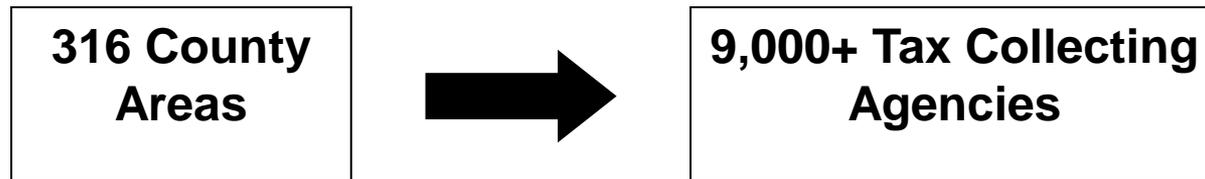
- Typical respondents: town managers, staff accountants, treasurers, directors of finance
- Non-directive questions to find out interpretation of terms, data retrieval processes

Results: Respondents Didn't Follow Instructions

- Directing respondents to include taxes collected on behalf of another government and exclude taxes collected on their behalf didn't work.

Results: Sample Design

- Sample of tax collectors for local non-property taxes
 - Changed from a non-probability panel to a probability sample
 - Did not have a national listing of all local tax collectors, so we sampled county-areas
 - Each local tax collecting agency within a selected county area was brought into the sample



- Private collection agencies/companies

Results: Problems with Comprehension

- “Revenue sharing”: respondents thought of long-defunct federal program
- Subtle differences between “licenses,” “taxes,” and “fees”

Results: Problems with Comprehension (Cont.)

- We have 'transient occupancy taxes' not hotel/motel taxes. Are those the same thing?
- Most of our revenues come from property taxes. Why aren't they on this form?

Results: Problems with Comprehension (Cont.)

- Respondents missed key component of questionnaire due to formatting, layout

Results: Problems with Retrieval and Reporting

- Alcohol and tobacco sales taxes not available separately from general sales taxes
- Licenses/fees: compiling this requires multiple departments, multiple reports

Results: Problems with Reporting

- Franchise fees: report in sales taxes or “other non-property taxes”?

Implications and Next Steps

- Imposers vs. collectors
- Language of questionnaire updated
- Statement of purpose, cover letter
- Respondents want to be complete
- Old panel and questionnaire processed simultaneously with new sample and questionnaire

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