

# Effects of fieldwork delay on estimates of subjective wellbeing in the 4<sup>th</sup> European Quality of Life Survey

**Tsjangis van Oostrom, Eszter Sandor & Gijs van Houten**  
**Eurofound**

2017 International Workshop on Comparative Survey Design and Implementation  
Mannheim, 16 March 2017

# Contents

- Research questions
- Seasonality and wellbeing
- The 4<sup>th</sup> European Quality of Life Survey
- Sample composition: variation in refusal rates
- Estimates of subjective well being
- Key findings and discussion

# Research questions

- To what extent do fieldwork delays affect estimates of subjective wellbeing
  - Due to variation in the sample composition?
  - Due to seasonality effects on subjective wellbeing?

# Seasonality and wellbeing

- Previous research on subjective wellbeing suggest a seasonal effect in measures of subjective wellbeing, notably happiness and life satisfaction
  - Due to the weather
  - Holidays such as Christmas
  - Some other studies did not find significant effects.
- Possible effect of wellbeing on likelihood of refusal

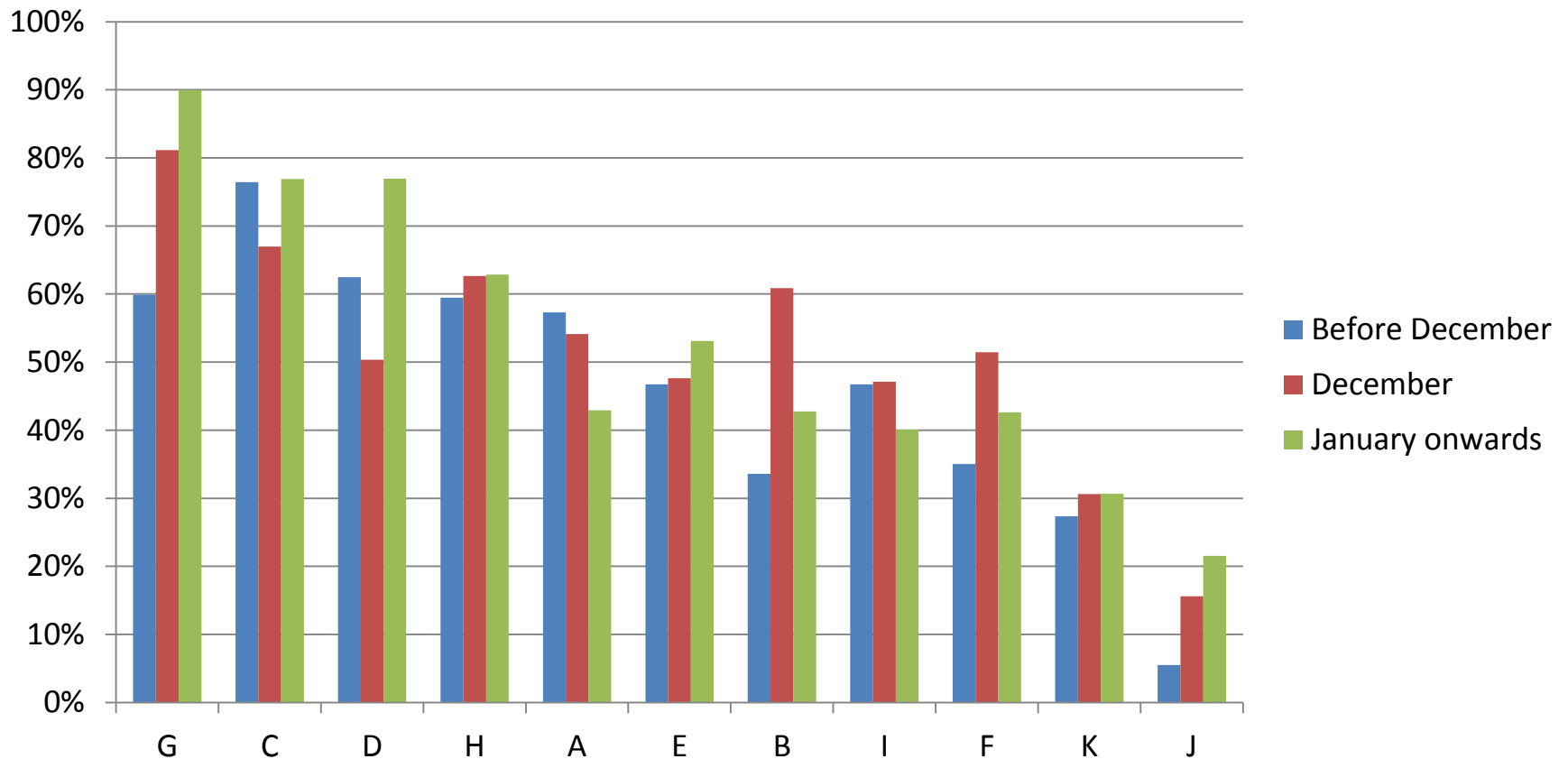
# 4<sup>th</sup> European Quality of Life Survey

Rounds	2003, 2007, 2011 , 2016
	<b>4<sup>th</sup> EQLS (2016):</b>
Target population	Resident population 18+ year old, living in private households, EU28 and 5 Candidate Countries: AL, ME, MK, RS, TR
Fieldwork period	September-December 2016
Sample size	Minimum N=1000, an increase in 4 EU countries (DE, UK, FR, IT) and TR
Sampling type	Random probability sampling: name-based and address registers Random route sampling with enumeration where above not available
Sample stratification	By region and urbanisation level (except MT)
Interview type	F2F - CAPI Self-administered – web add-on in: DE, UK, PL, SI

# Fieldwork delays

Country	Before December	December	January onwards	Total
A	503	20	658	1181
B	862	105	75	1042
C	542	649	440	1631
D	936	319	766	2021
E	719	167	133	1019
F	729	113	163	1005
G	1006	30	60	1096
H	767	129	114	1010
I	685	241	274	1200
J	615	306	130	1051
K	655	115	249	1019
Other 17	15589	1934	37	17560
<b>Total</b>	<b>23608</b>	<b>4128</b>	<b>3099</b>	<b>30835</b>

## Sample composition: variation in refusal rates



# Estimates of subjective wellbeing

Country	Period	Life Satisfaction	Satisfaction with family life	Happiness
A	December			
	January onwards			
B	December	-		-
	January onwards			
C	December			
	January onwards		-	
D	December		-	
	January onwards		-	-
E	December			
	January onwards			
F	December			
	January onwards	+		+
G	December			-
	January onwards		-	
H	December			
	January onwards			
I	December			
	January onwards	-		-
J	December			
	January onwards			
K	December			+
	January onwards			



# Ranking countries on subjective wellbeing

Life satisfaction			Satisfaction with family life			Happiness		
Before December	Including December	Total	Before December	Including December	Total	Before December	Including December	Total
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	J
H	H	H	C	K	F	H	H	H
I	C	C	K	C	K	I	I	I
C	I	I	B	F	B	C	C	C
B	K	B	F	B	C	K	K	K
K	B	K	I	I	I	B	B	B
D	D	D	H	H	H	D	F	F
F	F	F	G	G	G	F	D	D
G	G	G	D	D	D	G	G	G

# Key findings

- No systematic seasonal effect on the rate of refusals
  - Patterns differ across countries
- Small seasonal effects on estimates of subjective wellbeing
  - No significant effects in 4 countries, some significant negative effects in 5 countries, some significant positive effects in 2 countries
  - No clear support for 'Holiday hypothesis', weak support for 'weather hypothesis'
- Even though seasonality effects are fairly small they can result in serious errors in descriptive and analytical results

# Discussion

- Need for further analysis
  - Further analyse effects of sample composition
  - Analyse temporal distribution of other types of variables
- Explore possibilities to correct for seasonality in data analysis
- Need to keep tighter control on fieldwork timing in future surveys

# Questions or suggestions?

[www.eurofound.europa.eu](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu)

[tvo@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:tvo@eurofound.europa.eu)

[esa@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:esa@eurofound.europa.eu)

[gvh@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:gvh@eurofound.europa.eu)