

Title: Labour Force Survey Response - January 2013

Originator: [REDACTED]

Response

2.1 A multitude of factors have been used to explain the downward trend in response rates. Some of these factors include:

- Falling contact rates attributed to: rise in single person households; rise in households where all adults are in work; rise in controlled access to properties;
- Increasing interview lengths;
- Survey overload: the salience of a survey topic has become a more important determinant of response; Yes, but perhaps wider than this? Not just surveys, but general context of the public feeling more frequently bombarded for requests for their data, both to help in surveys/market research and by commercial organisations collecting information on their spending and lifestyle (loyalty cards, for example and the need to 'register' with websites in order to buy any product). Technological devlpts have made it much easier for commercial organisations to collect data on people and they see us as similar to them, rather than as official collectors of statistics.
- External shocks such as data losses which has impacted on trust in statistics. Evidence has suggested that such shocks usually have a short -term impact on response, albeit, when they return to trend, it will be at a marginally lower level;
- Non-participation as a means of expressing anti-government sentiments;
- General reduction in public's willingness to perform civic duty as expressed by survey participation; And, related to this, the rise in proportion of population who are migrants (eg Census results showing that fewer than half of people in London identify themselves as 'white' and that almost one in eight people in E&W was born elsewhere) may affect survey response: it is harder to communicate with non-English speaking migrants about what we want them to do and more diverse and mobile communities may contribute to the lack of 'civic mindedness' about taking part in surveys. It was striking in our cognitive interviewing that a couple of non-English students (with some English, but not fluent) found references to the survey results affecting their local area or their community alienating, because they said they aren't from the local area or don't belong to the local community. In the same way that cultural homogeneity is widely believed to be why Scandinavian countries have traditionally accepted such high tax rates, perhaps 'doing one's bit' for the local community also relies on that community being relatively cohesive?
- Reduced budgets which result in less appetite to administer costly re-issue exercises.
- Other short term "events" affecting contact and refusal rates such as bad weather, major events such as the Olympics.

2.3 The impact of these factors on LFS response is largely unknown, for example, it is difficult to estimate the impact of offering web as an alternative mode of

collection. There are **few/no?** examples presently in the UK where a true mixed mode collection is employed on Government surveys. But some anecdotal suggestion (in that recent complaint to Glen Watson and via some responses to the surveyfeedback mailbox) that some people who aren't willing to take part in a F2F or phone survey would cooperate if a postal or online option were available. Hard to explain to respondents why those were available for Census but aren't for social surveys?

	Achieving Cooperation Training (ACT) for all interviewers. This refusal training developed by ONS in conjunction with Bob Groves, Michigan. It has now extended to include several 'refresher' modules for use at regular interviewer Group Meetings.
	Achieving Contact Effectively (ACE) - training module delivered to all Fieldwork groups designed to promote better patterns of working with the aim of improving contact rates.
Survey materials	Review and refresh survey materials on an ongoing basis. Redesigned v including dedicated link for survey respondents on ONS front page. Test alternative methods for gaining access to gated communities; testing new letter with emphasis on plainer language to meet needs of respondents with levels of literacy in English.
Interviewer contracts	Improvements in T&Cs following on from their change in status to Civil Service Harmonisation of T&Cs. But results of 2011 Interviewer Attitudes Survey increased reluctance to work at weekends and evenings compared with ago.

Census Non-Response Link Study (CNRLS) - [REDACTED] mentioned that he could look also at the mode of Census response of households responding and not responding to the LFS, to see whether there was a differential preference for paper/online among the different groups and (presumably) whether follow-up by a Census collector was required.

Charts you asked for, updated to December 2012. I will ask [REDACTED] to check these on Monday morning.

I have only included LCF and FRS up to November 2012, as these are not yet 90% complete. HAS and LOS are between 90 and 99% complete at present. LCF and FRS are very nearly at 90% for December. FRS looks like it will be OK, but it looks like a very bad month for LCF so far with only just 40% overall response (less than 38% full response). The contact rate was poor (which might not be surprising with less than 90% complete), but refusals are by far the worst they've been all year at nearly 42%.

For LFS, what you suggested does seem to be true: the refusal rate for December was actually slightly lower for W1 but higher for all waves, so there must have been a lot of refusals at W2+.

The spreadsheets these are based on are here  for you to have a look.

Chart 1 LFS main quarterly survey, wave 1 response, contact and refusal rate, 1993 to present.

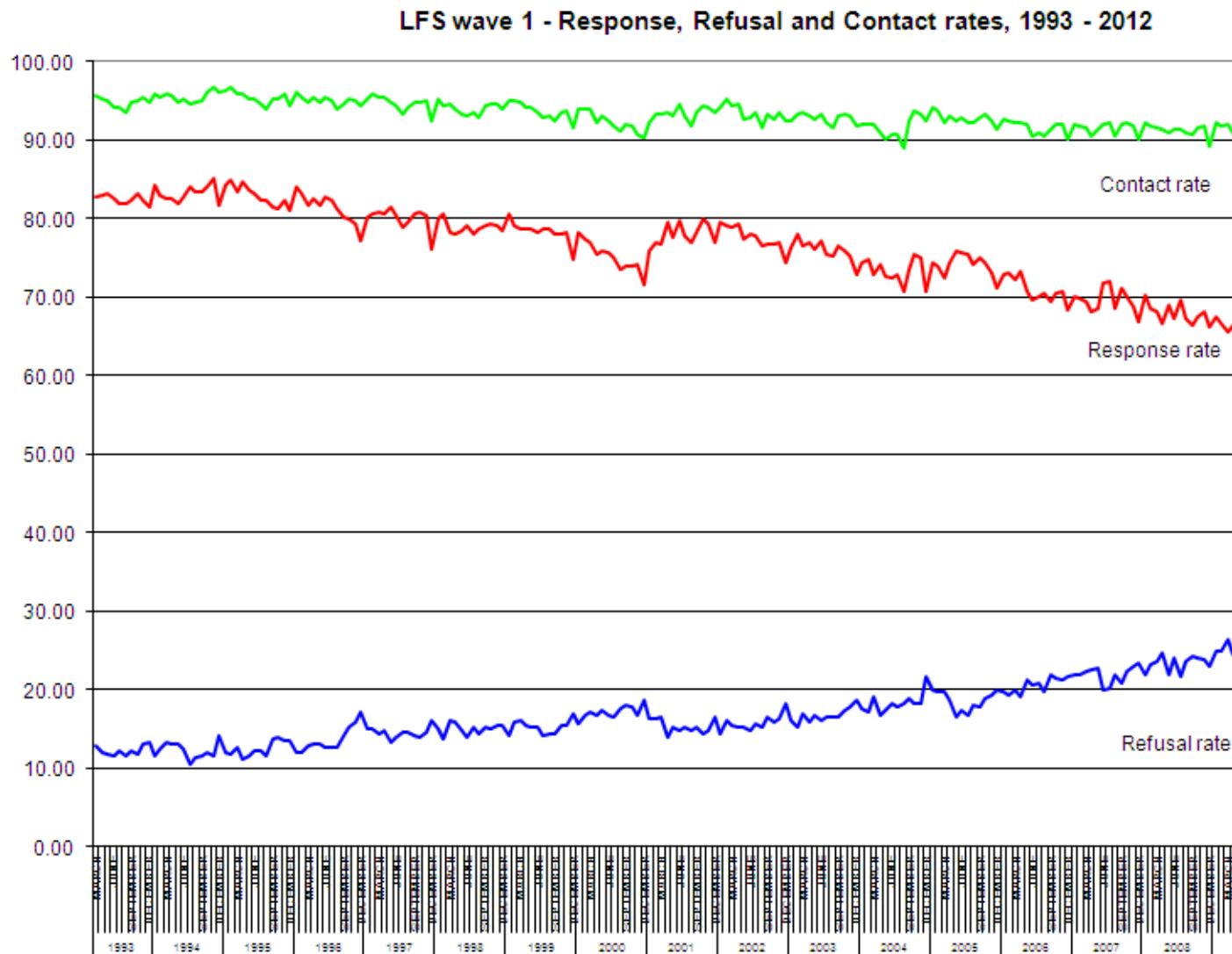
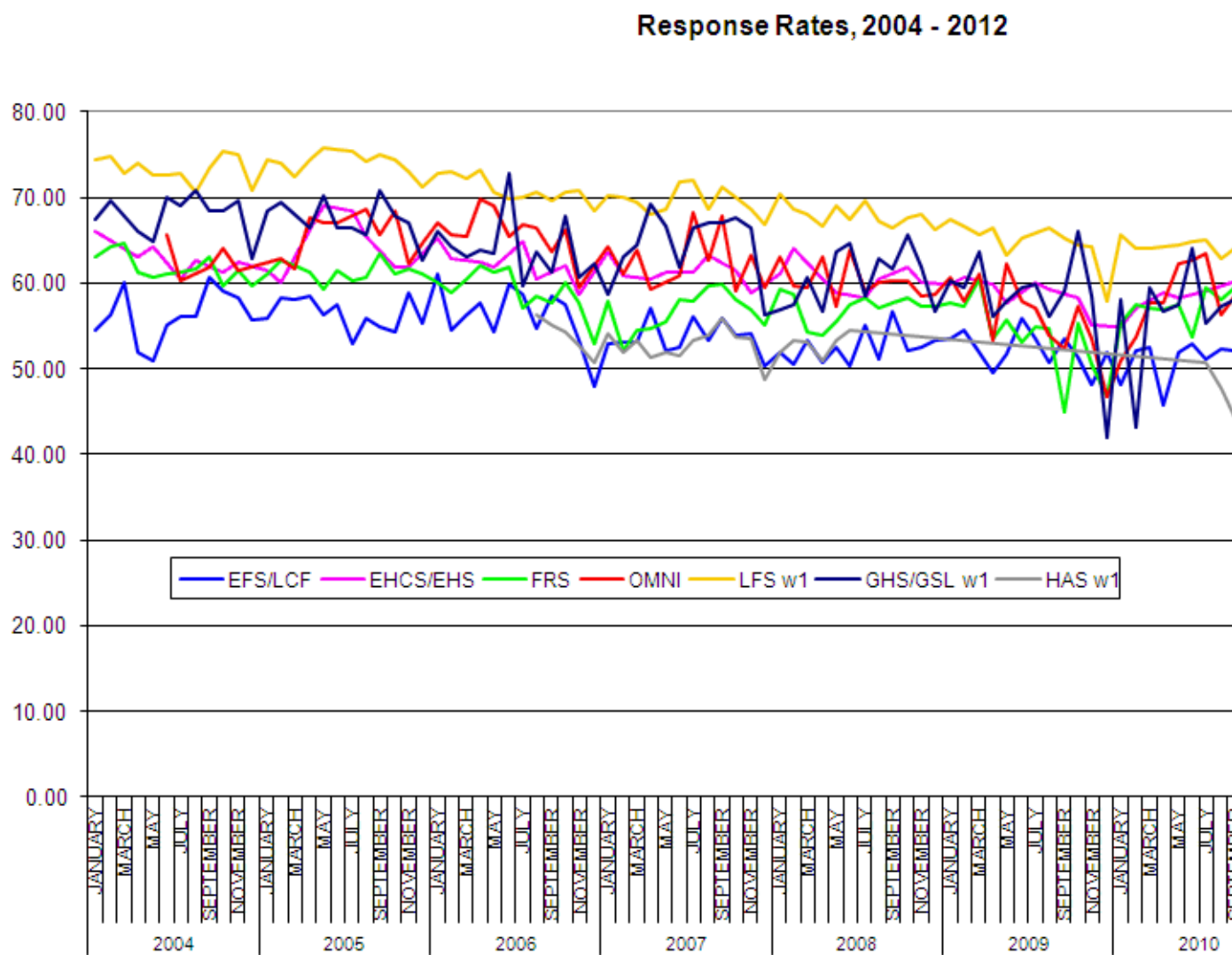
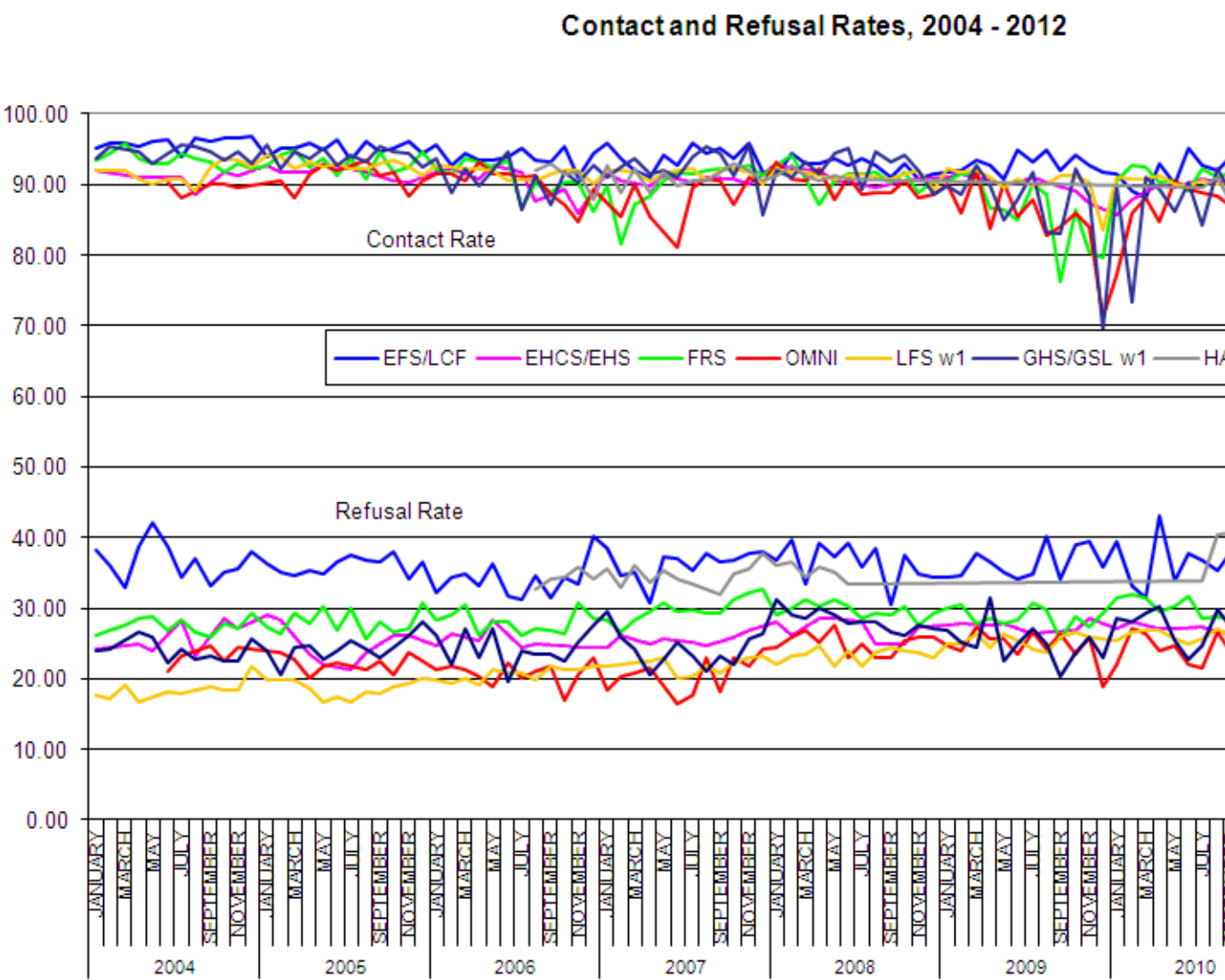


Chart 2: Household survey response, 2004 - present





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