

Getting more out of a survey

The 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey

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Outline

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- Planning for analysis and reporting
- Integration of ALL with other data
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What is ALL?

- The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) is an international survey involving 12 OECD countries (including New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the USA).
- New Zealand undertook ALL in 2006. The National Research Bureau did the data collection for the Ministry of Education.
- ALL had a nationally representative household-based sample of adults aged 16-65.
- ALL collected a wide range of socio-demographic and educational information.
- ALL measured adult skill levels in literacy, numeracy and problem solving.

Rationales for an adult skills survey

- Concerns about skill barriers to economic growth, productivity, and rates of technological change.
- Concerns about the role of skills in creating social inequities.
- Interest in the socio-demographic factors associated with different skill levels.
- Findings from ALL supported the development of the 2008 *Skills Strategy* and the *Literacy, Language, and Numeracy Action Plan*.

Stakeholders in information about adult skills

- Government policy makers and policy implementers in the work and skills domains
- Industry training organisations
- Tertiary education institutions – particularly those providing vocational training
- Peak bodies representing industry groups, tertiary education institutions etc
- Providers of workplace-based education and training (either employers themselves or separate providers)
- Providers of community-based literacy and numeracy programmes
- Academics interested in adult education, training and skills

Planning for analysis and reporting

- Original project plan's provision for resourcing and timing for reporting
- Stakeholders
- Aligning reporting to needs and interests of differing stakeholders
- Dedicated internal staff for reporting and analysis

Integration of ALL data with other data

- Using geocodes in the dataset to integrate with New Zealand Deprivation Index and Stats NZ urban/rural classification
- Using National Student Number to integrate the survey dataset with school and tertiary education administrative data.

Health literacy

- The ALL survey provided the option of scaling a subset of the test items to produce a health literacy score.
- The Ministry of Health wanted to take up this option and has published a report with a Māori/non-Māori comparison focus.

Making the dataset available to researchers

- After the Ministry's main publication programme was complete, we described and documented the dataset and made it available for researchers.
- We were concerned to ensure that the dataset is well understood and used validly.
- Multiple users and multiple types of use of the dataset.

What worked well

- Planning for reporting in advance
- Series of small, early release reports – rather than one big report
- High level of interest in results from stakeholders
- Analysis carried out across Ministry teams, with regular meetings to discuss work and issues
- Making data available to other agencies and researchers
- Nearly 40 outputs produced to date – including ones we didn't originally plan for

What was more difficult

- Coordinating release of initial results
- Not always able to deliver results as fast as audiences would like
- Documenting the data set took more time than anticipated
- Supporting users to understand the design and use of the data set
- Several areas of the background questionnaire yet to be analysed

Summary

- Planning for reporting at the start essential
- Resources need to be allocated – money and people
- Providing small, early results useful
- Need to engage audiences about the benefits of the information
- In-depth analysis takes time and users need support
- Not all uses will be predicted at the start

Further information

- Contact david.earle@minedu.govt.nz or paul.satherley@minedu.govt.nz
- See www.educationcounts.govt.nz for ALL publications.