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**ITC 4C Wave 8 Re-contact Web Survey
Final Technical Report**

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ITC Four Country Wave 8 Re-contact Web Survey Summary

English Web Survey in Field: July 13th to October 16th, 2010

Disposition	Canada	USA	UK	Australia	Total
Complete by web	490 (35%)	372 (23%)	396 (22%)	475 (27%)	1733 (26%)
Web assisted complete	35 (3%)	26 (2%)	1 (<1%)	0	62 (1%)
Partial	29 (2%)	31 (2%)	91 (5%)	111 (6%)	262 (4%)
Refusal of web	6	9	7	9	31 (<1%)
Email bounce back	30 (2%)	23 (1%)	45 (3%)	188 (11%)	286 (4%)
Request to phone	43 (3%)	88 (5%)	3 (<1%)	12 (1%)	146 (2%)
Deceased/not eligible	4	2	0	0	6 (<1%)
No attempt by web	776 (55%)	1090 (67%)	1275 (70%)	977 (55%)	4118 (62%)
Total number of records	1407 (100%)	1632 (100%)	1811 (100%)	1763 (100%)	6613 (100%)

French Web Survey in Field: September 24th to October 16th, 2010

Disposition	Canada
Complete by web	102 (27%)
Web assisted complete	0
Partial	13 (3%)
Refusal of web	0
Email bounce back	23 (6%)
Request to phone	0
Deceased/not eligible	1
No attempt by web	244 (64%)
Total number of records	383 (100%)

Section Two: Methodology

The ITC Four Country Wave 8 Recontact Survey employed a mixed mode approach, combining online with telephone data collection. An initial three-week period of web-only data collection was offered to all respondents by email invitation and/or by mailed letter. Email invitations preceded receipt of the prepaid incentive for all respondents in all countries. Letters arrived within a week of the initial email notice.

The email invitation allowed respondents to simply click into the web survey directly through a personalized link embedded in the message. For participants without email information, the log-in ID and password were included in the mailed letter, along with instructions about how to access the online survey. During the initial web survey period, respondents who contacted any call centre with a request for a preference of telephone interview were given special appointments to complete the survey. The English survey was launched as a separate online instrument from the French survey, given that the language preference of respondents was known from previous contacts.

The web form of the survey instrument was created to replicate as closely as possible the data collection process by telephone. The missing data issue that is a problem with a self-administered survey had to be addressed in the web version. Using a combination of mandatory response coding and pop-up prompts for “don’t know” and “skip to next question” provided the possibility of capturing data more completely. Figure 1 below shows the typical screen image of a question. In order to proceed to the next web page, the respondent must make a selection from the list of options. If none is chosen, when “next” is clicked, as Figure 2 displays, a prompt appears on the screen to provide additional response options and indicate that a choice is needed. This missing data technical solution was available on every screen of the questionnaire.

Figure 1: Web Survey Screen Image



Figure 2: Web Survey Missing Data Prompt



The use of the missing data prompt may have caused some random error in the survey functioning. Since the web form is self-administered, it is impossible to know what actions and key strokes respondents have attempted. In some cases, the survey may have been

interrupted by the use of this prompt. In months of testing prior to the launch, this problem was never experienced. However, once the survey was in field, some respondents notified the SRC of technical difficulties while completing the questionnaire. The prompt may have been partially responsible for some of these issues. Additionally, actions by the respondent that are not sanctioned by the program, such as using the “backspace” key to go back a screen, may also have caused technical problems. Although respondents were instructed about how best to complete the survey online, there is no assurance that these instructions were read and/or followed in a self-administered setting.

Section Three: Survey Fieldwork

Overview

The following table displays the chronology of the web survey launch.

ITC 4C WAVE 8 Survey Timeline		
Task	English survey Date	French survey Date
Protocol Development		
Three-firm coordination of record transfers	May 23, 2010	Sept 29, 2010
Web dispositions developed	May, 2010	May, 2010
Survey Development		
Re-contact survey developed, sent to firms	Ongoing from Dec 2009 to May 2010	Translated June to Aug, 2010
C8 Web Programming	Dec 2009 to June 2010	Provided in three segments from Aug 11, to early Sept, 2010
C8 Web Survey - testing/checks	April 29 to July 12, 2010	Sept 8 to 23, 2010
Other documents		
Re-contact letters/emails	May 21, 2010 to SRC	Sept 20, 2010 to SRC
Ethics		
UW Application	April 23, 2010	same
Fieldwork		
Web survey on-line participation begins – email invitations sent Day 1	July 13 – Oct 16, 2010	Sept 24 – Oct 16, 2010
Web reminder emails	Days 3, 8, 10 and 15	Days 4, 8, and 13
Web non-completes to CATI pool	Ongoing after Day 21	Oct 11 and Oct 18
Data verification interviews conducted	Dec 2010 and Jan 2011	Dec 15, 2010
Data		
Delivery to DMC	Jan 2011	same

Section Four: Survey Conduct

The chronology of the survey, and timing of tasks and goals, as presented in Section Three, requires some elaboration on how much time and resources were needed to achieve these tasks. In this section, the details about each component of the web survey are explained.

Questionnaire

The programmer had a previous version to use as a basis for creating the Wave 8 survey, and this was potentially a time-saver, if the questionnaire did not change much from the previous wave. However, this was not the case. New sections were added – cessation help, the FDA questions and the web bonus questions for web experience – as well as a comprehensive approach to deal with non-response in the self-administered environment, which had to be applied to every page of the questionnaire (700+ programmed web pages). The visual look and functionality of the survey process began in April but was not finalized until mid-June.

Additionally, the U.S. respondents had to be routed one of two possible ways through the survey, based on the last contact with each one (W7 or W7.5), which added considerable complexity to the questionnaire. Small but not insignificant changes continued to be given to the programmer until just prior to launch. The initial estimate of 25 days of programming time was exceeded very early in the pre-launch stage. In reality, the programmer spent an average of at least 50% of his work time for 9 months creating the English and French versions of the survey, which represents over 100 days of programming.

Sample

Due to possible differences in treatment of partial and refusal cases from the previous waves between two call centres, some time was required for the PMG, SMG and survey firms to determine who was eligible and should be re-contacted, and to ensure standardization across the sample from Wave 7 and 7.5, which had been collected by two different survey firms (SRDAR and RMR).

The fields required for reading in previous responses, the Smart Data, proved problematic from the start, given our inexperience with so many fields needed, and exactly what the content of those fields should be. For example: date fields were corrupted by viewing the sample in Excel; certain flag variables could not be empty for any individual without causing a fatal crash in the program, since the route for the respondent could not be known; extra fields had to be added for the Wave 7.5 respondents.

Testing the Survey

SRC provided trained interviewers to “prac” the survey alongside the staff time provided by SMG. Given the considerable number of possible routes through the survey, with four

countries, various smoking status possibilities, two sub-routes for U.S. respondents, an additional randomization to the web experience, and other groupings, testing was a complex process of feedback from SRC to SMG and the programmer. Changes to the questionnaire were still being made while testing was underway, further complicating the process. The complexity is best expressed in labour spent: in total, SRC staff logged 366 hours of testing, almost 100 hours of supervision and collation of testing results, as well as 80 hours of project management time during the 12 weeks of testing.

Fielding the Web Survey

Numerous technical problems were experienced by SRC once the launch took place. One major issue was a bottle-neck at the data-base when high usage occurred – given the length and complexity of the questionnaire, as well as the inability to control what key strokes or other actions a respondent might make. Initially, about 30% of respondents who logged in were being interrupted during the interview. These partial survey respondents were monitored closely to determine which partial interviews were simply an expression of disinterest in the mode versus a technical glitch that frustrated and “kicked out” the respondent. The latter type was contacted by phone and/or email by SRC staff, and if still incomplete after a certain amount of time these records were subsequently sent to the call centres for special attention.

One other technical problem, most likely resulting from this bottle-neck, was the loss of data for about 1% of all cases. The early responses, which had to be captured in order to allow the respondent to proceed through the survey, cannot be exported from the database. These 25 cases were given to SRDAR to attempt a data verification process. The following table displays the distribution of the cases by country and date of attempt. There was no pattern to the missing data, and the dates do not correspond to invitation dates.

Cases of Missing Data by Country and Last Date of Attempt

Record	Country	Date	Time
1	CAN E	July 26th	3:19pm
2	CAN E	July 26th	8:20pm
3	CAN E	July 28th	9:39pm
4	CAN E	August 9th	12:51am
5	CAN E	August 12th	11:16am
6	CAN E	August 28th	4:24am
7	CAN E	September 29th	6:58pm
8	CAN F	October 13th	7:59pm
1	US	July 20th	11:15am
2	US	July 26th	8:48pm
3	US	August 4th	1:08pm
4	US	August 12th	9:52pm
5	US	August 16th	12:43pm
6	US	September 11th	2:09pm
1	UK	July 29th	3:11pm

2	UK	August 10th	4:41pm
3	UK	August 12th	8:50pm
4	UK	August 16th	11:26am
5	UK	August 17th	3:57pm
6	UK	September 19th	3:53pm
1	AUS	July 19th	10:05pm
2	AUS	July 22nd	10:49am
3	AUS	July 28th	8:31pm
4	AUS	August 1st	4:34pm
5	AUS	August 25th	7:24pm

File Transfer Protocol

A detailed schedule of file sharing processes was created in the Wave 8 protocol. Daily handling of records, 6 days per week by SRC web administration staff, meant that the other call centres were kept up to date on completed, partial and 'return to web' records, as well as telephone or email refusals coming to the SRC. Additional cheque requests and address changes were also shared through the secure ftp site.

Budget

In estimating the costs of programming, hosting and providing a dataset for the Wave 8 re-contact survey, there was no costing for the long lead up to the launch (6 months). This long pre-launch period increased the project management time, programming time, and technical administration hours. As mentioned above, the amount of time testing was also significant and unexpected.

Lessons Learned:

- Programming could be improved with the next wave, given the lessons about non-response and sample fields.
- Auto-testing was not possible with the non-response programming method chosen. However, this is not the only way to capture non-response, and a different code could allow for auto-testing in the next wave. The auto-test feature may have shown some of the technical problems prior to the launch.
- Treatment of sample could be simpler in the next wave, given the experience in W8 with both smart data fields and selection of re-contact participants. Protocols could be established to handle the records more efficiently based on the lessons from this wave.