

Can Survey Participation Alter Household Financial Behavior?

Crossley et al, 2013

Discussion

by

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Interesting for at least two reasons

- The way to go when it comes to survey research
- Implications for retirement savings policies

Some comments on strategy

- Treatment is not only a (lengthy) survey on *retirement expectations*, but also on minimal and desired expenditure when retired, risk attitudes, and willingness to cut back on housing expenditure after retirement
- Hence output, not input: bravo
 - > salience

Question

- Should we interpret behavior change as a cognitive process/conscious strategy, or are people unaware of their behavior change?

Do not understand

- “Respondents did not get info on pension entitlements”

Vs

- “Reflection was aided by the availability of UPO”

Note

- Estimates of pension adequacy mentioned in the paper are much too optimistic, eg
 - > No account of cuts in pensions since 2008
 - > Replacement rate based on current income, also for the young
 - > Housing wealth considered to be liquid

Note 2

- Savings computed on non-housing assets
“because of consumption value of housing”
 - > Housing value = prepaid housing consumption + remaining value at death

Savings measured via tax data

- As the difference between non-housing wealth on Jan 1, 2009, Jan 1, 2008, and Jan 1, 2007

My definition of savings: income minus consumption

?

Could it be that

- Change in behavior is due to survey participation, but through income, not savings?
- Eg increased awareness that life is too short to work all the time,...

Policy implication

- Asking people to imagine retirement, rather than giving them information, information, warnings etc seems to affect behavior
 - > Not only of practical relevance, but also interesting for the debate on autonomy