**Motivation:**
To prevent non-response and panel attrition

**Problems in Germany:**
- Rising number of surveys
- Increasing numbers of low quality surveys and marketing misuse
- Decreasing response rates

**Challenges and Chances:**
- Complex SOEP questionnaire
- Longitudinal household survey
- New features like biomarkers
- (Behavioral) Experiments like trust games and grip strength test showed positive motivational effect

**SOEP goals**
- Maintain stability / high response rates
- Provide good data quality and minimize survey error
- Avoid attrition: use incentives to avoid drop-out of least co-operative sample members
- Avoid bias: use incentives to reduce potential bias for certain sample groups to avoid cumulative effects due to longitudinal approach

**Some results from other longitudinal surveys**
"The form of the incentive, gift or money, and the way in which the incentive is delivered to the respondent has a measurable impact on response rates."

- Unconditional incentives increase response more than conditional incentives (social reciprocity)
- Response increases with the value of the incentive
- Incentives have larger effects in studies with low response rates
- No generic lessons to guide survey practice
- "Respondent incentives are an effective means of maintaining sample size of a panel and ensuring its value in terms of efficiency of estimation and feasibility of subgroup analyses."

**Field name of the survey**
*Leben in Deutschland (LiD)*

**Current Practice in SOEP**

**SOEP maintenance**
comprises different activities over the whole year

**Major streams (permanent):**
1. Announcement letter + lottery ticket for individual respondents
2. Contact with interviewer
3. Letter of thanks to the household with postage stamp “portocard” incentive after participation
4. Address check

**Implementation:**
- Highly qualified interviewer pool
- Extensive follow-ups, for example telephone follow-up by a small group of specially trained interviewers

**Multi-pillar incentive concept: key features**
- Charity-based lottery ticket for all respondents (five euro value)
- Conditional incentive provided in advance since ‘08
- Special incentives for kids in the household (balloons)
- Small presents for:
  - subsamples with higher response burden (mothers, first-time 17-year-old respondents)
  - difficult target groups (potential refusers, hard-to-locate households, new/special respondents and target groups)
- Information materials
  - Homepage for respondents: “Leben in Deutschland” (LiD) http://www.leben-in-deutschland.info/ (Living in Germany)
  - Project information folder (since ‘08; contains information material, ball-point pen and writing pad)
  - Information brochure
  - "Datenreport," a social report for Germany (on request)
- Portocard (contains a special postage stamp, value: 55 cents)
- Announcement letter for the interview
- Letter of thanks (address check)
- “LiD mouse” logo

**Experience & Future**

**Positive experience with concept of combining small presents, information, and participation as volunteer work**

**Change to unconditional five euro lottery ticket was successful**
First results:
- Positive acknowledgement of respondents
- Very few complaints concerning omission of giveaway
- No known drop-outs in consequence of omission of previous gift
- Stabilization of high response rate

**Positive side effect: lottery tickets support charity**
Lottery ticket given to all SOEP respondents

**Increasing problems to motivate respondents, especially for new samples, new households, new respondents, potential refusers**
- Special Pretest on incentives in 2009
- Intensify maintenance with the focus on special target groups
- Intensify appropriate mix of essential information (letters, brochures, website, data report, etc.) and small gift
- Intensify training of field-interviewers;
  - stabilize commitment of old and
  - encourage commitment of new interviewers
- Systematic analyses of SOEP incentive effects in collaboration with TNS Infratest Sozialforschung