THE DIGEST OF
SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS
THIRD EDITION

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PART 4

TRENDS

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Targeted Negative Income Tax—Germany

SUMMARY: This demonstration, conducted from 1999 to 2002, tested the effects of targeted and time-limited negative income tax plans in seven small and medium-sized samples of unemployed public assistance recipients in the German states of Baden-Württemberg and Hesse. Subjects were followed for about two years.

COST: Research costs, approximately €750,000.


TREATMENTS TESTED: Targeted and time-limited negative income tax (TNIT) plans. The specifics of the tested program varied from site to site. Benefit-reduction rates were around 50 percent, but the exact formula varied considerably among sites. Earnings had to be below the public assistance break-even level to qualify for TNIT payments. Time limits were around one year in most sites but were somewhat longer in a few sites. Controls were eligible for the regular public assistance program, which after a disregard typically taxed earnings at around 100 percent. Thus, the TNIT provided stronger work incentives.

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST: (1) Employment; (2) Net income; and (3) Receipt of public assistance.

SAMPLE SIZE (for sites with random assignment only): City of Freiburg: treatments, 754; controls, 754. County of Tubingen: treatments, 44; controls, 29. County of Fulda: treatments, 120; controls, 120. County of Kassel: treatment group I, 230; treatment group II, 181; controls, 186. City of Kassel: treatments, 206; controls, 206. County of Odenwald: treatments, 45; controls, 45. City of Offenbach: treatments, 260; controls, 240.

TARGET POPULATION: Long-term unemployed people on public assistance. The exact nature of the target group varied from site to site.

NUMBER OF TREATMENT GROUPS: Two (with one control group) in all but one site; the County of Kassel had three groups with one control group.

NUMBER AND LOCATION OF SITES: Seven—In the State of Baden-Württemberg: City of Freiburg and County of Tubingen; in the State of Hesse: County of Fulda, County of Kassel, City of Kassel, County of Odenwald, and City of Offenbach.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS:
- Process analysis: Conducted using a checklist on implementation issues (e.g., letters sent to recipients, press information, oral interviews, etc).
- Impact analysis: Conducted using comparison of means and probit analysis.
- Benefit-cost analysis: Not conducted.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Small positive and statistically significant effects on employment were found in Fulda, Hesse. Implementation problems were not important in this site (see "Design Issues"). In the remaining sites, implementation was sufficiently flawed that no conclusions about impacts are possible.

TIME TRENDS IN FINDINGS: Not analyzed.

DESIGN ISSUES: The planned test of the TNIT experienced considerable implementation prob-
lems at many sites. For example, in most (but not all) sites, those eligible for the TNIT, which involved a complex change from their current situation, were simply notified of the change by letter, without any further attempts at follow-up.

REPLICABILITY: The demonstration could be replicated. However, more control would have to be exercised at the demonstration sites to avoid implementation problems.

GENERALIZABILITY: Uncertain.

FUNDING SOURCES: Ministries of Social Affairs in Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse.

TREATMENT ADMINISTRATORS: County or city governments in each location.


ENABLING LEGISLATION: §18 Abs. 5 BSHG, the Federal Public Assistance Act.


Note: Most of the material in this summary was obtained through correspondence with Alexander Spermann, the project director. The two final reports are written in German and were not translated into English prior to publication of the Digest.

Zurich Bike Messengers—Switzerland

SUMMARY: This demonstration, conducted in 2000, tested the effects of a pre-announced temporary increase in piece-rate wages on a small sample of bike messengers. Subjects were followed for four months.

COST: Unknown.


TREATMENTS TESTED: Bike messengers are paid a fixed percentage of the revenue from each delivery. They can sign up for more or fewer shifts and can increase or decrease the number of deliveries they choose to handle per shift. This demonstration randomly assigned messengers to two groups. Group A received an increase in the fixed percentage from 39 percent for males (44 percent for females) to 49 percent (54 percent for females) between September 11 and October 6, 2000, while group B members worked at their usual rates. Group B received the increase between October 30 and November 24, 2000, while group A worked at their usual rates. The experiment was announced in August 2000.

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST: (1) Shifts worked and (2) Deliveries per shift.

SAMPLE SIZE: Group A, 22; group B, 22.

TARGET POPULATION: Bicycle messengers of the Veloblitz Delivery Service.

NUMBER OF TREATMENT GROUPS: Two (with one control group).

NUMBER AND LOCATION OF SITES: One—Zurich.