

S-IV Outline of the Retail Price Survey (Structural Survey)

1. Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of the Retail Price Survey is to clarify the monthly trend of prices and the price structure by region in the nationwide information on the retail prices of goods and fees for services that are important in consumer life. The survey has been conducted as a “Fundamental Statistics Survey” in accordance with the provisions of the Statistics Act.

The survey consists of two parts: the “Trend Survey”, which aims at clarifying the monthly trend of prices, and the “Structural Survey”, that aims to clarify the price structure by region.

(History of the Survey)

In the past, the price structure had been grasped by the National Survey of Prices conducted once every five years. However, as changes in the consumption and distribution structure accelerated, it became difficult to understand the changes in the price structure accurately by conducting a statistical survey on a 5-year cycle. A survey to annually check the price differences between regions and prices by store type and specification, which had been conducted in the National Survey of Prices, was added to the Retail Price Survey as the “Structural Survey.” The survey has been conducted since January 2013.

With the introduction of the “Structural Survey,” the existing survey is now called the “Trend Survey,” and the National Survey of Prices was ended after the last survey in 2007.

In 2016, we have changed the survey items for the first time as an effort toward the promotion of the utilization of the Survey’s results and the improvement of the accuracy of the results. After that, we are going to conduct the Survey timely and appropriately by reconsidering the Survey items every year.

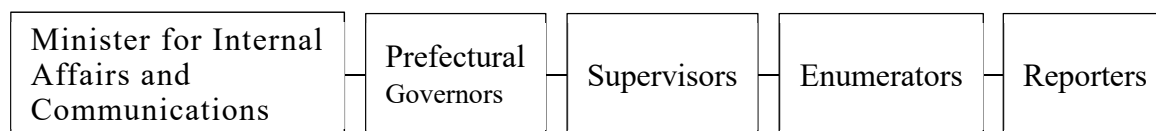
In order to improve the efficiency of the survey and to enrich the content, the survey on prices by store type and the survey on prices by specification were ended after the last survey in December 2021.

2. Survey system

The “Structural Survey” aims to grasp price differences between regions, such as prefectures. Surveyed items are those that are expected to show price differences between regions and account for a large percentage of the household consumption expenditure. (Survey on price differences between regions)

3. Survey organization

The survey is conducted through the following channel.



“Supervisors,” who are prefectural officials, supervise the field work of enumerators and take charge of collecting the prices of certain items. In total, approximately 130 supervisors are appointed for “Structural Survey.”

“Enumerators” are appointed in each sample city, town and village by the prefectural governors. They are in charge of surveying. In total, approximately 90 enumerators are appointed for the “Structural Survey.”

4. Classification of survey items and the number of prices collected

The name or type of surveyed goods is called a “Survey Item” or “Item.” Attributes of surveyed goods that are specified for each item are called a “Survey Specification” or “Specification.” The “Structural Survey” aims to grasp price differences between regions, such as prefectures. It surveys 57 items and 58 specifications that are expected to show price differences between regions and account for a large percentage of household consumption expenditure, such as “Non-glutinous rice,” “Food wrap,” and “Hair tonic.”

The survey items are classified into two categories, as provided by the following Table1, according to the consumer behavior, variation of prices among stores and other characteristics.

For each survey item and specification, the number of prices to be collected is defined as provided by the following Table 2 in each type of survey, item category and population size.

5. Survey specifications

To grasp prices excluding the differences in quality and properties of products and services, standardized qualities, properties, characteristics (characteristic) in a Survey Specification are to be understood as the basic specifications. These specifications are established so that the prescribed articles of commerce can be investigated in a uniform way.

The brands, standards, model number, etc. are specified in addition to definition of basic specifications when investigating certain items. These specifications are called “Detailed Specifications”, which should be distributed in the largest quantities and can be conducted continually. Detailed specifications include “Designated Brands” of specifying a brand only, and “Designated Brand and Model Number” of specifying model number, and so on.

6. Sample cities of survey

The survey covers 91 cities (91 non-capital cities nationwide that are not covered by the “Trend Survey”) in total as in the follows.

7. Survey districts

The entire areas of cities surveyed are designated as price survey areas.

8. Prices reporters

Price reporters for survey items are managers of retail stores.

Survey stores are designated by selecting a predetermined number of representative stores, mainly supermarkets for each survey area in order of the sales amount by survey item (if it is difficult to select them by sales amount, in order of management scale based on the number of employees, sales floor space, etc.). There are approximately 500 survey stores in total.

9. Survey dates

The survey is conducted on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday of the week that contains the 12th day of each odd month.

10. Survey method

The enumerators visit price reporters and collect prices through interviews and input them into price collection devices by themselves.

In principle, prices to be collected for the survey are normal retail prices for the specified item at stores or establishments surveyed on the survey date.

Therefore, the following prices are excluded.

- Extra-low prices due to the bargain sales, clearance sales, discount sales, and so on, which are held for less than eight days
- Prices of odd items, incomplete sets and goods sold in combination
- Reduced prices for quantity purchases
- Prices of second-hand articles, auctioned goods and those sold on installments

11. Publication of the results

The survey results are compiled by the Statistics Bureau and released, in principle, by June of the year following the survey year. (The aggregated results for base years (years ending with 0 or 5) of the consumer price index are released in principle around September of the year following the survey year.)

The results are published on the internet, in reports of “Annual Report on the Retail Price Survey,” etc.

Table 1. Survey item category

Survey item category	Criteria for items	Examples of items that apply
(a)	Items that consumers purchase mainly in their neighborhood, and that are subject to the Structural Survey	Food, household consumables, etc.
(b)	Items that consumers purchase mainly in representative commercial districts or large-scale stores in each municipality, and that are subject to the Structural Survey	Hair dressing and beauty products, etc.

Table 2. Number of prices collected

Survey item category	Population size of cities (Based on the 2015 Population Census)	Number of prices collected
Item (a)	Cities with a population of 150,000 or more	4
	Cities with a population of less than 150,000	2
Item (b)	Cities with a population of 150,000 or more	3
	Cities with a population of less than 150,000	1