

**Merlinco**

*Fact Sheet No.3*

***MERLIN FASTAB***

## 1 Overview

MERLIN FASTAB is a *free* data exploration program that reads a data file prepared by the MERLIN or MERLINPLUS survey analysis systems (see fact sheets 1 and 2), and allows the user to make tables very easily and quickly, even on very large databases. It requires no training and can be used by persons with virtually no computer experience, who wish to access the data.

The key to the speed is the fact that the program uses an “inverted” (i.e. transposed) version of the standard MERLIN internal data file, so that a subset of the variables available can be accessed for each respondent without having to read all of the variables for that respondent.

FASTAB allows the user to specify the four key elements of a table: Side, Top, Filter, and Weight. It allows both a Respondent Weight for general projection to a universe, and a Quantity Weight so that the table can represent miles or gallons, etc. Likewise, FASTAB allows up to three filter specifications, that can be “AND”ed or “OR”ed together. The table base may be further restricted to respondents with data in the Side and/or Top element. FASTAB can analyse projects which have been defined as having hierarchical data (e.g. households, individuals, journeys made), in which case the additional element of Level may be specified.

When a table definition is complete (only Side is mandatory, the other elements are optional), FASTAB computes the table and opens in Microsoft Excel. When the user has finished viewing the table, he may go on to specify another table, with or without closing the previous one.

Using inverted files is the main reason for FASTAB’s speed, but another contributory factor is the simplicity of the system, and this inevitably entails some restrictions in functionality. For example, filtering can only be done positively on an existing variable — negations are not allowed. Users cannot manipulate tables, or create new Sides, Tops, Filters or Weights. The user has limited control over the appearance of the table, e.g.: the combination of numbers, row and column percentages in each table cell. Any combination of means, standard deviations, standard errors and error variances may be shown on Side variables which have been set up with score values.

MORE (MERLIN On-line Reporting Engine) is another product from Merlinco, with similar functionality to FASTAB, but running on-line.

For a total ad hoc table-making environment (in which none of the above restrictions applies), please investigate the MERLINPLUS Database System.

## 2 Further information

FASTAB may be downloaded from [www.merlinco.co.uk/fastab](http://www.merlinco.co.uk/fastab) together with a demonstration project.

For more information on MERLIN and other Merlinco products, contact John Tebboth at Merlinco Ltd, on +44 (0)20 7709 3000 or email [info@merlinco.co.uk](mailto:info@merlinco.co.uk).

## 3 Operating environment

MERLINPLUS runs under Windows Vista Service Pack and VB.NET v4.6 upwards (it may run on earlier versions of Windows but we do not support these). It interacts with Office 2007 upwards.

## 4 Technical considerations

There are no limits on data file size (other than the physical size of the disk).

Each table may have up to 1000 rows x 255 columns. Any number of tables may be produced within each FASTAB session.

## 5 Files needed for FASTAB

All the files needed to drive FASTAB are generated by MERLIN or MERLINPLUS, and MERLIN Toolkit.

FASTAB users not having the software to generate these files may obtain them from any MERLIN or MERLINPLUS licence-holder, including Merlinco's own survey processing bureau.

## 6 Example FASTAB session

The next page shows an example specification screen from FASTAB, and the table produced.

The variable names appearing in the boxes of the specification screen (e.g. "PROJWT" in the "Respondent Weight" box) are selected by clicking on the required variable from the list in the large box. In our example, the "Display Options Title" box has been clicked on to show titles as well as variable names in the displayed list.

MERLIN FASTAB - C:\projects\UUMP\jump52.ftw

File Find View Filter Weight Run Help

Table 1

Side Q21

Top REGION

QWt

RWt PROJWT

| Entry name | #  | Title  |
|------------|----|--|
| Q25        | 54 | Q25. Yearly income of respondent                           |
| Q26I       | 55 | Q26. How long have you been a subscriber to Jump Magazine? |
| Q26S       | 56 | Q26. How long have you been a subscriber to Jump Magazine? |
| Q26        | 57 | Q26. How long have you been a subscriber to Jump Magazine? |
| Q27        | 58 | Q27. What is the likelihood of renewing your subscription? |
| REGION     | 59 | Region   |
| PROJWT     | 60 | Projection Weight  |

Filter 1 Q3 Filter Link AND Filter 2

Category 1 Category OR

Category Label Yes

Layout Settings (all default)

Click on header to sort, click on row to select variable

|                         | Total | Mid West | South | Mid Atlantic | West Coast |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------------|------------|
| <b>Unw. total</b>       | 27    | 9        | 6     | 4            | 8          |
| <b>Wtd. total</b>       | 213   | 60       | 60    | 40           | 53         |
| <b>25 or under (20)</b> | 13    | 7        | 0     | 0            | 7          |
| col %                   | 6%    | 11%      | 0%    | 0%           | 13%        |
| <b>26-35 (30.5)</b>     | 17    | 7        | 10    | 0            | 0          |
| col %                   | 8%    | 11%      | 17%   | 0%           | 0%         |
| <b>36-45 (40.5)</b>     | 90    | 27       | 30    | 20           | 13         |
| col %                   | 42%   | 44%      | 50%   | 50%          | 25%        |
| <b>46-55 (50.5)</b>     | 17    | 0        | 10    | 0            | 7          |
| col %                   | 8%    | 0%       | 17%   | 0%           | 13%        |
| <b>56-65 (60.5)</b>     | 47    | 13       | 0     | 20           | 13         |
| col %                   | 22%   | 22%      | 0%    | 50%          | 25%        |
| <b>Over 65 (70)</b>     | 23    | 0        | 10    | 0            | 13         |
| col %                   | 11%   | 0%       | 17%   | 0%           | 25%        |
| <b>Not reported</b>     | 7     | 7        | 0     | 0            | 0          |
| col %                   | 3%    | 11%      | 0%    | 0%           | 0%         |
| <b>Average</b>          | 47.02 | 41.69    | 45.42 | 50.50        | 51.56      |