

# Consumer Expenditure Survey Research & Plans for the Future

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[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

# Presentation Overview

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1. Background
2. Gemini Project Redesign Objectives
3. Focus of Recent CE Research
4. Gemini Project Design Team Plans
5. Use of CNSTAT's Report

# Continuous Survey Improvement Process

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- Biennial – CEQ instrument revisions
- 2013 – Inc Tax Estimation w/NBER Calculator
- 2009 – Telephone thresholds (CEQ)
- 2005 – Diary keying and auto-coding system
- 2005 – User friendly diary form
- 2005 – Contact History Instrument (CHI)
- 2004 – Income imputation
- 2004 – CAPI (CED) demographics and income
- 2003 – CAPI (CEQ)

# Redesign Objectives

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- Reduce measurement error, and in particular, underreporting
- Reduce burden
- Hold neutral, or reduce, costs
- Monitor redesign results



- Research agenda

# Focus of Recent CE Research: Reduce Measurement Error

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- Reduce number of interviews
- Reduce interview length
- Reduce reference period length
- Reduce proxy reporting
- Maximize record use & minimize recall
- Incorporate new technology
- Incorporate multi-mode interviewing

# Focus of Recent CE Research: Reduce Burden

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- Reduce number of interviews
- Reduce interview length
  - ▶ Streamlining the questionnaire
  - ▶ Split questionnaire research
  - ▶ Global questions
    - Diary to interview imputation
    - Backcasting
    - Within quarter imputation
    - Auxiliary source data

# Focus of Recent CE Research: Reduce Costs

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- Reduce interview length
- Reduce number of interviews
  - ▶ For example, eliminate the bounding interview

# Focus of Recent CE Research: Monitor Redesign Results

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## Data Quality Profile

- A consistent, well-defined set of metrics can be used to establish baselines for monitoring trends in the quality of survey activities and evaluate the impact of survey design options

## Measurement Error Analysis

- Determine sources of measurement error on expenditure reporting and develop a methodology for tracking and evaluating changes in measurement error due to design changes

## Burden Index

- Measure the effect of alternative design options



# In-Progress & Planned Research

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## In-Progress & FY2012

- Records Information & Feasibility
- Web Diary Test, Individual Diary Test

## FY2013

- Redesign Monitoring
- Redesign Feasibility Testing

## FY2014

- Additional Redesign Feasibility Testing
- Additional Analyses of Completed Studies

# Gemini Project Design Team

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- Initiated in July, 2012
- Joint team with the Bureau of the Census

## Objective

- Create a single proposal for a redesigned CE that expects to result in a verifiable reduction in measurement error

## Scope

- Synthesize inputs from 2009-12 Gemini Project activities, as well as from independent design proposals (Abt-SRBI, CNSTAT, University of Nebraska, University of Wisconsin, Westat)

# Gemini Project Design Team: Timeline

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- Jul 2012 – Kick-off
- Oct 2012 – Data collection recommendations, by quex group
- Nov 2012 – Redesign proposal outline (i.e., table shell)
- Nov 2012 – Decisions regarding independent design proposals
- Dec 2012 – Summary of FR, Census, BLS staff redesign ideas
- Dec 2012 – High level decisions re: survey redesign elements
- Feb 2013 – Present update at CE Annual Meeting
- Feb 2013 – Detailed overview of proposed redesign elements
- Mar 2013 – Draft redesign proposal report
- Jun 2013 – Final redesign proposal report

# Gemini Project Design Team: Challenges

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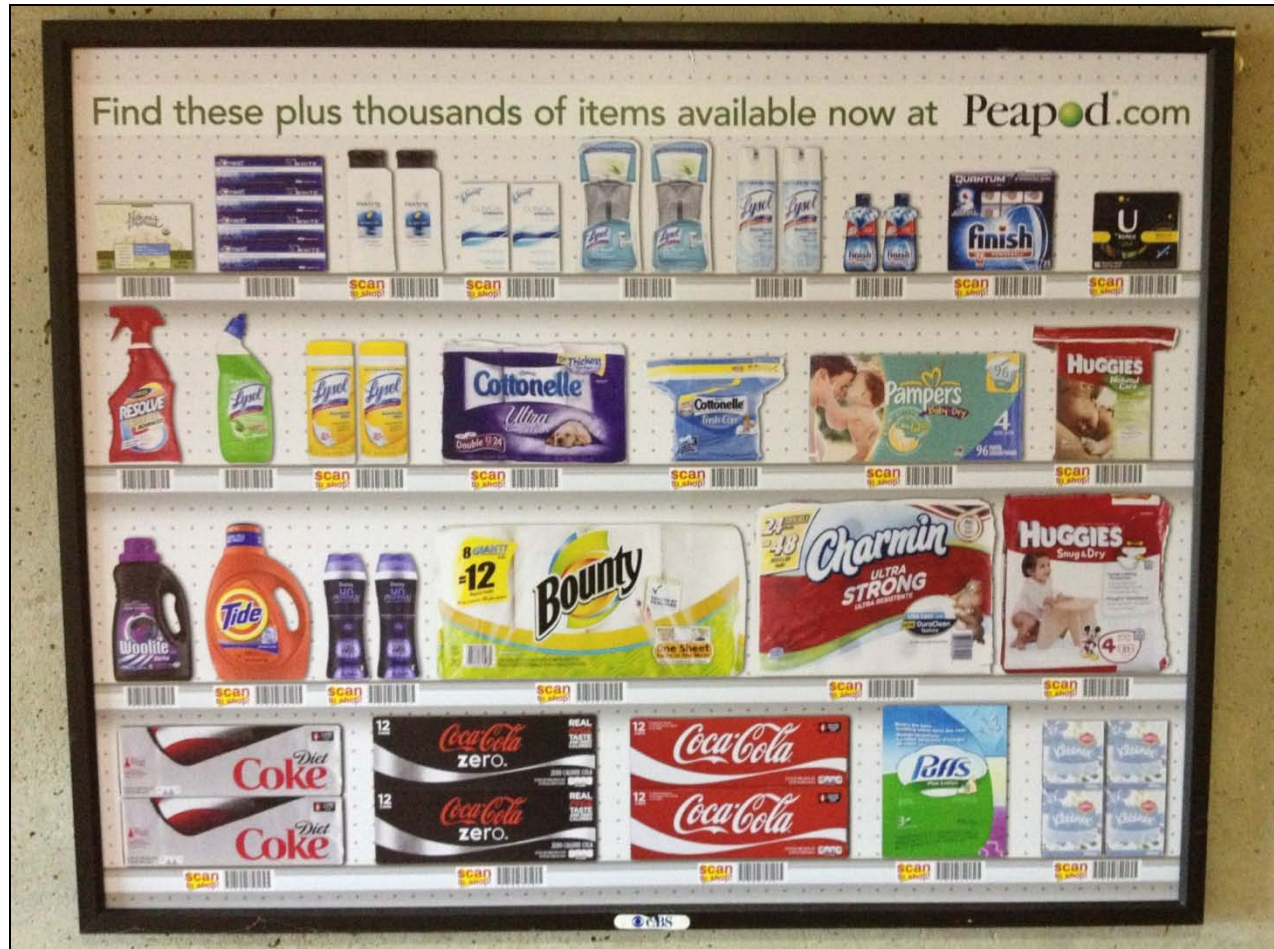
- Synthesizing research results into a comprehensive redesign plan
- Budget for research, testing, evaluation, and implementation
- Sample size requirements
- Timing of research findings
- Pace of social & technological change

# Pace of change....

January 12, 2012: "In Seoul, a virtual grocery store in the subway" (CNN Online)



# October 8, 2012: In Forest Glen, a virtual grocery store in the subway (Washington, DC suburbs)



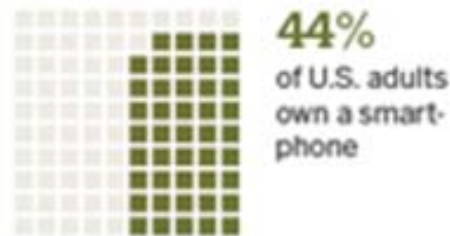
# “Half of U.S. adults now own a tablet or smartphone” (PEJ, 2012\*)

## The Growing Mobile Landscape

Tablet



Smartphone



Either tablet or smartphone



\* “The Explosion in Mobile Audiences and a Close Look at What it Means for News”  
A. Mitchell, T. Rosenstiel, L. Houston Santhanam of PEJ, and L. Christian of the Pew Research Center  
October 1, 2012



# CNSTAT Report: Value

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High-level thinking, justification, and guidance from nationally-recognized experts in economics, statistics, and survey methodology on factors affecting the quality and cost of CE data, and improved options for collecting those data, culminating in:

- Concurrence on Issue Areas
- Broad Recommendations
- Specific Design Proposals
- Cost Estimates for Maintaining Budget Neutrality
- Advocacy for Additional Resources



# CNSTAT Report: Promising Design Features

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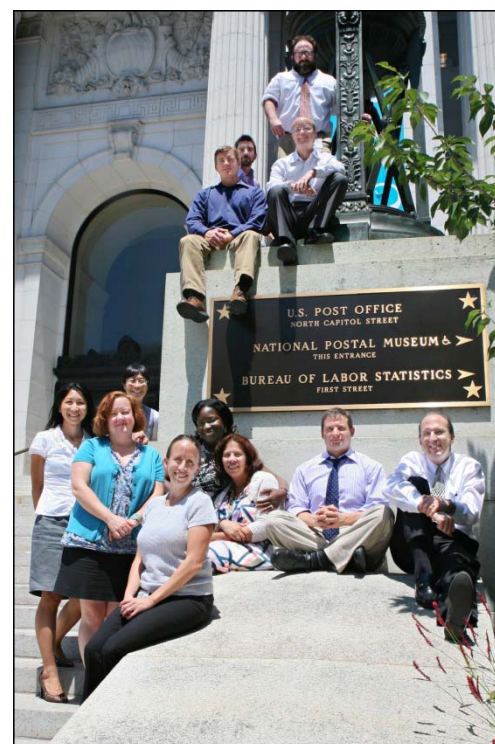
- One sample design
- Flexible recall periods & interview structure
- Increased use of technology, e.g., tablets
- Use of tech to encourage 'in the moment' reporting
- Increased reliance on self-administration
- Increased use of records
- Reduce proxy reporting
- Mixed mode data collection
- Large incentives
- Modular design, with a core survey

# CNSTAT Report: Panel's Recommendations

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- 6-01 Prioritize CE Data Uses for Redesign Trade-offs
- 6-02 Implement a Major Redesign (\$)
- 6-03 Fund Several Major Feasibility Studies (\$)
- 6-04 Sync Reference Periods for Exp & Non-Exp Items
- 6-05 Use Tablet for Self-Administration (w/Paper) (\$)
- 6-06 Develop a Redesign Roadmap within 6 Months
- 6-07 Use Incentives (\$)
- 6-08 Pursue a Long-Term Research Agenda
- 6-09 Increase Size & Capability of Research Staff (\$)
- 6-10 Engage Outside Experts in App Dev (\$)
- 6-11 Target Research on CNSTAT Recommended Topics
- 6-12 Fund a Methods Panel (or Research Sample) (\$) <sup>18</sup>

# Thank You, from CE to CNSTAT!



# Contact Information

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