

Consumer Expenditure Survey Research & Plans for the Future

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Consumer Expenditure Survey

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Presentation Overview

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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

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

Focus of Recent CE Research: Monitor Redesign Results

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

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

- 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

- 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

- 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....

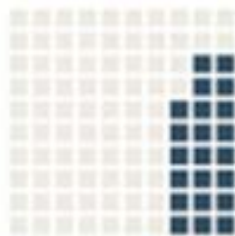
January 12, 2012: “In Seoul, a virtual grocery store in the subway” (CNN Online)



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

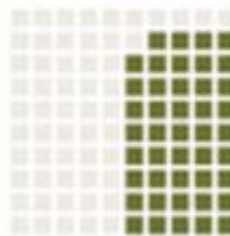
The Growing Mobile Landscape

Tablet



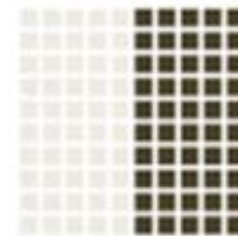
22%
of U.S. adults
own a tablet

Smartphone



44%
of U.S. adults
own a smart-
phone

Either tablet or smartphone



50%
of U.S. adults
own either a
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

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

- 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

- 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) (\$) ¹⁸

Thank You, from CE to CNSTAT!



Contact Information

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