
Consumer Expenditure Survey Redesign

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**Survey Redesign Panel II
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Survey Overview

■ Objective

- ▶ Collect information on the buying habits of America's consumers, including their expenditures, income, and household characteristics
- ▶ Used for periodic revision of the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

■ Sample Frame

- ▶ Conducted by Census Bureau with their address frame
- ▶ Unit is "consumer unit" (CU)
- ▶ Interview Survey (CEQ): 5 interview waves, 7,060 respondents = 35,300 annual responses
- ▶ Diary Survey (CED): 2 one-week self administered diaries, 7,050 respondents * 2 = 14,100 annual responses

Survey Overview

- Interview Survey: 5 interview waves
 - ▶ Designed to be via personal visit, but about 1/3 are by telephone
 - ▶ Average response rate - 74% (CY 2010)
- Diary Survey: 2 one-week self administered diaries
 - ▶ Average response rate - 77% (CY 2010)

Redesign Motivations

- Redesign Motivations
 - ▶ Evidence of measurement error
 - ▶ Environmental changes in technology and spending behaviors
 - ▶ Need for greater flexibility
- Redesign objective
 - ▶ Verifiable reduction in measurement error, with a particular focus on underreporting
 - ▶ Taking two paths – large and small-scale

Summary of Small Scale Redesign topics

- Reducing the length of the CEQ (for 2011 on)
 - ▶ Eliminating questions
 - ▶ Streamlining sections
- Estimating income taxes
- Using CED data to impute for CEQ data
- Determine need for bounding interview and research ways to reduce Interview #2
- Web Diary

Research (1)

- Data Users: Two data user surveys
 - ▶ Users' have a variety of (often competing) priorities, but tend to rate quantity (e.g., a complete data set for a CU) over quality (e.g., response rates).
 - ▶ In general, users tend to ask for *more*; more details and more sample

Research (2)

- Records: Two field studies
 - ▶ It is very time consuming to get respondents to collect records
 - ▶ The process of matching records to the flow of interview questions requires interviewer flexibility and respondent effort and cooperation

Research (3)

- Global Questions: Lab and field studies
 - ▶ Mixed results on correlation between global responses and detailed responses - varies by category
 - ▶ Respondents don't use a systematic, recall or expenditure-based strategy for arriving at answer
 - ▶ Mixed opinion about accuracy of global questions

Research (4)

- Survey Mode: Production data analysis, usability tests
 - ▶ Telephone interviews resulted in comparable data quality when use of recall aids is controlled
 - ▶ There are many operational issues with implementing a web survey for CE diary

Handling the Unexpected

- Typical project management issues, such as delays or underestimates of time needed to complete tasks
 - ▶ Had to lock Design Team into a report even though inputs for the report may not be finished
- Gemini Project Initiative was not funded
 - ▶ Will try to remain budget neutral
 - ▶ Implementing small-scale redesign options that will likely save money

Final Redesign Model

- Developing the final design
 - ▶ Interagency Design Team will kick-off this week
 - ▶ Incorporate inputs from multitude of sources
- Final Design approval
 - ▶ Presentations to levels of CE and BLS management
 - ▶ Stakeholder feedback
 - Design will have integrated feedback from previous user surveys and forums
 - Data User Impact Team to kick-off in 2013 – feedback will be integrated into final transition roadmap

Redesign Evaluation

- Evaluation of redesign success
 - ▶ Goal: a reduction in measurement error
 - ▶ Funding research contracts to produce a turn-key research plan to estimate measurement error pre and post redesign
- Final testing prior to implementation
 - ▶ Will have a large-scale pilot of the redesigned surveys
 - ▶ Five years to plan, implement, and analyze

Timeline

- 2009: Project planning, definition of data quality
- 2010: Identify and prioritize user needs, hold research methodology workshops
- 2011 - 2012: Develop inputs for redesign proposal and survey alternatives
- 2012 - 2013: Develop redesign proposal
 - ▶ Currently: Almost done developing inputs; Design Team to kick-off this week; Implementation of Small-scale redesign changes
- 2013 – 2018: Testing portions of redesign
- 2018 – 2023: Implementation of redesign

Costs

- Submitted budget initiative for Gemini (e.g., large scale redesign research); it was denied
- The CE research program has an annual budget, most of which has gone towards redesign work
- The redesign survey must remain “budget neutral”

Contact Information

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