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# Consumer Expenditure Survey CNSTAT Panel Briefing

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## Survey Design & Data Collection

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# Outline

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- Survey Design
  - Interview Survey
  - Diary Survey
- Data Collection
  - Role of the Census Bureau
  - Interviewing
  - Response Rates

# Interview Survey

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- Designed to collect expenditures for large or less frequently purchased items that can be recalled in a quarterly interview, or things that Rs make regular monthly payments on
- Housing units are selected for sample; Consumer units are identified within housing units
- Each unit is interviewed 5 times
- Rotating panel design to smooth workflow

# Interview Survey, cntd.

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- Instrument:
  - Paper and pencil survey until 2003
  - Converted to Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) in 2003
- Mode:
  - Primarily personal visit, but some decentralized telephone collection (~33%)
- Interview Length:
  - 60-minute average

# Interview 1

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- Establish reference person and HH roster
- Identify consumer units (CUs):
  - Anyone related to reference person by blood, marriage, unmarried partner, other legal arrangement
  - Other individuals or groups of related individuals may form additional CUs
  - Others who share spending on housing, food and other expenses

# Interview 1: Consumer Units

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- Composition may change over time
- Can move in or out of housing unit
- Students living away-from-home, in student housing, are separate Cus

# Interview 1: Data Collected

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- Demographic information for each CU member
- Housing characteristics:
  - e.g., type of structure, number of rooms, fuels used, year built, etc.
- Inventory of appliances and equipment:
  - e.g., stove, refrigerator, washer, dryer, computer, etc.
- Expenditures:
  - One month recall for all expenditure categories
  - Used for bounding purposes

# Interview 1: Data Collected, contd.

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- Detailed information on:
  - Owned Properties - description, current value, existing mortgages, home equity loans, payments
  - Vehicles – year, make, model, financing info for owned/leased
  - Health insurance – insurer, type, who pays
  - Non-health insurance – type (e.g., life, property, auto), pymt schedule
- Data are carried forward to Interview 2-5, and updated for disposals and new purchases



# Interviews 2-5

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- Updates to inventoried items:
  - Properties, vehicles, insurance, etc.
- Expenditures, descriptions, and other information for the previous 3 months for most expenditure categories

# Interviews 2-5: Expenditure Categories

<b>Categories</b>	
Rent	Household services
Utilities	Educational expenses
Home maintenance & repairs	Child care
Major appliances	Trips and vacations
Minor appliances	Transportation
Clothing	Entertainment
Household furnishings	Cash contributions
Medical expenses	

# Interviews 2-5: Expense Patterns for Other Items (detail collected in diary)

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- Usual weekly expenses for groceries
- Usual monthly expense for:
  - alcoholic beverages
  - mass transit to go to work, school, and other places

# Interviews 2 & 5

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- Work experience and income for each CU member 14+
- Income for the CU as a whole
- Credit liability
- Interview 5
  - Change in assets

# Diary Survey

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- Designed to collect detailed data on small frequently purchased items which may be difficult to recall in a quarterly interview
- Daily diary, with 4 parts:
  - Food for home consumption, Food away from home, Apparel, Other

# Diary Survey, cntd.

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- Each week of the year has equal representation
- Diaries must be placed within 7 days of **“earliest placement date”**
- Each Diary week is treated separately for estimation purposes

# Diary Survey, contd.

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- Each CU completes two consecutive 7-day Diaries with three personal visits
  - 1<sup>st</sup> visit
    - Collect demographic information place week 1 Diary
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> visit
    - Diary check and recall place Diary 2
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> visit
    - Diary check and recall collect income information

# Role of the Census Bureau

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- Develops sample of housing units
  - Drawn from the decennial census of addresses
- Programs CAPI instruments
  - Including edits, according to BLS specifications
- Collects data
  - Under Title 13



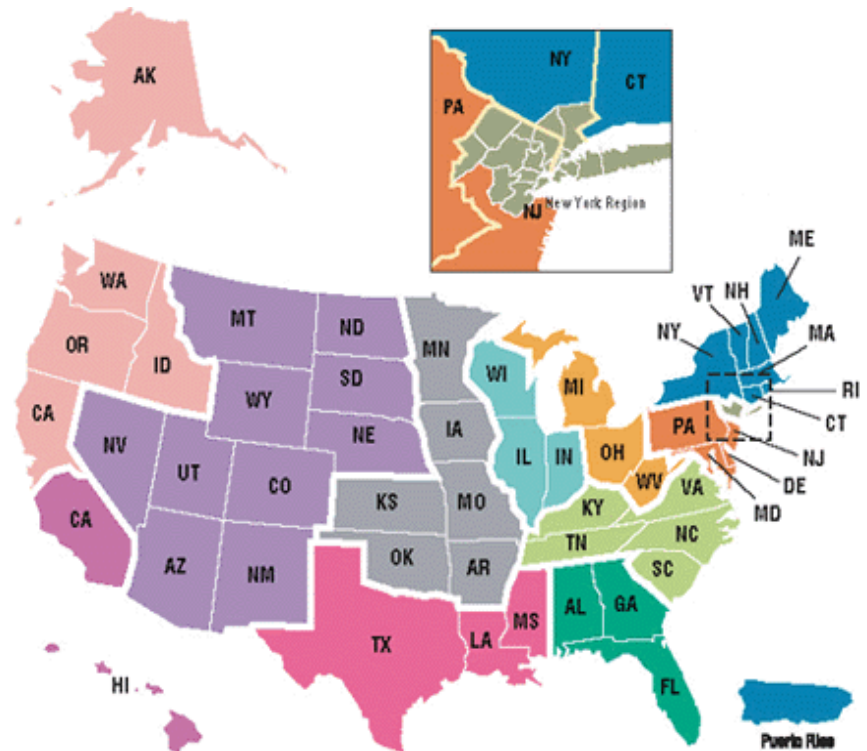
# Census Bureau: Processing Activities

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- Interview
  - CAPI data transmitted to Census HQ, where they **copy data needed for next quarter's instrument** (properties, vehicles, etc.)
- Diary
  - Check-in, keying, coding, imaging operations in Jeffersonville, IN
- Monthly data are transmitted to BLS

# Census Bureau: Regional Offices

- Decentralized data collection
- Conducted by the Census Bureau through its 12 ROs
- RO responsibilities vary in geographic scope, e.g.:
  - New York RO: 19 counties
  - Denver RO: 10 states
  - Los Angeles RO: Hawaii, Southern California



# Interviewing

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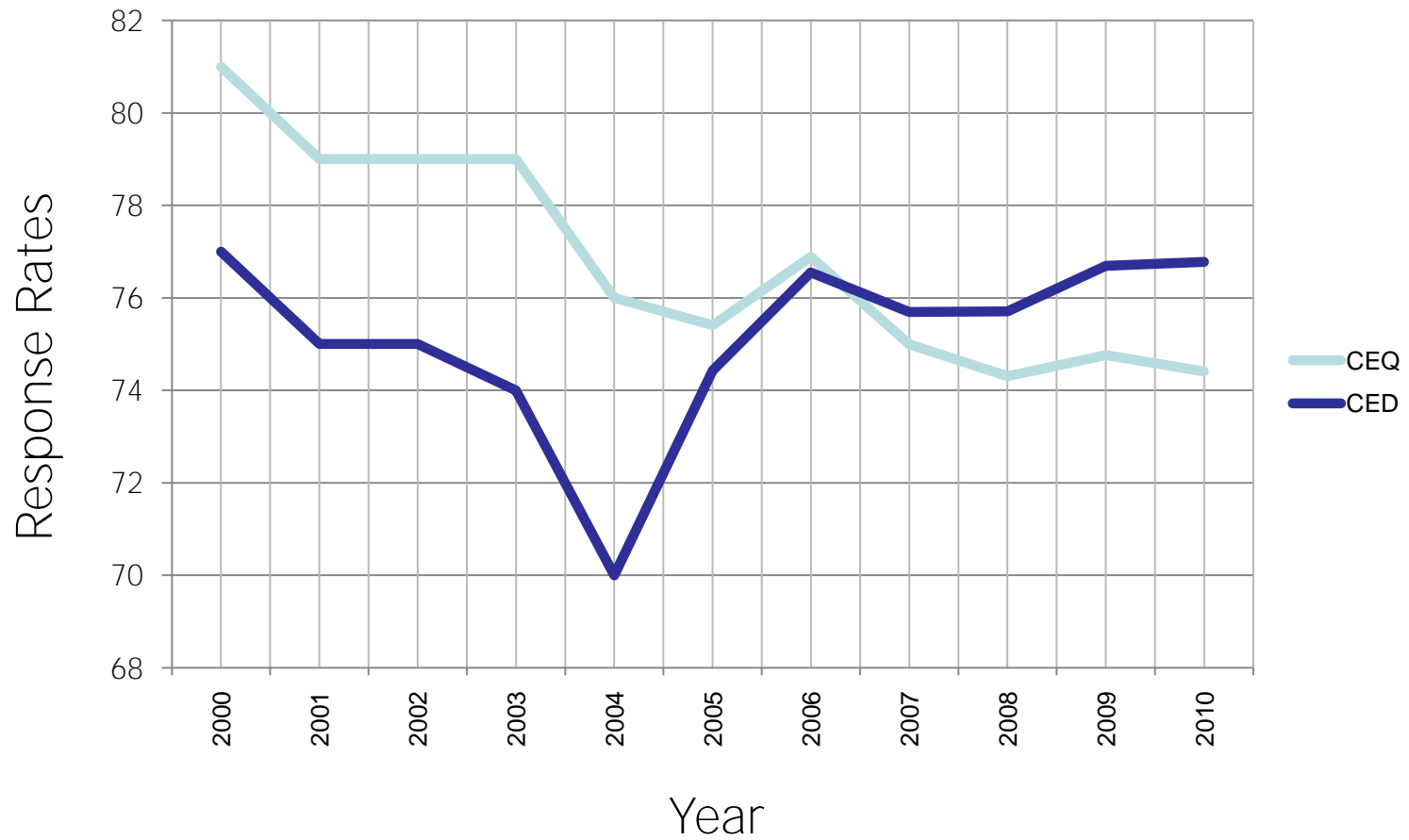
- Interview Survey
  - Multiple contacts *may be* required
- Diary Survey
  - Multiple contacts *are* required
- Contact History Instrument (CHI)
  - Part of both surveys
  - Data on nature and outcome of contact
  - Concerns of reluctant respondents
  - Source of detailed information about the survey process

# Interviewing: Mode

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- CE interview survey is designed to be conducted in person
- Approximately 33% of interviews are conducted by telephone
  - Policies recently updated to provide guidelines for telephone interviewing
- Barriers to personal interviews
  - Controlled access building and gated communities
  - Severe weather conditions (e.g., blizzard)
  - Respondent request for telephone interview

# CE Response Rates, 2000-2010



# Achieving Response Rate Goals

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- BLS and Census have worked together to improve response rates through:
  - Incentives test
  - Better data collection instruments
    - User-friendly diary
    - Improvements to CAPI content and operation
  - Improved field materials
    - Promotional materials about the surveys
    - Translating advance letters into Spanish and other languages
    - Revised and updated Information Book
- More focused FR training