Encouraging Record Use in the Consumer Expenditure Survey

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A New Opportunity for Records Use

Current CE:
- One interview per wave
- Encouragement in the advance mailing and during the interview that information can be found on records

Redesigned CE:
- Two interviews separated by one week
- New opportunity at Visit 1 to encourage records collection in preparation for Visit 2
Some Challenges for Records Use

- Minimizing burden before and during the interview
- Persuading respondents to collect and use records
- Communicating what records to collect
- Organizing records to be used in the interview
- Accessing electronic records
- Addressing privacy concerns
- Training interviewers on handling records
Interview Protocol Testing: Goals

- Research goals:
  - How communicate what records should be collected?
  - How encourage respondents to organize the records?
  - What would a Records-based CAPI instrument look like?
  - How would a Records-based interview feel?

- Two protocols tested:
  - Interviewer-driven
  - Respondent-driven
Interview Protocol Testing: Methods

- Small-scale field test with Westat
- 52 participants, 6 interviewers; split across 2 conditions
- $5 advance token + $55 post-paid incentive

Procedure:
- Set an appointment for in-person interview
- 10 days in advance: shipped a plastic folder, checklist, and instructions
- 3 phone calls from interviewers during the week
- Records collection + In-person interview = ~120 minutes
Interview Protocol Testing: Findings

- Use of records significantly lengthens the interview
  - Finding the record, familiarity with information on a record
- Both protocols can be successful; recommend hybrid
  - No differences on length, respondent burden, interviewer burden
  - Respondent-track more likely to use electronic records
- Interviewer can have significant impact on record use
  - Incentives, discomfort with handling private documents
- Dependence on records can cause confusion
  - Bundling, misalignment between record and CE item
Electronic Records Survey: Goals

Research goals:
- For what expenses people use electronic records
- How people access those records
- How respondents in a CE interview might use records
- Willingness to use government-administered cloud storage

Content likely to be part of the Records interview
- Group 1: Housing, Utilities, Education, Vehicle purchase and maintenance, Legal and finance fees
- Group 2: Medical, Insurance policies, Income, Assets and Liabilities
Electronic Records Survey: Methods

- Convenience sample from Amazon Mechanical Turk
  - n = 410, split across two conditions
  - Screened on whether they had expenses related to CE categories
  - This population is not representative but likely to have electronic records
  - Paid $1.75, <20 minute online survey
Electronic Records Survey: Findings

- Participants have more electronic records than paper records
  - Exceptions: medical and vehicle – in-person transactions
- Electronic records are stored in online accounts (including others’ in HH) rather than email, financial software, or apps
- Participants prefer printing records rather than saving files or screenshots, e-mailing, or looking-up records as needed during the interview
- Older participants are less willing to use cloud storage
- All participants are concerned about security and privacy
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