

# 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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