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# **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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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)

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- 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)

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- 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)

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- 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)

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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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