

Current Population Survey (CPS) Modernization

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Agenda

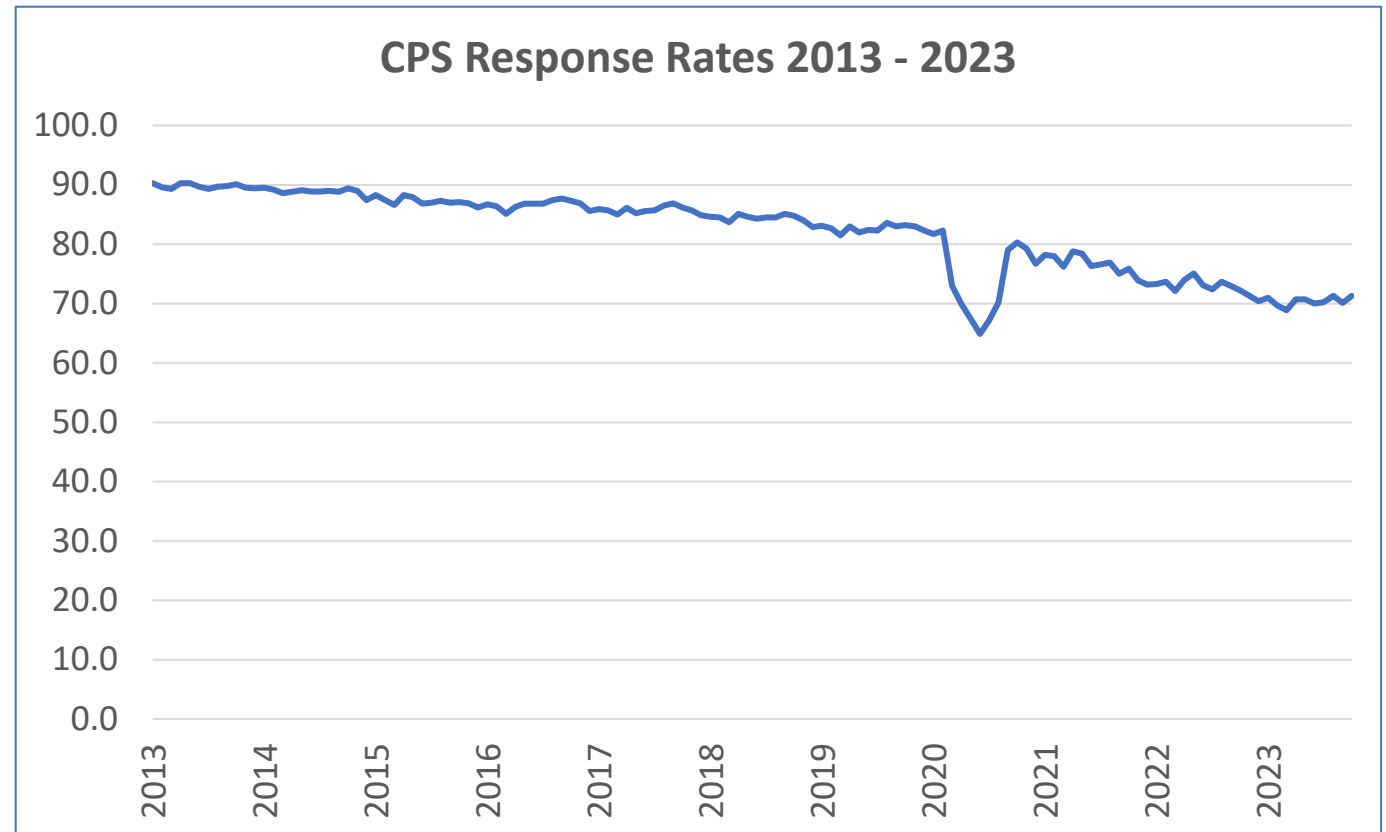
- CPS data-collection
- Current data collection challenges/need for modernization
- Developing a CPS web data collection instrument
- Broader CPS modernization research

CPS Background

- Monthly survey jointly sponsored by the Census Bureau and BLS
- Source for key labor force statistics, including the unemployment rate, labor force participation rate, and employment population ratio
- 70,000 households a month (60,000 eligible cases)
- Initial interview typically in-person, follow-up interviews typically by telephone
- 10- to 30-minute interview
- Collected for 10 days every month
- Longitudinal – collected for 8 months over a 16-month period

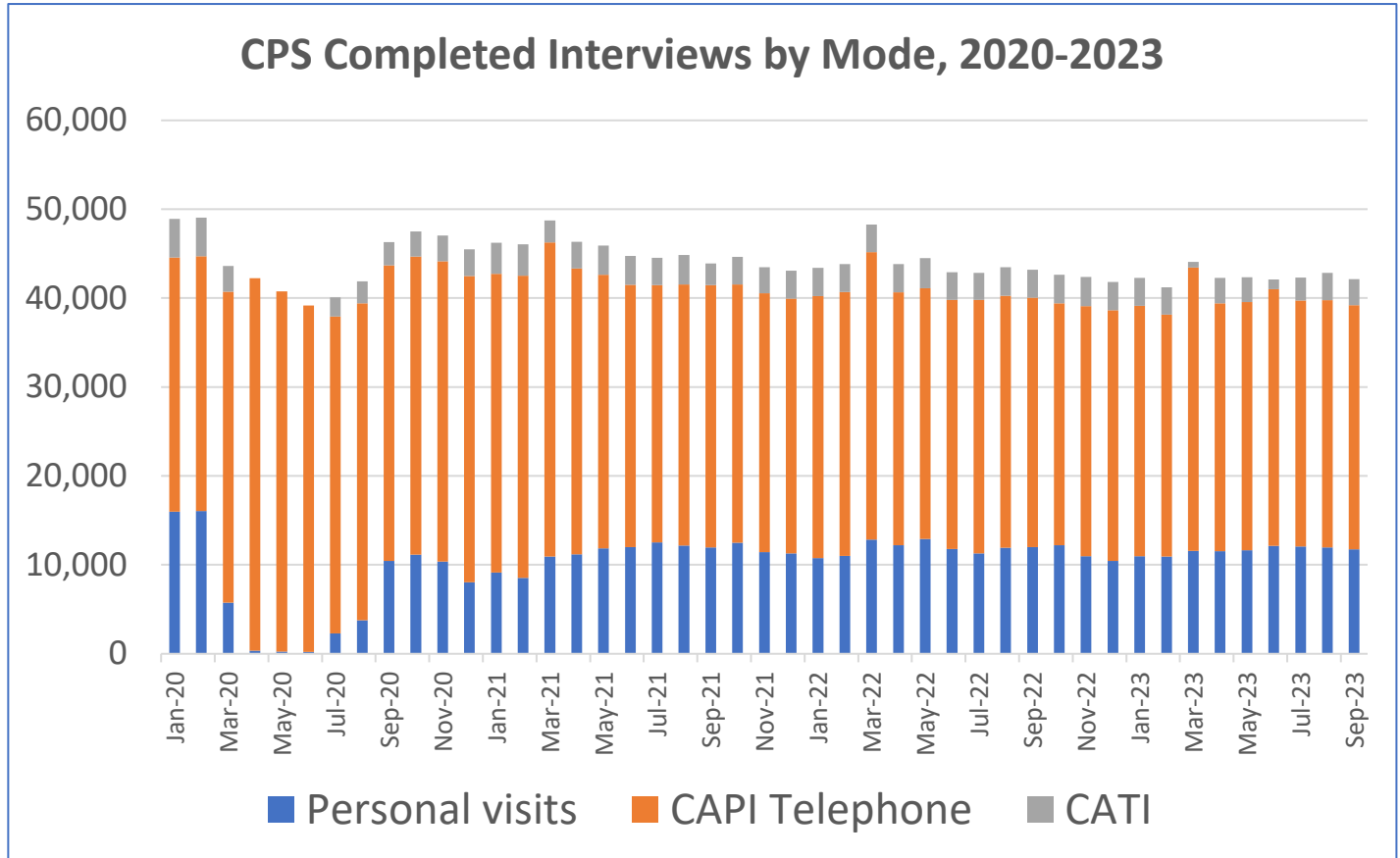
Declining Response Rates

- Increased rate of decline post-pandemic
- Increasing challenges
 - Trouble reaching cell phones
 - Doorbell cameras
 - Government trust/privacy
- Survey response rates are in decline globally



Rising Cost of the CPS

- Labor costs
- Travel costs
- Increased number of contacts required/harder-to-reach respondents
- Jan 2020 to Oct 2023
 - Personal Visits: -23.3%
 - CAPI Telephone: -2.2%
 - CATI: -36.1%



Need for Modernization

- Address the trend of declining response rates
 - Lower respondent burden
 - Reach respondents who are otherwise unwilling to report/hard to count
- Manage survey costs
 - Data collection costs continue to rise rapidly as response rates decline
 - Need to reduce long-term costs to maintain sample size
 - Improve operational efficiencies

Overall Plan

CPS Operational Modernization

- Implement internet self-response mode for basic CPS and supplements
- Other operational improvements

“Beyond CPS” Team

- Data and methods for producing monthly unemployment with a long-term sustainability approach
- Incubation space for idea generation and comparative analysis of estimates created using alternative data sources and methods

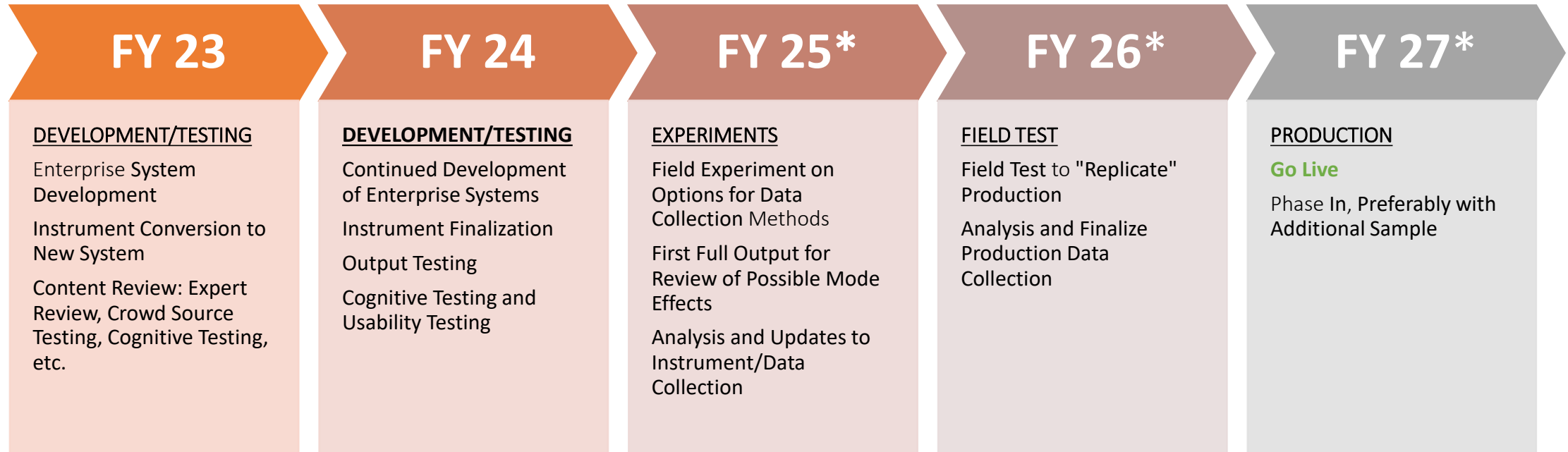
CPS ASEC Administrative Records and Big Data Team

- Use of administrative records, modeling, and other modern techniques with a focus on improving data quality and reducing respondent burden

Development of CPS Web Collection Mode

- Census and BLS are working to add a web-collection mode to existing in-person and telephone collection
- Goals of new mode:
 - Reduce respondent burden
 - Reach respondents unwilling to report by other methods
 - Limit the growth of collection costs
 - Re-direct field-collection resources to harder-to-collect cases
 - Improve response rates
- Target introduction of web mode in 2027

Preliminary High-Level Timeline of Internet Mode Implementation (Basic CPS)



*FY 25-FY 27 items are contingent on securing sufficient funding.

Development and Testing

- Goals:
 - Accuracy of data
 - Minimize/identify mode effects
 - Determine best way to encourage uptake of mode
- Questionnaire:
 - Minor survey redesign required to accommodate change to self-reporting
 - Determine how to handle questions currently interviewer coded (i.e., job search activity)
 - Ensure questions/instructions are easily understood without interviewer help

Types of Testing

- Testing the questionnaire (survey wording)
 - Expert Reviews
 - Comparison to Standards
 - Crowd Sourcing
 - Cognitive Testing
 - Focus groups with the interviewers
- Usability testing
 - Efficient and Accurate
 - Identify Barriers to Answering
 - Test New Mode Security Messages for Ease of Use and Protections

Types of Testing

Testing new data collection

- Field tests
 - Experiments
 - Contact Strategies
 - Wording/Screen Options
 - Mode Interaction Options
 - Replicate “Production”
 - Test Production Plan on a Shortened Timeline
- Phase In Production
 - Mitigate risk

Effects on ASEC and Supplements

- CPS will also need to convert all supplemental surveys to internet, which greatly expands the effort of this transition
- Supplemental questionnaires will need to be reviewed and transitioned to the web instrument
- This includes the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC), a major undertaking
 - Review of Respondent Burden as part of transition

Challenges to Introducing Web Mode

- Minimizing (and identifying) mode effects
 - May require substantial resources to test, identify, and minimize mode effects
- Operating within appropriated funds, which may impact scope and schedule
- System development
 - Census enterprise level development
- Updating collection process
 - Need to incorporate web in short collection period
 - How best to promote web reporting

Survey Modernization Beyond Internet

- While web and other data-collection changes are a key starting point for modernization, both agencies are cooperating to identify other areas to ensure the long-term sustainability of CPS
- Continuing Research for the future of CPS:
 - Adaptive Design
 - Sampling and Weighting Design
 - Other sources of Data as Support
 - Incentives

Could ACS be used to supplement CPS?

- Research goals
 - Could ACS data be used to model monthly CPS data?
 - Could ACS be used directly to support estimates?
- Challenges
 - CPS fixed 1-week reference period, ACS rolling reference periods
 - Different labor force status questions, CPS uses 16 question while ACS uses 7
 - Difference in “active job search”
 - Weighting complexities
 - Blending of cross sectional and longitudinal data

How about Administrative Data?

- Research goals
 - Could administrative data be used to support CPS estimates?
 - Could administrative data aid the survey?
- Challenges
 - CPS estimates are released long before most administrative data are available
 - Administrative data susceptible to changes in legislation/classification
 - Disconnect between CPS reference week and admin data sources
- Best opportunities
 - Inform weighting, nonresponse adjustments, reporting propensity, etc.

Questions

- What would be your biggest concern about CPS introducing a web collection mode?
- What uses of administrative records do you think could benefit CPS?
- Given the concerns over the potential continued decline of response rates, what steps to mitigate these concerns have we not discussed today but should be thinking about?

Contact us

- Thank you for your feedback
- For additional questions, please contact:

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