

Experiences Using an Event History Calendar in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics

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The Panel Study of Income Dynamics is a nationally representative longitudinal study of approximately 8000 U.S. families. The Board of Directors of the PSID continually search for ways to innovate the data collection instrument. For the 36th wave of the PSID, a major new component was added. A childhood health calendar was programmed to collect information on the most common childhood conditions including asthma, diabetes and allergies. Since this childhood health component is retrospective focusing on the time from the respondent's birth to age 17, the design team felt that using a calendar module would help trigger the respondent's memory. The PSID had prior experience using an electronic calendar for employment data outside of the main Blaise interview module. This separate employment calendar presented us with many obstacles, the most significant of which was the processing of separate file structures: Blaise and Access databases. In order to alleviate some of these processing issues, the decision was made to incorporate a Visual Basic calendar that would be called from the Blaise DEP. The data from the VB calendar application was written directly back to the Blaise bdb using a Dynamic Link Library thus avoiding multiple datasets.

In addition to data structure and extraction issues, the calendar mode versus the standard question list presented us with a number of challenges during interviewer training. This paper will discuss the challenges that we faced when fielding this calendar including data structure, extraction, and interviewer training. This paper will also present preliminary results of calendar data and how it will be used to generate final output variables for the PSID public use files.

Abstract