

Consumer Expenditures Proof of Concept: A Joining of Quarterly and Diary

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The Consumer Expenditures Survey project is comprised of two separate data collection instruments in Blaise. Consumer Expenditures Quarterly (CEQ) is a CAPI survey conducted every three months with a household for five interviews, collecting expenditures that the respondent can recall such as spending on housing, food, vehicles, and vacations. Consumer Expenditures Diary (CED) is a CAPI instrument with a paper diary component where the respondent records all of their expenditures in the diary for a total of two weeks. It is designed to capture data on consumer spending that may not be reported in CEQ interviews.

With long and costly interviews, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the sponsors of CEQ and CED, decided that a major re-design of the surveys was in order. After much consultation, they decided that they wanted to test combining the two surveys into one large survey with three components, Recall Interview, Diary, and Records Interview. The Recall Interview is a subset of CEQ sections that ask about expenditures such as furniture, appliances, or recreational activities or equipment. The Diary is similar to CED except that the respondent will have the option to complete the diary on the Internet through a website or phone app, or through the traditional paper diary. The Records Interview is a separate subset of CEQ sections that ask about expenditures that tend to have records, such as mortgages, rent, utilities, or vehicle expenses.

This paper will discuss the challenges of combining the CEQ and CED instruments together into one instrument with separate components. Specifically, it will discuss organizing sections by component, providing and tracking individual diaries for each household member, and allowing flexibility in completing the interviews while creating the appropriate outcome for the case.