

Current Population Survey (CPS) Modernization

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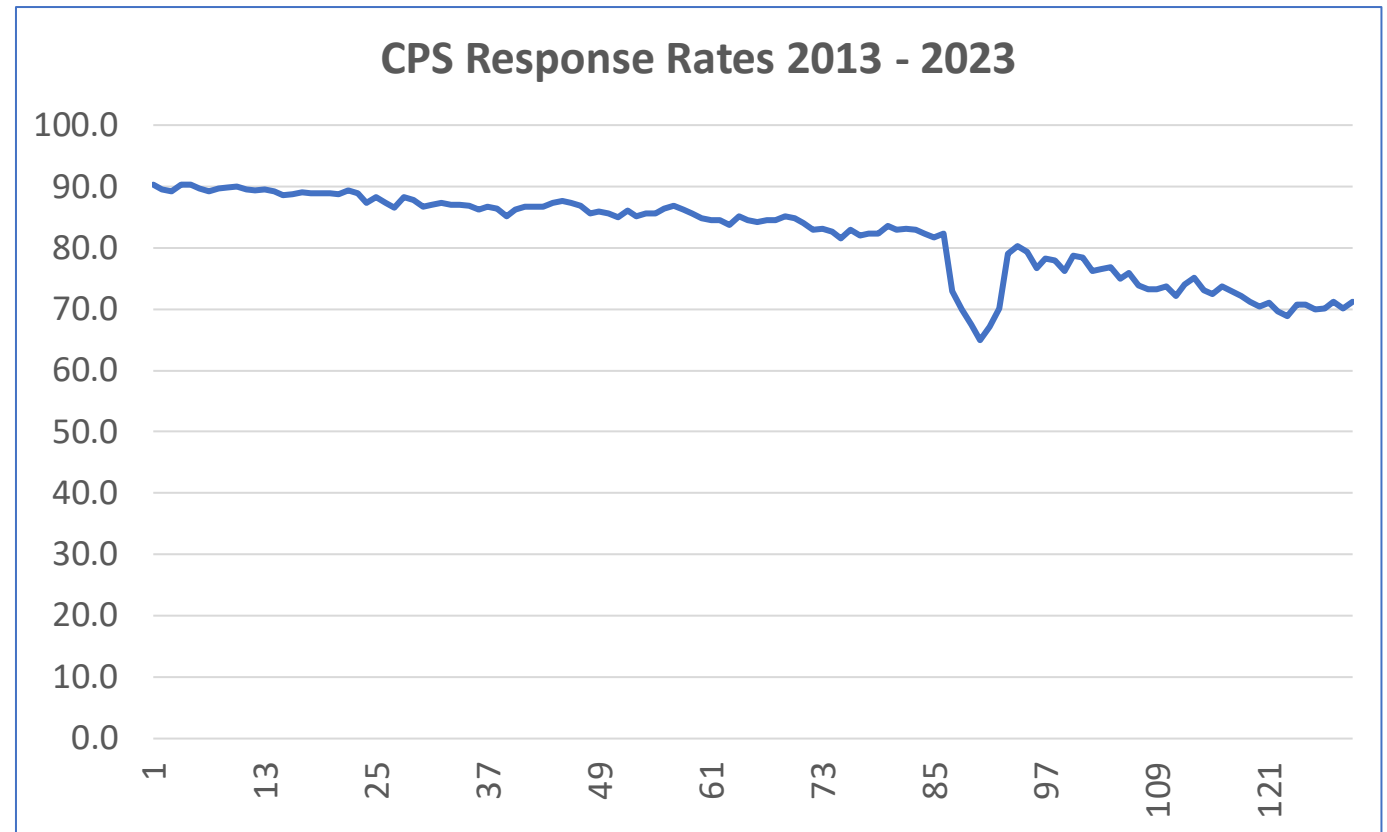
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CPS Background

- 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



Source: BLS: <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU09300000>

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

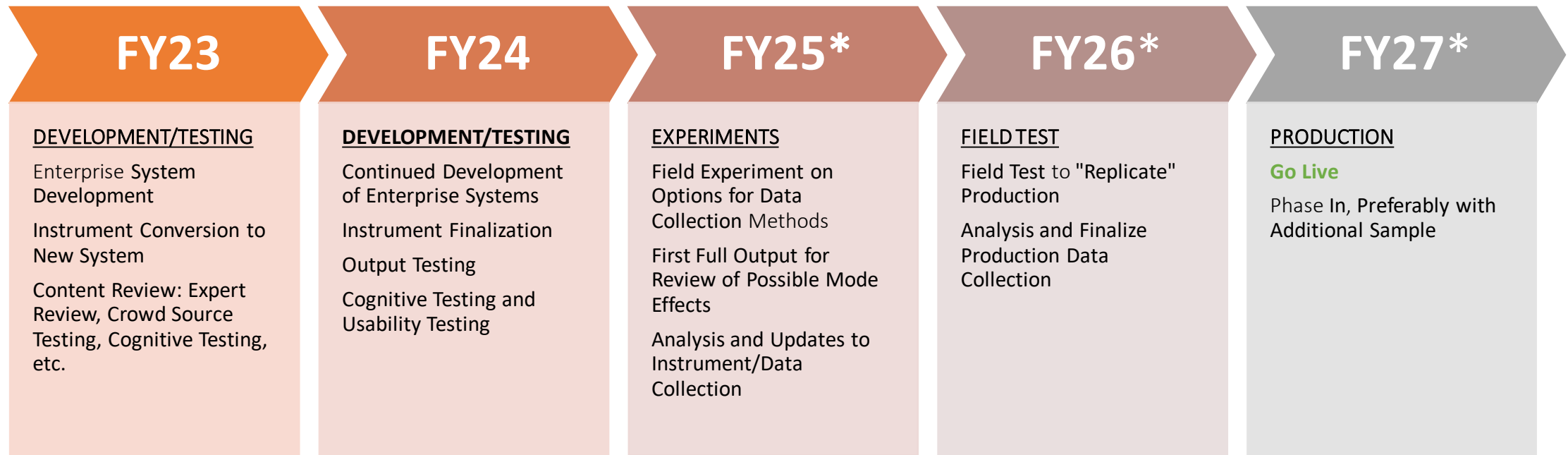
CPS ASEC Administrative Records and Big Data Team

- 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

Completed Testing

- Testing the questionnaire (survey wording)
 - Expert Reviews
 - Comparison to standards
 - Crowd Sourcing
 - Cognitive Testing
 - Focus groups with the interviewers

Key Findings

- Survey largely able to be followed and answers
- Some terms not familiar to respondents – Temporary Absence, Layoff
- Possible Broad interpretations for things like multiple jobs, business ownership
- Testing simplifying response options, including more instructions/definitions right on screen, different terms, provide more or different examples,
- Needs some solutions still for things Interviewers use to code

Upcoming Testing

- Usability testing
 - Efficient and Accurate
 - Identify barriers to answering
 - Test new mode security messages for ease of use and protections
- Field tests
 - Experiments
 - Contact Strategies
 - Wording/Screen Options
 - Mode Interaction Options
 - Replicate “Production”
 - Test Production Plan on a Shortened Timeline

Effects on ASEC and Other 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
- 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

Contact Us

- For additional questions, please contact:

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