



Addressing Respondent Burden for the American Community Survey

Background & Operational Challenges
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Background

- Congressional/Respondent Concerns
- Research to Reduce Contact Attempts in CATI
- 2013 – Implemented CATI Call Parameter Changes
 - Eliminated 1.2 million telephone contacts per year
- Research to Reduce Contact Attempts in CAPI
- 2015 – CAPI Stopping Rules Pilot

What is a “Burden Score”?

- Reflects the total contact attempts made across the various ACS operations (mail, telephone and personal visit), taking into account the perceived intrusiveness of the various types of attempts
- We have assigned points for each attempt based on the burden of various contact attempts
 - Higher # of points assigned for more intrusive contact attempts (i.e., CATI higher than mail, personal visit higher than telephone, contact higher than non-contact, etc.)
 - Higher # of points are assigned if the respondent expresses reluctance
- “Burden score threshold”, which if exceeded is the point which we will cease contact attempts on a given case

CAPI Stopping Rules Pilot

- Design
 - Included $\frac{1}{4}$ of the field areas during August 2015
 - Divided this $\frac{1}{4}$ into 3 treatment groups:
 - Group 1 – 2 daily transmissions; burden score was NOT displayed; cases were NOT removed
 - Group 2 – 2 daily transmissions; burden score WAS displayed; cases that exceeded the burden threshold WERE removed
 - 4.5% of cases were removed (out of 4,135 total cases in treatment group 2)
 - Group 3 – 2 daily transmissions; burden score was NOT displayed; cases that exceeded the burden threshold WERE removed
 - 4.1% of cases were removed (out of 4,213 total cases in treatment group 3)

CAPI Stopping Rules Pilot (cont'd)

- Operational Goals:
 - validate that burden scores are calculated accurately
 - ensure that work stops on cases that are removed
 - Identify training and tools needed to monitor progress for nationwide implementation

Operational Challenges

- Calculation for the Burden Score
 - The algorithm relies on the Mail and CATI contact data as well as daily Contact History Instrument (CHI) data that is transmitted from the FR laptops
 - Pilot – worked as specified; however, we did find occasions where FRs were reporting CHI contacts twice which caused some cases to accumulate “double points”.
 - Production – the score is now re-coded into 3 categories instead of using a number score.
- Display the Burden Score
 - Pilot – used a number for the score, i.e., 12, 43, 64, etc.
 - Production – using categories for the score:
L – Low, M – Medium, H – High

Operational Challenges (cont'd)

- Reassignments/"Double boarding"
 - Pilot
 - all burden scores were blanked out on any reassigned cases
 - Cases removed for exceeding the burden threshold were not automatically removed from all laptops with the case assigned
 - Production
 - Burden scores will be included at the time of the reassignment (no treatment groups)
 - Cases removed for exceeding the burden threshold will automatically be removed from all laptops assigned the case at the transmission following the removal

Operational Challenges (cont'd)

- Appointments
 - Pilot – Procedure to transfer respondent to the TQA operation to conduct the interview if an appointment was missed due to the case being removed
 - Production – Automated a case removal exception based on the presence of an appointment
- Language Assistance Challenges
 - Pilot – no special procedure developed
 - Production – Automated an exception to accruing burden points if “language problem” is present in the CHI data

Operational Challenges (cont'd)

- Time Zones
 - Pilot
 - FRs transmit before their work day began, but no earlier than 8:00am EST
 - FRs transmit at the end of their work day, but before midnight local time
 - HQ processing took place 3:00am – 8:00am EST
 - Production
 - Processing for the contiguous U.S. and Puerto Rico – 3:00am - 6:00am EST
 - Processing for Alaska and Hawaii – 6:00am - 9:00am EST
 - FRs transmit before their work day begins, but no earlier than 6:00am EST
 - FRs transmit at the end of their work day, but before midnight local time



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**A Field Perspective
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Lessons Learned

- How can we help FRs remember to conduct the extra transmission?
- Change the Field culture through improved training
- Help the FRs see the benefits of using CHI
- Help FRs understand the level of respondent burden
- Provide Supervisory reports to help monitor CHI entries
- Modify noninterview charges for 'high' burden cases
- Modify FR performance standards
- Improve wording in CHI (future)

The Extra Transmission

- FRs need to transmit twice each day on days they worked
- Change in procedure
- Developed FR training memos to explain importance of transmitting to capture the most recent case information on the progress and status of data collection operations.
- Developed Transmission Compliance Report for supervisors
- Changing the way we track transmissions

The Extra Transmission (cont'd)

- Ability to view start and end time of every transmission the FR makes (regardless of whether they have cases, whether the case status changed).
- Supervisors will be able to see what percentage of time during each assignment each FR followed transmission procedures.
- See a list of all work an FR is doing and transmission.
- Running record
- Supervisory tool used to remind FRs to transmit

Changing Field Culture

- Developed 5-step plan:
 1. VTC with RO staff, sponsoring division, FLD management, and Bureau Respondent Advocate (January 2016)
 2. Added verbiage to checklist for FR GPR observations (beginning February 2016)
 3. Update initial training (available July 2016)
 4. Develop and conduct classroom refresher training (May 23 through June 17, 2016)
 5. Develop FR memo for all ACS FRs (for June 2016 interviewing)

FR Benefits of Using CHI

- Learned during debriefing that some FRs did not see the benefit of recording CHI entries accurately
- Developed training with goal and 4 objectives
 - Define CHI
 - Identify the purpose of CHI
 - Identify the correlation between CHI and respondent burden
 - Review the flowchart of CHI

Help FRs Understand Level of Respondent Burden

- Developed RO and FR memos to explain background
- Developed training with goal and 13 objectives
 - Define burden
 - Identify the purpose of giving cases a burden level
 - Identify what FR actions contribute to burden
 - Outline the correlation between CHI and the burden level

Help FRs Understand Level of Respondent Burden (cont'd)

- Identify strategies for making each contact attempt count
- List actions that can negatively impact burden level
- List actions that ensure accurate burden score
- Identify how burden affects cases
- Identify the different levels of burden and how many contact attempts remain
- Identify where within case management to locate a case's burden level
- Define the impact of burden level on FR performance
- Identify dates for when this will take effect
- Cite where to find more information on burden level

Monitor CHI Entries

UTS: 1034 ACS Transmission Compliance Report (BETA)

Region: Atlanta

Interview Period:

	SSF	FS	FR	Current Workload	Progress Rate	Most Recent Transmission	# Days Since Last Transmit	Previous Transmission	% of Days Followed Procedures	Most Recent ACS CHI	Days with WebFRED no CHI	Days with CHI no WebFRED	Open Cases with no CHI	Completed Cases with no CHI
1	71	7181	S00-TMOFR900	8	10%	Mon, Apr 25, 2016 10:45:59 AM	0	Mon, Apr 25, 2016 8:37:49 AM	10%	Mon, Apr 25, 2016 10:06:43 AM	0	0	1	0

- Developed Supervisory reports to monitor both transmission and CHI compliance
- Compares payroll entries and CHI, open cases and no CHI, and completed cases and no CHI.

Noninterview Charges

- Met with Field management and survey sponsor to discuss options
- Decision to focus on cases with incoming high burden score
- Changed Type A policy
- May help alleviate FRs concerns from debriefing sessions about the affects of CATI on their performance

Modify FR Performance Standards

- Drop in National response rates due to:
 - Action plan to reduce hours/case to lower spending implemented April 2015
 - Burden Score pilot in August 2015 and new Type A 313 outcome code
 - Re-training FRs to see connection between their CAPI attempts to get interviews and respondent perceptions of harassment
- For FY16, we lowered the FR National Response Rate Standards on ACS.

Improve Wording in CHI (Future)

- CHI designed as generic instrument
- Some FRs are unsure what entries to make
- Initial review of the data found some FRs could improve on reporting CHI
- Looking into potential enhancements to CHI wording

Questions

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Links to Reports

- [Effect of Changing Call Parameters in the American Community Survey's Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing Operation](#)
- [Results of a Field Pilot to Reduce Respondent Contact Burden in the American Community Survey's Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing Operation](#)

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