

# Current Population Survey (CPS) Modernization

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# Agenda

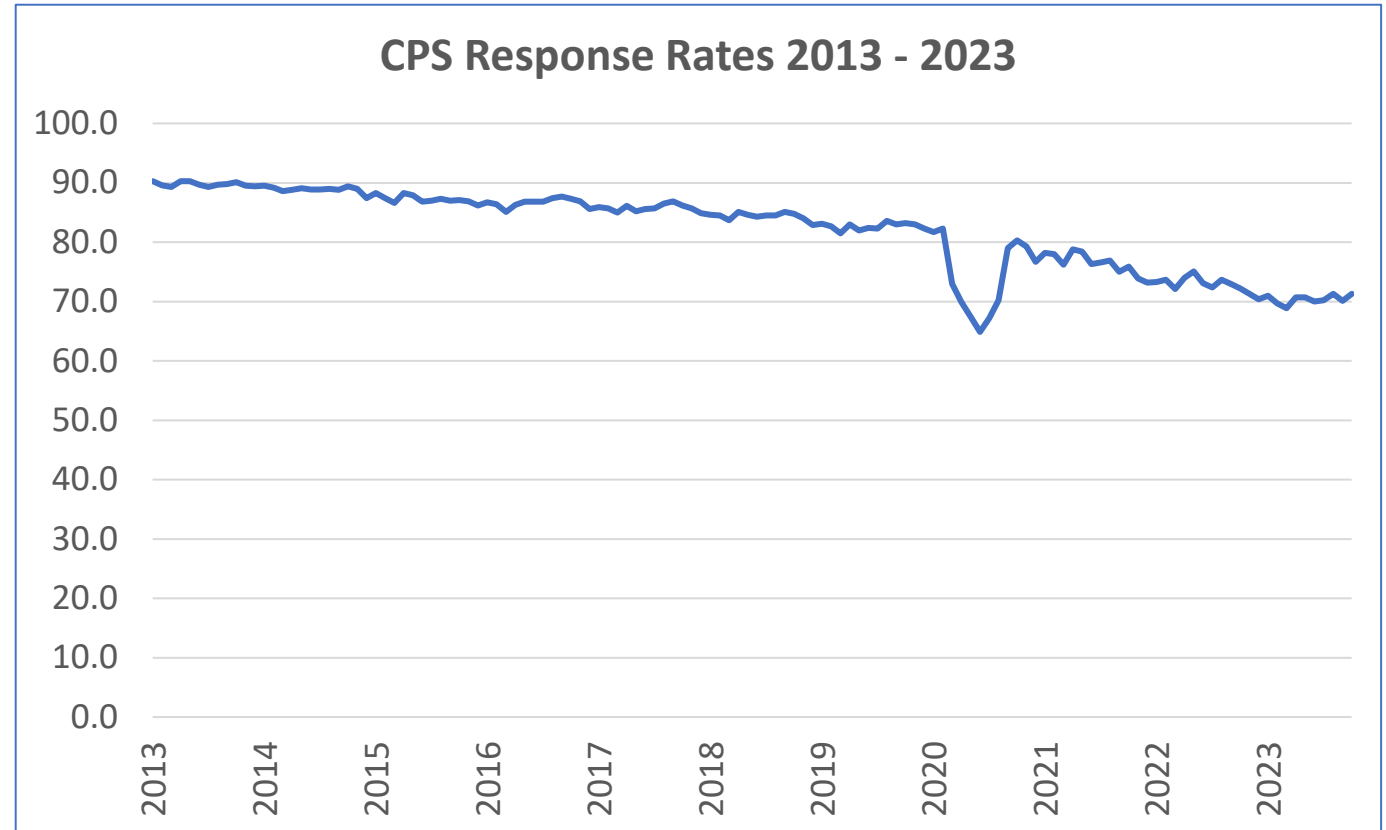
- CPS data-collection
- Current data collection challenges/need for modernization
- Developing a CPS web data collection instrument
- Broader CPS modernization research

# 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

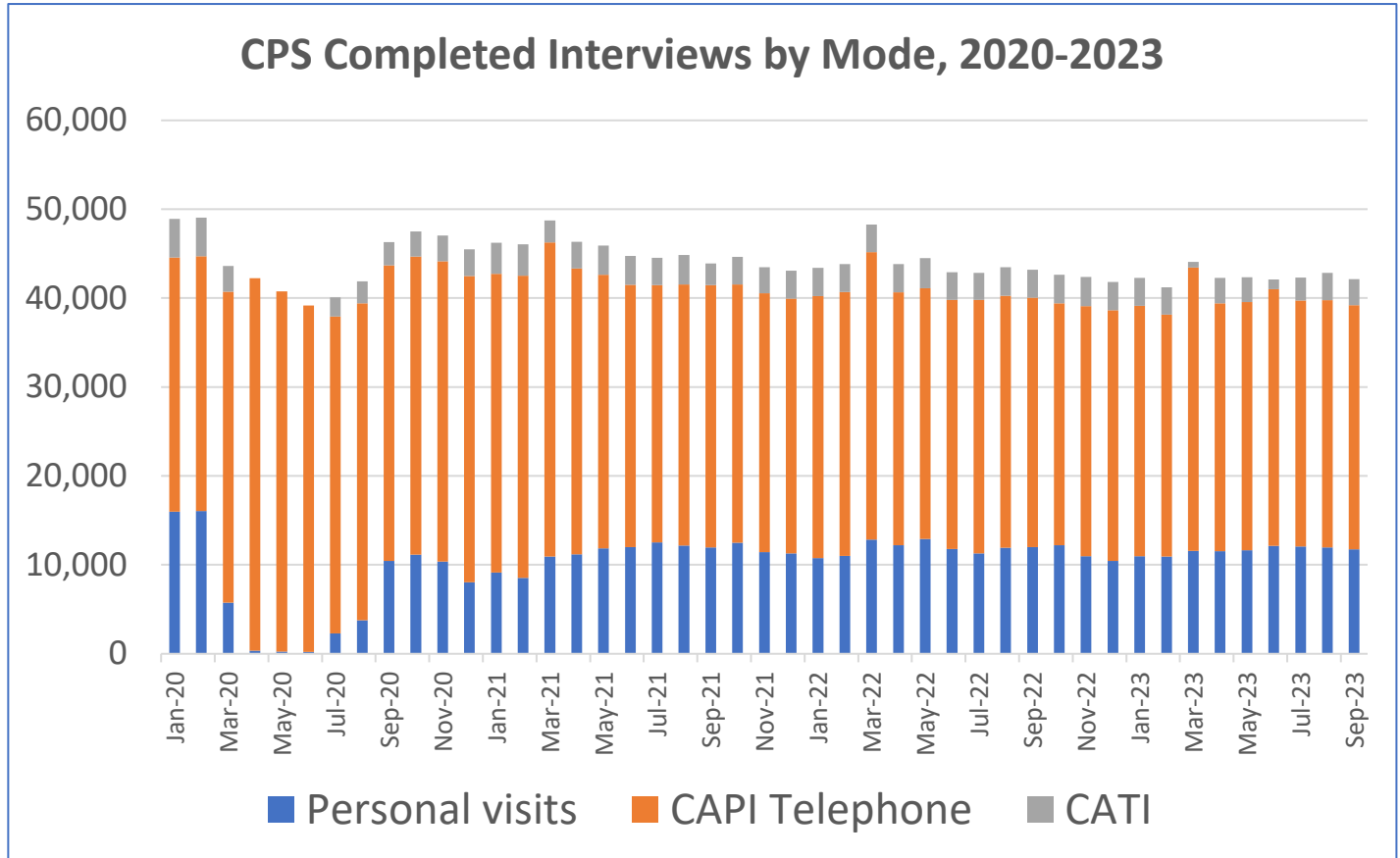
# Declining Response Rates

- 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

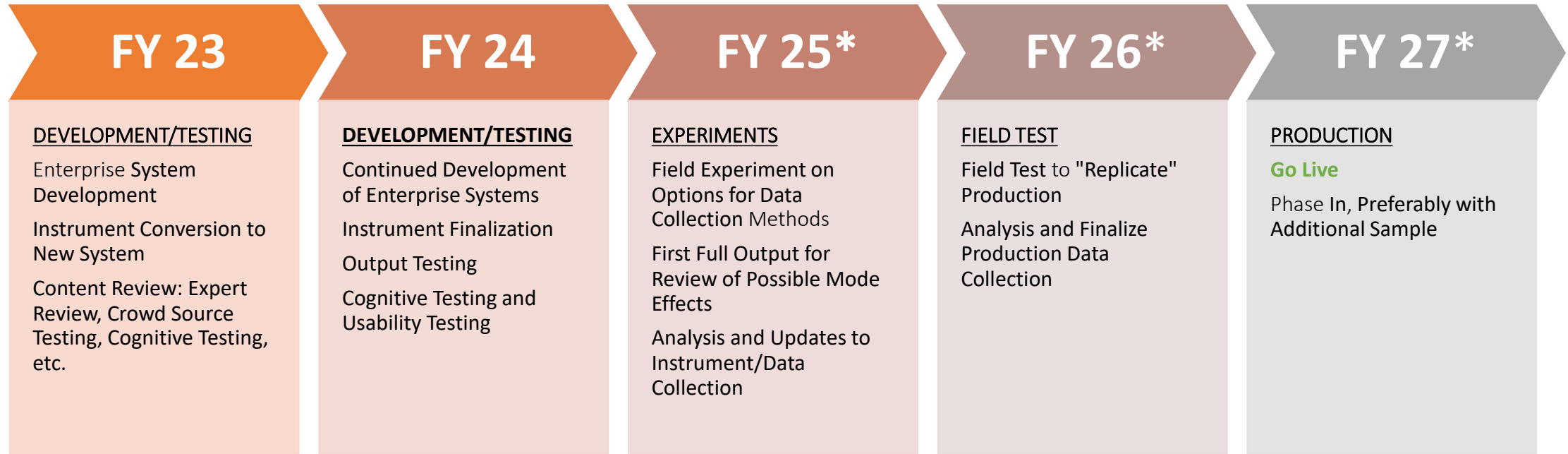
- Use of administrative records, modeling, and other modern techniques with a focus on improving data quality and reducing respondent burden

# 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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