Overview

• Purpose
• Background
• Questionnaire Development
• Cognitive Test
• Conclusions
Purpose

• To understand attitudes toward and knowledge of:
  – Federal Statistical System (FSS), public trust in the FSS, credibility of federal statistics, and
  – Statistical uses of administrative records.
BACKGROUND
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group

• Measure trust in official statistics
• Produce model survey questionnaire to gather comparable statistics internationally
• Cognitively tested in 6 member nations (Brackfield 2011)
• Questions are inadequately understood by U.S. respondents (Willson 2010)
OECD Model of Trust in Official Statistics

- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- Reliability
- Credibility
- Objectivity
- Relevance
- Coherence

Trust in statistical products
- Confidentiality protected
- Integrity
- Openness/transparency
- Impartiality
- Effective stakeholder management

Trust in official statistics

Cultural norms
Awareness
Past history/experience
Eurobarometer 2007

Do you trust official statistics?
2010 Gallup Poll

- Public awareness of 2010 Census advertising
- Intent to mail back their Census forms
- Used this feedback to make communication campaign decisions
- Achieved a mail-back participation rate of 74%

Miller and Waleko (2011)
QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT
Data Collection Vehicle: Gallup Daily Survey

- RDD CATI Survey
- 200 cases a night
- English and Spanish
- Dual-frame sampling (listed landline + RDD cellphone)
- Stratified proportionately by census region
- Weighted to match U.S. Census Bureau targets by age, sex, region, gender, education, ethnicity, and race
- Average of an 11% response rate
Structure of Questionnaire

• 25 questions total
  – 19 core: measure awareness of and attitudes towards federal statistics and federal statistical agencies.
  – 6 rotating: focusing on a range of issues
    • Administrative records use for statistical purposes (quality, privacy, & confidentiality)
    • Relationship between *known, planned events* and the FSS
    • Relationship between *unanticipated events* and the FSS
    • Agency-specific issues
Awareness

• Knowledge of Statistics
• Data User
  – Found to be best predictor of question comprehension in past cognitive testing by NCHS
Trust in Statistical Products

• Accuracy
• Reliability
• Credibility
• Objectivity
• Relevance
• Timeliness
• Coherence
Trust in Statistical Institution

• Confidentiality Protected
• Integrity
• Openness/Transparency
• Impartiality
• Effective Stakeholder Management
COGNITIVE TESTING
Cognitive Interviewing

- Qualitative methodology that offers the ability to understand the interpretive process behind answers to survey questions
- Shows *why* and *how* questions and/or response categories are flawed
- Informs strategies for improving question design
Methodology

• DC and Atlanta Metro areas
• Census, NCHS and IRS cognitive labs
• 42 interviews
• Diverse age, race, gender, education, income sample
• Respondent narrative and follow-up probing
• Semi-structured protocol
Cognitive Interviewing Findings

• **Overall lack of knowledge** about federal statistics led to:
  – Shifting Interpretations
  – Not thinking about statistics
  – Interpretations limited to examples given
Shifting Interpretations

• Contradictory answers to similar questions
• Example - “Federal statistical agencies can get information collected by any one of them”
  – Disagree -“I don’t think they share enough information. Unfortunately. You would think in this technology age they would, but they don’t.”
  – Same respondent very much against her personal information being shared for record linkage.
Not Thinking about Statistics

• Little awareness of federal statistics and no or few predefined opinions

• Respondents may sample from a set of irrelevant considerations:
  – Example 1 - “Statistics provided by federal agencies are often biased.” - Agree - Lobbyists have the ability to persuade members of congress to vote certain ways…
  – Example 2 - “Information collected to create federal statistics is sometimes used by the police and the FBI to keep track of people who break the law” - terrorists lists, sexual predator lists, a “large file” on John Lennon, etc.
Interpretations Limited to Examples Given

• First Qs asked about unemployment rate, population count, obesity stats and Neilson TV ratings

• Later Qs asked about federal stats more generally but Rs often answered about census

• Potential solutions:
  – Need to clearly define what the scope of the questions are about for Rs who are uncertain.
  – Preferable to at least have Rs think about a federal statistical agency when formulating their answers.
Recommendations

• Define concepts up front:
  – Because many people do not have a good deal of knowledge about federal statistics, it’s important that questions convey this topic immediately and consistently.

• Be specific:
  – Many Rs were thinking of specific federal agencies when answering the questions, make sure we are measuring what we think we are.

• Keep it simple:
  – Each question should be as straightforward as possible and avoid complex concepts that require higher-level thought and analysis on the part of Rs.
Final Questionnaire Topics

• Awareness
  – Orienting respondents – focusing on Federal Statistics
  – Data User – key knowledge variable

• Trust in Products and Institutions
  – Accuracy
  – Credibility
  – Integrity
  – Relevance
  – Objectivity/Transparency
  – Impartiality
  – Confidentiality Protected

• Administrative Records
Conclusions and Future Directions

• Field Test
  – Factor Analysis
  – Random Probing
  – Data Analysis

• Data collection began February 15, 2012 and will go through September 2013.
Thank you!

Questions or Comments?

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