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**Results and Recommendations from Cognitive Interviews
with the Employment History Topical Module
to the Survey of Income and Program Participation**

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FINAL REPORT

Results & Recommendations from Cognitive Interviews with the Employment History Topical Module to the Survey of Income & Program Participation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the research undertaken to cognitively pretest the Employment History Topical Module to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). In an effort to assess the performance of this revised SIPP module, as modified by the recommendations of the Continuous Instrument Improvement Group (CIIG), a series of cognitive interviews were conducted in February of 2003. Staff from the Center for Survey Methods Research (CSMR) conducted the interviews with a computer-automated instrument, containing questions from portions of the core SIPP instrument and the Employment History Module. Although questions from another revised module—the Reciprocity History Topical Module—were included in the instrument for pretesting purposes and preceded the Employment History questions, those results are not presented here.

The objective of the Employment History Module is to profile respondents' general work histories by identifying patterns of employment, length of employment at certain jobs, and reasons for long-term periods of unemployment after officially entering the labor force. Generally, the revisions implemented by CIIG incorporated revised and more conversationally-friendly question wording, included new questions documenting dates for periods of employment and unemployment (i.e., current job, previous job, first long-term job, total period of unemployment lasting six continuous months or longer), allowed multiple field codes to record reasons for absence from the labor force, and included new check items to assess the accuracy of respondent-provided information (e.g., incorporating verifying questions cross-referencing respondent's age or year at time of given event).

A summary of the main findings from this research are presented below:

Overall Successes:

- Most major paths through the instrument were pretested, and skip patterns operated as expected. Certain new verification questions, and other follow-up questions, remain untested due to insufficient response paths, but are not expected to cause major cognitive burden. These include the following screen numbers/names: 4. WK1WRK15; 5. WK1LWRKM; 7. LSTWRK15; 10. PRVJOB15; 13. FRMRYR15; 17. SXMTH15; 21. NO6REASN; 22. SIXMTHMN; 29. NWRESN; and 34. FRSTRSN;
- Recalling the year and month for previous work history was not particularly burdensome for most respondents because these events tended to be temporally recent (e.g., within the past year or two), and respondents successfully used a variety of cues to formulate their responses (e.g., season of the year, major life event like graduation or birth of a child). But, response burden can be expected to increase for respondents whose events are temporally distant and/or are not associated with a salient event; and
- The instrument seemed to successfully capture aspects of respondents' entry into the labor force and recent employment history.

Main Response Difficulties:

- Employment history data were most difficult to generate for respondents with complex and lengthy work histories, where stops and starts in the labor force did not necessarily coincide with major life events (e.g., chronic unemployment);
- One of the most difficult response tasks for respondents was estimating the total time spent out of the labor force for spells of six months in duration or longer, especially for those whose histories were complex, lengthy, and did not tend to coincide with other major life events; and

- Some questions with tailored/specified reference periods were prone to overload respondents' working memory (e.g., ANY6OFF) causing comprehension problems and frequent requests for reference period clarification.

Proposed Recommendations & Affected Screen Names:

- Screen 15. **FIRST6JOB** – Reword the interviewer note just above text entry space to communicate to interviewers that a broad range of responses are acceptable.
- Screen 16. **SIXMTHYR** – Reduce recall and response burden by adding an optional follow-up probe to make both response metrics known to respondents (i.e., year OR age of event).
- Screen 20. **NO6ALL** – Reduce response burden by adding a flashcard to display multidimensional response set that would otherwise remain “blind” to respondents.
- Screen 23. **ANY6OFF** – Improve comprehension/correct interpretation by adding an introduction to reorient respondents to the new topic, simplify question wording by deleting text that re-explains date references, and add the month to reference year(s) if recent (i.e., within current or previous year) and available to clarify reference period.
- Screen 24. **TIMEOFF** – Improve reporting accuracy by adding a new screen to precede TIMEOFF, called HOWMANY6, to prompt respondents' memory for different spells off of work during reference period. In TIMEOFF, combined month and year responses should be allowed (e.g., 5 years and 6 months), instead of only one or the other, to allow for more accurate/detailed data collection. Other suggestions include displaying the relevant time period for interviewer's on-screen reference, and simplified question wording.
- Screen 25. **WRK35HR** – Avoid breaks in logical question sequencing by relocating this question to precede ANY6OFF (i.e., OFF6MONTH should immediately follow TIMEOFF). Reduce comprehension difficulties and varying response strategies by replacing the term “generally” with the more descriptive word “mostly,” and allow month and year response metrics to ease response burden. As in ANY6OFF, use month and year (if available) when reference date(s) is/are recent (i.e., within the current or previous year) to clarify reference period.
- Screen 26. **OFF6MTH** – Simplify question wording by eliminating superfluous introduction and deleting text that re-explains reference period (e.g., as in ANY6OFF), add month to reference year(s) if recent (i.e., within current or previous year—also as in ANY6OFF), and eliminate causal component of current question wording by replacing term “because” with “when” or “while.”¹

The recommendations above reflect, and are consistent with, the suggested revisions submitted to the CIIG in an earlier document (See Attachment A), dated 3/7/03. This early submission was provided in an effort to comply with instrument authoring deadlines, and contains recommendations for revising instrument logic that are not presented in the following report. With the exception of one particular suggestion proposed for OFF6MTH (screen 26), these recommendations were accepted by the sponsor and will be incorporated into the existing Employment History Topical Module to the SIPP Methods Panel.

¹ This last recommendation (i.e., replacing “because” with “when” or “while”) was not accepted by the sponsor.

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ATTACHMENT A. Recommended Changes to the Employment History TM based on CSMR's cognitive interview research

A. RESEARCH PURPOSE

As part of a continuing effort to improve the flow and reduce respondent burden for the topical modules implemented in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the Continuous Instrument Improvement Group (CIIG) meets regularly to review the specifications and contents of these modules and proposes changes to skip pattern logic, eliminating redundant questions for which data is currently collected in the core instrument, and improves question wording.² After incorporating the proposed improvements into the modules, and before implementing them in the live SIPP instrument, it was thought the “improved” modules would benefit from cognitive research to assure the altered modules performed as expected. Thus, one of SIPP’s improved modules, the Employment History Topical Module, was selected for cognitive pretesting in the winter of 2003.

The objective of the Employment History Module is to profile respondents’ general work histories by identifying patterns of employment, length of employment at certain jobs, and reasons for long-term periods of unemployment after officially entering the labor force. Generally, the revisions implemented by CIIG incorporated revised and conversationally-friendly question wording, included new questions documenting dates for periods of employment and unemployment (i.e., current job, previous job, first long-term job, total period of unemployment lasting six continuous months or longer), allowed multiple field codes to record reasons for absence from the labor force, and included new check items to assess the accuracy of respondent-provided information (e.g., incorporating verifying questions cross-referencing respondent’s age or year at time of given event).

The number and complexity of this module’s modifications are too numerous to mention here, but major alterations are briefly described in the following list.³ In addition to minor wording changes throughout, the major modifications to the module included:

- 1) A new series of questions proposed by the module’s primary sponsor, HHES, to gather additional data regarding job spells for respondents with less than one year of current employment history (i.e., EH03A through WK1LWRKM);
- 2) Changes in skip pattern logic and follow-up questions accommodating respondents who held their first long term job at age 15 or younger;
- 3) Changes to question wording and intent for capturing total time off of work for spells of unemployment lasting six months or longer (i.e., ANY6OFF and TIMEOFF);
- 4) The addition of follow-up questions which cross-reference respondent-provided event year with calculated event age (and vice versa) to assure data accuracy (e.g., PRVJOB15, FRMRYR15, YRSIXMTH);
- 5) Altering a field coding task for a multi-dimensional, non-mutually exclusive response set from “choose one” to “mark all that apply” (i.e., NO6ALL, NWALL)—followed by a “main reason” question (i.e., NO6REASN, NWRESN); and
- 6) Tailoring fill instructions linked to reference periods in questions using employment history data provided by respondent (OFF6MTH).

The following sections of this report document the cognitive interview research used to assess the module’s performance, the characteristics of the respondents recruited for this research, general findings from the research, and a question-by-question evaluation of the module which are accompanied by recommendations where appropriate or needed. Recommendations contained in this report result from

² Fixed members of the CIIG include Census Bureau staff from the following divisions: DSD, DSMD, FLD, HHES, POP, SRD, and TMO.

³ CIIG’s recommendations are summarized in a memo from the group’s chair, Jeff Moore, to the SIPP Executive Committee – “Employment History Topical Module—Final Recommendations” (11/18/02).

the consensus of the researchers involved in the pretesting process, and are based upon a thorough review of the findings discussed at a group meeting.

B. METHOD & RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Method

In February of 2003, qualitative data regarding the Employment History Module's performance was obtained from 16 cognitive interviews. The cognitive pretesting was carried out with a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) and consisted of questions from portions of the core SIPP instrument, a revised Reciprocity History Topical Module, and a revised Employment History Topical Module, respectively.⁴ Although both modules were pretested simultaneously, respondents were recruited such that two groups of CSMR staff were able to focus on one or the other topical modules while pretesting its content.⁵ Because the same CAPI instrument was used to pretest both modules, a few respondents recruited for each module provided certain data that rendered them eligible for questions from both modules. So, although only thirteen respondents were recruited for the Employment History Module, data about the performance of these questions came from three respondents originally recruited for the other module.

Respondents were instructed to think-aloud as they answered the survey questions, and interviewers followed up with probes for questions of critical importance in the module and where there were apparent response difficulties. Interviews were between 30 minutes to one hour in length, and were conducted in the CSMR cognitive lab and places more convenient for respondents (i.e., respondents' homes, place of employment, and community service organizations).

Respondent Characteristics

Criteria used to recruit for the Employment History Module's cognitive interviews required respondents to have some type of employment history/activity over the past few years. In a few cases, special effort was given to recruiting respondents who may have left the workforce to care for elderly relatives or children. Consideration was also given to obtaining a diverse set of respondents regarding basic demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and race/ethnicity.

Respondents varied in the complexity of their employment histories. A few respondents had extremely unstable employment histories, while most other respondents seemed to have complex histories that included switching to or beginning new jobs, and dropping out of the labor force to care for young children. Less educated, African-American males were represented at the far end of the job stability scale, having the least amount of stability, whereas the Caucasian males seemed to have the greatest amount of job stability of all the respondents recruited for this project.

As Table 1 below illustrates, the 16 respondents recruited for this research were slightly skewed; they tended to be caucasians with some college or a college degree (n = 5) or African-Americans with an educational level of a high school diploma/equivalent or below (n = 6). The respondent pool was predominantly female (i.e., 8 female respondents were in the "low" education group, and 4 female respondents were in the "high" group). There was only one African-American (female) represented in the

⁴ Results from the Reciprocity History Topical Module are not discussed here, but are available in a related report produced by CSMR (author, Kristen Hughes). This particular module obtains a profile of patterns of participation in certain government programs prior to the beginning of the SIPP panel. Specific questions address the first time a respondent participated in a particular program, the length of participation, and the number of times the respondent has been in the program.

⁵ Staff conducting cognitive interviews primarily for the Employment History Module included Anna Chan, Ashley Landreth, and Jeff Moore. Staff conducting interviews focusing on the Reciprocity History Module included Kristen Hughes and Jennifer Hunter.

“high” education group. The four males were evenly split between the two education groups, however; all the African-Americans were in the “low” education group and all the caucasians were in the “high” group.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

<u>RACE/ETHNICITY</u>	<u>LOW EDUCATION^a</u>		<u>HIGH EDUCATION</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
African-American	2	4	0	1	7
Caucasian	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>9</u>
TOTAL	2	8	2	4	16

^a “Low” education is defined here as high school diploma/equivalent or below, while “high” education represents some college or above.

C. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

General Findings

For the most part, this module performed as intended. The instrument seemed to successfully capture aspects of respondents’ entry into the labor force and recent employment history. Most major paths through the instrument were pretested, and skip patterns operated as expected; however, certain new verification questions, and other follow-up questions, remain untested due to insufficient response paths. But, these questions are not expected to cause major cognitive burden. They include the following screen numbers/names: 4. WK1WRK15; 5. WK1LWRKM; 7. LSTWRK15; 10. PRVJOB15; 13. FRMYR15; 17. SXMTH15; 21. NO6REASN; 22. SIXMTHMN; 29. NWRESN; and 34. FRSTRSN.

Comprehension and response issues arose for respondents under a few different circumstances throughout the course of the interviews:

- Some respondents were caught off-guard by the extra effort required to comprehend and respond to the Employment History Module questions after being exposed to a long series of simplistic “yes/no” response tasks in the latter half of the modified SIPP core instrument, in addition to a few Reciprocity History Module questions.
- At times there was insufficient warning (or cues) for respondents to flag topic changes and difficult response tasks (e.g., TIMEOFF).
- Employment history data was most difficult to generate for respondents with complex and lengthy work histories, where stops and starts in the labor force did not necessarily coincide with major life events.
- Recalling the year and month for previous work history was not particularly burdensome for most respondents because these events tended to be temporally recent (e.g., within the past year or two), and respondents successfully used a variety of cues to formulate their responses (e.g., season of the year, major life event like graduation or birth of a child). Although, a few respondents did have difficulty generating this information, and one simply could not provide an answer. Response burden can be expected to increase for respondents whose events are temporally distant and/or are not associated with a salient event.

- One of the more difficult response tasks performed by respondents was constructing an estimate of total time spent out of the labor force for spells of six months in duration or longer, especially for those whose histories were complex, lengthy, and did not tend to coincide with other major life events.
- A few respondents were uncertain of, and not confident about, their interpretation of the “first job lasting six straight months or longer” concept, because criteria for the “job” concept were not presented (e.g., paid work, regular/frequent schedule, number of hours, taxes withheld, etc.). Consequently, respondents may not consistently classify in-scope “jobs” (e.g., paper carrier and babysitting jobs were judged to be out-of-scope).

Question-by-Question Findings

The recommendations in the report below reflect, and are consistent with, the suggested revisions submitted to the CIIG in an earlier document (See Attachment A), dated 3/7/03. This early submission was provided in an effort to comply with instrument authoring deadlines, and contains recommendations for revising instrument logic that are not presented in the following report. With the exception of one particular suggestion proposed for OFF6MTH (screen 26), these recommendations were accepted by the sponsor and will be incorporated into the existing Employment History Topical Module to the SIPP Methods Panel.

1. EMPHINTRO

Now I have some questions about your general work history.

1.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (EMPHINTRO):

New wording.

1.b. General Findings (EMPHINTRO):

Sixteen respondents received this introduction. Respondents seemed to comprehend this introduction screen without difficulty and had no apparent negative reactions.

1.c. Recommendation(s) (EMPHINTRO):

No change.

2. WK1BEFOR

Earlier I recorded that you started your [job with EMPNAME / BIZNAME business] in [start month] of [start year]. Were you working at some other job before [that one started / starting that business], or were you not working?

[1] - working at another job/business

[2] - not working

2.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (WK1BEFOR):

New screen for people with a current job which started within the past year. Note general understanding and recall issues.

2.b. General Findings (WK1BEFOR):

Three respondents received this question. Respondents who reported current employment in the core instrument navigated this question successfully. Respondents who had a job before their current job, and those who did not, both received this question and had no apparent difficulty with comprehension or response generation. Recall did not seem problematic, and for at least one respondent, the event was fairly recent (i.e., within the past 6-7 months).

2.c. Recommendation(s) (WK1BEFOR):

No change.

3. WK1LSTJB

Before [that job started / starting that business], in what year did you last work at a paid job or business?

3.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (WK1LSTJB):

New screen for WK1BEFOR = 2. Note general understanding and recall issues.

3.b. General Findings (WK1LSTJB):

Only one respondent received this question, and seemed to have difficulty with recall. Eventually this respondent estimated her answer based upon the birth year of her child; she knew she had held a job for a year prior to the birth.

3.c. Recommendation(s) (WK1LSTJB):

Although this question may cause recall difficulties when this event is temporally distant, comprehension of the basic concept in the question seems to be understood. Thus, the recommendation is that no change be made to this question.

4. WK1WRK15

So, before the [job/business] that started in [start month] [start year], you were about [AGE] when you last worked before that – is that right?

[1] Yes; correct

[2] No

4.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (WK1WRK15):

New screen. Note general understanding and recall issues.

4.b. General Findings (WK1WRK15):

No respondents filtered into this question.

4.c. Recommendation(s) (WK1WRK15):

No change.

5. WK1LWRKM

In what month was that?

5.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (WK1LWRKM):

New screen. Note recall issues.

5.b. General Findings (WK1LWRKM):

No respondents filtered into this question.

5.c. Recommendation(s) (WK1LWRKM):

No change.

6. LSTWRKY1

FORM A:

[Before you started your current job or business, in] what year did you last work at a paid job or business?

FORM B:

[In] what year did you last work at a paid job or business?

6.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (LSTWRKY1):

Change in skip pattern for respondents less than 15 and greater than 60.

6.b. General Findings (LSTWRKY1):

Only two respondents received this question, and both received Form B. This task was slightly cognitively burdensome, although more for one respondent than the other. One respondent had difficulty recalling the year she last worked at a job, even though it was a relatively recent event (i.e., 2002; just a few months prior to the interview) because it occurred at the end of the year. Both respondents offered that they could not recall the month for this event (NOTE: question does not ask for month; this information is collected in a subsequent question). Ultimately, both respondents were able to provide adequate and accurate answers (i.e., the year they last worked).

6.c. Recommendation(s) (LSTWRKY1):

No change.

7. LSTWRK15

So you were about [AGE] when you last worked – is that right?

[1] Yes; correct

[2] No

7.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (LSTWRK15):

New screen to probe respondents less than 15 years old at first job/business. Note general understanding, recall issues, and sensitivity (does question sound like interviewers doubt his/her veracity or memory ability?).

7.b. General Findings (LSTWRK15):

No respondents filtered into this question.

7.c. Recommendation(s) (LSTWRK15):

No change.

8. LSTWRKM1

In what month was that?

8.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (LSTWRKM1):

N/A

8.b. General Findings (LSTWRKM1):

Both respondents receiving this question estimated the month to the best of their ability (e.g., “September or October” and “It must have been at the end of the year, I guess it was December”).

8.c. Recommendation(s) (LSTWRKM1):

Although this question may cause recall difficulties and estimation, no change is recommended for this question.

9. PRVJOBYR *[if some paid work in the ref period, but none in week 1]*

Before [MONTH1+], in what year did you last work at a paid job or business?

9.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (PRVJOBYR):

N/A

9.b. General Findings (PRVJOBYR):

Three respondents received this question, all of whom had some type of problem understanding the question’s intent. Two respondents were unclear about the intended response metric (i.e., one respondent was not clear whether the question was asking for a name or a date, the other respondent thought the question asked for a month). Both respondents, however, seemed to provide the correct information when allowed to process the question further (e.g., question was repeated or additional time given for respondent to think about question wording). The last respondent had more specific conceptual trouble when it came to the phrase “last worked.” She recently terminated her job, but had been on a composite of maternity, annual, and unpaid leave (6 months total), prior to leaving her job officially. She was therefore unclear whether she should report the “day she physically left the job” or the “day she terminated employment.” When given a little extra time to process this question, she ultimately interpreted the question intent correctly as “day she physically left the job,” and was able to provide correct data. The recall task did not seem overly burdensome for these respondents, because the events were temporally close (i.e., all within the calendar year 2002). This task could be more difficult if this event is distant and does not coincide with other salient life events—in this case, estimation rather than recall is likely to occur.

9.c. Recommendation(s) (PRVJOBYR):

No change.

10. PRVJOB15

So you were about [AGE] when you last worked – is that right?

10.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (PRVJOB15):

New screen to probe respondents less than 15 years old at first job/business. Note general understanding, recall issues, and sensitivity (does question sound like interviewers doubt his/her veracity or memory ability?).

10.b. General Findings (PRVJOB15):

No respondents filtered into this question.

10.c. Recommendation(s) (PRVJOB15):

No change.

11. PRVJOBMN

In what month was that?

11.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (PRVJOBMN):

N/A

11.b. General Findings (PRVJOBMN):

Two of the three respondents who had difficulty with PRVJOBYR carried it through to this question. One respondent interpreted this question as “the month his last job began,” instead of the month employment terminated. And, the respondent who terminated her employment after 6 months of paid/unpaid leave (to care for newborn) felt a little uncomfortable reporting when she physically left the workplace, because she had provided her employer with unpaid consulting services throughout this time. Ultimately, though, this respondent answered correctly with the month she physically left the jobsite. Recall for these respondents did not seem to be as difficult as interpreting the question’s intent correctly.

11.c. Recommendation(s) (PRVJOBMN):

No change.

12. FRMRYR

In what year did you start that [previous/...] job or business?

12.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRMRYR):

New wording.

12.b. General Finding (FRMRYR):

Nine respondents received this question, and for most, recall did not seem to be an issue because beginning a new job coincided with some other major life event (e.g., graduating from college). For a few, however, recall was more cognitively demanding (e.g., when event was less salient due to temporal distance or frequency of stopping/starting new jobs). One respondent, whose event in question was distant, knew the beginning of her previous job began 13 years earlier and subtracted that number from the current year.

12.c. Recommendation(s) (FRMYR):

No change.

13. FRMYR15

So you were about [AGE] when you started that work – is that right?

13.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRMYR15):

New screen to probe respondents less than 15 years old at first job/business. Note general understanding, recall issues, and sensitivity (does question sound like interviewers doubt his/her veracity or memory ability?).

13.b. General Findings (FRMYR15):

No respondents filtered into this question.

13.c. Recommendation(s) (FRMYR15):

No change.

14. FRMRMN

In what month was that?

14.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRMRMN):

N/A

14.b. General Findings (FRMRMN):

As the temporal distance of these events increased, relative to the events from earlier questions, the degree to which this information was available varied across respondents: some respondents were unable to provide the month in which their former job began whatsoever, some respondents found this information to be quite salient, and others had vague memories tied to a particular season and estimated the month based on that information (e.g., sometime between late spring and early summer = month of May).

14.c. Recommendation(s) (FRMRMN):

No change.

15. FIRST6JOB

FORM A:

[Including service in the Armed Forces] what was the first job or business you had that lasted 6 straight months or more?

FORM B:

[What] was the first job or business you had that lasted 6 straight months or more?

Enter brief job/business name or description:

15.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FIRST6JOB):

New screen. Note general understanding and recall issues. Do respondents interpret question to include both full- and part-time jobs/businesses—or only full- or only part-time? Do respondents interpret the question as job/business lasting 6 months or more, or as the first spell of job/business WORK that lasted 6 months or more, which could have included multiple jobs/businesses?

15.b. General Findings (FIRST6JOB):

Fifteen respondents received this question, and although it functioned properly (i.e., to prompt general recall of first entry into labor force of six month duration or longer), there were minor problems with recording responses due to variations in the types of information respondents provided (e.g., respondents often provided their place, instead of type, of employment). The cause for the confusion among a few interviewers seemed to stem from the interviewer instruction, “Enter brief job/business name or description,” which caused these interviewers to probe respondents unnecessarily for a greater level of detail than was necessary (e.g., eliciting an actual job title or description after respondents provided answers like, “Texas” or “JC Penny”). Additional problems with comprehension, for at least one respondent, related to Form A of the question (i.e., question became lengthy with “Armed Forces” fill). Although, of the three respondents who received Form A, two were able to answer immediately, since duty in the Armed Forces was their first entry into the labor force. Also, a few respondents excluded events of long-term employment when it may or may not have been appropriate (e.g., a paper carrier is not a “real” job; “...it’s not like you’re really going and stamping a time clock” and a paid, yet sporadic, babysitting arrangement lasting a number of years was also excluded because it was a small amount of money and she did not claim it on her income tax return.).

An intrusion from an introductory screen in the Reciprocity Module occurred at this point (i.e., “...as an adult”), and the retention of this phrase by one respondent caused him to question whether long-term jobs held before the age of 18 should be excluded (i.e., the paper route he held in his mid-teens).

Concepts that were successfully conveyed to most respondents included the long-term employment clause, “...that lasted 6 straight months or more?” and most said they thought part- as well as full-time employment would meet the long-term employment criteria for this question. The on-screen interviewer note, instructing respondents to consider part- as well as full-time employment should also help interviewers convey the question’s intent for respondents who are uncertain. Cognitive interviewers were unsuccessful in gaining insight from these respondents about the issue of multiple jobs of less than 6 months, but together spanning more than 6 months, because no respondent had such experience and they found it difficult to provide feedback regarding this hypothetical situation.

15.c. Recommendation(s) (FIRST6JOB):

The intrusion related to the Reciprocity History Module has been eliminated, and should help prevent a premature narrowing of the job universe in this question. This question merely serves to prompt respondents to begin thinking about their first entry into the labor force, in preparation for the SIXMTHYR question, and it seems to serve that purpose. Thus, the only recommendation is that the interviewer instruction be written more vaguely to avoid confusion about the level of specificity required in a response. Consider replacing “Enter brief job/business name or description:”, just above the text entry field, with the following less specific text:

1st 6+ month job/business:

16. SIXMTHYR

FORM A:

How old were you when you [started that (job/business)?]

FORM B:

How old were you when you [first started working at a job or business that lasted at least 6 straight months?]

_____ (AGE) or _____ (YEAR)

16.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (SIXMTHYR):

New screen. Note general understanding and recall issues. Do respondents interpret question to include both full- and part-time jobs/businesses—or only full- or only part-time? Do respondents interpret as job/business lasting 6 months or more, or as the first spell of job/business WORK that lasted 6 months or more, which could have included multiple jobs/businesses?

16.b. General Findings (SIXMTHYR):

Many of the fifteen respondents who received this question had no difficulty recalling their age, because this event coincided with other major life events (e.g., high school graduation and obtaining a driver's license). There was evidence, however, of reporting burden for this question. One respondent was uncertain whether she should include part-time work, one respondent estimated an age (i.e., "About maybe 17"), and one respondent worked particularly hard to calculate an age based on a year already accessible in memory. For this last respondent, and at least one other respondent, it would have been easier to report a year instead of having to calculate an age. Although the question allows both metrics to be recorded, the question explicitly asks for only one (i.e., age at event), and reporting burden could be eased for respondents who have a year more readily assessable, if only they were aware that answers in that alternative form were acceptable.

16.c. Recommendation(s) (SIXMTHYR):

To ease reporting burden for respondents who do not remember their age, but rather the year of this event, a follow-up probe could be added to the screen. Such a probe would explicitly communicate to respondents that reporting in another metric (i.e., years) is also acceptable. Consider adding the following probe, just after the main question, to be administered when interviewers observe respondents having reporting difficulties:

"How old were you when . . ."

(Or do you remember the year?)

_____ (AGE) or _____ (YEAR)

17. SIXMTH15

So you were about [AGE] when your first long-term (job/business) started – is that right?

17.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (SIXMTH15):

New screen to probe respondents less than 15 years old at first job/business. Note general understanding, recall issues, and sensitivity (does question sound like interviewers doubt his/her veracity or memory ability?).

17.b. General Findings (SIXMTH15):

No respondents filtered into this question.

17.c. Recommendation(s) (SIXMTH15):

No change.

18. YRSIXMTH

That would be around (CALENDAR YEAR). Is that correct?

18.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (YRSIXMTH):

N/A

18.b. General Findings (YRSIXMTH):

Of the nine respondents who received this question, only one respondent felt it implied the interviewer/computer doubted her response and/or math ability. For the remaining respondents, this question allowed respondents to confirm the year, calculated from respondents' answer to the previous question. This question worked particularly well for one respondent who, given this confirmatory question and extra processing time, realized she reported her age incorrectly in the previous question. So, this question allowed the respondent and the interviewer to successfully negotiate a more accurate answer.

18.c. Recommendation(s) (YRSIXMTH):

Should this question cause respondents any discomfort, interviewers might be likely to normalize this situation as it occurs (e.g., "This is just something the computer comes up with and asks me to double-check"). No change to this question is recommended.

19. SXMTHYR2

I'm sorry. What year was it?

ENTER START YEAR OF THE PERSON'S FIRST "6-STRAIGHT-MONTHS-OR-MORE"
JOB OR BUSINESS

_____ (YEAR)

19.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (SXMTHYR2):

New FR note.

19.b. General Findings (SXMTHYR2):

One respondent received this question because the previous question (i.e., YRSIXMTH) caused her to realize she had incorrectly reported her age in SIXMTHYR. The interviewer and respondent were able to successfully negotiate the correct year for this event.

19.c. Recommendation(s) (SXMTHYR2):

No change.

20. NO6ALL

FORM A:

1. [Before MONTH, why did] you never work[...] [six straight months] at a paid job or business [...]?
2. [Before MONTH, why did] you never work[...] [...] at a paid job or business [after you were 15]?

FORM B:

1. [Why have] you never work[ed] [six straight months] at a paid job or business [...]?
2. [Why have] you never work[ed] [...] at a paid job or business [after you were 15]?

- <1> Taking care of a minor child
- <2> Taking care of an elderly family member
- <3> Taking care of a disabled but non-elderly family member
- <4> Other family or home responsibilities
- <5> Own illness or disability
- <6> Could not find work
- <7> Did not want to work
- <8> Going to school
- <9> Other

20.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (NO6ALL):

New screen. Note general understanding, recall issues, ease of fit between respondent's report and pre-codes.

20.b. General Findings (NO6ALL):

Only one respondent received this question (i.e., Form B1) and although she was able to comprehend it generally, her circumstances made reporting difficult. The respondent had a mental disability, in addition to being illiterate, which may have been her main reason for never entering the labor force. Yet, the respondent was not clear how best to respond to this line of questioning. The core SIPP asked this respondent for similar information twice before she was routed to this question. Her response to why she was not currently working in the SIPP core was that she "received [welfare] checks," and at this question she finally reports the reason she's never been employed is that she can neither read nor write.

The "blind" format of the response set, from a respondent's point of view, poses an interesting issue when reasons for never entering the labor force are complex, or shift over time. Should the data collected reflect an interviewer's judgment of respondent-provided information? Or, should the data collected reflect a respondent's assessment of the situation?

20.c. Recommendation(s) (NO6ALL):

Consider adding a flashcard to display the multi-dimensional response options that would otherwise remain "blind" to respondents. Because reasons for complete absence from the labor force might be extremely complex, and a variety of responses will be elicited through open-ended questions, the response option selection task could be simplified by revealing these categories to respondents up front. This strategy would allow respondents to select that which best described their situation without having to guess at appropriate responses. Adding a flashcard relieves interviewers from having to read a long list, at the same time as it eases response burden and facilitates a self-report data collection process rather than a process driven by interviewer-observation. Illiterate respondents, of

course, would need to have the flashcard read aloud. With this approach there may be, however, some reluctance for “disabled” persons to label/categorize themselves as such, but this issue is beyond the scope of the current pretesting project.

21. NO6REASN *[display reasons marked in NO6ALL]*

FORM A:

What is the main reason?

(– the main reason [you] never worked [six straight months] at a paid job or business?)

FORM B:

What is the main reason?

(– the main reason [you] never worked [...] at a paid job or business?)

21.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (NO6REASN):

New structure/format. Note general understanding and task difficulty. Does allowing multiple responses first, then getting “main” reason in follow-up make the task easier for respondent?

21.b. General Findings (NO6REASN):

No respondents filtered into this question.

21.c. Recommendation(s) (NO6REASN):

Allow respondent to retain flashcard from previous question. Otherwise, no change is recommended.

22. SIXMTHMN

In what month was that?

22.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (SIXMTHMN):

New screen. Note recall issues.

22.b. General Findings (SIXMTHMN):

No respondents filtered into this question.

22.c. Recommendation(s) (SIXMTHMN):

No change.

23. ANY6OFF

FORM A:

[if there is a valid entry for either LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR, fill:]

[Between [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR], when your first long-term (job/business) started, and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR], when you last worked, were there] any times when you did not work for 6 straight months or more?

FORM B:

[*else fill:*] [Since [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR], when your first long-term (job/business) started, have there been] any times when you did not work for 6 straight months or more?

<1> Yes

<2> No

23.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (ANY6OFF):

New screen. Note general understanding and recall issues. Would an explicit cue for women (mothers?) mentioning time off to raise children be an effective cue? Are there other specific cues we should consider?

23.b. General Findings (ANY6OFF):

Fifteen respondents received this question, and at least half were asked Form B. About half of the respondents deciphered the main thrust of this question correctly (i.e., ever been out of the labor force?), and most attended to the “6 straight months or more” criterion. There was evidence, however, that at least one respondent did not interpret this criteria correctly (i.e., one respondent was thinking about 6 weeks, not months). This reporting task seemed easiest for respondents with distinct and lengthy periods of time out of the labor force, or for those who had none or only very brief periods out of the labor force to consider (e.g., a few months). Salient memory cues (e.g., major life events such as the birth of a child and back surgery) also helped recall a great deal. This task was more difficult, however, for respondents who were out of the labor force for multiple spells of varying lengths (e.g., chronic unemployment situations). It was also more difficult for those who may have had recent periods out of the labor force that lasted just under or over the “6 straight months” criterion.

For the other half of the respondents, comprehension problems occurred due to the question’s complexity, length and subsequent demand on working memory. Respondents had to keep in mind the reference years, plus the description re-explaining the origination of each reference date (e.g., “when your first long-term job/business started...”), while simultaneously reviewing their work history. A context effect, created from previous questions with similar language (i.e., “for 6 straight months” in SIXMTHYR), may also explain the occurrence of the comprehension problems. While listening to the complex question, respondents may have attended to the familiar-sounding “6 straight months or more” criterion and misinterpreted the remaining portion of the question. As a result, at least two respondents thought the question was asking whether their *previous/first job* lasted 6 months or longer.

The tailored/specified reference periods caused a few respondents judgment difficulties when they experienced recent spells out of the workforce (e.g., during the current or previous year). This caused awkward and/or insufficient reference periods to display within the question (e.g., confused about when to report she “last worked”—March or September”—in a previous question, this respondent was unclear which month in 2002 she should include as part of the reference period—up through March or September of 2002?). Although not related to reference dates, another respondent experienced judgment difficulties when she excluded an entire year she spent out of the labor force in a job-training program (i.e., sponsored by Goodwill).

Since taking time off of work following a pregnancy was a fairly significant/salient event for respondents, and other life situations that presented themselves in cognitive interviews were not likely to be shared across a great number of respondents (e.g., back surgery), no other evidence was uncovered which suggests these or other cues might stimulate recall for these events.

23.c. Recommendation(s) (ANY6OFF):

- 1) Slow the interview down and allow respondents to reorient themselves to a new topic by adding an introduction to communicate the topic shift (i.e., FROM: jobs of a certain length, TO: periods of time out of the workforce of a certain length);
- 2) Reduce strain on working memory and simplify the question by deleting text that re-explains the reference dates (e.g., “when your first long-term job started”). Respondents should be able to carry forward the reason behind the specified dates, because most respondents reach this question just after the two questions determining the first and most recent long-term employment spells; and
- 3) Avoid judgment difficulties and confusion over recent reference dates by providing respondents with the month(s), if available, and year(s), when they are recent (i.e., within current or previous year).

This combined approach should help simplify the question, reduce demand on working memory, encourage correct interpretation, and clarify the reference period. Consider formatting this question in the following manner:

We’ve been talking about when [NAME] HAVEHAS worked. Next are questions about when HESHE WASWERE not working.

[if there is a valid entry for either LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR or WK1LSTJB, fill:]
Between [(if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill “the year”) SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR or WK1LSTJB], were there...

[else fill:] **Since [(if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill “the year”) SIXMTHYR], have there been...
...any times when [NAME] did not work for 6 straight months or more?**

24. TIMEOFF

FORM A:

Adding up all the times when you were out of work for 6 months or more, how much time [did] you spen[d] out of work [between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR]]?

FORM B:

Adding up all the times when you were out of work for 6 months or more, how much time [HAVE] you spen[t] out of work [since [SIXMTHYR]]?

_____ years or _____ months

24.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (TIMEOFF):

New screen. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty.

24.b. General Findings (TIMEOFF):

Ten respondents received this question, and at least half of them received Form B. The majority of respondents seemed to understand the question’s intent, including the “6 months or more” aspect, but the response and recall tasks were very difficult for most. The only respondents (3) who were able to provide an answer automatically had one long, distinct period of unemployment (e.g., “five years

straight” and “after I had the boys I didn’t work for 8 years”). The remaining respondent were fairly successful in their use of estimation strategies (e.g., over a 10-year period one respondent knew he had time off in between each job and each spell out of the labor force lasted no more than one year, so he estimated 3 years, since extended time off of work had happened about 3-4 times); however, a few respondents were unable to provide any type of answer because estimating and/or guessing were too difficult. So, the most difficult response scenarios tended to be those with long reference periods and sporadic (many starts and stops) employment/unemployment spells. This task will be increasingly difficult for respondents when salient and reliable patterns of employment/unemployment upon which to base estimation strategies are absent.

For the few respondents who either did not attend to, or ignored, the “6 months or more” aspect of the question, response error was significant. At first, one respondent tried to calculate periods of 6 *weeks* or longer before the interviewer interjected, because he’d not attended to the “6 *months* or more” aspect of the question. Another respondent estimated his *entire* absence from the labor force, either because he did not attend to the “6 months” criterion or because it was too difficult. His revised response, after extensive probing to determine the number of spells and length of time at each spell, decreased from his original estimate of 5 to 6 years to only 18 months.

A couple of respondents had difficulties with the specified/tailored response period. One respondent’s inability to limit recall to the specified reference period caused her to overestimate; her answer included time off of work from the beginning of the reference period up to the present, ignoring the specified reference period cutoff date (i.e., 2002). An extremely short reference date (i.e., 1999-2000) possibly caused another respondent to misinterpret the question; she thought it was asking for time she missed from work (e.g., sick days).

NOTE: This question only allows data to be recorded in months OR years, not both. During the cognitive interviews, the instrument would allow an entry of 18 months, but not 28 months. An explicit interviewer instruction regarding rounding months to years is not present.

24.c. Recommendation(s) (TIMEOFF):

1) Due to the inherent comprehension, recall, and judgment difficulties respondents will encounter in this question, and because determining the number of “out of work” spells contained within the specified/tailored reference period seems to be key in estimating a response, response burden could be decreased and accuracy increased if TIMEOFF was split into two questions. The first question should ask about the number of times the respondent has been out of the workforce. Such a question should use both the month and year (if available, as suggested in ANY6OFF) from questions LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB when that reference year is either the present or previous year in relation to the interview date. Consider adding this new screen (i.e., HOWMANY6), which would precede TIMEOFF:

[if filling “Since [SIXMTHYR]” use “has happened” and “HAVEHAS NAME been”; otherwise use “did that happen” and “WASWERE NAME”]

>HOWMANY6<

How many times [has/did] that [happened/happen]?

([Since [SIXMTHYR] / Between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 / PRVJOBYR / WK1LSTJB]], how many times [WASWERE NAME/HAVHAS NAME been] out of work for 6 months or more?)

[0] change ANY6OFF to “no”; skip TIMEOFF

[1] continue with TIMEOFF

- [2] continue with TIMEOFF**
- [3] continue with TIMEOFF**
- [4] continue with TIMEOFF**
- [5] - more than 4 – continue with TIMEOFF**
- [D/R] – continue with TIMEOFF**

2) The second portion of this estimation task could then ask respondents to compile a total period using the pre-identified number of spells out of the labor force as a cue for executing a more accurate estimate (or better yet, an enumeration). Question wording for TIMEOFF could then be simplified (e.g., delete overt reference periods), since the response task has been modified and facilitated by the addition of HOWMANY6;

3) Accept combined month and year responses to allow for more accurate and detailed data collection; and

4) Display relevant time period for interviewers' on-screen reference in case respondents either request clarification or indicate to interviewers they are having difficulty limiting responses to the implied reference period:

TIME PERIOD: SINCE [SIXMTHYR]
or
BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [LSTWRKY1]
or
BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [PRVJOBYR]
or
BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [WK1LSTJB]

Altogether, [.../counting up all those periods,] what was the total amount of time that NAME spent out of work [during that one period/...]?

_____ years
and
 _____ months

25. WRK35HR

FORM A:

During all the time you [worked up until [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR], did you generally work] 35 or more hours per week?

FORM B:

During all the time you [have worked since [SIXMTHYR], have you generally worked] 35 or more hours per week?

- <1> Yes
- <2> No

25.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (WRK35HR):

Revised wording. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty.

25.b. General Findings (WRK35HR):

Fourteen respondents received this question, and at least eight received Form B. In cases where the specified/tailored reference periods were long enough to contain several discrete job histories, and the typical hours worked varied across those jobs, the term “generally” became difficult for some respondents to negotiate. It was also unclear whether or not respondents differentially interpreted this concept. Evidence from a few respondents suggests they were only considering one job within the reference period, and not all jobs held during that time (i.e., the most recent, or current, job). Although, when probed, these respondents indicated their answers held true for the eligible jobs they were not considering when answering this question.

In addition, this question seems out of place; it is sandwiched between two questions about time off of work and the reasons for labor force absence. This question’s location seems to interrupt the logical flow of the interview.

25.c. Recommendation(s) (WRK35HR):

- 1) Relocate this question to precede ANY6OFF, which will avoid breaks in logical question sequencing and reduce the likelihood that extraneous information will crowd out the reference period from this question (needed for the subsequent question, OFF6MTH) in respondents’ working memory;
- 2) Consider replacing the term “generally” with “mostly,” which seems to more definitively convey the “51 percent or more” concept for respondents whose work hour arrangements have varied across jobs and over time;
- 3) Make the reference period more explicit for respondents, to increase the likelihood they will consider all eligible jobs, instead of their most recent or current job. Consider replacing “up until” with “between” and using the SIXMTHYR date to define the beginning of the reference period; and
- 4) As in ANY6OFF, use month and year (if available) when reference date is recent (i.e., within the current or previous year):

During all the time [NAME] . . .

worked between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB], did HESHE mostly work . . .

[or:]

HAVHAS worked since [SIXMTHYR], HAVHAS HESHE mostly worked . . .

. . . 35 or more hours per week?

26. OFF6MTH

FORM A: (if ANY6OFF="yes")

1. [Earlier we talked about periods of time you were not working for 6 months or more [since (SIXMTHYR)].]

[...] Have you had any long periods off work because you were taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?

2. [Earlier we talked about periods of time you were not working for 6 months or more [between (SIXMTHYR) and (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR)].]

[Including the time since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR),] have you had any long periods off work because you were taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?

FORM B: (if ANY6OFF="no")

Since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR), have there been any periods of time when you were off work for 6 months or more because you [were] taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?

<1> Yes

<2> No

26.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (OFF6MTH):

Revised wording. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty. Fills may render this question too wordy—can it be streamlined?? Would it make more sense to move these screens to immediately follow ANY6OFF/TIMEOFF (i.e., move WRK35HR to the end)?

26.b. General Findings (OFF6MTH):

Six respondents received this question, and at least three respondents received the lengthiest version (Form A2). This question's introductory statement (i.e., "Earlier we talked about...") lengthened this question considerably for those respondents, taxed their working memory, and caused confusion about the specified/tailored reference period—this was primarily due to the complex question wording (e.g., respondents often asked for clarification or a "repeat" of the intended reference period, because they were uncertain whether they remembered it correctly). This situation was probably aggravated by the disruption in the logical flow of the interview, as well as the tailored reference period, when the previous (existing) question (i.e., WRK35HR) was asked.

One respondent brought to light the causal implication of this question, i.e., it assumes care-giving *causes* a person to leave or be absent from the workforce, when she answered by saying "Yes, my child, but that's no excuse." By this statement, the respondent was expressing the sentiment that it is possible the caregiver never intended to enter or reenter the labor force in the first place (e.g., a homemaker who happens to have children at some point, but whose primary occupation is running the home). It seems the primary cause for this assumption rests on the term "because" in the question.

26.c. Recommendation(s) (OFF6MTH):

1) If the recommendation to remove WRK35HR from between TIMEOFF and this question (OFF6MTH) is adopted, then the introductory statement that re-explains the reference period (i.e., "Earlier we talked about...") becomes superfluous. Consider deleting this part of the question altogether to achieve a simplified and streamlined question;

2) As in ANY6OFF and WRK35HR, use month and year (if available) when reference dates are recent (i.e., within the current or previous year); and

3) Consider eliminating causal component of current question wording by replacing term "because" with "when" or "while" (NOTE: Recommendation #3 was not accepted by sponsor):

if ANY6OFF="yes":

Since (SIXMTHYR) HAVHAS [NAME] had any long periods off work when HESHE WASWERE taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?

if ANY6OFF="no":

Since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR or WK1LSTJB), have there been any periods of time when [NAME] WASWERE off work for 6 months or more when HESHE [WASWERE] taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?

27. NOWRKSPL

When did this happen most recently – from what year to what year?

FROM:

====> _____

TO:

====> _____

27.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (NOWRKSPL):

Revised wording. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty.

27.b. General Findings (NOWRKSPL):

Four respondents received this question. Recall issues did not present themselves; however, one respondent found the term “this” to be vague and it caused her to request clarification (i.e., she thought the question was asking about the last time she worked).

27.c. Recommendation(s) (NOWRKSPL):

No change.

28. NWALL

FORM A:

Who [have] you [been] taking care of [...]?

FORM B:

Who [were] you [...] taking care of [at that time]?

<1> ... a minor child?

<2> ... an elderly family member?

<3> ... or a disabled but non-elderly family member?

28.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (NWALL):

New screen. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty. Should there be an “other” option?

28.b. General Findings (NWALL):

Three respondents received this question, and at least one was administered Form B. Respondents seemed to comprehend the question, and did not have any recall or task difficulties. One interviewer verified the answer to this question, as the information surfaced in the previous question.

28.c. Recommendation(s) (NWALL):

No change.

29. NWRESN [display responses marked in NWALL]

Which one would you say ISWAS your main care-giving responsibility?

- <1> A minor child
- <2> An elderly family member
- <3> A disabled but non-elderly family member

29.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (NWRESN):

New structure/format. Note general understanding and task difficulty. Does allowing multiple responses first, then getting “main responsibility” in a follow-up make the task easier for R?

29.b. General Findings (NWRESN):

No respondents filtered into this question.

29.c. Recommendation(s) (NWRESN):

No change.

30. OTHTIMES

Since (SIXMTHYR YEAR entry), were there any other long periods of time when you didn't work because you [were] caring for a child, or an old or disabled person?

- <1> Yes
- <2> No

30.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (OTHTIMES):

Revised wording. Note general understanding and task difficulty. Is it still clear that we're looking for periods lasting 6 + months?

30.b. General Findings (OTHTIMES):

Three respondents received this question, none of whom displayed any comprehension or task difficulties. Only one person answered “yes,” but it is unclear whether this respondent remembered the “6 months or more” aspect of this question.

30.c. Recommendation(s) (OTHTIMES):

No change.

31. CNTOTHR

How many other times did this happen?

31.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (CNTOTHR):

N/A

31.b. General Findings (CNTOTHR):

The one respondent who received this question requested clarification; did it refer to instances of child-care or care for an elderly person? She added that she took care of her children from the time they were born until they were married, which forced the interviewer to reorient her to the target

concept, i.e., when did this happen when you were not working. Once the respondent was back on track, she unknowingly misreported one continuous period, which was not discovered by the respondent or the interviewer until the next question. At that point (next question—FRSTYR) she recalls this 10-year period actually occurred over two distinct periods, separated by a job lasting two years.

31.c. Recommendation(s) (CNTOTHR):

No change.

32. FRSTYR

When was the first time this happened – from what year to what year?

FROM: _____ TO: _____

32.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRSTYR):

Revised wording. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty.

32.b. General Findings (FRSTYR):

See findings from previous question (CNTOTHR). The only respondent who received this question misreported in the previous question, and here she realizes her time out of the labor force really occurred in two separate intervals.

32.c. Recommendation(s) (FRSTYR):

No change.

33. FRSTALL

ASK OR VERIFY

Who were you taking care of at that time?

<1> ... a minor child?

<2> ... an elderly family member?

<3> ... or a disabled but non-elderly family member?

33.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRSTALL):

New screen. Note general understanding, recall issues, and task difficulty. Should there be an “other” option?

33.b. General Findings (FRSTALL):

Only one respondent received this question, and the amount of conversation that occurred up to this point allowed the interviewer to correctly verify the answer after reading the question aloud.

33.c. Recommendation(s) (FRSTALL):

No change.

34. FRSTRSN *[display responses marked in FRSTALL]*

Which one would you say was your main care-giving responsibility (at that earlier time)?

- <1> A minor child
- <2> An elderly family member
- <3> A disabled but non-elderly family member

34.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues (FRSTRSN):

New structure/format. Note general understanding and task difficulty. Does allowing for multiple responses first, then getting “main responsibility” in a follow-up make the task easier for R?

34.b. General Findings (FRSTRSN):

No respondents filtered into this question.

34.c. Recommendation(s) (FRSTRSN):

No change.

ATTACHMENT A

(j:....\sipp\ciig\topicalmodules\emp history\COG-INT-CHANGES.WPD)

Recommended Changes to the Employment History Topical Module
based on CSMR's cognitive interview research

03/03/03

revised 03/07/03

CURRENT DESIGN:	RECOMMENDED CHANGES:
<p>>FIRST6JOB< [Including service in the Armed Forces, what / What] was the first job or business [NAME] had that lasted 6 straight months or more?</p> <p>FR NOTE: COUNT ANY JOB OR BUSINESS, EITHER FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME ENTER (N) FOR NEVER WORKED MORE THAN 6 STRAIGHT MONTHS AT A JOB OR BUSINESS</p> <p>Enter brief job/business name or description:</p> <p><N> [fill N in SIXMTHYR; go to NO6ALL]</p>	<p><i>change note leading into response space:</i></p> <p>1st 6+month job/business:</p>
<p>>SIXMTHYR< How old was HESHE when HESHE [started that (job/business)? / first started working at a job or business that lasted at least 6 straight months?]</p> <p>FR NOTE: COUNT ANY JOB OR BUSINESS, EITHER FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME. [fill: ../ ALSO INCLUDE ARMED FORCES SERVICE.]</p> <p>ENTER (N) FOR NEVER WORKED MORE THAN 6 STRAIGHT MONTHS AT A JOB OR BUSINESS</p>	<p><i>add a follow-up probe:</i></p> <p>How old was HESHE when HESHE [started that (job/business)? / first started working at a job or business that lasted at least 6 straight months?]</p> <p>(Or do you remember the year?)</p> <p>FR NOTE: COUNT ANY JOB [etc.]</p>
<p>>NO6ALL< [Before MONTH, why did/Why HAVHAS] [fill NAME] never work[ed] [../six straight months] at a paid job or business [../after HESHE WASWERE 15]?</p>	<p><i>> add a flashcard to display response options</i></p> <p>[Before MONTH, why did/Why HAVHAS] [fill NAME] never work[ed] [../six straight months] at a paid job or business [../after HESHE</p>

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<p>MARK ALL THAT APPLY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <1> Taking care of a minor child <2> Taking care of an elderly family member <3> Taking care of a disabled but non-elderly family member <4> Other family or home responsibilities <5> Own illness or disability <6> Could not find work <7> Did not want to work <8> Going to school <9> Other 	<p>WASWERE 15]?</p> <p>SHOW FLASHCARD [X]. MARK ALL THAT APPLY</p>
<p>ANY6OFF</p> <p><i>[if there is a valid entry for either LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR, fill:]</i> Between [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR], when HISHER first long-term (job/business) started, and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR], when HESHE last worked, were there</p> <p><i>[else fill:]</i> Since [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR], when HISHER first long-term (job/business) started, have there been</p> <p>any times when [NAME] did not work for 6 straight months or more?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > add an introduction; > delete text which re-explains date references; > if year referred to is the current year or the immediately preceding year, use both month (if available) and year (fallback: use both month and year if available); > <i>[need to make sure logic is right for Rs who respond to WK1LSTJB]</i> <p>We've been talking about when [NAME] HAVHAS worked. Next are questions about when HESHE WASWERE <u>not</u> working.</p> <p><i>[if there is a valid entry for either LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB, fill:]</i> Between [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB], were there</p> <p><i>[else fill:]</i> Since [[if SIXMTHYR=2000, fill "the year"] SIXMTHYR], have there been</p> <p>any times when [NAME] did not work for 6 straight months or more?</p>
<p>[N/A B new screen to precede TIMEOFF]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > to set up and clarify the somewhat difficult task of TIMEOFF, split it in two B to start, add an introductory A how many times has this happened@question [see below] > as in ANY6OFF, use both month and year, if available, in the

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	<p><i>LSTWRKY1/PRVJOBYSR/WK1LSTJB fill</i></p> <p><i>> if filling ASince [SIXMTHYR@use Ahas that happened@and HAVHAS NAME been@, otherwise use Adid that happen@and AWASWERE NAME@</i></p> <p><i>>HOWMANY6<</i></p> <p>How many times [has/did] that [happened/happen]?</p> <p><i>([Since [SIXMTHYR] / Between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 / PRVJOBYSR / WK1LSTJB]], how many times [WASWERE NAME/HA VHAS NAME been] out of work for 6 months or more?)</i></p> <p><i>[0] change ANY6OFF to Ano@, skip TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[1] continue with TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[2] continue with TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[3] continue with TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[4] continue with TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[5] - more than 4 B continue with TIMEOFF</i></p> <p><i>[D/R] B continue with TIMEOFF</i></p>
<p><i>>TIMEOFF<</i></p> <p>Adding up all the times when HESHE was out of work for 6 months or more, how much time [HAVHAS/did] [NAME] spen[t/d] out of work fill:</p> <p>between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYSR]?</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>since [SIXMTHYR]?</p> <p>_____ years</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>_____ months</p>	<p><i>> allow entries in both Ayears@and Amonths@spaces;</i></p> <p><i>> display the relevant time period as an FR note at the top of the screen</i></p> <p><i>> simplify the question wording</i></p> <p>TIME PERIOD: SINCE [SIXMTHYR]</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [LSTWRKY1]</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [PRVJOBYSR]</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p><u>BETWEEN [SIXMTHYR] AND [WK1LSTJB]</u></p> <p>Altogether, [.../counting up all those periods,] what was the total amount of time that NAME spent out of work [during that one period/...]?</p> <p>_____ years</p> <p><i>and</i></p> <p>_____ months</p>
<p><i>>WRK35HR<</i></p> <p>During all the time [NAME]</p>	<p><i>> move this screen so that it comes right before ANY6OFF;</i></p> <p><i>> change Agenerally@to Amostly@</i></p> <p><i>> as in ANY6OFF, use both month and year, if available</i></p>

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<p>worked up until [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR], did HESHE generally work [or:] HAVHAS worked since [SIXMTHYR], HAVHAS HESHE generally worked</p> <p>35 or more hours per week ?</p>	<p>During all the time [NAME]</p> <p>worked up until between [SIXMTHYR] and [LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB], did HESHE mostly work [or:] HAVHAS worked since [SIXMTHYR], HAVHAS HESHE mostly worked</p> <p>35 or more hours per week ?</p>
<p>>OFF6MTH<</p> <p>if ANY6OFF="yes": Earlier we talked about periods of time [NAME] WASWERE not working for 6 months or more [since (SIXMTHYR) / between (SIXMTHYR) and (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR)].</p> <p>[fill: Including the time since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR),/...] HAVHAS [NAME] had any long periods off work because HESHE WASWERE taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?</p> <p>if ANY6OFF="no": Since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR), have there been any periods of time when [NAME] WASWERE off work for 6 months or more because HESHE [WASWERE] taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?</p>	<p>> use both month and year, if both are available; > simplify B delete AEarlier...@intro; > simplify B use identical format for all Rs where ANY6OFF=@yes@ > [we asked Tom Palumbo to consider simplifying the intent of this Q (and OTHTIMES) by eliminating the causal component of the current question wording B i.e., change Abecause@to Awhen@or Awhile@; Tom does not want to make this change]</p> <p>if ANY6OFF="yes": Since (SIXMTHYR) HAVHAS [NAME] had any long periods off work when because HESHE WASWERE taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?</p> <p>if ANY6OFF="no": Since (LSTWRKY1 or PRVJOBYR or WK1LSTJB), have there been any periods of time when [NAME] WASWERE off work for 6 months or more when because HESHE [WASWERE] taking care of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person?</p>