

Moving Towards a User-Friendly Diary

Safia Abdirizak

Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys
Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology

March 8, 2018



Outline

1. Background

- a. Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys
- b. CE Diary Survey

2. Findings

- a. Diary form change
- b. Full diary double-placement
- c. Earliest/Latest Placement Date (EPD/LPD) removal

3. Summary



Background



Background

- The CE Surveys collect information from U.S. households on their buying habits (expenditures), income, and household characteristics.
 - ▶ **CE Quarterly Interview Survey:** collects data on large and recurring expenditures that consumers can be expected to recall for a period of 3 months or longer, such as rent and utilities
 - ▶ **CE Diary Survey:** collects data on small, frequently purchased items, including most food and clothing

Diary Survey

- Self-administered
- Respondents record a detailed description of all expenses for two consecutive 1-week periods
- Diary asks for expenses that the household incurs during the survey week



Pre-2017 Diary Survey Procedures

Interviewers normally conducted three visits:

- **First Visit-** deliver first diary and collect demographic information
- **Second Visit-** review/collect first diary and deliver second diary
- **Third Visit-** collect and review the second weekly diary, and complete the sections on work experience and income



Diary Form Change



Purpose

- Simplify the details that made the Diary task seem imposing
- Make it easier for respondents to fill out



Diary Survey Categories

- Food and Drinks Away from Home
 - ▶ Ex. Fast Food, Full-Service Places, Vending Machines, School or Work Cafeteria
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
 - ▶ Ex. Grocery Items
- Clothing
 - ▶ Ex. Dress, Pants, Shoes, Jewelry & Accessories
- Other
 - ▶ Ex. Gasoline, Movie Tickets, Dry Cleaning



Diary Form (Before cntd.)

Page 3

Day 1	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
3. Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories							
Examples: shirt, sweater, shorts, suit, dress, pants, sandals, sneakers, shoe repairs, soccer cleats, team uniform, ski boots, gloves, slippers, dance costume, watch, necklace, belt, pajamas, lingerie, socks, coat, jacket, windbreaker							
Please unfold the LEFT FLAP to see Additional Examples							
What did you buy or pay for? (see examples above and on the flap)	Total Cost without tax	Was the item for:		Age			Mark (X) if purchased for someone not on your list
		male	female	Under 2	2-15	16 & Over	
301							
302							
303							
304							
305							
306							
307							
308							
309							
310							
311							
312							
313							
314							
315							
316							
317							
318							
319							
320							
321							
322							
323							
324							
325							

If there are not enough lines in this part, please continue recording your expenses on pages 41-42.

10

FORM CE-801 (1-1-2013)



080110

Page 4

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	Day 1
4. All Other Products, Services, and Expenses							
Examples: cigarettes, gasoline, utility gas bill, prescription drugs, cordless telephone, dry clean (curtains), movie tickets, DVD rental, bus fare, phone bill, car insurance, brake work, hand soap, dish soap, power tools, paper towels, bath towel, rent, textbooks, cook book, airline fares, computer cables, cable TV bill, color television							
Please unfold the RIGHT FLAP to see Frequently Asked Questions							
What did you buy or pay for? (see examples above and on the flap)	Total Cost without tax	Mark (X) if purchased for someone not on your list					
401							
402							
403							
404							
405							
406							
407							
408							
409							
410							
411							
412							
413							
414							
415							
416							
417							
418							
419							
420							
421							
422							
423							
424							
425							

If there are not enough lines in this part, please continue recording your expenses on pages 43-44.

FORM CE-801 (1-1-2013)

11



080111



Diary Form (After)

Page 1

DAY 1 ENTER DAY AND DATE

See pages 2-3 for examples. If you need additional space, use pages 18-23.

Food and Drinks for Home Consumption

What did you buy or pay for?	If this item: Mark (X) one				Cost without tax	Mark (X) if purchased for someone not in your list
	fresh	frozen	bottled/ canned	other		
101						
102						
103						
104						
105						
106						
107						
108						
109						
110						
111						
112						
113						
114						
115						
116						
117						
118						
119						
120						
121						
122						
123						
124						
125						
126						
127						
128						
129						
130						
131						
132						
133						
134						
135						
136						

FORM CE-801 (1-2017)



090104

Page 2

DAY 1 FR USE: None VC

Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home

Mark (X) one that best describes the type of meal	Description	Mark (X) one that best describes where you made the purchase				Total Cost with tax & tip	If alcoholic beverage, mark (X) all that apply		Enter the total cost of the alcohol
		Fast Food Take-out Delivery	Full Service Restaurant	Wending Machine or Mobile Vendor	Employee or School Cafeteria		Beer	Wine	
201									
202									
203									
204									
205									
206									

Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories

What did you buy or pay for?	Cost without tax	Was the item for:				Mark (X) if purchased for someone not in your list
		Child Under 2	15	21	Adult 18 & over	
301						
302						
303						
304						
305						
306						
307						
308						

All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

What did you buy or pay for?	Cost without tax	Mark (X) if purchased for someone not in your list
401		
402		
403		
404		
405		
406		
407		
408		
409		
410		
411		
412		

FORM CE-801 (1-2017)



090105



New Diary Form

- Design based on original 70s diaries - all sections viewable across two pages
- Attempts to implement suggestions for improvement from Don Dillman
- Modified the number of rows necessary for each section
 - ▶ Food 36 rows, Meals 6, Clothing 8, Other 12
- Reduced instructions and examples
- Moved the “General Instructions” and “How to Fill Out Your Diary” to the front flap

Diary Form Change- Entries (2016 vs. 2017)

- Changes in diary design associated with marginal changes in respondent entries.

Section	Percent Change	
	Rows	Entries
Meals	-72.7	-8.2
Food	44.0	7.7
Clothing	-68.0	-16.7
Other	-48.0	1.1

Diary Double Placement



Diary Double-Placement

What is double-placement?

- Interviewers make one visit to place both diaries and one visit to pickup diaries for the entire household.

What Changed?

- Pre-2012: diaries double placed in select instances.
- 2012-2016: a minimum of 40% of diaries were double-placed
- 2017: protocol has all diaries double-placed

Purpose

- Reduce the cost of data collection activities
- Simplify data collection procedures
- Simplify interviewer training



Diary Double-Placement Procedures

Before

- At the first visit, interviewer places first week diary
- At the second visit, interviewer collects the first week diary and places second week diary
- At the third visit, interviewer collects the second week diary

After

- One visit to a household for placement of both week 1 and week 2 diaries
- One visit for diary pickup, eliminating the prior between-weeks visit

Diary Double-Placement Risk

- The between-weeks visit may have prompted greater reporting by diarists in the second week, leading to less ‘drop off’ in diary entries.
- There could be more non-participation in the second week without the between-weeks visit.



Diary Double Placement- Drop Off

- Before the change, in 2016, there was statistically significantly more drop-off when diaries were double-placed.

	2016 average drop-off (%)
Non-double placed	46.6
Double-placed	52.0
Overall	51.4

- After the change, in 2017, the extent of drop-off remained the same (51 percent).

Change in # of Contact Attempts (2016 vs. 2017)

- The move to double-place all diaries did not lead to an overall reduction in interviewer effort

	% Change
Mean	10%
Median	20%
Min	0%
Max	-19%

Contact Attempts- Interviewer Mode

- As expected, there was a slight increase in average contact attempts by phone and in-person visits decreased.

	% Change
Mean (in-person)	-1.6
Median (in-person)	0.0
Mean (telephone)	41.3
Median (telephone)	0.0
Mean (total)	7.9
Median (total)	25.0



Earliest/Latest Placement Date (EPD/LPD) removal



Background

EPD/LPDs were used to place diaries uniformly throughout the month and year to make sure cyclical expenditures were captured by the diary.

Example: Rent, Valentine's Day

Purpose

- Increase response rates
- Simplify the collection process for interviewers



EPD/LPD Procedure Comparisons

Before

- Each case assigned an EPD
- EPDs spread throughout the month & year
- Interviewer has 7 days (EPD + 6) to place week 1
- If week 1 not placed in time (by LPD), interviewer then has 7 days to place week 2

After

- Each case will still have an EPD
- EPD = 1ST day of interview month
 - ▶ January 1 for January cases, etc.
- Interviewer has from the 1st to the last day of the month to place the diaries

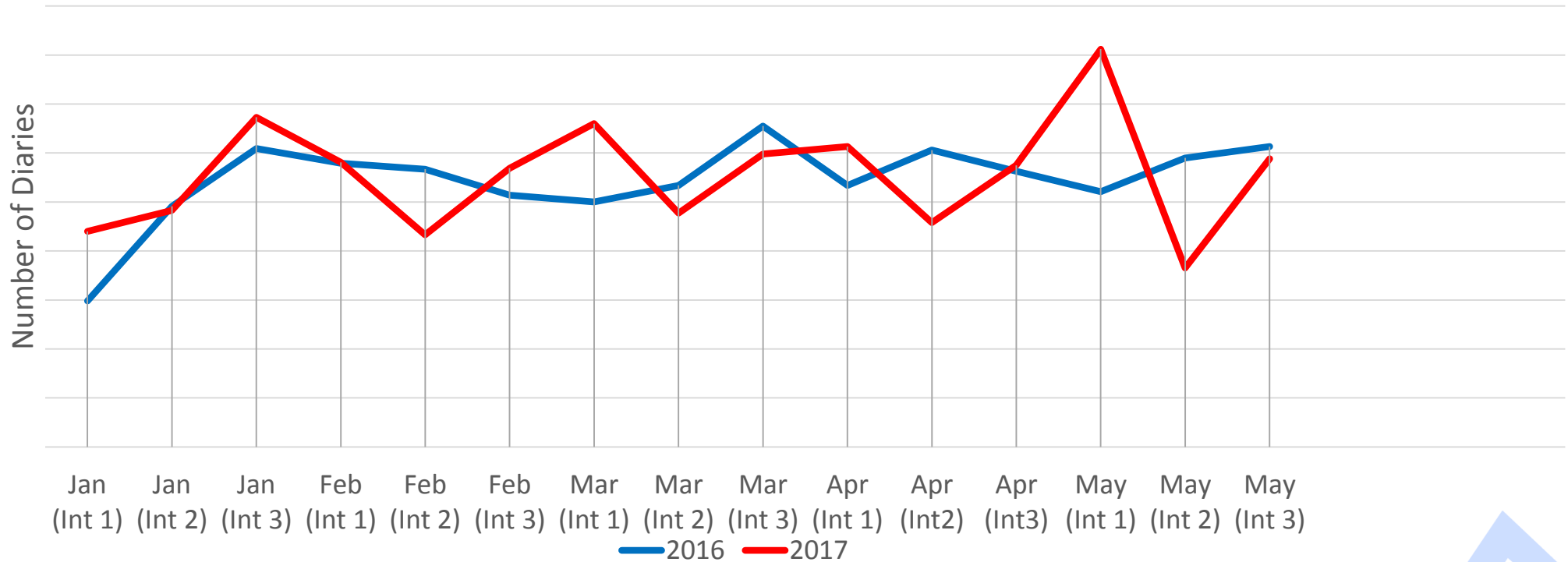
Diary – Placement

- Comparing actual placement dates between 2016 and 2017 suggested that 2016 diaries were placed more evenly throughout the month and the diaries in 2017 tended to be placed more in the beginning and end of the months.



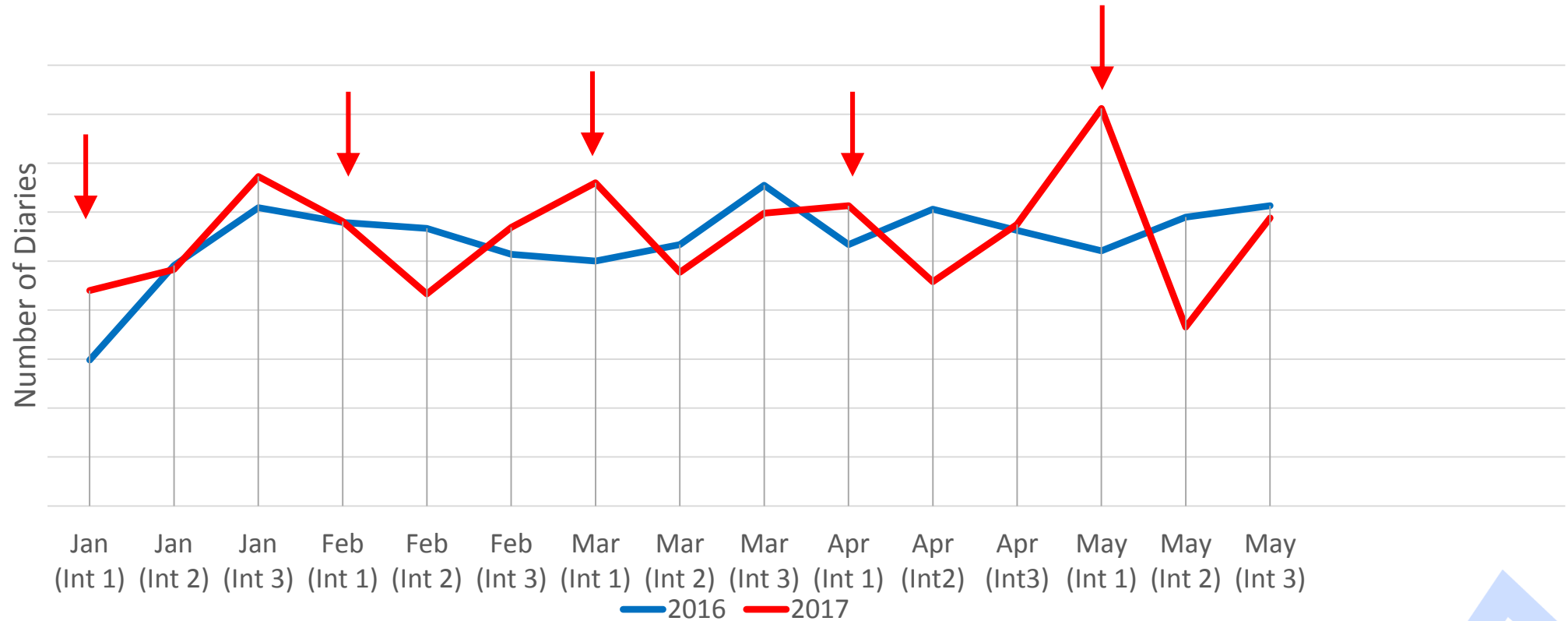
Diary – Placement

■ Trend in Placement Dates by Monthly Segments



Diary – Placement

■ Trend in Placement Dates by Monthly Segments



Non-Response Finding

- In 2017, there was a 63 percent decrease in ‘Temporarily Absent’ Households
- There was also a decrease in ‘placed too late’ diaries



Overall Response Rates

- In 2017, the simplification of placement methods appeared to have a positive impact on the response rate for CE diaries.



Summary

■ Diary Form Change

- ▶ Diary form is simpler and easier for respondents to complete
- ▶ No overall decrease in number of entries

■ Diary Double-Placement

- ▶ Respondents reported entries at consistent rate across both weeks
- ▶ Increase in average number of telephone contact attempts

■ EPD/LPD

- ▶ Increased flexibility of placement associated with increased participation
- ▶ Placement was not uniformly distributed across the month and the CE program will monitor the effect, if any, on expenditure reports



Contact Information

Safia Abdirizak

Economist

Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys

www.bls.gov/cex

202-691-5137

Abdirizak.Safia@bls.gov

