

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

# **Food Stamp SSI/Elderly Cashout Demonstration Evaluation**

Final Report

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**Volume III: Survey Operations**



VOLUME III  
SURVEY OPERATIONS

VOLUME III. SURVEY OPERATIONS

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CHAPTER I:  
INTRODUCTION

Data for the Food Stamp SSI/Elderly Cashout Demonstration were collected by Mathematica Policy Research from June through October 1981. A mixed-mode approach was used, which included a mail screening survey, a telephone survey that used a computer assisted telephone interviewing system (CATI), in-person field interviews, and a food intake survey that was conducted both by telephone and in-person. This report describes the survey operations.

CHAPTER II:  
SURVEY AND SAMPLE DESIGN

Three demonstration and three comparison sites were selected in which to conduct the surveys. The demonstration sites were Monroe County (Rochester), New York; Darlington and Dillon Counties in South Carolina; and Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon. Comparison sites were Albany County, New York; Marlboro and Lee Counties in South Carolina; and Lane County (Eugene), Oregon.<sup>1/</sup>

The survey counties were selected to achieve a mix with regard to area of the country and population density. Within South Carolina, four sufficiently close sites were chosen to allow interviewers to work interchangeably between counties. Also, to provide a truly rural site, the more urban demonstration and comparison counties in that state, Florence and Orangeburg, were excluded.

In this section we discuss the overall design of the data collection procedures; design and implementation of the sampling procedures; acquisition of the sample; and preparation of the sample for interviewing.

OVERVIEW OF  
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An overview of the data collection methodology will help establish the context for the more detailed discussion which follows. Figure 1 depicts the overall data collection plan.

In order to determine the impact of the demonstration, a sample of Food Stamp Program participants and eligible nonparticipants was interviewed. A cost-effective mechanism for targeting the nonparticipant survey on respondents eligible for the Food Stamp Program was developed.

As shown in Figure 1, samples were drawn from the Master Beneficiary Record (MBR) and Supplemental Security Record (SSR) files of the Social Security system. Two strategies were then adopted to identify eligibles. First, because such a large proportion of SSI recipients (about 75 percent) is eligible for food stamps, all SSI recipients in the sample were selected to receive the participation interview. Second, SSI nonrecipients were mailed a simple questionnaire designed to screen out those who were obviously ineligible to receive food stamps. Persons who passed the mail screen subsequently were administered the full participation interview, which included a more detailed set of screening questions. In order to minimize potential problems arising from nonresponse to the mail screening survey, a sample of persons who failed to return the mail questionnaire also was given the participation interview.

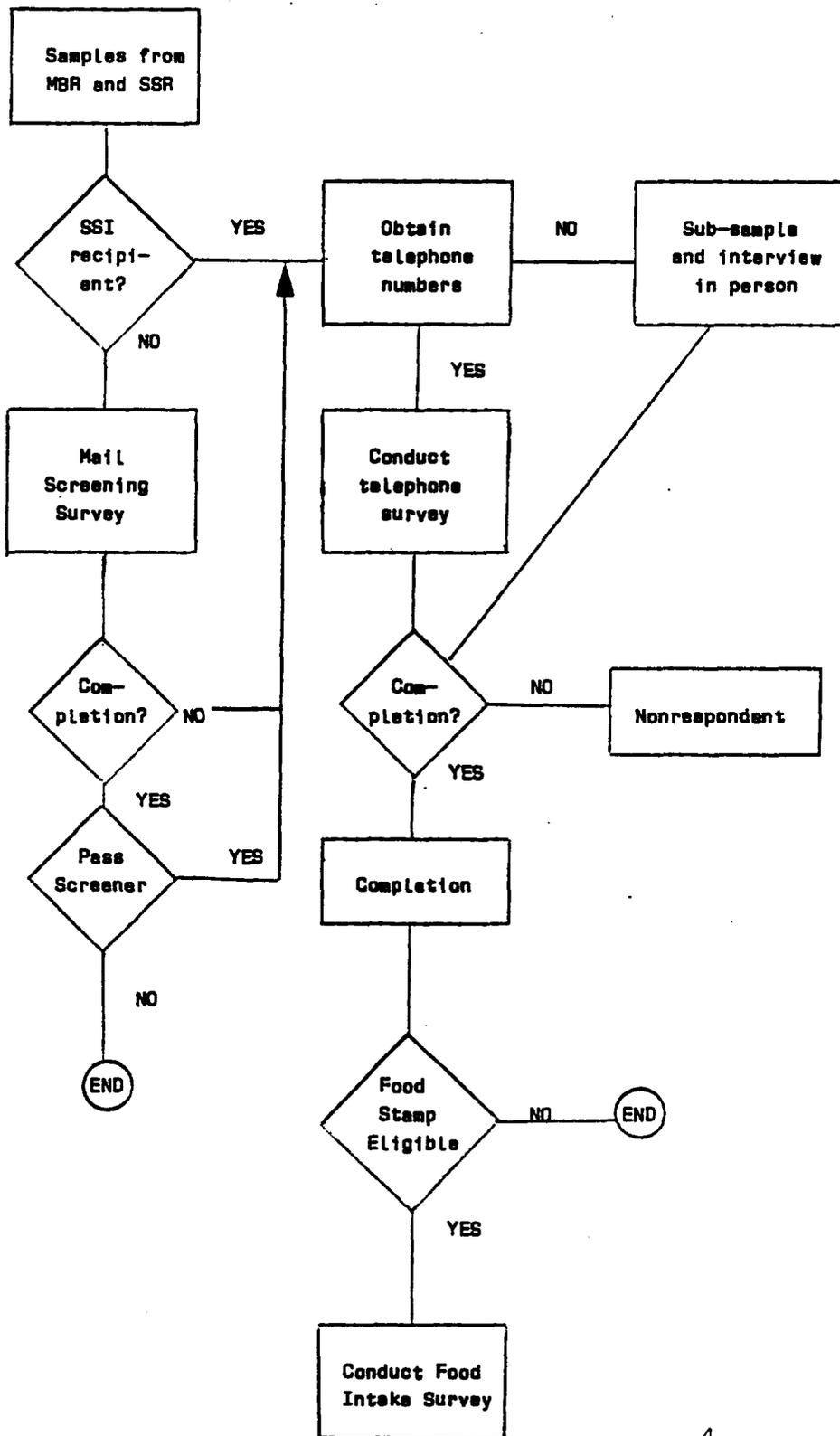
A mixed-mode telephone/in-person survey was conducted in all sites. After a person had been chosen to be given a participation interview, a search was made

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<sup>1/</sup>The survey areas for the Oregon demonstration site and the South Carolina sites consisted of only portions of the corresponding overall demonstration and comparison sites.

FIGURE 1

COLLECTION PLAN FOR INTERVIEW DATA



to obtain his or her telephone number if it was not available from the sample frame. Telephone interviews were attempted with persons who had locatable numbers. A subsample of persons who did not have locatable numbers (e.g., no telephone, unlisted number, or telephone not listed in their names), was selected for in-person interviewing. A 24-hour recall food intake survey was attempted with a member of each food stamp eligible household, both participants and nonparticipants, in each of the six sites.

SAMPLE  
DESIGN

The Social Security Master Beneficiary Record (MBR) and the Supplemental Security Record (SSR) were used as the sample frame for the survey. Because these files did not contain sufficient information to determine food stamp eligibility, it was necessary to draw large samples and screen out the ineligible. To accomplish this and keep survey costs to a reasonable minimum, the following steps were taken.

First, the universe of persons potentially eligible for the Food Stamp Program was divided into two strata: SSI program participants and SSI nonparticipants. The SSI stratum was assigned a higher sampling rate because the Food Stamp Program eligibility rate among the SSI population is known to be extremely high due to of the program's income and assets limits. The high probability that SSI recipients selected for the sample would be eligible for the Food Stamp Program made it unnecessary to screen that group. However, persons in the non-SSI stratum, where the rate of food stamp eligibility was expected to be much lower, were mailed a screening questionnaire designed to eliminate clearly ineligible households.

In addition to oversampling the SSI stratum, the sample allocation within each stratum took into consideration the differential survey costs associated with telephone and in-person surveys. The sampling rate was set so that approximately 15 percent of the interviews would be conducted in person. For the MBR group, all persons with locatable phone numbers who either passed the food stamp eligibility screen or failed to respond were assigned to the phone stratum. Those with no phone numbers were assigned to the field stratum.<sup>1/</sup>

CPS Questions. One component of the research for the food stamp project involved comparing Food Stamp Program eligibility determinations based on the previous year's income with those based on current income to identify any substantial discrepancies. Such analysis is of interest because at present, estimates of eligibility and participation are determined by using the previous year's income as obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to approximate current income.

The original research plan was to use the CPS questions to ask the entire survey sample about income in the previous year. However, the pretest results suggested that those questions should be asked of only a subsample of respondents—in-person respondents and a small random sample of telephone

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<sup>1/</sup> Nonresponders in the second wave of the mail survey were not sampled for eligibility/participation interviews.

respondents. In particular, the pretest revealed that the interview length posed a serious problem for many elderly respondents, especially those who were interviewed by telephone, because restricting their movement tended to cause them discomfort over time. In addition to imposing a serious personal burden on respondents, this situation could have led to deteriorating data quality. Omitting the CPS questions whenever possible was expected to significantly reduce these problems.

The CPS questions on previous year's income are very similar to the questions on current income, and during the pretest, telephone respondents frequently became annoyed because they thought they were being asked the same material twice. This was less of a problem during in-person interviews, probably because the rapport established in face-to-face contact with a respondent makes him or her more tolerant. Consequently, the CPS questions were omitted from most telephone interviews, but included in all field interviews.

Exclusion of Households with Members Under 65. Partially as a result of the pretest conducted in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the decision was made to limit the survey to households in which all members were age 65 or older. Although including households with younger members would have increased the eligibility screening yield rate and obtained information of policy interest, it was felt that the problems outweighed the advantages. First, given resource constraints, inclusion of "younger" households would have reduced the number of purely elderly households included, thus reducing the precision of the analysis for this group, which is directly included in the Cashout Demonstration. Second, it was found during the pretest that elderly people frequently do not have or are not willing to provide accurate information on the assets and income of younger household members. Third, younger household members frequently would not allow elderly respondents to participate in the survey, thus reducing response rates. Therefore, an early screening question in the interview determined the age of household members, and terminated the interview if anyone was under age 65.

#### SAMPLE PREPARATION

##### Acquisition

Both the MBR and SSR sample lists were obtained in the form of computer tapes from the Social Security Administration. Prior to their being sent to Princeton, the tapes were prepared for MPR's use by Social and Scientific Systems, Inc. Cases were selected from these files if the dates of birth were before 12/31/15, and the zip codes of residence or program application were in the relevant survey sites. After arrival in Princeton, the lists were randomized and each name was assigned a unique study identification number.

##### Eliminating Duplicates

Because the unit of observation in the eligibility/participation survey was the household, it was appropriate to eliminate all but one member of any household from the sample frames. It was also desirable to eliminate SSI recipients listed on the MBR sample frame.

After the unique ID numbers were assigned, and after samples of 6,000 names per site (when available) had been drawn from the MBR frame, alphabetical listings of both sample lists were manually compared. Cases were eliminated whenever any of the following were found:

1. Duplicate within MBR sample [same last name at same address],
2. Duplicate within SSR,
3. Duplicate on MBR and SSR.

In cases of duplicates between the SSR and MBR samples, the SSR case was retained; for duplicates within samples, the lower ID number was retained.

**Telephone Search  
and Assignment  
for Interviewing**

During the process of eliminating duplicates, a search was conducted to obtain telephone numbers for all SSR sample members who did not already have a telephone number on the file.

The results of the telephone search were then used to assign each sample member to either the telephone or field stratum. The SSR sample was assigned to 85 percent telephone and 15 percent field interview attempts. The MBR sample members underwent a telephone search and were assigned later, after their mail questionnaires had been returned. Labels and logs were produced through a computerized automated tracking system by site and sample group, for both the field and phone strata.

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SAMPLE  
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### CHAPTER III: PRETEST

MPR conducted a pretest of the data collection procedures and instruments for the Food Stamp SSI/Elderly Cashout Demonstration in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), Ohio, in September and October 1980. All aspects of the survey were tested during the pretest, including the mail survey, sample stratification, use of a computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system, field interviewing, and a food intake survey. Of particular interest was the testing of the CATI system which would perform eligibility calculations during the eligibility/participation interviews, and the testing of the feasibility of using a telephone methodology for collection of dietary intake data.

In this section we discuss the design and implementation of this pretest. The results and findings of the pretest are also summarized.

#### SAMPLE DESIGN

Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) Ohio was selected as the pretest location because it was the demonstration site with the largest estimated number of eligible nonparticipants. A large site was desirable in order to minimize possible effects on the entire survey if it were decided to conduct full survey activities there.

Sampling for the pretest was very similar to sampling for the full study; the Social Security Master Beneficiary Record (MBR) and the Supplemental Security Income Record (SSR) were obtained from the Social Security Administration and used as the sample frame for the selection of Food Stamp Program nonparticipants. However, unlike the full study, the pretest sample of program participants included households obtained from a list provided by Cuyahoga County of food stamp recipients over age 64.

As with the full study, MBR and SSR sample members were stratified into two groups, SSI program participants and nonparticipants, with the sampling ratio much higher for the SSI stratum because of the expectation of high Food Stamp Program eligibility in this group. Procedures were implemented to eliminate all but one member of a household from the sample frames, and to eliminate SSI recipients from the MBR frame and food stamp recipients from the other two frames. A telephone search was done, and the results were used to determine telephone or field stratum status for each sample member.<sup>1/</sup>

#### MAIL SURVEY

An initial mail screening was conducted for the MBR sample to determine gross Food Stamp Program eligibility. Nine hundred questionnaires were mailed out, and a 50 percent response rate was obtained after three questionnaire mailings and a reminder postcard. Of the mail returns, 32 percent passed the eligibility screen and were assigned to the eligibility/participation survey.

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<sup>1/</sup> Further details of the sampling procedures and other aspects of the pretest can be found in Jackson, (1981) and in Posner, et al. (1981).

For one-half of the sample, mail questionnaires contained a request for respondents' phone numbers. This design was used to test whether requesting telephone numbers would negatively affect response rates. Using the mail survey as a source of updated telephone numbers was seen as a potentially cost-effective way to obtain important information that might help improve response rates to the eligibility/participation survey. No significant difference was found in the response rates for the two groups, and the telephone number request was therefore included in all mail questionnaires for the full study.

#### ELIGIBILITY/ PARTICIPATION SURVEY

Procedures for hiring and training interviewers and for the conduct of the telephone and field pretest surveys were similar to those used for the full study but on a smaller scale. Introductory letters were sent to persons in the SSR and food stamp samples in advance of the phone and field surveys. A sample of mail nonrespondents also was assigned to the eligibility/participation survey. Computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) was used successfully for the phone interviewing, with 96 percent of the telephone interviews conducted in this manner.

Of 683 sample members assigned for interviewing, 344 (50 percent) completed the eligibility/participation interview. Of these, 82 percent was completed by phone and 18 percent in person.

#### DIETARY INTAKE SURVEY

Two key aspects of the procedures developed for the pretest of the dietary intake survey were different from methods which have usually been used to obtain dietary intake data. First, the interview was done by telephone rather than face-to-face. Second, food portion sizes were estimated by using a two-dimensional visual aid suitable for mailing to respondents, rather than the three-dimensional models which have traditionally been used for in-person dietary recall interviewing. Of particular interest in the pretest was whether respondents would be able to use the two-dimensional guide to report portion sizes. While some previous evidence was available to suggest that food intake

PRETEST  
EVALUATION AND  
FULL SURVEY  
IMPLICATIONS

After the fielding activities, a series of debrief meetings and operational reviews were held in order to evaluate the pretest in terms of both instruments and procedures. In general, the sampling and interviewing procedures and the survey instruments were found to work reasonably well. Also, the nutrient intake data obtained during the survey were found to be similar to data obtained in the HANES program. Most of the changes for the full study were made in an attempt to improve response rates and reduce respondent burden. Major findings of the pretest and changes made in going to the full survey are summarized below.

The Sample

The three sample frames yielded sufficient numbers of Food Stamp Program participants and eligible nonparticipants. However, in order to ensure full comparability between the participant and nonparticipant samples and in order to lessen the operational complexity of using three different sample lists for each of six different sites during the full study, the decision was made to use an alternative sample design for the full study. Rather than eliminating food stamp participants from the MBR and SSR sample frames, it was decided to include the food stamp recipients in those two frames as the program-participant component of the sample. Also, partially as a result of a pretest finding that the elderly often do not know the income and assets of younger household members, it was decided for the full survey sample to include only households in which all members were age 65 or over.

Instruments

The mail survey instrument and the eligibility/participation questionnaire were found to be very workable during the pretest. In general, they were easy for sample members to understand and respond to, and they permitted accurate program eligibility calculations. The most common problem encountered in the instruments, especially with the eligibility/participation questionnaire, was that the total length and detailed level of questioning on income and expenses became quite burdensome to the elderly sample, especially during telephone interviewing. This made it necessary for interviewers to repeatedly coax the respondents to finish the questionnaire, which resulted in substantial respondent fatigue by the end. Major instrument changes based on the pretest are discussed below.

Mail Survey Instrument. It was decided to shorten the mail survey instrument by eliminating the questions on expenses. It was found that the income and assets data alone were sufficient to make the necessary rough eligibility determinations. The response category options for the income and assets questions were broadened to reduce the number of categories. It was expected that this change would simplify the form and reduce its association with a study of a low-income sample, and that this would improve the response rate among higher-income sample members in the MBR sample.

Eligibility/Participation Instrument. Although the eligibility/participation instrument worked well during the pretest, changes were made in several areas to make it easier to administer and less burdensome to respondents. During the pretest, respondents found the two sets of income questions—one asking about last year's income (CPS module) and the other about last month's income (food stamp eligibility questions) to be redundant and burdensome. Therefore, for the full study, the CPS income module was administered to only a small randomly selected portion of telephone respondents but to all in-person respondents

because interviewer/respondent rapport was better during field interviewing. Also, interviewers had found the instrument section on vehicle assets to be especially troublesome to administer and calculate and the single-vehicle-household asset value determination was therefore simplified.

Some questions were changed slightly where interviewers indicated the pretest wording was somewhat unclear. Several questions were eliminated and others divided into two parts to improve clarity. In some parts of the CATI questionnaire, several questions were displayed on the screen simultaneously at one time to reduce interviewer wait time. These changes resulted in a slightly shorter, more succinct instrument.

Dietary Intake Instrument. Both the interviewers and the MPR survey personnel who supervised the interviewing felt that the dietary intake pretest was very successful. The interviewers perceived respondents as easily understanding the questions and being willing and able to provide careful summaries of the foods they had eaten. In addition, the interviewers reported that respondents generally understood the purpose of the two-dimensional food portion guide and were able to use it effectively to estimate amounts of foods eaten. The HANES interviewing and probing procedures also were found to be effective over the telephone.

As shown in Table III.1, the nutrient intake levels from the pretest results were similar to those computed from HANES survey data. Of the nine nutrients studied, statistically significant differences in average intake were found in the raw data for only three nutrients for women and none of the nutrients for men. Furthermore, when the data were rescaled to take into account differences in nutrient consumption estimated to have occurred between the periods when the two surveys were conducted, the differences between the two data sets were even smaller.<sup>1/</sup> (See Table III.2.)

#### Interviewing Procedures

The CATI methodology worked well during the pretest, with a minimum of system or staff performance problems. Procedures for assigning and tracking interviews in both the telephone center and in the field also were effective. However, as a result of the pretest, it was decided to implement the following procedures for the full study:

1. Follow-up a larger portion of phone noncompletes with field interviews, especially for those that were most likely to be successfully completed (e.g., the physically impaired).
2. Retrieve information more quickly from the CATI system to determine if critical data were missing and make more timely callbacks to finish incomplete documents.
3. Increase the time period in which to attempt sample member contact.
4. Request telephone numbers in mail survey questionnaires.

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<sup>1/</sup> See Posner, et al., 1981 for a description of the rescaling.

TABLE III.1

MEANS AND STANDARD ERRORS OF MEANS  
FOR NUTRIENTS ON PRETEST

|                 | Women                   |                      | Men                     |                        |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|                 | NHANES<br>Below Poverty | Pretest<br>n = 162   | NHANES<br>Below Poverty | Pretest<br>n = 162     |
| Calories (KCal) | 1,197.44<br>(44.83)     | 1,182.06<br>(65.86)  | 1,672.07<br>(78.06)     | 1,781.00<br>(207.41)   |
| Protein (gm)    | 49.02<br>(2.06)         | 47.95<br>(2.38)      | 64.42<br>(2.55)         | 70.46<br>(9.42)        |
| Calcium (mg)    | 519.17<br>(22.75)       | 460.79<br>(32.91)    | 597.48<br>(27.50)       | 720.09<br>(139.07)     |
| Iron (mg)       | 7.89<br>(0.28)          | 9.36*<br>(0.55)      | 11.25<br>(0.74)         | 11.98<br>(1.23)        |
| Vitamin A (IU)  | 4,417.35<br>(305.30)    | 4,887.61<br>(426.86) | 4,342.17<br>(626.07)    | 9,090.04<br>(2,502.49) |
| Vitamin C (mg)  | 71.82<br>(4.21)         | 103.58*<br>(7.62)    | 69.23<br>(8.48)         | 98.90<br>(18.21)       |
| Thiamine (Mg)   | 0.88<br>(0.04)          | 1.02*<br>(0.05)      | 1.16<br>(0.07)          | 1.24<br>(0.13)         |
| Riboflavin (mg) | 1.24<br>(0.09)          | 1.19<br>(0.07)       | 1.52<br>(0.14)          | 1.24<br>(0.17)         |
| Niacin (mg)     | 11.23<br>(0.62)         | 12.36<br>(0.64)      | 14.05<br>(0.83)         | 15.73<br>(1.73)        |

## Notes:

Asterisks indicate differences are statistically significant using a 95 percent difference of means test.

NHANES data are from U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Dietary Intake Source Data United States, 1971-1974, Hyattsville, Maryland, September 1979.

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TABLE III.2

MEANS AND STANDARD ERRORS OF MEANS  
FOR NUTRIENTS ON PRETEST  
WITH TIME TREND REMOVED FROM PRETEST DATA

|                 | Women                   |  | Men                     |  |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
|                 | NHANES<br>Below Poverty | Pretest<br>Data with<br>Time Trend<br>Removed<br>n = 162 | NHANES<br>Below Poverty | Pretest<br>Data with<br>Time Trend<br>Removed<br>n = 162 |
| Calories (KCal) | 1,197.44<br>(44.83)     | 1,196.22<br>(66.65)                                      | 1,672.07<br>(76.06)     | 1,806.02<br>(212.44)                                     |
| Protein (gm)    | 49.02<br>(2.06)         | 47.91<br>(2.37)  | 64.42<br>(2.55)         | 71.20<br>(9.52)  |
| Calcium (mg)    | 519.17<br>(22.75)       | 429.79*<br>(30.65)                                       | 597.48<br>(27.50)       | 697.81<br>(134.77)                                       |
| Iron (mg)       | 7.89<br>(0.28)          | 8.99<br>(0.53)   | 11.25<br>(0.74)         | 11.49<br>(1.18)  |
| Vitamin A (IU)  | 4,417.35<br>(305.40)    | 4,275.48<br>(373.23)                                     | 4,342.17<br>(626.07)    | 8,258.56<br>(2,273.57)                                   |
| Vitamin C (mg)  | 71.82<br>(4.21)         | 78.34<br>(5.76)  | 69.23<br>(8.48)         | 76.06<br>(14.29)   |
| Thiamine (Mg)   | 0.88<br>(0.04)          | 0.88<br>(0.06)   | 1.16<br>(0.07)          | 1.12<br>(0.12)   |
| Riboflavin (mg) | 1.24<br>(0.09)          | 1.11<br>(0.04)   | 1.52<br>(0.14)          | 1.18<br>(0.16)   |
| Niacin (mg)     | 11.23<br>(0.82)         | 12.33<br>(0.64)  | 14.05<br>(0.83)         | 15.70<br>(1.73)  |

*CAPS*  
*format*  
Notes:

Asterisks indicate differences are statistically significant using a 95 percent difference of means test.

NHANES data are from U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Dietary Intake Source Data United States, 1971-1974, Hyattsville, Maryland, September 1979.

Standard error estimates for the pretest data with the time trend removed do not include sampling error in the time trend estimates.

## CHAPTER IV: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Three survey instruments were used in conducting the study: the mail screener, the eligibility/participation questionnaire, and the food intake questionnaire. The following section discusses the design of each instrument. Copies of the instruments may be found in Chapter VIII of this volume.

### MAIL SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The screening instrument, which was mailed to all MBR sample members, was intended to be a short, simple questionnaire that would produce high response rates, and yet collect sufficient data to make rough food stamp eligibility determinations. The pretest resulted in several improvements to the instrument. Questions on expenses were eliminated and the response categories for the income and assets questions were decreased, which reduced the questionnaire to one page. The entire mail survey package was able to be mailed at the postal rate for a regular business-sized letter. Business reply envelopes and pre-addressed envelopes were provided for return of the completed questionnaires.

### ELIGIBILITY/ PARTICIPATION INSTRUMENT

The eligibility/participation survey questionnaire determined eligibility for food stamps by asking a series of questions on income, assets, and expenses. Midway through the interview, eligibility calculations were performed, and for respondents found eligible for food stamp benefits, data were obtained on attitudes, opinions, and experiences regarding food stamps and other programs, as well as information on food expenditures.

The eligibility/participation instrument had to collect the needed information in the most concise way possible, minimize respondent burden due to excessive length, and also minimize interviewer burden by keeping the complex eligibility calculations to a minimum. Changes were incorporated into several drafts of the instrument after review by MPR and FNS personnel. The instrument was also programmed for computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). In a CATI interview, no hard copy is used. Rather, the questionnaire appears on a video display screen and the interviewer "types" in the responses as the respondent answers. The same words are read to CATI and to field respondents but the CATI interviewer is spared calculations, which are performed by the computer. Inappropriate questions are automatically skipped.

Although the instrument was found to work generally well during the pretest using both CATI and hard copy, changes were made in several areas: the CPS module (discussed in the preceding section) was deleted from all CATI interviews, and the interviewer procedures for calculating eligibility in the hard-copy documents, especially those involving vehicle assets, were simplified. A few questions were eliminated and the wording changed slightly in others. CATI programming for some questions was adjusted so that questions appeared more quickly on the terminal screen. The result was a questionnaire lasting about 45 minutes when using CATI, and 55 minutes for field and hard-copy phone interviews.

**FOOD INTAKE  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

The main purpose of the food intake survey instrument was to obtain a detailed record of the type and quantity of all food and beverages consumed by a respondent in a 24-hour period. A questionnaire was developed for this purpose which obtained a description of everything the selected respondent ate and drank on the day preceding the interview. An important aspect of this instrument design was the development of a visual guide to assist respondents in estimating the quantity of any food or beverage item consumed. Also, the questionnaire and visual guide had to be adaptable for use in telephone as well as in-person interviewing.

The food intake questionnaire also sought to gather information on several attitudinal measures; respondent height, weight, and activity level; knowledge of basic food groups; and intake of vitamin or mineral supplements.

This questionnaire went through several revisions, incorporating comments from MPR, FNS, and Boston Nutrition Associates (BNA) staff. The instrument was also pretested in Cleveland, Ohio through both phone and field interviews. After the pretest, only minor wording and question order changes were made. The pretest established the feasibility of collecting dietary intake by telephone.

The food portion visual guide was developed by Boston Nutrition Associates and patterned after the 3-dimensional models used in the Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES) for in-person interviewing. The 18" by 24" chart was two-sided, with side A (blue) depicting weight measures, and side B (orange) depicting volume measures. A reduced-size black and white picture of the food portion guide is contained in Chapter VIII of this volume.

CHAPTER V:  
DATA COLLECTION  
PROCEDURES

This section describes the procedures used to collect data for the mail screening survey and the telephone and in-person eligibility/participation and food intake surveys.

MAIL SURVEY

As stated previously, because such a large proportion of the MBR sample was likely to be ineligible for food stamps, all persons selected in that frame were mailed a questionnaire that would screen out those who were clearly ineligible. For the original sample draw, approximately 20,000 sample members were randomly selected to receive mail questionnaires.

The first mailing took place during the week of June 15, 1981. Each potential respondent was mailed a packet containing an explanatory cover letter signed by an official of the Food and Nutrition Service, a questionnaire, and a postpaid, pre-addressed return envelope. [These documents are included in Chapter VIII of this volume of the report.]

One week later, a reminder/thank you postcard was mailed to the entire mail survey sample. The text of the postcard read:

This is just a short note to remind you about the questionnaire we sent to you a few days ago. If you have already completed the questionnaire and returned it in the convenient prepaid envelope, please accept our thanks. On the other hand, if you have not yet completed it, will you please do so at your earliest convenience to ensure that your answers to the questions are included in this very important study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Three weeks after the initial mailing, a second package of material similar to the first was mailed to all nonrespondents. This mailing contained a new cover letter urging the completion and return of the questionnaire [see Chapter VIII].

A few weeks after the survey began, it became evident that additional MBR sample members would be needed if the desired sample goal was to be met. This was due largely to two factors: (1) the number of households containing members under age 65 was higher than expected; and (2) the rate of Food Stamp Program participation among households in the SSR sample frame was higher than expected, thus lowering the number of eligible nonparticipants found in that frame. To increase the total sample and especially the number of persons eligible for, but

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<sup>1/</sup>The number of cases in this first mailing was the same for all sites except that the sample for the comparison site in South Carolina was limited to 2,574—the total number available.

not participating in, the Food Stamp Program, it was decided to forego the third mailing of questionnaires to the initial MBR sample group and, instead, to draw an additional sample of 6,500 MBR cases into the mail survey. The first mailing to this group took place in mid-July. The same procedures were followed as in the original mailings.

Returned questionnaires, to which ID labels were affixed, were batched by support staff and forwarded to data processing for entry and calculation of eligibility. Approximately every two weeks, a list was produced containing the names and addresses of those mail respondents who had passed the mail screen, i.e., whose gross assets, income, and household size did not make them clearly ineligible for food stamps. A telephone number search was then conducted for all respondents who had not indicated a phone number on their questionnaires. These sample members were then assigned for interviewing in the eligibility/participation survey—those with phone numbers were assigned to the phone stratum, those without were assigned to the field stratum.

About five weeks after the initial mailing, a list of all nonrespondents was produced. A telephone search was conducted, and depending on its results, these nonrespondents were assigned to either the phone or the field survey for interviewing attempts. This was done only for the members drawn into the sample for the June mailing; nonrespondents to the second sample draw mailing were not followed-up by phone.

ELIGIBILITY/  
PARTICIPATION  
TELEPHONE  
SURVEY

The eligibility/participation survey determined actual eligibility for food stamps and obtained data on attitudes, opinions, and experiences regarding food stamps and other programs. This interview was conducted by telephone from MPR's Princeton offices for the majority (85 percent) of the sample. Procedures for telephone interviewing are discussed below. Procedures for in-person interviewing and the food intake survey are described in the following sections.

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<sup>1/</sup> Time pressures made it necessary to limit this second sample draw to MBR cases for which duplicates had already been eliminated. The number of such interviews available varied somewhat by site. The final sizes of the mail samples by site are shown in Table V.1. The mail sample size was lowest at the South Carolina sites, largely because the total universe of households was smaller in those sites. In addition, the mail sample sizes at the New York sites were somewhat lower than those for Oregon, reflecting in part the fact that somewhat fewer New York cases had been checked for duplication at the time of the second sample draw.

<sup>2/</sup> Due to an error, approximately 450 cases who passed the mail screening test but whose mail questionnaires were received on certain days during a period late in the survey were not released into the phone/field survey. Failure to release a case was determined solely by the date on which the mail instrument was received, so it is reasonable to assume that the sample omitted from the phone/field survey was random.

TABLE V.1

## MAIL SCREENING RESULTS BY SITE

|                             | SITE                |                     |  |                                     |                                |                  | TOTAL           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                             | Monroe<br>County NY | Albany<br>County NY | Darlington<br>and Dillon<br>Counties, SC | Lee and<br>Marlboro<br>Counties, SC | Multnomah<br>County,<br>Oregon | Eugene<br>Oregon |                 |
| Mailed                      | 4,678               | 4,593               | 3,774                                    | 2,574                               | 5,471                          | 5,398            | 26,486          |
| Returned to<br>Sender       | 103                 | 100                 | 111                                      | 117                                 | 143                            | 130              | 704             |
| Deceased                    | 59                  | 38                  | 58                                       | 63                                  | 55                             | 75               | 348             |
| Moved Out<br>of Area        | 41                  | 63                  | 31                                       | 26                                  | 84                             | 62               | 307             |
| Eligible for<br>Mail Survey | 4,473               | 4,392               | 3,574                                    | 2,368                               | 5,189                          | 5,131            | 25,127          |
| Returned-<br>Complete       | 2,299<br>[.51]      | 1,925<br>[.44]      | 1,746<br>[.49]                           | 1,126<br>[.48]                      | 2,926<br>[.56]                 | 3,073<br>[.60]   | 13,095<br>[.52] |
| Returned-<br>Refused        | 73<br>[.016]        | 68<br>[.015]        | 18<br>[.003]                             | 11<br>[.005]                        | 93<br>[.018]                   | 74<br>[.014]     | 337<br>[.013]   |
| Non>Returns                 | 2,102<br>[.47]      | 2,399<br>[.55]      | 1,810<br>[.51]                           | 1,231<br>[.52]                      | 2,170<br>[.42]                 | 1,984<br>[.39]   | 11,695<br>[.47] |

Staffing and Training. Interviewing for the telephone survey took place between 10 a.m. and 11 p.m. weekdays, between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Saturdays, and between 1 and 9 p.m. on Sundays. Interviewers worked four- or six-hour shifts, and most interviewers worked five weekday shifts and one weekend shift per week. A supervisor was present in the interviewing room during all shifts. Supervisors were responsible for controlling interviewer assignments, answering questions, monitoring calls through use of a call director, and maintaining survey records. Supervisors reported to the survey manager, who oversaw the entire interviewing operation.

Interviewer training was conducted in three waves, each session lasting five days. Thirty-two individuals successfully completed training and were hired to conduct the survey. Half of these interviewers had worked on previous MPR telephone surveys and half were newly employed by MPR. The training agenda included the showing of MPR's videotapes on general interviewing techniques, "Role of the Interviewer," "Probing," and "Bias"; discussion of the eligibility/participation questionnaire along with round-table and one-on-one practice interviews; and intensive instruction and practice on the operation of the computer-assisted telephone interviewing system.

Interviewing Procedures. Telephone interviewing began in late June and continued until the beginning of October. Most of the telephone interviewing was completed by early September. SSR sample members selected for interviewing were mailed, several days before their first scheduled contact, an advance letter signed by an official of the Food and Nutrition Service explaining the study and requesting their cooperation. This letter was similar to the one sent to the MBR sample members for the mail survey, but also advised recipients that an interviewer would be calling them shortly. [See Chapter VIII.]

Most of the telephone interviews were conducted through the use of a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system (CATI) that permitted direct computer entry of responses as the interview was conducted. The determinations of eligibility for food stamp benefits were performed through this system after household composition, income, and assets data had been collected.

The CATI system performed very reliably during the study. Other than the CPS interviews (for which the questions were not included in the CATI program), fewer than 10 percent of the telephone interviews were conducted without the use of CATI, primarily follow-ups to partially completed interviews.

At the beginning of each shift, each interviewer was assigned about 20 contact sheets, one for each sample member to be contacted. Each attempt to reach a respondent was recorded on the contact sheet. Assignments were evaluated at the end of each day to determine reassignment priority and schedule. Each morning, all final statuses for the previous day were recorded in the master logs.

IN-PERSON  
ELIGIBILITY/  
PARTICIPATION  
INTERVIEWING

A subsample of persons who did not have listed telephone numbers and some sample members who resided in households in which no person was willing to be or capable of being interviewed by telephone were selected for in-person interviews. Fifteen percent of all completions were conducted in person.

Four or five interviewers were recruited in each of the six interviewing sites. Twenty-five individuals successfully completed training and were hired to

conduct the field interviews. Field training was conducted in two sessions; the first, lasting 3 1/2 to 4 days, covered the eligibility/participation questionnaire and was conducted by Princeton professional staff. The second session covered administration of the food intake questionnaire and took place after interviewers had had about one week of experience in the field with the eligibility/participation questionnaire. These sessions, lasting two days, were conducted by personnel from Boston Nutrition Associates and MPR.

The initial training took place in Albany and Rochester, New York; Florence, South Carolina; and Portland, Oregon. Food intake training in Oregon was done in both Portland and Eugene, to avoid the necessity of overnight interviewer travel.

The sessions for the eligibility/participation survey included the showing of MPR's videotapes on general interviewing techniques and covered all procedures for administering the questionnaires, including extensive practice on contact procedures, asking the questions, and performing the food stamp eligibility calculations. Each interviewer was also required to conduct a mock interview with an elderly person during the training period.

Field interviewing began in late June or early July, depending on the timing of the training sessions, and continued through October, although most field interviewing was completed by mid-September. Interviewers worked flexible schedules, including evening and weekend hours.

The same advance letter used for telephone interviews was sent out as advance notification for in-person SSR sample interviews. Interviewers were mailed packets of interviewing material for about ten persons at a time. They reported their progress to a Princeton-based survey assistant several times a week. Completed interview packets were shipped from the field individually. To ensure confidentiality, contact sheets containing identifying information were shipped separately from the completed questionnaires. Contact sheets and questionnaires were logged in upon arrival in Princeton. All completed questionnaires were subjected to a quality control edit. Respondents were recontacted if key information was inconsistent or missing.

At least one out of every five interviews was verified for each field interviewer. A Princeton staff member verified those completions for which telephone numbers were obtained at the time of the in-person completion; for those without telephone numbers, verification was done in person by individuals hired for this task. Overall, 28 percent of the field interviews were verified.

#### FOOD INTAKE DATA COLLECTION

Food intake interviews were attempted for a randomly selected household member whenever a household was found (during the eligibility/participation interview) eligible for food stamp benefits. For in-person interviews, the food intake interview immediately followed the eligibility/participation interview. For households determined by telephone to be eligible, an appointment was made to conduct the food intake interview about a week later, by telephone. For CATI interviews, the random selection of the food intake respondent was made by computer.

One of the two-sided, two-dimensional food portion visual guides was then mailed to each designated respondent for use during the subsequent interview.

As mentioned before, for the field sample, in-person food intake interviews were done, by the same interviewers, immediately after the eligibility/participation interviews. For the telephone survey, food intake data collection was conducted as a separate survey, using a different interviewing staff. Eight persons were trained for three days on the food intake survey, after which seven were hired as interviewers. The first day of training emphasized coding procedures and was conducted by the Princeton survey supervisor. The next two days of training were conducted by personnel from Boston Nutrition Associates and consisted of instruction in the use of the survey materials and extensive practice in conducting the 24-hour dietary recall. Proper probing procedures were emphasized.

Most food intake interviewing took place between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays, although some interviews were done weekends and weeknights. Food intake interviewing was supervised by an MPR staff member. Calls were frequently monitored by Boston Nutrition Associates personnel by means of conference calls.

The telephone food intake interviewers were responsible for coding all of the completed questionnaires from both telephone and in-person interviewing. Coding of the food intake questionnaires required assigning the appropriate HANES five-digit numeric code for each item consumed. Because of substantial nutrient differences between food items which might otherwise appear to be similar, scrupulous coding of food items was required. At least 20 percent of each person's coding work was recoded by a second coder or the supervisor to uncover any errors, omissions, or other problems.

#### PROBLEMS WITH INTERVIEWING THE ELDERLY

Several interviewing problems associated with the age of the respondents were encountered in attempting to interview the elderly population which constituted the sample for this survey. Some of these problems are discussed below along with methods used in attempting to alleviate them.

Hearing difficulties were a common problem in interviewing this age group, especially for telephone interviews. When interviewers raised their voices, it tended to distract the other interviewers in the room. Special voice amplification devices, acquired from the phone company and installed on telephones, helped to alleviate this problem. In some cases, when a respondent was too physically or mentally impaired to be interviewed, it was necessary to interview some other available member of the household. In other cases, the interview was attempted in person rather than by telephone. In 400 cases, impairments prevented the completion of any interview for the household.

Another problem was that some respondents tired easily or lost their concentration after a short period of time. Interviewers were trained to always begin the interview by asking respondents whether they were seated comfortably. For respondents who were unable to continue talking on the phone for the necessary time, either because of physical fatigue or loss of concentration, interviewers were often able to complete interviews by calling back on successive days and asking a few questions each day.

Several changes were made after the pretest to ease the interview burden on elderly respondents. The CPS module, which lengthened the interview and confused some respondents because of its similarity to the monthly income questions, was eliminated from most of the telephone interviews. Also, since it was evident from the pretest results that elderly respondents often did not know the assets and income of younger household members, households with members under 65 were eliminated from the sample.

Interviewers were trained to be sensitive to the unique aspects of interviewing the elderly. The importance of speaking slowly and clearly was stressed, and field interviewers were required to carry adequate identification so that elderly respondents would admit them into their residence.

**DATA ENTRY AND  
FILE CREATION**

Upon completion of coding and editing, all questionnaires from the mail survey, the eligibility/participation interviews and the food intake survey were data-entered. Out-of-range and missing values were checked and corrected, if appropriate, during a machine cleaning stage. All entry was 100 percent key-entry verified to ensure that entry errors were not transmitted to the data file.

The food intake data were processed through a software program adapted from one supplied by staff members of the HANES program in the Department of Health and Human Services. This program converted the coded food intake information into nutritional intake data. Modifications of the HANES program were necessary in order to process portion sizes estimated from the two-dimensional models designed for the current study.

Range checks were employed to identify coding errors in the nutrient intake data. In particular, whenever a recorded food item exceeded prespecified edit range limits, an edit message was printed by the computer, and the case was checked manually. The cases which were not in such a way that approximately 45

percent of the cases were checked. Cases with extremely large nutrient intakes aggregated across individual food items were also checked manually for coding errors.

CHAPTER VI:  
RESULTS AND  
RESPONSE RATES

MAIL SURVEY

Table VI.1 summarizes the results of the mail screening survey. Altogether, 26,486 packets were mailed. Of these, 704 were returned by the post office as "unknown"; 348 were either returned by the post office or by a family member indicating that the sample person was deceased; and 307 were determined to have moved out of the areas in which the survey was conducted, either through returns from the post office or from the sample person. Excluding these from the original sample left 25,127 MBR sample members eligible for the mail survey.

Fifty-two (52) percent of the eligible sample returned completed mail questionnaires. A total of 337 respondents returned unanswered questionnaires accompanied by letters stating their refusal to participate. The tone of the letters ranged from mild to strident. Despite two mailings and a postcard reminder, 11,695 persons did not return the mail questionnaire. Response rates varied somewhat from site to site. Albany had the lowest response rate (44 percent); this is consistent with the lower response rates in this site for both the phone and in-person surveys. The highest response rate, 80 percent, was in Eugene, Oregon.

Of those who returned completed questionnaires, Table VI.2 shows that 10 percent reported living in institutions and 21 percent lived in households with members under 65 years of age. Of the remainder, 3,283 or 25 percent of all completed returns passed the income/assets screen, indicating they were possibly eligible for food stamps.

ELIGIBILITY/  
PARTICIPATION  
SURVEY

There were 15,112 households drawn into the telephone and field portions of the eligibility/participation survey. For 8,600 of these households, sufficient information was obtained to determine their eligibility for participation in the Food Stamp SSI/Elderly Cashout Demonstration. Interviews were not attempted for 1,894 households because the sample member had died, moved out of the interviewing area, or was unable to be located. In this section, we will discuss some of the results of the interviewing.

Overall Sample

Table VI.3 displays the results of interviewing attempts by interviewing method (phone or field). Eligibility interviews were completed with 4,910 sample members. In addition, 3,890 sample members who were institutionalized or who were found to be residing in households with persons under age 65 were thereby determined to be ineligible. Counting these statuses as responses, the overall response rate was 65 percent.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Response rate is defined as those sample members for whom demonstration eligibility was determined as a percentage of all sample members except those who were no longer in the sample frame (i.e., deceased, moved out of the area, and not located).

**VI**  
TABLE **X.2**

STATUS OF COMPLETED MAIL QUESTIONNAIRES

|                                   | SITE                |                     |  |                                     |                                |                          | TOTAL          |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
|                                   | Monroe<br>County NY | Albany<br>County NY | Darlington<br>and Dillon<br>Counties, SC | Lee and<br>Marlboro<br>Counties, SC | Multnomah<br>County,<br>Oregon | Lane<br>County<br>Oregon |                |
| Returned-<br>Complete             | 2,298               | 1,825               | 1,746                                    | 1,126                               | 2,926                          | 3,073                    | 13,095         |
| Insti-<br>tutionalized            | 315<br>(.14)        | 177<br>(.09)        | 164<br>(.09)                             | 62<br>(.06)                         | 362<br>(.12)                   | 250<br>(.08)             | 1,330<br>(.10) |
| Household<br>Member<br>Under 65   | 466<br>(.20)        | 416<br>(.22)        | 532<br>(.30)                             | 377<br>(.33)                        | 466<br>(.16)                   | 549<br>(.18)             | 2,806<br>(.21) |
| Failed<br>Income/Assets<br>Screen | 1,018<br>(.44)      | 902<br>(.47)        | 461<br>(.26)                             | 286<br>(.25)                        | 1,492<br>(.51)                 | 1,537<br>(.50)           | 5,696<br>(.43) |
| Passed<br>Income/Assets<br>Screen | 500<br>(.22)        | 430<br>(.22)        | 589<br>(.34)                             | 401<br>(.36)                        | 606<br>(.21)                   | 737<br>(.24)             | 3,263<br>(.25) |

**VI**  
TABLE **A.3**

INTERVIEW FINAL STATUS BY INTERVIEW METHOD

|   | Phone  | Field | Total  |
|---|--------|-------|--------|
| a. Completed Interview                            | 4,182  | 728   | 4910   |
| b. Household Found to<br>Include Members Under 65 | 2,578  | 552   | 3130   |
| c. Institutionalized                              | 328    | 232   | 560    |
| d. Moved Out of Area                              | 34     | 45    | 79     |
| e. Deceased                                       | 256    | 104   | 360    |
| f. Not Located                                    | 1,197  | 258   | 1455   |
| g. Refused  | 3,277  | 349   | 3626   |
| h. Non-English Speaking                           | 193    | 21    | 214    |
| i. Physically Impaired                            | 359    | 41    | 400    |
| j. Unable to Contact                              | 299    | 79    | 378    |
| TOTAL SAMPLE                                      | 12,703 | 2,409 | 15,112 |
| Eligible for Interviewing <sup>a/</sup>           | 11,216 | 2,002 | 13,218 |
| RESPONSE RATE <sup>b/</sup>                       | 63.2   | 75.5  | 65.1   |

<sup>a/</sup> Calculated by deducting sample members who were deceased, not located, or moved out of the area from the total sample.

<sup>b/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of sample members eligible for interviewing for whom Cashout Demonstration eligibility was determined (a, b, and c above).

Sample members identified as deceased or having moved out of the area were excluded from the response rate calculations because they could not participate in the demonstration. The "not located" sample members were excluded from the response rate calculations because the age of the relevant population and the fact that the initial sample extracts had been prepared by the Social Security Administration more than six months prior to the survey suggested that many of the persons in the "not located" category may have died or have been institutionalized by the time of the survey. If the "not located" sample members had been counted as nonrespondents rather than ineligible for interviewing, the overall response rate of the study would have been 59 percent. But, given the likely ineligibility for the sample of households not located, the response rate calculation of 65 percent appears to be a more valid representation of the actual survey results.<sup>1/</sup>

The response rate was substantially higher for the in-person field attempts than for the telephone survey (75 percent as compared with 63 percent). Although the percentages of fully completed interviews were similar for both interview methods, field interviewers identified 38 percent of the sample as institutionalized or containing household members under age 65 as compared with 28 percent of the phone sample being similarly classified. Conversely, the refusal rate for telephone attempts was substantially higher than for in-person attempts. The other final status categories did not indicate any substantial differences between interviewing methods.

The number of refusals in both the telephone and field portions of the survey was greater than anticipated. Overall, approximately 27 percent of those eligible for interviewing refused to cooperate: 29 percent of the phone sample and 18 percent of the field sample. Reasons for refusals varied. Many gave reasons such as "no time," or "not interested"; others refused because they considered questions on income and expenditures to be too personal; still others refused on the basis that the survey was government sponsored. During the fielding period, the possibility of Social Security program cuts was the focus of considerable media coverage and, despite interviewer assurances to the contrary, some sample members expressed fear that their benefits might somehow be cut as a result of their participation in the survey. In addition, the distinction between a final status of "physically impaired" and that of "refusal" was sometimes difficult to make with this elderly and disabled population. A common reason for refusal was "I just don't feel up to it."

Some respondents refused to provide information out of concern about the legitimacy of the survey. This was a particular problem in Albany, where a number of recent burglaries had been preceded by phone calls asking when people would be home. In addition, there were articles written by an elderly person in at least one publication directed at the elderly in the Albany area urging persons contacted through our survey procedures not to cooperate.

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<sup>1/</sup> It should be noted that determinations of ineligibility for food stamps were made for many households from mail screener data, thus making it unnecessary to draw these households into the phone/field survey. Table VI.2 shows that 5,896 households were screened out at this stage. Taking this into account would lead to somewhat higher estimates of overall effective response rates for the overall survey operation, counting both the mail and the phone/field components.

Of the 3,626 refusals, 94 percent occurred very early in the interview. Six percent answered at least several questions but broke off before eligibility could be determined. All refusals were reviewed by the survey manager or survey supervisor. For telephone interviews, on the basis of interviewer notes about the circumstances of the refusal, a decision was made whether to attempt a refusal conversion. If so, the interview was assigned to one of the most experienced and persuasive interviewers who had demonstrated success in obtaining cooperation. In addition, letters were mailed by the project director to some of the people in opposition to the survey in the Albany area. Table VI.4 shows the results of the telephone refusal conversion effort for the eligibility/participation telephone survey. Of 629 attempted conversions, 145 were converted successfully into completed interviews and another 39 were found to be ineligible for the demonstration evaluation.

The large difference in the refusal rate by interviewing method is consistent with prior survey findings. Respondents find it much easier to refuse or to hang up on telephone interviewers than to refuse to cooperate with interviewers who appear in person.

Four hundred sample members could not be interviewed because they were physically impaired and there was no other member of the household with whom to conduct the interview. This represented about 3 percent of the sample members considered eligible for interviewing. The most common reason for inability to interview these people was poor hearing; some people had illnesses that prevented them from being interviewed. In some cases, senility or other mental impairments precluded respondents answering the survey questions. Whenever possible, field attempts were made if it was felt that the problem was solely related to talking on the telephone, and a few interviews were converted to completions in this manner.

The questionnaire was not translated into any other language; less than 2 percent of the eligible sample was not interviewed due to the lack of availability of someone who could speak English. Also, 378 sample members were unable to be contacted by the interviewers for a variety of other reasons.

Table VI.5 shows the number of attempts required for completed and non-completed interviews for the telephone survey. An average of 2.4 contact attempts overall [2.9 attempts for completions, 2.2 attempts for non-completions] were made to interview potential telephone respondents. All telephone sample members were called back a minimum of nine times if a final status was not obtained in earlier calls. Eighteen percent of the sample required four or more attempts to reach some final status. Sixty-five percent of the telephone assignments were completed on weekdays before 5 p.m., 24 percent on weeknights, and 11 percent on Saturday or Sunday.

For in-person interviews, an average of 1.95 contact attempts was made for each completed interview. Eighty-three percent of the assignments were completed on weekdays, 9 percent on weekends, and 8 percent weeknights after 5 p.m. When necessary, at least three attempts were made to contact a respondent in person.

Interviewing  
Results by  
Sample Strata

As described earlier, procedures differed for SSR as compared with MBR sample members. All sample members from the SSR frame were mailed an advance letter and then contacted by an interviewer. The MBR sample members received a mail survey questionnaire. Households that returned the questionnaire and were found

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TABLE X.4

TELEPHONE SURVEY REFUSAL CONVERSIONS

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Number of Conversions Attempted: 629

Ultimate Disposition:

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Complete                          | 145 (.25) |
| Household had<br>Members Under 65 | 36        |
| Institutionalized                 | 3         |
| Second Refusal                    | 407 (.69) |
| Non-English Speaking              | 4         |
| Physically Impaired               | <u>26</u> |

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**VI**  
TABLE A.5

CONTACT ATTEMPTS BY COMPLETION STATUS  
FOR THE TELEPHONE SURVEY

| Attempts                        | <u>Completes</u> |                       | <u>Non-Completes</u> |                       | <u>Total</u> |                       |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
|                                 | Proportion       | Cumulative Proportion | Proportion           | Cumulative Proportion | Proportion   | Cumulative Proportion |
| 1                               | .46              | .46                   | .53                  | .53                   | .51          | .51                   |
| 2                               | .23              | .69                   | .20                  | .73                   | .21          | .72                   |
| 3                               | .12              | .81                   | .09                  | .82                   | .10          | .82                   |
| 4                               | .07              | .88                   | .05                  | .87                   | .05          | .87                   |
| 5                               | .04              | .92                   | .02                  | .89                   | .03          | .90                   |
| 6                               | .02              | .94                   | .03                  | .92                   | .02          | .92                   |
| 7                               | .01              | .95                   | .01                  | .93                   | .02          | .94                   |
| 8                               | .01              | .96                   | .01                  | .94                   | .01          | .95                   |
| 9                               | .01              | .97                   | .02                  | .96                   | .01          | .96                   |
| 10                              | .01              | .98                   | .02                  | .98                   | .02          | .98                   |
| 11                              | .01              | .99                   | .01                  | .99                   | .01          | .99                   |
| 12-16                           | .01              | 1.00                  | .01                  | 1.00                  | .01          | 1.00                  |
| Average Attempts per Completion | 2.9              |                       | 2.2                  |                       | 2.4          |                       |

to be possibly eligible for food stamps were assigned for field or telephone interviewing. Also, a subsample of persons who still did not return a questionnaire after three notices was assigned for telephone or field interviewing. This led to wide differences between the two samples in their final status results.

Table VI.6 displays the final status of the sample by strata. The response rate of 57 percent for the MBR frame as compared with 80 percent for SSR sample members reflects the much higher refusal rate for MBR (36 percent of eligible sample compared with 11 percent for SSR). MBR sample members who had received the mail questionnaire were aware that the survey contained information on income and expenses. This may have made them less likely to cooperate with a follow-up interview even before the interview began. In addition, approximately 70 percent of the MBR sample members had not returned the mail survey previously. Clearly, this group was a difficult one from which to obtain cooperation, and it had a much higher refusal rate than the MBR sample members who had returned the mail questionnaire.

#### Interviewing Results by Site

Response rates by site are shown in Tables VI.7 through VI.9, for the phone and field sample combined and then for each interview method separately. The results indicate wide response rate differences among sites. The South Carolina demonstration and comparison counties, with response rates of more than 80 percent, were considerably higher than any other sites. Albany, New York had the lowest response rate, 49 percent, whereas the other three sites (Monroe County, New York and the demonstration and comparison counties in Oregon) had response rates ranging from 57 to 63 percent.

The wide difference in response rates between sites is a result of the variation in site refusal rates. The two South Carolina sites had refusal rates around 12 percent while sample members in the other sites, except Albany, refused at a rate of about 30 percent. In Albany, 41 percent of the eligible sample refused to cooperate. It is possible that the relatively organized resistance that the survey received [newspaper articles and discussions at meetings of elderly citizens] in Albany substantially increased the refusal rate there. Conversely, in the more rural South Carolina counties, where surveys of any kind are generally less likely to occur, sample members were much more cooperative. The relative differences between sites in response rates and, alternatively refusal rates, followed similar patterns in both the telephone and field portions of the survey, although field refusal rates were substantially lower in all sites compared with telephone refusal rates.

In part, the differences in refusal rates and other survey outcomes by site reflect cross-site different proportions of sample members from different sample frames. The elderly populations at the South Carolina site are, in general, much poorer than those at the other sites. As a result, much higher proportions of them are on SSI. <sup>1/</sup> This, together with the relatively small populations in the South Carolina sites, resulted in there being a relatively high proportion of sample members from the SSR sample in those sites. Thus, the high South

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<sup>1/</sup> Because of the small population sizes of the South Carolina sites, the MBR samples at those sites were smaller than those of the four other survey locations, even though all available MBR sample observations at these sites were drawn into the survey. (See Table VI.1)

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TABLE **A.6**

INTERVIEW FINAL STATUS BY SAMPLE GROUPS AND INTERVIEW METHOD

|  | SSR   |       |                     | MBR   |       |                     |
|--|-------|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|---------------------|
|  | Phone | Field | Total <sup>a/</sup> | Phone | Field | Total <sup>a/</sup> |
| a. Completed Interview                         | 1,418 | 334   | 1,752               | 2,764 | 394   | 3,158               |
| b. Household Found to Include Members Under 65 | 1,256 | 267   | 1,523               | 1,322 | 285   | 1,607               |
| c. Institutionalized                           | 215   | 97    | 312                 | 113   | 135   | 248                 |
| d. Moved out of Area                           | 16    | 11    | 27                  | 18    | 34    | 52                  |
| e. Deceased                                    | 89    | 32    | 121                 | 167   | 72    | 239                 |
| f. Not Located                                 | 928   | 90    | 1,018               | 269   | 168   | 437                 |
| g. Refused                                     | 419   | 52    | 471                 | 2,858 | 297   | 3,155               |
| h. Non-English Speaking                        | 136   | 13    | 149                 | 57    | 8     | 65                  |
| i. Physically Impaired                         | 138   | 17    | 155                 | 221   | 24    | 245                 |
| j. Unable to Contact                           | 79    | 24    | 103                 | 220   | 55    | 275                 |
| TOTAL SAMPLE                                   | 4,694 | 937   | 5,631               | 8,009 | 1,472 | 9,481               |
| ELIGIBLE FOR INTERVIEWING <sup>b/</sup>        | 3,681 | 804   | 4,465               | 7,555 | 1,198 | 8,753               |
| RESPONSE RATE <sup>c/</sup>                    | 79.8% | 86.8% | 80.3%               | 55.6% | 67.9% | 57.3%               |

<sup>a/</sup> Totals may vary slightly between tables because of minor errors in survey record keeping.

<sup>b/</sup> Calculated by deducting sample members who were deceased, not located, or moved out of the area from the total sample.

<sup>c/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of sample members eligible for interviewing for whom Cashout Demonstration eligibility was determined (a, b, and c above).

**VI**  
**TABLE A.7**

INTERVIEW FINAL STATUS BY SITE - PHONE/FIELD COMBINED

|   | Monroe<br>Co., NY<br>(D) | Albany<br>Co., NY.<br>(C) | Darlington<br>and Dillon<br>Cos., SC<br>(D) | Lee and<br>Harlboro<br>Cos., SC<br>(C) | Multnomah<br>Co., OR<br>(D) | Lane Co.,<br>Oregon<br>(C) | TOTAL  |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| a. Completed Interview                            | 678                      | 703                       | 862   | 768                                    | 879                         | 1,019                      | 4,910  |
| b. Household Found to Include<br>Members Under 65 | 487                      | 499                       | 689   | 675                                    | 403                         | 377                        | 3,130  |
| c. Institutionalized                              | 189                      | 116                       | 44  | 35                                     | 117                         | 59                         | 560    |
| d. Moved out of Area                              | 15                       | 18                        | 6   | 13                                     | 13                          | 14                         | 79     |
| e. Deceased                                       | 71                       | 88                        | 53  | 38                                     | 57                          | 53                         | 360    |
| f. Not Located                                    | 238                      | 211                       | 292   | 252                                    | 307                         | 155                        | 1,455  |
| g. Refused  | 685                      | 1,055                     | 262   | 197                                    | 740                         | 687                        | 3,626  |
| h. Non-English Speaking                           | 89                       | 57                        | 2   | 1                                      | 44                          | 11                         | 214    |
| i. Physically Impaired                            | 77                       | 72                        | 50  | 57                                     | 88                          | 56                         | 400    |
| j. Unable to Contact                              | 78                       | 77                        | 51  | 40                                     | 86                          | 46                         | 378    |
| TOTAL SAMPLE                                      | 2,618                    | 2,896                     | 2,311                                       | 2,076                                  | 2,734                       | 2,477                      | 15,112 |
| ELIGIBLE FOR INTERVIEWING <sup>a/</sup>           | 2,294                    | 2,579                     | 1,960                                       | 1,773                                  | 2,357                       | 2,255                      | 13,218 |
| RESPONSE RATE <sup>b/</sup>                       | 56.1%                    | 51.1%                     | 81.4%                                       | 83.4%                                  | 59.4%                       | 64.5%                      | 65.1%  |

<sup>a/</sup> Calculated by deducting sample members who were deceased, not located, or moved out of the area from the total sample.

<sup>b/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of sample members eligible for interviewing for whom Cashout Demonstration eligibility was determined (a, b, and c above).

**VI**  
TABLE A.8

INTERVIEW FINAL STATUS BY SITE - TELEPHONE SURVEY

|   | Monroe<br>Co., NY<br>(D) | Albany<br>Co., NY<br>(C) | Darlington<br>and Dillon<br>Cos., SC<br>(D) | Lee and<br>Marlboro<br>Cos., SC<br>(C) | Multnomah<br>Co., OR<br>(D) | Lane Co.,<br>Oregon<br>(C) | TOTAL  |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------|
| a. Completed Interview                            | 613                      | 585                      | 767   | 584                                    | 746                         | 887                        | 4,100  |
| b. Household Found to Include<br>Members Under 65 | 398                      | 407                      | 560   | 562                                    | 320                         | 331                        | 2,178  |
| c. Institutionalized                              | 128                      | 47                       | 25  | 21                                     | 73                          | 34                         | 268    |
| d. Moved out of Area                              | 6                        | 8                        | 3   | 4                                      | 8                           | 5                          | 34     |
| e. Deceased                                       | 57                       | 58                       | 40  | 28                                     | 39                          | 34                         | 256    |
| f. Not Located                                    | 218                      | 174                      | 246   | 238                                    | 228                         | 93                         | 1,397  |
| g. Refused  | 636                      | 910                      | 228   | 181                                    | 694                         | 628                        | 3,277  |
| h. Non-English Speaking                           | 92                       | 47                       | 2   | 1                                      | 41                          | 10                         | 193    |
| i. Physically Impaired                            | 71                       | 52                       | 45  | 56                                     | 81                          | 54                         | 359    |
| j. Unable to Contact                              | 64                       | 70                       | 41  | 34                                     | 54                          | 36                         | 299    |
| TOTAL SAMPLE                                      | 2,283                    | 2,358                    | 1,957                                       | 1,709                                  | 2,284                       | 2,112                      | 12,793 |
| ELIGIBLE FOR INTERVIEWING <sup>b/</sup>           | 2,002                    | 2,118                    | 1,668                                       | 1,439                                  | 2,009                       | 1,980                      | 11,216 |
| RESPONSE RATE <sup>c/</sup>                       | 56.9%                    | 49.1%                    | 81.0%                                       | 81.0%                                  | 56.7%                       | 63.2%                      | 63.2%  |

<sup>a/</sup>Totals may vary slightly between tables because of minor errors in survey record keeping.

<sup>b/</sup> Calculated by deducting sample members who were deceased, not located, or moved out of area from the total sample.

<sup>c/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of sample members eligible for interviewing for whom Cashout Demonstration eligibility was determined (a, b, and c above).

~~VI~~  
TABLE A.9

INTERVIEW FINAL STATUS BY SITE - FIELD SURVEY

|   | Monroe<br>Co., NY<br>(D) | Albany<br>Co., NY<br>(C) | Darlington<br>and Dillon<br>Cos., SC<br>(D) | Lee and<br>Marlboro<br>Cos., SC<br>(C) | Multnomah<br>Co., OR<br>(D) | Lane Co.,<br>Oregon<br>(C) | TOT   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| a. Completed Interview                            | 86                       | 118                      | 95  | 184                                    | 133                         | 132                        | 71    |
| b. Household Found to Include<br>Members Under 65 | 89                       | 92                       | 129   | 113                                    | 83                          | 46                         | 51    |
| c. Institutionalized                              | 61                       | 69                       | 19  | 14                                     | 44                          | 25                         | 23    |
| d. Moved out of Area                              | 9                        | 10                       | 3   | 9                                      | 5                           | 9                          | 4     |
| e. Deceased                                       | 14                       | 30                       | 13  | 10                                     | 18                          | 19                         | 10    |
| f. Not Located                                    | 20                       | 37                       | 46  | 14                                     | 72                          | 62                         | 25    |
| g. Refused  | 49                       | 145                      | 34  | 16                                     | 46                          | 59                         | 34    |
| h. Non-English Speaking                           | 7                        | 10                       | -   | -                                      | 3                           | 1                          | 2     |
| i. Physically Impaired                            | 6                        | 20                       | 5   | 1                                      | 7                           | 2                          | 4     |
| j. Unable to Contact                              | 14                       | 7                        | 10  | 6                                      | 32                          | 10                         | 7     |
| TOTAL SAMPLE                                      | 335                      | 538                      | 354   | 367                                    | 450                         | 365                        | 2,40  |
| ELIGIBLE FOR INTERVIEWING <sup>b/</sup>           | 292                      | 461                      | 292   | 334                                    | 348                         | 275                        | 2,00  |
| RESPONSE RATE <sup>c/</sup>                       | 74.0%                    | 80.5%                    | 83.2%                                       | 93.1%                                  | 74.7%                       | 73.8%                      | 75.5% |

<sup>a/</sup> Totals may vary slightly between tables because of minor errors in survey record keeping.

<sup>b/</sup> Calculated by deducting sample members who were deceased, not located, or moved out of area from the total sample.

<sup>c/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of sample members eligible for interviewing for whom Cashout Demonstration eligibility was determined (a, b, and c above).

Carolina response rates reflect, in part, the higher overall response rates for the SSR sample frame.

One final site difference worthy of note is that in both of the South Carolina sites, the percentages of households that included persons under age 65 were substantially higher than in the other survey sites. This was not unexpected, given the rural location of the South Carolina sample.

FOOD INTAKE  
SURVEY

Table VI.10 displays the results of the food intake survey, by site. The 24-hour dietary recall interview was completed for 82 percent of the randomly selected respondents whose households had completed the eligibility/participation interview and were found to be eligible for food stamp benefits.

A higher response rate was achieved for in-person interviews [95 percent] than for telephone interviews [79 percent]. This was expected because the in-person interviews were attempted immediately following the eligibility/participation interviews whereas the phone interviews were delayed by at least a week while the food intake chart was mailed to respondents. The refusal rate was 7 percent, with most refusals coming from the phone survey [8 percent] rather than the in-person survey [only 1 percent]. Consistent with the other survey operations experience, the highest refusal rate was obtained in Albany [11 percent]. A small number of interviews could not be completed because the designated respondents could not speak English or were too impaired to be interviewed, and no proxy respondents were available.<sup>1/</sup> Other than refusals, the largest number of non-completions was due to respondents who were not available for interviewing by phone despite numerous attempts.

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<sup>1/</sup> Proxy respondents were permitted only in cases where the designated respondents were incapable of being interviewed and there were other household members available who were aware of everything the designated respondent ate.

**VI**  
TABLE A.10

FOOD INTAKE SURVEY  
FINAL RESULTS BY SITE

|                             | MONROE COUNTY |       |       | ALBANY COUNTY |       |       | DARLINGTON/DILLON SC |       |       | LEE/MARLBORO SC |       |       | MULTNOMAH, OREGON |       |       | LANE COUNTY, OREGON |       |       | TOTAL |       |       |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                             | Phone         | Field | Total | Phone         | Field | Total | Phone                | Field | Total | Phone           | Field | Total | Phone             | Field | Total | Phone               | Field | Total | Phone | Field | Total |
| Complete                    | 199           | 44    | 243   | 206           | 73    | 279   | 433                  | 76    | 509   | 327             | 150   | 477   | 260               | 72    | 332   | 311                 | 52    | 363   | 1,736 | 467   | 2,203 |
| Refusal                     | 26            | 1     | 29    | 40            | 3     | 43    | 19                   | 1     | 20    | 25              | 0     | 25    | 28                | 0     | 28    | 33                  | 1     | 34    | 171   | 8     | 177   |
| Non-English Speaking        | 4             | 0     | 4     | 3             | 0     | 3     | 0                    | 0     | 0     | 0               | 0     | 0     | 3                 | 0     | 3     | 1                   | 0     | 1     | 11    | 0     | 11    |
| Physically Impaired         | 22            | 0     | 22    | 34            | 1     | 35    | 45                   | 2     | 47    | 36              | 0     | 36    | 22                | 0     | 22    | 34                  | 1     | 35    | 193   | 4     | 197   |
| Other Non-Complete          | 12            | 0     | 12    | 11            | 5     | 16    | 28                   | 1     | 29    | 16              | 2     | 18    | 10                | 4     | 14    | 12                  | 4     | 16    | 89    | 16    | 105   |
| TOTAL                       | 265           | 45    | 310   | 294           | 82    | 376   | 525                  | 80    | 605   | 404             | 152   | 556   | 321               | 76    | 397   | 391                 | 58    | 449   | 2,200 | 493   | 2,693 |
| RESPONSE <sup>2/</sup> RATE | 75            | 98    | 78    | 89            | 89    | 75    | 82                   | 85    | 85    | 80              | 99    | 88    | 81                | 84    | 84    | 79                  | 90    | 82    | 79    | 95    | 82    |

<sup>2/</sup> Response rate is defined as the percentage of all assigned interviews that were completed.

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CHAPTER VII:  
CALLBACKS FOR FOOD  
EXPENDITURE DATA

Question 192 of the eligibility/participation questionnaire, which was patterned after a similar question in the 1973-74 Consumer Expenditure Survey of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, asked about household food expenditures. The words "include purchases made with food stamps" were included in parentheses, to be read whenever a respondent had said the food consumption unit received food stamps. However, results suggest that some respondents may not have included purchases made with food stamps. [See Chapter VIII of Volume 1 of the report.] Therefore, the decision was made to call back all eligible respondents who could be reached by phone and ask about food expenditures again, first without mention of food stamp benefits, and later asking whether purchases made with food stamps had been included. These callbacks are described in this section.

**Questionnaire** A pretest of about 35 respondents showed that it was difficult to find a question wording that was interpreted similarly by all households. To avoid bias, two versions of the final short callback questionnaire were used. Sample members with odd numbered IDs were asked version A, and those with even numbers were asked version B. [See Chapter VIII.]

**Survey Operations** The survey took place during January 11-21, 1982, with most of the interviewing being completed during the first week. Twelve of the 15 interviewers, and the supervisor, had previously worked on the eligibility/participation survey.

The sample was prepared as follows: a computer list was produced of all eligible respondents, including participants and nonparticipants from both the field and phone surveys. The batch number for each ID number was looked up on another printout, and a list made of all ID numbers, by batch. The original contact sheets were then attached to the new questionnaire, which had a record of attempts on one side and the questions on the other (pink for odd numbers and blue for even numbers).

Seven attempts were made to contact respondents before a number was retired. Only questionnaires with all questions answered were batched for data entry. No contact was attempted with field respondents who did not have phone numbers.

**Results** Completed questionnaires were obtained from 81 percent of those attempted. Results were as follows:

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Complete                     | 1,613        |
| Don't Know Food Expenditures | 87           |
| Refused                      | 76           |
| Institutionalized            | 11           |
| Non-English Speaking         | 2            |
| Impaired                     | 14           |
| Deceased                     | 9            |
| Not Located                  | 81           |
| No Contact                   | <u>84</u>    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>1,887</b> |

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**CHAPTER VIII:  
ATTACHMENTS**

The following instruments and forms are included in this section.

- o Mail Screener
- o Eligibility/Participation Questionnaire
- o Food Intake Questionnaire
- o Food Portion Guide
- o Mail Survey Cover Letters
- o Phone/Field Advance Letter
- o Food Expenditure Call Back Questionnaire
- o Administrative Costs and Processes Interviewing Guide used in data collection for Chapter II of Volume 1 of report.
- o Administrative Costs and Processes Cost Estimating Sheet used in data collection for Chapter II of Volume 1 of report.