Appendix 1. FDIC Technical Notes

The data for this report were collected through a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)-sponsored Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) for June 2015. The CPS is a monthly survey of about 53,000 interviewed households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The survey is based on a scientific sample that is representative of the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population, aged 15 or older.

The CPS is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population, including employment, unemployment, and earnings statistics. The CPS includes a variety of demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, race, marital status, and educational attainment. Additional information about the CPS is provided on the Census website.[1]

The CPS sample consists of independent samples in each state and the District of Columbia. The sample sizes for each state are set so that specific precision requirements for estimating unemployment rates will be met.[2] The sample design ensures that most of the households in a given state have the same probability of being selected, though, in general, household selection probabilities will vary across states. Because the CPS design is state-based, most of the estimates for the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement should be precise at the state level and for some metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs).

Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement

The fourth Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement was conducted in June 2015. The first, second, and third supplements were conducted in January 2009, June 2011, and June 2013, respectively. The primary purpose of the supplement is to estimate the percentage of U.S. households that are "unbanked" and "underbanked" and to identify the reasons why. The supplement survey instrument used in 2015, attached as Appendix 3, included approximately 50 questions designed to provide this information.

The 2015 survey instrument is similar to the 2013, 2011, and 2009 survey instruments. The 2009 instrument was developed with the expertise of a national consulting firm, which specializes in public opinion research, as well as input from the Census Bureau's Demographic Surveys Division and the BLS. The 2009 survey instrument underwent four rounds of cognitive field pre-testing and was revised to address the feedback gathered from each round.[3] The questionnaire was revised in 2011, 2013, and 2015. For a detailed description of the most recent revisions, which underwent two rounds of cognitive testing, see Appendix 2. Because of changes in the questionnaire, direct comparisons between 2015 and prior-year estimates are not possible in some cases.

Eligibility and Exclusions

All households that participated in the June 2015 CPS were eligible to participate in the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement. However, only households whose respondents specified that they had some level of participation in their household finances *and* responded "Yes" or "No" to whether someone in their household had a bank account (survey supplement Question 2, or Q2) were considered survey respondents.[4] CPS household respondents who did not answer or answered "Don't know" to Q2, or who did not participate in their household financial decisions (or refused to answer), were asked no further questions and were classified as nonrespondents for the supplement.

Coverage and Response Rates

For the June 2015 CPS, a statistical sample of 60,841 survey-eligible households was selected from the sampling frame.[5] Of these households, 52,801 participated in the CPS,

[1]See, for example, Technical Paper 66, "Design and Methodology, Current Population Survey," available at http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/tp-66.pdf.

[2]The precision targets that are the basis for the sample design of the CPS are provided in Chapter 3 of the U.S. Census Bureau's Technical Paper 66, available at http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/tp-66.pdf.

[3]The goal of each round was to determine respondents' comprehension of each question, test the flow of the questions, find major recall difficulties, ascertain the sensitivity or inappropriateness of any questions, and gauge the operational feasibility of the supplement. No changes to the survey were recommended following the fourth round of testing.

[4]Respondents involved in their household finances include respondents in households where adults have separate finances or in households where the respondent was the only adult in the household. For households where adults share finances or have a mix of shared and separate finances, respondents were asked to specify how much they participated in their household financial decisions. Only those who reported having at least some level of participation were considered to be involved in their household finances.

[5]For details on the sampling frame, refer to the technical documentation for the June 2015 supplement, available at http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html.

resulting in an 87 percent response rate. There were 8,040 nonrespondent eligible households. Most of these nonrespondents either refused to participate (66 percent) or were not home at the time of the interview visit or call (20 percent). The remaining 14 percent consisted of households where (a) the household respondent was temporarily absent, (b) the household could not be located, (c) language barriers prevented the interview, or (d) other reasons. Because of the availability of translators for many languages, only 0.5 percent of the nonrespondents (37 households) did not participate as a result of language barriers.

Coverage ratios for the CPS are derived as a measure of the percentage of persons in the target universe (the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population, aged 15 or older) that are included in the sampling frame.[6] The overall coverage ratio for the June 2015 CPS was 89 percent. The missing 11 percent consists of three groups: (a) persons residing in households that are not in the CPS sampling frame, (b) noninstitutionalized persons not residing in households at the time the CPS was conducted, and (c) household residents that were not listed as household members for the CPS for various reasons. The coverage ratios varied across demographic groups. For example, among women aged 15 and older, the coverage ratio was 92 percent for whites, 81 percent for blacks, and 84 percent for Hispanics.

Of the 52,801 households that participated in the CPS, 36,189 (69 percent) also participated in the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement.[7] Supplement survey response rates vary by household characteristics, ranging from 63 to 74 percent for the segments of the population listed in Appendix Table A.1. The weights calculated by the Census Bureau for the CPS and the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement respondents were adjusted to account for both nonresponse and undercoverage. These weight adjustments help correct any biases in estimates because of nonresponse and undercoverage, so that results from the CPS are representative of the U.S. civilian, noninstitutionalized population, aged 15 or older.[8]

Analysis of Supplement Survey Results

Using supplement survey results, households were classified as "unbanked" if they answered "No" to the question, "Do you or anyone else in your household have a checking or savings account now?" Households that answered "Yes" to this question were classified as "underbanked" if they indicated that they used one of the following products or services from an alternative financial services provider in the past 12 months: money orders, check cashing, international remittances, payday loans, refund anticipation loans, rent-to-own services, pawn shop loans, or auto title loans.

The estimated proportion of U.S. households that is unbanked was derived by dividing the sum of the weights of the household respondents that were identified as being unbanked by the sum of the weights of all household respondents. The same formula was used to estimate the proportion of U.S. households that is underbanked. For estimated proportions of unbanked or underbanked households for demographic subgroups, the same computational approach was used and applied to respondent households in the subgroup.

In addition to presenting estimated proportions, many of the tables in this report include estimated numbers of households (e.g., total households, unbanked households, or underbanked households). An estimated number of households for a given category such as unbanked is derived as the sum of the weights of the sample households in that category. For example, for the entire supplement sample of 36,189 respondent households, the sum of the household weights is roughly 127.5 million, which would be an estimate of all U.S. households as of June 2015. The Housing Vacancy Survey, another survey related to the CPS that uses household controls to produce household weights, provided an estimate of 117.3 million as the number of households in June 2015. This difference (127.5 million versus 117.3 million) is because household weights prepared by Census for the CPS and for this supplement survey are generally taken to be the reference person weights and are not adjusted to align with household count controls. Household count controls were not used to adjust household weights because the CPS is a person-level survey rather than a household-level survey; therefore, universe controls were used only in the preparation of person weights. As a result, the sum of household weights shown in our tables for a category tends to be somewhat higher than the actual household count for the category.

This report also contains a number of tables for which unbanked percentages and other household statistics are computed for subgroups defined by a particular economic or demographic characteristic. The household classification of an economic or demographic variable that is defined at the

[6]The coverage ratio is the weighted number of persons in a demographic group (after weights are adjusted to account for household nonresponse) divided by an independent count of persons in that demographic group (obtained from the 2010 Census with updates based on the American Community Survey).

[7]Taking into account the nonresponse to the base CPS, the overall response rate for the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement was 59 percent.

[8]This adjustment is done by introducing three stages of ratio estimation that adjust weights to align with population control totals (independent population estimates for various demographic and geographic groups). The household weight is generally taken to be the weight of the householder/reference person; however, if the householder/reference person is a married male, the spouse's weight is used.

person level rather than the household level (e.g., race/ethnicity, education, or employment status) is based on the economic or demographic classification of the householder/reference person (i.e., the person who owns or rents the home).[9]

The Census Bureau classifies households into different household types. For instance, a family household is a household that includes two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together, along with any unrelated people who may be residing there. Detailed definitions regarding household types can be found in the technical documentation on the CPS website.[10]

Households are categorized into racial/ethnic classifications as follows: if the householder is identified as black, the household is classified as "black" regardless of whether the householder is identified as Hispanic or any other race. If the householder is not identified as black and is identified as Hispanic, the household is classified as "Hispanic." If the householder is identified as Asian and not black or Hispanic, then the household is classified as "Asian." If the householder is identified as white and not any other race and not Hispanic, then the household is classified as "white." All remaining households are classified as "other."

This report provides unbanked and other estimates for the population of households with disabilities. As in the 2013 report (the first time these estimates were presented), households are categorized as follows: if the householder is between age 25 and 64 and either (a) indicates "Yes" to any of the six-question disability sequence in the base CPS or (b) is classified as "Not in labor force – disabled," the household is classified as "Disabled, age 25 to 64."[11] If the householder is between age 25 and 64 and neither condition (a) nor (b) above is met, the household is classified as "Not disabled, age 25 to 64." If the householder is not between the ages of 25 and 64, the household is classified as "Not applicable (not age 25 to 64)."[12]

This report presents estimates of unbanked and underbanked rates (and other outcomes of interest) for larger metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). MSA delineations are established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB published a revised set of MSA delineations in February 2013, based on data from the 2010 Census and the 2006-2010 American Community Surveys. The 2013 delineations superseded the earlier delineations based on Census 2000 data, first established by OMB in June 2003.[13]

As discussed in the technical documentation to the June 2015 supplement, the Census Bureau phased the 2013 MSA delineations into the CPS (and phased out the 2003 delineations) over the period May 2014 to July 2015.[14] Housing units first included in the CPS before May 2014 were assigned metropolitan area codes based on the 2003 delineations. These metropolitan area codes consisted of metropolitan New England city and town area (NECTA) codes for New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) and MSA codes for other states.[15] Housing units first included in the CPS in May 2014 or later were assigned metropolitan area codes based on the 2013 delineations. These metropolitan area codes consisted only of MSA codes, as housing units in New England were given MSA codes as part of the phase-in of the 2013 delineations.

To facilitate MSA-level estimates using the 2015 survey data, an observation with an obsolete 2003 MSA code was assigned the corresponding 2013 MSA code.[16] An observation with a NECTA code was assigned the 2013 MSA code that

[9]In a few cases, the householder/reference person is classified as an ineligible respondent for the CPS, but another eligible household resident participated in the CPS and in the Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement. In these cases we use the attributes of the eligible respondent to characterize the household.

[10]See https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/technical-documentation/subject-definitions.html.

[11]Specifically, we use the variable PEMLR ("Monthly labor force recode") to determine if the respondent is not in the labor force because of a disability. Refer to the CPS Data Dictionary for detail on the six-question disability sequence, available at the following link: http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html.

[12]A universally accepted method to identify the population with disabilities does not exist. Key estimates from the FDIC Unbanked/Underbanked Supplement, such as the proportion of disabled households that are unbanked, are qualitatively similar using alternative disability measures. See Appendix I of the 2013 report for details, available at https://www.economicinclusion.gov/surveys/2013household/documents/2013_FDIC_Unbanked_HH_Survey_Appendix.pdf.

[13]For February 2013 delineations, see OMB Bulletin Number 13-01 (February 28, 2013), available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/bulletins/2013/b13-01.pdf. For June 2003 delineations, see OMB Bulletin Number 03-04 (June 6, 2003), available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/bulletins_b03-04. In each year between 2003 and 2009, OMB published minor revisions to the MSA delineations, based on the Census Bureau's annual population estimates.

[14]The technical documentation for the June 2015 supplement is available at http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html.

[15]Unlike MSAs, which are made up of one of more full counties or county equivalents, NECTAs are composed of cities and towns and often do not follow county boundaries.

[16]In the 2015 survey data, some housing units were located in counties populous enough to be identified, but no MSA code was assigned because these counties were not in an MSA based on the 2003 delineations (all of these housing units were first included in the CPS before May 2014). Because some of these counties were in an MSA based on the 2013 delineations, a 2013 MSA code was assigned to housing units located in such counties.

comprised that majority of the NECTA population.[17] Overall, less than 3 percent of observations in the 2015 data were affected by these adjustments.

For the 2013 and earlier survey years, metropolitan area estimates provided in this report are based on the 2003 delineations (MSA or NECTA). Consequently, some metropolitan area estimates that use 2015 survey data are not directly comparable to the corresponding metropolitan area estimates that use 2013 and earlier survey data, because of changes in geographic boundaries (e.g., the addition or subtraction of a county). In the report tables, a tilde (~) next to an MSA name indicates that the MSA was affected by a geographic boundary change. All MSA names in the tables, however, reflect the 2013 delineations.

Imputed Values for Income Received Through Prepaid Card or Other Methods in a Typical Month

Because of an issue with the administration of the survey instrument, Q140c – about whether the household received income or benefits through direct deposit or electronic transfer onto a prepaid card in a typical month – was not asked of households that used a prepaid card in the past 12 months, received income in a typical month, and were longer-term unbanked (i.e., unbanked and did not have a bank account at any point in the 12 months before the survey). This issue also appeared to influence responses to Q140e – about whether the household received income in any other form in a typical month. The proportion that indicated "Yes" to this question was substantially higher among the affected households.[18]

For the 540 households affected by this issue, predicted probabilities of receiving income through a prepaid card were generated using estimates from a logit model. The logit model was estimated on the sample of 2,915 households that used a prepaid card in the past 12 months and that received income in a typical month. Of these 2,915 households, 2,844 had a bank account, and the remaining 71 were recently unbanked (i.e., unbanked but had a bank account at some point in the 12 months before the survey).

The logit model specification included an indicator for bank account ownership; an indicator for whether the household obtained a prepaid card from a government agency or an employer; an indicator for whether the household fell behind on bills in the past 12 months; and categorical variables that characterized the household's monthly income volatility, income level, employment status, education, age, race/ethnicity, nativity, metropolitan status, and geographic region. Predicted probabilities of receiving income by other methods were generated for these households using a similar logit model.[19]

Estimates of the proportions of households that received income through a prepaid card (and through other methods) presented in this report incorporate these predicted values. For example, Appendix Table G.3 shows that among unbanked households, 16.9 percent received income through direct deposit or electronic transfer onto a prepaid card. This estimate is the weighted average of the proportion among unbanked households that did not use a prepaid card (0 percent, by construction), the proportion among recently unbanked households that used a prepaid card (54 percent), and the average predicted probability among longer-term unbanked households that used a prepaid card (55 percent).[20]

Statistical Precision of Estimates

To indicate the precision of certain estimates, standard errors were calculated based on the variation of the estimates across a set of 160 sample replicates provided by the Census Bureau. Details of the calculation of standard errors based on sample replicates (and on the CPS methodology in general) are available from the Census Bureau.[21]

Estimated differences discussed in this report are significant at the 10 percent level unless noted otherwise. That is, if the population difference were zero, then the probability of obtaining estimates having the observed difference or a larger difference would be no more than 10 percent, and could be considerably less. For example, the estimated difference

[17]For example, households with a NECTA code for Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH, were assigned the MSA code for Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH. For each NECTA code in the 2015 survey data, at least 80 percent of the Census 2010 NECTA population (and the estimated July 1, 2015, NECTA population) resided within the corresponding MSA, and for the majority of the NECTAs this number was at least 90 percent.

[18]Specifically, 24 percent of the 540 households affected by this issue answered "Yes" to the question about receiving income from other sources, compared to roughly 10 percent among other (unaffected) unbanked households and 2 percent among banked households. Further, households that indicated they received income in any other form were asked to specify the method. Among the households that were affected by this issue and gave a verbatim response, a substantially higher proportion of the verbatim responses directly referred to a prepaid card (compared to households that were not affected and gave a verbatim response).

[19]The logit model of income receipt by some other method was estimated on the 35,443 households in the sample that received income in a typical month and that were not affected by the issue with the administration of the survey instrument. The model specification was identical to the model of income receipt through a prepaid card described in the text.

[20]The estimated proportion of households that received income through a prepaid card in a typical month (and through other methods) was quite robust to using alternative logit model specifications and to alternative predictive approaches such as random forest.

[21]For a detailed description of the methodology used to calculate standard errors based on sample replicates, see Chapter 14 of the U.S. Census Bureau's Technical Paper 66, available at http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/tp-66.pdf.

between the proportion of unbanked households in the U.S. between 2015 (7.0 percent) and 2013 (7.7 percent) is -0.7 percentage points. The estimated standard error of this difference (computed using the 160 replicates as described above) is 0.2 percentage points. Under the assumption that the true difference in the unbanked rate between 2015 and 2013 is zero, the probability of observing the -0.7 percentage point difference in our sample data is 0.4 percent (i.e., the p-value is 0.004).

Certain 2015 report appendix tables include 90 percent confidence intervals in addition to point estimates. The confidence interval is one way to describe the uncertainty surrounding the estimate. For example, as shown in Appendix Table A.3, the estimated proportion of U.S. households that were unbanked in 2015 is 7.0 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval around this estimate ranges from 6.8 to 7.3 percent.

Appendix 2. 2015 Revisions to the FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households

The FDIC revised the survey instrument based on past survey experience, feedback received in response to the 2013 survey, and recent research on economic inclusion topics. The revisions retained successful elements of the 2013 survey, reorganized and revised existing questions, and added questions to gain new insights. The new and revised questions provide a detailed view of household financial transactions, credit, and savings behavior. The questions also increase our understanding of the extent to which use of alternative financial services (AFS) is typical rather than incidental, and provide information on household characteristics that could influence financial services use, such as monthly income volatility and perceptions about banks.

To accommodate the new questions in the 2015 survey instrument, several questions from the 2013 survey instrument were dropped because responses were not expected to differ from the 2013 responses. For example, the 2015 survey did not contain questions about recent events that might explain transitions into and out of the banking system (e.g., changes in income, marital status, or residence) or questions on where households obtained AFS.

Specific revisions to the 2015 survey are described below.

Introduction, Transitions, Reasons for Being Unbanked, and Household Perceptions About Banks

One question dropped from the 2013 survey asked households that opened an account less than 12 months ago the main reason for opening an account (2013 survey Q2f).

A new question asked all households, "How interested are banks in serving households like yours? Would you say very interested, somewhat interested, not at all interested?" (Q101).

Minor revisions were made to questions that asked unbanked households the reasons why they did not have a bank account (Q5 and Q6). The response, "Banks do not have convenient hours or locations" (2013 survey Q5a) was split into separate reasons: "Bank hours are inconvenient" (Q5a1) and "Bank locations are inconvenient" (Q5a2). "Bank account fees are too high or unpredictable" (2013 survey Q5b) was also split into separate reasons: "Bank account fees are too high" (Q5b1) and "Bank account fees are unpredictable" (Q5b2). Wording for other reasons was modified as follows: "Don't like dealing with or don't trust banks" was shortened to "Don't trust banks" (Q5d), "Do not have enough money to keep in an account or meet a minimum balance" was shortened to "Do not have enough money to keep in an account" (Q5e), "Not using a bank provides more privacy for my personal finances" was changed to "Avoiding a bank gives more privacy" (Q5f), and "Can't open an account due to ID, credit, or banking history problems" became "Cannot open an account due to personal identification, credit, or former bank account problems" (Q5g). Responses for the main reason a household was unbanked (Q6) were updated to be consistent with Q5.

Finally, questions on recent events that might explain transitions into and out of the banking system (2013 survey Q49, Q50, and Q51) were dropped.

Direct Deposit and Account Access Methods

Questions that asked about automatic transfers or deposits (2013 survey Q2c and Q2d) were dropped. Instead, the 2015 survey asked households whether they received income through direct deposit or electronic transfer into a bank account in a typical month (Q140b).

A question on types of mobile banking activities that households engaged in (2013 survey Q2i), such as downloading a bank's mobile app, reading text message alerts, or sending money to others using a bank's website or mobile app, was dropped.

Prepaid Cards

The introductory description of prepaid cards was shortened in the 2015 survey instrument.

The language and responses for the question on prepaid card sources were changed. The 2013 survey asked which location the household typically used to get the prepaid card, allowing only one selection (2013 survey Q43), while the 2015 survey allowed households to select multiple sources (Q111). The location choices also differed. The 2015 survey included as sources a bank location or bank's website (as opposed to a bank branch in the 2013 survey), a government agency, an employer payroll card, and family or friends.

A new follow-up question asked households that used a prepaid card from a government agency whether they received the card for social security or disability benefits, unemployment benefits, or food or child care benefits like SNAP or WIC (Q112).

The following questions about prepaid cards were dropped: whether households had ever used a prepaid card (2013 survey Q39), whether households used a prepaid card in the past 30 days (2013 survey Q41), reasons for using a prepaid card (2013 survey Q42 and Q42b), reloading of prepaid cards (Q44), methods to access or load a prepaid card account (2013 survey Q45), and prepaid card access and use through a mobile phone (2013 survey Q45b).

Although many prepaid card questions were dropped, prepaid card use was incorporated into new questions on income receipt and bill payment in a typical month and on saving for unexpected expenses or emergencies (described below).

Alternative Financial Services

All AFS questions that asked households whether they had ever used a particular AFS or whether they used a particular AFS in the past 30 days (2013 survey Q9, Q11, Q14, Q16, Q20, Q22, Q25, Q27, Q29, Q31, Q33, Q35, Q37, Q38, and Q38c) were dropped.

Questions that asked which nonbank locations were typically used to cash checks (2013 survey Q13b), purchase money orders (2013 survey Q19b), or send money to friends or relatives living outside the U.S. (2013 survey Q24b) were also dropped.

A question on online payday loan use in the past 12 months (2013 survey Q28b) was dropped.

Minor wording changes were made to questions on pawn shop loans (2013 survey Q30 and 2015 survey Q123), rent-to-own services (2013 survey Q36 and 2015 survey Q125), and auto title loans (2013 survey Q38b and 2015 survey Q126).[1]

The 2015 survey included new questions about international remittances. All households were asked whether they sent money abroad to family or friends in the past 12 months (Q130). For households that sent money abroad in the past 12 months, follow-up questions asked whether the money was sent using a bank (Q131) or a nonbank (Q133) in the past 12 months. Households that sent money abroad using a bank in the past 12 months were asked whether they did so in a typical month (Q132). Similarly, households that sent money abroad using a nonbank in the past 12 months were asked whether they did so in a typical month (Q134). The question about nonbank remittance use in the past 12 months in the 2015 survey (Q133) was similar to a question from the 2013 survey (2013 survey Q21).

Bank Credit, Saving, and Income Volatility

The 2015 survey included new questions about bank credit, saving for unexpected expenses or emergencies, and income volatility. All of these questions refer to the past 12 months.

Q160 asked households whether they had a credit card from Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover. Q161 asked whether they had a personal loan or line of credit from a bank, excluding student loans or loans for major purchases like a house or car. These new credit questions focused on bank credit products most likely to be substitutes for small-dollar, short-term credit available from AFS providers.

New questions asked households whether they applied for a new credit card, or a personal loan or line of credit at a bank (Q162), and, if so, whether they were turned down or not given as much credit as requested (Q163). Q164 asked households whether they thought about applying for a new credit card, or a personal loan or line of credit at a bank, but changed their mind because they thought they might be turned down.

A new question asked households whether they set aside any money that could be used for unexpected expenses or emergencies, even if the funds were later spent (Q170). Households were prompted to consider only funds that could have been easily spent, if necessary, and not retirement or other long-term savings. Q171 asked households that saved for unexpected expenses or emergencies where they kept the funds, with responses that included savings accounts; checking accounts; prepaid cards; other accounts such as certificates of deposit, brokerage accounts, or savings bonds; in the home, or with family or friends; buying something with

[1]In the 2013 survey, Q36 asked about use of rent-to-own services in the past 12 months, but Q35, which asked households whether they had ever used rent-to-own services, contained language describing rent-to-own services. Similarly, in the 2013 survey, Q38b asked about use of auto title loans in the past 12 months, but Q38 contained language describing auto title loans.

the intent to pawn it or sell it later, if necessary; and other methods. Only households that saved and were either banked or recently unbanked (i.e., unbanked but had a bank account at some point in the 12 months before the survey) were asked whether they kept savings in a savings account or a checking account, and only households that saved and used a prepaid card in the past 12 months were asked whether they kept savings on a prepaid card.

A new question asked households whether their income over the past 12 months was about the same each month, varied somewhat from month to month, or varied a lot from month to month (Q180).

A new question asked households whether they fell behind on bill payments (Q181).

Income Receipt and Bill Payment in a Typical Month

A new series of questions asked households about the methods they used to receive income (from work, government benefits, or other regular sources) and pay bills (for things like mortgage, rent, utilities, or child care) in a typical month. Households were prompted to consider the past 12 months before answering those questions.

All households were asked whether they received income in a typical month by paper check or money order (Q140a) or in cash (Q140d).[2] Banked households and recently unbanked households were asked whether they received income in a typical month through direct deposit or electronic transfer into a bank account (Q140b). Banked households and recently unbanked households that used a prepaid card in the past 12 months were asked whether they received income through direct deposit or electronic transfer onto a prepaid card (Q140c).[3] All households were asked whether they received income in any other form (Q140e). For households that received income by paper check or money order and that used a nonbank check casher in the past 12 months, a follow-up question asked whether they typically cashed the check or money order at a place other than a bank (Q141).

All households were asked whether they paid bills in a typical month with cash (Q150a), with a credit card (Q150d), or with a cashier's check or money order from a bank (Q150h).[4] Banked and recently unbanked households were asked whether they paid bills with a personal check drawn on a bank account (Q150b), using a debit card linked to a bank account (Q150c), or electronically from a bank account through online bill pay or direct withdrawal (Q150f). Households that used a prepaid card in the past 12 months were asked whether they used a prepaid card to pay bills (Q150e). Households that used a nonbank money order in the past 12 months were asked whether they paid bills with a money order from a place other than a bank (Q150g). All households were asked whether they paid bills in any other way (Q150i). Q151 asked households to choose their most common method of paying bills from the methods they selected in Q150.

Household Learning About Finances

A question was added on whether households asked a bank teller or bank customer service agent about financial products and services or managing money in the past 12 months (Q182).

Another question asked households whether, in the past 12 months, they attended any financial classes or financial counseling sessions, either in-person, by phone, or online (Q183). For households that attended such classes or counseling sessions, a follow-up question asked whether they learned about the classes or counseling sessions through a bank (Q184).

Internet Access

The question on Internet access (2013 survey Q46 and 2015 survey Q187) was modified to ask whether the household currently had Internet access at home, rather than at home or outside the home (e.g., school, work, public library, etc.) as in 2013.

[2] If at any point during the questions on receiving income respondents volunteered that they did not receive income, they were not asked further questions about receiving income.

[3] The universe for Q140c was intended to include all households that used a prepaid card in the past 12 months. Because of an issue with the administration of the survey instrument, only banked and recently unbanked households that used a prepaid card were asked this question. See Appendix 1 for details.

[4] If at any point during the questions on paying bills respondents volunteered that they did not pay bills, they were not asked further questions about paying bills.