The Census Project Webinar

The Pervasive Use of ACS Data and Recommendations for New Content

Linda Jacobsen and Mark Mather
U.S. Programs, Population Reference Bureau

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Pervasive Use of the ACS
Who Uses the ACS and How?

- ACS data aid response to disasters and other emergencies
  - Help federal, state, and local officials coordinate evacuations
  - Conduct damage assessments
  - Carry out recovery plans
- ACS data are essential for understanding and responding to COVID-19
  - Community Resilience Estimates
  - COVID-19 Data Hub
Who Uses the ACS and How?

- **Businesses use the ACS for planning and economic investment**
  - Site selection
  - Developing better marketing strategies

- **State and local planners use ACS data for decision making**
  - Forecasting population and housing needs
  - Building new transit lines, schools, hospitals, and roads
  - Conducting program and project evaluation
Who Uses the ACS and How?

• Members of Congress use ACS data to
  • Learn about their districts
  • Conduct legislative research

• Federal agencies rely on ACS data to
  • Protect people from employment discrimination
  • Provide fair access to affordable housing

• ACS data help ensure fair political representation
  • Citizen Voting Age Population data for redistricting
  • Compliance with Voting Rights Act bilingual ballot requirements
Recommendations for New ACS Content
Limitations of Current ACS Content

Hard to capture household relationships, especially for children

• Rising cohabitation and births outside of marriage
• More complex and fluid living arrangements
• Confusion about who to include in household
• Current question only asks about each household member’s relationship to Person 1
• Can’t determine if adult other than Person 1 is parent of any resident children
• Current question contributes to undercount of young children
• Undercount could result in inaccurate statistics about young children
Recommendation for New ACS Content

1. Improve Measurement of Household Relationships by:
   • Adding questions that capture relationships between all household members – not just those to Person 1
   • At a minimum, adding questions like the “parental pointers” in the CPS to determine relationship of children to all adults in a household
   • Reducing undercount of young children by applying decennial census methods and instructions about whom to include as household members
Limitations of Current ACS Content

Hard to identify second- and third-generation immigrants

- Current question only captures parental place of birth for children living with their parents
- Can’t determine whether respondents who don’t live with parents are second- or third-generation immigrants
- Limits use of ACS data to study characteristics, geographic distribution, and well-being of second- and third-generation immigrants over time
Recommendation for New ACS Content

2. Expand Measurement of Second- and Third-Generation Immigrants by:
   • Adding questions on father’s and mother’s place of birth for all ACS respondents
   • Addition of these questions previously tested in 2010 ACS Content Test
   • Based on results, Census Bureau recommended addition of these questions to 2013 ACS
   • Census Bureau director later requested OMB remove these two questions from clearance package for 2013 ACS
Recommendation for New ACS Content

3. Census Bureau Should Evaluate Potential Addition of Questions to Measure SOGI of ACS Respondents

• Increasing social and political visibility of sexual and gender minority populations

• Growing need for data on characteristics, geographic distribution, and well-being of these groups

• Can draw on Household Pulse Survey experience with addition of SOGI questions and research by Federal Interagency Working Group
Recommendation for New ACS Content

4. Combined Race/Ethnicity Question, With Addition of MENA Category, Should be Adopted in the ACS

• Requires OMB revision of standards for federal data on race and ethnicity
• These question changes already tested extensively by the Census Bureau
• Would improve ACS data quality in measurement of these characteristics
• Proposed for 2020 Census
• Not approved by OMB for use in 2020 Census or ACS