The Life Cycle of a Piece of Data

Tracing the Path of Question 16 – Health Insurance/Health Coverage Plan on the American Community Survey (ACS) Form

April 17, 2019

David Kraiker and Heidi Crawford
Data Dissemination Specialists
U.S. Census Bureau
The American Community Survey is on the leading edge of survey design, continuous improvement, and data quality

- The nation’s most current, reliable, and accessible data source for local statistics on critical planning topics such as age, children, veterans, commuting, education, income, and employment
- Surveys 3.5 million addresses and informs over $675 billion of Federal government spending each year
- Covers 35+ topics, supports over 300 evidence-based Federal government uses, and produces 11 billion estimates each year
- Three key annual data releases:
  - 1-year Estimates (for large populations)
  - 1-year Supplemental Estimates (for small populations)
  - 5-year Estimates (for very small populations)
# The American Community Survey

## How is the ACS Different from the Census?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>ACS</th>
<th>2010 and 2020 Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>produces</td>
<td>Sample estimates</td>
<td>Official counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>produces</td>
<td>Population characteristics</td>
<td>Population totals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New data every</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data reflect</th>
<th>Period of time</th>
<th>Point in time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collects</th>
<th>Information previously on the census “long form”</th>
<th>“Short form” information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### ACS Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>HOUSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
<td>Computer &amp; Internet Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancestry</td>
<td>Costs (Mortgage, Taxes, Insurance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Heating Fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Voting Age Population</td>
<td>Home Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Occupancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>Plumbing/Kitchen Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>Tenure (Own/Rent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>Year Built/ Year Moved In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Enrollment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOGRAPHIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class of Worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps (SNAP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours/Week, Weeks/Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry &amp; Occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35+ Topics  →  1000+ Tables  →  11 Billion Estimates
Question Inserted on ACS Form

Interagency Committee on the ACS (co-chaired Office of Management & Budget + Census Bureau)

Present question evolved from “disability” question on Decennial form (2000); changes due to: Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

First time on ACS form: 2008 (Q.15).

New Content to be added (request of CDC). Federal Register Notice.
Marriage of MAF and TIGER

Master Address File (MAF) – updated via Delivery Sequence File (DSF), ACS updates; geography partnerships.

TIGER (Topologically Integrated Geocoding & Encoding Referencing) – is a geospatial file with streets, linework, etc. that is tied to the MAF.

These two together combine the springboard for sample selection.
Sample Selection

An extract (snapshot) is taken twice a year from the MAF.

16 different sampling rates for different geographies and their densities.

Address selection is pulled from the MAF.

Address generation is made and delivered to Processing Branch.
A Place Called NPC!

National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, Ind.

NPC assembles all the cards, letters, packets which will be sent to households.
The Respondent: Agreeable vs. Reluctant

**Agreeable Respondent:**

“My” respondent had 5 people living in HH, of 3 different generations.

Passed the form around to each individual within household.

Called for help – had trouble with some questions about health insurance question.

Returned form to NPC.
Data Goes to NPC for Processing

Received paper forms are “guillotined,” scanned, & transcribed.

OMR (Optical Mark Recognition) – looks for illegible marks.

NPC calls respondent if there are discrepancies.

Retains questionnaires for several years
What about the Reluctant Respondent?

2/3 of remaining cases are sent to Regional Offices (RO).

Cases transmitted to RO near end of month.

We no longer call respondents.
At the Regional Office: 
Computer-aided Personal Interview (CAPI)

6 Regional Offices

9,200 Cases assigned out of NYRO monthly

Many Cases “Re-assigned” by Field Supervisors.

500 ACS Field Representatives (FR)–15 to 20 cases/month
The Art of getting an Interview

FR has cases on computer and makes personal visits: days, evenings and weekends.

FRs look for housing unit (HU) anomalies and make geographic corrections.

FRs who speak specific languages get sent “cases” of like languages.

Cases transmitted at end of month.
Our Headquarters Receives Data

Data reviewed and transmitted to HQ via ASCII files.

Data from the CAPI and vacant interviews arrive in Suitland, Md.

Statistical methodologies and confidentiality rules applied in Suitland.
Data Become Statistics

Data set up by ACSO (American Community Survey Office), transferred to DITD (Decennial Information Technology Division).

DITD makes sure the Census Geographies are in place. Preps the system.

SEHSD (Social, Economic & Housing Statistics Division) check the data shells (Data, Product, Metadata).

Data released on an embargoed site.
American Factfinder (AFF): A Dissemination Vehicle

Not all data on AFF is from ACS!

Data from question 16 is cross-tabulated in myriad ways.

The next ACS data release will be available on our new data platform: data.census.gov
Portrait of a Data User

Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency – was trained by SDC.

Covers 9 counties near Rochester, NY.

Uses PUMS (Public-Use Microdata Samples) to determine unemployment/no health care.

Provides health care package “solutions” to local population.
Questions?

And now to the online demo..........
Data Dissemination and Training: census.gov/academy

- Bring our data experts to you. Request a free data training for your organization.
- Subscribe to Census.gov/academy. Join our educational hub to receive our updates and training products.
- Receive our Data Gems. These short “how-to” videos are an easy and quick way to increase your knowledge of Census data. Get them in your inbox!
- Get access to our data courses. You will learn-at-your-own-pace with these video-tutorials designed for different skill levels.
- Interact with our instructors via webinars. Learn about our data releases and tools while attending these live virtual classes.
Continue the Conversation

Sign up for and manage alerts at
https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCENSUS/subscriber/new

More information on the American Community Survey:
https://www.census.gov/acs

Census (Non-media inquiries)
800-923-8282

Public Information Office (Media)
301-763-3030

facebook.com/uscensusbureau

twitter.com/uscensusbureau

youtube.com/user/uscensusbureau

instagram.com/uscensusbureau

pinterest.com/uscensusbureau

linkedin.com/company/us-census-bureau
Resources: Need Assistance?

U.S. Census Bureau
Data Dissemination Specialists

Heidi Crawford
(202) 774-4445
heidi.r.crawford@census.gov

David Kraiker
(202) 740-2909
david.j.kraiker@census.gov

Toll-free number:
1-844-ASK-DATA
(1-844-275-3282)

For general questions:
census.askdata@census.gov
Questions?

Thank you