



American Community Survey

Briefing for the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations

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March 27, 2015

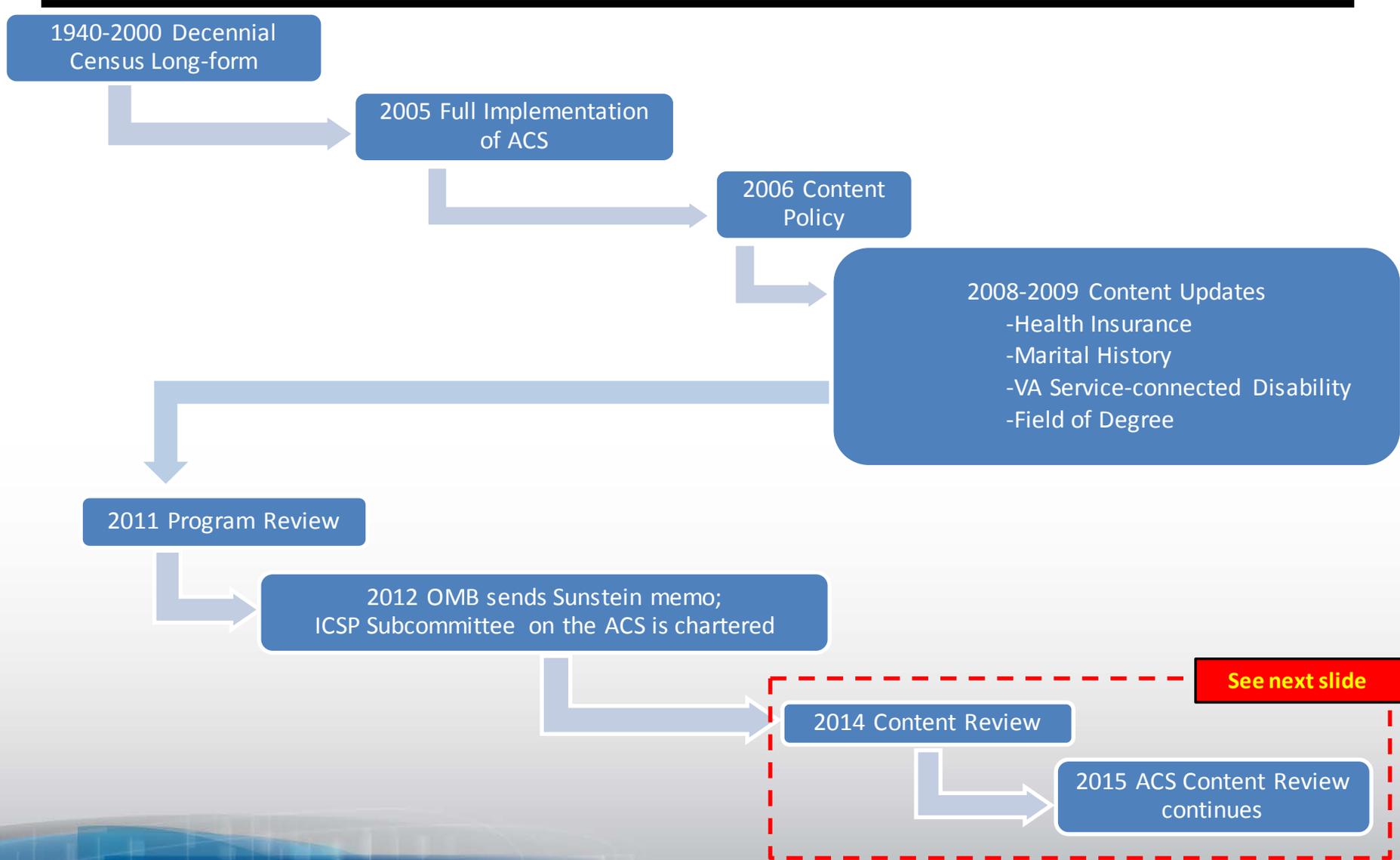
Agenda

- General Program Updates
- Content Review
- Future Research
- Respondent Burden
- Respondent Advocate
- Data Users Group
- Questions

General Program Updates

- Budget Update
- Data Products Update
 - 3-Year Data Products
 - Summary Level 070 - State-County-County Subdivision-Place/Remainder
 - 5-Year Comparison Profiles
 - Data Tools Postcard
 - Data Products Survey - Available April 2015
- Business-Related Activities
 - Big Data Summit: April 28 - 29 (San Jose, CA)
 - Small Business Development Centers: Sept 8-11 (San Francisco, CA)
 - Census Business Development Tool

Content Review



Content Review Discussions with NAC

- **Fall 2013** – Briefed the committee on the ACS Program, including the efforts underway for the 2014 ACS Content Review
- **Spring 2014** – Briefed the committee on the review of the ACS questions, the approach to the content review, our status, and next steps
- **Summer 2014** – NAC ACS Content Working Group met weekly to review ACS questions by major topic categories. Provided input on questions based on specific data usage. Feedback presented to full NAC in August 2014.
- **Fall 2014** – Briefed the committee on the results of the 2014 Content Review, the analysis framework, and the upcoming 60-day Federal Register Notice
- **Spring 2015** – Briefing on the comments received

Content Review Background

- The ACS Content Review builds upon earlier efforts begun during the comprehensive 2012 ACS Program Review to...
 - Examine and confirm the value of each ACS question
 - Confirm and update the legal basis for questions
 - Gather input from federal agencies and other data users
 - Analyze data using pre-specified criteria established by the ACS Subcommittee of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP)
 - Develop recommendations for ACS content that will provide the most useful information with the least amount of burden to the public



Content Review Background

- The Census Bureau examined all 72 questions on the ACS (24 Housing Questions and 48 Person Questions) utilizing the ICSP Subcommittee's methodology, resulting in five questions becoming candidates for removal.
- As required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, to obtain public comment, a 60-day notice on the proposed removal of these questions was published in the *Federal Register* from October to December 2014.

Content Review Data Analysis Outcome

Question topics that are candidates for Removal:

- Business or Medical Office on Property
- Field of Degree
- Marital History

These topics span five questions

Aggregate View of Public Comments

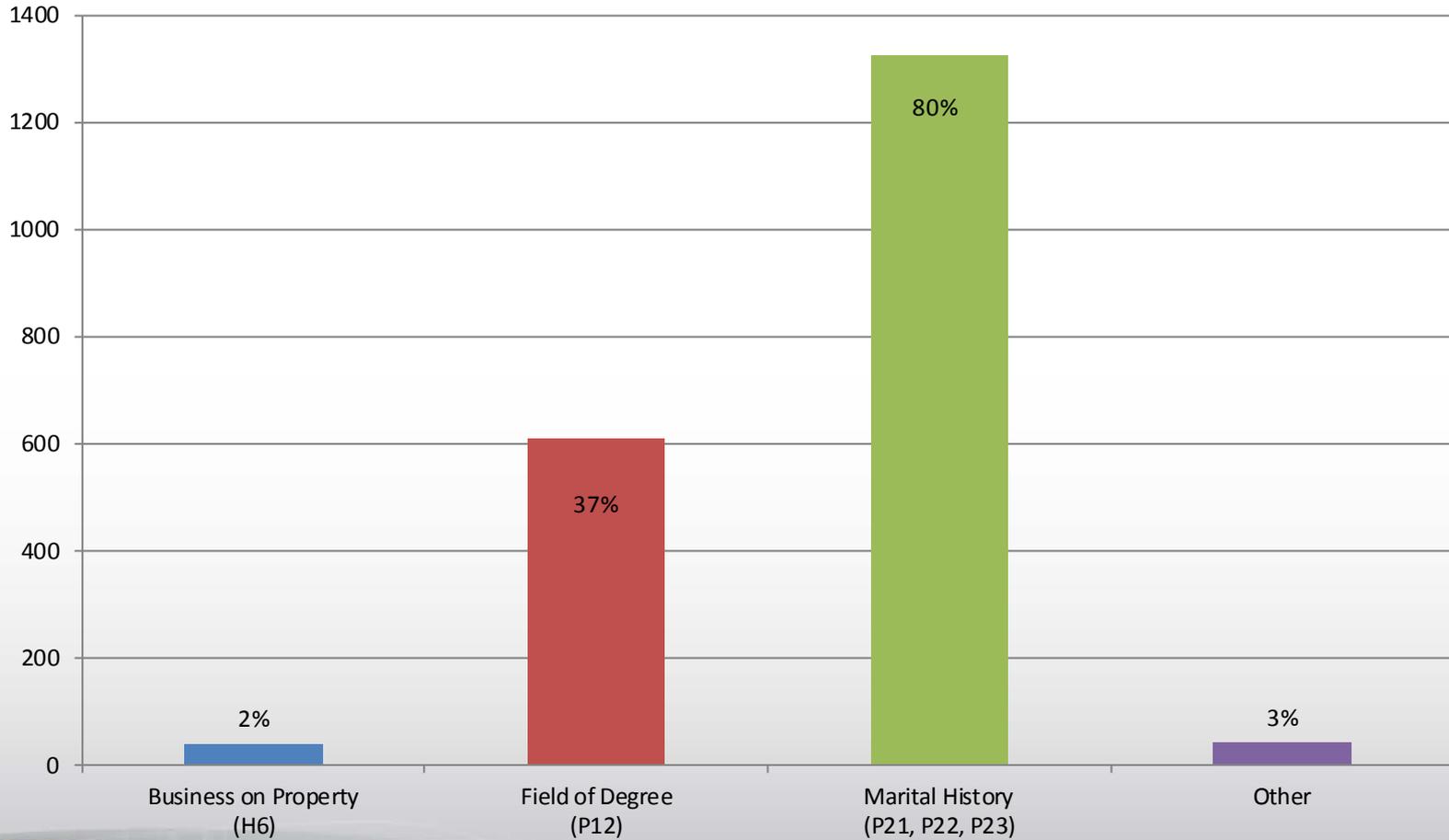
Topic	Comment	No. ¹
Survey	ACS provides important estimates, good value	207
	Other/potential ACS questions should be included on the ACS	238
	Maintain consistency of the questionnaire over time	30
Content Review	Did not consider population subgroups, non-federal uses	38
	Questions have insignificant respondent burden	35
Research	Families, marital patterns, federal program funding, and policy changes	354
	STEM (characteristics, economic outcomes, program planning)	125
	Non-STEM (characteristics, economic outcomes, program planning)	148
Other	Government agenda to attack/change/marginalize marriage	422
	Estimates are needed for the NSCG sampling frame	59
	There are no other sources for these estimates	132
	Other comments/ anecdotal comments	252

¹ Comment counts are not mutually exclusive.

Wide Range of Commenters

- Congress
- State Government
- City and County Government Agencies
- Census Stakeholders
 - Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT)
 - National Advisory Committee (NAC)
 - Census Scientific Advisory Committee (CSAC)
 - State Data Center Affiliates
 - Census Information Center Affiliates
- Professional Associations
- Nonprofits, Think-tanks, and Advocacy Groups
- Business
- Media
- University Researchers and Administrators
- Private Citizens

Questions Mentioned



Media Coverage

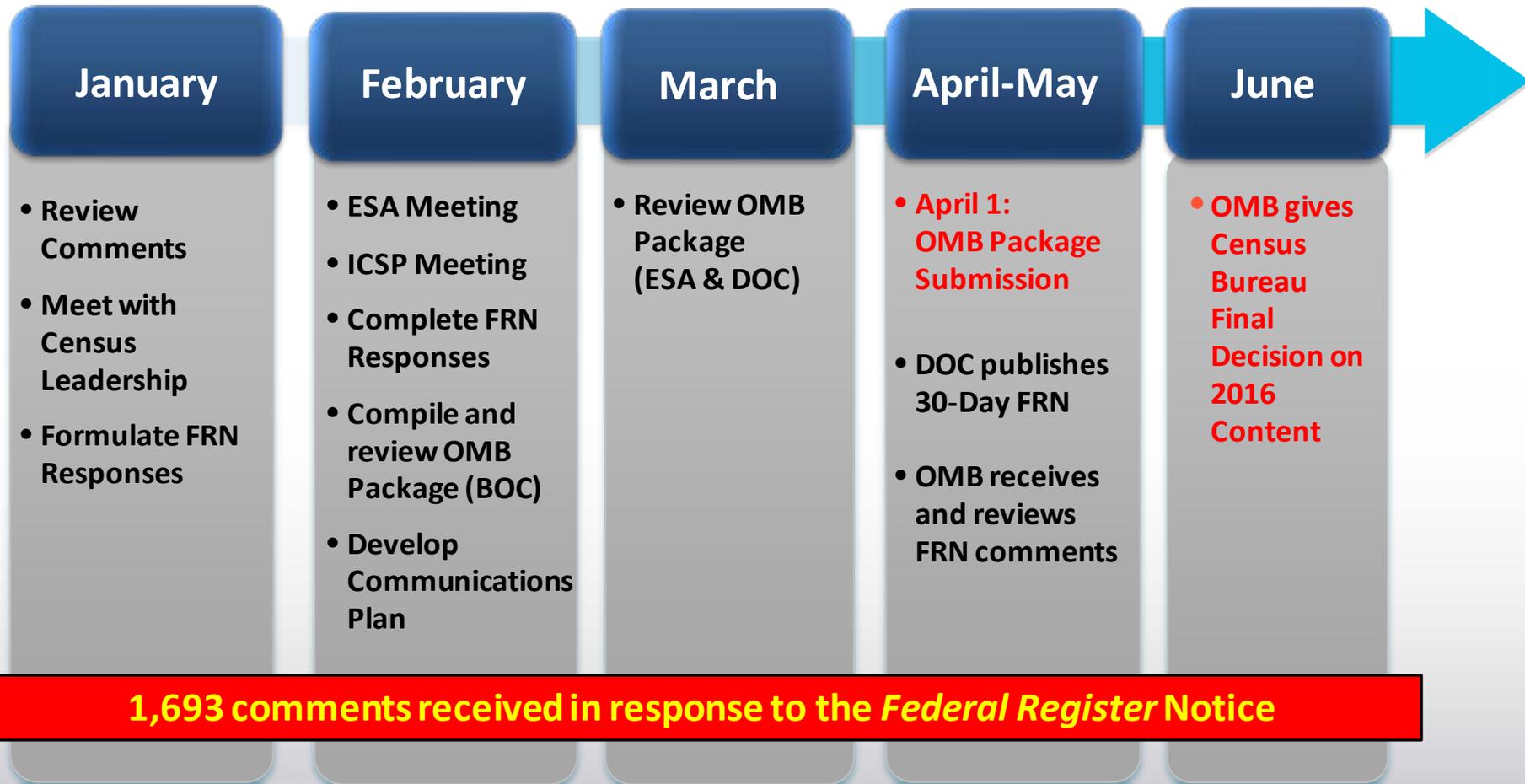
- 66 known clips* since October that are not primarily in favor of question removal:
 - Marital History-91% (60 clips)
 - Field of Degree-9% (6 clips)
 - Business on Property – unable to identify any clips
- 98,609 estimated impressions** from 51 Twitter mentions by 49 users
- Prominent Outlets:
 - New York Times
 - Wall Street Journal
 - National Public Radio

“For all the talk of evidence-based policy, the result will be the important debates on issues including family law, welfare reform, same-sex marriage and the rise of nontraditional families will proceed in a statistical void.”
– New York Times

*Clips: Media coverage – Newspaper, radio, etc.

** Impressions are potential views by audience members

High-level Timeline



Content Review Next Steps

Current Work...

February

- Briefings on the results of the Review
- Review FRN comments
- Begin development of OMB Package

March

- Review OMB Package

April-May

- **April 1: OMB Package Submission**
- Publish 30-Day FRN
- OMB receives and reviews FRN comments

June

- **OMB provides Census Bureau Final Decision on 2016 Content**

Future Work...

- **Identify high-value alternative data sources** to replace specific questions currently asked on the ACS to meet the needs of data users
- **Revise the wording of survey questions** to make them less burdensome for survey respondents, especially for questions determined during the Content Review to be especially sensitive, difficult or hard to understand
- **Potentially modify survey methods to ask some questions** of only a subset of the current ACS sample or less frequently than every year, in light of the frequency of data collection and level of geography needed to meet program requirements

Reduce Respondent Burden

- **Internet Data Collection**
 - Implemented for 2013 January Panel
 - Continues to exceed goal of at least 50% of self-response coming from the Internet
- **Computer Assisted Telephone Interview**
 - Implemented in March 2013
 - Reduction in calling strategy lessens respondent perceived intrusiveness and costs, without affecting quality
 - Reduction is approximately 1.2 million calls per year
- **Computer Assisted Personal Interview**
 - Conducted research on reducing the amount of personal visits to nonresponding households
- **Research: Revising Mail Package Materials**
 - Tested new messages that would resonate with respondents and motivate them to fill out the questionnaire or go online to do so
 - Tested revised mailing package materials that would encourage respondents to open materials
 - Will conduct field tests to determine how new messages and mailing package materials work in production
 - Will conduct field test to evaluate the impact of removing the mandatory message from the outside of the ACS mail envelopes

Respondent Advocate

- Established position April 2013
- Tim Olson served from April 2013 – October 2014
- Summary of activities:
 - Assisted approximately 175 respondents
 - Completed 429 congressional meetings in support of resolving constituent complaints
 - Participated in ACS Content Review Process
 - Advised ACS Messaging Research Team
 - Helped develop new “Are You in a Survey” webpage
 - Supported development of the “Respect the Respondent” training module for ACS field interviewers
- New Respondent Advocate: David Waddington (Feb. 2015)



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA USERS GROUP

- Purpose:
 - Improve understanding of the value and utility of ACS data
 - Promote information sharing among data users about key ACS data issues and applications
- Users group website and online community
- Membership is free and open to all interested ACS data users
- Currently over 1,100 members – Sign up!

acsdatausers.org



AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA USERS GROUP

2nd Annual Data Users Conference

- May 11-13, 2015, College Park, MD
- Hands-on workshops, about 35 presentations, luncheon roundtables, invited panel
- Themes include: the value of the ACS; what's next for the ACS; and key issues, uses, and applications of ACS data
- You can register until May 4 at www.acsdatausers.org

#ACSCConf15

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some additional ways to reduce respondent burden?
2. What are some additional ways to engage the business community?
3. What are some additional ways to engage the communities you represent?