

**US CENSUS BUREAU NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RACIAL, ETHNIC AND
OTHER POPULATIONS
WORKING GROUP CHARTER**

Working Group on Small Populations in the American Community Survey

Purpose

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a relatively new survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It collects data monthly and produces annual five-year period estimates for small geographic areas (census tracts and block groups) and small population groups. Prior to the 2010 Decennial Census, these data were provided through the decennial census long-form sample. The ACS small area estimates span a five-year period, the most recent five-year estimates, covering 2007-2011 were released in December 2012.

This Working Group will review, assess, and provide feedback on research that can improve ACS estimates of small populations. We will be looking to the Working Group to help define small populations, but a starting point would be groups with high sampling variability that result in unreliable or highly volatile estimates, year over year. Small populations could include groups such as American Indian and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Middle Eastern and Northern Africans, same sex couples, rural populations, children with disabilities and others.

The working group also will provide ideas and related research on ways to improve ACS estimates for small populations, including alternative methodologies, use of modeling, and other innovative ideas.

A sample expansion for the ACS in 2011 did provide an opportunity to improve ACS estimates for many small geographic areas and some small populations. However, in the current budget environment further expansions to the ACS sample are very unlikely and the work group should not consider options that involve an overall increase in the current ACS sample.

Working Group Focus

- *Guiding Research* – Assist the Census Bureau with identifying strategies for research, experimentation and testing that increase ACS data quality for small populations.
- *Improving Efficiencies* –Identifying strategies that increase the efficiency of ACS data collection for small populations.
- *Educating Data Users/Stakeholders* –Identify strategies to demonstrate to stakeholders that ACS data are reliable and useful. Consider the challenges and needs of users/consumers of ACS data. Highlight current ACS uses and benefits to data users, including federal, state and local governments, non-profit organizations, and other business entities.

Working Group Meetings and Members

- Working Group meetings will be held once a month.
- Membership in the Working Group will consist of 6 to 8 National Advisory Committee (NAC) members (one will be designated as the Working Group lead), plus if needed, other participants as agreed upon by the NAC members of the working group.

Working Group Deliverables

- A work plan that details the Working Group's activities through March 2014 will be presented at the March 14-15, 2013 NAC meeting.
- Findings from the Working Group will be presented at the October 31-November 1, 2013 NAC meeting.
- A final report will be submitted to the Census Bureau at the March 20-21, 2014 NAC meeting.

Sources of Information

- National Academies of Sciences Report, "Small Populations, Large Effects: Improving the Measurement of the Group Quarters Population in the American Community Survey";
- Interagency Council on Statistical Policy Subcommittee on the American Community Survey Reports

Census Bureau Staffing/Subject Matter Experts

- Tasha Boone, American Community Survey Office
- Tom Loo, Office of External Engagement