

# Synopsis for ACS Content Review Discussion with CSAC

April 16-17, 2015

## **Background**

The American Community Survey (ACS), a replacement to the long form of the census launched in 2005, is a mandatory annual survey asked each year of a sample of the U.S. population in order to provide current data needed more often than once every ten years. In December of 2010, following the release of its first set of estimates for every area of the U.S., the Director of the Census Bureau concluded it was an appropriate time to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the ACS program, including an initiative to examine and confirm the value of each question on the ACS. The 2014 ACS Content Review is the most comprehensive effort ever undertaken by the Census Bureau to review content on the survey, seeking to understand which federal programs use the information collected by each question, the justification for each question, and assess how the Census Bureau might reduce respondent burden.

## **Overview**

The 2014 ACS Content Review included an examination of all 72 questions contained on the 2014 ACS questionnaire, including 24 housing-related questions and 48 person-related questions. In order to be as transparent as possible, the Census Bureau has placed all background materials, methodological reports, and analysis results on the Census Bureau's Web site at

[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about\\_the\\_survey/methods\\_and\\_results\\_report/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/methods_and_results_report/).

Based on the analysis, the following questions are initially proposed for removal:

- Housing Question No. 6—Business/Medical Office on Property
- Person Question No. 12—Undergraduate Field of Degree
- Person Question No. 21—(In the Past 12 mos, did this person) Get Married, Widowed, Divorced
- Person Question No. 22—Times Married
- Person Question No. 23—Year Last Married

The Census Bureau has deliberately sought to ensure ACS stakeholders are aware of the project and understand the steps involved. The communications strategy has included outreach to a range of groups including the 23 Federal Agencies who participated in the effort, Tribal governments, state and local governments, academia, Congress, the public, data users, Census advisory groups including the Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations, the Census Scientific Advisory Committee, the business community, Census data dissemination support networks, think tanks, non-profits, grants writers, and many scientific and professional organizations. The Census Bureau has sent or provided periodic updates on the Content Review to the thousands of members of its ACS mailing lists, and utilized the ACS Data Users Group, established in 2012, to promote awareness of survey data users and encourage participation.

The Census Bureau also conducted specific outreach concerning the 60-day *Federal Register* notice (posted October 31 to December 30, 2014) to encourage a strong response. A total of 1,693 comments was received from many different organizations and individuals. The majority of comments came from individuals who did not identify an affiliation with an organization (801), followed by commenters from academia (591), nonprofits (131), government (70), business (45), university administrators (34), Census stakeholders (15), and media (6).

These public comment materials will be placed on the Web site with the other materials when the clearance package is delivered to OMB in April, and will be very carefully considered as the Census Bureau and OMB finalize the 2016 ACS content. Assuming a final decision is reached by June, the modified questionnaire will be implemented in January 2016.