

# **Comments on NAS ACS Meeting**

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# Areas Addressed

The following topics were discussed:

- Nature of Respondent Burden
- Communicating With the Public About the ACS
- Modifying the Group Quarters Questionnaire
- Use of Administrative Records
- Matrix Sampling
- Modeling and Imputation

# Nature of Respondent Burden

One topic of discussion was the nature of respondent burden.

Alternative aspects or measures raised were:

- Respondent burden as perceived by some members of Congress
- Number of questions
- Length of time to complete survey or individual questions
- Presence of questions that respondents find irritating
- Number of contacts from ACS to encourage response, especially number of telephone calls

It was suggested that the Census Bureau survey those asked to respond to the ACS about why they did or didn't respond and also survey ACS respondents to find out what they found burdensome or irritating. This would be good to know to improve the ACS and also could be useful in discussing burden with various groups.

# Communicating With the Public About ACS

- Three people who handle various commercial communication campaigns talked to the workshop.
- They gave examples of getting out a targeted message. They said that the Census Bureau has a good image in the American public, but little is understood about the ACS or that it is conducted by the Census Bureau.
- Better branding and associating the ACS more clearly with the Census Bureau were recommended.

# Modifying the Group Quarters Questionnaire

- There was discussion of treating those in non-institutional group quarters essentially the same as the non-group quarters population. This is mainly students in dormitories and military personnel in barracks (79%). There was discussion of putting the ACS questionnaire for non-Group quarters respondents on the internet.
- There was also discussion of reducing the number of questions for institutional group quarters respondents and possibly having this filled out from administrative records or by administrators. Perhaps it could be limited to age, sex, race, ethnicity, education and marital status. This could allow elimination of the paper form ACS for group quarters, which has been a problem, since sometimes the ACS form for the wrong year is left at the facility.

# Use of Administrative Records

Use of administrative records in the ACS is still being investigated. It is not clear when they will be used for purposes such as location and when they might be used to directly attribute responses.

# Matrix Sampling

- Matrix sampling was discussed in reference to asking some questions less often than every year and also related to dividing all or part of the ACS, so that some questions would only be asked of 1/2 or 1/3 of the respondents.
- Any of these ideas would reduce questionnaire length, but were very controversial.
- There was discussion of AddHealth, in which segmenting the questionnaire was considered, but instead the questionnaire was shortened with all questions continuing to be asked of all respondents.

# Modeling and Imputation

- Somewhat related to matrix sampling, there was discussion of modeling and imputation which could be used to solve some of the problems with matrix sampling.
- How exactly this would be done was unclear.

# Concluding Comments

There remain concerns about serving the needs of the two groups using ACS data:

1. Officials in government units such as states, counties and municipalities, who using use univariate or bivariate distributions
2. Researchers and policy analysts, who use the PUMS data

The various topics considered have different implications for the two groups of users. Matrix sampling, modeling, and imputation can have much more serious implications for the PUMS users.