



American Community Survey: Updates

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Efforts to Improve the American Community Survey

- Addressing Respondent Concerns: ACS Agility In Action
- Recent Stakeholder Engagements and Research Ideas

Agility in Action: A Snapshot of Enhancements to the American Community Survey

U.S. Census Bureau
American Community Survey Office

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Agility in Action -- Key Action Areas

- Reduce follow-up contacts
- Improve survey materials and the way we ask questions
- Obtain data from other sources
- Remove questions or ask questions less frequently
- Updated this version with accomplishments and plan to release in the fall

Improve Survey Materials and the Way We Ask Questions

- 2016 ACS Content Test
 - Tested wording changes proposed by an Interagency Committee
 - Data Collection - March through June 2016
 - Began the analysis phase in July 2016
- Cognitive Testing Contract
 - Conduct ongoing cognitive testing for wording changes that may reduce burden, difficulty, or sensitivity for respondents.
 - In June 2016 we completed cognitive testing for proposed revisions to “high burden” questions as recommended by Interagency groups.
 - Began the analysis of this testing in July 2016.

Agility in Action: Moving Forward

- Administrative Records Feasibility Reports
 - Continue assessments of coverage and quality of alternate data sources
- Data Use Awareness
 - Data Use Webinar – October 2016
 - Planning the next Data User’s Group (DUG) Conference in 2017
- Respondent Advocate

Agility in Action: Stakeholder Engagements

- National Academies of Science Committee for National Statistics (CNSTAT) public workshop (March 8-9, 2016)
- CNSTAT expert meetings
 - April 7th - Matrix Sampling
 - April 21st – Administrative Records
 - May 24th – Group Quarters Questionnaire
 - June 2nd – Communication and Messaging
- **Agility In Action 2.0 with new research agenda will be published this Fall**

Research Topics Based on NAS Meetings

- Understanding Respondent Perceptions of Burden
- Modifying the Modes and Design of the ACS
- Employing Alternative Data Sources
- Exploring Adaptive Design
- Enhancing Respondent Mail Materials
- Improving Messaging and Communications
- Improving Group Quarters Data Collection and Products

Understanding Respondent Perceptions of Burden

- Literature review of how other surveys have conceptualized and measured respondent burden
- Focus groups with respondents (both those who completed the survey and those who did not)
- Develop and test a series of questions that we can add to a methods panel on the ACS to measure perceptions of burden
- Analyze the comments we have received from respondents

Modifying the Modes and Design of the ACS

- Assess ways to enhance the cost benefit of CATI follow up, for example:
 - Focus on cases that are likely to be successful in CATI
 - Implement more adaptive stopping rules to reduce call attempts
- Investigate the feasibility of an abbreviated questionnaire for reluctant respondents
 - This is likely to include more than one randomly determined set of questions to omit in order to diffuse the quality impact for any particular questions.
 - This is also likely to be complex to implement.
- Use incomplete respondent data provided online in follow up contacts

Employing Alternative Data Sources

- Use select administrative records on housing to create a simulated 1-year and 5-year data product (e.g., property tax, property value, year built, and acreage)
- Evaluate a modified series of income questions to be asked if we can utilize the tax data to create income estimates
- Use IRS data on income to create a simulated 1-year and 5-year data product (data are not in house yet for this)
- Conduct a scoping exercise of the production system changes needed if we use administrative records

Exploring Adaptive Design

- Evaluate an adaptive strategy for targeting internet versus mail in the first mailing

Enhancing Respondent Mail Materials

- Develop a strategic framework for all of the mail pieces
- Conduct additional mail testing, for example:
 - Revise the “Why we Ask” brochure and include in the initial mail packages
 - Revise the cover the ACS paper questionnaire
 - Change the fifth mailing to a letter with sufficient information for the respondent to log in to complete the survey
 - Revise wording on letters and postcards
- Evaluate other creative revisions to the ACS mail material
 - The NAS experts suggested we consider using the strategic framework to design a new set of mail materials “from scratch”

Improving Messaging and Communications

- Develop updated communication strategy
- Pilot the use of targeted digital advertising
- Evaluate strategies for conducting the ACS during the 2020 Census

Improving Group Quarters Data Collection and Products

- Conduct a pilot test of modified definition of student housing
- Re-evaluate data products produced for GQs
- Evaluate quality and coverage of administrative records for institutional GQs

Questions