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The Impact of Superstorm Sandy on the Current Population Survey (CPS) Data Collection

by Lisa Clement, Christopher Laskey, and Shawn Ray

Superstorm Sandy devastated portions of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States (as well as portions of the Caribbean) on October 29, 2012. Since CPS interviewing was complete when the storm hit, October data collection was not impacted. The lingering effects of Sandy did, however, affect November data collection.

Five CPS field representatives (FRs) in New York were totally displaced and conducted telephone interviews only. In the coastal areas of Brooklyn, two FRs were unable to work, so the New York Regional Office (NYRO) reassigned their cases to other FRs.

In New Jersey, coastal areas were significantly impacted. Widespread power outages and gasoline shortages and rationing had direct impacts on 18 CPS FRs in New Jersey whose average CPS workload is about 30 cases. Some FRs travelled to where power was available, borrowing others' phones or cars to perform interviewing. One FR continued interviewing despite having suffered severe property loss.

In some shore areas, police blockades prohibited access to areas deemed too dangerous to enter. Type B classification procedures issued by Census headquarters provided the FRs with instructions on how to classify units that were either inaccessible or damaged/vacant. In most cases, inaccessible or damaged units were classified as Type B-Other.

The NYRO monitored the progress of cases very closely to gauge developments and activity rates in affected areas. We discussed with BLS the possibility of extending closeout if there were indications that it would help in completing cases.

Based on information provided by the NYRO, the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics jointly decided not to extend closeout. This decision was based on the number of completed cases and the expectation that extending closeout would not significantly improve interviewing results for CPS cases impacted by Sandy. The number of CPS cases classified as Type B-Other due to Hurricane Sandy was 20. It is expected that December interviewing is likely to experience similar residual impacts.

Survey response rates for November in the states affected by Sandy were within normal range and BLS reported that its analysis suggested that Hurricane Sandy did not substantively affect the national employment and unemployment estimates for November.

The Revised InterAgency Agreement Process

by Hampton Wilson

In an effort to increase efficiency and streamline the Interagency and Other Special Agreements (IOSA) process, last year the Census Bureau's Policy Coordination Office (PCO) initiated a centralized approach to manage all Census Bureau IOSAs that was fully implemented by November 2012. Based on this approach, the PCO became the focal point for managing, tracking, and routing IOSAs within the Census Bureau and the Office of General Counsel at the Department of Commerce (OGC). In addition, the PCO restructured workflow processes and routing procedures for reimbursable, payable, and joint statistical projects and no-funds exchanged IOSAs; established an IOSA management database; developed an electronic IOSA routing option;

and enhanced channels of communications between program managers, Census Legal staff, the Office of General Counsel, and the Budget and Finance Divisions.

Results of this new process include reduced IOSA review times, improved workflow clarity, less paper routing, and increased transparency. For example, regarding transparency, the PCO releases daily IOSA status reports for all IOSAs entered into a workflow process. The reports are accessible from an internal Census Bureau SharePoint/My Sites link. This functionality gives program managers the ability to view and track the status of any IOSA in the review process at Census and OGC.

The PCO also provides IOSA developmental tools, online advice regarding legal authorities, model agreement templates, checklists, and helpful links for program managers on the PCO intranet site. Upcoming enhancements for this new process include implementation of an IOSA/SharePoint platform, electronic signatures, and a publicly available website for current and prospective sponsors.

The National Health Interview Survey

by Anne Kearney

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is experimenting with new modes of data collection. In one pilot test, now winding down, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is comparing the collection of sexual identity data using an audio computer assisted self interviewing (ACASI) module at the end of the computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) questionnaire with collection of the same data gathered from a question in the CAPI interview that incorporates the use of a flashcard. Data analysis continues at NCHS and, as we move into 2013 data collection year, we will add these questions to the regular NHIS interview in one of the two modes.

In addition to experimenting with ACASI, NCHS is experimenting with an Internet follow-back survey using email addresses collected during the 2012 data collection year. We plan to re-contact sample adults and solicit their participation either via the Internet or via a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI). Another test involves using an address-based frame where we are able to obtain telephone numbers for a portion of the list and interview households with a shortened questionnaire either through CATI or CAPI.

In a separate effort, we will be expanding the 2013 sample in new primary sampling units in order to increase the sample in certain states in an effort to be able to produce more precise state-level estimates in more states.

The purpose of most of these tests is to monitor the possible effects of the Affordable Care Act on the nation's access to healthcare. The ACASI pilot test is an exception. Watch your newsletter for updates on all of these exciting projects in the coming months.

The Survey Implementation Process: The National Survey of College Graduates

by Cassandra Logan

As part of the Census Bureau's headquarters survey realignment program, the new Survey Directors and Assistant Survey Directors for each of the Census Bureau's demographic surveys engage in an intensive four-week implementation program dedicated specifically to their survey.

For the National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG), the implementation process started with a preliminary meeting for Survey Director (SD) Ben Reist, Assistant Survey Director (ASD) Cass Logan, and implementation facilitator Nancy Noell Kobilarcik. Nancy described the implementation process and what to expect over the coming weeks. A lot needed to be accomplished in a relatively short amount of time – from mid-August to late September. To be successful, it was important to understand how things were done in the past and to focus on how things will be done in the new administrative structure.

The implementation began with a strawman process and draft development, during which a work breakdown structure (WBS) of the NSCG survey processes, swimlanes (a graphic depiction of which group is responsible for sub-processes in the overall survey process), and a preliminary RACI matrix of responsibilities for all areas involved with the survey were developed. The RACI matrix identifies who is Responsible, who is Accountable, who is Consulted, and who is Informed about each step in the survey process.

Because the NSCG team was the third survey group to go through the implementation process, they were able to analyze the Lessons Learned by previous implementation teams and review earlier teams' documents, gaining valuable insights. The NSCG team could then focus on customizing their deliverables to address the requirements for collecting data via CATI, Web, and paper questionnaires every two years over a six month time span.

The implementation team was assembled to meet for four hours a day for approximately five weeks. These meetings were very well organized and facilitated by implementation specialists who provide these services for all of the demographic survey teams. They kept the team focused on the task and on schedule throughout the entire implementation period. The team consisted of the Survey Director and the Assistant Survey Director, representatives from Service Provider areas (Survey Methodology, Data Collection Automation, Data Collection, and Project Management), along with observers from the next team that will go through the implementation program. During the implementation process, many details were incorporated in the deliverables.

The final steps of the process included gathering information from every area that works on the survey to determine how much time each individual (or branch) works on the various tasks of the survey. Those data were entered into the resource-loaded WBS to determine resource allocations and overall estimated costs.

Going through this process helped the team clearly define roles and responsibilities for activities across the survey lifecycle. It also made clear that a “one size fits all” approach may not work for all surveys. Each survey has its distinct intricacies that must be considered and at times the model has to be reconfigured to fit the survey.

Maryland Software Developer Wins Census Bureau's Return Rate Challenge

Bill Bame, a 52-year-old software developer from Hampstead, Md., was selected as the winner of the U.S. Census Bureau's Census Return Rate Challenge. The challenge, conducted from August 31 to November 1, asked contestants to create the best statistical model predicting 2010 Census mail return rates at block group level geographies based on their demographic characteristics. The contest attracted 244 entries.

“During the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau saved an estimated $85 million in operational costs for every percentage point increase in the nation's participation rate by mail,” said Tom Mesenbourg, acting director. "Utilizing the winning model will help the Census Bureau create robust scoring metrics to identify hard-to-count areas and populations in the 2020 Census and save more money."

Bame won the $14,000 top prize with a model that came within 2.59759 percentage points of predicting the actual 2010 Census mail return rate of 79.3 percent. The return rate is the percentage of people who mailed back their 2010 Census questionnaires. Carter Sibley of Boston earned $7,500 for his second-place model, which came within 2.59872 percentage points. Paul Mineiro of Bellevue, Wash., and Jiri Materna of the Czech Republic teamed up for the third-place entry, so Mineiro earned $2,500. The contest rules state that prize money can go only to teams including U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents.

Two entries had a higher prediction rate than Bame's. These contestants did not qualify for a share of the prizes, however, because they are not U.S. citizens, which is required by the America Competes Act.

“Interactive Visualization of Census 2010 Response Rates” was chosen as the data visualization entry that best illustrated the intent of the challenge, winning $1,000. Seth Spielman and David C. Folch, both of Boulder, Colo., and Charles R. Schmidt of Bethlehem, Pa., created this project.

“Crowdsourcing solutions to technical problems are one way we are driving innovation and greater efficiency,” said Roderick Little, the Census Bureau's associate director for research and methodology. “The Census Bureau and other federal agencies, while constantly looking for ways to innovate and be more efficient in their operations, will be using information from this challenge to determine how to allocate future data collection resources.”

The competition was conducted on Kaggle.com under Section 105 of the America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2011.

To view results of the modeling competition and the methodologies used by the prize-eligible winners, go to https://www.kaggle.com/c/us-census-challenge/leaderboard and https://www.kaggle.com/c/us-census-challenge/forums.

Recent Data Releases

DECEMBER 2012
2010 Census

Summary Population and Housing Characteristics Reports (CPH-1)
This report series contains tables on age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino origin, households, families, housing tenure and occupancy, population density and area measurements. The lowest level of geography is the place level. There is a report produced for each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the United States. The reports are being released on a state-by-state basis. Reports have been released for several states so far. (December 12)

Centenarians: 2010
A special report provides an updated portrait of centenarians from the 2010 Census. Characteristics include: age, sex, race, Hispanic origin and living arrangements. Additional information is provided on the geographic distribution of centenarians as well as special data quality considerations. (December 10)

2010 Census American Indian and Alaska Native Summary File
This summary file provides detailed demographic information from the 2010 Census for more than 1,500 American Indian and Alaska Native tribal groupings, specific American Indian tribes and specific Alaska Native villages. These statistics are available for a variety of geographic areas. However, only geographic entities with a population of at least 100 for the specified group are available. The summary file has the largest number of American Indian and Alaska Native iteration groups of any Census Bureau data product released and adds a new layer of detail to the population and housing topics previously released from the census. Additionally, for the first time, the summary file includes detailed information on individual Central American, South American and Mexican-American indigenous groups. (December 13)

Demographic

American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates: 2007-2011
The only statistics on a wealth of demographic and socioeconomic measures for all geographic areas down to the block group level. These measures include education, occupation and language, to name just a few. The Census Bureau issues new sets of these five-year estimates every year; they are ideal for tracking trends over time for areas with populations of less than 20,000, which are not covered in any other round of estimates. (December 6)

Migration Products
Four sets of statistics addressing migration and mobility are being released simultaneously. This includes Geographical Mobility: 2012 and Geographic Mobility 2005-2010, a collection of national and local level tables from the Current Population Survey that describe the movement of people in the Unites States, including why they moved, types of moves, distance moved and characteristics of those who moved in the year prior to the survey. Along with the 2012 tables package, we will release for the first time data visualization charts and graphs that will include historical trends. The other set being released include 2011 American Community

Survey state-to-state migration flow tables, showing number of people moving between each different pair of states. (December 10)

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates: 2011
Available for roughly 3,140 counties and nearly 14,000 school districts, these statistics represent the only current, single-year income and poverty estimates available for all sizes of counties and school districts. (December 12)

Population and Housing Unit Estimates: July 1, 2011
Population estimates will soon be available on American FactFinder for the nation, states, metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, counties, Puerto Rico municipios, and for incorporated places and minor civil divisions. Estimates for some of these areas include components of change since the 2010 Census (births, deaths, and migration), as well as demographic characteristics (age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin). Housing unit estimates will be available for states and counties. The estimates were originally released on the Population Estimates website at https://www.census.gov/popest. National and state total population estimates were released on American FactFinder on October 25, 2012. (Mid-December)

State Population Estimates: July 1, 2012
Internet tables will show July 1, 2012, population estimates and components of change for the nation, states and Puerto Rico. Changes in the previous year, as well as since the 2010 Census, are examined. (December 20)

New Year's Day Population
The Census Bureau will ring in the year with its annual projection of the nation's population for Jan. 1, 2013. The release will include birth, death and net international migration rates. (December 27)

U.S. Population Projections: 2012-2060
What will our nation look like 50 years down the road? The answer will be revealed by these projections of the nation's population by age, race, and Hispanic origin. The first set of Census Bureau population projections based on the 2010 Census, they go to the year 2060. (December 12)

American Community Survey Brief: Veterans 2011
This brief highlights veterans 18 and older who reside in the United States and focuses on their racial, ethnic and regional diversity. Regional diversity includes foreign-born veterans and their countries of origin in addition to the native-born veteran population. The American Community Survey collects data on veterans in order to help government agencies, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, to establish programs for job counseling, training and placement. Sample topics covered in the brief include racial and ethnic diversity and birthplace of veterans. (December 13)

Economic

Survey of Market Absorption: 3rd Quarter 2012
The Survey of Market Absorption, sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, uses the Census Bureau's Survey of Construction as its sampling base. Each month, a sample of residential buildings containing five or more units is selected for the survey. The initial three-month interview collects information on amenities, rent or sales price levels, number of units, type of building and the number of units taken off the market (absorbed). Field representatives conduct subsequent interviews, if necessary, at six, nine and 12 months after completion.

These quarterly reports are generally available the first week of March, June, September and December. Additionally, statistics on absorption rates for selected metropolitan areas are also released on the Internet at the same time. (December 3)

State Government Finances: 2011
October 25 — Provides information by state on three types of multigenerational households, by race or Hispanic origin of the householder, and examines multigenerational households as a percentage of family households by county

Summary of State and Local Government Tax Revenue: 3rd Quarter 2012
— This summary shows quarterly tax revenue statistics on property, sales, license, income and other taxes. Statistics are shown for individual state governments as well as national estimates of total state and local taxes,

including 12-month calculations. This quarterly survey has been conducted continuously since 1962. (December 18)

National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Final U.S. Report
Results from one of the oldest continuing and most comprehensive recreation surveys. Includes information on the number of anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers, as well as how often they participate and how much they spend on their activities in the U.S. (December)

Media

'America by the Numbers' on C-SPAN's 'Washington Journal'
Tune in each Friday morning to C-SPAN's "America by the Numbers" for insight into key official statistics from the Census Bureau and other statistical agencies. Poverty, childbearing, education, health, the economy - topics discussed focus on the key issues of the day. The program highlights the trends and allows the public to call in or email their views.

Apps

Stay Connected to the Economy with Census Bureau Mobile App
Every week, the Department of Commerce releases key Census Bureau economic indicators. Get the latest business news on the go as it is released through the Census Bureau's free, easy-to-use mobile app, “America's Economy,” available for download for both Apple and Android phones and tablets. The app provides real-time updates for 16 key economic indicators from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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Demographic Profiles of the Island Areas: 2010 Census
The demographic profile summary files for the Island Areas include demographic, social, economic and housing tables available at the state, county, county subdivision and place levels for the three Pacific Island Areas — American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam — and at the state, county, county subdivision, place and estate levels for the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The demographic profile is in a summary file ASCII format. Also provided is a Microsoft Access database used to import the data, along with detailed instructions. In the coming months, the demographic profiles for the Island Areas will be available on the Census Bureau's American FactFinder website.

American Community Survey

2006-2010 American Community Survey Equal Employment Opportunity Tabulation
Nov. 29 — This tabulation, based on five years of American Community Survey data, highlights the diversity of the labor force (by sex and race/ethnicity) across several variables including detailed occupations, industry, earnings, citizenship, education, age, employment status, residence and worksite geographies for the nation, states, metro and micro areas, counties and places. These tables serve as the primary external benchmark for comparing the race, ethnicity and sex composition of an organization's internal workforce and similar external labor market within a specified geography and job category. The Census Bureau produces this tabulation for four sponsoring federal agencies: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Justice, Department of Labor and Office of Personnel Management.

American Community Survey Brief: Poverty and Shared Households by State: 2011 [PDF]
Nov. 28 — Explores the growth in shared households at the state level between 2007 and 2011. (These are households that contain an “additional adult” — a resident 18 and older who is neither the householder's spouse, nor the householder's cohabiting partner.) The brief also explores whether household sharing is influenced by economic circumstances by comparing three different poverty estimates.

American Community Survey Brief: Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Receipt in the Past 12 Months for Households by State: 2010 and 2011 [PDF]
Nov. 28 — Presents information on the number and percent of households receiving such benefits during the past 12 months as of the 2011 and 2010 American Community Survey for the nation and states.

American Community Survey Brief: Public Assistance Receipt in the Past 12 Months for Households: 2010 and 2011 [PDF]
Nov. 28 — Presents statistics for the nation and states on the number and percent of households who received such benefits during the past 12 months as of the 2011 and 2010 American Community Survey.

Demographic

Current Population Survey: 2011
Nov. 28 — The tables include detailed statistics about five-year age groups by sex, the 55-and-older population, the Hispanic population, the black population and the Asian population. The tables provide a wide range of social, economic and housing characteristics, such as marital status, educational attainment, nativity, employment status, occupation, poverty and housing tenure. The Current Population Survey, which has been conducted since 1940, is sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is the primary source of the nation's labor force statistics and provides understanding of labor market conditions.

Research On Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2011
The second annual report from the Census Bureau describing research on this measure, which complements, but does not replace, the official measure. The report compares U.S. 2011 supplemental poverty estimates to 2011 official poverty estimates for numerous demographic groups. In addition to the national-level statistics, the report presents supplemental poverty estimates for states for the first time, using three-year averages (2009-2011). It also compares national 2010 supplemental poverty estimates with 2011 supplemental poverty estimates and examines the effect of excluding individual resource or expenditure elements. (November 14)

America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2012
The tables provide information on the social and economic characteristics of families and households at the national level. (November 15)

Economic

Quarterly Workforce Indicators
Nov. 28 — This brief draws on newly available data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators, which includes information on firm age and size from the Business Dynamics Statistics microdata. The brief highlights statistics on hiring, turnover and wages at young businesses, finding that despite high worker turnover at young firms, the share of hires that increase net employment is higher at young firms relative to established businesses. The report also documents a decline in the relative wages paid to workers at young businesses, a decline partly explained by changes in the industry composition of young firms.

More information on the Quarterly Workforce Indicators can be found at http://lehd.ces.census.gov/ and more information on Business Dynamics Statistics can be found at https://www.census.gov/ces/dataproducts/bds/data.html.