



American Community Survey

Briefing for the State Data Center and Census Information Center Networks Annual Training Conference

Deborah Stempowski,
Chief, ACSO

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Agenda

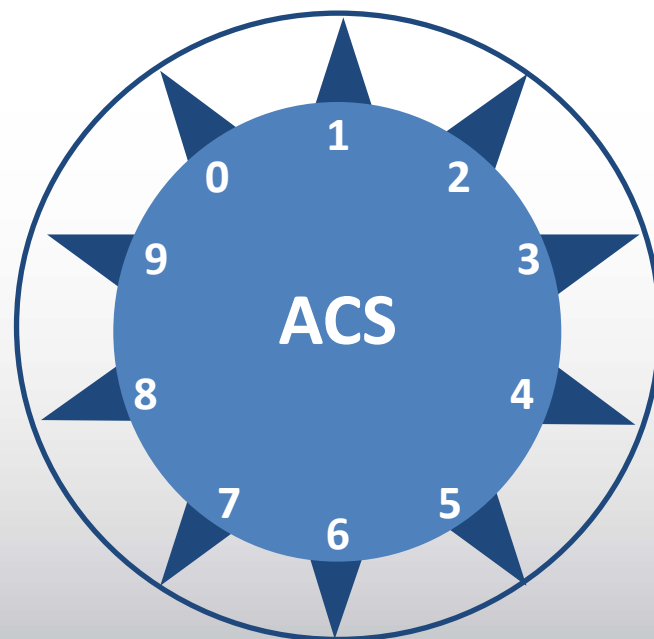
- General Program Updates
- Content Updates and Content Review
- Future Research
- Respondent Burden
- Respondent Advocate
- Data Users Group
- Ways We Can Collaborate
- Questions

American Community Survey

Beginning in 2005, the Census Bureau started conducting the American Community Survey (ACS):

- The ACS **replaced the decennial census long form** and responses to the ACS are **mandatory**—all responses are **confidential**.
- ACS is the **authoritative source of annual demographic, socioeconomic, and housing information** for all communities.
- The advantage of ACS is providing an annual, consistent source of data for states, counties/cities, census tracts—small area data.
- ACS is the only source of data for most rural communities.

ACS has been evolving, but there is **increasing pressure to adapt.**



American Community Survey: Concerns and Challenges

Respondent Concerns, which reflect general trends in society, but have specific implications for the ACS:

- **Mandatory**—respondents have concerns, with particular focus on the envelope message.
- **Privacy**—respondents express concern and reluctance in regard to certain questions.

American Community Survey: What's Next?

What have we done...where are we headed?

- **Content Review:** comprehensive review and analysis of each question, specifically focused on federal uses.
- **Response burden reduction:** considering new methodologies and new data sources to reduce respondent burden and continue providing the wide-range of socioeconomic data to all communities.

General Program Updates

- Budget:

Fiscal Year (FY) 2015	Fiscal Year 2016
Enacted \$230M	Presidents Request: \$257M

- Selected Program Impacts for FY15:
 - Failed Edit Follow-Up Operations (FEFU)
 - General Performance Review Observations
 - 3-Year Data Product
 - CAPI Field Representative Refresher Training

2014 Data Product Release Dates

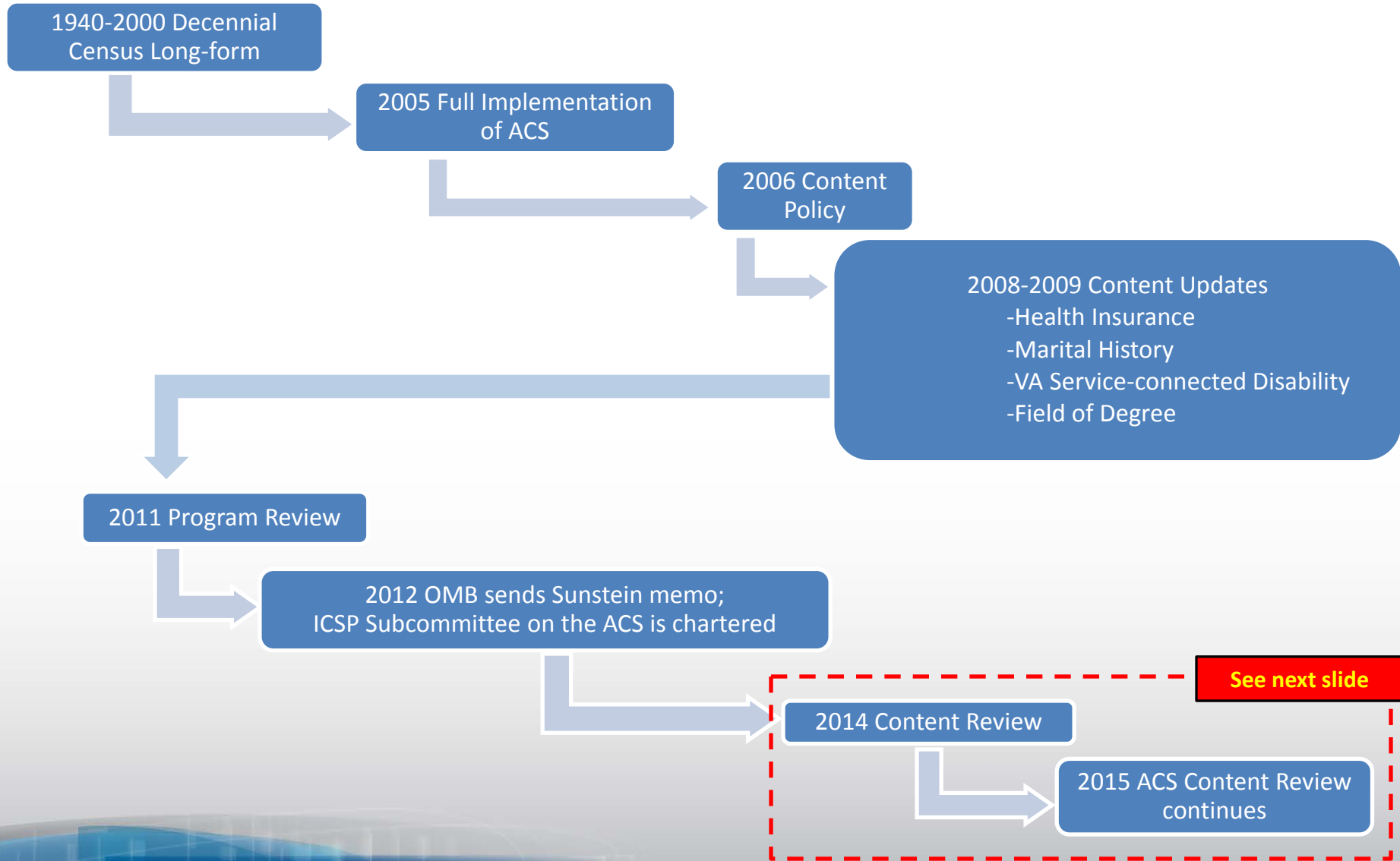
2014 Data Products Release Dates

- 1-Year products – September 17, 2015
- 1-Year PUMS – October 22, 2015
- 5-Year products – December 10, 2015
- 5-Year PUMS – January 21, 2016

Data Products Survey

- Survey to gather feedback on ACS data products
 - Overall experience using the products
 - Needs being met with current products
 - Usage of geographic areas
 - Usage of the documentation
 - Suggestions for dissemination
- Link to the survey:
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/utilities/data_products_survey.php
- Survey closed June 1, results available this Fall

2014 Content Review



2014 Content Review

The ACS Content Review builds upon earlier efforts begun during the comprehensive 2012 ACS Program Review to:

- Examine and confirm the value of each ACS question – 24 housing and 48 person questions
- Confirm and update the legal basis for questions
- Gather input from federal agencies and other data users
- Analyze data using pre-specified criteria established by the ACS Subcommittee of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy
- Develop recommendations for ACS content that will provide the most useful information with the least amount of burden to the public

Facts about Content Review

Who provided us with information? →

What did we examine?

- All 72 survey questions
 - 24 Housing Questions
 - 48 Person Questions
- 126 Individual Survey Components

Growth in total known uses:

- 175 to 300+

Agency

- Agriculture
- Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Census Bureau
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Education
- Energy
- Health and Human Services
- Homeland Security
- Housing and Urban Development
- Interior
- Nat'l Telecom. & Info. Administration

Agency

- Veterans Affairs
- Justice
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Transportation
- Labor
- Federal Communications Commission
- National Institutes of Health
- National Science Foundation
- Office of Management and Budget
- Social Security Administration
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

2014 Content Review: *Federal Register* Notice Comments

1,693 comments received in response to the *Federal Register* Notice

Wide Range of Commenters

- Congress
- State Government
- City and County Government Agencies
- Professional Associations
- Business
- Nonprofits, Think-tanks, and Advocacy Groups
- Media
- University Researchers and Administrators
- Private Citizens

Content Updates

- Changes in 2016 ACS Content Resulting From the Content Review
 - Remove:
 - H6 – Business or Medical Office on Property
 - Retain:
 - P12 – Field of Degree
 - P21, P22, P23 – Marital History
- Changes in 2016 ACS Content Resulting From Cognitive Testing on Computer Usage and Internet Questions
- Changes in 2016 ACS Content Concerning the Flush Toilet Section of the Plumbing Facilities Question
- Changes in 2016 ACS Mailing Procedures
- Opportunity to comment via the Supplemental Federal Register Notice (May 29-June 28, 2015)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2015/05/29/2015-13061/submission-for-omb-review-comment-request>

Content Review Next Steps

Current Work...

February

- Briefings on the results of the Review
- Review FRN comments
- Begin development of OMB Package

March

- Review OMB Package

April-May

- **April: OMB Package Submission & FRN**
- **May: Supplemental FRN**
- OMB receives and reviews FRN comments (both from initial and supplemental FRN)

June

- **OMB provides Census Bureau Final Decision on 2016 Content**

Future Work...

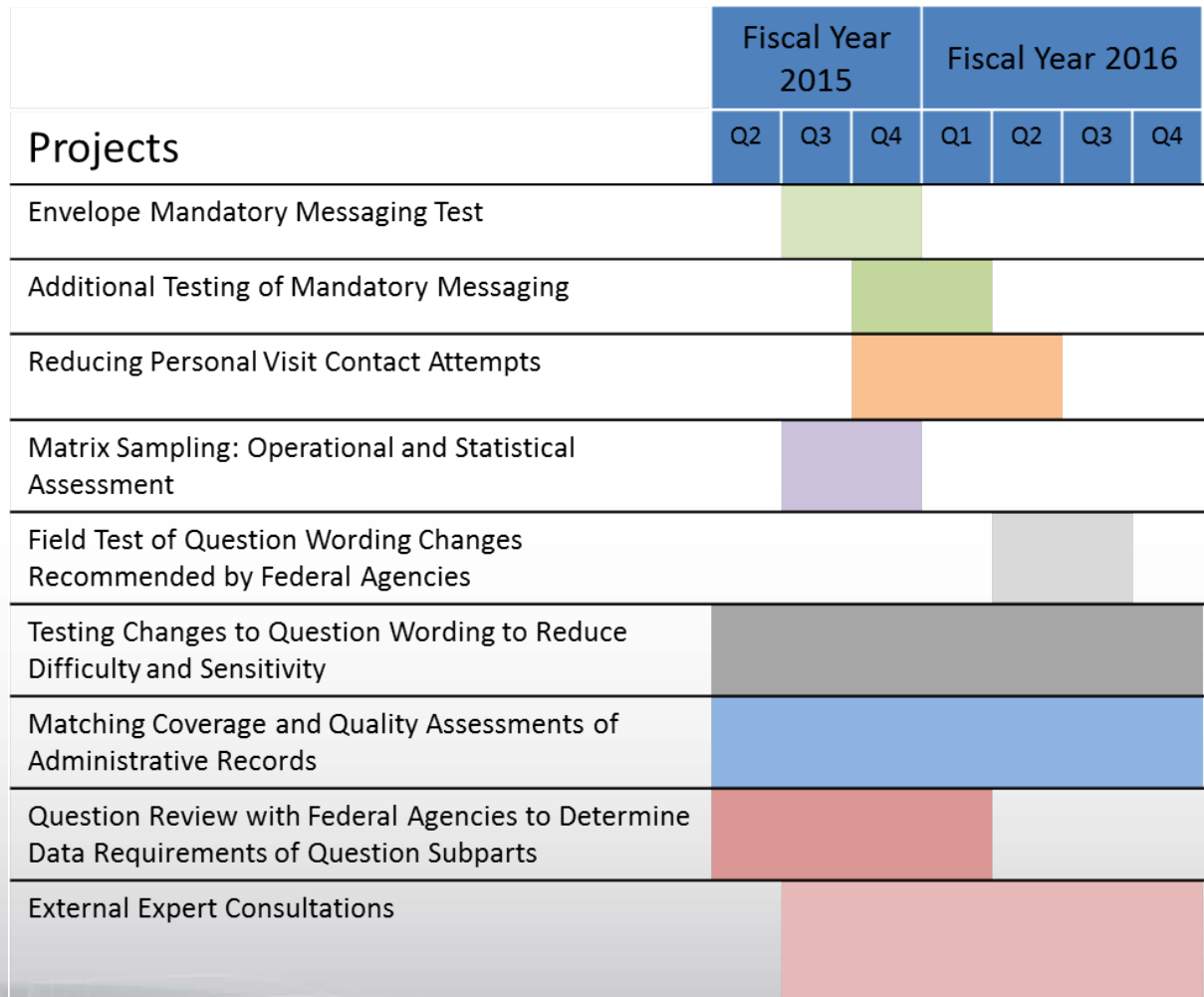
- **Identify high-value alternative data sources** to replace specific questions currently asked on the ACS to meet the needs of data users
- **Revise the wording of survey questions** to make them less burdensome for survey respondents, especially for questions determined during the Content Review to be especially sensitive, difficult or hard to understand
- **Potentially modify survey methods to ask some questions** of only a subset of the current ACS sample or less frequently than every year, in light of the frequency of data collection and level of geography needed to meet program requirements

ACS: Improving the Respondent Experience

Reduce Respondent Burden

- **Internet Data Collection**
 - Implemented for 2013 January Panel
 - Continues to exceed goal of at least 50% of self-response coming from the Internet
- **Computer Assisted Telephone Interview**
 - Implemented in March 2013
 - Reduction in calling strategy lessens respondent perceived intrusiveness and costs, without affecting quality
 - Reduction is approximately 1.2 million calls per year
- **Computer Assisted Personal Interview**
 - Conducted research on reducing the amount of personal visits to nonresponding households
- **Research: Revising Mail Package Materials**
 - Tested new messages that would resonate with respondents and motivate them to fill out the questionnaire or go online to do so
 - Tested revised mailing package materials that would encourage respondents to open materials
 - Will conduct field tests to determine how new messages and mailing package materials work in production
 - Will conduct field test to evaluate the impact of removing the mandatory message from the outside of the ACS mail envelopes

Improving the Respondent Experience



Mail Package and Messaging Research

Measure changes to mailing pieces and messaging resulting from extensive messaging research on self-response through three tests.

Project Update:

- Tested the removal of inserts in the paper questionnaire mailing package (instruction guide, instruction card) and messaging approach (March 2015)
- Tested the elimination of the pre-notice while strengthening later reminder contacts (April 2015)
- Tested modified envelopes without “Your response is required by law” (May 2015)
- Will test modified mandatory messaging throughout mail materials (Late Summer 2015)

Matrix Sampling

Matrix sampling could provide options to reduce the number of questions asked of individual households.

Project Update:

- Bring questions off the questionnaire during some years and only ask them as frequently as their legislated uses require
- Ask questions from only a subset of households when the geographic needs for the data do not require the level of precision provided by the full ACS sample
- Significantly reduce the length of the questionnaire for each household in sample, yet increase the total number of households selected to provide the necessary data
- Use administrative records to provide the majority of the source data for a given estimate supplemented by more current data from a small sample of survey respondents

2016 ACS Content Test

The 2016 ACS Content Test is designed to explore the difficulty of questions while improving data quality.

Project Update:

- Conduct fieldwork using a separate sample from production during March-June 2016
- Data analysis and stakeholder briefings in 2017

List of Topics Being Tested:

Telephone Service	Journey to Work: Time Leave for Work
Computer and Internet	Number of Weeks Worked
Relationship	Class of Worker
Hispanic Origin and Race	Industry and Occupation
Health Insurance	Retirement Income
Journey to Work: Commute Mode	Health Insurance Premium and Subsidies

ACS Uses of Administrative Records

Investigate use of administrative and commercial data sources to replace (or reduce) the need to collect data for some ACS questions.

- Recent assessment of the availability, timeliness and potential issues regarding data sources to replace ACS topics
- Research underway to document fitness for use through matching and analysis:
 - Topics include some of those perceived to be sensitive (e.g., income components, plumbing, property value) and some known to be cognitively difficult (e.g., number of rooms, year building built)
 - Exploring direct substitution for certain questions, including income from Internal Revenue Service, military service from Department of Defense, and pension and disability data from Social Security Administration
- Seeking stakeholder input to encourage data sharing and acceptance of direct substitution

Respondent Advocate

- Established position April 2013
- Tim Olson served from April 2013 – October 2014
- Summary of activities:
 - Assisted approximately 175 respondents
 - Completed 429 congressional meetings in support of resolving constituent complaints
 - Participated in ACS Content Review Process
 - Advised ACS Messaging Research Team
 - Helped develop new “Are You in a Survey” webpage
 - Supported development of the “Respect the Respondent” training module for ACS field interviewers
- New Respondent Advocate: David Waddington (Feb. 2015)

The logo features a stylized graphic of blue and orange dots arranged in a circular pattern, resembling a network or data points.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA USERS GROUP

- Purpose:
 - Improve understanding of the value and utility of ACS data.
 - Promote information sharing among data users about key ACS data issues and applications
- Membership is free
- Open to all interested ACS data users
- Webinars and special sessions at professional meetings
- 2nd Annual conference was held May 11-13, 2015
- Users group website and online community

<http://www.acsdatausers.org/>

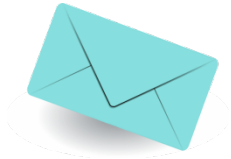
Continue the ACS Conversation



Connect on Social Media:

@uscensusbureau

facebook.com/uscensusbureau



Email:

deborah.m.stempowski@census.gov

acso.users.support@census.gov



Receive email updates:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCENSUS/subscriber/new>

Find more information:

census.gov/acs



acldatausers.org

Questions?