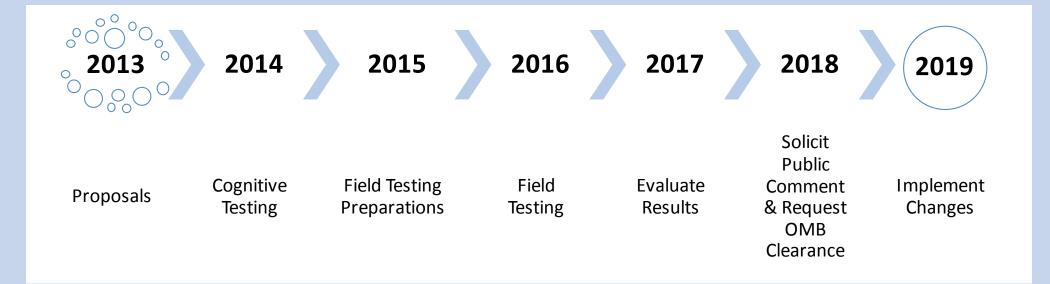
It Takes a Team: **Testing and Implementing Changes for the 2019 American Community Survey**

Jennifer M. Ortman, American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau

Changing the ACS to Keep Up With the Times

- Making the ACS questions clear, easy to understand, and relevant are key to improving the response rate and the quality of the data.
- The Census Bureau conducts a content test for the ACS about every 5 years to determine if wording and layout of questions should be updated.

2016 ACS Content Test Process



• Tested changes to 10 topics (13 questions) and 1 new question.

Methodology

- Split-sample experiment
- Separate sample from production ACS (n=70,000)
- Excludes group quarters, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico
- Content follow-up using telephone reinterview

Key Analysis Metrics

- Item Missing Data Rates
- Measure question clarity, question sensitivity, and respondent knowledge of the information needed to answer the question.
- Distributions of Response Categories
- Assess whether the question change affects the resulting estimates.
- Benchmark Comparisons
- Assess differences from other reliable sources.
- Response Reliability
- Evaluate consistency in responses by comparing the original interview to the CFU telephone reinterview.

Telephone Service

We are making updates to reflect changes in how Americans use telephones.

Test Version

he telephone service question is asked as a

separate question with an instruction added

Current Production

The telephone service question is an battery of plumbing and kitchen facilities

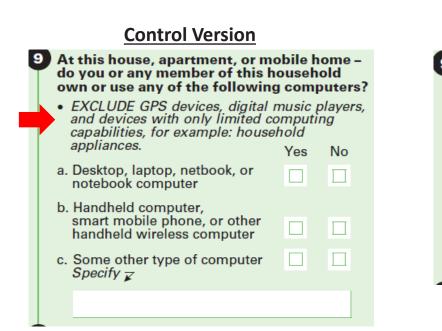
Does this house, apartment, o home have –	r <mark>mobi</mark> l Yes	e No
a. hot and cold running water?		
b. a bathtub or shower?		
c. a sink with a faucet?		
d. a stove or range?		
e. a refrigerator?		
f. telephone service from which you can both make		
and receive calls? Include cell phones.		

Computer and Internet Use

Technology is changing rapidly, both in terms of the devices we use and how we connect to the internet. We are using new words to describe this evolving technology.

Types of Computers

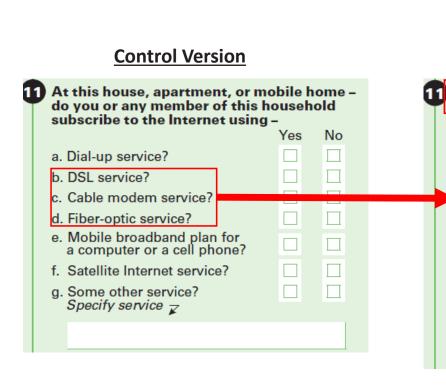
Increased the number of categories and replaced the term "Handheld Computer" with "Smartphone."



Internet Access an internet service provider

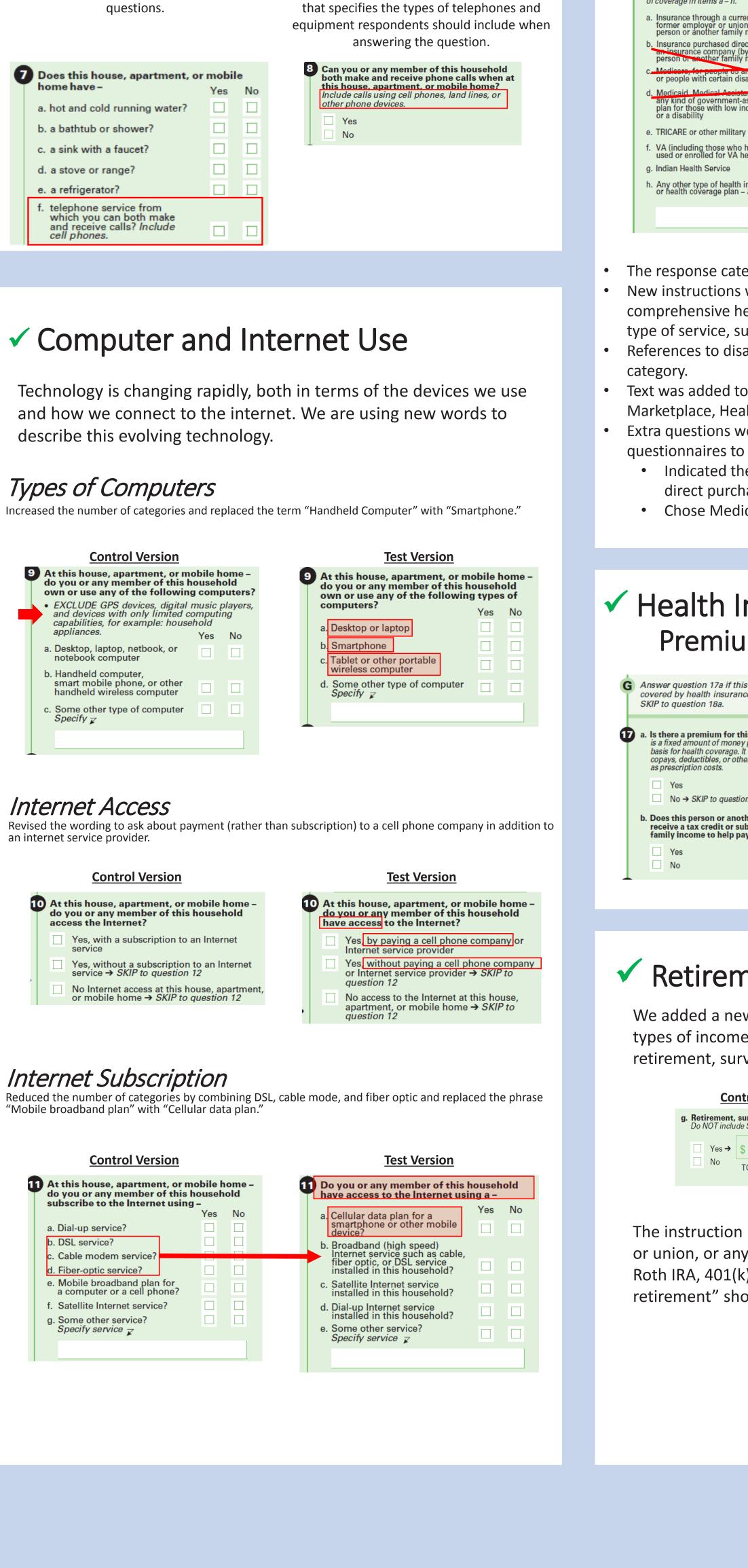
Control Version At this house, apartment, or mobile home do you or any member of this household access the Internet? Yes, with a subscription to an Internet Yes, without a subscription to an Internet service \rightarrow *SKIP to question 12* No Internet access at this house, apartmer or mobile home → *SKIP to question 12*

Internet Subscription





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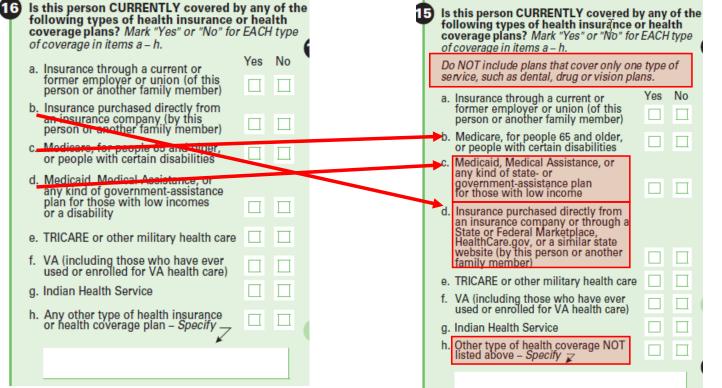


Health Insurance: Coverage

We tested several changes intended to reduce the undercount of those with Medicaid coverage, allow respondents to better distinguish direct-purchase insurance from other types, and to improve the accuracy of the estimates.

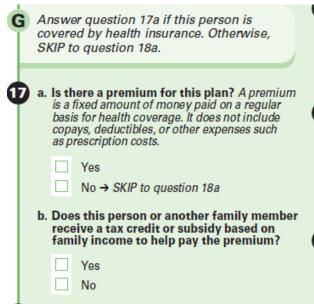
Test Version





- The response categories were reordered.
- New instructions were provided to clarify that the ACS only asks about comprehensive health insurance coverage, not "plans that cover only one
- type of service, such as dental, drug, or vision plans." References to disability status were dropped from the Medicaid response
- Text was added to reference insurance purchased "through a State or Federal Marketplace, HealthCare.gov, or a similar state website."
- Extra questions were added to the internet and interviewer-administered questionnaires to follow up with respondents who:
- Indicated they had employer-provided insurance in combination with direct purchase.
- Chose Medicaid in combination with direct purchase.

✓ Health Insurance: Premiums and Subsidies (new question)

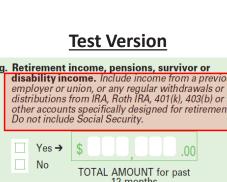


We are introducing a question on health insurance premiums and subsidies to provide more accurate information about coverage categories. These data will enhance the ability of HHS and the states to administer Medicaid, CHIP, and the exchanges, and monitor private insurance coverage

Retirement Income

We added a new instruction to help people better understand the types of income to include when answering the question about retirement, survivor or disability pensions.





The instruction now states that income from "a previous employer or union, or any regular withdrawals or distributions from IRA, Roth IRA, 401(k), 403(b) or other accounts specifically designed for retirement" should be included.

Commuting (Journey to Work)

Changes to the Commute Mode question were motivated by changes in public transportation infrastructure across the United States, particularly the increased prevalence of light rail systems and the need to update and clarify the terminology used to refer to commute modes that appear as categories on the ACS.

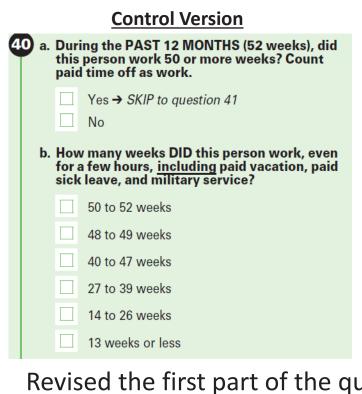
Commute Mode

rail." These three rail-related categories were also slightly reordered so that "Subway or elevated rail," the most prevalent rail mode, is listed first. The phrase "trolley bus" was dropped and the phrase "work at home" was changed to "work from home." The subheading of instructions was simplified to read "Mark ONE box for the method of transportation used for most of the distance.

32	WEE meth	Control Vers did this person usually K? If this person usually un od of transportation durin box of the one used for mo	get sed i	more than one e trip, mark (X)
		Car, truck, or van		Motorcycle
		Bus or trolley bus		Bicycle
		Streetcar or trolley car		Walked
		Subway or elevated		Worked at
		Railroad		home → SKIP to question 40a
		Ferryboat		Other method
		Taxicab		

Weeks Worked

We are making changes to make it easier to respond and to better meet the needs of data users.



- Revised the first part of the question to ask whether a person worked "EVERY week," rather than if they worked "50 or more
- paid time vacation, paid sick leave, and military service as work." In the second part, we changed the response option to a write-in, rather than asking respondents to select the correct category (e.g., 50 to 52 weeks, 48 to 49 weeks, etc.).

The category "Streetcar or trolley car" was changed to "Light rail, street car, or trolley," "Subway or elevated" was changed to "Subway or Elevated Rail," and "Railroad" was changed to "Long-distance train or commuter **Test Version 31** How did this person usually get to work LAST WEEK? *Mark ONE box for the method of transportation used for most of the distance.*

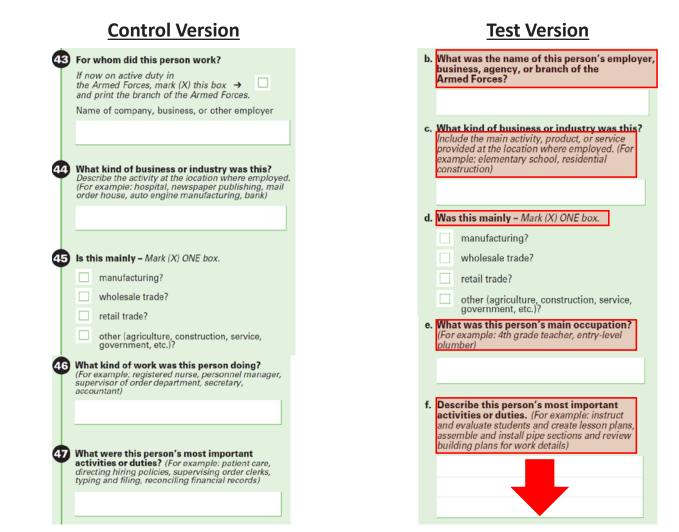
1				
		Car, truck, or van		Taxicab
		Bus		Motorcycle
		Subway or elevated rail		Bicycle
		Long-distance train or commuter rail		Walked
		Light rail, streetcar, or trolley		Worked from home → SKIP to question 39a
		Ferryboat		Other method

	Test Version			
3	9 a.	During the PAST 12 MONTHS (52 weeks), did this person work EVERY week? Count paid vacation, paid sick leave, and military service as work.		
		 Yes → SKIP to question 40 No 		
	b.	During the PAST 12 MONTHS (52 weeks), how many WEEKS did this person work? Include paid time off and include weeks when the person only worked for a few hours.		
		Weeks		

• Changed the instructions about what counts as work: "Count

Industry and Occupation

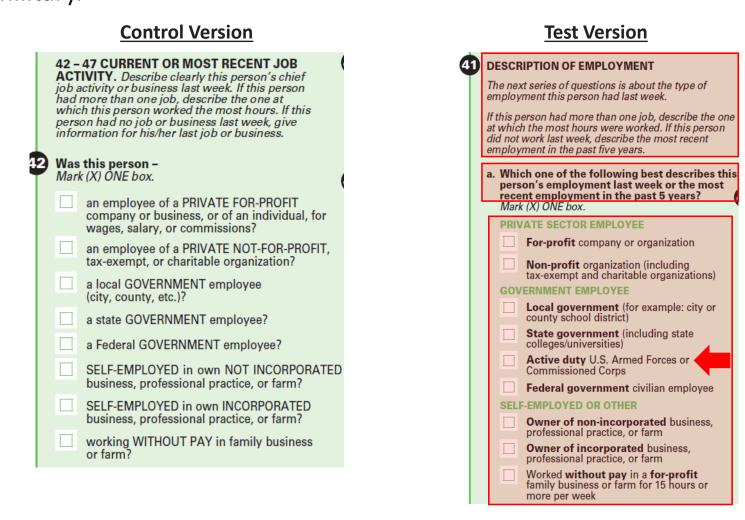
We are making to make the question easier to understand and answer with the level of detail needed to classify these data.



- The introductory text was rewritten to clarify what information we want in response to these questions.
- We moved the check box for those on Active Duty to the question about class of worker
- New examples were provided and the examples for main occupation and the description of job activities or duties are now consistent. For example "4th grade teacher" is now an example of occupation and the corresponding example in the job duties question is "instruct and
- evaluate students and create lesson plans." To encourage respondents to provide more details, we increased the space for writing in responses to these questions.

Class of Worker

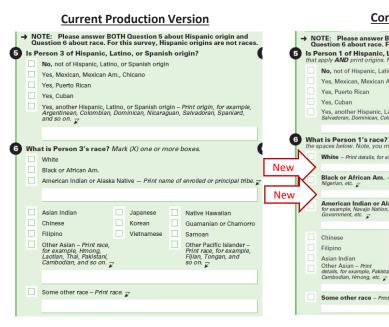
To make it easier to respond, we clarified definitions, improved the layout, and defined a category for those in Active Duty status in the military.



- The introductory text was reformatted to make it clear the question is about a person's main job or most recent job (unless the person has not held a job in the past 5 years).
- The categories are grouped under general headings: private
- sector, government, and self-employed or other. Active duty was added as a response category.
- The definition of unpaid family worker was clarified.

Race and Hispanic Origin

The Census Bureau has worked for many years to increase the accuracy and reliability of reporting in the major race and ethnicity categories defined by the OMB, collect detailed information for these groups, and increase response to these questions.



The version of the race and Hispanic origin questions selected for the 2020 Census will also be implemented on the ACS in 2020.

✓ Relationship

the "householder" is being revised to reduce errors in reports of same-sex and opposite-sex coupled households

Control Version

Husband or wife	Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
Biological son or daughter	Other relative
Adopted son or daughter	Roomer or boarder
Stepson or stepdaughter	Housemate or roommate
Brother or sister	Unmarried partner
Father or mother	Foster child
Grandchild	Other nonrelative
Parent-in-law	

- The "Husband or wife" and "Unmarried partner" categories were expanded to distinguish between opposite-sex and same-sex relationships.
- Unmarried partner was moved to the top of the list, immediately following spouse.
- Adding an automated check in electronic modes to ask respondents to verify responses when there are inconsistencies between sex and relationship. For example, if John and Mary are both reported as "Male" and their relationship is "Opposite-sex married couple," the check asks the person filling out the survey to verify that the responses to both questions are correct.

ntrol Version	Test Version
BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and For this survey, Hispanic origins are not races. Latino, or Spanish origin? Mark all boxes Note, you may report more than one group.	Whick categories describe Person 1? Mark all boxes that apply AND print details in the apaces below. White - Print details, for example, German, Irish, English, etc.
tino, or Spanish origin	
Am., Chicano	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – Print details, for example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Colombian, etc. Z
.atino, or Spanish origin – Print details, for example, Jombian, etc. ⊋	Black or African Am. – Print details, for example, African American, Jamaican, Nigerian, etc. g
R Mark all boxes that apply AND print origins in may report more than one group.	Asian — Print details, for example, Chinese, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, etc. 🗸
– Print details, for example, African American, Jamaican,	American Indian or Alaska Native – Print name(s) of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Mayan, Native Village of Barrow Inuplat Traditional Government, etc. 7
laska Native – Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), n, Mayan, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional	Middle Eastern or North African – Print details, for example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, etc. 7
Vietnamese Native Hawaiian Korean Samoan Japanese Chamorro	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – Print details, for example, Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Fijian, etc. ₹
tani, Other Pacific Islander – Print details, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc. Z	Some other race, ethnicity, or origin – Print details. Z
nt race(s) or origin(s). 😴	

- Instead of asking two separate questions, this test combined the Hispanic Origin and race categories into one question, with "Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin" as one of the response options.
- The question now asks what "categories" described the person.
- The total number of detailed race and ethnicity checkbox response options was reduced, but a write-in response area was available for
- every major group. • A distinct response option was also added for Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) responses.

The question about the relationship of each household member to

	<u>Test Versi</u>	on	
How	is this person related to Persor	1? M	ark (X) ONE box.
	Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse		Grandchild
	Opposite-sex unmarried partner		Parent-in-law
	Same-sex husband/wife/spouse		Son-in-law or daughter-
	Same-sex unmarried partner		Other relative
	Biological son or daughter		Roomer or boarder
	Adopted son or daughter		Housemate or roommat

Foster child

Other nonrelative

Father or mother

Stepson or stepdaughter

Brother or sister

✓ Test results supported implementing change.

× Test results did not support implementing change.

Changes Coming to the ACS in 2019

- Computer and Internet Use changes already implemented on the 2016 ACS.
- Changes proposed for implementation on the 2019 ACS:
 - Telephone Service
 - Commuting (Journey to Work)
 - Weeks Worked
 - Class of Worker
 - Industry and Occupation
 - Retirement Income
 - Relationship
 - Health Insurance Premiums and Subsidies (new question)
- Health Insurance Coverage changes not recommended for implementation.
- Decennial Drives Decision: In 2020, the ACS will implement the version of the race and Hispanic origin questions that are used on the 2020 Census.

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Disclaimer: This paper is released to inform interested parties of research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed on statistical, methodological, or technical issues are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.