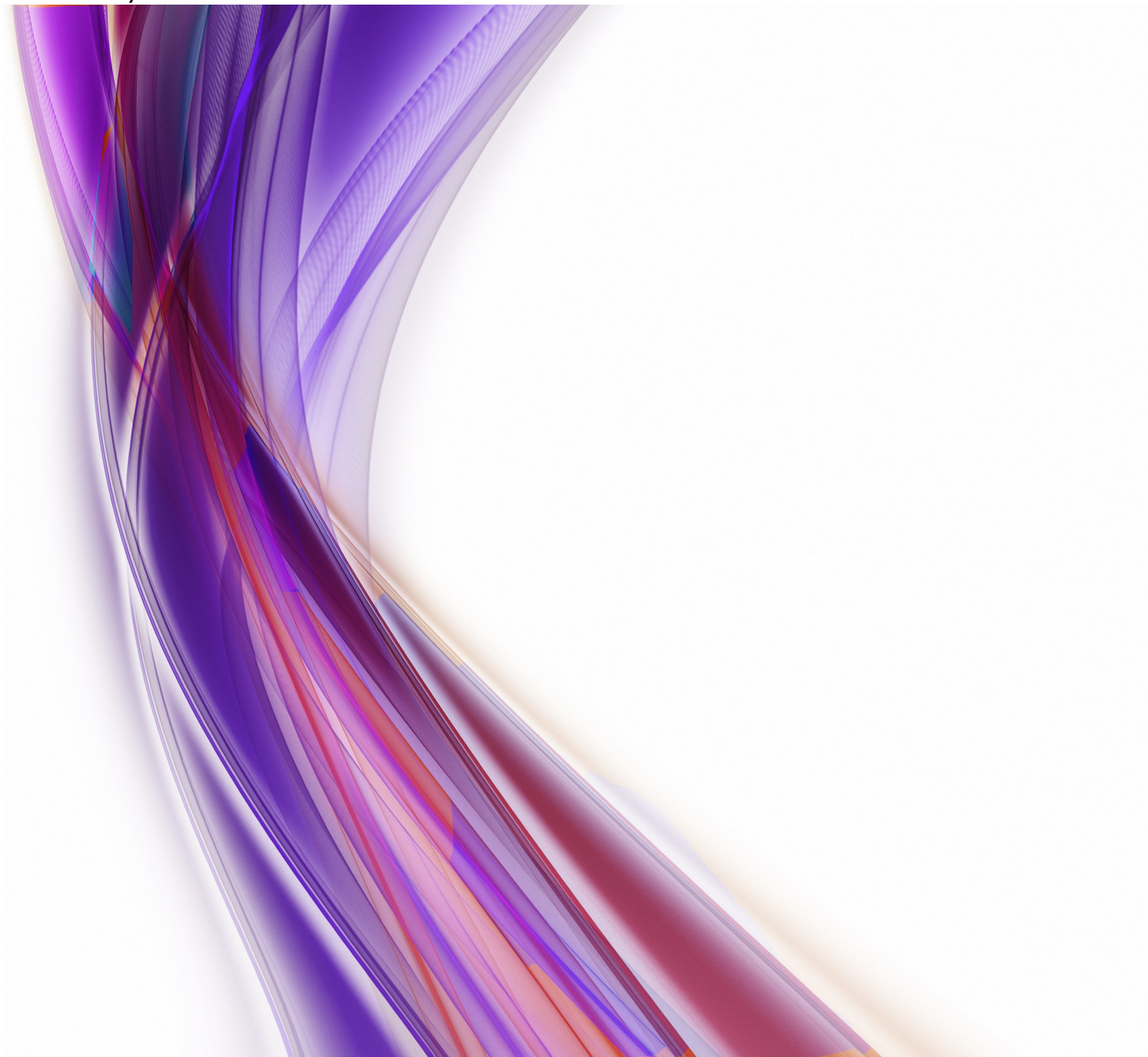


Agility in Action 2.0: A Snapshot of Enhancements to the American Community Survey

U.S. Census Bureau
American Community Survey Office

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. ENHANCING RESPONDENT MAIL MATERIALS.....	6
2. EMPLOYING ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES.....	9
3. MODIFYING THE MODES AND DESIGN OF THE ACS	13
4. ENSURING AGILE DESIGN.....	14
5. IMPROVING MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS.....	16
6. UNDERSTANDING THE RESPONDENT’S EXPERIENCE.....	17
7. IMPROVING GROUP QUARTERS DATA COLLECTION AND PRODUCTS	19
CONCLUSION.....	21
REFERENCES.....	22

INTRODUCTION

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing national survey that samples approximately 3.5 million addresses annually, about 290,000 addresses per month. These data are collected continuously throughout the year, to produce detailed population and housing estimates annually. The ACS is designed to produce critical information that was previously collected in the decennial census. Our estimates, covering more than 35 topics, support more than 300 known federal uses and countless nonfederal uses.

The ACS is the only source of comparable, quality information about the people in all of our communities. There is no more current, reliable, or accessible source for local statistics on topics such as age, children, veterans, income, and job skills than the ACS. It is an important national resource, providing needed data about who we are and how our population is changing.

ACS data are used every day to make important decisions that improve the quality of life for Americans. ACS data were key to the New Orleans, LA fire department developing a mapping model that determines neighborhoods most likely to suffer fire fatalities and least likely to have smoke alarms. See how the city's Office of Performance and Accountability and the New Orleans Fire Department are using ACS data to save lives every day.

[Stats in Action: New Orleans, LA: Smoke Alarm Outreach Program](#)

ACS is Vital to Businesses, Local Communities, and the Federal Government

The ACS is vital to small and large businesses seeking to better serve the full range of markets, find workers with the needed skillsets, and inform decisions on where to invest and create jobs. Local communities rely on the ACS to target resources to areas in need of assistance, as well as locate schools, first responders, roads, and hospitals. The Federal government uses ACS data to distribute over \$400 billion per year to our communities, and make our government run smarter and more efficiently.

There is no substitute for the ACS; it is foundational data, which undergirds our nation's data infrastructure.

Creating a Positive Customer Experience

Providing a positive experience and minimizing burden for survey respondents are clearly and demonstrably a central focus for our work. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for accomplishing this, and the U.S. Census Bureau remains agile in discovering new ways to create a positive customer experience. One important element of the customer experience is the mode people use to respond to the survey. The Census Bureau offers many ways to participate in the survey that are designed to make the process as easy as possible for the respondent. Since 2005, the combination of mail, telephone, and personal visits has produced annual overall survey response rates between 95% and 98%. Since 2013, the survey is available online, making participation even easier.

We are committed to demonstrating a high degree of transparency and agility by constantly searching for ways to improve. Over the last two years we:

- Made changes to survey operations that reduce respondent burden,
- Engaged in several vigorous communications efforts to educate the public about the community impact of ACS data,
- Conducted numerous research projects and published over 30 papers on their findings,
- Mined the best thinking of subject matter experts in private industry and the National Academy of Sciences, and
- Empowered an active Respondent Advocate to champion the needs and concerns of respondents everywhere.

We accomplished this while ensuring steady operations in engaging 3.5 million households a year with the ACS. This engagement includes providing customer service, encouraging people to fill out the survey, gathering and analyzing the data, and generating multiple data products along with 11 billion estimates free for public consumption.

Exercising our Commitment to Agility in Action

The Census Bureau understands that we live in an ever-changing, data-driven nation. As times change, so does our need to be nimble, flexible, and agile in our approach to the ACS. Part of this commitment to agility certainly includes actively addressing concerns about respondent burden with the ACS. We make this happen by continually investigating and enacting options for survey enhancements, and making research-based changes to how we operate and engage with respondents.

Over the course of the next year, the Census Bureau will enact a number of survey enhancements to include:

- Improve survey materials and the way we ask questions,
- Reduce follow-up contacts,
- Obtain data from other sources, and
- Remove questions or ask questions less frequently

Ensuring We Ask Only What Is Necessary

The data collected in the ACS are critical for communities nationwide. At the same time, the collection of information should be as minimally burdensome and intrusive as possible. In 2014, the Census Bureau conducted a comprehensive content review to ensure that only the information needed is requested, and that the justifications provided by federal agencies for the ACS questions are current and valid. Following the review of more than 300 federal agency uses of ACS data, the Business/Medical Office on Property question was removed in 2016.

The Census Bureau takes very seriously respondent burden and concerns and recognizes that the content review process and the resulting, proposed question change are only initial steps to addressing them. To that end, as a result of our ongoing research to reduce respondent burden, we also removed the flush toilet question and revised the computer use and internet questions.

We are committed to making the ACS questions clear and easy to understand. We conduct a content test about every 5 years to test whether changes to question wording, response categories, and definitions of underlying constructs would make it easier for respondents to answer questions and improve the quality of the ACS data. We conducted a test in 2016, which included ten topics.

The Path Forward

This document describes the efforts we are undertaking to create a positive customer experience while maintaining the high quality of ACS data. It provides background on the most impactful issues facing the ACS, methods to address the issue, and a path forward for:

- Enhancing respondent mail materials,
- Employing alternate data sources,
- Modifying the modes and design of the ACS,
- Ensuring agile design,
- Improving messaging and communication,
- Understanding respondent perceptions of burden, and
- Improving group quarters data collection and products.

1. ENHANCING RESPONDENT MAIL MATERIALS

When the Census Bureau mails the survey out to respondents, it includes information about the importance of the survey in the package. These materials are critical in encouraging their response. Their design and the messages they contain not only convey key information about their participation, but also set the tone for their interaction with the Census Bureau.

Respondents have expressed concerns that the tone of ACS materials has been too strong in the past. In response, we conducted tests in 2014 and 2015 that evaluated changes to reduce the prevalence of the messages regarding the mandatory nature of participation. We also focused on better communicating the uses and importance of the ACS (Barth et al., 2016; Oliver et al., 2016; Walker, 2015).

The Census Bureau worked with the National Academies of Science Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to conduct a public workshop and four subject matter expert meetings in the spring of 2016. The Census Bureau sought input from experts in survey methodology, marketing, and communications during the CNSTAT meetings. We asked for input specifically, on ways to improve the ACS mail materials while still maintaining high response rates. We are continuing to improve the ACS mail materials. The goal is to increase self-response, as well as reduce concerns with the mandatory nature of participation.

Being Strategic about Mailings

We are developing a strategic framework to outline the specific objective and audience for each mailing sent to respondents. This framework will reflect theory from the fields of communications and survey methodology. We will also use the framework to clarify further communications tactics and methodological approaches that would be applied in each mail piece.

Learning from the 2017 ACS Mail Design Test

We will revise our mail materials for further experimental testing based on the recommendations made by survey methodology experts. This will begin with cognitively testing revised materials in a laboratory setting, and will follow with formal experiments embedded within ACS production operations to evaluate their effectiveness.

This test will evaluate several methodological and messaging changes including:

- Using a revised “Why We Ask” brochure in the initial mail packages to convey the uses of the ACS data for the main topics on the questionnaire,
- Revising the ACS paper questionnaire cover to provide explanations about how we conduct the survey and the importance of participation, and

Objective:

Improve the ACS mail materials to increase understanding and self-response while reducing concerns with mandatory participation.

Actions:

- Be strategic about our mailings.
- Incorporate use of pressure-sealed mailers.

- Changing the fifth mailing from a postcard to a letter that includes sufficient information for a Respondent to log in to complete the survey online.

Additionally, this test will evaluate significantly revised wording in the letters and postcards that we send to respondents. Specifically, to:

- Provide a more courteous and less formal tone,
- Improve trust, and
- Better convey the benefits of participating in the survey, versus the costs or burden of their participation.

Conducting Pressure-Seal Letter Test

In recent years, the Census Bureau partnered with Reingold, Inc. to assess messaging and mail packaging. This partnership focused on addressing frequent questions and concerns raised about the ACS surrounding privacy, intrusiveness, value of the data, and burden of completion (Walker, 2015). With Reingold, Census conducted research to perform assessments of the ACS mail package to:

- Increase response rates for participants (and boost early response rates),
- Link the value of Census Bureau data to key areas of interest for various stakeholder groups, and
- Increase public awareness, support, and use of ACS data.

One recommendation from the partnership with Reingold was to investigate using pressure-sealed mailing materials in lieu of standard letters and postcards. The change in mailing materials may reduce both burden and cost if it prompts people to reply online, which would avoid the need for us to follow up by phone or in-person visit.

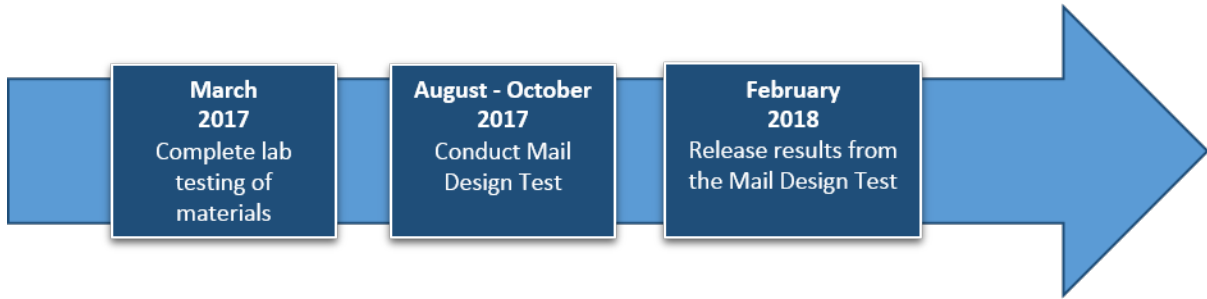
The 2017 ACS Pressure Seal Test will measure the impact of using pressure-sealed letters for the three reminders, which are currently a letter and two postcards. There will be three experimental treatments:

- Replace the reminder letter with a pressure-sealed letter and keep the two reminder postcards as is.
- Replace the reminder letter and one of the reminder postcards with pressure-sealed letters.
- Replace all three reminder mailings (letter and both postcards) with pressure-sealed letters.

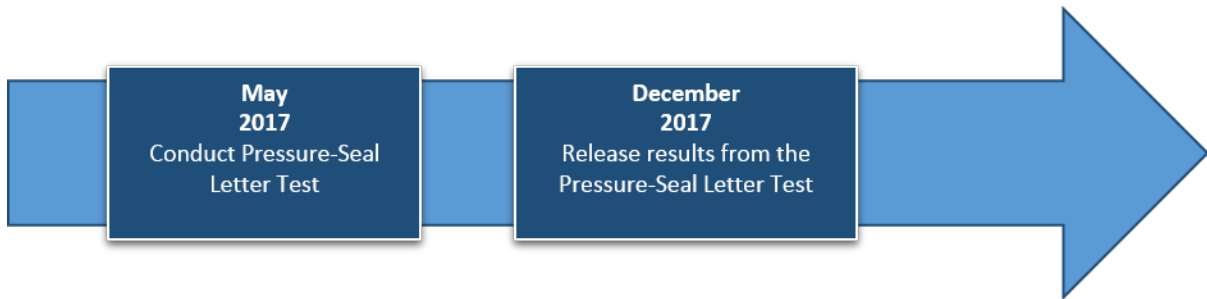
The Path Forward: Strategic Framework for Mailings



The Path Forward: Milestones in the 2017 ACS Mail Design Test



The Path Forward: Milestones for the Pressure-Seal Letter Test



2. EMPLOYING ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES

Making Administrative Records Key to Operational Agility

The Census Bureau has made significant progress exploring the use of administrative records in surveys and censuses.¹ In Agility in Action 1.0, the Census Bureau proposed evaluating the availability and suitability of several different data sources for use in the ACS. We then conducted the research on these data sources and released several reports that summarized findings about their suitability. Those reports focused on telephone service, year (a residence is) built, condominium status, income, and residence one year ago.

At the CNSTAT meetings, experts recognized the use of administrative records as a shining star in the Census Bureau's commitment to operational agility for the benefit of respondents. They expressed the opinion that using administrative records could also increase the data reliability. Since those meetings, the Census Bureau has continued to explore other topics for which administrative records could substitute for questions asked of respondents. Some of those topics include; property values, property taxes, acreage, and self-employment income.

Continuing Our Exploration of Administrative Records

Our goal is to chart a course for incorporating administrative records into our data gathering and analysis efforts. This will have a palpable impact on respondents by reducing the amount of information we request from them. To that end, the Census Bureau is building on its prior research to explore the feasibility of using even more administrative records to supply needed data on housing and income.

What do we need to learn about administrative sources?

Before we can proceed with testing to replace or supplement information on the ACS with data from administrative records, we must address the following questions:

- How will we use the administrative records?
- What estimates will we calculate?
- At what geography levels will we calculate estimates?
- What will be the criteria to determine if using administrative records is a success?

Objective:

Determine the feasibility of using administrative records to provide data on housing and income.

Actions:

- Continue our exploration of administrative records.
 - Use housing data to simulate an ACS data product.
 - Use administrative records with modified questions to measure income.
 - Use income data to simulate an ACS product.

¹ Administrative records refer to data collected by government agencies for the purposes of administering programs or providing services.

- What percentage of ACS households can have data filled using administrative records and therefore do not need to be asked these questions, and what are the characteristics of those households?

Using Selected Housing Data to Create a Simulated ACS Data Product

We propose to test using administrative records on housing to model and simulate an ACS data product. This is an essential step toward determining whether administrative records will ultimately be of sufficient quality to replace or supplement ACS data. Some of the variables we have identified that we could use include year built, acreage, property tax, and property value.

We will compare the simulated data product to the published ACS estimates to:

- See how the estimates would change by using administrative records,
- Determine whether data can be produced at all levels of geography,
- Determine if there is a break in series by using administrative records along with questionnaire data, and
- Gain insight as to how we could implement at least parts of the operation to use administrative records in the ACS.

Using Administrative Records with Modified Questions to Measure Income

Respondents often report the series of income questions as particularly burdensome. Currently, the ACS asks respondents to provide their total income for the past 12 months, and information about several components of income (both receipt and amount). We ask questions about the funds a person receives from various sources to create statistics about income, earnings, and poverty.

These estimates help gauge the need for economic assistance for populations in need (such as children and seniors) and measure the economic well-being of the nation. Income and poverty estimates are often part of allocation formulas that determine how food, health care, job training, housing and other assistance are distributed.

Modifying the Income Questions

We will explore ways in which we can use administrative records in conjunction with modifications to the current income question series. To begin with, we will test this strategy, which would include cognitive testing of replacement questions that are designed to be less burdensome. Revisions to the questions we might test could include:

- Asking only about whether someone receives specific income types and then proceeding to ask about total income.
- Changing the reference period from the last twelve months to “last year,” with a specific reference to the calendar year (e.g., “2016”). This better aligns with the collection period for

the administrative data and how respondents often think about income because tax years are calendar years.

- Investigate and potentially develop wording for cognitively testing a question at the household level on receipt of non-cash benefits.

Evaluating the Administrative Records on Income

We will also evaluate the suitability of the administrative records we obtain from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) to determine:

- If individual income category amounts, at the person level, could be determined using administrative records and statistical modeling techniques, and
- How the estimates would change by using administrative records.

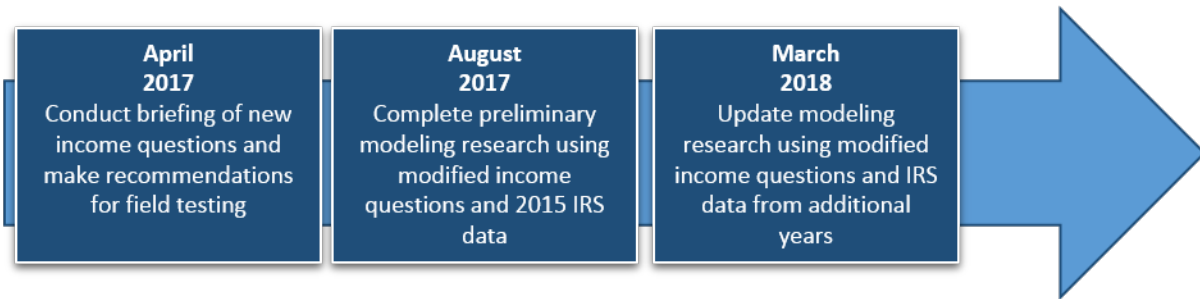
Akin to what we are doing with administrative data and housing, we will also simulate an ACS data product using administrative records for income. We will compare the simulated data product to the published ACS estimates. This will allow us to:

- See how the estimates would change by using administrative records,
- Determine if there is a break in series by using administrative records along with questionnaire data, and
- Gain insight as to how we could implement at least parts of the operation to use administrative records in the ACS.

The Path Forward: Milestones for Housing Estimate Simulation



The Path Forward: Milestones for Modifying Income Questions and Incorporating Administrative Records



3. MODIFYING THE MODES AND DESIGN OF THE ACS

The ACS allows respondents to respond in multiple modes, a design that takes relative cost and response rates into account and maximizes cost efficiencies. Specifically, we start with the least expensive and least intrusive contact modes (internet and mail) and then follow-up with more expensive and more direct contact modes (telephone and personal visit). Typically, negative comments come from respondents who experience the latter contact modes. We are looking into how we can make the survey experience better for in-person and phone respondents. This work is essential because the use of multiple contact modes increase response rates and improve data quality.

The experts we assembled in 2016 gave us two key recommendations about our contact modes collection mode design:

- Consider if the impact on respondents' perception of burden due to numerous call attempts in the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) follow-up operations are worth the number of interviews completed in this mode.
- Reduce burden during our multi-mode data collection by investigating ways to take advantage of incomplete data that respondents provided online when following up in later modes.

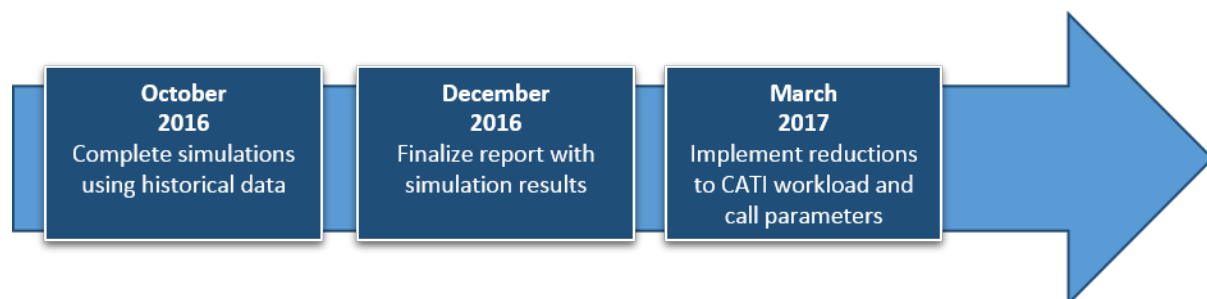
Streamlining CATI Follow-Up Operations

If the current costs and burden associated with contact attempts in the CATI follow-up operation are not yielding desirable results, we could test ways to change the cost-benefit relationship. In order to accomplish that, we researched the impact of the following:

- Reducing the workload for that operation to focus on cases most likely to be successful in CATI, and
- Implementing more adaptive stopping rules to reduce the number of contact attempts made for each case in CATI.

This effort began with various simulations using historical data from the ACS CATI operation, and then implementation in CATI production with a reduced workload and contact attempts.

The Path Forward: Milestones for Enhancing the Cost-Benefit of CATI Follow-Up



4. ENSURING AGILE DESIGN

ACS employed an *internet first* strategy when it introduced an Internet response option in 2013. This strategy encouraged response by Internet followed by a choice to respond by paper questionnaire or Internet. Although this method was effective at increasing overall self-response rates nationwide, this was not the case for some areas in the country (Baumgardner et al., 2014) or among some population groups (Nichols et al., 2015).

We would improve customer satisfaction if we provided respondents with their choice of response mode in the initial request. It can be frustrating for people without Internet access or who prefer responding by paper, to be told their response to the survey is required by law. Especially when the only response option the Census Bureau initially provides is Internet. Waiting two weeks for a paper form to arrive by mail after this initial invitation to respond online may make the respondents less likely to participate.

Objective:

Provide respondents with their choice of response mode.

Actions:

- Devise a strategy to target Internet versus Mail in the first mailing.
 - Figure out who prefers paper.
 - Leverage lessons learned by others.

Internet Versus Paper Questionnaire in the First Mailing

The goal of this effort is to reduce cost and respondent burden by developing an adaptive method that:

- Sends households an initial response option that most closely matches their preferences,
- Maintains or improves overall self-response, and
- Reduces the number of households that are sent a replacement mail package due to nonresponse.

Determining Areas Where Paper First is the Best Strategy

The first step is to produce tract-level comparisons between total self-response rates before and after the implementation of an Internet response option in 2013. We will examine Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and ACS data on Internet access and broadband connections, as well as Census Bureau Planning Database low response scores.²

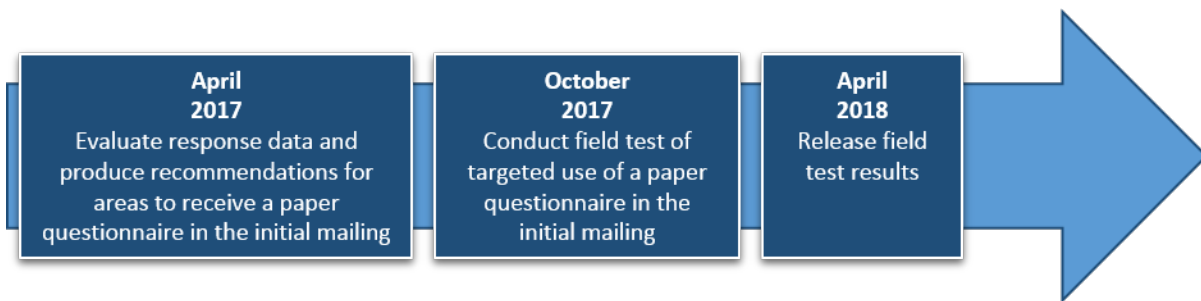
² The Planning Database assembles a range of housing, demographic, socioeconomic, and census operational data that can be used for survey and census planning. Data are provided at both the census block group and the tract levels of geography. The Planning Database uses selected Census and selected ACS estimates. In addition to variables extracted from the census and ACS databases, operational variables include the 2010 Census Mail Return Rate for each block group and tract. For more information see: http://www.census.gov/research/data/planning_database/.

Additionally, we will examine testing results in preparation for the 2020 Census and the Census Bureau's implementation of the National Survey of Children's Health. We tested a combination of FCC data on subscribership to Internet access services and low response scores from the Census Bureau's Planning Database. This helped determine geographic areas to target to send a paper questionnaire in the 2015 National Content Test for the 2020 Decennial Census (Matthews, 2015).

We are continuing to refine the methodology that will be used for the 2020 Census. We will document the evaluations from various data sources, and make recommendations for areas that could receive an ACS paper questionnaire in the first mailing. While this research is conducted, we will design the necessary mail materials and experts will review the revised materials.

Once we have identified areas to initially receive a paper questionnaire, we would conduct a field test evaluating the impact this methodology would have on self-response rates.

The Path Forward: Milestones for Internet Versus Paper Questionnaire in First Mailing



5. IMPROVING MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The ACS is an ongoing effort with very broad geographic dispersion. At any one time, the call to action is directed at a relatively small group of people. To date, communications efforts have focused on disseminating ACS data through traditional media outreach, event participation, social media, and trainings and webinars. These efforts made the survey a favorite of data users, yet it did not necessarily appeal to or reach other stakeholders like some individual respondents.

Seeking Innovative Alternatives to Increase Self-Response

While overall ACS response rates are high (usually 95-98%), self-response rates average around 60%. The Census Bureau is seeking innovative alternatives to increase self-response rates due to the high cost and burden to respondents of nonresponse follow-up data collection.

Partnering with the 2020 Census Integrated Communications Contractor

At the CNSTAT meetings, the experts encouraged the Census Bureau to rely heavily on the positive brand recognition the public has with the Census Bureau. We will partner with the 2020 Census integrated communications contractor to develop messaging and material for the public. Communications will focus on distinguishing between the ACS and the 2020 Census to alleviate confusion and provide clear direction to respondents in the ACS sample during the course of the census.

6. UNDERSTANDING THE RESPONDENT'S EXPERIENCE

The Census Bureau has engaged in numerous activities to provide a positive experience for our respondents, and minimize the burden associated with participating in the ACS. Understanding the respondent experience and their perceptions of burden involves exploring many different factors. Some of these factors are very concrete, such as survey length and number of contacts with the respondent. Other factors are less quantifiable, such as the respondent's perception of the survey experience, or notions of the survey's importance to the nation.

Objective:

Reduce respondent burden.

Actions:

- Learn from our respondents.
- Learn from other survey organizations.
- Take a deeper dive with current respondents.

Reducing Respondent Burden

The Census Bureau has worked hard to identify a range of possibilities for reducing perceived respondent burden while still maintaining the irreplaceable quality and richness of ACS data (Griffin and Hughes, 2013; Hughes et al., 2016). We implemented multiple projects to simplify and otherwise improve messaging in paper materials mailed to respondents. These projects also tested messages designed to increase respondent awareness about the significance of the data to communities across America (Heimel et al., 2016; Oliver et al., 2016).

We even considered multiple possibilities to ask survey questions less frequently or to fewer respondents (Hughes et al., 2015). During this process, we discovered that using administrative records was the best approach to reducing respondent burden without eroding data quality. Unfortunately, most of the other options currently available reduced both data availability and data accuracy for small geographies and populations. Therefore, we are vigorously pursuing all aspects of administrative record use.

During the CNSTAT meetings, the experts credited the Census Bureau for making great strides in addressing respondent burden, and they shared some new ideas of other avenues we can explore. The section that follows describes how we are acting on their suggestions.

Learning from Our Respondents

The Census Bureau pays careful attention to comments from respondents, documenting them as they come in and following up on concerns. Over the next few months, we will analyze these comments and pay close attention to each data collection mode, the number, type, and timing of contacts, and whether or not the respondent ultimately responded to the survey.

As we synthesize these comments, we'll look for themes that might suggest improvements to the respondent experience and response rates. We'll also cross reference them with key factors such as

demographics, socio-economic status, and geography. This will help us understand whether those who provide feedback share common characteristics or experiences.

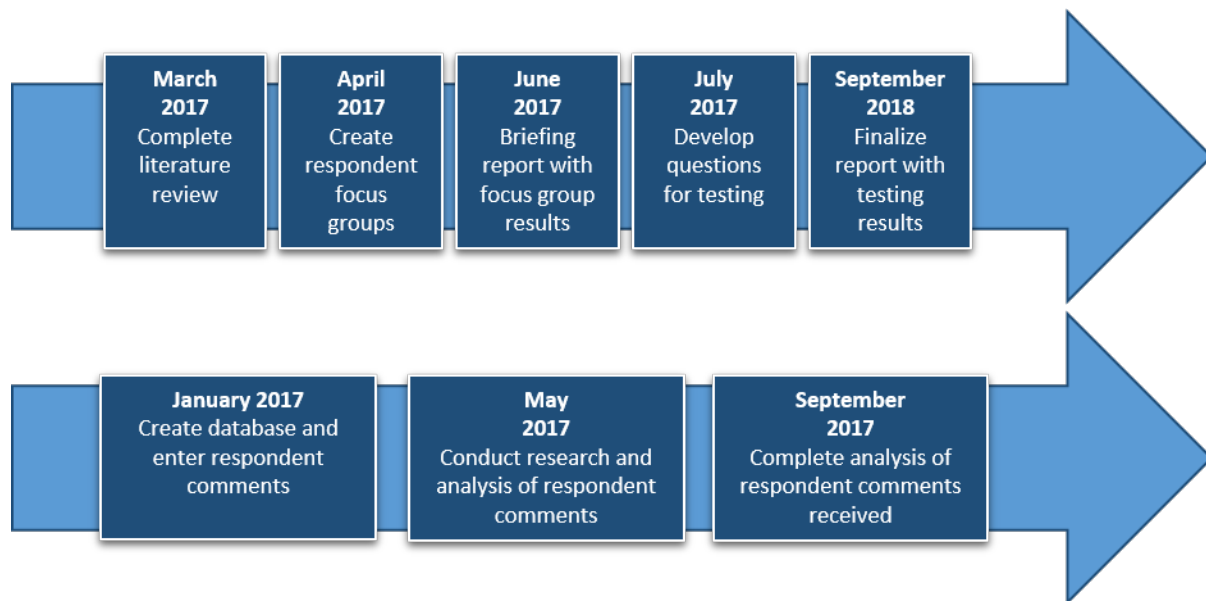
Taking a Deeper Dive with Current Respondents

We will conduct a literature review to explore how other surveys have conceptualized, operationalized, and tested respondent burden measures. We will take what we learned from the literature reviews to inform questions we'll ask in voluntary focus groups with survey respondents. One of the topics we will explore is perceptions of burden with different contact modes (mail, telephone, in-person), and ensure we have a well-rounded view of the respondent experience.

We will use this information to develop a proposed series of questions to ask a subset of survey respondents. We will evaluate the proposed series of questions through cognitive testing. This will validate if they enable us to measure key respondent perceptions of the burden associated with participating in the survey.

If the cognitive testing results demonstrate we can effectively measure these perceptions, we would implement these questions for a sample of respondents. The results of this exploration could then inform future endeavors to modify ACS methods or the survey itself.

The Path Forward: Milestones for Understanding Respondent Burden



7. IMPROVING GROUP QUARTERS DATA COLLECTION AND PRODUCTS

Like the Decennial Census, the ACS uses special procedures for people who live in what we call group quarters (GQs) which are living arrangements such as college dormitories, prisons, and nursing homes. Special procedures reflect that living arrangements are different for persons who reside in GQs compared to people who are living in traditional households (e.g., houses, apartments, mobile homes, etc.).

While the short form content used in the Decennial Census is meaningful for both GQ and household populations, some content on the ACS questionnaire does not really apply to people living in various types of GQs. For example, residents of nursing homes generally are not employed in the workforce, so questions related to commuting to and from work are not relevant.

Objective:

Make GQ data collection more relevant and less burdensome.

Actions:

- Evaluate quality, coverage, and feasibility of using administrative records in lieu of enumeration for Institutional GQs.
- Modify the definition of college/university student housing.
- Re-evaluate GQ data products.

In the interest of reducing respondent burden, the Census Bureau sought input from the experts on how best to make the data collection in GQs more relevant and less burdensome.

Evaluating Quality, Coverage, and Feasibility of Using Administrative Records in Lieu of Enumeration for Institutional GQs

Institutional GQ types include facilities such as correctional facilities for adults, juvenile correctional facilities, nursing/skilled-nursing facilities, and hospitals/hospices. We are working to evaluate the quality and coverage of available administrative records for ACS GQs and to determine the feasibility of using administrative records for ACS GQs. We will also rely on the lessons learned from the use of administrative records for the 2020 Census.

Modifying the Definition of College/University Student Housing

In both the 2020 Census and the ACS, people are counted using either the housing unit (HU) or the group quarters (GQ) method. In the past, most college/university student housing has been counted using the group quarters method. However, the types of places where students live are changing. There are increasingly more unique arrangements, including apartments and apartment-style housing, especially near or off campus.

It is important to identify whether buildings that house students attending a college/university are housing units or group quarters to get an accurate college/university student housing population count. To that end, we are working to improve the current definition by:

- Providing more specificity to distinguish between university/college-owned and privately-owned student housing.

- Creating an additional college/university student housing category, which will specify the criteria needed for a privately-owned student housing facility to be included in the GQ universe.

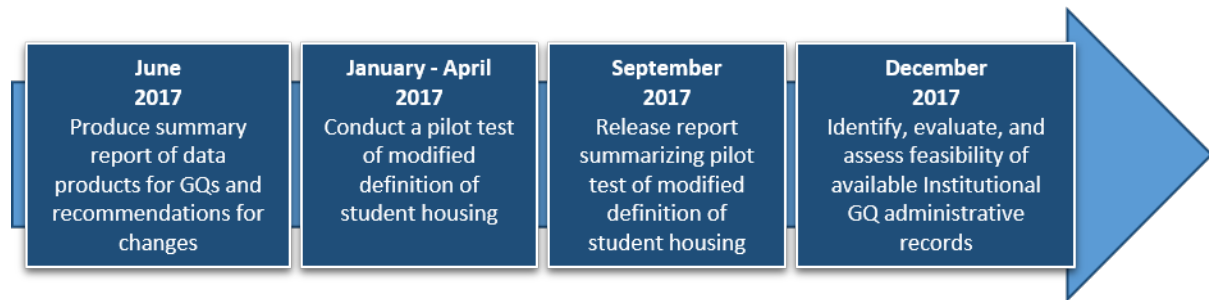
Re-Evaluating GQ Data Products

Since 2006, we have published quite a few GQ data products. Review of edited, weighted 2006 ACS GQ data yielded concerns with publishing some of the GQ population characteristics tables.

We are reevaluating the data products released and we plan to explore the feasibility of releasing GQ data down to the State level for:

- Juvenile and Adult Correctional Facilities,
- Nursing/Skilled-nursing Facilities,
- College/University Student Housing, and
- Military.

The Path Forward: Making GQ Data Collection More Relevant and Less Burdensome



CONCLUSION

The Census Bureau has continued to strengthen its deep and abiding commitment to improving the experience of survey respondents, preserving data quality, and enhancing the American Community Survey. We are evolving our survey operations to balance the needs of individual respondents with the need for impactful data in our communities.

Committing to Agility Through Innovation

Each year we remain agile in launching new research and experimentation with survey protocol while still meeting the multi-tiered demands of survey operations. We are building on exhaustive research that covers survey protocols ranging from mail packaging to contact modes to public education campaigns and beyond. In the year to come, we'll keep improving by using a multi-pronged approach, focusing on:

- Improving survey materials and the way we ask questions,
- Reducing follow-up contacts,
- Obtaining data from other sources, and
- Removing questions or asking questions less frequently

Committing to Engage Respondents and Providing Essential Data

It has been well-established that ACS data are used to improve the quality of life for Americans in myriad ways. The data help build businesses and create jobs, prepare for emergencies, improve the reach of health care and education, and much more. Knowing the significance and impact of the data, the Census Bureau is serious about continuing its work on reducing burden to respondents while providing these essential ACS data across the private and public sectors.

The Census Bureau provides resources to facilitate this such as: a [detailed explanation of why we ask each question on the survey](#), lots of easy-to-understand infographics, and a robust social media presence. We'll continue to do our part to stay agile and pursue every way we can to improve the respondent experience and enhance the survey over time, and we invite every American to do their part as well by filling out the survey.

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