

## COPAFS Meeting Report: September 13, 2009

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As is customary, the September COPAFS meeting featured four varied reports on issues of importance in the federal statistical arena. First, however, Ed Spar (COPAFS Executive Director) led off with a report on current events. He noted the upcoming FCSM conference, and that the December COPAFS meeting will feature a discussion on the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program. As of the meeting date, not much was happening on the statistical agency budgets' passage through Congress, and a Continuing Resolution was expected with an anomaly for the Census Bureau. [This is, in fact, what happened.]

The first presentation was provided by Steven Landefeld, Director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), discussing "**GDP and Beyond: Alternative Measures of the Economic Status of Households and Businesses.**" This is an issue of long standing, referring to a speech Robert F. Kennedy made at the University of Kansas in 1968 and to President Obama's inaugural speech. The question is: does the GDP do a good job of measuring living standards? There is a disconnect between the GDP and the things that people see as important in their lives. We refer APDU members to the powerpoint slides (see link at the end of this article) for the details of proposed alternatives. In conclusion, Landefeld said, "economists failed to incorporate risk and the financial sector into their models of the real economy. We need to provide them with the toolkit to do that."

Next came the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Acting Director Michael Sinclair, discussing "**New Initiatives for FY 2010 at the Bureau of Justice Statistics.**" With a new leader at BJS, the agency's staff has been working hard to take a fresh look at its programs. The biggest one, by far, is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The Committee on National Statistics recently completed two reports for BJS, one on survey victims and the other titled *Ensuring the Quality, Credibility, and Relevance of U.S. Justice Statistics*. The NCVS has two major objectives: (1) production of estimates of the incidence of victimization, both reported and unreported, and (2) measuring the characteristics and consequences of crime. They are not both well-served with the same survey design, but BJS is working on trying to reconcile the problems and make improvements. Another problem is the cost of finding victims to interview in an independent survey, since the victimization rate is estimated to be only 2 percent of the population. It would seem that a piggy-back screening interview on a national survey such as the ACS would make sense, but it's loaded with its own problems.

Beyond the NCVS, other initiatives include surveys of local sources to get an early read on changes before Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data become available, and parallel surveys of law enforcement and the public to better understand police-public relations. BJS may also redesign, and possibly combine, the State Court Processing Survey and the National Judicial Reporting System. Other initiatives are related to indigent defense, conversion of criminal history records into research databases, and survey related to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). There is also an improved and more user-friendly BJS website.

Overall, BJS has a very ambitious agenda which awaits sufficient funding. They look forward to user input on the web site.

After lunch, we heard from Victoria (Tori) Velkoff and other Census Bureau Population Division staff about the plans for **Demographic Analysis (DA)**. The definition of DA is “a macro-level method for evaluating census coverage by comparing census counts with estimates of the population based on administrative data. It also includes assessing the census for internal consistency and consistency with previous census estimates.” Its counts are *independent* of census counts. DA is one of the two methods through which census coverage is measured. The other is the post-enumeration survey (see below).

We refer you to the powerpoint presentation (see note at end of article) for a detailed description of the presentation. It includes a series of graphs showing very interesting results from the comparison of the 2000 census with the DA of ten years ago, and an explanation of how foreign in- and out-migration is estimated. Note, however, that DA is a national-level analysis only. It does not provide specific information for sub-national geography.

The final presenter was Vincent Thomas Mulé discussing **2010 Post-Enumeration Estimates Using Census Coverage Measurement (CCM)**. The first, and very important point, is that the purpose of CCM is *not* to adjust the census. Rather, the purpose is to estimate the net coverage of the census, the components (i.e. undercount and overcount) for persons in households, and for housing units. In previous censuses CCM had other names: Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (ACE) in 2000, and the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) before that. Regardless of the name, the methods are similar, except that this time, regression modeling will replace post-stratification. The powerpoint slides provide the details.

The data are expected to be released sometime in 2012. The reporting will be more extensive than in the past, although under- and overcount estimates will be more restricted than the overall estimates of net coverage error. The question of whether or not substate data will be available is still under review.

During the discussion, Mulé was asked if the CCM results would contribute to improvements in 2020. He described several applications, such as determining the impact of operational issues and learning more about duplications. When someone posed a hypothetical two percentage point increase in undercount, and a resulting outcry for adjusted census counts, Mulé played it straight, saying they are just doing what they have been charged to do.

Powerpoints for the BLS presentation and the two from the Census Bureau are available at [www.copafs.org](http://www.copafs.org) (scroll down to the bottom of the home page). The next meeting is scheduled for December 4; we plan to attend.