

The Uncertain Future of the American Community Survey

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Public Data Users

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Today's Discussion

- Program status
- Outreach and Communication efforts
- Aspects of Uncertainty
- Effects of a Voluntary ACS
- What's Next?

Current Status—Data Collection

- ACS currently remains mandatory
- Sample size—3.54 million addresses annually
- Response rates
- Addition of Internet option (January 2013)
- Addition of Computer Usage and Internet Access questions (January 2013)

Current Status—Outreach, Education, and Communications

- Confirming statutory uses (results due by September 14)
- “Eliminating America’s Playbook” (case studies)
- Revised www.census.gov (updated ACS page, infographics, videos linked to questions)
- NAS workshop and data user group

Aspects of Uncertainty

- Funding: Awaiting word on status of Continuing Resolution for FY13
- House vote to eliminate ACS; Senate action unscheduled
- Enforcement of penalties

Integrated Communications Plan

- Devote resources to educating congressional leaders, state/local/tribal officials, other stakeholders—Stakeholder Engagement under ACS Program Review
- Increase work with local and national partners

Effects of a Voluntary ACS

- 2003 test of voluntary response to ACS
- Voluntary response affects
 - Survey response
 - Survey costs
 - Reliability of survey estimates

Effects of a Voluntary ACS

Option	Cost	Initial Sample Size	Reliability of Survey Estimates
1	Increase costs by \$78-\$103M	Increase sample size to 4.25M addresses per year.	Maintained at current levels
2	Maintain Current Costs	Maintain initial sample size of 3.54M addresses per year, but reduce the proportion of cases that receive personal visit follow-up	Large reductions in reliability - 25 to 28 percent
3	Maintain Current Costs	Reduce initial sample size to 2.9M addresses per year	Large reductions in reliability - 20 to 22 percent
4	Increase Costs by \$37-\$58M ¹	Maintain current initial sample size	Large reductions in reliability - 10 to 12 percent

¹The lower bound of this cost estimate assumes a 20 percentage point reduction in mail response, similar to the 2003 test, whereas the upper bound assumes a more significant reduction in mail response of 30 percentage points.

Reliability of Survey Estimates

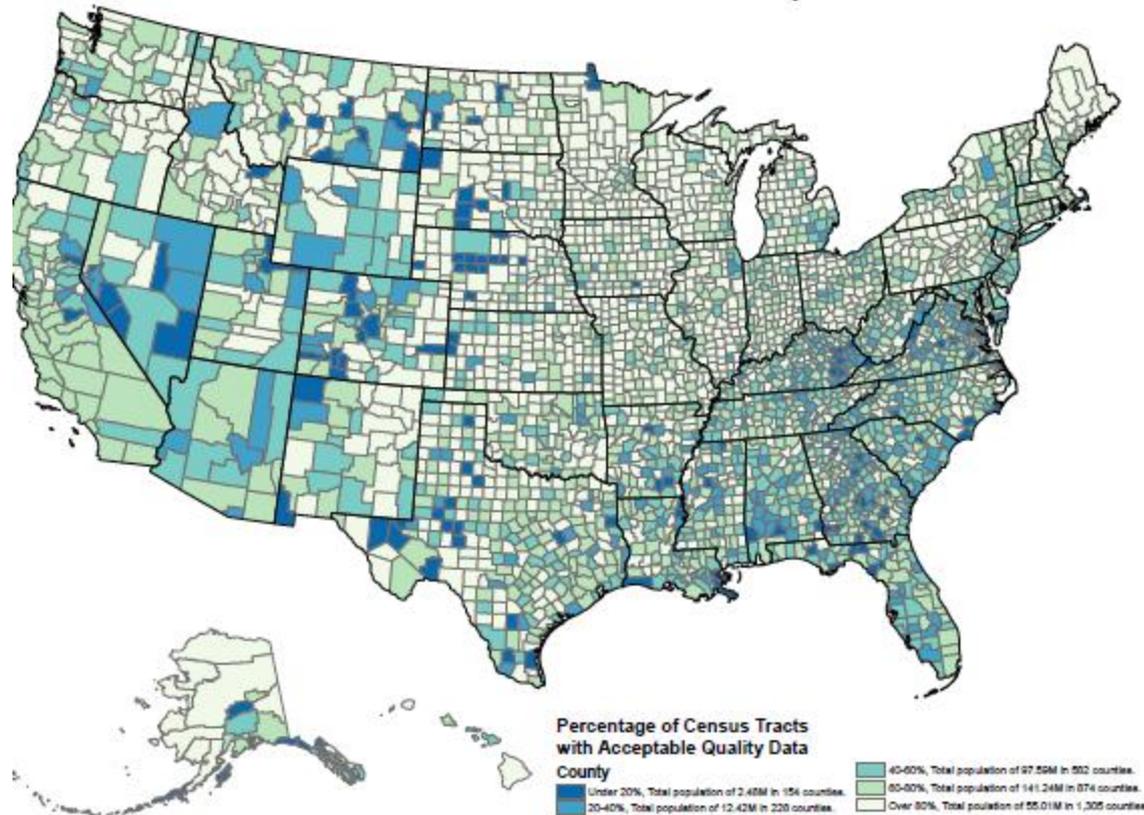
- Census Bureau Data Quality Standards
 - Implemented 2012
 - ACS applies standards to 17 key estimates
 - Data quality is determined by:
 - Coefficients of variation
 - Response rates
 - Coverage rates

Reliability of Survey Estimates

- Analysis of failure rates at the county level
 - With and without mandatory response requirement
- Threshold failure occurs if:
 - Majority of CVs at the tract level for the 17 key estimates are greater than 30 percent

Reliability of Survey Estimates

2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Under Mandatory Methods



Reliability of Survey Estimates

2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Under Simulated Voluntary Methods
Fixed Budget - Reduced Sample Size*

