

Tasks: ACS Web site Usability study (Novice and Expert users)

Novice Task Questions

1. You heard about the American Community Survey in the news and want to know more about it. How is the American Community Survey different from the decennial Census?
2. You just received the American Community Survey in the mail, and none of your neighbors did. Find out why your address was selected.
3. The survey is long and detailed, and you don't want to fill it out unless you have to.
4. Find out if the survey is mandatory.
5. Find out what the penalties are, if any, for failing to complete the survey.
6. Your Vietnamese neighbors received the American Community Survey in the mail and have asked for your help. They want to know if there is any information in their native language. Check the Website to see if there is anything available in Vietnamese to help your neighbors understand the basics.
7. You are interested in seeing what kind of information the American Community Survey has collected. Specifically, does it collect information on the number of people who speak languages other than English in the United States?
8. You are a researcher who will begin using the American Community Survey Web site on a regular basis, and you want to stay up-to-date on any changes or news items. Is there a way to subscribe to email updates? If so, subscribe to it.
9. You are filling out the survey but feel uneasy about Question 33 - *What time did this person usually leave home to go to work?* Find out why this question is being asked.
10. You have heard that the American Community Survey has data about your community. Find out how many children are enrolled in elementary education (grades 1-8) in your state.

Expert Task Questions

1. While researching "commuting to work" trends, you came across the American Community Survey, a survey that continually collects data and publishes data every year. The survey includes commuting to work as one of the topics. Before deciding whether to search for and use the data from the American Community Survey, you want to know something about the methodology.
 - a. Specifically, over what period of time were the data collected for any given annual release of 1-year estimates?
2. You know there is a table that provides data on the number of employed people with a disability.
 - a. You would like to know –what is the Table ID?

- b. Also you'd like to know –does the table provide a breakdown by age?
3. Use the site to find information on the following:
 - a. Why does the Census Bureau ask questions about monthly housing costs: mortgage costs, real estate taxes etc?
 - b. Which federal agencies use these data (on monthly household costs, real estate taxes, etc.) for their programs?
4. According to the information on the site:
 - a. What is the difference between 1-year estimates and 3-year estimates provided by the American Community Survey?
 - b. Is one or the other considered by the Census Bureau to be more reliable? Why?
5. Using information provided on the site, list at least 3 differences in methodology between the American Community Survey and the Decennial Census.
6. You want to determine whether you should compare the Census 2000 data to the 2008 American Community Survey data on school enrollment. According to information on the site:
 - a. Should comparisons be made between these two datasets for school enrollment?
 - b. If yes, which table should be used from the 2008 American Community Survey to compare with Table PCT23 (Sex by school enrollment by age for the population 3 years and over) from the Census 2000?
7. While reviewing some data on Jacksonville, North Carolina, you noted that the percent of the population that is female was 51 percent in 2005 but only 43 percent in 2006. This change seems unlikely. According to the information on the site, was there some change in the survey methodology between 2005 and 2006 that would explain this anomaly?
8. At the request of your professor, you are giving a presentation on the American Community Survey. Are there any prepared materials that you can use for this purpose? Based on information on the site, please name at least one example of these materials.
9. Use the site to find:
 - a. What is the estimated number of grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren in Maryland in 2007?
 - b. What is the margin of error for this estimate?
10. According to information found on the site:
 - a. What was the Housing Units sample size for the District of Columbia in 2006?
 - b. How would you explain the lower number of final interviews?

11. You are interested in analyzing ACS data on school enrollment by county for the state of Nebraska. Where on the ACS website can you find out:
 - a. Which counties receive 1-year and 3-year estimates?
 - b. Why are the 1-year and 3-year estimates not available for all counties in Nebraska?
 - c. Will the ACS ever produce data for all counties in Nebraska?