

OMB Nonsubstantive Change Request

Department: Commerce

Agency: U.S. Census Bureau

Title: American Community Survey Methods Panel Tests, 2018 Data Slide Test

OMB Control Number: 0607-0936

Expiration Date: 08/31/2018

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the American Community Survey (ACS) Methods Panel Tests clearance to test the inclusion of a data slide (also known as a slide chart) in two experimental treatments for the American Community Survey. The data slide is designed to communicate what the survey is, generate interest in the survey, and address respondent concerns about the legitimacy of the ACS. These benefits have the potential to also increase self-response rates. The Census Bureau proposes to conduct a field test as part of the production ACS May 2018 panel. This will require a change in the mail materials for a subset of the sampled addresses. No additional burden is expected.

Background: After receiving the ACS mailing, some respondents have questions or concerns about the survey, including questions about the legitimacy of the survey. Additionally, respondents want to understand how the data are used. To address these concerns, in addition to potentially improving the self-response rate, the Census Bureau seeks to test the inclusion of a data slide (also known as a slide chart) with the current ACS mail materials. The primary goal of the data slide is to help legitimize the survey. The data slide could also potentially serve as a reminder to complete the survey. Promoting survey legitimacy and respondent trust may increase self-response.

Timeline: The test is being planned as part of the ACS May 2018 panel, adhering to the same data collection protocols as production ACS.

Method: The data slide will contain information on selected statistics from the ACS for each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Currently, the ACS has five mailing pieces: 1) an initial mailing package, 2) a reminder letter, 3) a paper questionnaire package, 4) a reminder postcard, and 5) a final reminder postcard. One experimental treatment will include the data slide in the initial mail package. In addition to the data slide, the letter in this mailing will be modified to refer to the data slide. The second experimental treatment will include the data slide in the paper questionnaire package, which will only be sent if a response has not been received. In addition to the data slide, the letter in this mailing will be modified to refer to the data slide. All other materials and mailings will be the same as the production materials. See Table 1 below for a comparison of the treatments (one control treatment and two experimental treatments).

Table 1. Description of Mail Materials for all Treatments in the 2018 Data Slide Test

| Current Production (Control) | Data Slide in Initial Mailing | Data Slide in Paper Questionnaire Mailing |
|---|--|--|
| Initial Mailing Outgoing Envelope FAQ* Brochure Instruction Card Multilingual Information Letter | Initial Mailing Outgoing Envelope FAQ Brochure Instruction Card Multilingual Information **Letter – modified to reference the data slide **Data Slide | Initial Mailing Outgoing Envelope FAQ Brochure Instruction Card Multilingual Information Letter |
| Reminder Letter | Reminder Letter | Reminder Letter |
| Paper Questionnaire Package Outgoing Envelope Questionnaire FAQ Brochure Instruction Card Return Envelope Letter | Paper Questionnaire Package Outgoing Envelope Questionnaire FAQ Brochure Instruction Card Return Envelope Letter | Paper Questionnaire Package Outgoing Envelope Questionnaire FAQ Brochure Instruction Card Return Envelope **Letter – modified to reference the data slide **Data Slide |
| Reminder Postcard | Reminder Postcard | Reminder Postcard |
| Final Reminder Postcard | Final Reminder Postcard | Final Reminder Postcard |

* Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Brochure

** Indicates modified or additional materials

Analysis Metrics: The Census Bureau will compare self-response rates and final response rates of each of the experimental treatments to the control treatment. The Census Bureau will also assess the impact of each of the experimental treatments on data collection costs.

Sample: The monthly ACS production sample of approximately 288,000 addresses is divided into 24 groups, where each group contains approximately 12,000 addresses. Each group is a representative subsample of the entire monthly sample, and each monthly sample is representative of the entire yearly sample and the country. The Census Bureau will use two randomly selected groups for each treatment. Hence, each treatment will have a sample size of approximately 24,000 addresses. In total, approximately 48,000 addresses will be used for the two treatments. The remaining sample will receive the current production materials; however, 24,000 addresses will be sorted and mailed with the other treatment materials and serve as the control. The sample size will be able to detect differences of approximately 1.25 percentage

points between the self-response return rates of the control and experimental treatments. The power of the test, which is 80 percent and where $\alpha=0.1$, assumes a 50 percent response rate.

Use of Incentives: None.

Burden: There is no change in burden to the public associated with this test. The test is being conducted using production ACS sample. No additional contacts are being made.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Data Slide, Initial Mailing Package Letter and Paper Questionnaire Package Letter

Contact Information:

Please contact the following individuals for further information about this test:

Data Collection:

Agnes Kee
American Community Survey Office
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-1516
Agnes.S.Kee@census.gov

Statistical Aspects:

Elizabeth Poehler
Decennial Statistical Studies Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20233
(301) 763-9305
Elizabeth.A.Poehler@census.gov