

**2010 DECENNIAL PROGRAM -- LANGUAGE METHODS**

**Meetings of the Census Advisory Committee on the African American Population, the American Indian and Alaska Native Populations, the Asian Population, the Hispanic Population, and the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Populations**

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This draft document is being provided to the Census Bureau's Advisory Committees prior to upcoming meetings. It is preliminary in nature and in the early stages of development. As such, it is subject to revision. Our intent in making this working document available at this time is to inform ongoing discussions related to 2010 Census planning and the American Community Survey.

Questions for working group members:

1. Do you have recommendations for methods to make it more clear to Spanish-speaking respondents that they can call to request an ACS Spanish questionnaire? Should a message be included in the advance letter, the letter in the mailing package, or on the questionnaire itself? How could we expand this to other languages? We are looking to test this in the ACS to inform both ACS and 2010 Census planning.
2. What additional respondent assistance operations or tools should we pursue to encourage 2010 Census and ACS participation in languages other than English?
3. Do you have any comments on the design of the ACS bilingual GQ form?
4. What kinds of language support should the Census Bureau attempt to incorporate into automated data collection instruments?
5. Do you have any comments on the Interagency Language Roundtable provisional draft?

## **Introduction**

In the past 5 years the 2010 Decennial Program has developed and tested tools to improve the quality of data collected from non-English speakers. The ACS and the 2010 Census share many common data collection activities and quality objectives and have been working jointly to study language barriers and effective methods for quality data collection. Some methods, well suited for the 2010 Census may not be appropriate for the ACS (and vice versa).

This document provides a summary of 2010 Decennial Program activities relating to reducing language barriers and improving data quality for non-English speakers. It covers both ACS and 2010 Census plans and is organized into four broad topic areas - mail data collection methods, respondent assistance, telephone and personal visit data collection methods, and methods to improve translations.

## **Mail Data Collection Methods**

1. The ACS questionnaires are mailed in English (US) and in Spanish (PR). Methods have been in place since mid 2004 to support US requests for Spanish forms and PR requests for English forms. We are exploring if questionnaires should be created in a small number of additional languages or if language guides would be a sufficient approach. The goal would be to make these materials available upon request to support improving mail response.
2. ACS staff have begun discussions of methods to highlight the message to respondents that a Spanish form is available upon request. This includes looking at each of the mailing pieces (advance letter, mailing package, and reminder card). The method chosen should be scalable to support other languages.
3. One of the major goals of the 2005 National Census Test, a national mail test scheduled for the fall of 2005, is to evaluate the use of a bilingual (English/Spanish) questionnaire for use in 2010. The bilingual form uses a novel "swim lane" format, with English on one side and parallel Spanish on the other side. The bilingual swim lane questionnaire will be mailed to a national sample of 10,000 households.
4. The 2006 Census Test of methods for 2010, scheduled for the spring of 2006 in Austin, Texas, will again use a bilingual swim lane paper questionnaire, and will also evaluate the effect of including a multi-language questionnaire assistance guide in the mailing package with an English questionnaire. We created a language assistance guide in 12 languages to use in the 2004 Census Test in Queens, New York. We consider this guide to be a valuable respondent tool, and we are investigating alternative methods to distribute the guide more directly and quickly to respondents.
5. ACS staff evaluated in 2003 how frequently non-English speakers complete English mail forms and the completeness of the data collected by mail from these non-English speakers.

6. The ACS conducts a telephone followup operation for incomplete mail forms. This followup is currently conducted in both English and Spanish.
7. The 2010 Decennial Program has evaluated geographic clustering by language to determine the viability of targeted mailings in specific languages. This research is expected to be documented later this year. The ACS and 2010 Census will use this information to assist in decision-making on targeting both mail methods and outreach efforts. We are already relying on this type of information in planning the 2006 Census Test in Austin, Texas.
8. We are researching printing industry recommendations and requirements for production of on demand forms in multiple languages for possible use during the 2010 Census.

### **Respondent Assistance**

1. Both the 2010 Census and the ACS will make Telephone Questionnaire Assistance (TQA) available in languages other than English. TQA for the ACS has always existed in Spanish. A call to the Spanish help number reaches a Spanish speaker directly. The interviewer will either provide general assistance, mail a Spanish questionnaire, or conduct the ACS interview by phone. The ACS and 2010 Census are also both looking to expand TQA support in additional languages.
2. Changes have been made to link the TQA operators for the ACS to the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system to facilitate use of the CATI Spanish instrument to collect TQA interviews. TQA interviewers are trained to encourage callers to provide the interview over the phone.
3. While program details have not yet been determined, the vision for the 2010 Census includes providing language support for the following operations:
  - Internet (English and Spanish)
  - Be Counted/Were You Counted
  - Distribution of Language Assistance Guides
  - Questionnaire Assistance Centers
  - Partnership and Marketing
4. The 2010 Language R&D Group is working with the Partnership and Communications Group to continue to provide translated promotional and marketing materials appropriate to the communities involved in the 2006 Census Test.

### **Telephone and Personal Visit Data Collection Methods**

1. The CATI and Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) instrument for the ACS has always existed in both English and Spanish. Recently the instrument was revised to collect additional data on language-related issues. This information will allow us to more

closely monitor how data are being collected, including information on the frequency of use of an interpreter, a household member, or the interviewer as a means of obtaining the interview. These data will also allow us to identify specific language needs. To date this information has been used to identify the specific languages with the greatest needs during CATI, and was used in recruiting additional staff for the call centers. CAPI data are also being reviewed to identify current language barriers that result in survey noninterviews. Regional Office recruiting will benefit from this information.

2. The 2010 Census took a major step forward by testing the use of a partially-translated Hand-held Computer or HHC (Spanish-English) during the 2004 Census Test. Preliminary indications are that the Spanish-translated HHC performed favorably, especially at the Queens, New York test site. The 2006 Census Test will advance what we learned in New York by providing fully-translated Spanish HHC instruments in the Texas test site.
3. The ACS is exploring the best method of expanding the number of available translated instruments for use in CATI and CAPI. It is our goal to reduce the number of “on the fly” interviews by developing approved translations. We are evaluating integrating these additional languages into the laptop or developing paper guides for interviewers.
4. A new training module was created for ACS interviewers on language issues. All interviewers—experienced and new—were given this training. We expect this training to improve the consistency of procedures used in these situations and to remind interviewers of the importance of collecting complete data for all households.
5. In 2004 the ACS began using WebCATI to facilitate reassignment of cases across call centers and to more efficiently utilize interviewer language skills.
6. ACS staff created a quality measures web page with information issued annually of the survey response rates due to language barriers. Data for 2000 - 2003 are currently provided at the national and state levels. The levels remain low at national and state levels. We recently produced these noninterview rates at sub-state levels to determine if, despite low state level rates, small areas are negatively impacted by language barrier nonresponse. A summary of these findings are attached.
7. The ACS and 2010 Census rely on bilingual interviewers during followup operations to collect data from non-English speakers. Research comparing the language abilities of the ACS CAPI interviewers in each Regional Office with the language needs for that Regional Office was issued in 2004. An updated assessment is planned later this year to look at full implementation staffing and language needs for both CATI and CAPI. This information will be updated periodically and will serve as an important tool for hiring and planning for nonresponse followup activities in 2010.
8. A study of the completeness of ACS data collected via CATI and CAPI by language spoken was issued in 2003.

9. A language identification flashcard was used in Census 2000 to identify the specific language spoken when interviewers encountered a household that they could not communicate with. Minor modifications were made for its use in census testing. The ACS adapted this flashcard and has been using it for the past 6 months. ACS and 2010 Census planners are working to improve this flashcard.
10. A bilingual (English/Spanish) group quarters form was created for use in the ACS. It was recently field tested and is planned for use in 2006. A copy of this form is attached.
11. The ACS is planning additional translations of the letters and brochures used during personal visit followup to help interviewers explain the ACS to non-English speakers. These materials were translated and cognitively tested in 2004 for use in Puerto Rico.

### **Methods to Improve Translations**

1. The Census Bureau recognizes the importance of pretesting translated survey instruments and supporting documents in languages other than English. Both 2010 Census and the ACS are exploring effective methods for conducting cognitive tests in non-English languages. We have discussed with you in the past the Census Bureau Standard for Pretesting Questionnaires and Related Materials for Surveys and Censuses. This document can be found on our website at: [www.census.gov/srd/pretest-standards.html](http://www.census.gov/srd/pretest-standards.html).
2. Last year, the Census Bureau issued Guidelines for Language Translation of Data Collection Instruments and Supporting Materials. This document outlines the recommended process for translating survey instruments and materials to insure all translated documents are of the highest quality possible, given our available resources. We are providing a copy of these guidelines as Attachment 4.
3. Census staff are developing a plan for detailed review and testing of the existing Spanish translations. This plan builds off of previous research and exploratory studies.
4. The Census Bureau is currently participating with the Federal Government Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) to finalize a document on translation skill level descriptions. We are including a copy of their provisional draft (February 2005) as Attachment 5. Additional background information, related language papers and publications, and language skill level descriptions are available on the ILR website at: [www.govtilr.org](http://www.govtilr.org).
5. We plan to create a Census Bureau Language Reference Dictionary prior to the 2010 Census. We envision that this product will serve as a reference to provide consistency for translated census terms and concepts in multiple languages, and that the dictionary can be used throughout the Census Bureau.

### **Attachments - To be handed out at meeting.**

1. ACS GQ bilingual form
2. ACS summary of county-level noninterview rates due to language barriers
3. 2005 Census Test "swim lane" questionnaire [DC-1(E/S)]

4. Census Bureau Guideline: Language Translation of Data Collection Instruments and Supporting Materials (Issued: April 5, 2004)
5. Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Description for Translation (Draft: February 2005)

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