

## **Testing a Multilingual Assistance Brochure/Letter in the American Community Survey**

Meetings of the Language Working Groups of the  
Race and Ethnic Advisory Committee (April 27 - 28, 2006)  
and the 2010 Census Advisory Committee (May 11 - 12, 2006)

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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 planning and the American Community Survey.

**U S C E N S U S B U R E A U**

H:\language\Geographic Clustering of Language Spoken

## **1. Introduction**

In 2007 the Census Bureau would like to test options to inform respondents who speak Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian about the ACS and how they can obtain assistance. Our intent is to develop both a multilingual brochure and a multilingual letter that could be included in the ACS advance mailing. These materials would potentially include Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian translations and the specific assistance provided would include telephone assistance (in the required language) for each of these languages and a paper questionnaire for Spanish-speakers. The test would assess the success of each option by measuring (1) the number of calls to the assistance lines, (2) the increase in the number of completed interviews for each of these language groups, and (3) the overall impact on survey response rates. The test would also assess costs.

This paper discusses the proposed content of these letters/brochures and possible layouts. It includes examples for reference. A high level discussion is offered of how the assistance would be provided and how the test would be implemented. At this time we are unsure of the availability of funding to support this testing in 2007. Any decision to implement such a mailing in full production will need to take into account response as well as costs. The final section of this paper includes a set of questions for the working groups.

## **2. Background**

The 2006 ACS questionnaire includes a message on the cover that informs respondents how they can obtain assistance in Spanish (see Attachment 1). No messages currently exist on the ACS mail questionnaire or any other ACS mailing piece that explain how households who require assistance in languages other than Spanish can receive assistance. The telephone and personal visit followup operations are therefore primarily responsible for data collection from these populations. Although these operations have been shown to be successful, we are interested in trying to increase the number of interviews conducted for non-English speaking households prior to telephone and personal visit follow up activities. In particular we would like to use the mail mode to explain to Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian households that they can receive assistance in these languages and also complete the survey by telephone in their preferred language.

In 2005 the call centers recruited bilingual staff as part of the scheduled “ramp up” to full sample. The language capabilities currently exist in the call centers to support a telephone assistance operation in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian. Designing this prototype for production implies a commitment that these resources will continue to exist in the call centers.

## **3. Proposal**

**3.1 Content.** The primary message should be clear instructions on how households can obtain assistance in the language that they speak. In addition, some of the messages that

are included in the current advance letter should be considered in defining the specific content of these multilingual materials. The content of the advance letter was tested to identify key messages that should encourage response. (See Attachment 2 for a copy of the advance letter.) The messages include a basic description of the ACS, the values for the respondent and his or her community of participating, and how the household was chosen to be in the survey. We may want to consider some of these messages and/or additional messages on confidentiality, the mandatory nature of the survey, and the legal basis for data collection.

**3.2 Format.** We are considering two basic formats - a brochure and a letter. The brochure could be laid out as a series of questions and answers to cover the above-noted topics. (See Attachment 3 as a general idea of this format with four possible questions.) A single-sheet letter could be a shorter version of the current advance letter laid out as a letter from the Director with his signature. The advance letter currently requires a 9 ½ by 4 inch envelope. Ideally any insert should be designed within these size constraints.

**3.3 Assistance.** At this time the type of assistance offered for Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Russian speakers would be limited to telephone assistance. We would identify a toll-free telephone number that would connect to a line that is answered in the designated language. This is what is currently done for Spanish assistance. At times when an interviewer may not be available, a message would be provided requesting that a name and number be left with assurances that their call is appreciated and will be returned as quickly as possible. These messages would also be in the specific language. For Spanish-speakers an additional option will be offered - to have a Spanish paper questionnaire mailed to the respondent. This capability currently exists, but Spanish forms are rarely requested.

An interview can only be conducted if the respondent can provide their unique ACS sample address identification number. The advance letter currently includes this ACS identification number as part of the mailing label and it could be easily referenced by the respondent.

**3.4 Test.** We propose that after development of these test materials and testing of the translations that we split the national production sample for several months into three subsets and randomly assign either a control treatment (existing methods) or one of the two experimental treatments. We would monitor the mail response rates, quantify the number of contacts initiated by respondents to the assistance lines and the number of interviews completed as a consequence of those contacts, and compare final survey response rates. We would also collect information about the costs associated with the production of these materials, the assembly of the advance letters, and postage costs.

#### 4. Questions


- a. The ACS mail strategy includes the use of four mailing pieces. An advance letter is sent about a week prior to receipt of the initial mailing package. Several days after the initial mailing package is received, a reminder postcard is mailed. Addresses without a returned questionnaire are sent a second mailing package about 3 weeks after the initial mailing package.

Our current proposal is to test the inclusion of a special brochure or letter in the advance mailing. We believe it will be more visible in this mailing versus in the initial mailing package which includes the questionnaire, a return envelope, a letter, and a booklet with information on how to complete the questionnaire. What do you think?

- b. We are also considering testing the expansion of the list of language-specific toll-free numbers on the cover of the survey questionnaire. What do you think of this idea? Do you have any specific advice on the wording of this short message?
- c. If we were to design a brochure, what are your thoughts on the key messages that should be included? Do you like the idea of the design being in Q&A format? What specific design ideas do you have for a brochure?
- d. If we were to develop a letter do you think it should be similar in format to the advance letter? Should we have two letters (current letter plus a multilingual letter) or combine this information into one letter? What specific ideas do you have for a letter approach?
- e. Do you have any suggestions for the design of this test?

Attachments


Cover of ACS questionnaire



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

# THE American Community Survey

**People are our most important resource. This Census Bureau survey collects information about education, employment, income, and housing—information your community uses to plan and fund programs. Your response is important, and we keep your answers confidential.**

 If you need help or have questions about completing this form, please call 1-800-354-7271. The telephone call is free.

**Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD):**  
Call 1-800-582-8330. The telephone call is free.

**¿NECESITA AYUDA?** Si usted habla español y necesita ayuda para completar su cuestionario, llame sin cargo alguno al 1-877-833-5625. Usted también puede pedir un cuestionario en español o completar su entrevista por teléfono con un entrevistador que habla español.

For more information about the American Community Survey, visit our web site at: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

### Start Here

This form asks for three types of information:

- basic information about the people who are living or staying at the address on the mailing label above
- specific information about this house, apartment, or mobile home
- more detailed information about each person living or staying here

➔ What is your name? Please PRINT the name of the person who is filling out this form. Include the telephone number so we can contact you if there is a question, and today's date.

Last Name

First Name  M

Area Code + Number

Date (Month/Day/Year)  /  /

➔ How many people are living or staying at this address?  
Number of people

➔ Please turn to the next page to continue.

FORM ACS-1(2005) OMB No. 0607-0810  
(5-19-2005)

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

ACS-1(2005), Page 1, Base (Black)

ACS-1(2005), Page 1, GREEN Pantone 354 (20% and 100%)

Copy of advance letter

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Economics and Statistics Administration

U.S. Census Bureau  
Washington, DC 20233-0001

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Dear Resident:

In a few days your household will receive a questionnaire in the mail for a very important national survey, the American Community Survey. When the questionnaire arrives, please fill it out and mail it back promptly. The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this survey and chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample.

The American Community Survey collects information about various topics like education, housing, and jobs. Information from this survey is used by federal, state, local, and tribal governments to meet the needs of communities across America. For example, community leaders use this information to decide where schools, highways, hospitals, and other services are needed. The survey also is used to develop programs to reduce traffic congestion, provide job training, and plan for the healthcare needs of the elderly.

If you have access to the Internet and want to learn more about the American Community Survey, please visit the Census Bureau's Web site:  
[www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www).

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,  
Charles Louis Kincannon  
Director, U.S. Census Bureau

ACS-12(L)S (1-2003)

A Brochure Option

Front

<i><b>In Vietnamese</b></i>	<i><b>In Chinese</b></i>	<i><b>In English</b></i>
- question 1/answer 1	- question 1/answer 1	What is the ACS and why is it needed?
- question 2/answer 2	- question 2/answer 2	How do I get assistance in completing this survey questionnaire?
- question 3/answer 3	- question 3/answer 3	Is the information that I provide confidential?
- question 4/answer 4	- question 4/answer 4	How will my completing this survey help my community?

Back

<i><b>In Spanish</b></i>	<i><b>In Korean</b></i>	<i><b>In Russian</b></i>
- question 1/answer 1	- question 1/answer 1	- question 1/answer 1
- question 2/answer 2	- question 2/answer 2	- question 2/answer 2
- question 3/answer 3	- question 3/answer 3	- question 3/answer 3
- question 4/answer 4	- question 4/answer 4	- question 4/answer 4

