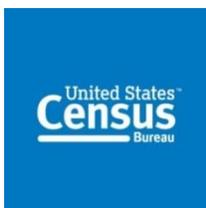


***Results from the 2015
Data Products Survey
for the American Community
Survey***

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

In the spring of 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau conducted an online survey for American Community Survey (ACS) data users. The survey consisted of nine questions, including seven core questions about the data products, documentation, and current dissemination methods. Questions on organizational affiliation and a request for contact information for possible follow-up activities followed. Four of the seven core questions allowed users to provide additional comments, explaining their answers in detail.

There were 667 responses to the survey. Two responses were not usable for analysis, but the remaining 665 provided a rich source of user feedback about the content of the data products, the accompanying documentation, and the current dissemination methods.

There were 824 comments from the open-ended questions, which provided a deeper understanding of the responses to the multiple-choice components. Most of this report summarizes what the Census Bureau learned from these comments. A full report will be available in October 2015.

Highlights from the survey results

Respondents were very positive about certain aspects of their experience finding and using the ACS data products. For example, about 87% of the respondents rated the content of the data products to be “good” or “excellent,” and 64% of the respondents said that the ACS data products are meeting their needs “very well.” However, comments from the open-ended questions were critical about methods of disseminating the data, data content, and documentation. The following list covers some of the major concerns expressed in these comments.

- Dissatisfaction with current methods of accessing the ACS data, including time required to find both data and documentation, and difficulties in downloading and manipulating tables.
- Need for support with user-defined tables and geographic areas, including a specific need for the Microdata Analysis System (MAS).
- Need for more detail in product content.
- Concerns about large margins of error (MOEs) for small geographic areas.
- Complaints about the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), including documentation and finding the data.
- Complaints about cancelling the 3-year products.
- Need for geographic mapping capability and Geographic Information System (GIS) support.
- Many comments about ACS documentation, both negative and positive, including specific suggestions for improvements.

There is overlap among several of these themes. For example, respondents who wanted more flexibility in creating the data products they need are similar to those who want more detail in the data products.

Many of the open-ended comments touched on issues related to the current methods of accessing ACS data and tools. In fact, over 40% of the comments included complaints about some aspect of this access.

In addition, two observations about the responses to questions Q8 (organizational affiliation) and Q9 (request for contact information for later follow-up) follow:

- 54% of the respondents provided contact information for further follow-up by the Census Bureau.
 - Overall, these respondents appear to have a more favorable view of the ACS, while providing many comments and suggestions at the same time.
- 99% of the respondents provided some type of answer to Q8, regarding organizational affiliation.

Recommendations for follow-up actions

We have identified four follow-up activities for the Census Bureau:

- Identify any changes to data products, documentation, or dissemination channels that should be considered based on the survey results.
- Share the results of survey with the following groups:
 - ACS Data Product Redesign Workgroup – comments on issues with data products
 - Center for Enterprise Dissemination Services and Consumer Innovation (CEDSCI) leadership group – comments on issues related to dissemination
 - ACS Content Council – requests for content changes to the current questionnaire
 - ACS Variance Estimation and Statistical Support Branch – comments on MOEs and other issues related to statistical reliability
 - ACS stakeholders external to the Census Bureau
- Invite a subset of those respondents who left their contact information to join a feedback group that will provide comments on new data products and dissemination strategies
- Consider additional methods of procuring user feedback based on lessons learned from this survey, e.g., a series of focus groups with small groups of data users that discuss concerns and ideas in greater depth.