INCOME IN THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY: Comparisons to Census 2000

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Summary

- Introduction
- Major Census 2000/C2SS differences: data collection, capture, processing, and presentation
- Results: Comparisons of C2SS to Census 2000/CPS
- Exploring reasons for C2SS/Census 2000 income differences
- Conclusions/Avenues for further research

Terminology

- **American Community Survey (ACS)**—timely small area data—ultimate aim is to replace the Census "long form" for 2010 and beyond
- **Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (C2SS)**—a large-scale national test, conducted in 2000, using ACS methodology
- **Current Population Survey (CPS)**—Annual Supplement contains income questions

Data Collection

- Reference Period—previous calendar year vs. previous 12 months
- Does this matter? Subject of Split-Panel Test Conducted in 1997

Table 1: Comparison of Median Income of Individuals by Income Type and Reference Period (asked October - December, 1997)

	ACS SPLIT PANEL TEST			
	PAST 12 MONTHS	CALENDAR YEAR 1996	DIFFERENCE	
Wages or Salary	$25,000	$26,000	-$1,000	*
Self-Employment	$12,000	$10,000	$2,000	*
Interest	$1,500	$1,400	$100	
Social Security	$7,932	$8,028	-$96	
Retirement	$9,700	$10,000	-$300	
Public Assistance	$3,438	$3,872	-$434	
Other Income	$3,000	$3,000	$0	
Total Income	$24,000	$24,662	-$662	

Table 2 - Response Rates for All Sources of Income - Split Panel Test

Income	Period	Percent Reporting Income	Difference	
Wage/Salary	Past 12 months	73.93%		
	Calendar year 1996	72.84%	+1.09	
Self-Employment	Past 12 months	73.72%		
	Calendar year 1996	72.68%	+1.04	
Interest, etc.	Past 12 months	72.07%		
	Calendar year 1996	71.05%	+1.02	
Social Security	Past 12 months	75.78%		
	Calendar year 1996	74.65%	+1.13	
Retirement	Past 12 months	75.36%		
	Calendar year 1996	73.96%	+1.40	
Public Assistance	Past 12 months	77.12%		
	Calendar year 1996	75.38%	+1.74	*
Other Income	Past 12 months	76.40%		
	Calendar year 1996	75.23%	+1.17	
Total Income	Past 12 months	83.67%		
	Calendar year 1996	83.09%	+0.58	

Source: 1996 American Community Survey
* Indicates statistical significant difference at 90-percent confidence level.

Adjusting Rolling Reference Period Income

(Jan 2001 interview 1.000000. . . .)
Dec 2000 interview 1.002766. . . .)
Nov 2000 interview 1.005596. . . .)
Oct 2000 interview 1.008443. . . .)
Sep 2000 interview 1.011305. . . .)
Aug 2000 interview 1.014134. . . .)
Jul 2000 interview 1.017179. . . . .)
Jun 2000 interview 1.020293. . . .)
May 2000 interview 1.022970. . . .)
Apr 2000 interview 1.025560. . . .)
Mar 2000 interview 1.028725. . . .)
Feb 2000 interview 1.031447. . . .)
Jan 2000 interview 1.033769. . . .)

J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D **J**
1999 2000 2001

ACS Adjustment Factors = Sum of 2000 Monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) Factors /Sum of Reference Period's Monthly CPI Factors

Census 2000/C2SS Data Capture/Allocation Differences

- **Data Capture**--Very different systems Optical Character Recognition (OCR) vs. “keyers”
- **Imputation**—Very similar designs, main difference is in implementation—vastly different sample sizes (donor pools)

Table 3. Comparisons of Median Household Income in 2000 Dollars: C2SS/ACS, Census 2000, and the CPS

State/ACS Test Sites	C2SS/ACS Estimate (In dollars)	Census 2000 (Adjusted for inflation – In dollars)	Percent Difference (ACS-Census)	Statistically Significant Difference (denoted by "*")	Current Population Survey (CPS) 2000 Dollars	Percent Difference (ACS-CPS)	Statistic Significa Differen (denotec "*")
United States	41486	43396	-4.6	*	41990	-1.2	*
California	46617	49078	-5.3	*	46816	-0.4	
Texas	39398	41260	-4.7	*	38609	2.0	
New York	43735	44841	-2.5	*	40744	6.8	*
Florida	38054	40115	-5.4	*	38856	-2.1	
Illinois	45708	48145	-5.3	*	46064	-0.8	
Pennsylvania	39661	41445	-4.5	*	42176	-6.3	*
Ohio	39745	42323	-6.5	*	42962	-8.1	*
Michigan	43387	46158	-6.4	*	45512	-4.9	*
New Jersey	54276	56986	-5.0	*	50405	7.1	*
Georgia	41295	43849	-6.2	*	41901	-1.5	

Exploring Reasons for Differences

- Data Collection
- Data Capture
- Allocation
- Other

Conclusions/Avenues for Further Research

- Census 2000 incomes are consistently higher than C2SS
- CPS/Census 2000 results are puzzling
- Much more work needs to be done to understand differences
- CPS/Census match holds promise