Brookings Briefings on the Census
Better Data for Better Decisions:
The Value of the American Community Survey to the Nation

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REAMER: Hi. I'm Andrew Reamer with the Urban Markets Initiative at the Brookings Institution. I want to welcome you to the second of three Brookings briefings on the census.

This session is titled, "Better Data for Better Decisions: The Value of the American Community Survey for the Nation."

I'll start with some opening remarks and ask for some words of welcome from our congressional hosts. I'll go over today's agenda and then turn to our distinguished moderator of the first panel, Katherine Wallman.

At the request of John Cuaderes, who is the executive director of the House Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, the Brookings Institution is holding a series of (inaudible) briefings on the census with three purposes in mind.

The first is to aid congressional staff and nongovernmental organizations in understanding the extent to which the functioning of our economy and our democracy relies on census data.

The second purpose is to provide an opportunity to stakeholders in census data, understand the steps necessary to produce these data and an opportunity to offer feedback to the Census Bureau and the House subcommittees regarding how these steps are carried out.

The third purpose is to give nongovernmental organizations information useful in educating members of Congress outside of these briefings.

At our first gathering in April, titled, "The Road to the 2010 Census: Implications for Apportionment, Redistricting and the Economy," we reviewed and discussed the rationale and multiyear process for producing an accurate count of America's population.

In today's session, we will focus on the value of the American Community Survey to the nation. The essence of that value is reflected in the first half of the title of today's session coined by John Cuaderes, "better data for better decisions."

Since 1940, the single most important statistical resource used by American governments and business to determine how best to invest their scarce resources, whether for public good or for profit, has been the Decennial Census long form.

Over seven iterations from 1940 to 2000, the long form has provided an array of population and housing characteristics such as income, occupation, housing type and cost, educational attainment and journey to work at a level of detail down to the neighborhood level.

The impact of these data for guiding public and private investment decisions has been enormous. In 2005, our federal, state and local governments sent about $3.9 trillion, much of it determined by the characteristics of the people or places that these governments are attempting to serve.

Over the years, governments at all levels have used long form data for geographies as large as the nation and as small as a neighborhood to: one, identify and measure community well-being, assets and activity patterns; two, shape and implement policies, programs and projects to act on what we see, for instance, to promote economic development, plan highways, educate children, deploy police, address poverty, assist veterans and prepare evacuation plans.

Governments build buildings, hire workers and contractors, develop regulations and provide support in light of long-form data.

Three, long-form data are integral to a significant number of state and federal assistance programs in the form of eligibility criteria -- for instance, determining where to allocate housing assistance and community development block grants.

And four, long-form data are used by governments to evaluate the impacts of the various programs and policies.

Private and nonprofit sectors, across the board, have used long-form data to identify markets and how best to serve them. The location of and the goods and services offered by grocery stores, banks, day care centers, hospitals and new housing units all have been guided by long-form data.

Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts use long-form data to figure out where to recruit new members, and chambers of commerce have used long-form data to determine what businesses to attract to their community.

In 2005, the private and nonprofit sectors spent $1 trillion in fixed investments in new structures. Few organizations of any size make a decision about where to locate a business establishment or locate housing without using, directly or through some value-added commercial vendor, long form-type data.

In 2005, American consumers spent $8.7 trillion in goods and services, dwarfing any other component of GDP. And in guiding where businesses locate and what they offer, long-form data has had a substantial impact on what goods and services are available for people to buy.

Consequently, since 1940, long-form data has had a strong influence on the American quality of life.

But as we all know, the value of the Decennial Census long-form data reflects a weakness as well. The data has been available but once a decade. And in a society in which well being depends on the intelligent allocation of public and private resources, once a decade is not enough.

If you're in a year past the middle of the decade, old data may be better than no data, but the world may have changed so much that the data may not lead you down the best path, with possible negative consequences.

In the 1970s and '80s, serious discussions were held about providing some type of reliable intercensal long-form data. But nothing came of them.

In the early 1990s the outlook seemed grim. The panel convened by the National Academies observed that, between expected high survey costs and lack of methodological progress, the chances of developing a new survey were small.

However, in the mid-1990s, a small band of determined staff at the Census Bureau developed survey fields and product methods that allowed for the development of the American Community Survey. And with key Census and OMB leadership behind these ideas, the ACS moved from a handful of test sites, beginning in 1996, to coverage in over 1,200 counties across the country from 2000 to 2004, with full nationwide implementation in 2005 and '06.

I'm pleased to say that we have today that key Census and OMB leadership with us in the persons of Jay Waite and Katherine Wallman.

I'd like to ask you to join me in thanking them for their efforts.

(APPLAUSE)

As I said, the title of this session is, "Better Data for Better Decisions," and the expected impact of the ACS at providing accurate and current estimates of populations. Housing characteristics should prove enormous. I'll leave it to our speakers to tell you how and why.

But before doing so, I want to place this expected value in context. For the upcoming year, the cost of fully implementing the American Community Survey will be $180 million.

If you place that figure, $180 million, side-by-side with the trillions of dollars I just explained that are guided by a use of long form-type data, you can see the enormous influence the relatively small ACS budget can have. And when you take that $180 million and divide it by the 111 million households in this country, the beneficiaries of the ACS, you get a per-household cost of $1.60.

I think it's useful to keep this cost-benefit analysis in mind.

We are enormously gratified by the turnout today to learn about the value of the American Community Survey to the nation. We have with us congressional staff from both houses and from both sides of the aisle. We have representation from federal agencies, membership organizations, public policy and research institutions, advocacy organizations, local planning agencies and the press.

Before reviewing the agenda, I'll ask Ursula Wojciechowski, a professional staff member for the House Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census to give words of welcome. We are here at the invitation of the subcommittee's director, John Cuaderes, and we very much appreciate that.

Ursula's welcome will be followed by one from Mark Stephenson, professional staff member for the minority on the House Government and Reform Committee.

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Good morning, everyone. How are you?

I'd like to thank Brookings for setting up this briefing this morning for you all. And I'd also like to thank Andrew for discussing so eloquently on all those points and taking half of my talking points.

(LAUGHTER)

So that leaves me with welcome, and please don't leave because we do have a wonderful program this morning.

The ACS is important to everyone, as Andy already said. Businesses, school systems, city planners, hospitals, new families looking for nice neighborhoods with other new families so their kids can have lots of playmates rely on the ACS for this kind of information. Not only that, but congressional offices need this information and can use this information to their benefit.

Congress relies on this data, whether they know it or not. And they need to be aware of that come appropriations time, which is next week, Wednesday.

(LAUGHTER)

Timely. They are going to the floor. And I do hope that we can get as much congressional support as possible because this program, the ACS and the decennial census need our continued support.

There have been times in the past two years, actually it's a very regular thing, that the ACS is challenged, threatened, funding is cut and the Census Bureau has pulled through wonderfully, but we can't compromise the ACS. We need to continue support, for many reasons, because without the ACS, we are doling out $300 billion in programs, and if we don't have the information, we're doling out the money blindly.

We can't afford that kind of money, not ever, and definitely not at this time, where budgets are tight.

And we can't compromise the ACS and the re-engineered short form because then we might not have any information until 2020. We would have to rely on 2000 data, which is already old at this point.

So we need the ACS to update us and teach us about our districts. We can learn our constituents and prioritize our legislative policies. We need to know the constituents, know their needs and vote accordingly.

Oh, I'd like to thank Mark for joining us. And the Committee on Government Reform and the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census has oversight jurisdiction of all census issues, so if there are any questions following this program, you can always call the office. We'd be happy to help. Brookings, I know, is always there also to answer any of your questions.

So with that, I will turn to Mark Stephenson for any of his comments.

Thank you, so much. Enjoy the day.

(APPLAUSE)

STEPHENSON: Hi, I'm Mark Stephenson, with the Democratic staff for the Government Reform Committee. I've worked on census issues, off and on, for a number of years. I, too, would like to welcome you and thank Brookings and welcome all of our presenters. I'm sure they'll do an ace job.

The census, in the past, as some of you old-timers might remember, that back in 2000 there was some partisan wrangling over how the census was going to be conducted. I would just like to assure everyone here that that is not the case for the ACS. The ACS enjoys broad support, bipartisan support among Democrats and Republicans. I think they agree that the data that it will provide is crucial for the Congress to do its job, and it's absolutely vital for business.

So with that, I think I'll just leave it to our presenters.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

REAMER: Thank you, Ursula and Mark.

As you can see from the agenda in your folder, today's session has three parts.

The opening session is chaired by Katherine Wallman and starts with two presentations from the Census Bureau's Jay Waite, who is the associate director for the Decennial Census, and from Lisa Blumerman, the deputy chief of the ACS office, and they'll speak about the purpose, products and process of the ACS.

Then we'll hear from a panel, four users with diverse perspectives regarding the value of the ACS.

We'll start with Dan Wiley, who is community coordinator in the Brooklyn Heights Office of Representative Nydia Velazquez. Dan will speak about the uses of the ACS for serving congressional constituents.

Following Dan will be Chris Fulcher, who's director of the Community Information Resource Center at the Rural Policy Research Institute. And Dan will talk about the importance of the ACS for rural America.

Following Dan will be Kirk Johnson, who is a senior policy analyst at the Center for Data Analysis at the Heritage Foundation. And Kirk will discuss the value of the ACS for the purposes of national policy analysis.

And the panel will be complete with the remarks of Bruce Fogarty, who is manager of Demographic and Economic Analysis at J.C. Penney and speaking on behalf of the National Retail Federation. And Bruce will talk about retail business reliance on the ACS and other census data.

After we hear from theses speakers, I'll moderate a question-and-answer session. And in the interest in finishing in a timely manner, we won't have a break. People are welcome to leave the room if they need to and can get food if they want to.

So, Katherine Wallman oversees the OMB Statistical Policy Office that guides the complex and highly idiosyncratic collection of 70 agencies we call the Federal Statistical System. Do you like that, idiosyncratic, yes?

This office represents the data users of America as it attempts to review and coordinate the activities of federal statistical agencies, assist OMB in the development of the president's budget for these agencies, and inform Congress as required by law.

Katherine Wallman?

WALLMAN: It's a pleasure to be here with you today.

When we talk about the American Community Survey in my office, where we try to convince people in the executive branch of the importance of this activity, we have been known to say in the president's budget presentation about the American Community Survey that this represents the greatest innovation in the U.S. statistical system since the introduction of sampling some decades ago, and we believe that.

This program has enjoyed very good support from both sides of the political spectrum in the executive branch. Initial support for this came, of course, during the previous administration, and I'm pleased it's been continued very strongly in the present administration.

We believe this program has many values, not the least of which is taking the pressure off the count when we do the decennial census next in 2010.

But more than that, I personally believe that this program offers the kinds of benefits to users of the data that historically came from the long form of the census to really give us much, much better information and much more current information, higher quality information and

perhaps, ultimately, a little bit of flexibility in our information that we have at the most local levels for use by our people.

I'm not going to take a lot of time this morning, because you're really here to learn more about the American Community Survey from the folks who do the real work. We consider ourselves somewhat the cheerleaders at the Office of Management and Budget. So, I'm going to turn the program over.

Jay, are you going to be the first speaker? Jay Waite is the associate director for the census programs at the Bureau of the Census. And he is going to lead off the presentation for the panel.

Jay?

WAITE: Thank you, Kathy.

I must say I've been in this room several times, but never quite had this view. I think the view from up here is much better than it is from the witness chair.

Now, I'm going to talk a little bit about the American Community Survey -- what it is, why we have it, a little bit about its history, not too much, but sort of an update, very briefly on what the collection mechanism is and how it works and a little bit about the type of data collected.

After I talk, Lisa, who is in charge of the day-to-day operations, will talk a lot more about the specific data that is produced and how you might find it useful.

So what is the American Community Survey? First and foremost, it's a replacement for the old long form. Those of you familiar with the long form it has for many, many years been collected as part of the census in years ending in zero. About one and six households receive the long form which asks a lot of the detailed socioeconomic and demographic data from which all of this small-area data that Andy was talking about is compiled and put together.

The American Community Survey is going to replace that long form. That's the important thing to put in the back of your head. There will be no long form in the 2010 Census.

And that's a pretty significant event, because it will allow those of us that have to do the count to focus our attention on what the Constitution said the census was about, and that is getting people counted once and only once and in the right place.

However, this data is so invaluable that we were looking for another place or another venue by which we could gather this information. The American Community Survey is that venue.

Not only will it produce data more frequently, but it will produce data of higher quality. Many of the questions on the long form are a little bit complex. All respondents do not necessarily understand every part about that question.

In the census, our enumerators have had two or three days of training on the long form and they don't often understand a lot more about the concept than the respondent does. With the

American Community Survey, we're able to get a long-term training of the enumerators so that we have people that can be very helpful in that interview process.

The purpose of the ACS is to collect that detailed decennial census sample data, and we collected every month and publish it every year, as opposed to once every 10 years, as was handled by the long form.

So just to kind of put that in context, some of the issues that Andy talked about, if you were trying to make plans -- either the local government official, a federal official or maybe even a member of Congress -- under the old model, in 2011, if you were interested in data for a particular local area, the most current data for small areas would have been collected in 2000.

I'm fond of saying to local groups: If your community, the place where you live and the issues, which come to you, are exactly the same in 2011 as they were in 2000, then the long form is just your cup of tea. But if by some small chance, some things have changed and things aren't quite the same way, the data that you have available needs to be a lot more current than once every 10 years.

We set out to do the ACS, as Kathy alluded to, to try to combine the ACS with the short-form census to improve the accuracy of the census coverage. The 2010 Census coverage is the coin of the realm. That's why we do the census. And whatever we're doing that distracts us or causes us not to be able to do the best job of counting is problematic.

With the ACS, we're going to be able to improve the census coverage, certainly improve the relevance and timeliness of data. As I mentioned, data every year is a lot more relevant and a lot more useful.

One key aspect of data quality is time. I can give you a very, very precise estimate of the poverty rate in 1830, and that's not very useful to you. But if I can get something more current, then it will be something that you can use and you can make intelligent decisions about.

We are reducing operational risk in the 2010 Census and we'll be containing costs because of the cost of the American Community Survey -- the existence of the American Community Survey.

Andy talked about the American Community Survey costing around $180 million to $200 million a year. That's a significant sum of money over 10 years. But because of the American Community Survey, we are able to make changes in the census itself that will more than offset the costs of the American Community Survey.

So we can do the census with an annual ACS less expensively than we could have repeated the old model of the census with the long form on it.

Well, we've heard already some discussions about why the ACS is important. It's important for many federal agencies to set policy -- national, state, and even local levels -- set policy based on long-form-type data, which is now going to be based on the ACS.

The ACS does not cause us to spend money. The ACS really has nothing to do with whether the Congress believes it's necessary to allocate $2 trillion or $5 trillion or half a trillion. But

what the ACS does is it allows everyone in that allocation process, whether it be Congress allocating to the states, states allocating to the counties, counties allocating down to the local units, it allows them to do that in a targeted way so that the monies that are actually appropriated are much more likely to go to the place where they were intended to go and not miss the target.

We collect a lot of information on the ACS. If you've had an ACS form mailed to you, you know it's not massive but it's pretty robust. It collects a lot of information.

It collects data, for example, on age and relationship, which is the same data that is collected on the short form. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services use this data on age and relationship to plan programs for older people living alone. Businesses servicing the senior citizen market can use the data to plan home-based shopping and other kinds of issues.

Lisa will talk to you a little bit about how we used the ACS for Katrina. One of the things that the people in the Katrina area were interested in very quickly is: Where are the elderly people living alone in this city? After the flood, they were not always able to get to them. If they were living alone they didn't have a network to be able to tell people where they were.

We had the choice of being able to use 2000 data or 2004 data. And so many of the people that lived in a particular place in 2000 might no longer well be living there. So that's an example of aid that you could get quickly.

Grandparents as caregivers; the welfare reform legislation enacted in 1996 requires the Census Bureau to collect information about grandparents who are primary caregivers for their grandchildren. Groups that are interested in supporting the grandparents in this effort are now able to get reasonable counts of those people, not only how many there are but where they are and to target resources to where they are really needed.

Of course income is always a hot topic. Income information is used by state, federal and local governments and businesses to tailor their products and their services. Where do you build a Neiman Marcus is determined a great deal by census data, formally long-form data, now will be ACS data.

You don't want to build a store where you don't have any customers or very few customers, nor do you want to build a factory where you're likely not to be able to get workers. That would not be very smart. If you were going to invest a lot of money, you would like to know: What is the educational level of people in these various communities?

It's not sufficient to know something about the education of the United States. You're interested in this town, this community where you're building this particular building.

The great power of the ACS -- there's a lot of other national surveys that tell us a lot of these things -- but a great power of the ACS is it's the source of very local data. There's a number of places where you can get poverty data for the nation; there's no place outside the ACS where you can get poverty data one-year old for a very small town in rural America or a small part of the bigger town.

A little bit about the history; Andy talked about some of the old people that had worked on the census. I'm one of those old people. Kathy very young at the time but we brought her along as well.

(LAUGHTER)

The ACS came out because, in the early 1980s, Congress recognized the need for more frequently updated long-form data. They authorized, but did not appropriate for, a mid-decade census. Many countries in the world have a census every five years. We have one every 10 years. There was authorization for us to have a mid-decade census in 1985, but money wasn't appropriated for it.

So then in the early '90s, Congress expressed a renewed interest in an alternative to a once-in-a-decade census. The data simply doesn't come often enough for useful purposes, and it's most apparent right at census time because right at census time, when you're trying to figure out what's going on and what's happening, the data is virtually 10-years old.

So they commissioned some research proposals where we looked at some alternative ways to try to collect data for a long form that would be separated from the once-in-a-decade.

Could we do it more often and, if so, how could we do it?

Well there were several principles that came out. We started with -- American Community Survey's childhood name was Continuous Measurements. We started out with a program called Continuous Measurements because we felt like if we were going to measure this more currently, we ought to be measuring on a regular basis. It's very expensive for a survey organization to pull together a large field force, do a survey, then close them all down and then a year or two year later call them to see if they're still there, round them back up again, train them and start over.

So we had two or three principles. One, data would be collected continuously throughout the year on a sample of about 250,000 households per month. Every month of the year, about 250,000 households we would get data from.

There were three modes of collection. There was a mail out/mail back mode, where we hoped to get a number of people because that's the cheapest and the best way, really, to get the data, because the person is sitting at their kitchen table filling out the information and has access to records if they need them. That's the highest quality and it's also the least expensive.

We had personal visit, telephone nonresponse follow-up, and ultimately a nonresponse follow-up of knocking on the door for individuals that we hadn't been able to get information from either by mail or by telephone.

We had planned early on that the survey estimates, the accounts, as it were, would be controlled through our population estimates. They were the official age, sex, race counts. And samples are not really extra strong on getting counts, but we had planned from the beginning that we would control these counts from the survey to the population estimates.

Well, way back in the Precambrian era we started working on the ACS, and in the early '90s we have a lot of different design possibilities of how we might develop it. In 1996, we started our first demonstration. We had a model. We thought we knew how to collect it. We started with four counties. These counties were picked purposely because we had individuals in those counties that had some interest in the data and we wanted to be able to work some with local governments. So we picked four counties.

Two years later we expanded that to 31 counties, which spread out more across the country, each time sort of testing our ability to collect the data. Could we actually get the data? Would it be meaningful? Could these local areas, in fact, use the data that we'd collected? And is there something else that we need to collect? Do we need to change something?

We kind of partnered with people in those local areas that would take our results at the end of the collection period and say, "This is what it tells me about my area."

So that was going on, and the 31 sites were expanded in 1999. Then beginning in 2000, the American Community Survey was expanded really to see -- more like a load test -- it was expanded to about 800,000 addresses in 1,200 counties.

It wasn't every county in the country, but it was a pretty big sample -- 800,000 the year, not a month, but 800,000 samples a year. And that enabled the Census Bureau to release data for every state and for the District of Columbia every year in more than 200 congressional districts and most of the counties and cities with population of 250,000.

You might have seen some ACS data reports that generally come out in the summer, in August, and into the fall. That has mostly come from this survey that we started in 2000 to see if we could do it everywhere.

In census lingo, I can do almost anything in four locations if I have enough supervision. The real challenge of doing a census is that it's happening everywhere all at once. And you really do have to make sure that your collection infrastructure is able to take care of everything.

So we ran that for four years. And the demonstration period ended in December of 2004.

Now in 2005, we began what we call full implementation, at least for households. We went up to the 3 million households a year, 250,000 households a month, beginning in '05. That will allow us to collect data for a lot more places.

Now we're in every county in the country. We're across the country. This map is hard to read -- it's hard for me to read -- but it gives you a little bit of an indication of our expansion in our collection capabilities.

So we've expanded now so that, beginning in '05, we've got enough data collected that we can produce data for every congressional district, obviously, but we can also produce data for all places, 65,000 or greater -- and even in the smaller places we're able to put them together in what we call PUMAs, which allows us to produce data for every year.

So I think when you see this data, and those of you that have seen it already know what I'm talking about, but when you see this data that's available to you every year about your member's district, it's very insightful. It gives the members information, just like it gives business, just like it gives federal and local governments information about where are the areas of concern.

How much of a problem do we really have in transportation in my district? Do we have a problem at all? If we do, where is it?

It allows the member to be able to have some really targeted information to be able to make recommendations about what is needed in the district.

So we began it in 2005 with full collection. The 2005 data, data from the 2005 collection is coming out, I believe, in August. So you'll see that in August of this year and that will be a great thing.

We're able to get really good response from the ACS. This is something which we worried about early on; we are very pleased with our ability to get response.

I talked about the three modes, and let me just very briefly describe what would happen.

Month one, say in January of 2005, we would mail out 250,000 questionnaires across the country. Now you know that's a lot of questionnaires, but there's a lot of households in the country -- so you would not see your neighbor getting a questionnaire the same time you got one. In fact, it would be more like about one in 500 households would get a questionnaire, spread out across the country.

So we'd mail out the questionnaire. Our experience over the several years of testing and also confirmed again in '05 is about 51 percent of those households fill out that form and mail it back. That's what we prefer to have happen to 100 percent, but we get about 51 percent to mail it back.

We use a process in mailing where first we mail you a letter saying, "You lucky person, you are going to get the American Community Survey."

(LAUGHTER)

Then we mail you the American Community Survey. Then a few days later we mail you a card saying, "I'm sure you've been busy, but don't forget to fill out the American Community Survey." A few days after that we say, "You obviously must've lost the form, here's another one." And with all that process, we get about 51 percent of the people to respond.

Then we take the other 49 percent, and with the use of crisscross directories and look-up files, we find phone numbers associated with addresses -- not for every address but with some of the addresses -- and we make phone calls to people.

At that time we say, "I know you must feel terrible for not having mailed it in, but we're going to help you. We're going to take the information over the phone and make it as easy as possible."

We get about 9 percent of our sample reporting over the telephone. That is also a lot less expensive than personal visits and so we're trying to get as much as we can in the least expensive process.

That leaves us with about 40 percent of the population for whom we haven't yet heard. We do a subsample of that population, an approximately a one in three sample of that population, and we send enumerators out to their door. That's the most expensive collection process, but without that we can't get good, unbiased estimates.

Now, the enumerator comes by. A very pleasant person. Is not familiar with the word "No" -- doesn't understand that word. He knocks on the door and says, "Now, I know you must feel really terrible. Not only did you not mail it in and we called and you were busy, I'm here to relieve your conscience."

So we are able to get a lot of answers. Only about 2 percent of the population of our sample do we not ultimately get an answer from in this three-month collection.

That is very, very high. And we're very pleased with that. Our enumerators love this survey. It's something that they like to do, they understand it's getting in the homes in some cases and talking to people about their lives.

I said in 2005 we began full implementation. We certainly began full implementation of the household collection. Because of priorities and budget issues, we did not begin collecting data for group quarters: prisons, nursing homes, universities. Those kinds of places were not part of the ACS in '05. They were added beginning of January '06. So when we get the 2006 data, it will reflect data not only for the household population, but also for the group quarters population.

So we've had some challenges. You know, when we do a census, we're able to put up a fairly extensive advertising campaign. I hope some of you remember what we did in 2000. This was your future and I know none of you left it blank. I hope that you don't know anybody that did, but we were able to get people sort of excited about the census and part of the census.

With the American Community Survey coming to your community every month, but not coming to very many people, it's a little more challenging to get people to be looking forward to it in the mail.

For the group quarters, we're able, in a census, to spend a lot of time and effort with a lot of group quarters gatekeepers, as it were, people that are in charge of the group quarters population.

We have to do that sort of anew with the ACS. We've had a little bit of challenge, but we've overcome those challenges and we think we're getting better at it, in being able to get permission to come into the group quarter to talk to the people that are in the sample.

So what do we collect on the group quarters?

Well, we collect demographic characteristics, sex, age, race and Hispanic origin. Those are the same things that the short form collects. And in effect, just like the long form, the ACS has the short form at the front of it and then all of the long form questions at the back.

So we're able to get some kind of confirmation about sort of the demographic characteristics of local areas.

Social characteristics. We ask about education, educational attainment. I mentioned earlier about building a factory so you can get some sense about whether the people in that area where you're going to build have the kind of education, the educational attainment, that would be needed for whatever your process is.

Marital status, fertility, grandparents as caregivers, which I mentioned; veterans information, disability status, place of birth, citizenship, year of entry, language spoken at home and ancestry. These are the kinds of questions from a social perspective that we ask in the American Community Survey. And we don't have any information about any individual person, but we can produce tabulations for areas with these kinds of characteristics.

Our economic characteristics -- of course, we get income, benefits, employment status, occupation, industry, commuting to work, place of work. Our Transportation Department uses the long-form data and now will begin using the ACS.

Investments in transportation infrastructure are very expensive. You don't want to build a road where only three people a year are driving on it. You have to be able to say: Where are the traffic patterns? Do I need to add more bus lines? If I do, where? Where is the traffic pattern?

You could get that by building a large tower and standing there watching your city all day and sort of trying to count people, or you could go to the American Community Survey and get data on where people are saying they're going to and from work, how they're getting there, and you begin to see: I have a problem here that I can work on; if I only have enough money to add two new buses, this is the route where those two buses should to be, because I can see that there's a lot of people that want to take the bus along that line. And maybe I can even take a bus on some other route where there's very little use and not being used efficiently.

Housing characteristics. We asked them housing characteristics about the housing units in which these people dwell. Tenure; how old is it, is it rented or owned? What kind of housing structure do you have? How much is it worth?

Now you think about how housing values and those of us that live here in the Washington, D.C. area, in 2011, we wouldn't be making reasonably good decisions about the housing values in our neighborhoods if our data was collected in 2000. At least my taxes have grown a lot since 2000 and I'm hopeful that if I ever sold a house that my house would as well.

But that's the case of something is changing pretty rapidly, and once every 10 years is not going to be sufficient to be able to get that information.

Taxes and insurance, utilities, monthly mortgages and monthly rents are all tabulated by the ACS and produced every year for the places that I've talked about.

Now Lisa will talk about how we now leverage that so that, even for my favorite community, East Cupcake, New Jersey, population 19, we are able to produce data for them every year after a few years of building up the sample. I should probably talk a little bit about that.

So I'll turn the time over to her because she's the one who -- I get to talk about it, but she's actually has to do it.

(APPLAUSE)

BLUMERMAN: Good morning. I'm Lisa Blumerman. I'm the deputy chief for the American Community Survey Office.

And Jay just finished explaining to you what the ACS is and the type of data that we collect on the American Community Survey. What I'm going to do in the next few minutes is take you on kind of a whirlwind tour of the data products that we are developing with the 2005 release.

I'll show you some quick tools as to help you access the data if you're interested in doing that and then, if time permits, I'll talk with you very briefly about a very special use of the ACS, the 2005 ACS, that we did this year and the special data products that we released earlier this month on the areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

OK. What Jay was just talking about is one of the basic design principles of the American Community Survey. It was really designed to produce data for communities, very low levels of geography, very small places, towns. And in order to do that, the way the ACS is designed is that we accumulate data over space and time.

So what does that mean?

Well as Jay said, starting in 2005 the ACS marked the first year of full implementation. And I like to think of that as the simple fact that we're now collecting data throughout the year in every county nationwide. Not from every person, but in every county nationwide.

And starting this August, we'll be able to release our first single-year estimates using the 2005 data from the fully implemented ACS. These estimates will be for places that with a population larger than 65,000. And to give you a sense of just how many that is, that's about 7,000 different geographic areas that we'll be releasing.

These geographic areas represent about 83 percent of the population.

When we think about accumulating data over space and time, one of the things we're talking about and going down to lower levels is that by 2008, we'll release our first three-year product. And that three-year product will represent data that were collected over 2005 through 2007.

And with that release, we'll be able to release data for places with a population of about 20,000 people or more. So in 2008, we'll be releasing our first three-year product as well as a single-year product, so there will be two sets of data coming out at that time.

And by 2010, we'll be able to release data for all areas. That's when we'll have our first five-year product out. And our first five-year product will include data that were collected between 2005 and 2009, and at that point we'll be able to get released data down to census tracks and block groups, the very low levels of geography.

To talk specifically about what it is we're releasing this year, as I said earlier, we'll be releasing our first year of single-year estimates. As you can see on the map, maybe, the areas in blue are the areas where most of the data will be going out. And you can see that these large areas are clustered in the more densely populated parts of the country.

If we're talking about counties, it's about 765 counties or 766 counties -- we're still working on the final number there, but it is quite a large number; and about 83 percent of population.

In addition to the data that we're releasing, for the areas larger than 65,000 and the 50 states and D.C., also starting in August we will be releasing data for Puerto Rico as well.

This does, however, leave many rural states with very few or no counties that will be able to get single-year estimates this year. So one of the things you'll see, for example, if we look at West Virginia, which we know is the very rural state, it has 55 counties but only seven of them are large enough to receive the single-year estimates.

One of our principles in working with the ACS is to really be able to release date at the lowest level of geography possible, given confidentiality and reliability constraints. That's why we accumulate data over time and space.

So in order to still meet that and still be able to provide data for all areas, we are able to provide some data for rural areas using our Public Use Microdata Areas, or PUMAs -- and Jay had reference them a minute ago.

And if we stick with West Virginia, the next map will show you how that breaks out over time. And what you see is that the state of West Virginia is partitioned into 12 different PUMA areas, and what we're able to do, then, is to release data at a much lower-level so that there is data available for all parts of the state.

What I'd like to do now is talk with you briefly and give you a sense of when you can expect the 2005 ACS data to be released. We do have four themed releases that we're planning for this year, and these releases will start in August. And there are actually two releases in August of this year.

In mid-August we'll be releasing our social and demographic data from the American Community Survey. And Jay just gave you a sense of the types of information that's included in that release.

At the end of August, we'll be releasing our economic data. And is the release of the economic data from the ACS will be in conjunction with the income and poverty release from the Census Bureau, as it was last year.

At the same time as our economic data are released, we're also releasing our Public Use Microdata Sample for those of you that are PUMS users; that will be coming out the end of August.

In October of 2006, very early October, we're planning to release our housing date. And then in November 2006 we're planning to release a new product that was new for us this past January, using 2004 data, but are Selected Population Profiles.

Throughout each of these releases, we'll also be releasing concurrently the data from the Puerto Rico community surveys. So to illustrate that, in mid-August when we release the social and demographic data for the 50 states and D.C., we'll also be releasing the same data for Puerto Rico.

To give you a sense of the types of data products we have, what I'd like to do now is very, very quickly to go through what those products are. But we do have quite a variety of different data products. For those of you familiar with Census 2000 data, some are similar, although they have some unique twists. And what you can see here is just that kind of breadth of data.

All of our data are accessed through American FactFinder, and the next slide will show you just a picture of what that main page is. And I'll refer to this later when I give you a quick how-to on how to actually access the data.

But what I'd like to do now is talk about our first data products, which are our Base Tables. What you see in front of you is an example of what a Base Table would be, as it will be displayed for the 2005 data.

Our Base Tables are our most detailed Base Tables that we've released for the American Community Survey. And we try to give you enough information on the table itself so that you can understand what it is that you're looking at.

So the table name is very explicit. And the data source is provided for you, as well as the universe.

The universe for our data products that we're releasing in August will be the household population. But starting with our release a year from this August, we'll have both the household and the group quarters population, so that will be an important distinction then.

For our all of our data tables, we do release an estimate followed by its margin of error. If you're familiar with the 2004, you may have seen some lower bounds and upper bounds. We're making a transition to a margin of error, so you'll see more of that starting with this release.

To give you an example of the types of topics that are released on Base Tables, because they are our most detailed, sex by age by race and Hispanic origin or median numbers of rooms in housing units.

There are over 1,000 Base Tables that are planned for the release with the 2005 data. It's a tremendous amount of data. And one of the things, as we continue to work through the data products, you'll see that we have thousands and thousands of data that are coming out.

I think the last time that I had talked with some of the staff, they were calculating over 15,000 unique estimates just for this release. So it's just an incredible amount of data.

The second data product that I'll talk with you about this morning would be our Data Profiles. And our Data Profiles are really just a more summarized or an aggregate way to look at data. There are four different Data Profiles. There is one for social, economic, housing and demographic -- forgot the obvious, sorry about that.

There are four different profiles, and these are available for all levels of geography. They really aggregate those Base Tables to give you a nice summary description of a particular geographic area, if that's what you're interested in.

Like the Base Tables, they do contain an estimate and a margin of error. Last year they did have the lower bound and upper bound, but this year they will have a margin of error.

The third data product that I'll just quickly reference are the Narrative Profiles. This is one of my favorite. If you're looking for prose or just an easy to read, quick-to-access report about a geographic area, here it is. It's done for you. These are computer-generated, with a lot of help, but it's a narrative description of the Data Profiles. And there are some graphs and charts in them and they're just a nice tool if you're looking for something at a glance. And they're also available for all of the geographic areas.

Our fourth data product would be our Subject Tables. Subject Tables show more detail that's available in the Data Profiles, but not quite as much detail as is available in the Base Tables. They're more oriented to a subject rather than a lot of detail.

We have, in terms of the 2005 release, just over 50 summarized topic-specific Subject Tables. If you're familiar with Census 2000 data products and have used them, these are what I would think are most similar to the Census 2000 Quick Tables, to give you a sense of what they're like.

The fifth data product, and one that was new for us last year, are the Selected Population Profiles. These were first released this past January using 2004 data. But Selected Population Profiles provide the user with a ready-made report on a population group with its margin of error.

And the figure that's shown here is just one portion of that Selected Population Profile.

To illustrate the number of profiles that we'll be releasing this August, there will be about 200 race, Hispanic origin and ancestry iterations. In addition to those race, Hispanic origin and ancestry iterations, we also have Selected Population Profiles on population groups like teenagers or grandchildren or the foreign-born.

So there's just a handful of those. The predominant focus is on those race iterations, and there are about 200.

Many people have expressed an interest in maps and what we can do with maps. And AFF offers us a unique way to develop schematic maps. And that's also one of the data products that's available. For the 2004 release, our schematic maps were somewhat limited for the ACS.

For the 2005 release, it's not quite as limited. We are actually planning them all the way down to county level, where you'll be able to see the counties within the states, PUMAs as well as congressional districts. So we'll have quite a bit more variety available with the thematic mapping application with the 2005 release.

Geographic Ranging Tables, and actually there's one on a picture over there, too, I noticed. It's a different way to see it. What I have in front of you is the standard version, and that's the way you can see it with significance to see if your changes are different. But this is an interesting way that you can see your state in context with the other states within the nation as well as the U.S.

With the 2004 release -- and what you'll see on that poster, I believe, is a county level map -- we did offer the Geographic Ranking Tables for counties and places. With the 2005 release, these will only be available at the state level. But we're introducing a new data product to supplement that, which is our Geographic Comparison Tables.

And our Geographic Comparison Tables are very similar to the ranking tables. Although the data aren't ranked, it provides you all of the geographic areas for a particular geography within it, and it does list them in alphabetical order. But these will be available for very low levels of geography.

The 2005 release we were just trying to see what we could do to get the data out to you so you could use as quickly as possible.

The last data product that I'll quickly mention is our Public Use Microdata Sample. And this is just a screenshot of where you would get these data off the American FactFinder.

The PUMS data are data files that contain the records of a sample of all housing units that responded to the survey. The advantage of the microdata is that the user can really run their own tabulations instead of relying on the tabulated data products that we've released.

What I'd like to just point out very briefly to you are some reference materials. I'll talk to you very quickly about how you would access the data using AFF, and then I'll talk specifically about some things that we've recently released for you.

Again, as I said earlier, all of the ACS data are accessible through the American FactFinder. And this first screen -- maybe, thank you -- this first screen is just how you would do it. What you would do is select American Community Survey, what's circled in the red and click Get Data. That would bring you to the ACS main page. Next slide. Thank you. That would bring you to the ACS main page.

One thing I would point out to you is that if you're interested in using the ACS data, AFF defaults to the most current year. You do have the ability to use earlier years of data, but it does default to that most current year.

On the right hand side of the screen is a quick pick of all of the different data products that I just talked about. So you would get to pick that product.

The next thing you would do would is just select your geography. You would continue to add -- if you were interested in the state, you would add that. And then you would ask it to show your results, and your data table would appear.

That data table is available to you both in the PDF format but also, as well, in a downloadable format that you can work with yourself.

Additional information on AFF is available. On the American FactFinder, there's a series of tutorials as well as some other online help. The documentation there is actually quite good.

In addition to that, staff in the American Community Survey Office have also put together a guide to new data products. And that guide to new data products is accessible off the ACS main page. And the link is up for you. It's also in your materials.

I recommend it. It's something, being relatively new to the office, that was very helpful to me. It provides key points to know about every release. So we'll have a new one coming out in August for the 2005 release, such is what geographic areas are new, what topics are covered, what's new in terms of the data products.

It's a really great resource, kind of at-a-glance, for how to learn to work with the ACS data.

In addition to that, earlier this month, actually end of last month, we released two new products, reference tools, that we think will be very useful to our users.

The first is our ACS Design and Methodology Paper. This is a really important reference document covering all the methods used in producing the 2005 ACS data. In addition to that, it also gives kind of the stuff Jay was talking about, the history and the evolution of the program. It is a really large document, about 423 pages, that's mostly because of the appendices at the end. It's available online right now. I'd encourage you to check it out and to look for the chapters you're most interested in.

Also, on the table set up in the hallway we do have a couple of reference copies if you'd like to take a look at that as well.

The second reference material that we released in May is our ACS Data User Training Guide. And what the training guide is is a series of PowerPoint presentations on ACS basics, including what the data products are and how to use them.

Each chapter in the training guide is followed by a series of exercises and examples that users can either use to train others or walk through themselves, to learn more about the data products. This is something that we did release at the end of May, and we'd be happy to share that information with you as well.

What I'd like to do before I stop is talk with you very briefly about a very special data product that we released this year. In early June, the Census Bureau actually released two data products in support of the efforts in response to the hurricanes, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

One was special a product released from our Small Population Division on special population estimates. The other was a special product using the 2005 American Community Survey data. And that's the product I'd like to talk about very briefly for you.

These Data Profiles were released on June 7th. So they're very new to us, and it was something we did in response to the unique, unprecedented nature and the devastation in the Gulf Coast area. And the focus of our analysis is the area in yellow. It was 117 counties that FEMA designated as receiving individual or public assistance. For Hurricane Katrina, that was as of October 7th. For Hurricane Rita, that was as of October 20th.

In addition to that area of interest, for the American Community Survey we were also able, because of the way we collect our data, to include information on the four affected states. All in all, we released over 70 different geographic areas.

Again, our goal with this project, as it is with all of the ACS, is to release date at the lowest level possible, given reliability and confidentiality constraints. And what that meant for the ACS was that we had to do something a little but unique.

The ACS was really designed to produce a single-year, a three-year or a five-year estimate; it was not designed to produce estimates for smaller periods of time.

What we did for this product was we broke the 12 months of data that were collected throughout 2005 into two time periods, one piece representing the pre-hurricane period, the January through August, and the second piece representing the four-month period of September through December.

And what we were trying to do was to get a sense of how the demographics and the population changed before the hurricanes and after the hurricanes, in the affected areas.

Because the ACS was not designed to be done this way, there were some limitations. The first limitation that I would point out is that, for the four-month period estimate, we had slightly larger variances.

The second with a limitation in just our ability. Jay had mentioned that when we produced the ACS and how it's designed, it's designed to be controlled to an independent set of population estimates. Because we were generating estimates for an eight-month period and a four-month period, we didn't have population controls to use, so the estimates that we did release were uncontrolled estimates.

We were able, however, to release data for 22 independent counties or parishes, and then groupings of the remainder of those areas that we developed working with the local people in those areas.

We released the same data that are our Data Profiles. It was an abbreviated Data Profile. So we released general demographic data, social characteristics, economic characteristics and housing characteristics throughout that time period.

I did mention that there were some limitations. One of the things we wanted to be sure about was the integrity of the data. We did a thorough review and a thorough check on the integrity, looking at things like response rates, looking at things like imputation, looking at quality measures, looking at the data in a time series fashion.

And the integrity of both the eight-month and the four-month period estimates were quite good. Some very high-level findings that we found from the special product, several themes. We found mobility -- people were moving. We found increases in people receiving benefits, food stamp participation, and we saw a changing composition, changing demographics of the population.

I think one of our takeaways from this and one of the things that we heard loudly from the local areas when we talked with them about this is that these data, for the first time, provide quantitative data to support the anecdotal stories that we've been hearing.

We saw on it TV, we read it in the newspaper: People said people were moving, people said there were people in need. There hadn't been data to support that.

With this special use of the ACS, we now have the quantitative data to show what had happened and what the population looked like for those two time periods.

Some high-level findings are provided for you to illustrate. If we look at the New Orleans Metro area, for example, one thing that's not on there is we saw an increase in median age. We saw a four-year increase in median age from the eight-month period before the hurricane, from about 38 to about 42 years of age in the four months after the hurricane.

We saw that the black or African-American alone population decreased from about 37 percent of the population in the eight-month period to representing about 22 percent of the population in the four-month period after.

And at the same time we saw the white alone or in combination population increase from about 59 percent of the household population in the eight-month period before, to representing nearly 73 percent in the post-hurricane time period -- just an example of some of the utility of the ACS and how we can do something just a few months after we finished data collection for it that's proven to show how we now have quantitative data to support those anecdotal stories.

I would just point out that we have a couple of other reference materials. If you have any questions, we are here. Nancy Torrieri is also here with our office today. We'd be happy to answer them.

But in addition, if you're not on our ACS Alert, I would encourage you to please go to that Web site that's listed and sign up for ACS Alert. It's an online newsletter that we just send out when there's news coming out so it will let you know about the releases and other things of that nature.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

WALLMAN: I believe the plan is that we will have all questions at 11:00 o'clock, is that correct?. So that we will proceed with the next set of presentations now.

But before I give up my microphone, I do want to remark on the crowd that's here today to indicate that I'm always pleased to see friends of long-standing. I see several of you over in that area, but I'm especially pleased to see many people who I'm not acquainted with, and that means we're getting a message to an additional set of people. It makes us very happy up here on the podium.

And finally, I do want to thank Ursula and Mark and all of the others who are helping us here on the Hill. I'm not supposed to lobby, but if you heard Ursula, I hope you heard her really clearly.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Thank you, everybody.

That was a very intense tutorial on the American FactFinder, but you do have your handouts so can refer to them later. And if you have any more questions I'm sure Lisa would love for you to call her, and she'll pull you through it if I can't.

I don't know if I can. It is very intense, but it's easy to use. And it has so much information that is so valuable. So thank you very much for that.

(UNKNOWN): (OFF-MIKE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Oh, OK, so they didn't have it. It will be posted online at the Brookings Web site. OK. You can refer to their Web page and get it from there.

So I'd like to employ everyone to stay for the second panel. They can make their way up here now and make themselves comfortable. I like to use the podium, but you are welcome to sit at your seats.

I'm so glad that so many are staying. I'm very surprised and very pleased. I really thought I'd have to beg, but I'm guessing that you now know how important it is and how it can help your districts.

The second panel of four gentlemen will give us an understanding of why it is important. Dan Wiley will speak first. He is the community coordinator at the Brooklyn Heights office for Representatives Nydia Velazquez, the 12th District from New York. He will discuss using the ACS to serve congressional constituents.

Our second speaker is Chris Fulcher, the director of Community Information Resource Center, the Rural Policy Research Institute. He's going to speak on the importance of the ACS for rural America.

Kirk Johnson, senior policy analyst, Center for Analysis, the Heritage Foundation, will speak on the value of the ACS for national policy.

And lastly, Bruce Fogarty, manager of Demographic and Economic Analysis at J.C. Penney, will be speaking on behalf of the National Retail Federation. And he will discuss the retail business uses of the ACS and other census data.

Thank you so much for staying. You can refill your coffees over there, as some of you are. It's been a long week, Friday morning.

All right, thank you.

WILEY: Again, I'm Dan Wiley. And I'm from Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez's office.

And what I thought I would do is exercise some of the things that we've been hearing about in map form. And I think this is my punishment for speaking up too much at the last session saying, "We need the maps, we need the maps." So they said, "Well bring the maps and show how it can work."

We all know the importance of accurate counts for our congressional districts because of re-apportionment but, more importantly, the ACS helps us to get profiles to understand our districts better.

So if we could go to the next slide, it's kind of hard to see this, but basically our congressional district, which is in New York City, comprises three counties. And it's actually the only congressional districts in New York City that has three counties, what we call boroughs. We have New York County, which is Manhattan, Kings County, which is Brooklyn and Queens County, which is Queens; and we have a distribution of population between these very different areas.

Obviously, the importance of separating the ACS from the decennial is so we can get more accurate counts which, of course, we all know means how many seats we might get in the House in our state. In New York, we lost two seats in the last count. And that's not the fault of the census, but we want to make sure that it's accurate so we have the right numbers.

So right now we have 29 seats as opposed to 31 seats, and I think we're a little shy in getting that extra seat.

If we could go to the next slide. More importantly for our district, we know we have equal number of people in each district in New York state, so how are they distributed among the different areas?

So this map shows basically population density to varying numbers per census tract. So the darker areas go up to over 7,500 people in one census tract versus the lighter areas.

The map here is showing median household income, but I can use this to show that if you look at the screens on either side, you can see we have a very high-density areas and low-density areas. The very low-density area right here, that's a cemetery, so those aren't live constituents.

(LAUGHTER)

The next slide shows how you can also bring -- now these maps were produced by a constituent group, the New York Industrial Retention Network, and this actually shows both population density but also gives you some information on white, African-American, Asian and Hispanic. You can see that we have a very diverse district. The green the areas represent two (inaudible) different boroughs (inaudible) the African American, white.

And if we can go to the next slide, we can also look at the income distribution, which is this map. And you can see that we have a very stratified district with a very high-income areas, like Brooklyn Heights, which is right near Manhattan, this is Manhattan's Wall Street; and very low-income areas like the lower East Side, but which is quickly (inaudible) and, for instance, in Red Hook. And this very low-income area, you can see, is actually a public housing development.

Now I have to admit to my friends at the census that I was one of the people to receive that ACS form in my household and I was one of those that did not respond.

(LAUGHTER)

But it's my boss's fault because she had me too busy. I had to go to evening meetings and everything like that. But I did have an enumerator come to my house. In fact -- for instance, I attend all of the tenant association meetings -- and the enumerator who came to my house to get our household data was a constituent from the Red Hook houses, which has a very high, over 20 percent unemployment rate. So I'm happy to say that I didn't respond and was able to employ one of my constituents.

(LAUGHTER)

If we could go to the next slide. You know, it was significant that she had a job out of it, so thank you.

(LAUGHTER)

Can we go to the next slide? So very quickly, how many people here are from congressional staff? Raise your hands. OK. This is very quickly for you, just to walk very quickly through how you can generate your own map.

Now these maps are generated using a GIS. And the good thing about using GIS is you have the capability of looking at many sets of data layered together so that, for instance here, instead of having each map showing you one racial group, you can see how they all cluster together by doing that.

That's the power of GIS. But I was very impressed in preparing for this in using the FactFinder and seeing how much it's improved since I had used it years ago. So this map showing median family income, we could just go quickly through how you get your own maps. You want to show your boss your district and some kind of thematic category.

So if you go to the next slide -- it's actually the FactFinder Web site -- on the left, where it's red, you go down to Data Sets and then go over to the Decennial Census.

Now our goal would be able to go down to the American Community Survey and then have very up-to-date data for small geographic areas. We're not there yet. So now we're just going to the decennial census. But I'm looking forward August and I'm looking forward to the next year. I'm particularly looking forward to every year after 2010 -- that is if we keep the funding up and we can get this refreshed.

But if we go to the next slide, you select Decennial Census, and then you go down and you can pick your congressional district. So you go down to the 109th Congressional District, which is you go down and there's a bullet and you click that. And then you select -- you have the 109th. You go to your state, in my case New York. And then for the geographic area, well take the 12th Congressional District, and then you hit next. And then you can pick from a lot of different themes based on long-form data.

So in this case, I picked median family income and there you have, voila, a map of your district showing the distribution of income groups.

You can change the data classes -- that's how many categories of colors from light to dark. For instance, this was preset to default to five classes, but you could make seven classes.

And actually Aaron, who generated some of this stuff for me and was showing me how to do it, found that seven classes displayed more interestingly.

So you can change the colors. This, unfortunately, is very small but you can zoom in. So go to the next slide. You can zoom down the street level. Here we just moved into a 7-mile wide slot. It doesn't get the whole district, but it gives you an idea of how big the district is: It's 7 miles from east to west -- and, actually, that's not the whole width. And so forth.

So you can generate your own maps. You don't need a GIS expert in order to do this stuff. And what we're left here is the median family income.

I just wanted to reference a New York Times article from yesterday which: "Brookings released a study showing dwindling middle class in the city. New York has the smallest share of middle-income families than any other metropolitan area in the nation. And like residents of most American cities and suburbs, they live in a dwindling number of middle income neighborhoods according to new analysis of census figures released yesterday. Middle-income neighborhoods are vanishing faster than middle-income families," said the nationwide analysis done by the Brookings Institute in Washington.

Now since my boss is on the Housing Subcommittee, next slide, we have a representation -- and you have this in your handout as well -- the percentage of population, renter occupied housing units where the monthly rent gross rent is 35 percent or more of household income. So to my mind, this is kind of borne out. In New York, we have 50 percent of the population pays more than a third of their income on rent.

If we go back and look at that for previous decades, they went back to 1970, you could see it borne out that the housing crunch that we're in.

But, there's a catch. The analysis suggests that further changes may have taken place since 2000 but does not quantify them. Why?

Well, because we're not far enough along in the American Community Survey. But when we get far enough along, and I'm looking forward to when we have the 65,000 population and we get to the next year, we will be able to refresh that so we can see what's going on, because real estate moves very quickly.

So I recommend looking at the article from the New York Times. It actually does mention the Greenpoint-Williamsburg section of our district, which is this community board bright here.

Next slide.

Now, the ACS can help us look at problems and solve problems. In this case, I thought I'd turn to economic development issues and employment. Here, you can see a map showing unemployment in our district.

If we go to the next slide, you can see education attainment. If we go to the next slide, you can see bike or walk to work.

I would just point out, and I don't have the map here, but I'm just going to point out to the area. I'm going to focus in on this area called Sunset Park in Brooklyn, which has an industrial waterfront -- much of New York City's waterfront is industrial. Here, you can see a lot of people paying a lot for rent, but on the map on the screen you can see that a lot of people walk to work.

Next slide.

So this is a citywide view showing residents employed in the industrial sector. So if you look at that same spot, you can see a high concentration of residents who are employed in the industrial sector who walk to work in Sunset Park.

Next slide.

But the problem in New York City is real estate. Real estate has been pushing out businesses and manufacturing jobs. And this is just one example of this section of our district where you can see the Brooklyn Bridge, the Dumbo which is an industrial area is now a place where you can spend $2.4 million on a two-bedroom apartment overlooking the bridges in what used to be industrial waterfront.

Next slide.

So this is a community board. And the population of this community board has increased over the last three decades to 120,000, which is about the size. And I show this also because you can see the industrial areas on the waterfront -- next slide -- which is purple.

Now this is an example of using the data and an organization, the New York Industrial Retention Network, doing a survey to compare where blue-collar workers live with where the jobs are and where there's job density.

So you can see the job density is close to the waterfront.

Next slide.

This is an example of a city policy to try to retain the industrial job base by creating a zone where you could tap the industrial areas. And this map was debated using the census data and other anecdotal testimony and a lot of GIS.

So this is an example of a policy that was greatly informed by having good data. And, obviously, we can do better to see how well this policy works if we can refresh that data every year and see what shifts are happening.

But like I say, real estate moves very fast.

Next slide.

This is just zooming in on the Sunset Park waterfront -- next slide -- and a very particular example of a project that I've been working on for my boss, which is a federal building. In this case, it used to be the FDA building. It's a million square feet. It's been empty for five years.

We helped to keep the Federal Bureau of Prisons from moving into it, because its sister building was taken over by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. So we have 2,000 constituents who aren't voters because they are prisoners.

(LAUGHTER)

But this building, we would like to fill up with light manufacturing jobs. And we work with the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation to see about, in the excess property, the GSA process of getting rid of the federal to get it to the city instead of just selling it to the highest bidder for public use.

In this case, with the GIS map and showing where workers are employed and where they walk to work and the need, in this area, to get this for light manufacturing and other kinds of new industries to employ people. But right now we're in the process of the city taking that from the federal government, and we also got some appropriations.

So these maps and this data helps us to show the problem and to come up with solutions. Next slide? And this is an example of what we're looking forward to in converting this building to kind of like a vital center for employment.

So that's basically my talk and kind of an example of how you can use the data for a specific project or figuring out where resources need to go to do appropriations that way and, in general, how we can see how well policies or programs might be working.

If we can refresh that data every year, then we can really see what effect something might be having or not having on the community.

So that's it. Sorry for going over my time.

(APPLAUSE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Next we'll be hearing from Mr. Fulcher.

FULCHER: Thank you.

My name is Chris Fulcher. I serve as the director for the Community Information Resource Center, which is a Rural Policy Research Institute center at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

I'd like to thank the Brookings Institution for inviting me here today to speak with you all.

Next slide, please.

What I'd like to talk about today is the importance of ACS in community decision support. And we have heard from in several speakers in terms of what is ACS, the importance of ACS and the mapping applications on it.

What I would like to do is put it more in a broader framework for decision-making. And as you see, the role of the American Community Survey in emergency preparedness, public health, early childhood development, economic development, workforce retention, et cetera are areas where ACS serves as a foundation, basically an underpinning, that combines many of the other data sets that we use in the decision-making process.

The title of my talk is, "The Chain is only as Strong as its Weakest Link" will become clearer at the end of this presentation.

The next section where I go to information systems for decision support, I will focus then on an integrative framework where ACS plays a role, along with many other federal and state and local databases.

I'll show you that information system which we have at our center and wrapping it up with a conclusion.

This is just to give you an overview of rural America. We spend so much time getting from here to there and really it's the in-between that holds us all together in so many ways. There are about 65 percent of the counties in the United States are basically non-metropolitan. And really it's the issue of access to services.

It's the provision of services and looking at that urban/rural differential with respect to accessibility, whether it's with health care, child well-being, environmental quality, et cetera, and we focus on the rural dimension, in many ways, of how we take this data and make it available for decision support.

I believe Lisa mentioned earlier about in urban areas it's an annual snapshot, which is fantastic. As you get into the more rural areas, there's that small numbers challenge where you have three- to five-year rolling averages. That's still a heck of a lot better than a 10-year snapshot. And we're very, very excited about ACS rolling out in terms of providing more timely information for local decision-making.

Next slide, please.

I thought it was kind of nice that I saw several papers -- Lisa presented this in her presentation, it's also a report with the Brookings Institution, and we got a hold of this data. Why? Because it's very timely. It's very, very timely information.

Without the ACS infrastructure in place, we wouldn't be able to provide or there wouldn't be this information to help us look at a pre- and post-Katrina/Rita impact.

The story I'm trying to depict there, and it's very busy, is that you see the losses in the urban areas -- New Orleans, the Gulf Coast area of Mississippi -- but it really looks at the gains and losses in those counties, as well, surrounding the areas heavily impacted.

All the areas in blue and red are those FEMA-designated disaster areas, but what it really shows is that there's a net population gain. I can't read it on this small paper and I can't read it up there very well, but there's a net population gain in rural areas.

What does this mean?

Well, we see on the media New Orleans and the urban areas and the great impact, but what's lost in the stories are: What happens to the rural regions?

When you have an increased population in those rural regions where there's already stresses on their infrastructure because they don't have the resources and the capability, even dealing with existing populations, you can imagine with increases in population what the impacts may be.

So providing that timely, up-to-date information helps us allocate resources more effectively.

This is just one example. It's not if another natural disaster happens, it's when and where and providing an infrastructural framework to deal, in a timely way, with these impacts and helping us allocate resources more effectively will save us a considerable amount of money.

The next slide, please? This is more of a table that really shows the gains and losses with respect to populations. I don't want to spend too much time on this, but it just provides the numbers. The full table is in the packet.

And so I will go to the next slide.

I will now focus on information systems for the decision support. And this is basically an Internet-based Geographic Information System that's available through our center. There are many centers, government agencies, nonprofit groups that provide GIS and data and maps, and it's extremely important to help visualize what's going on.

I think with ACS, as it rolls out, we need to be very cognizant of understanding what a map looks like in an ACS framework. It's not just going to be a snapshot, but it's going to be a different type of visualization, and it's important that we think thoroughly on how we communicate this in a mapping framework.

With that in mind, I'm going to go to the next slide. I was just in South Carolina the other day and basically, this one fellow -- and this isn't in your packet, I apologize; I just got this information, so I'll make this available to you if you'd like it.

What it deals with is we're dealing with changes in databases. Information is always coming in. It's flooding us in so many ways. Fifteen years ago we dealt with kilobytes and then megabytes, gigabytes and now terabytes, but you know I have a phrase, "Data, data everywhere but not a byte to think."

(LAUGHTER)

In other words, we're not integrating this data in a decision-making framework. And the reality is we can not only afford not to have old data, we need to make sure our data is tied together in a timely fashion so we can make more informed decisions.

You can't read any of this up there. Basically, what it shows is, at the state level, the myriad of different state-level databases that are updated on an ongoing basis.

And the next slide will show, at the federal level, the data sets that we update on an ongoing basis, whether it's the Center for Medicare and Medical Services, Bureau of Health Professions Area Resource File, HRSA data, USDA data, the census estimates, of course, that we have pre-ACS. All these data are updated on an ongoing basis.

When I speak to the issue of the chain is only as strong as the weakest link, we can't afford to have these census data be that weakest link by having only 10-year snapshots. We need to have it updated on an ongoing basis so it makes sense in conjunction with all these other data sets.

We have maps that show census data alone but, frankly, decision-makers don't care about agency-based data in a vacuum; they would like to have a cross, basically, between a number of different agencies at the federal, state and local level to help paint a more clear picture about community sustainability, what is going on and what are the impacts, what are the indicators.

And that's why we move to the next slide here with respect to using a GIS to help, basically, cut across the federal, state and local data sets.

Time and again I always present this slide at the beginning because 10 years ago few people knew what a GIS was, and it's almost a foregone conclusion now, but the key thing about this is that the overlapping of the many different data layers, whether they're point data, locations of hospitals, retail businesses, health care clinics, the lines of your street networks or rivers, transportation networks, jurisdictional boundaries, whether they're congressional districts, state, House or Senate districts, et cetera, these are all layers that we can overlap and basically provide a more meaningful or value-added context for decision-making.

So the key thing is that most folks in rural areas don't have the resources, both the financial and the technology resources, to put these information systems together to begin to address the issues that they face.

So our center's focused on providing a national framework for helping, basically, whether it's a rural, urban or suburban America access these different state and national data sets by using an Internet browser.

If we go to the next slide?

What we've developed is a three-step process. The first step -- since we can't see any of this very clearly -- the first step is identifying your area of interest. Whether you want to zoom into a specific city, a county, a state, congressional district, this is the area view.

So once you decide what area you want to click in on -- go to the next slide -- this is basically the engine that basically houses many of these different federal, state and local databases in a GIS framework.

If you click on one of those tabs to the right side, Administrative Data, you're going to get many different GIS layers. There are 2,780 GIS layers that are available that you can overlap. Of that census is 2,000 different permutations of GIS layers that you can overlap with health data, USDA data, economic data, et cetera.

So on the right side of the screen are your broad categories, whether it's health, human services, census, et cetera. And on the left side of the screen are the specific GIS layers that you can use to create your map. And with this national infrastructure, we can go down to the block level for population, population density at the national level.

If you would go to the next slide? This basically depicts the census category in itself. You see age, race, income, labor force, et cetera, on the right side of that tree. In each category -- you go to the left side -- and for each age category, you can select different levels of geography to look at.

Dealing with mapping and data is something that's fraught with peril. In many ways, you have to understand what the appropriate level of geography it is to be able to look at and do analysis with or show maps of. And we tried to build that into our information system and make that available.

If we could go to the next slide?

So finally, the third step is: Make your map. The first step is identify your area. Is it nationwide or is it local? The second step is to select from a myriad of different GIS layers to select from. And the third step is to make your map.

And if you click on Make Map, the next slide, you will get, in this case, a national map of I think it's high school attainment and locations of rural health clinics.

What does that mean? What is the importance of taking these different disparate data sets and overlapping them?

Well from a rural workforce retention standpoint, what population base may be available to work in those rural areas in hospitals or rural health clinics, et cetera?

So from a public policy standpoint, we really don't know what the issues will be next month, next year, et cetera. But by having a framework in place, like ACS, and having that infrastructure in place to be able to respond in a rapid way, likewise we need to respond in a rapid way in a public policy realm of these different issues as they crop up.

If we go to the next slide -- and by the way, on that national map, you can zoom in, again, to very much a local level. It's always fun with technology because you can basically leverage many of the different Internet Web sites and be able to pull across different data sets and make this as seamless as possible for the end-user.

The final slide please?

I leave you with this thought. This fellow, Victor Hugo, said this over 150 years ago: "Teach the ignorant as much as you can. Society is culpable for not providing instruction to all and must answer for the night it produces. If a soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness."

In other words from a local, community decision-support framework, we need to make sure we have the appropriate information in place to make more informed decisions.

So we do not want to contribute to the darkness. We need ACS and current data available so we can stay, so to speak, in the light.

So thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

And there's more information on our Web site there.

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Thank you very much.

The presentations have been wonderful and the audience has stayed for all of it and enjoying it. I wish I had this kind of audience for my hearings.

Next we'll be hearing for Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON: Thank you very much for having me.

And thank you very to the Brookings Institute for putting this on.

At the Heritage Foundation, we are interested in the impact of public policy on the nation as a whole, but I can't tell you how many times we have gotten a call from a member's office saying,

"OK, this new policy" -- let's say it's a tax policy or let's say it's an education policy or one of a number of other things -- "what does this mean for my constituents? What does this mean in terms of how it will affect not just the nation writ large, but the people who I represent?"

So while a number of people here today have talked about the American Community Survey and its usefulness pulling data from Web sites and so forth, which is all extremely important, from my standpoint doing national policy, I'm very much interested in using some of the large databases that can be generated and used by policy analysts like myself and other statisticians around town at the think tanks and so forth, to do this for rigorous policy analysis.

And in order to do this, I want to give you an example of how we've used previous Public Use Microdata Samples for public policy analysis.

A few years ago, the debate on what to do about Social Security started to focus on the relative value of Social Security taxes and benefits in terms of what retirees will get after they've put into the system for years on end.

And we wanted to evaluate what is the rate of return that you'll be able to get under Social Security and if we compare that to, say, if you were able to put some of that money away in your own personal retirement account.

Setting aside the second issue for the moment, and just focusing on the first one, what Social Security will pay, we used the Public Use Microdata Sample from the 1990 Census. And in 2000, we put together a document, a book, on what Social Security will pay on a congressional district by congressional district basis. And we found out some very interesting things from this.

What you can do with a microdata sample -- and the ACS, when fully ramped up, will have a full microdata sample where you can do very similar work -- is to estimate and model things like earnings profiles, things like if we pull in some other additional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention we can model things like life expectancy. We can look at occupational profiles. We can look at and we can estimate earnings trajectories over time.

We're able to look at all 435 congressional districts, virtually all at the same time, once our modeling techniques were done -- actually, we did 436 because we included D.C., which has a representative but not a full member of Congress -- and we found out some very interesting things that, depending on the demographic profile of your individual congressional district, you can and very different experiences with the Social Security system.

For example, if you -- and I'll just use one example because I know we're exceptionally short on time -- but if you happened to live in the early part of this decade in the 15th Congressional District of Michigan, which is in Detroit, you'll pay about $318,000 into the Social Security system, but you'll only get about $317,000 or so in terms of benefits. That is, you'll actually lose money under the system.

And this provided a great deal of information for individual members of Congress and also the nation writ large just in terms of national policy, using a very large database that allowed you to do certain very highly targeted types of analyses.

Some people have asked me, shifting just a little away from the PUMA database or the PUMS database, some people have asked me: Well, couldn't you really do this with other databases that have been out there? Couldn't you do this sort of work with, say, the current population survey?

Well the answer is, in fact: No. You could not do this type of highly detailed analysis with a 60,000-household survey, which is only designed really to produce national and state estimates of various social, demographic and economic characteristics.

In order to get these highly concentrated, highly specialized analyses, you really do have to have the 250,000 households every month that would be collected by the American Community Survey.

And in the absence of that, you're not going to be able to get that information about local areas.

One last thing I do want to mention -- these are on the screens, but also there in your packets as well -- is that, as opposed to the current population survey, and I'll beat this drum again, a number of people have brought this up, that in terms of our national decision-making, we do need to know some things about what's going on in the local areas.

For example, none of us would have known the extent to which poverty was an issue in New Orleans prior to Katrina if it were not for the American Community Survey. Would we have known that there was a poverty rate of 23.2 percent? No, we would not have. We would have had to resort to rhetoric and conjecture in terms of the overall debate.

We would not have known that Mobile County, Alabama, had a poverty rate a little bit lower, but still over 20 percent.

So there is a great need for very good, very detailed data that you can only get from large surveys such as the American Community Survey, which is why it -- again, and I'll reiterate what's already been said -- that it enjoys a great deal of support across the political spectrum and in a bipartisan fashion.

And thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Thank you.

And last but not least, Mr. Fogarty?

FOGARTY: Thank you.

I just want to say before we get started that I'm a baseball fan. And if you know baseball, you know what cleanup hitter is. The cleanup hitter bats fourth in the order and he's supposed to drive in the runs for the people who got on base first.

Well, I've had three good presenters in front of me and I'm going to drive home some point I think that they've made. So I'm also going to try to cut this down a little bit because Jay and Lisa have been given some good points about the ACS, and I don't want a repeat that.

I also want to say, particularly for those of you that are here from a congressional staff, that if there's any doubt -- I mean any doubt -- about full funding for the census, I'm here to tell you that you'll hear from us if you don't think that's true.

We have, in the past, written letters -- "we" not meaning just the National Retail Federation, but the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the International Council of Shopping Centers, and I'm sure other businesses have written Congress in support of funding.

This issue has come up in the last two years that I'm aware, and I've been one of the active people doing it. That's probably why I'm here. But the point of this is the business does care about this. And I'm going to be talking mostly about ACS, but it's not just that is what we care about.

So I want there to be no mistake about the reason I'm here. It's to make sure that Congress doesn't make a mistake and cut the funding for the things that we need and we use, just like my colleagues here from education, from public policy also use.

This is one of those win-win situations. Businesses use it, government uses it, educators use it, the public uses it. Not many things you can say everybody is on the same side.

That's just kind of a preamble.

The other point I want to make that is the National Retail Federation is not a small organization. We represent 23 million employees and $4.4 trillion of the economy. Consumer spending accounts for about 70 percent of the GDP, so we're not a small group. And what goes on and the decisions we make do impact a lot of people.

That's just kind of a preamble. So let me get into the key points here.

And I'm using what will hopefully be big animal pictures here -- a few words and hopefully key points.

Next slide, please.

We use all kinds of data from the Census Bureau. Obviously, the demographic data we've been talking mostly about ACS but obviously the Decennial Census, the Current Population Survey, things that other people have mentioned as well. We also use the Economic Census.

I was meeting yesterday with the Census of Retail Trade. That's a major input in some of the decisions we make and we use. We use the Geographic or the TIGER File which helps reference location of people. We get latitude and longitude of our customers and we know where they are in relation to our stores.

So it's not just ACS, although that's the focus today. But I want to make a point that cutting off funding in one place and then taking it back from somewhere else isn't going to work.

You are still going to hear from us, OK?

Indirectly from other federal agencies, of course, the bureau does surveying on behalf of other federal agencies like the Bureau of Labor Statistics. I can give you an example here of the Consumer Expenditure Survey, which is a major survey data that we use, because it describes the demographics of people by what they spend over a year and by different demographic cuts -- and we use that data as well.

How much did they spend on men's suits? In the case of J.C. Penney, we need to know that. So we can track that over time and see what the trends have been.

For example, we know women's hosiery, for those of you that are ladies -- you're probably saying women hosiery? Well that sucking right now, frankly. It's dropping off in demand. And you can see that in the Consumer Expenditure Survey.

So we can say that it's not just our business that's cratering, it's the general trend in the expenditures.

So hopefully those of you ladies that are wearing hose, I apologize, and please keep buying them. We still sell it.

(LAUGHTER)

If you don't know what hues are by the way, I recommend that you go shopping at J.C. Penney for some hues.

(LAUGHTER)

They're really neat little things that cover the tips of your toes if you're wearing sandals. And, men, you don't care about this, but for the ladies, it goes into the tip of your toes and it keeps your toes nice and dry.

(LAUGHTER)

They sell them at competition, too, but we sell it.

Anyway, and also indirectly from other people that we buy data from. I gave you the example here of Claratoss (ph), but there are many other companies that do this. So it's not only the data that the census provides, but they provide a benchmark that the companies that we buy the data from use. So it's important for that purpose as well.

I also want to make a note at the bottom of this slide here and just to comment, because it picks up on a point that I think Chris made very effectively, and that's the ability to integrate data. We integrate customer data with census data. We integrate competition location with census data and so forth. So it's not only the data itself, but it's very important about the access. And you'll hear this theme coming up again.

What census has done, in my opinion since 2000, is revolutionized the ability of all users, including business, to use this more effectively. We get it more accurately. We get it faster. And we can access it and produce the kind of things that we can do very easily now.

And that has increased the use of it by all users, business just being one example.

Next slide, please.

Well why is ACS so critical specifically to certain retailers? Well, if you know retail at all, you know that there are three reasons of what determines retail success. The three reasons are: location, location and location. And that's an old adage. If you've ever taken a marketing class, you'll know that that's an old story and you'll be tested on that. What are the three factors? If you don't list those three, you'll flunk the class.

And that's important. And, obviously, census data provides -- and ACS in particular provides -- data and, over time, it will get into finer and finer geographies as Lisa was describing. So it's important to get that geographic variation at a local level.

But to pick up on the point that Kirk and Chris were both making -- and Dan, too -- it's also the new adage is all about the customer and understanding that customer, the depth of the customer. And that's where things like the PUMS data set particularly and the PUMA areas and so forth really help us look across customers.

Here you can take a particular household and you can look at the makeup of that household. Not Ursula's household or Dan's household specifically, they're obviously de-identified, but you can get an idea of that kind of thing. And I'll come back to some examples of that in a minute.

I'm not going to cover the next point because I think it's already been made adequately by the previous speakers.

Next slide, please.

So accordingly, the ACS helps us to profile the demographics of trade areas -- surprise, surprise, retailers have trade areas. So if we want to know what's the makeup of the customers, it's the trade areas.

We infer characteristics of customers based on this sense of geography. A lot of tests find -- and typically for a lot of our customers we know their ZIP code, but we don't know anything else about them. In those cases, census data, at least for the ZTAs or the ZIP code tabulation areas that the census provides in 2000 -- will be providing hopefully, Lisa, out in 2010 in the small array data -- we'll be able to understand some things about ZIP codes.

And to pick up, Chris would probably jump in here and say, "Yes, but if you know the ZIP code, you can get some idea the census geography." And yes, you can. So at least if it's a block or block group, we can get that as well.

Prior to the ACS, of course, it was available only in 10 years. And this issue of being able to get data every year is so, so critical.

I just give you a few examples here of the kind of things that I've been asked about lately. And if I started to keep track of what I did from the first of the year, the list would be several pages long. So I've just given you three examples.

How many households in the U.S. have girls and/or boys 13 to 15? Now where do you get that kind of data? How you see that trend as it's evolving year after year after year?

Well that's the PUMS data set. And you can get down to PUMA areas or the areas underneath that, as I think Lisa was showing you the case of West Virginia, that example.

What's the annual income of households with full-time working mothers married with children 6 to 17? Why would a retailer care about that?

Well, if you're concerned about the sort of household composition and how much time people have to shop -- one of our competitors, I think, has done a very good job of going after that kind of a market. Retailers have market segments we focus on. So you want to know: What is the trend in these market segments? Where do you find that trend? Guess where you find it?

And guess what we can do now? It used to be we would have had to go out and survey ourself or something. Now we can tap into ACS and get a pretty good idea of how that group is evolving over time.

I think it was Kirk -- I forget who it was, Dan, I think -- about the disappearing middle-market size, middle-income group. That's a target for J.C. Penney, for example. And I've written recently to our Board of Directors about that problem, about how, between age and income, that group is shrinking in absolute numbers. And that's a key point that we track for our board.

Next slide, please.

So some of the typical decisions. Obviously, the main one is store location. This is the location, location, location effect. What's the market potential in an area? Market potential by merchandise line, hence the importance of the Census of Retail Trade in the Annual Survey of Retailers that the Census Bureau collects and we use.

Product or service performance and outlook. What are the market size and trends in an area or across the country or in PUMAs? Customizing offerings, for example media messaging, based on local market situation. For example, radio ads in Spanish: Where should you be doing that?

Census collects information on how well do people speak English and what language do they speak at home. That's useful to know that. In fact, we've just done a survey of Hispanic customers where we asked exactly the same questions because those questions are -- another point here -- well vetted by the Census Bureau statisticians.

So if you want to know how to ask these sort of sensitive questions, they do a really good job of testing that out. They have got advisory groups that work with them on these things. And believe me, we don't want to re-invent that. So we use them as a standard for how we ask similar questions.

Designing samples of winning responses. In doing primary research, if we're designing a sample, we want to know how to construct that sample to make sure it's geographically balanced.

Us, and the people we buy data from, we'll check how they did it. And sometimes, if we're not happy, we'll say we need to re-weight this because you're not matching what we're getting from ACS.

Enough on that slide. Next slide, please. I think this is the last slide.

What are the benefits of all this? Well, I think this is a point that Jay made right at the very start. This is all about ultimately being better able to serve, in our case customers and maybe your case it's your constituency, and Chris' case his communities, in Kirk's case his policy people.

What we mean by better data is: Better data always leads to better decisions.

One of my favorite quotes is from Disraeli and the quote is, "In general the most successful man is the man with the best information." And that's true. That's a game in military, that's a game in retail, that's a game in public policy and so forth.

So better data leads to better decisions. It leads to, in our case, more efficient allocation of resources and, therefore, better able to serve our customers.

I can't say any more clearly do that, except to just add to the point that by better data, I mean it's more accurate, it's more timely -- ACS -- it's more detailed, we get down the block groups, ultimately. Right now we're coming down the 65,000 this year as Lisa pointed out. And it's accessible and that's the big change that census had.

One of my attorneys in Dallas gave me this trivia question, "What's the most widely held publication in the world?" The answer is the U.S. Census. It's the most widely held publication of libraries across the world until 2000. In 1990 you can go in and you can find books, and books and books, but in 2000, you don't find the books and books and books.

They say they cut their budget by saving all that publication dollars, but it made it more accessible to us and now we can download it and get it ourselves and use it, just like all these guys are using it right here.

So that was a win-win all the way around. Cut the budget, save dollars and make it more accessible.

The next point: As it evolves over time to the smaller levels of geography, it enables us to make better decisions about locations and to customize our offerings to localities. I give the example of a well-known -- one of the Best Buy issues, with its very customized store types based on the types of constituency it has in its store area. It's gotten a lot of publicity lately about doing that sort of thing, very successful.

We've actually had them in to talk to us about how they did what they did and so forth, and they used ACS-type data to do that. In the J.C. Penney case, allocation of merchandise varies by

demographics and other factors. I've been working on a big issue for us is: How do you decide what merchandise goes to what store and in what sizes?

Demographics plays quite a role in doing all of that. And in our case, it's tens of million-dollar impact, in terms of how that affects us.

I think the bottom line is it just picks up data quicker, gives us these demographic trends faster, more accurately and it provides the basis for survey sample designs -- because we still go out and do a lot of surveying on our own or buy surveys from people. And it helps us provide a benchmark for that. And I don't think I can say it any clearer than that.

Thank you for the opportunity.

(APPLAUSE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: I'd like to thank our four panelists. Thank you for exemplifying why the ACS and the Decennial Census are so important. I was just informed that the appropriations bill will be going to the floor on Tuesday, not Wednesday, so the heat is on.

We'll start with questions now.

(UNKNOWN): (OFF-MIKE)

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Yes, if you could remain in your seats and Jay and Lisa will come up.

If anyone has a question if you could come to the microphone, say your name and state your question, we'll try to answer it for you.

REAMER: OK. Well that was a wonderful set of presentations, I think. And again let's give a round of applause to all our panel presenters.

(APPLAUSE)

And let's open it up for questions.

QUESTION: Thank you for wonderful presentation. And a few of the presenters mentioned using other federal agency data as well as, and I wondered what the interaction was between sort of the Federal Reserve Consumer Finances Survey with the census and some of the other sources?

REAMER: Can you just elaborate a little bit in terms of what you want. Are you wanting to what extent do the agencies interact or what...

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

WAITE: The person who didn't want to come up is the key to that.

(LAUGHTER)

The Office of Management and Budget has as their primary role to make sure that the questions that we ask are not strictly duplicative and that we're getting coordination between the various agencies. I don't want to misspeak for you, Kathy, but when we want to do a survey, we have to go to her, hat-in-hand and say, "Could you please let us ask these questions?" Sometimes she says yes and sometimes not.

FOGARTY: I happen to have just talked to Fiona Sigalla, who is an economist with the Federal Reserve in Dallas about that exact question, at least in their case, because I was interested in how they did their sample design.

It's conducted by the National Opinion and Research Center out of the University of Chicago. And the key is they do use the census ACS data as the benchmark basis for doing their sampling design. It just echoes the point that I made earlier about even private-sector things, when they're doing their -- and we buy lots of private-sector data -- when they're doing that, they're using the ACS as the basis for their weighting demographically.

So I know that the Fed does -- the Federal Reserve, at least that one -- does do that.

REAMER: Kathy, do you want to add something?

WALLMAN: I just think that Jay's always wanted to be me. So.

(LAUGHTER)

I think he's hit the right point that our office does a huge amount of coordination among the agencies and the agencies, themselves, do a huge amount of coordination with counterpart agencies. And this example about the controls throughout is one of the hardest things to explain to people when you're trying to get funding for the American Community Survey. This is really getting down to the hosiery and beyond.

(LAUGHTER)

When you try to explain this fundamental role that something like the ACS or census plays.

REAMER: Thanks.

Next question? OK, we have several people. OK, good. Four people and get up at once.

QUESTION: I have a question/comment. And I just want to reiterate what everyone has said here about the ACS and the census data. It is a very high-quality product with a lot of utilities and it can be integrated into our national data program and extensively in the department.

I'm glad that ACS is having success now and I'm pleased to see that, but it always seems to be a struggle to get the seemingly accepted knowledge that we need this program at the federal level accepted when authorizations and appropriations (inaudible). So I just wanted to make that comment.

(OFF-MIKE) I don't know if I'm asking a question or not, but the Department of Transportation is having a lot of difficulties in that area right now.

REAMER: OK. Thank you.

Ursula or Mark, do you want comment on the statement about -- no?

STEPHENSON: I would just say that I think that the Authorizing Committee and the Appropriations Committee or the subcommittee at least, are quite well aware of the importance of both the ACS and the Decennial Census.

The problem comes when other members with competing priorities offer amendments to a budget, frankly, that grows rather rapidly at the end of the decade and presents an inviting target for raiding. That's just an unfortunate fact of life. And I think it's up to us to do what we're doing here, which is to make the case about the importance of the census.

REAMER: And what's happened over the last several years is that when the census budget moves through the House, there's been an effort to take some money from it to put it into the Department of Justice. And a few years ago that effort failed; last year it succeeded. There was an attempt last week to do the same thing.

And so I wrote a Web ad for Brookings that has been passed around to you as to why census data are important to crime-fighting. Police departments use census data to understand where criminal hotspots are.

And so I think part of raising awareness about the value of census data is being able to demonstrate the uses that census data are put to in various realms that are important to members of Congress -- criminal justice, housing, education, transportation and so forth.

WOJCIECHOWSKI: I would just like to add one thing. There is light at the end of the tunnel. ACS has been slashed at the Appropriations Committee-level the past few years, but this year it was fully funded. So that does -- it's a ray of sunshine for me. But as Mark was saying, it's when it goes to the floor that other amendments come up and it becomes compromised.

But hopefully, that won't happen this year. Keep our fingers crossed. We hear rumors about amendments, but we'll see.

So we just appreciate your support and all of your efforts to lobby your members and other members for your reasons and for the general reasons that the ACS is valuable to everybody.

Thank you.

REAMER: Next question?

Go ahead.

QUESTION: I think this question is probably the most appropriate for Jay. We are incredibly excited about the possibility of getting updated information annually, especially as we're planning policy and providing research for a very specific disability group.

And I've noticed that question number 15 in the personal section, the personal info section, of the current ACS has a specific question about sensory impairment, and it lumps hearing impairments and visual impairments together in one question. And we've heard rumblings at ACS that that's going to be teased out possibly and that visual impairments and hearing impairments will be separated.

So I'm curious, first of all, if that's true, and second of all what the timetable is for that?

WAITE: An easy one, finally. Rumblings are not always true, but in this case they are.

(LAUGHTER)

We have a policy or a program within the American Community Survey, this is a five-year collection of data. We don't change questions lightly because we don't want to break the time series. But this year we've done some cognitive testing on new questions about disability, which does break those out. We've worked with an interagency committee at OMB where we identify particular questions that need more work, and that was one of them. It's being tested next January -- starting in January?

(UNKNOWN): The test (OFF-MIKE).

WAITE: Oh, we've already tested it. See, my staff's ahead of me.

We've tested that. It's intended to be put into the 2008 American Community Survey. In 2008, we are going to open the window just a crack and new questions or changes to questions are going to be put in. Then we would like it to be pretty stable for a while so that we can get the very smallest places getting that kind of information.

But we are going to have that teased out. I think we're very pleased with what we've found.

Disability is one example that I allude to very quickly before -- regardless of how the question is worded, if we send out enumerators in the old long-form model with two days of training, there are many nuances about disability that they don't understand.

We believe that the ACS offers an opportunity for us to be able to train enumerators over a longer period of time so that, to the extent that there's an interviewer-household interaction, there's a more intelligent conversation about what it is that agencies are trying to get.

But in this case the rumor is happily correct.

REAMER: OK. Thank you.

QUESTION: I'm from Congressman Charlie Dent's office. We're in the 15th District of Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia. We're having a lot of major development, like so many other

people across the country. I was looking to see if there was any way to project a year, five years, 10 years down the road what our population might look like, who might be there and where those people are coming from? Is that possible (inaudible)?

BLUMERMAN: The Census Bureau and the demographic director at the Population Division has a Population Estimates Program, which does produce annual population estimates and then, periodically, they do also produce and release population projections. So there's a number of different demographic techniques that can be used to project the population forward.

QUESTION: OK. Is that something that I can do, then, online? Can I do this projection...

BLUMERMAN: The projections that we release are already tabulated and they would be available online.

QUESTION: OK.

BLUMERMAN: There's different ways of doing projections.

QUESTION: OK. Is there any way to know where those folks are coming from at all? Like could we know that they're moving in from New York to get into a suburban area or...

BLUMERMAN: Actually, the estimates that we release every year do include a sense of migration.

QUESTION: OK.

BLUMERMAN: So there is some information on that that would show mobility. Also, the American Community Survey every year, one of the questions that we have is, "Where were you 12 months ago?" So we do also provide you annually updated information on migration.

And starting with the 2005 release this August, we'll be releasing data for all congressional districts.

So you'll get a sense of how people are moving over time, starting with the August release.

QUESTION: Fabulous.

WAITE: That's an example of putting two things together, really. I mean, from the American Community Survey they can tell you of the people that they surveyed that are living in a different state than Pennsylvania one year ago or a different county than where you are one year ago, X percent of them came from New York, and Y percent came from New Jersey and Z percent came from other counties in Pennsylvania.

You can get that kind of information from the American Community Survey. Combine that with the estimates of growth and you can begin to say, OK, if we're going to have 100,000 people moving into this district, that's an estimate, but what are they going to be made up of? You've got what they were made up of the last years, as we begin to gather the American Community Survey data.

So the projections will just say 100,000, but we'll be able to break it down a little bit by location.

QUESTION: Great. Thank you so much.

FULCHER: I would add to that -- and I think we both have comments to that -- not only would we look at population projections but, again, it's that integration of data.

We look at, as we have an increasing elderly population: Where are the resources that would help in terms of hospitals or clinics or what other social services may be needed? I would look again at high school retention rates, look at graduation rates. Where can we retain or where is a workforce percolating down the road 10 years?

So it's the population as well as, "Where's our economy going," in terms of what types of skill sets are we going to need. So, you know, it's very excited about having that updated information, projections and, again, dovetailing that with the other types of data, depending on why you want to look at populations.

FOGARTY: I just want to add this is another case, though, where there are also private-sector sources that do population projections as well. We buy a source, for example, that does projections five years out.

Now, it's a benchmark based on census numbers at a broader level, but for small-array data. And you just have to take it with a grain of salt. You have to understand how accurately it can do that.

But we do buy it because it does influence. We're planning retail sales. We're not just looking at just what happens this year, but were thinking, "This store has got to succeed over a long time." So we want to know how that's changing over time. And so we buy that data every year from a source and we integrate that, just like Chris has given the example, things like council of governments have sources of data like that and so forth.

So while the census provides a very good benchmark at a high level, when we're making a store decision, it's at a very small-area level. And this is where a lot of local data and knowledge supplements what the bureau does.

So I just wanted to give you another example of using the census with other sources together is the way to look at this thing properly, I think.

Thank you.

WILEY: And if I could just do the closer, anecdotally, New York Times had an article recently that Philadelphia was the new Brooklyn.

(LAUGHTER)

So there's a tie into our district. And with the tight real estate market, it would be interesting to look at that statistically, like what's going on, because you know a lot of people, obviously, can't afford to live in New York now and can't afford to live in that Dumbo neighborhood are living in your district and then coming to our place on the weekends.

QUESTION: Well, thank you so much.

REAMER: You're welcome.

Thanks for your question.

QUESTION: EPA, it seems like you're hearing has identified the root of the problem here: It's sold as a survey and what you would really want is a state-of-the-art E-government data service so that the taxpayers, the people who contribute to the survey, the Congress and others view it as that because a survey, you know, is in a category of "Well, maybe we need it or maybe we don't." But if it's a critical data service to support decision-making, then I think it's much more acceptable.

REAMER: Thanks.

Yes?

QUESTION: First of all, I want to thank all of you for your presentations. It was very informative. And the examples of how the ACS could be applied, I thought, were very good.

However -- and this is more of a comment than a question -- I thought that there was lacking an example of how this might also be used on a micro level as opposed to macro policy.

And there are at least two campaigns that we're involved with in New York City dealing with hospital closings and dealing with poverty issues where this type of information that we can get from the survey would be very helpful from small groups looking up, as opposed to big groups looking down.

I thought an example of that kind of usage -- although I thought Dan touched on it in some ways -- I thought that would have been helpful as an example.

And we're also continuing to work on the issues of how Latinos are counted and making sure that we're counted and not undercounted.

Thank you.

REAMER: OK.

Thanks for raising the point that community groups can use these data as well to understand their communities and to improve the quality of life there.

WILEY: I just want to give one example on that, because we have the problems of hospitals closings in Harlem and other places, but sometimes the issue of local health data having different

districts, health districts, smaller units, different than some of these census tracts or other geographic units, community boards.

And one of the strengths of GIS to make that local analysis work is that you can bring together these different geographic units. And Sara McLafferty, over at Hunter, in the Geography Department, her Ph.D. was basically looking at low-birthweight rates and resources like hospitals and facilities and bringing that data together.

So a lot of local work can be done.

Also, one of the examples I showed was surveys were done, you know, on employment based on some of the basic census data, but then they got a more detailed cut and brought them together.

So you can just, as we've been hearing, you can bring this data together.

FOGARTY: I think one point I want to make here is that one of the reasons you may be hearing that right now is because ACS doesn't provide that sort of small-level geography data now.

So one of the points I would like to just make sure you don't miss is that, in the last two years, we've written letters about funding for this. As Ursula well knows, ACS has been a target and it continues to be a target. And it's going to be a target, I think.

Hopefully, as each year goes by, as Jay and Lisa well know, and the cost of switching to something else is just astronomical -- in fact there's been some debate about doing away with the long form altogether, that's how bad it is.

But I think the key point is to keep, those of you that are like me, in this panel, interested in this, we've got to keep the pressure on so that we don't get cuts and so that when 2010 comes, we're going to get data at the block group level. There's some risk to that right now, very honestly.

If you get back in and you cut the survey size down, for example, you don't get enough density to get the small-area data. So one solution I've heard is, you know, don't survey as many people -- save money that way. Well that's fine, except it doesn't get you the small-area data. But that's why I didn't talk about it.

Do I do stuff with Hispanics at the small area? You bet I do. I just did a project this week on every store and what its ethnic makeup was. What it's makeup of Hispanics by Cuban, Puerto Rican, other and so forth, because there are some style differences in what those people buy and want.

So I'd love to get ACS data at that small area, but right now I can't do it.

FULCHER: And also it's amazing what we can't relay in 15 minutes. In other words, I agree completely. We're working, for example, with Latino churches in Chicago and the issue of HIV/AIDS referral service. And so really getting that updated informational data on locations of Hispanic populations of a certain percentage within a certain block group, et cetera, is not available in the ACS framework.

I think the intent of today's discussion is really a transitional from the 10-year census to an ACS framework that is going to be much more meaningful for all of us.

And if I showed this integrated decision-support framework we have, it's based on 2000 census. Well, we're itching and we're very, very much poised to incorporate ACS data as it becomes available.

WAITE: If I might add -- I think we mentioned it before, but just to reiterate: In 2010, we will have five-year data down to the block group. But once we get that, we will be able to refresh that data every year. So we don't have to wait for five more years for another block group number.

We get annual data for the larger places, three-year data for the medium-size places where we add year four and drop year one -- it's kind of a rolling three-year number. And once you get down to the block group, once you get that number -- and we're sort of at that awkward place now where we can see where we want to get. We've got to get a few more years worth of data under our belt to be able to show you the kinds of things that we can get at block group on an ongoing basis. But once we get it, we'll have it updated and refreshed every year.

REAMER: Question?

QUESTION: I perhaps have somewhat of a unique perspective here because I'm with the Justice, Research and Statistics Association -- given some of the comments being made here.

(LAUGHTER)

And what I would like to say is that I think that perhaps the problem is the undervaluing of information in general. For example, where with the National Crime Victimization Survey, that the funding for that has decreased over time so that the sampling for that has had to be cut back.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics, their budgets have been pretty much held constant. And, you know, it's kind of ironic in an era where there's this increased value being put on accountability through the part system at OMB, GPRA and Congress, and yet the production of some of the very important information that could help feed some of those things is also under siege.

And so those of us that are sort of in the research community find that it's not just the census but other information sources that people are looking to to be able to respond to all of these demands for accountability are struggling trying to just keep up.

And it isn't just the census information, but there's many other areas like this. And as agencies are struggling to try and respond to calls for accountability, where's this information's going to come from?

Thank you.

REAMER: Thanks for your comment.

I think government, you know, has several ways it can have an impact. It can write regulations, it can provide grants and it can provide information. And I think what's underrealized is how cost-effective information is. Relative to other forms of public policy it's cheap. And as I said in my opening remarks about the uses of the long-form data, it has an incredible impact.

So thank you for your comment.

Other questions?

QUESTION: I represent a very small town in Michigan actually, about 2,000 people in my town, but we also have a college in our town that has an enrollment of about 1,000. So for nine months out of the year, a third of our population is the college.

I know you said that you're going to start representing universities and such, and I know that this is a trend a lot in Michigan, at least. Is there going to be representation of the local district along with the university, or differentiate between the two?

BLUMERMAN: In January 2006, we did begin collecting data from group quarters, which would be, for example, the university. I'm trying to think of the best way to answer your question. We did begin collecting data on group quarters. Our first products that would be released that would include the group quarters population will be released a year from next August.

Right now we're still defining what those products would be, but at a national level, for sure, there would be a total population representation -- also the households and probably the group quarters. We're still discussing whether we would go below the state level.

This was the first year that we began to develop the group quarters data and to collect the data. So there's a series of evaluations and we'll probably be a little bit conservative with our first releases from it as we continue to refine it.

But, absolutely, we are collecting that data so that we do have -- and we will be compiling the estimates so that we do have the total population.

WAITE: One of the things we are concerned about when we collect data is that we do not compromise the respondent's identification. In group quarters, particularly in small group quarters, it sometimes -- perhaps not at a university of 1,000 people, but there are a lot of group quarters, you can imagine, that if we publish something about the group quarters in this town, and there's only one nursing home in this town, and that's got 27 people in it and we talk about the characteristics of those people, we're now getting dangerously close to divulging information about individual people.

But we will be collecting. And another thing that we can do, clearly, is when we have this Public Use Microdata File, which will be a sample of records that will have the identifications eliminated at least, but you'll be able to do some kind of analysis with that yourself.

FULCHER: I just wanted to add one point regarding rural communities. And we're working with the National Institute for Rural Community Colleges. And that's one of the key areas that we're focusing on in terms of workforce retention.

And we deal with sustainable communities. What population base and what training opportunities are there in rural community colleges around the country and what population can they draw from their service area is based in part on the American Community Survey.

We're looking down the road for that. It's going to take a while but, you know, pulling those pieces together, it provides more of a leverage for those community colleges to say, "Here, this is what we're doing and this is how we influence our area as an economic development engine."

REAMER: Thank you, Chris.

Another question?

I want to go back to something that was raised earlier about -- Jay, you mentioned that in 2008 there may be some new questions or new forms of questions.

So between you and Ursula, talk a bit about what the process is, I think a methods panel and just, you know, there are lots of folks who would like to get lots of questions on the ACS for their purposes and how this process is going to be handled.

WAITE: OK. Well, obviously we are concerned because of the five-year number with not making very many changes. The process that we've set up to make the changes is, first of all, we have to convince OMB -- and they're very tough -- we have to convince them that the data that's needed from this question is really needed at small areas.

There's a lot of other ways to get data if all you want is national data. But if you want block group data, there aren't any other games in town.

So the first: Is the data really needed at that level? Can you make that case that not just for one small group, but for a small group nationwide?

Also, then, we're concerned about: Well, can we put together a question that people will actually understand? Will we be able to get the information? You know, it doesn't do us any good to know that people would like it if we don't know how to get it.

So we work with the other federal agencies to try and identify questions that need more work on, like the disability question and others.

Then the next step is that we put together some trial questions, which we send through cognitive testing to make sure people can understand it, maybe modify them so that we've got a question that people can respond to, but then we're also -- we worry about a lot of things you know. I'm only 17, but I've done a lot of worrying, so you can see what you have.

(LAUGHTER)

We're then concerned that if we add a new question to the ACS, even though it works very fine in a hothouse lab in cognitive testing, it might actually have some negative impact on questions that are already there. It can contaminate them a little bit.

And I've used the example a few times about my aquarium. I've invested large sums of money in a big aquarium for my house. I learned the hard way that you don't go to the pet store and buy that pretty fish and drop it in the aquarium because the next morning all your aquarium fish are floating on the surface, if you're not careful.

So we have what we call a methods panel, which is a small panel, about 50,000 households, that we run every year. It looks like the ACS. It's structured like the ACS. But it's not part of the ACS tabulations.

So on that panel, we can put different questions -- the change in the veterans question, or a change in the disability question -- and we can observe on that panel, separated from the ACS itself so if there's any contamination, the ACS doesn't get that, and we can then observe and analyze that data and see: Did it work well with other questions? Did it cause the number of Hispanics to increase or decrease -- we didn't think it was going to but it had some kind of a relationship there?

If it doesn't, if it behaves itself like my little fish in my 5-gallon tank, it's acting all right, then we can ultimately move that question into the American Community Survey when we open the window, like in 2008.

So we don't put things in there very often. And when we do, they've had extensive testing and we have to be convinced that the data is really needed at the small-area level.

But we are making some changes in the veterans question. We're making some changes in the disability question, in the marital status question. So we're testing those changes as we speak in this process of cognitive testing and in the methods panel, targeted toward having some changes in content, potentially, in 2008.

REAMER: Did you want to add something about political? I mean certain House committees are also interested in getting a question relevant to their committee on the ACS.

WOJCIECHOWSKI: Absolutely.

Considering that Government Reform and our subcommittee have oversight over it, we want to make sure that the ACS is not destroyed because people are worried about asking too many questions already. That is something that we are often about: intrusion.

I can't even imagine the calls we would get if we took up any more of their time or asked 20 more questions. So both as the aisles come together and we talk with OMB, and come to an understanding that the methods panel is necessary to review the questions and review all the needs that agencies have, and the government needs to make sure that we are asking as few questions as possible, but getting all the information that we require.

So we've come to an understanding and we will work together to review all of those and see what we can do to minimize the burden of answering the survey but getting all the information that we do need.

REAMER: Thank you.

QUESTION: I'm from Congressman Davis's office and you touched on the answer to my question earlier in responding to the young lady from Michigan.

All of our constituents complaints, without exception, have to do with the security of their responses to the questions on the ACS survey. We had some this weekend in light of the VA losses. And what I'd like to know is what steps you're taking to ensure that the hardcopy responses are not going to get into the wrong hands.

WAITE: We certainly agree that, from our perspective, confidentiality of individual responses is very, very high on our list. All employees are given several briefings and refreshers every year about the fact that no data is allowed to leave the Census Bureau. We can't take individual questions out of the Census Bureau. Generally, very few people are actually allowed to review individual questionnaires.

We bring the questionnaires in under very tight security. For our data capture, for example, it comes into that building; it doesn't leave that building. The electronic capture data is transferred, but not by a person carrying it outside. We have very strict penalties for anyone at the Census Bureau who would divulge any information that was collected.

We're very comfortable that your particular questionnaire, if it comes in to the Census Bureau, probably the biggest article of faith at the Census Bureau is that nobody, but nobody puts that out.

We're concerned even at another level, as I was talking about the group quarters, that even though we didn't say anything about any one particular person, we're concerned that we look at our publications and the levels at which we tabulate stuff so that we don't inadvertently publish something that, even though we didn't say anything about your questionnaire, you happen to be the only female living in this particular block and so people that live in that block would know that this data about the female in that block is yours.

We have a board at the Census Bureau which has to approve all of our tabulations and all of our sales. They look at that. They're independent of any other group inside the agency. If they don't approve that we can tabulate data at a particular level, it's just off the table. There's no real appeal for that.

They have the final say about whether this level of publication is too low. But never would we ever think about any case of an individual record getting out of the Census Bureau.

I don't know any case where that's happened.

QUESTION: How long are they keeping the records?

WAITE: I'm not sure if I can find out for you on the ACS. In the census, we capture them and keep them just long enough so that we can get records for the archivist. As soon as the archivist gets, you know, has some legal obligations to provide those things to the archivists -- microfilm of them, not the paper. We have to capture the microfilm and give that to the archivists in the census, and that's about a year and a half after the census. And they are destroyed as soon as that process is over.

We don't have them around. We don't have 2000 Census forms anywhere now.

QUESTION: OK. Great.

REAMER: Thank you for your questions. One more question then we'll bring it to a close.

QUESTION: I just wanted to pick up on the point that the same kinds of things are useful for the retailing side and for social service.

I see just among my own clients as we look at, say, families with young kids and their income and their poverty status -- on the one hand you've got the people who want to feed them fast food. You know, how many kids need happy meals in store territories around McDonald's?

But on the other hand, we work with the Food and Nutrition Service. And in the wintertime, they have school lunch programs. And in the summertime you have summer food service programs. And we look at the small-area locations, the individual spots where summer food service is offered, and then you look around and say, "All right, where are all those clients? How far do they have to go? And what percentage of the local poverty population, those young families with kids who are in poverty, what percentage are actually being served?"

So these things are important for both constituencies. And there are many, many other examples, and of course the panel has given you a full range (OFF-MIKE) everywhere.

So I think without that small-area data, we're not really going to be able to continue funding any of these programs or analyses.

REAMER: Thanks for your comments.

FULCHER: If I could to speak to that. That's an excellent point. One of the areas that we're engaged in is we have this national-level data, state-level data, but we're not down to the level of detail in terms of making informed decisions at the local level.

So, you know, we have to rethink about how we're collecting data. Who are the parties involved in this governance framework? And clearly the nonprofit sector, for example United Ways could serve as an intermediary at the community level because of the relationships they have with a number of agencies.

How do we involve in providing a framework or way for those agencies to be engaged in percolating up to that national level that type of information that we need to do effective analysis?

So we have a long road to go, but that's just where our interest is.

Thank you.

REAMER: Well, I want to give some appreciations to our host, Ursula, and the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census; John Cuaderes, who I saw leaving in and out of here; Mark Stephenson; our speakers -- and some people we haven't mentioned before.

This event would not have been possible without several people. One is a consultant at Brookings, Cindy Taeuber, formerly of the Census Bureau and one of that small band of determined people who helped bring about the ACS over the last decade; Lindsay Clark and Laura Smith, in the back there.

So please give all of these people a round of applause.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you all for coming. I hope you leave with a higher appreciation of the value of the ACS for the nation.

END→