

New and Modified Content on the 2008 ACS Questionnaire: Results of Testing Prior to Implementation

Introduction

As a result of the success of the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) Content Test and the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test, several items were changed in the 2008 ACS production questionnaire. This document summarizes the results of the 2006 ACS Content Test and the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test with a focus on those items that were ultimately changed in production. This document is intended to provide background for people with regard to differences between the 2008 ACS and earlier years. Since the conditions of the test were not exactly the same as production, the information presented here is not meant to predict nor can it fully explain all differences in estimates between the 2008 data and earlier years. For more information, see the section below titled “Limitations.”

The topics covered in this summary are as follows:

- Basic Demographic Questions
 - Relationship
 - Sex
 - Age
 - Hispanic or Latino origin
 - Race
- Housing Questions
 - Year built
 - Rooms
 - Bedrooms
 - Plumbing facilities
 - Kitchen facilities
 - Telephone service available
 - Food stamp benefits
 - Value
- Person Questions
 - Citizenship status
 - School enrollment and type of school
 - Educational attainment
 - Residence 1 year ago
 - Disability
 - Employment status
 - Weeks worked in the past 12 months
 - Health insurance coverage
 - Marital history
 - Service-connected disability

LIMITATIONS

Limitations unique to the 2006 ACS Content Test

The 2006 ACS Content Test maintained the same general data collection methods as the ACS, but deviated from these methods in some aspects to meet research objectives as well as resource constraints. In general the deviations did not impact the validity of the results, and in many cases increased the effectiveness of the testing. However, these differences should be considered when evaluating the data. The differences between the ACS and the 2006 ACS Content Test are described as follows.

The 2006 ACS Content Test did not provide a toll-free number on the printed questionnaires for respondents to call if they had questions, as the ACS does. The decision to exclude this service in the 2006 ACS Content Test primarily reflects resource issues in developing the materials needed to train and implement the operation for a one-time test. However, excluding this telephone assistance allows us to collect data that reflects the respondent's interpretation and response without the aid of a trained Census Bureau interviewer.

The ACS Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) follow-up operation was excluded from the 2006 ACS Content Test in order to meet field data collection constraints. Without CATI, questions administered differently over the phone did not get the benefit of a full CATI operation (though some of the Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) actually do occur by phone). However, since only ten percent of ACS data is collected by CATI and CATI interviewers are trained to help respondents understand question intent and response categories, overall ACS data quality should not suffer when questions are implemented using CATI.

Limitations unique to the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test

The main objective of the 2007 Grid-Sequential Test was to determine the effects of changing the layout of the basic demographic items on the ACS paper questionnaire from a grid to a sequential layout. To meet this objective, we used a study design that differed from the production ACS. The grid-sequential test was strictly a mail (respondent-completed) test. The other modes of data collection used in the production ACS for mail nonresponse followup, CATI and CAPI, were not used for this test. Therefore, characteristics of CATI and CAPI respondents that may influence the estimates or distributions were not incorporated.

The data collection process for the grid-sequential test and the production cases used in the analysis used a modified Key From Paper (KFP) system rather than the (Key From Image) KFI system implemented for the 2008 ACS. A difference between the standard KFP system and the new KFI system is that the KFI system contains edits that clean the data. As a result, we modified the KFP system to include imaging of the grid-sequential

test questionnaires so that we could achieve similar results to the KFI system by having the ability to verify household or person records if needed.

Limitations Shared by the 2006 ACS Content Test and the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test

The universe for both tests was restricted to housing units (e.g. Group Quarters were excluded) and also excluded the areas of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

Both tests excluded the Failed Edit Follow-Up operation in order to fully assess the impact of the proposed 2008 ACS content changes on data quality. As a result, households that provided incomplete information on their form or who reported more than five people living within the household were not contacted to collect their remaining information via a CATI interview.

To allow for the study of the impact of the proposed 2008 ACS content changes on data quality, neither test applied the ACS editing and imputation rules. The ACS editing and imputation rules correct inconsistent responses and fill in missing responses. These tests only had item nonresponse rates calculated. A change in the item nonresponse rate can cause a change in the item allocation rates.

The ACS weighting methodology was not replicated in either test. All tabulations were derived using only the sampling weights. There were neither adjustments made to the weights for nonresponse nor adjustments to control to the independent housing and population estimates like the full ACS.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

In addition to the content changes introduced to the 2008 ACS, the layout of the basic demographic section (relationship, sex, age, Hispanic or Latino origin, and race) of the ACS questionnaire was changed from a grid to a sequential layout. The Census Bureau conducted the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test prior to implementing the sequential layout in the 2008 ACS to determine the impact of this change. Prior to 2008, the ACS used a horizontal grid to collect basic demographic data. The household member names were listed down the left side of the page and the questions were listed across the top. The 2010 Census plans to use a sequential format where each person's data are in a distinct column, and within each column, the names are at the top and the questions are listed down the page. In the interest of having the wording and presentation of these questions be consistent between the ACS and the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau conducted the 2007 ACS Grid-Sequential Test to test the feasibility of changing to a sequential layout in the 2008 ACS. For more information, see the report "Effects of Using a Grid versus a Sequential Form on the ACS Basic Demographic Data" at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS-MP-09_Grid-Sequential_Test_Final_Report.pdf

Relationship (Person Question 2)

The results of this test showed that response to the relationship question is not impacted by the change in layout.

Sex (Person Question 3)

Under the sequential format the sex response items were listed horizontally and the instruction “Mark (x) one box” was present. Under the grid layout the response items were listed vertically and the “Mark (x) one box” was not present.

The test results showed that changing from the grid format to a sequential layout led to an increase in reported males and a decrease in reported females. In addition, the test results showed that the sequential layout maintained the item nonresponse rate produced by the grid layout for the sex question.

Age (Person Question 4)

The test results showed that the sequential layout produced a lower combined item nonresponse rate for the age questions.

Hispanic or Latino Origin (Person Question 5)

The test results showed that changing from the grid format to a sequential layout led to an increase in reporting of Hispanics or Latinos. In addition, the test results showed that the sequential layout produced a lower item nonresponse rate for the Hispanic or Latino origin question.

Race (Person Question 6)

The results showed that the sequential layout produced a lower item nonresponse rate for the race question.

HOUSING QUESTIONS

Year Built (Housing Question 2)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on year built was to facilitate the collection of more current data throughout the decade for units built in 2000 or later. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the year built question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the year built question by collapsing “2000 to 2004” and “2005 or later” into “2000 or later” and adding a write-in field and instruction “Specify year” as the most recent category.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed no significant differences in overall question item nonresponse rates between the control and test versions. However, among

the respondents who indicated built in the year 2000 or later on the test version, approximately 12 percent did not provide a specific year of construction. The overall distribution for year built was not significantly different between the control and test panels. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.1 - Evaluation Report Covering Year Built” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H1_Year_Built.pdf

Rooms (Housing Question 7a)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on number of rooms were to provide a definition of a “separate room” and to improve the respondent’s understanding that rooms and bedrooms are related; that is, that “bedrooms” is a subset of “total rooms,” especially in the case of an efficiency apartment which has only one room and no bedroom. In other words, the number of bedrooms should always be less than or equal to the total number of rooms. The analyses of the results from the Census 2000 and the ACS mail questionnaires suggested that there were inconsistencies between the counts of rooms and bedrooms.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the rooms and bedrooms question set. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the question on total number of rooms by

- adding the word “separate” to the question,
- adding the instruction that defines a “room,”
- adding an instruction to include bedrooms and kitchens in the count of rooms,
- modifying the exclusionary instruction by removing the “half-room” concept and adding the phrase “unfinished basements,” and
- using an open-ended write-in field rather than categories.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that changes to the questions reduced underreporting of rooms and improved consistency between rooms and bedrooms while maintaining the item response rate. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.2 – Evaluation Report Covering Rooms and Bedrooms” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H2_Rooms_Bedrooms.pdf

Bedrooms (Housing Question 7b)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on number of bedrooms were to provide a definition of a “separate room” and to improve the respondent’s understanding that rooms and bedrooms are related; that is, that “bedrooms” is a subset of “total rooms,” especially in the case of an efficiency apartment which has only one room and no bedroom. In other words, the number of bedrooms should always be less than or equal to the total number of rooms. The analyses of the results from the Census 2000 and

the ACS mail questionnaires suggested that there were inconsistencies between the counts of rooms and bedrooms.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the rooms and bedrooms question set. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the question on number of bedrooms by

- adding language that explicitly links the total count of rooms and the count of bedrooms,
- providing the rule to use for defining a bedroom as part of the instruction,
- providing instructions for efficiency/studio apartments, and
- using an open-ended write-in field rather than categories.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that changes to the questions increased reporting of “0” bedrooms and improved consistency between rooms and bedrooms while maintaining the item response rate. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.2 – Evaluation Report Covering Rooms and Bedrooms” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H2_Rooms_Bedrooms.pdf

Plumbing Facilities (Housing Questions 8a-8c)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on plumbing facilities was to improve questions about household facilities, in order to identify specific components of plumbing needed for editing purposes, particularly for vacant units. These data will also be useful for evaluating the quality of housing in Puerto Rico and certain areas within the United States. Another objective was to improve the underreporting of complete plumbing facilities.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the plumbing questions. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS questions. The test version modified the questions by breaking out the specific components into three “yes/no” questions and modernizing the language (e.g. replaced “piped water” with “running water.”)

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that the test and control versions had similar percentages of complete/incomplete plumbing facilities and item nonresponse rates, and that editing of the plumbing items will be greatly enhanced. The new component approach allows housing analysts to evaluate the relationship between substandard housing and individual components of plumbing facilities in the United States and Puerto Rico. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.3 – Evaluation Report Covering Facilities” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H3_Facilities.pdf

Kitchen Facilities (Housing Questions 8d-8f)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on kitchen facilities was to improve questions about household facilities in order to identify specific components of kitchen facilities needed for editing purposes, particularly for vacant units. These data will also be useful for evaluating the quality of housing in Puerto Rico and certain areas within the United States. Another objective was to improve the underreporting of complete kitchen facilities.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the kitchen facilities question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the questions by breaking out the specific components into three “yes/no” questions and modernized the language (e.g. replaced “a sink with piped water” with “a sink with a faucet.”)

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that the test and control versions had similar percentages of complete/incomplete kitchen facilities and item nonresponse rates, and that editing of the kitchen facilities items will be greatly enhanced. The new component approach allows us to investigate whether vacant units that only lack refrigerators should be classified as lacking complete kitchen facilities. This approach will also allow housing analysts to evaluate the relationship between substandard housing and individual components of kitchen facilities in the United States and Puerto Rico. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.3 – Evaluation Report Covering Facilities” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H3_Facilities.pdf

Telephone Service Available (Housing Question 8g)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on telephone service available was to improve questions about household facilities, in order to identify specific components of telephone service availability needed for editing purposes, particularly for vacant units. These data will also be useful for evaluating the quality of housing in Puerto Rico and certain areas within the United States. Another objective was to improve the underreporting of telephone service.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the telephone service question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version of the question changed the phrase from “Is there telephone service available in this house...” to “Does this house,... have telephone service...” Also, an instruction “Include cell phones” was added.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed no significant difference in item nonresponse rates between the test and control versions. Also, the percent of households with telephone service availability for the test version was higher than the percent for the control version. Overall, the results showed that the changes introduced in the test version reduced the proportion of occupied units reporting no telephone service availability when compared with the control version. For more information, see the

report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.3 – Evaluation Report Covering Facilities” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H3_Facilities.pdf

Food Stamp Benefits (Housing Question 12)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on food stamp benefits was to reduce the underreporting of the receipt of food stamps. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the food stamps question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version changed the wording of the food stamp question to more closely reflect the wording asked in the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC). The test question was changed to include the additional phrase, “or a food stamp benefit card.” Also, the question on the dollar value of food stamps for the prior 12 months was removed since there is no legislative mandate that requires collecting the dollar amount of food stamp benefits received.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that modifying the wording of the food stamps question, as well as not asking about the value of the amount of food stamps received, increased the proportion of households that reported receiving food stamps. The findings also showed no significant difference in item nonresponse rates between the test and control versions. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.6 – Evaluation Report Covering Receipt of Food Stamps” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H6_Food_Stamps.pdf.

Value (Housing Question 16)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on property value was to introduce more precision to the value distribution. Economists and housing analysts at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had encountered considerable difficulty using the bracketed data. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the property value question. The control version was not exactly the same as the questionnaire used in 2006 ACS production. Instead, it had updated response categories that incorporated more high-end categories than were shown on the ACS production questionnaire, and it eliminated the open-ended category for those who indicated a value of “\$250,000 or more.” The test version revised the question wording by adding the word “About” to the beginning of the question and used an open-ended write-in field rather than categories.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed a higher item nonresponse rate for the test version than for the control version for owner-occupied units. There was no significant difference in nonresponse rates for owner-occupied mobile homes. The median values were similar for the ACS test and control versions. The national median was also similar to the median property value from the 2005 American Housing Survey. Even with the higher item nonresponse rates, the test version allows the collection of more precise data,

which serves the need of HUD, the major Federal user of housing statistics. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report H.7 – Evaluation Report Covering Property Value” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/H7_Property_Value.pdf.

PERSON QUESTIONS

Citizenship Status (Person Question 8)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on the U.S. citizenship status question were to correct inaccuracies with the current questionnaire item and to meet the requirements of congressionally funded initiatives. Collecting year of naturalization aids in verifying the accuracy of the reported rates of naturalization, which has been shown by some research to be overstated with the U.S. citizenship status question in the ACS prior to the 2006 ACS Content Test. The updated question also serves as the first official benchmark to compare with Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) administrative records on naturalization. The additional detail also assists in editing U.S. citizenship. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the 2006 question by including a write-in field for naturalized, foreign-born respondents to provide their year of naturalization. In addition, the test version replaced the response option “Yes, born abroad of American parent or parents” with “Yes, born abroad of U.S. citizen parent or parents.”

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed no significant differences in overall question item nonresponse rates between the control and test versions. Approximately 10 percent of respondents who indicated being a naturalized U.S. citizen did not report a year of naturalization. The overall distribution for U.S. Citizenship status was not significantly different between the control and test panels. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Test Report P.1 – Evaluation Report Covering Place of Birth, U.S. Citizenship Status, and Year of Arrival” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P1_Citizenship.pdf

School Enrollment and Type of School (Person Questions 10a-10b)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on school enrollment were to improve the data collected and to provide information on school enrollment of the U.S. population ages 3 and older. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the school enrollment question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question and response categories. The test version modified the school enrollment question by substituting “school” for “regular school” and adding “home school” in the instructions and response categories. The test version also modified the response categories by adding the qualifier “beyond a bachelor’s degree” to the “graduate or professional school” category and including a write-in field for enrollment in grades 1 through 12.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that there were no significant differences in the distributions of grade of enrollment, private school, or home schooled enrollment, and the enrollment of vocational, technical, or business students between the control version and the test version. The test version did not significantly increase the item nonresponse rates for the school age population. However, the test version showed a higher item nonresponse rate for grade level among the population age 3 and above, and a lower age-grade consistency for the grades 1-4 category. Despite these differences, both versions had low nonresponse rates overall and high age-grade consistency for the grade school categories. Because the test version performed as well as the original question in almost all respects and provided additional information by partitioning level of enrollment into single grades, the test version was adopted. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.2.a – Evaluation Report Covering School Enrollment” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P2a_Educational_Enrollment.pdf.

Educational Attainment (Person Question 11)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on educational attainment were to improve the clarity of the question for respondents and to improve detail on grades of schooling and secondary credentials. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the educational attainment question. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question and response categories. The test version modified the educational attainment response categories by including a series of five headings, separating kindergarten from nursery school, and including a write-in field for grades 1 through 11. The test version also included separate categories for type of high school completion (high school diploma versus GED and other alternative credentials). The test version also specified categorization of some college based on credits, rather than years, and added the qualifier “beyond a bachelor’s degree” to the professional degree category.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed no significant differences in overall question item nonresponse rates between the test and control versions. The distribution of educational attainment also differed between test and control versions for several attainment categories. For two groups, persons age 3 and above and persons 18 and above, the test version showed a decrease in the percent of people in the following categories: 7th or 8th grade; 12th grade, no diploma; and high school graduate. The test version showed an increase in the percent of people with more than 1 year of college, no degree and those with a bachelor’s degree. In the age 3 and above distribution, the test version showed a higher proportion in nursery school to 4th grade and a lower proportion in 11th grade. In the age 18 and above distribution, the test version had a higher proportion of respondents reporting no schooling completed. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.2.b – Evaluation Report Covering Educational Attainment” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P2b_Educational_Attainment.pdf.

Residence 1 Year Ago (Person Questions 14a-14b)

The primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on residence 1 year ago (migration) were to collect complete and appropriate address information for recent movers within the United States and to collect complete and appropriate previous residence information for movers to the United States from Puerto Rico. The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the residence one year ago (migration) question set. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the migration question by including the address (structure number and street name) and collecting geographic information down to the place level within Puerto Rico for persons living in the United States at the time of the survey whose previous residence was Puerto Rico.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed item nonresponse rates for place (city, town, or post office), county, and state names increased for the modified question while the item nonresponse rate for zip code decreased. Even with the higher item nonresponse rates, there was no significant difference in the number of addresses that were codeable at the state, county, or place level. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.3 - Evaluation Report Covering Residence 1 Year Ago (Migration)” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P3_Residence_1_Year_Ago.pdf

Disability (Person Questions 16a-18)

There were two primary objectives of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on the disability status questions. The first objective was to better identify specific portions of the population of people with disabilities. The second objective was to improve the estimate of the population of persons with disabilities, as defined by a person’s risk of participation limitation when he or she has a functional limitation or impairment. The test version included the following adjustments:

- The hearing and vision concepts are separate questions.
- The hearing and vision questions include children under 5 years old.
- The mobility question includes only walking and climbing stairs, the activities that account for the majority of mobility limitations.
- References to duration of limitation are removed.
- The word “serious” is added in the hearing, vision, mobility and cognitive/mental functioning questions to focus attention on longer-term disability and to reduce the misreporting of temporary or less severe conditions.
- The work disability question is removed.

After obtaining favorable results from the test version of the disability status questions, the revised set was included in the 2008 ACS. The 2008 questions on disability represent

a conceptual and empirical break from earlier years of the ACS. Hence, the Census Bureau does not recommend any comparisons to disability data from the 2007 ACS and earlier. For more information, see the “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.4 - Evaluation Report Covering Disability” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P4_Disability.pdf.

Employment Status (Person Questions 28a-28b, 34b, 35)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on the employment status series, specifically, the questions about worked last week, temporarily absent, and looking for work, was to improve the measurement of employment status by addressing several limitations that previous research suggested were present in the ACS question wording prior to 2008. Analysis of employment data from the ACS and Census 2000 revealed that employment levels were underestimated and unemployment levels were overestimated relative to benchmark data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) or from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program at the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Three of the ACS employment status questions were modified for the test panel. The worked last week and temporarily absent questions are key components in the measurement of employed people and people who are not in the labor force, while the looking for work question is a component in the measurement of unemployed people. These changes were done with an overall goal of increasing the estimate of employed people, reducing the estimate of unemployed people, and reducing response inconsistencies in the individual categories of the employment status concept.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the Employment status series question set. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS questions. The test version modified the employment status series questions by

- separating the worked last week question into two parts to address irregular work arrangements,
- removing the reference to work for profit in the worked last week question,
- including the meaning of work in the worked last week question rather than parenthetically,
- revising the list of examples of reasons for temporary absence to include maternity/paternity leave, family or personal reasons, and bad weather in order to reduce the estimate of unemployed people, and
- adding the word “actively” in all capital letters to the looking for work question,

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings overall showed that the test questions produced a higher estimate of employed people compared to the control. While the test questions did not produce a lower estimate of unemployed people, the overall unemployment rate was lower for the test panel. The unemployment rate is the more useful measure because it excludes people who are not in the labor force. Empirically, the test version of the

questions performed better than the existing ACS questions in terms of more favorable estimates, but respondents are answering the employment series of questions inconsistently. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.6.a. – Evaluation Report Covering Employment Status” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P6a_Employment_Status.pdf

Weeks Worked in the Past 12 Months (Person Questions 38a-38b)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on the weeks worked question was to produce a higher estimate of year-round workers, bringing the ACS estimate closer to the CPS estimate, while not adversely impacting item nonresponse rates and data quality. One of the main purposes of the weeks worked question is to establish a framework for the earnings data collected in the ACS. Classifying workers as “full-time, year-round” is key to the presentation and analysis of earnings data.

The 2006 ACS Content Test compared two versions of the weeks worked question set. The control version replicated the 2006 ACS question. The test version modified the opened-ended weeks worked question by splitting it into two parts. Part (a) asked whether the respondent worked 50 or more weeks in the past 12 months, or past 52 weeks. Part (b) asked respondents who said ‘no’ to part (a) to choose from six categories of how many weeks they did work, even for a few hours, including paid vacation, paid sick leave, and military service.

The 2006 ACS Content Test findings showed that the percentage of people 16 years and older who were year-round workers (50-52 weeks) was higher in the test panel than in the control panel at the national level. There was no significant difference in item nonresponse rates between the test and control panel. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.6.b. – Evaluation Report Covering Weeks Worked” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P6b_Weeks_Worked_Final_Report.pdf

Health Insurance Coverage (Person Questions 15a-15h)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on health insurance coverage was to determine how to collect data about health insurance coverage for all members of a household. Information on health insurance coverage was not collected in the ACS prior to 2008. Therefore, the limitations are not fully known and no comparisons can be made to previous ACS data. However, the results of the 2006 ACS Content Test provide useful information about the evaluation of the test data that demonstrated the viability of asking questions on health insurance coverage in the ACS. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.8 - Evaluation Report Covering Health Insurance” at: http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P8_Health_Insurance.pdf

Marital History (Person Questions 20-22)

The primary objective of the 2006 ACS Content Test work on marital history was to produce annual estimates of the numbers of people who marry and divorce, the number of times people were married, and the duration of their current marriage. The motivation for these questions was to use the ACS as the primary federal vehicle for the collection of marital data to replace the discontinued marriage and divorce registration area that had previously provided this information to Department of Health and Human Services on an annual basis.

Beginning in 2008, people 15 years and over who were ever married (currently married, widowed, separated, or divorced) were asked if they had been married, widowed, or divorced in the past 12 months. They were asked how many times (once, two times, three or more times) they have been married, and the year of their last marriage. Because marital history is a series of new questions on the 2008 ACS, the limitations are not fully known. However, the results of the 2006 ACS Content Test provide useful information about the evaluation of the test data that demonstrated the viability of asking marital history questions in the ACS. For more information, see the report “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.9 – Evaluation Report Covering Marital History” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P9_Marital_History.pdf

Service-Connected Disability (Person Questions 27a-27b)

The objective for including the topic of military service-connected disability rating in the 2006 ACS Content Test was to test whether the ACS could provide useful estimates of veterans by the disability-rating categories of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA needs data on the distribution of the veteran population by level of disability rating in order to estimate the demand for their health care services.

Information on service-connected disability was not collected in the ACS prior to 2008. Therefore, the limitations are not fully known and no comparisons can be made to previous ACS data. However, the results of the 2006 ACS Content Test provide useful information about the evaluation of the test data that demonstrated the viability of asking service-connected disability questions in the ACS. For more information, see the “2006 American Community Survey Content Test Report P.5.c - Evaluation Report Covering Service-Connected Disability” at:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/AdvMeth/content_test/P5c_Military_Service_Connected_Disability.pdf