

# Disability Data Collection in the U.S. American Community Survey

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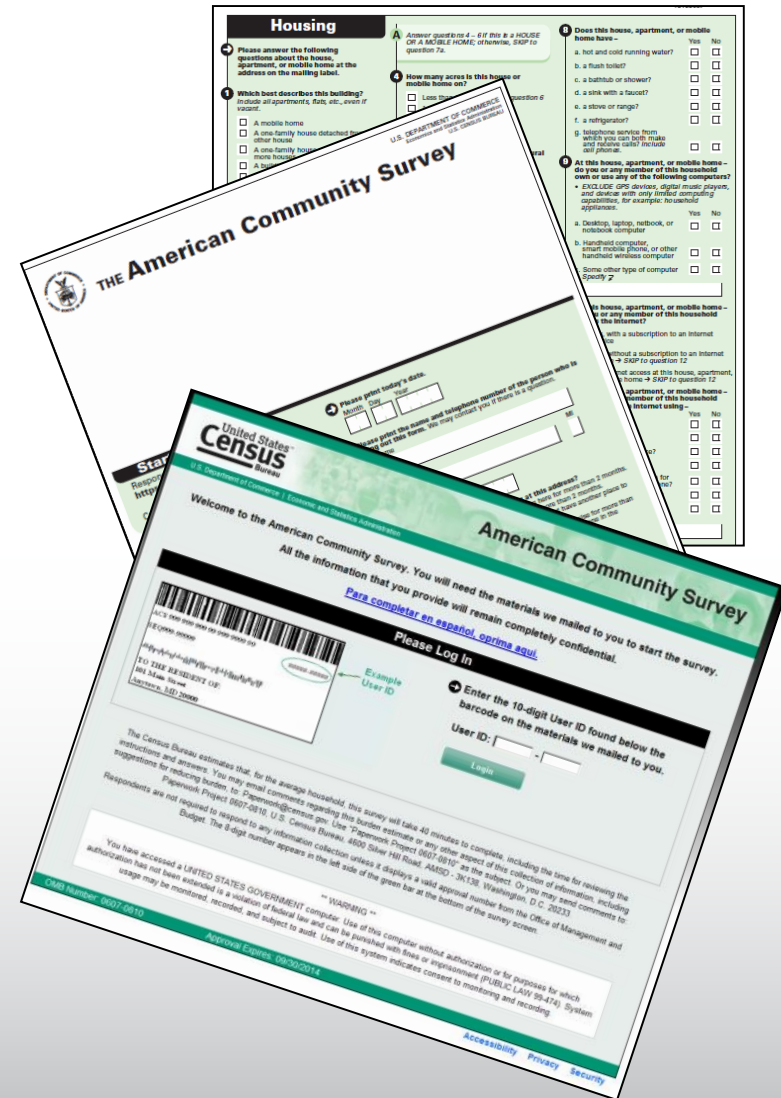
UNSD Expert Group Meeting on the Guidelines and Principles  
for the Development of Disability Statistics

12-14 July 2017

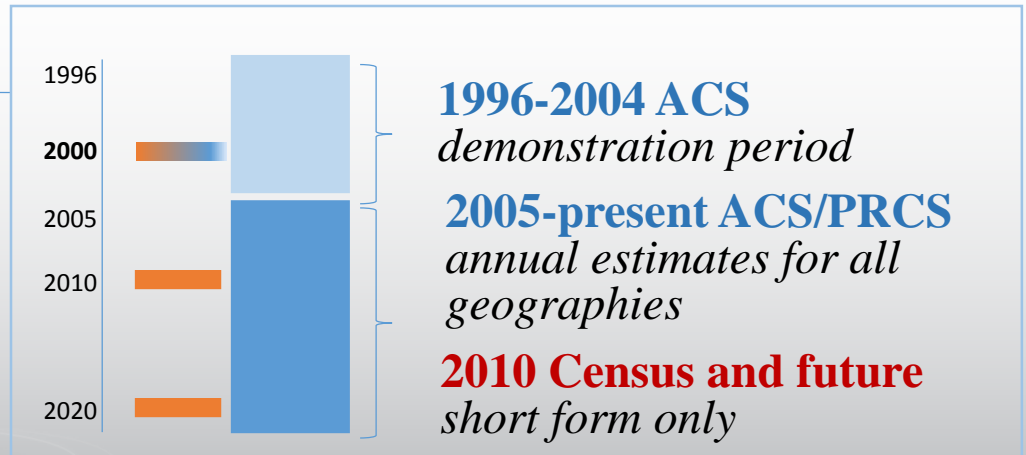
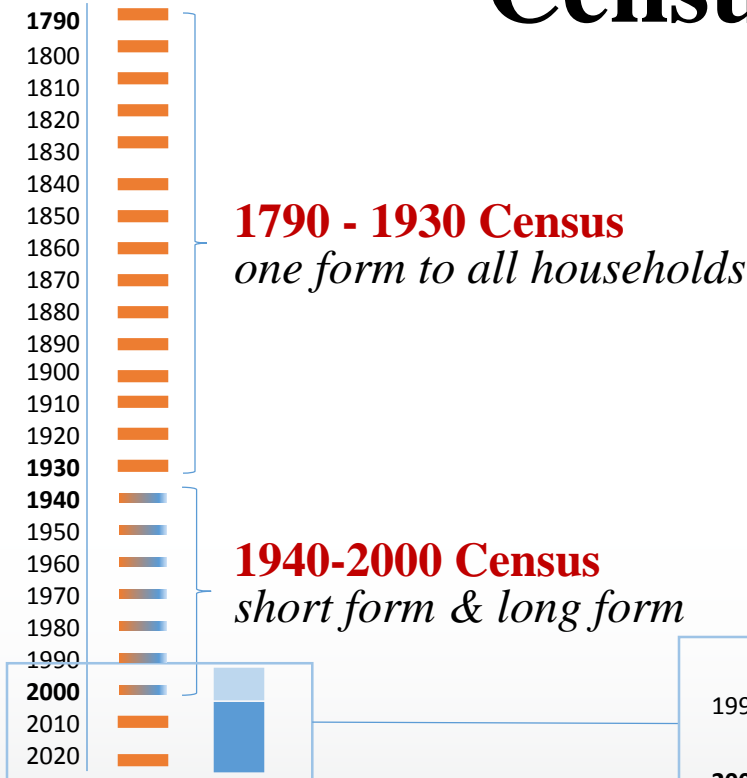
New York, NY

# ACS Basics

- Ongoing monthly survey sent to 3.5 million addresses per year to produce detailed population and housing estimates each year
  - Visit 20,000 Group Quarter facilities and sample approximately 194,000 residents each year
- Designed to produce *critical information on small areas and small population groups* previously collected on the decennial long form
- Covers 35+ topics and supports over 300 known Federal Government uses
- Data released twice annually
  - 1-year estimates (12 months of data)
  - 5-year estimates (60 months of data)



# Census & ACS



# How is the ACS Different from a Census?

	ACS	2010 Census
<i>purpose</i>	Sample estimates	Official counts
<i>produces</i>	Population characteristics	Population totals
<i>new data every</i>	Year	10 years
<i>data reflect</i>	Period of time	Point in time

# ACS Data Collection Process

**Online**



**Mail**



**Telephone**



**Personal Visit**



**Self-Response Modes**

**Non-Response Modes**

# Design Requirements for Disability Questions

Work was subject to several strict guidelines and requirements. In particular, the revised questions:

- could not exceed the space limitations in the American Community Survey;
- must perform equally well across a number of administration modes (mail, telephone, in-person);
- must be appropriate for the greatest proportion of individuals as possible, including young children;
- provide a valid, reliable and understandable general measure of disability; and
- would be fielded, without changes, for a 5-year period beginning with 2008 in order to generate 2010 Census estimates comparable in quality to the 2000 Census long form estimates.

# Measurement Objectives

- Based on the legislative review (18 agencies had legislative mandates and the conceptual framework):
  - “equalization of opportunity” was selected as the key policy question in areas such as housing, employment, communications, income and other areas of participation in society.
- To accomplish this objective, the question set must identify persons who, because of their limitations in functioning, are *at risk* for discrimination or lack appropriate opportunity for participation.
- In addition, in order to meet legislative and programmatic requirements for services and other forms of support, a measure of severe disability identifying those in need of assistance to maintain independence should be included.

# Measurement of Equalization of Opportunities

- Locate the definition of disability at the most basic level of activity/participation.
- This level is associated with the ability or inability to carry out basic activities at the level of the whole person (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, lifting packages, seeing a friend across the room).
- Development of a demographic means of understanding disability (can compare persons with and without disability).



# Functioning Domains

Question development began by focusing on the functional areas most commonly associated with limitations in participation.

Based on analyses conducted on large, national datasets, the functioning domains that were found to best predict the total population estimate of disability, including those identified by mental health problems:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Mobility
- Cognitive functioning
- Self care
- Independence getting outside the home

# The ACS Disability Measures

For sample persons 1 year of age and older:

1. Is this person deaf or does he/she have serious difficulty hearing?
2. Is this person blind or does he/she have serious difficulty seeing?

For sample persons 5 years of age and older:

3. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions?
4. Does this person have serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs?
5. Does this person have difficulty dressing or bathing?

For sample persons 15 years of age and older:

6. Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does this person have difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping?

Response Categories:

1. Yes
2. No

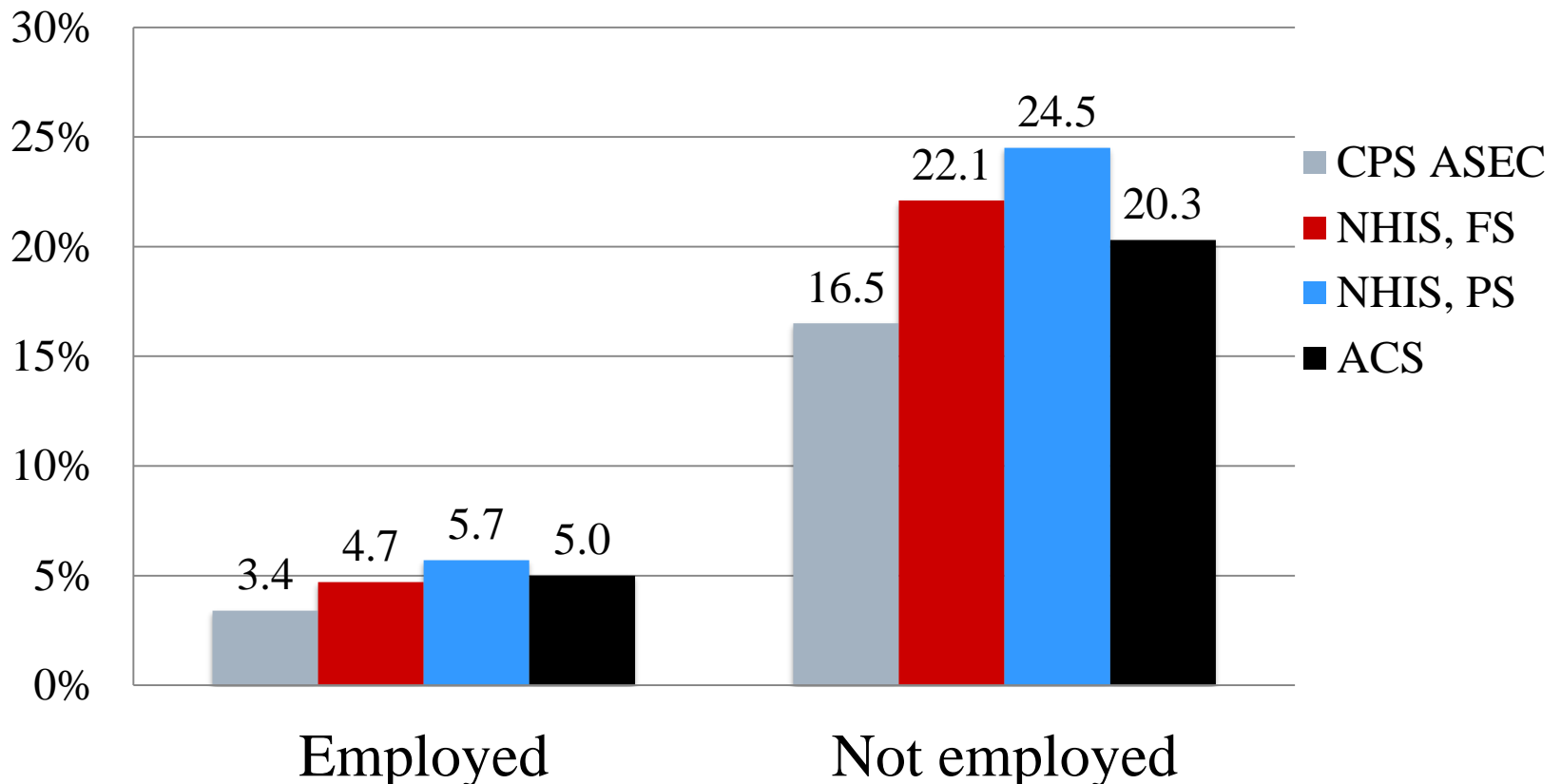
# Comparisons across Surveys

## Prevalence of Disability by Survey: 2009

Disability Item	Ages	CPS ASEC <sup>†</sup> (%)	NHIS		ACS (%)
			Family- Style (%)	Person- Style (%)	
Vision difficulty	1+	1.7	2.1	2.4	2.2
Hearing difficulty	1+	3.1	3.9	4.1	3.4
Mobility difficulty	5+	6.9	6.6	7.2	6.9
Cognitive difficulty	5+	3.5	3.9	4.7	4.8
Self-care difficulty	5+	2.0	1.8	2.2	2.6
Independent living diff	15+	4.0	4.7	5.1	5.4
Any disability	1+	<b>11.6</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>12.1</b>

<sup>†</sup>NOTE: CPS data are for population 16 years and over.

# Prevalence of Any Disability by Survey and Employment Status: 2009



\* CPS and ACS cover persons 16-64; NHIS covers persons 18-64.

# Lessons Learned

- It is possible and useful to include a short set of disability questions – for the purpose of disaggregation – in major national data systems.
- There will be some small differences in prevalence – but the differentials are consistent.
- The National Health Interview Survey (NCHS) has asked the ACS and the WG questions since 2010 and is moving to incorporating the full WG question set.
- A request has been submitted to change the ACS questions to the WG questions.