How Are Census Bureau Surveys Delivered?

AUSPL Conference 2015 provided opportunities for attendees to ask questions of speakers and workshop presenters. One of the questions posed by an AUSPL member to Representative Amodei was why the US Census Bureau sends out surveys using UPS rather than the US Postal Service. Harry Glenn of Van Scoyoc and Associates contacted a congressional staff person for an answer. The Census Bureau uses the USPS most of the time, but they do use UPS and Fed-Ex in limited and specific situations.

Most of us are familiar with the Census Bureau as the organization conducting a census of the population of the United States every ten years in years ending with a 0 (zero). The term "decennial" is used to describe this process, and it is conducted by the **Decennial Census Programs** department of the Bureau of the Census.

In addition, the Census Bureau conducts dozens of other censuses and surveys. Census Bureau statistics contribute to economic and foreign trade indicators released by the federal government.

The Census Bureau **Demographic Program** area conducts surveys on behalf of various federal and local government agencies about employment, crime, health, consumer expenditures, and housing. These surveys are conducted perpetually between and during decennial population counts. The USPS is used for the initial interaction with households, and follow-up can be done by use of UPS or FEDEX. According to the Census Bureau contact, "*we do use UPS and/or FEDEX in survey mailings to respondents (in consultation with our external sponsors as relevant/needed), but not usually as a vehicle for an initial contact. This is typically done only after a household has already received an initial mailing of a survey form or advance letter through the US Postal Service. Research has shown that this is a successful methodology for converting otherwise busy or reluctant households. According to our survey experts, it is an established practice in the survey research community.*"

The **Economics Directorate** area of the Census Bureau measures business and government data such as revenue, expenses and payroll. According to the census bureau contact, that division "*only uses carriers other than USPS in very limited situations.*"

The American Community Survey area of the Census Bureau does more than 130 surveys each year. These surveys are collected monthly, and provide demographic, housing, social and economic data. According to the Census Bureau contact, "*ACS only uses USPS for mailings to respondents … same for the 2020 tests.*" The "2020 tests" are the primary research and testing phase for design decisions for the 2020 Census

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