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Things the ACS Data Users Group Should Know About the Respondent Advocate

The production of high quality, relevant statistical information relies on openness to respondent concerns.

Office of the Respondent Advocate
www.census.gov/respondentadvocate
May 2017

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Introduction to the Respondent Advocate

- Created by the Director of the Census Bureau 4 years ago at the urging of Congress
- Serves as the voice of the Census Bureau's most valued resource – its survey respondents
- Among the 30+ household surveys, ACS is the biggest single customer with 3.5 million addresses in sample each year
- Represents a simple process for resolving respondent issues within a short period of time – Ombudsman position

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Respondent Advocate: High-Level Goals



- To improve *our* responsiveness to those we ask to participate in our surveys
- To raise awareness of respondent burden throughout the Census Bureau
- To participate in outreach and education about the Census Bureau's efforts to reduce respondent burden

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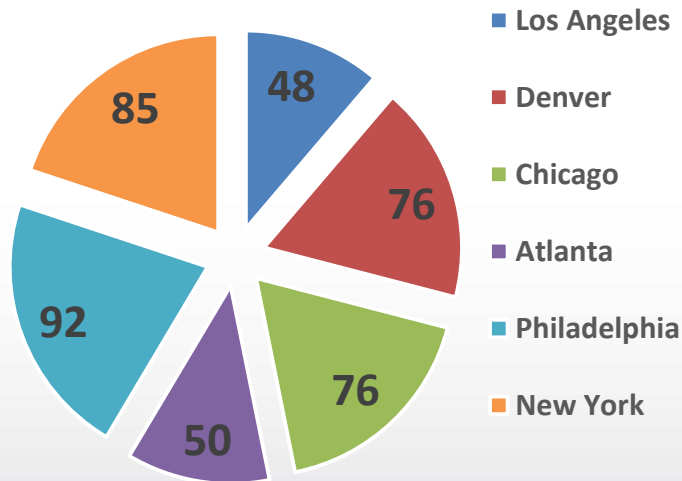
Key functions of the Respondent Advocate

- Ombudsman for respondents, resolving immediate concerns and issues
- Respect the respondents – including confidentiality of call if necessary
- Meets regularly with ACS managers and staff to stay informed about internal issues and key changes to data collection
- Liaison between respondents and the ACS managers – sharing respondent concerns with those who manage the survey
- Visit Congressional staffs to make them aware of the respondent advocate role and how that can help them with constituent concerns

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Respondent Concerns: Common Complaints

Number of ACS Cases By
Regional Office (524)



* There were an additional 97 ACS cases for which the regional office was undetermined.

- Intrusive nature of the survey,
- Fear that survey is a scam
- Concerns about data safety/hacking
- Constitutionality
- Number and variety of contacts inappropriate
- Amount of time to complete the survey
- Behavior of the field representative
- Want to be removed from survey because of illness or age

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Working with Congressional Staffs



- Congressional staffs can reach the advocate with questions or issues at 888-609-0563 or respondent-advocate@census.gov
- Educates Congressional staffs about the role of the respondent advocate, and how constituent feedback gets shared with our survey directors
- Works directly with their constituents – listens to the issues, investigates complaints, finds solutions
- Promotes the value of American Community Survey statistics.
- Educate them on how the Census Bureau is reducing respondent burden to make our surveys as unobtrusive as possible

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QUESTIONS?

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