Using the ACS to Help Discover and Contextualize Important Social Trends

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To Understand Trends and Patterns in the US The New York Times Uses the ACS in Many Ways

- PUMS (Public Use Micro-Data Samples) used for information at relatively large scale, but precisely defined
- Where households make top 1% or top 5% of income (PUMA)
  - Information on economic and other status for a variety of groups
    - Immigrant and Language Groups
    - New York City Transit Workers
    - New York City Policemen
    - And a host of others
- Tabulated data is used for patterns down to tract or block group, based upon the tables published by the Bureau
  - Patterns of segregation, economic status, education, housing, etc.
- Another major use of the ACS tabulated data is to contextualize and help to understand social patterns and social trends

Example from the Pandemic Year: Number 1

The location and composition of the places where Black Lives Matter protests happened after the George Floyd killing

- ***NY Times*** engaged reporters and ransacked news reports around the country to document where protests took place

- Working literally almost night and day we associated Census names and geographic types with basic demography from the early protest waves

- In this way, the demography of the areas of protest were documented

- The ACS contribution made it possible to see the geographic extent, the variation by economic status, and the fact that the demonstration went beyond communities that were predominantly minority

- Some of the resulting coverage was here: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/13/us/george-floyd-protests-cities-photos.html

Example from the Pandemic Year: Number 2

Changes in the pattern of the Trump-Biden Vote compared to the Trump-Clinton vote in 2016

- After the 2016 election, efforts were made to track changes in the pattern of the Trump-Clinton vote, compared to the Obama-Romney vote at the precinct level.

- This effort largely failed, due to problems with the maps from the local authorities. In 2020, a similar, but more highly resourced effort was successful

- ACS data were allocated from the tract level to the precinct in many of the swing states, and in some selected other areas. I described this process, which is a quite complex geographic process in my presentation at the 2019 conference

- This resulted in tracking areas, where Trump gained strength between 2016 to 2020, including in Florida, North Carolina, and some other areas.

- Multiple articles discussing these results were published in the Times, including, the following: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/20/us/politics/election-hispanics-asians-voting.html

Example from the Pandemic Year: Number 3

Analysis of Changing Composition of Police Forces in the United States, Using Data from the Law Enforcement Management And Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) combined with ACS information on the composition of the community

- Though the US collects data on crime, the collection of data on police departments is somewhat scanty

- No data are collected on police involved shootings

- Only occasionally is data collected on the composition of police forces in the United States. All are available here: https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=248#:~:text=Conducted%20periodically%20since%201987%2C%20the,representative%20sample%20of%20smaller%20agencies

Examples Pandemic Year: Number 3 (cont'd)

- LEMAS data has a complex sampling approach that samples all police departments with more than 100 sworn officers, but does a stratified sample of smaller departments

- Crime is reported for all departments

- Most police departments in the United States are small. But the bulk of the officers are in large departments, such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc.

- LEMAS data is based upon the area policed, which often does not conform to a defined Census Area.

- The BJS from time to time creates a crosswalk file to make it possible to relate policed areas to Census geographies. At any given moment it is out of date and not completely accurate.

- This is described here: https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/NACJD/series/00366

Examples Pandemic Year: Number 3 (cont'd)

- From these data it is possible to ascertain the composition among the largest departments and how this has changed from sample year to sample year

- However due to reporting gaps, change among all departments (or among all the largest departments) could only be reliably gauged for those who reported year to year

- In short, though crime is reported in a very detailed level in a variety of ways for all departments. Information on the departments themselves is much more spotty

- Despite these limitations it was possible to reliably ascertain how representative department were of their communities and how that has changed for many

- In short, many departments became less diverse, while policing more diverse communities, as these results show: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/23/us/bureau-justice-statistics-race.html

Enhancing the News with ACS Demography

From these three cases, it is plain that adding demographic information helps in understanding trends in patterns

- For Black Lives Matter protests, the scope and scale and diversity of the areas that protested was historic, and an important fact

- For voting, the fact that immigrant groups increased their support of Trump from 2016 to 2020 is important to know, while the change in the largely non-diverse suburbs away from Trump is also important

- That the composition of police forces compared to their communities have gotten less diverse, given the fraught nature of policing, including officer involved killings, seems very significant

- None of these analyses could have been done without the American Community Survey, and they are only a small subset of those we have done for the ***Times*** over the past 28 years

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For Further Information

Black Lives Matter Movement Gains Support From Diverse Demographic Swath of U.S.
https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/black-lives-matter-movement-gains-support-from-diverse-demographic-swath-of-u-s-10676

BLM Protests Data Now Live on Social Explorer
https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/blm-protests-data-now-live-on-social-explorer-10671

Failed Trump Re-Election Effort Still Made Gains Among Hispanic, Asian Voters
https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/failed-trump-re-election-effort-still-made-gains-among-hispanic-asian-voters-11151

New York Times/Social Explorer Analysis Finds Police Departments Became Whiter Over Decade
https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/new-york-times-social-explorer-analysis-finds-police-departments-became-whiter-over-decade-10947

Explore our New LEMAS Dataset
https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/explore-our-new-lemas-dataset-10971