Use of Census data (re: Federal Register Notice 83 FR 34111)

Sarah Jo Szambelan <sszambelan@spur.org>

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To:POP 2020 DataProducts <pop.2020.dataproducts@census.gov>;

Cc:ipums@umn.edu <ipums@umn.edu>;

Dear Karen Battle,

I am writing to provide public comment on Federal Register Notice 83 FR 34111.

I work at SPUR, a non-profit that does research, education and advocacy on various public policy issues in the San Francisco Bay Area, particularly on housing, transportation and sustainable development. Our research is the basis for much of our work. I currently use ACS and HUD tabulations in many ways, including:

1) Basic demographic trends for transit projects and/or changes in transit service
For this research, I am often asking who would be served by proposed changes or additions in transit service, or in other words what the demographics are of those who live near transit terms of age, race, educational attainment, family structure, disability status, etc. I am also usually asking how proposed changes in transit would increase or decrease access to jobs and economic destinations for these populations. I compile various demographic profiles using ACS 5-year samples at the census block group level. Using GIS, I intersect the area of the block groups with new geographies, such as the areas within reasonable walking distance of existing or proposed transit stations or stops. I then do a simple area-weighting where the weight = (original census block group area) / (new area of census block group after intersection). These weights are multiplied by various aggregate population counts. The result is a series of ACS summaries by my own custom geographies. I often generate these over various years and compare meaningful differences over time, accounting for margins of error.

In addition, I am planning to use PUMS data to do the following future research:

2) Trends for housing affordability
Our organization regularly tracks and summarizes housing affordability for different populations of the Bay Area and Northern California. Census data is compiled and released by HUD for these purposes, however some cross tabulations are not available, such as the rent burden of households by both race / ethnicity and income level. I would like to construct this cross tabulation over time by as fine a geography as possible using PUMS. These cross tabulations would also help generate research questions about city or county level policies where proposed or previous policy changes would be the independent variable and the cross tabulated rent burden a dependent variable.

3) Demographic profiles of those who may have been displaced
Using ACS 1-year estimates by Census place it's possible to observe that the racial make up of different cities in the Bay Area is changing over time. It is often hypothesized that low-income people of color are being pushed to the edges of region, further from jobs and economic opportunity. Local rental, housing construction and labor policies are being proposed and enacting in cities based on this. I intend to test the hypothesis using PUMS data by constructing joint distributions of people who have moved in the last 12 months, how far they have moved from and what their race / ethnicity, educational attainment and family structure is. This initial summary could inform important policies and lead to future research questions about the likelihood of different economic trends (e.g. rapid job growth) to affect the housing location options and choices of different populations.

While I've enumerated a few projects here, our organization regularly relies on Census data in many other ways to help inform various public policy white papers and policy creation processes that have the potential to affect hundreds of thousands of people

in our region. We are grateful to the US Census Bureau for the data it tirelessly makes available and for the opportunity to comment on this notice.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jo Szambelan

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