

It's a Hard-to-Survey World

Discussion of Nancy Bates' Morris Hansen Lecture
November 29, 2016

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Westat

Three Perspectives

- My work with Nancy
- My experience working on hard-to-survey issues as a contractor for U.S. statistical agencies
- My thoughts about some trends in the U.S. as they affect the Census and surveys

Nancy Bates

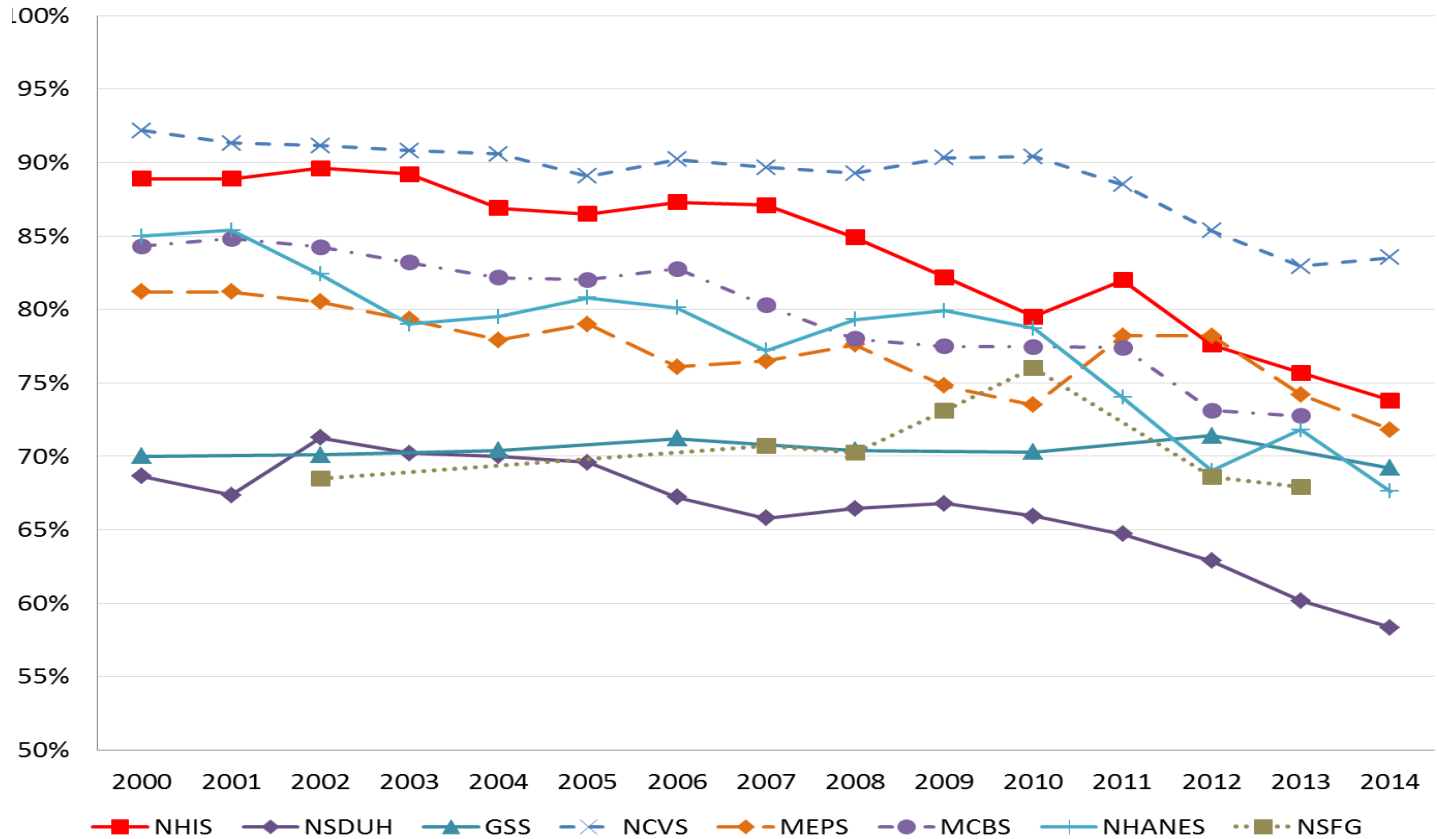
- Hard to Count, the 2012 Hard-to-Reach Conference, and the 2014 Hard-to-Survey Book; international scope
- Related work
 - Question effects on race, Hispanic origin – Bates, Martin, DeMaio, de la Puente (1995)
 - Response rates:
 - trends -- Atrostic, Bates, Burt, Silberstein (2001)
 - difficult/late interviews -- Bates & Creighton (2000)
 - predicting nonresponse -- Bates, Dahlhamer, Singer (2008)
 - Recent work on methods for counting gays and lesbians
 - 3 Decennial Censuses; NHIS, SIPP, other major Census Bureau survey programs

Harder to Count

- Undercounts and overcounts
- Homelessness, linguistic isolation, geography and weather, mobility, stigmatization and discrimination, disability, social isolation, poverty, wealth, criminal behavior
- Privacy
- Swimming against the tide

Harder to Survey

- Falling response rates
 - Mail, phone, face-to-face
- Rising costs
- Quality concerns
- The Tourangeau framework
 - Hard to identify
 - Hard to sample
 - Hard to persuade
 - Hard to interview



Face-to-Face Response Rate Trends (Williams & Brick, in review)

Response rate decline: nearly 1% per year on average, across 8 major national surveys

Modeling the Hard-to-Survey

- The HTS metric – many uses
- The Low Response Rate Score
- Mode
- Gated communities/locked buildings
- Language and geography
- Resource allocation and achieving greater efficiency

Broader Implications

- Adaptive design
- The easy-to-survey
- Internet – surveys and scraping
- Administrative records
- Behavior and norms are changing
 - Civic engagement

Community Engagement and Social Media

- Segmentation and social marketing
- Social distance
- Power of suggestion
- Digital media ads, actionable messages
- The “cynical fifth” and the emerging “suspicious”

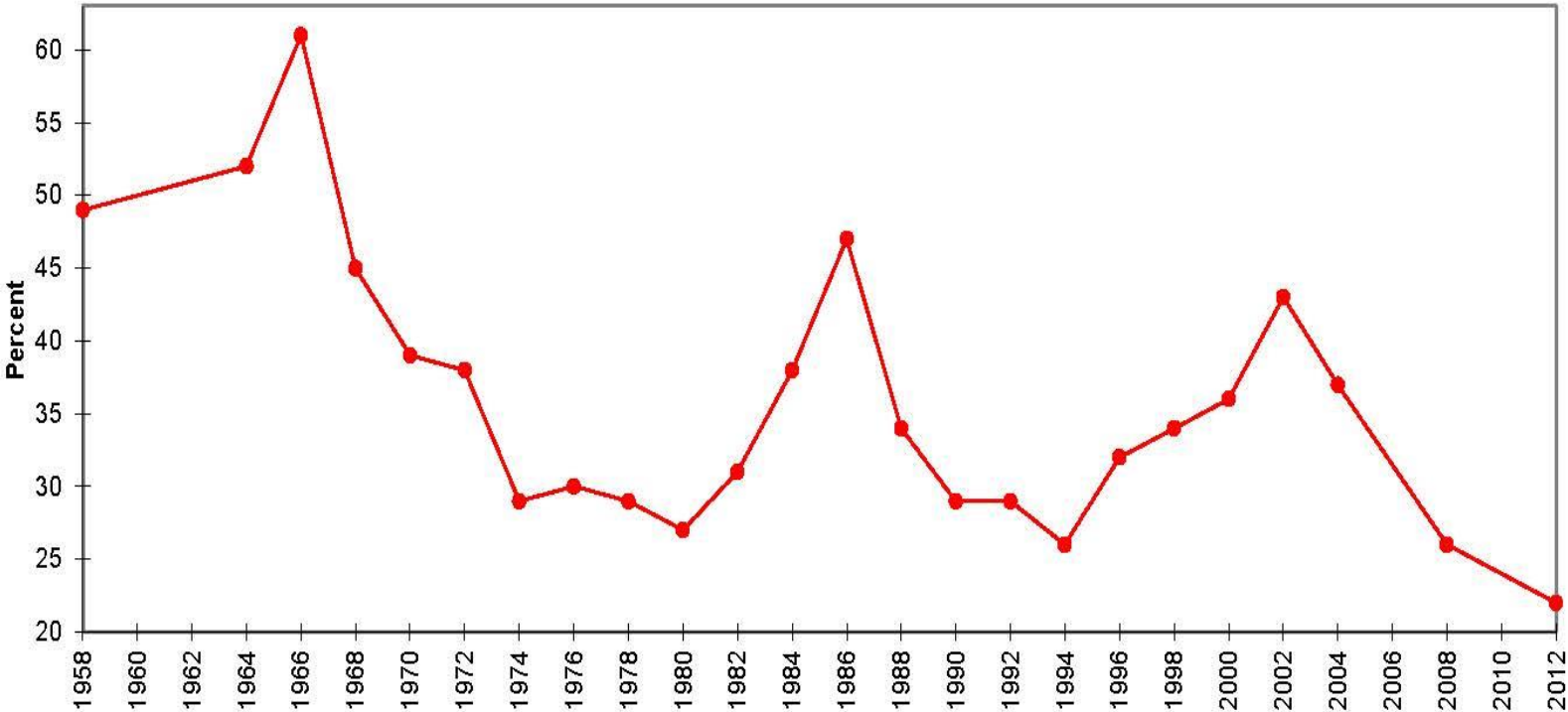
Declines in Confidence, Key U.S. Institutions (GSS data)

Ratio of “a great deal” to “hardly any”

	1976	2014	% Change
• Congress	.5	.1	down 80%
• Executive Branch	.5	.3	down 40%
• Major Companies	1.0	1.0	unchanged
• Press	1.6	.2	down 88%
• Supreme Court	2.3	1.2	down 48%
• Military	2.9	5.4	up 86%
• Banks	4.0	.4	down 90%
• Science	5.7	5.2	down 9%

Trust in Government Index (ANES) – '58-'12

Average Score on Index 1958-2012
TRUST IN GOVERNMENT



Graph 5A.5.1 Source: The American National Election Studies 04NOV15

note: no Time Series studies were conducted in years 1950, 2006 or 2010; in other years without data the question was not asked

The U.S. Constitution

- The Decennial Count
- Apportionment
- One Person One Vote
- The Electoral College
- \$4B
- The Kahns
- The Emoluments Clause

Inclusiveness, Integrity and Independence

- Counting everyone, even those who don't wish to be counted (and those whom others may wish weren't counted)
- “Post-truth” Census numbers
- Fragility and resilience
- Doing the right thing



I'm sorry Jeannie, your answer was correct, but Kevin shouted his incorrect answer over yours, so he gets the points."