Household income

Source 1. American Community Survey (2021)

Figure 8: Household income question in 2021 ACS questionnaire (source)
Source 2. PSRC Household Travel Survey (2019)

Figure 9: Household income question in 2019 PSRC questionnaire (source)

Comparison

The two sources take substantially different approaches to asking about household income. ACS requests a detailed breakdown of income from different sources (salary, self-employment, interest, etc.) with high precision. The PSRC survey requests only that respondents provide income within a predefined range. While the ACS approach yields more precise data and assists respondents in identifying all sources of income, it is likely more precise than is needed for transportation applications. The level of detail requested increases the level of effort required from respondents and is likely to raise privacy concerns for some. PSRC's questions are careful to clarify the purpose of income questions and the importance of privacy. The questionnaire also includes a secondary question that further reduces detail when respondents initially indicate that they would prefer not to state their income.
Recommendation

We recommend using the questions employed by PSRC. The income bins set by PSRC allow for a good understanding of the wealth of a household without creating privacy concerns or excessive work from respondents. As the PSRC question states, a typical purpose of income information in transportation data is to track representativeness, and we believe their questions do a good job of balancing the benefits of precise income data with concern for respondents.

**At this house, apartment, or mobile home – do you or any member of this household have access to the Internet?**

- Yes, by paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider
- Yes, without paying a cell phone company or Internet service provider → **SKIP to question 12**
- No access to the Internet at this house, apartment, or mobile home → **SKIP to question 12**

**Do you or any member of this household have access to the Internet using a –**

- a. cellular data plan for a smartphone or other mobile device? Yes No
- b. broadband (high speed) Internet service such as cable, fiber optic, or DSL service installed in this household? No No
- c. satellite Internet service installed in this household? No No
- d. dial-up Internet service installed in this household? No No
- e. some other service? Specify service

Specify service