Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program Department of Child Support Services County of San Diego

Evaluation Report Intervention Three – LiveChat

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose of Digital Marketing Grant Program

The Digital Marketing Grant Program, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, is a 24-month demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital marketing may help the child support program more effectively reach and serve families. In September 2018, OCSE awarded funds to 14 child support agencies to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents that could benefit from child support services and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.

1.2 PROBLEM

According to the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau, the percentage of Spanish -speaking households headed by a single parent with child(ren) under the age of 18 in San Diego County is 42%. By comparison, the percentage of San Diego County Department of Child Support Services (SDDCSS) case participants that identify Spanish as their primary language is 10%.

SDDCSS viewed this discrepancy as an opportunity to re-evaluate its current marketing strategy and found opportunities to enhance outreach and engagement with this population through three separate interventions that complement each other. These interventions include engaging with customers through social media, targeted emails to potential customers, and improved customer experience through a website live chat.

This evaluation report will detail the intentions, actions, and results of a LiveChat campaign intervention to increase customer engagement with the child support program.

2 Intervention

2.1 GOALS

SDDCSS identified two goals for this intervention:

- Identify the characteristics of people interested in LiveChat to determine if Spanish-speaking customers prefer LiveChat over existing communication tools
- 2) Increase LiveChat use on SDDCSS' website to increase traffic by Spanish-speaking customers

2.2 DEVELOPMENT

Development of this intervention began in February 2020, before implementing a live chat feature on the SDDCSS website, only phone calls, emails, and texting were available to customers. Through research and discussions with staff who engage with customers regularly, the customer desire for a "human" level of interaction was found. Often, newer customers had brief questions they wanted to ask, but did not have a quick means of doing so beyond calling the SDDCSS call center or appearing inperson to one of the offices. These options, due to several factors, were often not appealing or seen as safe by non-English speaking customers. Implementing a live chat feature was selected as the third intervention to provide a modern, more convenient method to communicate with a Child Support representative.

Principal Investigator/Project Director Kendrik Eaton and Grantee Authorizing Official Jennifer Hellerud oversaw the development of the intervention design by the SDDCSS Communications Team.

2.3 TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this intervention was current case participants whose primary language is Spanish, prospective customers, and anybody who is interested in the Child Support Program.

2.4 Intervention Design

The intervention consisted of two Facebook campaigns promoting the chat feature. The goal of the first advertisement was to find the customer segment that would prefer to use the feature. Once this customer segment was identified, SDDCSS created a second advertisement to test if a customized advertisement could increase LiveChat usage and website traffic.

The first paid advertisement ran for 21 days and started at week 5. The target population of this first advertisement was single parents with children under 18 years and it was demographically segmented into 48 groups using four variables: language, region, gender, and age. Language consisted of two groups: English and Spanish; region was split into three regions: South, Central, and North. These three regions were determined by ZIP code assigned to SDDCSS regional office. Gender was split between female and male, and age was separated into four groups (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45+). Using segmentation, user engagement on the advertisements could be measured by each group on Facebook analytics tools.

Additionally, 48 unique tracking codes were embedded in the link in the advertisement so analysts could track visitors to the website who had come from Facebook.

The second ad was initially planned to start in week 11; however, due to COVID-19 communication taking priority, the second advertisement was delayed until week 12.

2.5 Intervention Timeline

Week	Actions Planned	Actions Taken
Week 1	Begin Intervention #3	Monitor LiveChat performance by correcting LiveChat usage
4/1 – 4/7	LiveChat soft launch – No ad	
Week 2 First design meeting for 1 st Facebook paid ad: LiveChat		Monitor LiveChat performance by correcting LiveChat usage
4/8 – 4/14	promotion	
Week 3	Second design meeting for 1st Facebook paid ad	Monitor LiveChat performance by correcting LiveChat usage
4/15 – 4/21	Finish first draft for after approval from the Executive	
	Management Team (EMT)	
Week 4	Collect baseline for LiveChat usage	Monitor LiveChat performance by correcting LiveChat usage
4/22 – 4/28	Set up all conditions on Facebook Ad Manager	
Week 5	1st Facebook paid ad starts	5/1 Facebook paid ad distributed
4/29 – 5/5		Monitor ad performance by collecting key metrics from Facebook
		analytics, Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
Week 6	Brainstorm, research for the second Facebook paid ad	Monitor ad performance by collecting key metrics from Facebook
5/6 – 5/12	design	analytics, Adobe analytics and LiveChat
		Monitor ad performance by collecting key metrics from Facebook
5/13 – 5/19	promotion	analytics, Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
	1 st Facebook paid ad ends	5/19 1 st Facebook paid ad ended
Week 8	Learn: Evaluate 1 st Facebook paid ad results	Evaluate Facebook paid ad performance
5/20 – 5/26		
Week 9	Second design meeting for 2 nd Facebook paid ad – Decide	Monitor LiveChat performance by collecting key metrics from
5/27 – 6/2	target, submit draft to EMT for approval	Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
	Innovate: Make changes on target setting and ad design	
Week 10	Improve: Narrow target and tailor ad design fits to	Monitor LiveChat performance by collecting key metrics from
6/3 – 6/9	targeted audience	Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
Week 11	Intended start date of 2 nd Facebook paid ad	Monitor LiveChat performance by collecting key metrics from
6/10 – 6/16		Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
Week 12	2 nd Facebook paid ad starts	Monitor ad performance by collecting key metrics from Facebook
6/17 – 6/23		Analytics, Adobe Analytics and LiveChat
Week 13	2 nd Facebook paid ad ends	6/30 2 nd Facebook paid ad ended
6/24–6/30	Intervention ends	

2.6 OUTCOME MEASURES

Data Source	Data Element
LiveChat	Number of Chats
	Number of new customers/returning customers
SDDCSS website – Adobe Analytics	Number of unique visitors from Facebook
	Bounce rate ¹
Facebook	Number reached
	Number of clicks
	% video ad played at 100%
	Average time spent on ad

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¹ The percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.

2.7 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research questions that SDDCSS asked were:

- Did the LiveChat Facebook campaign have the desired effect of increasing traffic to the SDDCSS website?
- Was the Facebook campaign have a positively associated with LiveChat usage?
- What groups are most interested in using LiveChat?
- If the ad was tailored to the people who showed most interest in using the chat feature, would it further increase usage?

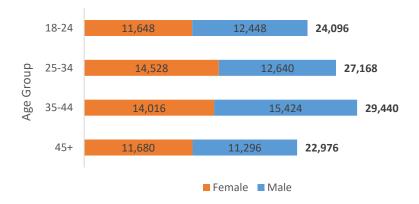
3 RESULTS

3.1 SAMPLE SIZE

3.1.1 Sample size for the first Facebook ad

The SDDCSS communication team used Facebook paid ads to promote their new LiveChat feature to identify the characteristics of the people most interested in it. The campaign started on 5/1/2020 and ran for 19 days. The target audience was single parents with children under 18 years. Since LiveChat user demographic information could not be collected through chat conversation, SDDCSS segmented the target audience using demographic information that Facebook provided, namely "Age", "Gender", "Spoken language", and "Region based on the ZIP code". Forty-eight segmented groups were created with the 4 variables. The first advertisement was a 15-second video ad, and it reached 103,680 people Men and women are evenly distributed in total sample. Figure 1 shows gender distribution by age group.

Figure 1. First Paid Ad: Gender/Age Distribution



3.1.2 Sample size for the second Facebook ad

After SDDCSS analysts examined the first paid ad results, they identified the specific groups that showed the most interest in the chat feature. The communications team targeted this group and tailored the paid ad based on demographic-based preferences. The target population was single parents aged 35 years and older, with children under 18 years old who live in San Diego County. The second ad was planned to start in week 11 and run for the same period as the first advertisement. However, new and unforeseen tasks came up for the SDDCSS communication team due to the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore the second paid ad launch was pushed to the end of week 12 of the intervention period. The ad started on 6/23/2020 and ran for only 8 days. 63,119 people were reached out thought the second paid ad in this period; 53% were men and 47% were women.

3.2 RESULTS

3.2.1 Website traffic

During the third intervention, 55,221 visitors visited SDDCSS website, 1,861 directly came through Facebook ads and accounted for 3.4% of the total website traffic. Three months before the third intervention (1/1 to 3/31), 49,521 people visited SDDCSS website and only 0.3% (162 visitors) came from Facebook.

Figure 2 shows the weekly number of website visitors from Facebook and the total number of website visitors from 1/1/2020 to 6/30/2020. Bars in the chart represent the weekly number of total website visitors and the orange line shows the number of website visitors from Facebook. Noticeable traffic

increase from Facebook is shown while the paid ads were running from 5/1 to 5/19 and 6/23 to 6/30. The weekly average of website visitors from Facebook itself during the paid campaign was 489 while the weekly average number was 19 during the non-campaign period.

The weekly average of total website visitors during the paid campaign was 4,619 while the weekly average number was 3,901 during the non-campaign period. 718 more people visited during the paid ad campaign week.

Although there might be other unknown factors that resulted in traffic increase during the intervention, the above results suggested that the Facebook paid campaign could potentially steer customers from social media to the SDDCSS website.

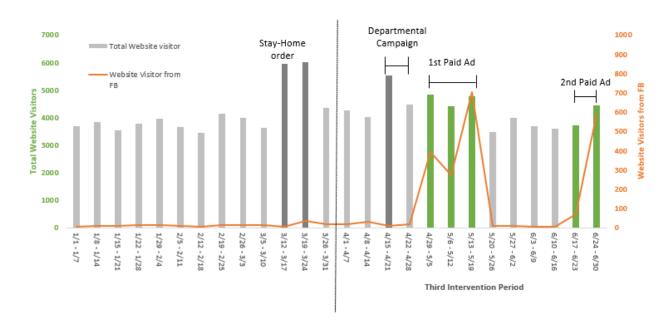


Figure 2. Website Visitors 1/1/2020 - 6/30/2020

Spanish Speaking Website Visitors

One goal of this grant project is to enhance outreach and engagement with Spanish- speaking potential customers. Both paid ads included links that take the customer to the SDDCSS homepage. People who were targeted as English-speakers were navigated to English homepage and Spanish-speaking audiences were taken to the Spanish homepage. Tables 1 and 2 show the number of people who visited the homepage in each language. The number of visitors to the English page during the intervention increased by 4,106 people or 7.8% compared to three months prior. Among 4,106 people, 1,133 were

brought from the two paid ads. The Spanish homepage received 769 more people compared to three months prior which is a 77% increase. Among 769 visitors, 678 people came through paid ads.

Table 1: Number of Visitors to English Homepage

Date	Number of Visitors to English homepage	Visitors from Facebook Paid Ads
1/3 - 3/31	52,147	50
4/1 - 6/30	56,253	1,183
Increase	4,106	1,133

Table 2: Number of Visitors to Spanish Homepage

Date	Number of Visitors to Spanish homepage	Visitors from Facebook Paid Ads
1/3 - 3/31	1,003	8
4/1 - 6/30	1,772	678
Increase	769	670

3.2.2 People Showed Most Interest Towards LiveChat

SDDCSS' communication team was interested in identifying the characteristics of people who preferred the LiveChat feature over other communication methods. However, since we could not collect the demographics of actual LiveChat users through chat conversation, SDDCSS ran a LiveChat campaign on Facebook and collected such demographics. First, we segmented the target population into 48 groups, then we examined user engagement on the ad to see if specific group showed greater interests towards LiveChat feature than other groups.

We examined Click Rate and two video ad engagement metrics identify the age group that most showed the interests toward LiveChat as shown in Tables 3 through 5.

Click Rate

The "Click Rate" was calculated by dividing the number of the people who clicked the link in the ad by the number of the total reaches in a group. In each region, the click rates of the group of 45 years or older was between 2.0% to 3.4% while the click rate for all other groups was between 0.8% to 1.9%.

Table 3: Click Rate

Central	Female	Male
18-24	1.1%	0.8%
25-34	1.3%	1.0%
35-44	1.9%	1.4%
45+	3.4%	2.7%
North	Female	Male
18-24	1.2%	1.2%
25-34	1.3%	1.2%
35-44	1.6%	1.3%
45+	2.0%	2.6%
South	Female	Male
18-24	1.0%	1.4%
25-34	1.5%	1.5%
35-44	1.5%	1.3%
45+	2.8%	2.7%

Videos Played in Entirety

SDDCSS' communication team created 15-second video ads for the first paid ad. The percentage of people who watched the video for all 15 seconds was calculated by dividing the number of times the video ad entirely played by the number of times ads were on the viewers' screen (Impression). The 45 and older group again showed the most interest of any age segment by watching the video to the end between 12.5% to 18% of the time. The other age groups combined showed a range from 5.8% to 11.6%.

Table 4: Videos Played at 100%

Central	Female	Male
18-24	7.5%	6.4%
25-34	8.8%	11.2%
35-44	9.3%	11.4%
45+	17.8%	14.1%
North	Female	Male
18-24	7.3%	5.8%
25-34	8.1%	7.3%
35-44	8.2%	8.3%
45+	13.7%	12.5%
South	Female	Male
18-24	6.2%	7.1%
25-34	8.8%	8.7%
35-44	8.8%	11.6%
45+	18.0%	17.6%

Video Average Playing Time

Table 5 compares the average time spent watching the video ads by each group. Again, 45 years and older spent 4 -6 seconds on average while other age groups spent 2-4 seconds.

Table 5: Average Time Spent (seconds)

Central	Female	Male
18-24	3	2
25-34	4	3
35-44	4	4
45+	6	5
North	Female	Male
18-24	3	2
25-34	3	3
35-44	4	3
45+	5	4
South	Female	Male
18-24	3	3
25-34	4	3
35-44	4	3
45+	6	5

3.2.3 Performance of the Tailored Paid Ad

After reviewing the first Facebook video ad results, SDDCSS observed that the 45 years and above group showed most interest toward the LiveChat feature, followed by the 35 to 44 years group. SDDCSS' communication team targeted the 35 years and above age group for the second paid Facebook ad. The second ad was created with demographic preferences to communicate and extend reach into that age group more effectively. Age was the only demographic used, as there were no notable differences in region and gender.

Traffic Increase

The first advertisement ran for nineteen days and the second ad ran for eight. Since the campaign lengths were different between two ads, the daily average website visitors were used to examine ad performance.

In Tables 6 and 7, the number of website visitors to the English and Spanish homepages from the first paid ad and the second paid ad are compared. While the tailored second ad generated roughly double the traffic to the Spanish homepage, the number of visitors from Facebook to the English site remained almost unchanged. Bounce rate of the second ad for both homepages increased.

Table 6: Daily Average Website Visitors – English Homepage

Advertisement	Average Daily Visitors	Bounce Rate
First Paid Ad	41	76%
Second Paid Ad	40	89%

Table 7: Daily Average Website Visitors – Spanish Homepage

Advertisement	Average Daily Visitors	Bounce Rate
First Paid Ad	19	60%
Second Paid Ad	36	91%

<u>User Engagement</u>

Table 8 compared the viewer engagement of each paid ad. The difference between the groups were not notable.

Table 8: Ad Performance Comparison

Key Metrics	First Ad (19 days) All ages	Second Ad (8 days) 35+
Reach	103,680	63,119
Link Click %	1.7%	1.6%
Cost per Click	\$0.95	\$1.25
3-second View %	22%	21%
Played Entire Video %	9%	8%
Average Video Play	3 seconds	3 seconds

3.2.4 LiveChat Usage

SDDCSS received 444 chats from 4/1 to 6/30. Nine percent of chats were from new customers and 93% were from either existing or returning customers.

Figure 3 illustrates the weekly LiveChat usage during the third intervention. Slight increases were found during both paid campaigns. The weekly average during the first paid ad was 33 uses, and 25 uses for the second paid ad. The weekly average usage was 21 during the non-campaign weeks.

The spikes between 4/15 and 4/28 are due to a departmental communications campaign being run separately from the intervention. This campaign was run due to COVID-19 and targeted existing customers only. The LiveChat usage during that period was excluded from weekly average calculation referenced above.

Departmental Campaign 100 90 80 70 Live Chat Usage 50 1st Paid Ad 40 2nd Paid Ad 20 10 4/1 4/8 6/3 4/15 5/27 6/10 4/22 5/20 4/29 5/13 6/17 4 6/9

Figure 3. LiveChat Weekly Usage 4/1/2020- 6/30/2020

3.3 ANALYSIS

The purpose of this evaluation is to answer the 4 following research questions:

- Did the LiveChat Facebook campaign have the desired effect of increasing traffic to the SDDCSS website?
- 2. Was the Facebook campaign have a positively associated with LiveChat usage?
- 3. What groups are most interested in using LiveChat?
- 4. If the ad was tailored to the people who showed most interest in using the chat feature, would it further increase usage?

During the intervention, the SDDCSS communication team ran 2 Facebook paid advertisements. Both paid advertisements promoted the new LiveChat feature on the website. The SDDCSS website received 55,221 visitors, an increase of 5,700 compared to the three months before the intervention. Among the 5,700 visitors, 1861 visitors were driven by the Facebook LiveChat campaign. The number of website visitors from Facebook three months before the campaign was only 162.

In the six months period between 1/1/2020 and 6/30/2020, LiveChat visitors increased by 18%. The weekly average of total website visitors during the LiveChat campaign period was 4,619 while the weekly average during the non-campaign period was 3,901.

The landing page for website visitors from the campaign was the SDDCSS homepage. English speakers were directed to the English site and Spanish-speaking user were taken to the Spanish site. The numbers of website visitors to both homepages were examined by comparing the traffic before and during the

intervention. The English site gained 4,106 more visitors during the intervention, which represented an increase of 7.8% compared to three months prior. Among the 4,106, 1,133 were generated by the LiveChat campaign, thus 28% of the total gain was contributed by LiveChat campaign. Spanish homepage received 769 more people compared to three months prior, which was 77% increase, and 678 out of 769 visitors came through the campaigns. Thus 88% of total gain came from the campaign.

The results of the Facebook campaign were satisfactory, yet inconclusive on whether Facebook campaign itself solely increased the website traffic. In the era of COVID-19, since face-to-face communication was limited, a greater reliance on digital communication occurred. The increased traffic volume to the website may have been due to a variety of circumstances. During this intervention, the pandemic could be the biggest factor for driving traffic to the website. However, we believe the paid social media campaign helped target the appropriate audience and drive traffic upward at a faster pace than organic posts.

To answer whether the LiveChat campaign increased LiveChat usage was challenging. To count how many people were brought to the site by the campaign, SDDCSS simply counted traffic from the tracking code embedded in the campaign ad. However, there was no tool available to track how many of the website visitors from campaign used the chat feature. To work around this, we analyzed the average weekly LiveChat usage each week. During the first campaign, the average weekly usage was 33. The average for the second campaign was 25. Both campaigns saw a higher weekly average compared to non-campaign weeks, which averaged 21 uses. Although this result shows only a possible association between the campaigns and LiveChat usage, it was enough for the SDDCS communication team to decide to support future campaigns using Facebook to increase LiveChat usage.

With digital communications taking priority during the COVID-19 pandemic, the SDDCSS communication team believes that LiveChat functions could provide a higher rate of customer satisfaction compared to other customer service channels. In this intervention, SDDCSS tried to identify the characteristics of the people who prefer LiveChat. The target for the first LiveChat campaign was segmented into 48 groups using four variables: age, gender, region and language. After the target population was segmented into 48 groups, user advertisement engagement was examined to see which specific group showed greater interests towards the LiveChat feature.

We used three key metrics for user engagement: "Click rate", "Video played in entirety" and "Video average play time". Surprisingly, one group stood out for all key metrics. The 45 years and older group

showed most interest towards the LiveChat feature. The Click rate for the 18-44 years group was between 0.8% to 1.9%, the click rate for 45 years or older was between 2.0% and 3.4%. This older group again showed the most interest watching 100% the video to the end compared to the other age groups. 12.5% to 18% of this group watched entire video ad while the other age groups combined showed a range from 5.8% to 11.6%.

The length of the video was 15 seconds. Women 45 years and above watched the video for an average of six seconds and men in the same age bracket spent an average of five seconds. All other age groups spent two to three fewer seconds watching the ad, for an average of three to four seconds. The group that showed the next highest interest for the LiveChat feature was the 35-44 years group. The SDDCSS communication team targeted these two groups for the second LiveChat Facebook paid campaign and tailored the ads accordingly.

To design the second ad, the ad design team considered the three following suggestions that the analyst made after first ad result was reviewed:

- 1. Develop methods to help the audience better navigate to LiveChat, as there were many visitors to the website, but they quickly bounced off before engaging.
- 2. Develop methods to increase the engagement of the largest customer age group (35-44 years) who saw the paid ad campaign.
- 3. Re-format the video ad to be more "mobile friendly".

The strategy for the second Facebook ad was to first identify frequently asked questions (such as how to start a child support case) and then offer LiveChat as the answer/solution. Also, the Child Support logo was removed from the beginning of the video to help keep the viewers' engagement.² The layout size was also changed from a traditional 16:9 horizontal to a 1:1 square. This layout is better suited to maximize compatibility on both desktop and mobile screens.

Daily average number of website visitors to the Spanish homepage increased by 89%. The second ad did not make difference in driving traffic to the English site. The bounce rate for both sites went up from 76% to 86% for the English site, and 60% to 91% for the Spanish site. The ad campaigns were successful

² The presence of overt government symbols can cause some viewers to move on quickly due to a lack of trust between the recipient and government agencies.

in attracting visitors to the site but keeping them there to engage with the chat feature was a new challenge. This result led us to believe that the high bounce rate may be a result of 1) landing on the same webpage as before thus prompting a need for more development of the homepage; and 2) targeting the same group with the same information in a short period of time.

4 LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

4.1 LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the third intervention, the SDDCSS communication team found areas for improvement for future digital marketing projects. The Facebook campaign was associated with an increase in traffic to the SDDCSS website and therefore the LiveChat campaign may have played a role in increasing online presence and public awareness. However, the advertisement performance results from the two paid ads showed a high bounce rate. The bounce rate for overall website visitors from Facebook was 83% during the campaign period, while the average bounce rate from other referring domains such as Google during the same period was 51%. This means that 83% of people who landed onto the homepage through Facebook did nothing on the page once they entered and immediately left. People familiar with our department, such as current customers, bounced less than people in the information gathering mode. Also, website visitors who come from Google tend to bounce much less than visitors from social media. This high bounce rate may indicate:

- The landing page is not effective in turning visitors into customers.
- Website visitors are not getting the information they expected.
- Visitors do not know where to go once they land on the homepage.

Redesigning the homepage to create a simpler, easier to navigate, and useful resource for customers should decrease the bounce rate and increase engagement. These improvements will be the next steps for SDDCS communication team.

4.2 NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the SDDCSS digital marketing team are as follows:

1. Re-develop the SDDCSS website to reduce the bounce rate from Facebook.

- 2. Conduct an omni channel campaign to capture a wide-ranging audience.
- 3. Plan/develop new digital marketing strategies (streaming ads/radio ads/podcasts).

After the third intervention ended, SDDCSS immediately started the website re-design project. This project focused on re-designing the homepage, simplifying the website navigation, creating a more intuitive interface, and making the website more mobile friendly. Prior to this redesign, the SDDCSS website had been redesigned only once and those efforts were not strictly data driven. The current redesign effort is based on measurable, observed, customer behavior and is set up to be constantly reevaluated on a regular basis. Once this new website is launched, we will monitor inbound traffic, customer engagement, customer flow, and bounce rate to see if any changes need to be made

Currently, SDDCSS is utilizing email marketing promotions such as GovDelivery and PeachJar for prospective customers as well as Facebook, Twitter, and texting. Omnichannel marketing drives customer engagement across all channels with seamless messaging. SDDCSS believes that the omnichannel strategy can make our department more responsive and efficient and will allow customers to obtain the information on their preferred device and through their preferred channel. In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding how the customers want to interact with our organization without being physically present to the office is essential.

5 Works CITED

1. Custom tabulation of 2018 1-year ACS PUMS data

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=total%20households%20&g=0500000US06073&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDP1Y2018.DP02&vintage=2018