

NWX-US DEPT. OF COMMERCE

Moderator: Deborah Rivera-Nieves
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1:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the Q&A session if you'd like to ask a question, you may press star 1 on your phone. Today's call is being recorded. If you have any objections, please disconnect at this time and now I'd like to turn the call over to Mr. Justin Keller. Sir, you may begin.

Justin Keller: Thank you, hello everyone and welcome. My name is Justin Keller and I work in the outreach and education branch in the American Community Survey office here at the U.S. Census Bureau and today I'm presenting an introduction to the American Community Survey.

So I'll start today by going over the basics of the ACS including the history of the survey, how the data are collected, the topics included as well as the geographies that we cover.

Next I'll cover some resources available for learning more about the survey followed by information about the different data products available and the ways to access them. Then I'll reserve some time at the end for questions. The American Community Survey is an ongoing national survey that samples approximately 3.5 million addresses annually.

This comes-out to about 290,000 addresses on a monthly basis. These data are collected continuously throughout the year to produce annual population and housing estimates. The survey covers the resident population of the United States and Puerto Rico for people living in housing units and group quarters.

Housing units include living arrangements such as your typical house, apartment and mobile home whereas group quarters are group living arrangements that are owned or managed by an entity or organization; think dorms, correctional facilities or barracks. The estimates are designed to produce critical information previously collected in the decennial Census.

Our estimates cover more than 35 topics and support more than 300 known federal uses and countless non-federal uses. We released two different sets of estimates each fall in the form of one-year and five-year datasets. The one-year is a collection of 12 months of data where the five-year datasets are a collection of 60 months of data.

The first Census for the United States was conducted in the Year 1790 and occurred every 10 years with one form being sent to all households until 1930. From 1940 until the 2000s the decennial Census contained a short form that was sent to all households as well as a long form that was sent to a sample of households.

In the Year 2000 a large-scale demonstration of the American Community Survey was conducted with full implementation of the ACS and Puerto Rico community survey implemented in 2005. In 2010 and moving forward the decennial Census is only a short form sent to all households because the ACS annually collects information once collected by the long form.

The ACS was developed to focus the Census on improving the population count and provides characteristic data more than once every 10 years to help frame policy issues. If you want to think about the ACS in comparison to the 2010 decennial Census, it's important to remember that the Census provides official counts while the ACS provides sample estimates.

The Census provides population totals whereas the ACS provides population characteristics. The Census occurs every 10 years and reflects a point in time while the ACS occurs annually reflecting a period of time over which the data are collected.

Currently the American Community Survey data collection operation encompasses four modes taking place over a three-month period, Internet, mail, telephone and personal visits. For most housing units the first phase of data collection includes an invitation to the households to respond via the Internet which is mailed to the sample address.

If the household does not respond via the Internet a paper questionnaire is then sent to the sample address for the household to complete and return by mail. Internet data collection started in 2013.

After this if no response is received by mail or Internet, the Census Bureau follows-up with computer-assisted telephone interviewing or CATI if the telephone number is available for that address.

If the Census Bureau is unable to reach an occupant of the unit using CATI or the household refuses to participate, the address may be selected for a computer-assisted personal interviewing or CAPI.

At any point in this process receipt of an Internet response or a completed paper questionnaire from the sample's address will result in the address being removed from the data collection workbook.

On the screen is a list of topics that are covered by the ACS. The content collected by the ACS can be grouped into four main types of characteristics: social, economic, housing and demographic. Social characteristics include topics such as education, marital status, veterans, place of birth, citizenship status, language spoken at home, migration and others.

The American Community Survey also collects basic demographic characteristics such as sex, age, race and Hispanic origin. This is the same information that was collected by the 2010 Census. Economic characteristics include such topics as employment status, income, commuting to work, occupation, health insurance and others.

Housing characteristics include topics such as tenure, information about occupancy in the structure, housing costs including mortgages, taxes, insurances, utilities as well as plumbing and kitchen facilities and others. Together these topics are used to produce more than 1000 tables for local communities resulting in more than 11 billion estimates each year.

The ACS' unique ability to report on a wide range of geographies is what gives it such a broad appeal. On your screen are some of the geographies for which ACS data is produced and the relationship between them. As you can see lower geographic areas fit neatly within the larger areas directly connected with lines.

For example, school, Congressional and state legislative districts fit neatly within states and do not cross state boundaries. However, they may cross boundaries of counties or metro areas.

As you can see the smallest building blocks of the structure is the block group which are references between 600 and 3000 people. Right on top of that is the Census tract which ranges from 1200 to 8000 people.

ACS data products are released only one year after the data are collected and the first year of data collection with a full sample was in 2005, thus ACS data collected in 2015 were released in 2016 as one-year estimates.

ACS one-year estimates pulling data collected over 12 months are available for geographic areas of the population of 65,000 or more. We plan to release the 2016 ACS one-year estimates in just a little over two weeks on September 14th. We will also be hosting a pre-release Webinar next Thursday, September 7th at 1:00 pm.

ACS one-year supplemental estimates are 60 detailed tables available for geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or more. The Census Bureau created this product to respond to data user needs for more timely data at smaller geographies. There are simplified versions of popular ACS tables mainly univariate or bivariate tables focused on key topics.

The supplemental estimates provide more current data and annual updates to almost twice as many geographies as compared to standard one-year release. For example there's 15,101 geographies covered by the 2014 supplemental estimates versus a little over 7800 in the 2014 one-year release. This year we plan to release the 2016 one-year supplemental estimates on October 19th.

ACS five-year estimates again pulling data collected over 60 months are available for geographic areas of all sizes down to the Census tract and block group level. We plan to release the 2012 to '16 five-year estimates on December 7th, thus ACS data are available for geographic areas with a population of 20,000 or more in the form of one-year and five-year estimates.

But ACS data are only available for a geographic area with a population less than 20,000 in the form of five-year estimates. In 2015 the Census Bureau discontinued three-year estimates in order to prioritize activities that would preserve the integrity of the sample, enhance the quality and tighter dataset and ensure a better experience for the respondent.

Although the Census Bureau discontinued the three-year product, every community in the nation continues to receive detailed social, economic, housing and demographic characteristics through the one and five-year data products. Now we'll talk about some resources for learning more about the ACS.

If anyone ever has questions about the ACS, the first place to turn is census.gov/acs. The American Community Survey Website has a lot of information about the program, data products as well as helpful information and tools for data users.

Our data tables and tools page will introduce you to the most popular tools and data products with descriptions and links available for each. The strength of the American Community Survey is in estimating characteristics distribution.

We recommend users compare derived measures such as percent, means, medians and rates rather than estimate of population totals. The comparison

guidance page provides yearly guidance of comparisons of datasets and specific topics and subjects.

In general the Census Bureau recommends that you do compare similar period lengths, for example one-year to one-year estimates. However, you wouldn't want to compare estimates from different period lengths, for example comparing a one-year to a five-year estimate.

You do compare estimates from non-overlapping periods so for example comparing a 2005 to '09 five-year estimate with a 2010 to '14 five-year estimate. However, you wouldn't want to compare overlapping periods so you wouldn't want to compare 2005 to '09 with a 2006 to '10 five-year estimate.

For users that have accessed the data but need more information to understand the tables and complete their analysis, we offer codeless subject definitions, (reporter) definitions, instructions for applying some physical testing, comparison guidance as well as accuracy of the data in our technical documentation section on the technical documentation page.

Now we're going to talk about some selected ways to access ACS data products. The ACS caters to a variety of data users with unique needs. Here's a list of some selected ways to access ACS data and also a link to guidance on which would be the most appropriate data tool for you to use.

All data tools are available from census.gov. Simply choose the data tab on the top then click the data tools and app button. QuickFacts is a quick easy way to access facts about people, business and geographies, all states, counties, cities and towns of the population greater than 5000 people.

It's great for making quick comparisons between two geographies. Some topics you can compare-on are population, age and sex, housing, health, economy, transportation, business and others.

Our next tool is Census Business Builder. CBB provides select demographic and economic data from the Census Bureau; can help determine best location for businesses, provide a snapshot of the local community, detailed reports about local demographic characteristics as well as various business characteristics.

It's available for all the geographies down to the tract levels. Currently there's two editions available, the small business division which combines ACS data with data from economic Census programs. Tool health business planners find optimal location to open or expand the business; helps identify potential customers and competitors in a given industry.

It's a great tool for small business openers who don't have access to the expansive and complex analytics that larger corporations do. The second is the regional analyst edition, built for chambers of commerce and regional planning staff who need a broad portrait of the people and businesses in their service area.

It presents data for all sectors of the economy and for a user-defined region made-up of one or more areas. American FactFinder is the most comprehensive tool for accessing Census Bureau statistics.

Users can choose between several speeds, community facts which delivers those QuickFacts, a guidance search which will walk a user through the process of finding that they need, an advanced search allowing for very

specific queries and the download center which allows users to download an entire dataset and explore it on their own.

Another of our popular tools is My Congressional District. This tool is useful for information on Congressional districts. It provides statistics on people, workers, housing, socioeconomics, education and business and is available to embed the avocation on your own Website.

In keeping with our modern era of information on that go, the Census Bureau has created an API for developers to utilize publicly-available detailed ACS data in the development of Web or mobile applications. The ACS now contains the ACS one, three and five-year datasets as well as data from our Censuses and programs.

Formats available in the API include HTML, XML and JSAN and this is available through census.gov/developers. Product types is a topic you can select in American FactFinder. The letters in parentheses next to the profiles and tables corresponds to the beginning of the table ID in AFF. Through American FactFinder you can access a wide range of ACS data products.

Profiles offer a broad look at a community's socioeconomic, housing and demographic characteristics. They generally include many variables and are available for geography or a population group at the center.

Tables provide a more precise or detailed view of the subject whereas the subject matter is the center of the table. Data profiles provide broad socioeconomic, housing and demographic profiles. Narrative profiles summarize information in the profiles using concise, non-technical terms.

Comparison profiles offer comparisons of estimates across years and selected population profiles provide broad social and economic and housing profiles for a large number of race, ethnic ancestry and country and region of birth.

Talk a little bit more specific about the tables available, the detailed tables provide access to the most detailed ACS data and cross-tabulations of variables. Subject tables are similar to data profiles but include more detailed ACS data classified by subject.

Ranking tables provides state rankings of estimates across 86 key variables and finally geography comparison tables compare geographic areas other than states so for example counties or Congressional districts or key variables.

Ever wonder what the table ID represents? The characters may look random at first but each ACS table ID is purposely numbered to describe its content and format. For example the characters in B06004 APR show the table contains place of birth statistics for the white population alone in Puerto Rico.

The ACS table IDs consist of up to five elements. To learn more about the numbering system or drill into each of the following elements, you can visit the link on your screen. Now we're going to go over some examples in FactFinder of finding data.

So say you wanted to know the average commuting time in Denver, Colorado. What I'd advise is going to [census.gov/quickfacts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts). What you would then do is enter Denver in the search box, select Denver city and then select a fact so what you want to do to get the average commuting time is scroll down to transportation and select mean travel to work.

What this shows us is that the average commuting time in Denver is 24.8 minutes which is a little less than the 25.9 minutes shown nationally. Now say you wanted to see how this compares across Colorado. You can do this simply by clicking on the chart icon to review this information.

You go up to the top and click chart and click Denver and you can compare the mean travel time to work across the State of Colorado. Like we mentioned, QuickFacts is a quick easy way to find facts about different variables. Now say you wanted to have income and earnings data nationally broken-down by urban and rural geographies. How would you do that?

For this I would recommend using American FactFinder available at factfinder.census.gov so from there you'd want to go to the advanced search either along the top or along the side. On the advanced search tab, select geographies and then from the name tabs scroll down and select it shows geographic components.

What this does will give you a list of all and the most frequently requested geographic types so for our case we want to do urban versus rural so we want to select urban. Rural is not available on this page so we'll just page over. Scroll down, select rural, edit to our selection and as you can see from the top left both rural and urban were added to the selection box.

And now we can close the geographic overlay to get this income and earnings data nationally. We're going to want to go to topics and then people, income and earnings and then finally income and earnings for households and from there we can close the overlay and from here we see there's over 4600 tables and products which match some characteristic of the search that we did.

Because of the population thresholds we talked about earlier, we're going to want to use the five-year estimates so in this case we'll compare medians and we can do so by selecting Table S1903 using the most recent ACS five-year estimate so here we have a breakdown of median income for the rural and urban populations.

For our third example let's say we wanted to see population estimates for counties in a Congressional district. The first thing we want to do and this is a case for any new search in American FactFinder is clear our selections so go back to the advanced search and X-out of that and then click clear all selections and start anew.

From here it brings us back to a fresh search screen so what we'll want to do to compare pop estimates for counties in the Congressional district we're going to go over to geographies, we're going to select from a list and for geographic type, I'm going to scroll-down to select the State of Georgia, put 115th Congress.

We'll just select the 6th Congressional District, add it to the geography so for some reason, FactFinder is not displaying the part of the county choice for Congressional district, Code 510 so there are flaws with FactFinder. They just have to continue to work through those so because of that I will skip the Example 3, I apologize for that.

We are in the midst of converting to a new data dissemination platform. This is available on in data at data.census.gov and this is a preview of the new data dissemination platform. We're currently gathering public input to develop the tool. You can explore and poke around here and submit feedback to [\(sedsy\).feedback@census.gov](mailto:(sedsy).feedback@census.gov) found right here on your screen.

You have to remember it's important to remember because it is in development that all datasets will not be available so now that we're back in the PowerPoint we could just quickly go over how it should have looked to find population estimates for counties in the Congressional district.

So again we select geographies then the name filter, 510 should have showed-up so it should be right there for county or part within a Congressional district. We then select Georgia and then District 6 which would result and give us the three counties listed so you'd want to select all three, add that.

From there you want to select people and then basic count and estimate and population total. At that point you can close this topics overlay and this would provide the results for DP05 and you can see up in the upper left it uses the 2011 to '15 five-year estimates.

Now if you wanted to click to create it, you can click on create a map and then you select the variable to maps to provide a map and see how this would look so for this example you could see the populations available by county in this Congressional district. As a reminder if you're using our data, we ask you to source this by following the requirements listed on the screen.

We also encourage you to let us know how you're using ACS data. You can always share your thoughts or data using examples using our Twitter handle, @USCensusBureau or #ACSdata or visit our Facebook page. We want to remind you that there is a user group specifically for users of ACS.

The data user group was formed in partnership with the population reference bureau. It's a great way to learn from your peers about how to use an ACS data for all kinds of applications. To access this free tool, go to

acsdatausers.org to learn more including how to sign-up to be one of the over 1700 users in the ACS online community.

We also have assistance available to you. Our regional data staff can help access local statistics from the ACS or offer training to help build your skills. Simply contact the address below at census.askdata@census.gov. With that this concludes the presentation portion of the program and we can open the line to questions.

Coordinator: The phone lines are now open for questions. If you'd like to ask a question over the phone, please press star 1 and record your name. If you'd like to withdraw your question, press star 2. Thank you. The first question to queue is from (Pamela). Your line is now open.

(Pamela): Oh, okay, I was wondering, okay, I was just on the beta version of the new stuff, if we get data is that data current?

Justin Keller: It would be whichever dataset that you selected from.

(Pamela): Right, so it's not like it's an old set out there. It's so you said that not all the sets would be there but if it is there, then it's right, I guess is what I meant.

Justin Keller: Correct. That's correct.

(Pamela): Right, thank you.

Coordinator: Next question in the queue is from (Abe). Your line is now open.

(Abe): Yes, hello?

Justin Keller: Hi there.

(Abe): Hi, so I got two questions if I may. You showed during the WebEx you showed a lot of links but those links went by real quick and none of them are easy-to-remember links. Is there a place where all those links are referenced that I can just look at one URL and find all of them? That's my first question.

The second question is I'm trying to use this new interface and I expected it to be sort of Google-like but even though I put-in the Google-type query, it came back with tons of data, tons of very information, very little actual useful data.

Justin Keller: Okay, in answer to your first question, the presentation will be sent-out generally about 24 hours after using the e-mail address you logged-in under so you will have those links available and then also within a week the presentation will also be made available online with those links as well.

(Abe): Where will be the presentation be made available after a week at what URL?

Justin Keller: It'll be at - I'll bring it up on the screen - you go to census.gov/acs, click on events, actually I'm sorry, click on guidance for data users and then training presentations and all our presentations are available here so I can leave this up here.

(Abe): Did you notice how many levels of indirection you actually used to get there?

Justin Keller: Yes.

(Abe): Okay and the second question with respect to the ease of use of this new Google-type interface?

Justin Keller: Yes, I would just encourage you to submit that feedback and anything you experience.

(Abe): All right, thank you.

Coordinator: Next question in the question is from (Bud), your line is now open.

(Bud): Yes, I actually hit the pound and two really quickly after he answered the question regarding where I could find the data so I was trying to write-down the bread crumbs right now so thanks, you've answered my question.

Justin Keller: Oh, perfect.

Coordinator: Next question in the queue is from (Anne Marie), your line is now open.

(Anne Marie): Hi, so I think I know the answer but you had a slide that showed the one-year it was like a table of one-year estimates and five-year estimates and population for want to use them.

So if I were wanting to aggregate Census tracts to planning districts here in Philadelphia which are our own, you know, boundaries that we've created, I would have to use five-year estimates because tracts are small, correct?

Justin Keller: Correct.

(Anne Marie): Okay. Just wanted to make sure because I know sometimes the one-year, people ask well why aren't you using the one-year data so thanks.

Justin Keller: Yes, and again those thresholds for one year is 65,000 or more and the five-year encompasses everything else.

(Anne Marie): Right, thank you.

Coordinator: So once again if you would like to ask a question over the phone, please press star 1 and record your name. The next question in the queue is from (Doug), your line is now open.

(Doug): Right, those problems that you were having with the American FactFinder, are you sure that they are corrected and that in your new data platform or which I assume has the different search engine?

Justin Keller: Yes, the part of the roll-out for feedback is to try to address any, you know, issues that will arise. You know, no system is perfect but we are trying to address those as we move along so that once all the data is in there, we minimize those issues.

(Doug): Yes, but how thorough is your QA process, I mean, that was a pretty basic search? Do you have a QA group there that's systematically trying queries and reporting problems?

Justin Keller: I know there is a group who are responsible for the new platform. I know they are working hard and would hope they can address the issues that do arise.

(Doug): Okay, and what again is the name of the new data platform you're moving to? I didn't get it the first time around.

Justin Keller: It's I don't know that it has a name right now. It's just available at data.census.gov.

(Doug): Okay, okay, so we can't give you any input as to our recommendations for data platforms or I have a ...

((Crosstalk))

Justin Keller: Yes, let me ...

((Crosstalk))

(Doug): ... I mean, is that still being still a matter of discussion then or okay.

((Crosstalk))

Justin Keller: And if you go to data.census.gov and scroll-down to the very bottom, it will allow you to share that experience.

(Doug): Okay, yes, because I do have a lot of experience with a lot of the new platforms, okay. All right, thank you.

Justin Keller: Thank you. We look forward to your feedback.

(Doug): Right.

Coordinator: Next question in the queue is from (Sasha). Your line is now open.

(Sasha): Hi, I had a question, I was working with some information from some block groups and I'm just trying to identify, you know, if they fell, you know, within certain income ranges.

But what I wanted to do was map those block groups that I selected that were, you know, eligible under X criteria and I wanted to map those and you don't create a sort of just a color-coded map but there were various block groups. Is there anything any tool that you guys have that could facilitate that? If I explained myself correctly?

Justin Keller: Have you tried the create-a-map functions through FactFinder?

(Sasha): I've created maps based on like certain characteristics, you would say income or just, you know, something easy but what I wanted to let, okay, so let's say, you know, Puerto Rico had 1000 block groups, simplifying it and 200 of those were eligible under my criteria.

So I wanted to map those 200 block groups, you know, and have those selected and, you know, on the map or just identified in a certain color because my second step was to say well, you know, in this place in this area of island you have a high concentration of you know, the people that are eligible.

Justin Keller: Okay, you know, off the top of my head I'm not sure. What I can encourage you to do is submit an e-mail and I can give the e-mail address to ACSO data user support and you can e-mail them directly and hopefully get you a better answer and that e-mail address is acso.data.users.support@census.gov. That again is - if anyone needs that again - it's acso.data.users.support@census.gov.

Coordinator: I'm showing no further questions at this time.

Justin Keller: Okay, well if there's no further questions then I'd like to thank everyone for attending today and to follow-up with us if anything comes-up after the fact and look for the presentation in the next couple of days. Thanks.

Coordinator: This concludes today's call. Thank you for your participation. You may disconnect at this time.

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