Making Sense of the American Community Survey
Outline

Overview of the American Community Survey (ACS)
✓ History & Methodology
✓ Datasets (2016 ACS 1 Year Estimates Release) & Topics
✓ Geographies

Resources for learning more
✓ Census.gov/acs
✓ User’s Guide
✓ Narrative Profiles

Accessing ACS data products
✓ Fact Finder Demo
✓ Data.census.gov
What Do We Do?

The Decennial Census
The once-a-decade population and housing count of the United States

The American Community Survey
The ongoing annual survey of the demographic, socioeconomic and housing characteristics of the nation’s population

Population Estimates
produces annual estimates of the population and housing units

The Economic Census
The official five-year measure of American businesses

Census of Governments
provide periodic and comprehensive statistics about governments and governmental activities

+ over 130 statistical programs
Making Sense of the ACS

- Ongoing monthly survey sent to 3.5 million addresses per year to produce detailed population and housing estimates each year
  - Visit 20,000 Group Quarter facilities and sample approximately 194,000 residents each year
- Designed to produce **critical information on small areas and small population groups** previously collected on the decennial long form
- Covers 40+ topics and supports over 300 known Federal Government uses
- Data released twice annually
  - 1-year estimates (12 months of data)
  - 5-year estimates (60 months of data)
History: Census and ACS

• **1790-1930**
  - Census: one form to all households

• **1940-2000**
  - Census: short form and long form

• **2005-present**
  - ACS /ACS-GQ/ PRCS: Full implementation

• **2010**
  - Census: short form only
2010 Census vs. ACS

**2010 Census**
- 100% Data
- How many people live in the U.S.?
- Point in time: April 1, 2010
- Count - People, Housing units,

**American Community Survey**
- Sample Data
- How do people live in the U.S.?
- Period in Time: 1yr and 5yr
- Characteristics: Income, Poverty, Education

2000 Long Form SF3 & SF4
Data Collection Process

- **Online**
- **Mail**
- **Telephone**
- **Personal Visit**

**Self-Response Modes**

**Non-Response Modes**
What is Available from the ACS?

• Social
  • Ancestry
  • Citizenship Status
  • Disability Status
  • Educational Attainment & School Enrollment
  • Fertility
  • Grandparents as Caregivers
  • Language Spoken at Home
  • Marital History; Marital Status
  • Migration/Residence 1 Year Ago
  • Period of Military Service
  • Place of Birth
  • Undergraduate Field of Degree
  • Veteran Status
  • Year of Entry

• Demographic
  • Age
  • Sex
  • Race
  • Hispanic Origin

• Economic
  • Income
  • Benefits
  • Employment Status
  • Occupation
  • Industry
  • Commuting to Work
  • Place of Work

• Housing
  • Tenure
  • Housing Value
  • Occupancy
  • Taxes & Insurance
  • Household Size
  • Utilities

What topics can you get from the 2010 Census?
  • Age
  • Race
  • Sex
  • Hispanic or Latino Origin
  • Household Relationship
  • Tenure (Owned vs. Rented)
  • Vacancy Characteristics
Can I Get Data for my Area?

Zip Codes: Business data only
Zip Code Tabulation Area: Demographic, socioeconomic and housing
Places: Cities and towns (except states in the Northeast)
County Subdivisions: Cities and towns for states in the Northeast (ME, VT, NH, MA, CT, RI, NJ, and NY)
When are ACS Estimates Available?

- **Areas with a population 65,000+**: 1 Year Estimates

- **All Areas** (incl. census tracts & block groups): 5-year estimates

Public Use Microfile Sample Data

Upcoming releases:
- 2018 ACS 1 Year Estimates – September, 2019
- 2014-2018 ACS 5 Years Estimates – December, 2019
Guidance for ACS Data Users

✓ Compare across geographies and population subgroups using the same year estimates.

✓ When looking at trends overtime, compare with caution. For instance, when looking at 2015 ACS and 2016 ACS estimates, use caution when comparing:
  • Income, Earnings, and Poverty
  • Computer and Internet Use
  • Language Spoken at Home

✓ Compare percentages, means, medians, and rates instead of totals whenever possible

✓ Don’t expect ACS estimates to match decennial census counts or estimates from other surveys
Popular Data Tools

- Data.census.gov
- Quick Facts
- My Congressional District
- Interactive Maps
- Narrative Profile
- American FactFinder
- Census Reporter
- Flows Mapper
- Business Builder
- DataFerrett
- My Tribal Area
- Response Outreach Area Mapper
Data Dissemination and Training: census.gov/academy

- **Bring our data experts to you.** Request a free data training for your organization.

- **Subscribe to Census.gov/academy.** Join our educational hub to receive our updates and training products
  
  - **Receive our Data Gems.** These short “how-to” videos are an easy and quick way to increase your knowledge of Census data. Get them in your inbox!

  - **Get access to our data courses.** You will learn-at-your-own-pace with these video-tutorials designed for different skill levels.

  - **Interact with our instructors via webinars.** Learn about our data releases and tools while attending these live virtual classes.

**Contact us:**
Census.askdata@census.gov
1844-ASK-DATA
Connect with us on Social Media

---

United States Census Bureau
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov