American Community Survey (ACS)

What is it?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing sample survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people. Information from the survey generates data that help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal and state funds are distributed each year. This U.S. Census Bureau survey samples about 295,000 addresses each month for an estimated 3.5 million households each year. For more information, go to <www.census.gov/acs>.

How does this survey help me?

Through the ACS, we know more about jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, whether people own or rent their home, and other topics. Public officials, planners, and entrepreneurs use this information to assess the past and plan the future. When you respond to the ACS, you are doing your part to help your community plan hospitals and schools, support school lunch programs, improve emergency services, build bridges, and inform businesses looking to add jobs and expand to new markets, and more.

Is my information confidential?

Participating in U.S. Census Bureau censuses and surveys is safe. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information and keep your responses strictly confidential. It’s against the law for the Census Bureau to publicly release your responses in any way that could identify you, your household, or your organization.

To protect your privacy, the American Community Survey NEVER asks for:
- Your social security number
- Your personal information via e-mail
- Money or donations
- Credit card information

How am I notified to participate?

You will receive a letter, signed by the Census Bureau director, informing you that your address was selected to be included in the American Community Survey. If you are notified, you will:
- Receive a letter and instruction card explaining how to complete the survey online, and/or receive a paper copy of the survey to complete and return to Jeffersonville, IN.

If you do not complete the survey you may:
- Receive a visit from one of our field representatives to complete the survey with you.
How often is the data released?
New data are available each year.

What products are available from the data?
- ACS 1-year estimates—for geographies with 65,000 or more people.
- ACS 1-year supplemental estimates—for geographies with 20,000 or more people.
- ACS 5-year estimates—all geographies.
- Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Files—for 1- and 5-year datasets.

NOTE: The Census Bureau discontinued the ACS 3-year estimates as of 2014, though previous 3-year estimates are available.

How would I use this information?
- Developing business plans
- Completing grants
- Planning for strategic and economic development
- Preparing for emergency management operations

What are some of the topics available in the ACS?

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For more information about education and training, see <www.census.gov/data/training-workshops.html>.