

The American Community Survey

Briefing for National Committee on Vital and
Health Statistics Meeting
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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

What Is the American Community Survey?

- A large, continuous demographic survey
 - Produces annual and multi-year estimates of the characteristics of the population and housing
 - Produces *characteristics, not a population count*
 - Produces information for small areas including tracts, block groups and population subgroups updated every year
 - Key component of reengineered 2010 census

Effects of the American Community Survey on the 2010 Census

- Eliminate long-form
- Better knowledge of local areas
- Ongoing contacts with local governments
- Experienced field staff to help with the short-form only census

American Community Survey Program Schedule

- ACS testing and development: 1996-2004
- ACS full implementation begins 2005
 - Monthly sample for household population, as well as group quarters population, planned for 2005 start
- First ACS data products, 2006; annually updated data products each year thereafter

Full Implementation Plans

- Implement a national sample of 3 million addresses in every county, American Indian and Alaska Native area, and Hawaiian Home Land in the United States, and in Puerto Rico
- Provide profiles every year for communities of 65,000 or more
- Provide 3- to 5-year cumulations for communities of less than 65,000 population

Current and Timely Local Data: ACS Release Timetable

Type of Data	Population Size of Area	Data for the Previous Year Released in the Summer of:							
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010+
Annual estimates	250,000+	■	■	■	→	→	→	→	→
Annual estimates	65,000+				→	→	→	→	→
3-year averages	20,000+						→	→	→
5-year averages	Census Tract and Block Group								→

■ Data reflect American Community Survey testing through 2004.

Note: Increase in sample size from 800,000 to about 3 million addresses expected to begin in 2005.

Full Implementation: Budget Issues

- The current Administration is committed to full implementation of the ACS and reengineering of the 2010 census.
- The President's budget included \$64.8 million to begin funding that plan in FY 2004.
- FY 2005 House mark was sufficient to fund full implementation in 2005; Senate mark was not—final FY 2005 appropriation for ACS is unknown at this point

ACS Methodology

- First month: Mail out paper forms to 1/12th of annual sample
- Second Month: Nonrespondent follow-up by telephone using a computer-assisted questionnaire
- Third month: For remaining nonrespondents, follow-up of a sample via personal interview, also using a computer-assisted questionnaire

ACS Content

- Very similar in scope to Census long form—topics covered include: education, migration, disability status, employment status, industry, occupation, weeks and hours worked, food stamp receipt, income, poverty; housing characteristics such as number of rooms, utility costs, value of property, and rent/mortgage costs
- Reference period differences:
 - Census: point in time; previous calendar year for income
 - ACS: annual average; previous 12 months for income

Federal Agency Uses of the American Community Survey

- In January 2003 the Census Bureau compiled an inventory of uses of American Community Survey data that Federal agencies identified to the Interagency Committee on the American Community Survey
 - For each questionnaire item the inventory differentiates mandatory and required uses from programmatic uses not specifically identified in federal laws, regulations, or court decisions
 - The inventory also shows how frequently the data are needed for what (smallest) geographic areas

Federal Agency Information Program

- The American Community Survey Federal Agency Information Program will ensure that federal agencies having a current or potential use for data will have the assistance they need.

Once an agency has indicated that they want to participate in the program, the Census Bureau will contact the person identified as liaison by the agency and identify one or more Census Bureau contacts.

- The Census Bureau staff can provide information and technical assistance as needed as well as advocating for the agency within the American Community Survey.

For more information, or if you have any questions:

- Go to <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
- Contact Chuck Nelson (301-763-3183, charles.t.nelson@census.gov)