

American Community Survey – “Not the same old census data...”

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The Way It Was...

In Census 2000, the census used two forms

- “Short” form – asked for basic demographic and housing information, such as age, sex, race/Hispanic, how many people lived in the housing unit, and if the housing unit was owned or rented by the resident. A.k.a. “100% data”
- “Long” form – collected the same information as the short form but also collected more in-depth information such as income, education, and language spoken at home. About 16 percent of all households received the long form. A.k.a. “Sample data”.

But we only got data every 10 years.



The Way It Is Now...

- 2010 Census focused on counting the U.S. population with basic demographic info – age, sex, race/Hispanic, and owner/renter. There was only one form.
- The ACS will collect the same questions as in the 2010 Census.
- Social and economic data are now collected **only** in the ACS



American Community Survey

The American Community Survey or ACS:

- Is a sample of about 3 million addresses nationwide each year or about 2 percent
- Data are collected continuously throughout the year
- Three modes of data collection
 - mail
 - phone
 - personal visit
- Data are released annually



ACS Content

<u>Demographic *</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Economic</u>	<u>Housing</u>
<p>Sex Age Race Hispanic Origin</p>	<p>Families Education Marital Status Fertility Grandparents Veterans Disability Status Language at Home Citizenship Mobility</p>	<p>Income Benefits Employment Status Occupation Industry Commuting Place of Work Health Insurance</p>	<p>Tenure * Occupancy * Structure Type Housing Value Taxes & Insurance Utilities Mortgage Monthly Rent</p>

* Also collected in the 2010 Census



Period Estimates

- ACS estimates are “period estimates”. They describe the average characteristics over a specified time period.
- Contrast with point-in-time estimates that describe the characteristics of an area on a specific date
- ACS has three time-periods: 1-year, 3-years, and 5-years. These use the calendar year.



Constructing Multiyear Estimates

- Data are pooled across 36 or 60 months
- Data are weighted to produce estimates
- Estimates are controlled for age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin
- Multiyear estimates are not an average of 1-year estimates
- Dollar-valued data are inflation adjusted using the CPI to the most recent year of the period



ACS Geography

- Estimates for each time period have a different population threshold for geographic areas:
 - 1-year: Population 65,000+
 - 3-year: Population 20,000+
 - 5-year: All geographies including Census Tract and Block Group



Currency vs. Reliability



Measure of Reliability – Margin of Error

2008 1-Year Estimates for California

Selected Economic Characteristics	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Margin of Error
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Population 16 years and over	28,497,519	+/-10,319	28,497,519	(X)
In labor force	18,675,022	+/-45,307	65.5%	+/-0.2
Civilian labor force	18,513,990	+/-46,699	65.0%	+/-0.2
Employed	17,124,518	+/-46,405	60.1%	+/-0.2
Unemployed	1,389,472	+/-22,343	4.9%	+/-0.1
Armed Forces	161,032	+/-7,365	0.6%	+/-0.1
Not in labor force	9,822,497	+/-44,836	34.5%	+/-0.2
Civilian labor force	18,513,990	+/-46,699	18,513,990	(X)
Percent Unemployed	7.5%	+/-0.1	(X)	(X)

2008-2006 3-Year Estimates for California

Selected Economic Characteristics	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Margin of Error
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Population 16 years and over	28,139,366	+/-6,690	28,139,366	(X)
In labor force	18,228,215	+/-19,023	64.8%	+/-0.1
Civilian labor force	18,084,737	+/-19,578	64.3%	+/-0.1
Employed	16,834,866	+/-20,762	59.8%	+/-0.1
Unemployed	1,249,871	+/-12,175	4.4%	+/-0.1
Armed Forces	143,478	+/-4,082	0.5%	+/-0.1
Not in labor force	9,911,151	+/-19,445	35.2%	+/-0.1
Civilian labor force	18,084,737	+/-19,578	18,084,737	(X)
Percent Unemployed	6.9%	+/-0.1	(X)	(X)



Use Multiyear Estimates When ...

- The population for your geographic area is less than 65,000
- Margins of error for one-year estimates are larger than acceptable
- Analyzing data for small geographic areas or small population groups in large areas

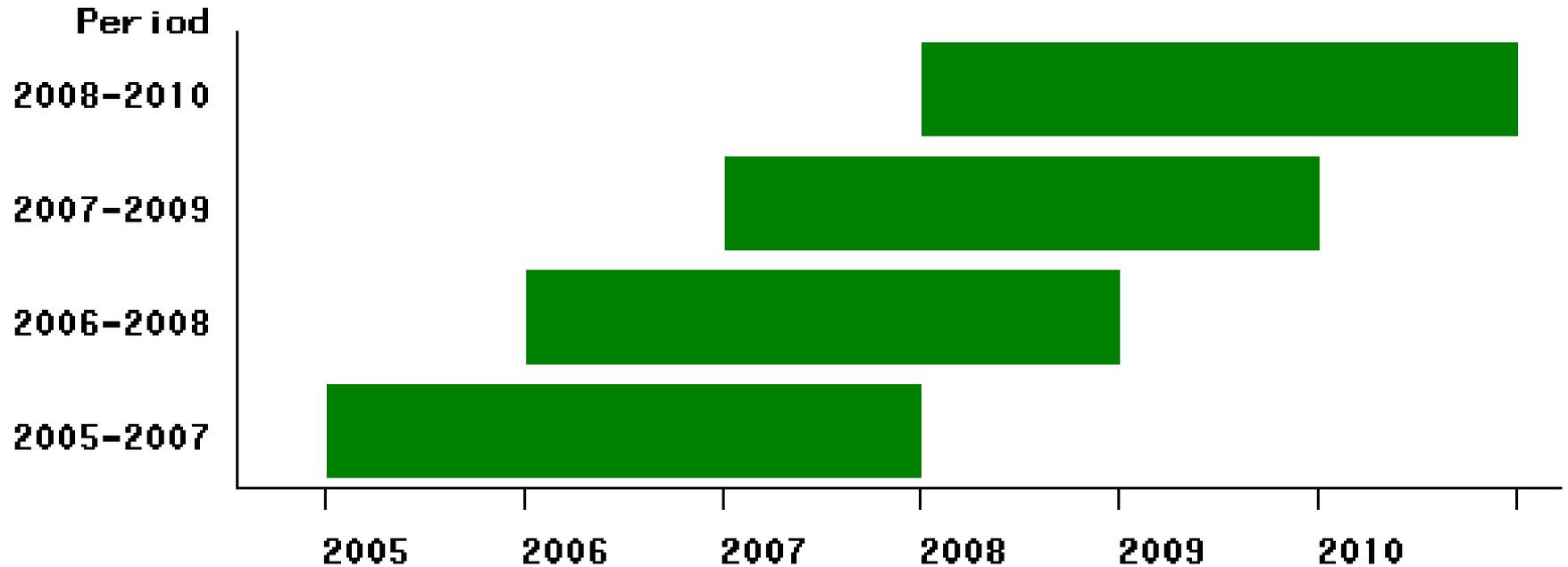


Comparing ACS Estimates

- Use the same time period – don't compare 1-year estimates with multiyear estimates.
- Same geographic areas over time
 - Use caution if geographic boundaries have changed over time
 - Better to compare non-overlapping periods



Overlapping Periods



How to Label Multiyear Estimates

- ACS estimates based on data collected from 2005-2007 should not be labeled “2006” or “2007” estimates
- Multiyear estimates do not represent any one year or the midpoint of a period
- Correct labeling for multiyear estimate: “The child poverty rate for the 2005-2007 period was X percent.”



Comparing Data...

- Comparing ACS to ACS
 - Census Bureau usually supports comparisons made between ACS but as new variable are added, they will not be available in prior years. Use caution when using data from the ACS prior to 2005 because the sample sized changed dramatically.
- Comparing ACS to Census – Use Caution
 - Differences between the ACS and Census 2000 include residence rules, universes, and reference periods.
 - Census is a “point-in-time” estimate for April 1, 2000.

For Detailed Notes and Cautions by Data Element, go to www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/comparing_2009/



ACS Products

- Summary Files
 - Pre-designed data tables
 - Available one for each survey (1-, 3-, 5-year)
 - Various geography by survey
- Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)
 - A sub-sample of individual responses
 - Allows self-designed tabulations
 - Will be released a couple of months after the Summary File.
 - Geography: PUMAs of 100,000+ only.



Release Schedule

Data Product	Population Threshold	Year of Data Release							
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
		Year(s) of Data Collection							
1 - year Estimates	65,000+	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
3 - year Estimates	20,000+			2005- 2007	2006- 2008	2007- 2009	2008- 2010	2009- 2011	2010- 2012
5 - year Estimates	All Areas*					2005- 2009	2006- 2010	2007- 2011	2008- 2012

*All legal, administrative and statistical geographic areas down to the tract and block group level.

Release Schedule for the 2009 ACS:

www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_release_schedule/



American FactFinder - factfinder.census.gov

The screenshot shows the American FactFinder website. At the top, it says "U.S. Census Bureau" and "American FactFinder". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "Main", "Search", "Feedback", "FAQs", "Glossary", "Site Map", and "Help". The main content area is titled "Your source for population, housing, economic, and geographic data". On the left, there is a vertical menu with categories like "POPULATION FINDER", "FACT SHEET", "PEOPLE", "HOUSING", "BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT", "ABOUT THE DATA", "DATA SETS", "DOWNLOAD CENTER", "MAPS", and "TOOLS AND REFERENCES". A red arrow points to the "MAPS" link. The main content area is divided into several sections: "Fast Access to Information" with a "Get a Fact Sheet" form; "Getting Detailed Data" with links to "Decennial Census", "American Community Survey", "Puerto Rico Community Survey", "Population Estimates Program", "Economic Census", and "Annual Economic Surveys"; "Population Data" with a "Population Finder" and "U.S. Population Clock" showing 310,511,079; and "What's New" with a "GET EMAIL UPDATES" button and a "Coming Soon!" announcement for the "NEW American FactFinder".

NOTE: New version coming in 2011.



- POPULATION FINDER
- FACT SHEET
- PEOPLE
- HOUSING
- BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT
- ABOUT THE DATA
- DATA SETS**
 - Decennial Census
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- MAPS
- TOOLS AND REFERENCES

[Main](#) ▶ [Data Sets](#)

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

[Load Query](#) | [Clear all selections](#)

The American Community Survey is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at how they are changing. The Puerto Rico Community Survey is the equivalent of the American Community Survey for Puerto Rico. [more...](#)

[2009 Quick Guide](#) | [Errata Notes](#)

Other Resources

- [American Community Survey Main Page](#)
- [Quality Measures](#)
- [Public Use Microdata Sample \(PUMS\)](#) - download data and view documentation
- [Download Center](#)
- [Download 1996-2004 data via FTP](#)

[Explain Table and Map Formats](#)

2009	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from the American Community Survey and the Puerto Rico Community Survey • Collected during calendar year 2009 • Available for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or more <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Explain 1-year vs. 3-year vs. 5-year estimates</p>	Select from the following: Data Profiles Comparison Profiles Selected Population Profiles Ranking Tables Subject Tables Detailed Tables Geographic Comparison Tables Thematic Maps Reference Maps Custom Table Enter a table number List all tables List all maps Download PUMS data About this data set
2008	<input type="radio"/> 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from the American Community Survey and the Puerto Rico Community Survey • Collected during calendar years 2006, 2007 and 2008 • Available for geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or more <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Explain 1-year vs. 3-year estimates</p>	
	<input type="radio"/> 2008 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from the American Community Survey and the Puerto Rico Community Survey • Collected during calendar year 2008 • Available for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or more 	

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Online reports from the Summary File



American Factfinder

Key Reports are:

- **Data Profiles** – multiple tables, 1 geography (quick overview - **Fastest**)
- **Comparison Profiles** – multiple time periods, 1 geog. (very useful to see revised data and **statistical significance of change**)
- **Detailed Tables** – user-specified tabulations from the Summary File for user-selected geography. The source tables for all other reports. (**Most direct**)



What Can You Do Now?

- Learn More! Educate yourself on the ACS data and its limitations.
- Should you establish some guidelines for acceptable reliability within your program?
- If you have reporting requirements for your program participants, there will be a need to educate staff on the ACS and how to use and get the data.



What Can You Do Now?

- Review your enabling legislation and regulations. Is the wording specific to a census? Is a revision necessary?
- Review your program requirements. If you use a small geographic area – block groups or tracts – and ask for very specific data, the ACS may not have the sample size to provide reliable data to support this.



More Information ...

- Compass Handbooks - Set of educational reports aimed at specific audiences
www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/handbooks/
- ACS Website www.census.gov/acs/www/
- A Simple Significance and MOE Calculator
planning.maryland.gov/msdc/Affiliate_Meeting/2010/StatisticalCalculationsMenu_ForSDC.xls
- ACS Errata Notes – what problems have been found
www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/errata/



Release of Census 2010 Data

- Population by State and US: Dec. 31, 2010
 - Total population only
- Redistricting Data: Feb-Mar 2011
 - State, county, place, tract, block group, block
 - Population – total and 18+ by Race/Hispanic
 - Housing Units - total, occupied, and vacant
- Demographic Profiles: May 2011
- Summary File 1: June – Aug 2011
- Summary File 2 : Dec 2011 – Apr 2012

www.census.gov/population/www/cen2010/glance/index.html



Questions? Call Me.

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