

American Community Survey (ACS)

What is it?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely detailed social, economic and housing data EVERY YEAR! The ACS replaces the decennial census long form by collecting long-form-type information throughout the decade rather than only once every 10 years. The ACS data will provide, for the first time, a continuous stream of updated information for states and local areas, and will revolutionize the way we use data to understand our communities. Please see the table below for a list of data items collected by the ACS:

Table 1. Subjects Included in the American Community Survey

Demographic Characteristics	Social Characteristics	Housing Characteristics
Age	Marital Status and Marital History*	Year Structure Built
Sex	Fertility	Units in Structure
Hispanic Origin	Grandparents as Caregivers	Year Moved Into Unit
Race	Ancestry	Rooms
Relationship to Householder (e.g., spouse)	Place of Birth, Citizenship, and Year of Entry	Bedrooms
	Language Spoken at Home	Kitchen Facilities
Economic Characteristics	Educational Attainment and School Enrollment	Plumbing Facilities
Income	Residence One Year Ago	House Heating Fuel
Food Stamps Benefit	Veteran Status, Period of Military Service, and VA Service-Connected Disability Rating*	Telephone Service Available
Labor Force Status	Disability	Farm Residence
Industry, Occupation, and Class of Worker		Financial Characteristics
Place of Work and Journey to Work		Tenure (Owner/Renter)
Work Status Last Year		Housing Value
Vehicles Available		Rent
Health Insurance Coverage*		Selected Monthly Owner Costs

*Marital History, VA Service-Connected Disability Rating, and Health Insurance Coverage are new for 2008.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

When will ACS data be available for my community?

Table 2. Release Schedule for ACS Data

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

*Five-year estimates will be available for areas as small as census tracts and block groups.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

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When will ACS data be available for my community? (cont.)

The ACS samples nearly 3 million addresses each year. The annual ACS sample is smaller than that of the Census 2000 long-form sample. As a result, the ACS needs to combine population or housing data from multiple years to produce reliable numbers for small counties, neighborhoods, and other local areas. To provide reliable information for communities each year, the ACS will provide 1-, 3-, and 5-year estimates.

ACS data are very timely because they are released in the year immediately following the year in which they are collected. Table 2 (reverse side) provides a timetable for data released by the American Community Survey. The first 1-yr estimate was released in 2006 for the year 2005 for geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or more. A new 1-yr estimate has been released for these areas every year since. In the fall of 2008, the ACS released the first 3-yr estimates for the years 2005-2007. These 3-yr estimates were available for geographic areas with a population of 20,000 or more. In 2010, the ACS released the much anticipated 5-yr estimates (for the period of 2005-2009) that provide data for all geographic areas—including census tracts and block groups. And remember, new 1-yr, 3-yr and 5-yr estimates will be released every year, henceforth!

Detailed ACS 2010 timeline for data release

SEPT. 2011* - 2010 1-yr estimates for geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or more

OCT 2011* - 2008-2010 3-yr estimates for geographic areas with a population of 20,000+.

DEC 2011* - 2006-2010 5-yr estimates for ALL census geographic areas regardless of population size—including census tracts and block groups.

*Current anticipated release dates, subject to change

Where can I find data for my community?

ACS data is available for FREE through the American Factfinder—the U.S. Census Bureau's online data access tool. The URL is www.factfinder.census.gov

If you have any questions or need any assistance accessing data for your community please contact our Data Dissemination Specialist Alexandra Barker at 617-519-1099 or via e-mail at Alexandra.s.barker@census.gov