How Do We Know?

An American Community

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) is a vital source of information that helps communities, businesses and state and local governments invest, provide services and plan for the future. With statistics on age, income level, education, occupation and veterans status, the ACS enables decision-makers to appropriately fund school-lunch programs, place new hospitals, build new businesses and take other actions that lead to healthy towns and cities.

Health Admin

Benjamin, a director for a health care provider, uses ACS information on age, income, disability, and health insurance to place an urgent care facility in a rural community. He would also use the information to plan particular services. For example, a younger community might need more pediatric care, while an older community might need more oncology and other geriatric care.

Business Owner

Thomas is a small business owner who operates a service station and is looking to expand. He uses the ACS information to figure out where to place his business based on commute patterns. He is also able to plan his operating hours around busy commute times.

Market Analyst

A national chain of grocery stores wants to grow — but how does it pick a new location that fits its services? Justin heads a team of experts who identify the best possibilities for the company. He uses the ACS information to look at household composition and plan for what type of products the new store should feature. For example, young professionals buy different products than do families with children.

Educator

Jocelyn, a school superintendent, needs to provide educational services for the community. She uses the ACS to figure out how many children their area should expect in the coming years, information on languages spoken at home, English-language ability, disability, family structure, and income to help her determine what kinds of services and staff they'll need to have. The ACS information also helps her determine whether older children and adults need additional services such as dropout prevention and adult literacy classes.

Non-profit

Allison is the director of a non-profit food bank. She wants to make sure the organization is making the most of critical resources. She uses the ACS to look at age, employment, income, and food stamp information to find an area with people who could use their help putting food on the table. She also utilizes the information as she applies for grants that will help her fund the operation.

Entrepreneur

Karen is a technology expert with ideas for a series of smartphone apps. She wants to find a location for her new company. She uses the ACS to look at the education level of the potential workforce and the quality of the community's infrastructure. She also looks at how many people in the area have telephone service, so as to get an idea of how her immediate community might respond to the new product.

Fire Chief

A local fire department wants to make sure it can provide the best possible coverage to its citizens. Fire Chief Ryan wants to keep his community safe, so he works with the city council and local interest groups to use ACS information such as housing units, mix of single family homes, and multi-unit apartment complex information to guide where the city should place vital fire safety resources. He also uses it to help plan for emergencies and natural disasters.

Veterans Coordinator

A local veterans services non-profit organization wants to make sure they are providing the proper services to veterans, returning service members, and their families. Carlos, the organization's lead coordinator, uses the ACS' veterans status, period of service, and age information to provide information on VA medical services, and state or municipal resources available in the local area. He also combines the information with that on employment status and educational attainment to plan job training and other support programs.

City Planner

Vanessa is a city planner and civil engineer planning infrastructure changes to meet the needs of a growing and changing community. She uses the ACS to figure out where to put vital infrastructure such as highways, mass transit systems, and power lines. She also uses the information to plan water and sewage treatment facilities — this is why she needs to know if a home has a flush toilet.

Footer
The American Community Survey is a survey and its estimates are subject to sampling error.

To learn more about the American Community Survey, please visit **www.census.gov/acs**