
1. TOPICS COVERED IN THE ACS

The primary purpose of the American Community Survey (ACS) is to help Congress determine funding and policies for a wide variety of federal programs. Because of this, the topics covered by the ACS are diverse (see Table 1.1).

- Examples of social characteristics include disability, educational attainment, language spoken at home, and veteran status.
- Examples of economic characteristics include employment status, health insurance, income, and earnings.
- Examples of housing characteristics include computer and Internet use, selected monthly owner costs, rent, and the year the structure was built.
- Demographic characteristics include age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and relationship to householder.

TIP: The ACS was designed to provide estimates of the characteristics of the population, not to provide counts of the population in different geographic areas or population subgroups. For basic counts of the U.S. population by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin, visit the U.S. Census Bureau's Population and Housing Unit Estimates Web page.³

³ U.S. Census Bureau, Population and Housing Unit Estimates, <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

A good way to learn about the topics covered in the ACS is to explore the information available through the U.S. Census Bureau's data.census.gov Web site.⁴ The Data Profiles in data.census.gov, which include the most frequently requested social, economic, housing, and demographic data, are useful for novice users who want to explore the range of topics available.⁵ Copies of ACS questionnaires for different years are also available on the Census Bureau's Web site.⁶ For more detailed information about the topics in the ACS, see the section on *Understanding the ACS: The Basics* in the Census Bureau's handbook on *Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What All Data Users Need to Know*.⁷

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, data.census.gov, <<https://data.census.gov>>.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, data.census.gov, Data Profiles, <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=DP>>.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Questionnaire Archive, <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.html>.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What All Data Users Need to Know*, <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/handbooks/general.html>.

Table 1.1. **Population and Housing Data Included in American Community Survey Data Products**

Social Characteristics	Economic Characteristics	Plumbing Facilities ⁶
Ancestry	Class of Worker	Rent
Citizenship Status	Commuting (Journey to Work)	Rooms/Bedrooms
Citizen Voting-Age Population	Employment Status	Selected Monthly Owner Costs
Disability Status ¹	Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) ⁴	Telephone Service Available
Educational Attainment	Health Insurance Coverage ²	Tenure (Owner/Renter)
Fertility	Income and Earnings	Units in Structure
Grandparents as Caregivers	Industry and Occupation	Value of Home
Language Spoken at Home	Place of Work	Vehicles Available
Marital History ²	Poverty Status	Year Householder Moved Into Unit
Marital Status	Work Status Last Year	Year Structure Built
Migration/Residence 1 Year Ago		
Period of Military Service	Housing Characteristics	Demographic Characteristics
Place of Birth	Computer and Internet Use ⁵	Age and Sex
School Enrollment	House Heating Fuel	Group Quarters Population
Undergraduate Field of Degree ³	Kitchen Facilities	Hispanic or Latino Origin
Veteran Status ²	Occupancy/Vacancy Status	Race
Year of Entry	Occupants Per Room	Relationship to Householder
		Total Population

¹ Questions on Disability Status were significantly revised in the 2008 survey to cause a break in series.

² Marital History, Veterans' Service-Connected Disability Status and Ratings, and Health Insurance Coverage were added in the 2008 survey.

³ Undergraduate Field of Degree was added in the 2009 survey.

⁴ Food Stamp Benefit amount was removed in 2008.

⁵ Computer and Internet Use was added to the 2013 survey.

⁶ One of the components of Plumbing Facilities, flush toilet, and Business or Medical Office on Property questions were removed in 2016.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.