

# The American Community Survey

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# Helping You Make Informed Decisions...

Timely Information  
for the 21st Century

# What Is the Difference Between the American Community Survey and the Decennial Census?

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## ◆ Decennial census collects:

- A count of the population (*short form*)
- Economic, social, and housing information about communities and population groups (*long form*)

# What the American Community Survey Is NOT

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- ◆ A population count
- ◆ A tool or a measurement for apportionment of Congress

# What Is the American Community Survey?

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- ◆ A program to provide information every year for communities about
  - age, gender, race/ethnicity
  - families, children, the elderly
  - income, poverty
  - education
  - work, unemployment
  - commuting patterns
  - housing

# What Is the American Community Survey?

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- ◆ A large, continuous demographic survey which
  - Produces annual and multi-year estimates of characteristics of the population and housing
  - Produces information for small areas including tracts and population subgroups - updated every year
  - Uses a “current” residence rule

# Information for Communities

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## ◆ Communities can include:

- states
- counties
- cities and towns
- census tracts
- *population subgroups*

# How Will the American Community Survey Help Your Community?

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## ◆ Better information for:

- distribution of public funding
- establishing community goals
- comparing your community with others
- identifying community problems and solutions
- location of facilities and programs



# How Can Your Community Use Information From the American Community Survey?

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- ◆ To track the well-being of children, families, and the elderly
- ◆ To determine where to locate new highways, schools, and hospitals
- ◆ To stimulate economic development
- ◆ To evaluate programs such as welfare and workforce diversification

# Major Stages in the American Community Survey Plan

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- ◆ Demonstration period, 1996-1998 -- *completed*
- ◆ 31 comparison sites, 1999-2002
- ◆ Full implementation, every county and nationwide, 2003 and beyond

# The American Community Survey Plan, 1999 and Beyond

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- ◆ Compare the American Community Survey to the Census 2000 long form results
- ◆ Full implementation in every county, starting in 2003
- ◆ American Community Survey - Coverage Program (formerly CAUS)
- ◆ Replace the Census 2010 long form

# Comparison Study

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- ◆ Understand and measure differences between the traditional census long form and the American Community Survey
- ◆ Provide a bridge to interpret changes between Census 2000 and the American Community Survey

# 31 Comparison Sites

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- ◆ Sites were selected for factors such as
  - rate of population growth
  - population size
  - difficulty in enumerating in 1990 Census
  - regional distribution
- ◆ Situations in which results may vary because of the difference in methods used for the American Community Survey and the census
- ◆ Data users likely to review the data and provide feedback to the Census Bureau

# More About 31 Comparison Sites

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- ◆ Compares the 1999-2001 American Community Survey to the Census 2000 long form with similar sample sizes
- ◆ Samples any address only once
- ◆ Oversampling in small governmental units

# Full Implementation 2003 and Beyond

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- ◆ Implement in all 3,000+ counties of the United States
- ◆ Begin national sample of 3 million addresses across all counties
- ◆ Profiles every year for communities of 65,000 or more, beginning in 2004 and each year thereafter
- ◆ 3 to 5-year cumulations for communities of less than 65,000 population

# Data Products From the Nationwide American Community Survey

Year	Population 65,000 or greater	Population 20,000 or greater (3-year average)	Population Below 20,000 (5-year average)
2004	X		
2005	X		
2006	X	X (2003-2005)	
2007	X	X (2004-2006)	
2008	X	X (2005-2007)	X (2003-2007)

*Nationwide implementation begins in 2003 if Congress appropriates funds.*



# Multi-year Cumulations

- ◆ Statistical uses of the 5-year moving averages:
  - Picturing general trends
  - Measuring consistent differences among communities
- ◆ 5 years of collection provides updated 5-year average estimates in the 6th year
  - 2003-2007 collection  $\nless 2008$  results
  - 2004-2008 collection  $\nless 2009$  updated 5 year estimate

# American Community Survey Products

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- ◆ For most general uses
  - Profiles of communities and special population groups
  - Summary tabulations similar to those found in census products -- down to the block group level
- ◆ For research and special purposes
  - Public Use Microdata Sample files
- ◆ American Community Survey website
- ◆ Free CD-ROM (with multiple years of survey results)

# For More Information

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- ◆ Visit the American Community Survey website
  - Go to the Census Bureau's website at **[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)**
  - Click on **Subjects A-Z**
  - Click on **American Community Survey**
  - Email us at **[acs@census.gov](mailto:acs@census.gov)**

# How Can You Help the American Community Survey?

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- ◆ Use the free CD-ROM to review survey results
- ◆ Tell us how the American Community Survey meets your needs and how you will use the information
- ◆ Tell others about the American Community Survey and how it can benefit their communities
- ◆ Share your comments and suggestions with us