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Resources for ACS Data Users: New ACS Handbooks and Online Case Studies

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POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU | www.prb.org

ACS Compass Handbooks



Topics
Population, Economy

Geography
Maps, Products

Library
Infographics, Publications

Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS) > Guidance for Data Users > Handbooks

American Community Survey (ACS)

About the Survey

Respond to the Survey

News & Updates

Data

Guidance for Data Users

Subjects Included in the Survey

Which Data Table or Tool Should I Use?

When to Use 1-year, 3-year, or 5-year Estimates

Handbooks

Comparing ACS Data

Statistical Testing Tool

Training Presentations

Geography & ACS

Technical

Handbooks for Data Users

You can use American Community Survey (ACS) data in different ways. This handbook helps a particular group with specific how-to instructions and

For an introduction to ACS data, we recommend the compass handbook



What Congress Needs to Know

November 2008

This handbook helps congressional staff use ACS data to conduct legislative research, and more.



What Federal Agencies Need to Know

December 2008

This handbook helps federal agencies use ACS data in more ways.



What General Data Users Need to Know

October 2008

This handbook helps general data users learn how to use ACS data to answer real-world questions.

Purpose of Handbooks

- Introduction to the ACS and how to access the data
- Guidance on working with multiyear estimates and margins of error
- Case studies showing hypothetical applications of ACS data
- Technical appendices for more advanced users
- Tailored content for different ACS data user communities

Why Update Handbooks Now?

- It's been almost 10 years; LOTS of changes to ACS website, data and products
- News ways to disseminate info online
- Availability of new case studies using ACS data

ACS Website in 2007

AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
SURVEY

The American Community Survey is a new nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at how they are changing. It will replace the long form in future censuses and is a critical element in the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 census plan.



Highlights & Updates

August 15, 2006
[2005 ACS data products are now available on the American FactFinder website.](#)

June 7, 2006
[Data Profiles for Gulf Coast Area](#) are now available!

Latest ACS Alert!
[Alert 48 released 4/27/2007](#)

[Highlights Archive >>](#)

The ACS is vital to economic development, and for wise government and business decision making. [Learn More about Target](#)

ACS Data Products Released!

[2005 ACS data products](#) are now available at its new address on the American FactFinder website.

[2005 ACS and Puerto Rico Community Survey \(PRCS\) Data Briefs](#) are now available. *Data Briefs* provide data highlights by topic area for each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and for Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) in Puerto Rico. The first set of *Data Briefs* will highlight social characteristics in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Subsequent *Data Briefs* will highlight demographic, economic and housing characteristics for these areas.

Quick Start

[Click here](#) for a quick look at 2005 data for the United States in American FactFinder's "Fact Sheet".

In-depth Data

Go to the [ACS Datasets Tab](#) to review the complete line of ACS data products for 2005.

Advanced Data Users

The [ACS FTP site](#) is also available for downloads of 2005 ACS data products.

[Go to Usinn](#)

[Using Data from the 2005 American Community Survey](#) (in pdf format) - a handbook for users that covers a broad set of topics relating directly to the 2005 ACS. It is available in PDF format and can be downloaded for use as a reference document.

[Using Data from the 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey \(in pdf format\)](#) (in pdf format) - a handbook for users that covers a broad set of topics relating directly to the 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey. It is available in PDF format and can be downloaded for use as a reference document.

[Guide to the ACS Data Products](#) - an online tool that allows users to obtain additional information about the 2005 data products.

[ACS Data User Training Guide](#) - a set of PowerPoint presentations that you can use to train general audiences about the ACS.

[Accuracy of the Data - 2005](#) - providing data users with a basic understanding of the sample design, estimation methodology, and accuracy of the data.

[Quality Measures](#) - 2005 data now available: response rates, coverage rates, sample size and allocation

SURVEY BASICS

new! [Subjects Planned for the 2010 Census and American Community Survey](#) provides information about what subjects are planned for 2010 Census and 2008 American Community Survey.

Information about the American Community Survey is now available in the following languages (in pdf format):

[中文](#) [español](#) [한국어](#) [русский](#) [Việt Ngữ](#)

Information about [Group Quarters](#) are now available for the American Community Survey and Puerto Rico Community Survey.

Now available: [Puerto Rico Community Survey - A Handbook for Government Officials](#) (in pdf format).

[American Community Survey - A Handbook for State and Local Officials](#) (in pdf format).

ACS Media Tool Kit

"Current Information for [American Indian and Alaska Natives](#)" - new brochure in pdf format.

[Congressional Tool Kit](#) - "portable" information on the ACS in pdf format.

[Federal Agency Information Program](#) - assisting federal agency transition from Census long-form data to ACS data.

Learn more about the [Puerto Rico Community Survey](#) -- available in English and Spanish.

Other Survey Basics topics: [Survey Questionnaire](#), [Sample Size](#), [Sample Selection](#).

Source: Wayback Machine.

ACS Website in 2007

“Accurate knowledge of the characteristics of people who live in Lower Manhattan neighborhoods helps planners make decisions on development that is suitable for future residents.”

*Joseph Salvo, City of New York
Department of City Planning*

Source: Wayback Machine.

ACS Website in 2017

The screenshot shows the United States Census Bureau website for the American Community Survey (ACS). The top navigation bar includes links for Topics (Population, Economy), Geography (Maps, Products), Library (Infographics, Publications), Data (Tools, Developers), Surveys/Programs (Respond, Survey Data), and Newsroom (News, Blogs). The breadcrumb trail reads: Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS). The main heading is "American Community Survey (ACS)".

About the Survey

The American Community Survey helps local officials, community leaders and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed information about the American people and workforce.

- Respond to the Survey
- News & Updates
- Data
- Guidance for Data Users
- Geography & ACS
- Technical Documentation
- Methodology
- Library
- Operations and Administration
- Contact Us

What is the ACS? (Image: American flag)

How do I respond to the ACS? (Image: Person at computer)

Where can I get ACS data? (Image: Map)

Latest

- Data
- News
- Events
- Library

2016 Data Release

Learn more about upcoming ACS data releases, including the September 14th release of the 2016 ACS 1-year estimates, as well as a preview of Data.census.gov.

Respond to the ACS
Learn how

Key Changes to Handbooks

- Design and implement as online rather than print publications (easy to update)
- Standardize primary content, rather than producing 12 separate documents
- Integrate material from technical appendices
- Actual case studies from ACS data users representing different data user groups

Major Content Sections (Novice Users)

- Understanding the ACS: The Basics
- Geographic Areas Covered in the ACS
- Understanding and Using Single-Year and Multiyear Estimates
- Making Comparisons with ACS Data
- Accessing ACS Data

Major Content Sections (for More Advanced Users)

- Understanding Error and Determining Statistical Significance
- Calculating Measures of Error for Derived Estimates
- Technical Sections (formerly Appendices)
 - Differences Between the ACS and the Decennial Census
 - Using Dollar-Denominated Data
 - Measures of Nonsampling Error

Online Case Studies

- Show different ways ACS data can be used
- Criteria
 - Availability of online reports, data, or applications
 - Timely
 - Clear program / policy implications
- Include step-by-step instructions
- Highlight key results in charts, tables, or maps

Results

Figure 4: Atlanta Region 20-County Data Dashboard



Two Handbooks Currently in Production

Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data:

- What All Data Users Need to Know
- What Users of Data for American Indians and Alaska Natives Need to Know

Customized Content for Additional Data User Groups

- Business
- Congress
- State and Local Government
- Rural Areas
- Journalists
- Researchers
- Federal Agencies
- Puerto Rico Community Survey

Modules for Tools or Data Products

- Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Files
- Summary Files
- American FactFinder (CEDSCI)
- Application Programming Interface (API)

Thank You!

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