

An Overview of the American Community Survey

Sixth Annual GIS and Public Health Day – May 4, 2010

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What is the American Community Survey?

- A large, continuous demographic survey
 - 250,000 Households nationwide – every month
 - The HU address is the sample unit – not people
 - Produces annual and multi-year estimates of the characteristics of the population and housing
 - Decennial Long Form content with conceptual differences
 - Census views it as producing characteristics' distributions, NOT counts
 - Produces information for small areas including tracts, block groups and population subgroups

Data Collection Timing

Calendar Month						
Collection Month	Nov 2009	Dec 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	Mar 2010	Apr 2010
November 2009	Mail	Phone	Visit	Dropped		
December 2009		Mail	Phone	Visit	Dropped	
January 2010			Mail	Phone	Visit	Dropped



Total
January
Interviews

ACS Data Product Release Schedule

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

Data products are released in the year following the single-year or the last year of the multi-year period in which data are collected.

American Community Survey: Data Products

- Summary Products
 - Detailed Tables (Summary File 1 & 3)
 - Summary File type data products
 - Base and Compressed tables
 - Tabular Profiles
 - Narrative Profiles
 - Ranking Tables
 - Geographic Comparison Tables
 - Thematic Maps
 - Selected Population Profiles (characteristic based)
- Public Use Microdata Files (PUMS)

Switching from Census to ACS Mentality

The Census and the ACS are different collection instruments

- Reference Period
 - The Census was a point in time estimate (4-1-10);
 - The ACS accumulates 12 months of surveys for a calendar year estimate
 - CAN NOT think of annual ACS estimates as centered within a specific period (annual, 3-year, 5-year)
 - Not all data is from that calendar year though -- many questions ask “In the last 12 months...”
- Sample Size
 - Less than Decennial Long Form
 - Declining over time as nation grows

Measuring Income Over a 12 Month Period

2009												2010											
Previous 12 Month Period												Month of Survey Receipt											
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec											
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec										
		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec									
			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec								
				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec							
					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec						
						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec					
							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec				
								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec			
									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec		
										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec	
											X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Rec

Switching from Census to ACS Mentality

- Some Conceptual Differences
 - Residency Rules
 - Decennial Census - “Usual Place of Residence”
 - ACS - resident of area if staying there 2+ months when contacted; affects seasonal areas, students
 - Sample weighting
 - Census – small sample weighting areas
 - ACS – county population estimates
 - Sub-county areas
 - Migration/Change of Residence
 - Census: 5 years ago
 - ACS: 1 year ago

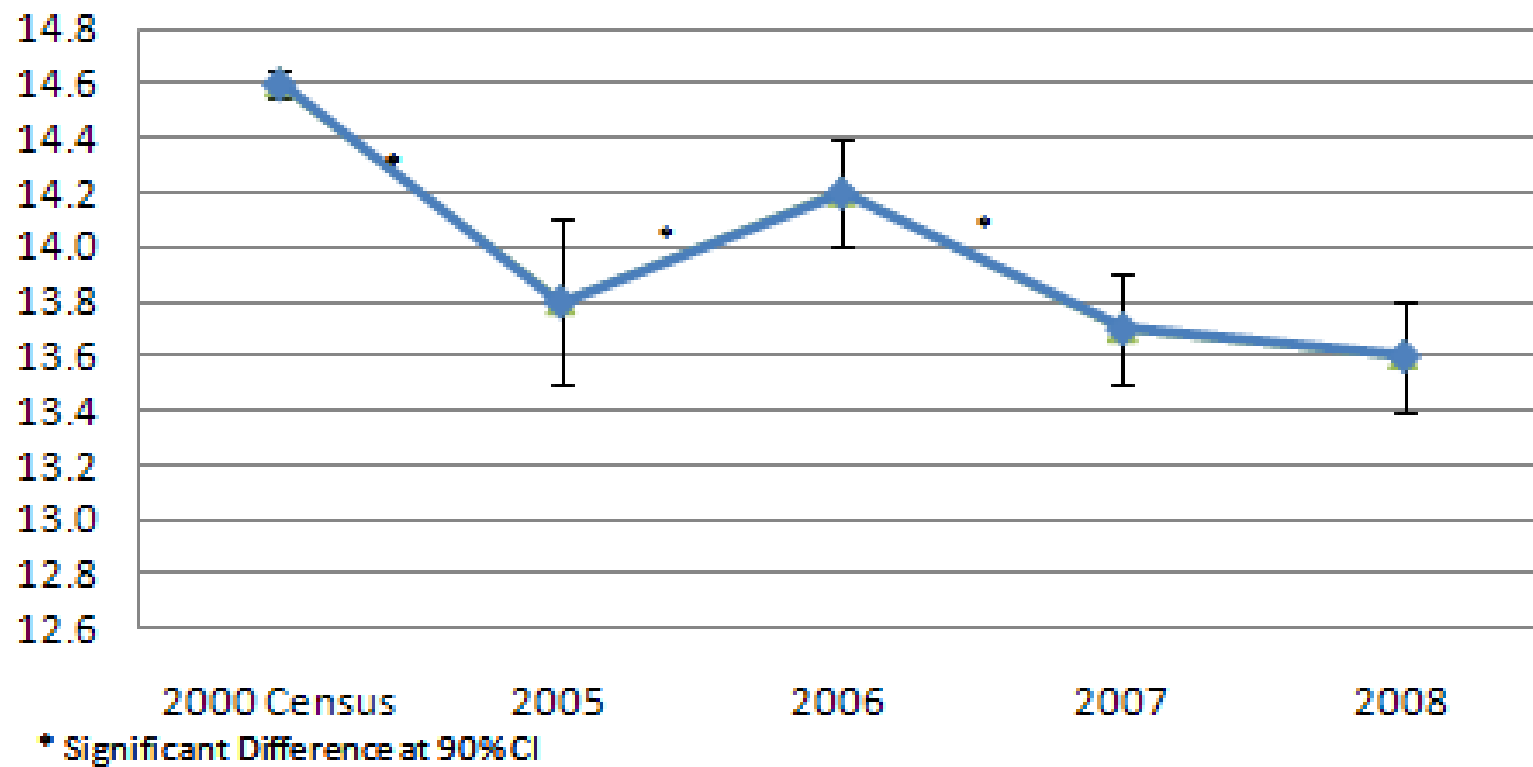
Switching from Census to ACS Mentality

- Period rather than point estimates
- Fire hose of data every year
- Multiple numbers for the same area
 - 2010 release for areas of 65,000 or more
 - 1-year estimate (2009 collection)
 - 3-year estimate (2007-2009 collection)
 - 5-year estimate (2005-2009 collection)
 - Areas of 20,000 to 65,000
 - 3-year estimate (2007-2009 collection)
 - 5-year estimate (2005-2009 collection)
 - Areas under 20,000
 - 5-year estimate ONLY (2005-2009)

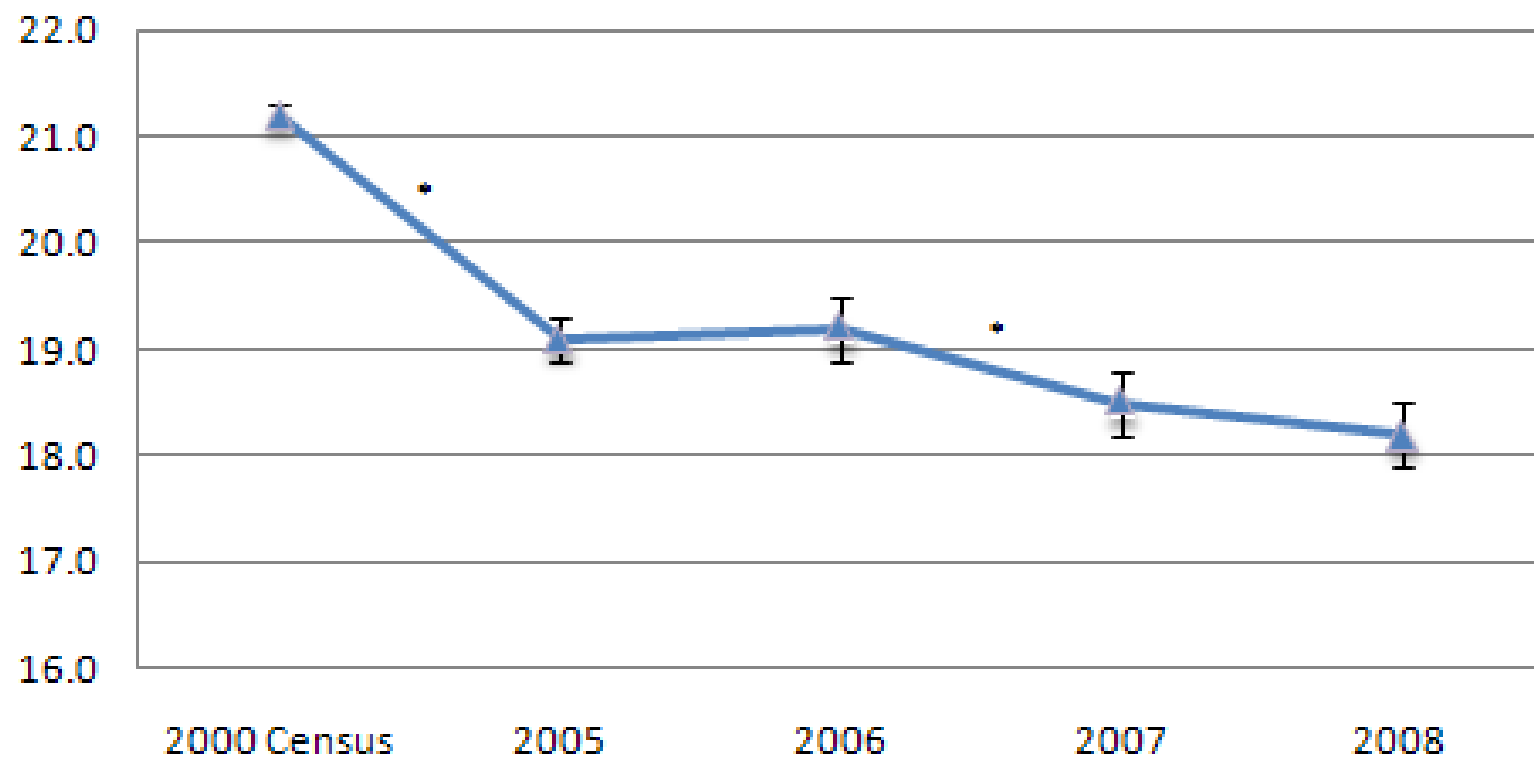
Switching from Census to ACS Mentality

- Statistical Quality Issues
 - Data Allocation
 - Census – high rates
 - ACS – better, trained interviewers
 - Margins of Error
 - Had to be calculated for Census
 - Presented in the ACS products
 - Reported at 90-percent confidence level
 - Summary Files also have Standard Errors
 - May affect uses of the data
 - Denominators
 - Regression analysis

ACS 1-Year Poverty Rates, NYS

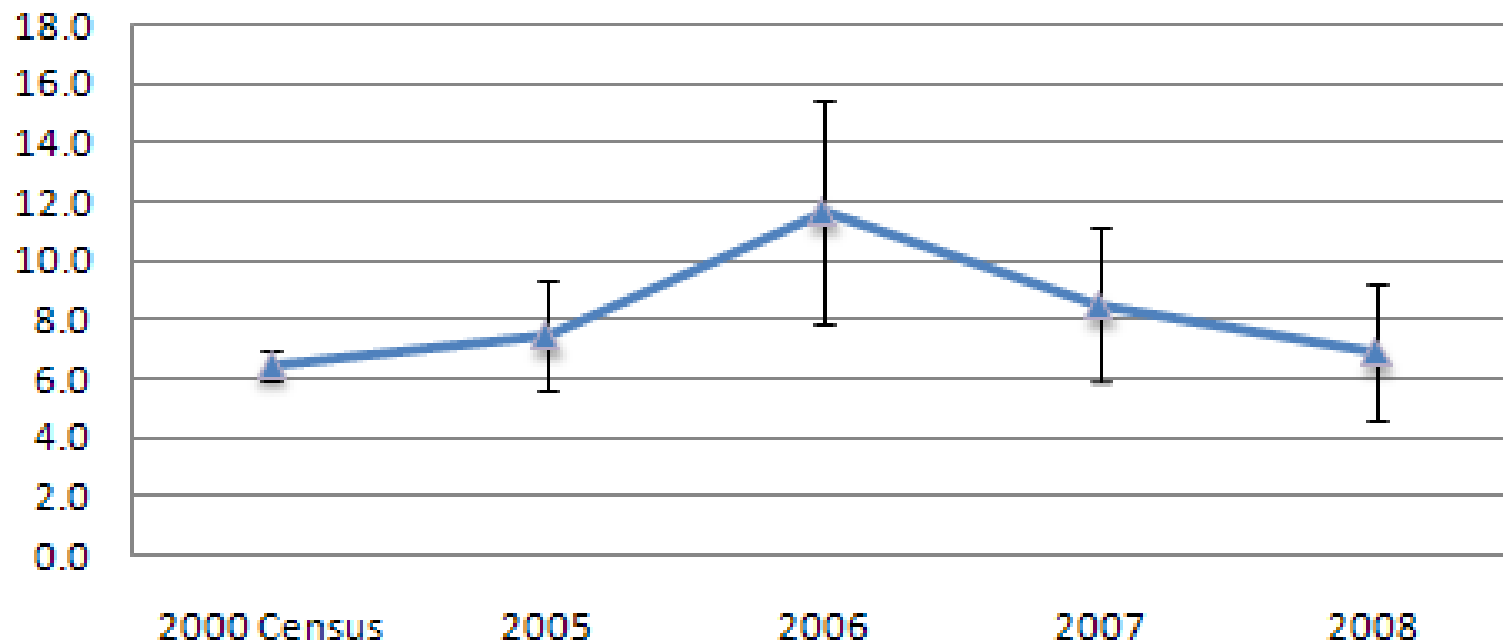


ACS 1-Year Poverty Rates, NYC



* Significant Difference at 90% CI

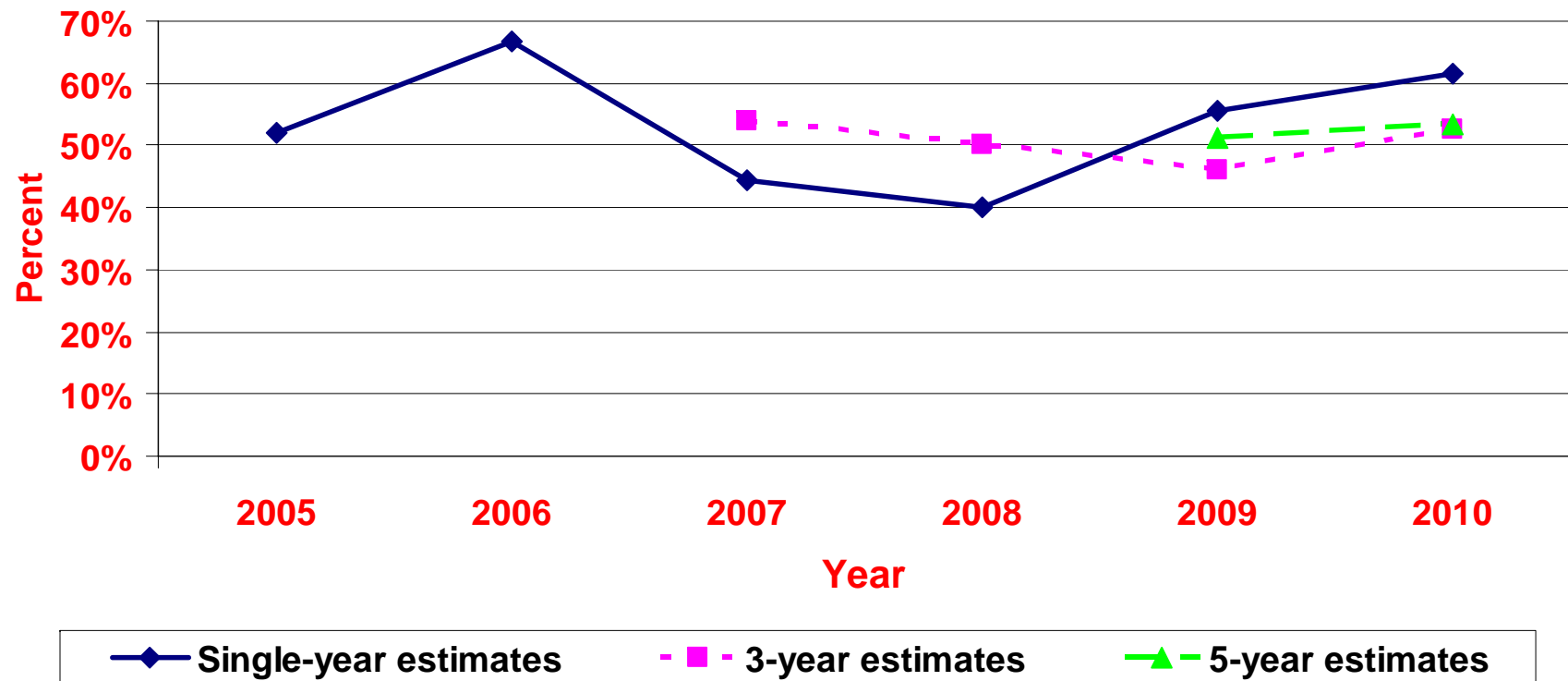
ACS 1-Year Poverty Rates, Cheektowaga, CDP



* Significant Difference at 90% CI

Multi-year Estimates

**Example 2: Item with year-to-year increases and decreases
(Homeownership rates)**



GETTING THE SUMMARY DATA

Summary File Example

- Joe is a researcher working for the National Center for Health Statistics. He needs to map the counties with large proportions of the population that do not speak English very well. So he wants the ACS language data for every available county in the nation.



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American Community Survey (ACS)

ACS Main | About the ACS | Access Data | **How to Use the Data** | About the Data | FAQs | Site Map | Search ACS

ACS Alerts

Alert 72 - released
12/18/2009

Contact Us

Contact the American Community Survey Office by phone at **1-800-923-8282** or visit ask.census.gov for further information on the American Community Survey.

News Releases

April 27th, 2010
New Census Bureau Report Analyzes Nation's Linguistic Diversity

December 7th, 2009
The Foreign-Born Labor Force in the United States: 2007

October 27th, 2009
Census Bureau Releases 2006-2008 American Community Survey Data
[more News Releases »](#)
[Media Tool Kit »](#)

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

- is an on-going survey
- is sent to a sample of the population
- tells us what the population looks like and how it lives
- helps communities determine where to locate services and allocate resources

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY AND THE 2010 CENSUS

Every address receives a 2010 Census form.

A random sample of addresses also receives an American Community Survey form.

Both require your response.

[Learn more.](#)

American Community Survey Form

 The image shows the front of the American Community Survey form. It features the title "The American Community Survey" and a section titled "Start Here" with instructions for completing the form. The form is designed with a green and white color scheme.

2010 Census Form

 The image shows the front of the 2010 Census form. It features the title "2010 Census" and a section titled "Start Here" with instructions for completing the form. The form is designed with a blue and white color scheme.

Get Data

American FactFinder

Now Available
[2006-2008 ACS 3-Year Data](#)
[2008 ACS 1-Year Data](#)

The ACS Compass Products



[Handbooks](#),
[Powerpoint Presentations](#),
and other educational materials to help you understand and use the American Community Survey data.

HIGHLIGHTS

new! [2006-2008 3-Year Public Use Microdata Sample \(PUMS\) Files](#)

[2008 ACS Data Release](#)

Available in this Section

[How to Use the Data Main](#)

[ACS and Intercensal Population Estimates](#)

[The ACS Compass Products](#)

Comparing ACS Data
[ACS 1-Year Estimates](#)
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[Group Quarters Definitions](#)

» [2006 GQ Data Products](#)

[Errata](#)

» [ACS 2000 Errata \(11/7/02\)](#)

» [ACS 2000 Errata \(3/25/02\)](#)

[User Notes](#)

» [ACS 1999 Limitations](#)

» [ACS 2000 Notices](#)

[Geography Explanation](#)

[Data Products Details](#)

[Using Data from the 2006 ACS \[PDF\]](#)

Each year we add new documentation to reflect changes in the survey or update the existing documents to help you understand the data better.

The ACS Compass Products

The **ACS Compass Products** are educational materials to help users better understand and appropriately use ACS data. When all educational materials are finalized, they will include user-specific handbooks, fully scripted PowerPoint presentations, and an on-line tutorial.

Subject Definitions

We have identified and **defined** population and housing variables to help you understand the results of the American Community Survey. These include information on how the data were collected and how they are presented in data products.

Accuracy of the Data

These documents provide data users with a basic understanding of the sample design, confidentiality, sampling error, nonsampling error, estimation methodology, and **accuracy of the data**.

Errata

This section will keep you informed of any updates made to the data due to found **errors**.

Data Product Details

This **online tool** allows users to obtain additional information about the 2007 data products. Users can obtain information about the set of published geographic areas within each state, lists of detailed tables by topic and lists of specific ranking tables, subject tables, and Selected Population Profiles. A variety of other links is available from this site with information about ACS data products.

ACS Summary File

The **American Community Survey Summary File (ACS-SF)** final version files are available. The summary file is a combination of all of the detailed tables by state in a series of files, similar to those published for Census 2000. The 2005 prototype version is also available.

How to Find ACS Data in American FactFinder

The **How to Find American Community Survey Data in American FactFinder** is a revised brochure created for you to print out at your leisure. The brochure will provide step by step guidance for finding American Community Survey data using American FactFinder.

Quality measures

The content in **quality measures** provides discussion and data tables at the state and national level on 4 key indicators of survey data quality -- response rates, coverage rates, sample size and allocation rates.

Group Quarters Definitions

The content provides the **definitions** that help users understand the scope of American Survey Group Quarters data collection.

Geography Notes

The **geography notes** gives a brief explanation of the Census Bureau's geographic hierarchy and common terms as well as details on specific geographic areas presented in the American Community Survey data products.

Using Data from the 2006 ACS

This **2006 ACS Data Users Handbook [PDF]** covers a broad set of topics relating directly to the 2006 ACS. It covers the type of information produced from the ACS, including measures of quality that are critical for users to consider. Each of the specific data products is detailed in this guide, along with tips on how to access and interpret these data.

Using Data from the 2006 Puerto Rico Community Survey

This **2006 PRCS Data Users Handbook (English version) [PDF]** covers a broad set of topics relating directly to the 2006 Puerto Rico Community Survey. It is available in PDF format and can be downloaded for use as a reference document.

ACS-Summary File (SF)

ACS-Summary File (SF)

Special Note: Any corrections made to the summary files are documented in the [errata notes](#).

One of the data products supported by the long form in Census 2000 was the Summary File 3 (SF3). SF3 is a set of tables on a variety of subjects drawn from the long form that are repeated for all the supported geography down to the block group level. The goal for ACS is to provide a set of summary files (i.e., a separate ACS-SF) for estimates from each time period the ACS will cover: (1-Year, 3-Year, and 5-Year). As a step toward this goal, the ACS has developed a production version of the ACS-Summary File (SF).

The production version of the ACS-Summary File (SF) is based on the 2006-2008 ACS 3-Year detailed tables and is located on the ACS FTP site. The ACS-SF includes all detailed tables for all geographies published in the 2006-2008 ACS 3-Year products.

The main directory of the ACS-Summary File's FTP server for the 2006-2008 ACS 3-Year production version is http://www2.census.gov/acs2008_3yr/summaryfile/ and for the 2008 ACS 1-Year production version is http://www2.census.gov/acs2008_1yr/summaryfile/

The 2005-2007 ACS 3-Year version of the ACS-Summary File is located at: http://www2.census.gov/acs2007_3yr/summaryfile/

The directory for the ACS 2007 1-Year production version is http://www2.census.gov/acs2007_1yr/summaryfile/

The directory for the 2006 production is http://www2.census.gov/acs2006/Final_Summaryfile and for the 2005 prototype version is <http://www2.census.gov/acs2005/summaryfile>

Each site has documentation on using the ACS-Summary File and 53 subdirectories (nation, all states, DC, and Puerto Rico). SAS program examples are also included. The summary file is available in three formats - the estimates, standard errors, and margins of error. The README file in the main FTP directory for each year contains information on the files and their purposes.

Please review the Technical Documentation before accessing the ACS Summary File on the FTP site. This documentation is located on the following link: [ACS-Summary File \(SF\) Technical Documentation](#)

The Census Bureau and American Community Survey Office hope that this production version of the ACS-SF will give data users a chance to work with these files and provide the Census Bureau with useful comments. The Census Bureau will also consider comments that are received on the production version of the ACS-SF.

ACS-Summary File (SF) Technical Documentation

The technical documentation contains information and reference materials on how to use the ACS-SF. Chapter 2 of this document, "How to Use the ACS Summary File", is a guide to the ACS-SF and the documentation. New users should review this chapter before using the ACS-SF. All documentation should be reviewed before accessing the files on the FTP site.

[ACS 2006-2008 Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Production\)](#) [PDF 442KB]
[ACS 2008 Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Production\)](#) [PDF 441KB]
[ACS 2005-2007 3-Year Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Production\)](#) [PDF 555KB]
[ACS 2007 Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Production\)](#) [PDF 1.2MB]
[ACS 2006 Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Production\)](#) [PDF 1.2MB]
[ACS 2005 Summary File: Technical Documentation \(Prototype\)](#) [PDF 775KB]

Below is an example of how to access an estimate and its corresponding margin of error for a specific geographic area.

[ACS 2006-2008 3-Year SF Worked Example \(Production\)](#) [PDF 29KB]
[ACS 2008 SF Worked Example \(Production\)](#) [PDF 15KB]
[ACS 2005-2007 3-Year SF Worked Example \(Production\)](#) [PDF 19KB]
[ACS 2007 SF Worked Example \(Production\)](#) [PDF 29KB]
[ACS 2006 SF Worked Example \(Production\)](#) [PDF 34KB]
[ACS 2005 SF Worked Example](#) [PDF 16KB]

We encourage data users to assist us in improving the design and future implementation of the ACS-SF. Please send comments and/or questions on this production version and the documentation via email to:
nicholas.m.spanos@census.gov.

Throughout 2009-2010 we may issue updates and corrections to this production version of the ACS-SF. We will keep users aware of these updates via the ACS Alert from the ACS website and on the ACS errata notes page located on:
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/Errata.htm>.

In addition to the actual Summary Files, Joe needs...

- Essential files
 - Technical Documentation
 - Data Dictionary = merge_5_6.xls
 - README doc
- Useful files
 - Worked example
 - Example SAS programs

www2.census.gov/acs2008_3yr/summaryfile/



[Parent Directory](#)



[OSASExamplePrograms/](#)



[ACS_2006_2008_3-Year_SF_Tech_Doc.pdf](#)



[ACS_Summary_File_Worked_Example_advanced.pdf](#)



[Alabama/](#)



[Alaska/](#)



[Arizona/](#)



[Arkansas/](#)



[California/](#)



[Texas/](#)



[UnitedStates/](#)



[Utah/](#)

Scroll Down ...



United States File



[Parent Directory](#)



[20083us0001000.zip](#)



[20083us0002000.zip](#)



[20083us0003000.zip](#)



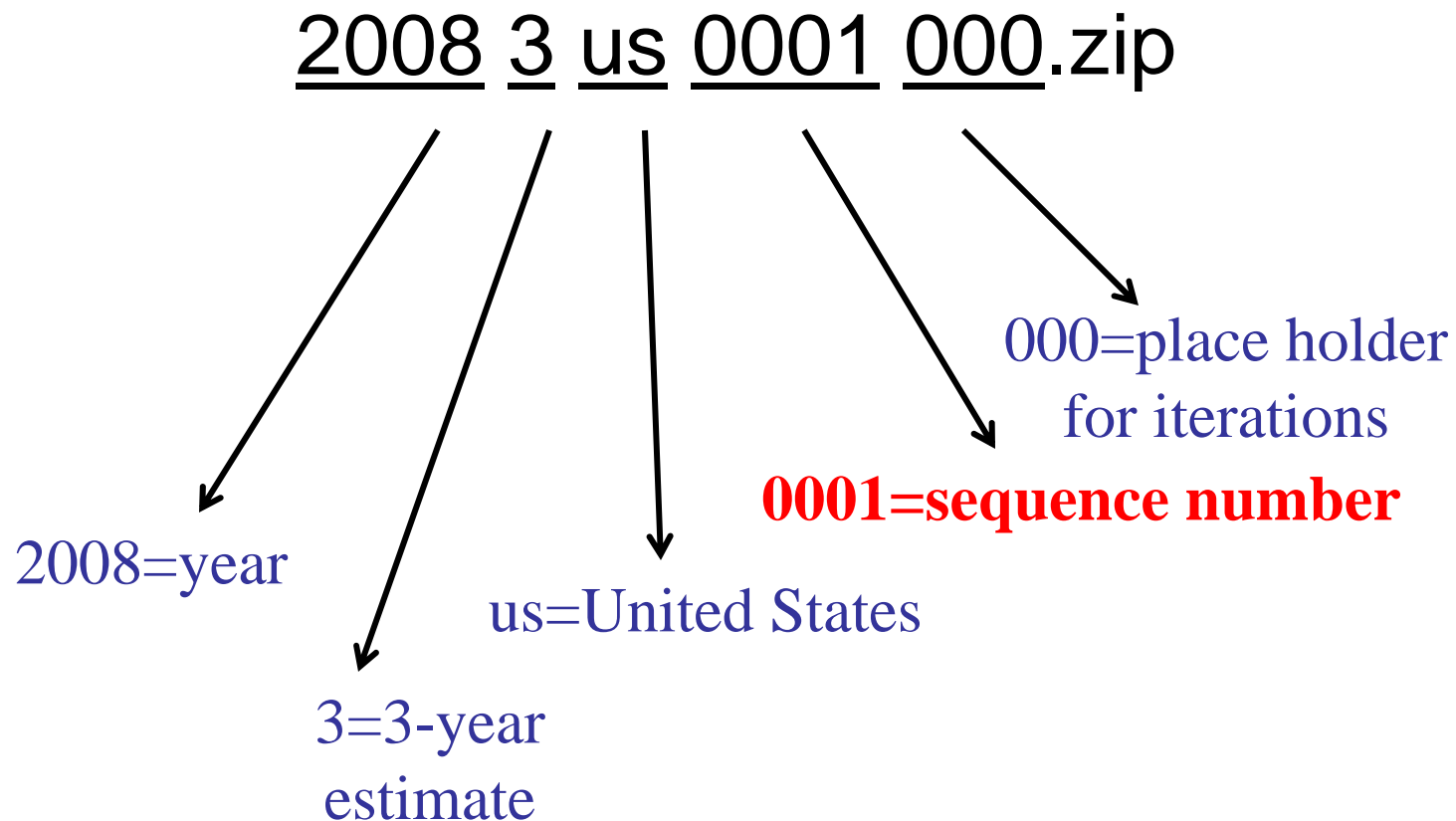
[20083us0004000.zip](#)



[20083us0005000.zip](#)

File Naming Conventions

- Example:



Summary File Data

Within each geography file there are 4 text files

20083us0001000.zip

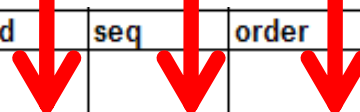

- 1.g20083us.txt (Geography)
- 2.e20083us0001000.txt (Estimate)
- 3.m20083us0001000.txt (Margin of Error)
- 4.s20083us0001000.txt (Standard Error)

Which of the 158 zip files should Joe download?

The first step is to determine the Sequence Number.






- A. If Joe knows the Table ID number, then he can go directly to the Data Dictionary.
- B. If Joe does not know the Table ID number, then he will review the Technical Documentation first and then go to the Data Dictionary.





Data Dictionary

fileid	tblid	seq	order	position	cells	total	title	subject_area
ACSSF	B16001	59			119 7 CELLS		LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH FOR THE POPULATION 5 YEARS AND OVER	Language
ACSSF	B16001	59					Universe: Population 5 years and over	
ACSSF	B16001	59	1				Total:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	2				Speak only English	
ACSSF	B16001	59	3				Spanish or Spanish Creole:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	4				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	5				Speak English less than "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	6				French (incl. Patois, Cajun):	
ACSSF	B16001	59	7				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	8				Speak English less than "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	9				French Creole:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	10				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	11				Speak English less than "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	12				Italian:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	13				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	14				Speak English less than "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	15				Portuguese or Portuguese Creole:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	16				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	17				Speak English less than "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	18				German:	
ACSSF	B16001	59	19				Speak English "very well"	
ACSSF	B16001	59	20				Speak English less than "very well"	

Back to FTP site

	20083us0057000.zip	07-Dec-2009 08:27	675K
	20083us0058000.zip	07-Dec-2009 08:27	553K
	20083us0059000.zip	07-Dec-2009 08:27	1.3M
	20083us0060000.zip	07-Dec-2009 08:27	1.4M
	20083us0061000.zip	07-Dec-2009 08:27	1.6M

	e20083us0059000.txt
	m20083us0059000.txt
	s20083us0059000.txt
	g20083us.txt

**Hint: To view the raw data,
WordPad is the best option**

Table 2.1 Geographic Header Record Layout for the ACS Summary File

Data Dictionary Reference Name	Description	Field Size	Starting Position	Geographic Summary Levels For Single-Year Tables
RECORD CODES				
FILEID	Always equal to ACS Summary File identification	6	1	All Summary Levels
STUSAB	State Postal Abbreviation	2	7	All Summary Levels
SUMLEVEL	Summary Level	3	9	All Summary Levels
COMPONENT	Geographic Component	2	12	All Summary Levels
LOGRECNO	Logical Record Number	7	14	All Summary Levels
GEOGRAPHIC AREA CODES				
US	US	1	21	010
REGION	Census Region	1	22	020
DIVISION	Census Division	1	23	030
STATECE	State (Census Code)	2	24	040, 050, 060, 160, 230, 500, 795, 950, 960, 970
STATE	State (FIPS Code)	2	26	040, 050, 060, 160, 230, 500, 795, 950, 960, 970
COUNTY	County of current residence	3	28	050, 060
COUSUB	County Subdivision (FIPS)	5	31	060
PLACE	Place (FIPS Code)	5	36	160, 312, 352
TRACT	Census Tract	6	41	Reserved for future use
BLKGRP	Block Group	1	47	Reserved for future use

ACSSF NY040000000001	36	New York	
04000US36			
ACSSF NY040010000002	36	New York; Urban	U
04001US36			
ACSSF NY040430000003	36	New York; Rural	R
04043US36			
ACSSF NY040520000004	36	New York; In metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area	
04052US36			
ACSSF NY040550000005	36	9	
04055US36		New York; Not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area	
ACSSF NY040560000006	36	1	
04056US36		New York; In metropolitan statistical area	
ACSSF NY040570000007	36	1	Y
04057US36		litan statistical area -- in principal city	
ACSSF NY040580000008	36	1	
04058US36		litan statistical area -- not in principal city	
ACSSF NY040590000009	36	New York; Not in metropolitan statistical area	
04059US36			
ACSSF NY040600000010	36	2	
04060US36		New York; In micropolitan statistical area	
ACSSF NY040610000011	36	2	Y
04061US36		New York; In micropolitan statistical area -- in principal city	
ACSSF NY040620000012	36	2	
04062US36		New York; In micropolitan statistical area -- not in principal city	
ACSSF NY050000000013	36001		
05000US36001		Albany County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000014	36002		
05000US36002		Allegany County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000015	36005		
05000US36005		Bronx County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000016	36006		
05000US36006		Broome County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000017	36007		
05000US36007		Cattaraugus County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000018	36011		
05000US36011		Cayuga County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000019	36013		
05000US36013		Chautauqua County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000020	36015		
05000US36015		Chemung County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000021	36017		
05000US36017		Chenango County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000022	36019		
05000US36019		Clinton County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000023	36021		
05000US36021		Columbia County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000024	36023		
05000US36023		Cortland County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000025	36025		
05000US36025		Delaware County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000026	36027		
05000US36027		Dutchess County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000027	36029		
05000US36029		Erie County, New York	
ACSSF NY050000000028	36031		
05000US36031		Essex County, New York	

Logical Record Number

GIS ID

Geo ID Code

Estimate SF of the US for Language

Seq. Number from Data Dictionary	Logical Record Number	Estimate
ACSSF,2008e3,us,000,0059,0000264,	1462915,	1056408,32002
ACSSF,2008e3,us,000,0059,0000265,
<u>ACSSF,2008e3,us,000,0059,0000266,</u>	<u>715787,</u>	<u>427958,255288,</u>
ACSSF,2008e3,us,000,0059,0000267,	2491394,	2242925,7834E
ACSSF,2008e3,us,000,0059,0000268,

SOURCES OF MORE INFORMATION

American Community Survey (ACS)



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The A

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In recognition of the need to provide guidance on new concepts and the challenges they bring to users of American Community Survey (ACS) data, the U.S. Census Bureau has developed a series of educational materials called *The ACS Compass Products*. The Census Bureau will release data from the ACS in the form of 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates. These estimates represent concepts that are fundamentally different from those associated with sample data from the decennial census long form. We hope *The ACS Compass Products* give direction and guidance to you in using ACS data.

Handbooks

These handbooks provide user-friendly information about the ACS and the new multiyear estimates available in 2008. Each handbook targets a specific user group including first time ACS data users.

Presentations

Need to conduct your own training? These PowerPoint presentations with fully scripted text allow individuals to conduct their own training on key aspects of the ACS. They are designed to help data users learn about the ACS and cover various topics from the ACS basics to understanding ACS multiyear estimates.

E-learning Tutorial - *forthcoming*

An on-line tutorial that enables users to understand and appropriately use ACS data. Basic and advanced topics on the ACS are covered and case studies to illustrate concepts are provided.

If you have questions, comments, or identify any areas of concern, we would like to hear from you. Please contact us by email at acso.users.support@census.gov.

The ACS Compass Products: Handbooks

The Census Bureau recognizes that users of ACS data have varied backgrounds, educations, and experiences. They need different kinds of explanations and guidance to understand ACS data products. To address this diversity, the Census Bureau worked closely with a group of experts to develop a series of handbooks, each of which is designed to instruct and provide guidance to a particular audience. The audiences that we have chosen are not expected to cover every type of data users, but they cover major stakeholder groups familiar to the Census Bureau.

The handbook series is called, *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data*. The specific handbooks are listed below, along with a brief summary of each of the target audiences.

These handbooks will be released on a flow basis beginning October 2008.

General Data Users	Business Community	High School Teachers
Media	Congress	State and Local Governments
Federal Agencies	Researchers	Users of Data for Rural Areas
Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Data Users	Users of Data for American Indians and Alaska Natives	Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) Data Users

What General Data Users Need to Know [PDF 1.6MB] helps general audiences understand the basics of the ACS, its opportunities and challenges, and how to access and the use the ACS data on the Census Bureau's Web site. It includes concrete examples of how ACS data can be used to answer real-world questions about our society. [Top](#)

What the Business Community Needs to Know [PDF 2.2MB] acknowledges that to make effective use of the ACS, businesses need to understand how ACS data are collected and reported, and their advantages and limitations relative to the long form data previously collected during the decennial census. This handbook describes the data products available from the ACS and how to access them. Examples are provided with step-by-step instructions on accessing the data. [Top](#)

What High School Teachers Need to Know [PDF 2.3MB] summarizes the types of information and geographic areas covered by the ACS and explains how to understand ACS data. Specific examples are provided to illustrate how ACS data can be incorporated into lesson plans and activities to address a variety of social studies, geography, and mathematics standards. [Top](#)

What the Media Need to Know [PDF 1.1MB] describes how the ACS is put together, key concepts and how to get the most out of the survey. It explains the various ways to find and access ACS data and the best ways for novice and experienced journalists to use the estimates. Step-by-step stories are included of how journalists have used the ACS to find and improve their published work. [Top](#)

What Congress Needs to Know [PDF 1.5MB] can help congressional staff use ACS data to respond to constituent inquiries, draft floor and press statements, conduct legislative research, understand funding formulas, compare data from the ACS with other federal statistics, and interpret ACS data. [Top](#)

What State and Local Governments Need to Know [PDF 1.2MB] illustrates how ACS data can be used to address typical issues faced by state and local governments and provides information that can allow for a more effective transition from decennial census long form data to ACS data. Several real-life case studies are included to demonstrate how best to use and interpret ACS data. [Top](#)

What Federal Agencies Need to Know [PDF 2.1MB] is designed to aid federal agency analysts, program administrators, and policy makers when they use ACS data in carrying out the business of their agencies. This handbook describes the essential features of the ACS in detail, discusses some important statistical and practical considerations and

The ACS Compass Products: Presentations

These PowerPoint presentations provide important information on various aspects of the American Community Survey (ACS). They have been developed for two main purposes: (1) for individuals to learn more about the ACS and (2) to provide a wide audience with the tools needed to conduct training on the ACS. Each presentation consists of approximately 35 slides and the accompanying speakers' notes.

An Overview of the American Community Survey presents the basics of the ACS program and website. It includes information on content, survey methodology, and data products.

[Presentation Slides](#) [PPT]
[Speaker Notes](#) [PDF 52KB]

Things that May Affect the Estimates from the American Community Survey presents a discussion of sampling error and other things that affect ACS estimates, such as non-sampling error and population controls.

[Presentation Slides](#) [PPT]
[Speaker Notes](#) [PDF 60KB]

Understanding Multiyear Estimates from the American Community Survey details the definition, use, and interpretation of multiyear estimates.

[Presentation Slides](#) [PPT]
[Speaker Notes](#) [PDF 49KB]

Data Products from the American Community Survey presents an overview of the ACS data products, including examples of each product.

[Presentation Slides](#) [PPT]
[Speaker Notes](#) [PDF 53KB]

Geographic Areas and Concepts for the American Community Survey gives an overview of the types of geographic areas for which data are available from the ACS.

[Presentation Slides](#) [PPT]
[Speaker Notes](#) [PDF 45KB]

Introduction to the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File from the American Community Survey provides an explanation of the PUMS file, the available geographies, and how to access these data.

Other Sources

- ACS Design and Methodology Report
- 2006 ACS Data Users Handbook
- American Community Survey Office by phone at **1-800-923-8282**
- Leonard Gaines at lgaines@empire.state.ny.us or 518-292-5312