

The American Community Survey

A Continuous Measurement Application in the United States

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**AMERICAN
COMMUNITY
SURVEY**

**America is changing,
and so is the census.**

A detailed look at how our communities are changing every year—not just once every ten years. That's what the powerful new American Community Survey provides. Your community needs current information about its residents' education, employment, income, housing and more in order to plan and fund local services that are important to you.

Your response is important and completely confidential.

For more information, please visit
www.census.gov/acs

Or call the Census Bureau's ACS toll-free number at
888-346-9682

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

United States
**Census
2010**

- Overview of the American Community Survey (ACS)
- Advantages of Continuous Measurement
- Considerations of Continuous Measurement

ACS Background

- Provide timely detailed data to policy makers
- Reengineer decennial census by eliminating the need for the long-form
- Allows opportunity for continuous improvement

Timeline of ACS Development

- 1994 - 1996 Development of Continuous Measurement Prototype
- 1996 - 1998 Operational Testing
- 1999 - 2004 Demonstration Period
- 2005 and on Full implementation

ACS Content Areas

- Demographic characteristics
- Social characteristics
- Economic characteristics
- Housing characteristics

ACS Sample Design

- Survey designed to produce annually updated single-year and multi-year estimates
- Variable sampling rates used to ensure sufficient sample sizes in the smallest governmental units
- Sample cases selected from an updated Master Address File (MAF)

ACS Data Collection

- Methodology based on best practices from decennial census and demographic surveys
- Monthly samples using overlapping multi-mode data collection methods
 - Mail
 - Telephone
 - Personal Visit

ACS Data Collection

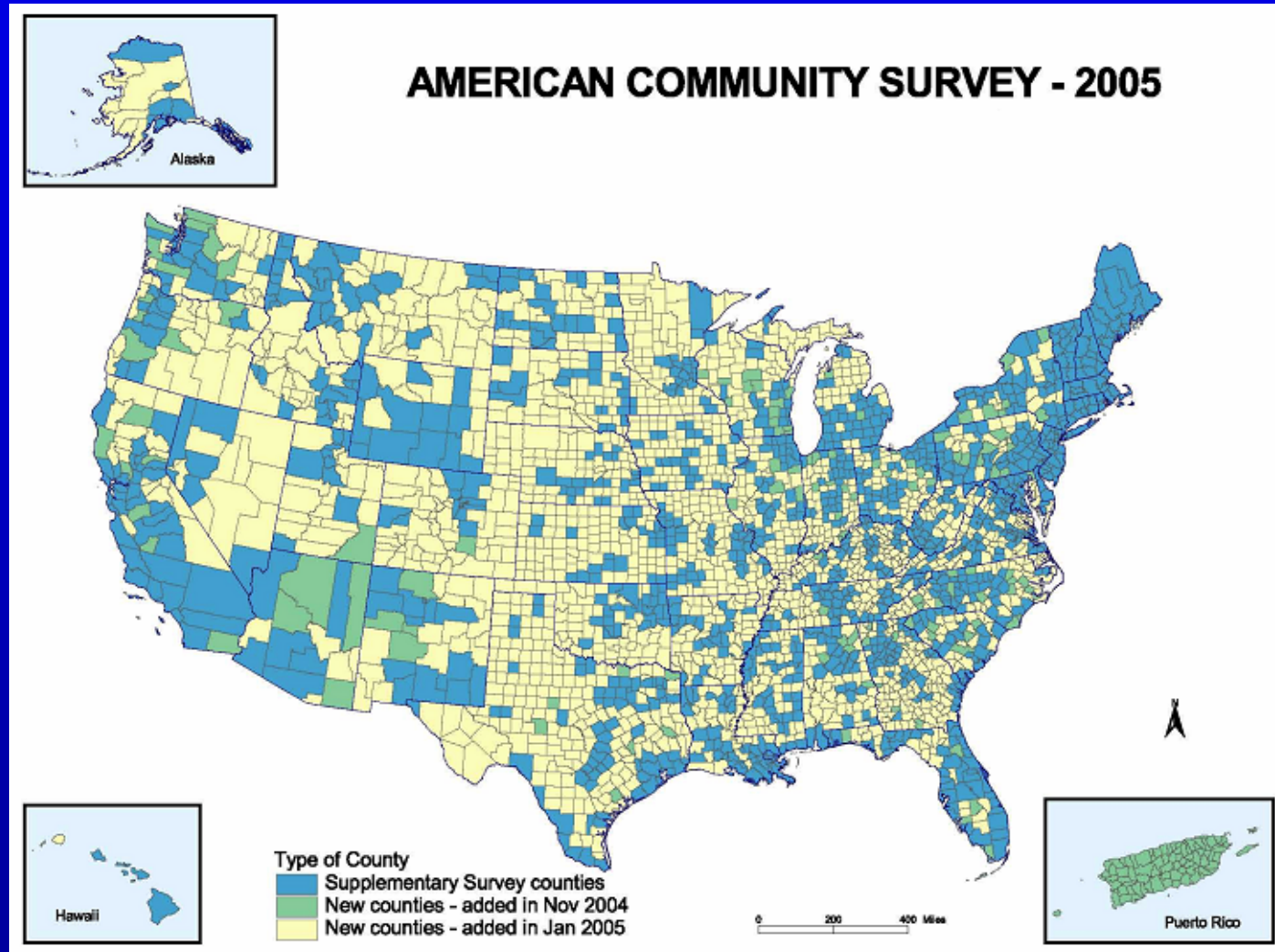
- Four mailings used to maximize response
- Nonresponse workload identified for telephone follow-up
- Subsample of non-respondents to mail and telephone selected for personal visit follow-up

ACS Data Collection

Continuous cycle

Sample Panel	Calendar Month				
	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Mar 2007	Apr 2007	May 2007
Nov 2006	Personal Visit				
Dec 2006	Phone	Personal Visit			
Jan 2007	Mail	Phone	Personal Visit		
Feb 2007		Mail	Phone	Personal Visit	
Mar 2007			Mail	Phone	Personal Visit

ACS Operations



ACS Data Processing

Annual accumulation

- All data collected in a given calendar year are used to produce the ACS estimates for that year
- Data for multiple years will be pooled to produce 3-year and 5-year estimates

ACS Weighting and Estimation

- Initial weights reflect the probability of selection
- Weights are adjusted to account for noninterviews
- Weights are adjusted to independent housing unit and population estimates (controls)

Examples of ACS Data Products

- Detailed Tables
- Profiles
- Ranking Tables and Geographic Comparison Tables
- Thematic Maps
- Public Use Files (microdata)
- Special Tabulations

ACS Data Products

Illustration of an ACS Release schedule

Type of Data	Population Size of Area	Data For The Previous Year(s) Would be Released In The Summer Of:						
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1-year Estimates	65,000+							
3-year Estimates	20,000+							
5-year Estimates	Smallest areas							

Advantages of Continuous Measurement

- Production of updated annual estimates means more current and timely data for users
- Improved quality due to the use of interviewing staff that are experienced and continuously employed

Advantages of Continuous Measurement

- Greater flexibility in content determination
- Ability to use ACS results as sampling frame for additional surveys
- Streamlined production systems that are improved by continuous use and improvement

Considerations of ACS Sample Design

- Maintaining frame completeness through the use of
 - Postal service updates in most areas
 - Special field updating in more rural areas
- Maintaining proposed sample size despite risks of
 - Budget reductions
 - Increases in mail, phone, and overall survey nonresponse

Considerations of ACS Data Collection

- Maintaining high levels of mail response, overall survey response, and improving effectiveness of telephone follow-up
- Maintaining low levels of item nonresponse
- Developing additional language tools

Considerations of ACS Data Collection

- Identification, testing and integration of new content
- Ensuring methods are effective in all areas and for all populations
- Shifting to image capture technology

Considerations of ACS Weighting and Estimation

- Quality of population and housing estimates used as survey controls
- Reliability of data collected for small geographic areas
- Comparability and utility of single-year and multi-year estimates

Considerations of ACS Data Products

- Educate users on multi-year products
- Facilitate transition of data users from traditional once-a-decade long-form census to ACS
- Maintain timely review and release of data as the number of data products increases

Summary

- Overall, the ACS has been a successful example of implementing a continuous measurement application
- Considerations will continue to require research
- For the 2010 census in the US, the ACS will replace the traditional decennial long-form

For More Information

American Community Survey Office

1-888-346-9682

cmo.acs@census.gov

www.census.gov/acs/www

ACS Alert

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Special/Alerts.htm>

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