

## Q & A

### 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

The 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates were released on December 14, 2010.

#### What are the ACS estimates?

The ACS is a large, continuous survey taken annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey provides us with information each year on the characteristics of our population and housing. It also provides us with estimates of small areas such as census tracts as well as for small population groups such as the “Samoan” race group or “female householders with no husband present”.

Decennial censuses are a complete count of our population taken every 10 years. The recent 2010 Census collected only “short form” data such as age, sex, race, Hispanic origin and housing. In previous decennial censuses, a “long form” was used to collect social and economic data as well as more detailed population and housing data. The decennial census “long form” data has been replaced by the annual ACS survey data. Therefore, no “long form” data will be released from the 2010 Census.

2010 Census data will be released in several waves beginning December 21, 2010. The Census Bureau is advising the public to use the 2010 Census data instead of the ACS data for information such as total population counts, age, sex, race, Hispanic origin and selected housing data. As we move further from the 2010 Census collection year, ACS data will prove to be more valuable as an estimate of these population counts and characteristics.

#### Why use the 5-year ACS data instead of the decennial census data?

The Census Bureau conducts the American Community Survey every year and asks questions similar to those on the “long form” which was used during the 2000 Census. For data consistency and cost saving, the Census Bureau decided not to use the “long form” for the 2010 Census and, instead, will rely on the 5-year ACS data for small area data as well as for social and economic data. The 5-year data will also allow data to be released on a more current basis as opposed to the release of data every 10 years.

#### What are the new geographic areas available?

ACS data released earlier were for areas with populations of 20,000 people or more. The 5-year ACS data now includes small area data which has not previously been released such as block groups, census tracts, Hawaiian Home Lands, school districts and legislative districts. It also

includes many Hawaii geographic areas with populations of less than 20,000 people such as the more sparsely populated census designated places.

The last set of Census Bureau data down to the block group level was collected and released in 2000.

#### What do the 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimates represent?

All ACS data are estimates obtained from surveys. The 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimates are based on 60 months of collected survey data. This means that the data set has the largest sample size of all ACS products and therefore is the most reliable ACS data. For the State of Hawaii, about 100,000 people were included in the sample over the 5-year period. This also means, though, that the dataset is the least current since the survey data collected spans from 2005 to 2009. All geographic areas down to the block group level have been released. Data for small population subgroups are also available in this 2005-2009 ACS estimates.

#### How do I interpret the 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimates?

**The 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimate is the average characteristic of an area or population group over the time period 2005 to 2009.**

For example, the 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimate for Chinatown's (census tract 52) total population was 2,472. This means that the average population in Chinatown between 2005 and 2009 was 2,472.

Another example is the 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimate for Chinatown's poverty rate which was 33.6%. In other words, for the Chinatown area (census tract 52), the average percent of population below poverty between 2005 and 2009 was 33.6%.

The data comes from a sample of people in Hawaii and therefore, the "total population" and the "percent below poverty" estimates are provided along with their margins of error.

#### When should the 5-year ACS estimate be used (versus the 1-year or 3-year ACS estimate)?

Data users should utilize the 5-year estimates when studying very small population groups; when analyzing census tracts or other small geographies not available in the 1-year and 3-year products; and when reliability of the estimates is more important than how current (in regard to time) the estimates are.

### What types of products are available?

The Census Bureau provides *data and narrative profiles* (such as geographical area profiles containing social, economic, housing and demographic data); *detailed tables; subject tables* (such as characteristics of people who have earned less than a high school degree); *geographic comparison tables* (such as comparisons between different counties); and *thematic maps* (maps displaying area differences down to the county level).

### Where can I find the data?

You can find the Hawaii specific data at:

DBEDT internet site at:

<http://hawaii.gov/dbedt/info/census/acs/ACS2009/>

You can also find Hawaii data and any U.S. data at the Census Bureau American Factfinder Internet site. The data down to the census tract geographical level may be obtained using the American Factfinder at:

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds\\_name=ACS\\_2009\\_5YR\\_G00\\_&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=310396234320](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&_lang=en&_ts=310396234320)

You can download the data from the Census Bureau Download Center Internet site. The data down to the block group geographical level may be obtained by downloading the 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Summary File 1 dataset at:

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DownloadDatasetServlet?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DownloadDatasetServlet?_lang=en)