

GENERAL INFORMATION

The **American Community Survey** is conducted in every county, American Indian and Alaska Native Area, Hawaiian Home Land, and in Puerto Rico. Each month a sample of addresses is selected, and each of these addresses receives an American Community Survey questionnaire.

Need more information?



Phone
1-800-923-8282 (toll-free)
1-800-354-7271 (survey respondents)
301-763-4636 (data queries)



Web site
www.census.gov/acs/www

Responses to the **American Community Survey** are protected by law. Census Bureau employees are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of your information.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"The **American Community Survey** is a valuable survey that will have a positive impact on all Americans." (*National Council of La Raza*)

"The **American Community Survey** is vital to economic development and for wise government and business decision-making. The American Community Survey is an improvement over the census long form because it provides small-area information annually, instead of once a decade." (*Joan Naymark, Director of Research and Planning for Target*)

"The ACS 5-year data products will be important assets for facilitating the health and well-being of metropolitan America." (*Andrew Reamer, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution*)

"We look forward to a continued discussion about how the ACS will help provide critical information about Alaska's people." (*Mitzi C. Barker, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.*)

ACS

**Living
by the
Numbers:**
*Your role in
the American
Community
Survey*

Issued January 2010
ACS/10-LBTN

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

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U
Helping You Make Informed Decisions

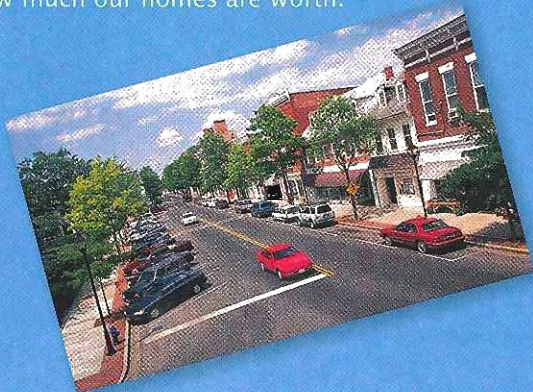
United States
**Census
2010**

CHARTING YOUR COMMUNITY'S CHANGES

Have you ever thought much about what determines if new roads, schools, after-school programs, or hospitals are placed in your community? How long it takes fellow commuters to get to work? Why it took so long for your favorite restaurant to get to your neighborhood? Where you would go if disaster struck nearby? How your community has changed over the years and what evidence exists to prove it? What makes your community attractive to new businesses or tourists? Why there isn't a bank or video store on your corner?

The answers lie in the numbers . . . numbers that reflect who we are, what people and businesses make up our communities, how our communities have changed, how those changes impact our daily lives, and most important, how our communities are meeting the needs those changes created . . . numbers like those previously collected every 10 years during the census. Those same numbers play a critical role for states and local communities in determining their share of federal money for schools, roads, senior citizen centers, and other services.

Up until 2000, those numbers were provided by what is known as the census long form, which went to certain households as part of the 10-year census. Long form results provided characteristics on population and housing, such as our education levels, whether we are working and how long it takes us to get to work, what languages we speak at home, and how much our homes are worth.



TRACKING TRENDS THROUGH THE YEARS

But wait! What about the changes that occur in the other 9 years?

Our communities can change radically in a few years. But how can we understand the impact if we can't accurately gauge what changes actually occurred? The U.S. Census Bureau has moved toward a whole new way of census-taking to help answer those questions.

The **American Community Survey** (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at ongoing changes. It is a critical element in the Census Bureau's approach to future censuses. The benefits of the American Community Survey include:

- A focused purpose: By obtaining detailed information about the United States' population and housing, the **American Community Survey** replaces the long form that was formerly used for the census. This allows the 2010 Census to focus on the core questions needed for congressional apportionment.
- Updated information every year: The **American Community Survey** provides current, up-to-date numbers annually.
- More efficient uses of taxpayers' dollars: The **American Community Survey** helps improve the census process and provides communities nearly 10 times the information.

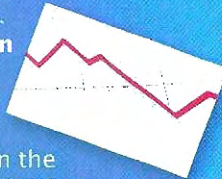
The **American Community Survey** doesn't count the population, but it does provide information on the population's characteristics and living situations.

That's where YOU enter the picture. Your community's ability to provide the goods and services you need is only as good as the information at its disposal, and federal tax dollars can only be allocated to communities where they are most needed if current information is available. That is why community support for the **American Community Survey** is vital.

NUMBERS IN ACTION

Emergency planning: The West Virginia state government uses the **American Community Survey** data to be better prepared in the event of catastrophic flooding. They use the American Community Survey to estimate the number of shelters possibly needed, the amount of debris that might be generated, loss estimates for existing structures, and potential economic impact on the surrounding communities.

Community-level grants: The U.S. Department of Labor uses **American Community Survey** data to allocate millions of federal dollars to local community groups in its Pathways Out of Poverty program. In the application process, nonprofit organizations use American Community Survey poverty data in the grant proposals to show how their programs will help areas that need them most.



Business: Large retail chains use **American Community Survey** data for measuring change in and size of the diverse population of urban areas. They find these data are critical for correctly selecting new sites for multimillion dollar stores.



Your concerns: Looking to start a new business? Moving to a new town? Maybe you are in charge of a local civic organization and need an up-to-date community profile. The **American Community Survey** provides the information for making the choices that are right for you—the numbers you need right now and every year, not just once a decade.