Comparison: Census Bureau Demographic Programs

	Decennial Census	Population Estimates Program	American Community Survey
Purpose / Uses	Apportionment of seats in Congress Redistricting Allocation of Federal funding Planning at state and local levels	Survey controls Allocate Federal funding intercensal yrs Denominators for statistical rates Planning at state and local levels	Provide timely detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing data about the country's communities every year.
Temporal frame	Point-in-time	Point-in-time	Period estimate
Reference date	April 1 Year ending in zero	July 1 Intercensal years	None. Estimates describe entire period, which may be: 1-year (areas with 65,000 population plus) 3-year (areas with 20,000 population plus) 5-year period (all areas including ZCTAS, down to block group)
Periodicity	Every 10 years ("snapshot")	Annual	Ongoing survey Data collection every month ("video")
Burden on respondent	Mandatory	None	Mandatory
Authority	Article I, Section 2 Constitution U.S. Code Title 13, Sections 141 and 193	Title 13, Section 181	U.S. Code Title 13, Sections 141 and 193
Methodology	100% enumeration Every resident, every housing unit, and every group quarters	Vital records (from states) plus formulas for calculation of net migration	Random sample from Master Address File: 3.54 million HUs/year (295,000/month) Increase from 2.9 million--June 2011 mailout
Modes of Personal contact	Mail or drop off questionnaire; personal visit follow-up to non-responding addresses	No contact with residents. Census Bureau headquarters works with individual states	Mail Telephone Personal visit
Management hub(s)	Temporary Regional Census Centers	Census Headquarters	Census Regional Offices (6)
Data			
Output	Counts	Counts	Characteristics
Topics	Age Sex Race and ethnicity, Household relationships Tenure (own or rent home)	**U.S., state, county totals:** Age, sex, race, ethnicity, housing **Incorporated place totals:** Population only	See Quick Reference Guide : "American Community Survey Data Release Timetable, Topics Covered by the ACS"
Lowest level of release	Block	Incorporated place	Block group (FTP); census tract (AFF)