American Community Survey Outreach Session

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Introductions

Please introduce yourself.

- Your name
- Occupation
- How familiar are you with Census data?
- Were you aware there was a long and short form for Census 2000 data collection?
- Have you ever heard about the American Community Survey (ACS)?

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Purpose

1. To help the Census Bureau better understand data user needs and concerns.
2. To obtain information from you about your concerns, reactions, and suggestions for potential improvements to the current plan regarding the release of data from the American Community Survey (ACS)

Discussion Topics

1. Background on Decennial Census and ACS
2. Multiyear Estimates
3. Data Release Schedule
4. Frequency and Volume of Data
5. Data Reliability
6. Data Dissemination

Background on Decennial Census and the ACS

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Census 2000

Two forms were used:

1. "short" form – asked for basic demographic and housing information, such as age, sex, race, how many people lived in the housing unit, and if the housing unit was owned or rented by the resident
2. "long" form – collected the same information as the short form but also collected more in-depth information such as income, education, and language spoken at home

Only a sample of the population received the long form.

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2010 Census

- 2010 Census will focus on counting the U.S. population
- Same “short form” questions as Census 2000
- No “long form” data will be collected

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American Community Survey
Similarities with Census 2000

- Same questions and many of the same basic statistics as long form in 2000
- 5-year estimates will be produced for same broad set of geographic areas including census tracts and block groups

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American Community Survey
Key Differences from Census 2000

- Beginning in 2010, data for small geographic areas will be produced every year versus once every 10 years
- Census 2000 data described the population and housing as of April 1, 2000 while ACS data describe a period of time and require data for 12 months, 36 months, or 60 months

American Community Survey
Key Differences from Census 2000

- The goal of ACS is to produce data comparable to the Census 2000 long form data
- These estimates will cover the same small areas as Census 2000 but with smaller sample sizes
- Smaller sample sizes for 5-year ACS estimates result in reductions in the reliability of estimates

American Community Survey
Methodology

- Sample includes about 3 million addresses each year
- Both housing units and group quarters population are included
- Every county in the U.S. is included in the sample
- Data are collected continuously throughout the year using mail, telephone, and personal visit methods

American Community Survey
Period Estimates

- ACS estimates are period estimates, describing the average characteristics over a specified period of time
- Contrasts with Census 2000 and other surveys that provide 'point-in-time' estimates that describe the characteristics of an area on a specific date
- 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates will be released for geographic areas that meet specific population thresholds

American Community Survey
Issues for small areas

- Like Census 2000 the total sample size for data in those areas will be based on small samples
- These areas will only receive 5-year period estimates
- Less reliable than data from Census 2000

American Community Survey
Benefits of ACS for small areas

- Once 5 years of data are accumulated, these areas will receive data **every** year – not once every 10 years
- For planners, researchers, and other data users, small town data can be combined with other small towns to improve reliability
- Improvements in completeness of data over Census 2000

Multiyear Estimates

What are Period and Multiyear Estimates?

A **period estimate** is an estimate that describes the average characteristics of an area over a specific time period

A **multiyear estimate** is a period estimate that encompasses more than one calendar year.

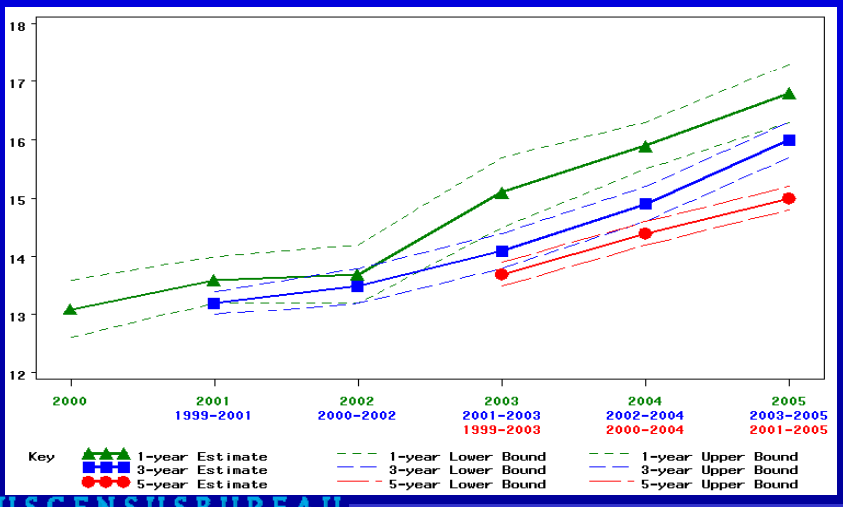
- The period for ACS 1-year estimates is the 12 months that make up the calendar year, the period for ACS multiyear estimates is either 3 or 5 calendar years.

What Are 5-year ACS Estimates?

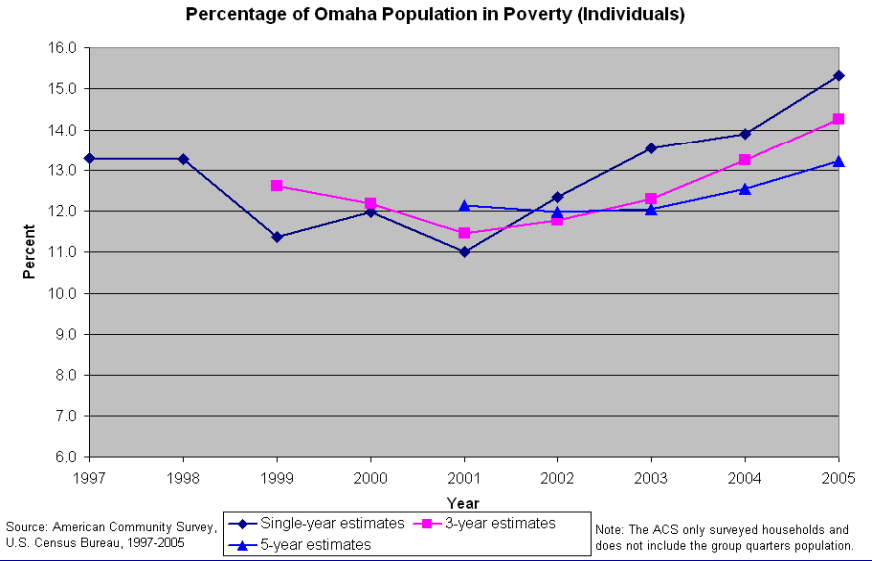
All the data collected for 60 months (e.g., January 2005 through December 2009) are pooled together and then averaged to come up with 5-year estimates.

5-year estimates do not represent any one year or the midpoint of a period.

Example:
Percent of Population 5 Years and Older who Speak Spanish at Home- Lake County, IL



Example:



Discussion Questions- Multiyear estimates

- Does the fact that these data are averages based on 5 years and not point-in-time estimates affect how or whether you will use the data?

Data Release Schedule

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American Community Survey
Data Products 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

*All legal, administrative and statistical geographic areas down to the tract and block group level.

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Discussion Questions- ACS Data Release Schedule

- Do you think that the release of 5-year averaged data every year is a good idea?
- Will the existence of data released every year make you feel the need to use it, to update your databases or projections or will you be able to ignore it and use it when you need it?

Discussion Questions- ACS Data Release Schedule

- Would you prefer data on another schedule, for example every 2 years or 5 years?
- What do you think of the idea of releasing the full set of data periodically (maybe every 3 or 5 years) and releasing a small subset in the other years?

Data Reliability

Example:
Port St. Lucie, Florida

GRANDPARENTS				
Number of grandparents living with own grandchildren under 18 years	2,651	+/-838	100%	(X)
Responsible for grandchildren	917	+/-558	34.6%	+/-16.9

Example:
Cass County, North Dakota
(population 132,585)

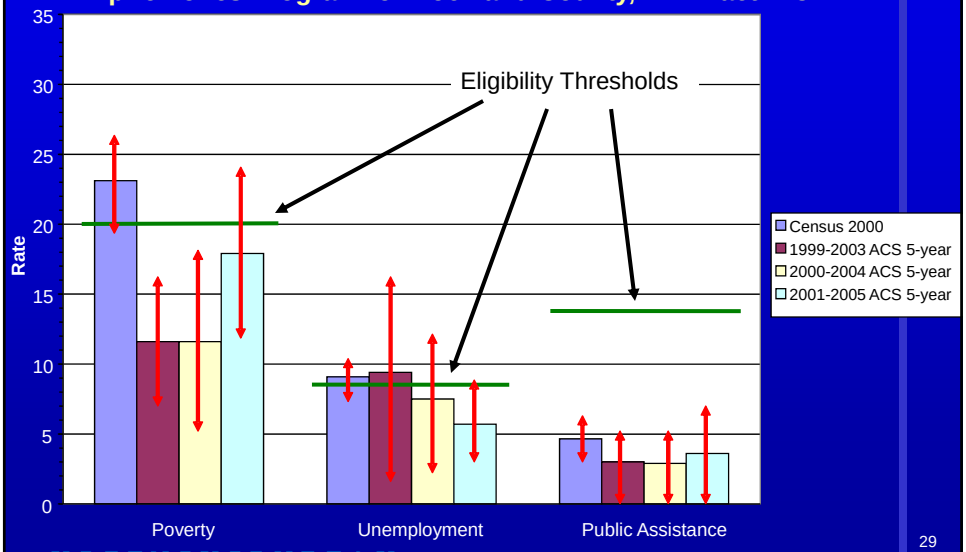
PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL		
All families	4.5%	+/-1.7
With related children under 18 years	5.5%	+/-2.7
With related children under 5 years only	9.0%	+/-7.9
Married couple families	1.4%	+/-0.8
With related children under 18 years	0.5%	+/-0.4
With related children under 5 years only	0.5%	+/-1.0
Families with female householder, no husband present	20.1%	+/-9.1
With related children under 18 years	21.4%	+/-10.3
With related children under 5 years only	32.7%	+/-27.0

Example:
Comparison of 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year Estimates of the Percentage of Persons in Poverty for Omaha, NE: 2003-2005 ACS

	2003/ 2001-2003/ 1999-2003	2004/ 2002-2004/ 2000-2004	2005/ 2003-2005/ 2001-2005
1-year estimate	13.5	13.9	15.3
3-year estimate	12.1	13.2	14.2
5-year estimate	11.9	12.5	13.2
1-year MOE	1.6	1.5	1.5
3-year MOE	0.8	0.8	0.8
5-year MOE	0.5	0.5	0.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Multiyear Estimates Study.

Example:
Comparison of 5-year Period Estimate and Census 2000:
Empire Zones Program for Rockland County, NY: Tract 123



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Multiyear Estimates Study.

Discussion Questions – Reliability

- Do you find this easy or hard to understand?
- Are data with large margins of error still useful?
- If you were filling out a grant application and it required you to enter the percent of grandparents responsible for raising children, what percent would you use?
- How easy or hard is it for data users to interpret confidence intervals? Are the data still useful?

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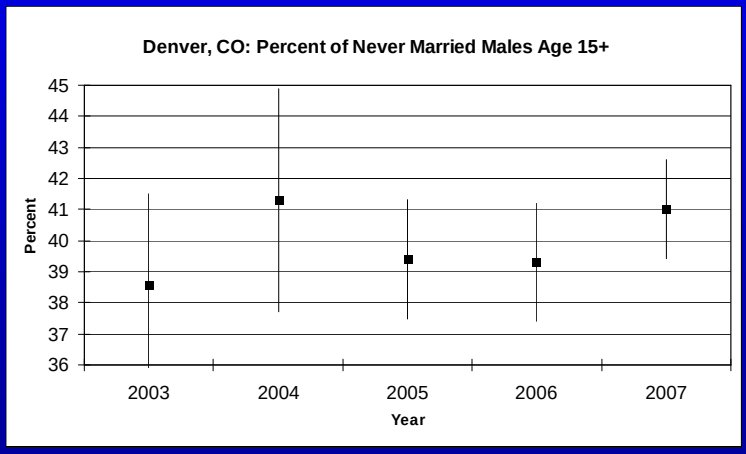
Displaying Confidence Intervals



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Confidence Indicator

Selected Social Characteristics in the United States: 2006	Estimate	Reliability	Margin of Error
HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE			
Total households	30,491	good	+/-1,731
Family households (families)	19,533	good	+/-1,639
With own children under 18 years	9,432	good	+/-1,446
Married-couple families	13,310	good	+/-1,677
With own children under 18 years	5,442	good	+/-1,216
Male householder, no wife present	1,150	good	+/-462
With own children under 18 years	546	fair	+/-386
Female householder, no husband present	4,052	good	+/-747
With own children under 18 years	2,430	good	+/-702
Nonfamily households	11,958	good	+/-1,434
Householder living alone	9,777	good	+/-1,216
65 years and over	4,512	good	+/-604
Households with one or more people under 18 years	10,922	good	+/-1,423
Households with one or more people 65 years and over	8,090	good	+/-909
Average household size	2.66	good	+/-0.14
Average family size	3.40	good	+/-0.22
RELATIONSHIP			
Household population	81,112	good	+/-5,974
Householder	30,491	good	+/-1,731
Spouse	13,609	good	+/-1,650
Child	25,692	good	+/-3,081
Other relatives	5,208	good	+/-2,044
Nonrelatives	5,112	good	+/-1,690
Unmarried partner	2,346	good	+/-681
MARITAL STATUS			
Males 15 years and over	31,286	good	+/-2,521
Never married	11,413	good	+/-1,679
Now married, except separated	14,392	good	+/-1,886
Separated	775	fair	+/-469
Widowed	993	good	+/-410
Divorced	3,713	good	+/-889
Females 15 years and over	32,957	good	+/-2,576
Never married	7,901	good	+/-1,330
Now married, except separated	14,492	good	+/-1,917
Separated	1,445	good	+/-680
Widowed	4,551	good	+/-804
Divorced	4,568	good	+/-1,134
FERTILITY			
Number of women 15 to 50 years old who had a birth in the past 12 months	1,849	good	+/-681
Unmarried women (widowed, divorced, and never married)	554	fair	+/-386
Per 1,000 unmarried women	54	fair	+/-37
Per 1,000 women 15 to 50 years old	90	good	+/-31
Per 1,000 women 15 to 19 years old	10	poor	+/-29
Per 1,000 women 20 to 34 years old	173	good	+/-59
Per 1,000 women 35 to 50 years old	27	fair	+/-29

Reliability Legend based on the Coefficient of Variation (CV)

Estimate Reliability	Ratio of Standard Error to its Estimate (CV)
poor	greater than 0.61
fair	0.31 to 0.61
good	less than 0.30

Note: This indicator provides general guidance about the reliability of the estimates; discretion should be used when determining whether the estimates are appropriate for use.

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Discussion Questions: Confidence Indicator

- Do you think this type of confidence indicator would be useful or helpful to you? Why or why not?
- When would you use an estimate that was labeled “fair”? How about “poor”?
- Would you prefer to use this confidence indicator or the margin of error to evaluate the reliability of an estimate? Why?

Discussion Questions: Confidence Indicator

- Would you prefer the Census Bureau not release data that is not reliable or release as much data as possible but with confidence indicators?
- If you do think it would be better to not release these data, what would data users do if a lot of data for a town–say half–were not released?

Data Dissemination

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ACS Data Dissemination

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Discussion Questions- Data Dissemination

- Are you familiar with American FactFinder and the ACS data products?
- Are you familiar with the ACS Summary File and Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)?
- What do you think of the idea of restructuring the data dissemination strategy so that only estimates with the highest level of reliability are available on American FactFinder (knowing the full set would be accessible via FTP site)?

Discussion Questions- Data Dissemination

- Would you learn to use the FTP site in order to access the additional data?
- Do you think the Census Bureau should develop special products for American FactFinder to include only those estimates that meet the highest level of reliability?
- Would you prefer that (like the long form) no measures of sampling error be included in the ACS products?

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