

The
U.S. Census Bureau's
**AMERICAN COMMUNITY
SURVEY**

THE NATION'S MIRROR
&
Our Democracy's *Edge*

ACS 101

- ✍ Implemented nationwide in 2005
- ✍ Replaced traditional census 'long form'
- ✍ Part of decennial census; response required under 13 U.S.C. §141
- ✍ Ongoing survey of 3 million households (250,000 per month)

ACS 101

(continued)

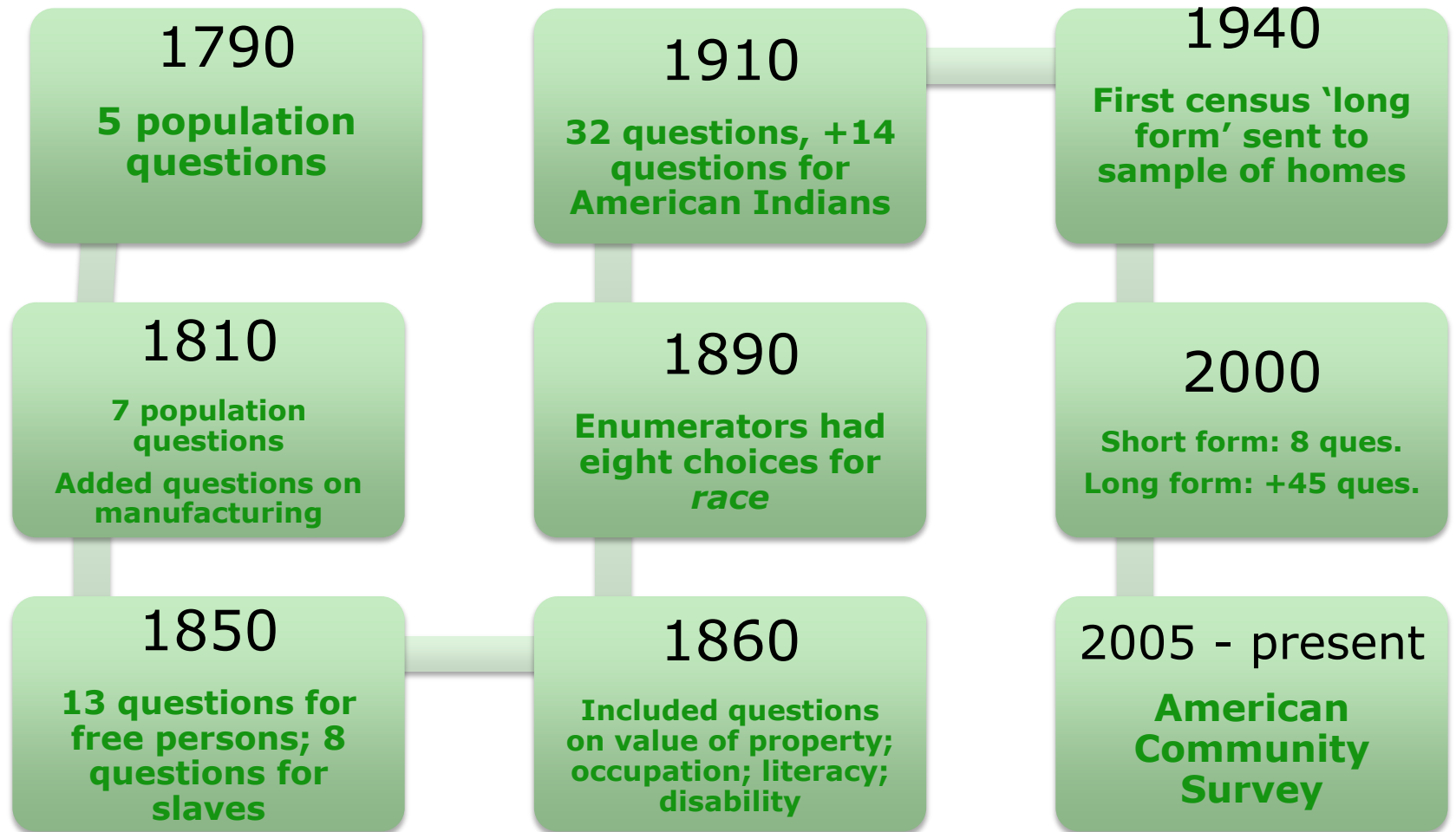
 *Only* source of consistent, small-area data for *every* U.S. neighborhood and community. Areas with:

- 65K+ population: 1-year estimates
- 20K – 65K population: 3-year estimates
- <20K population (down to census tracts or block groups): 5-year estimates

 Data published annually

The Census & ACS

THE NATION'S MIRROR for 220 years



ACS TOPICS

- Congress approves ACS topics and questions each decade (13 U.S.C. §141(f))
- All ACS data are used to administer, evaluate, or monitor federal programs or comply with federal court decisions
- Visit the Census Bureau's website for citations of laws that require or use the data:

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/questions_and_why_we_ask/

ACS TOPICS

Basic (Population)

- Age
- Sex
- Hispanic origin
- Race
- Relationship

Social (Population)

- Ancestry
- Citizenship status
- Disability
- Educational attainment
- Fertility
- Grandparents as caregivers
- Language spoken at home
- Marital history
- Marital status
- Period of military service
- Place of birth

- School enrollment
- Residence one year ago
- Undergraduate field of degree
- Veteran status
- VA service connected disability rating
- Year of entry

Financial (Housing)

- Business or medical office on property
- Cost of utilities
- Condominium fee
- Insurance
- Mobile home costs
- Mortgage
- Real estate taxes
- Rent
- Tenure (own or rent)
- Value of property

ACS TOPICS

(continued)

Physical (Housing)

- Acreage
- Agricultural sales
- Bedrooms
- House heating fuel
- Kitchen facilities
- Plumbing facilities
- Telephone service available
- Rooms
- Units in structure
- Vehicles available
- Year moved in to unit
- Year structure built

Economic (Population & Housing)

- Class of worker
- Food stamps benefit
- Health insurance coverage
- Income
- Vehicles available
- Work status last year
- Industry
- Journey to work
- Occupation
- Place of work
- Labor force status

SAMPLE ACS DATA



Congressional District 4, Connecticut (111th Congress)

Selected Economic Characteristics: 2009 ⓘ

Data Set: 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Survey: American Community Survey

[Social](#) - Education, Marital Status, Relationships, Fertility, Grandparents...

[Economic](#) - Income, Employment, Occupation, Commuting to Work...

[Housing](#) - Occupancy and Structure, Housing Value and Costs, Utilities...

[Demographic](#) - Sex and Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Housing Units...

[Narrative](#) - Text profile with graphs for easy analysis...

NOTE. Although the American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic and housing unit estimates, it is the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program that produces and disseminates the [official estimates of the population for the nation, states, counties, cities and towns and estimates of housing units for states and counties](#).

For more information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Selected Economic Characteristics	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Margin of Error
EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
Population 16 years and over	537,826	+/-4,069	537,826	(X)
In labor force	363,375	+/-5,831	67.6%	+/-0.9
Civilian labor force	363,219	+/-5,801	67.5%	+/-0.9
Employed	327,385	+/-5,273	60.9%	+/-0.9
Unemployed	35,834	+/-3,322	6.7%	+/-0.6
Armed Forces	156	+/-173	0.0%	+/-0.1
Not in labor force	174,451	+/-4,811	32.4%	+/-0.9
Civilian labor force	363,219	+/-5,801	363,219	(X)
Percent Unemployed	9.9%	+/-0.9	(X)	(X)

CONGRESSIONAL USES

Projecting demographic and economic change ...

Annually updated estimates

Monitor trends in real time



Identifying needs; balancing priorities ...

Compare conditions & characteristics across space and time

Set thresholds for offering assistance



Allocating formula grants to states and localities ...

\$416 billion annually (FY2008)

184 programs

CONGRESSIONAL USES

(continued)

ACS data: *Make your case ...*

- Legislative proposals & funding formulas
- Committee statements
- Floor statements and “one-minutes”
- Letters to federal agencies
- Press releases
- Op-eds
- Constituent newsletters

FEDERAL PROGRAM USES

SOURCE: Selected examples from *Surveying for Dollars: The Role of the American Community Survey in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds*, by Andrew Reamer, Fellow, The Brookings Institution, July 2010.

- ✓ Rural Electrification
Loans/Telephone Loans
- ✓ Emergency Watershed Protection Program
- ✓ Supportive Housing for the Elderly/for Persons with Disabilities
- ✓ Small Business Development Center
- ✓ Highway Planning & Construction
- ✓ Appalachian Area Development
- ✓ Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies (No Child Left Behind)
- ✓ Adult Education State Grant Program
- ✓ Medicaid
- ✓ Block grants for Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse
- ✓ Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers
- ✓ Low Income Home Energy Assistance
- ✓ Child and Adult Care Food Program
- ✓ Crime Victim Assistance
- ✓ Unemployment Insurance
- ✓ Homeland Security Grant Program
- ✓ Child Welfare Services (State Grants)

Democracy's *Edge*

The Great Equalizer



In a post-earmark budget world ...

- Assess conditions
- Identify needs
- Balance priorities/set goals
- Determine funding
- Target resources
- Allocate grants
- Monitor progress
- Evaluate outcomes

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *A Compass for Understanding and Using American Community Survey Data: What Congress Needs to Know* (U.S. Census Bureau, Nov. 2008):
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/handbooks/ACSCongressHandbook.pdf>
- To access ACS data, go to the Census Bureau's American FactFinder: <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html? lang=en>

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