

Update: Census Data and the American Community Survey at SOCDs

1. An update of the American Community Survey has been completed for
 - a. ACS one year data up to 2009
 - b. ACS 3-year data (2005-2007), (2006-2008)
 - c. ACS 5- year data (2005 -2009)
2. We are working to complete the population for the census 2010 and ACS 5- year data (2006 – 2010).

Guidance for Using the American Community Survey

1-The Census 2010 counts people, whereas the American Community Survey estimates their characteristics. The 2010 Decennial Census provides counts of the population and their basic characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, and homeowner status). The American Community Survey has replaced the decennial Census as a survey of the demographic, economic, social, and housing characteristics of the population. The American Community Survey has the advantage of occurring at a greater frequency than the Census but does not survey the entire population.

2 – Survey estimate: The American Community Survey data are survey estimates and are not as accurate as the previous decennial Censuses because the sample size of the American Survey is smaller. The Census Bureau publishes an accompanying margin of error for every estimate as a measure of the reliability of the American Community survey estimate,

3 - Compare non-overlapping period-estimates of identical length. The American Community Survey 1-, 3-, and 5-year estimates are “period estimates,” which means they represent the characteristics of the population and housing over a specific data collection period. For comparisons between years, one should only use period estimates of identical length for consistency. Furthermore, the Census Bureau discourages direct comparisons between estimates for overlapping periods.

4 – Incomplete geographic coverage. American Community Survey collects and releases data for geographic areas that meet a specific population threshold, which varies by period length. Not all communities will be included in the American Community Survey. Generally, 5-year data provides full geographic coverage.