



*Working to make North Carolina
the best place to be and raise a child.*

Measuring What Matters

Eliminating the American Community Survey Hurts Business, Local Communities

The American Community Survey (ACS) collects data on 3 million households a year and helps federal and state governments target billions in funding to families and communities across the country. The ACS is a critical tool for business, policymakers and researchers, providing annually updated information at every geographic level from neighborhoods to the nation.

About the ACS

The ACS replaces the long form census. Demands for timely, nationally consistent data from a wide variety of data users led policymakers to consider the feasibility of collecting social, economic, and housing data continuously throughout the decade. The benefits of providing current data, along with the anticipated decennial census benefits in cost savings, planning, improved census coverage and more efficient operations led the Census Bureau to plan the implementation of a continuous measurement, later called the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS was expanded to full sample size for housing units in 2005.

Topics covered by the ACS include:

- Demographic characteristics—age, sex, race, ethnicity and relationship
- Housing—tenure, condition, value, financing, monthly costs, utility, taxes, etc.
- Social characteristics—marital status, language, education, veteran status, etc.
- Economic characteristics—labor force status, income, industry, health insurance, etc.

The ACS Facilitates Informed Decision Making in the Public and Private Sectors

The ACS is a unique, invaluable source of information about the U.S. and its residents. No other federal survey or database provides comparable information in the same timely, comprehensive and accessible manner. Since the ACS is a critical component in most public and private sector surveys, as well as other core Census Bureau datasets, the private sector could not replicate the ACS were the survey to disappear.¹

Data from the American Community Survey helps businesses, states and local governments understand emerging trends, issues and opportunities within their sector and make better decisions to address them.

¹ The Census Project (2010). American Community Survey Fact Sheet.



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Public Policy Impact

- ACS data guides the equitable flow of more than \$400 billion dollars in federal assistance to states and local communities—more than \$11 billion of which are distributed to North Carolina.²
- ACS data provides key benchmarks for federal enforcements of civil rights and antidiscrimination laws and court decisions.
- ACS data are used to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies in every government realm, such as education, health, housing, transportation, small business development, human services and environmental protection.
- State and local governments rely on ACS data to make on-the-ground investment decisions across all policy domains.

Business and Economic Impact

- Businesses of all types and sizes use ACS data to identify new markets, select business locations and make investment decisions.
- Nonprofit organizations such as hospitals and direct service providers rely on ACS data to better understand and serve the needs of their constituencies.
- ACS data are essential to efforts by state and local governments, chambers of commerce, and public-private partnerships to promote business attraction, expansion and startups that lead to job creation.

² Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings (2008). *Surveying for Dollars: North Carolina, Federal Assistance Programs that Distributed Funds in the State of North Carolina on the Basis of American Community Survey-Related Statistics, Fiscal Year 2008.*