



# COMMUNITYCOUNTS SPECIAL EDITION

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## American Community Survey (ACS)

The U.S. Census Bureau wishes to inform you of an issue of importance to you and your constituents, and to solicit your assistance. The Census Bureau is changing the way it will conduct future censuses. In the past, most households received a "short form," while one household in six received a "long form." The short form asked seven questions, and the long form asked 46 more. Beginning with the next census in 2010, all households will receive only a short form. The long form questions will be collected on a flow basis beginning later this year and continuing throughout the decade

via the American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS is conducted by mail, telephone, and visits from Census Bureau field representatives.

It will be implemented in every county, American Indian reservation, Alaska Native Village,

and Hawaiian homeland in the U.S. beginning in July 2004, and will continue every month thereafter.

## Quick Facts on the American Community Survey

*The survey is conducted under the authority of Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141 and 193. That law requires that it be completed.*

- All answers are **confidential**. Any Census Bureau employee who violates that confidentiality is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both.
- Addresses are selected at random to represent similar households in their area.
- The survey will be sent to approximately 2½ percent of U.S. households per year.
- The survey is conducted by mail, telephone, and personal visit.

### Benefits for Congress

- The ACS is the only source for annual demographic, social, economic, and housing information for Congressional Districts.

- Current information for decision-making and policy development.

- Current information for allocation of funds.

- Current information for program evaluation.

### Benefits for State and Local Governments

- Comparable information across and within states for program evaluation and use in funding formulas.

- Current information for determining where to locate new schools, hospitals, and highways.

- Current information for tracking the health and well-being of children, families, and the elderly.

### For the Public

- The data will aid federal, state, and local governments distribute tax dollars fairly.
- Telephone questionnaire assistance is available at **1-800-354-7271**.
- Spanish language telephone assistance is available at **1-877-833-5625**.

## Frequently Asked Questions on the American Community Survey

### *What is the American Community Survey?*

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census. During Census 2000, the population of the United States was counted, and additional information was collected to describe the characteristics of the Nation's population and housing. The next census in 2010 will count the population, while the American Community Survey collects the information about population and housing characteristics throughout the decade. Based on the American Community Survey, the Census Bureau can provide data about our rapidly changing country more often than every 10 years.

### *Why don't you use the information I provided on my Census 2000 questionnaire?*

We need your response even if you completed a Census 2000 questionnaire, because the characteristics of your household may have changed since Census 2000. As we move further away from 2000, information provided in Census 2000 becomes outdated.

### *How do I benefit by answering the American Community Survey?*

The American Community Survey provides up-to-date information for the Nation, states, cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and communities. By responding to the

American Community Survey questionnaire, you are helping your community to establish goals, identify problems and solutions, and measure the performance of programs. Communities need data about the well-being of children, families, and the elderly to provide services to them. The data also are used to decide where to locate new highways, schools, hospitals, and community centers; to show a large corporation that a town has the workforce the company needs, and in many other ways.

*The data will aid federal, state, and local governments distribute tax dollars fairly.*

## AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY - DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

*The American Community Survey is conducted using three methods of data collection:*

1. Mail
2. Telephone
3. Personal Visits

### **Every household receives:**

- A prenotice letter
- The American Community Survey questionnaire
- A reminder card
- A replacement questionnaire if the original questionnaire is not returned in a timely manner

*Addresses that do not respond by mail will be contacted using phone or personal visit, or both.*

### **Telephone Interviewing - the telephone**

operation is conducted approximately six weeks after the questionnaire is mailed. The Census Bureau will attempt to obtain telephone numbers and conduct telephone interviews for all households that do not respond by mail.

*Census Bureau telephone interviewing staff will conduct these interviews.*

**Personal Interviewing** - Following the telephone operation, a sample will be taken from the addresses which remain uninterviewed. These addresses will be visited by Census Bureau field representatives, who will conduct the interview.

## MORE FAQ

### *Do I have to answer the questions on the American Community Survey?*

Yes, your response to this survey is required by law (Title 13, United States Code, Sections 141 and 193). Title 13, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding. The survey is approved by the Office of Management and Budget. We estimate this survey will take about 38 minutes to complete.

### *How will the Census Bureau use the information that I provide?*

The Census Bureau can use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and cannot publish or release information that would identify you and your household. Your information will be used in combination with information from other households to produce data for your community. Similar data will be produced for communities across the United States. We may combine your answers with information that you gave to other

agencies to enhance the statistical uses of these data. This information will be given the same protections as your survey information. Based on the information that you provide, you may be asked to participate in other Census Bureau surveys that are voluntary.

### *Will the Census Bureau keep my information confidential?*

Yes. All of the information the Census Bureau collects for this survey about you and your household is confidential by law (Title 13, United States Code, Section 9). By law, every Census Bureau em-

ployee—including the Director as well as every field representative—has taken an oath and is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both if he or she discloses ANY information that could identify you or your household.

### *Where can I find more information about the American Community Survey or get assistance?*

You may visit our Web site [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www), or call 1-800-354-7271 if you need assistance or more information.

**Public cooperation is vital to the success of this new way of conducting the census.**

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*Giles Hall is home of Spelman's Census Information Center*

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