

The American Community Survey: Expanding to Smaller Areas

December 2008

The American Community Survey three-year estimates mark a major expansion in the availability of timely and relevant data for the nation. Approximately 14,500 distinct geographic areas are now included with the three-year estimates — more than twice the number of areas included in the 2006 release.

With the release of the 2005-2007 ACS three-year data, about 95 percent of the nation's population will live in a county that has American Community Survey data. The number of counties that now have data jumped from 783 in 2006 for one-year estimates to 1,817 for three-year estimates.

The new areas covered in the survey data are those with populations between 20,000 and 64,999. Their inclusion is made possible by the aggregation of three years of survey responses, which is required to produce statistically valid data for less populous areas. Three-year estimates will also be generated for larger areas — those with populations of 65,000 or more — in addition to the one-year estimates currently available for those areas.

This is the first time since Census 2000 that areas with populations between 20,000 and 64,999 have detailed socioeconomic and housing data available to them. In 2010, the number of areas will again expand, when five-year data for areas with populations smaller than 20,000 — including census tracts and census block groups — first become available.

Type of Geographic Area	Areas with a Population of 65,000 or More		Areas with a Population of 20,000 or More		Total Number of Entities for this Type of Area
	Count	Percent of all such areas	Count	Percent of all such areas	
Nation	1	100.0	1	100.0	1
State (and the District of Columbia)	51	100.0	51	100.0	51
County	788	25.1	1,817	57.8	3,141
Place	513	2.0	2,065	8.2	25,067
Congressional District	436	100.0	436	100.0	436
Public Use Microdata Areas	2,068	99.9	2,071	100.0	2,071
Alaska Native Regional Corporation	3	25.0	4	33.3	12
American Indian / Alaska Native Area / Native Hawaiian Area	15	2.5	36	5.9	607
Combined Statistical Area	123	100.0	123	100.0	123
Metropolitan Statistical Area / Micropolitan Statistical Area	502	53.5	911	97.0	939
Combined New England City and Town Area	9	90.0	10	100.0	10
New England City and Town Area	25	58.1	40	93.0	43

Source: Based on the Census Bureau's 2007 Population Estimates for states, counties and places and on the 2007 ACS estimates of total population for the other geographic areas. These numbers are for geographic areas within the U.S. and do not include areas within Puerto Rico.

For more information, visit the American Community Survey Web page at <http://www.census.gov/acs>.

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