Skills and Abilities of the Working-Age Population, Rockland County, NY: 1996-1999
(Prototype for an automated on-line report)

Scott Boggess & Jonathan Chong
Population Division, Education and Social Stratification Branch

DRAFT: April 5, 2001

INTRODUCTION

The attached profile uses data from the first two phases of the American Community Survey to describe the skills and abilities of the working-age population of Rockland County, NY in 1999 and to depict changes and trends in worker characteristics since 1996. This profile is a prototype for an automated on-line report and, as such, is simply one example of the kind of reports that could be made available in this fashion. Once the American Community Survey is fully implemented, data users will be able to generate similar profiles for all states, counties, and large metro areas on an annual basis.

DATA: The American Community Survey is a new approach for the collection and dissemination of timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data. The ACS is being implemented in three phases. The demonstration phase began in 1996 in four sites. It expanded to eight sites in 1997 and nine sites in 1998. The demonstration phase was used to evaluate procedures, costs, and potential data products. The second phase of the American Community Survey, the comparison phase, began in 1999 and runs until 2002. In the comparison phase the ACS was further expanded to 31 sites. The purpose of the comparison phase is to evaluate the quality of the ACS data through comparison with data collected from Census 2000. The final phase of the American Community Survey, full implementation, is set to begin in 2003. When fully implemented the ACS will be in every county in the U.S. and will survey an annual national sample of three million households.

American Community Survey data are collected through a combination of mail-out/mail-back questionnaires, computer assisted telephone interviews, and computer assisted personal interviews. The ACS collects a multitude of population and housing data including, but not limited to, education, income, migration, fertility, household structure, utility costs, and property taxes. For geographic areas and population subgroups of 65,000 or more, ACS estimates will be updated annually, beginning in 2004, rather than decennially and can be compared across states, communities, and population groups. Multi-year estimates will be available for smaller areas beginning in 2005. The American Community Survey is expected to replace the Census long-form questionnaire in 2010.

Prior to 1999, the American Community Survey only surveyed housing units. It did not survey those living in group quarters such as military barracks, college dormitories, prisons, nursing homes, and boarding houses. For consistency across time, all the estimates presented in this profile are based only on housing unit data. As a result, the estimates presented here will tend to underestimate population totals.

Rockland County was chosen for this study because it is one of the four original American Community Survey sites, it is one of only two sites with data spanning the entire 1996 to 1999 period (along with Multnomah County, OR), and it has a racially and ethnically diverse population. Rockland County is part of the New York City metropolitan area and had an estimated population of 284,022 in 1999.

AUTOMATED REPORTING: The use of automated reports will allow the Census Bureau to summarize and release American Community Survey data in more timely fashion than would be possible with traditional reports. The preparation of traditional reports is a time consuming process, often taking a year or more. Even if we only produced traditional reports at the state level, the data would likely be several years out-of-date before the reports were released. Through automated reports, the Census Bureau will be able to provide users with text documents on thousands of places and population subgroups, usually within 12 months of the end of data collection.

Automated reports can be programmed to provide annual point estimates, estimates of change over time, estimates of differences across geographies or population subgroups, tests of significance, as well as summary tables, detailed tables, and supporting graphs. Embedding the statistical tests in the automated report allows the Census Bureau to produce a text document that meets the Bureau's standards of statistical accuracy. Data users will be able to customize reports to suit their needs by selecting from available subjects, geographies, population subgroups, and years. Within each report users could also be allowed to select the statistical tests, tables, and supporting graphs that they feel are most appropriate.

While the exact format and content of these reports has yet to be determined, most will consist of some basic text and a set of accompanying graphs and tables. After the user has selected the parameters for the report, the relevant set of data will be run through a standard computer program. The program will, in turn, generate the requested estimates and comparisons, perform the appropriate statistical tests, and construct the relevant graphs and tables. Based upon the results of the data analysis, the program will then generate the additional text necessary to complete the report. One example of an automated report, the "narrative profile," is already available on the American Community Survey website.

USERS: Information on workforce characteristics should be of interest to a wide range of data users. Federal, state, and local government officials could use this data to help attract new businesses or to better target work training programs. Existing businesses and entrepreneurs could use this data to help determine the going wage rate for certain types of labor or the optimal location for a new business. Labor unions could use the data to track wage rates and work hours across states, counties, occupations, and industries and to identify the location of possible new members. Researchers could use this data to analyze the effects of economic, demographic, and policy changes on wages and employment.

AUTOMATED REPORT: Workers' Skills and Abilities Profile
FOR PLACE: Rockland County, New York
FOR YEARS: 1996 to 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LABOR FORCE, 1999

For the purposes of this profile, workers are divided into two age groups those 15 to 24 years old and those 25 to 64 years old. The younger workers are more likely to be in school and less likely to be employed full-time and year-round than the older workers. In certain cases data are not available for 15 year olds and, as a result, estimates are presented only for those 16 to 24 years olds.

DEMOGRAPHICS, 1999

AGE AND SEX: In 1999, Rockland County had an estimated population of 284,022. The median age was 37 years old. Twelve percent of the population was 15 to 24 years old while 53 percent was 25 to 64 years old. Of those aged 15 to 24 years, 51 percent were male, compared with 48 percent of those aged 25 to 64.

RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: The population of Rockland County is predominately White and non-Hispanic. In 1999, of those 15 to 24 years old, 76 percent were White, 12 percent were Black, 8 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4 percent were of some other race. Of those between the ages of 25 and 64, 79 percent were White, 11 percent were Black, 6 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 4 percent were of some other race. Hispanics made up 10 percent of those 15 to 24 years old and 7 percent of those 25 to 64 years old. Hispanics may be of any race.

CITIZENSHIP: In 1999, approximately 89 percent of the working-age population of Rockland County were U.S. citizens. Of Rockland County's 15 to 24 year olds, 85 percent were U.S. citizens by birth while 4 percent were U.S. citizens by naturalization. Among those 25 to 64 years old, 76 percent were citizens by birth and 14 percent were citizens by naturalization.

EMPLOYMENT, 1999

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT: Among 16 to 24 year olds, 53 percent were employed, 4 percent were unemployed, and 43 percent were not in the labor force during the last week—many of these because they were in school and not looking for work. Among those 25 to 64 years old, 79 percent were employed, 2 percent were unemployed, and 19 percent were not in the labor force in the last week.

HOURS OF WORK: Fifteen to 24 year olds who reported having done any work at all in the past 12 months tended to work fewer hours per week than those 25 to 64 years old. In 1999, among 15 to 24 year olds who worked, the average mean hours worked per week was 31 hours. Among 25 to 64 year olds who worked in the past 12 months, the mean number of hours worked per week was 40 hours.

WEEKS OF WORK: Fifteen to 24 year olds who reported having done any work in the past 12 months tended to work less weeks per year then those aged 25 to 64 years old. Fifteen to 24 year olds worked an average of 33 weeks per year while those aged 25 to 64 years old worked an average of 48 weeks.

OCCUPATION: In 1999, the most common occupations for those between the ages of 15 to 24 were technical, sales, and administrative positions, 43 percent, followed by service occupations, 23 percent. For those aged 24 to 65, managerial and professional specialty were the most common occupations, 43 percent, followed by technical, sales, and administrative occupations, 28 percent, and service occupations, 13 percent.

CLASS OF WORKER: Older workers were more likely to work in the public sector or to be self-employed than younger workers were. Among 15 to 24 year old workers, 80 percent were classified as private, for profit workers, 8 percent were classified as private, non-profit workers, 10 percent as government workers, and 2 percent were classified as self-employed. Of those aged 25 to 64, 58 percent were classified as private, for profit workers, 10 percent were classified as private, non-profit workers, 20 percent as government workers, and 11 percent were classified as self-employed.

INDUSTRY: In 1999, 15 to 24 year olds worked primarily in services, 42 percent, and retail trade, 36 percent, while 25 to 64 year olds were concentrated in services, 45 percent (not significantly different from 15 to 24 year olds), manufacturing, 12 percent, and retail trade, 11 percent.

EARNINGS, 1999

In 1999, average earnings of the working-age population in Rockland County were $36,808. Older workers earned significantly more, on average, than younger workers did. The average earnings of people aged 16 to 24 was $7,276 while that of those aged 25 to 64, was $42,497. For those who worked at least one week during the last 12 months the averages increased to $10,676 for 16 to 24 year olds and $49,804 for 25 to 64 year olds. Among full-time, year-round workers (at least 50 weeks/year and 30 hours/week) average wage and salary income increased even further to $20,985 for 16 to 24 year olds and $57,245 for 25 to 64 year olds.

EDUCATION, 1999

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: In 1999, 91 percent of Rockland County's population aged 25 to 64 years old had earned at least a high school diploma or equivalent and 43 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Because most 15 to 24 year olds have yet to complete their schooling, they have significantly lower levels of educational attainment than those 25 to 64 years old. Only 54 percent of those between the ages of 15 and 24 had yet to earn at least a high school diploma and only 9 percent had already earned at least a bachelor's degree.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: Among those 15 to 24 years old, 68 percent were enrolled in school: 46 percent in a public school or college and 22 percent in a private school or college. Of those aged 25 to 64 years old, only 6 percent were enrolled in school: 3 percent in a public school or college and 3 percent in a private school or college.

Note: School enrollment estimates do not include those enrolled in vocational, technical, or business schools.

Of those between the ages of 15 and 24, 7 percent were high school dropouts—they had not earned a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school during the past 3 months—compared with 9 percent of those between the ages of 25 and 64.

IDLENESS: In 1999, 8 percent of males 16 to 24 years old and 12 percent of males 25 to 64 years old were idle—not enrolled in school and not working.

DISABILITY STATUS, 1999

In 1999, among people aged 25 to 64 years old, 5 percent possessed a disability that made it difficult to work at a job or business, compared to 3 percent of those 16 to 24 years old.

LANGUAGE, 1999

OTHER LANGUAGES: In Rockland County, of those aged 15 to 24 years old in 1999, 32 percent spoke a language other than English at home and 23 percent were multilingual (they spoke another language and spoke English very well). Among 25 to 64 year olds, 26 percent spoke a language other than English at home and 16 percent were multilingual. The most common second languages among those that were bilingual were Spanish and Yiddish.

ENGLISH ABILITY: In 1999, among those aged 15 to 24 who spoke a language other than English at home, 71 percent spoke English very well, compared to 61 percent of those aged 25 to 64. Those 25 to 64 years old were significantly more likely to report speaking English well, 23 percent, than those 15 to 24 years old, 16 percent. Both groups were equally likely to report not speaking English well, approximately 10 percent, and not speaking English at all, approximately 5 percent.

TRENDS IN THE LABOR FORCE, 1996 TO 1999

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION SIZE AND AGE: From 1996 to 1999, Rockland County's population grew by over 13,000 residents, from 270,954 to an estimated 284,022. The median age of Rockland County's population also increased, from 36 to 37 years old, due, in part, to an increase in the proportion of those aged 65 and older.

RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: From 1996 to 1999, there was a small but significant decrease in the percent of those aged 25 to 64 who were White, from 82 to 79 percent, while the proportion of White non-Hispanics among 15 to 24 year olds decreased from 78 to 76 percent. In addition, there was a small increase in the proportion Hispanic (may be of any race) in both age groups. Among those 15 to 24 years olds the proportion Hispanic increased from 10 to 12 percent, while among 25 to 64 year olds it increased from 8 to 9 percent.

CITIZENSHIP: There was no change in the citizenship status of Rockland County's workers from 1996 to 1999—approximately 90 percent of Rockland County's working age population were citizens in 1999.

EMPLOYMENT

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT: Over the period from 1996 to 1999 the labor force participation rate and employment rate of 25 to 64 year olds remained relatively constant while the unemployment rate decreased slightly from 3 percent to 2 percent. The employment rate of 16 to 24 year olds increased significantly over this period, from 47 percent in 1996 to 53 percent in 1999. In addition, the percentage of 15 to 24 year olds not in the labor force decreased from 49 percent in 1996 to 43 percent in 1999.

HOURS WORKED: The average hours worked per week among those that worked at least one week in the past 12 months increased slightly for 15 to 24 year olds, from 29 hours/week in 1996 to 31 hours/week in 1999, and remained relatively unchanged, at 40 hours/week, for 25 to 64 year olds.

WEEKS WORKED: There were no significant changes in average weeks worked among those who worked at least one week from 1996 to 1999 for either older or younger workers.

OCCUPATION: From 1996 to 1999 there were no significant shifts in occupation among 15 to 24 year olds. Among older workers, there was a shift toward management and professional occupations and precision production, craft, and repair occupations and away from technical, sales, and administrative occupations; farming, forestry, and fishing; and operators, fabricators, and laborers.

CLASS OF WORKER: There was little change in the distribution of workers by class between 1996 and 1999.

INDUSTRY: From 1996 to 1999, the service industry remained the most common industry of employment for both 15 to 24 year olds and 25 to 64 year olds. The most notable changes in industry of employment between 1996 and 1999 were a 3 percentage point decrease in the percentage of 15 to 24 year olds employed in manufacturing and a 2 percentage point increase in the proportion of 25 to 64 year olds employed in construction.

EARNINGS

Average earnings of older workers increased from 1996 to 1999. The mean earnings of 25 to 64 year olds who worked at least one week in the last year increased by 7 percent from $46,025 in 1996 to $49,084 in 1999 (both numbers in constant 1999 dollars). There was no significant change in the average earnings of younger workers over this period.

EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: Between 1996 and 1999, there was an increase in the educational attainment of Rockland County's 25 to 64 year olds. Compared with 1996, 25 to 64 year olds in 1999 were less likely to have only a high school diploma and more likely to have completed some college or to have completed a Master's degree.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: There were no notable changes in the school enrollment rates of either 15 to 24 year olds or 25 to 64 year olds from 1996 to 1999.

The dropout rate for those aged 25 to 64 remained constant at approximately 9 percent from 1996 to 1999. The dropout rate among 15 to 24 year olds increased significantly from 4 percent in 1996 to 7 percent in 1999.

IDLENESS: Rates of idleness among both 16 to 24 year old men and 25 to 64 year old men did not change significantly from 1996 to 1999.

DISABILITY STATUS

Due to a change in question wording, disability rates in 1996-1998 are not directly comparable with those in 1999.

LANGUAGE

OTHER LANGUAGES: From 1996 to 1999, the proportion of Rockland County residents who reported speaking a language other than English at home increased by two percentage points among 25 to 64 year olds (from 24 to 26 percent). Among both 15 to 24 year olds and 25 to 64 year olds, the percent claiming to be multilingual remained largely unchanged.

ENGLISH ABILITY: Among those who reported speaking a language other than English at home, English language proficiency was unchanged between 1996 and 1999.