



THE CENSUS PROJECT

Supporting quality measures of
America's economy and places

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Census Experts Release Plan to Enhance Nation's Most Essential Data Seven Actions to Save the American Community Survey

Washington, D.C. - The Census Project, a national and broad based coalition of advocates for full funding of the Census Bureau and especially the American Community Survey (ACS), today released a [detailed action plan](#) for Congress and the Census Bureau to collaborate on improving official annual statistics vital to serving all of America's communities. Having raised the alarm that America's essential data are at risk due to nearly flat funding of the ACS in recent years, the group said, "... significant new investment in the ACS is urgently needed..." because the ACS, "... is the most comprehensive, robust, and current source of information about America's changing population, economy, housing, and workforce." Yet, data quality issues threaten its future viability.

"For each of the last two years we have issued deeply detailed reports on how vital the ACS has become, and how pervasive its use. Each time we were pressed by Congress and others for the specific improvements needed, and today we are releasing a comprehensive plan, that if acted upon can ensure Americans can expect better, more timely and new data to serve the nation," said Mary Jo Mitchell, Co-Director of The Census Project.

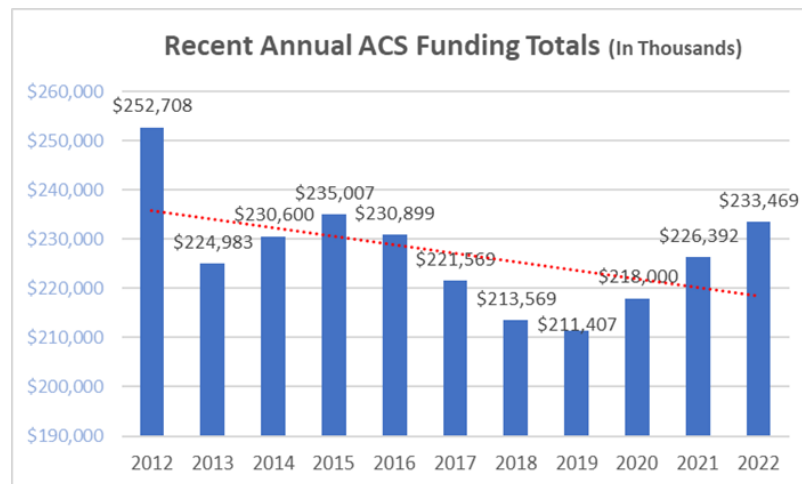
Today's report recommends ACS enhancements that include 1) developing new ACS data products to address more complex public policy challenges; 2) fully integrating the ACS in the Bureau's enterprise transformation efforts; 3) accelerating research to advance the use of administrative records and alternative data sources in the ACS to improve data quality and reduce respondent burden; 4) enhancing ACS nonresponse follow up operations to get higher response rates and address inequitable data quality; 5) an increase in the annual survey sample size to better serve rural, remote and underserved areas of the country; 6) revising content to improve data quality even beyond the new race & ethnicity and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) questions; and 7) increased funding by Congress to the ACS program overall.

"The simple facts are the ACS has been underfunded and passed over for needed innovations for years. The nation is paying a worsening price each year in the form of delayed or degraded data products and we are missing the boat in providing more timely data on the newest public policy challenges," said Howard Fienberg, Co-Director of The Census Project.

The report cited an example of how funding constraints have delayed innovations in the ACS program. “In 2018, the Census Bureau issued a comprehensive report laying out a plan to begin using administrative data to supplement survey responses in the ACS. Now, more than five years later, the Bureau has only this year begun to use some administrative data to supplement ACS survey responses (on property acreage). The Bureau’s ACS Office clearly needs additional resources to hire or contract out to expert data scientists, analysts, and other IT professionals to accelerate research and use of administrative and third-party data in the ACS...” the report stated.

The Census Project’s FY 2025 [funding recommendation](#) addressed these needed ACS investments. (It also included other initiatives as well, including stabilizing the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), strengthening the Population Estimates program, and investing in modernizing enterprise data infrastructure at the Bureau). This year, over 120 national, state and local organizations joined a [letter](#) to Congress in support of the Census Project’s recommended Fiscal Year 2025 budget for the Census Bureau.

Altogether, these enhancements totaled just \$400 million, with the ACS accounting for most of this recommended amount. The report lays out how such a small funding increase can overcome the threats to the program and provide a significant return on investment in the form of greatly improved data for the nation’s communities. Funding levels over the last decade for the ACS have not kept pace with the growing national population or inflation. The current ACS sample size cumulated across five years is now much smaller than the last long-form sample in the 2000 Decennial, in part because the nation’s population has increased since 2000 by more than 51 million people and the number of housing units by almost 28 million more.



In the coming days The Census Project will release the [latest](#) version of their comprehensive annual report on the ACS first released in 2022.

The Census Project (<https://thecensusproject.org>) is a broad-based coalition of national, state, and local organizations and companies that support an inclusive and accurate 2030 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census “long form”). Its 800+ member organizations and companies, representing the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors, rely on objective data that the Census Bureau produces to inform evidence-based investment, policy, and planning decisions.