



The American Community Survey

Essential Data for U.S. Businesses and Communities, and the Public

What is the American Community Survey (ACS)?

The ACS, which replaced the census long form in 2005, is a nationwide, continuous survey of about 3.5 million households conducted by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). It is the only source of **comparable** (across geography), **consistent** (across time), **timely** (updated annually) and **high-quality demographic, socio-economic, and housing data** for all U.S. communities down to the neighborhood and census tract levels, making it possible to accurately compare downtown New York with rural Kentucky.

Incredibly Pervasive Uses of ACS Data

Data users in the private, public, and non-profit sectors use ACS data to determine where and how to **locate** businesses and factories, **build** schools, hospitals, and roads, and **target services** to vulnerable populations, including, **children, veterans, and older Americans**. Scientists and market researchers use it to **produce statistically representative samples** for surveys and opinion polls. ACS data are used to **enforce civil rights laws** and **protect people from discrimination**. In 2017, 316 federal spending programs distributed more than **\$1.5 trillion** to states and local areas based, in whole or in part, on data derived from the ACS.

Challenges Threaten America's Essential Data

Years of underinvestment have degraded the data, precluded necessary increases in the survey's sample size and shortchanged the Bureau's ability to address steadily declining response rates, revise content, and make other improvements. Proposals to revoke the survey's mandatory response requirements would further erode the survey's utility, degrading the quality and availability of data for [for America's 3,141 counties](#) and increasing the program's cost by almost 40 percent, based on research requested by Congress.

Census Stakeholders Urge Congress to Support Long Delayed Enhancements

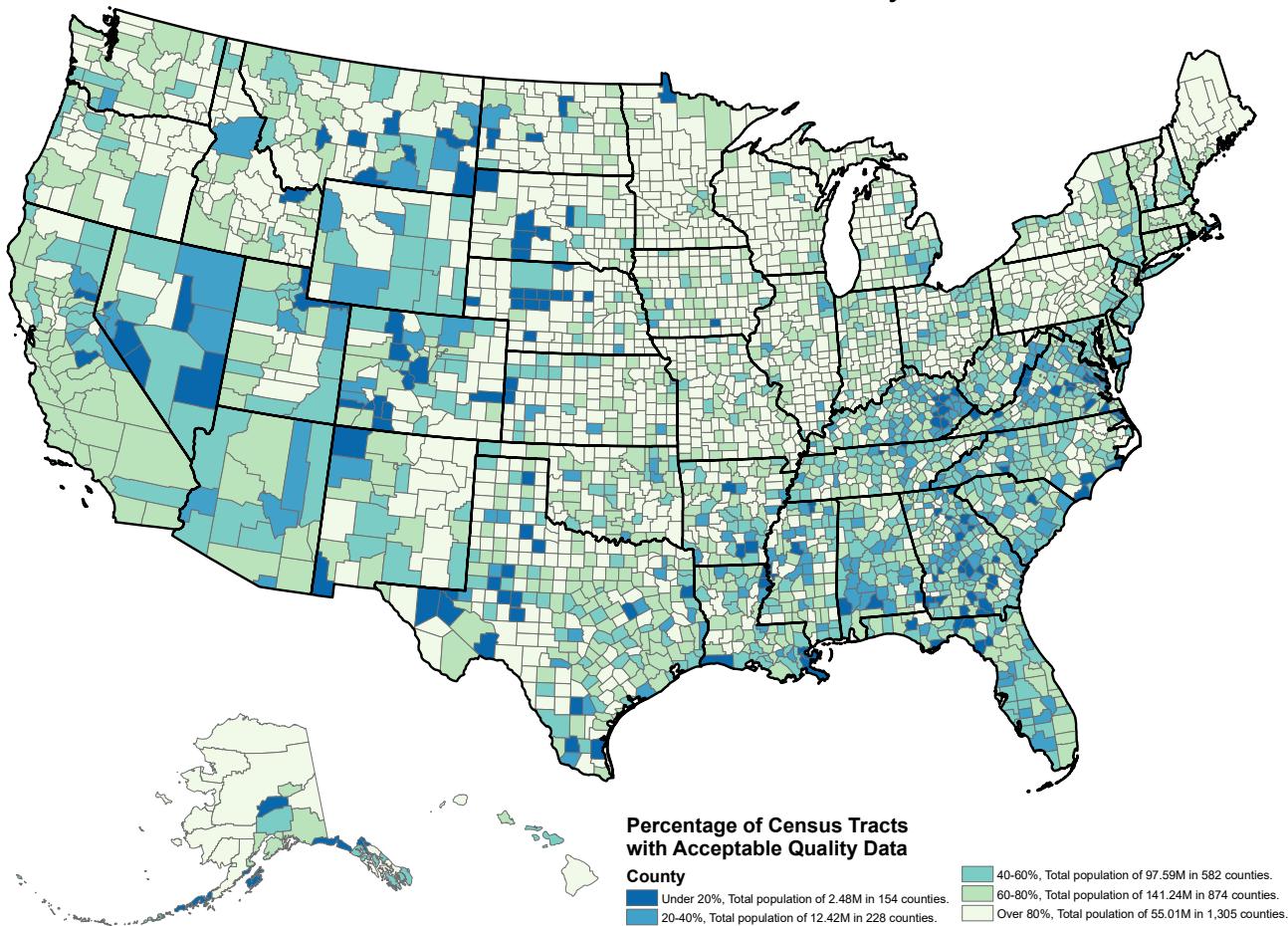
The Census Project, a coalition of over 800 national, state, and local organizations, released a report documenting the many uses of the ACS and identifying its challenges. It makes several recommendations to sustain and enhance the ACS, including:

- Increased funding to expand the survey's sample size, enhance non-response follow up operations, reduce respondent burden, and develop new data products.
- Revised survey content to ensure the ACS is accurately capturing data about the nation's increasingly complex population and households.

Learn More at: [ACS: America's Data at Risk](#)

The Census Project: www.thecensusproject.org

2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Under Mandatory Methods



2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Under Simulated Voluntary Methods

