



## THE CENSUS PROJECT

Supporting quality measures of  
America's economy and places

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### **Census Delayed Release of ACS Data Highlights Stakeholder Call for Congress to Invest in Bureau Modernization**

**Washington, D.C.** – Just as 83 national and local civic and business organizations [wrote](#) to Senate and House Appropriations committee leaders calling for larger investments in modernizing Census Bureau operations and expanding the American Community Survey (ACS), the Census Bureau [announced](#) the first ever delay in release of the ACS 5-Year estimates due to Covid-19 non-response challenges – highlighting the urgent need to rescue this vital survey.

“In FY 2022, Congress has a unique opportunity to initiate multi-year funding for the Bureau, providing the agency with resources that it needs to not only sustain and strengthen its mission, but also to recover from years of postponed enhancements and pursue numerous necessary operational improvements...” wrote the census stakeholders in their letter to appropriators considering the FY 2022 funding levels for the Bureau.

Among the enhancements stakeholders have [been advocating](#) for in seeking greater funding for the Census Bureau are two key efforts mentioned in the letter released today, including:

“...**Modernizing the Bureau’s data infrastructure** — The Census Bureau needs to harness currently available Big Data technology and methodology to reduce respondent burden and realign the Bureau’s already-existing data from multiple sources into universal ‘frames’...and;

“...**Enhancing the American Community Survey (ACS)** — As part of the overall Frames Initiative, the Census Bureau needs the flexibility to combine data sources with the ACS, the ongoing survey that replaced the “long form” of the Census in 2005 which provides consistent, timely and accurate data about the nation’s changing socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, to produce more timely granular data for a significant number of geographies (e.g. rural and remote regions) and sub-populations (e.g., American Indians and Alaska Natives) than achievable from the current ACS 5-year estimates.” ... the stakeholders wrote.

Census Project co-director Howard Fienberg said, “Today’s announcement is a shock to the system of broad-based census data users, and a clarion call for the need to invest in Census modernization if the nation is to have the most reliable, trusted, and timely data on our economy and communities to drive our decision-making.”

“We sincerely hope there is time and flexibility in the complex Appropriations process this year for Congress to step in and help prevent even worse data outcomes, whether related to Covid-19 or long neglected investments at the Bureau,” said Census Project co-director Mary Jo Hoeksema.

The ACS 5-year estimates are multiyear "period" estimates designed to provide increased statistical reliability for data from less populated areas and smaller population subgroups that would otherwise not meet specific population size thresholds to be published.

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*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 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census “long form”). Its 900+ 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.*