

# America's Essential Data at Risk

## We Must Preserve and Enhance the American Community Survey

### Challenges Threaten America's Essential Data

Local communities, entrepreneurs, urban planners, major corporations and thousands of others that depend on annual data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey were stunned late last year when both major annual data releases were delayed or replaced with experimental data due to quality issues. Years of underinvestment and the pandemic 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 methodological and operational improvements. Stakeholders raised a clarion call for action.

### What is the American Community Survey (ACS)

The [ACS](#), which replaced the census long form in 2005, is a nationwide, continuous annual survey of about 3.5 million households conducted by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). It provides reliable and timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year for communities large and small. It is the largest official survey of American households.

### Incredibly Pervasive Uses of ACS Data

Data users in the private and public sectors use ACS data to inform a wide range of decisions, such as where to locate businesses and factories, build schools, hospitals, and roads, and how to target services to vulnerable populations, including, children, veterans, and older Americans. ACS data are used to enforce civil rights laws, including the Voting Rights Act, and protect people from discrimination. In 2017, 316 federal spending programs distributed more than \$1.5 trillion to states and local areas on the basis, in whole or in part, of data derived from the ACS.

### Census Stakeholders Urge Congress to Support Long Delayed Enhancements

On March 8, 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 calls for an urgent national initiative to ensure the ACS can deliver what the nation needs.

- An infusion of **\$100 to \$300 million** is urgently needed to protect the ACS from further data quality deficiencies, increase the survey's sample size, enhance non-response follow up operations, reduce respondent burden, and develop new data products.
- New questions and survey content are needed 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](https://www.thecensusproject.org)