

Ten stories you can do using estimates from the American Community Survey

1. Households of people living alone now outnumber those of married couples with children under 18 at home. The survey has estimates for “householder living alone.” [Look under “nonfamily households” on the data profile.] That can be the starting point for a look at young singles or elderly people on their own, or a comparison of your area with the nation.
2. Preschool is a hot issue, and the American Community Survey has estimates for preschool/nursery school enrollment. You can compare enrollment by race and ethnic group.
3. “Fertility” is census jargon for the topic of how many children the average woman has. The American Community Survey can tell you who had a child in the previous year, and whether they were married when they did. For unmarried mothers (or married ones), you can find out how much education they have, their race, and whether they were born in the U.S. or another country.
4. The survey asked people where they lived one year ago. You can use the estimates to track how many newcomers arrived in your community from other states or counties, and how many moved directly from a foreign country. If you delve into detailed tables, you can get even more information to assemble a portrait of new arrivals.
5. You can use the estimates to look at “working poor” families in your community or nationwide. Under detailed tables, table B17016 [Poverty status in the past 12 months of families by family type by work experience of householder and spouse] shows you how many poor people held full- or part-time jobs in married-couple families, single-mother households and single-father households.
6. You can find out what time people leave home to go to work, and ask the following questions: By what hour are most people on the road to work? What is the most popular time to leave home for work? Do people in closer-in communities leave later? Do most women leave for work at a different time than men do?

7. The survey estimates can tell you what proportion of young people own their own homes [look under detailed tables for “tenure by age of householder”], and can give you similar statistics for racial minorities and the foreign-born [look under detailed tables for “tenure.”].
8. Under housing information is a category called “vehicles available,” which lets you see the estimate for households that do not own a car or truck, as well as those that own three or more.
9. The survey can tell you how many homeowners [or renters] pay a high proportion of their income for housing costs, which include some utility costs. It used to be that people were advised not to spend more than a third of their income on housing, but many now spend 35 percent or more.
10. You can look at what proportion of immigrants living in a community or state arrived very recently, which can help quantify an area’s appeal to new immigrants and increased demand for services.