

# The Brookings Institution

Metropolitan Policy Program



## Using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to Find Good Stories

November 15, 2006

Online Discussion Co-hosted by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and KnowledgePlex

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*Moderated by Andrew Reamer, Metropolitan Policy Program*



## Examples of questions you can answer with the Census Bureau's American Community Survey

- Are young people buying homes in my area?
- Do many Hispanics hold management jobs?
- Could I see a map with child poverty by state?
- Is there much of a Russian community here?
- Where do divorced men (or women) live?
- Who is moving to my area's richest suburb?
- Which places are the best/worst educated?



# The American Community Survey's big themes and small details

- **School** enrollment, and how much education adults have completed
- **Families**: Children, grandparents, women who had a baby in the past year, single moms and dads, teenagers
- **Unmarried** couples (including same-sex), **single** people (including elderly), **disabled** people (including children), **veterans**
- **Immigrants**: Where from, when arrived, how good is their English
- **Money**: Earnings, jobs people hold, working parents, who is poor, other income such as Social Security and food stamps
- How people get to work, **commuting** time, households without cars
- **People who moved** within the U.S. during the previous year
- **Housing** costs, who owns and who rents, housing affordability, size (number of rooms), heating fuel, overcrowding



# You can look at one place, or compare two or more different ones

Estimates are available for:

- the nation,
  - states,
  - congressional districts,
  - metropolitan areas,
  - counties,
  - cities,
  - school districts,
  - select American Indian lands,
  - and certain other districts with more than 65,000 people.
- Data for smaller areas will be available in a few years.





# You can compare age groups, men and women, or race/ethnic groups

- Example: Are women buying more homes than men?
- Example: Are most new arrivals in your community Hispanic?
- Example: Are children more likely to be poor than the elderly?





# What is not available



- Areas of **less than 65,000** people will not have data **until 2008 or 2010**, depending on population size.
- People in “**group quarters**” are not included.

Residents of institutions such as military barracks, college dorms, mental hospitals, nursing homes and prisons are not included through 2005. Until they are, do not use the survey to write about college towns or counties with large prisons.
- The survey does not ask about religion, political party, sexual orientation, home schooling, computers, pets or recent purchases.



# How to get data from the American Community Survey

- Start with <http://factfinder.census.gov>
- If you forget, go to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and click on “**American FactFinder**” on the left rail
- Under American Community Survey, click on “get data”
- The Factfinder page also has 2000 Census data, local population estimates, economic census numbers and other good stuff





# <http://factfinder.census.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau



American FactFinder

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Your source for population, housing, economic, and geographic data

POPULATION FINDER

FACT SHEET

PEOPLE

HOUSING

BUSINESS AND  
GOVERNMENT

ABOUT THE DATA

DATA SETS

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MAPS

TOOLS AND  
REFERENCES

Address Search...

Enter a [street address](#)  
to find Census 2000  
data

- [Browser Notes](#)
- [Confidentiality](#)
- [Citing FactFinder](#)

## Fast Access to Information



Get a **Fact Sheet** for your community...

city/town,  
county, or zip

state

-- select a state --

GO

[or select a state using a map »](#)

## Getting Detailed Data

**Decennial Census** - taken every 10 years to collect information about the people and housing of the United States  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

See the [Count Question Resolution Program](#) for information on Census 2000 count corrections.

**American Community Survey** - an ongoing survey that provides data about your community every year  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

**Puerto Rico Community Survey** - the equivalent of the American Community Survey for Puerto Rico  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

**Population Estimates Program** - population numbers between censuses  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

**Economic Census** - profiles the U.S. economy every 5 years  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

**Annual Economic Surveys** - data from the Annual Survey of Manufactures and Nonemployer Statistics  
[learn more](#) | [get data](#)

## Special Interest

## Population Data

### Population Finder

Use the [Population Finder](#) to view population trends for your community.

### U.S. Population Clock



18:54 GMT (EST+5) Nov 05, 2006

300,144,174

more [population clocks »](#)

## What's New

### Nation's Population Reaches 300 Million

The nation's population reached the historic milestone of 300 million on October 17th. [more »](#)



### 2005 American Community Survey (ACS)

Housing data added 10/3. Click the Fact Sheet, People and Housing links on the left menu.

**Updates to American FactFinder** released August 15, 2006. [more »](#)

**2004 Zip Code Business Patterns** are available from the [Data Sets](#) page.

**2002 Economic Census** data are being released on a flow basis, as [Quick Reports](#), [Thematic Maps](#), and [Detailed Statistics Data Sets](#)

This is the American FactFinder page. We've added a red arrow to show you where you click to get data from the American Community Survey.





## Data Sets

POPULATION FINDER

FACT SHEET

PEOPLE

HOUSING

BUSINESS AND  
GOVERNMENT

ABOUT THE DATA

DATA SETS

- Decennial Census
- **American Community Survey**
- Puerto Rico Community Survey
- Annual Population Estimates
- Economic Census
- Annual Economic Surveys

DOWNLOAD CENTER

MAPS

TOOLS AND  
REFERENCES

Main ▶ Data Sets

### AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

[Load Query](#) | [Clear all selections](#)

The American Community Survey is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities a fresh look at how they are changing. The Puerto Rico Community Survey is the equivalent of the American Community Survey for Puerto Rico. [more...](#)

[Errata Notes](#)

#### Other Resources

- [American Community Survey Main Page](#)
- [Quality Measures](#)
- [Public Use Microdata Sample \(PUMS\)](#) - download data and view documentation
- [Download Center](#)
- [Download 1996-1999 data via FTP](#)

[i Explain Table and Map Formats](#)

2005

#### 2005 American Community Survey

Includes results from both the American Community Survey and the Puerto Rico Community Survey. The 2005 data products include estimates of demographic, social, and economic characteristics of people, households and housing units (both occupied and vacant) for every state in the Nation, Puerto Rico, and most areas with a population of 65,000 or more.

[2005 Quick Guide](#) | [Important Notes About Using the Data](#)

Select from the following:

[Data Profiles](#)  
[Selected Population Profiles](#)  
[Ranking Tables](#)  
[Subject Tables](#)  
[Detailed Tables](#)  
[Geographic Comparison Tables](#)  
[Thematic Maps](#)  
[Reference Maps](#)

[Custom Table](#)

[Enter a table number](#)  
[List all tables](#)  
[List all maps](#)  
[Download PUMS data](#)  
[About this data set](#)

2004

#### 2004 American Community Survey

The 2004 data products include estimates of demographic and economic characteristics of people, households and housing units (both occupied and vacant) for every state in the Nation, most areas with a population of 250,000 or more, and selected areas of 65,000 or more.

[2004 Quick Guide](#) | [Important Notes About Using the Data](#)

This is what shows up when you click on “**get data**” for the American Community Survey. The 2005 American Community Survey offers you a quick overview of one place (data profile), as well as rankings, subject tables, detailed tables, geographic comparison tables, maps or other options.



# Best options for first-time users

- **Data profile**
  - A five-page overview of the nation, a state or community. Use this for basic questions, headline and graphics statistics, or background on a place that's new to you.
- **Rankings**
  - States are ranked for 2005 on dozens of measures, grouped by topic.
- **Subject tables**
  - Find out frequently requested numbers by topic -- for example, disability -- for one geographic area.
- **Thematic maps**
  - A great way to see patterns, which can help you test story ideas or make graphics.



## U.S. Census Bureau

American FactFinder

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### Select Geography

You are here: [Main](#) ▶ [Data Sets](#) ▶ [Geography](#) ▶ Results

2005 American Community Survey, Data Profile

Choose a selection method

list

name search

address search

map

[i Explain Census Geography](#)

Select a [geographic type](#)

- Nation
- Nation
- Region
- Division
- State
- ..... County
- ..... County Subdivision
- ..... Place
- ..... Congressional District - 109th
- ..... School District, Elementary
- ..... School District, Secondary
- ..... School District, Unified
- ..... Public Use Microdata Area
- American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/Hawaiian Home Land
- Combined Statistical Area
- Metropolitan Statistical Area/Micropolitan Statistical Area
- ..... Principal City
- ..... Metropolitan Division
- Combined New England City and Town Area
- New England City and Town Area
- ..... Principal City

areas using the [Download Center](#).

Once you have decided to look at a data profile, table, or map, click on the **dropdown box to select the level of geography** for which you want to see it. Click “map it” to see its boundaries.

## Data Profile

You are here: [Main](#) ▶ [Data Sets](#) ▶ [Geography](#) ▶ [Results](#)

Use the links above to change your results

[Options](#)

[Print / Download](#)

[Related Items](#)

### 2005 Data Profiles:

#### Demographic

[Social](#)  
[Economic](#)  
[Housing](#)  
[Narrative](#)

[Change geography \(state, county, place...\)](#)

- [Subject Definitions](#)
- [Quality Measures](#)



## Tennessee

### General Demographic Characteristics: 2005 ?

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey

**Demographic** - Sex and Age, Race, Relationship, Household by Type

**Social** - Education, Marital Status, Fertility, Grandparents...

**Economic** - Income, Employment, Occupation, Commuting to Work...

**Housing** - Occupancy and Structure, Housing Value and Costs, Utilities...

**Narrative** - Text profile with graphs for easy analysis...

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

General Demographic Characteristics: 2005	Estimate	Margin of Error
<b>Total population</b>	<b>5,810,590</b>	*****
<b>SEX AND AGE</b>		
Male	2,837,860	+/-3,679
Female	2,972,730	+/-3,679
Under 5 years	388,136	+/-2,406
5 to 9 years	367,108	+/-7,542
10 to 14 years	390,062	+/-7,685
15 to 19 years	379,067	+/-4,604
20 to 24 years	378,551	+/-5,089
25 to 34 years	800,348	+/-5,150
35 to 44 years	881,740	+/-4,385
45 to 54 years	865,581	+/-3,833
55 to 59 years	363,165	+/-7,643
60 to 64 years	288,179	+/-7,689
65 to 74 years	409,999	+/-2,379
75 to 84 years	233,902	+/-3,949
85 years and over	64,752	+/-3,668
Median age (years)	37.3	+/-0.2
18 years and over	4,437,794	+/-3,305

Here is the first page of the **data profile** for Tennessee.

Click on “social,” “economic,” “housing” or “narrative” to see the other pages.

“**Narrative**” has text in plain English, and some charts.



## U.S. Census Bureau

American FactFinder

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### American Community Survey - Ranking Tables

You are here: [Main](#) ▶ [Data Sets](#) ▶ [Ranking Tables](#) ▶ [Results](#)

[Print](#) | [Related Items](#)

#### View this table...

▶ for [states](#)

▶ from 2005

from [2004](#)

from [2003](#)

from [2002](#)

[with statistical  
significance](#)

#### View...

▶ as a chart

#### Other tables...

[Select another  
ranking table](#)

#### Legend

upper bound  
estimate  
lower bound



### United States and States

Percent of Children Under 6 Years Old With All Parents in the Labor Force: 2005

Universe: Own children under 6 years in families and subfamilies ?

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey, 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

State	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
South Dakota									
North Dakota									
Iowa									
Mississippi									
Minnesota									
Vermont									
Wisconsin									
Delaware									
Rhode Island									
Nebraska									
Missouri									
South Carolina									
Maryland									
Louisiana									
Montana									
Ohio									
Wyoming									
Kansas									
Arkansas									

Under **ranking tables**, which compare states, here is what you get if you ask for the percent of children under 6 with all their parents in the labor force.

You can get a table, or – as shown here – as a chart. It shows that more than seven in 10 young children in South Dakota live with parents who either are working or looking for work.



## Colorado

### S1903. Median Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2005 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) ?

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Subject	Total	Margin of Error	Median income (dollars)	Margin of Error
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN OF HOUSEHOLDER</b>				
<b>Households</b>	<b>1,819,037</b>	<b>+/-8,199</b>	<b>50,652</b>	<b>+/-553</b>
One race--				
White	86.2%	+/-0.3	52,286	+/-654
Black or African American	3.8%	+/-0.1	35,293	+/-4,953
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.9%	+/-0.1	46,473	+/-7,941
Asian	2.1%	+/-0.1	55,773	+/-6,649
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	N	N	39,416	+/-23,112
Some other race	5.4%	+/-0.2	37,141	+/-2,032
Two or more races	1.5%	+/-0.1	44,241	+/-4,702
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	15.0%	+/-0.2	34,684	+/-1,425
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	77.3%	+/-0.3	55,184	+/-799
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER</b>				
15 to 24 years	6.6%	+/-0.2	25,635	+/-1,218
25 to 44 years	41.2%	+/-0.4	53,440	+/-1,252
45 to 64 years	36.4%	+/-0.4	63,329	+/-1,028
65 years and over	15.7%	+/-0.2	31,151	+/-1,092
<b>FAMILIES</b>				
<b>Families</b>	<b>1,164,221</b>	<b>+/-11,318</b>	<b>62,470</b>	<b>+/-758</b>
With own children under 18 years	49.3%	+/-0.6	58,416	+/-1,600
With no own children under 18 years	50.7%	+/-0.6	66,049	+/-863
Married-couple families	78.0%	+/-0.7	72,006	+/-850
Female householder, no husband present	15.2%	+/-0.5	28,572	+/-1,291
Male householder, no wife present	6.9%	+/-0.4	44,215	+/-3,174
<b>NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS</b>				

Here is an example of a **subject table** – median income for different groups in Colorado. You can look at income gaps between races and ethnic groups, or different kinds of households and families.

Subject areas you can choose from include:

- children,
- disability,
- education,
- employment,
- housing,
- origin and language (immigrants),
- poverty,
- relationships,
- and transportation.

# United States by State - M2101. Percent of the Civilian Population 18 Years and Over Who are Veterans

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ThematicMapFramesetServlet?\_bm=y&\_MapEvent=displayBy&-errMsg=&-\_useSS=N&-\_dB

## Change...

- [Data Classes](#)
- [Boundaries and features](#)

## Reposition on...

- [A street address or ZIP code](#)
- [A latitude and longitude](#)
- [The selected geography](#)

## View...

- [as a table](#)
- [with statistical significance](#)

[Quick tips](#)

## Legend

### Data Classes

Percent

- 4.8 - 8.6
- 9.3 - 10.9
- 11.1 - 12.3
- 12.4 - 13.9
- 14.3 - 16.7

### Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody

Items in gray text are not visible at this zoom level



## M2101. Percent of the Civilian Population 18 Years and Over Who are Veterans: 2005

Universe: Civilian population 18 years and over

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey, 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey

### United States by State

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Identify - geo name and data value

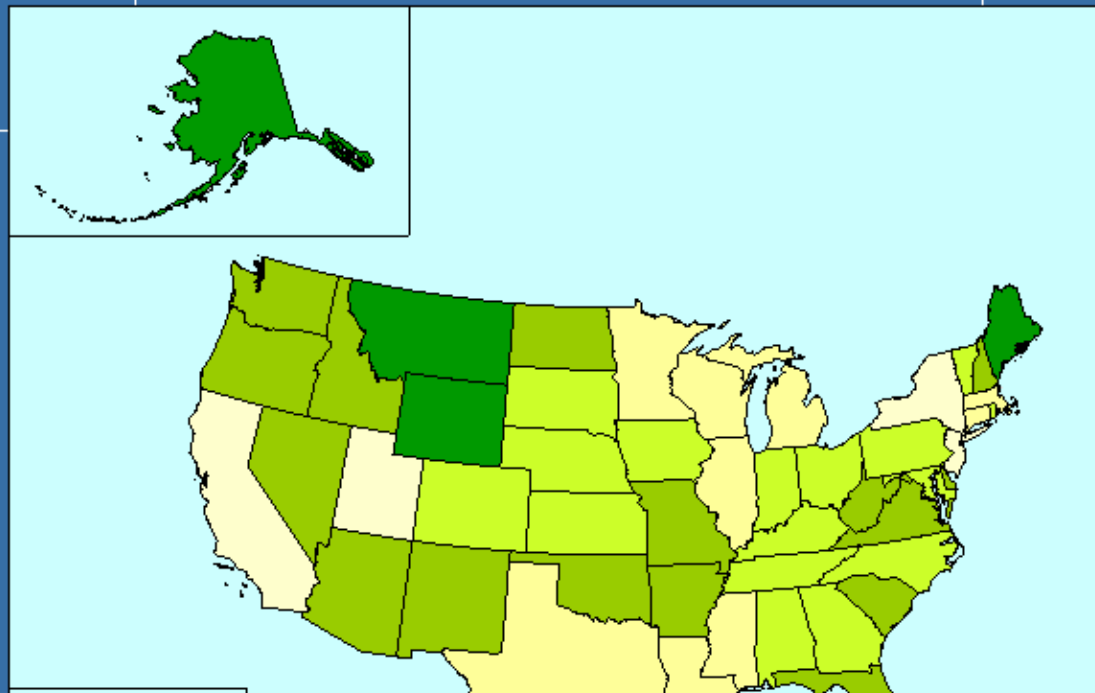
Click map to:



U.S. View

Zoom: U.S. Street

Display map by: State



Here is an example of a **thematic map**. This one shows the percentage of veterans in the civilian population, by state. Maps are a way to see patterns quickly. You also can view this as a table, by clicking on the left rail.



# Wyoming by County - M0601. Percent of the Native Population Born in their State of Residence (Including P

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ThematicMapFramesetServlet?\_bm=y&-tree\_id=3058&-\_MapEvent=displayBy&-context=tm&-errMsc

## Change...

- [Data Classes](#)
- [Boundaries and features](#)

## Reposition on...

- [A street address or ZIP code](#)
- [A latitude and longitude](#)
- [The selected geography](#)

## View...

- as a [table](#)
- [with statistical significance](#)

[Quick tips](#)

## Legend

### Data Classes

Percent

- 40.1 - 40.1
- 49.4 - 49.4

### Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Items in gray text are not visible at this zoom level



## M0601. Percent of the Native Population Born in their State of Residence (Including Puerto Rico): 2005

Universe: Native population

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey

### Wyoming by County

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Identify - geo name and data value

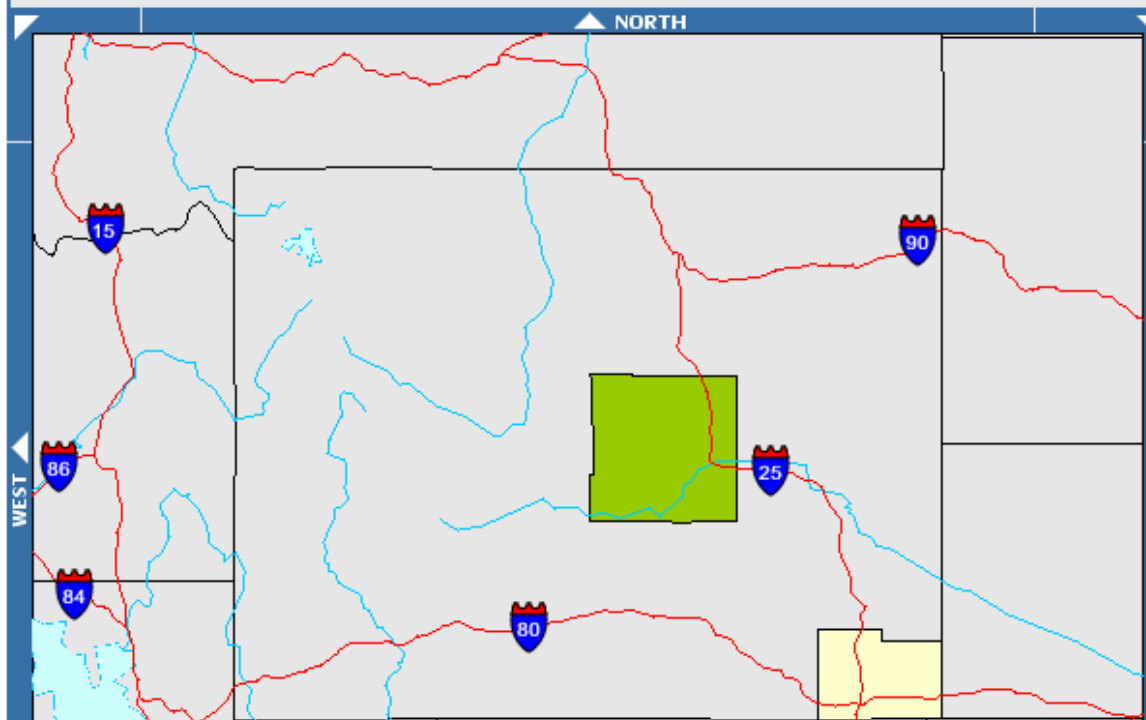
Click map to:



Zoom:



Display map by: County



This map shows that you cannot yet get data from the survey for **lightly populated areas**. If you try to find out the percentage of people born in other states for each county in Wyoming, the map comes up mostly blank because most counties are too small to have survey data yet. But there is a way around this.

# Wyoming by Public Use Microdata Area - M0601. Percent of the Native Population Born in their State of Residence

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ThematicMapFramesetServlet?\_bm=y&-tree\_id=3058&-\_MapEvent=displayBy&-context=tm&-errMsg=

## Reposition on...

- A street address or ZIP code
- A latitude and longitude
- The selected geography

## View...

- as a table
- with statistical significance

[Quick tips](#)

## Legend

### Data Classes

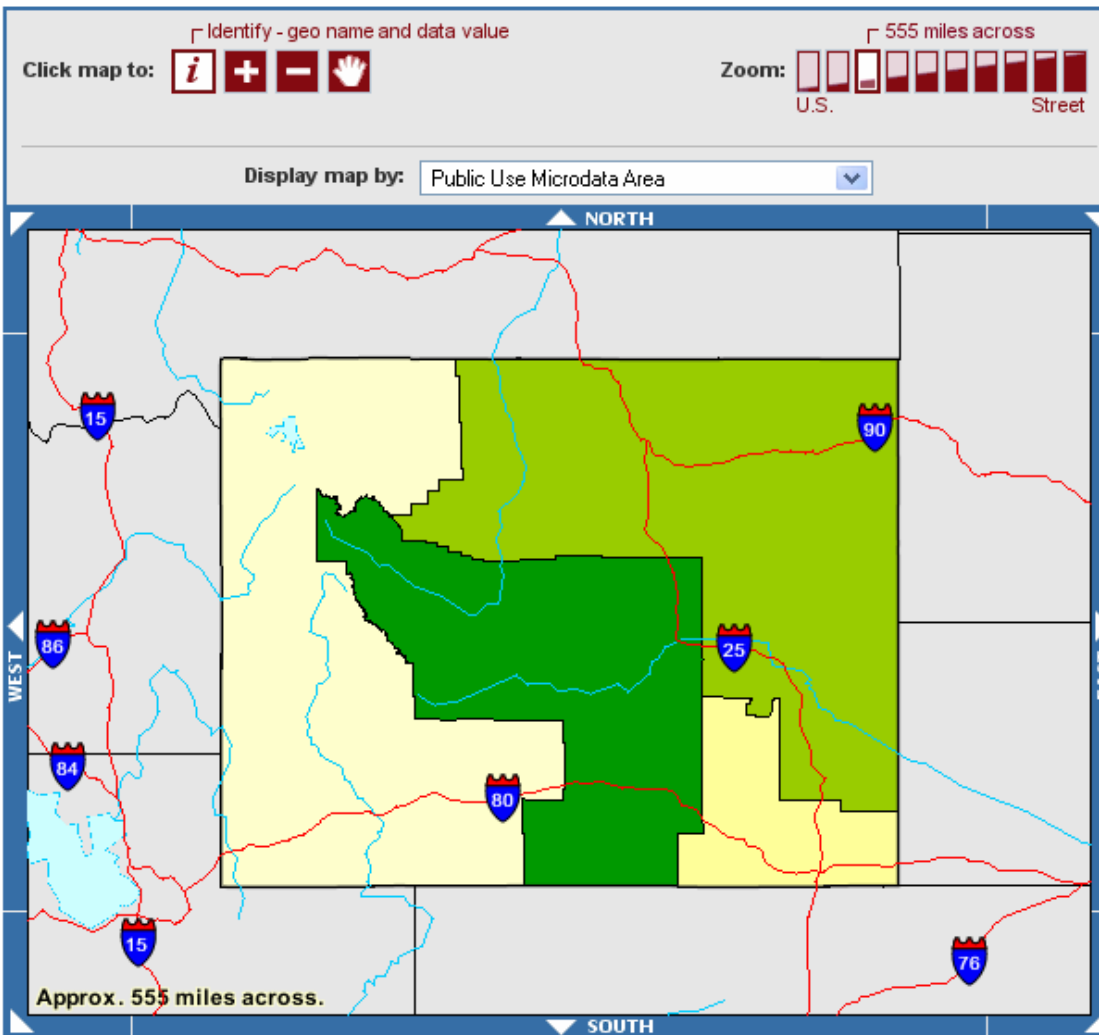
Percent
35.5 - 35.5
40.7 - 40.7
45.2 - 45.2
50.3 - 50.3

### Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody

Items in gray text are not visible at this zoom level

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey

For rural areas, you can select a map of “Public Use Microdata Areas.” The Census Bureau divides each state into PUMAs, each of which has at least 100,000 people. The result shows an interesting east-west divide, with more out-of-staters in the western part of the state.



# A few hints for finding your way



- Not sure what something means?
  - Check the “glossary” at the top of the FactFinder page
  - Look at “subject definitions” as you go along
- You can download numbers and maps to a spreadsheet or other program.
- Look for (?) or preview options to get more information before committing yourself to a search.



# A Few Cautions

- The purpose of the survey is to provide characteristics, not counts
- Check your definitions and your “universe”
- Be careful about comparing 2005 survey estimates with those from the 2000 Census
- Check the margin of error to make sure there’s a real difference between two estimates you want to talk about...and then don’t make a big deal out of small differences.



# ACS: Characteristics, *Not* Counts

- Use the Census Bureau's annual population estimates:
  - If you want to know the **number of people** in a state, county or other geographic area
  - The same goes for age, race group, and male-female totals
- Use the American Community Survey for:
  - Data to **describe the group** of people you are looking at

# Nebraska by Public Use Microdata Area - M2302. Percent of Children Under 6 Years Old With All Parents in the Labor Force: 2005

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ThematicMapFramesetServlet?\_bm=y&-tree\_id=3058&-\_MapEvent=zoom&-context=tm&-errMsg=&-

Print / Download / Related Items

## Change...

- [Data Classes](#)
- [Boundaries and features](#)

## Reposition on...

- [A street address or ZIP code](#)
- [A latitude and longitude](#)
- [The selected geography](#)

## View...

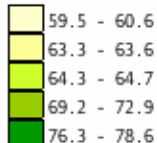
- as a [table](#)
- [with statistical significance](#)

[Quick tips](#)

## Legend

### Data Classes

Percent



### Features

- Major Road
- Street
- Stream/Waterbody
- Stream/Waterbody



## M2302. Percent of Children Under 6 Years Old With All Parents in the Labor Force: 2005

Universe: Own children under 6 years in families and subfamilies

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey

Nebraska by Public Use Microdata Area

NOTE: Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Identify - geo name and data value

Click map to:

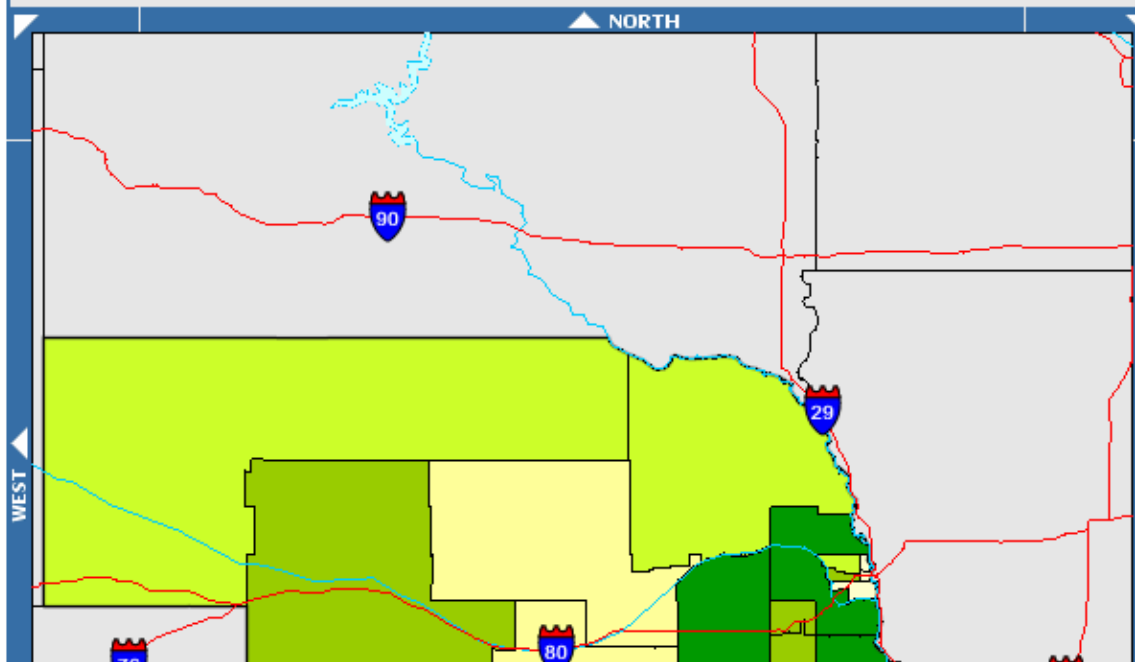


Zoom:



Display map by:

Public Use Microdata Area



Check the definition of words used in the title to make sure you are clear about what you are saying.

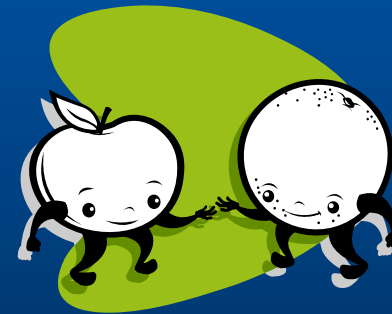
Also look at the “universe” (see red arrow), which tells you that these are “own children” and would exclude, for example, a child being raised by a grandparent.



# Has something changed over time?

- If your area has survey data going back to 2001, use that to make comparisons over time
- You can make some comparisons with 2000 using census data, but be cautious.
- More detail on this is on the Brookings website.

Apples vs. oranges...







# Survey numbers have fuzzy edges



- Every survey number is an **estimate**.
- They are foggy or cloudy around the edges, with a **margin of error**. That's why English has words such as "**roughly**," "**about**" or "**approximately**."
- Make sure two estimate ranges do not overlap, so that you do not mistakenly say there is a difference when there may not be.



# Here is the easy way to figure whether two estimates overlap

- Each survey number is an estimate with its own margin of error. The smaller the group being measured, the larger that margin of error will be.
- If your first estimate is 12.0%, with a margin of error of 2.0%, the range is 10.0-14.0%.
- To find the range of an estimate, add the margin of error to it to see how large it could be [ $12.0\% + 2.0\% = 14.0\%$ ].
- Then subtract the margin of error from the estimate to see how small it might be. [ $12.0\% - 2.0\% = 10.0\%$ ]
- Do the same easy math for your second estimate, and see whether their ranges overlap.

## View this table...

## ▶ for states

## ▶ from 2005

from [2004](#)from [2003](#)from [2002](#)
[with statistical significance](#)

## View...

as a [chart](#)

## Other tables...

[Select another ranking table](#)
• [Subject Definitions](#)• [Quality Measures](#)

## United States and States

## R2001. Median Household Income (In 2005 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars): 2005

Universe: Households ?

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey, 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey

NOTE. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Rank	State	Median	Margin of Error
1	New Jersey	61,672	+/-526
2	Maryland	61,592	+/-595
3	Connecticut	60,941	+/-812
4	Hawaii	58,112	+/-1,969
5	Massachusetts	57,184	+/-694
6	New Hampshire	56,768	+/-999
7	Alaska	56,234	+/-1,807
8	Virginia	54,240	+/-540
9	California	53,629	+/-324
10	Delaware	52,499	+/-1,416
11	Minnesota	52,024	+/-366
12	Rhode Island	51,458	+/-1,374
13	Colorado	50,652	+/-553
14	Illinois	50,260	+/-338
15	New York	49,480	+/-422
16	Washington	49,262	+/-644
17	Nevada	49,169	+/-890
18	Utah	47,934	+/-946
19	District of Columbia	47,221	+/-1,934
20	Wisconsin	47,105	
	<b>United States</b>	46,242	
21	Wyoming	46,202	
22	Michigan	46,039	
23	Vermont	45,686	
24	Georgia	45,604	
25	Pennsylvania	44,537	
26	Arizona	44,282	
27	Indiana	43,993	

## Median household income by state

Margin of error here:  
For example,  
Maryland income  
could be as high as  
\$62,187 [61,592  
+595], so New  
Jersey may not be  
first.

Connecticut income  
could be as high as  
\$61,753 [60,941 +  
812], so Maryland  
cannot brag that it  
beats Connecticut.

Fortunately, there is an easier way  
to check whether two estimates  
overlap. On the left rail is the phrase  
“with statistical significance.”  
Click it...

# United States and States - R2001. Median Household Income - Mozilla Firefox

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http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTTableSS?\_bm=y&-ds\_name=ACS\_2005\_EST\_G00\_8-\_box\_head\_nbr=R2001&-\_req\_ty

## View this table...

### ► for states

### ► from 2005

from [2004](#)

from [2003](#)

from [2002](#)

[without statistical significance](#)

## View...

as a [chart](#)

## Other tables...

[Select another ranking table](#)

• [Subject Definitions](#)

• [Quality Measures](#)



## United States and States

R2001. Median Household Income (In 2005 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars): 2005

Universe: Households ?

Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey

Survey: 2005 American Community Survey, 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey

Select a state and click 'GO', or click a row of the table to see statistical significance.

Connecticut

GO

The presence of a ■ indicates geographies whose estimates are **not** statistically significantly different from the estimate for the selected geography. ■■ indicates the selected geography.

NOTE. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [Survey Methodology](#).

Rank	State	Median	Margin of Error
1	■ New Jersey	61,672	+/-526
2	■ Maryland	61,592	+/-595
3	■■ Connecticut	60,941	+/-812
4	Hawaii	58,112	+/-1,969
5	Massachusetts	57,184	+/-694
6	New Hampshire	56,768	+/-999
7	Alaska	56,234	+/-1,807
8	Virginia	54,240	+/-540
9	California	53,629	+/-324
10	Delaware	52,499	+/-1,416
11	Minnesota	52,024	+/-366
12	Rhode Island	51,458	+/-1,374
13	Colorado	50,652	+/-553
14	Illinois	50,260	+/-338
15	New York	49,480	+/-422
16	Washington	49,262	+/-644
17	Nevada	49,169	+/-890
18	Utah	47,934	+/-946
19	District of Columbia	47,221	+/-1,934
20	Wisconsin	47,105	+/-394
	<b>United States</b>	46,242	+/-104
21	Wyoming	46,202	+/-1,518
22	Michigan	46,030	+/-1,440

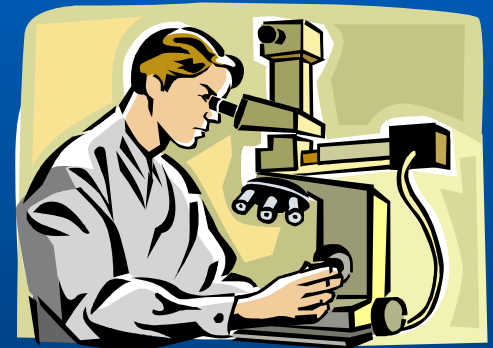
**Ranking tables and thematic maps** calculate for you whether there is any meaningful difference between two estimates.

Just click on “with statistical significance” and then select the area you want to compare. The single red dots next to New Jersey and Maryland indicate that their incomes may not be higher than Connecticut’s...and you don’t have to do the math!



# Even if two estimates are [statistically] different, ask yourself...

- Is the difference big enough to justify a story?
- Maybe the story is that there is not much of a difference, or may not be.





## If your comparison doesn't work, you could try something else

- In the income example, you can still say that New Jersey's median household income ranks **among the richest states**.
- You could look at **different race or age groups** in New Jersey and compare their income figures.
- You could look at American Community Survey estimates from **past years** and see whether New Jersey median household income is up or down.



# Caution Checklist



- ☐ Make sure of your definitions
- ☐ Know your “universe”
- ☐ Don’t write about estimates where lack of group quarters makes a difference
- ☐ If comparing past and present, check for boundary changes
- ☐ Figure the range of each estimate to determine any overlap
- ☐ **Reality check:** Do not make a big deal out of small differences





# American Community Survey data release schedule

- **Since 2000:** All states, and many congressional districts and areas of 250,000 or more have multi-year data
- **2006:** All areas of 65,000+ have 2005 data, to be updated each year
- **In 2008:** Data for areas of 20,000+
- **In 2010:** Neighborhood-level data



## For more information...

- Census press office: 301-763-3691 or [pio@census.gov](mailto:pio@census.gov)
- Click on “Newsroom” on the Census Bureau home page, and then “media services” to access a telephone list of bureau experts (though they may send you back to the press office)
- Go to <http://www.census.gov/sdc/> for state data center contact information



# Training opportunities

- Four-week online training course led by Cynthia Taeuber
  - Register at: <http://www.statistics.com/courses/census>
- Reference: *American Community Survey Data for Community Planning*, by Cynthia Taeuber
  - Available mid-December: [www.trafford.com](http://www.trafford.com)

# [www.brookings.edu/metro/umi.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/umi.htm)

A recording of this training session and other resources for using the American Community Survey will be available at the Brookings website.

Questions? Contact  
Michelle Daniels,  
[mdaniels@brookings.edu](mailto:mdaniels@brookings.edu)

**The Brookings Institution**

November 16, 2006

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The Urban Markets Initiative aims to improve the quality of the information available on urban communities to unleash the full power of those markets to connect them to the economic mainstream.

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### PROGRESSIVE ANALYTICS FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

#### Downtown Detroit

Released by UMI, The Social Compact, and the University of Michigan at the annual Urban Land Institute conference in Detroit, *Downtown Detroit In Focus* is the product of innovative, progressive analysis of the market size and potential of Downtown Detroit. Progressive analytics for downtown development provide a more accurate picture of downtown and its neighborhoods. Working closely with the lead economic development and downtown business organizations, local decisionmakers will use this collaborative research product to better serve current residents and drive future development in downtown Detroit.

[View the paper](#)  
[Find out more about UMI's work in Retail and Commercial Development](#)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
**Using Census Numbers to Find Good Stories**  
November 15, 2006

**Of Silk Purses and Sows' Earmarks** by Andrew Reamer  
September 25, 2006

### INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

#### Measuring the Informal Economy - One Neighborhood at a Time

Street vendors in New York City, a home-based worker in Los Angeles, the day laborer in New Orleans—these businesses are part of the "informal economy" but are an integral part of daily urban life. Accurate measurement of a community's economic activity has the power to attract new investment by businesses and new residents. But in many of our urban communities, residents remain underserved, in part because these type of businesses remain largely unmeasured by economists and banks.

[View the paper](#)  
[Find out more about the roundtable, "Hidden in Plain Sight:"](#)

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