

Census 2010 & the American Community Survey

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for a Race, Ancestry

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FACT SHEET



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Greensboro city, North Carolina

2006-2008 2000

2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates - [what's this?](#)

Data Profile Highlights:

NOTE: Although the American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic, and housing characteristics for the United States, the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program that produces and disseminates the [population, states, counties, cities and towns](#) and estimates of housing units for states and

Social Characteristics - [show more](#) >> **Estimate** **Percentage**

Average [household](#) size 2.32

Census History

- Census of the population every 10 years
- Mandated by the Constitution

Article 1, Section 2: “Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this union, according to their respective numbers, ... The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of ten years, in such manner as they shall by law direct.”

- First census in 1790

Bit more history...

- Variation in questions over time
 - Slavery: up to 1860
 - Feeble-minded: 1840-1890
 - Income: first in 1940
 - Female veterans status: first in 1980
 - Multiple races and grandparents as caregivers: added in 2000
- 1960: enumeration divided in two; short form (count every person) and long form (gather detailed information)

The Basics from Census 2000

- Short Form
 - Survey of 100% of the population
 - Questions about the basic demographic characteristics
- Long Form
 - Sample of one in six housing units (approximately 17% sample)
 - Basic demographic questions
 - PLUS questions about socioeconomic topics

The Basics from Census 2010

- Short Form
 - Continue constitutionally mandated short form counting 100% of the population
- Long Form (B-Bye!)
 - Replaced by the **American Community Survey (ACS)**

American Community Survey

- A nationwide, continuous monthly survey
- Samples 3 million **addresses** per year or 250,000 addresses each month.
- Data will be released annually for communities of 65,000 or more people
- Profiles available in 3 or 5 year estimates for communities with fewer than 65,000 people

ACS Releases Dates & Coverage

Data Product	Population Threshold	Year of Data Release					
		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
		Year(s) of Data Collection					
1-year Estimates	65,000 +	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
3-year Estimates	20,000 +			2005-2007	2006-2008	2007-2009	2008-2010
5-year Estimates	All Areas					2005-2009	2006-2010

Availability for particular places



**Burlington, NC has
49,038 (ACS 2006-2008)**

Two 3 year estimates (05-07 & 06-08) are available now. The 5 year estimate will be available in December 2010.



**Reidsville, NC has
14,485 (Census 2000)**

5 year estimate (2005-2009) available in December 2010



**Greensboro, NC has 242,817
(ACS 2006-2008)**

Any 1 year estimate, 3 year estimate and the 5 year estimate could be used for Greensboro.

Benefits of the ACS

- Provides timely socioeconomic data between the decennial censuses
- Provides ability to monitor trends in local communities between censuses
- Has permanent, professional interviewers who are more successful at increasing the response rate

Just remember...

- **Best to compare similar estimates:**
 - Example: Compare Burlington's 3 year estimates to Greensboro's 3 year estimates
- **Be careful about comparing same area over time:**
 - Do not compare overlapping estimates (e.g., 2005-2007 & 2006-2008)
 - Do compare 2005-2007 & 2008-2010
- **Which estimate you choose can change the story!**
- **Compass Handbooks**

Point in time versus Period data

- Census count is point in time—April 1
- ACS is period data
 - Data collected almost daily
 - Information is anchored to day on which sample housing unit was interviewed. So, “last 12 months” depends on when the interview occurs.
- Be aware of this issue when comparing employment, income, and student enrollment.

Margins of Error

- Census Bureau claims a confidence interval of 90%
 - Albany County 258,649 +/-2,191
 - We are 90% confident that the true number is between 256,458 and 260,840. There is a 10% probability that the estimate would be outside this range.
- Problems though...
 - Example: Estimate of number of Nicaraguans in Guilford County = 177 +/- 179
 - We are 90% confident that the true number is between -2 and 356. (Oh boy!)

Thanks!

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Resources

- [American FactFinder](#) (Portal for US Census Bureau's data)
- [American Community Survey website](#) (information on using and accessing data)
- [IPUMS-USA](#) (integrated public use microdata series from Minnesota Population Center)

References

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