

# CENSUS DATA For GIS

# Census Data

## General Types:

- Decennial Census (1990, 2000, 2010)
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- Population Estimates
- Economic Census
- Annual Economic Surveys

# Decennial Census

- The official U.S. Census is described in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States. It calls for an actual enumeration of the people every ten years, to be used for apportionment of seats in the House of Representatives among the states.
- Contains the most detailed demographic information available...but is outdated a few years after the Census\*

\* This was the impetus for the American Community Survey

# Population Estimates Program

- The Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program publishes population numbers between censuses.
- *Estimates...* from the Population Estimates Program are for the past, while *Projections* provide population estimates for future dates.

# Economic Census

- The Economic Census provides a detailed portrait of the Nation's economy once every five years, from the national to the local level.
- The Economic Census is conducted every five years, in years ending in '2' and '7.'

# Annual Economic Surveys

- In addition to conducting the Economic Censuses every five years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 100 economic surveys covering various sectors of the economy.
- For more information, see;  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/programs.xhtml?program=aes>

# American Community Survey

- The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities an annual look at how they are changing. It replaced the 'long form' in the 2010 census.
- The ACS collects information from U.S. households similar to what was collected on the Census 2000 long form, such as income, commute time to work, home value, veteran status, and other important data.

# Decennial Data Products

Basically there are two\* types of data:

- PL 94-171 redistricting data
- 100% Data (SF1 & 2)

\* Public Use Microdata Samples



# Economic Surveys?

- In addition to conducting the Economic Censuses every five years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts more than 100 economic surveys covering annual, quarterly, and monthly time periods for various sectors of the economy.
- These surveys measure a wide variety of economic activities, from capital expenditures for food manufacturing companies to annual auto dealership sales.

# What is the American Community Survey?

A large, continuous demographic survey that:

- Produces annual and multi-year estimates of the characteristics of the population and housing
- Produces *characteristics*, **not** a population count
- Produces information for small areas including census tracts

# What is the American Community Survey?

- Collect Detailed Decennial Census Sample Data Every Month Instead of Only Once Each Decade
- Release Tabulations of These Data on a Yearly Basis
- Allow the Census Bureau to Restructure and Simplify the Decennial Census Effort

# Full Implementation: Every County Nationwide

- 3 million addresses every year throughout the U.S. and in Puerto Rico
- Provide single-year period estimates for communities of 65,000 or more starting in 2006
- Provide 3-year period estimates for communities with populations of 20,000 or more starting in 2008
- Provide 5-year period estimates starting in 2010

Type of Data	Population Size of Area	Data for the Previous Year Released in the Summer of:							
		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010+
Annual estimates	≥250,000	→			→				
Annual estimates	≥65,000				→				
3-year averages	≥20,000						→		
5-year averages	Census Tract and Block Group*								→

 Data reflect American Community Survey testing through 2004

\* Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county averaging about 4,000 inhabitants. Census block groups generally contain between 600 and 3,000 people. The smallest geographic level for which data will be produced is the block group; the Census Bureau will not publish estimates for small numbers of people or areas if there is a probability that an individual can be identified.

# So Which Data Are Best for You?

# Factors to Consider

- Content (topics)
- Level of Detail (how small)
- Currency of the data
  - Collection cycle (how often)
  - Collection date (when last collected)
- Coverage (Geography)

# Level of Detail

- Decennial.....Census Block to U.S.
- ACS.....Tract to U.S.\*
- Pop Estimates.....Metro area to U.S.
- Economic Census.....ZIP Code to U.S. (5yr)
- Surveys.....County to U.S.

\* Block group level data are available via FTP but are not recommended unless aggregated



# Data Currency

- ACS data are the freshest characteristics...
- Decennial data remain the official “counts”
- Economic census and surveys provide critical measures of economic activity at the ZipCode/County level and higher.
- Economic Census is years ending in 2 & 7
- Surveys are usually monthly/semiannual

# Acquiring Census Data

Primary sources of the data...

- [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) (American Fact Finder)
- NHGIS: [www.nhgis.org](http://www.nhgis.org) (Historical U.S. census data and boundary files from 1790 to 2010.)

# Accessing Census Data

American FactFinder:

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

# Thank you!

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