

**Population Association of America
Introduction to the American Community Survey
Training Session
Wednesday, April 29 – 1:00 pm-5 pm**

Revised 2/27/09

1:00 – 1:45

Welcome and ACS Fundamentals

This session will cover key ACS basics including the types of ACS data sets (1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates), the concept of a period estimate, the summary levels (or types of geographic areas) associated with aggregate data, and the plans for release of both summary data and microdata. It will highlight some important issues for demographers including how ACS data contrast with past census long form sample data. This session will explain how the ACS estimates relate to the estimates from the Population Estimates Program and how they will relate to the estimates from the 2010 Census.

1:45 – 2:15

Case Study 1 – How to Deal with Estimates with Low Reliability

This session will remind users of the need to consider the reliability of ACS estimates before using them in an application. It will show examples of ACS estimates with high margins of error and will explain how to calculate Coefficients of Variation (CVs) and how they should be interpreted. Examples of when ACS data should and should not be used will be discussed. Case studies will demonstrate how to improve reliability by using data from ACS collapsed detailed tables and when it might be a good idea for data users to collapse categories to produce their own improved estimates. This session will share illustrations of how also to aggregate geographic areas to improve reliability.

2:15 – 2:30

Break

2:30 – 3:00

Case Study 2 – Choosing Between 1, 3, and 5-year Data

This session will provide examples of balancing currency and precision in deciding when to use 1-year ACS estimates versus 3-year or 5-year estimates. Specific case studies will demonstrate the steps that users should take to choose the best data set for their application.

3:00 – 3:30

Case Study 3 – Making Comparisons

This session will demonstrate how to use the information provided on the ACS website to determine which comparisons are appropriate to make. Examples will instruct users on how to compare ACS data with Census 2000 data and also how to compare consecutive years of the ACS. Extrapolations to multivariate analyses will be covered. Issues associated with comparing overlapping multiyear estimates will be discussed.

3:30 – 3:45

Break

3:45 – 4:15

Case Study 4 – Introduction to Demographic Research Using the ACS PUMS

This session will feature an analysis using ACS PUMS data to update trends in Hispanic inter-county migration. Two years of annual ACS estimates are pooled to obtain a larger sample, and the one-year migration question from the ACS is analyzed. A brief presentation of findings will be followed by a general discussion of ACS PUMS files and some of the issues involved in using and interpreting such data and the opportunities afforded by the ACS in being able to track important demographic trends on a more timely basis than was possible with the once-per-decade census long-form sample.

4:15 – 4:45

Case Study 5 – Introduction to Demographic Research Using Aggregated ACS Data for Ecological Regression

This session will feature an analysis using ACS data in the same fashion that Census 2000 Summary File 3 or Summary File 4 data might have been used. Using mid-sized counties as the unit of analysis, the 2005-2007 ACS 3-year data are put to work in an ecological regression to understand how county demographic attributes can be used to more fully understand spatial variation in poverty across the U.S. Discussion will focus on crucial differences between the ACS and census long-form data, and considerations that must be made when conducting demographic research using ACS aggregated data.

4:45 – 5:00

Wrap Up