American Community Survey

"It Don't Come Easy", Ringo Starr

Why so difficult?

- Period Estimates – not point in time, not easy for people to understand or explain
- Different residence rules – not usual place of residence as with decennial; ACS is current residence (living in place for 2 mos)
- Smaller sample size than decennial – was 1 in 6 now approx. 1 in 40 – need to check reliability

Why so difficult? Cont'd

- 5 Year data only data set available for ALL geographies (starting Dec. 2010)
- Don't mix and match single year with multi-year – will not be able to use most current single yr. data when comparing with small areas
- Did I mention Margins of Error, Standard Errors, confidence intervals and coefficients of variation?

Finding the ACS Sample Size

- Tables B98___ in American FactFinder detailed tables provide the number of initial addresses selected and the final interviews for states and most if not all counties

B98001. UNWEIGHTED HOUSING UNIT SAMPLE - Universe: HOUSING UNITS
Data Set: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates
Survey: American Community Survey

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

	Maryland
	Estimate
Initial addresses selected	136,754
Final number of housing unit interviews	96,236

B98002. UNWEIGHTED GROUP QUARTERS POPULATION SAMPLE - Universe: POPULATION IN GROUP QUARTERS
Data Set: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates
Survey: American Community Survey

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

	Maryland
	Estimate
Initial sample selected	9,614
Final number of group quarters person interviews	6,998

B00001. UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE COUNT OF THE POPULATION - Universe: TOTAL POPULATION
Data Set: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates
Survey: American Community Survey

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey

	Maryland
	Estimate
Total	233,819

Small samples mean greater possibility for unreliable data need to look at statistics to determine whether to use data

Issues to Consider

- May want to see if there are additional data sources to verify what the ACS data show

- How to treat funding for programs and grants when new data are coming out annually
  - A locality may be eligible for funding based on criteria one year and not be eligible the next
  - A discussion needs to take place about how to treat MOEs with regard to eligibility for programs/funds/grants

Hypothetical example of funding or grant concern

- Jurisdictions with a poverty rate for persons below 18 yrs of age that is 20% or greater will be eligible for funds relating to programs to provide services to underserved children:
- Are only jurisdictions where the “estimate” is 20% or greater eligible or should MOEs be considered
- In the past census data were only available every 10 yrs so data for localities did not change – now may qualify one year but not next

Baltimore city, Maryland

Data Set: **2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates**

Subject	Total	Margin of Error	Below poverty level	Margin of Error	Percent poverty level	Margin of Error
Population for whom poverty status is determined	**617,829**	**+/-2,274**	**121,024**	**+/-5,518**	**19.60%**	**+/-0.9**
AGE						
Under 18 years	150,856	+/-800	40,978	+/-2,936	27.20%	+/-1.9

Dorchester County,

Subject	Total	Margin of Error	Below poverty level	Margin of Error	Percent poverty level	Margin of Error
Population for whom poverty status is determined	**31,159**	**+/-409**	**3,951**	**+/-751**	**12.70%**	**+/-2.4**
AGE						
Under 18 years	6,383	+/-275	1,167	+/-392	18.30%	+/-6.1

Who Gets Funded?

- Baltimore – yes Persons <18 below poverty is 27.2% with a MOE of +/- 1.9%
- Dorchester – ? Persons <18 below poverty is 18.3% (estimate doesn't meet requirement, however with MOE of +/- 6.1% the spread is 12.2% – 24.4%

- What happens if a jurisdiction qualifies one year, but not the next; how does one plan for uncertainties relating to funding?

RECAP

- Sept. 28th – ACS 2009 single year data for areas over 65,000
- Dec. – ACS 2005-2009 data aggregated over 5 years for *ALL* areas including census tracts and block groups
- ACS 2007-2009 3 year data will be available for all areas over 20,000 in Jan. 2011

RECAP cont'd

- Areas over 65,000 population will receive 3 different data sets – 1 yr.; 3 yr.; and 5 yr.
- ACS should not be used as counts of population (use the Census Bureau estimates) but for "characteristics" of the population
- Don't mix and match data sets – if preparing table/report with geographies of different sizes – use the same data set for all

Finding ACS data

- www.census.gov
  - American FactFinder
- http://www.census.gov/acs/www/
  - ACS page on Census site
- http://planning.maryland.gov/msdc/
  - MD State Data Center