

2001 Supplementary Survey

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Questions and Answers

What Are The Supplementary Surveys?

The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey was designed to demonstrate the feasibility of collecting long form-type information at the same time but separately from the decennial census. The supplementary surveys conducted in 2001 and 2002 were designed to provide a bridge of information for a permanent American Community Survey, which will replace the decennial long form in 2010, pending Congressional funding.

The surveys used the American Community Survey questionnaire and methodology to collect demographic, social, economic, and housing data from a sample of 700,000 households nationwide.

What Is The American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey is the proposed replacement for the decennial census long form. The testing of this program began in 1996. It asks essentially the same questions as the long form, but the data collection will be spread throughout the decade, rather than at a single point in time, which provides information on a continuous basis. This gives communities and population groups a dynamic picture of changes throughout the decade. Testing of the American Community Survey continues in 31 diverse sites throughout the country. When fully implemented, the American Community Survey will be conducted in every county, American Indian and Alaska Native area, Hawaiian Home Land, and in Puerto Rico, and will have a sample size of approximately 3 million households.

What Is Being Highlighted Today?

The supplementary survey data consist of change profiles in tabular format (2000-2001) for the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, and areas with populations of 1 million or more, as well as single-year profiles for areas of 250,000 or more. The single-year profiles for 2001 appear in the form of detailed tables, tabular and narrative profiles. Today's data release includes population and housing characteristics such as educational attainment, commuting time, household income, and home value.

What Is Significant About These Data?

First, the supplementary survey data offer a fresh look at changes in distributions of population and housing characteristics since 2000.

Second, they are an example of what the American Community Survey will be able to produce for the nation, the states, and small geographic areas every year if funded by Congress. Under the Census Bureau's plan, and if full funded, by 2004 the American Community Survey will produce estimates for geographic areas and population groups of 65,000 or more. By 2008, the American Community Survey will produce estimates for the smallest areas (such as census tracts), and the smallest population groups in the country, subject to confidentiality protections. Each year's data will be an extraordinarily rich source of information for the country as well as smaller areas, one that has never been available before.

Are There Cautions In Using These Data?

Yes. They are not a substitute for Census 2000 population counts, for Census 2000 long form data, for income and poverty estimates from the Current Population Survey, or for unemployment rates from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The supplementary survey data are based on a household sample of approximately 700,000 households versus the 19 million households for the Census 2000 long form. In addition, unlike the long form estimates, the supplementary survey estimates do not include group quarters such as emergency and transitional shelters, college dormitories, nursing facilities, and prisons.

Why Weren't Group Quarters Included In The Supplementary Surveys?

The Census Bureau made a conscious decision not to overburden these facilities by surveying them twice in the same year—once for the decennial census and then again for the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey. To maintain consistency for data comparisons, group quarters were not included in the 2001 and 2002 supplementary surveys.

Can Supplementary Survey Data Be Compared To The Census 2000 Long Form?

The supplementary survey questionnaire is essentially the same as the Census 2000 long form. The supplementary survey data tables are similar to Census 2000 Summary File 3 tables. But, you should be aware that the data from these two sources could differ.

Some of the main reasons for the differences are the larger size of the Census 2000 long form sample, absence of group quarters from the supplementary survey, differences in reference periods of some questions, and differences in the way the data were collected.

Between now and the end of 2003, the Census Bureau will be conducting detailed studies of selected social, economic, and housing characteristics comparing the Census 2000 long form with the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey. Results of these studies will be published on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey Web site.

Which Numbers Should A Data User Rely On? Supplementary Survey Or The Census 2000 Long Form?

The Census 2000 long form provides the basis for official Census Bureau estimates for 2000. The supplementary surveys should be used to measure changes between 2000 and 2001.

Why Are The Poverty Estimates Different Than Those From Census 2000 And The Current Population Survey?

The Census Bureau conducts several surveys to measure various aspects of income and poverty. Each of these surveys differs from the others in the length and detail of its questionnaire, the number of households interviewed, the methodology used to collect and process the data, and, consequently, in the income and poverty estimates produced. It is important to understand that different survey and methods produce different results, and consequently when it is appropriate to use each survey or method.

The source of the *official national* estimates of income and poverty is the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Why Have Both Surveys?

The supplementary surveys provide good, timely measures of annual *state-level* change. The American Community Survey will provide a longer time series from which to measure change, for *sub-state* areas, and even *finer sub-populations*.

Are There Differences In The Unemployment Estimates From The Supplementary Surveys And The Current Population Survey (CPS)?

The unemployment figures from the supplementary surveys are not comparable to the official unemployment data from the CPS. The supplementary surveys and the CPS use different concepts, different questions, different reference periods, and different modes of collection. For example, the official concept of unemployed for the CPS requires the individual to be actively seeking work, whereas passive job seeking is sufficient in the supplementary survey concept. The official unemployment rates come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

What Are The Differences Between The Supplementary Survey And Census 2000 Race And Hispanic Origin Data?

The race data from the supplementary surveys and the race data from Census 2000 are different even though the questions are the same. We think the primary reason for these differences is that the supplementary survey has different methods of data collection than used for Census 2000. The Census Bureau continues to evaluate thoroughly these results and to conduct other research to understand more about the conceptual issues involved in reporting data about race.

For example, Hispanics have a different pattern of response to the race question. The biggest difference is that many fewer Hispanics in the supplementary surveys reported "Some Other Race" and many more reported "White" than in Census 2000. There are also differences for some race groups in the estimates of the number who reported only that race ("race alone") compared to the estimates of the number who reported that race whether or not they reported any others ("race alone or in combination").

Differences also occurred in reporting Hispanic origin. More detailed origins were reported in the supplementary surveys, while more general terms like Hispanic or Latino were reported in Census 2000.

Why Didn't You Ask The Race Questions In The Same Way, And Use The Same Methods Of Collection?

By design, the American Community Survey methods used by the supplementary surveys do not directly replicate those used to collect the long form data in Census 2000. Instead, they incorporate what are expected to be improvements that are made possible by reengineering the decennial census.

Because the American Community Survey data will be collected over the course of the year, rather than in a short time around April 1, mailing replacement questionnaires is possible. Also, because the American Community Survey will have a much smaller sample size each year and the personal visit follow-up will be done by 4,000 highly trained field representatives, many of whom conduct other Census Bureau surveys with laptops, the supplementary surveys can use computerized instruments that generate more accurate and more complete data than paper questionnaires. In contrast, providing laptops to 500,000 temporary Census 2000 enumerators, training them, and creating the necessary technical infrastructure would have been prohibitively expensive.

Do The Supplementary Surveys Include Population Counts?

No. The supplementary surveys (and the American Community Survey) were designed to measure population and housing **characteristics** such as educational attainment, language spoken at home, veteran status, employment, and home ownership. Official population counts come from the decennial census and the intercensal population estimates.

How Much Did The 2001 Supplementary Survey Cost?

The cost of data collection for the supplementary survey was \$27 million.