

# AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

## Years Survey Included Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM)- Related Questions

1996–Present

### Survey Description

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau. It provides the most current, nationally consistent data on demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics of the U.S. population every year. The ACS replaced the long-form Decennial Census to provide data on the U.S. population's housing and socio-economic status every year instead of every 10 years. As a continuous measurement survey, it complements the short-form Decennial Census, both of which are part of the Decennial Census Program. The goals of the ACS are:

- Give federal, state, tribal, and local governments an information base for administering and evaluating government programs.
- Provide data users with timely and comparable data across states, communities, and population groups.

### Survey Sample Population

The ACS is conducted in over 3.5 million housing units across every county in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico each year; in Puerto Rico, the ACS is known as the Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) and is an equivalent of the ACS. The ACS collects data continuously throughout the year, randomly drawing a sample of about 250,000 addresses every month on a rotating basis to produce annual estimates. All samples are drawn from the Census Bureau's Master Address File (MAF), an annually updated official inventory of known living quarters and selected nonresidential units (public, private, commercial) in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

ACS data are collected from residents of sampled housing unit addresses. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters. The Census Bureau includes only residents whose actual or intended length of stay in a sample housing unit at the time of survey fielding is more than two months.

## Survey Mode

The ACS is conducted using four modes—internet, mail, telephone, and in-person interview—and is administered in three sequential phases. The first phase is the mail and internet survey mode, in which multiple mailings are sent to sampled housing unit addresses to encourage respondents to complete the survey via the internet or to return a paper questionnaire. The second phase is the telephone mode, which uses computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI), in which the ACS is conducted on nonrespondents from the first phase who have a telephone number and a mailable address. The third phase is the in-person interview mode, in which Census Bureau field representatives use a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) software to conduct the survey in person for undeliverable addresses and nonrespondents from the first and second phases. In Puerto Rico and in hard-to-reach areas in the U.S., only the mail survey mode is used.

## SGM-Related Survey Questions

The ACS data is composed of two separate questionnaires: the Housing Unit and the Group Quarters questionnaires. Only the Housing Unit questionnaire includes SGM-related questions.

### *ACS Housing Unit Questionnaire*

The questions below are from the ACS Housing Unit questionnaire and are asked of persons living or staying in a housing unit for more than two months. They are not asked of persons who are living in temporary housing for more than two months, such as a college student living away or someone in the armed forces on deployment. One person from each household (Person 1 or household respondent) who is at least 15 years or older answers the ACS Housing Unit questionnaire for all members of the household.

Category	Question	Question History
Sexual Identity	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Sexual Attraction	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Sexual Behavior	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Gender Identity	Person 1 is the person living or staying here in whose name this house or apartment is owned, being bought, or rented. If there is no such person, start with the name of any adult living or staying here.  (3) What is Person 1's sex? <i>Mark (X) ONE box.</i> Male Female	This is the only version of the question that has been used and will be used in 2019.  The same question is asked for up to 4 additional household members (Person 2–Person 5).  Gender identity is also collected for up to 7 additional household members (Person 6–Person 12) by providing an additional space in the survey to include their names and sex (e.g., male, female). From 1996–2007, however, sex of the household member was not collected for the 7 additional household members (Person 6–Person 12).

Category	Question	Question History
Household Relationships	<p>(2) How is this person related to Person 1? <i>Mark (X) ONE box.</i></p> <p>Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse Opposite-sex unmarried partner Same-sex husband/wife/spouse Same-sex unmarried partner Biological son or daughter Adopted son or daughter Stepson or stepdaughter Brother or sister Father or mother Grandchild Parent-in-law Son-in-law or daughter-in-law Other relative Roommate or housemate Foster child Other nonrelative</p>	<p>This is the current version of the question that will be used in 2019. Person 1 answers this question for up to 4 additional household members (Person 2–Person 5).</p> <p>From 2008–2018, question wording remained the same, except for the response options. The answer options from 2008–2018 are as follows:</p> <p>Husband or wife Biological son or daughter Adopted son or daughter Stepson or stepdaughter Brother or sister Father or mother Grandchild Parent-in-law Son-in-law or daughter-in-law Other relative Roomer or boarder Housemate or roommate Unmarried partner Foster child Other nonrelative</p> <p>From 1996–2007, question wording remained the same, except for the response options. The answer options from 1996–2007 are as follows:</p> <p>Husband or wife Son or daughter Brother or sister Father or mother Grandchild In-law Other relative Roomer, boarder Housemate, roommate Unmarried partner Foster child Other nonrelative</p>

## Response Rates

The most recent available response rate is from 2016. The national response rate for housing units in 2016 was 94.7%. National response rates from all other years are displayed in the link below. A drop-down menu is also available in the link for filtering response rates by states. <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample-size-and-data-quality/response-rates/>

Response rates definitions are available at:

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/sample-size-and-data-quality/response-rates-definitions.html>

## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

### Organizations Involved

The U.S. Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce is responsible for conducting this survey.

### Survey Links

#### *Questionnaires*

Find the ACS Housing Unit questionnaires from 1996–2018 by following the link below. Under the “Methodology” tab, click “Questionnaire Archive.” <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

The 2019 version of the ACS Housing Unit is available in the Reginfo.gov site below. <https://mobile.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAOMBHistory?ombControlNumber=0607-0810>

#### *Data*

Find the ACS data in easy-to-use formats by following the instructions for each data table or tool listed in the link below.

<https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/>

Other ACS data options are available under the “Other Data Options” section in the link below, which lists various forms of ACS data for advanced users.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

### *General Information*

All information on the ACS can be found on the Census Bureau’s ACS website, which includes general background information about the ACS, latest news and updates, data, various technical and methodology documents, a library of reports, and contact information.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>



## References

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. U.S. General Services Administration.  
OMB Control Number 0607-0810.

<https://mobile.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAOMBHistory?ombControlNumber=0607-0810>

United States Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce. American FactFinder.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/programs.xhtml?program=acs>

United States Census Bureau. U.S. Department of Commerce. Programs.

<https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/demographic/>

