

# American Community Survey

## Data Avalanche Warning

by Steve Rosenow, National Crosswalk Service Center

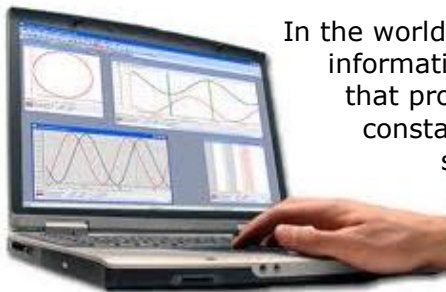
On December 14, the Census Bureau released the first five-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS). These contain the most comprehensive population, demographics, economic, social and housing data since the release of the 2000 Census. The Census Bureau defines the five-year ACS data as "Consisting of about 11.1 billion individual estimates and covering more than 670,000 distinct geographies..."<sup>1</sup> This latest release represents a major shift in the methods used by the Census Bureau to estimate characteristics of the population at the lowest geographic levels. Small geographic areas will no longer need to rely on outdated 2000 census estimates.

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## 2010 Classification Update: SOC and CIP

by Steve Rosenow, National Crosswalk Service Center



In the world of workforce and economic information, change is constant. Agencies that produce this information are constantly torn between maintaining stability in the classifications they use and updating them reflect changes in the universes they measure. The first option simplifies comparisons of data

over time, although increasing amounts of activity may be classified in residual (all other) categories as they fall outside current classification structures. The latter option accounts for changes in the structure and nature of economic and labor market activity and better tracks these changes at the cost of comparability over time. There is no ideal compromise between the two approaches, since any agency's audience has multiple purposes and uses for the data the agency produces.

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*The Workforce Information Database and the American Community Survey:* The Analyst Resource Center (ARC) and the National Crosswalk Service Center (NCSC) have developed a prototype file structure that contains demographic information like that found in the 2000 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). The NCSC has developed content for this structure that draws data from the 2000 Census, 2002-2009 single-year estimates, 2005-07, 2006-08, and 2007-09 three-year estimates, and 2005-2009 five-year estimates from the ACS. More information can be found on the NCSC's [WID Non-standard Tables](#) page.

States can request files for their states that contain national, state, county and place estimates for all areas for which the data are produced for their states and the time periods outlined above. Send your requests to: [ncsc@iowa.gov](mailto:ncsc@iowa.gov).

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## Local Educational Information – The Roundabout Way

by Steve Rosenow, National Crosswalk Service Center

Ask any state Workforce Information Database administrator, and the answer will be the same: *The best content for the database generally originates locally.* Sometimes this comes about through participation in Bureau of Labor Statistics programs (Occupational Employment Statistics, Current Employment Statistics), and other times it results from information gathered and published locally, such as state licensed occupation information.

Other information takes a more circuitous route, originating locally and collected and processed by someone far away, only to be returned for general local use. This type of information can sometimes be adapted for use in the Workforce Information Database (WID). One example of this type of information is the postsecondary education information collected annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Their Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) gathers a wealth of information each year from 7,000 postsecondary institutions, ranging from small single-program proprietary schools to major research universities.

School, program and completions information has been part of the WID since it began as the ALMIS Database. Its inclusion originated with one of the precursors to the WID, the Occupational and Labor Market Information Database (OLMID), dating back to 1994. States experienced varying degrees of success in populating these tables. Beginning in 2005, the Analyst Resource Center and the National Crosswalk Service Center have distributed SCHOOLS, PROGRAMS, PROGCOMP and SUPPLY table content extracted from the annual IPEDS surveys. Each fall, when new IPEDS survey data are released, the NCSC has reformatted the files for use in the WID and notified states of the availability of the files. State-specific files were made available on request, with up to 15 states requesting the annual updates.

The IPEDS data fit nicely into the WID structures. Some of the features of the resulting tables follow:

- WID content is taken from the IPEDS Institutions and Completions surveys, with revisions usually available in the fall of each year.
- Record Counts for the 2009 WID files:
  - SCHOOLS: 7,192
  - PROGRAMS: 208,210
  - PROGCOMP: 172,147
  - SUPPLY: 237,033
- One of the most significant obstacles that prevented use of IPEDS data by the states was a lack of geographic identifiers below the state level. For two years, the NCSC used GIS software to add latitude and longitude coordinates along with county codes to the files. Beginning with the 2009 IPEDS data released in fall 2010, those variables were populated by the NCES.
- The IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data, source of content for the SCHOOLS table, are institution based, containing only one record for each institution. This usually relates to the schools' main campuses. Branch campuses or joint operations with other schools are not represented. States who request their files are advised of this dimension and urged to identify branch campuses and programs in their states.



For more information, or to request a copy of a state's files, contact the NCSC at [ncsc@iowa.gov](mailto:ncsc@iowa.gov).



## ARC Meeting Notes

Notes from Portland, OR – October 2010

### ETA Update

ETA update was given by Samuel Wright, Contract Representative. ETA is under a continuing resolution. The ETA asks for a monthly report so that they can clearly document activities and expenditures.

Wright requested a formal letter be sent out to the states to see who is interested in hosting the Employer Database.

Montana has offered to host any states that are interested; they will be taking the code and rewriting it to a .net system. The cost would be based upon equipment, storage space, and services used. The cost should be less than current hosting with CIBER. Eleven states are currently using Workforce Informer. Additional information can be obtained from [Mike Cochrane](#).

States that are involved in Green Jobs are sending out surveys. It is a consensus that states have to come up with their own definitions of what constitutes green jobs. The green jobs stimulus grant provides funding and states have to proceed whether they have standard guidelines available.

### Administrative Update

ARC member states that do not have a contract that covers travel should let North Carolina know, and they can draft a contract for those states. The obligation authority for states is for 12 months based on available funds from the Feds.

### NCSC Update

Schools table content was sent to 7 states. The NCSC and CareerOneStop are discussing testing web addresses for licensing agencies and coordinating updates with the states.

### Structure

Version 2.5 of the WID is being finalized, and will be released in 2011.

InfoGroup inserted additional values into the employer database contact title code field. The Structure Committee identified possible related structure changes, such as expanding the field to 2 characters.

No decision was proposed, pending an analysis of the effect of this change. The Structure group also questioned InfoGroup making unilateral changes without notifying the ARC. The Structure Committee will continue discussion on the matter, and will propose a solution in 90 days.

Questions were raised about how a major version release of structure document should be handled. It was decided that ARC must put the document out for review by the states and ETA, and allow sufficient time for comment. Typically six to twelve months is needed for the review process.

### Highlights of Version 2.5

- Addition of soc2000 and cip2000 tables to handle older versions without changing names of tables for current versions. Also inclusion of crosswalks to handle the new and old versions.
- New periodtype for ACS data; 2 new periods for 3-year and 5-year estimates.
- Version 2.5 changes to include suggestions from Katrina Evans

Draft Policy document will be sent to Policy Committee. ARC should maintain a list of contacts for each BLS program. Bob Cottrell will contact BLS to determine the contact persons for the BLS programs.

### Education Committee

The Committee rewrote the training documentation, which includes; John Pearce's wireless application (DROID APP). Wage Salary Calculation application and a Green Jobs portion were also added.

Due to budget issues, it was decided that a conference would not be held in the near future. Discussion was held on the possibility of having a webinar using Google Talk, Adobe Connect or GoToMeeting. The Committee plans to do another survey, including questions on webinars usage in LMI shops.

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## Survey {continued from page 1}

**First, a little history.** . .the 2000 census, like prior versions, collected much of the detailed information about the population and housing stock through more detailed questionnaires sent to a sample of households. In the mid-1990s, the Census Bureau began to plan for collecting this information on an ongoing basis and to making this more detailed information for small geographies available each year. Testing of the data collection began in the 1990s, and data releases were begun in 2000, with additional geographic areas added through 2002. During the 2010 census, no information was gathered through a sample. That was completely replaced by ACS estimates.



**How it's done...** The ACS is conducted on an ongoing basis, collecting information from about 250,000 households each month, with an annual total coming from three million addresses. The data are gathered by mail, telephone and personal visits, just like the census, and are collected throughout the year.

**Data and geographic subtleties...** While ACS estimates are designed to replace the sample data collected in previous censuses, there are differences in their content and detail, and as always "The devil is in the details" when processing and analyzing the data. The data are collected continuously and released annually in three levels of detail, depending on population size of an area:

- *One-year estimates* are available for the nation, states and other geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or more. Fairly complete sets of these estimates became available starting in 2002.
- *Three-year estimates* are available for geographic areas of 20,000 or more. Three sets of these estimates have been released: 2005-07, 2006-08 and 2007-09.
- *Five year estimates* for 2005-2009 were released in December 2010. Estimates are available for all areas down to the census tract and block group level.

A significant difference between the ACS estimates and census data is that the ACS estimates are period data, and represent all of the survey returns collected during a period of time (Jan-Dec 2008, Jan 2005 -Dec 2008). Census data are "point in time" data that represent the status of the population at a given point in time, generally April 1 of the census year. The different concepts in use, along with sometimes differing definitions of characteristics and change in subject areas over time, make comparison of ACS estimates to those from the 2000 census somewhat more complex than dealing with much of the other economic and labor market information that are commonly in use. Fortunately, the Census Bureau provides guidance in use of the data and comparison to the 2000 census data.<sup>2</sup>

- One-year estimates can generally be compared to other one-year estimates and to the 2000 census. However, some variables and geographic areas of coverage may change over time, so caution must be used.
- Multi-year estimates can generally be compared to 2000 census data. Comparison of multi-year estimates with each other involves more subtleties. Estimates should only be compared with other estimates gathered over the same length of time (three-year with three-year, five-year with five year). The Census Bureau also discourages comparisons between overlapping multiple year estimates.

While data consumers may see a great wealth of useful information, it's important that those who provide the data and its analysis educate themselves on the use of the data so as to not mislead the customer. ❄

<sup>1</sup> ["U.S. Census Bureau Releases First Set of 5-Year American Community Survey Estimates"](#) , Accessed on 12/22/2010.

<sup>2</sup> ["Comparing ACS Data"](#) and subordinate pages.

## SOC CIP {continued from page 1}

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) are responsible for the major classifications used in labor market and education data respectively. BLS manages dissemination and other activities related to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) on behalf of the SOC Policy Committee (SOCPC). The SOCPC includes a variety of federal statistical agencies that utilize occupational classifications. NCES manages the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) which they use in an annual survey of postsecondary educational institutions. Both classifications have 2010 revisions, and these changes will work their way into various federal statistical programs over time.

### 2010 SOC

Detailed information about the SOC revision can be found on the [BLS SOC](#) page. That page also contains information about related products such as the Spanish edition of the manual (available as a PDF file) and the Direct Match Title File, a listing of nearly 6,600 job titles, each matched to a single SOC occupation. The SOC page contains information about suggesting additional titles for inclusion in this file. Since the SOC is the standard classification, the revised classification will be incorporated into a number of federal occupational statistics programs:

- [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (Department of Labor): The 2010 version is being used to collect employment and wage information through the Occupational Employment Statistics program for May 2010 with data published in May 2011. Adoption schedules for several other BLS programs are still under development.
- [Employment and Training Administration](#) (Department of Labor): This agency's O\*NET classification is based on the SOC, and a revised classification based on the 2010 SOC was released in December 2010. The National O\*NET Center has announced plans for releasing Version 15.1 of the O\*NET Database using the new classification in February 2011<sup>1</sup>.
- [Census Bureau](#) (Department of Commerce): The list of 2010 Census occupations, based on the 2010 SOC was released in October 2010<sup>2</sup>. The American Community Survey, designed to provide occupational information in place of the long form questionnaire used in previous censuses, used census occupations based on the 2000 SOC through 2009.
- [Defense Manpower Data Center](#) (Department of Defense): This agency publishes crosswalk files that link military occupations to their civilian equivalents, issuing quarterly updates. The Department of Defense crosswalk issued in January 2010 was the first based on the 2010 SOC.

Nearly all of the material in the SOC manual is available on the BLS SOC page, and printed copies and the 2010 SOC on CD-ROM can be ordered from the National Technical Information Service (<http://www.ntis.gov/products/soc.aspx>)

Initial work on the next SOC revision, tentatively scheduled for 2018 is scheduled to begin in late 2013, with the SOCPC Federal Register announcement of recommendations published in late 2014 or early 2015. Subsequent revisions are scheduled at ten-year intervals.

### 2010 CIP

The Classification of Instructional Programs has a history that starts with its first publication in 1980, with revisions in 1985, 1990 and 2000. The classification "supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity."<sup>3</sup> Unlike the SOC, with uses across a number of statistical agencies, the use of the CIP is largely confined to the National Center for Education Statistics and state and local education agencies. NCES' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) conducts annual surveys of postsecondary institutions and uses the CIP to track enrollments and program completions by institution. Use of the 2010 CIP is required for reporting for the 2010-11 school year, with collecting begun in the Fall, 2010 and publication in Fall, 2011. For the first time in 2010, no printed CIP manual will be available. All material from the manual will be available for downloading from the CIP web site. (continued on page 6)

## New Geography Resource



Thanks to a tip from the newsletter of the Council for Community and Economic Research/Labor Market Information Training Institute, the National Crosswalk Service Center has begun distribution of a new geographic source that contains links between ZIP codes and counties. These links are based on U.S. Postal Service administrative data and are contained in databases distributed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The files allow users to apportion ZIP code-based data among the counties in which the ZIP code areas are located. WID versions of these files have not been developed, pending consultation with the ARC Structure Committee on structure issues. You'll find more information about the files on the [NCSC News page](#). ❄

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## SOC CIP {continued from page 5}

### Crosswalk Development

Reference materials for 2010 versions of both the SOC and CIP contain crosswalks linking the new codes to their previous (2000) versions. These files are available for downloading from the classifications' respective web sites. However, the area of greatest interest is development of crosswalks that link the 2010 versions of the SOC and CIP. Any number of organizations have undoubtedly developed versions of this crosswalk for their own programmatic uses. Development of an initial standardized set of relationships is being coordinated by the agencies responsible for the classifications, BLS and NCES, with publication by NCES planned for early 2011.

### WID Implications

The Workforce Information Databases (WID) has classifications for nearly any form of economic or labor market activity, and changes to those classifications are not uncommon, for reasons examined in this article's introduction. Version 2.5 of the WID, scheduled for release in 2011 includes modifications to clarify the inclusion of these revised classifications as the underlying data series introduce them. Lookup tables for

these classifications, as well as others that are revised regularly (census industries and occupations, NAICS industries), are to be used for the most current version of the respective classifications. Older versions are retained in lookup files with names that contain the version year. For example, the CIP lookup table that contains the 2010 version is named CIPCODE. Earlier versions are named CIP2000, CIP1990, etc. Each version has its own CODETYPE variable for inclusion in the OCCCODES and INDCODES tables. This allows database administrators to manage databases that may contain different versions of some classifications. ❄

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<sup>1</sup> [O\\*NET Research and Technical reports](#)

Accessed on 12/27/2010.

<sup>2</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau Industry and Occupation](#)

Accessed on 12/27/2010.

<sup>3</sup> [IES CIP](#)

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## Meeting Notes {continued from page 3}

### Information Presentation

The Committee will move forward with implementing a "sandbox" for the ARC website. They will work with the NCSC on the design for the "sandbox".

It was proposed that a "sandbox" be set up for web developers on the ARC website. This page would have brief descriptions of applications and what they are intended for.

Questions were raised about who would own the code that would be put in a sandbox and whether or not the ARC has the personnel to manage something like this. Since ARC is not a legal entity it has no legal standing to deal with these issues. The sandbox would be a place for states to share ideas, but it would be up to the individual states to decide what to share.

### Policy Committee

The Policy Committee noted the continuing need for administrative help to do the minutes and publications. The annual report will need to be done soon for ETA.

The issue of the Employer Database was discussed, and the Committee will continue efforts to get other states interested in taking over the contract from Iowa. It was noted that Connecticut might be interested.

The Workforce Information Database is a normalized, relational database structure developed for the storage and maintenance of labor market, economic, demographic and occupational information. The Analyst Resource Center is responsible for the Workforce Information Database structure development, update, and maintenance. Members include North Carolina (lead), Connecticut, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Texas, Wyoming, and ETA, along with support from the National Crosswalk Service Center.

Further discussion was held on the sandbox project. A general process for contributing to the sandbox was suggested:

- Steve Rosenow will develop a form for contributors to describe their application.
- States will share their application with the Policy Committee and the Information Presentation Committee for approval. Prior to posting on the website, the ARC will need written authority to share the application as well as contact information to be posted with the application.
- Once the Committees have approved the application, then NCSC will post to the ARC website.

It was requested that Rosenow provide the ARC Policy Committee with the monthly NCSC report he prepares for ETA in case they have additional information to the report. ❄



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