

S A N D A G

info



2006 American Community Survey



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As the state-designated Regional Census Data Center for the San Diego region, SANDAG is committed to providing the latest information about census data. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a new survey that will provide annual demographic data for communities across the nation, including the San Diego region. This is the second in a series of annual ACS *infos* that will be updated with the latest data and information.

Please contact SANDAG at (619) 699-1900 for more information about the ACS or other census datasets.

Background

The American Community Survey (ACS) is the United States Census Bureau's new program for collecting and disseminating demographic, socioeconomic, and housing data. The program began testing and development in 1996. Full nationwide implementation began in January 2005. Approximately one out of 40 addresses (2.5%) is surveyed each year, which equals about 3 million addresses a year. In San Diego County, one out of 40 equates to almost 28,000 addresses each year (based on SANDAG 2006 population and housing estimates).

ACS data are an invaluable resource for understanding the region's current demographic landscape. The survey was created to provide more timely data. Unlike the decennial census long form that produced data every ten years, the ACS will provide data annually. (While the Census counts 100 percent of the population, it only surveys 16 percent of households using the "long form" to gather more comprehensive demographic data. The ACS will replace the long form which will not be included in the 2010 Census.)

The timing of the initial ACS data release depends upon an area's geographic size. After the initial release, data will be released annually for all geographic areas. As shown in Figure 1, the first full implementation release for areas with 65,000 people or more was in 2006. The first release for areas with 20,000 people or more will be in 2008. The first release for smaller areas, like census tracts and block groups, will be in 2010. Data are released later for areas with fewer than 20,000 people because more time will be needed to acquire enough survey respondents to provide a statistically reliable sample; the data will be released annually as either three-year or five-year averages.

Figure 1
Initial Release Depends upon Size of the Area

Type of Data	Population Size of Area	2003*	2004*	2005*	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1-year estimate	250,000+	→							
1-year estimate	65,000+				→				
3-year averages	20,000+						→		
5-year averages	Census Tract and Block Group								→

*ACS testing

How to Use This Data

The annual data releases are a noteworthy improvement over previous decennial census data releases, but they also create differences in data interpretation. Most of these differences can be attributed to the smaller ACS sample size than the decennial census long form. One in six households was surveyed in Census 2000 versus one in 40 households surveyed for the ACS. When using the data, users must be aware of the following issues:

- ACS estimates are less precise than decennial census estimates. The smaller sample size means a larger margin of error. The ACS data products report a margin of error that should be taken into consideration when making comparisons between different time periods or geographic areas.
- The 2006 ACS data does include people living in Group Quarters*. However, 2005 ACS does not. Caution should be used when comparing the two time periods.
- Not all of the data are directly comparable to Census 2000 data. While the ACS collects the same information as the Census 2000, the surveys have different methodologies. For example, the Census 2000 uses April 1, 2000, as its reference date for questions, while the ACS uses the month before the survey.

2006 American Community Survey Characteristics in San Diego County

The 2006 ACS data releases occurred in the summer and fall of 2007. Data are available for the County of San Diego and cities greater than 65,000 in population. There were three data releases:

1. August 28, 2007: Income, Earnings, and Poverty Data
2. September 12, 2007: Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics; and Public Use Microdata Sample
3. September 27, 2007: Group Quarters and Selected Population Profiles

Social and Demographic Characteristics

In 2006, the median age of San Diego County's population was 34 years old. The percentage of males and females is even, with 50 percent each. As shown in Table 1, a slight majority of the County's household population are White (52%). Hispanics are the second largest race/ethnic group with 30 percent.

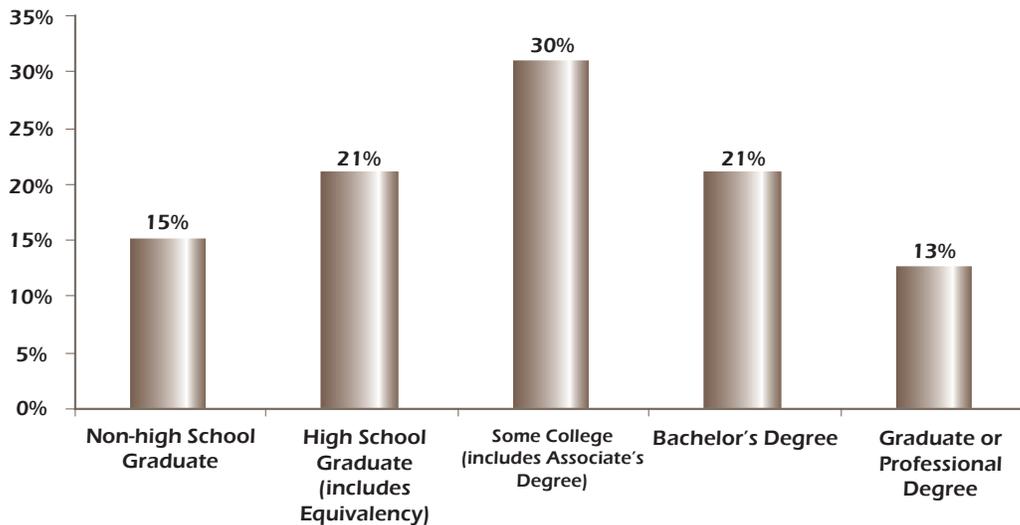
* Group Quarters are non-household living quarters, such as dormitories, nursing homes, and military barracks.

Table 1
Race/Ethnicity, Total Population
San Diego County, 2006

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Household Population
Hispanic	30%
White	52%
Black	5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	<1%
Asian	10%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	<1%
Other	3%
Total	100%

Figure 2 shows the educational attainment levels for San Diego County residents (age 25 years or older). About a third of the region’s population has a high school degree or less (36%), some college (30%), or a Bachelor’s degree or higher (34%).

Figure 2
Educational Attainment, Total Population, 25 Years or Older
San Diego County, 2006



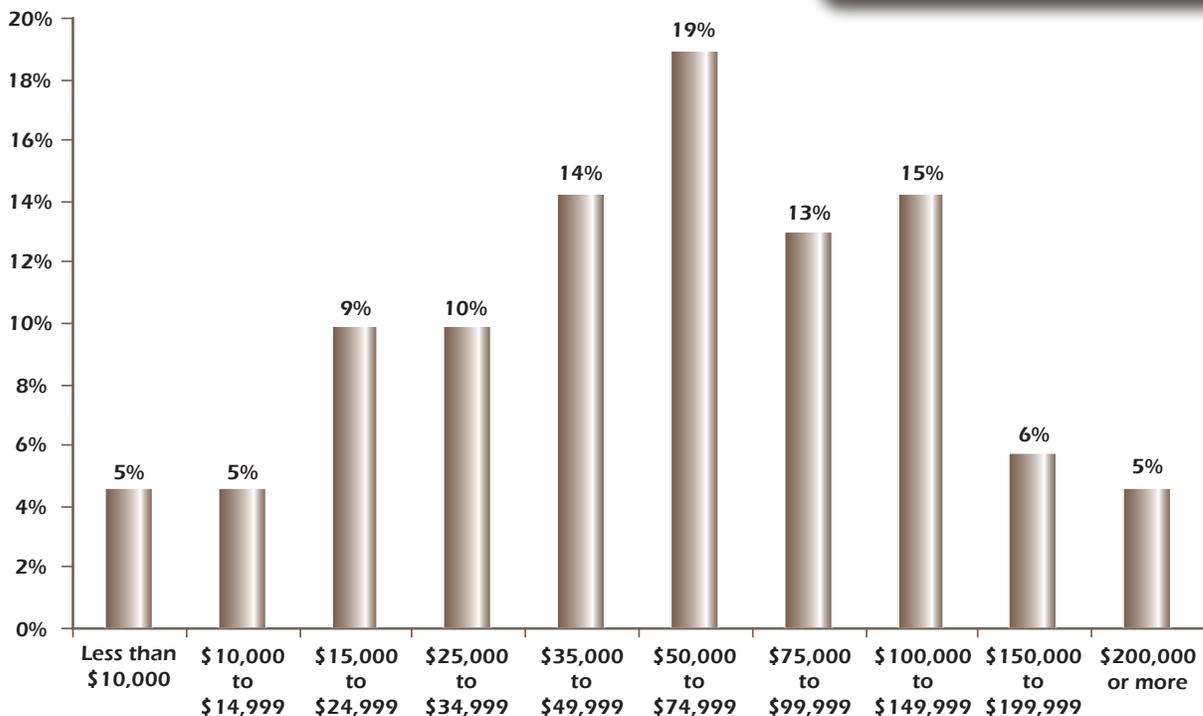
Slightly more than half of the region’s residents (age 15 years or older) are married (52%). Two out of three households is a family household (66%) and almost half of those include children under 18 years old. (A family household includes two or more people living in the same household related by birth, marriage, or adoption.) The average household size is 2.72, and the average family size is 3.33.

Economic Characteristics

In 2006, the median household income for San Diego County was \$59,591. The household income distribution (Figure 3) shows that the largest percentage of households is in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 category (19%). On the far ends of the distribution, 10 percent of households have incomes less than \$15,000, and 26 percent have incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Eight percent of families in the County are below the poverty level. Of those, almost half (40%) are female single parent families with at least one child under the age of 18 years old. Twelve percent of individuals fall below the poverty level. Thirty-three percent of those individuals are under the age of 18 years old.

Figure 3
Household Income, Total Households
San Diego County, 2006



Note: The ACS household income estimates do not match SANDAG 2006 estimates. This is due to differences in methodology between the ACS and the Census 2000, which is the base year of SANDAG current estimates.

Like the decennial census, the ACS collects information about the commute between home and work. These data are released with the economic characteristics. Table 2 shows commuters (workers 16 years and older) by their means of transportation to work. The vast majority (80%) drive to work alone. Twelve percent carpool, and 3 percent use transit to get to work. Three percent walk and 2 percent use other means, like biking, taxi, or motorcycle.

The Census Bureau uses set poverty thresholds based on family size and number of children. If the total income for a family is less than the set threshold, then they are classified as being "below the poverty level." The poverty threshold for a four-person family with two children is \$20,444. Individuals who are not living in family households also are measured against an appropriate income threshold.

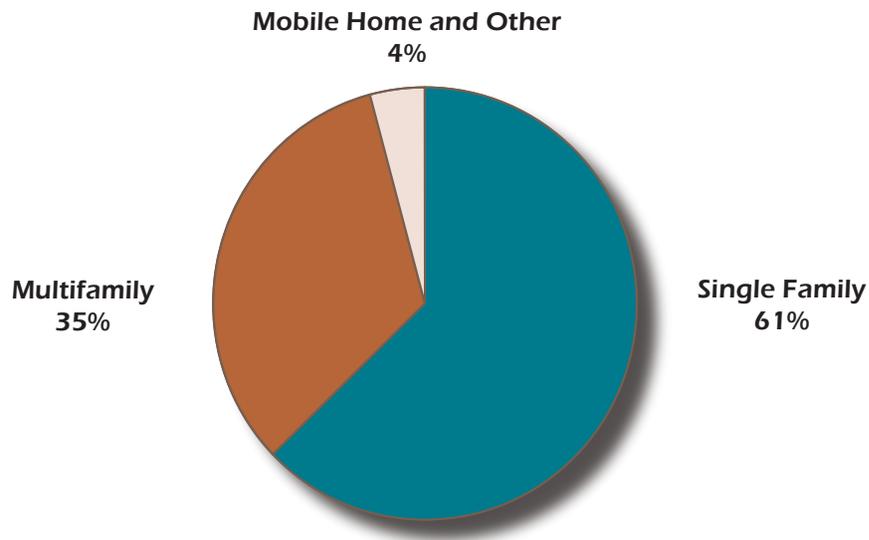
Table 2
Means of Transportation to Work, Workers 16 Years and Older
San Diego County, 2006

Means of Transportation	Percent of Household Population
Car, truck, or van – drove alone	80%
Car, truck, or van – carpooled	12%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	3%
Walked	3%
Other means	2%
Total	100%

Housing Characteristics

Most of the housing units in San Diego County are single family (61%). A third of the housing units (35%) are multifamily and 4 percent are mobile homes or other housing stock, like boats, RVs, etc.*

Figure 4
Housing Units by Type, Total Housing Units
San Diego County, 2006



More than half (58%) of all occupied housing units are owned by their residents. Correspondingly, 42 percent of households are renter-occupied. The average household size for owner-occupied units is 2.76, and the average household size for renter-occupied units is 2.65.

Almost half of all households (49%) pay 30 percent or more of their household income for housing costs. Renters tend to have a greater burden than owners – 56 percent of renter-occupied households pay 30 percent or more versus 45 percent of owner-occupied households.

* The ACS unit type estimates are not directly comparable with SANDAG current estimates, which are based on data from the San Diego County Assessor's office. The Census Bureau and the Assessor's office use different definitions of structure type.



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AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The ACS is a valuable source for demographic data in the San Diego region. This *info* is designed to give the reader a brief introduction to the ACS and its data. More data are available through the United States Census Bureau's Web site at www.census.gov/acs. Or, contact SANDAG at (619) 699-1900 for additional information about American Community Survey data.

In addition to preparing annual estimates of the region's demographic and economic characteristics, SANDAG maintains information from the census, land use inventories, transportation information, and more. This information can be downloaded directly from the Demographics and Other Data section of the SANDAG Web site at www.sandag.org in two formats. The Data Warehouse allows users to select specific census, estimates, forecast variables, and create custom datasets as text files or Excel spreadsheets. The Profile Warehouse contains formatted profiles of the most frequently requested information.

Customized data, reports, and maps also are available through the SANDAG Service Bureau. For information on these and other Service Bureau products and services, visit www.sandag.org/service_bureau or call (619) 699-1900.