

info

2008 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 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 approximately 28,000 addresses each year (based on SANDAG 2008 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 produced every ten years, the ACS will release data annually. (While the Census 2000 counted 100 percent of the population, it only surveyed 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 was 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 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 & 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 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 need to 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.
- 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.
- The three-year estimates should not be compared with ranges in time that overlap. For example, estimates from 2006-2008 should not be compared to 2007-2009. When comparing three-year estimates, the ranges need to be independent from one another. So, 2006-2008 can be compared to 2009-2011 when these data become available.

2008 American Community Survey Characteristics In San Diego County

The ACS data releases occurred in the fall of 2009. One-year and three-year estimates are available for cities within the County of San Diego, with the only exception being Del Mar, since populations need to be greater than 65,000 for one-year estimates and 20,000 for three-year estimates. There were five data releases:

09/22/09	2008 ACS one-year estimates of housing, social, and economic data
09/29/09	2008 ACS one-year estimates of all remaining tables and products
10/27/09	2006-2008 ACS three-year estimates
10/30/09	2008 ACS one-year public use microdata sample file
Winter 2009	2006-2008 ACS three-year public use microdata sample file

Social and Demographic Characteristics

In 2008 the median age of San Diego County's household population was 34.2 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 (51%). Hispanics are the second largest race/ethnic group with 31 percent.

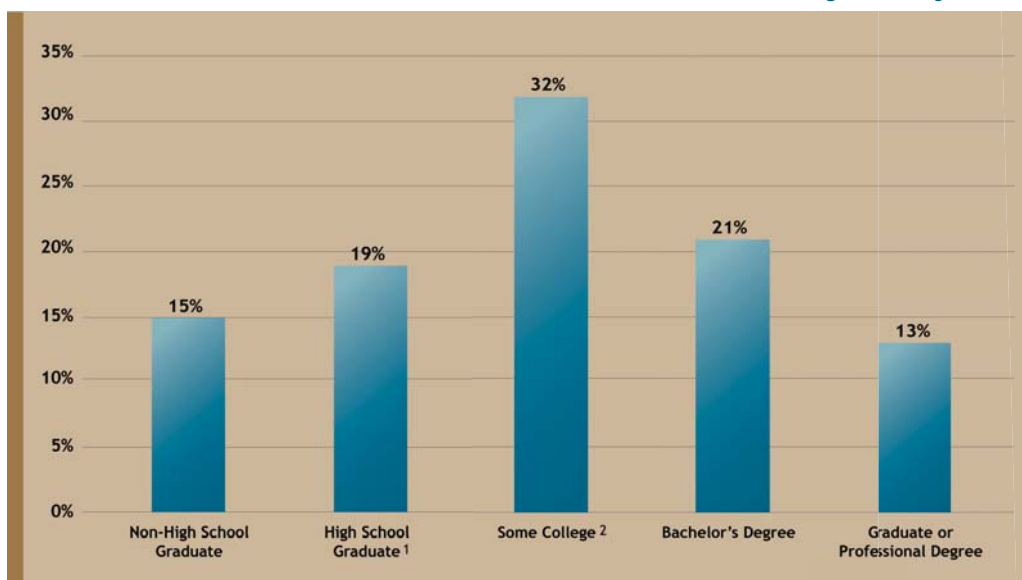
Table 1

*Race/Ethnicity, Total Population
San Diego County, 2008*

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Total Population
Hispanic	31%
White	51%
Black	5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	<1%
Asian	10%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	<1%
Other	3%

Figure 2 shows the educational attainment levels for San Diego County residents (age 25 years or older). About a third of the region's household population has a high school degree or less (34%), some college (32%), or a Bachelor's degree or higher (34%).

Figure 2
*Educational Attainment, Total Population, 25 Years or Older
San Diego County, 2008*



1 = Includes Equivalency 2 = Includes Associates Degree

Almost half of the region's residents (household population age 15 years or older) are married (48%). 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 2.78 and the average family size is 3.39.

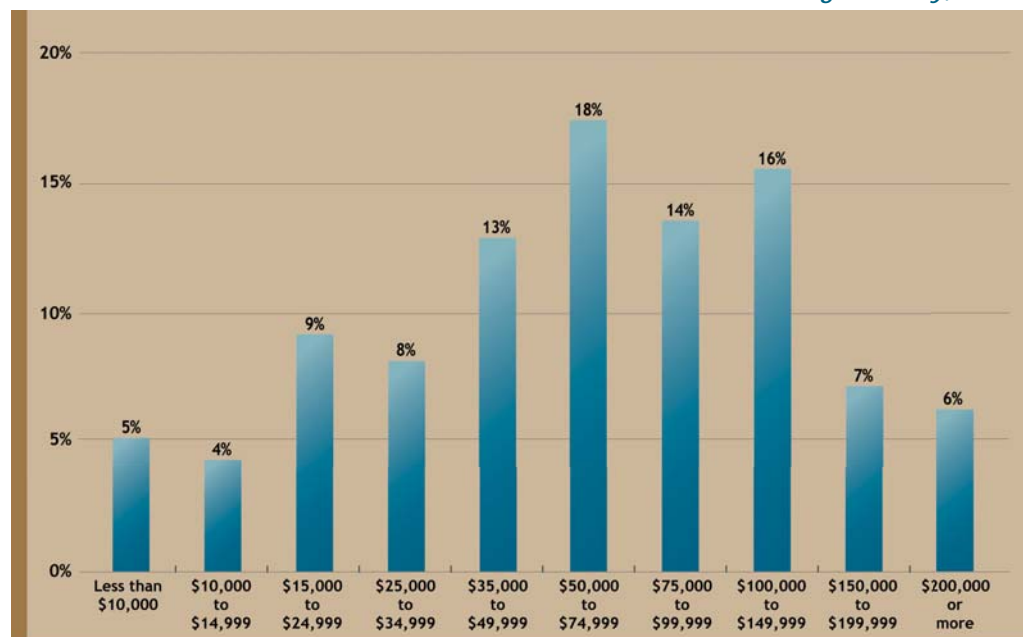
Economic Characteristics

In 2008 the median household income for San Diego County was \$63,026. The household income distribution, Figure 3, shows that the largest percentage of households is in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 category (18%). On the far ends of the distribution, 9 percent of households have incomes less than \$15,000, and 29 percent have incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Eight percent of families in the County are below the poverty level. Of those, almost half (42%) are female single-parent families with at least one child under the age of 18 years old. Thirteen percent of individuals fall below the poverty level. Seventeen percent of those individuals are under the age of 18 years old.

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 \$21,834. Individuals who are not living in family households also are measured against an appropriate income threshold.

Figure 3
Household Income, Total Households
San Diego County, 2008



The ACS household income estimates do not match SANDAG 2008 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 (79%) drive to work alone. Twelve percent carpool, and 4 percent use transit to get to work. Three percent walked, and 2 percent used other means, like biking, taxi, or motorcycle.

Table 2
Means of Transportation to Work, Workers 16 Years and Older San Diego County, 2008

Means of Transportation	Percent of Household Population
Car, Truck, or Van – Drive Alone	79%
Car, Truck, or Van – Carpooled	12%
Public Transportation*	4%
Walked	3%
Other Means	2%

*excluding taxicab

Housing Characteristics

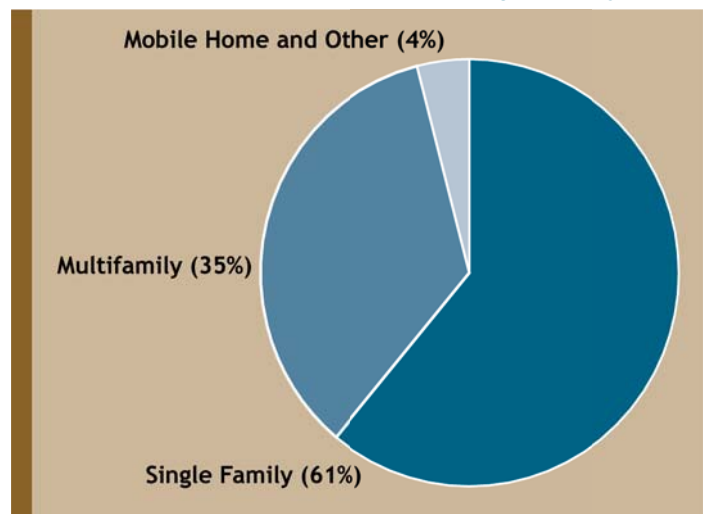
Most of the housing units in San Diego County are single family (61%). A third of the housing units (35%) are multifamily, and 4 percent are mobile homes or other housing stock, like boats, RVs, etc.*

More than half (56%) of all households occupied housing units are owned by their residents. Correspondingly, 44 percent of households are renter-occupied units. The average household size for owner-occupied units is 2.85, and the average household size for renter-occupied units is 2.69.

Half of all households (50%) pay 30 percent or more of their household income for housing costs. Renters tend to be burdened more than owners – 55 percent of renter-occupied households pay 30 percent compared to 46 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.

Figure 4
Housing Units by Type, Total Housing Units San Diego County, 2008



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info presents information produced as part of the SANDAG overall planning program. The series contains population, housing, employment, land use, transportation, criminal justice, and other data, as well as occasional reports on other subjects of general interest. This report is financed with federal funds from the United States Department of Transportation, state funds from Caltrans, and local funds from SANDAG member jurisdictions.

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 U.S. Census Bureau's Web site at www.census.gov/acs, or contact SANDAG at (619)699-1900 for additional information about ACS 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/servicebureau or call (619) 699-1900.

SANDAG

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is the region's primary research and planning agency, providing the public forum for regional policy decisions about growth, transportation, transit planning and construction, environmental management, housing, open space, energy, public safety, and binational topics. SANDAG is composed of mayors, council members, and county supervisors from each of the region's 18 cities and county government:

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