

What's the Connection between LUCA and ACS?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is the Census Bureau's replacement for what used to be the long-form Census survey. The ACS gathers the "juicy" socioeconomic indicators such as income, poverty, educational attainment, etc. that are the mainstay for planning, economic development, and grant writing purposes. As opposed to the old long-form census survey, which occurred only once every 10 years in connection with the decennial census, the [ACS](#) is on-going and the results are released annually.

Like any survey, the ACS must start with a sample frame from which random samples are drawn. Without a known universe from which to pull samples, researchers have no way of knowing how many sample items are required to generate results that reliably represent the characteristics of the larger group.

With the ACS, the items to be sampled are households. The unique identifier for a household is its address. The Census Bureau uses its Master Address File (MAF), the list of all residential addresses in the U.S., as the sample frame for the ACS.

Any addresses missing from the Census Bureau's MAF have no chance of being included in the ACS. The addresses that are generally the hardest to assemble are those for individuals who are on the extremes of the socioeconomic spectrum, and whose absence will skew the sample results most dramatically. These skewed results can be significant, especially when a city, county, or other small geographic area's socioeconomic indicators are compared against a state, or national average. The impact of missing addresses on ACS results will likely exist for a decade, or more.

The Census Bureau has a program called the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA). LUCA, offers local governments an opportunity to suggest changes to the MAF. The Census Bureau realizes that local governments have the best understanding of the distribution of residential addresses within their community. LUCA happens only once a decade and any addresses missed at that time have little chance of being added back during the following decade (Note: this does not apply to new housing construction, which is monitored in a separate Census Bureau program).

So, although the LUCA program's primary focus is to ensure that all households that should be counted in the decennial census are counted, it also has a significant impact on the ACS, as well as other Census Bureau programs that generate information on local government areas.

All local governments should be participating in the Census Bureau's LUCA program, or should work with another governmental entity to perform the review of address records on their behalf. Additional information about the program can be accessed at <https://www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/luca.html> or by contacting the Census Bureau at <mailto:geo.2020.luca@census.gov> or calling 1-844-344-0169.