

Minnesotans Depend on the American Community Survey Stories from Minnesota 2017



Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce Jonathan Weinhagen, President & CEO

We are currently working with public and private partners to explore the future of the workforce system in our region. ACS data is invaluable in reviewing the past, current and future needs of our workforce. We are analyzing ACS data against a set of data that is designed to be predictive of future workforce needs. This will inform the regional strategy and have a significant impact on how we leverage K-12, post-secondary education and the workforce system to ensure our region remains economically competitive.



Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Matt Kramer, President/CEO

The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce is heavily reliant on U.S. Census Data. We are regular consumers of On The Map in particular as we analysis labor-sheds, transportation/transit patterns, and commercial industrial segments across our service area. This data provides us with timely, accurate updates that we can use to accelerate the shared success of our area businesses.



Greater Minnesota Partnership and Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

Chris Henjum, Senior Policy Analyst.

Good, reliable data is very important for rural communities and businesses. For example, in this legislative session, we've used data on employment, housing, and family income to advocate for tailored, efficient job training, workforce housing, and business expansion programs. With this data — which would not be available otherwise — we are able to understand just how unique rural issues are from those in the metro area, and design policy solutions accordingly. The recent election showed that those living in rural areas have serious, specific issues that need to be addressed — data from the US Census and ACS ensures that policymakers and advocates have the data to tackle such challenges.



The Center for Small Towns, University of MN, Morris

Kelly Asche, Program Specialist

The Center for Small Towns in Morris works with small towns and use the ACS as a starting point for this consultation.

- With over a dozen chambers of commerce in small towns, the ACS is used to document the importance for their member businesses to reach out to 2nd/seasonal residents in their regions (around lakes regions). This has led to numerous conversations and business strategies aimed at these "residents/tourists" including marketing and engagement. The ACS data are the basis for this conversation.
- The CST has helped equip communities with information about their housing stock (age of structure, type, heating options, etc.) and population so they are empowered to pursue funding opportunities for additional housing or connect with housing developers to meet their data-defined needs.
- When contacted to research the need for childcare in rural areas, CST compiled ACS/Census data on working parents and the number of children across the state. Potential child care providers are also concerned with the income level and average wage for parents in their areas, as these will heavily influence their ability to hire a child care provider.

**Bureau of Economic and Business Research University of
Minnesota – Duluth. Monica Haynes, Director**

The UMD Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) relies heavily on the American Community Survey (ACS) data. The data helps us provide a much more accurate statistical report for our city, state, public, and private clients and their constituencies. Many of these clients utilize our research for initiatives that have far reaching implications affecting not only state but also regional and federal programs and decisions.

The most recent BBER initiatives that have utilized ACS data are:

The Regional Economic Indicators Forum (REIF). This ongoing, comprehensive research initiative helps drive growth, prosperity and collaboration across the 15-county region it covers in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. Visit the National Bank of Commerce website at <https://nbcbanking.com/About-NBC/R-E-I-F/> for historical information and the current annual report.

The Impact of Split Incentive on Privately Owned UMD Student Rental Housing. This multi-year project dove deeply into the cost of implementing energy efficient improvements in rental housing. It provided insight into the economic impact on the city of Duluth were a focused program addressing the issue enacted. It has been shared both regionally and state-wide by many entities. Visit the Ecolibrium3 website at <http://www.ecolibrium3.org/research-publications/> for an overview summary and the full report.

Community Asset Mapping of Workforce Services. This initiative, a partnership between the BBER and UMD's Geospatial Analysis Center, is in process. It will provide a digital database and map of workforce development programs and related support services as a collaborative and integrated workforce system for the seven counties of Northeastern Minnesota and the City of Duluth. ACS data is being used for a report on the economic demographics of the region as they pertain to workforce services being provided and needed.

While these are the most current uses of ACS data by the BBER, it has historically used the ACS data for many of its reports. BBER reports can be accessed at <http://lsbe.d.umn.edu/centers-outreach/centers/bber>.

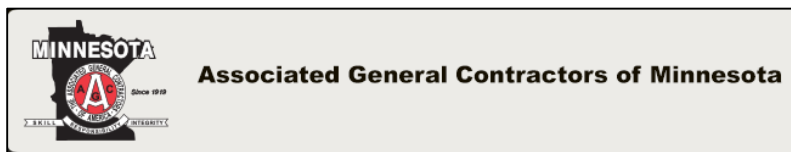


The Northspan Group, Inc. Duluth, MN

Karl Schuettler, CEO

The Northspan Group would like to voice its strong support for continued funding of the American Community Survey. Northspan uses ACS data nearly every day while administering the Northland Connection program, which serves as an economic development portal for eight counties in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. Our program provides economic and demographic information for the entire region, and the regular updates to the ACS ensure that we present the most accurate picture possible. This award-winning program, with data on the local population and available workforce, including details ranging from income to education level, directly integrates data into our property listings. This comprehensive array of information has received plaudits from national site selectors and development partners, and allows us to best market the region and its economic assets. More broadly, Northspan also uses ACS data for federal Economic Development Administration grant applications to assess distress and eligibility requirements. Accurate data is essential to nearly every piece of the work we do.

Losing access to ACS data would directly harm our ability to understand and respond to changes in our communities and create action plans that address some of the challenges we face. In a fast-moving data-driven world, updates through voluntary surveys or once-a-decade censuses simply do not provide the information that can make or break site selection or grant funding decisions. For the sake of economic development in the Upper Midwest, it is imperative that we maintain the level of access to data that we currently enjoy. Without this firm foundation in ACS data, analyzing our communities becomes guesswork, which will only further harm many of our rural clients who do not have the capacity to conduct their own extensive research. ACS funding levels directly drives economic development across Minnesota, and The Northspan Group values your continued support of this crucial tool.



Associated General Contractors of Minnesota Tim Worke, CEO

Broad (and specific) demographic data is indeed important for construction services consumers and ultimately to our members who build the infrastructure for both public and private owners. It helps to ensure the best decisions are made to maximize the investment in construction and to maximize the resultant benefits for the user.



State Health Access Data Assistance Center – SHADAC
University of Minnesota, School of Public Health.
Lynn Blewett, Principal Investigator

The State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) is a state health policy research and technical assistance center housed within the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health. The Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) is a vital resource for SHADAC’s work, and we promote its use among our key audiences, including state and federal policy makers, foundations, and other researchers and policy analysts. We provide several ACS estimates. The ACS is a key data source for our state-level dissemination tool. SHADAC’s Data Center provides custom tabulations of estimates for a broad range of health measures available at <http://datacenter.shadac.org/>. The Data Center had about 3,500 users in the past year. With the implementation of Minnesota’s health insurance marketplace, MNsure, policy makers needed sound data to determine how to best allocate resources for outreach efforts. SHADAC used 1-year and 5-year ACS data, in combination with enrollment and other administrative data, to identify where the remaining eligible were located within MN at the Census area and neighborhood level. These data helped to illuminate the size of the remaining eligible population as well as where they were located. With this information more efficient and targeted outreach efforts were possible. SHADAC also conducted similar work for five other states: New Mexico, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Oregon. No state dollars were used to fund this work. The analysis was supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s State Health Reform Assistance Network.



Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Laurie Ohmann, Senior Vice President of Client Services & Community Partnerships

As the largest comprehensive social service organization in the region, Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (CCSPM) meets people who are hungry, homeless, and poor where they are, providing short-term support and long-term solutions. While our physical service locations remain concentrated in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, we serve clients throughout the 12-county metropolitan area. Our reach extends across an expansive network of donors, volunteers, and advocates in the region.

CCSPM works through direct service, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement to build a community where there is poverty for no one and opportunity for everyone. We rely on American Community Survey (ACS) data in all of these activities.

For example, we rely on annual ACS data to map the region's areas of concentrated poverty and the presence of people of color in those areas. We then add the home addresses of our clients. This allows us to depict racial disparities as it affects our clients and to plan for program improvements.

We also use ACS rental housing cost burden data to help our stakeholders better understand the expansion of housing instability and homelessness among low-income households.

We rely on ACS-based maps and reports to improve client lives through data-grounded planning and to support meaningful dialogue with our Board members, legislators, parishioners, and concerned citizens. The outcomes of those conversations range from legislation advancing out of committee and successful appeals to the community for material support to assisting with voter education and empowering the voice of almost 30,000 low-income people, who turn to CCSPM for assistance, in the policy decisions that affect their futures.

The affordable, representative, and high quality data conveniently provided by the Census Bureau are the single most valuable means CCSPM has for generating accurate insights into the size, location and living conditions of our region's low income people and families. We request your continued support for this valuable public resource.

School of Public Affairs, St. Cloud State University

King Banian, Dean and Professor of Economics

In the School of Public Affairs at St. Cloud State University, the American Community Survey provides key data for work we do for our work with community partners. One recent request was by various business and government leaders in the [Greater St. Cloud Community Pillars](#) discussion. ACS data will be used to create the snapshot presentation on poverty. Because ACS can deliver poverty rates broken down by demographic area, the snapshot allows community leaders to see what the face of poverty is in the St. Cloud area. The data we use cannot be produced otherwise, so reductions to ACS harm our ability to grasp the issues we face.



Dakota Worldwide Corporation, Inc.

Elliott Olson, President & CEO

The Census data gathered under constitutional mandate is vital to the economy of the United States.

Most economic activities whether public or private are often allocated spatially. Adequate and trusted data covering the demographics of the population and its spatial distribution are necessary to minimize the squandering of economic resources. Census data is necessary for almost all locational decisions. These can range from the building of government service centers, hospitals and clinics, and bank branches to stores and shopping centers. Without the census demographics economic growth especially among small businesses would be stifled.

Minnesota State Demographic Center

Susan Brower, State Demographer

At the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the American Community Survey (ACS) is of paramount importance to performing our work of answering pressing public questions, helping state and local governments in fulfilling their missions and using taxpayer dollars wisely, assisting philanthropic and nonprofit organizations understand and respond to community needs (especially for disadvantaged populations such as young children, populations of color, immigrants and refugees, and people with disabilities), and guiding the work of business leaders with insights for site selection, understanding markets, and economic and workforce development.

The ACS data are the lifeblood of decision-making. In a typical week, we may share the ACS' statistics to understand the transportation barriers of low-income workers, to help service providers identify isolated older adults with unmet caregiving needs, to identify non-English speaking populations for outreach, to assess the educational level in a regional labor shed, to gauge whether workers are making gains in their earnings, or to assess the size of a particular population to when crafting legislation or writing a fiscal note. We have used the rich micro-data of the ACS to conduct in-depth analyses regarding race and ethnic inequities, rural-urban differences, talent retention and attraction, and migration trends that affect the size and preparation of our labor force. And this only begins to scratch the surface of the utility of the ACS for identifying trends impacting Minnesotans and planning wisely for the future. Policymakers and decision-makers in all sectors all across Minnesota look to us for answers across a range of topics so that they may respond to the needs of their constituents and customers, and we in turn, look to the ACS to find those answers. The ACS data are critical to our work and theirs.

Examples of the ACS in our work are available in our Publications

Library: <http://mn.gov/admin/demography/reports-resources/our-publications/>



City of Cloquet

Holly Hansen, EDFP/AICP Community Development Director

Our city helps to fund the Northland Connection website which uses ACS data. We also use this data for specific studies such as housing studies etc.



Metropolitan Council and MetroTransit

Todd Graham, Principle Forecaster.

Metropolitan Council and MetroTransit use Census ACS data to improve transit planning in the Minneapolis-St Paul metro area. The agencies determine transit market areas, and the mix of transit services, by analyzing neighborhood characteristics (for block groups) and predicting statistically what neighborhoods have the greatest potential ridership response to transit service offerings. Among the variables found most influential are population concentration and population without private vehicles -- data obtained from Census ACS. Other MetroTransit analyses use Census ACS in siting new bus stops and identifying neighborhoods that need customer communications in additional languages. Metropolitan Council's most recent transit market area study can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2jj41x6>

Census ACS is essential to this analysis as no other data source – public or private – provides language characteristics, vehicle ownership patterns, commuter characteristics and commute choices, detailed at the neighborhood and community level, and with an annual update cycle.



Greater Twin Cities United Way Devon Meade, Director, Impact Management at United Way

As an organization, Greater Twin Cities United Way relies heavily on the high-quality and in-depth data provided every year by the American Community Survey. Our mission is to create pathways out of poverty, thereby improving individuals' lives and the community. In order to be responsive to the community's needs, it is essential to track them and the people impacted over time - the more detailed, specific, updated, and better sampled, the better. It is largely through the ACS that GTCUW better understands disparities in income, housing, and education; discovers unmet need; and identifies the most impacted populations, thus tailoring our strategy. A decreased investment in the ACS service would surely lessen GTCUW's impact.

One specific example of how GTCUW has used ACS data to respond to community needs is around the issue of suburban poverty. Over time, it became apparent that the geography of poverty was changing and that poverty in the suburbs was increasing. In the Twin Cities metro area, starting in 2007, the number of people in poverty in the suburbs surpassed the cities, our traditional geographic focus. GTCUW responded by allocating a greater portion of our resources to suburban anti-poverty programs.



University of Minnesota, Center for Community and Urban Affairs

Community GIS Program, Jeff Matson, Program Director

The University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) uses Census ACS data weekly if not daily in order to provide critical information to community organizations and residents in disadvantaged communities. Our scale is hyper-local: Census Tracts and Blocks Group-level data are our life blood and the ACS is the only source for reliable statistics on poverty, race, income and education available anywhere. Take the example of our online disparity indicators map (www.maps.umn.edu/CURA/indicatormap). This application allows users to create disparity profiles of important indicators such as home ownership rates, educational attainment and labor force participation by race at any level of geography in over 25 metro areas across the county. None of this would be possible without the American Community Survey's 5-year data. Policy-makers, communities, school districts, grant-writers, and researchers would be unable to make data-driven decisions without this valuable resource.



Wilder Research, Minnesota Compass

Craig Helmstetter, Senior Research Manager

Example #1: As a part of Minnesota Compass, a data tracking project funded by 15 of Minnesota's leading corporate and private philanthropies, Wilder Research used American Community Survey data to show that Minnesota has among the very largest employment gaps in the nation between its non-Hispanic white residents (79% of those age 16-64 are working for pay), and its residents of color (66% of those age 16-64 are working for pay), ranking 44th worst in the nation according to the most recent data.

Many community partners are working to address Minnesota's employment gaps, including a public-sector led coalition called Everybody In, a philanthropy-led initiative called Minneapolis-Saint Paul Workforce Innovation Network (MSPWin), and employer-led efforts headed up by the Itasca Project. Wilder Research monitors progress on closing employment gaps on an on-going basis using ACS data, and the gaps have started to close over the past couple of years.

Example #2: One of Minnesota's largest community foundations was recently debating where to focus its resources. After some initial discussion, the foundation asked Wilder Research to provide an analysis of the educational and economic conditions of African American boys and young men in the metro area. Wilder Research combined an analysis of ACS data with other data sources to help inform the foundation's board. In the end, the board decided to fund a new initiative focused on helping to lift up African American boys and young men.

Minnesota Population Center

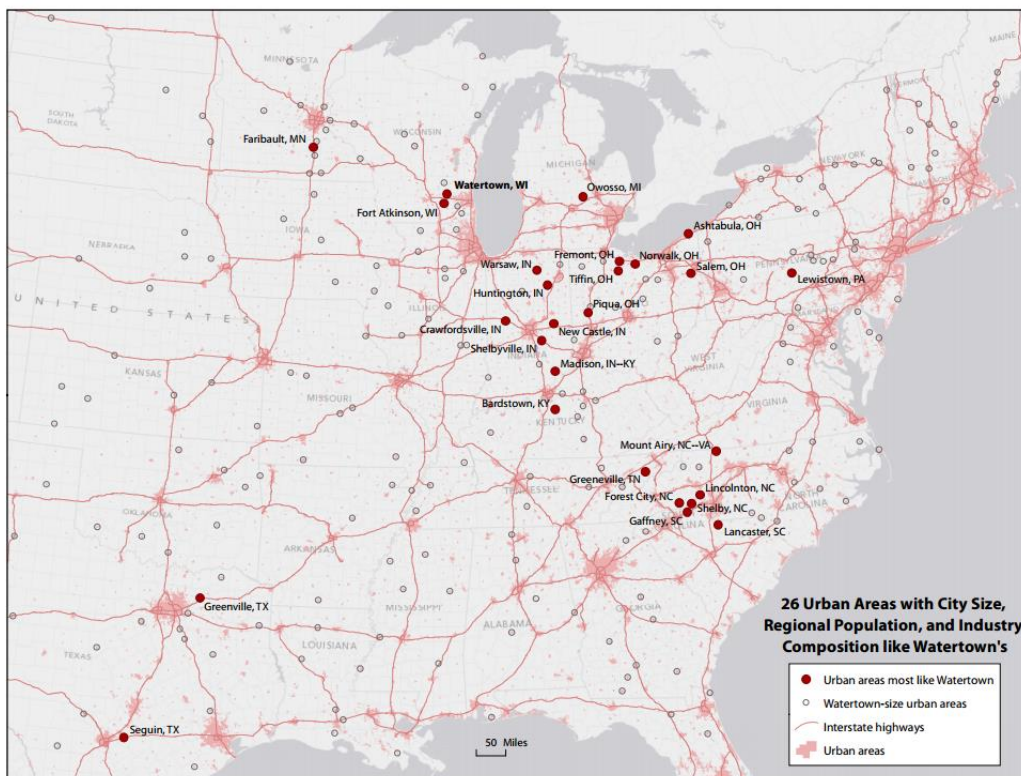
Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota

Jonathan Schroeder, Research Scientist

The Minnesota Population Center (MPC) runs two websites that distribute data from the decennial census and the ACS, including historical data back to 1790: IPUMS-USA (for anonymized individual & household-level data) and NHGIS (for geographic summary data). In 2016, these two sites received about 84,000 data requests, of which about 48,000 (57%) included ACS data.

MPC site users are mostly researchers and students, but there are also many journalists, planners, and policy analysts, from both public and private sectors.

As an example, I recently conducted an analysis for the Watertown (Wis.) Economic Development Organization. The group of business leaders wanted to identify similar communities around the country with which they could compare their own development strategies and outcomes. I used data from the 2010 census to identify areas with a similar population size--both within the urban area and in the broader region--and I used ACS data to measure how similar to each community's industry composition was to Watertown's. The results are in the attached map. ACS data was essential; no other source provides data on such topics for smaller cities.





Maxfield Research
Mary Bujold, President

I am writing this letter to provide some examples of how our small business regularly uses data from the American Community Survey and how critical this information is not only to the work that we do daily, but the results that occur from the information that is provided to our clients.

Maxfield Research and Consulting is a real estate research and consulting firm that works with public and private clients to assist them with information on real estate development projects. We regularly utilize information from the ACS to provide our clients with the most timely information regarding housing data for real estate development. These developments result in providing needed housing in large and small communities across the nation, housing for low, middle and upper income households, housing for individuals with special needs, housing for Veterans, homeless individuals. Providing housing is integral to economic development in a community. Housing generates jobs and provides places for households to live and raise their families, provides convenient access to employment in many communities.

One of our key reports is the Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis. We provide these reports to government agencies, cities, and counties to assist them with identifying a variety of housing needs. The Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis provides significant documentation of growth trends and housing market conditions in the communities in which we work. The analysis typically leads to strategies and initiatives in each of the communities or the counties to provide housing which often leads to an increase in employment and other economic development in the communities in which these studies have been completed.

Providing timely and accurate information is critical to our analyses and in providing accurate data to our clients. Without the American Survey data, our clients would be forced to wait for another 10 years to obtain updated housing market and demographic information. Social trends and housing preferences are changing more rapidly now than ever before and providing data at regular intervals has become key to making the best recommendations and judgements for the communities in which we work.

City and county budgets are tight. If this information were not available, it would mean less accurate information, more short-term errors and potential missed opportunities to provide local communities with information they need to support their own growth and development.

The American Community Survey enables communities to better direct their resources, guide economic development objectives and initiate and sustain future housing, jobs and

infrastructure in small and large communities across the country. These are the backbone of that nation and the ACS plays a critical role in ensuring that we can continue to assist our clients with these efforts.

I urge you **not** to make the ACS voluntary or to cut its budget. This information is critical to cities and governments across the country, private developers and public agencies alike.



Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

Sean O’Neil, Business Development Coordinator

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce’s Grow Minnesota! program uses American Community Survey (ACS) data to support our statewide efforts to retain and assist Minnesota businesses. We particularly rely on the robust research produced by groups like the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, and MN Compass, that use ACS data to provide reporting on the state’s economic and demographic trends. This research informs our strategies to address leading issues like Minnesota’s workforce readiness & availability challenges. We also use ACS data to provide direct assistance to businesses. For instance, in 2016 the Grow MN! program used ACS data to help a Minneapolis business understand changes in the racial and ethnic makeup of their community. They needed this information to prepare a strategic plan for how their business will adapt in coming years to better serve and hire from the community that they are located in. ACS data was particularly useful in this case because of its ability to provide reliable statistics for small geographic areas, such as neighborhoods and cities.



Goat Ridge Brewing Co. in New London, MN.

Kelly Asche, Co-Founder

We utilized the ACS data to look up the amount of seasonal residents in our region to determine our potential for future growth. We are operating with the assumption that nearly 60% of seasonal residents will make these their permanent homes over the next 10 years as they retire, thus increasing our customer bas



Dakota County, Office of Performance and Analysis

Jane Vanderpoel, Management Analyst

Dakota County uses American Community Survey data in a variety of ways. These data are essential. Only one of the cities in Dakota County are big enough to benefit from 1-yr data, while 95 percent of the population lives in a city with population greater than 20,000. The now discontinued 3-yr dataset had been used for these smaller cities. The 5-yr dataset must now fill that data gap but it less useful especially for trends that are more dynamic than others: Household median annual income, poverty rate, rate of those without health insurance, etc. Following are some of the uses of ACS data in Dakota County.

1. We maintain on our external website, for public use, a list of 25+ Community Indicators, many of which rely on ACS data. These are the usual indicators you'd expect to see: population demographics, poverty, cost-burdened for housing, unemployment, etc. <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Government/Analysis/Demographics/Pages/default.aspx>
2. We also prepare a summarized version of this data every spring, discussed at a workshop for the Board of Commissioners to kickoff the annual budget process, so they understand socio-economic and diversity achievement gap issues within the County as they begin considering our services and programs.
3. We have a 45-minute slide presentation based on the community indicators that we use when asked to speak to community groups, such as the United Way board and Chambers of Commerce.
4. Our environmental management staff are devising ways to entice people in multi-housing facilities to embrace recycling – they use ACS data to help locate neighborhoods with large shares of renters.
5. Our public health staff participate with the state in a program intended to improve everybody's health. They use ACS household income data overlaid with grocery store locations and transit routes to study issues around access to healthy food.
6. Our parks staff conducted a scientific (random sample) residential survey about what people like to do in parks when they worked on a master plan for visitors services and facilities in our park system last year – and they compared demographics of the survey responders with "actual" demographics of county residents using ACS data.
7. The County's Community Development Agency (this is also a part of County government) uses renter/homeowner and housing cost-burden data from ACS to assess the need for

additional affordable housing units.

8. Our community services division is working on a pilot project to better understand the causes of poverty (so as to prevent it) in two of our most racially diverse and lowest-income cities – they’re mapping ACS income and poverty and demographics data (age, race) at the lowest level available to understand what’s happening in different neighborhoods.

9. A couple of years ago, our elected officials (Board of Commissioners) asked for some very in-depth data (at the city level) to show gaps between our White population and People of Color population in income, education, insurance, poverty, homeownership, etc. We used ACS data for that. It was the last year the 3-yr data was available.

10. Our planners are preparing the mandatory decennial Comprehensive Plan, which looks out 20 years to guide broad policy decisions. They use ACS and census population growth data to create population estimates for communities across our County – which helps us plan where to build new roads, expand current roads, and otherwise help improve commute time (to work), which is additional ACS data we use.

11. Our employee relations department staff annually track ACS data showing race of working-age population countywide to compare it to similar data for our own workforce because we want our workforce to match what our population looks like.



Geospatial Analysis Center, University of Minnesota-Duluth, Stacey Stark, Director, Geospatial Analysis Center

Specific uses of American Community Survey data in the Geospatial Analysis Center (GAC) projects (representing many stakeholder groups) follow.

Hazard Mitigation Planning: required plans by FEMA and for the pre/post disaster grant money that the State administers (In this case the Minnesota State Homeland Security and Emergency Management Office). We have worked with 16 MN counties with recently approved plans, and are in the process of working with 27 more. <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/hazard-mitigation/Pages/hazard-mitigation-planning.aspx>

Hazard risk assessment of a community is completely dependent on the understanding of the population patterns and demographics of a jurisdiction. According to FEMA's Local Mitigation Planning Handbook (2013). "People are your most important asset. The risk assessment can

identify areas of greater population density, as well as populations that may have unique vulnerabilities or be less able to respond and recover during a disaster. These include visiting populations and access, and functional needs populations. In addition, the risk assessment can identify locations that provide health or social services that are critical to post-disaster response or recovery capabilities.”

The Hazard Mitigation Plan must:

- Identify concentrations of residents and employees to help target preparedness, response, and mitigation actions.
- Identify locations and concentrations of access and functional needs populations to develop mitigation actions that will best assist them.
- Consider demographics of projected population growth to predict vulnerability.

Our Minnesota Counties are eligible for Hazard Mitigation dollars once they have a FEMA approved plan. According to an analysis by the Multihazard Mitigation Council (a public/private partnership designed to reduce the economic and social costs of natural hazards), for every dollar spent by the federal treasury on FEMA mitigation grants, \$3.65 is saved. “The present value of potential annual savings to the federal treasury because of the FEMA grants studied is approximately \$970 million compared to an annual budget expenditure on these grants of \$265 million” (Multihazard Mitigation Council, 2005).

Adequacy of Provider Networks in the Health Insurance Marketplace: The Geospatial Analysis Center worked with the Economics Department in LSBE to consider Minnesota's health insurance provider plans and their networks of service locations with respect to the Affordable Care Act's requirement of accessibility. In Minnesota this means the lesser of 30 minutes or miles for primary care, mental health and hospital care; and the lesser of 60 minutes or miles for specialty, specialized hospital, and other services. GAC developed models to analyze and assess the population and areas of the state that are covered for each of these networks. The demographics provided by the American Community Survey are critical to identifying locations by census block or tract of age groups, special needs, and other characteristics of populations that insurance provider networks must serve. This analysis will ensure, independently, that the providers are meeting their federal obligations.
