About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is the most extensive nationwide survey currently available. From its annual releases we are able to examine the city's detailed demographic, socioeconomic, and housing characteristics. Each month, questionnaires are sent to a sample of approximately 295,000 addresses across the country, so households are continuously receiving and responding to the ACS. In order to have a large enough sample from which to create estimates of characteristics, the ACS "rolls-up" the sample for 12, or 60-month periods, depending on the size of the geographic area. Estimates are prepared using 1 year of sample for places of at least 65,000 residents, and 5 years of sample for all places regardless of size. This means that estimates can be obtained for a single year (e.g. 2014) or for 5-year periods (e.g. 2010-2014) used for these maps.

New York City Neighborhood Tabulation Areas

Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (NTAs) were created to project populations at a small area level, from 2000 to 2030 for PlaNYC, the long-term sustainability plan for New York City. However, NTAs are now being used to present data from the decennial census and the ACS. Since population size affects the error associated with population projections, as well as ACS estimates, these geographic units needed to have a minimum population, which we determined to be 15,000. This criterion resulted in combinations of census tracts that probably would not occur if one were solely designating boundaries of historical neighborhoods. Moreover, the neighborhood names associated with the neighborhood tabulation areas are not intended to be definitive.

Users need to be cognizant of the reason why NTAs were created and the demographic/geographic constraints inherent in how they were configured. Despite these limitations, NTAs are a valuable summary level for use with both the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). These geographic areas offer a good compromise between the very detailed data for 2,168 census tracts and the broad strokes provided by the 59 community districts. For the ACS, NTAs offer a statistically reliable alternative to the high sampling error that renders data for most individual census tracts unusable.

Map Legend

When defining the breaks in the map legend to categorize estimates into ranges, we considered margin of errors when assigning estimates into their respective classes. We did this by creating an upper and lower bound around the estimate. For example, if an estimate is 10,000 with a margin of error of +/- 2,000, we assigned an upper break value of 12,000 and a lower break value of 8,000. We used this method of assigning breaks to minimize overlap of classes, in order to take margin of errors into account when mapping. By doing this we ensure that the majority of estimates in a class (over 50%), really belong to their respective classes.