

How our population analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) microdata differs from published Census Bureau tabulations

In our analysis of [Asian origin groups](#), we have chosen to use microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS) released by the U.S. Census Bureau and compiled by Integrated Public Use Microdata Series ([IPUMS](#)). With the microdata, we can analyze in detail relationships among variables and intricate household structures. However, to help ensure the privacy of individuals and confidentiality of their responses, the Census Bureau limits the amount of detail released on individuals. Thus, in using these data, we are constrained by the variables, codes and parameters released by the Census Bureau.

Limitations like these further constrain our ability to provide a definitive estimate of Taiwanese in the United States. For example, the Taiwanese race category is not identified separately in microdata from the ACS released by the Census Bureau between 2005 and 2011. In addition, for respondents who identify their race as *both* Taiwanese and Chinese, the Census Bureau only recognizes this combination in publicly available microdata for 2000 to 2004; since then, such individuals are coded as “Chinese and other Asian,” making it impossible to use the race question to include these individuals as Taiwanese.

Another example of the limitations is the Asian race [tabulation by the U.S. Census Bureau](#), which shows 226,000 people of Taiwanese race in the 2019 American Community Survey. This figure includes people who gave their race as Taiwanese *alone or in combination* with other racial groups. In the ACS microdata, it is only possible to identify people who responded with Taiwanese as their *only* race—a total of about 195,000 people. Those who specified their race as Taiwanese plus another race must be categorized in the data we use as “Other Asian.”

By using the microdata, we cannot classify individuals as Taiwanese if they chose more than one race group (for example, Taiwanese and White or Chinese). While this is a shortcoming of the microdata, these data do permit us to analyze the overlaps of the race, ancestry, birthplace and relationship identifiers to produce a broader estimate of the Taiwanese population.