



Finding American Community Survey Data

Dissemination Outreach Branch
Center for Enterprise Dissemination
U.S. Census Bureau

Contents

1	data.census.gov/Census API/Microdata Access	3
1.1	data.census.gov Resources Page	3
1.2	API Resources Page	3
1.3	API Guidance for Developers Page	4
1.4	API Discovery Tool	4
1.5	Available APIs	5
1.6	MDAT Resources Page	5
2	American Community Survey (ACS)	6
2.1	Guidance for Data Users	6
2.2	Subjects Included in the Survey	6
2.3	When to Use 1-year, 3-year, or 5-year Estimates	7
2.4	Table Shells and Table List	7
2.5	Table and Geography Changes	7
2.6	Table IDs Explained	8
2.7	Selected Population Tables and American Indian and Alaska Native Tables	8
2.8	Data Suppression	8
2.9	Notes on Estimate and Annotation Values	9
2.10	Comparing ACS data	9
2.11	ACS Data Availability Spreadsheet	9
2.12	American Community Survey (ACS) Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy	10
2.13	Available ACS APIs via the ACS Program Page	10
2.14	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)	11
3	Geography	12
3.1	Geographic Entities	12
3.2	Hierarchy of Geographic Entities	13
3.3	Counties and County Equivalents	15
3.4	Places and County Subdivisions	15
3.5	Small Geographic Areas	16
3.6	Understanding Geographic Identifiers	17
4	External Resources	18
4.1	MABLE Geocorr from Missouri State Data Center	18

Additional Resources and Information

1 [data.census.gov/Census API/Microdata Access](https://data.census.gov/Census%20API/Microdata%20Access)

1.1 [data.census.gov Resources Page](https://data.census.gov/Resources)

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov.html>

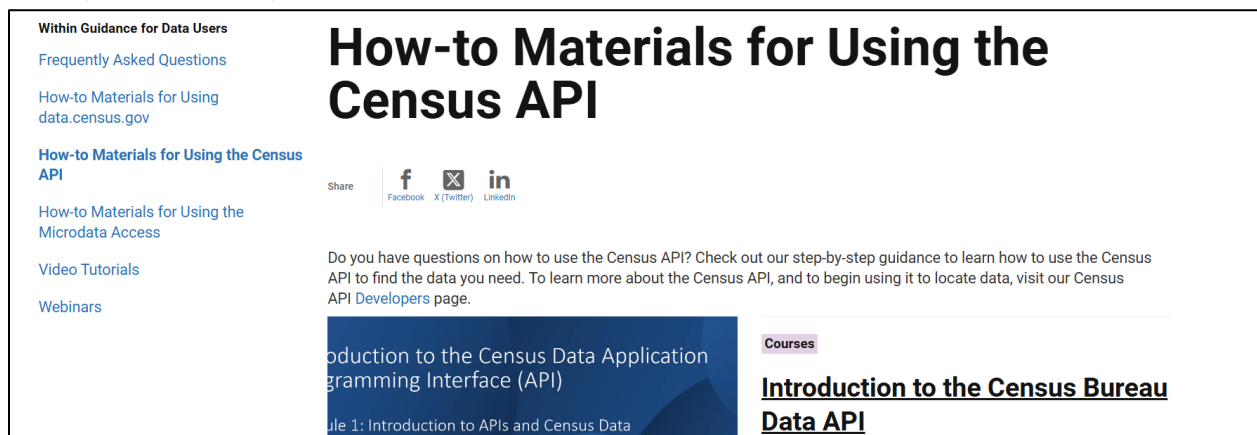
This page provides information on data.census.gov, including recorded video tutorials, webinars, workshops, our monthly newsletter, and informational PDFs.



1.2 [API Resources Page](https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/guidance-for-data-users/how-to-materials-for-using-the-census-api.html)

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/guidance-for-data-users/how-to-materials-for-using-the-census-api.html>

This page provides helpful information for getting started with the Census API, including an introductory course, video tutorials, and the API User Guide.



1.3 API Guidance for Developers Page

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/guidance.html>

Provides additional links to the API User Guide and Microdata API User Guide, as well as the API Discovery Tool.

Within Developers

About

App Gallery

Available APIs

Developers' Forum

Geography




Guidance for Developers

News

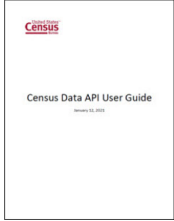
Terms of Service

Updates

Guidance for Developers

Share   


Census Data API User Guide




This user guide is to instruct developers and researchers on how to use the Census Data Application Programming Interface (API) to request data from U.S. Census Bureau datasets.


[View the Census Data API User Guide](#)

Census Microdata API User Guide



This guide is to provide an overview of the U.S. Census Bureau's microdata application programming interface (API) and walk through how to make queries. Through this guide, you will learn what the microdata API is, when to use it, and how to use it to get raw data and custom




Top

1.4 API Discovery Tool

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/updates/new-discovery-tool.html>

The Discovery Tool includes dataset description, variables included, changes, variable formats, supported geographies, example calls, links to program technical documentation, and more.

Within Developers

About

App Gallery

Available APIs

Developers' Forum

Geography

Guidance for Developers

News

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Updates

// Census.gov / Data / Developers / Updates / Census Data API Discovery Tool

Census Data API Discovery Tool

March 01, 2014


The Census Data API Discovery Tool provides a machine-readable dataset discovery service and is available in three formats:




- api.census.gov/data.html
- api.census.gov/data.xml
- api.census.gov/data.json

The content of api.census.gov/data.json is based largely on the Open Project Data Common Core Metadata Schema and is extended to include metadata specific to Census Bureau datasets. The api.census.gov/data.xml URI may be used to access the same information as XML.

In addition to the above URIs dataset discovery is available for the entire vintage/dataset hierarchy as well. For example, the following URIs may be used to discover all datasets within the 2010 vintage:

- api.census.gov/data/2010.html
- api.census.gov/data/2010.json



Share   

1.5 Available APIs

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets.html>

Provides available APIs across Census Programs and provides information by dataset.

The screenshot shows the 'Available APIs' page on the Census Bureau website. The header includes the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and navigation links: 'About', 'Available APIs' (highlighted), 'Guidance', and 'Latest Releases'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area features the title 'Available APIs' and a list of datasets under the heading 'EXPAND ALL | COLLAPSE ALL'. The visible datasets are 'American Community Survey (ACS)' and 'Decennial Census'. A sidebar on the left lists various developer resources, and a 'Top' button is in the bottom right corner.

United States Census Bureau

About Available APIs Guidance Latest Releases

Search data, events, resources, and more

// Census.gov / Data / Developers / Available APIs

Within Developers

About

App Gallery

Available APIs

Developers' Forum

Geography

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News

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Updates

Available APIs

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We plan on adding more of our publicly available datasets. Here you'll find which of our many data sets are currently available via API. To make specific requests for the release of datasets, please sign up and submit your requests on our [Developer Forum](#).

Visit our [Discovery Tool](#) page to learn more.

EXPAND ALL | COLLAPSE ALL

- ➕ American Community Survey (ACS)
- ➕ Decennial Census

Top

1.6 MDAT Resources Page

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/guidance-for-data-users/how-to-materials-for-using-the-microdata-access.html>

Provides guidance on using the Microdata Access Tool, including video tutorials, PDFs, recorded webinars, data dictionaries, and information on data availability.

The screenshot shows the 'How-to Materials for Using the Microdata Access' page on the Census Bureau website. The header includes the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and navigation links: 'About', 'Available APIs', 'Guidance', and 'Latest Releases'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area features the title 'How-to Materials for Using the Microdata Access' and a list of resources under the heading 'EXPAND ALL | COLLAPSE ALL'. The visible resources are 'Using Microdata Access: With ACS 1-Year Estimates - Public Use Microdata Sample [1.5 MB]' and 'Using Microdata Access: How To Create Poverty Estimates From The CPS ASEC [2.4 MB]'. A sidebar on the left lists various guidance resources, and a 'Top' button is in the bottom right corner.

United States Census Bureau

About Available APIs Guidance Latest Releases

Search data, events, resources, and more

// Census.gov / Data / data.census.gov Resources / Guidance for Data Users / How-to Materials for Using the Microdata Access

Within Guidance for Data Users

Frequently Asked Questions

How-to Materials for Using data.census.gov

How-to Materials for Using the Census API

How-to Materials for Using the Microdata Access

Video Tutorials

Webinars

How-to Materials for Using the Microdata Access

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Do you have questions on how to use [Microdata Access](#)? Check out our step-by-step guidance to learn how to use [Microdata Access](#) to create your own tabulations.

- 📄 [Using Microdata Access: With ACS 1-Year Estimates - Public Use Microdata Sample \[1.5 MB\]](#)
- 📄 [Using Microdata Access: How To Create Poverty Estimates From The CPS ASEC \[2.4 MB\]](#)

Featured Resource

Video

Using Dual Vintage PUMAs in the

Top

2 American Community Survey (ACS)

2.1 Guidance for Data Users

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance.html>

This is the primary page for guidance on using the American Community Survey.

The screenshot shows the 'Guidance for Data Users' page on the Census Bureau website. The page has a navigation bar with links to 'Partners', 'Researchers', 'Educators', 'Survey Respondents', 'News', 'NAICS Codes', 'Jobs', 'About Us', 'Contact Us', and 'Help'. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for 'Topics', 'Data & Maps', 'Surveys & Programs' (which is selected), and 'Resource Library'. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation bar. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: '// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Guidance for Data Users'. On the left, there is a sidebar with links: 'Within American Community Survey (ACS)', 'Comparing ACS Data', 'Handbooks', 'Recorded Webinars', 'Subjects Included in the Survey', 'Statistical Testing Tool', 'Using ACS Data with Open-Source Software', and 'When to Use 1-year or 5-year Estimates'. The main heading is 'Guidance for Data Users'. Below the heading, there is a paragraph explaining that the ACS not only produces data about the nation's population but also provides resources to help data users understand how to use and access this information. There is a 'Share' button with social media icons for Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn. Below this, there is a section titled 'Join the ACS Data Users Group and Online Community'. To the right, there is a 'Related Information' section with links to 'American Community Survey Data' and 'Technical Documentation'.

2.2 Subjects Included in the Survey

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/subjects.html>

The screenshot shows the 'Subjects Included in the Survey' page on the Census Bureau website. The page has the same navigation bar and tabs as the previous page. The breadcrumb trail is: '// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Guidance for Data Users / Subjects Included in the Survey'. The sidebar on the left has links: 'Within Guidance for Data Users', 'Comparing ACS Data', 'Handbooks', 'Recorded Webinars', 'Subjects Included in the Survey' (which is selected), 'Statistical Testing Tool', 'Using ACS Data with Open-Source Software', and 'When to Use 1-year or 5-year Estimates'. The main heading is 'Subjects Included in the Survey'. Below the heading, there is a section titled 'Find ACS Data by Topic'. This section explains that the links below connect to American Community Survey Detailed Tables for each subject on data.census.gov. There are two bullet points: 'The search results will display 1-year and 5-year estimates for the nation from the most recent release.' and 'Use the "refine your search results" geography box to change the state, city, or place. (Or use the Geography Selector tool on the left for more selections.) Hint: Which estimates appear (1-year or 5-year) will depend on the size of a chosen geography.' To the right, there is a 'Share' button with social media icons for Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn. Below this, there is a 'Related Information' section with a link to 'Share Your ACS Data Story'.

POPULATION		HOUSING
SOCIAL	DEMOGRAPHIC	Bedrooms
Ancestry	Age; Sex	Computer and Internet Use
Citizen Voting-Age Population	Group Quarters Population	House Heating Fuel
Citizenship Status	Hispanic or Latino Origin	Kitchen Facilities
Disability Status	Race	Occupancy/Vacancy Status
Educational Attainment	Relationship to Householder	Occupants per Room
Fertility	Total Population	Plumbing Facilities
Grandparents as Caregivers	ECONOMIC	Rent
Language Spoken at Home	Class of Worker	Rooms
Marital History	Commuting (Journey to Work) and Place of Work	Selected Monthly Owner Costs
Marital Status	Employment Status	Telephone Service Available
Migration/Residence 1 Year Ago	Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Tenure (Owner/Renter)
Place of Birth	Health Insurance Coverage	Units in Structure
School Enrollment	Income and Earnings	Value of Home
Undergraduate Field of Degree	Industry	Vehicles Available
Veteran Status; Period of Military Service	Occupation	Year Householder Moved Into Unit
Year of Entry	Poverty Status	Year Structure Built
	Work Status Last Year	

2.3 When to Use 1-year, 3-year, or 5-year Estimates

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html>

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Census Bureau website with links for Partners, Researchers, Educators, Survey Respondents, News, NAICS Codes, Jobs, About Us, Contact Us, and Help. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with Topics, Data & Maps, Surveys & Programs (highlighted), and Resource Library. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: // Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Guidance for Data Users / When to Use 1-year or 5-year Estimates. On the left, a sidebar lists 'Within Guidance for Data Users' with links to Comparing ACS Data, Handbooks, Recorded Webinars, Subjects Included in the Survey, Statistical Testing Tool, and Using ACS Data with Open-Source Software. The main heading is 'When to Use 1-year or 5-year Estimates'. The text explains that choosing a dataset involves more than just population size, and refers to a handbook for more details. Social media share links for Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn are on the right.

2.4 Table Shells and Table List

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/table-shells.html>

The screenshot shows the same top navigation bar as the previous page. The secondary navigation bar is the same. The breadcrumb trail is: // Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Technical Documentation / Table Shells and Table List. The sidebar lists 'Within Technical Documentation' with links to Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy; Data Suppression; Errata Notes; Table & Geography Changes; and Table Shells and Table List (highlighted). The main heading is 'Table Shells and Table List'. The text explains that table shells display the layout of tables without estimates or margins of error, and that they are available one week before the data release. Social media share links are on the right.

2.5 Table and Geography Changes

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/table-and-geography-changes.html>

Find out what tables and geographies changed from one year to the next on this page.

The screenshot shows the same top navigation bar. The secondary navigation bar is the same. The breadcrumb trail is: // Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Technical Documentation / Table & Geography Changes. The sidebar lists 'Within Technical Documentation' with links to Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy; Data Suppression; Errata Notes; Table & Geography Changes (highlighted); Table Shells and Table List; and User Notes. The main heading is 'Table & Geography Changes'. The text says 'Learn more about changes to tables and geography for each American Community Survey data release.' Below this is a horizontal timeline with years 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, and a 'More' dropdown. The year 2022 is selected and highlighted. Below the timeline, the year '2022' is displayed in large text. On the right, there is a 'Related Information' section with links to 'Geography Boundaries by Year' and 'Share Your ACS Data Story'. Social media share links are also present.

2.6 Table IDs Explained

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/data-tables/table-ids-explained.html>

The screenshot shows the 'Table IDs Explained' page on the Census Bureau website. The page has a navigation bar with links to Partners, Researchers, Educators, Survey Respondents, News, NAICS Codes, Jobs, About Us, Contact Us, and Help. Below the navigation bar are tabs for Topics, Data & Maps, Surveys & Programs (which is selected), and Resource Library. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation bar. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with links to 'Within Data Tables' (Data Profiles, Narrative Profiles, Subject Tables, Ranking Tables, Geographic Comparison Tables, Supplemental Tables, and Table IDs Explained). The main heading is 'Table IDs Explained'. The text explains that table IDs are used to describe the content and format of ACS data tables, using the example B06004APR, which represents the white alone population in Puerto Rico. It also states that ACS table IDs consist of up to five elements and provides a link to 'Table Shells and Table List'.

2.7 Selected Population Tables and American Indian and Alaska Native Tables

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/race-aian.html>

Learn more about the Selected Population Tables and the American Indian and Alaska Native Tables that are release from the ACS every five years.

The screenshot shows the 'Race, Ethnicity, Ancestry and American Indian & Alaska Native Tables' page on the Census Bureau website. The page has a navigation bar with links to Partners, Researchers, Educators, Survey Respondents, News, NAICS Codes, Jobs, About Us, Contact Us, and Help. Below the navigation bar are tabs for Topics, Data & Maps, Surveys & Programs (which is selected), and Resource Library. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation bar. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with links to 'Within Data' (Congressional and State Legislative Districts, Custom Tables, Data Tables, Data Tools, Data via API, Data via FTP, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and Experimental Data). The main heading is 'Race, Ethnicity, Ancestry and American Indian & Alaska Native Tables'. The text explains that every five years, the Census Bureau releases two data products containing the greatest level of statistical detail for specific population groups: 'Selected Population Tables (Race, Ethnicity, Ancestry)' and 'American Indian and Alaska Native Tables'. It also provides a link to 'Table Shells and Table List'.

2.8 Data Suppression

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/data-suppression.html>

Learn more about Data Suppression in the ACS.

The screenshot shows the 'Data Suppression' page on the Census Bureau website. The page has a navigation bar with links to Partners, Researchers, Educators, Survey Respondents, News, NAICS Codes, Jobs, About Us, Contact Us, and Help. Below the navigation bar are tabs for Topics, Data & Maps, Surveys & Programs (which is selected), and Resource Library. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation bar. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with links to 'Within Technical Documentation' (Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy, Data Suppression, Errata Notes, Table & Geography Changes, Table Shells and Table List, and User Notes). The main heading is 'Data Suppression'. The text explains that data users often question why certain American Community Survey (ACS) estimates are not available, and that the missing estimates can be caused by data suppression. It also provides a link to 'Table Shells and Table List'.

2.9 Notes on Estimate and Annotation Values

Link: <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-1year/notes-on-acs-estimate-and-annotation-values.html>

The screenshot shows the top of the Census Bureau website. The header includes the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and navigation links: 'About', 'Available APIs', 'Guidance', and 'Latest Releases'. A search bar is on the right. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: '// Census.gov / Data / Developers / Available APIs / American Community Survey 1-Year Data (2005-2022) / Notes on ACS Estimate and Annotation Values'. The title 'Notes on ACS Estimate and Annotation Values' is prominently displayed. Below it, the sub-header 'Estimate and Annotation Values' is followed by a paragraph explaining that annotation values are character representations of estimates and have values when non-integer information needs to be represented. A table of common Estimate/Margin of Error (E/M) values and their corresponding Annotation (EA/MA) values is mentioned. Social media share buttons for Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn are visible. A 'Related Information' link is at the bottom right.

2.10 Comparing ACS data

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html>

This page provides guidance on comparing ACS estimates, both with other ACS estimates and with counts from the Decennial Census.

The screenshot shows the 'Comparing ACS Data' page on the Census Bureau website. The header includes the 'United States Census Bureau' logo and navigation links: 'Partners', 'Researchers', 'Educators', 'Survey Respondents', 'News', 'NAICS Codes', 'Jobs', 'About Us', 'Contact Us', and 'Help'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: '// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Guidance for Data Users / Comparing ACS Data'. The title 'Comparing ACS Data' is prominently displayed. Below it, a paragraph explains the strength of the American Community Survey (ACS) in estimating characteristic distributions. Another paragraph states that all ACS data are estimates and that the Census Bureau publishes a margin of error (MOE) for every ACS estimate. Social media share buttons for Facebook, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn are visible. A 'Related Information' link is at the bottom right.

2.11 ACS Data Availability Spreadsheet

Link: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/acs/data/ACS_datasets_migration.xlsx

This table provides all data products by year and where they can be found.

American Community Survey (ACS) Data Products Availability (Current Status as of December 15, 2022)			
ACS Datasets	data.census.gov	API	FTP Site
2021 1YR			
Detailed Table	Yes	Yes	https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/summary_file/2021/
Data Profile	Yes	Yes	No
Comparison Profile	Yes	Yes	No
Subject Table	Yes	Yes	No
Geography Comparison Table	No	No	No
2021 2YR			
Detailed Table	Yes	Yes	https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/summary_file/2021/
Data Profile	Yes	Yes	No
Comparison Profile	Yes	Yes	No
Subject Table	Yes	Yes	No
Selected Population Profile	Yes	Yes	No
Ranking Table	No	No	https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/2021/1_year_ranking/
Geography Comparison Table	No	No	https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/2021/1_year_geographic_comparison_tables/
2020 1YR Supplemental Estimates	Yes	Yes	No
2020 2YR			
Detailed Table	Yes	Yes	https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/summary_file/2020/data/
Data Profile	Yes	Yes	No

2.12 American Community Survey (ACS) Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/code-lists.html>

Within Technical Documentation

Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy

Data Release Rules

Errata Notes

Table & Geography Changes

Table Shells and Table List

User Notes

// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Technical Documentation / Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy

Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy

View the detailed codes and definitions for variables, statistical testing, and an explanation of sample design, methodology, and accuracy for the American Community Survey.

2023 2022 2021 2020 2019 More

2023

Code Lists
Detailed codes for variables that contain a large number of coded responses, such as ancestry and

Instructions for Applying Statistical Testing

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f

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X

X (Twitter)

in

LinkedIn

Related Information
VIDEO
Population Reference Bureau: The American Community Survey
VIDEO
Population Reference Bureau: Assessing ACS Reliability
Share Your ACS Data Story

Top

2.13 Available ACS APIs via the ACS Program Page

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/data-via-api.html>

Within Data

Custom Tabulations

Data Tables

Data Tools

Data via API

Data via FTP

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

Experimental Data

Race, Ethnicity, Ancestry and American Indian & Alaska Native Tables

Summary File

Variance Replicate Estimate Tables

// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / ACS Data / ACS Data via API

American Community Survey Data via API

The Census Bureau's Application Programming Interface (API) is a tool that you can use to access American Community Survey (ACS) data more efficiently. It reduces the need for data storage and provides users with a set of standard commands to easily access statistics that can be incorporated into their programs and applications. You can also use it to create simple queries to access ACS data through an internet browser. Learn more about how to access ACS datasets via the API, as well as resources to learn more about using the API.

Census Data API
Building a Request – Four Easy Steps
Following these 4 steps will produce an API query for the Total Population for all counties in Maryland using 2012-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

1 Identify the dataset you want to use
<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/data-via-api.html>

2 Identify items needed
Variable names (geographic codes (county, ZIP))

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Related Information
Developers
data.census.gov Resources
Census Data API User Guide
Find ACS Data Available in the API
Take the Intro to the API Course

Top

2.14 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/microdata.html>

Provides more information on the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) including links to the PUMS documentation, how to use the PUMS, and FAQs.


Within American Community Survey (ACS)

[PUMS Data](#)

[How to Use PUMS on data.census.gov](#)

[PUMS Documentation](#)

[PUMS FAQs](#)




// Census.gov / Our Surveys & Programs / American Community Survey (ACS) / Microdata

Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files enable data users to create custom estimates and tables, free of charge, that are not available through ACS pretabulated data products. The ACS PUMS files are a set of records from individual people or housing units, with disclosure protection enabled so that individuals or housing units cannot be identified.

The Census Bureau produces ACS 1-year and 5-year PUMS files. These files are accessible using the microdata access tool on data.census.gov and the Census Bureau's [FTP site](#).* Only selected geographic areas are identified in the ACS PUMS, including nation, regions, divisions, states, and Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). Of these, PUMAs are the most detailed geographic areas available.

Check out our handbook, [Understanding and Using the ACS PUMS Files](#), to learn more about working



[Understanding and Using the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample Files \[4.7 MB\]](#)

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[LinkedIn](#)

Related Information

PUBLICATION

[What ACS Public Use Microdata Sample File Users Need to Know](#)

WEBINAR

[Introduction to the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample \(PUMS\) Files](#)

WEBINAR

[Calculating Margins of Error the ACS](#)

Top

3 Geography

3.1 Geographic Entities

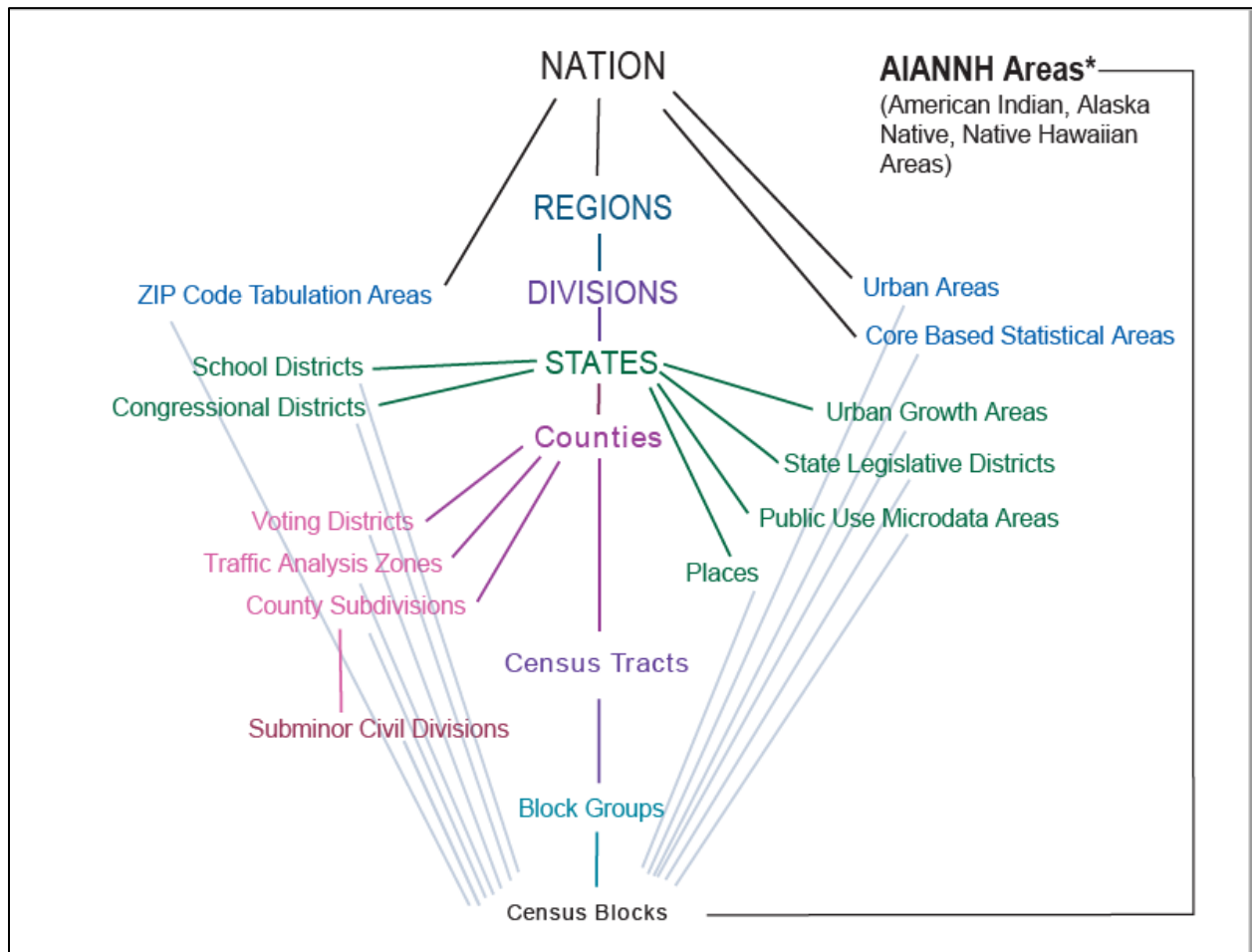
The nation is subdivided into two main types of geographic areas, **legal** and **statistical**.

Legal areas are defined specifically by law, and include state, local and tribal government units, as well as some specially defined administrative areas like congressional districts. Many, but not all, are represented by elected officials.

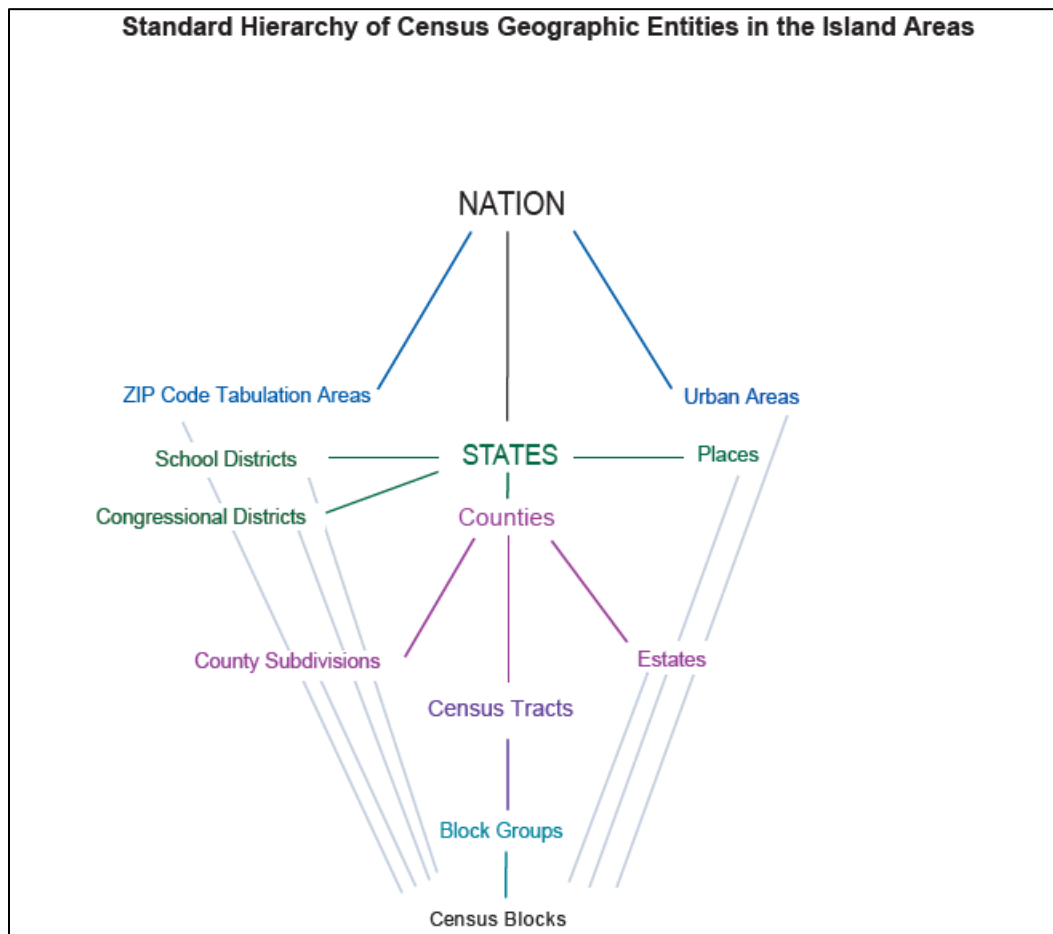
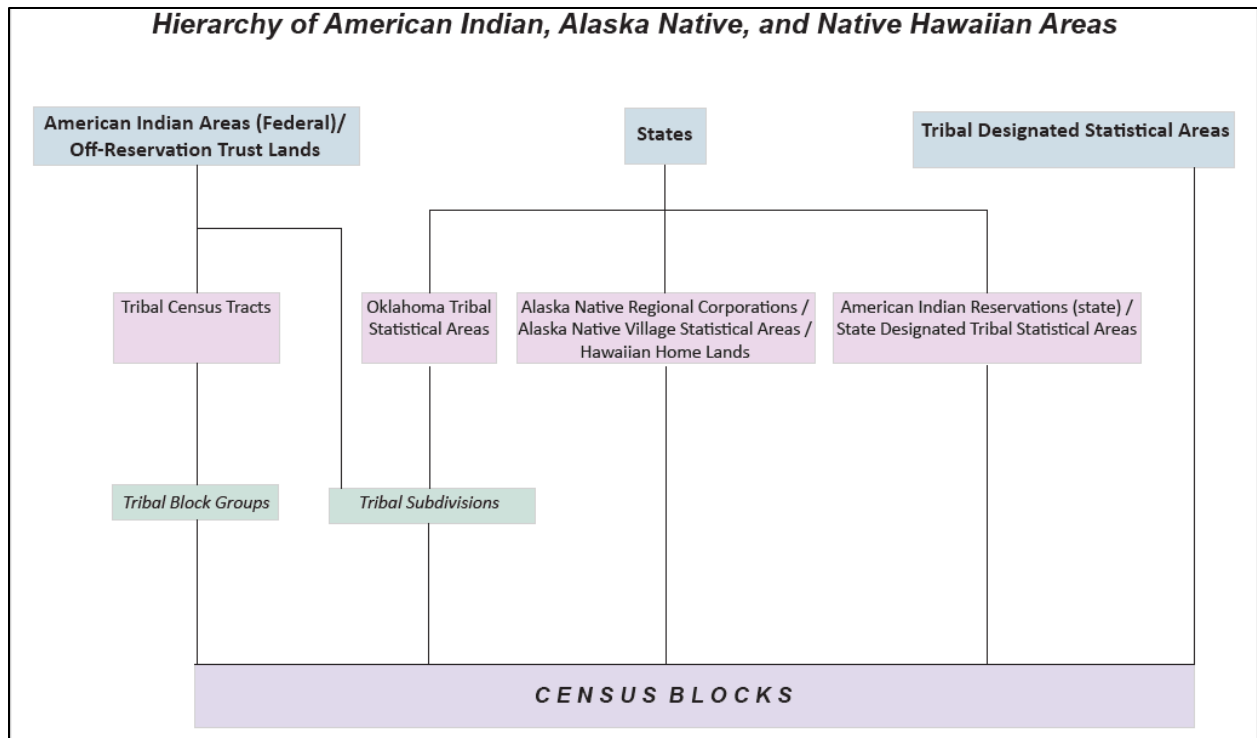
Statistical areas are defined directly by the Census Bureau and state, regional or local authorities, and include census tracts and urban areas. The primary purpose of statistical areas is to tabulate and present census data.

Geographic Entities	
Legal/Administrative	Statistical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• States• Counties• Minor civil divisions• Congressional districts• School districts• Incorporated places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Census tracts• Metropolitan/Micropolitan statistical areas• Urban areas• Census designated places

3.2 Hierarchy of Geographic Entities



* Refer to the “Hierarchy of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Areas” in next diagram.



3.3 Counties and County Equivalents

Counties and County Equivalents

- Counties in 48 states
- Independent Cities in MD, MO, NV, and VA
- Parishes in Louisiana
- Cities, Boroughs, Municipality, Census Areas in Alaska
- Municipios in Puerto Rico
- Islands and Districts in American Samoa
- Municipalities in the Northern Marianas
- Islands in the Virgin Islands
- District of Columbia and Guam each treated as a county equivalent

3.4 Places and County Subdivisions

The Census Bureau maintains boundaries for two types of Places – Incorporated Places and Census Designated Places.

Incorporated places are legal geographic areas. They include cities, towns, villages and boroughs and we update their boundaries yearly through the Boundary and Annexation Survey.

The second type of place, Census Designated Places, or CDPs, are statistical geographic areas. Their boundaries are drawn to provide data for concentrations of population that are recognized by name by local residents but are not legally incorporated. CDP boundaries are updated once every 10 years, prior to each decennial census, by local participants.

Places

Incorporated Places.

- Cities, towns, villages, boroughs.
- Legal boundaries, updated yearly through the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS).

Census Designated Places (CDPs).

- Statistical areas that provide boundaries for concentrations of population locally recognized by names, but not officially incorporated.
- Updated every 10 years prior to each decennial census.

Like Places, there is also both a legal and a statistical type of county subdivision. The legal county subdivisions are called Minor Civil Divisions, or MCDs. MCDs are formal governmental entities like towns, townships, and districts. In some states, MCDs have fully functioning governments, on par with

incorporated places. In states that do not have MCDs, local partners delineate Census County Divisions, or CCDs. CCDs are created solely for the purpose of displaying statistical data.

County Subdivision

Minor Civil Divisions.

- Legal divisions of counties, including towns, townships, and districts.
- In 12 strong MCD states in the Northeast and Midwest, they have functioning governments.

Census County Divisions.

- Statistical divisions of counties.

3.5 Small Geographic Areas

ZIP Code Tabulation Areas or ZCTAs (pronounced *zik-tahs*) are a geographic product of the U.S. Census Bureau created to allow mapping, display, and geographic analyses of the United States Postal Service (USPS) Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) Codes dataset. More information can be found [here](#).

ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)

- **ZIP codes are mail delivery routes, not areas defined by boundaries.**
- **The creation of ZCTAs is based on Census Blocks to create clearly defined boundaries.**

Public Use Microdata Areas are geographic areas for which the Census Bureau provides selected extracts of raw data from a small sample of census records that are screened to protect confidentiality. These extracts are referred to as public use microdata sample (PUMS) files. The PUMAs are required to contain at least 100,000 people. PUMAs do not overlap and are contained within a single [state](#). PUMAs enable the Census Bureau to publish census data for sub-state areas throughout every state. For example, the ACS publishes detailed data every year, but due to their sampling procedure only publishes detailed data for census areas that have more than 65,000 People. Only seven of the fifty-five counties of West Virginia were large enough to receive estimates from the first ACS in 2006. In contrast, all 12

PUMAs that partition West Virginia received ACS estimates for that year, because by definition a PUMA is large enough for complete demographic data availability. More information can be found [here](#).

Public Use Microdata Areas

- Statistical areas defined for the dissemination of Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data.
- Nest within states or state equivalents.
- Contain at least 100,000 people.

3.6 Understanding Geographic Identifiers

Link: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-identifiers.html>

Learn everything you ever wanted to know about Geographic Identifiers, or GEOIDs, from why they are important to how they relate to each other.

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About Geographic Areas

Geographic Variant Codes and Definitions

Hierarchy Diagrams

TIGER Data Products Guide

Understanding Geographic Identifiers (GEOIDs)

Understanding Geographic Identifiers (GEOIDs)

What are GEOIDs?

The Census Bureau and other state and federal agencies are responsible for assigning geographic identifiers, or GEOIDs, to geographic entities to facilitate the organization, presentation, and exchange of geographic and statistical data.

Share

4 External Resources


4.1 MABLE Geocorr from Missouri State Data Center


Link: <https://mcdc.missouri.edu/applications/geocorr.html>

Link to guidance on using the Geocorr (found under the Related Information section):

<https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/guidance-for-data-users/how-to-materials-for-using-data-census-gov.html>

Related Information

 [Can I Find Information on Selected Geographies Using the MABLE Geocorr? \[< 1.0 MB\]](#)

 [How Can I Determine whether a Geography, Such As a County, Is Completely within an Urban Area, Completely Rural, or a Mix? \[< 1.0 MB\]](#)

Direct link to *Can I find information on selected geographies using the MABLE Geocorr?*:

https://www2.census.gov/data/api-documentation/Address%20Search%20-%20Geocoder%20and%20TIGERweb/Using%20MABLE%20Geocorr_ZCTAs%20within%20State.pdf

Direct link to *How can I determine whether a geography, such as a county, is completely within an urban area, completely rural, or a mix?*: https://www2.census.gov/data/api-documentation/Address%20Search%20-%20Geocoder%20and%20TIGERweb/Using%20MABLE%20Geocorr_Urban_Rural_Mix.pdf

https://www2.census.gov/data/api-documentation/Address%20Search%20-%20Geocoder%20and%20TIGERweb/Using%20MABLE%20Geocorr_Urban_Rural_Mix.pdf