

## **U.S. Census and Using Census Data**

As required by the U. S. Constitution, every 10 years, the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) conducts the decennial census to determine the number of people living in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the census in years ending in zero, on Census Day, which is April 1. The [data](#) collected by the decennial census are used to determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. The U.S. decennial census is unique because it is an actual enumeration of the total population living in the United States, rather than a sample. <sup>1</sup>

The first U.S. Census was conducted in 1790, more than a year after the inauguration of President Washington and shortly before the second session of the first Congress ended. Congress assigned responsibility for the 1790 Census to the marshals of the U.S. judicial districts. <sup>2</sup>

Between 1970 and 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau used two questionnaires. Most households received a short-form questionnaire asking a minimum number of questions. A sample of households received a long-form questionnaire that included additional questions about the household. <sup>3</sup>

Due to the creation of the [American Community Survey](#) in 2005, the 2010 Census was conducted using a "short-form only" census with the [2010 Census questionnaire](#) consisting of a single version with ten questions. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau is again using a single short-form questionnaire, but with the public now having [three ways to submit their responses](#) to the 2020 census: online, by phone, or by mail. The ability of the U.S. Census Bureau to implement the 2020 decennial Census survey has been significantly impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Other frequently used government data sources, like the [American Community Survey](#) or [Current Population Survey](#), are structured to sample from the full population.<sup>4</sup>

## **Using Census data**

Census data are used to allocate multiple federal funding streams. In fiscal year 2015, census data were used to determine the allocation of [\\$675 billion for 132 programs](#), including Medicaid, SNAP, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, Head Start, and Highway Planning and Construction.<sup>5</sup>

Census data is used in funding determinations for the U.S. Department of Education's two biggest elementary and secondary programs, 'Title I' (compensatory education) and the 'Individuals with Disabilities Education Act' (special education). These programs rely on the Census for counts of school-aged children and children in poverty at the state and school district levels. <sup>6</sup>

Planners use [U.S. Census data](#) and other surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (such as the American Community Survey) to better understand the social, economic, and demographic conditions in their communities. Census data provides planners with knowledge of how their communities have changed over time and how they may best be served in the future. Planners regularly look at community

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<sup>1</sup> Georgetown University, McCourt School of Public Policy Why Does the Census Matter for State and Local Governments? <https://mccourt.georgetown.edu/news/why-does-the-census-matter-for-state-and-local-governments/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/history.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/questionnaires/](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/questionnaires/)

<sup>4</sup> Georgetown University, McCourt School of Public Policy Why Does the Census Matter for State and Local Governments? <https://mccourt.georgetown.edu/news/why-does-the-census-matter-for-state-and-local-governments/>

<sup>5</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Ibid](#)

features such as age, household size, and home ownership rates when updating their Comprehensive Plans.

In addition to plans, census data is used in programming, and policy reports submitted to elected officials and department heads to make policy and programming decisions. The demographic information gathered from the Census can also help planners develop inclusive and effective outreach strategies.<sup>7</sup>

### American Community Survey

In 2005, after years of testing and outreach to stakeholders and data users, the Bureau launched the annual [American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#) which helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities for the years between the decennial census. This survey is sent to approximately 3.5 million housing units and group quarters in the US annually. ACS estimates are less precise than the comparable estimates from decennial census years, however they are collected each year and are at times more current. The ACS is the primary source for detailed population and housing information about our nation. It is necessary to combine multiple survey years to obtain reliable estimates for smaller geographies.

The ACS provides current reliable and accessible data on topics important in planning such as age, children, veterans, community, education, income and employment. There are three key annual releases of ACS data; a 1-year estimate for larger populations, 1-year supplement estimates (for smaller populations and 5-year estimates for very small populations. [ACS data](#) is based on a survey of 3.5 million and informs \$675 billion of Federal government spending every year.

For ACS population datasets for your municipality go to '[City and Town Population Totals: 2010-2019](#)'. Population totals are provided for 2010 to 2019 for 'Places of 50,000 or More', Incorporated Places and 'Minor Civil Divisions'<sup>8</sup>.

### Population and Housing Unit Estimates

Population and housing estimates can be viewed at [The Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) (PEP) produces estimates of the population for the United States, states, metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas, counties, cities, towns, as well as for Puerto Rico and its municipios.

To access the most frequently requested social, economic, housing, and demographic data. Each of these four subject areas is a separate data profile go to [American Community Survey Data Profiles](#). The data profiles summarize the data for a single geographic area, both numbers and percent, to cover the most basic data on all topics.

[U. S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#) provides statistics for all states and counties and for cities and towns with a population of 5,000 or more.

For assistance in determining which data table or tool to use visit the '[American Community Survey Which Data Table or Tool Should I Use?](#)

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<sup>7</sup> How Does the Census Relate to Planning?

<https://planning.lacity.org/blog/how-does-census-relate-planning>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/guidance-geographies/terms-and-definitions.html>

At [American Community Survey data tables](#) there are brief descriptions of the ACS data tables (or "data products") that are available at <https://data.census.gov/>. Most, but not all, of the ACS tables previously found on American Factfinder, are moving to <https://data.census.gov/>

The [Cornell Program on Applied Demographics](#) is an excellent source for [New York County data](#) on the latest ACS data profiles, maps, historic and recent trends, population projections, and County-to-County migration.

### **New York Data Center**

The [New York Data Center](#), located in the Division of Research and Statistics within the New York State Department of Labor. The NY Data Center is part of a nationwide effort to improve public access to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning Department, as an [affiliate](#) of the New York State Data Center, is responsible for assisting with the collection and dissemination of demographic, social and economic data to local governments, businesses and the public

The New York Department of Labor also provides [Population Data and Projections](#)

### **Other U.S Census Bureau Resources**

US Census My Congressional District

<https://www.census.gov/mycd/>

COVID-19 Demographic and Economic Resources

<https://covid19.census.gov/>

US Census Statistical Testing Tool

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/statistical-testing-tool.html>