FINDING CENSUS DATA

STEP 1: USING AMERICAN FACTFINDER

Open a browser and navigate to the US Census Bureau's website at www.census.gov. There, navigate to the American FactFinder by clicking through Data > American FactFinder.



By default, you will land on the "Main" page of the FactFinder site (below). Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the interface.



The American FactFinder is a portal through which we can access an incredible amount of information gathered and compiled by the US Census Bureau. You can access tabular data through either a "Guided Search" or an "Advanced Search."

Click "Advanced Search" to access the search options. Here, information is grouped by Topic, Geography, and Race.

Click "Topics" in the panel of search options on the left of the interface.

Notice that a panel of specific topic options appears. Variables collected by the Census Bureau are collected and presented here thematically.

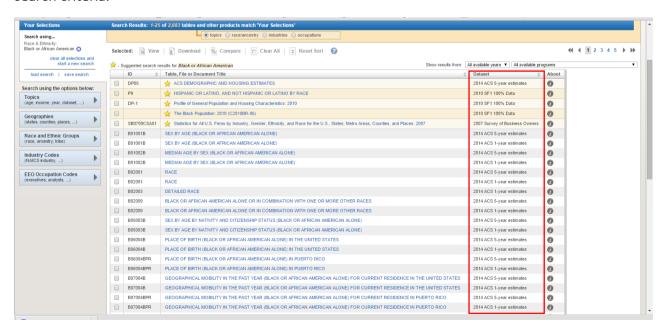
Notice that the text of this panel asks you to "Select Topics to add to 'Your Selections" and that the panel of "Your Selections" at the upper left of the window is currently empty. The FactFinder works by a simple logic: You (the user) will make a series of selections, specifying exactly what you're looking for and adding parameters (or "selections"), and the FactFinder will populate the tables that fit your selection criteria in the "Search Results" panel.

Next you need to specify the desired geographies of our data. Without making this selection, the FactFinder has no way of knowing whether to prepare a table of census block data in one particular county or state-level data for all fifty states. Click "Geographies" on the left to access the Geography selection panel.

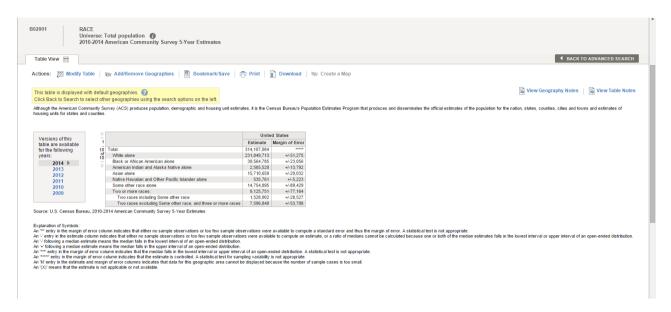
Notice that the first step is to select a Geography Type. At this point, we have to make a decision about the geographic units of our analysis.

Some common geographic units of analysis for Census data include: Urban Area, County, or Census Tract. Once you choose a geographic unit, you will be prompted to specify the state in which you are looking, and if you narrow your search even further, the specific County or Census Tract too.

Once you have selected your area, you will have a list of tables available to you that satisfy your search criteria.



If you click on a particular table, it will bring you to an abbreviated page showing you the contents of that table:



Once you've found the dataset you want, click "**Download**." A new dialog of download options will appear.

Select that you'd like to download a **comma delimited** .csv file with "Data and annotations in separate files." It's helpful to keep the annotations separate -- if you included them in the data file, you would just end up deleting them to prepare your data file.

Click OK.

When the data is ready for download, click "Download" and save your data.

The data will be downloaded in a .zip file. Unzip the file and notice that you have multiple csv files, along with a "read me" text file with user information.

An example download would include:

ACS 11 5YR B16001.csv - your actual dataset

ACS_11_5YR_B16001 _ann.csv – the annotated dataset with information describing each column of your set.

ACS_11_5YR_B16001_metadata.csv — a data dictionary also describing the information for each column in your set.

Using your dataset and the metadata, you are now ready to begin exploring, organizing, analyzing and mapping your data!