2014 ZIP CODE TABULATION AREA (ZCTA) LOCALE ASSIGNMENTS:
FILE SPECIFICATIONS

1. Abstract

The 2014 ZCTA Locale file is a table of NCES Locale assignments applied to each of the Census Bureau's Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) included in the 2014 TIGER/Line boundaries. The assignments rely on 2014 NCES Locale boundaries, and are based on the locale that accounts for the largest areal proportion of the ZCTA.

2. Data Source

ZCTA boundaries for the 2014 ZCTA Locale file were sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau's TIGER/Line shapefile collection. Current geography in the 2014 TIGER/Line shapefiles generally reflects the boundaries of governmental units in effect as of January 1, 2013,* and other legal and statistical area boundaries that have been adjusted and/or corrected since the 2010 Census. This vintage includes boundaries of governmental units that match the data from the surveys that use 2014 geography, such as the 2014 Population Estimates and the 2014 American Community Survey.

*Because the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) was suspended for 2014, only a minimal number of updates to governmental unit boundaries have been made since 2013.

3. Structure and Format

Format
The 2014 ZCTA file with locale assignments is offered in two formats: a SAS table and a dBase file. In both cases, there is a single file for the United States.

Naming Conventions
The name of the SAS table is: edge_zcta14_locale_final.sas7bdat
The name of the DBF file is: EDGE_ZCTA14_LOCALE_FINAL.dbf

Where:
EDGE	Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates program
14	the year of the ZCTA file and Locale file used
sas7bdat	the file extension for SAS tables
dbf	the file extension for dBase files

4. ZCTA Overview

Development
ZIP Code tabulation areas (ZCTAs) are approximate area representations of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) 5-digit ZIP Code service areas that the Census Bureau uses to present statistical data from censuses and surveys. The Census Bureau defines ZCTAs by allocating each census block that contains addresses to a single ZIP Code tabulation area, usually to the ZCTA that reflects the most frequently occurring ZIP Code for the addresses within that block. Blocks that do not contain addresses but are completely surrounded by a single ZIP Code tabulation area (enclaves) are assigned to the surrounding ZCTA; those surrounded by multiple ZCTAs will be added to a single ZCTA based on the longest shared border. The Census Bureau identifies 5-digit ZIP Code tabulation areas using a 5-character numeric code that represents the most frequently occurring USPS ZIP Code within that ZCTA. This code may contain leading zeros.

There were significant changes to the construction of ZCTA boundaries between 2000 and 2010. Only legitimate five-digit areas were defined for 2010, therefore there was no longer full nationwide coverage. The 2010 ZCTAs better represented actual ZIP Code service areas because the Census Bureau initiated a process before creation of 2010 blocks to add block boundaries that split polygons with large numbers of addresses using different ZIP Codes. For additional discussion of ZCTA development and use, see: http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/zctas.html.

Limitations
The Census Bureau does not update ZCTA boundaries throughout the decade, and this condition poses some limitations for using the ZCTA locale file. First, although the geographic relationship between 2010 ZCTA polygons and the extent of 2010 ZIP Code service areas is likely to be quite close, there may be differences between the two. Second, the geographic relationship between 2010 ZCTA boundaries and post-2010 USPS ZIP Code service areas may become less reliable over time if USPS adjusts the spatial extent of these areas to improve delivery service. Third, because the 2010 ZCTA universe did not include the complete set of 2010 USPS ZIP Codes, some ZIP Codes may not have a corresponding match in the ZCTA file. This lack of correspondence may increase over time if USPS retires or introduces new ZIP Codes after 2010. Lastly, the ZCTA delineation process primarily uses residential addresses and is biased towards ZIP Codes used for city-style mail delivery, thus there may be ZIP Codes that cover primarily nonresidential or post office box addresses that may not have a corresponding ZCTA.

5. Locale Overview

Locale codes are a general geographic indicator developed by the Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE) Program to help the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) classify the types of communities where educational institutions are located. The framework includes twelve classifications: four basic types – City, Suburb, Town, Rural – that each contains three subtypes based on population size and proximity (see criteria below). Because ZCTAs may contain multiple types of locales, final assignments are based on the locale that accounts for the largest areal proportion of the ZCTA. If a single locale accounts for a majority of the ZCTA area, the ZCTA is assigned the locale. If no single locale accounts for a majority of the area, then the ZCTA is assigned to the basic type that accounts for a majority of the area, and then assigned to largest subtype within the basic category. If no subtype or basic

type accounts for a majority of the ZCTA area, the ZCTA is assigned based on a simple plurality.

Locale Codes and Assignment Criteria

Code	Locale	Criteria
11	City-Large	Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population of 250,000 or more
12	City-Midsize	Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000
13	City-Small	Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population less than 100,000
21	Suburb-Large	Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population of 250,000 or more
22	Suburb-Midsize	Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000
23	Suburb-Small	Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population less than 100,000
31	Town-Fringe	Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urbanized Area
32	Town-Distant	Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an Urbanized Area
33	Town-Remote	Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 35 miles from an Urbanized Area
41	Rural-Fringe	Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster
42	Rural-Distant	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster
43	Rural-Remote	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and is also more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster

6. Record Layout

2014 ZCTA Locale File Record Layout

Field	Length	Type	Description
ZCTA5CE10	5	String	ZCTA code
LOCALE	2	String	Locale assignment