Special Edition
2010 Center of Population

The U.S. mean center of population, as of April 1, 2010, is near Plato, Mo., an incorporated village in Texas County. The U.S. Census Bureau calculated this point as the place where an imaginary, flat, weightless and rigid map of the United States would balance perfectly if all 308,745,538 residents counted in the 2010 Census were of identical weight.

Ever since Chestertown, Md., was determined to be the center of population after the first census was conducted in 1790, the center of population has told the story of America, illustrating how we've grown as a nation. It follows a trail across the country — across Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Missouri — that reflects our history of settling the frontier, waves of immigration and regional migration.

The Census Bureau will install a commemorative "geodetic control mark" at a site near the official coordinates during a dedication ceremony in May 2011. This survey disc will be used by satellites and land surveyors to conduct scientific surveys to generate precise position data that serve as the foundation for accurate mapping and charting in America.

The Mean Center of Population

37.517534 N, 92.173096 W
Coordinates (latitude, longitude) in decimal degrees of the 2010 mean center of population and the most western and southern point in our nation's history, as well as the most southerly movement from the previous decade.

2.9
Distance in miles from the center of population coordinates to Plato, Mo., the nearest incorporated municipality and nearest place for which the Census Bureau provides data.

109
The 2010 Census population of Plato, Mo.

26,008
The 2010 Census population of Texas County, Mo., where the village of Plato is located.

Historical Path of the Mean Center of Population

4
Number of times the mean center of population has been placed in Missouri: 1980-2010.

23.4
Distance in miles from Edgar Springs, Mo., the 2000 mean center of population, to Plato, Mo., the 2010 center of population.

872.9
Distance in miles from Chestertown, Md., the 1790 mean center of population, to Plato, Mo., the 2010 mean center of population.

1870
The U.S. census with the most northerly movement of the center of population from the previous decade — 44 miles from Beaver, Ohio, to Hillsboro, Ohio.

1860
The U.S. census with the largest increase in distance of the mean center of population from the previous decade — the 80.4 miles from Elizabeth, W.Va., to Beaver, Ohio, as well as the most westerly movement from the prior census.

1920
The U.S. census with the smallest increase in distance of the mean center of population from the previous decade — from downtown Bloomington, Ind., to a spot 9.7 miles to the northwest.

Locating the Mean Center of Population

National Geodetic Survey
A federal agency under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that defines and manages the national coordinate system and pinpoints the position of the center of population.

Geodesy
The science concerned with determining the size and shape of the Earth and the location of points on its surface. Accurate positions are required for a wide variety of applications, including mapping and charting, flood risk determination, transportation, communication, engineering and land use planning.

1.5 million
Approximate number of points that serve as the foundation for mapping and charting in the United States under the National Spatial Reference System.

Did You Know?

The U.S. Census Bureau also calculates the median center of population, which is the point of intersection of a north-south line that divides the population of the United States in half and an east-west line that also divides the population of the United States in half.

38.472967 N, 87.410365 W
Coordinates (latitude, longitude) in decimal degrees of the 2010 median center of population, in Clay Township, Pike County, Ind., 7.1 miles southwest of Petersburg, Ind.