TIGER Product Comparison

TIGER products include:

- TIGER/Line® Shapefiles
- TIGER/Line® Geodatabases (GDBs)
- TIGER/Line® with Selected Demographic and Economic Data
- Cartographic Boundary Shapefiles
- Keyhole Markup Language (KML) - Cartographic Boundary Files

Access files at <www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files.html>.

Access TIGERweb at <https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/tigerwebmain/TIGERweb_main.html>.

TIGER/Line® Shapefiles

These are extracts from the Census Bureau's Master Address File/Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (MAF/TIGER) database. They contain features such as roads, railroads, and rivers, as well as legal and statistical geographic areas and are designed for use with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. This is our most comprehensive geographic dataset.

Best uses:

- Highly detailed for large-scale mapping.
- Geographic analysis such as area calculation, geocoding, and determining precise area relationships.

Release schedule:
Annually in late summer.

TIGER Geodatabases

These are extracts from the Census Bureau's MAF/TIGER database. They contain similar attributes as the TIGER/Line® Shapefiles.

The TIGER GDBs contain detailed, full boundaries of geographic areas, but do not include any statistical data. Their larger storage capacity allows for national files that are not possible in shapefile format, such as roads and census tracts. Some of the GDBs also include multiple layers of geography in the same file.

GDBs are only fully functional within Esri ArcGIS software.

Best uses:

- Highly detailed for large-scale mapping.
- Area calculation, geocoding, and determining precise area relationships.
- Large storage capacity allows users to obtain national files and multiple layers with fewer downloads.

Release schedule: Annually in the fall.

TIGER/Line® With Selected Demographic and Economic Data

These are extracts from the Census Bureau's MAF/TIGER database that also contain legal and statistical boundaries which are pre-joined or related with population and housing counts, Census Demographic Profile 1 attributes, and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates data. TIGER/Line® with selected demographic and economic data are available for a limited set of geographic areas.

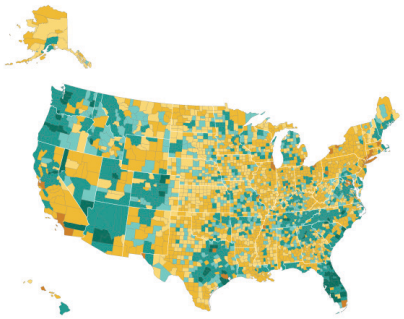
Attribute metadata (for the demographic data) is included. Metadata for the geography may be found in the TIGER/Line® shapefiles for the corresponding year.

GDBs are only fully functional within Esri ArcGIS.

Best uses:

- Highly detailed for use in large-scale mapping.
- Geographic analysis such as area calculation, geocoding, and determining precise area.
- Mapping statistical data.

Release schedule: New ACS GDBs are released annually in late February/early March.



Cartographic Boundary Shapefiles and KML Files

Cartographic boundary shapefiles and KML files are generalized extracts of selected geographic areas from the Census Bureau's MAF/TIGER database. These boundary files are designed for small-scale thematic mapping.

The cartographic boundary files are clipped to the shoreline of the United States and do not show the full extent of geography out to the legal limit in coastal water. Cartographic boundary files are available for select geographic areas down to the block group level and for a limited number of partial geographies.

- Projects that do not require a high level of detail (small-scale mapping).
- Shapefiles: Smaller size files take up less disk space and take less time to render.
- Thematic mapping.
- KML files are used for viewing census boundaries without GIS software.

  These files should not be used for projects that require geographic analysis (geocoding, area measurement, etc.).

Release schedule: Annually in the spring.

TIGERweb

TIGERweb is an Application Programming Interface (API) and online viewer that includes all layers of census geography. TIGERweb includes data from the most recent TIGER benchmarks and TIGERweb Decennial includes 2010 and 2000 data from the 2010 benchmark. The API is available as a Web Map Service (WMS) and a Representational State Transfer (REST) service.

Best uses:

- TIGERweb viewer: Viewing and comparing geographic areas without downloading files.
- WMS or REST services: Building applications using TIGER data.

Release schedule: Updated twice a year.