Census Bureau Grids FAQs

Q: What are grids?

A: Grids are characterized by a pattern of regular repeated shapes that fit together without gaps or overlaps and will cover the entire United States and territories. They can be any shape that does not create gaps or overlaps, such as squares, rectangles, triangles, quadrilaterals, or hexagons.

Q: Why is the Census Bureau choosing to use grids?

A: The Census Bureau recognizes that spatial data is important and is useful in many different contexts. Gridded data provides an alternative perspective of our data compared to other well-known Census Bureau geographies. Grids are stable over time; only the data within the grid cells will change with each new data release. This allows for identifying changes over time effortlessly.

Q: Will the Census Bureau release one type of grid or multiple grids?

A: The initial plan is to publish one type of grid. We are exploring the possibility of producing additional grids geometry in the future.

Q: Will the Census Bureau provide grids data every year?

A: Yes, the Census Bureau will provide grids data every year.

Q: What makes grids different from the usual Census geographies (tracts, blocks, etc.)?

A: Grids provide a different perspective of the same data that users have seen in blocks or tracts. Grids provide new geographic “bins” that differ in size and shape compared to tracts and blocks. Instead, these new “bins” are regular geometric shapes made using straight lines and are equal in area. Grids that are produced will never change over time; instead, new grids will be introduced as stakeholder needs change.

Q: What are gridded data?

A: Gridded data are data values assigned to grid cells such as counts (number of housing units), summed economic output (in dollars), averages (average household income)**.**

Q. Are grids replacing existing geographies?

A. No, grids are not replacing existing statistical (Tracts, Blocks, etc.) or legal (County, Incorporated Places, etc.) geographies.

Q: Do grid shapes and sizes change every 10 years?

A: No, grids will remain the same geography with the same size and shape over time.

Q: Is new data released every year for grids?

A: Yes, our intent is to publish gridded datasets annually.

Q: Where can I find more information on grids?

A: On the Census Bureau Grids Project website or send an email to geo.grids@census.gov for more information.

Q: Will grids cross state and county boundaries?

A: Yes, grids will cross state and county boundaries.

Q: How will grids help my community?

A: Census Bureau gridded data make it easier to select small areas or compare other regions of interests. Gridded data also support weather monitoring, climate studies, emergency preparedness, response to hazards, and other environmental events.

Q: How can we contact you about Census Bureau grids?

A: Email us at geo.grids@census.gov.

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