

Cartographic Boundary Files

The cartographic boundary files are simplified representations of selected geographic areas from the Census Bureau's MAF/TIGER geographic database. These boundary files are specifically designed for small scale thematic mapping.

When possible generalization is performed with intent to maintain the hierarchical relationships among geographies and to maintain the alignment of geographies within a file set for a given year.

To improve the appearance of shapes, areas are represented with fewer vertices than detailed TIGER/Line equivalents. Some small holes or discontinuous parts of areas are not included in generalized files.

Generalized boundary files are clipped to a simplified version of the U.S. outline. As a result, some off-shore areas may be excluded from the generalized files. This simplified U.S. outline is available for download for reference.

Types of Files

Cartographic Boundary files are available in shapefile format for the 2010 Census, Census 2000, and selected geographies for other years. Currently they are only available through the active links below. We anticipate a more user-friendly download will be available by early November 2011. File-based metadata will be coming soon.

- Nation-based Files
 - Congressional Districts
 - County
 - Division
 - Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas and Related Statistical Areas
 - Region
 - State
- State-based Files
 - Alaska Native Regional Corporation
 - Block Group
 - Census Tract
 - Congressional Districts
 - Consolidated City
 - County Subdivision
 - Place
 - State Legislative Districts - Upper and Lower
 - Subminor Civil Division (Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands only)
- US Outline File – 3 resolutions
 - gz_2010_us_outline_5m.zip

- gz_2010_us_outline_20m.zip
- gz_2010_us_outline_500k.zip
- [All 2010 Census vintage files \(from ftp site\)](#)
- [Previous versions of the cartographic boundary files](#)

Advantages

- Simplified shapes improve the appearance of geographic areas when displayed at small scales.
- These boundary files take up less disk space than their ungeneralized equivalents.
- Cartographic boundary files take less time to render on screen.

Limitations

- These files should not be used for:
 - geographic analysis including area or perimeter calculation.
 - geocoding addresses.
 - determining precise geographic area relationships.
- Some geographic areas are excluded from these files.
- Geographic areas may not align with the same areas from another year.

File Naming Convention

The 2010 cartographic boundary files are named **gz_2010_ss_III_vv_rr.zip** where:

- *ss* = state fips code or 'us' for a national level file
- *III* = summary level code
- *vv* = 2-digit version code
- *rr* = resolution level
 - 500k = 1:500,000
 - 5m = 1:5,000,000
 - 20m = 1:20,000,000

For a complete list of 2010 summary level codes for the cartographic boundary files, please see the chart below.

For the naming convention of cartographic boundary files created prior to 2010, please see our [naming convention page for previous versions](#).

Scale

Files are available at target map scales (geographic areas are not available at all target scales):

- 1:500,000
- 1:5,000,000
- 1:20,000,000

Cartographic Boundary File Summary Level Codes

Summary Level Code	Summary Level Name
020	Region
030	Division
040	State
050	State-County
060	State-County-County Subdivision
067	State-County-County Subdivision-Subminor Civil Division
140	State-County-Census Tract
150	State-County-Census Tract-Block Group
160	State-Place
170	State-Consolidated City
230	State-Alaska Native Regional Corporation
250	American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/Hawaiian Home Land
251	American Indian Area-Tribal Subdivision/Remainder
252	American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area (Reservation or Statistical Entity Only)
254	American Indian Area (Off-Reservation Trust Land Only)/Hawaiian Home Land
256	American Indian Area-Tribal Census Tract
258	American Indian Area-Tribal Census Tract-Tribal Block Group
310	Metropolitan Statistical Area/Micropolitan Statistical Area
314	Metropolitan Statistical Area-Metropolitan Division
330	Combined Statistical Area
332	Combined Statistical Area-Metropolitan Statistical Area/Micropolitan Statistical
335	Combined New England City and Town Area

Summary Level Code	Summary Level Name
337	Combined New England City and Town Area-New England City and Town Area
350	New England City and Town Area
352	New England City and Town Area-State-Principal City
355	New England City and Town Area (NECTA)-NECTA Division
361	State-New England City and Town Area-Principal City
500	State-Congressional District (111th)
610	State-State Legislative District (Upper Chamber)
620	State-State Legislative District (Lower Chamber)
700	State-County-Voting District/Remainder
860	5-Digit ZIP code Tabulation Area
950	State-School District (Elementary)/Remainder
960	State-School District (Secondary)/Remainder
970	State-School District (Unified)/Remainder