Product Overview

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This chapter provides an overview of the numerous series of publications and other data products issued by the Census Bureau. It consists largely of a chart of several pages listing all the Census Bureau's product series. The chart, after listing general and reference sources, presents series by broad, alphabetically arranged subjects, such as ''Agriculture,'' ''Foreign Trade,'' ''Housing,'' ''Mineral Industries,'' and ''Population.'' The chart briefly describes each series and, if it is covered in this Catalog/Guide edition, gives its abstract number(s).

Data users should refer to the chart if they want an overview of a Census Bureau program or a general idea of what the Bureau puts out on some subject. The chart helps readers screen out irrelevant references and select useful ones. **To make sure a data product has the information needed, check the abstract or contact Customer Services.**

Users who are trying to locate a specific title or data on particular subjects, such as mobility, roof construction, or household characteristics, should start with the Title Index or Subject Index, respectively.

HOW DATA ARE PUBLISHED

The symbols used below appear in the chart, beginning on page 9, and are used with abstract titles in other chapters.

Data users will find information on ordering the products in the Ordering Products section at the end of the Catalog/Guide.

Printed Reports

A great deal of data from censuses and surveys appears in statistical tables in printed reports and, occasionally, printouts and photocopies.

Since the amount of data is massive and printing is expensive, the Bureau often issues data in greater statistical and geographic detail on computer tape and other electronic media than in print.

Microfiche

All census reports printed since the 1790's are reproduced on microfiche and can be purchased from commercial sources. The Census Bureau currently is investigating arrangements for selling microfiche of most reports issued from 1968 on. Contact Customer Services (301-457-4100) for information.

Computer Tape

The Census Bureau issues extensive census and survey results on magnetic tape, a form that allows users with main-frame computers to handle large amounts of data efficiently. The tape is available on reels (''computer tapes'') and cartridges. (See the Ordering Products section for technical specifications.)

The Census Bureau provides, on tape, these basic types of data files:

Summary files (also referred to as ''summary tapes'') parallel many printed census reports with the same or more tabulations. For the population and housing censuses, summary files include considerable statistical and geographic detail not found in other census products.

Public-use microdata files include records for unidentified individual persons, households, and housing units in a form that protects the confidentiality of the responses, but allows users to design their own tabulations. Geographic information is limited.

Geographic reference files can be used to assign geographic codes to addresses, create maps by computer, build geographic information systems, and accomplish various other tasks.

Compact Discs

The Census Bureau is releasing some data files of the types described above on compact 4 3/4-inch, laser discs, called CD-ROM's (compact disc—read only memory). These discs can be used, with a suitable reader, on personal computers.

Retrieval and display software is included on most CD-ROM's, and updates to this software are available from the Census-BEA (Bureau of Economic Analysis) Electronic Forum. For information, call 301-457-1242.

CD-ROM's also can be prepared on request for data files otherwise available only on computer tape. See the Ordering Products section for more information.

Online Access

Many Census Bureau reports and other products, in full or in part, appear online. For more information, see ''Online Options'' on page 2.

Fax

The Census Bureau also offers many reports and other products, in full or in part, via telefacsimile (fax) machine. The reports are offered through the ''FastFax'' service. For more information, see the discussion of FastFax on page 2.

Diskettes

Some reports and data files appear on 3 1/2- or 5 1/4-inch diskettes—also called ''floppy disks''—for the IBM Personal Computer and compatible microcomputers. The data on diskettes are in a dBase format.

Maps

The Bureau prepares *outline maps* with names and boundaries of areas for which it publishes data and *statistical maps* that, through color and shading, actually display data. Some maps appear in reports; others are sold separately.

Census Geography

The Bureau collects and publishes data for the governmental and statistical areas listed here. **Those in italics are ones for which data are obtained only in decennial censuses of population and housing.** For more information on geography and geographic products, see figure 2 and the Geography section of the following chart. Also, see the Geography and 1990 Census chapters.

Governmental areas:

United States, Puerto Rico, and outlying areas under U.S. sovereignty or jurisdiction
States, counties, and county equivalents
Incorporated places (such as cities and villages) and minor civil divisions (MCD's) of counties (such as townships)
Congressional districts and voting districts
American Indian reservations, associated trust lands, and Alaska Native Regional Corporations

Statistical areas:

Four census regions and nine census divisions, all of which are groupings of States
Metropolitan areas
Census county divisions (CCD's) in States where MCD boundaries are not satisfactory for statistical purposes
Census designated places
Urbanized areas
Alaska Native village statistical areas
Tribal designated statistical areas and tribal jurisdiction statistical areas
Census tracts and block numbering areas (BNA's)—Statistical subdivisions of counties. They have an average population of about 4,000. Census tracts are defined mainly in metropolitan areas, and BNA's are defined in counties without census tracts.
Block groups (BG's)—Groupings of census blocks within census tracts and BNA's; tabulation BG's have an average population of about 800.
Blocks—The smallest census geographic areas, normally bounded by streets or other physical features. They are identified throughout the country and have an average population of under 100.

Figure 2. **Census Small-Area Geography**

