Preface

The *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* published since 1878, is the standard summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the United States. It is designed to serve as a convenient volume for statistical reference and as a guide to other statistical publications and sources. The latter function is served by the introductory text to each section, the source note appearing below each table, and Appendix I, which comprises the Guide to Sources of Statistics, the Guide to State Statistical Abstracts, and the Guide to Foreign Statistical Abstracts.

This volume includes a selection of data from many statistical sources, both government and private. Publications cited as sources usually contain additional statistical detail and more comprehensive discussions of definitions and concepts. Data not available in publications issued by the contributing agency but obtained from the Internet or unpublished records are identified in the source notes. More information on the subjects covered in the tables so noted may generally be obtained from the source.

Except as indicated, figures are for the United States as presently constituted. Although emphasis in the *Statistical Abstract* is primarily given to national data, many tables present data for regions and individual states and a smaller number for metropolitan areas and cities. Appendix II, Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas: Concepts, Components, and Population, presents explanatory text, a complete current listing and population data for metropolitan and micropolitan areas defined as of December 2005. Statistics for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and for island areas of the United States are included in many state tables and are supplemented by information in Section 29. Additional information for states, cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and other small units, as well as more historical data are available in various supplements to the *Abstract* (see inside back cover).

Statistics in this edition are generally for the most recent year or period available by summer 2007. Each year over 1,400 tables and charts are reviewed and evaluated; new tables and charts of current interest are added, continuing series are updated, and less timely data are condensed or eliminated. Text notes and appendices are revised as appropriate. In addition, three special features—*Historical Statistics, State Rankings,* and *USA Statistics in Brief*—can be found on our Web site: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>.

Changes in this edition—This year we have introduced 64 new tables covering a wide range of subject areas. These cover a variety of topics including: grandparents living with children, selected cosmetic plastic surgery procedures, average out-of-pocket expenses for undergraduates, workplace violence, tribal gaming revenue, Internet service providers, wildland fires, and tobacco consumption by country and sex. For a complete list of new tables, see section titled "New Tables," p. xi.

In addition to the above new tables, there are other changes to note for this edition. The title for Section 2, "Vital Statistics," has been changed to "Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces"; Section 13, "Income, Expenditures, and Wealth," has been changed to "Income, Expenditures, Poverty, and Wealth"; and Section 26, "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation," has been changed to "Arts, Recreation, and Travel."

Statistical Abstract on other media—The *Abstract* is available on the Internet and on CD-ROM. Both versions contain the same material as the book, except for a few copyrighted tables for which we did not receive permission to release in these

formats. Our Internet site <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/> contains this 2008 edition plus selected earlier editions in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format. Spreadsheet files for each table in the book are also available on the Web site and CD-ROM (free distribution of single copies on request). In many cases, the spreadsheet files show more years and/or subject/geographical detail.

Statistics for states and metropolitan areas—Extensive data for states and metropolitan areas of the United States can be found in the *State and Metropolitan Area Data Book: 2006*. This publication minus some data items, as well as selected rankings of the states and metropolitan areas, is available on our Internet site at <http://www.census.gov/compendia/smadb>.

Statistics for counties and cities—Extensive data for counties can be found in the *County and City Data Book: 2007*. It features 175 data items covering everything from age and agriculture to retail trade and water use for all states and counties with U.S. totals for comparison. Also included are approximately 80 data items for cities with populations of 25,000 or more. Six tables present nearly 80 additional data items from the 2005 American Community Survey for 242 incorporated places with populations of 100,000 or more.

This publication is available on our Internet site at <http://www.census.gov/compendia/ccdb> (tentative). For a database with over 6,000 county items, check out USA Counties at <http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml>.

Limitations of the data—The contents of this volume were taken from many sources. All data from censuses and surveys or from administrative records are subject to error arising from a number of factors: Sampling variability (for statistics based on samples), reporting errors in the data for individual units, incomplete coverage, nonresponse, imputations, and processing error. (See also Appendix III, p. 907.) The Census Bureau cannot accept the responsibility for the accuracy or limitations of the data presented here, other than those for which it collects. The responsibility for selection of the material and for proper presentation, however, rests with the Census Bureau.

For additional information on data presented—Please consult the source publications available in local libraries or write to the agency indicated in the source notes. Write to the Census Bureau only if it is cited as the source.

Suggestions and comments—Users of the Statistical Abstract and its supplements (see inside back cover) are urged to make their data needs known for consideration in planning future editions. Suggestions and comments for improving coverage and presentation of data should be sent to the Director, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233.