Introduction

Beta Data FERRETT is a great tool for accessing Census Data when more detail is required than is provided in the pre-prepared tables. Data FERRETT allows users who are familiar with different types of Current Population Survey (CPS) data to compare variables of their choosing. CPS data users who may not be familiar with programs such as SAS, STATA, or SPSS can get detail they may not have been able to access otherwise. One word of caution - Beta Data FERRETT is not a substitute for SAS, STATA, or SPSS, because the power and utility of these programs does become necessary, as a user’s analysis becomes more complex.

Before getting started with Data FERRETT, users should become familiar with the CPS, how it is conducted, and the variable names and ranges. Visit http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cps-main.html and browse the technical documentation to obtain abundant information on the CPS and CPS supplements. There’s also information from the history of the survey on how variances and standard errors are calculated. Don’t forget to look at the data dictionary which contains the variables and the possible values of those variables; the most current version of this document is located at ftp://www.bls.census.gov/pub/cps/basic/201001/jan10dd.txt (however, this last version does not list supplement information). This will allow one to navigate through Data FERRETT much more efficiently.

After obtaining an understanding of the variable composition of a survey, you must then think about the question you are trying to answer. This allows you to, more easily locate the variables needed to answer your question.

This example will cover only basic CPS data. It will not address any of the supplements that accompany the CPS. For more information on these consult the technical documentation for those supplements.
Question

For this example the question is:

“How do unemployment rates compare across demographic details like sex and Hispanic origin?”
- Go to the Census homepage: www.census.gov
- Click on the data tools link
Once there, click on the DataFerrett Link.
• There are two places to click that will launch the web application of Beta Data Ferrett.
• Click either link.
• A pop-up window will come up.
• Enter a valid email address to proceed. The email address is used to send large extracts via email, and to inform users of new datasets available if desired. It is not used for any other purpose or shared with any organization.
• Please note: Ensure that pop-ups are enabled (click the yellow bar at the top and select “always allow for this site”). The security certificate must be downloaded and installed to export or download data.
After clicking “ok” on the disclaimer for using the Beta version of Data Ferrett, you will be brought to the introduction screen.

Use the tutorials and examples located here, which serve as a great addition to this document for learning how to use Data Ferrett.

After exploring the options on this screen click on Step1: Select Dataset & Variables.
• In the “Select Dataset(s) to search” box, open the folder for the Current Population survey
• Open the folder named “Basic”.
For this example, Dec 2009 data will be used. Click on Dec 2009, and then select View Variables.
• Click the check boxes next to Labor Force Variables and Demographic Variables.
• Then click the Search Variables icon.
A new window appears, to highlight the variables you are interested in.

Highlight PESEX and then click Browse\Select Highlighted Variables.
A pop-up window appears, to browse and/or select variables and values.
Check the box next to **Select**, then click ok.
Then click OK to confirm your selection of this variable to the Data Basket.
• Now you’re back at the variable selection screen.
• Scroll through the list of variables and highlight PEMLR. Then click Browse\Select Highlighted Variables.
• The pop-up window appears, to browse and/or select variables and values.
• Check the box next to **Select**, this will select all the values applicable for that variable.
• Then click **OK** to add the variable to the basket.
• Then click **OK** to confirm your selection of this variable to the Data Basket.
Scroll through the list of variables and highlight PEHSPNON. Then click Browse\Select Highlighted Variables.
• The pop-up window appears, to browse and/or select variable and values.
• Check the box next to Select. This will select all the values applicable for that variable.
• Then click OK to add the variable to the basket.
• Then click OK to confirm your selection of this variable to the Data Basket.
Click on the Step 2 tab to create your table.
• Click the “Make A Table” icon.

• A pop-up window appears, giving instructions for building your table. To Hide or Show this window click “i” on the tool bar, or click the “X”.

Making a Table (to Hide or Show this window click “i” on the toolbar)

1. Click and highlight to select variable.

2. Hold mouse key to turn cursor into a hand, then drag selected variable to Column A or Row 1 on spreadsheet. You can type over any value labels in order to make them more readable.

3. Click on the toolbar to get data results.

For formulas and other advanced spreadsheet functionality see Help, Contents in menu bar.
• To start creating the table highlight PEMLR in the right-hand box, then click and drag it to cell C2, R1 (yellow).
• Then, click and drag PEHSPNON to cell C1, R2 (red).
• Make Sure not to use cell C1, R1.
• A warning pops up stating that there are different weights being used. This is fine, because we are going to use weighting related to Labor Force Variables. Click the ok box.
• Take PESEX and drop it into C1,R2.
• This procedure is called nesting, and it will cause Hispanic origin to be broken down by sex.
Click “Options” in the tool bar, scroll down to Weighting, and select PWCMPWGT. PWCMPWGT is the weight used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the official labor force data.
Click on “Go Get Data” and the table will populate.
The end result is a populated table with the information you specified.
Final Notes

This is not a comprehensive guide to Data Ferrett, nor has it touched on the full potential of the web application. The Data Ferrett team has a great deal of information for users to learn the program, and even some details of the more advanced features.

For more information go to, http://dataferrett.census.gov/. On the right hand side of the screen you will find links to tutorials and other resources, which are extremely helpful.

Finally, a note on the weighting: When in doubt refer to the technical documentation (see introduction). In most cases if you do not receive the warning about weighting you can proceed with the default weighting selected by Ferrett.
Contact Information

The Current Population Survey (CPS) Branch is part of the Demographics Surveys Division of the United States Census Bureau. Refer any data related questions to the CPS. The branch can be reached at 1-301-763-3806, or visit ask.census.gov to submit an inquiry over our net-based system.

If you have questions or are experiencing technical issues in Data Ferrett please contact the Data Ferrett team at 866-437-0171 or send email inquiries to dsd_ferrett@census.gov.