

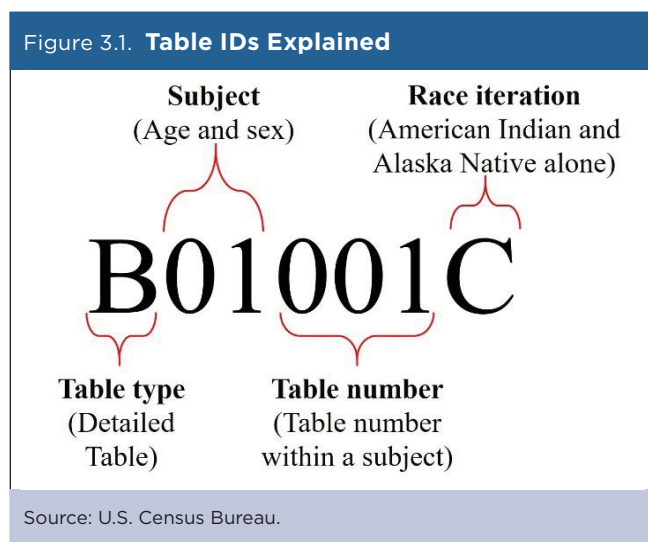
3. TABLE IDS, SEQUENCES, AND VARIABLE NAMES

Table IDs

All American Community Survey (ACS) tables have a table ID that follows specific naming conventions. This makes it easy to identify the same table across different tools, such as in data.census.gov, the Summary File and the Application Programming Interface (API). You will need to know the table ID in order to extract a table from the Summary File. Table IDs consist of up to five elements.

The first element is a letter that indicates the table type. For example, as shown in Figure 3.1, the first letter is “B” indicating that the data are from a Detailed (or Base) Table. Table IDs that start with “C” refer to collapsed tables. B tables have the most detail for a given topic while C tables have collapsed categories.

The next two characters identify the subject of the table. Tables beginning with “01,” for example, are for tables in the age and sex subject. Each subject has a unique 2-digit subject number.



The following three digits are a sequential table number that uniquely identifies a table within a given subject.

The fourth element is an alphabetic suffix that indicates the corresponding ACS table is repeated for different race and Hispanic origin groups. For example, table IDs ending in a “C” are for American Indian and Alaska Native Alone populations. Those with an “H” suffix are for non-Hispanic White populations.

Lastly, selected tables will have a final alphabetic suffix “PR” to indicate a table is available for Puerto Rico geographies only.

Refer to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Web site for more details about naming conventions and subject numbers for ACS tables.¹²

Sequence Numbers

There are so many tables in the ACS that they cannot all fit into a single zipped file. The Detailed Tables are split across numerous files, called sequences. There are approximately 170 sequences for the ACS 1-year Summary File, and 120 sequences for the ACS 5-year Summary File. The rules governing how many tables can be assigned the same sequence number depend on the following:

- There are no more than 256 cells per sequence, so the data can be read into a spreadsheet. There are 245 cells reserved for data and 11 other cells reserved for identifying information.
- Tables are grouped numerically by the “root” of their Table ID, (for example, Table B00001 is in sequence file 0001).
- Tables with race iterations are grouped in the same sequence.

Sequence Number/Table Number Lookup File

You need to know the sequence number associated with a Detailed Table to access the correct estimate and margin of error files for that table. The start position for the estimates or margins of error of a particular table depends on the sequence number.

To help data users find the sequence number associated with an ACS Detailed Table, the Census Bureau provides a Sequence Number/Table Number Lookup file with each ACS data release. The file is available in SAS, Excel, and text format and can be found on the Summary File Technical Documentation page.¹³ Use the SAS data set version when processing the Summary File data in SAS. Use the Excel version to view the list of tables, their associated table IDs, sequence numbers, and line numbers for ACS estimates within each table.

Suppose you are interested in obtaining data on transportation methods men and women use to get to work (Table B08406). To find the sequence number associated with the table, open and look for the appropriate

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), Table IDs Explained, <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/which-data-tool/table-ids-explained.html>.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), Summary File Documentation, <www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/summary-file-documentation.html>.

table ID in the Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup file. Applying a filter and/or searching within the Excel file will ease this process. Figure 3.2 shows several of the rows for Table B08406. The sequence number associated with this table is “38.” Therefore,

to access the 2017 ACS 1-year estimates in Table B08406 for the nation as a whole, use the file labeled “e20171us0038000.txt.” To access the corresponding margins of error for these estimates, use the file labeled “m20171us0038000.txt.”

Figure 3.2. Portion of Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup File

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	File ID	Table ID	Sequence Number	Line Number	Start Position	Total Cells in Table	Total Cells in Sequence	Table Title	Subject Area	
7439	ACSSF	C08301	37	11				Worked at home		
7440	ACSSF	B08406	38			7 51 CELLS		SEX OF WORKERS BY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK FOR WORKPLACE GEOGRAPHY	Journey to Work	
7441	ACSSF	B08406	38					Universe: Workers 16 Years And Over		
7442	ACSSF	B08406	38	1				Total:		
7443	ACSSF	B08406	38	2				Car, truck, or van:		
7444	ACSSF	B08406	38	3				Drove alone		
7445	ACSSF	B08406	38	4				Carpooled:		
7446	ACSSF	B08406	38	5				In 2-person carpool		
7447	ACSSF	B08406	38	6				In 3-person carpool		
7448	ACSSF	B08406	38	7				In 4-or-more-person carpool		

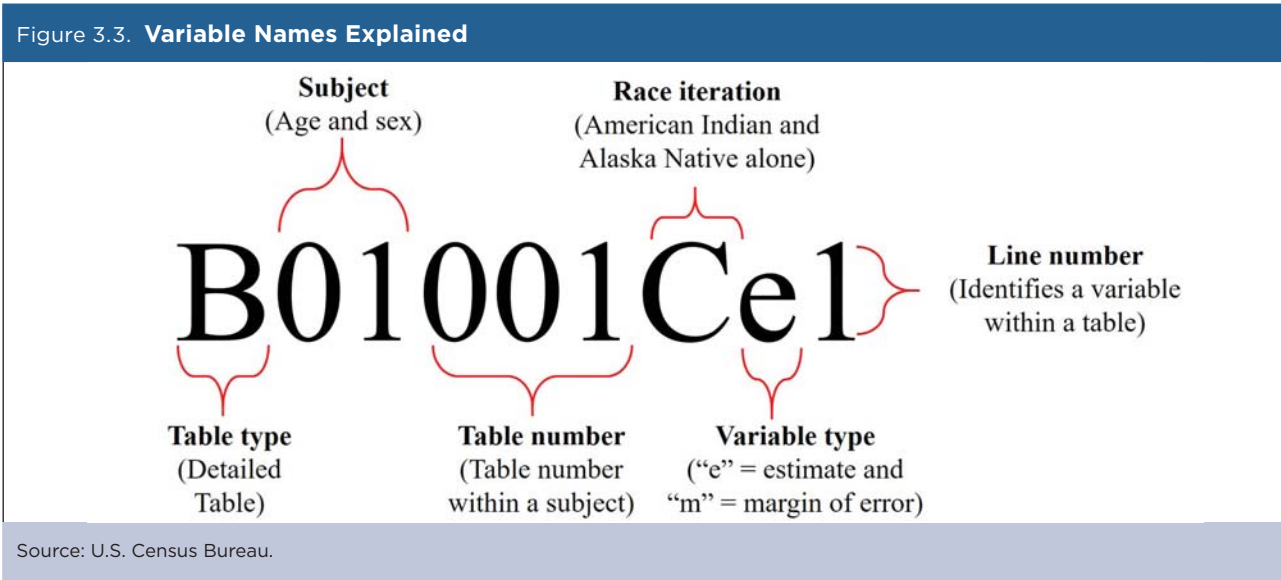
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Variable Names

In the ACS Summary File, variable names for estimates and margins of error are alpha-numeric.

Variable names include three elements: a table ID, a letter to indicate the data type (e=estimate, m=margin

of error), and a line number, which identifies ACS estimates within each table. For example, in the SAS programs provided by the Census Bureau, the variable name for the estimated total number of people who are American Indian and Alaska Native alone is “B01001Ce1” (see Figure 3.3).



In the Excel file templates, the variable names are similar, except the “e” and “m” components have been removed because the estimates and margins of error are located in separate sheets. The line numbers in the Excel templates are preceded by an underscore (“_”) and contain up to three digits, including leading zeros. For example, the variable name for the estimated total

number of people who are American Indian and Alaska Native alone is “B01001C_001.”

You can use the information in the Lookup file to identify the variable names that will be used in the provided SAS programs and in the template files.