

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

September 28, 2022

Scan QR codes  
throughout the  
webinar to access  
resources



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This webinar is being recorded. The recording will be available after the webinar.

[census.gov/data/academy/webinars/2022/using-the-american-community-survey-summary-file.html](https://census.gov/data/academy/webinars/2022/using-the-american-community-survey-summary-file.html)

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File Outline



- **Overview of the American Community Survey**
- Definition and Legacy of the Summary File
- Explanation of Sequence and Table-Based Summary File Formats
- Demo- Walk Through Examples of Table-Based format
- Resources to Learn More

[census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/training-presentations.html](https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/training-presentations.html)

# Using The American Community Survey Summary File

## The Foundation

*The American Community Survey is on the leading edge of survey design, continuous improvement, and data quality*

- The nation's most current, reliable, and accessible data source for local statistics on critical planning topics such as age, children, veterans, commuting, education, income, and employment
- Surveys **3.5 million** addresses and informs over **\$675 billion** of federal government spending each year
- Covers **40+ topics**, supports over **300** evidence-based federal government uses, and produces **11 billion** estimates each year
- Typically provides three key annual data releases:
  - 1-year Estimates (for large populations, geographies of 65,000+ population)
  - 1-year Supplemental Estimates (for small populations, geographies of 20,000+ population)
  - 5-year Estimates (for very small populations, geographies down to Census Tracts and Block Groups)

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**The American Community Survey**

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**Start Here**

You have two ways to respond:

Respond online today at: <https://respond.census.gov/acs>

OR

Complete this form and mail it back as soon as possible.

**Your response is required by law.**  
The American Community Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This survey is one of only a few surveys for which all recipients are required by law to respond. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information.

**If you need help or have questions about completing this form, please call 1-800-354-7271.**

**Text Telephone (TTY):**  
Call 1-800-582-8330.

**¿NECESITA AYUDA? Llame sin cargo alguno al 1-877-833-5625.**

For more information about the American Community Survey, visit our website at: <https://www.census.gov/acs>

**Please print the name and telephone number of the person who is filling out this form. We will only contact you if needed for official Census Bureau business.**

Last Name

First Name  MI

Area Code + Number  -

**How many people are living or staying at this address?**

- **INCLUDE** everyone who is living or staying here for more than 2 months.
- **INCLUDE** yourself if you are living here for more than 2 months.
- **INCLUDE** anyone else staying here who does not have another place to stay, even if they are here for 2 months or less.
- **DO NOT INCLUDE** anyone who is living somewhere else for more than 2 months, such as a college student living away or someone in the Armed Forces on deployment.

**Number of people**

**Fill out pages 2 - 7 for everyone, including yourself, who is living or staying at this address for more than 2 months. Then complete the rest of the form.**

Form ACS-1(2021) OMB No. 0607-0810 (9-18-20) OMB No. 0607-0926

# Using The American Community Survey Summary File

## Availability of ACS Data Products

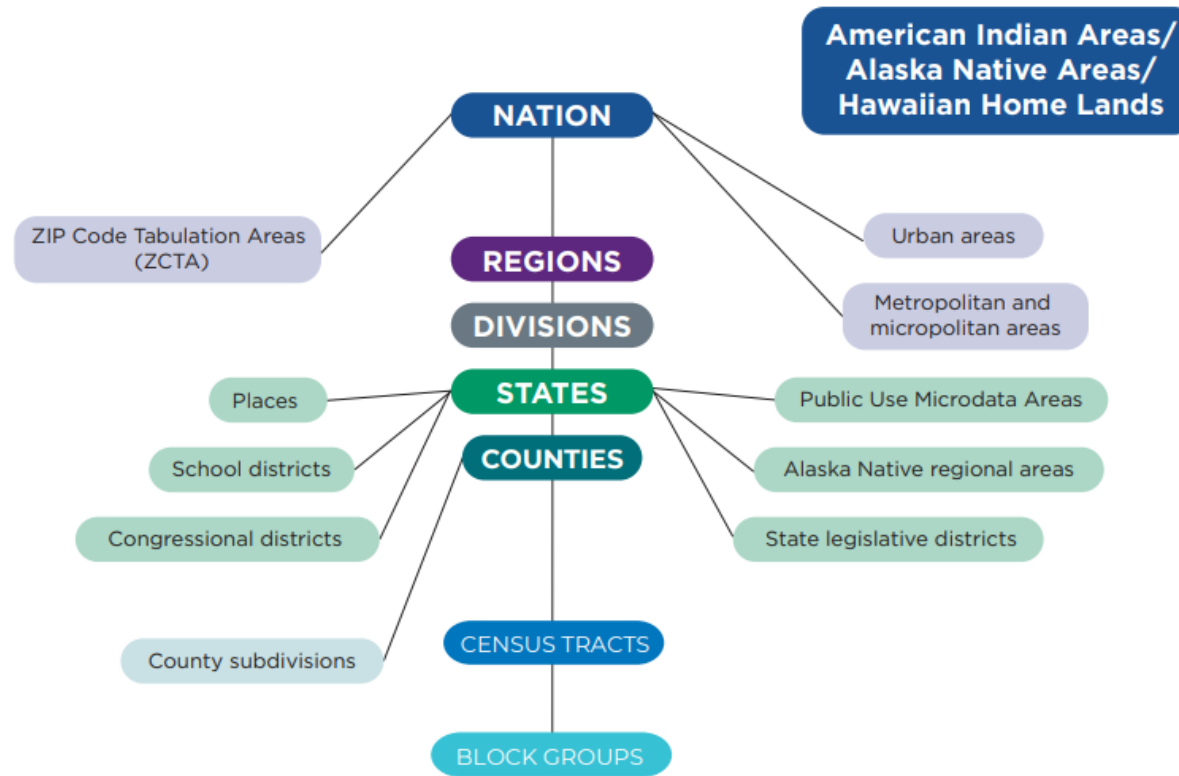


Estimated Population of Geographic Area	1-Year Estimates	1-Year Supplemental Estimates	5-Year Estimates
65,000 or more	X	X	X
20,000 to 64,999		X	X
Less than 20,000			X
Typical Release Date (Occurs in the calendar year after data collection)	<b>September 15, 2022</b>	<b>October 20, 2022</b>	<b>December 8, 2022</b>

[census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases.html](https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases.html)

# Using The American Community Survey Summary File

## ACS Geographies



# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Content Overview



POPULATION		HOUSING
<b>SOCIAL</b> Ancestry Citizenship Citizen Voting Age Population Disability Educational Attainment Fertility Grandparents Language Marital Status Migration School Enrollment Veterans	<b>DEMOGRAPHIC</b> Age Hispanic Origin Race Relationship Sex  <b>ECONOMIC</b> Class of Worker Commuting Employment Status Food Stamps (SNAP) Health Insurance Hours/Week, Weeks/Year Income Industry & Occupation	Computer & Internet Use Costs (Mortgage, Rent, Taxes, Insurance) Heating Fuel Home Value Occupancy Plumbing/Kitchen Facilities Structure Tenure (Own/Rent) Utilities Vehicles Year Built/ Year Moved In

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# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## What is the ACS Summary File?



### The ACS Summary File

- A set of files that contain the same data as the Detailed Tables but in a more flexible format to allow data users to extract only the desired data or entire datasets.
- Used by advanced users **who want entire datasets.**
- Subject Tables and Data Profiles are created from the Detailed Tables and, therefore, are not available.



Original Database by [shindaverse](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#).



# Using The American Community Survey Summary File

## The ACS Detailed Tables

- Most detailed ACS data and cross tabulations of ACS variables.
- Begin with the letters "B" for base tables and "C" for collapsed tables. Collapsed tables cover the same topics as the base table, but with fewer categories.
- All geographic areas down to the **block group level**.
- Available through the ACS Summary File, Census Bureau Application Programming Interface, and [data.census.gov](http://data.census.gov)

Table ID	Table Title
B01001	SEX BY AGE
B01001A	SEX BY AGE (WHITE ALONE)
B01001B	SEX BY AGE (BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE)
B01001C	SEX BY AGE (AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ALONE)
B01001D	SEX BY AGE (ASIAN ALONE)
B01001E	SEX BY AGE (NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER ALONE)
B01001F	SEX BY AGE (SOME OTHER RACE ALONE)
B01001G	SEX BY AGE (TWO OR MORE RACES)
B01001H	SEX BY AGE (WHITE ALONE, NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO)
B01001I	SEX BY AGE (HISPANIC OR LATINO)
B01002	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX
B01002A	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (WHITE ALONE)
B01002B	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE)
B01002C	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ALONE)
B01002D	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (ASIAN ALONE)
B01002E	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER ALONE)
B01002F	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (SOME OTHER RACE ALONE)
B01002G	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (TWO OR MORE RACES)
B01002H	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (WHITE ALONE, NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO)
B01002I	MEDIAN AGE BY SEX (HISPANIC OR LATINO)
B01003	TOTAL POPULATION
B02001	RACE
B02003	DETAILED RACE
B02008	WHITE ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02009	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02010	AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02011	ASIAN ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02012	NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02013	SOME OTHER RACE ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES
B02014	AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ALONE FOR SELECTED TRIBAL GROUPINGS
B02015	ASIAN ALONE BY SELECTED GROUPS

# Using The American Community Survey Summary File

## What is the Legacy of the Summary File?

- A unique product the Census Bureau provides as its commitment to releasing the files to all stakeholders in a fair and balanced method.
- Census data products have included "summary files" for **many censuses (1960 data earliest known use found)**
- First used internally by staff to prepare Census tables and printed reports.
- Eventually, data was provided in tape reels for State Data Centers (SDC's) but the format was not user-friendly for most data users and even the partners in the SDC program (required a large storage space & special computing hardware that used tape reels).
- Census later made the summary files available on CD/DVD to the public. This was thought to make the data so much more accessible and usable for many MORE data users .
- Census continued to use the data in summary files as input files to create other products: tables in print, pdf, and on American FactFinder and now data.census.gov.



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# Using the American Community Survey Summary File Outline

- Overview of the American Community Survey
- Definition and Legacy of the Summary File
- **Explanation of Sequence and Table-Based Summary File Formats**
- Demo- Walk Through Examples of Table-Based format
- Resources to Learn More

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Summary File Formats



### **Two Summary File formats are currently available**

- Sequence-based (original)
- Table-based (current)
- Sequence-based format provides ACS data from 2005 to 2021.
- Table-based format provides ACS data from 2018 and beyond
- Users should first check if the data of interest are easily available for download on [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov)

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Sequence-Based Summary File



### The Sequence-based ACS Summary File Format

- Includes three files: estimates, margins of error, and geography files
- Found in the File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site, accessible through the Summary File Data page
- Contain a large number of cells, they are stored in a series of files, called sequences, containing only the estimates from the tables.
- Sequences don't include metadata such as the titles of the tables, the descriptions of the rows, and the names of the geographic areas.
- The metadata must be merged with the data files to reproduce the complete tables.

**ACS Summary File Sequence-Based Format (2005-2021)**

Share [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

The American Community Survey (ACS) Summary File Sequence-Based Format is a set of comma-delimited text files that contain all of the Detailed Tables for the ACS data releases. Summary File data in the sequence-based format are only available for data years 2005-2021. The sequence-based format is divided into three file types: estimates, margin of error, and geography files for each release.

In the sequence-based format, Detailed Tables are stored in a series of files with only the data from the tables and without such information as the table title, description of the rows, or geographic identifiers. That information is located in other files that the user must merge with the data files to reproduce complete tables.

The handbook, *Using the ACS Summary File: What Data Users Need to Know*, provides an overview and more about working with the sequence-based format. Data, instructions, guides, and example SAS programs are provided below for each year.

**Download *Using the American Community Survey Summary File: What Data Users Need to Know* [PDF - 6.5 MB]**

**Related Information**

[ACS Summary File Table-Based Format](#)

MAPPING FILE  
[TIGER/Line with Selected Demographic and Economic Data](#)

2021 2020 2019 2018 2017 More ▾

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Sequence-Based Summary File

### CHALLENGES:

- Can be confusing for data users
- Multiple sources of technical documentation needed to discover which file or sequence contains the table of interest, then must combine three files to recreate this table.
- Each year ACS staff must split the data into 40,000 files and prepare the same information into two different formats to accommodate the requirements for the ACS Summary File and the Application Programming Interface (API).

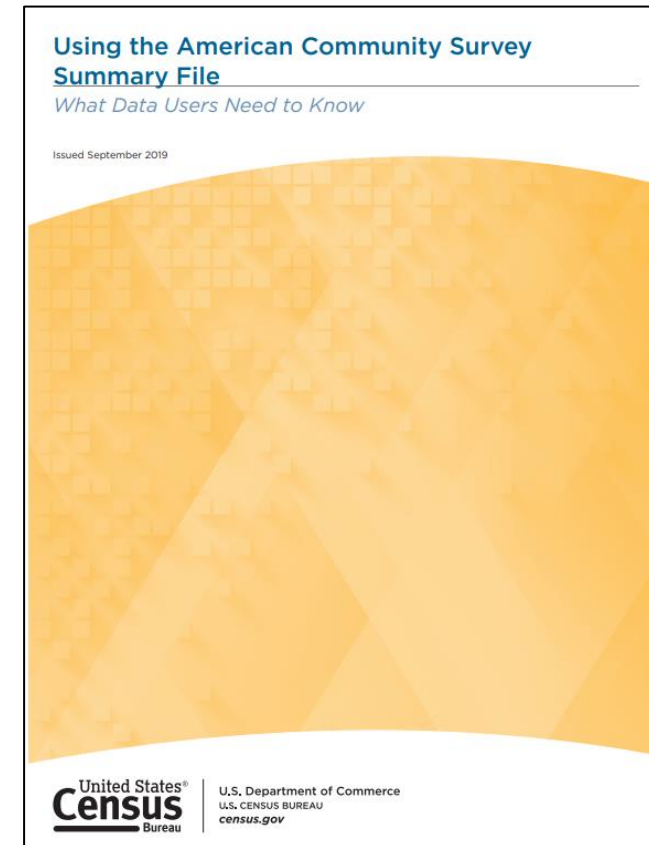
# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Sequence-Based Summary File



### Resources/Guides for the ACS Sequence-based Summary File Format:

- Handbook- Using the American Community Survey Summary File What Data Users Need to Know
- Instructions on How to Read the ACS Summary File into Excel
- Instructions on Joining the ACS Summary File to the TIGER/Line Shapefiles
- SAS programs for each sequence per state
- Example of Creating a Table Using SAS





# Using the American Community Survey Summary File




## Overview of the Table-Based Summary File



### The Table-Based ACS Summary File Format

- Streamlines the ACS SF production by delivering only one file.
- Instead of splitting the files by state and sequence number, the new format will be by table ID.
- Reduces the complexity of the ACS SF from over 140,000 files to about 1,000 files.
- Now split by table ID (no longer split by state and sequence number)
- One file for each table containing estimates, MOEs, for all geographies

## ACS Summary File

Share   

The American Community Survey (ACS) Summary File is a unique data product that includes all estimates and margins of error (MOE) from the [Detailed Tables](#) for all geographies published for the ACS. The ACS Summary File allows data users to download statistics for a large number of tables and geographic areas. Currently, there are two methods for downloading the summary file: the new Table-Based Format and original Sequence-Based Format.

### Table-Based Format

For the 2018 data release, the Census Bureau tested a new, Table-Based Format for the ACS Summary File. This format groups the estimates and MOE by table ID, removing the need to merge these files. That is, a file is posted for each table containing both the estimates and MOE for all available geographies. Data users only need to merge in geography labels to create complete tables.

*The Table-Based Format is the recommended format for the 2021 data release, and it will be the only format starting with the 2022 data release.* Check out the Getting Started and data year tabs below for information and resources. The resources include instructions for merging the geography labels with each table via Excel or programs like SAS and Python.

Please visit the Census Bureau's [Developer's Forum](#) through Slack to share feedback on the Table-Based Format in the "acs-summary-file" channel. We appreciate hearing about what you like or what we can improve upon.

### Changes for the 2021 Data Release

The 2021 data release is the final release of the original Sequence-Based Format;

#### Related Information

[ACS Summary File Sequence-Based Format](#)



# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Table-Based Summary File

### Table-based Format

#### Benefits:

- Estimates and margins of error for each table are combined into one file
- All geography identifiers and labels combined into one file
- Simplified documentation For Census Bureau: Saves time and resources
- Can use Excel, SAS, or Python to work with the SF

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Overview of the Table-Based Summary File



### Resources/Guides for the ACS Current Summary File Format:

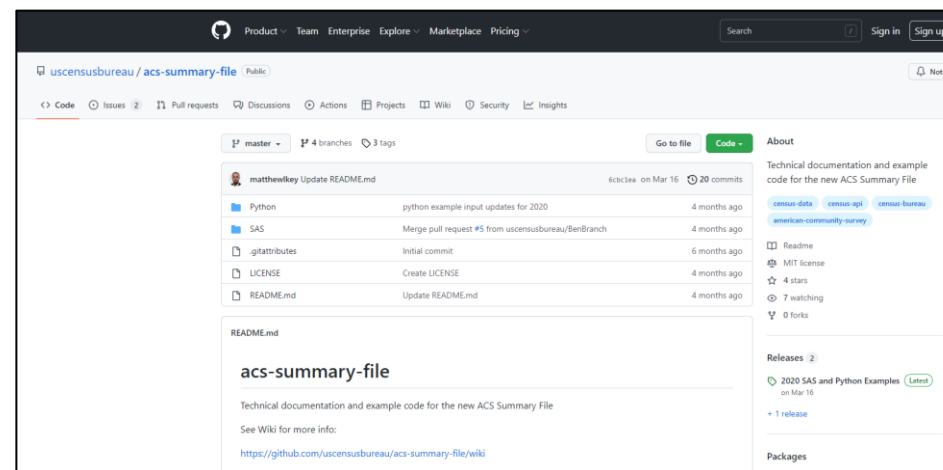
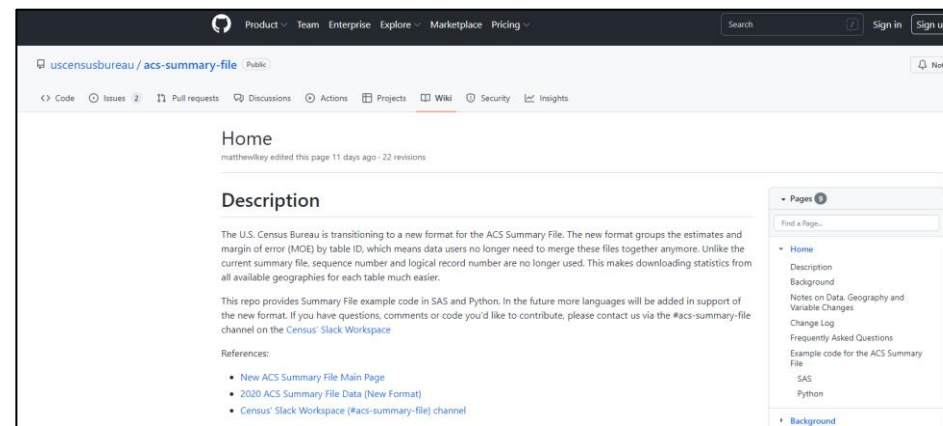
- [ACS Summary File GitHub wiki page](#)
- [ACS Summary File GitHub repository](#)



### Data Analysis Examples Provided in GitHub:

- SAS
- Python

### Instructions on Reading the Geography Names into the SF Using Excel



# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Accessing Summary File from the ACS Data Page



Within Our Surveys & Programs

- About the ACS
- Respond to the ACS
- News & Updates
- Data**
- Microdata
- Guidance for Data Users
- Geography & ACS
- Technical Documentation
- Methodology
- Information For...
- Library
- Operations and Administration

## American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation.


### Featured

#### Respond to the ACS

Learn the different ways to respond to the American Community Survey – online, by phone, by email. Read our FAQs or call us for more help with the survey.

#### American Community Survey Data

The American Community Survey releases new data every year, in the form of estimates, in a variety of tables, tools, and analytical reports.



[census.gov/programs-surveys/acs.html](https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs.html)

Within American Community Survey (ACS)

- Custom Tables
- Data Tables
- Data Tools
- Data via API
- Data via FTP
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
- Experimental Data
- Race/Ethnicity and American Indian & Alaska Native
- Summary File**
- Variance Replicate Estimate Tables

## American Community Survey Data

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The American Community Survey (ACS) releases new data every year through a variety of data tables that you can access with different data tools. Learn more about the different types of tables and profiles powered by ACS data. We also have information about other special datasets, such as the ACS Experimental Data, ACS Summary File, and ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

### Get Started Accessing ACS Data

Check out [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov), the Census Bureau's main data dissemination tool. Here, you can access tables and maps with ACS data. You can also view [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov) Resources for step-by-step guidance, video tutorials, FAQs, and more.

[GO TO DATA.CENSUS.GOV](https://data.census.gov)

[data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov) Resources

#### Related Information

- [DATA](#)
- [Data](#)
- [data.census.gov Resources](https://data.census.gov)

[census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html](https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html)


# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Accessing Sequence-Based from the Main Summary File Page






Within Data

- Custom Tables
- Data Tables
- Data Tools
- Data via API
- Data via FTP
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
- Experimental Data
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Respond to the ACS  
Learn how

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***The Table-Based Format is the recommended format for the 2021 data release, and it will be the only format starting with the 2022 data release.*** Check out the [Getting Started](#) and data year tabs below for information and resources. The resources include instructions for merging the geography labels with each table via Excel or programs like SAS and Python.

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### Changes for the 2021 Data Release

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#### Related Information

[ACS Summary File Sequence-Based Format](#)

[census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/summary-file.html](https://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/summary-file.html)

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# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Demo: Access the Table-Based Summary File Tables

### Accessing the Summary File Tables and Geography File from the FTP site:

Visit the ACS Summary File page at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/summary-file.html>

For the sequence-based format, visit <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/summary-file/sequence-based.html>



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[Getting Started](#) [2021](#) [2020](#) [2019](#) [2018](#) [2017 to 2005](#)

#### Getting Started

The Table-Based ACS Summary File contains three file types:

**Table Labels** - Description of each line item in a table



# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Table Shells



### ACS20211YR\_Table\_Shells.txt

Table ID	Line	Indent	Unique ID	Label	Title	Universe	Type
B01001	1.0	0	B01001_001	Total:	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	2.0	1	B01001_002	Male:	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	3.0	2	B01001_003	Under 5 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	4.0	2	B01001_004	5 to 9 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	5.0	2	B01001_005	10 to 14 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	6.0	2	B01001_006	15 to 17 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	7.0	2	B01001_007	18 and 19 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	8.0	2	B01001_008	20 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	9.0	2	B01001_009	21 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	10.0	2	B01001_010	22 to 24 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	11.0	2	B01001_011	25 to 29 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	12.0	2	B01001_012	30 to 34 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	13.0	2	B01001_013	35 to 39 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	14.0	2	B01001_014	40 to 44 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	15.0	2	B01001_015	45 to 49 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	16.0	2	B01001_016	50 to 54 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	17.0	2	B01001_017	55 to 59 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	18.0	2	B01001_018	60 and 61 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	19.0	2	B01001_019	62 to 64 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	20.0	2	B01001_020	65 and 66 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	21.0	2	B01001_021	67 to 69 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	22.0	2	B01001_022	70 to 74 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	23.0	2	B01001_023	75 to 79 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	24.0	2	B01001_024	80 to 84 years	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int
B01001	25.0	2	B01001_025	85 years and over	SEX BY AGE	Total Population	int

- Added hierarchy, line type and universe as columns
- Now one file for 1-year shells, one file for 5-year shells
- Excel version still available at a different location
- Pipe delimited; utf-8 encoded

[github.com/uscensusbureau/acs-summary-file/wiki/Change-Log](https://github.com/uscensusbureau/acs-summary-file/wiki/Change-Log)







# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## All Data from the State of California in Table B01001

	NAME	GEO_ID	B01001_E001	B01001_M001	B01001_E002	B01001_M002	B01001_E003	B01001_M003	B01001_E004	B01001_M004
1	California	0400000US06	39237836	-555555555	19618934	6432	1129355	3475	1210580	14702
2	California -- Urban	0400001US06	37039607	40644	18459965	24696	1060499	5939	1148785	14470
3	California -- Rural	0400043US06	2198229	40644	1158969	23831	68856	5217	61795	4717
4	California -- In metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area	04000A0US06	38956998	-555555555	19474623	6175	1122822	3435	1204457	14791
5	California -- In metropolitan statistical area	04000C0US06	38374563	-555555555	19179376	5102	1110028	3000	1188541	14611
6	California -- In metropolitan statistical area -- in principal city	04000C1US06	17768429	3337	8873501	24723	501178	11127	531411	11901
7	California -- In metropolitan statistical area -- not in principal city	04000C2US06	20606134	3337	10305875	23993	608850	11461	657130	12638
8	California -- In micropolitan statistical area	04000E0US06	582435	-555555555	295247	3170	12794	1392	15916	2011
9	California -- In micropolitan statistical area -- in principal city	04000E1US06	157703	8859	80663	5977	2809	1234	3447	1304
10	California -- In micropolitan statistical area -- not in principal city	04000E2US06	424732	8859	214584	7107	9985	1412	12469	1881
11	California -- Not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area	04000G0US06	280838	-555555555	144311	1596	6533	990	6123	1259
12	California -- Not in metropolitan statistical area	04000H0US06	863273	-555555555	439558	3400	19327	1505	22039	2011
13	Alameda County, California	0500000US06001	1648556	-555555555	816792	301	44662	199	46548	2478
14	Butte County, California	0500000US06007	208309	-555555555	103229	826	5124	303	5783	1049
15	Contra Costa County, California	0500000US06013	1161413	-555555555	570719	716	31081	2	32812	2867
16	El Dorado Countv. California	0500000US06017	193221	-555555555	96068	849	4295	522	4050	1006

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File Outline

- Overview of the American Community Survey
- Definition and Legacy of the Summary File
- Explanation of Sequence and Table-Based Summary File Formats
- Demo- Walk Through Examples of Table-Based format
- **Resources to Learn More**



- Purpose:
  - Improve understanding of the value and utility of ACS data.
  - Promote information sharing among data users about key ACS data issues and applications.
- Includes users group website and online community
- ACS Data Users Conference
- Membership is free and open to all interested ACS data users

[acsdatacommunity.prb.org](https://acsdatacommunity.prb.org)

# Using the American Community Survey Summary File

## Continue the Conversation



### Customer Service Center

1-800-923-8282 or 301-763-INFO (4636)

### Email Us

[acso.users.support@census.gov](mailto:acso.users.support@census.gov)

### Website

[census.gov/acs](https://census.gov/acs)



### Email Alerts

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCENSUS/signup/12426>

### Social Media @uscensusbureau

#ACSdata

### Source Us

U.S. Census Bureau, [YYYY – YYYY] American Community Survey [1/5]-year estimates