

TRIO User's Guide

NATIONAL **TRIO** CLEARINGHOUSE

Finding Census Data On-line With American FactFinder

American FactFinder is an electronic system that provides access to Census Bureau data on the Internet. You can use the system to select or create detailed data tables and maps that provide information from Census 2000 as well as other Census programs. Log on to American FactFinder at <http://factfinder.census.gov> or visit <http://www.census.gov> and select "American FactFinder." Here is a brief overview of steps you can take to locate Census data using the system. More detailed instructions that guide you through a sample query are located on the back.

1. Formulate a question.

Developing a specific question is the first important step to finding the information you need on-line. Be as specific as possible: for example, "How many (*number of*) veterans (*who*) lived (*what*) in the area where I want to establish a Veterans Upward Bound Program (*where*), in 2000 (*when*)?" Include who, what, where, and when in your question.

2. Identify the geographical area where you want data.

The next step in locating the information you need is selecting a specific geographical area. Using American FactFinder, you can locate detailed information by state or county or within more specific geographical groupings designated by the Census Bureau or local committees the Bureau has established.

Census Geographies: In addition to geographical categories like state and county, the Census tabulates data for smaller geographic areas called census tracts, block groups and blocks. **Census tracts** are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions contained within counties. **Blocks** and **block groups** are subdivisions of Census tracts. **Blocks** are the smallest of these subdivisions and often correspond to city blocks. A **block group** consists of all the blocks within a census tract with the same beginning number e.g. block group 3 consists of all blocks within a 2000 census tract numbering from 3000 to 3999. Block groups are the smallest geographic units for which the Census Bureau tabulates sample data, however, not all data are available at the block group level.

3. Identify the data set that includes the information you want.

Data in American FactFinder are organized within **Data Sets**, which are grouped according to Census programs. The most popular program is the **Decennial Census**, which collects and compiles data every ten years. The 2000 Census Data Sets, called **Summary Files**, vary according to the information they contain. **Summary File 1** provides information on age, sex, race and ethnicity and residency; **Summary File 2** includes population and housing characteristics for detailed racial and ethnic categories; and **Summary File 3**, the file most applicable for TRIO users, contains detailed population and housing data such as educational attainment, employment status and income.

4. Choose the table(s) in the selected data set applicable to your question and geography.

Information within data sets is systematically categorized and arranged in tables. Census 2000 detailed tables are identified and labeled using a letter that refers to the type of data in the table, and then a number that is assigned sequentially as the tables are produced. Letters used include 'P' for population tables; 'H' for housing tables; 'PCT' for population tables that cover geographies to the census tract level; and 'HCT' for housing tables that cover geographies to the census tract level. For example, Table P12. Sex by Age is a population table with the sequential number, '12'. Finding the tables that contain the information you are searching for is easier after viewing or printing the list of all tables within a specific summary file.

5. Create a detailed table using the table number(s) and geographic areas you have identified.

See reverse for instructions.

Instructions for Creating a Detailed Table Using American FactFinder

There are many ways of creating detailed tables using American FactFinder. The following exercise guides you through one way of creating a table responding to the sample question, "How many veterans live near Suitland High School in Prince George's County, Maryland?". Follow these steps to locate the statistical data you need.

1. Locate detailed information about the geographical area for which you want information.

Example: Address: 5200 Silver Hill Rd. Forestville, Md. 20747

1. Click 'Maps and Geography' on the left menu
2. Click 'Reference Maps.'
3. Enter the address in the space below the map.
4. Click 'Go.'

TRIO TIP: Use this shortcut if you only need the census tract #:

1. Click 'Tools' on the left menu.
2. Under Data Extraction Tools, click 'Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council.'
3. Fill in the address and/or zip code and click 'Search.'

Results: Prince George's County, Census Tract 8024.06, Block 2000, Block Group 2

2. Create one or more detailed tables that provide information on the geographical area you have selected and that answers the research question(s) you have defined. Refine question, if necessary.

Example: Question: How many veterans live in Census Tract 8024.06, according to the 2000 Census?

1. From the Home page, Click 'Data Sets' on the left.
2. Select 'Census 2000 Summary File 3.'
3. Click 'Detailed Tables' on the right side.
4. Select 'Census Tract' in the 'geographic type' window.
5. Select a state – Maryland.
6. Select a county – Prince George's.
7. Select a census tract – 8024.06.
8. Click 'Add' then Click 'Next.'
9. Click the 'By Keyword' tab at the top.
10. Type 'veteran' in the space and click 'Search.'
11. Browse the list of detailed tables that provide information about veterans.
12. Select the table 'P116- Imputation of Veteran Status for the Population 18+ Years' and click 'Add.'
(An **Imputation** is a method used by the Census Bureau to assign values. It relies on the statistical principle of "homogeneity," or the tendency of households within a small geographic area to be similar in most characteristics.)
13. Click 'Show Result.'

TRIO TIP: Print the list of all tables for this data set:

1. Click 'Data Sets' on the left menu.
2. Select Census 2000 Summary File 3
3. Click 'Technical Documentation' on the right menu.
4. Select 'Chapter 5' in the PDF file.

Results: 1, 687 veterans live in Census Tract 8024.06

TRIO TIP: Continue research by selecting another table or changing your geographical selection(s).

- A. To select additional tables, Click 'Tables' at the top in the 'You are Here' menu. Change selections as needed.
- B. To change or add geographical areas, Click 'Geography' in the top menu. Change selections as needed.

For more help using American FactFinder, use the following aids available in the top toolbar on every screen:

- **Help** – Provides step-by-step instructions for specific tasks, tutorials and a glossary of terms
- **Glossary** – Lists detailed definitions of terms used in American FactFinder, such as census tract.
- **FAQs** – Provides answers to common questions, a useful page to skim before beginning your research.

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