

# ACS Summary File Technical Documentation

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*2013 ACS 1-year, 2011-2013 ACS 3-year, and  
2009-2013 ACS 5-year Data Releases*

**American Community Survey Office**  
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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 The American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census Program and is designed to provide more current demographic, social, economic, and housing estimates throughout the decade. The ACS provides information on more than 40 topics, including education, language ability, the foreign-born, marital status, migration and many more. Each year the survey randomly samples around 3.5 million addresses and produces statistics that cover 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year periods for geographic areas in the United States and Puerto Rico, ranging from neighborhoods to Congressional districts to the entire nation. For more information about the ACS, please visit our main page at: [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs). ACS tables are published on the Census Bureau's American FactFinder (AFF) website, [factfinder2.census.gov](http://factfinder2.census.gov), and are available for download in several forms. This document will brief data users on the contents of the ACS Summary File and explain how they can use it to obtain statistics.

## 1.2 The American Community Survey Summary File

The American Community Survey Summary File (ACSSF) is a unique data product that includes all the estimates and margins of error from the Detailed Tables and geographies that are published for the ACS. Other ACS data products, such as Subject Tables and Data Profiles, are created from the Detailed Tables and are therefore not available in the ACS Summary File.

Since the Detailed Tables contain a large number of cells, the tables are stored in a series of files with only the data from the tables, without such information as the title of the tables, the description of the rows, and the names of the geographic areas. That information is in other files that the user must merge with the data files to reproduce the tables.

The ACS Summary File data files are in American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) format. The files are divided into three types:

- Geographies – (position based and comma delimited)
- Estimates – (comma delimited)
- Margins of Error – (comma delimited)

[Chapter 2](#) discusses each component in detail and explains how to put them all together.

## 1.3 Topics and Geographies Covered

Data contained in the ACS Summary File cover demographic, social, economic, and housing subject areas. All Detailed Tables for the ACS 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates are in the Summary File and are listed in [Appendix A](#) for their respective data release.

The published ACS Summary File geographies cover areas that are based on “summary levels.” A summary level specifies the content and the hierarchical relationships of the geographic elements that are required to tabulate and summarize data. For example, summary level code “040” represents the U.S. states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico; while summary level code “050” represents counties and county equivalents within states.

The ACS 1-year estimates are published for areas that have passed the 65,000 population threshold, while the ACS 3-year estimates are published for areas that have passed the 20,000 population threshold. The ACS 5-year estimates are published for all areas and include additional summary levels such as census tracts and block groups, and additional information for geographies such as American Indian areas, core based statistical areas, combined statistical areas, Congressional districts and state legislative districts. View the full list of summary levels published for the Detailed Tables in [Appendix B](#). For the first time in the 2009-2013 ACS 5-year data release, data for census block groups are published in American FactFinder, as well as the ACS Summary File. The list of tables in the 5-year [Appendix A](#) shows which tables are available at the block group level.

Many resources are available to help users understand the ACS geographic terms and concepts. For additional information, please visit the Geography Reference page at [www.census.gov/geo/www/reference.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/reference.html) and the Geography and the ACS page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance\\_for\\_data\\_users/geography/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/geography/).

## 1.4 Tools for Obtaining Data

Since using the ACS Summary File can be challenging, users should first check if their tables of interest are available for download on American FactFinder. Below are some other options to help users retrieve the tables they want. They are listed in order based on ease of use. You can access these tools on the ACS Summary File page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/).

- Summary File Retrieval Tool

The Summary File Retrieval Tool is a macro-driven Excel spreadsheet that provides a method to easily retrieve a table for the nation, states, and all of the geographic areas in a state (or for all cross-state geographic areas such as metropolitan statistical areas or census regions). This tool is designed to be easy to use, and does not require any programming experience. There is a drop down menu from which the user can select the state for the table and receive data for all geographies within the state. One key requirement is that Microsoft Excel 2007 or later is needed. Other hardware and software requirements for the tool are listed on the ACS Summary File page.

- Summary File Excel Import Tool

The Summary File Excel Import Tool is a replicate of the Excel templates that Census 2000 provided for the Summary File 3 release. The Excel Import Tool provides a basic

layout of each sequence in Excel in the same format as the estimate and margin of error files are formatted. For individuals that do not have Excel 2007 or later and are unable to use the Summary File Retrieval Tool, the Excel Import Tool provides an alternative option to read the ACS Summary File into Excel. You can access instructions for using this tool on the ACS Summary File page.

- SAS Programs

There are two programming options for SAS users. The first option is a set of individual SAS programs, one for each summary file by geography and sequence. These programs are best for users only interested in looking at a specific sequence for a specific geography. The second option is a single SAS program that is parameterized to allow users to read in any sequence for any geography into SAS. This program can also be used to read the entire summary file into SAS, and is designed for users looking for a large amount of data. You can access these programs on the ACS Summary File page.

- Summary File DataFerrett Tool (5-year release only)

DataFerrett is a tool provided by the Census Bureau to help users view, download, and manipulate a wide variety of data sets to suit their needs. Among the features provided by this tool is the ability to construct user-defined variables from the variables on the input data file(s), the ability for users to exclude data that is not of interest, a variety of options for downloading data, and the ability to create complex tabular reports from the data including graphs and thematic maps. This tool is ideal for data users who wish to view, customize, and restrict the data that is available in the ACS 5-year Summary File. A link to this tool is available on the Summary File page.

## 1.5 Notable Changes to the Summary File

Here are some notable changes for the 2013 ACS Summary Files:

- New Layout for the ACS Summary File Technical Document

This year, we created one “core” technical document for the 2013 ACS 1-year, 2011-2013 ACS 3-year, and 2009-2013 ACS 5-year data releases with separate appendices specific to each release. Appendices E and F from earlier years are now Appendices A and B for the 2013 data releases. In addition, worked examples from previous technical documents are now available on the ACS Summary File page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/). Let us know what you think by sending your feedback to [acso.users.support@census.gov](mailto:acso.users.support@census.gov).

- Format Change for Sequence Number Table Number Lookup Files

In previous years, we released the Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup Files in xls, sas7bdat, and txt formats. This year, we released the files in two formats: xls and sas7bdat.

- Block Groups Now Available in American FactFinder

For the first time with the 2009-2013 ACS 5-year data release, data for census block groups are published in American FactFinder, as well as the ACS Summary File. Block group level data for earlier years are only available in the ACS Summary File.

You can learn more about accessing block group level data using the ACS Summary File Retrieval Tool by viewing a video on the ACS Summary File page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/).

- TIGER/Line Shapefiles Pre-Joined with ACS Estimates Available

Did you know that TIGER/Line Shapefiles are available pre-joined with ACS 5-year estimates in geodatabase format? You can access these files on the TIGER Products page at [www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/tiger-data.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/tiger-data.html).

- Summary Level 080 Removed

Beginning with the 2009-2013 ACS 5-year data release, we will no longer produce estimates for summary level 080: State-County-County Subdivision-Place/Remainder-Census Tract. Summary level 080 estimates are for portions of tracts that are the intersecting areas of county subdivisions and places, or portions of county subdivisions and places that are the intersecting areas with tracts. We will continue to produce Census tract level estimates (summary level 140: State-County-Census Tract).

- Two additional areas included in the 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Summary File

The 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Summary File contains two areas from summary level 070: State-County-County Subdivision-Place/Remainder that are not available on American FactFinder. These geographies are "Louisville city (part), Louisville Central CCD, Jefferson County, Kentucky" and "Louisville city (part), Louisville West CCD, Jefferson County, Kentucky."

## 1.6 Contact Us

Please send any technical questions or comments on the ACS Summary File you have via email to: [acso.users.support@census.gov](mailto:acso.users.support@census.gov). If you have questions or comments about the American Community Survey, you can submit a question online at [ask.census.gov/](http://ask.census.gov/).

## 2 How to Use the ACS Summary File

### 2.1 Locating the Summary File

The ACS Summary File is accessible from the American Community Survey main page. From the ACS main page, [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs), click on the **Data and Documentation** tab, select the option for **Summary File**, as shown below:

The screenshot shows the American Community Survey website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following tabs: People, Business, Geography, Data, Research, and Newsroom. The 'Data & Documentation' tab is selected, and its dropdown menu is open, showing options: Data Releases, Data Product Descriptions, Documentation, Geography, Downloadable data via FTP, **Summary File** (highlighted with a white arrow), Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), and Custom Tabulations. The main content area features a 'Question Corner' section with a question about income data, an 'Explore the Form' section with a form preview, and a 'Data by Topic' section with a list of categories including Age and Sex / Aging, Ancestry, Disability, Commuting to Work, Education, Employment, Family/Relationships, Income and Earnings, Language, Origins, and Population Change. A search bar is located in the top right corner.

That will take you to the ACS Summary File page. Click on **1-year Summary File** to go to the ACS Summary File FTP site.

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## American Community Survey

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- Data Product Descriptions
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- Summary File**
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- Custom Tabulations

### Summary File

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The American Community Survey (ACS) Summary File is a set of comma-delimited text files that contain all of the Detailed Tables for the ACS 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year data releases.

The 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 full tables.

Starting with the 2013 ACS data release, block groups, the lowest level of geography published by the ACS, are available in American FactFinder. For earlier years, block groups are available only in the ACS 5-year Summary File.

2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005

#### Summary File Data and Documentation

<b>2013 ACS 1-year Estimates</b>	<b>2011-2013 ACS 3-year Estimates</b>	<b>2009-2013 ACS 5-year Estimates</b>
----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

**Data**  
Contains estimate, margin of error, and geography files for each release

[1-Year Summary File](#)    [3-Year Summary File](#)    [5-Year Summary File](#)

**Templates**  
Includes description of variables in each column for all sequence files and geography file

[1-year Templates \[ZIP xx MB\]](#)    [3-year Templates \[ZIP xx MB\]](#)    [5-year Templates \[ZIP xx MB\]](#)

This is the ACS Summary File—it is actually comprised of three folders that are explained the next section.

U.S. Department of Commerce

United States Census Bureau

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Name	Last modified	Size	Description
<a href="#">Parent Directory</a>		-	
<a href="#">2012 ACSSF All In 1 Giant File(Experienced-Users-Only)/</a>	04-Sep-2013 15:33	-	
<a href="#">2012 ACSSF By State All Tables/</a>	22-Aug-2013 11:50	-	
<a href="#">2012 ACSSF By State By Sequence Table Subset/</a>	09-Sep-2013 15:06	-	
<a href="#">ACS2012 1-Year TableShells.xls</a>	11-Sep-2013 09:49	3.5M	
<a href="#">ACS_2012_SF_Tech_Doc.pdf</a>	09-Sep-2013 13:55	3.4M	
<a href="#">SequenceNumberTableNumberLookup.sas7bdat</a>	11-Jul-2013 15:41	10M	
<a href="#">Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup.txt</a>	11-Jul-2013 15:42	2.0M	
<a href="#">Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup.xls</a>	11-Sep-2013 11:25	5.4M	
<a href="#">UserTools/</a>	09-Sep-2013 10:55	-	

## 2.2 Summary File Organization

The Summary File is organized in three folders as shown in the above screenshot. These three directories contain the same combination of files; they are simply arranged differently to accommodate various user needs:

- [ACSSF\\_All\\_In\\_1\\_Giant\\_File\(Experienced-Users-Only\)](#)



## ACSSF\_All\_In\_2\_Giant\_Files(Experienced-Users-Only) (5-year release)

The “All in 1 Giant File” or “All in 2 Giant Files” directory contains a zipped file, which includes geography, estimate, and margin of error files. This zipped file is ideal to download if users want estimates and margins of error for all geographies throughout the nation at once. The file is very large and should only be used by those that can easily process a very large file.

- ACSSF\_By\_State\_All\_Tables

The “By State All Tables” directory contains zipped files for each state or state level equivalent, each of the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, as well as cross-state geographies such as metropolitan areas. Each zipped file contains a geography file and multiple estimate and margin of error files. Downloading from these state level folders is ideal if users want all the tables for a state level geography or cross-state geographies.

- ACSSF\_By\_State\_By\_Sequence\_Table\_Subset

The “By State By Sequence Table Subset” directory contains folders for each state or state level equivalent, each of the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, as well as cross-state geographies such as metropolitan areas. Within those folders are a geography file and zipped files containing the estimate and margin of error files, one per “sequence” (sequences are explained in [Chapter 2.3](#)). Downloading from these folders is ideal if users only want a few tables for a state level geography or cross-state geographies.

Using the 1-year release as an example, the naming convention used for the zipped files in this directory is the following:

<b>2013 1 ak 0001 000.zip</b>		
<b>Example</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Range or Type</b>
2013	Reference Year	ACS data year (last year of the period for multiyear periods)
1	Period Covered	1=1-year, 3=3-year, 5=5-year
ak	State Level	US or abbreviations for state, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico
0001	Sequence Number	0001 to 9999
000	IterationID	Iteration ID for Selected Population Tables and American Indian & Alaska Native Tables. Note: Iteration ID is always “000” for the standard 1-Year, 3-Year, and 5-Year products.

The “All in 1 Giant File” (or “All in 2 Giant Files”) and the “By State All Tables” folders contain the same tables as the “By State By Sequence Table Subset” folder. The difference is in the organization. The “By State All Tables” zipped files contain all of the sequence files for the given state, so each zipped file contains over 300 files. The “All in 1 Giant File” (or “All in 2 Giant Files”) zipped file contain all sequence files for all states, which is thousands of files.

As mentioned earlier, the zipped files are divided by state or state-level equivalents. Those state-level equivalents include the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. There is also a level called "United States," which is for summary levels that can cross state boundaries, such as the Nation, and all Regions, Divisions, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs), and Tribal Reservations. The United States level does not contain tables for geographies that are always entirely within a state, such as counties and places; for those tables, go to the folder or files for that state.

The following is a table that gives examples of the types of summary levels are in the state and state-level equivalent folders and files and those that are in the United States folders and files.

Each State, DC, and Puerto Rico	United States
State	United States
County	Region
County subdivision	Division
Place	Metropolitan or urban statistical areas
Congressional districts (113th Congress)	New England City and Town Area (NECTA)
Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)	American Indian/Alaska Native/Hawaiian Home Land areas
School Districts	Urban areas
Alaska Native Regional Corporation	Zip Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)

### 2.3 Sequence Numbers

Detailed Tables for similar subject areas are grouped together in "sequences." A sequence number is an assigned number to a grouping of ACS tables. Table sequencing now follows these rules:

1) Tables are sorted numerically by the "root" of their Table ID, where the "root" is defined as the numeric section after the first letter and before any additional letters, so for example the root of B06004APR is "06004". For tables with the same root, additionally sort them in the following order:

- Non-iterated, non-collapsed, non-PR version (e.g., Table B06003)
- Iterated, non-collapsed, non-PR versions (e.g., Tables B06004A, B06004B...B06004I)
- Non-iterated, collapsed, non-PR version (e.g., Table C06001)
- Iterated, collapsed, non-PR version (e.g., Tables C08505A, C08505B... C08505I)
- Non-iterated, non-collapsed, PR version (e.g., Table B06003PR)
- Iterated, non-collapsed, PR versions (e.g., Tables B06004APR, B06004BPR...B06004IPR)
- Non-iterated, collapsed, PR version (e.g., Table C06001PR)
- Iterated, collapsed, PR version (e.g., Table C06001APR)

2) With tables sorted in this order, start with the first table and assign it to the first sequence. For each subsequent table, if the table has either a new "subject," a new "geography type," or would cause the number of cells in the sequence to exceed 245, then start a new sequence. "Subject" is described using the second and third characters in the Table ID, so for example the subject of B06004APR is "06" for place of birth. You can view a complete list of subjects at [ask.census.gov/faq.php?id=5000&faqId=1687](http://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id=5000&faqId=1687). "Geography type" can be one of three things:

Place of Residence geography type, Place of Work geography type, or Residence 1 Year Ago geography type.

3) If a table does not fit in one sequence, then put the first 245 cells of it in one sequence, and the rest in the next. If a table does not fit in two sequences, then put the first 245 cells of it in one sequence, the next 245 cells of it in the next sequence, and the rest in a third sequence.

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 data cells and 11 other cells reserved for identifying information.
- There are approximately 170+ sequences for the 2013 ACS 1-year Summary File, approximately 170+ sequences for the 2011-2013 ACS 3-year Summary File, and approximately 120+ sequences for the 2009-2013 ACS 5-year Summary File.
- Tables are grouped numerically by the "root" of their Table ID, (i.e., Table B00001 is in sequence file 0001).
- Tables with race iterations are grouped in the same sequence.

It is critical to know the sequence number associated with a Detailed Table (Table ID) for two reasons. First, one needs it in order to access the correct estimates and margins of error files for the desired table. Second, the field start position for the estimates or margins of error of a certain Detailed Table depends on its sequence number.

The Sequence Number and Detailed Table Number Lookup file, available in Excel and as a SAS dataset, lists Table IDs associated with each sequence number. This spreadsheet is available on the ACS Summary File page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/).

For example, to find the sequence number associated with the Table B08406, a user must open and look for that Table ID in the Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup file. Shown below is a screenshot of this file opened to where the "tblid" is B08406. The next column in the file, "seq," shows that this Table ID is associated with the sequence number "0029." In order to access the estimate and margin of error file for Table B08406, a user will need to download the estimate and margin of error files labeled with the sequence number "0029."

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
5923	ACSSF	B08406	29			7	51 CELLS	SEX OF WORKERS BY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK FOR WORKPLACE GEOGRAPHY	Journey to Work
5924	ACSSF	B08406	29					Universe: Workers 16 years and over	
5925	ACSSF	B08406	29	1				Total:	
5926	ACSSF	B08406	29	2				Car, truck, or van:	
5927	ACSSF	B08406	29	3				Drove alone	
5928	ACSSF	B08406	29	4				Carpooled:	
5929	ACSSF	B08406	29	5				In 2-person carpool	
5930	ACSSF	B08406	29	6				In 3-person carpool	
5931	ACSSF	B08406	29	7				In 4-or-more-person carpool	
5932	ACSSF	B08406	29	8				Public transportation (excluding taxicab):	
5933	ACSSF	B08406	29	9				Bus or trolley bus	
5934	ACSSF	B08406	29	10				Streetcar or trolley car (carro publico in Puerto Rico)	
5935	ACSSF	B08406	29	11				Subway or elevated	
5936	ACSSF	B08406	29	12				Railroad	
5937	ACSSF	B08406	29	13				Ferryboat	
5938	ACSSF	B08406	29	14				Bicycle	
5939	ACSSF	B08406	29	15				Walked	
5940	ACSSF	B08406	29	16				Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	
5941	ACSSF	B08406	29	17				Worked at home	
5942	ACSSF	B08406	29	18				Male:	
5943	ACSSF	B08406	29	19				Car, truck, or van:	

## 2.4 Geography File

There is a geography file that comes with the estimate and margin of error files. This file begins with a “g” and is an ASCII file using either a position based format or comma delimited format. A geography file exists for each state or state level equivalent.

Geography files are named using the following convention (using the 1-year data release as an example):

<b>g 2013 1 ak.txt</b>		
<b>Example</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Range or Type</b>
g	File Type	g=geography
2013	Reference Year	ACS data year (last year of the period for multiyear periods)
1	Period Covered	1=1-year, 3=3-year, 5=5-year
ak	State Level	US or abbreviations for state, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico

The geography files contain geographic information for an ACS tabulated area, including the name of the area. One variable on the file, called LOGRECNO, is the logical record number and is used to link the level of geography to the estimate and margin of error files. An example of how to use LOGRECNO is discussed in [Chapter 2.5](#). The fields in the layout below are blank if the geography is not available for a release.

The following table provides the generic layout of the geography file (1,3,5-Year):

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Field Size</b>	<b>Starting Position</b>
----------------------	--------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

<b>RECORD CODES</b>			
FILEID	Always equal to ACS Summary File identification	6	1
STUSAB	State Postal Abbreviation	2	7
SUMLEVEL	Summary Level	3	9
COMPONENT	Geographic Component	2	12
LOGRECNO	Logical Record Number	7	14
<b>GEOGRAPHIC AREA CODES</b>			
US	US	1	21
REGION	Census Region	1	22
DIVISION	Census Division	1	23
STATECE	State (Census Code)	2	24
STATE	State (FIPS Code)	2	26
COUNTY	County of current residence	3	28
COUSUB	County Subdivision (FIPS)	5	31
PLACE	Place (FIPS Code)	5	36
TRACT	Census Tract	6	41
BLKGRP	Block Group	1	47
CONCIT	Consolidated City	5	48
AIANHH	American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/ Hawaiian Home Land (Census)	4	53
AIANHHFP	American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/ Hawaiian Home Land (FIPS)	5	57
AIHHTLI	American Indian Trust Land/ Hawaiian Home Land Indicator	1	62
AITSC	American Indian Tribal Subdivision (Census)	3	63
AIT	American Indian Tribal Subdivision (FIPS)	5	66
ANRC	Alaska Native Regional Corporation (FIPS)	5	71
CBSA	Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area	5	76
CSA	Combined Statistical Area	3	81
METDIV	Metropolitan Statistical Area-Metropolitan Division	5	84
MACC	Metropolitan Area Central City	1	89
MEMI	Metropolitan/Micropolitan Indicator Flag	1	90
NECTA	New England City and Town Area	5	91
CNECTA	New England City and Town Combined Statistical Area	3	96
NECTADIV	New England City and Town Area Division	5	99
UA	Urban Area	5	104
BLANK		5	109
CDCURR	Current Congressional District ***	2	114
SLDU	State Legislative District Upper	3	116
SLDL	State Legislative District Lower	3	119
BLANK		6	122
BLANK		3	128
ZCTA5	5-digit ZIP Code Tabulation Area	5	131

SUBMCD	Subminor Civil Division (FIPS)	5	136
SDELM	State-School District (Elementary)	5	141
SDSEC	State-School District (Secondary)	5	146
SDUNI	State-School District (Unified)	5	151
UR	Urban/Rural	1	156
PCI	Principal City Indicator	1	157
BLANK		6	158
BLANK		5	164
PUMA5	Public Use Microdata Area – 5% File	5	169
BLANK		5	174
GEOID	Geographic Identifier	40	179
NAME	Area Name	1000	219
BTTR	Tribal Tract	6	1219
BTBG	Tribal Block Group	1	1225
BLANK		44	1226

We also provide an Excel template for the geography file named “SFGeoFile Template.xls.” The template provides users with two rows containing the variable names and their descriptions (as displayed in the above table) for each column in the geography file. It is meant to be used with the comma delimited version of the geography file. The template is available in the User Tools folder for your dataset (i.e., [www2.census.gov/acs2013\\_1yr/summaryfile/UserTools/](http://www2.census.gov/acs2013_1yr/summaryfile/UserTools/) in the zipped “2013\_SummaryFileTemplates” folder). Here is a screenshot of the Excel file:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	
1	FILEID	STUSAB	SUMLEVEL	COMPONENT	LOGRECNO	US	REGION	DIVISION	STATECE	STATE	COUNTY	COUSUB	PLACE	TRACT
2	Always equal to ACS Summary File Identification	State Postal Abbreviation	Summary Level	Geographic Component	Logical Record Number	US	Census Region	Census Division	State (Census Code)	State (FIPS Code)	County of current residence	County Subdivision (FIPS)	Place (FIPS Code)	Tract
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														

Each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the set of cross-state geographies, have one geography file associated with them regardless of how the Summary File is accessed. For example, the following screenshot shows the beginning of the state geography file for Maryland. In the screenshot, the logical record numbers corresponding with the state of Maryland, Allegany County, and Anne Arundel County are circled. The logical record number for the state of Maryland is “0000001”, for Allegany County it is “0000012”, and for Anne Arundel County it is “0000013”.

Sequence Number	Geographic Area
ACSSF MD0400000000001	24 04000US24 Maryland
ACSSF MD0400100000002	24 04001US24 Maryland; Urban
ACSSF MD0404300000003	24 04043US24 Maryland; Rural
ACSSF MD040A000000004	24 040A0US24 Maryland; In metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area
ACSSF MD040C000000005	24 040C0US24 Maryland; In metropolitan statistical area
ACSSF MD040C100000006	24 040C1US24 Maryland; In metropolitan statistical area -- in principal city
ACSSF MD040C200000007	24 040C2US24 Maryland; In metropolitan statistical area -- not in principal city
ACSSF MD040E000000008	24 040E0US24 Maryland; In micropolitan statistical area
ACSSF MD040E200000009	24 040E2US24 Maryland; In micropolitan statistical area -- not in principal city
ACSSF MD040G000000010	24 040G0US24 Maryland; Not in metropolitan or micropolitan statistical area
ACSSF MD040H000000011	24 040H0US24 Maryland; Not in metropolitan statistical area
ACSSF MD0500000000012	24001 05000US24001 Allegany County, Maryland
ACSSF MD0500000000013	24003 05000US24003 Anne Arundel County, Maryland
ACSSF MD0500000000014	24005 05000US24005 Baltimore County, Maryland
ACSSF MD0500000000015	24009 05000US24009 Calvert County, Maryland

Excess spaces in the pictured geography file have been removed for illustrative purposes.

## 2.5 Estimate and Margin of Error Files

Each of the three Summary File directories include zipped files containing estimate files (file names beginning with an “e”) and margins of error files (file names beginning with an “m”). The estimate files contain published ACS estimates and the margin of error files contain published ACS margins of error for their respective estimates. Here is the naming convention used for those files (using the 1-year data release as an example):

e 2013 1 ak 0001 000.txt		
Example	Name	Range or Type
e	File Type	e=estimate, m=margin of error
2013	Reference Year	ACS data year (last year of the period for multiyear periods)
1	Period Covered	1=1-year, 3=3-year, 5=5-year
ak	State Level	US or abbreviations for state, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
0001	Sequence Number	0001 to 9999
000	Reserved for future use	Iteration value for future use

The estimates and margins of error for Detailed Tables are grouped together in by sequence numbers, as discussed in [Chapter 2.3](#). There is an estimate and margin of error file for each sequence number.

The format of the estimate and margin of error files are identical; they are strings of comma-delimited ASCII text. Each row represents a different geographic area and the first six fields contain metadata such as the geographic area and the sequence number. Following those fields are the estimates or margins of error for the Detailed Tables. Starting and ending positions of the fields associated with each Detailed Table can be found using the Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup file, which is discussed in [Chapter 2.3](#). The estimates or margins of error for one Detailed Table span several fields within a row.

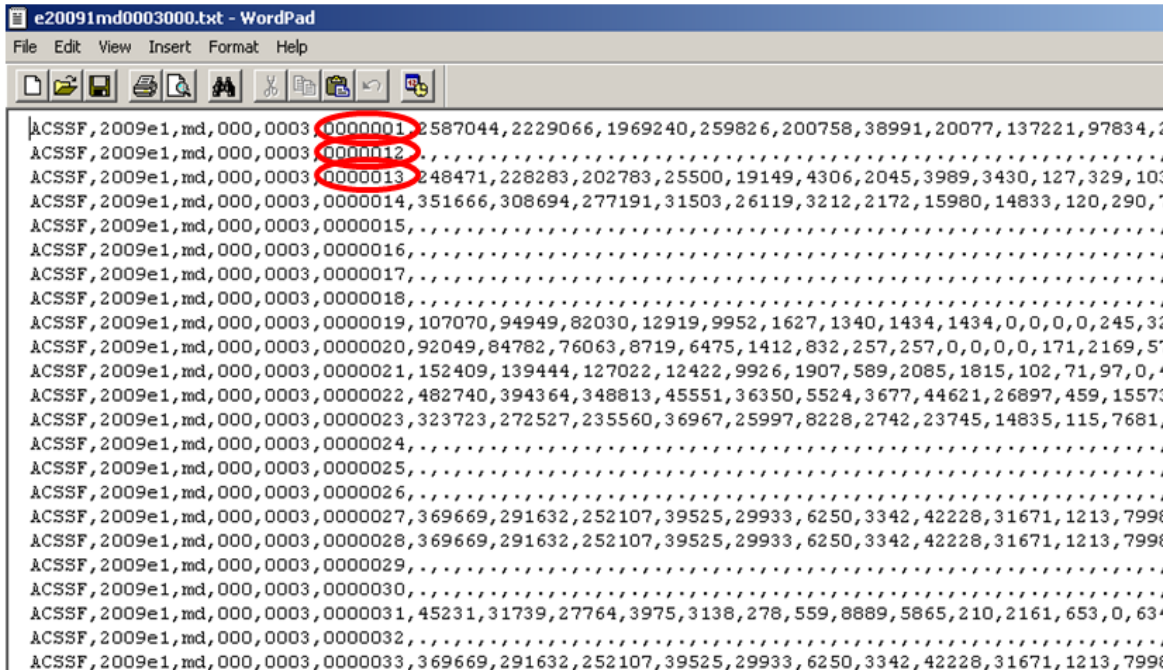
Here is the record layout of the estimates and the margin of error files:

Field Name	Description	Field Size
FILEID	File Identification	6 Characters
FILETYPE	File Type	6 Characters
STUSAB	State/U.S.-Abbreviation (USPS)	2 Characters
CHARITER	Character Iteration	3 Characters
SEQUENCE	Sequence Number	4 Characters
LOGRECNO	Logical Record Number	7 Characters
Field # 7 and up	Estimates (or Margins of Error)	Various

Going back to the example from [Chapter 2.3](#), we know that Table B08406 corresponds to sequence “0029.” Additionally, the Sequence Number and Table Number Lookup file (as shown earlier) tells us that Table B08406 begins at position seven and contains 51 cells.

In order to get estimates for Maryland; Allegany County, MD; and Anne Arundel County, MD one must recall the logical record numbers associated with each geography. In [Chapter 2.4](#), we identified these to be “0000001,” “0000012,” and “0000013,” respectively. The logical record number, LOGRECNO, must be used to merge the geography information to the estimate and margin of error files.

The example below shows the estimate file for sequence “0029” and all geographies except census tracts and block groups for the state of Maryland using the 2007-2009 ACS 3-year Summary File. For the 2008-2012 ACS 5-year Summary File, the dots “.” in the below screenshot will be replaced by empty cells as documented in [Chapter 4.2](#). Note that each row has a uniquely assigned logical record number, called LOGRECNO, which links the estimate to a specific geographic area. The pictured example has the logical record numbers corresponding to Maryland, Allegany County, and Anne Arundel County circled. Estimates for Table B08406 at these geographic levels can be found within their respective rows at field seven and continuing for 50 additional fields.





## **3 User References and Website Resources**

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### **3.1 Detailed Tables for the ACS Estimates**

The table list in [Appendix A](#) for each data release contains information on all Detailed Tables included in the ACS Summary File. This appendix also includes a complete list of tables and their geography restrictions. For data quality and geographic reasons, some tables are published with specific geography restrictions. For example, the table B05001-PR, Citizenship Status in Puerto Rico, is produced for Puerto Rico only, and the table B08501, Means Of Transportation To Work By Age For Workplace Geography, is only produced for the work place geographies.

### **3.2 ACS Summary Levels/Components For Detailed Tables**

[Appendix B](#) for each release contains a list of the summary levels and components that are included in the ACS Detailed Tables.

### **3.3 ACS Summary File Page**

The ACS Summary File page at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/) contains links to all of the data, documentation, and user tools associated with the ACS Summary File. This includes the data, templates, technical documents and appendices, Summary File Retrieval Tool, table shells, sequence number table number lookup files, SAS programs, DataFerrett, and TIGER/Line Shapefiles pre-joined with ACS estimates.

### **3.4 ACS Summary File User Tools Page**

More information about the user tools described in [Chapter 1.4](#), such as the Summary File Retrieval Tool, Excel Import Tool, SAS tools, and DataFerrett, is available on the ACS Summary File page in the Summary File User Tools section at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/summary\\_file/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/) .

### **3.5 Supplemental Documentation**

Supplemental documentation concerning the American Community Survey to assist users using this technical document is located on the ACS website at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/documentation\\_main/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/). Documents such as the Subject Definitions, Accuracy of the Data, and Code Lists are available on the URL listed above.

## 4 User Notes

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### 4.1 Population Thresholds

The Census Bureau publishes ACS 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates, with population thresholds set for the ACS 1-year and 3-year estimates to produce reliable data. Here is a brief comparison of the three types of estimates:

1-year Estimates	3-Year Estimates	5-Year Estimates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published for selected geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or greater</li> <li>Represent the average characteristics over a calendar year</li> <li>Have fewer published geographic areas than the 3-year and 5-year estimates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published for selected geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater</li> <li>Represent the average characteristics over the 3-year period of time</li> <li>Have more published geographic areas than the 1-year estimates but fewer than the 5-year estimates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published for all geographic areas including those with a population under 20,000.</li> <li>Represent the average characteristics over the 5-year period of time</li> <li>Have more published areas than the 1-year and 3-year estimates</li> </ul>

For more information on the ACS estimates, users are encouraged to visit the ACS website [www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance\\_for\\_data\\_users/estimates/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/estimates/).

### 4.2 Jam Values

Some data values represent unique situations where either the information to be conveyed is an explanation for the absence of data, represented by a symbol in the data display, such as "(X)", or the information to be conveyed is an open-ended distribution, such as 115 or greater, represented by 115+.

The following special data values can appear in the ACS Summary File table as an explanation for the absence of data:

- Missing Value = ""

A missing string indicates that the estimate is unavailable. (This appears in the estimates and margins or error files as two commas adjacent to each other without anything between them, or if the last cell in a data file is filtered then you get a comma followed immediately by a carriage return or EOF.) A missing value indicates when an estimate is missing because of filtering for geographic restrictions, coefficients of variations (CV), or was removed due to the Disclosure Review Board's (DRB) requirements. For more detail on filtering, please visit [Chapter 4.4](#).

- Dot = "."

A dot indicates when the estimate has no sample observations or too few sample observations. In the margin of error files, this value could also indicate that the margin of error is unavailable for a median estimate that has been replaced with a jam value.

- Zero = "0"

A "0" entry in the margin of error column indicates that the estimate is controlled. A statistical test for sampling variability is not appropriate. This is similar to the "\*\*\*\*\*" symbol used in American FactFinder.

- Negative 1 = "-1"

This indicates that an estimate does not contain a Margin of Error. Tables B00001, B00002, and tables starting with B98 and B99 do not have margin of error (MOE) associated with them. The MOE calculations are set to -1 for these tables.

- Jam Values for Medians

The following is a listing of the jam values for medians. For example, if there is an estimate of "2499" for table B10010, then it does not indicate a dollar amount. It means that the median is somewhere below 2,500 and thus is not calculated.

<b>Jam Value</b>	<b>Actual Meaning</b>	<b>Use for Medians</b>
0	1 or less	Age, Duration of Marriage
9	9.0 or more	Rooms
10	10.0 or less	Gross Rent as Percentage of Income, Owner Costs as Percentage of Income
50	50.0 or more	Gross Rent as Percentage of Income, Owner Costs as Percentage of Income
99	100 or less	Rent, Gross Rent, Selected Monthly Owner Costs, Monthly Housing Costs
101	101 or more	Duration of Marriage
116	115 or more	Age
199	200 or less	Tax
1001	1,000 or more	Selected Monthly Owner Costs
1939	1939 or earlier	Year Built
1969	1969 or earlier	Year Moved In
2001	2,000 or more	Rent, Gross Rent
2010	2010 or later	Year Built, Year Moved In
2499	2,500 or less	Income, Earnings
4001	4,000 or more	Selected Monthly Owner Costs, Monthly Housing Costs
9999	10,000 or less	Value
10001	10,000 or more	Tax
200001	200,000 or more	Income
250001	250,000 or more	Income, Earnings
1000001	1,000,000 or more	Value

### 4.3 Rounding Rules and Margins of Error

B00001, B00002, B98001, and B98002 are sample counts, not estimates, and do not have margin of error (MOE) associated with them. Tables in series B99\* imputation tables and B98\* (except B98001 and B98002) quality measure tables do not provide margin of error calculations. The margin of error calculations are set to -1 for these tables.

There are a few special rules on how certain margin of error are determined for ACS estimates. The accuracy of the estimate (decimal place) within the detailed tables determines how many digits the margin of error is rounded.

#### 4.4 Explanation of Missing Estimates and Data Release Filtering Rules

Data users often question why certain ACS estimates are not available. Missing estimates can be caused by data suppression through various methods or restrictions that are applied to ACS data to limit the disclosure of information about individual respondents and to reduce estimates with unacceptable statistical reliability.

Filtering rules, based on statistical reliability of the ACS 1-year and 3-year survey estimates, are used to ensure that Detailed Tables are not released where the majority of the estimates in the Detailed Tables have an unacceptable level of reliability.

Learn more about missing estimates and filtering rules in the data suppression document available on the ACS website at [www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/data\\_suppression/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/data_suppression/).

#### 4.5 Display of Estimates

The estimates in the summary files are stored using standard notation instead of in scientific notation. The estimates are stored as whole numbers. The largest estimate in the ACS Summary File contains 14 digits.

#### 4.6 Multiple Sequences For a Table

There are eight tables with more than the maximum 245 cells that cannot fit into a single sequence, so each of these tables is broken into multiple sequence files. The table below shows the tables that contain multiple sequences:

Tables That Are Contained in More Than One Sequence File

Table ID	Table Title
B24121	Detailed Occupation By Median Earnings In The Past 12 Months For The Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years And Over
B24122	Detailed Occupation By Median Earnings In The Past 12 Months For The Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Male Population 16 Years And Over
B24123	Detailed Occupation For The Full-Time, Year Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years And Over
B24124	Detailed Occupation For The Full-Time, Year Round Civilian Employed Male Population 16 Years And Over
B24125	Detailed Occupation For The Full-Time, Year Round Civilian Employed Male Population 16 Years And Over
B24126	Detailed Occupation For The Full-Time, Year Round Civilian Employed Female Population 16 Years And Over

Check [Appendix A](#) to verify the sequences for these tables. The last six tables on the list are only produced at the United States national level (summary level 010), and the files for these sequences will be blank for all other summary levels.

## Document History

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<b>Version #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
1	09/11/2014	Initial Release