

PHIA
Public Health Information Alliance
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Web Based Statistical Sources for Public Health

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Class Description

Locating vital statistics, health and health behavior statistics, and demographics can be time consuming. Learn a logical approach to digging out the data using three steps: 1. discover what entity collects that data routinely, 2. learn how it is distributed, and 3. use efficient techniques to retrieve the specific data you need. Several major statistical resources on the web will be demonstrated. Sources for statistics at local, state, and national levels will be reviewed.

Goals and Objectives

By the end of class, participants will know:

1. An approach for discovering statistical sources new to the user.
2. Location of the major portal sites on the web for public health statistics.
3. The statistical scope of some of the major ongoing data collection efforts in the US.

Statistical Categories Covered

This session concentrates on demographic, health, and vital statistics. The section on techniques for locating statistical sources, which emphasizes the underlying thought process and tools, will be useful for any type of statistical search.

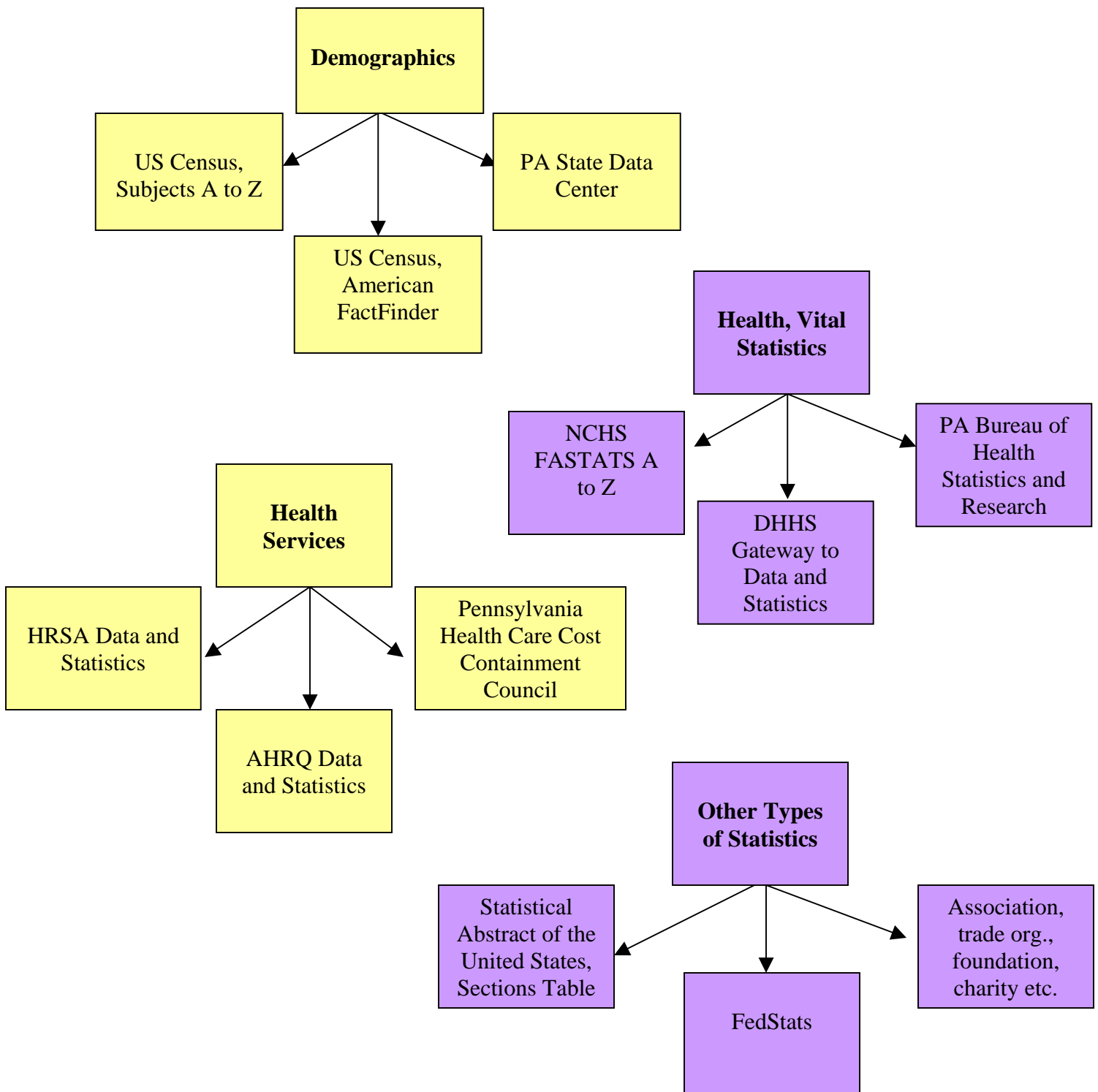
A Stepped Approach to Finding Stats on the Web

To find statistics when you don't know the exact source, it's best to approach it in a series of steps.

1. **Identify the type of statistic needed** – demographic? Health? Vital statistics? Health care delivery? Environmental? Etc.
2. **Identify an appropriate portal site/ ongoing survey** for that statistical type.
 - a. Chart on next page identifies likely starting points that compile statistics from multiple surveys and collection systems
 - b. Consider geographic level in choosing start point (fed, state, local)
 - i. Some Federal sites (ex census) will have local level data too
3. **Search and/or browse the starting point**
4. **Learn how to use the data interface.**
 - a. Read documentation. It often discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the data. For example, data may not be reliable at a local level from large national surveys.
 - b. Web sources may have condensed reports, existing tables, tables you can create on the fly, or raw data you can download and manipulate.
 - c. Some sites have special online tools for mapping, chart creation, downloading whole datasets, and displaying spreadsheets in their own browsers.
5. **If not successful, get assistance** from one of the following resources.
 - a. Workplace Library
 - b. Public Library – list at <http://www.statelibrary.state.pa.us/libraries/cwp/view.asp?a=11&Q=79040>

- c. Academic Library
- d. PA Data Center <http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/>
- e. PHC4 <http://www.phc4.org/>

Quick Starting Points by Statistical Type



Demographics, US, State or Local Level Quick Start Points

US Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov/>

1. Subjects A-Z an excellent starting point

Example. Find county level data on age of the population of your county

1. In Subjects A to Z, go to A
2. Page down to Age Data. Click on it.
3. Click on County Level.
4. There are two sources, the census and estimates. Look at both, compare information given.

Pennsylvania State Data Center <http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/index.html>

1. Online includes reports based on census data,
2. Note that “County and Municipal Profiles” link on the Data page contains reports based on 1990 census data. Similar reports from the 2000 census are under the link “Census 2000.”
3. Pennsylvania Statistical Abstract can be purchased in print or CD from this site, but is not full text online. Includes statistics on population, vital statistics, industrial development, banking, employment, education, social services, taxes, government, crime, infrastructure, etc.

U of Pittsburgh, University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR)

<http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu/>

1. Publications section contains reports on Pittsburgh and Allegheny county using social, economic, and health data.
2. For more personalized service, contact the staff of the Urban and Regional Analysis Unit of UCSUR. Contact info is on their website.

Health and Vital Statistics Quick Start Points

National Center for Health Statistics <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

1. FASTATS A to Z.

Example: Find the number of emergency room visits in the United States by children under the age of 18 related to automobile accidents.

1. In FASTATS A to Z, Go to E
2. Click on Emergency Department Visits
3. Go to the most likely table listed, *Number of injury-related visits to hospital emergency departments by sex, age, and intent and mechanisms of injury: 1995-2001* from Health, United States
4. Find the statistic of interest.
5. Note the source of the statistic is in the footnotes.

1. Search or browse several tools for locating statistics produced by DHHS agencies.

Example 1: Find source of data on heart disease and smoking

1. In the DHHS Gateway to Data and Statistics, click on DataFinder.
2. In the search box type “heart disease” and smoking. Click Go
3. Examine results, follow links of interest.

Example 2: Search DataFinder two different ways for oral health statistics. Compare the results. Which result set do you prefer?

1. Go to the DataFinder site.
2. Enter the first search. Use “ “ to search for the phrase “*oral health*”. Browse the results
3. Enter the second search. *Oral or dental*. Compare the results to the first search.

Example 3: Browse two lists for likely sources of data on health of the elderly

1. From the DHHS Gateway to Data and Statistics click on Shortcuts to Major HHS Data Systems
2. From the DHHS Gateway to Data and Statistics click on MetaDirectory of HHS Data Resources
3. Compare the type of information provided in each list.

Health and Vital Statistics : PA State or Local level

Pennsylvania Bureau of Health Statistics and Research

<http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=175&Q=228721>

Be aware that this site is rather poorly organized, and you may have to dig for what you want. (see work force statistic example below for illustration).

1. **E Guide to Health Statistics (A to Z)** – best starting point if unsure about what’s on the site. Click on button on main page to access.

Example: What percentage of adults smoke in the north central region of Pennsylvania?

1. Click on the E Guide to Health Statistics (A to Z) button
2. Go to S, find smoking
3. Follow instruction on screen to access Behavioral Risk Data
4. Click on Behavioral Risk Factors for Pennsylvania Adults - Regional Differences
5. Find data needed in the report

2. **EpiQMS tool (Epidemiologic Query and Mapping System)**

- a. create customized data tables, charts, maps and county profiles of birth, death, cancer and population statistics.
- a. Adobe SVG Viewer (version 3.0 or higher is required) can be downloaded from the website to view maps and charts. Table creation requires no additional software.
- b. Datasets include PA deaths, births, population, and cancer incidence.

Example: Create a table including the number of deaths due to heart attack in all Pennsylvania counties in 2002.

1. From the EpiQMS page, <http://app2.health.state.pa.us/epiqms/>, click on the graphic logo
2. On the page Step 1: Choose a dataset, click on Resident Deaths.
3. Leave the other drop boxes on the page at the defaults of county/state and Table.
4. To select all counties for inclusion in the table, in the County/State scroll box click the first county, hold down the shift key, scroll down and click on the last county.
5. In the Underlying Cause of Death box, scroll down to Acute myocardial infarction and click on it.
6. Click on Make Table.
7. Look through the results. A number in red indicates a higher than expected number compared to the state. Blue indicates a lower one.

3. **Links to Other Health Statistics Web Sites (Button)**

- a. Sometimes serves as a better starting point than the A to Z list.
- b. Definitely use it if the A to Z list indicates there should be a report on the website, and the link it gives leads to a confusing page.

Example: Find county level data on the health workforce in Pennsylvania, using two paths to the same data.

1. Try the A to Z list first. What do they call the category?
 - a. Once you find it, click on the link, and read the description of the data.
 - b. Click on the link to the data reports. Locate them on the page.
2. Now try it through the Links to Other Health Statistics Web Sites.
 - a. From the Links, choose State or Local Agencies
 - b. Find the Health Workforce Reports link, click on it.
 - c. Find a report of interest to you and follow the link.

Other Statistical Types Quick Start Points

Statistical Abstract of the United States <http://www.census.gov/statab/www/>

1. Published annually, print and on the Internet. Most libraries have a print copy in reference.
2. Internet version free on the web, pdf file.
3. While the Statistical Abstract doesn't contain exhaustive data tables, it does cover a wide range of topics, and gives credits to the source of its data.
4. Look up your subject in the index, or go to the broad category it is mostly to fall under and browse the tables. If there is a table on your topic, check the footnotes for its statistical sources. Locate the original source to see if there is more information.

Example: Find the total national health expenditure on public health for the most recent year available.

1. From the Statistical Abstract page <http://www.census.gov/statab/www/> click on "View online versions of 2003 edition"
2. Go to the light blue table, and click on the 2003 link labeled Health and Nutrition.
3. A PDF copy of the tables opens. Click on the binoculars icon to start searching.
4. Enter *public health* in the search box.
5. Follow the search links to the various tables.
6. Note what information is given, and its source(s).
7. If you choose to use the Index instead of going straight to the tables and searching, you must look for broader topics if your topic does not appear. For example, the tables that public health expenditures statistics appear in a table indexed to "health expenditures" in the index.

FedStats <http://www.fedstats.gov/>

1. Directory of statistical sources from federal agencies of all types
2. A to Z list very broad, if it doesn't contain your topic, do a search instead.

Example: Find likely Federal sources of data on the tobacco industry

1. Go to the FedStats web page
2. At the bottom of the column headed "Links to Statistics" click on the word Search.
3. On the search page, type "tobacco" in the search box, click on Search
4. Follow the resulting links. What agencies collect these statistics?

Find an association, foundation, charity or think tank that works in the topic area.

1. Interest groups often commission statistical work, publish reports based on the statistics.
2. *Directory of Associations* – published by Gale, this is a standard reference work in most library reference collections. Print and online versions exist. Online by subscription only.
 - a. Associations in the directory are organized by subject. Use the index to find appropriate groups.
3. If you are primarily interested in using the Internet for this task, a search engine such as Google, or a weblinks list from a know organization are good starting points.

Example: find associations or foundations that are interested in injury prevention, then examine their websites for statistical sources.

1. In Google enter "*injury prevention*" association OR foundation
2. Examine the links, choose a few to follow.
3. Look for statistics on websites retrieved.
4. Check those websites carefully for attribution of statistical sources.
5. Check the original source if possible.

Consult an academic library

1. Many carry specialized databases they can consult.
2. If you do not have borrowing privileges, check on policy of service and resource access for unaffiliated individuals before making a trip there.
4. Resources to look for
 - a. *American Statistics Index*. A comprehensive guide and index to the statistical publications of the U.S. Government
 - b. *Statistical Reference Index*. A selective guide to American statistical publications from sources other than the U.S. Government.
 - c. *Statistical Universe*. Online database available by subscription only from Lexis Nexis that contains the same information as *American Statistics Index*, *Statistical Reference Index*, and *Index to International Statistics*.
 - i. Allows searching within the statistical tables, not just the titles and headings, making it easier to locate specific data.

Statistical Portals for Public Health on the Internet

Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce : Health Data Tools and Statistics

http://phpartners.org/health_stats.html

About the Partners Site

1. Created by the National Library of Medicine in partnership with national public health organizations and agencies.
2. Part of a larger site to link public health workers to information on the web.

Content

1. Links to health statistics and data sets
2. Resources to support data collection.
3. An extensive list, organized by geography and type of data tool.
4. Not organized by topic.

DHHS Gateway to Data and Statistics

<http://hhs-stat.net/index.asp>

About the Gateway

1. One stop for access to data from multiple HHS agencies
2. Search the DataFinder database or browse for sources
3. DataFinder searching supports Boolean and, or and not functions. See the Search Tips link on that page for exact syntax allowed.
4. For search examples, see page 6 and 7 of this guide.

Pennsylvania Department of Health : Links to Other Health Statistics Web Sites

<http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=175&q=202163>

1. Links to environmental and human health statistics
2. organized by issuing agency.
3. Two sections
 - a. National
 - b. State or Local

PHIA

<http://www.hsls.pitt.edu/guides/phia/links/stats>

1. Created as part of the PHIA website for ACHD, it contains links to sites organized into three main sections,
 - a. General Statistics and Guides
 - b. Population Statistics
 - c. Health and Vital Statistics.

2. Within each are subdivision for National, State and Local statistics.

National Center for Health Statistics : Other Sites

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/sites.htm>

1. This set of links is useful when you need health data that does not appear on the NCHS website.
 - a. The first few links are to other statistical portal sites.
 - b. The rest are to individual sites, organized by topic.

ICPSR - Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/index-medium.html>

“ICPSR maintains and provides access to a vast archive of social science data for research and instruction, and offers training in quantitative methods to facilitate effective data use... ICPSR hosts a number of topical archives, including the [Health and Medical Care Archive](#) (HMCA), the [International Archive of Education Data](#) (IAED), the [National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging](#) (NACDA), the [National Archive of Criminal Justice Data](#) (NACJD), the [Substance Abuse & Mental Health Data Archive](#) (SAMHDA), and the [Child Care and Early Education Research Connections](#) (CCEERC).” (from About ICPSR, <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/org/index.html>)

Demographics in More Depth: Using the US Census Web Site

About the Census

<http://www.census.gov>

1. Every ten years
2. Terms used for data from the Short and Long Forms
 - a. 100% data - from questions on both the Short Form and the Long Form
 - b. Sample data – from questions on just the Long Form
 - i. 1 in 6 nationally, but not evenly distributed
 1. Government unit fewer than 2100 One in two
 2. Government unit 2100-31000 One in four
 3. Census Tract 5200 or more One in Eight
 4. Any other area One in Six
3. Data from all past and present censuses available on the Census website
4. Estimates of population change produced between census
 - a. National done monthly by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin
 - b. State, County, annually by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin
 - c. Government entities over 39,000 population – annual, total pop.
5. Annual estimates for July of each year, released at various times for different data products
6. An excellent tutorial on the structure and content of the 2000 Census, including modifications from past censuses, by Daniel Cornwall of the Alaska State Library is on the web at http://home.att.net/~daniel.cornwall/census_tutorial.html

American FactFinder

<http://factfinder.census.gov/>

American FactFinder allows you to search for specific Census data based on geography and topic. Data from other related surveys is also accessible on this page. There are tools for the beginner and the more advanced searcher, and tutorials on how to use the site in the Help section.. The following screen shot shows the initial screen for American FactFinder.

Start here if you know which file your data is in.

Start here if you don't know which file your data is in.

U.S. Census Bureau 10 Years on the Web

American FactFinder

Main Search Feedback FAQs Glossary Site Map Help

Your source for population, housing, economic, and geographic data

FACT SHEET

PEOPLE

HOUSING

BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT

CENSUS OVERVIEW

DATA SETS

MAPS AND GEOGRAPHY

REFERENCE SHELF

TOOLS

Fast Access to Information

- Check out the [Fact Sheet](#) for community profiles.
- For age, education, income, and race, click [People](#).
- For home values, ownership, and mortgage, click [Housing](#).
- For foreign trade, governments, and housing starts, click [Business and Government](#).

Getting Detailed Data

- To learn about Data Sets, check out the [Census Overview](#).
- Expert user? Go directly to [Data Sets](#).

What's New

- Facts for Features: The Fourth of July 2004. [more >](#)
- Nearly 43 million people identified their ancestry as German in Census 2000. [more >](#)
- Eight of the nation's 10 fastest growing large cities (100,000 or more population) are in the Western states of Arizona, Nevada and California. [more >](#)
- American FactFinder updates released June 18, 2004 [more >](#)
- The Nation's Hispanic and Asian populations increasing faster than the overall population. [more >](#)

[past items >](#)

About the Data

- The [Decennial Census](#) is taken every 10 years to collect information about the people and housing of the United States.
- The [American Community Survey](#) - an ongoing survey that provides data about your community every year.
- The [Economic Census](#) profiles the U.S. economy every 5 years.
- The [Population Estimates Program](#) publishes population numbers between censuses.

U.S. Population Clock

10:04 am EDT Jul 02, 2004

293,634,671

real-time [population clocks](#)

Looking for information on [Religion](#) or [Genealogy](#)?

Want to see the old [Basic Facts](#)?

In the Spotlight

ECONOMIC CENSUS 2002

2002 Economic Census data now available in American FactFinder - 2002 Economic Census data are being released on a flow basis, as [Quick Reports](#) and [Detailed Statistics Data Sets](#).

The American Housing Survey (AHS) - sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, enters its fourth decade with the publication of 2003 results. [more >](#)

[past items >](#)

Special Interest

- [Kids' Corner](#) - Learn fun facts about your state and take a quiz.
- [Censo 2000 Puerto Rico](#) en español.
- [American Indian and Alaska Native](#) data and links
- The Bureau's [latest news releases](#) and [The Broadcast Zone](#).

[Confidentiality](#)

Search

keyword

geography

GO

Or

Enter a [street address](#) to find Census 2000 data

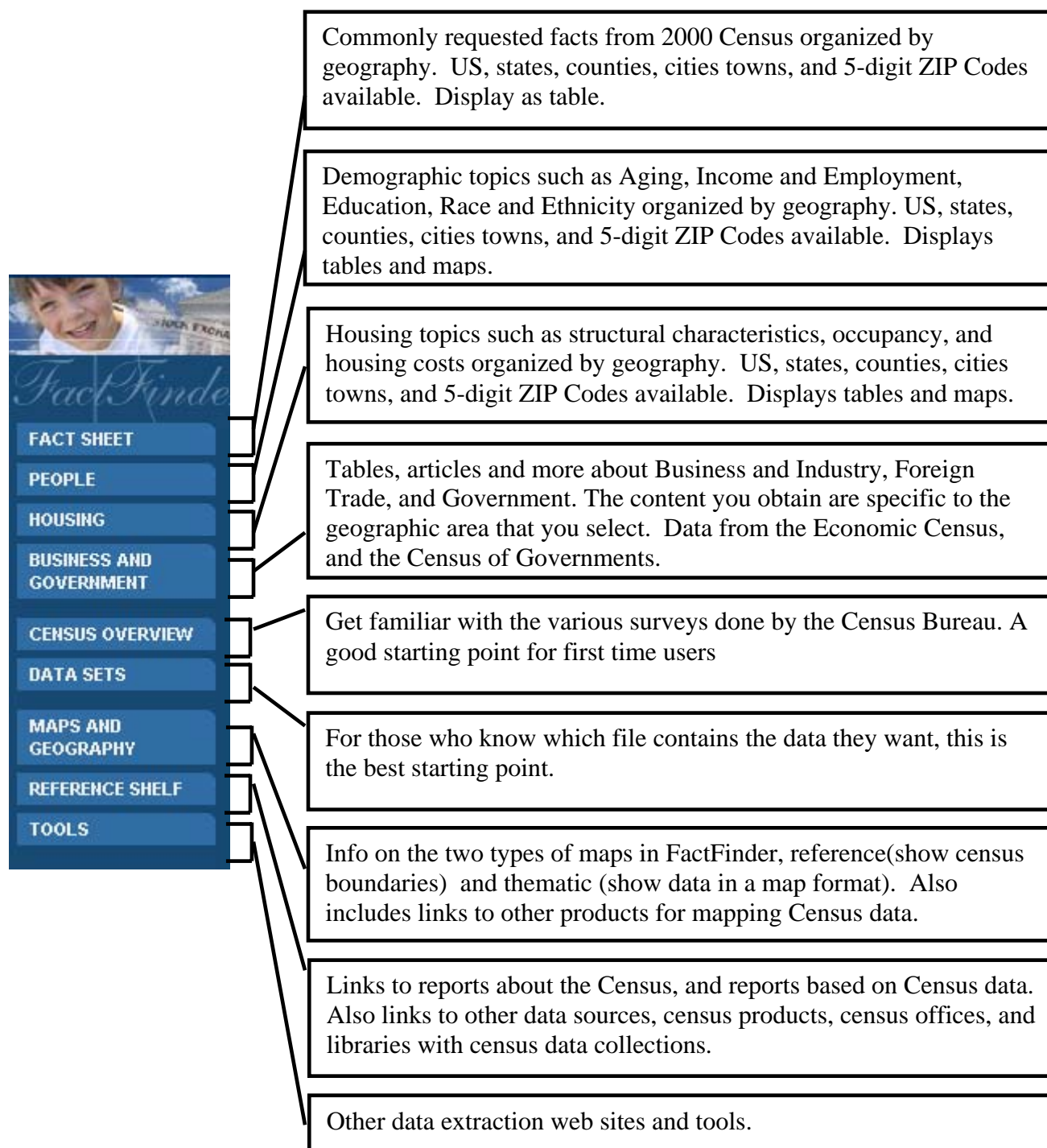
[Census 2000](#) | [Subjects A to Z](#) | [Search](#) | [Product Catalog](#) | [Data Tools](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Quality](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Policies](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Home](#)

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Helping You Make Informed Decisions

American FactFinder Navigation Buttons

The main navigation tools are pictured below, along with a brief description of what each leads to.



Starting from the Search Box

1. Search box in left menu and Search link in top menu bar go to the same places.
2. Use when you aren't sure which file to start from
3. Searches build sequentially. New search options to select or type in appear depending on the previous step you took.
4. Two ways to proceed after searching
 - a. Use the data retrieved if it answers your question
 - b. Use the information retrieved about the File and Table containing the type of data you want to search further under the Data Sets section.

Search by keyword

Example: find 2000 Census data on number of children under the age of five living at 185% of the poverty level in the United States and smaller geographic units.

1. Enter the word "poverty" in the search box in the left menu
2. On the next page, under "Select a year and a program" choose Census 2000
3. Click the Search button.
4. Results organized by data presentation type, then by file source within each type
 - a. Quick tables
 - b. Geographic comparison tables
 - c. Thematic maps
 - d. Population and Housing detailed tables
5. Under Quick Tables, Summary File 3, choose QT-P35 by clicking on it.
 - a. Note new header which shows the Table Name, Data Set, and Geographic Area you are looking at.
 - b. You can modify the search using the links above the header information, such as "Geography."
 - c. Look at the table of data.
 - d. Now look at the bottom of the table. The footnote tells exactly which matrixes from the file were used to generate the Quick Table data. This information can be used later to build tables of your own.
 - i. Prefixes used for the data give clues as to the content
 1. P – Population, down to block level
 2. H- Housing, down to block level
 3. PCT- Population, down to census tract level
 4. HCT- Housing, down to census tract level
6. Modify the geography to see data for Pennsylvania
 - a. Click on the Geography link at the top of the page
 - b. Under "Select a Geographic Type" choose State
 - c. Click on Pennsylvania in the scroll box of state names.
 - d. Click the Add button
 - e. Click on the Show Results button

You will have two tables now, one for the US, and directly below it one for Pennsylvania

Search by geography

Example: Find out what's available in American FactFinder on your home county?

1. Click in the radio button in front of the word geography.
2. Type your county in the search box (ex:Allegheny County).
3. Click Go
4. In the bottom box of the resulting screen you will see a list of surveys containing data for your County. Choose the 2000 Census one by clicking under it on your county name.
5. Click on OK
6. Examine the resulting list

Search by address

Example: Put in your home address. Find out what census block you live in and view a map of it.

1. Click on "enter a street address"
2. Enter your street address and zip code in the appropriate boxes
3. Click on Go
4. From resulting list, choose Census Tract by clicking on it.
5. Click the Map It button to view a map of your census tract.
6. In the results list, choose some of the tables and view them.

Learning More

American FactFinder has good step-by-step tutorials on its website. Click on Help, then the Tutorials tab at the top of the page to see a complete list.

Help With More Complex Census Questions

If you need help in using the Census, try one of the following resources

1. University of Pittsburgh, University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR) <http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu/>
 - a. UCSUR partners with Pitt researchers and ACHD employees to create and administer data surveys, as well as provide assistance in locating particular sets of data within the census data sets.
2. Pennsylvania State Data Center <http://pasdc.hbg.psu.edu/>
 - a. Reports on Pennsylvania created with census data are provided.
 - b. Training and consultation are available.
3. US Census Bureau Regional Offices <http://www.census.gov/field/www/>
 - a. Help via phone or email.

Health and Vital Statistics in More Depth: Using the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Website

About the NCHS Website

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

The National Center for Health Statistics is operated by the CDC. It provides access to data you can manipulate, and statistical publications based upon that data. Health data sets, their accompanying documentation, and publications based on NCHS data can be viewed or downloaded. In addition, two tools for data manipulation, the Beyond 20/20 browser and the SETS program, can be downloaded from the site. For health related data from other websites, there are links from NCHS in the section titled “Other Sites.”

Where to Start

Most health data needs can be met with information from a publication, an easier process than manipulating the raw data sets. NCHS provides several good starting points. Which you choose will depend on your topic and level of knowledge about individual surveys covered by NCHS.

1. To find data when you are unsure of which survey or publication might contain it, go to the FASTATS A to Z page as described in the section *Stepped Approach to Finding a Statistical Source* in this document.
2. If you know what survey is likely to contain your data, click on its acronym in the left hand menu to access reports, publications, data sets, and instructions on downloading and using the public access data.
 - a. Some large data sets are also available only CD, or both by download and on CD.
3. Surveys and Data Systems in the left hand menu gets you to a short list of surveys. Clicking on one takes you to documentation and all data provided on the web from that survey in any form.
4. Selected topics, such as Aging, Healthy People 2010, and Injury have sections devoted to them accessible from the left hand menu bar.

Help Using the Site

1. The How To link in the left hand menu gives detailed instructions on accessing the data and data manipulation tools on the website.

Scope of Selected NCHS Surveys

All of the following surveys are linked from the main NCHS web page.

National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)

Assesses the health and nutritional status of Americans through a combination of physical and dental examinations, individual interviews, and diagnostic procedures and lab tests.

Data is not valid at the state and local level. Nationwide, 5,000 people examined in 15 mobile exam centers are included in the sample. Community surveys to meet the needs of state and local planning are among their goals for the future.

Fact sheet available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/factsheets/nhanes.pdf>

National Health Care Survey (NHCS)

NHCS collects health care utilization data from providing organizations, such as hospitals, nursing homes, emergency rooms, office-based physicians, ambulatory surgery centers, home health agencies, and hospices. Data used to track changes in health service utilization, disease pattern changes.

Fact sheet available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/factsheets/nhcs.pdf>.

National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

“...the nation’s largest household health survey, providing data for analysis of broad health trends, as well as the ability to characterize persons with various health problems, determine barriers to care, and compare health status, health related behaviors, and risk factors across racial and ethnic populations.” (from NHIS fact sheet, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/factsheets/nhis.pdf>)

National Immunization Survey (NIS)

Sample survey of children age 19-35 months used to determine vaccination rates for 6 recommended childhood immunizations. National and state level data available, plus selected metropolitan areas (ex: only Philadelphia included from PA). Published reports are available, as are public use data files. Data files can be downloaded as zip files.

National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)

Four surveys of women were conducted between 1973 and 1995 on topics related to marriage, divorce, contraception, and infertility. Data, reports from the data, and bibliographies of articles citing the data are included. More recent surveys done in 2002 and 2003 of both women and men on the same topics are described on the website; data will be added in 2004.

National Vital Statistics System (NVSS)

Data on births and deaths collected from birth and death statistics. To protect privacy, data at geographic levels below the state level is not available without special permission. Reports such as Vital Statistics of the United States available fulltext as PDF files. Fact Sheet available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/factsheets/nvss.pdf> .

State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey (SLAITS)

Data needed by state and local authorities to plan health services is not routinely available. The SLAITS program conducts telephone surveys to fill this need. Surveys are sponsored by government agencies and private organizations, using methods from the NIS, and utilizing questions from existing NCHS surveys in order to provide national/local comparison data as needed. Surveys currently available on the website concentrate on child health, health in Iowa and Texas, and asthma.