

Definition: Census tract

Question

What is a census tract?

Answer

Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. Tracts are delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting data. Census tract boundaries normally follow visible features, but may follow governmental unit boundaries and other non-visible features in some instances; they always nest within counties.

Designed to be relatively homogeneous units with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions, census tracts average about 4,000 inhabitants.

There are 65,443 census tracts in the United States; if you add those in Puerto Rico and the Island Areas (e.g., the U.S. Virgin Islands), the total is 66,438. More data on census tracts can be found in the U.S. Census Bureau's [Guide to Census Tract](#) resources. At present, data on census tracts are obtained only from the Census of Population and Housing conducted every 10 years (last in [2000](#)); you can find data for census tracts in Summary Files 1 to 4.

In the future, the Census Bureau will have annual data for census tracts based on the American Community Survey (ACS). We expect to see tract data from the ACS in 2010. More information about the [American Community Survey](#).

If you want to find socioeconomic, housing, or population data for census tracts, go back to the previous window, and search on "tract."