

How to Use American Factfinder to Obtain Census Data about Cambridge, Massachusetts

The U. S. Census Bureau uses the American Factfinder website to distribute a variety of data sets over the internet. These data sets include results from the 1990 Decennial Census, the 2000 Decennial Census, the 1997, 2002 and 2007 Economic Censuses, and all years of the American Community Survey.

⇒ Important Caveats:

- Please note that prior to 2006 the American Community Survey did not include residents of dormitories or other group quarters living arrangements. As a result, **2000 Census data and any ACS data including years prior to 2006 should be compared with caution.** In general, comparisons between the American Community Survey and 2000 Census data can be problematic. See [here](#) for more information.
- Data from the 2010 Decennial Census are found on the new **Factfinder2** web site, which can be found here:

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/sessionexpired.xhtml>

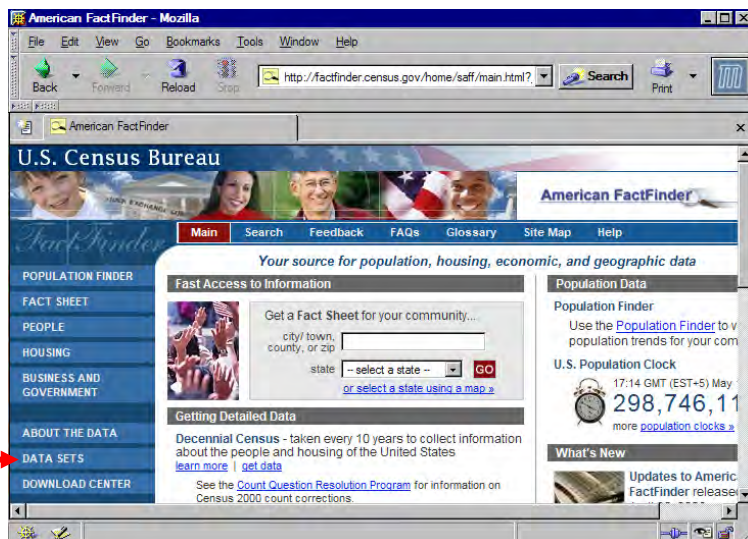
Please note that these instructions for not apply to the Factfinder2 site, which is completely different from the original Factfinder site.

Getting Started

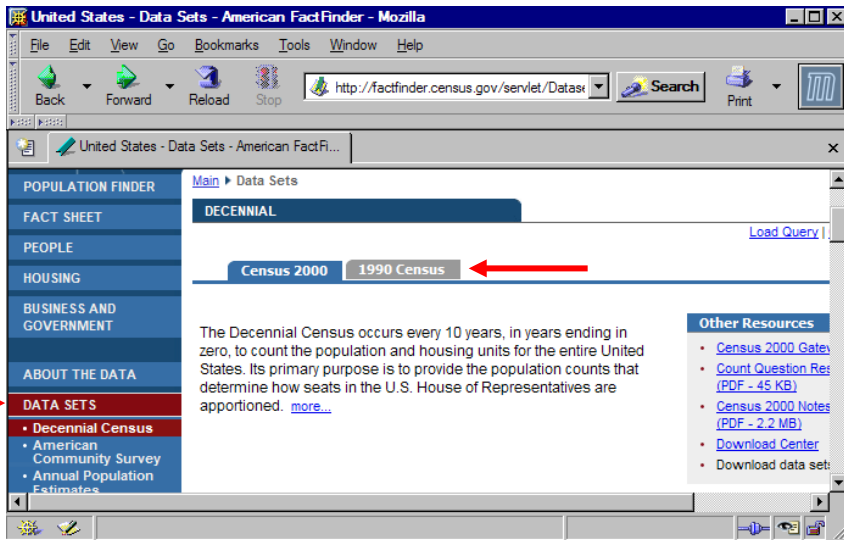
American Factfinder is at: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

Obtaining 1990 and 2010 Census Data

To obtain decennial census data about Cambridge navigate to Factfinder's Data Sets page from the home page:

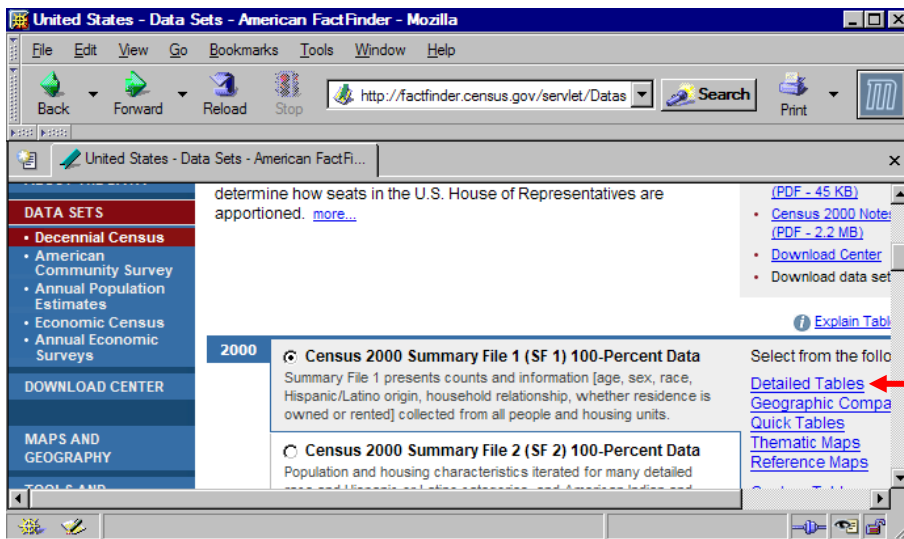


This step takes you to the 2000 Decennial Census data set page by default. If you wish to work with another data set either select the 1990 Census tab or pick another data set from the left hand side of the page.



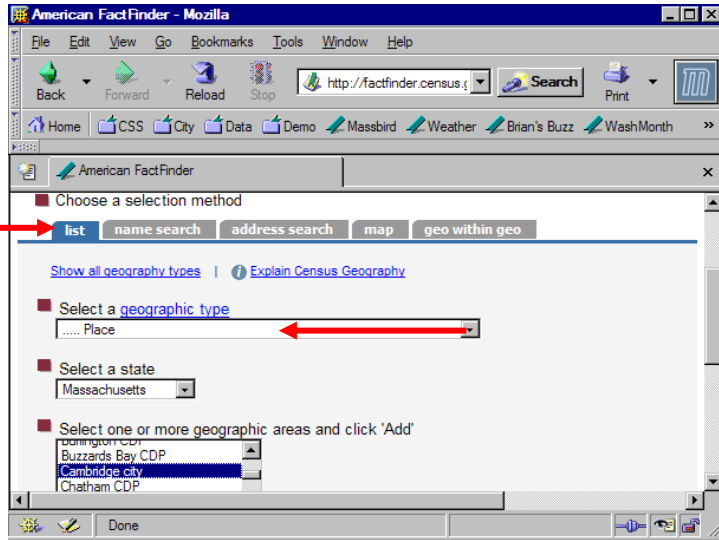
If you pick a decennial census data set you must next select a data file. Most people want to use either the basic short form data files (SF1 from 2000, STF1 from 1990) or long form data files (SF3 from 2000, STF3 from 1990). The short form data files are drawn from 100% of the population. Long form data files are drawn from a 1 in 6 sample of the population. Additional 2000 Decennial Census data files (SF2 for short form and SF4 for long form) detail characteristics for many race and Hispanic subcategories.

After choosing a data file, select “Detailed Tables” or another data product from the right hand side of the page.

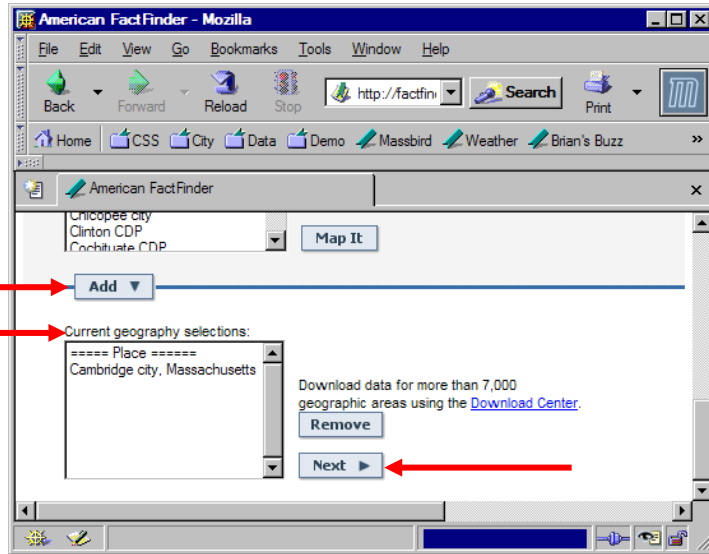


Use the “List” tab on next page to select the level of geography of interest. You will need to make a series of choices to pick specific locations. You can select areas as small as individual census blocks for SF1 or SF2 data or census blockgroups for SF3 or SF4

data. If you want information about Cambridge as a whole chose “Place” as the “geographic type”. To obtain data about Cambridge census tracts, blockgroups or blocks chose the appropriate “geographic type”. Cambridge census tracts range from 3521 to 3550 in Middlesex County. You can obtain data for two or more geographies at once.



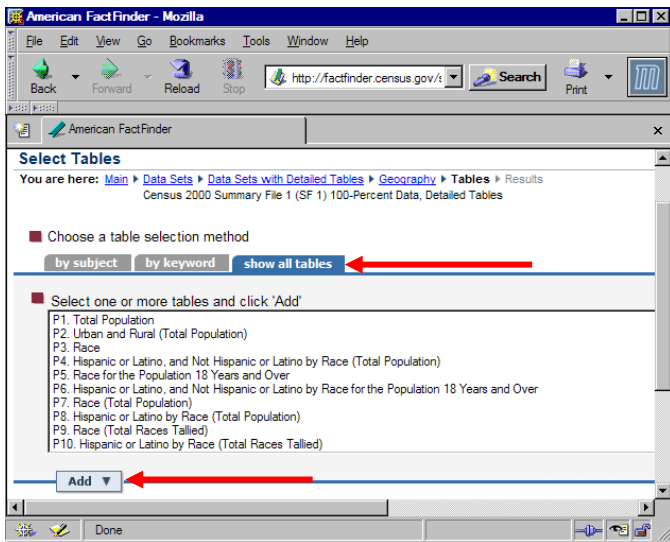
Once you locate your area of interest use the “Add” button to place this location in your current geography selections, then chose “Next”.



This last step takes you to the Tables page, where you select specific data tables for review.

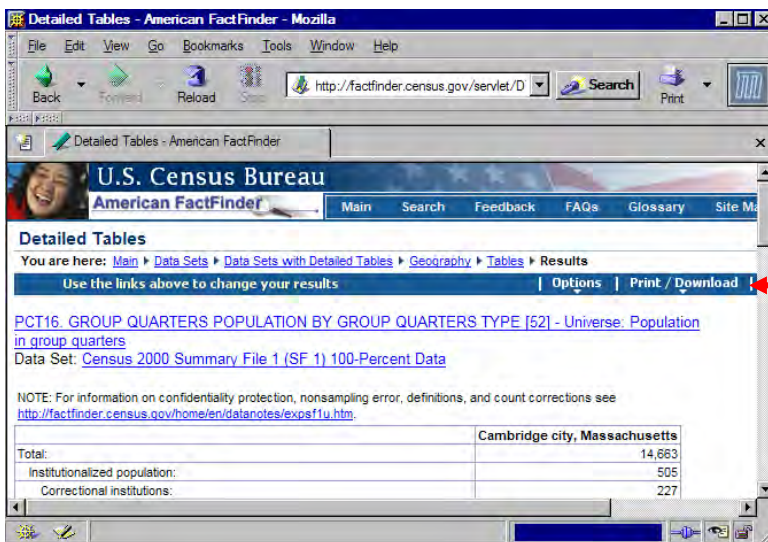
There are three methods for selecting tables:

1. Picking from the list of all tables;
2. Searching by keyword; and
3. Searching by topic.



Tables with population related data start with a “P”. Table with housing related data start with an “H”. Both SF1 and SF3 include certain tables for the population as a whole and for specific race and/or Hispanic subgroups. Tables that include only a subset of the population include the table number for the entire population followed by a letter from A through I. Both data files also include tables that only go down to the census tract level; these are labeled with either “PCT” or “HCT”.

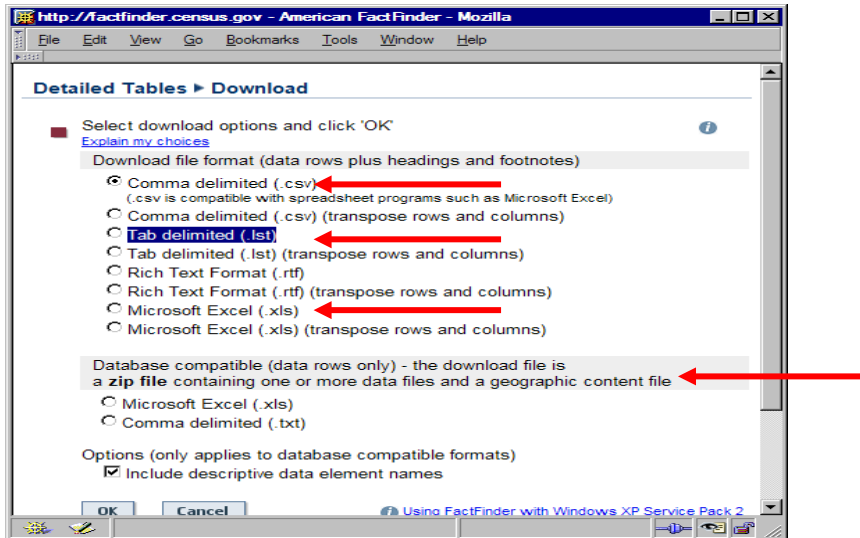
Use the “Add” button to add tables to your current table selection. Once you have selected all the tables you want to review, use the “Show Result” button on the far right hand side of the page to generate them.



If you choose, you can either print the tables or download the data for further analysis. To do so use the “Print/Download” button near the top of the page.

When downloading data to Microsoft Excel use either the comma delimited (.csv) or Microsoft Excel (.xls) options. CSV files are sometimes easier to use as a starting point

for analysis. For database programs you can use either CSV or tab delimited (.lst) files. You can also download compressed Microsoft Excel or comma delimited files in .zip format.



Obtaining American Community Survey Data

The process for obtaining one and three year American Community Survey (ACS) Data from the Factfinder web site is largely the same as that for decennial census data. The one and three year data include only citywide information about Cambridge; no census tract or block group data is available in these data sets.

The ACS does not include PCT tables. Instead ACS tables have a prefix of “B” or “C”. Tables that start with “B” include more subcategories, while “C” tables are collapsed into fewer categories. In some cases where there is not enough data collected to produce a “B” table only the “C” table is available. In other cases there were too few responses for the Census Bureau to make results available in any configuration. Some ACS tables also have letter as suffix. These tables include only data for a single racial and/or Hispanic grouping.

Five year ACS data (e. g., the 2005 - 2009 data set) is not available through Factfinder. Instead you need to download either the data itself or the Summary File Retrieval Tool, which is a macro driven Excel file that allows you to select specific tables at the statewide level. Note that not all five year ACS tables are available at the blockgroup level. Both “B” and “C” tables are found in the five data set.

You can download five year ACS data from here:

http://www2.census.gov/acs2005_2009_5yr/summaryfile/

The Retrieval Tool and user documentation can be found here:

http://www2.census.gov/acs2005_2009_5yr/summaryfile/