

Census Tracts

Geographic Products Branch
U.S. Census Bureau

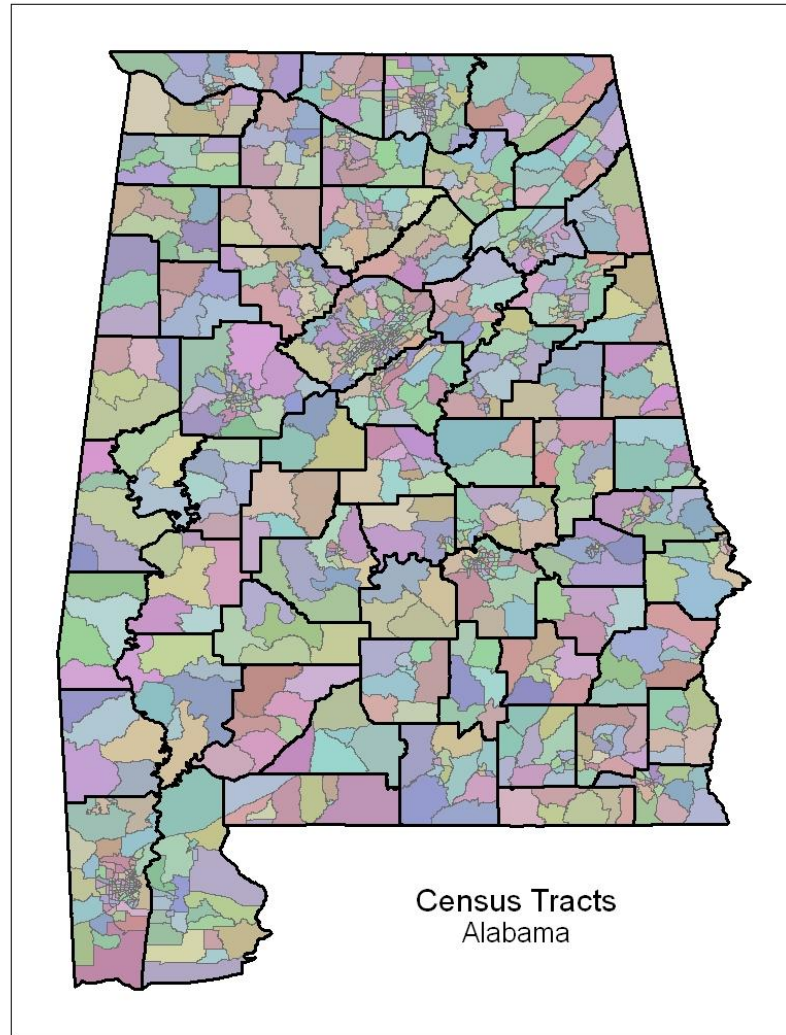
Overview

- Definition of a census tract
- History of census tracts
- How census tracts are updated each decade
- How to compare census tract boundaries decade to decade

Definition

- Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county.
 - Uniquely numbered in each county with a numeric code
- Census tracts average about 4,000 inhabitants
 - Minimum Population – 1,200
 - Maximum Population – 8,000

Map of census tracts



History of the Census Tract

- 1790 First census
- 1890 First delineation of small geographic areas called sanitary districts
- 1906 Dr. Walter Laidlaw suggested the delineation of permanent, small geographic areas that would retain their boundary census to census
- 1910 Dr. Laidlaw divided NYC into “districts” and asked Census to do the same for seven other cities
- 1920 Dr. Laidlaw published data by district for NYC
- 1930 Howard Wipple became chairman of the Committee on Census Enumeration Areas and promoted the use of census tracts

History of the Census Tract

- 1940 The census tract became an official geographic entity for which the Census Bureau would publish data for. Census tracts covered major cities and block number areas (BNAs) covered many other cities
- 1970 The number of BNAs increased and the criteria of the BNA matched the census tract
- 1980
- 1990 Census tracts and BNAs covered the entire nation
- 2000 The BNA concept was retired and census tracts were defined nationwide.
- 2010 100th anniversary of the census tract

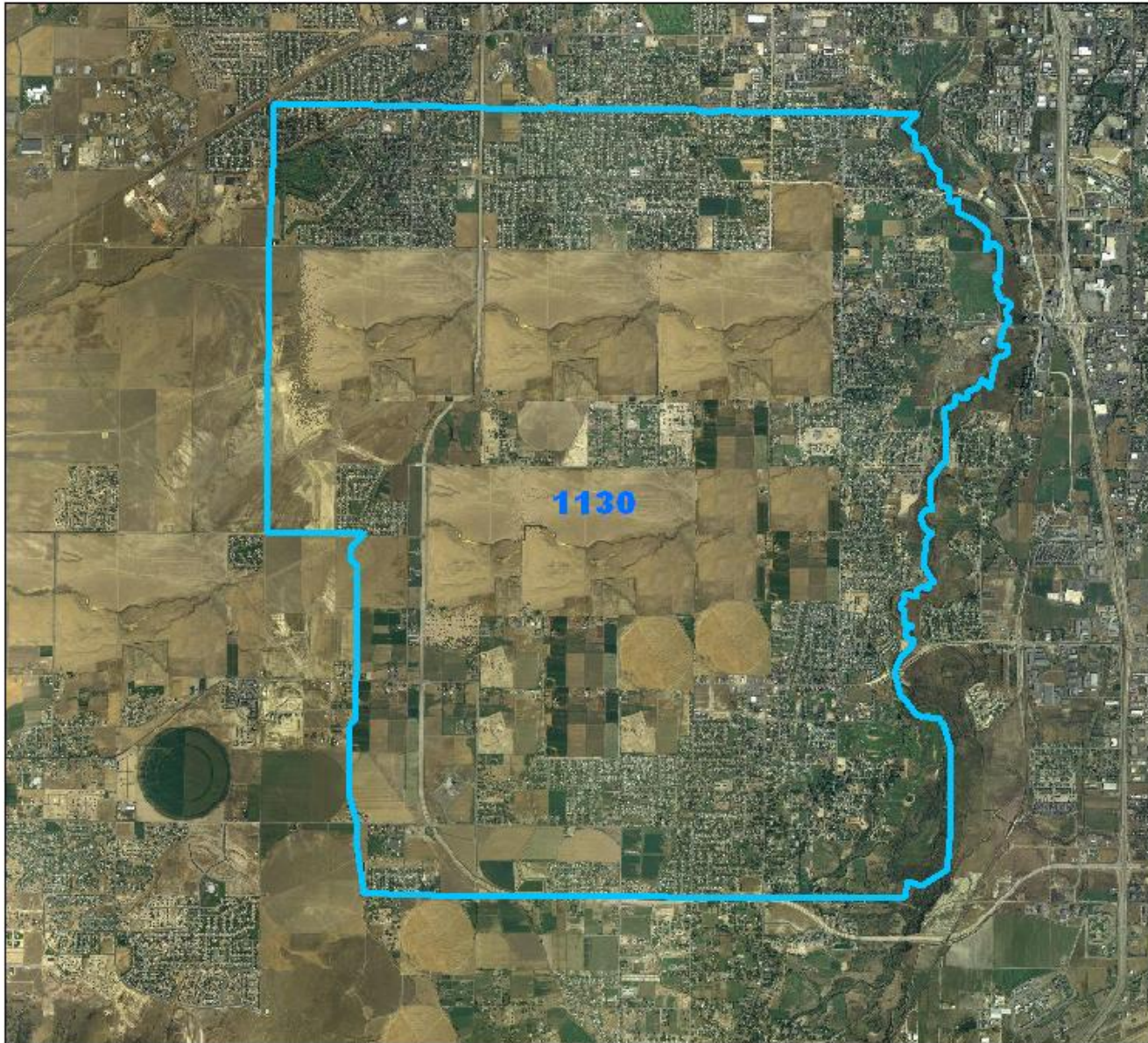
Updating Census Tracts

- Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP)
 - Program offered once every 10 years
 - Local involvement in delineating statistical areas
 - Census tracts are split or merged, depending on population change
 - The new 2010 census tracts were released as part of the 2010 TIGER/Line Shapefiles beginning in December 2010.

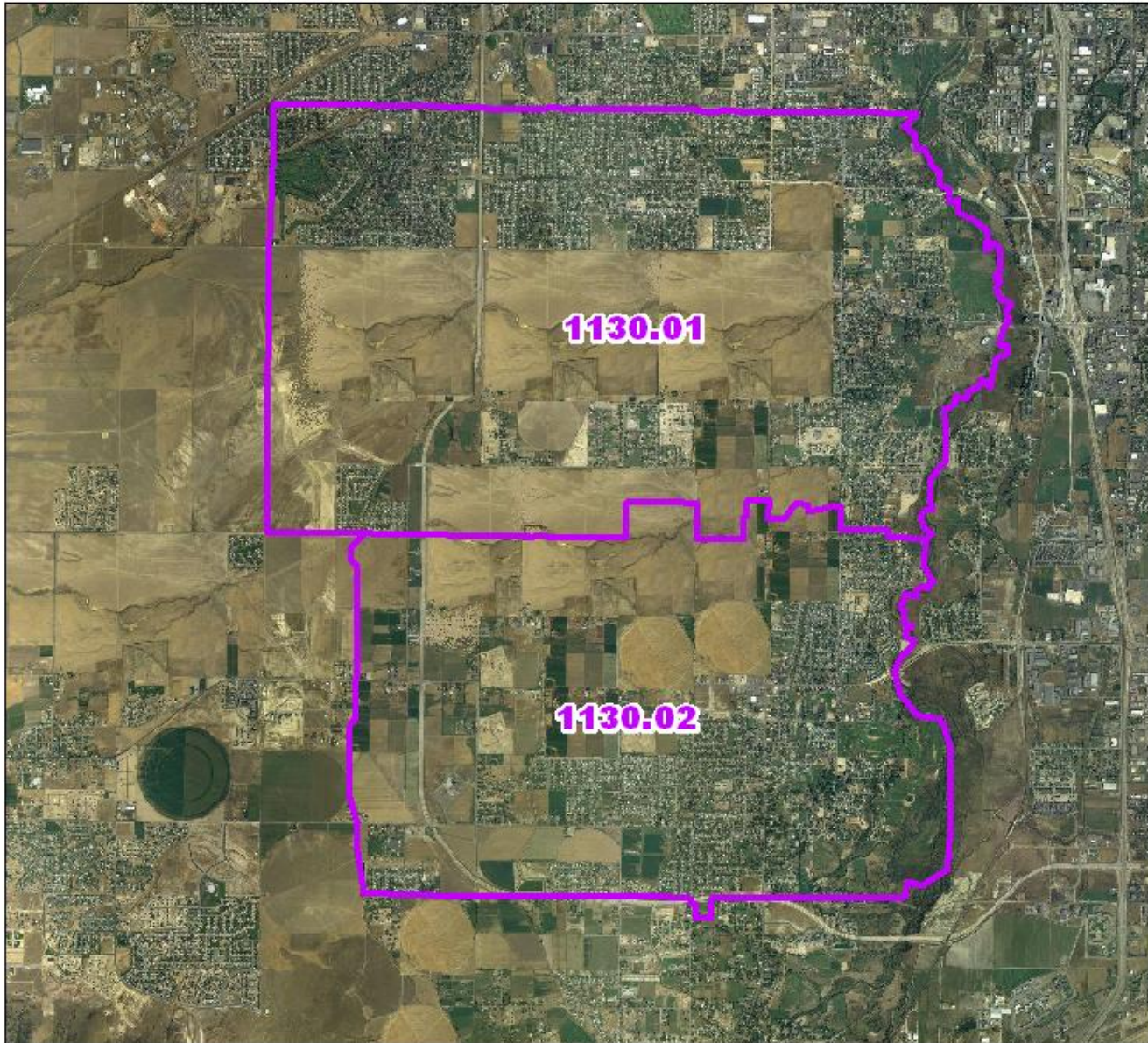
Updating Census Tracts

- Census tracts are designed to be relatively permanent over time.
 - Any changes are documented so data can be compared from decade to decade.
- Census tracts with more than 8,000 people are split into 2 or more tracts and are given an extension to their existing numeric code
- Census tracts with less than 1,200 people are merged with a neighboring tract and are given a new numeric code
- Small boundary corrections are sometimes allowed as well.

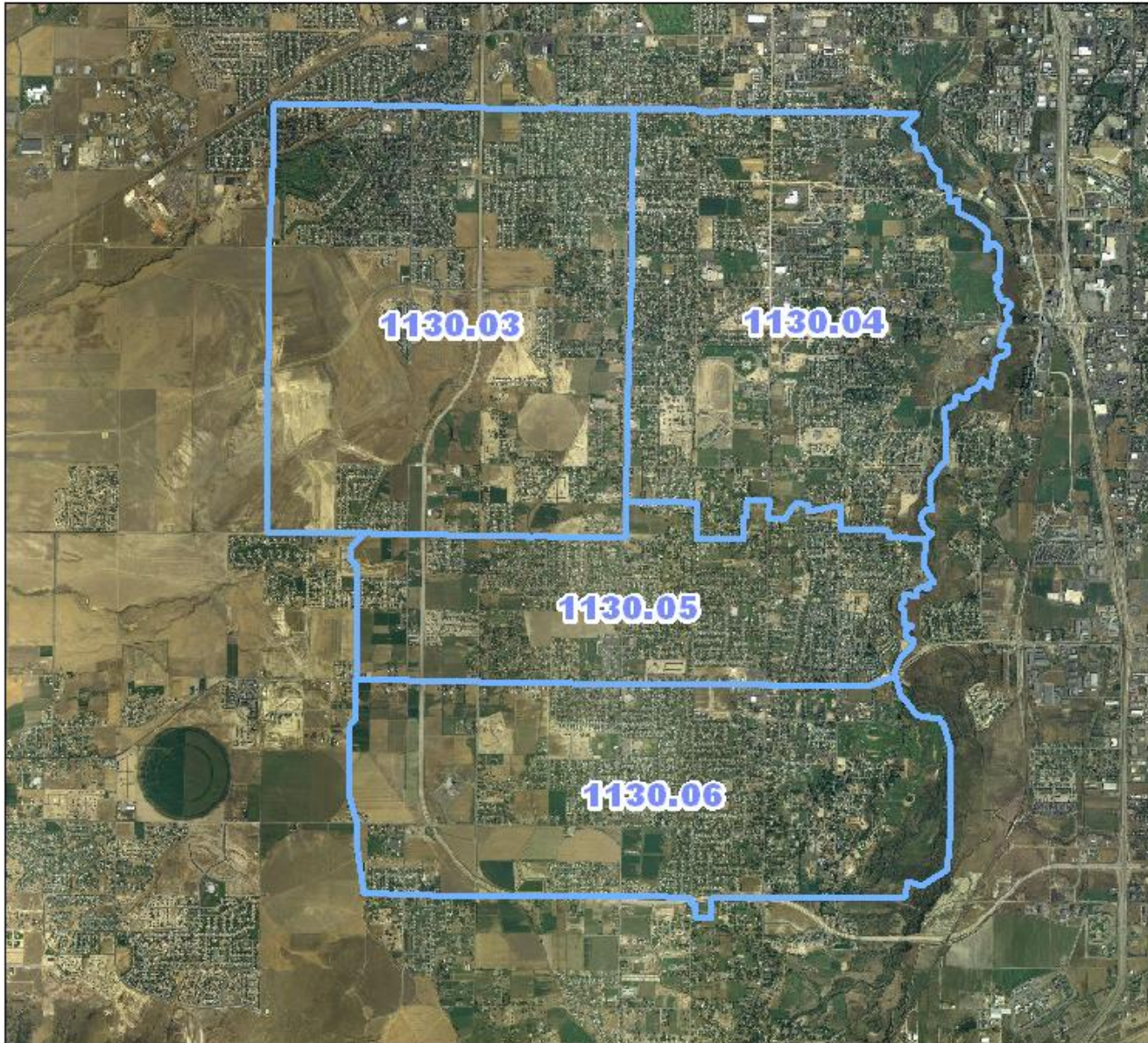
1970 Census Tracts



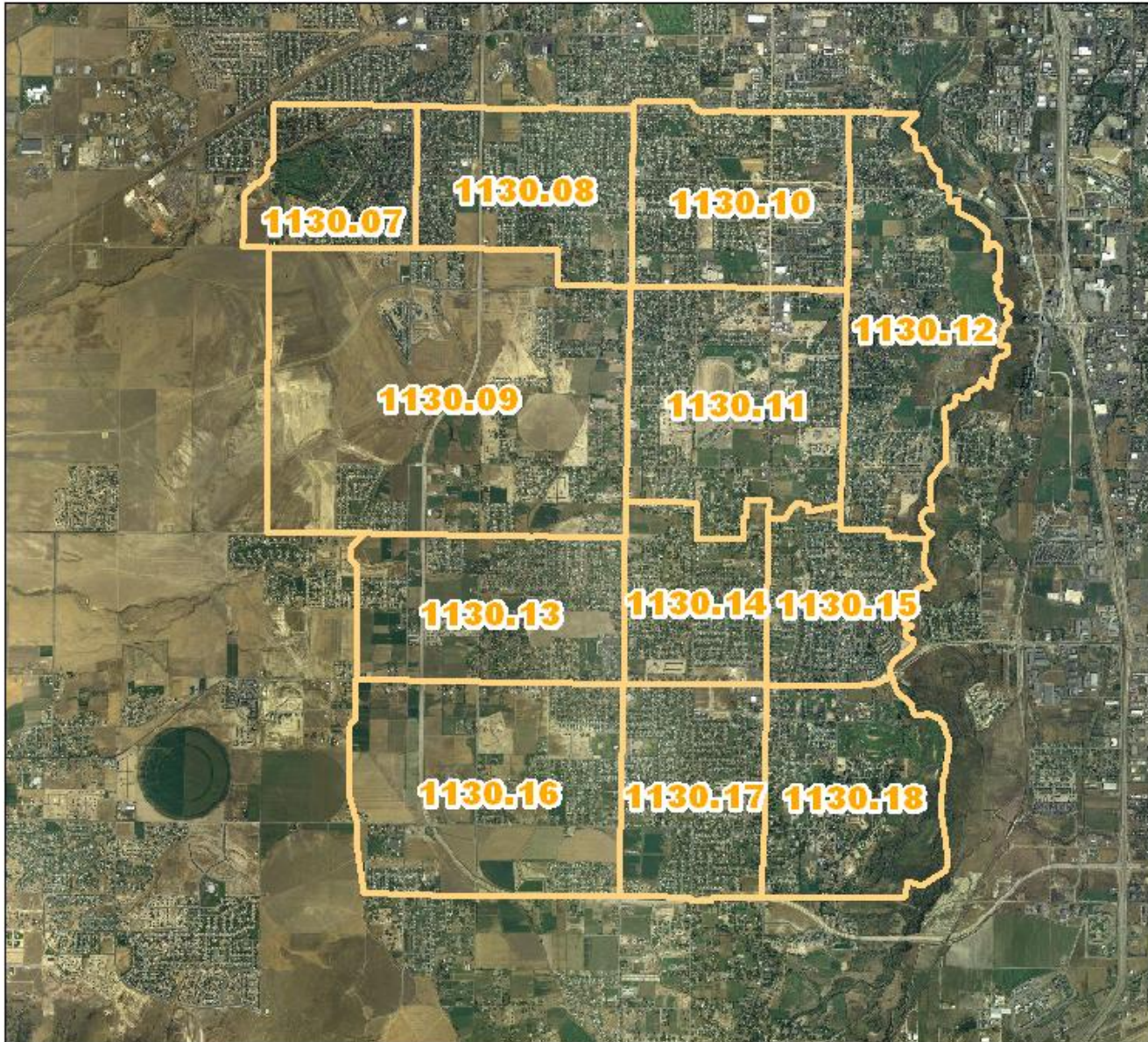
1980 Census Tracts



1990 Census Tracts



2000 Census Tracts



Census Tract Relationship Files

- Files that show how 2000 census tracts relate to 2010 census tracts
- One record per each 2000 census tract/2010 census tract spatial set
 - The area that is uniquely shared between a 2000 census tract and a 2010 census tract
- Three sets of files
 1. Census Tract Relationship File with population and housing unit information and area measurement (both national and state-based files)
 2. Substantially Changed 2000 Census Tract Files (both national and state-based files)
 3. Substantially Changed Census 2010 Census Tract Files (both national and state-based files)

Census Bureau Homepage - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.census.gov/

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New Census App Helps Users Find Local Statistics on the Go

Download dwell, the new U.S. Census Bureau mobile app that delivers on-the-go access to key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics for thousands of places across the nation.

[See More](#)



Discover the **NEW** Census Bureau App



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< 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 >

U.S. Census Bureau Economic Indicators

International Trade Balance November 2013 Report Released 8:30 AM EST, 1/7/14	-\$34.3 B	↑ -12.9%	
Manufacturers' Goods November 2013 Report Released 10:00 AM EST, 1/6/14	\$497.9 B	↑ New Orders 1.8%	
Construction Spending November 2013 Report Released 10:00 AM EST, 1/2/14	\$934.4 B	↑ 1.0%	
New Residential Sales November 2013 Report Released 10:00 AM EST, 12/24/13	464,000	↓ Single-family houses -2.1%	

View All

* change not statistically significant
° significance not reported / applicable

QuickFacts

Quick, easy access to facts about people, business, and geography.

To begin, select a state from this list or [use the map](#).

Select a state to begin

Census News

Infographics Highlight the History and Measurement of Poverty

Tuesday, January 07, 2014

A new infographic, "Poverty: The History of a Measure," presents a timeline of major milestones in the [Read More](#)

Census Bureau Reports Almost One in Three Americans Were Poor at Least Two Months from 2009 to 2011

Tuesday, January 07, 2014

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 31.6 percent of Americans were in

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History and Measurement of Poverty

Two new infographics highlight the

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http://www.census.gov/geo/

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What's New?

[2012 and 2013 U.S. Gazetteer Files](#) - Released November 8, 2013

[State Legislative District Reference Maps](#) - Released September 24, 2013

[2013 TIGER/Line](#)

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Census Data Mapper

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trivia...

Q: Los Angeles appeared on the list of top ten largest urban places for the first time during which Census?

[See the answer](#)

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Maps & Data

Find geographic data and products such as the TIGER/Line Shapefiles, KMLs, TIGERweb, cartographic boundary files, geographic relationship files, and reference and thematic maps.

Maps

Census Data Mapper


The Census Data Mapper is a web mapping application intended to provide users with a simple interface to view, save and print county-based demographic maps of the United States.

Reference Maps

Reference maps are designed to show the geographic locations of features and boundaries. These maps usually contain features, such as roads and rivers, and boundaries, such as county, place, census tracts, or many more. These maps do not contain demographic data and are used solely to show the location of and relationship between boundaries and features. For interactive reference maps see TIGERweb.

Thematic Maps

Thematic maps are designed to show demographic, economic, business, or socioeconomic data about or characteristics of an area. Thematic maps tell a story



Geographic Data

TIGER Products

Geospatial Files and Applications from our MAF/TIGER database. Tools for use in GIS software, Web Mapping Services (WMS) to use in your applications, and browsers to view geographic data.

Partnership Shapefiles

The Partnership Shapefiles are used in our partner programs to share data with and capture data from our partners.

Relationship Files

Relationship files help users compare different vintages of geography, such as Census 2000 blocks to 2010 Census blocks in text format.

Gazetteer Files

Relationship Files - Geography - U.S. Census Bureau - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/relationship.html

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Relationship Files

These text files describe geographic relationships. There are two types of relationship files; those that show the relationship between the same type of geography over time (comparability) and those that show the relationship between two types of geography for the same time period.

Geographic Relationships Over Time (Comparability)

These files show the relationships (comparability) for the same type of geography over different periods of time (e.g. the relationship between places in 2010 and places in 2000).

- + Block Relationship Files
- + County Subdivision Relationship File
- + Place Relationship File
- Tract Relationship Files

The 2010 Census Tract Relationship files are provided as a tool to help data users compare the universe of Census 2000 tracts to the universe of 2010 Census tracts. From these files, data users may determine how Census 2000 tracts relate to 2010 Census tracts and vice versa. The links below provide more information about the relationship files, including format and layouts, as well as a link to the files. Also see the Congressional District relationship files section above for the 113th Congressional Districts to Census Tract relationship files.

- [Overview of the 2010 Census Tract Relationship Files](#)
- [Understanding the 2010 Census Tract Relationship Files \[PDF\]](#)
- [Download the 2010 Census Tract Relationship Files](#)
- [2010 Census Tract Relationship File Format and Record Layout](#)
- [Census 2000 Tract Relationship Files](#)

- + Urban Areas Relationship Files

Geographic Relationships Between Entity Types

Download the 2010 Census Tract Relationship Files - Geography - U.S. Census Bureau - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/tract_rel_download.html

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Download 2010 Census Tract Relationship Files

The complete set of 2010 Census Tract Relationship files are available to the public. Please select the type of tract relationship file you'd like to view from the list below. Then use the menu to select national files or a state.

2010 Census Tract Relationship Files

Substantive Files	Geographic Files
<input type="text" value="Select a State"/> GO Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska Nevada New Hampshire New Jersey New Mexico New York North Carolina North Dakota Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Pennsylvania Puerto Rico Rhode Island South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Texas Utah Vermont Virginia Washington West Virginia Wisconsin	Census Tract Files GO Census Tract Files GO Census Tract Files GO

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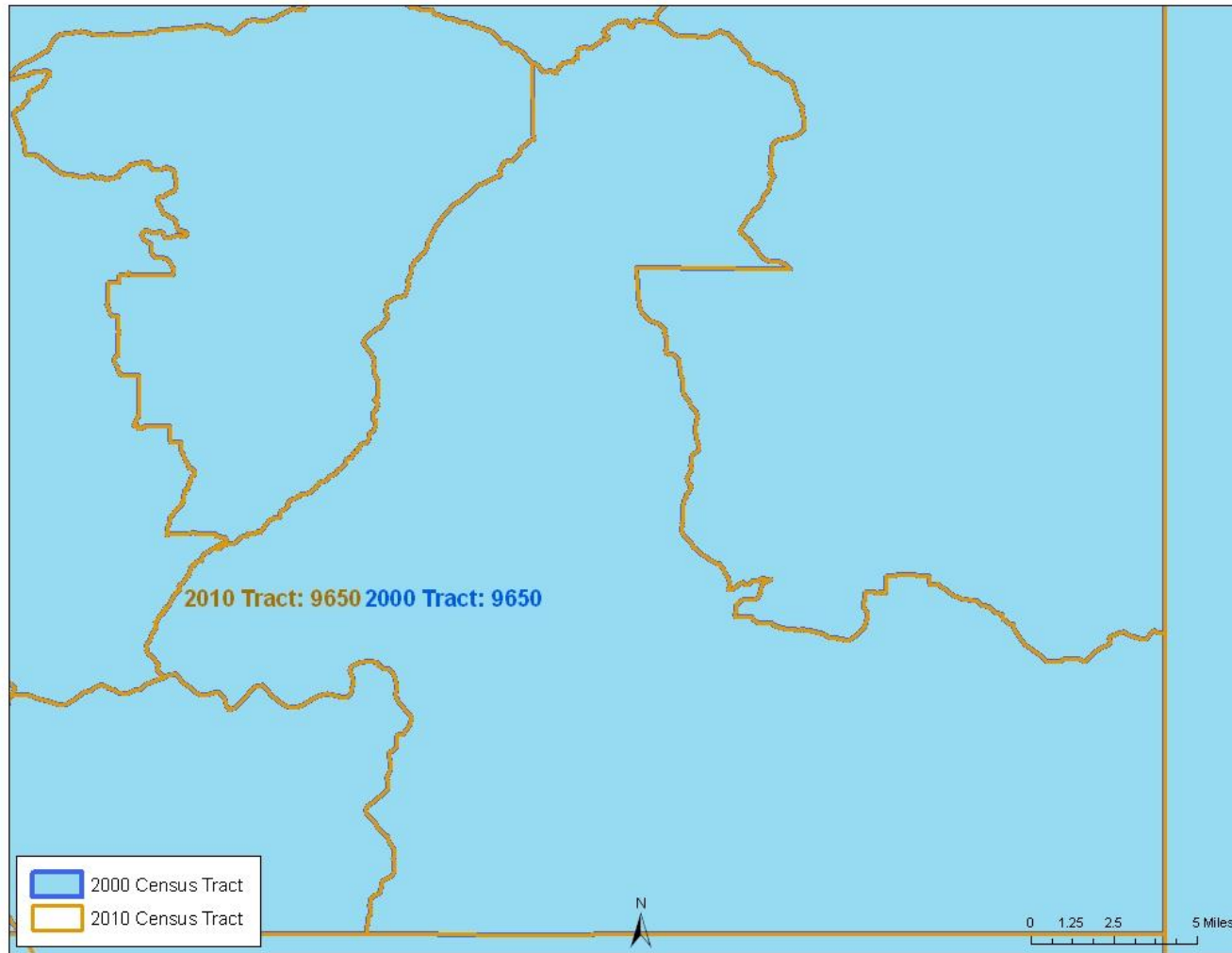
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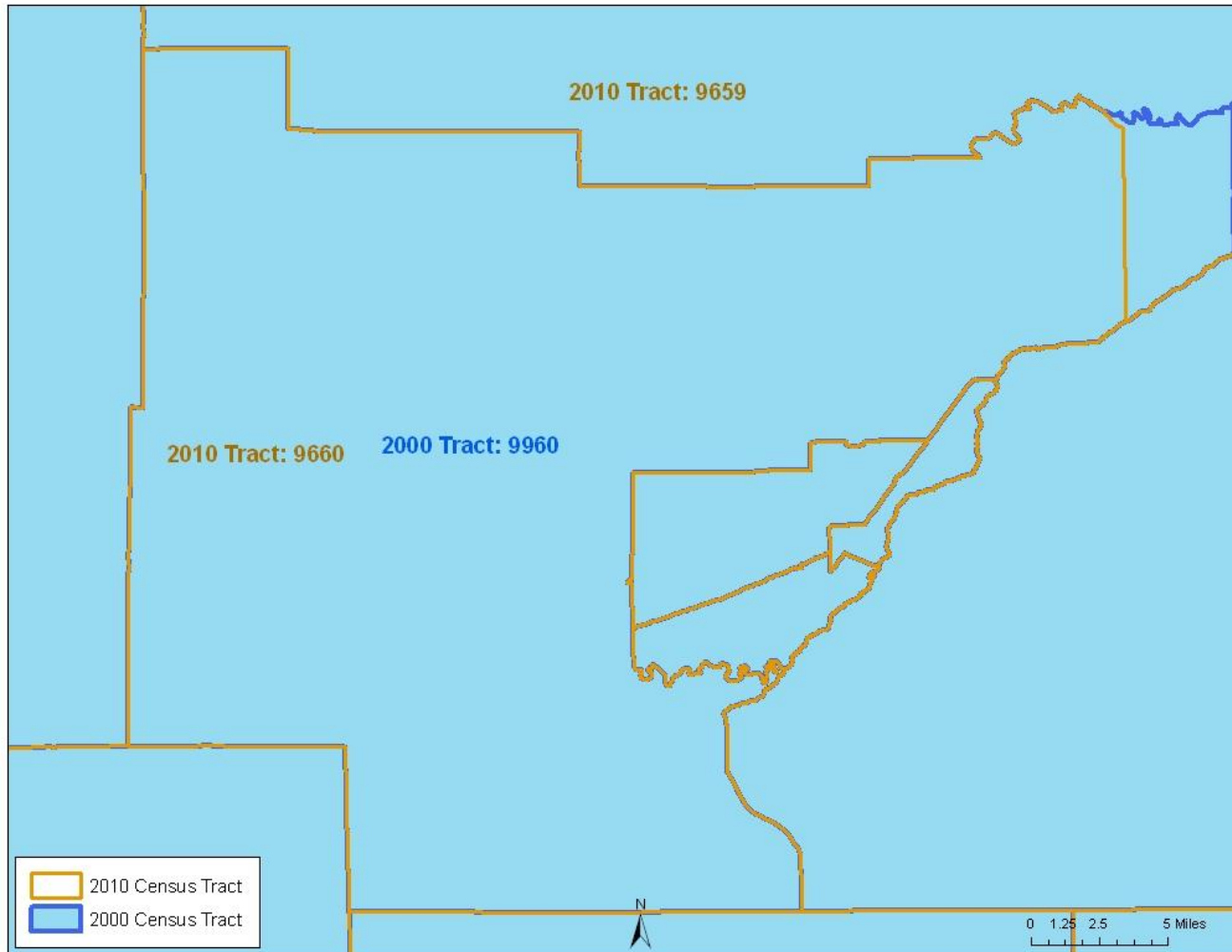
Internet Explorer browser window showing a list of census data. The address bar contains: http://www.census.gov/geo/www/2010census/tract_rel/trf_txt/ny36trf.txt. The page content is a long list of text-based data rows, each containing multiple fields separated by commas. The data appears to be a list of census tracts with various attributes. The status bar at the bottom shows "Done" and "Trusted sites".

- To visualize the tract relationship files, you can use our TIGER/Line shapefiles or the tract outline PDF maps.
- The TIGER/Line shapefiles can be found at <http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/data/tiger.html>
- The census tract reference maps can be found at <http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/>

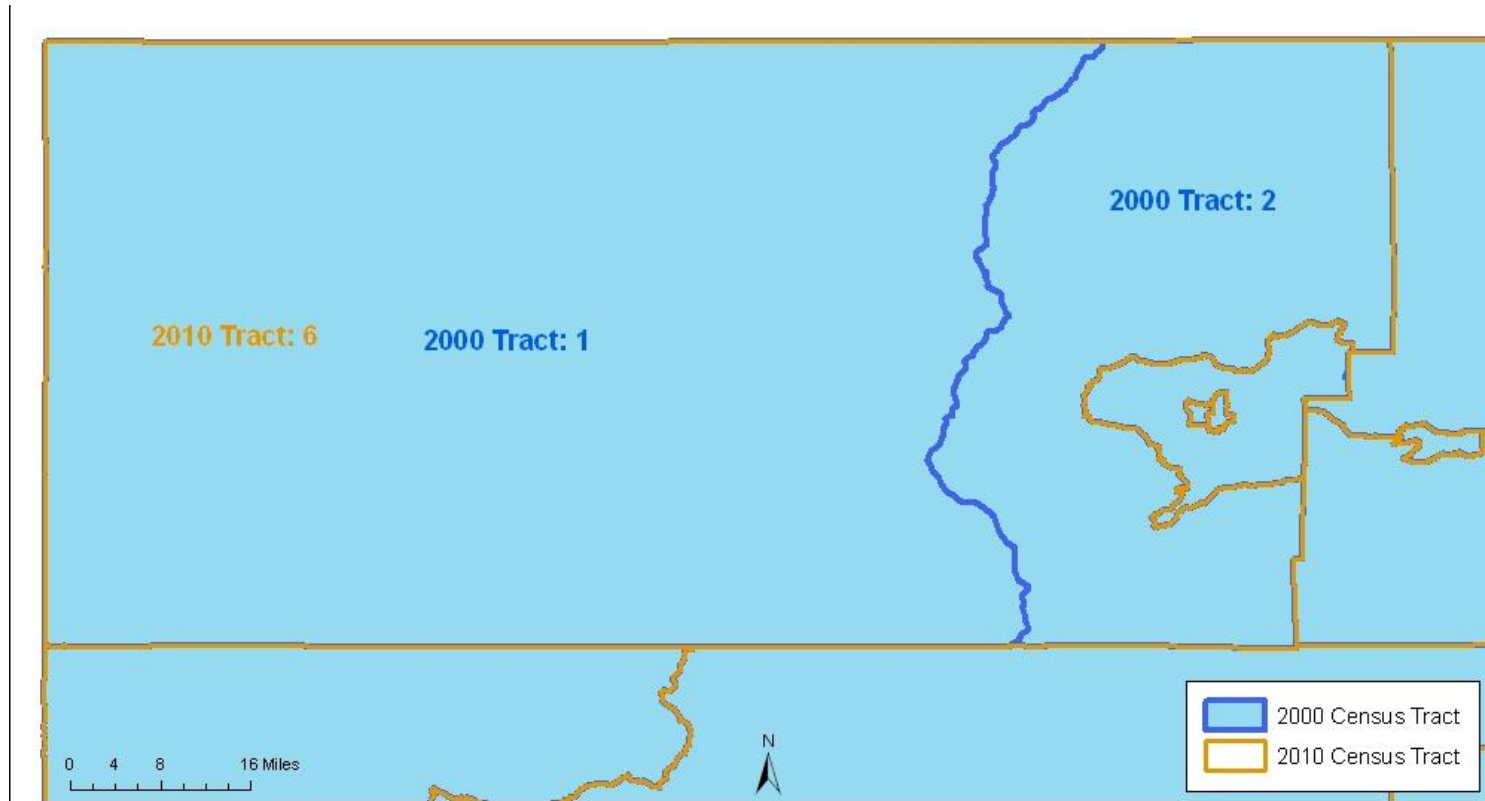
No Change



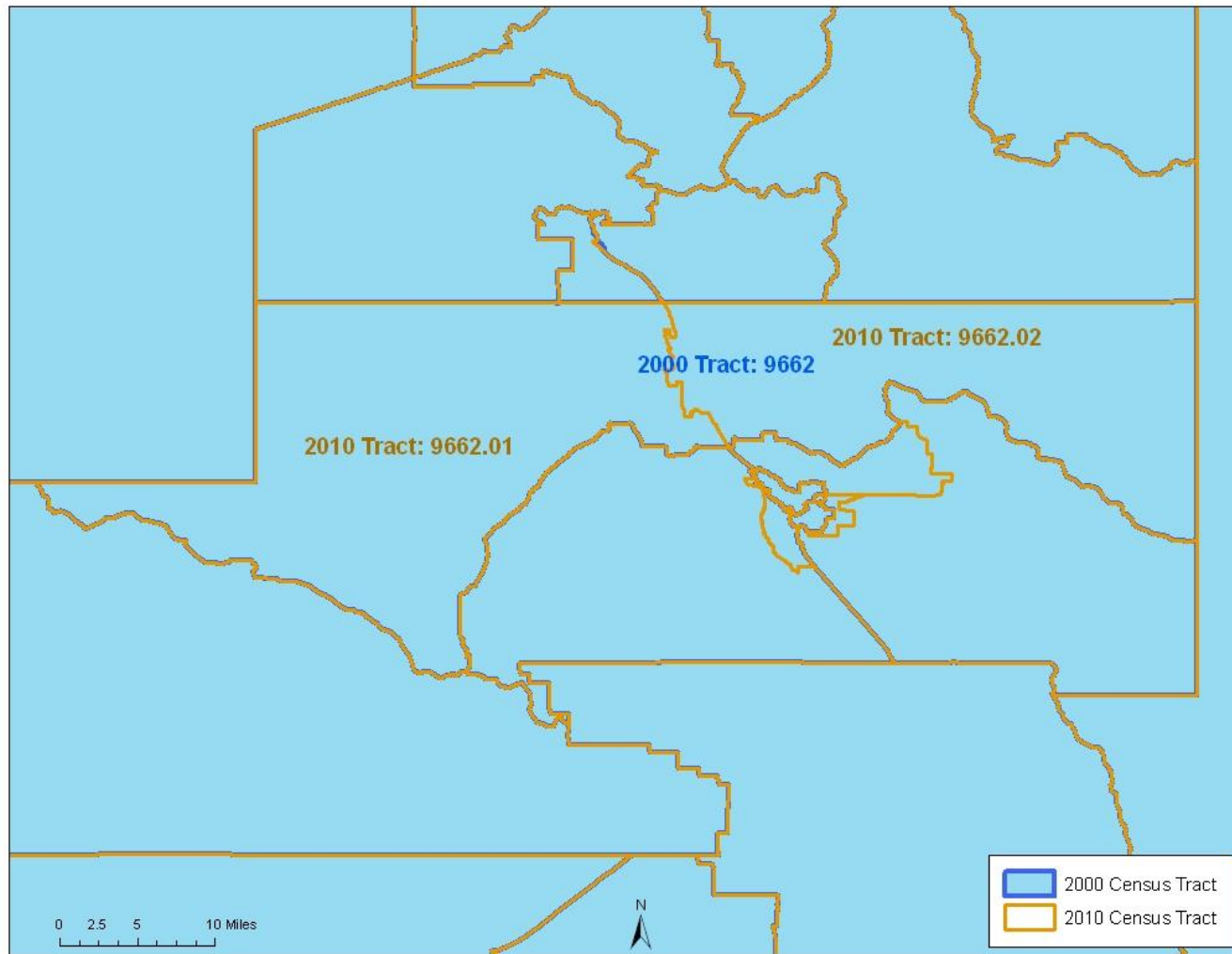
Revision



Merged



Split



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Email us at geo.geography@census.gov