

3. ACCESSING ACS DATA

Accessing ACS Data in Pretabulated Tables

The U.S. Census Bureau provides access to pre-tabulated American Community Survey (ACS) tables through two main sources: data.census.gov and the ACS Summary Files.

Data.census.gov is the Census Bureau's primary tool for accessing population, housing, and economic data from the ACS, the Puerto Rico Community Survey, the decennial census, and many other Census Bureau data sets.²¹ Data.census.gov provides comprehensive access to pre-tabulated ACS data for a wide range of geographic areas, including states, cities, counties, census tracts, and block groups.²²

Data users can access detailed ACS tables by using data.census.gov's "Advanced Search" feature, which allows users to conduct keyword searches, or search by using predefined topics, geographies, years, surveys, or codes (see Figure 3.1).

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, data.census.gov, <<https://data.census.gov>>.

²² Block groups were available for the first time with the 2009–2013 ACS 5-year data release. Previously, this geography level was only available in the ACS Summary Files.

Options for Accessing ACS Data

- Data.census.gov provides access to population, housing, and economic data from the ACS and many other Census Bureau data sets.
- Journalists with programming skills can use the ACS Summary Files to access multiple ACS tables for large numbers of geographic areas.
- The ACS Public Use Microdata Sample files allow users to create custom estimates with variables of their choosing.
- State Data Centers and Census Information Centers can provide help in accessing ACS data.
- Journalists who want access to ACS data prior to their public release can apply for embargo access.

Figure 3.1. Advanced Search Feature in Data.census.gov

