The U.S. Census

Geography 210

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What is the US Census Bureau?

- Full count of US population in order to allot seats in the House of Representatives
  - Constitutional mandate
- Collect information on American people and economy
  - Lawmakers and other stakeholders advocate for certain questions

The Census Bureau has to balance the need for more detailed information on many topics with concerns over privacy and inefficiency

Why is the census important?

- Allocating US House of Representatives seats based on accurate population count
- Allocating $400 billion in federal and state funding
- Providing data to states, businesses, and communities
- Main source of information on many topics
  - public health
  - education
  - crime
  - employment and consumer spending
  - housing

What are the surveys the Census Bureau uses?

- Over 130 ongoing surveys
- Economic surveys of manufacturing, service, and retail establishments
- US Census every 10 years
  - Full count of population
  - Very simple form
- American Community Survey
  - Sample of population
  - Detailed information on race and ethnicity, language, income, education and employment, migration, disability, and housing
  - Replaced long-form decennial census once sent to a subset of homes

What information can we get from census data?

http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

How does the Census use geography?

"Geography is central to the work of the Census Bureau, providing the framework for survey design, sample selection, data collection, tabulation, and dissemination. Geography provides meaning and context to statistical data."
    -- Census website

Census Block
    Block group
        Census Tract
            Place, county subdivision, county, state, division, region, US

How do census data work in GIS?

- Download data
  - MassGIS and other state websites
  - Census website
- Use the analytical tools we've learned in class
- Consider scale: block group, tract, municipalities of different sizes

What are some applications of using census data in GIS?

- Universities and researchers: Study of demographics and other population characteristics at national, regional, and local scales
- Governments and private agencies: Location of schools and other facilities, transportation and infrastructure planning, emergency preparedness and natural disaster relief, and public health and safety (among many other topics)
- Insurance, retail or real estate: market research, identifying trends and ideas for new locations or projects