Try the Census Test Site: data.census.gov

In chapter 11 we introduced readers to American FactFinder, the Census Bureau’s primary tool for finding data on population, housing, economic data, and survey data. In reality, there are about 40 tools that they have made available, and this creates confusion among users. The Bureau has a plan to combine the features of these various tools into a single portal. It won’t be until 2022 that this project will be complete, but in the meantime, we, the general public, can play around with the tool as it exists today. It is available at https://data.census.gov/. That URL spawns a longer one, but the simple URL will serve you best. Not all data is currently available. Not all features are enabled as they will be at the project completion. Nevertheless you will find it a fun experience to play with maps and tables.

Eventually the new dissemination platform will contain all content from the current Quick Facts, American FactFinder, Census Business Builder, and DataFerrett, the microdata tool for examining anonymized responses to Census surveys.

The simple search box offers a suggestive search. Just start typing “dis,” for example, and you will see availability of data for disability, congressional districts, natural gas distribution, and other topics with words beginning with “dis.” Since the tool is still in the early development stages, don’t expect full functionality. For example, tables do not display more than four columns accurately. Selecting fewer columns is the way to go in this early iteration.

To introduce yourself to the features from data.census.gov, try this exercise.

1) Type in the county in which you live. As you begin to type, you should see the county as the first suggestive result. In my case, it is Arapaho County, Colorado.

2) Scroll down the attractive page, and you will see either charts or maps presenting an overview of data. Choose a category that interests you, perhaps foreign born, language spoken at home, families and living arrangements, uninsured population, educational attainment, or employment and labor force status. Notice that you can change the data variable and color palates for maps (Figure 1), as well as get the data behind charts (Figures 2 and 3).
Figure 1. Map from data.census.gov showing percent with health insurance coverage in Arapahoe County, Colorado, in 2016.

Figure 2. Chart from data.census.gov showing types of language spoken at home by percentage for Arapahoe County, Colorado, in 2016. Arrow points to source in data in figure 3 below.
Figure 3. Table behind chart shown in figure 2 above.

Those needing detailed statistics and full features from the Census Bureau should continue to use American FactFinder and the other tools on the Web site. But data.census.gov will continue to develop and will be the future of access to population and economic census data.