

Accessing Government Records: Authorities and Agreements

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Using Multiple Data Sources and State-of-the-Art Estimation Methods

Who has the data?

- Federal or state agency
- Firms
- Aggregators
- Public

Who can get the data?

- Authorized parties
 - Enforcement, research, statistical use
- Anyone with cash or a useful trade
- Scrapers and hackers

Is the data usable?

- What is captured?
- What are important fields?
- Who manages the data?
- Who is authorized to access/extract?

Can the data be normalized and integrated?

- Parse, standardize, validate, geocode, anonymize, and link
- Human and IT resources, technical and SME
- Access to identifiers
- Census approach

Data uses

- Enforcement, research, evaluation, and operations
- Access paths differ
- Example: Wage data

Wage data

- NDNH accessible to SSA, Dept. of Education, HUD, state unemployment compensation administrators, Treasury for debt collection, state SNAP administrators, deidentified data available to researchers
- IRS wages accessible to designee of taxpayer, state tax officials, state/local law enforcement, committees of Congress, Treasury/Justice/SSA for tax administration, statistical use (Census, BEA, FTC, Treasury, USDA, CBO)
- SSA wages accessible for operations and researchers
- LEHD UI wages accessible for Census Bureau statistical uses

Implications

- Metadata
 - Study design and interpretation of results
- Quality
 - Assess relevant content, accuracy, timeliness, comparability, technical check, completeness, stability, vintage, data treatment known, and cost
- Bias
 - Non-consent, linkage, and non-coverage

Census Bureau Authority

Confidentiality Protection (13 U.S.C. § 9(a))

Neither the Secretary, nor any other officer or employee...may...

- (1) use the information furnished under the provisions of this title for any purpose other than the statistical purposes for which it is supplied; or
- (2) make any publication whereby the data furnished by any particular establishing or individual under this title can be identified; or
- (3) permit anyone other than the sworn officers and employees of the Department or bureau or agency thereof to examine the individual reports.

No department, bureau agency, officer, or employee of the Government,...shall require, for any reason, copies of the census reports which have been retained by any such establishment or individual. Copies of the census reports which have been so retained shall be immune from legal process, and shall not, without the consent of the individual or establishment concerned be admitted as evidence or used for any purpose in any action, suit, or other judicial or administrative proceeding.

Access and Use of Administrative Records (13 U.S.C. § 6)

- (a) The Secretary, whenever he considers it advisable, may call upon any other department, agency, or establishment of the federal government, or of the government of the District of Columbia, for information pertinent to the work provided for in this title.
- (b) The Secretary may acquire, by purchase or otherwise, from States, counties, cities, or other units of government, or their instrumentalities, or from private persons and agencies, such copies of records, reports, and other materials as may be required for the efficient and economical conduct of the censuses and surveys provided for in this title.
- (c) To the maximum extent possible and consistent with the kind, timeliness, quality, and scope of the statistics required, the Secretary shall acquire and use information available from any source referred to in subsection (a) or (b) of this section instead of conducting direct inquiries.