Let’s take an in-depth look at the geography available in the Decennial Censuses and the American Community Survey.
There are two different types of geography – legal and statistical.

Legal jurisdictions have legally described boundaries which cannot change without legal steps.

Note that “Incorporated Cities” are included in the “Places” classification.

In California, incorporated cities cannot cross county boundaries.
Statistical geography is an area that is created to identify an area for the tabulation of census data only.

CCD are not commonly used in CA – they are here as an equivalent level of geography to Minor Civil Divisions in some states in the East.

CDP boundaries are drawn by the local partner, the State Data Center, or the Census Bureau.
Census Tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county that are updated by local participants prior to each decennial census as part of the Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program. The primary purpose of census tracts is to provide a stable set of geographic units for the presentation of statistical data.

A census tract usually covers a contiguous area; however, the land area of census tracts varies widely depending on the density of settlement. Census tract boundaries are delineated with the intention of being maintained over a long time so that statistical comparisons can be made from census to census. Census tracts occasionally are split due to population growth or merged as a result of substantial population decline.
Block Groups in CA

- Population between 600 and 3,000.
- There are 23,212 block groups in the 2010 Census and 22,133 in 2000.
- A block group consists of all blocks in a single tract with the same first digit. For example, blocks 3001, 3002, 3003, ..., 3999 in census tract 1210.02 belong to BG 3 in that census tract.
- Codes: BGs have a valid code range of 0 through 9. BGs beginning with a zero only contain water area.
- **IMPORTANT**: Block groups are numbered within a census tract. To identify a specific BG, you must have the state, county, and tract codes.
- This is the lowest level of geography available in the American Community Survey. But only selected tables are available for block groups.
Blocks in CA

- Statistical areas bounded by visible features, such as streets, roads, streams, and railroad tracks, and by nonvisible boundaries, such as selected property lines and city, township, school district, and county limits and short line-of-sight extensions of streets and roads.
- There are 710,145 block groups in the 2010 Census and 533,163 in 2000 – a 33% increase.
- Census blocks nest within all other tabulated census geographic entities and are the basis for all tabulated data.
- Four digit code from 0000 to 9999 within a census tract. Block numbers beginning with a zero (in Block Group 0) are only associated with water-only areas.
Census Tract 12 is bounded by R Street, 12 Street, N Street, 15th street, Capitol Ave, 21st Street back to R Street

We are in tract 11.01
The blue dotted line is a voting district boundary.
You can find the census geography for a particular address on American FactFinder.
Census Designated Places in CA

- CDPs are settled concentrations of population that are locally identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated.
- No population size limit.
- CDPs and incorporated cities are grouped together in census geography as “Places”.
- Boundaries are drawn by local officials, the State Data Center, or the Census Bureau.
- CDP boundaries may change from one decennial census to the next. A CDP with the same name as in an earlier census does not necessarily have the same boundary.
- If a CDP incorporates, the new city will probably not have the same boundaries as the old CDP even when it has the same name.
- A CDP can cross county boundaries. There are four of these in CA. In census tabulations, the data are usually for the whole CDP, not the parts in each county.

* There are 1,523 whole places (sumlev 160). Four places are split by counties = 1,527 in sumlev 155.

- 02812 Aromas CDP – Monterey and San Benito
- 38604 Kingvale CDP – Nevada and Placer
- 38646 Kirkwood CDP – Amador and Alpine
- 77728 Tahoma CDP – El Dorado and Placer

There are cases where the name of a CDP and the name of a city are the same – for example, Burbank city in LA county and Burbank CDP in Santa Clara County. So pay attention to the label.
ZCTA in CA

- ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) are approximate area representations of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) five-digit ZIP Code service areas.
- The Census Bureau defines ZCTAs by allocating each block that contains addresses to a single ZCTA, usually to the ZCTA that reflects the most frequently occurring ZIP Code for the addresses within that tabulation block.
- Data users should not use ZCTAs to identify the official USPS ZIP Code for mail delivery. The USPS makes periodic changes to ZIP Codes to support more efficient mail delivery.
- The ZCTAs process used primarily residential addresses and was biased towards Zip Codes used for city-style mail delivery, thus there may be Zip Codes that are primarily nonresidential or only P.O. boxes that may not have a corresponding ZCTA.

Last bullet – important when trying to match census data to tabulations of your own data.
Counts in California: Urbanized Areas {59} and Urban Clusters {152}

Central Place—The 2010 Census urban areas will no longer include one or more designated central places. In preceding censuses, the central place included all incorporated or census designated places included in the urban area title, plus additional incorporated areas that met a population size criterion. The concept of central place for urban areas no longer is being applied.

Urban Area Titles and Codes—The title of each UA and UC may contain up to three incorporated place or census designated place (CDP) names and will include the two-letter U.S. Postal Service abbreviation for each state or statistically equivalent entity into which the UA or UC extends.

Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are geographic areas for which the Census Bureau provides selected extracts of raw data from a small sample of census records that are screened to protect confidentiality. These extracts are referred to as public use microdata sample (PUMS) files.

For the 2010 Census, each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and some Island Area participants delineated PUMAs for use in presenting PUMS data based on a 5 percent sample of decennial census or American Community Survey data. These areas are required to contain at least 100,000 people. This is different from Census 2000 when two types of PUMAs were defined: a 5 percent PUMA as for 2010 and an additional super-PUMA designed to

Why should you care? Because with the PUMS file, you can create special tabulations that are no available on the standard summary files.
Geographic Resources:

- 2010 Census Block and Census Tract Maps –

- TIGER/Line Files (for GIS applications) –
  [www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/shp.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/shp.html)

- Urban Areas:
  - Relationship Files (UA to other census geography) –
    [www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010ua_reldl.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010ua_reldl.html)
  - Boundary Shape Files (for GIS applications – select the “Urban Area” layer) –
    [www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles2010/main](http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles2010/main)
  - Reference Maps (“ua” = Urbanized Areas; “uc” = Urban clusters) –
    [www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/](http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/)
Questions? Call Us.

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Thank you!