

Introduction

Demographics at your fingertips. That is what the *A to Z Guide to American Consumers: Quick Links to Free Demographics* is all about. This directory provides you with links to the demographic data that the nation's leaders—in government, business, and academia—depend on for policy decisions, strategic planning, marketing, and scholarly analysis.

The decision to create this directory has been a long time in coming. For three decades, I have been knee-deep in demographics, plumbing countless columns of numbers and rows of statistics as a demographer, editor, and author. As the editor of *American Demographics* magazine in the 1980s, my office was piled high with government reports, and my staff labored over the printed pages in our effort to retrieve the numbers, explain the trends, and bring stories to life. As the author of books on demographic trends published both before (*100 Predictions for the Baby Boom*, 1987) and after (*Bet You Didn't Know*, 2008) the arrival of the Internet, I have a deep appreciation for the communications revolution. As the editorial director of New Strategist Publications, overseeing the production of the company's many reference books and reports, I know it has never been easier to get the numbers you need. Yet every time I capture, in seconds, a needed statistic for a customer, colleague, or reporter, this is the question I continually hear: How did you do it? How did you find the information in a just a few keystrokes?

In fact, the numbers you need are only a few clicks away. Never has access to demographic data been more democratic. But you need to know where to look. Internet search engines can be helpful, but they are not enough. Search engines can retrieve the right numbers, but they are hidden in a long list of wrong numbers—links that will take you to questionable surveys, costly statistics, and outdated reports. If you are unsure what you are looking for, then search engine results can lead you astray. The *A to Z Guide* takes you where you need to go and bypasses the extraneous and erroneous.

About the directory

The *A to Z Guide to American Consumers: Quick Links to Free Demographics* is organized alphabetically by topic from Abortion and Adoption to Zip Code Demographics. We believe a topical listing, rather than a listing by source (such as Census Bureau) or survey (such as the American Community Survey) is the best way to serve the needs of those who want answers. Not many people outside the academic community care whether numbers come from the Census Bureau or another government agency. Few even know the range of data provided by the American Community Survey. But many need to know about incomes, public schools, or health insurance.

The best way to use the *A to Z Guide* is to download it as a pdf file. In that format, you will be able to literally click through to the sources listed in these pages. For those of you who have a printed copy of the directory, type the URL for the source into the address box of your browser and go.

Most of the links in the *A to Z Guide* are your conduit to the original source of demographic data available from the producing agency. For the most part, this directory does not include businesses and nonprofits that publish demographic statistics produced by others because they are not the original source of the data. This directory also does not include businesses that provide numbers for a fee. Most of the sources shown here are entirely free, although a few charge a nominal fee (such as the \$5 charge to download a working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research). The *A to Z Guide* is your link to original sources, the latest data, and the rich universe of free demographics. The *Guide* will be updated regularly, since Internet addresses and offerings change frequently.

Sprinkled throughout the directory are brief commentaries I have written for *American Consumers*, a free email newsletter about demographic trends available from New Strategist (to subscribe, go to <http://www.newstrategist.com> and click on "Get free American Consumers Newsletter"). These commentaries discuss how to think about demographics, what is revealed by demographic data, and how you can use demographics to talk about trends.

At the end of the *A to Z Guide* are three appendices for those who want to know more. Appendix A describes the many surveys that produce the demographic data on which government and industry depend. Appendix B lists physical addresses and telephone numbers for the major agencies that produce demographic data. While the Internet is the way most people retrieve data today, we believe the directory would be incomplete without these additional listings. Appendix C is a glossary of demographic terms for easy reference. Also at the back of the book is an index to help speed researchers on their way to finding the information they need.

Consider the *A to Z Guide* your research assistant. With its help, you are more likely to find the right number and make the best decision.

Cheryl Russell
Editorial Director
New Strategist Publications

(Cheryl Russell is the editorial director of New Strategist Publications. She is a demographer and author who previously served as editor-in-chief of American Demographics magazine from 1984 to 1990, executive editor of The Boomer Report, and contributing editor to Money magazine. She holds an M.A. in Sociology/Demography from Cornell University.)