

Source	Frequency	Method	Geography available	Comparability	Best used when	Summary
<b>Decennial Census</b>	Every ten years, in years ending with 0	Complete count of population	All geography levels for total population; variable for more detailed demographic statistics	Data can be compared across geographies and across years	Precision is more important than having up-to-date data; the Decennial count was recent	Decennial Census data is the most accurate and precise population data for all levels of geography but is limited as it is only released every 10 years.
<b>Population Estimates</b>	Annual	Estimation based on decennial population count and births, deaths, and migration	State and county for total population, components of change and characteristics; total population only at town level	Data can be compared across geographies and longitudinally within the same decade; to compare to a previous decade, use intercensal population estimates	Having up-to-date data is more important than precision; analyzing geographic areas (i.e. states, counties and towns)	Population Estimates are the most accurate source of up-to-date population statistics at the national, state, county, and town level. However, only total population is available at the town level.
<b>American Community Survey</b>	Annual	Estimated using a survey answered by a sample of the population	1-year: geographic areas with at least 65,000 in population; 5-year: all geographic areas	Data can be compared across geographies; 5-year estimates can only be compared to non-overlapping years. For example, 2015-2019 ACS estimates can only be compared to 2010-2014 estimates or earlier.	Analyzing demographic characteristics of sub-county geographies; Demographic detail and precision are more important than having up-to-date data	American Community Survey 5-year estimates are the best source of population data for small geographies, particularly when details such as race and ethnicity or age and sex are needed at the town level or lower.
<b>State Economist Population Projections</b>	Every two years, typically in even years	Estimation using cohort-component method (advancing historical population counts using migration rates, birth rates, and death rates)	State and county for total population and population by 5-year age group and sex; total population for towns	Data can be compared across geographies and across years within the same projection; however, current projections should not be compared to past projections.	Projections for future population counts are needed for Maine at the state, county, or town level	State Economist population projections are produced every two years and provide projections for future population counts within Maine.