

American Housing Survey (AHS): Using the Internal User File (IUF)

The American Housing Survey (AHS) is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the data are collected by the Census Bureau. The first national survey was conducted in 1973 and the first metro area was surveyed in 1974. As of 2013, surveys have been conducted in 66 metro areas.

Accessing the AHS Public Use Files

The AHS Public Use File (PUF) is available to the general public in SAS and ASCII format. The PUF for each survey year is available at www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs.html. At this site users can download:

- 1) Datasets of all AHS surveys dating back to 1973;
- 2) The codebook that provides the name and detailed information on each variable for each survey year;
- 3) The survey questionnaire/booklet in both English and Spanish;
- 4) Information on topcoded and bottomcoded variables and the methodology used in the coding;
- 5) AHS technical documentation; and
- 6) Publications and/or tabular data in Excel format.

Why Use the Internal User Files?

The AHS PUF includes most of the data collected on the AHS, but in order to maintain the privacy of the respondents, many items are not released on the PUFs, are recoded, topcoded, or bottomcoded (i.e., really high and really low values are grouped together in a single value) and the level of geography available is limited and some of it is masked.

Some AHS users may have data needs that cannot be fully supported by the PUF. To accommodate those requirements, Census has created AHS internal user file (IUF) for each survey year. The AHS IUF contains geographic identifiers (e.g., Census tract) that do not appear on the PUF and also includes data that has not been topcoded, or aggregated for confidentiality reasons. In addition, they contain variables that can be used to calculate the correct standard errors for a complex random sample. The data, however, have been edited and imputed.

The following table shows the differences between the PUF and the IUF.

PUF	IUF
Topcoded/Bottomcoded and perturbed (Age) data to protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents	Non-topcoded/bottomcoded data and age is not perturbed
Some variables, such as amenities available in the community, may be recoded to a single Yes/No variable	All individual variables collected in the survey are available
Other variables, such as some variables tracking details on why an unit was not interviewed, are not available	All variables in the interview are available
Merged/Masked geography	Detailed geography (including 1980 census tract)
Recoded/Collapsed information on home improvement	Detailed information on home improvement at the job-level

PUF	IUF
No information on sampling frames	Detailed information on sampling frames
In some metro areas some cases may be dropped for disclosure purposes, as the population count in certain areas may no longer meet Census' threshold for disclosure (post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, for example)	All cases are available
No recoded/computed variables that are used to create the publication tables	A file including the recoded/computed variables used to create tables are included
No information from MASTER file	MASTER file which includes detailed information on sampling frame, geography, etc. is included

About the Data Files

The main documentation for the AHS data is the PUF codebook, available on the Census web site (www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs.html). In general, the AHS IUF internal variable names and file structure corresponds to that of the PUF. There are some exceptions, some of which are described in this document.

The IUF consist of ALL variables on the PUF, including computed variables that are released on the PUF (i.e., variables that are created by combining or recoding other variables). The only difference between variables on the PUF and IUF are that all IUF variables are the actual data, whereas some variables on the PUF have been topcoded or bottomcoded and have been otherwise adjusted to protect the privacy and maintain the confidentiality of the respondent.

All data files described below are in SAS format. For each survey year, the IUF dataset consists of multiple SAS files. They are:

HOUSHLD/NEWHOUSE: This file used to be called HOUSHLD (until 2005) and is now called NEWHOUSE. The file has the same name in the PUF and IUF and contains most of the survey data. It has one record per household and the IUF includes more variables than the PUF.

PERSON: This file includes a single record for each member of the household. This means there can be multiple records for each occupied household and there are no records for vacant, usual-residence-elsewhere and noninterview units. This file includes all person-level data including race/ethnicity, income, age, disability status, etc. of each person in the household. Like on the PUF, the variable MVG on the person file can be used with MOVGRP (mover group), which is available in the RMOV (recent mover) data file to determine to which mover group each person belongs. Beginning in 2009, the MOVGRP variable on the RMOV file was renamed to MVG to make the merge easier.

HOMIMP: This file includes information on the home improvement projects conducted on each housing unit. In the PUF, the data are one record for each home improvement job reported, whereas on the IUF the data are one record per household with each job shown in their own variables.

RMOV: This file includes information on Recent Movers and is at the mover group level and is the same for both the IUF and PUF.

JTW: This file has information on an individual's journey to work and is at the person level. It is the same for both the IUF and PUF. This file no longer exists from 2011 onwards, as the JTW questions were removed.

MORTG: The information on mortgages is available on this file. It is at the household level and includes information on all owner-occupied homes with a mortgage. The only major differences between the PUF and the IUF for this file are topcodes.

RATIOV: This is a household level file that includes the ratio verification variables. There is no difference between the IUF and the PUF.

OWNER: This is a household level file with information on the on-site owner or manager and there is no difference between the PUF and the IUF.

TBLRCD: Many recodes are computed to create the tables released by the Census Bureau on the AHS data. These recoded variables are available in this file. It is a household level file. There is no PUF equivalent for it, as this file is only released with the IUF.

MASTER: This is a household level file, which is also unique to the IUF (no PUF equivalent). This file has sampling frame information on each housing unit and includes fields identifying detailed geography (down to the 1980 census tract level) for each unit.

NONTOPPUF: In years prior to 2007, this file included the recodes that are included on the PUF. Unlike on the PUF, these variables have not been topcoded and do not have values suppressed or masked. It should be noted that many of these variables or near equivalents appear on other IUF files. These variables have been incorporated in the NEWHOUSE file starting with the 2007 National IUF.

TOPICAL: Information from survey modules dealing with specific topics, for example, use of public transportation or household planning for disasters. These modules are not part of every AHS survey (in 2011 and 2013 surveys only).

OMOV: Information on persons who have left the unit since the last survey; this information is organized by groups of out-movers (in 2013 survey only).

REPWGT: Information needed to calculate variances. Contains multiple weights that can be used to generate alternative estimates of a variable for the purpose of calculating variances (in 2011 and 2013 surveys only).

TYPEC: Cases that were shown on previous year metro or national public use files (PUFs) but do not appear on the current year PUF (in 2011 and 2013 surveys only).

Geography Variables

The key geography variables, all on the IUF MASTER file, are:

Variable Name	Census Geography
CBNCOD90	1990 central city/balance code
CBUR80	1980 central city/balance/urban/rural code
CENSTATE	1960 Census state code
CMSA80	1980 consolidated MSA code
CMSA90	1990 consolidated MSA code
COOLDAY	Cooling degree days
COUNTY80	1980 FIPS county code
COUNTY90	1990 FIPS county code
FIPSTATE	FIPS state code
HEATDAY	Heating degree days
MDCOD80	1980 design MCD/CCD code
MDCOD90	1990 design MCD/CCD code
MSASTA80	MSA status – 80 definition
MSASTA90	MSA status – 90 definition
PLCODE80	1980 design Census place code
PLCODE90	1990 design Census place code
PMSA80	1980 design MSA/PMSA code
PMSA90	1990 design MSA/PMSA code
REGION	Census region
TRACT80	1980 tract code
TRCTSF80	1980 tract suffix
UACODE80	1980 design urbanized area code
UACODE90	1990 design urbanized area code
UASIZE90	1990 design urbanized area size
URBRUR80	1980 design urban/rural code
URBRUR90	1990 design urban/rural code
ZONE	Zone code (metro only)

Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) codes can be found at:

<http://www.census.gov/geo/reference/ansi.html>

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) codes can be found at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/metro/>

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

An internal use SAS dataset (geoskinny.sas) is available for use with the IUF. It is designed to match to the internal “newhouse.sas” file using the CONTROL variable. This file provides WGS84 coordinates in addition to Census 2000 vintage tract, block group, and block codes. For 2011 and 2013, it also includes 2010 vintage tract, block group, block, and PUMA codes, as well as the Census 2000 vintage PUMA codes.

Race Variables

For the national and metro surveys between 1997 and 2002, RACE is coded identically on both the IUF and the PUF. Beginning in 2003, respondents were allowed to choose “one or more” races. The IUF stores these answers in RACE1 (first race mentioned) through RACE5 (last race mentioned). The PUF includes only the variable RACE, which recodes these answers into 21 categories such as “White only.”

Coding of RACE1-RACE5 on the IUF

Code	Race
1	White
2	Black or African American
3	American Indian or Alaska Native
4	Asian
5	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
6	Other - DO NOT READ

Race and Nativity

Nativity (country of birth) information has been collected since the 2001 national file, but appears on the PUF in aggregated form (e.g., Portugal and the Azores are grouped into a single category). Nativity codes for the IUF are contained in Appendix 1.

Recodes Files

The TBLRCD file contains the recodes used internally to produce the AHS publication tables. Most of these variables are fairly simple recodes, but may be of use to users seeking to reproduce the AHS publication tables. These variables may allow users to save some effort and avoid “reinventing the wheel.” Five variables that are based on especially complex calculations, and hence probably of the most interest to users, are:

Variable Name	Description
OTPINR	Outstanding principal and interest (rnd)
POORR	Household income as % of poverty level (rnd)
POVLVL	Poverty value that corr. to lookup table
ZSMHCM	Monthly housing costs w/ maintenance
ZSMHCN	Monthly housing costs w/o maintenance

Sampling Variables - National Files

The AHS is a complex random sample. Standard errors calculated from the data will be larger than those calculated using formulas that assume a simple random sample. This section discusses the key features of the AHS sample design, and discusses the IUF variables that correspond to those features.

The AHS sample is stratified in two ways: by Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) and by sample frame. A PSU is a county or a group of counties. The AHS sample was drawn by dividing the country into PSUs and then randomly sampling PSUs.

More specifically, large PSUs (called “self-representing” PSUs) were drawn with certainty. Smaller PSUs (“non-self-representing”) were divided into strata based on geography and characteristics from the 1980 census.¹ Finally, one PSU was randomly chosen from each strata.

A difficulty with this scheme is that there is only one PSU per stratum, while at least two PSUs per stratum are required to calculate the standard errors. Hence, the Census Bureau has combined pairs (sometimes triplets) of PSUs into “pseudo-strata” of similar PSUs for the purpose of calculating SEs.

Within each PSU, housing units were randomly chosen from four sample frames (lists of housing units). The 1980 Census frame contains housing units constructed before 1980. The permit frame contains housing units built since 1980 in areas where a building permit is required to authorize construction. The special areas frame contains housing units built since 1980 outside of permit-issuing areas, a small number of rural areas. Finally, the group quarters frame contains units in group quarters. These group quarters units are not considered housing units and are not in the interviewed sample. A sample is drawn from these units nonetheless, because some of these units may later be converted to housing units.

The key sampling variables are:

PSU80	1980 design stratification PSU
SEGMTYPE	Can be used to identify which sample frame unit comes from Frames defined using SEGMTYPE are: Permit Frame: SEGMTYPE = 4, 13 GQ Frame: SEGMTYPE = 12 Special Area Frame: SEGMTYPE = 6, 10 Unit Frame: SEGMTYPE = 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11
SEGMNT80	The last 3 digits can also be used to identify which sample frame unit comes from Frames defined using SEGMNT80 are: Permit Frame: 001-249 GQ Frame: 250-274 Special Area Frame: 275-299 Unit Frame: 300-999
STRPSU80	Pseudo-strata
PSUTYP80	1980 design PSU type (self-representing/non-self-representing). Values of 1, 4, or 5 mean self-representing, 2 or 3 mean non-self-representing.

In a statistical procedure such as SAS proc means, a user would specify strata as self-representing*frame*pseudo-strata, and specify cluster (within strata) as PSU80.

Note that the AHS national files from 1985-2013 are based on a 1980 sample design. 1990 and 2000 sample design

¹For a more detailed description of the AHS sample design and formation of the strata, see “American Housing Survey, A Quality Profile,” Current Housing Reports H121/95-1, available at <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/research/publications/h12195-1.html> .

variables are also included on the file, for internal use (i.e., for field staff), but played no role in drawing the sample.

Gaining Access to the IUF

Access to the IUF is available through the Census Bureau's secure Research Data Center (RDC) network. Approved researchers must obtain a Special Sworn Status (SSS) from the Census Bureau. SSS researchers are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of the data they access. There are a number of partnering universities and research institutions throughout the United States staffed with a Census Bureau employee. For information on how to apply and the types of proposals that are acceptable see www.census.gov/ces/rdcresearch/howtoapply.html.

Contact Information

AHS Information Owner: Tamara Cole, Survey Director, Housing Surveys 1-301-763-4665, tamara.a.cole@census.gov

SEHSD AHS staff: 1-301-763-3235 or 1-888-518-7365 (toll free) or by email at ahsn@census.gov.

Appendix 1: Coding of NATVTY (Country of birth) on the IUF

Code	Country	Code	Country	Code	Country
57	United States	415	Egypt	183	Latvia
72	Puerto Rico	312	El Salvador	222	Lebanon
96	Outlying Area of the U.S. (American Samoa, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Marianas, Other U.S. Territory)	555	Elsewhere	184	Lithuania
200	Afghanistan	139	England	224	Malaysia
375	Argentina	417	Ethiopia	315	Mexico
185	Armenia	148	Europe	252	Middle East
245	Asia	507	Fiji	436	Morocco
501	Australia	108	Finland	126	Netherlands
102	Austria	109	France	514	New Zealand
130	Azores	110	Germany	316	Nicaragua
333	Bahamas	421	Ghana	440	Nigeria
202	Bangladesh	138	Great Britain	468	North Africa
334	Barbados	116	Greece	304	North America
103	Belgium	340	Grenada	142	Northern Ireland
310	Belize	313	Guatemala	127	Norway
300	Bermuda	383	Guyana	462	Other Africa
376	Bolivia	342	Haiti	527	Pacific Islands
377	Brazil	126	Holland	229	Pakistan
205	Burma	314	Honduras	253	Palestine
206	Cambodia	209	Hong Kong	317	Panama
301	Canada	117	Hungary	385	Peru
353	Caribbean	210	India	231	Philippines
318	Central America	211	Indonesia	128	Poland
378	Chile	212	Iran	129	Portugal
207	China	213	Iraq	132	Romania
379	Colombia	119	Ireland/Eire	192	Russia
311	Costa Rica	214	Israel	233	Saudi Arabia
337	Cuba	120	Italy	140	Scotland
155	Czech Republic	343	Jamaica	234	Singapore
105	Czechoslovakia	215	Japan	156	Slovakia/Slovak Rep
106	Denmark	216	Jordan	449	South Africa
338	Dominica	427	Kenya	389	South America
339	Dominican Republic	218	Korea/S. Korea	134	Spain
380	Ecuador	221	Laos	136	Sweden

Appendix 1: Coding of NATVTY (Country of birth) on the IUF (continued)

Code	Country
137	Switzerland
237	Syria
238	Taiwan
239	Thailand
351	Trinidad/Tobago
240	Turkey
195	Ukraine
387	Uruguay
180	USSR
388	Venezuela
242	Vietnam
147	Yugoslavia