

Dependent Interviewing in the American Housing Survey

Updated September 6, 2018

“Dependent interviewing” is the practice of using the results from previous surveys or other questions to improve the accuracy and reduce respondent burden of current surveys. Only respondent-provided, unedited data are eligible to be used in dependency comparisons. Since the American Housing Survey is longitudinal, it provides numerous opportunities to utilize dependent interviewing.

In 2015, the AHS began a new longitudinal panel. The panel has two primary components: 1) an integrated national sample which includes the Top 15 metropolitan areas, and 2) an independent metropolitan area sample, consisting of rotating metros. Since 2015 was the first year with the new panel, dependent interviewing was not used in the collection instrument. Dependent interviewing was reinstated for the 2017 AHS.

Dependent interviewing takes a number of basic forms. Each of these basic forms have variations depending on the nature of the original question. Based on the individual item, the eligibility for dependency may be further restricted. For most items, the prior year must have been a regular, occupied interview. For items related to the acquisition of the home and the demographic characteristics of the household, the prior year household must be the same as the current year. The following are the most common forms of dependency in the current AHS instrument.

1. Do Not Re-ask (DNR). In its simplest form, data items that are unlikely to change can be skipped entirely once a valid answer is obtained. Examples of this include the purchase price of the housing unit or a person’s country of birth.
2. Verify (V). For data items which can change, but either do so infrequently or in a predictable way (such as a person’s age), the respondent can be asked to verify that the situation is the same as it was in the previous survey or supply new information about any changes.

The AHS instrument also includes other types of dependency such as “Bounding” and “Setting”. These types of dependencies apply only to a select number of items in the instrument.

3. Bounding (B). For infrequent events, such as remodeling or major repairs, the respondent is asked whether an event is the same or different from one reported in the previous survey. This helps eliminate “telescoping,” the tendency of respondents to remember events as more recent than they actually were.
4. Setting (S-pn). In some cases, whether a question uses a type of dependent interviewing depends on specified conditions. For example, SUBRNT (whether the government subsidizes rent for the unit), is generally set if the prior year value for PROJ is “yes” for occupied units but is not re-asked for vacant units.

The table below lists the variables in the AHS dataset that are subject to dependent interviewing and the type of dependency used in each survey year after 2015, if any. See the legend and notes at the foot of each page for an explanation of the codes used. For dependent interviewing prior to 2015, please refer to [Dependent Interviewing in the American Housing Survey](#). Note that dependency formats may change from survey year to survey year.

Use of Dependent Interviewing in AHS – National and Top 15 Metro Areas

| Variable | Description | Survey Year | |
|----------|---|-------------|-------|
| | | 2017 | 2019 |
| ACCESSB | Entry system required to access building | V-y | V-y |
| AFUEL | Type of fuel used for air conditioning | V-s | V-s |
| AGE | Age of person | V | V |
| AGERES | Flag indicating community is age restricted | V-y | V-y |
| AIRSYS | Central air conditioner | V | V |
| ANCHOR | Method used to anchor mobile home | V-y | V-y |
| APPLY | Was your household assigned to this specific unit or were you allowed to choose it? | S-pn | S-pn |
| BEDRMS | Number of bedrooms in unit | | V |
| BURNER | Unit has working built-in cooking burners | V-y | V-y |
| CELLAR | Unit has a basement | V | V |
| CFUEL | Fuel used most for cooking | V-s | V-s |
| CITSHP | US citizenship of person | DNR-s | DNR-s |
| COMPLEX | Flag indicating this building is part of an apartment complex | V | V |
| CONDO | Flag indicating unit is a condominium | V | V |
| COOK | Unit has working cookstove or range/oven | V-y | V-y |
| CPRICE | Cost of construction plus value of land | DNR | DNR |
| CUSHOM | How owner obtained unit | DNR | DNR |
| DENS | Number of dens or libraries in unit | | V |
| DFUEL | Fuel used by clothes dryer | V-s | V-s |
| DINING | Number of dining rooms in unit | | V |
| DISH | Unit has working dishwasher | V | V |
| DRY | Unit has working clothes dryer | V | V |
| EBARCL | Building with bars on windows within ½ blk | | V-y |
| ECOM1 | Business/institutions within ½ block | | V-y |
| ECOM2 | Factories/other industry within ½ block | | V-y |
| EWATER | Bodies of water within ½ block of unit | | DNR |
| FAMRM | Number of family rooms, great rooms, or TV rooms in unit | | V |

Legend:

- **V** – Verify prior year response, **V-s** – Verify prior year response excluding answer of "other", **V-t** – Verify if tenure changed from renter to owner occupied, **V-y** – Verify if prior year response was "yes"
- **DNR** – Do not re-ask (fill answer from prior years), **DNR-s** – Do not re-ask if prior year citizen, **DNR-y** – Do not re-ask if prior year response was "yes", **DNR-v** – Do not re-ask for vacant interviews, **DNR-vs** – Do not re-ask if SUBRNT2 is "yes"
- **B** – Bounding, **S-pn** – Setting specified value if national case and prior year value of PROJ was "yes"

| Variable | Description | Survey Year | |
|----------|---|-------------|-------|
| | | 2017 | 2019 |
| FPLWK | Unit has useable fireplace | V-y | V-y |
| GARAGE | Flag indicating unit has a garage or carport | V-y | V-y |
| GATED | Flag indicating housing is gated or surrounded by walls or fences to prevent access by persons other than residents | | V-y |
| GRAD | Educational level of person | V | V |
| GUTREHB | Flag indicating unit has undergone a gut rehabilitation in the last 10 years | DNR-y | DNR-y |
| HALFB | Number of half bathrooms in unit | | V |
| HEQUIP | Main heating equipment | V-s,y | V-s,y |
| HFUEL | Fuel used most for heating unit | | V-s |
| HOA | Flag indicating unit is part of a homeowner's association | DNR-y | DNR-y |
| KITCH | Number of kitchens in unit | | V |
| INUSYR | Year person came to the US | DNR | DNR |
| LAUNDY | Number of laundry or utility rooms in unit | | V |
| LIVING | Number of living rooms in unit | | V |
| LPRICE | Purchase price of unit and land | DNR | DNR |
| MAR | Marital status of person | V | V |
| MHSETQ | Type of mobile home foundation | V | V |
| MHWIDE | Type of manufactured or mobile home | V | V |
| MOVE | Year person moved in | DNR | DNR |
| MOVMM | Month person moved in | DNR | DNR |
| NATVTY | Country of birth of person | DNR | DNR |
| NOSTEP | Flag indicating unit's entrance is accessible without climbing up or down any stairs | V-y | V-y |
| NOWIRE | Flag indicating electrical wiring concealed by walls | V-y | V-y |
| OTHFN | Number of other finished rooms in unit | | V |
| OVEN | Unit has a working microwave oven | V-y | V-y |
| OWNLOT | Flag indicating owner owns the lot | DNR | DNR |
| PAR | Line number of parent of person | DNR | DNR |

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| Variable | Description | Survey Year | |
|----------|--|--------------|--------------|
| | | 2017 | 2019 |
| PLUGS | Flag indicating every room has working electrical plug | V-y | V-y |
| PORCH | Flag indicating unit has porch or deck or balcony or patio | V-y | V-y |
| PREOCC | Received unit as gift or purchased it | DNR | DNR |
| PROJ | Building owned by public housing authority | S-pn, DNR-vs | S-pn, DNR-vs |
| PUBSEW | Unit connected to public sewer | DNR-y | DNR-y |
| RACE | Race of person | DNR | DNR |
| RAS | Type of alteration/repair | B | B |
| RECRM | Number of recreation rooms in unit | | V |
| REFR | Unit has a working refrigerator | V-y | V-y |
| REL | Relationship of person to reference person | DNR | DNR |
| RENEW | Income info required for lease renewal | S-pn | S-pn |
| SEWDIS | Type of sewage disposal | V | V |
| SEX | Sex of person | DNR | DNR |
| SINK | Unit has kitchen sink | DNR-y | DNR-y |
| SPAN | Spanish origin of person | DNR | DNR |
| SUBRNT | Government subsidizes rent for unit | S-pn, DNR-v | S-pn, DNR-v |
| TADJ | Purchase price changed due to inspection/test | DNR | DNR |
| TPBPIP | Lead pipes inspected before purchase | DNR | DNR |
| VCHER | Received voucher to help pay rent | S-pn | S-pn |
| WASH | Unit has a working washing machine | V-y | V-y |
| WATER | Source of water for unit | V-s | V-s |
| WFPROP | Unit is a waterfront property | | DNR |
| WFUEL | Fuel used most to heat water | V-s | V-s |
| WHNGET | Year unit bought/obtained/received | DNR | DNR |

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