

How to Make the Most of the 2015 and 2017 AHS Public Use Files: The 'Getting Started' User Guide

Is there a user's guide to help me better understand, analyze, and interpret the 2015 and 2017 AHS Public Use File (PUF) data?

Yes. As part of our continuing effort to make the American Housing Survey (AHS) data more accessible and easier to use, the U.S. Census Bureau (Census) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) developed a Guide to help users better understand, analyze, and interpret the 2015 and 2017 AHS public use file (PUF) microdata. This helpful User's Guide—[Getting Started with the Public Use File: 2015 and Beyond](#)—is easy to access in the technical documentation section on the American Housing Survey website.

Why should I use the 'Getting Started' Guide? The Guide provides a user-friendly introduction to the 2015 and 2017 PUF microdata. It features sections on key PUF topics and explains important differences between the 2015 and 2017 PUFs relative to prior-year PUFs.

How do the 2015 and 2017 PUFs differ from prior years? In 2015, the AHS underwent a major redesign. For the first time since 1985, HUD and Census drew an entirely new national and metropolitan areas longitudinal sample, resulting in changes to the 2015 and later AHS PUF microdata. These changes include: integration of the 15 largest metropolitan areas into the National sample PUF; fewer tables in the relational PUF structure; fewer weights; name changes to many variables; removal of non-interviews from the PUF; a new interactive codebook—the [AHS Codebook Interactive Tool](#); and reorganization of the codebook variables into topics and subtopics. Both the 2015 and 2017 PUFs contain two files: the integrated national sample file and the independent metropolitan areas sample file. The [integrated national sample file](#) contains data for the entire nation and for each of the top 15 largest metropolitan areas, as well as an oversample of HUD-assisted housing units. The independent metropolitan areas sample file contains data from 10 metropolitan areas selected for each survey year. Users should note that the 10 metropolitan areas selected for 2015 are different than the 10 selected for 2017. The 10 metropolitan areas selected for 2015 will be surveyed next in 2019, while the 10 metropolitan areas selected in 2017 will be surveyed next in 2021.

What does the 'Getting Started' Guide contain? The 'Getting Started' Guide provides detailed information on these changes to the PUF, along with updated information to help AHS data users access and use the 2017 PUF, including:

- Important Release Notes;
- A brief review of the 2015 Sample Redesign;
- Clearly organized sections on topics ranging from replicating results in the AHS summary tables to resources for investigating edits and imputations.

How can I get a copy of the Guide? Download the free [Getting Started With the Public Use File: 2015 and Beyond Guide](#) from the [technical documentation](#) section on the American Housing Survey webpage.

Where can I learn more about the American Housing Survey? To learn more, visit the [American Housing Survey](#) webpage.