



The American Housing Survey

Suburbs and the 2010 Census

George Mason and Hofstra Universities

July 2011



Topics

- **About the American Housing Survey (AHS)**
- **Accessing the AHS**
- **Public versus Internal Use Files**
- **Research Using the AHS**
- **Future of the AHS**



About the American Housing Survey (AHS)



Inception of the AHS

- A 1968 Presidential Commission on Housing found that there was not enough information on the dynamics and condition of the housing stock, especially between censuses.
- In 1971 Congress authorized the AHS.
 - In 1973 the first National AHS was conducted.
 - In 1974 the first Metro AHS was conducted.



AHS Today

- The national survey is currently conducted every two years.
- It is the largest regular national housing survey in the United States.
 - Has a fixed sample of about 50,000 households with new construction added during each iteration.
- Selected metropolitan areas are surveyed every 4 to 6 years. Almost 50 metro areas have been surveyed by the AHS.



Questions AHS Can Answer

Some examples of questions that can be answered :

- Is there an adequate supply of housing and how inventory has changed over time?
- What is the quality of the housing we live in?
- What is the quality of the neighborhoods we live in?
- How have housing characteristics and amenities changed over time?
- How much does housing cost how it varies for different groups and over time?
- How do we finance our housing?
- Are homeownership rates equal for all groups?
- Information on housing that is no longer in stock



Neighborhood quality,
 Neighborhood problems,
 Crime, Litter, Pollution,
 Internal and External
 Building Condition

Household education,
 income and race/ethnicity



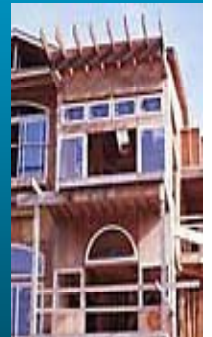
Just some subject areas



Mortgage financing,
 Rent controls &
 Rent subsidies
 Utilities and energy
 usage



Inventory composition,
 Units in structure,
 Square footage



Residential alterations
 and home repairs



The homes people left,
 and why they moved
 here



The Nation's Housing

- Its size and characteristics
- Its use and occupancy
- Its condition and neighborhood
- Its financial characteristics
 - Monthly housing costs
 - The ratio of costs to household income
- And characteristics of the household



Some Other Structure & Equipment Measures

- Year structure built
- Elevator
- Heating Fuel
- Kitchen Appliances
- Square footage of unit
- Rooms: number and type
- Persons per room (crowding)



Some Other Household Characteristics

- Age
- Children
- Education
- Race
- Hispanic Origin
- Tenure (own/rent)
- Nativity/citizenship
- Income



Another Uniqueness of the AHS

- The AHS has had the same panel in sample since 1985.
- This allows researchers to track the same housing unit over an almost 30 year span.

But this barely opens the door
to the wealth of information in
the AHS





Disseminating the AHS Data

- The AHS data are released publicly and are available at:
<http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/ahs.html>
- The internal data files are available at the RDCs
- In addition, Census publishes tables from the AHS data that are available at:
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/ahs/ahs.html>



The Data Files

PUF	IUF
Topcoded data	Non-topcoded data
Merged/Masked geography	Detailed geography (including 1980 census tract)
Recoded/Collapsed information on home improvement	Detailed information on home improvement at the job-level
No information on sampling frames	Detailed information on sampling frames



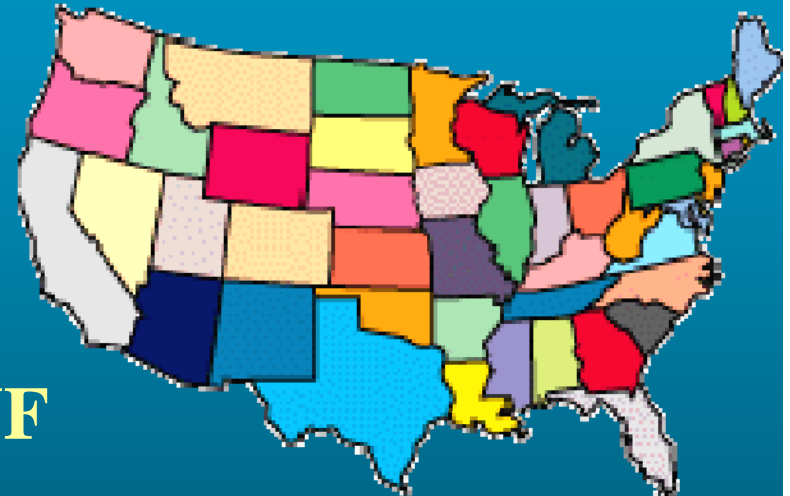
Geography for National Data Products

- On PUF

- Regions
- Metropolitan statistical areas
 - Central cities
 - Suburbs
- Rural areas
- Places grouped by size

- On IUF

- Everything on PUF +
- State
- County
- Unmasked MSA information
- 1980 Census Tract





Information on Data Sets

Available at

<http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/ahs.html>

- 1995 and later AHS Public Use Files (PUFs) for downloading
 - (SAS and ASCII versions)
- A codebook for the survey
- The survey booklet/questionnaire
- Information on topcoded variables



Other Information on AHS

Available at

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/ahs/ahs.html>

- PDF versions of AHS reports since 1993
- Access to the microdata for extracts
- Excel versions of each of the publication tables for 2005 and 2007
- Descriptions of the surveys
 - Historical changes
 - Definitions of concepts and variables
 - Sample design, sizes, and weights



Recent Research Using AHS Data

- ⇒ State of the Cities
- ⇒ Home Workers and Their Homes
- ⇒ A Decade of Remodeling
The Custom Home Market
- ⇒ Home Vintage and Operating Costs
- ⇒ Home Improvement as Investment
- ⇒ Rural Housing and Welfare Reform
- ⇒ Assisted Living Snapshots
Elderly Housing Needs



The Future of the AHS

- Rotating Modules of Special Questions
- 60 metro areas within the next four years
- Re-design of the sample in 2015



Contact Information

Mousumi Sarkar

American Housing Survey Branch

U.S. Census Bureau

Phone: 301-763-3235

Email: mousumi.sarkar@census.gov