Dependent Interviewing in the American Housing Survey
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"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. Since the American Housing Survey is longitudinal, it provides numerous opportunities to practice dependent interviewing by using information collected about a housing unit in previous years. While a limited form of dependent interviewing was used from the very beginning of the AHS, this practice was expanded considerably after the survey instrument switched to a computer-assisted form in 1997. In the following national survey (1999), the instrument had access to the data recorded in 1997 and could thus supply the Field Representatives with the information needed for dependent interviewing.

Dependent interviewing takes a number of basic forms:

1. Do Not Re-ask In its simplest form, data items which are unlikely to change can be skipped entirely, once a valid answer is obtained. Examples of this include the purchase price or a person's gender or country of birth).

2. Probe. In cases where changes in response are possible but unlikely, the Field Representative can be prompted to probe a reported change, to make sure it is correct.

3. Verify For data items which can change but either do so infrequently or in a predicable way (such as person age), the respondent can be asked to verify that the situation is as it was in the previous survey, supplying new information about any changes.

4. Bound For infrequent events, such as remodeling or major repairs, the respondent can be 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.

These basic forms can be modified with triggers that invoke or suppress them under specified circumstances. For example, year built is generally "do not re-ask," but it is asked again if a unit changes from being renter-occupied to being owner-occupied, on the grounds that owners are more likely to know this information than renters.

The table below lists the variables in the AHS national datasets that are subject to dependent interviewing. The table shows the type of dependent interviewing that was used in each survey year, if any. See the legend and notes at the end of the table for an explanation of the codes used.

Use of Dependent Interviewing in AHS National

Variable	Survey Years						
	1974 to 1983	1984 to 1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
AFUEL				V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
AGE	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
AIRSYS				V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
BUILT		DNR	DNR	V-t	V-t	V-t	V-t
BURNER			V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
CELLAR				V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
CFUEL			DNR	V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
CITSHP						DNR-s	DNR-s
CLIMB				V	V	V	V
COMMRECR[1]							DNR-y
COOK			V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
CPRICE				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
CUSHOM				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
DFUEL				V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
DISH			V	V	V	V	V
DISPL			V	V	V	V	V
DRY			V	V	V	V	V
DWNPAY				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
EWATER							DNR
FLOODPLN							DNR
FLOORS				V	V	V	V
FRSIT			DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
FRSTHO				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
FRSTOC				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
GRAD			V	V	V	V	V

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[1] Applies only to the golf course portion of the recode

HEQUIP				V-s,y	V-s,y	V-s,y	V-s,y
HFUEL				V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
INUSYR						DNR	DNR
LOT				V	V	V	V
LPRICE				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
MAR			V	V	V	V	V
MOVE	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
MOVM	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
NATVTY						DNR	DNR
NOWIRE			V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
NUNITS			V	V	V	V	V
NUNIT2					DNR-c	DNR-c	DNR-c, P
OVEN			V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
PAR			DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
PLUGS			V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
PORCH				V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
PREOCC				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
PROJ				DNR		DNR	DNR
PUBSEW				V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
RACE[2]	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR		DNR
RAS			B	B	B	B	B
REFR				V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
REL					DNR	DNR	DNR
SEX	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
SINK			DNR-y	V-y	V-y	V-y	V-y
SPAN	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
SPOUS					DNR	DNR	
TRASH			V	V	V	V	V
UNITSF		DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR
WASH			V	V	V	V	V
WATER				V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s

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[2] RACE was reasked in 2003 in order to allow answers of multiple races.

WELDUS				V	V	V	V
WELL				V	V	V	V
WFUEL			V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s	V-s
WHNGET				DNR	DNR	DNR	DNR

Legend: V – verify prior year response
                   V-s – verify prior year response excluding answers 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 reask (fill answer from prior year)
                   DNR-c – do not reask if current year TYPE agrees with prior year NUNIT2
                   DNR-s – do not reask if prior year citizen
                   DNR-y – do not reask if prior year response was "yes"

                   P – probe if prior year value not equal to current year value

                   B – bounding, verify that same job in successive surveys are not duplicates

Additional information on the use of dependent interviewing:

- Only prior year respondent-provided, unedited data are eligible to be used in dependency comparisons.
- Based on the individual item, the eligibility for dependency may be further restricted. It must be the same housing unit being interviewed in the previous and current survey. For most items, the prior year must have been a regular, occupied interview. For items related to the acquisition of the home, the prior year household must be the same as the current. For items related to demographics, it must be the same person in the prior and current year.
- Dependency formats may change from survey year to survey year.
- The 1997 AHS (the first automated instrument) incorporated dependency practices throughout the survey instrument. However, this was also a questionnaire redesign year and many questions were not identical to the format used in 1995. Therefore, prior year data were unavailable. So while many items appear (based on the instrument programming) to have had dependency applied in 1997, only those marked on the table actually were dependent in 1997.