

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Regional NOFA Data Points

General Questions

Are the most recent Census data from 2010?

The most recent data on population counts are from the 2010 Decennial Census. If the data have not yet been published for a particular area, then 2000 data are used.

The most recent data (labeled 2009) on population and housing characteristics are from the 2007-2009 American Community Survey. We use the three-year average in order to include smaller communities for which a one-year average may not exist.

How should I calculate an average for a combined area?

If the data do not exist for the area in question, then use a weighted average. A weighted average is preferable to a straight average. For example, suppose that you want to calculate the average rent-to-income ratio of an area composed of three counties. You will need the rent-to-income ratio of each county and the number of renter households. The weighted average would be

$$(H1 \times R1 + H2 \times R2 + H3 \times R3)/(H1 + H2 + H3)$$

where H is the number of renter-occupied households in each county and R is the rent-to-income ratio in each county.

Why are CBSA (metropolitan and micropolitan areas) data only available for 2007-2009?

The CBSA (Core-Based Statistical Area) is a relatively new concept and didn't exist in 2000. You can, however, create your own data. First, you need to know what the components of the CBSA are. For the most recent definitions of CBSAs, go here: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/metroareas/lists/2009/List1.txt> (To view the history of definitions of metropolitan and micropolitan areas, go here: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/metroareas/metrodef.html>)

You can retrieve the data for the component parts in 1990 and 2000 and create a weighted average for those years (as instructed above).

I am having trouble collecting a specific data point? What do I do?

To the extent possible, HUD has tried to request data points that are nationally available. There are some individual cases, particularly in rural areas, where a specific data point is not available. In these cases, please enter NA (not available) in the appropriate field and provide a brief explanation as to the reason why the data point was not available at the end of the form. Additionally, we encourage applicants to use the narrative statement in Rating Factor 2 to elaborate on the conditions that would have been described in the missing data point.

I need more space in the form because of the number of consortium members - what should I do?

In the case of large consortium memberships or multiple counties where there are more fields necessary than are available on the rating form, please attach an additional copy of the form and indicate that there is a continuation of the list. The additional pages will not count against your 15-page limit for the appendix.

Specific Questions by Data Point

1.1

Why is the rent-to-income ratio different from what I calculate with median rent and median income data?

The data provided on the web site is the median rent-to-income ratio. This is different than the median rent-to-median income ratio. Please use the already calculated ratio as it is more accurate (a median of ratios rather a ratio of medians). The home value-to-income ratio was not calculated by the Census, however, and is calculated by HUD as the ratio of median home value to the median household income.

How do I secure the regional housing and transportation cost data? I only see index percentages of the population?

There are a few simple steps to get this information. Once you have picked your region on the <http://htaindex.org/> website: 1) select the “change” button next to the “display” field on the upper right side of the panel and choose Summary Table of Statistics; 2) select the other “change” button on the right panel – a set of data options should come up in a popup window labeled “Compare”; 3) select the data points [Household Monthly Transportation Cost](#) and [Average Monthly Housing Cost \(\\$\)](#) from the available options; 4) new tables and maps will generate showing the desired figures. 5) multiply the monthly figures and sum the totals to get the regional housing and transportation cost and insert this information into the appropriate fields region_wide and by a representative sampling of communities.

The housing and transportation affordability index does not appear to work for certain rural places? Can we make our own data?

There are some limited areas of the country where the CNT index has not provided data. In those cases, regions can provide their own (sourced) data, or if it is not possible to collect data, they can list this field as NA (not available). Please note that CNT is developing an additional data module that will address some of these currently unavailable regions. We will make an announcement to our database when this module is available.

2.1

Why is there a large unexplainable change in the urbanized land data for some counties?

The data of interest is the area (in acres) of urbanized land, as reported by the Census. The ratio you are required to report is the urbanized land per capita (urbanized area divided by the total population of the county) for 1990 and 2000. The difficulty is that the Census methodology for determining what is “urbanized” changed between 1990 and 2000. For an explanation, see http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/uac2k_90.html . We have made an effort, however, to calculate the area of urbanized land in 1990 using the 2000 methodology. Nationally, there is a 15.5 percent increase in urbanized area but only a very small increase in urbanized area per capita (from 0.207 to 0.211 acres). There will be cases, however, of extreme change in individual counties. Whether or not an area is urban or rural is a binary variable. Thus, small changes in the community itself can cause an abrupt change in its classification as urban.

2.2

How does HUD define “Water Infrastructure”? To calculate the miles of distribution of water infrastructure per population, should we use the total population in the region, or the water distribution service population?

For the purposes of this NOFA, water infrastructure refers to the miles of distribution system operated by the public utilities for getting potable and non-potable water to its client base. For the requested data point, HUD seeks the figure for the miles of distribution system per 1000 people served.

3.1

How do I calculate the VMT per capita provided by the FHWA website?

You do not have to! If you go to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/pubstats/>, you will find the data you need for 2009 on tables 4.4.5.1 ([Length and daily vehicle-miles of travel](#)) and 4.4.5.2 [Selected characteristics](#) (Table HM-71, Table HM-72). The data for total road mileage and vehicle miles traveled is in table HM-71, the per capita measure can be found in table HM-72. The other years requested (1990, 2000) are similarly available on archived pages at this site.

3.2

What do the data for factor 3.2 measure?

The data presented on this web site do not actually measure *all* trips but only commuting behavior (journey-to-work). Note also that the numbers provided are for the number of commuters and not for the number of “trips.” Please report the data as they appear, however. If your community is one that experiences a heavy volume of traffic because it is a tourist, entertainment, or commercial destination, you may augment your application with additional data from other sources where available.

Please note that an early version of the Rating Form had asked for totals for this data; that information is not required for this data point.

4.1

How do I collect information on the requested dissimilarity indexes for my community?

This is a complex but important measure that helps HUD understand conditions in your community. To start, proceed to the website <http://www.s4.brown.edu/cen2000/SchoolPop/SPDownload.html>. Here you can find calculations for the 1999 dissimilarity indexes in every Metropolitan Statistical Area by ethnicity. The Rating Factor 2 data form asks for this data by Black/White, Asian/White, and Hispanic/White for 2009. In some communities, the 2008 data that is needed to make the 2009 calculation is not available. For this reason, **HUD will accept data for 1999, 2009, or both.** If the applying region follows the boundaries of the Metropolitan Statistical Area, the data points for 1999 can be directly obtained from the site above by clicking on the designated link under Option 1. The abbreviations of the data fields are also available at this site. If the applying region has different boundaries and/or wants to include 2009 data as available, the applicant can download the 1999 information by School District (Option 4) or can calculate the dissimilarity index using collected data and inputting it into the provided [Excel spreadsheet](#).

Please Note: [If you are using the Excel spreadsheet, remember that only elementary school data is needed.](#) One potential site from which to collect such data for 2008 is <http://www.nces.ed.gov/> (see below).

4.2

How do I collect the appropriate data on school lunch eligibility? At what scale should I collect the information?

To collect the required school lunch data, applicants can build data tables for their entire state by county and then select the applicable counties and import their information to the Rating Form. Here's how to do it: 1) go to the website for the National Center for Education Statistics (<http://www.nces.ed.gov/>) 2) Under the Data Tools tab, select "Build Custom Tables and Datasets". 3) Select "CCD Build a Table" on the page that results. 4) a series of variables will follow, from which you will construct your data table. In sequence you should pick A) "School Year 2007-2008" [click next] B) at this point a NCES Data Usage Agreement popup comes up; pick "I Agree" C) in a Select Columns dropdown pick "Total Enrollment" and in the Rows By Field below pick "Total Students (District)" D) look back up the page to the dropdown and make an additional selection, "Students in Special Programs"; this time in the Rows By Fields pick "Total Free and Reduced Lunch Students [click next] E)"your state" [click next] F) Select "View Table".

A table should result that looks like this

Table by County School Year 2007-2008			
County Name-most recent year (District)	State Abbr (School)	Total Students (UG, PK-12) (District)	Free and Reduced Lunch (School)
ALAMEDA	CA	213,847	70,007
ALPINE	CA	127	62
AMADOR	CA	5,007	1,266

with all of the counties for your state. G) select the appropriate counties for your region and fill their data in. Include the data as a ratio, with the number of eligible students on the numerator, and the number of students in the district in the denominator. **please note:** those who downloaded Rating Factor Form 2 early on may have gotten a version that asked for this data separated by race. That segmentation is **not** required for this data point.

5.1

Can you clarify the meaning of "employer" and "employment center". It seems an employment center could have several employers. It could be a large building with multiple firms (and multiple SIC or NAICS codes); a large company with a campus of buildings, a number of downtown blocks with one or more companies, or a suburban business/industrial park. What geographic designation are you looking for here?

There are indeed several scales at which this data point could operate. For FY2011, HUD -wants to determine the actual facilities that are the largest employers and measure housing conditions in the vicinity of these places, v. the largest sectors. For example, if the State is the largest employer in the region but its employees are geographically spread throughout, it may not make the list. If instead the State has large numbers of employees working in one location, it would be amongst the top five. A large company with a campus of buildings would qualify as a single location if the buildings are co-located.

7.1

I contacted the County Health department and they said they do not have this information broken down by race. How would we present this information?

Provide the requested information to the degree possible and present a clear explanation of what data is absent.