

NEBRASKA STATE DATA CENTER QUARTERLY TRAINING SESSIONS

Workshops Coming Soon—Mark Your Calendars!

Thursday June 5, 2008 – PUBLIC USE MICRODATA (UNO Campus in Omaha, NE)

What is microdata?

Public use microdata files contain a sampling of individual records of the actual responses to a questionnaire. They contain the data to show the characteristics of a sample of people, households, families, and/or housing units. They are electronic versions of a sample of the questionnaires collected from households, as coded and edited during census processing. Information which could identify a household or an individual is excluded or top-coded to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

What can I do with the files?

Public use microdata files essentially allow “do-it-yourself” special tabulations. The Census 2000 and ACS files furnish nearly all of the detail recorded on long-form questionnaires, subject to the limitations of sample size, geographic identification, and confidentiality protection. You can construct a wide variety of tabulations comparing any desired set of variables. You have almost the same freedom to manipulate the data you would have if you had collected the data in your own sample survey, **yet these files offer the precision of census data collection techniques and sample sizes larger than would be feasible in most independent surveys, plus there is no time delay or cost in obtaining the data.** Microdata samples are useful to users who are doing research that does not require the identification of specific small geographic areas or detailed crosstabulations for small populations. Microdata users frequently study relationships among census variables not shown in existing census tabulations (for example, income and educational attainment of husbands and wives), or concentrate on the characteristics of specifically defined populations (“who is” moving into an area versus out of that area).

What files are available?

The American Community Survey (ACS) releases PUMS files annually. They are organized by state and in two separate files – one for housing unit variables and the other for individual person records. The two files can be merged to have both the housing and person variables in one file. The lowest level of geography available is a PUMA area, whose boundaries are drawn to contain at least 100,000 persons. The ACS has been using the same PUMA boundaries as Census 2000.

Census 2000 had two independently drawn samples, designated “5 percent” and “1 percent”, each featuring a different geographic scheme. Nationwide, the Census 2000 5-percent sample provides the user records for over 14 million people and over 5 million housing units. The 1-percent sample has over 2.8 million people and over 1 million housing units. Each file contains weights for both the housing unit and person variables, so that the entire population and their characteristics can be represented by this sample of records.

How is the information available geographically?

To maintain the confidentiality of the PUMS data, minimum population thresholds are set. For the 1-percent state-level files, geographic areas must contain at least 400,000 persons versus 100,000 for the 5-percent files. In Nebraska the 1-percent file is divided into 3 areas, and the 5-percent file has 14 areas, including two in Lancaster County and four in Douglas County.

Coming Soon

The 19th Annual Nebraska State Data Center's Data Users Conference

When: Thursday, August 14, 2008
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Girls & Boys Town Conference Center
14100 Crawford St.
Omaha, NE 68010

Why: Stay current with the latest Census data, products, methods of access, and applications. The newly implemented American Community Survey, or “annual census”, will be discussed as well as state and local population trends. Other topics covered at this year’s data conference will likely include:

- Tools in Economic Analysis
- Great Plains Socio-Economic & Demographic Trends
- The Population Estimates Program
- Information for Successful Grant Writing
- Census Basics and Details for the 2010 Census!

Mark your calendars and plan to attend this year’s information-filled conference! Watch your mail for further details or contact David Drozd @ 402-554-2132 or ddrozd@unomaha.edu.