

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) ABOUT PUMAS

Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) MAF/TIGER Partnership Software (MTPS) and Partnership Shapefiles

When will the PUMA MTPS be available to download?

The PUMA materials were made available September 15, 2011 at:
http://www.census.gov/geo/www/pvs/PUMA_PVS.html

Will there be multiple passwords assigned for both downloading the MTPS, and uploading the completed submissions?

Yes, there will be one password for downloading the MTPS, and a different password for uploading the completed submissions via FTP site.

If I can't download the software and data from the website, can I receive a CD-ROM with the MTPS and User Guide and Spatial Data?

Yes, please contact the Census Bureau's PUMA team at geo.puma@census.gov or (301) 763-1099 or (301) 763-3056 and they will send you the discs with this information.

Once the software is downloaded by the State Data Centers (SDCs) then the 90 day period starts?

Yes, this is correct.

Is the PUMA MTPS software different from other MTPS software developed for other Census Bureau products and delineation programs?

Yes, the PUMA MTPS is different. You will need to use the PUMA MTPS for this delineation program.

Can other data formats and files be imported into the MTPS?

Yes, the MTPS can incorporate a wide range of data formats and georeferenced images. There is an import tool for additional reference materials (e.g. shapefiles, PDF, Tif, JPEG).

During CTEF importation, does the MTPS run the same checks as when the PUMAs are created interactively?

There will be no verification checks as the CTEF is imported, but all data must go through a final check/verification before it is submitted. There are some initial checks of tabular data, i.e. alignment, consistency, but the final check of PUMA criteria occurs at the verification stage (separate toolbox used at the end of the delineation process).

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Can we look at files prior to uploading the whole project?

Yes, there is an option (Option 2) to open a single CTEF without uploading the whole project.

Does the MTPS include the population data prior to 2010? How can I determine if the population of a PUMA will decline below the minimum population of 100,000 persons in the upcoming decade?

No, current populations from 2010 census for county and tract populations are included within the shapefiles uploaded in the MTPS. A minimum population of 100,000 persons is required at the time of the delineation. If population decline is anticipated throughout the upcoming decade (2010-2020), PUMAs should be delineated to encompass a population substantially higher than 100,000 persons so that the population will remain above 100,000 throughout the decade (2010-2020).

Will we be able to delineate multiple counties in this exercise?

Yes, the MTPS is already set by default to generate county coverage for your entire state, or you can limit the number of counties in your project by adjusting the *.xml setup file.

In some cases, it may not be possible to follow the “serpentine pattern” in assigning numbers for PUMAs. Should PUMAs be renumbered to follow this pattern?

The Census Bureau has not prescribed any single numbering scheme for all states. However, in order to maintain data comparability over time, the Census Bureau does not recommend renumbering all PUMAs within the state to fit the serpentine pattern.

Can the first three digits of the PUMA code include the county FIPS?

The PUMA code must consist of a 5-digit numeric code that is unique within the state. If the five-digit code includes the county FIPS and the number fits the other guidelines for assigning codes to new PUMAs, then this is an acceptable number to use. It has been suggested that if a group of PUMAs nest within a county, the first three digits should be the same and then numbered sequentially (i.e., 00101, 00102, 00103, and 00104). If a PUMA consists of an entire county, or group of counties, assign a PUMA code that has “00” for the fourth and fifth characters of the PUMA code (i.e., 00100). In order to maintain data comparability over time, the Census Bureau does not recommend renumbering all PUMAs within the state in order to add the county FIPS code to the five-digit numeric code.

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- What happens if there is more than one unassigned area in the final check?**

The software will display multiple failures during verification, which will be resolved on a case-by-case basis by the person who is conducting the verification check.

- What is the deadline for submittal of boundary delineation?**

SDCs will have 90 days from the time they call in to receive their password to complete and submit their PUMA plan (not to extend past December 31, 2011).

- What happens after the SDC submits PUMAs to the Census Bureau? Is there a review by Census Bureau staff geographers? How and when will SDCs receive feedback?**

SDCs will receive an e-mail from the Census Bureau to acknowledge that the PUMAs have been submitted. There will be no official verification after this initial e-mail. Census Bureau geographers and staff will review PUMAs submitted by SDCs. If there are any discrepancies upon review, the staff will contact SDCs directly to discuss this on a case-by-case basis.

INFORMATION FOR DIVIDING WORK IN THE MTPS AMONG MULTIPLE INDIVIDUALS/LOCAL PARTNERS:

- What is the best way for SDCs to disseminate software to local partners and individuals?**

Local partners and individuals assigned to delineate PUMAs will go to the same URL, but the SDC will need to give the local partners the user name and password. The SDC will also be required to create the setup files to give to the local partners.

- As a local partner, do I call in independently for the MTPS file or should I get the files from the SDC leads?**

Go through your SDC lead to get the user name and password.

- Can the PUMA delineation work be divided among multiple individuals within a state, and then combined to one final project for review and final submission?**

Yes, the MTPS allows its users to import multiple files into one project for review and final submission, provided the files do not contain overlapping PUMAs (i.e., individual census tracts can be assigned to only one PUMA, not more than one PUMA).

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Can you review the exact format for entering counties in the setup file?

The demonstration on this procedure is documented in the webinar. In your Set up file, do not change this line:

`<CoreStateCoverage>23</CoreStateCoverage>` (where '23' indicates 'Maine')

To change County Coverage, go to first line under the `<CountyCoverage>` section:

And create a list (list counties separated by comma—do not add a space):

`<CoreCountyCoverage>23001, 23003, 23005, 23007</CoreCountyCoverage>`

How will individual counties submit new PUMAs that have extended into adjoining county that has been assigned to another local partner? i.e., single census tract?

The adjoining county's local partner should be informed that a new PUMA from the bordering county will extend into their county to include single or multiple census tracts. The CTEF file from the adjoining county can designate an "unassigned area" to the specific census tracts in question. When the two files are combined, the CTEFs will merge into one project table, and the "unassigned area" will be assigned to the new PUMA from the bordering county. SDCs can also preview shapefiles and CTEFs containing the local partner's delineated PUMAs the MTPS or another non-MTPS GIS software to identify overlapping areas between two different counties.

What if it is not clear at the outset how to split states to divide the delineation work among multiple local partners/individuals? If the SDC wants review two or more options from local partners prior to making a decision, does the geographic split have to be mutually exclusive in order to submit CTEFs to the final product?

To adjudicate two different possible splits within a county, the SDC will have the ability to edit the final PUMAs in the setup file. However, the SDC will not be able to import two different overlapping files into the MTPS as CTEFs. When the local partner submits their CTEF to the SDC, their ZIP file will include the shapefiles (i.e., *.shp). SDCs can import the shapefiles as layers into the MTPS as "reference" to edit the split, or they can review the proposed splits using alternative GIS software. When the SDC has decided which approach or proposal to use, they can import the appropriate CTEF into the MTPS. At the same time the SDC should inform the other local partner whose proposal was not accepted, to edit their CTEF and exclude this area from their revised file and resubmit.

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- Will the local partners need to run the final check to create a report changes file? After these are delivered to the SDC, what happens next?**

The SDC will take their portion of the state and create a CTEF, then what?

Yes, the local partners will need to run the final checks. The SDCs would then combine all the CTEFs (remove the ZIP files from the folder). Reset the PUMAs and import multiple CTEFs and create the final file. SDCs should not include counties in their original project and import new CTEFs. Open up the entire state, and proceed from there.

PUMA CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

- Are the PUMA building blocks (i.e., counties or census tracts) considered contiguous if their borders touch at a corner?**

No, adjoining counties and census tracts must be connected by a(n) line or area; their boundaries are not contiguous if they connect at a point or corner. The component entities or building blocks of PUMA must be contiguous, unless an individual county or census tract is not contiguous.

- Criteria specify that we should not divide tribal geographies. What about Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas specifically? What suggestions do you have?**

For Oklahoma, as in other states, the intent of this guideline is to avoid dividing tribal statistical areas into multiple PUMAs. If Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Areas can be contained within one PUMA and meet all other 2010 criteria, the Census Bureau recommends that these areas should not be split. To assure that ACS data is meaningful within your state, it is preferable to include individual tribal entities within one or two PUMAs rather than in multiple PUMAs.

- What should we do with reservations in Tribal areas in New York that are in multiple counties with relatively small populations?**

For New York, as in other states, the intent of this guideline is to ensure that tribal area populations are in as few PUMAs as possible. Many tribal areas and reservations have complex geographies, crossing state and county boundaries, etc. Where possible and logical avoid splitting populated areas.

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Why is it important to consider the CBSA boundary when delineating PUMAs?

CBSAs have become increasingly more important to demographers to define urban areas. For PUMS data to be meaningful for data users, PUMA boundaries should be entirely within or entirely outside CBSA boundaries. CBSA boundaries should not be split by PUMAs. Most recent PUMS data includes CBSAs from 2007. The next revisions for CBSAs will be in 2012.

For areas just over 200,000 population guideline, are there possible instances where a PUMA could exceed this maximum?

The limit is a guideline, not a criterion, and PUMAs can exceed 200,000 persons. However, PUMAs between 100,000 to 200,000 are more suitable for detailed, meaningful analysis of data from the American Community Survey.

Has there been any thought of merging PUMAs mid-decade if they fall below 100,000. For instance if some PUMAs currently just over 200,000 are split, and one of these PUMAs fall below the 100,000 minimum, how would the state be assured that these PUMAs would not be merged with an adjacent PUMA that is different from the original PUMA before the split?

There were some instances in mid-decade (i.e. New Orleans) where three PUMAs were merged for the PUMS data; however these three original PUMAs were retained for the ACS estimates. The Census Bureau will contact SDCs for consultation on combining adjacent PUMAs if populations of individual PUMAs fall significantly below the 100,000 minimum.

How can I be certain that the PUMA that I delineate will be suitable or useful to data users?

In most instances, the Census Bureau relies upon the expertise of data users such as demographers, economists, and regional experts to identify the areas or regions to include within specific PUMAs. Census Bureau strongly encourages SDCs to rely upon the expertise of data users to make these kinds of important decisions.

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- Currently some counties within our PUMAs are combined within other counties, regions, or planning agencies in other PUMAs. How can we be assured that PUMAs will incorporate the optimal counties, regions that will be meaningful to data users?**

Talk with your neighboring counties, regional planning agencies, and data users about combining areas prior to your delineation.

- Is it acceptable to divide a Regional Development Agency into more than one PUMA if the population of this agency exceeds 200,000?**

Yes, this is acceptable.

- In our region, we have census tracts associated with the city that are not part of the contiguous city boundary. What do you recommend that we do to delineate a contiguous PUMA?**

We would recommend that the SDC select all tracts within an incorporated place or CDP. After they are selected, and a noncontiguous alignment is detected, we recommend that you interactively “build-out” additional tracts to connect two noncontiguous parts, or de-select tracts from a non-contiguous part to make the PUMA contiguous.

- What suggestions are there from other SDCs to identify potential local partners or regional experts for my state?**

Some states have used multiple affiliates, county, regional, or metropolitan planning agencies, academic research organizations, and department of transportation representatives. Communication between these agencies and organizations can include conference calls or regularly scheduled meetings to discuss specific questions that arise.

PUMA NAMES

- What are the guidelines for naming 2010 PUMAs?**

A list of 2010 PUMA Name Guidelines for Participants has been posted on the website with the final user guidelines (<http://www.census.gov/geo/puma/puma2010.html>).

- In cities of over one million persons, what suggestions do you have to name the multiple PUMAs that will be created for that city (i.e., Chicago, New York)?**

City neighborhoods may be the best source for names in this instance. Program guidelines specify that these names should identify a concise area name that is also meaningful to data users. These names should also be descriptive, clear, and unique

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within the state. The 2010 PUMA Name Guidelines for Participants are posted on the PUMA website (http://www.census.gov/geo/puma/PUMA_name_guidelines.pdf).

- Are there any limitations about the standard naming conventions and are special characters allowed, commas, hyphens, ampersands?**

There are two documents on the PUMA website that specifies the 2010 PUMA Name Guidelines for Participants and the Valid Characters for Geographic Area Names <http://www.census.gov/geo/puma/puma2010.html>. This information is also included within the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) Documentation at the 2010 PUMA MTPS Partnership Shapefile, and Partnership Guidelines Download Access Point http://www.census.gov/geo/www/pvs/PUMA_PVS.html.

- Can PUMAs accept apostrophes?**

Yes, PUMAs can accept apostrophes.

- Are names optional or required?**

Puma names are optional but strongly encouraged.

- Is there a character limit to the names?**

Yes, there is an 86 character limit; the MTPS will not allow names longer than 86 characters.

- Aside from excluding “PUMA” at the end of PUMA names, are there any other words that should be excluded from the name, i.e. state?**

For most data products, Census will append state name abbreviations. We are not certain if this applies to all products, however. Census will remove state names if necessary. State names are accepted only when used with a compass direction, i.e. Northeastern Maine. Geographic type or area descriptors such as “County” or “City” may be appended to the name to identify the particular geographic entity being described.

PUMA DATA

- Is 2010 Census Data available for my PUMA now? If so, how can I access this data?**

The 2010 Census data will not be available until the new 2010 PUMA boundaries have been delineated by SDCs (following Summer 2012). To date, ACS 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year estimates for PUMAs based on boundaries in 2000 are available through 2009 on Legacy American Factfinder. To access these data, go to factfinder.census.gov. You will use 2000 PUMA boundaries for these data.

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Can you explain the difference between Super PUMA and a Standard PUMA?

There are no Super PUMAs for 2010. The Census Bureau defined Super PUMAs in 2000 as an aggregate of 5% PUMAs for the publication of the 1% sample. The 2010 PUMAs will only include one level of "Standard" PUMAs.

LINKS TO PUMA WEBSITE, MTPS, AND PRESENTATIONS:

Is there a Puma user group or listserve for SDCs and local partners to address questions that may arise during the delineation process?

The best place to submit questions to the Census Bureau is by e-mail: geo.puma@census.gov or by phone (301) 763-1099 or (301) 763-3056. The PUMA website (<http://www.census.gov/geo/puma/puma2010.html>) is periodically updated to include a FAQ document that lists questions from the mailbox, PUMA webinar, and from the SDCs and their local partners. SDCs will be also be contacted via e-mail with general announcements and new informational postings to the website during the delineation process.

PUMA Webinar link (September 2011) :

<http://sdcclearinghouse.wordpress.com/>

CIC and SDC Program 2011 Annual Training Conference, Census Bureau (October 2011):

<http://www.census.gov/sdc/11octmtg.html>

PUMA MTPS, Partnership Shapefile, and Partnership Guidelines Download Access Point page?

http://www.census.gov/geo/www/pvs/PUMA_PVS.html

CONTACT INFORMATION: For more information about **2010 PUMAs**, the **PUMA MTPS and Partnership Shapefiles**, or the **PUMA Delineation Program** please contact the Geography Division at geo.puma@census.gov or (301) 763-1099 or (301) 763-3056.