

Metropolitan Areas (MSAs and CBSAs)

General Concept of Metropolitan Areas

The general concept of a metropolitan area is one of a large population center, together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that center. Some metropolitan areas are defined around two or more centers.

Metropolitan areas are defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs)

Previous ACUFactor® reports used metropolitan areas defined by the OMB as of June 30, 1999, and based on 1990 standards. Metropolitan areas consisted of one or more counties, except in the New England states, where the components were cities and towns. In order to be defined as a metropolitan area by these standards, the area's population must satisfy the following:

- a city with a population of 50,000 or more, or
- an urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000, provided that the component counties had a population of at least 100,000.

The 1999 definition included three types of metropolitan areas:

- Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs).
- Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs).
- Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs).

MSAs were stand-alone areas, but CMSAs were defined as groups of PMSAs. The U.S. had 258 MSAs, 73 PMSAs, and 18 CMSAs based on the 1999 definition.

Each metropolitan area was assigned a **four-digit** Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code, listed in alphabetical order nationwide.

Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs)

The OMB announced new metropolitan area definitions on June 6, 2003, based on application of the 2000 Census data. All metropolitan areas nationwide are now defined by one or more counties.

The U.S. has three types of metropolitan areas defined, and they are collectively referred to as Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs):

- Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Metros).
- Micropolitan Statistical Areas (Micros).
- Metropolitan Divisions (Divisions).

In order to be defined as a metropolitan area by these standards, the area's population must satisfy the following:

For Metros:

- at least one urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more, and
- adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core, based on commuting ties.

For Micros:

- at least one urban cluster with a population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000, and
- adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core, based on commuting ties.

Using these definitions, 29 Divisions are subsets of 11 of the 361 Metro areas. The Division level is used, when available, for ACUFactor reporting since it more closely resembles the old MSA definitions.

These new areas may not be directly comparable to MSAs, PMSAs, and CMSAs defined as of 1999. In addition to the new designation of Micro areas, the following kinds of changes may affect the definition of individual Metro areas:

- a county or counties added or deleted.
- two or more MSAs merged to form a single Metro area.
- a MSA split to form multiple Metro and Micro areas.
- reclassification as a Micro area.

Each metropolitan area is assigned a **five-digit** FIPS code, listed in alphabetical order nationwide.