

CBSA Codes Documentation



Introduction:

These notes describe our CBSA product which also has **current U.S. Census population estimates** and a ranking, based on population. It provides a simplified explanation of the marketing areas which the U.S. government has defined.

Note: the government makes changes to these definitions (usually at the end of each year) and we stay on top of these changes and will add them when available.

Overview of the Definitions:

In the year 2000, the Office of Management and Budget redefined the way market areas are defined. They have gone by different names in the past (SMSAs, MSAs, CMSAs, etc.) and now there are even more acronyms. These market areas have been refined again with the latest changes made and are now primarily called CBSA Codes. The previous (MSA) codes covered about 80 percent of the country, but the new CBSA codes cover about 93 percent.

There are basically two major classifications of codes:

- **Metropolitan Statistical Areas** (population of 50,000 or more people).
- **Micropolitan Statistical Areas** (from 10,000 up to 50,000 people). The Metropolitan Statistical Areas are about the only name that is being kept from previous definitions, though some areas are defined differently than previously.

So what's a **CBSA**? It is the name the government is using to describe **both** the Metropolitan and Micropolitan areas. It stands for **Core-Based Statistical Areas** (whatever that means!) Essentially, a CBSA contains one or more counties with an urban area of 10,000 or more people and the counties that have people which would commute to that area. In Puerto Rico, the 'county' areas are called "municipios" (municipality / community).

Note: there *are* CBSA records for the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

For areas that have over 2.5 million people, they may be subdivided into **Metropolitan Divisions**. For instance, the greater New York CBSA Code is 35620 and covers NY, NJ and PA, so it was subdivided into these areas:

35620	35004	Nassau County-Suffolk County, NY
35620	35084	Newark, NJ-PA
35620	35614	New York-Jersey City-White Plains, NY-NJ

Accuracy Matters!

One more definition: if you are looking for very large areas, there are **CSAs (Combined Statistical Areas)** which are similar to the old CMSA. This is a code that groups large, nearby metro areas such as the Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia, WA area. There is a separate file which we include which contains a list of all CSAs and their corresponding CBSA codes.

It takes a little getting used to these names, but overall these are much better than the MSA codes of the past primarily because of the larger coverage areas.

The defined areas are updated by the government as new population figures are released by the Census Bureau. ***We keep our data up-to-date with the latest population and area changes!***

An example that should help you to understand these definitions is as follows:

The **Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia, WA Combined Statistical Area (CSA) Code is 500**. This consists of the following **CBSA** codes:

- 14740** Bremerton-Silverdale, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area
- 36020** Oak Harbor, WA Micropolitan Statistical Area
- 36500** Olympia, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area
- 42660** Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area
- 43220** Shelton, WA Micropolitan Statistical Area

Since the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area (#42660) contains over 2.5 million people; it is broken down into the following **Metropolitan Divisions**:

- 42644** Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, WA (King and Snohomish counties).
- 45104** Tacoma, WA (Pierce County)

Our Data Files:

The following files are provided. Note: these files have been ‘normalized,’ which means they have been set up to minimize the amount of duplication of information. This is ideal for programmers, but not so if you want to browse a file because the main file will have just codes which point to other files. We are in the process of developing software for non-programmers which will allow you to browse the data and sort / select what you need to see. If you don’t see this on our web site, ask about its availability.

A note about population figures: The figures we include are the latest **estimates** of the current population in the area. **They are released annually**. We will include them in our data by about May to August of the following year. It is based on **county-level** information, so it may not appear correct when just a single town is mentioned. For instance, for the Shelton, WA Micropolitan area, the population is over 50,000, which would make you think it should be a *Metropolitan* area, not a *Micropolitan* area, but that over 50,000 figure is the population for the whole county where Shelton is located, not just for Shelton (Shelton itself is a Micropolitan area).

Also, these areas are occasionally modified. As estimates are released by the Census, the Office of Management and Budget will take those figures and adjust the data accordingly. For instance, if an area had 8,000 people in 2000, but now has over 10,000 people, it will become a new Micropolitan area.

The following are the files included with this product:

CSA-List.csv: This has the CSA number, name, latest population estimate and rank. Note that each CSA can have multiple CBSA Codes because a CSA is a combination of multiple CBSAs. A CBSA can only be in one CSA.

Fields	Format
CSA Code	Integer 9(3)
CSA Name	Character X(75)
Estimated Population	Integer 9(8)
Rank	Integer 9(3)

State-CSA.csv: This has the state abbreviation and CSA number for each CSA in a state.

State-CBSA.csv: This has the state abbreviation and CBSA number for each CBSA in a state.

CSA-Master.csv: This is the file which has all CSA codes and its corresponding CBSA codes.

CBSA-List.csv: This has the CBSA code, along with the name, type (Metro, Micro), latest population estimate and rank.

Division.csv: This has the breakdown of each division within a CBSA. It has the latest population estimate for that division.

Zip-CBSA.csv: This has one record for every Zip Code and the corresponding CBSA and Division codes for that Zip (if available—rural areas won't have any codes). This will also have the state abbreviation, city and county. Note: this file will not include military APO/FPO records, U.S. Virgin Islands and territories in the South Pacific.

CBSA-full.xlsx: This is our Excel file which utilizes Edit Tables and the VLOOKUP function to make viewing / filtering our CBSA product easy. Please watch the video on our web site which demonstrates how to use this product.