



Arrowhead Center

What is a Metropolitan Statistical Area and why are there so many types of MSA's?

MSA is an acronym for Metropolitan Statistical Area. Geographic entities like counties, cities and towns are grouped together, based on standards defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Each group is classified as either a Metropolitan Statistical Area or a Micropolitan Statistical Area. These areas are solely defined and used for statistical purposes.

An MSA is a group of urbanized areas, central counties and outlying counties that are defined as follows:

1. Each urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 is defined as a **Metropolitan Statistical Area**. While an urban cluster with a population of at least 10,000 people but not more than 50,000 people, is defined to be a **Micropolitan Statistical Area**.
2. **Central counties** will have at least 50% of their population in different urban areas or within a single urban area. The urban area should have a minimum population of 10,000 people.
3. **Outlying counties** need to fulfill certain commuting requirements. Either 25% of the employed residents have to commute to work in the central county, or 25% of the employed reside in the central county.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) using data from the Census Bureau, defines the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas by meeting well defined standards that help provide nationally consistent definitions for the purposes of collecting and publishing statistics for specific geographic areas. OMB periodically revises the list of MSAs. The most recent revision was in 2005. The complete list can be found at: http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro_general/List1.txt

In New Mexico, there are currently three MSAs which are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1: New Mexico Metropolitan Statistical Areas				
MSA	Component Counties	FIPS Code	Population (2000 Census)	Population (2006 Estimate)
Albuquerque			729,649	816,810
Bernalillo	35001		556,678	615,099
Sandoval	35043		89,908	113,772
Torrance	35057		16,911	17,551
Valencia	35061		66,152	70,389
Las Cruces			174,682	193,888
Dona Ana	35013		174,682	193,888
Santa Fe			129,292	142,407
Santa Fe	35049		129,292	142,407
MSA total			1,033,623	1,153,106
New Mexico			1,819,046	1,954,599
MSAs as Percent of Total			56.8	59.0
Source: Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties of New Mexico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006. (CO-EST2006-01-35). March 22, 2007. Available at: http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/tables/CO-EST2006-01-35.xls				

In New Mexico there are sixteen micropolitan statistical areas described in Table 2. The importance of being declared a micropolitan area is that American Community Survey (see <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>) data will be available for these areas within the next few years. There are no data for these areas in the 2005 ACS data sets.

Table 2: Micropolitan Statistical Areas in New Mexico (County in which located and County FIPS Code)		
MSA	County	FIPS Code
Alamogordo	Otero	35035
Carlsbad-Artesia	Eddy	35015
Clovis	Curry	35009
Deming	Luna	35029
Espanola	Rio Arriba	35039
Farmington	San Juan	35045
Gallup	McKinley	35031
Grants	Cibola	35006
Hobbs	Lea	35025
Las Vegas	San Miguel	35047
Los Alamos	Los Alamos	35028
Portales	Roosevelt	35041
Roswell	Chaves	35005
Ruidoso	Lincoln	35027
Silver City	Grant	35017
Taos	Taos	35055

Some History: In the 1970s, the Census Bureau used designations known as Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs). The idea behind the SMSA was to capture large population centers –often multi-county areas that were significantly linked to each economically. In the 1980s, the Census Bureau and OMB began using MSAs instead of SMSAs. By the 1990s, the concept of the metropolitan area had become clouded with various classifications of MSAs such as Class C or D for smaller areas. A fundamental revision came before the 2000 Census with the new classification of MSAs and micropolitan areas.