**PUF FAQs**

What is the PUF?

The Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) Public Use File (PUF) is an experimental data product that contains information for approximately 5.9 million shipments obtained from businesses that responded to the 2017 CFS. In 2012, the PUF was referred to as a “Public Use Microdata (PUM) File”; terminology has been changed to be more consistent with Census Bureau Standards. The PUF provides access to shipment-level characteristics while continuing to protect the confidentiality of individual business information. The PUF users can create customized tables and build models to track and analyze the movement of commodities.  For more information about the PUF, see the PUF [User's Guide](https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2017/econ/cfs/historical-datasets.html).

Why are my estimates lower than the CFS published totals?

It is possible you did not apply the tabulation weighting factor when calculating your estimates. Please refer to section 5 of the PUF [User's Guide](https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2017/econ/cfs/historical-datasets.html) for more information on producing estimates.

Can I create estimates of daily, weekly or monthly shipments?

No. There is no variable in the PUF that indicates the day, week or month in which the shipment occurred.

Can I create estimates of quarterly shipments?

The PUF is designed to produce annual estimates. While it is possible to compute quarterly estimates with PUF data, the file was not designed for this and the estimates may be misleading. Additionally, any quarterly estimates produced are not official Census Bureau statistics and should not be attributed to the U.S. Census Bureau.

I want to track the shipments of a specific company. Can I do this with the PUF?

No. Due to confidentiality laws, the CFS PUF does not identify any individuals or businesses. Methods of preventing disclosure include the extensive review and analysis of the microdata file prior to its release and the use of data suppression, data modification, and noise infusion. Please see the Commodity Flow [Survey Methodology](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cfs/technical-documentation/methodology/methodology-2017.html) for more information on disclosure avoidance techniques.

Are there prior year PUFs I can download?

Yes. The 2012 CFS Public Use Microdata (PUM) file was the first experimental data product.