FIPS County Code Changes

David Dorn,

May 2007, last updated October 2018

The territory of the United States is subdivided into about 3,000 counties (called parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska). The set of counties in the 48 mainland states has remained nearly unchanged over recent decades. To map county data to 1990 Commuting Zones, one however needs to correct for the rare cases when counties split, merge, or change their FIPS code. I list below the county code changes since 1980, and propose a strategy to map the affected counties to 1990 CZs.

County code changes in the 1980s

- New Mexico, 1981: Cibola county (FIPS 35006) is created out of parts of Valencia county (FIPS 35061).
  Action: no adjustment of the source data required since Cibola and Valencia both map to the same CZ 34901.

- Arizona, 1983: La Paz county (FIPS 4012) is created out of parts of Yuma county (FIPS 4027).
  Action: since the La Paz and Yuma counties map into different Commuting Zones, attribute the 1980 population of pre-split Yuma county partly to CZ 38100 (Yuma) and partly to CZ 38300 (La Paz), using a split proportional to population size in 1990 (Yuma 106,895 vs. La Paz 13,844).

- South Dakota, 1983: Washabaugh county (FIPS 46131) merges into Jackson county (FIPS 46071).

Action: assign Washabaugh county to CZ 27603 which comprises Jackson county.

County code changes in the 1990s

- Virginia, 1995: The independent city of South Boston (FIPS 51780) merges into Halifax county (FIPS 51083).
  Action: no adjustment of the source data required since South Boston and Halifax both map to the same CZ 2200.

- Montana, 1997: Yellowstone National Park territory (FIPS 30113) is merged into Gallantin (FIPS 30031) and Park (FIPS 30067) counties.
  Action: no adjustment of the source data required since all three territories map to the same CZ 34402.

- Florida, 1997: Dade county (FIPS 12025) is renamed as Miami-Dade county (FIPS 12086).
  Action: assign Miami-Dade county to CZ 7000 which comprises Dade county.

County code changes in the 2000s

- Virginia, 2001: The independent city of Clifton Forge (FIPS 51560) merges into Alleghany county (FIPS 51005).
  Action: no adjustment of the source data required since Clifton Forge and Alleghany both map to the same CZ 17300.

- Colorado, 2001: Broomfield county (FIPS 8014) is created out of parts of Adams, Boulder, Jefferson, and Weld counties. According to Wikipedia, Boulder county lost about 40,000 inhabitants to Broomfield county in 2001.

In turn, Broomfield's website indicates a population of 42,169 for 2003 which suggests that most of Broomfield's population came from Boulder county.

Action: assign FIPS code 8014 to CZ 28900 which comprises Boulder county (as well as Adams and Jefferson counties).

Combined county codes

*   Some data sources aggregate information for certain sets of counties, and use a three-digit county code starting with 9 for these combined statistical areas. In particular, the FIPS codes 519xx refer to combinations of independent cities and surrounding counties in the state of Virginia.