



## IPUMS Data Training Exercise: An introduction to IPUMS USA (Exercise 2 for SPSS)



**IPUMS**  
USA

### Learning goals

- Understand how IPUMS USA dataset is structured
- Create and download an IPUMS data extract
- Decompress the data file and read the data into a statistical package

### Summary

In this exercise, you will gain basic familiarity with the IPUMS USA data exploration and extract system to answer the following research questions: What proportion of households in the US has a mortgage? Is the mother's spoken language a consistent determinant of a child's preferred language? How are utility costs changing over time, and are changes in cost different by urban status? You will create a data extract that includes the variables MORTGAGE, VALUEH, LANGUAGE, SEX, AGE, METRO, OWNERSHP, COSTELEC, COSTGAS, ROOMS, UNTSSTR; then you will use the sample code to analyze these data. After completing this exercise, you will have experience navigating the IPUMS USA website and should be able to leverage these data to explore your own research interests.

## Register for an IPUMS Account

Go to <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> click on Login at the top, and apply for access. On login screen, enter email address and password and submit it!

### Make a data extract

- Navigate to the IPUMS USA homepage and click on "Browse Data."

### Select Samples – Extract #1: Associations in Household Ownership

- Go to the homepage and click SELECT DATA located at the top of the page.
- On the following webpage, click SELECT SAMPLES.
- Choose the **2010 ACS (1-year) sample** by “check marking” the radio box to the left of the sample name.
- Once checked, click SUBMIT SAMPLE SELECTIONS.

### Select Variables – Extract #1: Associations in Household Ownership

- Return to the SELECT DATA page. Using the variable table or search feature, find the variables:
  - MORTGAGE: Mortgage status
  - VALUEH: House value
  - LANGUAGE: Language spoken at home
  - SEX: Sex
  - AGE: Age
- Once you have located the variables, click the radio button ‘Add to cart’ on the left side of the page. This selects them to be included in the data extract.



- Once the sample and variables are selected, click VIEW CART -> CREATE DATA EXTRACT.
- For this example, we will attach to each person case the language spoken by their mother if she resides in the household.
- To accomplish this, click “ATTACH CHARACTERISTICS” on the EXTRACT REQUEST page. Check the box at the intersection of LANGUAGE and Mother, and SUBMIT.

Variable	Head	Father	Mother	Spouse
<a href="#">PERNUM</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">PERWT</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">AGE</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">SEX</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">LANGUAGE</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">LANGUAGEED</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Review and provide a short description for the extract and click SUBMIT EXTRACT.
- You will receive an e-mail when the data is available for download.

## Select Samples – Extract #2: Housing Costs

- Go to the homepage and click SELECT DATA located at the top of the page.
- On the following webpage, click SELECT SAMPLES.
- Choose the **2005 through 2010 ACS (1-year) samples** by “check marking” the radio box to the left of the sample names.
- Once checked, click SUBMIT SAMPLE SELECTIONS.

## Select Variables - Extract #2: Housing Costs

- Return to the SELECT DATA page. Using the variable table or search feature, find the variables:
  - METRO: Mortgage Status
  - OWNERSHP: Ownership of dwelling



- COSTELEC: Annual electricity cost
- COSTGAS: Annual gas cost
- COSTWATR: Annual water cost
- ROOMS: Number of rooms
- UNITSSTR: Units in structure
- CPI99: 1999 Consumer Price Index
- Once you have located the variables, click the radio button `Add to cart` on the left side of the page. This selects them to be included in the data extract.
- Review and provide a short description for the extract and click SUBMIT EXTRACT.

### **Review and submit your extract**

- Click on the "View Cart" button underneath your data cart.
- Review your variable and sample selection to ensure your extract is complete.
  - You may notice a number of additional variables you did not select are in your cart; IPUMS preselects a number of key technical variables, which are automatically included in your data extract.
- Add additional variables or samples if they are missing from your extract, or click the "Create Data Extract" button.
- Review the Extract Request screen that summarizes your extract; add a description of your extract (e.g., "USA Exercise 2: Household Ownership" or "USA Exercise 2: Housing Costs") and click "Submit Extract".
- You will receive an email when your data extract is available to download.



## Getting the data into your statistics software

The IPUMS USA extract builder provides raw ASCII data files and the command files necessary for reading the raw data into a stats package. Note that these instructions are for SPSS. If you would like instructions for a different stats package, see <https://www.ipums.org/exercises.shtml>.

### Download the data

- Follow the link in the email notifying you that your extract is ready, or by clicking on the "Download and Revise Extracts" link on the left-hand side of the IPUMS USA homepage.
- Right-click on the data link next to the extract you created.
- Choose "Save Target As..." or "Save Link As..."
- Save into your preferred working directory. This tutorial assumes you will save the file into "Documents" (which should pop up as the default location).
- Do the same thing to save the SPSS command file.

### Decompress the data

- All IPUMS extracts are compressed. There are many applications available for decompressing files. We recommend [7zip](#) for Windows users. Macs can open these types of files without additional software.
- Find the "Documents" folder under the Start menu.
- Double click on the ".dat" file.
- In the window that pops up, press the "Extract" button.
- After the extract has completed, confirm that the Documents folder contains three files that begin with "usa\_###".



## Read in the data

- Double click on the ".sps" file, which should automatically have been named "usa\_000...".
- The first two lines should read:

```
cd ".".  
data list file = "usa_000..."/
```

- Change the first line to read: cd (location where you've been saving your files). For example: `cd "C://Documents"`.
- Change the second line to read:

```
data list file = "C: /Documents//usa_000...dat"/
```

- Under the "Run" menu, select "All"; an output viewer window will open. Use the Syntax Editor for the SPSS code below, highlight the code, and choose "Selection" under the Run menu.

## SPSS Code to Review

Code	Purpose
compute	Creates a new variable
freq	Displays a simple tabulation and frequency of one variable
crosstabs	Displays a cross-tabulation for up to 2 variables and a control
~=	Not equal to



## Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Excluding cases you don't mean to. Avoid this by turning off weights and select cases after use, otherwise they will apply to all subsequent analyses.
2. Terminating commands prematurely or forgetting to end commands with a period (.)  
Avoid this by carefully noting the use of periods in this exercise.

## A note on IPUMS USA and sample weighting

Many of the data samples provided by IPUMS USA are based on statistical survey techniques to obtain a nationally representative sample of the population. This means that persons with some characteristics are over-represented in the samples, while others are underrepresented.

To obtain representative statistics, users should always apply IPUMS USA sample weights for the population of interest (persons/households). IPUMS USA provides both person (PERWT) and household—level (HHWT) sampling weights to assist users with applying a consistent sampling weight procedure across data samples. While appropriate use of sampling weights will produce correct point estimates (e.g., means, proportions), many researchers believe that it is also necessary to use additional statistical techniques that account for the complex sample design to produce correct standard errors and statistical tests.

IPUMS USA has provided the variables STRATA and CLUSTER for this purpose. While unnecessary for the following analytic exercises focused on mean and proportional estimates, a further discussion can be found on the IPUMS USA website: ANALYSIS AND VARIANCE ESTIMATION WITH IPUMS USA

[https://usa.ipums.org/usa/complex\\_survey\\_vars/userNotes\\_variance.shtml](https://usa.ipums.org/usa/complex_survey_vars/userNotes_variance.shtml)



# Analyze the Data

## Part 1: Frequencies

This part of the exercise uses Extract #1: Associations in Household Ownership.

1. Find the codes page on the website for the MORTGAGE variable and write down the code value, and what category each code represents.

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2. How many people **in the sample** had a mortgage or deed of trust on their home in 2010? What proportion **of the sample** had a mortgage?

---

```
frequencies mortgage.
```

```
execute.
```

3. Using weights, what proportion **of the population** had a mortgage in 2010?

---

```
weight by perwt.
```

```
freq mortgage.
```

```
exe.
```

### Using household weights (HHWT)

Suppose you were interested not in the number of people with mortgages, but in the number of households that had mortgages. To get this statistic you would need to use the household weight (HHWT) and select only one person from each household to represent that household's characteristics, and filter so that  $PERNUM = 1$ .



4. What proportion households **in the sample** had a mortgage? What proportion of the **sample** owned their home?
- 

```
Weight off.  
USE ALL.  
COMPUTE filter_$=(PERNUM = 1).  
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'PERNUM = 1 (FILTER)'.  
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.  
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).  
FILTER BY filter_$.  
frequencies mortgage.  
exe.
```

5. What proportion of households **across the country** had a mortgage in 2010?
- 
6. What proportion of households owned their home? Does the sample over or under-represent households who own their home?
- 

```
weight by hhwt.  
Filter by filter_$.  
frequencies mortgage.  
exe.
```



7. What is the average value of:

- a. A home that is mortgaged? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. A home that is owned? \_\_\_\_\_

```
means tables = valueh by mortgage
/cells mean count stddev.
exe.
```

8. What could explain this difference? *Note: Exclude cases where the house value is missing.*

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9. Under the description tab on the website for VALUEH, reader the first user note. On the codes page, find the top codes by state for VALUEH, under 2010 ACS/PRCS topcodes by state. How could this complicate your data analysis? Check a histogram of your data to rule out any bias.

---

---

```
USE ALL.
COMPUTE filter_$=(VALUEH < 9999990).
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ ' VALUEH = 9999990 (FILTER)'.
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).
FILTER BY filter_$.
graph
/HISTOGRAM = valueh.
exe.
```



## Part 2: Frequencies

10. What were the three most commonly spoken languages in the US in 2010?

---

```
weight by perwt.  
freq language  
      /format dfreq.  
exe.
```

11. Using the code page on the website for LANGUAGE, find the codes for the three most commonly spoken languages.

---

---

12. What percent of individuals who speak English at home:

- Has a mother who speaks Spanish at home? \_\_\_\_\_
- Has a mother who speaks Chinese at home? \_\_\_\_\_

```
USE ALL.  
COMPUTE filter_$=( LANGUAGE = 1).  
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ ' LANGUAGE = 1 (FILTER)'.  
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.  
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).  
FILTER BY filter_$.  
crosstabs  
      /tables = language by language_mom  
      /cells = count row.  
exe.
```



13. What percent of men under the age of 30 speak Spanish at home?

---

```
USE ALL.
COMPUTE filter_$=(AGE < 30).
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'AGE < 30 (FILTER)'.
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).
FILTER BY filter_$.
crosstabs
  /tables = language by sex
  /cells = count column.
exe.
```



### Part 3: Advanced Exercises

This part of the exercise uses Extract #2: Housing Costs.

14. On the website what are the codes for METRO? What is the code for a single family house, detached in the variable UNITSSTR?

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---

---

15. What is the proportion of households in the central city who owned their home:  
a. in 2008?

---

- b. in 2010?

---

```
RECODE PERNUM (1=1) (ELSE=0) INTO pernum_coded.  
VARIABLE LABELS pernum_coded 'Coded PERNUM'.  
EXECUTE.  
FILTER BY pernum_coded.  
weight by hhwt.  
EXECUTE.  
crosstabs  
  /tables metro by ownershp by year  
  /cells = count row.  
exe.
```



## Create a graph for annual utility costs by metropolitan status

16. What is the approximate annual cost of *water* for:

- a. A household in the metro area in 2010?

---

- b. A household not in the metro area?

---

```
RECODE METRO (1=0) (0=SYSMIS) (2 thru 4=1) INTO in_metro.
VARIABLE LABELS in_metro 'In Metro'.
value labels
/in_metro
0 "nonmetro"
1 "metro".
EXECUTE.

USE ALL.

COMPUTE filter_$=(PERNUM = 1 & YEAR = 2010 & COSTWATR ~= 0 &
  COSTWATR < 9990).
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'PERNUM = 1 & YEAR = 2010 & COSTWATR ~=
  0 & COSTWATR < 9990 (FILTER)'.
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).
FILTER BY filter_$.
graph
/bar (grouped) = mean(costelec) mean (costwatr) by in_metro.
Execute.
```



17. What is the approximate annual cost of *electricity* for:

a. A household in the metro area in 2010?

---

b. A household not in the metro area?

---

18. In this sample, is there a simple correlation between the number of rooms and the annual cost of electricity?

---

---

```
COMPUTE filter_$=(PERNUM = 1 & COSTELEC ~= 1 & COSTELEC < 9990 &
ROOMS > 0).

VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'PERNUM = 1 & COSTELEC ~= 1 & COSTELEC
< 9990 & ROOMS > 0 (FILTER)'.

VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.

FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).

FILTER BY filter_$.

weight by hhwt.

correlations

    /variables = costelec rooms.

Execute.
```

Next, create a graph that will display the average cost of gas and water over time, controlling for the number of rooms and the units in structure. To control for these variables, look at the specific case of a single family house, detached with 5 rooms.



19. On the website, find the variable description for COSTGAS and note that gas costs are expressed in contemporary dollars. To adjust costs for inflation a price index, CPI99, must be used. Go to the CPI99 variable description page. What year is the index year and how do you apply the inflation adjustment?

---

---

---

20. Has the annual cost of gas for a single family, 5-room home increased since 2005 in **nominal terms**? What about the annual cost of water?

---

---

```
USE ALL.
```

```
COMPUTE filter_$=(PERNUM = 1 & ROOMS = 5 & UNITSSTR = 3 &  
COSTGAS ~= 0 & COSTGAS < 9990 & COSTWATR ~= 0 & COSTWATR <  
9990).
```

```
VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'PERNUM = 1 & ROOMS = 5 & UNITSSTR = 3  
& COSTGAS ~= 0 & COSTGAS < 9990 & COSTWATR ~= 0 & COSTWATR <  
9990'+ '(FILTER)'.  
VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.  
FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).  
FILTER BY filter_$.  
weight by hhwt.  
graph  
/bar (grouped) = mean(costwatr) mean(costgas) by year.  
exe.
```



21. Has the annual cost of gas for a single family, 5 room home increased since 2005 in real terms? *Note: The variable CPI99 assigns an inflation index value according to the year of the observation.*

---

---

```
Weight off.

Filter off.

compute costgas_real = (costgas*cpi99).

USE ALL.

COMPUTE filter_$=(PERNUM = 1 & ROOMS = 5 & UNITSSTR = 3 &
COSTGAS ~= 0 & COSTGAS < 9990 & COSTWATR ~= 0 & COSTWATR <
9990).

VARIABLE LABELS filter_$ 'PERNUM = 1 & ROOMS = 5 & UNITSSTR = 3
& COSTGAS ~= 0 & COSTGAS < 9990 & COSTWATR ~= 0 & COSTWATR <
9990'+ '(FILTER)'.

VALUE LABELS filter_$ 0 'Not Selected' 1 'Selected'.

FORMATS filter_$ (f1.0).

FILTER BY filter_$.

Weight hhwt.

graph

    /bar = mean(costgas_real) by year.

exe.
```



# Answers

## Part 1: Frequencies

1. Find the codes page on the website for the MORTGAGE variable and write down the code value, and what category each code represents.

0 N/A; 1 No, owned free and clear; 2 Check mark on manuscript (probably yes); 3 Yes, mortgaged/ deed of trust or similar debt; 4 Yes, contract to purchase

2. How many people in the sample had a mortgage or deed of trust on their home in 2010? What proportion of the sample had a mortgage? 1,523,041 people; 49.75%

3. Using weights, what proportion of the population had a mortgage in 2010?  
47.46%

### Using household weights (HHWT)

4. What proportion households in the sample had a mortgage? What proportion of the sample owned their home? (*Hint: don't use the weight quite yet*)

42.20% of households mortgaged; 23.98% of household owned

5. What proportion of households had a mortgage across the country in 2010?

40.53% of households

6. What proportion of households owned their home? Does the sample over or under-represent households who own their home?

20.07% of households, sample over-represents households that own their own home or have a mortgage.



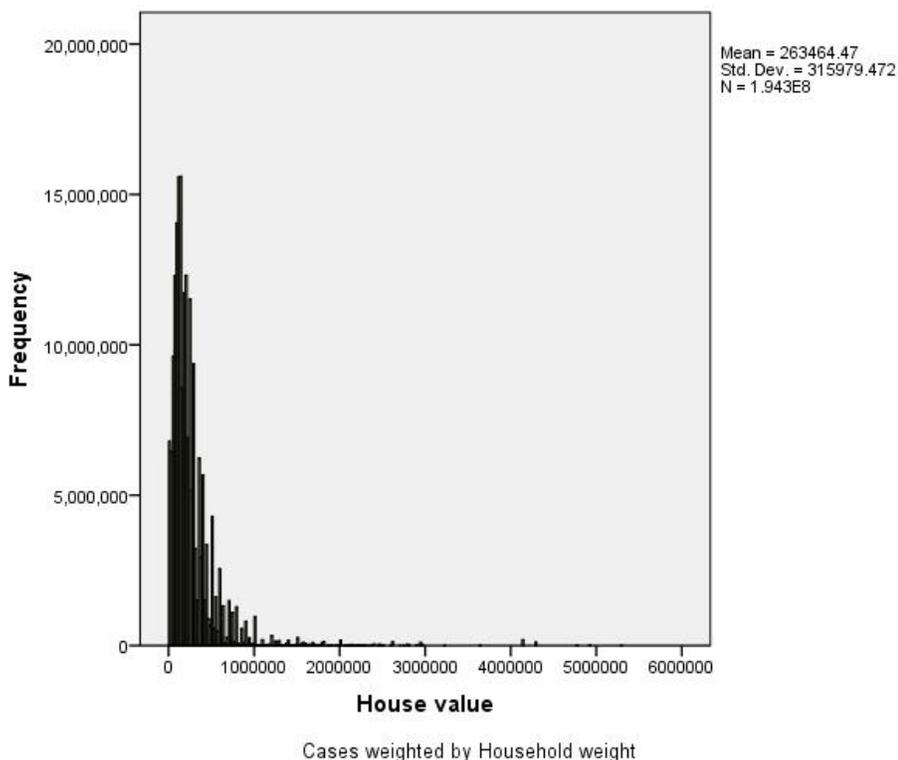
7. What is the average value of:
  - a. A home that is mortgaged? \$267,890
  - b. A home that is owned? \$219,015

8. What could explain this difference?

Perhaps homes that have already been paid off are older and less expensive, or it takes less time to pay off a home that is worth less.

9. Under the description tab on the website for VALUEH, reader the first user note. On the codes page, find the top codes by state for VALUEH, under 2010 ACS/PRCS topcodes by state. How could this complicate your data analysis? Check a histogram of your data to rule out any bias.

There doesn't seem to be a significant cluster around the topcodes, so the data sample may not be noticeably biased.



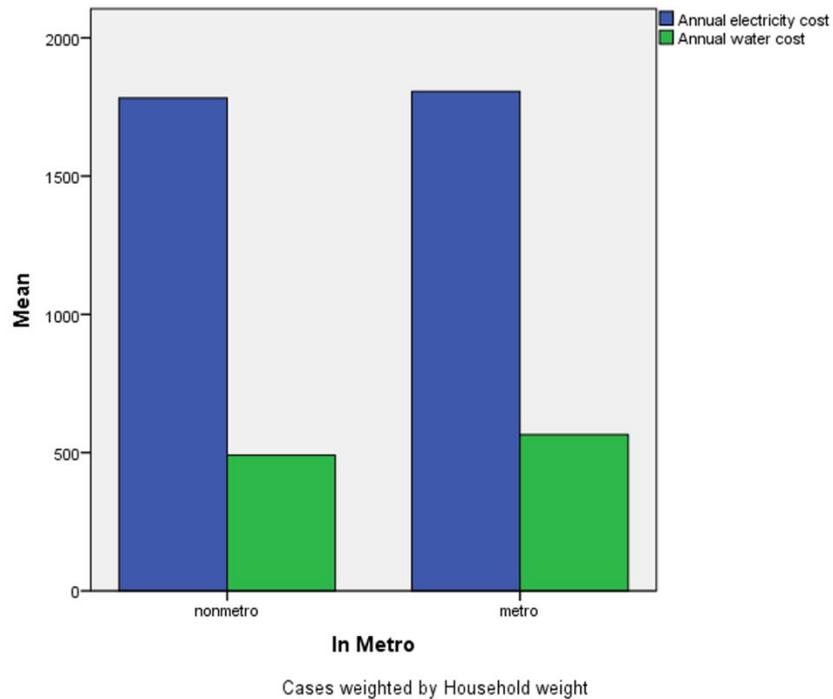
## Part 2: Frequencies

10. What were the three most commonly spoken languages in the US in 2010?  
English, Spanish, Chinese
11. Using the code page on the website for LANGUAGE, find the codes for the three most commonly spoken languages. 01 English; 12 Spanish; 43 Chinese
12. What percent of individuals who speak English at home:
  - a. Has a mother who speaks Spanish at home? 3.89%
  - b. Has a mother who speaks Chinese at home? 0.22%
13. What percent of men under the age of 30 speak Spanish at home? 13.4%

## Part 3: Advanced Exercises

14. On the website what are the codes for METRO? What is the code for a single-family house, detached in the variable UNITSSTR?  
UNITSSTR: 03 1-family house, detached; METRO: 0 Not identifiable; 1 Not in metro area; 2 Central city; 3 Outside central city; 4 Central city status unknown
15. What is the proportion of households in the central city who owned their home:
  - a. in 2008? 44.51%
  - b. in 2010? 42.92%
16. What is the approximate annual cost of *water* for:
  - a. A household in the metro area in 2010? ~\$575
  - b. A household not in the metro area? ~500





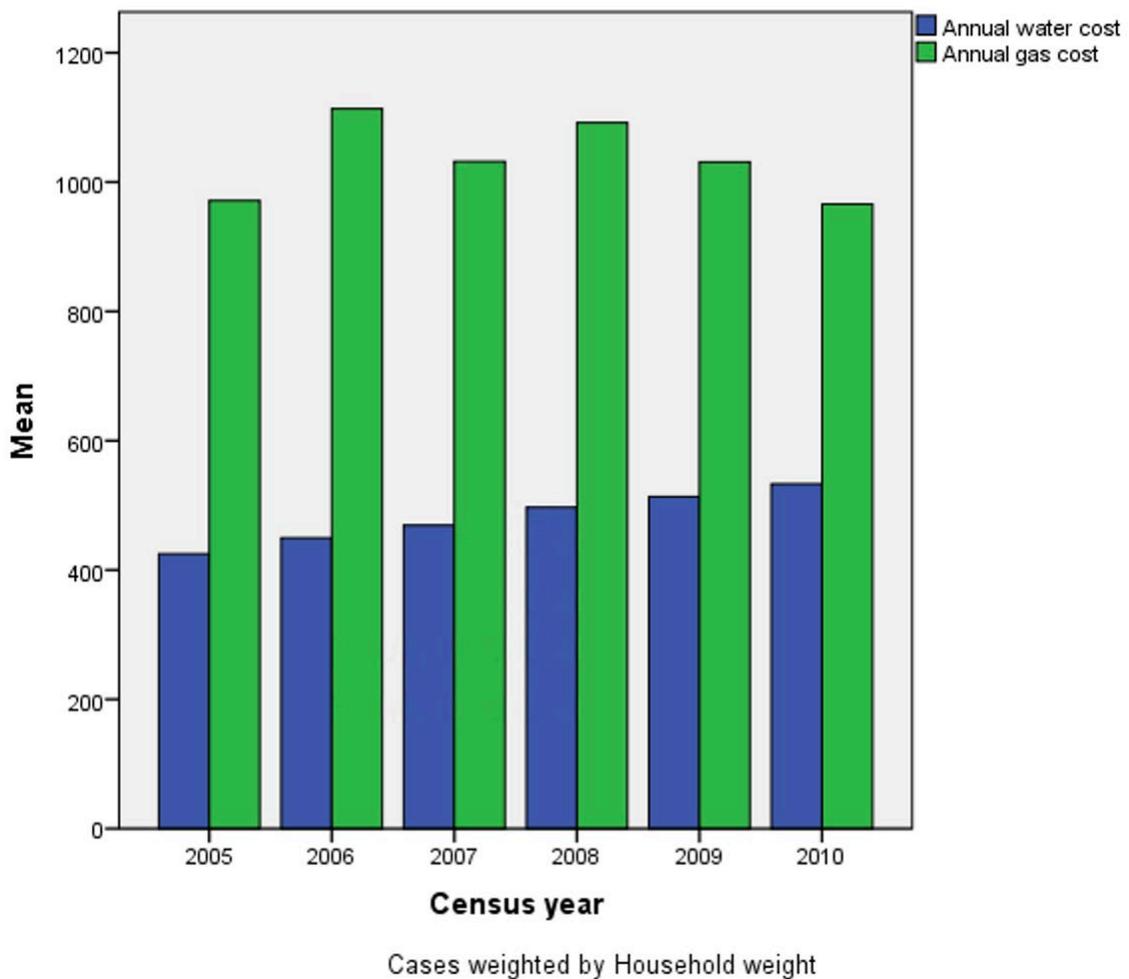
17. What is the approximate annual cost of *electricity* for:

- A household in the metro area in 2010? ~\$1700
- A household not in the metro area? ~\$1750

18. In this sample, is there a simple correlation between the number of rooms and the annual cost of electricity? There seems to be a weak positive correlation between number of rooms and the cost of electricity. (0.30)



Next, create a graph that will display the average cost of gas and water over time, controlling for the number of rooms and the units in structure. To control for these variables, look at the specific case of a detached, single-family house with 5 rooms.



19. On the website, find the variable description for COSTGAS and note that gas costs are expressed in contemporary dollars. To adjust costs for inflation a price index, CPI99, must be used. Go to the CPI99 variable description page. What year is the index year and how do you apply the inflation adjustment? 1999; real costs adjusted for inflation and indexed to the 1999 U.S. dollars are estimated by generating a new variable  $CPI99 * COSTGAS$ .



20. Has the annual cost of gas for a single family, 5-room home increased since 2005 in nominal terms? What about the annual cost of water?

In nominal terms, the cost of gas is fluctuated over time, but the cost of water has steadily increased.

21. Has the annual cost of gas for a single family, 5 room home increased since 2005 in real terms?

In real terms, the gas prices fluctuated over time.

