



# Introduction to IPUMS MICS

January 30, 2024  
Questions and Answers

The following are adaptations of questions received during the live webinar and their answers. For additional questions or clarifications, contact IPUMS User Support at [ipums@umn.edu](mailto:ipums@umn.edu)

## Accessing IPUMS harmonized versions of UNICEF MICS data

1. Where does MICS information come from? Who collects and controls access to the original MICS data?

*MICS stands for "Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys." These are household surveys, typically representative at the national level, based on a two-stage cluster sampling design. The surveys are administered by individual countries using guidelines and tools provided by UNICEF. For more information, see the [UNICEF MICS website](#).*

2. Is it true that the MICS microdata is entirely administered by UNICEF so all microdata access policies and things like anonymization as appropriate would be handled by UNICEF?

*Correct. Questions about access and redistribution are most appropriately directed to UNICEF. IPUMS is well positioned to answer questions about our documentation and harmonization syntax. Our User Support team will review available UNICEF documentation in an effort to answer questions, but some types of questions are more appropriately answered by UNICEF.*

3. Is it correct that IPUMS MICS only provides harmonization syntax for data downloaded from UNICEF?

*Yes. IPUMS MICS does not disseminate UNICEF MICS data. Instead, you download the data from UNICEF, syntax from IPUMS, and create the data extract on your computer. To do this, follow the steps on the IPUMS "My data" page or in the email sent to you when your extract is complete.*

4. How do I apply for access to the data?

*You need to register on the [UNICEF MICS website](#), which is free. Registration requires a brief description of your proposed research, and approval can take up to three days, but approval is generally easily granted. And we are available (email user support at [ipums@umn.edu](mailto:ipums@umn.edu)) to help with the process if needed.*

5. Can I use IPUMS MICS for class projects with students, or for other training and education purposes?

*Absolutely you can use it for all these purposes. Please email us at [ipums@umn.edu](mailto:ipums@umn.edu) if you have more specific questions.*

6. Can students have access to this dataset for their research?

*Yes, anyone conducting research can obtain access to UNICEF MICS data. Students are also eligible to win a research award if they write a paper using IPUMS MICS data.*

7. Are there ways to get the data out of Stata and into a different format?

*Yes. Once the harmonization syntax is run in Stata, you can use the `[export]` command in Stata to export your harmonized dataset into another statistical software. See [this blog post on creating an IPUMS MICS extract](#) for additional information.*

8. Will harmonization syntax be available for statistical packages other than Stata at some point?

*Yes. We are working with the IPUMS IT team to develop ways to provide the IPUMS MICS harmonization syntax in other statistical languages.*

9. How comparable are the original MICS data within a country between rounds? Across countries?

*Question wording, and variable and value labels often differ across MICS samples, even for different-year samples from the same country. This is why IPUMS MICS is such a valuable tool. Our experts have carefully harmonized variables across surveys while preserving all details. In IPUMS MICS, each variable name is a url link to more information. Click on the name to see a discussion of COMPARABILITY as well as the original QUESTIONNAIRE TEXT from each survey.*

10. Are there IRB requirements?

*The data are anonymized secondary survey data so there are generally no IRB requirements to access them. Users may want to review the IRB requirements for their particular institution, however. Access to the data is controlled by UNICEF.*

11. Is there a way to pool the data via the IPUMS MICS website?

*Yes, IPUMS MICS provides users with customized syntax to pool samples selected by users into a single data file. The provided syntax also creates new harmonized variables across those samples.*

# Topical, temporal, and geographic detail in MICS data

12. Is 5-17 the age range UNICEF defines as 'adolescents'? For the 5-17 age questions, is the child's actual age recorded?

*Yes, that is the age range for the data on adolescents. The child's actual age is recorded, and you can use your own cut-offs as needed.*

13. How can I learn about whether or not MICS data cover a specific topic? How can I learn if IPUMS MICS has harmonized a certain variable from the UNICEF MICS data?

*The search feature in the variable browsing menu can be used to explore variable availability. You can also reach out to the IPUMS User Support team at [ipums@umn.edu](mailto:ipums@umn.edu) if you aren't finding your variable of interest.*

14. Can you say a couple of words about harmonization of individual / household weights in the example shown?

*Individual and household weights are provided by UNICEF and harmonized without further modification. A user guide on weights in IPUMS MICS will be available soon.*

15. What countries and rounds are available in IPUMS MICS? Are there any rounds or countries explicitly excluded? How can I learn which countries and rounds are included?

*Descriptions of the samples included in IPUMS MICS are available in the [Sample Description page](#). Currently, we have included all publicly available samples in Round 3-6 and are adding new samples as they are released. Round 1 data is not publicly released by UNICEF. We are currently working to add Round 2 samples into IPUMS MICS.*

16. What level of geographic detail is typically available in these data? Are there ways to access more detailed geographic detail?

*Most (though not all) samples include information at the first administrative level. IPUMS MICS provides harmonized geography variables and GIS boundary files. The harmonized geographic variables are for visual representation/research purposes only; they are not a representation of actual political boundaries. See this webpage for more about the [geographic information available in IPUMS MICS](#).*

*Currently, UNICEF releases [georeference GPS points](#) for only select countries and access must be obtained directly from UNICEF. It is possible for researchers to combine those GPS coordinates with the data in an IPUMS MICS extract.*

## Linking with MICS data

17. Is it correct that the different units of analysis cannot be linked in a single data request from IPUMS MICS? How do I link across units of analysis?

*Yes. All units of analysis contain household and individual identifiers that are automatically added to your extract. You must create an extract, download, and run*

*the harmonization syntax for each of the different units of analysis you are interested in. This [Linking Guide](#) provides recommendations on linking keys and syntax to use in Stata to facilitate linking across units using the harmonized data.*

18. Are there resources for combining IPUMS MICS data with geospatial data?

*For most samples, geographic variables are representative at the first administrative level. Analysts can aggregate geospatial data to that level and link it to UNICEF MICS data. Currently, IPUMS MICS does not incorporate GPS coordinates or contextual variables. See this webpage for more about the [geographic information available in IPUMS MICS](#). For information on geospatial data on other IPUMS data projects, visit IPUMS International (see [more information at this blog post](#)) or [IPUMS DHS contextual variables](#).*

19. How does MICS data differ from popular DHS data? Are they comparable and can they be harmonized too?

*There are indeed many similar topics between IPUMS DHS and IPUMS MICS data. However, each data collection contains many unique variables and, even for similar variables, there are differences in availability, sample design, and variable codes and names. We are currently working on resources and documentation to facilitate interoperability across the IPUMS Global Health data collections.*