

# IPUMS Geography in Transition

IPUMS is in the process of creating spatially harmonized geographic variables for all samples in the database. Currently, a few countries still have geographic elements that are not yet updated, reflecting an older method of organizing this information. These countries lack year-specific variables. Instead, they have variables that are **harmonized over time and by name only**. That is to say, the codes and labels are harmonized across samples, but the boundaries are not necessarily consistent, and some places exist in some samples and not in others. There are no boundary files associated with these variables. Only the first-level geographic units are harmonized for these countries.

By our next data release all IPUMS-International countries will have spatially harmonized geography at the first and second level of geography and corresponding year-specific geography.

For a typical country, the basic set of unharmonized variables under the old method looks like the following (using Dominican Republic as an example):

Variable	Geographic level	Type of geography
GEO1_DOX	First level: provinces	Harmonized by name [Non-GIS]
GEO2_DOX	Second level: municipalities	Harmonized by name [Non-GIS]

## Notes on current state of geography

- Spatially harmonized geography at the first administrative level is available for **all** IPUMS countries and they have associated [GIS boundary files](#).
- Spatially harmonized geography at the second administrative level are available for **most** IPUMS countries and they also have associated [GIS boundary files](#).
- Year-specific geography at the [first](#) and [second](#) administrative level is available for **most** IPUMS countries; they have associated GIS boundary files.
- Variables that are harmonized by name are only available for countries where year specific geography is unavailable. As year-specific geography at the first and second administrative levels becomes available, non-spatially harmonized variables will be phased out.
- At the present moment IPUMS is only working on providing users with spatially harmonized units at the first and second level of geography. If lower levels of geography meet our confidentiality requirements, they are harmonized by name. Any other geography variables like cities and urban areas are also harmonized by name.

Click [HERE](#) for a list of geography variables across all IPUMS-International samples.