

# FIPS County Code Changes

David Dorn,

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The territory of the United States is subdivided into about 3,000 counties (called parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska). The definition of these counties has been very stable over recent decades, with the notable exception of Alaska.

I have collected information from multiple sources about the few changes in county definitions that occurred in the mainland U.S. since the 1980s. Accounting for these county code changes is relevant when one wants to match pre-1990 or post-1990 county data to 1990 Commuting Zones.

County code change, and action for mapping county to 1990 Commuting Zones via 1990 county codes:

- Arizona, 1980s: La Paz county is created out of parts of Yuma county. FIPS code 4012 appears. *Action:* since the La Paz and Yuma counties map into different Commuting Zones, attribute the 1980 population of pre-split Yuma county (FIPS 4027) partly to CZ 38100 (Yuma) and CZ 38300 (La Paz), using a split proportional to population size in 1990 (Yuma 106,895 vs. La Paz 13,844).
- New Mexico, 1980s: Cibola county is created out of parts of Valencia county. FIPS code 35006 appears. *Action:* no action needed because Cibola and Valencia both map into the same Commuting Zone.
- Florida, 1990s: Dade county changes name to Miami-Dade. FIPS code is changed from 12025 to 12086 in order to preserve alphabetical sequence of county codes. *Action:* rename code 12086 to 12025.
- Virginia, 1990s: The independent city of South Boston merges into Halifax county. FIPS code 51780 disappears. *Action:* no action needed because South Boston and Halifax both map into the same Commuting Zone.

- Montana, 1990s: Yellowstone National Park territory is merged into Gallatin and Park counties. FIPS code 30113 disappears. While this territorial change already occurred in 1978, the Census bureau only became aware of it during the 1990s. *Action:* no action needed because all involved territories map to the same Commuting Zone.
- Virginia, 2000s: The independent city of Clifton Forge merges into Alleghany county. FIPS code 51560 disappears. *Action:* no action needed because Clifton Forge and Alleghany both map into the same Commuting Zone.
- Colorado, 2000s: Broomfield county is created out of parts of Adams, Boulder, Jefferson, and Weld counties. FIPS code 8014 appears. 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).

Other county code observations:

- Data sources for Virginia sometimes aggregate information for independent cities and surrounding counties. The FIPS codes 519xx refer to such city/county combinations.
- Data for the two Wisconsin counties 55078 and 55115 is sometimes combined and reported under FIPS code 55901.