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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Policy Development and Research

A Closer Look at the
Nation's Housing
and Neighborhoods

A Guide to the Annual Housing Survey

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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A Guide to the Annual Housing Survey

The Annual Housing Survey is
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Who Uses the Annual Housing Survey?

Among those who find the Annual Housing Survey particularly useful in their daily operations as well as for long term planning are:

- Policymakers for housing and community development programs.
- State and local planning officials concerned with housing and transportation trends and their impact on growth policies.
- Corporate and financial planners concerned with future investment opportunities, the mortgage finance market, and potential capital needs for housing improvement.
- Marketing managers with responsibility for planning output and distribution.
- Social scientists and other academicians concerned with the interrelationships of housing with other social goals.

What Do We Need to Know?

- How much of the Nation's housing needs rehabilitation?
- What's needed to put that housing in shape for use?
- How does the supply of suburban rental units compare with that in the central city, and what's the difference in rent?
- How much do housing costs of urban and rural families change from one year to another?
- What are the key neighborhood services that influence residents to stay or to move?
- How much do those who move manage to improve their living conditions?

HUD's Annual Housing Survey Helps Answer These Questions

The answers to these and other questions about the quality of housing in the United States are provided by the Annual Housing Survey.

This effort is a joint undertaking of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Bureau of the Census.

Housing in the United States has been measured by the Census Bureau in regular housing censuses since 1940 and in population censuses since 1850, and the amount and kinds of information gathered in each census have increased.

We have learned -- every 10 years -- how many homes there are in our country, how long occupants have lived in them, whether they have a car, and other things.

But we have never known whether a home had a leaky roof, holes in the walls, broken steps, or peeling paint. Or whether the kitchen or heating equipment worked. Or whether the garbage collection was adequate.

The Annual Housing Survey constitutes a major effort by the Federal Government to find out about such things -- about the quality as well as the quantity of housing in this Nation.



The Annual Housing Survey consists of two separate parts: (1) a national sample of housing units from urban and rural areas to be examined every year; and (2) metropolitan area samples from 60 selected Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas* (SMSA's), including the largest and many of the smaller, fast-growing ones, with one-fourth of them examined in detail every fourth year.

The housing units which are surveyed have been scientifically selected to represent a cross section of all housing in the Nation, updated each year to include new construction. The first annual statistics for the Nation as a whole were available in early 1975, while the detailed information on the first group of SMSA's was available in 1976.

In gathering information, Census Bureau interviewers visit the household occupying each housing unit in the sample. For unoccupied units, they obtain information from landlords, rental agents, or neighbors.

As described in detail below, all information about individuals obtained in the Survey is kept strictly confidential, in compliance with Federal law. Statistics are aggregated for a whole area or for

the whole Nation, so that information about any household or neighborhood is not identifiable. No information about any family or individual is ever disclosed.

The Annual Housing Survey provides a timely and reasonably complete census of housing in America for all the people involved in making key decisions about our future -- HUD and the Executive Branch, the Congress, State and local officials, public interest groups, private industry, and others.

Results of the Annual Housing Survey are aggregated and made public in printed reports each year.

The remainder of this brochure provides details on the Annual Housing Survey.

* A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area is an area designated by the Office of Management and Budget; it generally is made up of one entire county or several counties; it must include at least one core city (or, in certain cases, an effective community) of 50,000 or more inhabitants; and it must meet certain metropolitan characteristics. In New England, "towns" are used instead of "counties."

What Does It Tell Us?

We need to know more than we know about our housing, and we need to know new kinds of things about our housing -- how adequate are facilities for example.

Since the 1940 Census of Housing, the Bureau of the Census every 10 years has measured changes in the number and types of housing units and their amenities. Between censuses, estimates of change have been based on one-time special studies and on occasional sample surveys.

But as housing has become a critical factor in the economic life and health of the Nation, the need for more up-to-date and reliable statistics has become apparent. In addition, growing aspirations for a higher quality of life for all Americans have generated a need for information on the physical conditions of housing units and the character of the neighborhood in which they are located.

The Annual Housing Survey is designed to fulfill these needs. Among other things, it provides information that will:

- Permit a year-to-year comparison of the number of housing units in the United States, broken down by type, location, and whether renter- or owner-occupied or vacant.
- Show the net changes in the housing supply resulting from the destruction of some units and the construction of new ones.
- Provide information on the physical condition of both occupied and unoccupied housing units and on the dependability and repair of their facilities and utilities.
- Indicate to what extent rural and urban housing are being repaired and renovated to be made more livable.
- Provide information on vacancy rates in rental and "for sale" housing and on whether they are in central cities or in suburbs.

- Give comparative information on the price of housing and on the level of rents.
- Determine to what extent those people who move during the year upgrade their housing.
- Provide information on where "movers" come from and the reasons for their move.
- Indicate whether people believe neighborhood conditions and community services are improving or deteriorating from year to year.

Building on the Census of Housing

Facts about homes are clearly related to facts about people; and since 1850, census takers have counted the number of dwellings when they counted the population. Since 1890, they also have reported on how many people owned their own homes.

The 1930 Census added some housing questions for nonfarm housing which dealt with the amount of rent paid or with the value of the property if owner occupied.

But it was not until 1940 that a full-fledged housing census was taken. At that time, the Federal Government was seeking facts on the general condition of the Nation's housing to determine the need for assistance programs. Moreover, manufacturers wanted housing information to help them determine the likely demands for materials and supplies, while banks and other lending institutions were looking for facts that would help them improve their appraisals of housing properties underlying mortgage loans.

The 1940 Census of Housing provided this new information on vacancy, year built, financing, number of rooms, plumbing facilities, lighting, heating equipment, and fuel used for heating and cooking.

Subsequent decennial censuses have produced the same basic information, plus information on new subjects such as occupancy by race, income source,

length of occupancy, availability of automobiles, source of water, and sewage disposal. In recent censuses, many of the housing questions were asked on a sample basis.

But the need for more particularized information still existed. Following the 1970 Census, the Subcommittee on Construction Statistics of the Cabinet Committee on Construction recommended that HUD sponsor a yearly housing survey, with the survey to be taken by the Bureau of the Census.

Subsequently, HUD and Census Bureau officials met with individuals representing the full spectrum of the housing field -- Federal, State, and municipal officials; representatives of professional groups and research organizations; consultants and academicians; and industrialists in the housing field.

From those meetings and other work, HUD and Census Bureau officials developed a survey questionnaire that serves as many needs as possible within the constraints of questionnaire size, sample reliability, and costs. The development of that questionnaire marked the beginning of the Annual Housing Survey.

Scope of the Survey

The Annual Housing Survey utilizes questions and data from previous censuses and from special studies. But its focus is wider.

For the first time, data are being collected on how well bathrooms, kitchens, heating units, and electrical systems work, rather than merely determining if these amenities are present in the apartment or house. Similarly, the dependability of services such as water supply, sewage disposal, and trash and garbage collection is investigated.

Such household problems as leaky roofs and basements, holes in walls and ceilings, broken steps and peeling paint and plaster also are investigated by the Survey.

Beyond the condition of housing units, the Survey inquires into the environment of the neighborhood in which they are located. The Survey measures:

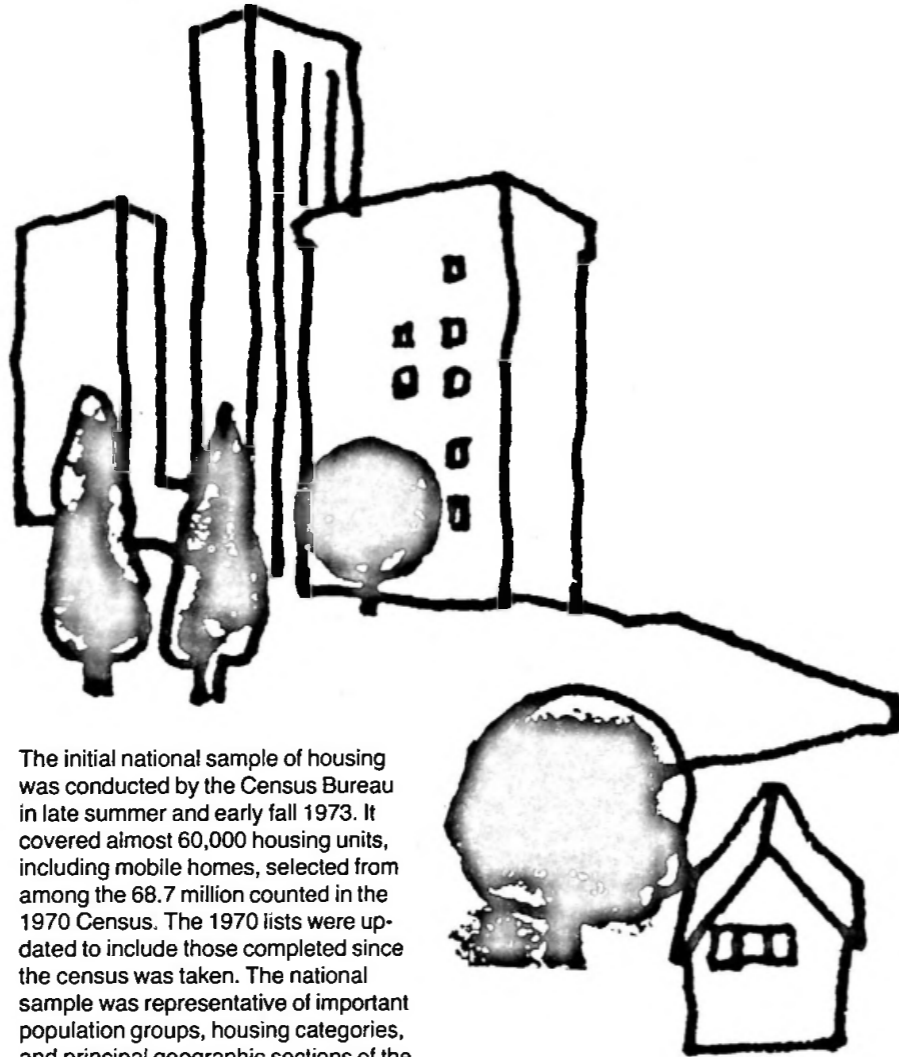
- The presence of abandoned, vacant, or rundown buildings;
- Trash, litter, or junk in the streets, on empty lots, or on property along the street;
- Heavy street traffic;
- Commercial, industrial, or other non-residential activities;
- Odors, smoke, or gas; and
- Street or neighborhood crime.

The part these conditions play in prompting occupants to move will be examined. In addition, householders are asked to judge the adequacy of such neighborhood public services as mass transportation, schools, police and fire services, shopping, and health services.

There are questions dealing with the characteristics of housing occupants, such as family size, age, race, sex of head, income and ownership of a second home. In addition, there are questions specifically addressed to recent movers, particularly on the location and characteristics of their previous residence, its financial characteristics, and the reasons for their move.

National Sample

The first part of the Annual Housing Survey is called the national sample of housing.



The initial national sample of housing was conducted by the Census Bureau in late summer and early fall 1973. It covered almost 60,000 housing units, including mobile homes, selected from among the 68.7 million counted in the 1970 Census. The 1970 lists were updated to include those completed since the census was taken. The national sample was representative of important population groups, housing categories, and principal geographic sections of the country.

The second survey of the national sample began in August 1974. In addition to the sample of newly completed units, which is added to the basic group each year, the national survey was expanded to include an additional 16,000 rural housing units so as to provide more detailed information on this segment of the Nation's housing supply. This increased the rural sample to approximately 32,000 of the nearly 76,000 units which now are surveyed nationally each year.

Metropolitan Area Samples

The second part of the Annual Housing Survey consists of the metropolitan area samples.

This part began with a survey of SMSA's during a 12-month span from April 1974 through March 1975, and covered 135,000 units, selected on the same basis as that used in selecting the national sample. These units included 15,000 from each of four very large metropolitan areas (Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.) and 5,000 units from each of 15 smaller SMSA's. These same units were surveyed again in 1977-1978.

In the second year of the Survey, 1975-1976, another group of SMSA's was surveyed covering 145,000 units; these included four very large metropolitan areas (Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco) and 17 other SMSA's.

The Survey, in the third year, 1976-1977, canvassed 140,000 housing units in a final group of 20 SMSA's. The four very large metropolitan areas were Houston, St. Louis, Seattle, and New York.

Beginning in 1978, the 60 SMSA's were redistributed into four panels of 15 SMSA's, each panel including three large-sample SMSA's and twelve small-sample SMSA's. (See the groups, p. 11.)

Who Uses the Results?

The information generated by the Annual Housing Survey is valuable to those people in our society who are charged with official responsibilities regarding housing or who are concerned with housing for business or other reasons.

The Survey can be particularly useful to the Congress and to its committees that initiate legislation on housing. It is useful to housing experts at HUD, which is responsible for assessing housing needs and for developing programs to meet those needs. With its emphasis on the quality of housing, HUD uses the statistics to help evaluate programs that are designed to provide decent housing for lower-income families.

The Department of Labor can use Survey information to estimate the kinds and numbers of jobs that might become available in rehabilitating housing. The Federal Reserve Board and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, as well as HUD, are better able to evaluate and assess the mortgage finance market and potential capital requirements arising from housing construction, renovation, and turnover of ownership.

Private financial institutions such as commercial and mutual savings banks, savings and loan associations, insurance companies, real estate investment trusts, and mortgage companies are better able to plan future investment opportunities.

State and local governments have access to more current information on trends which may affect their housing and transportation patterns and influence their future growth policies. Public utilities are able to determine where additional service will be needed.

The information collected on the condition of housing provides a useful basis for follow-up surveys to determine the likely dollar volume for renovations and repairs of owner-occupied as well as rental units. Private companies and trade organizations have an estimate of requirements for materials needed for home upkeep and housing renovation.

Lumber and building material companies, flooring manufacturers, producers of furnaces and air conditioning equipment, makers of bathroom fixtures and other firms gain information essential for planning the output and distribution of their products.

Survey data also find wide use as a basis for planning and decisionmaking by economists and financial analysts who advise home and apartment builders, the real estate industry, and institutional investors.

Reports

Joint HUD-Census Bureau reports are issued on the data collected through the Annual Housing Survey. The first report, released in early 1975, covered data collected from the national sample. Since then, national sample reports, as well as those from the metropolitan area samples, have become available about 12 months after interviewing is completed.

Statistics from the national sample are tabulated for the entire United States; for each of the four major geographic regions; for all SMSA's in the United States (both inside and outside central



city) and for the remainder of the country. After the second National Survey, urban and rural tabulations were also published. For the samples from metropolitan areas, data are shown for the area as a whole as well as for inside and outside the central city of the area. (For SMSA's with a small sample, data were shown only for the area as a whole in the first two years.)

Annual Housing Survey Reports for the Nation and for SMSA's are published each year in the following six parts:

- A. General Housing Characteristics
- B. Indicators of Housing and Neighborhood Quality
- C. Financial Characteristics of the Housing Inventory
- D. Housing Characteristics of Recent Movers
- E. Urban and Rural Housing Characteristics
- F. Financial Characteristics by Indicators of Housing and Neighborhood Quality

Annual Housing Survey Reports are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 or any Department of Commerce District Office.

Computer tapes for public use of Annual Housing Survey national and SMSA data are available from the Bureau of the Census.

Confidentiality of Information Collected

The Annual Housing Survey is conducted by the Bureau of the Census of the U.S. Department of Commerce, which has established a reputation for trustworthiness and confidentiality through decades of collecting data on various facets of American life. The detailed information that their interviewers are gathering on the conditions and quality of housing is for the sole purpose of developing general statistical data. By law, no one – the census taker or any other employee of the Census Bureau – is permitted to disclose information about any person or establishment.

No information about a person, household, street, block or neighborhood is ever disclosed in the Survey. All information is aggregated.

Households in the sample are sent an introductory letter prior to the interviewer's visit, alerting them to the Survey and indicating its purpose. In their home visits, interviewers explain the nature and importance of the Survey in greater detail.

Participation by a householder or any other person is entirely voluntary, and entry by an interviewer into a home is at the consent of the owner or occupant. When a Census Bureau interviewer obtains information on vacant units from a landlord, rental agent, or neighbor, the interviewer explains in full the background and purpose of the Survey.

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**Annual Housing Survey
Standard Metropolitan
Statistical Areas**

Group I

*Atlanta, Ga.
Cincinnati, Ohio-Ky.-Ind.
Colorado Springs, Colo.
Columbus, Ohio
Kansas City, Mo.-Kans.
New Orleans, La.
Newport News-Hampton, Va.
Patterson-Clifton-Passaic, N.J.
*Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J.
Rochester, N.Y.
San Antonio, Tex.
San Bernardino-Riverside-Ontario, Calif.
San Diego, Calif.
*San Francisco-Oakland, Calif.
Springfield-Chicopee-Holyoke, Mass.-Conn.

Group II

Baltimore, Md.
Buffalo, N.Y.
*Chicago, Ill.
Cleveland, Ohio
Denver, Colo.
Hartford, Conn.
Honolulu, Hawaii
*Houston, Tex.
Las Vegas, Nev.
Miami, Fla.
Milwaukee, Wis.
Omaha, Nebr.-Iowa
Portland, Oreg.-Wash.
Raleigh, N.C.
*Seattle, Everett, Wash.

Group III

Albany-Schenectady-Troy, N.Y.
Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, Pa.-N.J.
Birmingham, Ala.
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Indianapolis, Ind.
*Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.
Louisville, Ky.-Ind.
Memphis, Tenn.-Ark.
*New York, N.Y.
Oklahoma City, Okla.
Providence-Pawtucket-Warwick, R.I.-Mass.
Sacramento, Calif.
Saginaw, Mich.
*St. Louis, Mo.-Ill.
Salt Lake City, Utah

Group IV

Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove, Calif.
*Boston, Mass.
Dallas, Tex.
*Detroit, Mich.
Fort Worth, Tex.
Madison, Wis.
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.
Newark, N.J.
Orlando, Fla.
Phoenix, Ariz.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Spokane, Wash.
Tacoma, Wash.
*Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va.
Wichita, Kans.

*Large sample surveys were taken in these areas, and data are published separately for the central city and the rest of the metropolitan area as well as for each area as a whole. All other metropolitan areas have smaller sample sizes. Originally, data were published only for the area as a whole, but are now published for the central city and for the rest of the SMSA as well.

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