

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY 2002

APPENDIX C. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this appendix is to explain the methodology used to measure homeownership affordability in this report. The approach taken is the same for each of the years for which data are presented (1984, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2002).

Criteria for measuring affordability

In this report, two primary approaches are used to provide a measure of homeownership affordability:

1. For each family and unrelated individual, a calculation is made using data on income, assets, and debt to determine the maximum-priced home the family or individual can afford.
2. For each family and unrelated individual, calculations are made using data on income, assets, and debt to determine if the family or individual can afford to purchase the criterion home in the area where it lives. Several criterion homes are used to measure affordability - a modestly priced home, a median-priced home, a low-priced home, a new single-family home, a price-adjusted home, and a condominium. For an explanation of these terms, see Appendix B. For the values of each of these criterion homes, see Appendix E.

Determining affordability status for families and individuals within the area where they live discounts the possibility that home purchasers may choose to live outside of their current residential area for more affordable housing or that some purchasers may have to move to less affordable areas than where they currently live due to job transfers or other reasons.

Primary variables used in affordability calculations

The following key variables are used to calculate homeownership affordability:

Mortgage type. Affordability calculations are made using conventional fixed rate 30-year loans.

Interest rates. For conventional fixed rate 30-year loans the interest rate used is the average contract interest rate on conventional loans closed during the survey period, determined from the Federal Housing Finance Board's (FHFB) Monthly Interest Rate Survey (MIRS). The rate for these loans was estimated at x.xx percent in 2002, 8.67 percent in 1995, 7.17 percent in 1993, 9.51 percent in 1991, 9.79 percent in 1988, and 12.91 percent in 1984.

Criterion home. The criterion home is the value of the home used to determine affordability status. Six different criterion homes are used in the calculations. See Appendix B for a definition of each criterion home, and Appendix E for the actual value of each home.

Income. "Available" money family income is used in all the affordability calculations. It is the income of the husband and wife only in a married-couple family, and the male or female only in a family with a male or female householder. The income data were collected during the 4-month reference period for each survey and converted to an annual amount by multiplying by 3.

"Available" money family income includes income from:

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- o Wages, salaries, tips, bonuses, etc.
- o Own business, farm, etc. after expenses
- o Social Security payments
- o U.S. Government Railroad Retirement pay
- o Veterans compensation or pensions
- o Employer disability payments
- o Payments from a purchased sickness, accident, or disability insurance policy
- o Child support or alimony payments
- o Pension payments from a company or union
- o Federal Civil Service or other Federal civilian employee pensions
- o U.S. military, National Guard, or Reserve Forces retirement pay
- o State or local government pensions
- o Paid-up life insurance policies or annuities
- o Estates or trusts
- o Other payments for retirement, disability, or survivor
- o National Guard or Reserve pay
- o Mortgages
- o Royalties
- o Other permanent cash income not included elsewhere

"Available" money family income excludes temporary and noncash income (including government transfers) from:

- o Federal or State Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- o State unemployment compensation
- o Supplemental Unemployment Benefits
- o Other unemployment compensation
- o Worker's compensation
- o State, employer, or union temporary sickness or disability benefits

- o Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- o General assistance or General relief
- o Indian, Cuban, or Refugee Assistance
- o Foster child care payments
- o Food stamps
- o Other welfare
- o G.I. Bill and other VA educational assistance
- o Relatives or friends
- o Lump sum payments
- o Roomers or boarders
- o A charitable group
- o Incidental or casual earnings

Also excluded is income from rental property and income from interest or dividends from regular passbook savings accounts in a bank, savings and loan, or credit union; money market deposit accounts; certificates of deposit or other savings certificates; interest-earning checking accounts; money market funds; U.S. government securities; municipal or corporate bonds; stocks or mutual funds; and other interest-earning assets. Income from these sources is not included because the assets generating this income can be sold to provide cash to increase the initial downpayment to purchase the home.

Real estate taxes. Real estate taxes are estimated for each region based on data from the American Housing Survey(AHS) The following were for each region for each year:

	Tax Per \$1,000 Value					
	2002	1995	1993	1991	1988	1984
Northeast		\$18	\$17	\$13	\$13	\$16
Midwest		\$14	\$15	\$14	\$14	\$14
South		\$ 9	\$ 9	\$ 8	\$ 7	\$ 7
West		\$ 9	\$ 8	\$ 8	\$ 8	\$ 7

Property insurance. Property insurance is estimated at \$3 per \$1,000 value for homes in all areas in each year based on guidelines set forth in the "Guide to Residential Financing".

Closing costs. Closing costs include costs for transfer taxes, title fees, and appraisal fees; and prepayment items such as real estate taxes and property insurance. Although they can vary from area to area, for conventional loans in this report they are estimated to be 3 percent of the total value of the property based on guidelines in the "Guide to Residential Financing". For conventional fixed rate mortgages these fees must be paid "up- front" and they cannot be financed.

Fees and charges. Fees and charges include all fees, commissions, discounts, and "points" paid by the borrower or seller in order to obtain a loan. They exclude charges for mortgage credit, life or property insurance, transfer taxes, and title fees. Fees and charges were estimated based on data for conventional loans closed during the survey period, determined from the Federal Housing Finance Board's Monthly Interest Rate Survey (MIRS). This estimate produced fees and charges of x.xx percent of the mortgage amount in 2002, 1.15 percent in 1995, 1.30 percent in 1993, 1.62 percent in 1991, 1.98 percent in 1988, and 2.58 percent in 1984.

Assets. Assets include all cash available in savings accounts, money market deposit accounts, certificates of deposit, money market funds, government securities, bonds, checking accounts and the net value of stock and mutual funds. The net value of stock is the gross asset value of the stock portfolio minus the amount borrowed on stocks in a margin account.

Assets also include the net equity available, after selling costs and discounts are subtracted, in rental income property owned, non-rental income property owned, debt owed from businesses owned, and mortgages owned; as well as the equity available in any currently owned home. The following discounts were applied:

- O Equity in owned home and from sale of rental income property (10 percent) - Typical selling costs include brokerage fees of 7 percent and fix-up and transfer costs of 3 percent.
- O Non-rental income property (15 percent) - This includes property such as vacation homes and undeveloped lots. Typical selling costs include brokerage fees of 10 percent and fix-up and transfer costs of 5 percent.
- O Owned mortgages and debt from the sale of owned businesses (25 percent) - Both of these are debt instruments that are not very liquid. Typically they are sold to investors who require high rates of return on their investments.

Debts. Debt is the amount owed on credit cards, automobile loans, bank loans, outstanding home mortgages, and all other loans.

Total allowable debt. Under Fannie Mae guidelines for a conventional loan, total allowable debt for a family or unrelated individual is 8 percent of "available" monthly family income for consumer debt and 28 percent for mortgage debt.

Total monthly payment on outstanding debts. Monthly debt payments are estimated at 3 percent of total outstanding debt (2 percent principal, 1 percent interest). Although interest rates may vary significantly for different types of debts, e.g. less for car loans and more for credit card debts, the 3 percent payment is considered an average payment typical of those required by consumers on a monthly basis.

Excess debt. A family or unrelated individual has excess debt if the monthly payment on outstanding debts is greater than the total allowable debt. This excess debt must be paid down to the total allowable debt level using available cash in order to qualify for a mortgage.

Calculation to determine affordability level versus criterion home in area.

There are two principal determinants of whether a family or unrelated individual can afford a criterion home: (1) does it have the necessary cash available to pay the minimum down payment, closing costs, excess debt, if any, and fees and charges associated with purchasing the home; and (2) after all available cash has been exhausted, does it have the necessary income needed to make the required monthly mortgage payments. If the answer to either question is "no", then they cannot afford the criterion home.

The following specific steps go into the calculation of homeownership affordability for each family or unrelated individual for conventional loans:

1. Total "available" money family income, assets (transformed into available cash), debt level, and excess debt, if any, are determined.
2. If there is excess consumer debt (over 8 percent of "available" monthly family income), the excess debt is paid down using available cash. If the available cash is not enough to pay the excess debt down to an acceptable level, the family or unrelated individual is not able to afford the criterion home.
3. The total amount needed for the minimum down payment, closing costs, fees and charges (including points) on the criterion home is determined. This amount is compared to the total remaining available cash (after any excess debt was paid down). If the available cash is not equal to or greater than the amount required, the family or unrelated individual is not able to afford the criterion home.
4. Any available cash still remaining is added to the minimum down payment to reduce the amount of the criterion home that has to be financed.
5. The mortgage needed to purchase the criterion home after all available cash is applied to the down payment is determined. The total mortgage needed is transformed into monthly payments of principal and interest based on the average interest rate for a conventional, 30-year, fixed payment mortgage.
6. Monthly payments for real estate taxes, property insurance, private mortgage insurance (if the down payment is less than 20 percent of the criterion home) are determined. These amounts plus the amount for principal and interest become the total monthly mortgage payment required.

7. According to Fannie Mae guidelines, the maximum amount of income that can be allocated to mortgage payments is 28 percent. If the total monthly mortgage payment required exceeds 28 percent, then the family or unrelated individual is not able to afford the criterion home.

Calculation of the maximum-priced home a family or unrelated individual can afford

The maximum-priced home that a family or unrelated individual can afford was calculated using the following steps:

1. Based on total "available" money family income and Fannie Mae guidelines, the maximum allowable mortgage for a family or unrelated individual is determined.
2. Total available cash is added to the maximum allowable mortgage to establish the total funds available.
3. Amounts for closing costs, fees and charges, minimum down payment, mortgage insurance premiums, property insurance, and real estate taxes are deducted from total funds available. The remaining amount is the potential maximum-priced house that the family or unrelated individual can afford.
4. The amount of cash required to purchase the potential maximum-priced house is determined. This amount includes a minimum down payment of 5 percent, closing costs, and fees and charges.
5. If the total available cash is less than the amount of cash required, the potential maximum-priced house is lowered based on the available cash and the amount of cash required for the potential maximum-priced house, until the maximum-priced house is determined. This lowered figure becomes the maximum-priced house that the family or unrelated individual can afford.
6. If the family or unrelated individual has no available cash they cannot afford any house, regardless of their income.

Comparability with earlier reports

The methodology for determining homeownership affordability in this report is similar to that used in earlier reports. However, there were two significant differences from earlier reports. One is the source of the information involved in determining some of the criterion homes. In previous reports, results from the SIPP were used to calculate the value of the median, modestly priced, and low-priced home. For this report, the source of the information for these calculations was the Census Bureau's new American Community Survey (ACS).

A second difference involved the geography for which criterion home values were calculated. In earlier reports, the affordability status of families and individuals was determined for median, modestly priced, and low-priced homes for the nine census divisions by whether the family or individual lived in a central city, in the suburbs, or outside a metropolitan area (27 areas). By using the ACS as the source for these calculations, the country was divided into 95 areas – by state by inside or outside metropolitan area for 44 states and for state only for six states and the District of Columbia (see Appendix E for the values of criterion homes in 2002). This resulted in a more precise determination of affordability.