

**NWX-US DEPT OF COMMERCE**

**Moderator: Kim Brown**  
**February 26, 2014**  
**12:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time at this time all participants are in a listen-only mode.

During the question and answer session please press Star 1 on your touch-tone phone. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time.

Now I will turn the conference over to Mr. Sperry. You may begin.

John Sperry: Good afternoon and welcome to the Economic Indicator Webinar series. I'm John Sperry. And I will be the host of this Webinar.

This Webinar series was created by the Economic Directorate of the US Census Bureau to help you discover the wide range of data we have to offer.

Through this series you will learn about each of our economic indicators and the role the data plays in our economy.

Here with me today is Melissa Kresin and Bob Callis from the Housing Vacancies and Home Ownership branch who will be jointly presenting the eighth Webinar in our nine part series.

This Webinar and others that have already taken place will be archived on our Web site [www.census.gov/econ/webinar](http://www.census.gov/econ/webinar). I will now hand things over to Melissa.

Melissa Kresin: Thank you John. Hello to all of our participants and thank you for joining us this afternoon. My name is Melissa Kresin. And I am one of the co-authors along with Bob Callis on the housing vacancies and homeownership press release.

The goal of today's Webinar is to familiarize you with the Current Population Survey and Housing Vacancy Survey, the data collection process, and the available data products.

First we will talk about survey logistics and the survey process, followed by a few technical points about the data, and then the available data products.

We will conclude by going through the Web site together so I can point out various data and resources available to you.

I will address any questions you have at the end of the presentation.

Two sources of survey data are used in the quarterly Current Population Survey Housing Vacancy Survey press release the Current Population Survey or CPS and the Housing Vacancy Survey or HVS.

The HVS is a supplement of the CPS meaning both surveys use the same sampling frame. If the housing unit is occupied the residence complete the CPS. If a housing unit is vacant the most knowledgeable responder completes the HVS.

The data are collected monthly and released quarterly in January, April, July and October and annually in February of the following year.

Annual 2013 data will be available tomorrow February 27 at 10:00 AM. Both surveys are voluntary and have a response rate of about 90%.

The CPS originally called the Monthly Report of Unemployment was initially initiated in 1940 by the Work Progress Administration.

In 1942 the survey was transferred to the Census Bureau and its name was changed to the Monthly Report on the Labor Force.

The name was changed once more in 1942 to the current to the present Current Population Survey to reflect the surveys expanding role as a source for data on a wide variety of demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the population.

The CPS was created as mass unemployment in the 1930s increase the need for unemployment statistics.

Precise concepts of labor force participation were developed and adapted for a national sample survey of households now referred to as a CPS.

The Housing Vacancy Survey began in 1956 with the collection of ten year data. These data provided the basis for introducing two new measures the rental vacancy rate and homeowner vacancy rate.

While rental and homeowners vacancy rates are available back to 1956 homeownership rates are provided back to 1960 since the housing unit definition was updated in 1960.

The pre-1960 definition did not place an emphasis on separate living quarters as the current definition does.

The CPS HVS sample is a multistage stratified sample of approximately 72,000 housing units both occupied and vacant that are interviewed monthly.

The survey excludes institutionalized populations including residents of prisons, nursing homes, and so on.

The unit is in the CPS HVS survey for four consecutive months, out for eight months, then back in for four months before leaving the sample permanently. This design ensures a high degree of continuity from one month to the next as well as over the year.

The 484 sampling scheme has the added benefit of allowing the constant replenishment of a sample without excessive burden to respondents.

The current sample consists of housing units drawn from Census 2000 along with housing units built after April 1, 2000.

Beginning in April 2014 a new sample will be phased in about 95% from the master address file over a 16 month period.

The fieldwork is conducted during the calendar week that includes the 19th of the month and the questions refer to activities during the prior week which is the week that includes the 12th of the month.

The CPS HVS questionnaire is completely computerized and is administered by both personal and telephone interviews so all vacant interviews are conducted in person.

If a housing unit is occupied then the CPS is conducted. Information is provided by the owner or renter on age, race and ethnicity, and family status which allows the HVS to produce disaggregated home homeownership rates by household or characteristic.

The number of occupied housing units collected from the CPS is used to calculate the homeownership rate.

In addition the number of renter occupied and owner occupied housing units are used to calculate the rental vacancy rate and homeowner vacancy rate.

If a housing unit is vacant then the HVS is conducted. Information is provided by the most knowledgeable respondent who could be the owner of the unit, a property manager, a representative from the homeowners association or a neighbor.

Data is collected on vacancy status which is whether the house is for rent, for sale, rented or sold but not yet occupied or held off the market and on characteristics of the housing units such as number of rooms and bedrooms, years the structure was built, duration of vacancy, and asking rent or sales price.

Vacancy status data is used when calculating the rental vacancy rate and homeowner vacancy rate.

Three important rates are presented quarterly and annually from the Current Population Survey Housing Vacancy Survey data which are the rental vacancy rate, the homeowner vacancy rate, and home ownership rate.

The rental vacancy rate is the proportion of the rental inventory which is vacant for rent. The rental vacancy rate is one of the Census Bureau's 13 federal economic indicators used to measure the economy as a whole and more specifically the housing economy.

Similar in calculation the homeowner vacancy rate is the proportion of the homeowner inventory which is vacant for sale.

Lastly the home ownership rate is the proportion of households that are owner occupied.

Next we will look at why these rates are important and who uses them. The CPS HVS data allows data users to gauge the current economic climate, evaluate the need for new housing programs and initiatives, measure the adequacy of supply of rental and homeowner units, estimate trends in housing vacancies and homeownership, and provide information on the characteristics of vacant units currently on the market.

Our data users come from a variety of fields including public and private sector organizations, policy and budget analysts, congressional staff, and builders and developers.

A wide range of agencies use the CPS HVS data including in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Federal Reserve Board, National Association of Homebuilders, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the Joint Center for Housing Studies, and the White House's Council of Economic Advisers.

And that concludes a survey logistics and survey process section. The remainder of the presentation will cover our data and data products.

Research has shown that seasonality is present for home ownership rates but not vacancy rates therefore we only seasonally adjust the national homeownership rate.

The purpose of seasonal adjustments is to remove seasonal effects from the time series. A few examples of seasonal effects include weather, the school year, and holidays. Both the non-seasonally adjusted in seasonally adjusted rates are presented in the press release.

As you see in the chart the adjusted and unadjusted rates follow the same trend though they generally differ from each other by about .1 to .3 percentage points.

To calculate the seasonally adjusted home ownership rate we use a program called X-13ARIMA which is seasonal adjustment software produced, distributed, and maintained by the Census Bureau.

Something unique to the HVS time series data are the vintage housing inventory estimates. In 2003 we began controlling to independent housing unit estimates based on the most recent decennial census.

In 2009 we began revising estimates annually based on the latest independent housing unit estimates.

These four components including the most recent census count of housing units, new residential construction, new mobile homes, and housing unit lost come from other census surveys and are used to estimate the change and how things stock.

The independent housing unit estimates are used to create an adjustment factor that is applied to the as published data to ensure the weight sum to the independent housing unit total.

The time series of estimates beginning with April 1, 2010 is revised and updated annually. The series of estimates from second quarter 2000 through the first quarter 2010 was last revised in July 2012 as -and is considered final. Revisions from this ten year period reflected the results of the 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses.

Housing inventory estimates prior to the second quarter of 2000 have not been revised.

The most recent vintage estimates vintage 2012 can be found on our Web site under revised estimates of the housing inventory.

Prior vintages vintage 2008 to 2011 can be found under archived releases. I will point out both of these locations when we look at the Web site together but first let's review the contents of the press release.

The press release is released at 10:00 AM approximately 30 days after the close of the reference quarter.

The release highlights the most recent findings including rental and homeowner vacancy rates, median asking rent and sales prices, housing inventory estimates, home ownership rates, seasonally adjusted homeownership rates, and home ownership rates by region, age, race, and ethnicity and family income.

The text in the press release makes comparisons from the current quarter to the same quarter in the previous year.

While the press release focuses on the most recent quarter's data historical data dating back to 1956 can be accessed on the HVS Web site.

Now that you have an understanding of the HVS let's delve in further to take a look at what's available on our Web site. For that I'd like to switch over to Census Web site and walk you through how to get to the HVS site.

After you navigate to census.gov if you scroll over where it says people and the second column click on Housing. This takes you to the housing landing page where you can access many other housing related surveys.

On the left-hand side of the screen if you click on the fourth bullet Housing Vacancies and Home Ownership Survey you'll be taken to our main Web site.

I'd like to first direct your attention to the red box that says latest releases. Our latest press release is from fourth quarter 2013.

You can access the PDF of the press release here and we have two graphs of rental vacancy rate and home ownership rate which compares the rates from this quarter to the same quarter last year.

The detailed tables contain data specifically from the fourth quarter 2013 and make comparisons to the fourth quarter of 2012.

For historical time series if you click on Historical Tables you can access data all the way back to 1956.

If you continue to scroll down you'll see the revised estimates of the housing inventory that I just discussed that we have the adjustment factors applied to them.

Under archived releases is where you can access the tables from the previous vintages. And also link at the very bottom of the page takes you to the methodology that we used to create the adjustment factors.

On our definition page we define all the concepts in the tables. And if you scroll down to the middle of the page you can see the equations that I just presented.

We also have some state and MSA data. We have home ownership rates, rental vacancy rates, and homeowner vacancy rates for the states and the 75 largest MSAs.

Here is where you can access our annual statistics. And like I said tomorrow at 10:00 AM this will be updated with 2013 data.

We have a neat time series tool that shows you data in somewhat of a different way than we present in our tables.

So say for example you wanted to see the rental vacancy rate in the Northeast from 1956 to 2013. If you click on Get Data a nice table populates right here with all the data points for you. There's also bar charts and line charts available to see this data visually.

Moving to the tabs on top of the Web site the methodology tab there is links to our interviewing manual and our design and methodology technical paper where you can find many more details on weighting, sampling, and the like.

Under our data tab you'll see many of the links that you saw from the main page linking to our data.

Under publications you'll see past papers and posters that we've created using the Current Population Survey and Housing Vacancy Survey data.

Under related sites you'll find many other data from housing surveys.

And the contact us page has our phone number and email address.

Also on the main page you can access previous quarters and previous annual statistics back to 1994. You could also see the remaining upcoming releases for 2014.

Like we just saw there are many other sources of housing data produced by the Census Bureau. Here is a short list of surveys with the corresponding Web sites.

You can also access these links from related sites tab on the HVS Web site or the housing landing page at [census.gov/housing](http://census.gov/housing).

And that wraps of the presentation. Before we move to the question and answer portion of the Webinar John is going to tell you more about the upcoming Webinars and the Census Bureau's mobile apps.

John Sperry: Thank you Melissa. Be sure to check out our mobile app called America's Economy available on iPhone, iPad and Android devices.

This app will provide you with quick and easy to access data and information on all of the economic indicators in this Webinar series.

Before moving on to our Q&A session we are going to post a link to a short survey. Please fill this out and let us know how we're doing.

We like to know what we can improve, what you like, and anything in general to make our future Webinars even better.

While you're filling out this survey I'd like to tell you about the upcoming Webinars in this series. On March 12 at 1:00 PM Eastern Standard Time there will be a Webinar on construction put in place.

The construction spending series provides monthly estimates of the total dollar value of construction work done in the United States.

This includes new residential and nonresidential structures as well as improvements to existing structures.

The final Webinar in the series the Quarterly Services Survey will take place on March 26 at 1:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

The quarterly services report is the only source of service industry indicator performance providing estimates of revenue for selected service industries, source of revenue estimates for a subset of industries, estimates of total operating expenses from tax exempt firms and industries that have a large not for profit component as well as estimates of inpatient days and discharges for hospital services.

You can view the complete list of upcoming Webinars as well as recordings of our past Webinars on our Web site at [www.census.gov/econ/webinar](http://www.census.gov/econ/webinar).

And at this point we'll give you a few minutes before we move forward. We'll resume in two minutes at 1:24.

At this point we will now open the Webinar for questions. The operator will provide instructions on how to ask a question.

We want to give everyone an opportunity to ask a question so we will allow one question and one follow-up. Operator can you please provide the instructions?

Coordinator: Thank you. We will begin the question and answer session. If you'd like to ask a question please press Star 1 from your touch-tone phone.

Your name is required to introduce your question. Un-mute your phone and record your name clearly when prompted. To withdraw your question press Star 2. One moment please while we wait for questions to queue.

And our first question comes from (Nancy Vandenhouten). Your line is now open.

(Nancy Vandenhouten): I don't have a question.

Melissa Kresin: (Nancy) can you repeat that for us?

(Nancy Vandenhouten): Hello?

Melissa Kresin: Hello.

(Nancy Vandenhouten): I'm sorry I don't have a question. I don't know what happened but...

Melissa Kresin: Okay.

(Nancy Vandenhouten): ...pressed something wrong. Thank you.

Coordinator: Once again if you have a question just press Star 1 on your touch-tone phone. We have one question in queue from (Tammy). Your line is now open.

(Tammy): Hello. I just have a question about whether we should - or could you explain when we should use this data series versus say the American Community Survey or other type of statistics in terms of the geography covered and what the most recent data is?

Melissa Kresin: Sure. That's a great question. So the CPS HVS data is great when you're looking at a national or regional level. The ACS is really great when you're looking at more of the state, NSA, County, even tracked level.

Now one of the differences is that the HVS data is the most up to date data the Census produces on housing.

So for example we already have our fourth quarter 2013 data out and tomorrow we'll have our annual 2013 data out whereas with the American Community Survey the most recent data out now is 2012.

So you somewhat have to balance your needs of geography and timeliness with which survey you're going to use.

(Tammy): Thank you.

Melissa Kresin: Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question in queue unfortunately we didn't get their name but if you pressed Star 1 to ask a question your line is now open.

Once again if you have a question press Star 1 on your touch-tone phone and please record your name clearly. You must record your name clearly so that you may ask your question.

We have one more question in queue where we didn't get a name unfortunately. But if you pressed Star 1 on your phone to ask a question your line is now open.

The next question in the queue comes from (Andrew). Your line is now open.

(Andrew): Hi thanks. I guess the question I wanted to ask was whether the Census Bureau has made any progress into figuring out some of the discrepancies between some of the surveys?

For example I know this pretty big discrepancy between the vacancy rates that comes out of HVS CPS and the vacancy rate comes out of the American Community Survey.

And I think I've seen some - I saw a paper that sort of looking into that. But I was curious if there was any more progress in that line?

Bob Callis: This is Bob Callis talking. We have a fact sheet on our Web site that talks about the differences between the ACS and the Housing Vacancy Survey.

There are differences in the methodology and coverage and things like that. I would refer you to that. And (Bart) did you want to add anything on that?

(Bart): Yes his name is (Ari Fecreshi) and System Division Chief for Housing Characteristics. And yes we're actually taking a deeper look at all of these.

In fact there are differences among a number of different surveys and also with the Census.

We noted that in fact we did a paper on this recently where we noted differences between that decennial census and the American Community Survey where the estimates of occupied and vacant housing were quite considerably different.

We have a paper on that if you want maybe have a comment maybe we can send you a copy of the paper.

So we're always looking to try to find, you know, the reasons for these differences. But part of them are differences in frame, sampling frames, differences in the purposes for which the data collection were done.

There's a number of different reasons why the numbers are different. If the ID - wonderful if all the numbers read exactly all the time but they don't. And part of what we're trying to do is try to explain all these things so the research continues.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from (Fran Dickerson). Your line is now open.

Melissa Kresin: (Fran)?

(Fran Dickerson): Hello.

Melissa Kresin: Hello.

(Fran Dickerson): Hi. You had mentioned which data sets were best to be used in specific instances whether it's regional or nationwide.

And could you repeat that? And also I'm looking at a data set that would be used specifically for a city planning purposes?

Melissa Kresin: Of course. So for city, county, even state it's best to use the American Community Survey because for the Housing Vacancy Survey while we publish rates we don't publish any estimates.

So for example if you wanted the number of vacant housing units by state that's going to come from the American Community Survey.

Just because their sample is about three to 3-1/2 million households a year versus our sample which is much, much smaller they just have a greater ability to get - drill down to a more detailed geographic level.

(Fran Dickerson): Okay thank you.

Melissa Kresin: Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from (Emanuel). Your line is now open.

(Emanuel): Yes good morning. You may have discussed this early during the presentation but you mentioned that your sample size is 72,000 units.

If your sample size is constant how do you go about estimating the total size of the housing inventory, you know, the number of occupied and vacant housing units?

Melissa Kresin: Sure thank you. So that 72,000 is a monthly estimate and we have a stratified sample. So what that means is that the housing units that we are choosing are representative of the US.

So we use a weighting factor. So we take that one housing unit and it represents X number of other similar housing units with like characteristics. So as in all sample surveys we use weighting and control to come up with our national estimate.

Bob Callis: And for the quarterly estimates what we do is we take the three months. We add them up and divide by three to get a quarterly estimate.

And for the annual numbers we take the 12 estimates for each month, add them up, and divide by 12 and that's our annual estimate for 2013.

(Emanuel): But in order to estimate the total number of housing units does that come from the different survey?

((Crosstalk))

(Chris Streves): This is (Chris Streves) speaking. So the total housing unit numbers are produced as a control from the population division at the United Census Bureau.

Occupied status is determined by the actual survey. So you can - basically because as 72,000 households within our survey includes both unoccupied and occupied households.

So from that you can kind of through weighting and all that you can determine basically an occupancy rate. And then we also will bench - well the HVS benchmarks to the total housing unit count. Does that answer your question?

(Emanuel): Yes. So the total housing in account and the HVS should tie out to something that's produced by the population division?

(Chris Streves): Correct.

Bob Callis: Yes. You can take a look at our source and accuracy section. We have a nice paragraph that talks about how the estimates are produced.

(Emanuel): Great. Thank you.

Coordinator: There are no further questions in queue at this time.

John Sperry: If there are no further questions this will conclude the housing vacancy's Webinar. But if you have any questions at a later time please feel free to contact the branch at 301-763-3199.

You can also contact the branch via email currently displayed on the screen. On behalf of Melissa and everyone who worked hard on this Webinar thank you for joining us today.

Coordinator: One moment. We actually have one question in queue.

Melissa Kresin: All right.

Coordinator: (Chris) your line is now open.

(Chris): Thanks. So thanks for doing this today. This - I'm a relatively new housing analyst. And I'm wondering at the 30,000 foot level how to know when to look at the ACS and when to look at the HVS when seeking housing data at the community level big picture kind of question.

Melissa Kresin: Sure (Chris). Like a couple other people are interested in this as well. When you want to get down to a community level you're going to have to use the American Community Survey.

For the Housing Vacancy Survey we have estimates for the nation and the four regions. And so we have home ownership and vacancy rates for the states and MSAs.

But if you're wanting detailed housing data for anything smaller than the regions you're going to want to use the American Community Survey.

(Chris): Is there - okay thanks.

Melissa Kresin: Thanks.

John Sperry: Once again on behalf of Melissa and everyone who worked hard on this Webinar thank you for joining us today and have a wonderful day.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference. You may now disconnect at this time.

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