# HISTORICAL CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY/HOUSING VACANCY SURVEY (CPS/HVS) CHANGES

## Changes in 2026

In the first quarter 2026, the Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey began using the new Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) definitions that were announced by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in February 2023, based on the application of the 2020 OMB standards to Census 2020 data. The definitions are available at: www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro.html. Caution should be used when comparing MSA data for 2026 to earlier data.

Beginning in April 2025, a new sample is being phased in over a 15-month period and completed by July 2026. The methods used to select the sample households for the survey are evaluated after each decennial census. Based on these evaluations, the design of the survey is modified and systems are put in place to provide the sample for the following decade. The design for the entire decade was selected from the Master Address File (MAF).

In the second quarter 2026, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2025 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2026. The vintage 2025 estimates are benchmarked to the 2020 Census. Housing inventory estimates prior to April 1, 2020 are considered final and will not be revised further. The same general procedure will be followed each year in revising housing inventory estimates with the most up-to-date independent housing estimates available. For an explanation of the methodology used in producing the housing inventory independent estimates, please see: www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html

Note: This time series is by the latest "vintage year." For example, vintage 2025 means that all estimates in this time series are identified as belonging to "vintage 2025." The 2010 data through the first quarter 2020 are from the 2020 vintage series, while data after the first quarter 2020 are from the 2025 vintage.

## Changes in 2025

Due to a lapse in federal funding, the Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey (CPS/HVS) did not collect data for the month of October 2025. The fourth quarter 2025 HVS estimates are therefore based only on data from November 2025 and December 2025. Data users should be aware of the time period difference when working with the fourth quarter 2025 estimates and take note of the margins of error, which reflect the higher level of uncertainty for the fourth quarter 2025 estimates.

In the second quarter 2025, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2024 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-

series data from second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2025. The vintage 2024 estimates are benchmarked to the 2020 Census. Housing inventory estimates prior to April 1, 2020 are considered final and will not be revised further.

**Changes in 2024**

In the second quarter 2024, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2023 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2024. The vintage 2023 estimates are benchmarked to the 2020 Census. Housing inventory estimates prior to April 1, 2020 are considered final and will not be revised further.

**Changes in 2023**

In the second quarter 2023, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2022 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2023. The vintage 2022 estimates are benchmarked to the 2020 Census. Housing inventory estimates prior to April 1, 2020 are considered final and will not be revised further.

**Changes in 2022**

In the second quarter 2022, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2021 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2022. The vintage 2021 estimates are benchmarked to the 2020 Census. Housing inventory estimates prior to April 1, 2020 are considered final and will not be revised further.

**Changes in 2021**

In the second quarter 2021, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2020 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2021. The vintage 2020 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2020**

In the second quarter 2020, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2019 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2020. The vintage 2019 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2019**

In the second quarter 2019, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2018 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2019. The vintage 2018 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2018**

In the second quarter 2018, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2017 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2018. The vintage 2017 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2017**

In the second quarter 2017, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2016 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2017. The vintage 2016 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

In the first quarter 2017, the parameters used to calculate standard errors for rates and estimates were updated. The factors are evaluated, and updated if necessary, after approximately 15 months of data have been collected from a new CPS/HVS sample following a decennial census. The current sample has been fully phased-in since July 2015.

**Changes in 2016**

In the second quarter 2016, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2015 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2016. The vintage 2015 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2015**

In the second quarter 2015, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2014 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2015. The vintage 2014 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

In the first quarter 2015, the Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey began using the new Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) definitions that were announced by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in February 2013, based on the application of the 2010 OMB standards to Census 2010 data. The definitions are available at: www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro.html. Caution should be used when comparing MSA data for 2015 to earlier data.

**Changes in 2014**

In the second quarter 2014, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2013 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2014. The vintage 2013 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2013**

In the second quarter 2013, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2012 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2013. The vintage 2012 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2012**

In the second quarter 2012, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2011 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2010 through the first quarter 2012. The vintage 2011 estimates are benchmarked to the 2010 Census.

Beginning in the first quarter 2012, the population controls reflect the results of the 2010 Decennial Census. This change has virtually no effect on vacancy and homeownership rates. Research has shown that the new 2010-based controls increased the rental vacancy rate in April 2010 from 10.43 percent to 10.45 percent - a difference of less than 1/10 of one percent. The

homeowner vacancy rate remained the same at 2.63 percent, while the homeownership rate was up from 66.67 percent to 66.74 percent.

**Changes in 2011**

In the third quarter 2011, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2010 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. This includes the housing inventory time-series data from 2000 through the second quarter 2011. The vintage 2010 estimates are benchmarked to the 2000 and 2010 Census.

**Changes in 2010**

In the third quarter 2010, historical housing inventory estimates were revised based on the latest series of independent housing controls, the vintage 2009 independent housing estimates issued by the Census Bureau's Population Division. The vintage 2010 estimates are benchmarked to the 2000 Census.

In the first quarter 2010, the Census Bureau began imputing missing values for the family income question, which is used in the homeownership table 8 of the press release. Previously, householders not responding to this question were excluded from the homeownership calculations for those below/above the median family income level.

**Changes in 2007**

In first quarter 2007, the Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey (CPS/HVS) began using Blaise, a powerful computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) system and survey processing tool for the Windows operating system. It is being used for many of the surveys now being conducted by the Census Bureau.

**Changes in 2003**

Beginning in the first quarter 2003, population controls that reflect the results of the 2000 Decennial Census were used in the CPS/HVS estimation process for the first time. This change had a slight effect on vacancy and homeownership rates, as described below. As a final additional step in the estimation process, the estimates were controlled to independent housing counts used for the first time in order to produce a more accurate estimate of housing units. This makes the CPS/HVS estimates of housing units more consistent with other Census Bureau housing surveys. The new housing controls affected the count of all housing units in the sense that both occupied and vacant units were ratio estimated to the new control total. Vacancy rates and homeownership rates were not affected by this change.

In the first quarter 2003, the CPS/HVS began computing first-stage factors (used for weighting purposes) based on year-round and seasonal counts of housing units from the 2000 decennial. From 1980 to 2002, the CPS/HVS first-stage factors were based on year-round estimates only. We believe that this improves our counts of year-round and seasonal units.

The shift from 1990-based to 2000-based population controls (including the weighting revision) had a very slight effect on vacancy rates and homeownership rates. Research has shown that the new 2000-based controls dropped the rental vacancy rate in the first quarter 2002 from 9.14 percent to 9.08 percent - a difference of less than 1/10 of one percent. The homeowner vacancy rate was revised from 1.67 percent to 1.65 percent, while the homeownership rate was revised from 67.82 percent to 67.81 percent.

Beginning in the first quarter 2003, the questions on race on the CPS were modified to comply with the revised standards for federal statistical agencies. Respondents are now allowed to select more than one race. The Hispanic/Non-Hispanic origin question continues to be asked separately.

**Changes in 1994**

Beginning in the first quarter 1994, a new weighting procedure was implemented based on the 1990 Decennial Census. The 1990-based weighting prodedure produced an estimate of the total housing inventory about 0.1 percent lower than the 1980-based weighting. Generally, the vacancy rates were only minimally affected, while the homeownership rate was about one-half of a percentage point lower with the new weighting procedures.

Also beginning in the first quarter 1994, the CPS/HVS became a fully computerized survey with the implementation of the Computer Assisted Survey Information Collection (CASIC). The CASIC tools consist of state-of-the-art computer-assisted modules for data collection and processing. Although the concepts, definitions and questionnaire items remain the same, the shift to CASIC may affect vacancy rates and homeownership rates. The Census Bureau was unable to determine the quantitative effects of the use of CASIC on the vacancy and homeownership rates. Data users should use caution when comparing data for 1994 and later with earlier data.

## Impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Housing Vacancies and Homeownership data collection for 2020 and 2021

The coronavirus pandemic affected data collection operations for the CPS/HVS during several quarters of 2020 and 2021. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the pandemic-related restrictions on CPS/HVS data collection had ended in all areas. However, the estimates of year-over-year change for the second quarter of 2022 compare back to the second quarter of 2021 when restrictions on in-person data collection were still in place for a few areas. In the second quarter of 2021, pandemic-related restrictions on CPS/HVS data collection affected 1 percent of cases, and the response rate was 78 percent. Data users should understand and consider the changes in data collection operations when interpreting CPS/HVS estimates for the affected quarters and when comparing the affected quarters to other periods. Data are generally collected the week of the 19th and the reference period is the time of interview.

**How did the data collection procedures change for the CPS/HVS in response to the coronavirus pandemic?**

The Census Bureau suspended in-person data collection for the CPS/HVS on March 20th, 2020. The suspension of in-person interviews—termed *personal visits* by CPS/HVS—continued through the entirety of data collection for the second quarter during April, May, and June 2020. During this period, the Census Bureau continued to conduct the CPS/HVS by telephone, including efforts to collect telephone interviews for households and vacant units that would normally have been in-person interviews.

Beginning in July 2020, the Census Bureau began to reinstitute personal visits. The reintroduction of in-person data collection started in limited areas of the country in July 2020, in additional areas in August, and in all areas of the country by September and October 2020. For November and December 2020, in-person data collection was suspended for some areas based on local guidance, though to a lesser extent than the past two quarters. Also, beginning in December 2020, 'drive-bys' were allowed. Interviewers were allowed to drive by the sample unit, as another method to try to determine the vacancy status.

The data collection procedures for December 2020 continued to be in place through the current quarter. In-person data collection was suspended in a small number of areas based on local guidance, and interviewers continued to be allowed to drive by the sample unit to determine the vacancy status.

The table below shows the percentage of the CPS/HVS sample cases where personal visits were allowed during 2020 and the first three quarters of 2021.

**Table 1: Percent of sample cases where personal visits were allowed.**

| | | Region | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **All** | **Northeast** | **Midwest** | **South** | **West** |
| Q3 2021 All Months | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |
| September 2021 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| August 2021 | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |
| July 2021 | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |
| Q2 2021 All Months | 99% | 100% | 99% | 100% | 98% |
| June 2021 | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |
| May 2021 | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |
| April 2021 | 99% | 100% | 97% | 100% | 98% |
| Q1 2021 All Months | 98% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 91% |
| March 2021 | 99% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 98% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| February 2021 | 97% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 88% |
| January 2021 | 97% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 89% |
| Q4 2020 All Months | 94% | 100% | 90% | 100% | 84% |
| December 2020 | 84% | 100% | 71% | 100% | 60% |
| November 2020 | 98% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 93% |
| October 2020 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Q3 2020 All Months | 63% | 95% | 72% | 45% | 61% |
| September 2020 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| August 2020 | 50% | 100% | 70% | 20% | 47% |
| July 2020 | 39% | 87% | 47% | 15% | 36% |
| Q2 2020 All Months | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| June 2020 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| May 2020 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| April 2020 | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

The CPS/HVS sample design seeks to collect data on sampled housing units for a total of 8 months, meaning that interviewers attempt to complete an interview in each of those 8 months. Once selected, a housing unit is in the sample for 4 consecutive months, out for 8 months, and then in the sample for 4 months. Under normal procedures, the first and fifth interviews are conducted entirely via in-person interviews. In other months, a field representative can conduct a telephone interview instead of an in-person interview if certain conditions are met. The suspension of in-person interviews replaced these procedures, substituting telephone contact attempts for all sample housing units regardless of their month in sample. The removal of the in-person visit suspensions reversed this change, returning to the previous procedures for determining when a telephone interview attempt is allowed.

During the period when personal visits were suspended, the telephone contact attempts relied on phone numbers identified through multiple sources. For housing units with a completed interview in a previous month, interviewers attempted to contact the occupant or knowledgeable proxy interviewed during the previous month. Additionally, interviewers were encouraged to use the resources available to them to identify contact information for sample housing units and/or knowledgeable proxy respondents. These resources included internal resources such as purchased third-party telephone lookup databases, as well as public records databases such as tax assessor records. They also included telephone contacts with knowledgeable local sources such as landlords, leasing offices, neighbors, and postal workers who might be able to identify vacant units, provide contact information for the property owner, and/or complete a proxy interview.

**What was the response rate for the third quarter of 2021?**

The overall response rate for the third quarter 2021 was 76 percent. This is approximately 2 percentage points lower than the response rate for the previous quarter (78 percent in the

second quarter 2021), but it is notably higher than the response rate for the same quarter of the previous year (71 percent in the third quarter of 2020). The overall response rate for the third quarter 2021 reflects three monthly data collection efforts in July, August, and September 2021. The monthly response rates were 77 percent in July, 77 percent in August, and 75 percent in September 2021.

During the second quarter of 2021, the monthly response rates were 79 percent in April, 78 percent in May, and 76 percent in June 2021.

During the first quarter of 2021, the monthly response rates were 78 percent in January, 78 percent in February, and 77 percent in March 2021.

During the fourth quarter 2020, the monthly response rates were 81 percent in October, 80 percent in November, and 77 percent in December.

During the third quarter 2020, the monthly response rates were 66 percent in July, 69 percent in August, and 79 percent in September. These monthly rates reflect the incremental reintroduction of personal visits during July, August, and September 2020.
During the second quarter of 2020, the monthly response rates were 70 percent in April, 67 percent in May, and 65 percent in June. These rates reflect no in-person visits for data collection.

During the first quarter of 2020, the monthly response rates were 82 percent in January, 83 percent in February, and 73 percent in March. These rates reflect the use of normal data collection procedures during January and February 2020 and the suspension of in-person interviews midweek during the data collection operations for March 2020. CPS/HVS data collection operations for each month begin at the start of the week containing the 19th and close out early the following week. The suspension of in-person interviews on March 20th, 2020 occurred on the Friday during the week of data collection. Interviewers were able to make at least one in-person visit attempt to most sample units before in-person visits were suspended.

**How does the CPS/HVS weighting and methodology account for non-response?**

The CPS/HVS methodology assumes that the in-person visits and other data collection steps will allow interviewers to make a determination for every unit in the sample of whether the unit is an occupied unit with a completed CPS interview or a Type A (eligible but no data collected/refusal), Type B (eligible but unoccupied/vacant), or Type C (ineligible/not a residential unit) non-interview. In months when normal data collection procedures are in place, this process relies on in-person visits to allow the interviewer to observe the visible attributes of the unit and attempt to contact neighbors or other individuals who may have knowledge of the vacancy status of the unit in order to identify all potential HVS-eligible units. Following the suspension of in-person interviewing, the number of HVS eligible interviews (Type Bs) declined

in April, May, and June 2020 relative to their historical averages, and the number of Type A units increased. Type A units continued to be elevated in July and August, relative to their historical averages, and Type B units continued to be depressed. But Type A units returned closer to their historical average in September, October, November, and December and continuing through the third quarter 2021. These changes may be due to the data collection changes resulting in more units with unresolved interview statuses or to a true decrease in the number of vacant units. The data collected do not distinguish between these possibilities.

The CPS/HVS weighting and estimation procedures are designed under the assumption that the data collection procedures will accurately determine the interview status (Type A, B, or C) of the units in the housing sample. The weights adjust for changes over time in the incidence of Type A noninterivews relative to completed interviews for occupied units. However, the weighting methodology does not include a non-response component to adjust for changes in the response rate of vacant units. Instead, the methodology assumes that all HVS-eligible vacant units will be identified by the in-person data collection attempts. If the suspension of in-person interviews reduced the ability of interviewers to complete data collection for HVS-eligible vacant units, the impact would be a lower estimate of the vacancy rate.

In addition to the implications for the overall level of the vacancy rate estimates, data users should also consider the potential for the changes in data collection procedures to disproportionately affect data collection among some groups more than others, along with the consequences of differential non-response for the CPS/HVS estimates. Because the CPS/HVS weights for vacant units do not include a non-response component to adjust for differences in the response rates of different subgroups, the CPS/HVS estimates would reflect any differences in the relative response rates of specific subgroups. For example, if the changes in data collection procedures increased the difficulty of data collection for vacant rental units more than vacant homeowner units, the CPS/HVS estimates would reflect the impact on data collection by showing a relatively larger reduction in the rental vacancy rate than in the homeowner vacancy rate.

**Were there any changes to the methodology for processing the data or producing estimates?**

No, there were no changes to the procedures used to process the data and produce estimates. The CPS/HVS methodology is described in Technical Paper #77, "Design and Methodology: Current Population Survey—America's Source for Labor Force Data," published in October 2019. Census is conducting ongoing research to understand the extent to which the changes in data collection procedures were accompanied by changes in nonresponse and sample composition, along with the implications of such changes for the CPS/HVS estimates. As part of this effort, we recently released a working paper that presents the results of nonresponse analyses and that examines the sensitivity of CPS/HVS estimates to the use of an alternative nonresponse weighting adjustment (Spader et.al. 2021), https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2021/demo/SEHSD-WP2021-04.html

**Could the changes in data collection procedures affect the CPS/HVS estimates of vacancy?**

The changes in data collection procedures could affect the CPS/HVS estimates of vacancy for the quarters when in-person visits were restricted. The methodology for producing the CPS/HVS estimates of vacancy rates assumes that all HVS-eligible vacant units will be identified through the in-person data collection procedures. To the extent that the changes in data collection procedures resulted in some vacant units being classified as Type A nonresponses rather than HVS-eligible vacant units, the CPS/HVS estimates will underestimate the true vacancy rate. Because the data collection changes occurred in response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to separate the effects of the data collection changes from the effects of COVID-19. Data users should therefore exercise caution when comparing the estimates across quarters, interpreting the differences between quarters to reflect both the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of changes in data collection procedures.

**Could the changes in data collection procedures affect the CPS/HVS estimates of the homeownership rate?**

The changes in data collection procedures could affect the CPS/HVS estimates of the homeownership rate for the quarters when in-person visits were restricted. In particular, data users should consider the potential for the suspension of in-person interviews to disproportionately affect the response rates of renters versus homeowners. For example, if response rates declined further among rental units than homeowner units following the suspension of in-person interviews, the effects on the CPS/HVS estimates would be a lower estimate of the number of rental households, a higher estimate of the number of homeowner households, and a higher estimate of the homeownership rate. Data users should therefore exercise caution when comparing the estimates across quarters, interpreting the differences between quarters to reflect both the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of changes in data collection procedures.

**Could the changes in data collection procedures affect the CPS/HVS estimates of the housing inventory composition?**

The changes in data collection procedures could affect the CPS/HVS estimates of the components of the housing inventory for the quarters when in-person visits were restricted. The CPS/HVS weights are controlled to the total number of housing units in the United States, so the estimated number of all housing units in the housing inventory is not affected by the data collection changes. However, the potential impacts of the data collection changes on the estimates of vacancy and tenure described in the previous sections could affect the estimated components of the housing inventory. Specifically, any change in the estimated vacancy rate will affect both the estimated number of vacant units and the estimated number of occupied units, because the sum of vacant and occupied units must equal the total number of housing units in the United States. Data users should therefore consider the CPS/HVS weighting methodology when interpreting the estimates of the components of the housing inventory.

**Could the changes in data collection procedures affect estimates of quarter-to-quarter and year-to-year change in the CPS/HVS estimates?**

The changes in data collection procedures could affect the estimates of quarter-to-quarter and year-to-year change. The previous sections describe how the changes in data collection procedures could affect the estimates of vacancy rates, the homeownership rate, and the housing inventory for a specific quarter. Because the changes in data collection procedures continued to evolve across data collection months, the impacts of these changes on CPS/HVS estimates may also differ across quarters. Data users should therefore consider the data collection procedures present in each quarter being compared—and any differences between quarters—when interpreting estimates of quarter-to-quarter or year-to-year change. For example, Table 1 shows that 63 percent were eligible for personal visits during the third quarter of 2020, but that 100 percent of sample housing units were eligible for personal visits during the third quarter of 2021. Estimates of the change in the homeownership rate from the third quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021 may therefore reflect the differences in data collection procedures between quarters in addition to the actual change in homeownership.

For more information on the quarterly data collection changes in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, please see the Source and Accuracy Statement for those particular quarters - https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/reports.html.

## SOURCE AND ACCURACY OF ESTIMATES

### Source of Data

The estimates presented in this report were primarily based on data obtained from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey (CPS/HVS). The populations represented (the population universe) are all housing units (vacancy rates) and the civilian non-institutional population of the United States (homeownership rate). Data concerning vacancy rates and tenure of occupied housing units were from the monthly sample of the CPS. The data presented are averaged for the three months – July, August, and September 2026. The average weighted CPS response rate for those three months was 66 percent.

Distributions of characteristics of occupied housing units in detailed table 3 were from the American Housing Survey (AHS). The distributions were applied to the CPS/HVS housing inventory independent estimates to obtain the characteristics of occupied housing units used in this report. The Survey of Construction (SOC) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) also were used to improve estimates of the rent distribution.

For the 2023 AHS National sample, about 97,000 sample housing units were selected for interview. Of the selected units, 2,743 were found to be ineligible because the units either no longer existed or did not meet the AHS definition of a housing unit. Of the 94,000 eligible sample units, about 39,000 were classified as noninterviews because (1) no one was at home after repeated visits, (2) the respondent refused to be interviewed, or (3) other reasons such as the interviewer was unable to find the unit. This classification produces a weighted overall response rate of 59.2 percent. A detailed description of the AHS sample design and estimation procedure can be found here: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/tech-documentation/def-errors-changes.html

## CPS Design

Since the inception of the CPS in 1940, the sample has been redesigned several times to upgrade the quality and reliability of the data and to meet changing data needs. From July 1995 to March 2004, the CPS/HVS sample was selected from a frame based on the 1990 Decennial Census. From April 2004 to June 2005, the sample consisted of sample units drawn from both the 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses. From July 2005 to March 2014, the sample consisted of housing units drawn from Census 2000, along with housing units built after April 1, 2000. Beginning in April 2014, the CPS/HVS sample was based on the Master Address File (MAF) complied during the 2010 Census and will use annual selections from the MAF instead of the once a decade sample selection used previously. Beginning in April 2025, a new sample based on the MAF is being phased in over a 15-month period and will be completed by July 2026.

Beginning in the first quarter 1986, vacant seasonal mobile homes were included in the count of vacant seasonal units. This change resulted in a 12 percent increase in the number of vacant seasonal housing units.

Beginning the second quarter of 1999, a change was made in the way data for housing units in structure were collected. Previously, there was one category to show a 1-unit structure. That has been broken into two categories: 1-unit attached and 1-unit detached.

Of the 70,000 housing units contained in the CPS/HVS sample, approximately 60,000 are eligible for interview each month; of this number, on average 19,000 occupied units, are visited but interviews are not obtained because occupants are not found at home after repeated calls or are unavailable for some other reason. In addition of the 60,000 units, there are also about 7,400 sample units in an average month which are visited but are found to be vacant or otherwise not to be interviewed. About 6,000 are vacant and interviewed for the HVS.

The CPS estimation procedure for occupied units involves the inflation of the weighted sample results to independent estimates of the total civilian non-institutional population of the United States by age, race, sex and Hispanic/non-Hispanic categories. These independent estimates were based on statistics from the decennial censuses of population; statistics on births, deaths, immigration and emigration; and statistics on the strength of the Armed Forces.

The HVS estimation procedure for vacant units is similar to that used for occupied units. Weighted sample results were adjusted at the state level using 2010 and 2020 census vacant counts. (Most of current sample was fully phased-in by July 2015. Beginning in April 2025, a new sample is being phased in over a 15-month period and will be completed by July 2026). A second adjustment inflated these results based on the CPS coverage of occupied units by geographic areas. As a final step for both the CPS and HVS, all housing unit counts were adjusted to reflect independent housing control totals. This change was effective, beginning in the first quarter 2003.

## Comparability with Decennial Census Housing Data

The most recent research has shown that the CPS/HVS and the 2020 census produced significant differences for vacancy characteristics. The rental vacancy rate from the April 2020 census was 7.4 percent, whereas the CPS/HVS reported the rental vacancy rate of 6.6 percent for the first quarter 2020. (As discussed earlier, the COVID-19 Pandemic began affecting data collection operations in the second quarter 2020). The April 2020 census had a homeowner

vacancy rate of 1.5 percent, while the CPS/HVS had a vacancy rate of approximately 1.1 percent for the first quarter 2020. For occupied housing, the April 2020 census produced a homeownership rate of 63.1 percent, while for the first quarter 2020, the CPS/HVS produced a rate of 65.3 percent. These differences illustrate that, for these characteristics as well as others, caution should be used when making comparisons between the 2020 census and the CPS/HVS.

In comparing results from the CPS/HVS and the 2010 census, each produced significant differences for vacancy characteristics. The rental vacancy rate from the April 2010 census was 9.2 percent, whereas the CPS/HVS reported the rental vacancy rate of 10.6 percent for the first half of 2010. The April 2010 census had a homeowner vacancy rate of 2.4 percent, while the CPS/HVS had a vacancy rate of approximately 2.6 percent for the first half of 2010. For occupied housing, the April 2010 census produced a homeownership rate of 65.1 percent, while for the first half of 2010, the CPS/HVS produced a rate of 67.0 percent. These differences illustrate that, for these characteristics as well as others, caution should be used when making comparisons between the 2010 census and the CPS/HVS.

In comparing results from the CPS/HVS and the 2000 census, each produced significant differences for vacancy characteristics. The rental vacancy rate from the April 2000 census was 6.8 percent, whereas the CPS/HVS reported the rental vacancy rate of 7.9 percent for the first half of 2000. The April 2000 census had a homeowner vacancy rate of 1.7 percent, while the CPS/HVS had a vacancy rate of approximately 1.5 percent for the first half of 2000. For occupied housing, the April 2000 census produced a homeownership rate of 66.2 percent, while for the first half of 2000, the CPS/HVS produced a rate of 67.2 percent. These differences illustrate that, for these characteristics as well as others, caution should be used when making comparisons between the 2000 census and the CPS/HVS.

Earlier research has shown that the CPS/HVS and the 1990 census produced significant differences for vacancy characteristics. The rental vacancy rate from the April 1990 census was 8.5 percent, whereas the CPS/HVS reported the rental vacancy rate of 7.2 percent for the first half of 1990. The April 1990 census had a homeowner vacancy rate of 2.1 percent, while the CPS/HVS had a vacancy rate of approximately 1.7 percent for the first half of 1990. For occupied housing, the April 1990 census produced a homeownership rate of 64.2 percent, while for the first half of 1990 the CPS/HVS produced a rate of 63.9 percent. These differences illustrate that, for these characteristics as well as others, caution should be used when making comparisons between the 1990 census and the CPS/HVS.

Most of the concepts and definitions were the same for items that appear in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 censuses and the Housing Vacancy Survey. However, there was one minor difference in the housing unit definition between the CPS/HVS and the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses. The difference was that, in the CPS/HVS prior to 1983, living arrangements containing five or more persons, not related to the person in charge, were classified as group quarters; for the 1980 and 1990 census, the requirement was raised to nine or more persons not related to the person in charge. For Census 2000, the conversion requirement was eliminated. There were some differences in what has been counted as housing units between the earlier censuses and the CPS/HVS. Descriptions of the differences between earlier censuses and the HVS appear in the 1985 and earlier reports of this series.

Prior to the first quarter 1990, there were significant differences between the CPS/HVS and the decennial censuses. The 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses included vacant mobile homes as housing units, whereas prior to 1986 the CPS/HVS did not. However, beginning in the first quarter 1986, vacant seasonal mobile homes were counted as housing units in the CPS/HVS. In addition, year-round vacant mobile homes were counted as housing units, beginning in the first quarter 1990 in the CPS/HVS. Another difference in the housing unit definition between the CPS/HVS (prior to 1986) and the 1980 and 1990 censuses was that the CPS/HVS required units to be separate living quarters and have direct access or have complete kitchen facilities. For the 1980 and 1990 Decennial Censuses, the complete kitchen facilities alternative was dropped with direct access required of all units. However, beginning in 1990, the CPS/HVS requirement for complete kitchen facilities was dropped with direct access required of all units. Thus, the earlier definitional differences were eliminated.

In addition, there are differences between the methodologies used to collect data for the CPS/HVS and the censuses. These differences include interviewing procedures, staff experience and training; differences in processing procedures and sample designs; the sampling variability associated with the CPS/HVS and the sample data from the census; and the non-sampling errors associated with the CPS/HVS and census data.

**Comparability with Earlier CPS/HVS Data**

As stated earlier in this report, beginning in the first quarter 1994 new weighting procedures based on the 1990 Decennial Census were implemented. In addition, the survey data collection procedures became fully computerized. Caution should be used when comparing current data with unrevised data prior to 1994.

In the first quarter 1990, year-round vacant mobile homes were included for the first time as part of the year-round vacant count of housing units. This change was made to make the composition of the housing unit inventory for the CPS/HVS similar to the decennial census and other surveys, which count all mobile homes as housing units for both occupied or vacant (available for occupancy on the site). Research has shown that the inclusion of vacant mobile homes increased the vacancy rate significantly in some cases. We have revised 1989 data in this report to reflect all changes. Caution should be used when comparing data from 1990 or later with unrevised data prior to 1990.

In the fourth quarter 1989, new edit procedures were implemented in the CPS/HVS. These new procedures were used to allocate cases that would have been classified as "not reported" under previous procedures.

In the first quarter 1980, several changes were implemented in the survey to improve the reliability of the data presented. These included adding a supplemental sample, refining the estimation procedures, and changing the source of occupied characteristics from the Quarterly Housing Survey to the AHS.

Although the above-mentioned changes resulted in more reliable estimates, data for 1980 and later in this report are not completely comparable to data for the fourth quarter 1979 and previous quarters, as published in Housing Vacancies reports, series H-111, Nos. 1 to 79-Q4. Furthermore, unrevised data prior to 1990 were not completely comparable to 1990 data and

beyond, due to the inclusion of year-round vacant mobile homes, beginning in the first quarter 1990. Thus, particular caution should be observed in drawing conclusions about trends that extend from before 1980 to 1980 and beyond, and also trends from before 1990 to 1990 and later. For comparative purposes, 1979 data in this report were revised to incorporate all changes made in 1980, and 1989 data were revised to incorporate all changes made in 1990. Unrevised 1989 and 1979 data are provided to show the magnitude of the various changes.

**Vacancy Rates for Characteristics in Historical Tables 3 and 4**

Vacancy rates in historical tables 3 and 4 are based in part on forecasts of occupied housing units. These forecasts are periodically revised to incorporate more recent data and improved forecasting procedures. In fourth quarter 2013, historical tables 3 and 4 were updated to include the most recent AHS data. Beginning in 2013, the first quarter 2013 data are based on data from the 2011 AHS. Beginning in 2015, the first quarter 2015 data are based on data from the 2013 AHS. Beginning in 2017, first quarter 2017 data are based on data from the 2015 AHS. Beginning in the first quarter 2019, data are based on data from the 2017 AHS. Beginning in the first quarter 2021, data are based on data from the 2019 AHS. Beginning in the first quarter 2023, data are based on data from the 2021 AHS. Beginning the first quarter 2025, data are based on data from the 2023 AHS.

For the occupied unit forecasts of the monthly rent categories in detailed table 3, the AHS data are updated quarterly to reflect the rise in the cost of renting through the use of the residential rent index and the latest available asking rent data for newly constructed rental units.

**Caution in Using Seasonal Vacant Data**

Analysis of seasonal vacant data prior to the first quarter 1987 has shown that estimates for these characteristics have been underestimated by approximately 28 percent. The estimates beginning with the first quarter 1987 were adjusted to reflect this.

**Accuracy of the Estimates**

Since the CPS/HVS estimates are based on a sample, they may differ somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same questionnaires, instructions and enumerators. There are two types of errors possible in an estimate based on a sample survey: sampling and non-sampling. The accuracy of a survey result depends on both types of errors, but the full extent of the non-sampling error is unknown. Consequently, particular care should be exercised in the interpretation of figures based on a relatively small number of cases or on small differences between estimates. The margins of error provided for the CPS/HVS estimates primarily indicate the magnitude of the sampling error. They also partially measure the effect of some non-sampling errors in responses and enumeration; but do not measure any systematic biases in the data. (Bias is the difference averaged over all possible samples, between the estimate and the desired value). Approximately

2 percent of the CPS/HVS households are selected for quality control reinterview each month based on the previous month's outcome.

**Non-Sampling Variability**

Nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources, e.g., inability to obtain information about all cases in the sample, definitional difficulties, differences in the interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness on the part of respondents to provide correct information, inability to recall information, errors made in collection such as recording or coding the data, errors made in processing the data, errors made in estimating values for missing data and failure to represent all units with the sample (undercoverage). Undercoverage in the CPS/HVS results from missed housing units and misclassifying housing units. Ratio estimation to independent controls, as described previously, partially corrects for the bias due to survey undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates to the extent that missed households have different characteristics than interviewed households. While highly unusual, HVS interviews may not always be complete. In the case of missing information, the data will be allocated. An HVS interview is not considered a Type B Noninterview unless the question "Is this interview by observation only?" is answered.

**Sampling Variability**

The margins of error shown in the tables are primarily measures of sampling variability - the variations that occurred by chance because a sample rather than the entire population was surveyed. The sample estimate and its standard error enable one to construct margins of error - ranges that would include the average results of all possible samples with a known probability. For example, if all possible samples were selected, each of these being surveyed under essentially the same general conditions and using the same sample design, and if an estimate and its standard error were calculated from each sample, then approximately 90-percent of the margins of error would include the average result of all possible samples.

The average estimate derived from all possible samples is or is not contained in any particular computed margin of error. However, for a particular sample, one can say with specified confidence that the average estimate derived from all possible samples is included in the margin of error.

Standard errors may also be used to perform hypothesis testing, a procedure for distinguishing between population parameters using sample estimates. The most common types of hypotheses appearing in this report are: (1) the population parameters are identical, and (2) the population parameters are different. An example of this would be comparing the vacancy rate inside MSAs versus the vacancy rate outside MSAs. Tests may be performed at various levels of significance, where a level of significance is the probability of concluding that the characteristics are different when in fact they are identical.

To perform the most common test, let x and y be sample estimates for two characteristics of interest. Let the standard error on the difference x-y be SEDIFF. If the ratio R = (x-y)/SEDIFF is between -1.645 and +1.645, no conclusion about the difference between the characteristics is justified at the 0.10 level of significance. If, on the other hand, this ratio is smaller than -1.645 or larger than +1.645, the observed difference is significant at the 0.10 level. In this event, it is a commonly accepted practice to say that the characteristics are different. Of

course, sometimes this conclusion will be wrong. When the characteristics are in fact the same, there is a 10 percent chance of concluding that they are different.

The Census Bureau uses 90-percent confidence intervals and 0.10 levels of significance to determine statistical validity. All statements of comparison in the text have passed a hypothesis test at the 0.10 level of significance. This means that, for most differences cited in the text, the absolute value of the estimated difference between characteristics is greater than or equal to 1.645 times the estimated standard error of the difference. In addition to sampling error, the figures in this report, both the estimates and their margins of error, are also subject to rounding error.

**Illustration of the Use of Tables and Standard Errors**

The sample estimate and its standard error enable one to construct a margin of error. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger a margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. For example, the estimated percent of housing units vacant and available for rent in the Northeast is 2.0 percent (Table 11) and the rounded standard error on the estimate is 0.1 percentage points (Table A-1). The margin of error, at the 90 percent confidence interval, is calculated as 1.645 x 0.1, or 0.2 after rounding. Thus, the 90 percent confidence interval is from 1.8 percent to 2.2 percent. If all possible samples were surveyed under essentially the same general conditions and the same sample design, and if an estimate and its standard error were calculated from each sample, then approximately 90 percent of the margins of error would include the average result of all possible samples.