

Appendix B.

Sample Design and Weighting

SAMPLE SIZE

The 2007 national data are from a sample of housing units interviewed between April and September 2007. The same basic sample of housing units is interviewed every 2 years until a new sample is selected. The U.S. Census Bureau updates the sample by adding newly constructed housing units and units discovered through coverage improvement efforts.

For the 2007 American Housing Survey-National sample (AHS-N), approximately 60,000 sample housing units were originally selected for interview. Due to budgetary constraints, roughly 8 percent of these units were taken out of the sample and were not interviewed in 2007. These reduced units are eligible for reinstatement in future enumerations. About 2,150 of the remaining 55,000 total units included for interview were found to be ineligible because the unit no longer existed or because the units did not meet the AHS-N definition of a housing unit.

Of the 52,850 eligible sample units, about 6,550 were classified (both occupied and vacant housing units), as “Type A” noninterviews because (a) no one was at home after repeated visits, (b) the respondent refused to be interviewed, or (c) the interviewer was unable to find the unit. This classification produced an unweighted overall response rate of 88 percent. The weighted overall response rate was 89 percent.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The Census Bureau has interviewed the current sample of housing units since 1985. First, the United States was divided into areas made up of counties or groups of counties and independent cities known as primary sampling units (PSUs). A sample of these PSUs was selected. Then, a sample of housing units was selected within these PSUs.

Selection of sample areas. The sample for AHS is spread over 394 PSUs. These PSUs cover 878 counties and independent cities with coverage in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

If there were over 100,000 housing units in a PSU at the time of selection, the PSU is known as a self-representing PSU because it was removed from the probability sampling operation. It was in sample with certainty. The sample from the PSU represents only that PSU. There are 170 self-representing PSUs.

The Census Bureau grouped the remaining PSUs and selected one PSU per group, proportional to the number of housing units in the PSU, to represent all PSUs in the group. These selected PSUs are referred to as non-self-representing PSUs. The sample non-self-representing PSUs for AHS are a subsample of the Current Population Survey’s (CPS) sample areas based on the 1980 census.

Selection of sample housing units. The AHS sample consists of the following types of units in the sampled PSUs:

- Housing units selected from the 1980 census
- New construction in areas requiring building permits
- Housing units missed in the 1980 census
- Other housing units added since the 1980 census
- Housing units selected from the 2000 census

Housing units selected from the 1980 census. The Census Bureau picked a systematic sample so every unit had a 1 in 2,148 chance of being included in the AHS.

In areas where addresses are complete (at least 96 percent of units having a house number and street name) and permits are required for new construction, housing units receiving 1980 census long-form questionnaires were sorted by the following items:

- PSU
- Central city, urbanized area, urban outside urbanized area, rural
- Owner, renter, vacant for rent, vacant for sale, other types of vacant housing units
- Number of rooms
- Value of housing unit or gross rent
- Manufactured/mobile home or not a manufactured/mobile home

In areas where addresses are not complete or permits are not required for new construction, land areas were sorted using a formula incorporating the following items:

- PSU
- Central city, urbanized area, urban outside urbanized area, rural
- Median value of housing unit
- Number of children under 6 years old
- Number of elderly people

- Number of owner-occupied housing units
- Number of manufactured/mobile homes
- Number of housing units lacking some plumbing
- Number of owner-occupied housing units whose value is below \$45,000
- Number of renter-occupied housing units with rent below \$200
- Number of Black and Hispanic people
- Number of 1-room housing units

New construction in areas requiring building permits. In areas that require building permits for new construction, the Census Bureau selected a sample of permits. These permits do not cover manufactured/mobile homes or conversion of buildings to residential use.

Housing units missed in the 1980 census. The Census Bureau conducted a special study that identified units at addresses missed or inadequately defined in the 1980 census. A sample of these identified units was selected.

Other housing units added since the 1980 census. If extra units are added in buildings or manufactured/mobile home parks where AHS already has sample units, a sample of these extra units was selected. To find when whole buildings are built (in addition to building permits mentioned above) or are converted from nonresidential to residential use, the Census Bureau listed all residential buildings in a sample of areas around the country, found any additional buildings, and selected a sample of their units.

Housing units selected from the 2000 census. The following adjustments were made to the AHS-N sample in 2005 by adding certain types of units selected from the 2000 census:

- A new sample of manufactured/mobile homes was selected from the 2000 census in an attempt to improve coverage of manufactured/mobile homes built between 1980 and 2000. These units were selected at the same rate as the 1980-based units. One-half of this sample was included in the 2005 interviewing and, as a result, one-half of the 1980-based sample was not included. The units interviewed in 2005 were also interviewed in 2007.
- In an attempt to improve coverage of the elderly, a sample of special living units was selected from the 2000 census. The Census Bureau purchased address lists of special living facilities from two vendors and supplemented these lists with facility addresses from various special living facility Web sites. These addresses were matched to the 2000 census to identify 2000 census housing units in special living facilities from which the resulting sample of these special living units was drawn. Because the universe was so small, a double sample of units was selected. Before interviewing, the

resulting sample was screened to confirm eligibility. There were 921 units in the initial sample with 486 remaining after the screening.

Estimation for AHS-National

Each housing unit in the AHS sample represents itself and over 2,000 other units. The exact number it represents is its “weight.” The weight was calculated in six steps. The purpose of these steps is to minimize both sampling errors and errors from incomplete data. The result of the steps is also to force consistency with some major categories of data in other Census Bureau surveys, so figures on these categories do not actually depend on the AHS sample, but on the other surveys.

1. **Basic weight.** The Census Bureau assigned each unit a weight to reflect its probability of selection. With rare exceptions, this weight is 2,148. One exception is the special living sample, which is assigned a weight of 1,074.
2. **Sample adjustment.** An adjustment was made to the units remaining after the reduction described in the sample size section. The basic weight was multiplied by 1.09 to reflect this reduction.
3. **Noninterview adjustment.** An adjustment was made for refusals and occupied units where no one was home. The calculations for this adjustment do not include units the Census Bureau could not locate. The earlier weight was multiplied by the following factor:

$$\frac{\text{Interviewed units} + \text{Units not interviewed}}{\text{Interviewed units}}$$

It is assumed the units missed are similar in some ways to the units interviewed for AHS.

This adjustment is done separately for groups defined by cross-classifying the following data items if prior year data for the indicated items are available:

- Four census regions
- 1990 central city, suburb, or nonmetropolitan
- 1990 urban or rural
- Manufactured/mobile home or not a manufactured/mobile home
- In a special living facility or not in a special living facility (only if the housing unit is not a manufactured/mobile home)
- Owner/for sale or renter/for rent
- Number of units in structure*
- Number of rooms*
- Occupied, vacant year round, or seasonal/migratory vacant*

(*If known from a previous survey; otherwise, the Census Bureau substituted whether or not units were

drawn from building permits for these items.)

For seasonal/migratory vacants and year-round vacants other than those for rent or for sale, units were cross-classified only by census region and 2000 central city/suburb/nonmetropolitan area.

4. **PSU adjustment.** The Census Bureau adjusted for differences that existed in 1990 between the number of 1990 census housing units estimated from the AHS sample of non-self-representing (NSR) PSUs and the 1990 census counts outside the self-representing PSUs. The earlier weight was multiplied by the following factor:

$$\frac{\text{1990 census housing units in all areas that could have been chosen as nonself-representing PSUs}}{\text{1990 census housing units estimated from the AHS sample of non-self-representing PSUs}}$$

This adjustment is done separately for groups defined by cross-classifying:

- Four census regions
 - Owner, renter, or vacant
 - 1990 central city, suburb, or nonmetropolitan
 - 1990 urban or rural
 - Hispanic or non-Hispanic householder (only in South and West regions)
 - Black or non-Black householder (only in South region)
5. **New construction adjustment.** The Census Bureau adjusted for known deficiencies in sampling new construction by multiplying the earlier weight by the following factor:

$$\frac{\text{Independent estimate}}{\text{AHS sample estimate}}$$

This adjustment is done separately for groups defined by cross-classifying:

- Four census regions
- Manufactured/mobile home or not a manufactured/mobile home
- Number of units in structure
- Year built (pre-1980 and 5-year categories after 1980 as shown in the publication)

Independent estimates are based on the Census Bureau's Survey of Construction and Survey of New Manufactured Home Placements. Note that final AHS figures for the categories above are not really based on the AHS sample findings, but on the independent sources.

6. **Demographic adjustment.** Comparability among the surveys was ensured by multiplying the earlier weight by the following factor:

$$\frac{\text{Independent estimate}}{\text{AHS sample estimate}}$$

This adjustment is done in two steps for occupied units. First, the factors were computed and applied for the Hispanic or non-Hispanic groups defined by cross-classifying:

- Four census regions
- Owner or renter
- Hispanic or non-Hispanic householder
- Husband-wife, other male householder, or other female householder
- Age of householder

Next, the demographic adjustment is repeated with the same cells, except classified by the Black or non-Black groups, rather than the Hispanic or non-Hispanic groups.

Vacant for sale, vacant for rent, other year-round vacant and seasonal/migratory vacant units were cross-classified only by the four census regions and 2000 central city, suburb, or nonmetropolitan area.

The percentage of occupied and vacant units was based on the AHS itself. The distribution within occupied and vacant units is from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey for occupied units, and from the Housing Vacancy Survey for vacant units. The grand total number of all housing units in the United States is based on the 2000 census adjusted to account for new and lost units. Note that final AHS figures for the categories above are not really based on the AHS sample findings, but on the independent sources.

Repetitions. The new construction and demographic adjustments were repeated to help match both sets of independent estimates simultaneously. These adjustments were repeated until every cell's factor is between 0.98 and 1.02 or the change in each factor from one repetition to the next is fewer than 0.015.

Small cells. In each step of weighting, many items were cross-classified; so some cells may have few cases. When a cell is too small (less than 30 cases for the noninterview adjustment or less than 50 cases for the demographic adjustment) or the adjustment factor is too extreme (greater than 1.5 for the noninterview adjustment or outside a range of 0.5 to 2.0 for the demographic adjustment), the Census Bureau combined the cell with one or more other cells that are similar in most respects. Cells for the PSU adjustment or the new construction adjustment were not combined.