

# Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief

## Phoneless in America

You could have picked up a phone and called almost every American household in 1990, but not all of them.

That's because there were nearly 5 million households (5 percent) without a telephone. Though the number and proportion seem fairly high, they were much higher only a few decades ago. As recently as 1960, for instance, more than 11 million households — just over 1 in 5 — were phoneless. This Brief uses data collected by the 1990 Census of Population and Housing to show which types of households were most likely to still be phoneless.

### The phoneless tended to be in the South.

Though the South accounted for about one-third of the Nation's households, it contained one-half of those that lacked a phone. The region was home to 4 of the 5 States with phonelessness rates that exceeded 10 percent. Mississippi and New Mexico, where about 1 in 8 households lacked a telephone, led the Nation, followed by Arkansas, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

All five of these States also had a 1989 median household income well below the national average.

Meanwhile, Northeastern householders were the likeliest to have a phone. Massachusetts, at 98 percent, led the Nation in householders with a phone. (See table on back.)

### Most often, the young were the phoneless.

The elderly, due to their greater risk of having a medical emergency, were probably the age group most in need of telephones. It was found the older the householder, the smaller their chances were of lacking a phone. The proportion who were phoneless fell steadily from 15 percent of those under age 25 to 2 percent aged 75 or older. As a result, nearly half of all householders without a telephone were under age 35.

Nonetheless, there were still half a million elderly householders (aged 65 or older) who lacked a phone. The table on back shows the percentage of elderly householders without phones, by State.

### Most of the phoneless were renters.

Nearly 3 in 4 phoneless households lived in rental units. All in all, 11 percent of renter households lacked a phone.

### Men living alone were likeliest to have no phone.

Twelve percent of men living alone were phoneless; meanwhile, women living alone and married-couple families were much less likely to be without a phone (3 percent each). Though households without a married couple made up 44 percent of all households, they comprised 68 percent of those without a phone.

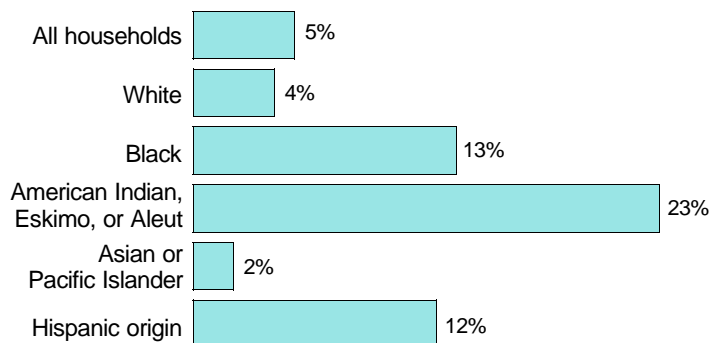


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### About 1 in Every 4 Native American Households Did Not Have a Telephone

Percent of households without a telephone in their home, by race and ethnicity of householder: 1990



Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

### Households in single-family homes were least likely to be phoneless.

A mere 3 percent of householders in single-family houses had no phone; the rate rose to 8 percent for householders in buildings with two or more apartments. In other types of units (mostly mobile homes), the phonelessness rate reached 13 percent. Consequently, phoneless householders were far less likely than all householders to reside in a single-family home (38 percent versus 66 percent).

#### More information:

*Subject Summary Tape File 7 (Metropolitan Housing Characteristics)* presents 1990 census data for States and metropolitan areas on the likelihood of households not having a telephone; the statistics are presented by various household characteristics. *SSTF 7* comes on both computer tape and CD-ROM. Contact Customer Services (301-763-4100) for more information about 1990 census products.

#### Contacts:

Telephone availability —  
Robert Bonnette  
301-763-8553

Statistical Briefs —  
Robert Bernstein  
301-763-1584

*This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current interest. It examines data from the 1990 census. A complete description of statistical quality and limitations is included in the SSTF 7 technical documentation.*

### Where the Phoneless Were

State and regional rankings by households without a telephone in their home: 1990

	Households with no phone				Elderly householders with no phone			
	Number	Rank	Percent of all households	Rank	Number	Rank	Percent of all elderly householders	Rank
<b>United States</b>	<b>4,817,457</b>		<b>5.2%</b>		<b>522,123</b>		<b>2.5%</b>	
Alabama	131,554	12	8.7%	8	18,386	9	5.1%	5
Alaska	15,730	42	8.3%	11	1,209	46	8.2%	1
Arizona	116,408	17	8.5%	10	13,887	15	4.5%	11
Arkansas	97,536	22	10.9%	3	11,922	18	5.0%	6
California	313,140	3	3.0%	45	29,937	4	1.5%	42
Colorado	53,582	28	4.2%	31	4,388	32	2.0%	28
Connecticut	32,316	35	2.6%	47	3,139	36	1.1%	51
Delaware	7,684	51	3.1%	42	807	51	1.5%	42
D.C.	10,529	46	4.2%	31	1,094	47	2.0%	28
Florida	270,242	4	5.3%	23	32,627	3	2.2%	24
Georgia	195,689	5	8.3%	11	20,182	5	4.6%	9
Hawaii	9,394	48	2.6%	47	1,562	43	2.1%	26
Idaho	21,079	40	5.8%	19	1,967	41	2.5%	21
Illinois	192,216	6	4.6%	27	19,525	6	2.1%	26
Indiana	121,752	15	5.9%	18	10,940	20	2.4%	22
Iowa	36,487	34	3.4%	39	3,743	34	1.4%	48
Kansas	41,733	32	4.4%	30	3,764	33	1.7%	38
Kentucky	140,881	9	10.2%	5	16,831	11	5.3%	4
Louisiana	124,455	13	8.3%	11	14,603	14	4.6%	9
Maine	17,382	41	3.7%	35	2,027	40	1.9%	32
Maryland	55,103	27	3.2%	41	5,326	30	1.6%	39
Massachusetts	47,382	31	2.1%	51	6,534	27	1.2%	50
Michigan	139,082	10	4.1%	33	11,696	19	1.6%	39
Minnesota	40,353	33	2.4%	50	5,357	29	1.5%	42
Mississippi	115,130	18	12.6%	1	16,286	12	7.3%	2
Missouri	102,725	21	5.2%	24	10,643	22	2.2%	24
Montana	21,123	39	6.9%	16	2,498	37	3.5%	17
Nebraska	21,682	37	3.6%	36	2,405	38	1.6%	39
Nevada	25,118	36	5.4%	21	3,532	35	4.2%	12
New Hampshire	14,067	44	3.4%	39	1,377	45	1.8%	35
New Jersey	85,851	23	3.1%	42	10,069	23	1.5%	42
New Mexico	67,532	25	12.4%	2	7,859	25	7.2%	3
New York	332,408	2	5.0%	25	36,606	2	2.4%	22
North Carolina	178,690	8	7.1%	14	19,444	7	3.6%	15
North Dakota	8,515	50	3.5%	37	1,084	48	1.8%	35
Ohio	191,994	7	4.7%	26	18,739	8	2.0%	28
Oklahoma	106,381	20	8.8%	7	10,879	21	3.8%	14
Oregon	50,052	30	4.5%	28	5,160	31	2.0%	28
Pennsylvania	116,779	16	2.6%	47	17,770	10	1.5%	42
Rhode Island	11,873	45	3.1%	42	1,437	44	1.5%	42
South Carolina	114,695	19	9.1%	6	12,717	17	4.7%	8
South Dakota	15,518	43	6.0%	17	2,041	39	3.0%	18
Tennessee	132,331	11	7.1%	14	15,073	13	3.6%	15
Texas	523,034	1	8.6%	9	46,445	1	4.1%	13
Utah	21,472	38	4.0%	34	1,767	42	1.8%	35
Vermont	9,392	49	4.5%	28	808	50	1.9%	32
Virginia	123,638	14	5.4%	21	12,920	16	3.0%	18
Washington	64,667	26	3.5%	37	7,197	26	1.9%	32
West Virginia	70,754	24	10.3%	4	9,090	24	4.9%	7
Wisconsin	50,840	29	2.8%	46	5,917	28	1.4%	48
Wyoming	9,487	47	5.6%	20	907	49	2.8%	20
<b>Regions</b>								
Northeast	667,450	4	3.5%	4	79,767	4	1.8%	4
Midwest	962,897	2	4.3%	2	95,854	2	1.9%	3
South	2,398,326	1	7.5%	1	264,632	1	3.7%	1
West	788,784	3	4.2%	3	81,870	3	2.2%	2