

We asked... You told us

Complete Plumbing and Kitchen Facilities

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

H10. Do you have **COMPLETE** plumbing facilities in this house or apartment; that is, 1) hot and cold piped water, 2) a flush toilet, and 3) a bathtub or shower?

- Yes, have all three facilities
- No

Complete Plumbing Facilities

In question **H10** on the 1990 census forms, we asked people to tell us if the house or apartment where they lived had complete plumbing facilities. You told us only 1 percent of all housing units in the United States lacked complete plumbing facilities; that is, they did not have hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower.

Availability of Plumbing Facilities Has Improved Over Time

- The presence of complete plumbing facilities has been a major indicator of housing quality in the United States for the past five decades. When measured in these terms, the quality of housing has improved dramatically since 1940, when 45 percent of all housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities.
- The regions have followed the same trend (see bar chart). Between 1940 and 1990, the percentage of housing units lacking complete plumbing facilities declined substantially for each region.
- In 1940, 68 percent of the homes in the South lacked complete plumbing facilities, compared with 47 percent in the Midwest, 32 percent in the West, 25 percent in the Northeast, and 25 percent in the Northeast. The South had consistently higher percentages than any other region through 1980. By 1990, plumbing in all regions had improved to the point where there was very little difference among them.
- For the most part, the decline in the percentage of housing units lacking complete plumbing facilities can be attributed to the large amount of new housing built with modern amenities, the demolition of older housing units, and the enforcement of housing codes that brought existing homes up to modern standards of quality.

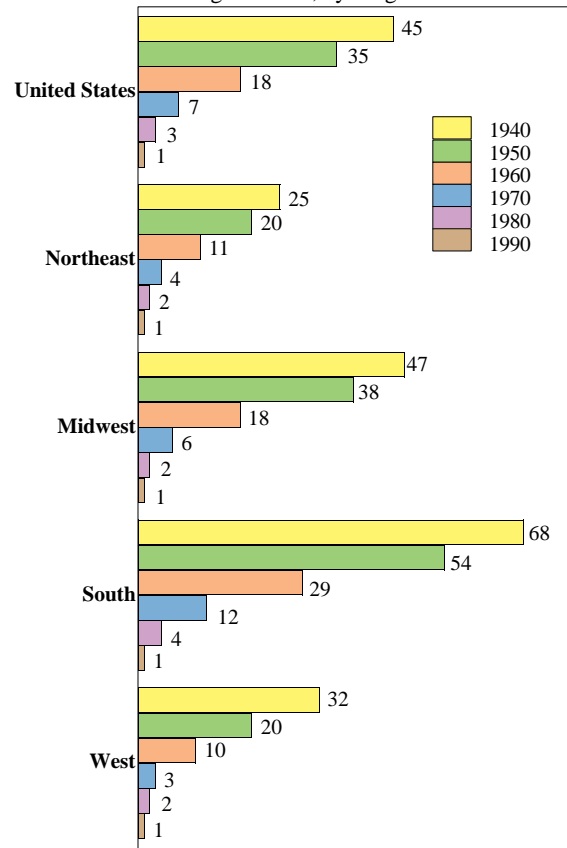
Where Were the Deficiencies in 1990?

- Although the vast majority of homes in the Nation were equipped with complete plumbing facilities in 1990, the percentage of housing units lacking these facilities still reached meaningful levels in certain areas. Most of the deficiencies occurred in rural areas where there was older housing.
- Nationally, 3 percent of the housing units in rural areas lacked complete plumbing facilities, compared with fewer than 1 percent in urban areas. The State with the highest percentage of rural homes lacking these facilities was Alaska (31 percent), followed by Arizona (11 percent) and New Mexico (10 percent).
- Within metropolitan areas,¹ the highest percentages of homes lacking complete plumbing facilities were found outside the central cities of three metro areas in Texas: Laredo (24 percent), McAllen-Edinburg-Mission (10 percent), and El Paso (9 percent). The percentages for the latter two metro areas did not differ significantly.

¹Generally, a **metropolitan area** consists of a sizable central city (or cities) and the surrounding suburbs, with a total population of at least 100,000. Metropolitan areas are defined in terms of counties (cities and towns in New England). **Central cities** include the largest city in each metropolitan area as well as other cities that meet population size and commuting requirements.

Steady Decline Since 1940 in Homes Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities

Percent of Housing Units Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities, by Region: 1940 to 1990



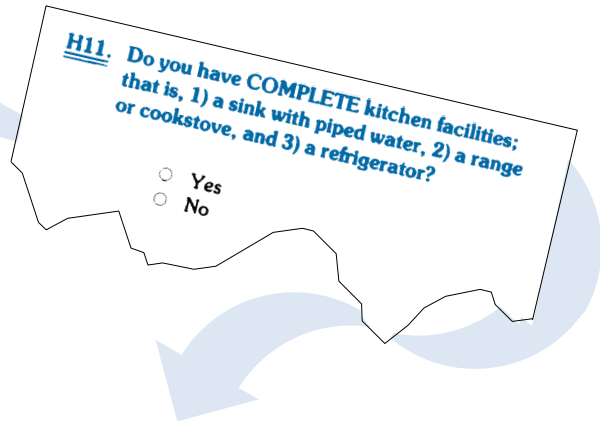
Census Trivia: According to the 1990 census, which State had the highest percentage of homes lacking complete plumbing facilities? (Answer on reverse.)

Complete Kitchen Facilities

In question **H11**, we asked people to tell us if their homes had complete kitchen facilities; that is, a sink with piped water, a range or cookstove, and a refrigerator.

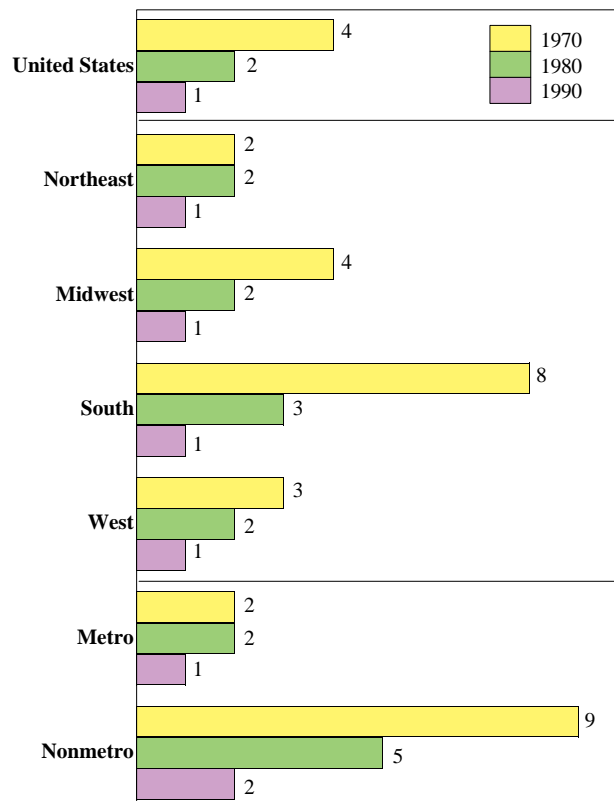
From what **you told us**, we learned that:

- At the national level, only 1 percent of all housing units in 1990 lacked complete kitchen facilities, the same proportion reported as lacking complete plumbing facilities.
- Homes lacking complete kitchen facilities have been rare in the United States for over 20 years. The proportion of homes lacking this equipment was 4 percent in 1970—the first census for which data were tabulated on this subject—and only 2 percent in 1980.
- In 1990, there was almost no difference among the regions in the percentage of homes lacking complete kitchen facilities. Each region had about the same percentage as the Nation as a whole—1 percent. In 1970 and 1980, the South had a higher percentage than any other region, similar to the pattern for plumbing facilities.
- The 1990 data for States varied only slightly. Alaska had the highest proportion of homes lacking complete kitchen facilities (11 percent); New Mexico followed with only 3 percent. In 15 States, fewer than 1 percent of the housing units lacked complete kitchen facilities.
- Although the percentage of housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities was about the same in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan areas in 1990, differences were evident in 1970 and 1980. In 1970, the proportion lacking complete kitchen facilities for nonmetro areas was 9 percent, compared with only 2 percent for metro areas. In 1980, the figures were 5 percent for nonmetro areas and 2 percent for metro areas.



Only a Small Percentage of Homes Still Lacked Complete Kitchen Facilities

Percent of Housing Units Lacking Complete Kitchen Facilities, by Region and Metropolitan Residence: 1970 to 1990



Note: The data on complete plumbing and kitchen facilities are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

Who Uses This Information?

Just a few examples:

- Federal, State, and local governments to identify areas eligible for housing assistance programs and rehabilitation loans
- Public health officials to locate areas in danger of ground water contamination and waterborne diseases
- City and community officials to pinpoint areas that need special programs such as meals on wheels

Trivia Answer: About 13 percent of all housing units in Alaska lacked complete plumbing facilities in 1990, the highest of any State. The next highest was Maine with only 4 percent.

Want to Know More?

Consult the series of 1990 census reports, CH-2, *Detailed Housing Characteristics*, at a large public or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO).

Call:

- Customer Services at the Census Bureau, **301-763-4100**, for ordering information about the GPO reports listed above OR for copies of CQC bulletins
- Kim Giesbrecht or Karen Mills, **301-763-4263**, for general information on CQC bulletins
- Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, **301-763-8553**, for more information on housing data



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