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# Statistical Brief

## New Homes

In 1987, 8 percent of the Nation's nearly 103 million homes were less than 4 years old. A look at these new homes reveals how Americans' preferences in housing are changing.

### Most housing in the United States is single family.

Single-family homes remain the majority of housing constructed in the United States. But among new units, construction of traditional single-family houses (detached houses, mobile homes, and attached units such as some townhouses) has declined: 45 percent of homes built between 1983 and 1987 were single-family units, compared with 61 percent of older units. Recent construction statistics show some evidence that single-family detached construction is again on the rise. New units were more often condominiums — 10 percent of new construction versus 4 percent of older units.

### New housing construction has shifted along with the population to the suburbs and to the South and West.

Since 1983, 56 percent of new homes have been built in the

suburbs, about one-quarter have been in central cities, and less than one-fifth have been in non-metropolitan areas. Among older homes, 43 percent were in the suburbs, one-third were in central cities, and slightly less than one-fourth were in nonmetropolitan areas. Along with this shift in metropolitan location has come a shift in region: more than 7 out of 10 new homes have been built in the South and West, compared with fewer than 3 out of 5 older homes.

### New homes differ from older homes in the number of rooms and in some amenities.

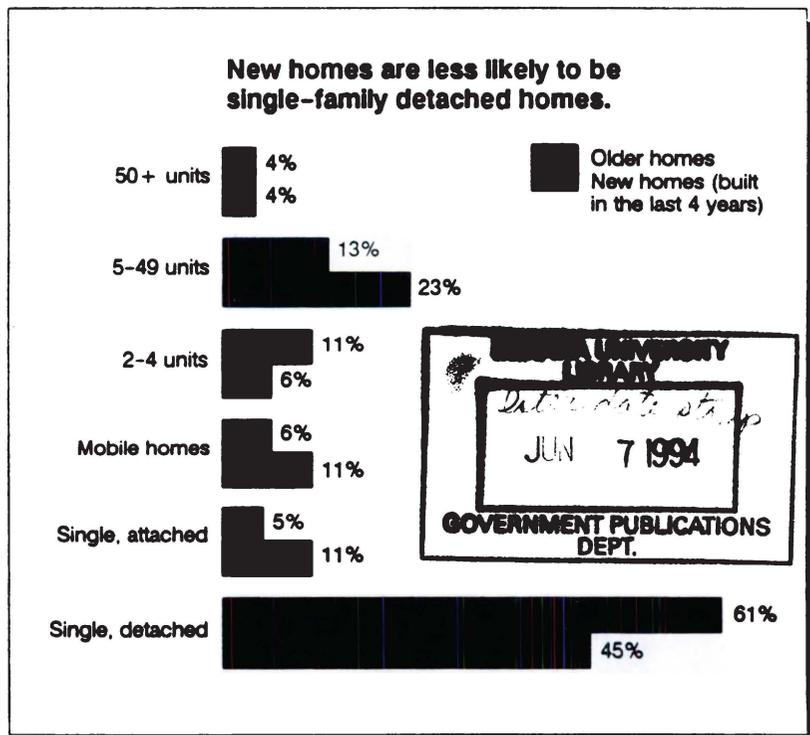
While the median number of rooms in new homes is slightly

less than in older homes, the square footage is 9 percent larger in new single-family detached houses and mobile homes. Some amenities are more prevalent in new homes: 59 percent have two or more bathrooms, compared with 27 percent of older homes. Air conditioning has become much more common: 80 percent of new homes versus 62 percent of older homes have air conditioning; overwhelmingly, it is a central system (72 versus 33 percent). Most new units (81 percent) have a porch, deck, balcony, or patio, compared with 73 percent of older homes, and 44 percent of new homes had a usable fireplace (27 percent for older homes). However, new homes



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are less likely to have a separate dining room: 34 versus 37 percent.

**Most new homes use a warm-air furnace as the main source of heat.**

While warm-air furnaces remain the main choice for home heating (53 percent of older homes and 65 percent of new homes), electric heat pumps have also become more popular (3 versus 14 percent). Other types of heating equipment that do not heat the whole house, such as room heaters and pipeless furnaces, have lost ground. Steam and hot water systems are the main source of heat in 16 percent of older homes, but now appear in only 4 percent of new homes.

**Electricity is the builders' fuel of choice: over half of newly constructed homes used it as the main heating fuel.**

Newly constructed homes are more than twice as likely as older units (53 versus 21 percent) to use electricity for heating. In contrast, the use of piped gas has declined substantially, from one-half of older homes to one-third of new ones. (Recent construction data reveal some evidence that piped gas usage is again on the rise.) The number of new homes using fuel oil is much lower than that for older homes (4 versus 14 percent), and the proportion of new homes using kerosene or other liquid fuel, coal or coke, or wood as the main heating fuel is also lower compared

with that for older homes. The proportion of units using bottled gas or solar energy is not statistically different between new and older homes.

The data in this brief are drawn from the American Housing Survey (AHS), a highly detailed, comprehensive set of data collected each odd-numbered year. The AHS is sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

**For information on housing:  
See**

*American Housing Survey for the United States in 1987, Series H-150-87, December 1989. Stock number 003-024-0783-9, \$27.00.*

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