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Statistical Brief

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Who Makes Do-It-Yourself Home Improvements?

When homeowners need improvements made to their homes—for instance, remodeling their kitchens—they don't always call a contractor. Many choose to do it themselves.

More than half of American homeowners had some sort of work done on their homes during the 2-year period of 1986 and 1987. About 47 percent of these owners (14 million) were "do-it-yourselfers"—they did most of the work themselves on at least one of their improvements or repairs.

This Brief presents the demographic characteristics of households who did do-it-yourself jobs. The chart on the right shows the types of work this Brief covers. Data come from the 1987 American Housing Survey (AHS). The AHS asks respondents about jobs that tend to be expensive or require skilled labor. As a result, the amount of do-it-yourself work is understated. For example, painting a room of your home wouldn't be counted as an improvement unless the cost of materials was \$500 or more.

Also, the Brief focuses only on work done to the home itself or to an attached structure and does not include detached garage or yard improvements.

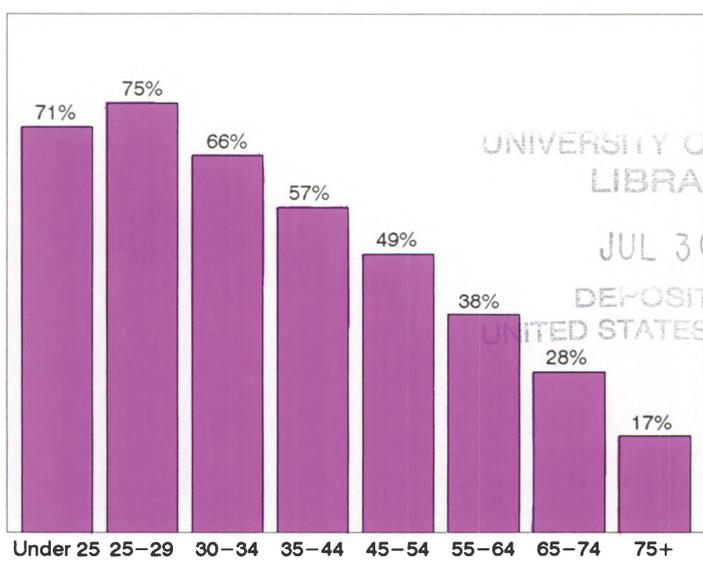
Younger homeowners do more of their own home improvement work.

In general, the proportion of do-it-yourself work dropped as the homeowner's age increased. While about 7 in 10 owners under age 35 who undertook recent improvements did most of the work themselves on at least one job, only 1 in 4 of those aged 65 or older did so.

- What jobs are included?**
- Repairing or replacing a roof
 - Adding a room
 - Adding or remodeling a bathroom or kitchen
 - Adding or replacing siding
 - Installing a storm door or window
 - Installing insulation
 - Adding or replacing major equipment (such as a furnace or central air-conditioning system)
 - Other major jobs costing \$500 or more

As Homeowners Grow Older, Do-It-Yourself Activity Declines

Percent of homeowners having home improvements or repairs made who did most of the work themselves on at least one job, by age: 1986-1987



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Female householders were less likely to attempt a do-it-yourself job.

Among two-or-more-person households with a female householder, about 1 in 3 who made home improvements did their own work for at least one of the jobs. In contrast, about 6 in 10 of the two-or-more-person households with male householders fixing up their homes were do-it-yourselfers. And just over half of married-couple family households (with all persons related) making home improvements did their own work for at least one of the jobs.

Among those living alone, the differences between the sexes were even greater. About half of men, but only 18 percent of women, who lived alone did their improvement or repair work themselves. Women living alone may have been less likely to have done any work themselves because many of them were elderly. Among those who had a home improvement, 57 percent of the female homeowners were 65 years or older; only 27 percent of lone male homeowners were elderly.

Do-it-yourselfers were concentrated in the middle income ranges.

Homeowners with an income between \$20,000 and \$59,999 constituted a disproportionate share of do-it-yourselfers. They accounted for 62 percent of all the do-it-yourselfers, yet made up just 55 percent of all persons who had home improvements or repairs made.

As the chart shows, those with incomes above or below this range were less likely to do their own improvement work. For instance, only about one-third of owners with incomes of \$120,000 or more who fixed up their homes were do-it-yourselfers. At the other end of the

scale, about 38 percent of owners with incomes below \$20,000 were do-it-yourselfers. One reason for the low do-it-yourself rates for these low-income owners is that about half who had work done were age 65 or older; only about 24 percent of these elderly persons did their own work.

Do-it-yourselfers were more common in the Midwest and rural areas.

The Midwest was the only region of the country in which half of the households making home improvements did the work themselves. While 51 percent of Midwestern owners were do-it-yourselfers, 47 percent of those in the Northeast and West and 44 percent in the South did the work themselves.

Just 4 in 10 of the homeowners in central cities who had work done to their home did the job themselves. In the suburbs, about 48 percent were do-it-yourselfers. The leading do-it-yourself group were the owners in nonmetropolitan rural areas,

who did 54 percent of their improvements themselves.

More Information: *Homeowners and Home Improvements: 1987, Current Housing Reports, Series H121/92-1.* Contact Customer Services at the Census Bureau (301-763-4100) for ordering information.

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This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It may include data from businesses, households, or other sources. All statistics are subject to sampling variability as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors and tests analytical statements to meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, users should exercise caution when comparing these data with data from other sources.

Those in the Middle Income Ranges Were Most Likely "Do-It-Yourselfers"

Percent of homeowners having home improvement or repair work done who did most of the work themselves on at least one job, by household income: 1986-1987

