

Physical Characteristics of Housing: 2009–2011

American Community Survey Briefs

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents data on basic physical and structural characteristics of the total housing inventory at the national level and for metropolitan statistical areas (metro areas) based on the 2009–2011 American Community Survey (ACS) 3-year estimates.¹ The report will examine types of housing structures, newer and older houses, and the size of the houses measured by the number of rooms.

STRUCTURE TYPE

According to the 2009–2011 ACS, 131.8 million housing units were located in the United States. Of these housing units, 81.1 million (61.5 percent) were single-family houses not attached to any other structure (referred to as “detached, single-family houses”). Another 7.6 million (5.8 percent) were classified as single-family houses attached to one or more other structures, commonly referred to as “townhouses” or “row houses.” Buildings with 2 to 4 apartments composed 10.9 million (8.3 percent) housing units of the inventory, while 12.3 million (9.3 percent) housing units were located in buildings with 5 to 19 apartments. Large buildings with at least 20 apartments accounted for 11.2 million (8.5 percent) housing units. There were 8.6 million (6.5 percent) mobile homes, while the remaining 111,000 (0.1 percent) housing units in the inventory were classified as “other,” which includes occupied boats, recreational vehicles, and vans.

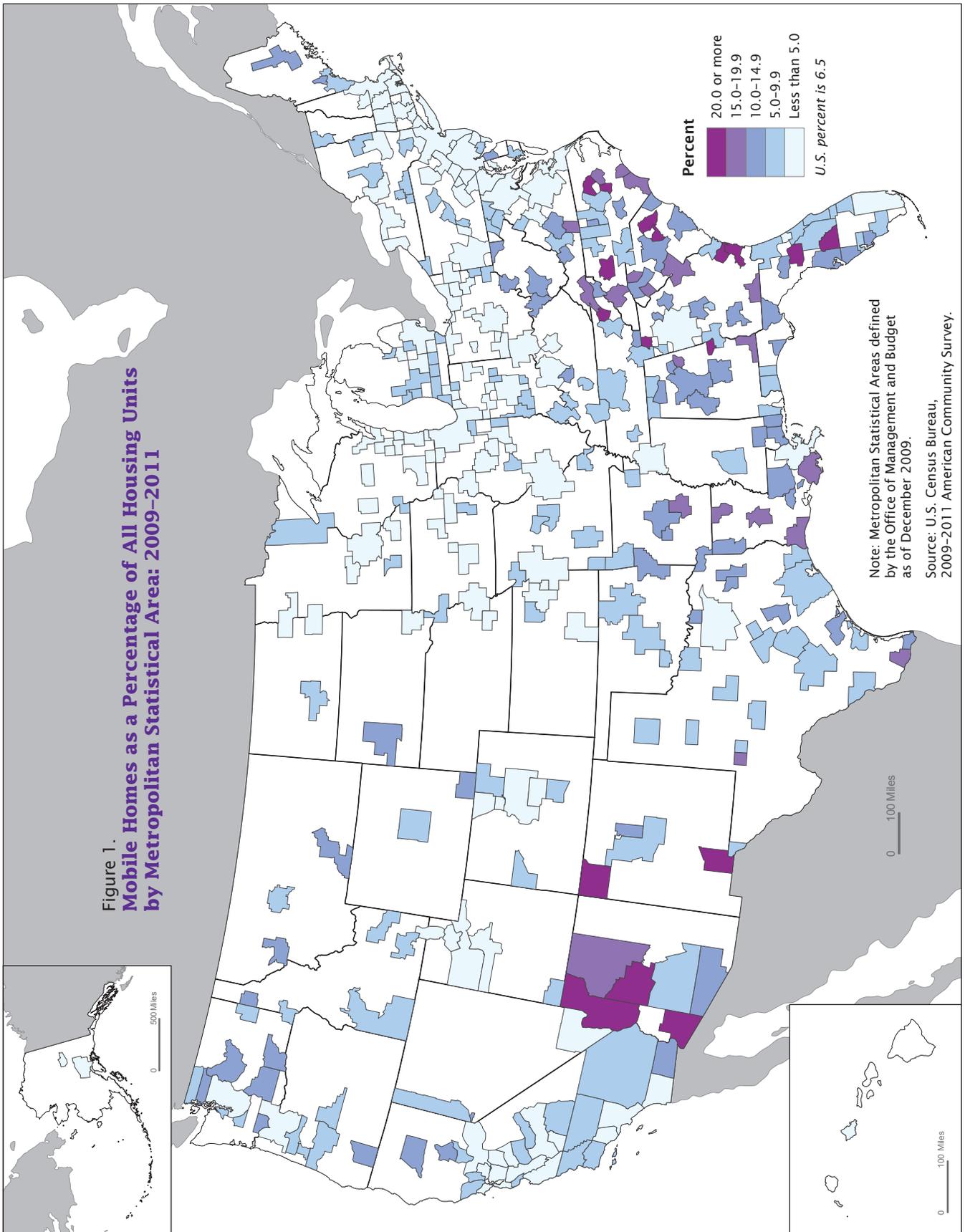
The vast majority of metro areas, 349 of the 366, contained mainly detached, single-family houses. Among the 17 metro areas that did not, New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA, had the lowest percentage of detached, single-family houses with 36.3 percent. Naples-Marco Island, FL (40.0 percent), had the second lowest percentage, while Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, followed with 42.3 percent of its housing inventory classified as detached, single-family houses.

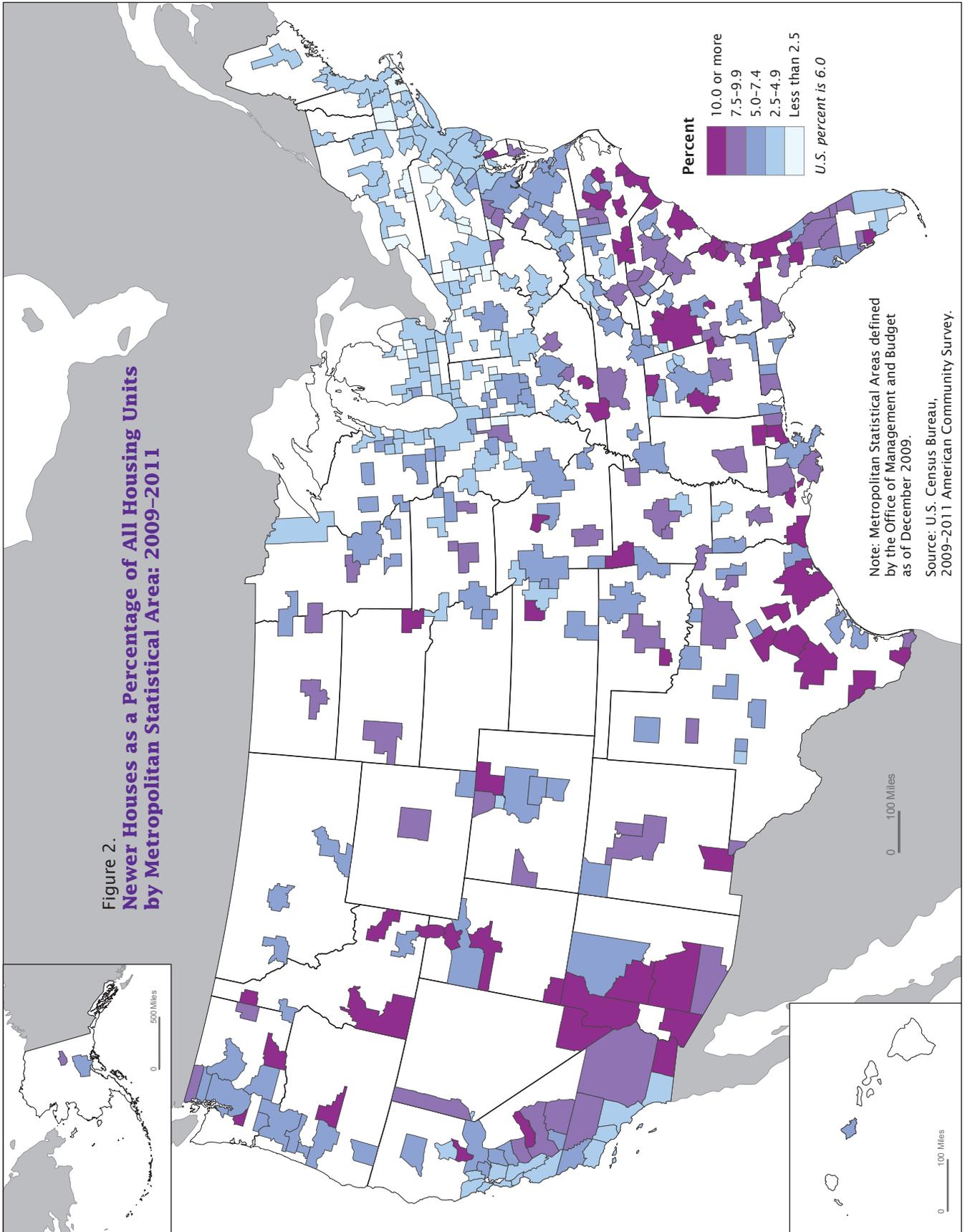
In five metro areas, townhouses or row houses composed more than 20.0 percent of the housing inventory. These metro areas were Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD (29.1 percent); Baltimore-Towson, MD (28.8 percent); Reading, PA (23.4 percent); Trenton-Ewing, NJ (20.9 percent); and Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ (20.8 percent).

Though not statistically different from one another, New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (26.8 percent), and Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (26.6 percent), were the only metro areas that had greater than 25.0 percent of the housing inventory located in large buildings with at least 20 apartments.² Following these two metro areas, the largest percentage of housing inventory located within large apartment buildings were found in Honolulu, HI (24.5 percent); Fargo, ND-MN (20.2 percent); Naples-Marco Island, FL (18.2 percent); and Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (17.1 percent).

¹ For more information on metro areas, please see www.census.gov/population/metro/.

² All comparisons made in this report have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90.0 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.





Mobile homes composed more than 20.0 percent of the housing inventory in 11 metro areas. The largest percentage of mobile homes as part of a metro area's housing inventory was in Farmington, NM, with 32.0 percent, followed by Yuma, AZ, with 29.0 percent. Besides these two metro areas, Lake Havasu City-Kingman, AZ (26.7 percent), was the only other metro area to have mobile homes account for more than 25.0 percent of its housing inventory (Figure 1).

NEWER/OLDER HOUSES

For the purpose of this report, newer houses are defined as those built in the year 2005 or later, while older houses are those built before the year 1950. In the United States, estimates from the 2009–2011 ACS data show that 6.0 percent of all housing units were newer houses, while older houses accounted for 19.3 percent of the total housing inventory.

The percentage of newer houses within a metro area's housing inventory ranged from 1.2 percent in Pittsfield, MA, and Elmira, NY, to 16.4 percent in Gulfport-Biloxi, MS (Figure 2). The housing inventory of 172 metro areas had a significantly higher percentage of newer houses than the national percentage of 6.0 percent, while 142 metro areas had a significantly lower percentage than the national percentage. Fifty-two metro areas were not statistically different from the national percentage.

Newer houses accounted for more than 10.0 percent of the housing inventory in 39 metro areas. Gulfport-Biloxi, MS (16.4 percent) was the only metro area with more than 15.0 percent of its housing inventory built in 2005 or later.

The range for older houses as a percentage of a metro area's housing inventory was 0.5 percent in

Naples-Marco Island, FL, to 49.5 percent in Elmira, NY. The percentage of older houses in the housing inventory of 127 metro areas was significantly higher than the national percentage of 19.3 percent, while 217 metro areas had a significantly lower percentage than the national percentage. Twenty-two metro areas were not statistically different from the national percentage.

In 30 metro areas, older houses accounted for more than one-third of the housing inventory, while in 11 metro areas older houses were greater than 40.0 percent. Of these 11 metro areas, homes built before 1950 exceeded 45.0 percent of the housing inventory in Elmira, NY (49.5 percent), Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA (48.8 percent), Johnstown, PA (47.0 percent), and Pittsfield, MA (46.9 percent).

ROOMS

The 2009–2011 ACS data estimate that the median number of rooms within a housing unit in the United States is 5.5.

Of all 366 metro areas, the median number of rooms ranged from 4.7 in 5 metro areas (Yuma, AZ; Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL; Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana,

CA; Honolulu, HI; and Fairbanks, AK) to 6.8 in Provo-Orem, UT.

Sixteen metro areas had a median number of rooms that was larger than 6.0. Of these 16 metro areas, Provo-Orem, UT, had the largest percentage (30.6 percent) of its housing units having 9 or more rooms. Other metro areas with a high percentage of its housing units having 9 or more rooms were Logan, UT-ID (26.6 percent); Idaho Falls, ID (26.5 percent); and Ogden-Clearfield, UT (24.8 percent). Along with these metro areas, Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV (22.3 percent); Rochester, MN (21.8 percent); and Salt Lake City, UT (21.0 percent) were the only other metro areas with greater than 20.0 percent of its housing units having 9 or more rooms.

Ten metro areas had a median number of rooms below 5.0. Manhattan, KS (11.7 percent), and Myrtle Beach-North Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC (11.6 percent), had the largest percentage of its housing units having just one room and were the only metro areas to have greater than 10.0 percent of its housing units composed of one room. The metro areas with the next largest percentage of housing units with one room were Farmington, NM (6.5 percent), and Flagstaff, AZ (6.1

What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.

percent), which were not statistically different from one another.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2009 through 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarters population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding

value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for all estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of

the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf>.

Appendix Table A.

Physical Characteristics of Total Housing Inventory by Metropolitan Statistical Area¹: 2009–2011(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Area	Total housing units		Percentage detached, single-family houses		Median year structure built		Median number of rooms	
	Estimate	Margin of error ² (±)	Percent	Margin of error ² (±)	Estimate	Margin of error ² (±)	Estimate	Margin of error ² (±)
United States	131,826,591	3,846	61.5	0.1	1975	1	5.5	0.1
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	2,166,002	1,092	67.0	0.3	1989	1	6.0	0.1
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	709,474	979	59.1	0.4	1990	1	5.3	0.1
Baltimore-Towson, MD	1,133,447	1,095	45.3	0.3	1971	1	6.2	0.1
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	500,064	819	69.3	0.5	1979	2	5.8	0.1
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	1,884,815	1,191	47.8	0.3	1957	1	5.5	0.1
Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY	519,018	870	59.1	0.5	1954	1	5.8	0.1
Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC	738,811	710	67.0	0.4	1989	1	5.6	0.1
Chicago-Joliet-Naperville, IL-IN-WI	3,797,596	1,373	51.9	0.2	1966	1	5.5	0.1
Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN	917,554	870	65.0	0.4	1971	1	5.8	0.1
Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH	956,106	877	65.0	0.3	1959	1	5.9	0.1
Columbus, OH	793,224	818	61.6	0.4	1976	1	5.7	0.1
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	2,508,595	1,298	63.6	0.2	1985	1	5.5	0.1
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO	1,079,841	781	59.3	0.3	1980	1	5.8	0.2
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	1,885,676	742	69.9	0.3	1964	1	5.8	0.1
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	507,490	871	59.6	0.5	1964	2	5.7	0.1
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	2,315,153	950	62.1	0.3	1984	1	5.4	0.1
Indianapolis-Carmel, IN	758,339	613	68.4	0.4	1977	1	5.8	0.1
Jacksonville, FL	599,167	924	62.4	0.6	1986	1	5.6	0.1
Kansas City, MO-KS	883,811	673	69.9	0.3	1975	1	5.9	0.1
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	841,950	435	58.0	0.5	1995	1	5.2	0.1
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	4,495,216	1,583	49.8	0.2	1966	1	4.7	0.1
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	560,298	612	69.5	0.5	1973	1	5.5	0.2
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	551,323	644	68.8	0.5	1979	1	5.7	0.1
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	2,465,506	1,142	42.3	0.2	1979	1	4.7	0.1
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	670,319	630	54.5	0.4	1962	1	5.4	0.1
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	1,355,786	1,089	60.7	0.3	1977	1	6.1	0.1
Nashville-Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin, TN	668,800	906	65.4	0.5	1984	1	5.7	0.1
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	539,478	644	60.8	0.5	1973	1	5.4	0.1
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	7,530,183	2,109	36.3	0.1	1956	2	4.8	0.1
Oklahoma City, OK	540,003	613	71.9	0.5	1977	1	5.4	0.1
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	943,949	1,119	59.6	0.4	1989	1	5.4	0.1
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	2,435,028	1,488	44.6	0.2	1962	1	6.1	0.1
Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ	1,801,538	857	64.2	0.3	1989	1	5.4	0.1
Pittsburgh, PA	1,101,964	1,325	67.1	0.3	1957	1	5.9	0.1
Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	926,114	716	61.9	0.3	1978	1	5.5	0.1
Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA	694,298	524	53.9	0.5	1957	1	5.4	0.1
Raleigh-Cary, NC	467,429	573	63.2	0.6	1992	2	5.8	0.1
Richmond, VA	532,432	1,098	70.7	0.5	1979	1	6.0	0.1
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	1,502,164	1,112	69.0	0.3	1984	1	5.4	0.1
Sacramento—Arden-Arcade—Roseville, CA	872,477	1,059	67.6	0.5	1980	1	5.4	0.1
St. Louis, MO-IL	1,236,978	961	69.2	0.3	1970	1	5.6	0.1
Salt Lake City, UT	411,267	375	64.6	0.5	1979	1	6.1	0.2
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	840,750	754	68.1	0.4	1983	1	5.4	0.1
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	1,165,610	1,081	51.4	0.3	1977	1	5.1	0.1
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	1,743,042	1,167	49.5	0.3	1964	1	5.0	0.1
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	650,066	558	54.3	0.5	1973	2	5.2	0.1
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	1,464,902	982	59.4	0.3	1979	1	5.5	0.1
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	1,354,587	1,023	55.5	0.3	1982	2	5.1	0.1
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	687,066	1,144	61.6	0.4	1978	1	5.9	0.1
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	2,217,179	1,296	46.5	0.2	1978	1	6.1	0.1

– Represents or rounds to zero.

¹ Fifty most populous metropolitan statistical areas based on the 2010 Census. Metropolitan statistical areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.² Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2011 American Community Survey.