

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS SURVEY DOCUMENTATION

STATE ASCII Files

State Level Residential Building Permit Statistics

Introduction

These files provide building permit statistics on new privately-owned residential construction. These are provided for the 50 states and the District of Columbia sorted by FIPS State code, followed by aggregate totals for divisions, regions and the United States total.

File Format

- A. File Names: Two files are provided for the monthly data series and one for annual series ("YYMM" is the survey date for monthly using the 2-digit year and 2-digit month, and "YYYY" is survey year for annual using the 4-digit year.):

1. Current month - data tabulated for only that survey period.

ST<YYMM>C.TXT, i.e. ST9801C.TXT

2. Year-to-Date - summed data from the beginning of the year through the current survey month including late reports and corrections for prior months.

ST<YYMM>Y.TXT, i.e. ST9801Y.TXT

3. Annual - data tabulated for that survey year:

ST<YYYY>A.TXT, i.e. ST1997A.TXT

- B. Each file is an ASCII, comma delimited file, providing:

1. Survey date, in the form "YYYYMM" (annual files show a date of "YYYY").
2. Two-digit FIPS state code.
3. One-digit Census region code.
4. One-digit Census division code.
5. Alpha state name.

6. Buildings, Units and Valuation Permit Data (valuation is shown in thousands of dollars.)
- C. Two sets of data are shown for each type of construction:
1. Estimates with Imputation - includes reported data for monthly respondents and imputed data for nonrespondents.
 2. Reported Only - includes only reported data for respondents.

Source of Data

Statistics on construction authorized by building permits are based upon reports submitted by local building permit officials in response to a mail survey. They are obtained using Form C-404, "Report of Building or Zoning Permits Issued and Local Public Construction." When a report is not received, missing residential data are either (1) obtained from the Survey of Use of Permits (SUP) or (2) imputed. All other missing data are imputed. The SUP is used to collect information on housing starts. Data from the SUP are available only for about 850 places for which Census Bureau interviewers list and sample the permits that authorized construction of new residential structures. For places not in the SUP, imputations are used. The imputations are based on the assumption that the ratio of current month authorizations to those of a year ago should be the same for both respondents and nonrespondents. When imputing annual statistics, the ratio is based on current year authorizations to those of a year ago.

Monthly Building Permits Statistics

The monthly statistics are based on data from a sample of 8,500 permit-issuing places, selected from a universe of approximately 19,000 places. All places in 99 designated metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs) were selected with certainty. The remaining places were stratified by state into two strata based on the number of housing units authorized in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992. In each state, all places that authorized housing units during that period greater than or equal to a predetermined number of units were selected with certainty. The other places were selected at the rate of 1 in 10.

Annual Building Permits Statistics

The annual statistics are not based upon a sample, but are obtained by directly cumulating the data for the 19,000 permit-issuing places. Although these statistics are not subject to sampling variability, they are subject to various response and operational errors which can be attributed to many sources: inability to obtain information about all cases, differences in interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in processing the data. Explicit measures of the effects of these errors are not available.

However, most of the important operational errors were detected and corrected in the course of the Bureau's review of the data for reasonableness and consistency.

Sampling Variability

The monthly estimates are based on samples and may differ from statistics which would have been obtained from a complete census using the same survey questionnaire and procedures. An estimate based on a sample survey is subject to both sampling error and nonsampling error. The accuracy of a survey result is determined by the joint effect of these errors. Sampling error reflects the fact that only a particular sample was surveyed rather than the entire population. Estimates of size of the sampling errors are provided by the standard error of the estimates. Nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources: inability to obtain information about all cases in the sample; definitional difficulties; differences in interpretation of questions; inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information; and errors made in processing data. As derived for this report, the estimated relative standard errors include part of the effect of nonsampling errors but do not measure any systematic biases in the data.

The particular sample selected for the Building Permits Survey is one of a large number of similar probability samples that, by chance, might have been selected using the same sample design. Each of the possible samples would probably yield somewhat different results. The standard error of a survey estimate is a measure of the variation of all possible sample estimates around the theoretical, complete coverage value. The relative standard error is defined as the standard error divided by the value being estimated.

Geographic Coverage of Building Permit Jurisdiction

Most of the permit-issuing jurisdictions are municipalities; the remainder are counties, townships, or unincorporated towns. For the municipalities, and townships or towns, the area subject to building permit requirements to which the figures pertain is normally that of the governmental jurisdictions. A small number of municipalities have authority to issue building or zoning permits for areas extending beyond their corporate limits. In such cases, the data relate to the entire area within which the permit-issuing authority is exercised. Similarly, a small number of townships issue permits for only a part of the township and the data normally covers only the area subject to the township's permit system.

Limitations of Data

The portion of construction measurable from building permit records is inherently limited since such records obviously do not reflect construction activity outside of the area subject to local permit requirements. For the nation as a whole, less than 5 percent of all privately owned housing units built are constructed in areas that do not require building permits.

The reported statistics are also influenced by the following factors:

1. Some building permit jurisdictions close their books a few days before the end of the month/year, so that the time reference for permits is not, in all cases, strictly the calendar month/year.
2. A study spanning 4 years showed that about 3 percent of the single-family houses built in permit-issuing places are built without a permit.

To the extent that most of these limiting factors apply rather consistently over an extended period, they may not seriously impair the usefulness of building permit statistics as prompt indicators of trends in residential construction activity.

Questions should be directed to Manufacturing Construction Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. 20233-6900. Phone: (301) 457-1321.

Record Layout of Building Permits State ASCII Customer Data File

<u>Field</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Section</u>
1	Survey Date; YYYYMM. "YYYY" is the 4-digit year and "MM" is the month (annual is YYYY), i.e. January 2000 = 200001, Annual 1999 = 1999.	
2	FIPS State code	Identification
3	Census region code (1-4)	
4	Census division code (1-9)	
5	Alpha Geographic (State) Name	
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6	101-Buildings	
7	101-Units	
8	101-Valuation	
9	103-Buildings	
10	103-Units	Estimates
11	103-Valuation	With
12	104-Buildings	Imputation
13	104-Units	
14	104-Valuation	
15	105-Buildings	
16	105-Units	
17	105-Valuation	
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18	101-Buildings	
19	101-Units	
20	101-Valuation	
21	103-Buildings	
22	103-Units	
23	103-Valuation	Reported
24	104-Buildings	Only
25	104-Units	
26	104-Valuation	
27	105-Buildings	
28	105-Units	
29	105-Valuation	