

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS SURVEY DOCUMENTATION

MA ASCII Files

Metropolitan Area (MA) Level Residential Building Permit Statistics

Introduction

These files provide building permit statistics on new privately-owned residential construction. These are provided for all CSAs and CBSAs in the United States sorted by CSA code and CBSA code.

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, "YYYY" is the survey year for annual using the 4-digit year):

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

MA<YYMM>C.TXT, i.e. MA0401C.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.

MA<YYMM>Y.TXT, i.e. MA0401Y.TXT

3. Annual - data tabulated for that survey year:

MA<YYYY>A.TXT, i.e. MA2002A.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. Three-digit CSA code or "999"
3. Five-digit CBSA code or "99999"
4. Header Coverage Code, Blank or "C", if CSA/CBSA is completely covered by monthly permit issuing places

5. Alpha CSA/CBSA 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.

Sample Design and Estimation Procedures

Monthly statistics are obtained by directly cumulating the data for the places in the metropolitan statistical areas that report monthly. All permit-issuing places in the 82 largest MSAs (based on 2002 annual data) are canvassed monthly. All places in the remaining areas may or may not be canvassed each month.

Annual statistics are obtained by cumulating data for all the places in the metropolitan statistical areas, both the monthly and annual reporters.

Reliability of the Data

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 by 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.

Geographic Coverage of Building Permit Jurisdictions

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 cover 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 areas 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 and Construction Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. 20233-6900. Phone: (301) 763-5160.

Record Layout of Building Permits MSA 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	CSA Code	Identification
3	CBSA Code	
4	Alpha Code - Header Coverage Code - Blank or "C", if CSA/CBSA is completely covered by monthly permit issuing places	
5	Alpha Geographic (CBSA) Name	
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	
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	