

LIVING QUARTERS AND HOUSEHOLD CONCEPTS IN THE 1960 CENSUS

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Summary

Over the years, users of housing census data have made a number of criticisms of the dwelling unit concept. The weaknesses of this concept have become particularly evident in the course of analysis of urban renewal and slum clearance areas. In these areas particularly, the 1950 concept was subject to varying interpretations by enumerators. For this reason the Bureau of the Census has developed more specific means of delineating each of the separate quarters where people live. As a result, the unit of enumeration has become a "housing unit" instead of a "dwelling unit." In order to define this new unit of enumeration, changes were made in the application of the physical criteria, "access to unit" and "cooking equipment." Since a "household" is defined as the person or group of persons occupying a housing unit, the change affects both housing units and households.

The criteria and the procedures used in 1950 frequently omitted from the universe certain peripheral types of living arrangements. Such quarters should be uniformly included in order to secure a more complete account of housing conditions in America. Thus, consistent with the long range goal of extending coverage, the 1960 Census of Housing will include all living quarters having some degree of "separateness."

The basic criterion of "separateness" used in earlier censuses is not being changed but more criteria are being provided for determining when a particular unit is to be considered as separate.

It is estimated that the new definition will add about one million households or occupied housing units, and perhaps a quarter of a million vacant units. More precise estimates will be available from postcensal evaluation surveys. The impact of wider coverage will be greatest on parts of urban areas, with less impact on rural areas. The change reflects largely the enumeration as separate units those quarters occupied by persons who were formerly counted as members of another household or of "nondwelling unit living quarters."

Nature of the Changes in Definition

Basically, the same physical criteria for determining separateness that were used in 1950—entrance or access and availability of cooking equipment—are being used in 1960. The change is primarily in the application of the criteria. The basic physical definition of a dwelling unit in 1950 was that it must have (a) separate cooking equipment or (b) two or more rooms with a separate entrance. One room in a "regular apartment house" and one room that was the only living quarters in the structure were exceptions to the rule and could be dwelling units. The basic definition of the housing unit for 1960 is that it must have either (1) direct access or (2) kitchen or cooking equipment for exclusive use.

From the data collection standpoint, the change was designed to simplify and systematize

the enumerator's task of delineating separate housing units in converted structures, rooming houses and similar places with complex living arrangements. In 1950, the enumerator either divided these places into individual dwelling units or he classified the whole structure as "nondwelling unit quarters" and singly listed the occupants, providing no housing or household information for the structure. There is ample evidence that different courses were taken by different enumerators under the same circumstances. Generally there is no evidence as to why the decision was made to enumerate the structure as individual quarters or as combined quarters. Structures have been identified in New York and other large cities in which virtually identical living arrangements were enumerated as dwelling units by one enumerator and as nondwelling unit quarters by another. In some instances even the same enumerator used different procedures in two separate structures with similar living arrangements, particularly if one of the structures had a sign "Rooms for Rent" and the other had a sign "Apartments for Rent" in each case the quarters had separate access. The only difference was likely to be that cooking equipment was provided by the landlord in the second structure but not in the first.

The burden on the 1950 enumerator was heavy in areas where these marginal units were prevalent. He had to remember the basic definition as well as the exceptions. The exception that was difficult to apply in these marginal cases was that in a "regular apartment house" one room without cooking could become a dwelling unit, whereas if the structure was not a regular apartment house one room had to have cooking to qualify as a dwelling unit. The enumerator's manual did not define "regular apartment house." Consequently, this was subject to varying interpretations by enumerators.

After many months of discussion with a working group from advisory committees, the idea evolved that the enumerator should be concerned with only one conceptual task, namely, to ascertain when people live "separately." In essence, the enumerator may accept the respondent's interpretation of separateness, although wherever more than one family is reported at an address he asks if they "live and eat together or have separate quarters." If they have separate quarters, then the more objective criteria of "access" and "cooking equipment" are applied. Pretests in Ithaca, New York and Washington, D. C. indicated that these criteria are applied uniformly only when enumerators must consciously record them on a schedule. No such record was required in 1950.

The application of the physical criteria reduces individual enumerator interpretation by the requirement that when living quarters have either "direct access" or "kitchen or cooking equipment for exclusive use," or both, they are to be classified as housing units. If the quarters have neither of these criteria they are not considered sufficiently separate to be classified as housing

units. They are therefore combined with the quarters through which occupants entered even though the respondents in such quarters consider themselves as living separately.

With these new procedures, there are only three aspects of the housing unit determination that are still somewhat subjective.

(1) If the respondent in a converted structure having two families, e.g., parents on the first floor and a son and his family on the second, does not consider that the families live separately, the enumerator records access and cooking only for the whole structure. In such cases, the physical criteria for two units may exist although they are ignored on the basis of the respondent's interpretation of "living together."

(2) The determination of what constitutes direct access may depend in part on the enumerator's interpretation. The definition gives two types, direct from outside the structure and through a common hall. The common hall, vestibule or lobby is defined as one that is not a part of any unit, but is clearly separate from all units in the structure. In application this common hall definition may not be uniformly applied. For example, in certain types of converted houses, a center hall may be used both as a common hall for all families and as a means for one family to go from one of its rooms to another.

(3) The third aspect relates to marginal types of cooking equipment such as hot plates. To be considered as cooking equipment, these appliances must be "used for the regular preparation of meals." The word "regular" may have varying interpretations among the enumerators.

All of these three aspects were also present in the 1950 definition but under less precise definitions. Our pretests have indicated that the more stringent definitions led to more uniformity in interpretation of these rules than in 1950.

A final difference in procedures involves the enumeration of rooming houses and separate living quarters in institutions. In 1950, any living quarters containing ten or more unrelated persons was enumerated as nondwelling unit quarters for which no housing information was obtained. Mechanical editing reduced this maximum to five or more lodgers. In 1960, for rooming houses, the enumerator will first find out whether the living arrangements of the occupants meet the separateness criteria. Each of the quarters that meets the criteria becomes a housing unit. Those that do not are combined. If there are five or more persons unrelated to the person designated as head, the combined quarters are enumerated as "group quarters" and no further housing information is obtained. In institutions for 1950, separate quarters were enumerated as dwelling units only when such quarters were in structures containing no inmates. In 1960, all quarters occupied by staff personnel will be enumerated as housing units if they otherwise qualify. In dormitories, student quarters are excluded from the housing unit universe.

The reasons for the change

The plan to simplify the procedures and

improve the coverage of housing units in the 1960 housing universe is largely a direct result of Census users' need for housing characteristics for the entire housing inventory--for all the places where people live in separate quarters.

Housing statistics have been an increasingly important element in economic planning on a number of fronts, such as housing demand, marketing research for consumer goods and many other areas. But in city planning, in urban renewal or in slum clearance programs, the need becomes acute. These programs generally are designed to upgrade economic and social conditions in the decayed parts of large urban areas. It is in these crowded sections of cities that the 1950 Census of Housing was not entirely adequate, since the 1950 procedures did not provide separate housing statistics for the partially self-contained living quarters so common in blighted or slum parts of cities.

The high incidence of partially self-contained living quarters in heavily populated urban areas is plainly evident in 1950 publications for census tracts. In many urban tracts a large number of noninstitutional persons are reported as not living in households. Obviously, these persons were living in quarters that did not meet the 1950 dwelling unit definition, and no housing information was obtained for their quarters. Information on age of structure, condition, plumbing facilities, family income and number of persons per room, influences the selection, and is used to define the boundaries of potential planning, renewal or clearance areas. For planning purposes, these housing data should be available for all housing in an area, not just a part of it.

Other users of housing statistics, such as those concerned with housing market analysis, will find that the new definition will provide information for other types of quarters formerly excluded from the dwelling unit count. Many of the occupants of such quarters may be part of the potential demand for new housing or for consumers' goods. Common examples are young married couples who occupy a room with direct access but no cooking equipment. In economic terms, many persons in quarters classified as "nondwelling unit quarters" in 1950 differed little from those in dwelling units. Nevertheless, no household characteristics, such as age of head or income were available for such persons or groups of persons.

Finally, tabulation of these two new housing characteristics--access and cooking equipment--will provide a much better description of the character of living quarters than has hitherto been available. The term "quality," when applied to housing, previously has depended on condition of structure and availability of plumbing facilities. Data now will be available on condition, type of access, availability of cooking equipment, and plumbing facilities in evaluating quality of housing.

Estimates of the volume and characteristics of units added

In the course of making the change in concept, the Bureau obtained some information on the probable magnitude of the change as well as on the characteristics of the units that might be added. This

information was obtained from small scale studies by a task force of housing technicians working with Census staff and from a national sample taken in conjunction with the Current Population Survey in November 1958. It should be emphasized that the information cannot be considered as definitive. Under more favorable circumstances the national sample would have produced more reliable quantitative statistics. This survey, however, required the same enumerator to apply both sets of enumeration unit definitions, the old and the new, with only a minimum of training. This fact, plus an indication that some enumerators may have suspected that the supplement was a device for checking the accuracy of their work, is believed to have led to an unknown amount of bias.

Keeping in mind that these figures should be considered as approximations at best, some indication of what was found is given in Tables 1 and 2. In Table 1 it is assumed that the number of occupied and vacant housing units in 1960 will amount to about 60.8 million. The November survey indicated that there would be 59.6 million dwelling units as defined by the 1950 procedures. The remaining 1.2 million were found either in quarters classified as nondwelling units in 1950 (500,000 units) or as additional units in quarters classified as one dwelling unit by the 1950 definition (700,000 units). Of the 700,000 units, 100,000 may be assumed to represent a more precise delineation of dwelling units. Since all 700,000 of them have both separate cooking and direct access, they should have been counted separately even under the old definition.

The 60.8 million in this table is also distributed by subcategories of the 1960 housing unit universe. The first group which is tentatively labelled "regular housing units" are those which were found to have both direct access and cooking equipment or kitchen for exclusive use of the occupants. Substantially all of these quarters were dwelling units by the old definition. Even the two hundred thousand not so classified may well represent the sorts of dwelling units not separately identified under the old procedures. As pointed out above, 100,000 were found within quarters defined as one dwelling unit earlier. The balance were quarters that had the access and cooking qualifications of the 1950 dwelling unit but were located in rooming houses, hotels, motels, institutions and the like. The second group, for the purposes of this paper defined as partially self-contained units, had either direct access or cooking equipment or kitchen for exclusive use, but not both. Even though deficient in these criteria for separateness, half of this group were included among the regular dwelling units by the 1950 definition.

Thus from this table, it is possible to draw two conclusions with respect to the probable impact of using the new unit of enumeration:

(1) While the gross increase resulting from the change should be around 1.2 million, one sixth of these units have all of the characteristics of the regular dwelling units and probably should have been included earlier.

(2) Of those units which are lacking in some

aspect of complete separateness, half were included under the old procedures.

These conclusions might also be stated in terms of quality of the results:

(1) Coverage of units having either complete separateness or partial separateness will be more uniform.

(2) The user of housing statistics will have more detailed information relating to the adequacy of living quarters.

In Table 2 distributions are shown for three characteristics of partially self-contained units. Again it should be emphasized that these are only approximations of what we may expect to find. Also this group includes both of those that were previously included in the dwelling unit universe (about half) and the additional units included by the new definitions. From these distributions, however, we can conclude that relatively large proportions of these marginal living quarters consist of one furnished room occupied by one person who is a renter.

The qualitative evaluations of the task force mentioned earlier lend support to the distributions for rooms and tenure. There appears to be some question, however, as to whether the number of one-person units should be as high as 70 percent of the partially self-contained units. Observations in New York City and Memphis, Tennessee, indicated relatively large numbers of such quarters contained families.

The question of comparability

Any change or improvement in statistics always raises the problem of comparability. The merits of the improvement must be weighed against the disadvantage of a break in the series. In some respects the break is of a minor nature as far as both housing and population are concerned. It may be no greater than occurred between 1940 and 1950. Only this time we shall be able to quantify the change, whereas previously we have not been able to do so. The obvious advantages of better coverage and better descriptions of adequacy of all living quarters appear to outweigh the disadvantages. Furthermore, even if the old procedures were to be used again, only a rough comparability would exist. The definitions were subject to wide variability of interpretation by individual enumerators.

There is one problem of comparability of housing statistics that has given housing analysts some concern. This stems from the fact that added units which are carved out of the old dwelling units (the 700,000 shown in the first column of Table 1) will give rise to a large proportional increase in the number of units sharing plumbing facilities, although the absolute numbers will still represent a tiny part of the whole inventory. The increase will occur when a unit by the old definition contained one bathroom and is now reported as two or more units. Not only such added units would be shown as sharing these facilities but also that part of the original unit which is left. While it is true that this may result in an apparent increase in substandard units as defined by the

housing agencies, it does not represent a change in the true situation. The facilities were in fact shared before the change. It simply was not recognized that there were two separate units using the facilities. Because of the relatively small numbers involved, this increase in sharing will be obvious only in tabulations for some small areas, such as tracts, where these complex living arrangements are prevalent.

The effect of the change in definition may also be acute in the annual series of households and in the anticipated shift of persons from secondary to primary individuals. The change over to the new definition will take place at the time of the Census. Some change in level as well as in characteristics of households will be apparent. On the assumption that 15 to 20 percent of the added units will be vacant, the 1960 household figure from the Current Population Survey may be one million greater than the figure in 1959 solely because of the change in definition. Since about half of these added units result from fragmentation of households in the earlier series, a slight decrease in household size may be expected. Furthermore, there may be roughly 200,000 (or two-thirds) fewer secondary families and up to 700,000 persons whose status may be shifted from secondary to primary individuals. The number of subfamilies living with relatives may be reduced slightly, but not significantly. Finally a larger proportion of one-person households may be found.

Some help in relating the old household series to the new can be expected from the postcensal surveys. At least these surveys will provide a description of the added households and possibly some indication of the source of such households. It is also hoped that a means can be devised for measuring the extent of the change in the annual household series by examining the returns in the Current Population Survey.

The plans for postcensal evaluation of the change

The plans for postcensal evaluation have not yet been formulated in detail. These will, however, include identification of a sample of those units which would not have been counted as separate units in 1960 under the correct application of the 1950 definitions. From this evaluation, reasonably precise estimates of the magnitude of the change can probably be made. Some information will be available on the housing and household characteristics for the new units and for the old units, if any, from which they were derived. These surveys will include information on the source of the added units, that is the former classification of the quarters, as either dwelling unit or nondwelling unit.

Tabulation and publication plans

A simple distribution of all units by whether or not they have direct access, cooking equipment and bath or toilet for exclusive use will be tabulated for all areas. Those units lacking one or more of these characteristics will be tabulated in three groups: (1) with direct access and cooking exclusive but lacking exclusive use of bath or toilet; (2) with direct access but shared or no cooking equipment; and (3) with cooking exclusive

but access through another unit. For places of 25,000 or more population, this distribution will also be tabulated by tenure. It is intended to publish these data for all areas containing a significant number of partially self-contained units. Unpublished data for other areas will be available upon request.

In addition to the simple distribution, cross-tabulations of the three groups of units lacking or sharing access, cooking and bath or toilet will be published. The cross-tabulated characteristics will include such items as tenure, rooms, condition, number of units in structure, year built, number of persons, rent, and income. The areas for which these cross-tabulations will be shown include standard metropolitan statistical areas and cities having 100,000 or more inhabitants in 1960.

Table 1.—EFFECT OF CHANGE OF DEFINITION ON ESTIMATED NUMBER OF 1960 UNITS OF ENUMERATION

Living quarters by 1950 definition	Housing units by 1960 definition (in millions)		
	Total	Regular housing units	Partially self-contained units
Total units	60.8	58.8	2.0
Regular dwelling units..	59.6	58.6	1.0
Additional quarters within dwelling units..	0.7	0.1	0.6
Quarters in nondwelling units.....	0.5	0.1	0.4

Source: Derived from unpublished data collected by the U. S. Bureau of the Census in the current Population Survey, November 1958.

Table 2.—CHARACTERISTICS OF OCCUPIED PARTIALLY SELF-CONTAINED HOUSING UNITS

Characteristic	Percent Distribution
All partially self-contained housing units.....	100
<u>Rooms:</u>	
1.....	61
2.....	12
3 or more.....	24
Not reported.....	3
<u>Persons:</u>	
1.....	70
2.....	14
3 or more.....	14
Not reported.....	2
<u>Tenure:</u>	
Owner.....	9
Renter.....	64
Furnished.....	53
Unfurnished.....	10
No cash rent.....	27

Source: Derived from unpublished data collected by the U. S. Bureau of the Census in the Current Population Survey, November 1958.