

# Massachusetts State Data Center Newsletter

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## For Sale or Rent: Vacancy Rates in the Commonwealth

*by Alison Donta, Manager, Population Program*

As of April 1, 2000, there were 178,409 vacant housing units in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The majority of these vacant units were in Barnstable County (29.3%). Middlesex County, with 15,461 vacant units, had the second highest number of vacant housing units. The fewest vacant units were found in Franklin (2,473) and Hampshire (2,653) counties.

Total vacancy rates throughout counties in Massachusetts ranged from a low of 2.5% in Norfolk County to a high of 59.8% in Nantucket County. Dukes and Barnstable counties had the second and third highest vacancy rates in the Commonwealth. The total vacancy rate for

Massachusetts was 6.8%.

The total vacancy rate is calculated by dividing the number of vacant units in any geographic area by the total number of housing units in that same area. This rate, while giving a rough approximation of housing availability in any given community, can also be misleading. Vacant units may or may not be actually available for a specific purpose. According to the Census Bureau, vacant units are classified as "for rent," "for sale only," "rented or sold, not occupied," "for migrant work," "for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use," or "other vacant." This last category includes units such as housing for caretakers or janitors and new housing

that is technically complete enough to be occupied but is not yet finished.

Seasonal housing accounted for 52.6% of vacant housing in Massachusetts. The proportion of vacant units used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use was highest in the Cape/Island counties (95.0% in Dukes, 93.8% on Nantucket, and 90.0% in Barnstable County). Berkshire County had 60.8% of its vacant units used seasonally. Suffolk County had the lowest proportion of seasonal housing (12.5%). Therefore, an individual or family looking for a new home to buy may initially be attracted to the overall vacancy rates on Nantucket, but would soon discover 93.8% of the vacant units on Nantucket are for

*(continued on page 3)*

Housing Units and Vacancy Rates, by Tenure and County: Massachusetts 2000							
County	Housing Units			Vacancy rates			
	Total	Occupied	Vacant	Total	Homeowner	Rental	Available housing
Massachusetts	2,621,989	2,443,580	178,409	6.8	0.7	3.5	1.7
Barnstable County	147,083	94,822	52,261	35.5	1.4	7.4	1.9
Berkshire County	66,301	56,006	10,295	15.5	1.7	8.2	3.5
Bristol County	216,918	205,411	11,507	5.3	0.8	5.5	2.6
Dukes County	14,836	6,421	8,415	56.7	1.3	3.6	0.9
Essex County	287,144	275,419	11,725	4.1	0.5	3.0	1.4
Franklin County	31,939	29,466	2,473	7.7	1.4	3.6	2.1
Hampden County	185,876	175,288	10,588	5.7	1.0	5.3	2.6
Hampshire County	58,644	55,991	2,653	4.5	0.7	2.9	1.4
Middlesex County	576,681	561,220	15,461	2.7	0.5	2.3	1.2
Nantucket County	9,210	3,699	5,511	59.8	2.4	3.9	1.2
Norfolk County	255,154	248,827	6,327	2.5	0.4	2.5	1.1
Plymouth County	181,524	168,361	13,163	7.3	0.6	3.2	1.2
Suffolk County	292,520	278,722	13,798	4.7	0.9	2.9	2.2
Worcester County	298,159	283,927	14,232	4.8	0.8	4.3	2.0

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 SF-1 data.*

# Challenging Your Census 2000 Count

by John Gaviglio, State Data Center Manager



The State Data Center at the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research is offering its assistance to the following entities, should they decide to challenge their Census 2000 population count:

- Local and tribal governments
- Local clerks
- Local planners
- Local planning board representatives
- State legislators on the Redistricting Committee

- State equivalents that are acting on behalf of a local or tribal jurisdiction

We will provide information that will be critical to completing challenges, such as:

- Count Question Resolution program information and guidelines
- An Excel spreadsheet with total population, sex, age, race and Hispanic origin, households, group quarters population, housing units, tenure and occupancy status at the Census block level

- Your Census block maps in Adobe PDF format
- Selected pages from our Summary File 1 profile for your jurisdiction
- Who to contact to get printed Census block maps

MISER will provide these data and one hour of consulting time free of charge. Additional assistance will be provided at a discounted hourly rate. Please send all requests on your official stationery to:

*John Gaviglio  
MISER State Data Center  
200 Hicks Way  
University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst, MA 01003-9277*

# Census 2000 Supplementary Survey

by Chris Amherst, Data Specialist, Boston Office

The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (C2SS) summary tables include economic, social, and housing characteristics. Currently, results are available for the United States as a whole, the 50 states, and the District of Columbia. The 107 tables provided for each of these areas present estimates on a variety of topics. This fall, similar tables will be released for most cities and counties with populations of 250,000 or more. In Massachusetts, Hampden County will be excluded as it is already covered by the American Community Survey (ACS).

This supplemental survey was conducted as part of the Census 2000 effort using the same questionnaire

and data collection techniques utilized by the ACS. It was established as a way of testing whether or not the ACS could replace the long form in 2010.

The data available through C2SS are based on a sample of 700,000 households over a 12 month period. In Massachusetts, households received the survey sometime between March and May 2000. This data collection differs from the Census 2000 long form method so C2SS data and their definitions will not be directly comparable. For example, the Census 2000 long form bases income data on January 1999 to December 1999. The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey bases income data on the 12 months

prior to when a household received the survey.

The survey provides information that would not be available until the release of the Census 2000 long form data.



For more information about the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, go to:

<http://www.census.gov/c2ss/www/>

For information about the American Community Survey, go to:

<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>



### Guest Corner

MISER has been providing school enrollment forecasting services to towns/cities since 1983. Typical users have been school superintendents, school committees, or others doing long range planning and budgeting at the local, regional, and state levels. Our aim is to help public schools by providing school leaders with meaningful data and strategic tools. Our school enrollment studies provide vital information to schools and communities as they plan for capital improvements, sufficient teacher workforce, and other budgeting needs. In addition, our forecasts serve as an important piece of the School Building Assistance application required by the State. MISER offers 3 types of forecasts and users can request more than one type for comparative purposes.

#### 1. Individual School Report (ISR)

This forecast is based on historical patterns of student enrollment at school districts on October 1 of each year. As with all of our reports, individual grade and school year enrollments are forecasted for

*(For Sale or Rent...from page 1)*  
seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Thus, more precise measures of vacancy are needed in order to assess the true availability of housing throughout the Commonwealth. The homeowner vacancy rate is a measure of the proportion of owner-occupied and for sale housing units still vacant. Similarly, the rental vacancy rate is a measure of the proportion of renter-occupied and for rent units still vacant. The overall measure of "available housing" reflects the number of vacant units either for sale or for rent divided by the total number of housing units in any given geographic area.

# School Enrollment Forecasting

by *Lonnie Kaufman, MISER Education Coordinator*



### Guest Corner

up to 10 years and presented in easy to read tables and figures.

#### 2. School Attending Children (SAC)

This forecast includes all students from individual towns/cities who are either attending their local school district or other options such as charter schools, other public schools, vocational schools or collaborative programs. For towns/cities considering new building projects, this report has proven to be a valuable tool in identifying the "maximum" number of local students that are eligible to attend their schools, although they may currently be choosing alternatives.

#### 3. Scenarios

One of the unique features we offer is the ability to develop and compare "scenarios" to examine the effect of actual, proposed, or anticipated changes in the school and town/city. Thus, for example, if you believe that more families/students will enter the school due to a new housing project or business (thereby increasing migration), or that more students will leave

the school through school choice (thereby decreasing retention), we can modify specific numbers in these matrices and see the effect over time on school population.

Some recent enhancements to the forecasting methodology :

- Birth data are collected and analyzed by month to account for unique Kindergarten start dates.
- Separate tables and figures are provided for enrollment, retention, migration, and persistence rates.
- Maximum enrollment possibilities can be determined by comparing ISR and SAC forecasts.
- Impact of potential enrollment changes resulting from charter schools, choice, building growth, or other factors can be analyzed.

Public schools and State agencies receive a 20% discount

*For more information go to: <http://www.umass.edu/miser/edu/index.html> or call Lonnie Kaufman at 413-545-3460.*

The table on page 1 reveals that these more precise vacancy rates were much lower than total vacancy rates throughout Massachusetts in 2000. Homeowner vacancy rates were highest in Nantucket (2.4%) and Berkshire (1.7%) counties, and lowest in Norfolk (0.4%) and Essex (0.5%) counties. Rental vacancy rates were higher than homeowner rates for all counties with the highest rates in Berkshire (8.2%) and Barnstable (7.4%) counties. Middlesex (2.3%) and Norfolk (2.5%) counties had the lowest rental vacancy rates in 2000. Berkshire County had the highest available housing rate (3.5%) and Norfolk County had the lowest

(1.1%). Overall, Massachusetts had only a 1.7% available housing rate. These low rates throughout the Commonwealth are reflected in the increasing rents and home prices and increasing reports of housing shortages, especially in Boston and some college towns such as Amherst and Cambridge. In many areas of the Commonwealth, homes are purchased and rentals are rented almost as soon as they are advertised. Available housing rates have decreased over this past decade (with the exception of Berkshire County, where the rate was 3.3% in 1990) and many planners predict that, for most areas, the trend will continue.

## New Census Report Documents Rapid U.S. Internet Use 1997-2000

by William Murray, Boston Office Manager

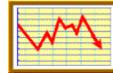
New census data released this month document how effective internet use as a means of communication has really become. In 2000, about 1-in-3 adults used email from home. The data show that in August 2000, 54 million households had one or more computers. Compared to 1984, when the first data were collected, this is an increase from 42% to 51% of all households.

The new data show that in 2000, 41.5% of households had internet access. Again this is a big increase from 1998 when the same figure was 26.2%. The internet use data was first collected in 1997 when the access was 18%.

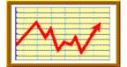
Surprisingly, home computer access differed by age of household members. Among households with children ages 3-17 is 65% with 30.4% using the internet; the same figures for adults 18 years and older are 55.4% and 37.3% respectively. PC availability in 2000 was relatively greater where children were present.

For more information go to: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p23-207.pdf>

## Selected Statistics from the 2000 State Data Center Annual Report



Reported by the SDC Lead and all Massachusetts SDC Affiliates



January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000

Data requests	29,921
Full time equivalent employees (FTE)	41.5
SDC coordinating organizations	1
SDC Affiliate organizations	46
BIDC Affiliate organizations	17
Affiliate Meetings Held	1
Affiliates in attendance	27
Customized programming projects completed*	144
Customized products prepared using Census Bureau Data*	20
Decennial Censuses speeches and presentations given*	4
Economic Censuses workshops given*	1
Other Census programs promotional activities	2
Training workshops given*	1
Media Activities*	6
Census 2000 Review*	
Days spent in Suitland MD	29

\*SDC Lead only



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



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