U.S. Department of Commerce BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

## Market Absorption of Apartments

First Quarter 1988-Absorptions
H130-88- Q1
Issued June 1988

Figure 1.
Units in Apartment Buildings Started, Completed, and Absorbed: 1982 to 1987


Note: Limited to bulidings with five or more units in permit-issuing places.

1. Source: Constructlon Reports, C20-88-2 (February 1988) table 2.
2. Source: Construction Reports, C22-88-2 (February 1988) table 2.
3. Privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished apartments.

Questions regarding these data may be directed to Housing Division, Telephone 301-763-8165.
For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Of the 78,100 privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished rental apartments completed in buildings with five units or more during the fourth quarter, October-December 1987,65 percent were absorbed (seasonally adjusted) 3 months efter their completion. This is about the same ( $\pm 5$ percent) as the 3 -month seasonally adjusted rate of 62 percent for aparments completed in the third quarter of 1987 , and also about the same ( $\pm 5$ percent) as the seasonally adjusted rate of 64 percent for fourth quarter 1986 completions (table 3).

The statistics in this report are based on a sample survey and consequently they are subject to sampling variability. ${ }^{1}$ Estimates derived from different samples would differ from one another. The standard error of a survey estimate is a measure of the variation among the estimates from all possible samples. Estimates of standard errors have been computed from the sample data and are presented in the tables. They allow us to construct interval estimates with prescribed confldence that the interval includes the average of the
${ }^{1}$ See Reliability of Estimates on page 4.
estimates from all possible samples. For all the change statements made in this report, 90 -percent confidence intervals for statistical comparisons can be constructed by using the 90 -percent deviate shown in the parentheses after the change; however, when a 90 -percent confidence interval contains zero, we are uncertain whether or not the change has occurred. In addition, some of the statistical findings which are not part of the tables are also provided with a 90 -percent deviate.

The median asking rent for unfurnished units constructed in the fourth quarter of 1987 was $\$ 533$. Aparments renting for less than $\$ 350$ accounted for only 7 percent of unfurnished rental unit completions. Those renting for $\$ 350$ to $\$ 449$ accounted for 21 percent ( $\pm 5$ ), similar to the 26 percent $( \pm 5)$ for apartments renting for $\$ 450$ to $\$ 549$. Almost half (46 percent) of new apartments were renting for $\$ 550$ or more.

More than half ( 55 percent) of all newly constructed apartments were built with two bedrooms. Forly one percent were buit with fewer than two bedrooms; 4 percent with three bedrooms or more (table 1). The 3 -month absorption rate for apartments with three bedrooms or more was 80 percent, 17 percentage points ( $\pm$ 6) higher than the 3 -month rate of 63 percent for apartments with fewer than three bedrooms.

Table 1. Characteristics of Unfurnished Apartments Completed During the Fourth Ouarter of 1987 and Rented Within 3 Months

## Not Seasonally Adjusted

(Privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, tental apartments in buildings with five units or more. Data regarding number of bedrooms and asking rent are collected at the initial interview, i.e., 3 months following completion. Data may not add so total due to rounding. Medians are computed using unrounded data.

*Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . X Not applicable.

Figure 2.

## Median Rent of Apartments Completed in the United States: 1984 to 1987



Figure 3.
Cooperative and Condominum Aparment Completions as Percent of Total Apartment Completions: 1984 to 1987


Note: Limited to Buldings with flve or more unlts in permit-Issuing places.

Apartments completed in the third quarter, JulySeptember 1987, which have been on the market for 6 months were 80 percent absorbed. This is a decrease of $7( \pm 4)$ percentage points from the 6 -month rate for apartments completed during the second quarter, but similar ( $\pm 6$ percent) to the 6 -month rate for those completed in the first quarter. Apartments which have been on the market for 9 months, those completed during April-June 1987, were 93 percent absorbed, 5 percentage points higher ( $\pm 4$ ) than the 9 -month absorption rate for first quarter 1987 completions (table 3).

Approximately 24,300 cooperative and condominium apartments in buildings with five units or more were completed in the fourth quarter of 1987. The 3 -month absorption rate for these apartments was 70 percent. Cooperative and condominium apartments accounted for about 22 percent of total fourth quarter 1987 completions (table 4).

The median asking price for condominium units buit in the fourth quarier was $\$ 122,000$. Of the 23,900 newly constructed condominium apartments, 68 percent had two bedrooms, 19 percent had fewer than two bedrooms, and 12 percent had three or more (table 5).

All apartments in buildings with five units or more completed during the fourth quarter of 1987 totaled 110,000 (table 6). This is about 24 percent ( $\pm 7$ ) fewer than were completed during the same period (fourth quarter) in 1986, and 8 percent ( $\pm 5$ ) fewer than the 119,600 completed in the third quarter of 1987.

The majority of the units completed in the fourth quarter, $71( \pm 4)$ percent, were privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, rental apartments. Furnished, privately financed, nonsubsidized, rental units accounted for less than 1 percent ( $\pm 0.3$ ) of all apartment completions. Although this is significantly lower than the percentages of furnished apartments in the third quarter and in the fourth quarter a year ago, caution is urged in the interpretation of the current figure as it may be a temporary aberration in the data and may not be an indication of the beginning of some underlying trend.

Units in federally subsidized properties built under programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Low Income Housing Assistance (Section 8), Senior Citizens Housing Direct Loans (Section 202), and all units in buildings containing apartments in the FHA rent supplement program) accounted for 4 $( \pm 2)$ percent of total completions.

Three ( $\pm 2$ ) percent of the apartments completed are not in the scope of the survey for the purpose of measuring absorption rates or characteristics and include time-sharing units, continuing care retirement units, and turnkey housing (privately built for and sold to
local public housing authorities subsequent to completion). The data on privately financed units include privately owned housing subsidized by State and local government.

A total of 346,500 unfurnished units were completed in the last 12 months (table 7). Of these, 83 ( $\pm$ 4) percent were reported as rented by the end of the first quarter of 1988. The median asking rent for all units completed in 1987 was $\$ 516$; the median asking rent for the 60,200 units remaining for rent at the end of March 1988 was $\$ 550$ or more.

The total number of condominium apartments completed in the last 12 months was 89,500 (table 8 ). Those reported as sold by the end of the first quarter of 1988 numbered $74,200( \pm 8,000)$, or 83 percent $( \pm 4)$ of the total. The median price asked for all condominiums built in 1987 was $\$ 114,600$. The total number of condominium apartments completed in the last 12 months that remained for sale at the end of the first quarter was 15,400 and they had a median asking price of $\$ 118,700$, about the same as the median price of $\$ 119,400$ asked for units sold in the first quarter of 1988. About two-thirds of all condominium apartments built in the past 12 months have two bedrooms, whereas two-bedroom, unfurnished, rental apartments have accounted for only about half of all such units completed in the past year.

## SAMPLE DESIGN

The Survey of Market Absorption (SOMA) is designed to provide data concerning the rate at which nonsubsidized and unfurnished privately financed units in buildings with five units or more are rented (or absorbed). In addition, data on characteristics of the units, such as rent and number of bedrooms, are collected.

The buildings selected for SOMA are those included in the Census Bureau's Survey of Construction (SOC). ${ }^{2}$ For SOC, the United States is first divided into primary sampling units (PSU's) which are sampled on the basis of population. Next, a sample of permit-issuing places is selected within each sample PSU. Finally, all buildings with five units or more within sampled places, as well as a subsample of buildings with one to four units, are selected.

Each quarter, a sample of buildings with five or more housing units in the SOC sample reported as completed during that quarter come into sample for SOMA. Buildings completed in nonpermit-issuing areas are excluded from consideration. Information on the proportion of units absorbed 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after completion is obtained for units in buildings selected in a given quarter in each of the next four quarters.

[^0]Each quarter the absorption data for some buildings are received too late for inclusion in the report. These late data will be included in a revised table in the next quarterly report (see table 2).

## ESTIMATION

Unbiased quarterly estimates are formed by multiplying the counts for each building by its base weight (the inverse of its probability of selection) and then summing over all buildings. The final estimate is then obtained by multiplying the unbiased estimate by the following ratio estimate factor:
total units in $5+$ buildings in permit-issuing areas as estimated by the SOC for that quarter
total units in $5+$ buildings as estimated by SOMA for that quarter

This procedure produces estimates of the units completed in a given quarter which are consistent with the published figures from the Housing Completions Series, ${ }^{3}$ and also reduces, to some extent, the sampling variability of the estimates of totals.
${ }^{3}$ See "Housing Completions," Construction Reports, Series C22.

It is assumed that the absorption rates and other characteristics of units not included in the interviewed group or not accounted for are identical to rates for units where data were obtained. The noninterviewed and not-accounted-for cases constitute less than 2 percent of the sample housing units in this survey.

## RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES

There are two types of possible errors associated with data from sample surveys: sampling and nonsampling errors. The following is a description of the sampling and nonsampling errors associated with SOMA.

## Nonsampling Errors

In general, nonsampling errors can be attributed to many sources: inability to obtain information about all cases, definitional difficulties, differences in the interpretation of questions, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correctinformation, and errors made in processing the data.

Table 2. Characteristics of Unfurnished Apartments Completed During the Third Ouarter of 1987 and Rented Within 3 Months (Revised)

## Not Seasonally Adjusted

(Privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, rental apartments in buildings with five units or more. Data regarding number of bedrooms and asking rent are collected at the initial interview, i.e., 3 months following completion. Data may not add to total due to rounding. Medians are computed using unrounded data.)


[^1]
## Sampling Errors

The particular sample used for this survey is one of a large number of possible samples of the same size that could have been selected using the same sample design. Even if the same questionnaires, instructions, and interviewers were used, estimates from each of the different samples would differ from each other. The deviation of a sample estimate from the average of all possible samples is defined as the sampling error. The standard error of a survey estimate attempts to provide a measure of this variation among the estimates from the possible samples and, thus, is a measure of the precision with which an estimate from a sample approximates the average result of all possible samples.

As calculated for this survey, the standard error also partially measures the variation in the estimates due to response and interviewer errors (nonsampling
errors), but it does not measure, as such, any systematic biases in the data. Therefore, the accuracy of the estimates depends on both the sampling and nonsampling error measured by the standard error, biases, and some additional nonsampling errors not measured by the standard error.

The sample estimate and its estimated standard error enable the user to construct confidence intervals, ranges that would include the average result of all possible samples with a known probability. For example, if all possible samples were selected, each of these were surveyed under essentially the same general conditions, and an estimate and its estimated standard error were calculated from each sample, then-

1. Approximately 68 percent of the intervals from one standard error below the estimate to one standard error above the estimate (i.e., 68 -percent confidence interval) would include the average result of all possible samples.

Table 3. Absorption Rates of Privately Financed Nonsubsidzed Unfurnished Apartments: 1984 to 1987
(Buildings with five units or more.)

| Quarter of completion | Total unfurnished apartments completed |  | Seasonally adjusted--rented within 3 months |  | Not seasonally adjusted-rented within- |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  | 3 months | 6 months |  | 9 months |  | 12 months |  |
|  | Number | Standard error* (number of apartments) |  |  | Percent | Standard error* (percentage points) | Percent | Standard error* (percentage points) | Percent | Standard error* (percentage points | Percent |  | Percent | Standard error* (percentage points) |
| 1984 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March | 68,900 | 2,620 | 71 | 2.6 | 68 | 2.7 | 88 | 1.9 | 94 | 1.4 | 96 | 1.1 |
| April-June..... | 84,800 | 3,790 | 68 | 2.5 | 72 | 2.4 | 88 | 1.7 | 93 | 1.3 | 96 | 0.9 |
| July-September. | 72,200 | 3,700 | 63 | 2.2 | 64 | 2.2 | 82 | 1.9 | 91 | 1.4 | 96 | 0.8 |
| October-December... | 87,400 | 3,730 | 66 | 2.0 | 64 | 20 | 81 | 1.6 | 90 | 1.0 | 94 | 0.8 |
| 1985 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March | 74,800 | 3,260 | 67 | 1.5 | 64 | 2.1 | 84 | 1.6 | 91 | 1.2 | 94 | 1.2 |
| April-June..... | 94,200 | 4,080 | 65 | 2.0 | 68 | 2.0 | 85 | 1.5 | 92 | 1.1 | 95 | 0.9 |
| July-September... | 97,100 | 3,900 | 64 | 1.9 | 65 | 1.9 | 83 | 1.5 | 91 | 1.1 | 96 | 0.8 |
| October-December... | 98,300 | 3,420 | 65 | 1.6 | 62 | 1.6 | 82 | 1.3 | 93 | 0.9 | 96 | 0.7 |
| 1986 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March ...... | 92,700 | 3,430 | 67 | 1.7 | 65 | 1.7 | 86 | 1.3 | 93 | 0.9 | 96 | 0.8 |
| April-June........... | 99,600 | 4,020 | 63 | 1.9 | 66 | 1.9 | 84 | 1.4 | 91 | 1.1 | 95 | 0.8 |
| July-September...... | 107,700 | 5,670 | 69 | 1.7 | 71 | 1.7 | 85 | 1.3 | 92 | 1.0 | 96 | 0.4 |
| October-December... | 107,700 | 5,670 | 64 | 1.8 | 61 | 1.8 | 81 | 1.5 | 91 | 0.6 | 95 | 0.4 |
| 1987 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March ${ }^{\text {P }}$. | 97,700 | 4,620 | 60 | 1.8 | 58 | 2.1 | 80 | 2.6 | 88 | 2.7 | 92 | 2.4 |
| April-June. | 81,600 | 4,780 | 64 | 2.2 | 88 | 1.4 | 87 | 0.7 | 93 | 0.7 | (NA) | (NA) |
| July-September ${ }^{\text {r }}$ | 89,100 | 4,240 | 62 | 2.4 | 63 | 2.4 | 80 | 2.4 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |
| October-December... | 78,100 | 4,790 | 65 | 2.0 | 63 | 2.0 | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) | (NA) |

[^2]2. Approximately 90 percent of the intervals from 1.6 standard errors below the estimate to 1.6 standard errors above the estimate (i.e., 90 -percent confidence interval) would include the average result of all possible samples.
3. Approximately 95 percent of the intervals from two standard errors below the estimate to two standard errors above the estimate (i.e., 95 -percent confidence interval) would include the average result of all possible samples.
For very small estimates, the lower limit of the confidence interval may be negative. In this case, a better approximation to the true interval estimate can be achieved by restricting the interval estimate to positive values, that is, by changing the lower limit of the interval estimate to zero.

The average result of all possible samples either is or is not contained in any particular computed interval. However, for a particular sample, one can say with
specified confidence that the average result of all possible samples is included in the constructed interval.

The conclusions stated in this report are considered significant at the 90 -percent confidence level.

For example, table 1 of this report shows that there were 42,700 apartments with two bedrooms completed in the fourth quarter of 1988. The standard error of this estimate is 3,160 . The 68 -percent confldence interval as shown by these data is from 39,540 to 45,860 . Therefore, a conclusion that the average estimate derived from all possible samples lies within a range computed in this way would be correct for roughly 68 percent of all possible samples. Similarly, we could conclude that the average estimate derived from all possible samples lies within the interval from 37,644 to 47,756 (using 1.6 times the standard error) with 90 percent confidence.

The data in this report are preliminary and subject to slight changes in the annual report.

Table 4. Absorption Rates of Cooperative and Condominum Apartments: 1984 to 1987 Not Seasonally Adjusted
(Structures with five units or more.)


[^3]
## Table 5. Characteristics of Condominium Apartments Completed During Fourth Quarter of 1987 and Sold Within 3 Months

## Not Seasonally Adjusted

(Privately financed, nonsubsidized, condominium aparments in buildings with five units or more. Data regarding number of bedrooms and asking price are collected at the initial interview, ine., 3 months following completion. Data may not add to total due to rounding. Medians are computed using unrounded data.)


* Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . X Not applicable

Table 6. Apartments Completed in Buildings With Five Units or More: 1984 to 1987
(Data may not add to total due to rounding.)

| Quarter of completion | Total apartments completed |  | Unfurnished apartments |  | Furnished apartments |  | Cooperatives and condominiums |  | Federally subsidized |  | Other ${ }^{\text {\% }}$ |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Number | Standard error* | Number | Standard error* | Number | Standard error* | Number | Standard error* | Number | Standard error* | Number | Standard error* |
| 1984 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March. | 104,400 | 5,110 | 68,300 | 2,620 | 1,700 | 630 | 23,600 | 2,150 | 6,200 | 1,180 | 4,000 | 960 |
| April-June | 138,100 | 7,260 | 84,800 | 3,790 | 2,700 | 970 | 38,500 | 3,290 | 9,000 | 1,750 | 3,100 | 1,040 |
| July-September. | 126,900 | 6,940 | 72,200 | 3,700 | 1,700 | 770 | 43,200 | 3,360 | 9,000 | 1,740 | 800 | 530 |
| October-December. . | 136,600 | 7,220 | 87,400 | 3,730 | 3,700 | 1,140 | 38,400 | 3,280 | 4,300 | 1,220 | 2,800 | 990 |
| 1985 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March. | 117,900 | 8,290 | 74,800 | 3,260 | 1,100 | 590 | 32,700 | 2,850 | 2,500 | 880 | 6,800 | 1,430 |
| April.June .... | 138,300 | 8,040 | 94,200 | 4,060 | 1,700 | 850 | 36,600 | 3,570 | 3,300 | 1,190 | 2,500 | 1,030 |
| July-September.. | 144,600 | 7,850 | 97,100 | 3,990 | 2,100 | 890 | 39,000 | 3,550 | 2,400 | 870 | 3,900 | 1,010 |
| October-December. | 132,600 | 7,110 | 98,300 | 3,420 | 2,500 | 940 | 27,400 | 2,870 | 3,800 | 1,160 | 600 | 460 |
| 1986 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March. | 123,400 | 7,220 | 92,700 | 3,430 | 1,400 | 710 | 23,300 | 2,830 | 5,300 | 1,440 | 700 | 530 |
| April-June . | 135,500 | 8,300 | 99,600 | 4,020 | 4,600 | 1,460 | 23,700 | 3,130 | 6,600 | 1,740 | 900 | 650 |
| July-September.. | 145,900 | 5,640 | 107,700 | 5,670 | 3,100 | 1,200 | 26,500 | 3,670 | 6,900 | 1,780 | 1,600 | 870 |
| October-December.. | 145,400 | 5,640 | 107,700 | 5,670 | 2,500 | 1,080 | 28,200 | 3,890 | 4,400 | 1,430 | 2,700 | 1,120 |
| 1987 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| January-March ${ }^{\ddagger}$.... | 126,400 | 5,140 | 97,700 | 4,620 | 1,400 | 780 | 20,600 | 3,210 | 3,700 | 1,310 | 3,000 | 1,160 |
| April-June ${ }^{\text {r }}$ | 117,900 | 5,140 | 81,600 | 4,780 | 2,600 | 530 | 27,100 | 4,210 | 3,200 | 280 | 3,300 | 880 |
| July-Septembert | 119,600 | 5,140 | 89,100 | 4,240 | 3,700 | 1,440 | 18,900 | 2,800 | 5,900 | 2,000 | 1,900 | 520 |
| October-December.. | 110,000 | 3,620 | 78,100 | 4,790 | 100 | 20 | 24,300 | 3,510 | 4,300 | 1,320 | 3,100 | 1,580 |

[^4]Table 7. Characteristics of Unfurnished Apartments Completed in the Last 4 Ouarters and Reported as Rented and Remaining For Rent in First Ouarter of 1988
(Privately financed, nonsubsidized, unfurnished, rental apartments in buildings with five units or more. Data regarding number of bedrooms and asking rent are collected at the initial interview, i.e., 3 months following completion. Data may not add to total due to rounding. Medians are computed using unrounded data.)


* Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . NA Not available.

Note: These data are for first through fourth quarter 1987 completions.

Table 8. Characteristics of Condominium Apartments Completed in Last 4 Ouarters and Reported as Sold and Remaining For Sale in First Quarter of 1988
(Privately financed, nonsubsidized, condominium apartments in buildings with five units or more. Data regarding number of bedrooms and asking price are collected at the initial interview, i.e., 3 months following completion. Data may not add to cotal due to rounding. Medians are computed using unrounded data.)

| Item | Total con-dominiums completed in last 4 quarters | Standard error* (number of apartments) | Condominiums sold prior to 1 st quarter 1988 | Standard error* number of apart ments ) | Condominiums sold in ist quarter 1988 | Standard error* number of apartments ) | Condominums remaining for sale at end of 1st quarter 1988 | Standard error* (number of apariments ) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Total. | 89,500 | 6,880 | 54,300 | 4,390 | 19,900 | 2,010 | 15,400 | 1,520 |
| PRICE CLASSES |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Less than \$50,000 | 4,100 | 1,010 | 2,400 | 510 | 800 | 200 | 900 | 340 |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 ... . . . . . . . . . . . . . | 15,600 | 1,320 | 10,300 | 930 | 3,000 | 470 | 2,200 | 280 |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999 | 18,700 | 2,540 | 16,700 | 1,130 | 4,500 | 700 | 3,500 | 950 |
| \$100,000 to \$149,999 | 21,900 | 3,500 | 15,000 | 2,940 | 4,200 | 610 | 2,600 | 530 |
| \$150,000 to \$199,999. | 9,500 | 2,090 | 5,600 | 1,280 | 2,200 | 780 | 1,700 | 370 |
| \$200,000 or more . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | 19,800 | 4,630 | 10,300 | 2,560 | 5,100 | 1,520 | 4,400 | 890 |
| Median asking price. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . | \$114,600 | \$7,850 | \$112,600 | \$7,280 | \$119,400 | \$11,850 | \$118,700 | \$14,670 |
| NUMEER OF REDROOMS |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Less than 2. | 19,000 | 3,150 | 11,400 | 1,760 | 4,100 | 1,030 | 3,500 | 440 |
| 2 | 61,300 | 5,950 | 38,000 | 3,960 | 13,400 | 1,650 | 9,900 | 1,370 |
| 3 or more | 9,200 | 1,400 | 4,800 | 670 | 2,500 | 510 | 1,900 | 480 |

[^5]
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[^0]:    ${ }^{2}$ See "Housing Starts," Construction Reports, Series C20, for details of this survey.

[^1]:    * Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . X Not applicable.

[^2]:    * Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . NA Not available. 'Revised.

[^3]:    * Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 . NA Not available. ${ }^{\text {r Revised. }}$

[^4]:    * Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of $3 . \quad$ rRevised.
    ${ }^{1}$ Other includes time-sharing units, continuing care retirement units and turnkey housing (privately built for and sold to local public housing authorities subsequent to completion).

[^5]:    * Standard error within range of about 2 chances out of 3 .

    Note: These data are for first through fourth quarter 1987 completions.

