Rental Housing Market Condition Measures: A Comparison of U.S. Metropolitan Areas From 2009 to 2011

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INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of the report "Rental Housing Market Condition Measures: 2009" on the rental housing market in the nation's 50 most populous metropolitan statistical areas (metro areas) based on the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), the housing landscape has changed.[1] The recession has officially ended. However, with the subsequent decline in the homeownership rate over the last several years, an increasingly larger percentage of households are seeking to rent. This report will look at four measures of rental market conditions and their changes between 2009 and 2011: housing costs, housing cost burdens, rental vacancy rates, and renter share of total households.

RENTAL HOUSING MARKET MEASURES

Rental Costs

In 2011, the lowest median gross monthly rents among all the metro areas in the United States were $502 in Wheeling, WV-OH, and $536 in Johnstown, PA. The San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA, Metro Area and Honolulu, HI, Metro Area had the highest gross rents, $1,460 and $1,419, respectively. Among the 366 metro areas, 259 (70.8 percent) had a median gross rent below the national median of $871, 67 areas (18.3 percent) had a median gross rent above the national median, and 40 areas (10.9 percent) were not statistically different from the national median.

A comparison of all metro areas to the national median masks the tighter rental conditions faced by renters living in higher density metro areas. Out of the 50 most populous metro areas, the average renter household in 26 areas (52 percent) spent more than the national median, those in 22 areas (44 percent) spent less than the national median, and those in 2 areas (4 percent) were not statistically different from the national median.[2]

Gross rent: The monthly amount of rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water, and sewer) and fuel (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.).

Gross rent as a percentage of income: The ratio of gross rent to household income. It is used as a measure of housing affordability by policymakers and as a determinant of eligibility for federal housing programs and is often referred to as a housing cost burden.

For this report, a renting household is considered "burdened" if the household is required to spend 35 percent or more of its income on housing costs.

Rental vacancy rate: The proportion of the rental inventory that is vacant and "for rent." It is computed by dividing the number of vacant units "for rent" by the sum of renter-occupied units, vacant units "for rent," and vacant units that have been rented but not yet occupied, and then multiplying by 100.

[1] For a detailed explanation of the metropolitan statistical areas in this report, go to <www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/bulletins/fy2009/09-01.pdf>.

[2] Since this report looks at what has happened to the metropolitan areas that were examined in the earlier report, the most populous are those that were most populous in 2009.

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Among the 50 most populous metro areas, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY, Metro Area ($682); Pittsburgh, PA, Metro Area ($682); and Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN, Metro Area ($696) had the lowest median gross rents, but they were not significantly different from each other. While the median gross rents in Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN, did not differ from those in Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN ($711), and Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH ($712), the median gross rent in Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY, and Pittsburgh, PA, was significantly lower than the gross rent in the remaining 47 of the 50 most populous metro areas.

The San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA, Metro Area, with a gross rent of $1,460, was the most expensive rental housing market among the 50 most populous metro areas. Following San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA, was the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, Metro Area with median gross rent of $1,391. The third highest median gross rent was in San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA, Metro Area ($1,345); the fourth highest median gross rent was in San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA, Metro Area ($1,237); the fifth highest median gross rent was in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA, Metro Area ($1,214). Rounding out the top seven most expensive metro areas are New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA ($1,187), and Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH ($1,163).

Table 1 shows that, between 2009 and 2011, median gross rent adjusted for inflation changed in one-half of the 50 most populous metro areas with decreases in all but 2 metro areas. The largest decline of $130 (from $1,087 in 2009 to $957 in 2011), was in the Las Vegas-Paradise, NV, Metro Area. The only increases—of $26 (from $1,365 in 2009 to $1,391 in 2011) in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, Metro Area and $15 (from $1,172 in 2009 to $1,187 in 2011) in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA, Metro Area—were not significantly different from each other.

When all 366 metro areas were compared, a different pattern emerged. While only 80 of the metro areas experienced changes between 2009 and 2011, 23 of them experienced increases and 57 experienced decreases (Figure 1). Assuming that, in general, declining supply (as evidenced by decreases in the rental vacancy rate) and increased demand (as evidenced by a higher percentage of renting households) would lead to increases in gross rent, one might expect higher vacancy rates in 2011 than in 2009 given the number of metro areas that experienced declines in gross rent between 2009 and 2011. However, the Rental Vacancy Rate section shows that this did not occur, suggesting a more complex relationship which is beyond the scope of this brief.

The biggest declines occurred in the following metro areas: Port St. Lucie, FL ($176 from $1,085 to $909); Naples-Marco Island, FL ($150 from $1,063 to $913); Carson City, NV ($142 from $967 to $825); Las Vegas-Paradise, NV ($130 from $1,087 to $957); Sebastian-Vero Beach, FL ($123 from $894 to $771); Norwich-New London, CT ($106 from $1,071 to $965); and Idaho Falls, ID ($87 from $734 to $647). While the decline in Port St. Lucie is significantly different from all metro areas except the six mentioned, the declines in the other six metro areas are not statistically different from each other, nor are they different from many of the other metro areas with large declines. Table 2 shows the metro areas with the largest increases in median gross rent.

Of the remaining, 283 had no change and comparable statistics were not available for 3 areas. Because declines were across the board, the most and least expensive metro areas in 2011 remained largely unchanged from 2009. The large number of metro areas experiencing declines, coupled with the large share of the population living in metro areas, contributed to a national decline from $880 in 2009 to $871 in 2011. (There was no change nationally in median gross rents between 2009 and 2010.)

Renter Burden

Nationwide, more than 2 in 5 renter households (44.3 percent) had housing costs that consumed 35 percent or more of their income, referred to in this report as "burdened renters." Among the metro areas with the lowest shares of burdened renters were Wenatchee-East Wenatchee, WA (22.4); Fond du Lac, WI (27.7); Cheyenne, WY (28.0); Wheeling, WV-OH (28.1); Decatur, AL (28.8); Great Falls, MT (29.8); and Lewiston, ID-WA (30.7); whose shares were not statistically different from each other. In the Redding, CA, Metro Area, 61.2 percent of renting households were burdened—Redding was not statistically different from 25 other metro areas with high shares of burdened

Table 1.

Rental Market Conditions Demand-Side Measures by Metropolitan Statistical Area:[1] 2009 and 2011

(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Median gross rent (inflation–adjusted dollars)					Share of renters spending 35 percent or more of income for gross rent (percent)				
	2009		2011			2009		2011		
	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Difference	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Difference
United States	**880**	**2**	**871**	**2**	***–9**	**42.48**	**0.1**	**44.32**	**0.1**	***1.85**
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	953	8	914	11	*–39	43.04	1.2	45.75	1.3	*2.71
Austin-Round Rock, TX	953	14	930	19	–23	41.55	1.8	41.39	1.7	–0.16
Baltimore-Towson, MD	1,095	16	1,073	14	*–22	44.58	1.6	45.26	1.6	0.68
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	793	15	753	23	*–40	45.47	2.4	45.00	2.6	–0.47
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	1,170	14	1,163	10	–7	38.76	1.1	40.76	1.1	*2.00
Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY	692	11	682	11	–10	45.58	2.2	42.58	2.0	*–3.00
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC	833	13	820	15	–13	38.79	1.9	44.33	2.1	*5.54
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	942	6	928	6	*–14	43.26	0.8	44.79	0.9	*1.53
Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN	716	14	711	12	–5	40.46	1.9	43.16	1.8	*2.70
Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH	726	11	712	11	–14	44.03	1.7	44.05	1.6	0.02
Columbus, OH	793	11	776	9	*–17	38.57	1.7	41.44	1.7	*2.87
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	885	7	863	7	*–22	38.97	1.0	39.39	1.0	0.42
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO	914	15	920	15	6	41.65	1.4	41.35	1.5	–0.30
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	818	10	805	10	–13	47.04	1.3	47.86	1.0	0.82
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	956	17	962	15	6	43.00	2.1	44.73	2.4	1.74
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	885	9	849	8	*–36	40.52	1.1	40.69	1.1	0.17
Indianapolis-Carmel, IN	783	13	764	12	*–19	39.83	1.8	42.62	1.7	*2.79
Jacksonville, FL	942	21	940	17	–2	44.68	2.5	44.47	2.6	–0.21
Kansas City, MO-KS	798	12	798	13	0	36.10	1.9	40.56	1.7	*4.46
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	1,087	16	957	15	*–130	43.03	1.6	43.67	1.8	0.64
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	1,244	9	1,214	8	*–30	47.27	0.6	50.69	0.5	*3.42
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	705	13	696	15	–9	38.95	2.4	40.06	2.2	1.11
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	802	14	805	17	3	47.19	2.2	49.43	2.3	2.24
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	1,124	11	1,078	11	*–46	54.35	1.2	55.67	1.1	1.32
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	802	11	785	9	*–17	42.42	1.6	45.50	1.8	*3.08
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	876	13	858	9	*–18	41.27	1.5	41.20	1.3	–0.07
Nashville-Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin, TN	821	17	800	14	–21	39.22	2.4	41.28	2.3	2.06
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	935	17	886	15	*–49	49.71	2.5	51.32	2.0	1.61
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	1,172	6	1,187	5	*15	42.93	0.5	45.75	0.5	*2.82
Oklahoma City, OK	721	17	731	13	10	41.77	2.5	42.04	2.3	0.27
Orlando-Kissimmee, FL	1,038	14	970	15	*–68	50.75	1.9	52.87	2.1	2.12
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	954	9	957	8	3	43.32	1.0	47.01	1.0	*3.69
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	955	11	893	11	*–62	43.07	1.5	42.12	1.2	–0.95
Pittsburgh, PA	674	11	682	10	8	38.19	1.3	38.68	1.4	0.49
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	913	12	906	12	–7	41.38	1.4	43.77	1.5	*2.39
Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA	889	20	849	12	*–40	39.33	1.8	40.90	1.7	1.57
Raleigh-Cary, NC	877	14	828	17	*–49	37.63	2.4	38.35	3.1	0.72
Richmond, VA	945	18	925	18	–20	42.67	2.2	39.49	2.3	*–3.18
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	1,131	13	1,076	14	*–55	48.70	1.4	52.22	1.9	*3.52
Sacramento—Arden-Arcade—Roseville, CA	1,056	16	1,004	17	*–52	46.76	1.7	48.11	1.7	1.35
St. Louis, MO-IL	766	10	772	11	6	41.21	1.6	42.81	1.6	1.60
Salt Lake City, UT	874	17	859	14	–15	41.29	2.5	43.61	2.5	2.32
San Antonio, TX	799	13	807	16	8	39.20	2.0	41.80	1.9	2.60
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	1,281	19	1,237	16	*–44	48.05	1.3	48.49	1.2	0.44
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	1,362	16	1,345	14	–17	40.20	1.1	42.60	1.0	*2.40
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	1,470	23	1,460	20	–10	37.37	1.7	39.15	1.6	1.78
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	1,075	11	1,037	16	*–38	38.76	1.3	40.20	1.5	1.44
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	951	11	906	11	*–45	45.52	1.6	49.33	1.6	*3.81
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	1,033	21	1,053	15	20	41.03	1.9	45.20	1.9	*4.17
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	1,365	10	1,391	13	*26	38.14	1.0	38.85	1.1	0.71

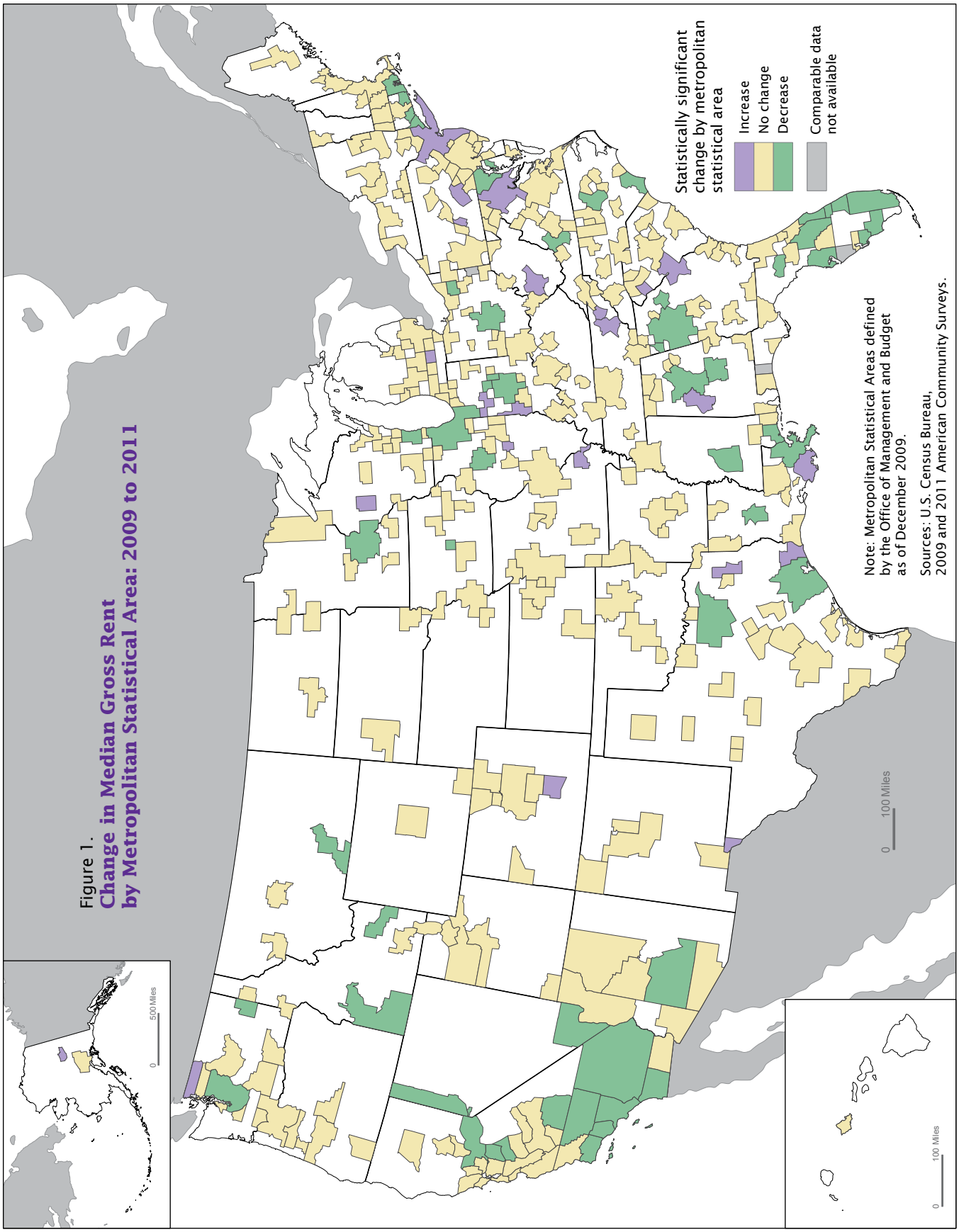
*Statistically different from zero at the 90 percent confidence level.

[1] Fifty most populous metropolitan statistical area populations based on population estimates as of July 1, 2009. Metropolitan statistical areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

[2] Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Figure 1.
Change in Median Gross Rent by Metropolitan Statistical Area: 2009 to 2011



Note: Metropolitan Statistical Areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Table 2.

Sixteen Largest Increases Between 2009 and 2011 in Median Gross Rent

(In dollars. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error	Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error
Fairbanks, AK	220 (1,029 to 1,249)	166	Tuscaloosa, AL	61 (694 to 755)	39
Jackson, MI	96 (680 to 776)	70	Charleston, WV	59 (619 to 678)	39
Cape Girardeau-Jackson, MO-IL	89 (549 to 638)	75	Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA	58 (667 to 725)	53
Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX	85 (681 to 766)	31	Bellingham, WA	58 (828 to 886)	55
Altoona, PA	73 (549 to 622)	42	Terre Haute, IN	56 (611 to 667)	45
Pueblo, CO	68 (684 to 752)	59	El Paso, TX	52 (657 to 709)	29
Morristown, TN	64 (580 to 644)	54	Decatur, AL	51 (620 to 671)	48
Longview, TX	64 (669 to 733)	48	Anderson, SC	48 (620 to 668)	45

Note: Because of sampling variability, some of the estimates in this table may not be statistically different from one another or from estimates for other metropolitan areas not listed here.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

renters. Renters living in 213 of the 366 metro areas (58.2 percent) mirrored the nation, with no statistical difference between their shares of burdened renters and the national rate of 44.3 percent. Eighty-three metro areas (22.7 percent) had shares of burdened renters that were significantly lower than the nation's 44.3 percent share, while the shares of burdened renters living in 70 metro areas (19.1 percent) were significantly higher than the share of burdened renters nationwide.

Despite the high gross rents faced by renters living in the 50 most populous metro areas, their incomes appear to have compensated, making them less likely to be burdened by high shelter costs than for the nation as a whole. Shares of burdened renters living in 20 metro areas (40 percent) were lower than the national rate. In 13 metro areas (26 percent), shares were higher than the national rate. Seventeen areas (34 percent) had shares of burdened renters that were not significantly different from the national rate.

Some of the heaviest burdens in the 50 most populous metro areas were borne by renters in Florida and California, hit hard by the housing market-led recession. In Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, more than one-half (55.7 percent) of renter households were burdened. In Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL, 52.9 percent of renters were burdened. The share in Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL, while lower than the share of burdened renters in Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, did not differ from the shares of burdened renters in Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA (52.2 percent), or New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA (51.3 percent).

The changes between 2009 and 2011 in the shares of renters spending 35 percent or more of their income on housing costs, shown in Table 1, paint a picture that differs from the one that declining median gross rent in the United States and most metropolitan areas suggest. Declining median gross rents bolstered with steady or increasing incomes should have resulted in a decreased percentage of burdened renters. That is, if a household's rent had declined and its income had risen then the household's share of income devoted to paying rent would decline. If this had happened, then at minimum, the 23 large metro areas with declines plus 34 of the remaining metropolitan areas with declines in their median gross rents would have had declines in their shares spending more than 35 percent of their incomes for rent. That is, more metro areas would have become more affordable. Of the 50 most populous metro areas, only Richmond, VA, with a decline of 3.2 percentage points from 42.7 percent to 39.5 percent between 2009 and 2011, and Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY, with a decline of 3.0 percentage points from 45.6 percent to 42.6 percent for the same time period, became affordable for more renters. (Changes in Richmond and Buffalo's shares were not statistically different from each other.) Seventeen areas, including some of the least affordable in 2009, became even less affordable by 2011. The shares of burdened renters were unchanged (that is, not statistically different) in the remaining 31 large metro areas. Unlike ranking the decreases, ranking increases among the 50 most populous metro areas is less clear. For example, the change in the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill, NC-SC, Metro Area, with a

percentage point increase of 5.5 from 38.8 percent in 2009 to 44.3 percent in 2011, is not statistically different from 14 of the other 17 large metro areas with increases in their shares.

Similarly, only 11 (rather than 57) of all 366 metro areas, including Richmond, VA, and Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY, reduced their share of burdened renters. In addition to Richmond and Buffalo-Niagara Falls, these metro areas are Sandusky, OH; Missoula, MT; Olympia, WA; Pine Bluff, AR; Steubenville-Weirton, OH-WV; Pittsfield, MA; Madera-Chowcilla, CA; North Port-Bradenton-Sarasota, FL; and Bakersfield, CA. The sizes of the declines were not statistically different for these 11 metro areas. Sixty-two metro areas increased their shares of burdened renters (Figure 2). Table 3 shows some of the largest increases. In the remaining 293 metro areas, the share was unchanged. Nationally, the share of burdened renters increased steadily from 42.5 percent in 2009 to 43.8 percent in 2010 to 44.3 percent in 2011.

Rental Vacancy Rate

Nationwide, the rental vacancy rate was 7.4 percent in 2011. Among the metro areas with the lowest rental vacancy rates were Bismarck, ND (0 percent); Williamsport, PA (0.3 percent); Ithaca, NY (0.6 percent); Logan, UT (0.8 percent); Prescott, AZ (1.3 percent); State College, PA (1.3 percent); Ames, IA (1.4 percent); and Columbus, IN (1.9 percent), although these do not differ statistically from each other and from many other areas. At 40.3 percent, the Myrtle Beach-North Myrtle Beach-Conway, SC, Metro Area's rate was the highest in the nation. By contrast, most metro areas had rental vacancy rates at or below the national level, with 65 areas (17.8 percent) having vacancy rates above the national rate, and 93 metro areas (25.4 percent) having a rental vacancy rate below the national vacancy rate. Vacancy rates in 208 areas (56.8 percent) were not statistically different from the 7.4 percent national rate.

When the focus shifts to the 50 most populous metro areas, rental vacancy rates tended to be higher than that for the nation as a whole. Of the 50 most populous metropolitan statistical areas, 18 metro areas (36 percent) had rental vacancy rates above the national rate, while 19 areas (38 percent) had rental vacancy rates below the national rate. The rental vacancy rates in 13 of the 50 most populous metro areas (26 percent) were not statistically different from the nation's vacancy rate.

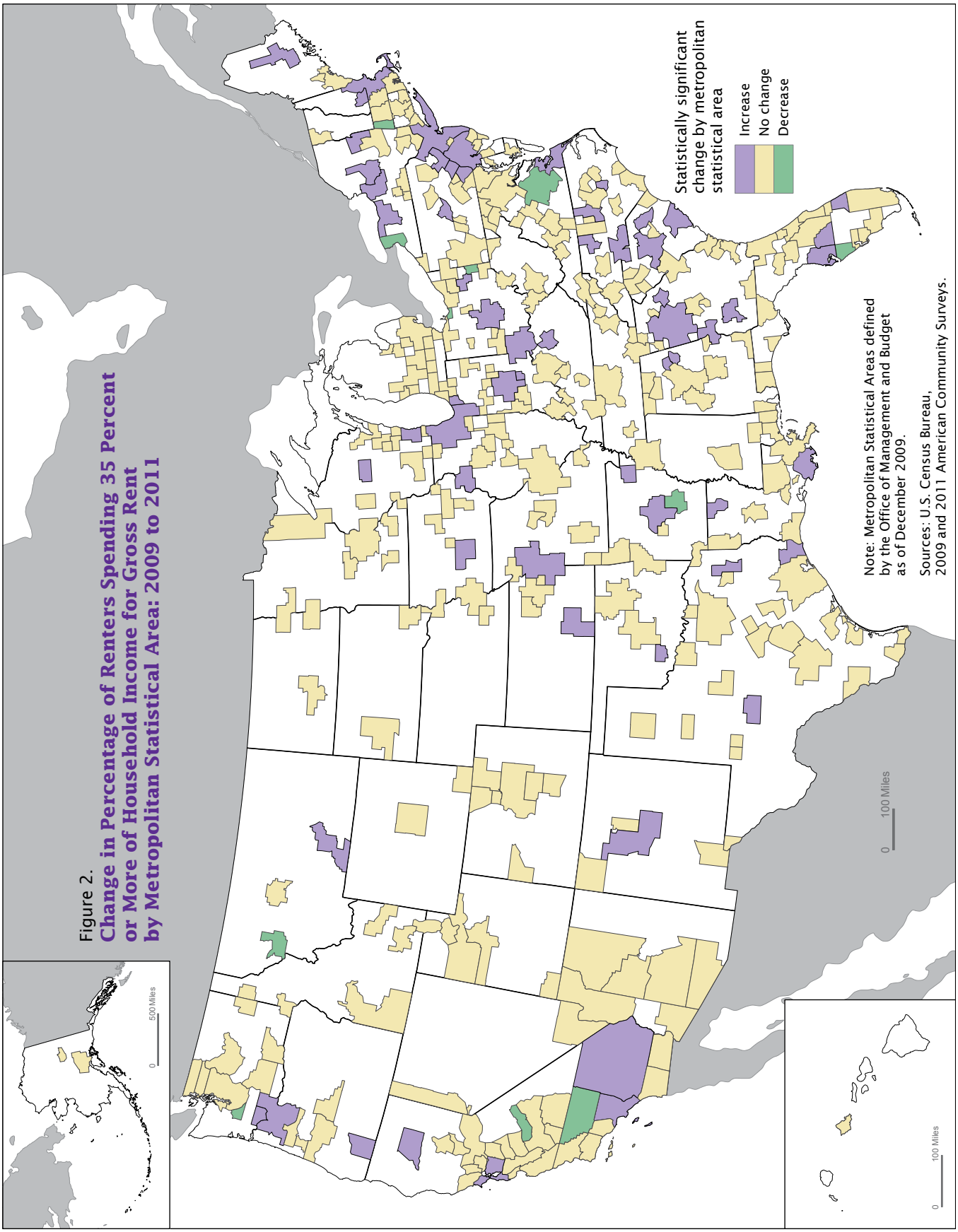
Ten of the 50 most populous metro areas had double-digit rental vacancy rates. These metro areas are: Jacksonville, FL; Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ; Memphis, TN-MS-AR; Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA; Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL; Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN; Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX; Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL; Las Vegas-Paradise, NV; and Richmond, VA.

San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA (2.7 percent), and Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI (3.5 percent), have the lowest rental vacancy rates but were not statistically different from each other. While the rental vacancy rate in Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI, did not differ from that of Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH (4 percent); Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA (4.1 percent); and San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA (4.1 percent), the rental vacancy rate in San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA, was significantly lower than the rental vacancy rates in the remaining 48 of the 50 most populous metro areas.

While the steady reduction from 8.4 percent in 2009 to 8.2 percent in 2010 to 7.4 percent in 2011 in the national rental vacancy rate indicates a tightening rental market, the picture at the metro level is not as clear. On the one hand, approximately four times as many metro areas experienced declines as those that experienced increases, providing some evidence of tightening rental markets. The rental vacancy rate fell in one-fifth (74) of all 366 metro areas and increased in 4.9 percent (18). However, on the other hand three-quarters of the metro areas (274) had rental vacancy rates that were unchanged between 2009 and 2011 (Figure 3). Table 4 shows some of the largest decreases in rental vacancy rates.

Metro areas experiencing some of the largest increases in rental vacancy rates from 2009 to 2011 include the following: Jacksonville, NC, with an 11.7 percentage point increase from 2.4 to 14.1 percent; Gainesville, GA, with an 11.1 percentage point increase from 4.2 to 15.3 percent; and Battle Creek,

Figure 2.
Change in Percentage of Renters Spending 35 Percent or More of Household Income for Gross Rent by Metropolitan Statistical Area: 2009 to 2011



Note: Metropolitan Statistical Areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Table 3.

Sixteen Largest Increases Between 2009 and 2011 in Share of Burdened Renters

(Percentage points. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error	Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error
Gadsen, AL	20.82 (31.46 to 52.28)	12.34	Jonesboro, AR	12.90 (35.70 to 48.60)	10.65
Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA	16.98 (29.44 to 46.43)	9.91	Redding, CA	12.55 (48.60 to 61.15)	8.51
Columbus, IN	16.23 (25.55 to 41.78)	13.34	Barnstable Town, MA	11.53 (43.36 to 54.88)	9.15
Anniston-Oxford, AL	14.40 (37.04 to 51.44)	10.20	Michigan City-La Porte, IN	11.43 (34.97 to 46.40)	10.97
Longview, WA	14.27 (42.94 to 57.22)	11.45	Columbus, GA-AL	11.17 (35.62 to 46.79)	5.79
San Angelo, TX	13.20 (30.17 to 43.37)	11.12	Longview, TX	11.12 (29.09 to 40.21)	8.11
Billings, MT	13.00 (28.43 to 41.43)	8.26	Goldsboro, NC	10.75 (33.97 to 44.72)	8.00
Wausau, WI	12.96 (25.87 to 38.83)	9.11	State College, PA	10.37 (44.63 to 54.99)	7.97

Note: Because of sampling variability, some of the estimates in this table may not be statistically different from one another or from estimates for other metropolitan areas not listed here.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

MI, with a 10.8 percentage point increase from 3.7 to 14.5 percent.

The decline in rental vacancy rates was more pronounced in the 50 most populous metro areas, with rental vacancy rate decreases in 56 percent (28 areas) and 38 percent (19 areas) unchanged. The rental vacancy rates increased in the Richmond, VA, Metro Area; Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC, Metro Area; and the St. Louis, MO-IL, Metro Area. Richmond's increase of 5.4 percentage points (from 7.8 percent to 13.2 percent) was the largest. Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC, Metro Area's increase of 2.3 percentage points from 6.2 to 8.5 percent, and St. Louis, MO-IL, Metro Area's increase of 1.4 percentage points from 6.5 to 7.9 percent tied for the second largest increase in rental vacancy rate between 2009 and 2011 (Table 5). Despite changes between the 2 years, the positions of the metro areas with the highest and lowest vacancy rates were generally unchanged.

Renter Share of Total Households

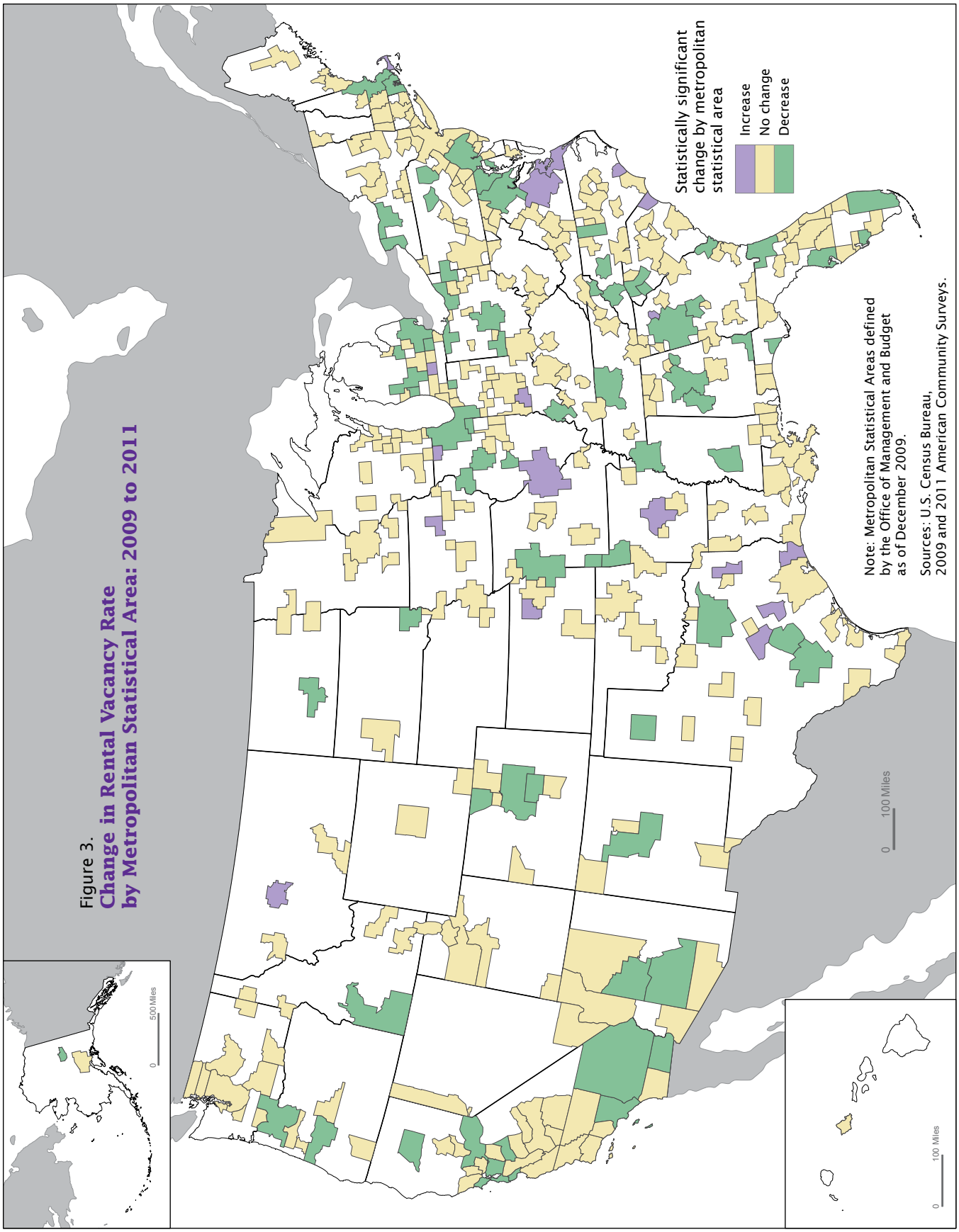
The opposite side of the homeownership rate—the share of occupied housing that is renter occupied—offers another glimpse into the rental housing market situation across the United States. Nationally, the renter share of occupied housing was 35.4 percent in 2011. A comparison of the United States to the metropolitan areas suggests that homeownership is more prevalent in smaller metropolitan areas and outside of metropolitan areas. Ninety-six metro areas had higher renter shares; 186 had lower renter shares. The shares of renting households in the remaining 84 metro areas were not statistically different.

Some of the lowest shares of renting households were evident in the following metro areas: Bay City, MI; Monroe, MI; Punta Gorda, FL; Rochester, MN; Barnstable Town, MA; Holland-Grand Haven, MI; Farmington, NM; Sebastian-Vero Beach, FL; and Palm Coast, FL. (These metro areas represent only some with the lowest shares. Due to sampling variability, these may not be statistically different from others not listed here.) Among the highest share of renting households was the Salinas, CA, Metro Area, which at 52.6 percent is not statistically different from the metro areas of Manhattan, KS; Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA; and College Station-Bryan, TX.

A comparison of the nation to the 50 most populous metro areas underscores the importance of rental housing to these areas. While over one-half of all 366 metro areas combined (50.8 percent) had shares of renter households lower than the national share, only 22 of the top 50 metro areas (44 percent) had lower shares of renter households. The Oklahoma City, OK, Metro Area; Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA, Metro Area; Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA, Metro Area; and Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC, Metro Area had the same proportion of renting households as did the United States. Twenty-four of the 50 most populous metro areas had shares of renters higher than the national rate.

Among the 50 most populous metro areas, the renter shares are lowest and not statistically different from each other in Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI, Metro Area (29.4 percent); St. Louis, MO-IL, Metro Area (29.6 percent); Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI, Metro Area (29.9 percent); and

Figure 3.
Change in Rental Vacancy Rate by Metropolitan Statistical Area: 2009 to 2011



Note: Metropolitan Statistical Areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Table 4.

Seven Largest Decreases Between 2009 and 2011 in Rental Vacancy Rate

(Percentage points. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error	Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error
Tuscaloosa, AL	15.80 (21.07 to 5.27)	5.64	Fairbanks, AK	8.11 (13.43 to 5.31)	6.26
Elkhart-Goshen, IN	13.51(19.29 to 5.78)	7.00	Holland-Grand Haven, MI	7.94 (11.94 to 4.00)	5.55
Macon, GA	9.63 (16.08 to 6.45)	4.50	Kankakee-Bradley, IL	7.64 (13.51 to 5.88)	7.13
Panama City-Lynn Haven-Panama City Beach, FL	8.33 (22.50 to 14.16)	7.81			

Note: Because of sampling variability, some of the estimates in this table may not be statistically different from one another or from estimates for other metropolitan areas not listed here.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Birmingham-Hoover, AL, Metro Area (30.0 percent). (Birmingham-Hoover may actually be higher than some others not specifically cited here, but the others are lower than all other 46 metro areas.) The metro areas with the highest share of renting households are Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (50.8 percent), followed by New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (48.9 percent). Tied for third highest shares are San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA, Metro Area (46.7 percent), Las Vegas-Paradise, NV, Metro Area (46.4 percent), and San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA, Metro Area (46.3 percent). Rounding out the top four are Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX, Metro Area (43.3 percent) and San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA, Metro Area (43.1 percent).

The renter share of all households in the United States increased steadily from 34.1 percent in 2009 to 34.6 percent in 2010 to 35.4 percent in 2011. Among all the 366 metro areas, the shares of renting households rose in 88, remained unchanged in nearly three-quarters (269), and decreased in 9 metro areas (Figure 4). The metro areas with decreases were Ocean City, NJ (7.5 from 32.5 to 25.0 percent); Owensboro, KY (6.6 from 32.4 to 25.8 percent); Jacksonville, NC (6.1 from 45.3 to 39.2 percent); Hanford-Corcoran, CA (5.3 from 49.4 to 44.1 percent); Lewiston, ID-WA (5.2 from 34.7 to 29.5 percent); Victoria, TX (5.1 from 34.3 to 29.2 percent); Jackson, MS (3.4 from 34.7 to 31.3 percent); Roanoke, VA (3.1 from 31.4 to 28.3 percent); and Lexington-Fayette, KY (2.8 from 40.9 to 38.1 percent). The changes were not significantly different among the 9 metro areas. Some of the largest gains in the renter share of total households are shown in Table 6.

The increase in the percentage of renting households was more pronounced in the top 50 most populous metro areas. Table 5 shows that, while shares were unchanged in 15 areas, in the remaining 35 areas (70 percent), the shares of renting households increased. Among the metro areas with the largest increases, Atlanta, GA, rose by 4.2 percentage points from 31.5 percent in 2009 to 35.7 percent in 2011, which was not significantly different from the change in New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA (4.0 percentage points from 34.4 percent to 38.4 percent); Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale, AZ (3.7 percentage points from 33.7 percent to 37.4 percent); Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL (3.5 percentage points from 33.9 percent to 37.4 percent); Las Vegas-Paradise, NV (3.3 percentage points from 43.1 percent to 46.4 percent); Salt Lake City, UT (2.6 percentage points from 30.6 percent to 33.2 percent); and Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA (2.6 percentage points from 36.1 percent to 38.7 percent). Interestingly, Cleveland had a small but significant increase between 2009 and 2011 (1 percentage point from 33.6 to 34.6 percent) despite a small but significant decrease between 2009 and 2010 (1.2 percentage points from 33.6 to 32.4 percent).

Despite these changes, the metropolitan areas' relative positions remain much the same as in 2009, as increases and decreases often do not overcome the influence of other market characteristics, such as limited availability of land. Even with increases, many of the metro areas with the lowest shares of renting households in 2009, such as the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI, Metro Area and the Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI, Metro Area, remained in the lowest groups in 2011 because metro areas like Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA, and New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA, with high shares of renting households, increased their shares of renting households.

Table 5.

Rental Market Conditions Supply-Side Measures by Metropolitan Statistical Area:[1] 2009 and 2011

(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Rental vacancy rate (percent)					Renter share of total households (percent)				
	2009		2011			2009		2011		
	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Difference	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Estimate	Margin of error[2] (±)	Difference
United States	**8.43**	**0.1**	**7.40**	**0.1**	***–1.03**	**34.13**	**0.1**	**35.42**	**0.1**	***1.29**
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	13.96	0.9	10.79	0.8	*–3.17	31.52	0.5	35.66	0.6	*4.14
Austin-Round Rock, TX	7.78	1.0	5.10	0.7	*–2.68	41.34	1.0	43.31	1.2	*1.97
Baltimore-Towson, MD	8.23	0.9	6.17	0.8	*–2.06	31.99	0.7	33.22	0.6	*1.23
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	11.75	1.8	7.15	1.5	*–4.60	29.53	1.1	29.98	1.2	0.45
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	5.56	0.6	3.98	0.5	*–1.58	36.56	0.5	38.66	0.5	*2.10
Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY	8.01	1.3	5.56	1.0	*–2.45	33.42	0.9	34.19	1.0	0.77
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC	8.91	1.2	8.16	1.2	–0.75	33.09	0.9	33.91	1.1	0.82
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	8.73	0.5	7.62	0.4	*–1.11	33.03	0.4	34.46	0.4	*1.43
Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN	10.89	1.1	11.30	1.1	0.41	31.79	0.7	31.23	0.7	–0.56
Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH	9.69	0.9	7.93	0.9	*–1.76	33.61	0.7	34.56	0.6	*0.95
Columbus, OH	10.40	1.1	7.02	1.0	*–3.38	36.77	0.8	38.58	0.8	*1.81
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	12.12	0.6	9.71	0.6	*–2.41	37.79	0.5	38.93	0.5	*1.14
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO	7.75	1.0	5.10	0.7	*–2.65	34.40	0.8	37.03	0.7	*2.63
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	11.05	0.9	8.42	0.7	*–2.63	27.96	0.5	29.92	0.5	*1.96
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	7.85	1.3	7.45	1.5	–0.40	30.34	0.9	32.62	0.9	*2.28
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	12.27	0.7	11.64	0.6	–0.63	37.74	0.5	38.44	0.6	0.70
Indianapolis-Carmel, IN	9.50	1.3	8.63	1.1	–0.87	33.63	0.9	33.82	0.9	0.19
Jacksonville, FL	14.09	1.5	10.10	1.9	*–3.99	32.16	1.0	32.56	1.2	0.40
Kansas City, MO-KS	10.31	1.2	8.63	0.9	*–1.68	32.05	0.8	32.73	0.8	0.68
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	12.15	1.3	12.61	1.1	0.46	43.12	0.9	46.40	1.1	*3.28
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	5.29	0.3	4.52	0.3	*–0.77	49.27	0.4	50.79	0.3	*1.52
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	9.84	1.2	9.63	1.7	–0.21	31.45	1.2	31.29	0.9	–0.16
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	13.87	1.6	10.69	1.4	*–3.18	36.14	1.1	37.56	1.2	1.42
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	11.75	0.7	9.24	0.8	*–2.51	35.39	0.5	37.50	0.5	*2.11
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	4.28	0.9	3.45	0.7	–0.83	37.65	0.8	39.56	0.8	*1.91
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	5.91	0.7	5.09	0.8	–0.82	27.57	0.6	29.37	0.5	*1.80
Nashville-Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin, TN	10.23	1.5	8.10	1.5	*–2.13	32.24	0.9	34.24	1.1	*2.00
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA	11.07	1.5	9.75	1.2	–1.32	34.41	1.0	38.41	0.9	*4.00
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	5.04	0.2	4.91	0.2	–0.13	47.29	0.3	48.85	0.3	*1.56
Oklahoma City, OK	8.02	1.2	8.72	1.5	0.70	34.67	0.9	35.05	1.0	0.38
Orlando-Kissimmee, FL	12.91	1.2	11.74	1.4	–1.17	33.87	0.9	37.40	0.9	*3.53
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	8.91	0.7	7.10	0.6	*–1.81	30.43	0.5	32.06	0.5	*1.63
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	13.58	0.9	10.12	0.9	*–3.46	33.65	0.6	37.39	0.7	*3.74
Pittsburgh, PA	5.61	0.9	5.50	0.7	–0.11	29.84	0.7	30.73	0.6	0.89
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA	5.60	0.9	4.09	0.7	*–1.51	37.92	0.8	39.21	0.7	*1.29
Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA	7.25	1.0	5.95	0.8	*–1.30	36.08	0.8	38.69	1.0	*2.61
Raleigh-Cary, NC	11.44	1.9	9.73	2.3	–1.71	31.48	1.1	32.06	1.6	0.58
Richmond, VA	7.78	1.4	13.19	1.4	*5.41	31.00	1.1	33.00	0.9	*2.00
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	8.14	0.8	6.85	0.8	*–1.29	34.14	0.7	35.69	0.7	*1.55
Sacramento—Arden-Arcade—Roseville, CA	8.02	1.0	6.11	0.9	*–1.91	38.40	0.8	40.21	0.9	*1.81
St. Louis, MO-IL	6.54	0.9	7.93	0.9	*1.39	29.31	0.7	29.56	0.6	0.25
Salt Lake City, UT	8.08	1.7	5.98	1.4	–2.10	30.59	1.2	33.25	1.2	*2.66
San Antonio, TX	11.89	1.3	7.79	1.1	*–4.10	34.99	0.9	37.03	1.1	*2.04
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	5.05	0.5	5.54	0.6	0.49	44.82	0.6	46.71	0.6	*1.89
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	5.46	0.6	4.10	0.5	*–1.36	44.46	0.6	46.34	0.7	*1.88
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	3.40	0.7	2.71	0.7	–0.69	41.12	1.0	43.05	0.8	*1.93
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	5.13	0.7	5.00	0.7	–0.13	38.23	0.6	40.05	0.6	*1.82
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	13.44	1.1	11.19	1.2	*–2.25	32.14	0.8	33.56	0.7	*1.42
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	6.16	1.0	8.48	1.1	*2.32	36.84	0.9	35.90	0.9	–0.94
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	6.95	0.6	4.75	0.5	*–2.20	33.99	0.5	36.42	0.5	*2.43

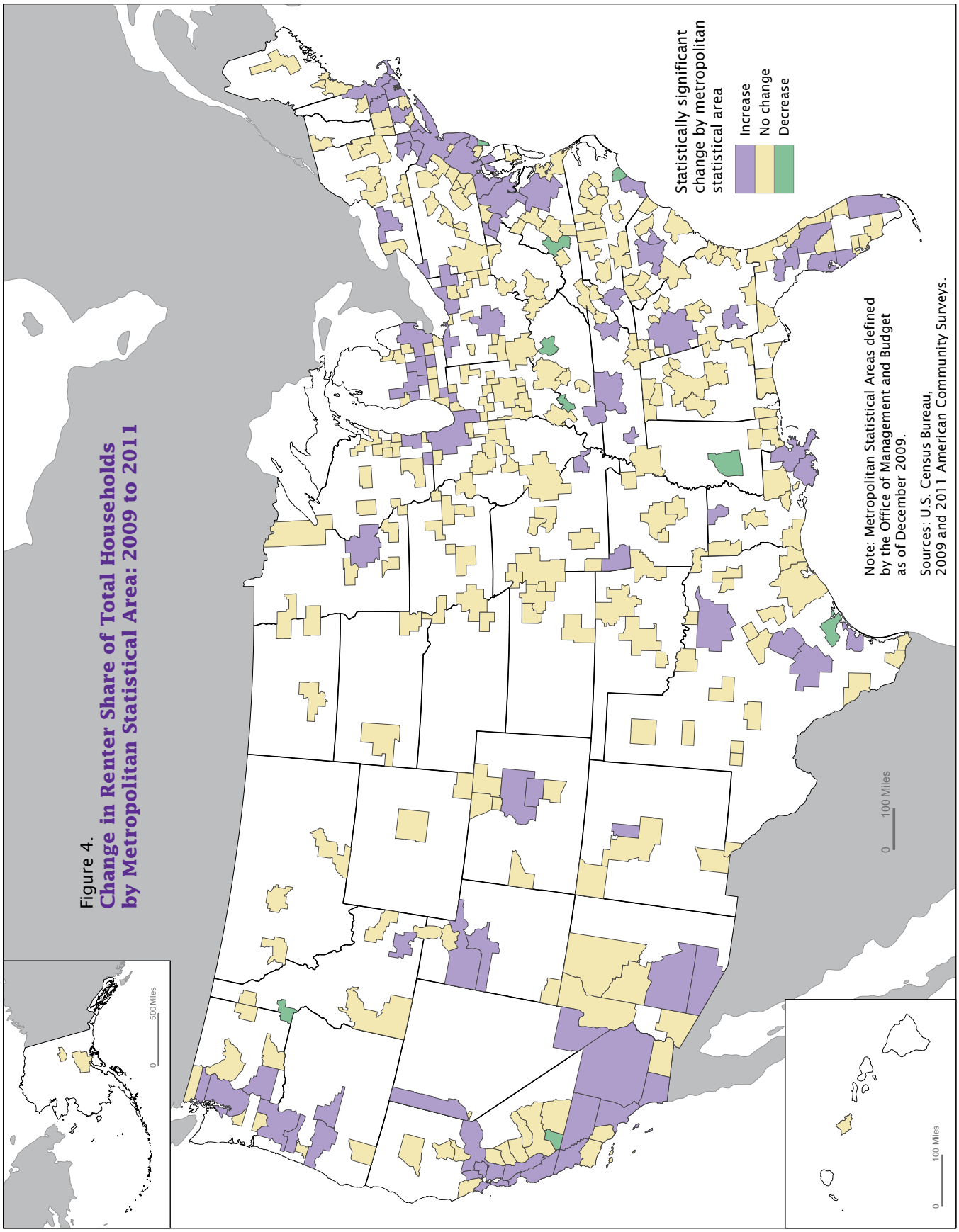
*Statistically different from zero at the 90 percent confidence level.

[1] Fifty most populous metropolitan statistical area populations based on population estimates as of July 1, 2009. Metropolitan statistical areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

[2] Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Figure 4.
Change in Renter Share of Total Households by Metropolitan Statistical Area: 2009 to 2011



Note: Metropolitan Statistical Areas defined by the Office of Management and Budget as of December 2009.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

Table 6.

Ten Largest Increases Between 2009 and 2011 in Renter Share of Total Households

(Percentage points. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/*)

Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error	Metropolitan area	Estimate	Margin of error
Napa, CA	9.42 (36.14 to 45.56)	4.95	Jackson, MI	6.40 (23.31 to 29.71)	3.56
Cumberland, MD-WV	8.71 (29.34 to 38.05)	4.58	Cape Girardeau-Jackson, MO-IL	6.15 (27.86 to 34.01)	4.17
Pocatello, ID	7.99 (26.31 to 34.30)	5.17	San Luis Obispo-Paso Robales, CA	5.80 (38.08 to 43.89)	3.11
Sumter, SC	6.96 (28.95 to 35.92)	4.67	Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, LA	5.78 (22.54 to 28.32)	3.38
Bremerton-Silverdale, WA	6.45 (28.52 to 34.97)	3.05	Bend, OR	5.62 (31.17 to 36.79)	4.73

Note: Because of sampling variability, some of the estimates in this table may not be statistically different from one another or from estimates for other metropolitan areas not listed here.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys.

What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.

For more information, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development also publish information on renter shares of occupied housing, housing costs for renters, renter burden, and rental vacancy rates for the United States and selected metropolitan statistical areas from the American Housing Survey. The Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey (HVS) is the official source of the rental vacancy rate and share of renter-occupied housing units for the United States, the 50 states, and the 75 largest metro areas. The housing cost data available from the HVS are limited to responses provided on rents for vacant rental units in the United States. HVS does not purport to measure housing cost burden.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarters population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for all estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf>.