

Impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Housing Vacancies and Homeownership data collection for the First Quarter 2020

The first quarter 2020 data from the Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey (CPS/HVS) may reflect the impacts of changes in data collection operations made in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The first quarter estimates reflect the 3-month average of data collected in January, February, and March. The changes in data collection operations made in response to the coronavirus pandemic affect the data collected in March only.

Data are generally collected the week of the 19th. The reference period is the time of interview, in this case March 15-25. On March 20, the Census Bureau suspended in-person interviews. Further, two Census call centers that assist with interviews were closed. The Census Bureau continued to conduct the CPS/HVS by telephone and made efforts to collect telephone interviews for households and vacant units that would normally have been interviewed in person. The response rate was 73 percent in March 2020, about 10 percentage points lower than the response rates of 82 percent in January and 83 percent in February. The response rate in March 2019 was 82 percent.

The estimation methodology was not changed in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The lower response rate for March 2020 is addressed by the weights. We likely cannot fully understand or quantify the effects of the pandemic on the CPS/HVS data and estimates. This note is intended only to document the changes to data collection operations made in response to the coronavirus pandemic.