Septic Systems Fact Sheet
Office of Wastewater Management | Decentralized Wastewater Program

This fact sheet presents data on soil-based septic systems collected by the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2007 American Housing Survey, based on a sampling of 55,000 housing units.

Septic System Use

- In 2007, an estimated 20 percent (26.1 million) of total U.S. housing units were served by septic systems. This is an increase of 1.54 million septic systems since 1985.

- In 2007, 22 percent (1.6 million) of all housing units less than 4 years old used septic systems.

Demographics

- In 2007, 50 percent (13.1 million) of total housing units with septic systems in the United States were in rural areas, 47 percent (12.3 million) were in suburbs, while 3 percent (774,000) were found in central cities.

- In 2007, 46 percent (10.1 million) of occupied housing units with septic systems were located in the southern region of the United States, followed by the midwest with 22 percent (4.8 million), the northeast region with 19 percent (4.2 million), and the west with 13 percent (2.9 million).

Total housing units served by septic and centralized/clustered systems

- Total housing units served by septic systems

- Rural
- Suburb
- Urban
- Central cities

Total housing units served by septic systems, by U.S. Region***

- Northeast (19%)
- West (13%)
- South (46%)
- Midwest (22%)

The American Housing Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division every two years to determine up-to-date housing statistics. Field data cover an average of 55,000 housing units. A sample of housing units in all survey areas was selected from the decennial census. The survey goes back to the same housing units on a regular basis, recording changes in characteristics, adding and deleting units when applicable. This cross-sectioning of the housing inventory gives a picture of houses and households as they change over long periods of time. Since these estimates are based on samples, they may differ from the results that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken under the same interviewing conditions.

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Web site - [www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/ahs/ahs.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/ahs/ahs.html)

US EPA Decentralized Wastewater Program - For more information visit [www.epa.gov/owm/onsite](http://www.epa.gov/owm/onsite)

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