



## Housing Structures and Costs in Rhode Island

To meet the needs of current and future residents, planners need timely information about their housing stock, including characteristics like size and age of homes and renter and homeownership costs. According to 2010-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) data, Rhode Island has 462,981 housing units, of which 409,308 are occupied (88.4%). The bulk of our housing is single-family detached homes, and over half of all housing units in the state have two or three bedrooms. About 60% of occupied units in the state are owner-occupied, and the rest are renter-occupied.

With the release of 2010-2012 3-year American Community Survey data, we can compare facts and figures on homeownership and renters from 2007-2009 and 2010-2012. These are particularly interesting timeframes to compare because the period 2007-2009 encompasses the national recession (December 2007-June 2009). The recession, sparked by a bursting housing bubble, profoundly affected the housing market in Rhode Island. Many of these effects are still present in 2010-2012, a fully post-recession dataset, technically speaking. The percent of owner-occupied housing units has declined slightly between 2007-2009 and 2010-2012. While housing costs have gone down in real dollars for renters and owners, the share of renters and owners who put more than 35% of their household income toward housing has remains unchanged.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**462,981** - housing units in R.I.

**157,971** - housing units built 1939 or earlier

**54.5%** - share of all units that are single-family detached homes

**0.9%** - share of units that are mobile homes

**\$891** - median gross rent

Source: American Community Survey 2012 3-year data.

### A Snapshot of Housing Structures in Rhode Island

In Rhode Island, over half of all housing units are single-family detached homes. The percentage of single-family detached homes has declined slightly between 2007-2009 and 2010-2012, from 55.4% to 54.5% of all housing units. Housing with two to four units comprises another 24.3% of housing units in the state. Other units include structures with five or more units, single-family attached homes, and mobile homes.

Rhode Island residents will not be surprised to learn that one third of their housing units are at least 70 years old. Another half of the housing units in the state were built between 1940 and 1980. Decades that built the greatest number of homes that residents still live in include the 1950s and 1970s. The 2012 estimates suggest

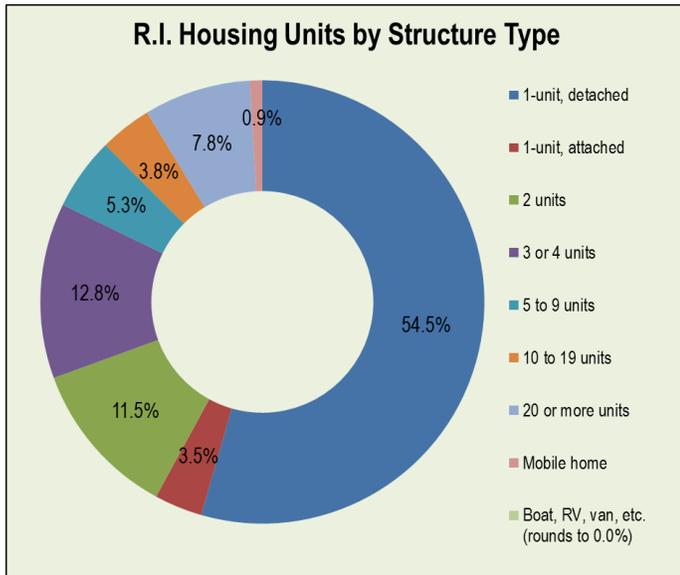
## ABOUT THE DATA

Data in this Bulletin are drawn primarily from two American Community Survey's 3-Year Datasets. The most current data come from the estimates produced for 2010-2012, and the comparison data come from estimates for 2007-2009. The advantage to using 3-year data is that margins of error are smaller than with 1-year data, but the timeframe still allows for comparisons between the recession and post-recession years. All changes described in this Bulletin are statistically significant at the 90% confidence level.

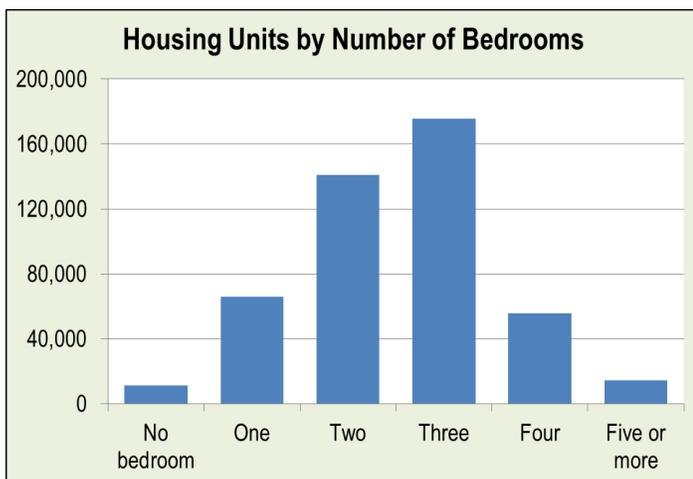
<sup>1</sup> All dollar figures are expressed in 2012 dollars. Dollar figures from other years are adjusted for inflation to 2012.

<sup>2</sup> "Vacancy rates" do not include all vacant buildings, only those that are vacant and for rent or vacant and for sale. The *homeowner vacancy rate* is the proportion of the homeowner inventory that is vacant for sale. It is computed by dividing the number of vacant units for sale only by the sum of the owner-occupied units, vacant units that are for sale only, and vacant units that have been sold but not yet occupied, and then multiplying by 100. The *rental vacancy rate* is the proportion of the rental inventory that is vacant for rent. It is computed by dividing the number of vacant units for rent by the sum of the renter-occupied units, vacant units that are for rent, and vacant units that have been rented but not yet occupied, and then multiplying by 100.

that 13.4% of Rhode Island residents live in homes built after 1990.



Most of the housing units in the state have two or three bedrooms. Such units are usually built with a single family household in mind. Builders and planners notice that there is growing demand for other types of housing for other types of households, such as elders who wish to age in a manageable home and younger generations who are waiting longer to get married and have children.



### Homeownership

In Rhode Island, homeownership fell between the recession and post-recession 3-year datasets. In 2010-2012, the estimated home ownership rate was 60.3%, down from 63.0% in 2007-2009. The share of owner-occupied homes that had a mortgage, 71.9%, did not have any statistically significant change. According to the 2010-2012 statistics, the

homeowner vacancy rate was 2.0% which does not reflect a statistically significant change from the 2007-2009 data.<sup>2</sup>

### Rent and Renters

Median rent has fallen in Rhode Island over the past several years. In 2010-2012, median gross rent was estimated at \$891, which is a decrease from \$989 in 2007-2009.<sup>1</sup> However the share of renters who spend at least 35% of their household income on gross rent has not changed, hovering around 40%. The decrease in median rent but stable rate of cost-burdened renters reflects lasting impacts of the recession that drove declines in real income and employment. During the post-recession data period, the rental vacancy rate was 6.8%, which is not statistically different from the rental vacancy rate during the recession data period.<sup>2</sup>

### Homeowner costs

On the whole, costs that homeowners incur have dropped slightly as well. In 2010-2012, the median monthly owner costs for housing units with a mortgage was \$1,867, down from \$2,139 in 2007-2009.<sup>1</sup> Monthly owner costs include mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, utilities, and condominium fees. For homeowners without a mortgage, the 2010-2012 data show median owner costs at \$665, fifty dollars lower than the 2007-2009 median after adjusting for inflation.<sup>1</sup> The 2012 data show that 31.6% of homeowners spend more than 35% of their income on owner costs, down slightly from 33.3%.

## TO LEARN MORE...

To explore the more housing data from the American Community Survey, visit the U.S. Census website, [American FactFinder](http://www.census.gov). You can locate data from a particular dataset or year by going to Advanced Search > Topics > Year or Advanced Search > Topics > Dataset. Municipalities under 20,000 residents will need to consult 5-year data.

[HousingWorksRI](http://www.housingworksri.org) publishes a wealth of data in an easily digestible format, including their annual [Housing Fact Book](http://www.housingworksri.org). Rhode Island Housing also publishes data on rents, home sales, and other housing topics at <http://www.rhodeislandhousing.org/sp.cfm?pageid=672>

[RhodeMapRI](http://www.rhodeislandplanning.org), a collaborative project led by Statewide Planning, is exploring housing data in the process of writing a new state housing plan. For more information or to get involved, contact Siobhan O’Kane at [siobhan.okane@doa.ri.gov](mailto:siobhan.okane@doa.ri.gov).

For further information about RI State Data Center resources, contact Vincent Flood at [vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov](mailto:vincent.flood@doa.ri.gov) or Amanda Martin at [amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov](mailto:amanda.martin@doa.ri.gov) and visit the website at <http://www.planning.ri.gov/geodeminfo/data/index.php>.