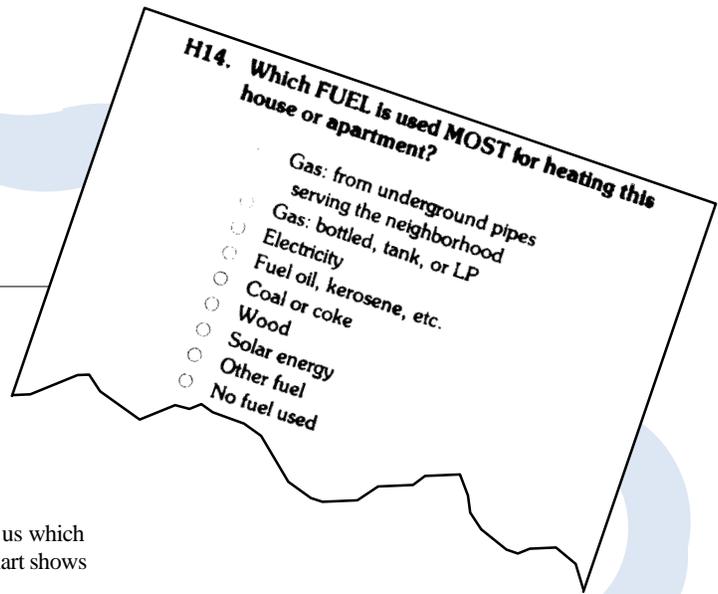


# We asked... You told us

## Home Heating Fuels

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

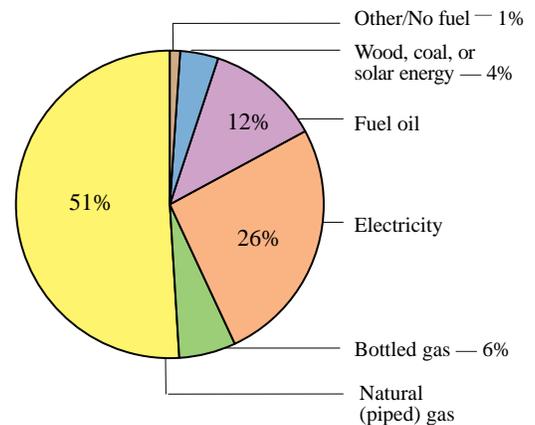


In question **H14** on the 1990 census forms, **we asked** people to tell us which fuel they used most for heating their house or apartment. The pie chart shows what **you told us** in replying to this question.

- In 1990, gas was the most frequently used energy source for heating homes. Natural (piped) or bottled gas was used to heat 57 percent of the housing units<sup>1</sup> in the United States.
- The Nation also relied heavily on electricity as a heating source. In 1990, electricity was the main source of heat in 26 percent of housing units.
- About 12 percent of residences used fuel oil, and a small percentage of homes (4 percent) used wood, coal, or solar energy.
- Only 1 percent of housing units used other types of fuels or did not use fuel at all. In Hawaii, for example, temperatures stay warm throughout the year, and most homes do not have a need for heating fuel.

### Piped Gas Was the Most Common Home Heating Fuel in 1990

Percent of Occupied Housing Units by Type of Home Heating Fuel



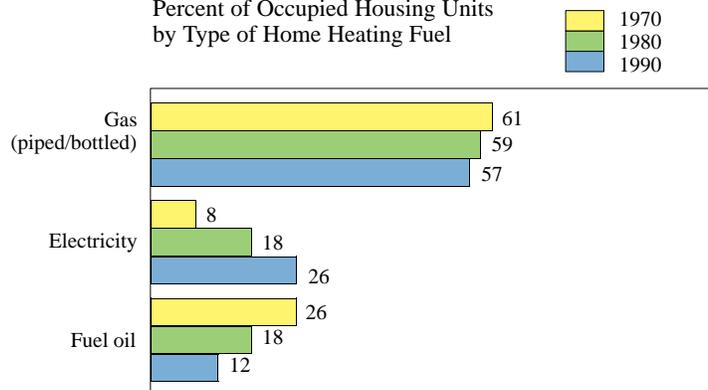
### Changes in the Type of Fuel Used for Heating Homes

The bar chart shows how the use of gas, electricity, and fuel oil changed between 1970 and 1990.

- Gas remained the most common heating fuel throughout the 1970's and 1980's, although its use decreased slightly from 61 percent in 1970 to 57 percent in 1990.
- On the other hand, electricity and fuel oil showed dramatic changes during this period. Fuel oil use dropped sharply from 26 to 12 percent, while the use of electricity increased from 8 to 26 percent.
- The shift from fuel oil to electricity resulted, in part, from the population movement to the Sun Belt States where climates are warmer and heat pumps are more popular. The high cost of oil during the energy crisis in the 1970's also played a role in the change in household fuel choices of consumers.

### Use of Electricity for Heating Homes Rose During the 1970's and 1980's

Percent of Occupied Housing Units by Type of Home Heating Fuel



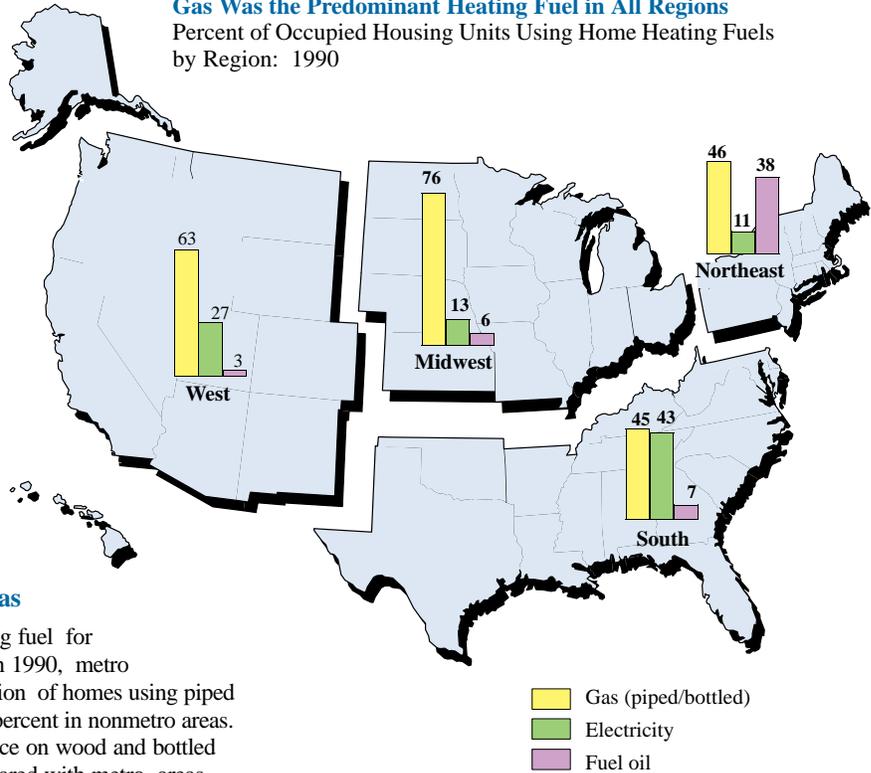
<sup>1</sup>Data on home heating fuels were collected only from occupied housing units and thus do not include vacant units. The information on home heating fuels is based on a sample and, therefore, is subject to sampling variability.

**Census Trivia:** According to the 1990 census, which State had the highest percentage of housing units heated by electricity? Which State had the highest percentage heated by fuel oil? (Answer on reverse.)

### Type of Fuel Used to Heat Homes Differed by Region . . .

- As shown in the map, gas was the primary source of heat for 76 percent of the homes in the Midwest, 63 percent in the West, 46 percent in the Northeast, and 45 percent in the South.
- Although gas was the leading fuel in the South, almost as many homes (43 percent) used electricity, the highest percentage of the regions.
- The Northeast relied on fuel oil more heavily than any other region. About 38 percent of the homes in this region used it as the main source for heat. In each of the other regions, oil was used by fewer than 8 percent of the homes.
- Only 11 percent of the homes in the Northeast used electricity, the lowest percentage of the regions.

**Gas Was the Predominant Heating Fuel in All Regions**  
Percent of Occupied Housing Units Using Home Heating Fuels by Region: 1990

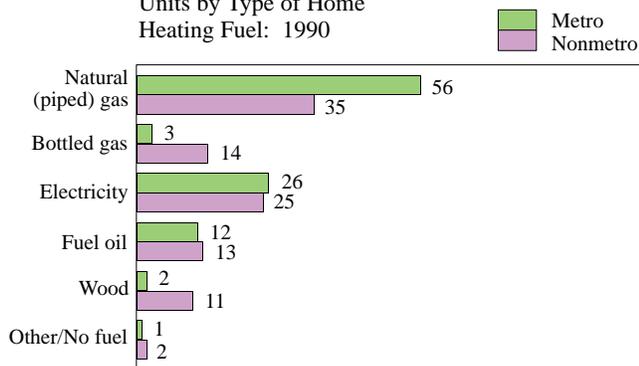


### . . . and Between Metro and Nonmetro Areas

- Although piped gas was the predominant heating fuel for both metropolitan<sup>2</sup> and nonmetropolitan areas in 1990, metro areas depended on it more heavily. The proportion of homes using piped gas was 56 percent in metro areas, but only 35 percent in nonmetro areas. This gap resulted from the relatively high reliance on wood and bottled gas as heating sources in nonmetro areas compared with metro areas. Surprisingly, wood still was used as the main heating fuel in 11 percent of the housing units in nonmetro areas, compared with 2 percent in metro areas.

<sup>2</sup>Generally, a metropolitan area consists of a sizable city and its suburbs, with a total population of at least 100,000. Metropolitan areas are defined in terms of counties (cities and towns in New England).

**Metro Areas More Dependent on Piped Gas Than Nonmetro Areas**  
Percent of Occupied Housing Units by Type of Home Heating Fuel: 1990



### Who Uses This Information?

Just a few examples:

- Utility companies to forecast the need for additional power facilities and utility networks
- Federal, State, and local governments to allocate funds for energy cost assistance programs
- Environmental protection agencies and organizations to educate people about the need for energy conservation

*Trivia Answer:* In 1990, Florida had the highest percentage of homes heated by electricity (79 percent), and Maine had the highest percentage heated by fuel oil (69 percent).

**Want to Know More?** Consult the 1990 census report, CH-2, *Detailed Housing Characteristics*, at a large public or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO).

If you want to know more, call:

- Customer Services at the Census Bureau, **301-763-4100**, for ordering information about the GPO reports listed above OR for copies of CQC bulletins
- Kim Giesbrecht or Karen Mills, **301-763-4263**, for more information on CQC bulletins
- Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, **301-763-8553**, for more information on housing data



Issued July 1993