

Spaces in New Homes

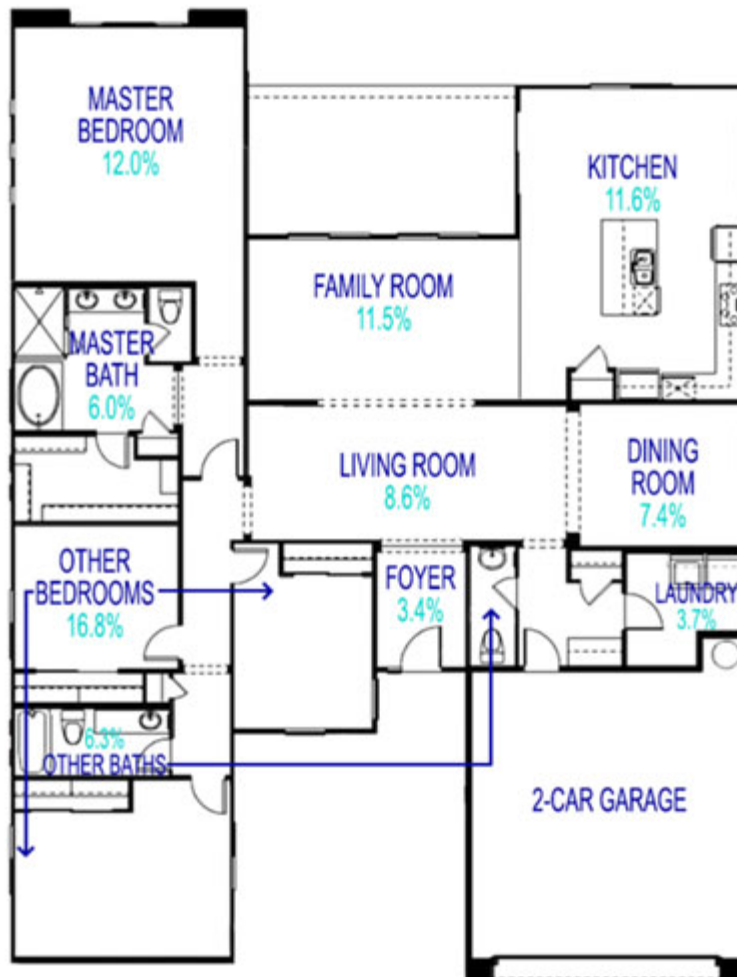
October Special Study for Housing Economics

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A question frequently asked about new homes is how finished floor space is distributed in them. The standard source for data on characteristics of new homes, the Census Bureau's [Survey of Construction](#) (SOC), doesn't go very far toward answering the question. As recently reported in NAHB's [Special Study for August](#), SOC data can be used to show that the median size of a home started in 2012 was 2,315 square feet, with, on average, 2.56 bathrooms, and 3.38 bedrooms.

But these standard data don't answer questions about how large the rooms are, or how much of the square footage is allocated to spaces like bedrooms, baths, a living room, etc. in the typical new home. To collect this type of information, NAHB recently surveyed its single-family builder members. The average percent distribution of finished space in the typical new home built by NAHB's members is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1.
HOW SPACE IS DISTRIBUTED IN AN AVERAGE NEW HOME



Other finished space not indicated (breakfast nook, closets, halls etc.) **12.7%**

Note: floor plan shown for purposes of illustration only; percentages are not intended to match the geometric areas in the diagram perfectly.

Source: average percentages based on special questions appended to the survey for the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index, June 2013.

The following sections discuss each type of space in more detail, provide square footages, and breakdown the results for homes in different size ranges.

Types of Spaces

The survey on spaces in new homes took the form of special questions appended to the monthly survey that underpins the [NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index](#) in June of 2013. For reference, the questionnaire is available at the end of this report. This article is based on information from 204 single-family builders who provided relatively complete answers to these questions.

As the questionnaire shows, the survey asked single-family home builders about space allocated to ten different types of rooms—plus a great room that could be a combination of several types of spaces, and provided a line to write in and describe any other areas. A separate question covered the space devoted to walk-in pantries and closets.

The survey attempted neither to define any of the room types, nor to explain what constitutes a room. Identifying and counting individual rooms is not always easy, as spaces in the home that are clearly intended to serve different functions may be separated from each other by any combination of partial walls, arches, columns, cabinetry, etc., with or without various sizes of pass throughs. Indeed, removing walls and substituting other features to achieve a more open feel while still indicating distinct spaces within the home has become a common type of remodeling project. In this article, the determination and classification of rooms is left up to the builder's interpretation.

The only type of room that builders reported was present in the typical new home 100 percent of the time is a master bedroom. Every new home also contains a kitchen area, but this is sometimes combined with other space in a great-room configuration, so only 93 percent reported including a kitchen as a completely separate room. Other rooms present in over 90 percent of the homes are master bathroom, other (than the master) bedrooms, other bathrooms, and a laundry room.

Table 1 shows these percentages and also provides a breakdown for homes in three size categories, with cut-offs at 2,000 and 3,000 square feet. Not surprisingly, some types of spaces are more common in larger homes. The share of new homes built with separate dining rooms, separate family rooms, and walk-in pantries increases regularly as the homes get bigger. The same is not true, however, for a separate living room, great room or other finished space. Entry foyers are present in over 90 percent of new homes with at least 2,000 square feet of living space, but are slightly more common in 2,000-2,999 square foot homes than in homes with 3,000 or more square feet of space.

Table 1. How Often Builders Provide Various Rooms and Spaces in New Homes

	All New Homes	By Home Size		
		Under 2,000 square feet	2,000-2,999 square feet	3,000 square feet plus
Master Bedroom	100%	100%	100%	100%
Other Bedrooms	95%	91%	96%	94%
Master Bathroom	96%	91%	98%	97%
Other Bathrooms	96%	94%	96%	96%
Laundry Room	96%	94%	99%	93%
Entry Foyer	89%	74%	95%	91%
Separate Kitchen	93%	87%	95%	93%
Separate Dining Room	79%	68%	82%	84%
Separate Living Room	52%	51%	45%	61%
Separate Family Room	64%	43%	67%	73%
Great Room	46%	43%	50%	46%
Other Finished Space	67%	60%	73%	67%
Walk-in Kitchen Pantry	60%	51%	56%	76%

Size of Rooms

One home can be larger than another either because it has more rooms, or because each of the rooms in it is larger (or, of course, a combination of the two). Table 2 shows the average size of particular rooms and spaces that are often included in new homes. The averages are based only on cases where the room or space is

present—so, for example, 550 square feet is the average size of a great room in new homes that have a great room.

	All New Homes	By Home Size		
		Under 2,000 square feet	2,000-2,999 square feet	3,000 square feet plus
Master Bedroom	309	231	271	411
Other Bedrooms	481	261	416	713
Master Bathroom	160	115	144	210
Other Bathrooms	191	93	146	313
Laundry Room	102	67	87	145
Entry Foyer	101	65	89	138
Separate Kitchen	306	193	275	423
Separate Dining Room	216	148	196	281
Separate Living Room	330	256	319	393
Separate Family Room	404	311	355	503
Great Room	550	487	481	680
Other Finished Space	530	270	435	825
Closet Space	146	106	125	201
Walk-in Kitchen Pantry	37	17	31	51

When it’s present, befitting its name, the great room tends to be the largest of the individual rooms. The second and third place for the average new home are spaces that often consist of more than one room or area—other (i.e., not master) bedrooms and other finished space (where builders were asked to write in what that includes).

In the average new home, other bedrooms account for 481 square feet of space, and other finished space is 530 square feet. The most common types of other finished spaces reported by builders were hallways, studies, bonus rooms, and breakfast nooks. Closet space, on average, accounts for 146 square feet.

Of the spaces in Table 2 that consist of a single area, separate family rooms are next to the great room in size, averaging 404 square feet, followed by living rooms

(averaging 330 square feet), master bedrooms (309 square feet) and kitchens (306 square feet). The smallest individual space captured in the survey is a walk-in pantry, with an average size of 37 square feet.

Like the previous table, Table 2 provides a breakdown for homes in three different size classes. In almost all cases, the size of rooms (or other spaces) increases regularly with the size of the home. The only exception is the great room—which, when it is present, tends to be slightly larger in homes under 2,000 square feet than in the 2,000-2,999 square foot homes.

Some apparent irregularity in the great room statistics is probably not surprising, given the variable nature of the great room. Sometimes builders reported the same space in the home as both a great room and a separate family room, in which case it is counted as both in the tables shown here. But more often builders described great rooms as some combination of family room, living room, dining room, and kitchen. Although a family-living room combination was most common, builders reported many different configurations, including great rooms encompassing all four types of living spaces. Table 3 shows how often the great room contains each of these spaces.

Table 3. How Often Great Rooms Contain Various Spaces	
Family Room	69%
Living Room	56%
Dining Room	24%
Kitchen	18%

Percentage & Square Footage Breakdown

Results from Table 1 (how often particular types of spaces are present in new homes) and Table 2 (the size of the spaces, when present) are combined in Table 4 to show how space is distributed throughout a new home. To derive this breakdown, great room square footage is allocated according to the type of area it contains (family, living, dining, kitchen) based on the relative sizes of those areas in homes that have them.

	Small		Average		Large	
Master Bedroom	231	14.2%	309	12.0%	411	10.9%
Other Bedrooms	237	14.6%	432	16.8%	677	17.9%
Master Bathroom	104	6.4%	154	6.0%	209	5.5%
Other Bathrooms	86	5.3%	163	6.3%	285	7.5%
Laundry Room	63	3.8%	96	3.7%	134	3.5%
Entry Foyer	47	2.9%	88	3.4%	128	3.4%
Kitchen	195	11.9%	300	11.6%	420	11.1%
Dining Room	126	7.8%	192	7.4%	266	7.0%
Living Room	193	11.8%	223	8.6%	282	7.5%
Family Room	181	11.1%	296	11.5%	426	11.3%
Other Finished Space	167	10.3%	326	12.7%	541	14.3%
Total	1,630	100.0%	2,580	100.0%	3,780	100.0%

Note: Table 4 is based on averages across all homes. Table 2 reports average square footage of particular rooms only where they exist. As a result, most square footage numbers will be smaller in Table 4 than in Table 2.

In addition to an average breakdown of space in all new homes, Table 4 also shows the breakdown for a small home (based on averages for homes under 2,000 square feet) and a large home (based on homes with at least 3,000 square feet).

While Table 2 showed the sizes of rooms when they exist, Table 4 shows allocation of space averaged across all homes. So if a home lacks a second bathroom for example, it will be averaged into Table 4 as a home where zero space is allocated to other baths. As a result, the square footage numbers will be smaller in Table 4 than in Table 2, unless a particular type of area is present in every home (and, as Table 1 has shown, that's true only of the master bedroom).

Bedrooms in total account for a fraction under 29 percent of the floor space irrespective of home size. On a square footage basis, the area covered by bedrooms increases from 468 square feet in the average small home (of about 1,600 square feet) to 1,080 square feet in the average large home (about 3,800 square feet). In smaller homes, the master bedroom takes up a greater share of the floor space, appearing to be one area of the home builders don't want to sacrifice for affordability.

The percentage of bathroom space as a share of the total area is 12.3 percent on average, more in the large home, less in the small home. Like bedrooms, the master suite accounts for a greater share of total bathroom space in smaller homes.

The share of space covered by the laundry room—which is present in the vast majority of homes, irrespective their size—is 3.7 percent and varies only to a minor extent with the size of the home. The entry foyer accounts for 3.4 percent of the finished area on average, as well as for the large home. For the small home, the share falls to 2.9 percent, primarily because, as Table has shown, entry foyers are not as ubiquitous in homes under 2,000 square feet.

The share of space covered by kitchen and dining rooms declines only modestly with house size. The 195 square foot kitchen accounts for 11.9 percent of the space in the small home, while the 420 square foot kitchen accounts for 11.1 percent in the large home. Similarly, the 126 square foot dining area accounts for 7.8 percent of the space in the small home, while the 266 square foot kitchen accounts for 7.0 percent in the large one.

The family room tends to account for a little over 11 percent of the floor space in each of the three cases: small, average, and large home. The living room, on the other hand, accounts for nearly 12 percent of the space in the small home, but only 7.5 percent in the large one. As a result, slightly less space is devoted to the family room than living room in the small home; but, in the large home over 50 percent more space is devoted to family room than the living room.