Between 1973 and 1993, the Nation added 31 million homes.

The national housing inventory reached 107 million units in 1993. Over the course of the past two decades, housing growth has been concentrated in the South and West. Nearly 7 of every 10 homes constructed since 1975 were located in these two regions. Twenty years ago, 32 and 18 percent, respectively, of the homes in the United States were located in the South and West. By 1993, these respective regional shares had grown to 36 and 21 percent.

The condition of our housing improved.

Between 1973 and 1993, U.S. households became more likely to have —

G Complete kitchens.
G Complete plumbing facilities.
G Central heat.
G Central air conditioning.

G Adequate elbow room. As occupied housing units grew larger (from a median of 5.1 to 5.5 rooms), the typical household became smaller (dropping from 2.5 to 2.3 persons). Consequently, the proportion of homes that were crowded (more than one person per room) was cut in half, from 6 to 3 percent.

At the same time, they became less likely to have interior problems, such as —

G Peeling paint
G Open cracks.

The graph below illustrates these improvements.

Homes grew older.

In 1973, American homes were a median of 22 years old; 20 years later, the typical home was 28 years of age.

More and more homes were heated by electricity.

In 1973, piped gas was the main heating fuel for the majority (55 percent) of the Nation’s occupied homes. Fuel oil and electricity, at 25 and 10 percent, respectively, followed. Twenty years later, piped gas was still tops (51 percent), but electricity and fuel oil had traded places (27 and 12 percent, respectively). Electricity’s jump may be
Renters suffered an even greater erosion in median income — $23,400 to $18,900, or a 19-percent drop.

While incomes were declining, home values and rents were rising. The median value of owner-occupied homes (in constant 1993 dollars) rose 10 percent — from $78,400 to $86,500. Likewise, the median monthly amount paid in rent and utilities rose 12 percent, to $487.

**Households became less likely to be maintained by married couples**

In 1973, about 75 percent of all owner-occupied housing units were maintained by married couples; the same was true for 48 percent of all renter-occupied units. Twenty years later, the corresponding proportions had declined to 65 percent and 30 percent, respectively. At the same time, multi-person households maintained by single women became more common (a 1-in-8 chance in 1973, 1 in 5 in 1993).

**... or contain children ...**

In 1973, 43 percent of householders lived with their own children under age 18. Two decades later, the proportion had dipped to 37 percent.

**Homeownership rate remained practically unchanged.**

About 65 percent of homes in 1973 and 1993 were occupied by their owners. As in 1973, homeownership rates were higher in the Midwest and South than in the Northeast and West.

**Housing became less affordable.**

In constant 1993 dollars, the median income of families and primary individuals who owned their homes slipped 2 percent from 1973 to 1993 — from $37,400 to $36,500. Renters suffered an even larger decline — from $37,400 to $36,500. Using the same scale, 77 percent of owners and 59 percent of renters gave their neighborhood a comparable rating.

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