

**Written Statement of**

**Paul Emrath, Ph.D.**

**On Behalf of the  
National Association of Home Builders**

**Congress of the United States**

**Briefing on the**

**Impact of Falling Response Rates to  
Social Surveys and What Can Be Done**

**April 26, 2013**

I am happy to have this opportunity to provide a statement on social surveys conducted and financed by the federal government on behalf of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

NAHB is a Washington-based trade association representing more than 140,000 members involved in building and remodeling single family and multifamily housing, operating rental properties, manufacturing and distributing products, financing, and other aspects of residential construction. NAHB and its members thus have a strong demand for the information provided by federal statistical system, and have been strong supporters of federal surveys over the years.

As an organization, NAHB has an official policy on federal housing data. In 1989, NAHB's Board of Directors adopted a resolution urging the federal government to "maintain and improve the scope and quality of housing and housing information data that it collects and disseminates," and that resolution has remained in effect ever since.

NAHB and its members access the data produced from federal surveys and use it in a variety of ways on virtually a daily basis. For example, NAHB regularly tracks and forecasts series produced from federal surveys, such as those conducted by the Census Bureau's Manufacturing and Construction Division, to help its members make informed business decisions.

In some cases, NAHB combines data from the federal statistical system with other information. For example, the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity index combines house price data purchased from a vendor with local income estimates and property tax and insurance rates information from federal surveys to track housing affordability in metropolitan areas across the country. In an application like this, the data produced from federal surveys play a critical role and there is no substitute for them.

Even the information NAHB produces from its own surveys is often most useful because it can be benchmarked or compared to nationally representative data from the federal government. The NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index, which is monitored closely by the press, the Federal Reserve, and firms on Wall Street, has been useful and successful primarily because it can be shown to be a leading indicator of the series on housing starts, which is produced from a federal survey.

NAHB members who build and operate properties under federal housing programs rely on income and rent data from federal surveys to determine the eligible tenants and maximum rents, requires a data system that covers the entire country in a comprehensive, consistent way.

Much of the research NAHB undertakes in support of its policy positions relies on data from federal surveys. To illustrate the range and frequency of NAHB's use of federal survey data, recent examples are shown below. Major NAHB studies are shown going back to 2011. Shorter analyses posted on NAHB's Eye on Housing blog are shown for approximately the past months. In each case, the federal survey or surveys on which the piece is based are indicated. All items shown are available to the general public through NAHB's web site.

Major studies available at HousingEconomics.com

- *Pent-up Housing Demand: The Household Formations That Didn't Happen—Yet*, February 2, 2011. Housing Vacancy Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Property Tax Rates After the Housing Downturn*, April 4, 2011. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Housing Opportunity Index by Race/Ethnicity*, May 3, 2011. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Property Tax Rates by County and City*, August 2, 2011. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *NAHB House Price Estimator, Updated*, October 5, 2011. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Geography of Home Size and Occupancy*, December 1, 2011. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *NAHB Apartment Rent Estimator*, January 3, 2012. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Metro Area House Prices: The "Priced Out" Effect*. February 1, 2012. Building Permit Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau), American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Snapshot of Home Ownership in Local Housing Markets*, March 2, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Residential Construction Employment across States and Congressional Districts*, April 3, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Quality of the Existing Housing Stock: As Good as You Thought?* May 1, 2012. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *55+ Households are Nearly Everywhere*, July 5, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Immigrants and Housing Demand*, August 3, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Lower Operating Costs Mean Buyers Can Afford a Higher-Priced Home—If It's New* December 6, 2012. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Latest Calculations Show Average Buyer Expected to Stay in a Home 13 Years*, January 3, 2013. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Characteristics of Home Buyers*, February 8, 2013. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Immigrant Workers in the Construction Labor Force*. April 1, 2013. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).

Items available in NAHB's Eye on Housing blog:

- *Residential Construction Spending Rebounds in August*, October 1, 2012. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for September – Weak Payrolls and Noisy Unemployment Rate*, October 5, 2012. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Construction Hiring Dips in August, but Sector Job Openings Rise*, October 10, 2012. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Headline Inflation Surges on Gas Prices*, October 16, 2012. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Telephone Point of Purchase Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Housing Construction Accelerates*, October 17, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Apartment Production Numbers Hit 4-Year Highs in September*, October 17, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *New Home Sales Continue Improvement*, October 24, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Homeownership Rate Slips during the Third Quarter*, October 31, 2012. Housing Vacancy Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Residential Construction Spending Surges on New Construction and Remodeling*, November 1, 2012, Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *An Increase in Multigenerational Households*, November 2, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for October – Continued Positive But Subpar Gains*, November 5, 2012. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Seasonal Turnover Holds Back Construction Labor Market Growth*, November 6, 2012. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Sources of Small Business Financing in the Construction Sector*, November 8, 2012. Survey of Business Owners (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Nationwide Housing Affordability Improves in Third Quarter*, November 15, 2012. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Headline Inflation Slows, but Core Inflation Accelerates*, November 15, 2012. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Telephone Point of Purchase Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Housing Starts Continue Advance*, November 20, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Production of New Apartments: Upward Trend Continues*, November 21, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Townhouse Starts and Market Share Grow During Third Quarter*, November 26, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).

- *New Home Sales Hold Steady in October*, November 28, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Residential Construction Spending Climbs to 4-year High*, December 3, 2012. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Data Show Continued Growth in Rental Demand*, December 7, 2012, Survey of Market Absorption of Apartments (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for November – Still Positive, Still Weak*, December 7, 2012. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Lower Operating Costs Mean New-Home Buyers Can Afford More House*, December 10, 2012. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Construction Job Openings Spike in October*, December 11, 2012. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Consumer Prices Decline On Falling Energy Costs; Gas Prices Fall but Household Energy Increases*, December 19, 2012. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Telephone Point of Purchase Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Housing Production Takes a Breather*, December 19, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Apartment Production Stable at 4-Year High*, December 20, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Custom Home Construction Steady as Overall Market Expands*, December 21, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *New Home Sales Up in November*, December 27, 2012. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Latest Study Shows Average Buyer Expected to Stay in a Home 13 Years*, January 3, 2013. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Residential Construction Spending Rises for Eighth Consecutive Month*, January 3, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Property Tax Collections on the Rise Again*, January 4, 2013. Annual Survey of Local Government Finances (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for December – Gaining Strength? Not Really*, January 7, 2013. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Single-Family Built-for-Rent Market Share Remains Elevated*, January 8, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Construction Job Openings Up in Recent Months*, January 10, 2013. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Consumer Prices Unchanged As Gasoline Is Offset by Shelter and Food*, January 17, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Telephone Point of Purchase Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

- *Multifamily Production Rate Hits 4.5-Year High*, January 18, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Homeownership Rate Holds Steady in Fourth Quarter*, January 29, 2013. Housing Vacancy Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Positive Run Continues for Residential Construction Spending*, February 1, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *BLS Data Revision: Home Building Employment Up*, February 1, 2013. Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Income Disparity Between New and Existing Home Buyers Widens*, February 12, 2013. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Open Construction Jobs, But No Hiring Surge Yet*, February 12, 2013. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Housing Permits Continue Rise*, February 20, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Multifamily Production Falls Back to November Rate*, February 21, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Housing Affordability Increases at Year-End 2012*, February 22, 2013. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Fourth Quarter 2012 Custom Home Building*, February 25, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Builders Selling Well*, February 26, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *One Point in the HMI Eventually Means 37,000 Jobs*, February 27, 2013. Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Residential Construction Spending Flat in January*, March 4, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Apartment Construction Continues to Improve*, March 8, 2013. Survey of Market Absorption of Apartments (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for February – Mixed, But With Homebuilding on Top*, March 8, 2013. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Rising Job Openings in Construction*, March 12, 2013. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *CPI Up on Gasoline, Real Rental Prices Also Rise*, March 18, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Telephone Point of Purchase Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Solid February for Housing Starts*, March 19, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Townhouse Market Share Remains At Post-Recession Highs*, March 20, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Multifamily Starts: A Little Stronger than We Thought Last Month*, March 21, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).

- *New Home Sales Readjust*, March 26, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Property Tax Share Falls as Total Tax Receipts Increase*, March 28, 2013. Annual Survey of Local Government Finances (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Multifamily Rental Properties: Would You Believe 2.25 Million?* March 29, 2013. Rental Housing Finance Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Residential Construction Spending Bounces Back in February*, April 1, 2013. Consumer Expenditure Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Immigrant Workers in Construction*, April 2, 2013. American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau).
- *Single-Family Built-for-Rent Market*, April 2, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *New Homes Provide the Living Space Buyers Want*, April 4, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *The Employment Situation for March – Bad, But Homebuilding Shines*, April 5, 2013. Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau), Current Employment Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *Post-Recession Highs for Open Construction Positions*, April 9, 2013. Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- *What Makes a Home Inadequate?* April 9, 2013. American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- *New Homes Fill Demand for 2 1/2 Baths*, April 11, 2013. Survey of Construction (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). American Housing Survey (sponsored by HUD, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau).