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<http://www.wsj.com/articles/average-time-to-build-a-house-6-months-1420652311>

## Average Time to Build a House: 6 Months

By Adam Bonislawski



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James Boast

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Want to get your house built as quickly as possible? Buy land in the South and nail down a construction crew.

According to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1973 it took, on average, six months to build a single-family home. In 1980, that number was up to 6.9 months, and in 2009 it was up to 7.9. In 2013, the latest data available, it was back down to six months.

Why the sudden speedup? Are job sites spiking the coffee with Red Bull?

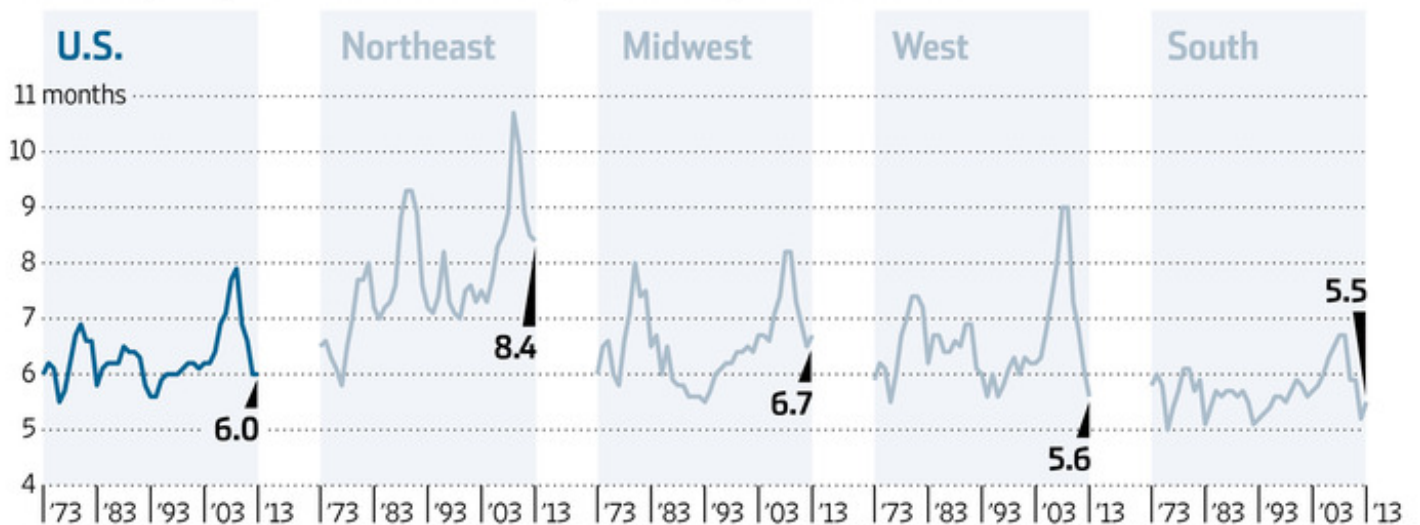
The main cause of longer construction times is a tight labor market, says Rick Judson, a Charlotte, N.C.-based

developer and former chairman of the National Association of Home Builders, trade organization. And while labor shortages are perhaps to be expected during boom times, they crop up during housing busts, as well, he notes.

Take, for instance, the aftermath of the 2008 mortgage crisis. Construction times rose steadily during the boom, from an average of 6.1 months in 2002 to 6.9 months in 2006. But delays grew even longer after the housing market collapsed, with build times topping out at 7.9 months in 2009.

## Nailed It

The average length of time to build a home, in months, from start to finish.



Source: Census Bureau

The Wall Street Journal

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“Many tradespeople simply went out of business and aren’t coming back,” Mr. Judson says. “They either retooled themselves educationally, moved into a different business, or simply retired.”

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And that, he says, created a labor shortage that persisted even as single-family housing starts plummeted from a peak of 1.7 million in 2005 to 445,000 in 2009.

In particular, busts thin the ranks of less skilled workers like framing carpenters, says Ed Brady, president of Bloomington, Ill.-based Brady Homes and an NAHB vice chairman. Such workers typically have less time and education invested in their trade and are therefore quicker to change career paths than, for instance, a plumber or electrician, he says.

Weather is the other key factor underlying house build times, Mr. Judson says.

“When you have freezing weather in the Northeast, you can’t pour concrete. You don’t get the productivity out of contractors and subcontractors that you would in the more temperate days of spring, summer and fall,” he says.

The census numbers bear this out—with build times consistently longest in the Northeast and shortest in the South with the Midwest and West somewhere in between.

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