Top 10 Counties with Highest 55+ Housing Vacancy Rate — ALEX Intelligence 2026

57.6% Vacancy in Top 55+ Counties

Where retirees live, empty homes are a feature—not a flaw

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THE DATA

57.6%

Housing Vacancy Rate (2024)

The highest vacancy rate among U.S. counties with the highest share of residents aged 65+

This data, drawn from the 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, reveals that Worcester County leads the nation in housing vacancy among 55+ communities. This is not a sign of underperformance, but of intentional inventory design. The figure includes seasonal and second homes, which are common in retirement destinations like coastal and lakefront counties. High vacancy rates in these areas reflect strategic supply—offering a flexible, low-turnover environment that accommodates both permanent residents and temporary stays.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-23-fifty-five-plus-fifty-five-plus-vacancy-share-county-us-senior

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Vacancy Is a Strategic Asset

In active-adult and age-restricted communities, high vacancy rates are not a market failure—they are a signal of supply elasticity. These counties attract retirees not just for permanence, but for lifestyle access: seasonal living, second-home ownership, and mobility. The presence of unoccupied units indicates a well-balanced inventory that supports both long-term residency and flexible housing use. This model benefits both owners and developers, allowing capital to remain fluid while maintaining long-term value in a low-turnover market.

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Seasonal Demand Drives Vacancy, Not Deterioration

The high vacancy rates in top 55+ counties are not tied to disrepair or financial distress. Rather, they reflect the nature of retirement housing as a lifestyle asset. These communities are designed for mobility—residents often downsize from larger homes, then return seasonally or shift ownership between primary and secondary locations. This pattern, common in resort and coastal counties, means vacancy is a feature of demand, not a symptom of oversupply. It underscores the need to assess 55+ markets through the lens of lifestyle economics, not traditional vacancy metrics.

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