

United States Federal Rental Assistance Fact Sheet

Federal rental assistance helps struggling seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and working families keep a roof over their heads, often by helping them afford rental units they find in the private market. Ten million people in over 5 million low-income households receive federal rental assistance.

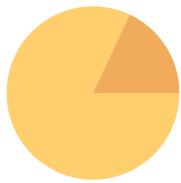
10.4 million

people in **5.2 million American** households use federal rental assistance to afford modest housing.

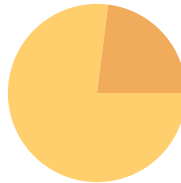
68% are seniors, children, or people with disabilities.



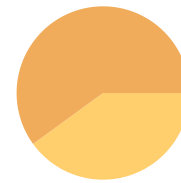
...but **4 in 10 low-income*** people in the United States are homeless or pay over half their income for rent. Most don't receive federal rental assistance due to limited funding.



18% of assisted people are seniors



23% of assisted people have a disability



60% of assisted people are in families with children

Rental assistance helps **1.9 million** of the United States' seniors age in place.

Rental assistance helps **2.4 million** people with disabilities to live independently in the United States.

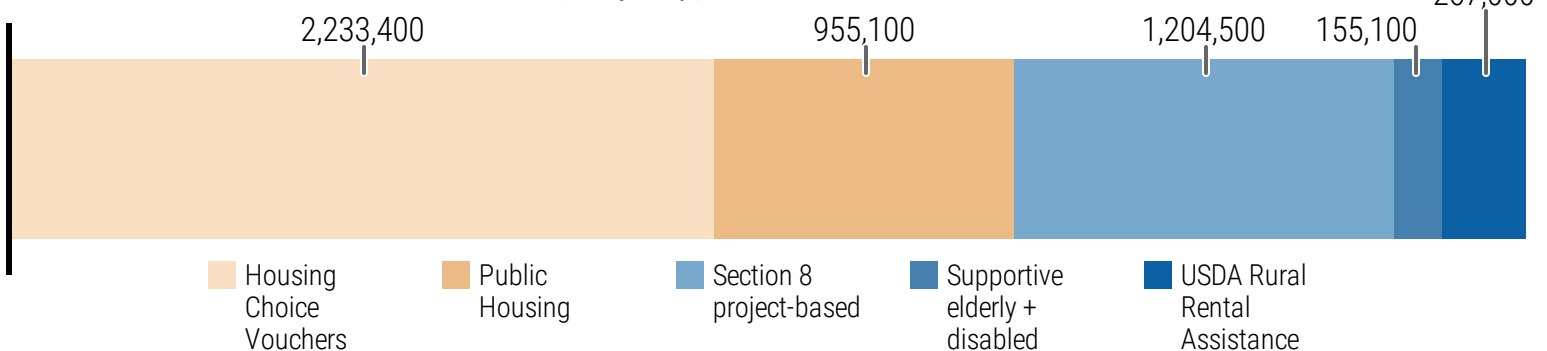
Rental assistance helps **6.3 million** people in families with children in the United States avoid homelessness.

Rental assistance supports working families: **60%** of non-disabled, working-age American households receiving Department of Housing and Urban Development rental assistance include at least one worker.

Rental Assistance Supports All Types of American Communities

Rental assistance helps 8.9 million people in cities and suburbs, as well as 1.5 million people in rural areas and small towns.

Number of Households Receiving Major Types of Federal Rental Assistance in the United States



Federal rental assistance programs provided states with **\$43.9 billion** in 2018.

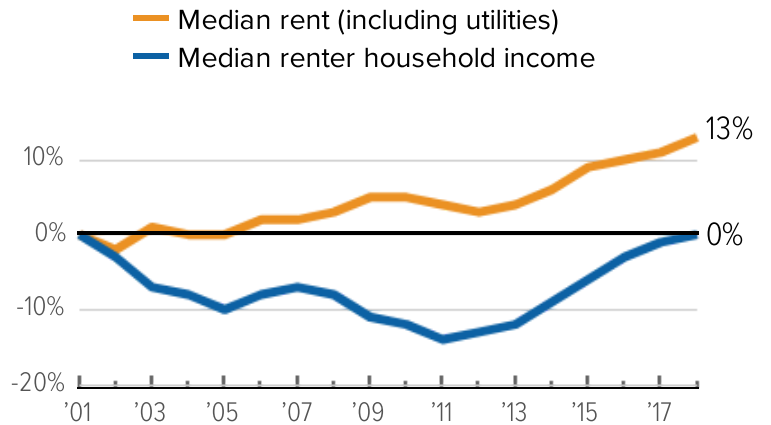
Rental Costs Have Risen in the United States

The median rent (including utilities) for an apartment in the United States was **\$1,060/month** in 2018, an 13 percent increase since 2001.

But wages for many jobs have not caught up.

As a result, **24 million** people in **11 million** low-income American households pay more than half their income for rent, often forgoing necessities, like food or medicine, to keep a roof over their heads. The federal government considers housing unaffordable if it costs more than 30 percent of a household's income.

Percent change since 2001, adjusted for inflation



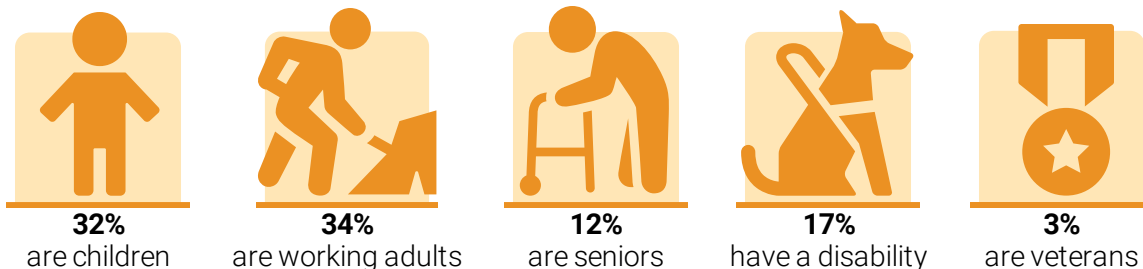
Source: CBPP tabulations of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey

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Federal Rental Assistance Hasn't Kept Pace

Despite the importance of rental assistance, more federal dollars go to homeownership subsidies like the mortgage interest deduction, which mainly benefit higher-income households, instead of families that struggle the most to afford housing. American communities only thrive when everyone — renters and homeowners, whether Black, brown, or white — have access to decent, affordable housing.

24 million low-income American renters pay more than half their income for housing. Most don't receive rental assistance due to funding limitations. Who are they?



When low-income renters can't find a decent, affordable apartment, they are more likely to be evicted and risk becoming homeless.

On a single night in 2018, **half a million** people experienced homelessness in the United States. An estimated **1.3 million** American school children lived in shelters, on the street, doubled up with other families, or in hotels or motels during the 2016-2017 school year.

1.3 million American children live in unstable housing

Our country's current policy approach gives more help to those who need it least. We can change this. Policymakers need to work together to expand rental assistance and ensure that all Americans have access to good, affordable homes.

Last updated June 1st, 2021

*Low-income = household income not exceeding 80 percent of local median income. For a family of three in the United States, 80 percent of the local median is equivalent to \$54,350. Download data for all 50 states and D.C. [here](#). Full sources and methodology available [here](#).