

2021 Federal Rental Assistance Factsheets

Sources and Methodology

To create the federal rental assistance factsheets for the 50 states, District of Columbia, and the United States, CBPP analyzed administrative data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). In addition to public sources, we relied on a non-public dataset from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (available through a research agreement) to analyze demographic characteristics of households using HUD rental assistance. We also estimated the unmet need for housing assistance among all low-income households using the American Community Survey.

People using federal rental assistance: This figure encompasses all people receiving USDA Rural Rental Assistance (Section 521) and the HUD-administered programs listed below, rounded down to the nearest thousand.

- Public Housing
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (including Moderate Rehabilitation)
- Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202)
- Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities (Section 811)
- McKinney-Vento Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, Safe Havens, and Other Permanent Housing units and beds
- Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) tenant-based rental assistance

We used the following sources for each program:

- Public Housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance, Supportive Housing for the Elderly, and Supportive Housing for Disabled Persons program data are from a non-public dataset from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (available through a research agreement).
- McKinney-Vento bed counts for Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, Safe Havens, and Other Permanent Housing are from HUD's [2018 Housing Inventory Count](#) by State. We count one bed as one person.
- HOPWA counts are from [grantee performance profiles](#) for 2017-2018. HOPWA counts are only available for households. We assume all households are single individuals, which may be an undercount of total people served. We include households receiving tenant-based rental assistance or living in permanent housing facilities that receive operating subsidies.
- USDA Rural Rental Assistance counts are from the USDA's fiscal year 2018 [Multi-Family Fair Housing Occupancy Report](#).

Some funds authorized under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act and HOME Investment Partnership program are used by some grantees for rental assistance. However, we exclude these people because HUD does not publish detailed demographic data for people receiving rental assistance through these programs.

Households using federal rental assistance: This figure encompasses all households in the programs listed above, rounded down to the nearest thousand. In some instances, we used unit counts if household counts were not available. Unit counts represent all units in each federally assisted property, regardless of occupancy status.

We used the following sources for each program:

- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher household counts are from HUD’s [Voucher Management System](#) quarterly reports. We calculated the monthly average of voucher households as of June 2018.
- Public Housing, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance, Supportive Housing for the Elderly, and Supportive Housing for Disabled Persons program data are from HUD’s 2018 [Picture of Subsidized Households](#) dataset. We estimated the number of households in each program by multiplying total units by the occupancy rate. Total units were substituted for households if the occupancy rate was unavailable.
- McKinney-Vento unit counts for households with children and bed counts for households without children in Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, Safe Havens, and Other Permanent Housing are from HUD’s [2018 Housing Inventory Count](#) by State. For single individuals, we count one bed as one household.
- HOPWA household counts are from [grantee performance profiles](#) for 2017-2018. We include households receiving tenant-based rental assistance or living in permanent housing facilities that receive operating subsidies.
- USDA Rural Rental Assistance household counts are from the USDA’s fiscal year 2018 [Multi-Family Fair Housing Occupancy Report](#).

Some funds authorized under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act and HOME Investment Partnership program are used by some grantees for rental assistance. However, we exclude these households because HUD does not publish detailed demographic data for households receiving rental assistance through these programs.

Share of rental assistance recipients who are seniors, children, or people with disabilities: This figure represents the percentage of federal rental assistance recipients who are over age 61; under age 18; or are between the ages of 18 and 61 and have a disability. See **“People using federal rental assistance”** for sources. See **“People with disabilities**

receiving federal rental assistance” for HUD’s definition of disability and assumptions we used to count people with disabilities.

Ratio of low-income people who are homeless or pay more than half their income in rent: This figure is based on counts of people experiencing homelessness from HUD’s [2018 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress](#), and our estimates of all low-income renters and low-income renters paying more than half their income for housing using the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample. See **“Low-income people and households paying more than half their income for rent”** for more details.

Seniors receiving federal rental assistance: Federal rental assistance programs consider anyone 62 or older to be a senior. These demographic categories are not mutually exclusive — for instance, a senior citizen with a disability would be counted in the persons with disabilities category and in the seniors category. See **“People using federal rental assistance”** for sources.

People with disabilities receiving federal rental assistance: These figures include any person (regardless of age) who meets HUD and USDA criteria for having a disability. Federal rental assistance programs consider a person disabled if they have one or more of the following:

- a disability as defined in [Section 223 of the Social Security Act](#)
- a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration, substantially impedes their ability to live independently, and is of such a nature that such ability could be improved by more suitable housing conditions
- a developmental disability as defined in [Section 102](#) of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act
- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) or any condition that arises from the etiologic agent for AIDS

We made several assumptions to adjust for differences in demographic data across programs. We treated all households assisted by HOPWA and all single adults assisted by McKinney-Vento programs as adults with a disability, as the programs’ rules typically require adults to meet disability criteria to receive assistance.

These demographic categories are not mutually exclusive — for instance, a senior citizen with a disability would be counted in the persons with disabilities category and in the seniors category. See **“People using federal rental assistance”** for sources.

People in families with children receiving federal rental assistance: We considered people living in households with a person under age 18 to be a family with children. We made several assumptions to adjust for differences in demographic data across programs. We included children receiving USDA Rural Rental Assistance, but data were not available on the number of adults living with children. We included families with children as well as child-only households receiving McKinney-Vento assistance. We excluded all households assisted by HOPWA due to lack of demographic data; however, most other HUD households headed by a person with a disability do not include children.

These demographic categories are not mutually exclusive — for instance, a child with a disability would be counted in the persons with disabilities category and in the families with children category. See **“People using federal rental assistance”** for sources.

Children receiving federal rental assistance: Children refer to any person under age 18 receiving federal rental assistance. We excluded children assisted by McKinney-Vento programs and HOPWA due to lack of data. See **“People using federal rental assistance”** for sources.

Working families receiving HUD rental assistance: We considered households to be working if at least one person reported wage income (earnings from any job, self-employment, or military pay) in 2017. We used the non-public HUD administrative dataset to estimate this figure. This dataset includes households in the following programs:

- Public Housing
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (including Moderate Rehabilitation)
- Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202)
- Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities (Section 811)

Administrative data on work participation or earnings are not available for other rental assistance programs.

Federal funds for rental assistance: This is the sum of federal funding for all rental assistance programs, rounded to the nearest million or billion. Funding data are from the following sources:

- Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance, Supportive Housing for the Elderly, and Supportive Housing for Disabled Persons fiscal year 2018 funding is from HUD’s [Community Assessment Reporting Tool](#).
- Public Housing funding is from HUD’s 2018 [Operating Fund Validation Report](#) and fiscal year 2018 [Capital Fund Allocations to State/Public Housing Authorities](#).
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funds for Permanent Supportive Housing, Transitional Housing, and Safe Havens are from HUD’s fiscal year 2018 [Continuum of Care funding reports](#) and fiscal year 2018 [Emergency Services Grant awards by state](#). A share of these dollars includes some supportive service funding.
- HOPWA funding is from HUD’s [grantee performance profiles](#) for 2017-2018. Figures include expenditures listed for tenant-based rental assistance and permanent housing facilities that receive operating subsidies.
- USDA Rural Rental Assistance funds are from the [Rural Housing program fiscal year 2017 obligations report](#).

Bar Chart – Major Types of Federal Rental Assistance: This chart includes households in the largest federal rental programs; it excludes a small number of households in the HOPWA and McKinney-Vento programs. See “**Households using federal rental assistance**” for the sources used in this chart.

Federal rental assistance recipients in cities, suburbs, rural areas and small towns: We relied on the Housing Assistance Council’s [Census tract geographies](#) to determine [how many federal rental assistance recipients resided in these areas](#). Rural areas are Census tracts with less than 16 housing units per square mile. Small towns areas are Census tracts with 16 to 64 housing units per square mile and a low degree of commuting to a metropolitan core area identified by a USDA [Rural Urban Commuting Area Code](#) score of 4 or higher.

We used the non-public 2017 HUD dataset and the USDA’s [Multi-Family Section 514 and 514 Active Projects](#) list as of April 2018 to determine the location of assisted people. These sources include data on the following programs:

- Public Housing
- Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (including Moderate Rehabilitation)
- Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202)
- Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities (Section 811)
- USDA Rural Rental Assistance (Section 521)

The USDA’s Multi-Family Section 514 and 514 Active Projects list only reports households receiving Rural Rental Assistance. For this calculation, we treat those households as single individuals, which results in a slight undercount of total people served. (Most households receiving USDA Rural Rental Assistance are single individuals.) Detailed location data are not available for other rental assistance programs.

Median rent (including utilities): Median monthly housing costs (rent and utilities) are from the 2018 American Community Survey. Figures for 2018 are from Table B25064, “Median Gross Rent,” available on the Census Bureau’s American [FactFinder](#) website. To calculate the percent change since 2001, we used the 2001 American Community Survey [Public Use Microdata Sample](#)’s (ACS PUMS) monthly gross rent variable to estimate median monthly rental housing costs. This variable includes a household’s monthly rent plus estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water, and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these are the responsibility of the renter. We adjusted this value for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) before calculating the percent change since 2018.

Line Chart: Median monthly housing costs (rent and utilities) and median renter household income are from the American Community Survey. We used data from Table B25064, “Median Gross Rent,” and Table B25119, “Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months by Tenure,” for years 2005-2018, available on the Census Bureau’s [FactFinder](#) website.

We used the ACS PUMS’ monthly gross rent variable

(described above) and annual household income variable for years 2001-2004. Household income includes: wages, salary, commissions, bonuses, and tips from all jobs; self-employment income (net income after business expenses) from non-farm or farm businesses, including proprietorships and partnerships; interest, dividends, net rental income, royalty income, or income from real estates and trusts; Social Security or Railroad Retirement; Supplemental Security Income; any public assistance or welfare payments from the state or locality; retirement, survivor or disability pensions; and any other regularly received income (e.g., veterans' payments, unemployment compensation, child support, or alimony).

We adjusted all values for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) before calculating the percent change since 2001.

Low-income people and households paying more than half their income for rent: We used the 2014-2018 five-year ACS PUMS to estimate the number of low-income people and households paying more than half their income for rent. HUD considers households to be “low income” if their cash income is 80 percent or less of the local area median income (AMI), typically set at the metropolitan area or county level.

The ACS PUMS data use Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) as the primary geographic unit. PUMAs partition each state into non-overlapping areas containing about 100,000 residents. Since PUMAs do not always correspond to county boundaries, we needed to make approximate matches between PUMA households and counties. Using the Census Bureau's Census tract-to-PUMA and Census tract-to-county geographic relationship files, we developed a PUMA-to-county code crosswalk, which we weighted by the share of renter households earning less than \$75,000 in each county in each PUMA. We used this crosswalk to generate geographical relationships between PUMAs and counties, allowing us to assign ACS household records to counties and, subsequently, to HUD's metro- and county-based [2017 area median incomes](#).

We used the ACS PUMS's monthly gross rent variable and annual household income variable (described above) to determine whether a household paid half or more of its income for housing. Households with negative income and households that did not pay rent were excluded from the analysis. Households with zero income and renters that pay no rent but do pay monthly utilities were included in the analysis. We considered households with zero income and positive housing costs to be paying more than half their income for rent.

Our estimate may include some households receiving federal rental assistance. The ACS data do not include information on receipt of rental assistance, making it difficult to fully exclude such households.

Infographic – Types of low-income renters paying more than half their income for rent: These percentages are based on CBPP tabulations of the 2017 ACS PUMS, described above.

- Children are persons under age 18.
- Working adults are age 18-61 and reported earned income in the last year.
- Seniors are age 62 or older.

- A person has a disability if they meet one of the ACS' [six disability criteria](#).
- A person is a veteran if they have previously served, but are not now serving, on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard, or if they served in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II.

These categories are overlapping, meaning that the same person could fall into more than one category (e.g. a veteran with a disability). The denominator is the total number of low-income households paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing costs.

People experiencing homelessness: People experiencing homelessness are from HUD's [2018 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress](#). These numbers are based on a single-night census of people living in shelters or other areas not designed for human habitation.

School-age children in unstable housing: Data on the number of school-age children in unstable housing are from the Education Department's [ED Data Express tables](#) for unstably housed students enrolled during school year 2016-2017. The Education Department considers children to be in unstable housing if they are in shelters, transitional housing, or awaiting foster care; doubled up with other families; in hotels or motels; or in places not designed for human habitation.

Income cut-off for a low-income family of three: State and national low-income thresholds for a family of three are from HUD's fiscal year [2019 Section 8 Income Limits](#).