

## **American Housing Survey estimates of worst case needs among non-elderly adults with disabilities should be adjusted to the best available counts of adults with disabling conditions**

HUD's estimates for 2005 and 2007 of worst case needs among non-elderly adults with disabilities come from AHS proxies based on sources of income. But as HUD improved its disability proxy over the years, it recognized that its estimates from the imperfect AHS proxies should be adjusted to be consistent with control totals from better data on numbers of adults with disabilities (as discussed in HUD 2003, Appendix C, pp A-46-A-50). Table 1 summarizes such adjustments for 2007 from the best data sources now available. They imply that worst case needs among non-elderly adults with disabilities could be more than double the AHS estimates: occurring among 2.1 to 2.4 million very-low-income renters rather than the AHS estimate of 1 million.

The adjustment steps summarized in Table 1 are:

1. The 2007 American Housing Survey provided all of the data elements used in estimating worst case needs, but did not ask about disabling conditions. Households with severe rent burden comprise most of those with worst case needs, but households reporting rental assistance are excluded and unassisted renters with severely inadequate housing are added. Based on income from sources often paid to disabled persons, a subtotal of 1.006 million worst case households is presumed to house non-elderly adults with disabilities.
2. The 2007 American Community Survey had six questions on disabling conditions. It also counts very-low-income renters with severe rent burden but cannot identify those receiving rental assistance. The panel estimates worst case needs for non-elderly adults with disabilities from the 2007 ACS by assuming that the AHS relationships between worst case needs and renters with severe rent burden hold for both childless households and families with children.
3. The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) provide the best available estimates of persons with disabilities. As the third panel summarizes, comparison of ACS counts of adults 18-61 with disabling conditions against equivalent NHIS and SIPP data imply that ACS estimates are low by 35 to 54 percent.
4. Adjustments using these factors thus imply that worst case needs among non-elderly adults with disabilities in childless households were as high as 1.2 to 1.4 million in 2007. Among non-elderly adults with disabilities in families with children, worst case needs ranged from 0.9 to 1.0 million.

These levels of need are quite similar to estimates made for 2005 using the same procedures. Nelson (2008) found that worst case needs among non-elderly adults with disabilities in childless households ranged from 1.3 to 1.4 million, while needs in families with children were 0.8 to 1.0 million.<sup>1</sup>

Because all of these estimates come from surveys of households, they exclude homeless adults with disabilities as well as those living in group quarters or other institutions.

In 2009, both the AHS and the ACS ask the same 6 questions about disabling conditions that were recently recommended by a Census advisory panel for all federally funded surveys. But AHS and ACS estimates will still need to be compared to better data sources: "these questions will not meet the needs of all...Some people who are truly at high risk of disability will not be captured by these questions....No short set of questions can adequately define this population for specific purposes."<sup>2</sup> Research on how well these 6 questions count those with disabling conditions continues. For example, Houtenville plans to analyze the 6 ACS questions against 68 questions when new SIPP data become available in early 2011, and a CPS disability supplement is planned for 2012.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn P. Nelson, *The Hidden Housing Crisis: Worst Case Housing Needs Among Adults With Disabilities*. <[www.tacinc.org/downloads/HiddenHousCrisis.pdf](http://www.tacinc.org/downloads/HiddenHousCrisis.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> David C. Stapleton et al, Options for Improving Disability Data Collection, p. 391 in Andrew Houtenville et al, *Counting Working-Age People with Disabilities: What Current Data Tell Us and Options for Improvement*, Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> See <<http://disabilitysupplement.econsys.com>>

**Table 1**

**Estimating Worst Case Needs among Non-Elderly Adults with Disabilities in 2007  
from the Best Available Data on Numbers of Adults 18-61 with Disabling Conditions**

	Households with nonelderly adults with disabilities		All	All household types@
	Childless households	Families with children		
1) <u>2007 American Housing Survey data have best questions on worst case needs, but not disabilities: @</u>				
Very-low-income renter households (000s)	1,707 a)	973 b)	2,680	15,940
with rent burden>50% of income	845	517		7,167
reporting rental assistance	790	350		4,366
unassisted with burden>50%	na	396		5,720
with worst case needs	602	404	1,006	5,910
Worst case as % of severe rent burden	71.2%	78.1%		
2) <u>2007 American Community Survey data have 6 questions on disabling conditions:</u>				
Very-low-income renter households (000s)	2,282 c)	1,470		
with rent burden>50% of income	1,273	836		
reporting rental assistance	question not asked on the ACS			
unassisted with burden>50%	question not asked on the ACS			
Estimate of worst case needs (assumes AHS ratio of worst case needs as % of severe rent burden)	<b>907</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>1,560</b>	
3) The SIPP and NHIS have more questions, and better data, on non-elderly adults with disabling conditions				
	Number of U.S. adults 18-61 with disabling conditions (000s)*		Ratio compared to ACS:	
American Community Survey, 2003	18,813			
National Health Interview Survey, 2002	25,318		1.35	
Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2002	29,046		1.54	
4) Estimates of very-low-income renter households with worst case needs consistent with counts from NHIS and SIPP (000s) (The 2007 ACS estimates in panel 2 are adjusted by ratios shown in panel 3)				
Control total from:				
National Health Interview Survey	<b>1,220</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>2,099</b>	
Survey of Income and Program Participation	<b>1,400</b>	<b>1,009</b>	<b>2,409</b>	

@ HUD, 2010 *Worst Case Housing Needs 2007*, Table A-1a & A-3, pp. 55 & 59.

@@ HUD, 2010 *Worst Case Housing Needs 2007*, Table A-5, p. 64.

a AHS estimate based on receipt of income from Social Security, SSI, public assistance, or disability payments.

b Estimate from PD&R based on AHS receipt of income from from Social Security, SSI, or disability payments.

c ACS data based on 6 questions on disabling conditions, tabulated by NLIHC

\* Table 11, Robert R Weathers, 2005. *A Guide to Disability Statistics from the American Community Survey*, Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute