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## **2009 WORST CASE HOUSING NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**

*Supplemental Findings of the Worst Case Housing  
Needs 2009: Report to Congress*

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**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
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## 2009 WORST CASE HOUSING NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), *2009 Worst Case Housing Needs of People With Disabilities*. A supplement to the *Worst Case Housing Needs 2009: Report to Congress*, this document presents national estimates and information on the critical housing problems that confront low-income renting families that include people with disabilities. Worst case needs households are defined as very low-income renters who do not receive government housing assistance and who either pay more than one-half of their income for rent or live in severely inadequate conditions, or both. Worst case needs is an additional burden for people with disabilities, who often face housing discrimination and a limited availability of accessible housing units.

The report addresses a weakness of previous worst case needs reports: use of a rough proxy to estimate the number of people with disabilities who have severe housing needs. Its purpose is to provide a more accurate accounting of such people and assess the methodology used to calculate this. In this way, it analyzes the extent to which new questions about disability status added to the 2009 American Housing Survey (AHS) improve the estimation of people with disabilities and compares the estimates with other survey-based data sources.

In 2009, approximately 1 million households that included nonelderly people with disabilities had worst case needs—accounting for 38 percent of all very low-income renter households with disabilities. Between 2007 and 2009, there was a 13-percent increase of worst case needs households that included people with disabilities. The AHS disability estimates do not always align perfectly with estimates from other surveys. Although the American Community Survey and the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) have higher disability rates overall, questions pertaining to activity limitation that use similar concepts show that the NHIS and the AHS estimates are, in fact, very similar.

The report finds that renter households that include people with disabilities are more likely than those that do not include people with disabilities to have very low incomes, experience worst case needs, pay more than one-half of their income for rent, and have other housing problems such as living in inadequate or overcrowded housing. On the other hand, housing assistance has been successful at targeting this population. Renter households that include people with disabilities are two times more likely to receive

housing assistance than those that do not include people with disabilities. This may be one reason why the increase in worst case needs households in this group is much less than the 20 percent increase for the population as a whole. The increase in worst case needs in recent years and the special challenges that people with disabilities face will require a continued effort to support these households in finding suitable, affordable, and accessible housing.



Raphael W. Bostic  
Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research

# SUMMARY

## 2009 WORST CASE HOUSING NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This study presents national estimates of the number of households that include people with disabilities who have worst case housing needs and presents their characteristics. It provides a supplement to the *Worst Case Housing Needs 2009: Report to Congress*, released in February 2011.

People with disabilities face additional burdens to finding safe and affordable housing for several reasons, such as being subjected to housing discrimination and encountering limited availability of accessible housing units. This supplement responds to the need to improve the estimation of the number of people with disabilities with severe housing needs and address the known undercount of past estimations. This supplement also analyzes the extent to which

new direct questions on disabilities, added to the 2009 American Housing Survey (AHS), improve the estimation of people with disabilities and it discusses remaining limitations toward identifying people with disabilities with severe housing needs using this survey.

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The prevalence of nonelderly people with disabilities is higher among renter households than among owner households, although most households that include nonelderly people with disabilities are owner occupied.
2. Renter households that include nonelderly people with disabilities are more likely than those that do not include people with disabilities to have very low incomes, experience worst case needs, pay more than one-half of their income for rents, and have other housing problems, such as living in inadequate or overcrowded housing.
3. On the positive side, renter households that include nonelderly people with disabilities are two times more likely to receive housing assistance than those that do not include people with disabilities.

### WORST CASE NEEDS

Unassisted, very low-income renter households (below one-half of Area Median Income) who—

- Have a severe rent burden (pay more than one-half of their income for rent) and/or
- Live in severely inadequate conditions.

4. In 2009, 2.6 million very low-income renter households included nonelderly people who reported having at least one of the six measures of disabilities (visual, hearing, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living limitations) and, of those, 987,000 experienced worst case needs, which put the prevalence of worst case needs at 38 percent among this group.
5. The estimated number of households with worst case needs that included people with disabilities was smaller using the direct measure than the income proxy measure, due to the income proxy measure's overcounting of people with disabilities in some cases and undercounting of people with disabilities in other cases.
6. According to the income proxy measure, between 2007 and 2009, the number of worst case needs households that included people with disabilities increased by 100,000, reaching 1.1 million households. In this time period, the prevalence of worst case needs among very low-income renters with disabilities increased from 38 to 41 percent.
7. Ambulatory, cognitive, and independent living limitations were the most prevalent limitations among households with worst case needs and with people with disabilities. Visual, hearing, and self-care limitations were found in a smaller share of those same households.
8. In the households that included nonelderly people with disabilities, 86 percent included nonelderly adults with disabilities, 18 percent included children with disabilities, and 4 percent included both instances.
9. In general, small differences exist between households with worst case needs that included people with disabilities and those that did not, by race/ethnicity and by geographical location.
10. Comparison with other data sources indicated that the AHS estimates of the number of people with disabilities (1) do not always align perfectly with estimates from other surveys; (2) are limited by a small set of questions that do not completely capture the complex concept of disability; and (3) do not include some population groups that have a high prevalence of people with disabilities.