

2018 Housing Impact Report: Trends in Housing Assistance and Who it Serves

Executive Summary

Our homes are the building blocks of our future. In 2017, 2.26 million low-income families received a Housing Choice Voucher and 4.77 million families lived in a rental home assisted through project based subsidies, such as Public Housing Operating and Capital Grants, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, or Project Based Section 8. The 2018 Housing Impact Report explores the impact of homes made affordable through federal housing assistance programs on people and places, including the promotion of stability, positive health outcomes, economic mobility, and educational opportunities.

Receiving rental assistance is associated with improved economic, health, and educational outcomes

Rental assistance provides stability for low-income families by keeping rent payments within their budget, which increases their ability to pay rent on time and reduces the likelihood of a forced move or eviction. A growing body of research suggests receiving rental assistance is associated with improved health outcomes which are likely driven by these families' increased ability to spend on healthcare, improved access to quality housing situations, and reduced housing instability stressors. Rental assistance can also improve the economic mobility of children by providing access to housing in areas with good schools, jobs opportunities, accessible transportation, and a positive health outlook. Additionally, publicly supported rental housing can also connect children to valuable education services, such as summer and after-school programs, which have been linked to improved academic achievement, school attendance, and social behaviors.

Increasingly more are in need of affordable housing

Publicly supported housing programs help 14.49 million people build capacity to avoid repetitive encounters with homelessness and poverty, including 5.29 million children, 2.87 million seniors, and 2.53 million disabled individuals. Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and veterans were observed to be increasingly served by publicly supported housing, while children, the largest group served, have experienced declines in recent years.

Working low-income assisted renters experience significant health and labor market barriers

Nearly four-in-five of households receiving assistance that are able to work are working or have recently worked. Yet, these families face multiple labor market barriers that limit their wages, hours worked, and job advancement. Able-bodied working-age adults report poorer health outcomes and greater caretaker responsibilities compared to their low-income peers, which may preclude them from maintaining stable work or taking on additional hours. Additionally, volatile work schedules, stagnant wage growth, and disparities in educational attainment prevent assisted families from earning livable wages and experiencing job advancements that enable upward mobility economic independence.

Additional services are needed to remove barriers to upward mobility

Many public housing authorities and affordable housing providers are leveraging partnerships and existing HUD programs to remove these barriers to upward mobility by connecting their residents to childcare, career development, and health services. Despite these efforts, more resources and community partners are needed to reach assisted households and scale-up the impact of these programs. The services most needed are health-related programs, especially for seniors and those living with physical and mental health problems; programs to boost children's learning outcomes; and job-advancement programs that lead to wage gains rather than simply connect individuals to employment.

