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Housing Assistance Matters Initiative

Decent and affordable housing has far-reaching consequences for people’s health, quality of life, and access to opportunities, but these consequences are not always well understood. To inform public debate about assisted housing policy and strengthen policy outcomes, Housing Assistance Matters highlights research and analysis about the need for and benefits of well-managed public and assisted housing. Using a multimedia approach, this initiative draws upon research by Urban Institute scholars and others to explore key connections between all forms of rental assistance and outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

Barnstable County, MA

For every 100 extremely low-income renter households (ELI), there are only **49** affordable and available rental units.

In this area, households of four earning less than \$25,850 are classified as ELI.

The Gap at a Glance

5,918

Total ELI renter households

2,918

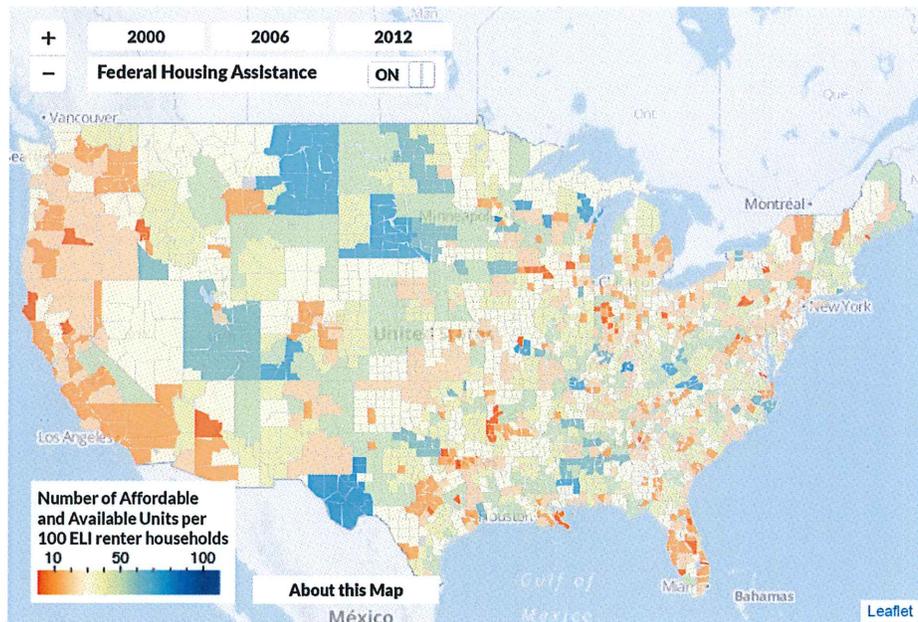
Affordable and available rental units

3,000

The total gap between ELI households and affordable and available rental units

2,352

Estimated affordable and available rental units serving ELI households with HUD assistance



Embed this map (Click the box, Ctrl + C to Copy): `<iframe src="http://dat`

Many Americans struggle to afford a decent, safe place to live in today’s market. Over the past five years, rents have risen while the number of renters who need moderately priced housing has increased. These two pressures make finding affordable housing even tougher for very poor households in America. For every 100 extremely low-income (ELI) renter households in the country, there are only 29 affordable and available rental units. As defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), extremely low-income households earn 30 percent or less of area median income.

Not one county in the United States has an even balance between its ELI households and its affordable and available rental units. As a result, ELI households have to search harder for a place to live, spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent, or live in substandard housing.

Some markets are tighter than others. Of the top 100 US counties in 2012, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, has the smallest gap in units affordable and available for every 100 ELI households; Cobb County, Georgia, has the largest.

This situation would be much worse without HUD rental assistance, which helps almost 3.2 million ELI households afford homes. HUD assistance comes in three forms: public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and privately owned but federally assisted housing. Without HUD rental assistance, the number of affordable and available rental units for ELI households would significantly decrease.

The Urban Institute will update this map periodically. And, as data become available, we will track the affordability gap for ELI households, as well as very low income and low-income households.

The Housing Assistance Matters Initiative is a project of the Urban Institute, made possible by support from Housing Authority Insurance, Inc. (HAI, Inc.), to provide fact-based analysis about public and assisted housing. The Urban Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization and retains independent and exclusive control over the substance and quality of any Housing Assistance Matters products. The views expressed in this and other Housing Assistance Matters Initiative products are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute or HAI, Inc.