

## Facts on Affordable Housing

**The United States has a severe affordable housing shortage, and it is getting worse.**

- The number of households estimated to be paying more than 50 percent of their incomes toward housing is 17.7 million.<sup>1</sup>
- Incomes are not keeping pace with rising housing costs. In 2007, the national housing wage, or hourly wage needed to afford rental housing, increased to \$17.32 (up from \$16.31), beyond the means of many low-income renters.<sup>2</sup>
- Public housing and vouchers are in short supply. Between 1999 and 2006, annual funding for public housing declined by 25 percent, and over 150,000 Section 8 vouchers were lost since 2004.<sup>3</sup>
- The affordable housing stock is eroding at a rapid pace. An estimated 200,000 affordable private market rental units are due for demolition.<sup>4</sup>
- Only 1 in 4 people who are eligible for housing assistance receive some type of housing subsidy.<sup>5</sup>
- During the 1970s, there was a surplus of 300,000 affordable housing units; today, there are 6 million units of affordable housing accessible to households earning 30 percent of the area median income, and 7.7 million such households.<sup>6,7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS). Harvard University 2008. *The State of the Nation's Housing*.

<sup>2</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). 2007. *Out of Reach*.

<sup>3</sup> Rice, D. and Sard, B. *The Effects of the Federal Budget Squeeze on Low Income Housing Assistance*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 2, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS). Harvard University 2007. *The State of the Nation's Housing*.

<sup>5</sup> Rice, D. and Sard, B. *The Effects of the Federal Budget Squeeze on Low Income Housing Assistance*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. February 2, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Daskal, J. "In Search of Shelter: The Growing Shortage of Affordable Rental Housing." June 1998. Paper. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington, DC.

**The shortage of affordable housing makes it more difficult for people to exit homelessness and increases the risk of homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families.**

- Severe housing cost burden is particularly troublesome for poor families. Extremely low-income households make up just 17 percent of the nation's households, but they are 70 percent of the nation's households living in severely unaffordable housing. These households have a harder time paying for food, transportation, and medical care and are at a high risk for homelessness.<sup>8</sup>
- The dwindling number of subsidized housing units is leaving many homeless people on waiting lists, often years in length. Places with the greatest need have had their waiting lists closed for years. In January 2007, New York City opened its waiting list for the first time in 12 years.<sup>9</sup> St. Paul opened its waiting list for two days and had an 11,000 person response, resulting in a wait list of many years for some families.<sup>10</sup> In Washington, DC, the waiting list for subsidized housing is over 46,000 households long, representing a 92 percent increase from 2002.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). 2007. *Out of Reach*. [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)

<sup>8</sup> Pelletiere, D., Treskon, M. and S. Crowley. *Who's Bearing the Burden? Severely Unaffordable Housing*. 2003. [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)

<sup>9</sup> New York City Housing Authority. 2007. Section 8 Assistance. General Information. <http://www.nyc.gov/cgibin/misc/pfprinter.cgi?action=print&sitename=NYCHA>

<sup>10</sup> Saint Paul Housing Authority. 2007. <http://www.stpaulpha.org/s8other.html>

<sup>11</sup> Lazere, Ed, Rogers, Angie, Rolland, Stacey. Meeting DC's Challenges, Maintaining Fiscal Discipline: Policy Proposals for the New Mayor and Council. March 6, 2007