Worst Case Needs Measure and ACS-Based Tabulations on Rent Burden

David A. Vandenbroucke
Div. Housing & Demographic Analysis
Office of Economic Affairs
Policy Development & Research
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Introduction

• Severe rent burden and inadequate housing quality are the most serious indicators of poor housing.

• There are two data sources that can be used to count households with these problems:
  - The American Housing Survey
  - The American Community Survey
What Are Worst Case Needs?

• Population:
  - Unassisted renter households
  - Incomes less than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI).

• Criteria:
  - Monthly housing cost $\geq 50\%$ of income
  - OR living in severely inadequate housing
“Very Low Income” Renter Households with Problems

- AHS: 48% (2005) to 42% (2007)
- Factfinder: 77% (2005) to 74% (2007)
- Joint Center: 41% (2005) to 42% (2007)
- CHAS: 49%

ACS-Based

2005 2007
Differences Among WCN Measures

• **AHS (42%)**:  
  - *Unassisted* renter households  
  - Incomes $\leq$ 50\% of AMI  
  - Cost burdens $\geq$ 50\% or severely inadequate housing.

• **Factfinder (75%)**:  
  - Renter households  
  - Incomes $\leq$ $35,000  
  - Cost burdens $\geq$ 30\%, no quality measure
Differences Among WCN Measures

- **Joint Center (43%)**:  
  - Renter households  
  - Incomes $\leq 1^{st}$ quartile  
  - Cost burdens $\geq 50\%$

- **CHAS (49%)**:  
  - Renter households  
  - Incomes $\leq 50\%$ AMI  
  - Cost burdens $\geq 50\%$ or substandard housing
Why Use Each Estimate?

• **AHS**
  - Most accurate specification
  - Can be used to analyze subgroups (with difficulty)
  - Little subnational geography (regions, metro areas)
  - Historical data available back to 1985
  - Updated every two years

• **Fact finder**
  - Easy to access
  - Updated most quickly
  - All ACS geography
  - Least accurate specification
Why Use Each Estimate?

- **Joint Center**
  - Fairly accurate specification
  - Easy to get
  - National data only
  - Updated every year, with a lag

- **CHAS**
  - Good specification
  - State & county data
  - Access via complicated spreadsheets
  - Annual updates, relies on three-year averages
Where to find them

• **AHS**
  - Worst Case Needs Report: HUD USER
  - Housing Affordability Data System: HUD USER

• **Factfinder**
  - http://factfinder.census.gov
  - Table B25106

• **Joint Center (State of the Nation’s Housing)**
  - http://www.jchs.harvard.edu

• **CHAS**