
Healthy Starts at Home: Cross-Sector Opportunities to Advance Maternal and Child Health through Housing



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Infant and Maternal Mortality



US Dept Housing & Urban Development

HUD is responsible for overseeing the nation's housing and community development policies

HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all

Annual budget of approximately \$60 billion (medium-sized agency)

Secretary Marcia Fudge is the 18th Secretary of HUD



What is Housing Insecurity?



Housing Security

What is needed for persons of reproductive age and their infants?

Housing that is...

- Safe
- Physically adequate
- Affordable
- Based on choice
- Stable



Housing Insecurity Examples

- Homeless or at-risk
- Rent burdened
- At risk of housing loss due to eviction or foreclosure
- Overcrowded or doubled up
- Living in severely inadequate conditions
- Worse case housing needs



Definition of Worst Case Housing Needs

Households with worst case housing needs are:

- Renter households
- Who do not receive housing assistance
- Who have incomes at or below 50% of the Area Median Income (“very low-income”)

AND

- Pay more than 50% of their household income on rent (“severe rent burden”), OR
- Live in severely inadequate conditions, OR
- Experience both severe rent burden and severely inadequate conditions.



Housing Insecurity Statistics

Household Pulse Survey (September- October 2021)

- 16% of renter households behind on rent (6.94 million)
- 7% of renter households fearful of imminent eviction (3.11 million)

Homelessness

- More than 580,000 people experiencing homelessness on a given night
- Homelessness has increased by 6% since 2016

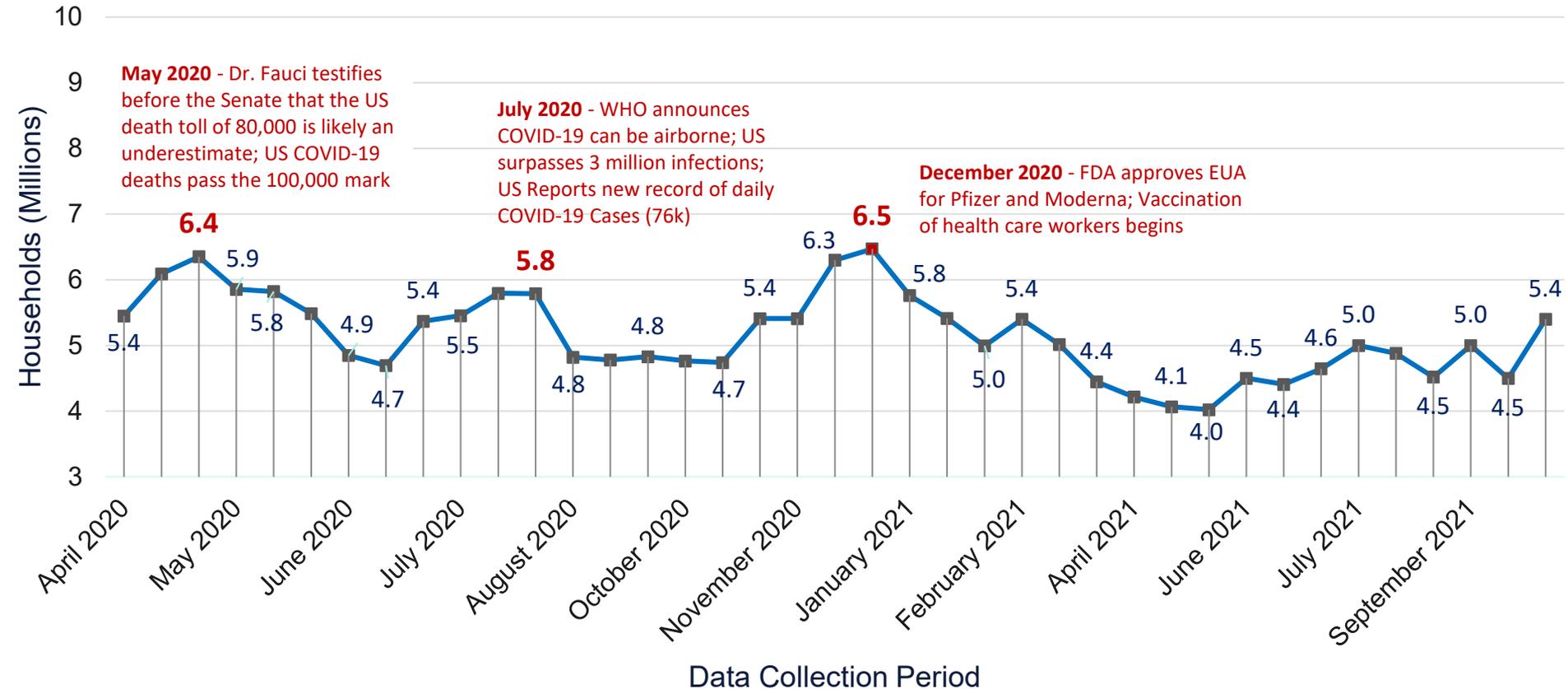
Worst Case Housing Needs

- 7.77 million households experiencing worst case housing needs
- Cases of worst case housing needs increased by 2% for non-Hispanic black households between 2017 and 2019 (decreased for non-Hispanic white households)



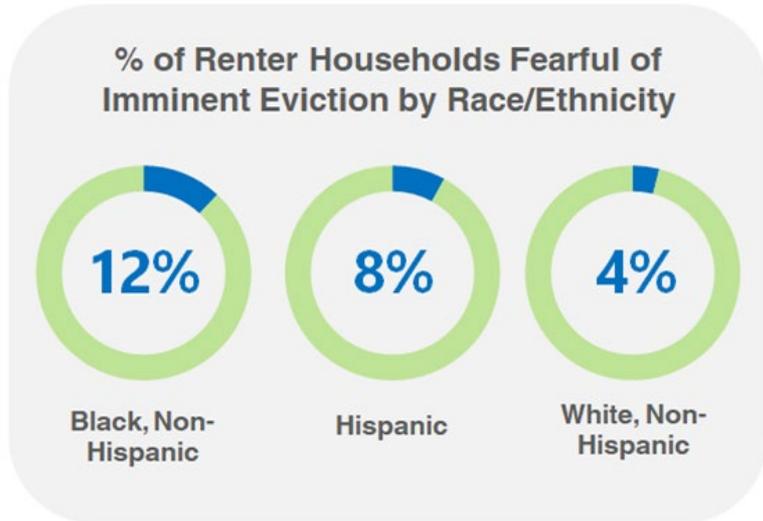
Housing Insecurity During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Estimated Number of U.S. Renters Not Confident in Their Ability to Pay Next Rental Payment On Time

April 2020-October 2021, Census Household Pulse Survey



Housing Insecurity Disparities

- Race and ethnicity
- Income
- Housing assistance status
- Sexual orientation
- Gender Identity
- Family status
- Employment status
- **The Covid-19 Pandemic Exacerbated an Existent Crisis**



What is the Current State of Housing Insecurity for Women and Children?



Scope – HUD-Assisted Families

Women and Children Living in Public and Assisted Housing

- Women represent approximately **70% of all HUD-assisted adults** (*4.2 million women*)
- **77%** of HUD-assisted women identify with a racial or ethnic minority group
- Approximately **50,000 new babies** are born every year to HUD-assisted women
- Children comprise **35.5% of all HUD-assisted persons** (*3.3 million children, including nearly 900,000 children aged 0-5*)

Health Status of HUD-Assisted Women and Children

Women

- **36%** self-reported fair or poor health
- **24%** had 2+ emergency room visits during the prior year
- **12%** had serious psychological distress
- **35%** had unmet medical needs due to cost

Children

- **5.2%** had fair or poor health
- **14%** had 2+ emergency room visits during the prior year
- **21%** had current asthma
- **27%** had a learning disability



Scope – Unstably Housed Families

Infancy is the period of life when a person is most likely to live in a homeless shelter

- In 2015, approximately half of families experiencing homelessness had a child aged 0-5
- Approximately 10% of homeless families had an infant under 12 months of age

Strong link between housing stability and maternal and child health

- Prenatal homelessness associated with higher odds of low birth weight and preterm delivery
- Homelessness during infancy is associated with higher odds of poor infant health
- Compared with consistently housed mothers, mothers with a history of homelessness had worse physical and mental health outcomes



Promising MCH + Housing Efforts



Promising Housing + MCH Efforts

Emerging research shows that when housing assistance is paired with health services, there are striking results for MCH outcomes.

Ohio Healthy Beginnings at Home (HBAH) Study

- Assessed the impact of providing rental assistance to unstably-housed, pregnant women
- Significantly more newborns in the intervention group were full-term and healthy weight
- Babies in the intervention group were less likely to be admitted to the NICU
- When NICU required, average days spent in NICU was much lower for intervention group



Promising Housing + MCH Efforts, cont.

[Family Options Study \(RCT\)](#)

- Experiment for homeless families with young children that introduced four possible interventions, including receipt of a housing voucher
- Families offered vouchers reported less child separations, decreased maternal psychological distress, decreased economic stress, fewer child behavior problems, and less household food insecurity

[Boston's Healthy Start in Housing Program \(HSiH\)](#)

- Collaboration: Boston Public Health Commission & Boston Housing Authority
- Prioritizes access to public housing for homeless and housing-insecure pregnant women who have medical risks associated with poor birth outcomes
- Home visitors identify housing insecurity as social determinant of health
- Evaluation shows participants experienced improved mental health status and reduced stress

Moving Forward



Opportunities

What is HUD doing?

- Commitment to improving outcomes for women, children, and families
- Strategically examining emerging evidence on housing's role in improving maternal and early infant health outcomes
- Facilitating data linkage and cross-agency research to better understand MCH outcomes and housing status
- Building partnerships with MCH stakeholders at the federal, state, and local level
- Connecting health care providers with housing providers

What can HHS do?

- Include HUD at the table
- Incorporate housing screening into existing programs
- Help build stronger health and housing partnerships at the state and local level
- Help prevent eviction by connecting clients to resources
- Explore shared programming and funding opportunities

Resources

[Boston Uses Public Housing to Promote Healthy Birth Outcomes](#) *The Health Equity Guide*

[Opinion: Housing stability can lead to better health for pregnant women and their babies.](#) *The Columbus Dispatch, May 2021*

[Associations With Infant and Maternal Health and Hardship Outcomes.](#) *Cityscape, 2018*

[Landmark Family Options Study Has Clear Policy Implications.](#) *HUD Edge Article, 2016*

[Healthy Start in Housing: A Case Study of a Public Health and Housing Partnership To Improve Birth Outcomes.](#) *Cityscape, 2014*

[Bringing life course home: a pilot to reduce pregnancy risk through housing access and family support.](#) *The Maternal and Child Health Journal, 2013*





Thank You! Questions?

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