People with Disabilities in Rural America: An ACS Snapshot

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Debate and Discussion

Debate
  • Focus on prevalence of Social Security disability claims in rural areas
  • Access to services challenges in rural areas

Discussion
  • Ways to use data to better understand population and serve them
Data Background

• Several data sources: Current Population Survey, Social Security Disability Program Administration data etc.

• ACS provides the most comprehensive geographic coverage

• Question changed in 2008, no estimate for small geographies until 2013
ACS Definition of Disability

• Six Types of Disability

  • **Hearing Difficulty**: Deaf or serious difficulty hearing
  • **Vision Difficulty**: Blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses
  • **Cognitive Difficulty**: Having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions because of a physical, mental or emotional problem
  • **Ambulatory Difficulty**: Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs
  • **Self-Care Difficulty**: Having difficulty bathing or dressing.
  • **Independent Living Difficulty**: Having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor’s office or shopping because of a physical, mental or emotional problem *

ACS 2009-13 Estimate Rural and Small Town Poverty by Age and Disability Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percent Living Below Poverty Threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under Age 18</td>
<td>25.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18 to 64</td>
<td>16.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 or Older</td>
<td>10.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24.04%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Total Rural Population in Poverty**
- **Rural Population with Disability in Poverty**
Housing Accessibility

- No ACS measure of housing accessibility conditions
  - Housing age as proxy (Units built before 1980)

- No ACS measure specifically evaluating people with housing access difficulties
  - Ambulatory difficulties as proxy
Identifying Counties With Potentially Elevated Housing Accessibility Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Occupied Housing Units Built Before 1980</th>
<th>Percent Population Ambulatory Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 5.4 Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 42.4 Percent</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.4 to 57.9 (Average) Percent</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 57.9 Percent to 73.4 Percent</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 73.4 Percent</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>513</td>
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</table>