What GAO Found

In 2005, an estimated 2.3 million veteran renter households had low incomes. The proportion of veteran renter households that were low income varied by state but did not fall below 41 percent. Further, an estimated 1.3 million, or about 56 percent of these low-income veteran households, had housing affordability problems—that is, rental costs exceeding 30 percent of household income. Compared with other (nonveteran) renter households, however, veterans were somewhat less likely to be low income or have housing affordability problems.

HUD’s policies for its three major rental assistance programs generally do not take veteran status into account when determining eligibility or assistance levels, but eligible veterans can receive assistance. Also, HUD generally does not distinguish between income that is specific to veterans, such as VA-provided benefits, and other sources of income. The majority of the 41 largest public housing agencies that administer the housing choice voucher or public housing programs have no veterans’ preference for admission. The 13 largest performance-based contract administrators that oversee most properties under project-based programs reported that owners generally did not adopt a veterans’ preference.

In fiscal year 2005, an estimated 11 percent of all eligible low-income veteran households (at least 250,000) received assistance, compared with 19 percent of nonveteran households. Although the reasons for the difference are unclear, factors such as differing levels of need for affordable housing among veteran and other households could influence the percentages.

Percentage of Low-Income Veteran Renter Households with Housing Affordability Problems, by State, 2005

Sources: GAO analysis of sample survey data from 2005 American Community Survey; Art Explosion (map).


To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above.

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