

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

120,819

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO
EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS ON
A SINGLE NIGHT IN JANUARY 2016

The Great Recession, the “Jobless” Recovery and automatic government spending cuts (through the process of sequestration) have had a devastating impact on the availability of affordable housing. The tight rental market adds to the challenges families face in finding housing. In 2017, a person working (full-time, year-round at minimum wage) could not afford the monthly Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom rental unit in any state or the District of Columbia and still have enough money for food, utilities and other necessities (see **Table 8**). Although federal rental assistance can help reduce homelessness, housing instability and overcrowding, only 1 in 4 eligible households receive it.¹ The vast majority of these families earn less than \$20,000 a year.

- Households with children comprise 38 percent of those helped by federal rental assistance.
- Housing vouchers can help families move from areas of concentrated poverty to lower-poverty neighborhoods. Children who moved from concentrated poverty neighborhoods before age 13 have been shown to have higher earnings as 26-year-old adults when compared with those who did not leave the neighborhoods.²
- Vouchers for homeless families with children reduce foster care placements by more than half and also reduce school moves and other hardships.³
- The federal government spends over three times as much on tax subsidies for homeownership as on rental assistance. More than half of those tax subsidies benefit households with incomes higher than \$100,000.⁴

Having a safe, stable home is a basic need for all children. Homelessness, unstable housing, and the unavailability of affordable housing have dire consequences for children. Children comprised 120,819—more than 1 in 5—of the nearly 550,000 homeless people living in shelters, transitional housing and on the streets on a single night in January 2016, when the annual assessment of homeless people was conducted for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s annual report to Congress.⁵

- Thirty-five percent of homeless people were in families with children and more than half of all homeless families with children lived in five states: California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York and Texas. Family homelessness declined by 20 percent between 2010 and 2016.⁶

- In 2016, Black families with children represented close to half of homeless families nationwide and 49 percent of homeless families who were sheltered. White families with children made up nearly 60 percent of homeless families who were unsheltered.⁷
- More than 1.2 million children under 6 were homeless in 2015.⁸ Infants comprised 10 percent of children served by federally-funded homeless shelters, and half of sheltered children were under 6.⁹

More than 1.2 million homeless children were enrolled in public schools during the 2014-2015 school year, excluding younger children and youths not enrolled in school (see **Table 9**).

- Student homelessness has increased by 87 percent since the start of the Great Recession even as the country continues to recover.
- Seventy-six percent of homeless students during the 2014-2015 school year were living doubled-up with family or friends; 14 percent were in shelters or transitional housing and 7 percent were in hotels or motels. Three percent were unsheltered, often living in abandoned buildings or cars.
- Homeless children's access to school is complicated by high mobility as well as the lack of school supplies and clothes, funds for transportation and necessary records to enroll in a new school. The trauma, poor health and mental health, hunger and fatigue many experience continue to challenge them when they get to school.

Missed Opportunities: New Data on Youth and Young Adult Homelessness¹⁰

According to a report by Voices of Youth Count, an initiative of Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 4.2 million teens and young adults experienced homelessness over the course of a year. The homeless youth included at least 1 in 30 13- to 17-year-olds unaccompanied by a parent or guardian (a total of 700,000) and 1 in 10 young adults 18-25 years old (a total of 3.5 million). The report confirms youth homelessness is a pervasive social crisis with similar rates in rural areas and cities. The survey found Black youths and young adults had an 83 percent higher risk and Hispanic youths a 33 percent higher risk of experiencing homelessness than White youths. In addition, poor youths and young adults; youths with less than a high school diploma or GED; unmarried young parents; and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youths were all at especially high risk of homelessness.

Youths who experience homelessness are at high risk of hunger, poor health outcomes, physical violence, rape and sexual exploitation. The dangers are real but so are the opportunities for positive intervention. The report calls for prevention services to help families care for youths; early intervention services in school, health and child welfare systems; long-term investments in supportive and transitional housing, case management, shelters and youth drop-in centers; and cross-coordination between education, health, social service and child welfare systems to better serve youths in need.

**In 2017, a person working (full-time, year-round at minimum wage)
could not afford the monthly Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a
two-bedroom rental unit in any state or the District of Columbia.**

Table 8: Rental Housing Affordability, 2017

| | Monthly Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a Two-Bedroom Rental Unit | Minimum Wage (\$/hr) | Number of Full-Time Jobs at Minimum Wage Needed to Afford Two-Bedroom FMR | Hourly Wage Necessary to Afford FMR with One Full-Time Job |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| Alabama | \$768 | \$7.25 ^a | 2.0 | \$14.78 |
| Alaska | 1,256 | 8.75 | 2.5 | 24.16 |
| Arizona | 913 | 8.05 | 1.8 | 17.56 |
| Arkansas | 713 | 7.50 | 1.6 | 13.72 |
| California | 1,608 | 9.00 | 2.9 | 30.92 |
| Colorado | 1,143 | 8.23 | 2.4 | 21.97 |
| Connecticut | 1,285 | 9.15 | 2.4 | 24.72 |
| Delaware | 1,124 | 8.25 | 2.6 | 21.62 |
| District of Columbia | 1,746 | 10.50 | 2.7 | 33.58 |
| Florida | 1,075 | 8.05 | 2.6 | 20.68 |
| Georgia | 873 | 7.25 ^a | 2.3 | 16.79 |
| Hawaii | 1,830 | 7.75 | 3.8 | 35.20 |
| Idaho | 762 | 7.25 | 2.0 | 14.65 |
| Illinois | 1,085 | 8.25 | 2.5 | 20.87 |
| Indiana | 789 | 7.25 | 2.1 | 15.17 |
| Iowa | 758 | 7.25 | 2.0 | 14.57 |
| Kansas | 811 | 7.25 | 2.2 | 15.59 |
| Kentucky | 726 | 7.25 | 1.9 | 13.95 |
| Louisiana | 841 | 7.25 ^a | 2.2 | 16.16 |
| Maine | 939 | 7.50 | 2.0 | 18.05 |
| Maryland | 1,470 | 8.25 | 3.1 | 28.27 |
| Massachusetts | 1,424 | 9.00 | 2.5 | 27.39 |
| Michigan | 844 | 8.15 | 1.8 | 16.24 |
| Minnesota | 967 | 7.25 ^a | 2.0 | 18.60 |
| Mississippi | 772 | 7.25 ^a | 2.0 | 14.84 |
| Missouri | 815 | 7.65 | 2.0 | 15.67 |
| Montana | 775 | 8.05 | 1.8 | 14.90 |
| Nebraska | 791 | 8.00 | 1.7 | 15.22 |
| Nevada | 937 | 7.25 | 2.2 | 18.01 |
| New Hampshire | 1,129 | 7.25 | 3.0 | 21.71 |
| New Jersey | 1,420 | 8.38 | 3.2 | 27.31 |
| New Mexico | 821 | 7.50 | 2.1 | 15.78 |
| New York | 1,460 | 8.75 | 2.9 | 28.08 |
| North Carolina | 821 | 7.25 | 2.2 | 15.79 |
| North Dakota | 851 | 7.25 | 2.3 | 16.36 |
| Ohio | 780 | 7.25 | 1.8 | 15.00 |
| Oklahoma | 768 | 7.25 | 2.0 | 14.78 |
| Oregon | 1,028 | 9.25 | 1.9 | 19.78 |
| Pennsylvania | 971 | 7.25 | 2.6 | 18.68 |
| Puerto Rico | 504 | 9.00 | 1.3 | 9.68 |
| Rhode Island | 1,013 | 7.25 ^a | 2.0 | 19.49 |
| South Carolina | 823 | 8.50 | 2.2 | 15.83 |
| South Dakota | 734 | 7.25 ^a | 1.6 | 14.12 |
| Tennessee | 798 | 7.25 | 2.1 | 15.34 |
| Texas | 956 | 7.25 | 2.5 | 18.38 |
| Utah | 885 | 9.15 | 2.3 | 17.02 |
| Vermont | 1,139 | 7.25 | 2.2 | 21.90 |
| Virginia | 1,211 | 9.47 | 3.2 | 23.29 |
| Washington | 1,229 | 8.00 | 2.1 | 23.64 |
| West Virginia | 754 | 7.25 | 1.7 | 14.49 |
| Wisconsin | 838 | 7.25 | 2.2 | 16.11 |
| Wyoming | 821 | 7.25 ^a | 2.2 | 15.80 |
| United States | \$1,103 | \$7.25 | 2.9 | \$21.21 |

^aIn these states federal minimum wage law supersedes state minimum wage laws because the federal minimum wage is greater than the state minimum wage or there is no state minimum wage.

Notes: Affordability is defined as rent not being more than 30 percent of monthly income. FMR is the 40th percentile of gross rents for typical, non-substandard rental units. It is calculated annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Sources: National Low Income Housing Coalition. 2017. "Out of Reach 2017." http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2017.pdf; U.S. Department of Labor. "Minimum Wage Laws in the States - August 1, 2016." <https://www.dol.gov/whd/min-wage/americ.htm>.

The number of homeless children enrolled in public schools has increased by 87 percent since the start of the Great Recession. Only 17 states and the District of Columbia saw any decreases between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years.

Table 9: Homeless Children Enrolled in Public Schools, Selected School Years

| | School Year: | | | | | Percent Change between 2006-2007 and 2014-2015 | Percent Change between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 |
|----------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---|---|
| | 2006-2007 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 | 2014-2015 | | |
| Alabama | 10,907 | 17,670 | 29,749 | 19,266 | 19,373 | 77.6% | 0.6% |
| Alaska | 3,216 | 4,493 | 3,972 | 3,934 | 4,018 | 24.9 | 2.1 |
| Arizona | 19,628 | 31,178 | 29,895 | 28,777 | 28,393 | 44.7 | -1.3 |
| Arkansas | 7,080 | 9,550 | 10,851 | 11,180 | 10,756 | 51.9 | -3.8 |
| California | 178,014 | 248,904 | 251,984 | 284,086 | 235,983 | 32.6 | -16.9 |
| Colorado | 11,978 | 23,680 | 22,958 | 23,681 | 24,146 | 101.6 | 2.0 |
| Connecticut | 1,980 | 2,804 | 2,826 | 2,964 | 3,192 | 61.2 | 7.7 |
| Delaware | 1,842 | 3,729 | 3,857 | 4,351 | 3,098 | 68.2 | -28.8 |
| District of Columbia | 824 | 2,947 | 3,756 | 3,772 | 3,551 | 330.9 | -5.9 |
| Florida | 30,554 | 63,414 | 69,956 | 67,402 | 73,117 | 139.3 | 8.5 |
| Georgia | 14,017 | 34,101 | 35,922 | 36,845 | 37,791 | 169.6 | 2.6 |
| Hawaii | 1,132 | 2,465 | 2,312 | 2,634 | 3,526 | 211.5 | 33.9 |
| Idaho | 1,875 | 6,076 | 6,118 | 6,447 | 7,162 | 282.0 | 11.1 |
| Illinois | 19,821 | 43,025 | 49,623 | 54,452 | 52,333 | 164.0 | -3.9 |
| Indiana | 8,249 | 14,870 | 15,777 | 17,926 | 19,205 | 132.8 | 7.1 |
| Iowa | 2,886 | 7,370 | 6,809 | 6,828 | 6,936 | 140.3 | 1.6 |
| Kansas | 3,569 | 9,056 | 9,330 | 10,378 | 9,715 | 172.2 | -6.4 |
| Kentucky | 18,337 | 35,658 | 31,179 | 27,227 | 27,836 | 51.8 | 2.2 |
| Louisiana | 34,102 | 20,762 | 20,476 | 20,402 | 20,277 | -40.5 | -0.6 |
| Maine | 1,055 | 1,564 | 2,070 | 1,986 | 1,934 | 83.3 | -2.6 |
| Maryland | 8,456 | 14,691 | 15,663 | 16,239 | 16,096 | 90.4 | -0.9 |
| Massachusetts | 11,863 | 15,066 | 15,774 | 17,538 | 19,353 | 63.1 | 10.3 |
| Michigan | 24,066 | 43,418 | 37,738 | 38,117 | 40,861 | 69.8 | 7.2 |
| Minnesota | 6,008 | 11,848 | 11,874 | 14,343 | 15,196 | 152.9 | 5.9 |
| Mississippi | 12,856 | 11,448 | 12,845 | 9,680 | 10,309 | -19.8 | 6.5 |
| Missouri | 13,620 | 24,549 | 26,506 | 29,784 | 30,650 | 125.0 | 2.9 |
| Montana | 2,202 | 1,762 | 2,551 | 2,640 | 3,075 | 39.6 | 16.5 |
| Nebraska | 1,633 | 3,080 | 3,247 | 3,449 | 3,317 | 103.1 | -3.8 |
| Nevada | 5,374 | 10,363 | 12,054 | 14,865 | 17,178 | 219.7 | 15.6 |
| New Hampshire | 1,983 | 3,304 | 3,319 | 3,276 | 3,335 | 68.2 | 1.8 |
| New Jersey | 4,279 | 4,897 | 8,660 | 10,303 | 10,150 | 137.2 | -1.5 |
| New Mexico | 4,383 | 12,681 | 11,661 | 11,949 | 10,279 | 134.5 | -14.0 |
| New York | 44,018 | 96,881 | 108,603 | 116,700 | 118,435 | 169.1 | 1.5 |
| North Carolina | 12,659 | 27,652 | 27,050 | 24,492 | 26,613 | 110.2 | 8.7 |
| North Dakota | 1,209 | 2,712 | 2,122 | 2,395 | 2,715 | 124.6 | 13.4 |
| Ohio | 13,578 | 24,236 | 23,748 | 28,632 | 27,939 | 105.8 | -2.4 |
| Oklahoma | 8,284 | 21,325 | 22,805 | 25,008 | 26,979 | 225.7 | 7.9 |
| Oregon | 15,517 | 21,345 | 19,189 | 21,058 | 22,637 | 45.9 | 7.5 |
| Pennsylvania | 12,935 | 19,905 | 19,349 | 21,309 | 22,014 | 70.2 | 3.3 |
| Rhode Island | 667 | 981 | 907 | 997 | 1,004 | 50.5 | 0.7 |
| South Carolina | 6,033 | 10,495 | 11,436 | 12,809 | 13,353 | 121.3 | 4.2 |
| South Dakota | 1,038 | 2,542 | 1,839 | 1,835 | 2,156 | 107.7 | 17.5 |
| Tennessee | 6,567 | 14,586 | 14,319 | 29,663 | 13,259 | 101.9 | -55.3 |
| Texas | 33,896 | 94,624 | 101,088 | 111,759 | 113,063 | 233.6 | 1.2 |
| Utah | 9,991 | 13,597 | 15,321 | 14,579 | 14,999 | 50.1 | 2.9 |
| Vermont | 764 | 1,202 | 1,055 | 1,145 | 1,124 | 47.1 | -1.8 |
| Virginia | 9,898 | 17,940 | 17,538 | 18,026 | 17,876 | 80.6 | -0.8 |
| Washington | 16,853 | 27,390 | 30,609 | 32,539 | 35,511 | 110.7 | 9.1 |
| West Virginia | 2,984 | 7,459 | 8,168 | 7,430 | 7,955 | 166.6 | 7.1 |
| Wisconsin | 8,103 | 15,491 | 18,637 | 19,471 | 18,366 | 126.7 | -5.7 |
| Wyoming | 675 | 1,173 | 1,022 | 1,447 | 1,556 | 130.5 | 7.5 |
| United States | 673,458 | 1,162,117 | 1,216,117 | 1,298,015 | 1,259,695 | 87.0% | -3.0% |

Source: National Center for Homeless Education. 2016. "Federal Data Summary School Years 2012-13 to 2014-15: Education for Homeless Children and Youth," Table 4. <http://nche.ed.gov/downloads/data-comp-1213-1415.pdf>.