

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/america.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>.