



HOMELESSNESS

201

By Laura Hansen, Coalition to End Homelessness



OUTLINE

- The Coalition to End Homelessness
- Defining Homelessness
- How do we count and understand homelessness. **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS TRAINING IS THAT FAR MORE PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS THAN ARE REPORTED.**
- Reasons for Escalating Homelessness
 - Low Income
 - High priced housing
- Solving Homelessness
 - The bigger picture: What are other countries doing?
 - What is the U.S. doing now?
 - What are the problems with this approach?
- Society and Homelessness
 - References and Appendices Follow





- Coalition Founded in 1989 by the Department of Children and Families in Response to HUD requiring coordinated planning for grants
- We received our 501c3 in 1992
- Our first board consisted mainly of service providers concerned with HUD funding.
- In 2005 We were United Way's Agency of the Year.
- In 2007 Broward County took over many of our roles.
- We continue to provide innovative services as well as advocacy and education and believe both are necessary to end homelessness.
- Past advocacy successes include lower cost bus fare for homeless people, free and reduced cost childcare for homeless families and a Living Wage for Broward County.



DEFINE HOMELESSNESS



HOW DO YOU DEFINE HOMELESSNESS?

Are you actually sleeping outside?

What State do you live in?

Do you have a tent?

Are you sleeping in your car?

What about a run-down house without electricity or water?

Someone else's house when they don't know it?

A homeless shelter

Do people try to hide their homelessness?

Jail or Prison but time's up and there is no place to go?

What does your age have to do with it?

Hospital but you're being discharged with nowhere to go?

SOAR ACT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Most agencies MUST use a government definition of Homelessness to get government funding. Government departments have different definitions.

SOAR ACT

- 1.. An individual or family that lacks a fixed residence or lives somewhere not meant for human habitation,
2. An individual or family who will lose their housing within 14 days
3. Youth 25 years or younger who lack stable housing (couch-surfing)
4. Those fleeing domestic violence

Florida Department of Education retrieved from
<https://www.fldoe.org/policy/federal-edu-programs/title-ix-mvp/#:~:text=Every%20Child%20Has%20a%20Right,nighttime%20residence%20are%20considered%20homeless.>

STATUTE DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS



(§ 578.3)?

Literally Homeless (?)

Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes

Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence

BUT WAIT, WHAT ABOUT:

- Categories of homeless include experiences of those who:
 1. Are trading sex for housing
 2. Are staying with friends, but cannot stay there for longer than 14 days
 3. Are being trafficked
 4. Left home because of physical, emotional, or financial abuse or threats of abuse and have no safe, alternative housing

IN ADDITION TO DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS, THERE ARE ALSO DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF HOMELESS ESTABLISHED BY HUD AND SOME GRANTS REQUIRE REPORTING ON THE DIFFERENT TYPE OF HOMELESSNESS A CLIENT MAY MEET. OR ONLY FUND CERTAIN TYPES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

KINDS OF HOMELESSNESS



WHAT DO YOU IMAGINE THESE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS MEAN?



COUNTING AND UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

COUNTING THE HOMELESS

Unfortunately, the methods used by HUD to conduct the PIT (Point in time) counts produce a significant undercount of the homeless population at a given point in time. In addition, regardless of their methodology or execution, point in time counts fail to account for the transitory nature of homelessness and thus present a misleading picture of the crisis. Annual data, which better account for the movement of people in and out of homelessness over time, are significantly larger: A 2001 study using administrative data collected from homeless service providers estimated that the annual number of homeless individuals is 2.5 to 10.2 times greater than can be obtained using a point in time count.

- - **National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty**

ISSUES WITH COUNTING THE HOMELESS

• Homeless people don't always look homeless and often lie about being homeless because there is a stigma to homelessness and poverty. Homeless people rarely gather together for easy counting. You can count people at a shelter, but what if they are somewhere else? Researchers have spent years trying to figure out the most accurate way to count or estimate the number of homeless people in America. Government counts are clearly recognized as among the worst in terms of Research studies, but everyone is required to use that methodology if they want government funding.



HUD REQUIRES ALL COMMUNITIES TO USE THEIR SPECIFIC COUNTING MODEL TO RECEIVE ANY GOVERNMENT GRANTS

- This makes it possible to compare apples to apples.
- Prior to HUD's changes, different communities used different models.
- It was understood that counting the homeless only revealed a small fraction of the actual population and therefore most communities used a multiplier. So, if they counted 400 people, they would multiply that number by another number they felt best represented the actual number of homeless people in their community.
- With different communities using different methods and multipliers it was difficult to compare actual homelessness from one place to another. This is one of the benefits of the current Point-in-Time count.

HUD POINT-IN-TIME MODEL

- Con: No academic support for this model
- Con: Depends on volunteers with limited or no training
- Con: Only counts people who are seen, but we know that most homeless people try to avoid being seen because it often leads to arrest and always stigma
- Con: Most volunteers do not want to go to places that they consider “scary,” but very often those are the only places homeless people are permitted
- Con: Trusts the word of the person being interviewed and often brings snacks so that the non-homeless person has an incentive to falsely say that he or she is homeless
- Con: January is usually very cold, so fewer homeless people would be visible during this month.

DON'T COUNT ON IT

How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates
the Homelessness Crisis in America



NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

2017

Definitions of Homelessness

THE GOVERNMENT COUNT

According to the Washington Post (referring to the HUD homeless count):

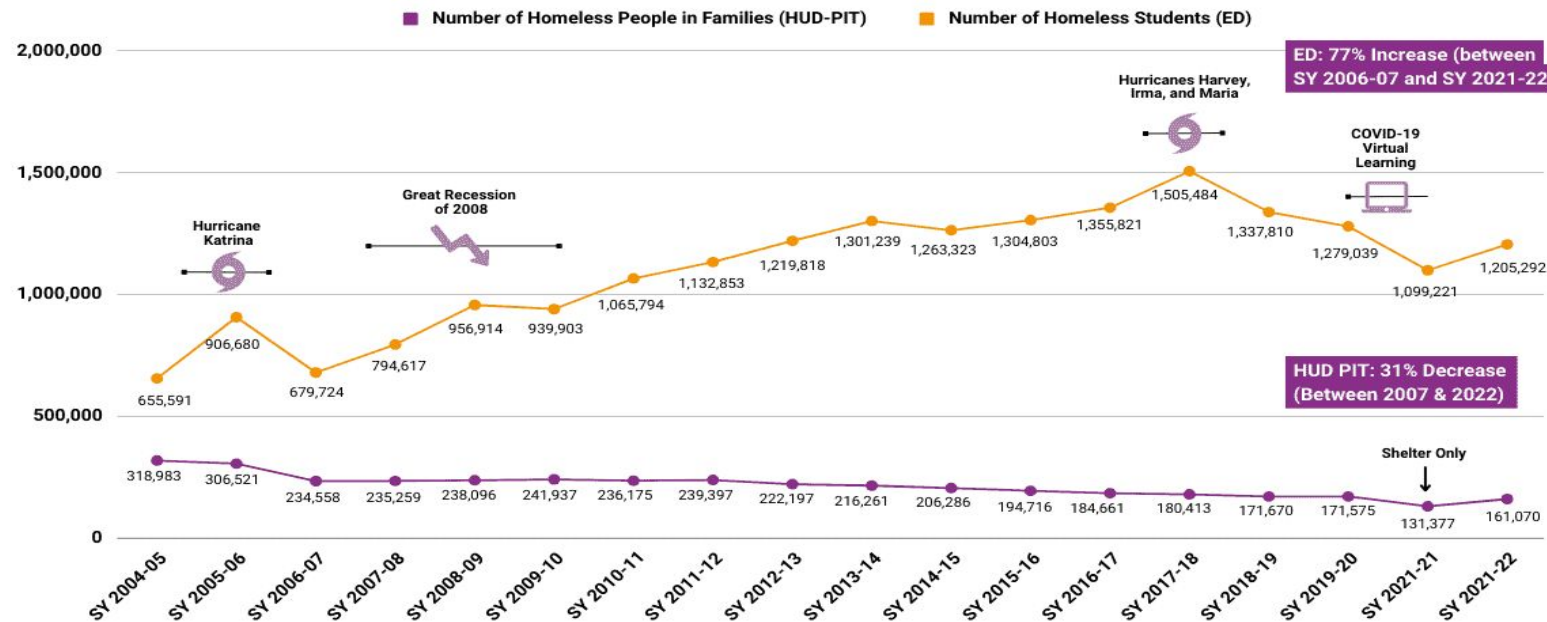
The margin of error in these counts would be large — if it were published at all. The counts are conservative, and they provide a low-end estimate.

~Daniel Flaming of the Los Angeles-based Economic Roundtable

On January 25, every other year, communities conduct a point-in-time count. Mostly untrained, or marginally trained volunteers go out and look for homeless people to count.

Do you see any research methodology issues with this practice?

In 2017, the National Homelessness Law Center published a report called, "Don't Count on it: How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates the Homelessness Crisis in America." The report cited estimates that the true scale of homelessness falls between 2.5 and 10.2 times what the Point-in-Time count suggests.



Sources:

1. [HUD Sources for Persons in Family Households with Children](#). 2005-2009: HUD identifies the category as persons in households with children. 2010: HUD changes the category to person in households with adults and children. 2011-2020: HUD changes the category to persons in households with at least one adult and one child. *This category includes households with one adult and at least one child under age 18. Note: HUD data represent a single point in time, while ED data represent an academic year.*
2. [Homeless Student Data from the Department of Education](#) Note: ED data for the 2022-2023 school year is not yet available.

The government's numbers don't even match!

ALL COUNTING METHODS, PROVIDE DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE HOMELESS

Racial inequality with Native Americans and African Americans experiencing the most homelessness

Veterans experience homeless at a greater rate than non-veterans

The number of families with children who are homeless is greatly under-estimated

Children raised in foster care are more likely to be homeless

LGBT, particularly young LGBT are more likely to be homeless

There are also issues that impact willingness to get help. Many homeless people have had problems with large institutions and avoid authorities of any kind.

MARTHA BURT, THE URBAN LEAGUE

- As a research methods specialist, Martha Burt extensively studied the question of counting the homeless. She found that 10% of people living at or below the poverty level experienced homelessness at some point in the year. This is not the same as saying 10% of those living at or below the poverty level are homeless on any given day (which the HUD count also fails to calculate but gives us a very good way to measure homelessness in any given year.

- PRO – Easy to count and highly regarded. This measure can also be used on any given U.S. population where the number of people living at or below poverty is known. For example in the U.S., The census says “The official **poverty rate** in 2022 was 11.5 **percent**, with 37.9 million people in poverty.” Using Burt’s methodology that means that in 2022 3,970,000 people probably experienced homelessness at some point in 2022. HUD’s Point in Time Count reports 650,000 Homeless people during the same time frame.

- Using Burt’s methodology we find six times as many homeless people in any given year as reported in the HUD count which is well within the National Alliance’s range. Another way of saying this is that the HUD count probably captures about 16% of homeless people.

- PRO – This model does not rely on homeless people to tell the truth or to be willing to participate

- Burt, M. R. (1995). Critical factors in counting the homeless: An invited commentary. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 65(3), 334–339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0085059>

CENSUS-BASED MODEL: ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Take a random sampling
(valid research method)

Ask them if they have ever been homeless, then apply this % to all Americans.

So, if we ask 10,000 randomly selected people if they have ever been homeless and 7.4% say yes, then we will conclude that that figure probably applies to the rest of America.

PRO:

Consistent with academic research methods

CON:

There is a great deal of shame surrounding the experience of homelessness, so many people will deny having had a homeless experience. Unfortunately, this creates an undercount.

CON:

Focuses primarily on children and youth

WE END UP WITH VERY DIFFERENT NUMBERS

TOTAL AMERICANS: 341,516,526 (CENSUS 2024)

Method	HUD	Burt	Census Study	NLCHP
Time- Period	On one day	one year	lifetime	On one Day
Method	Physically counted on the street January 25 every other year	10% of Americans living below poverty will experience homeless annually	7.4 % of All Americans called had experienced homelessness	HUD Number times multiplier of 2.5 to 10.2 depending on a number of factors
	653,104	3,927,440	25,272,222	1,632,760 to 6,531,040
	Cons 6, No Pros	Cons 2, Pros 3	1 Con, 1 Pro	1 Con, 1 Pro

USING BURT'S METHODOLOGY –DURING A YEAR FOR FLORIDA

Homeless in U.S
 $38,000,000 \times .1$
 $= 3,800,000$

10% of people in poverty in the U.S. 3,800,000 which represents the total homeless population – 38,000,000 people in the U.S. live at or below poverty.

Homeless in
Florida $56,700,000$
 $\times .1 = 5,670,000$

10% of people living in Poverty in Florida which represents the total homeless population - 56,700,000 people in Florida live at or below poverty.

Homeless in
Broward $238,880 \times$
 $.1 = 23,888$

10% of people living below poverty in Broward which represents the total homeless population – 238,880 people in Broward live at or below poverty

WHY ARE PEOPLE HOMELESS

WHAT CAUSES HOMELESSNESS?

Homelessness Is Deadly*

People who experience homelessness die nearly 30 years earlier than the average American—and at the average age that Americans died in 1900

50 Years Old

77 Years Old



People who experience homelessness



Average American

SUBSTANCE ABUSE, MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY

- According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness: “In 2021, almost 23 percent in the United States experienced mental illness, and 5.5 percent had serious mental illness (SMI). In contrast, 31.4 percent of people who experienced homelessness had SMI. So while both housed and unhoused people experience mental health issues, it may be true that homeless people have more serious mental health issues. It may also be true that homelessness causes more serious mental health problems rather than the other way around. Another possibility is that the only homeless people that get counted with mental health issues are those that are hospitalized, rather than members of the general public with less severe mental health issues being able to talk about them.
- The same situation is true for substance abuse. While both housed and unsheltered people have substance abuse issues, they appear to be more serious for chronically homeless people although again, the statistics used are not necessarily valid and just because there is a relationship between homelessness and substance abuse does not mean that substance abuse creates homelessness, it could be that homelessness leads to substance abuse.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY NEGATIVELY IMPACTS EVERYONE

- With the latest data from several federal sources compiled at the end of 2023, it is unfortunately clear that yet again, the 4.1 million people with disabilities ages 18 to 64 who receive SSI cannot afford an apartment in any housing market in the United States without additional support. American Progress(2021).
- The Urban Institute published (2022) "People with Disabilities living in the U.S. face urgent barriers to housing: Federal programs are not meeting the housing needs of disabled people." The name of the study itself gives away its conclusions. When people face disability it often directly impacts income which impacts housing.
- Popkins (2023) found "In addition to the lack of affordable housing overall, disabled people face an acute shortage of housing that is accessible or includes the services they need. The federally assisted housing stock that serves households with the lowest incomes is old; much of it was built before the 1970s and is therefore exempt from the requirements of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#). This housing increasingly [serves older adults and people with disabilities](#), many of whom live in units that don't meet their needs."

THIS IS WHERE THE BLAME GAME STOPS WORKING

- the landmark 2017 study *[Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America](#)*, from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that 4.2 million young people experienced unaccompanied homelessness over a 12-month period.
- Public schools are required to proactively identify all children and youth experiencing homelessness — those who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness, and those who do not — in order to ensure that they receive educational protections and services. While there may not be a shelter bed or housing unit for every family and youth who needs one, there is a guaranteed seat in the classroom. Even with well documented challenges in the identification of homeless children and youth by schools, public schools are still much more accurate barometers of family and youth homelessness than HUD data.
- HUD’s Flawed Data Contribute to Harmful Policies and Conflict with Other Agencies’ Missions and Mandates. (Schoolhouse connection) HUD’s data perpetuates a fundamentally dishonest conversation about homelessness. It keeps homeless children, youth, and families invisible, and ignores their growing ranks in public schools and early childhood programs. We won’t make a dent in reducing homelessness until we acknowledge how children and youth experience it, and reform federal, state, and local policies to meet their needs.” **-Barbara Duffield, ED, SchoolHouse Connection**



IT IS EASIER TO BLAME THE VICTIM AND ABSOLVES US OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROBLEM, BUT THE ROOT CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS IS POVERTY. POVERTY IS OFTEN THE RESULT OF GREED. MORE FOR ME.



THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND INDEED MANY SERVICE PROVIDERS ALSO TEND TO BLAME HOMELESS PEOPLE FOR THEIR LACK OF HOUSING. MANY PROVIDERS ARE CONVINCED THAT HOMELESS PEOPLE NEED RELIGION, LIFE-SKILLS, BUDGETING TRAINING AND MANY OTHER INTERVENTIONS AND DON'T APPRECIATE HOW TRULY CREATIVE HOMELESS PEOPLE ARE TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE AT POVERTY LEVEL



WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE HOMELESS – LACK OF INCOME

As we shall see in the following slides,
Only about 50% of Americans earn a
Wage that allows them to afford
Housing (pay a third or less of their
Total income on housing). This 50%
Of Americans is housing burdened,
Often spending much more than
They can afford on housing making the
vulnerable to homelessness



POVERTY IN THE U.S.

- The federal poverty level (FPL) in the United States for 2024 is as follows:
- Individuals: \$15,060
- Family of 2: \$20,440
- Family of 3: \$25,820
- Family of 4: \$31,200
- Family of 5: \$36,580
- Family of 6: \$41,960
- Family of 7: \$47,340
- Family of 8: \$52,720
- Family of 9 or more: Add \$5,380 for each additional person





Minimum wage hasn't been enough to lift most out of poverty for decades, Pew Trusts

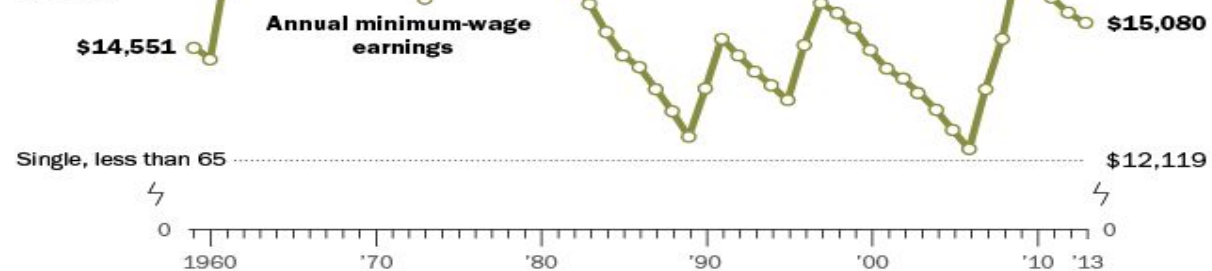
Poverty and the Federal Minimum Wage

Poverty thresholds, by household type

Two adults, two children \$23,624

One adult, two children \$18,769
Two adults, one child \$18,751

One adult, one child \$16,057
..... \$15,080

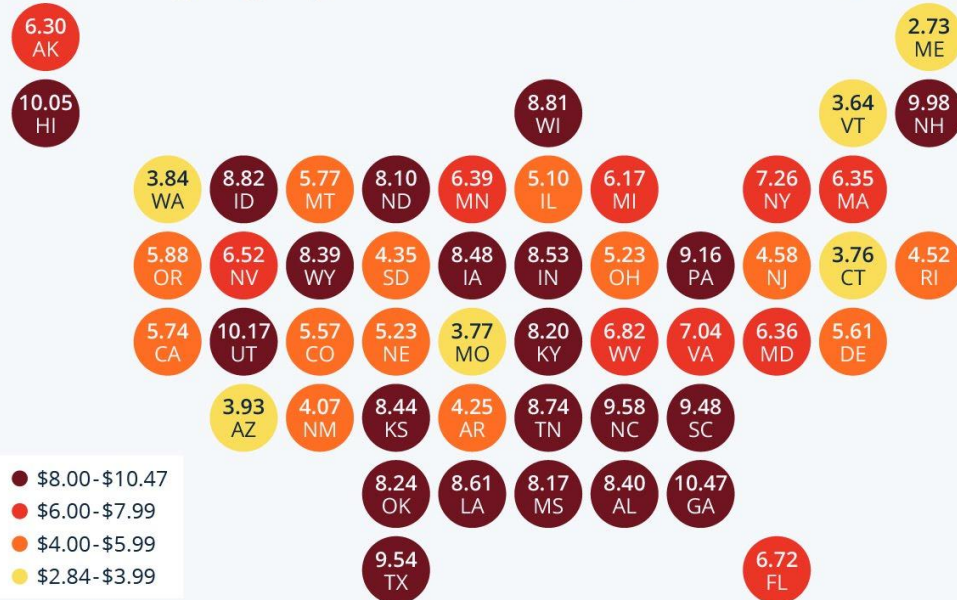


Note: Annual minimum-wage earnings in constant 2013 dollars assuming a full-time work schedule of 40 hours per week and 52 weeks per year. Poverty thresholds are adjusted for inflation each year.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The Living Wage Gap

Gap between the hourly minimum wage and the living wage by U.S. state in 2023 (in U.S. dollars)



For a single person with no children

Source: Living Wage Calculator (Amy Glasmeier/MIT)



statista

THE LIVING WAGE – AN ALTERNATIVE MEASURE TO THE POVERTY LEVEL

- A living wage is calculated by estimating the cost of a basic but decent life in a specific region and dividing that number by the number of working adults in a household. The cost of living includes food, housing, healthcare, transportation, education, clothing, and other essential needs.
- According to an analysis from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the minimum wage does not suffice to pay for a typical set of living expenses in any state of the United States. Hawaii, Georgia and Utah, where the living wage gap exceeded \$10 per hour, fared the worst.

	1 ADULT				2 ADULTS (1 WORKING)				2 ADULTS (BOTH WORKING)	
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child
Living Wage	\$22.43	\$37.27	\$45.36	\$58.76	\$30.56	\$36.52	\$40.78	\$44.67	\$15.28	\$20.81
Poverty Wage	\$7.24	\$9.83	\$12.41	\$15.00	\$9.83	\$12.41	\$15.00	\$17.59	\$4.91	\$6.21
Minimum										

LIVING WAGE/HOUSING WAGE VS POVERTY LEVEL



LIVING WAGE, POVERTY LEVEL WAGE AND MINIMUM WAGE.



U.S. CENSUS MOST RECENT POVERTY UPDATE



The official poverty rate in 2020 was 11.4 percent, up 1.0 percentage point from 10.5 percent in 2019. This is the first increase in poverty after five consecutive annual declines (Figure 8 and Table B-4).

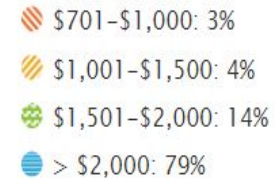
In 2020, there were 37.2 million people in poverty, approximately 3.3 million more than in 2019 (Figure 8 and Table B-1).

Between 2019 and 2020, the poverty rate increased for non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics. Among non-Hispanic Whites, 8.2 percent were in poverty in 2020, while Hispanics had a poverty rate of 17.0 percent. Among the major racial groups examined in this report, Blacks had the highest poverty rate (19.5 percent), but did not experience a significant change from 2019. The poverty rate for Asians (8.1 percent) in 2020 was not statistically different from 2019 (Figure 9 and Table B-1).

Poverty rates for people under the age of 18 increased from 14.4 percent in 2019 to 16.1 percent in 2020. Poverty rates also increased for people aged 18 to 64 from 9.4 percent in 2019 to 10.4 percent in 2020. The poverty rate for people aged 65 and older was 9.0 percent in 2020, not statistically different from 2019 (Figure 9 and Table B-1).

Between 2019 and 2020, poverty rates increased for married-couple families and families with a female householder. The poverty rate for married-couple families increased from 4.0 percent in 2019 to 4.7 percent in 2020. For families with a female householder, the poverty rate increased from 22.2 percent to 23.4 percent. The poverty rate for families with a male householder was 11.4 percent in 2020, not statistically different from 2019.

Fort Lauderdale, FL apartment rent ranges

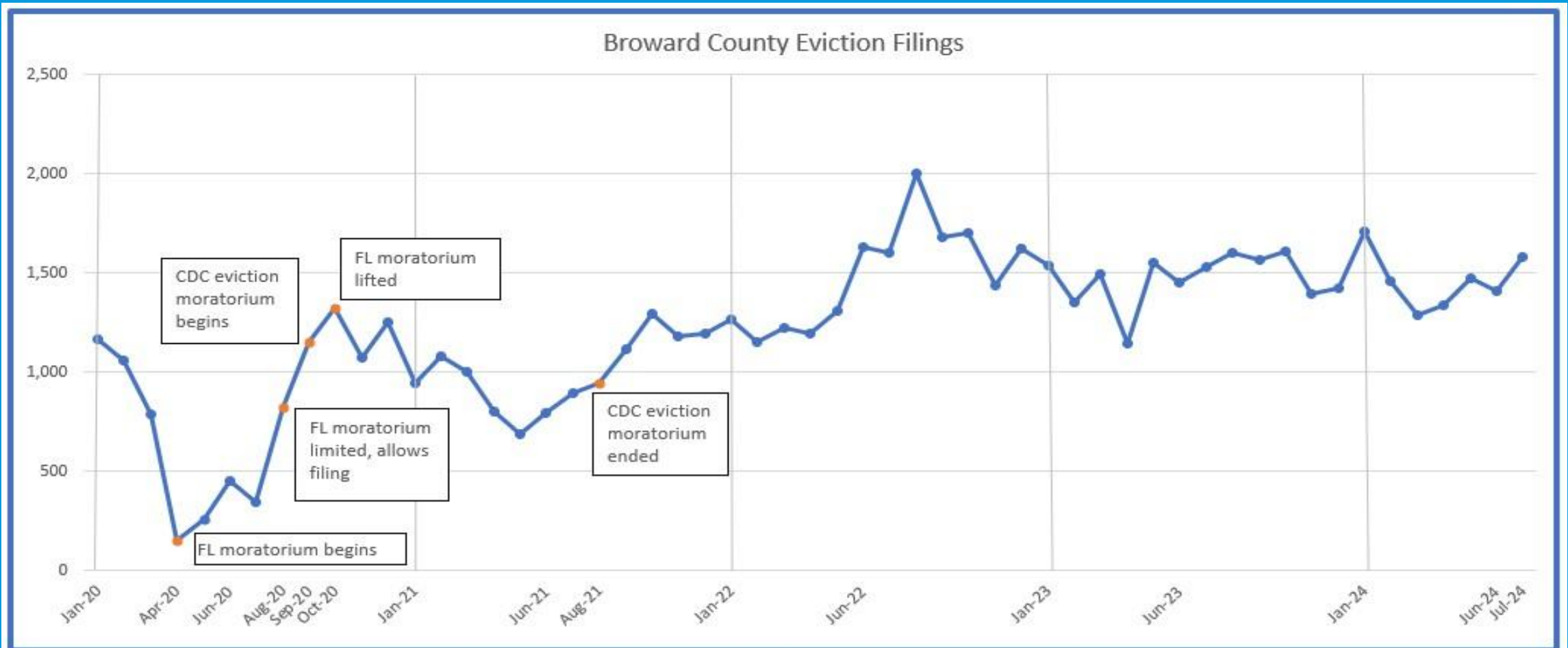


WHY ARE PEOPLE HOMELESS COST OF HOUSING

AMERICANS BY INCOME BRACKET AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Americans by Annual Income Bracket	Percentage Of Americans	Number of Americans	Annual Housing Income (1/3 total income)	Monthly Housing allotment
Under 15K	8.3	28.6 mil	0 – 5,000.00	0 – 416.60
15 – 25k	7.4	25.5 mil	5,000.00 – 8,333.00	416.60 – 694.41
25 – 35K	7.6	26.2 mil	8,333.00 – 11,666.00	694.41 – 972.16
35 – 50k	10.6	36.5 mil	11,666.00 – 16,666.00	972.16 – 1,388.83
50 – 75k	16.2	55.9 mil	16,666.00 – 25,000.00	1,388.83 – 2,083.33
75 – 99k	12.3	42.4 mil	25,000 – 33,000	2,083.33 – 2,750.00
100 -150 k	16.4	56.5 mil	33,000 – 50,000	2,750.00 – 4,666.60
150 – 199k	9.2	31.7 mil	50,000 – 66,333.00	4,666.60- 5,527.75
200k +	11.9	41 mil	66,666.00 +	5555.50 +
	Total % of Americans paying more than they can afford for housing: 50.1%	172,700,000.00 Americans may be housing insecure		

EVICTON RATES – 19.1 OF EVERY RENTAL HOUSEHOLD WILL FACE EVICTION IN BROWARD COUNTY OVER A FOUR YEAR PERIOD



Source: Broward County Clerk of Court

HOMEOWNERSHIP VS. RENTAL HOUSING

- Although home ownership is a better financial investment in the long term, it comes with a lot of up-front costs, and monthly costs in addition to a mortgage payment.
- While there have been many federally supported programs aiming to increase the rate of home ownership, for people living even slightly below median income, home ownership is not often possible for people living at or below poverty.
- The majority of lower income households rent their dwellings so for our purposes, rental costs and availability are of greater concern.



BROWARD COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEVELS

FY 2024 Income Limits Summary							
FY 2024 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income	FY 2024 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family				
	Click for More Detail		1	2	3	4	5
Fort Lauderdale, FL HUD Metro FMR Area	\$89,100	Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	36,950	42,200	47,500	52,800	57,000
		Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)* Click for More Detail	22,200	25,400	28,550	31,700	36,580
		Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	59,150	67,550	76,050	84,450	91,200

THE HOUSING BURDEN HERE

With 61.9 percent of renter households categorized as cost-burdened, Broward County was already one of the most unaffordable places to live in the US. The hardships associated with housing costs have been particularly severe for low-income seniors, single parents, individuals with disabilities, and other households with fixed incomes or necessary expenditures on healthcare, childcare, and other basic needs. These hardships and levels of distress have multiplied significantly during the past two years as rent prices have increased by over 30 percent, thereby increasing renter cost-burden levels throughout Broward County.

Because Broward County depends greatly on tourism, the County has a large service-sector economy. Service sector jobs are normally some of the lower paid jobs available, and often people in these positions depend on tips which may or may not be well understood by all those they serve.

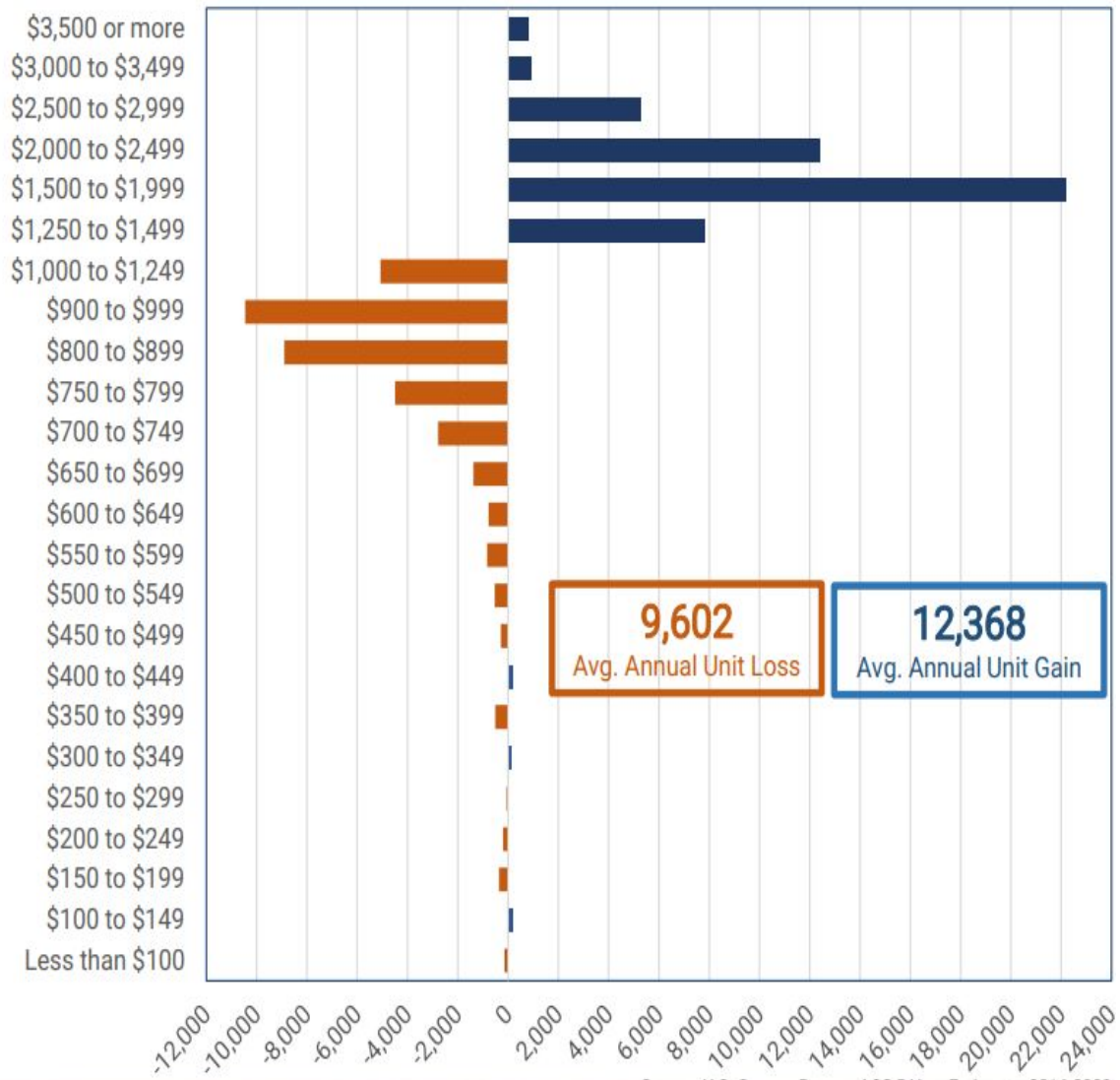


IT IS AMAZING MORE PEOPLE ARE NOT HOMELESS

The Affordable Housing Needs Assessment reached several critical findings: • The scope and scale of Broward County's affordable housing needs are substantial and impact a broad spectrum of economic, social, and quality of life issues; • Renter households are the most vulnerable due to generally lower household incomes, low wage employment, and excessive cost-burden levels; • of a sinThe vast majority (94 percent) of Broward County residents are unable to afford the current median sale price (\$590,000) single-family home. Broward County's median single-family home price-to-median household income ratio now stands at 9.8:1,

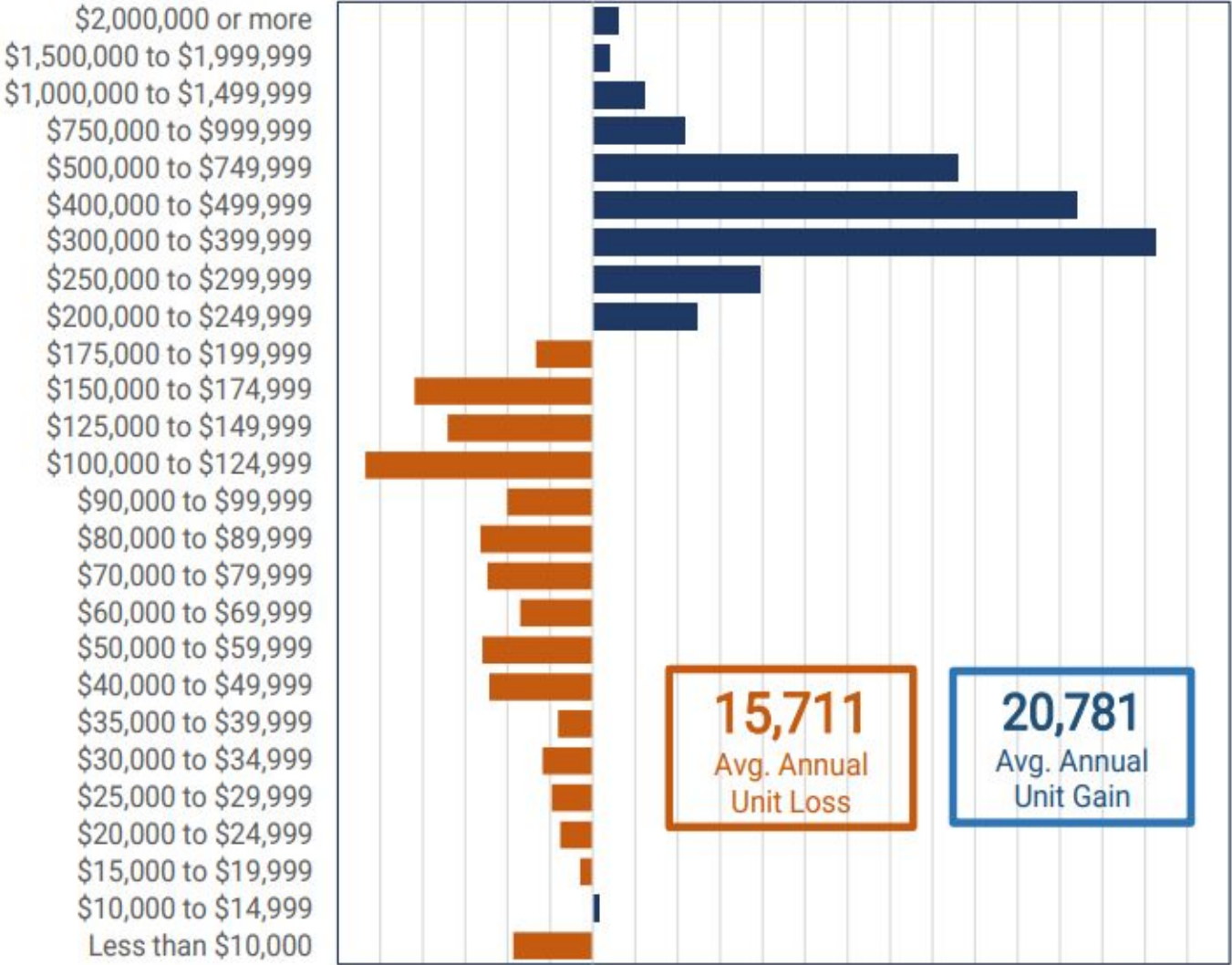
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Figure 2.5: Renter- Occupied Units Supply: Change by Value, 2016-2020



CHANGE IN THE SUPPLY OF RENTAL UNITS IN BROWARD COUNTY

Figure 2.4: Owner-Occupied Units Supply: Change by Value, 2016-2020



CHANGE IN THE SUPPLY OF OWNED PROPERTY IN BROWARD

"EXTREMELY LOW-INCOME RENTERS CONTINUE TO FACE HOUSING GAP"

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION



HOW CAN WE SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?



The bigger picture – how are other countries dealing with similar issues?



HOMELESSNESS WORLDWIDE

HOMELESSNESS IS A WORLDWIDE PROBLEM

Experiencing homelessness

As per 10 000 people, 2023 or latest year (point-in-time data)



Note: People experiencing homelessness (PIT data) who are living rough or staying in emergency accommodation (ETHOS Light 1, 2, 3), as reported by governments. *Data for the United Kingdom (England) refer to the number of households experiencing homelessness per 10 000 households for ETHOS Light 2 and 3; data also include people enumerated in the Rough Sleeping Snapshot (ETHOS 1). Source: OECD Affordable Housing Database, HC3.1 People experiencing homelessness.

In the latter years of the 2010s, the nation of Finland positioned itself as a global leader in combating homelessness. Through an innovative public policy strategy that has virtually eliminated homelessness within its borders, Finland has redefined how nations can address homelessness. By focusing on prevention, early intervention, and a comprehensive support system through wraparound services, Finland has shown the world that homelessness is a solvable problem.

HOW DID FINLAND END HOMELESSNESS

“A 2020 article in *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, written by Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri, states that until the 1990s, Finland used the “staircase” or “treatment first” approach” (Similar to our Continuum of Care model or what I call the puritanical approach) “to addressing homelessness, which entails providing housing to individuals only after they have been treated for mental illnesses, drug abuse, or other ailments. The article cites research suggesting that the staircase model “can work well with those who have opted for substance abuse rehabilitation” Meaning those people who want to deal with substance abuse issues “and can cope with shared housing.” Which in U.S. Emergency shelter can mean up to 100 beds in one room as well as a schedule not dissimilar from prison. “However, the insistence on service users being intoxicant-free and able to take control of their lives has proven to be an insuperable barrier for many homeless people with multiple problems.”

FINDLAND'S MODEL

“Finland began to prioritize the Housing First approach, providing housing immediately and without preconditions to residents in need. The underlying principle of Housing First is that having a stable and secure home is a fundamental human right and a critical foundation for tackling other issues contributing to homelessness, such as mental health issues or substance abuse. By prioritizing housing as the first step in addressing homelessness, Finland’s government successfully created a supportive environment for individuals to address other challenges. According to the Finnish experts Shinn and Khadduri cite, “In the Housing First model, a dwelling is not a reward that a homeless person receives once their life is back on track. Instead, a dwelling is the foundation on which the rest of life is put back together.”

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM JAPAN

Conventional Approaches



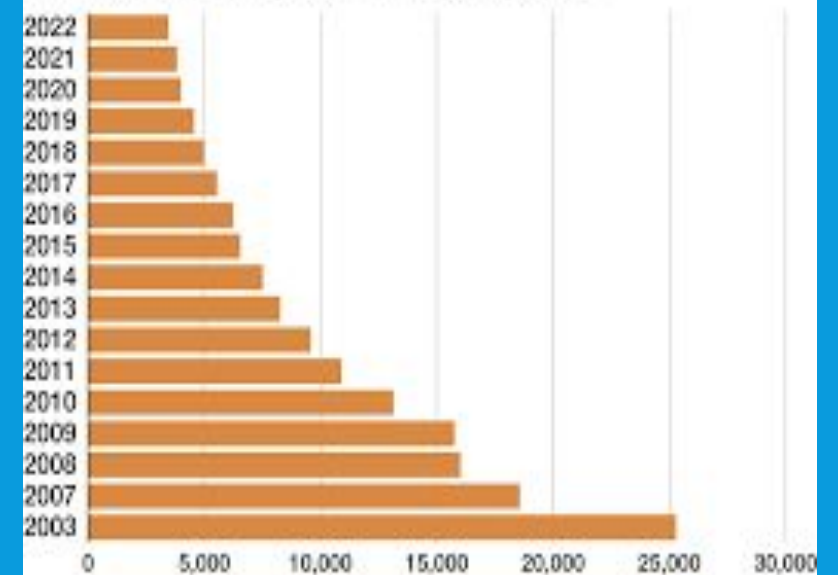
The administration determines whether or not an individual is permitted to be provided housing and gives its approval or disapproval.

Housing First



- > Housing is a basic human right.
- > Housing is provided without preconditions.
- > The individual makes the final decision.
- > Supporters provide assistance to the individual to enable them to live within society.

Number of Homeless People in Japan



Created by Nippon.com based on data from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare.

nippon.com

HOW ARE WE CURRENTLY MANAGING HOMELESSNESS IN THE U.S.?



CRIMINALIZATION

According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, Criminalization of Homelessness is increasing:

% of Cities with laws criminalizing	
SLEEPING IN A VEHICLE:	18%
PANHANDLING:	27%
LOITERING	32%
LIVING IN A VEHICLE	39%
SLEEPING/LYING DOWN	47%



As usual, Children suffer the most

- Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America found that of the 3.5 million 18-24 year-olds and 700,000 13-17 year-olds who experienced homelessness, nearly three quarters who slept on the streets or in shelters also 'couch-surfed' (stayed with others), demonstrating the fluid nature of homeless living arrangements.
- Lack of Appropriate Shelter Options, Fear of Child Welfare Authorities, and Concern About the Safety of Shelters Explain Why Most Families and Youth Who are Homeless are Not in Shelters or on the Streets.
- Shelters and transitional housing are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, do not accept unaccompanied minor youth, or simply do not exist in too many communities. When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they are less likely to be included in HUD's counts.



BAD DATA ALLOWS THE GOVERNMENT TO CLAIM THEY ARE DOING ENOUGH TO HELP THE HOMELESS

- Congress and local communities use federal homelessness data to set priorities for funding, services, and action. Because, as we already know, this data is incorrect, incorrect assumptions are made.
- By underestimating family and youth homelessness, HUD data contribute to decreased attention, focus, and funding for family and youth programs, as well as a sense of complacency. The inaccurate data create the mistaken impression that current federal policies and approaches are “working” and should be continued — a view that is not shared by many local service providers and educators.
- The use of HUD homelessness data to claim progress in decreasing family and youth homelessness is in direct conflict with, and undermines the work of, public schools and federal early childhood programs. These agencies are required to improve the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness in order to ensure that they receive federally-mandated protections and services. Congress specifically amended the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to improve the identification of homeless children and youth.

NOBODY REALLY KNOWS HOW MANY CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE WITHOUT SHELTER

Two studies of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows that high school students experiencing homelessness are at high risk of harm regardless of where they sleep. A 2019 study demonstrated dire risk of rape, assault, suicide, substance abuse, hunger, bullying and other risks, whether high school students experiencing homelessness are sleeping in a motel, a car, a shelter, temporarily with other people, or moving so frequently that they cannot identify a usual sleeping arrangement over a thirty-day period. Vulnerability to these harms was comparable across different homeless situations. A 2022 study found that high school students who reported homelessness had 208% higher odds of sexual victimization and 347% higher odds of physical victimization. Each homeless sleeping location, including staying with others and motels, was associated with increased odds of experiencing both sexual and physical victimization compared to sleeping at a parent or guardian's home, underscoring the vulnerability of all high school students who experience homelessness, regardless of where they sleep.

IGNORE THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM AND HOPE IT GOES AWAY.

- Families experiencing homelessness are also less likely than single adults to stay on the streets and other outdoor locations where they can be included in PIT counts, often because they are afraid their children will be removed from their custody. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness fear interactions with authorities and exploitation from older adults whether in a shelter, on the street, or staying on someone's couch.
- For these reasons, families and youth are much more likely to stay temporarily with other people, or in motels — situations that are themselves very unstable, often unsafe, and put them at risk of trafficking. They are also more common in rural and suburban areas, where the PIT count results in dramatic under-counts.
- Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Who Are Excluded from HUD's Definition of Homelessness and its Data Are As Vulnerable as Those Who Are Included.

TODAY, FOR THE MOST PART COMMUNITIES ARE IGNORING THE HOMELESS PROBLEM OR MAKING IT WORSE

- Hostile Architecture is used to discourage homeless people from getting comfortable anywhere,
- Police sweeps are issued on a regular basis and particularly before events that will attract tourists (The Boat Show). Homeless people are picked up by the police, often without their belongings which they then lose forever, and placed in jail for a couple of days.
- Many members of the public look away from homeless people and try to ignore them.
- Many people seek gated communities for housing so they will not have to contend with seeing poverty.
- Governments are focused on developing their tax base by gentrifying low income housing and building more expensive developments.

TRADITIONAL/ HISTORICAL MODELS OF RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS

- PUNATIVE MEASURES HAVE BEEN THE NUMBER ONE WAY THE U.S. HAS DEALT WITH HOMELESSNESS. From Tramps, to Hobos, to the Homelessness, those without a permanent address have been seen as lacking social values, lacking religious values, and been jailed, fined, enslaved, forced into institutions and punished in a variety of ways. As far as we can tell Homelessness has existed since 900 B.C. at least and probably since the dawn of man.
- Many organization believe that punitive methods of dealing with homelessness are getting worse. In reality it is hard to tell since there was not a great deal written about homelessness historically. Nevertheless, we do know that homelessness is illegal in every state except for Oregon and Wyoming. We do know that the punitive model of addressing homeless is in wide use today with police often the first line of “homeless workers”
- How effective has the punitive approach worked for ending homelessness? Since it does not change their circumstances, indeed makes their circumstances worse (loss of belonging, loss of relationships, loss of contact with society) it is not surprising that it has been ineffective.

THE PURITANICAL APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS

- For many years this was seen as the kindest response to homelessness and even today people who practice this approach are often seen as softies.
- The puritanical approach is similar to the punitive approach in that homeless people are seen as lacking fundamental values/morals and in need of intervention to change their behavior and thinking.
- This approach focuses on getting jobs for homeless people, requiring sobriety, and punishing drug use. Homeless people are required to work with a case manager until their behavior is more in line with social standards. Many of these shelters have schedules not dissimilar from prison. Sheltered clients are required to get up early, eat meals at specific times, find a job and ideally be ready to live independently in 30 days.
- Puritanical values include honesty, hard-work, responsibility, self-control, sobriety, and belief in the Bible.
- Puritanical beliefs are a part of the Foundation of the U.S., and many of them are widely practiced today. They are not necessarily bad or good, the question is if they successfully end homelessness for people who did not necessarily believe them before being “helped” by them. Many of the models of ending homelessness that we use today are based on these values. Homeless people who attain shelter are often required to make rapid progress towards adopting and living these values.

HOW WELL DOES THE PURITANICAL APPROACH TO HOMELESS WORK?

- This approach is popular with funders, including government agencies as many people believe that homelessness is a result of moral failure. Agencies using this approach are more likely to be funded.
- According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

It's easy to wonder why we don't just build more shelter to tackle unsheltered homelessness. With people living outside — on the streets and in tunnels, cars, and encampments — expanding shelter capacity can seem like the simplest solution.

Emergency shelters play a critical, often life-saving role in providing a safe place for people experiencing a housing crisis. But providing a shelter bed alone is often a temporary, inadequate fix to homelessness. As Alliance Vice President Steve Berg said in a recent Unsheltered post:

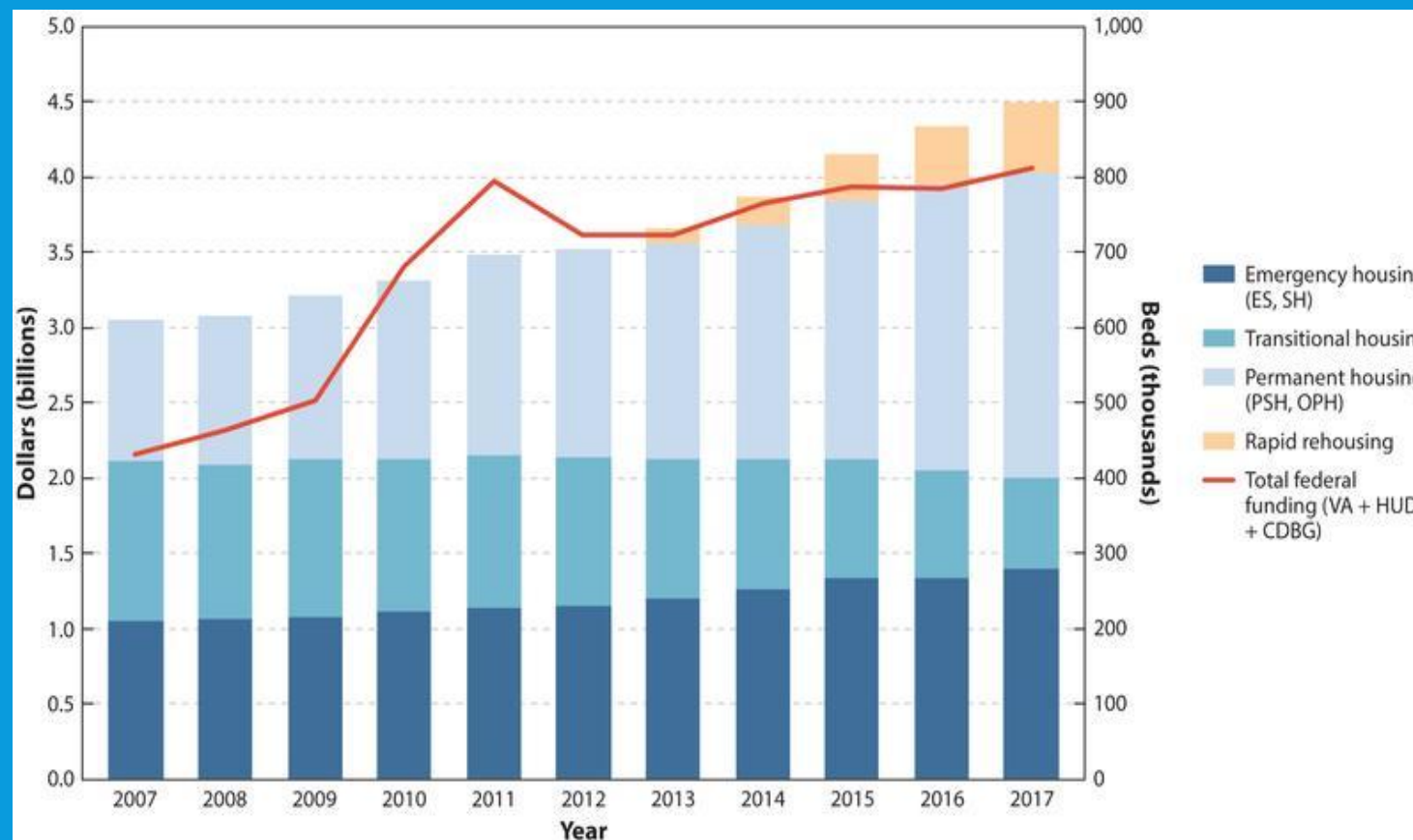
“If the only response is more shelter, each new shelter will quickly fill up, and unsheltered homelessness will continue to grow... A community must consider how each person will exit to housing from that shelter.”

THE ACCEPTANCE MODEL

- Many of the more successful models of ending homelessness are based on an acceptance of homelessness.
- Different programs use different terminology to explain how they help the homeless. Some of that terminology includes, “rights based”, “consumer driven”, “harm reduction”, “client choice, and “trauma informed”.
- Housing is provided first, along with any other unmet basic needs like food. Permanent housing is unconditional and not based on sobriety, work-ethic, or other puritanical values. Clients often work with a case manager later and develop their own plans rather than being told what they must do.
- While this is a relatively new approach, research so far shows much better outcomes for clients. Research is ongoing.



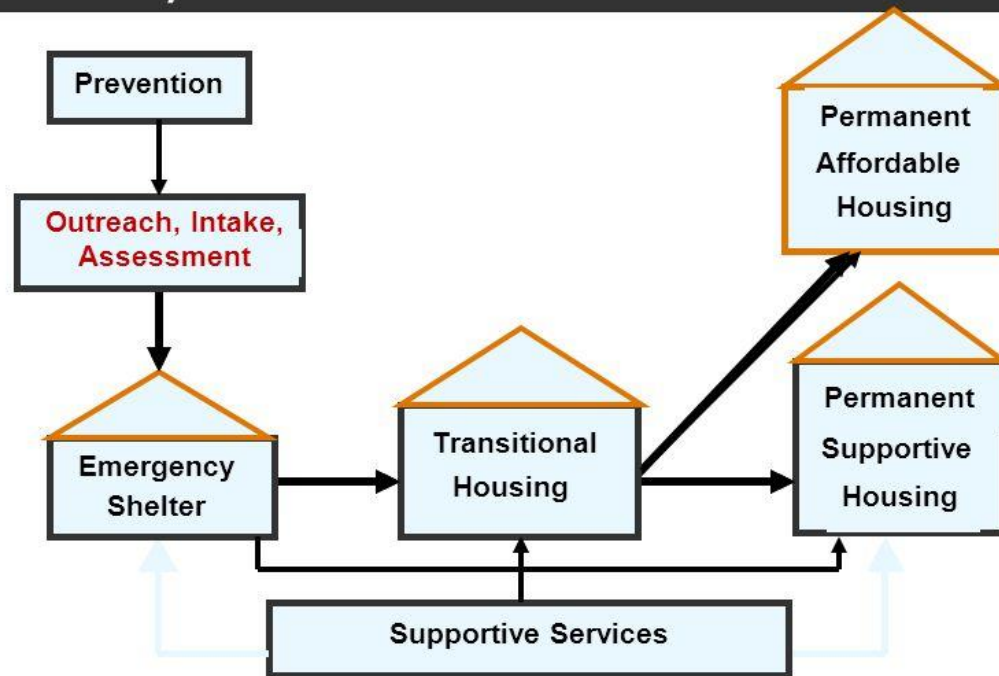
COSTS OF OUR CURRENT INEFFECTIVE APPROACH



Proposal	Total	Dem	Ind	Rep	
Expand federal incentives for developing more housing that is affordable to lower-income households	77%	81%	73%	74%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act
Provide direct cash transfers or payments to help homeless individuals afford basic necessities and housing	61%	68%	56%	54%	
Incentivize local communities to reform restrictive land use and zoning policies to allow the building of different types of housing, including accessory dwelling units and multifamily homes	70%	77%	66%	64%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act
Increase funding for addiction treatment and recovery programs aimed at homeless individuals	77%	80%	73%	77%	
Increase funding for counseling and support services for homeless individuals with mental illness	80%	83%	77%	81%	
Increase funding for programs that support veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness	82%	83%	77%	83%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act
Increase funding to open more temporary shelters	75%	80%	71%	71%	
Increase funding to build and preserve public and/or federally subsidized housing – including transitional and long-term housing for homeless individuals	75%	80%	71%	70%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act
Expand the housing voucher program to ensure that rental assistance is available to all extremely low-income households	77%	83%	72%	72%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act
Establish a permanent federal program for emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention	73%	79%	67%	67%	Included in BPC's American Housing Act

MOST AMERICANS OF ALL POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES BELIEVE HOMELESSNESS IS A HUGE PROBLEM.

HUD Continuum of Care System



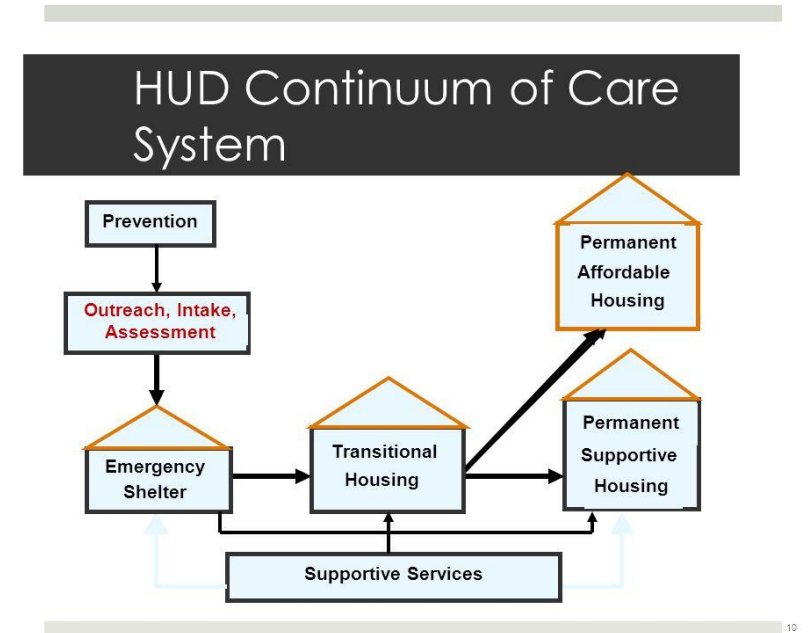
THE GOVERNMENT AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR REDUCING HOMELESSNESS IS HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD). HUD'S PLAN TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS IS THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

CONTINUUM OF CARE MODEL DISCUSSION

- This is the current model that all communities must use for HUD funding. HUD funding is called “The Continuum of Care”,
- HUD Introduced the Continuum of Care in 1994 and it was codified into law by Congress in 2009,
- Despite billions of dollars in investment, nearly every community forced to use this model lacks affordable housing which is the last step in the tangled and confusing process. So even if you can get in (a bed in emergency shelter is the first stop) you cannot get out. Hotel California.
- The cost of this model is astronomical. While hard figures for the total spending on homelessness are difficult to find (this would include private spending, public spending, etc.) California made an effort to quantify spending and found that between 2019 and 2024 the State spent \$24 Billion on homelessness or about \$160,000.00 per person and despite this funding homelessness increased by about 30,000.00 (Ohanian, Hoover Institute)
- What other problems can you see in this model?

PROBLEMS WITH HUD'S MODEL

- There are not sufficient prevention services in Broward County or elsewhere.
- Outreach exists but there are not sufficient emergency shelter beds to place people in as all emergency shelter beds are always full... and where are these supportive services?
 - Even if people could get into emergency shelter the process of moving them from shelter to shelter to shelter is destabilizing and can make people worse off than they were before,
 - Insufficient Transitional housing exists for the number of people leaving emergency shelter and most people leaving emergency shelter don't qualify anyway, or cannot afford it,
 - No permanent affordable housing exists to move people into even if they could get into Emergency Shelter and then transitional shelter



The continuum of care relies highly on existing faith based services.

Pros

- Nearly all religions teach kindness and compassion for the poor.
- Many religious organizations provide services for the poor, such as food and shelter, and are the first to do so in many communities.
- Many religious people go out of their way to be kind to the homeless and poor people.
- Most religions teach congregations to help the poor and to increase converts.

Cons

- Many people of faith approach homelessness in a puritanical way.
- This means looking at client defects, which are not usually the main cause of homelessness.
- Spirituality is often coupled with faith-based services which are required by many religion-based services.
- Many religions believe that a lack of adherence to their beliefs is the reason for homelessness.
- Many of these programs seek to convert clients to their religion and see any lack of religious practice as a reason for homelessness

If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.

Leviticus 25:35-36

WHAT ARE MAINSTREAM SERVICES? (PUBLIC SERVICES AND HOW ARE THEY INTEGRATED INTO THE CONTINUUM OF CARE)

- Vital Records
- Social Security
- Health Care (e.g., hospitals, mental health care)
- Libraries
- 911, Police, Fire, Ambulance, Substance Abuse programs
- Education
- Veteran Benefits
- Transportation

DO YOU THINK THAT THERE ARE OTHER MAINSTREAM SERVICES? CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHERS? DO YOU THINK THAT THESE ARE THE SAME FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE AS THEY ARE FOR HOUSED PEOPLE? WHAT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT? DO YOU THINK THE SAME KIND OF DISCRIMINATION THAT EXISTS WITHIN MAINSTREAM SERVICES MIGHT ALSO EXIST IN THE HOMELESS SYSTEM?



 VICE

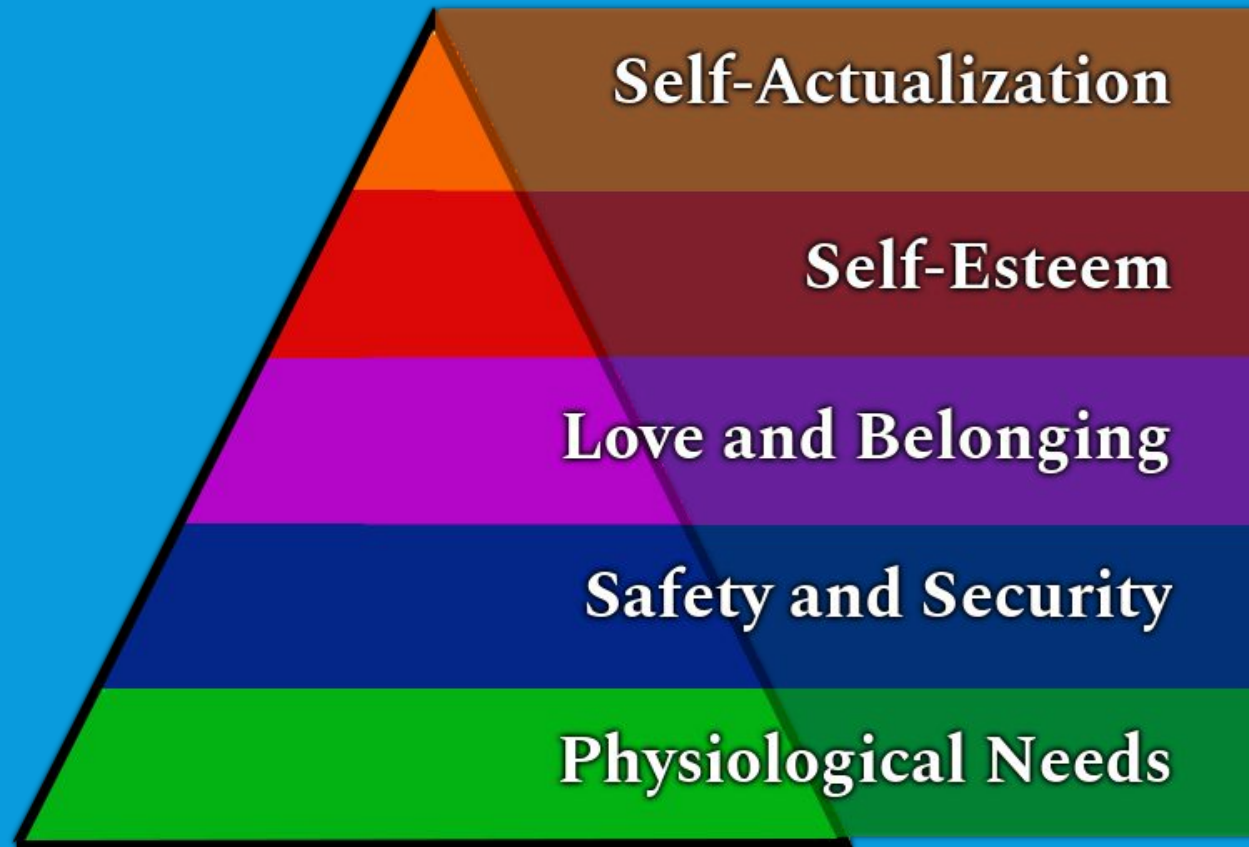
Stop Calling the Police on Homeless People

DOES ANYONE THINK LAW ENFORCEMENT DISCRIMINATES? DOES THIS SAME KIND OF DISCRIMINATION EXIST IN OTHER MAINSTREAM SERVICES? MIGHT IT ALSO EXIST IN HOMELESS SERVICES?

THE CONTINUUM OF CARE DEPENDS ON MAINSTREAM SERVICES TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO HOMELESS PEOPLE.

- These services such as law enforcement, health care, public services for mental health care or substance abuse, transportation and other services are already over-utilized, and often unavailable.
- Do you think that these services provide the same level and kind of service to homeless people as they do to housed people? To white people as to darker people? To immigrants as to citizens?
- Can you imagine any access barriers that homeless people might face when seeking these services? Such as lack of identification, lack of a computer, lack of an address, inability to prove they have a mailing address, lack of even enough money for small fees for service.
- If access to these services is required to get a job and housing, how might that impact homelessness?

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS A HOMELESS PERSON HAS IN 30 DAYS?





WHAT MODEL WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR
HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE?

OBVIOUSLY CURRENT EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY EFFECTIVE

- Housing First has been proven to work.
- It is not only unnecessary for homeless people to go through emergency shelter and then transitional shelter but it is destabilizing.
- Asking homelessness people to solve all their problems before they have permanent housing is in complete violation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
- Homeless people improve more quickly when they are provided housing first
- The problem with this is the lack of affordable housing.



HOUSING FIRST

- According to current research, the most effective model for helping homeless people is the "Housing First" approach, which prioritizes providing immediate access to permanent housing with minimal preconditions, alongside supportive services to help individuals maintain stability in their new home; this includes models like Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) which have proven highly successful in reducing homelessness and improving housing retention rates
- According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition "Despite the clear benefits of Housing First, Congress has not funded long-term solutions at the scale necessary. To address homelessness, Congress should expand rental assistance to all eligible households, build and preserve homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes, and expand voluntary supportive services. Without this investment, more people are pushed into homelessness every day. For example, while 207 people experiencing homelessness secure housing every day in Los Angeles County, 227 people enter homelessness daily."



HOUSING FIRST



- A number of strong academic studies have been conducted on the housing first model, their findings:
- Housing first rapidly ends homelessness - Housing first costs less than the COC
- Housing first improves client outcomes - Housing first improves treatment outcomes
- Housing first reduces community costs for mainstream services like healthcare,
- The cost savings to the public ranges from \$900.00 to \$29,400.00 per person per year

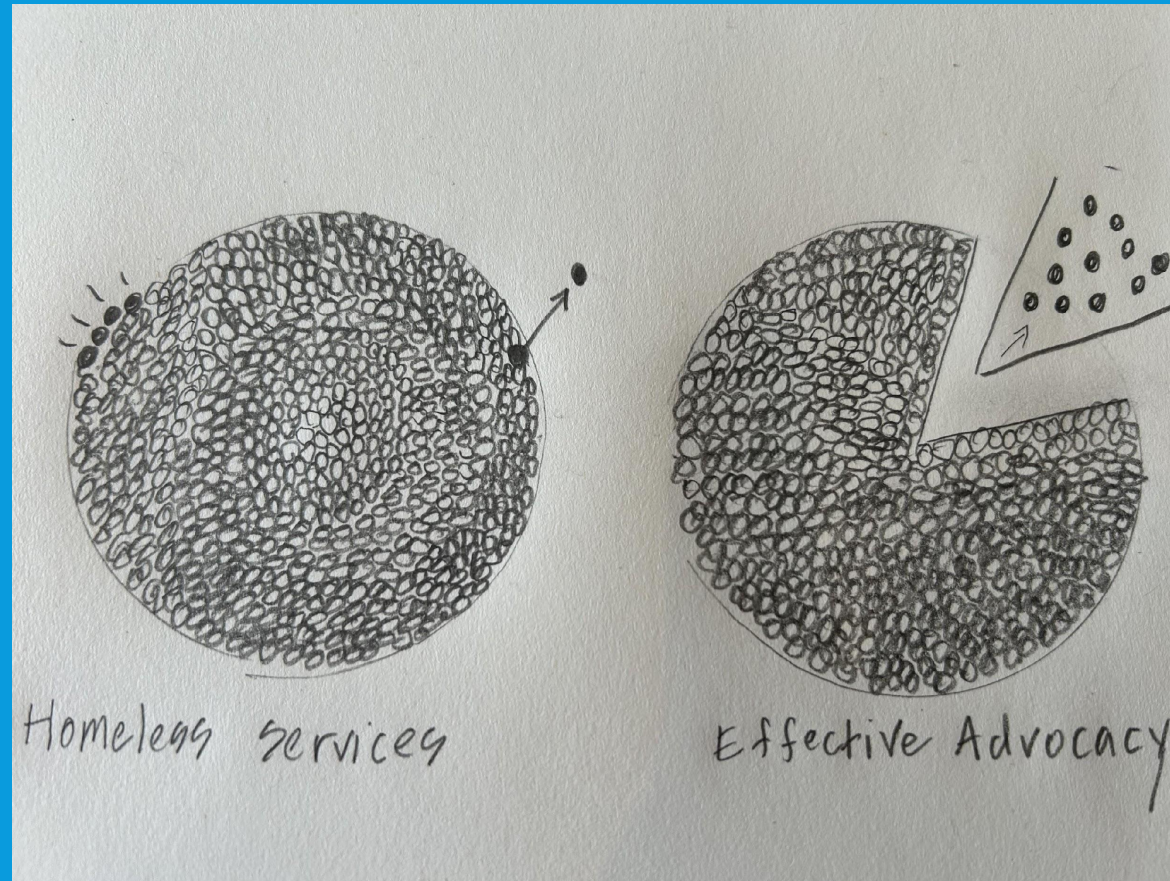
PREVENTION SERVICES

Fowler, P.J., Hovmand, P.S., Marcal, K.E., and Das, S. (2019). Solving homelessness from a complex systems perspective: insights for prevention responses, Annual Review Public Health, April 1, pp. 465-486 studied other approaches to reducing homelessness besides the Continuum of Care and Housing First. Their findings:

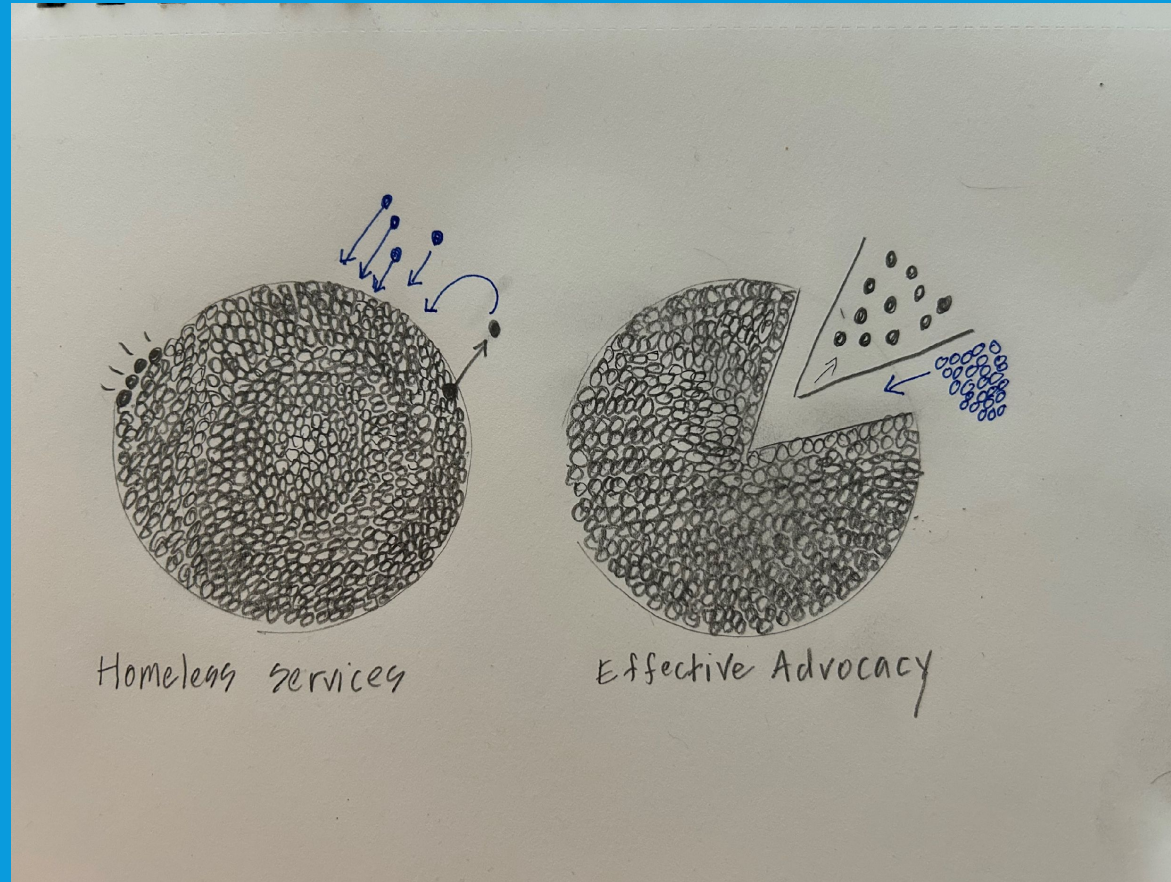
1. "Trends in homelessness remain stubbornly high despite policy initiatives to end homelessness."
2. "Simulations suggest that prevention provides a leverage point within the system; small efficiencies in keeping people housed yield disproportionately large reductions in homelessness. A need exists for policies that ensure reliable delivery of coordinated prevention efforts. A complex systems approach identifies capacities and constraints for sustainably solving homelessness."

EFFECTIVE SERVICES VS EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

SERVICES REMOVE ONE PERSON AT A TIME FROM HOMELESSNESS, OR SOMETIMES THEY ONLY PROVIDE SOME ASSISTANCE THAT MAY EVENTUALLY REMOVE THEM FROM HOMELESSNESS. EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO END HOMELESSNESS FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE.



WHAT OFTEN HAPPENS INSTEAD



ADVOCACY DISCUSSION

- What changes would you advocate for?
- How would you approach advocacy
- Do you think our elected officials are interested in making improvements to reduce homelessness?
- Do you think our elected officials might be interested in reducing the expense of homelessness to our community?
- Would you want to partner with any other group in any advocacy efforts?
- Who do you imagine our elected officials would listen to?

BEING HOMELESS IN THE U.S.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

- More and more people experience homelessness every year, growing 23% from 2019 to 2023
- More and more homeless people are unsheltered,
- The severe cost burden of housing is only increasing,
- Despite tremendous effort and financing the problem is getting worse not better.

How Does Society Feel About the Homeless?



An example of hostile architecture used to prevent the unhoused from sleeping on benches

- Society is largely concerned with wealth. The more money you have, the better off you are.
- The homeless, having nothing, are as low as it gets in a consumer culture like ours – stigmatized like the untouchables of India
- The general population believes that:
 - ◆ homelessness is a choice
 - ◆ homeless people are lazy alcoholics and drug addicts
- The homeless are seen as:
 - ◆ violent
 - ◆ dangerous
 - ◆ criminals (who desire to take advantage wherever they can)

Perceptions about the Consequences of Homelessness on Society

Unfunded use of emergency rooms and health care facilities

Unfunded overuse of police and fire rescue

Overuse of incarceration facilities

Overuse of mental health and substance abuse systems

Public health problem

Harm to the local economy and tourism

Social stigma

FEAR

FEAR

TENT CITIES - ACROSS THE NATION

EVERY ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THEM HAS FAILED



Individual Consequences of Homelessness



Personal– The moment that a person realizes that he or she won't have a roof to live under, it is difficult for him or her to believe. Not dealing with reality makes him or her less able to take action. As a result, he or she will suffer psychologically.

Here are some of the consequences:

- Loss of self-esteem
- Becoming institutionalized
- Increase in substance misuse
- Loss of ability and will to care for oneself
- Increased danger of abuse and violence
- Increased chance of entering the criminal justice system
- Development of behavioral problems
- Much shorter life

Attitudes of the Homeless

Conscious that they are avoided by society and that people cannot look at them (i.e., people always look away)

Feel as if they are a burden to everyone they know and at every place they go

Extremely socially isolated

Neglected by family and society

What do you think you should do when you see a homeless person?

- The same thing you would do when you see anyone else?
- Striking up a conversation is the same with homeless people as housed people. You might say hello, ask how they are?
- The same rules apply as they do to any stranger: be friendly and respectful and wary of overstepping boundaries
- Do no Harm.
- What about beggars? At the very least, don't look away and make them feel invisible.
- If you care how they spend your donations, then don't give.
- If you can give without expectations, then give. Keep some 1.00 bills in your car.

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Report by Schoolhouse Connection

<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/left-out-of-all-in-children-youth-and-families-and-the-federal-strategic-plan-on-homelessness>

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APPENDIX – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This is a full report from SchoolHouse Connection retrieved 10/1/24 from <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/Left-Out-of-All-In.pdf>. I am including it here to share with you the problems that homeless children, youth and families experience as a result of HUD's PIT count and to support the argument that HUD's data is unreliable.

Left Out of "All In:" Children, Youth, and Families and the Federal Strategic Plan on Homelessness In December 2022, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released "All In," a new federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. While the emphasis on equity and prevention are improvements over the previous four federal plans, "All In" ultimately falls far short of what is needed to prevent and solve homelessness in the United States. Specifically, the plan excludes most children and youth experiencing homelessness from its key metrics; establishes a goal that conflicts with the mandates of early care and education agencies; omits early care and education from core pillars of the plan; and fails to address the complex and burdensome eligibility requirements that prevent children, youth, and families from accessing homelessness and housing assistance.

We urge USICH and its member agencies to revise the plan to 1) commend and incentivize effective identification and enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness in early care and education; 2) include specific goals, benchmarks, and targets for enrollment, participation, and outcomes in early care and education, from prenatal through higher education; and 3) specifically include early care and education in all three core pillars of the plan, including recommendations for revising eligibility criteria to remove barriers to assistance.

1. The new federal goal to reduce homelessness by 25% by 2025, using HUD Point in Time (PIT) data, excludes most children, youth, and families who experience homelessness. This keeps them invisible and marginalized in federal, state, and local action.

"All In," the new Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, creates a national goal to reduce homelessness by 25% by 2025, as measured by HUD's "Point in Time" (PIT) count. However, the HUD PIT count only includes the number of people who are in shelter or transitional housing, or who are identified by volunteers during street counts. Most families and youth who are homeless do not stay in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets. In fact, less than 15% of children and youth experiencing homelessness enrolled by public schools are in these situations when they are first identified as homeless.

APPENDIX

- Shelters and transitional housing are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, closed to unaccompanied minor youth, or simply non-existent in too many communities. When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they are much less likely to be included in HUD's counts.
- ● Families experiencing homelessness also are less likely than single adults to stay on the streets and other outdoor locations where they might be included in PIT counts, often because they are afraid that their children will be removed from their custody. Unaccompanied youth also avoid living on the streets out of fears of interactions with authorities and exploitation from older adults.
- ● As a result of these circumstances, most children and youth experiencing homelessness stay in motels or temporarily with other people due to lack of alternatives; many move fluidly between these situations, which are often dangerous and highly insecure. This invisible and unstable homelessness is not included in HUD's limited methodology, but is included in definitions and data used by early childhood and education agencies. It is also associated with educational and health harms that are comparable to HUD-defined homelessness.

APPENDIX

- While the plan states that it will use “data and evidence” to drive decisions, it largely ignores data from the federal programs that see and serve children, youth, and families. By adopting a national goal that excludes most children and youth experiencing homelessness, and that excludes metrics from early childhood programs, public schools, and institutions of higher education — the nation’s largest providers of services to children and youth — the new federal plan all but guarantees that energy, action, and resources will not be directed toward children and youth. In light of the strong correlation between childhood homelessness and adult homelessness, this is a recipe for continued adult homelessness far into the future.
- 2. A national goal that creates incentives for communities to reduce homelessness according to the HUD PIT count directly conflicts with the mandates of early childhood programs and public schools. These agencies are charged with proactively identifying and increasing the enrollment of all children and youth experiencing homelessness — those who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness, and those who do not. By establishing a national goal that conflicts with the requirements of early childhood and education systems, the new federal plan undermines its own focus on prevention.
- Early childhood programs and public schools are required to proactively identify all children and youth experiencing homelessness — those who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness, and those who do not — in order to ensure that they receive educational protections and services. Congress specifically amended the Child Care Development Fund, the Head Start Act, and federal education law (the McKinney-Vento Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to improve the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The \$800 million of the American Rescue Plan dedicated to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness was specifically intended to increase identification, and help address the disengagement from school related to the pandemic.
- These proactive identification and outreach requirements are particularly important in light of research demonstrating that not completing high school is the greatest single risk factor for experiencing homelessness as a young person. Higher education also appears to be a protective factor against young adult homelessness: a 2019 study shows four-year college enrollment to be nearly four times higher for young adults without experiences of homelessness <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/left-out-of-all-in/> in the prior 12 months (52% compared to 15%). Yet higher education is barely referenced in the new federal plan.

Appendix

- A decrease in reported homelessness data does not equate to progress in “ending homelessness.” It may mean — as we have seen during the pandemic — that institutions like schools were not able to identify families and youth due to virtual learning, or that shelters reduced their capacity or closed entirely, or that early childhood programs and college campuses closed down, or that there were fewer trained volunteers for Point in Time counts, or that some time-limited housing models (like Rapid Rehousing) are counted as “permanent” housing, while other time-limited models (Transitional Housing) are counted as “homeless.” Worse, decreases in reported homelessness by early childhood programs or schools may mean failure to comply with federal laws that require identification and outreach, or failure to dedicate adequate resources toward outreach, identification, and enrollment. Significant evidence exists that children and youth experiencing homelessness are severely under-identified by early childhood programs, public schools (according to CDC data and by a recent Center for Public Integrity investigation), and in higher education. By incentivizing communities to reduce homelessness according to HUD PIT data, and not creating any incentives for early childhood programs, public schools, and institutions of higher education to increase identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness, the new federal plan undermines federal early childhood and education policies and its own focus on prevention. In sum, if the “whole of government” federal plan to reduce homelessness excludes the goals and mandates of early childhood and education systems — goals that are directly correlated with homelessness prevention — it is all but guaranteed to fail.

Appendix

- 3. The new federal plan relegates homeless early childhood and education agencies to the “prevention” pillar of the plan. By leaving these agencies out of the core pillars of crisis response and housing and supports, the plan fails to leverage the knowledge, experience, and universal setting of the largest providers of services for children, families, and youth. By relegating early childhood and education programs to the “prevention” portion of the plan, the federal strategic plan treats most children and youth who are identified as homeless by early childhood programs and public schools as “housing insecure” or “at risk of homelessness.” But they are not merely “housing insecure” or “at risk of homelessness” — they are homeless, and their loss of housing has already occurred. Defining them as “at risk” of homelessness means they will continue to face barriers accessing housing and services because they will not be prioritized for assistance — indeed, they may not even be assessed. Early childhood and education also play critical roles in the “housing and supports” pillar and the “crisis response” pillar of the plan. In fact, early childhood and education agencies are the <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/left-out-of-all-in/> largest providers of services to children and youth experiencing homelessness, meeting urgent basic needs (food, clothing, and some health care needs) as well as important connections to housing. By relegating education exclusively to prevention, the plan fails to take advantage of the knowledge, experience, and universal setting of the largest number of front-line providers for families and youth

Appendix

. And even that inclusion appears to be an afterthought; the chart on page 69 indicates that the U.S. Department of Education was not included in the White House Homelessness Prevention Working Group that met from October 2021 through January 2022 to develop this section of the plan. Similarly, early childhood and education are excluded from the plan's section on interagency planning for disaster response, despite their critical roles in assisting children, youth, and families during disasters.

4. The new federal plan acknowledges that "complicated eligibility and documentation requirements can significantly delay the process of getting someone off the streets and into housing," yet is silent on the ways in which HUD's definition of homelessness and complex eligibility system bar children, youth, and families from receiving assistance, thereby perpetuating homelessness. People who don't meet HUD's definition of homelessness are screened out of coordinated entry; as a result, their vulnerability is not evaluated or assessed, simply based on where they found a place to sleep. Being screened out creates barriers to the housing and services that are needed for stability, and ultimately perpetuates cycles of homelessness. SchoolHouse Connection's Youth Policy Corps members met with USICH staff in the summer of 2022 and emphasized that they often were more vulnerable and suffered the greatest harm when they were staying with other people, but during those times they would not have met HUD's definition of homelessness. Their experiences are confirmed by CDC data showing that youths' vulnerability to violence, suicide, substance abuse, hunger, bullying, and lack of sleep was comparable across various homeless situations, including those situations that are not included in HUD's definition of homelessness.

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- . In fact, early childhood and education agencies are the <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/left-out-of-all-in/> largest providers of services to children and youth experiencing homelessness, meeting urgent basic needs (food, clothing, and some health care needs) as well as important connections to housing. By relegating education exclusively to prevention, the plan fails to take advantage of the knowledge, experience, and universal setting of the largest number of front-line providers for families and youth. And even that inclusion appears to be an afterthought; the chart on page 69 indicates that the U.S. Department of Education was not included in the White House Homelessness Prevention Working Group that met from October 2021 through January 2022 to develop this section of the plan. Similarly, early childhood and education are excluded from the plan's section on interagency planning for disaster response, despite their critical roles in assisting children, youth, and families during disasters.
- 4. The new federal plan acknowledges that “complicated eligibility and documentation requirements can significantly delay the process of getting someone off the streets and into housing,” yet is silent on the ways in which HUD's definition of homelessness and complex eligibility system bar children, youth, and families from receiving assistance, thereby perpetuating homelessness.

Appendix Continued

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: 1. The plan should include specific initiatives to commend communities for improving the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness by early childhood programs, public schools, and institutions of higher education. Only when children and youth are identified by these agencies can they receive the protections and services to which they are entitled under federal law — protections and services that are necessary if they are to avoid homelessness as adults.

Appendix continued

- In light of the shortcomings of the PIT count, communities should look to a variety of other data sources — especially public schools, early childhood programs, and youth-serving programs — to get a fuller and more accurate picture of the prevalence of homelessness and the needs of those who experience it.
- SchoolHouse Connection and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan have created searchable data profiles using U.S. Department of Education and Office of Head Start data. These profiles make available child and youth homelessness data at the national, state, county, school district, and Congressional levels.
- Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, remains the most comprehensive and reliable data sources on unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, ages 13-25.
- Researchers at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), Vanderbilt University, and the Heartland Alliance Social IMPACT Research Center developed a census-based model for estimating doubled-up homelessness across the United States. Research on this peer-reviewed methodology was published in Housing Policy Debate in January 2022. Using this method, researchers found that 3.7 million people in the U.S. population were doubled-up in 2019. First used to provide a comprehensive homeless estimate in Chicago in 2016, CCH continues to release an annual count of Chicago's homeless population each year. CCH also leads a Homelessness Data Project that seeks to expand a model, and has developed a toolkit to train organizations and advocates on how to conduct a comprehensive homeless estimate in their region. The goal is to build a more accurate snapshot of what homelessness looks like across the country, while also building a base committed to aligning HUD's definition of homelessness to include people staying in doubled-up situations.

Appendix continued

- However, school data paint a very different picture.
- Between 2007 and 2022, HUD data show a 31% decrease in families and children who meet its definition of homelessness (in shelters or visibly counted outside).
- Over that same time period – between the 2006-07 school year and the 2021-2022 school year – public school data show a 77% increase in children and families who meet the federal education definition of homelessness (shelters, motels, unsheltered, and staying temporarily with others).
- Public schools are required to proactively identify all children and youth experiencing homelessness — those who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness, and those who do not — in order to ensure that they receive educational protections and services. While there may not be a shelter bed or housing unit for every family and youth who needs one, there is a guaranteed seat in the classroom. Even with well documented challenges in the identification of homeless children and youth by schools, public schools are still much more accurate barometers of family and youth homelessness than HUD data.
- HUD’s Flawed Data Contribute to Harmful Policies and Conflict with Other Agencies’ Missions and Mandates
- However, most families and youth who are homeless do not stay in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets.
- Of the more than 1.2 million children and youth experiencing homelessness identified by public schools in the 2021-2022 school year (the most recent year for which national data is available), only 4% were unsheltered, and 12% were staying in shelters. The rest were staying in motels, or staying temporarily with other people due to lack of alternatives. This invisible and unstable homelessness is not included in HUD’s limited methodology.

Appendix

As organizations representing service providers, educators, and advocates who work directly with families and youth, we are alarmed at the reported increases in family and youth homelessness. But e content HUD's assertion these increases reverse a steady decline in family homelessness. Our networks confront a very different reality – as do the children, youth, and families who are rendered invisible and overlooked by HUD's data.

In this brief, we explain why HUD's data are flawed and misleading and why other federal data sources provide a more accurate picture of child, youth, and family homelessness. This is important because government and local communities use federal data to set critical priorities for funding, services, and action. It is also important because until children, youth, and families are accurately reflected in all federal data, they will be underserved (**comment – this is true for all homeless people none of whom is accurately reflected in the HUD count – comment by Laura Hansen**), which ultimately perpetuates adult homelessness.

The bottom line is that policymakers and the public should view HUD's homelessness data with extreme skepticism, particularly with respect to children, youth and families. Communities should look to a variety of other data sources – especially public schools, early childhood programs and other youth serving programs – to get a fuller and more accurate picture of the prevalence of homelessness and the needs of those who experience it.

Appendix, continued,

- Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America found that of the 3.5 million 18-24 year-olds and 700,000 13-17 year-olds who experienced homelessness, nearly three quarters who slept on the streets or in shelters also 'couch-surfed' (stayed with others), demonstrating the fluid nature of homeless living arrangements.
- Lack of Appropriate Shelter Options, Fear of Child Welfare Authorities, and Concern About the Safety of Shelters Explain Why Most Families and Youth Who are Homeless are Not in Shelters or on the Streets.
- Shelters and transitional housing are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, do not accept unaccompanied minor youth, or simply do not exist in too many communities. When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they are less likely to be included in HUD's counts.
- Families experiencing homelessness are also less likely than single adults to stay on the streets and other outdoor locations where they can be included in PIT counts, often because they are afraid their children will be removed from their custody. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness fear interactions with authorities and exploitation from older adults whether in a shelter, on the street, or staying on someone's couch.
- For these reasons, families and youth are much more likely to stay temporarily with other people, or in motels — situations that are themselves very unstable, often unsafe, and put them at risk of trafficking. They are also more common in rural and suburban areas, where the PIT count results in dramatic under-counts.

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- Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Who Are Excluded from HUD's Definition of Homelessness and its Data Are As Vulnerable as Those Who Are Included.
- Two studies of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows that high school students experiencing homelessness are at high risk of harm regardless of where they sleep. A 2019 study demonstrated dire risk of rape, assault, suicide, substance abuse, hunger, bullying and other risks, whether high school students experiencing homelessness are sleeping in a motel, a car, a shelter, temporarily with other people, or moving so frequently that they cannot identify a usual sleeping arrangement over a thirty-day period. Vulnerability to these harms was comparable across different homeless situations. A 2022 study found that high school students who reported homelessness had 208% higher odds of sexual victimization and 347% higher odds of physical victimization. Each homeless sleeping location, including staying with others and motels, was associated with increased odds of experiencing both sexual and physical victimization compared to sleeping at a parent or guardian's home, underscoring the vulnerability of all high school students who experience homelessness, regardless of where they sleep.
- Four studies (California, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Washington state) find that children and youth who stay with other people temporarily, or in motels — considered homeless under the education definition — have comparable or worse educational risks and outcomes as those who stay in shelters or are unsheltered.
- School Data Show Different Trends in Family and Youth Homelessness

Youtube videos

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1AWLo_fK1U