



Homeless Youth Census 2019 District of Columbia

BACKGROUND

The End Youth Homelessness Act of 2014 requires that the District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DHS) conduct a youth-specific homeless census. DHS tasked The Community Partnership (TCP) with conducting the Homeless Youth Census in summer of 2019.

Similar to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-required the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count that TCP conducts each January, the intention of the Homeless Youth Census (HYC) was to help the District better understand the scale and scope of homelessness and housing instability among youth up to age 24. The information collected was used by the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness (DCICH) to inform its strategic plan for addressing youth homelessness and by DHS and TCP to make decisions about resource allocation for youth in the District.

While similar to PIT, the Homeless Youth Census differed in three key ways:

- 1) The HYC is focused solely on unaccompanied individuals and heads of family households who are age 24 and under;
- 2) The HYC occurred over the course of nine days instead of a single day (the 2019 HYC was held from September 20th through 28th);
- 3) In addition to “literally homeless” youth – youth who are experiencing homelessness while in shelter, transitional housing or living in unsheltered situations – the HYC also included young people who are living in unstable housing arrangements (e.g. in doubled up situations or “couch surfing”), or are at risk of becoming homeless.

Further, the End Youth Homelessness Act required that a questionnaire/needs assessment be completed with the youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability counted during the HYC. To that end, TCP engaged homeless services providers, homeless outreach teams, and other providers who serve homeless and unstably-housed youth to request that these agencies survey any persons 24 years old or younger served by their program or agency between September 20th through 28th who was an unaccompanied person or head of household.

The results of these surveys were reviewed by TCP to determine the number of unaccompanied persons or heads of household who were either homeless or unstably-housed, and their survey results were aggregated according to their age group, housing status, and household configuration.

HYC Definitions

For the purposes of the HYC:

- **Literally homeless** means any person residing in an Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing facility, or who is otherwise unsheltered (living in a place not meant for habitation like a car or sleeping outside);
- **Unstably-housed** means any person who is precariously housed and/or living in doubled up situations (generally with family or friends);
- **At-risk of homelessness** means any person who is currently in permanent housing but are in danger of losing that housing in the next 30 days;
- **Youth** are persons who are 24 years old or younger, based on self-reported age or date of birth; distinctions are made below between minors (persons under 18) and transition age youth (TAY) (persons 18-24);
- **Unaccompanied persons** are single persons who are living on their own and not residing with others;
- **Heads of household** are those who are living with at least other adult or with at least one child who is in their care.

Methodology Notes

In 2018, the DCICH Youth Committee and TCP worked to develop a new, broadened methodology for counting literally homeless and unstably-housed youth as captured through a new survey instrument. In contrast to looking at a single night to designate a “category” in which a youth would fall (literally homeless or unstably-housed), the new methodology seeks to better understand the fluidity of youth homelessness by asking survey respondents to provide all of the places stayed at night of the preceding 30 days and to select one of those places where they stayed most often. By collecting both pieces of information we can better understand the mobile nature of youth homelessness, while still designating who are *most often* literally homeless or *most often* unstably-housed.

2019 HYC TOTALS

A total of 1,306 unaccompanied youth and youth heads of family households were counted in the 2019 HYC, representing both those who most often experienced literal homelessness (668 youth) and those who were most often unstably-housed or at risk of homelessness (449 youth) in the 30 days prior to the 2019 Youth Count. An additional 192 youth who were counted in the HYC survey indicated that they most often did not have safe and stable housing in the preceding 30 days, but declined to provide information on where they stayed.

The total numbers of unaccompanied persons and heads of family households in both age and housing status categories counted during the HYC are charted in the tables below:

2019 Homeless Youth Census
Count Totals and Percentage Change (2018 - 2019)

Population	2019 Totals	2018 Totals	% Change
All Persons			
All Persons	1306	1328	-2%
Household Composition			
Singles	742	782	-5%
<i>Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)</i>	689	712	-3%
<i>Unaccompanied Minors (Under 18)</i>	53	70	-24%
Family Heads of Household (HoH)	564	546	3%
<i>Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)</i>	556	534	4%
<i>Minors (Under 18)</i>	8	12	-33%

- There was a modest decrease (-2%) in the total number of youth counted in 2019.
- Decrease is driven by singles (-5%), as there is a 3% increase in families counted in 2019.
- Despite decrease, there was a greater number of surveys completed in 2019 (1468) v. 2018 (1085)
- Additional surveys only increased the number of ineligible surveys. This may indicate that the methodology is working to reach eligible youth.

2019 Homeless Youth Census
Literally Homeless v. Unstably-Housed Youth

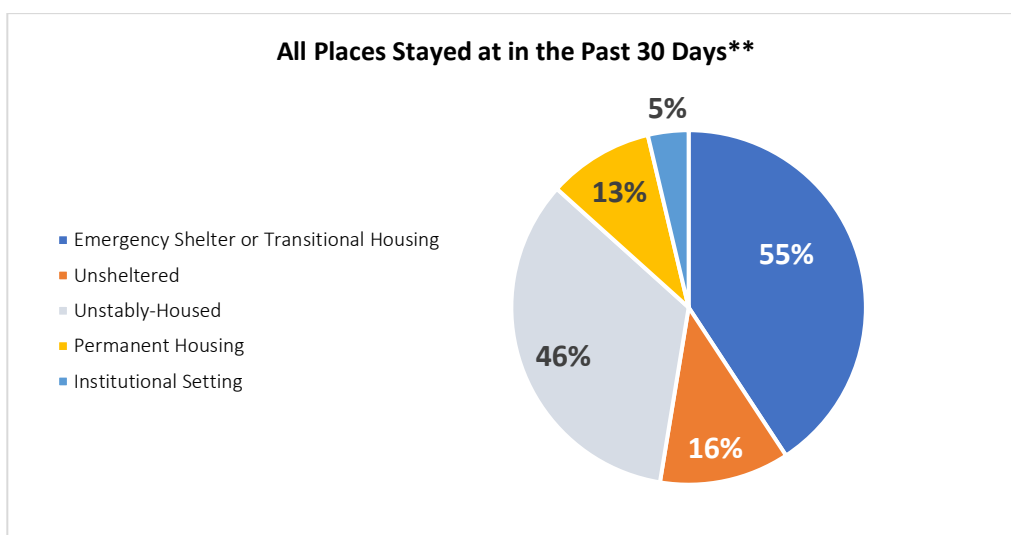
Population	Literally Homeless	% Literally Homeless	Unstably-Housed (Or At Risk)	% Unstably-Housed (Or At Risk)	Unknown* (Either Literally or Unstably-Housed)
All Persons					
All Persons	622	56%	492	44%	192
Household Composition					
Unaccompanied Youth	373	58%	267	42%	102
Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)	360	60%	245	40%	84
Unaccompanied Minors (Under 18)	13	37%	22	63%	18
Family Heads of Household (HoH)	249	53%	225	47%	90
Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)	248	53%	220	47%	88
Minors (Under 18)	1	17%	5	83%	2

* Note: "Unknown" are those responses where the youth indicated they did not stay in safe and stable housing in the preceding 30 days or that they are at risk of losing housing in the next 30 days, but declined to provide information on their nighttime locations. These are excluded from percentage shares on this table.

- A total of 622 (56%) of the youth counted were experiencing literal homelessness most often.
- Unstably-housed youth or those at risk of becoming homeless made up 44% of the youth counted (492).
- The remaining 192 youth included here (but not in percentage shares of population) provided information that they did not have safe and stable housing in the preceding 30 days, or that they were at risk of losing housing in the next 30 days, but they declined to provide information on where they were staying.
- The rates are mostly consistent between family and single households.

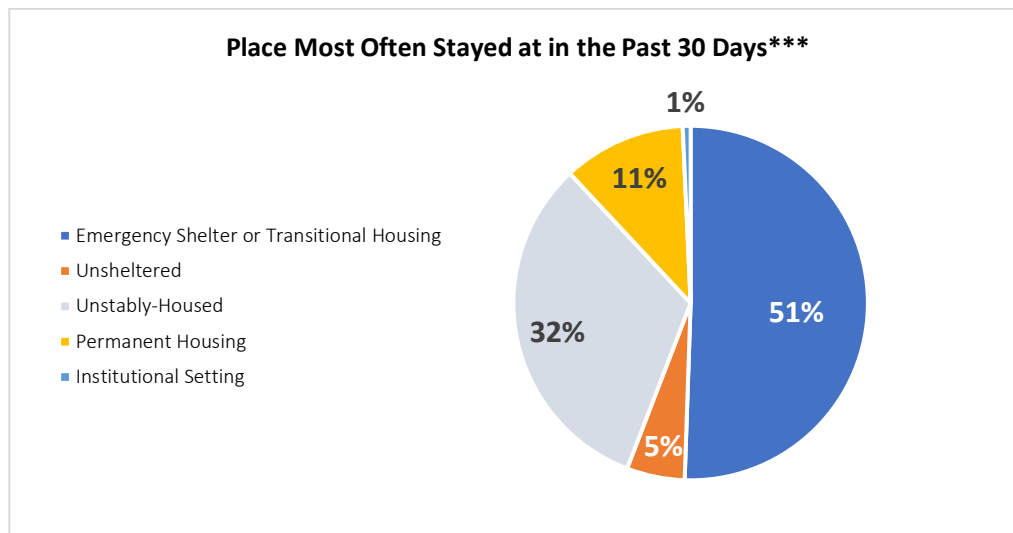
YOUTH MOBILITY

The survey asked youth to provide information on **all of the places** they stayed the night in the preceding 30 days and then to select **the single place** they stayed most often during that time. The two charts below show this information. What we see is that youth are likely to stay in multiple types of locations over a very short period of time; for example, a youth may access shelter for several days out of the month, but then might also stay with friends or family on other days.



** Note: The above table shows the percentage shares out of all respondents who answered the question to select ALL of the places stayed at in the past 30 days. A respondent could have chosen multiple locations. Shelter and Transitional Housing records from the Homeless Management Information System are included above.

- When asked to provide **all of the locations** where a respondent stayed the night in the preceding 30 days, on at least one day in the month:
 - 55% stayed in an Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing program;
 - 5% stayed on the streets or in a place not meant for human habitation (unsheltered);
 - 46% of the youth counted indicated that they couch-surfed or were in a doubled-up situation;
 - 13% and 5% stayed in a permanent housing arrangement.
- One quarter (25%) of youth who were counted stayed in at least two of these locations.



*** Note: The above table shows the percentage shares out of all respondents who answered the question to select the **ONLY** place stayed at in the past 30 days. Every respondent is only counted once in this table. Youth counted in shelter or transitional housing program but who did not complete a survey are included in "Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing" above if they were in a program most of the nights during the past 30 days.

- When asked what location a respondent spent **most of the nights** in the preceding 30 days:
 - 51% of respondents most often stayed in an Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing program and 5% said they were most often in an unsheltered location (these two groups are considered "literally homeless").
 - Unstably-housed or youth at risk of becoming homeless made up 44% of the youth counted, including those in an unstable housing arrangement (couch-surfing, etc.), in a permanent housing location but at imminent risk of losing their housing, or were most often in an institutional setting but have since left and are without safe and stable housing.
 - Youth counted in "Permanent Housing" or "Institutional Settings" indicated that, while they most often stayed in those locations over the preceding 30 days, they would not have safe and stable housing in the next 30 days; these individuals are considered "at risk". In some cases this may be a youth who regularly leaves their home due to household conflict or violence or someone who stayed in an institutional setting most nights, but is no longer staying there and has nowhere else to go. **Responses in which the youth stayed in one of these places most often, but also said that they expect to have safe and stable housing in the next month (i.e. not at risk) are ineligible for inclusion in the Youth Count and are not counted in any totals**

SINGLE YOUTH OVERVIEW

2019 Homeless Youth Census *Single Youth*

Population	2019 Totals	2018 Totals	% Change
Singles	742	782	-5%
<i>Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)</i>	689	712	-3%
<i>Unaccompanied Minors (Under 18)</i>	53	70	-24%

- 40 fewer single youth were counted in 2019 as compared to 2018, a decrease of 5%.
- The decrease is consistent in both unaccompanied minors and Transitional Age Youth (TAY).
- Though the percentage change between years for unaccompanied minors is -24%, the total number of difference is only 17 persons. Unaccompanied minors are a very hidden population, making it hard to know if the change is due to fewer unaccompanied minors experiencing a housing crisis or if fewer unaccompanied minors were located – or agreed to take a survey.
- Over half (57%) of all youth counted in the 2019 HYC (including young families) were single youth.

Demographics

- **Race & Ethnicity:** The vast majority of single youth counted (85%) are Black/African American and 13% indicated they are of Latinx/Hispanic heritage.
- **Gender:** 36% Female, 53% Male, 7% Trans Female, 2% Trans Male, and 2% said they were a different gender than options provided (includes all responses of Gender Queer, Non-Binary, Different Gender, Gender Non-Conforming, or Don't Know in HMIS records or survey responses).
- **Age:** The youngest literally homeless unaccompanied youth counted was 13 years old when surveyed, unaccompanied minors make up just 7% of all singles counted.
- **LGBTQ+:** 30% of single youth counted indicated they are a sexual orientation other than heterosexual and 34% are in the LGBTQ+ community.

Experiences & System Involvement

- **Domestic Violence:** 39% of single youth had a past experience of domestic violence; 35% indicated family violence and 25% said they experienced intimate partner violence. Of those with a past experience of DV, 64% said they started having problems with their housing because of that violence.
- **Justice Involvement:** 33% of single youth had a past experience with the juvenile justice system; 26% had an experience with the DYRS system and 16% had an experience in another city.
- **Child Welfare:** 30% said they had an experience in the child welfare system in their lifetime; 23% indicated that their experience was with CFSA and 15% experienced this system outside of the District.
- **Education:** Only 47% of single youth said they had achieved a high school diploma or GED; 72% of unaccompanied minors were currently enrolled in school.
- **Last Place of Residence:** Over three-quarters (76%) of single youth said their last permanent residence was in the District.
- **Income & Benefits:** Less than one third (31%) of single youth were currently receiving some kind of income and 39% had a public benefit.

Young Families Overview

2019 Homeless Youth Census Young Families

Population	2019 Totals	2018 Totals	% Change
Family Heads of Household (HoH)	564	546	3%
Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)	556	534	4%
Minors (Under 18)	8	12	-33%

- Young families (including those with a minor head of household) make up 43% of all youth counted in the 2019 HYC.
- An increase (3%) overall was seen among young families between the 2018 and 2019 HYC. Minor-headed households saw a decrease of 4 families (-33%).

Demographics

- **Race & Ethnicity:** 89% of youth heading a family household are Black/African American and 4% indicated they are of Latinx/Hispanic heritage.
- **Gender:** 90% Female, 8% Male, 1% Trans Female, .2% Trans Male, and 1% said they were a different gender than options provided (includes all responses of Gender Queer, Non-Binary, Different Gender, Gender Non-Conforming, or Don't Know in HMIS records or survey responses). The difference in gender between heads of family households who took the survey, compared with those who were counted only through an HMIS record is significant, 22% of youth who took the survey were not female, compared with only 2% in HMIS.
- **Age:** The youngest literally homeless minor head of household counted was 17 years old when surveyed, unaccompanied minor heads of households make up just over 1% of all young families counted.
- **LGBTQ+:** 13% of youth heads of family households are in the LGBTQ+ community; 19% of heads of family households who took a survey identified as LGBTQ, compared with only 7% counted through HMIS alone. 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ youth are pregnant and parenting (heading a family household).

Experiences & System Involvement

- **Domestic Violence:** 31% of youth heads of family households had a past experience of domestic violence; 36% indicated family violence and 31% said they experienced intimate partner violence. Of those with a past experience of DV, 70% said they started having problems with their housing because of that violence.
- **Justice Involvement:** 30% of youth heads of family households had a past experience with the juvenile justice system; 24% had an experience with the DYRS system and 12% had an experience in another city.
- **Child Welfare:** 19% said they had an experience in the child welfare system in their lifetime; 21% indicated that their experience was with CFSA and 11% experienced this system outside of the District.
- **Education:** Just over half (54%) said they had achieved a high school diploma or GED; 71% of minor heads of household were currently enrolled in school.
- **Last Place of Residence:** Most youth heads of family households (86%) said their last permanent residence was in the District.
- **Income & Benefits:** Only one quarter (25%) of youth heads of family households were currently receiving some kind of income and 73% had a public benefit.