



ESTIMATE OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO

2023

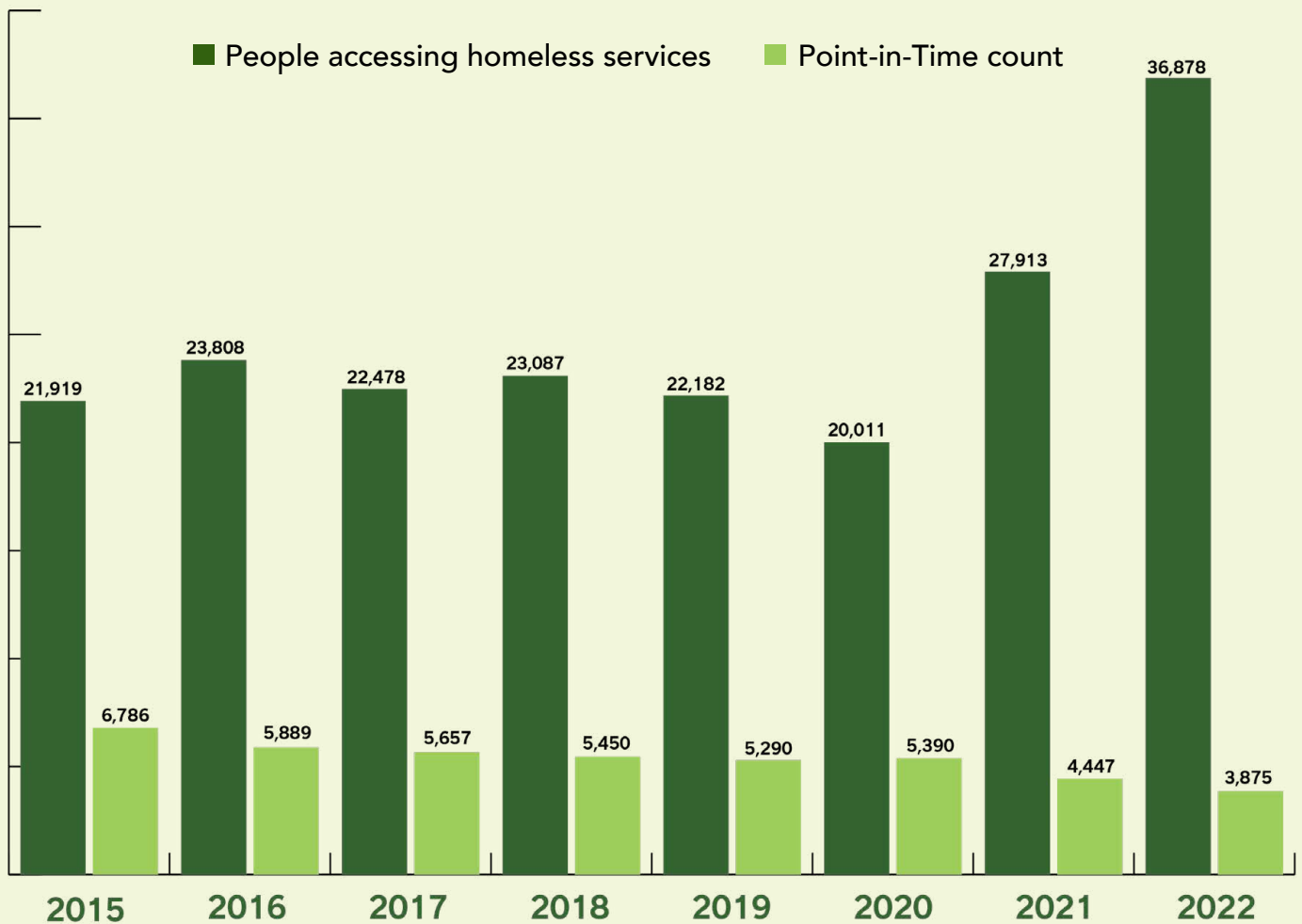
REPORTING 2015-21

CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

An estimated 68,440 people are experiencing homelessness in Chicago, IL in 2021 – and it’s quickly rising. This reflects a 2,829-person increase from the previous year. Data reflects massive shifts in the way people are experiencing homelessness, with 7,985 more people staying on the street or in shelters.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **82% of people experiencing homelessness are people of color.** Chicagoans identifying as Black, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native, and Multi-Racial account for 55,857 people experiencing homelessness—19,970 people identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x. Only 12.6% of people experiencing homelessness are white.
- **Black and African American Chicagoans continue to disproportionately experience homelessness.** Centuries of racist economic, educational, and housing practices continue to leave Black Chicagoans more at risk of homelessness. Black and African American Chicagoans account for 53% of all people experiencing homelessness, while making up [only 29% of the city’s total population](#).
- **Hispanic and Latino/a/x Chicagoans far more often experience homelessness by couch-surfing.** Of all Hispanic and Latino/a/x Chicagoans experiencing homelessness, 91% are in doubled-up situations. Furthermore, national research suggests that Hispanic and Latino/a/x people are dramatically under-represented in data on street and shelter homelessness, sometimes [referred to as the Latino Homeless Paradox](#).
- **Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to temporarily stay with others than to stay on the street or in shelters.** In 2021, 11,885 people experiencing homelessness were unaccompanied youth (age 24 and younger), 88% of whom temporarily stayed with others. In total, 3,143 unaccompanied youth and their children (under age 18) experienced homelessness.
- **Most families experiencing homelessness are temporarily staying with others.** In 2021, 24,500 people in families with children were experiencing homelessness and 68% were temporarily staying with others.



Sources: Chicago Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), All Chicago Making Homelessness History. All Chicago was not involved in the data analysis included in this report, and the conclusions in this report do not represent the views of All Chicago. City of Chicago Point-in-Time Count and Survey Report of People Experiencing Homelessness in Chicago, City of Chicago (2015-2022).

WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

Homelessness describes a situation where a person does not have a *fixed, regular, and adequate* nighttime residence—but what is *fixed, regular, and adequate* depends on who you ask.

Homelessness is not one-size-fits-all and there are many ways one person can experience it. Someone may sleep in a shelter, on the street, at a train station, and double up with family or friends all in one week. All these living situations should be considered homeless.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a person as homeless when they do not have a permanent home and sleep in a shelter, on the street, or in other places that are not meant for living. This

includes people fleeing domestic violence. With this definition, people that are doubling up cannot receive housing assistance from HUD. However, doubling-up is the way most people experience homelessness in Chicago.

The Department of Education affirms that doubling up should be included in definitions of homelessness. The Department of Education knows that a student might be staying in a shelter, motel, car, or doubling up all in one week. This definition better reflects how most people experience homelessness in Chicago.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) method is the traditional way the Department of Housing and Urban Development counts people that are unhoused. The PIT counts how many people are sleeping on the street or in shelters on one cold January night every year. This method only counts

people that are visible, and it does not include people doubling up. This count does not give an accurate picture of how many people are homeless, and it does not help the city find the right solutions to homelessness.

To understand the housing service needs of people experiencing homelessness, the City of Chicago, All Chicago, and the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC) use a variety of sources of data. These sources include the Point-in-Time count, annual records and demographics of people accessing services, and information directly from people with lived experience and their service providers.

Point-in-Time counts are used to fund solutions to homelessness, but this method is only a snapshot of a very small population of people that are unhoused.

For every 1 person reported as homeless in the city Point-in-Time count, 9 more people accessed city homeless services¹ last year.

HOW DO WE DEFINE HOMELESSNESS?

Someone that does not have a permanent home and stays in a shelter, on the streets, temporarily with others, and/or in other places that are not meant for living.

METHODOLOGY

To get a better idea of how many people are experiencing homelessness, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) created a new method. CCH worked with researchers from Vanderbilt University and the Social IMPACT Research Center of Heartland Alliance to create this new way of estimating homelessness. The methodology is published in the *Housing Policy Debate* journal and the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series dataset is open to anyone to view and use for their own research.²

¹ Please see the 'Who is included in HMIS data?' section below for a full definition of people who accessed city services.

² Richard, M.K., Dworkin, J., Rule, K.G., Farooqui, S., Glendening, Z., & [Paler-Ponce], S. *Quantifying Doubled-Up Homelessness: Presenting a New Measure Using U.S. Census Microdata*. *Housing Policy Debate*.



To count people who are staying on the street or in shelters, CCH used information from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is a database used by organizations and agencies that work with people experiencing homelessness to collect and share information about their clients. The system helps to track how many people are experiencing homelessness, the services they need, and the services they receive. HMIS is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

WHO IS INCLUDED IN THE HMIS DATA?

To count people experiencing street and shelter homelessness throughout the year, CCH asked for a count of everyone who accesses certain types of services recorded in HMIS. The HMIS data herein referred to as both “street and shelter homeless” and “people accessing

city homeless services” includes all people served, anytime during the specified time period, by one or more of the project types: Emergency Shelter, Street Outreach, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, and Coordinated Entry. While most people served meet HUD’s definition of literal homelessness, some people enrolled in the Transitional Housing and Coordinated Entry project types meet other categories of homelessness.³ CCH excludes people who were served exclusively by enrollment in a Rapid Rehousing program. Although temporary, Rapid Rehousing programs are considered permanent housing by HUD and by the Chicago Continuum of Care.

DATA DEDUPLICATION

This estimate aims to not count the same person twice by removing duplicate entries whenever possible. Given the limits of all the

WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO, IL?

TOTAL *	Temporarily Staying with Others	Street & Shelter
68,440	44,429	24,011

Household Type

Single Adults (25 and over)	28,307	15,624	12,683
Couples **	1,919	1,634	285
Adult Head of Household (HoH) Families (w/ children)	21,357	15,106	6,251
Youth (24 and under) HoH Families (w/ children) **	3,143	1,633	1,510
Unaccompanied Single Youth (24 and under)	11,885	10,432	1,453
Unknown Household Type	1,829	0	1,829

** indicates this total should be used with caution (coefficient of variation ≥ 30).

Sources: *Street and Shelter Data*: Chicago Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), All Chicago Making Homelessness History. All Chicago was not involved in the data analysis included in this report, and the conclusions in this report do not represent the views of All Chicago. *Temporarily Staying with Others Data*: Extracted from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 10.0 [dataset]. *Methodological Source*: Richard, M.K., Dworkin, J., Rule, K.G., Farooqui, S., Glendening, Z., & [Paler-Ponce], S. *Quantifying Doubled-Up Homelessness: Presenting a New Measure Using U.S. Census Microdata*. Housing Policy Debate.

data sources, there may still be some duplicates within the data. In 2022, CCH found that 5,545 people in HMIS used homeless services and stayed with friends or family at some point during the year. CCH removes this population from the street and shelter estimate, assuming that they would be captured in the doubled-up estimate.

DATA LIMITATIONS

These estimates do not include people who are experiencing street-based homelessness but have not used homeless services. It also does not include people who are homeless but may not want anyone to know, like those who do sex work and cannot safely report their income. This does not include people who were in jail the entire year and were experiencing homelessness before they entered the carceral system. Finally, people who were in healthcare institutions the entire year are also not included.

Please note these data do not include most asylum seekers that have arrived in Chicago; the data reflected in the report are from 2021 prior to the large increase of new arrivals which began in August of 2022.

WHO IS CONSIDERED STREET AND SHELTER HOMELESS?

The term “homeless” [as defined by HUD](#) includes the following conditions:

- an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- an individual who has a primary residence that is—
 - a shelter providing temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
 - a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

- Or, an individual residing in an institution (such as a hospital or jail) for 90 days or less if that individual met the other elements of this definition prior to entering that institution.

WHO IS CONSIDERED HOMELESS BY TEMPORARILY STAYING WITH OTHERS?

This analysis defines poor individuals and families in poor households as “temporarily staying with others” when they fall outside of the conventional household composition and cannot afford to live in housing of their own or formally contribute to housing costs. For the purposes of this estimate, individuals who meet the following conditions are considered homeless:

- Adult children and children-in-law of the household head who have children of their own, are married, or are single but live in an overcrowded (more than two people per bedroom) situation.
- Minor and adult grandchildren of the household head, excluding:
 - Minor grandchildren of the household head when the household head claims responsibility for their needs.
 - Minor grandchildren whose single parent is living at home and is under 18 (i.e., children of teenage dependents).
- Other relatives of the household head:
 - Parents/parents-in-law, siblings/siblings-in-law, cousins, aunts/uncles, and other unspecified relatives of the household head who are under the age of 65, excluding:
 - Minor siblings of the household head when the minor’s parent is not present (so the household head may assume responsibility for minor siblings).
 - Single and childless adult siblings of the household head, when the household head is also single with no children—resembling a roommate situation.
 - Parents/parents-in-law, siblings/siblings-

WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO, IL?

	TOTAL	Temporarily Staying with Others	Street & Shelter
	68,440 ↑ 2,829	44,429 ↓ 5,156	24,011 ↑ 7,985

Age

Ages 0 - 4	7,324	5,007	2,317
Ages 5- 13	8,172	5,645	2,527
Ages 14- 17**	2,843	2,091	752
Ages 18- 24	12,181	12,069	112
Ages 25 and older	37,920	19,617	18,303

Race

Black, African American	36,334 ↓ 279	20,142 ↓ 4,312	16,192 ↑ 4,033
White	8,606 ↑ 391	5,273 ↓ 57	3,333 ↑ 448
Asian, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander**	2,357 ↑ 893	2,151 ↑ 809	206 ↑ 84
American Indian, Alaska Native**	1,736 ↑ 1,477	1,454 ↑ 1,347	282 ↑ 130
Other/Multi-Racial	15,430 ↓ 2,922	15,409 ↓ 2,943	21 ↑ 21
Unknown Race	3,977 ↑ 3,289	N/A	3,977 ↑ 3,269

Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic, Non-Latino/a/x	44,654 ↓ 698	26,329 ↓ 4,984	18,325 ↑ 4,286
Hispanic, Latino/a/x	19,970 ↑ 209	18,100 ↓ 172	1,870 ↑ 381
Unknown Ethnicity	3,816 ↑ 3,318	N/A	3,816 ↑ 3,318

Chicago Public Schools Enrollment Data (2020-21)

McKinney-Vento enrollment	17,773	16,036	1,453
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in-law, cousins, aunts/uncles, and other unspecified relatives of the household head who are over age 65 and in an overcrowded situation.

- Non-relatives of the household head such as friends, visitors, and “other” non-relatives, excluding:
 - Roommates/housemates, roomers/boarders, and unmarried partners or their children.

HOW CAN WE SOLVE HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO?

At least 68,440 people are experiencing homelessness in Chicago, IL, and the solution to homelessness is very clear: it’s housing. Chicago needs a dedicated revenue stream to create affordable housing opportunities for our neighbors most in need, coupled with services to make sure they have support to remain housed and achieve their personal goals. Ongoing funding is needed to create and pay for permanent housing, and to ensure funding does not vary each year or is not deprioritized by future administrations.

A city-generated revenue stream is necessary to house people experiencing all forms of homelessness—people living on the streets, in shelters, and doubling up. Cities like Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco have taken action to create their own dedicated revenue streams to address the problem. With clear signs of homelessness spiking in Chicago, the time is now.

Learn more about Bring Chicago Home at BringChicagoHome.org.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Doubling up is the way that most people—particularly families with children—experience homelessness. The traditional “Point-in-Time” method for enumerating homelessness tallies those experiencing street and shelter homelessness on a designated night of the year, but it fails to account for those temporarily staying with others. Point-in-Time methodology dramatically undercounts homelessness and, worse, points to the wrong policy solutions.

To better understand the scope of homelessness and advocate for the resources most appropriate to your community, researchers at Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Vanderbilt University, and the Heartland Alliance Social IMPACT Research Center developed a model to estimate people experiencing homelessness by doubling-up. Our hope is that with a better understanding of the scope of the problem, local groups can advocate for the resources to address all forms of homelessness and work collectively to broaden the federal definition of homelessness.

Prepared by [Sam Paler-Ponce](#) and [Julie Dworkin](#)

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Suggested citation: Samuel Paler-Ponce, Julie Dworkin (July 2023). *Estimate of People Experiencing Homelessness in Chicago, IL* (2023). Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Available at www.chicagohomeless.org/estimate.

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