

ESTIMATE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN CHICAGO

CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS
2021

reporting CY 2015-19

Immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, an estimated 58,273 people were experiencing homelessness in Chicago, IL. This report describes the state of Chicago homelessness prior to the COVID-19 crisis, relying on data from the Chicago Homeless Management Information System and the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

COVID-19 is pushing many Chicagoans into homelessness, but just how many is still unknown.

The economic impact of COVID-19 has pushed many renters into housing instability and Chicago will face a massive backlog of eviction filings when the Illinois eviction moratorium ends. Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing estimated 21,000 Chicago households were at risk of eviction at the beginning of this year.¹ In Illinois, as many as 542,000 renter households could be at risk of eviction.²

Many more households will soon face homelessness. Black and Hispanic/Latiné households are experiencing a disparate impact. In Chicago, 69% of Black households and 63% of Hispanic/Latiné households report serious financial problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 33% of white households report similar concerns.³

Too little affordable housing, insufficient living wage work, limited access to medical care, and domestic violence are some of the reasons people face homelessness, and only a fraction of those

experiencing homelessness are able to access shelter and transitional housing.

An estimated 58,273 people were experiencing homelessness in Chicago, IL in 2019, immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. This represents a 16% decrease of the same population in the prior year.

This reflects an overall trend of people living in poverty leaving Chicago—particularly Black and Latiné Chicagoans. Between 2015 and 2019, the Black/African American population living in poverty in Chicago decreased by 12.8%. For Hispanic/Latiné Chicagoans living in poverty, the population decreased by 28.5%.

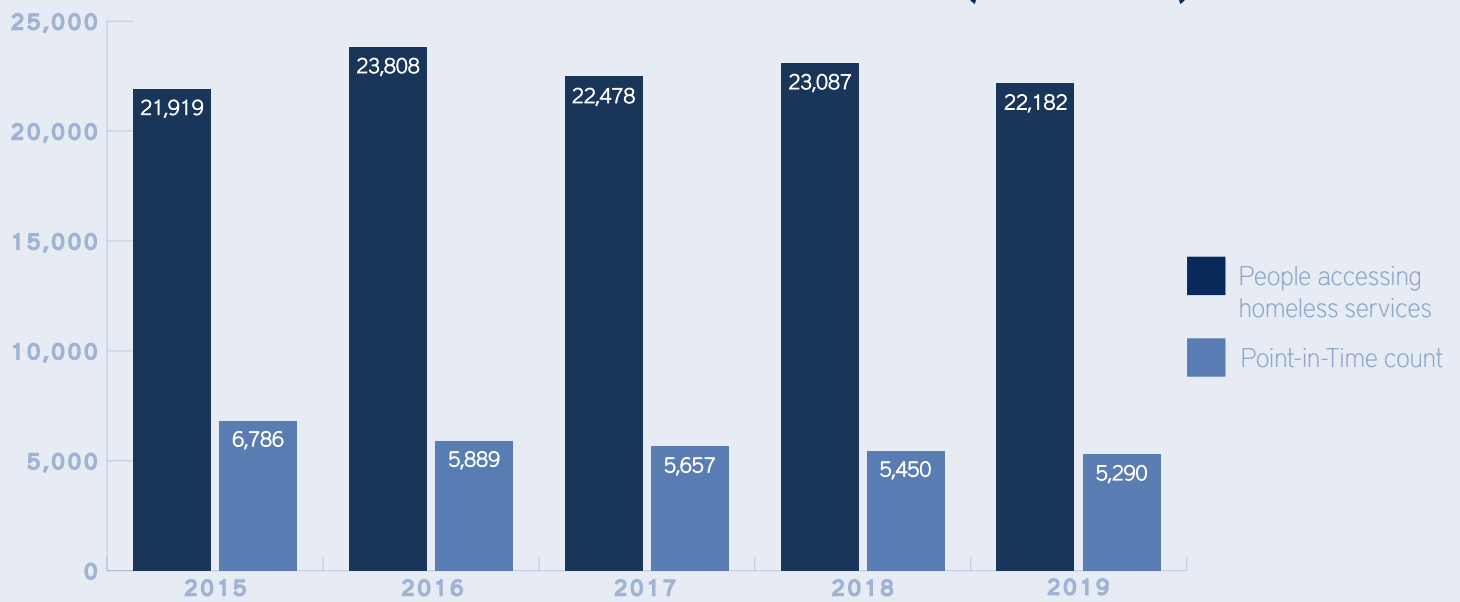
The decrease in homelessness from year-to-year was almost exclusively among people experiencing homelessness by temporarily staying with others. Since 2015, the count of people that access homeless services throughout the course of each year has remained between 21,919 and 23,808 people. Most of Chicago's permanent housing resources for those experiencing homelessness do not include those temporarily staying with others in their eligibility criteria. Therefore, many households move out of Chicago where market rent is more affordable.

¹Peter Rosenblatt, Randall Leurquin, Mark Swartz, and Gina Spitz, *Eviction Filings, Unemployment, and the Impact of COVID-19*, Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (2020).

²Katherine Lucas McKay, Zach Neumann, and Sam Gilman, *20 Million Renters Are at Risk of Eviction; Policymakers Must Act Now to Mitigate Widespread Hardship*, Aspen Institute (2020).

³The Impact of Coronavirus on Households in Major U.S. Cities, National Public Radio, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (2020).

PEOPLE ACCESSING HOMELESS SERVICES V. POINT-IN-TIME COUNT IN CHICAGO (2015-19)⁴



⁴Raw data for this and other sections were provided by Chicago's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), administered by 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.

During the 2019-20 school year, only 11% of students experiencing homelessness were staying in a shelter. Most families experiencing homelessness are staying wherever they can. They are often forced to move frequently between unstable living situations—sleeping in motels, cars, trains, or temporarily staying with others. These living situations can quickly break down due to overcrowding, tensions that develop, and fear of the primary tenant losing their housing. In the 2019-20 school year, 88% of students experiencing homelessness were temporarily staying with others.

The U.S. Department of Education recognizes all forms of homelessness that children and youth might experience, including families that are experiencing homelessness by temporarily staying with others.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a far more limited scope of homelessness. The traditional “Point-in-Time” method for enumerating homelessness tallies people 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 points to the wrong policy solutions.

While the Point-in-Time count may indicate incremental decreases in people experiencing homelessness, there is relatively no change in the count of people accessing homeless services—which is consistently more than three times the Point-in-Time count total. The count of people accessing homeless services includes all people served over 12 months, while the Point-in-Time measures those experiencing homelessness on a single night.

For communities nationwide, accurately measuring homelessness is more than informative. Estimates of homeless populations help determine which communities receive essential federal housing, transportation, and public health assistance. 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. In most cases, people experiencing homelessness by temporarily staying with others are not captured in these data.

To better reflect all forms of homelessness that one might experience, researchers at Chicago Coalition

for the Homeless (CCH), Vanderbilt University, and the Heartland Alliance Social IMPACT Research Center have developed a model to better estimate the total scope of people experiencing homelessness, incorporating people experiencing homelessness by temporarily staying with others.⁵

This estimate does not include people living on the street or other places not meant for habitation who had no contact with service providers.

This also does not include people experiencing homelessness who do not want to be found because of the potential negative impact to their safety and wellbeing, such as those involved in sex work and/or those without documentation of citizenship or immigration. People detained in jail the entirety of the year who were experiencing homelessness prior to their incarceration are not included, nor does this estimate include those staying in healthcare institutions for the entirety of the year.

Additionally, the estimate of people experiencing homelessness by temporarily staying with others is a rolling average. While not exactly a “Point-in-Time” measure, it describes a general point in time, rather than being a cumulation of 12 months of data like the data available on street and shelter-based homelessness.

Estimating the number of people experiencing homelessness is limited to what is documented. The estimates provided in this report should be observed as homelessness that is captured in data from the Homeless Management Information System and U.S. Census American Community

Survey data. No source is a complete reflection of all homelessness experienced in Chicago.

Immediately prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, an estimated 58,273 people were experiencing homelessness in Chicago throughout 2019. It is still unclear how many people will be newly homeless because of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact.

The estimate of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago decreased in years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic—and almost exclusively among people temporarily staying with others (also known as “doubling-up”). The population of people experiencing street and shelter homelessness and accessing services has seen very little change. Findings outlined in this report suggest that the decrease in those temporarily staying with others may not be a result of people exiting homelessness.

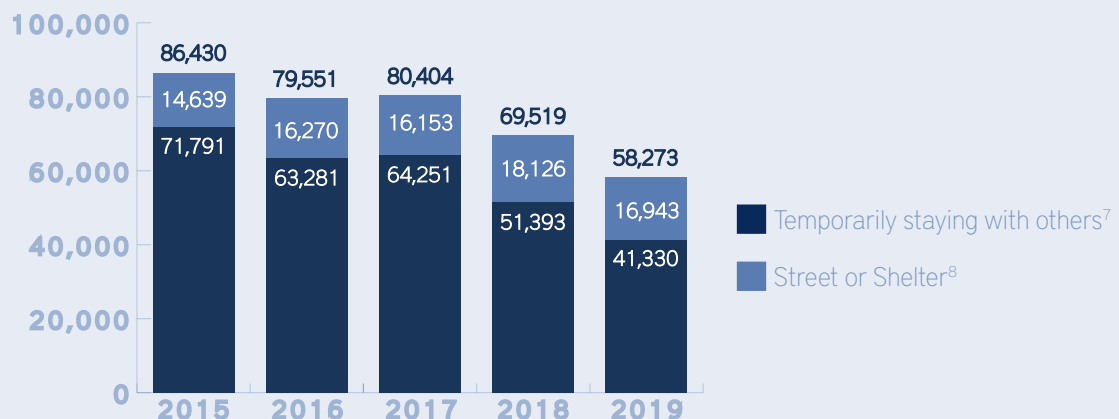
In 2019, people experiencing homelessness made up 2.16% of Chicago’s population.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Chicago saw very little change over time in the population accessing homeless services. Since 2015, the count of people that access homeless services throughout the course of each year hovered between 21,919 and 23,808 people.

In comparison, the Point-in-Time count has counted between 5,290 and 6,786 people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January since 2015.

⁵Richard, M.K. Dworkin, J., Rule, K.G., Farooqui, S., Glendening, Z., & Carlson, S. (under review). Estimating doubled-up homelessness with Census microdata.

ESTIMATE OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO⁶

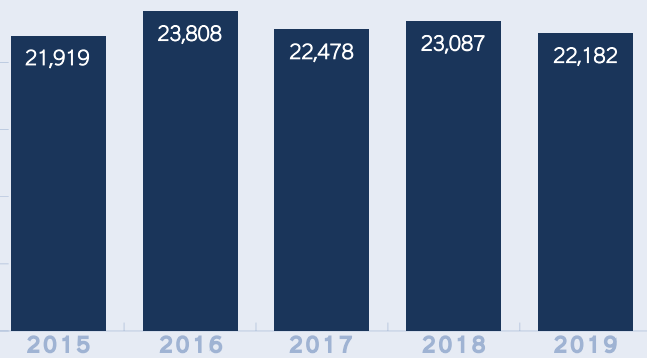


⁶ The estimates provided are based on methodologies developed in partnership with the Social IMPACT Research Center of Heartland Alliance.

⁷ 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]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.18128/Doio.V10.0>

⁸ Please note that all street and shelter data prior to 2018 includes people enrolled in a rapid re-housing program. Though temporary, this population has since been excluded, per the request of the local HMIS administrator, because rapid re-housing programs are considered permanent housing by HUD and the CoC.

PEOPLE ACCESSING HOMELESS SERVICES IN CHICAGO, IL⁹



⁹ Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

TEMPORARILY STAYING WITH OTHERS

Most Chicagoans experiencing homelessness temporarily stay with others (or “double up”) at some point throughout the year. Of the 58,273 people experiencing homelessness in 2019, 71% were temporarily staying with others. According to Homeless Management Information System data, 22,182 people utilized the homeless services

system and 24% reported temporarily staying with others at least once in 2019. In the 2019-20 school year, 88% of students experiencing homelessness were temporarily staying with others, according to Chicago Public Schools data.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Due to longstanding structural and historical racism, Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latiné households disproportionately experience poverty and homelessness. An estimated 34,125 Black/African-American Chicagoans experienced homelessness throughout 2019. An estimated 14,491 Hispanic/Latiné Chicagoans experienced homelessness throughout 2019. In total, 81.1% (33,525) of people temporarily staying with others identified as Black/African-American and/or Hispanic/Latiné.

Experiencing homelessness by doubling up is concentrated in predominantly Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latiné neighborhoods. These data illustrate a long history of racist policies and practices that keep Black and Brown communities poor, unstably housed, and experiencing homelessness.

PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY IN CHICAGO (2015-19)¹⁰

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
RACE					
Black or African-American	339,924	314,105	316,517	286,979	271,922
White	265,926	225,135	241,018	239,581	212,726
Other Race	94,227	109,548	79,447	60,038	60,906
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	52,183	43,430	47,923	51,685	40,616
American Indian or Alaska Native	3,340	1,671	3,624	2,757	3,858
Two or More Races	18,243	21,779	16,449	12,891	12,877
ETHNICITY					
Hispanic or Latino	252,181	228,817	204,272	197,884	180,389

¹⁰ Data extracted from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series.

DOUBLED-UP HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO (2015-2019)¹²

While the population of Chicagoans experiencing homelessness has decreased over the past five years, it is unlikely that people are exiting homelessness. It is more likely that people experiencing homelessness and poverty are leaving Chicago – particularly Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latiné Chicagoans.

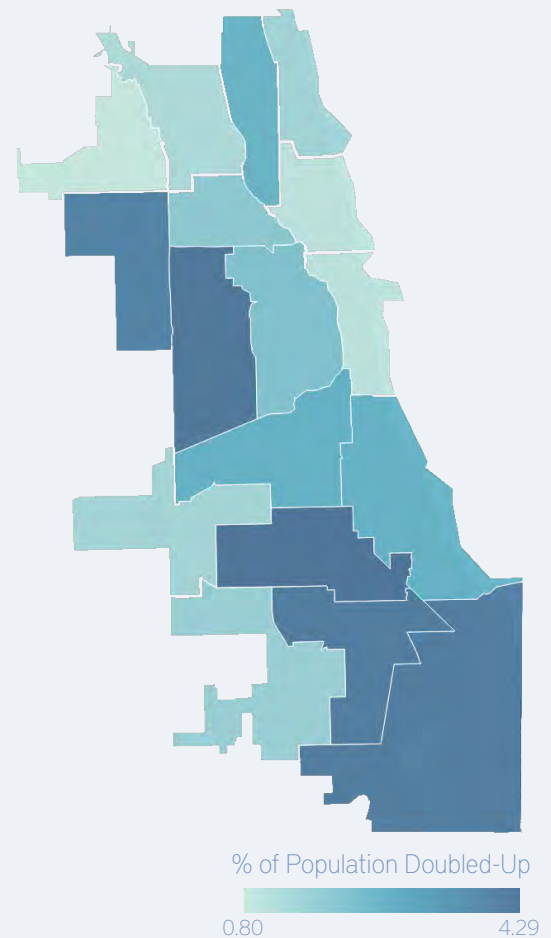
Between 2015 and 2019, the Black/African-American population living in poverty in Chicago decreased by 12.8% (or around 71,000 people). For Hispanic/Latiné Chicagoans living in poverty, the population decreased by 28.5% (or around 71,800 people). These data suggest that it may be more common for Black and Brown Chicagoans experiencing homelessness to leave Chicago than connect to housing.

AGE AND FAMILY TYPE

Families and unaccompanied youth seldom stay on the street or in a shelter. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, 13,663 people experiencing homelessness were single unaccompanied youth (age 14-24) and 91% of whom temporarily stayed with others.

In total, 12,913 minors (under age 18), with or without a parent present, experienced homelessness.¹¹

In 2019, 17,150 people in families with children were experiencing homelessness and 68% were temporarily staying with others. HMIS data suggest that 495 households experienced street and shelter homelessness in families headed by youth (age 14-24).



¹² Molly Richard (2021), Tableau, <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/molly.richard7527/viz/EstimatesofDoubled-UpHomelessness2015-2019/IllinoisMetroAreas>

¹¹ Please note that this includes all minors, regardless of household composition.

ESTIMATE OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY FAMILY TYPE IN CHICAGO (2019)

	TOTAL	STREET AND SHELTER	TEMPORARILY STAYING WITH OTHERS
Single Adults (25 and older)	26,206	9,780	16,426
Multiple Adults (no children)	642	95	547*
Families (with children)	17,150	5,499	11,651
Unaccompanied Youth (age 14-24)	13,966	1,260	12,706
Unknown Household Type	309	309	0

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

ESTIMATE OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO (2019)¹³

	TOTAL		STREET AND SHELTER		TEMPORARILY STAYING WITH OTHERS ¹¹
Number of Individuals	58,273		16,943		41,330
RACE					
Black or African-American	34,125	58.6%	12,979		21,146
White	14,630	25.1%	3,146		11,484
Other Race	4,992	8.6%	0		4,992
Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	2,854	4.9%	173		2,681*
American Indian or Alaska Native	796	1.4%	219		577*
Two or More Races	450	0.8%	0		450*
Unknown Race	426	0.7%	426		0
ETHNICITY					
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	43,512	74.7%	14,995		28,517
Hispanic/Latino	14,491	24.9%	1,678		12,813
Unknown Ethnicity	310	0.5%	310		0
AGE					
0-4	5,483	9.4%	1,344		4,139*
5-17	7,430	12.8%	1,835		5,595
18+	45,065	77.3%	13,469		31,596
Unknown Age	295	0.5%	295		0
CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2019-20					
Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)	13,843**		1,544		12,124
POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT					
January 23, 2020 count	5,390		5,390		n/a

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

** 175 students did not temporarily stay with others or stay in a shelter. This number is likely an undercount due to the COVID-19 pandemic making it difficult to identify students experiencing homelessness.

¹³ 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]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.18128/Do10.V10.0>

HOW IS “HOMELESS” DEFINED?

To reflect all forms of homelessness that one might experience, the following definition of “homeless” includes people temporarily staying with others.

Street and shelter homelessness

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 supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
 - an institution that provides a temporary residence for those intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

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 that 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 living 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 that 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-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.

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Suggested citation: David Mendieta, Samuel Carlson (July 2021). Estimate of Homeless People in Chicago (2015-19). Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Available at www.chicagohomeless.org/estimate.