

# Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America

## National Estimates

*Foundational evidence for understanding the scale, scope, and urgency of youth homelessness in America.*

Adolescence and young adulthood represent a key developmental window. Every day of housing instability and the associated stress represents a missed opportunity to support healthy development and transitions to productive adulthood. Voices of Youth Count gives voice to young people across our nation who lack the necessary supports to achieve independence and make their unique contributions to our society.

Through multiple methods and research angles, Voices of Youth Count sought to capture and understand the voices and experiences of thousands of young people. While the deprivation of housing stability was the common thread in Voices of Youth Count research, the stories of youth homelessness—and the opportunities for intervention—rarely centered on housing alone.

Every experience, every youth, was unique. Their experiences ranged widely in duration, sleeping arrangements, safety, and circumstances. With the data gained through Voices of Youth Count, we can better understand the challenge so that we can develop more effective policy and practice.

*Missed Opportunities: National Estimates* summarizes the results of the Voices of Youth Count national survey that estimates the percentage of United States youth, ages 13 to 25, who have

experienced unaccompanied homelessness at least once during a recent 12-month period. The survey captured homelessness experiences broadly, including couch surfing in addition to arrangements like sleeping on the streets, in cars, or in shelters.

Until now, one major challenge to putting solutions in place has been the lack of credible data on the size and characteristics of the youth population who experience homelessness and a way to track how this population changes over time. Without credible numbers and deeper understanding, it has been difficult for the nation to develop a well-resourced and tailored response to address this hidden problem in our communities.

Voices of Youth Count, in this and future briefs over the coming year, will speak to the evidence while seeking solutions.

**No more missed opportunities.**

### RESULTS SHOW

**1 in 10**

young adults ages 18 to 25 endures some form of homelessness in a year. Half of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

**1 in 30**

adolescent minors ages 13 to 17 endures some form of homelessness in a year. A quarter of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

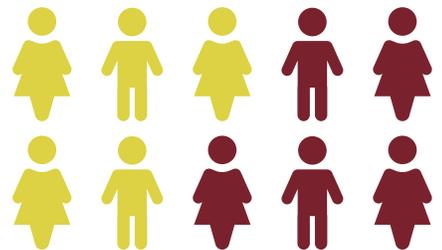
Rates of youth experiencing homelessness were similar in rural and nonrural areas.

**Youth 13-17**  
4.2%  
Household prevalence in urban counties.

4.4%  
Household prevalence in rural counties.

**Young Adults 18-25**  
9.6%  
Population prevalence in urban counties.

9.2%  
Population prevalence in rural counties.



About half of the youth who experienced homelessness over a year faced homelessness for the first time.

### Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness

**346%**

Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED had a 346% higher risk

**120%**

LGBT youth had a 120% higher risk

**162%**

Youth reporting annual household income of less than \$24,000 had a 162% higher risk

**33%**

Hispanic, non-White youth had a 33% higher risk

**83%**

Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk

**200%**

Unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk

