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# CONFRONTING HOMELESSNESS

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*Homelessness in Ohio 2012 - 2018*

# ABOUT THE OHIO HUMAN SERVICES DATA WAREHOUSE

The recent COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of a safe, stable, and affordable home in maintaining a healthy community. The health crisis and related economic crisis have exacerbated the deep racial and economic inequalities that were already present in Ohio. In the wake of this economic and health crisis, Ohio is facing increasing challenges to keeping people in their homes. As hundreds of thousands of Ohioans have filed for unemployment and experienced disruptions in their income, we expect many of these households will be unable to pay rent or their mortgage and may face housing instability in the coming year. Prior to COVID-19, a lack of affordable housing already existed in Ohio; in 2018, the shortage was more than 256,000 housing units for extremely low-income renters. For every 100 extremely low-income renters there were only 44 available and affordable units. This affordability crisis will likely be exacerbated in the coming year.

As we begin to understand the changes to homelessness in Ohio, it is critical to understand the patterns of homelessness that pre-existed COVID-19. Available data presents a somewhat mixed picture. The 2018 Point-In-Time count identified 10,249 homeless individuals in the state on a single night in January, a decline of about 200 individuals from 2016.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, in the same year, Ohio Department of Education data showed that 23,398 Ohio public school students lacked stable housing at some point during the 2018-2019 school year, an increase of nearly 5,000 from just two years prior.<sup>2</sup> However, both the PIT count and ODE data only capture a small portion of those who experience homelessness each year.

To develop informed and effective strategies to combat homelessness, it is essential that practitioners, policymakers, and the public have access to reliable and comprehensive information about the challenge of homelessness. However, no state or federal databases exist that provide a full view of homelessness and its connections to other systems across geographies. The Ohio Human Services Data Warehouse aims to fill this knowledge gap and strengthen statewide efforts to alleviate the interrelated issues of poverty and homelessness through the aggregation and analysis of cross-system data related to at-risk populations. OHSDW aggregates information about the population receiving services from Ohio's homelessness providers. This data is matched with other state and local databases, to measure existing need, understand statewide patterns, and inform policy and programmatic solutions to meet demand.

This report covers data on those who experienced homelessness in 2018, in an attempt to describe the trends and patterns throughout the state of Ohio. When possible, we contextualize the information about those who accessed homelessness services with other statewide data on Ohio's population in an attempt to provide an explanation for the patterns we see throughout the state.

OHFA is honored to support ongoing efforts to reduce homelessness. We are eager to continue collaborations with our peer state agencies to create the most robust data resource possible. We sincerely thank all the Continuums of Care and our partners at the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services who contributed to the development of this report. We welcome the opportunity to continue exploring innovative approaches to ending homelessness and furthering the impact of this newly developed information source.

Respectfully Submitted,

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# OHSDW MEMBERS

This report—and the OHSDW generally—are only possible with the support of our member organizations. We are grateful for their time and resources, which they generously provide, to making this report possible.

- Akron/Summit County CoC
- Canton, Massillon, Alliance/Stark CoC
- Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC
- Cleveland/Cuyahoga County CoC
- Columbus/Franklin County CoC
- Dayton/Kettering/Montgomery CoC
- Ohio Balance of State CoC
- Toledo/Lucas County CoC
- Youngstown/Mahoning County CoC
- Ohio Development Services Agency
- Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services

The program partners also give special thanks to Kevin D. Carpenter and Arisen Technology Corporation, who were instrumental in the creation and management of the OHSDW.

Spotlight On...

## CONTINUUM OF CARE PROGRAMS

A Continuum of Care is a regional or local organization that coordinates housing and service planning and funding for families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness. A CoC helps organize and deliver housing and services to meet the needs of people who experience homelessness—referred to as ‘clients’ in this report—and help them maximize self-sufficiency as they move to stable housing.

The CoC Program is designed to promote communitywide action to end homelessness. CoCs provide funding for nonprofit providers and local governments to re-house those who are experiencing homelessness; promote access to and improve utilization of services; and track the individuals served in their area, helping to provide an overview of the state of homelessness in a region.

HUD has identified four necessary parts of a continuum:

- **Outreach, intake, and assessment** to identify individual needs and link to appropriate services
- **Emergency shelter** to provide people a safe, immediate alternative to sleeping on the street
- **Transitional housing** with supportive services to develop skills once clients are housed
- **Permanent and permanent supportive housing** to provide individuals and families

# DATA AND METHODOLOGY

OHSDW aggregates data from local Homeless Management Information Systems, which capture information on individuals accessing services. Data in this report reflect information from the aggregated HMIS records maintained by Ohio's nine Continuums of Care, reflecting all 88 of Ohio's counties, from January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2018. If an individual obtained homelessness services prior to 2012, any such records are not included.

Clients self-report collected demographic data at intake or exit from one or more of the following services: Emergency Shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing. At intake and/or exit, clients provide information on their demographics, health, living situation prior to entering a program, and destination upon exit. This report does not include data from other efforts or programs, such as street outreach.

The OHSDW is able to maintain a consistent view of entries and exits over time using a hashed identifier. Before exporting data to the OHSDW, CoCs use a hashing procedure that uses personally identifying information—such as names and birth dates—to create a unique identifier. OHSDW receives anonymized data with a unique person ID, allowing us to connect records for the same person across various sources, time periods, and geographies, without revealing sensitive client information. This process maintains the privacy of persons who received services, while allowing us to better understand how individuals are being served.

To analyze data, we avoid double-counting individuals by focusing on 'unique individuals by year'. This analysis method recognizes that individuals may access services multiple times per year. In our analysis, we are primarily interested in unique person entries, so we filter out multiple entries by a single person within a calendar year. As such, we are not counting total entries to the system, but unique individuals served.

When a client does not provide data, we exclude those records from analysis; the number of such exclusions is noted in the text or below the relevant graph or table. This report provides descriptive analysis of this data, not statistical testing; findings designated as "significant" should not be construed as having a scientific meaning.

All programmatic terms used in this report are as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development unless otherwise noted. At times throughout the report, we compare data for the CoCs with data from Ohio more broadly. This Ohio-specific comparison data on race, ethnicity, and age comes from the 2018 one-year American Community Survey estimates; all other statewide data is from OHFA's **Housing Needs Assessment** and is referenced using endnotes.

# OVERVIEW

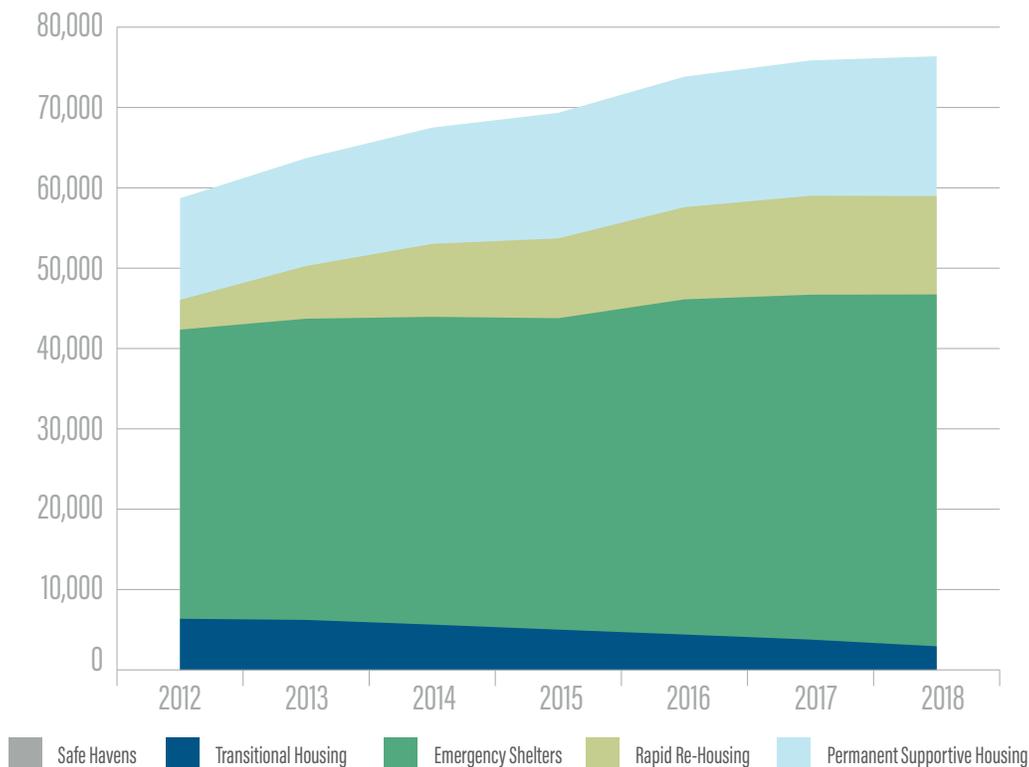
In 2018, 76,478 unique individuals were served by Ohio's Continuums of Care. This means about one in every 15 Ohioans (or 6.7% of the population) accessed homelessness services in 2018. This is likely an undercount of the total Ohioans experiencing a housing crisis, as this data source cannot capture families doubling up, staying with family or friends, or staying in temporary locations such as a car or motel.

In the same period, about one in every eight Ohioans (13.8%) lived below the poverty line<sup>3</sup>, which was \$16,460 for a two-person household and \$25,100 for a four-person household. Working full-time earning minimum wage, a household of four would be well under the poverty level (yearly salary of \$18,096). About half of the population living below the poverty level in Ohio in 2018 experienced homelessness.

The number of people experiencing homelessness each year has grown consistently over time. Between 2012 and 2018, the population experiencing homelessness grew 30.8%; during the same time Ohio's entire population grew by only 1.3%.

**In 2018, about half of all Ohioans who lived in poverty experienced homelessness.**

**Clients Accessing Homelessness Services By Project Type, 2012-2018**



The increase in homelessness reflects, in part, the lack of affordable and available housing in Ohio. In 2018, Ohio had only 80 affordable and available units for every 100 very low-income households. For the lowest income groups—those who live below the poverty level—there were only 44 affordable and available units for every 100 extremely low-income households. In 2018, there was a shortage of 256,875 affordable units.

Ohio's lowest income earners have also become increasingly cost burdened over time. Incomes for this subset of Ohioans has lagged since the financial crisis in 2008, meaning they have not been able to match increases in rent. This puts them at a higher risk for housing cost burden, housing instability, and homelessness. In 2018, more than 70% of Ohio's lowest earning group experienced severe housing cost burden—paying more than 50% of their income on rent—compared to less than 1% of those earning the area median income or higher

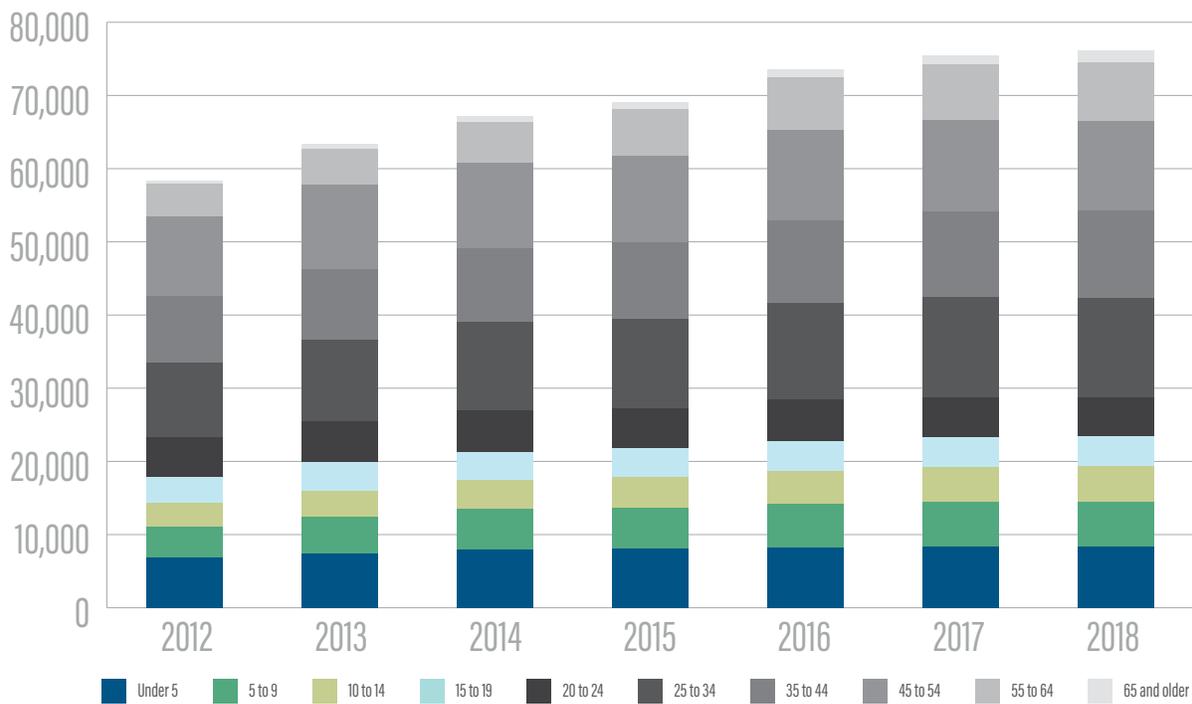
# DEMOGRAPHICS

## CLIENT AGE

In 2018, the average person accessing homelessness services was 31 years old. Excluding children under age 18, the average head of household was 39 years old. Age at first entry was unknown for 402 clients.

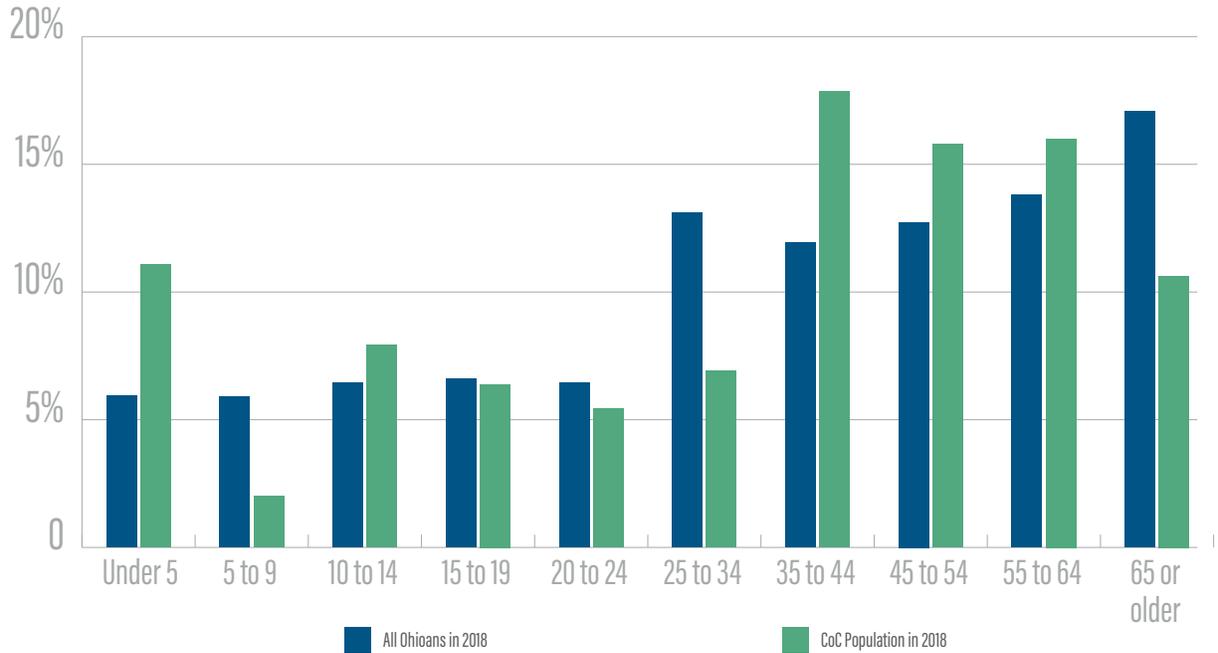
Over time, the proportion of clients in each age group has shifted slightly. The largest increases in population served from 2012-2018 have been in the age groups of 55 to 64 and 65 or older, which grew 85 and 208 percent respectively. The next largest increase in age group served is children aged 5 to 9 and 10 to 14, which increased 43 and 49 percent from 2012-2018.

Age Group Composition by Year, 2012-2018



When focusing on how these age groups compare to the whole population of Ohio, the figure below shows the age at entry for the 2018 CoC population compared to the Ohio population, using ACS 2018 one-year estimates. This shows which age groups were more and less likely to experience homelessness than would be expected given the current age composition of the state.

**Age Distribution of Ohio Compared to CoC Clients, 2018**



**Children:** About a third of the population that experienced homelessness in 2018 were children under the age of 18 (28.5%). This includes 2,258 infants who had not yet reached the age of one. Compared to the state overall, children aged 0 to 4 were substantially overrepresented in the CoC population; 11.4% of CoC clients fell in this age range, compared with only 5.9% of Ohioans overall.<sup>4</sup> Children aged 10 to 14 are also overrepresented in the CoC population. The total number of children under age 18 experiencing homelessness has increased steadily year over year. Since 2012, the number of children experiencing homelessness has increased 35%, reaching 21,827 in 2018.

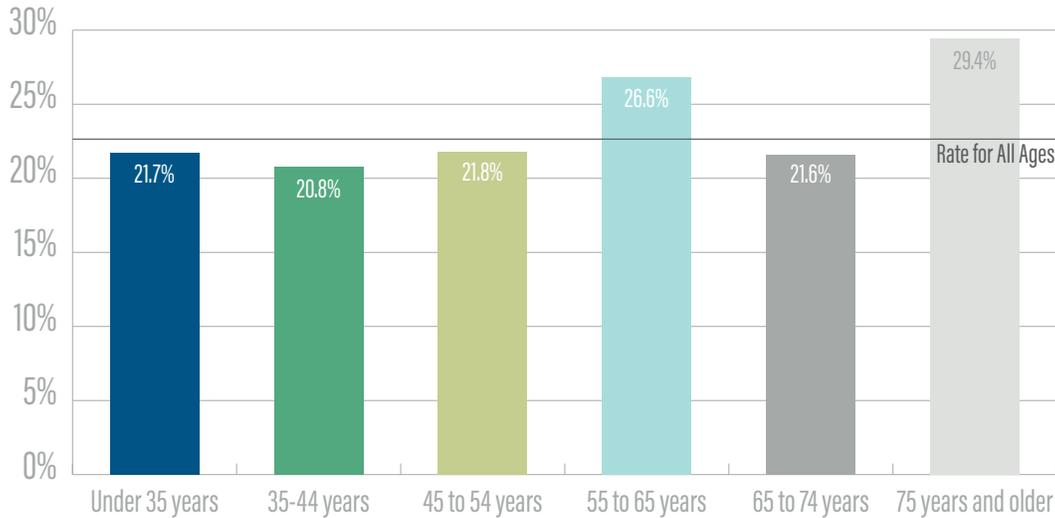
Children in Ohio are more likely to live in poverty than their older counterparts. Almost half—43.9%—of households with children experience housing cost burden<sup>5</sup> (spending more than 30% of income on housing). About 19% of Ohioans under 18 were living below the poverty line in 2018<sup>6</sup>, compared to only 13% of those aged 19 to 64, or 8.6% of those 65 and older. Given that children are uniquely vulnerable to poverty and housing instability, it is not surprising that children make up such a substantial portion of the population experiencing homelessness.

In 2018, **2,258** infants experienced homelessness.

**Adults:** Adult sub-groups between 25 and 54 make up about half of the total CoC client population in 2018. The largest sub-age group accessing CoC services is adults aged 35 to 44; this age group comprised 17.8% of the CoC client population and only 8.8% of the Ohio population in 2018.

**Older Adults:** Older adults aged 55 or older were less likely to enter the CoC system during the study period than their younger counterparts; only 12.6% of all clients fell into this age group. Yet, while the overall numbers remain small, the number of adults aged 55 or older accessing homelessness services increased almost 50% over six years.

**Severe Rent Burden by Age**



The increasing number of older adults accessing homelessness services may be related to two trends: the number of older Ohioans is increasing, and this population is uniquely susceptible to housing challenges. Demographers predict the percentage of Ohioans aged 55 and over will peak by 2030 at 32%.<sup>7</sup> This increase in the number and proportion of older adults is not unique to Ohio, and is happening at the national level as well.<sup>8</sup>

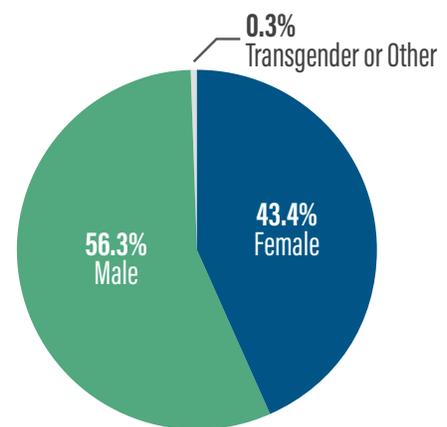
As the number of older adults increases, a larger number are living alone; in 2017 one out of every nine Ohio households had a single adult aged 65 or over. Living alone may make the cost and upkeep of a home challenging. As a result, a higher percentage of older Ohio renters are severely cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on housing. Beyond affordability, accessibility may also be a challenge for older adults. As adults age, they are more likely to experience mobility issues. Ohioans with disabilities have a higher prevalence of housing problems (54.9%) than those without disabilities (44.5%).<sup>9</sup> Without active policies and programs directed at this population, we may see more older adults accessing homelessness services in the coming years.

## CLIENT GENDER

Males made up just over half of the adults accessing homeless services: of clients aged 18 or older, 56.3% clients were male, 43.3% were female, and 0.3% identified as transgender, non-binary, or another gender identity. Gender at first entry was unknown for 93 clients. This ratio of male to female clients has stayed consistent over time.

Of the population younger than 18, the gender gap is much smaller. Females account for 49.5% of the CoC youth population, males account for 50.5%, and those identifying as transgender or non-binary is .1%.

While men were overrepresented in the CoC Client population, women actually are more likely to live under the poverty line in Ohio than men. In 2018, throughout the state, women were slightly more likely to live in poverty than men (15.1% compared to 12.6%).

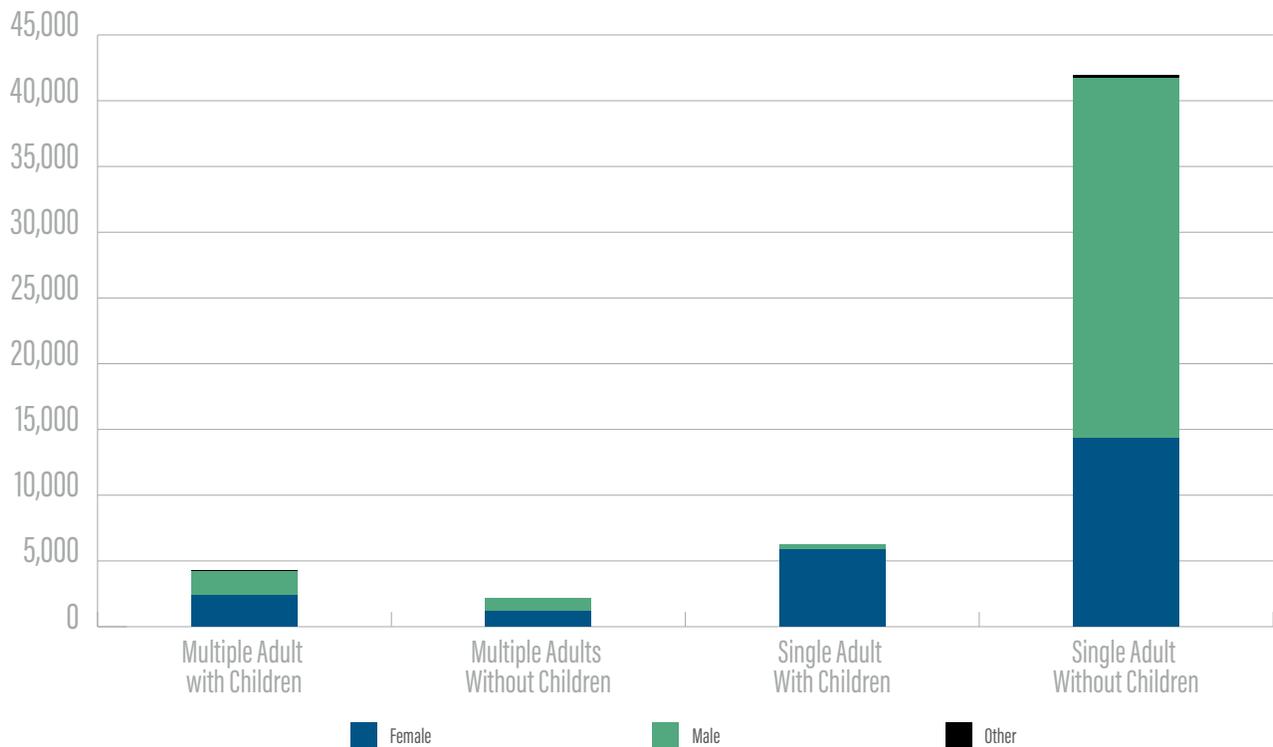


## FAMILY STATUS

The number of families accessing homelessness services has been steadily increasing since 2012. Between 2012 and 2018, the number of families (analyzed as adults entering with children) increased by 20.4%. More than 28,800 people entered as part of a family, 64.8% of whom were children under 18.

In particular, the number of females entering with children has increased. Despite making up only 43.4% of the adult CoC population, females represented 93.5% of the “single adult with children” population. Males, in contrast, made up 65.4% of the “single adult without children” population.

Adult by Gender & Household Composition at Entry



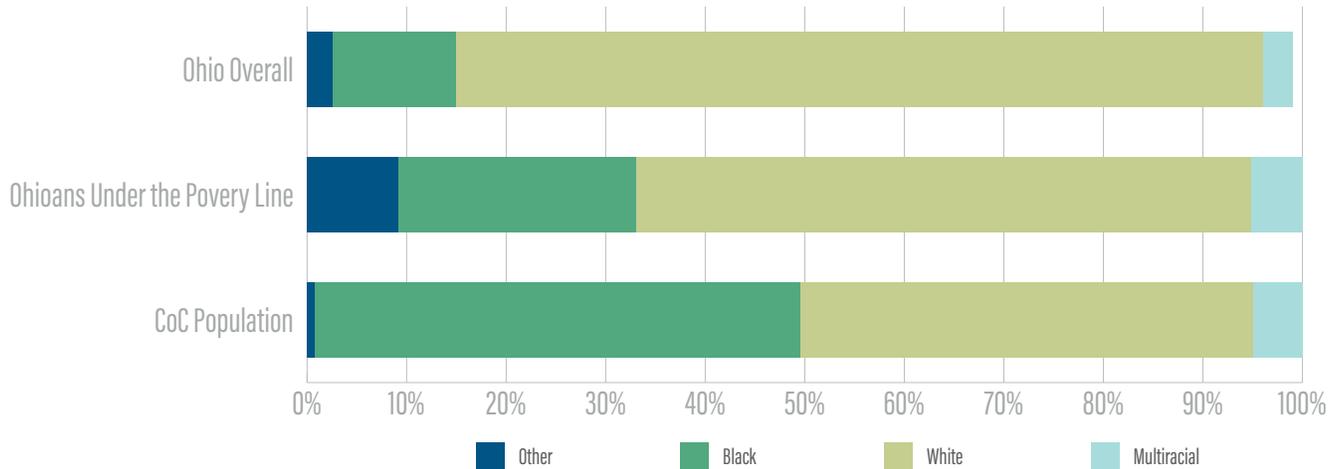
Of the roughly 14,400 children that entered with a single adult, the average child’s age was six years old, and the average age of the adult was 32. More than 1,250 infants entered with a single adult.

The increasing number of women and children accessing homelessness services highlights the challenges many women face throughout the state. The lack of affordable and available housing in Ohio is largest for homes with multiple bedrooms. While Ohio is nearly meeting the need for one bedrooms for very low-income renters, there is a sizable shortage of supply for affordable units with more bedrooms that can accommodate larger families – suggesting that adults with children may be even more vulnerable to housing instability.

## CLIENT RACE AND ETHNICITY

The racial composition of those accessing homelessness services differs drastically from the state's overall composition. White individuals were underrepresented in the homelessness population. White people made up 81% of the total state population in 2018, but comprised 45.4% of those served. By contrast, Black individuals were over-represented. Black individuals represented 12.4% of Ohio's population in 2018 but made up 48.8% of clients accessing services. Multiracial individuals were also over-represented, comprising 3.1% of Ohio's population, but 5% of persons receiving services. Race at first entry was unknown for 415 clients.

**Race of CoC Clients, Compared to Ohio's Population and the Population Experiencing Poverty, 2018**



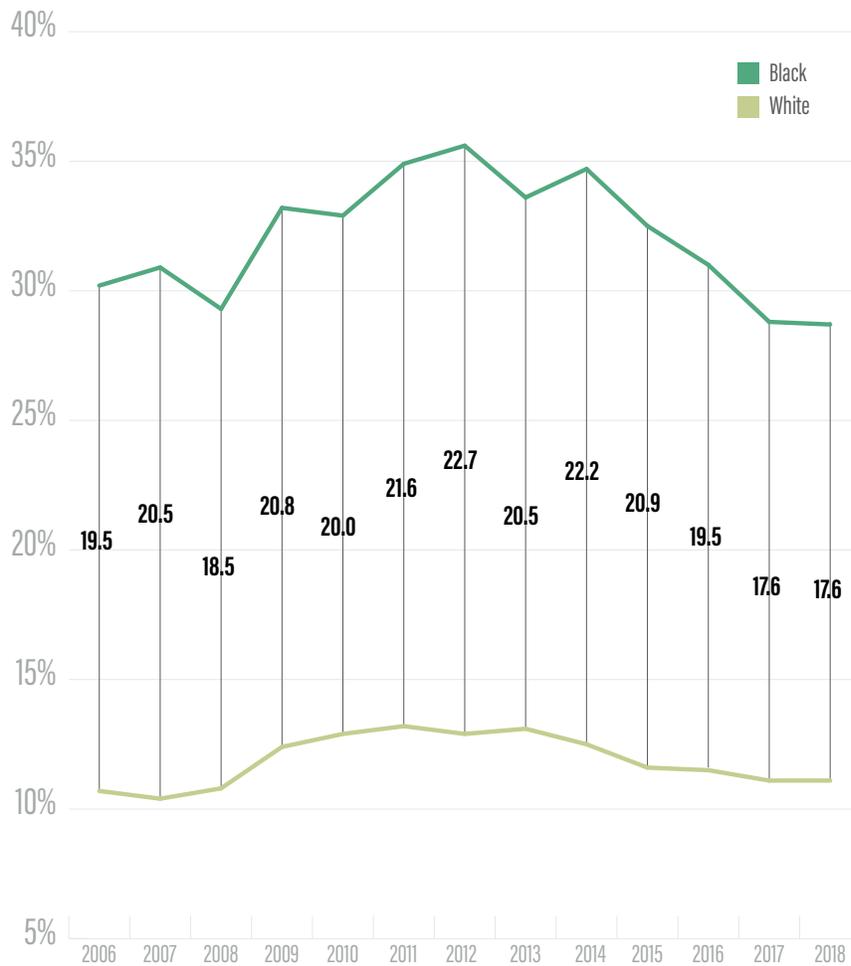
Regarding ethnicity, about 4% of clients reported that they were of Hispanic or Latino ancestry. Ohio's population is 3.9% Hispanic or Latino. Ethnicity at first entry was unknown for 249 clients.

This imbalance reflects a persistent inequality in access to housing, wealth, and economic opportunity at the state level. The history of housing in America has created a deeply unequal and racially divided housing landscape. Discriminatory practices, such as redlining and racial bias in lending, have created a deep divide in homeownership between Black and white Ohioans. White Ohioans are 37 percent more likely to own a home than Black Ohioans. Ohio's gap is nine points larger than the national gap. Racial bias in homeownership remains, as Black Ohioans are still far more likely to be denied a mortgage than white Ohioans (38% compared to 22% of white Ohioans).

These historic patterns of discrimination extend into income and poverty as well. In 2018, Black Ohioans were nearly three times more likely to live in poverty than white Ohioans (29% versus 11%).<sup>10</sup> This 18-point gap is substantially larger than the national gap (12) and the gaps in all neighboring states. The 2018 median household income for a white head of household in Ohio was \$60,783, 1.8 times larger than the median income for a Black head of household (\$33,590).

As a result, Black renters are more likely to be cost burdened (33.4% compared to 21.5% for white renters) and face higher barriers to housing stability.

**Black-White Poverty Gap, 2006-2018**

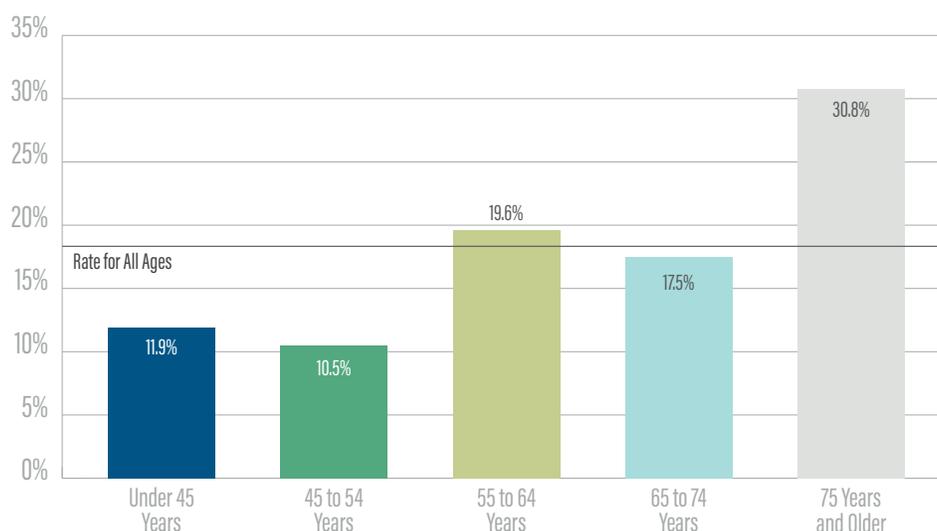


## HIGH RISK POPULATION: VETERANS

Of clients entering programs in 2018, 74% were military veterans, with veteran status not reported for 1,046 people. During the study period:

- The average age for veterans entering the CoC system during the study period was 52.
- More than 330 veteran households included children at entry.
- The largest prior residence for veterans included temporary shelter (33%) and a place not fit for habitation (24%).
- The most common exit destinations were an unsubsidized home (35%), a subsidized home (21%), or moving with friends or family (18%).

Severe Rent Burden for Veterans, by Age



The older age at entrance for veterans stems, in part, from the fact that older veterans are experiencing substantially more housing cost burden than younger veterans.<sup>11</sup>

## HIGH RISK POPULATION: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Of all clients, 20.3% reported surviving domestic violence at some point in their lives, including 33% of women and 9.7% of men. Survivor status was not disclosed for 160 entrants. During the study period:

- The average age for domestic violence survivors at first recorded entry was 35; about 1,680 survivors who accessed services were children under the age 18 (11% of all domestic survivors who accessed services in 2018).
- Of all domestic violence survivors, 74% were women.
- Prior to accessing services, 42% were in another shelter, 21% were staying with family or friends, and 19% were literally homeless or living in a place not meant for human habitation.
- The most common exit destinations were an unsubsidized home (38%), moving with friends or family (30%), or a subsidized home (15%).
- Just over a third of the survivors accessing services (35%) entered with children.

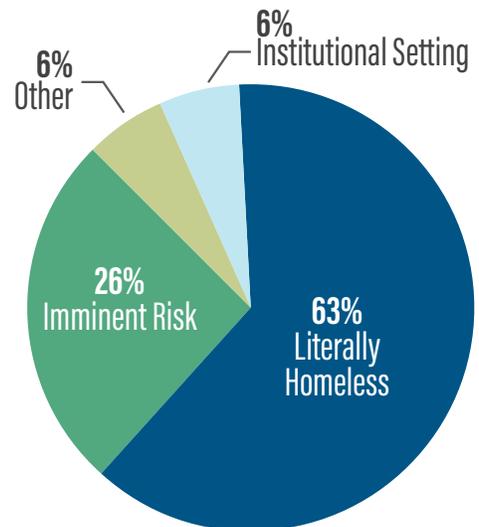
Estimating the number of domestic violence survivors experiencing homelessness exclusively through HMIS records, however, is challenging. Many cities and regions have dedicated facilities that provide emergency services to those fleeing immediate danger, which are prohibited from entering data in HMIS due to VAWA legislation. As a result, counts of those clients are omitted from this report. The figures presented here represent only a portion of the domestic violence challenges Ohio faces.

# HOUSING BEFORE AND AFTER SERVICES

## PRIOR LIVING CONDITIONS

At entry into a CoC-affiliated housing program, clients report their most recent housing situation. HUD characterizes prior residence into four categories, detailed below:

- 1. Literally Homeless:** Persons who have a primary nighttime residence not designed for permanent living. This includes places not meant for habitation and various temporary shelters;
- 2. Imminent Risk Situation:** A nighttime residence in a place where there is an elevated risk of losing shelter in the coming weeks. This includes motels/hotels or staying with friends and family;
- 3. Institutional Settings:** Persons living in foster care, jails, prisons, hospitals, long-term psychiatric care, substance abuse facilities, or similar locations; and
- 4. Other Prior Conditions:** Includes examples such as rental or ownership with varying levels of subsidy or unidentified locations.



Prior residence was not collected from over 11,000 clients. Of those who do have a prior residence reported, more than half of all individuals in 2018 came from a situation where they were literally homeless (63%). Most of these individuals—about 24,000 persons—reported an emergency shelter as their most recent residence, while 13,500 individuals reported being in a place not fit for habitation before receiving services.

18% of people were living in places not fit for habitation when they entered the homelessness system.

A quarter of clients (26%) came from an imminent risk of homelessness prior to first entry. The vast majority of these clients—15,300 persons—had been staying or living with a family member or friend.

Six percent of individuals entered the system from other situations. Most of these were living in a rental home (3,380) or a home they owned (160).

Finally, 6% of initial entrants came from an institutional setting. Over a third of these clients had previously been in jail, prison, or a juvenile detention facility with another quarter coming from substance abuse facilities.

## EXIT DESTINATION

Exit destination refers to the immediate residence individuals go to following their last contact with CoC services. Frequently, this destination is only the first step on a longer path to housing stability. Exit destination was unavailable for almost 40% of entrants in 2018. For those who did have a recorded exit destination, the largest subset went to stay with friends or family or went to an unsubsidized rental unit.

**Rent or own:** The largest group of known exits went to a rental unit. Almost half (45.2%) moved into an unsubsidized rental of their own. Another 21.1% moved into a rental with a subsidy. A total of 0.4% moved into a home that they owned, either with or without a subsidy.

**Friends and family:** Almost a third (27.0%) moved in with family or friends, either on a temporary or permanent basis. Moving back with friends or family may lead to a high rate of re-entry into the homelessness system, as this is not always stable or secure housing.

**Place not fit for habitation:** Unfortunately, 7% exited the shelter to a place not fit for habitation. This includes 190 people in households and more than 230 children under 18.

**Shelter:** About 8.9% exited to another shelter.

The most common exit destination varied by household type. Unaccompanied minors were most likely to exit to a stay with friends or family (62.9%) as were adult-only households (28.4%). Single parent family households were more likely to exit to a rental situation (58.4%).

Studies show that not all exit destinations provide the same level of safety and continued housing stability. For example, sleeping on a friend's couch may provide temporary shelter, but may not be an effective long-term solution to prevent re-entry into the homeless system. Similarly, rental homes with high rents may ultimately be unsustainable for some. It is important to find targeted solutions to help ensure that as individuals exit the homelessness system they are in a sustainable rental situation.

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