



BACKGROUND

Youth Homelessness is a persistent challenge that impacts between 1 million and 1.7 million young people nationally. Unlike their adult counterparts, young people experiencing homelessness are not always seen as a visible street or shelter population, but are often “couch surfing” – staying with relatives, friends, and in many cases strangers. Even at best, these situations are short-term and cause significant instability in young people’s lives, disrupting employment and school attendance. In the worst case scenarios, young people who have already experienced the trauma of leaving their family of origin are exposed to dangerous and damaging situations such as further abuse or exploitation.

CAUSES OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The National Coalition for the Homeless identifies three primary causes of youth homelessness: family problems, economic problems and residential instability. These trends are noticeable in the District. Nearly half of all young people age 18 to 24 surveyed in DC’s annual census of youth experiencing homelessness cited family conflict – which includes general parent-youth conflict, as well as conflict due to youth’s sexual orientation or gender identity, and conflict due to family financial issues – as the primary factor leading to their homelessness or housing insecurity.

Economic conditions are the second biggest factor. Youth cited loss of job/income, eviction, and a general lack of financial support or affordable housing as the main reason for their unstable situation.

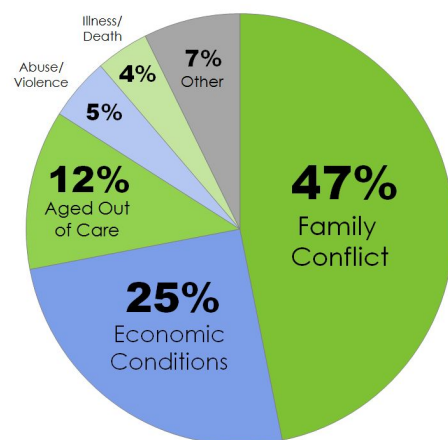
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN DC

Historically, data evidencing the size and circumstances of the population of youth experiencing homelessness have been lacking, both in DC and nationally, resulting in little public awareness or political urgency to be found for taking critical and timely action to address the problem. To address this gap, in May 2014 the DC Council passed the End Youth Homelessness Amendment Act, which mandated and funded an expansion of accessible youth-friendly services and an annual census of District youth experiencing homelessness.

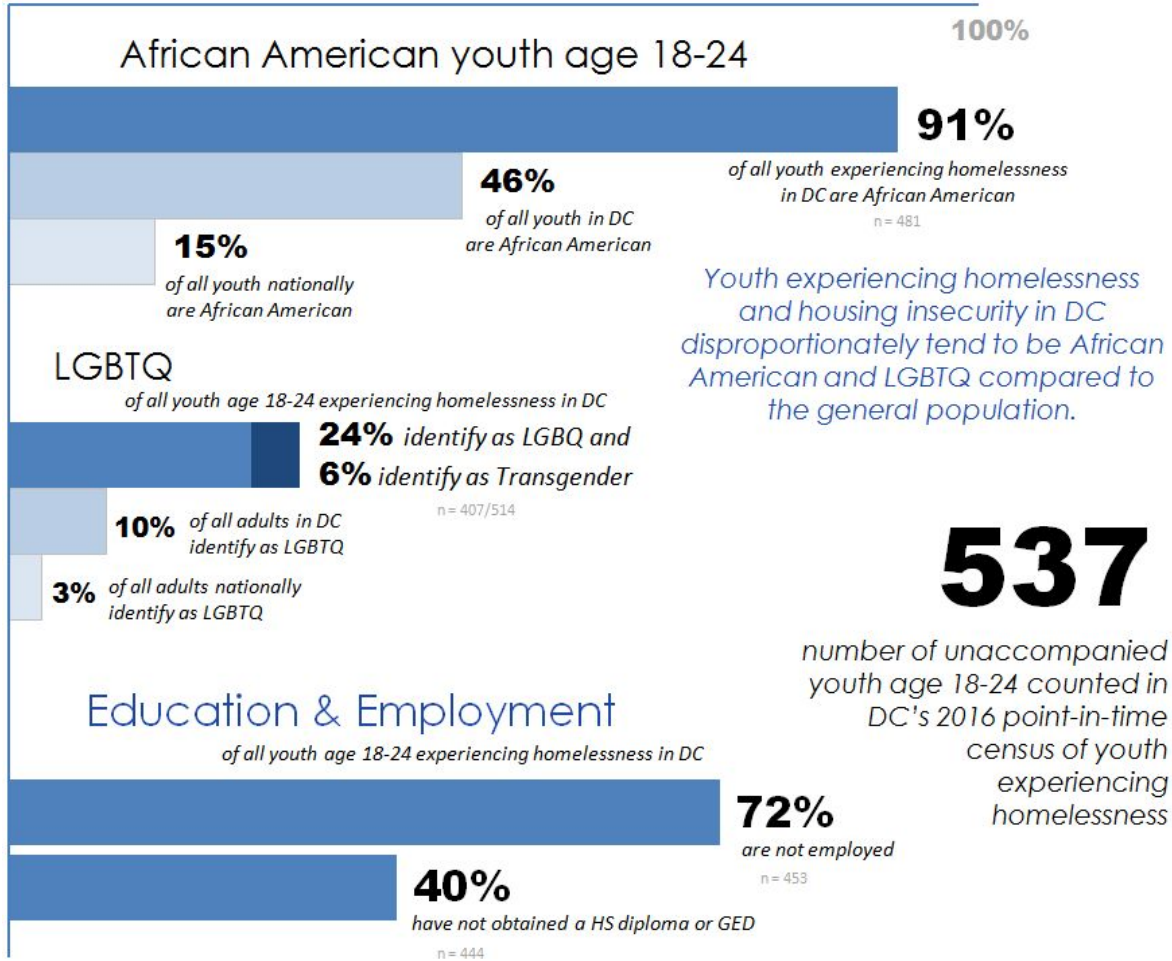
The census reveals that at any given time, there are more than 500 youth in the District who are relying on emergency shelter, transitional housing, “couch surfing,” or on the streets. This number exceeds the current supply of beds in DC youth shelters and housing by several hundred, and significantly strains prevention services. **Closing that gap, by adding to the shelter and housing inventory, and increasing prevention and aftercare programming in the District, is of principal importance.**

The reverse page illustrates some of the key findings of the latest census. To address the overall problem of youth homelessness, and the causes and concerns revealed in the annual census, DC’s Interagency Council on Homelessness has adopted *Solid Foundations DC*, a five-year, comprehensive plan to end youth homelessness in the District of Columbia. For further reading, it can be downloaded at bit.ly/solidfoundationsdc.

Source: Youth Count DC, September 2016. Categories derived from 425 responses from youth age 18-24 who answered “What would you say is the primary reason you are homeless/housing insecure?”



WHO ARE THE DC YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?



Other System Involvement

More than a third of youth age 18-24 experiencing homelessness in DC have touched other public systems



35%
CSOSA
n = 316



34%
DYRS
n = 431



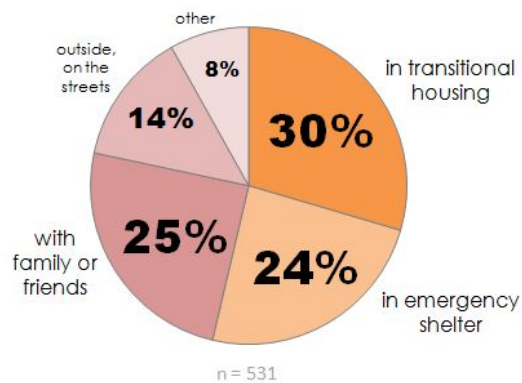
28%
CFSA
n = 475



25%
Other Institution/
Treatment Setting
n = 449

Where Homeless Youth Sleep

At any given point in time, youth age 18-24 experiencing homelessness are typically in shelter, "couch surfing", or on the street



Sources: YOUTH Count DC, the second annual census of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in DC, was conducted from September 16-24, 2016. Response rates varied by question, and the total numbers of responses (n) is included here for each. Responses combine data on youth age 18-24 experiencing literal homelessness (e.g. in shelter) and those experiencing housing insecurity (e.g. "couch surfing"). Other data sources include Kids Count for general DC and national totals on race, and the Movement Advancement Project for LGBTQ.