



2020 Youth Outreach & Count Report





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A message from CEO Richard Cho

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that in our society so many youth face homelessness and housing instability. Adolescence and young adulthood is hard enough without the hardship of not having a place to sleep from night to night. We must do better.

This year's Youth Outreach and Count showed that we still have considerable work ahead of us. Based on the information collected by 250 volunteers last January and extrapolated data, we estimated that 2,462 youth would experience homeless in 2020 and an additional 5,361 would experience housing instability this year. Even more heartbreaking was our estimate that 696 minors would experience literal homelessness in 2020. This is not how childhood should look.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our volunteers, to the schools and other partners who participated in this year's project, and to our funders, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Fairfield County's Community Foundation, Farmington Bank Community Foundation, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and Melville Charitable Trust. Thank you all for your commitment to making sure every youth has a place to call home.

The good news is that through our Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project, we have the means to provide youth with the services and supports necessary to remain housed. Our hope is that by doing a better job identifying youth in crisis we will be able to connect them with the resources they need.

Finally, a special thanks to you for taking the time to read this report.

In gratitude,



Richard Cho
CEO



A message from Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Coordinator Roy Graham



Dear Friends,

This report is dark. It is hard to look homelessness in the face. Our society is failing so many youth. In 2020, we should be doing better.

The good news is that we do have solutions for young people when we can identify them. In 2018, Connecticut was selected as one of ten communities awarded the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project grant (YHDP) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Through this grant, we have been able to provide technical assistance as well as funding for planning and homeless assistance projects, to learn how communities can successfully approach the goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness by building comprehensive systems of care for youth and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24..

Our vision is one where all young people have safe, stable places to live and opportunities to reach their full potential. Prior to the inception of the YHDP grant there were very few resources dedicated solely to the needs of individual youth and young adults who were experiencing unstable housing and/or literal unsheltered homelessness.

Where do we go from here? In 2021, we will be working closely with youth groups, youth with lived experience, and municipal staff to connect youth with services. As we publish this report, we have housed 261 households including 300 adults and over a dozen children parented by youth. Help us keep up the momentum.

There is so much more to this story, and we hope that you will join us in our efforts to end youth homelessness. It's the right thing to do.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roy Graham'.

Roy Graham

A message from Youth Systems Coordinator Carl Asikainen

Dear Friends,

This is it. For years now, we have been saying that we were going to end youth homelessness by 2020. Years later, we have a system in place to end youth homelessness. Now we just need your help connecting youth with available resources to help them resolve their housing crises.

January of 2021 is around the corner and CCEH will be in touch with municipalities throughout the state to seek assistance identifying youth in need of housing assistance. We know from experience that these youth often choose to float below the radar. Their lack of trust is not unfounded--- the system has failed them, so why would they reach out?

In 2021, we will be looking for your help. We will be looking for help from McKinney-Ventos connecting unaccompanied youth in their school districts with services. We will be looking for help from municipal youth services departments identifying youth in need of housing assistance. We will even be looking for help from youth themselves in reaching out to peers.

In any case, we need all the help we can get making sure that no youth spends 2021 homeless or unstably housed. Please join us.

Yours truly,



Carl Asikainen



About the Youth Outreach and Count Project

The Youth Outreach and Count Project is an annual data collection and awareness-raising event designed to expand outreach partnerships across the state and collect vital data on youth between the ages of 13-24 who are experiencing homelessness or severe housing instability. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires a Point-in-Time Count, a census of individuals and families experiencing homelessness, to be conducted in every state. In 2017, HUD began requiring data specific to youth and young adults.

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) leads this effort and expanded it to raise local and statewide awareness, augment outreach, and build stronger safety nets through collaborative partnerships. While CCEH played a key coordinating role, the seven regional Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs) and hundreds of volunteers across the state contributed to the collection of the data included in this report.

Where did volunteers survey youth?

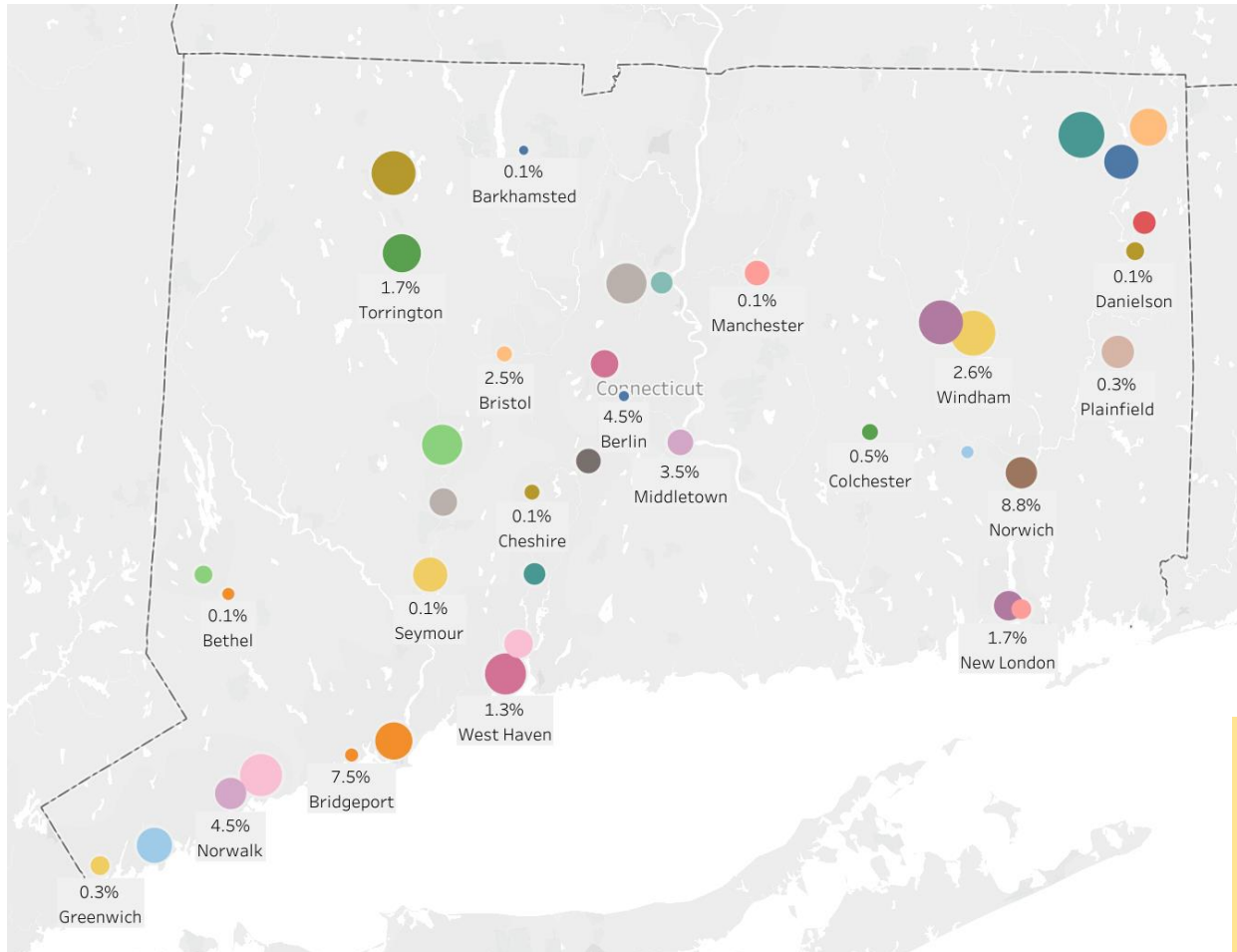


Figure 1: Map of Surveyed Youth

Volunteers surveyed youth in towns throughout the state of Connecticut, placing emphasis on towns known to have higher levels of poverty.

Methodology

Connecticut's Youth Outreach & Count was guided by best practices for surveying young people provided by the "Voices of Youth Count" led by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, lessons learned from previous counts, and the input from young people across the state. The count also utilizes the extrapolation services of Dr. Stephen Adair, Professor of Sociology at Central Connecticut State University.

The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) conducted this year's Youth Outreach and Count from January 22-28. Community providers, state agencies, schools, colleges and universities throughout the state joined one of the eight regional Youth Engagement Team Initiatives (YETIs) across the state to plan and execute the Youth Outreach and Count. Volunteers completed 2,573 surveys during the week-long effort.

We based our extrapolations on data collected through the Youth Count, the annual Point-in-Time Count, and the Homeless Management Information System.

Information on methodology limitations can be found at <http://www.cceh.org/youthcount/methodology2020>.



We estimate that 2,462 youth
experienced literal
homelessness in 2020.

Executive Summary

This year, CCEH and our partners enlisted 250 volunteers in surveying homeless and housing unstable youth throughout the state. These volunteers conducted 2,573 surveys. We combined data from these surveys with information collected during the Point-in-Time Count and extrapolated from these results to develop estimates. Key findings were as follows:

- We estimated that 7,823 youth would experience homelessness or housing instability during 2020, representing a 16% decrease from the 9,303 youth estimated in 2019.
- We estimated that 5,361 of these youth would be unstably housed and 2,462 would experience literal homelessness during that period.
- We estimated that 5,379 youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four would experience homelessness or housing instability during 2020. Our data suggests that 1,766 of this age cohort would be literally homeless at a point during 2020.
- We estimated that 2,444 youth under the age of eighteen would be homeless or unstably housed during 2020. We estimated that 696 of these minors would be literally homeless during that period.

Data visualizations from the Youth Count can be found at:
www.cceh.org/youthcount2020.

Executive Summary: Key Estimates

Population	Unstably Housed	Literally Homeless	TOTAL
18-24 years of age	3,613	1,766	5,379
13-17 years of age	1,748	696	2,444
TOTAL YOUTH	5,361	2,462	7,823

Table 1: Total Unstably Housed and Literally Homeless Youth Population

These estimates are based on the 2,573 surveys completed combined with extrapolated data.

Executive Summary: Responses from Surveyed Youth

88 indicated criminal justice involvement	14 were still in foster care	8 were minors still in foster care	68 had been trafficked
9.3% were parenting youth	123 had been or still are involved with DCF or foster care	58.5% had no high school diploma	68.4% were enrolled in school
18% were enrolled in college courses	Of youth enrolled in college courses 1 was a trafficked minor	3% were enrolled in trade/vocational school	47.6% youth ages 18-24 were unemployed

Table 2: Responses From Surveyed Youth

These figures reflect responses from the 2,573 surveys collected.

Demographics: Race and Ethnicity

Why do we collect data on this?

Capturing demographic data allows us to analyze racial disparities our system needs to address.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Nearly half of the respondents struggling with housing are youth of color. Black and African Americans are 12.2% of the population of Connecticut (Census.gov for 2019), yet represent 31% of the homeless or unstably housed respondents for the Youth Count.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

This year's percentages were roughly comparable to last year's.

What are the limitations of data we collected?

This year the survey was administered to students in the least affluent school districts in order to capture those students who may be most likely to experience homelessness or unstable housing. As a consequence, the report does not include extensive data on youth homelessness from more affluent towns.

What is our main take-away?

People of color continue to be overrepresented in comparison with general population numbers. School districts should pay attention to students of color as there may be higher incidents of homelessness among this population.

Demographics: Race

How would you describe your race?

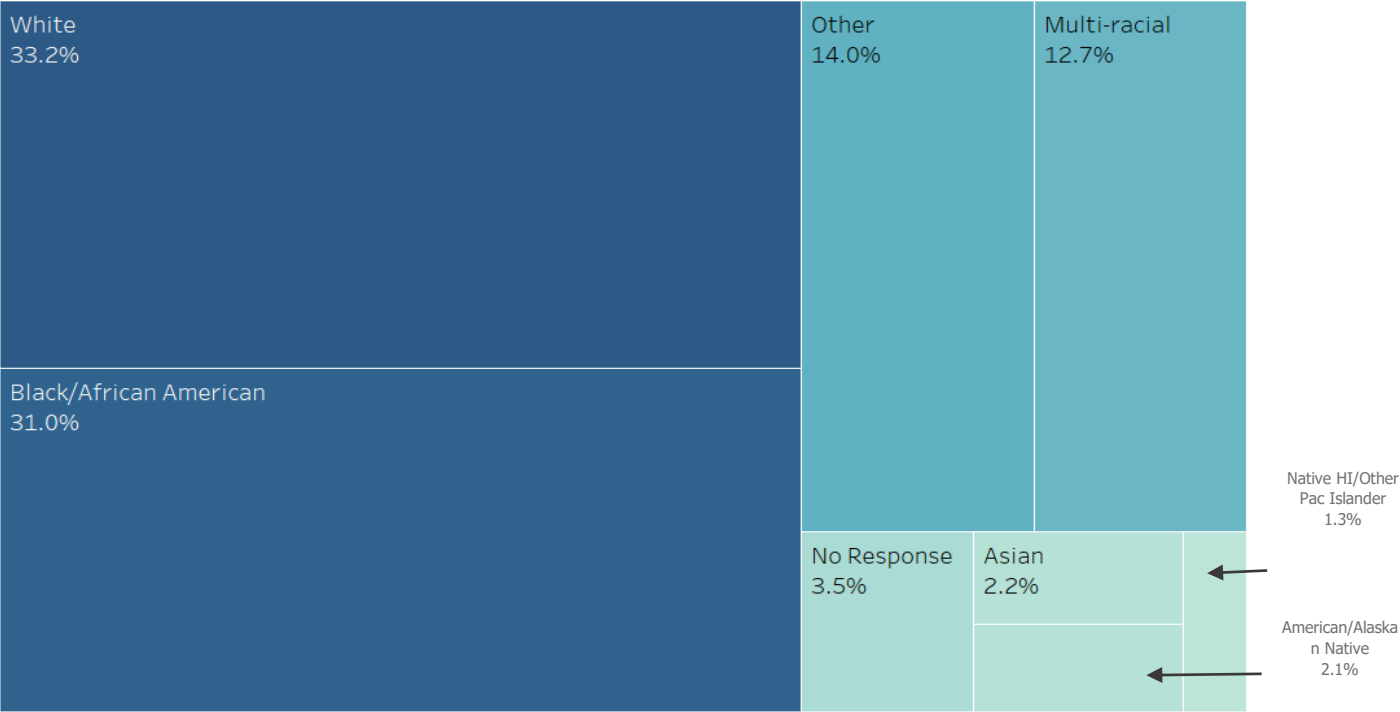


Figure 2.1: Youth Count Composition by Race.



We estimate that **5,361 youth** were **unstably housed** in 2020.

Demographics: Ethnicity

How would you describe your ethnicity?

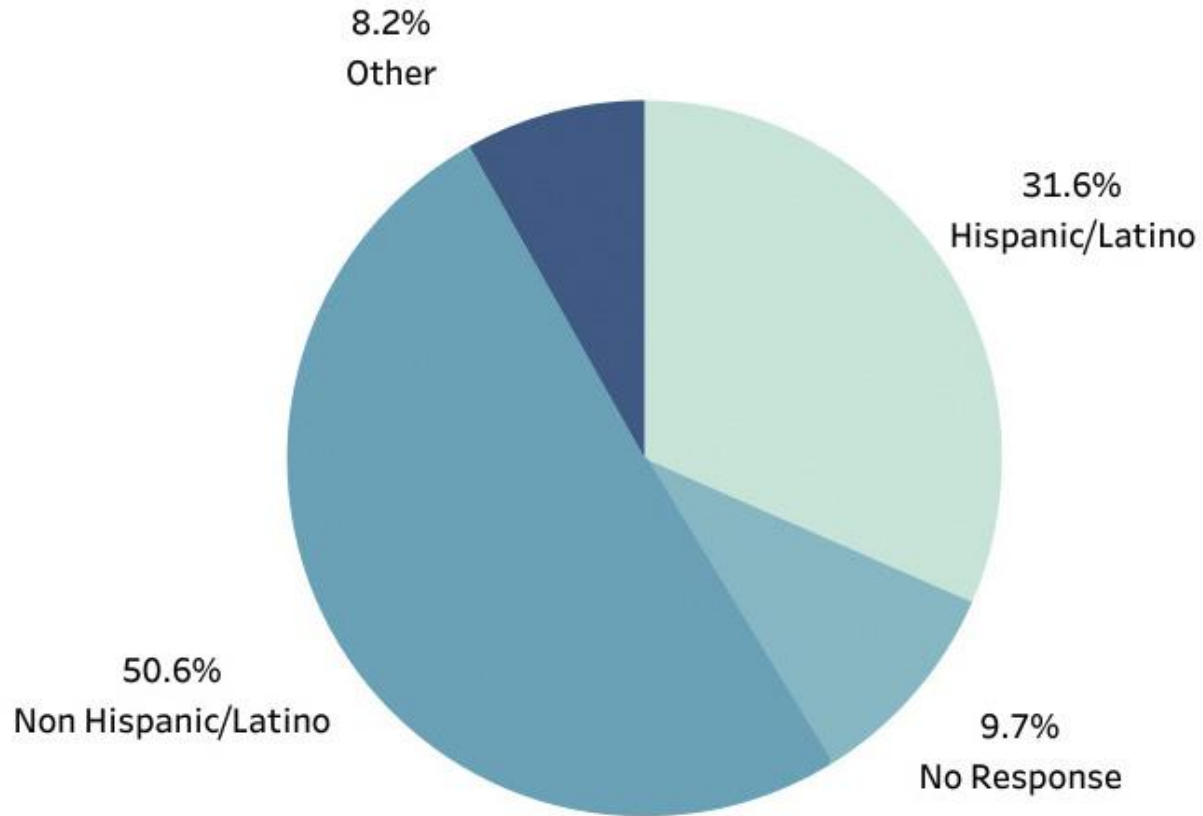


Figure 2.2: Youth Count Composition by Ethnicity.

Demographics: Gender and Sexual Orientation

Why do we collect data on this?

LGBTQ+ youth continue to experience housing insecurity at higher rates than their peers.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Nearly 1 out of 5 respondents struggling with housing were LGBTQ+.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

The percentage of youth identifying as LGBTQ+ increased from 4% of last year's respondents to 17% of this year's.

What are the limitations of data we collected?

While we collected data from a broader geography, we collected fewer surveys this year. We did, however, focus on collecting data through LGBTQ+ partners, which may have contributed to the increase.

What is our main take-away?

We need to support providers and other partners in identifying LGBTQ+ experiencing homelessness.

Demographics: Gender

How would you describe your gender?

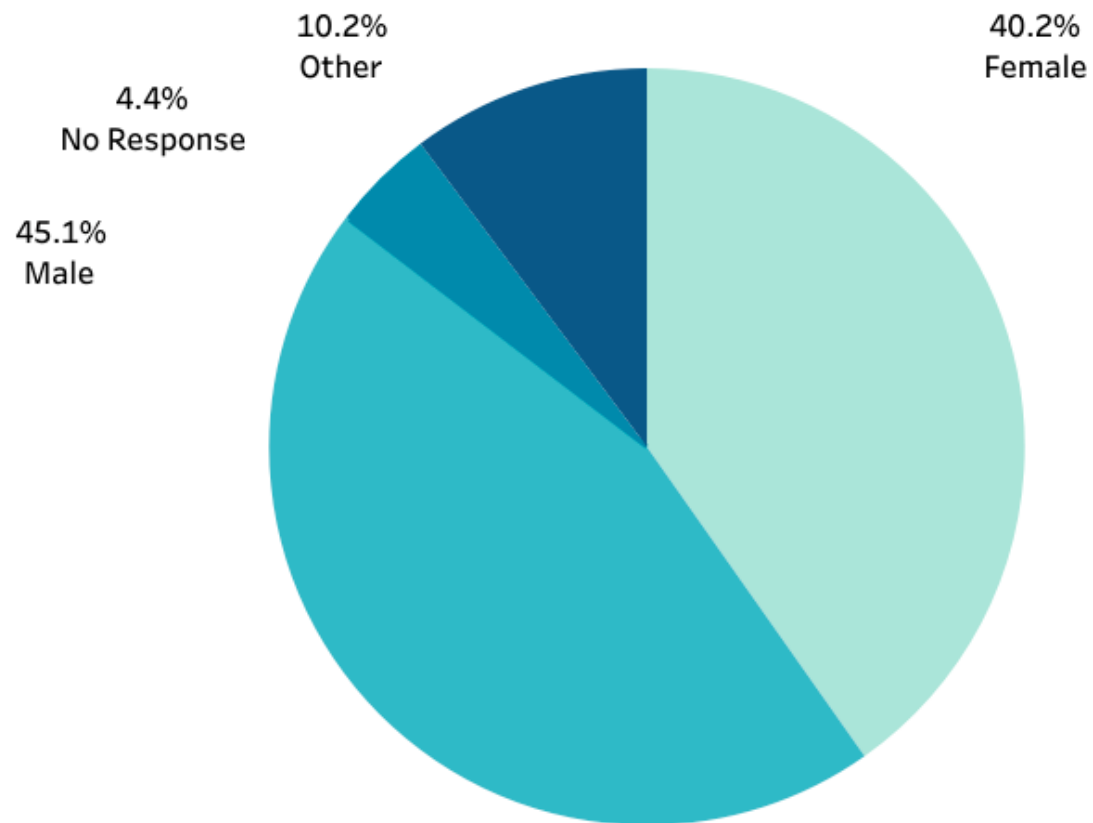


Figure 3.1: Youth Count Composition by Gender



More than 20% of surveyed youth identified as **LGBTQ+**, **pansexual**, or **asexual**.

Demographics: Sexual Orientation

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

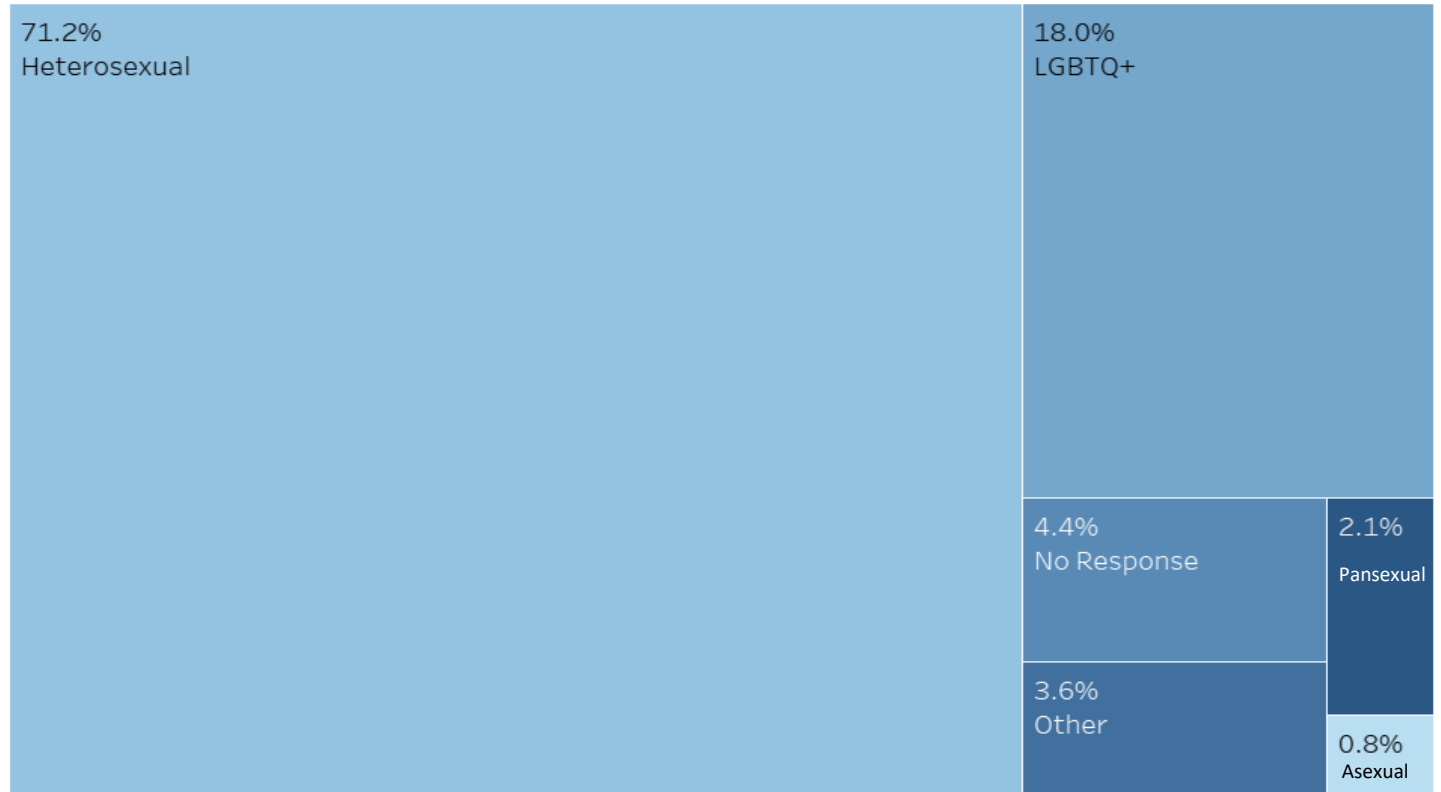


Figure 3.2: Youth Count Composition by Sexual Orientation

Frequency of Moves

Why do we collect data on this?

Young people move around at a high frequency. This presents challenges to efforts for successful outreach and identification. Knowing details about the scope and type of these moves can help our partners target outreach and specific interventions.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Respondents were able to select multiple answers. The fact that "other" was selected more than 50% of the time indicates that we need to do more work to figure out where young people who are unstably housed are sleeping. It is worth noting that couch-surfing represented more than 15% of responses, indicating that many youth rely on their social networks for temporary places to stay.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

We did not collect data on this topic last year.

What are the limitations of data we collected?

Many youth skipped this question or selected 'other' as a response. One reason for this may be the fact that it is difficult for youth in crisis to recall chronological, historical events due to traumatic nature of homelessness.

What is our main take-away?

Youth who are unstably housed are at greater risk of becoming literally homeless. We need to figure out ways to identify youth experiencing housing instability in order to intervene before they run out of options.

Frequency of Moves

Where have you stayed over the past 60 days because you did not have a safe or permanent place to stay?

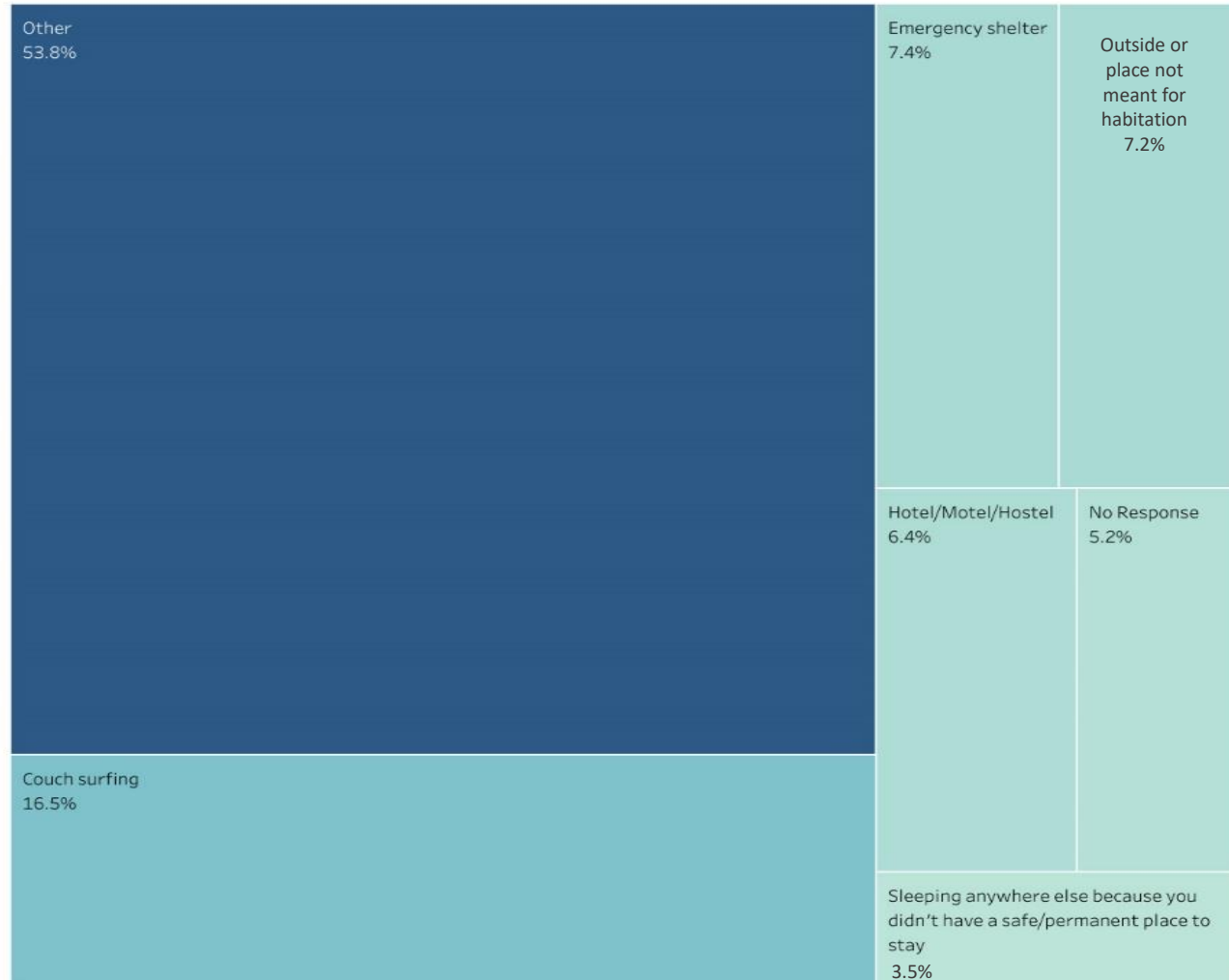


Figure 4: Frequency of Moves.

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Understanding the root causes helps us to understand how to prevent homelessness among youth.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Data suggests that family conflict and unemployment are the main causes of homelessness among youth.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

Conflict and unemployment were once again listed as the top two causes of homelessness.

What are the limitations of our approach?

Changes in how we framed the question resulted in differences in how youth responded.

What is our main take-away?

We need to focus our efforts on training people who interface with youth in diversion techniques focused on resolving family conflict and unemployment.

Causes of Homelessness

What do you feel led you to being unstably house?

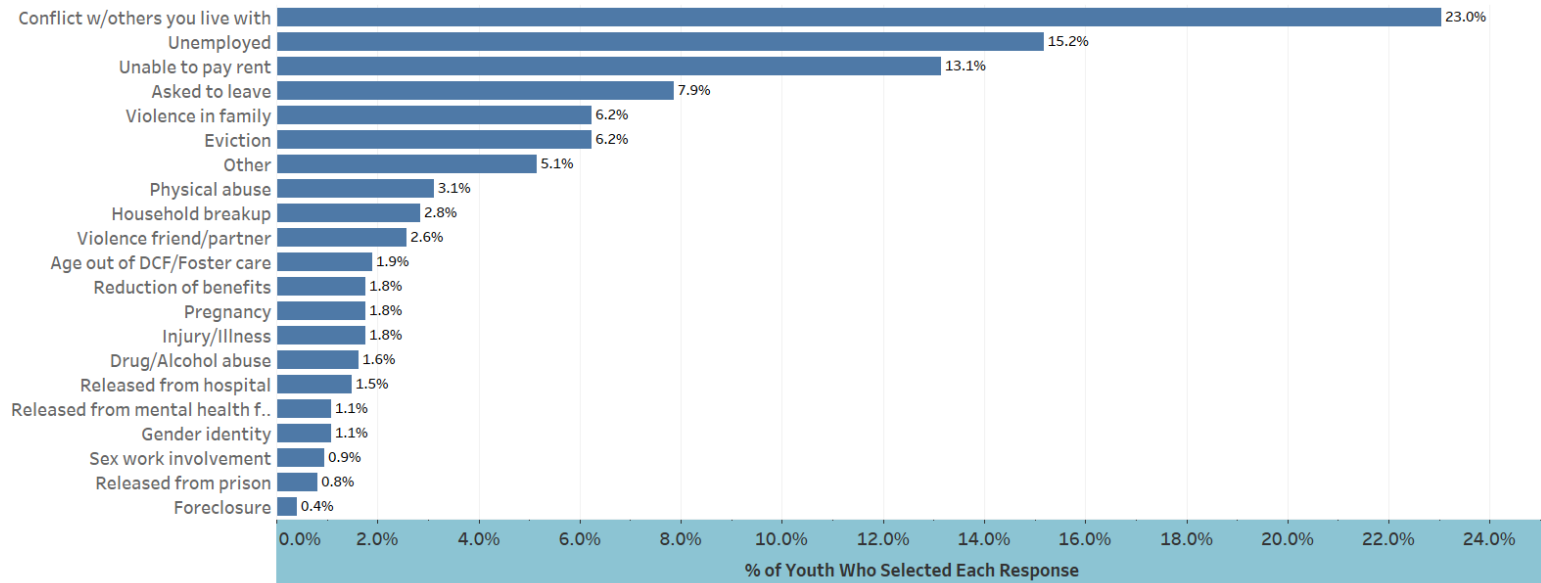


Figure 5: Causes of Homelessness

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Young people facing housing insecurity are at high risk for trafficking.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Very few minors who indicated that they were literally homeless shared that they had a history of transactional sex. This is not surprising given the complicated dynamics associated with trafficking.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

These figures were comparable to last year's.

What are the limitations of our approach?

Youth who have been coerced are generally reluctant to honestly answer survey questions on the subject out of fear of retribution.

What's our main take-away?

Identifying trafficked youth is incredibly challenging. We need to identify additional approaches to connecting with trafficked youth experiencing homelessness.

Trafficking and Transactional Sex

Has anyone encouraged/pressured/forced you to exchange sexual acts for resources?

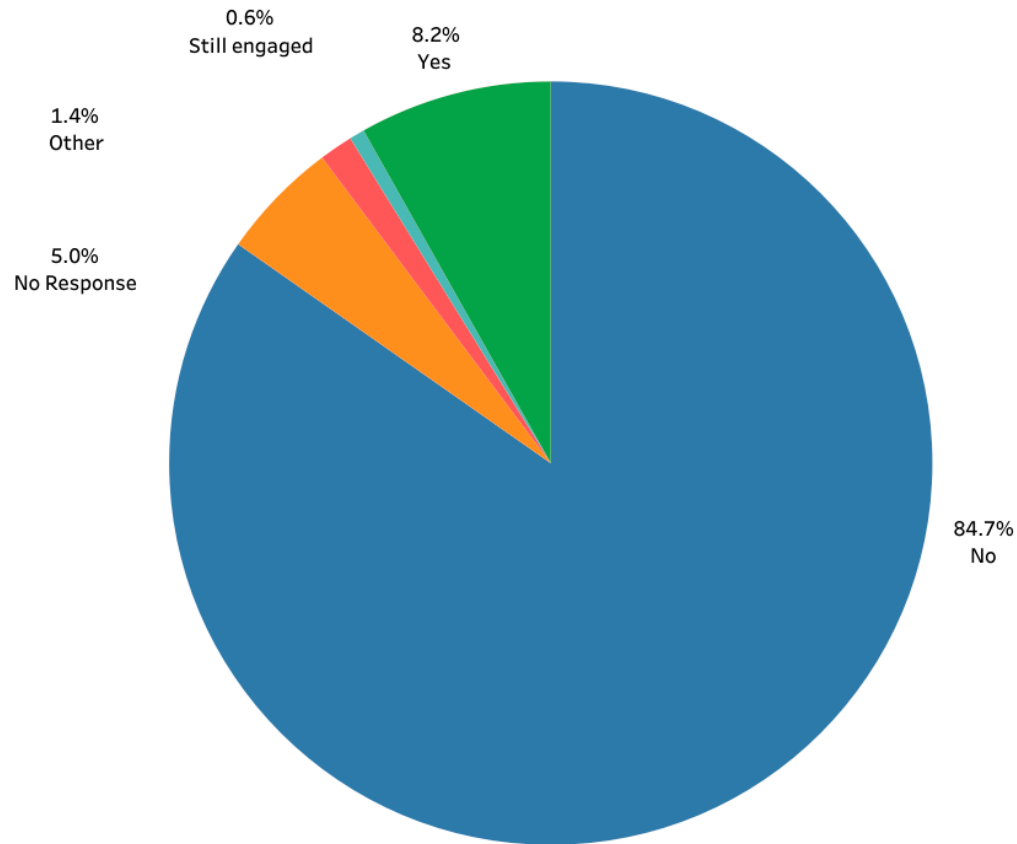


Figure 6: Trafficking and Transactional Sex

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Youth who have had involvement in the criminal justice system are at high risk of becoming homeless.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Eleven percent of homeless youth had some sort of justice system involvement.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

This percentage remained constant from last year.

What are the limitations of our approach?

We did not identify any limitations to our approach.

What's our main take-away?

Reducing youth arrests through alternative approaches, including mediation and Juvenile Review Boards, will also aid in reducing youth homelessness.

Criminal Justice Involvement

Have you ever been in juvenile detention, prison or jail?

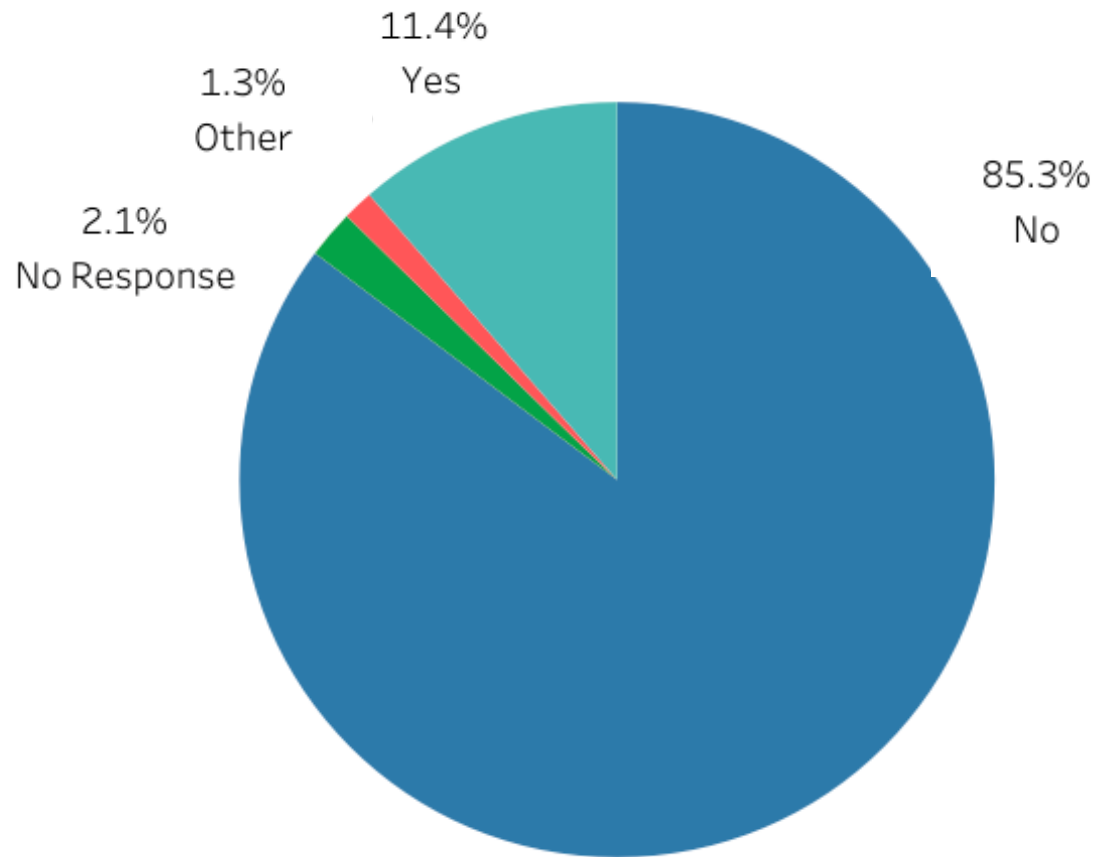


Figure 7: Criminal Justice Involvement

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Poor relationships with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and foster care can propel youth to leave their homes.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Nearly sixteen percent of youth reported current or past involvement with DCF and Foster Care. This figure is consistent with our understanding that youth who have not had a good experience with child welfare systems continue to struggle with housing after the term of their care.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

This represents a slight increase in the percentage from last year.

What are the limitations of our approach?

We did not identify any limitations to our approach.

What's our main take-away?

Youth who have had negative experiences with DCF may be more inclined to refuse services that the agency offers, including but not limited to financial assistance for college.

DCF and Foster Care Involvement

Have you ever been, or are you still, in foster care/DCF custody?

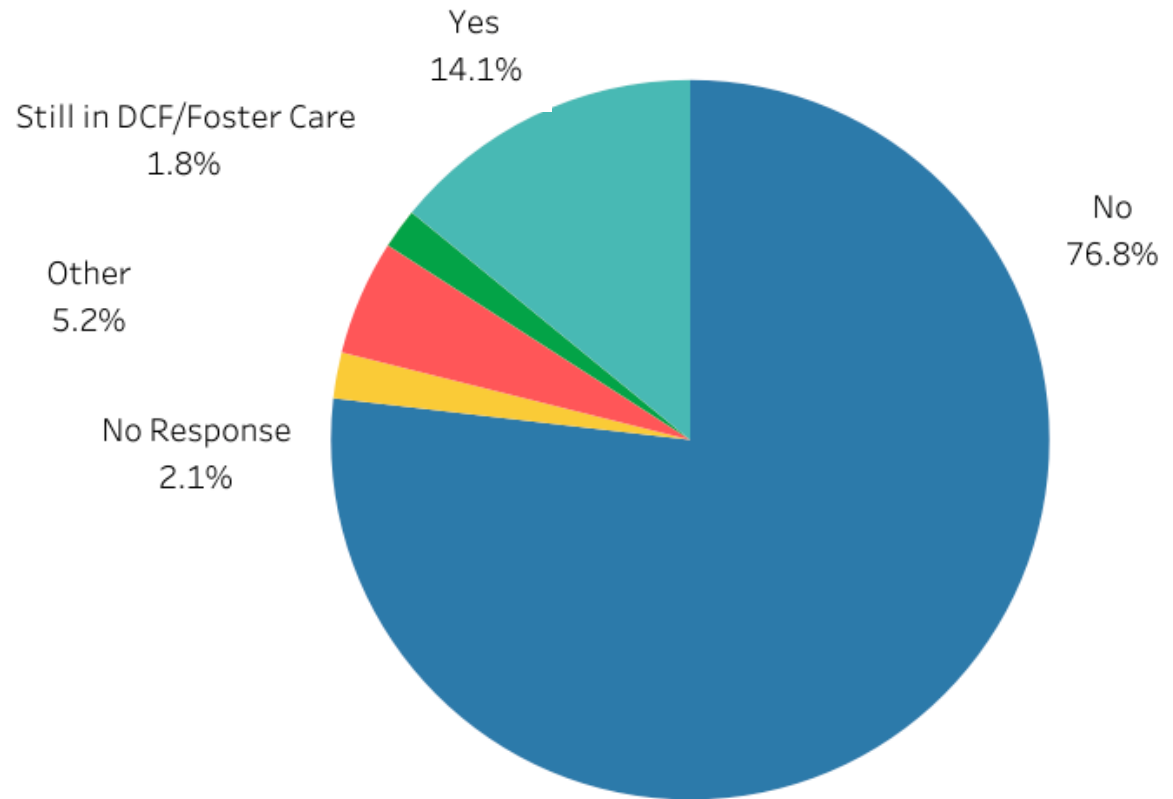


Figure 8: DCF and Foster Care Involvement

Education and Employment

Why do we collect data on this subject?

We want to understand where in the cradle-to-career pipeline our system is failing homeless and housing unstable youth. Understanding these dynamics allows us to address root and sustaining causes of youth homelessness.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Seventy-four minors reported being separated from their school district and struggling with housing. Nearly half of the 18-24 year olds struggling with housing lack employment.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

We found that a larger percentage of homeless youth reported that they were employed this year than the previous year.

What are the limitations of our approach?

We did not identify any limitations to our approach.

What is our main take-away?

Education is critical for employment; as education increases so do employment opportunities. Partnering with school systems is essential to assist minors and youth with gaining skills and resources needed for employment. Early intervention is critical to ensuring successful outcomes.

Education

What is the highest degree or level of education you completed?

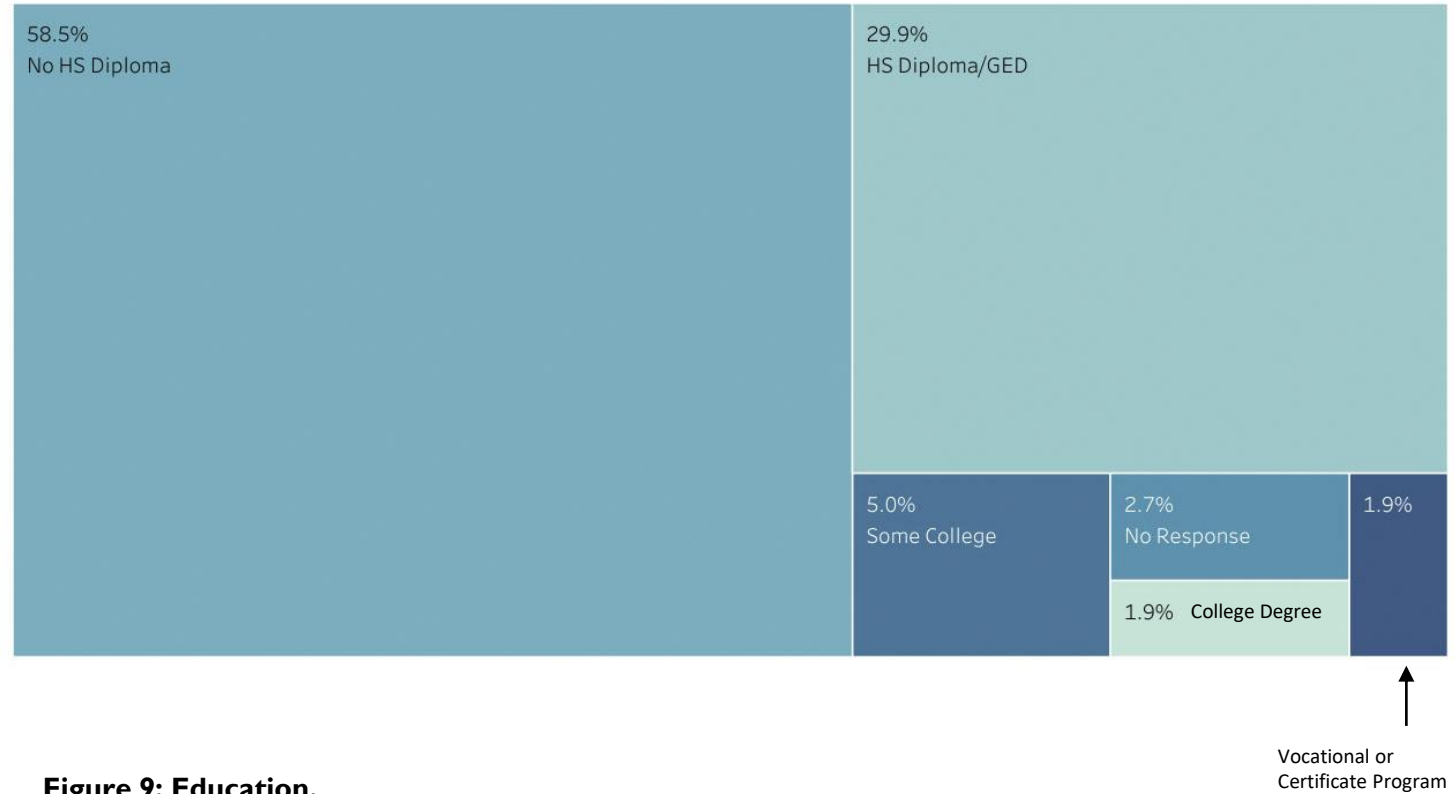



Figure 9: Education.



Nearly two thirds of youth surveyed were enrolled in or attending school.

Employment

Are you currently attending school/other educational program?	
Currently enrolled and attending	64.2%
Not currently enrolled	30.1%
Currently enrolled not attending	4.3%
No Response	1.4%

Are you currently employed at a job for which you receive a paycheck?	
No	57.8%
Yes	36.6%
Other	1.7%
No Response	3.9%

Table 3: Employment.



school district
**We estimate that 696 minors
17 and under experienced
literal homelessness in 2020.**

Minors (Identified as Youth 13-17)

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Homeless minors have unique needs and challenges. Data allows us to better target interventions for minors experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

A significant number of minors experience homelessness. The data indicates that the information we are receiving from school districts, child welfare, and juvenile justice does not fully represent the scope of homelessness among minors.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

Data consistently shows a connection between child welfare history and homelessness among minors. We also saw increases in minors identifying as LGBTQ+ as well as minors reporting having been trafficked.

What are the limitations of our approach?

Surveying in 2020 was balanced between 13-17 year olds and 18-24 year olds, which means that our sample disproportionately represented minors. The extrapolated numbers take this point into account.

What is our main take-away?

There is currently no comprehensive singular system to track minors experiencing homelessness. The Department of Children and Families, Department of Correction, State Department of Education, and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services all collect data separately, making it challenging to develop targeted interventions for unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness.



Parenting Youth

Why do we collect data on this subject?

Parenting youth face particularly difficult challenges finding stable housing and continuing their education.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Forty-one parenting youth reported homelessness and thirty-one indicated they were unstably housed.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

In 2019 the youth count showed 154 youth with children were struggling with housing. 66 indicated they were homeless and 88 were unstably housed.

What are the limitations of our approach?

The data provides a snapshot in time. Longitudinal data would allow more insights into how parenting, housing instability, and education intersect.

What is our main take-away?

Parenting youth require comprehensive and coordinated supports from school districts, Head Starts, and child welfare.

Why do we collect data on this subject?

This question provides insight into where to focus on building our system's service capacity for youth.

What do this year's numbers tell us?

Employment, financial challenges, transportation, a place to live long-term, and education represent roughly half of the responses we received for this question.

How does this compare to last year's numbers?

This percentage was comparable to last year's.

What are the limitations of our approach?

We did not identify any limitations.

What is our main take-away?

Employment services, financial assistance, and help with transportation are among the top services required by youth experiencing homelessness.

Uses of Services

Total count and percentage of each service selected (youth selected multiple services.)

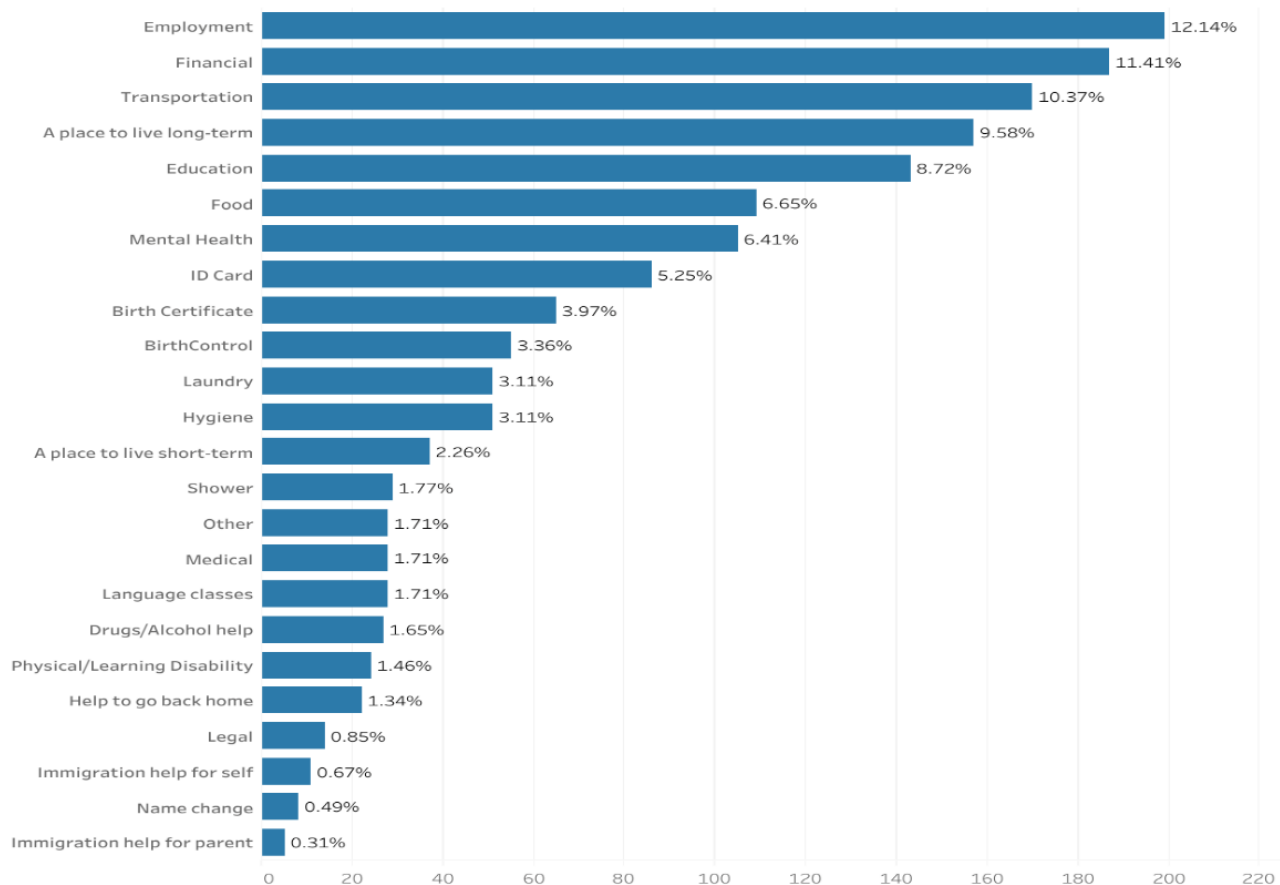


Figure 10: Uses of Services



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many volunteers who participated in the count. We are grateful to everyone for their hard work and wish to thank the following agencies for providing regional coordination this year:

- Access Community Action Agency
- BHcare
- Capital Region Mental Health Center
- Catholic Charities of Fairfield County
- Columbus House, Inc.
- The Connection, Inc.
- CT Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services
- CT Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Emerge, Inc.
- Hartford Healthcare
- Inspirica, Inc.
- Journey Home
- Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project
- Recovery Network of Programs
- Salvation Army Waterbury
- Supportive Housing Works
- United Way of Southeastern CT
- Windham No Freeze

We also would like to thank the following schools for participating:

- E.O. Smith High School (Mansfield)
- Harvard H. Ellis Technical High School (Killingly)
- Killingly High School
- Maloney High School (Meriden)
- Manchester High School
- New Britain High School
- Norwich Free Academy
- Norwich Technical High School
- Platt High School (Meriden)
- Tourtelotte Memorial High School (Thompson)
- Windham High School

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