

Additional Forms of Homelessness and Housing Instability

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Introduction

In addition to the data collected through PIT counts and HMIS are several other sources of information about homelessness and housing instability. This section presents information about people who share housing with others due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e., doubled up); people who are living in hotels or motels because they have no alternative adequate accommodations; and people who have housing problems such as severe rent burdens or unsafe housing. Information from the American Housing Survey (AHS) and the U.S. Department of Education¹ describes:

- People who live with another household and then move;
- Children who are classified as homeless following a definition used by local school administrators to report to the U.S. Department of Education. The definition includes living with others because of loss of housing or economic hardship; and
- Low-income renters who are severely rent burdened, have severe housing problems, and have other indicators of instability such as missed rent payments or no good choice for a destination if evicted.

This information sheds light on the broader spectrum of people experiencing homelessness or precarious housing situations for organizations at the federal, state, and local levels. These data also inform the need for mainstream affordable housing and benefits programs that can supplement federal and local homelessness resources. It is important to realize that individuals and families experiencing homelessness often experience multiple types of housing instability.

The data sources—the American Housing Survey and data from local education agencies—have limitations, like all sources of data, but they provide context for understanding forms of homelessness and housing instability in addition to those described in the rest of this report.

American Housing Survey 2013 Supplement: Residents Who Have Moved Out in the Past 12 Months

“Doubling up” can mean many things and sometimes refers to multigenerational households or to people who share housing on a long-term basis in order to save on housing costs. A supplement to the 2013 AHS² was designed to learn about different forms of doubling up, including those in less stable living situations.

American Housing Survey Special Supplement for 2013

The American Housing Survey (AHS) is based on a representative sample of housing units in the United States and asks questions about the housing unit, the composition of the household occupying the unit, household income, and housing costs. The AHS is conducted biennially. Starting in 2011, the AHS consisted of a permanent core questionnaire plus topical supplements on a rotating basis. In 2013, the AHS included a topical supplement called “Doubling Up,” in which a subset of people were asked questions about reasons surrounding residential moves. The 2013 survey also asked renter households about some specific indicators of housing instability, such as threats of eviction, that are not part of the core questionnaire.

¹ For more information on the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of homeless children and youth, refer to: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html#sec725>.

² Details about the AHS and the Doubling Up supplement can be found here: <http://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/2013/> and <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/>.

Respondents³ were asked a series of questions about household members who had moved out of the housing unit within the past year. The questions were asked about households that stayed for at least two weeks and had no other usual residence.⁴

In 2013, there were 4.4 million households with at least one member who had moved out in the last year.⁵ This type of doubled up situation could reflect a variety of circumstances—for example, a college student who was at home during summer break and returned to school; an elderly person who was living with family and moved into assisted living; someone who moved to a new city and stayed with a friend until finding his or her own place; or a runaway youth with no stable housing options, moving from one friend's house to another friend's house. Therefore, the 2013 AHS supplement asked questions about the nature of the mover's stay and about the mover's destination. The answers to those questions reveal a subset of people who may be particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. Exhibit 1 summarizes the reasons household members moved out of the respondent's housing unit and the household members' destination upon moving.

EXHIBIT 1: Reasons Household Members Moved Out of the Respondent's Housing Unit and Where They Moved

	# Housing Units	%
Total	4,421,000	
Reason for Stay		
Lack of Money	1,191,000	27.1
Other Reasons (not lack of money)	3,200,000	72.9
Asked to Leave		
Yes	320,000	7.3
No	4,089,000	92.7
Reason for Leaving		
Financial	543,000	12.4
Crowding, conflict or violence	250,000	5.7
Other Reasons ^a	3,585,000	81.9
Destination		
Moved to the home of relatives/friends	1,084,000	25.3
Moved to homeless situation ^b	13,000	0.3
Moved to treatment program, hospital, or nursing home	67,000	1.6
Moved to jail or prison	17,000	0.4
Moved to Foster Care	11,000	0.3
Moved to Another Situation ^c	3,090,000	72.2

Source: Table S-07-AO of the 2013 AHS National Summary tables

Note: The number of housing units is rounded to the nearest thousand. Those "not reported" are excluded.

^a Other reasons for leaving the housing unit included a major change in the family (e.g. marriage, new relationship, divorce, death, separation), health reasons, to be closer to work or job, school or military, or to establish one's own household.

^b A homeless situation was defined as staying in a shelter program or in a place not meant for human habitation such as a park, street, sidewalk, car, or abandoned building.

^c Other situations included one's own place, dormitories, or barracks.

³ These questions were asked of a knowledgeable household member age 16 or over. In most cases, the respondent was the head of household.

⁴ These questions were restricted to occupied housing units where a person or group of people moved out within 12 months prior to the interview or since the current occupants moved in when that was less than a year before the interview. Household members moving out included anyone who stayed in the home for at least 2 weeks and had no other place where he or she usually lived. While respondents were instructed to only include people who had stayed at least two weeks, a small percentage of households were reported with a length of stay less than 2 weeks. They included minors who moved out without a parent or guardian. In cases where more than one person or group of people moved out during the last year, the respondent was instructed to refer to the first person of group of people listed as moving out in the last year.

⁵ The AHS National Summary Tables (Table S-07_AO) are available at: <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs/data/2013/national-summary-report-and-tables---ahs-2013.html>

Of the households with at least one member that moved out in the past year, 27.1 percent were reported by the respondent to have been staying because of a lack of money to pay for housing. In addition, 7.3 percent (320,000 movers) of household members who moved were asked to leave. Other reasons included crowding and conflict or violence in the housing unit (5.7 percent of those who moved out), and financial reasons (12.4 percent of those who moved out).⁶

Few household members who moved out (less than one percent) were reported by the respondent to have gone to a shelter program or a place not meant for human habitation,⁷ but a quarter went to stay with family or friends rather than to a place of their own. Some household members went to settings that are known precursors to homelessness: institutional health facility, such as a treatment program, hospital, or nursing home (1.6 percent or 67,000 movers), jail or prison (0.4 percent or 17,000 movers), or foster care (0.3 percent or 11,000 movers).

U.S. Department of Education: Data from Local Education Agencies on Unstably Housed and Homeless Children

In *Opening Doors*, the Administration set a goal of preventing and ending homelessness among families, youth, and children in 2020. The plan notes that children experiencing homelessness have high rates of acute and chronic health problems, as well as exposure to violence. The plan also notes the importance of improving enrollment, retention in, and successful completion of early childhood, elementary, and secondary education for these children.

The U.S. Department of Education collects data from local education agencies (LEAs) about children ages 3 through grade 12 who are enrolled in public schools,⁸ including public preschool programs, whose primary nighttime residence at any time during a school year was:

1. a shelter, transitional housing, or awaiting foster care placement;
2. unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, or abandoned buildings);
3. a hotel or motel due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; or
4. in housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e., doubled-up).

The Department of Education uses these primary nighttime residence categories to provide services to students as mandated under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The data reported by the U.S. Department of Education are used by the agency to determine whether states are providing children and youth residing in the primary nighttime residences listed above with access to a free, appropriate public education.

⁶ Financial reasons could include the inability to contribute to the housing costs in their host's unit, but it could also include a mover's ability to pay for their own housing.

⁷ This is a small number compared to the number of people staying in shelters at some time during 2014 who were reported by the HMIS to have come from staying with friends or relatives. These numbers are based on different methods of identifying people who become homeless.

⁸ Some students in higher grades are youth over the age of 18.

During the 2013–2014 academic year, the U.S. Department of Education reported 1,298,236 children living in the primary nighttime residences categories used to provide services to students as mandated under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, an 8 percent increase from the prior school year (95,729 more children). Among these children, 14.3 percent were in shelters, transitional housing, or awaiting foster care placement; more than three quarters (76.2 percent) were sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; 3.2 percent were in an unsheltered location; and 6.2 percent were living in a hotel or motel because of the lack of alternate, adequate accommodations. Numbers of children in each of these nighttime residence categories, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education, increased between the 2012–2013 and 2013–2014 school years.

EXHIBIT 2: Number of Public School Children in Homeless Situations, the U.S. Department of Education, 2012–2014

Residence	2013–2014	2012–2013
Total	1,298,236	1,202,507
Shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster care	186,265	174,715
Living with other people because of housing loss or economic hardship ^a	989,844	919,370
Unsheltered locations ^b	42,003	39,243
Staying in hotels or motels because of the lack of alternative accommodations	80,124	69,179

Source: http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/data_comp.php. For U.S. Department of Education data about homeless children in your state, please visit:

<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html>

^a Children who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

^b E.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, abandoned buildings, or other places not intended for human habitation.

Local Education Agency Data, HMIS Data, and Point in Time Data

The LEA data reported by the U.S. Department of Education differ from the HMIS and PIT data reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in several other ways:

- LEA data are reported by school administrators and generally verified by local liaisons and state Coordinators. HMIS data are reported by homeless service provider staff. PIT count data are reported by communities based on counts of people in shelter programs and unsheltered locations.
- LEA data cover a July 1 to June 30 period; however, data on school children during the summer may be limited. HMIS data used in the AHAR cover a period from October 1 through September 30. PIT count data are for a single night in January.
- LEA data include children and youth living in hotels or motels if they are judged to be there because of a lack of alternate, adequate accommodation. HMIS data include people living in hotels or motels only if those accommodations were subsidized through a homeless assistance program.
- The LEA data reports on information on public school children from ages 3 through grade 12. HMIS and PIT count data include children under age 3. The LEA data include some young adults (18 and older) who are still in public school. The HMIS data and PIT count report all people 18 and over in a separate category from those under 18. The PIT count data report all youth who are ages 18 to 24 in a separate category.

American Housing Survey 2013: Renters with Worst Case Housing Needs and Other Indicators of Housing Instability

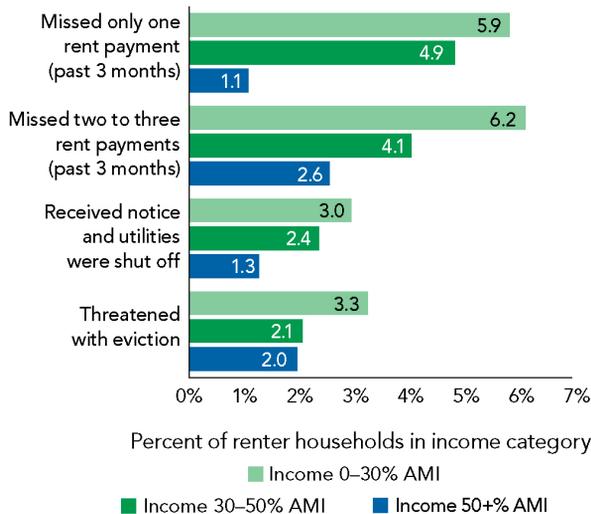
HUD submits periodic reports to Congress on renter households with severe needs for housing assistance. Submitted every other year, the reports are based on detailed information in the AHS on the quality and costs of rental housing units and the incomes of the housing's occupants. Households with worst case needs for housing assistance are defined as renters with incomes below 50 percent of area median income who do not have housing assistance and are living in severely substandard housing, paying more than half their income for housing costs, or both.

In 2015, HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) released the fifteenth in a series of Worst Case Needs reports to Congress, showing that 7.72 million renter households fell into the worst- category in 2013.⁹ Most households with worst case needs have severe rent burdens, and these households may be forced to move or may be evicted because they stop paying rent. To try to learn whether some of these households have immediate indicators of housing instability, the 2013 AHS included supplemental questions about missed rental payments and eviction threats.

⁹ http://www.huduser.org/portal/Publications/pdf/WorstCaseNeeds_2015.pdf

Most households (families and individuals) that become homeless have incomes well below the federal poverty standard. The tabulations in the 2013 Worst Case Needs report show that, among renter households with severe housing problems and incomes below 30 percent of area median income (which varies by location, but is roughly equivalent to the poverty level), 5.9 percent missed one rent payment in the last three months, another 6.2 percent missed two to three rent payments, 3 percent had their utilities shut off, and another 3.3 percent faced the threat of eviction (Exhibit 3).

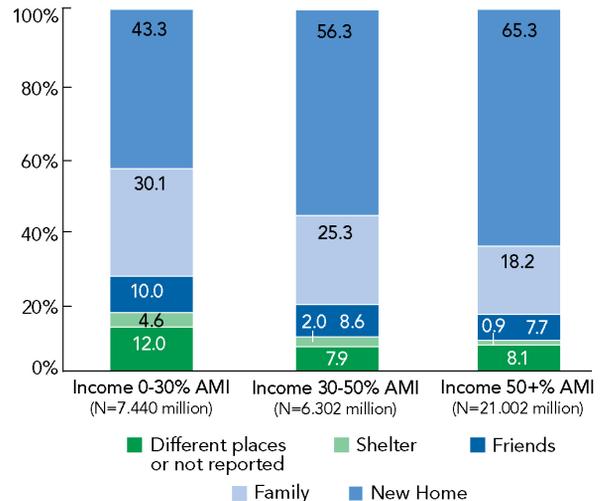
EXHIBIT 3: Housing Instability for Unassisted Renters with Severe Housing Problems



Source: American Housing Survey data, 2013. The exhibit is reproduced from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress*. Office of Policy Development and Research, April 2015.

The 2013 AHS also asked renter households what they thought their housing situation would be should they be evicted (Exhibit 4). Among the households with poverty-equivalent incomes (below 30 percent of area median income) and not currently receiving housing assistance (e.g., not using a Section 8 voucher and not living in public housing), 43.3 percent said they would be able to find another place to live on their own, and 40.1 percent said they could stay with either family (30.1 percent) or friends (10 percent). About 5 percent (4.6 percent or 340,000 households) predicted that they would end up in a shelter program if they were evicted from their current residence.

EXHIBIT 4: Perceived Housing Destination of Unassisted Renters if Evicted



Source: American Housing Survey data, 2013. The exhibit is reproduced from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress*. Office of Policy Development and Research, April 2015.

