

Fact Sheet on Homelessness and Housing Instability in DC

District of Inequality

- DC is experiencing an economic boom: in June 2018 the DC Council finalized the **\$14.5 billion FY2019 budget**.¹
- DC's population surpassed 700,000 in 2018 -- the US Census Bureau states that **19%** of the population lives in poverty.²
- As of 2016, Washington DC had the **highest per capita rate of homelessness in the country**, with more than 15,000 people experiencing homelessness over the course of a typical year.³
- DC's homeless population increased by 34% between 2009 and 2016.⁴ According to the 2018 Point in Time count, it decreased slightly, by 7.6%, from 2017 to 2018.⁵

The Numbers - DC 2018 Point-in-Time Count

- The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is conducted each January, yet although it is the official government count of persons experiencing homelessness, it undercounts homeless families because it doesn't include those who are not in the shelter system, including those doubled up with other households or staying in their cars.
- The 2018 PIT only showed **1,924** homeless children, but at least **6,000 D.C. school children** started the 2017-2018 academic year in homelessness, nearly double the number in 2014.⁶
- Based on the PIT count, as of January 2018, **6,904** persons in the city were homeless, comprised of **3,761** single adults, **9** unaccompanied minors, and **924** families totaling **3,134** family members.⁷
- On the night of the 2018 PIT, at least **600** people were unsheltered on the street.⁸
- **51%** of single adults and **19%** of adults in families in the 2018 PIT are chronically homeless.⁹
- **50%** of homeless single adults have been formerly institutionalized – many people become homeless for the first time upon being discharged from an institution, such as a hospital or a jail.¹⁰
- **34%** of adults in homeless families, and **19%** of single adults, report a history of domestic violence.¹¹
- **30%** of single homeless adults, but only **2%** of adults in families, have a history of chronic substance abuse.¹²
- **32.4%** of single adults and **7.4%** of adults in families suffer from mental illness.¹³
- **24.6%** of single adults are living with chronic health problems, and **18%** have a physical disability.¹⁴
- African American DC residents, despite making up **47.7%** of the District's population on the whole, comprise **88.4%** of adults experiencing homelessness.¹⁵
- Median age of adults in families experiencing homelessness: **29 years old**.¹⁶
- Median age of single adults experiencing homelessness: **51 years old**.¹⁷
- Median age of children in families experiencing homelessness: **5 years old**.¹⁸

Income Inequality in the Nation's Capital

- **19% of DC residents live below the US federal poverty guidelines**, which for a family of four is only **\$25,100 per year**.¹⁹
- 2016 data shows **31,000 DC children (26 percent)** live in poverty.²⁰
- In the DC metro area, **Median Family Income is \$117,200²¹ annually**. Many “affordable” housing units are available to people whose incomes are 80% of this Median Family Income, which puts them out of reach for many working class and low-income households. People experiencing deep poverty, especially those who need family-sized units, are often left out of the equation.
- Employment is the primary source of income for **34%** of single homeless adults in DC and **26%** of adults in homeless families.²² Even with D.C.’s minimum wage of **\$13.25/hour** this is not enough to afford any housing.²³
- Social Security or VA Disability benefits are the primary source of income for **32.9%** of homeless single adults.²⁴ In 2019, the monthly SSI amount is **\$771**.²⁵ The only source of income available to disabled adults waiting to be approved for SSI is Interim Disability Assistance (IDA), which is only **\$370/month**.
- TANF benefits are the primary source of income for **57.4%** of homeless families in D.C.²⁶ The maximum benefit for a family of three is **\$576** per month.²⁷
- The maximum monthly benefit for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps) is **\$192** for one person but only for people with no other income.²⁸
- Despite having an overall unemployment rate of **5.6**,²⁹ the unemployment rate for African Americans in DC is **12.9%** - the highest African American unemployment rate in the country.³⁰ ³¹ The Latinx unemployment rate in DC is **3.1%**.³²

DC's Emergency Shelter System

- In DC, there is a right to shelter only during hypothermic (below 32 degrees Fahrenheit) or hyperthermic (above 95 degrees Fahrenheit) conditions. Although no legal right exists to shelter outside of those weather conditions, the DC Department of Human Services does make some year-round family shelter placements. Massachusetts and New York City are the only other jurisdictions in the United States with right-to-shelter laws.
- From November 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018, **1,599 families applied for family emergency shelter** – a **3% increase** from the 2017 Hypothermia season.³³ Only **924** families were in the shelter system when the Point-in-Time was done, indicating that many families were denied emergency shelter.
- As of May 2018, DC had **809** emergency shelter units for families – a number that includes government contracted motel rooms for overflow capacity. With DC General family shelter closed in November 2018 capacity has dropped significantly.³⁴

- DC has approximately **890** year-round emergency shelter beds for single adult men, who make up **72%** of DC's **3,761** single homeless adults. Additional beds are only made available during hypothermia season.³⁵
- For homeless women, DC has only approximately **218** year-round emergency shelter beds, who make up **26%** of DC's **3,761** single homeless adults (978 women). As a result, women were turned away from shelter on a regular basis during the last year because there is not enough capacity. Additional beds are made available during hypothermia season.³⁶
- There are no shelter spaces for adult couples without children.

DC's Affordable Housing Crisis

- DC was the city with the highest percentage of gentrifying neighborhoods from 2000-2013.³⁷
- 20,000 Black residents were displaced from Washington, DC between 2000-2013.³⁸
- Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in DC is **\$1,793**,³⁹ although apartments in DC are routinely listed for much, much higher.
- National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates that in order to afford FMR, **renters must earn \$34.48 per hour** (minimum wage is \$13.25/hour), working fulltime for 52 weeks per year. As compared to all 50 states, DC has the 2nd highest housing wage in the nation, second only to Hawaii.⁴⁰
- To afford that same FMR 2-bedroom apartment, **a minimum wage earner must work 104 hours per week**.⁴¹
- Between 2000 and 2012, the number of low-cost rental units in DC fell by half, and the number of lower-value homes fell by nearly three quarters. Low-cost units that remain are likely to be subsidized by either federal or local programs.⁴²
- DC's public housing stock, which is operated by the DC Housing Authority--the main provider of affordable housing in D.C.--has *decreased* by 4,000 units since the 1990s, to only 8,000 total.
- The waiting list for housing resources through DCHA closed in 2013 and has not reopened. There are still **26,000** applicants waiting for public housing, and **40,000** waiting for Housing Choice Vouchers.⁴³
- The lowest-income 40 percent of DC households did not see statistically significant change in income between 2000 and 2010, making it impossible to keep up with the sharp rise in housing costs in DC that occurred since the early 2000s.⁴⁴
- As of 2018, **57,656** renter households are considered extremely low income, and there is a shortage of **31,666** rental homes affordable and available for that population.⁴⁵
- As of 2017, DC's multi-family housing market had only between a 2.7% and 3.6% rental vacancy rate.^{46 47}

- Between 2002 and 2012, the number of low-cost rental units in D.C. dropped by more than **50%**, while the number of more expensive units rose by more than **155%**.⁴⁸

¹ “D.C. Council finalizes \$14.5 billion budget, including new taxes and spending” The Washington Post, June 26, 2018.

Accessed July 5, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-finalizes-145-billion-budget-including-new-taxes-and-spending/2018/06/26/ed221158-795a-11e8-93cc-6d3becdd7a3_story.html?utm_term=.8de9d9dc571a

² United States Census Bureau Quick Facts, District of Columbia, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/dc/PST045217>

³ United States Conference of Mayors, Hunger and Homelessness Survey, Dec. 2016

⁴ Id.

⁵ DC Department of Human Services 2018 Point-in-Time Fact Sheet. <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/2018-point-time-count-people-experiencing-homelessness-district-columbia>

⁶ “More than 6,000 homeless D.C. kids head to school this year. Here’s the first day through one of their eyes” The Washington Post, August 20, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/it-feels-great-to-go-back-the-districts-students-return-to-school/2018/08/20/e2d4f528-a491-11e8-8fac-12e98c13528d_story.html?utm_term=.78781b83f222

⁷ DC Department of Human Services 2018 Point-in-Time Fact Sheet. <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/2018-point-time-count-people-experiencing-homelessness-district-columbia>

⁸ Id.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id.

¹² DC Department of Human Services 2018 Point-in-Time Fact Sheet. <https://dhs.dc.gov/page/2018-point-time-count-people-experiencing-homelessness-district-columbia>

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness-Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2018 Point in Time. Accessed July 5, 2018. <http://www.community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures>

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation: 2018 Poverty Guidelines. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

²⁰ Id., at 56.

²¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Economic and Market Analysis Division, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2018/2018summary.odn>

²² The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness-Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2018 Point in Time.

²³ DC Department of Employment Services Office of Wage Hour Compliance. Accessed July 5 2018.

<https://does.dc.gov/service/office-wage-hour-compliance>

²⁴ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness-Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2018 Point in Time

²⁵ United States Social Security Administration, SSI Federal Payment Amounts For 2019. Accessed February 21, 2019.

<https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/SSI.html>

²⁶ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness-Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2018 Point in Time

²⁷ Coventry, Kate. “What’s in the Approved Fiscal Year 2019 Budget for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.” DC Fiscal Policy Institute, July 13, 2018. Accessed August 23, 2018. <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/TANF-FY-2019-Final.pdf>

²⁸ The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Accessed August 28, 2018.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility#How%20much%20could%20I%20receive%20in%20SNAP%20benefits?>

²⁹ US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics: Economy at a Glance, District of Columbia. Accessed July 5, 2018.

<https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.dc.htm>

³⁰ Jones, Janelle. “In 14 states and DC, the African American unemployment rate is at least twice the white unemployment rate.” Economic Policy Institute, May 17, 2018. Accessed July 5, 2018. <https://www.epi.org/publication/state-race-unemployment-2018q1/>

³¹ Id.

³² Id.

³³ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Hypothermia FY18 Debrief – Families, Prepared for the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness. May 2018.

³⁴ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. *Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington: Results and Analysis from the Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of Homeless Persons*, May 9, 2018. P. 72.

<https://www.mwcog.org/documents/homelessnessreport/>

³⁵ *Id.*, p. 15

³⁶ *Id.*, p. 16

³⁷ Richardson, Jason, Bruce Mitchell and Juan Franco. “Shifting Neighborhoods – Gentrification and cultural displacement in American cities.” The National Community Reinvestment Coalition. March 19, 2019. <https://ncrc.org/gentrification/>

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach 2018*. Accessed July 5, 2018.

http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2018.pdf

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Reed, Jenny. DC Fiscal Policy Institute. *Disappearing Act: Affordable Housing in DC is Vanishing Amid Sharply Rising Housing Costs*. May 7, 2012. Accessed August 23, 2018. <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/5-7-12-Housing-and-Income-Trends-FINAL.pdf>

⁴³ DC Housing Authority. District of Columbia Housing Authority 2018 Oversight and Performance Hearing, Committee on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, Responses to Pre-Hearing Questions. 2018

http://dccouncil.us/files/user_uploads/budget_responses/dcha.pdf

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ National Low-Income Housing Coalition. 2018 District of Columbia Housing Profile. Updated June 26, 2018. Accessed August 23, 2018. http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_DC.pdf

⁴⁶ Cushman & Wakefield. Washington, DC Multi-Family Snapshot – Mid-Year 2016. Second Quarter, 2016. Accessed August 23, 2018. <http://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/research-and-insight/unitedstates/washington-dc-multifamily-snapshot>

⁴⁷ Bisnow. “D.C.’s Multifamily Absorption Rate Is Starting To Slow, But Construction Isn’t.” July 20, 2018. Accessed August 23, 2018. <https://www.bisnow.com/washington-dc/news/multifamily/dcs-multifamily-absorption-rate-is-starting-to-slow-but-construction-isnt-90929>

⁴⁸ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, [Disappearing Act: Affordable Housing in DC Vanishing Amid Sharply Rising Housing Costs](#), May 7, 2012