

Fact Sheet on Homelessness and Housing Instability in DC

The Basics

- In May 2019 the DC Council finalized the **\$15.5 billion FY2020 budget, the local portion of which is 8.6 billion**. Only a small portion of the budget is spent on homeless services and housing programs.¹
- DC's population surpassed 700,000 in 2018 - - the US Census Bureau states that **19% of DC's population lives in poverty**.²
- In 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 percent** between 2009 and 2016.⁴ According to the 2019 Point in Time count, it decreased slightly, by **5.5 percent**, from 2018 to 2019.⁵

The Numbers

- The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is conducted on one night each January, and the data collected during the PIT is the basis for official statistics and demographics regarding homelessness in Washington, DC.
- The January 2019 PIT identified a total of **6,521** persons in the District as homeless, composed of **3,862** single adults, **13** unaccompanied minors, and **815** families containing **2,646** family members.⁶
- On the night of the 2019 PIT, at least **608** people were unsheltered and living on the street.⁷
- The PIT counts families who are in the shelter system, not those who are doubled up with other households because of a housing crisis. Yet **70 percent of families** who sought emergency shelter or housing services during the 2018-2019 hypothermia season reported that they were staying with family or friends at the time.⁸
- The 2019 PIT only reported **1,602**⁹ homeless children, but at least **5,593 D.C.** school children were experiencing homelessness when they started the 2018-2019 academic year.¹⁰
- **44 percent** of single adults and **13 percent** of adults in families counted in the 2019 PIT are chronically homeless.¹¹
- **41 percent** 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.¹²
- **32 percent** of adults in homeless families, and **20 percent** of single adults, report a history of domestic violence.¹³
- **22 percent** of single homeless adults, but only **3 percent** of adults in families, have a history of chronic substance abuse.¹⁴
- **31 percent** of single adults and **19 percent** of adults in families suffer from severe mental illness.¹⁵
- **21 percent** of single adults are living with chronic health problems, and **16 percent** have a physical disability.¹⁶

- African American DC residents, despite making up **47 percent** of the District's population on the whole, comprise **87 percent** of adults experiencing homelessness.¹⁷
- Median age of adults in families experiencing homelessness: **28 years old**.¹⁸
- Median age of single adults experiencing homelessness: **51 years old**.¹⁹

Income Inequality in the Nation's Capital

- **19 percent of DC residents live below** the US federal poverty guidelines, which for a family of four is only **\$25,750 per year**.²⁰
- As of 2017 **32,000 DC children (26 percent)** were living in poverty, and **49,000 children (39 percent)** were living in households with a high housing cost burden.²¹
- In the DC metro area, **Median Family Income for fiscal year 2019 is \$121,300²² annually**. Many housing units designated as "affordable" go to people whose incomes are up to 80% of this Median Family Income, which puts the units 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 **28.5 percent** of single homeless adults in DC and **35.2 percent** of adults in homeless families.²³ Even with D.C.'s minimum wage of **\$14.00/hour** this is not enough to afford housing.²⁴
- SSI/SSDI/Disability benefits are the primary source of income for **34.4 percent** of homeless single adults.²⁵ In 2019, the monthly SSI amount is **\$771**.²⁶ 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 **48 percent** of homeless families in D.C.²⁷ The maximum benefit for a family of three is only **\$643** per month.²⁸
- The maximum monthly allotment (benefit) for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps) is **\$192** for a household of one, and **\$640** for a household of four.²⁹
- Despite having an overall unemployment rate of **5.6 percent**,³⁰ the unemployment rate for African Americans in DC is **12.9 percent** - the highest African American unemployment rate in the country.³¹ The Latinx unemployment rate in DC is **3.1 percent**.³²

DC's Emergency Shelter System

- In DC, there is a right to shelter only during hypothermic (below 32 degrees) or hyperthermic (above 95 degrees) conditions. Although no legal right exists to shelter outside of those weather conditions, the DC government 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, 2018 to March 31, 2019, **1,647 families sought shelter or housing services at the central point of intake for families experiencing a housing crisis** – a **3 percent increase** from the 2018 Hypothermia season,³³ yet only **815** families were in the shelter system when the Point-in-Time was done.
- There were only **667 emergency shelter units for families** in the DC 2018 Shelter & Housing Inventory, which means that many families were placed in motel rooms that DC contracts as overflow shelter for families.³⁴
- From November 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, **6,568** single persons used low-barrier and severe weather shelters in DC. 23 percent of these people were women, 77 percent were men, and less than one percent identified as transgender or gender non-conforming.³⁵
- DC has approximately **890^a** year-round emergency shelter beds³⁶ for single adult men, who make up roughly 73.3 percent of the 3,862 single homeless adults identified during the 2019 Point-in-Time (approximately **2,831** men). Additional beds are only made available during hypothermia season.³⁷
- DC has only approximately **322^b** year-round emergency shelter beds for single adult women³⁸, who make up 25.5 percent of DC's 3,862 single homeless adults (approximately **985** women). As a result, women were turned away from shelter on a regular basis during the last year because there is nowhere near enough capacity. Additional beds are only made available during hypothermia season.³⁹
- There are no shelter spaces for adult couples who do not have children, or for pet owners who do not want to leave their pet behind in order to enter shelter.

DC's Affordable Housing Crisis

- DC had the highest rate of gentrification of any city in the country (meaning the highest percentage of gentrifying neighborhoods) between 2000 and 2013.⁴⁰
- 20,000 Black residents were displaced from Washington, DC between 2000 -2013.⁴¹
- 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
- A 2019 study found average rent for a 2-bedroom in DC to be \$3,100/month, and that renters in DC need to have over \$132,000 in annual earnings in order to pay 28 percent of their income or less on the average 2-bedroom apartment.⁴³
- DC has a shortage of **30,438** rental units that are affordable and available for extremely low income renters.⁴⁴

^a This number refers to shelters receiving government funding and listed in The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness shelter census in August 2019.

^b This number refers to shelters receiving government funding and listed in The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness shelter census in August 2019.

- In stark contrast with average market rate rent in DC, Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in DC is only **\$1,665**.⁴⁵ FMR is calculated by HUD and is used to determine payment standard amounts for the Housing Choice Voucher program and other federal housing subsidies (Note that this is the federal standard. Some local housing authorities in high rent jurisdictions, such as the DC Housing Authority, adopt payment standards higher than FMR in order to make it feasible for renters to find homes in the local market).⁴⁶
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) calculates that in order to afford FMR, **renters must earn \$32.02 per hour** (minimum wage is \$14.00/hour), working fulltime for 52 weeks per year⁴⁷
- To afford that same FMR 2-bedroom apartment, **a minimum wage earner must work at least 91 hours per week**.⁴⁸
- DC’s public housing stock is operated by the DC Housing Authority - the main provider of affordable housing in DC – and has **decreased by 4,000 units since the 1990s to only 8,000 units**, many of which are not occupied now due to poor conditions.
- DC’s public housing stock has long suffered from disinvestment and lack of adequate maintenance. At least **2,600 units are considered to be in “extremely urgent” condition** due to the presence of lead and mold, as well as water damage and vermin infestations. As of summer 2019, the DC Housing Authority is planning to **demolish or renovate at least 14 public housing complexes**.⁴⁹
- 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.⁵⁰
- As of 2019, **50,710** renter households are considered extremely low income, and there is a shortage of **30,438** rental homes affordable and available for that population.⁵¹
- As of 2017, DC’s multi-family housing market had only between a **2.7 percent and 3.6 percent rental vacancy rate**.⁵²
- Between 2002 and 2012, the number of low-cost rental units in D.C. dropped by more than **50 percent**, while the number of more expensive units rose by more than **155 percent**.⁵³

¹ “D.C Council approves \$15.5 billion budget in rancorous debate over priorities” The Washington Post, May 28, 2019. Accessed July 24, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-approve155-billion-budget-in-rancorous-debate-over-priorities/2019/05/28/8f93aa08-814a-11e9-95a9-e2c830afe24f_story.html?utm_term=.1376a15cedf5

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 The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. TCP Fact Sheet – Point in Time 2019. <http://www.community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures>

⁶ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. TCP Fact Sheet – Point in Time 2019. <http://www.community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures>

⁷ [Id.](#)

⁸ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Hypothermia FY19 Debrief – Families. Prepared for the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness. May 2019

⁹ [Id.](#)

¹⁰ Government of the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education Responses to Fiscal Year 2018 Performance Oversight Questions. P. 859.

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- ¹¹ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. TCP Fact Sheet – Point in Time 2019. <http://www.community-partnership.org/facts-and-figures>
- ¹² Id.
- ¹³ Id.
- ¹⁴ Id.
- ¹⁵ Id.
- ¹⁶ Id.
- ¹⁷ Id.
- ¹⁸ Id.
- ¹⁹ Id.
- ²⁰ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation: 2019 Poverty Guidelines. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2019-poverty-guidelines>
- ²¹ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *2019 Kids Count Data Book – State Trends in Child Well-Being*. Accessed August 6, 2019. <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2019kidscountdatabook-2019.pdf>
- ²² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>
- ²³ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. *Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2019 Point in Time*.
- ²⁴ DC Department of Employment Services Office of Wage Hour Compliance. Accessed August 6, 2019. <https://does.dc.gov/service/office-wage-hour-compliance>
- ²⁵ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. *Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2019 Point in Time*
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- ²⁷ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. *Facts & Figures: District of Columbia CoC FY2019 Point in Time*.
- ²⁸ 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 6, 2019. <https://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/TANF-FY-2019-Final.pdf>
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- ³⁰ US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics: Economy at a Glance, District of Columbia. Accessed August 6, 2019. <https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.dc.htm>
- ³¹ 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/>
- ³² Id.
- ³³ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Hypothermia FY19 Debrief – Families, Prepared for the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness. May 2019.
- 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 8, 2019. P. 54. <https://www.mwco.org/documents/homelessnessreport/>
- ³⁵ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Hypothermia FY19 Debrief – Unaccompanied Persons, Prepared for the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness. May 2019
- ³⁶ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Shelter Census. August 12, 2019
- ³⁷ Id., p. 15
- ³⁸ The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness. Shelter Census. August 12, 2019
- ³⁹ Id., p. 16
- ⁴⁰ 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/>
- 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 “Report: \$132K in income is needed to comfortably rent a two-bedroom in D.C.” Curbed DC, July 30, 2019. <https://dc.curbed.com/2019/7/30/20747273/dc-apartment-prices-two-bedrooms-renting-income>

⁴⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition. *2019 District of Columbia Housing Profile*. Accessed October 23, 2019. https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_DC.pdf

⁴⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach 2019*. Accessed July 31, 2019. https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2019.pdf

⁴⁶ HUD User Office of Policy Development and Research. Fair Market Rents. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>

⁴⁷ Id.

⁴⁸ National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach 2019: District of Columbia*. Accessed July 31, 2019. <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/district-columbia>

⁴⁹ “D.C. officials want to demolish or renovate 4 of the city’s worst public housing complexes” The Washington Post, July 3, 2019. Accessed August 5, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-officials-want-to-demolish-or-renovate-14-of-the-citys-worst-public-housing-complexes/2019/07/02/5c25fc0c-9cf2-11e9-9ed4-c9089972ad5a_story.html?utm_term=.b3484955aba3

⁵⁰ 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

⁵¹ National Low-Income Housing Coalition. 2019 District of Columbia Housing Profile. Accessed August 6, 2019. <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/district-columbia>

⁵² 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>

⁵³ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, *Disappearing Act: Affordable Housing in DC Vanishing Amid Sharply Rising Housing Costs*, May 7, 2012