

Massachusetts Youth Count

2018

A report from the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth on homelessness, housing instability, and access to services among youth and young adults under the age of 25 in the Commonwealth.



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¹ Note: The Massachusetts Youth Count involves extensive collaboration, including in the development of this report. Analysis and writing of this report was completed by Laurie Ross, PhD, Associate Professor of Community Development and Planning at Clark University, with consultation and involvement from the Continua of Care (CoCs), Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Commission), and the Identification and Connection Working Group.

1.0 THE 2018 MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH COUNT OVERVIEW

The Massachusetts Youth Count is an annual survey used to learn about the scope and needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness². The Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Commission) provides oversight for the Count and is responsible for annual reports on its progress to the Governor’s Office, the Legislature, and the Office of the Child Advocate. The Commission defines an unaccompanied homeless youth or young adult (UHY) as a person who:

- 1) Is 24 years of age or younger; and**
- 2) Is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian; and**
- 3) Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.**

From April 23 through May 13, 2018, the Commission conducted the fifth annual Massachusetts Youth Count. The survey was administered online and by service providers, Youth Ambassadors³, and street outreach workers at drop-in centers, meal programs, programs for youth experiencing homelessness, and other places where young people congregate⁴. In 2018, a total of 2,202 surveys were collected. Of these surveys, 2,150 were included in the analysis and 738 met the Commission’s definition of an unaccompanied young person experiencing homelessness.⁵

The 2018 Count builds on momentum from the groundbreaking 2014 Count, the first statewide effort of its kind in the United States and the subsequent annual Counts. The 2014 Count established a baseline against which progress in addressing unaccompanied youth homelessness could be measured. The importance of having this baseline became even more significant when the Commission released the “Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness” in 2018. The Massachusetts Plan responds to youth and young adult housing vulnerability and identifies needed program, policy, and system changes.

Highlights of the 2018 Count include:

- 34.3% of respondents met the Commission definition of UHY
- 30.4% of respondents who met the Commission definition left home permanently before the age of 18
- 17.5% who met the Commission definition were unsheltered, meaning they were staying outside, in an abandoned building, in a car, or in another location not meant for human habitation
- Youth Ambassadors and street outreach were the two most effective methods to reach unsheltered youth through the Youth Count process
- 50% of respondents who met the Commission definition had a high school diploma or equivalent; but 22.4% of them had no diploma and were not in school

² The Executive Office of Health and Human Services allocated \$150,000 from its FY’18 administrative line item (4000-0300) to continue the state’s commitment to understand the scope of homelessness among unaccompanied youth. This report is submitted as part of those efforts.

³ Youth Ambassadors are an important component of the Youth Count process. Youth Ambassadors are young people who have experienced homelessness or housing vulnerability and who are trained to assist the CoC’s and partners with administering the Count. Youth Ambassadors contribute their knowledge about homelessness and their communities to help assure that the results of the Youth Count reflect the full breadth and depth of youth in diverse communities across the Commonwealth.

⁴ See Attachment One for the Youth Count methodology.

⁵ Surveys from respondents over the age of 24, duplicates, and surveys with ambiguous housing status were removed (i.e. if a respondent chose multiple, contradictory items to the question, “Where did you sleep last night?”). If it was not clear whether a survey was a duplicate, it was included in the analysis.

- Most respondents had access to income through employment or benefits; however, 33.1% relied on illegal or informal income sources, an almost 50% increase from last year
- The percentage of females with justice system involvement increased almost 84% from last year
- Respondents were more likely to receive some or all of the help they sought in 2018 as compared to 2017

2.0 THE 2018 YOUTH COUNT RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In 2018, a total of 2,150 surveys were included for analysis. These 2,150 responses were analyzed to determine the number that met the definition of unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness (UHY) adopted by the Commission. A total of 738 survey respondents met the Commission’s definition, or 34.3% of all surveys collected in 2018. Table One presents the total number of included surveys and the total number meeting the Commission’s definition.

Table One	2018 State
Total # surveys	2150
Total # HUD definition	579
# currently housed but homeless in past	462
Total # Commission definition	738
# under 18	37
# LGBTQ	174
# foster care	195
# juvenile/criminal justice	248
# parenting with custody/pregnant	194
# not in school/no diploma	165

In addition to UHY, 77 respondents were experiencing homelessness and living with a family member. Of the housed youth, 462 of them reported experiencing homelessness at some point in the past. Thirty-five (35) housed, unaccompanied respondents reported not having a safe place to stay for the next 14 days. These additional data points suggest a higher degree of homelessness and housing vulnerability than revealed by the numbers of youth and young adults meeting the Commission’s definition at the time of the Count. It is also important to note that on average, UHY permanently left home at 17.6 years old. Two hundred and twenty-five (225) or (30.4%) had left home permanently before the age of 18; their average age of leaving home permanently was 15.4 years old.

Surveys from the 773 respondents who had reported never experiencing homelessness were analyzed to provide a point of comparison for several variables of interest including education and employment status and history of systems involvement. These housed, never homeless respondents included 131 youth and young adults not living with parents or guardians. The remaining housed, never homeless respondents were still with family.

As a point of comparison, in 2017, 2,711 surveys were included in the analysis and of these 501 (18.5%) met the Commission definition. The increase in the percentage that met the Commission definition in 2018 is likely a function of improvements in the outreach and counting process as well as an actual increase in young people experiencing homelessness. Recent figures from the Department of Housing and Community Development report that homelessness among 18-24 year olds without children increased 11% in Massachusetts this year⁶.

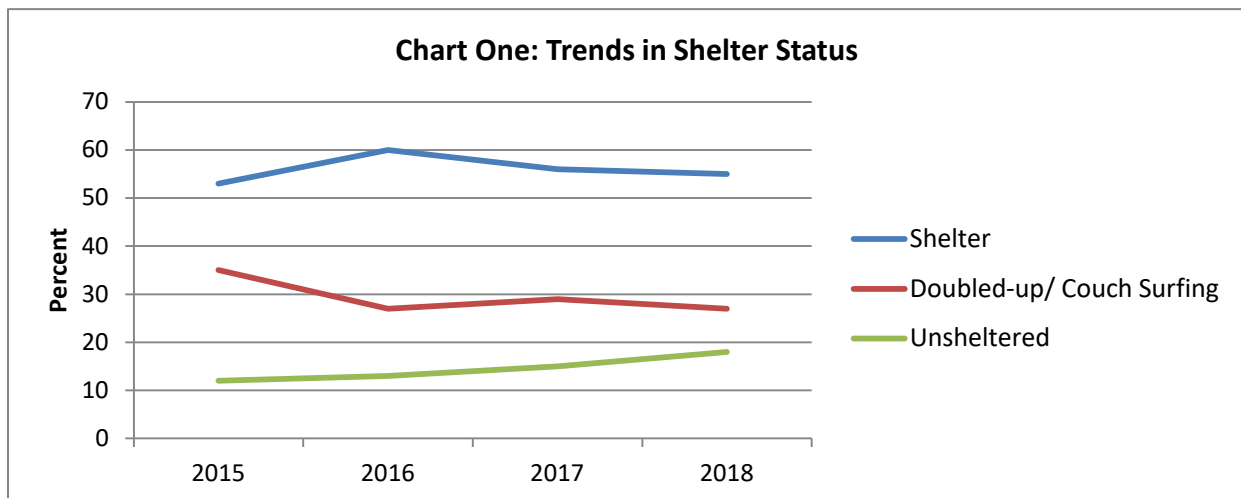
⁶ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

2.1 HOUSING STATUS AND REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

WHERE SLEPT THE NIGHT BEFORE TAKING THE SURVEY

In 2018, 408 out of the 738 (55.7%) UHY respondents had stayed at a shelter, transitional housing, or a hotel on the night before the Count. As in the two prior years, the next most common response was staying with family, a partner, or a friend, with 197 or 26.9% of UHY respondents. Throughout the report we refer to this group as couch surfing or doubled-up. One hundred and three (103) of the respondents who were couch surfing or doubled-up (52%), either knew that they did not have a safe place to stay for the next 14 days or were unsure whether or not they did. One hundred and twenty-eight (128) respondents reported being unsheltered, meaning they stayed outside or another place not meant for habitation. At over 17.5% of respondents, this is several percentage points higher than last year's count. Chart One groups where respondents stayed the night before the survey into sheltered, couch surfing/doubled up or unsheltered and provides four-year trends. Chart Two provides more detailed information on where the 2018 respondents slept the night before taking the survey⁷.

Pregnant and parenting UHY were most likely to be sheltered (71.6%). UHY with juvenile or criminal justice involvement were least likely to be sheltered and most likely to be couch surfing and/or staying with a relative, partner, or friend (29.4%). UHY who identify as LGBTQ or who had justice involvement had the highest rates of being unsheltered (26.4% and 26.1%). It is noteworthy that none of the respondents meeting the Commission definition on the Cape were sheltered. Most of these young people were staying with relatives, partners, or friends. See Table Two for more details on where each population slept the night before the survey.



⁷ The total number of places a respondent slept adds up to 733 even though 738 individuals who met the Commission definition were identified. This is due to 5 respondents indicating they were unaccompanied and homeless but did not specify where they slept the night before the survey.

Chart Two: Where Slept the Night Before the Survey

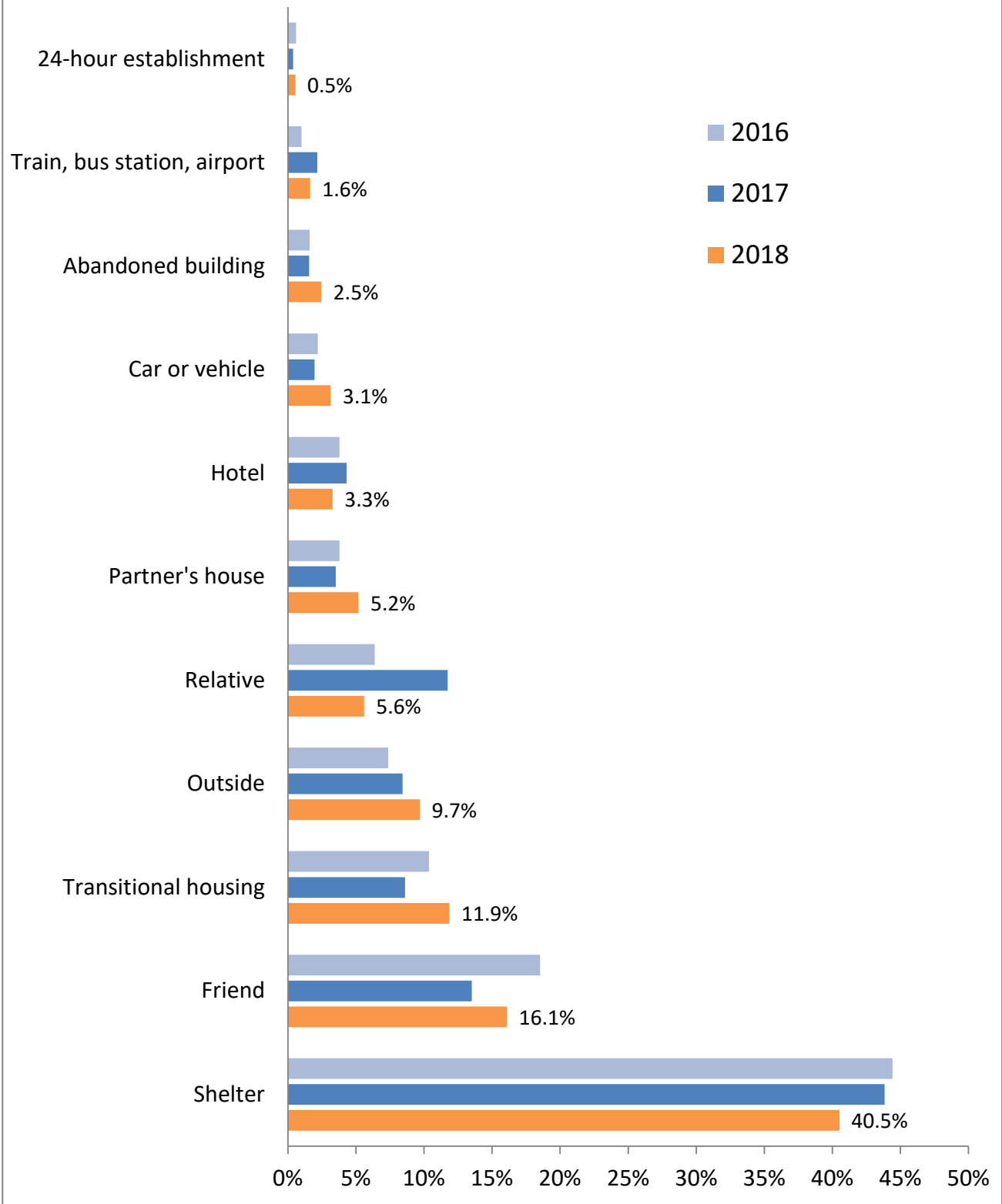


Table Two	UHY	Pregnant/ Parenting	Foster system	Justice system	LGBTQ
Shelter	40.5%	61.9%	37.6%	33.9%	31.6%
Friend	16.1%	10.8%	17.5%	19.2%	18.4%
Transitional housing	11.9%	8.8%	13.4%	7.3%	11.5%
Outside	9.7%	5.7%	9.8%	14.3%	15.5%
Relative	5.6%	2.6%	4.6%	4.5%	3.4%
Partner	5.2%	6.7%	4.6%	5.7%	4.6%
Hotel	3.3%	1.0%	2.6%	3.3%	4.0%
Car	3.1%	1.0%	3.1%	5.3%	1.7%
Building	2.5%	0.5%	3.1%	2.9%	4.0%
Train station	1.6%	0.5%	3.1%	3.3%	4.0%
24-hour	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	1.1%
Sheltered	55.7%	71.6%	53.6%	44.5%	47.1%
Couch surfing/doubled-up	26.9%	20.1%	26.8%	29.4%	26.4%
Unsheltered	17.5%	8.2%	19.6%	26.1%	26.4%
Total number in each group	738	194	195	248	174

In 2018, we learned more about how respondents were approached to take the survey (see Attachment Three, Question 31). Respondents in shelters, transitional housing, and hotels were most likely to take the survey at a shelter or housing program. Yet 50% of these young people were recruited through other means—predominantly through Youth Ambassadors and other social service agencies. Respondents who were doubled up or couch surfing were most likely to be recruited by Youth Ambassadors or through education programs. Respondents who were unsheltered were most likely to be recruited through Youth Ambassadors and street outreach. We are missing information on how 118 respondents who met the Commission definition were recruited to take the survey (See Table Three).

Table Three: Recruiting by Housing Situation	Total number	Sheltered %	Couch surfing/ Doubled-up %	Unsheltered %
Youth Ambassador	144	13%	25%	32%
Agency count	99	12%	17%	13%
Education program	66	6%	20%	<1%
Street outreach	88	7%	13%	25%
Shelter	223	50%	3%	9%
Total number	620	408	197	128

These data on recruiting methods could give the Continuums of Care (CoCs) and other Youth Count administering agencies guidance on where to direct efforts during the Counts (and guide service provision). For example, only 13% of all surveys administered at education programs identified youth meeting the Commission definition; yet education programs appeared to be an important location to reach youth who were couch surfing or doubled up with family or friends. Forty percent of surveys

conducted at social service agencies identified youth meeting the Commission definition and at least 30% of all surveys conducted via street outreach and Youth Ambassadors were with young people meeting the Commission definition. Youth Ambassadors and street outreach appear to be the most effective methods to reach young people staying in places not meant for human habitation. See Attachment One for more information about the Youth Count methodology, including the planning and implementation process.

WHY RESPONDENTS WERE NO LONGER WITH PARENT OR GUARDIAN

In order to gain insight into young people's paths to homelessness, the survey included a question about why the respondent was no longer with their parent or guardian. As presented in Chart Three, the survey provided 14 options and respondents could choose as many as were relevant to their situation.

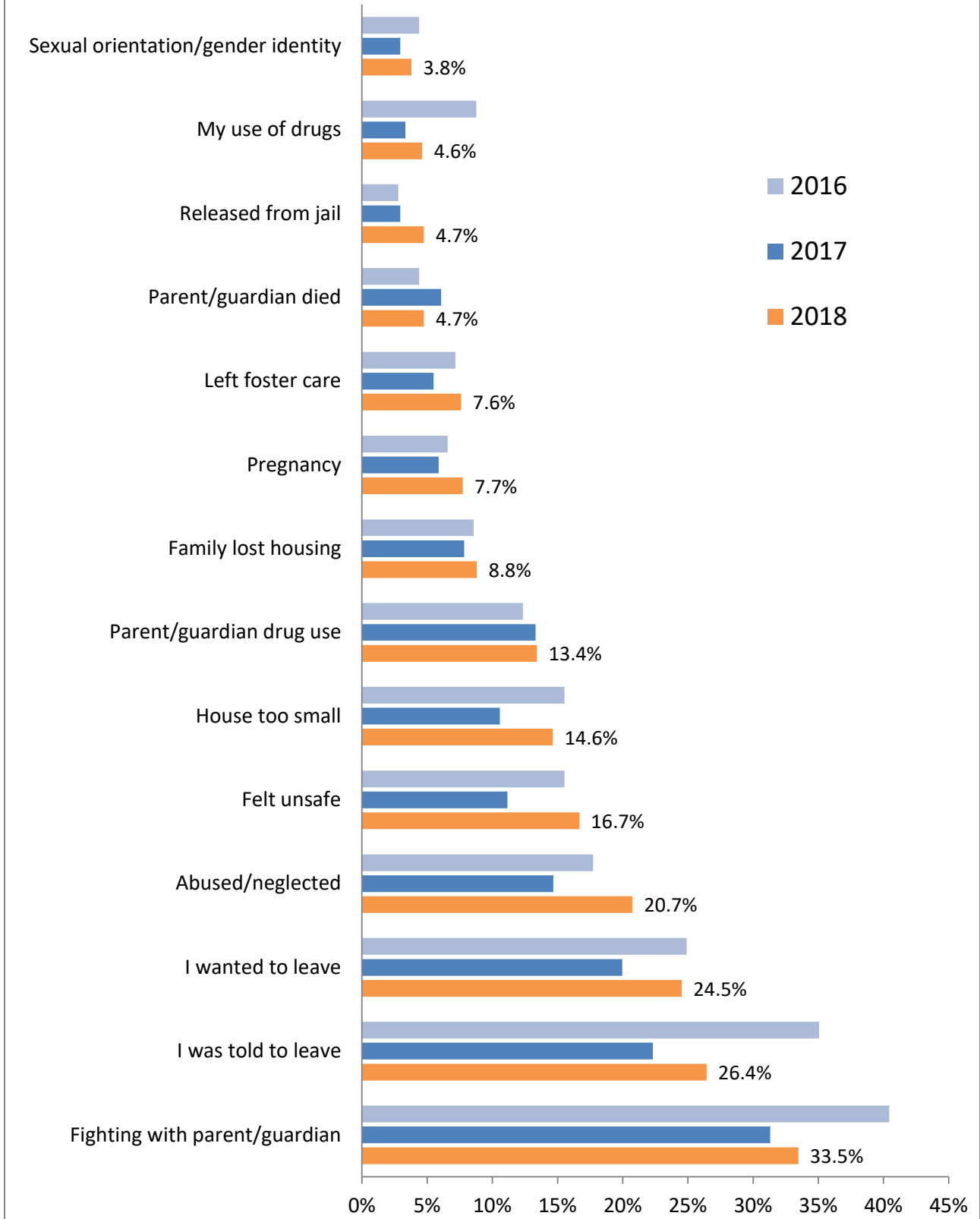
Like in the past three years, the top reasons UHY were not living with their families were related to family conflict. Fighting, being told to leave, abuse/neglect, and feeling unsafe were among the top reasons young people were not with family. The following reasons increased in 2018: abuse and neglect, feeling unsafe, and being released from jail.

For pregnant/parenting respondents two additional reasons they were no longer with a parent or guardian were that the house was too small and due to their pregnancy or child. For UHY with foster care system involvement leaving foster care was a main reason. For justice system-involved youth, parental drug use was a main reason that respondents were no longer with parents or guardians.

I lost my house in a fire & my family asked me to leave. I live with my girlfriend but need my own situation where I am not dependent on others.

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (male, 18-20 years old, Balance of State)

Chart Three: Reasons not Living with Parent/Guardian



2.2 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND OTHER INCOME SOURCES

The survey included questions regarding school enrollment, educational attainment, employment, and income sources. These questions provide insight into challenges UHY may experience in achieving housing and economic stability in the future.

EDUCATION

Table Four compares the education status of UHY with respondents who were housed and never experienced homelessness.

Table Four	UHY (738)	Housed, never homeless (752)
High school diploma and currently in school	91 (12%)	258 (34%)
High school diploma, not currently in school	275 (37%)	83 (11%)
No diploma and currently in school	155 (21%)	386 (51%)
No diploma, not currently in school	165 (22.4%)	25 (3.3%)
Blank	52	21
Average age	20.7	18.1

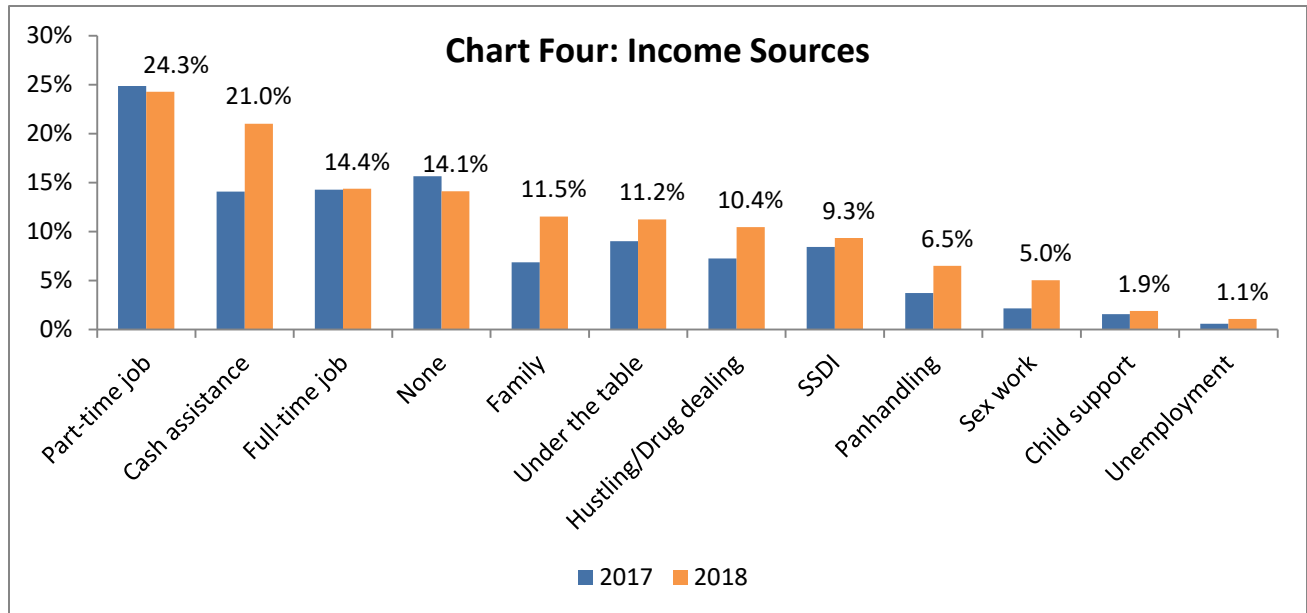
Of the UHY, 366 (~50%) of them had a high school diploma or equivalent and 91 of these young people were in school at the time of the survey. Twenty-one percent of UHY did not have a diploma, but were in school. Overall, 246 UHY were in school (i.e. either high school or post-secondary); indicating that in spite of housing instability, these young people were engaging in education. Yet, when compared to respondents who had never been homeless, we see a point of disparity for UHY. For UHY, 22.4% were not in school and did not have a diploma; only 3.3% of housed, never homeless youth were in this situation. Respondents who met the Commission definition were almost seven times more likely to be out of school without a diploma than housed, never homeless respondents, in spite of the fact that the UHY tended to be older.

Start educating kids in high school on real life skills because no one ever taught me about credit and adult life skills.

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (female, 21-24 years old, Balance of State)

INCOME SOURCES

In 2018, respondents were asked about their current sources of income. They could choose as many as were relevant to them. Chart Four provides details about the number of respondents who reported receiving income from each source.



Slightly less than one-quarter of the respondents reported working at a part-time job. This represented the largest source of income for unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. Cash assistance was the second most common response, at 21.0% of respondents. The increase in cash assistance in 2018 may be correlated with a higher percentage of pregnant/parenting youth who met the Commission definition and thus were more likely to be eligible for cash assistance. Full-time employment was the third most common response at 14.4%. No income source was the fourth most common response at 14.1%; fewer UHY reported having no income in 2018 as compared to 2017. Hustling or drug dealing represented 10.4% of reported income sources, panhandling represented 6.5%, and sex work represented 5.0%. These results indicate that many of the respondents reported being engaged in legal activities to earn money; however, 33.1% reported relying on illegal or informal income sources, an almost 50% increase from last year.

How can I get a job if I don't even got a place to shower or sleep or eat? There is hundreds of other kids like me sleepin' in these buildings and no one give a damn

--2018 Youth Count Respondent
(female, 18-20 years old, Worcester County)

Respondents were asked about past involvement in exchanging sex for money, housing, or other necessities. One hundred and six (106) or 14.4% of UHY responded yes to this question. This is an

increase from last year when 13.6% indicated having ever exchanged sex for money or other necessities. UHY were 5.5 times more likely to exchange sex for money or other necessities as compared to housed and never homeless respondents. Of housed, never homeless respondents, 2.6% reported having ever exchanged sex for money or other necessities.

Fifty-six percent of the UHY respondents who had exchanged sex for money or other necessities identified as LGBTQ. It is important to highlight that 34.5% of UHY who identified as LGBTQ reported having ever exchanged sex for money or other necessities. This represents a 46% increase as compared to last year. Further, UHY who identified as LGBTQ were 4 times more likely than youth who meet the Commission definition but did not identify as LGBTQ to exchange sex for money or other necessities.

2.3 SERVICE UTILIZATION

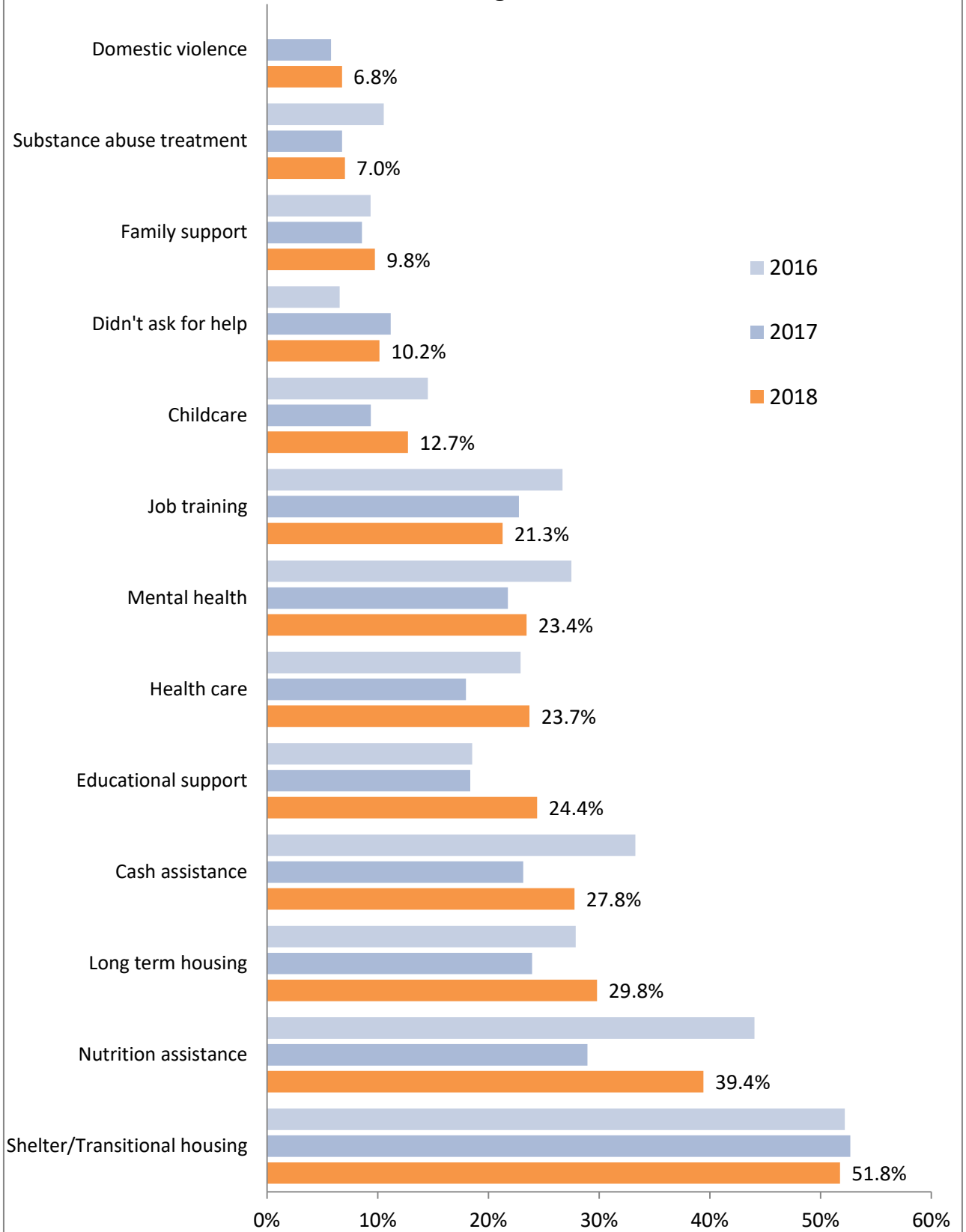
A major goal of the Massachusetts Youth Count is to gain a better understanding of the kinds of services unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness need and the challenges they face accessing them. The survey tool included three questions related to service utilization. The first asked about the types of services respondents tried to access in the past year. The second asked if they got all, some, or none of the help they needed. The third asked about service barriers. Due to the way questions were asked, there is no way to determine youth's ability to access any one particular service type.

Starting with service types, respondents could indicate services they had previously sought from a list of 13 service types. Respondents could also indicate they had not tried to access any help. Chart Five shows the distribution of these responses. The four top most sought-out services remained the same in 2018 as compared to the prior three years: housing (both shelter and long-term housing); nutritional assistance, and cash assistance. The biggest increase in services sought was for food and nutrition assistance at over 10 percentage points, indicating increased food insecurity among these young people. Youth seeking education-related services increased six percentage points in 2018. In spite of family conflict continuing to be a major driver of unaccompanied youth homelessness, only 9.8% of respondents reported seeking family support services. It is noteworthy that this rate did increase in 2018. After increasing by almost 70% from 2016 to 2017, the percent of youth not seeking help decreased in 2018 to about 10% of respondents.

Make it easier for us to get housing. Most of us cannot afford \$1500 or \$2000 a month for a place and the waiting list for a housing voucher is years long. I got denied food stamps because I couldn't get the necessary documents that showed I left work at a certain time, so I went hungry for days or even weeks sometimes because of this. You guys need to fix all these problems, sooner or later us teens are gunna die from all this.

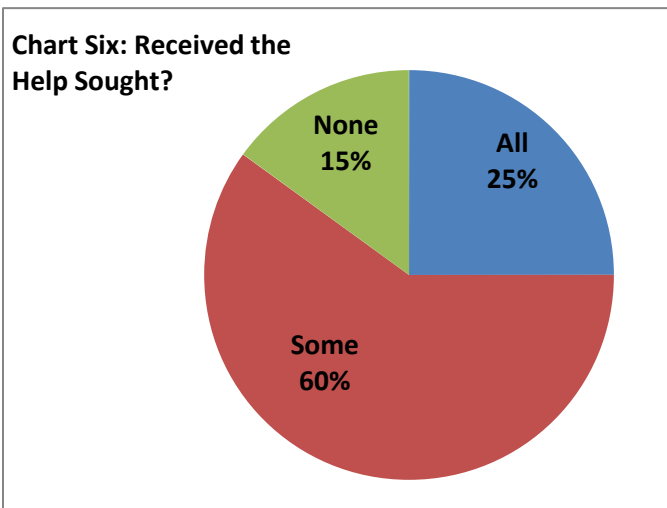
--2018 Youth Count Respondent (female, 18-20 years old, Cape/Islands)

Chart Five: Services Sought in Past 12 Months



UHY who identify as LGBTQ were more likely to seek out health care and mental health services than UHY as a whole. UHY with criminal justice involvement were more likely to seek out health care and employment assistance. Pregnant and/or parenting UHY were more likely to seek childcare than other respondents. UHY with foster care system involvement were more likely to seek out mental health support.

Chart Six shows that one-quarter of the UHY felt they received all the help they sought. Sixty percent received some of the help they sought and 15% reported receiving none of the help they sought. The percentage of respondents reporting that they received none of the help they sought decreased from 21% in 2017 to 15% in 2018.



Unsurprisingly, there are variations in the extent to which different groups of young people experiencing homelessness felt they got the help they needed (See Chart Seven). For example, 34.4% of young people in shelter felt they received all the help they sought, while only 16.9% of couch surfing youth and 8.4% of unsheltered youth felt they received all the help they sought. Alternatively, only 8.5% of youth in shelter felt they got none of the help they sought as compared to 22.7% of couch surfing youth and 23.2% of unsheltered youth.

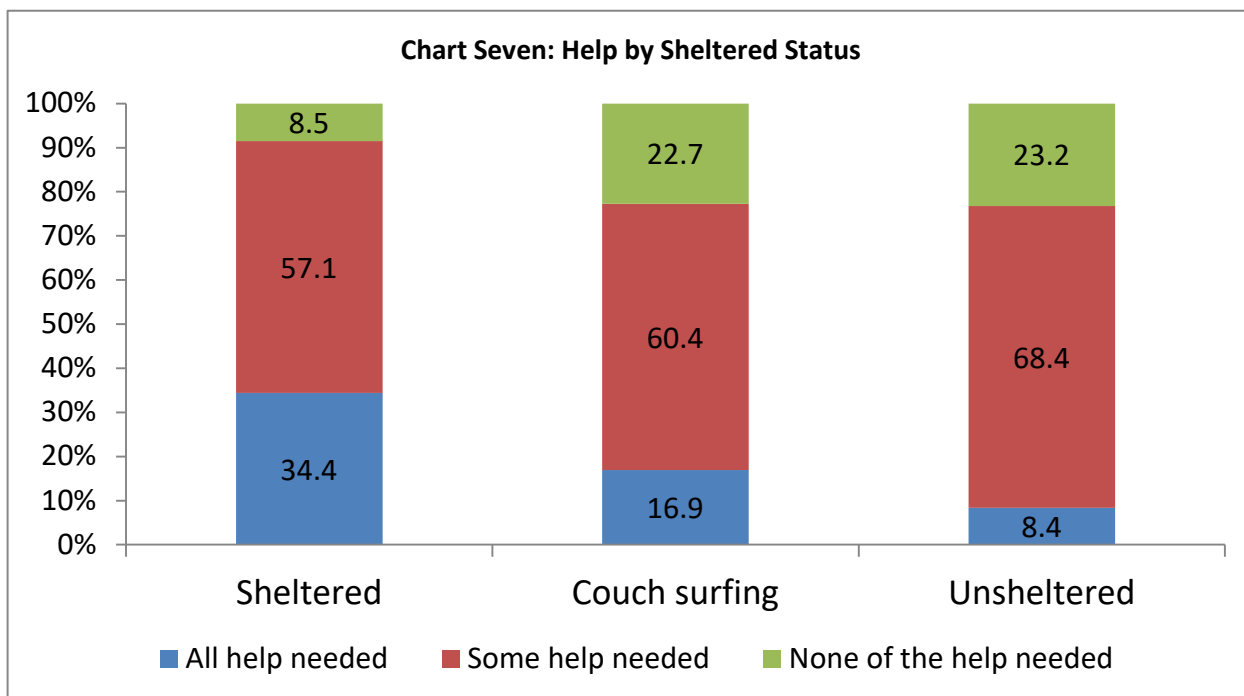
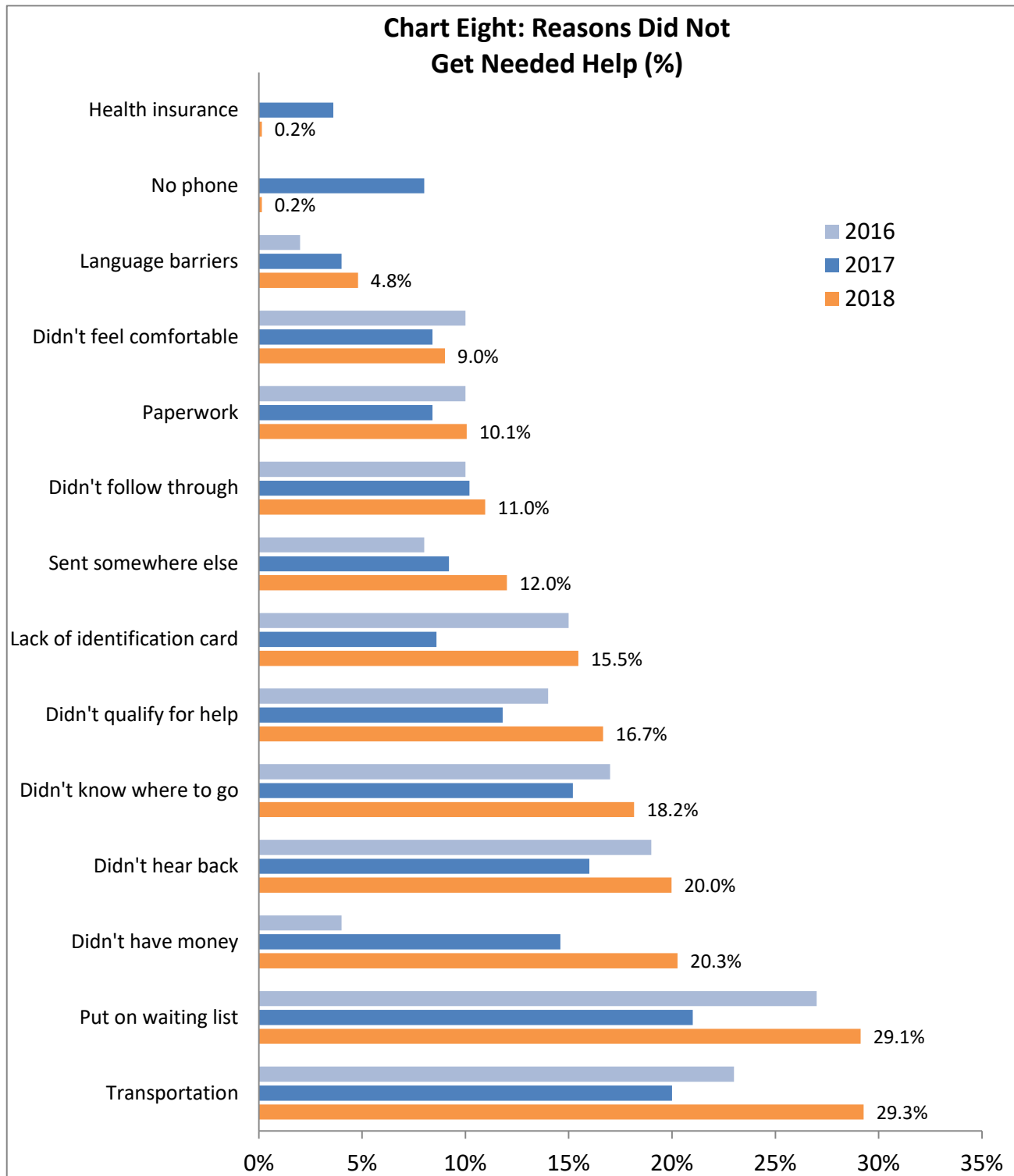


Chart Eight provides reasons young people reported that they did not get the help they needed. The top reasons remained the same from last year—waiting lists, transportation, not having money, and not hearing back from the provider.



2.4 SUBPOPULATIONS

The Commission was interested in learning more about the experiences of vulnerable subpopulations; therefore, the survey tool contained questions to determine the number of youth who were pregnant or parenting, who had history of systems involvement, those with veteran status, and who identified as LGBTQ. Table Five presents an overview of these populations as compared to respondents who reported being housed and never homeless.

TABLE 5: VULNERABLE POPULATIONS		
Meets Commission Definition (738)	Population	Housed, Never Homeless (773)
26.2% (194)	Pregnant/Parenting with custody (332 total respondents)	5.9% (46)
26.4 (195)	Foster Care Involvement (361 total respondents)	4.3% (34)
33.6 (248)	Juvenile or Criminal Justice Involvement (426 total respondents)	5.5% (43)
23.5% (174)	LGBTQ (471 total respondents)	20.9% (162)
3.3% (24)	Military (53 total respondents)	1.5% (12)

As compared to respondents who were housed and never homeless, UHY were almost 5 times more likely to be pregnant or parenting; 6 times more likely to have had foster care involvement; 6 times more likely to have had justice system involvement; and 2 times more likely to have been in the military. UHY were only slightly more likely to report an LGBTQ identity. In the following section, a closer examination is provided of each of these populations' experiences with homelessness and service acquisition.

2.4.1 PREGNANT OR PARENTING

Of the 738 youth who met the Commission definition, 194 (26%) were pregnant or parenting with custody of their children. Forty-six (6%) of housed and never homeless youth and young adults were pregnant or parenting. Of the 194, 66% were parents with custody, 18.5% were pregnant, and 15% were both. Pregnant/parenting respondents with custody of their children continue to be more likely to be born outside of the United States than other UHY (22% vs. 14.4%). Twenty-three parenting respondents identified as male; 158 as female; and eight as transgender, two-spirit, gender queer, or agender.

Respondents who were pregnant and/or parenting were more likely to have stayed with a partner the night before the survey than the respondents as a whole. Seventy-one percent of pregnant/parenting respondents were in a shelter, transitional program, or hotel, and 8% were unsheltered.

The reasons pregnant and parenting respondents were not living with their parents/guardians that differed most significantly from the sample as a whole were pregnancy and the house being too small.

Pregnant/parenting UHY sought the following services at a higher rate than other UHY: cash assistance, childcare, family support, and help for domestic violence. These young people were also more likely to get the help they needed: 33% reported getting all the help they needed, and only 9% of them reported not getting any of the help they needed. This is likely due to the higher likelihood that these young people were sheltered. The reasons pregnant/parenting youth gave about why they did not receive help mirror that of the UHY overall with the exception of not qualifying for help. This was one of the top reasons for pregnant/parenting respondents, but not UHY respondents as a whole.

In terms of income sources, the primary income source for pregnant/parenting UHY was cash assistance. At 55% of these respondents; this was 34 percentage points higher than all respondents who meet the Commission definition. These respondents were also more likely to be receiving SSI/SSDI, receiving child support, and working under the table, and less likely to report panhandling or having no income at all.

I would say to be more considerate. Homeless families do and have gone through a lot so it'd be best not to treat them as just a "case" instead [as] people who have nowhere to stay with their children - it's hard.

*-2018 Youth Count Respondent
(female, 21-24 years old)*

2.4.2 SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

FOSTER CARE

Twenty-six percent of respondents meeting the Commission definition had ever been in foster care; this is 4 percentage points lower than last year. Only 4.3% of housed, never homeless youth and young adult respondents had ever been in foster care. Not only were respondents with experience in the foster care system at higher risk of being homeless, they also were at higher risk to be sleeping in potentially unsafe locations. Twenty-seven percent of youth who slept outside the night before the Count had previous foster care involvement. Thirty-eight or 19.4% of all youth with foster care involvement were unsheltered the night before the count, as compared to 17.5% of all respondents who met the Commission definition. Roughly 52% of respondents with foster care involvement identified as male and 43% identified as female. Close to 29% of respondents who identified as LGBTQ had a history of foster care involvement, which is roughly 3 percentage points higher than respondents as a whole. UHY with foster care system involvement were more likely to not be living with parents due to parental substance use than other respondents.

These young people were more likely to have sought help for mental health issues, health care, and family support than UHY respondents as a whole. They were slightly more likely to say they received both all and none of the help they sought than UHY respondents. Not having proper identification was the one service barrier for UHY with foster care involvement that was not in the top five reasons for UHY in general.

Serious help is needed for teens aging out of foster care. Myself and way too many of my friends have been homeless after leaving foster care.

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (female, 18-20 years old, Cape/Islands)

In terms of income sources, youth with foster care involvement reported no income sources, working under the table, and SSI/SSDI at higher rates than other UHY. Thirty-three respondents with foster care involvement (16.9%) reported having ever exchanged sex for basic necessities. This is 2.5 percentage points higher than respondents who met the Commission definition as a whole.

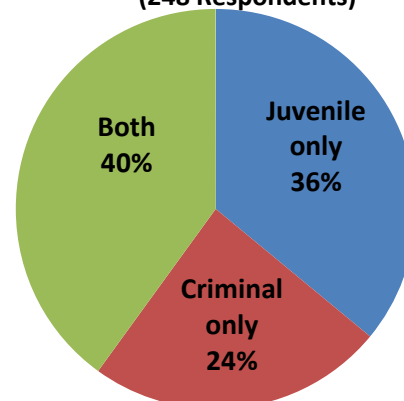
In most cases, children come into the care of some government agency for example Dept. of Children and Families and when a child turns 18 they are pretty much rushed to be on their own. If instead of rushing them and expecting so much of these kids do you think there could be a program to prevent homelessness or at least support them ongoing to assure they can make it further in life?

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (female, 21-24 years old, Hampton County)

JUVENILE OR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

In the 2018 Count, 248 UHY had juvenile or criminal justice system involvement. This represents 33.6% of all UHY respondents and is a 28 percent increase from last year⁸. Of these, 36% had juvenile justice system involvement only, 24% had criminal justice system involvement only, and 40% had both (see Chart Nine). Only 5.5% of housed, never homeless youth and young adult respondents had ever been detained. In terms of gender, respondents with justice system involvement differed

Chart Nine: Justice System Involvement (248 Respondents)



⁸ This is substantial increase, which could in part be attributed to how we refined the questions about juvenile and adult criminal system involvement in 2018.

substantially from others who met the Commission definition in that 61.3% reported identifying as male and 29.4% as female (Commission definition: 46.1% female and 42.0% male). In 2018, the percentage of females with justice system involvement increased almost 84%. Eighty-nine UHY respondents (12%) reported both foster care and justice system involvement. This rate is identical to last year.

Young people with juvenile system involvement tended to have left home permanently at a younger age than UHY as a whole (see Table 6). The young people with juvenile or criminal justice system involvement had an elevated likelihood of having slept in a place not meant for habitation the night before the survey; 26% of them reported sleeping in a vehicle, outside, or in an abandoned building. This is almost 9 percentage points higher than respondents who met the Commission definition as a whole. Conversely, these young people were less likely to utilize formal housing supports. Forty-four percent of respondents with criminal justice involvement stayed in a shelter, transitional housing, or a hotel the night before, as compared to 55.7% of all respondents who met the Commission definition.

Table Six: Justice System Involvement by Gender and Age	Juvenile only	Criminal only	Both	UHY total
Average age (current)	19.9	21.6	21.4	20.7
Average age left home first time	15.7	16.6	15.6	16.7
Average age left home for good	16.8	17.6	16.9	17.6
Male	54%	68%	61.3%	42%
Female	40%	22%	29.4%	46.1%

Respondents who met the Commission definition with justice system involvement were more likely to not be living with family due to parental substance use than other respondents (justice system=22.5%; MA Commission=13.4%). Other reasons that ranked higher for respondents with justice involvement than for UHY respondents as a whole were abuse and neglect, being released from detention, and personal drug use.

These young people were more likely to have sought job skills and training services, substance use treatment services, or no help at all than other respondents and were less likely to seek long-term housing support and childcare. For those who sought help, 20% reported that they received none of the help they sought, as compared to 15% of all UHY.

In terms of income sources, these young people were more likely to have reported working under the table, hustling or drug dealing, panhandling, sex work, or family as sources of money and much less likely to report receiving cash assistance than all respondents who met the Commission definition. Roughly 25% of respondents with justice system involvement reported having ever exchanged sex for basic necessities, which is more than 10 percentage points higher than UHY as a whole.

2.4.3 LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER/QUESTIONING (LGBTQ)⁹

In total, 471 out of the 2,150 respondents reported an LGBTQ identity (21.9%). Of the 471, 174 met the Commission definition for an unaccompanied homeless youth (23.5%). For UHY youth who identified as LGBTQ, the average age they reported leaving their home permanently was 17.8 years old. This was slightly older than the average age of UHY respondents as a whole, which was 17.6 years old. Respondents who left home due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, left home permanently on average at 18.6 years old.

Young people who identified as LGBTQ were more likely to have slept in a place not meant for human habitation the night before the survey than other respondents (17% overall UHY vs. 25% LGBTQ). UHY who identified as LGBTQ were more likely than other respondents to report abuse and neglect, parental substance use, foster care, and own drug use as reasons they were not living with their families.

I really need affordable housing and more options for queer youth

--2018 Youth Count Respondent
(male, 18-20 years old, Hampton County)

Respondents who identified as LGBTQ had a slightly different list of top services sought. In addition to shelter and nutrition assistance, LGBTQ respondents reported mental health services, long-term housing, and health care in their top five services sought. This was the only subpopulation that did not include cash assistance in their top five services sought. Rates of receiving the help they were seeking were similar to all respondents meeting the Commission definition. The top barriers faced by LGBTQ respondents were identical to the broader group of respondents meeting the Commission definition.

In terms of income sources, LGBTQ respondents reported part-time employment, hustling/drug dealing, family, and cash assistance as their top income sources. Fifty-six percent of the UHY respondents who had exchanged sex for money or other necessities identified as LGBTQ. It is important to highlight that 34.5% of UHY who identified as LGBTQ reported having ever exchanged sex for money or other necessities. This represents a 46% increase as compared to last year. Further, UHY who identified as LGBTQ were 4 times more likely than youth who meet the Commission definition but did not identify as LGBTQ to exchange sex for money or other necessities.

Many social service providers are generally homophobic and transphobic, disciplinary people. Sexual trauma [is] generally ignored and unaddressed by providers as well

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (gender non-conforming, 21-24 years old, Balance of State)

⁹ A breakdown of gender identity and sexual orientation is provided in the Demographics section (Section 2.5).

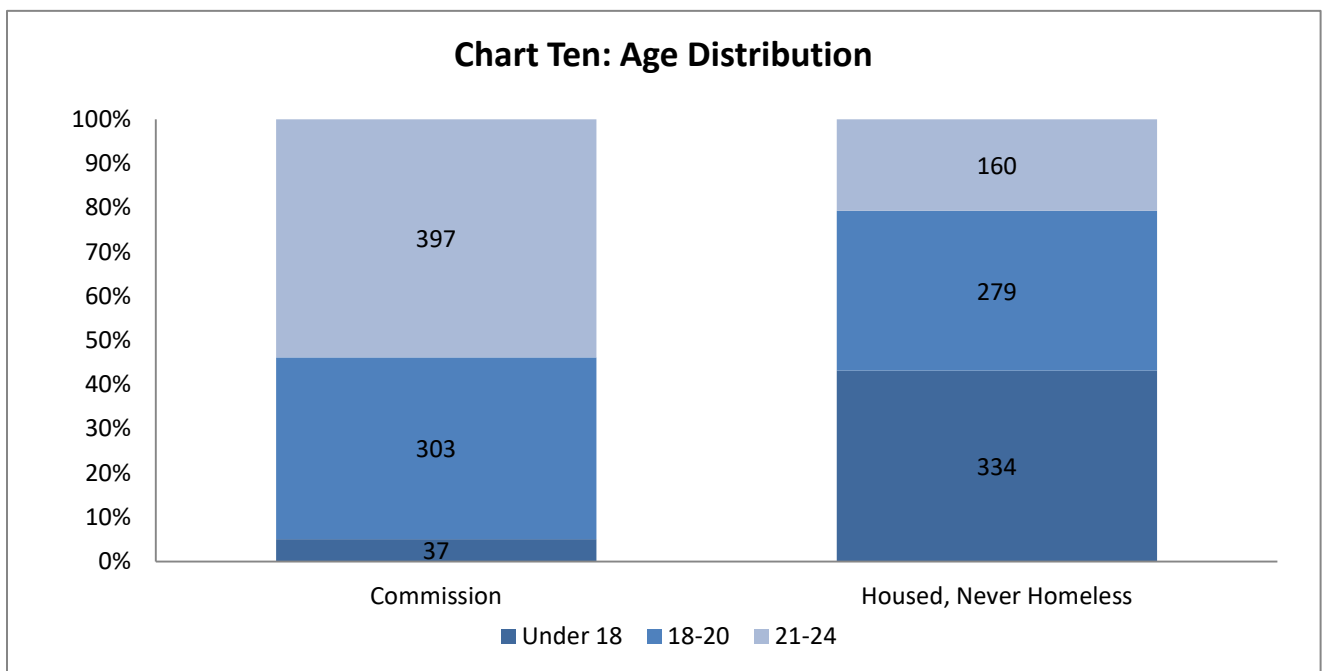
2.5 DEMOGRAPHICS

The Commission included several questions to understand demographic characteristics of unaccompanied youth and young adults who were experiencing homelessness. In this section, information about the age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and place of birth are provided.

2.5.1 AGE

Similar to last year, the majority of survey respondents meeting the Commission's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth were between the ages of 18 and 24. Roughly 5.0% of responses from those meeting the state's definition for homelessness came from youth under the age of 18.

The average age unaccompanied homeless youth left home the first time was 16.7 and the average age these young people left home permanently was 17.6. Two hundred and twenty-five (225) young people or 30.4% of UHY left home permanently before age 18.

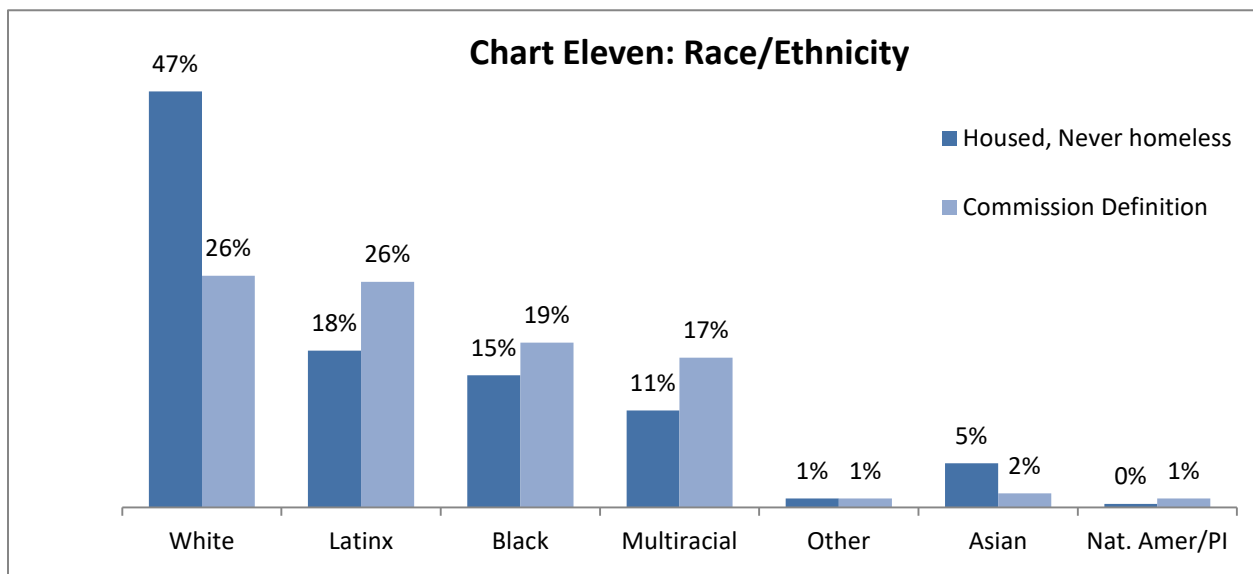


We need more programs/shelters for youth. Sometimes because they are under 18 they don't qualify for housing. Which is unfair.

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (female, under 18, Worcester)

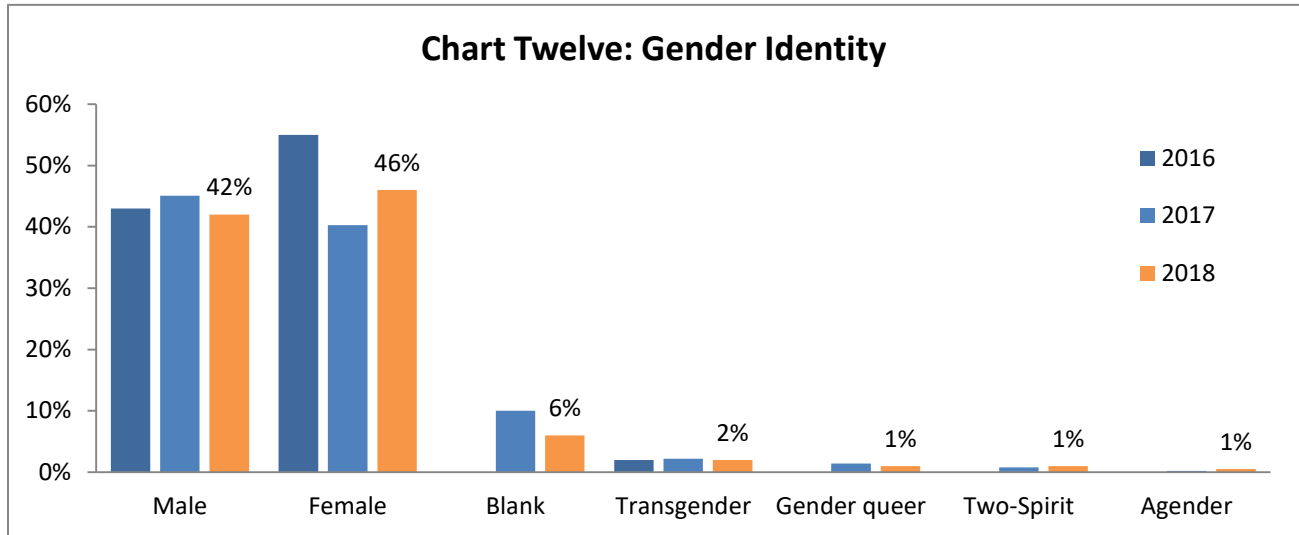
2.5.2 RACE/ETHNICITY

Respondents were able to select multiple options for race and ethnicity on the survey tool. Chart Eleven indicates the distribution of those responses. Cumulatively, Black, Latinx, and Multiracial respondents constituted 62% of the respondents who met the Commission definition but were only 54% of all young people surveyed. White respondents made up 34% of all young people surveyed and 26% of those that met the Commission definition. In contrast, the majority of Massachusetts residents are White (~82%) and 61% of students in Massachusetts schools are White. While only 7% of the Massachusetts population identifies as Black/African American, 19% of UHY respondents were Black/African American. Similarly, U.S Census data shows that only 10% of Massachusetts residents are Hispanic/Latino, but 26% of UHY respondents self-identified as Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx.



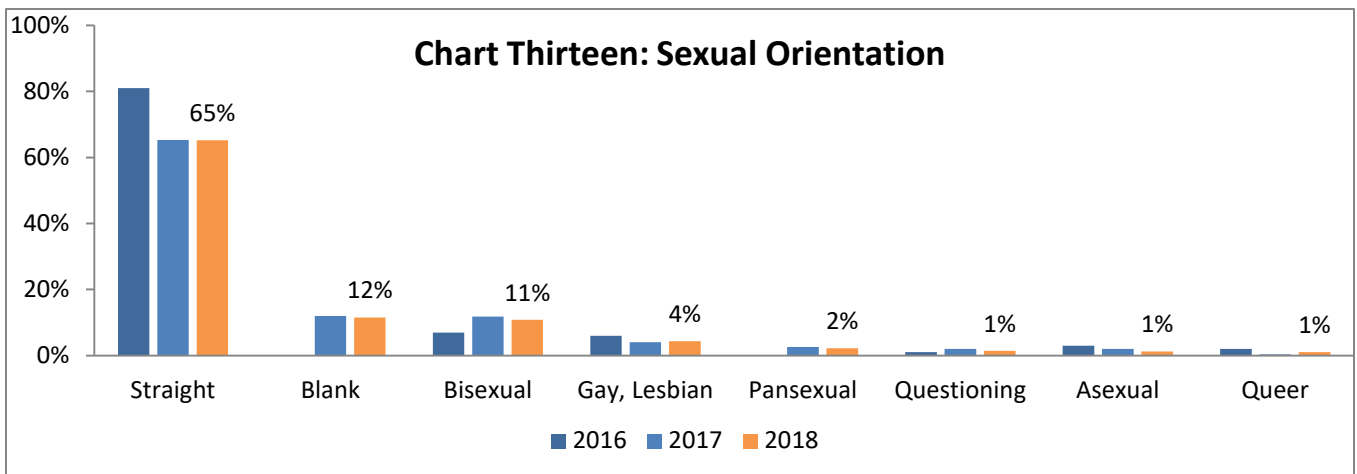
2.5.3 GENDER

Of the 738 UHY respondents, 46.1% identified as female. Roughly 42% of respondents identified as male. Of the remaining respondents, 1.6% identified as transgender; 0.9% as gender queer; 0.5% as agender; and 0.9% as two-spirit. Roughly 6% of respondents left this question blank (see Chart Twelve).



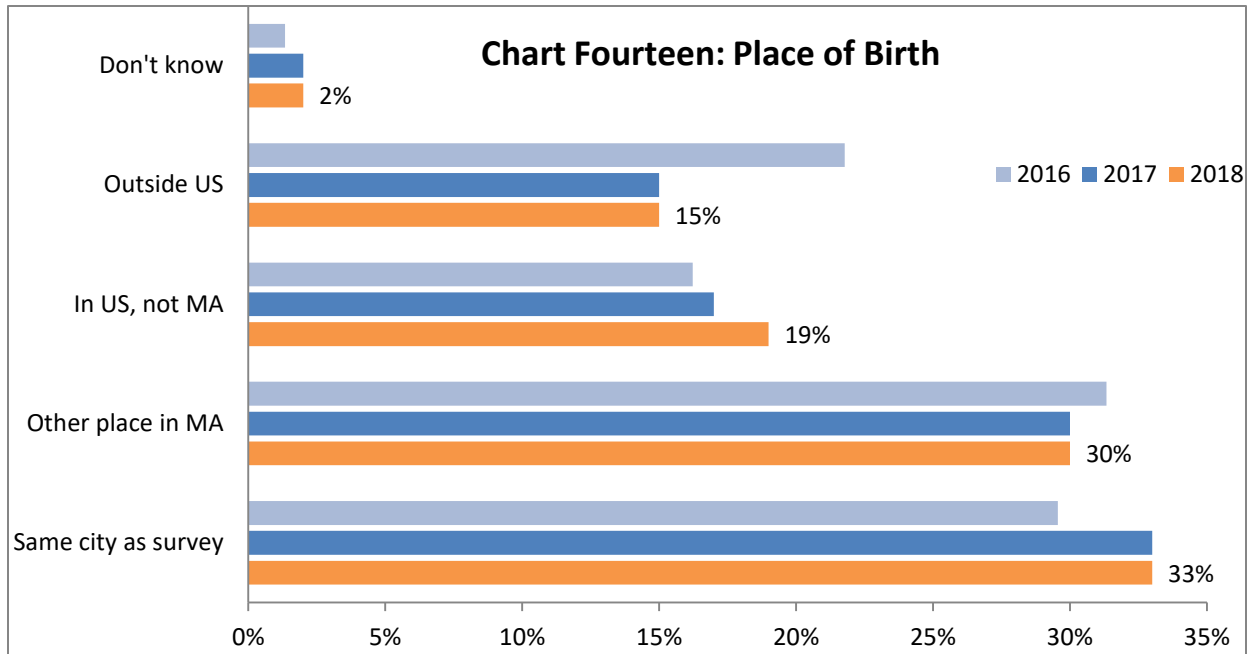
2.5.4 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In order to better understand the experiences of unaccompanied youth by sexual orientation, the survey tool included the following question: “What is your sexual orientation? Please check the answer that best describes you.” The phrasing and response categories were designed to be as inclusive as possible. Chart Thirteen shows the breakdown of responses. The most common response was straight, at 65.3% of responses. All responses for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning, total 23%; and 12% were blank.



2.5.5 PLACE OF BIRTH

Of the 738 respondents meeting the Commission’s definition, 63% were born in Massachusetts; 33% of respondents were born in the same city or town in which they took the survey; 15% were born outside of the United States (see Chart Fourteen). The survey did not give guidance on how young people born in Puerto Rico should answer this question. It appears that some respondents who were born in Puerto Rico answered “In the US, not MA” and some answered “Outside US” .



3.0 CONCLUSION

The 2018 Massachusetts Youth Count findings continued trends from prior years. The primary factor associated with unaccompanied youth homelessness included family conflict and instability. Unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness were less likely to be connected to education and employment and were more likely to have systems involvement than their accompanied, housed and never homeless counterparts. As compared to respondents who were housed and never homeless, in 2018, UHY were almost 5 times more likely to be pregnant or parenting; 6 times more likely to have had foster care involvement; 6 times more likely to have had justice system involvement; and 2 times more likely to have been in the military. UHY were only slightly more likely to report an LGBTQ identity. The vast majority of these young people sought help but many of them faced barriers accessing the resources they needed.

Recognizing that family conflict is a primary factor associated with homelessness, the Youth Count data suggest that there are at least four clusters of vulnerability that increase young people's risk for experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts.

- **Family substance use** was an issue that led some young people to experience homelessness. Family substance use appeared to be correlated with greater likelihood of youth being foster care and/or justice system involved. The average age that these young people left home permanently was 16.4 years old, over a year younger than other young people who were unaccompanied and homeless. These young people were less likely to be sheltered and more likely to be doubled up, couch surfing, or unsheltered than young people who identified as unaccompanied and homeless as a whole. Given the continued intensity of the opioid epidemic in Massachusetts, this is a factor that demands focused attention.
- **Family economic instability** manifested as families living in places with not enough room and/or families losing their home. Both of these manifestations of economic instability drove young people into homelessness. Sixty-two percent of these young people were sheltered, which is roughly 7 percentage points higher than the group who identified as unaccompanied and homeless. Alternatively, only 10% reported being unsheltered, which is 7.4 percentage points lower than UHY as a whole. It would be important to learn more about how these young people, although homeless, are able to get connected to shelters where it is more likely they can get help.
- **Early pregnancy and parenting** appeared to exacerbate family economic instability. These young people were much more likely to be sheltered than young people who identified as unaccompanied and homeless as a whole. The experiences of these young people emphasize the need to include discussions of housing and economic self-sufficiency in comprehensive sexuality education.
- **Sexual orientation or gender identity**. For respondents for whom one of the reasons they left home was due to sexual orientation or gender identity, their average age leaving home permanently was 18.6 years old, over a year older than other young people who were unaccompanied and homeless. Yet, these young people were much more likely to be unsheltered than young people who identified as unaccompanied and homeless as a whole. It

would be important to learn more about how and why these young people stay with their families longer, but then once they leave have a greater likelihood of staying in places not meant for human habitation. It is also important to address that respondents who identified as LGBTQ were more likely to express a need for mental and physical health services than other UHY.

In addition to gaining deeper insight into pathways into homelessness, a few new trends emerged.

1. We saw an 84% increase in the percentage of female UHY with justice system involvement as compared to 2017. Of the 73 females with justice system involvement, 82.2% of them were for juvenile system involvement (27 of them also had adult system involvement). While UHY males were over two times more likely to have justice system involvement than females, this increase for females is cause for concern. Overall, we saw a roughly 28% increase in the number of UHY with justice system involvement from 2017 to 2018.
2. While many UHY reported having access to legal income sources such as part-time employment and cash assistance, in 2018, we saw a 50% increase in the percent of youth who relied on illegal or informal income sources, such as working under the table, hustling, drug dealing, panhandling, and sex work. Over 20% of respondents sought employment assistance in 2018; this was a decrease from 2017. In the open-ended comments, young people make reference to how CORIs and the costs associated with getting needed identification documents were barriers to getting both employment and housing. Other young people commented on the need to have housing—or at least a place to shower and eat—so that they can get a job.
3. For the third year in a row, nutrition assistance—such as SNAP and free meals—was the second most sought service among UHY. However, this was the service with the biggest increase in being sought at over 10 percentage points higher than 2017. Open-ended comments emphasized food insecurity among these young people. Following are two of these comments:
 - *Stop shutting church dinners down in Boston. There's real people struggling everyday...*
 - *There are too many road blocks to receiving help. Need food? Sorry they don't want us to eat. Being homeless has enabled me to be anorexic.*

The 2018 Youth Count confirms that unaccompanied youth homelessness is not yet a thing of the past in Massachusetts; however, there were several encouraging trends in both the data and the Count process.

1. We saw how effective Youth Ambassadors and street outreach were in connecting to young people who were unsheltered, couch surfing, or doubled-up. Fifty-five percent of youth who were unsheltered and 38% of youth who were doubled up or couch surfing took the survey via Youth Ambassadors or street outreach. In relation to service provision, this finding suggests the importance of techniques that go to the youth rather than only relying on youth to come to the service.
2. While young people still reported struggling with the DCF 'aging-out' process, in 2018, 26.4% of respondents meeting the Commission definition had ever been in foster care. This is 4.4 percentage points lower than last year or a 12% decrease. Not having necessary identification was one of the top service barriers reported by young people with foster care involvement that was not reported by other groups. Ensuring that these young people age out with the documentation that they need could help move the needle for this group even more.

3. Finally, in 2018, 85% of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness reported getting some or all of the help they sought. This rate is up from 79% in 2017. Only 8.5% of sheltered youth reported not receiving any help they sought; but roughly 23% of young people couch surfing, doubled-up, or unsheltered reported not receiving help they sought. Again, reflecting on the effectiveness of Youth Ambassadors and street outreach in connecting with these young people, these may be strategies to increase young peoples' success in getting what they need.

After conducting the Youth Count for five years, we have learned a great deal about the scope of the problem and service needs of unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. Yet, there remain at least three gaps in our knowledge base. One, there are many cities and towns from which we receive no surveys (See Attachment Six). There is likely a correlation between these places and availability of services for young people experiencing homelessness. Two, while we have made great strides in developing robust Youth Ambassador and street outreach procedures, these lessons have not been applied across the state, decreasing our connection to doubled-up, couch surfing, and unsheltered youth and young adults. Finally, the MA Youth Count process has been largely unsuccessful connecting with unaccompanied youth under the age of 18. While 25% of all surveys collected are from youth under 18, in 2018 only 7% of them met the Commission definition. The data tell us that the average age UHY left home permanently was 17.6 years old and that over 30% of youth left home permanently before the age of 18 (their average age leaving home was 15.4 years old); yet our Count strategies are not reaching youth under 18 who meet the Commission definition. Specific strategies will be needed to address these three gaps. Some ideas can be found in Attachment One.

Massachusetts remains committed to ending youth and young adult homelessness. As the MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness rolls out, we expect to see reductions in youth experiencing homelessness and improvements in young peoples' ability to access supports, services, and resources. Insights from this report can help tailor strategies that address drivers of unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness.

TO: MA COMMISSION

FROM: E. C.

I feel like the youth should have more programs for help to get housing. Most of us make mistakes and don't have GEDs so to pay regular rent and take care of necessity can get tricky. We can get pretty discouraged. Thanks.

--2018 Youth Count Respondent (Male, 21-24 years old, Hampton County)

4.0 ATTACHMENTS¹⁰

- 1) Methodology
- 2) Members of the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- 3) Final 2018 Uniform Survey Tool
- 4) State Level Data Table
- 5) Open-ended Responses
- 6) Cities and towns where surveys were and were not collected

¹⁰ Numbering of Tables, Charts, and Figures restart in the Attachments section.

Attachment One: Methodology

STRUCTURE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH COUNT

Three organizing entities support the Massachusetts Youth Count: the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (the Commission), the Identification and Connection Working Group (the Working Group) of the Commission, and 15 of the local Continuums of Care (CoCs).¹¹

The **Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth** provides oversight for the Count and is responsible for reporting on its progress annually to the Governor’s Office, the Legislature, and the Office of the Child Advocate. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services chairs the Commission, and at the time of the 2018 count, the Commission included 27 members, representing youth, state government, service providers, and advocates (see Attachment Two for members of the Commission).

The **Identification and Connection Working Group** of the Commission organized and facilitated the Massachusetts Youth Count on behalf of the Commission. For the 2018 count, its primary responsibilities were to update the count methodology, make needed modifications to the uniform survey tool, coordinate a statewide conference for stakeholders to prepare for the count, and implement the count in partnership with CoCs.

The **CoCs** implemented the Youth Count at the local and regional level. Each CoC has a unique geographic area to cover, a mix of resources and providers, and high demand for homeless services.

YOUTH COUNT METHODOLOGY

The Commission, through the Working Group, provided technical assistance to fifteen of the participating CoCs in Massachusetts that executed the Youth Count survey in 2018. The Count’s uniform survey tool was administered during a 3-week period from April 23 through May 13, 2018. The Working Group developed guidelines for CoCs to work with diverse partners to identify young people who may or may not be connected to schools, employment or social services and to engage youth volunteers, also known as “Youth Ambassadors,” to assist with implementation.

The Youth Count is aligned with lessons learned through Chapin Hall’s Voices of Youth Count process¹². The Working Group formulated a set of guidelines based on best practices to conduct a youth count (See Pergamit et al., 2013). Recommended practices included forming a local planning committee, providing stipends to youth volunteers, conducting focused youth outreach and marketing of the count, training all volunteers, engaging diverse partners, providing day-of coordination and quality control, and seeking creative ways to engage youth under 18.

¹¹ A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.

¹² Dworsky, A., Horwitz, B., (2018). Missed opportunities: Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

REFINEMENT OF THE UNIFORM SURVEY TOOL

To develop the 2018 uniform survey tool, the Working Group started with the 2017 survey tool and worked to further address limitations, reduce confusion, and encourage completion of each question by survey participants. Several significant modifications were made to the tool as follows:

- Question 5: Where did you sleep last night. Change: respondents were only allowed to choose one option. In the past they could choose multiple items, which led to challenges in interpretation and analysis.
- Question 9a and 9b: If no, how old were you when you left home the first time and when did you leave home for good (paraphrased): Past versions of the survey did not distinguish between first leaving and permanent leaving which prevented respondents from being able to accurately respond to the question.
- Questions 19 and 20: Justice system involvement
 - 19. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention -- a secure facility or residential program for young people -- as a result of criminal behavior or police involvement?
 - 20. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison?

This change was made to provide a clearer understanding of correlates with youth homelessness. Analysis included respondents with juvenile justice system involvement only, adult justice system involvement only, and both juvenile and adult system involvement.

- Question 21a: Pregnant/parenting: Respondents could choose if they were pregnant, a parent, or both and if they were a parent, whether or not they had custody of their child(ren).
- Question 31: Which of the following best describes how you were recruited to take this survey?
This question was added to facilitate analysis about effective outreach and counting methods.

Another significant modification was administering the survey through a Google Form rather than Survey Monkey. The Google Form platform afforded the Identification and Connection group more control over survey process—including modifying questions and pulling results. The survey was also administered through a paper version. The paper survey was available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, Khmer/Cambodian, and Brazilian Portuguese. The electronic Google Form was available in English and Spanish. See Attachment Three for the final 2018 Uniform Survey Tool.

CONTINUUM OF CARE ENGAGEMENT

Once the methodology and updated survey tool were complete, the Working Group worked with the CoCs to develop the outreach strategies. Engagement with the CoCs during this phase included email and telephone conversations providing basic information about what the Working Group was hoping to accomplish, grant information, and an overview PowerPoint presentation that described the Commission and the proposed methodology. CoCs were notified about the 2018 Youth Count dates and grant availability on November 30, 2017.

CoCs were invited to attend a half-day MA Youth Count Conference at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, which was held on February 15, 2018. The Commission and Working Group's goal for the

conference was to orient everyone to the initiative, provide information about the methodology and survey tool, and facilitate a discussion among CoCs and other partners about promising youth count practices, with a particular focus on authentic engagement of youth. Approximately 65 people were in attendance, including at least one representative from each of the CoCs. Following the Massachusetts Youth Count Conference, the Working Group co-chairs began providing ongoing technical assistance to each CoC. Additionally, each CoC had the opportunity to apply for a capacity building grant in the amount of up to \$5,000 from the Commission to help with financial costs of conducting the Youth Count. Not all CoCs accepted the grant and utilized other resources to administer the survey.

KEY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

This part of the report includes feedback from a CoC debrief survey and integrates some findings from the 2018 Youth Count. Eighteen surveys were submitted, representing 14 out of 15 Continua of Care (CoC)¹³ that participated in the 2018 Youth Count. Eighty-three percent of respondents represented the Lead Agency responsible for administering the Youth Count Survey. The remaining respondents were partners in the Youth Count. Table One provides an overview of debrief results by each CoC and includes data about the number of surveys collected and the number and percent meeting the Commission definition for unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

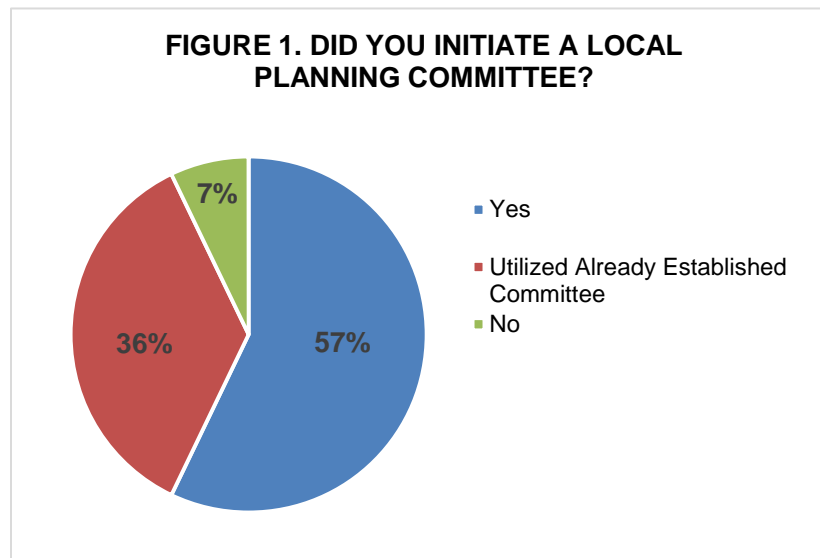
Table One: Debrief Results	Planning Committee	# Days Survey Period	Outreach to LGBTQ Youth	Outreach to Youth Under 18	Youth Ambassadors	Street Count/ Outreach	Magnet events	Used incentives	Total # Surveys Collected	# Commission Definition (%)
Boston	Yes	18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	548	203 (37%)
Attleboro	Yes	14	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	65	7 (11%)
Balance of State	Yes	14	No	Yes	Yes*	No	Yes	Yes	178	54 (30%)
South Shore	Yes	21	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	23	20 (86%)
Cambridge	Yes	21	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	64	54 (84%)
Cape	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes	No	Yes	105	9 (9%)
Fall River	Yes	14	No	No	Yes*	Yes	No	Yes	119	11 (9%)
Hampden	Yes	21	No	Yes	Yes*	No	Yes	Yes	174	100 (57%)
Lowell	No	21	No	Yes	Yes*	No	No	Yes	128	51 (40%)
Lynn	Yes	18	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	92	18 (20%)
New Bedford	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	85	22(26%)
North Shore	Yes	28	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	109	35 (32%)
Somerville	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	50	14 (28%)
3 County	Yes	21	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	92	48 (52%)
Worcester	No response to debrief survey								236	53 (22%)
CoC Blank									82	36 (44%)
Total	* Debrief interview indicated no Ambassadors, but survey respondents said they took the survey via an Ambassador								2150	738 (34%)

¹³ A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.

PLANNING FOR THE YOUTH COUNT

CoCs engaged a wide-range of partner organizations in the count and survey administration, including public schools, community colleges, mental health and substance abuse agencies, youth services agencies, individual and family shelter providers, and individuals affected by homelessness and housing instability.

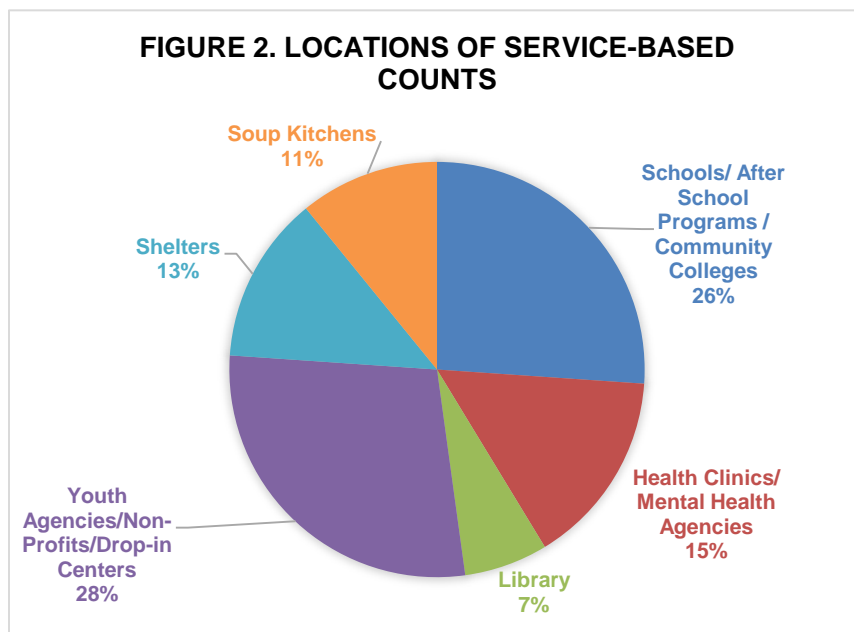
Local planning committees allow agencies to spread out project responsibilities and encourage engagement and input from diverse groups of stakeholders that interact with youth who are at-risk or experiencing homelessness. Fifty-seven percent of agencies initiated a local planning committee to plan for their counts. Committees allowed agencies to better strategize and organize across geographically distinct groups. The North Shore engaged young people as ambassadors for specific geographic regions. Boston held three focus groups with over 30 youth and direct service staff, including street outreach workers from area shelters to identify hot spots for youth. Somerville saw new committee members join from the public library, the school district and university graduate school programs. Five agencies (36 percent) utilized existing committees to plan the Count. Figure 1 breaks down the use of local planning committees.



Marketing. Common marketing strategies across CoCs included in-person community meetings, word-of-mouth, local media outlets, postings on the CoC website, and postings on partner organizations' social media pages. Sites received positive feedback from partner agencies on the ease of use of the materials created by the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless that could be posted in storefront windows and on social media platforms. Lynn included various local resources on the backside of marketing postcards.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

One-hundred percent of responding CoCs conducted a service-based count. CoCs reported this to be the most effective model to administer the surveys. Locations included schools, shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centers and health clinics. Youth agencies, non-profits and drop-in centers were the most popular sites surveys were administered, as shown in Figure 2.



Training volunteers CoCs trained Youth Ambassadors and other volunteers on administering the surveys by reviewing the surveys beforehand, and including instructions with the surveys in addition to having a contact person available through the count to answer questions. Boston conducted information sessions in partnership with the Boston Youth Service Network that included reporting on 2017 Count findings. Boston also provided Youth Ambassadors with a three-hour paid training that also included an overview of 2017 data and role playing about how to administer the surveys. Lynn held two trainings, one at lunchtime and one in the evening where they ran through the entire survey with volunteers to be sure they understood the questions; discussed cultural sensitivity and respectful engagement; discussed the calendar and the importance of not being late to tables; and reviewed the criteria for the Count. Each Lynn volunteer received a "cheat sheet" which had the link to the survey, the phone number and email address of the coordinator, and other information relevant to the Count. Both Fall River and New Bedford included training and talking points on how to approach potential survey participants.

Identifying participants Strategies to determine which youth to survey varied across CoCs. Fifty percent of CoCs utilized partner agencies to identify youth to survey. Boston followed a protocol established in the 2016 Voices of Youth Count of Suffolk County in which teams of Youth Ambassadors accompanied by staff would go to predetermined hotspot areas, explain goals of the count and basic findings from previous years and then engage people to take the survey.

Incentives Ninety-three percent of responding CoCs, excluding Somerville, offered incentives for youth participating in the survey, funded by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services; the

Department of Housing and Community Development; an Unaccompanied Youth Grant; and philanthropic gifts. Incentives included gift cards ranging from \$5-\$20 to Dunkin' Donuts, Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, Target, and Cumberland Farms (with the intention of young people to use for gas); MBTA passes; phone chargers; backpacks; T-shirts and hats. One CoC mentioned it would be helpful to provide survey incentives in a more streamlined fashion directly linked to completion of the online survey.

Youth Ambassadors Fifty-seven percent of CoC representatives indicated the use of Youth Ambassadors or other youth leaders in their Count process. Springfield was one CoC that decided not to use Youth Ambassadors based on previous years' experiences, but they plan to engage youth currently experiencing homelessness to act as ambassadors in future years. Youth Ambassadors generally received a stipend to participate in planning, training, and survey administration activities. Given the importance and complexity of the task and the level of responsibility required of the role, Boston considers the Youth Ambassador role to be an important work readiness opportunity for young people.

After analyzing the Youth Count data, 480 Youth Count respondents indicated that they were recruited to take the survey by a Youth Ambassador. Of these, 144 respondents or 30% met the Commission definition. Boston's Youth Ambassadors recruited the highest number of survey respondents. One hundred percent of respondents recruited by Cambridge Youth Ambassadors met the Commission definition. See Table 2 for more results based on recruiting efforts.

Street count & street outreach Seventy-eight percent of CoCs conducted a street count and/or used street outreach techniques as part of the count. Street outreach was conducted at predetermined hotspots based on previous years' experiences, and in cooperation with local agencies that do street outreach regularly. CoCs that did not conduct a special street count for the Youth Count relied on street outreach organizations to administer surveys as part of existing outreach activities; in Cambridge Youth Ambassadors conducted surveys outside drop-in spaces.

After analyzing the Youth Count data, 246 Youth Count respondents indicated that they were recruited to take the survey through street outreach. Of these, 88 or 36% met the Commission definition. Again, Boston had the highest number of surveys through street outreach. Cambridge and 3-County Rural had the highest percentage of street outreach surveys meet the Commission definition. See Table 2 for more results based on recruiting efforts.

Magnet events were held by 57% of CoCs. Bridge Over Troubled Waters in Boston held a "Be Counted Pizza Party" which over 60 young people attended. Lynn held a kickoff event at a drop-in basketball night to take advantage of an existing event that regularly has 150-200 young people age 14-20. Springfield held events at area community colleges and community centers.

Not many respondents indicated filling out surveys at magnet events. Only 10 respondents indicated that they were recruited to take the survey at a magnet event and of those, only 2 met the Commission definition. It is possible that respondents did not realize that they were at a magnet event when filling out the surveys and put an Education program or Agency as their response.

Special outreach for LGBTQ youth Forty-three percent of CoCs conducted special outreach for LGBTQ youth/young adults. Common outreach strategies mentioned included engaging youth organizations such as area Gay Straight Youth Alliances and drop-in and health centers that work exclusively with LGBTQ youth. Boston worked collaboratively with the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Youth to conduct targeted outreach to LGBTQ youth; one of the Commission’s Youth Ambassadors had been a Boston Youth Count Ambassador in 2017. Somerville’s Youth Ambassador training included discussions on outreach to LGBTQ youth, and their marketing materials indicated that magnet events were safe spaces for youth. CoCs that did not perform outreach specific to LGBTQ youth (57 percent) reported longstanding difficulty engaging LGBTQ youth, despite repeated efforts from individuals and programs. Several CoCs requested more assistance with outreach to youth who identify as LGBTQ.

In total, 471 surveys were filled out by youth identifying as LGBTQ. Of these, 174 or 23.5% also met the Commission definition. The four most frequently used recruitment strategies to reach LGBTQ respondents were Youth Ambassadors (125 total surveys); schools/education programs (103 surveys); street outreach (69 surveys); and social service agencies (68 surveys). Of the 174 youth who identified as LGBTQ and met the Commission definition, 39 were recruited by Youth Ambassadors; 35 were from a shelter; and 33 were recruited through street outreach.

Special outreach for youth under 18 Seventy-nine percent of CoCs conducted special outreach for youth under the age of 18. CoCs worked with school departments to engage staff, specifically guidance counselors, in assisting with identifying youth to survey and conducted outreach at recreation and youth centers. Area shelters in the North Shore helped with surveying teen parents. Lynn held a special event on the first Friday of the Count at the Lynn Tech basketball drop-in, which was valuable in engaging youth in addition to spreading the word about the count. Lynn’s drop-in basketball program is run by Lynn Parks and Recreation Department and Police Department.

Of the 539 youth under 18 recruited to take the survey, 204 of them were recruited at a school or education program, 124 were recruited by a Youth Ambassador, and 70 at a social service agency. These were the top three ways youth under 18 indicated being recruited (this question was blank on 56 surveys). Of the 37 youth under 18 who met the Commission definition, 17 were recruited by a Youth Ambassador, 7 were recruited at a school or education program, and 5 were recruited at a social service agency.

SUCSESSES

Increased youth engagement CoCs saw greater participation from and engagement of youth in the 2018 Count. Boston highlighted the Youth Ambassador model as their greatest success and Somerville noted the importance of the Youth Ambassador role. Youth were able to build connections to their peers on the street which led to greater survey participation. Incentives for Youth Ambassadors and for youth who completed the survey encouraged participation. Additionally, the Youth Ambassador roles

provided confidence and skill building for youth. Lynn saw an increase in participation from college students.

New and strengthened partnerships with youth agencies helped identify, survey and most importantly connect youth to local services. Boston, Cambridge and Somerville improved their coordination with one another on planning for the Count and connecting youth with services. Somerville and Springfield reported better coordination with school departments and committees which helped notify school-aged youth about the Count. More connections and coordination with community colleges was also mentioned.

CHALLENGES

Missing youth in the Count 36% of CoCs reported **geography** as a main issue in reaching youth. Young people who are hesitant to identify themselves as experiencing homelessness, those who are couch surfing along with those determined to remain invisible for fear of being brought into the care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and other systems are missed in the Count. One CoC expressed concern that they were unable to reach younger youth (e.g. 13-14 year olds) as well as undocumented youth. Multiple CoCs reported **difficulty in engaging school departments** in the Count, resulting in challenges notifying school-based youth about the Count¹⁴. One CoC mentioned that it was difficult to survey youth and then not have resources to offer them.

Several CoCs also requested getting materials far in advance and setting the dates as early as possible. Some also mentioned the need to receive the DCHD grant earlier so that they could better plan for Youth Ambassadors, marketing, and magnet events. One CoC mentioned that having the lead up to the Count during April vacation is difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Centralized resource sharing of best practices for survey administration and marketing approaches. Three County suggested creating a webinar to show how to work with young people in the Count, including how to introduce the Count, the questions that often come up, and how to maintain confidentiality. Springfield identified that it is difficult to survey youth and not have resources to offer them. This year Lynn put local resource information on the back of their marketing materials, and this is a practice that other CoCs may find useful. Cambridge recommended the state utilize funds to create a centralized marketing strategy such as an ad campaign on MBTA vehicles.

Develop an app and have iPads for Youth Ambassadors to use to administer the surveys. CoCs identify inputting the paper surveys into the database to be a major task that is amplified by limited resources. A mobile application with geolocation mapping abilities would also assist CoCs in neighboring cities (i.e.

¹⁴ It should be noted that CoCs are not attempting to survey youth in the schools but rather notify students about the survey through mechanisms such as posters.

Cambridge and Somerville) reduce duplication of responses. [*This would also provide a clearer way to identify the CoC where the survey was completed for data analysis purposes.*]

Restructure survey so that it is shorter, no more than two pages, and has all important questions on the first page. Fall River recommends shifting the language from a homeless survey, to a survey regarding housing stability and to explain how the survey results are used in future policy-making and potential funding. There seems to be a preference for the paper survey. One CoC recommended allowing the sites to see the data in real time as it is being collected. One CoC is beginning to implement a youth by-name list of youth experiencing homelessness to keep track and serve youth on an ongoing basis and questions the usefulness of a point-in-time count.

Adjust timing of survey to coordinate with academic calendars. Starting the survey earlier and running longer will help CoCs reach college students before campuses close. Quincy/Weymouth/Plymouth notes that the Youth Count is a duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources and prefers conducting the count in January along with our annual Point in Time (PIT) count. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) continues to put more and more responsibility on CoCs to conduct a youth count during the PIT. They indicate being challenged to meet all of the state obligations along with other responsibilities to HUD. They are less likely each year to conduct a separate springtime count given the need to do the same thing in January. New Bedford also indicated that it was difficult time to ramp up for a multi-week count given other commitments at that time of the year.

Broaden who is involved in administering the count such as emergency medical technicians, police officers, and firefighters.

Use of 2018 Youth Count Data

CoCs have used previous years' data to complete community/county needs assessments, for strategic planning and grant applications. CoCs appreciated the community-specific data; however because there are likely undercounts, CoCs are unsure about how to communicate the numbers to city decision-makers. CoCs request access to raw data in Excel format, and would benefit from receiving reports and materials earlier to better plan for next year's count. CoCs continue to build on efforts of prior years to improve and increase agency and youth participation in the count.

Final Comments

CoCs expressed appreciation for the Commonwealth's and the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless' ongoing efforts to determine the scope of youth homelessness and using the results to inform funding and service needs.

On the 2018 survey, we included a question on the survey that asks, “Which of the following best describes how you were recruited to take this survey?” Below are the results. It is important to note that 114 respondents said they were unsure where they were recruited to take the survey (of these, 33 met the commission definition, “Comm”) and 247 left the question blank (of these, 72 met the Commission definition).

Table 2: Results based on Recruiting Efforts	Magnet Event		Youth Ambassador or Peer Leader		School/ Education program		Agency		Shelter		Social Media		Street outreach		Total # collected	Total # meeting Commission definition
	Total	Comm	Total	Comm	Total	Comm	Total	Comm	Total	Comm	Total	Comm	Total	Comm		
Boston	3	1	263	87	44	7	17	10	49	46	1	1	135	30	548	203 (37%)
Attleboro/ Taunton	0	0	1	0	40	0	13	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	65	7 (11%)
Balance of State	1	0	31	15	48	7	60	17	9	9	2	0	3	1	178	54 (30%)
South Shore	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	17	17	0	0	2	2	23	20 (86%)
Cambridge	0	0	15	15	3	0	11	10	10	10	0	0	16	13	64	54 (84%)
Cape	1	0	12	0	53	3	18	4	2	2	0	0	18	2	105	9 (9%)
Fall River	0	0	32	1	57	5	1	0	0	0	6	1	5	1	119	11 (9%)
Hampden	1	0	7	1	37	9	10	6	80	74	3	0	9	4	174	100 (57%)
Lowell	2	1	11	0	11	0	15	3	28	23	0	0	8	3	128	51 (40%)
Lynn	0	0	0	0	2	1	6	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	92	18 (20%)
New Bedford	0	0	0	0	61	11	0	0	10	9	2	0	1	1	85	22(26%)
North Shore	1	0	44	9	29	5	3	3	14	14	0	0	4	2	109	35 (32%)
Somerville	0	0	17	6	10	0	9	4	2	2	0	0	2	1	50	14 (28%)
3 County Rural	0	0	6	4	17	5	25	12	10	7	0	0	18	13	92	48 (52%)
Worcester	1	0	31	3	91	13	52	23	3	1	0	0	15	6	236	53 (22%)
Blank	0	0	9	3	0	0	6	2	11	10	0	0	8	6	82	36 (44%)
Total	10	2	480	144	504	66	249	99	242	223	15	2	246	88	2150	738 (34%)
% meeting Commission Definition	20.0%		30.0%		13.1%		39.8%		92.1%		13.3%		35.8%			

Attachment Two: Members of the Commission

Role	Name (alpha)
Department of Public Health	Monica Bharel
Youth	Jamila Bradley
Department of Housing and Community Development	Gordie Calkins
1 Member Appointed by House Minority Leader Representative	Kate Campanale
1 Member of the Senate	Senator Harriette Chandler
MA Transgender Political Coalition	Mason Dunn
Senate Chair, Committee on Children, Families Persons with Disabilities	Senator Jennifer Flanagan
1 Member Appointed by Senate Minority Leader	Maureen Flatley
Direct Service Provider, Appointed by the Governor	Lisa Goldblatt-Grace, My Life My Choice
MA Housing and Shelter Alliance	Caitlin Golden
Direct Service Provider, Appointed by the Governor	Lisa Goldsmith, DIAL/SELF
House Chair, Committee on Children, Families Persons with Disabilities	Representative Kay Khan
Youth	Lauren Leonardis
Direct Service Provider, Appointed by the Governor	Kevin Lilly, Samaritan Steps
MA Task Force on Youth Aging Out of DCF	Tammy Mello
Department of Transitional Assistance	Jeffrey McCue
Department of Youth Services	Rebecca Moore
Department of Children and Families	Amy Mullen
1 Member of the House	Representative James O’Day
MassEquality.Org	Deborah Shields
MA Appleseed Center for Law and Justice	Deb Silva
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Sarah Slautterback
Boston Alliance of GLBT Youth	Grace Sterling-Stowell
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Secretary Marylou Sudders, (Chair)
ICHH (staff)	Linn Torto
Office of Medicaid	Daniel Tsai
MA Coalition for the Homeless	Kelly Turley
Department of Mental Health	Michelle Botus
Youth	Kitty Zen

Massachusetts Youth Count Housing and Homelessness Survey 2018

This survey is being administered by the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and the local Continuum of Care, so that the state and local providers can better understand the housing and service needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25 in Massachusetts. Over the past three years, the results of similar surveys have helped to push the Legislature to invest a total of \$3.7 million in housing and services for young people who have experienced housing instability.

There are 31 questions. Your answers will remain confidential. Please respond to all of the questions you feel comfortable answering. We greatly appreciate your participation!

* Required



1. Have you already taken this survey in the past three weeks (or since April 23rd)?

- Yes
- No

2. What are your initials?

3a. What is your age? *

3b. What is your date of birth?

4a. What is your primary language?

4b. If your primary language is one other than English, are you taking this survey in your primary language?

- Yes, someone is reading the questions to me in my primary language
- Yes, this paper or electronic version has been translated into my primary language
- No, I am taking this survey in a language that is not my primary language

We are asking the following set of questions to better understand your housing situation.

5. Where did you sleep last night? *

[CHECK ONE OPTION THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR ANSWER]

- Shelter (emergency/temporary)
- Transitional housing
- Hotel or motel
- Own apartment or house
- Parent or guardian's home
- Other relative's home
- Foster family's home
- Home of friend or friend's family
- Home of boyfriend/girlfriend/partner
- Car or other vehicle
- Abandoned building, vacant unit, or squat
- On a train/bus or in train/bus station
- 24-hour restaurant, Laundromat, or other business/retail establishment
- Anywhere outside (street, park, viaduct)
- Hospital or emergency room
- Mental health residential treatment facility
- Substance use residential treatment facility/detox center
- Juvenile detention center or jail
- Other:

6. How long have you stayed/lived in the place you stayed last night?

- Fewer than 6 months
- 6-12 months
- More than 12 months

7. Do you have a safe place where you can stay on a regular basis for at least the next 14 days?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

8. Are you currently experiencing homelessness?

- Yes
- No, but I have experienced homelessness in the past
- No, and I never have experienced homelessness
- Unsure
- Comment:
- Other:

We are asking the following set of questions to learn if you are “accompanied”, that is living with your parent or guardian, and your history of being out on your own.

9a. Are you currently living with a parent, guardian or foster parent?

- Yes (If yes, skip to Question 11.)
- No

9b. If no, how old were you the first time you left home to be out on your own?

9c. If no, how old were you when you left for good?

10. If you are not living with your parent/guardian/foster parent now, what are the reasons? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- I was fighting with my parent/guardian/foster parent
- My parent/guardian/foster parent abused drugs or alcohol
- My parent/guardian/foster parent died
- My house was too small for everyone to live there
- I was abused or neglected (physically, emotionally, or sexually)
- I did not feel safe due to violence or unsafe activities in my house
- My family lost our housing
- I left foster care
- I was released from jail or detention facility
- I was/am pregnant or got someone else pregnant
- My sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- My use of drugs or alcohol
- I was told to leave

- I wanted to leave
- Not applicable; I am still living with my parents.
- Other:

We are asking the following set of questions to better understand your demographics (place of birth, age, education, income, etc.), as well as your experiences in trying to access needed resources.

11. Where were you born?

- In this city/town
- Another place in Massachusetts
- Outside of Massachusetts, but in the U.S.
- Outside the U.S
- Don't know

12. Which city/town are you in right now, taking this survey? *

13a. Have you been staying overnight in the city/town where you are taking this survey?

- Yes (If yes, skip to Question 14.)
- No, I am staying in another city/town

13b. If no, what is the name of the city or town where you are staying?

14. Do you have a high school diploma, HiSET degree, or GED?

- Yes
- No

15. Are you currently attending school or another education program?

- Yes
- No

16. Are you currently employed at a job for which you receive a pay stub or pay check?

- Yes
- No

17. Have you ever served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard?

- Yes
- No

18. Have you ever been in foster care?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

19. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention -- a secure facility or residential program for young people -- as a result of criminal behavior or police involvement?

- Yes
- No

20. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison?

- Yes
- No

21a. Are you pregnant and/or parenting?

- Yes, pregnant only
- Yes, parenting only
- Yes, both pregnant and parenting
- No (If no, skip to Question 22.)
- Unsure
- Other:

21b. If you are parenting, do you have custody of your child(ren)? In other words, are you responsible for caring for your child(ren) on a day-to-day basis?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

22. What are your sources of income? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- Full-time job
- Part-time job and/or temporary job
- Money from “under the table” work
- Cash assistance from DTA/Welfare or DCF
- Social Security/disability payments
- Unemployment benefits
- Hustling/selling drugs
- Sex work/turning tricks
- Panhandling/spanging
- Child support
- Money from family members or friends
- None
- Other:

23. Have you ever exchanged sex (including sexual intercourse, oral sex, or any sexual interaction) for food, a place to stay, money, or other necessities?

- Yes
- No

24. In the last year, have you tried to get help from any of the following services/programs? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- Shelter or short-term/transitional housing
- Long-term housing (such as Section 8 or public housing)
- Educational support (such as enrolling in school or GED/HiSET program)
- Job training, life skills training, or career placement
- Health care services
- Family support (such as conflict mediation or parenting support)
- Child care
- Nutritional assistance (such as Food Stamps/SNAP or free meals)
- Cash assistance (such as DTA/Welfare benefits or Social Security Disability benefits)

- Domestic violence/sexual assault counseling
- Counseling or other mental health services
- Substance use/alcohol treatment program
- No, I haven't tried to access help
- Other:

25. Did you get the help you needed?

- Yes, all of the help I needed
- Some of the help I needed
- No, none of the help I needed

26. If you did not receive all of the help you needed, why was that? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- Transportation
- Sent somewhere else
- Language barrier
- Put on waiting list
- Paperwork
- I.D./documents
- Didn't hear back
- Didn't know where to go
- Didn't qualify for help
- Didn't feel comfortable/safe
- Didn't follow through or return for services
- Didn't ask for help
- Didn't have money
- Other:

27. What is your race/ethnicity? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- White
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx
- Asian
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern/North African
- Other:

28. How would you describe your gender identity? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- Female
- Male
- Transgender – Male to Female
- Transgender – Female to Male
- Genderqueer/Gender-Nonconforming
- Agender
- Two-Spirit
- Other:

29. Which of the following best fits how you think about your sexual orientation? [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]

- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- Straight
- Queer
- Questioning
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Other:

30. Do you have any comments or insights you would like to share with the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

31. Which of the following best describes how you were recruited to take this survey?

- At a shelter
- At a social service agency
- Through a Youth Ambassador
- Through a street outreach worker/street count
- At a magnet event
- At a school/educational program
- Unsure
- Other:

32. *For survey administrators/Youth Ambassadors only*: Was this survey taken by the Youth Count participant between April 23rd and May 13th? If not, please enter the survey date next to "other".

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Thank you!

As noted above, all of your answers will remain confidential. Your participation is deeply appreciated and a key contribution in helping Massachusetts better understand housing instability among youth and young adults. For more information about this survey and the work to expand housing and resources for youth and young adults experiencing housing instability, please contact the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: massachusettsyouthcount@gmail.com.

SUBMIT

Attachment Four: State Level Data Table

Individual Characteristics	Total number	% Total	# Commission Definition	% Commission Definition
Total	2150	NA	738	34.3%
Under 18 Years Old	539	25.1%	37	5.0%
Average age (current)	19.4		20.7	
Asian	66	3.1%	12	1.6%
Black / African American	372	17.3%	138	18.7%
Hispanic / Latino / Latina	489	22.7%	193	26.2%
Middle Eastern/North African	21	1.0%	6	0.8%
Multiracial	304	14.1%	123	16.7%
Native American / Pacific Islander /Native Hawaiian	19	0.9%	6	0.8%
White	728	33.9%	194	26.3%
Other	6	0.3%	3	0.4%
Female	1017	47.3%	340	46.1%
Male	898	41.8%	310	42.0%
Agender	10	0.5%	4	0.5%
Genderqueer	32	1.5%	7	0.9%
Transgender	36	1.7%	12	1.6%
Two-Spirit	9	0.4%	7	0.9%
Questioning/Fluid	10	0.5%	2	0.3%
Straight	1461	68.0%	481	65.2%
Gay / Lesbian	80	3.7%	32	4.3%
Queer	21	1.0%	7	0.9%
Bisexual	225	10.5%	80	10.8%
Asexual	17	0.8%	9	1.2%
Pansexual	43	2.0%	16	2.2%
Questioning / Don't Know	79	3.7%	10	1.4%
Employed	938	43.6%	255	34.6%
Pregnant/Parenting, <i>has custody</i>	332	15.4%	194	26.2%
Foster care involvement	361	16.8%	195	26.4%
Juvenile or criminal justice involvement	426	19.8%	248	33.6%
Not in school, no diploma or equivalent	244	11.3%	165	22.4%
Ever exchanged sex for money, housing	172	8.0%	106	14.4%
Average age left home first time	16.8		16.7	
Average age left for good	17.6		17.6	
# ever in military	53	2.5%	24	3.3%

Attachment Five: Open-ended Responses on 2018 Youth Count Survey

The following themes emerged from an analysis of the open-ended response to the final question on the 2018 Youth Count Survey, **“Do you have any comments or insights you would like to share with the MA Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?”** Quotations follow each theme.

Quotations were also integrated throughout the report.

Advice to the commission

- Put this information to good use and do something about the current state of our youth
- The youth are the future, yours and mine. Do something before it's too late.
- Homelessness can happen to anyone at any time & homeless individuals need to be aware of all the available resources that can address multiple intersecting needs. Also, be very mindful of the LGBTQ community
- Fund Youth on Fire! Give a sh*t, please.
- I think that as long as the funds keep going and people help things will only get better
- If your looking to help young kids who struggle in their lives then you have to find and address the problem before the kid tries to make his own solutions.
- Help young men
- If you plan of helping them, really help them. So if you think that only getting surveys to help them, it's a long road ahead.
- If we spend more time paying attention to our youths they will spend more time trying to be better.
- Just that the homeless youth is a lot more common than you guys think. Please help the youth.

Advice to youth

- Keep your head up, be strong, be safe and don't ever give up on yourself
- Live a good life
- There are many resources that give the help needed and you can't get discouraged.
- Just because your having trouble being in a stable home doesn't mean give up on anything that you were working on before the down fall.
- Focus on your goals do not get lured into drugs. And focus when in school. Being homeless sucks
- Keep your head up and don't give up!

Aging out of systems

- Less kids would be homeless if they were learning life skills before being released from DCF
- I'm aging out of the system, and I feel as though the service options afterwards are limited.
- In most cases children come into the care of some government agency for example DCF and when a child turns 18 they are pretty much rushed to be on their own. If instead of rushing them and expecting so much of these kids do you think their could be a program to prevent homelessness or at least support them on-going to assure they can make it further in life.
- Serious help is needed for teens aging out of foster care. Myself and way too many of my friends have been homeless after leaving foster care.

Services need to be more available

- Make more services for youth open on weekends.
- More funding, services available year round, financial aid for IDs/medication/mental health/medical services. Legal services, substance abuse services
- More funding, more help, less qualifications, more locations
- Health care is a nightmare
- DRUG COUNSELING HELP
- More job fairs & drug outreach
- Apoyo de emergencia sobre mujeres con violencia domestica
- We need more resources and make it easier to find
- Not enough outreach, as there are often times where homeless individuals aren't accounted for or don't know where/how they can get help.

Needed resources and services

Resources

- \$\$ where the money at?
- Needs more donations
- We need clothing all the time
- I hope you'll help with donations and whatever resources are necessary to assist youth in there situations

Services

- Give them certifications, not college
- Start educating kids in high school on real life skills because no one ever taught me about credit and adult life skills.
- Offer more services for education
- Help families trying to reunify with their children!
- More Youth Services!
- There isn't many available resources/services for younger adults and there is a great need for it
- That they're are a lot of different organizations for homeless but I feel there should be more
- This program has helped me in so many ways. Just use the help in a good way.
- Put more programs like this and kids wouldn't want help
- Is there a program for single people who need help with housing?
- School should be more on top of helping

CORI's are a barrier

- Not overlooking someone because their partner has a felony!
- That there needs to be more help for homeless youth with felonies on their record.

Increase access to food

- Stop shutting church dinners down in Boston. There's real people struggling every day. Stop the possible man slaughter
- There are too many road blocks to receiving help. Need food? Sorry they don't want us to eat. Being homeless has enabled me to be anorexic.
- Buy/donate more organic healthy food
- More places to eat
- I wish there were more food trucks

Youth don't have adequate income and jobs

- An mi ipinion si la renta no fudra tan cara no nos todra estarl viviendo con amigos o buscindo donde vivir tenbian por los trobojas, sin trabajo no podomos taner dondu vivir - otra se nos hasa difiicil qua siempre en los lugeres no osanton - ninos eso es lo mas trista an esta pois
- Apayo para fuente trabajo vivienda la renta en especial
- There are a lot of homeless teens in Framingham not by choice. It would really be nice to see more help jobs, homes, etc.
- The biggest challenges that homeless youth experience is paying rent and finding employment.

Identification and paperwork are barriers

- Make it easier for us to get housing most of us cannot afford \$1500 or \$2000 a month for a place and the waiting list for a housing voucher is years long. I got denied food stamps because I couldn't get the necessary documents that showed I left work at a certain time, so I went hungry for days or even weeks sometimes because of this. You guys need to fix all these problems, sooner or later us teens are gunna die from all this.
- A lot of youth are on their own and have a hard time getting a leg up do to requiring paperwork or ID's that cost money

Barriers facing young parents

- Young fathers need help too
- There should be more help available for young parents seeking housing.
- That they take into account that if a single teenage mother shows evidence of her needs then they should not take so long to provide the necessary help

Threats to safety

- Stop the harassment with Boston police department and transit police
- Programs in the Boston area have failed to maintain privacy compromising my safety in many ways and I am now in a worse place because of it.
- More places to be during the day to stay out of trouble

Getting help takes too long

- The process can be a little bit more faster. Everything else is great
- There should be a way to help with housing quicker
- Only one thing I wish we people can get housing quicker
- Never enough subsidized housing options. Everyone has wait lists that are 5 years or longer. where am I supposed to stay???

Experiences with staff in programs

- I like my case worker at catholic social services Osborn st
- Housing for youth is needed, many social service providers are generally homophobic and transphobic, disciplinary people, sexual trauma generally ignored and unaddressed by providers as well
- Every place has been under staffed. Staff is not nice.
- Some of the workers don't really care about us and we get treated as less than human.
- I would be say to be more considerate. Homeless families go and have gone through a lot so it'd be best not to treat them as just a "case" instead of people who have nowhere to stay with their children - it's hard

Housing specific requests

- Have youth public housing
- More youth shelters and resources stop homelessness from increasing
- Over-night shelters for youth. Free trade classes/job fairs
- More housing for youth
- We need more programs/shelters for youth. Sometimes because they are under 18 they don't qualify for housing. Which is unfair.
- I want to try to get a house
- More workshops on sexual health should be brought to attention as well as housing for homeless teens/teen moms
- Vivienda
- Yes we need more housing for people like me that's suffering
- Necesitamos orientacion para poder entra ala viviendas
- The state should review apartments before having people move in
- This is hard it's really hard. I feel like there should be constant updates on people who are abusing/misusing Housing so that people who REALLY need it are able to receive it.
- Give us money and house
- HELP US GET HOUSED! I'm done begging, do something.
- More access to housing. Free narcan
- I just want to be in a place where i can feel that my kids are safe and i want my own apartment already.
- I really need affordable housing and more options for queer youth
- Me gustaria que me ayudaran a conseguir un apartamento que yo pueda pagar a lo que mi esposo consigue trabajo
- More support with house searching
- Should have more option for section 8 and other housing places
- Hoping they can help and house all those that are in need
- I feel there should be more housing arrangements in north county for teen moms, such as the Redfield House.
- I really wish that they had more to help with kids in my situation in my area that wasn't long term. I just need something to help me get on to my feet, where I can get a job, a car, and apartment of my own.
- Housing assistance program
- Mas ayuda de vivienda
- More Shelters
- We need more youth shelters or at least somewhere "we" can stay warm, well all the food restaurants are closed. Because we continue to get kicked out and get in trouble
- Offer more resources and shelter
- Shelter is good help if you let them help you
- This is issue of homelessness is a large one in Boston, why aren't there more programs or funding for programs that ensure youth have a safe, secure place to live?

General experiences—positive and negative

- Thank you :-) for all the support and respect I was giving. I find the FOH shelter as a real blessing.
- Get rid of some of these enabling centers.
- Homelessness sucks

- It's hard but I try to remain positive
- It seems very difficult to receive help
- Homelessness sucks. I just want to have somewhere I can go every night so I can focus.
- Being in a shelter sucks. Rather an apartment for me and my baby.
- Being homeless since 16 on, all I can say is this shit is rough
- Some homeless youth is as sad as me when we begging to hit reality.
- Think...how would a young person know how to properly handle themselves in these mature situations??
- I lost my house in a fire & my family asked me to leave. I live with my girlfriend but need my own situation where I am not dependent on others
- When being homeless. I always have to be aware of my surroundings for myself and others. Being homeless for so long has taught me a lot. And I hope to overcome these adversities in the near future.
- Youth should get the help they need because it's hard handling life on their own at a young age when their just starting their journey.
- Being 18 and homeless is hard. I told somebody I would be a prostitute if I needed. Families leave or we must leave them. Most of us it is shameful
- They should have places specifically designed for homeless youth to go to other than to share a shelter w/older drug addicts and convicts b/c it is a bad atmosphere.
- I have been homeless before and I got into some hard core drugs. I just wanna get my life on track
- I don't know if there's other kids like me but I was sleeping outside for over a year cause the system let me down. I pray you do something about cause the day I get a chance to I'm giving back to all
- How can I get a job if I don't even got a place to shower or sleep or eat. There is hundreds of other kids like me sleepin in these buildings and no one give a damn

General pleas for help

- Help Us!
- We need close support w/ planning out our futures. Most of us live day-to-day and don't think about the long-term effects of our actions today.
- I think I've done this survey but don't seem to get any help.
- Help
- Homeless Youth need more help
- We need a lot of help to acquire the services we need to survive
- We need more help
- Help us more. We are the future
- Help more
- Keep helping youth
- Do your best in helping the homeless
- Need more help assistance, no funding
- No one should be homeless. Need more opportunities to help people get them out of homelessness.

Attachment Six: Where surveys were and were not collected

In 2018, surveys were collected in 69 out of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts (20%). Respondents who met the Commission definition were surveyed in 53 (15%) of these cities and towns. The following tables is organized by CoC and provides a list of all cities and towns where surveys were collected, the number of surveys collected in each, and the number that met the Commission definition.

Surveys by Coc and City/Town	All Surveys	Commission Definition
Boston	548	203
Taunton/Attleboro	65	7
Attleboro	25	3
Dartmouth	2	0
Taunton	37	4
Westport	1	0
BoS	178	54
Bedford	1	1
Brookline	3	3
Chelsea	28	17
Everett	39	2
Framingham	15	11
Lawrence	16	5
Malden	63	5
Quincy	8	7
Tyngsborough	1	1
Weymouth	3	2
Wrentham	1	0
Brockton	23	20
Brockton	19	18
Marshfield	1	1
Middleborough	3	1
Cambridge	64	54
Cape	105	9
Barnstable	82	6
Bourne	1	0
Brewster	1	1
Chatham	2	0
Dennis	3	1
Gosnold	1	0
Harwich	9	1
Mashpee	4	0
Sandwich	2	0
Fall River	119	11

Hampton	174	100
Chicopee	3	2
East Longmeadow	1	0
Holyoke	34	15
Springfield	116	73
West Springfield	16	6
Westfield	3	1
(blank)	1	1
Lowell	128	51
Lynn	92	18
New Bedford	85	22
North Shore	109	35
Amesbury	3	0
Beverly	3	2
Danvers	1	0
Gloucester	21	5
Haverhill	30	11
Ipswich	3	3
Peabody	2	11
Salem	40	1
Salisbury	5	0
(blank)	1	1
Somerville	50	14
3-county	92	48
Adams	1	1
Amherst	1	1
Athol	1	1
Dalton	1	1
Easthampton	1	0
Great Barrington	2	1
Greenfield	20	11
Montague	24	10
North Adams	5	2
Northampton	7	3
Orange	7	13
Pittsfield	17	2
(blank)	5	2
Worcester county	236	53
Athol	2	2
Bolton	2	0
Boylston	1	1
Fitchburg	26	10
Gardner	1	0
Harvard	1	1
Leominster	5	0
Sturbridge	27	0
Westborough	1	1
Worcester	170	38

no coc listed	82	39
Total	2150	738

Cities and towns with no surveys in regional CoCs¹⁵

Balance of State

- Acton
- Ashby
- Ashland
- Avon
- Ayer
- Bellingham
- Belmont
- Billerica
- Boxborough
- BRAINTREE
- Burlington
- Canton
- Carlisle
- Chelmsford
- Cohasset
- Concord
- Dedham*
- Dover
- Dracut
- Dunstable
- Foxborough
- FRANKLIN
- Groton
- Holbrook
- Holliston
- Hopkinton
- Hudson
- Lexington
- Lincoln
- Littleton
- MARLBOROUGH
- Maynard
- Medfield
- MEDFORD
- Medway
- MELROSE
- Millis
- Milton
- Natick
- Needham
- NEWTON
- Norfolk
- North Reading
- Norwood
- Pepperell
- Plainville
- RANDOLPH
- Reading
- REVERE
- Sharon
- Sherborn
- Shirley
- Stoneham
- Stoughton
- Stow
- Sudbury
- Tewksbury
- Townsend
- Wakefield
- Walpole
- WALTHAM
- WATERTOWN
- Wayland
- Wellesley
- Westford
- Weston
- Westwood
- Wilmington
- Winchester
- WINTHROP
- WOBURN

¹⁵ Capitalized communities indicate a city designation. * indicates County center.

South Shore (Brockton):

- Abington
- BRIDGEWATER
- Carver
- Duxbury
- East Bridgewater
- Halifax
- Hanover
- Hanson
- Hingham
- Hull
- Kingston
- Lakeville
- Marion
- Mattapoisett
- Norwell
- Pembroke
- Plymouth*
- Plympton
- Rochester
- Rockland
- Scituate
- Wareham
- West Bridgewater
- Whitman

Cape and Islands

- Aquinnah
- Chilmark
- Eastham
- Edgartown*
- Falmouth
- Nantucket*
- Oak Bluffs
- Orleans
- Provincetown
- Tisbury
- Truro
- Wellfleet
- West Tisbury
- Yarmouth

Hampden County

- AGAWAM
- Blandford
- Brimfield
- Chester
- Granville
- Hampden
- Holland
- Longmeadow
- Ludlow
- Monson
- Montgomery
- PALMER
- Russell
- Southwick
- Tolland
- Wales
- Wilbraham

North Shore

- Andover
- Boxford
- Essex
- Georgetown
- Groveland
- Hamilton
- Lynnfield
- Manchester by the sea
- Marblehead
- Merrimac
- METHUEN
- Middleton
- Nahant
- Newbury
- NEWBURYPORT*
- North Andover
- Rockport
- Rowley
- Saugus
- Swampscott
- Topsfield
- Wenham
- West Newbury

Attleboro/Taunton

- Acushnet
- Berkley
- Dighton
- Easton
- Fairhaven
- Freetown
- Mansfield
- North Attleborough
- Norton
- Raynham
- Rehoboth
- Seekonk
- Somerset
- Swansea

Three County

- Ashfield
- Lee
- Ware
- Alford
- Conway
- Cummington
- Florida
- Granby
- Hatfield
- Hinsdale
- Lenox
- Middlefield
- New Ashford
- Northfield
- Becket
- Belchertown
- Bernardston
- Buckland
- Charlemont
- Cheshire
- Chesterfield
- Clarksburg
- Colrain
- Deerfield
- Egremont
- Erving
- Gill
- Goshen
- Hadley
- Hancock
- Hawley
- Heath
- Huntington
- Lanesborough
- Leverett
- Leyden
- Monroe
- Monterey
- Mt. Washington
- New Marlborough
- New Salem
- Otis
- Pelham
- Peru
- Plainfield
- Richmond
- Rowe
- Sandisfield
- Savoy
- Sheffield
- Shelburne
- Shutesbury
- South Hadley
- Southampton
- Stockbridge
- Sunderland
- Tyringham
- Warwick
- Washington
- Wendell
- West Stockbridge
- Westhampton
- Whately
- Williamsburg
- Williamstown
- Windsor
- Worthington

Worcester County

- Ashburnham
- Auburn
- Barre
- Berlin
- Blackstone
- Brookfield
- Charlton
- Clinton
- Douglas
- Dudley
- East Brookfield
- Grafton
- Hardwick
- Holden
- Hopedale
- Hubbardston
- Lancaster
- Leicester
- Lunenburg
- Mendon
- Milford
- Millbury
- Millville
- New Braintree
- North Brookfield
- Northborough
- Northbridge
- Oakham
- Oxford
- Paxton
- Petersham
- Phillipston
- Princeton
- Royalston
- Rutland
- Shrewsbury
- Southborough
- SOUTHBRIDGE
- Spencer
- Sterling
- Sutton
- Templeton
- Upton
- Uxbridge
- Warren
- Webster
- West Boylston
- West Brookfield
- Westminster
- Winchendon