



**WITHOUT A HOME AND MORE:  
HOMELESS YOUTH COUNT 2015**

**Center on Homelessness, Health, and Employment Law & Policy**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2015, 46,808 homeless unaccompanied youth and parenting youth were identified on a single night.<sup>1</sup> On that night, there were 36,907 homeless unaccompanied youth with 19,838 in shelters and 17,069 without shelter.<sup>2</sup> On that night, an additional 9,901 homeless youth were parenting youth, with 9,462 in shelters and 439 without shelter, who were parenting 13,242 children, with 12,669 of these children in shelters and 573 of these children without shelter.<sup>3</sup>

Homeless youth are comprised of both children under the age of 18 and young adults ages 18 to 24. On that night in January 2015, 13 percent (4,667) of homeless unaccompanied youth were children under the age of 18 and 87 percent (32,240) were young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 and 1% (126) of homeless parenting youth were children under the age of 18 and 99% (9,775) were young adults between the ages of 18 to 24.<sup>4</sup>

Homeless youth<sup>5</sup> are a diverse population. Approximately half of homeless youth are male, approximately half are female, and approximately 1 percent identify as transgender. Concerning race and/or ethnicity, 49 percent are white, 39 percent are African-American, 22 percent are Hispanic, 3 percent are Native American, 1 percent are Pacific Islander, 1 percent are Asian, and 8 percent selected multiple races.<sup>6</sup>

To prevent and end homelessness of homeless youth, federal agencies have established and renewed a goal to prevent and end homelessness of youth by 2020.<sup>7</sup> In the 2015 Amendment to this goal, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness stated that better tools and integration of data systems are needed to improve understanding of the characteristics and needs of youth who are experiencing homelessness.<sup>8</sup>

To meet this need for more information about the characteristics and needs of youth who are experiencing homelessness, several cities, counties, and states have counted and surveyed homeless and unstably housed youth in recent years. In 2015, at least fifteen locations surveyed homeless and unstably housed youth. This report has collected the results of these various surveys to display them together to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the characteristics of homeless youth, the factors that cause and contribute to their homelessness, the

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dep't Hous. & Urban Dev't., *The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness* (Nov. 2015), *available at* <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2015-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> In this report, the term homeless youth includes both unaccompanied youth and parenting youth.

<sup>6</sup> The total is greater than 100 percent because race and ethnicity were distinct categories and because of rounding.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (2010), *available at* [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/opening\\_doors\\_2010\\_final\\_fsp\\_prevent\\_end\\_homeless.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/opening_doors_2010_final_fsp_prevent_end_homeless.pdf); U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, As Amended in 2015* (June 2015), [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/USICH\\_OpeningDoors\\_Amendment2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf) [hereinafter *Opening Doors 2015*].

<sup>8</sup> *Opening Doors 2015, supra* note 7.

state of their homelessness and their safety, the assistance that may protect them and help them obtain housing, and obstacles to receiving assistance and achieving stability. This report should provide some understanding of the characteristics and needs of youth experiencing homelessness and the information and recommendations can be used to prevent and end homelessness of youth.

The surveyed youth in many ways reflect the entirety of the nation's homeless youth. The fifteen survey locations include locations in various parts of the country and in both rural and urban areas: Chicago, Illinois; Connecticut; Metropolitan Denver, Colorado; Houston, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Maine (rural); Maine (urban); Hampden County, Western Massachusetts; Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties, Western Massachusetts; New York City, New York; Reno, Nevada; San Francisco, California; Santa Clara County, California; Seattle/King County, Washington; Yolo County, California. These locations encompass Continuums of Care (CoC) with the largest numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth. Seven of the locations included in this report are in the top ten major city CoCs that have the largest numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth: New York City, San Francisco, San Jose/Santa Clara County, Seattle/King County, Chicago, and Houston. Similar to the proportion of children and young adults nationwide, 11% of the homeless youth surveyed were children and 89% were young adults. Similar to the national gender proportions of homeless youth, the median gender of homeless youth surveyed was 54% males, 41% females, 3% transgender, 2% other, and 1% no response/missing. Similar to the nationwide race/ethnicity proportions of homeless youth, the median race/ethnicity of homeless youth was 35% white, 36% African-American, 22% Hispanic/Latino or Latina, 2% Asian, 3% Native American/Native Alaskan, 2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 12% Multiple Races, 17% Other, and 6% Unknown/Missing.<sup>9</sup>

### Characteristics of Homeless Youth

This report summarizes thirteen characteristics of the homeless youth who were surveyed: age, education, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, employment, domestic violence experience, homelessness of parents, foster care experience, pregnant or parenting status, veteran status, substance use experience, physical and mental health, and justice experience.

- **Age:** Homeless youth surveyed<sup>10</sup> comprise children under the age of 18 and young adults ages 18 to 24. Of the homeless youth surveyed, 11% were children and 89% were young adults and most of the locations had similar proportions of children and young adults.
- **Education:** Homeless youth had various degrees of school enrollment and educational attainment ranging from middle school level or less to college or graduate school level. Although most homeless children were currently in school, less than half of homeless youth were currently in school, many homeless youth without a high school diploma were not currently in school, and few homeless young adults had completed some college.
- **Gender:** The gender proportion of homeless youth were similar in the majority of the survey locations with roughly equal percentages of males and females, but some of the locations had vastly different ratios of male and female youth and some locations had a larger percentage of transgender youth.
- **Sexual Orientation:** The sexual orientation of homeless youth varied in each survey location. The median sexual orientation of homeless youth was 75% straight/heterosexual, 16% LGBTQQ, 3% other, and 5% not reporting.

<sup>9</sup> The total is greater than 100 percent because race and ethnicity were distinct categories, because of the use of a median value, and because of rounding.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the report this phrase "homeless youth surveyed" refers to both homeless and unstably housed youth.

- **Race/Ethnicity:** The race/ethnicity of homeless youth varied at each location. The median race/ethnicity of homeless youth was 35% white, 36% African-American, 22% Hispanic/Latino or Latina, 2% Asian, 3% Native American/Native Alaskan, 2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 12% Multiple Races, 17% Other, and 6% Unknown/Missing.
- **Employment:** Homeless youth have employment in each location, but at relatively small levels. The median percent of homeless youth surveyed who were working was 22% with a range of 10% to 36. In the locations that assessed needed services, between 28% and 74% of homeless youth surveyed needed job training/job search/employment services.
- **Domestic Violence Experience:** Homeless youth in each surveyed location have experienced family violence or domestic violence. In locations that reported types of family or domestic violence experience combined or individually, between a fourth and half of homeless youth surveyed experienced family or domestic violence.
- **Homelessness of Parents:** Many homeless youth have parents who are homeless. Overall, a total of 18% and between 9% and 37% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their parents were homeless.
- **Foster Care Experience:** Foster care experience varies among homeless youth. Overall, a median of 35% and between 24% and 72% of homeless youth surveyed had prior foster care experience. In locations that assessed whether homeless youth surveyed had aged out of the foster care system, 7% to 22% of homeless youth surveyed had aged out of the foster care system and in one location 8% of homeless youth surveyed who had aged out of foster care reported they had nowhere to go when they aged out of foster care and were on the streets.
- **Pregnant or Parenting Status:** Homeless youth are pregnant or parenting in many, if not all, of the locations. Surveyed homeless youth were pregnant or parents in all nine of the locations that asked a question on the topic. Overall, between one percent and approximately two-thirds of homeless youth surveyed were pregnant or parenting.
- **Veteran Status:** Homeless youth who are veterans or have served in the military reside in almost all of the surveyed locations. Homeless youth with veteran status or military service were in seven of eight locations. Overall, between 1% and 5% of homeless youth surveyed were veterans or had military service.
- **Substance Use Experience:** Homeless youth vary in their substance use in each location. In locations that assessed substance use, 15% to 38% of homeless youth surveyed reported alcohol use, drug use, or substance use.
- **Physical and Mental Health:** Homeless youth in each location have physical or mental disabilities or chronic health problems. Overall, 5% to 20% of homeless youth surveyed reported a physical disability, 1% to 10% reported a developmental disability, and 12% to 70% reported a mental health concern. Also, 7% to 22% of homeless youth surveyed reported chronic health conditions and 2% to 12% reported having HIV/AIDS.
- **Justice Experience:** Homeless youth have spent time in juvenile detention, jail, or prison in each location. Overall, a median of 29% and between 19% and 46% of homeless youth have spent time in juvenile detention, jail, or prison.

### **Causes of Homelessness**

This report summarizes eight causes or contributors of the homeless youth who were surveyed: family or domestic violence, kicked out or ran away, parent homelessness, sexual

identity or orientation, pregnancy, medical and mental health, aging out of or leaving foster care or justice system, and financial and legal.

- **Family or Domestic Violence:** Homeless youth in each location reported that family or domestic violence was a cause or primary cause and a contributing factor of their homelessness. Overall, a median of 11% and between 10% and 32% percent of homeless youth surveyed reported family/domestic violence as a cause of their homelessness. Also, a median of 22% and range of between 18% and 45% reported that a fight or argument with parent, family, or others was a cause of their homelessness.
- **Kicked Out or Ran Away:** Homeless youth report that being kicked out or running away from home was a cause of their homelessness. Overall, between approximately 10% and 50% of homeless youth surveyed reported that being kicked out or abandoned or running away was a cause of their homelessness.
- **Parent Homelessness:** Homeless youth reported that the homelessness of their parents or family was a cause of their own homelessness. Overall, 7% and between 6% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported that the homelessness of their parents or family was the cause of their own homelessness.
- **Sexual Identity or Orientation:** Homeless youth reported that their sexual identity or sexual orientation was the cause or a contributor of their homelessness. Overall, between 1% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their sexual identity or sexual orientation caused or contributed to their homelessness.
- **Pregnancy:** Homeless youth reported that pregnancy was a cause of their homelessness. Overall, 12% of homeless youth surveyed reported that pregnancy was a cause of their homelessness.
- **Medical and Mental Health:** Homeless youth reported that medical and mental health concerns were a cause of their homelessness. Overall, between 3% and 21% of homeless youth surveyed reported that medical or mental health was a cause or contributor of their homelessness with 3% to 5% reporting hospitalization or treatment, 4% reporting mental health issues, 6% to 11% reporting their use of alcohol or drugs, and 10% to 21% reporting use of alcohol or drugs.
- **Aging Out of or Leaving Foster Care or Justice System:** Homeless youth reported aging out of or leaving foster care or the justice system as a cause of their homelessness. Overall, between 2% and 45% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they became homeless after aging out of the foster care or juvenile justice system.
- **Financial and Legal:** Homeless youth reported financial and legal reasons as causes of their homelessness. Overall, between 2% and 22% of homeless youth surveyed reported a financial and legal reason for their homelessness with 2% reporting foreclosure, 10% reporting eviction, 13% reporting they could not afford to pay rent, and 19% to 22% reporting a lost job.

### **Characteristics of Homelessness**

This report summarizes the characteristics of homelessness of the youth who were surveyed: the locations for the night surveyed, aspects of time related to their homelessness, prior living situations, and their safety.

#### **Location of Homelessness:**

Homeless youth surveyed stayed in various sheltered and unsheltered locations on the night surveyors questioned the homeless youth about their housing status. Overall, a median of

22% and between 4% and 89% of homeless youth were in unsheltered locations. Also, a median of 36% and between 11% and 77% of homeless youth were in shelters/emergency shelters or transitional housing/transitional living. In addition, surveyed youth reported staying in unstable living situations. A median of 20% and between 10% and 64% of homeless youth were unstably housed including staying with friends, short-term with relatives, a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, on a couch, or in a hotel or motel. One percent of homeless youth surveyed were in a hospital, jail, prison, or detention facility. In Connecticut, 4% of homeless youth surveyed reported they were in a foster home and 2% of homeless youth surveyed reported they were in a treatment facility. Also, a small percentage of surveyed youth reported staying in more permanent living situations. Between 1% and 6%<sup>11</sup> of homeless youth surveyed were in a parent's home, relative's home, foster parent home, or dorm without the expectation of leaving soon. In Chicago, 12% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they were in permanent housing for homeless or low-income persons.

Most of the unsheltered homeless youth had stayed outdoors on the night surveyors questioned the homeless youth about their housing status. In the four locations that assessed specific unsheltered locations, between 69% and 87% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed had spent the night outside. In a few locations, between approximately 6% and 76% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed had spent the night on public transportation, between 4% and 13% spent the night in a car, RV, or van, between 9% and 13% spent the night in a garage or storage structure, between 6% and 11% spent the night in an abandoned building, and 6% stayed inside a business such as a restaurant or bar.

#### Time Homeless:

Homeless and unstably housed youth vary in the length of time they have spent in their current housing situation, from less than a day to several years. In the four locations that assessed this length of time, between 3% and 50% had spent less than a month, between 22% and 54% had spent 1 to 12 months, and between approximately 12% and 31% had spent more than a year in their current housing situation. At least some surveyed youth had spent more than a week without shelter and at least a year without shelter on the streets or in a shelter.

Many homeless youth have experienced more than one episode of homelessness. In the three locations that assessed the number with prior homelessness, between 55% and 68% of homeless youth surveyed reported they had been homeless on a prior occasion.

Some homeless youth first become homeless at very young ages. Homeless youth reported first becoming homeless at age 6 years old and 11 years old and between 38% and 54% reported first becoming homeless before the age of 18.

#### Prior Living Situations:

Homeless youth have unstable living situations and are not able to stay in the same location for very long and homeless youth without shelter have even greater instability in their living situations. In different places, more than one-fourth of homeless youth surveyed reported more than four shelter stays, staying in four or more places in the past month, and moving six or more times in the past two years.

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<sup>11</sup> This does not include New York's permanently housed youth whose responses were excluded in this report so that the report could focus on learning more about homeless youth and how to prevent and end youth homelessness.

Youth live in a variety of locations immediately before, during the month before, during the three months before, and during the twelve months before they become homeless. The most commonly reported location homeless youth surveyed lived before becoming homeless was in their own home or with family or friends. Overall, a median of 10% and between 3% and 83% of homeless youth surveyed reported living in their own home and between 30% and 54% reported living with family and/or friends before becoming homeless. Many homeless youth have lived in foster care before becoming homeless. Overall, between 3% and 5% of homeless youth reported living in a foster care/group home before becoming homeless. Homeless youth have also stayed in medical, treatment, juvenile detention, jail, and prison facilities before becoming homeless. Overall, between 2% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hospital, treatment, juvenile detention, jail, or prison facility before becoming homeless.

Many youth surveyed were already homeless in shelters, structures not meant for living, or outside or staying in a hotel or motel before their current episode of homelessness. Overall, between 1% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hotel or motel and between 4% and 72% reported staying in a shelter or transitional housing before becoming homeless. Finally, between 5% and 10% reported staying on a bus or subway, in a car or RV, or in an abandoned or foreclosed building in different locations and between 4% and 35% reported staying outside.

#### Safety:

Some homeless youth face potentially traumatic and unsafe actions to try and obtain housing, food, or other basic needs. In the two locations that assessed survival behaviors, between 17% and 24% of homeless youth surveyed reported exchanging sex.

Some homeless youth are living in unsafe locations. In the four locations that assessed feelings of safety, between 7% and 21% reported not currently feeling safe.

Many homeless youth have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse since becoming homeless. In a location that assessed abuse since becoming homeless, between 24% and 46% of homeless youth reported experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse since becoming homeless. Although homeless youth are living in unsafe locations where they experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, homeless youth surveyed experienced slightly lower levels of abuse since becoming homeless and more decreases in the frequency of abuse.

### **Types of Assistance**

This report summarizes the nine types of assistance that youth who were surveyed have accessed, attempted to access, and need to obtain housing and stable lives: parental assistance, housing assistance, shelter day services, food or nutrition assistance, educational and employment assistance, legal assistance, documentation and immigration assistance, childcare and family assistance, and medical and mental health assistance.

#### Parental Assistance:

Although some homeless youth can move back in with parents, many homeless youth report that they are not able to move back in with their parents. In one location, about one-fourth of homeless youth have already tried to move back in with their parents or family and in another location one-third of homeless youth surveyed do not have contact with their parents and more than eight in ten reported that they could not live with their parents.

#### Housing Assistance:

Homeless youth have previously accessed, are currently accessing, or have attempted to access housing assistance and need housing assistance. Overall, about forty percent of homeless youth surveyed have accessed emergency shelter and twenty percent of homeless youth surveyed have accessed transitional housing. In addition, about one-quarter of homeless youth surveyed sought short-term housing assistance and long-term assistance. Overall, between approximately one-fifth and fourth-fifths of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for housing.

#### Shelter Day Services:

Homeless youth have accessed drop-in centers or shelter day services and have a current need for shelter day services. Overall, approximately a fifth of homeless youth surveyed had used shelter day services and a tenth of homeless youth surveyed had used bus passes. In terms of need, a quarter of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for food, one-tenth to half reported a need for clothing, six percent to forty percent reported a need for personal hygiene products or a place to shower, eight percent reported a need for a place to do laundry, and fourteen percent to a twenty-seven percent reported a need for transportation.

#### Food or Nutrition Assistance:

Homeless youth have previously accessed or are currently accessing food or nutrition assistance and have a current need for food or nutrition assistance. Overall, about one-third to half reported accessing free meal services and about forty percent to half reported accessing two federal nutrition programs. In terms of need, a quarter of homeless youth surveyed reported a current need for food or nutrition assistance.

#### Educational and Employment Assistance:

Homeless youth previously accessed, are currently accessing, or have attempted to access educational programs or services and job training or job services and need educational and employment assistance. Overall, fourteen percent of homeless youth surveyed have previously accessed or are currently accessing educational programs or services and job training or job services and approximately one-tenth to one-third had attempted to access educational support and fifteen percent to one-third had attempted to access job training. In terms of need, approximately twenty to forty percent of homeless youth surveyed reported a current need for education and one-tenth to half of homeless youth surveyed reported a current need for job training and employment services.

#### Legal Assistance:

Some homeless youth are currently accessing legal services and need legal services. Overall, five percent of homeless youth surveyed are currently receiving legal assistance. In terms of need, four to five percent of homeless youth surveyed reported a current need for legal help or legal services.

#### Documentation and Immigration Assistance:

Homeless youth reported they were currently accessing or attempted to access immigration services and need documentation and immigration services. Overall, five percent of homeless youth reported they were currently accessing immigration services and one percent reported they attempted to access services, including immigration services. In terms of need, one percent reported they needed immigration assistance for them or a parent, two percent reported they needed language classes, one-tenth to half reported they needed a license, state ID, identification card or Social Security Card, and one-tenth to half reported they needed a birth certificate.

#### Childcare and Family Assistance:

Homeless youth have previously accessed, are currently accessing, or have attempted to access childcare and family assistance. Overall, three percent of homeless youth surveyed have accessed family assistance. In addition, four percent to nearly a third reported attempting to access childcare, a quarter to half attempted to access cash assistance, and a small percentage attempted to access family support.

#### Medical and Mental Health Assistance:

Homeless youth have previously accessed, are currently accessing, or have attempted to access medical or mental health services or assistance and need medical and mental health assistance. Overall, between a tenth and half of homeless youth surveyed reported accessing health care or health care services and less than a tenth reported accessing Social Security Insurance (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). In one location, twenty-one percent reported receiving General Assistance and a small percentage reported receiving VA Disability Compensation, Other Veterans Benefits, mental health services, and alcohol or drug counseling. In addition, between a tenth and a third of homeless youth reported having attempted to access counseling/mental health service and a small percentage reported having attempted to access a substance abuse program. In terms of need, five percent to forty percent reported a need for health care or medical services, six percent to seventeen percent reported a need for substance abuse services or treatment specifically, ten percent to twenty percent reported a need for counseling/mental health specifically, and between seven percent to thirty-five percent reported a need for dental care or vision care specifically.

### **Barriers to Assistance**

This report summarizes five types of barriers to assistance that youth face in attempting to access assistance and specific barriers to staying in shelters or permanent housing: eligibility, accessibility, comfort, documentation and language, and transportation.

#### Eligibility:

Some homeless youth are unable to obtain assistance because of eligibility requirements. Overall, sixteen percent reported they did not receive assistance because they did not qualify.

#### Accessibility:

In addition to being ineligible for programs, not having money to apply for programs, and being on a waitlist, some homeless youth reported they were unable to obtain assistance because of eligibility rules. In separate locations, a small percentage of youth reported they did not obtain assistance because there were too many rules, because they could not access or find services for people their age, and because of substance abuse.

#### Comfort:

Homeless youth reported they are unable to obtain assistance because they did not apply, they did not hear back, they did not follow through, they felt uncomfortable, and they lacked motivation. Overall, five percent to sixteen percent reported they did not ask for help or never applied, two percent to twenty-four percent reported they did not hear back, four percent to twenty-three percent reported they did not follow through, three percent to fourteen percent reported they felt staff were not friendly or felt uncomfortable, and two percent reported a lack of motivation.

#### Documentation and Language:

Homeless youth report that documentation and language has prevented them from obtaining assistance. Overall, thirteen percent reported that lack of ID or documentation, six percent reported that paperwork, three percent reported that language barriers, and three percent reported that the lack of a permanent address impaired their ability to obtain or prevented them from obtaining assistance.

#### Transportation:

Homeless youth have reported that transportation difficulties have made it difficult or prevented them from obtaining assistance. Overall, between three percent and thirty-two percent of homeless youth surveyed had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because of physical mobility, they did not know where to go, they were sent somewhere else, or they lacked transportation.

### Recommendations

Evaluation and analysis of youth homelessness in several locations has identified several areas wherein further investment can lead to less youth homelessness.

#### Addressing the Characteristics and Causes of Youth Homelessness:

- Providing the opportunity for homeless youth to finish high school and enroll in college, community college, or a trade school.
- Expanding job training, employment placement, and appropriate supportive services for youth with disabilities, pregnant or parenting youth, and other homeless youth to increase the percent of homeless youth who are employed in part-time or full-time work.
- Providing more resources to prevent family/domestic violence or family conflict and providing opportunities for youth escaping family/domestic violence or family conflict to live independently and with the support of other caring individuals.
- Providing housing assistance and other assistance for youth with homeless parents and for pregnant or parenting youth.
- Providing assistance to youth who spend time in the foster care or justice system or age out of the foster care or justice system to secure housing, education, and/or employment once they leave or age out of the foster care or justice system.
- Providing assistance to youth with medical and mental health needs with health care, counseling, treatment, housing, education, and/or employment.
- Providing documentation, immigration, and legal assistance to youth without documentation, who need immigration assistance, or legal assistance.

#### Addressing the Obstacles That Homeless Youth Experience When Trying to Obtain Assistance:

- Providing assistance with differing eligibility and accessibility requirements to allow homeless youth with different needs to obtain assistance.
- Providing case management to homeless youth applying for assistance to reduce impediments to obtaining assistance due to eligibility, accessibility, lack of communication, lack of documentation, language barriers, and transportation difficulties.
- Providing financial assistance to homeless youth with financial impediments to obtaining housing such as lack of money for moving costs, application fees, and security deposits.
- Providing legal assistance to homeless youth with legal impediments to obtaining housing such as credit history, criminal record, and eviction record.

## INTRODUCTION

Nationwide, there are more than 46,000 homeless youth. Homeless and unstably housed youth are a diverse group, experience many different factors that cause or contribute to their homelessness, are exposed to varied homeless and precariously housed environments, and have different obstacles to obtaining assistance to achieve housing and stable lives.

To better understand youth homelessness and the characteristics and needs of youth who are experiencing homelessness, several cities, counties, and states have counted and surveyed homeless and unstably housed youth in recent years. To provide a more national picture of youth homelessness, the information gathered from the counts and surveys conducted in a single and the most recent year (2015) are included in this report.

In 2015, at least fifteen locations surveyed homeless and unstably housed youth: Chicago, Illinois; Connecticut; Metropolitan Denver, Colorado; Houston, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Maine (rural); Maine (urban); Hampden County, Western Massachusetts; Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties, Western Massachusetts; New York City, New York; Reno, Nevada; San Francisco, California; Santa Clara County, California; Seattle/King County, Washington; Yolo County, California.

These surveys include a wide variety of homeless and unstably housed youth. These surveys encompass areas in eleven different states, in different regions of the country, and in both urban and rural areas. In these locations, 5,251 homeless and unstably housed youth were counted and 2,945 were surveyed.

These surveys provide a detailed description of the demographics, hardships, and vulnerability of a large number of homeless and unstably housed youth.

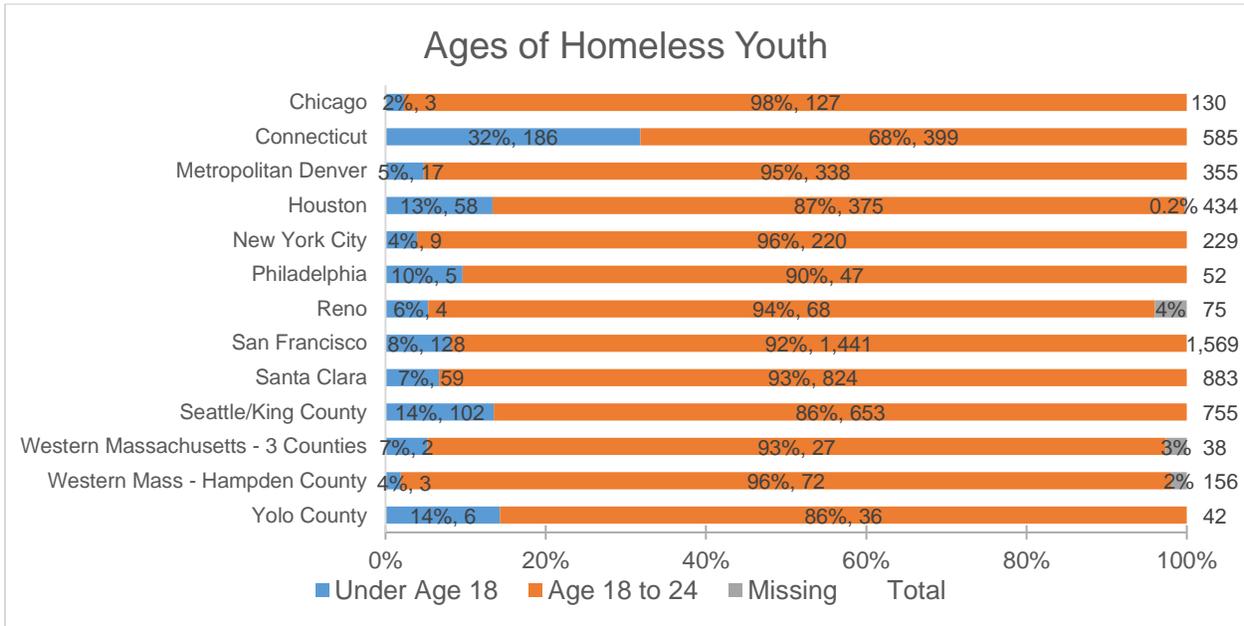
This report is divided into five parts. Part I describes the characteristics of homeless and unstably housed youth. Part II reports the causes of youth homelessness. Part III discusses the characteristics of youth homelessness. Part IV describes the types of assistance needed to prevent and end youth homelessness. Part V illustrates the barriers to assistance for homeless youth. At the end of the report, policy recommendations are provided that address the characteristics and causes of youth homelessness that are identified in this report and the obstacles that homeless youth experience in trying to obtain housing and other assistance.

# I. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS AND UNSTABLY HOUSED YOUTH

This report summarizes fourteen characteristics of homeless and unstably housed youth: age, education, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, employment, domestic violence experience, homelessness of parents, foster care experience, pregnant or parenting status, veteran status, substance use experience, physical and mental health, and justice experience.

## Age

Homeless youth vary in age in each location surveyed with homeless youth comprised of both children under the age of 18 and young adults ages 18 to 24. In the thirteen locations surveyed, a total of 89% (68% to 98% in each location) of the homeless youth surveyed were between the ages of 18 to 24 and a total of 11% (2% to 32% in each location) were unaccompanied children under the age of 18.



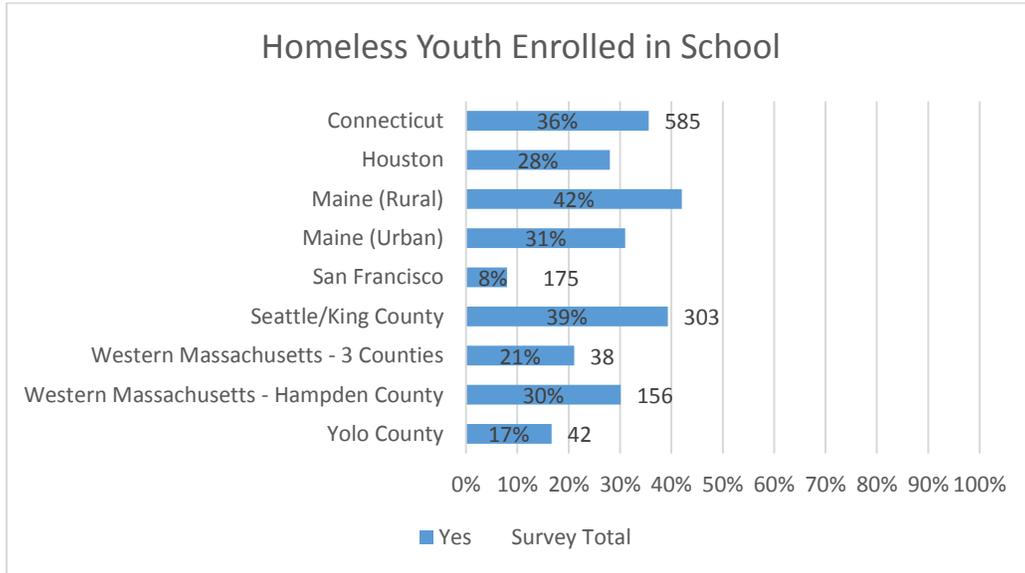
The locations with the lowest percent of homeless youth under the age of 18 were Chicago and Hampden County with only 2% under the age of 18 and the location with the largest percent of homeless youth under the age of 18 was Connecticut with 32% under the age of 18. Other locations with larger percentages of homeless children were Seattle/King County, Yolo County, and Houston.

## Education

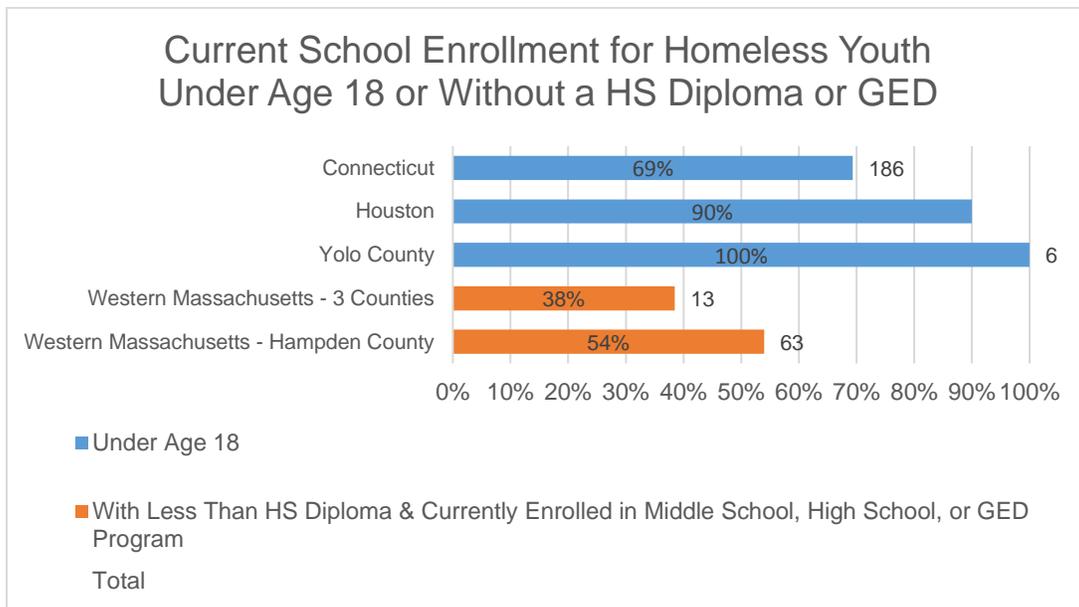
Homeless youth vary in their level of school enrollment, educational attainment, and educational needs.

Most homeless youth were not currently enrolled in school. Overall, a median of thirty percent of homeless youth surveyed were currently enrolled in school. The percent of homeless

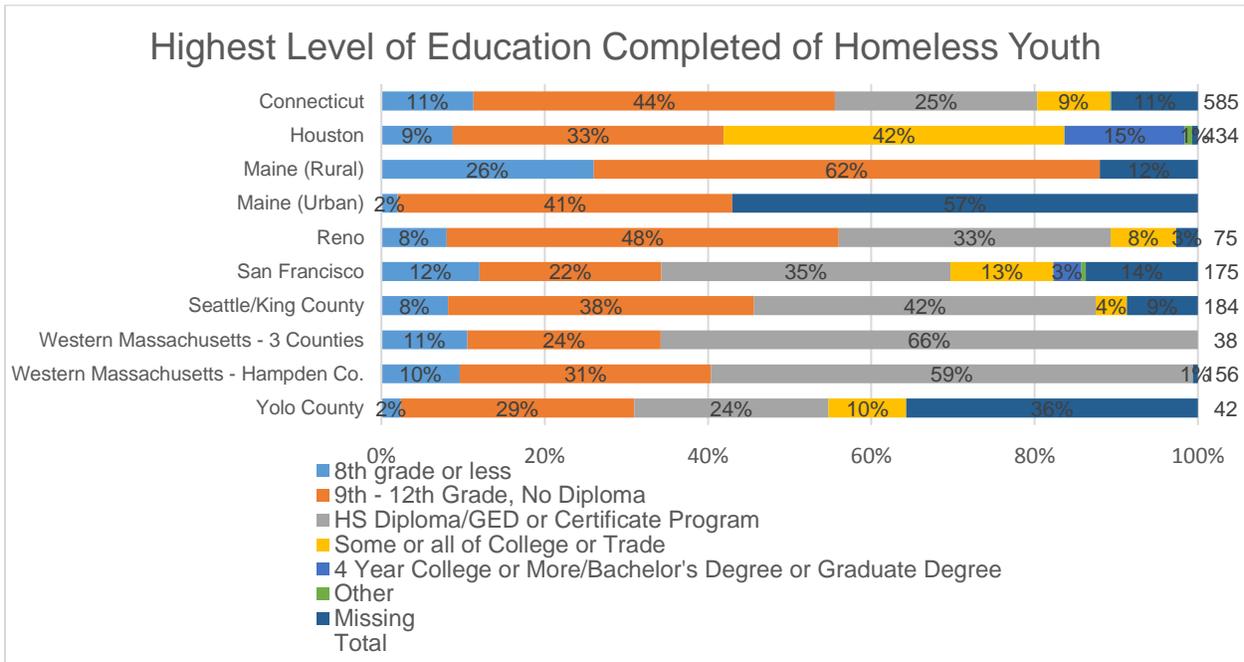
youth surveyed who were currently enrolled in school ranged from 8% in San Francisco to 42% in rural Maine.



Most, but not all, of homeless youth under the age of 18 were currently enrolled in school in the three locations where the data were available. Although all of the homeless youth under the age of 18 were currently in school or had already earned a high school diploma in Yolo County, California, only 69% in Connecticut and only 90% in Houston of homeless youth under the age of 18 were currently in school. When assessing the percent of homeless youth with less than a high school diploma education who were currently enrolled in secondary school or a GED program, only 54% were currently enrolled in Hampden County in Massachusetts and only 38% were currently enrolled in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties in Western Massachusetts.



Homeless youth surveyed had various degrees of educational attainment ranging from middle school level or less to college or graduate school level. Overall, the median highest level of education completed for homeless youth was 8% completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade or less, 35% completed 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade but did not receive a diploma, 35% received a high school diploma, and 10% had completed some or all of college, trade school, or graduate school with information missing for 11%. The percent of homeless youth surveyed with less than a high school diploma or GED ranged from 31% in Yolo County, California to 88% in rural Maine. Many of these homeless youth are currently in school, yet a significant portion are not. The only three locations where more than half of the homeless youth surveyed reported having at least a high school diploma or GED or Certificate were San Francisco, Hampden County, and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties.



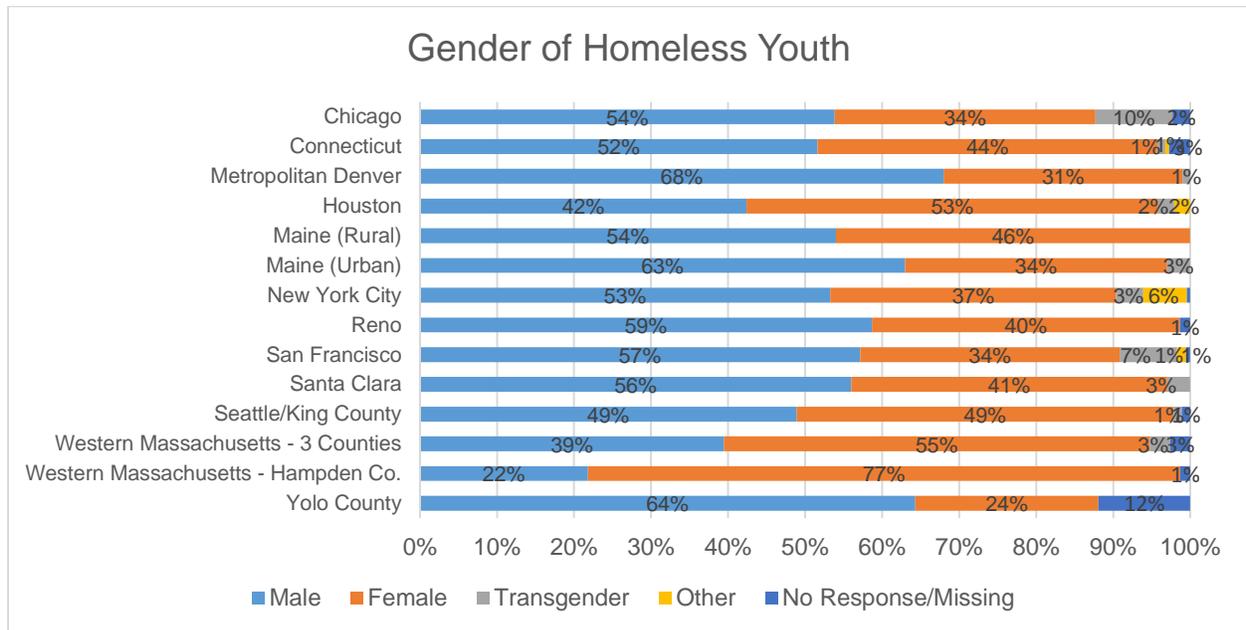
Many of the homeless youth surveyed who have not received a high school diploma or GED are not currently enrolled in school. In Houston, 37% of homeless youth ages 18 to 24 had not received a high school diploma or GED. In Seattle, the 8% of respondents who had less than a high school education and the 38% of respondents who had completed only some high school education were not currently enrolled in school. In Hampden County in Western Massachusetts, 19% of respondents had less than a high school diploma and were apparently not enrolled in school. In the other three counties in Western Massachusetts, 21% of respondents had less than a high school diploma and were apparently not enrolled in school. In Yolo County, California, approximately 14% of respondents had less than a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school.

In addition to lacking a high school diploma or GED, many older homeless youth between the ages of 18 to 24 do not have a college or advanced degree and are not enrolled in college. In Houston, while 71% of homeless youth surveyed were age 19 to 24, only 16% of homeless youth respondents had completed some college or earned a college or advanced degree. In Connecticut, while 41% of homeless youth surveyed were age 21 to 24, only 9% of homeless youth respondents had completed some or all of college or a trade school. In Seattle/King County, while 77% of homeless youth surveyed were age 19 to 24, only 4% of homeless youth respondents had completed some college or had earned a college degree. In Yolo County, California, while 86% of

homeless youth surveyed were age 19 to 24, only 6% of homeless youth age 19 to 24 were enrolled in school and only 10 percent of homeless youth respondents had completed some college.

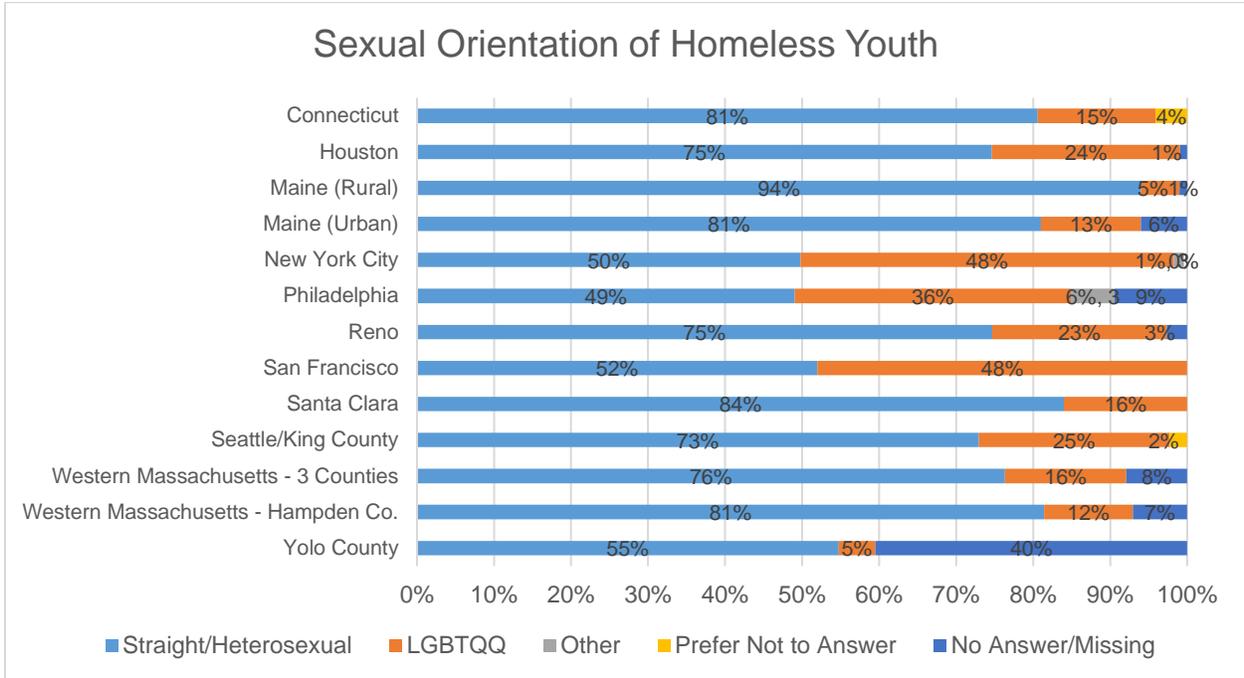
## Gender

Gender ratios slightly varied at each survey location. The proportion of males and females were similar in the majority of the survey locations, but some of the locations had vastly different male and female proportions. In the fourteen locations surveyed, the proportion of males ranged from a low of 22 percent in Western Massachusetts - Hampden County to a high of 68% in Metropolitan Denver. Conversely, the proportion of females ranged from a low of 24% in Yolo County to a high of 77% in Western Massachusetts – Hampden County. Individuals identified as transgender at ten of the locations comprising between 1% of the homeless youth population in three of the locations and 10% of the homeless youth population in another location. More than five percent of the homeless youth population identified as transgender in Chicago and San Francisco. Between 1% and 6% were identified using other gender terms at four of the locations.



## Sexual Orientation

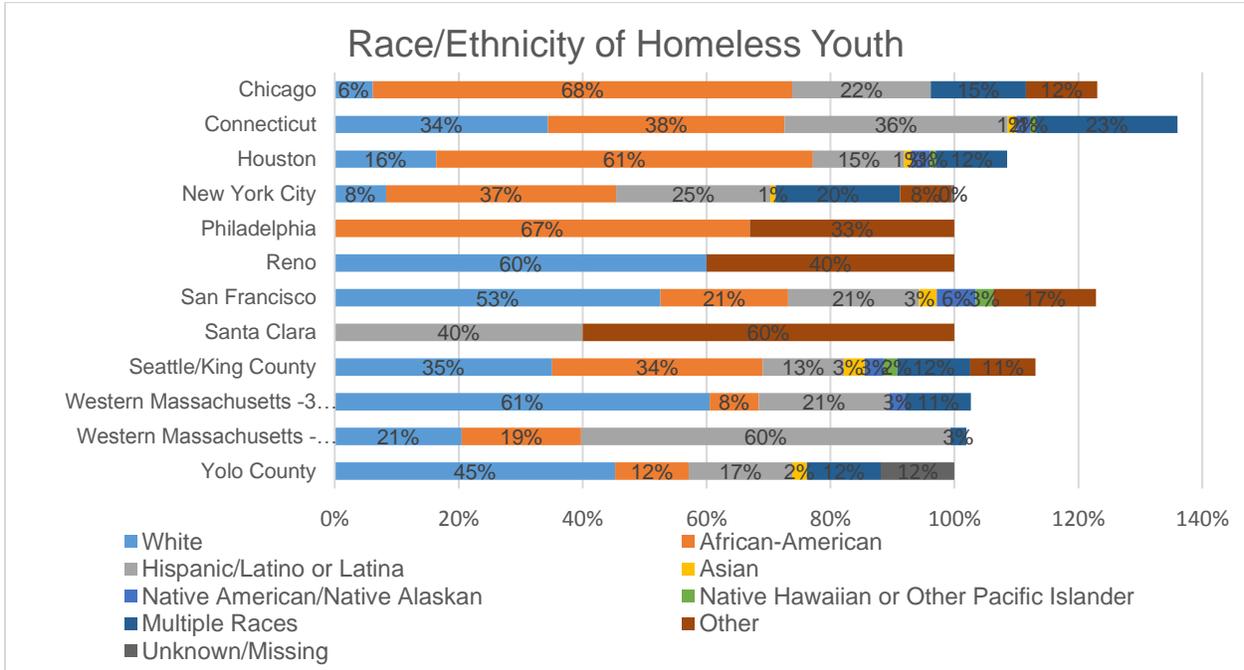
The sexual orientation of homeless youth varied in each survey location. Overall, the median percent of straight/heterosexual homeless youth was 75%, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQQ) homeless youth was 16%, other homeless youth was 3%, with 5% not reporting. The percent of straight/heterosexual homeless youth ranged from a low of 49% in Philadelphia to a high of 94% in rural Maine. The percent of reported LGBTQQ homeless youth ranged from 5% in Yolo County, California to 48% in New York City. The locations where more than 25 percent of the homeless youth surveyed identified as LGBTQQ were New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.



The percent of LGBTQQ homeless youth could be higher. In two locations, New York City and Philadelphia, 1% and 6% of homeless youth surveyed were included in a non-identified category. In Connecticut and in Seattle/King County 4% and 2%, respectively, of homeless youth surveyed preferred not to answer the question. A number of homeless youth did not answer the question or the answer was missing in eight of the locations, ranging from 1% of the homeless youth surveyed in rural Maine and Houston to 40% of the homeless youth surveyed in Yolo County, California. These missing data could increase the number and percent of LGBTQQ homeless youth in each of these locations.

## Race/Ethnicity

The race/ethnicity of homeless youth varied at each location. Overall, the median percent in each category were: 35% white, 36% African-American, 22% Hispanic/Latino or Latina, 2% Asian, 3% Native American/Native Alaskan, 2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 12% Multiple Races, 17% Other, and 6% Unknown/Missing. Between 6% and 61% of homeless youth surveyed identified as white. The percent of homeless youth who identified as African-American ranged from 8% to 68%. Between 13% and 60% of homeless youth surveyed identified as Hispanic/Latino or Latina. In six of the eight locations who provided an Asian category, between 1% and 3% identified as Asian, in five of the seven locations who provided a separate category, another 1% to 3% identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and in four of the five locations who provided a separate category between 2% and 6% identified as Native American/Native Alaskan. Between 3% and 20% of homeless youth surveyed identified as multiracial.

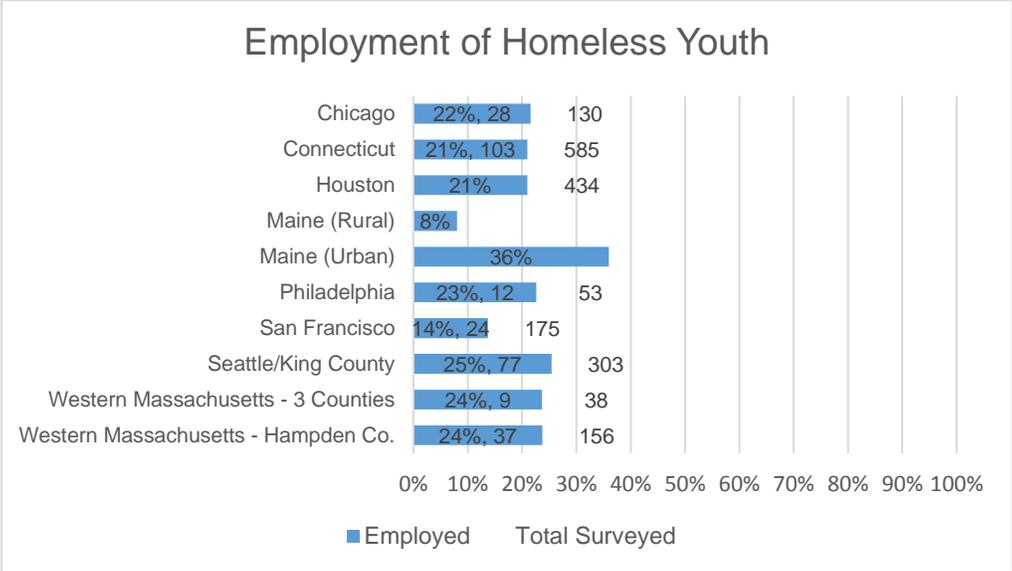


The majority of homeless youth surveyed identified as white in three locations (Reno, San Francisco, and the three counties in Western Massachusetts), African-American in three locations (Chicago, Houston, and Philadelphia), and Hispanic/Latino or Latina in Hampden County in Western Massachusetts. In the remaining locations, at least 40% of homeless youth surveyed identified as white in Yolo County, California and as Hispanic/Latino or Latina in Santa Clara, California. In Connecticut and Seattle, homeless youth surveyed split their identifications fairly evenly among these three categories, and in New York City, 82% of homeless youth surveyed identified as African-American, Hispanic/Latino or Latina, or multiracial.

## Employment

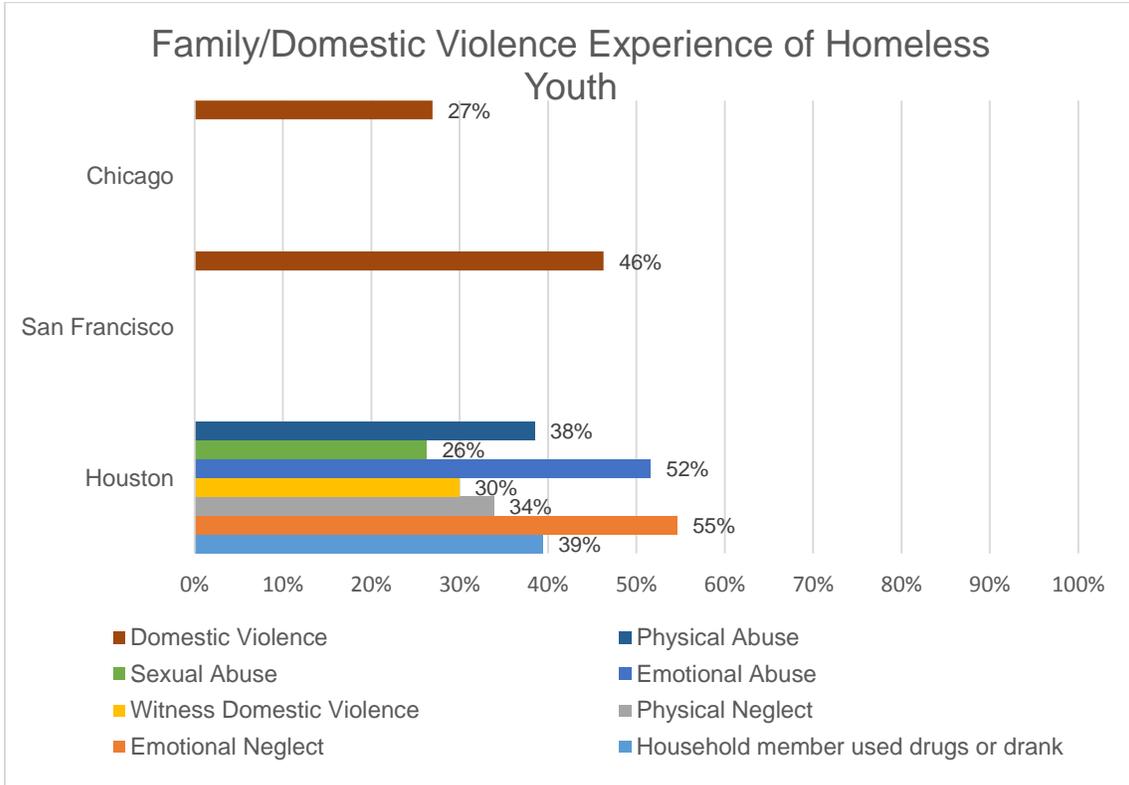
Homeless youth have employment in each location, but few work and many reported needing job training/job search/employment services.

Homeless youth have employment in each location, but at relatively small levels. The overall median percent of homeless youth surveyed who were working in each of the ten locations that assessed current employment was 22% with less than 10% of homeless youth surveyed working in rural Maine to 36% of homeless youth surveyed working in urban Maine.



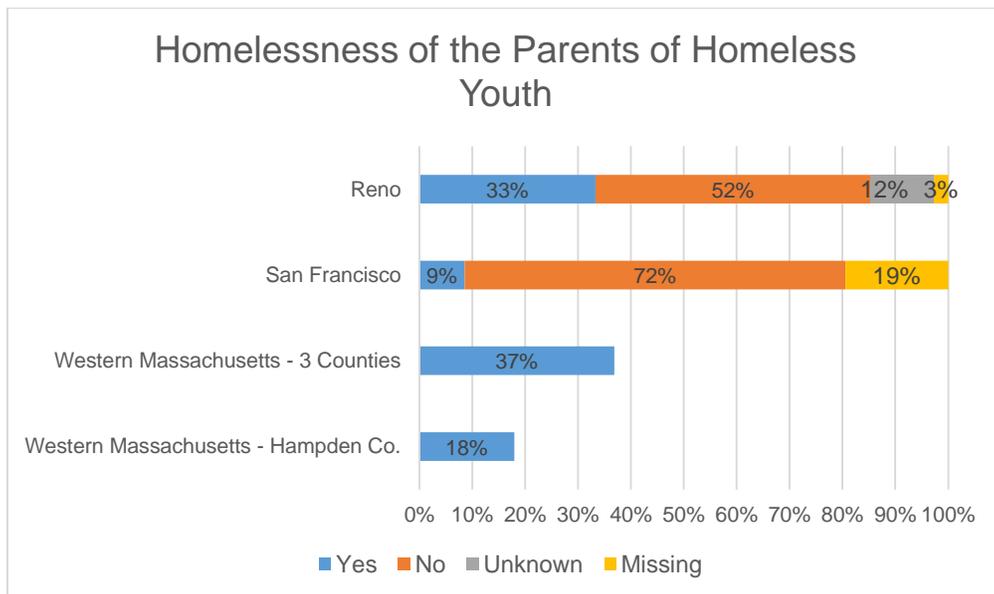
### Domestic Violence

Homeless youth in each surveyed location have experienced family violence or domestic violence. The median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported experiencing family or domestic violence was 37% and ranged from 27% to 46% in the two locations that surveyed overall experience alone. In Houston, which assessed types of abuse and neglect individually, between a fourth and half of homeless youth surveyed experienced a specific type of family or domestic violence. Conversely, in Houston, 26% of homeless youth surveyed reported that no adult cares about them, 37% of homeless youth surveyed reported that no adult gives them job or school advice, and 41% of homeless youth surveyed reported that no adult provides them with emotional support.



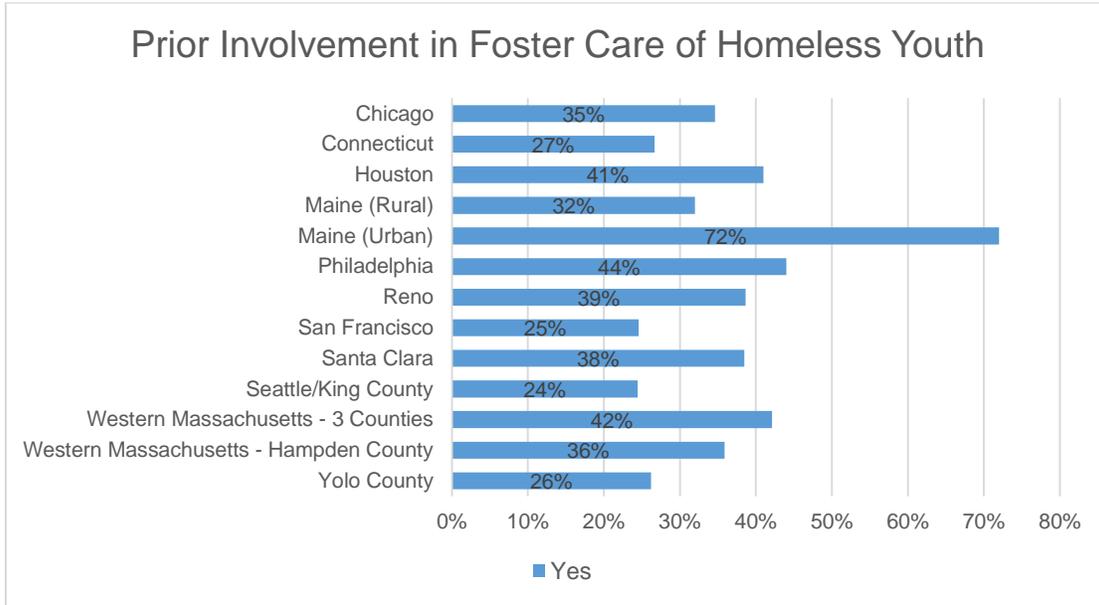
## Homelessness of Parents

Many homeless youth have parents who are homeless. Overall, 18% of homeless youth surveyed in four locations reported that their parents were homeless. In San Francisco, 9% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their parents were currently homeless. In Reno, 33% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their parents were homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 18% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 37% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that their parents were homeless.

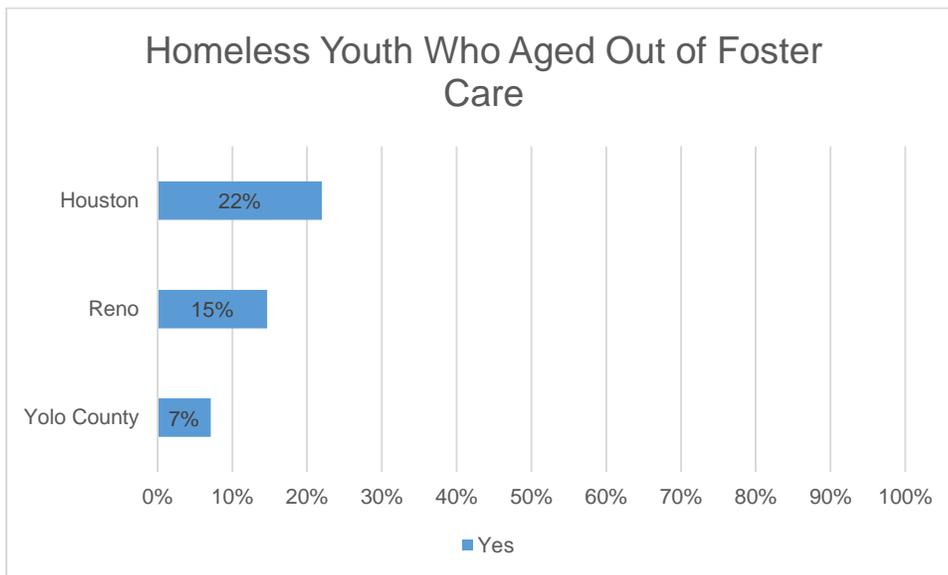


## Foster Care

In every surveyed location, many homeless youth have foster care experience. Overall, a median of 35 percent of homeless youth surveyed reported prior experience with the foster care system. The percent of homeless youth surveyed with prior foster care involvement ranged from 24% to 72% meaning that between 1 in 4 and 3 in 4 homeless youth experienced the foster care system.

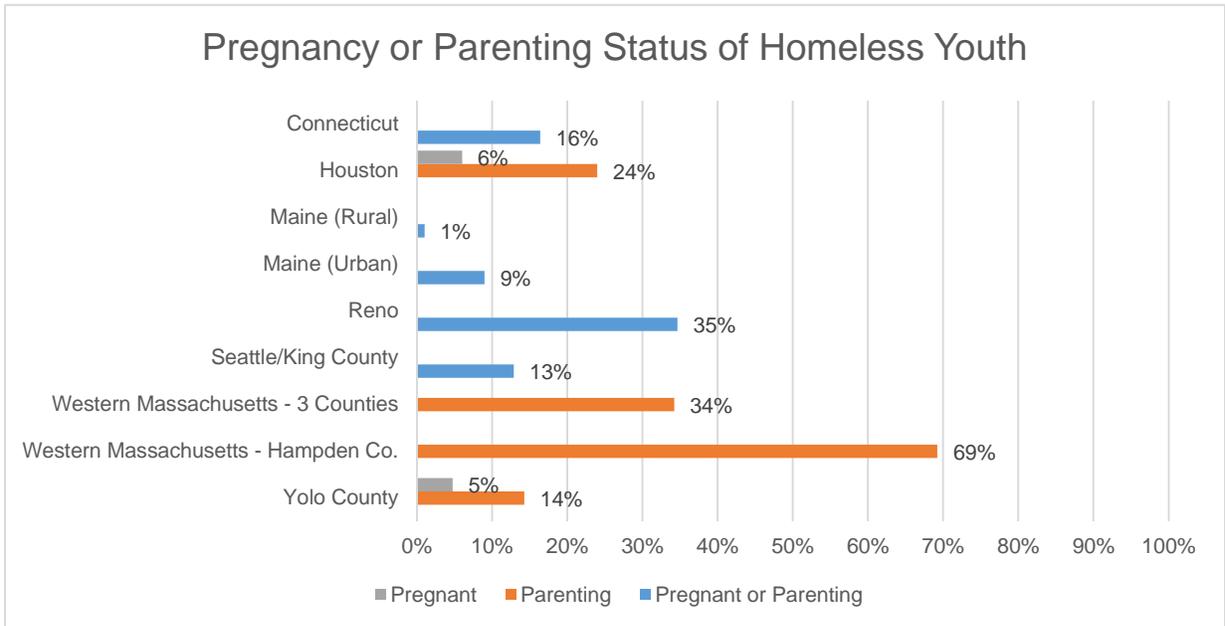


Many of the homeless youth with foster care experience age out of foster care. In the three locations that assessed whether homeless youth surveyed had aged out of the foster care system, 7%, 15%, and 22% of homeless youth surveyed had aged out of the foster care system in Yolo County, Reno, and Houston, respectively. In Houston, 8% of homeless youth surveyed who aged out of foster care reported they had nowhere to go when they aged out of foster care and were on the streets.



## Pregnant or Parenting

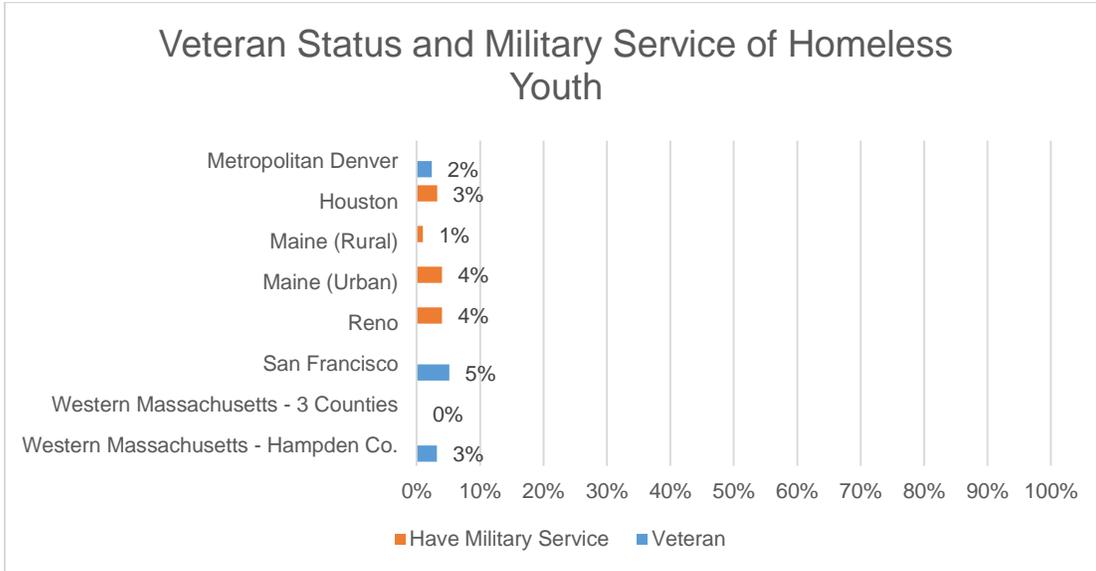
Homeless youth are pregnant or parenting in many, if not all, of the locations. Surveyed homeless youth were pregnant or parents in all nine of the locations that asked a question on the topic. Overall, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported they were pregnant or parenting was about 15%. Similarly, in Santa Clara County, approximately 16% of female youth respondents reported they were pregnant.



The proportion of homeless youth surveyed who reported they were pregnant or parenting was lowest in rural Maine at only 1% of respondents reporting they were pregnant or parenting and highest in Hampden County in Western Massachusetts with 69% of the respondents reporting they were parents. In both Reno, Nevada and in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties in Western Massachusetts, one-third of survey respondents were either parents or pregnant or parenting.

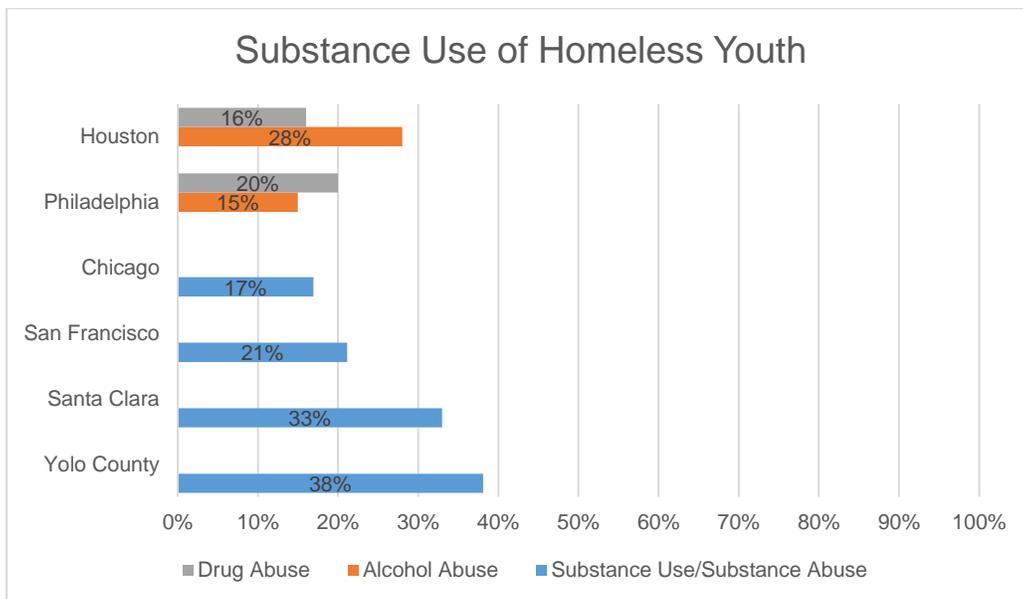
## Veteran Status

Homeless youth who are veterans or have served in the military reside in almost all of the surveyed locations. In seven of the eight locations that asked about or reported veteran status or military service, homeless youth reported they had veteran status or military service. Overall, the percent of homeless youth surveyed who were veterans or had military service ranged from 1% in rural Maine to 5% in San Francisco with a median of 3%.



## Substance Use

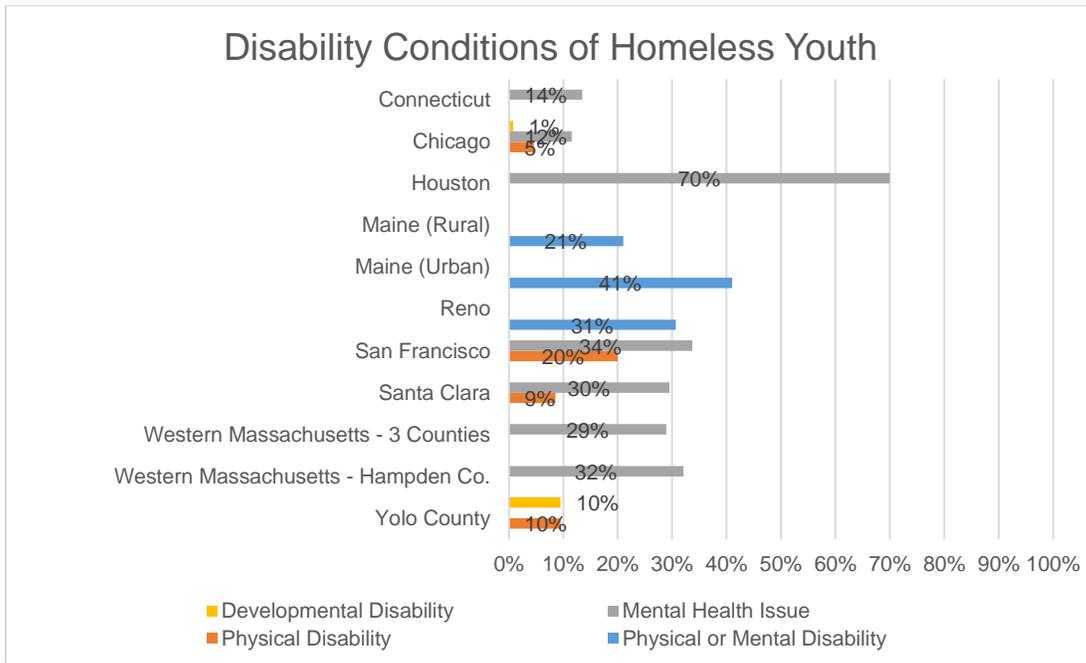
Homeless youth vary in their substance use or substance abuse in each location. In the four locations that assessed substance use (Chicago) or substance abuse (Santa Clara County, San Francisco, and Yolo County), the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported substance use or substance abuse was 27% with a range from 17% to 38%. In the two locations that assessed alcohol abuse, the median percent of homeless youth who reported alcohol abuse was 22% with 85% reporting no alcohol abuse in Philadelphia and 28% reporting drinking more than once a week in the past year in Houston. With regard to drug use, Philadelphia reported that 80% of homeless youth surveyed reported no drug abuse and Houston reported drug use within the past month of between 4% and 34% depending on the drug with 4% for crack, 5% for cocaine, 6% for meth and ecstasy, 7% for opiates, and 34% for marijuana.



Although many homeless youth reported substance use, for many homeless youth, this substance use may not have started until they were homeless. For example, in Western Massachusetts, only 6% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 11% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that they left home because of their drugs or alcohol. Also, in San Francisco, while 21% of homeless youth surveyed reported substance abuse, only 10% of homeless youth surveyed reported that alcohol or drug use was the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness and 15% of homeless youth surveyed reported that addiction contributed to their homelessness. The percent of homeless youth who reported that their substance use was a cause of or contribution to their homelessness in these three locations were lower than the percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported substance use in the six locations that surveyed substance use.

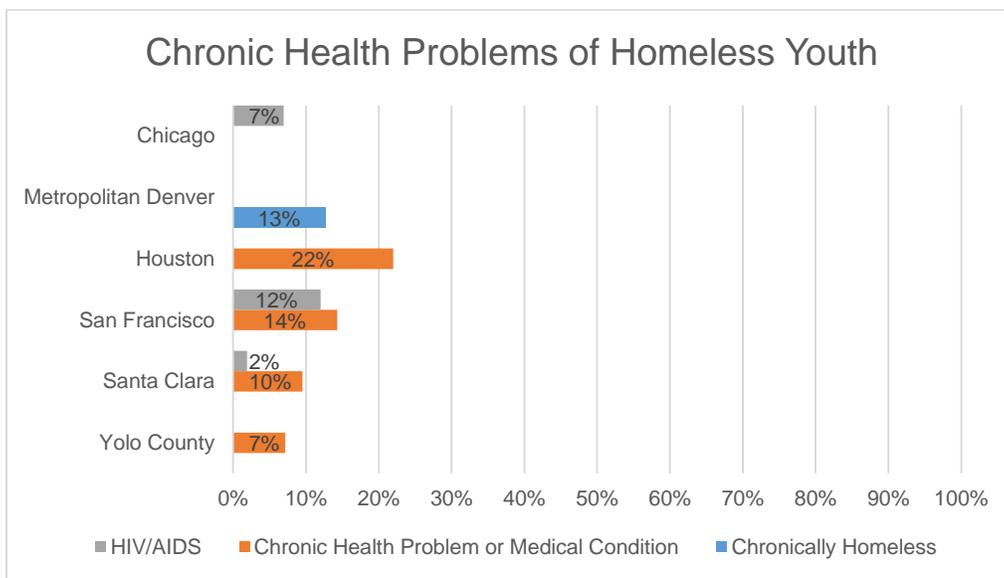
### Physical and Mental Health

Homeless youth in each location have physical or mental disabilities. In the three locations that assessed the percent of homeless youth with a physical or mental disability, about one-third of the homeless youth surveyed had a physical or mental disability. In the four locations that assessed the percent of homeless youth with a physical disability, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported a physical disability was 9% with a range from 5% to 20%. In the seven locations that assessed the percent of homeless youth with a mental health issue, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported a mental health issue was 30% with a range from 12% to 70%. In the two locations that assessed the percent of homeless youth with a developmental disability, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported a developmental disability was 5% with a range from 1% to 10%.

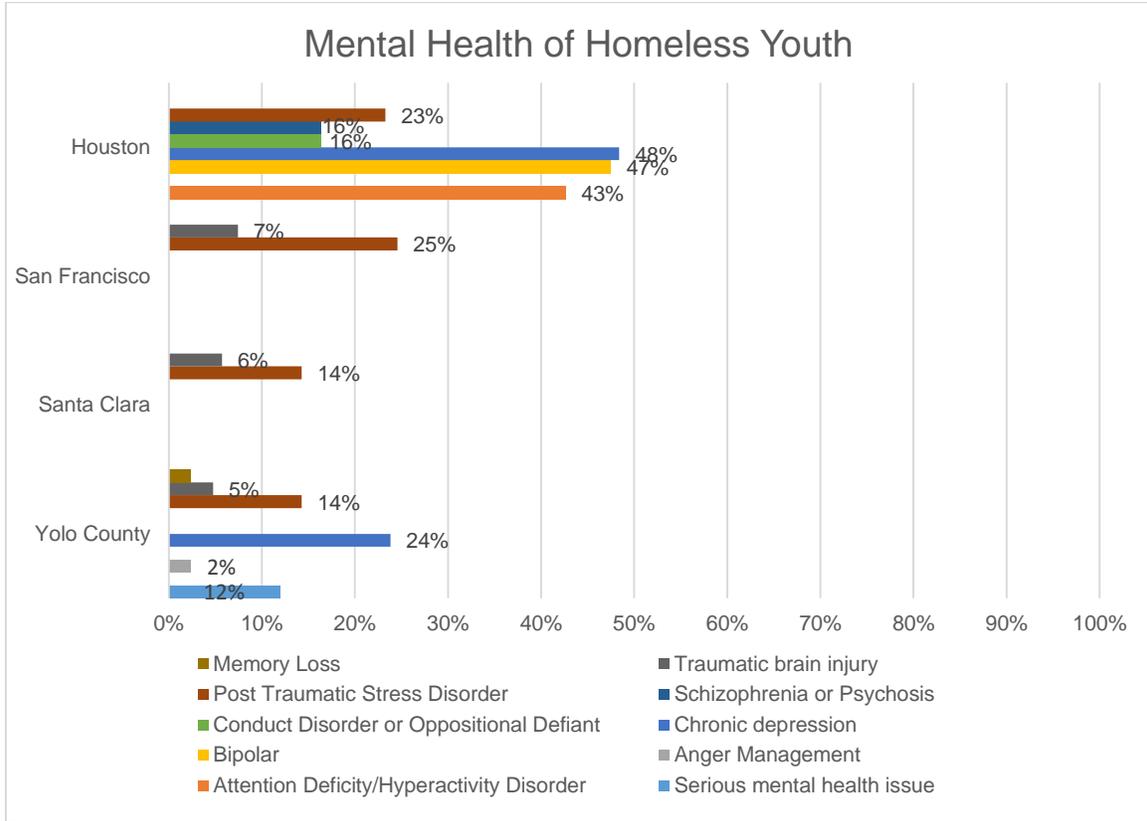


Homeless youth in each location assessing chronic health are chronically homeless or report chronic health problems. In Metropolitan Denver, 13% of homeless unaccompanied youth surveyed were chronically homeless in that they had a disability and were homeless for at least a year or have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In the four locations that assessed chronic health conditions, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported chronic health conditions was 12% with a range from 7% to 22%. In the

three locations that assessed the prevalence of HIV/AIDS of homeless youth, the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported having HIV/AIDS was 7% with a range from 2% to 12%.



Homeless youth report many different types of mental health concerns. In the four locations (Houston, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Yolo County) that assessed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported PTSD was 19% with a range from 14% to 25%. The median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported traumatic brain injury (TBI) was 6% with a range from 5% to 7% in the three locations reporting. The median percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported depression was 36% with 48% reporting depression in Houston and 24% reporting chronic depression in Yolo County. In addition, 16% reported conduct disorder or oppositional defiant, 16% reported schizophrenia or psychosis, 43% reported attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and 47% reported bipolar disorder in Houston and 2% reported anger management issues, 2% reported memory loss, and 12% reported serious mental health issues in Yolo County.



Similar to youth aging out of or leaving foster care, youth with physical or mental disabilities have become homeless after receiving medical care. In San Francisco, 3% of homeless youth surveyed had stayed in a hospital or treatment facility immediately before becoming homeless.

### Juvenile Detention

Homeless youth have spent time in juvenile detention, jail, or prison in each location. Overall, the median percent of homeless youth that have spent time in juvenile detention, jail, or prison is 29%. Each location had slight variations in the wording of this question. The four locations that limited the experience to experience with the juvenile justice system (Houston and Reno) or when the respondent was less than age 18 (San Francisco and Yolo County) had a median percent of 30% and a range from 26% to 35% of homeless youth with experience. In the location that limited the experience to experience within the year prior to the study (Santa Clara), the percent of homeless youth with experience was 31%. The six locations that did not limit the experience to only juvenile experience or to experience when under the age of 18 or to within the prior year (Chicago, Connecticut, Maine, Western Massachusetts – 3 Counties, Western Massachusetts – Hampden County, and Seattle/King County) had a median percent of 27% and a range from 19% to 46% of homeless youth with experience.



The importance of these data is unknown because it is unknown whether the homeless youth spent time in detention, jail, or prison because of their homelessness or unstable housing, due to family situations, or due to trauma they have experienced. Many homeless youth may be arrested due to their homeless status if they are sitting, lying down, or sleeping outside, outside late at night, or asking for food or money. Family violence and instability can result in youth staying in either foster care or juvenile detention facilities. Youth who witness or experience high levels of trauma may be more likely to have involvement with the juvenile justice system. For example, in Houston, homeless youth surveyed who had experience with the juvenile justice system and the foster care system had a higher trauma score, higher rates of prior mental health diagnoses, and higher rates of current mental distress compared to youth involved in foster care alone.

The number of nights that homeless youth spend in detention, jail, or prison may be fairly limited. For example, in San Francisco, 77% of homeless youth had spent between 0 and 10 nights in jail or prison in the prior year and only 9% had spent more than 50 nights in jail or prison in the prior year.

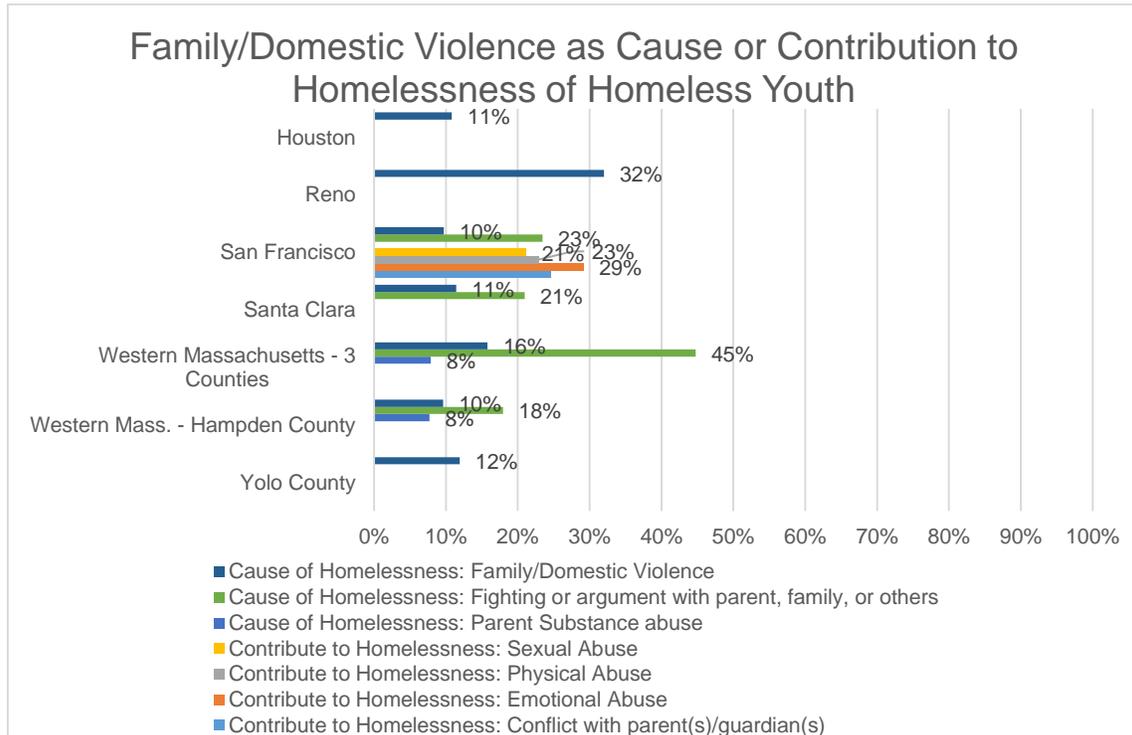
As with foster care, homeless youth have aged out of the justice system or left detention. In Houston, 13% of homeless youth surveyed reported they had aged out of the juvenile justice system and of those that aged out, 8% went to a shelter or group home and 9% went to a motel or the streets when they left. In San Francisco, 18% of homeless youth surveyed were on probation or parole and almost as many (15%) stated that they were on probation or parole at the time that they most recently became homeless. In Santa Clara County, 16% of homeless youth surveyed reported they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey and nearly as many (13%) reported that their criminal record was preventing them from obtaining housing or employment. In Connecticut, homeless youth surveyed who identified having been involved with the criminal justice system experienced housing instability and were five times more likely to have moved two or more times in the last six months and were three times more likely to be living unsheltered outside or in a place not meant for human habitation.

## II. CAUSES OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Homeless youth reported eight causes of their homelessness: family or domestic violence, being kicked out or running away from home, homelessness of their parents or family, their sexual identity or sexual orientation, pregnancy, medical and mental health concerns, aging out of or leaving foster care or the justice system, and financial and legal reasons.

### Family or Domestic Violence

Homeless youth in each surveyed location reported that family or domestic violence was a cause or primary cause of their homelessness and a contributing factor of their homelessness. In the seven locations that assessed the cause or primary causes of the respondents' homelessness, between 10% and 32% percent of homeless youth surveyed reported family/domestic violence as a cause of their homelessness with a median percent of 11%. A higher percentage of homeless youth surveyed (median of 22% and range of between 18% and 45%) reported that a fight or argument with parent, family, or others was a cause of their homelessness in the four locations that assessed this cause. Parental substance abuse was a primary cause of homelessness for only 8% of homeless youth surveyed in two locations. In San Francisco, a higher percentage of homeless youth surveyed reported that sexual, physical, and emotional abuse was a contributing factor (between 21% and 29%) of their homelessness than reported that family/domestic violence was a primary event or condition (11%) that led to their homelessness.

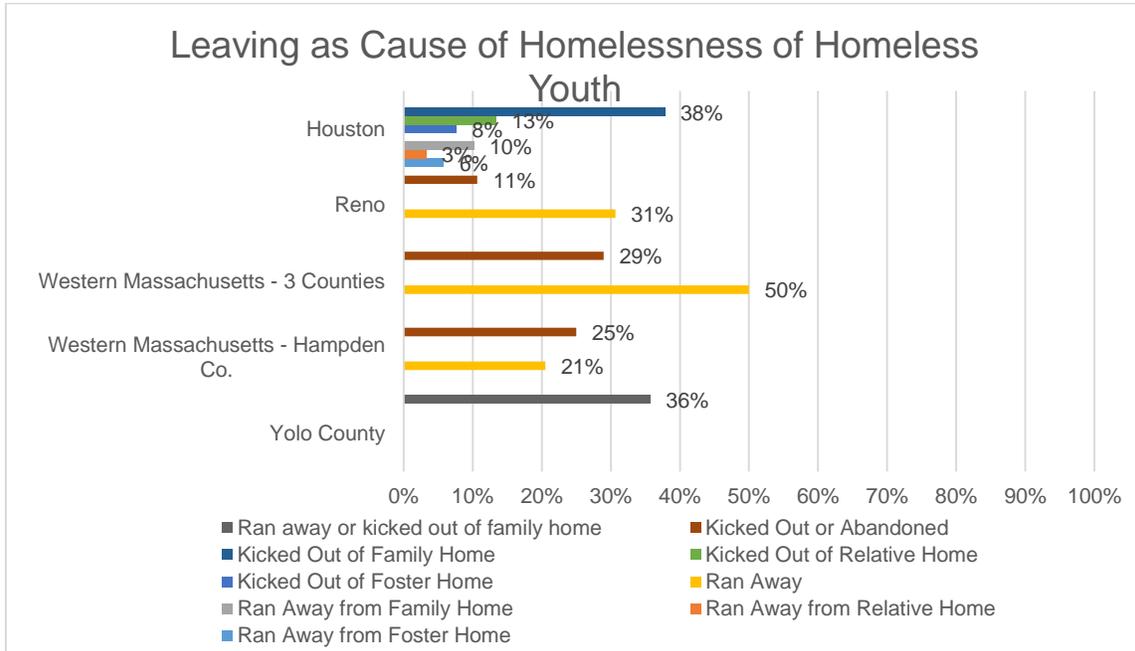


With a large percent of homeless youth reporting experiencing family/domestic violence, that it cause or contributed to their homelessness, and that they do not have any adults who care about them, given them job or school advice, or provide emotional support more resources are needed to prevent family/domestic violence and to provide opportunities for homeless youth and

youth escaping family/domestic violence to live independently and with the support of other caring individuals.

## Kicked Out or Ran Away

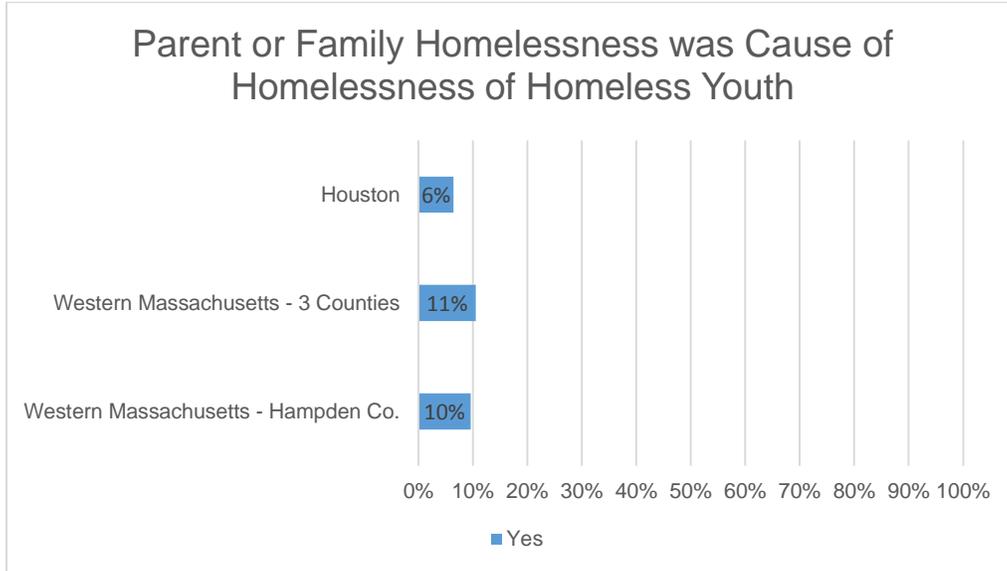
Homeless youth report that being kicked out or running away from home was a cause of their homelessness. In five locations, between approximately 10% and 50% of homeless youth surveyed reported that being kicked out or abandoned was a cause of their homelessness and likewise between approximately 10% and 50% reported that running away was a cause of their homelessness.



The percent of homeless youth who reported that being kicked out or abandoned or running away was a cause of their homelessness varied in each location. In Reno, 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they became homeless because they were kicked out or abandoned while 31% reported it was because they ran away. Of the homeless youth surveyed in Houston, 38% reported they became homeless because they were kicked out of a family home, 13% reported they became homeless because they were kicked out of a relative's home, and 8% reported they became homeless because they were kicked out of a foster home while 10% reported it was because they ran away from a family home, 3% reported it was because they ran away from a relative's home, and 6% reported it was because they ran away from a foster home. In Western Massachusetts, 25% and 29% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported they left home because they were told to leave while 21% in Hampden County and 50% in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that it was because they wanted to leave and 13% in Hampden County and 10% in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported it was because they did not feel safe. In Yolo County, 36% of homeless youth surveyed reported they became homeless because they were kicked out or ran away from a family home.

## Parent Homelessness

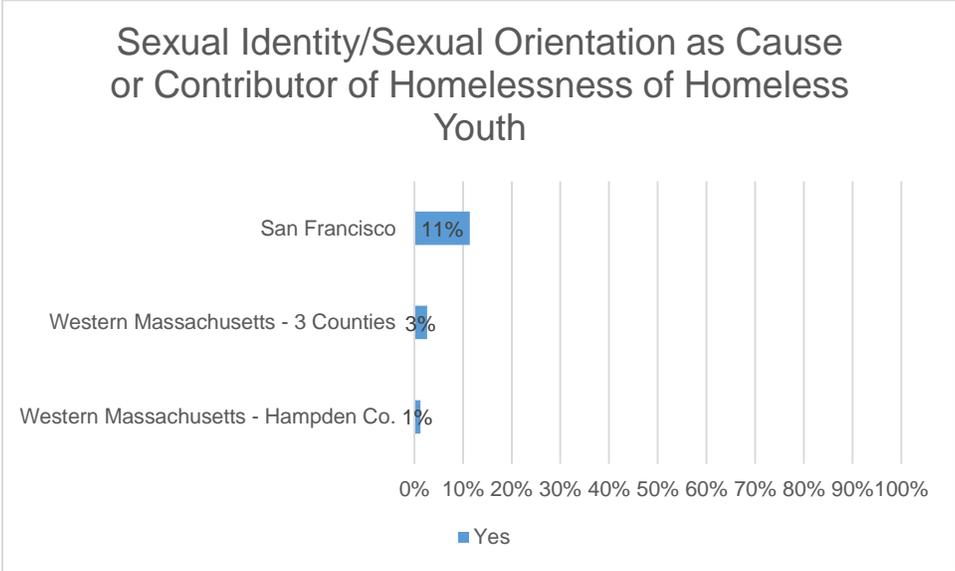
Homeless youth reported that the homelessness of their parents or family was a cause of their own homelessness. Overall, 7% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations reported that the homelessness of their parents or family was the cause of their own homelessness.



The percent of homeless youth who reported that homelessness of their parents or family was a cause of their homelessness varied slightly in each of the three locations. In Houston, 6% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they became homeless because their family is homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 10% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 11% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that they left home because their parent/guardian was homeless.

## Sexual Identity or Orientation

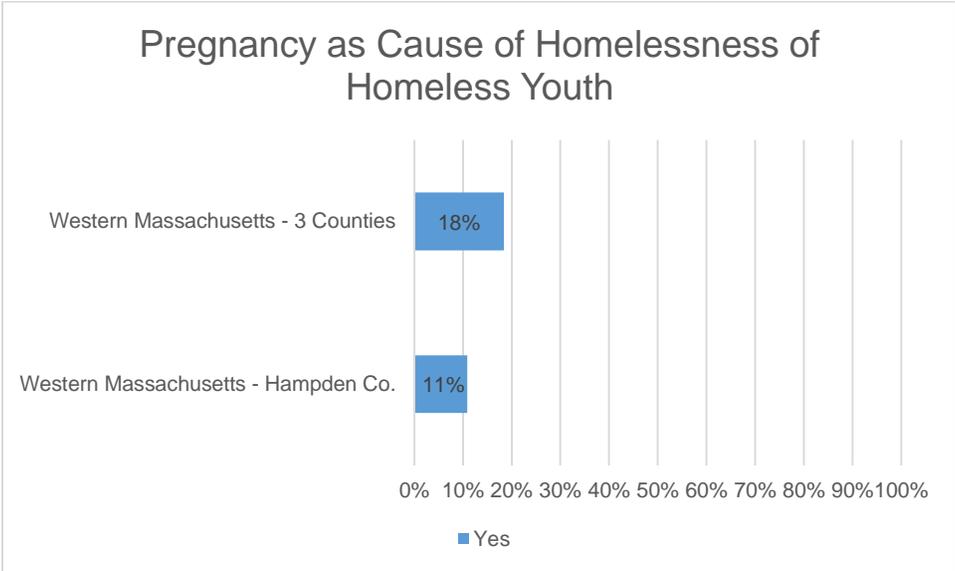
Homeless youth reported that their sexual identity or sexual orientation was the cause or a contributor of their homelessness. Overall, 6% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations reported that their sexual identity or sexual orientation caused or contributed to their homelessness.



The percent of homeless youth who reported that their sexual identity or sexual orientation was a cause of their homelessness varied slightly in each of the three locations. In Western Massachusetts, 1% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 3% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that their sexual orientation was the reason they left home. In San Francisco, 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their sexual identity contributed to their homelessness.

**Pregnancy**

Homeless youth reported that pregnancy was a cause of their homelessness. Overall, 12% of homeless youth surveyed in two locations reported that pregnancy was a cause of their homelessness.

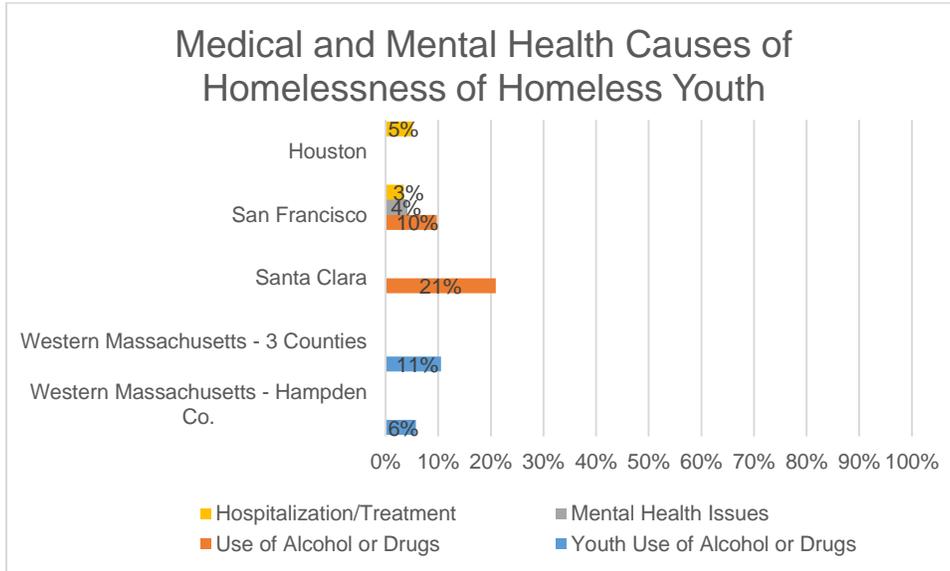


The percent of homeless youth who reported that pregnancy was a cause of their homelessness varied slightly in the two locations that assessed it. In Western Massachusetts, 11% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 18% of homeless youth surveyed in

Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that pregnancy was a reason they left home.

## Medical and Mental Health

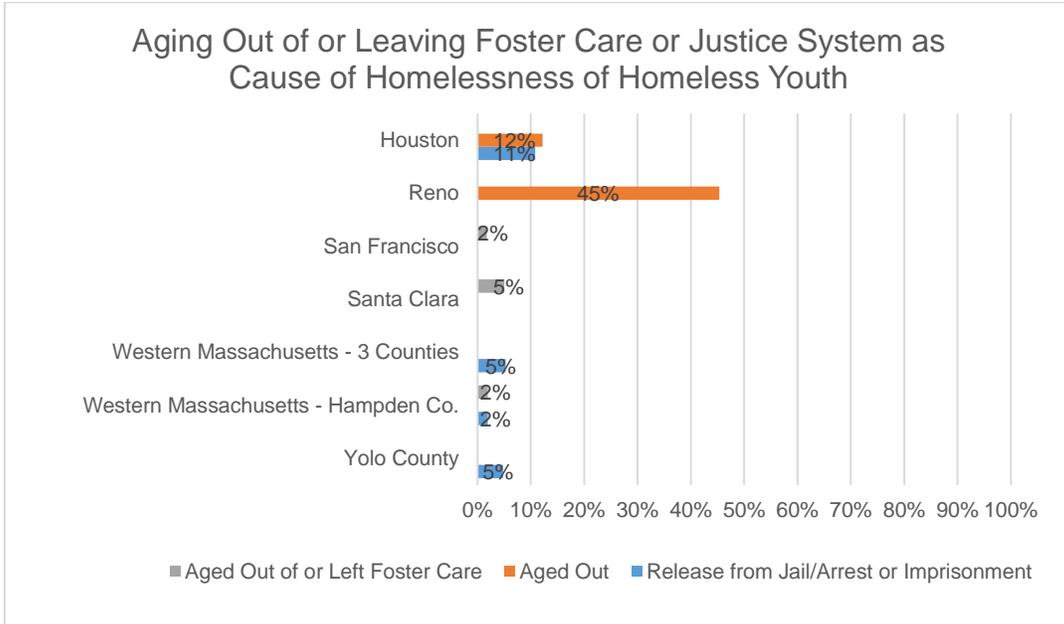
Homeless youth reported that medical and mental health concerns were a cause of their homelessness. Overall, between 3% and 21% of homeless youth surveyed reported that medical or mental health was a cause or contributor of their homelessness.



The percent of homeless youth who reported that medical and mental health causes of their homelessness varied slightly in each location. In Houston, 5% of homeless youth surveyed reported they became homeless because they had nowhere to go when they were discharged from the hospital. When homeless youth surveyed in San Francisco were asked the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness, 3% reported hospitalization or treatment, 4% reported mental health issues, and 10% reported use of alcohol or drugs. When asked what contributed to their homelessness, 15% of homeless youth surveyed reported that addiction contributed and 17% of homeless youth surveyed reported that mental health issues contributed. In Santa Clara County, 21% of homeless youth surveyed reported that alcohol or drug use was the primary cause of their homelessness. In Western Massachusetts, 6% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County and 11% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported that their use of alcohol or drugs was the reason they left home.

## Aging Out of or Leaving Foster Care or Justice System

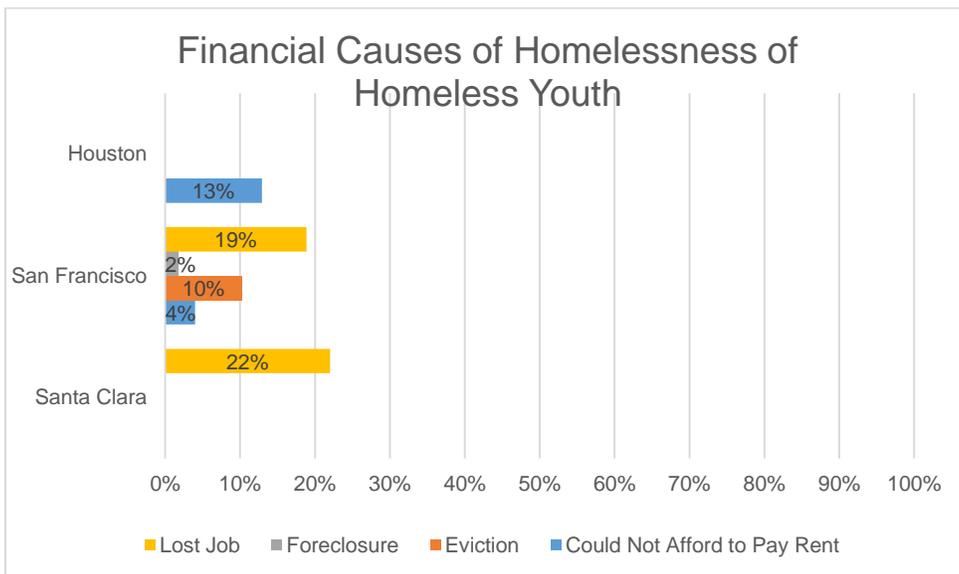
Homeless youth reported aging out of or leaving foster care or the justice system as a cause of their homelessness. Overall, between 2% and 45% of homeless youth surveyed in seven locations reported that they became homeless after aging out of the foster care or juvenile justice system.



The percent of homeless youth who reported that aging out of or leaving the foster care or justice system was the cause of their homelessness varied slightly at most locations. In five of the seven locations, only between 2% and 5% of homeless youth reported that aging out of or leaving foster care or detention was the cause of their homelessness. In the other two locations, 11% to 12% of homeless youth surveyed reported they became homeless because they had no place to go when released from jail or prison and after aging out of the foster care or juvenile justice system in Houston and 45% of homeless youth surveyed reported they let home for good because they aged out in Reno.

### Financial and Legal

Homeless youth reported financial and legal reasons as causes of their homelessness. Overall, between 2% and 22% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations reported a financial and legal reason for their homelessness.



Employment loss and low employment levels was a cause or contributor of homelessness for the homeless youth surveyed. The median percent of homeless youth surveyed reporting that job loss was the primary condition or event that led to their homelessness was 20% in the two locations reporting this information with 19% in San Francisco and 22% in Santa Clara County. An even higher percentage reported that financial issues contributed to their homelessness (27%) than reported that job loss was a primary cause of their homelessness (19%) in San Francisco, the only location reporting both.

The percent of homeless youth who reported financial and legal causes of their homelessness varied slightly in each of the three locations. In Houston, 13% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they became homeless because they could not pay rent. When homeless youth surveyed in San Francisco were asked to list the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness, 2% listed foreclose, 4% listed that the landlord raised rent, 10% listed eviction, and 19% listed a lost job. In addition, 27% of homeless youth surveyed reported that financial issues contributed to their homelessness and 12% reported that legal issues contributed to their homelessness. In Santa Clara County, 22% of homeless youth surveyed reported that a lost job was the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness.

### III. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The homelessness experienced by the homeless youth surveyed is discussed in this report in four ways: the locations for the night surveyed, aspects of time related to their homelessness, prior living situations, and their safety.

Homeless and unstably housed youth vary in the length of time they have spent in their current housing situation, from less than a day to several years. Some homeless youth first become homeless at very young ages.

Homeless youth have unstable living situations and are not able to stay in the same location for very long and homeless youth without shelter have even greater instability in their living situations. Youth live in a variety of locations immediately before, during the month before, during the three months before, and during the twelve months before they become homeless including in their own home, with family or friends, in a foster care/group home, in medical, treatment, juvenile detention, jail, and prison facilities, in a hotel or motel, in a shelter, in transitional housing, in a car or RV, in an abandoned or foreclosed building, on a bus or subway, and outside.

Some homeless youth face potentially traumatic and unsafe actions to try and obtain housing, food, or other basic needs, some homeless youth are living in unsafe locations, and some homeless youth have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse since becoming homeless.

#### Location Where Homeless

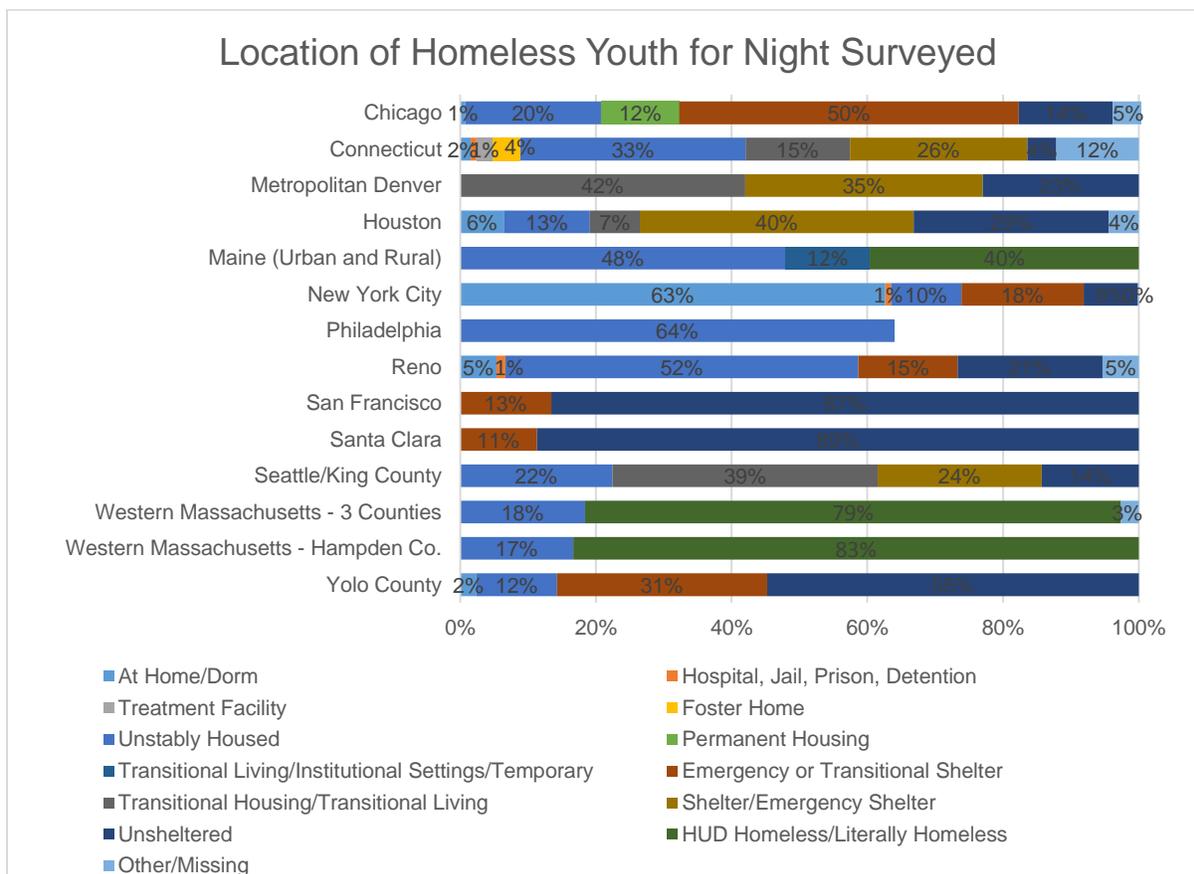
Homeless and unstably youth surveyed stayed in various sheltered and unsheltered locations on the night surveyors questioned the homeless youth about their housing status, including on the streets, in a tent, on a bus or subway, in a late-night or 24-hour business establishment, in an abandoned or foreclosed building, in a car, van, or RV, in a garage or storage structure, in a shelter, in transitional housing, short-term with relatives, with a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, with friends, on a couch, in a hotel or motel, in a foster home, in a detention facility, in a hospital, in a treatment facility, and in permanent housing for homeless or low-income persons.

Homeless youth surveyed stayed in sheltered and unsheltered locations. Overall in the ten locations that assessed homeless location, a median of 22% and between 4% and 89% of homeless youth were in unsheltered locations and a median of 36% and between 11% and 77% of homeless youth were in shelters/emergency shelters or transitional housing/transitional living.

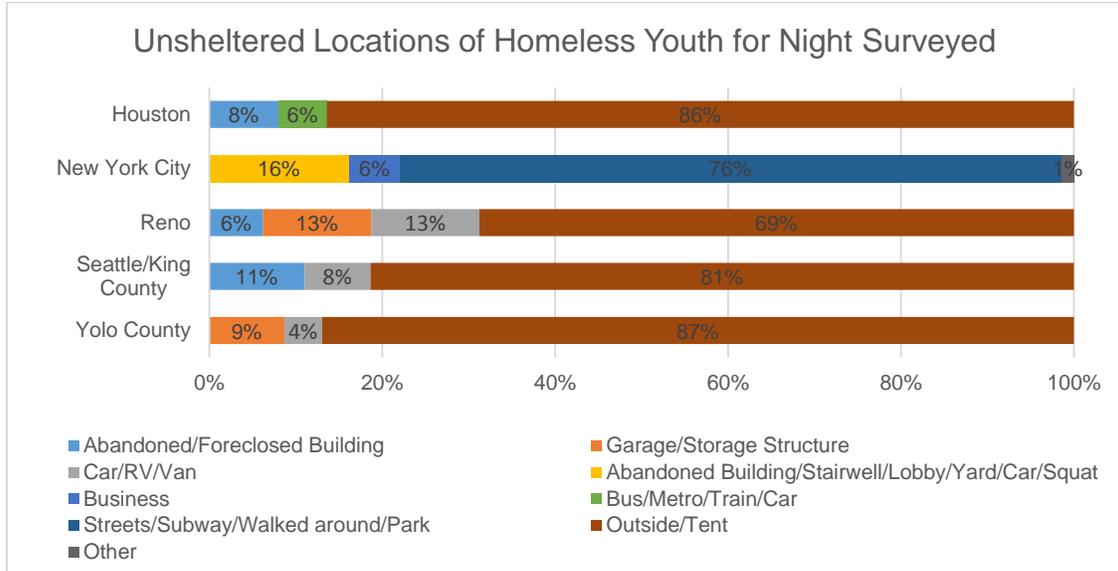
In addition, surveyed youth stayed in unstable housing situations. Between 10% and 64% of homeless youth were unstably housed with a median of 20% in the eleven locations that assessed these locations that included staying with friends, short-term with relatives, a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, on a couch, or in a hotel or motel. One percent of homeless youth surveyed were in a hospital, jail, prison, or detention facility in the three locations that assessed these locations. In Connecticut, 4% of homeless youth surveyed reported they were in a foster home and 2% of homeless youth surveyed reported they were in a treatment facility.

A small percentage of surveyed youth stayed in permanent housing. Between 1% and 6% with a median of 2% (if not including New York's permanently housed youth) of homeless youth surveyed were in a parent's home, relative's home, foster parent home, or dorm without the

expectation of leaving soon in the six locations that included these individuals in their survey results. In Chicago, 12% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they were in permanent housing for homeless or low-income persons.



Most of the unsheltered homeless youth had stayed outdoors on the night surveyors questioned the homeless youth about their housing status. In the four locations that assessed specific unsheltered locations, a median of 84% and between 69% and 87% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed had spent the night outside. Similarly, 76% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed had stayed outside or on the subway in New York City.



Other unsheltered homeless youth had stayed in precarious buildings, structures, or vehicles not meant for human habitation. In Houston, 6% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed had spent the night on public transportation or in a car. In Reno, Seattle/King County, and Yolo County, between 4% and 13% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed spent the night in a car, RV, or van. Nine percent and 13% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed spent the night in a garage or storage structure in Yolo County and Reno, respectively. In New York City, 6% stayed inside a business such as a restaurant or bar. Between 6% and 11% of unsheltered homeless youth surveyed spent the night in an abandoned building in Houston, Reno, and Seattle/King County.

## Time Homeless

Homeless and unstably housed youth vary in the length of time they have spent in their current housing situation from less than a day to several years.

In Connecticut, where thirty-three percent were unstably housed, twenty-six percent were in an emergency shelter, fifteen percent were in transitional housing, and four percent were unsheltered, only 3% of surveyed youth reported that it had been less than a month since they were in permanent housing, 22% reported that it had been between 1 to 12 months since they were in permanent housing, and 17% reported that it had been more than a year since they were in permanent housing.

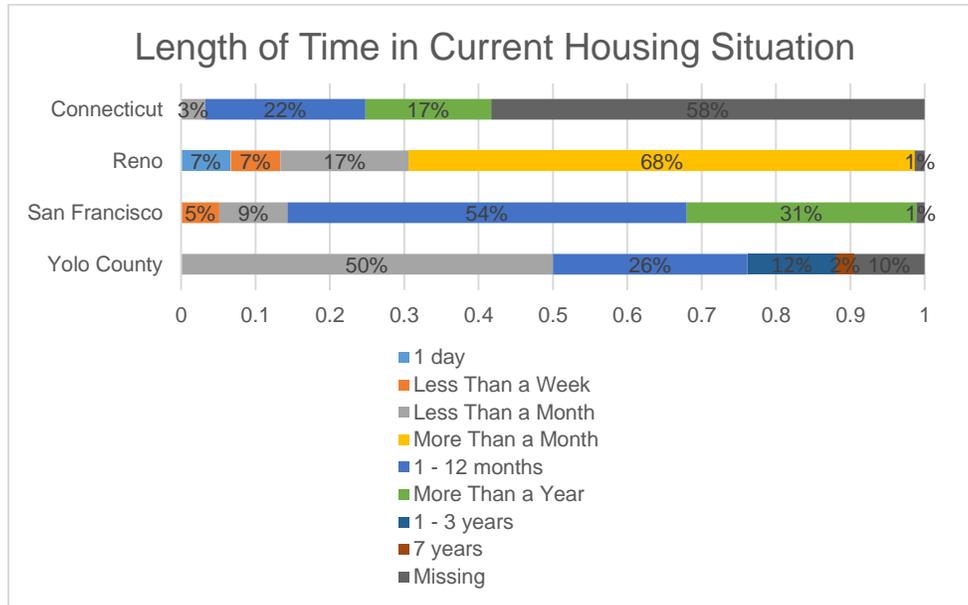
In Reno, where fifty-two percent were unstably housed, fifteen percent were in emergency shelters or transitional housing, and twenty-one percent were in unsheltered locations, only 14% of surveyed youth reported spending less than week in their current housing situation and 68% of surveyed youth reported spending more than a month in their current housing situation.

In San Francisco, where thirteen percent were in emergency shelters or transitional housing and eighty-seven percent were unsheltered, 14% of surveyed youth reported spending less than a month in their current homeless situation, 54% reported spending 1 to 12 months in their current homeless situation, and 31% have spent more than a year in their current homeless situation.

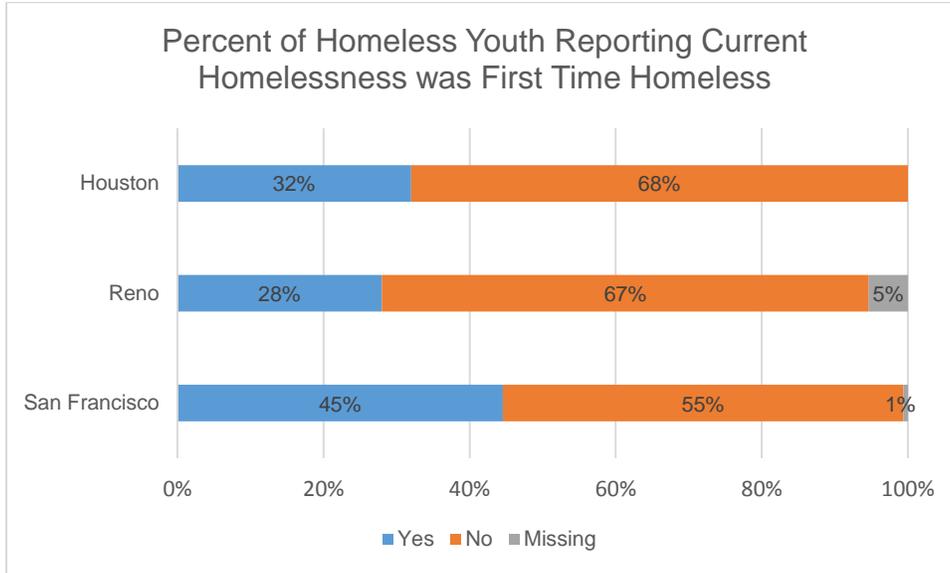
In Yolo County, where twelve percent were unstably housed, thirty-one percent were in emergency shelters or transitional housing, and fifty-five percent were unsheltered, 50% of

surveyed youth reported spending less than a month in their current housing situation and 40% had spent more than a month in their current housing situation with 26% having spent up to a year and 12% having spent 1 to 3 years in their current housing situation. In addition, 19% of surveyed youth in Reno reported being homeless for five years or longer and 31% of surveyed youth in Yolo County reported long-term homelessness of staying in shelters or places not meant for regular sleeping continuously for 1 year or more in the last 3 years.

Therefore, at least some surveyed youth had spent more than a week without shelter on the streets in Reno and at least a year without shelter on the streets or in a shelter in San Francisco and Yolo County.



Many homeless youth have experienced more than one episode of homelessness. In three locations, between 55% and 68% of homeless youth surveyed reported prior episodes of homelessness. In Houston, 68% of homeless youth surveyed reported they had been homeless in the past prior to the current episode. In Reno, 67% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their current homelessness was not their first time being homeless. In San Francisco, 55% of homeless youth surveyed reported that their current homelessness was not their first time being homeless. Also, in Maine, homeless youth surveyed in urban Maine reported 2.5 episodes of homelessness and homeless youth surveyed in rural Maine reported 3.0 episodes of homelessness.



Some homeless youth first become homeless at very young ages. For example, in Reno, the youngest that someone first became homeless was at the age of 6 years old. In Houston, 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported first becoming homeless before reaching 11 years old and 54% of homeless youth surveyed reported first becoming homeless before reaching 18 years old. In Western Massachusetts, 38% of homeless youth surveyed in Hampden County left home before the age of 18 and 50% of homeless youth surveyed in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties left home before the age of 18.

Homeless youth have unstable living situations and are not able to stay in the same location for very long and homeless youth without shelter have even greater instability in their living situations. In Philadelphia, 43% of homeless youth surveyed reported more than four shelter stays. In New York City, 29% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in four or more places in the past month and 10% reported staying in eight or more places in the past month. These numbers double or nearly double for homeless youth without shelter with 57% of homeless youth surveyed without shelter reported staying in four or more places and 25% reported staying in eight or more places in the past month. In Connecticut, 9% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in four or more places in the past six months. In Houston, 41% of homeless youth surveyed reported moving six or more times in the past two years.

## Locations Lived Before Becoming Homeless

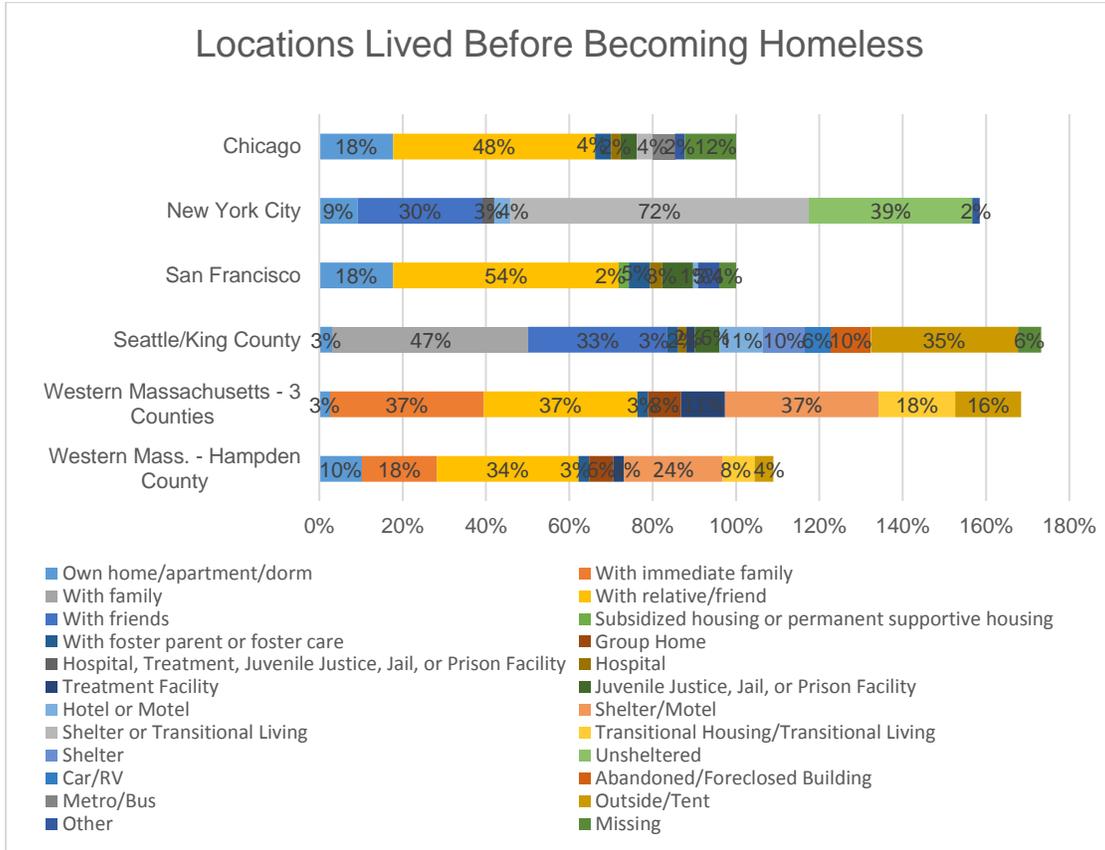
Youth live in a variety of locations immediately before, during the month before, during the three months before, and during the twelve months before they become homeless.

The most commonly reported location homeless youth surveyed lived immediately before, during the month before, during the three months before, and during the twelve months before becoming homeless was in their own home or with family or friends. In Chicago and San Francisco, 18% of homeless youth surveyed lived in their own home and 48% and 54% lived with family or friends immediately before becoming homeless. In New York City, 9% of homeless youth surveyed lived in their own home, a parent’s home, or a dorm and 30% lived with friends during the month before they became homeless. In Seattle/King County, 3% of homeless youth surveyed lived in their own home, 47% lived with family, and 33% lived with friends during the three months before becoming homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 10% and 3% lived in their own home, 18% and 37% lived with immediate family, and 34% and 37% lived with relatives or

friends during the twelve months before becoming homeless in Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties, respectively.

Many homeless youth have lived in foster care before becoming homeless. In six locations, between 3% and 8% of homeless youth surveyed lived in foster care before becoming homeless. In Chicago and San Francisco, 4% and 5% of homeless youth surveyed reported living in a foster care/group home immediately before becoming homeless. In New York City, 3% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hospital, jail, juvenile detention, mental health facility, or group home during the month before becoming homeless. In Seattle/King County, 3% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a foster home during the three months before becoming homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 3% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying with a foster parent and 6% to 8% reported staying in group home during the twelve months before becoming homeless in Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties, respectively.

Homeless youth have also stayed in medical, treatment, juvenile detention, jail, and prison facilities before becoming homeless. In six locations, between approximately 2% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed had stayed in a medical, treatment, or detention facility before becoming homeless. In Chicago and San Francisco, 2% to 3% of homeless youth surveyed had staying in a hospital and 4% and 7% had stayed in a juvenile justice, jail, or prison immediately before becoming homeless. In New York City, 3% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hospital, jail, juvenile detention, mental health facility, or group home during the month before becoming homeless. In Seattle/King County, 2% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hospital, 2% reported staying in a treatment facility, and 6% reported staying in jail or juvenile detention during the three months before becoming homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 3% and 11% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a treatment or medical facility during the twelve months before becoming homeless in Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties respectively.

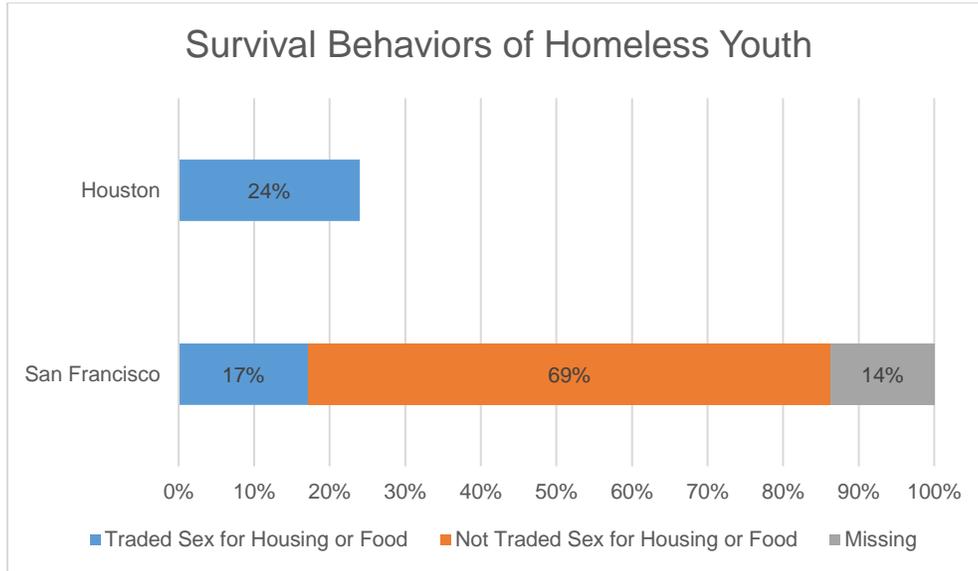


Many youth surveyed were already homeless outside, in structures not meant for living, or in shelters or staying in a hotel or motel before their current episode of homelessness. Overall, between approximately 4% and 35% were staying outside, between approximately 5% and 15% were staying in a structure not meant for living, between 4% and 72% were staying in a shelter or drop-in center, and between approximately 1% and 37% were staying in a hotel or motel.

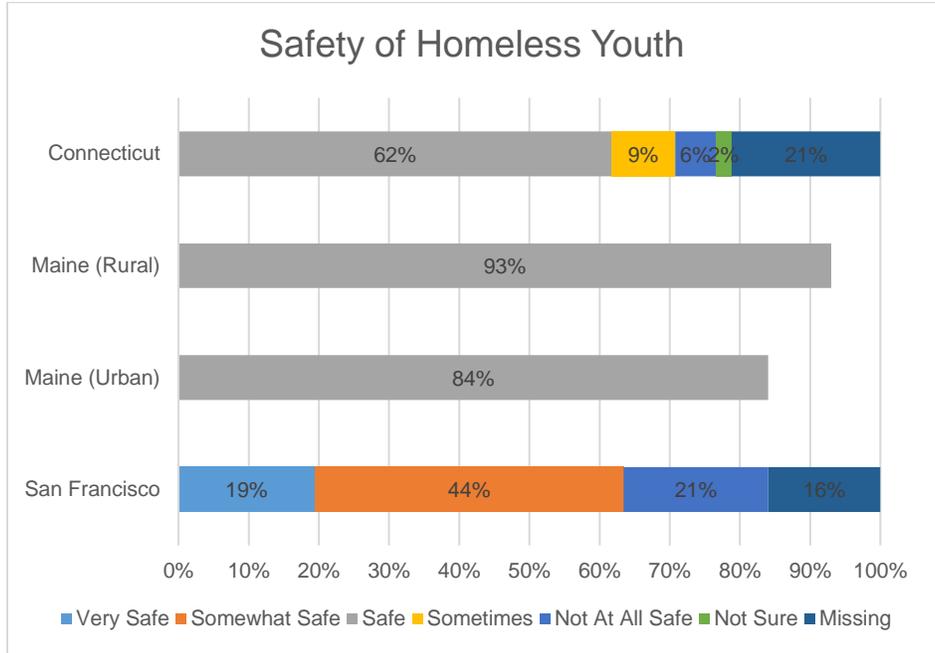
The percent of homeless youth who had stayed in each previous homeless location varied in each of the locations. In Chicago, 4% of homeless youth surveyed were staying in a shelter or transitional housing and 5% were staying on the subway or on a bus immediately before becoming homeless. In San Francisco, 1% of homeless youth surveyed were staying in a hotel or motel immediately before becoming homeless. In New York City, 4% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a hotel or motel, 72% reported staying in a shelter, drop-in center, transitional living facility, or church bed, and 39% reported staying in unsheltered locations during the month before becoming homeless. In Seattle/King County, 11% of homeless youth reported staying in a hotel or motel, 10% reported staying in a shelter, 6% reported staying in a car or RV, 10% reported staying in an abandoned/foreclosed building, and 35% reported staying outside or in a tent during the three months before becoming homeless. In Western Massachusetts, 24% and 37% of homeless youth surveyed reported staying in a shelter or motel, 8% and 18% reported staying in transitional housing, and 4% and 16% reported staying outside during the twelve months before becoming homeless in Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties respectively.

## Safety

Some homeless youth face potentially traumatic and unsafe actions to try and obtain housing, food, or other basic needs. In two locations, between 17% and 24% of homeless youth surveyed reported engaging in potentially harmful actions in order to obtain necessities for survival. In San Francisco, 17% of homeless youth surveyed reported trading sex for a place to stay. In Houston, 24% of homeless youth surveyed reported trading sex to meet their basic needs.



Some homeless youth are living in unsafe locations. In four locations, between 7% and 21% of homeless youth surveyed reported feeling unsafe. In Connecticut, 6% of homeless youth surveyed reported feeling not safe and 9% of homeless youth surveyed reported not feeling safe sometimes. In Maine, 7% of homeless youth surveyed in rural areas and 16% of homeless youth surveyed in urban areas did not report currently feeling safe. Likewise, 21% of homeless youth surveyed in San Francisco reported feeling not safe in their current living situation. Ten percent of the homeless youth surveyed in San Francisco reported that their safety has been threatened 10 or more times in the past 30 days.



Many homeless youth have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse since becoming homeless. In San Francisco, 42% of homeless youth surveyed have experienced physical abuse since becoming homeless, 24% of homeless youth surveyed have experienced sexual abuse since becoming homeless, and 46% of homeless youth surveyed have experienced emotional abuse since becoming homeless.

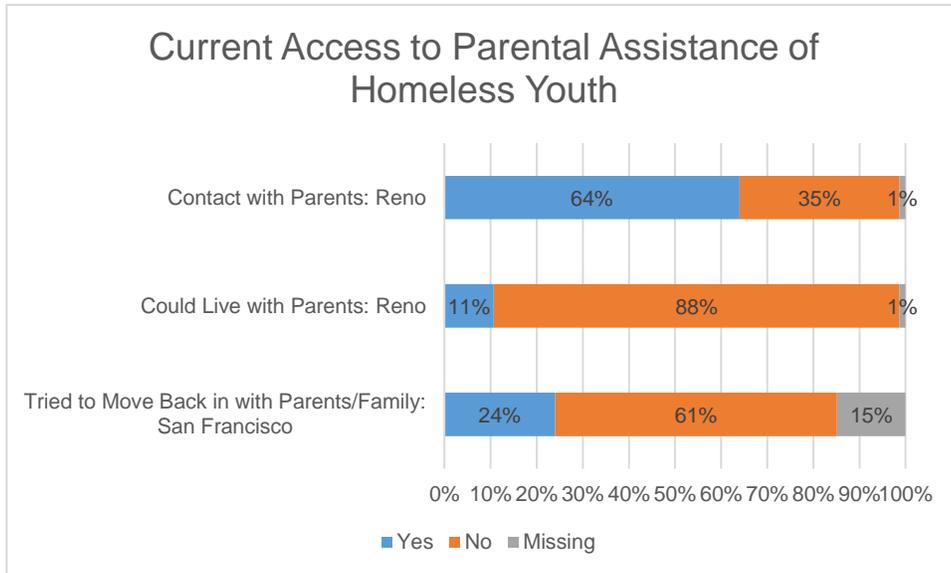
Although homeless youth are living in unsafe locations where they experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, homeless youth surveyed experienced slightly lower levels of abuse since becoming homeless and more decreases in the frequency of abuse. In San Francisco, 1% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing physical abuse, 6% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing sexual abuse, and 3% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing emotional abuse since becoming homeless. In terms of frequency, 8% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing physical abuse, 7% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing sexual abuse, and 12% fewer homeless youth surveyed reported experiencing emotional abuse very often or frequently since becoming homeless as they experienced before becoming homeless.

## IV. ASSISTANCE FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Homeless youth surveyed reported previous or current access, attempted access, and need of nine types of assistance: parental assistance, housing assistance, shelter day services, food or nutrition assistance, educational and employment assistance, legal assistance, documentation and immigration assistance, childcare and family assistance, and medical and mental health assistance.

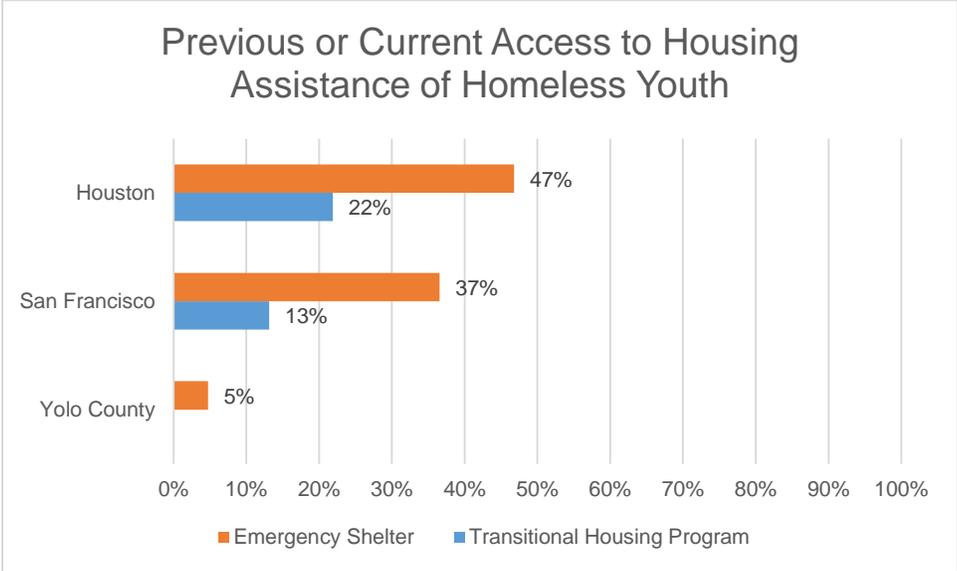
### Parental Assistance

Although some homeless youth can move back in with parents, many homeless youth report that they are not able to move back in with their parents. In Reno, 35% of homeless youth surveyed do not have contact with their parents and 88% reported that they could not live with their parents. In San Francisco, 24% of homeless youth have already tried to move back in with their parents or family.

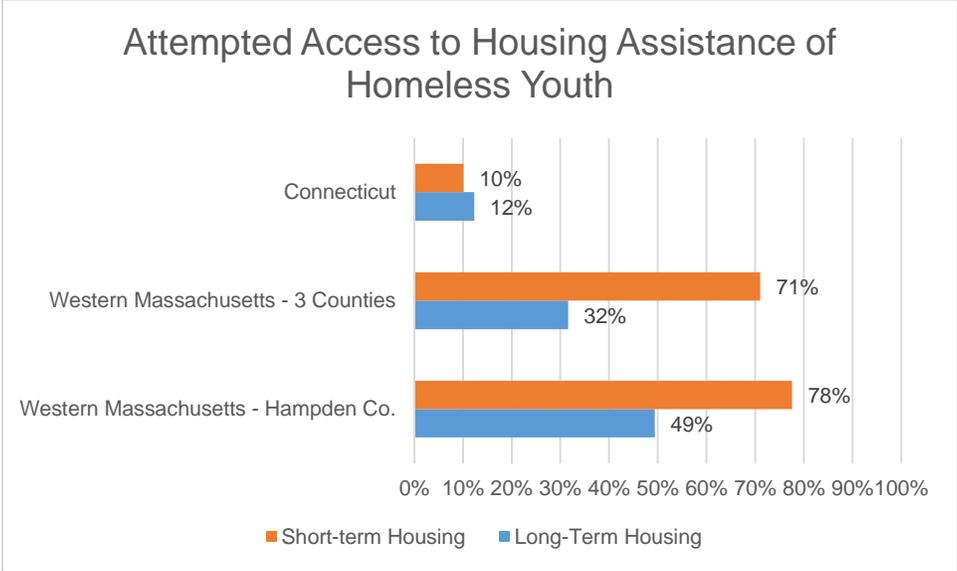


### Housing Assistance

Homeless youth have previously accessed or are currently accessing short-term and medium-term housing assistance. Overall, 41% and between 5% and 47% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations have accessed emergency shelter and 19% and between 13% and 22% of homeless youth surveyed at two locations have accessed transitional housing.

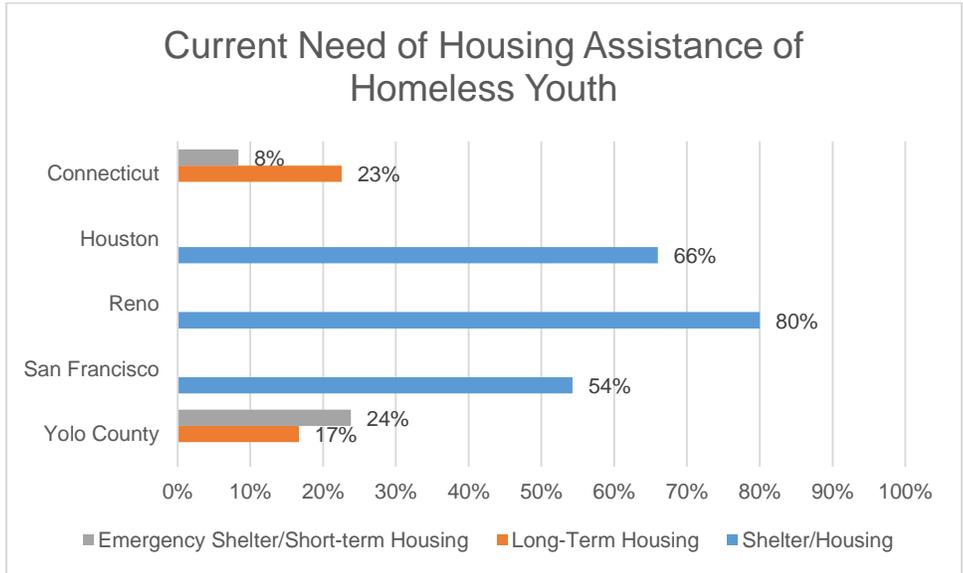


Homeless youth have sought short-term and long-term housing assistance. Overall, 27% of homeless youth surveyed at three locations sought short-term housing assistance and 21% of homeless youth surveyed at these locations sought long-term assistance. In Connecticut, 10% attempted to access short-term housing and 12% attempted to assess long-term housing. In Western Massachusetts, 71% in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties and 78% in Hampden County sought short-term housing in the past year and 32% and 49% in each location sought long-term housing in the past year.



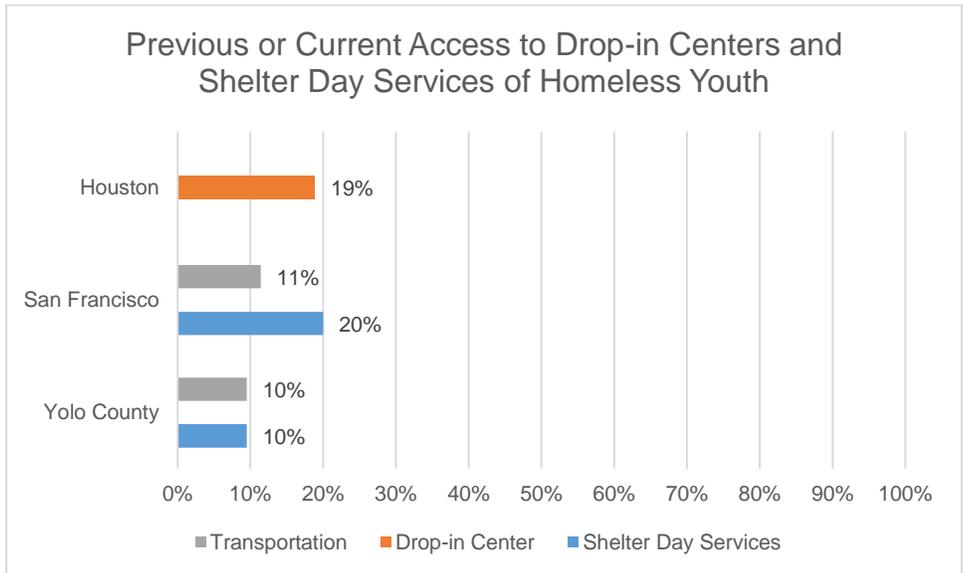
Homeless youth reported a current need of both short-term housing assistance and long-term housing assistance. Overall, between approximately 1 in 5 and 4 in 5 homeless youth surveyed reported a need for housing. In Connecticut and Yolo County, 8% and 24% of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for short-term housing and emergency shelter and 23% and 17% of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for long-term housing. In Houston, 66% of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for housing. In Reno, 80% of homeless youth surveyed said they

needed housing. In San Francisco, 54% of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for shelter/housing.



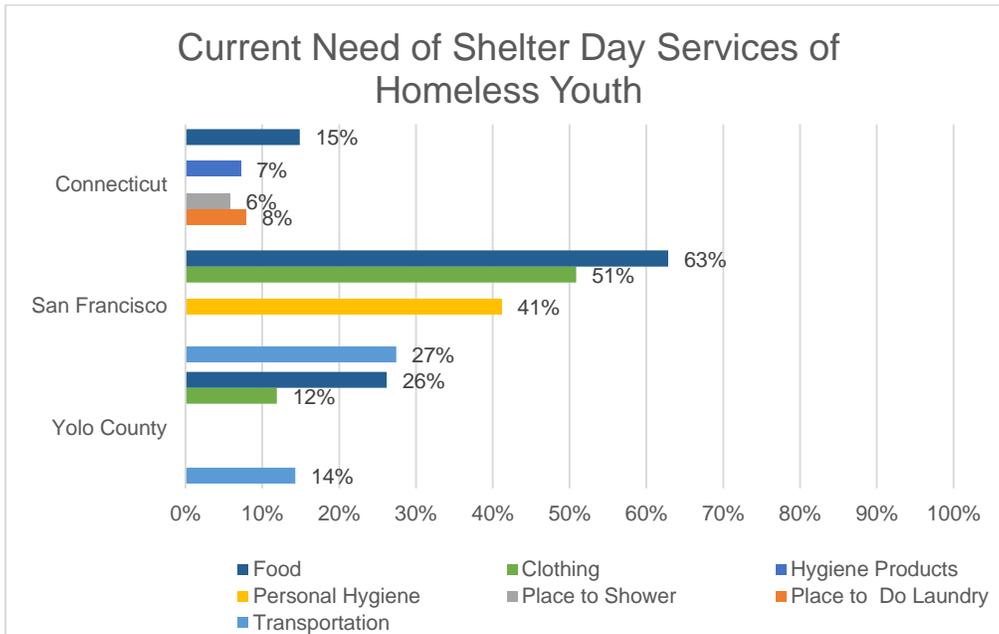
### Shelter Day Services

Some homeless youth have accessed drop-in centers or shelter day services. Overall, a total of 18% and between 10% and 20% of homeless youth surveyed had used shelter day services and a total of 11% of homeless youth surveyed had used bus passes in two locations (San Francisco and Yolo County). Similarly, 19% of homeless youth surveyed had previously accessed a drop-in center in Houston.



Homeless youth have a current need for shelter day services. In three of the survey locations, homeless youth reported needing food, clothing, personal hygiene products, a place to shower, a place to do laundry, and transportation. Overall, 26% of homeless youth surveyed reported a need for food, between 12% and 51% reported a need for clothing, between 6% and 41%

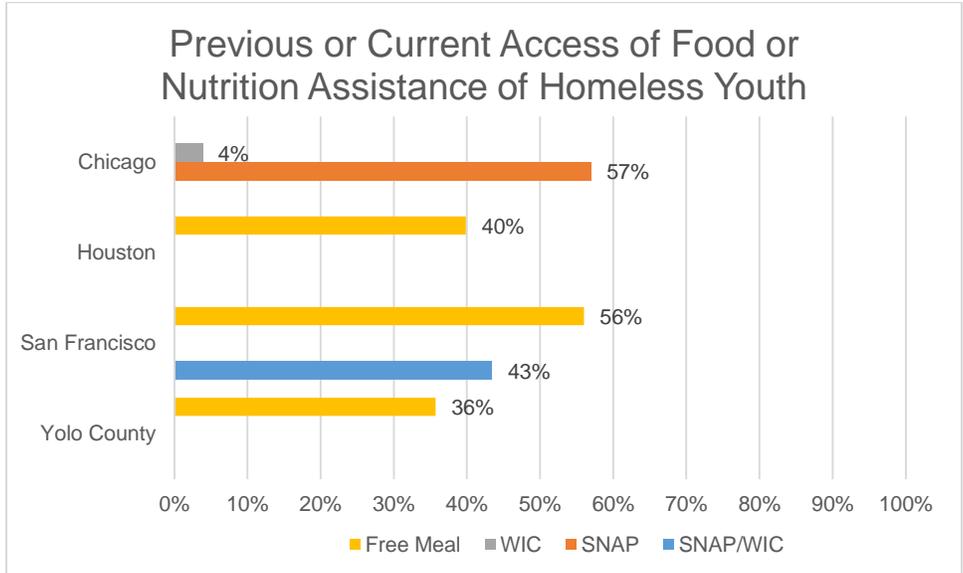
reported a need for personal hygiene products or a place to shower, 8% reported a need for a place to do laundry, and between 14% and 27% reported a need for transportation.



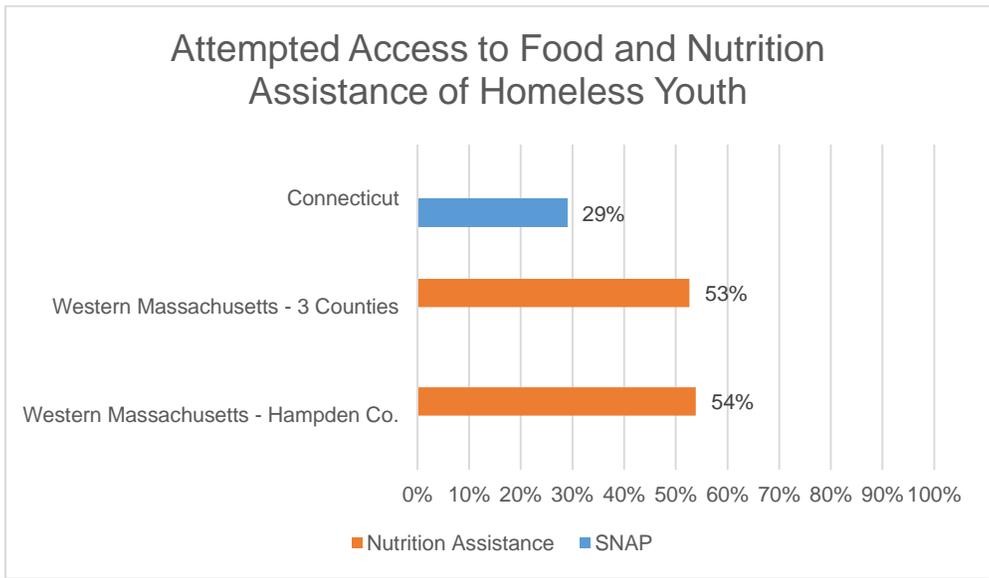
The percent of homeless youth who needed shelter day services varied in each of the three locations. In Connecticut, 6% of homeless youth surveyed reported they needed a place to shower, 7% reported they needed personal hygiene products, and 8% reported they needed a place to do laundry. In San Francisco, 41% of homeless youth surveyed reported personal hygiene as a need, 51% reported they needed clothes, and 27% reported needing transportation. In Yolo County, 12% reported they needed clothes and 14% reported needing transportation.

### Food or Nutrition Assistance

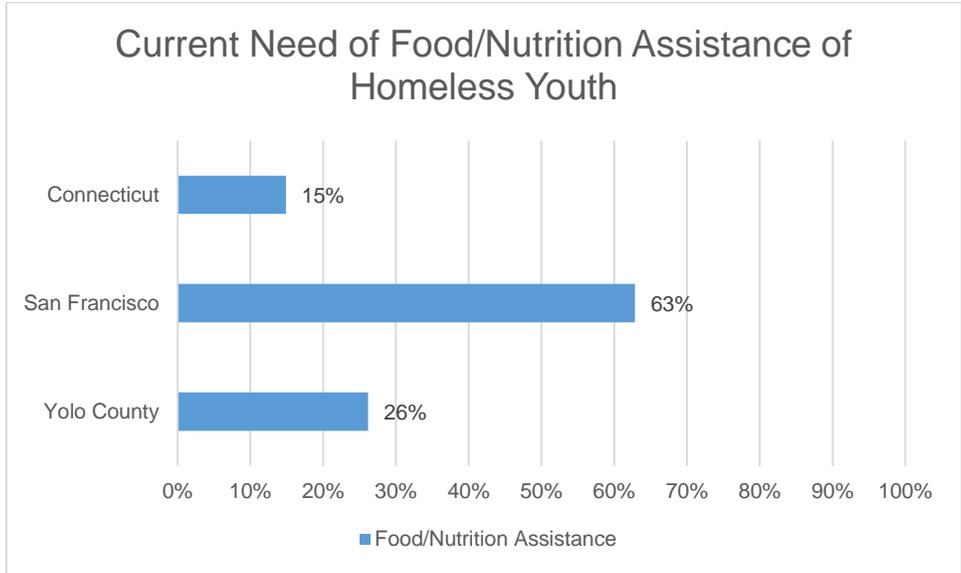
Homeless youth have previously accessed or are currently accessing food or nutrition assistance. Overall, 44% of homeless youth surveyed at three locations reported that they have accessed or are currently accessing free meal services. Also, 4% of homeless youth surveyed reported they are accessing the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and 57% of homeless youth surveyed reported they are accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Chicago and 43% of homeless youth surveyed reported they are accessing WIC or SNAP in San Francisco.



Homeless youth have attempted to access food or nutrition assistance. In three locations, between 29% and 54% of homeless youth surveyed reported attempting to access food or nutrition assistance. Overall, 53% of homeless youth surveyed in Western Massachusetts have sought nutrition assistance in the past year. In Connecticut, 29% of homeless youth surveyed attempted to access SNAP.

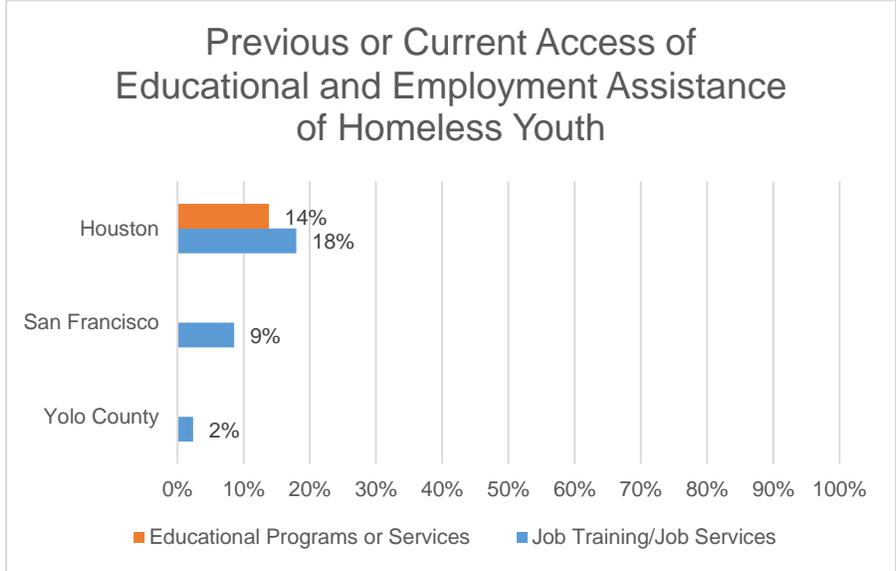


Homeless youth have a current need for food/nutrition assistance. Overall, a total of 26% and between 15% and 63% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations reported a current need for food/nutrition assistance.

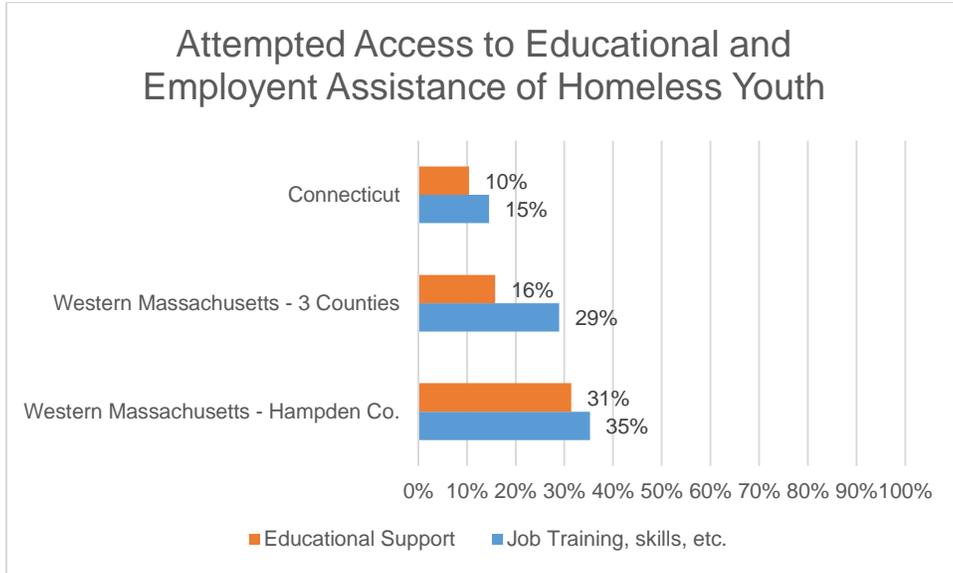


### Educational and Employment Assistance

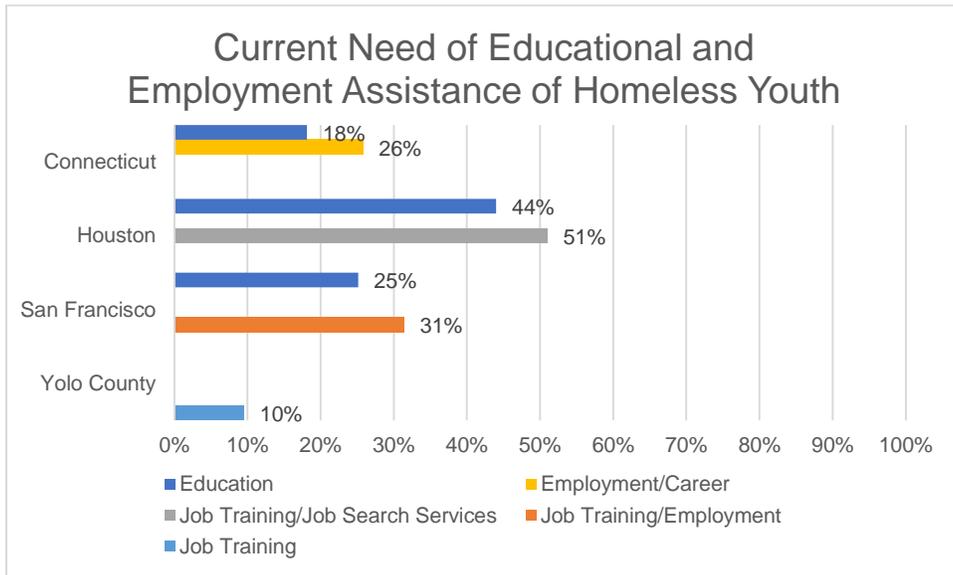
Homeless youth have previously or are currently accessing educational programs or services and job training or job services. Fourteen percent of homeless youth surveyed in Houston have previously accessed educational programs or services. Also, a total of 14% and between 2% and 18% of homeless youth surveyed in three locations have previously accessed or are currently accessing job training or job services.



Homeless youth have attempted to access educational support and job training. Overall, between 10% and 31% attempted to access educational support and between 15% and 35% attempted to access job training. In Connecticut, 10% of homeless youth surveyed attempted to access educational support and 15% of homeless youth surveyed attempted to access job training. In Western Massachusetts, 28% of homeless youth surveyed sought educational support and 34% of homeless youth surveyed sought job training in the past year.

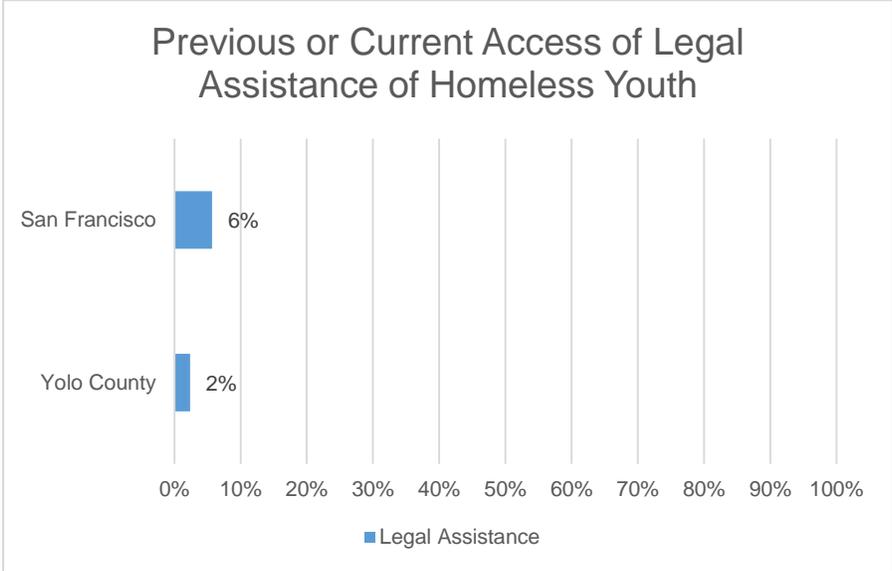


Homeless youth surveyed need educational and employment assistance. Overall, between 18% and 44% of homeless youth surveyed at three locations reported a current need for education and between 10% and 51% of homeless youth surveyed in four locations reported a current need for job training and employment services.

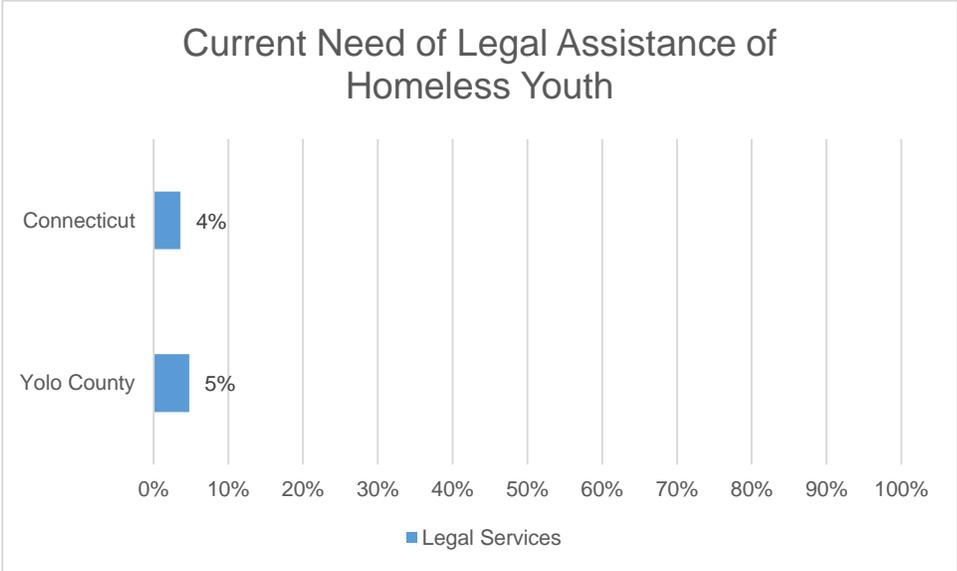


## Legal Assistance

Some homeless youth are currently accessing legal services. Overall, a total of 5% and between 2% and 6% of homeless youth surveyed in two locations are currently receiving legal assistance.

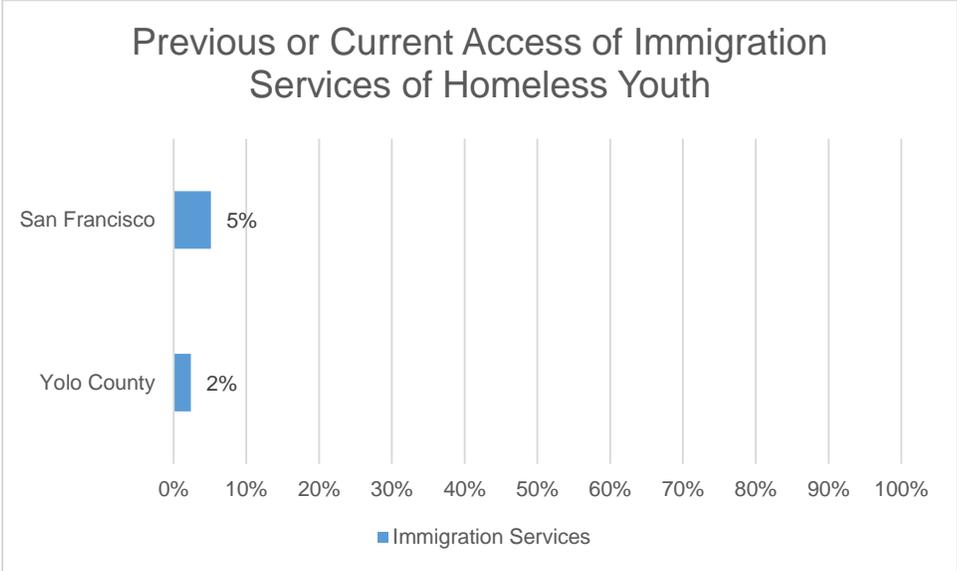


Homeless youth have reported a need for legal assistance. Overall, 4% of homeless youth surveyed at two locations reported a current need for legal help or legal services.

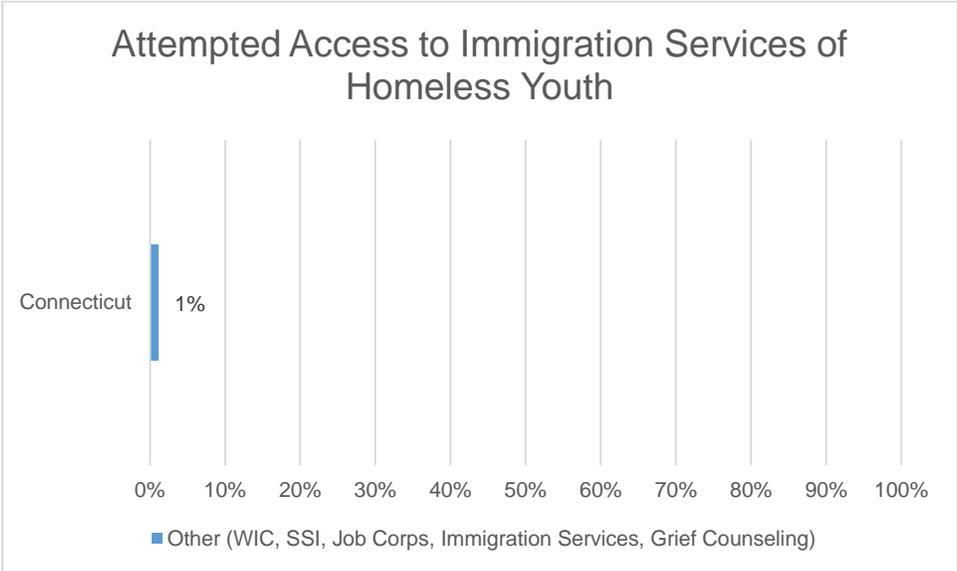


### Documentation and Immigration Assistance

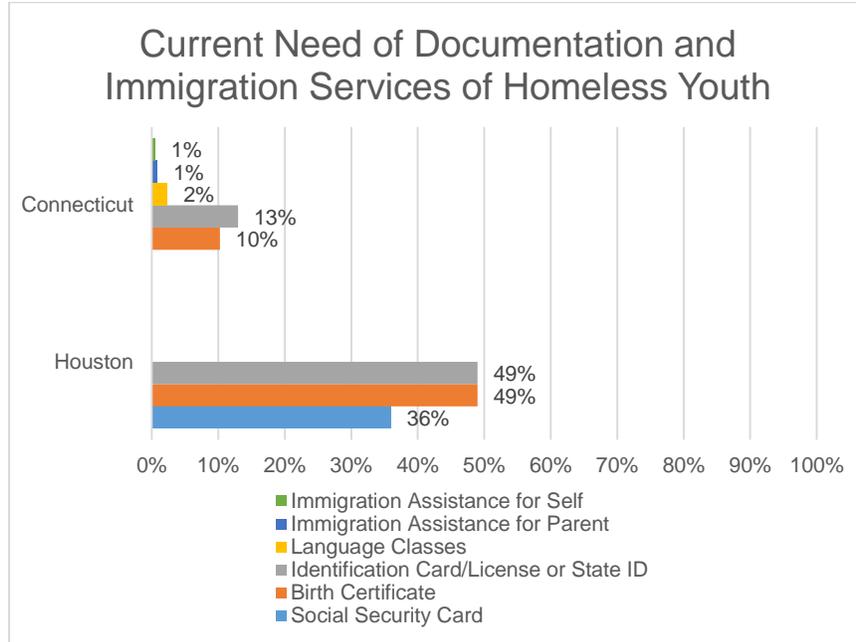
Homeless youth reported they were currently accessing immigration services. Overall, 5% of homeless youth at two locations reported they were currently accessing immigration services.



Homeless youth have attempted to access immigration services. In Connecticut, 1% of homeless youth surveyed reported they attempted to access services, including immigration services.



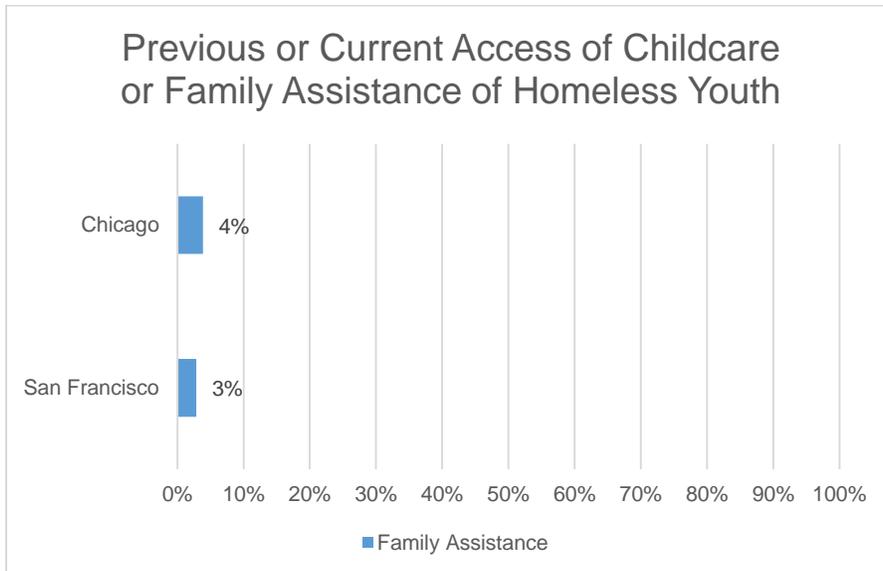
Homeless youth have a current need for documentation and immigration services. Overall, 1% reported they needed immigration assistance for them or a parent, 2% reported they needed language classes, 13% to 49% reported they needed a license, state ID, identification card or Social Security Card, and 10% to 49% reported they needed a birth certificate.



The percent of homeless youth who needed documentation and immigration services varied between the two locations. In Connecticut, 1% of homeless youth surveyed reported they needed immigration assistance for them or a parent and 2% reported they needed language classes. In Connecticut, 10% and 13% reported they needed a birth certificate and an identification card, respectively. In Houston, 36% reported they needed a Social Security Card, 49% reported they needed a license or state ID, and 49% reported they needed a birth certificate.

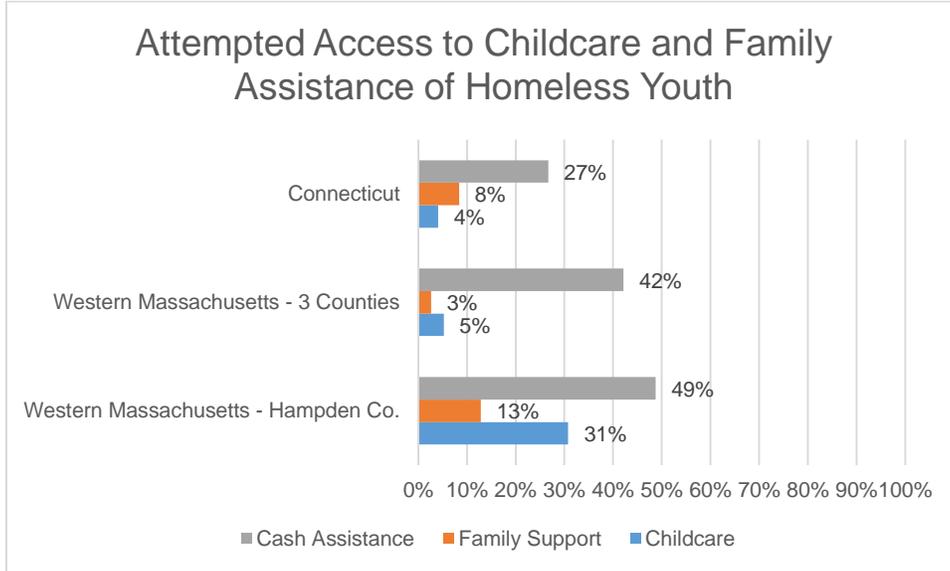
### Childcare and Family Assistance

Homeless youth have previously accessed or are currently accessing family assistance. Overall, 3% of homeless youth surveyed at two locations have accessed family assistance.



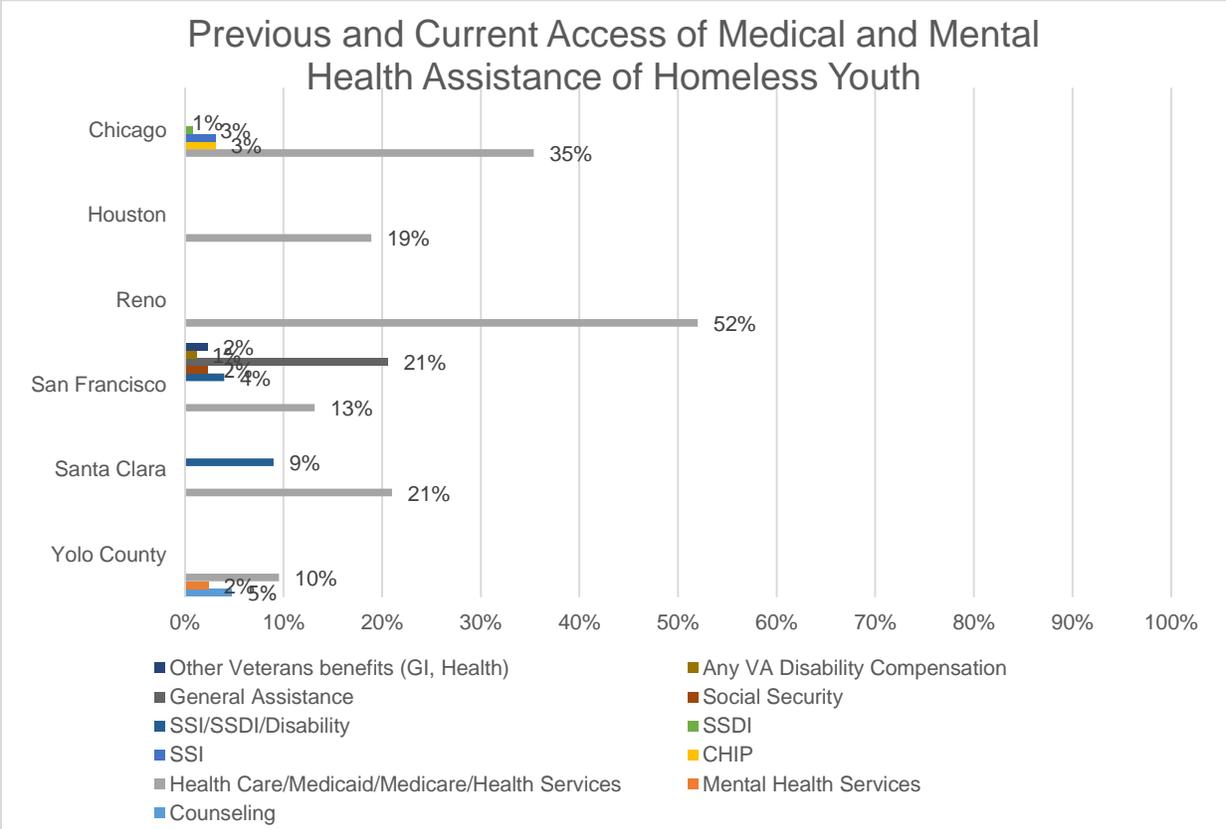
Homeless youth have attempted to access childcare and family assistance. In three locations, between 4% and 31% of homeless youth surveyed attempted to access child care,

between 3% and 13% attempted to access family support, and between 27% and 49% attempted to access cash assistance. In Connecticut, 31% of homeless youth surveyed attempted to access childcare, 13% attempted to access family support, and 49% attempted to access cash assistance. In Western Massachusetts, in the past year, 26% of homeless youth surveyed sought childcare, 11% sought family support, and 47% sought cash assistance.

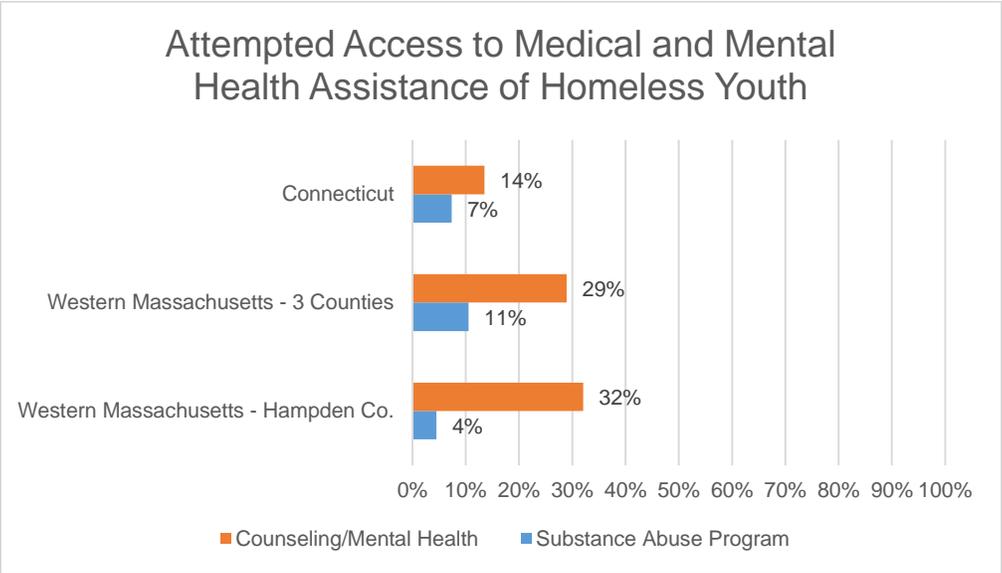


## Medical and Mental Health Assistance

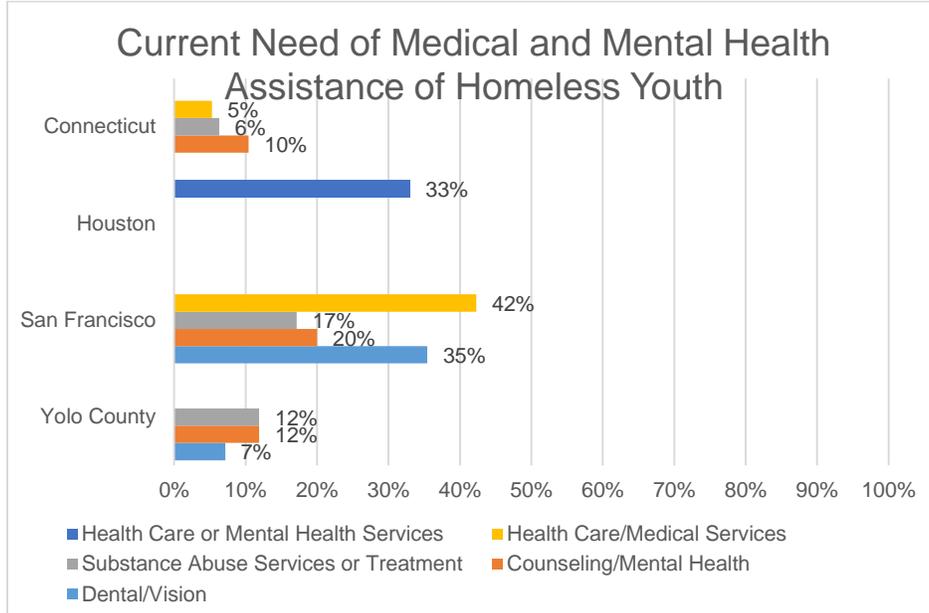
Homeless youth have previously and are currently using medical or mental health services or assistance. Overall, between 10% and 52% of homeless youth surveyed at six locations reported accessing health care or health care services. In addition, between 4% and 9% of homeless youth surveyed at three locations reported accessing Social Security Insurance (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). In San Francisco, 1% of homeless youth reported receiving VA Disability Compensation, 2% reported receiving Other Veterans Benefits, and 21% reported receiving General Assistance. In Yolo County, 2% of homeless youth surveyed reported accessing mental health services and 5% reported accessing alcohol or drug counseling.



Homeless youth have attempted to access medical and mental health assistance. Overall, between 14% and 32% of homeless youth reported having attempted to access counseling/mental health services in Connecticut and in the past year in Western Massachusetts. Also, between 4% and 11% of homeless youth reported having attempted to access a substance abuse program in Connecticut and in the past year in Western Massachusetts.



Homeless youth have reported a need for medical and mental health assistance. Overall, a total of 13% and between 5% and 42% reported a need for health care or medical services, a total of 9% and between 6% and 17% percent reported a need for substance abuse services or treatment specifically, a total of 13% and between 10% to 20% reported a need for counseling/mental health specifically, and between 7% and 35% reported a need for dental care or vision care specifically.



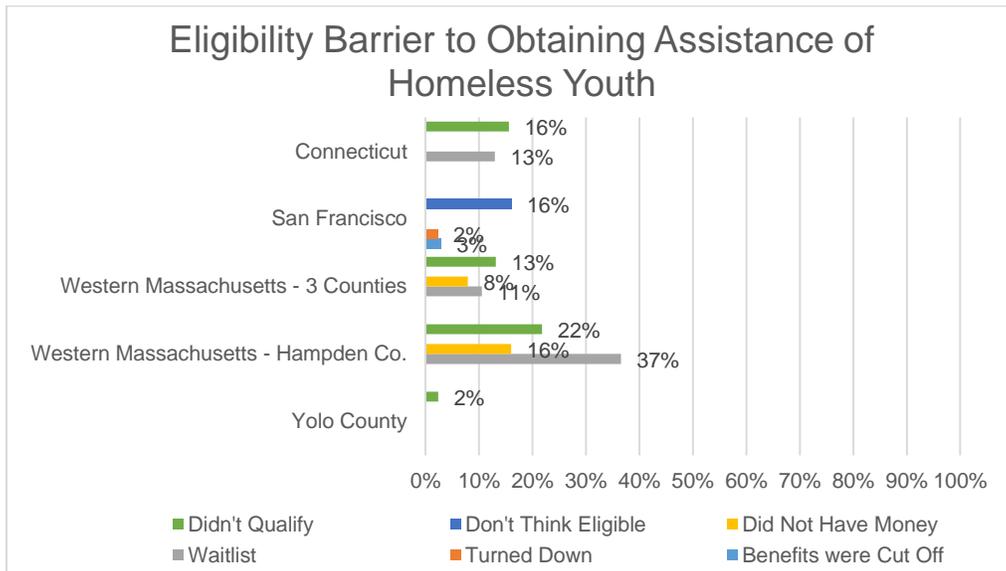
Homeless youth report that deficiencies or aggressiveness in mental health access and treatment as reasons for having unmet need for mental health services. Of homeless youth surveyed with unmet need, 35% of homeless youth surveyed reported cost, 28% reported not knowing where to go, 23% reported concerns about being required to participate in inpatient treatment or given medication, 31% reporting thinking they could handle the problem without treatment, and 31% did not think treatment would help as a reason for their unmet need in Houston.

## V. BARRIERS TO ASSISTANCE FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

This report summarizes five types of barriers to assistance that youth face in attempting to access assistance and specific barriers to staying in shelters or permanent housing: eligibility, accessibility, comfort, documentation and language, and transportation.

### Eligibility

Some homeless youth are unable to obtain assistance because of eligibility requirements. Overall, an average of 16% and between 2% and 22% of homeless youth surveyed reported they did not receive assistance because they did not qualify. Fourteen percent of homeless youth surveyed in Western Massachusetts reported they did not obtain assistance because they did not have money. Likewise, 16% of homeless youth surveyed in San Francisco reported they did not receive assistance because they did not think they were eligible and 2% reported they were turned down.

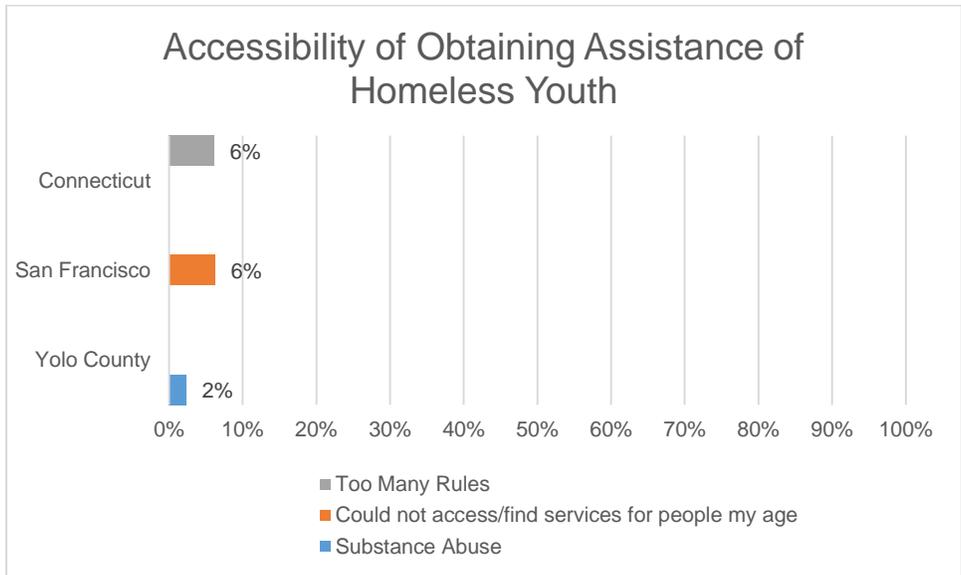


In addition to not obtaining assistance because they were not eligible, some homeless youth had their benefits taken away or were placed on a waitlist. In San Francisco, 3% reported their benefits were cut off. In Connecticut and Western Massachusetts, a total of 18% and between 13% and 37% of homeless youth surveyed reported that they were on a waitlist.

### Accessibility

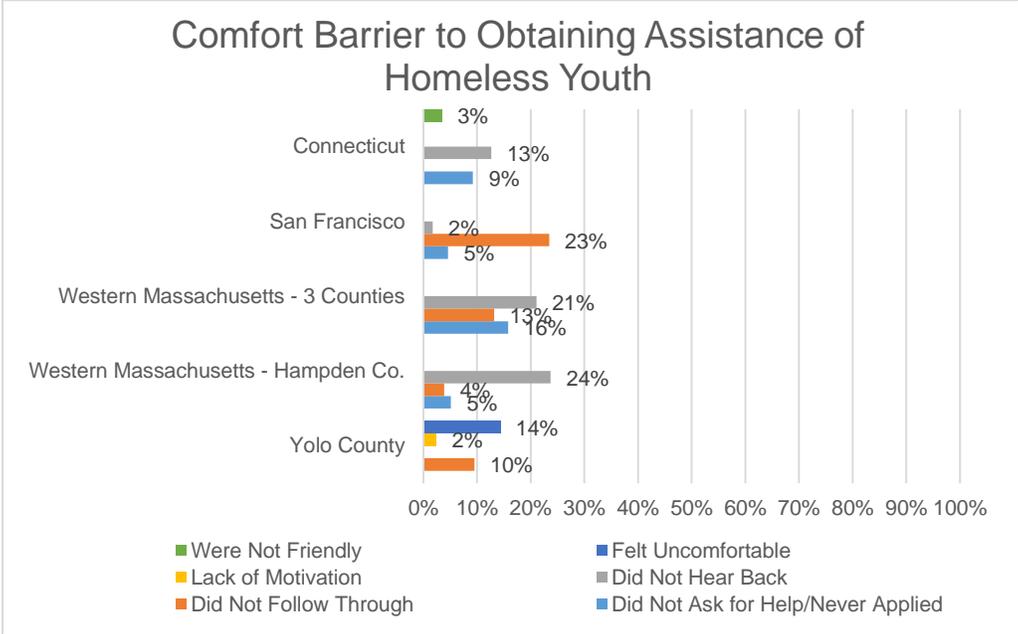
In addition to being ineligible for programs, not having money to apply for programs, and being on a waitlist, some homeless youth reported they were unable to obtain assistance because of eligibility rules. In three locations, between 2% and 6% of homeless youth surveyed reported they did not obtain assistance because of rules or other lack of accessibility. In Connecticut, 6% of homeless youth surveyed reported they did not obtain assistance because there were too many rules. In San Francisco, 6% reported they did not receive assistance because they could not access or find services for people their age. In Yolo County, 2% reported they did not receive assistance because of substance abuse. In rural and urban Maine, only 41% and 84% of homeless youth

surveyed who were diagnosed with a disability were currently accessing services, respectively. In San Francisco, 3% of homeless youth surveyed had stayed in a hospital or treatment facility immediately before becoming homeless. Also, 73% of the homeless youth in Yolo County who reported at least one physical, mental, emotional, or developmental issue reported that those issues were keeping them from holding a job or stable housing.



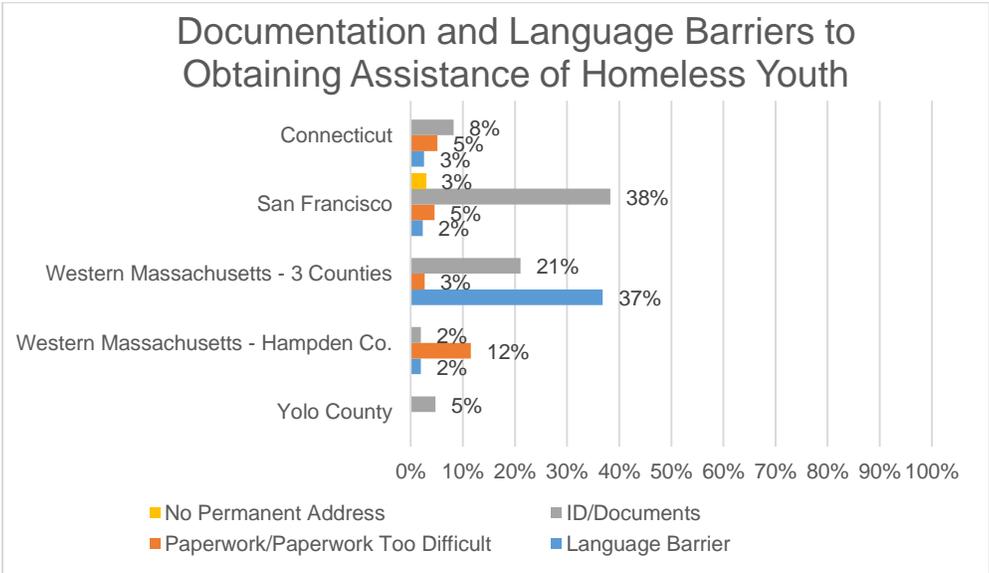
## Comfort

Homeless youth reported they are unable to obtain assistance because they did not apply, they didn't hear back, and they felt uncomfortable. Overall, a total of 8% and between 5% and 9% of homeless youth did not ask for help and a total of 13% and between 13% and 24% did not hear back in Connecticut, San Francisco, and Western Massachusetts. Also, a total of 14% and between 4% and 23% of homeless youth didn't follow through in San Francisco, Western Massachusetts, and Yolo County. In addition, 3% in Connecticut reported that staff were not friendly and 14% in Yolo County reported they felt uncomfortable.



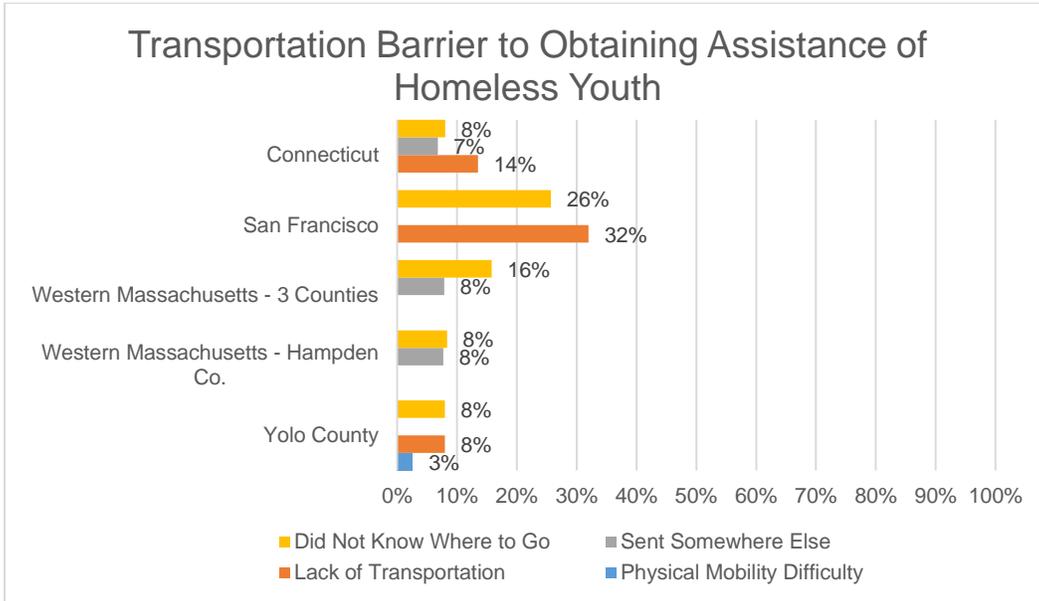
## Documentation and Language

Homeless youth report that documentation and language has prevented them from obtaining assistance. Overall, a total of 13% and between 2% and 38% of homeless youth at five locations reported that lack of ID or documentation impaired their ability to obtain assistance. At four of the locations, a total of 3% and between 2% and 37% reported that language barriers and a total of 6% reported that paperwork prevented them from obtaining assistance. Also, 3% in San Francisco reported that the lack of a permanent address prevented them from obtaining assistance.



## Transportation

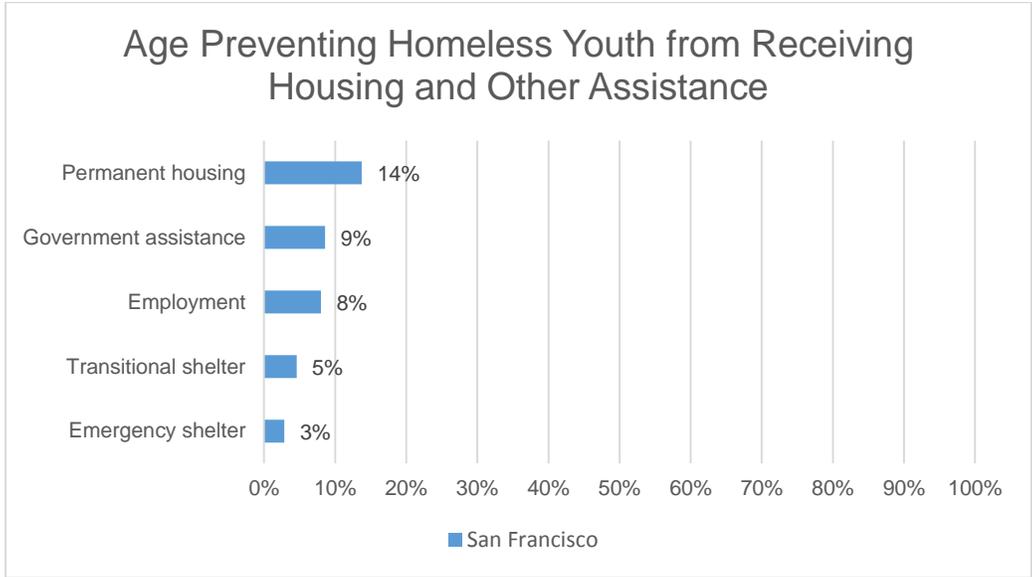
Homeless youth have reported that transportation difficulties have made it difficult or prevented them from obtaining assistance. Overall, between 3% and 32% of homeless youth surveyed had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because of four types of transportation difficulties.



Homeless youth surveyed had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because of the following transportation difficulties: physical mobility, they did not know where to go, they were sent somewhere else, or they lacked transportation. In five locations, a total of 11% and between 8% and 26% of homeless youth surveyed had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because they did not know where to go. In three locations, a total of 7% reported they had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because they were sent somewhere else. Also, in three locations, a total of 17% and between 8% and 32% reported they had difficulty or did not obtain assistance because of a lack of transportation. In addition, 3% in Yolo County reported they did not obtain assistance because of physical mobility.

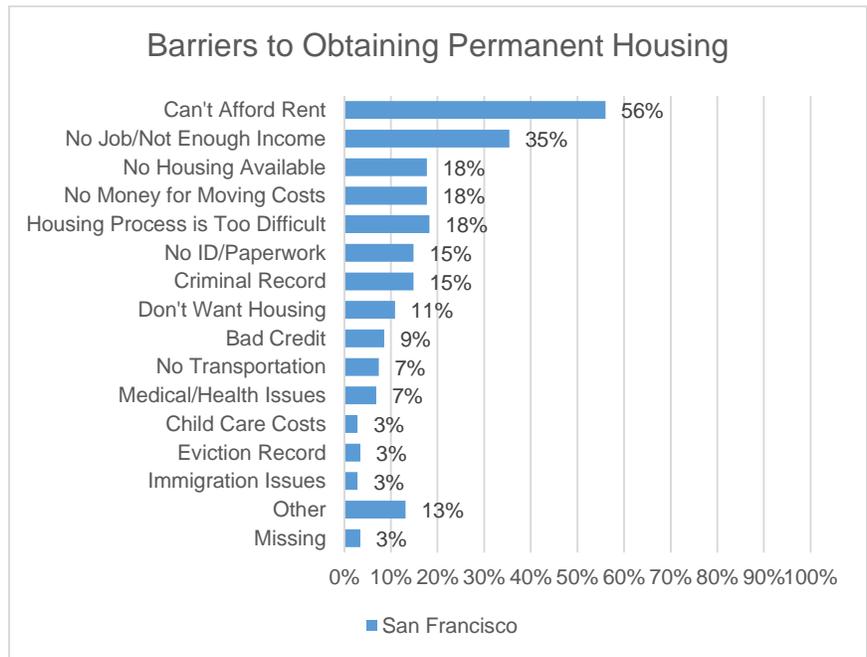
## Age

Age is a factor that prevents homeless youth from being able to receive housing and other assistance. In San Francisco, between 3% and 14% of homeless youth reported that their age prevented them from receiving emergency shelter, transitional housing, employment, government assistance, or permanent housing.



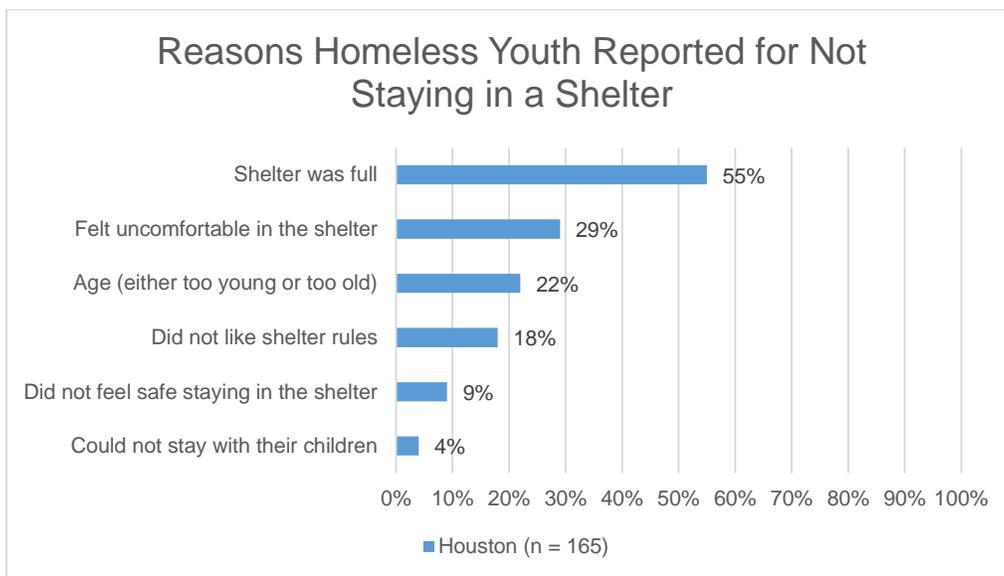
## Specific Barriers to Obtaining Permanent Housing

Homeless youth report numerous barriers to obtaining permanent housing. The two most commonly reported reasons in San Francisco were they could not afford rent and they did not have a job or enough income. The third most common reason reported was that there was no housing available. Other reasons that were mentioned by the homeless youth surveyed included the paperwork and that they did not have the necessary identification, criminal record, credit history, eviction record, medical/health issues, lack of money for moving costs and transportation, and child care costs.



## Specific Barriers to Staying at a Shelter

Some homeless youth have been unable to stay at a shelter. In Houston, 37% of homeless youth surveyed reported they had traveled to a shelter and not stayed the night. More than half of the youth reported that the shelter was full and about one-quarter reported that they were ineligible because of their age. In addition, about one-third reported they did not feel safe or felt uncomfortable. Other reasons given were that the homeless youth could not stay with their children or did not like the shelter rules.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the characteristics and causes of youth homelessness and needs and difficulties in obtaining assistance reported by homeless youth in these fifteen locations, this report provides several recommendations to prevent and eliminate youth homelessness.

- **Providing the opportunity for homeless youth to finish high school and enroll in college, community college, or a trade school.**

Some homeless youth had less than a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school and most had not completed some college and many reported financial causes for their homelessness and a current need for education. With more education and acquiring a major in a career field or a trade and related experience and access to higher education, homeless youth will be able to afford housing and other living expenses.

- **Expanding job training, employment placement, and appropriate supportive services for youth with disabilities, pregnant or parenting youth, and other homeless youth to increase the percent of homeless youth who are employed in part-time or full-time work.**

Between two-thirds and ninety-eight percent of the homeless youth surveyed were between the ages of 18 to 24, which is double or triple the percent who were currently employed, and many reported a current need for job training and employment services. With job training, job placement, and supportive services, homeless youth will be able to afford housing and other living expenses.

- **Providing more resources to prevent family/domestic violence or family conflict and providing opportunities for youth escaping family/domestic violence or family conflict to live independently and with the support of other caring individuals.**

A large percent of homeless youth report experiencing family/domestic violence or family conflict, that it cause or contributed to their homelessness, and that they do not have any adults who care about them, given them job or school advice, or provide emotional support and some homeless youth reported homosexual sexual orientation or identified as transgender and that sexual identity or sexual orientation caused or contributed to their homelessness. With more resources to prevent family/domestic violence and family conflict, fewer youth may leave home and become homeless in order to escape family/domestic violence and family conflict and with short-term and medium-term housing assistance and appropriate supportive services, homeless youth escaping family/domestic violence and family conflict can live independently and obtain any necessary mentoring to be able to continue education and build a more stable future.

- **Providing housing assistance and other assistance for youth with homeless parents and for pregnant or parenting youth.**

Many homeless youth reported that their parents were homeless and some reported that homelessness of their parents or family was a cause of their own homelessness and some homeless youth in every location with many homeless youth in some locations reported they were pregnant or parenting and some reported that pregnancy was the cause of their homelessness. By providing housing assistance and other assistance, such as education, employment, or childcare assistance to homeless youth and their family members, homeless youth and their family members will be able to obtain housing and stay in intact families.

- **Providing assistance to youth who spend time in the foster care or justice system or age out of the foster care or justice system to secure housing, education, and/or employment once they leave or age out of the foster care or justice system.**

Many homeless youth had spent time in the foster care or justice system, some homeless youth had aged out of the foster care or justice system, some or many homeless youth reported that aging out of or leaving foster care or the justice system caused their homelessness, a few homeless youth had aged out of the foster care or justice system with nowhere to go when they aged out of the foster care or justice system and were on the streets. By providing housing, education, and/or employment assistance once youth leave or age out of the foster care or justice system, homeless youth leaving or aging out of the foster care or justice system will be able to retain housing and a more stable future.

- **Providing assistance to youth with medical and mental health needs with health care, counseling, treatment, housing, education, and/or employment.**

Some homeless youth reported a physical or mental disability, chronic health problem, or substance use, some homeless youth reported they became homeless immediately after leaving a hospital or treatment facility, some homeless youth reported that medical or mental health caused or contributed to their homelessness, some homeless youth diagnosed with a disability were not currently accessing services, some homeless youth have reported a need for health care services, and some homeless youth with a physical or mental issue were keeping them from holding a job or steady housing. With improved access to treatment and other services, youth who have medical or mental health or substance use problems can avoid homelessness and obtain housing and homeless youth with physical or mental disabilities or prior substance use may need assistance to secure housing, education, and/or employment.

- **Providing documentation, immigration, and legal assistance to youth without documentation, who need immigration assistance, or legal assistance.**

Some homeless youth reported they needed an identification card or birth certificate, a few reported they needed immigration assistance, and a few reported they needed legal help or legal services. By assisting homeless youth in obtaining inaccessible, lost, stolen, or misplaced identification documents or other assistance, homeless youth will be able to obtain housing, education, and employment.

- **Providing assistance with differing eligibility and accessibility requirements to allow homeless youth with different needs to obtain assistance.**

Some homeless youth reported being unable to receive assistance because they did not qualify or they did not think they were eligible, some homeless youth reported they were turned down or their benefits were cut off, and some homeless youth reported they were unable to obtain assistance because there were too many rules, they could not access or find services for people their age, they could not stay with their children, or they did not like the shelter rules. By changing age and other eligibility determinations for assistance and providing housing that accommodates youth with different needs such as parenting youth, homeless youth will have increased access to housing and other assistance.

- **Providing case management to homeless youth applying for assistance to reduce impediments to obtaining assistance due to eligibility, accessibility, lack of communication, lack of documentation, language barriers, and transportation difficulties.**

Some homeless youth reported being unable to obtain assistance because of eligibility, accessibility, lack of communication, lack of identification or documentation, lack of a permanent address, language barriers, and lack of transportation. By providing case management to homeless youth applying for assistance to assist with eligibility, communication, obtaining documentation, and transportation, homeless youth should have increased access to assistance.

- **Providing financial assistance to homeless youth with financial impediments to obtaining housing such as lack of money for moving costs, application fees, and security deposits.**

Some homeless youth reported being unable to obtain permanent housing because they did not have enough income and some homeless youth reported they lacked money for moving costs and transportation. By providing financial assistance for moving costs, application fees, and security deposits to homeless youth who are employed or have money for some housing costs, more homeless youth may be able to obtain permanent housing.

- **Providing legal assistance to homeless youth with legal impediments to obtaining a job or housing such as credit history, criminal record, and eviction record.**

Some homeless youth reported being unable to obtain employment or permanent housing because of a credit history, criminal record, or eviction record. By providing legal assistance to challenge or expunge the record or to challenge the denial of the housing to homeless youth with a credit history, criminal record, or eviction record, more homeless youth may be able to obtain employment and housing.

## CONCLUSION

From the surveys of thousands of homeless youth in urban and rural areas in selected locations across the country, a more complete picture is available of youth homelessness, the causes and contributors of youth homelessness, and the obstacles to reducing youth homelessness among the nation's youth. Homeless youth discussed themselves and their education, employment, domestic violence, foster care, and detention experience, pregnancy or parenting and veteran status, and their health along with the different causes of their homelessness: family problems (family/domestic violence, family conflict, parent homelessness, pregnancy, and aging out of or leaving the foster care or justice system), financial problems, and health problems. They also discussed their needs for housing assistance, shelter day services such as a place to shower and do laundry, food or nutrition assistance, educational and employment assistance, documentation and immigration assistance, childcare and family assistance, and medical and mental health assistance and they listed the barriers to obtaining assistance such as eligibility requirements, accessibility, feeling uncomfortable, lacking documentation, language, and transportation difficulties. From this information, this report provides recommendations to prevent and eliminate youth homelessness.

## METHODOLOGY & NOTES

The data in this report come from the survey report for each survey location. The survey reports are listed in the sources section. Each location administered different survey questions and the differences are highlighted in the notes that follow for each section or figure of the report.

Except where noted in the figure in the report or for each figure below, the sample size for each figure and the number of youth who completed a survey is as follows: Chicago, Illinois (130); Connecticut (585); Metropolitan Denver, Colorado (355); Houston, Texas (434); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (53); Maine (rural) and Maine (urban) (265); Hampden County, Western Massachusetts (156); Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties, Western Massachusetts (38); New York City, New York (229); Reno, Nevada (75); San Francisco, California (175); Santa Clara County, California (105); Seattle/King County, Washington (824 for demographic data (age, gender, race/ethnicity) and for location of homeless youth for night surveyed, 184 for highest level of education completed and 303 for other data); Yolo County, California (42).

### Sections:

#### Assistance for Homeless Youth:

Surveys in four locations assessed current or previous access to assistance. In Chicago, it was reported as access to government services and benefits. In Houston, youth reported what type of services they had previously utilized. In San Francisco, the survey asked “Are you currently using any of the following services/assistance?” In Yolo County, the survey asked “Which services are you currently accessing? (check all that apply)”. In addition, in Reno, youth reported whether or not they have health insurance and in Santa Clara County, youth reported whether or not they were receiving disability benefits and were covered by Medicaid.

Surveys in three locations assessed attempted access to assistance. In Connecticut, youth were asked what services they have already attempted to access. In Hampden County and Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties in Western Massachusetts, youth were asked what help they sought in the past year.

Surveys in four locations assessed current need of assistance. In Connecticut, youth were asked “Right now, what do you need to improve your well-being?” In Houston, youth were asked what types of services would be most helpful right now. In San Francisco, youth were asked “What are your current needs?” In Yolo County, youth were asked “In the past year, which services were you unable to obtain? (check all that apply)”.

### Figures:

Highest Level of Education Completed of Homeless Youth: Respondents who completed 9th Grade were included in the 8th Grade or Less Category instead of the 9th - 12th grade Category for San Francisco. The Some or all of College or Trade Category included only Some College for Houston, Reno, San Francisco, and Yolo County, Some College/College Degree for Seattle, and

Some or all of College or Trade School for Connecticut. Seattle/King County only surveyed respondents who were not currently enrolled in school.

Gender of Homeless Youth: In Seattle/King County, the Transgender category included Transgender and Gender-queer individuals and the No Response/Missing Category was identified as Other/Unknown.

Sexual Orientation of Homeless Youth: The LGBTQQ category in Houston included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, confused, and asexual categories. In New York City, it was assumed that 8 of the 11 respondents who were included in the other category were transgender and placed into the LGBTQQ category. In Philadelphia, the LGBTQQ category only included lesbian, gay, or bisexual categories. In Seattle/King County, it was assumed that 9 of the 16 respondents who preferred not to answer the question were transgender as there was no transgender category in the survey for this question and this reached the total number of survey participants.

Race/Ethnicity of Homeless Youth: The Connecticut, San Francisco, and Seattle/King County totals are greater than 100% because the Hispanic/Latino category was asked as a separate ethnicity question in their surveys. In these locations, the racial group question did not contain a Hispanic/Latino category. Therefore, the individuals in the "Other" category in both San Francisco and Seattle/King County may be Hispanic/Latinos. In Houston, respondents were able to select more than one category. The Chicago survey did not include Asian, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander categories. The New York City survey did not include Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander categories. In Western Massachusetts, the Asian category included Asian or Pacific Islander. The Philadelphia report only included two categories: African-American and Non-African American. The Reno report only included two categories: White and Non-White. The Santa Clara report only reported one category: Hispanic/Latino.

Employment of Homeless Youth: The Connecticut survey asked respondents to exclude temporary work in considering whether they were employed and only included respondents of legal working age. In Maine, employment was reported as percent of respondents not employed.

Job Training/Employment Services Used and Needed by Homeless Youth: In urban Maine, needed services for job training was assessed as percent of homeless youth who reported they cannot afford rent. In rural Maine, needed services for job training was assessed as percent of homeless youth who reported being unable to find a job or job training. In Connecticut, previously unable to obtain services was not a time-limited question while in Yolo County, being previously unable to obtain services was limited to the past year. In Seattle/King County, needed job training/employment services was determined as the number of respondents currently looking for a job.

Family/Domestic Violence Experience of Homeless Youth: In Chicago, Domestic Violence was reported as "Domestic Violence Victim." In San Francisco, Domestic Violence was assessed as any experience of domestic violence (current or past).

Prior Involvement in Foster Care of Homeless Youth: In Western Massachusetts, the mention of Foster Care included Foster Care or Group Home. In Connecticut, Foster Care included history of some involvement with the Department of Children and Families or Foster Care

Pregnancy or Parenting Status of Homeless Youth: In Santa Clara County, 16% of female youth survey respondents reported they were pregnant. In San Francisco, 6 survey respondents reported that pregnancy contributed to their homelessness.

**Veteran Status:** In this figure, the sample size for Metropolitan Denver is 338, excluding the youth under the age of 18.

**Substance Use of Homeless Youth:** Philadelphia reported substance abuse in terms of percent with no substance abuse so it was assumed that the remainder of the respondents reported substance abuse. Houston's reported value for alcohol abuse is the percent of homeless youth surveyed who reported drinking more than once a week in the past year and reported value for Drug Abuse is percent who used marijuana in the past month.

**Disability Conditions of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, mental health issue was assessed as percent of respondents who reported at least one of the prior mental disorder diagnoses. In Santa Clara and San Francisco, mental health condition included any psychiatric or emotional conditions. In Western Massachusetts, mental health issue was assessed as the percent of homeless youth who sought assistance with counseling or mental health in the past year. In Connecticut, mental health issue was assessed as the percent of homeless youth who attempted to assess counseling.

**Chronic Health Problems of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, chronic health problem or medical condition was assessed as a serious health problem being treated by a doctor and included asthma, ADHD, bipolar, depression, HIV, hypertension, hives, diabetes, Hepatitis C, epilepsy, schizophrenia, and Asperger's syndrome.

**Juvenile or Criminal Justice Experience of Homeless Youth:** In Chicago, the question was phrased as whether the respondent had spent time in jail or prison. In Connecticut, the question was phrased as whether the respondent had ever been in juvenile detention, jail, or prison. In Houston, the assessment was experience in the juvenile justice system. In Maine, the question was phrased as whether the respondent had spent time in jail. In Western Massachusetts, the question was phrased as whether the respondent had spent time in jail or juvenile detention. In Reno, the assessment was staying in detention or jail as a juvenile. In San Francisco and Yolo County, the assessment was experience in the criminal justice system before the age of 18 years old. In Santa Clara County, the question was phrased as if the respondent spent at least 1 night in jail or prison in the year prior to the study. In Seattle/King County, the question was phrased as "Have you ever been to detention or jail?"

**Family/Domestic Violence as Cause or Contribution to Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Western Massachusetts, cause of homelessness of family/domestic violence was assessed as abuse or neglect by parent. In San Francisco, fighting or argument with parents, friends, or others was assessed as argument with family or friend who asked you to leave.

**Parent or Family Homelessness was Cause of Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, parent or family homelessness was assessed as whether "family is homeless." In Western Massachusetts, parent or family homelessness was reported as parent/guardian homelessness.

**Sexual Identity/Sexual Orientation as Cause or Contributor of Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Western Massachusetts, the assessment was whether sexual orientation was a cause of the respondent's homelessness. In San Francisco, the assessment was whether sexual identity was a contributor of the respondent's homelessness.

**Medical and Mental Health Causes of Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, the assessment was why the respondent became homeless. In San Francisco, one assessment was the primary event or condition that led to respondent's homelessness, and another assessment was what contributed to respondent's homelessness. In Santa Clara County, the assessment was the primary cause of respondent's homelessness. In Western Massachusetts, respondents were asked

the reason they left home. In Houston, the response was the respondent had nowhere to go when they were discharged from the hospital. In San Francisco, the responses to the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness were hospitalization or treatment, mental health issues, and use of alcohol or drugs and the responses to what contributed to their homelessness were addiction and mental health issues. In Santa Clara County, the response was alcohol or drug use. In Western Massachusetts, the response was their own use of alcohol or drugs was the reason they left home.

**Aging Out of or Leaving Foster Care or Justice System as Cause of Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, the response was when aging out of the foster care or juvenile justice system or released from jail or prison. In Hampden County, the response was the respondent left foster care and in Hampden County and in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties the response was the respondent was that they left foster care or were released from jail. In Reno, the response was aging out. In San Francisco and Santa Clara County the response was foster care as their primary cause of homelessness In Yolo County, the response was because of arrest or imprisonment.

**Financial Causes of Homelessness of Homeless Youth:** In Houston, the response was because the respondent could not pay rent. In San Francisco, the responses to what the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness were foreclose, that the landlord raised rent, eviction, and a lost job and the responses to what contributed to their homelessness were financial issues and legal issues. In Santa Clara County, the responses were a lost job.

**Location of Homeless Youth for Night Surveyed:** In Chicago, unstably housed was assessed as staying with friends/family but not living there. In Connecticut, emergency shelter included both shelter and host home and unstably housed included staying with a family member and leaving in two weeks, staying with friends, or staying in a hotel. In Houston, unstably housed included staying in home of friend/acquaintance, home of girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, or a hotel/motel. In Maine, unstably housed was reported as “unstably housed in situations such as couch surfing or temporarily living with extended relatives.” In Western Massachusetts, unstably housed was assessed as doubled up/couch surfing. In New York City, unstably housed included staying in a friend’s place/couch surfing, in a hotel, or exchanging sex for shelter. In Reno, unstably housed included staying in a hotel or motel, shared living with other youth, a kitchen or couch, a friend’s house, or doubled up. Seattle included respondents who stayed in a hotel/motel as unsheltered, but this report places them in the unstably housed category instead. In Yolo County, unstably housed included staying in someone else’s house or in a hotel/motel paid for by agency. The sample sizes that differ from the survey total provided at the beginning of this section for each location in this figure are: New York City (849), San Francisco (1,569), Santa Clara County (883), and Seattle/King County (824).

**Unsheltered Locations of Homeless Youth for Night Surveyed:** The sample size for each location in this figure is: Houston (125), New York City (68), Reno (16), Seattle/King County (118), and Yolo County (23).

**Length of Time in Current Housing Situation:** In Connecticut, the time is reported as time since permanent place to live instead of time in current housing situation.

**Percent of Homeless Youth Reporting Current Homelessness was First Time Homeless:** In Houston, the reported value was the percent that had been homeless in the past prior to the current episode.

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