

METHODOLOGY

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a survey given nationally each year to households throughout the country by the U.S. Census Bureau in order to track changes in the U.S. landscape on a yearly basis between the years they do the full census. Recently, an analysis of ACS data by the national Bureau of Labor Statistics found an increase in what they described as “doubled-up” households in the aftermath of the housing bubble and resulting recession. They defined doubled-up as any additional adult in the household who was not the head of household or their spouse or partner. After reading these reports, CCH realized that with a more refined definition, ACS data could be used to estimate those who met the homeless definition of doubled-up. Of note, however, is that the ACS does not explicitly ask if members of the household are living there due to loss of housing or economic hardship. Therefore, our methodology was designed to determine who was most likely living in a doubled-up homeless situation. Because we could not know for certain, when the data was ambiguous, we erred on the side of not including someone as homeless, which resulted in a conservative estimate.

This analysis defines doubled-up as additional family members or non-relatives in a household who are not minor children, step-children, spouses or unmarried partners of the head of household and the household is at 125% or below of the federal poverty level.

We created a number of exclusions that we thought would not typically be viewed as a homeless situation:

- Single adult children living with parents who often move back home for reasons other than economic hardship
- Relatives of the head of household who were over 65 who often live with family due to health reasons
- Grandchildren living with grandparents for whom the grandparent claims responsibility for basic needs
- Roommates, lodgers, and people in institutions or group lodgings

We did include adult children living with parents who had children of their own, but if they were under the age of 25, we only included them if they were living in an overcrowded situation (more than two people per bedroom).

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS)

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a centralized database that all service providers who work with homeless people in Chicago must use to input data on their clients.

For the analysis, we requested for the calendar year 2015, an unduplicated count of people served in the homeless service system in the calendar year 2015. This included everyone served in all program types, with the exception of people who were exclusively served in Permanent Supportive Housing for the entire year. Those people would not be considered homeless at any time during that year. However, we did include people in programs with temporary rental subsidies. The HMIS data also included anyone living on the street who had been in contact with a service provider.

We also asked obtained data that showed as to whether any of the above households had lived with friends or family at any time during the calendar year that they were served in the shelter system.

UNDUPLICATED TOTALS

For the total figures for the analysis, we added the number of doubled-up individuals from the ACS analysis to the number served in the shelter system. We then subtracted anyone who had been sheltered but also had been living with friends and family at any time during the calendar year to avoid duplication. The data includes people living on the street who were in contact with service providers and therefore entered into HMIS, but we did not attempt to estimate those living on the street or other places not meant for human habitation who had no contact with service providers. This estimate also does not include data on those living in institutions such as jails or mental institutions who were homeless prior to entering.

“BEING DOUBLED UP IS LIKE WALKING ON GLASS WITHOUT BREAKING IT.”
-LESTER JONES, 44

“DOUBLED UP IS BEING HOMELESS, BECAUSE ANYTIME THE PERSON YOU ARE STAYING WITH CAN DECIDE TO PUT YOU OUT. IT IS LIKE LIVING ON THE EDGE.”
-MARKELL LEE, 17



2015 ESTIMATE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE IN CHICAGO



INTRODUCTION

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) has developed a new methodology for estimating the homeless population in Chicago throughout the year. CCH uses a definition of homelessness which incorporates all those considered homeless under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) definition, and also incorporates portions of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. The DOE definition includes people who are living “doubled-up,” which means staying with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship. CCH includes doubled-up households in our definition because it more accurately captures the way most people experience homelessness.

The methodology uses the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey data to estimate the number of doubled-up individuals in Chicago in 2015. It also uses data from the city’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) from 2015 to count those served in the shelter system. It then removes duplicates by identifying individuals who experienced both forms of homelessness during the year.

(See pages 3-4 for a more detailed explanation on the definition and methodology)

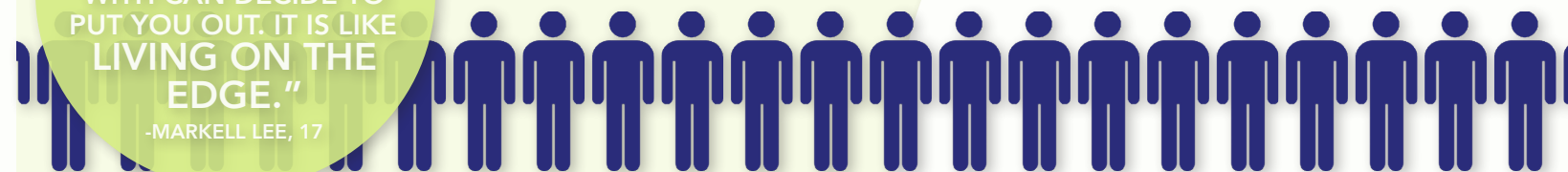
SPOTLIGHT ON DOUBLING UP: HOW THE MAJORITY OF HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

This new analysis looks at households accessing the shelter system and also those who are doubled-up, which is defined as those who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. **Our analysis found that in 2015, 82% of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago were living doubled-up. For families, that number was 88%.**

Families that access the shelter system and those living doubled-up lose their housing for similar reasons: domestic violence, divorce, loss of a job, medical bills. But the majority of families will choose to move in with others when possible, rather than taking their children to a shelter. However, these situations are temporary and frequently break down due to overcrowding, tensions that develop, and fear of the primary tenant losing their housing. Many doubled-up families move multiple times and go in and out of the shelter system. According to 2015 data from the homeless service system:

→ 44% of homeless families that were served in the shelter system in 2015 had been living doubled-up with friends or family either prior to or after entering the shelter system within that same year. (HMIS 2015)

→ 56% of homeless families surveyed by CCH reported staying in 2-3 places over the span of three years and nearly 20% stayed in 4-6 places.



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AVION SMITH



Avion Smith, 16, is friendly and reliable, but she admits that being doubled-up is wearing her down.

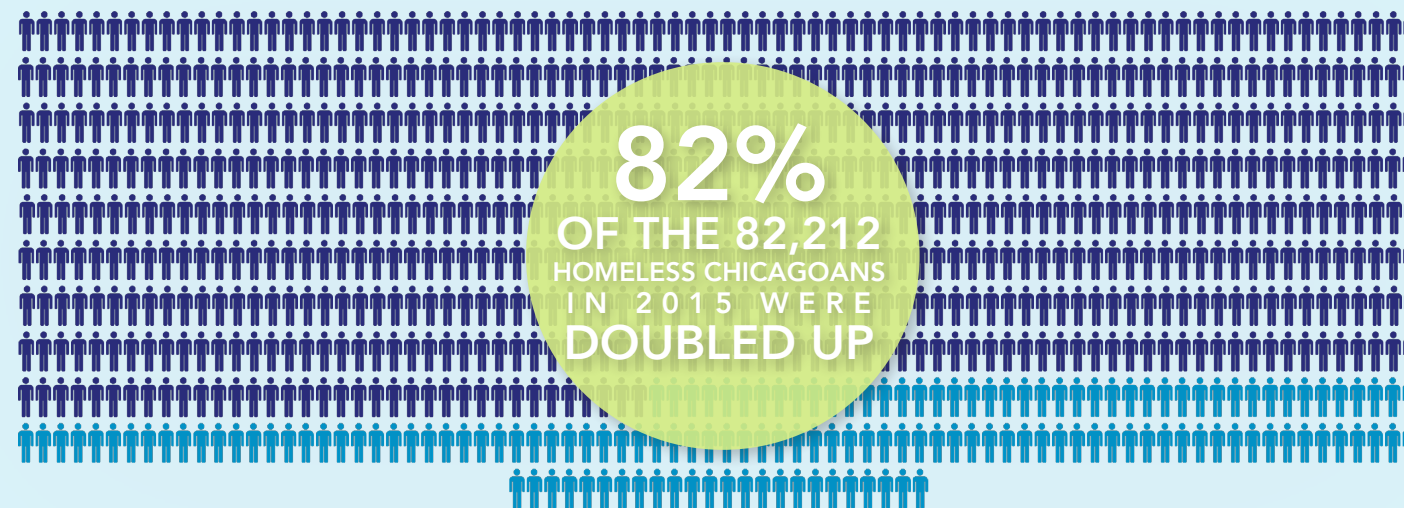
"Right now I live with my great aunts, my mom and my four other siblings. My mom is pregnant so it will be six of us. But there's only three bedrooms. My aunts each have a bedroom, I share a room with my siblings, and my mom sleeps on the couch."

In the last year, Avion lived at five places with various relatives and friends. "Being doubled is homeless because you are staying at someone else's house, you don't have have a home."

Last year, Avion's family lived in their own apartment in Minnesota, though it was hard without support from their extended family. Her mother worked two jobs, driving a bus and janitorial work at night. When Avion's 9-year-old sister broke her leg, their mother decided that they needed to return to Chicago to be close to family.

But Avion's mother lost her driver's license in the move. Without it, she cannot work as a bus driver, and she cannot get a new one without proof of residence. Housing instability is an on-going struggle for Avion's family.

"I have gone to 10 different schools. I want to stay at the school I am at now. If we had affordable housing, my mom could find a better job and we could come right home after school, because we would have our own key."



THE NUMBERS

The total unduplicated count of people homeless in Chicago throughout 2015 is **82,212**. 82% of them were living doubled-up.

- According to data from the American Communities Survey, **67,582** people were living doubled-up in Chicago in 2015.
- According to 2015 HMIS data, **21,919** people were served in the shelter system. Of those, **7,280** had been living doubled-up with family or friends at some point that year. The unduplicated total count of homeless people in 2015 is 82,212 (67,582 doubled-up and 14,639 sheltered only).
- Of the **35,480** of homeless people living in families with children, 31,064 (88%) were doubled up.
- Of the **9,925** homeless family households, 8,634 (87%) were doubled up.
- Of the **46,425** homeless individuals, 36,418 (78%) were doubled up.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth ages 14-24 totaled **11,231**. Of those, **9,792** were unaccompanied homeless single youth, and **1,439** were unaccompanied homeless parenting youth.
- 85% (8,279) of the single youth were doubled up, and 79% (1,147) of the parenting youth were doubled up. 83% (9,426) of all unaccompanied homeless youth were doubled up.

"I'VE BEEN LIVING DOUBLED UP MOST OF MY LIFE. IT'S KIND OF DEPRESSING AND MAKES YOU QUESTION YOURSELF A LOT."

-MICHAEL HUNTER, 18

DEFINITION

The definition of homelessness for the purposes of this estimate is as follows:

From the HUD definition

For purposes of this Act, the term "homeless" or "homeless individual" includes—

- (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is—

(A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

(B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

(C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

And

From the DOE definition

(Note: The Department of Education definition refers specifically to children and youth, but we modified the definition to apply to people of all ages. For the full definition, see: <http://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv-def.php>)

- (1) those who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals