

Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences people have in our community, resulting in over 5,700 people in Erie County experiencing the traumatic instability that results from losing housing.

Compared to 2017, the number of people experiencing homelessness has remained nearly the same and its persistence is cause for concern. Efforts in the community to reduce homelessness among particular subpopulations, such as the chronically homeless or veterans, have been successful due to data-driven, targeted efforts to ensure there are sufficient housing resources available that meet these population's needs. The same tactics can be applied to the broader community through efforts to secure more affordable, sustainable housing. The common denominator for everyone lost their housing is that they lived circumstances where they could not afford it.

The 2017 HUD Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis found that the rental market became tighter in the City of Buffalo, and attributes that to demolitions of "obsolete apartment communities" and "replaced by new communities in growing parts of the community". Median rent in the area has increased 18% over the last seven years. Looking into American Community Survey data, we found that an area's median percentage of income paid towards rent has the strongest impact on the homelessness rates. We need targeted efforts to make housing affordable for those who struggle, and we believe subsidizing tenants in need through housing vouchers to be the most effective strategy.

The data in this report, unless otherwise stated, comes from the Homeless Management Information System, which uses self-reported client-level information that is recorded on intake by homelessness alleviation providers. All data in this report is aligned with federal fiscal years. FFY2018 is October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018. Data about community demographics comes from the American Community Survey, 2017 Five Year Estimates.

Main Findings

- 5,754 people experienced homelessness in Erie County this year, consistent with the number of people reported last year
- Despite only being 13.4% of Erie County's population, black people made up more than half (52.8%) of all clients experiencing homelessness
- Children made up nearly a quarter of the population (1,042 children) of people experiencing homelessness in Erie County
- 70.1% of clients served were single adults; 68.6% of single adults served identified as male
- 85.6% of the 486 adults in family households identified as female
- 34% of clients went to a permanent housing destination after exiting from a program

Key Findings

Annual Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness

	2017 HMIS	2017 Estimated Total Count	2018 HMIS	2018 Estimated Total Count	% Change
NY-508	5092	7888	5550	7872	-0.20%
Erie County	4309	5705	4289	5742	0.65%

Table 1: Overall homelessness in Erie County

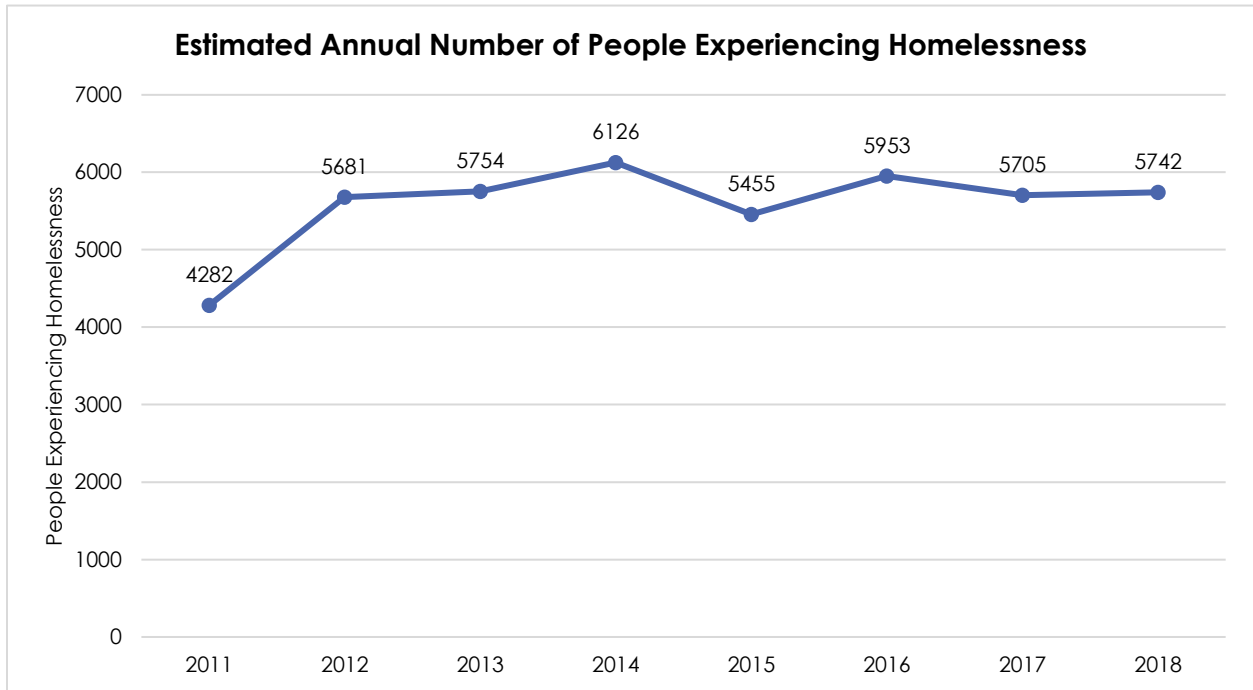


Figure 1: Homelessness in Erie County 2011-2018

Point in Time Data

		Households with Adults + Kids	Adult Only Households	Children-Only Households	Total
2018	Households	67	428	14	509
	Total People	229	430	14	673
2019	Households	79	400	6	485
	Total People	252	404	6	662

Table 2: Point in Time Data for Erie County, 2018-2019

Demographics of Homelessness

Race and Homelessness

Race	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Buffalo Residents	% of All Erie County Residents
Asian	0.5%	5.2%	3.5%
Black	52.8%	37.1%	13.4%
Native American	1.0%	0.4%	0.5%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
White	37.4%	47.6%	78.0%
Multiracial	5.1%	3.8%	2.3%

Table 3: Racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness, residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County¹

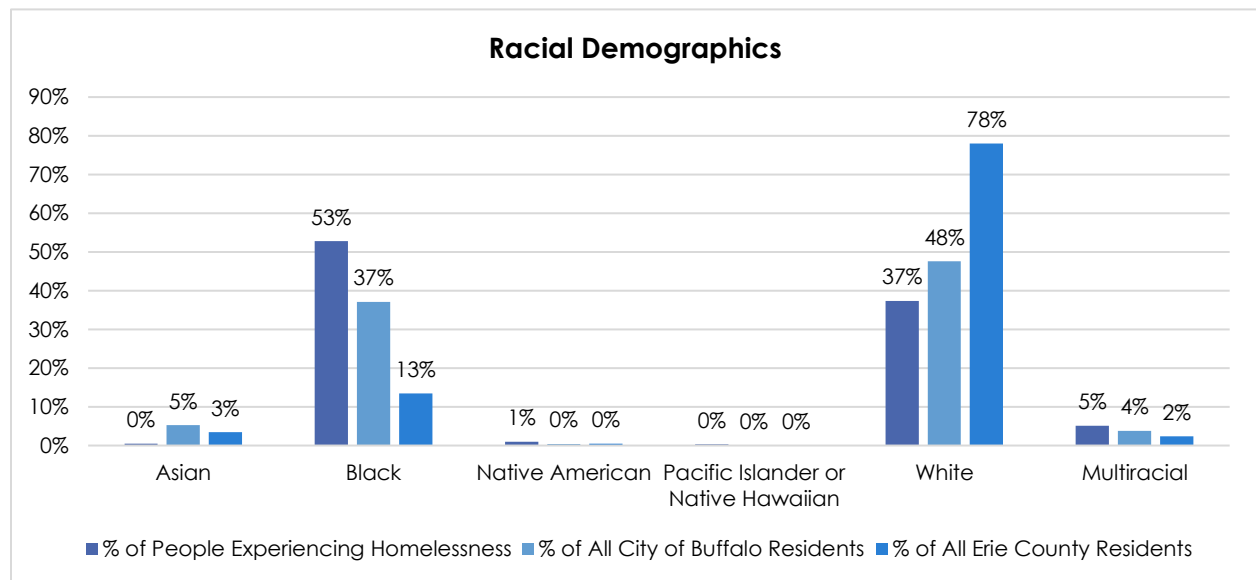


Figure 2: Percent of population in each racial category

Ethnicity	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Buffalo Residents	% of All Erie County Residents
Hispanic or Latino	16.3%	11.3%	5.2%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	80.3%	88.7%	94.8%

Table 4: Ethnicity demographics of people experiencing homelessness, residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County²

¹ American Community Survey, 2013-2017 five-year estimates

² American Community Survey, 2013-2017 five-year estimates

Age, Gender, Household Type, and Homelessness

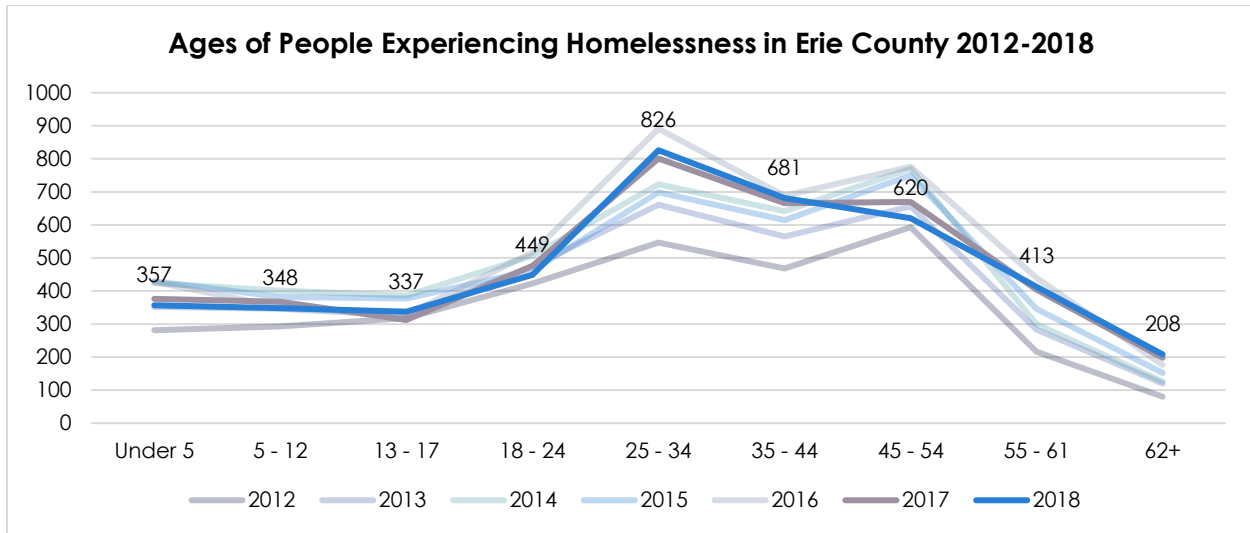


Figure 3: Age distribution of people experiencing homelessness

	Client Count	Percent
Children	1042	24.3%
Under 5	357	8%
Age 5-12	348	8%
Age 13-17	337	8%
Adults	3197	74.5%
Age 18-24	449	10%
Age 25-34	826	19%
Age 35-44	681	16%
Age 45-54	620	14%
Age 55-61	413	10%
Age 62+	208	5%

Table 5: Total adults/children experiencing homelessness

Gender	Client Count	Percent
Male	2429	56.6%
Female	1777	41.4%
Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	5	0.1%
Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)	2	0.0%
Client Doesn't Know	76	1.8%

Table 6: Gender of those experiencing homelessness

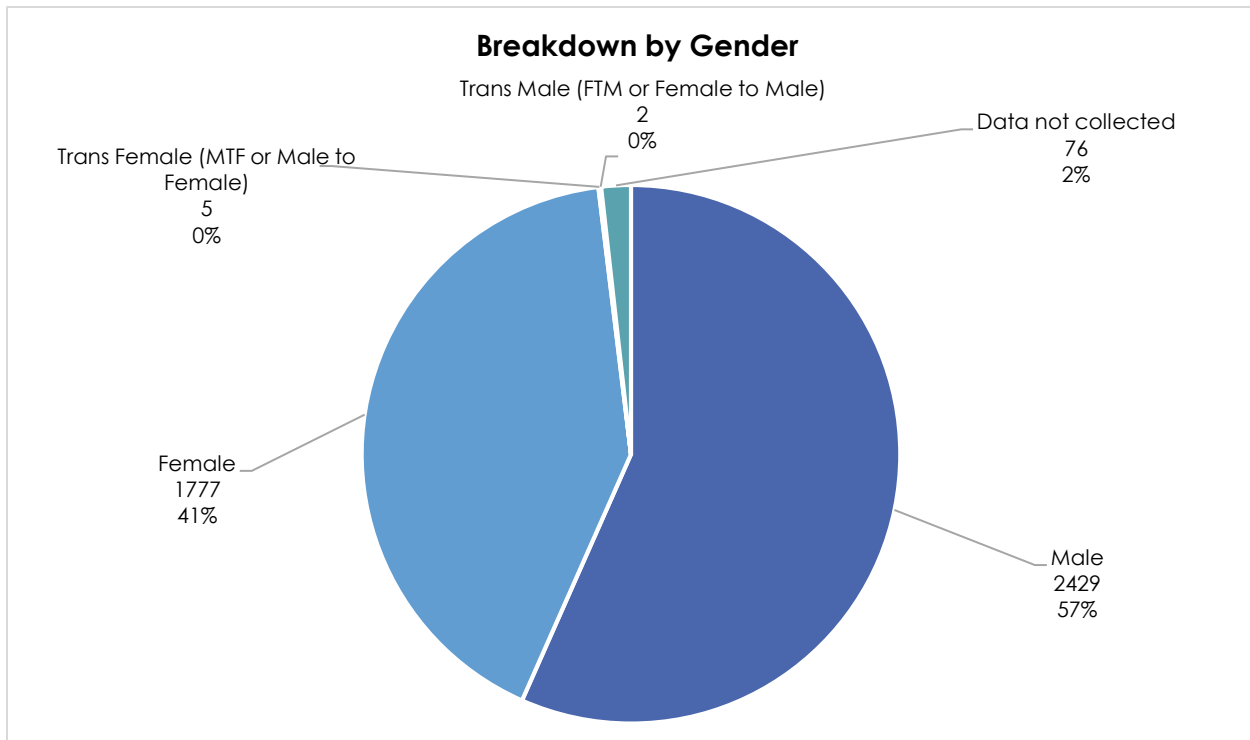


Figure 4: Gender distribution of all people experiencing homelessness

Household Type	Female	Male	Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)
Single Adult	30.1%	68.6%	0.2%	0.1%
Families	85.6%	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Couple with No Children	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Female Single Parent	97.5%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Grandparent(s) and Child	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Male Single Parent	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Relative	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Two Parent Family	54.9%	45.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 7: Gender of all adults (ages 18+) experiencing homeless in each household type

Household Type	Count of Households	% of Households	Count of Clients	% of Clients
Single Adult	3007	87.4%	3007	70.1%
Families	434	12.6%	1282	29.9%
Couple with No Children	16	0.5%	30	0.7%
Female Single Parent	362	10.5%	1040	24.2%
Grandparent(s) and Child	1	0.0%	2	0.0%
Male Single Parent	12	0.3%	30	0.7%
Other	1	0.0%	2	0.0%
Other Relative	42	1.2%	178	4.2%
Two Parent Family	16	0.5%	30	0.7%
Grand Total	3441		4289	

Table 8: Family type distribution of the households experiencing homelessness (1 single adult = 1 household)

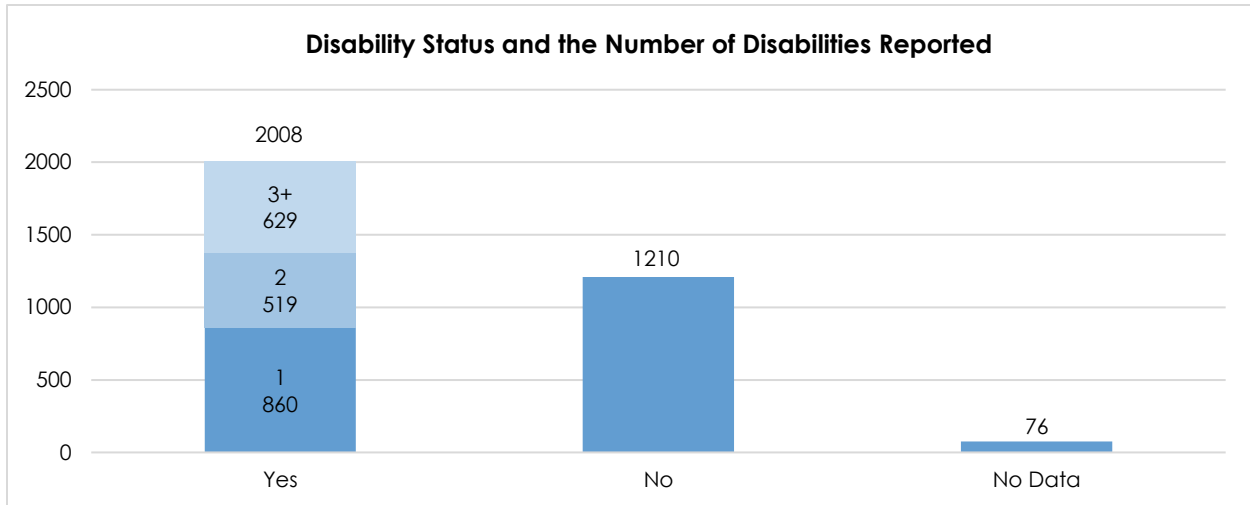


Figure 5: The disability status of all heads of households; if reporting yes to having a disability, the number of disabilities is indicated

Before and After Homelessness

The situations that lead to homelessness, where people resided prior to entering a program, and where they go to after exiting

Primary Reason for Homelessness	Client Count	Percent
Household Disputes (not DV)	531	15.8%
Release from Institution	359	10.7%
Eviction by primary tenant	351	10.4%
Loss of Job/Income (includes public benefits)	301	8.9%
Domestic Violence	221	6.6%
Ask to leave by landlord	200	5.9%
Relocation from out of the NY-508 CoC Area	192	5.7%
Court eviction by landlord	189	5.6%
Substance Abuse	176	5.2%
Mental Health	153	4.5%

Table 9: The top reasons cited for homelessness by heads of households at the most recent stay

Residence Prior to Project Entry	Client Count	Percent
Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with shelter voucher	756	22.5%
Staying or living in a family member's room, apartment or house	633	18.8%
Place not meant for habitation	471	14.0%
Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment or house	391	11.6%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	263	7.8%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	243	7.2%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	123	3.7%
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	83	2.5%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	65	1.9%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	52	1.5%

Table 10: The top ten locations clients were residing at before entering the homelessness system according to the heads of household

Exit Destinations	Count	%
Permanent	1344	34%
Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	4	0%
Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy	8	0%
Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons	51	1%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	376	9%
Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy	330	8%
Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy	249	6%
Rental by client, with VASH subsidy	27	1%
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	250	6%
Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure	49	1%
Temporary	691	17%
Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with ES voucher	162	4%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	6	0%
Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	13	0%
Safe Haven	3	0%
Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (e.g., room, apartment or house)	252	6%
Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure (e.g., room apartment or house)	168	4%
Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)	87	2%
Institution	129	3%
Foster care home or foster care group home	13	0%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	28	1%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	46	1%
Long-term care facility or nursing home	8	0%
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	15	0%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	19	0%
Unstable	166	4%
Place not meant for habitation	166	4%
No Data Available	1630	41%
Client doesn't know	14	0%
Client refused	44	1%
Data not collected	33	1%
Deceased	2	0%
No exit interview completed	1315	33%
Other	222	6%
Grand Total	3960	

Table 11: Exit destinations provided by the heads of household during their most recent stay in fiscal year 2018

Locations of Homelessness and Housing Costs

Zip Code of Last Permanent Address	Percent
14215	10.5%
14211	8.7%
14213	4.9%
14212	3.8%
14201	3.7%
14207	3.6%
14208	3.5%
14206	3.1%
14214	2.9%
14204	2.3%

Table 12: Top ten zip codes of clients' last permanent address provided by the heads of household

Percent of Income Towards Rent	City of Buffalo	Erie County - All	Erie County Excluding Buffalo
Less than 15.0 percent	15.70%	15.81%	15.87%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	10.90%	12.17%	13.17%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	9.10%	9.80%	10.37%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	9.50%	9.71%	9.91%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	8.40%	7.87%	7.47%
35.0 percent or more	46.40%	37.60%	30.46%

Table 13: American Community Survey – percent of people paying a certain percent of their income on their housing in the city of Buffalo (ACS 2012-2016 estimates)

The concentration of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Buffalo is not entirely surprising when you see that, of renters, over half (54.8%) pay more of their income than is considered affordable for their rent, 30%. When one must pay more for rent, they must sacrifice other expenses. Efforts to ensure that residents of the city of Buffalo can maintain their rent should look into housing affordability initiatives, which include subsidies paid to renters. The median percent of income paid towards rent in Erie County as a whole is 29.7%, nearly exactly what is considered affordable.

Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

Homelessness continues to be a persistent social problem, despite the slight decrease in the number of people who experienced it in the CoC service area. We recommend the following:

- There is a growing affordable housing crisis throughout Western New York. Rents are increasing at alarming rates and those living in poverty are getting priced out of housing altogether.
- A report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition states that the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan area has a shortage of 46,000 affordable housing units.
- An increase in the number of Section 8 vouchers is needed to give low income renters greater mobility rather than having limited affordable housing options.
- Local, State and National leaders must recognize the affordable housing crisis and develop a plan to address the need.
- New York State needs to adopt the Housing Stability Support Initiative which would increase the rental subsidy for five years for those who are homeless.

The solution to homelessness is a home.