Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences people have in our community, resulting in 5,244 people in Erie County experiencing the traumatic instability that results from losing housing. Compared to 2019, the number of people experiencing homelessness has decreased by 8.7%, though its persistence remains 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 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. FFY2019 is October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. Data about community demographics comes from the American Community Survey, 2014-2018 Five Year Estimates.

**Key Findings**

**Annual Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018 HMIS</th>
<th>2018 Estimated Total Count</th>
<th>2019 HMIS</th>
<th>2019 Estimated Total Count</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NY-508</td>
<td>5550</td>
<td>7872</td>
<td>5344</td>
<td>6963</td>
<td>-11.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie County</td>
<td>4289</td>
<td>5742</td>
<td>4271</td>
<td>5244</td>
<td>-8.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Overall homelessness in Erie County*

- 5,244 people experienced homelessness in Erie County this year, down 8.7% from the number of people reported last year
- Despite only being 13.4% of Erie County’s population, black people made up more than half (53.3%) of all clients experiencing homelessness
- Children made up nearly a quarter of the population (988 children) of those experiencing homelessness in Erie County
- 69.5% of clients served were single adults; 68.2% of single adults served identified as male
- 85.8% of the 494 adults in family households identified as female
- 29.4% of clients left for a permanent housing destination after exiting from a program
Demographics of Homelessness

Household Type and Homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Gender Non-Conforming</th>
<th>Trans Female (MTF, Male to Female)</th>
<th>Trans Male (FTM, Female to Male)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Adult</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with No Children</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Single Parent</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s) and Child</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Single Parent</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent Family</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Gender breakdown of household types based on all heads of households and their spouses/partners experiencing homelessness (3372 clients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Count of Households</th>
<th>% of Households</th>
<th>Count of Clients</th>
<th>% of Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Adult</td>
<td>2970</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>2970</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with No Children</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Single Parent</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>1074</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent(s) and Child</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Single Parent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent Family</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3417</strong></td>
<td><strong>1905</strong></td>
<td><strong>4270</strong></td>
<td><strong>3034</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Family type distribution of the households experiencing homelessness (1 single adult = 1 household)

Figure 1: A look at the changes in the number of single clients and total families entering the homeless system over time.
Race, Ethnicity, and Homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>% of People Experiencing Homelessness</th>
<th>% of All City of Buffalo Residents</th>
<th>% of All Erie County Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their race (4083 clients), residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County.

![](image)

Figure 2: Percent of population in each racial category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% of People Experiencing Homelessness</th>
<th>% of All City of Buffalo Residents</th>
<th>% of All Erie County Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Ethnicity demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their ethnicity (4063 clients), residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County.

1 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)
2 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)
Age, Gender, and Homelessness

**Figure 3:** Age distribution of people experiencing homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 12</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 17</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 24</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 61</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62+</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Total adults/children experiencing homelessness who provided a date of birth (4181 clients)

**Figure 4:** Gender distribution of all people experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (4175 clients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Client Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2440</td>
<td>58.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1725</td>
<td>41.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Non-Conforming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data not collected</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Gender of those experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (4175 clients)
Disability Data

Over half (56.9%) of the 4,088 clients who provided their disability status report having at least one disability. When only adults (ages 18+) are considered, this rate increases to 72%. People with disabilities are over-represented in the homelessness system. This is made clear by the discrepancies in the rates of people with disabilities in the city of Buffalo and general Erie county (16.1%, 13.2% respectively) compared to the rates of people with disability experiencing homelessness in Erie county.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Count of Clients</th>
<th>% of All Clients w 1+ Disability</th>
<th>% of All Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Health Condition</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Diagnosis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impaired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Problem</td>
<td>1704</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Medical</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision Impaired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Breakdown of the types of disabilities experienced by both clients with disabilities (2174) and all clients (4270)

![Disability Status and Number of Disabilities Reported](image)

Figure 5: The disability status of those experiencing homelessness who reported their disability status (4088 clients); if reporting yes to having a disability, the number of disabilities is indicated

3 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Reason for Homelessness</th>
<th>Client Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household Disputes (not DV)</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release from Institution</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eviction by primary tenant</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Job/Income (includes public benefits)</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask to leave by landlord</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court eviction by landlord</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation from out of the NY-508 CoC Area</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: The top ten reasons cited for homelessness by heads of households, not including those who did not provide a response (3015 clients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence Prior to Project Entry</th>
<th>Client Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with shelter voucher</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living in a family member’s room, apartment or house</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place not meant for habitation</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living in a friend’s room, apartment or house</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: The top ten locations clients were residing at before entering the homelessness system according to heads of households, not including those who did not provide a response (3211 clients)
# Exit Destination Data

## Exit Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permanent</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client in a public housing unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with GPD TIP housing subsidy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with family, permanent tenure</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Temporary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporary</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid for w/ ES voucher, or Host Home shelter</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Haven</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with family, temporary tenure</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster care home or foster care group home</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term care facility or nursing home</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Unstable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unstable</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place not meant for habitation</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## No Data Available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Data Available</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client doesn’t know</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client refused</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data not collected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No exit interview completed</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Grand Total | 3182 |

Table 11: Exit destinations provided by the heads of household at their latest exit in fiscal year 2019
The number of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Buffalo is not entirely surprising when you see that over half of renters (54.2%) pay more of their income towards rent than is considered affordable (30%). Efforts to ensure that residents of the city of Buffalo can maintain their rent should explore housing affordability initiatives, which include subsidies paid to renters.

### Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

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.

#### All Levels of Government should together:

- Fund the production of more housing specifically for single adults, separate and apart from their respective existing supportive housing commitments.
- Fund the production of units for families that include units for large families.
- Fund a Market Study to determine the number of units by bedroom size needed to house people at various income levels, especially at the lowest income levels.
- Once the market study is complete, the State, County and Municipalities should use their available resources to direct funding for those units.

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4 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)
**New York State Must:**
- Implement the [Home Stability Support (HSS)](https://www.hssprogram.org) program to create a State-funded, long-term rent subsidy for households receiving public assistance who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing due to eviction, domestic violence, or hazardous housing conditions.
- Follow the recommendations of the Bring it Home Campaign and adequately fund existing community based housing programs for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- Ensure effective reentry planning for individuals being released from State prisons in order to identify viable housing options prior to each individual’s scheduled release date.
- Reform punitive parole practices that allow parole officers to exercise wide discretion and deny placement at potentially viable addresses for individuals leaving State prisons.
- Reconstitute the New York State Interagency Council on Homelessness to continue the coordination of state and federal efforts to end homelessness.

**Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance must:**
- Permanently eliminate the statewide requirement that shelter residents pay rent for shelter or enroll in a savings program as a condition of receiving shelter.
- Stop sanctioning individuals with higher needs that have difficulties in complying with complex assistance requirements.

*The solution to homelessness is a home.*