Homelessness soars after pandemic-era safety net programs end: a summary of data from big cities

Supplementary Table. Summary means and standard deviations (SD) of homelessness and city characteristics for cities in the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC); total and stratified by cities that had the highest rates of people experiencing homelessness (PEH) compared to other cities. *

Section	Metric	All BCHC cities		BCHC cities with highest PEH (top 10 cities) *				P §
				Yes		No		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Homelessness †								
Totals	Number PEH, per 100,000 residents in 2015	333.0	255.2	628.2	271.7	210.0	104.4	††
	Number PEH, per 100,000 residents in 2021	217.0	191.9	397.0	272.7	143.4	68.4	††
	Number PEH, per 100,000 residents in 2023	371.6	275.5	764.3	120.7	207.9	90.7	††
Unsheltered	Percent of PEH who are unsheltered 2023	34.7	23.9	44.6	28.6	30.2	20.7	
Demographics	Percent of PEH who are children (aged <18), 2023	16.2	7.8	15.0	11.0	16.7	6.0	
	Percent of PEH who are non-White (Hispanic or non-Hispanic [NH]), 2023	56.5	18.7	57.8	16.7	56.0	19.9	
	Underlying percent, city population non-White NH	*57.6*	*15.0*	*58.6*	*14.2*	*57.2*	*15.7*	
	Percent of PEH who are Hispanic, 2023	23.4	18.2	28.6	14.1	21.1	19.6	
	Underlying percent, city population Hispanic	*23.7*	*17.6*	*24.2*	*13.5*	*23.5*	*19.5*	
City characteristics ‡								
Population	Population density, persons per square mile	6607	5453	11,545	7104	4549	2811	††
Housing	Median cost of rent, $	1344	400	1707	237	1192	355	††
	Ratio of vacant rental units to number of PEH	5.0	3.6	1.1	0.4	6.7	3	††
	Ratio of renters vs. owners	1.2	0	1.5	0.4	1.0	0.2	††
	Percent of housing units owner occupied	47.4	7.3	41.3	6.6	50.0	6.0	††
Income-related	Per capita household income	35,474	11,121	46,524	11,510	30,870	7100	††
	Percent of intensely gentrified neighborhoods in the city, 2010 to 2020 ‡	21.6	10.0	28.2	13.3	18.9	6.9	**
	Household Income Inequality ‡	0.06	0.17	0.19	0.10	0.00	0.17	††
Segregation	Racial residential segregation, white vs. non-white ‡	46.7	9.3	45.6	11.4	47.2	8.6	
Communicable diseases	HIV/AIDS prevalence, per 100,000 population	680.1	466.1	908.4	596.9	585.0	374.4	**
	Syphilis prevalence, per 100,000 population	23.7	10.8	28.0	12.9	21.9	9.6	
	New Tuberculosis cases, per 100,000 population	3.5	1.6	4.3	1.7	3.2	1.5	

Footnotes

* The BCHC is comprised of [35 members]. We included all BCHC member cities except one (Kansas City, Missouri homelessness count was unable to be disaggregated from the multi-county Continuum of Care). The following ten BCHC cities had the highest homelessness rates in 2023: New York City, NY; Boston, MA; Washington, D.C.; San Francisco, CA; Oakland, CA; Portland, OR; Seattle, WA; Los Angeles, CA; Long Beach, CA; Denver, CO.

† Homelessness metrics were derived using data from the [Point-in-Time (PIT)] survey conducted by Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance Programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). 'Unsheltered' refers to staying in a location not intended for habitation (e.g., street, park, etc.). The counts should be viewed as rough estimates. The counts underestimate the number of PEH as they do not include people who were not homeless during the winter counting period, PEH who were incarcerated or hospitalized, people precariously housed (e.g., couch surfing), or others who do not meet [HUD's definition] of literal homeless.

‡ See the [BCHI data platform] FAQ section for data sources and descriptions of many of the variables in this table. Census data were from the Am. Community Survey 2017-2021. Household Income Inequality was from the [Index of Extremes] (ICE, possible range–1 to 1, positive values indicate extreme concentration of privilege. Racial residential segregation is from the Index of Dissimilarity (values ≥50% are generally considered 'high'). The gentrification measure is explained in a [UHC report].

§ Symbol ** reflects P<0.06 and symbol †† reflects P<0.02, roughly indicating statistically different mean values between the highest PEH cities vs. others. Readers are encouraged to consider substantive differences in means (not only P-values). In small samples likes ours, P-values skew high (in the direction of statistical insignificance) thus, we used a higher threshold P<0.06 instead of the traditional threshold P<0.05.

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