

Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences people have in our community. In the five counties of our continuum of care, over 8,200 people experiencing the traumatic instability that results from losing. Nearly a quarter, 1,929 people, were in Niagara County. Homelessness increased 6.4% in Niagara County, highlighting the need for continued attention. 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 Continuum of Care refers to the unified geography covered by the HUD HEARTH Act Continuum of Care grants. The Homeless Alliance of WNY is the lead agency for this region NY-508, which includes **Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties**, coordinating the application and facilitating strategic dialog between grantees of this grant and other funding sources to ensure a unified, effective, and efficient effort to end homelessness in the region. The Homeless Alliance also operates the local Homeless Management Information System, also known as BAS-Net (Buffalo Area Services- NETWORK) which collects information on all HUD-funded and voluntarily participating non-HUD-funded homelessness alleviation providers, including outreach, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing (including all housing first programs), rapid re-housing, and transitional housing providers. That information, other aggregate data shared by non-participating providers, and community demographic data from the American Community Survey are used to inform this report, which covers federal fiscal year 2017 (October 1, 2016-9/30/2017).

Main Findings

- 1,929 people experienced homelessness in Niagara County, an increase of 6.4% from the previous year.
- African Americans were overrepresented in the homeless population, making up 39.9% of all people experiencing homelessness but only 7.1% of Niagara County.
- African Americans in poverty had the highest rate of experiencing homelessness of other racial groups who experience poverty.
- 299 children experienced homelessness in Niagara County, nearly half (46.2%) were members of female single parent households and almost a third were unaccompanied (32.4%)
- 63.35% of all homeless people were male, and 92.59% of male adults were single
- The City of Niagara Falls is the modal place of origin for people experiencing homelessness
- Nearly 1/5 of people entering homelessness gave an institutional setting as their last place of residence.

Key Findings

	2015 HMIS	2015 Estimated Total Count	2016 HMIS	2016 Estimated Total Count	2017 HMIS	2017 Estimated Total Count	% Change
NY-508	4769	7964	5240	8272	5378	8200	-0.8%
Niagara County	469	1980	623	1813	1041	1929	+6.40%

Table 1: Total Homelessness

NY-508 Point-in-Time ¹	Unsheltered Homeless Count	Sheltered Homeless Count	Total
January 26, 2011	178	760	938
October 26, 2011	135	N/A	N/A
January 26, 2012	106	804	910
July 26, 2012	131	N/A	N/A
January 30, 2013	98	750	848
January 29, 2014	64	784	848
July 22, 2014	119	N/A	N/A
January 28, 2015	61	858	919
January 26, 2016	57	905	962
January 25, 2017	18	907	925
January 24, 2018	15	942	957

Table 2: Point-in-Time

		Households with Adults + Kids	Adult Only Households	Children-Only Households	Total
2017	Households	26	111	2	139
	Total People	75	111	2	188
2018	Households	30	104	3	137
	Total People	82	105	4	191

Table 3: Niagara County Point in Time Counts

Demographic Information

Race, Ethnicity, and Homelessness

Race	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Niagara Falls Residents	% of All Niagara County Residents
Asian	0.38%	1.01%	1.07%
Black	39.90%	22.30%	7.1%
Multiracial	8.61%	4.5%	2.26%
Native American	2.58%	1.63%	1.0%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.38%	.03%	0.04%
White	45.74%	69.68%	87.9%
Missing Data	2.39%	-	-

Table 4: Racial representation of people experiencing homelessness as compared to Niagara County and Niagara Falls.

¹ In 2011 and 2012, NY-508 included Erie County. In 2013-2015, it included Niagara County as well. In 2016 to present, it includes Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties

Race	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Niagara Falls Residents	% of All Niagara County Residents
Hispanic or Latino	8%	3.2%	2.6%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	92%	96.8%	97.4%

Table 5: Ethnic composition of people experiencing homelessness, residing in Niagara County, and Niagara Falls.

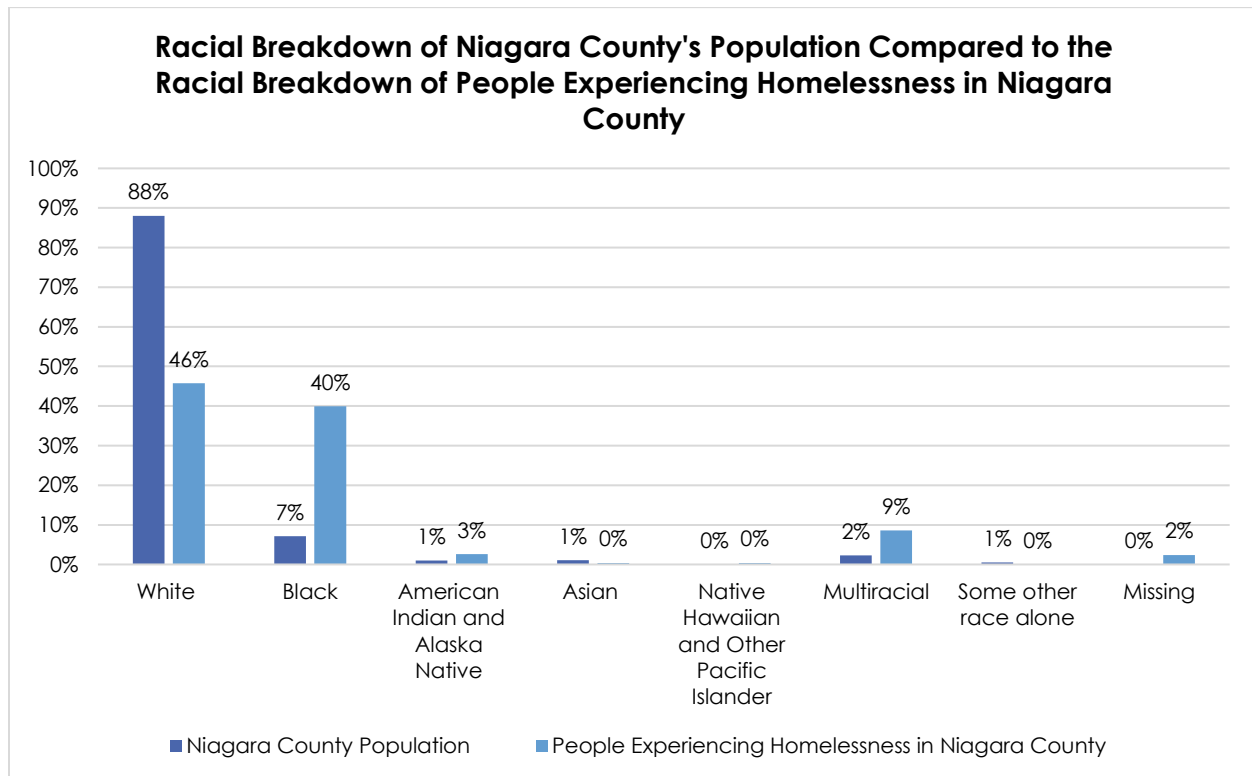


Figure 1: Racial breakdown of the general population and homeless population, as a percent

Differences in homelessness rates are a consequence of racism. Racial inequities in our society impact many domains of life, including education, housing access, and income. We see racial inequality present not just in homelessness, but in rates of poverty and the rates of how many people in different racial categories who are experiencing poverty become homeless. When someone becomes homeless, it is because they could not afford the housing they have access to.

Almost 40% of all people experiencing homelessness in Niagara County are African American, while only 7.1% of Niagara County and 22.3% of the City of Niagara Falls are. Nationally, research finds that African Americans are overrepresented in people experiencing homelessness². There is similar, albeit less dramatic, overrepresentation in the Hispanic and Latino community where 8% of all people experiencing homelessness in Niagara County are Hispanic or Latino but only 2.6% of residents of Niagara County and 3.2% of residents of Niagara Falls are.

² 2018, National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Racial Inequities in Homelessness by the Numbers". <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>

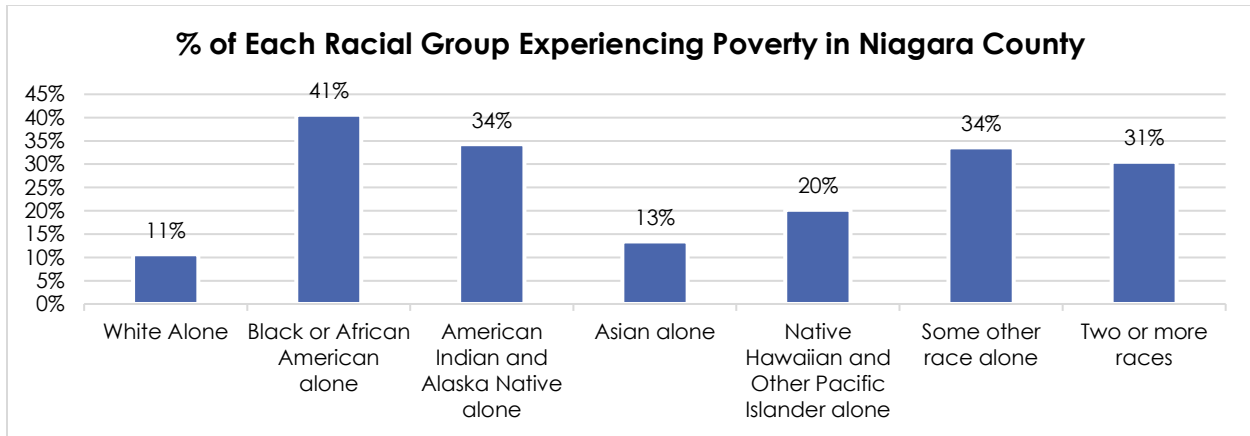


Figure 2: Poverty rates of racial categories in Niagara County³

The poverty rate of Niagara County is 12.6%, and of the City of Niagara Falls it is 27.2%. If homelessness and poverty happened independent of racial dynamics, you would expect that all racial groups experience poverty at similar rates. African Americans experience poverty at higher rates than any other racial group in Niagara County (41%) though Native Americans have a very high poverty rate as well (34%). Living in poverty puts one at a higher risk of homelessness because homelessness is the inability to afford housing.

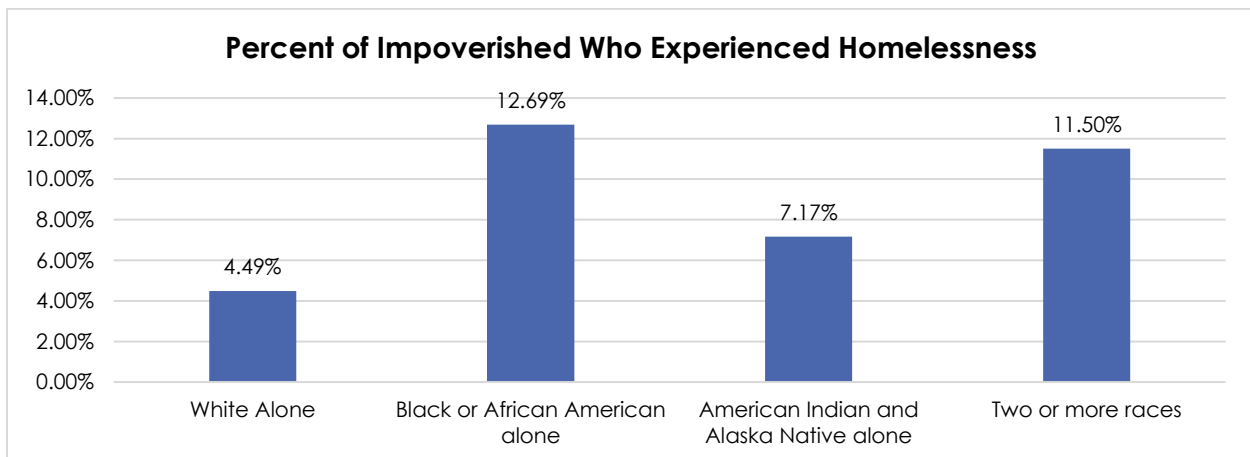


Figure 3: Percent in Poverty Who Experienced Homelessness (Asian and Pacific Islanders excluded due to low numbers)

The risk of homelessness for those in poverty is not the same across racial groups, either. We used our data from HMIS to understand how many individuals were in each racial group against the number of people the American Community Survey estimates is experiencing poverty in each racial group to compute the rates. If there were too few people in HMIS, we omitted the group. (Asians and Pacific Islanders were not computed due to very low numbers in both the general population and homeless population).

This chart assumes that everyone who experienced homelessness was living below the poverty line, and homeless people are thus a subset of that number. We see different incidences of homelessness among racial groups. African Americans in poverty had the highest rates of

³ American Community Survey, 5 year estimates (2012-2016)

homelessness, more than twice that of whites: 12.69% of Black people living below the poverty line became homeless, compared to 4.49% of white people, 11.5% of multiracial people, or 7.17% of Native Americans. It is clear that homelessness rates are a consequence of systemic racism. Efforts to reduce racism would eventually have the effect of reducing homelessness.

Gender, Age, and Household Type

	Percent
Adults	71.77%
Children	28.42%

Table 6: Persons experiencing homelessness by age

Household Type	Percent of Children From Household Type
Female Single Parent	46.2%
Male Single Parent	2.0%
Unaccompanied	32.4%
Two Parent Family	19.4%

Table 7: Percent of Children experiencing homelessness per household type

Nearly 300 (299) children experienced homelessness in Niagara County, comprising of 28% of the total people who experienced homelessness. Close to half (46.2%) were the children of a female single parent and nearly a third (32.5%) were unaccompanied.

Household Type	Percent of households	Percent of People
Couple With No Children	0.73%	1.13%
Female Single Parent	8.65%	19.85%
Male Single Parent	0.61%	1.23%
Single Adults	87.33%	68.05%
Two Parent Family	2.68%	9.74%

Table 8: Household Composition of those experiencing homelessness

A household could be a single person or one unit with multiple members. We use both measures for different planning purposes.

Over 2/3s of people who experience homelessness are single adults. We routinely find an unmet need for low-cost, affordable housing that is sized to accommodate this population. An increase in the inventory of rooming houses and single-resident occupancy (SRO) units priced to be affordable for those who are at or near poverty would assist this population in avoiding and ending homelessness.

Nearly 9% of all households were female single parents, with nearly a fifth of all people experiencing homelessness being members of that household type. Male single parent families and two parent families are relatively rare, suggesting that the social and economic forces that impact female single parents make them more vulnerable to homelessness (though it is worth noting that male single parent families are absolutely rare). It is more challenging for women to

maintain economic security. For instance, there is a \$12,195 gap in the median yearly income of men (\$38,340) and women (\$26,145) in Niagara County, and 43.7% of all female single parents are living below the poverty line.

Gender Reported	Percent
Female	36.27%
Male	63.35%
Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	0.10%

Table 9: Gender of all people experiencing homelessness

	Female	Male
Couple With No Children	3.21%	0.74%
Female Single Parent	29.82%	1.30%
Male Single Parent	0.92%	0.93%
Two Parent Family	9.63%	4.44%
Single Adult	56.42%	92.59%

Table 10: Gender of adults by household type of people experiencing homelessness

We see that, among HMIS participating providers, most of the people who are experiencing homelessness are men (63.35%) and the vast majority of men (92.59%) are single. Nearly 30% of adult women who experience homelessness are single mothers, though more than half (56.42%) are also single. We believe that a greater inventory of single resident occupancy units will assist this population afford housing and therefore avoid homelessness.

Causes and Location of Homelessness

Primary Reason Adults Gave for Homelessness	Percent of Adults Who Cited This Reason
Not Disclosed	33.49%
Release From Institution	18.98%
Eviction by primary tenant	7.50%
Household Disputes (not DV)	6.89%
Loss of Job/Income (includes public benefits)	5.68%
Relocation from out of the NY-508 CoC Area	4.96%
Court eviction by landlord	3.87%
Health/Safety Violation	2.90%
Ask to leave by landlord	2.78%
Mental Health	2.78%
Substance Abuse	2.06%
Problems with building	1.45%
Domestic Violence	1.33%

Table 11: Reason for Homelessness as reported to HMIS participating providers

A significant number of people (almost 1/5 of those who experienced homelessness) reported that their previous stay was an institutional setting, more frequently incarceration. Better discharge planning would prevent immediate entry into homelessness.

Zip Code of Last Permanent Address	Percent	Location
14301	25.93%	City of Niagara Falls
14305	13.85%	City of Niagara Falls
14303	10.11%	City of Niagara Falls
14304	7.47%	City of Niagara Falls
14120	5.49%	North Tonawanda
14094	3.74%	Lockport
14215	2.86%	City of Buffalo (East Side)
14213	2.42%	City of Buffalo (East Side)
14201	1.32%	City of Buffalo (Lower West Side)
14020	1.10%	Batavia

Table 12: Top Ten Zip Codes of Last Permanent Residence

Percent of Income Paid Towards Rent	Niagara County, New York	Lockport city, New York	Niagara Falls city, New York
Median Percent of Income Paid to Rent	29.7%	28.3%	35.5%
Less than 10.0 percent	3.66%	4.81%	3.57%
10.0 to 14.9 percent	10.21%	6.90%	9.15%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	11.48%	12.25%	7.81%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	10.45%	15.37%	9.27%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	11.60%	13.47%	9.08%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	7.99%	14.23%	7.24%
35.0 to 39.9 percent	6.00%	5.42%	6.38%
40.0 to 49.9 percent	8.24%	5.48%	10.19%
50.0 percent or more	23.85%	18.31%	30.95%

Table 13: Percent of Renters paying a particular percent of income towards Rent

Homelessness is concentrated in the populated areas of Niagara County. Overall, 46.08% of all Niagara County's renters are paying more of their income than what is considered affordable (30% of one's income). This is true for 43% of renters in Lockport and 54.76% of renters in the city of Niagara Falls. The median for the county is 29.7% of income, just at the threshold of affordable, while the City of Niagara Falls has a median that is higher than affordable.

Zip codes of origin for people who experienced homelessness in Niagara

10/1/2016-9/30-2017

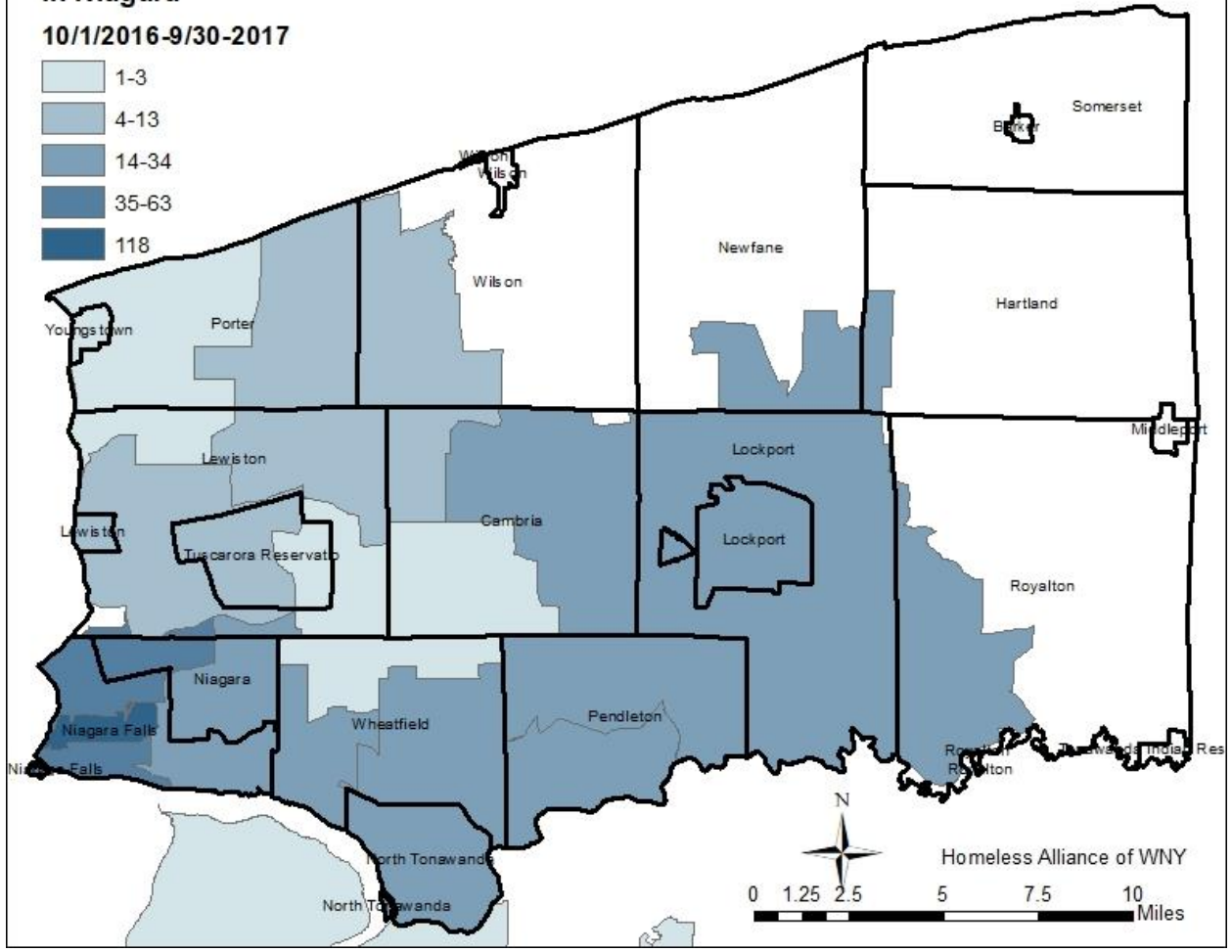
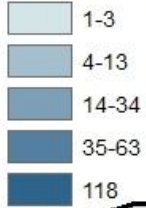


Figure 4: Map of Last Permanent Address

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:

- Tenant-based targeted interventions that make housing affordable, such as an increase in the Department of Social Service shelter allowance to match HUD Fair Market Rent
- The state should adopt and fully fund the Home Stability Support initiative
- The state should adopt a policy that requires any funding they provide for the provision of housing for those experiencing homelessness utilize Coordinated Entry in order to make these units available to those who are currently without housing
- More Housing Choice Vouchers need to be made available to HUD
- An increase in the number of one bedroom and single-room occupancy units available for low-income individuals
- All Public Housing Authorities need to adopt a homeless preference based upon the HUD definition of "homeless"
- Better discharge planning by the Department of Corrections, or a rapid rehousing program funded by the department to keep the formerly incarcerated from immediately entering the homelessness system
- Efforts to assist female single parent households afford housing, particularly mothers of very small children
- Engaging in all efforts to eliminate institutional racism, such that all people have equal and equitable access to the social and economic institutions that lead to the acquisition of wealth and financial resources

The only thing that ends homelessness is a home.