

# America's Youngest Outcasts

## Fact Sheet

America's Youngest Outcasts looks at child homelessness nationally and in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, ranks the states from 1 (best) to 50 (worst), and examines causes of child homelessness and solutions.

The report uses the newest federal and state data related to child homelessness, including the most recent annual count of homeless children in public schools made by the U.S. Department of Education (2012-2013 school year; released in September 2014) and U.S. Census data. The report notes that while progress has been made in reducing homelessness among veterans and chronically homeless individuals, no special attention has been directed toward homeless children, and their numbers have increased.

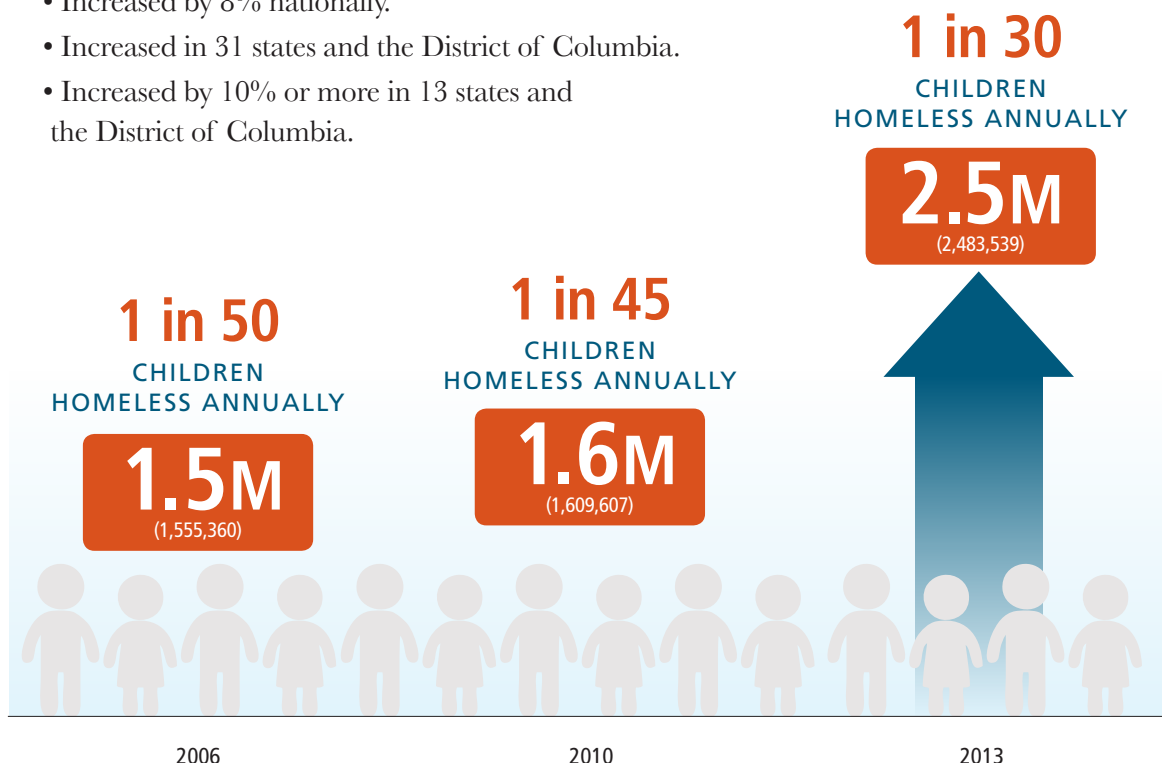
### Prevalence of Child Homelessness

Based on a calculation using the most recent U.S. Department of Education's count of homeless children in U.S. public schools and on 2013 U.S. Census data:

- 2,483,539 children experienced homelessness in the U.S. in 2013 (2.5 million).
- This represents one in every 30 children in the U.S.
- This is an historic high in the number of homeless children in the U.S.

From 2012 to 2013, the number of children experiencing homelessness annually in the U.S.:

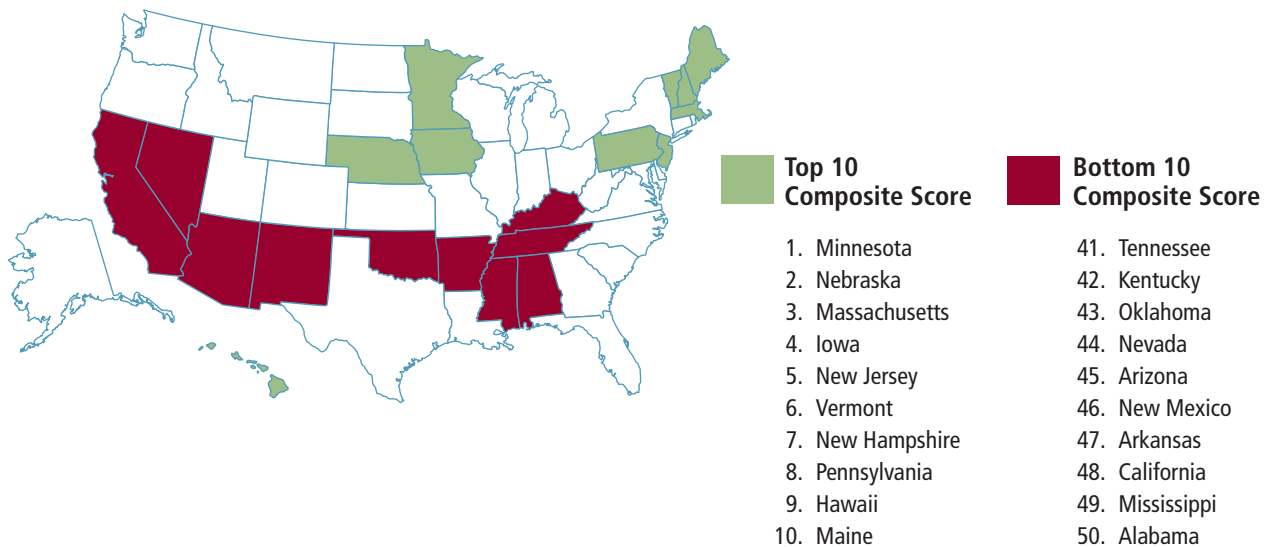
- Increased by 8% nationally.
- Increased in 31 states and the District of Columbia.
- Increased by 10% or more in 13 states and the District of Columbia.



For the complete report, please visit: [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)

## State Ranking

The states are ranked in the report from 1 (best) to 50 (worst) using a composite of four domains: (1) extent of child homelessness; (2) well-being of the children; (3) risk for family homelessness; and (4) policy response. All states have children who are homeless.



## Causes of Child Homelessness

Major causes of homelessness for children in the U.S. include: (1) the nation's high poverty rate; (2) lack of affordable housing across the nation; (3) continuing impacts of the Great Recession; (4) racial disparities; (5) the challenges of single parenting; and (6) the ways in which traumatic experiences, especially domestic violence, precede and prolong homelessness for children and families.

## Impacts of Homelessness on Children

Research shows that homeless children are hungry and sick more often. They wonder if they will have a roof over their heads at night and what will happen to their families. Many homeless children struggle in school, missing days, repeating grades, and drop out entirely. Up to 25% of homeless pre-school children have mental health problems requiring clinical evaluation; this increases to 40% among homeless school-age children.

The impacts of homelessness on the children, especially young children, may lead to changes in brain architecture that can interfere with learning, emotional self-regulation, cognitive skills, and social relationships. The unrelenting stress experienced by the parents may contribute to residential instability, unemployment, ineffective parenting, and poor health.

## Effective Responses to Child Homelessness

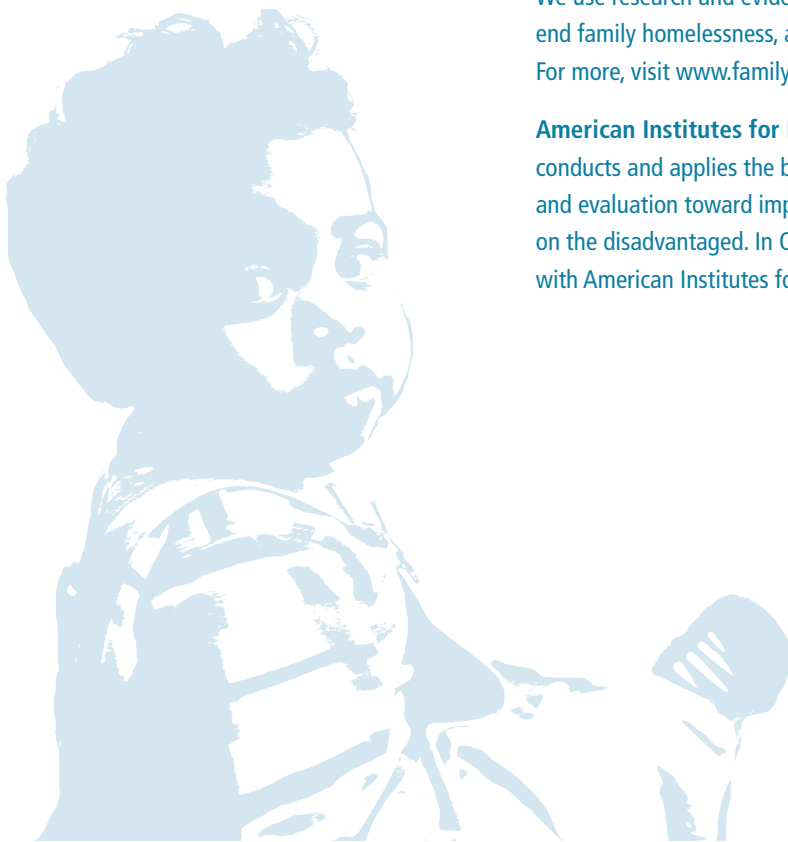
Effective responses to child homelessness must include:

- Safe, affordable housing.
- Comprehensive needs assessments of all family members.
- Family-oriented services that incorporate trauma-informed care.
- Identification, prevention, and treatment of major depression in mothers.
- Parenting supports for mothers.
- Education and employment opportunities for parents.
- Further research to identify evidence-based programs and services for children and families.

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**The National Center on Family Homelessness**, founded in 1988, is the nation's foremost authority on child and family homelessness. We use research and evidence-based approaches to prevent and end family homelessness, and give every child a chance. For more, visit [www.familyhomelessness.org](http://www.familyhomelessness.org).

**American Institutes for Research (AIR)**, founded in 1946, conducts and applies the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation toward improving people's lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged. In October 2012, The National Center merged with American Institutes for Research. For more, visit [www.air.org](http://www.air.org).



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