Massachusetts Youth Count | 2024

A report from the Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission

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Contents[1]

1.0   2024 Youth Count Highlights

The Youth Count is a bi-annual survey sponsored by the Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission (Commission) to learn about the scope, needs, and demographics of youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness[2]. The 2024 Youth Count was held from April 1st through April 30th. A total of 1,412 complete surveys from 147 different cities and towns were collected through a range of outreach strategies. Of these surveys, 661 from 105 cities and towns met the Commission's definition of an unaccompanied young person currently experiencing homelessness (UHY)[3]. These 661 young people reported sleeping in the following housing situations and contexts the night before taking the survey:

- 327 (49.1%) UHY were **sheltered** at emergency shelter, transitional housing, a hotel/motel, or some other facility;
- 220 (33.4%) UHY were **doubled up or couch surfing** with family other than parents, a partner, or a friend;
- 114 (17.3%) UHY were **unsheltered**, meaning they stayed outside or in a place not meant for human habitation.

Major 2024 Youth Count Findings include:

- **Unsheltered Youth:** In 2024, the percent of youth who were unsheltered remained the same as 2022 at 17%. The biggest increase in unsheltered respondents was among 18-20 year olds.
  - **The Good News:** There was a significant decline in the number of unsheltered respondents with foster care involvement.

- **Emergency Shelter**: Of the 184 who were in emergency shelter, 117 had been in shelter for less than 6 months; however, 20 reported that they were in emergency shelter for over one year.
  - **The Good News**: As compared to 2022, the percent of respondents in emergency shelter for over one year decreased from 15% to 11%.

- **Education**: In 2024, 23% of UHY respondents reported not having a high school diploma and not attending school.
  - **The Good News**: The rate of respondents without high school diplomas but who were attending school was significantly higher as compared to 2022. In 2022, 14% of respondents without high school diplomas were attending school. In 2024, the rate was 23%.
  - **The Good News**: In 2024, 33 UHY respondents were attending community college. This is up from just 7 UHY respondents in 2022.
- **Income:** 74% of the respondents reported having at least one income source; however, 24% reported having no income. This is up from 16% in 2022.

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[2] The Commission has administered the Massachusetts Youth Count since 2014. Over the years, nearly 10,000 surveys have been completed, with detailed data analysis reports released each winter.
[3] The Commission defines an unaccompanied homeless youth or young adult (UHY) as a person who: Is 24 years of age or younger; and is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian; and lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- o **The Good News:** A smaller number of respondents reported that they were currently exchanging sex or sexual content for money or basic needs in 2024 as compared to 2022.

- **Justice involvement:** 1 in 5 UHY respondents reported juvenile or adult justice system involvement[4].
  - o **The Good News:** As compared to 2022, there was a significant decline in the number of respondents who reported justice-system involvement. This decline was driven by fewer respondents with juvenile justice involvement.

- **UHY are most likely to get help with:**
  1. **Nutritional Assistance:** 68.5% of those who needed nutritional assistance received some or all of the help they needed, making it the most accessible service asked about on the survey.
  2. **Health Care Services:** 66.9% of those needing health care received help.
  3. **Substance Use or Alcohol Treatment:** 58.5% of those who needed help with substance use or alcohol treatment received assistance.
  4. **Populations most likely to receive help tend to be those who are in shelter, who are pregnant or parenting, or who identify as LGBTQ+.**

- **UHY are least likely to get help with:**
  1. **Long-Term Housing:** Only 34% of those who needed long-term housing received some or all of the help they needed, making it the least accessible resource.
  2. **Sexual Assault Counseling:** About 36% of those needing sexual assault counseling received assistance.
  3. **Family Support:** Approximately 44% of those who needed family support received help.
  4. **Populations least likely to get help are those who are unsheltered and those without a high school diploma who are also not in an educational program.**

- **Barriers:** Being put on a waitlist and not hearing back from a service provider are the barriers most associated with receiving no help at all for the majority of service types. While other barriers such as transportation are frequently experienced, they don't appear to be associated

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[4] The 2024 survey added a clarification that was not on the 2022 survey "Have you ever spent time in juvenile detention (a secure facility or residential program for young people) *after being charged with a criminal offense?*" and "Have you ever spent time in an adult jail or prison after being charged with a criminal offense?" In 2022, the survey asked "Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention…" and "Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison?"

with not getting help. Waitlists seem particularly pronounced as a barrier to accessing long-term housing as reflected in these quotes from Youth Count respondents[5]:

> *"Better access to housing. Not having people wait 10 plus years for vouchers to help with housing costs."*
>
> *"I think a separate waitlist for the youth ages 20-24 for section 8 housing is needed."*

Table One shows MA Youth Count trends over the past seven years. The final column compares the three years prior to COVID-19 (2017-2019) with the three years post-COVID (2021-2024) and indicates which characteristics are statistically different between these periods. The three characteristics with significantly different changes are BIPOC (decrease); ever exchanged sex for basic needs (increased); and born outside of the United States (decrease).

Table One: [6]	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2024	Significant Change 2017-20 vs 2021-24[7]
Total #UHY	501	738	529	265	634	661	NA
LGBTQ+	22.7%	23.5%	24.7%	36.2%	30%	26.3%	No
BIPOC	68.4%	71.0%	69.5%	63.7%	60.2%	65.2%	Yes ☐*
Foster care	29.9%	26.4%	31.2%	36.2%	34.7%	30.7%	No
Justice system	26.4%	33.6%	25.1%	31.3%	26.4%	19.8%	No
Parenting /Pregnant	17%	26.2%	24.0%	13.9%	20.6%	17.3%	No
No high school diploma, not in school	23.8%	22.4%	19.0%	15.5%	25.8%	22.9%	No
Left home for good before age 18	N/A	30.4%	30.2%	34.7%	33.7%	28.1%	No
Ever exchanged sex for basic needs[8]	13.5%	14.4%	11.9%	16.9%	22.5%	19.8%	Yes ☐*
Born outside of the United States	15%	15%	14%	8%	7.7%	11.9%	Yes ☐*
* Statistically significant difference over the two time periods at p <0.05							

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[5] All quotations throughout this report **in this font** are in response to the final question on the survey, "Do you have any other comments or insights you would like to share with the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?"

[6] Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a Youth Count was not conducted in 2020. As of 2022, the Youth Count is now conducted biannually. Research to Action briefs are developed in interim years and focus on particular populations or experiences of young people who are unhoused.

[7] T-tests of the means of each characteristic for the two time periods were used to establish statistical significance.

[8] The significant increase could be due to a change made in 2022 in how we ask about this topic. We now include two questions, one refers to exchanging sexual acts and the other refers to exchanging sexual content.

2.0   The 2024 Massachusetts Youth Count Overview

The Massachusetts Youth Count is an annual survey used to learn about the scope, needs, and demographics of youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness. The Commission provides oversight for the Count and is responsible for annual reports on its progress to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Office of the Child Advocate.

> The Commission defines an unaccompanied homeless youth or young adult (UHY) as a person who:
> - Is 24 years of age or younger; and
> - Is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian; and
> - Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

The 2024 Youth Count took place from April 1st through April 30th both in person and online. Service providers were able to extend surveying at special events into May. The Commission offered $20 stipends to young people who completed the survey online, while many local providers provided additional incentives for those who filled out the survey in person. Any young person under 25 living in Massachusetts who had ever experienced homelessness or housing instability was eligible to participate. Survey efforts relied on networks of service providers, Youth Ambassadors,[9] and trained street outreach workers to engage youth in programs and in places where young people were known to gather.[10]

A total of 1,412 complete surveys were collected, with 661 meeting the Commission's definition of an unaccompanied young person currently experiencing homelessness (UHY). The high percentage of surveys meeting this definition reflects the eligibility criteria used for the Count rather than indicating trends in youth homelessness.

Table Two: 2024 Overview	State
Total # surveys	1412
Total # UHY based on Commission definition	661
# under 18	47
# BIPOC	431
# LGBTQ+	174
# foster care	203
# juvenile/criminal justice	131
# pregnant and/or parenting	115
# not in school/no diploma	152
# born outside US	79
# Ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs (ESN)	131
Left home as a minor	186

Table Two presents the total number of surveys included and the number of respondents meeting the Commission's definition. All figures listed below under "Total # Commission definition" refer to the 661 youth and young adults who met these criteria.

The survey highlights an additional layer of homelessness and housing vulnerability among respondents. For example, 210 respondents were experiencing homelessness while accompanied

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[9] Youth Ambassadors are young people who have experienced homelessness or housing vulnerability and who are trained to partner with the regional agencies administering the Count.
[10] See Attachment One for the Youth Count methodology.

by a parent or guardian. Thirty-six housed respondents reported not having a safe place to stay within the next 14 days. Another 142 respondents indicated that they had experienced homelessness at some point in the past. Additionally, 113 respondents did not consider themselves homeless, but their living situation met the Commission's definition of homelessness, so they are included in the analysis of unhoused young people (see Table Three)[11].

Table Three: Living Situation of 2024 UHY respondents Who Do Not Consider Themselves to be Experiencing Homelessness	%	Count
Transitional housing program	25.7%	29
Home of boyfriend/girlfriend/partner without paying rent	18.6%	21
Shelter (emergency/temporary)	16.9%	18
Home of friend or friend's family without paying rent	13.3%	15
Other relative's home without paying rent	10.6%	12
College dorm	7.1%	8
Car or other vehicle	4.4%	5
Hotel or motel	3.5%	4
Jail or juvenile detention center	0.9%	1
Grand Total	**100%**	**113**

Table Four provides a comparison of the identities and life experiences of 2024 respondents with those from 2022. Notably, there was a statistically significant decrease in respondents with justice system involvement. We saw a statistically significant increase in the number of respondents born outside of the United States[12].

Table Four: Overview of 2024 Youth Count Respondents	2022	2024	Statistically significant
Total #	634	661	
BIPOC	387	431	No
Past or present foster care system involvement	220	203	No
Left home for good before 18	212	186	No
LGBTQ+	191	174	No
Not in school & no diploma	164	152	No
Past or present juvenile/criminal justice system involvement	168	131	Yes ☐
Ever exchanged sex or sexual content for needs (ESN)	143	131	No
Parenting /Pregnant	131	115	No
Born outside US	49	79	Yes ☐
Under 18	42	47	No

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[11] Additional qualitative research into how young people experience housing instability and how they identify with homelessness will be conducted for a 2025 Research to Action brief.
[12] Z-tests were used to assess statistically significant differences in proportions across the two time periods.

3.0   Housing Status

In 2024, 327 out of the 661 (49.1%) UHY respondents had stayed in a shelter, transitional housing,[13] a hotel/motel, or another facility on the night before the Count. Throughout the report this group is referred to as "Sheltered". The next most common living situation was staying with family, a partner, or a friend, reported by 220 (33.4%) UHY respondents. This group is referred to throughout the report as "couch surfing" or "doubled-up". Additionally, 114 (17.3%) respondents were categorized as "unsheltered", meaning they reported staying outside or in a place not meant for human habitation. Chart One provides a nine-year overview of the percentages of where respondents who met the Commission definition stayed the night before the survey, categorized as sheltered, couch surfing/doubled up or unsheltered.

Chart One: Where Respondents Slept the Night Before the Survey: Seven Year Trends

Year	Sheltered	Doubled-up/ Couch Surfing	Unsheltered
2015	53	35	12
2016	60	27	13
2017	56	29	15
2018	55	27	18
2019	56.7	31	12.3
2021	55	36	9
2022	49	34	17
2024	49	33	17

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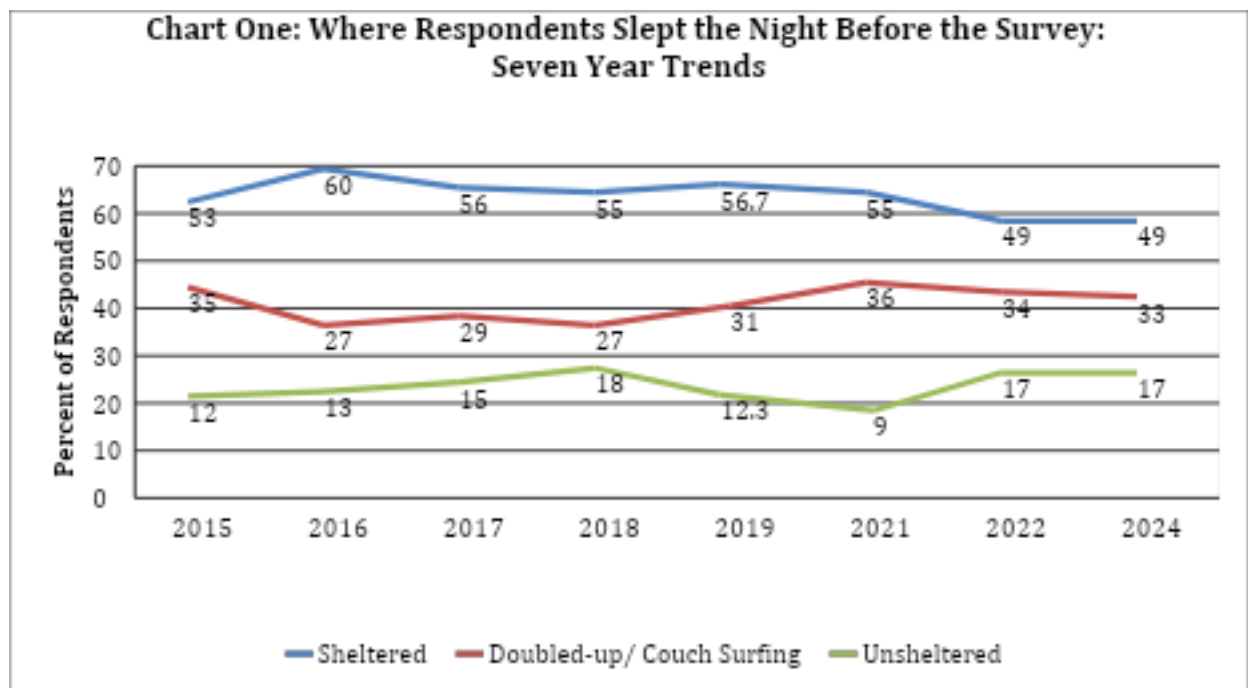
[13] The sheltered housing category includes 12 young people who indicated that they were experiencing homelessness while living in a college dorm. The UHYC sponsors two programs that provide college housing for young adults experiencing homelessness. Other facilities in this category include jail, juvenile detention centers, hospitals, and mental health facilities.

While the overall proportions in each category remained relatively stable compared to 2022, there were notable shifts within subpopulations across each category of homelessness in 2024.

Changes from 2022-2024

Unsheltered UHY: four significant changes were observed
- Decrease in the proportion of UHY with foster care involvement
- Decrease in the proportion of UHY with justice system involvement
- Increase in UHY respondents 18-20 years old
- Decrease in UHY respondents 21-24 years old

Sheltered UHY: One significant change:
- Decrease in the proportion of UHY who left home permanently as minors

Doubled-up or couch surfing respondents: Two significant changes:
- Decrease in justice system involvement
- Increase in BIPOC respondents

2024 Differences Among Subpopulations in each Housing Situation

- Being sheltered was the most common situation for respondents who were **Pregnant/Parenting**, in the **Foster Care System**, and **21-24 years old**, with more than half of these populations having spent the night before the survey in shelters. It was very rare for a pregnant or parenting respondent to be unsheltered.

- Respondents with **Justice System** involvement or who identify as **LGBTQ+** showed a more varied distribution across the three housing situations. While the largest percentage of these populations were sheltered (48.8% and 46.8%, respectively), a significant portion were also doubled-up (33.9% for Justice System and 38.6% for LGBTQ+). The relatively higher percentage of doubled-up individuals in these groups suggests that they have a support network that can provide them with a place to stay. LGBTQ+ respondents were the least likely of all subpopulations to be unsheltered.

- Those who are **currently under 18** as well as those who **left home as minors** were more likely to be unsheltered compared to other subpopulations and least likely to be sheltered. This trend points to a heightened vulnerability to homelessness for minors likely worsened by limited access to age-appropriate shelter services. The following quotes from respondents illustrate the need for additional youth-oriented resources:

  "(We need) homeless shelters for youth not just teen moms or adults."

  "I think there should be more support groups for teens who don't know how to find housing."

Geographic Trends in Shelter Usable and Availability

Table Five provides data about regional differences in housing and shelter availability and UHY's ability to access help.

Metro Boston	164	13%	37%	15%	28%	7%	23%	27%	42%
Bristol	108	19%	21%	9%	44%	7%	28%	38%	50%
Worcester	80	24%	23%	21%	24%	8%	26%	35%	52%
Plymouth	64	16%	47%	6%	25%	6%	19%	29%	35%
Essex	63	17%	17%	2%	54%	10%	39%	48%	51%
Three County	51	16%	33%	18%	29%	4%	20%	23%	34%
Hampden	46	13%	37%	11%	33%	6%	31%	47%	45%
North Middlesex	36	28%	14%	5%	39%	14%	35%	27%	32%
Metro West	27	19%	31%	3%	22%	25%	18%	17%	30%
Cape & Islands	12	8%	8%	17%	42%	25%	20%	64%	50%

Unsheltered rates are notably higher in North Middlesex (28%) and Worcester County (24%). Metro Boston, Hampden, and Plymouth have relatively high rates of youth in shelters with 37%, 37%, and 47%, respectively. In contrast, shelter usage is significantly lower in Essex County (17%), North Middlesex (14%), and on the Cape & the Islands (6%). Transitional housing rates are highest in Three County (18%) and Worcester (21%). The highest rates of UHY living doubled-up or couch surfing were reported in Essex (54%) and Bristol (44%).

UHY in Essex (39%) and North Middlesex (35%) report the highest rates of receiving no help with shelter. Gaps in transitional housing support were found in the Cape (64%), Essex (48%), and Hampden (47%). For long-term housing, Bristol (50%), Worcester (52%) and Essex (51%) counties have particularly high rates of youth reporting no assistance.

Three County, Metro Boston, Metro West, and Plymouth have fewer youth reporting receiving "no help" with shelter or transitional housing. Conversely, Essex, Hampden, and North Middlesex show higher rates of unmet needs.

4.0   Education

The survey included questions regarding school enrollment and educational attainment. Table 6 presents the education status of UHY respondents.

Table 6: Education Status	Average Age	2022	2024	Significant change
High school diploma, not currently in school	21.4	282 (44%)	261 (39%)	No
No high school diploma, currently in school	19.4	87 (13.7%)	153 (23%)	Yes ☐
No high school diploma, not currently in school	20.7	164 (26%)	152 (23%)	No
High school diploma, currently in school	20.9	89 (14%)	95 (14%)	No
Total	20.7	622	661	

More than half of the UHY respondents (54%) had a high school diploma. Overall, 37% of UHY respondents were in school (either high school or post-secondary), indicating that despite housing instability, these young people were engaging in education. This represents a nearly 10 percentage point increase from 2022. While this is great news, it should be pointed out that approximately 90% of 18-25 year olds in Massachusetts have a high school diploma, while only 57% of 18-24 year olds who responded to the Youth Count have a high school diploma.

The number of respondents without a high school diploma but who were currently enrolled in an education program significantly increased as compared to 2022. Of those in school, 56% were in high school, with an average age of 18.6. The remainder were enrolled in HiSet programs, YouthBuild, and other educational and technical programs with an average age of 20.5 years.

Over one-quarter of the UHY respondents with a high school diploma or equivalent were enrolled in some form of post-secondary education at the time of the survey. This includes 37 in four-year colleges, 33 in community colleges, and 25 in some other post-secondary training.

Examining educational levels by type of the homelessness young people were experiencing provides additional insights into the relationship between education access and housing stability. Chart Two shows that unsheltered respondents were least likely to have a high school diploma and least likely to be in school. Doubled-up respondents were more likely to have a high school diploma but not be currently enrolled in further education. Sheltered youth were more likely to have a diploma than their doubled-up and unsheltered peers and were much more likely to be pursuing additional education. This higher rate of educational attainment among sheltered respondents may partially reflect their engagement in the UHYC college housing scholarship programs. In general, it appears that being sheltered offers the stability needed to pursue education.

Chart Two: Education by Housing Status
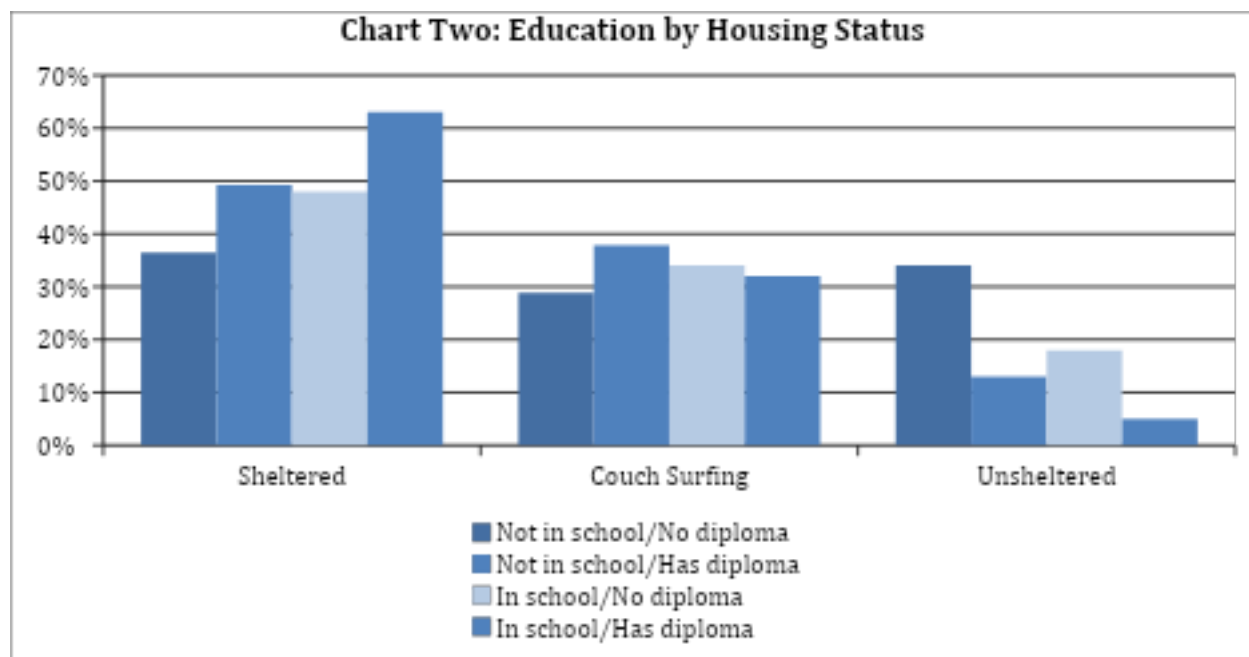
Homelessness is a very sad part of Boston. And there's not enough resources to go around for youth over the age of 20. This is a huge setback for any of those youth to be successful and stable. They end up on the streets for years and years. As for myself, I didn't know when I would get to be stable. And the only reason I got support is because I was already connected with services. What about the youth that aren't? That's what we need to talk about.

–Youth Count Respondent

5.0   Employment and Other Monetary Sources

Respondents were asked about their current sources of money[14] and could select as many options as were relevant to them. Table 6 provides details about the number of respondents reporting money from each source and compares these findings to 2022.

In 2024, the most common sources of money are part-time or temporary jobs, none, and cash assistance from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). In 2022, a full-time job was ranked among the top three sources, with cash assistance in fourth place. The proportion of respondents indicating they had no sources of money increased significantly since 2022. The number of respondents who reported exchanging sex or sexual content for money was the only source to decrease significantly.

Table 7: Sources of Money	2022 #	2022 %	2024 #	2024 %	Significant Change
Sample	634		661		
Part-time job and/or temporary job	208	33%	206	31.2%	No
None	102	16%	156	23.7%	Yes □
Cash assistance from DTA/Welfare or Department of Children and Families (DCF)	95	15%	100	15.2%	No
Full-time job	101	16%	94	14.2%	No
Money from family members or friends	84	13%	92	14.0%	No
Money from "under the table" work	64	10%	60	9.1%	No
Social Security/disability payments	37	6%	38	5.8%	No
Money from college financial aid	24	4%	24	3.6%	No
Hustling/selling drugs	19	3%	22	3.4%	No
Self-employed/my own business	14	2%	22	3.4%	No
Unemployment benefits	26	4%	18	2.7%	No
Panhandling/"sp'anging"	19	3%	18	2.7%	No
Exchanging sex/sexual content including OnlyFans or other phone or video platforms	29	5%	16	2.4%	Yes □
Child support	11	2%	4	1%	No

Respondents who were **doubled-up or couch-surfing** were most likely to be working full-time or part-time jobs. They were also most likely to be receiving money from family members or friends, indicating that many doubled-up respondents have connections that facilitate both employment and financial assistance.

For **sheltered** respondents, part-time work was the most common source of money, followed by none. They were the group most likely to receive cash assistance and Social Security benefits. This suggests that connections to formal services, such as shelter and transitional housing, are

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[14] We refer to sources of money as the umbrella term rather than income due to the range of activities young people engage in to secure financial resources, some of which are exploitative and therefore we choose to not refer to them as income. In this discussion, Cash Assistance includes resources from DTA and DCF.

associated with a greater likelihood of receiving government benefits, which can contribute to longer-term stability. In contrast, **unsheltered** respondents were the most likely to report having no income at all, highlighting their severe economic vulnerability.

Respondents who identified as Native American were more likely to receive unemployment benefits compared to other groups and were also more likely to report hustling or selling drugs. In contrast, Asian respondents were much more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to report receiving money from family or friends, particularly in comparison to Black respondents. Black respondents were also the least likely to report receiving cash assistance. This could be related to their higher likelihood of being doubled-up and not connected to formal services.

LGBTQ+ respondents were more likely to have a part-time job, to receive Social Security, and obtain money from college financial aid, and they were less likely to have no sources of income. Additionally, LGBTQ+ respondents were much more likely to exchange sex or sexual content for money or basic needs; in fact, 13 out of the 16 respondents currently engaged in this practice identified as LGBTQ+.

There appears to be a correlation between receiving help with employment and having formal income sources. For example, respondents who reported receiving the most employment help were most likely to report income from cash assistance or full-time jobs. Conversely, those who reported receiving the least amount of employment help were more likely to be receiving money through exchanges of sex or sexual content. Respondents who reported needing help with employment but didn't seek it were most likely to receive money from hustling, selling drugs or having no income at all. Addressing barriers to employment assistance could enhance the stability of UHY and reduce their experiences of homelessness.

> ### *"I need help with a job and a permit, housing, and cash benefits."*
> ### *--Youth Count Respondent*

Exchanging Sex or Sexual Content for Money and Necessities

"When I was homeless most shelters were booked. I turned to prostitution"
— 19-year old, Black Youth Count Respondent from Plymouth County

Table 8 presents data from the following three questions:

- Have you ever exchanged sex **acts** (including sexual intercourse, oral sex, etc.) for food, a place to stay, money or other necessities? □ Yes □ No
- Have you ever exchanged sexual **content** (including phone calls, photographs, or video uploads) for food, a place to stay, money or other necessities? □ Yes □ No

- If you ever exchanged sex or sexual content for money, **did someone else keep the profits** or hold the money for you? □ Yes □ No

Table 8: Ever exchanged sex or sexual content for money or other basic needs	#	%
Ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs (ESN)	131	19.8%
Exchanged sex acts only	*23*	*17.5%*
Ever exchanged sexual content only	*32*	*24.4%*
Both acts and content	*76*	*55.7%*
Did someone else keep the profits or hold the money for you?	35	26.7%

Out of the 131 respondents who reported having exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs: 23 had only exchanged sexual acts; 32 had only exchanged content; and 76 had exchanged both. Additionally, 35 respondents indicated that someone else controlled the profits from these exchanges.

Of these 35 respondents, 30 exchanged both and 5 had exchanged content only. Of these 35 respondents, 43% identified as LGBTQ+; 80% identified as BIPOC; 40% had foster system involvement; and 14% were currently engaged with voluntary services from DCF. Geographically, 10 respondents were from Metro Boston; 5 were from Essex or Hampden County, 4 were from Bristol County, Three County, or Plymouth, 2 were from Metro West, and 1 was from Worcester.

Table 9 compares the 2024 UHY respondents as a whole, with those who had ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs. Respondents who identified as LGBTQ+ or had been committed or sentenced to the juvenile or adult justice system were much more likely to have ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs compared to the overall respondent group of UHY. In contrast, respondents who had foster care involvement or those who left home as minors were moderately more likely to have engaged in such exchanges. Respondents born outside of the United States were moderately less likely to have ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs.

Total % (#) UHY/Commission Definition	46.8% (661)	19.8% (131)
BIPOC	65.2%	69.4%
LGBTQ+	26.3%	44.3%
Foster care	30.7%	36.6%
Left home before 18	28.1%	36.6%
Juvenile/Criminal justice	19.8%	32.1%
Not in school & no diploma	22.9%	22.9%
Parenting with custody/Pregnant	17.3%	21.3%
Under 18	7.1%	6.8%
Born outside of the United States	11.9%	5.3%

6.0   Foster Care and Justice System Involvement

This section addresses the involvement of UHY in foster care, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems, including the experiences of young people with both foster care and juvenile justice involvement. The data are derived from specific survey question as shown below:

Table 10 compares various subpopulations within UHY respondents, focusing on those who are unsheltered, have a high school diploma, left home as minors, are exchanging sex to meet their basic needs, identify as Black, Latino, or multiracial, or pregnant/parenting.

Among UHY respondents, 203 reported foster care involvement, leaving home permanently at a younger age than the overall UHY population (17.3 versus 17.9). Notably, 73 of these respondents left home permanently as minors, which is a statistically higher rate of leaving home early. UHY with foster care involvement are significantly less likely to have a high school diploma. While not a statistically significant difference, 65.5% of those with foster care involvement identified as BIPOC, approximately 7 percentage points higher than the UHY population without foster care involvement. Fifty UHY respondents who were over the age of 17 reported being currently signed onto the Department of Children and Families (DCF) voluntarily.

Table 10	All UHY	UHY without foster care system involvement	UHY with foster care system involvement
Total #	661	458	203
Total %	-	69.3%	30.7%
Unsheltered	114	17.9%	15.8%
Has high school diploma	356	56.8%	47.3% ☐
Left home as a minor	186	24.7%	36.0% ☐
Ever exchanged sex for basic needs	131	18.1%	23.6%
Black, Latino, or multiracial	401	58.5%	65.5%
Pregnant or parenting	115	15.7%	21.2%
Cells that are filled mean it is significantly different than respondents as a whole, p <0.05			

In terms of justice system involvement, 131 UHY respondents reported such experiences (See Table 11). Of these 131, 56 only had juvenile justice involvement (average age=20.7), 36 only had adult justice system involvement (average age=21.2), and 39 had been detained in both juvenile and adult systems after being charged with a criminal offense (average age=21.6). Eighteen respondents reported that they were voluntarily signed onto the Department of Youth Services (DYS), with an

average age of 20.2. Compared to 2022, there was a significant decrease in juvenile justice involvement (138 in 2022 versus 95 in 2024). Of the 95 who reported juvenile justice involvement, 62 were committed to Massachusetts DYS.

Table 11	All UHY	UHY without justice system involvement	UHY with justice system involvement	% any juvenile justice	% any adult justice	Foster care and juvenile justice system
Total #	661	530	131	95	75	51
Total %	-	80.1%	19.8%	14.4%	11.3%	7.7%
Unsheltered	114	17.4%	16.8%	18.9%	14.7%	15.7%
Has high school diploma	356	53.6%	55.0%	53.7%	57.3%	56.9%
Left home as a minor	186	24.9%	41.2% ☐	42.1% ☐	41.3% ☐	35.3%
Ever exchanged sex for basic needs	131	16.8%	32.1% ☐	32.6% ☐	37.3% ☐	17.6%
Black, Latino, or multiracial	401	59.6%	64.9%	70.5%*	62.7%	64.7%
Pregnant or parenting	115	16.0%	22.9%	24.2%*	25.3%*	35.3% ☐
*Cells that are filled mean it is significantly different than respondents as a whole, p <0.05 *Approaching significance*						

Key Justice System Findings (Table 11):

High School Diploma: Those with a high school diploma did not show a statistically significant difference in justice system involvement compared to those without justice system involvement. This suggests that educational attainment alone may not be a key factor in justice system involvement. However, all z-statistics were negative, indicating that having a high school diploma might serve as a protective factor against justice system involvement.

Left Home as a Minor: This group exhibited significantly higher involvement with the justice system. Respondents with justice system involvement who left home as minors were also more likely to have been in the child welfare system.

Exchanging Sex for Basic Needs: This subpopulation showed significantly higher involvement across all categories of justice system involvement, except for involvement in both child welfare and justice systems. While the Youth Count is a point-in-time survey, making causal relationships difficult to establish, this data suggests that foster care system involvement may serve as a protective factor against ESN and that there is a strong correlation between justice system involvement and having ever exchanged sex for basic needs.

Black, Latino, or Multiracial: This combined group did not show significant differences from the overall population in any category of justice involvement, including both juvenile justice and child

welfare system involvement. Results were approaching significance for any juvenile justice involvement.

Pregnant or Parenting: This subpopulation had a statistically higher rate of joint juvenile justice and child welfare system involvement.

7.0   Service Needs and Barriers

A key goal of the Massachusetts Youth Count is to better understand the types of services unaccompanied homeless youth need and the barriers they face in accessing those services. The 2024 survey included the following overview and question to assess this:

> "In this section, we ask about different types of help, services, or supports you may have needed in the past year. Please let us know if you needed each type of help, and if you got all, some, or none of the help you needed. We also ask if you needed the help but didn't try to get it. For any service you did not get all of the help you needed, we ask what kept you from getting help. "

Service Needs

Table 12 summarizes the responses to the service needs question. The five most needed services in 2024 were long-term housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, nutritional assistance, and employment support.[15]

Table 12: UHY's service needs	# needed	% needed	% got all or some	% got none	% needed but didn't try to get it
Long term housing	516	78%	34%	43%	23%
Emergency/crisis shelter	496	75%	54%	26%	20%
Short-term/transitional housing	483	73%	48%	33%	19%
Nutritional assistance	448	68%	69%	19%	12%
Employment support	406	61%	51%	28%	21%
Cash assistance	362	55%	44%	34%	22%
Health care services	353	53%	67%	20%	13%
Mental health counseling	312	47%	54%	18%	29%
Help getting into high school or GED	263	40%	57%	20%	23%
Help with college	253	38%	49%	23%	28%
Family support	198	30%	44%	29%	26%
Domestic violence counseling	155	23%	48%	22%	30%
Sexual assault counseling	142	21%	36%	25%	39%
Childcare	124	19%	53%	27%	20%
Substance use or alcohol treatment	123	19%	59%	19%	23%

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[15] In the 2024 survey, we differentiated between emergency/crisis shelter and short-term/transitional housing. In prior years, these were combined into one question. We removed two barriers that referred to COVID-19 restrictions and added two new barriers: 1) Legal barriers and 2) Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity.

Nutritional Assistance continues to stand out as a high-demand service that is relatively successful in meeting the needs of those who seek it, with 68.5% of respondents receiving some or all of the help they needed. Emergency Shelter was also widely needed, though slightly less accessible---54% of those who sought help received at least some support. Open-ended responses shed some light on what caused some respondents to report not getting all that they needed:

- o *"Some shelters actually want to help but some don't."*
- o *"You have to fit THEIR criteria to get any type of help."*
- o *"Most emergency shelters assume we are just addicts or troublemakers when in reality a majority of us had negligent parents who didn't prepare us for the 'real world'."*

Transitional Housing was another prevalent need, with 47.6% of respondents receiving some or all of the help they needed, though 33% reported receiving no help at all.

In stark contrast, long-term housing remains the most needed service but the least accessible, with only 34.1% of respondents receiving any assistance. This significant gap highlights a critical challenge in making homelessness a brief, one-time experience. Moreover, 18% of those who needed long-term housing did not even attempt to seek help.

Mental Health Counseling and Employment Support were needed by respondents, but a number of young people did not seek these services (13.5% for mental health and 12.9% for employment). Specialized services such as family support, domestic violence counseling, sexual assault counseling, childcare, and substance use or alcohol treatment were needed by fewer respondents, which is expected given the more specific nature of these services. However, domestic violence and sexual assault counseling stand out, as many respondents who needed these services did not seek help.

Notably, the groups most likely to report receiving no help at all were unsheltered and those without a high school diploma. Groups more likely to receive some or all of the help they needed included those in shelter, pregnant or parenting, or who identify as LGBTQ+.

It is also important to acknowledge that most participants required multiple services to enhance their stability. This sentiment is well expressed by one Youth Count respondent:

"I believe that access to affordable housing options, job training programs, mental health services, and transportation assistance would greatly improve my housing stability."

Service Barriers:

In 2024, we asked respondents if any of the following barriers prevented them from accessing the help they needed:

1. Transportation	8. Didn't know where to go	15. Didn't have a phone to follow up
2. Sent somewhere else	9. Didn't qualify	
3. Language barrier	10. Didn't feel comfortable/safe	16. Didn't have health insurance
4. Put on a waiting list	11. Felt too overwhelmed to seek help	17. Legal barriers
5. Paperwork	12. Didn't follow through or return for services	18. Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity
6. Didn't have ID	13. Didn't ask for help	19. NONE
7. Didn't hear back	14. Didn't have money	20. Other

The following discussion focuses on the top barriers (including combinations of barriers) that respondents identified for each service type. These top barriers were those chosen by at least five respondents. We calculated the percentage of all respondents facing each barrier or combination of barriers and compared it to the percentage of those who said they received no help. If the difference between the overall sample and those who received no help was greater than 4 percentage points, cells were shaded in the table. Red-shaded cells indicate barriers that were more prevalent among those who reported receiving no help, while green-shaded cells indicate barriers that were more common among UHY who did ultimately receive help. Table 13 summarizes these findings. Sources of help are along the top row. Barriers are listed along the left most column.

The barriers faced by those who report not receiving help seem to be supply-side issues. These include waiting lists, not hearing back, not qualifying for help, lack of ID, legal barriers, and language barriers. These barriers are all related to the service sector's requirements and processes. One young person provided some understanding about barriers associated with qualifying for help, *"We need more access to youth-specific services (specifically 18-25) because unless we have children of our own, we tend to be overlooked by support options."*

In contrast, those who said they received no help were less likely to report the following barriers: not asking for help, transportation, feeling too overwhelmed, and not knowing where to go for help.

Overall, young people need more support with system navigation. In some cases, the services are there, but knowing how to access them and having the fortitude to pursue them is a challenge as expressed by one respondent, *"Talking to a real person about my situation would help; I'm sort of on my own, and emails and calls are confusing and tiring."*

> *"Massachusetts standards/qualifications are too high! I had to work 3 jobs at once just to pay rent alongside working I barely got any sleep, had no free time, no health insurance/or had to pay, while being a student, and having no support with my mental health at the time. I applied for SNAP I got denied, I applied for assistance because I have RA I got denied. Everything I tried to do I got denied and said "I make too much money" I made minimum wage at 2 jobs and 17 at another. Never-mind gas prices leaving me to pay 65-80$ every 2 days because 2 of my jobs were 40 minutes away from my apartment."*
> —19-year old, doubled up 2024 Youth Count Respondent from Worcester

Table 13: Barriers to each type of help needed for those who reported receiving no help	Long term housing	Emergency Shelter	Short term housing	High school	College	Employment	Health-care	Family Support	Child care	Nutrition	Cash assistance	Domestic violence	Sexual assault	Mental health	Substance use
Put on waiting list	pink	pink		pink			pink		pink		pink	pink	pink	pink	
Put on waiting list, Didn't hear back	pink		pink												
Didn't qualify for help					pink	pink				pink					
Didn't feel comfortable/safe, I felt too overwhelmed to seek help												pink	pink		
Lack of ID							pink								
Legal barriers							pink								
Didn't hear back, Didn't have money									pink						
Language barrier															pink
Transportation, Sent somewhere else, Language barrier, Put on waiting list, Paperwork, Lack of I.D./documents, Didn't hear back															pink
Didn't hear back		pink	pink									green			
Didn't have money				pink	green	pink			green				pink	pink	green
Paperwork				pink			green								green
Sent somewhere else					green									pink	
I felt too overwhelmed to seek help				green	green	green		green				green			pink
Transportation		green				green									pink
Didn't ask for help	green	green	green	green	green	green		green				green	green	green	green
Didn't know where to go				green						green	green				
Didn't follow through or return for services				green										green	
Paperwork, Lack of ID, Didn't hear back															
Didn't feel comfortable/safe													green		
Paperwork, Lack of ID/documents, Didn't qualify for help															

Didn't feel comfortable/safe, Didn't ask for help														

🟩 Barriers that were more common among UHY who received help.

🟥 Barriers that were more common among those who reported receiving no help.

8.0   Voices of Youth and Young Adults

The Youth Count captures the experiences of a diverse range of young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. It offers a unique opportunity to learn about young people who may not be connected to services, such as those who are couch surfing and who are unsheltered in Massachusetts. For this reason, we include a section in the report solely responding to the open-ended question, "Do you have any other comments or insights you would like to share with the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?"

One young person expressed the hardship of homelessness and the lack of adequate support: "The homeless rate is bad, we are out here starving." Many echoed this sentiment, calling for affordable housing, accessible shelters, and mental health support. For instance, one respondent emphasized the need for community-based resources, sharing that "a community center for individuals facing homelessness" would be invaluable. Another stressed the immediate need for affordable housing options, saying, "Housing should be free, so should water." Another shared the importance of faster response times for longer-term help emphasizing that "any way to reduce waiting list time and/or programs that house individuals for longer periods of time other than shelters" would be a meaningful improvement. These statements illustrate that homelessness among youth and young adults in Massachusetts is often a matter of basic survival, with the lack of accessible resources adding to the challenges they face.

The barriers to achieve stable housing and independence go far beyond finding a roof over their heads. Many young people are forced to navigate complex, often inaccessible systems to secure housing, employment, and basic necessities. One respondent described a common challenge: "Landlords are requiring 3x rent, credit over 600, and referrals. I can't do that. I'm struggling to give my kids a good life and to get on my feet." Another shared the emotional toll and stigma of homelessness, saying, "People look at me weird. I feel too good to be there. Such a shame. I deserve better." The barriers created by credit checks, rental requirements, and stigma prevent many youth from accessing stable housing, trapping them in cycles of temporary solutions that offer little long-term security.

The justice and foster care systems play significant roles in the lives of many young people experiencing homelessness, at times compounding rather than alleviating their challenges. One young person shared the frustration of losing stability after aging out of foster care: "It's horrible. They try and pull you out of place you have settled when aging out. There's no housing available at this time. Those in youth shelters shouldn't be thrown to the curb or placed in horrible conditions due to aging out." Another respondent, reflecting on their experiences, suggested that "DCF and its processes need to be re-thought out. Prioritize the youth in the system, not the system."

For young people with histories in the justice system, the barriers to stable housing vary depending on whether they were involved in the juvenile or adult corrections system. Although juvenile records are typically sealed, young adults who have been involved with adult corrections may face significant challenges due to having a criminal record. Many landlords are unwilling to rent to

individuals with any justice history, creating severe obstacles for those trying to rebuild their lives. As one respondent noted, this lack of second chances leaves them with few housing options. "Give people with a criminal past a second chance," they urged, highlighting the need for more compassion and understanding in housing opportunities.

While the Youth Count data suggest that young people who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to get the help they need, this group still faces discrimination. For these young people, having mentors or caseworkers who understand and empathize with their experiences can make all the difference. One young person emphasized the need for such support, stating, "We need people we can trust, people who are like us. Social workers have traumatized a lot of us… We need to see ourselves. When I meet older trans people, it shows me that it's possible for trans people to live that long, I hold onto that." The value of mentorship and representation in support systems cannot be overstated; seeing others who have overcome similar challenges provides hope and a roadmap for LGBTQ+ youth who might otherwise feel isolated and unsupported.

Many youth also highlighted the need for accessible resources to help them navigate complex systems like housing assistance, financial support, and legal aid. One young person shared their vision for a more youth-centered support system, saying, "I would like it to be easier and more accessible for youth to be offered help and given a chance. To not be seen as a crisis or an 'issue.'" Another respondent called for a centralized, easily navigable hub of resources: "A central place where you can sit down with someone and they can explain all the resources available like DTA, SSI, Section 8." These insights underscore the importance of clear, supportive pathways that allow young people to understand and access the help available to them, rather than being overwhelmed by complex systems.

9.0   Demographics

The Commission included several questions to gather demographic information about UHY. This section provides details on respondents' age, race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and place of birth.

Age

The majority of survey respondents meeting the Commission's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth were between the ages of 18 and 24. Approximately 7.0% of respondents were under 18, 38.4% were between 18 and 20, and 54.5% were between 21 and 24. The average age at which unaccompanied homeless youth left home permanently was 17.9, with nearly one-third leaving home permanently as minors.

Table 14	2022 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=634)		2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (657)	
	#	%	#	%
Under 18	42	6.6%	47	7.1%
18-20	232	36.6%	254	38.4%
21-24	360	56.8%	360	54.5%
Average current age	20.8 (SD=2.3)		20.7 (SD=2.3)	
Average age left home permanently	17.8 (2.3)		17.9 (SD=2.2)	

Race/Ethnicity

Respondents could select multiple options for race and ethnicity on the survey tool. Black, Latino, Asian, and Multiracial respondents made up 65% of those who met the Commission definition.

Table 15: Race/ethnicity	2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=661)	
	#	%
White	186	28.1%
Black	178	26.9%
Latino	121	18.3%
Multiracial	107	16.2%
Prefer not to answer	43	6.5%
Asian	16	2.4%
American Indian	7	1.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0.3%

Gender

Approximately half of UHY reported they are girls or women, with 2.7% of them reporting that they are transgender. Meanwhile, 40.5% identified as boys or men, with 3.7% of this group identifying as transgender. In total, there were 37 respondents who identified as transgender, accounting for 5.6% of all respondents. As a point of comparison, the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 5.7% of Massachusetts high school students identify as transgender.

Table 16: Gender	2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=661)		
	#	%	% transgender
Girl/Woman	335	50.7%	2.7%
Boy/Man	268	40.5%	3.7%
Non-Binary	16	2.4%	43.8%
Prefer not to answer	14	2.1%	14.3%
Genderqueer	12	1.8%	66.7%
Two-spirit	3	0.5%	0%
Unsure	2	0.3%	50%

Sexual Orientation

Sixty-five percent of the UHY identified as straight or heterosexual, while 12.4% were bisexual, 3.5% gay, 2.4% lesbian, and 3% pansexual. The remaining respondents identified as asexual, queer, questioning, or two-spirit. Additionally, 7% of UHY respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Table 17: Sexual Orientation	2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=661)	
	#	%
Heterosexual/Straight	432	65.4%
Bisexual	82	12.4%
Prefer not to answer	45	6.8%
Gay	23	3.5%
Pansexual	19	2.9%
Lesbian	16	2.4%
Blank	14	2.1%
Queer	12	1.8%
Other Multisexuality (e.g. abrosexual, demisexual, omnisexual)	8	1.0
Questioning	5	0.8%
Asexual	3	0.5%
Two-spirit	2	0.3%

Place of Birth

Of the 661 respondents meeting the Commission's definition of UHY, 69% were born in Massachusetts. Specifically, 40.8% were born in the same city or town in which they took the survey, while roughly 16% were born in the United States but outside of Massachusetts, and 12% were born outside of the U.S. The 2024 results show significant differences from 2022, with fewer young people being from the city or town where they took the survey and more coming from outside Massachusetts and the United States.

Table 18: Place of Birth	2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=661)	
	#	%
In this city/town	270	40.8%
Another place in Massachusetts	186	28.1%
Outside of Massachusetts, but in the U.S.	103	15.6%
Outside the U.S	79	12.0%
Don't know	3	0.5%

In 2024, we asked young people who were born outside of the U.S. about their country of origin and how long they have lived in the U.S. Among these respondents, 57% had lived in the U.S. for over 7 years, while 21.5% had lived in the U.S. for less than one year. Those who had lived in the U.S. for less than 6 months came from Guinea, Haiti, Mexico, and Senegal. Table 19 summarizes their responses:

Table 19: Country of Origin	Number	%	Number who have been in the US for less than a year
Dominican Republic	19	24.1%	1
Haiti	13	16.5%	4
Cape Verde	5	6.3%	0
Guinea	3	3.8%	3
Jamaica	3	3.8%	0
Mexico	3	3.8%	1
Colombia	2	2.5%	1
Ivory Coast	2	2.5%	0
Senegal	2	2.5%	2
Brazil	1	1.3%	0
Congo	1	1.3%	1
Egypt	1	1.3%	0
Ethiopia	1	1.3%	0
India	1	1.3%	0
Indonesia	1	1.3%	0
Iraq	1	1.3%	0
Liberia	1	1.3%	0
Moldova	1	1.3%	0
Morocco	1	1.3%	0
Russia	1	1.3%	0
Vietnam	1	1.3%	0

10.0 Report Summary

The 2024 Massachusetts Youth Count report provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges, vulnerabilities, and strengths of unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) in the state. The data highlight diverse issues faced by different subpopulations, including unsheltered youth, those in shelters, pregnant and parenting youth, younger respondents, and those exchanging sex or sexual content for basic needs. While the findings emphasize critical gaps in services, they also showcase the resilience and adaptability of young people and the system that is serving them. Below is a summary of key findings across several important areas.

Unsheltered Youth: Unsheltered youth, comprising 17.3% of the Youth Count respondents, face significant challenges, including higher rates of educational disruption, justice system involvement, and extreme economic vulnerability. In 2024, there was a notable increase in the number of 18-20 year olds who were unsheltered, indicating a lack of services for younger unhoused individuals. This group is the least likely to have completed high school or be attending school. This group is the least likely to have sources of money and shows the highest level of unmet service needs.

Sheltered Youth: Shelters provide stability for nearly half of UHY, but these young people still face critical challenges. While they are more likely to pursue education, receive government benefits, and work part-time, gaps remain in transitioning them to long-term housing. Although fewer than in 2022, many sheltered youth continue to reside in shelters for extended periods.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth: Pregnant and parenting youth make up 17.4% of the UHY population and are more likely to be sheltered than their peers. However, they face unique challenges in accessing critical services such as family support and childcare. A significant proportion of this group has had foster care system involvement, many of whom also have justice system involvement. The combination of parenting responsibilities, housing instability, and inadequate access to services creates barriers to education and employment.

Minors: Youth under 18 are particularly vulnerable to unsheltered or unstable living situations. Their early entry into homelessness often correlates with foster care or justice system involvement. Many are not in school and lack access to essential resources, while their lack of income sources and financial dependence exacerbate their vulnerability.

Exchanging Sex or Sexual Content for Basic Needs: A striking 19.8% — or 1 in 5 — UHY reported having ever exchanged sex or sexual content for basic needs, such as food, shelter, or money. This subgroup includes a disproportionate number of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC youth, as well as those with prior foster care and justice system involvement. Many youth in this group are economically marginalized and lack other income sources, making them susceptible to exploitation. Notably, 35 respondents indicated that someone else holds the money or profits from these exchanges.

Justice System Involvement: Youth with justice system involvement represent 19.8% of UHY respondents. The good news is that there was a significant decrease in the number of those with juvenile justice involvement. However, unsheltered and marginalized subpopulations, including those exchanging sex for basic needs, and those without a high school diploma show higher rates of justice system involvement. The interplay of homelessness, family disruption, and foster care involvement create a cycle of instability for these youth.

Educational Trends: More than half of the UHY had a high school diploma; yet, 23% reported not having one and not attending school. Unsheltered youth were particularly unlikely to have completed high school. The rate of respondents without diplomas but attending school significantly increased compared to 2022. Sheltered UHY had higher rates of educational engagement, including participation in college housing programs. While there were positive educational trends in 2024, it should be pointed out that approximately 90% of 18–25-year-olds in MA have a high school diploma, while only 57% of 18–24-year-old Youth Count respondents have a high school diploma.

Economic Vulnerability: Economic insecurity is a consistent theme, with 24% of respondents reporting no income/money source. Unsheltered youth are the most economically vulnerable, but even those in shelters and temporary housing struggle to find stable employment or access government benefits. LGBTQ+ youth disproportionately exchange sex and sexual content for basic needs. The correlation between receiving assistance with employment and having stable income highlights the need for targeted employment and income support programs.

Help Seeking and Service Barriers: The most needed services included long-term housing, emergency shelter, transitional housing, nutritional assistance, and employment support. However, significant gaps exist, particularly for long-term housing, where only 34% of respondents received any help. Unsheltered respondents and those without high school diplomas were the most likely to report receiving no help for most service types. Barriers to help were often related to service system attributes, such as waitlists, eligibility, and paperwork, while factors like not asking for help, not knowing where to go, or not having transportation were less commonly associated receiving no help at all. The data also highlights opportunities for improving service delivery, particularly in long-term housing and specialized support services, such as domestic violence and sexual assault counseling, which were needed but not frequently accessed by respondents.

Strengths and Resilience: Despite their vulnerabilities, many UHY demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness. A significant portion of UHY, particularly those in shelters, continues to pursue education despite housing instability. LGBTQ+ youth are also more likely to be engaged in part-time work and receive financial aid for college, reflecting their determination to improve their circumstances. The notable increase in young people without high school diplomas returning to school suggests positive changes in school outreach practices. Additionally, the decrease in the length of shelter stays and the decrease in UHY with juvenile justice system involvement indicates progress these systems are making in supporting young people who are housing unstable.

Conclusion: The 2024 Youth Count report presents a nuanced view of the experiences of unaccompanied homeless youth in Massachusetts. It highlights significant gaps in housing, education, mental health, and income support services. However, it also underscores the resilience of these youth, who continue to pursue education, employment, and stability despite facing systemic and personal obstacles. Addressing the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth will require a multifaceted approach, including expanding both short and long-term housing options, improving access to education and mental health services, and developing targeted employment programs for young people in Massachusetts who are experiencing housing instability.

11.0 Attachments

1) Methodology
2) Final 2024 Uniform Survey Tool (English Version)
3) Members of the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
4) Cities and towns where surveys were and were not collected

Attachment One: Methodology

The 2024 Count builds on progress initiated by the groundbreaking 2014 Count, the first statewide effort of its kind in the United States, and the annual Counts that followed. The 2014 Count established a crucial baseline for measuring progress in addressing unaccompanied youth homelessness. This baseline became even more valuable with the release of the "Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness" in 2018, which responded to youth and young adult housing vulnerabilities and identified necessary program, policy, and system changes. The Plan also required regions to conduct community needs assessments to analyze the drivers of youth homelessness, with Youth Count data playing a key role in those assessments. The 2024 Youth Count provides policymakers and service providers insight into how young people have fared since the pandemic and highlights service gaps that need attention.

Structure of the Massachusetts Youth Count
The Massachusetts Youth Count is organized by the Commission, including the Identification and Connection Working Group (the Working Group), and EOHHS Homeless Youth Services and its statewide network of funded providers and Statewide Youth Ambassadors.

The **Commission** provides oversight for the Count and is responsible for reporting on its progress annually to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Office of the Child Advocate. The Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services chairs the Commission, and at the time of the 2024 Count, the Commission included members representing youth, state government, service providers, and advocates (see Attachment Two for members of the Commission).

Members of the **Identification and Connection Working Group** of the Commission organized and facilitated the Massachusetts Youth Count on behalf of the Commission. For the 2024 Count, its primary responsibilities were to convene interested stakeholders to prepare for the Count, update the Count methodology, make needed modifications to the uniform survey tool, develop promotional materials for stakeholders to prepare for the Count all accessible in a Google Drive, develop a centralized mechanism to distribute incentives, and implement the Count in partnership with Regional Providers.

The Regional Providers, funded through EOHHS Homeless Youth Services, supported by Statewide Youth Ambassadors, Senior Consultants to the Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission, and the Director of Homeless Youth Services implemented and coordinated the Youth Count at the local and regional level. Each Regional Provider had a unique geographic area to cover, a mix of resources and providers, and high demand for homeless services. The Senior Consultants ensured that the Statewide Youth Ambassadors had decision-making responsibility in the Count, and assisted bringing youth voice to the Count process through focus groups and direct review of all Count materials.

Youth Count Methodology
The Commission, through its Senior Consultants and Working Group, provided technical assistance via Zoom and created implementation materials for the network of regional providers conducting the 2024 Youth Count survey. The uniform survey tool was administered over a 4-week period, from

April 1 through April 30, 2024, with surveying continuing at special events until the end of May. The Working Group developed guidelines for regional partners to collaborate with diverse organizations, identifying State and Local Youth Ambassadors who played a crucial role in assisting with the implementation. Their lived experience and community knowledge ensured that the survey results reflected the full breadth of youth homelessness across the Commonwealth.

The Youth Count drew from best practices outlined in Chapin Hall's *Voices of Youth Count* process[16]. The Working Group created guidelines based on these practices, which included forming local planning committees, providing stipends for Local Youth Ambassadors, conducting targeted youth outreach and marketing, engaging diverse partners, ensuring coordination and quality control, and finding creative ways to engage youth under 18 years old.

Refinement of the Uniform Survey Tool & Process

To develop the 2024 uniform survey tool, the Working Group started with the 2022 survey tool and worked to address its limitations, reduce confusion, and encourage participants to complete each question. Specific modifications to the questions are discussed throughout the report. In 2024, we continued using a Google Form to capture responses, while also providing a paper version. Both the electronic and paper surveys were available in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Brazilian Portuguese. The final English version of the 2024 Uniform Survey Tool can be found in Attachment Two.

Regional Provider Engagement

Once the methodology and updated survey tool were finalized, the team collaborated with the Regional Providers to develop outreach strategies for promoting the online tool. Engagement during this phase included emails, phone conversations to discuss goals, grant information, and several Zoom webinars and drop-in sessions. Communication with Regional Providers was maintained throughout the Count including progress updates and material for distribution. A Looker Data Studio dashboard was also created to provide Regional Providers with real-time information on completed surveys and key respondent characteristics.

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[16] Dworsky, A., Horwitz, B., (2018). Missed opportunities: Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Attachment Two: Final 2024 Uniform Survey Tool
2024 Massachusetts Youth Count Survey

This survey is being administered by the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, in partnership with youth and young adults, the ten homeless youth regions funded by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Homeless Youth Services, and many community groups. This survey has been designed so that the state, regional, and local providers can better understand the housing and service needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25 in Massachusetts. Over the past several years, the results of similar surveys have helped to push the Legislature to invest millions of dollars in housing and services for young people who are experiencing housing instability.

There are 38 questions that should take 20-25 minutes to complete. **Your answers will remain confidential. These are personal questions. Please respond to all of the questions you feel comfortable answering. This information is very important to better serve young people who are unstably housed or homeless.** We greatly appreciate your participation! If you are unstably housed or homeless, you will be directed to fill out a form to receive payment at the end of the survey.

****

1. Have you already taken this survey since April 1st 2024?

    □   Yes

    □   No

2. What are your initials? Initials are the first letter of each of your names: first/middle/last. If you prefer not to write your initials, please use three letters you will remember. We will use the letters to be able to compensate you for completing the survey

    __/___/___(first/middle/last)

3. What is your age?_____

4. What is your date of birth? ___/___/___(month/day/year)

5. What is your primary language? _____

6. If your primary language is one other than English, are you taking this survey in your primary language?

    □   Yes, someone is reading the questions to me in my primary language

    □   Yes, this paper or electronic version has been translated into my primary language

    □   No, I am taking this survey in a language that is not my primary language

    □   English is my primary language

7. Are you currently living with a parent, guardian, or foster parent?

□ Yes

□ No

We are asking the following set of questions to better understand your housing situation.

8. Are you **currently** experiencing homelessness or housing instability? This can include couch surfing, sleeping outside, being in and out of a parent, guardian or foster home, staying in a shelter, sleeping in your car, etc.

□ Yes

□ No, but I have experienced homelessness or housing instability in the past

□ No and I never have experienced homelessness or housing instability

□ Unsure

Comments_____

9. Where did you sleep last night? (**CIRCLE THE <u>ONE</u> OPTION THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR SITUATION)**

□ Shelter (emergency or crisis)

□ Transitional housing program

□ Hotel or motel

□ Apartment or home where I pay the rent or mortgage and I am up to date on rent

□ Apartment or home where I pay the rent or mortgage but I am behind on rent

□ Parent or guardian's home

□ Other relative's home without paying rent

□ Foster family's home

□ Home of friend or friend's family without paying rent

□ Home of boyfriend/girlfriend/partner without paying rent

□ Car or other vehicle

□ Abandoned building, vacant unit, or squat

□ On a train/bus or in train/bus station

□ 24-hour restaurant, laundromat, or other business/retail establishment

□ Anywhere outside (street, park, viaduct)

□ Hospital or emergency room

□   Mental health residential treatment facility

□   Substance use residential treatment facility/detox center

□   Juvenile detention center or jail

□   Other: _____

10. How long have you stayed/lived in the place you slept last night?
    □   Fewer than 6 months   □   6-12 months   □   More than 12 months

11. Do you have a safe place where you can stay on a regular basis for at least the next 14 days?
    □   Yes   □   No   □   Unsure

We are asking the following set of questions to learn about your history of being out on your own.

12. How old were you the first time you left home to be out on your own? _____ (enter NA if you have never been on your own)

13. What were the reasons you left home? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

□   I was fighting with my parent/guardian/foster parent

□   My parent/guardian/foster parent abused drugs or alcohol)

□   My parent/guardian died

□   My house was too small for everyone to live there

□   I was abused or neglected (physically, emotionally, or sexually)

□   I did not feel safe due to violence or unsafe activities in my house

□   My family lost our housing

□   I left foster care

□   I was/am pregnant or got someone else pregnant

□   My sexual orientation and/or gender identity

□   My use of alcohol or drugs

□   I was told to leave

□   I wanted to leave

☐ I had to move out because of COVID-19

☐ Other_____

_____

14. When you left home the first time, where did you stay?

☐ Shelter (emergency or crisis)

☐ Transitional housing

☐ Hotel/motel

☐ Own apartment where you paid the rent

☐ Other relative's home without paying rent

☐ Foster family's home

☐ Home of friend or friend's family without paying rent

☐ With a boyfriend/girlfriend/partner without paying rent

☐ Program for minors without a place to stay

☐ Car or other vehicle

☐ Abandoned building, vacant unit, or squat

☐ On a train/bus or in train/bus station

☐ 24-hour restaurant, laundromat, or other business/retail establishment

☐ Anywhere outside (street, park, viaduct)

☐ Other

_____

_____

15. How old were you when you left home for good? _____
(enter NA if you have never left home to be on your own or if your response above was when you left home for good)
16. Which city/town are you in right now, taking this survey?_____
17. Have you been staying overnight in the city/town where you are taking this survey?
   ☐ Yes   ☐No, I'm staying in _____

We are asking the following set of questions to better understand your demographics (place of birth, education, income, etc.) as well as your experiences trying to access resources

18. Where were you born?

        □   In this city /town

        □   Another place in MA

        □   Outside MA but in the U.S.

        □   Outside U.S

        □   Don't know

18 a. If you were born outside U.S., which country were you born in _____

18b. How long have you been living in the U.S.?

        □   0-6 months

        □   7 months-1 year

        □   1.1-2 years

        □   2.1-5 years

        □   5.1 or more years

19. Do you have a high school diploma, HiSET degree, or GED?   □ Yes   □ No

20. Are you currently attending school or another education program?   □ Yes   □ No

(If yes, which one of the following type of school or education program are you attending?)

    □   High School

    □   GED/HiSET program

    □   Community College

    □   4-year College or University

    □   Technical/vocational program

    □   Youth Build or Job Corps

21. Have you ever served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard? □ Yes   □ No

22. Have you ever been in foster care?   □ Yes   □ No   □ Unsure

23. Are you currently signed onto DCF voluntary services   □ Yes   □ No   □ Unsure

24. Are you currently signed onto DYS voluntary services (YES program)?   □ Yes   □ No
□ Unsure

25. Have you ever spent time in juvenile detention (a secure facility or residential program for young people) after being charged with a criminal offense?   □ Yes   □ No   □ Unsure

If yes (check all that apply)
- □ I was committed to the MA Department of Youth Services (DYS)
- □ I was committed to a Juvenile Justice System in another state
- □ Other _____

26. Have you ever spent time in an adult jail or prison after being charged with a criminal offense?

□ Yes   □ No   □ Unsure

27. Are you pregnant or parenting?
□ Yes, pregnant only
□ Yes, parenting only
□ Yes, both pregnant and parenting
□ No
□ Unsure

27a. If you are a parent, do you have custody of your child(ren)? In other words, are you responsible for caring for your child(ren) on a day-to-day basis on at least some days of the week?

□ Yes   □ No   □ NA

28. What are the ways that you **currently** make money? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- □ Full-time job
- □ Part-time job and/or temporary job
- □ Money from "under the table" work
- □ Cash assistance from DTA/Welfare or DCF
- □ Social Security/Disability payments
- □ Unemployment benefits
- □ Hustling/selling drugs
- □ Exchanging sex/sexual content including Only Fans or other phone or video platforms
- □ Panhandling/spanging
- □ Child support
- □ Money from family members or friends
- □ Money from college financial aid
- □ Self-employed/my own business

□   None

□   Other: _____

29. Have you ever exchanged sex acts (including sexual intercourse, oral sex, etc.) for food, a place to stay, money or other necessities?   □ Yes   □ No

30. Have you ever exchanged sexual content (including phone calls, photographs, or video uploads) for food, a place to stay, money or other necessities?   □ Yes   □ No

31. If you ever exchanged sex or sexual content for money, did someone else keep the profits or hold the money for you?   □ Yes   □ No

32. **In the last year**, have you needed any of the following types of help. If you needed it, please let us know if you got the help you needed. If you were unable to get the help you needed, please let us know what got in the way for you.

Needed help with emergency or crisis shelter CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⬜	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing shelter? (choose all that apply) ⬜	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money		☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other	
Needed help with short-term, transitional housing CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⬜	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing short-term housing? (choose all that apply) ⬜	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money		☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other	
Needed long-term housing such as a housing subsidy, Section 8, or public housing CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⬜	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help

What barriers did you face accessing long-term housing supports? (choose all that apply) ⬚	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money	☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed help with high school enrollment or completion or GED/HiSET enrollment CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⬚					

What barriers did you face accessing high school/GED support? (choose all that apply) ⬚	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money	☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed help with college such as applying, enrolling, financial aid, etc. CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⬚					

What barriers did you face accessing college education support? (choose all that apply) ⬚	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money	☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed job training, job search, life skills training, or career					

placement CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⍰					
What barriers did you face accessing job training or employment support (choose all that apply) ⍰	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other	
Needed help with health care services CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⍰	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing health care? (choose all that apply) ⍰	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other	
Needed help with family support such as conflict mediation or parenting support CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⍰	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing family support? (choose all that apply) ⍰	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other	
Needed help with child care CIRCLE ONE OPTION ⍰	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help

What barriers did you face accessing childcare? (choose all that apply) ▢	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money		☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other	
Needed help with food such as SNAP, food from soup kitchen or food pantry CIRCLE ONE OPTION ▢	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing food? (choose all that apply) ▢	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money		☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other	
Needed help with cash assistance like DTA/welfare benefits, or Social Security Disability benefits CIRCLE ONE OPTION -->	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing cash assistance, (e.g., DTA/welfare benefits, or Social Security Disability benefits? ▢	☐ Transportation ☐ Sent somewhere else ☐ Language barrier ☐ Put on a waiting list ☐ Paperwork ☐ Didn't have ID ☐ Didn't hear back	☐ Didn't know where to go ☐ Didn't qualify ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe ☐ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services ☐ Didn't ask for help ☐ Didn't have money		☐ Didn't have a phone to follow up ☐ Didn't have health insurance ☐ Legal barriers ☐ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity ☐ NONE ☐ Other	
Needed help with domestic violence counseling CIRCLE ONE OPTION ▢	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help

What barriers did you face accessing domestic violence counseling? (choose all that apply)	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ □ NONE □ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed help with sexual assault counseling CIRCLE ONE OPTION					

What barriers did you face accessing sexual assault counseling? (choose all that apply)	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed help with mental health counseling CIRCLE ONE OPTION					

What barriers did you face accessing mental health counseling? (choose all that apply)	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other

	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
Needed help with substance use/alcohol treatment CIRCLE ONE OPTION					

What barriers did you face accessing substance use or alcohol treatment? (choose all that apply) ▢	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other

Needed something else: CIRCLE ONE OPTION	A. Yes, and I got all the help I needed	B. Yes, and I got some of the help I needed	C. Yes, but I got none of the help I needed	D. I needed this help but I didn't try to get it	E. No, I didn't need this type of help
What barriers did you face accessing this help?	□ Transportation □ Sent somewhere else □ Language barrier □ Put on a waiting list □ Paperwork □ Didn't have ID □ Didn't hear back	□ Didn't know where to go □ Didn't qualify □ Didn't feel comfortable/safe □ Felt too overwhelmed to seek help □ Didn't follow through or return for services □ Didn't ask for help □ Didn't have money		□ Didn't have a phone to follow up □ Didn't have health insurance □ Legal barriers □ Discrimination due to sexual orientation/gender identity □ NONE □ Other	

33. What is your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply:

- □ American Indian/Alaskan Native
- □ Asian
- □ Black/African American
- □ Hispanic/Latinx
- □ Middle eastern/North African
- □ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- □ White
- □ Prefer not to answer
- □ Write your own response _____

34. What is your gender?

- □ Girl/Woman
- □ Boy/Man
- □ nonbinary
- □ Genderqueer
- □ two-spirit
- □ Unsure
- □ Prefer not to answer
- □ Write your own response _____

35. Are you transgender?

☐ No, I am not transgender.

☐ No, I identify as nonbinary, genderqueer, or another term

☐ Yes, I am a transgender girl/woman

☐ Yes, I am a transgender boy/man

☐ Yes, I identify as nonbinary, genderqueer, or another term

☐ Not sure whether I am transgender

☐ Not sure what this question means

☐ Prefer not to answer

☐ Write your own response_____

36. What is your sexual orientation? (sexual orientation means who you are romantically and physically attracted to)

☐ Heterosexual/straight

☐ Lesbian

☐ Gay

☐ Bisexual

☐ Queer

☐ Questioning

☐ Pansexual

☐ Asexual

☐ two-spirit

☐ Prefer not to answer

☐ Write your own response_____

37. Do you have any other comments or insights you would like to share with the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

38. Which would best describe how you were recruited to take this survey?

☐ At a shelter

☐ At a social service agency

☐ Through a Youth Ambassador

☐ Through a street outreach worker/street count

☐ At an event

☐ At a school/educational program

☐ Social media/website

☐ An email from a friend or acquaintance

Thank you!

As noted above, **all of your answers will remain confidential.** Your participation is deeply appreciated and a key contribution in helping Massachusetts better understand housing instability among youth and young adults.

For more information about this survey and the work to expand housing and resources for youth and young adults experiencing housing instability, please contact the [Massachusetts Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission](https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission)
https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission

_____

For official use only: Survey date_____

 Survey site _____

Administering organization/Youth Count Ambassador _____

Attachment Three: Members of the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

FY25 MA Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth[17]

Seats	Current Appointment or Designee
Secretary of Health and Human Services or Designee- CHAIR	Dr. Alice Colegrove, designee
Senate Chair of Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities	Sen. Robyn K. Kennedy
House Chair of Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities	Rep. Jay Livingstone
Member of the Senate	Sen. Lydia Edwards
Member of the House	Rep. James O'Day
One member Who Shall be Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader	Sen. Patrick O'Connor
One member Who Shall be Appointed by the House Minority Leader	Rep Hannah Kane
The Commissioner of Children and Families (DCF) or a designee	Teona Beromelidze, designee
The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or a designee	Shirley Fan-Chan, designee
The Commissioner of Department of Public Health (DPH) or a designee	Jennifer Halstrom and Stacy Lynch, designees
The Commissioner of Mental Health (DMH) or a designee	Heidi Holland, designee
The Director of Medicaid or a designee	Madeline Wachman, designee
The Commissioner of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or a designee	Kamaria Moore-Hollis, designee

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[17] Last updated Jan 2024

The Under Secretary for Housing and Community Development (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) or a designee	Gordon Calkins, designee
The Commissioner of Youth Services (DYS) or a designee	Rebecca Moore, designee
*Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Lisa Goldblatt-Grace, My Life My Choice
*Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Elisabeth Jackson, Bridge Over Troubled Waters
*Direct Service Provider who works with Unaccompanied Homeless Youth- Appointed by the Governor	Phil Ringwood, Dial/SELF
*Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.	Kelly Turley
*The Mass Taskforce on Youth Aging out of DCF Care	Rachel Gwaltney
*Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice	Deb Silva
*Mass Equality Org, The Campaign for Equality Inc.	Deborah Shields
*Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance	Caitlin Golden
*Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth	Aaron Gonzales
*Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, Inc.	Tre'Andre Carmel Valentine
*Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Thaliana Paulino
*Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Brianna Howland

*Youth who has experienced homelessness- Appointed by the Child Advocate	Deandre Avant

Attachment Four: Where Surveys Were and Were Not Collected

In 2024, surveys were collected in 147 out of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts (42%). Respondents who met the Commission definition were surveyed in 105 of these cities and towns. These rates are similar to 2024; however, there was a considerable increase in surveys from Metro Boston and Bristol County and a decrease in other areas such as Worcester County. The following table is organized by regions and provides a list of all cities and towns where surveys were collected, the number of surveys collected in each, and the number that met the Commission definition. Total numbers of surveys collected and meeting the Commission definition do not add up to totals used elsewhere in the report due to missing information about where some of the young people were staying.

Region Summary	2024 respondents meeting Commission definition (n=661)	
	#	%
Metro Boston	164	24.8%
Bristol	108	16.3%
Worcester	80	12.1%
Plymouth	64	9.7%
Essex	63	9.5%
Three County	51	7.7%
Hampden	46	7.0%
North Middlesex	36	5.4%
Metro West	27	4.1%
Cape & Islands	12	1.8%
Blank	10	1.5%

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 1 -Three-County	**100**	**51**
Adams	8	3
Alford	7	3
Amherst	20	9
Ashfield	3	3
Becket	1	
Belchertown	1	
Bernardston	1	
Buckland		

Charlemont		
Cheshire		
Chesterfield	1	1
Clarksburg		
Colrain		
Conway		
Cummington		
Dalton	1	1
Deerfield		
Easthampton		
Egremont		
Erving		
Florida	3	1
Gill	3	
Goshen		
Granby		
Great Barrington		
Greenfield	19	12
Hadley		
Hancock		
Hatfield		
Hawley	1	1
Heath		
Hinsdale		
Huntington		
Lanesborough		
Lee		
Lenox		
Leverett		
Leyden		
Middlefield		
Monroe		
Montague	2	
Monterey		
Mount Washington		
New Ashford		
New Marlborough	1	1
New Salem		
North Adams	12	8

Northampton	3	2
Northfield		
Orange	3	1
Otis	1	1
Pelham		
Peru		
Pittsfield	4	2
Plainfield		
Richmond	1	
Rowe		
Sandisfield		
Savoy	1	
Sheffield		
Shelburne		
Shutesbury		
South Hadley		
Southampton		
Stockbridge		
Sunderland		
Tyringham		
Ware	1	
Warwick		
Washington		
Wendell		
West Stockbridge		
Westhampton		
Whately		
Williamsburg	1	1
Williamstown	1	1
Windsor		
Worthington		

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 2 - Hampden County	**105**	**46**
Agawam	9	4
Blandford		
Brimfield		
Chester		
Chicopee	7	
East Longmeadow		
Granville		
Hampden		
Holland		
Holyoke	6	3
Longmeadow		
Ludlow	1	
Monson		
Montgomery		
Palmer		
Russell		
Southwick		
Springfield	78	36
Tolland		
Wales		
West Springfield	1	
Westfield	2	2
Wilbraham	1	1

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 3 - Worcester County	**163**	**131**
Ashburnham	2	1
Athol	5	1
Auburn	3	
Barre		

Berlin	2	2
Blackstone	1	1
Bolton	7	4
Boylston	4	1
Brookfield		
Charlton	1	1
Clinton		
Douglas		
Dudley	5	2
East Brookfield		
Fitchburg	20	11
Gardner		
Grafton		
Hardwick		
Harvard		
Holden		
Hopedale		
Hubbardston		
Lancaster	1	
Leicester		
Leominster	2	1
Lunenburg		
Mendon	1	
Milford	1	
Millbury		
Millville		
New Braintree	1	1
North Brookfield		
Northborough		
Northbridge		
Oakham		
Oxford	2	2
Paxton	1	
Petersham		
Phillipston		
Princeton		
Royalston		
Rutland		
Shrewsbury		

Southborough		
Southbridge	1	1
Spencer	1	
Sterling		
Sturbridge		
Sutton		
Templeton		
Upton		
Uxbridge		
Warren		
Webster		
West Boylston	2	1
West Brookfield		
Westborough	1	1
Westminster		
Winchendon		
Worcester	99	49

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 4 - Bristol County	**261**	**108**
Acushnet	2	
Attleboro	17	15
Berkley	3	2
Dartmouth	6	1
Dighton	1	
Easton		
Fairhaven	2	1
Fall River	54	31
Freetown	1	
Mansfield	2	1
New Bedford	162	48
North Attleborough	3	3
Norton		
Raynham		
Rehoboth	1	1
Seekonk	1	
Somerset		
Swansea	3	2
Taunton	3	3
Westport		

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 5 - Cape Cod & Islands (Barnstable, Dukes & Nantucket counties)	**26**	**12**
Aquinnah		
Barnstable	7	3
Bourne	3	2
Brewster	1	
Chatham		
Chilmark	1	1
Dennis	1	1
Eastham	1	1
Edgartown		
Falmouth	6	1
Gosnold		
Harwich	1	1
Mashpee		
Nantucket		
Oak Bluffs		
Orleans	1	
Provincetown		
Sandwich		
Tisbury		
Truro	1	
Wellfleet		
West Tisbury		
Yarmouth	3	1

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 6 - Plymouth & East Norfolk counties	**103**	**64**
Abington	1	
Braintree	8	5
Bridgewater	9	8
Brockton	44	30
Carver		
Cohasset		
Duxbury		
East Bridgewater		
Halifax		
Hanover		
Hanson		
Hingham		
Holbrook	2	1
Hull		
Kingston		
Lakeville		
Marion		
Marshfield	3	
Mattapoisett		
Middleborough		
Norwell	2	
Pembroke	2	2
Plymouth	6	3
Plympton		
Quincy	18	14
Rochester		
Rockland	1	
Scituate		
Wareham	4	
West Bridgewater		
Weymouth	2	
Whitman	1	1

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 7 - Essex County	**121**	**63**
Amesbury	7	4
Andover	5	3
Beverly	5	3
Boxford		
Danvers	1	1
Essex		
Georgetown		
Gloucester	2	2
Groveland		
Hamilton	1	
Haverhill	6	2
Ipswich	1	
Lawrence	28	15
Lynn	39	18
Lynnfield		
Manchester		
Marblehead		
Merrimac		
Methuen	6	3
Middleton		
Nahant		
Newbury		
Newburyport		
North Andover		
Peabody	3	1
Rockport		
Rowley		
Salem	13	8
Salisbury	1	1
Saugus	3	2
Swampscott		
Topsfield		
Wenham		
West Newbury		

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 8 - North Middlesex County	**96**	**36**
Acton	1	
Ashby		
Ayer		
Bedford	9	4
Billerica	2	1
Boxborough		
Burlington		
Carlisle		
Chelmsford	1	1
Concord		
Dracut		
Dunstable		
Groton		
Hudson	1	
Lexington		
Lincoln		
Littleton		
Lowell	71	26
Marlborough	5	2
Maynard	1	
North Reading		
Pepperell		
Reading		
Shirley		
Stoneham		
Stow		
Sudbury		
Tewksbury		
Townsend		
Tyngsborough		
Wakefield		
Wayland		
Westford		
Weston		
Wilmington	2	1

Winchester		
Woburn	3	1

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 9 - Metro West (South Middlesex & West Norfolk counties)	**51**	**27**
Ashland	5	5
Avon	4	3
Bellingham		
Canton	1	
Dedham	1	1
Dover		
Foxborough		
Framingham	26	10
Franklin	1	1
Holliston		
Hopkinton		
Medfield	3	1
Medway		
Millis		
Natick	1	1
Needham		
Norfolk	1	
Norwood		
Plainville		
Randolph	6	3
Sharon	1	1
Sherborn		
Stoughton		
Walpole	1	1
Wellesley		
Westwood		
Wrentham		

Region/Cities & Towns	Total Respondents	Total Respondents Meeting the Commission Definition
Region 10 - Metro Boston	**363**	**164**
Arlington	3	3
Belmont		
Boston	324	146
Brookline	2	
Cambridge	5	2
Chelsea	4	1
Everett	3	
Malden	5	3
Medford	1	
Melrose	1	1
Milton	5	2
Newton		
Revere	2	
Somerville	3	3
Waltham	4	2
Watertown	1	1
Winthrop		