



HIDDEN PRECARIOUS HOUSING

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Homelessness and Overcrowding in California

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Executive Summary

There is broad agreement that California is experiencing a homelessness crisis. California Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) are among those experiencing severe housing precarity, meaning that their housing is often uncertain and unstable, expensive, and of low quality. However, the California AANHPI experience with housing precarity, often as hidden homelessness and overcrowding, is generally invisible to policy makers and public service providers.

This report presents findings from a recent study of eleven California counties with the highest concentration AANHPI populations to show the hidden implications of AANHPI housing precarity. The flawed ways in which many policy makers count homeless populations, along with the high levels of community stigma and shame of being considered homeless among AANHPI households, and various socioeconomic factors, have resulted in a lack of access and use of housing, legal, mental health/behavioral health, and basic needs services for which they are eligible.

The most important findings from our analysis are:

1. Federal counts of homelessness differ substantially from California state counts of homelessness. For homeless youth, there are large gaps in the counts between the total number of AANHPI homeless youth in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT) counts (conducted annually for the sheltered population and every two years for homeless people not living in shelters) and the total number of AANHPI homeless students in the California Department of Education's PK-12th grade enrollment data. The California counts are much higher but the federal PIT counts are used for federal funding allocation.
2. Some California counties (Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, San Francisco, Sacramento) have relatively high numbers of homeless AANHPI students compared to other California counties and other racial and ethnic groups.
3. Some California counties show relatively high proportions of AANHPIs living in overcrowded conditions, where there is more than one person living per room in a house or apartment. Moreover, some AANHPI groups have a disproportionately high incidence of housing overcrowding. For example, in Fresno County, a higher proportion of NHPI households lives in overcrowded conditions compared to all other racial and ethnic groups.
4. Because of the severe community stigma and shame associated with homelessness and the conditions associated with precarious housing, AANHPI families and households are reluctant to identify as homeless or precariously housed. They are less likely to acknowledge that they need services and, therefore, do not seek and may not use available services even if they are eligible.
5. Service providers point to language access, citizenship status, age, income and unemployment as factors most associated with AANHPIs that are at risk of being unhoused.

From these findings, we make the following recommendations:

1. **Triangulate** data from the state's PK-12th grade homeless student enrollment database with U.S. HUD PIT counts, and U.S. Census Bureau data. This would better inform state and local policy decision-making and more adequately address AANHPI housing precarity.
2. **Collaborate** with California's Department of Education (CA DOE) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to require other state agencies to use the state's DOE homelessness counts as the more inclusive and accurate measures for state and local policy action regarding homelessness.

3. **Enhance** funding and policies to support affordable housing for multigenerational families. Community assets, especially larger housing units with more than two bedrooms and bathrooms, are used by AANHPI populations to house relatives and friends in overcrowded housing units, resulting in keeping them from living on the streets.
4. **Use** “overcrowding” as a way to measure precarious housing. Identify neighborhoods, cities, and counties with large proportions of AANHPI overcrowding to create maps and priority areas to target and more efficiently reach unhoused AANHPIs. These mapping tools can be an invaluable resource for making more visible, improving, and stabilizing what is now hidden precarious housing.
5. **Expand** research to refine measures of housing precarity, investigate the effects of precarious housing on social, health, and political outcomes, catalogue the ways in which AANHPI communities use housing strategies, such as doubling up and other means to keep AANHPIs off the streets, as well as outline and evaluate policy strategies that support these community housing options.

This report includes the following sections: (1) a brief overview of research on homelessness for AANHPIs, including federal and state definitions of homelessness, (2) data and methods for this study, (3) most important findings from the analyses, (4) conclusions and recommendations for policy action and future research.

Introduction

This report examines precarious housing, which we define as uncertain and unstable, expensive, and often low quality, for California’s Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) population. Data include homeless counts from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-In-Time (PIT) and the California Department of Education (CA DOE) PK-12 enrollment data, American Community Survey overcrowding data, and interviews with service providers and community leaders from throughout the state.

After a brief review of the research on AANHPI homelessness, we provide a definition of homelessness from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (1987), which drives the federal allocation of funding for homeless services. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides funding for housing and social services targeting homeless populations.

We examine hidden precarious housing among AANHPIs in California with a focus on eleven counties with high concentrations of AANHPI populations based on the proportion of the total population and total number of residents. These counties by region are:

- Northern California: Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Francisco
- Central California: Fresno, San Joaquin
- Southern California: Los Angeles County, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego

There are three areas where we focus our analysis:

First, we analyze the discrepancies in “counts” of AANHPI homeless populations, where U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-In-Time (PIT) counts conducted every year (of sheltered populations) and every two years (of unsheltered populations). We consider the HUD PIT counts as important indicators because these data are used for federal funding allocations. The California state counts of homeless students in the PK-12 system provide an alternative assessment of the size and composition of the state’s homeless population. To preview the findings, in comparing homelessness data from HUD PIT counts of homeless individuals younger than 25 years of age with California Department of Education (CA DOE) data on AANHPI homeless students, we find large discrepancies in these counts for particular California counties. The primary reason for these discrepancies is that the CA DOE counts “temporarily doubled up” as a category of being homeless whereas the HUD PIT counts see such “overcrowding” as a risk for homelessness rather than being homeless.

Second, to examine the “doubled up” definition of homelessness used by the CA DOE, we analyze data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) to further examine overcrowding in AANHPI households. Overcrowding is defined by the U.S. Census as households with more than one occupant per room. Our analysis shows that overcrowding is common for many AANHPI groups, with NHPs especially overcrowded in many California counties, and in some counties, more NHPs are overcrowded than all other racial or ethnic groups..

Third, we present an analysis of qualitative interview data with thirteen service providers and community leaders. The interviewees generously provided their insights about what is happening “on the ground” to further explain how AANHPI’s precarious housing remains hidden. These community leaders and front-line staff indicate that California AANHPIs are generally reluctant to seek services because of severe stigma related to homelessness and associated legal, mental and physical health identity and conditions. Because of this severe stigma and reluctance to seek services, AANHPIs are using whatever resources that are available to them through family, friends, and acquaintances to stay off the streets, including using hidden precarious housing options.

We conclude the report with a summary of the most important findings and recommendations for policy action and future research.

What do Researchers Know about AANHPI Homelessness?

Researchers and policymakers have largely depicted Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) as being less likely to be homeless compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Folsom et al., 2005; Hudson & Vissing, 2010; Olivet et al., 2021). However, other scholars have shown that AANHPIs experience risk factors for homelessness, including low wages, lack of health coverage, substance use, mental health issues, and sexual risk-taking; these risk factors adversely affect AANHPI subgroups disproportionately and more than other racial or ethnic groups (Halverson et al., 2022; Liu & Wadhera, 2022; Yue et al., 2022). Chang et al. (2023), in a rare study including unhoused AANHPIs, looked at mortality data for AANHPIs in Santa Clara County in California and found that the cause of death for AANHPIs who were unhoused was different when compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Unhoused AANHPIs over a ten-year period in Santa Clara County tended to die from “injuries and illness” compared to other groups that tended to die from substance use and overdose. In other words, this study showed that AANHPIs show many risk factors for homelessness but are different from other unhoused racial and ethnic groups in terms of causes of death.

Why is there not more research and policy attention paid to hidden precarious housing for AANHPIs?

The reasons for the lack of policy and research attention on AANHPI hidden precarious housing and homelessness include social and cultural assumptions and myths about AANHPIs. Some scholars, for example, point to long-standing cultural myths about AANHPIs, such as “model minority” and “yellow peril” framings, as reasons why policymakers do not investigate the prevalence of homelessness among AANHPIs (Kawai, 2005). These assumptions and myths are compounded by AANHPIs tending not to ask for help or services (including mental health, substance use, and income maintenance programs) due to cultural pressures and perspectives such as stigma and shame with respect to such conditions or needs (Evans et al., 2012), especially AANHPIs who are recent immigrants or less acculturated (Atkinson & Gim, 1989).

Reinforcing this lack of attention to AANHPI hidden precarious housing and homelessness, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) Point-In-Time (PIT) estimates, mandated via the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for all local jurisdictions receiving federal funding, as well as national surveys, consistently show low rates of AANHPI homelessness, either observed or self-reported (Hudson & Vissing, 2010). However, some researchers have argued that HUD’s PIT data undercounts the total unsheltered population (Mosites et al., 2021).

Findings from related fields highlight the results of lack of access and lack of use of health and social services by AANHPIs needing assistance. A University of California Asian American and Pacific Islander Policy Multicampus Research Program (UC AAPI Policy MRP) study in 2009 showed that California AANHPIs experience high rates of deaths due to cancer, low rates of cancer screening, high rates of tuberculosis, hepatitis B, and diabetes, low insurance coverage rates, and high levels of mental distress (Ponce et al., 2009). Other research has confirmed the lack of access by AANHPIs to mental health services (Leong & Lau, 2001) and health care (Jang et al., 1998), along with discrimination experienced by AANHPIs in housing and labor markets (McMurtry et al., 2019) and underrepresentation in housing program use (Evans et al., 2020). In other words, California AANHPIs have needs for health and social services, housing and legal aid, and other basic needs. However, stigma remains an important barrier for AANHPI households to ask for help and hidden housing precarity remains an important reason why service providers do not consider AANHPIs to be a high-priority population to reach.

Definition of Homelessness

The U.S. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §11431) passed in 1987 was the first federal legislation focused on addressing homelessness. The Act included funding for a variety of services targeting homeless populations, premised on a Continuum of Care (CoC), which included several points of contact (including emergency shelter, single room occupancy, and permanent supportive housing) meant to move homeless persons from the streets into permanent housing situations.

The McKinney-Vento Act includes definitions of **homelessness**:

1. an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
2. an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
3. an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
4. an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
5. an individual or family who—
 - A. will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by—
 - i. a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;
 - ii. the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or
 - iii. credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;
 - B. has no subsequent residence identified; and
 - C. Lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and
6. unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who—
 - A. have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing,
 - B. have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and
 - C. can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.” (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)

The McKinney-Vento Act also defines those **who are “at risk of homelessness”**:

- A. has income below 30 percent of median income for the geographic area;
- B. has insufficient resources immediately available to attain housing stability; and
- C.
 - i. has moved frequently because of economic reasons;
 - ii. is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - iii. has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated;
 - iv. lives in a hotel or motel;
 - v. *lives in severely overcrowded housing*;
 - vi. is exiting an institution; or
 - vii. *otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability* and an increased risk of homelessness.” (italics added by authors) (McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act)

In other words, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act does not consider hidden precarious housing (hidden homelessness and overcrowding) as a definition of homelessness, and therefore, HUD does not use this as a definition for the PIT count conducted every year (shelters) or every other year (homeless individuals not living in shelters), which is used for federal fund allocation.

California AB 27: Homeless Children and Youths and Unaccompanied Youths Reporting

The McKinney-Vento Act also requires the identification of homeless student populations as a way to connect those individuals to services and resources. However, the McKinney-Vento Act does not include guidelines on how to count and identify homeless students and researchers argue that there has been an undercount of homeless students (Rosales, 2022).

California Assembly Bill (AB) 27, signed into law in 2021, mandates local educational agencies (LEAs), liaising with school districts and charter schools, to administer a housing questionnaire and make those data available to the state’s Department of Education. This includes a template for a standardized questionnaire to be used by schools. AB 27 also establishes three technical assistance centers to train schools in how to connect families with resources.

In the following sections, we describe the data we use to explain hidden precarious housing for AANHPIs in California. We compare the HUD PIT count by race and ethnicity for 2022 (all homeless persons younger than 25 years) with the CA DOE homeless student count for the academic year 2022-2023 to demonstrate the hidden nature of AANHPI housing precarity in California. We also provide results from the analysis of thirteen interviews with California AANHPI organization leaders and front-line staff to explain the experience of AANHPIs in California living with housing precarity and why this remains hidden.

Data

We analyzed quantitative data from 2022 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts, 2022-23 California Department of Education (CA DOE) Homeless Student Enrollment, and 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. We also conducted qualitative interviews with thirteen service providers and community leaders from across California to provide insights about hidden housing precarity for California's AANHPI communities.

2022 U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT) Count: The federal HUD PIT Count offers a snapshot of homelessness—both sheltered and unsheltered—on a single night. These counts occur during the last 10 days of January each year (for the sheltered population). HUD PIT counts are meant to provide an estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness within particular homeless populations such as families, veterans and youth.

The data are collected and reported by Continuum of Care (CoC) geographies. CoC entities also report the number of beds in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, safe havens, rapid rehousing programs, permanent supportive housing programs and other permanent housing.¹

2022-23 State of California (CA) Department of Education (DOE): The CA DOE uses a federal definition of homelessness that includes students living in motels, trailer parks, campgrounds, or public spaces. Their data include all enrolled homeless children and youth in grades PK through 12.²

2022 American Community Survey (ACS): The ACS is the nation's most comprehensive data set that provides reliable housing, demographic and economic characteristics by race, national origin or ethnic sub-group at the county level geography in between the decennial census every ten years.³

Interviews: We conducted interviews via Zoom with thirteen community leaders and service providers across California from September 9 to November 8, 2023. The interviewees included individuals working directly in homeless services as well as leaders of organizations that have been working in housing assistance and affordable housing development. The interviewees also included organizations that have not previously focused on housing services in their work but have been finding it to be an increasingly common area of need for the communities they serve. These interviews provided critical insight into the lived experience of community members and the trends that have been invisible in official counts and quantitative data.

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2023, December). COC Analysis tool: Race and Ethnicity. HUD Exchange. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5787/coc-analysis-tool-race-and-ethnicity/>

² California Department of Education. (2022, November). Definition of Homeless - Homeless Education (CA Dept of Education). California Department of Education -- Homeless Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/homelessdef.asp>

³ United States Census Bureau. (2023, August 16). American Community Survey Data. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data.html>

Findings

In this section, we highlight the most important results of our analysis.

First, we analyze the discrepancies in “counts” of AANHPI homeless populations, where U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-In-Time (PIT) counts conducted every year (of sheltered populations) and every two years (of unsheltered populations). We consider the HUD PIT counts as important indicators because these data are used for federal funding allocations. The California state counts of homeless students in the PK-12 system provide an alternative assessment of the size and composition of the state’s homeless population. To preview the findings, in comparing homelessness data from HUD PIT counts of homeless individuals younger than 25 years of age with California Department of Education (CA DOE) data on AANHPI homeless students, we find large discrepancies in these counts for particular California counties. The primary reason for these discrepancies is that the CA DOE counts “temporarily doubled up” as a category of being homeless whereas the HUD PIT counts see such “overcrowding” as a risk for homelessness rather than being homeless.

Second, to examine the “doubled up” definition of homelessness used by the CA DOE, we analyze data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) to further examine overcrowding in AANHPI households. Overcrowding is defined by the U.S. Census as households with more than one occupant per room. Our analysis shows that overcrowding is common for many AANHPI groups, with NHPIs especially overcrowded in many California counties, and in some counties, more NHPIs are overcrowded than all other racial or ethnic groups.

We build on these findings with an analysis of qualitative interview data with thirteen service providers and community leaders. The interviewees generously provided their insights about what is happening “on the ground” to further explain how AANHPI’s precarious housing remains hidden. These community leaders and front-line staff indicate that California AANHPIs are generally reluctant to seek services because of severe stigma related to homelessness and associated legal, mental and physical health identity and conditions. Because of this severe stigma and reluctance to seek services, AANHPIs are using whatever resources that are available to them through family, friends, and acquaintances to stay off the streets, including using hidden precarious housing options.

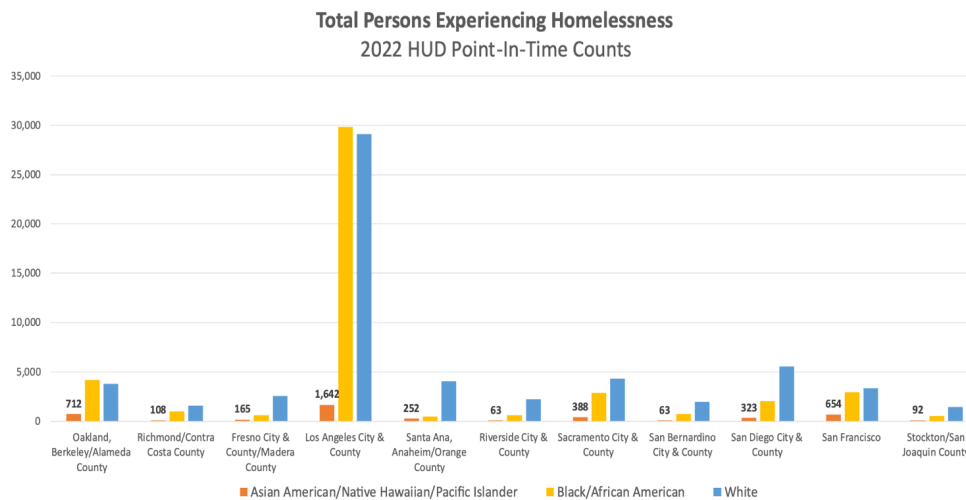


Figure 1: Total Persons Experiencing Homelessness
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2022 Point-in-Time Counts

What do official counts tell us about AANHPI homelessness?

Federal U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-In-Time (PIT) counts of AANHPI homelessness neatly fit the model minority myth described earlier, which depicts AANHPIs as overachievers and not experiencing economic, social, or political problems. The 2022 HUD PIT count suggests that AANHPIs are not homeless in California. In 2022, the HUD PIT count recorded just over 171,000 total individuals who were experiencing homelessness in California. Of those 171,000+, just under 4% (6,495) were identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander.

- Figure 1 above shows HUD PIT counts for total persons experiencing homelessness by race and ethnicity. The orange bar is AANHPIs, the yellow bar is Black/African Americans, and the blue bar is Whites.
- Across the eleven counties of focus with the highest concentrations of AANHPI residents, Los Angeles City & County has the highest number of homeless persons.
- Across the eleven counties of focus, AANHPIs account for a slim percentage of the total number of persons experiencing homelessness.

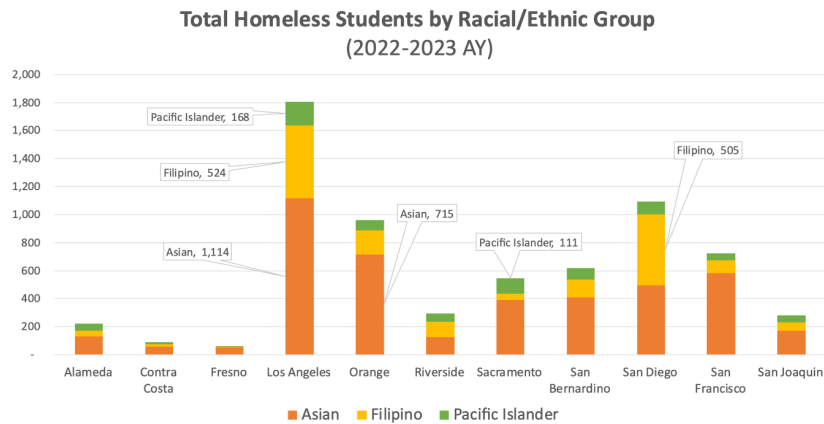


Figure 2: Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander Homeless Students
Source: 2022-2023 CA Department of Education Homeless Student Enrollment

How do HUD's Point-in-Time Counts compare to California Department of Education homeless student data?

California's Department of Education (CA DOE) is another source for data on homelessness and focuses specifically on PK-12th grade homeless students. Data for the 2022-2023 school year were collected under the newly implemented AB 27 guidelines for survey administration and data collection. Figure 2 shows the number of homeless Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students across the eleven counties of focus.

- Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange and San Francisco counties have the highest number of Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander homeless students.
- Filipino homeless students are concentrated in San Diego and Los Angeles counties.
- The largest number of Pacific Islander students are located in Los Angeles and Sacramento counties.

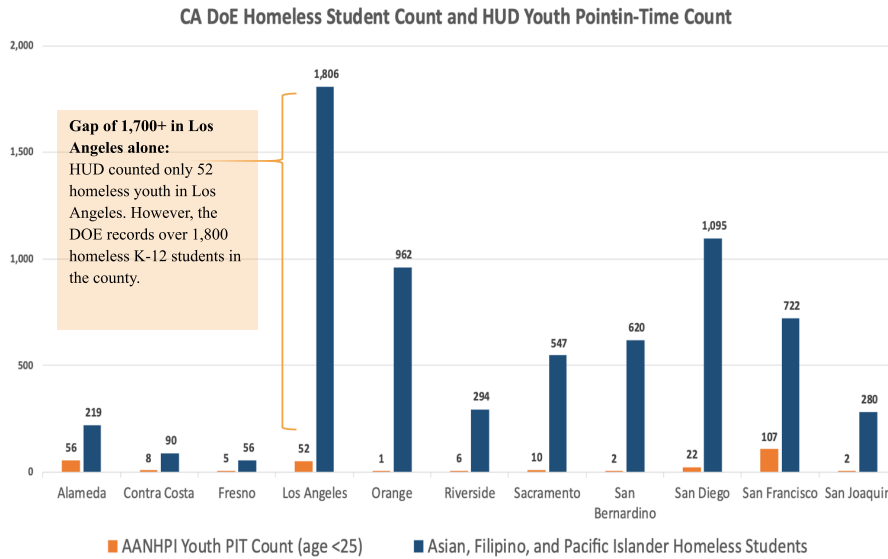


Figure 3: CA DOE Homeless Student Count and HUD Youth Point-in-Time Count
 Source: 2022 HUD Point-in-Time Counts and 2022-2023 CA DOE Homeless Student Enrollment

In 2022, the CA DOE counted 8,391 Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander homeless students statewide.

- HUD's 2022 PIT count showed only 403 AANHPI homeless individuals younger than 25 years for the whole state. HUD's youth category includes individuals younger than 25 years while CA DOE counts PK-12th grade homeless students.
- Figure 3 above shows that there is a large gap between the two counts. The orange bar is the AANHPI HUD PIT count of homeless persons younger than 25 years. The blue bar is CA DOE counts of homeless PK-12th grade students who are Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander.
- Figure 3 shows the differences across counties. In Los Angeles county alone, there is a gap of over 1,700 homeless youth and young adults, when comparing the 2022 HUD PIT count and the 2022-2023 CA DOE PK-12th grade homeless student count.

Why are AANHPI not saying that they are homeless or that they need services?

The previous section showed that AANHPI homelessness in the state is underreported or "hidden." Parents and guardians may be reluctant to have their AANHPI children identified as homeless due to perceived stigma of being labeled as "homeless" and fear of being the only ones with visible housing precarity problems. Fear of deportation due to undocumented citizenship status may be another factor. This is a vicious cycle. As a result, even the CA DOE data are likely underreporting AANHPI homelessness as much of the state data are collected via surveys asking respondents to self-report their experiences.

The role of stigma and the real concern among parents is described by an Orange County community leader.

"The other thing they don't use is free and reduced lunch and they don't use the McKinney-Vento Act to get additional resources for their kids because they're worried. They're worried the authorities will say they're not taking care of their kids and take them away."

- Orange County Community Leader

Even if parents and families are willing to disclose their precarious housing situation, language capacity may be a barrier. One of the interviewees highlighted the lack of language capacity as a barrier to counting AANHPI populations experiencing homelessness.

“In San Jose, when we look at rent burden or housing stability for sub-groups, Southeast Asians have indicators that are similar to those for Black, Latinx, Indigenous populations -- so I would expect to see more unhoused folks than what we see in the PIT Counts. In our encampments up here, there are clusters of Vietnamese speakers because there are city staff there who are doing Vietnamese translation and interpretation. Whether or not it ends up in the PIT Counts, there are AAPI unhoused in this city.”

- San Jose Community Leader

2022-2023 Statewide Homeless Student Enrollment by Dwelling Type				
	Temporarily Doubled-Up	Temporary Shelters	Hotels/Motels	Temporarily Unsheltered
Asian	74.9%	11.5%	11.4%	2.2%
Filipino	89.3%	6.1%	2.6%	2.1%
Pacific Islander	80.3%	6.5%	10.0%	3.2%
African American	68.5%	12.4%	13.7%	5.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	76.2%	10.3%	9.1%	4.5%
Hispanic or Latino	86.6%	5.4%	4.4%	3.5%
White	76.8%	10.1%	7.8%	5.3%
Two or More Races	75.8%	9.9%	10.0%	4.2%
STATEWIDE	83.3%	6.9%	6.0%	3.8%

Table 1: 2022-2023 Statewide Homeless Student Enrollment by Dwelling Type

Source: 2022-2023 California Department of Education Homeless Student Enrollment by Dwelling Type

Where do PK-12th grade homeless students live in California?

The gaps between the HUD PIT count and CA DOE homeless PK-12th grade student enrollment totals suggest that AANHPI individuals who are experiencing homelessness are undercounted at the federal level (and likely also at the state level because of the reluctance by parents and guardians to self-identify as precariously housed).

The difference between HUD PIT counts and CA DOE counts can be explained by the different and more expansive definition of homelessness used by CA DOE. Recently released 2022-2023 data by CA DOE showing homeless students by housing situation shows that most (83%) homeless students in the state are “temporarily doubled up.” CA DOE defines “temporarily doubled-up” as “living with relatives or friends due to economic hardship, including unaccompanied youth and runaways” (California Department of Education).

Table 1 above shows the living situations of homeless students by race and ethnicity:

- Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander PK-12th grade homeless students are living in doubled up situations at 75%, 89% and 80%, respectively.
- The data also reveal differences between groups. Filipino PK-12th grade homeless students have higher rates of doubling up than the statewide percentage (89% compared to 83% for PK-12th grade homeless students statewide).
- While about 7% of all PK-12th grade homeless students are living in temporary shelters, the percentage is 11.5% for Asian students.
- For Pacific Islander homeless students, the use of hotels/motels is the second most likely living situation for this group.
- Both Pacific Islander and Asian homeless students are living in hotels/motels at higher rates than the overall homeless student population at 10.0% and 11.4%, respectively.

These results support our assertion that HUD PIT counts are severely and in some counties very severely undercounting AANHPI homeless populations. Community leaders have long recognized that HUD PIT counts undercount AANHPI unhoused or precariously housed populations.

Counting a population is difficult when that population is mobile and may also seek to avoid detection or identification. The gaps between HUD’s PIT Count and the CA DOE count of PK-12th grade homeless students, however, suggests the potential magnitude of undercounting. If AANHPIs who are experiencing homelessness and housing precarity are not all represented in homeless counts, then there is a need to look more closely at AANHPI housing characteristics.⁴

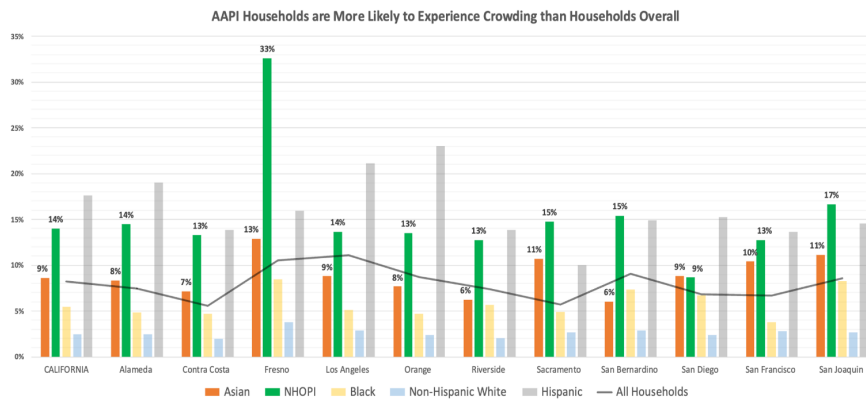


Figure 4: AAPI Households are More Likely to Experience Crowding than Households Overall
 Source: 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

What does data on overcrowding show about hidden precarious housing and homelessness for AANHPIs in California?

Building on the CA DOE category of “temporarily doubled up,” experienced by the vast majority of PK-12th grade homeless students in California, Figure 4 above shows overcrowding by race and ethnicity for the state and across the eleven counties of focus, with the highest concentration of AANHPIs:

- The Census Bureau’s definition of overcrowding describes households with more than 1.01 occupants per room. This includes all living spaces in the housing unit and excludes spaces like kitchens, hallways, bathrooms, and unfinished rooms.⁵
- On Figure 4, overcrowding by race and ethnicity for the entire state is the left most set of bars. The racial and ethnic categories are those used by the U.S. Census Bureau. The orange bars are Asian residents, the green bars are NHOPI (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander) residents, the yellow bars are Black residents, the light blue bars are non-Hispanic White residents, the grey bars are Hispanic residents, and the dark grey line is the percentage of all households living in overcrowded housing.

4 <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Census%20defines%20an%20overcrowded%20unit%20as,1.5%20persons%20per%20room%20are%20considered%20severely%20overcrowded> (accessed March 25, 2024).

5 California Department of Housing and Community Development. (n.d.). Overpayment and Overcrowding. California Department of Housing and Community Development. <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/planning-and-community-development/housing-elements/building-blocks/overpayment-payment-and-overcrowding#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Census%20defines%20an%20overcrowded%20unit%20as,1.5%20persons%20per%20room%20are%20considered%20severely%20overcrowded>

- NHOPIs especially and Asians in some cases are experiencing overcrowding across many counties in California. Counties in the Central Valley (33% in Fresno, 17% in San Joaquin, 15% in Sacramento) and San Bernardino (15%) in Southern California show some of the higher proportions of overcrowding for NHOPI households.

Interviews revealed even higher levels of overcrowding than may be captured in the U.S. Census data.

“Housing and the cost of living were already so out of reach for our families before the pandemic. [The pandemic] made things worse when our homes were already overcrowded – overcrowded with multiple families living in them. Here, in the Inland Empire, there can be as many as 20 to 25 family members living under a single roof.”

- Inland Empire Community Leader

In Orange County, a community leader described the overcrowding situation.

“We had a young person who lived with 8 people in a garage. The house had 1 bathroom and there were 23 people living in the house. [The student] had no access to the bathroom and kitchen, so his family had to always eat take out and at times use a bucket for their waste. [This kind of situation] is so common that folks don’t know they would be considered unhoused.”

- Orange County Community Leader

In other words, overcrowding is being used by California AANHPI households to moderate/reduce their rent burden and other housing costs (e.g. utilities, mortgage, property tax, insurance). However, NHPI overcrowding is extremely high in (seemingly affordable/low-rent) places like Fresno County. Overcrowding is likely due in part to the lack of rental housing options with more than one – two bedrooms.⁶ Overcrowding causes problems with reasonable access to toilets and kitchens. Rethinking housing precarity may need to include measures of access to essential services, such as access to toilets. Moreover, the majority of new affordable housing developments are not designed for multigenerational households, which results in the tenuous doubling up of families, friends and relatives in a home.

How do we explain these patterns of hidden housing precarity, especially why do AANHPIs in California not seek housing, legal, and other basic needs services?

We focus in this section on the analysis of the thirteen qualitative interviews with community leaders and front-line service providers from across the state who shared with us the experiences of AANHPIs and the barriers to seeking help. These experiences are complex and nuanced, and the factors are not all good or bad. Barriers and opportunities include stigma (associated with being labeled homeless and or being associated with societally marginalized conditions and needs, leading AANHPIs to be reluctant to identify as homeless), social isolation (not having community support exacerbates housing precarity, but social support among unhoused AANHPIs provides needed help), transnational networks (may provide needed help but at the same time are global sources of stigma), and the use of unpermitted housing options (may provide more options than the formal housing market but may consist of substandard or low quality housing).

⁶ <https://laist.com/news/housing-homelessness/los-angeles-family-sized-housing-policy-three-two-bedroom-apartments-incentives-boyle-heights-rent-overcrowding>, accessed March 28, 2024.

Stigma operates in keeping forms of homelessness hidden when individuals – out of fear of community shame – avoid identifying themselves as homeless and forgo seeking services. At the same time, there is also community support – when community members temporarily house and extend household space to keep individuals off the streets. The organizers and community leaders we interviewed consistently revealed these dual themes of community support and community stigma.

“People in our community don’t see themselves as homeless because they’re living with family. They think of homeless as people living on the streets but couch surfing and temporarily living with folks is also homelessness. It’s very stigmatized. No one wants to be labeled as homeless but that’s the reality.”

- Inland Empire Community Leader

Stigma and feelings of shame lead to **social isolation** as individuals hide their status from those they know. This can make housing precarity issues even more acute. This challenge reveals another characteristic of homelessness that existing services are limited in their current approaches to address – that is the role of community among the unhoused in combatting deep social isolation.

“The most unique thing about working with AANHPI homeless [persons] is keeping their community together. I don’t think homeless services is ready for that or have thought that far ahead. The biggest thing about homelessness is social isolation but coupled with AANHPI culture and how collective we are, the social isolation is exponentially worse. Taking individuals from an encampment where they are with others who speak their language and where they eat together to a shelter in Skid Row where they are by themselves -- they are definitely going to leave that shelter and return to the encampment.”

- Los Angeles Outreach Worker

These conditions mean that any housing strategies must allow currently unhoused or precariously housed AANHPI community members to be rehoused together. Otherwise, the longer-term effects of any rehousing strategy may prove unsuccessful.

Transnational networks add more complexity to the stories of AANHPI homelessness. In Los Angeles, local housing community leaders and homeless services staff were made aware of an encampment of over twenty unhoused Filipinos near downtown. For this group, there are diverse and overlapping concerns that include immigration status and the fear of interacting with any formal services and the pressure to continue to send remittances home. Many or all have hidden their situation from family and friends. The encampment also includes veterans who have been unable to access benefits. The transnational nature of social networks complicates the role of stigma in influencing how unhoused AANHPIs seek services and help.

“There was a news coverage done on [the encampment] and they didn’t blur the faces... One of [the individuals], his family in the Philippines found out about [his situation] through the news. There were a lot of hateful comments on the YouTube page, like ‘Oh, you’re in America and you should be grateful. You’re there, as opposed to me. You should be grateful. You’re lazy.’ This really impacted his mental health.

There is an added layer of shame and guilt and making sure your family back home doesn’t find out. I don’t think I’ve really experienced that level of cultural shame with the Black/African American community or the Hispanic/Latino community.”

- Los Angeles Homeless Outreach Worker

Precariously housed individuals and households under financial pressure create conditions for homelessness. Federal HUD PIT homeless counts alone do not tell the full story of housing precarity for AANHPIs.

“The biggest thing is housing affordability -- if rents decrease, that fixes a lot of problems. You get fewer evictions and less homelessness. It’s easier to prevent people from becoming homeless than it is to find and fix the problems for people who are homeless. It’s cheaper to prevent homelessness than to deal with homelessness.”

- San Jose Organizer

Unpermitted housing adds another dimension to the issue of overcrowding and introduces concerns about living conditions to the story of precarity though also provides options for affordable housing. While staying with others (through overcrowding) can be a strategy for avoiding more extreme forms of homelessness, there are potential issues of individuals and families living in substandard conditions. There are several barriers to formalizing unpermitted housing, both on the landlord side and the tenant side. Formalizing unpermitted housing might bring more units into compliance with city standards, however, the cost and potential penalties associated with formalization likely discourage both landlords and tenants from pursuing such avenues.

“In fact, the big problem here in San Francisco is the unpermitted garage conversions. And so, we do work with the city to try to get to those communities and get them to participate in amnesty programs for legalizing ADUs [Accessory Dwelling Units] or legalizing garage conversions. A lot of people don’t participate in those programs because they’re not inclined to be in the light of day.

Landlords are not inclined to participate because the people who are housed in those units will not say anything and the people who live in those units are not inclined to participate or report because they’re probably getting [paying] something less than market rate rent in San Francisco and the person may be a person who speaks their language and who they have a cultural affinity with. But, it’s very difficult to try to get participation in those programs because it takes two to do it -- either the tenant or the landlord have to think it’s a problem, that there are code violations, etc. ... It’s a matter of getting folks to think that they are entitled to [housing standards] -- to say, “Yes, this is something my landlord should be doing for me.”

- San Francisco Organizer

Conclusions and Recommendations

The most important findings from our analysis are:

- Federal counts of homelessness differ substantially from California state counts of homelessness. For homeless youth, there are large gaps in the counts between the total number of AANHPI homeless youth in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Point-in-Time (PIT) counts (conducted annually for the sheltered population and every two years for homeless people not living in shelters) and the total number of AANHPI homeless students in the California Department of Education's PK-12th grade enrollment data. **The California counts are much higher but the federal PIT counts are used for federal funding allocation.**
- Some California counties (**Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, San Francisco, Sacramento**) have relatively high numbers of homeless AANHPI students compared to other California counties and other racial and ethnic groups.
- Some California counties show relatively high proportions of AANHPIs living in overcrowded conditions, where there is more than one person living per room in a house or apartment. Moreover, some AANHPI groups have a disproportionately high incidence of housing overcrowding. For example, **in Fresno County, a higher proportion of NHPI households live in overcrowded conditions compared to all other racial and ethnic groups.**
- Because of the severe community stigma and cultural shame associated with homelessness and the conditions associated with precarious housing, **AANHPI families and households are reluctant to identify as homeless or precariously housed.** They are less likely to acknowledge that they need services and, therefore, do not seek and may not use available services even if they are eligible.
- Service providers point to **language access, citizenship status, age, income and unemployment as factors most associated with AANHPIs that are at risk of being unhoused.**

From these findings, we make the following recommendations:

- **Triangulate** data from the state's PK-12th grade homeless student enrollment database with U.S. HUD PIT counts, and U.S. Census Bureau data. This would better inform state and local policy decision-making and more adequately address AANHPI housing precarity.
- **Collaborate** with the state Department of Education (CA DOE) and California Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to require other state agencies to use the state's DOE homelessness counts as the more inclusive and accurate measures for state and local policy action regarding homelessness.
- **Enhance** funding and policies to support affordable housing for multigenerational families. Community assets, especially larger housing units with more than two bedrooms and bathrooms, are used by AANHPI populations to house relatives and friends in overcrowded housing units, resulting in keeping them from living on the streets.
- **Use** "overcrowding" as a way to measure precarious housing. Identify neighborhoods, cities, and counties with large proportions of AANHPI overcrowding to create maps and priority areas to target and more efficiently reach unhoused AANHPIs. These mapping tools can be an invaluable resource for making more visible, improving, and stabilizing what is now hidden precarious housing.
- **Expand** research to refine measures of housing precarity, investigate the effects of precarious housing on social, health, and political outcomes, catalogue the ways in which AANHPI communities use housing strategies, such as doubling up and other means to keep AANHPIs off the streets, as well as outline and evaluate policy strategies that support these community housing options.

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