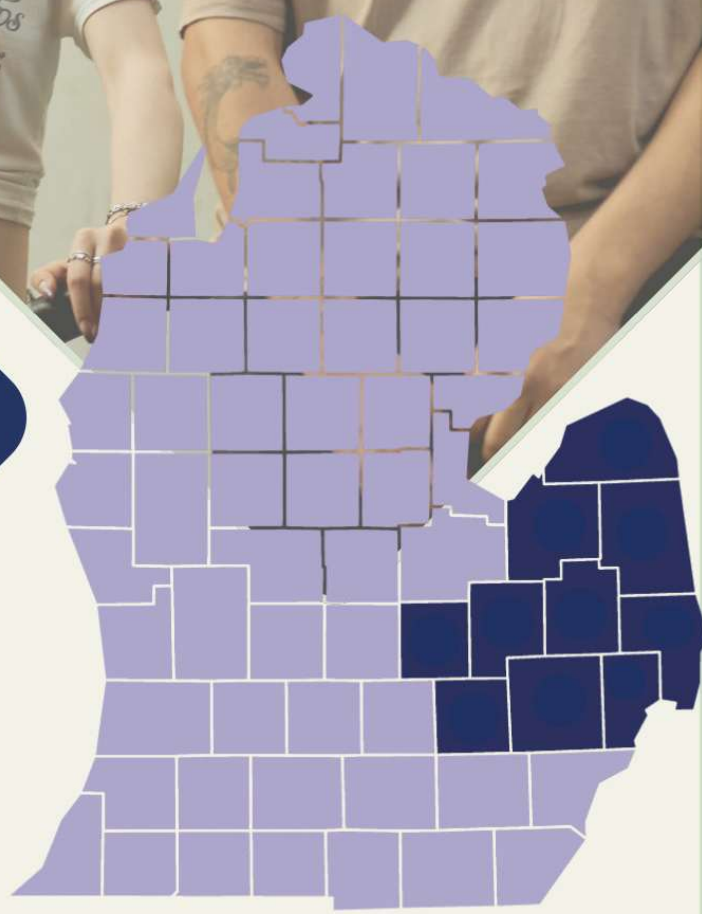
Youth Needs Assessment

The Mid and Southeast Michigan Youth Homelessness Regional Partnership



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Prepared for

The Mid and Southeast Michigan Youth Homelessness Regional Partnership

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Public Sector Consultants and Partners for Impact would like to acknowledge all the partners who participated in this needs assessment. They especially appreciate the Regional Partnership's Youth Advisory Board, LIGHT Board, for their support and leadership on multiple components of this needs assessment. LIGHT Board members' skills and expertise were instrumental in ensuring a thorough and well-rounded assessment.

Executive Summary

Youth and young adults who experience homelessness or housing instability are at significant risk of poorer physical and mental health outcomes, disrupted education, and long-term economic instability. To better understand these challenges in Mid- and Southeast Michigan, the MSEMI Youth Homelessness Regional Partnership (MSEMI YHRP), led by Lighthouse in collaboration with a steering committee of partnership representatives, conducted a regional youth needs assessment. This report examines youth homelessness and housing instability in ten counties—Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola—and identifies key factors shaping young people's experiences with housing and support services.

Methods: The assessment uses public data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), school-based McKinney-Vento data, and interviews and discussions with service providers, system partners, and young adults ages 18 to 24. These sources provide insight into the demographics of the region, risk factors associated with housing instability, and the youth-serving system's strengths and challenges.

Findings indicate that homelessness among youth and young adults in the region, while frequently undercounted, is influenced by a combination of economic pressures, limited affordable housing, and barriers related to education, employment, and social risk factors.

- 29% of the MSEMI region's population is under the age of 25
    - 21%: people under 18 years old
    - 8%: people ages 18 to 24 years old
- 12% of people under 25 years old experience poverty, which is a key risk factor for homelessness
- 1 in 3 young people under 25 who receive services for homelessness from a local housing provider in the region report that their families don't have the income to support them
- 38% of 15- to 24-year-old householders spend more than 30% of their income on housing

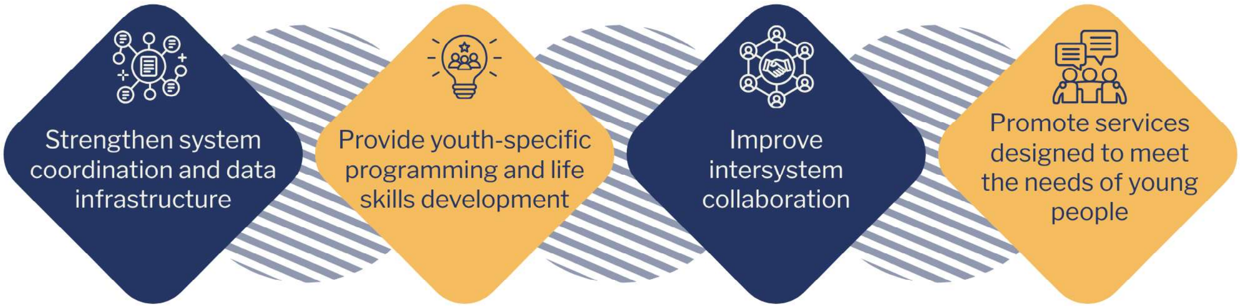
Homelessness among youth and young people in the region:

- 5,638 K–12 students experiencing homelessness in the 2022–23 school year

From 2020 to 2024:

- 3% increase in homelessness among young adults ages 18 to 24
- 35% increase in homelessness among young people under 18 years old
- Service providers and young people agree: Limited youth-specific housing, transportation, fragmented data, unaddressed family risk factors, and legal constraints are key barriers to keeping young people safe and housed

Based on these findings, participants identified ways to improve the regional response to youth homelessness. Recommendations fall into these key categories, with detailed suggestions in the full report. Further, this report focuses largely on 18- to 24-year-olds, as the widest service gaps exist for serving that age group

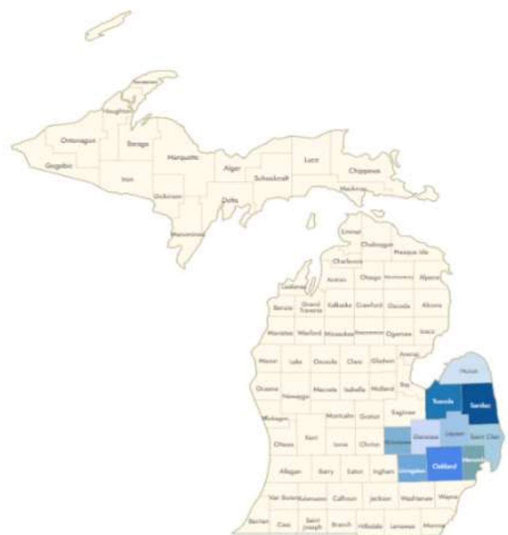


Together, these efforts can help build a more coordinated and responsive system to prevent and address youth homelessness across the MSEMI region.

Introduction

Young people who experience homelessness or housing instability are at increased risk for substance use, victimization, poor mental health, and chronic homelessness, among other challenges (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs n.d.a). Programs across Michigan work to prevent homelessness and mitigate these risks, but gaps in reach and effectiveness remain—particularly for young people ages 18 to 24. These gaps are driven, in part, by inconsistent data on the needs and experiences of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

The Mid and Southeast Michigan Youth Homelessness Regional Partnership is a collaborative dedicated to alleviating poverty and eradicating homelessness across a ten-county region of the state, comprising Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola Counties. MSEMI provides programs and services, promotes affordable housing development, and conducts statewide advocacy. Effectively implementing these efforts requires a clear understanding of who is experiencing housing instability or homelessness, how and where they access services, and the challenges they face. MSEMI received a Youth Homelessness Systems Improvement (YHSI) grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a needs assessment on these topics. A full list of YHSI partners is included in Appendix A.



MSEMI—led by Lighthouse—partnered with Public Sector Consultants (PSC)[1] and Partners for Impact (PFI)[2] to develop a regional profile assessing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The profile includes data on housing instability as well as the prevalence, drivers, and service needs of young people experiencing homelessness across the MSEMI region to inform program and policy development. Profiles of individual counties in the region are provided in Appendix B.

[1] PSC is a Michigan-based research and consulting firm with offices in Lansing and Detroit.

[2] PFI is a consulting firm dedicated to building capacity for community change headquartered in Apex, North Carolina.

Methods

PSC conducted a comprehensive assessment of the MSEMI region's youth and young people up to age 24 and the systems that serve them. This assessment included collection and analysis of publicly available data from sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, HUD, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Additionally, PSC worked with local and regional planning bodies, known as Continuums of Care (CoCs), to gather data on youth served by programs addressing housing instability and homelessness. Together, these data sources provide insight into both the broader youth population and those experiencing housing instability in the region.

To complement these quantitative data sources, PSC and PFI conducted interviews and discussion groups with CoC representatives, youth service providers, housing services providers, system partners, and young people ages 18 to 24. These conversations provided important context on how the youth-serving system operates in the MSEMI region, the challenges providers and young people face, and opportunities for strengthening programs and services. They also offered critical insight into the lived experiences of youth navigating housing instability and accessing services.

Key Terms

Continuum of Care (CoC): A regional or local organization that acts as a planning body for coordinating housing services to reduce and end homelessness

Homelessness: There are many definitions of homelessness. For example, HUD defines "literally homeless" as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act includes students who are literally homeless but also students who are temporarily staying with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship. This report denotes which definition is being used for each data point.

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS): HUD's electronic data system used where CoCs collect and store data on homelessness in their jurisdictions

Local youth housing providers: Lighthouse, Reach Resource Services, Livingston Family Center, and Comprehensive Youth Services are the local youth housing providers that serve those up to age 25 across the ten-county region. They offer the following programs:

- Transitional living
- Rapid rehousing
- Basics and crisis centers
- Street outreach

MSEMI region: The area consisting of Genesee, Huron, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Sanilac, Shiawassee, and Tuscola Counties

Youth, young people, and/or young adults: people ages zero to 24 years old. The specific ages included varies on the data available. Specific ages for a given data point are listed in the narrative and exhibits.

Limitations

Data on homelessness and housing instability have historically been difficult to capture for several reasons. Homelessness often involves frequent moves and periods without use of shelters or programs that typically collect data on people receiving services. In addition, varying definitions of homelessness and housing instability—as well as stigma associated with those experiences—may prevent individuals from identifying with those definitions or seeking services.

Local CoCs collect data on people experiencing homelessness using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). PSC and the MSEMI YHRP requested HMIS data from the CoCs serving counties in the MSEMI region, but they were not available in time for inclusion in this report. To help address this gap, PSC worked with local youth housing providers to obtain program-level HMIS data.

Additional data gaps include important demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and immigration status. National data indicate that LGBTQIA+ young people are at higher risk for homelessness, but PSC was unable to identify a comprehensive, generalizable data source capturing these characteristics for the full MSEMI region. Although some CoCs provided program data containing this information, the data only represent individuals who sought and received services and therefore may not reflect the full scope of needs.

Regional Profile

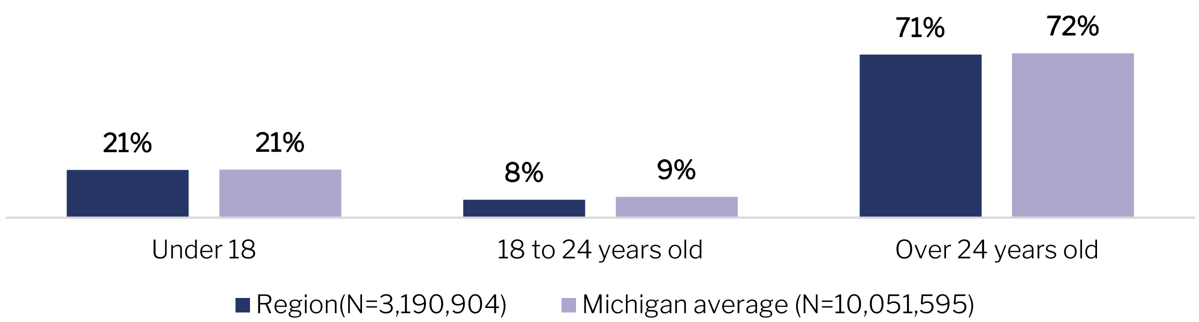
Knowing who lives in the MSEMI region, their age and racial identity, as well as the economic and social conditions that affect housing stability offers important background for interpreting the data that follow. This section first describes key demographic characteristics and then examines factors that may increase the risk of housing instability among young people. Where relevant, information and insights shared by interview and discussion group participants are provided to supplement the quantitative data with local context.

Age and Race Demographics

Understanding the region's demographics provides context for interpreting trends in youth homelessness and housing instability. This section describes the age and racial composition of the MSEMI region's population, with a focus on young people ages 18 to 24. Some data sources used expanded or different age groups, so the most comparable or relevant age group is provided.

The age distribution of the ten-county region closely matches that of Michigan overall (Exhibit 1). Young people ages 18 to 24 comprise approximately 8 percent of the region's population, while youth under age 18 make up 21 percent, and adults over age 24 account for 71 percent. Understanding the size of these age groups provides context for assessing the scope of housing instability among young people relative to the broader population.

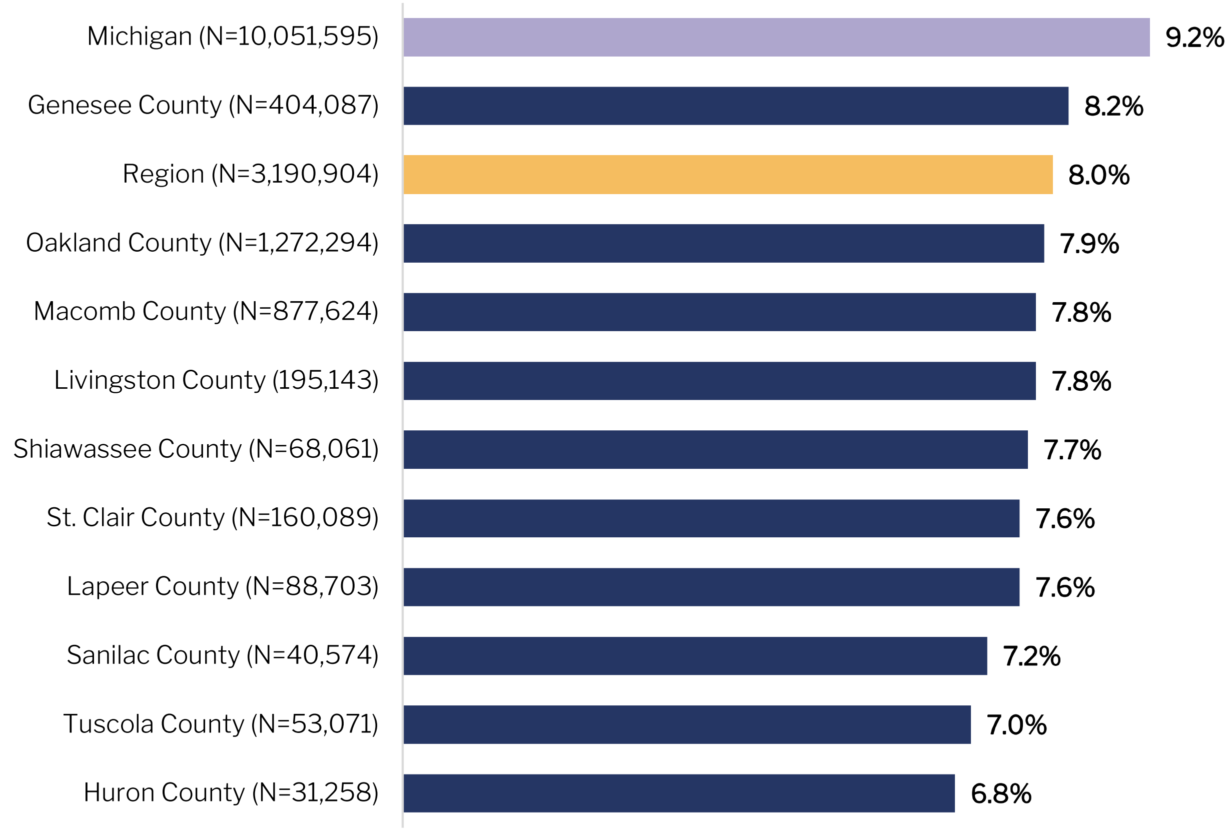
EXHIBIT 1. Population by Age Group, Ten-County Region and Michigan, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

The population of focus, 18- to 24-year-olds, makes up under 10 percent of each county's population. Genesee County has the highest share of young people in this age group (8.2 percent), and Huron County has the lowest (6.8 percent) (Exhibit 2).

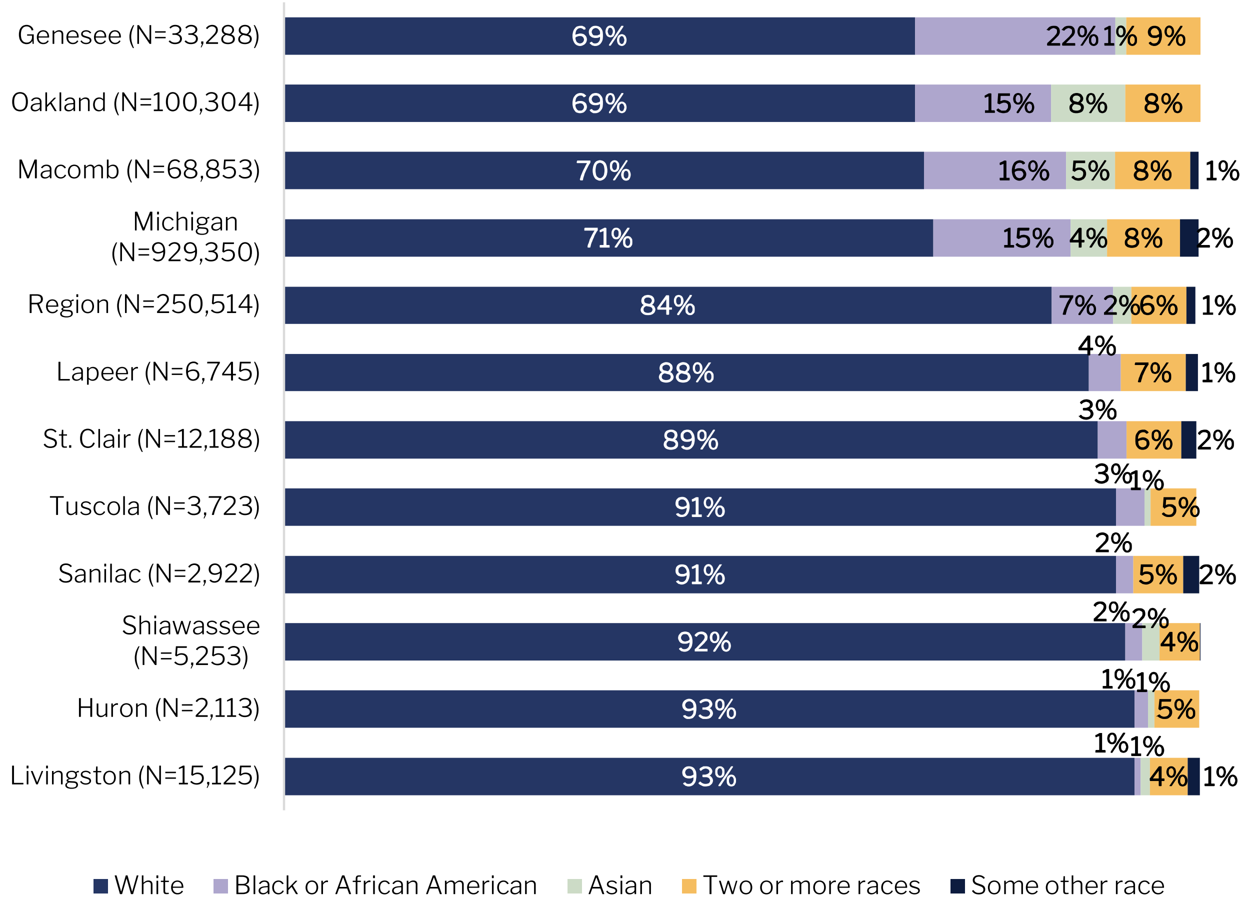
EXHIBIT 2. Percent of Population Ages 18 to 24 by Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

The region's racial composition is similar to the state's, with a predominantly white population, including young adults ages 18 to 24, though the share of residents who identify as a race other than white varies across counties. Macomb, Oakland, and Genesee Counties are the most racially diverse, with about one-third of the population ages 18 to 24 years old in each county being a race other than white (Exhibit 3).

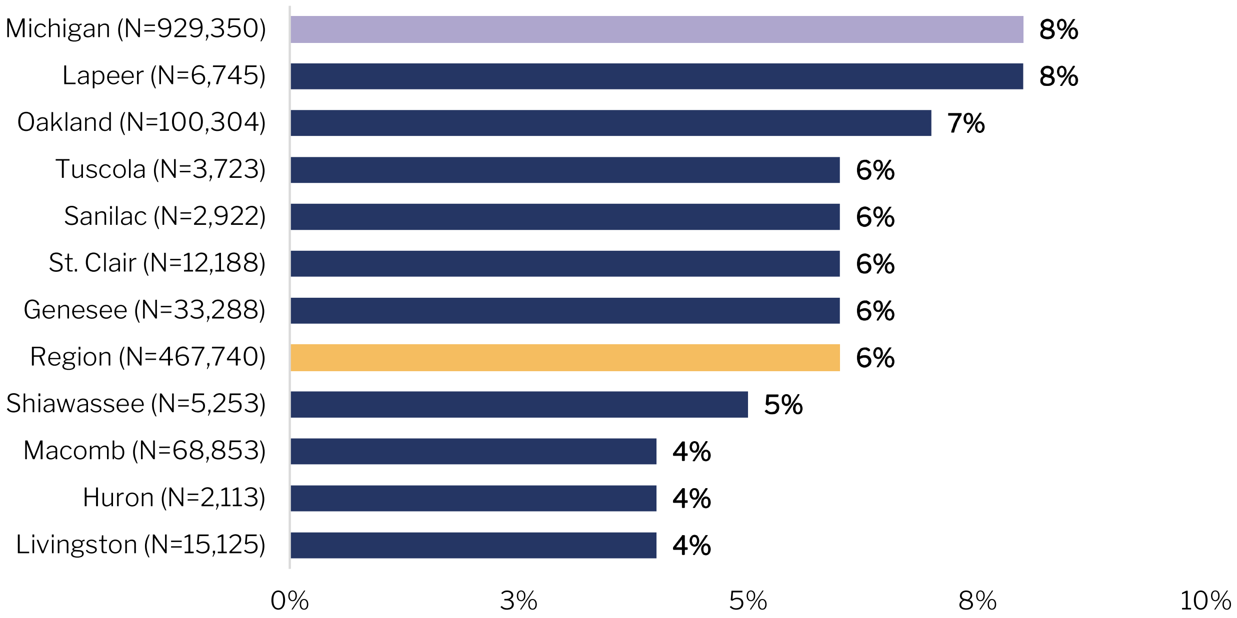
EXHIBIT 3. Racial Demographics of MSEMI Region's 18- to 24-Year-Old Population by Location, 2023



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b; 2023c; 2023d; 2023e; 2023f; 2023g; 2023h; 2023i
Note: the U.S. Census Bureau defines white as a person who has origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. People can select the race that they most identify with according to census definitions rather than nuanced definitions, meaning that each county could be more or less racially diverse than shown in the data.

Six percent of the region's youth are Hispanic or Latino, regardless of race. Lapeer County has region's highest percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who are Hispanic or Latino in the region (8 percent) and Livingston, Macomb, and Huron Counties have the lowest (4 percent) (Exhibit 4).

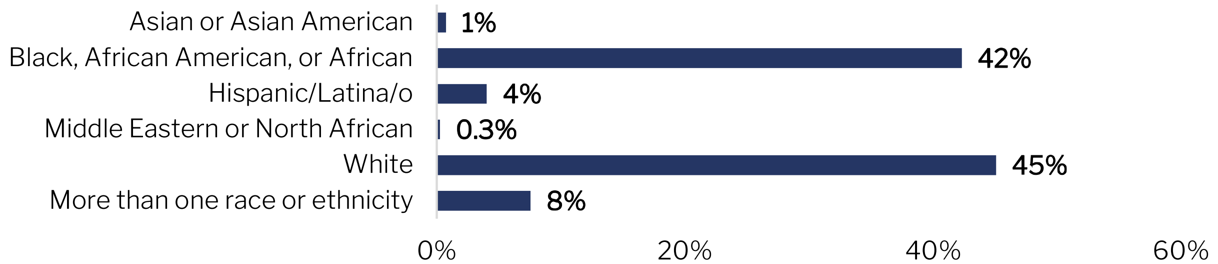
EXHIBIT 4. Hispanic or Latino Identity of MSEMI Region's 18- to 24-Year-Old Population by Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023i

Housing and community services providers noted that Black youth represent a higher proportion of youth accessing homeless services in Genesee and Macomb Counties, whereas in more rural areas youth of color and non-English-speaking youth are rarely present in housing service systems. HMIS data from the local youth housing providers offer some evidence to support this. While the majority of participants (45 percent) enrolled in their programs were white, 42 percent were Black, African American, or African (Exhibit 5). This represents a large disparity, as less than 10 percent of the youth population in the region is Black or African American. The census does not include African in the same category as Black or African American.

EXHIBIT 5. Racial Demographics of Participants in Local Housing Programs, 2025



N=397 (race and ethnicity were not listed for 12 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Given this demographic context, the following sections examine key economic and social factors that may increase the risk of housing instability in the region.

Housing Instability and Homelessness

Housing instability and homelessness are measured in several ways, and no single data source fully captures the scope of need. Varying definitions of homelessness, transience, and inconsistent engagement with services limit the ability to measure homelessness comprehensively. However, publicly available data, service provider programs, and insights from interviews offer important information about factors associated with housing instability and homelessness among young people.

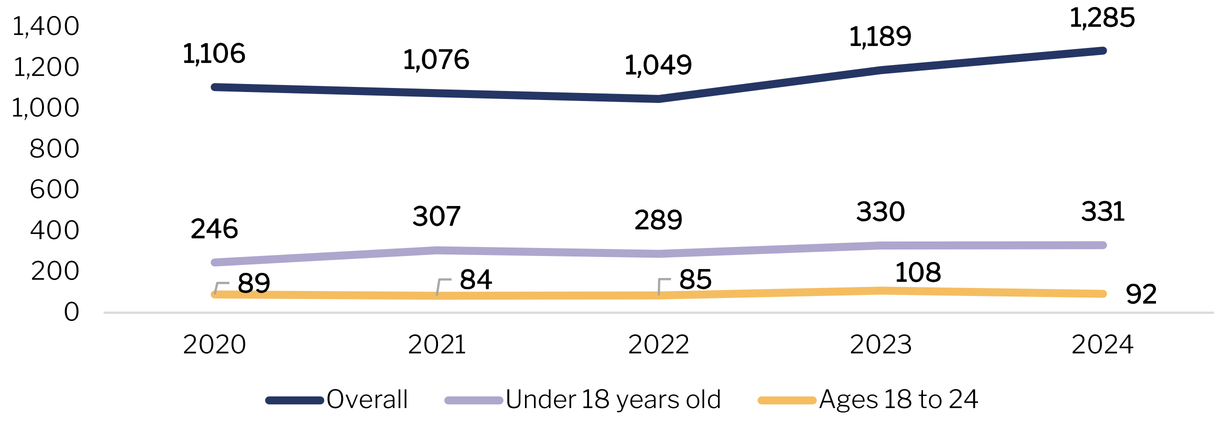
Point-in-Time Homelessness Counts

On behalf of HUD and recurring every January, local CoCs conduct an annual point-in-time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness. The PIT count is a one-night snapshot of homelessness that is used to identify trends over time. HUD defines people as literally homeless if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The PIT count does not capture everyone experiencing housing instability—particularly individuals who are not connected to shelters or service providers—but does offer a consistent measure for understanding the scope of homelessness in the region.

Several counties in the MSEMI region—St. Clair, Sanilac, Huron, Tuscola, Lapeer, and Shiawasee—are part of Michigan's Balance of State CoC, which encompasses 66 of the state's 83 counties as of December 2025. Because county-level, historical PIT data are not available for these areas, the regional analysis presented contains the data from Genesee, Livingston, Macomb, and Oakland Counties.

PIT data indicate that overall homelessness increased by 16 percent, from 1,106 individuals to 1,285 individuals between 2020 and 2024. Among young people ages 18 to 24, homelessness increased by 3 percent, while homelessness among minors under age 18 increased by 35 percent (Exhibit 6).

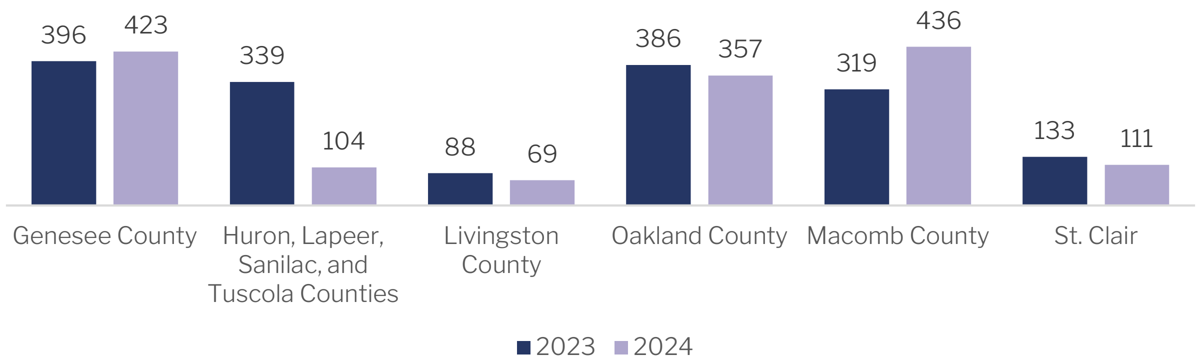
EXHIBIT 6. PIT Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness in Macomb, Oakland, Genesee, and Livingston Counties by Age, 2020–2024



Source: HUD 2024

The local planning body for the Thumb region (St. Clair, Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties) provided PIT counts for 2023 and 2024. In 2023, there were 1,661 people counted as homeless across the region. In 2024, this number decreased to 1,500 (Exhibit 7). Genesee and Macomb Counties experienced an increase in people experiencing homelessness, while the other counties had decreases.

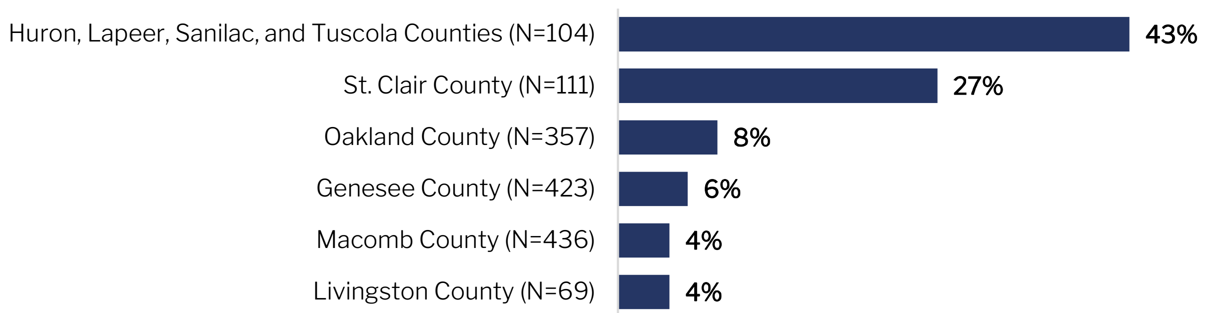
EXHIBIT 7. PIT Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness by Location, 2023 and 2024



Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC
Note: PIT counts are from CoC data. Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties are all included under the Balance of State.

Most people experiencing homelessness in the region during the 2024 PIT count were counted as sheltered. Of the 1,500 total people homeless, 152 or about 10 percent were unsheltered (HUD 2024; HMIS 2024 data). This suggests that most individuals experiencing homelessness in the region are connected to formal services. However, data may be skewed, as winter PIT counts are conducted by volunteers who might not know where to find people who are unsheltered and be deterred by weather. In the Thumb region, however, 43 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness were unsheltered; far more than the less than 10 percent in the other counties (Exhibit 8).

EXHIBIT 8. Percent of People Who Were Unsheltered During the PIT Count by Location, 2024



Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC
Note: PIT counts are from CoC data. Huron, Lapeer, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties are all included in the Balance of State.

PIT counts may underrepresent youth experiencing homelessness. Service providers who participated in interviews said that, rather than utilizing traditional shelters or staying at encampments, homeless youth tend to “double up” or “couch surf,” staying with friends, extended family, or grandparents. They said this is especially true in rural areas such as the Thumb and Livingston County, where limited youth-specific shelters and programs are available.

McKinney-Vento Student Homelessness Data

Since PIT counts capture homelessness at one point in time and mainly include those connected to shelter systems, additional data are needed to better understand the full scope of youth homelessness. Public school districts identify and report students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as part of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which ensures educational stability for children and youth experiencing homelessness by providing access to transportation, academic support, and the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin (U.S. Department of Education 2023).

The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness is broader than the one used in HUD's PIT count, as it includes students who are temporarily staying with others due to housing loss or economic hardship. This broader range of data housing instability gives a more comprehensive view of youth homelessness, particularly among young people who may not access shelters or formal services. Housing service providers said that young people are more likely to share spaces designed for fewer people (called doubling up) or couch surf and they also tend to avoid adult-oriented services such as soup kitchens. Providers also noted that those who attend school during the day are more likely to be connected with services.

According to McKinney-Vento data collected during the 2022–23 school year, 2.4 percent of students statewide experienced homelessness. Across the ten-county region, the percentage was lower at 1.2 percent (Exhibit 9). However, three counties—Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola—reported student homelessness rates above the statewide average. These county-level differences highlight the importance of understanding local variation when planning and targeting services to support young people experiencing housing instability. Additionally, district size is important in understanding homelessness; though Oakland County ISD has the lowest percent of students experiencing homelessness, it has the highest number of students experiencing homelessness because the district is the largest in the region.

Though Oakland County ISD has the lowest percent of students experiencing homelessness, it has the highest number of students experiencing homelessness because the district is the largest in the region.

EXHIBIT 9. Percent of K–12 Students Experiencing Homelessness by Location, 2022–23 School Year

Location	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Percent of Total District Enrollment
Sanilac ISD (N = 5,953)	178	3.0%
Tuscola ISD (N = 7,093)	207	2.9%
Huron ISD (N = 4,622)	121	2.6%
Michigan (N = 1,433,914)	32,762	2.3%
St. Clair ISD (N = 24,904)	503	2.0%
Lapeer ISD (N = 11,135)	192	1.7%
Genesee ISD (N = 61,910)	974	1.6%
Shiawassee RESD (N = 10,529)	172	1.6%
MSEMI region (N = 443,949)	*5,638*	*1.2%*
Livingston ESA (N = 24,910)	286	1.1%
Macomb ISD (N = 117,519)	1,326	1.1%
Oakland ISD (N = 175,374)	1,679	1.0%

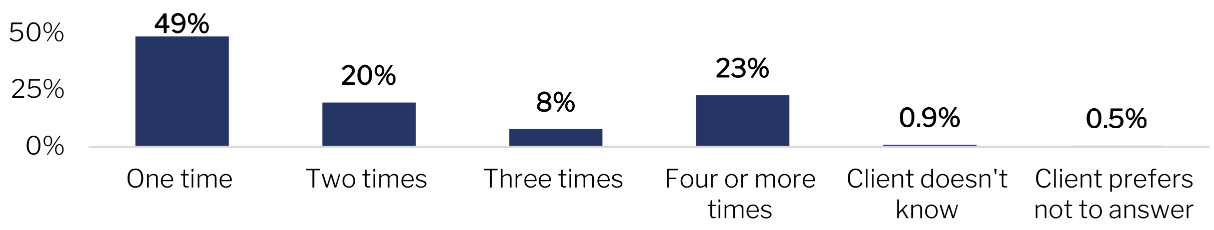
ISD: Intermediate School District
RESD: Regional Education Service District
ESA: Educational Service Agency
Source: SchoolHouse Connection 2024

Youth Services Program Data

The region's local youth housing programs—Lighthouse, Reach Resource Services, Livingston Family Center, and Comprehensive Youth Services—shared HMIS data from their programs to better understand young people who are experiencing housing instability or homelessness. **These programs served 409 individuals across the MSEMI region in 2025.** About half of those surveyed were homeless for the first time, while just over half experienced homelessness at least twice. Almost a quarter of young people had experienced homelessness four or more times (Exhibit 10).

Nearly 1 in 4
young people experienced homelessness 4+ times in the last 3 years

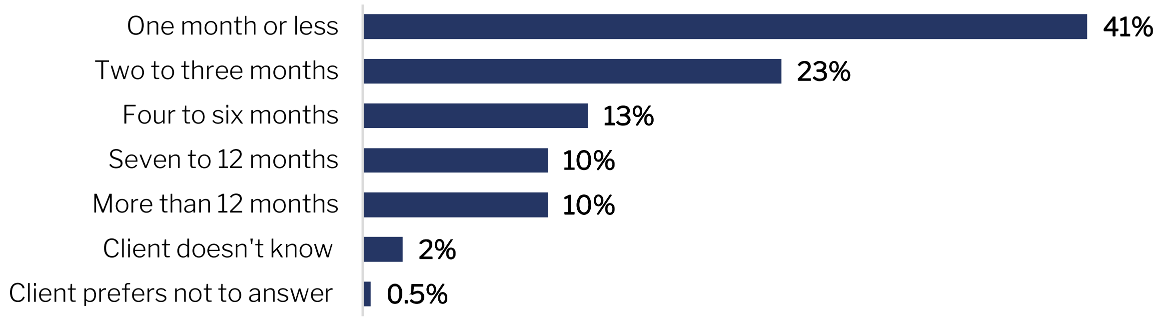
EXHIBIT 10. Incidence of Young People Experiencing Homelessness in the Last Three Years, 2025



N = 220 (These data were not listed for an additional 188 young people)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

At time of intake (when these data were collected), the majority (41 percent) of young people experienced homelessness for one month. Twenty percent experienced homelessness for more than half the year (Exhibit 11). This shows it is crucial to continue improving how quickly youth enter services, as any time spent homeless can lead to negative health and safety outcomes.

EXHIBIT 11. Young People Receiving Local Housing Services by Duration of Homelessness, 2025



N = 222 (These data were not listed for an additional 187 young people)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Each service recipient completes intake and exit forms that are entered into the HMIS system. The forms provide essential demographic information and factors that may have contributed to or caused housing instability and homelessness. These additional data are included throughout the report.

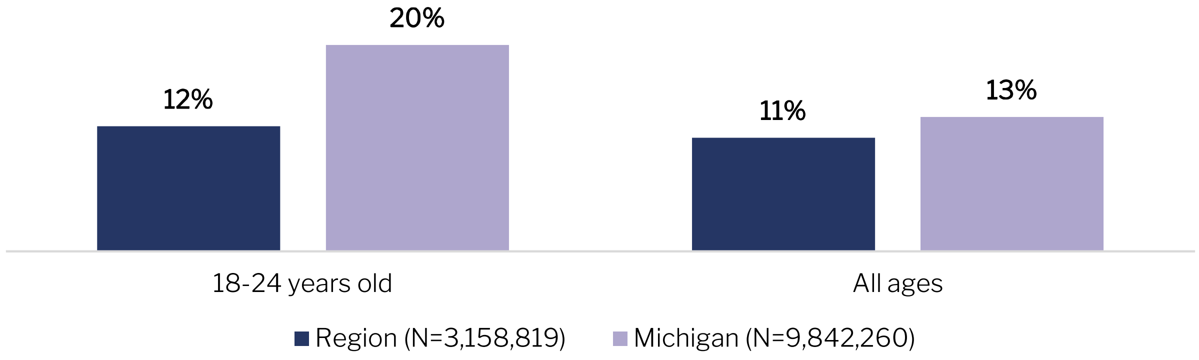
Risk Factors for Homelessness and Housing Instability

Understanding factors associated with housing instability can help identify higher-risk populations and inform strategies to prevent homelessness among young people. Research shows that economic hardship, limited access to affordable housing, educational and employment disruptions, and involvement with public systems can increase vulnerability to housing instability. The indicators below provide insight into several of these risk factors in the MSEMI region.

Poverty and Household Income

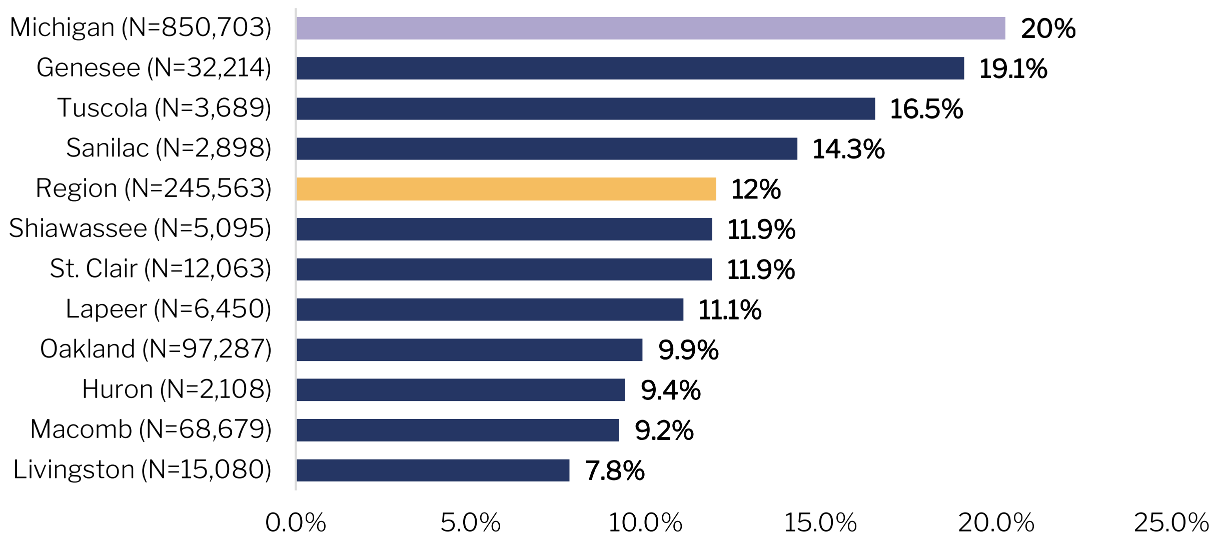
Economic indicators such as poverty and household income are important context to determine young adults' risk of housing instability. In the MSEMI region, 12 percent of young people ages 18 to 24 live in poverty, a rate similar to the 11 percent poverty rate for all residents (Exhibit 12). However, poverty rates among young people differ across in the region. In Genesee County, 19 percent of young people ages 18 to 24 live below the federal poverty level, and in Tuscola County, 17 percent do so, compared to 8 percent in Livingston County (Exhibit 13).

EXHIBIT 12. Average Poverty Rate by Age Group and Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

EXHIBIT 13. Percent of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Experiencing Poverty by Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

Across the MSEMI region, the median household income is $52,293 for households headed by someone ages 15 to 24, compared to $72,261 for all households. The same pattern exists statewide. In Michigan, households headed by someone ages 15 to 24 have a median income of $41,222, compared to $71,149 for all households (U.S. Census Bureau 2023k). Many young adults are early in their careers, working part-time, or enrolled in school, so households headed by young adults typically have lower incomes than those headed by older adults. Most of the youth included in the HMIS data from the region's housing services providers are heads of household.

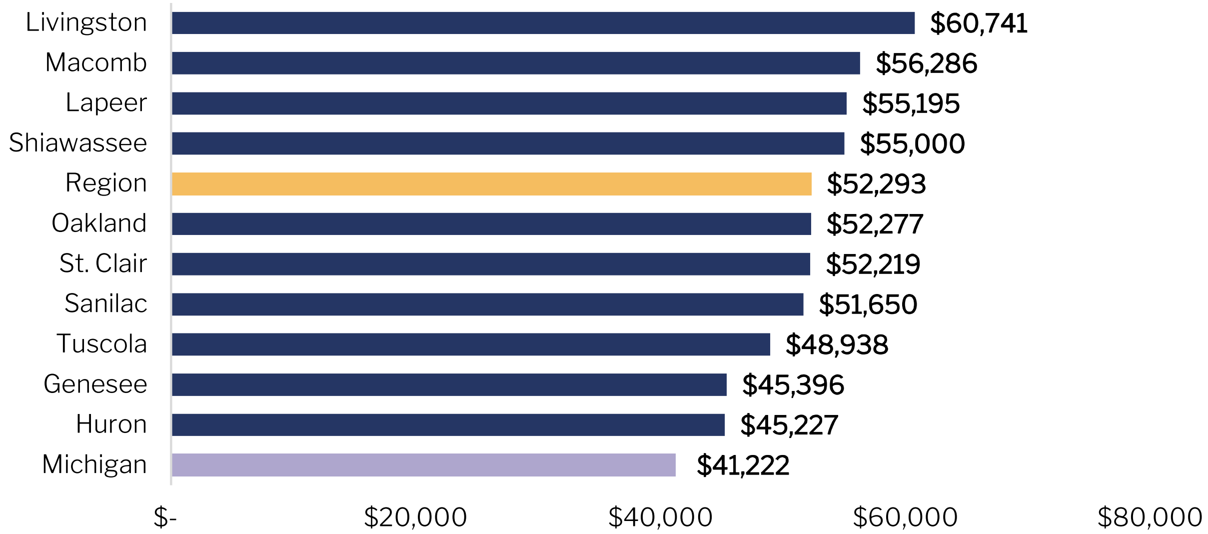
$72,261: The median household income for all households in the region

$52,293: The regional median household income for households headed by someone ages 15 to 24

Young people make 72% of the regional median household income, on average

Fifteen- to 24-year-old householders in the MSEMI region have higher median household incomes compared to their 15- to 24-year-old counterparts across the entire state. ($52,293 and $41,222 respectively). However, there are differences across each county; 15- to 24-year-olds in Huron have the lowest median household income ($45,227), while those in Livingston have the highest ($60,741) (Exhibit 14).

EXHIBIT 14. Median Household Income for Households Headed by 15- to 24-Year-Olds by Location, 2023



N varies by location
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023k

In interviews, providers said homelessness frequently reflects generational cycles of poverty, especially in rural communities. They noted that youth from families with histories of eviction and housing instability often lack the life skills to break the cycle. This supports research findings that early experiences of housing instability greatly impact a young person's risk for homelessness as an adult, because children acquire knowledge and skills from the adults around them.

"When you have families that have lived with generational poverty and they have been in a crisis cycle time and time again, there's nobody who knows those skills to be able to pass on."

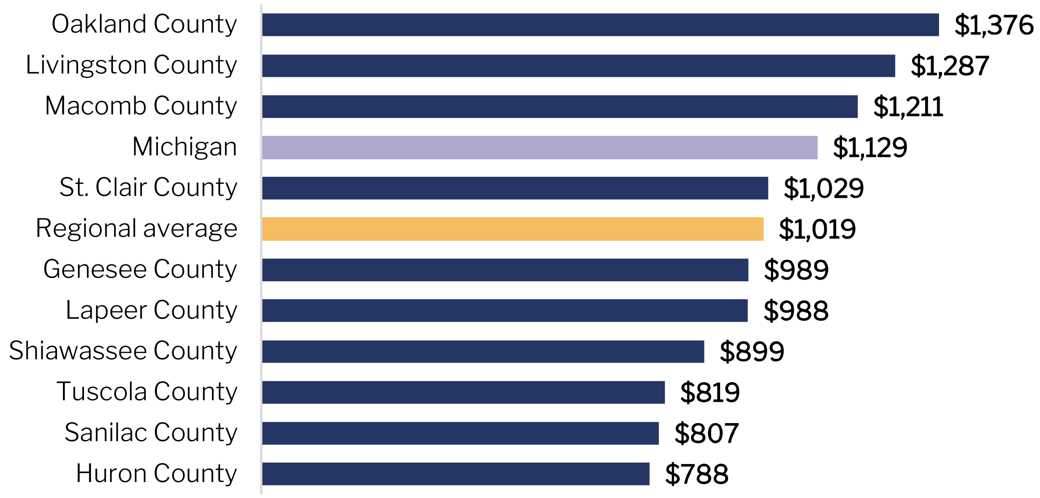
—Service provider

Cost of Housing

In addition to lower earnings among young adults, limited affordable housing makes maintaining stable housing more difficult and may contribute to longer stays in temporary or shelter settings. Interview participants noted that youth typically lack adequate rental or credit history and landlords are often reluctant to rent to young tenants.

In 2023, the average median rent in the ten-county MSEMI region was estimated at $1,019 per month, with substantial variation across counties. County-level averages ranged from $788 per month in Huron County to $1,376 per month in Oakland County, illustrating that young adults in some parts of the region face much higher housing costs than others (Exhibit 15).

EXHIBIT 15. Median Rent in MSEMI Region by County, 2023



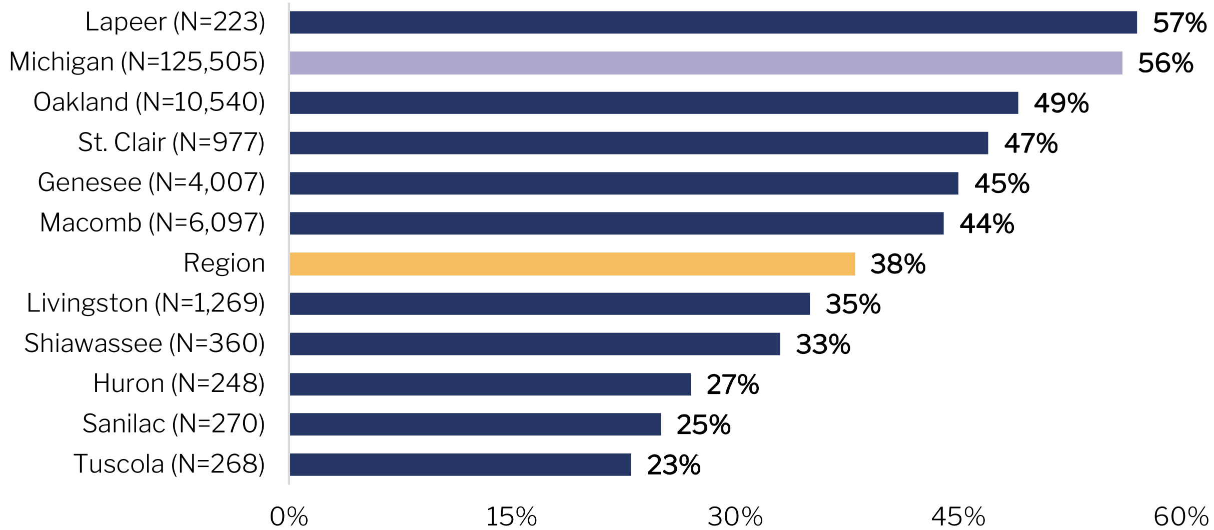
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023l

Initial estimates from 2024 indicate increases in rent across the region. While data is not available for all counties, one-year estimates[3] show that rent across the region was consistently above $1,000 per month. Prices have likely continued to rise into 2026.

Another way to understand housing affordability is to examine housing cost burden. A household is cost burdened if it spends over 30 percent of its income on housing. An average of 38 percent of householders ages 15 to 24 are cost burdened in the MSEMI region (Exhibit 16). Five counties—Macomb, Genesee, St. Clair, Oakland, and Lapeer—have a higher share of 15- to 24-year-olds with a housing cost burden than the regional average of 38 percent. At 57 percent, Lapeer's rate exceeds the state average of 56 percent. These patterns indicate that many young adults in the region must devote a large share of their income to housing, leaving fewer resources for other basic needs.

38%
of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened

EXHIBIT 16. Percent of Householders in the MSEMI Region Ages 15 to 24 with a Housing Cost Burden, 2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2024m

Education and Employment

Beyond income and housing costs, young people's connections to school and work also affect housing stability as they provide access to income, support systems, and opportunities to build independence. Young people not in school or working may face greater challenges meeting their basic needs and maintaining stable housing.

[3] One-year estimates are preferred over five-year estimates for housing cost estimates to show year-to-year change. However, one-year estimates in rent were not available for all counties in the MSEMI region at the time of publishing.

This section looks at education and employment indicators—such as opportunity youth, chronic absenteeism, and school dropout—to better understand factors that may cause housing instability among young people in the MSEMI region.

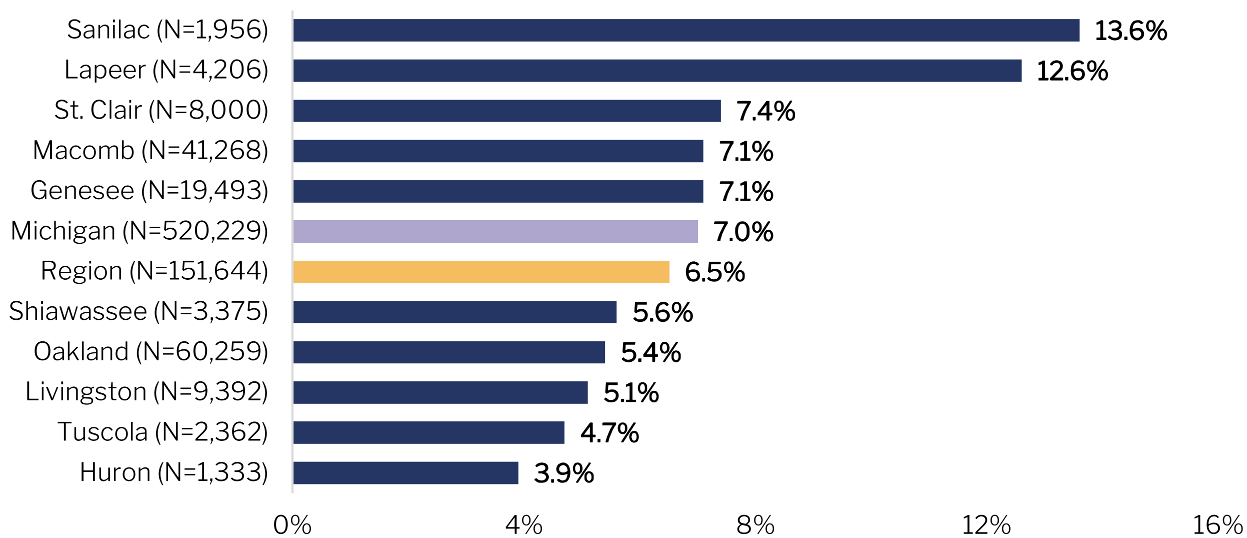
Opportunity Youth

Young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in school or working are often called "opportunity youth." This term helps identify those who may lack opportunities for education, work experience, and financial independence.

Interview participants noted that the pandemic increased social anxiety, limited conflict resolution skills, and reduced experience with basic adult tasks in this age group. One interview participant said, "Once a young person turns 18, societal systems expect full independence. However, young people aged 18–24 still require substantial connection, reassurance, and support."

In the MSEMI region, the share of opportunity youth differs by county (Exhibit 17). Sanilac County (13.6 percent) and Lapeer County (12.6 percent) have much higher rates than the statewide rate of 7.0 percent. Other counties in the region have rates near or just above the statewide average. These findings suggest some areas have more young people disconnected from school or work, increasing their risk of housing instability and showing a need for targeted prevention and support.

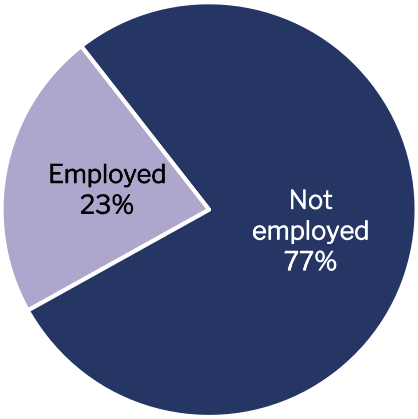
EXHIBIT 17. Percent of 16- to 24-Year-Olds Not in School or Not Working by Location, 2019-2023



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

HMIS data from the region's housing service providers show that 77 percent of youth receiving services are unemployed (Exhibit 18) and 13 percent irregularly attend school. Due to the confidential nature of HMIS programmatic data, analysis to determine which unemployed youth were attending school irregularly was not possible at this time.

EXHIBIT 18. Employment Status of Young People in the Region Receiving Local Housing Services, 2025



N = 262 (Employment status was not available for 148 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Of unemployed young people who receive housing services:

37% are looking for work

33% are not looking for work

26% are unable to work

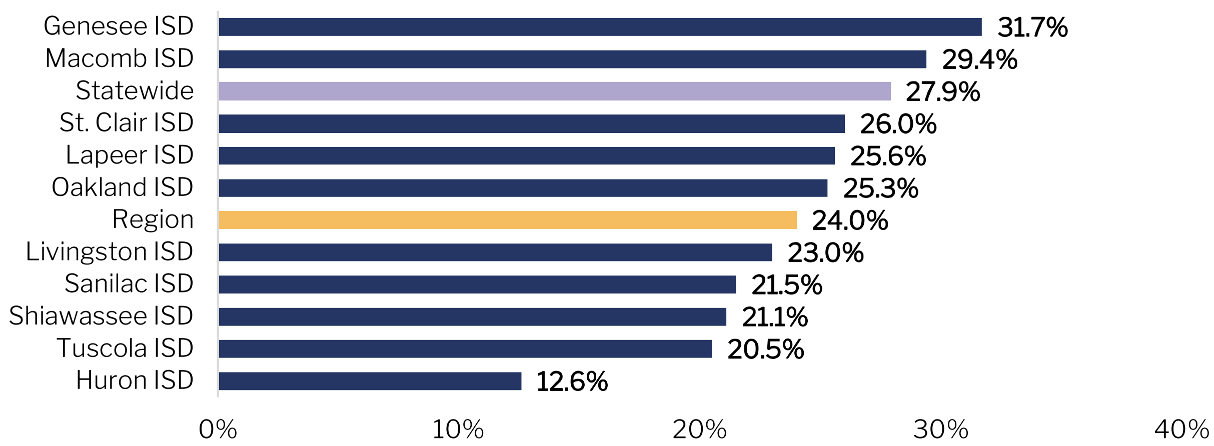
N = 203
*Data were not collected for the remaining 4 percent of participants

Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout

Chronic absenteeism (missing 10 percent or more of school days) is an early sign that students may be disengaging from school, which can affect their long-term stability. Housing instability can make it more difficult for students to attend school regularly due to transportation challenges, frequent moves, and unmet basic needs (National Center for Homeless Education 2018). At the same time, missing school frequently or leaving school before graduating can limit future job opportunities and earnings. Tracking chronic absenteeism and dropout rates helps identify schools and/or students who may benefit from additional support.

On average, 24 percent of students in the ten-county region were chronically absent during the 2024–25 school year, compared to 28 percent of students statewide. Most intermediate school districts (ISDs) in the region had lower chronic absenteeism rates than the state overall, with the exception of the Genesee and Macomb ISDs (Exhibit 19).

EXHIBIT 19. Chronic Absenteeism Rate by School District, 2024–25 School Year



Source: Michigan Department of Education 2025a

Students who are chronically absent are also more likely to drop out of high school (Erb-Downward and Watt 2018). Dropping out of high school can affect long-term economic stability. Young people who do not graduate may have fewer job opportunities, lower earnings, and less access to support systems, all of which can increase the risk of housing instability. Schools also provide important relationships and resources that support stability, and leaving school may reduce access to these supports.

During the 2024–25 school year, 8 percent of students across Michigan dropped out of high school. Within the MSEMI region, Genesee ISD had six schools in the highest 10 percent of school dropout rates statewide, the most of any county in the region, followed by Oakland ISD with four (Exhibit 20).

EXHIBIT 20. Schools in the MSEMI Region in the Highest 10 Percent Statewide for Dropout Rate, 2024–25 School Year

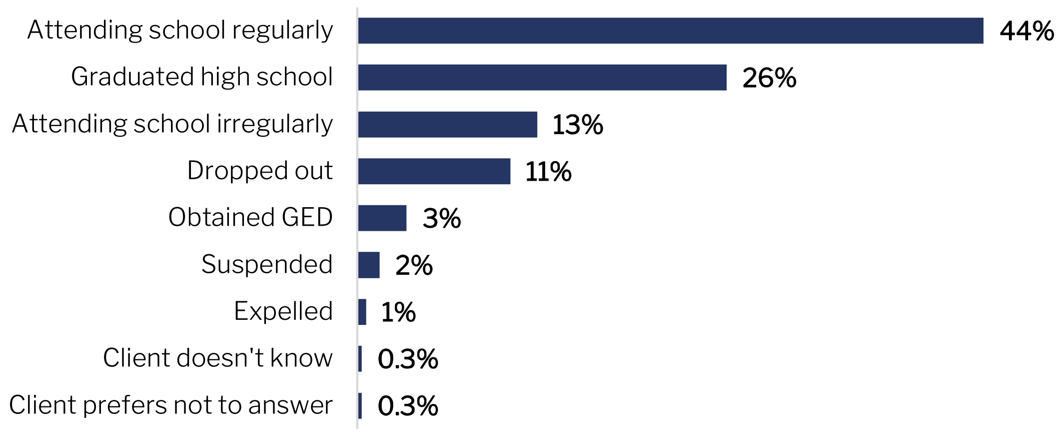
School District	Schools in the Highest 10% Statewide for Dropout Rate	Dropout Rate
St. Clair RESA	St. Clair County Intervention Academy	62.5%
Genesee ISD	The New Standard Academy	52.9%
Genesee ISD	Flex High School of Michigan	48.0%
Oakland ISD	Pontiac Academy for Excellence	44.0%
Genesee ISD	Flint City Schools	33.7%
Genesee ISD	Westwood Heights Schools	27.9%
Genesee ISD	Beecher Community School District	26.0%
Oakland ISD	Michigan Virtual Charter Academy	25.0%
Oakland ISD	Lighthouse Connections Academy	24.2%
Huron ISD	Owendale-Gagetown Area School District	23.5%
Oakland ISD	City of Hazel Park Schools	22.0%
Sanilac ISD	Carsonville-Port Sanilac School District	21.9%
Macomb ISD	Clintondale Community Schools	20.6%
Genesee ISD	Bendle Public Schools	20.0%
St. Clair RESA	Virtual Learning Academy of St. Clair County	20.0%

Source: Michigan Department of Education 2025b
Note: A regional dropout rate is unavailable.

Many schools with higher dropout rates are nontraditional schools or those that are outside the traditional school district structure, such as charter schools or virtual academies. These schools often serve students with more complex needs and those at increased risk of dropout. However, outcomes vary, and some nontraditional schools have stronger student retention and graduation rates.

HMIS data also show that 11 percent of young people receiving services from housing service providers in the region have dropped out of school. Another 3 percent have either been suspended or expelled (Exhibit 21).

EXHIBIT 21. Percent of Young People Receiving Local Housing Services by School Status, 2025



N = 315 (School status was not listed for an additional 95 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Higher Education

For those with a high school diploma or GED, attending college may be the next step to gain the knowledge and skills needed for their desired career. This is becoming more important as Southeast Michigan's top industries grow into research and engineering. However, higher education can be costly and requires knowledge of how to pay for it. College tuition for two- and four-year programs at public and private institutions has increased over the last three decades. Between the 2024–25 and 2025–26 school years, tuition and fees rose from 2.7 percent (public two-year, in-district) to 4 percent (private nonprofit four-year) (Ma, Pender, and Hu 2025).

There are several financial assistance options available; research even suggests that for over 15 years, "first-time, full-time students at public two-year colleges have been receiving enough grant aid on average to cover tuition and fees." For a public, four-year program, however, students need to cover an average of $16,200 for tuition and fees and $5,140 in other school costs after accounting for grants (Ma et al. 2025).

Financial aid that does not require repayment, such as Pell Grants, is a promising option for youth who experience homelessness or housing instability. Michigan also offers free community college, another avenue to earn a college degree. However, many young people experiencing homelessness may not have the knowledge, resources, or support to find and apply for these options. Providing college and financial counseling to young people who want higher education is vital, because it helps them avoid poverty and shows them that their aspirations are not out of reach just because they have experienced homelessness.

LGBTQ+ Youth

The number of LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness in the U.S. increased by 56.8 percent between 2019 and 2023 (Soucy, Hall, and Moses 2025). National studies (Morton et al. 2018;

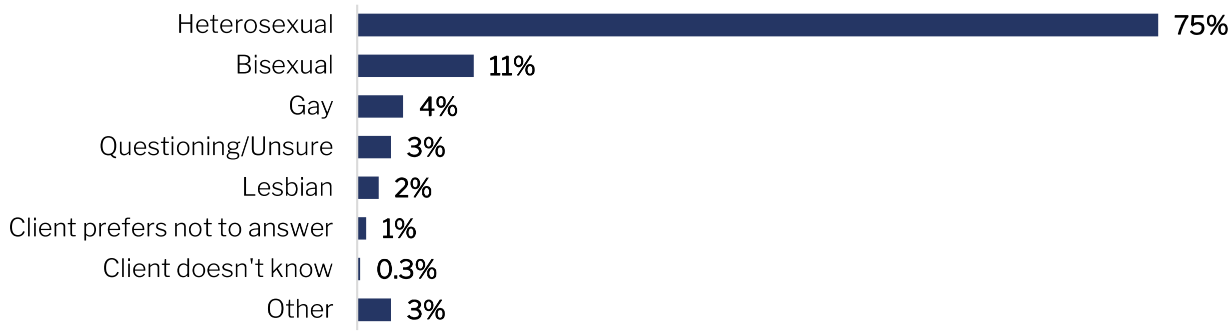
DeChants et al. 2021) consistently find that LGBTQ+ youth experience homelessness at more than twice the rate of non-LGBTQ peers and may represent 20 to 40 percent of all homeless youth despite being a much smaller share of the general youth population (approximately 5 to 10 percent).

Providers who participated in discussion groups also indicated that LGBTQ+ youth are consistently overrepresented across the region, similar to national trends. According to one provider, approximately 40 percent of homeless youth across the county they serve identify as LGBTQ+.

40%
of youth receiving services for homelessness are LGBTQ+

Three-quarters of youth engaged in local housing programs identified themselves as straight/heterosexual. Eleven percent reported that they are bisexual, the next most common sexuality among program participants (Exhibit 22). **The discrepancy between national statistics and qualitative insights from provider focus groups suggests that LGBTQ+ youth in the region may be underserved.** This could be due to things like stigma, fear of engaging in services, discrimination, or not feeling like there are services that fit their needs.

EXHIBIT 22. Sexual Orientation of Young People Engaged in Local Housing Programs, 2025



N = 347 (Sexual orientation was not listed for an additional 62 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Parenting Youth

The number of parenting youth experiencing homelessness in the U.S. rose 28 percent from 2023 to 2025, reversing a downward trend since HUD started reporting data on parenting youth in 2015 (Soucy, Hall, and Moses 2025). Housing providers in the MSEMI region reported that the prevalence of parenting youth in the region varies significantly by county. Thumb-area providers in estimated that approximately 75 percent of their clients are parents of toddlers, while Livingston and Macomb County providers reported far fewer parenting youth in their service populations. Four percent of youth served by local youth housing providers reported being pregnant. Of note, providers said that pregnant and parenting youth often experienced homelessness earlier in their lives.

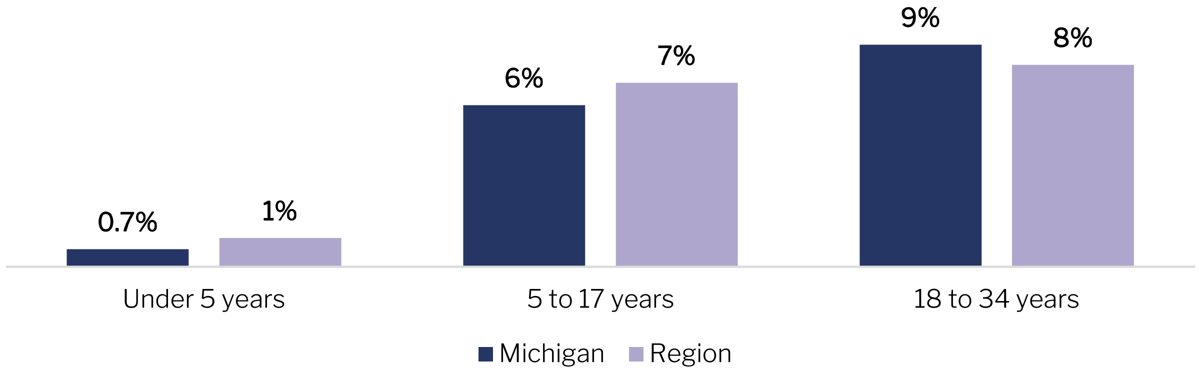
"[T]o see [a client] go from a 12-year-old at a basic center to a 21-year-old with their own baby and homeless is devastating."—Provider

Disability Status

Disability is an important factor when examining housing instability risk. People with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty, unemployment, and higher housing cost burden—factors that increase vulnerability to homelessness. Measuring disability is complex, as definitions vary and not all individuals with disabilities are identified in data.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the region's share of residents with a disability is similar to the statewide average. Across the region, approximately 1 percent of children under age five, 7 percent of children aged 5 to 17, and 8 percent of young adults aged 18 to 34 report a disability (Exhibit 23). Census data defines disability based on reported difficulty with hearing, vision, cognition, mobility, self-care, or independent living.

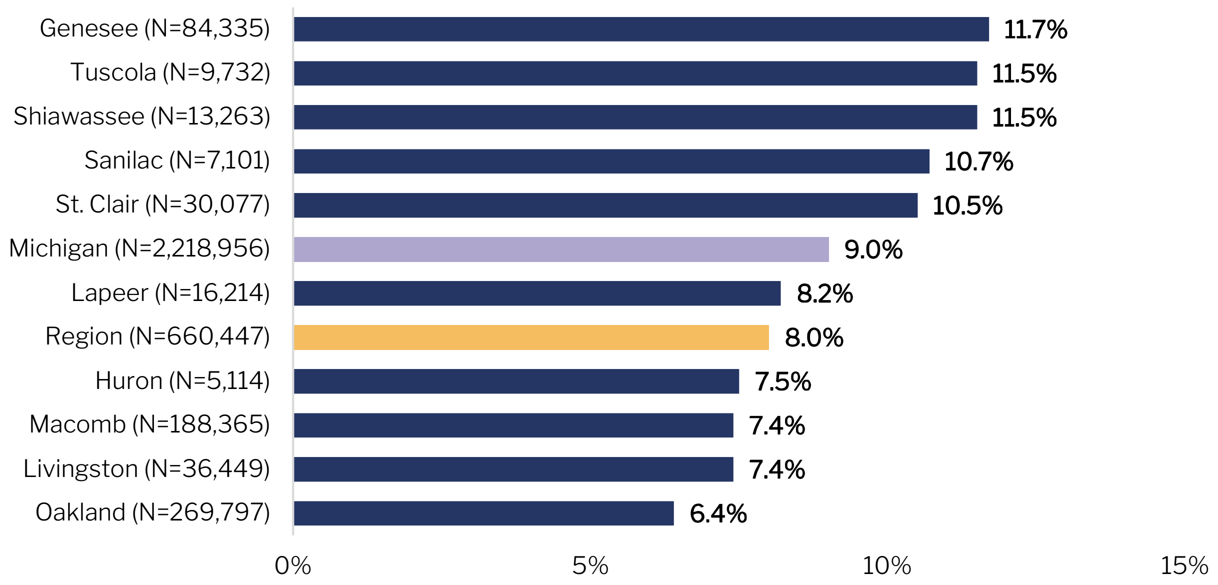
EXHIBIT 23. Percent of Population with Disability by Age and Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023n

Though no category exists for 18- to 24-year-olds, the Census Bureau does examine disability status for 18- to 34-year-olds. About 12 percent of this age group meets the census disability criteria in Genesee, Shiawassee, and Tuscola Counties, the highest in the region and higher than the state and regional averages. Oakland County has the lowest rate of people in this age group with a disability, at 6 percent (Exhibit 24).

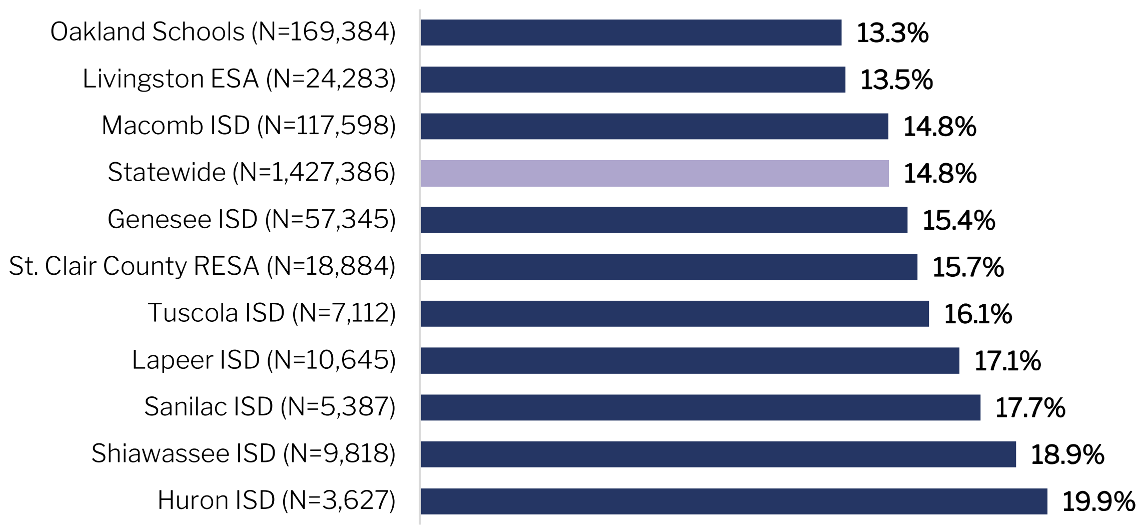
EXHIBIT 24. Percent of 18-to 34-Year-Olds with Disability by Location, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023n

School data provide additional insight into disability among children and youth. The Michigan Department of Education defines students with disabilities as those who have one or more qualifying impairments and receive special education or related services through an individualized education program (IEP). During the 2024–25 school year, nearly 15 percent of students statewide were identified as having a disability. In the MSEMI region, the average was approximately 16 percent, with more than half of counties exceeding the statewide rate (Exhibit 25).

EXHIBIT 25. Percent of Students with Disability by Location, 2024–2025



Source: MI School Data 2025c

A substantial share of children and young adults in the region live with disabilities. Coupled with the fact that people with disabilities are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, it is imperative that housing and prevention strategies are responsive to the need for accessible housing and targeted support.

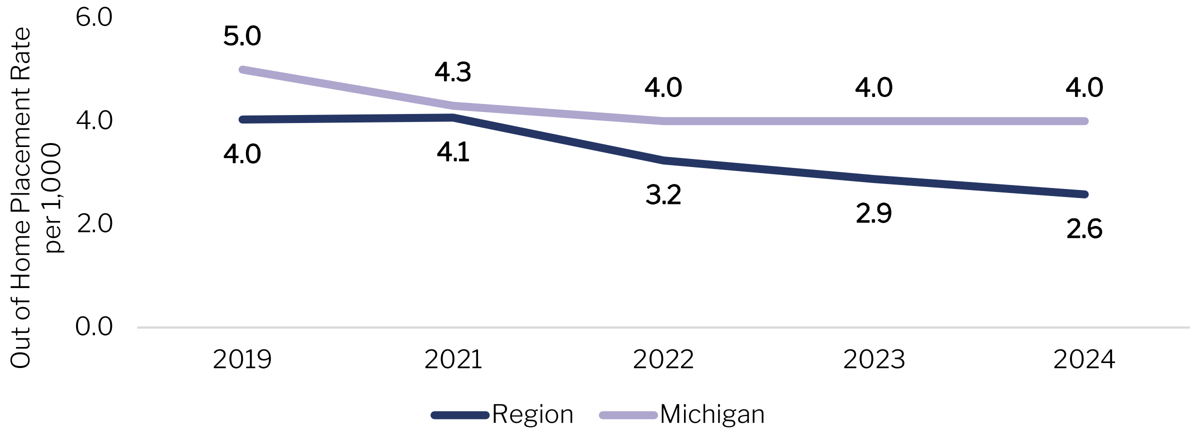
Foster Care and Juvenile Justice Involvement

Youth with histories of foster care or juvenile justice involvement are disproportionately represented among young people experiencing homelessness (U.S. Department of Justice 2023). Providers who participated in interviews also said a significant proportion of homeless youth in the region have a background that includes foster care or adoption. For example, according to one interviewee, more than half of youth in the Transitional Living Program in Livingston County had such histories.

Disruptions in family stability, placement changes, school mobility, and barriers to employment and housing following system involvement can increase vulnerability during the transition to adulthood. Some noted that youth aging out of foster care often reject services because of “institutional fatigue” and may withdraw from support systems for one to two years before returning during a crisis. Data on foster care placements and juvenile justice involvement offer important insight into populations at elevated risk of housing instability.

From 2019 to 2024, the MSEMI region had lower rates of children ages zero to 17 placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect than the statewide average (Exhibit 26). All counties except Lapeer (which had a 19 percent increase) experienced declines in foster care placements during this period. Even with these declines, foster care involvement remains an important indicator of housing vulnerability.

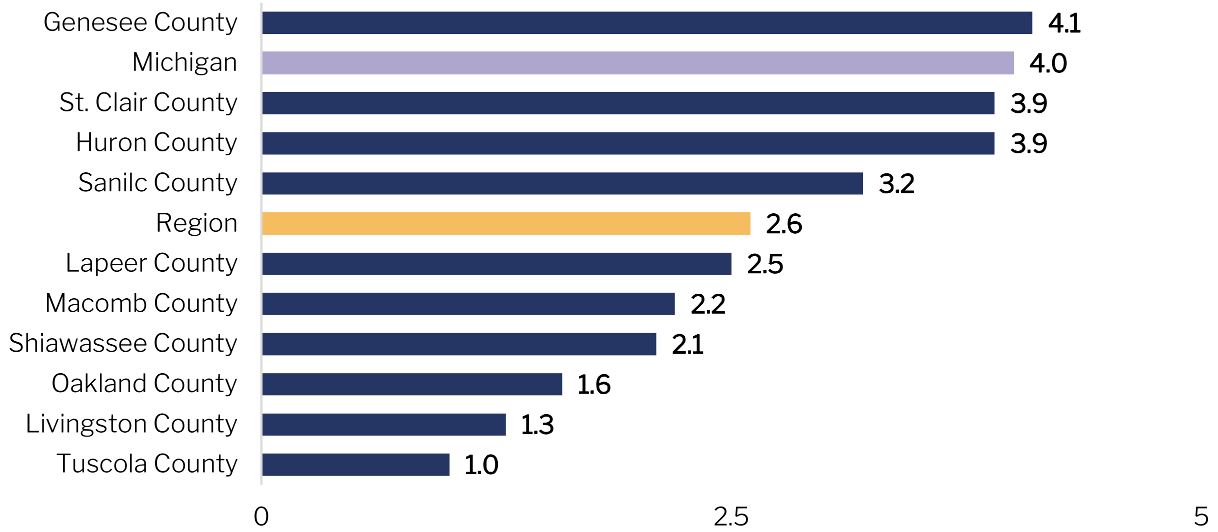
EXHIBIT 26. Rate per 1,000 Children Ages Zero to 17 Placed in Out-of-Home Care Due to Abuse or Neglect by Location, 2019–2024



Note: Rate per 1,000
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.a

In 2024, Genesee County had the highest rate of children placed in out-of-home care (4.1 per 1,000 children ages zero to 17) (Exhibit 27). However, the county experienced a promising 23 percent decline in foster care involvement from 2019 to 2024.

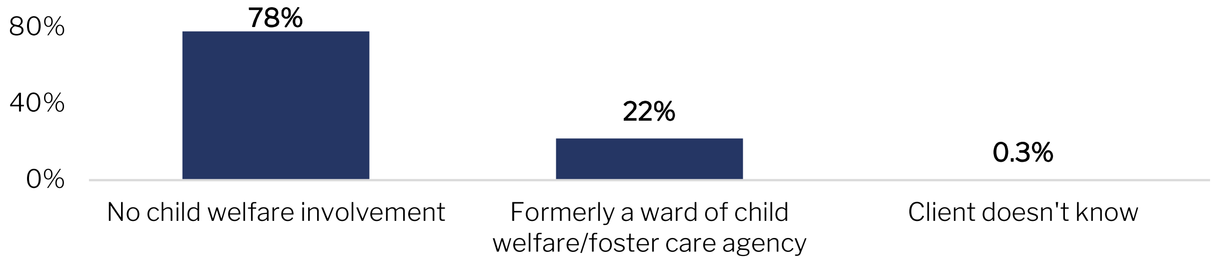
EXHIBIT 27. Rate per 1,000 Children Ages Zero to 17 Placed in Out-of-Home Care Due to Abuse or Neglect by Location, 2024



Note: Rate per 1,000
Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.a

HMIS data from the region's local youth housing providers show that nearly a quarter of youth receiving services were formerly a ward of child welfare or a foster care agency. Of note, five service recipients who were at risk of becoming homeless (2 percent) reported voluntarily remaining in or returning to foster care after their 18th birthday and were at risk of becoming homeless (Exhibit 28).

EXHIBIT 28. Percent of Young People Engaged in Local Housing Programs by Involvement in the Child Welfare System, 2025



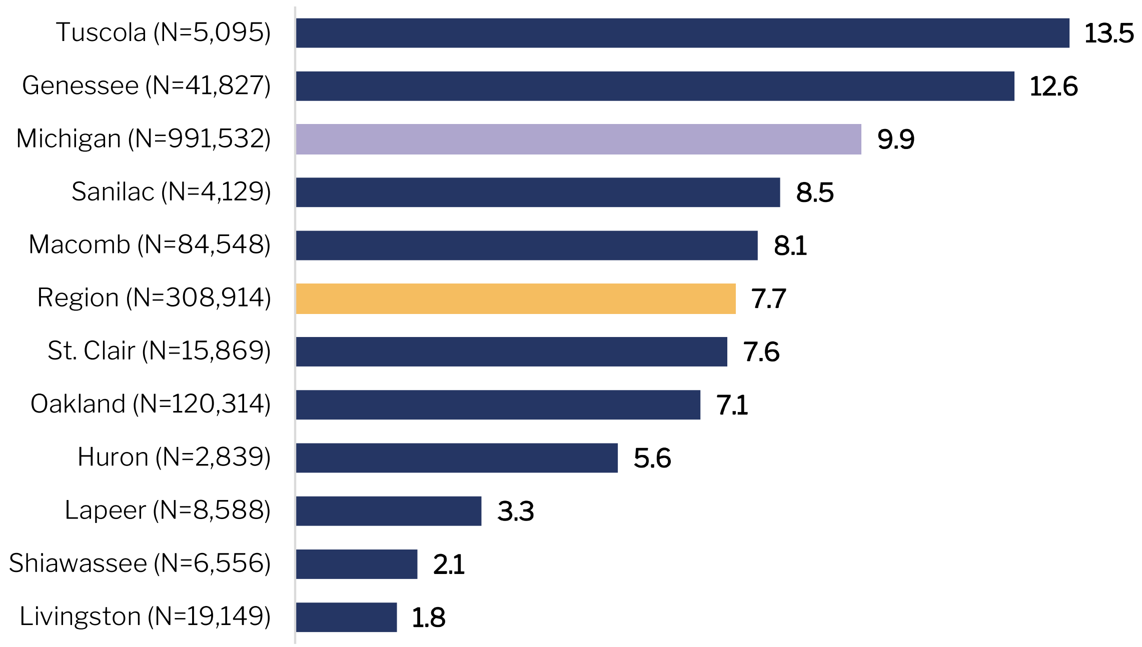
N = 312 (Child welfare involvement was not listed for an additional 97 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Juvenile Justice System Involvement

According to the Michigan Commission on Juvenile Justice (2023), the arrest rate for youth ages 10 to 17 in the MSEMI region was 7.7 arrests per 1,000 juveniles—equivalent to the statewide rate.

However, rates vary substantially across counties, ranging from 1.8 arrests per 1,000 in Livingston County to 13.5 per 1,000 in Tuscola County (Exhibit 29). While the regional rate mirrors the state overall, the wide variation across counties underscores uneven patterns of system involvement that may have implications for housing stability among affected youth.

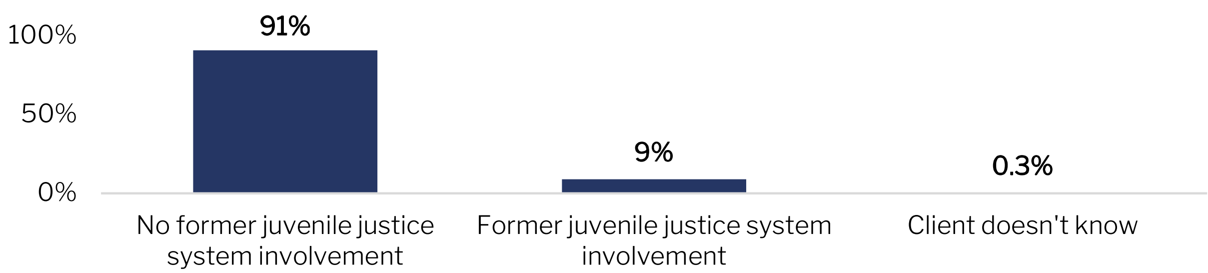
EXHIBIT 29. Arrest Rate per 1,000 Youth Ages 10 to 17 by Location, 2023



Source: Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice 2023

Nine percent of young people engaged in local housing programs reported that they had prior involvement with the juvenile justice system (Exhibit 30).

EXHIBIT 30. Percent of Young People Engaged in Local Housing Programs by Former Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System, 2025



N = 314 (Juvenile justice involvement was not listed for an additional 96 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

Family Risk Factors

Family structures and support can be strong risk or protective factors for young people. Certain factors, like generational poverty or substance use, can increase the likelihood that a young person will become homeless or experience housing instability. Many of the young people who served through the youth housing providers have family members who experience their own challenges that interfere with stable family connections. Young people receiving services reported the presence of family members with challenges ranging from unemployment to incarceration (Exhibit 31).

> "What helps me feel supported is being able to get away from a bad home life, being out of the elements, and feeling like I have a clean and safe place to live."—Young person

EXHIBIT 31. Proportion of Young People Receiving Local Housing Services Who Have a Family Member with Select Risk Factors, 2025

Risk Factor	Number	Percent
A parent is incarcerated	26	10%
Family member has a physical disability	43	17%
Family member is unemployed	80	32%
Family member has insufficient income to support youth	86	34%
Family member has an alcohol or substance abuse disorder	99	39%
Family member has a mental health disorder	131	52%

Note: N varies by risk factor because not all program participants provided answers for every question upon intake
A parent is incarcerated: N=254
Family member has a physical disability: N=249
Family member is unemployed: N=250
Family member has insufficient income to support youth: N=251
Family member has an alcohol or substance abuse disorder: N=251
Family member has a mental health disorder: N=254
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

> "Sometimes being homeless is safer than being with family members."—Young person

In addition to increasing the risk of homelessness, family risk factors have the potential to create unsafe home environments that further complicate a young person's ability to return home after experiencing homeless. Providers and young people alike said that there is often a choice between being unsafe at home or on the streets. These difficult choices highlight the importance of not only immediate or crisis response, but also of long-term supports that help young people find stable housing and build transitional life skills.

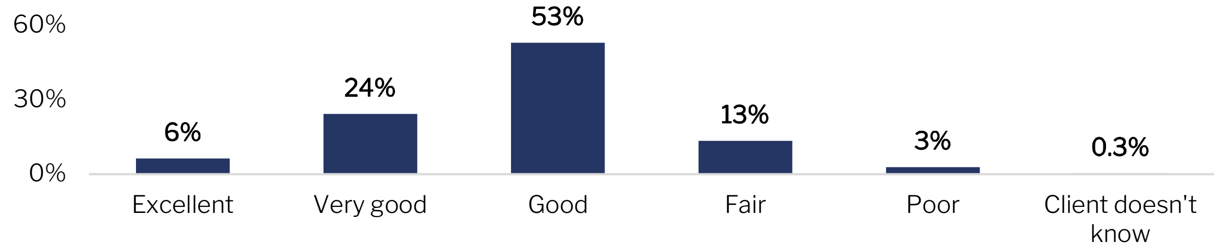
Health Effects of Housing Instability and Homelessness

Housing instability and homelessness are associated with increased risks to both physical and mental health. The stress of housing insecurity, exposure to unsafe environments, and inconsistent access to care can negatively affect overall well-being and contribute to long-term cycles of instability.

According to the American Psychological Association, "feelings of persistent sadness and hopelessness" as well as suicidality, increased by nearly 40 percent in the decade leading up to the pandemic (Abrams 2023). These challenges are likely to be more pervasive among young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness. Unaccompanied youth are more likely to experience depression and may have reduced access to treatment or consistent support. In some cases, unmet mental health needs can contribute to increased substance use (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs n.d.b).

HMIS data from the region's housing service providers show that more than half of youth receiving services (83 percent) report having an overall health status that is good, very good, or excellent (Exhibit 32).

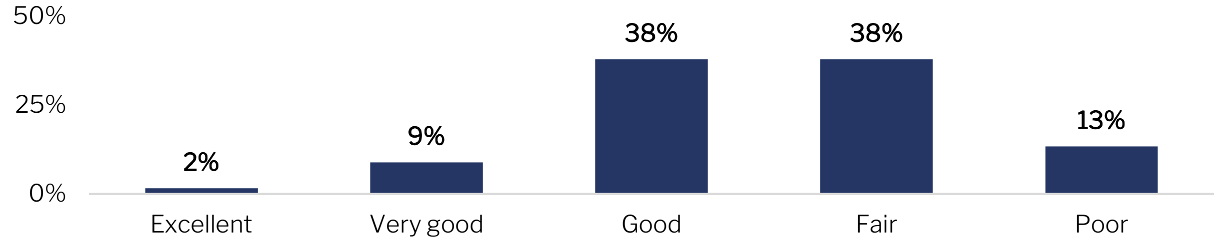
EXHIBIT 32. Personal Rating of General Health Status by Young People Engaged in Local Housing Programs, 2025



N = 351 (Health status was not listed for an additional 59 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

However, the opposite is true for mental health status. More than half (51 percent) of youth receiving housing services report their mental health status as fair or poor and only 2 percent rate their mental health as excellent (Exhibit 33).

EXHIBIT 33. Personal Rating of Mental Health Status by Young People Engaged in Local Housing Programs, 2025



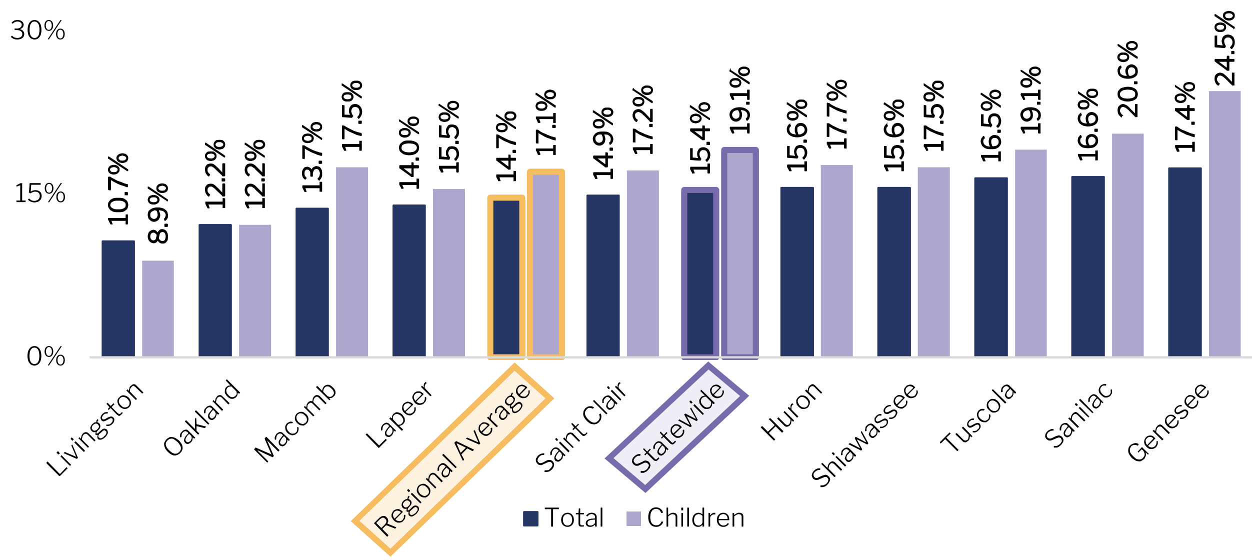
N = 313 (Health status was not listed for an additional 96 youth)
Source: HMIS data analyzed by PSC

"Many of our youth have unaddressed mental health disorders and/or are living with family members with severe untreated mental health disorders. These services are already limited and are now seriously in jeopardy."—Service provider

Access to Food

Housing instability affects health by limiting consistent access to adequate nutrition. Food insecurity—the inability to consistently afford enough food to meet a household's nutritional needs—can both result from and contribute to economic insecurity (Ashbrook 2023). Feeding America estimates that in 2023, 14.7 percent of individuals in the MSEMI region experienced food insecurity, compared to 15.4 percent statewide. In both the MSEMI region and statewide, children are more likely than the overall population to experience food insecurity, affecting 17.1 percent of children regionally and 19 percent statewide (Exhibit 34).

EXHIBIT 34. Percent of Total Population and Population Under 18 Years Old Experiencing Food Insecurity by Location, 2023



Note: N varies by location and population
Source: Feeding America n.d.

Domestic Violence

1 in 3
young people receiving housing services experienced domestic violence

Another contributing factor to overall health is safety. One-third of young people receiving housing services reported being victims of domestic violence,[4] and about half of those experienced violence in the last year. In comparison, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that one in 12 teenagers, generally, experience physical dating violence, and 1 in 10 experience sexual dating violence (CDC 2025). Further, children are present in almost a quarter of all intimate partner violence cases filed in state courts. Although a child may not be a direct victim of violence, they are left with the trauma and consequences of witnessing it (National Domestic Violence Hotline n.d.).

Of those who have experienced domestic violence, 28 percent were actively fleeing at the time of intake into a local housing program. This indicates that the homelessness response system is also a crucial component of keeping youth out of unsafe situations.

[4] Domestic violence as part of the HMIS intake form includes dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence against the individual or a family member that has taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence.

Housing and Community Services in the MSEMI Region

PSC and PFI facilitated interviews and discussion groups with representatives from the youth-serving system, including housing service providers, community service providers, Continuum of Care (CoC) leaders, HMIS administrators, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and regional partners across the ten-county MSEMI region. Interviewees represented both Michigan Balance of State (MI-500) and independent CoCs, as well as school districts and state-level agencies. PSC also worked with the LIGHT Board, the Regional Partnership's Youth Advisory Board, to lead a discussion group for young people ages 18 to 24, which included ten young people living in the MSEMI region who have experienced housing instability.

During these conversations, young people and service providers shared their experiences with services designed to help address housing instability and homelessness. These conversations provided important context on how the youth-serving system operates in the MSEMI region, the challenges faced by providers and young people, and opportunities for strengthening programs and services.

Strengths

- Youth outreach and engagement
- Collaboarative networks
- New funding and strategic programs
- Innovation in access and technology

Challenges

- Legal challenges to serving minors
- High levels of transience
- Limited availability of services for specific populations
- Out-of-date resource directories
- Stigma from adults
- Lack of adequate and consistent transportation
- Lack of affordable housing or sympathetic landlords
- System and data-related barriers

Each of these strengths and challenges are described in more detail in the sections below.

Strengths of the Youth-Serving System

Interview and discussion group participants noted strong partnerships among service providers and community connections as well as specific instances where youth can access services relatively easily.

Youth Outreach and Engagement

Providers described a meaningful shift among providers toward Positive Youth Development (PYD) frameworks[5] and youth empowerment. They focus more on working with young people rather than directing their lives and said they try to meet youth in the spaces they already occupy, like parks, schools, and other community gathering points.

Many young people in the discussion group said they especially appreciated service providers who offered a variety of services. For example, many young people reported that their schools provide transportation assistance, free mental health services, educational support, and food assistance. They said having these supports in a single, easily accessed location eased the burden of housing instability and helped them manage their health.

Collaborative Networks

Most service and housing providers reported strong partnerships between organizations. Many housing providers said they are familiar with making referrals to other organizations that can help meet the needs of the young people they serve. This helps create trust and relationships between providers and with young people. Some providers described strong statewide and regional provider networks, including formal structures such as the Michigan Network for Youth and Families and a range of informal rural networks. They said these facilitate resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and informal cross-county case coordination.

> "The nice thing about [the region] is that we all know each other so our community partnerships are strong. It makes referrals so much easier."— Service provider

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[5] Youth.gov defines PYD as an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

Young people said they do receive referrals from professionals they are connected to, but most said they learn about services from friends. They described strong connections among young people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in their communities.

New Funding and Strategic Programs

Housing and community service providers reported the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) generated significant momentum, especially in rural areas previously lacking service infrastructure.[6] Key developments include the creation of the Thumb Region Youth Partnership (TRYP) program, which delivers housing, case management, and barrier-removal services (including employment support and GED assistance) to youth and young adults under age 25 in the rural Thumb region.

In addition, they said the Michigan fiscal year 2024 budget included a $5.3 million increase in state funding for runaway and homeless youth programs, representing a 77 percent increase after years of flat funding.

According to these providers, progress has also been made on Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers, which facilitate collaboration between MDHHS and housing providers to secure housing for youth before they exit the foster care system.

Innovation in Access and Technology

One interviewee described Advocate, a web-based application available in Oakland County that allows individuals to apply for shelter online without requiring a phone call or in-person visit. App users receive daily text messages through the app to check in on housing status, offering a method of engagement suited to how youth typically communicate.

Another interviewee said school liaisons are using updated training tools on McKinney-Vento.org to better equip staff, including bus drivers and cafeteria workers, to identify students experiencing homelessness, aiming to expand the system's reach to youth who might otherwise go undetected.

System Challenges and Access Barriers

Interview and discussion group participants identified legal, logistic, and systemic barriers that limit the effectiveness of the youth-serving system. These challenges affect both providers and the young people they serve and can make it difficult for youth experiencing housing instability to access consistent and appropriate support.

[6] The HUD-sponsored Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program provides funding to select communities across the United States to promote the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Michigan's Balance of State CoC, which includes the more rural counties in the MSEMI region, received YHDP funding in 2022.

Legal Challenges to Serving Minors

Almost all housing and community service providers that participated in interviews or discussion groups **said that unaccompanied minors cannot legally consent to housing, healthcare, and other services without parental approval and/or legal documentation.** These legal constraints are one of the most common and pervasive barriers to receiving the services that a young person needs. Young people experiencing homelessness because of unsafe or unstable family dynamics, it can be difficult to gain parental consent for services. Providers also reported that many youth leave unstable home environments without legal identification such as birth certificates or Social Security cards.

Providers said they can sometimes offer limited services, like a set number of mental health counseling sessions, but noted this approach is inadequate. They explained it disrupts service continuity and can be risky for young people without a safe home to return to.

High Levels of Transience

Youth in this population tend to move more frequently than their adult counterparts, sometimes relocating seasonally or traveling considerable distances in search of resources. This mobility makes it difficult for case managers to maintain contact and provide continuity of care.

Limited Availability of Services for Specific Populations

Across interviews and discussion groups, participants identified three specific populations of young people who are most likely to struggle to obtain housing services: people ages 18 to 24, LGBTQ+ youth, and parenting youth.

Young People Ages 18 to 24

Providers reported a severe shortage of emergency shelters designed specifically for young adults ages 18 to 24. They said this population often does not qualify for youth programs (which may be capped at age 17 or 21) so they are not well-served and can end up in shelters intended to house adults. In some cases, interviewees said, these young adults have been actively traumatized in adult shelter environments.

LGBTQ+ Youth

Some interviewees described a shortage of safe, affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ youth in rural areas. They noted that school-based support groups have disbanded in many communities and faith-based providers do not always offer a welcoming environment for this population.

Parenting Youth

Others described challenges for parenting youth, including that providers sometimes fail to recognize young parents as “youth.” This can lead to parenting youth being treated as adults and excluded from youth-specific services. One provider noted that Livingston County does not have a family shelter, which forces parenting youth experiencing homelessness to rely on a fragmented network of faith-based motel vouchers; they state that the vouchers typically expire after 14 days.

Interviewees identified the need for maternity-style housing and substance use programs tailored to new and expectant mothers. A provider in the Thumb region noted a lack of childcare support, especially for those working nontraditional hours, worsening factors contributing to homelessness. Another challenge is that shelters for young mothers may require them to stay single or not allow partners. This increases the child care burden on the mother and may further contribute to gender gaps in poverty and homelessness.

Out-of-Date Resource Directories

When young people need services and do not have a referral, either formal or word-of-mouth, they often turn to internet searches or resource directories like 211. While 211 is well-known, young people said it was outdated and unhelpful. Some shared stories of calling 211 only to receive information about programs no longer available or told they did not qualify for nearby services. They said these searches left them feeling more hopeless and uncertain about how to get help.

> "I called 211 and was told that I need to spend the night [on the streets] of Detroit if I wanted to get into a shelter there."—Young person

Stigma from Adults

Young people felt older adults generally misunderstood their challenges and were sometimes judgmental and discriminatory. Some young people said they were told finding a place to live wouldn't be that expensive if they just worked harder. This type of statement felt out of touch and makes young people feel there is something wrong with them for experiencing hardship. They said it is critical to demonstrate care and respect for the young people they work with.

> "I work 12 hours per day, 7 days a week. I'm still told by older people that I'm not working hard enough."—Young person

Lack of Adequate and Consistent Transportation

All discussion groups identified transportation as the main barrier to accessing services. Public transportation is limited in most MSEMI counties. Even when it is available, young people say they do not always feel safe using it. One young person described having had traumatic experiences taking a bus in the past and being afraid to do so in the future. Unfortunately, they said they had few alternatives.

While provision of transportation services for students experiencing homelessness is required under McKinney-Vento, a McKinney-Vento coordinator acknowledged that transportation can sometimes take a long time to coordinate, leaving students without consistent transportation.

Lack of Affordable Housing or Sympathetic Landlords

Even with rental vouchers, youth face significant barriers to securing affordable housing. In affluent communities such as Livingston County, one interviewee said "affordable" units rent for approximately $1,200 per month, with landlords requiring a monthly income of three times the rent. They noted that youth typically lack rental and credit history or have credit histories damaged by family members. Interviewees also noted that landlords frequently express reluctance to rent to young tenants.

System and Data-Related Barriers

Housing and community service providers described specific challenges with data sharing and interagency cooperation.

HMIS Data Gaps

Although Michigan has a statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), administrative qualified service organization business associate agreements (QSOBAAs) rarely cover multiple counties. Interviewees said this causes duplicate, disconnected records when a youth moves between counties and is entered as a new client in each system, preventing providers from accessing a complete service history.

In addition, interviewees stated that many rural shelter programs are operated by faith-based volunteers who do not enter data into HMIS, resulting in a systematic undercount of the homeless population and reduced eligibility for data-driven funding allocations.

Cross-System Failures

Interviewees reported that funding restrictions often prevent Transitional Living Programs from serving youth still in foster care because programs would receive state funding to support the same youth (called double-dipping). They said this limits the level of youth support despite clear benefits from both programs.

They also noted that homeless programs are not well-equipped to serve youth with serious criminal histories, yet courts sometimes place such individuals in shelters as an alternative to incarceration, which can be a poor fit for those with complex behavioral and mental health needs.

Community service and housing providers said that they still feel like many partners who interact with youth experiencing homelessness work in silos. For example, law enforcement and social service agencies may be engaging with the same young people but a formal structure for communication and coordination does not exist between these groups.

Youth and Service Provider Recommendations

Everyone engaged during this process offered recommendations on how to improve the youth-serving system. One common recommendation was to ensure young people remain at the center of the work; bringing their voices to the table is essential for creating a system that actually works for them. It is also crucial that homelessness is addressed within the context of other challenges and needs, such as employment, education, transportation, food, and behavioral health.

Interviewees and discussion group participants offered several recommendations for addressing/reducing/ameliorating youth homelessness. These recommendations largely fell into four categories:

- Strengthening system coordination and data infrastructure
- Providing youth-specific programming and life skills development
- Improving intersystem collaboration
- Promoting services designed to meet the needs of young people

Strengthen System Coordination and Data Infrastructure

- **Centralize intake:** Establish a single point of entry for initial intake, eliminating the current requirement for youth and families to complete separate intakes across multiple agencies.
- **Improve cross-county coordination:** Implement a Housing Assessment Resource Agency (HARA) model that spans county lines, reflecting the geographic mobility of the homeless population. HARAs provide centralized intake and housing assessment to support comprehensive community-wide service access and delivery.
- **Increase cross-county data sharing:** Expand QSOBAAs to enable data sharing across county boundaries, ensuring providers can access a youth's full-service history regardless of where prior services were received.
- **Align definitions:** Align HUD's definition of homelessness with the McKinney-Vento definition, which includes doubled-up arrangements, to enable earlier intervention before youth reach literal homelessness.
- **Understand homelessness:** Complete county-specific PIT counts for the MSEMI counties that are currently included in the Balance of State CoC.

Provide Youth-Specific Programming and Life Skills Development

- **Invest in life skills programming:** Invest in structured programs teaching practical skills such as vehicle registration, insurance, household maintenance, and financial literacy. Compensate youth for their time and participation in programs. Tangible incentives significantly improve engagement, particularly for a population accustomed to systems that have demanded compliance without reciprocity.

- **Assist with obtaining vital documents:** Create dedicated resources to help youth navigate the process of obtaining birth certificates and government-issued identification.
- **Advocate for legal and medical consent reform:** Advocate for a 72-hour Safe Harbor law to allow programs time to locate parents before CPS involvement, and for legislation permitting minors to consent to routine medical care without parental sign-off.

Improve Intersystem Collaboration

- **Improve system coordination:** Increase coordination between homeless service programs, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems. Build on the progress made through HUD's Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers by strengthening collaboration between housing providers and child welfare to secure housing for youth before aging out of foster care. Engage housing commissions and authorities as active partners, as these entities control housing choice vouchers and other essential federal resources.
- **Engage city council and county commission:** Advocate for greater involvement by city councils and county commissioners in acknowledging and addressing youth homelessness at the local level.
- **Expand school liaison and homeless service provider coordination:** Improve coordination between school liaisons and homeless service providers across county lines to prevent youth from falling through the cracks when they change school districts.

Promote Services Designed to Meet the Needs of Young People

- **Empower young people to Lead:** Engage and compensate young people to lead and bring their voices to the table when developing programs and services for young people.
- **Close referral loops:** Follow up with referral organizations on behalf of youth to remove the burden for young people when possible.
- **Support pregnant and parenting youth:** Increase resources and shelters for pregnant and parenting youth.
- **Tailor services to young people:** Develop youth-focused shelters to help young people feel safer.
- **Raise awareness:** Provide current and useful information about resources available to address homelessness, including through social media.
- **Build mentorship into housing programs:** Help connect young people with older adults that have gone through some of the same experiences.
- **Reduce stigma:** Work with landlords to reduce bias associated with leasing to young people.
- **Create positive spaces for youth:** help facilitate or convene support groups for youth where they feel safe to share their story and lift each other up. This is especially important for LGBTQ+ youth, or those that may experience other forms of discrimination.

Conclusion

This needs assessment provides an overview of the scope and drivers of youth homelessness and housing instability across Mid- and Southeast Michigan. Data sources, including PIT counts, McKinney-Vento school data, and program-level information—offer important insights but also illustrate the difficulty of fully showing youth homelessness. Many young people avoid traditional shelter systems and instead rely on informal arrangements such as couch surfing or doubling up with friends or relatives. As a result, the true scale of housing instability among youth may exceed what existing data sources capture.

Findings indicate that youth homelessness in the region is shaped by a combination of family risk factors, feelings of safety, economic pressures, housing affordability challenges, barriers to education and employment, and involvement in systems such as foster care or juvenile justice. At the same time, conversations with service providers and young people highlight the resilience of youth navigating these challenges and the importance of supportive relationships and accessible services.

The assessment also identifies key strengths in the region's youth-serving system. Providers described strong partnerships, growing collaboration across organizations, and increased momentum through initiatives such as the YHDP and expanded state funding. These efforts, along with a broader shift toward youth-centered approaches that emphasize empowerment and outreach, provide a strong foundation for continued progress.

Despite these strengths, important gaps remain, including limited youth-specific housing options, transportation barriers, and challenges faced by populations such as young adults ages 18 to 24, LGBTQ+ youth, and parenting youth. Addressing these gaps will require stronger coordination across housing, education, and social service systems, as well as improvements in data sharing, youth-focused programming, and the inclusion of young people's perspectives in program design. By building on existing strengths while addressing these challenges, regional partners can continue advancing toward a system in which all young people have access to safe, stable housing and the supports they need to thrive.

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Appendix A: YHSI Partner Chart

<table>
<tr><th>County (CoC)</th><th>Youth Provider</th><th>CoC/Local Planning Body Lead</th><th>Coordinated Entry Lead</th><th>HARA</th><th>HMIS Lead</th></tr>
<tr><td>Oakland (MI-504)</td><td>Lighthouse MI (YHRP Lead)</td><td>Alliance for Housing (CoC lead)</td><td>Alliance for Housing</td><td>Community Housing Network</td><td>Alliance for Housing</td></tr>
<tr><td>Livingston (MI-518)</td><td>Livingston Family Center</td><td>Livingston Co. HCC (CoC Board)</td><td>Oakland Livingston HSA</td><td>Oakland Livingston HSA</td><td>Oakland Livingston HAS</td></tr>
<tr><td>Macomb (MI-503)</td><td rowspan="5">Comprehensive Youth Services</td><td>Macomb Community Action (CoC Lead)</td><td>Macomb Community Action</td><td>Macomb Community Action</td><td>HAND</td></tr>
<tr><td>St. Clair (MI-500)</td><td>MIBOSCOC
MSHDA
St. Clair CSCB (LPB Lead)</td><td>MIBOSCOC</td><td>Blue Water Community Action</td><td>MIBOSCOC
MSHDA</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sanilac (MI-500)</td><td rowspan="4">MIBOSCOC
MSHDA
Thumb Area LBP (Board)</td><td rowspan="4">MIBOSCOC</td><td rowspan="4">Human Development Commission</td><td rowspan="4">MIBOSCOC
MSHDA</td></tr>
<tr><td>Huron (MI-500)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tuscola (MI-500)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lapeer (MI-500)</td><td rowspan="3">Reach Resource Services</td></tr>
<tr><td>Genesee (MI-505)</td><td>Greater Flint Health Coalition (CoC Lead)</td><td>Genesee Community Health Center</td><td>Genesee Community Health Center</td><td>Greater Flint Health Coalition</td></tr>
<tr><td>Shiawassee (MI-500)</td><td>MIBOSCOC
MSHDA
Central Michigan LPB</td><td>MIBOSCOC
MSHDA</td><td>EightCAP</td><td>MIBOSCOC
MSHDA</td></tr>
</table>

Notes: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Housing & Homeless Services Division is not represented on partner table as their role stretches across all counties within the region.
MI-500 is MI Balance of State CoC (MIBOSCOC); MSHDA and the MIBOSCOC share a joint leadership relationship, in which MSHDA is the CoC collaborative applicant and fiduciary of HMIS funds. The MIBOSCOC is comprised of Local Planning Bodies (LPBs), who are additionally represented in the MSEMI YHRP.

Appendix B: County Profiles

The MSEMI region is made up of rural and urban counties. While the region has many shared characteristics, it is also important to acknowledge the differences across counties. For young people, especially, this can help tailor services that meet their unique needs based on where they reside.

Genesee County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

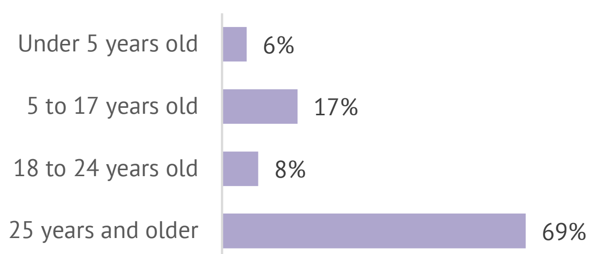
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	31%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	32	Highest in the region
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1.6%	Slightly below regional average
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	21%	Highest in region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	7%	Above regional average
Median rent	$989	Mid-range in region

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, HUD 2024, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

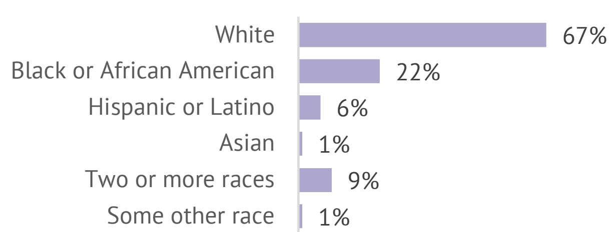
Nearly one-third of Genesee County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B1). The county's population is predominantly white but is more racially diverse than many other counties in the region. About 6 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B2).

Exhibit B1. Population by Age, 2023



N = 404,087
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B2. Population Ages 18-24 by Race and Ethnicity



N = 33,288
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

Homelessness

Between 2020 and 2024, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Genesee County increased from 349 to 423 (21 percent). During the same period, the number of young adults aged 18 to 24 experiencing homelessness increased from 22 to 32 (45 percent). In 2024, nearly all young people experiencing homelessness were staying in sheltered settings, with only one person counted as unsheltered.

In the 2022–23 school year, 1.6 percent of K–12 students experienced homelessness—slightly below the regional average of 1.9 percent and the statewide average of 2.4 percent.

Poverty and Household Income

Genesee County has the highest overall poverty rate in the MSEMI region, with 16 percent of all residents experiencing poverty. Youth and young adults experience poverty at higher rates than the general population, with about one-quarter of children under age five living in poverty (Exhibit B3).

Exhibit B3. Youth Poverty Rate by Age, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

Median household income among householders ages 15 to 24 is $45,396, compared to $60,673 across all households in the county. Both figures are among the region's lowest.

Housing Costs

Median monthly rent in Genesee County is $989. Despite relatively low household incomes, this ranks as the fifth highest median rent in the region. **Nearly 45 percent of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened**, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 7 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Genesee County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. Genesee ISD also has the highest rate of chronic absenteeism in the region at 31.7 percent, and six schools in the county have dropout rates in the top 10 percent regionally.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Several additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Genesee County:

- Approximately 15 percent of students in Genesee ISD receive special education services
- **The county has the highest juvenile arrest rate in the MSEMI region, with 12.6 arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10 to 17**
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years but remain an important indicator of housing vulnerability

Huron County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

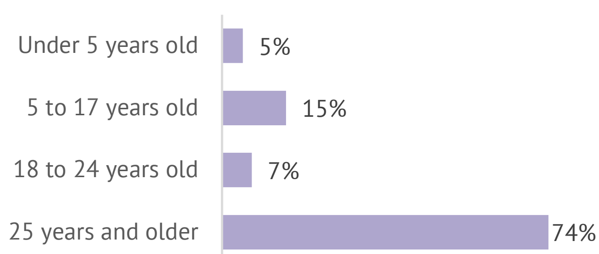
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	26%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	N/A	
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	2.6%	Two times the regional average
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	14.5%	Mid-range in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	3.9%	Lowest in the region
Median rent	$743	Lowest in the region

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

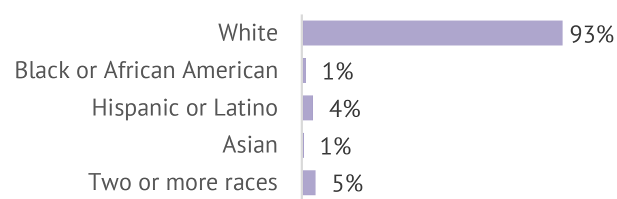
About one-quarter of Huron County's population is under age 24, including 7 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B4). The county's population is predominantly white and is one of the least racially diverse counties in the region. About 4 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B5).

Exhibit B4. Population by Age, 2023



N = 31,258
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B5. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 2,113

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

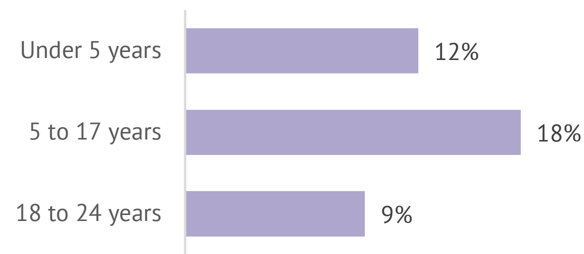
Homelessness

Huron County is one of the counties that is represented under the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). As such, historical data on point-in-time (PIT) counts for homelessness in Huron County, specifically, was not available at the time of analysis. However, PSC worked with a local planning body to obtain single-year PIT data for 2023. In 2023, there were 53 people experiencing homelessness, 49 of whom were sheltered and four of whom were unsheltered. Additional data for 2024 were available but combined with Lapeer, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties' data. Across all of these counties, only three young people aged 18- to 24-years-old were counted as homeless, one of whom was unsheltered and two of whom were sheltered. Of note, **nearly 3 percent of K–12 students in Huron County experience homelessness, the highest rate in the region**.

Poverty and Household Income

Huron County's poverty rate is the same as the MSEMI region's, with 12 percent of all residents experiencing poverty. Youth under 18 years old experience poverty at higher rates than the general population, but young adults ages 18 to 24 experience poverty at a slightly low er rate (9 percent). The poverty rate for 5- to 17-year-olds is 18 percent, which is higher than any other group in the county (Exhibit B6).

Exhibit B6. Poverty Rate by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

Median household income among householders ages 15 to 24 is $45,227, compared to $56,963 across all households in the county. **Huron County's median household income for all ages is the lowest in the region.**

Housing Costs

Median rent in Huron County is $743 per month, the lowest in the region. Though rent costs may be affordable compared to other counties, over a quarter (27 percent) of 15- to 24-year-olds are housing cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 4 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Huron County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is the lowest rate of opportunity youth in the region. Huron ISD also has the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism at 12.6 percent.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Huron County:

- Approximately 20 percent of students in Huron ISD receive special education services, the highest in the region
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years but remain an important indicator of housing vulnerability—in 2024, the foster care rate in Huron County was above the regional rate (3.9 per 1,000 children ages zero to 17, compared to 2.6 per 1,000)

Lapeer County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

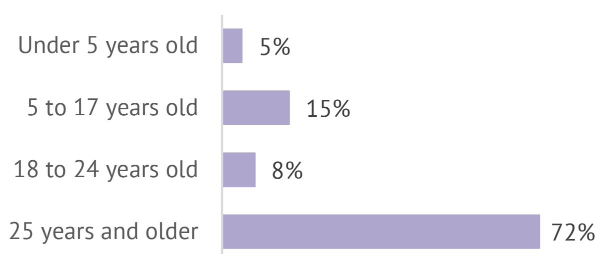
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	28%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	N/A	
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1.7%	Similar the regional average
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	12.5%	Mid-range in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	12.6%	Among the highest in the region
Median rent	$959	Similar to regional average

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

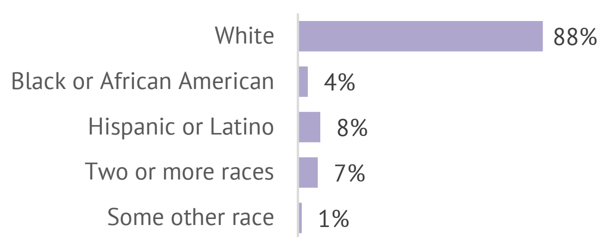
Just over one-quarter of Lapeer County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B7). The county's population is predominantly white, and the racial diversity is similar to that of the regional makeup. About 8 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino, which is more than in any other county (Exhibit B8).

Exhibit B7. Population by Age, 2023



N = 88,703
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B8. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 6,745
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

Homelessness

Lapeer County is one of the counties that is represented under the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). As such, historical data on point-in-time (PIT) counts for homelessness in Lapeer County, specifically, was not available at the time of analysis. However, PSC worked with a local planning body to obtain single-year PIT data for 2023. In 2023, there were 109 people experiencing homelessness, 78 of whom were sheltered and 31 who were unsheltered. Additional data for 2024 were available but combined with Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola Counties' data.

Across all four counties, only three young people aged 18- to 24-years-old were counted as homeless, one of whom was unsheltered and two of whom were sheltered. During the 2022–23 school year, 1.7 percent of Lapeer ISD students were experiencing homelessness.

Poverty and Household Income

Lapeer County's poverty rate is lower than the MSEMI region's, with 10 percent of all residents experiencing poverty. However, youth and young adults all experience poverty at higher rates than the general population. (Exhibit B9).

Exhibit B9. Poverty Rate by Age, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

Median household income among householders ages 15 to 24 is $55,195, compared to $76,228 across all households in the county. Both of these median incomes are similar to the regional averages.

Housing Costs

Median rent in Lapeer County is $959 per month, similar to the regional average. **More 15- to 24-year-olds in Lapeer County are housing cost burdened than in any other county; 57 percent of young people spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.**

Education and Employment

About 13 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Lapeer County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is the second highest rate of opportunity youth in the region. A quarter of Lapeer ISD students are considered chronically absent, similar to the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Lapeer County:

- Approximately 17 percent of students in Lapeer ISD receive special education services
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years, but Lapeer County was the only county to experience an increase—**from 2019 to 2024, the rate of children ages zero to 17 increased by 19 percent**

Livingston County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

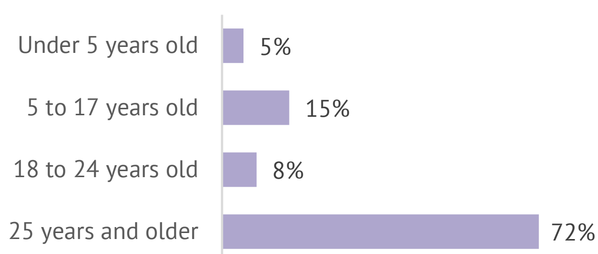
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	28%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	7	Lowest in the region
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1.1%	Among the lowest in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	6%	Lowest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	5.1%	Lower than the regional average
Median rent	$1,236	Higher than the regional average

Sources: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, HUD 2024, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

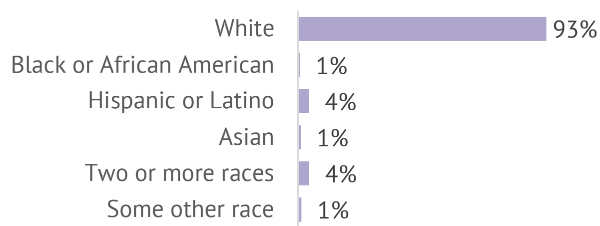
Just over one-quarter of Livingston County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B10). The county's population is predominantly white and one of the least racially diverse in the MSEMI region. About 4 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B11).

Exhibit B10. Population by Age, 2023



N = 195,143
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B11. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 15,125
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

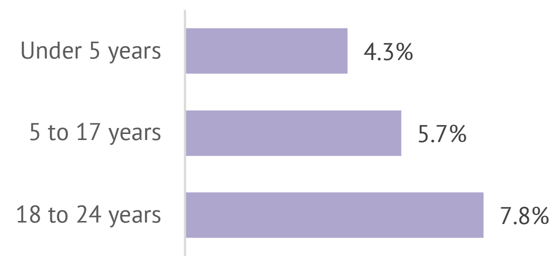
Homelessness

Within the MSEMI region, Livingston County had the fewest number of people experiencing homelessness every year from 2020 to 2024. During this same period, fewer than 15 young people aged 18 to 24 were experiencing homelessness. About 1 percent of Livingston ESA students experienced homelessness during the 2022–23 school year, which was also among the lowest rates in the region.

Poverty and Household Income

Livingston County's poverty rate is the lowest in the MSEMI region's, with 5 percent of all residents experiencing poverty. Young adults aged 18 to 24 had a higher rate of poverty (7.8 percent), though that rate is lower than that of all other MSEMI counties (Exhibit B12).

Exhibit B12. Poverty Rate by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

Livingston County has the highest median household income in the region for all ages ($101,315). However, **the gap between the median household income for all ages and for 15- to 24-year-olds is one of the largest. On average, householders ages 15 to 24 make 60 percent of the median household income in Livingston County,** earning $55,195.

Housing Costs

The median rent in Livingston County is $1,236 per month, which is 1.25 times higher than the regional average. Thirty-five percent of 15- to 24-year-olds are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 5 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Livingston County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is a lower rate than the regional average of 6.5 percent. Just under a quarter (23 percent) of Livingston ESA's students are considered chronically absent, similar to the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Livingston County:

- Approximately 14 percent of students in Livingston ESA receive special education services
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years but remain an important indicator of housing vulnerability

Macomb County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

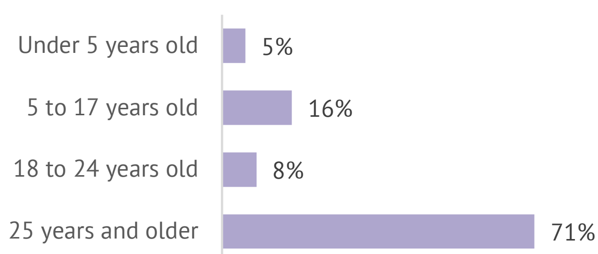
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	29%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	21	Mid-range
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1.1%	Among the lowest in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	12.4%	Among the lowest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	7.1%	Higher than the regional average
Median rent	$1,175	Higher than the regional average

Sources: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, HUD 2024, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

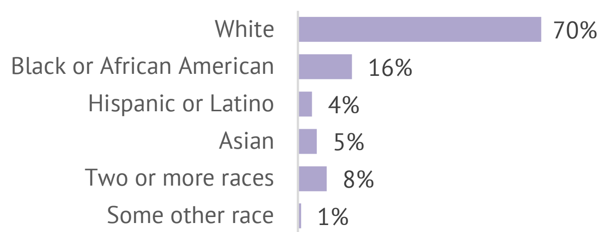
Almost 30 percent of Macomb County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B13). The county's population is predominantly white, but is more diverse that the region as a whole. Thirty percent of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and about 4 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B14).

Exhibit B13. Population by Age, 2023



N = 877,624
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B14. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 68,853
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

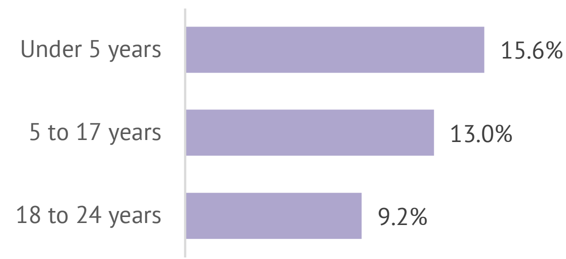
Homelessness

In 2024, Macomb County had the highest number of people experiencing homelessness (436), but had a lower share of people ages 18 to 24 experiencing homelessness (21**). However, from 2020 to 2024, the county saw the biggest increase in 18- to 24-year-olds experiencing homelessness in the region;** in 2020, eight young adults were counted as homeless, up to 21 by 2024. About 1 percent of Macomb ISD students experienced homelessness during the 2022–23 school year, which was also among the lowest rates in the region.

Poverty and Household Income

Ten percent of all residents in Macomb County experience poverty. Minors under 18 years old experience higher rates of poverty, with children under five years old experiencing the highest rates of poverty (Exhibit B15).

Exhibit B15. Poverty by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in Macomb County of $76,399 is just above the regional average. The median for householders ages 15 to 24 years old is $56,286, also slightly above the regional average for this age group.

Housing Costs

Macomb County has the third-highest median rent in the region at $1,175 per month. Almost half (44 percent) of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 7 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Macomb County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is a higher rate than the regional average of 6.5 percent. **Nearly 30 percent of Macomb ISD students are considered chronically absent, the second highest rate in the region.**

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Macomb County:

- Approximately 15 percent of students in Macomb ISD receive special education services
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years, including in Macomb County, but remain an important indicator of housing vulnerability

Oakland County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

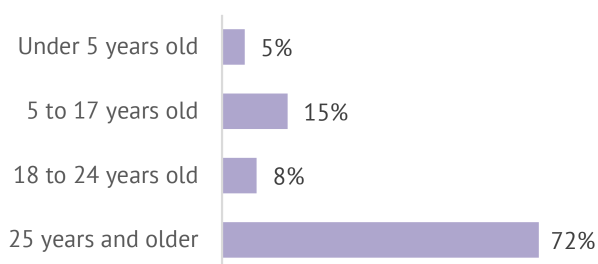
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	28%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	32	Highest in the region
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1%	Lowest in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	9.1%	Among the lowest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	5.4%	Lower than the regional average
Median rent	$1,319	Highest in the region

Sources: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, HUD 2024, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

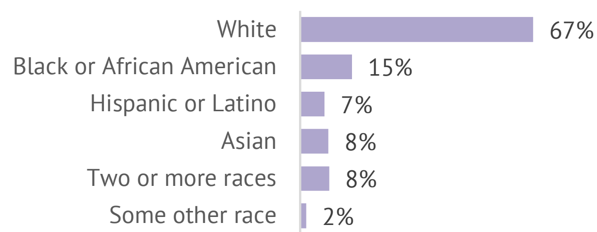
Twenty-eight percent of Oakland County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B16). The county's population is predominantly white, but is more diverse that the region as a whole. One-third of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and 7 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B17).

Exhibit B16. Population by Age, 2023



N = 1,272,294
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B17. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 100,304
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

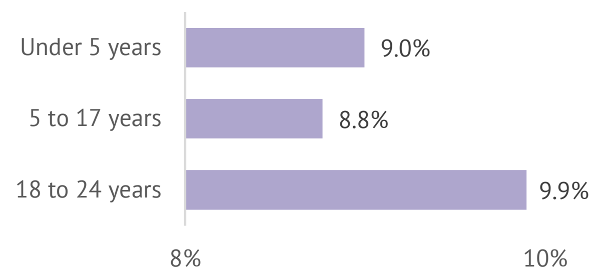
Homelessness

In 2024, there were 357 people counted as homeless in Oakland County. Thirty-two young adults ages 18 to 24 were counted as homeless, which, along with Genesee County, was the highest in the region. **However, from 2020 to 2024, the county was one of the only in the region that saw a decline in homelessness for both all ages and for young adults according to PIT counts.** About 1 percent of Oakland ISD students experienced homelessness during the 2022–23 school year, which was also among the lowest rates in the region. Despite the lowest rate of homelessness among students, it should be noted that the district is large, meaning that **Oakland ISD had the largest number of students experiencing homelessness.**

Poverty and Household Income

Eight percent of all residents in Oakland County are experiencing poverty. Children and young people experience higher rates of poverty than the general population; about 10 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds experience poverty (Exhibit B18).

Exhibit B18. Poverty by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in Oakland County of $95,296 is the second highest in the region behind Livingston County. The median for householders ages 15 to 24 years old is $52,277, which is nearly equivalent to the regional average for this age group. Of note, Oakland County has the biggest wage gap by age group. **On average, householders ages 15 to 24 make only 55 percent of the median household income for all ages.**

Housing Costs

Oakland County has the highest median rent in the region at $1,319 per month. About half (49 percent) of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 5 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Oakland County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is a lower rate than the regional average of 6.5 percent. About 25 percent of Oakland County ISD students are considered chronically absent, which is roughly equivalent to the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Oakland County:

- Approximately 13 percent of students in Oakland County ISD receive special education services
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years, including in Oakland County, but remain an important indicator of housing vulnerability

St. Clair County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

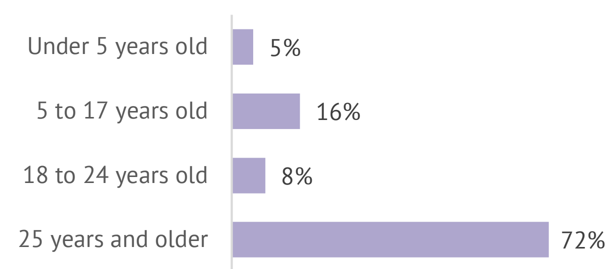
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	28%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	9	One of the lowest in the region
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	2%	Similar to regional average
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	14%	Mid-range in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	7.4%	Higher than the regional average
Median rent	$999	Mid-range in the region

Sources: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, HUD 2024, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

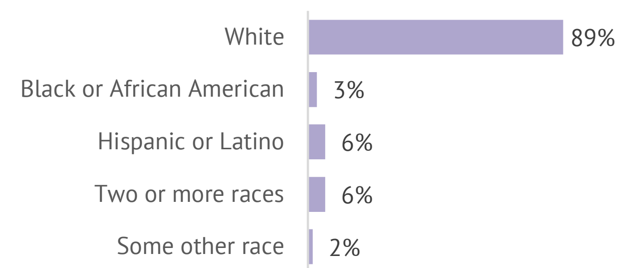
Twenty-eight percent of St. Clair County's population is under age 24, including 8 percent ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B19). The county's population is predominantly white. Eleven percent of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and 6 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B20).

Exhibit B19. Population by Age, 2023



N = 160,089
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B20. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 12,188
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b—2023i

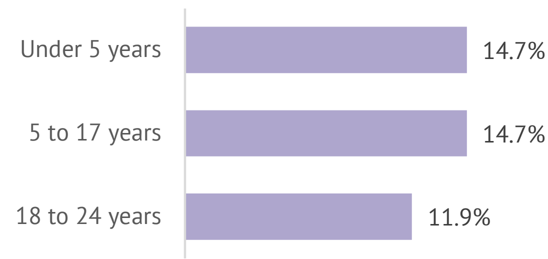
Homelessness

In 2024, there were 11 people counted as homeless in St. Clair County, eight of whom where unaccompanied youth ages 18 to 24. About 2 percent of St. Clair RESA students experienced homelessness during the 2022–23 school year. **Outside of the more urban Oakland, Macomb, and Genesee Counties, St. Clair County had the highest number of students experiencing homelessness.**

Poverty and Household Income

Eleven percent of all residents in St. Clair County experience poverty. Children and young people high higher rates of poverty; about 12 percent 18- to 24-year-olds experience poverty (Exhibit B21).

Exhibit B21. Poverty by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in St. Clair County is $69,349 for all ages and $52,219 for householders ages 15 to 24. While the all-age median income is lower than the regional average for the same age group, the median income for 15- to 24-year-olds is roughly equivalent to the regional average.

Housing Costs

The median rent in St. Clair County is $999 per month, similar to the regional average. Almost half (47 percent) of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

About 7 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in St. Clair County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is a higher rate than the regional average of 6.5 percent. Twenty-six percent of St. Clair County RESA students are considered chronically absent, which is slightly higher than the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in St. Clair County:

- Sixteen percent of students in St. Clair County RESA receive special education services
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years, including in St. Clair County, but the county still has one of the highest rates in the region, with 3.9 per 1,000 children ages zero to 17 in out-of-home placements

Sanilac County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

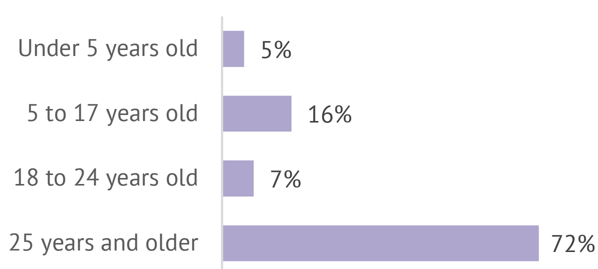
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	28%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	N/A	
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	3%	Highest in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	20.9%	Among the highest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	13.6%	Highest in the region
Median rent	$814	Lower than the regional average

Sources: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

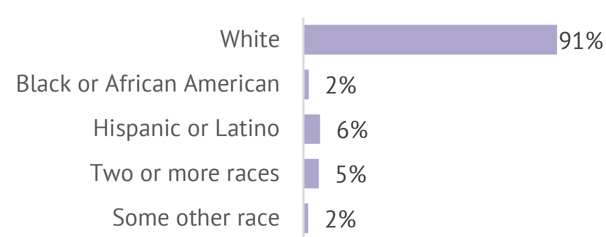
Twenty-eight percent of Sanilac County's population is under age 24, including about 7 percent of whom are ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B22). The county's population is predominantly white. Nine percent of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and 6 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B23).

Exhibit B22. Population by Age, 2023



N = 40,574
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B23. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 2,922
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

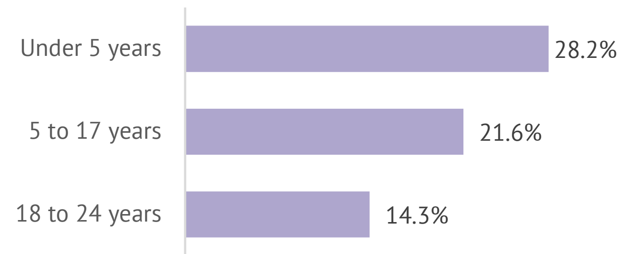
Homelessness

Sanilac County is one of the counties that is represented under the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). PSC worked with a local planning body to obtain single-year PIT data for 2023. In 2023, there were 74 people experiencing homelessness in Sanilac County, 50 of whom were sheltered and 24 who were unsheltered. Additional data for 2024 were available but combined with Huron, Lapeer, and Tuscola Counties' data. Across all four counties, only three young people ages 18 to 24 were counted as homeless, one of whom was unsheltered and two of whom were sheltered. Three percent of Sanilac ISD students were considered homeless during the 2022–23 school year—the highest rate in the region.

Poverty and Household Income

Fourteen percent of all residents in Sanilac County are experiencing poverty. Children and young people experience higher rates of poverty; **children under five years old experience poverty at twice the county rate** (Exhibit B24).

Exhibit B24. Poverty by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in Sanilac County is $59,074 for all ages and $51,650 for householders aged 15 to 24 years old. Both of these are lower than the regional average. **Sanilac County has the second lowest median household income in the region for all ages.**

Housing Costs

The median rent in Sanilac County is $814 per month, which is lower than the regional average. A quarter (25 percent) of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

Almost 14 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Sanilac County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is the highest rate in the region, where the average is 6.5 percent. About 22 percent of Sanilac County ISD students are considered chronically absent, which is slightly lower than the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Sanilac County:

- About 18 percent of students in Sanilac County ISD receive special education services
- Sanilac County has a rate 3.2 per 1,000 children ages zero to 17 in out-of-home placements, which is higher than the regional average
- Sanilac County has one of the highest juvenile arrest rates in the region, with 8.5 per 1,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17 being arrested

Shiawassee County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

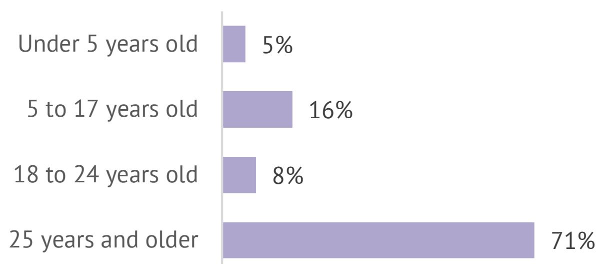
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	29%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	N/A	
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	1.6%	Mid-range in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	20.9%	Among the highest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	15.2%	Higher than the regional average
Median rent	$876	Lower than the regional average

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

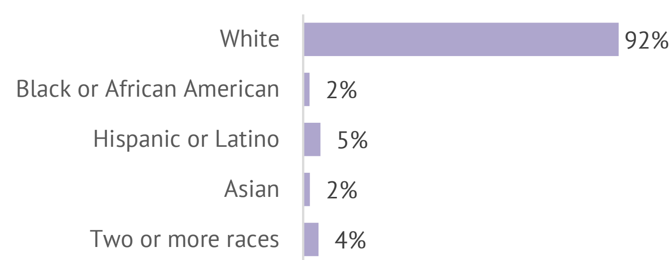
Twenty-nine percent of Shiawassee County's population is under age 24, including about 8 percent of whom are ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B25). The county's population is predominantly white and the county is among the least racially diverse in the region. Eight percent of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and 5 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B26).

Exhibit B25. Population by Age, 2023



N = 68,061
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B26. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 5,253
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

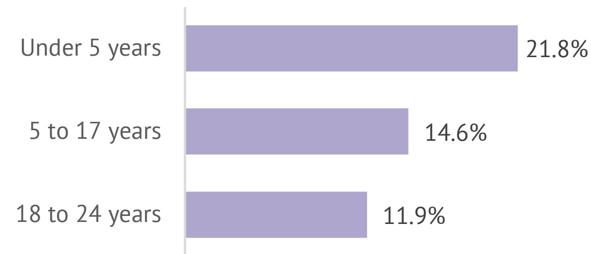
Homelessness

Shiawassee County is one of the counties that is represented under the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). As such, historical data on point-in-time (PIT) counts for homelessness in Shiawassee County, specifically, were not available at the time of analysis. Based on McKinney-Vento school data, 1.6 percent of students in Shiawassee RESD experienced homelessness in the 2022–23 school year.

Poverty and Household Income

Twelve percent of all residents in Shiawassee County are experiencing poverty. Children under 18 experience higher rates of poverty; **almost 22 percent of children under five years old experience poverty** (Exhibit B27).

Exhibit B27. Poverty by Age, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in Shiawassee County is $64,464 for all ages and $55,000 for householders ages 15 to 24. The median household income for all ages is lower than the regional average, but that of 15- to 24-year-olds is higher than the regional average for the same age group.

Housing Costs

The median rent in Shiawassee County is $876 per month, which is lower than the regional average. One-third (33 percent) of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

Almost 6 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Shiawassee County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is incrementally lower than the regional average of 6.5 percent. About 21 percent of Shiawassee RESD students are considered chronically absent, which is also lower than the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Sanilac County:

- About 19 percent of students in Shiawassee RESD receive special education services, which is the second highest rate in the region
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years. In 2024, the county had a rate 2.1 per 1,000 children ages zero to 17 in out-of-home placements, which is lower than the regional average

Tuscola County

Youth Homelessness and Housing Instability Risk Factors

County Snapshot: Youth Housing and Economic Indicators

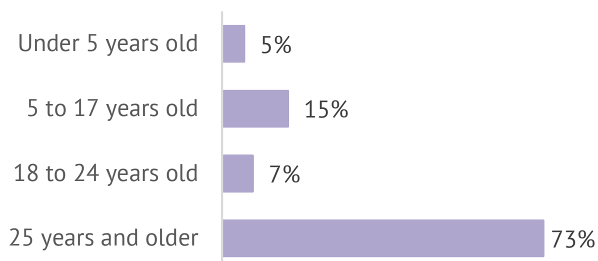
Indicator	Value	Regional Context
Population under age 24	27%	Similar to regional average
Young adults experiencing homelessness (18–24)	N/A	
Students experiencing homelessness (K–12)	2.9%	Second highest in the region
Youth poverty rate (0–24)	20.9%	Among the highest in the region
Opportunity youth (16–24)	4.7%	Second lowest in the region
Median rent	$796	Second lowest in the region

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, U.S. Census Bureau 2023j, Schoolhouse Connection 2024, Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.b

Age and Race Demographics

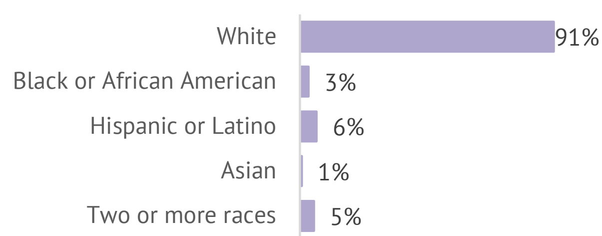
Twenty-seven percent of Tuscola County's population is under age 24, including about 7 percent of whom are ages 18 to 24 (Exhibit B28). The county's population is predominantly white and the county is among the least racially diverse in the region. Nine percent of the county's 18- to 24-year-olds are People of Color, and 6 percent of young people identify as Hispanic or Latino (Exhibit B29).

Exhibit B28. Population by Age, 2023



N = 53,071
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023a

Exhibit B28. Population Ages 18 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



N = 3,723
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023b–2023i

Homelessness

Tuscola County is one of the counties that is represented under the Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC). As such, historical data on point-in-time (PIT) counts for homelessness in Tuscola County were not available at the time of analysis. PSC worked with a local planning body to obtain single-year PIT data for 2023. In 2023, there were 103 people experiencing homelessness in Tuscola County, 77 of whom were sheltered and 26 of whom were unsheltered. Additional data for

2024 were available but combined with Huron, Lapeer, and Sanilac Counties' data. Across all four of these counties, only three young people ages 18 to 24 were counted as homeless, one of whom was unsheltered and two of whom were sheltered. Based on McKinney-Vento school data, 2.9 percent of students in Tuscola ISD experienced homelessness in the 2022–23 school year. This is the second highest rate in the region.

Poverty and Household Income

Thirteen percent of all residents in Tuscola County are experiencing poverty. Children under 18 experience high higher rates of poverty; **with over 15 percent of children under 17 years old experiencing poverty** (Exhibit B30).

Exhibit B30. Poverty by Age, 2023

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023j

The median household income in Tuscola County is $62,847 for all ages and $48,938 for householders ages 15 to 24. Both these incomes are lower than the regional average for the same age groups. Further, **the median household income for 15- to 24-year-olds is one of the lowest in the region.**

Housing Costs

The median rent in Tuscola County is $796 per month, which is the second lowest in the region. Despite relatively affordable rent costs, 23 percent of householders ages 15 to 24 are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Education and Employment

Almost 5 percent of youth ages 16 to 24 in Tuscola County are considered opportunity youth, meaning they are not enrolled in school and not working. This is lower than the regional average of 6.5 percent. About 21 percent of Tuscola ISD students are considered chronically absent, which is also lower than the regional average.

Other Indicators of Housing Risk

Additional indicators highlight potential risk factors for housing instability among youth in Tuscola County:

- About 16 percent of students in Tuscola ISD receive special education services, which is the second highest rate in the region
- Foster care placements have declined across the region in recent years but remain an important risk factor for homelessness