Public concern about homelessness in the United States has increased in recent years. A late 1995 Gallup poll found that 86% of Americans feel sympathy for the homeless, and 33% report that they feel more sympathy now than they did five years ago. According to the same poll, one reason for this apparent increase in sympathy is that 17% of Americans, primarily women and young adults, believe that they could become homeless.¹ The fact that these groups are concerned about homelessness reflects, in part, two decades of increases in the visibility of homeless women and children in the United States. Published reports suggest that most homeless families with children are headed by single women between the ages of 26 and 30 who have never been married and have two children.²

Because shelter is a basic human need, it is not surprising that the effects of homelessness on children and families appear to be harsh and multifaceted. According to one study, homeless women are significantly more likely to have low birth weight babies than are similar poor women who are housed.³ Others report that, compared to the general population of children, homeless children have twice as many health problems, are more likely to go hungry, and have higher rates of developmental delay; and although findings have not been consistent, higher rates of depression, anxiety, and behavior problems have been reported for homeless children.⁴ Because, however, as discussed in this article, collecting reliable and comprehensive information about the population of homeless families with children is very difficult, accurately estimating the size, scope, and impact of homelessness among families with children in the United States has been almost impossible.⁵ Estimates of the size and composition of the population of homeless families and children are important, however, to understand the etiology and consequences of homelessness, to design effective programs and policies to address the problem, and to evaluate whether interventions are working.

This Child Indicators article focuses on available data on homeless families and children. First, it reviews different definitions of homelessness and...
the most common methods used to estimate the size of the homeless population. It then examines data on subgroups of homeless children and youths in the United States and considers the duration of homelessness for families with children that use shelter services. Finally, it examines trends in the numbers of families who are at risk of losing their housing.

Estimates of the size of the homeless population vary, depending on the definition of homelessness used. Even when definitions are clear and consistent, the methods used to count the homeless differ widely. Estimates of the number of homeless at one point in time or for a period of time can be made. In practice, homeless families and children are a difficult group to find and track, and few estimates that focus on children specifically have been made. Using a variety of techniques, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) estimated that between 80,000 and 400,000 children were likely to be homeless or doubled up, living with friends and extended family, on any given night in 1988. Based on the GAO’s “best” estimates, many more children were doubled up (186,000 in 1988) than living in shelters or other community settings provided for homeless families (68,000 in 1988). The length of homelessness for families tends to be short (less than three months), although there is evidence that a small group of families is homeless for years. Data on trends in actual homelessness are not available, but trends in the number of single-parent families in extreme poverty, conditions that tend to precede homelessness for families, suggest a large increase in the population of potentially homeless families since 1975.

Defining Homelessness

Since the early 1980s, estimates of the size of the overall homeless population have ranged from 192,000 to three million. An important reason for this variance in the estimates is different definitions of homelessness.

Two broad groups of individuals can be included in a definition of the homeless. The first is often called the literally homeless, people who have no permanent homes and spend the night in places such as the street, cars, or emergency shelters. The other group sometimes considered homeless is the precariously housed population. People who are precariously housed are in danger of becoming literally homeless because they have no place of their own to live or their current housing situation is tenuous. This group includes, among others, people who are doubled up—those who are living for short periods of time with friends or relatives and thus lack a fixed, regular nighttime residence. Children often appear among the precariously housed population because parents who become homeless may place their children with friends or relatives in order to avoid literal homelessness for them. Because some individuals and families choose to share housing as a regular, stable, and long-term arrangement, distinguishing the precariously housed from those in stable sharing arrangements is difficult.

The official definition of homelessness used by government agencies for determining eligibility for services is found in the 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the first comprehensive
federal law dealing with emergency assistance for the homeless. The act defines a homeless person as:

(1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; [or]

(2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is—

- a supervised or publicly operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

- an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

- a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.\(^8\)

The McKinney definition includes many of the literally homeless population, although it excludes individuals in jails. It may or may not include the precariously housed, depending on the interpretation of “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This ambiguity makes the McKinney definition difficult to use for data collection.

Aside from differences in definitions, another source of variability in published estimates of the size of the homeless population is the diverse statistics used to describe the population. The two most frequently reported statistics are nightly counts (or point prevalence) and annual prevalence. Nightly counts measure the number of people who are homeless at one point in time. This type of estimate presents a “snapshot” of the size and composition of the homeless population. The point in time chosen for the nightly count can affect an estimate because there are typically more homeless people at the end of the month (when government assistance money runs out) and in the summer months.\(^10\) A nightly count can, however, provide a useful estimate of the number of homeless people who may need services on a given day.

Annual measures provide estimates of the number of people who are ever homeless over the course of a year. Because homelessness tends to happen intermittently for many people, the annual counts result in much higher estimates of the number of homeless people than the nightly counts. The duration of homelessness can have a large impact on estimates of annual prevalence. Efforts to count the homeless at different points in time may count the same people twice if people tend to be homeless
longer than the time that elapsed between the counts.\textsuperscript{11}

Variations in the duration of homelessness can also affect the mix of services that families need. A family experiencing a short, one-time bout of homelessness is likely to be affected in other ways and to need different services than one that is homeless repeatedly and intermittently. Families that have been homeless continuously for an extended period may need still different services. However, these key data about homeless families, the duration of homelessness and number of homeless episodes, are difficult to estimate because of the lack of tracking systems for the homeless and the anonymous nature of many of the services that are provided.

**Methods of Counting the Homeless**

Several methodologies have been used to count the homeless. The most direct method, used for nightly counts, is a census. In a census, researchers visit shelters and other places where the homeless are found and count the number of homeless people they see over a short, defined period of time. The U.S. Bureau of the Census did this in 1990 in an effort called “shelter and street night” (S-night).\textsuperscript{12} The resulting estimates from this effort were strongly criticized by researchers and advocates for the homeless.\textsuperscript{13} One criticism related to children, for example, is that, in a census or direct survey of homeless individuals, parents may hesitate to identify themselves as homeless if they are afraid that they will be charged with neglect and have their children taken away from them.

In other efforts to count the homeless, local government or shelter officials are asked to estimate the number of homeless in their area or served by their agency at a given time or over the course of a longer time period. Service-based estimates of the number of homeless vary, depending on the choice of the services that are included in the sample.\textsuperscript{14} Most programs for homeless people, especially shelters, primarily serve the literally homeless population, so counts based on these services do not include the precariously housed or doubled-up populations. Shelter regulations also affect who is able to stay in shelters. Shelters for families, for example, often will not allow men or adolescent boys to stay, forcing families with male members to break up or go elsewhere for shelter.\textsuperscript{15} A 1995 poll by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that, in 64% of the cities polled, city officials believed that families may have to break up in order to be accommodated in shelters.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, families that place their children in foster care or with relatives because of homelessness are not likely to be categorized as homeless families with children in most surveys, and their children will not be counted among the homeless.

Moreover, estimates that rely on measures of service utilization as indicators of the size of the homeless population may be subject to bias due to the increase in the number of shelters and food programs over time. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated that the number of shelters for the homeless grew from 1,900 in 1984 to 5,000 in 1988, and the number has probably continued to expand.\textsuperscript{17} Although this growth most likely reflects an attempt to respond to a rise in the need for shelters, it is also possible that, as the number of shelters increases, the proportion of the homeless population using the shelters may also enlarge.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, estimates of the number of homeless that depend on counts of people using services may increase even though the actual number of homeless individuals or families may not have done so. In addition, the availability of shelters may encourage families who otherwise might have remained precariously housed to become homeless, so that greater availability of shelters may actually expand the literally homeless population.

Other methods of estimating the homeless population are even more indirect and rely on informed opinion or statistical estimation rather than actual counts by census takers or shelter operators. Some analysts
have based estimates on unemployment figures or poverty rates for a given region, and others use proportions of homelessness in one area to make estimates in other areas. Many of these indirect estimation techniques and some of the estimates they produced are reviewed in the remainder of this article.

The Number of Homeless Families, Children, and Youths

The most detailed estimate of the number of homeless children and youths in the United States was prepared by the General Accounting Office in 1989. The GAO used several different techniques to estimate the numbers of homeless families and children in different settings. These setting-specific estimates were then aggregated to provide overall estimates of 68,000 children literally homeless and 186,000 children doubled up on any given night in 1988 (see Figure 1). To estimate the number of urban sheltered homeless children and youths, the GAO asked shelter providers and government agencies that place families in hotels and motels to provide counts of the numbers of families and children sheltered on October 24, 1988, the numbers served yearly, and estimates of the percentage of homeless families in their county that would be found in each of several settings.18 To estimate the number of homeless children and youths in nonurban areas, the GAO projected that the rate of homelessness in nonurban areas would be one-third that in urban areas and applied the estimated rate to the population of nonurban areas across the country.19 The GAO also used indirect estimation to conclude that about 186,000 children and youths are doubled up. That estimate, shown in Figure 1, was based on the median of the shelter operator’s answers to a question about the percentage of children in families who were doubled up with friends or relatives.18

The GAO estimates are far from precise because they depend heavily upon the assumptions that were made about the numbers of homeless children in different circumstances. For that reason, the GAO reported that estimates might plausibly range from 41,000 to 107,000 literally homeless and from 39,000 to 296,000 precariously housed children and youths.20

Since the 1989 GAO report, there have been few published attempts to estimate the size of the national population of homeless families with children. Recently, however, new data have become available on the homeless.21 These administrative data reflect utilization of services for the homeless and are collected by state and local housing and human services agencies. The most useful of these new data provide annual unduplicated counts of homeless shelter users for an entire jurisdiction. Many previous studies, such as the GAO study cited above, relied on estimates of the homeless population at a point in time (a given night or during a week) and could not be relied upon to provide accurate information on the annual prevalence of homelessness. They therefore cannot be used to describe adequately the dynamics of homelessness for children and families.

Results from these more recent counts show that family homelessness varies widely across the country. For example, New York City had an annual rate of 232 homeless families in shelters per 10,000 families in the city in the period 1988 to 1992; in Rhode Island, only 63 families per 10,000 were in homeless shelters in 1992. Part of this difference stems from the higher rate of poverty in New York City. Using only poor families as the population base, the rate of homeless families using shelters in New York City is 800/10,000, and in Rhode Island the rate is 500/10,000.

New data suggest a very high rate of homeless shelter use (4% to 8%) among poor families with children over the course of a year.

Duration of Homelessness

The length of time that people are homeless can vary greatly. Some are made temporarily homeless by natural disasters such as earthquakes or fires or because of unemployment or family breakdown. Individuals and families who receive monthly assistance checks...
The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) estimated that in 1988 there were about 254,000 homeless children and youths age 16 and younger on any given night in the United States—68,000 were literally homeless, and about 186,000 were “doubled up” or in shared housing. GAO estimates were calculated from counts of children at homeless shelters and opinion-based estimates from service providers for the other categories. They do not include unaccompanied (runaway) children and youths, or those in families who spent their own money to stay in hotels or motels.

- The great majority of homeless children are in shared housing. The GAO’s best estimate of the number of children who were doubled up is shown above. However, because of the difficulties inherent in estimating the size of the doubled-up population, the estimate had a wide range, from 39,400 to 296,500.

- Of children and youths who are literally homeless, about 37% are in urban shelters and hotels; 32% are in suburban and rural settings. “Public places” include cars, abandoned buildings, bus terminals, and so forth. “Other” places include spousal abuse shelters, detoxification centers, and jails. The suburban and rural estimates were calculated using a rate of homelessness estimated to be one-third of the median rate in cities.

may run out of money a few weeks into the month and be forced out of their housing until the next check arrives, making them episodically homeless. Others are homeless for a year or more.

Most homeless families with children fit in the first two categories—the temporarily and episodically homeless. Figure 2 shows data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 1988 Survey of Shelters for the Homeless. HUD surveyed a probability sample of 205 managers of shelters for the homeless in counties with populations over 25,000, asking, "Among the people you served on an average night this year, how many would you say had been homeless for more than three years and how many had been homeless for less than three months?" The shelter operators reported that about 70% of the clients in shelters serving primarily families with children had been homeless for less than three months. By contrast, shelters serving primarily unaccompanied men reported that only 32% of their clients had been homeless for less than three months.22

A 1987 Urban Institute study of homelessness reached similar conclusions about the duration of homelessness for families with children. In that study, a survey of users of shelters and food kitchens revealed that half of the families with children had been homeless for 4.6 months or less (the median duration); the figure was 10 months for single adults. However, these statistics do not tell the whole story. The same survey found that the average length of time that families were homeless was 14.6 months. Another study based in Washington, D.C., found a similar discrepancy between the median (3.5) and mean (9.0) number of months families were homeless.2 These large differences between the median and mean duration of homelessness indicate that, although most families are homeless for a relatively short time, a substantial proportion of the population of homeless families is homeless for years.

### Trends in Homelessness for Children and Families

Although most agree that the numbers of homeless families and children have increased dramatically since the late 1970s, no data provide consistent estimates of the number of literally homeless families over time.24 Similarly, no data directly measure trends in the number of families with children that are doubled up or otherwise precariously housed. However, past studies have shown that homeless families with children tend to be headed by single parents who are very poor, and time series data are available on these families.25 These data can be used to infer trends in the number of precariously housed families with children and families at risk for literal homelessness. Figure 3 shows the number of households headed by single parents with incomes below 51% of the poverty level between 1974 and 1991. These estimates were constructed by Peter Rossi from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of households in the United States.26Because the CPS includes only the population living in non-institutional housing units, some literally homeless families, such as those living in shelters, are not included in these estimates while other literally homeless families, such as those living in welfare hotels, may be included. Most doubled-up families would be included in this data series.27

As shown in Figure 3, the number of households headed by single parents with personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line rose from more than 1 million in 1974 to about 2.5 million in 1991. In 1991, 50% of the poverty level for a household of three was $4,996, or $425 per month. At this income level, many of these families are probably at high risk of becoming literally homeless. It is not unreasonable, then, to expect that the number of homeless families with children increased between 1974 and 1991 in response to the 150% increase in this population of high-risk families during that time. Most of the increase in the population of single-parent families with incomes below 51% of the poverty line occurred between 1976 and 1983. In the early 1980s, attention began to focus on a "new" type of...
In 1988, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development surveyed a probability sample of 205 managers of shelters for the homeless in counties with populations over 25,000. The managers were asked, “Among the people you served on an average night this year, how many would you say had been homeless for more than three years and how many had been homeless for less than three months?” Shelters were considered to serve primarily one group when at least 75% of their clientele were in that group.

Among shelters responding to the survey, nearly 70% of the clients in shelters serving primarily families with children had been homeless for less than three months, and only 3% of clients of these shelters were homeless for more than three years. In contrast, 38% of clients in shelters serving primarily unaccompanied men were reported to have been homeless for more than three years.

However, there is reason to believe that these data do not tell the whole story. Two studies that examined the number of months that families were homeless across the nation and in Washington, D.C. found a relatively low median duration of homelessness (3.5 and 4.5 months, respectively) but a much higher mean duration of homelessness (14.6 and 9.0 months, respectively). These statistics suggest that although most families are homeless for a relatively short time, a smaller group exists that is homeless for lengths of time measured in years.

There are no data that directly measure the number of families with children who are literally homeless, at risk for homelessness, or precariously housed. However, because homeless families with children tend to be headed by single parents who are poor, trends in the number of very poor, single-parent families, for which data are available, can be used to suggest trends in the population of homeless families.

The data in this graph were constructed from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which surveys households in the United States about their income and other characteristics each month. Because the CPS includes only the population living in noninstitutional housing units, most of the literally homeless (those living in shelters or on the streets) are not included in these estimates.

- The number of families headed by single parents with personal incomes below 51% of the poverty line rose from just over one million in 1974 to about 2.5 million in 1991.
- The increase was largely due to two factors. First, there was a large increase in the number of single parents in general over this time period. Second, there was a significant increase in the proportion of single parents who were poor (from 17% in 1974 to 28% in 1991).
- During the period of most rapid growth in this population, 1977–1982, the problem of large numbers of homeless families with children became identified in the popular press, academic, and advocacy literature.

Source: Rossi, P.H. Troubling families: Family homelessness in America. American Behavioral Scientist (January 1994) 37,3:349, Figure 2.
homeless population that included, for the first time since the Depression, visible numbers of women and children.\(^{29}\) Also noteworthy is the fact that the number of families in this at-risk category has not increased substantially since the early 1980s. (The increases in 1990 and 1991 probably were related to the recession in those years. Although data for more recent years are not shown, other reports indicate that the number of families with children with incomes below the poverty level has declined since 1991 coincident with the recent economic expansion.)\(^{30}\) Absent a clear trend in the population of families with children at risk for homelessness, it is difficult to know how much credence to give the anecdotal reports that this population has continued to increase in most recent years.\(^{31}\)

### Conclusion

Reliable information about the size, distribution, and composition of the homeless population is essential for effective planning for the housing, jobs, and public support homeless people need. Getting the necessary data, however, has proven to be extraordinarily difficult and controversial. As this review has emphasized, these obstacles stem in part from the nature of homelessness itself. The fact that a significant component of the homeless population of families with children includes those doubled up or precariously housed, a group not nearly as visible as the literally homeless but one whose housing arrangements are unstable, only complicates matters further.

Although the statistical data on homelessness are spotty, it is well accepted that homelessness has increased for U.S. families over the past two decades, with most of the growth concentrated in the 1980s. In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers studying urban homelessness did not find or mention homeless families. Today, however, no matter which estimates are used, researchers conclude that counts of both homeless individuals and homeless families have increased dramatically since that time. The causes of this growth in the number of homeless families are multiple, complex, and not well understood.\(^{32}\) Rising rates of family homelessness are probably related to the increase in the number of families in extreme poverty in the 1970s and 1980s combined with a substantial expansion in the number of single-parent families. The increase in poverty, however, cannot be the whole story because poverty rates among families with children were much higher in the 1950s and early 1960s than in recent years, but homelessness for families with children was not widely visible during the earlier period.\(^{29}\)

Given the large number of families at economic and social risk for homelessness, it has been hypothesized that estimates of the number of homeless families, and perhaps family homelessness itself, are at least partially determined by the shelter system.\(^{2}\) The population of identified literally homeless families consists almost entirely of families in shelters, and most estimates of the homeless population build on statistics from shelter operations. Accordingly, shelter capacity plays a crucial role in determining the size of the population of homeless families. By providing a refuge, shelters may actually lower the threshold for what families are willing to tolerate in their daily lives before becoming homeless. For example, in the absence of shelter alternatives, women abused by their partners may not perceive any viable alternative to remaining. With an increased availability of battered-women’s and other family shelters, some such women may be able to remove themselves and their children from abusive home-based relationships. A byproduct of this important process would be an increase in the shelter (hence homeless) population.

Solving the problem of family homelessness will require multiple strategies and changes in broad economic trends—no easy task. The lack of good data on the population of homeless children and their families, however, cannot be used as an excuse for not addressing the problem. Whether there are 41,000 literally homeless children on any given night, as is suggested by the GAO report, or more than 10 times that number,
as asserted by some advocacy groups, homelessness among children indicates that society is not functioning at a level that assures at least minimally decent basic necessities for all children. The new data on annual unduplicated counts of the homeless suggest that many more poor families may cycle through homelessness each year than point-in-time estimates indicate. This fact should increase concern for this population, as should the finding that, although homelessness is not a permanent condition for most homeless families, many children experience this state for a substantial portion of their young lives.

Most initial governmental responses to the emergence of literal homelessness did not address the root causes of homelessness, but instead provided emergency aid intended to help people survive during their homeless experience. However, the data on the number of families at risk for literal homelessness suggest that the pool of these families is so large that solutions that focus only on trying to help families after they become literally homeless will not substantially reduce the overall number of homeless families and may, to a certain extent, increase that population. In this environment, although these programs of emergency assistance are very much needed, policies focused on the much larger problem of reducing the number of families at risk for homelessness, very poor families with limited social supports, will be necessary to reduce or eliminate homelessness among families with children.

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4. Wright, J. Poverty, homelessness, health, nutrition, and children. In Homeless children and youths: A new American dilemma. J.H. Kryder-Coe, L.M. Salamon, and J.M. Molnar, eds. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991, pp. 71–104; Rafferty, Y., and Shinn, M. The impact of homelessness on children. American Psychologist (November 1991) 46:11:1170–79. Significantly more of the homeless women (16%, comparable figures being 11% of women in public housing and 7% of all women) had low birth weight babies. The most common disorders among homeless children were upper respiratory infections (42% versus 22% of the national sample), minor skin ailments (20% versus 5% of the national sample), ear disorders (18% versus 12% of the national sample), chronic physical disorders (15% versus 9% of the national sample), and gastrointestinal disorders (15% versus 4% of the national sample).
7. This group also can include people who have temporary residence in hospitals or jails but no permanent place of residence. Rossi, P.H. The urban homeless: Estimating composition and size. Science (1987) 235:1336–41.
8. See note no. 5, Institute of Medicine, Committee on Health Care for Homeless People, p. 2.
9. See note no. 6, Burt and Cohen, p. 18.
11. Estimates of annual prevalence can and frequently have been made by combining information on point prevalence and duration. For example, if we observe 10,000 homeless families on a particular night and determine that their average period of homelessness was one month, we may estimate that 120,000 families experience homelessness annually. Clearly, these estimates of annual prevalence are very sensitive to errors made in either of the underlying statistics.

12. On the evening of March 20, 1990, the U.S. Bureau of the Census counted the number of people at selected homeless shelters and street and other locations not intended for habitation (including parks, restaurants, movie houses, and transportation terminals). This was the first time the bureau made a nationwide effort to gather information on the number and characteristics of selected components of the homeless population. The count was designed to provide some important data about the homeless but not to provide a complete count of the homeless. The bureau estimated that, on the date of the count, there were 240,000 homeless in emergency shelters, shelters for runaway and homeless youths, shelters for abused women, and visible in street locations. For further discussion of S-night, see: U.S. General Accounting Office. 1990 Census: Limitations in methods and procedures to include the homeless. Washington, DC: GAO, GAO/ GGD-92-1, December 1991; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Fact sheet for 1990 decennial census counts of persons in selected locations where homeless people are found. CPH-L-87. Washington, DC. Revised July 1, 1992.

13. The National Coalition for the Homeless published a report titled Fatally flawed: The Census Bureau's count of homeless people, which said that results from S-night should not be used because the count did not include all U.S. jurisdictions (only jurisdictions with populations of at least 50,000 were included in the S-night count), it missed some categories of the homeless (such as children in foster care because their families were homeless), it used only the point prevalence and not the annual prevalence data, and it is too hard to count homeless people on the street.


17. See note no. 6, Burt and Cohen, p. 22.


19. This projection was based on the highest proportion of urban to nonurban homelessness that U.S. General Accounting Office found in the literature.

20. See note no. 18, U.S. GAO, p. 29. The result for the literally homeless is similar to the Urban Institute's estimate that there are 61,500 homeless children and youths in cities and suburbs and an unknown percentage of children among 52,000 homeless in rural areas.


23. See note no. 6, Burt and Cohen, pp. 4, 41.

24. The one set of data that is collected consistently across years, the annual poll done by the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), collects the proportion of the homeless who are families with children in several cities. According to the USCM, the proportion of the homeless population that is families with children has grown from 27% in 1985 to 37% in 1995. There are many problems with the USCM data, though. Because USCM does not routinely collect data on the number of homeless in its sample of cities, these proportions cannot be used to measure changes in the number of homeless families with children over time. In addition, the USCM data are based on reports of service providers, so it is impossible to determine the extent to which the USCM series reflects changes in the number of homeless or the supply of shelters for homeless families. See note no. 16, Waxman, Peterson, and McClure, p. 69.
25. The few studies that have described the nature of homeless families in an empirical way have found a relatively consistent picture. Those studies find that even though many homeless families receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children, they are almost always poor. Most are headed by single women between the ages of 26 and 30 who have never been married and have two children. Most are black or Hispanic, and they have lower levels of mental illness and substance abuse than does the single homeless population. (See note no. 2, Rossi.)

26. See note no. 2, Rossi, p. 349, Figure 2.

27. The Current Population Survey (CPS) includes only households in its sampling. A household, according to the CPS, “consists of all the persons who occupy a housing unit. A house, an apartment or other groups of rooms, or a single room is regarded as a housing unit when it is occupied or intended for occupancy as separate living quarters; that is, when the occupants do not live and eat with any other persons in the structure and there is direct access from the outside or through a common hall.” Thus, families that are precariously housed and are living with friends or family or in a welfare hotel would be included in the CPS, but families that are living in institutions, such as homeless shelters, would not be included. U.S. Bureau of the Census. Poverty in the United States: 1992. Current Population Reports, Series P60–185. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993, p. A–9.


