

Number of homeless New York City public school students reaches a new high

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Recently released data collected by Advocates for Children of New York documents that during the 2024-2025 school year, a total of 154,000 New York City public school students were homeless, a new record. The annual total has exceeded 100,000 for the last 10 years. The large majority of them, 65,000, slept in shelters, a record high, or lived in crowded multi-family homes. Out of more than 900,000 students in the public schools, nearly 1 in 7 were homeless during the last school year, the highest proportion on record.

This barbaric condition is a testament to the chronic lack of affordable housing in the city. To grasp the scale of the problem, the city's homeless student population alone would itself number among the 20 largest school districts in the country.

The majority of homeless students, more than 82,000, live in overcrowded households. The city is notorious for such unsafe living conditions for adults as well as children, which all too often lead to tragedy such as devastating fires with multiple injuries and/or deaths and severe disruptions of already precarious lives. Another 65,000 students lived in city homeless shelters. The remainder live in hotels, motels or on the street.

The situation in New York City is but one example of conditions across the country. A recent national survey found that more than 1.3 million students are homeless.

Available apartments in the city are at their lowest point in nearly 60 years. At the same time, median rents are at a record high. In a new report, the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development (ANHD) warns that New York City could see a major wave of affordable housing losses in the coming years as long-term affordability agreements, which are based on past municipal assistance, expire. A recent report estimates that the city will need over half a million new housing units to meet expected demand by 2030.

The Citizens' Committee for Children of New York reports that one in every three New York renters will soon have to pay at least 50 percent of their income for housing. This situation will only worsen due to the Trump administration's cut in federal housing aid.

In New York City alone, as of August 2025 more than 350,000 men, women and children were homeless, based on data collected by the Coalition for the Homeless.

The baseless right-wing claim that a flood of immigrants is "destroying" the city, including by Democratic Mayor Eric Adams, causing, among other problems, the rise in student homelessness, is refuted by the fact that the escalating numbers of homeless children began long before the recent immigrant arrivals.

Not surprisingly, homeless students suffer academically from their impoverished and unstable living conditions. Recent state testing revealed that nearly 80 percent of homeless students in grades 3 through 8 were deficient in reading and math. Nearly 40 percent did not graduate from high school and one in eight dropped out, three times the rate of their housed peers. Half of homeless students have a high rate of absenteeism, which means that they missed at least one out of every 10 days.

Again, not surprisingly, the "problem" of student homelessness is not evenly distributed across the city but instead is concentrated within its poorer neighborhoods, including East Harlem in Manhattan, Brownsville and Bushwick in Brooklyn, and High Bridge and Grand Concourse in the Bronx. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the uneven distribution of homeless shelters and public schools means that many of these students have to travel long distances to reach their schools. Forty percent of

families are placed in shelters in a different borough from where the children go to school.

During the current mayoral race, the leading candidates—Democrat Zohran Mamdani (member of the Democratic Socialists of America, the DSA) and independent (formerly Democrat) Andrew Cuomo—have each made pathetically inadequate proposals to address the problem of child homelessness, without any realistic prospect of implementing even these feeble efforts. Mamdani wants to expand a program that provides for city workers to more frequently “check in” with homeless families in shelters. Cuomo wants to create “community schools” with dedicated services for the homeless.

With regard to the severe lack of affordable housing, of which homeless students are but one manifestation, to the extent that they address the issue, both Cuomo and Mamdani propose completely inadequate solutions. Cuomo merely wants to continue business as usual, using public bonds and incentives to coax private developers to build more affordable housing, a program that has totally failed to avert the current crisis. Mamdani pledges to build 200,000 new affordable housing units over 10 years, an amount that falls far short of the half million estimate of the projected need in the next five years.

The extreme lack of affordable housing is just one manifestation of the sharp contrast between the city’s wealthy elite and its increasingly impoverished working class, in the world’s financial capital. A newly released report by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli finds that Wall Street’s profits could top \$60 billion in 2025 if current trends continue. At the same time, another study, published earlier this year, found that a quarter of city residents do not have enough money to afford basic needs including housing, food and medical care.

On November 1, due to the government shutdown, the Department of Agriculture will cut off Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to over 3 million New Yorkers, about 60 percent of them in New York City. While the state has released \$30 million in funds to compensate, this will go directly to food banks, which may be difficult or impossible for many SNAP recipients to reach. Food banks in the state and city have already been stretched

to the brink because of increasing demand.

Without determined action by the working class, the Trump administration’s full-scale assault on a broad range of social programs will drastically worsen conditions for students and the vast majority of the population.



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