

Telling the Story of Youth Homelessness Through Data: Impacting Policy at the State and County Level



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Counting CA's homeless students

- Nearly 300,000 students experienced homelessness in 2013-14, 5% of CA's student body
- We have the largest share of homeless students in the country (21%) with rates more than double that of the national average
- Increase of 39% since the 2009-10 school year

Methods

- Data on student homelessness broken down by county and state legislative district
- School district address used to organize data into state Senate & Assembly district using “Find Your State Legislator” website
- School zip code used to organize by county

Data-Sharing as Storytelling

- Over 1/2 of homeless students are in Pre-K – 5th grade, 20% in middle school, and 30% in high school

Percentage of homeless students by nighttime residence

California	Percent
Doubled Up with Friends or Relatives	86.1%
Hotel/Motel	3.9%
Temporary Shelter	7.1%
Unsheltered	2.9%

Key Messages

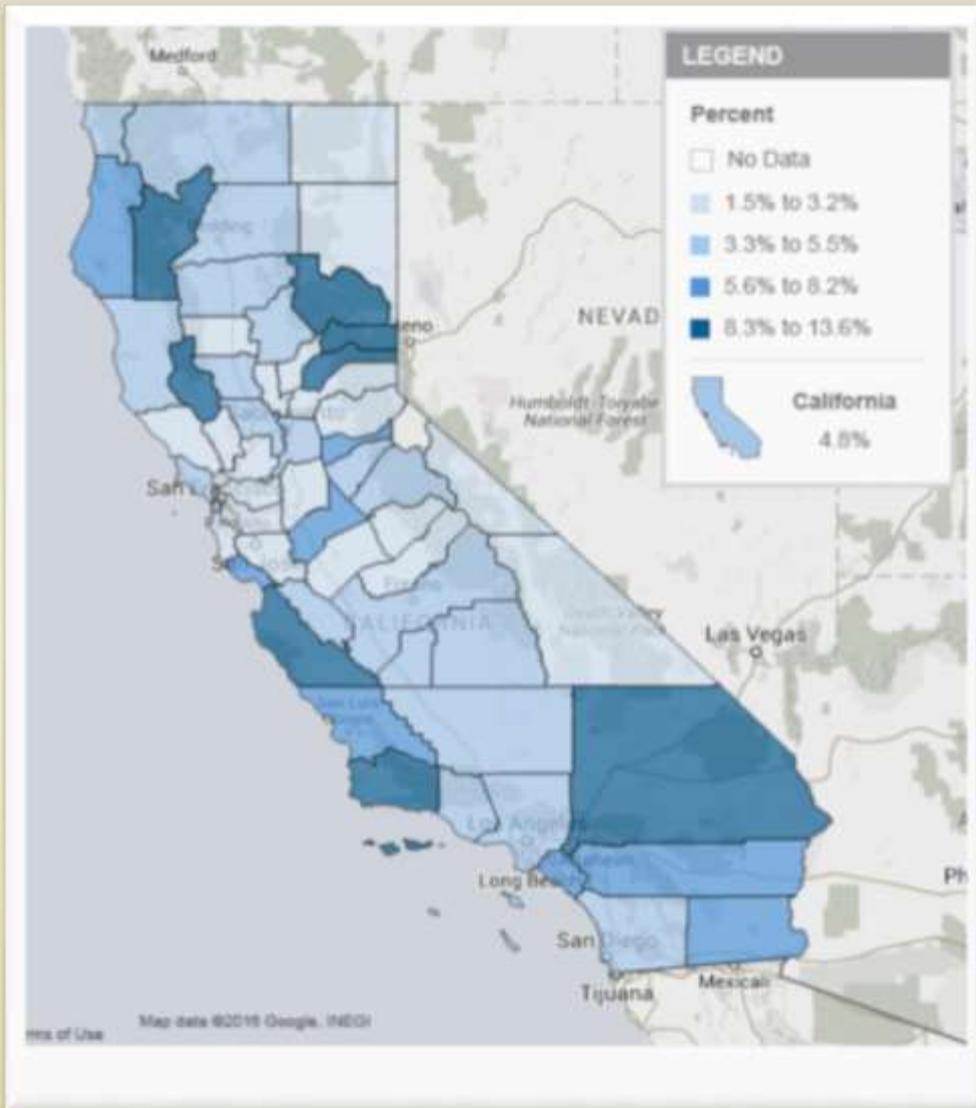
- Homeless students attend schools in **urban, suburban, and rural** areas
- Though Los Angeles Unified School District identified the highest overall numbers of homeless students (14,323), rural Trinity County had the highest percentage of homeless students (13.3%).
- Suburban Assembly Districts such as AD40 (San Bernardino County) and AD7 (Sacramento) were among the top six in overall numbers of homeless students, indicating the geographic diversity of the problem.

Outcomes

- Big media splash!
 - 20+ articles up and down the state, coverage in national publications, including NPR
- Uncovered policy issues we hadn't previously considered
- #1 Policy Recc turned into law (explicitly include homeless students in local school accountability plans)
- Increased awareness → action

Lessons Learned

- Multiple data sources help us tell the story of youth homelessness (PIT, COE, HMIS) – view & describe to media & policymakers as pieces of a puzzle
- Social justice framework rather than relying on easy tropes creates more meaningful change
- Get creative using “social math”
 - 300k homeless students in CA, more than the entire student pop of AK, DC, & VT combined



If you have any questions, feel free to email
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Q&A