



Institute for Children,  
Poverty & Homelessness

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# Using Data to Ensure Supportive School Climates for Homeless Students

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# ICPH: Bringing Family Homelessness into Focus

- The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) is a New York City-based policy research organization focused on family homelessness in New York City and throughout the United States
- All materials we produce are available for free at [www.ICPHusa.org](http://www.ICPHusa.org)



# Reports

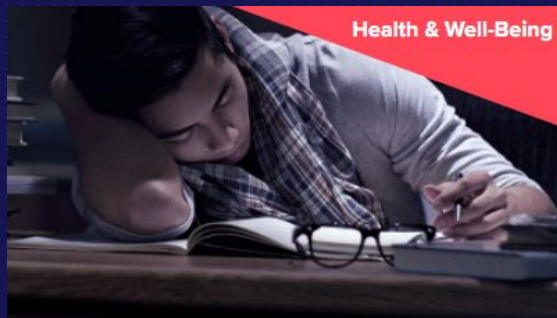
ICPH researches the causes of family homelessness, the demographics of this growing population, the conditions that make it difficult for homeless families to become self-sufficient, and the programs that are most effective in helping them transition out of poverty. ICPH works with programs and partners across the U.S. to conduct and disseminate this research in order to improve services and influence public policy.

 <p>Education</p> <p>September 5, 2019</p> <p><b>Addressing Barriers to Learning</b></p> <p><a href="#">↗</a></p>	 <p>Education</p> <p>July 31, 2019</p> <p><b>Housed Without Stability: The Continuing Challenges Faced by Formerly Homeless Students</b></p> <p><a href="#">↗</a></p>	 <p>Housing &amp; Shelter</p> <p>June 25, 2019</p> <p><b>The Dynamics of Family Homelessness in New York City</b></p> <p><a href="#">↗</a></p>
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# Interactive Data

ICPH produces interactive tools and data for users to further explore the effects of homelessness on children and their families. These tools allow people from different fields to tailor and engage with ICPH data in a way that is meaningful to them and the unique needs of their organization.



May 10, 2018

**The Health and Well-Being of Homeless High School Students**



April 11, 2018

**Suspension Hubs Interactive Map**



April 10, 2018

**The United States of Homelessness**





# Presentation Outline

- What is the YRBS?
- Housing questions on the YRBS
- Homelessness among high school students
- School Climate
  - School engagement
  - School safety
  - School environment
  - Cumulative impact of school climate
- Policy Considerations



# What is the YRBS?

- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- Administered with support from CDC by states and urban school districts every other year
- Measures health-related behaviors
- Housing questions first appeared in 2005
- Two housing questions added to optional question list in 2017





# YRBS Housing Questions

During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep?

- In my parent's or guardian's home
- In the home of a friend, family member, or other person because I had to leave my home or my parent or guardian cannot afford housing
- In a shelter or emergency housing
- In a motel or hotel
- In a car, park, campground, or other public place
- I do not have a usual place to sleep
- Somewhere else

During the past 30 days, did you ever sleep away from your parents or guardians because you were kicked out, ran away, or were abandoned?

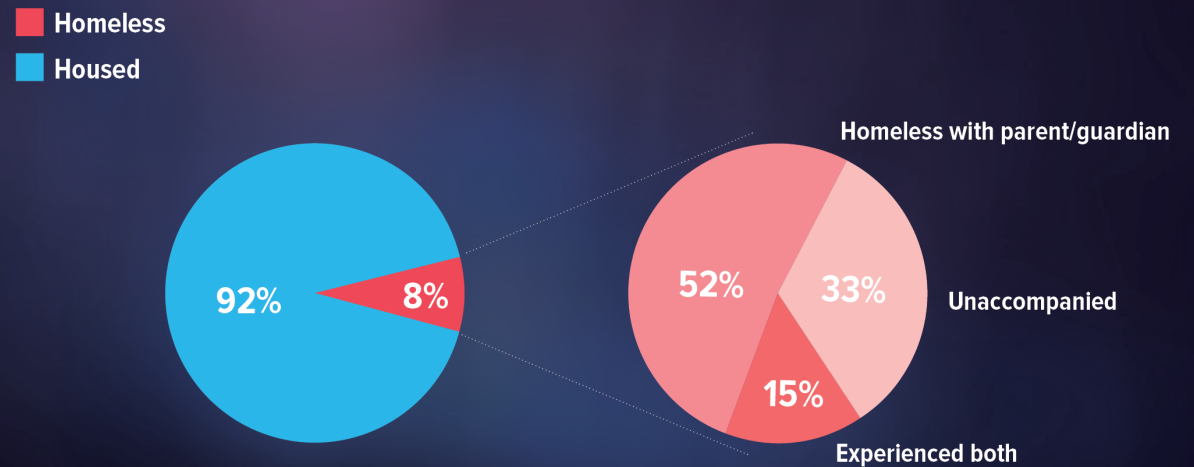
- Yes
- No



# How Many High School Students Experience Homelessness?

- Overall, 8% of high school students experienced homelessness
- 52% were homeless with their parents or guardians, 33% were unaccompanied and 15% experienced both types of homelessness
- Likely an undercount of unaccompanied students, and homeless students overall

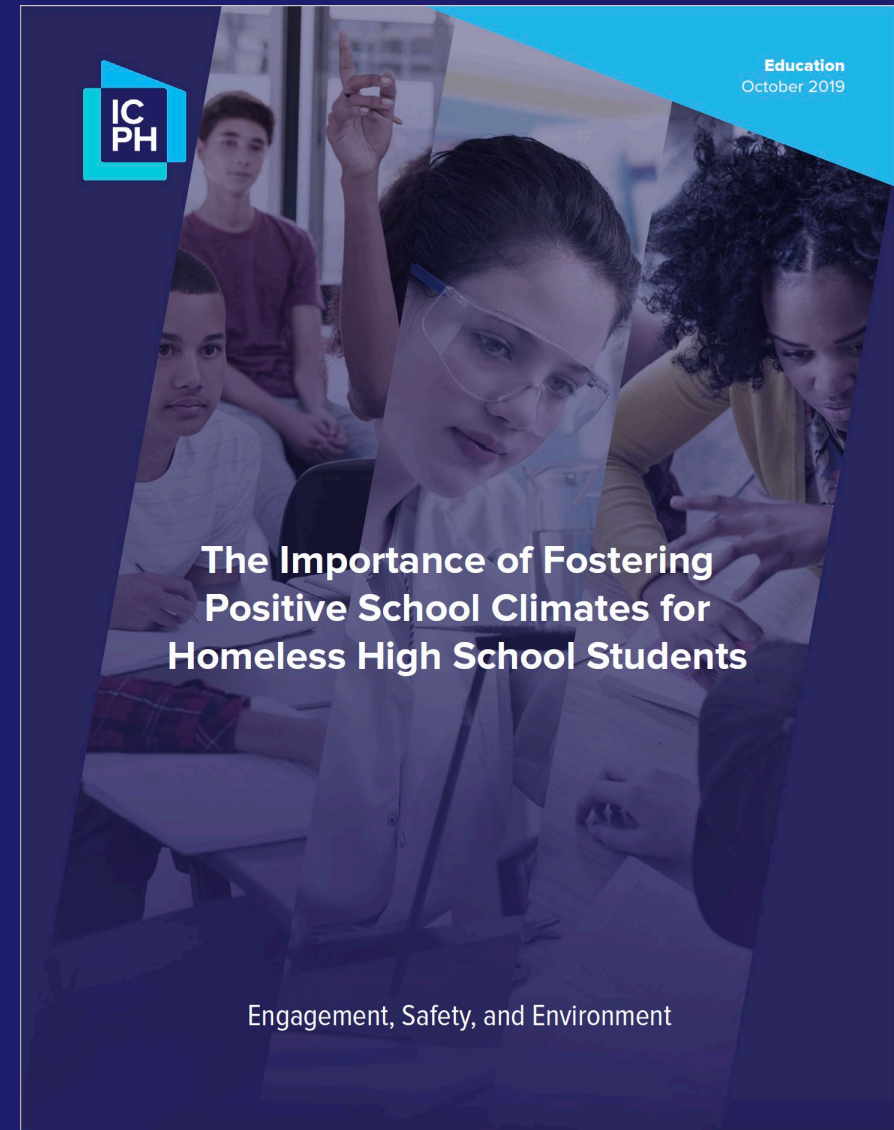
High School Students by Housing Status and Type of Homelessness



Note: This is likely an undercount of unaccompanied students. Only 10 of the 29 geographies included asked students if they were unaccompanied, and among those 10 geographies, about half of homeless students experienced unaccompanied homelessness in the previous 12 months.

# School Climate

- Supportive school climates can improve academic and well-being outcomes for homeless students
- Based on the Safe and Supportive Schools Model
  - **Engagement**: feeling connected to the school through participation in academic and extracurricular activities, and positive relationships with staff and peers
  - **Safety**: students are free from concerns of bullying, harassment, and violence at school
  - **Environment**: exposure to drugs and alcohol at school, clear and fair rules, and school-based health supports





# Engagement

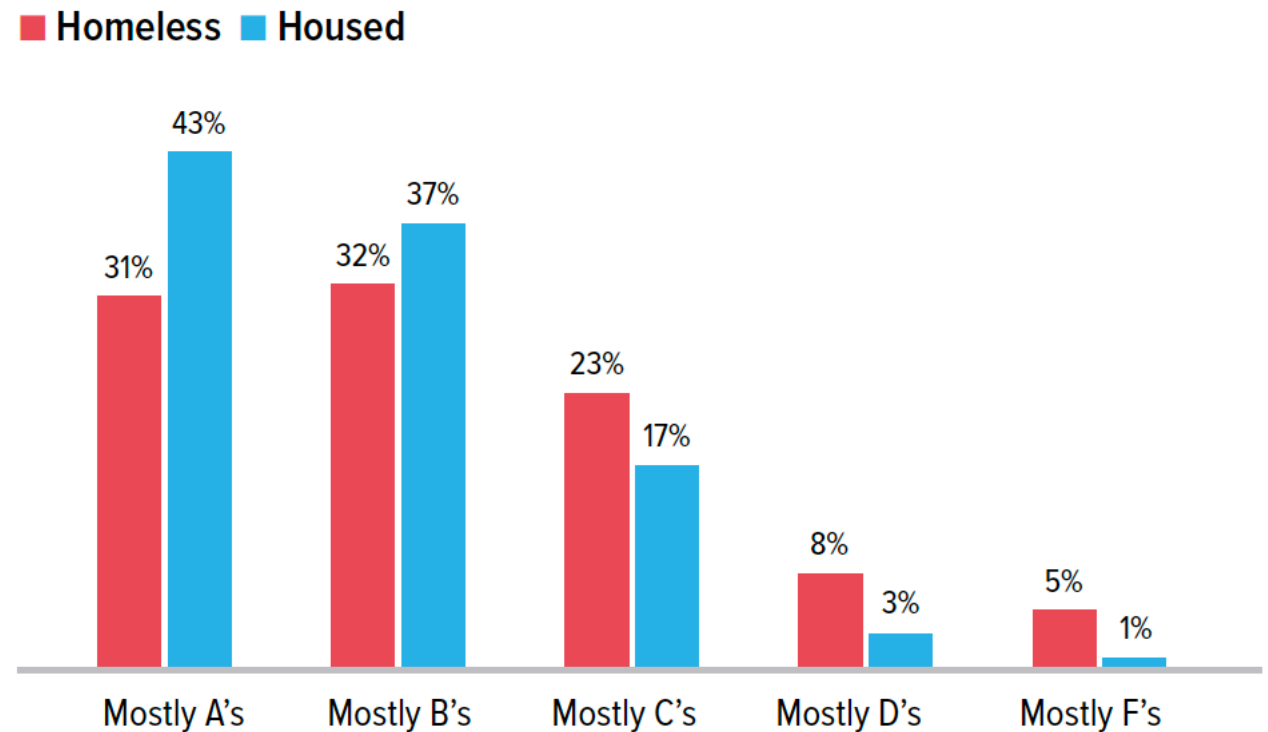
- Academic achievement
- Sports and extracurriculars
- Connections with teachers



# How Do Homeless Students Perform in School?

- Nearly two thirds of homeless students (63%) got mostly A's or B's, compared to 80% of housed students
- Homeless students were about 1.7x more likely to get mostly C's, D's, or F's (36% vs. 21%)

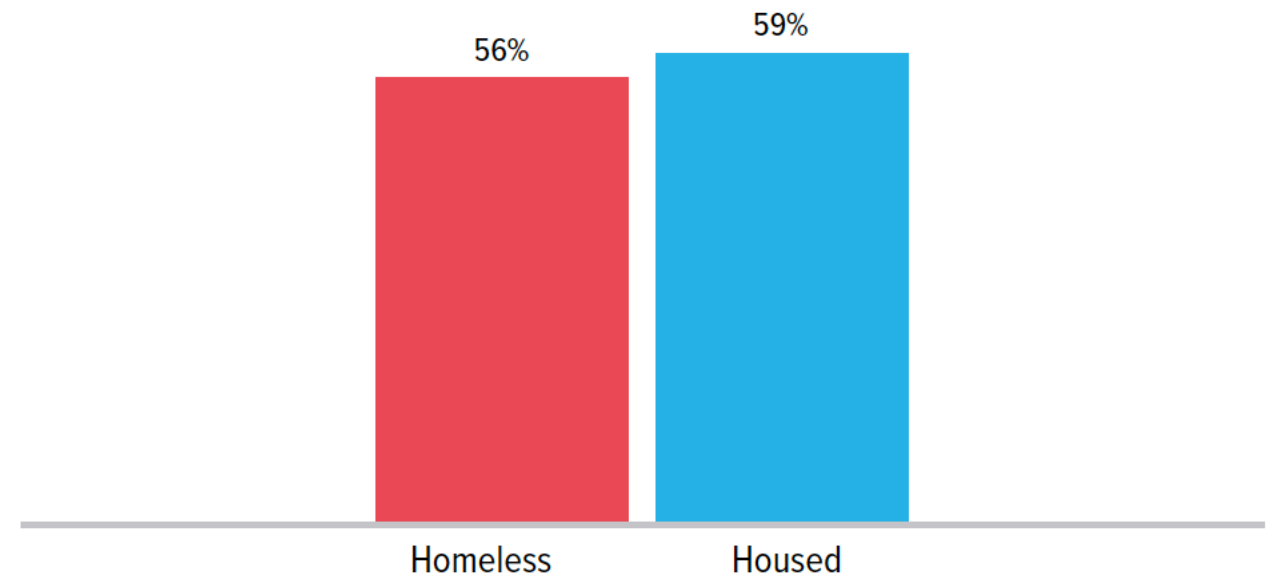
Academic Grades of High School Students During the Past Year



# Are Homeless Students Involved in School Activities?

- Homeless students were nearly as likely as their housed peers to participate in extracurricular activities (56% vs. 59%)
- Extracurriculars create opportunity for homeless students to stay connected, involved, and have a safe place to be after school

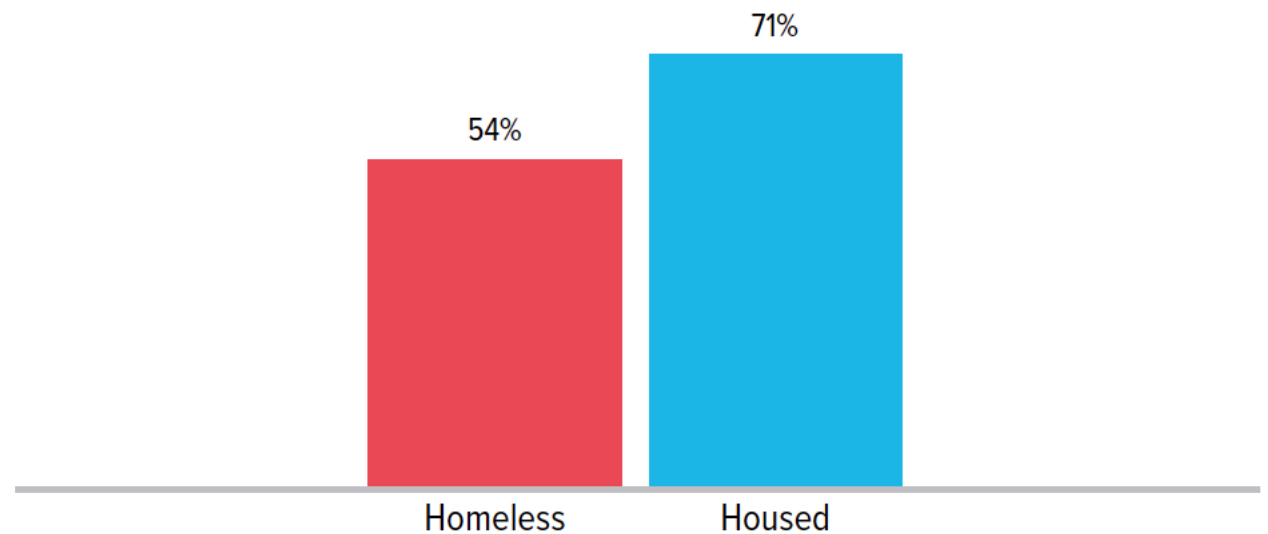
Percent of Students Who Participated in Sports or Extracurricular Activities\*



# Do Homeless Students Feel Connected to Teachers and Other School Staff?

- Homeless students are about 1.3 times less likely than housed students to have a positive connection with a teacher or other adult at school (54% vs. 71%)
- These relationships are vital for homeless students

Percent of Students Who Have a Positive Connection with a Teacher or Other Adult at School







# Discussion Questions

- What are some other ways to measure school engagement?
- Does your school have any initiatives that specifically address school engagement?
- Are there any initiatives you think would help students feel more engaged at school?



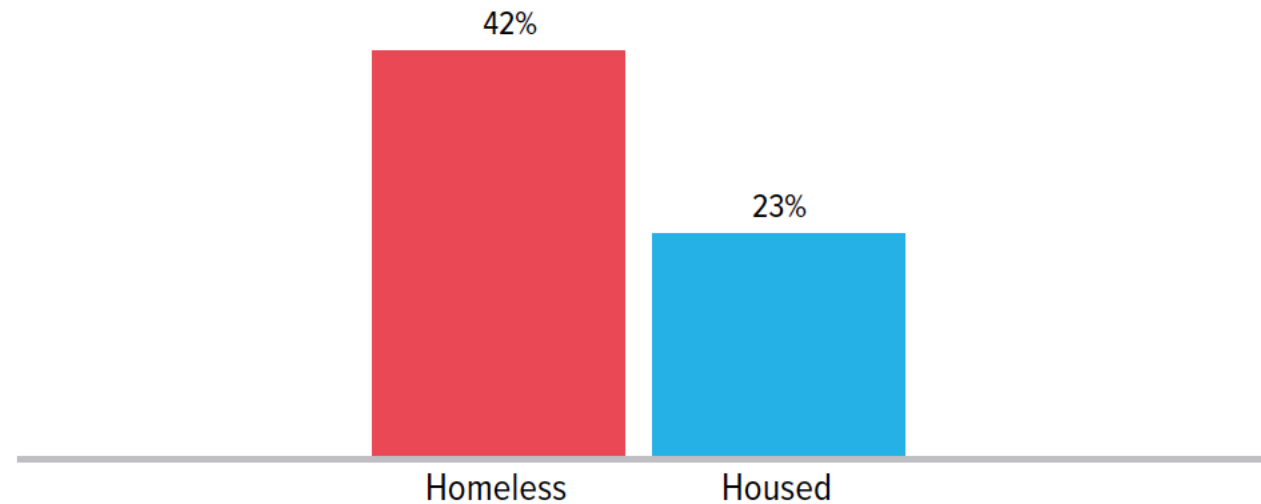
# Safety

- Bullying
- School Safety
- School Violence

# Are Homeless Students More Likely to Be Bullied than Housed Students?

- Homeless students were nearly 2x more likely to be bullied
- Students may be bullied because of their housing status or related reasons, like not having clean clothes or access to a shower

Percent of Students Who Were Bullied at School or Electronically in the Past Year



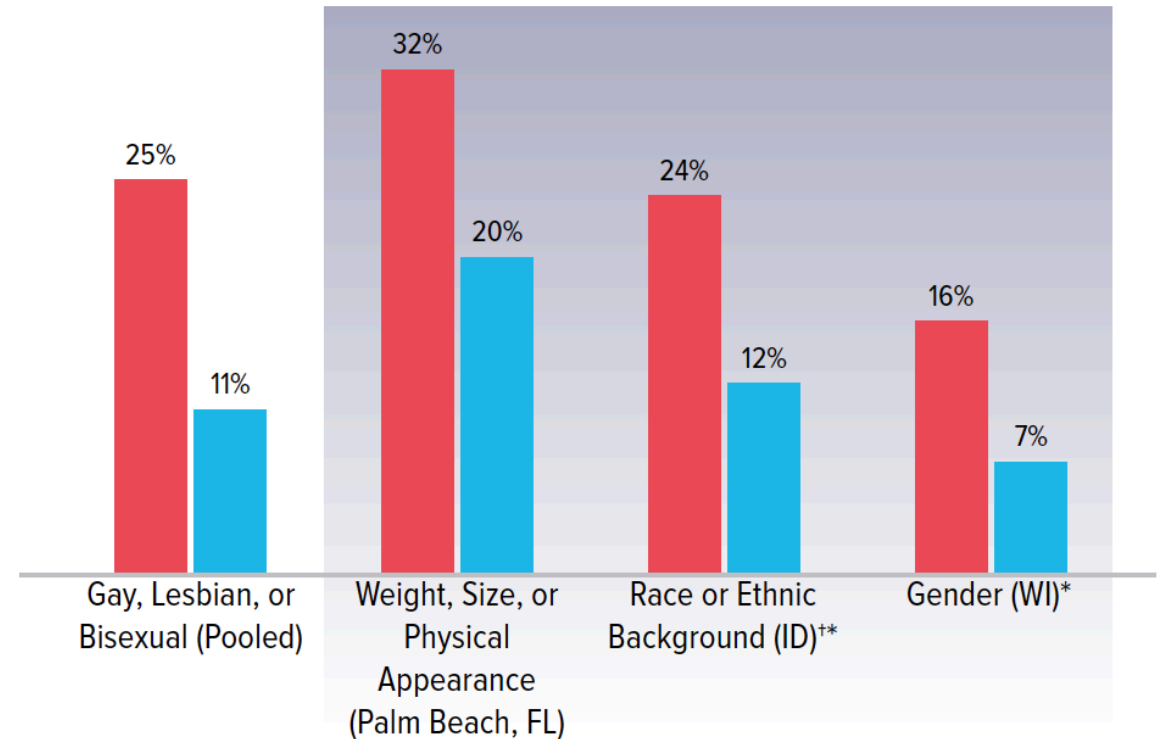


# What Are Some Reasons Homeless Students Are Bullied?

- Homeless students were over 2x more likely to be bullied for their sexual orientation
- Homeless students were also bullied at 1.5 to 2x the rate of housed students for their weight, size, or physical appearance, race or ethnic background

Percent of Students Who Were Bullied for Sexual Orientation, Appearance, Race, or Gender

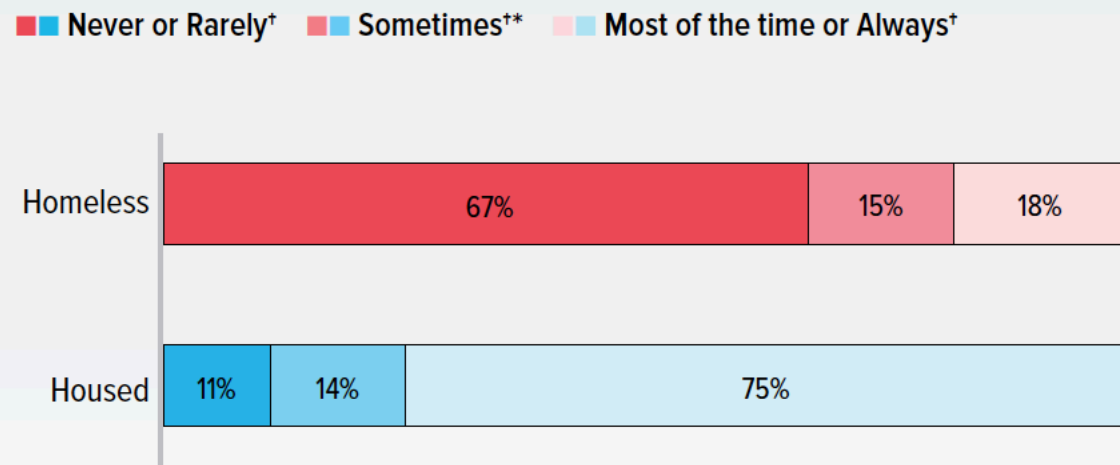
■ Homeless ■ Housed



# Do Homeless Students Feel Safe at School?

- In Arkansas, over two thirds of homeless students said they never or rarely felt safe and secure at school
- More likely to say harassment and bullying are problems at their schools

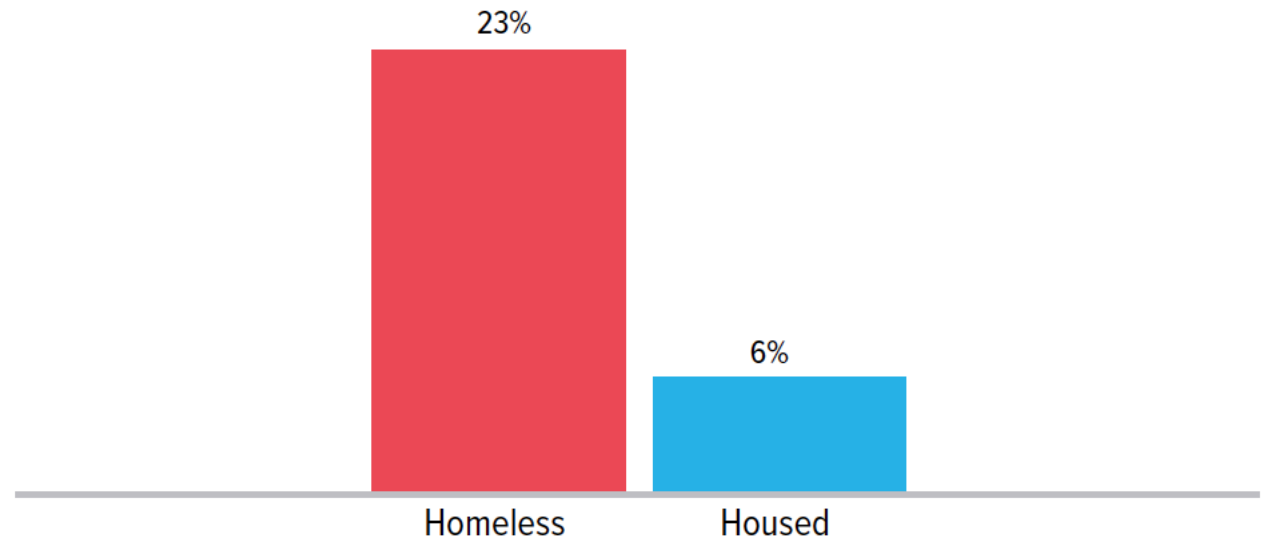
How Often Do Students in Arkansas Feel Safe and Secure at School?



# What Happens When Students Do Not Feel Safe at School?

- Homeless students were nearly 4x more likely to miss school because they felt unsafe
- Making sure students feel safe could help reduce chronic absenteeism

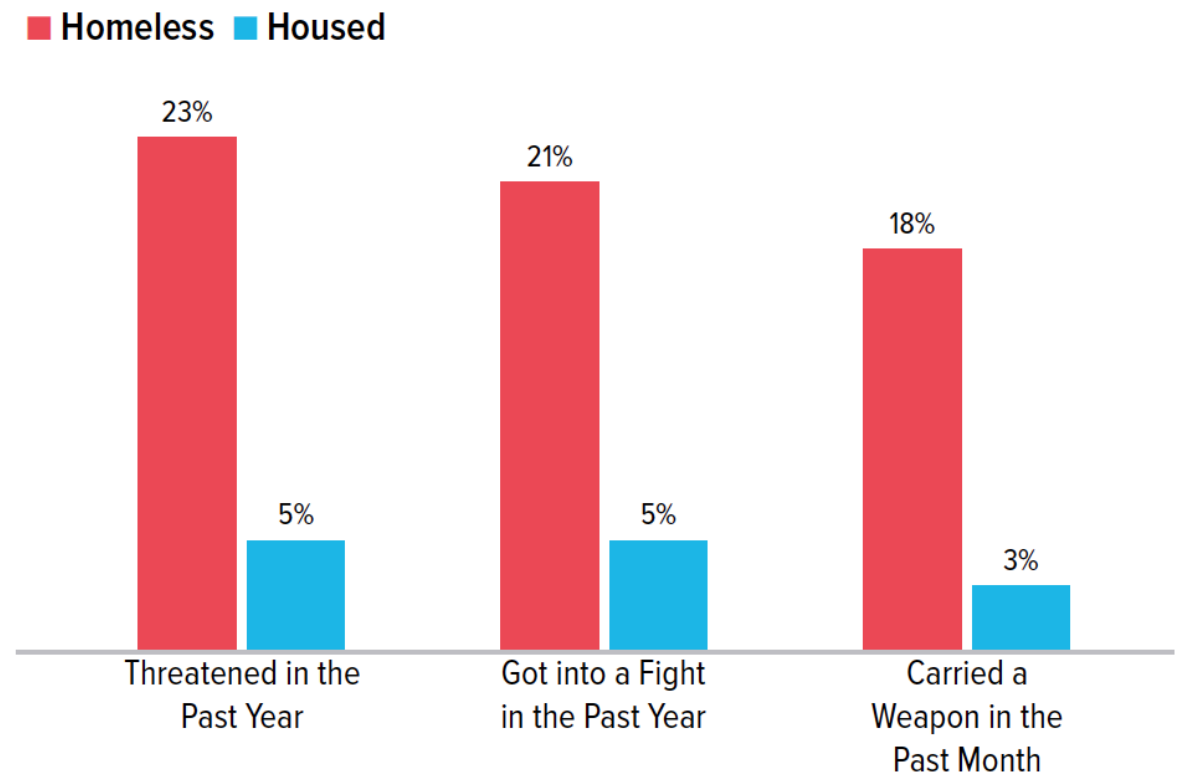
Percent of Students Who Missed School During the Past Month Due to Feeling Unsafe



# Are Homeless Students Experiencing Violence at School?

- Nearly 1 in 4 homeless students were threatened at school
- Over 1 in 5 homeless students got into a fight at school
- 18% of homeless students carried a weapon at school, 6x the rate of housed students

Percent of Students Who Were Threatened, Got in a Fight, or Carried a Weapon at School







# Discussion Questions

- What are some other ways to measure school safety?
- Does your school have any initiatives that specifically address school safety?
- Are there any initiatives you think would help students feel safer at school?





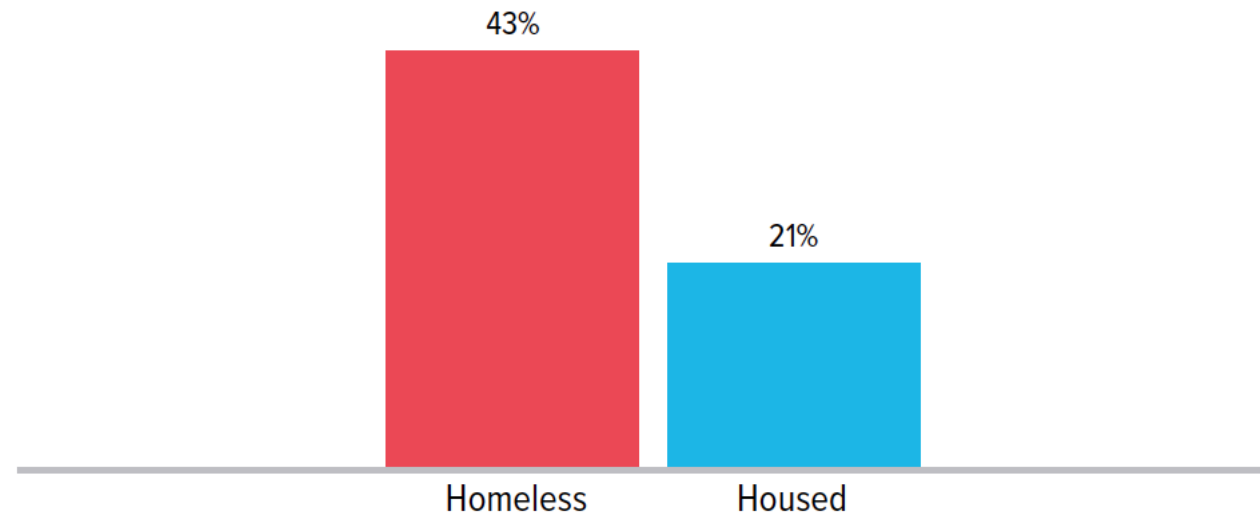
# Environment

- Illegal substances at school
- School rules
- School-based health services

# Are Homeless Students More Likely To Be Exposed to Drugs at School?

- Homeless students were twice as likely to have been offered, sold, or given drugs at school
- Homeless students are already more likely to use drugs, and having easy access at school makes them harder to avoid

Percent of Students Who Said they Had Been Offered, Sold, or Given Drugs on School Property in the Past Year

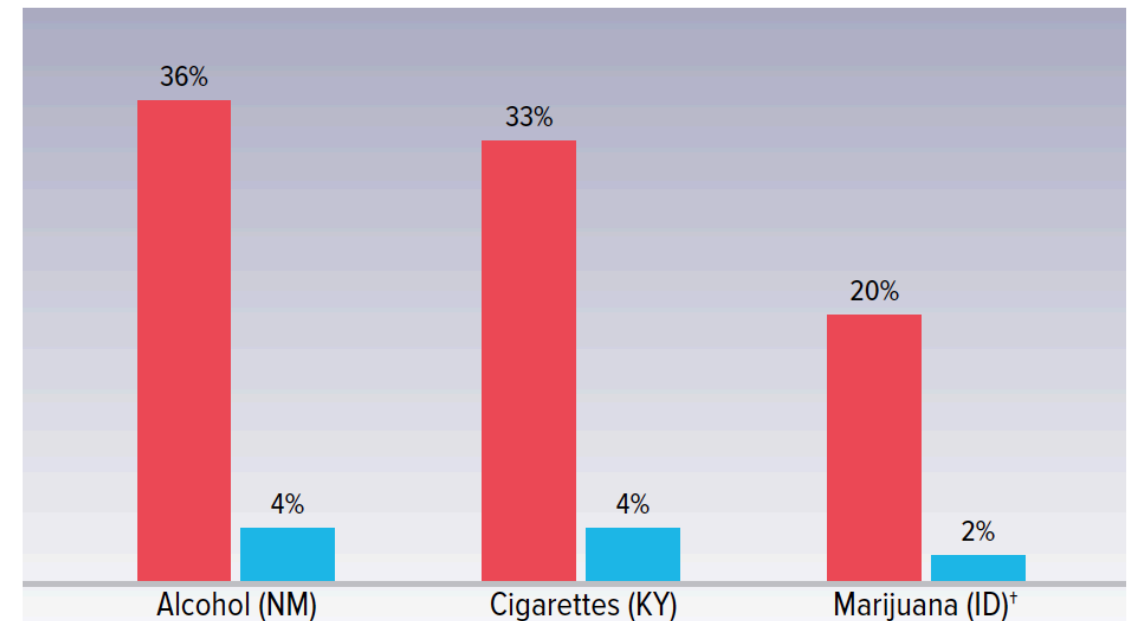


# Are Homeless Students More Likely to Drink, Smoke Cigarettes, and Use Marijuana at School?

- In New Mexico, homeless students were 9x more likely than housed students to drink alcohol at school
- In Kentucky, homeless students were 8x more likely to smoke cigarettes at school
- In Idaho, homeless students were 10x more likely to use marijuana at school

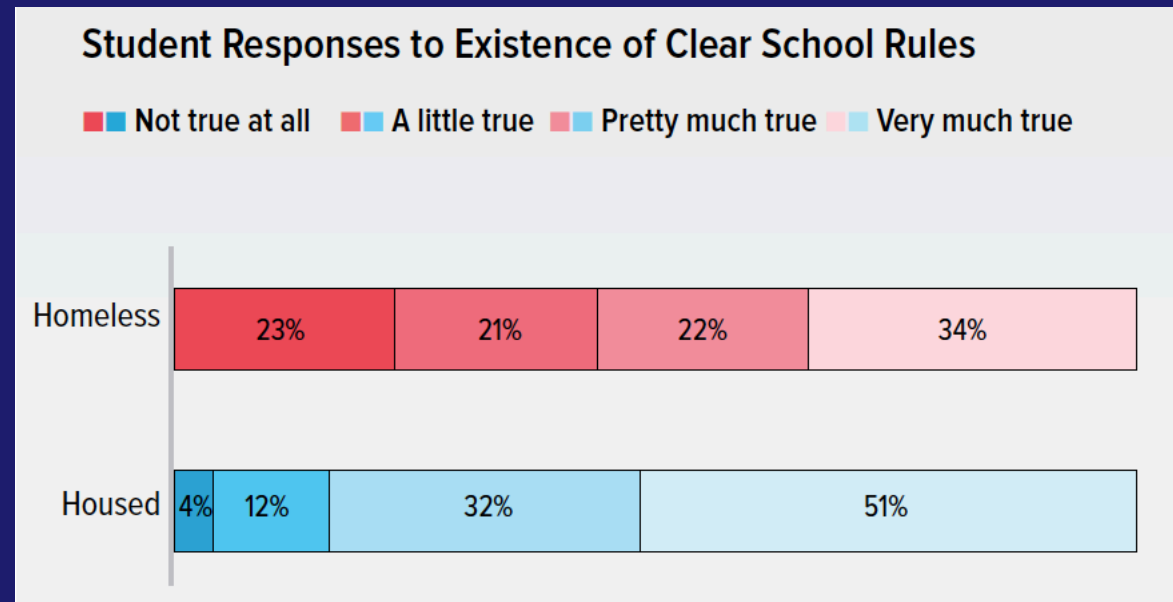
Percent of Students Who Drank, Smoked Cigarettes, or Used Marijuana at School in the Past Month

■ Homeless ■ Housed



# Do Students Believe There Are Clear School Rules About What Students Can and Cannot Do?

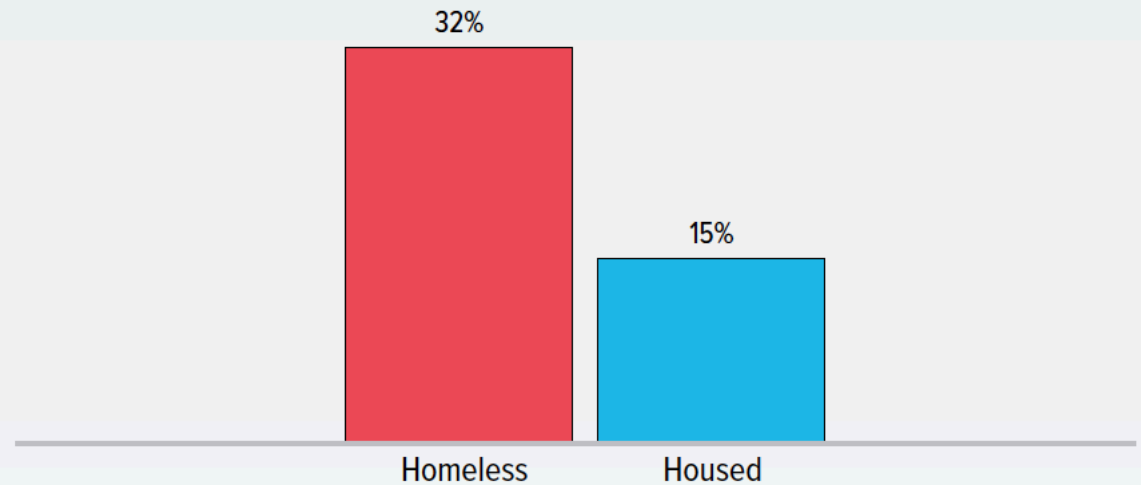
- 1 in 3 homeless students said it was very much true that their school had clear rules, compared to over half of housed students
- Nearly 1 in 4 homeless students said it was not true at all, compared to just 4% of housed students



# Do Homeless Students Use School-Based Health Services?

- In New York City, homeless students were twice as likely to have gotten help from a counselor, social worker, or therapist at school
- Homeless students in NYC were also slightly more likely to have gone to the nurse or clinic at school

Percent of Students Who Got Help from a Counselor, Social Worker, or Therapist at School in the Past Year







# Discussion Questions

- What are some other ways to measure school environment?
- Does your school have any initiatives that specifically address school environment?
- Are there any initiatives you think would help improve school environments?

# The Cumulative Impact of Negative School Climate Among Homeless High School Students



# How Was School Climate Measured?

- Bullying
- Missing school due to feeling unsafe
- Lacking positive relationships with teachers or adults at school
- Being offered, sold, or given illicit drugs on school property

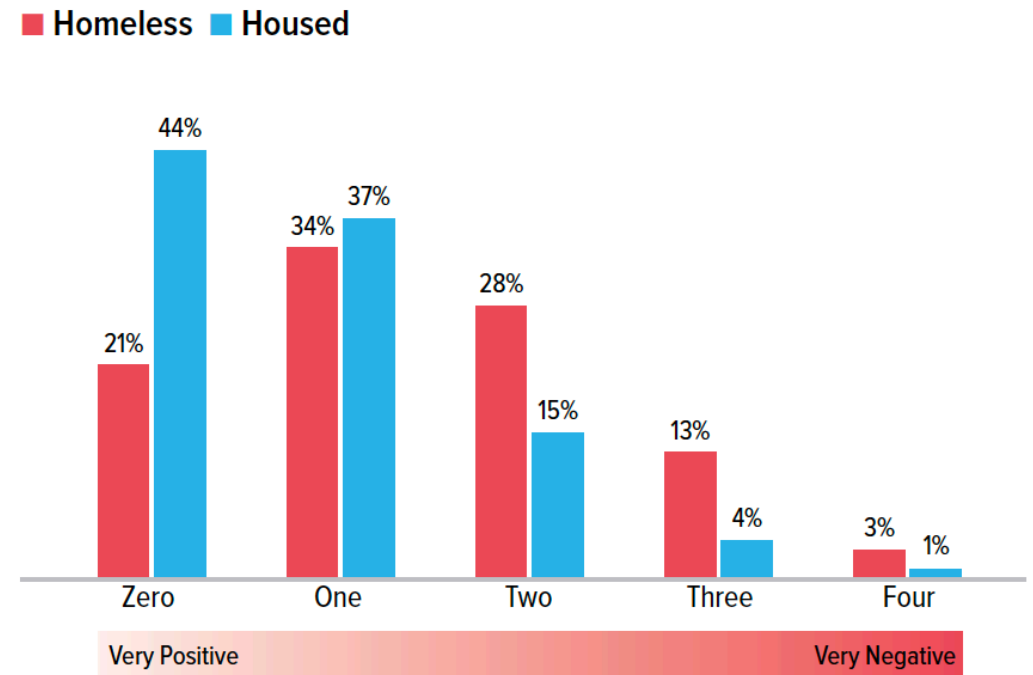
Very Positive

Very Negative

# Homeless Students Disproportionately Experience Negative School Climates

- Although more than half of homeless students experience just one or no negative school climate factors, they are half as likely to have experienced very positive school climates as housed students
- Homeless students are about 3x more likely to have very negative school climates, experiencing three or four negative school climate indicators

Number of Negative School Climate Indicators Experienced by Housing Status

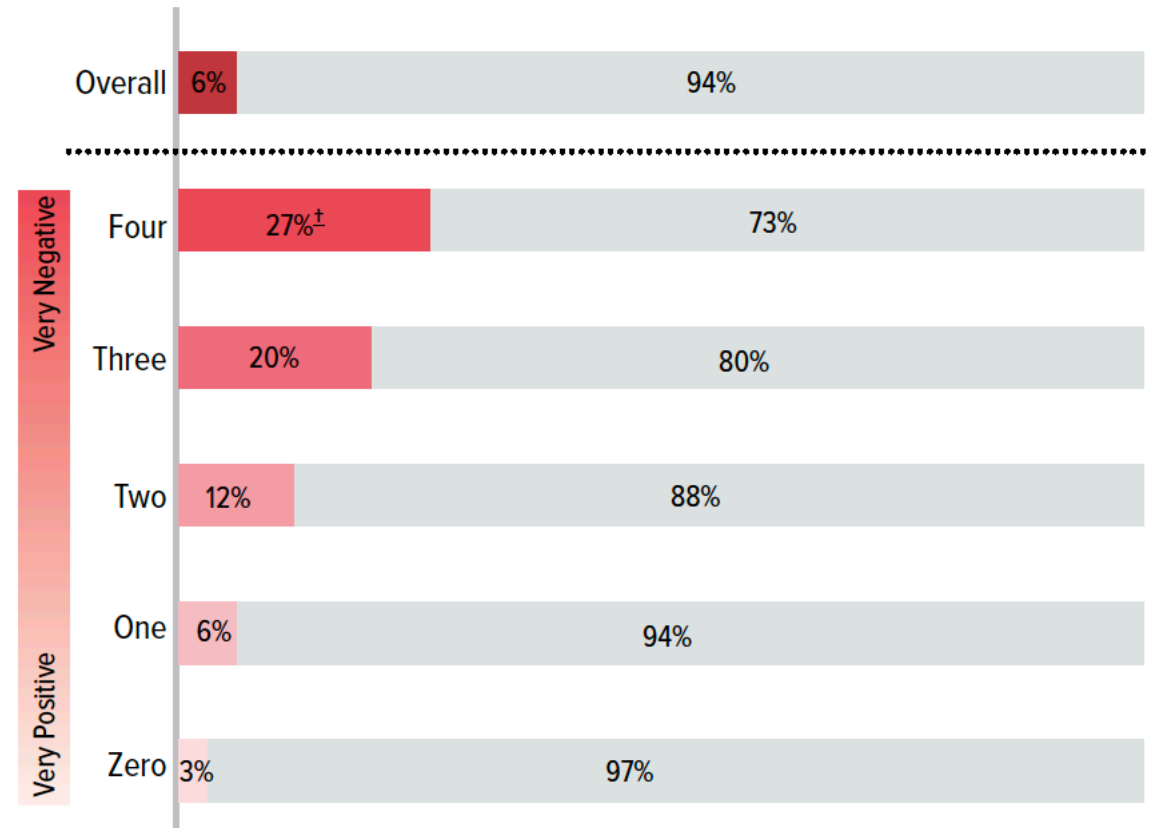


# Homeless Students Disproportionately Experience Negative School Climates

- Overall, 6% of students in this sample experienced homelessness
- Homeless students were disproportionately likely to experience two or more negative school climate indicators
- 27% of students that experienced the most negative school climates were homeless, 4.5x the overall rate of homelessness

Percent of Homeless and Housed Students by Number of Negative School Climate Indicators Experienced

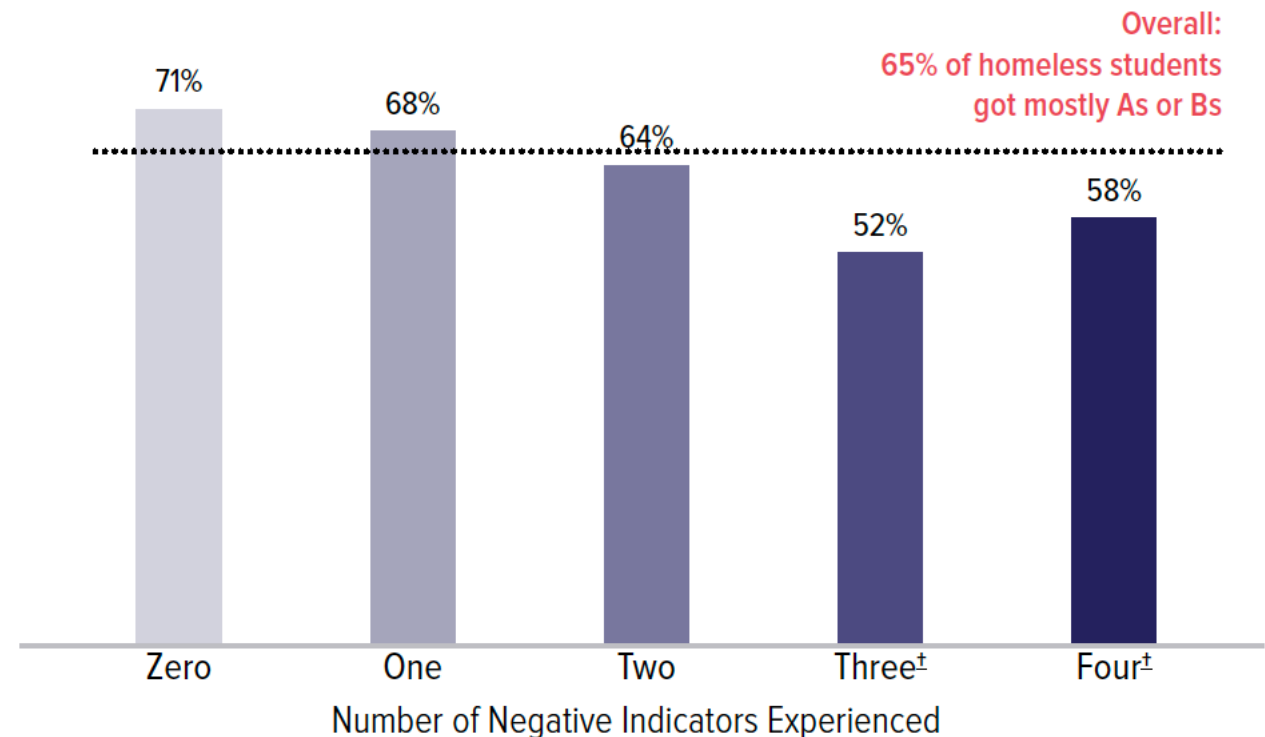
■ Homeless ■ Housed



# How Does School Climate Affect Homeless High Schoolers' Academic Performance?

- Overall, 65% of homeless students got mostly A's or B's
- Only 58% of homeless students experiencing the most negative school climates got mostly A's or B's, compared to 71% of homeless students who experienced the most positive school climates

Percent of Homeless Students Who Got Mostly A's or B's, by Number of Negative School Climate Indicators

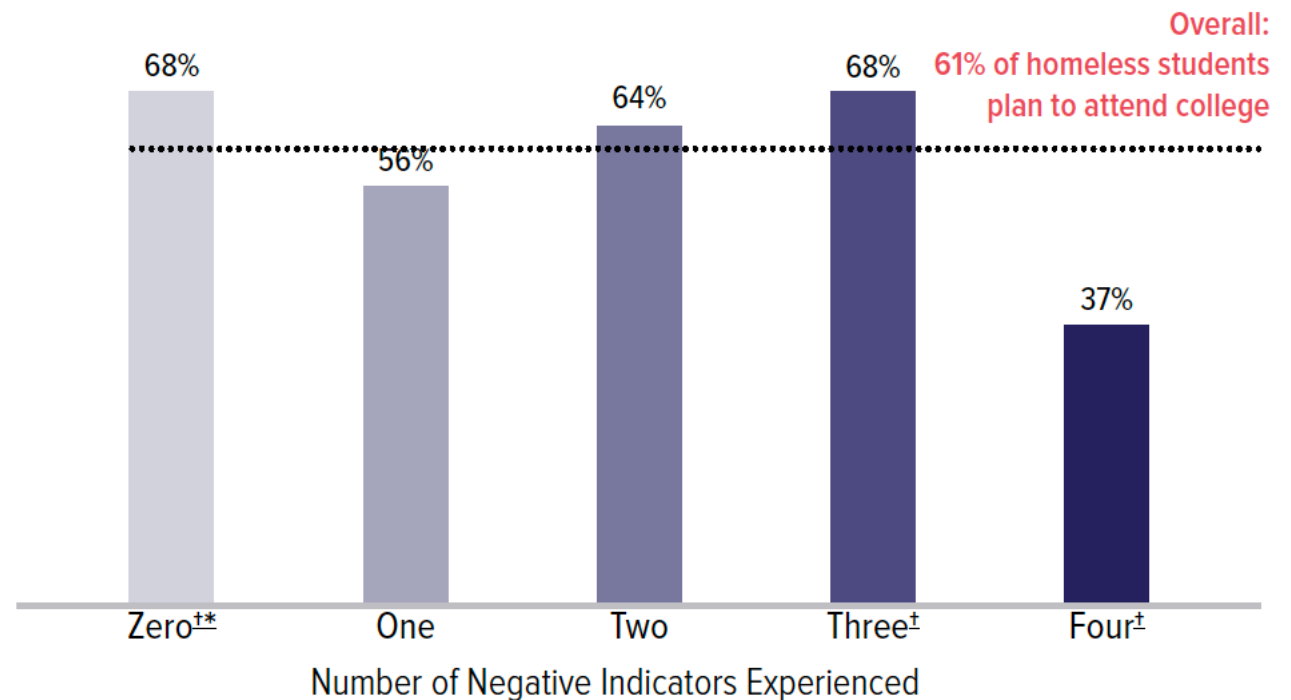




# How Does School Climate Affect Homeless High Schoolers' College Plans?

- 61% of homeless students overall planned to attend college, only slightly lower than the 68% of homeless students with very positive school climates that planned to attend college
- Homeless students that experienced four negative school climate indicators were about 1.8x less likely to plan to attend college than those with positive school climates

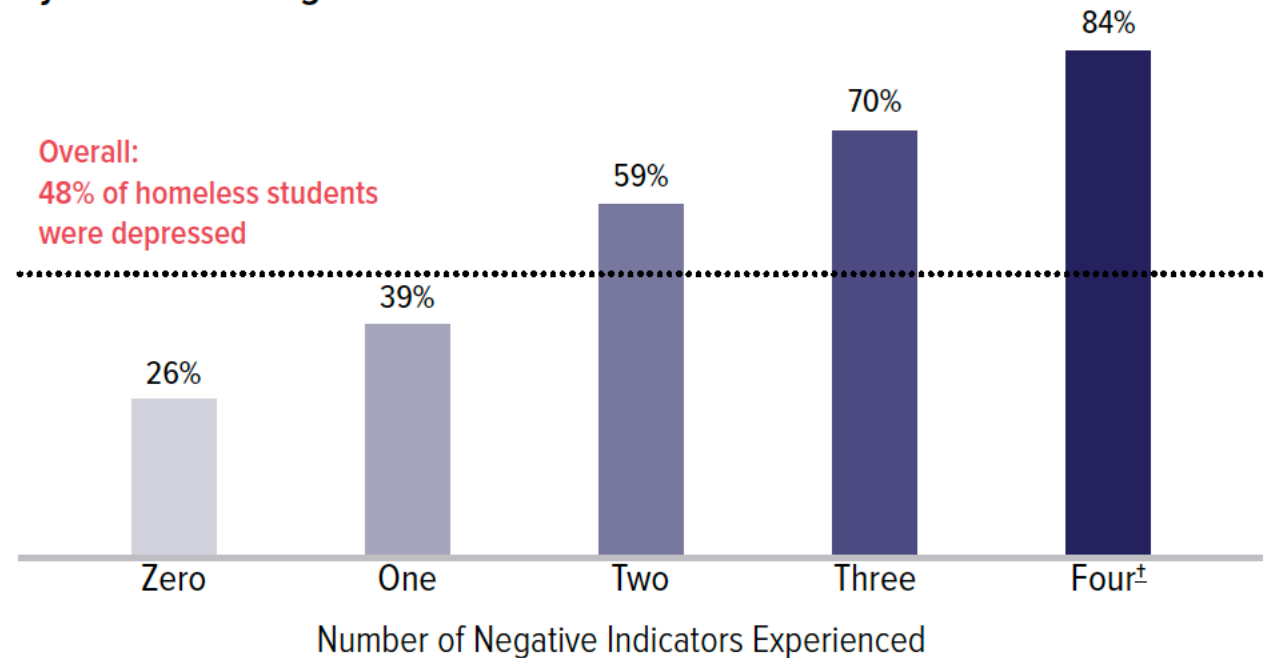
Percent of Homeless Students Who Plan to Attend College by Number of Negative School Climate Indicators



# What Is the Relationship Between School Climate and Depression?

- Overall, 48% of homeless students were depressed
- Experiencing even two negative school climate indicators was correlated with above average rates of depression (59%)
- 84% of homeless students who experienced the most negative school climates were depressed

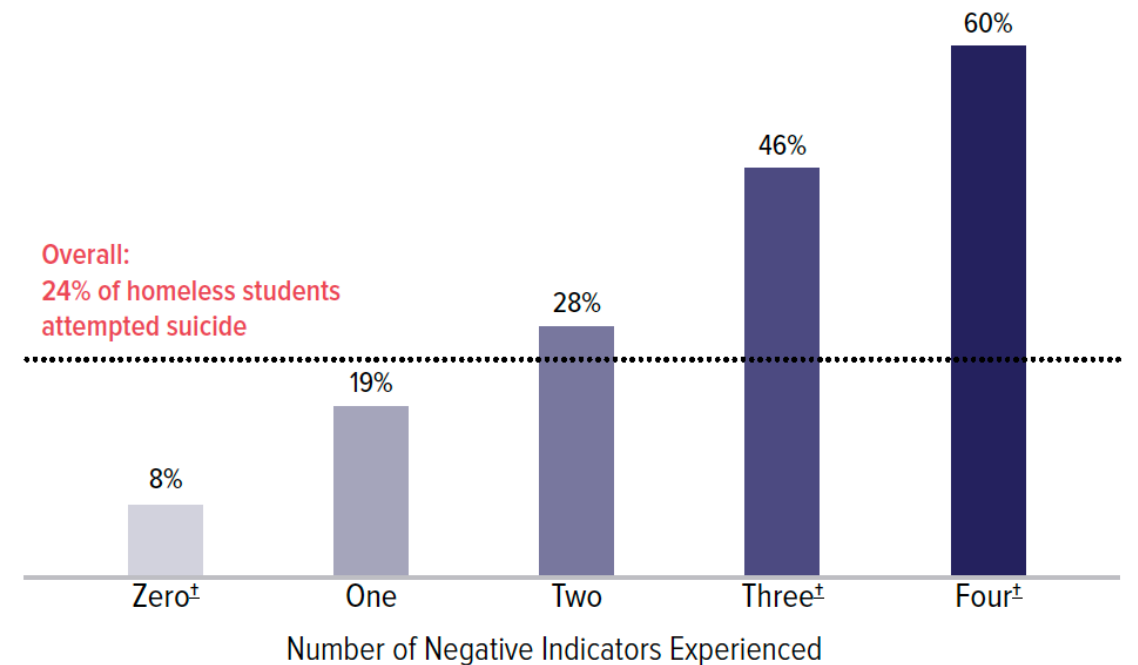
Percent of Homeless Students Who Were Depressed, by Number of Negative School Climate Indicators



# What Is the Relationship Between School Climate and Suicide?

- Like depression, experiencing even two negative school climate indicators was associated with rates of suicide attempts that were above the overall rate of 24%
- Homeless students that experienced four negative school climate indicators were 7.5x more likely to attempt suicide than homeless students who did not experience any negative school climate indicators

Percent of Homeless Students Who Attempted Suicide, by Number of Positive School Climate Indicators





# Conclusions and Policy Considerations

- Homeless students are disproportionately impacted by school climate
- Initiatives aimed at tackling homelessness tend to focus on housing, schools can play a positive role and should not be overlooked as a key point of service provision
- Anti-bullying and safety measures can improve school climate
- Trauma-informed approaches especially benefit homeless students
- School-based mental and physical health supports are crucial
- Positive school climates have the largest impact on low-income students and can serve as a protective factor against the negative impacts of homelessness

# Discussion Questions

- Is school climate discussed in your school or district?
- Are there any broader initiatives that address school climate in your area?
- Are there any school climate initiatives that have not been discussed that you have found beneficial?
- As educators or others that work in schools, what could your districts do to support you in creating a positive school climate?

# Questions?







# Thank You!

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