

CRISIS AHEAD: HOW HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING SHORTAGE ARE AFFECTING WIC STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS

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Outline

- Housing insecurity and homelessness
- How housing difficulties affect the home environment and health of families
- Participants' experiences with housing
- Experiences and barriers staff face
- How PHFE WIC is addressing needs of these families
- Audience discussion

POLITICS 06/19/2018 05:45 am ET | Updated Jun 19, 2018

America's Housing Crisis Is A Ticking Time Bomb

A new report reveals rising rents and surging inequality — and it's only going to get worse.



By Michael Hobbes

HUFFPOST

EDITORIAL

The Affordable Housing Crisis Is About to Get Worse

By The Editorial Board

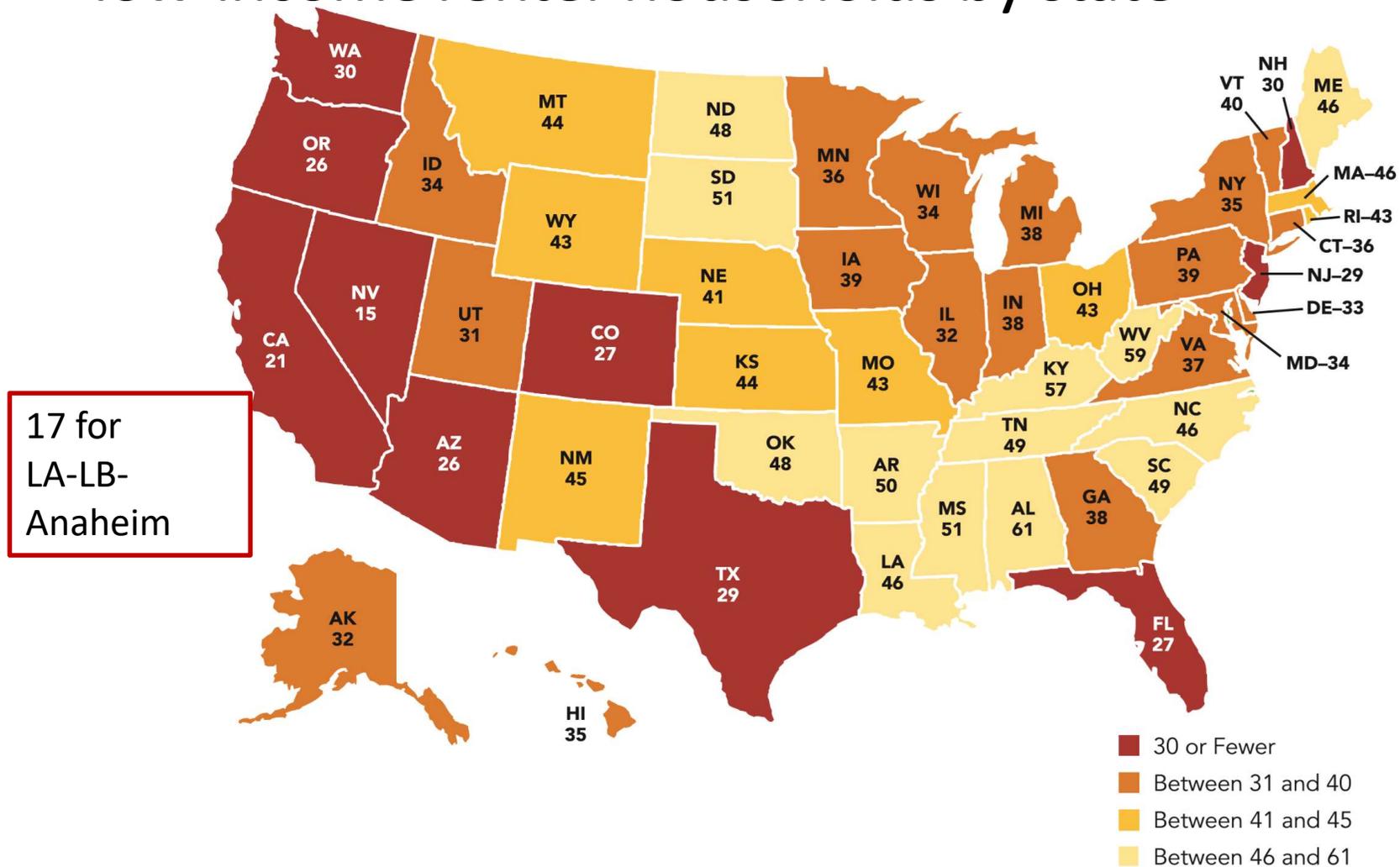
Feb. 2, 2018

The New York Times

38 million households are housing-cost burdened

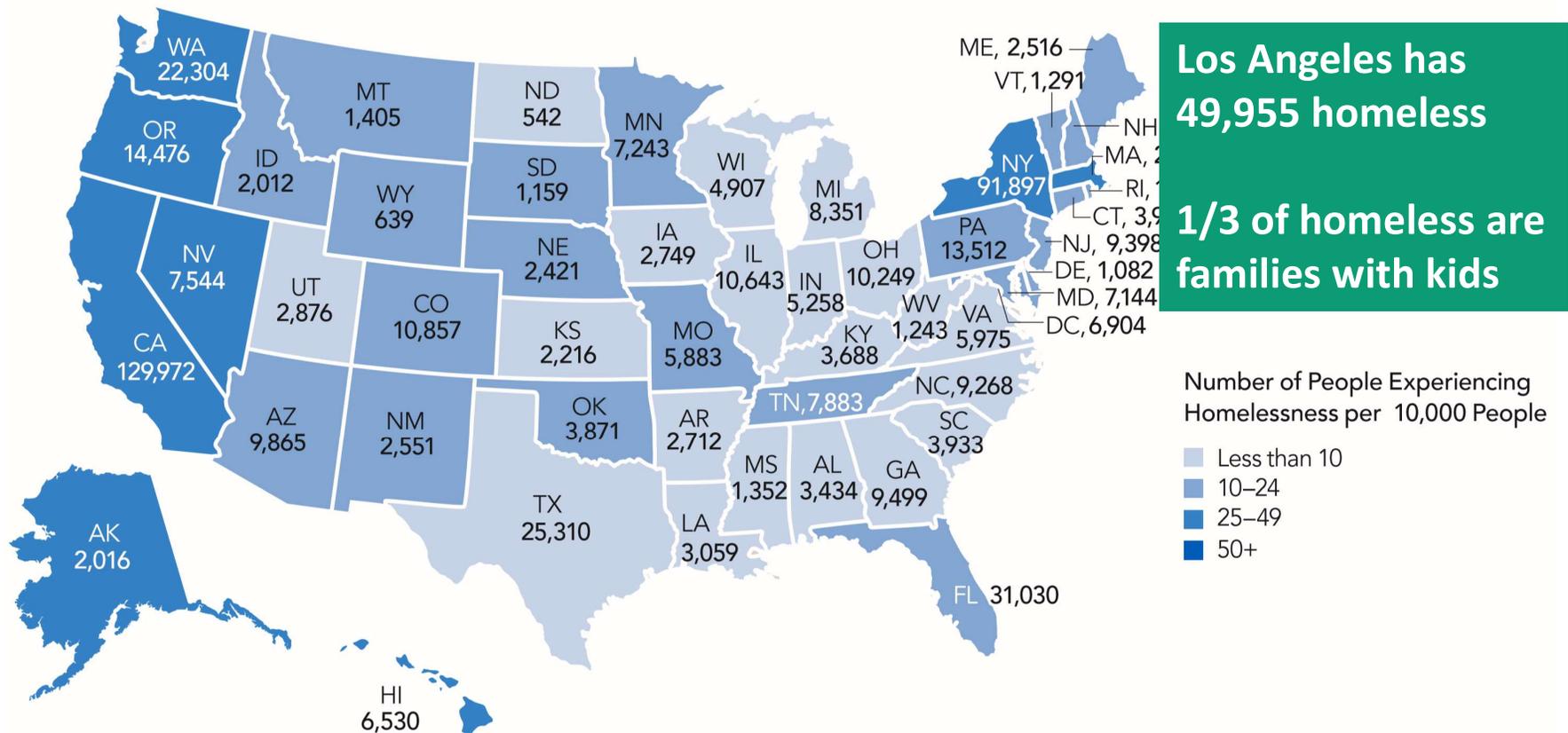
11 million renter households are severely housing-cost burdened

Units affordable and available per 100 extremely low-income renter households by state

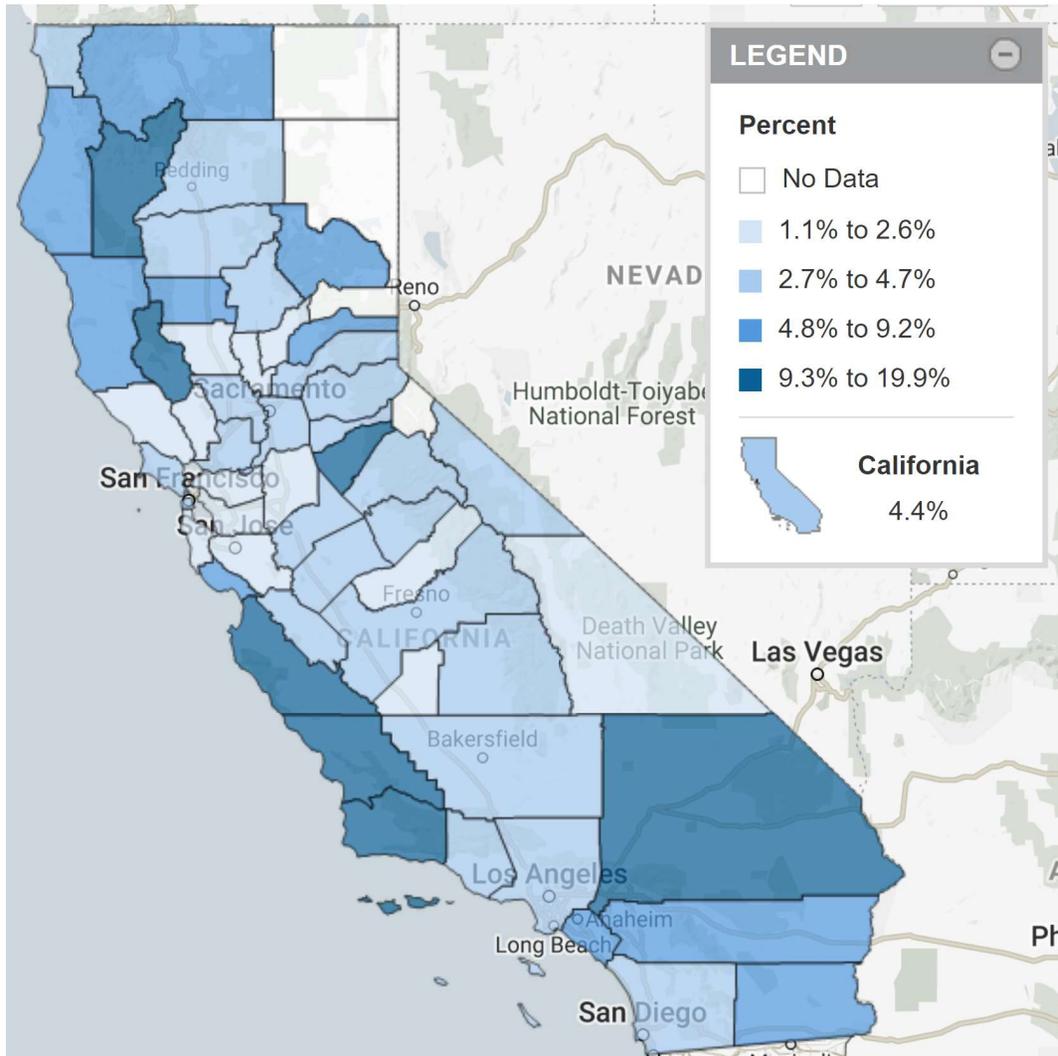


Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition 2017. NLIHC tabulations of 2015 ACS PUMS data. Extremely low income is defined as being $\leq 100\%$ federal poverty level or 30% of their area median income.

Number of Homeless by State in 2018 from Point-In-Time Count



Homeless students in California



- In 2016-2017, 262,748 children enrolled in public school (PreK to 12th grade) were homeless (Department of Education)
- 85% doubled-up
- 4% in Los Angeles

Source: National Center for Homeless Education. Data from California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation & California Basic Educational Data System. Public school students recorded as being homeless at any point during a school year.

Los Angeles County



~4,000 square/miles

More than 10 million people

Mix of rural and urban



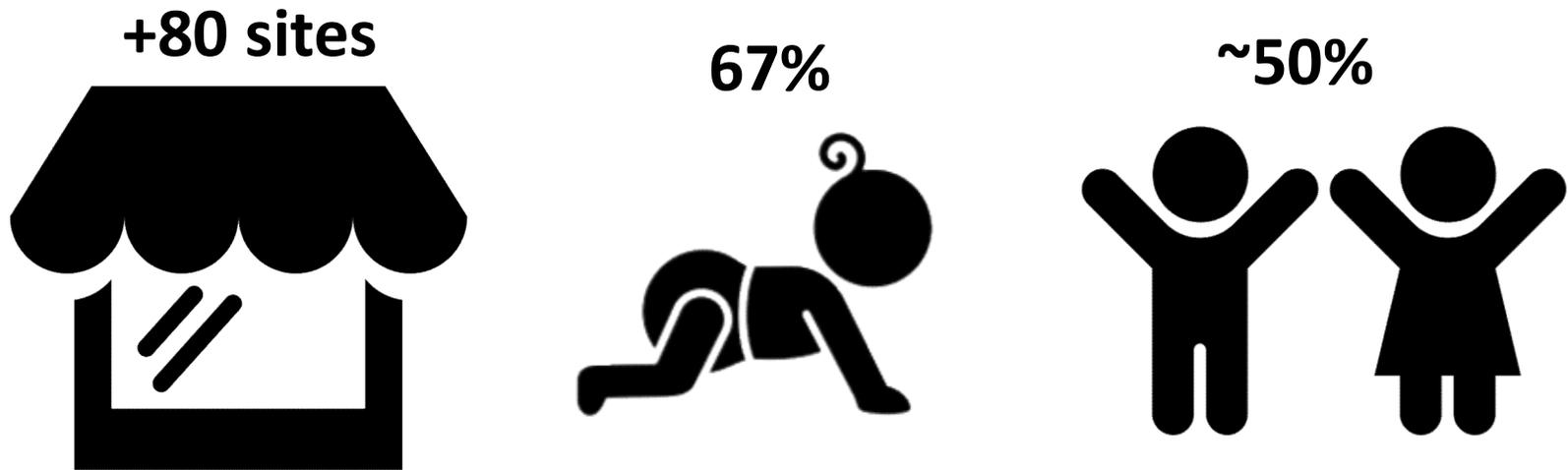


Angelina Orellana, 8, does homework in a garage. (Francine Orr/ Los Angeles Times)



Brenda Salgado cleans up the bathroom as her 4 children play in the motel room. (Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times)

WIC Program in Los Angeles County



Source: 2017 data from Los Angeles County WIC Data <http://lawicdata.org/>
Images from the Noun Project

Characteristics of WIC participants in Los Angeles County

83% Hispanic, 8% NH Black, 5% Asian, 4% NH White

32% have parents did not finish high school

72% poor (< 100% FPL)

28% extremely poor (< 50% FPL)

NH= Non-Hispanic; FPL = Federal Poverty Level.

Sources: Los Angeles County WIC Data 2018 <http://lawicdata.org>; and analyses of 2017 LA County WIC Survey data

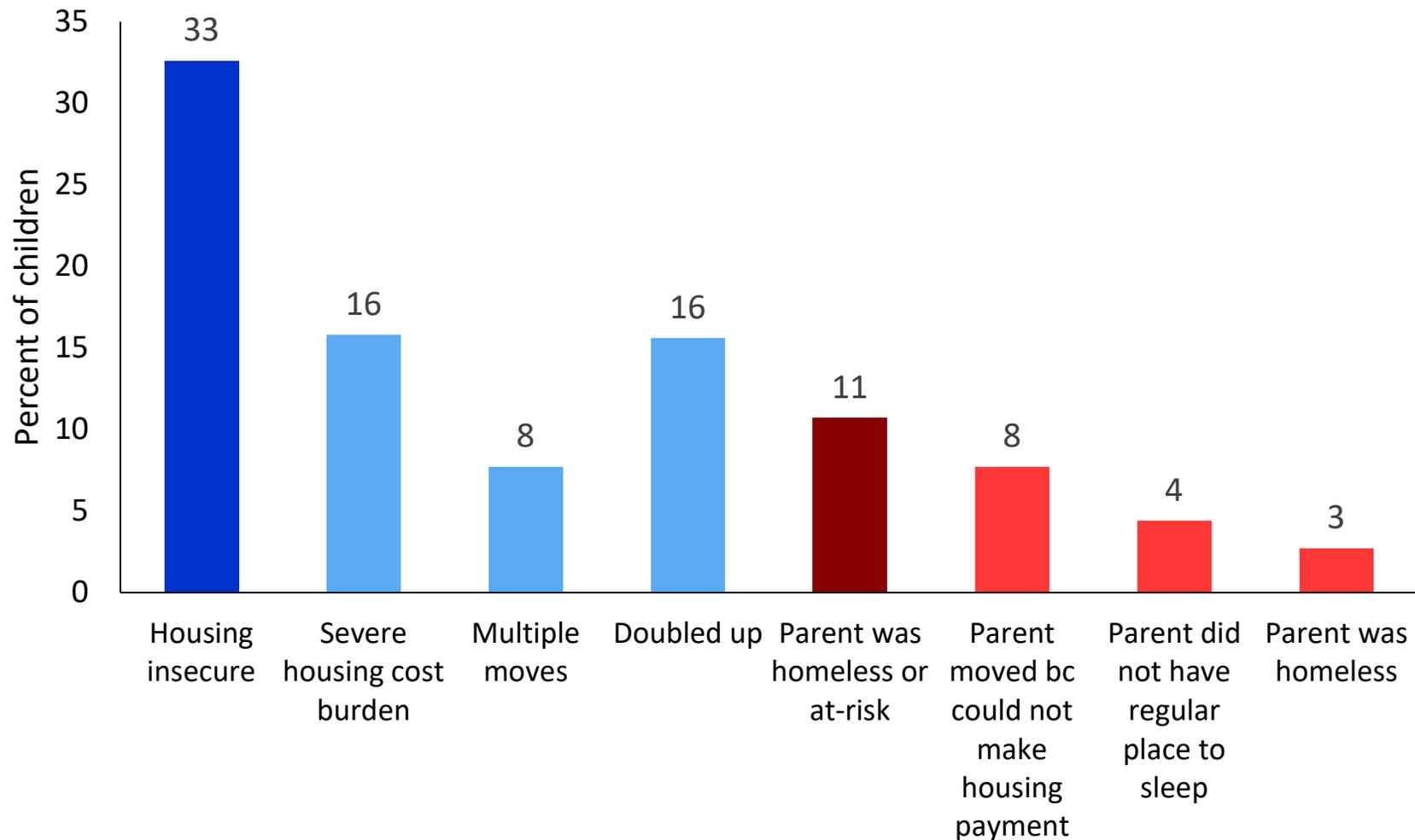


Housing insecurity and homelessness among children

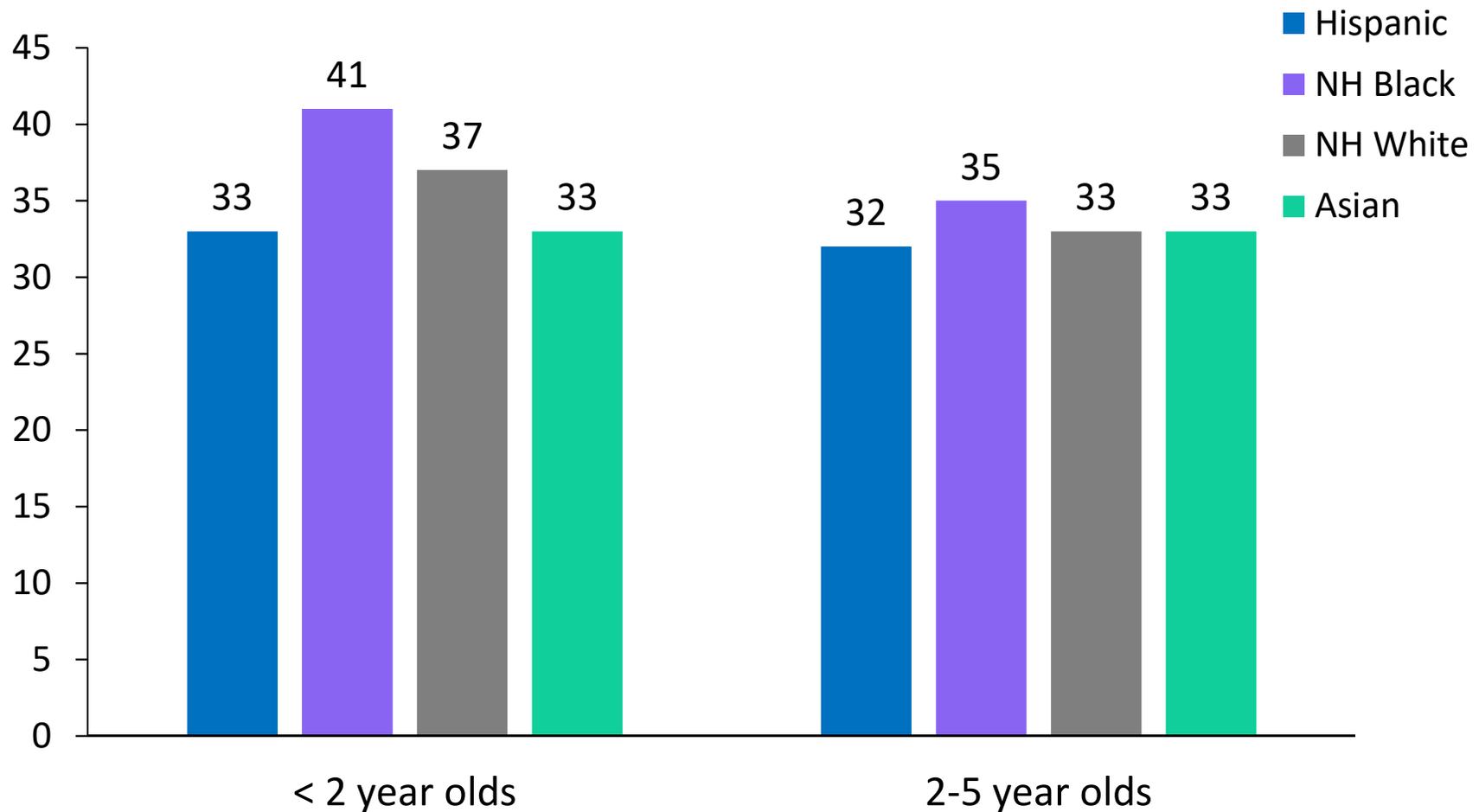
Los Angeles County WIC Parent Survey

- ~5,500 participants
- Every 3 years
- Computer-assisted phone interviews
- English and Spanish
- www.lawicdata.org

Housing insecurity and homelessness among children ≤ 5 years old, 2017 (n=5380)

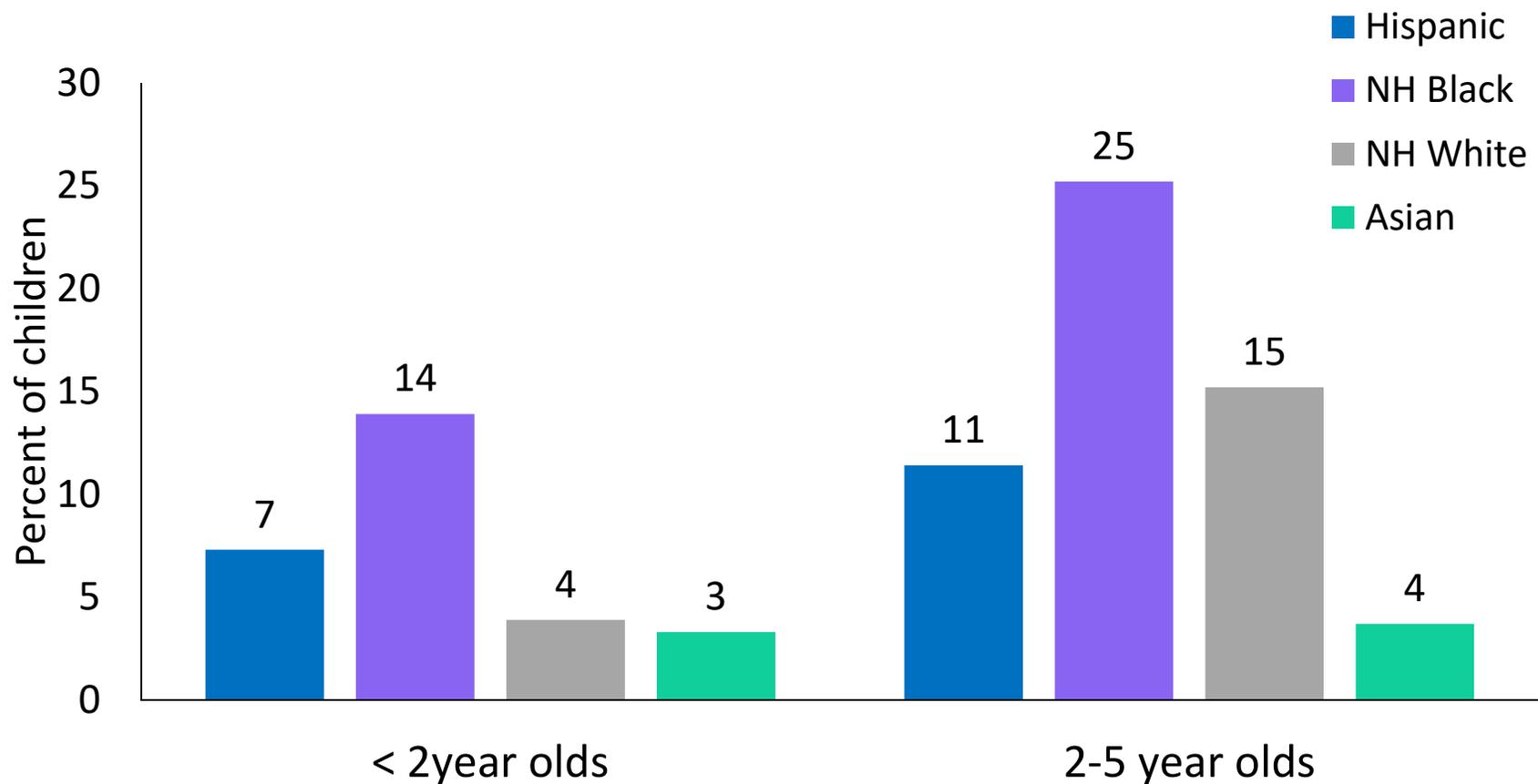


Differences in housing insecurity by race/ethnicity and child's age, 2017 (n=5380)



NH = Non-Hispanic

Differences in parent's risk of homelessness by race/ethnicity and child's age, 2017 (n=5380)

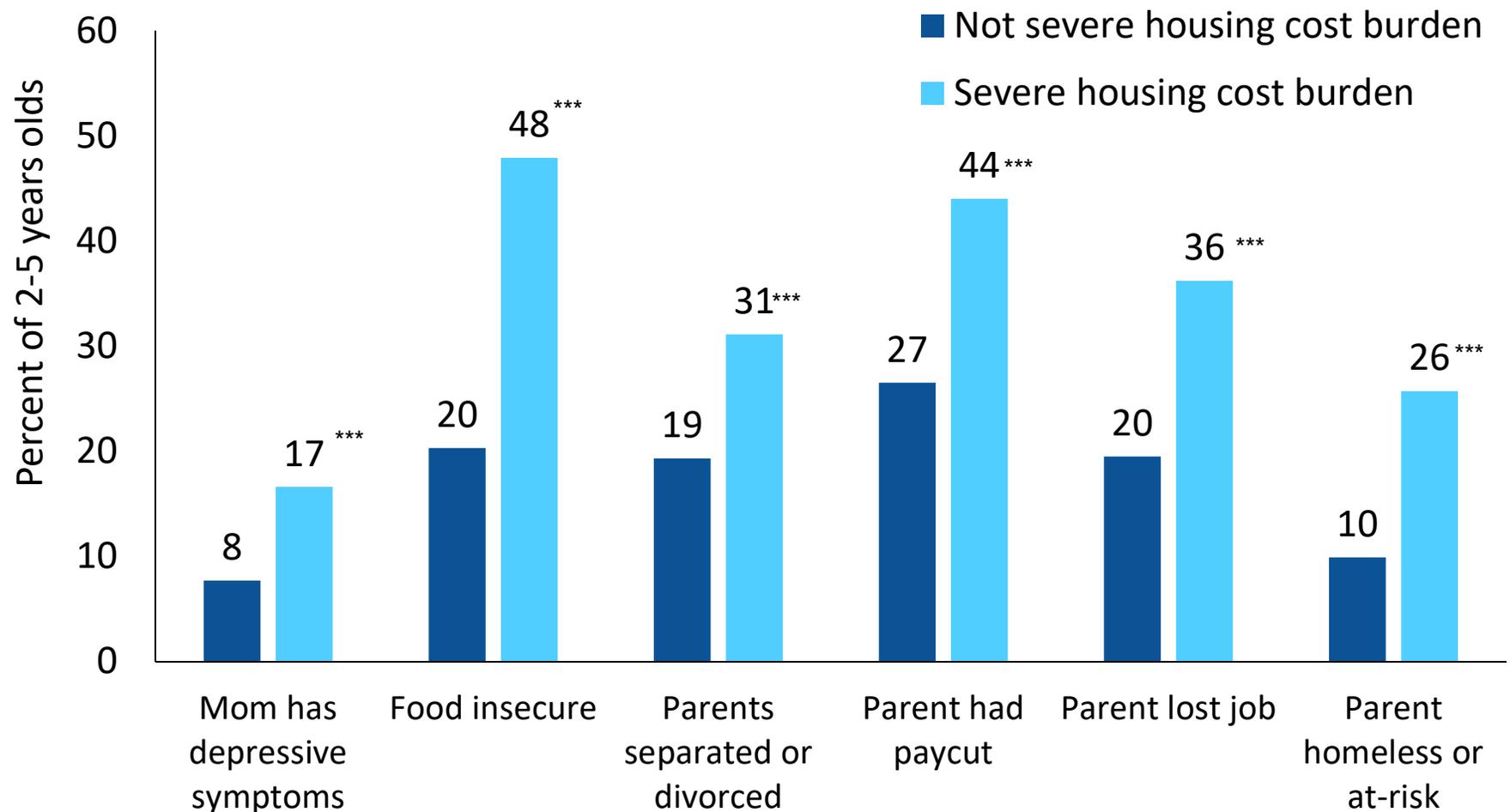


NH = Non-Hispanic



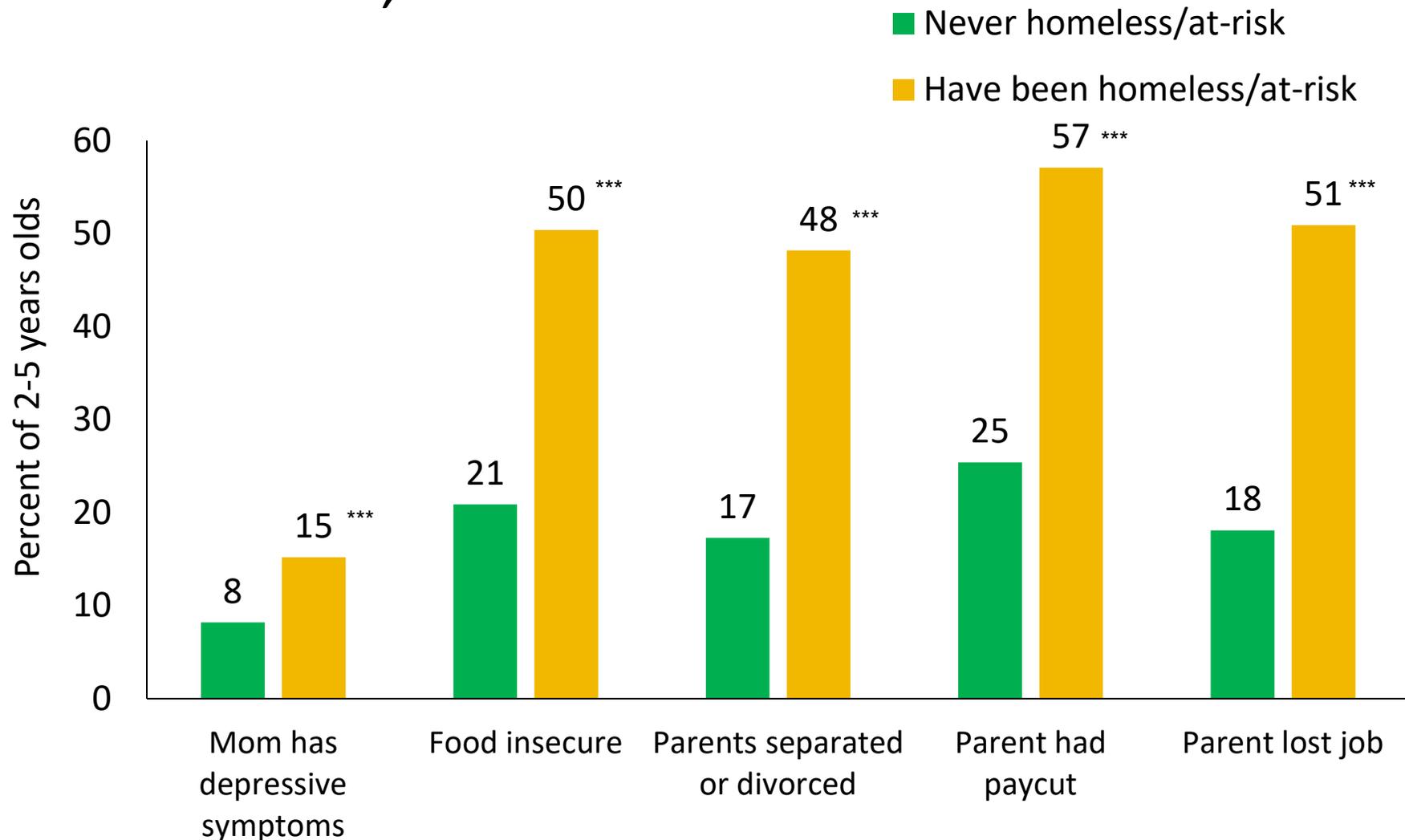
How can housing-cost burden and homelessness affect the health of children and families?

Home environment of children by severe housing cost burden, 2017



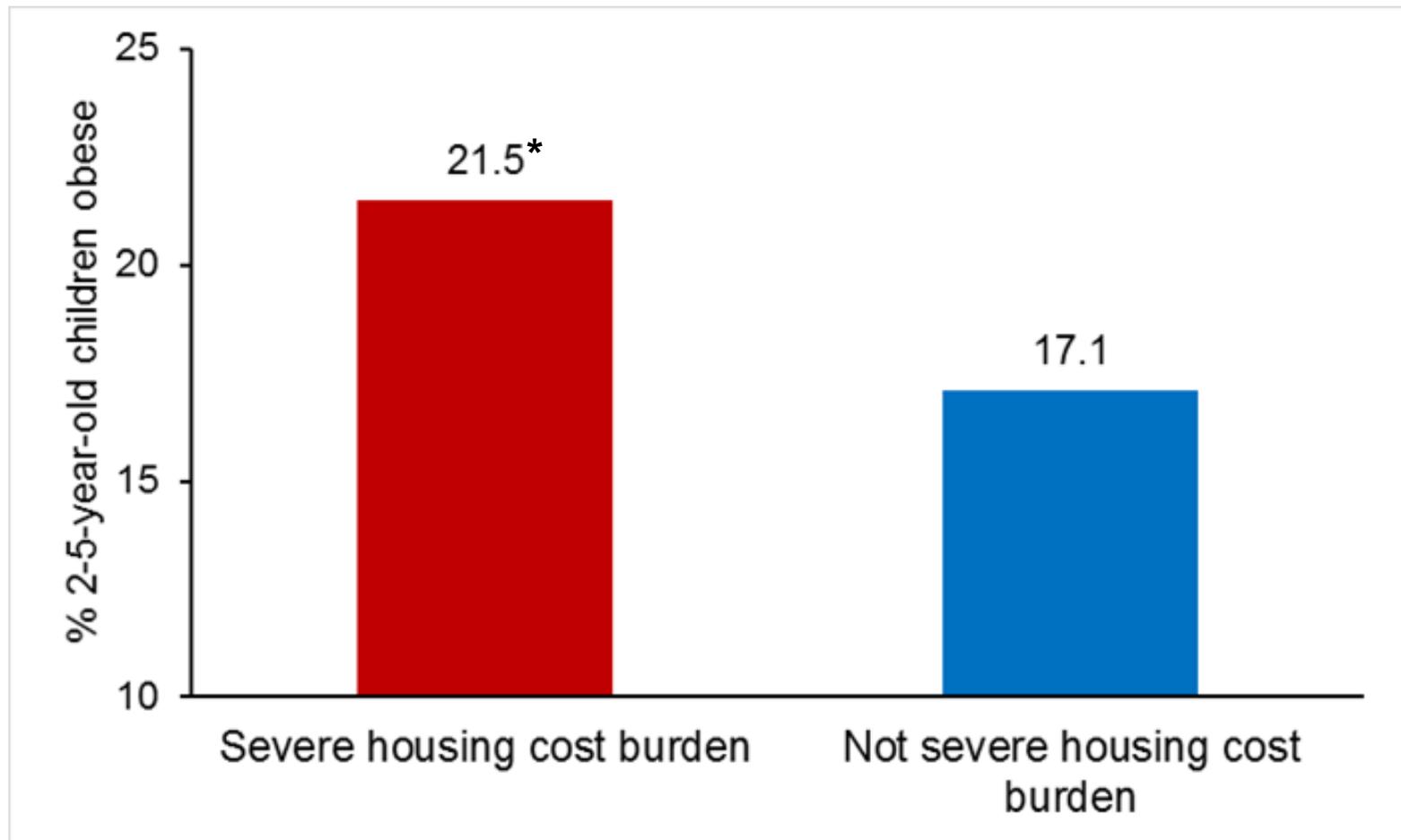
Chi-Square test of differences by severe housing cost burden: *p-value <0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001

Home environment of children by parent homelessness, 2017



Chi-Square test of differences by severe housing cost burden: *p-value <0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001

Childhood obesity (BMI \geq 95th percentile) by severe housing cost burden (2011 and 2014)



Chi-Square test of differences by severe housing cost burden: *p-value <0.05; **<0.01; ***<0.001 20

Key Takeaways about WIC-participating children in Los Angeles County

- 11% of children have a parent who is homeless or at risk
- 33% of children are housing insecure
- 16% live in severe housing cost burden
- Greater exposure to stressful home environment
- Greater risk of food insecurity and obesity
- Racial/ethnic disparities



Participants' experiences with housing

Qualitative interviews

- 30 WIC families
- Participated in the 2017 LAC WIC Survey and gave permission for follow-up
- Experienced severe housing cost burden, multiple moves, or doubled up
- White, Black, Hispanic-Spanish, Hispanic-English

Findings of qualitative interviews

- Causes of homelessness/housing insecurity: rising rents, eviction, life changes, underemployment
- Where they live
- Doubling up with relative (child care, stress)
- Differences by race/ethnicity
- Difficulty finding a place (credit, kids, quality, race/ethnicity)

Findings of qualitative interviews

- Importance of social networks for food, lodging, and social support.
- Mental health services needed.
- Fear of being stigmatized and children taken away
- Importance of food assistance programs but some unaware of resources (food pantries, eligibility for SNAP)
- Families embarrassed to get homeless WIC food package
→ referring to homeless package differently may be helpful.



The experiences and barriers staff face in
dealing with housing-related issues

Findings from PHFE WIC staff survey on homelessness (n=107)

Ask about housing

- 79% of staff wait for client to disclose homelessness or housing problems → Need to ask about housing
- Training needed since potential for stigmatization and fear of Department of Children and Family Services
- 20% of staff are concerned about their own housing situation

Findings from PHFE WIC staff survey on homelessness (n=107)

Resources Provided

- 60% of staff reported not having resources → Need updated list of resources
- List should include location and eligibility (marital status, immigration status)
- Missed referrals → Who should offer them?
- 25% waited for participant to ask for homeless package → Training to offer and refer to package differently.



PHFE WIC's Approach to Reach Unhoused Families

Pina Hernandez, BS
Outreach Manager
PHFE WIC Program

Outreach to Unhoused Families

Talking to these families opened our eyes to the challenges they face:

- Limited knowledge of WIC
- Hard to get to WIC
- Not able to get to grocery stores
- Inadequate food storage
- Lack of cooking facilities
- Not familiar with new living area and services

What Did We Do?

Formed an internal PHFE WIC committee to expand support to these families:

- Working with agencies that provide services to families in housing transition is helping us to learn to facilitate access to WIC services
- Assigning a lead person per SPA to network with agencies that provide support services to these families
- In a pilot project, we are expanding our outreach beyond a paper referral i.e. having outreach staff at a shelter on selected days to facilitate applying to WIC

Training and Guidance for Staff

Provided a training day for WIC staff and other agencies

- ❑ Presenters shared information with WIC staff about their support services to these families (lots of great networking!)
 - ❑ Cal Works, LAHSA, 211, Family Solutions

Provided guidance to WIC staff to assist these families when receiving WIC services

- ❑ Training WIC staff to increase their awareness of the unique needs of unhoused families
- ❑ Continuing to work on strategies that can take away the stigma of a “homeless family”
- ❑ Collaborating with Union Rescue Mission (shelter) to bring services to their families

Connecting with Other Agencies

Work in progress and learning from others...

- ❑ Increasing our connection with agencies that provide direct services to families in unhoused situations
- ❑ Increasing connections to establish a seamless referral system for these families
- ❑ Increasing referrals to other services that offer benefits to these families

Questions and Discussion

When providing services to clients who are homeless or have housing concerns,

- what barriers are you encountering?
- what steps are you taking?



Thank you

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