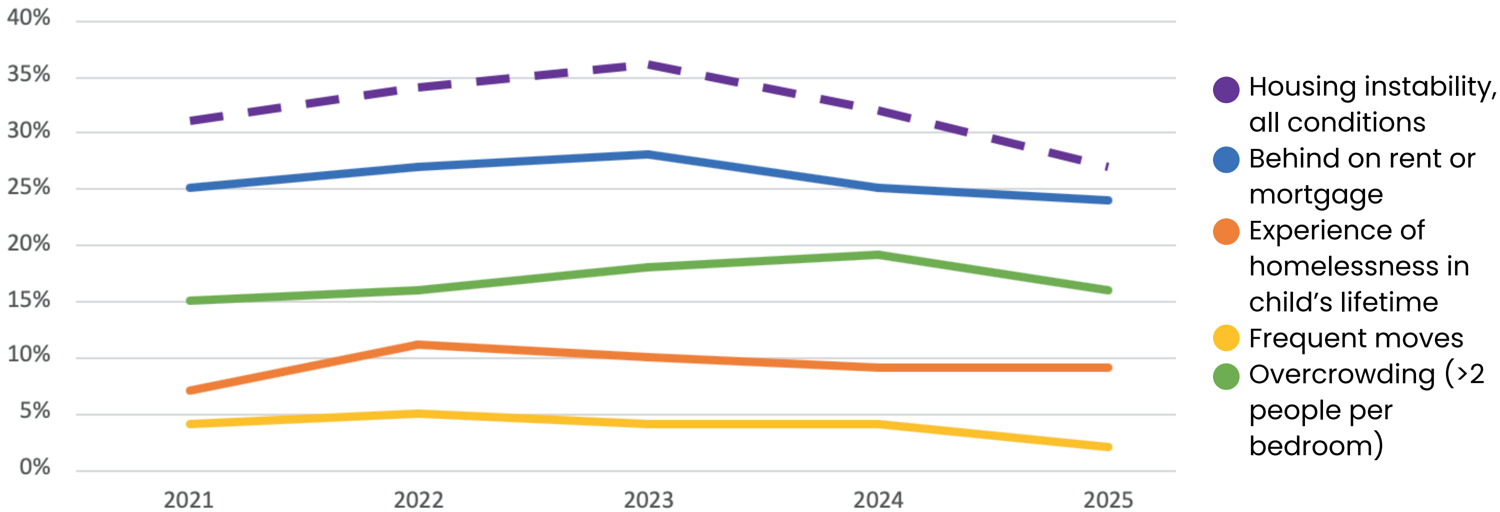
PERSISTENT HOUSING INSTABILITY AMONG FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

HOUSING INSTABILITY PREVALENCE AMONG FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN, 2021–2025



Source: Children's HealthWatch data

According to the 2022 National Survey of Children's Health, **one in six children in the U.S. experienced housing instability.**

Among families with young children interviewed by Children's HealthWatch in 2025 at hospitals in 4 U.S. cities (Boston, MA; Minneapolis, MN; Philadelphia, PA; Little Rock, AR), **24% experienced housing instability.**

The rate of housing instability observed in our data is higher than the national average and reflects heightened risk faced by very young children in families with low incomes, a population **uniquely vulnerable to economic instability.**

Housing instability is measured as one or more of the following experiences:

- Behind on rent or mortgage during the last year
- Experience of homelessness during the child's lifetime
- 2+ moves in last year

Separately, **overcrowding** is defined as >2 people per bedroom.

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF HOUSING INSTABILITY

Children's HealthWatch research demonstrates that housing instability **increases the risk** of:

- Infants and toddlers being in fair/poor health and **not meeting developmental milestones**
- Mothers reporting fair/poor physical health and **depressive symptoms**

CHILDREN'S HealthWatch

STABLE HOUSING, STABLE FUTURES: POLICIES TO ADDRESS HOUSING INSTABILITY

Families with a history of eviction within the last five years are:

5X more likely to experience homelessness

3–4X more likely to experience other forms of housing instability

MORE LIKELY

- 2+ economic hardships
- young children in fair or poor health
- young children at developmental risk
- mothers who report depressive symptoms

$111B* avoidable health and education costs attributable to housing instability over a ten year period.

*Calculated in 2015; cost is now higher due to inflation

1 IN 4 income-eligible households in the U.S. participate in housing assistance due to chronic underfunding.

Housing assistance mitigates health consequences of housing instability but does not adequately meet need.

In 2025, 16% of families interviewed by Children's HealthWatch participated in housing assistance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create new housing vouchers** to bridge the gap between income and housing costs
- **Oppose harmful policies that restrict access to housing and homelessness services,** including threats to mixed status families and new work reporting requirements
- **Create an emergency assistance fund** to support families facing eviction
- **Expand and preserve** the supply of affordable housing
- **Strengthen and enforce** tenant protections and anti-discrimination laws
- **Ensure continued operation of HUD** by protecting funding and adequate staff