

# Should the Commonwealth Expand Supports for Pennsylvania's 46,000 Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness?

Part 2 of the Children Cannot Wait Series  
Prepared by the Policy Department of HopePHL

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## Introduction

HopePHL's Children Cannot Wait Campaign explores how Pennsylvania can strengthen the resiliency of children, youth and families experiencing homelessness. Since 2023, the Campaign works with organizations around the state to advocate for increasing support for the children.

We acknowledge and are grateful to the City, state, and federal leadership who support the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness initiative.

New reports from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) show that in School Year (SY) 2022-23, 46,705 children and youth were identified as homeless throughout the Commonwealth, at an all-time high. This paper begins with reports using Pennsylvania Department of Education data.

HopePHL's "Children Cannot Wait Campaign" series aims to increase awareness of children and youth experiencing homelessness. This report, Part 2, explores the data for Pennsylvania provided by the county and by region.

PDE manages the "Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness" (ECYEH) program, a federally funded effort designed to eliminate barriers to education for students experiencing homelessness. PDE contracts with eight regions in the Commonwealth for local implementation. The regions use the funds to train school personnel in 500 school districts and 176 charter schools(i) and provide direct services like uniforms, transportation, mentoring, summer programming, school supplies, and more. The education system is the only statutorily required federal agencies to report on children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Find the PDE reports [here](#).



## Who Should Read This?

We encourage policymakers and their staff, funders, child service agencies, school personnel, family advocates, and others to read and understand the data and consider expanding efforts to reach out to children and youth experiencing homelessness.

## Highlights

- In the 2022-23 school year, Pennsylvania witnessed an all-time high of 46,705 children and youth had experienced homelessness, marking a significant 17% increase from the previous year's [2022] total of 40,003. This breakdown includes:
  - 10,158 young children from birth to kindergarten account for 22% of the total, with infants and toddlers representing the largest group at 35% of this age category.
  - Notably, there was a 34% increase in Pre-Kindergarten homelessness since 2022 and a 49% increase since 2020.
- The distribution among different age groups is as follows:
  - 26,324 children in grades K-8 and 12,852 youth in grades 9-12.
  - Regional disparities are evident, with Region 7 seeing the highest increase at 98% and Region 4 at 79.5%. See map below for the regional locations.
  - Out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties:
    - 55 (82%) identified more homeless children compared to 2022, while 12 (18%) reported fewer.
    - Between 2020 and 2023, 41 counties (61%) observed an increase in homeless children, though six counties decreased over the four years, including Crawford, Clearfield, Columbia, and Susquehanna.

## Recommendations By Advocates

Over the past few years, Pennsylvania's advocates have urged state legislators to expand capacity to identify and serve students experiencing homelessness. Specifically, we encourage the following:

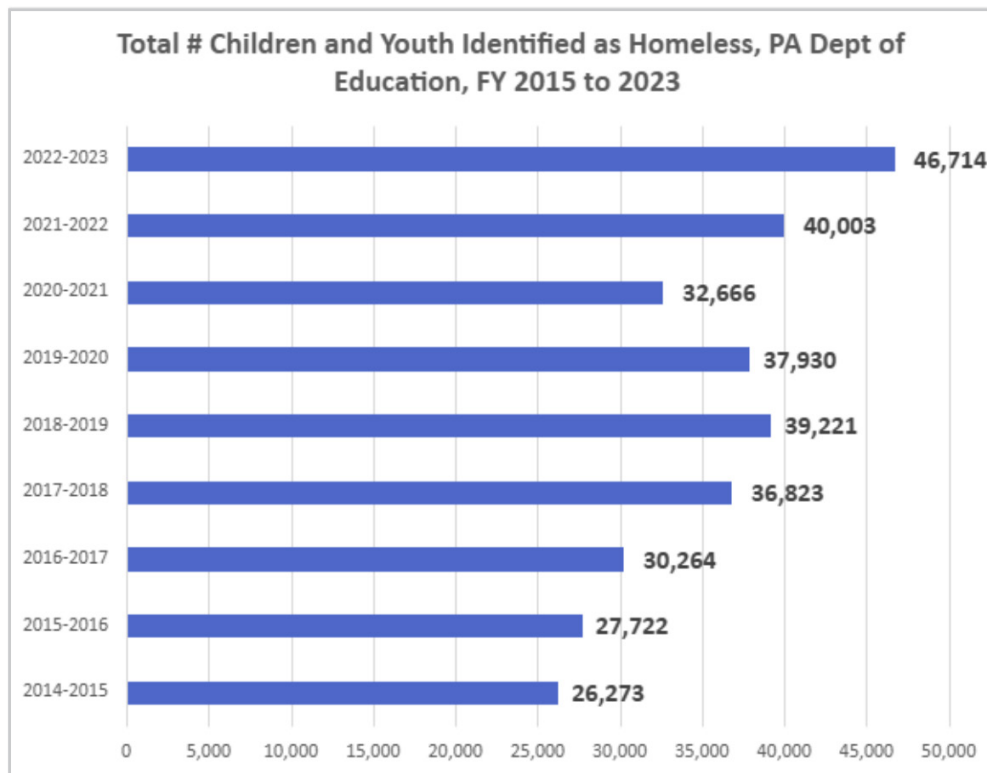
1. To ensure continued student support, \$10 million should be allocated to the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program.
2. Locally, the homeless housing and the education systems need to cooperate to connect housing to families experiencing homelessness, especially those living doubled up.



- School Districts should consider allocating a portion of the Basic Education Funds to support their counselors, social workers, and others tasked to help students experiencing homelessness.

## Findings

Child and youth homelessness increased by 78% throughout Pennsylvania to 46,714 in 2023 from 26,273 in SY 2015 and 40,003 (17% increase) in 2022.



The increased numbers suggest good news and concerning news:

- The numbers increased partly because the education system is more effective due to improved coordination with multiple human service systems at the county level and having been given resources from the American Rescue Plan that were never previously available.
- The numbers may rise due to improved state collaboration via the 'OCDEL McKinney Vento Advisory Group' led by the Pennsylvania Head Start State Collaboration Office. OCDEL is the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. This group recruits participation from the county and state government, and nonprofit communities to discuss how to improve the identification of young children experiencing homelessness through systems designed to provide support and education. In addition, the ECYEH regional coordinators continue to expand their networks in supporting children. Finally, the state's 'Early Learning Resource Centers' are regional hubs coordinating child care and other services.



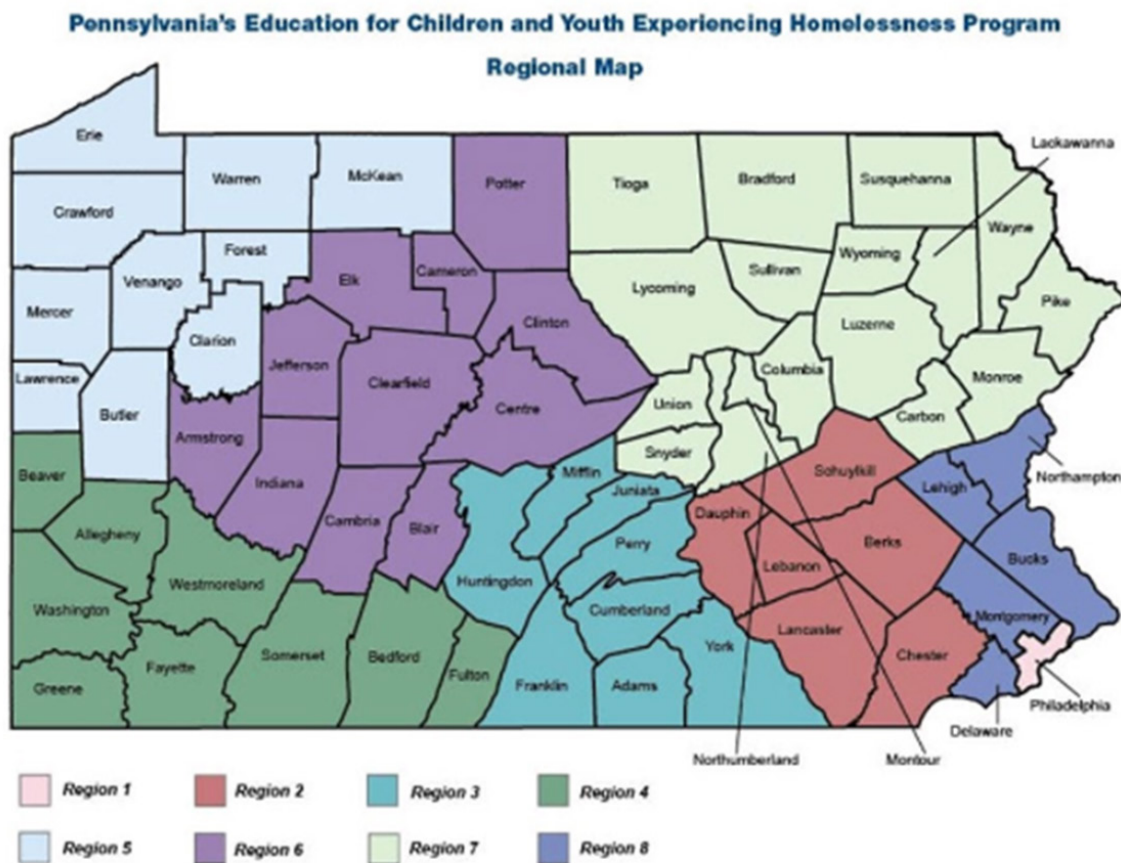


- The bad news is that family homelessness continues to rise due to many factors, including the withdrawal of federal COVID funding that supported homeless prevention strategies, the elimination of transitional and emergency housing, and the high cost of rental housing for low and moderate-income families.

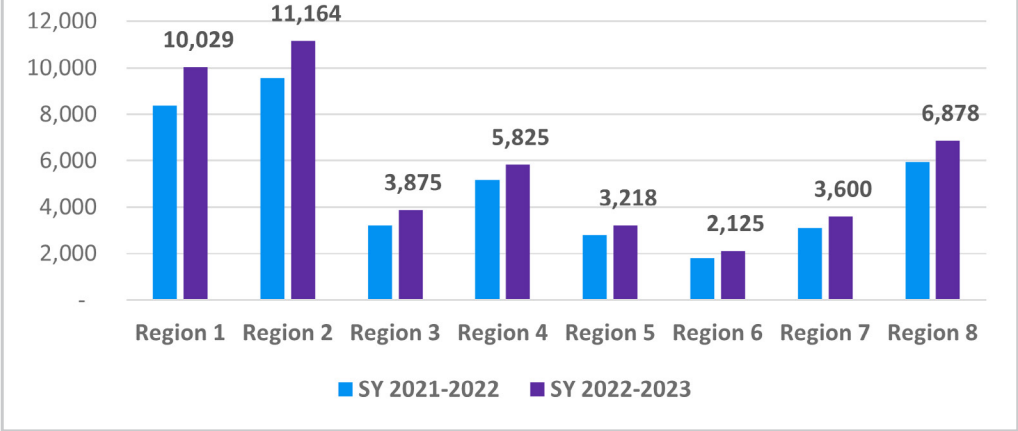
## Child and Youth Homelessness by County and ECYEH Region

The Pennsylvania Department of Education’s (PDE) Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program is a federally-funded initiative to remove barriers to education for students facing homelessness. PDE collaborates with eight regions across the Commonwealth for local implementation, utilizing funds to train school personnel in 499 school districts and 176 charter and cyber schools. These funds facilitate direct services such as transportation, mentoring, summer programming, school supplies, and uniforms. As the only federal agency mandated by law to report on homeless children and youth, PDE produces an annual evaluation that serves as a critical source of this data.

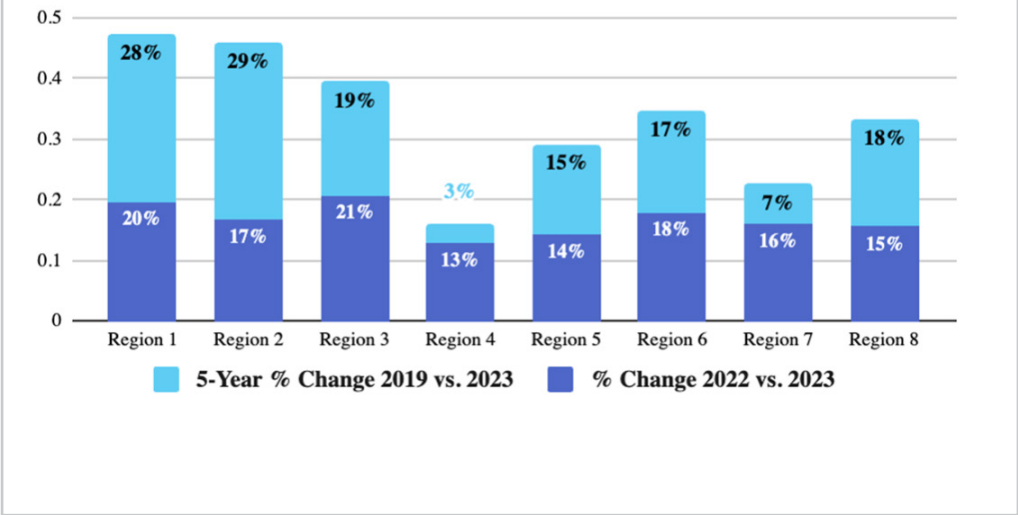
Below is a map detailing the regions and counties, accompanied by two data charts providing insights specific to each area.



### # Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Pennsylvania, by Region, SY 2022 (N=40,003) to 2023 (N=46,714)



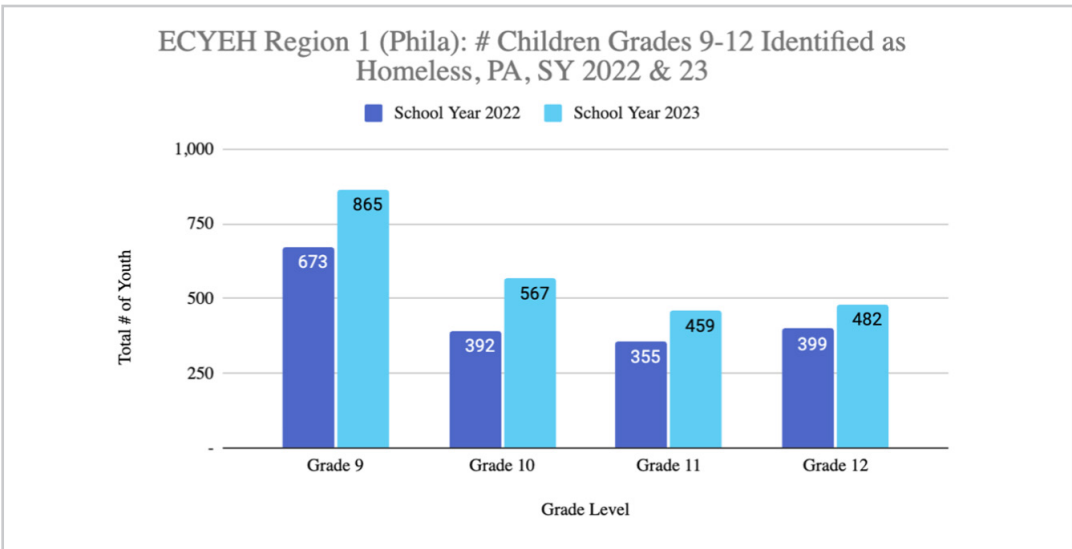
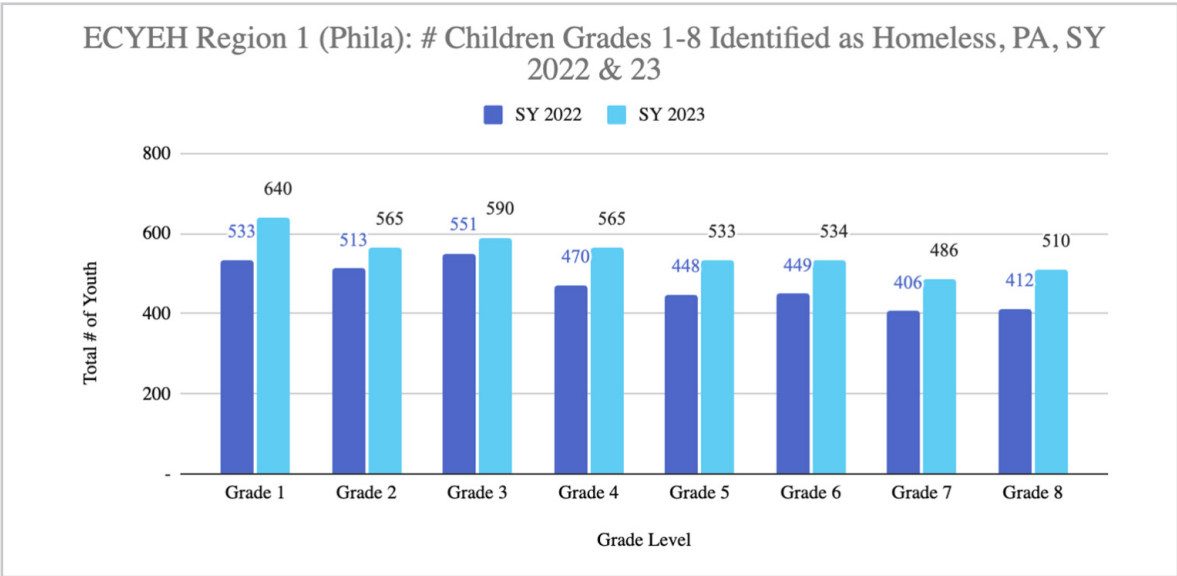
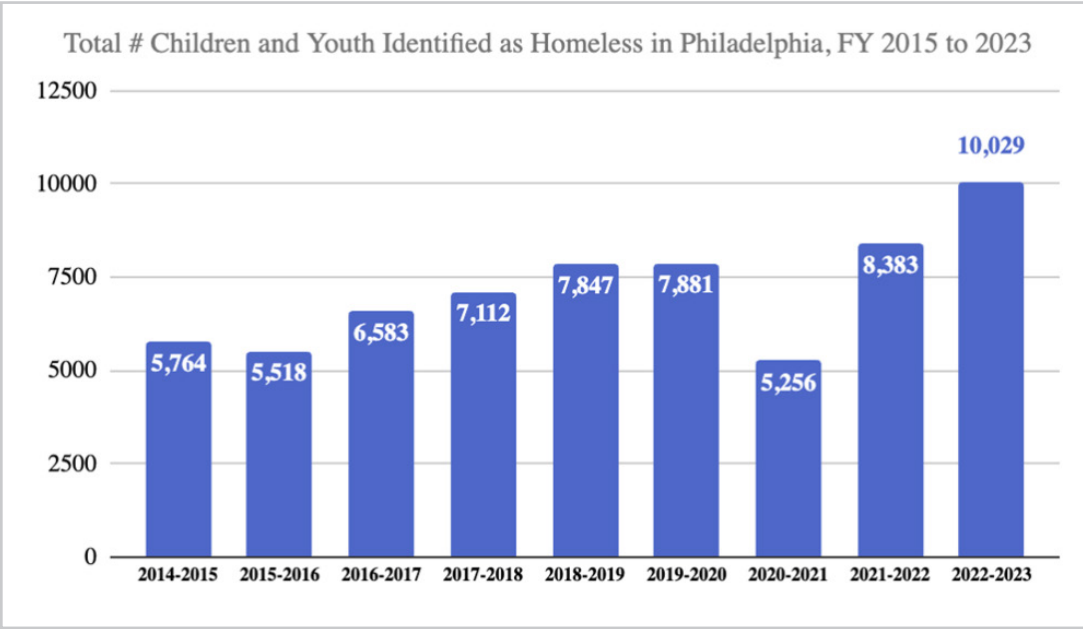
### % Change in Number of Children and Youth Identified as Homeless in Pennsylvania by Region



### Region 1: Philadelphia County

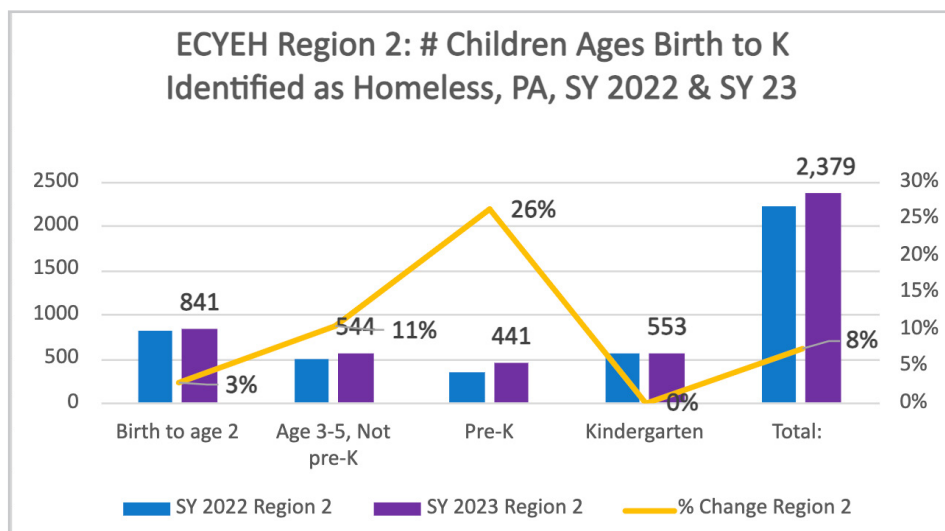
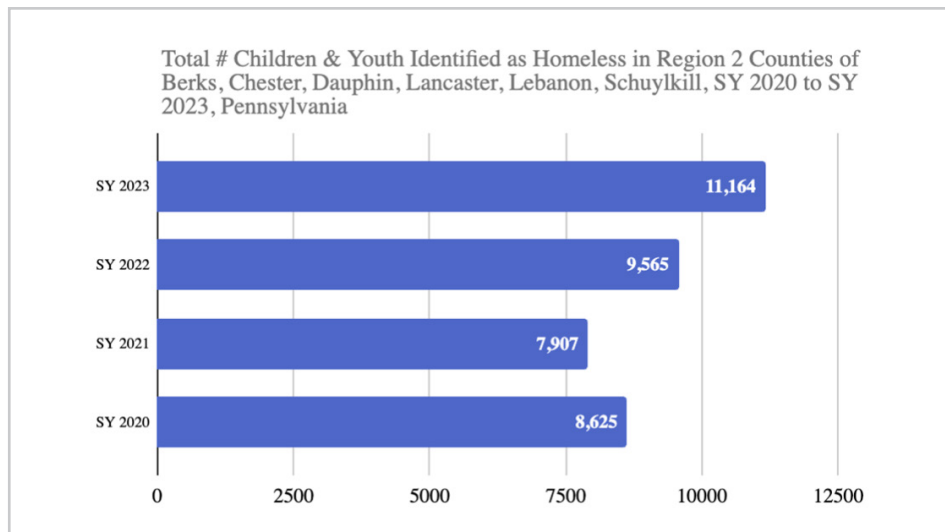
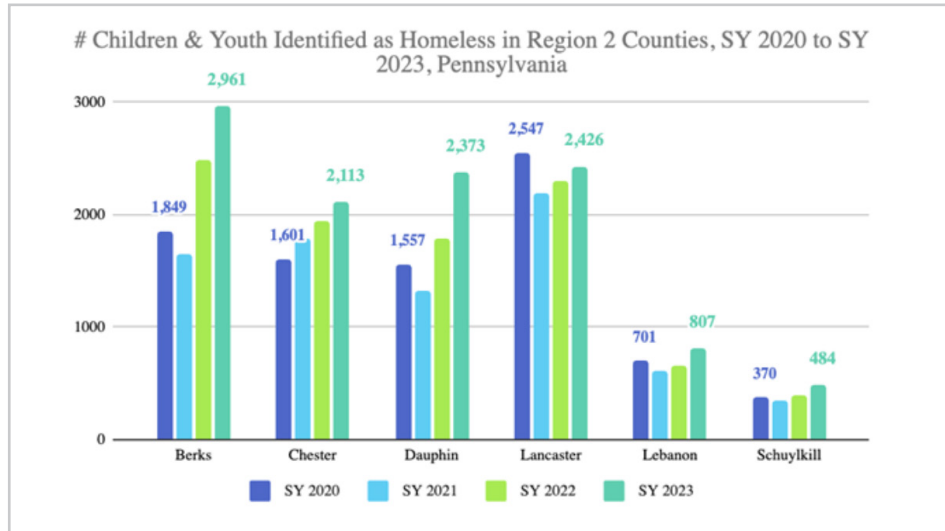
- Overall, there was a 16 percent increase in the number of young children identified as homeless.
- There was a 44 percent increase in Pre-K identification of children as homeless



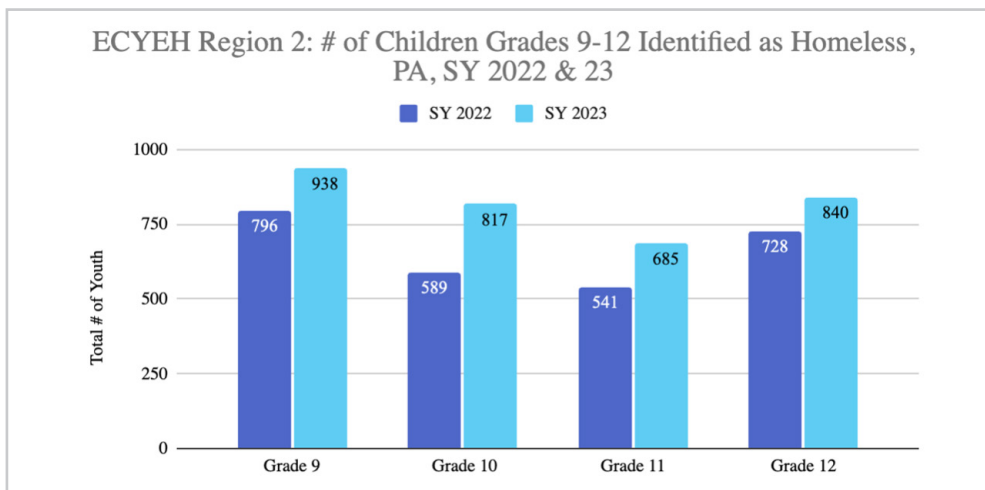
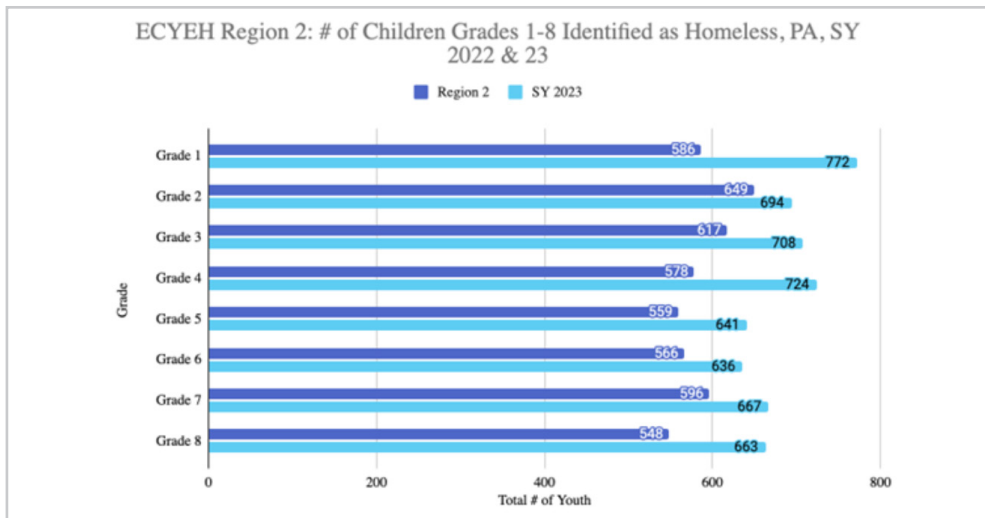


## Region 2: Berks, Chester, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Schuylkill Counties

- 8 percent increase in the number of young children identified as homeless.
- 26 percent increase in a number of Pre-K identification of children as homeless.

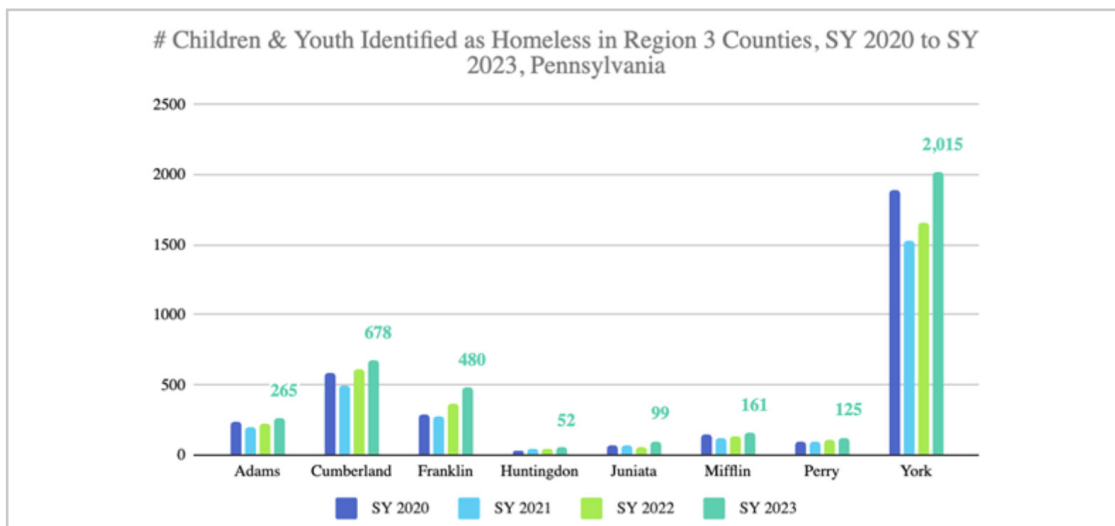




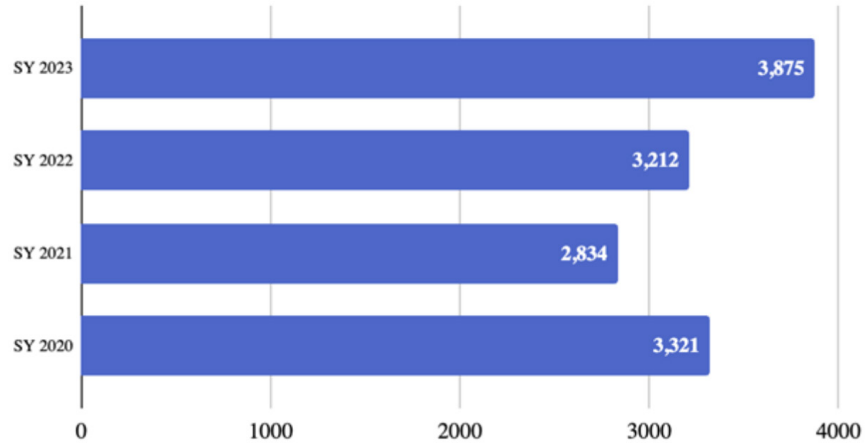


### Region 3: Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, and York Counties

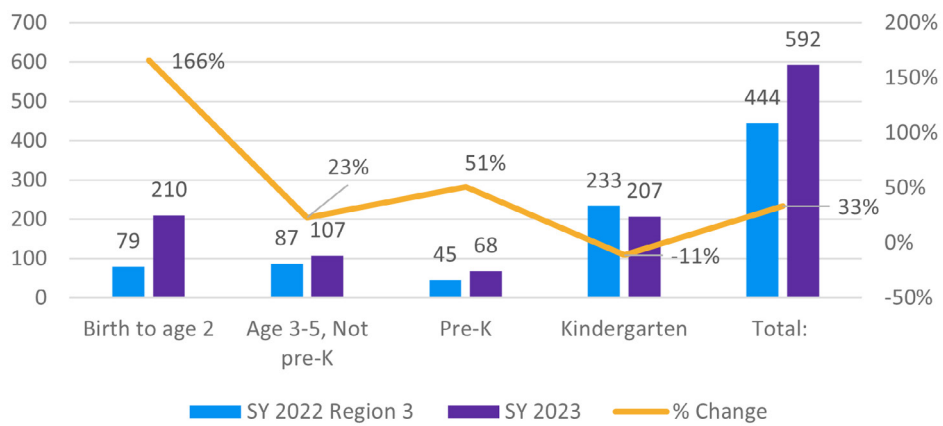
- Region 3 had the highest percentage increase at 33 percent in the number of young children identified as homeless, including a 166% increase in the number of infants and toddlers identified.



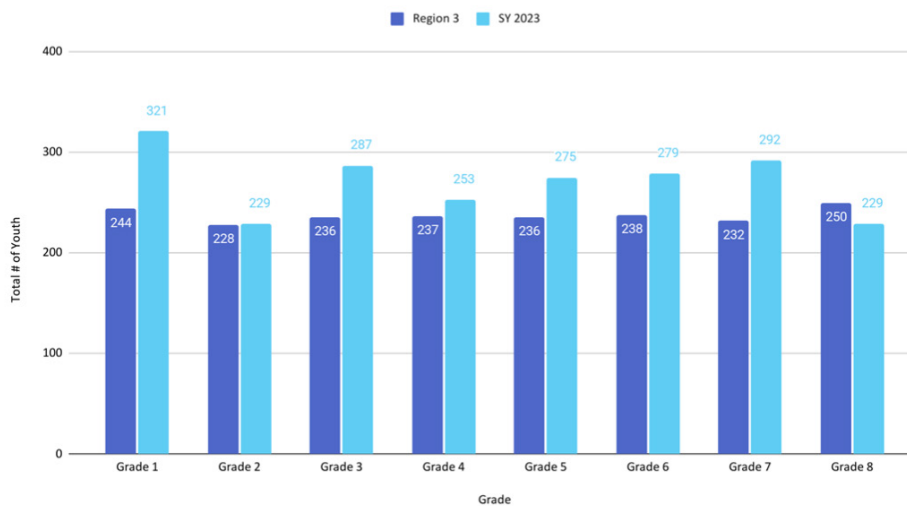
Total # Children & Youth Identified as Homeless in Region 3 Counties, SY 2020 to SY 2023, Pennsylvania

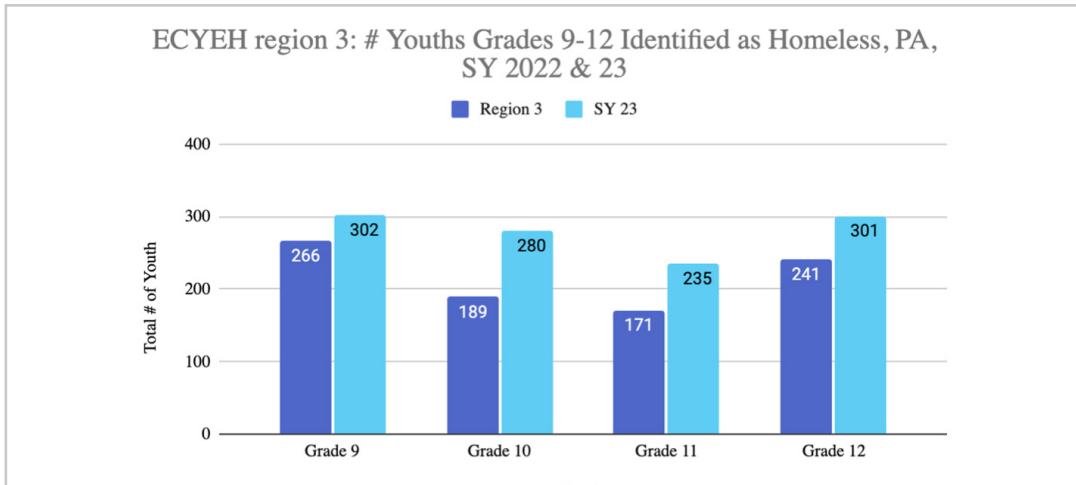


ECYEH Region 3: # Children Ages Birth to K Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022 & SY 23



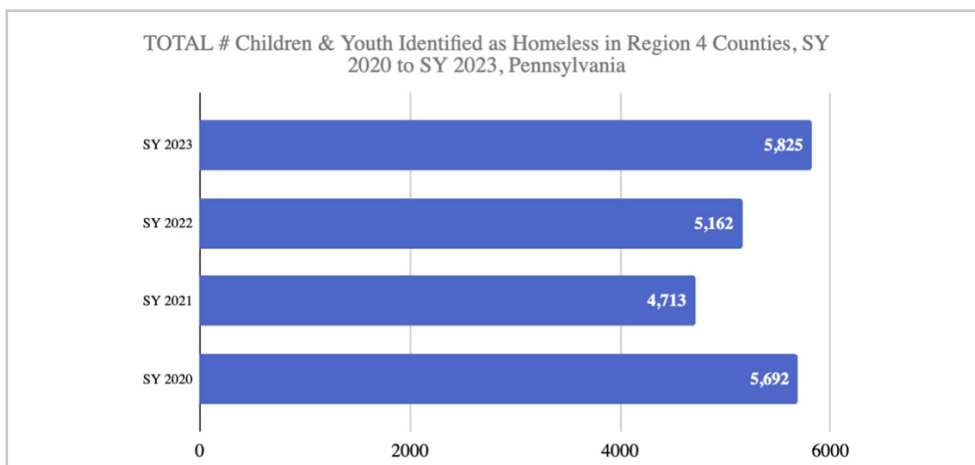
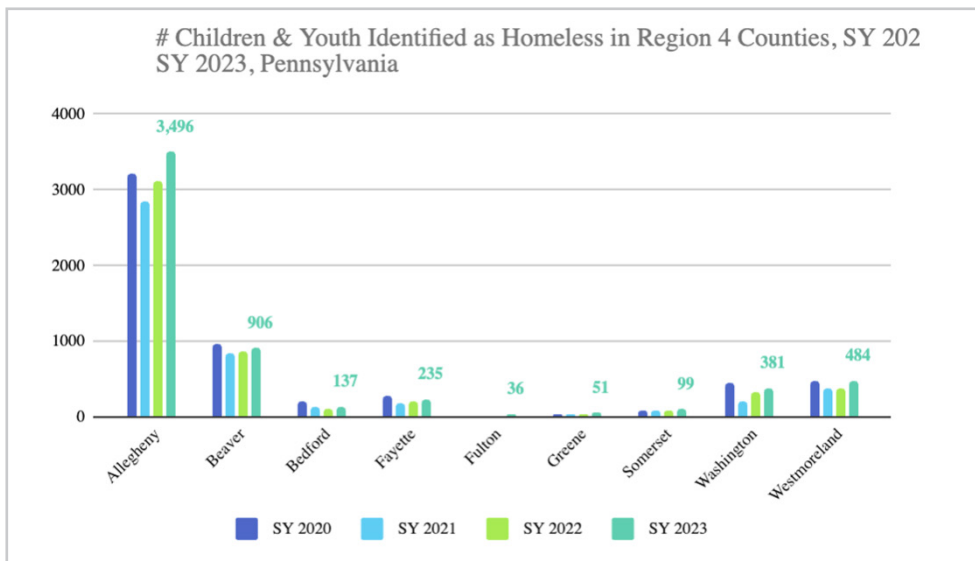
ECYEH Region 3: Children Grades 1-8 Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022 & 23



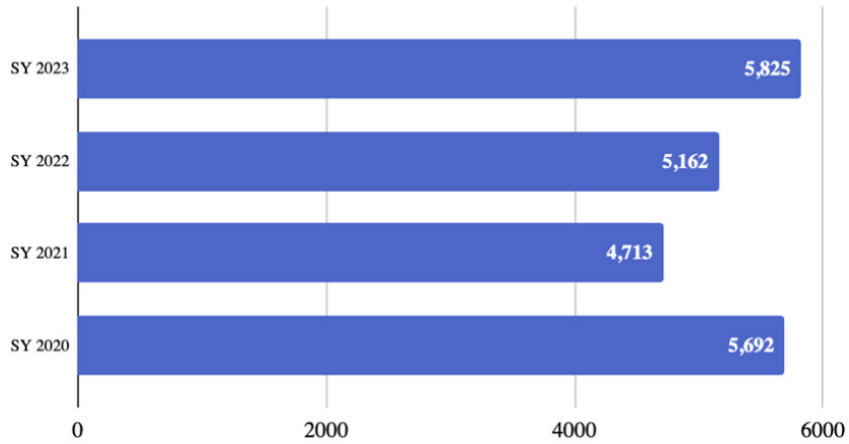


## Region 4: Allegheny, Beaver, Bedford, Fayette, Fulton, Greene, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland Counties

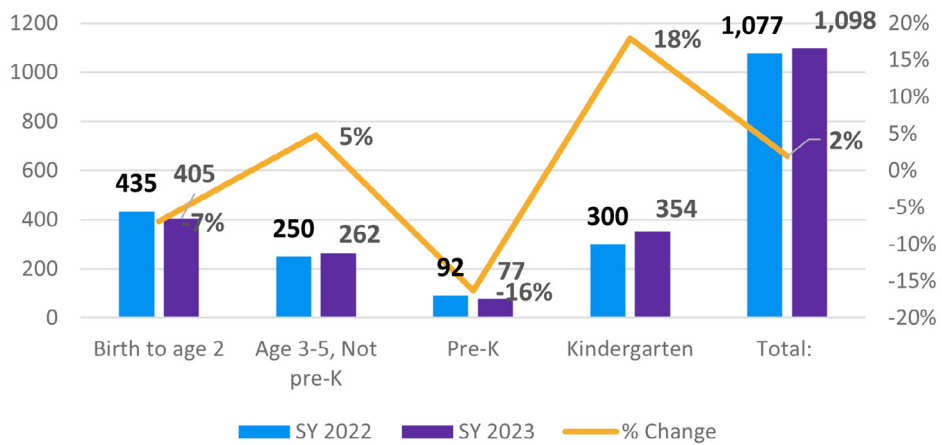
- An overall 2 percent decrease in all children identified as homeless, including a 16 percent decrease in the number of Pre-K children.
- There was an 18 percent increase in the number of Kindergarten children.



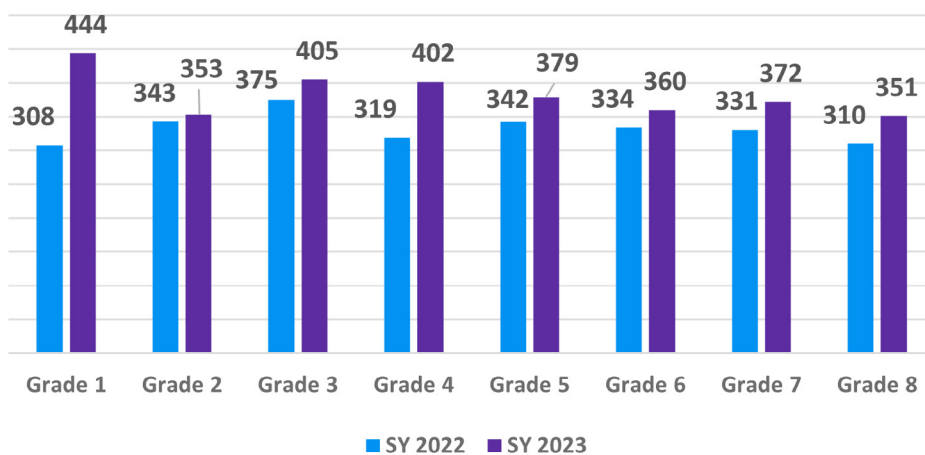
TOTAL # Children & Youth Identified as Homeless in Region 4 Counties, SY 2020 to SY 2023, Pennsylvania

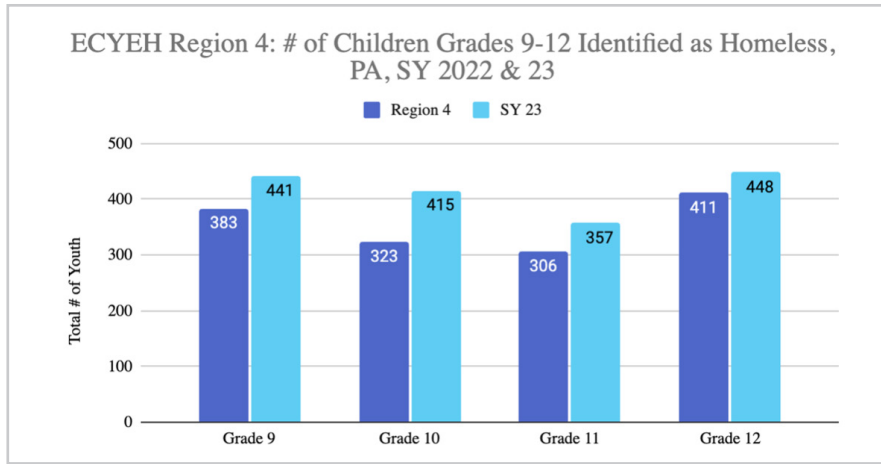


ECYEH Region 4: # Children Ages Birth to K Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022 & SY 23



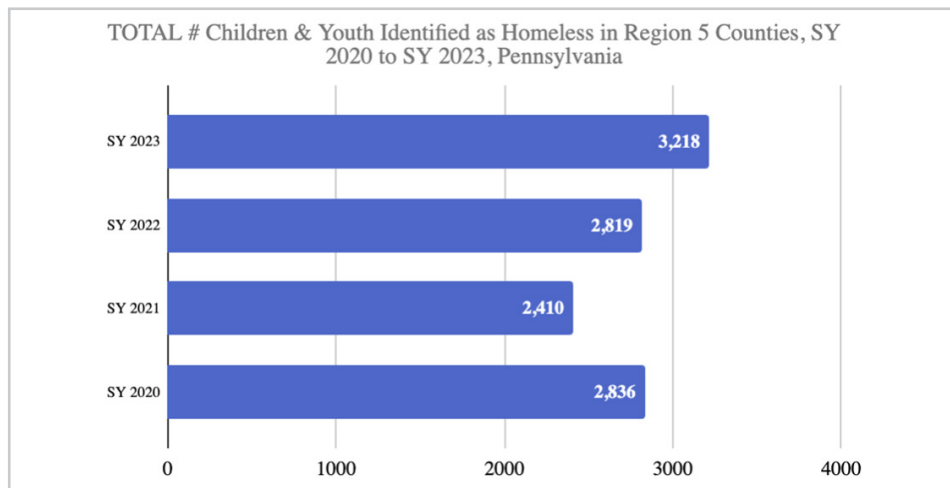
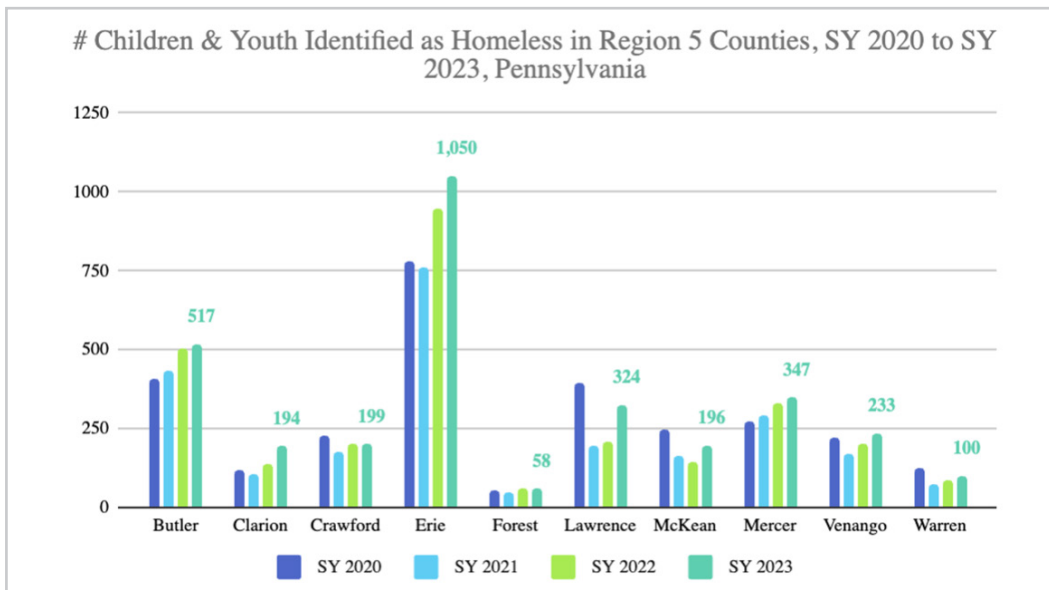
EYECHE Region 4: # Children Grades 1-8 Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022 & Sy 23



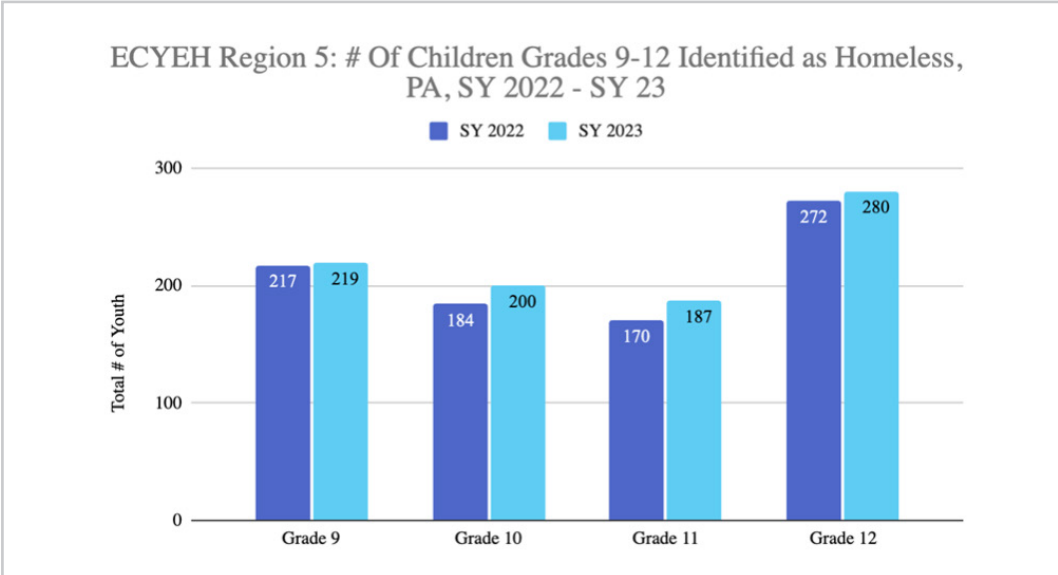
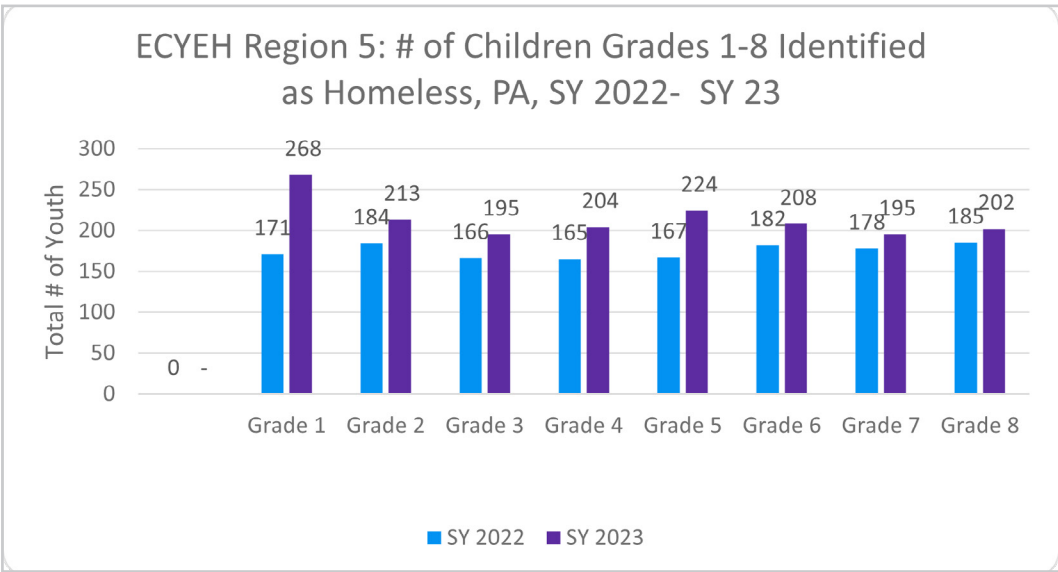
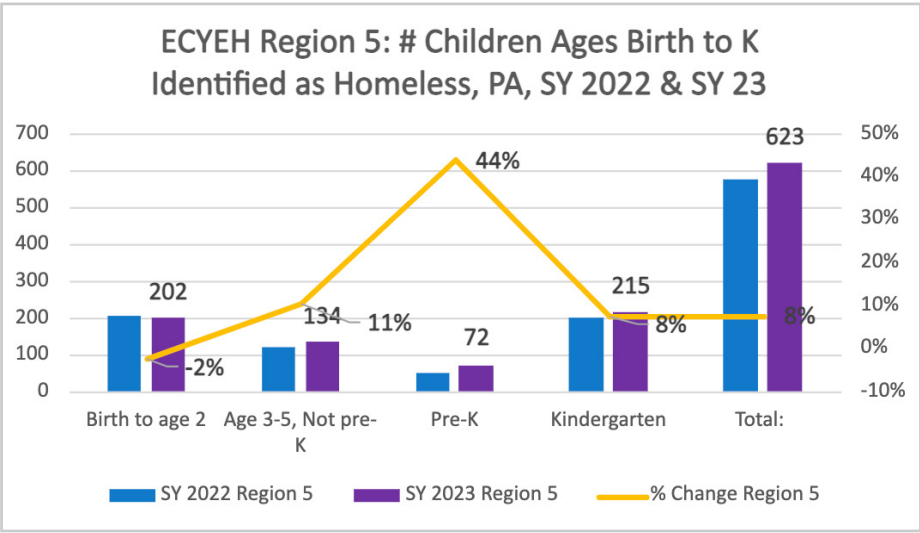


**Region 5: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren Counties**

- The region identified 44 percent more Pre-K homeless children than in 2022.
- ChartRegion 5 was one of three regions to identify fewer infants and toddlers.

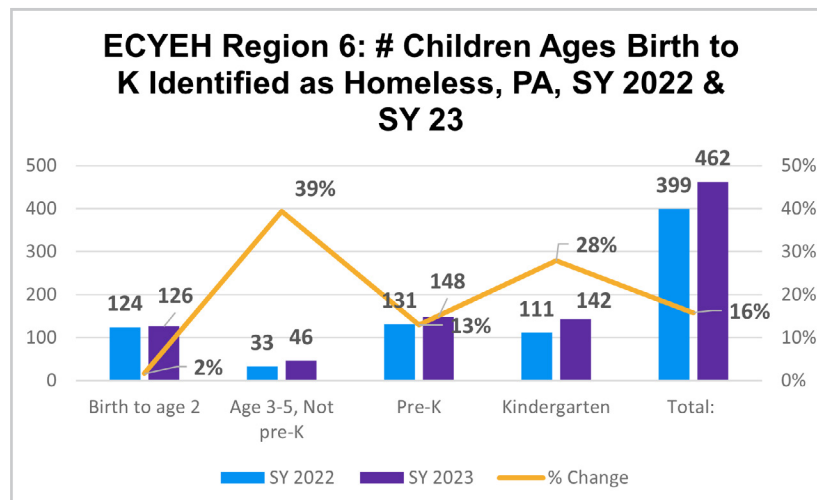
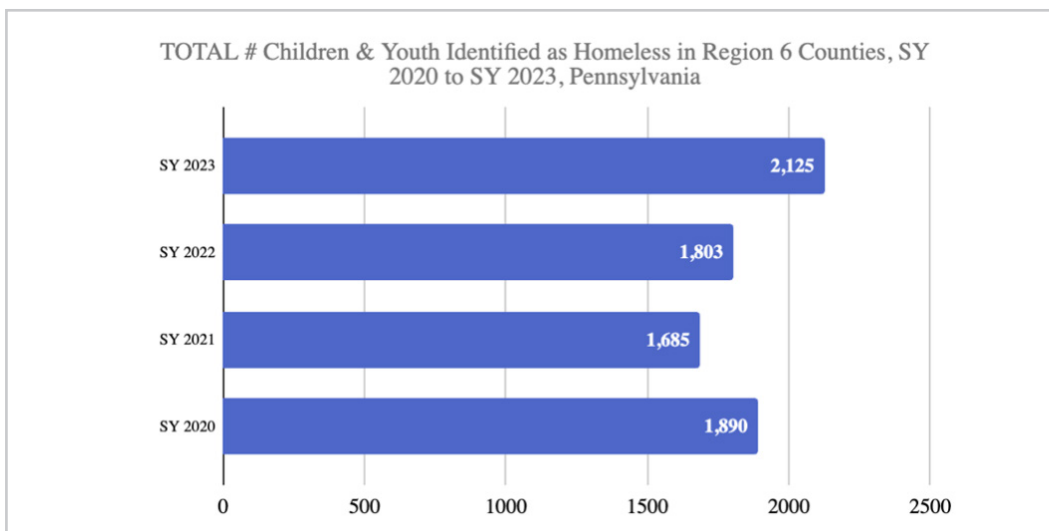
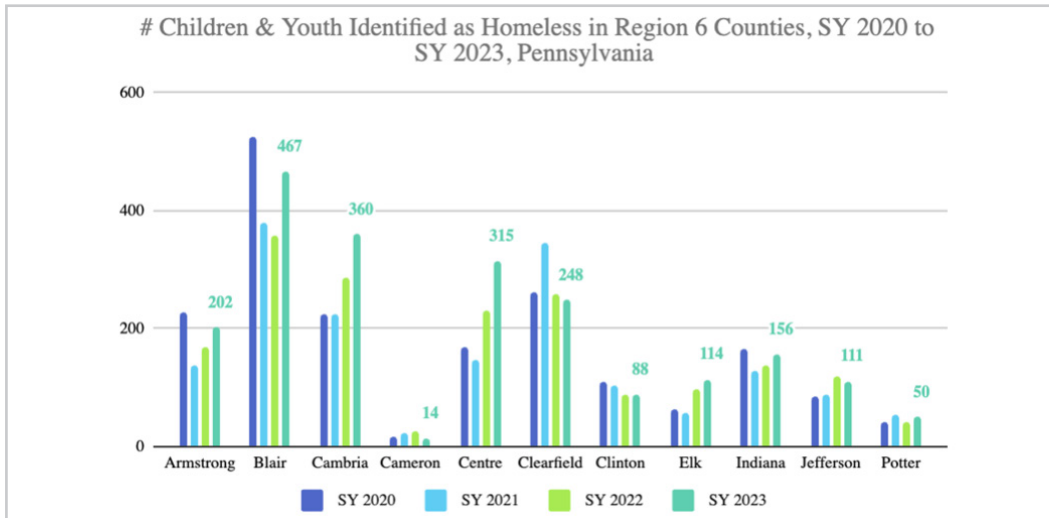


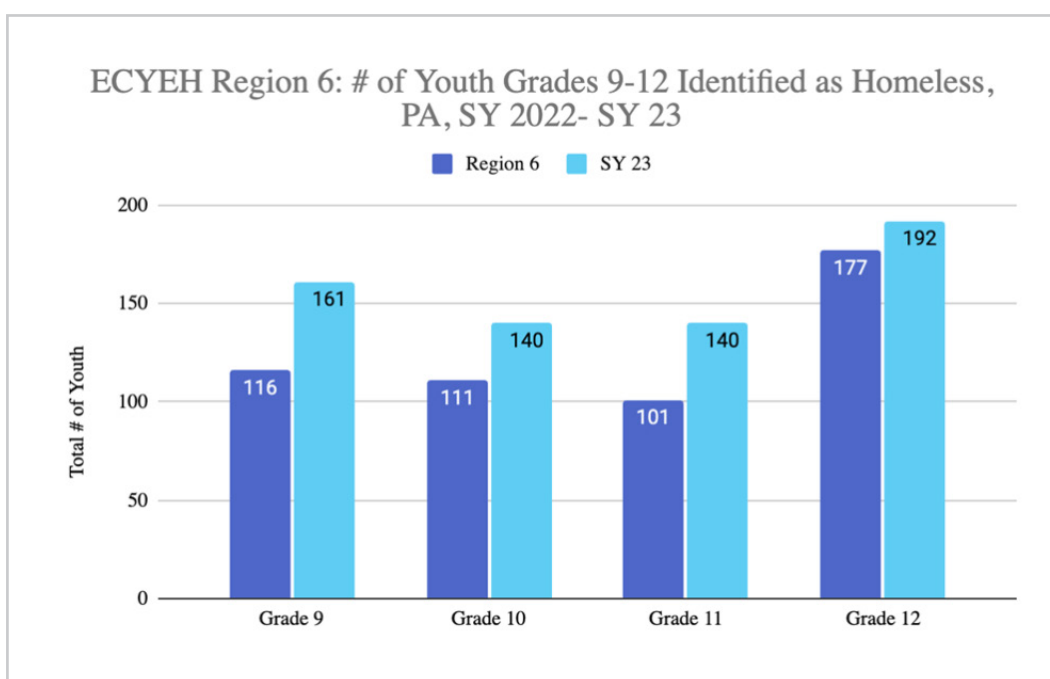
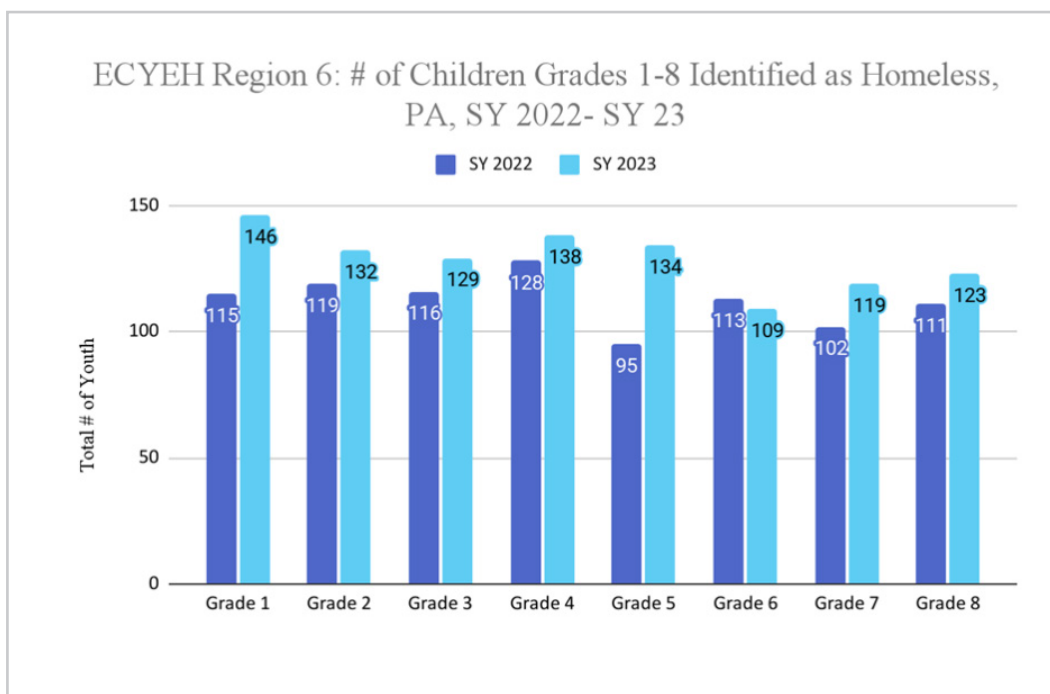




## Region 6: Armstrong, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Indiana, Jefferson, and Potter Counties

- A 16 percent increase overall in the number of children identified as homeless.



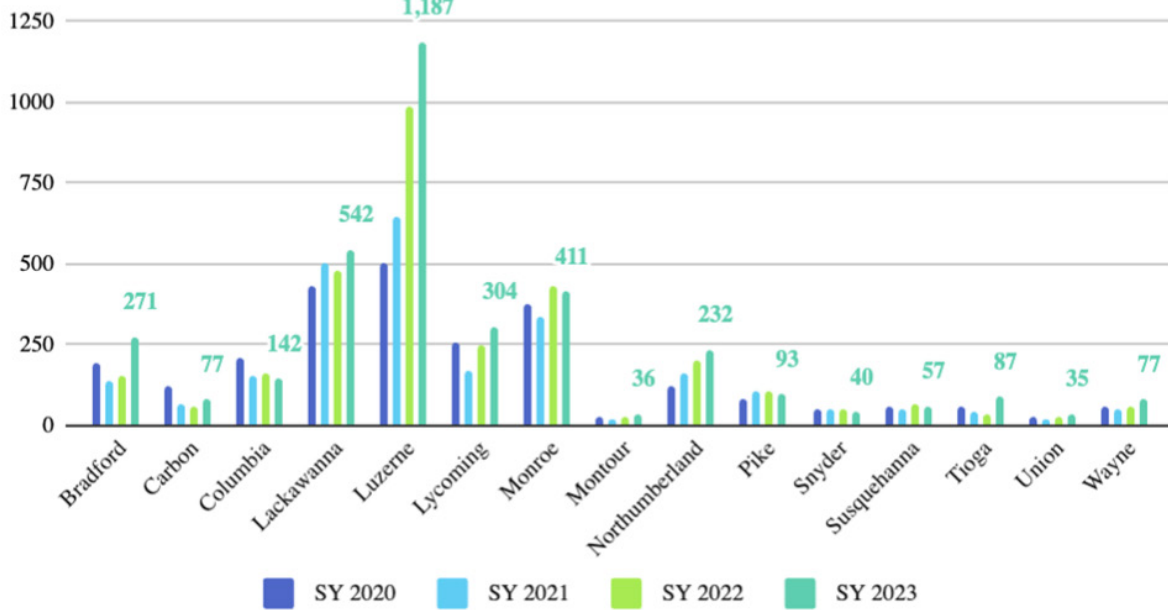


**Region 7: Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Snyder, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union and Wayne Counties**

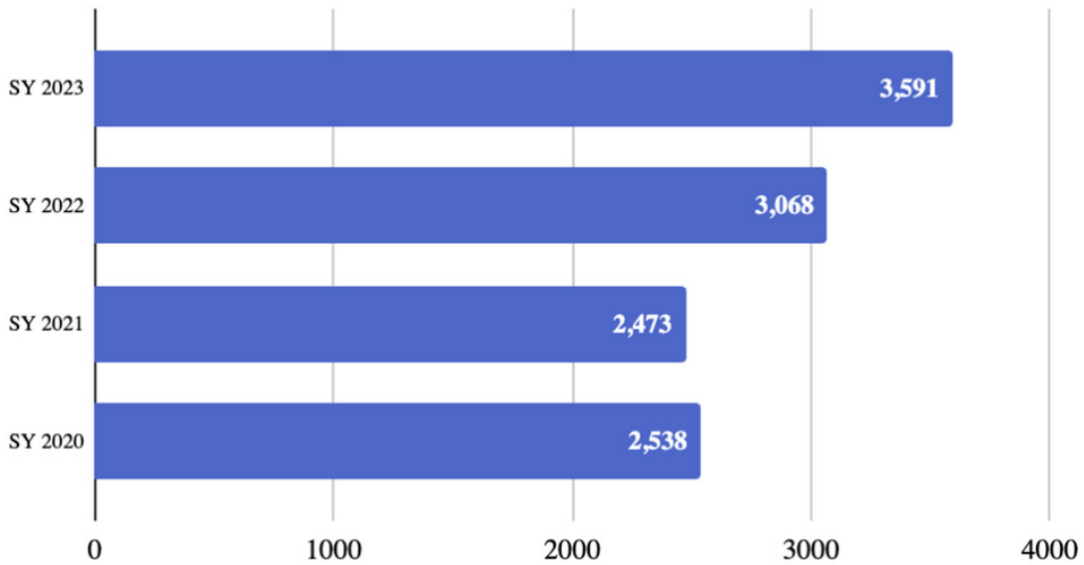
- Region 7 achieved the highest percentage increase in the number of Pre-K children.
- A 25 percent increase overall in the number of children identified as homeless.



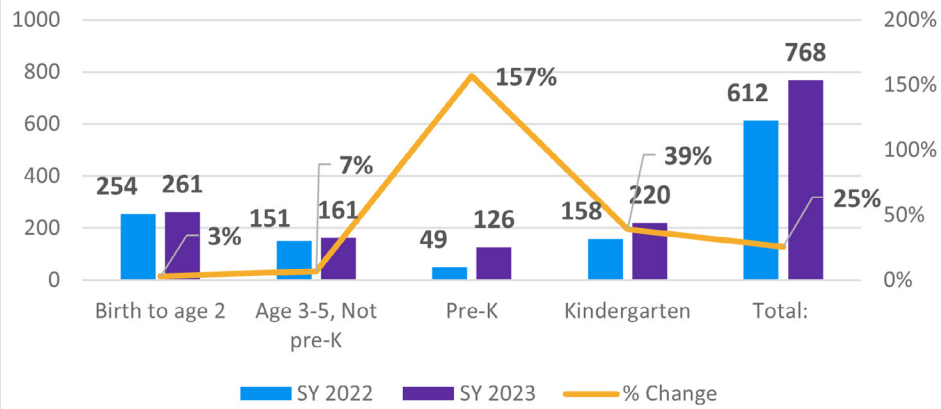
# Children & Youth Identified as Homeless in Region 7 Counties, SY 2020 to SY 2023, Pennsylvania



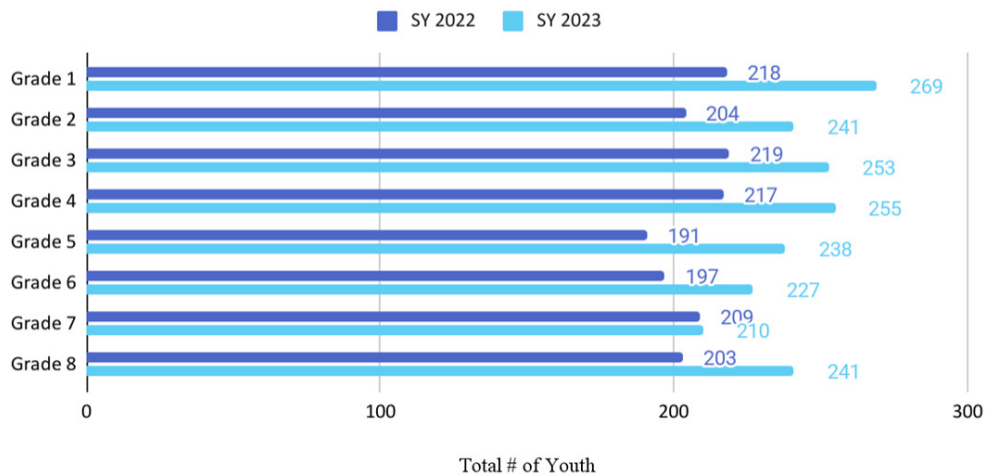
# Children & Youth Identified as Homeless in Region 7 Counties, SY 2020 to SY 2023, Pennsylvania



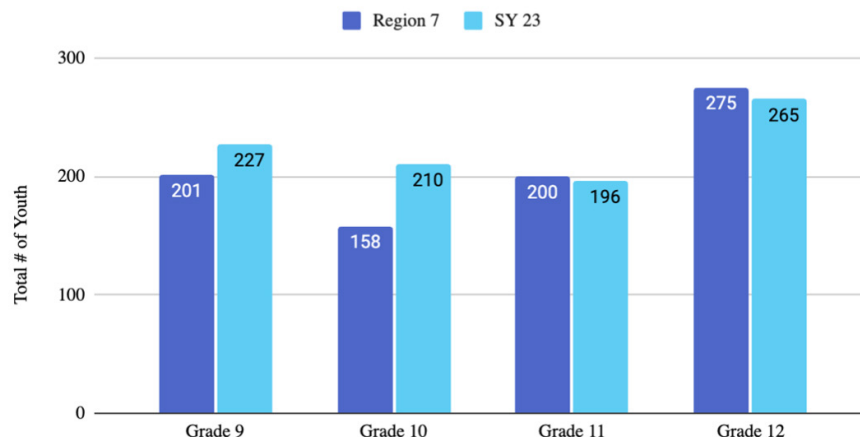
### ECYEH Region 7: # Children Ages Birth to K Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022 & SY 23



### ECYEH Region 7: # of Children Grades 1-8 Identified as Homeless, PA, SY 2022- SY 23



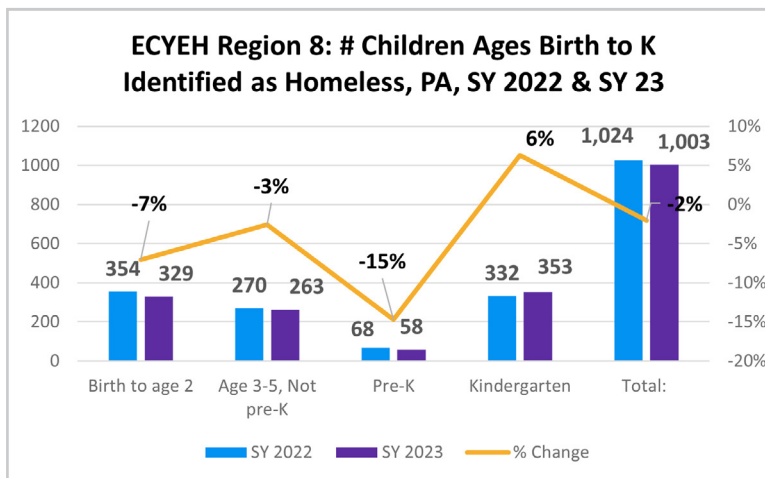
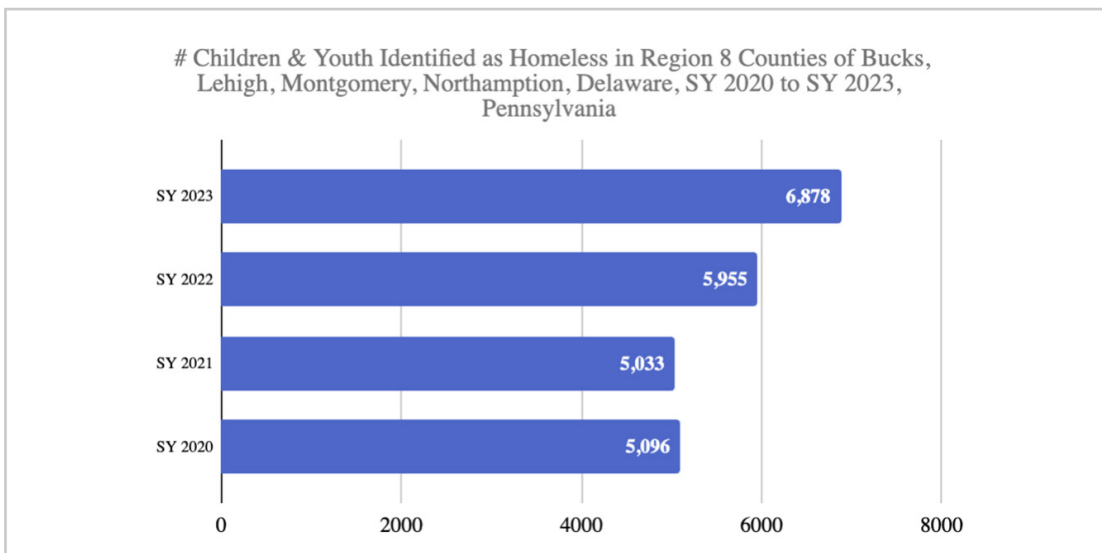
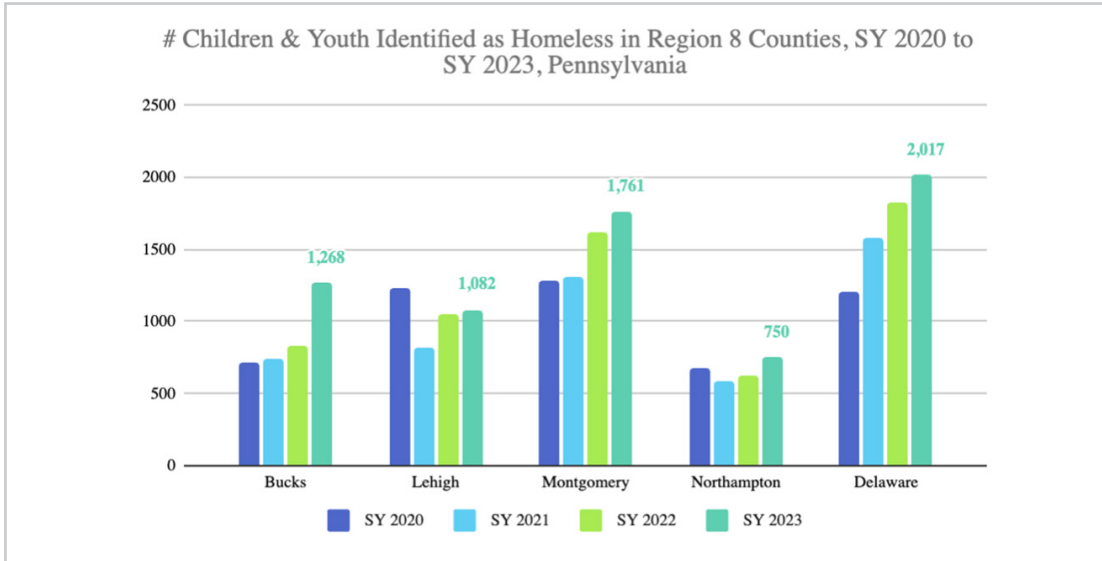
### ECYEH Region 7: # of Youth Grades 9-12 Identified as Homeless, PA SY 2022- SY 23

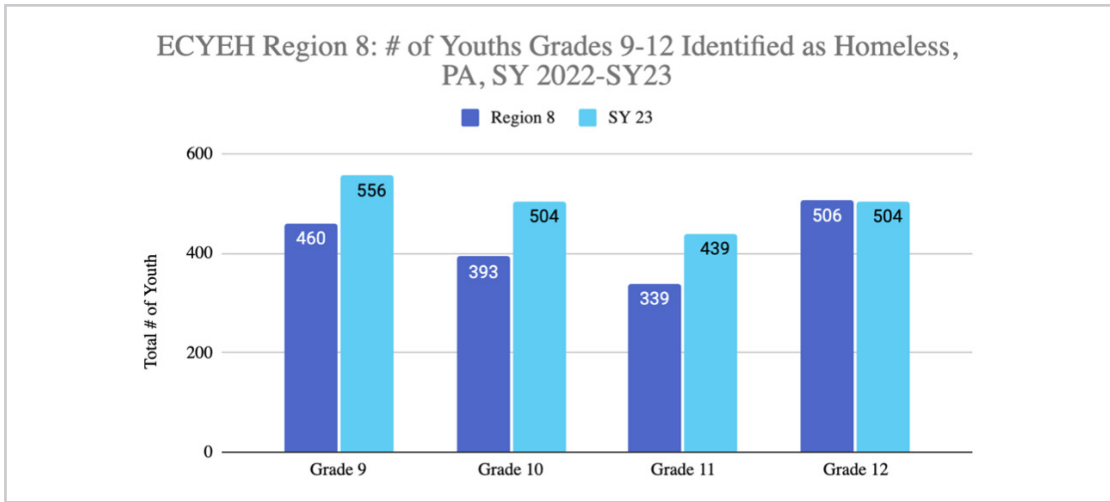




## Region 8: Bucks, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton

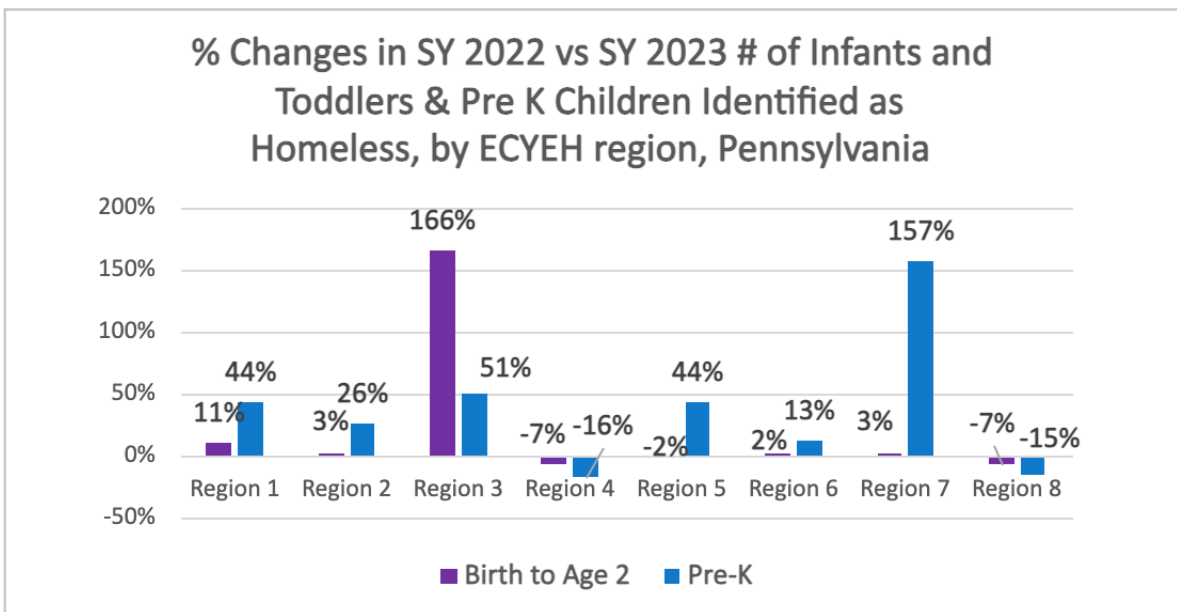
- Region 8 is the only region to experience a decrease in the overall number of young children.





## Infants, Toddlers and PreK

- We examined the percentage changes of infants and toddlers because they are the most numerous of children in the four categories, from birth to kindergarten, and of the expansion of home visiting programs. We also looked at percentage changes in Pre-K children because of many known state and local strategies to reach out to this population, especially in the Head Start system and the expansion of Pre-K throughout the Commonwealth.
- Overall, three regions (Regions 4, 5, and 8) identified fewer homeless infants and toddlers than in the previous year, and three areas identified fewer. Two regions (Regions 4 and 8) identified fewer Pre-K children.
- We are aware of the decline of early childhood education programs due to the lingering effects of COVID-19 that closed hundreds of programs, reduced the workforce, and inhibited the hiring of qualified teachers due to poor compensation.





## About HopePHL

HopePHL™ (pronounced “hopeful”) was founded by integrating two human service organizations in Philadelphia, PA: People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and Youth Service, Inc. (YSI). Leveraging 120 years of combined service experience, HopePHL’s mission is to inspire Philadelphia’s children, youth, families,, and communities to thrive by providing housing, advocacy, and trauma-responsive social services designed to promote equity, resilience, autonomy, and well-being.

HopePHL advocates for urgently needed public policy changes on behalf of families and youth experiencing homelessness and the neighborhoods we serve.

Learn more at [www.hopephl.org](http://www.hopephl.org).

HopePHL wishes to thank the following who provided input to this paper:

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- The PA Department of Education’s data staff
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