Center for Justice Innovation

RESEARCH BRIEF

The Unnamed Eviction Crisis
A quantitative analysis of households with and without children

Each year, nearly three million children face eviction in the United States. Yet, because children are often unnamed on the eviction filing, they are legally and practically invisible in the landlord-tenant courts where their eviction cases are being heard. This brief explores some key observable differences between households with and without children that were served by Newark Community Solutions' Eviction Diversion Initiative (NCS-EDI) between May 1, 2024, and December 31, 2025. Using programmatic and administrative data on households served by NCS-EDI during this period, this research finds that households with children had higher rent debt burdens, faced swifter eviction actions, and were more likely to enter settlement agreements than those without. Taken all together, these findings are especially concerning in the context of mass legal underrepresentation of tenants during eviction proceedings.

Background

The Eviction Diversion Initiative at Newark Community Solutions (NCS-EDI) has provided tenants' rights education, resource navigation, and connections to legal services for households facing eviction in Essex County, New Jersey, since April 2022. NCS-EDI pursues housing justice through close collaboration with local organizations, legal service providers, and the court system to swiftly identify households at risk of eviction and provide them with the information, resources, and support to prevent or mitigate disruptive displacement.

Just over a year into the program's operations, the Eviction Lab at Princeton University released a report revealing that U.S. households with children are twice as likely to experience an eviction action as those

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without.[1] Yet, to protect children's privacy and shield them from eviction records, they are not named parties in eviction proceedings. Instead, they are often invisible: the courts and social service providers may be unaware that a child is a member of a household facing eviction. Consequently, their needs are often overlooked and unaddressed,[2] despite the importance of safe and secure housing throughout child development.[3]

With this knowledge, NCS-EDI expanded its operations to provide more holistic responses to the entire household facing eviction actions, not just the leaseholder(s), with financial support from the Turrell Fund.[4]

This Data and Research Brief reports preliminary findings that describe the experiences and realities of households with children served by NCS-EDI and implications for future practice.

Methods Snapshot

Researchers used programmatic data collected from NCS-EDI's case management system representing the 1,555 Essex County households that were enrolled in eviction diversion services between May 1, 2024, and December 31, 2025. These data were used to better understand the civil legal and housing outcomes of families facing eviction. All cases were included in the larger sample, though certain analyses required the removal of clients with missing data. The findings detailed in this brief include descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including Chi-square and t-tests. For full methodology and tables, please see the accompanying technical appendix.

Key Findings

Households with children face greater economic challenges and swifter eviction actions. On average, households with children had higher monthly rents, and often owed more in unpaid rent compared to households without ($1591 vs. $1296, and $6468 vs. $5890, respectively).[5]

FIGURE 1: AVERAGE AMOUNT OF RENT OWED AT FILING

Households with children

$6.5k
rent owed

Households without children

$5.9k
rent owed

Additionally, the civil legal consequences of unpaid rent arose more quickly for households with children (4.9 vs. 6.0 months of rent owed at the time of filing).

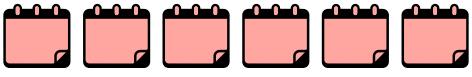
FIGURE 2: AVERAGE MONTHS OF RENT BACK-OWED AT THE TIME OF FILING

Households with children

4.9
months

Households without children

6
months



Further, a greater share of households with children were receiving some type of cash or non-cash benefit at intake than households with no children present (54% vs 44%). Across all three measures of economic status, these differences were found to be statistically significant.[6]

The vast majority of households navigate landlord-tenant court without legal representation. At the time of program enrollment, only 12% of households were receiving legal representation or counsel. Households with children faced slightly lower rates of representation compared to those without (9% vs. 13% represented, respectively).[7]

Households with children were more likely to enter into a settlement agreement to resolve their eviction case. Sixty-eight percent of households with children entered into settlement agreements in an attempt to resolve their case, while 60% of households without children entered them.

Households with and without children faced similar housing- and case-related outcomes at discharge. The presence of children in a household had no significant impact on whether the case was dismissed, or if the household remained housed in their original dwelling or became street homeless. Equal proportions of both types of households had their cases dismissed (20%), and similar shares remained housed in their original home (76% with children, 79% without). Further, households faced the execution of a warrant of removal at similar rates (26% with children, 30% without). For all cases, less than <1% of households served became street homeless at case closure.

Discussion

These preliminary findings reveal that households with children experience eviction proceedings and eviction prevention services differently than households without children. The data used here represent only a fraction of eviction filings in just one county of a state that, per the latest available estimates, sees an average of 417 eviction filings daily.[8] Additionally, it is worth considering that the legal and housing outcomes presented are for households that received eviction diversion services through their program enrollment. Disparities for families who were not connected to eviction prevention services may be different than those presented here. In light of all this, we encourage social and legal service providers, government actors, and researchers to urgently find and evaluate solutions to support the unnamed victims of eviction. Based on the findings, we put forth recommendations in three areas, for providers (practice), policymakers (process), and researchers (understanding):

In Practice. We found that households with children served by NCS-EDI during their eviction proceeding were significantly more rent burdened than households without children. Further, eviction filings against them occurred more quickly, highlighting the urgency with which providers must navigate the needs of families with children. While the average difference (1.1 months) in time to filing may appear minimal, the consequences are in fact steep: 1.1 months means 33 fewer days, on average, to divert the eviction, connect with legal representation, or find alternative housing.

These families may benefit from broader, more coordinated connections to cash and non-cash assistance to support housing stability.[9] Additionally, earlier outreach by social and legal service providers may better recruit households earlier in the eviction process, hopefully minimizing the time they navigate landlord-tenant court alone.

In Process. Households with children served by NCS-EDI were less likely to already have an attorney at enrollment and more likely to settle their cases. The ramifications of settlements agreements are not small: as part of their settlement, tenants often unintentionally forfeit certain rights, like those to assert an affirmative defense, access a trial, or protect their rental subsidy, should settlement be breached.

Further, the advancement of policies like the right to counsel in landlord-tenant proceedings can help address the extreme disparities in representation between landlords, who are represented by counsel in 90% of proceedings, and tenants.[10][11]

In Understanding. These analyses represent only a snapshot of the needs and outcomes of households served by NCS-EDI, and little of their actual experiences, stresses, and decision-making through the eviction proceeding. To truly understand the impact of the eviction process, settlement agreements, and disruptive displacements for children in New Jersey, researchers and data scientists across the courts, state, and community providers must work together to share information and craft analyses which better reflects the statewide effects of eviction and the nuanced ways it is experienced by families with children at scale.

This includes investigating the effect of eviction-related stress on parental decision-making, and how that may impact the observed disparity in settlement rates.

Conclusions

Every year in the United States, an estimated 2.7 million households face eviction, among them some 2.9 million children.[12] This means that the average tenant facing eviction is more likely to be a child than the implicated tenant. This brief describes the ways households with children differ from those without children among a sample of 1,555 households served by a community-based social service provider in New Jersey.

These preliminary results suggest that households with children facing eviction often lived with harsher economic realities and faced quicker eviction actions than households without children. Additionally, while all households were underrepresented, and many had already initiated trial at the time of intake, families with children entered potentially risky settlement agreements at rates higher than the general population.

Finally, we found no statistically significant differences among the rates that households remained housed in their original dwellings or had their cases dismissed, suggesting that the presence of children did not influence the likelihood of positive case outcomes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Newark Community Solutions is a program of the **Center for Justice Innovation** (Center). The Center is a nonprofit organization that reimagines justice by developing pioneering programs, conducting rigorous research, and sharing knowledge with communities and courts.

The **Data Analytics and Applied Research** (DAAR) team supports justice reform by designing, tracking, and analyzing data-driven programs and policies to improve outcomes and accountability both at the Center and in wider criminal justice systems.

A **Research Brief** is a short analysis prepared by DAAR that delivers timely, accessible insights about the Center's programs and broader issues related to communities, public safety, and the justice system. While the main text is designed for a general audience, each brief is accompanied by more technical appendices that contain the full underlying analysis, ensuring both accessibility and rigor.

[1] Graetz, N., Gershenson, C., Hepburn, P., Porter, S.R., Sandler, D.H., & Desmond, M. (2023). A comprehensive demographic profile of the US evicted population. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 20(41). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2305860120

[2] Ibid.

[3] Schwarz, G., Leifheit, K.M., Chen, J.T., Arcaya, M.C., Berkman, L.F. (2022). Childhood eviction and cognitive development: Developmental timing-specific association in an urban birth cohort. *Social Science & Medicine, 292*, 114544. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.11454

[4] Newark Community Solutions began receiving funding from the Turrell Fund in Spring 2024.

[5] While data describing the size of the dwelling were unavailable, it is likely safe to attribute the increased rents to the larger household (i.e., with children) size. This may similarly explain the greater amounts of back owed rent. The economic consequences are no less real.

[6] Statistical significance was determined using an (alpha) = .05. For full results, please see the accompanying methods appendix.

[7] While connection to legal representation was a key intervention component, nearly half of all households could only be recruited into programming at or after their trial had begun or a settlement agreement had been reached, leaving many to navigate complex bureaucracies and legal procedures with limited critical, early support.

[8] Latest estimates from the Eviction Lab using 2018 filing data indicate that New Jersey had a filings rate that was 4.25% higher than the national average. https://evictionlab.org/map/

[9] A model for such single-application service connection might be borrowed from services for aging adults, like NJSAVE. NJSAVE is a single application that screens and enrolls low-income, older adults for a variety of medical and social service savings programs. Learn more about it here: https://nj.gov/humanservices/doas/services/l-p/njsave/

[10] Tenant right to counsel programs succeed along a number of dimensions, including in remaining housed and minimizing costs. For more about tenant right to counsel: Franzese, P.A., & Thomas, C.J. (2022). Disrupting dispossession: How the right to counsel in landlord-tenant proceedings is reshaping outcomes. *Seton Hall Law Review, 52*, 1255-1323.

[11] Park, S., & Pollack, J. (2021). *Tenants' right to counsel is critical to fight mass evictions and advance racial equity during the pandemic and beyond.* American Civil Liberties Union. https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/tenants-right-to-counsel-is-critical-to-fight-mass-evictions-and-advance-race-equity-during-the-pandemic-and-beyond/

[12] Graetz et al., 2023, PNAS.

Technical Appendix

A. Methods

Data Source: Case-related and programmatic data were extracted from the case management system used by NCS-EDI. These data were collected and recorded throughout program participation, and much of the data used in these analyses were collected by program staff at intake. Data pertaining to household size, income, benefits status, and rent amounts were self-reported by the client. All other data were entered directly from case-related court documents.

Sample: A total of 1,555 households were served by NCS-EDI during the study period (May 1, 2024 – Dec 31, 2025). Client demographics, stratified by the presence of children in the household, are detailed in Table 1. Heads of households with children were more likely to be female (86% vs. 62%), less likely to be Black (79% vs. 85%), and more likely to be Hispanic or Latinx (17% vs. 9%). No other statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups. Additionally, demographic (age/gender) breakdowns of the children living in households facing eviction are described in Table 3.

Analysis Approach: We compared client demographics, base rents, household income, owed rent, and rates of positive outcome between households with and without children using Chi-square tests for categorical variables and Welch's two-sample t-tests for continuous variables. Full results are detailed in Table 2.

Limitations: There are two main limitations to this study: one, we are not able to make any causal assertions about the role that the presence of children plays on relevant aspects of the household situation or case outcomes; we were only able to establish correlations, setting the stage for further analysis into the observed group differences. Two, the sample is not representative of all households facing eviction, whether nationwide, statewide, or countywide. Households receiving eviction diversion services and/or legal representation through NCS-EDI may have more positive case outcomes than households not receiving these services. Therefore, the housing and legal outcomes of clients described in this report may not reflect the outcomes of the vast number of tenants who are evicted without access to legal representation or social services. Additionally, NCS-EDI services may differentially benefit households with and without children, meaning the disparities in outcomes among all households facing eviction may be larger or smaller than those reported here.

B. Full Results

Table 1. Selected household demographics

	HOUSEHOLD TYPE	
	With Children (N=812)	Without Children (N=743)
Demographics†		
Gender (n=1549)		
Female***	700 (87%)	464 (63%)
Male***	108 (13%)	275 (37%)
Other	0 (0%)	2 (<1%)
Race/Ethnicity		
Black**	642 (80%)	629 (86%)
White	21 (3%)	22 (3%)
Hispanic/Latinx***	134 (17%)	67 (9%)
Other	8 (<1%)	15 (2%)

† Demographics were self-reported by the tenant facing eviction, and may not reflect the demographics of other household members.

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

B. Full Results (continued)

Table 2. Selected household characteristics and outcomes

	HOUSEHOLD TYPE	
	With Children (N=812)	Without Children (N=743)
Household/Case Data (N=1555)†		
Avg. household size***	3.3	1.4
Med. # of children	2	---
Avg. monthly rent (n=1272) ***	$1591	$1296
Avg. reported monthly income***	$1728	$1502
Avg. total rent back owed (n=1307)**	$6468	$5890
Avg. month(s) rent back owed (n=1267)***	4.9	6.0
Received cash/non-cash ben.***	440 (54%)	334 (44%)
Represented by legal counsel at enrollment(n=1187)	57 (9%)	73 (13%)
Case Outcomes		
Legal Outcome (n=1135)‡	**615**	**520**
Case Dismissed	126 (20%)	106 (20%)
Warrant of Removal Exec.	160 (26%)	155 (30%)
Housing Outcome (n=1122)§	**603**	**519**
Remained Housed	478 (76%)	396 (79%)
Relocated (Permanent)	13 (2%)	11 (3%)
Relocated (Temporary)	109 (21%)	109 (18%)
Became Homeless	4 (<1%)	3 (<1%)

† These data were reported by the client at the time of intake.

‡ Legal outcomes were unavailable for 420 households at the time of analysis. In 9% of cases (n=137), no legal outcomes were recorded at discharge as an eviction filing had not be formally submitted by the landlord, or the proceedings were ongoing at time of discharge. An additional 18% of cases (n=284) were still enrolled in programming, and so legal outcomes were unavailable.

§ Housing outcomes were unavailable or unknown for 27% of participants (n=433) for similar reasons.

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

C. Frequency Table of Children Served

Table 3. Reported gender/age of children served among households with children

AGE (at Household Enrollment)	GENDER Female	Male	Total
Under 1	33	44	77 (5%)
1 to 5	187	180	367 (25%)
6 to 12	314	314	628 (42%)
13 to 17	226	179	405 (27%)
Total	760 (51%)	717 (49%)	1477

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