

STATE OF HOMELESSNESS

Summary of Homelessness in Metro Denver 2021-2022

ADAMS, ARAPAHOE, BOULDER,
BROOMFIELD, DENVER, DOUGLAS,
& JEFFERSON COUNTIES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2021 State of Homelessness report would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the region's partners. This includes dozens of agencies, partners, individuals with lived expertise, and stakeholders working each day to create real solutions to this issue.

Throughout the document, there are perspectives from individuals either currently or formerly experiencing homelessness. A special thanks to MDHI's Young Adult Leadership Committee for helping collect these quotes and Lynne Rienner Publishers for the rights to reprint excerpts. These perspectives help provide insight and humanize the data and metrics contained within this report.

Additionally, we would like to thank each of the organizations that participate in inputting data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the region's coordinated entry system OneHome, and our partners from across the seven-county Metro

Denver region who assisted in completing the sheltered Point-in-Time count in February of 2021.

MDHI would also like to thank the Colorado Department of Education for their data contribution on the number of students experiencing the educational definition of homelessness as well as the Colorado Department of Local Affairs for their permission to reprint portions of their Making Homelessness History in Colorado Playbook. With each of these key partners, and interested readers like you, making measurable progress on homelessness is possible.

“The real tragedy of losing your house is that it makes all of your shameful conditions of your life visible for all to see.”

- Barb

Journeys Out of Homelessness

LETTER FROM

METRO DENVER HOMELESS INITIATIVE

Dear Reader,

The following report is the 2021 Metro Denver Homeless Initiative's State of Homelessness Report. It is MDHI's contribution to the larger conversation and understanding of homelessness in the metro region.

This report is thanks to numerous regional and statewide partners, including the work to implement a comprehensive, widely-used Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Due to these efforts, there are now expansive data available on homelessness. Additionally, this report includes other publicly available data, such as the number of students in the region identified by school districts as experiencing homelessness.

While there are differences in the definitions, count types, and methodologies between the data sets, there are some clear commonalities. This year's report once again demonstrates the over-representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) individuals experiencing homelessness across all data sources. This is the result of systemic oppression and policies which continue to perpetuate this racial disparity. Second, homelessness continues to be one of the most pressing challenges in our region and is the direct result of economic conditions such as a lack of affordable housing, wages which do not keep pace with the cost of housing, cost of living, and gentrification.

COVID-19 created historical challenges for those experiencing homelessness and those economically impacted by the pandemic. Year over year, our region saw a 40% increase in the number of people accessing emergency shelter as well as a 99%

increase in the number of people newly experiencing homelessness. This increase is a direct result of the pandemic.

In spite of all these challenges, the pandemic also created an opportunity for collaboration and coordination in new and improved ways. It brought increased awareness to the issue of homelessness, creating historic investments in affordable housing and the homelessness response. Partners and stakeholders across the entire region are working together in new and exciting ways.

One of the successes of the past year, in spite of rising homelessness rates across all our communities, has been the Built for Zero work in coordination with the Community Solutions. A targeted, strategic focus on Veteran homelessness has led to better data and an overall reduction of 15% during 2021 in the number of Veterans in our region experiencing homelessness. This work is proof of what is possible.

By working together, our region has the opportunity to create lasting change. MDHI continues to be hopeful about the future and grateful to each and every person working to ensure we all have a safe, stable place to call home. We also recognize the urgency as thousands of our unhoused neighbors struggle each day. We can do better. We must.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jamie Rife

Metro Denver Homeless Initiative

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1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report is a snapshot of the data related to homelessness in the seven-county Denver metro region. This includes the counties of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson. The report summarizes data on individuals, families, and youth experiencing homelessness while providing insights from those with lived expertise.

OVERVIEW

This report highlights two overarching trends in homelessness. First, inherent in homelessness, is the racial inequity that must be addressed. Second, the only long-term solution to homelessness is housing. The region faces a significant affordable housing crisis, worsened by COVID-19's economic impact.

LIMITATIONS

Inherent in any data related to homelessness are differences in count types, definitions, and comprehensiveness. Additionally, COVID-19 limited the region's ability to conduct an unsheltered Point-in-Time count in January of 2021, leading to an incomplete understanding of those staying outdoors or in other places not meant for human habitation.

INTENDED USE

This report is not an attempt to capture the "total number" of individuals experiencing homelessness in the region. Rather, its intent is painting a larger picture of homelessness and assists readers in creating a broader understanding of the breadth and experience of homelessness. The views contained within are those of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative.

2021 DATA SUMMARY



<p>Cumulative count (Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021)</p>	<p>One night in January (A point in time)</p>	<p>Cumulative by school year (Last reported year 2019-2020)</p>
<p>The number of unique individuals accessing the region's HMIS for services or housing support related to homelessness.</p>	<p>Survey, outreach, and information system pull across the seven-county region over the course of one night.</p>	<p>The number of unique students identified by school districts as experiencing homelessness.</p>

HMIS and PIT use the Department of Housing and Urban Development of literally homeless. McKinney-Vento uses the Department of Education definition of homeless.

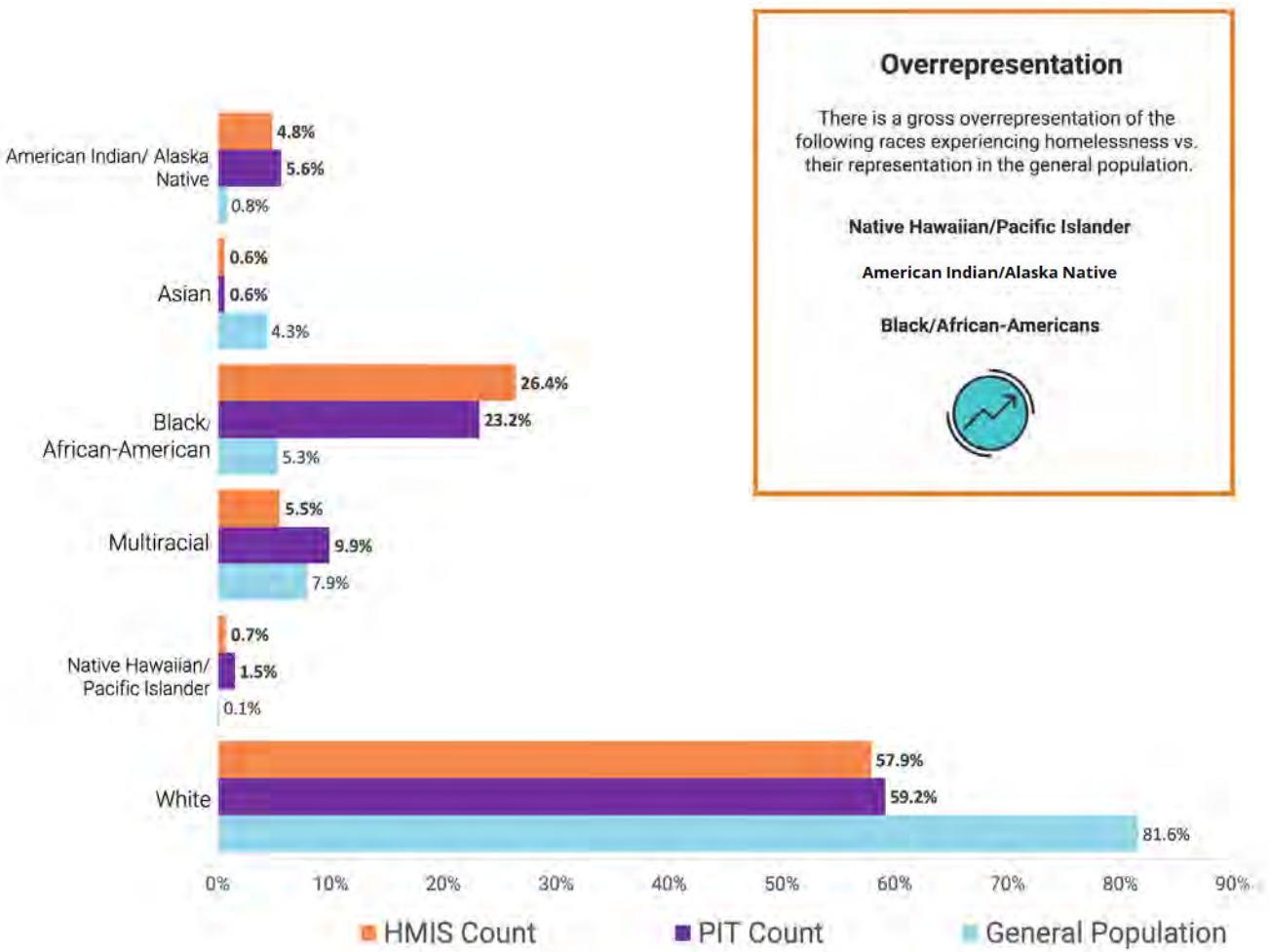
✦ Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, the 2021 PIT count only includes those in shelters. Anyone who fit the HUD definition of “unsheltered” was not able to be counted.

“Unsheltered” is defined as those with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

See the “LIMITATIONS” on page 10 for more.

RACE REPRESENTATION ACROSS ALL DATA POINTS

Across all data sources, there is an overrepresentation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) among those experiencing homelessness as compared to the overall census data for the region.



2 | INTRODUCTION

The issue of homelessness continues to grow throughout the metro-Denver region. While the hard-working providers in our community dedicate themselves to housing our most vulnerable, housing costs, economic conditions, systemic racial inequities, the COVID-19 pandemic, and numerous other factors continue to plague the region, leading to the current homelessness crisis. Over the past year, metro-Denver has seen significant increases in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, many of them for the first time.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide meaningful context to the issue of homelessness as well as spark conversations on what works.

The report first consolidates existing data within the seven-county region on the breadth of homelessness and seeks to inform the overall issue of homelessness as it occurs across systems and throughout the region to provide a fuller, deeper understanding of the problem. Homelessness is not limited to the individuals we see, those characterized as the visible homeless. There is an entire subset of this population composed of children, families, youth, and others that make up the invisible homeless. In fact, historically 3 in 4 people experiencing homelessness are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other indoor situations and, therefore, are not seen. It is also important to understand the root causes of homelessness and stop perpetuating stereotypes as these misconceptions deter from meaningful solutions.

There is hope for this issue, and the report provides implications and next steps. It is important to understand homelessness itself and the steps the region can take to make significant progress towards purposefully addressing it.

“There is no meaningful safety net, because there is a cultural assumption that poverty, illness, and homelessness are all the result of personal failings.”

- Caroline

Journeys Out of Homelessness

OVERVIEW

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. The metro-Denver region's CoC is comprised of seven counties including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson. The views contained within this report are those of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), the region's CoC.



Part of MDHI's role in the region as the CoC includes overseeing the region's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), conducting the annual Point in Time (PIT) count, and creating a Coordinated Entry (CE) system. Each of these activities provides data points on homelessness included in this report. Additionally, the most recent data from the Department of Education, academic year 2019-2020, is included to provide a fuller look on homelessness among families, children and youth in the region.

LIMITATIONS




This report synthesizes the current information available regarding homelessness in the region. However, as with any data surrounding the issue of homelessness, there are several key limitations. The data are not "apple-to-apple" comparisons across data. Comparison is not possible nor advised. Significant differences in counts do appear; however, each of these data sets is unique in what, who, and how it measures homelessness. When combined, they create a much broader understanding of individual, family, and youth homelessness.

The vast differences in the total counts can be explained by a few key factors. While these limitations are important to understand, they should not deter nor distract from each data set providing an important piece of the overall picture. Each is equally important as they describe a subsection of this population and, together, create a comprehensive description of the current state of this issue in the metro-Denver region.

The first factor important to understand are the definitional variances between the data on which living situations constitute homelessness. They vary between federal agencies, depending on the scope of the federal agency and their intended role in addressing homelessness. In some instances, these definitions overlap while in other areas they vary significantly. These are described at length within each section; however, this difference in definitions helps explain the wide variation in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. In some data sets, homelessness is limited to those that are literally homeless. Please see the definitions section for an explanation of this. In other cases, a more comprehensive definition of homelessness, referenced here as the McKinney-Vento Educational definition, is utilized. An explanation of this term can also be found in the definitions section.

Variances in counts are also affected by the types of counts themselves. In some data, the count is a single point-in-time, data collected on a single day. In other data, the count is cumulative, collecting the numbers over a much longer period, up to an entire school or calendar year. The timeframes for these counts may occur within different calendar or academic years due the variations in reporting requirements by agency or organization. The most recently available data from each agency was used for the purposes of this report.

Lastly, the data included in this report are by no means exhaustive on the topic of homelessness. This initial version of the report is just that – an initial annual report that can be improved in future iterations. This report is a mechanism to assist the public, lawmakers, and provider community on the wider issue of homelessness and work to create collaboration on ending homelessness.

 <p>DEFINITIONAL VARIANCES</p>	 <p>POINT-IN-TIME VS CUMULATIVE</p>	 <p>INITIAL ANNUAL REPORT</p>
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While variances do occur due to several limitations of the data, there are also areas in which the data reinforce each other. For example, one commonality across all data sources is the glaring racial inequity of homelessness. In each of the data on homelessness including race, the overrepresentation of BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) is glaring. Additionally, housing costs, trauma, family and relational dysfunction is a consistent cause of homelessness, as is the significant need for increased housing resources.

Lastly, due to COVID-19, while the region did conduct the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count for those staying in shelter, safety concerns led to the region’s decision to not conduct an unsheltered count in January of 2021. Therefore, the PIT data only includes the approximately 75% of those staying in the region’s shelters.

3

CRITICAL DEFINITIONS

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

HUD defines persons experiencing chronic homelessness as those who (a) are homeless, (b) are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, (c) have been homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless across those occasions is at least 12 months, and (d) have a disability.

LITERAL HOMELESSNESS (HUD HOMELESSNESS)

An Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter (including safe haven or transitional living program).

NEWLY HOMELESS

Newly homeless is defined as a person who has been experiencing homelessness for less than one year and this was their first episode of homelessness.

SAFE HAVEN

A project that offers supportive housing that (1) serves hard to reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who came from the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services; (2) provides 24-hour residence for eligible persons for an unspecified period; (3) has an overnight capacity limited to 25 or fewer persons; and (4) provides low demand services and referrals for the residents.

SHELTER

A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. In metro Denver, there are variations of shelter types, including family shelters where households may stay for 14- 90 days on average, and nightly shelter for individuals which may be nightly only or longer term depending on the program.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

A project that provides temporary lodging and is designed to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families into permanent housing within a specified period of time, but typically no longer than 24 months. In transitional housing, there are generally higher eligibility and program requirements than in emergency shelter. Participants may be asked to pay rent or fees to stay in these programs

UNSHELTERED (HUD DEFINITION)

With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

YOUTH

Includes anyone between the ages of 18-24 (not yet 25) *please note, not all youth are unaccompanied therefore in this document you will see a number of youth and a separate number for unaccompanied youth.

4 | EFFECTS OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had sweeping consequences not just for those experiencing homelessness but also for those at risk of losing housing. The 2021 PIT count showed a 40% increase in those staying in the region's emergency shelters and a 99% increase in those identifying as newly homeless.

A recent analysis of census data by the National Equity Atlas puts
61,000 households
behind on rent
in Colorado.

Totalling an estimated
\$192,500,000
of rental arrears,
the majority of which are a result of loss of income
or unemployment due to the pandemic.

Nearly half of these households identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and 47% are households with children.

While the federal, state, and local governments have acted to create relief funding, many households still face eviction and homelessness. With the eviction moratoriums expiring, these households find themselves facing thousands of dollars in rental debt from which it is nearly impossible to recover. Continued swift governmental action is needed to ensure households at-risk of losing housing and those who have already lost housing have the necessary support for recovery.

5

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Time and again, studies show a large disconnect between public perception on the causes of homelessness and its actual causes. When surveyed on why an individual may experience homelessness, answers from the public generally focus on individual choices or issues, citing challenges with substance use, chronic health conditions, or severe mental health disorders as the leading causes.

A poll on public perception conducted by The Denver Foundation’s Close to Home campaign highlights this misperception. Actual data from the Point-in-Time (PIT) count indicated the top reasons of homelessness in the region are a lost job or inability to find work, high housing costs, or relationship/family break-up as the most common causes of homelessness.

This, coupled with other systemic causes such as racial inequities, stagnant wages, and access to healthcare to name a few, create economic conditions in which many among us are unable to secure and maintain stable housing.

The leading cause of homelessness, not just in this region but around the country, is a **lack of affordable housing.**

The cost of housing in the metro region continues to rise. This creates conditions in which an increased number of the regions are burdened by housing costs, even in those areas that were once considered affordable. This is not to say there are not other barriers faced by those experiencing homelessness.

While physical and/or mental disabilities, substance use, unemployment or underemployment, and various other challenges are part of the broader picture of homelessness, a lack of affordable, appropriate housing continues to be the foremost challenge.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 on our local, state, and national economies have only worsened this shortage as thousands of our neighbors struggle with their mortgages and rent, many for the first time. The cost of purchasing a home rose at historic rates over the past year, putting home ownership further out of reach for many and contributing to rampant gentrification. At its core, there is only one solution to homelessness - housing.

Denver ranks second in the nation, as the most gentrified city in the United States. (National Community Reinvestment Coalition)

The November 2021 median close price of a home in Denver Metro was \$543,000 with the average close price of \$629,479. (Denver Metro Association of Realtors)

Colorado has the 9th highest housing wage in the country, with a wage of \$27.50/hr required for a two-bedroom rental home or an annual wage of \$57,200. (National Low Income Housing Coalition)

6 | BRIEF EXPLANATION OF DATA SOURCES

HMIS DATA

Per HUD, "A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness."

Type:

Cumulative or date range as applicable.

Method:

Statewide data system that collects and tracks data on those experiencing homelessness

Definition of Homelessness:

HUD Definition of Literally Homeless

Each Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards."¹

The HMIS allows real time data as well as longitudinal data on those experiencing homelessness in the region. Nearly 75% of shelter providers in the region and all HUD funded agencies utilize HMIS to contribute to the body of data available.

1. HMIS: Homeless Management Information System. (2020). HUD Exchange. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/>



POINT IN TIME (PIT) DATA

The Point in Time (PIT) count is an annual survey of people experiencing homelessness in communities on a single evening in January.



Type:

One night in January
(a point in time)

Method:

Survey, outreach, and
information system pull.

Definition of Homelessness:

HUD Definition of Literally
Homeless

The 2021 PIT count for Metro Denver asked people across the region where they spent the night of February 26, 2021.

The PIT provides a “snapshot” of literal homelessness on a single night and the resulting data is meant to be representative of homelessness “on any given night,” specifically during the winter months when PIT counts are conducted nationally.

The annual PIT count for the Metro Denver region is organized and guided by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI).



Limitations

Due to safety concerns, the PIT data only included those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe haven for 2021 and does not include those staying in unsheltered situations.

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA

Public school districts across the United States are required to identify, support, and report on students experiencing homelessness at some point during the school year.

Type:

Cumulative by school year

(number of students that were identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the school year 2019-2020)

Method:

Identification by school districts and tracked via the district's Student Information System (SIS)

Definition of Homelessness:

U.S. Department of Education definition



Students are identified at the district level and data is collected by the Colorado Department of Education and sent to the U.S. Department of Education. This data is publicly available.

As discussed later in this report, due to the focus of this identification being to support the educational needs of students, the definition of homelessness under the Department of Education, and some other federal agencies, varies from that of the HUD definition.



Concern Over Re-enrollment

COVID-19 exacerbated the economic achievement gap for students experiencing homelessness and led to a decrease in the number of these students re-enrolling for the 2021 school year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: VI-SPDAT DATA

Providers conduct this survey instrument, the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) with clients experiencing homelessness and enter results into the region’s Coordinated Entry System, OneHome.



Type:

Pulled from OneHome for the purposes of this report spans 7/1/2020-6/30/2021

Method:

Providers conduct this index with potential clients and enter data into HMIS

Definition of Homelessness:

HUD Definition of Literally Homeless

The VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) is a survey administered both to individuals and families to determine risk and prioritization when providing assistance to **people experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness**.

This information is collected and stored in the region’s HMIS system and gives extensive insight into the characteristics and barriers of those experiencing homelessness.

During the defined date range, 3,273 clients completed the VI-SPDAT ²

2. VI-SPDAT: Program News. (2020). CTHMIS: Measuring Success. <https://www.cthmis.com/info/detail/vi-spdatt/13>



Limitations

The VI-SPDAT relies on self-reported information and has been shown to have inherent racial bias, inconsistent results, and may not adequately assess an individual’s vulnerabilities.

7 | DATA BY POPULATION

REPORT ORGANIZATION

In an effort to examine these data points side-by-side, this report is organized by household type. This first includes those unsheltered, followed by adult homelessness (or households without children), families (or households with children), and youth.

7-1

ADULTS, FAMILIES, & YOUTH

UNSHELTERED

Due to an increase in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) usage across the region, this year’s report does include information on those staying outdoors or in other places not meant for human habitation between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Due to safety concerns related to COVID-19, the region could not complete an unsheltered PIT count. However, due to the expansion of HMIS use during the pandemic in an effort to better collaborate and assure the safety of those without a home, the region has its first glimpse into more comprehensive, longitudinal data on those staying outdoors or other places not meant for human habitation.

During this period, 10,870 adults, 1,031 members of families, and 954 youth accessed services while reporting they were staying in an unsheltered location. This is the first time the region has had an annual cumulative count. However, this, like all HMIS data, only includes those individuals and households engaging in services and, therefore, still represents an undercount until the region can confidently create a full By-Name-List (BNL) of everyone experiencing homelessness.

“Honestly, homelessness just causes a lot of mental stress on me. I got really depressed and really anxious thinking about it.”

- Youth Currently Experiencing Homelessness

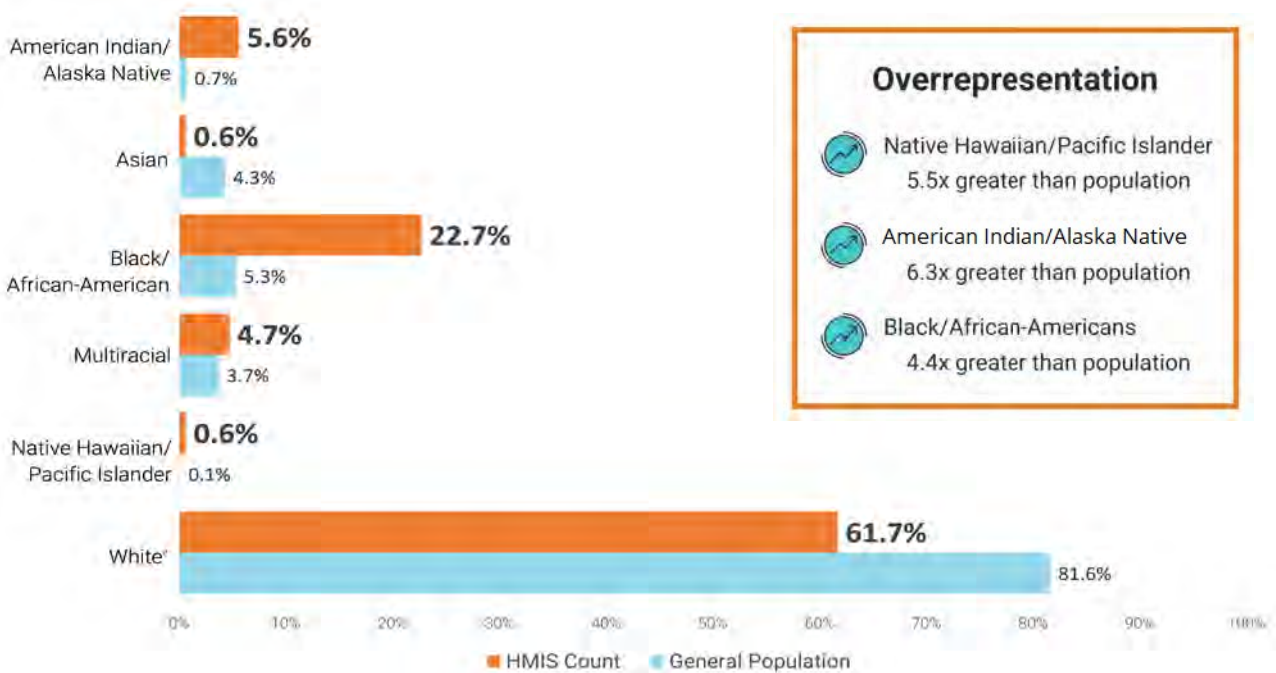
HMIS DATA

UNSHELTERED ADULTS

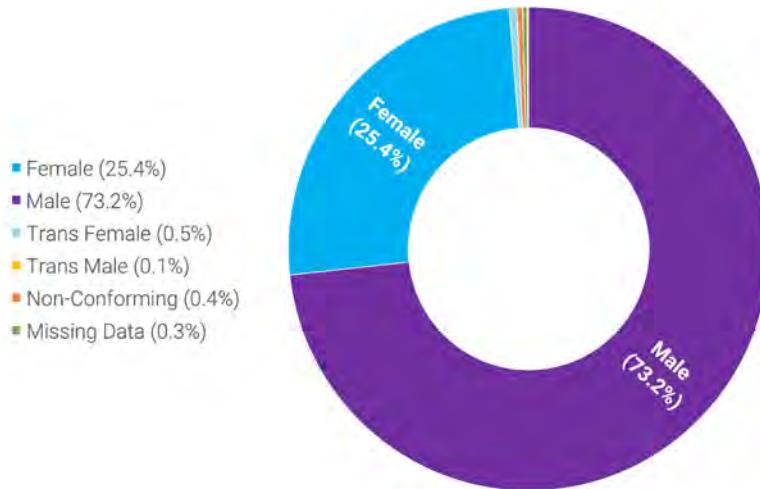
This data represents the number of unsheltered adults accessing services related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.

10,870

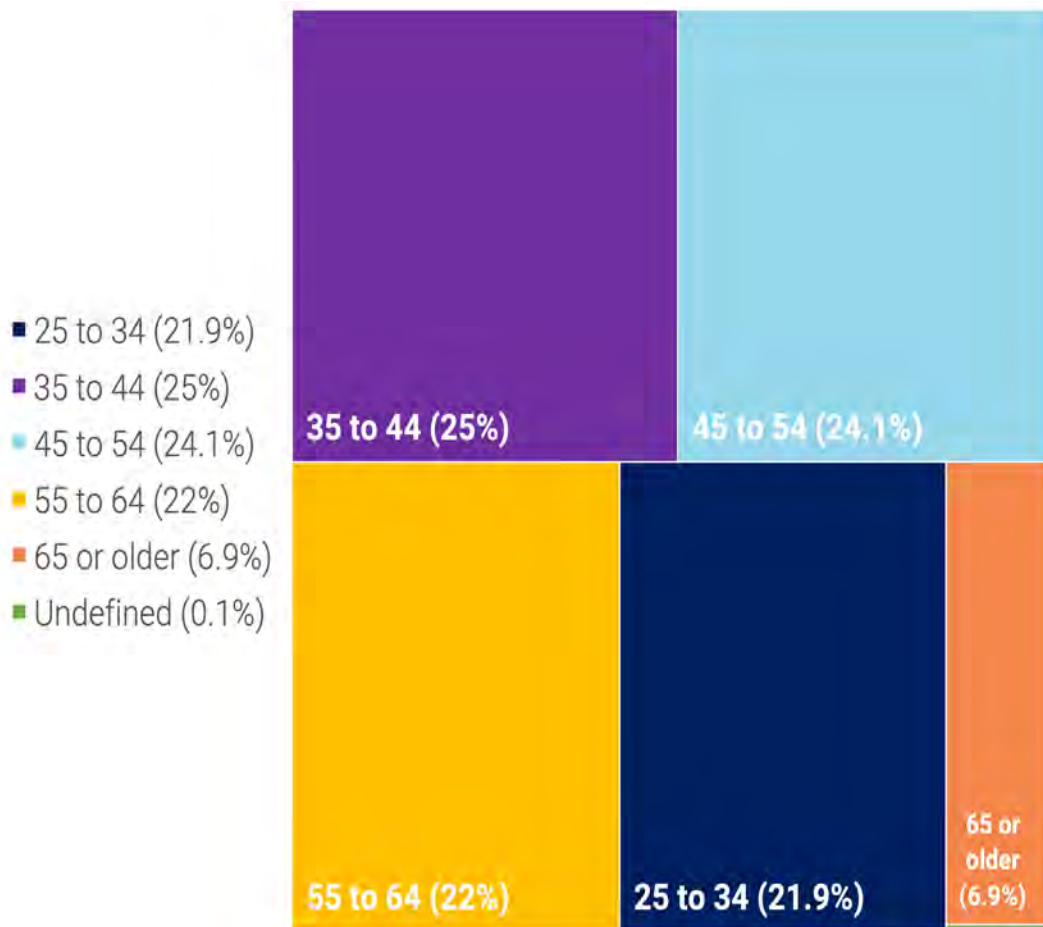
Race Representation vs General Population in Unsheltered Adults



Gender Breakdown in Unsheltered Adults



Age Breakdown for Unsheltered Adults



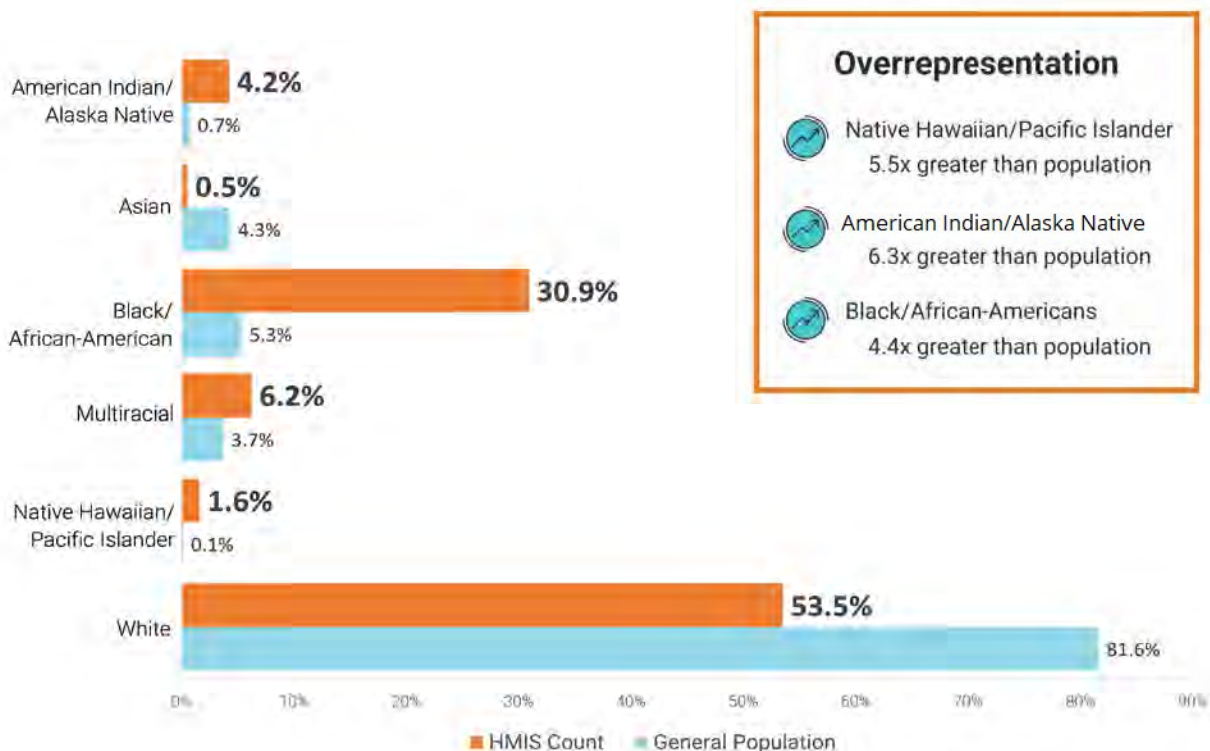
HMIS DATA

UNSHELTERED FAMILIES

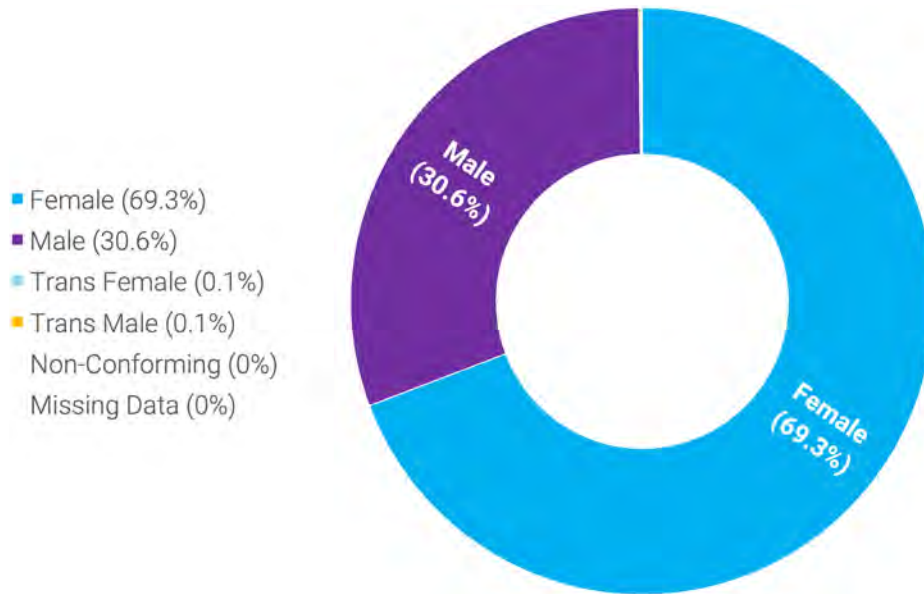
This data represents the number of unsheltered families accessing services related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 and **generally only includes the heads of household information**, depending on how the agency collects the information.

1,031

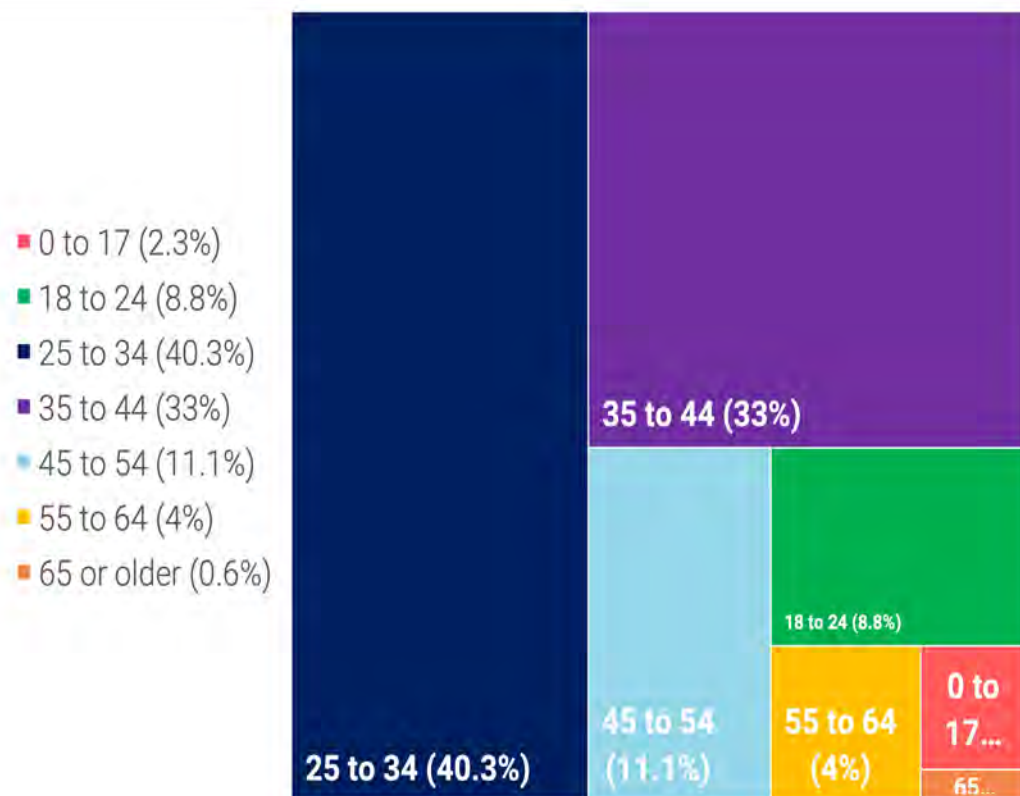
Race Representation vs General Population in Unsheltered Families



Gender Breakdown in Unsheltered Families



Age Breakdown for Unsheltered Families



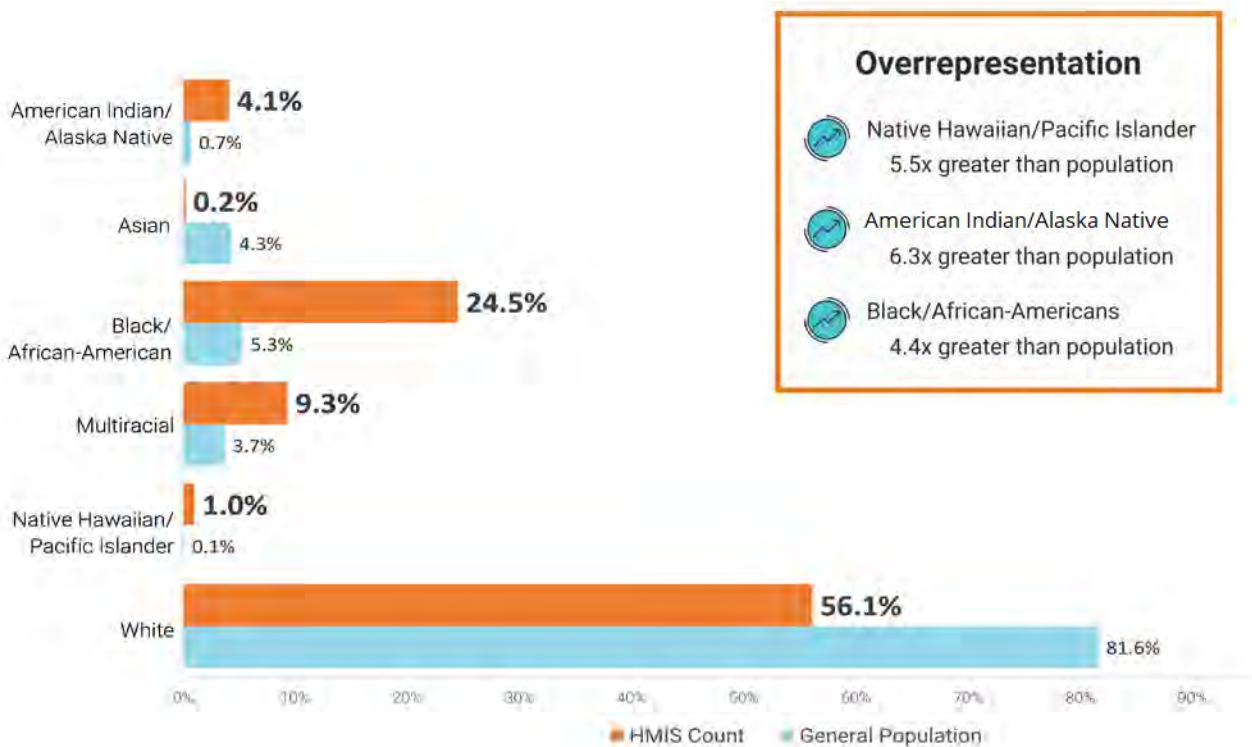
HMIS DATA

UNSHELTERED YOUTH

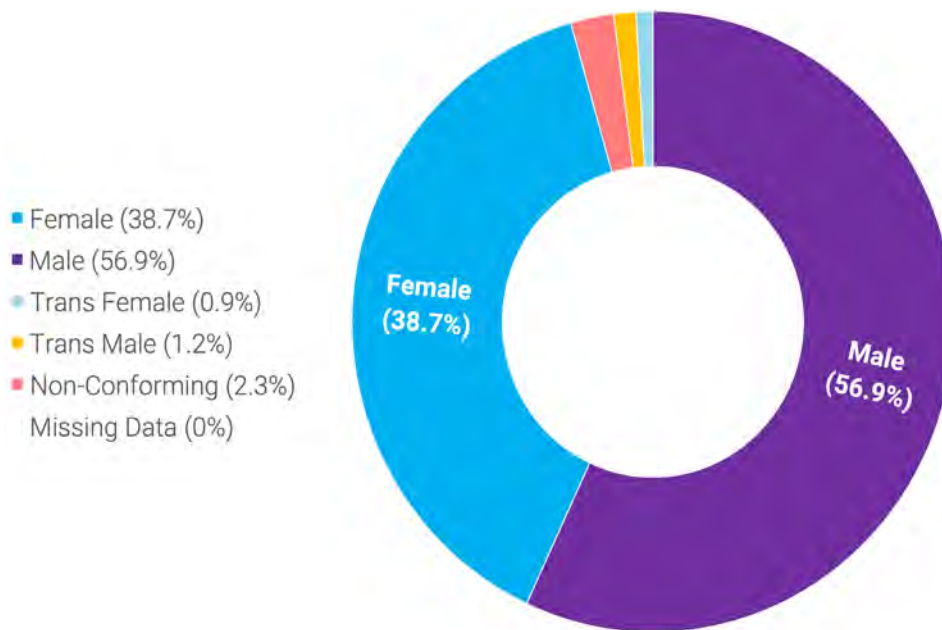
This data represents the number of unaccompanied, unsheltered youths accessing services related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.



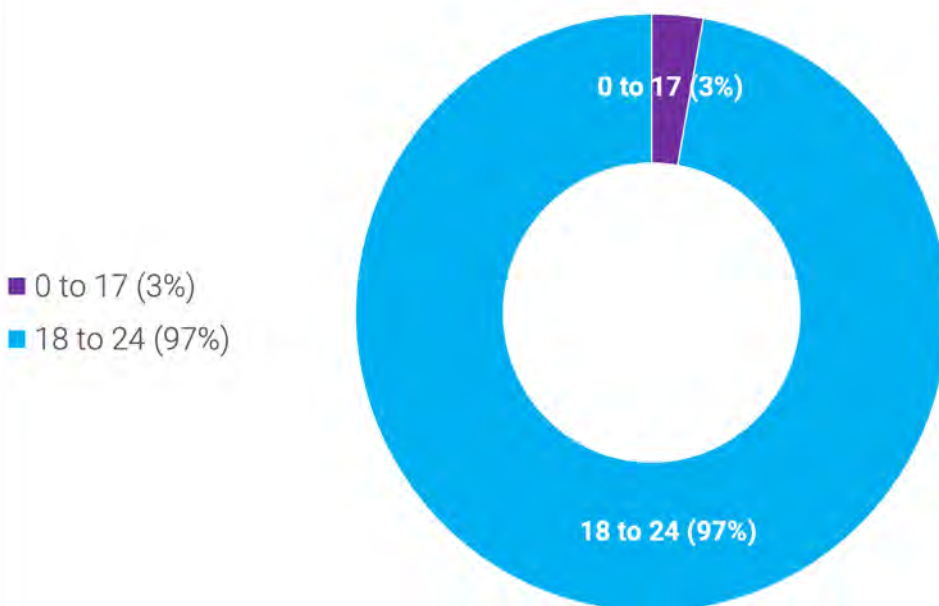
Race Representation vs General Population in Unsheltered Youth



Gender Breakdown in Unsheltered Youth



Age Breakdown for Unsheltered Youth



7-1 | ALL HOUSEHOLDS WITH ADULTS-ONLY

The following section outlines data on adult-only households for both sheltered and unsheltered living situation. Individuals experiencing homelessness are overwhelmingly those identifying as:

- Male
- Disproportionately BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)
- Not experiencing homelessness for the first time
- Have higher rates of barriers related to physical or mental disabilities, chronic health conditions, and/or substance use than other subpopulations

Approximately one in five surveyed with the VI-SPDAT is a veteran and a majority identify trauma as contributing to their homelessness.

Due to visibility of many of these individuals, the general public forms many of its assumptions about those experiencing homelessness based on this population. However, this is but one of the faces of homelessness and is not representative of the entire population.

**“I guess what I want people to know is that
the emotional effects of homelessness stay with you,
just like those of abuse.”**

- Michelle

Journeys out of Homelessness

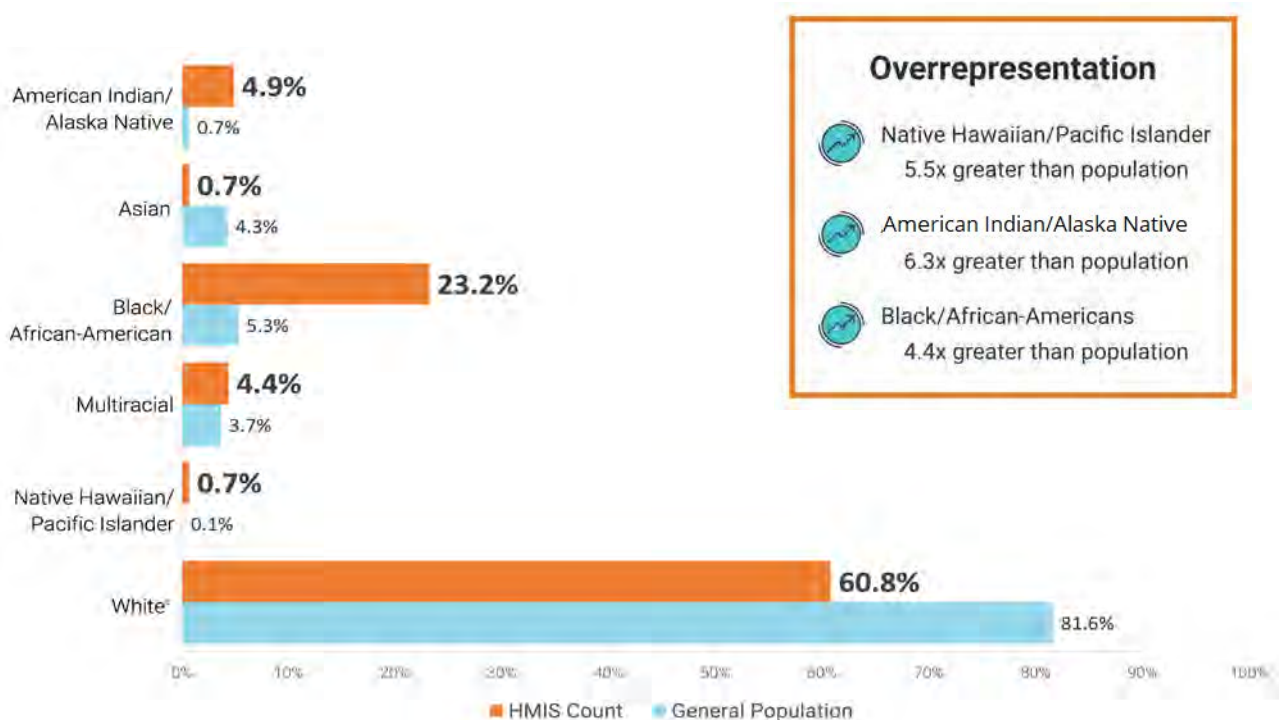
HMIS DATA

ADULT-ONLY HOUSEHOLDS

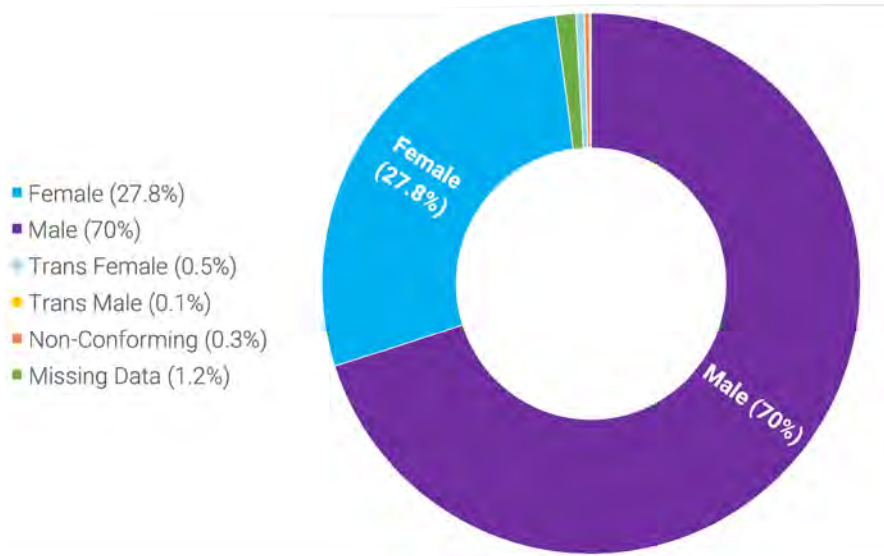
This data represents the number of adult-only households accessing services related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.



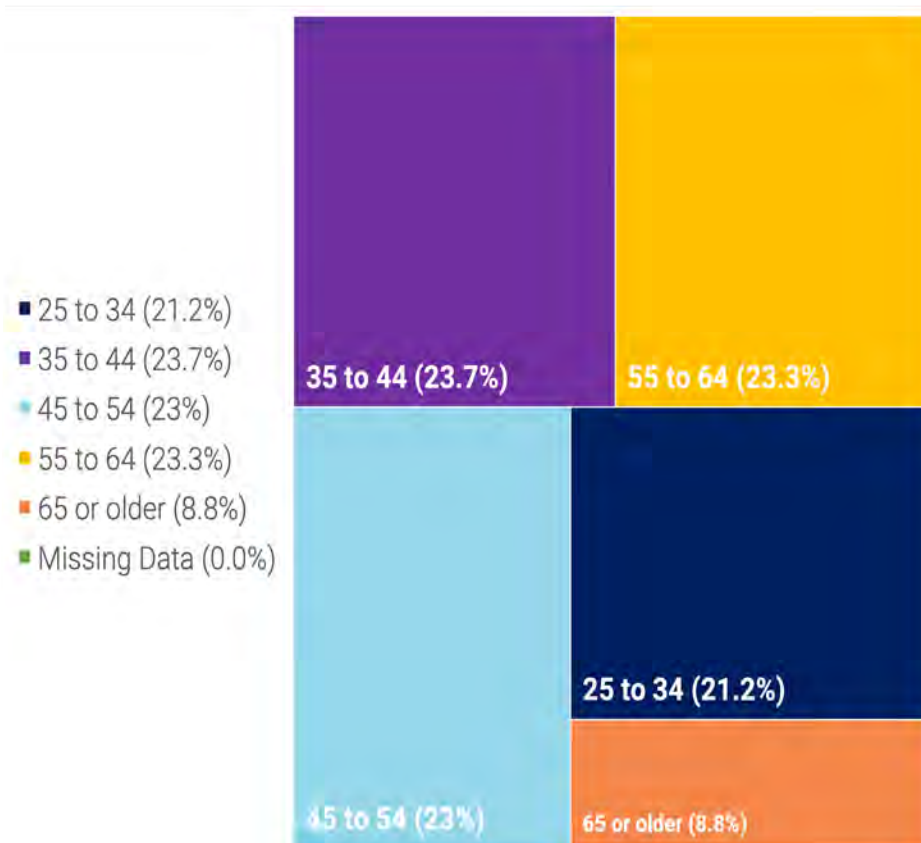
Race Representation vs General Population in Adult-Only Households



Gender Breakdown in Adult-Only Households



Age Breakdown for Adult-Only Households



PIT DATA (SHELTERED ONLY)

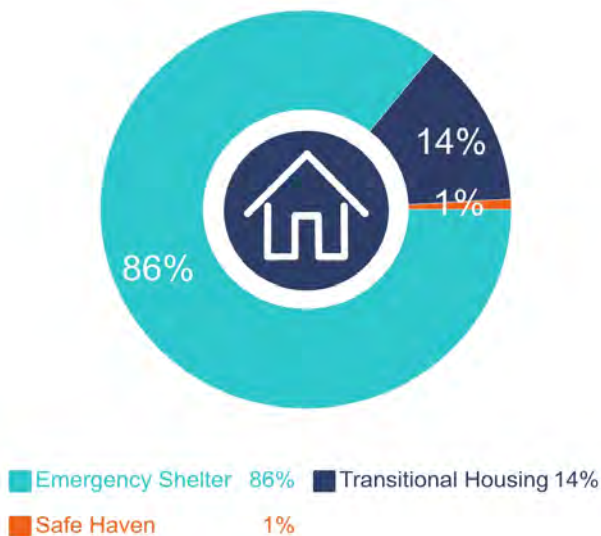
ADULT-ONLY HOUSEHOLDS

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in February. The following data was collected on February 25, 2021 and provides a snapshot of adult homelessness on a single day.



Where They Slept the Night Before

Adult-Only Households
Where They Slept

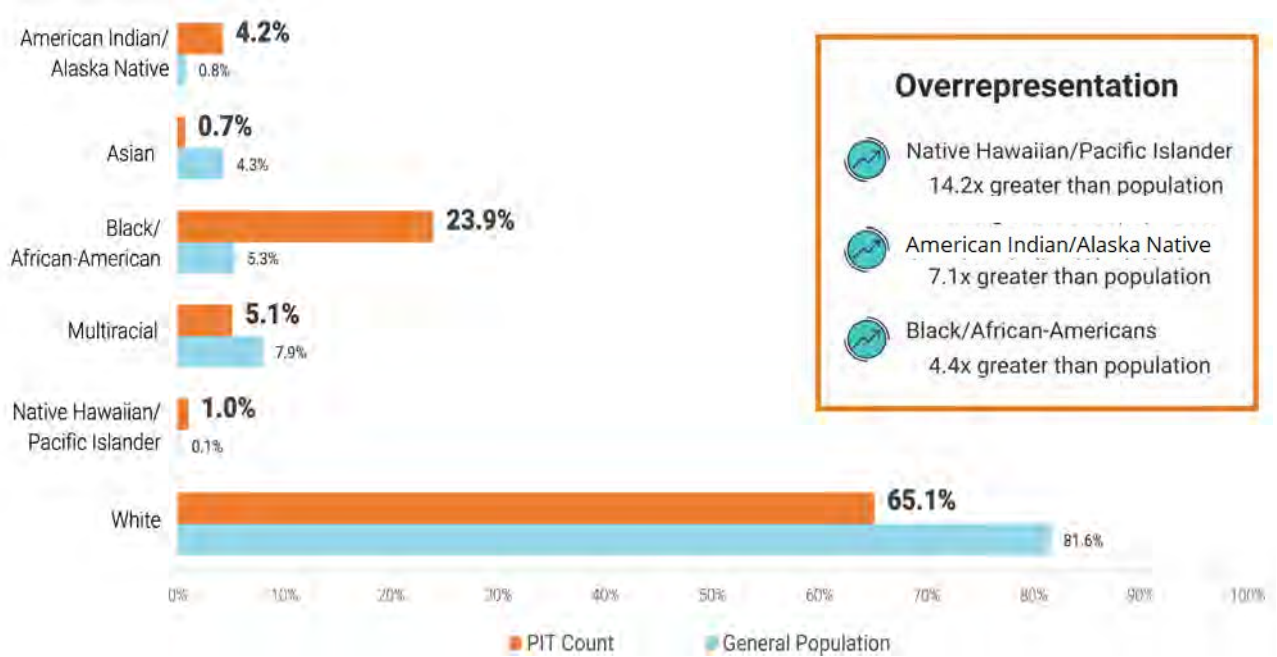


What does it mean to be SHELTERED?

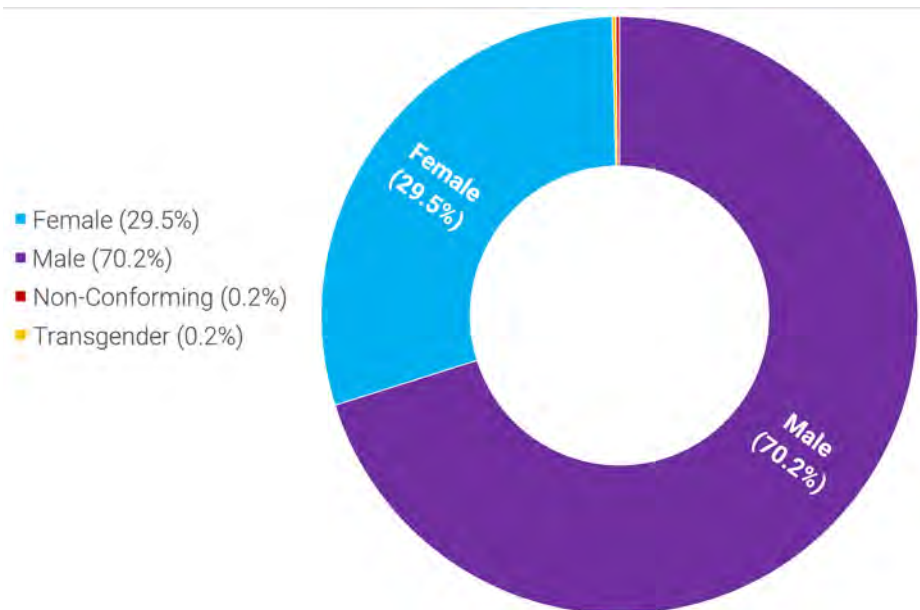
HUD defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied children who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters for the homeless.

This includes all beds dedicated for use by homeless persons that are reported by a **COC** in their housing inventory count (**HIC**).

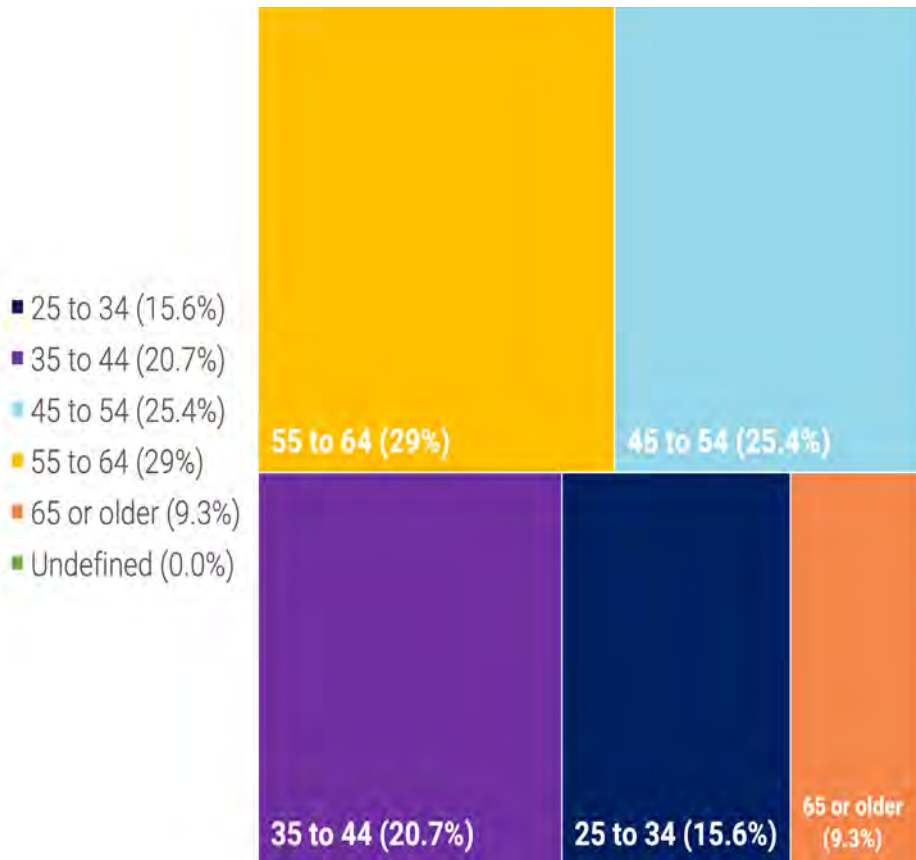
Race Representation in Adult-Only Households



Gender Breakdown in Adult-Only Households



Age Breakdown for Adult-Only Households



Veteran Status for Adult-Only Households



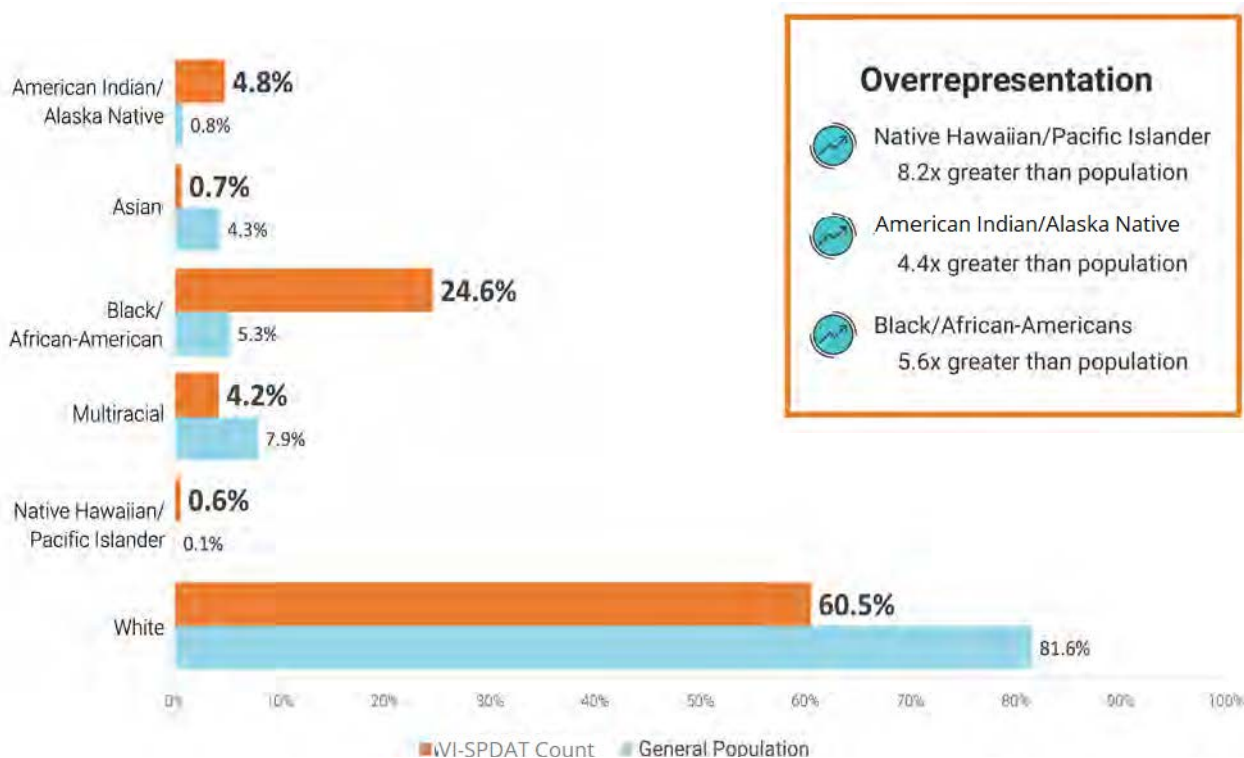
VI-SPDAT DATA

ADULT-ONLY HOUSEHOLDS

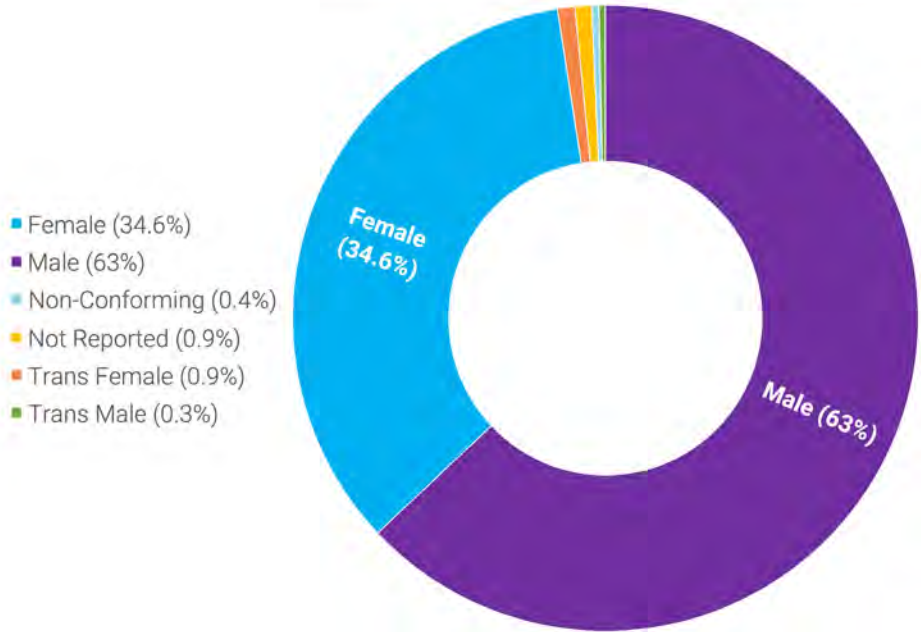
The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region's individuals experiencing homelessness. During the data range between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, 2,442 individuals completed the assessment.



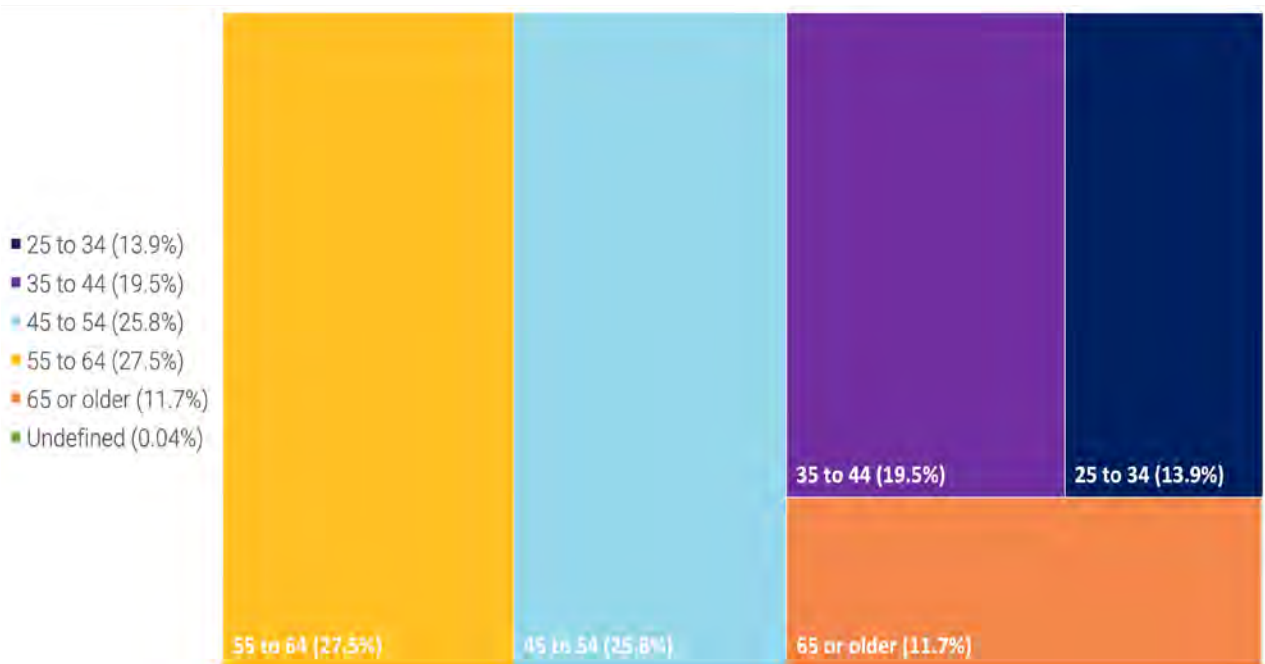
Race Representation in Adult-Only Households



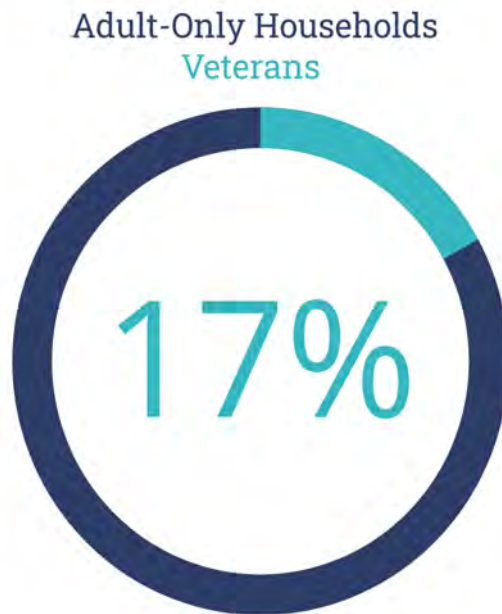
Gender Breakdown in Adult-Only Households



Age Breakdown for Adult-Only Households



Veteran Status for Adult-Only Households



Background in Foster Care for Adult-Only Households



7-2 | FAMILIES

As compared to individual homelessness, households with children have significantly **less**:

- Barriers with mental health
- Chronic health conditions, disabilities and/or substance use.

A much **higher percentage are newly homeless** and much fewer are chronically homeless. Over 57% of those in families experiencing homelessness are children.

Family homelessness is perhaps where economic challenges and systemic inequities are most visible.

There is a significant over-representation of females as compared to other subpopulations, additionally, those identifying as black or African American are significantly over-represented.

The vast majority of these households have one to three children, over half identify trauma as contributing to their homelessness, and many report that homelessness is a significant barrier to their children regularly attending school.

“My biggest challenge with homelessness is not knowing where my child and I would end up and if it was safe enough.”

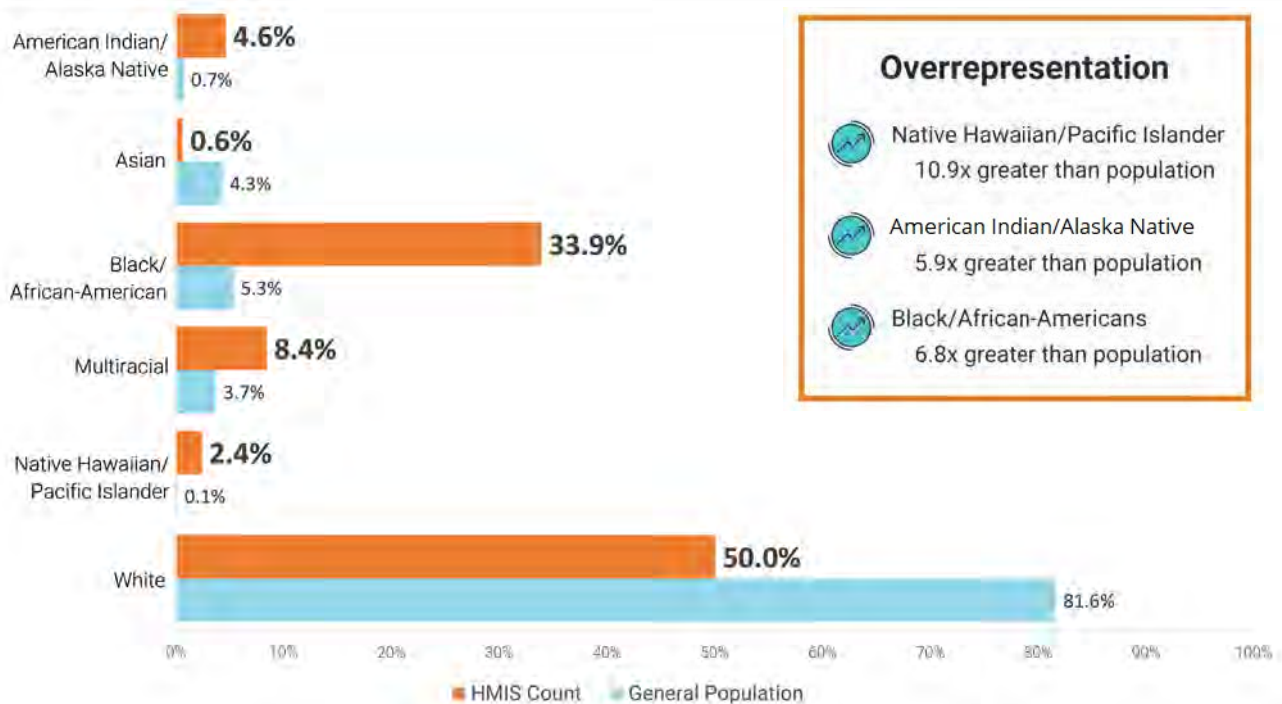
- Young Parent Experiencing Homelessness

HMIS DATA FAMILIES

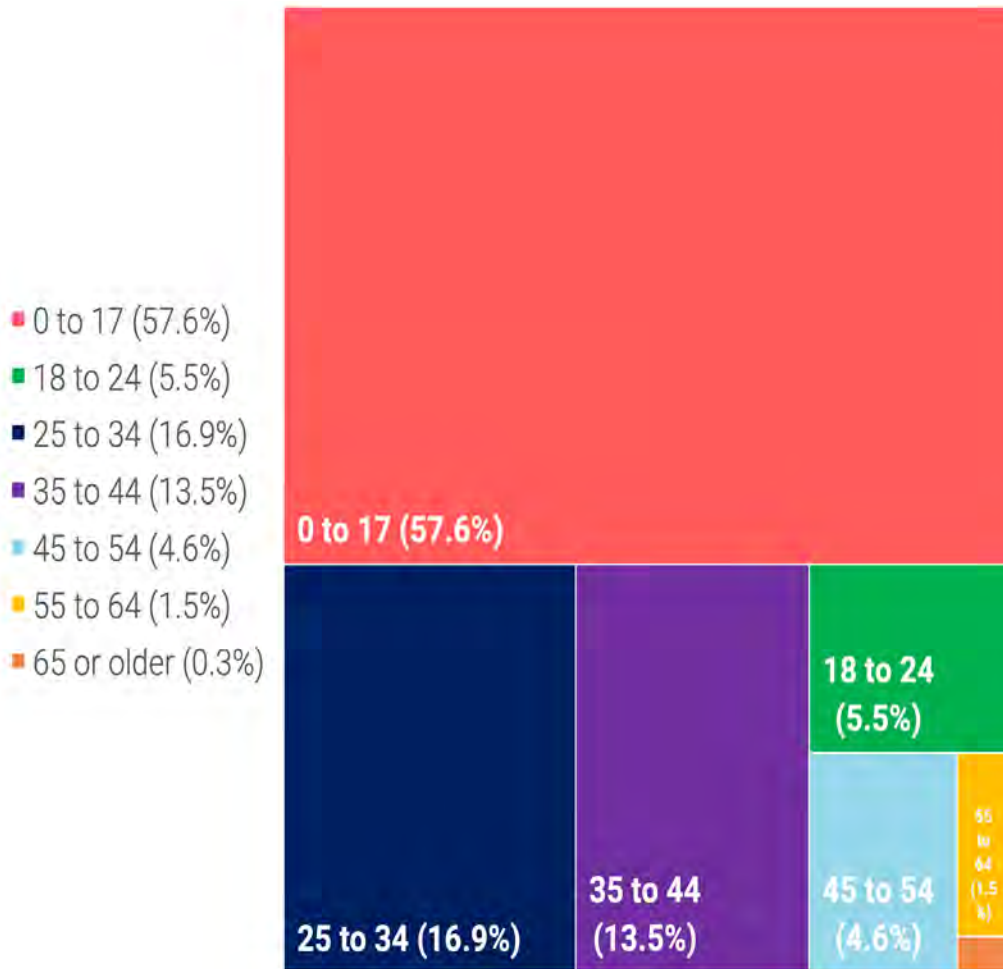
This data represents the number of families accessing services or housing related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.



Race Representation vs General Population in Families



Age Breakdown for Families



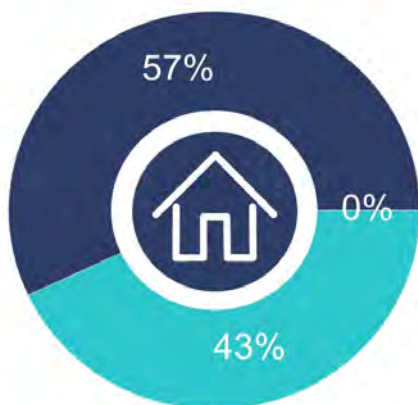
PIT DATA (SHELTERED ONLY) FAMILIES

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in February. The following data was collected on February 25, 2021 and provides a snapshot of **family** homelessness on a single day.



Where They Slept the Night Before

Families
Where They Slept



■ Emergency Shelter 43% ■ Transitional Housing 57%
■ Safe Haven 0%

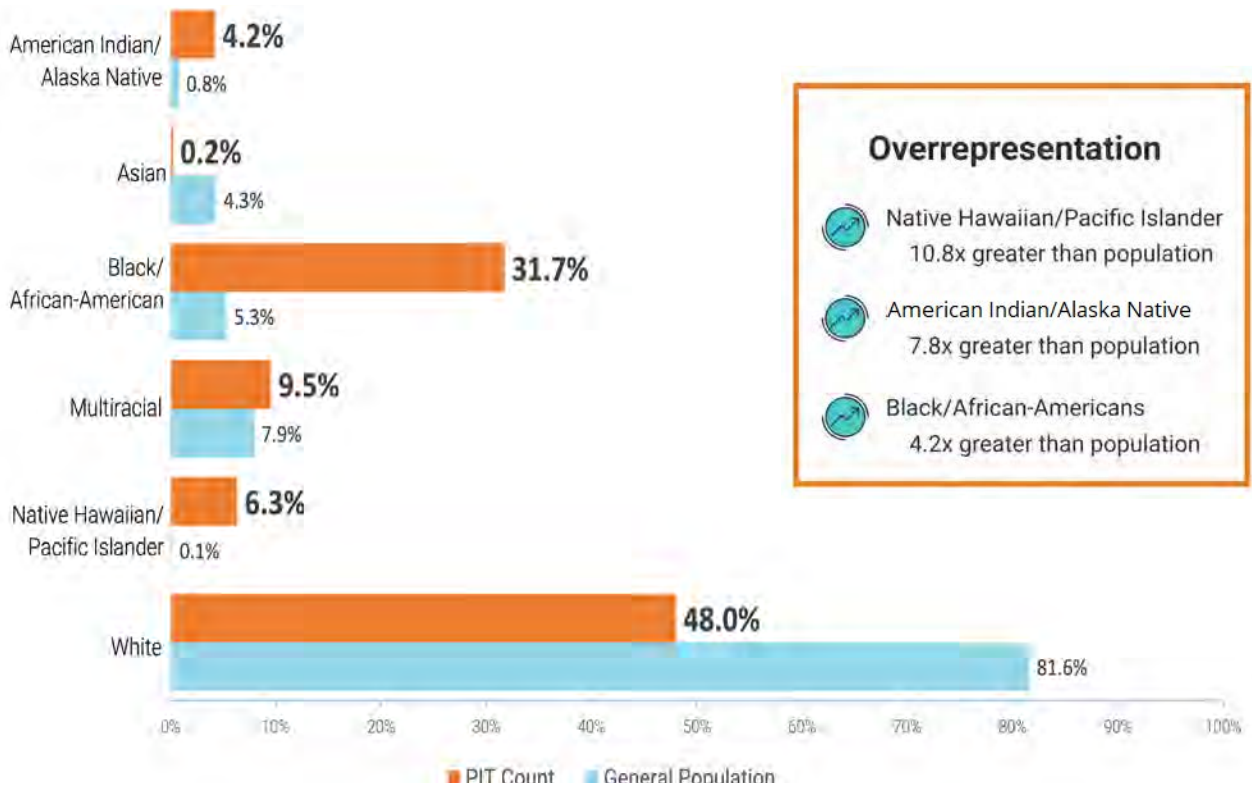


What does it mean to be SHELTERED?

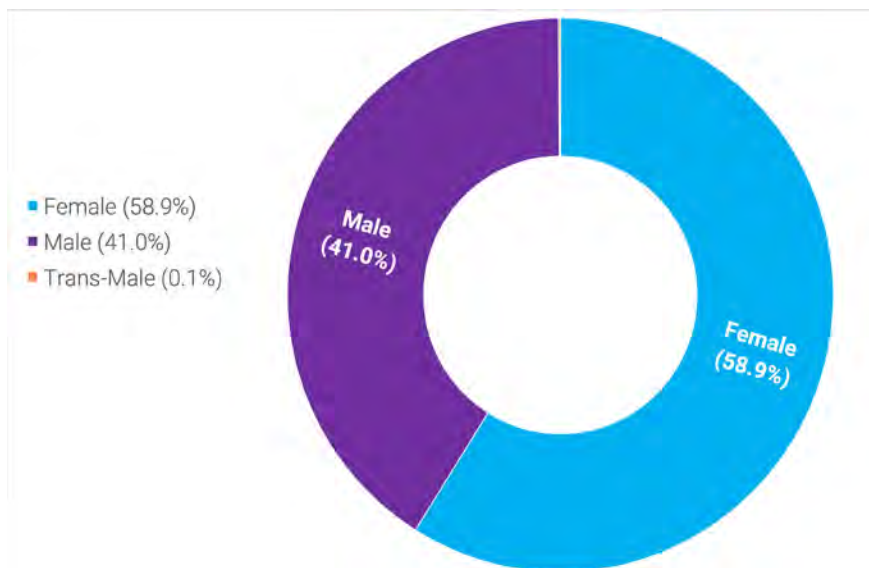
Hud defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied children who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters for the homeless.

This includes all beds dedicated for use by homeless persons that are reported by a COC in their housing inventory count (HIC).

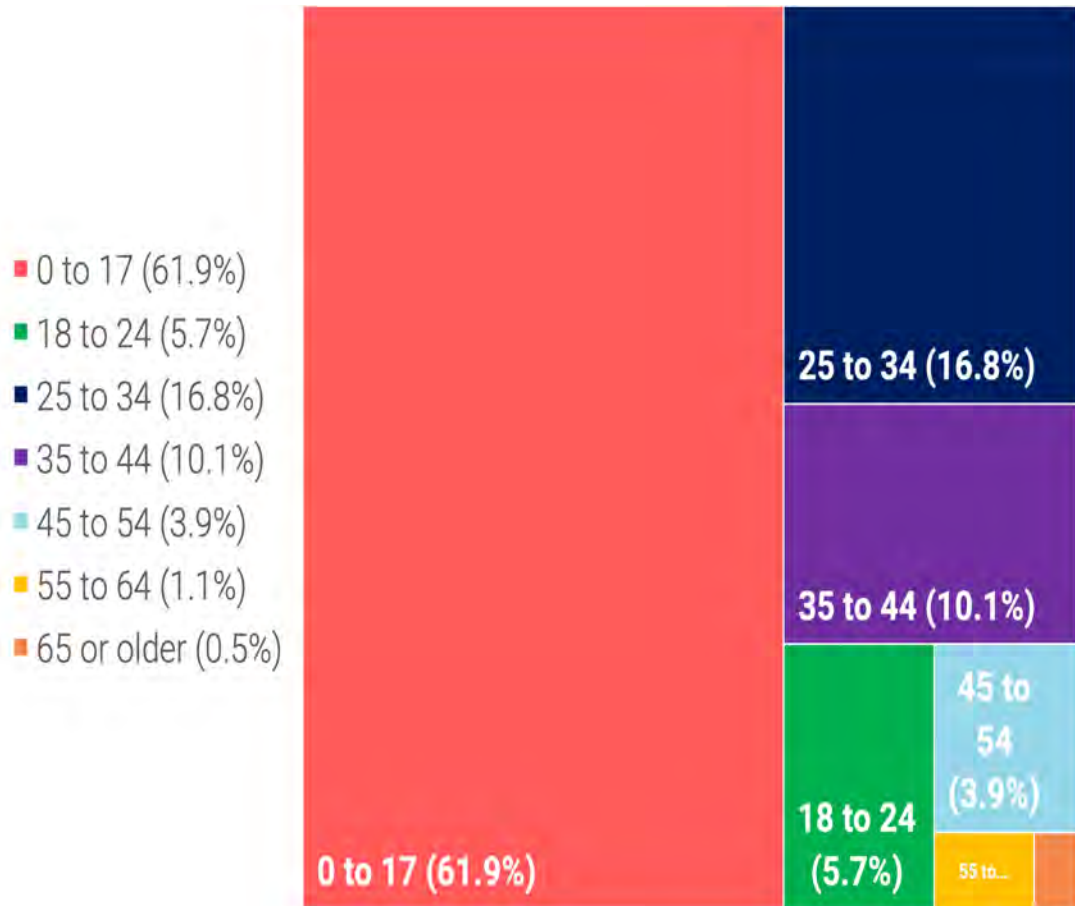
Race Representation vs General Population in Families



Gender Breakdown in Families



Age Breakdown for Families



Veteran Status for Families

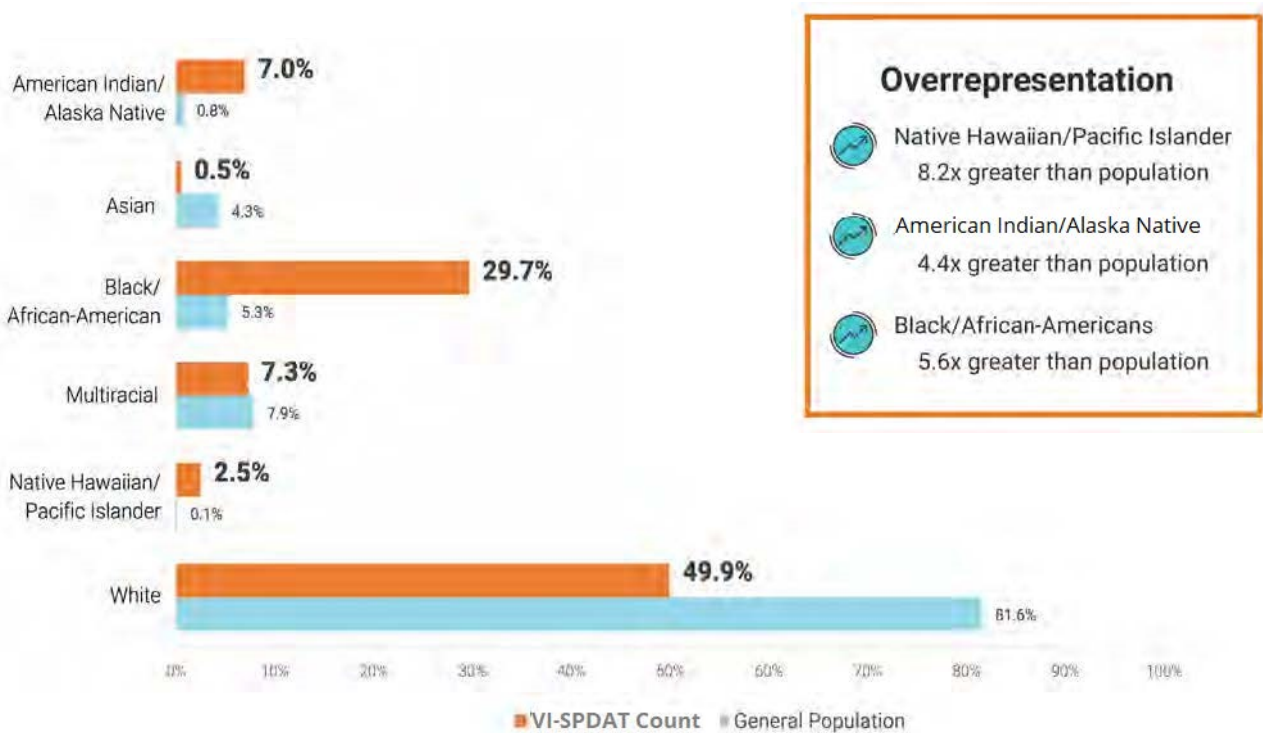


VI-SPDAT DATA FAMILIES

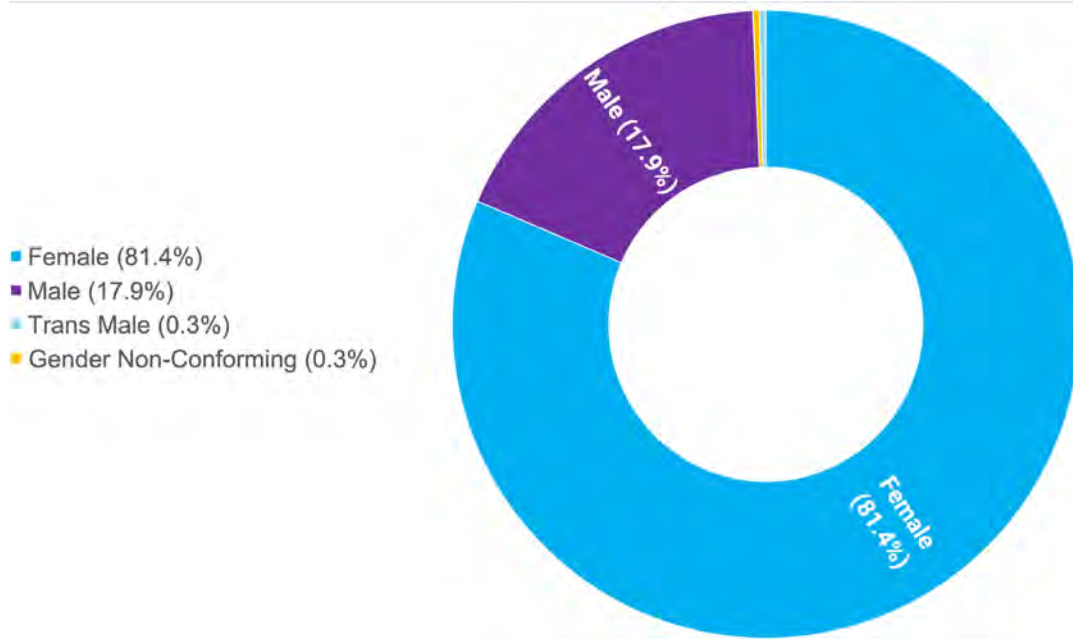
The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region’s families experiencing homelessness. During the data range, 603 individuals completed the assessment and **generally only includes the head of household.**



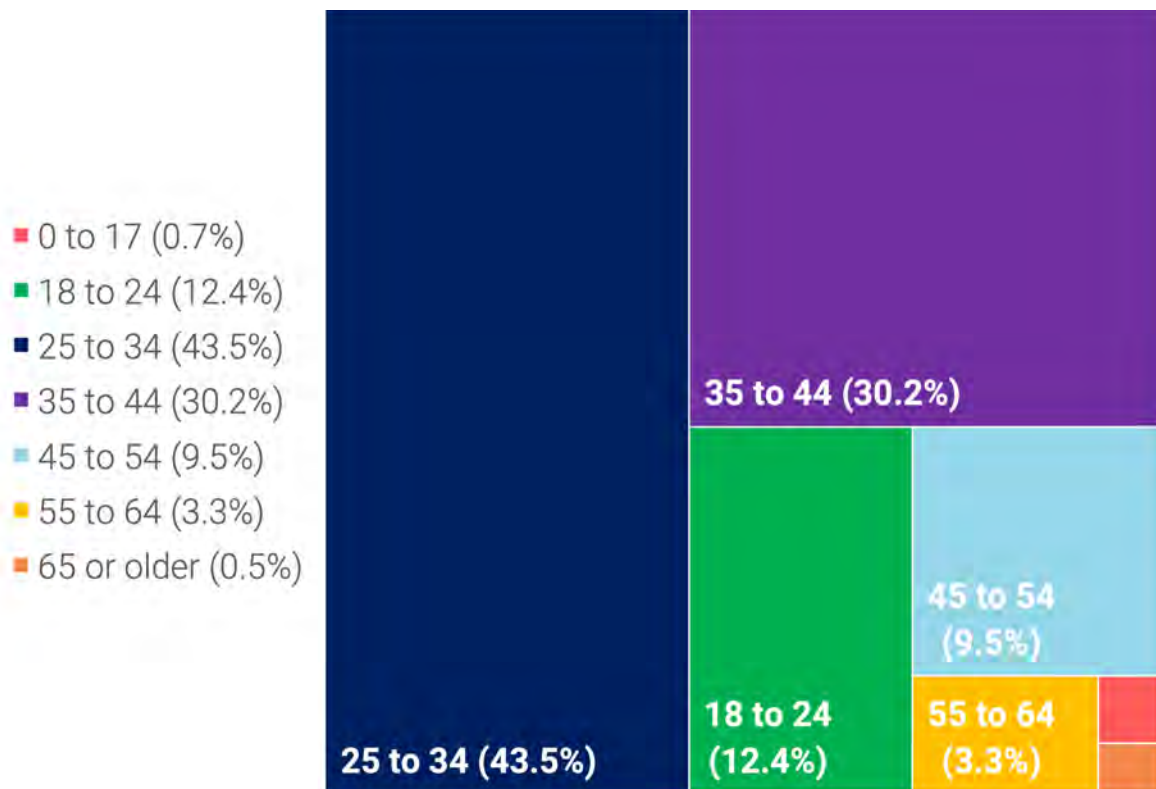
Race Representation in Families



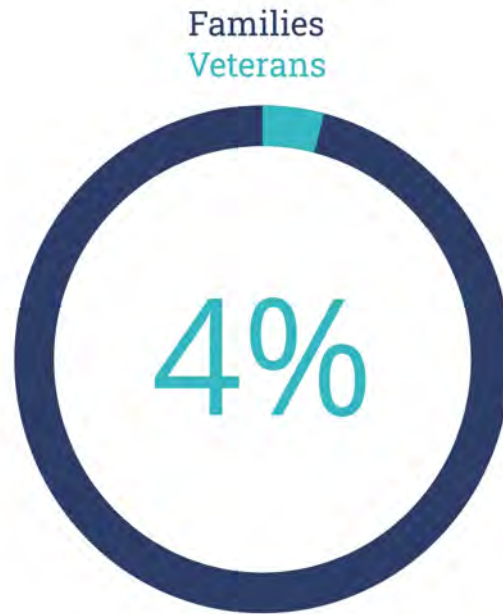
Gender Breakdown in Families



Age Breakdown for Families



Veteran Status for Families



Trauma Experience in Families

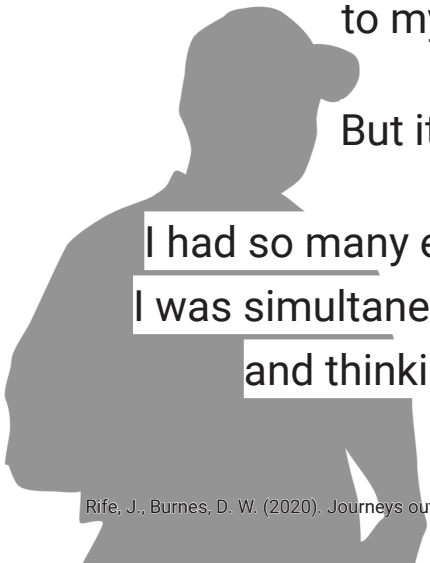


7-3 | YOUTHS

The following data demonstrates the issue of youth homelessness.

While the definition of “unaccompanied youth” varies between HUD and USED, the issue remains the same –

We are failing our young people in this country, **particularly those experiencing foster care.**



“Escaping my violent home just took one visit
to my friend and mentor...whom I trusted.

But it was the hardest ask I’ve ever made.

I had so many emotions running around in my head.
I was simultaneously ashamed, scared, shy, suicidal,
and thinking violent thoughts about my father.”

- **Tim**

Rife, J., Burnes, D. W. (2020). Journeys out of homelessness: The voices of lived experience. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

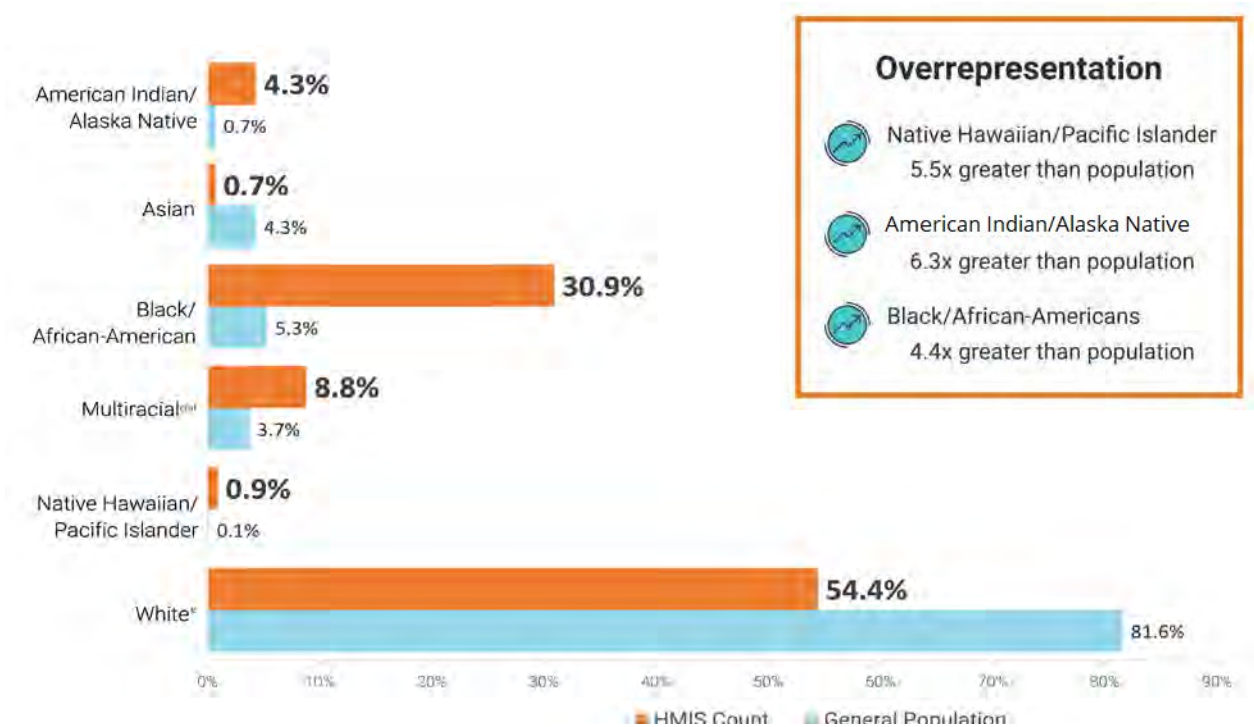
HMIS DATA

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTHS

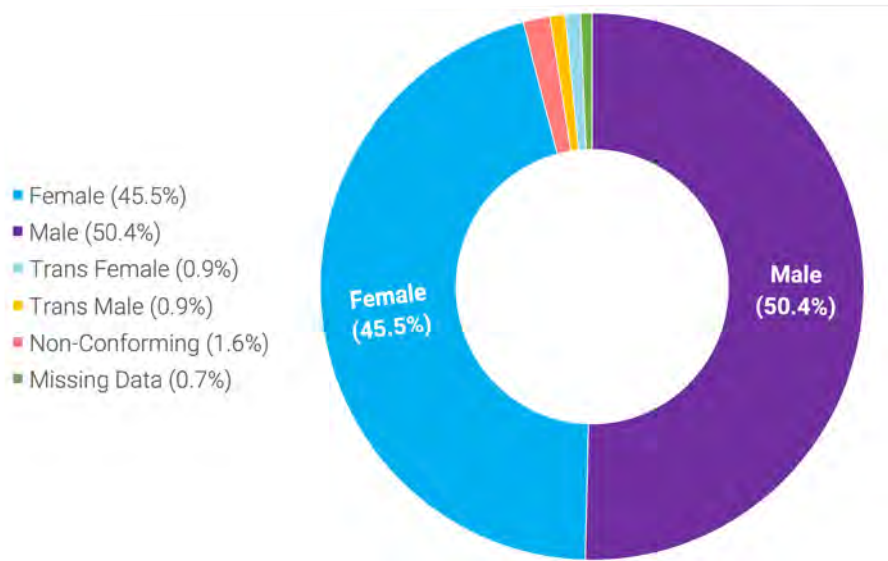
This data represents the number of unaccompanied youths accessing services or housing related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.



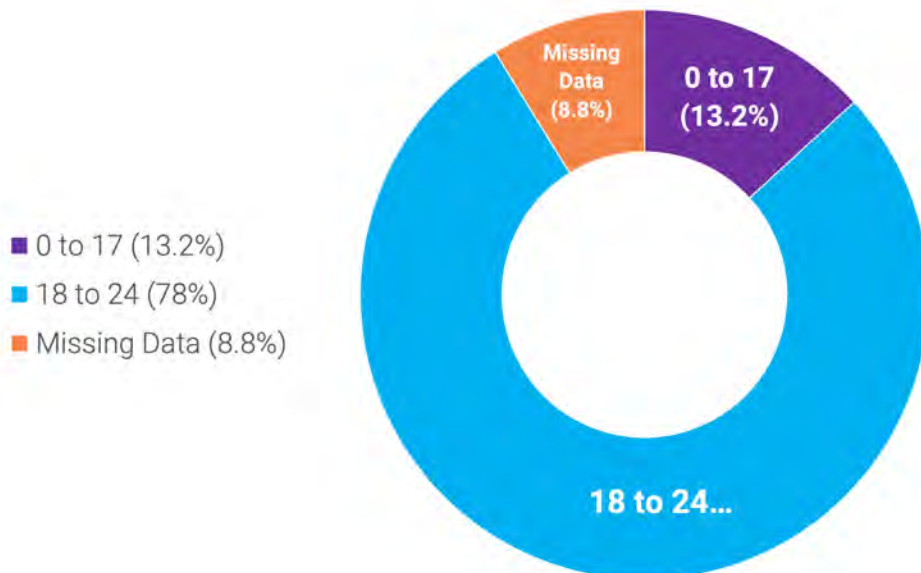
Race Representation vs General Population in Youths



Gender Breakdown in Youths

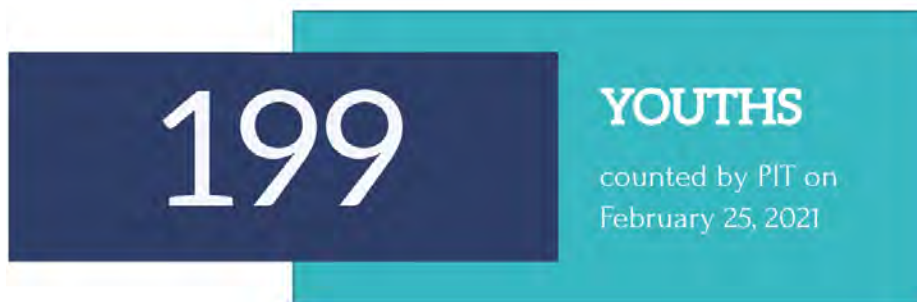


Age Breakdown for Youths



PIT DATA (SHELTERED ONLY) YOUTHS

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in February. The following data was collected on February 25, 2021 and provides a snapshot of youth homelessness on a single day. Unaccompanied youth, as defined by HUD, includes all homeless persons age 24 or younger and without a head of household older than 24.



Where They Slept the Night Before

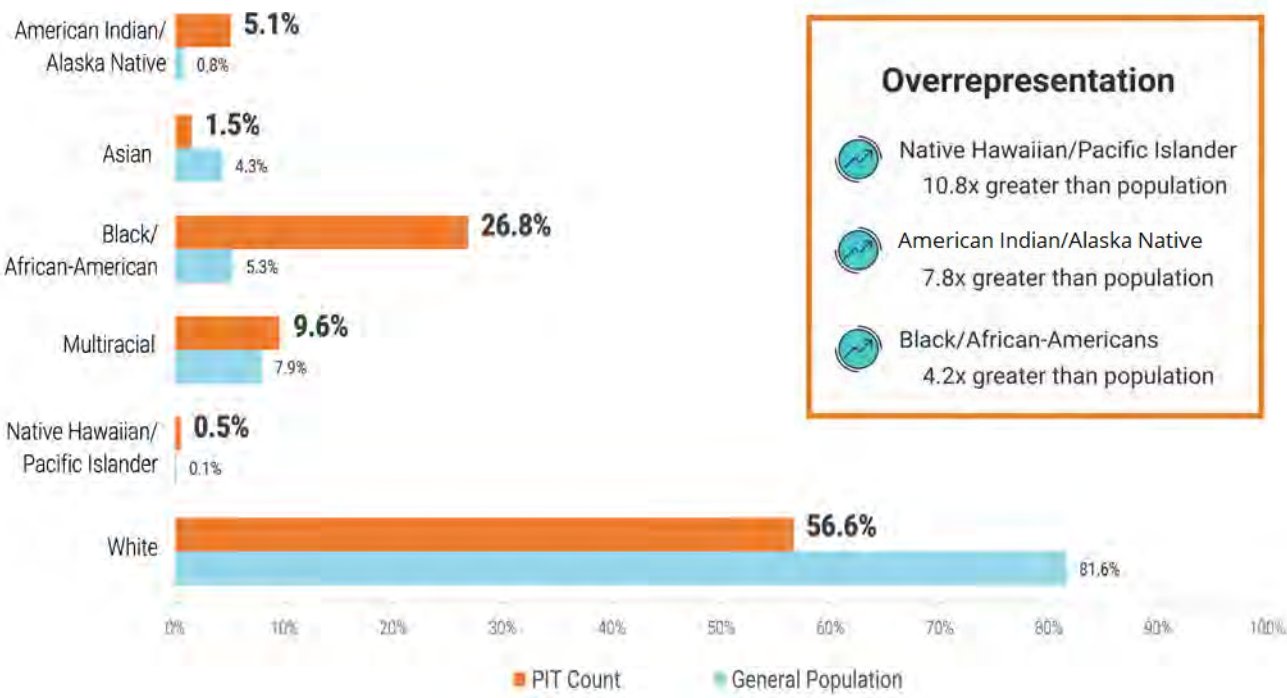


What does it mean to be SHELTERED?

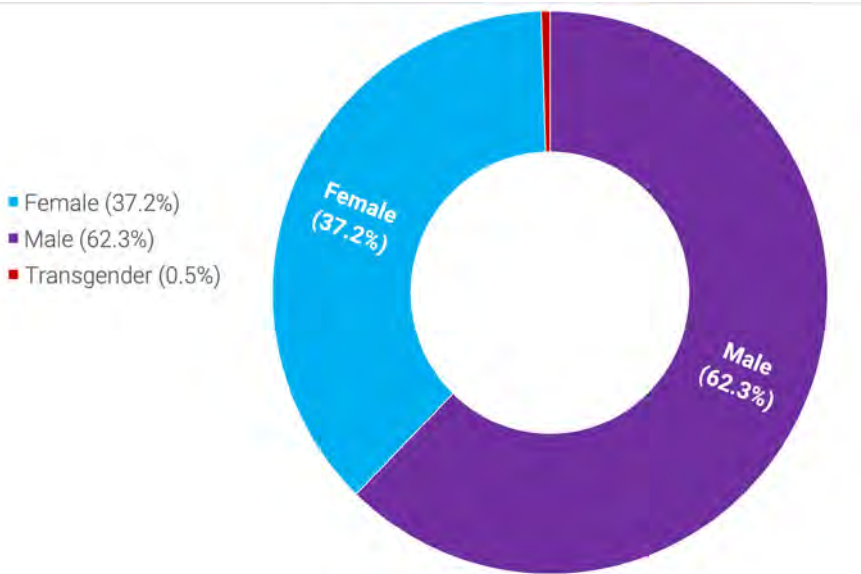
HUD defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied children who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters for the homeless.

This includes all beds dedicated for use by homeless persons that are reported by a COC in their housing inventory count (HIC).

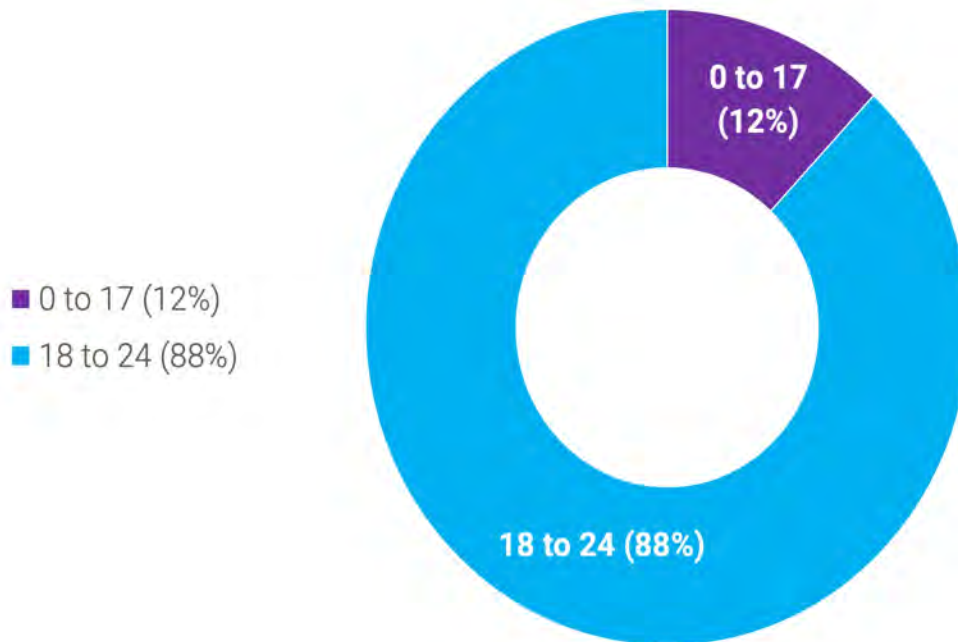
Race Representation vs General Population in Youths



Gender Breakdown in Youths



Age Breakdown for Youths

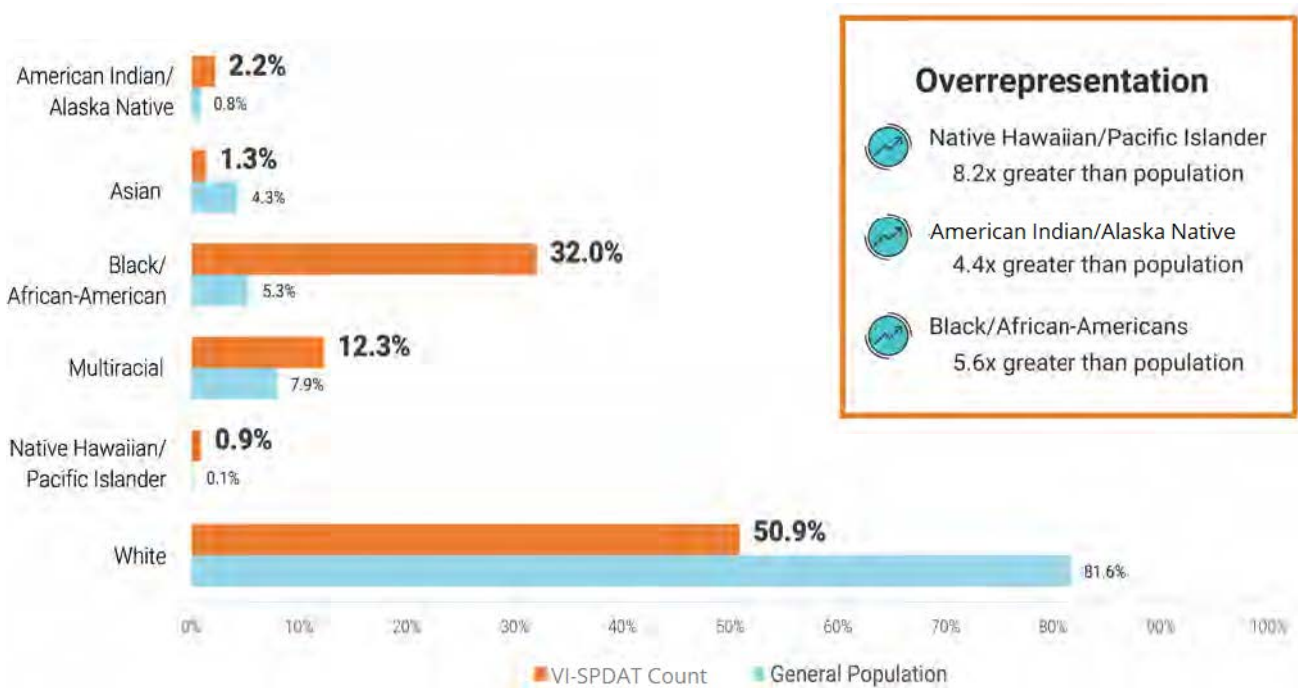


VI-SPDAT DATA YOUTHS

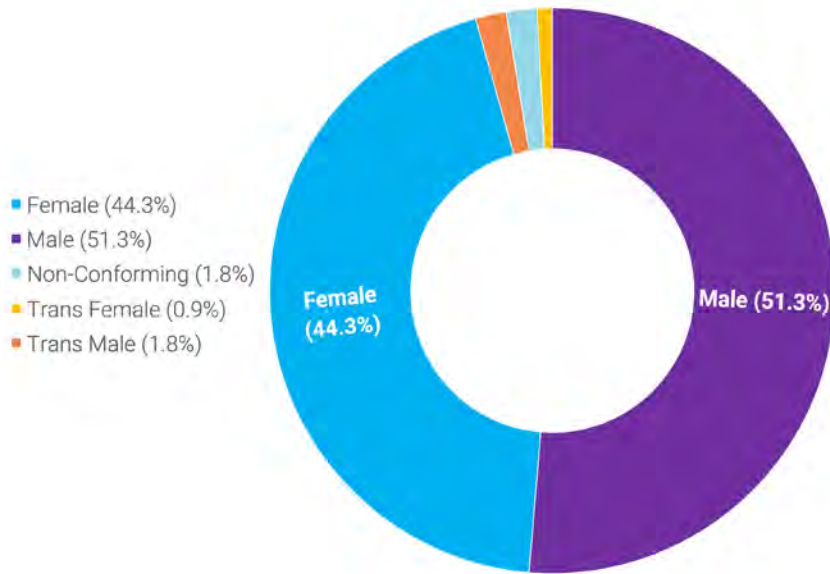
The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region’s youth experiencing homelessness. During the data range, 228 youth completed the assessment.



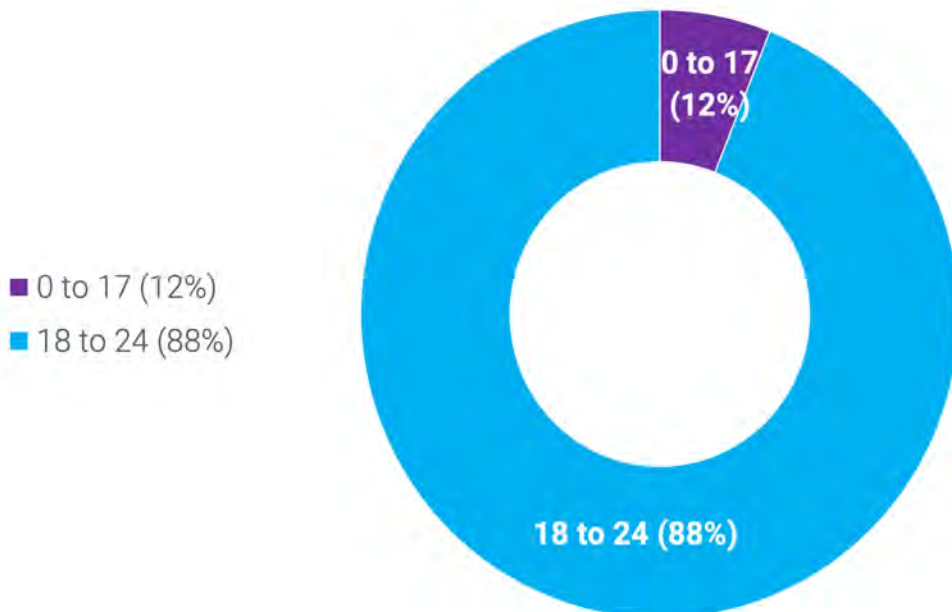
Race Representation in Youths



Gender Breakdown in Youths

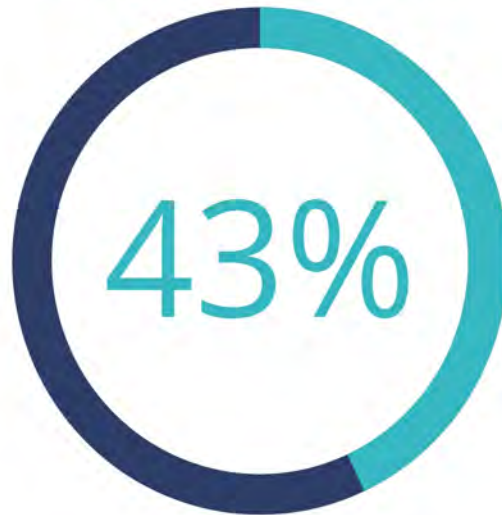


Age Breakdown for Youths



Background in Foster Care for Youths

Youths
Background in Foster Care



Basic Needs Not Being Met for Youths

Youths
Basic Needs Not Met



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA

YOUTHS

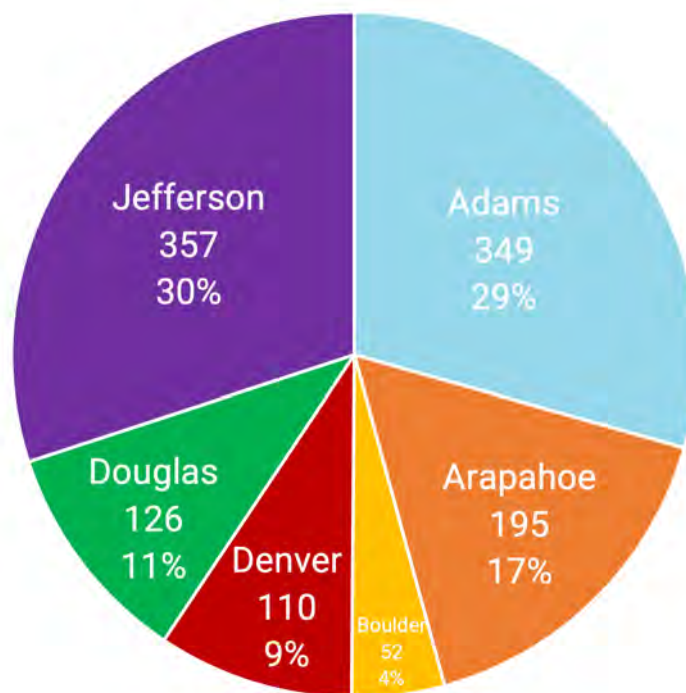
The Colorado Department of Education collects ongoing data on the number of students experiencing homelessness each year, including unaccompanied youth.

Similarly to the information noted in the family section of this report, this is a collective count that indicates the number of unaccompanied youth who at some point during the year experienced the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of homelessness.

An unaccompanied youth must also fit the definition of homeless in the McKinney-Vento Act to receive assistance under the provisions in the law. Under this definition, homeless refers to lacking a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)(a)]. The term “unaccompanied” refers to a youth “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian” [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)].

Total Count of Unaccompanied Youths in Each County

During the 2019-2020 school year, the most recent data available by the Department of Education, school districts within each county identified the following number of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:



There were a total of **1337 unaccompanied youths** experiencing homelessness.

7-4 | COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA

The Colorado Department of Education collects ongoing data on the number of students experiencing homelessness each year. This is a collective count that indicates the number of students who at some point during the year experienced the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of homelessness. For some of these students, this homelessness may have been brief. For others, it may have lasted the entire school year. These students fall into one of four general categories of homelessness. As per statute, the term “homeless children and youths”:

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

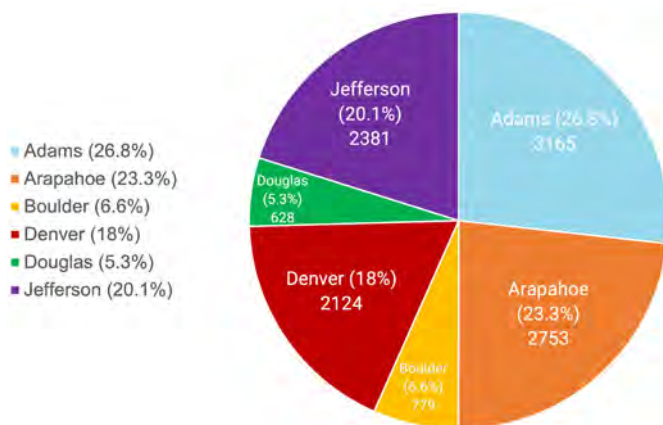
(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

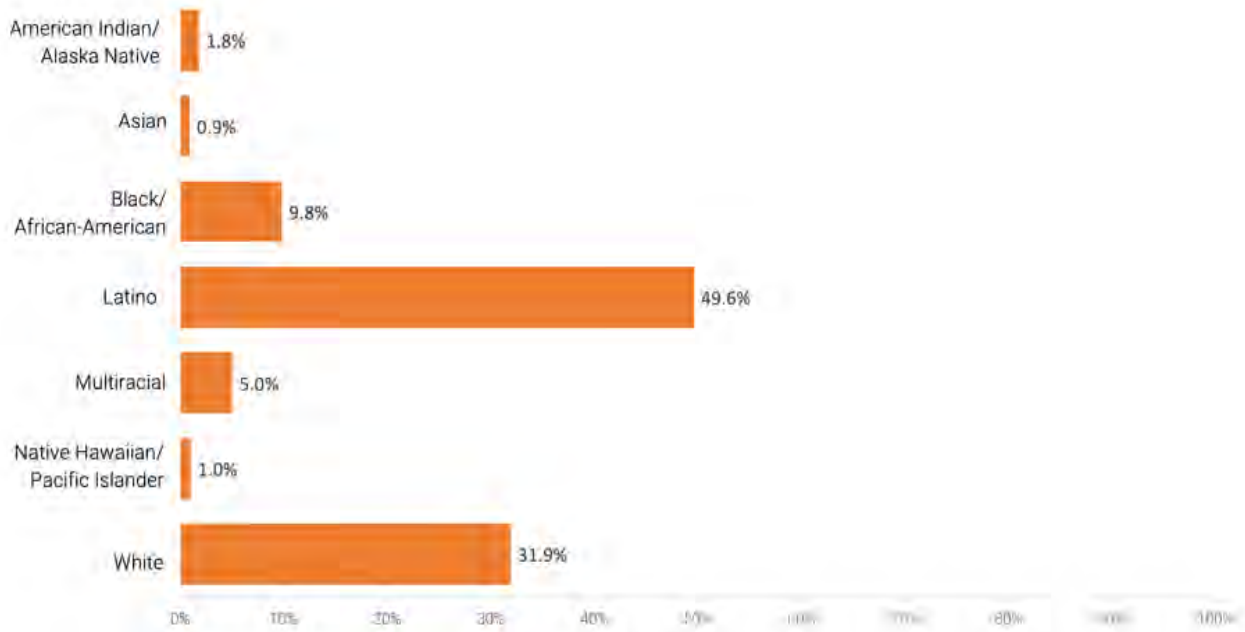
Total Count of Students in Each County



11,830 STUDENTS identified as experiencing homelessness

* Broomfield is not included as school districts are in Adams, Boulder, and Jefferson County

Race Representation in Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness

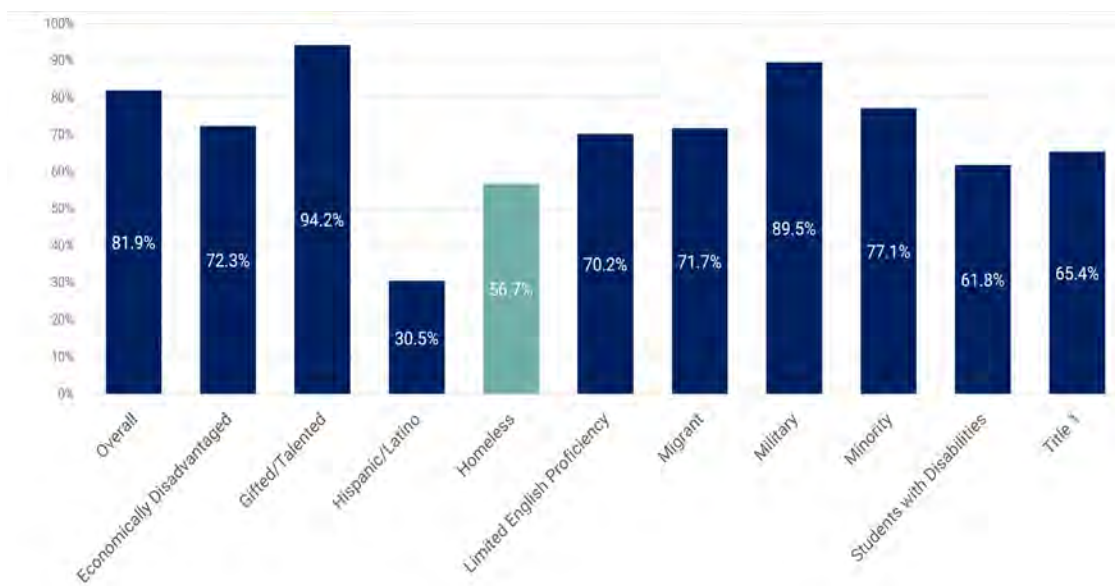


Graduation Rates of Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness

Due to privacy concerns and the Federal Education Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA), only aggregate data is available to ensure the protection of students and their families. Colorado was one of the first states in the nation to begin collecting and releasing data on the graduation and completion rates of students experiencing homelessness.

According to the Colorado Department of Education’s interactive dashboard, for the class of 2019, the state average graduation rate in four years was 81.1%.

This rate **plummets to 56.7%** for students experiencing homelessness.



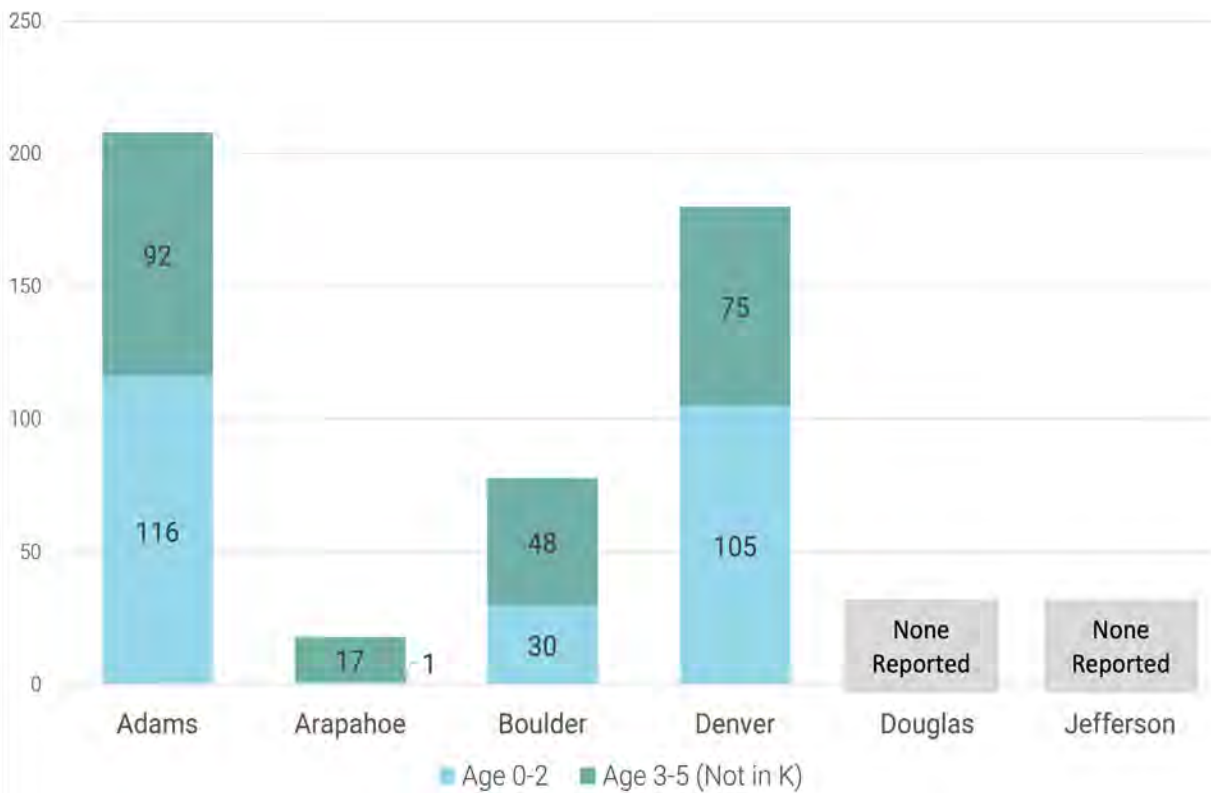
This means that approximately 1 in 2 students who experience the lack of a fixed, regular, adequate home graduate on time, pointing to the relationship between stable housing and academic achievement.

Age of Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness

In addition to identifying enrolled students experiencing homelessness, school district homeless liaisons assist in identifying children ages 0 to 5.

There were a total of **454 children age 0-5** experiencing homelessness.

Here are the number of children identified by school districts in the metro region during the 2019-2020 school year. Some districts in the region did not report any students in these age ranges.



8 | IMPLICATIONS



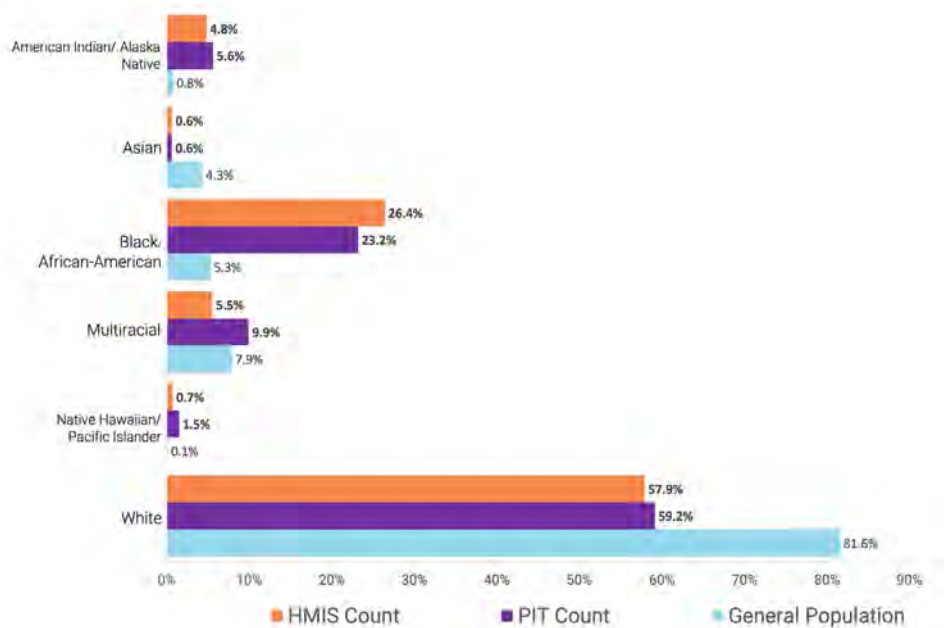
CREATING AN EQUITABLE RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

At its core, homelessness is a result of widening economic inequity, failing systems, and structural and systemic racism. As evident in this report, and all data on the issue, there is a glaring over-representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) in the homeless population and an underrepresentation of white people among those experiencing homelessness when compared to the overall census data for the region.

As a community, we must strive for racial equitable outcomes in our homelessness response. This begins by recognizing this inequity, measuring this disproportionality at a population level, and striving to ensure an equitable prioritization process and response with the ultimate goal of eliminating over-representation of any one population.

Beyond the homelessness response, structural and systemic issues in contributing systems such as criminal justice, child welfare, and healthcare must be addressed. Failings of these systems directly contribute to the homelessness crisis. Additionally, we must seek to enhance the supports that contribute to the economic stability of the region’s household such as quality childcare, employment and education opportunities, and those supports that specifically target housing-burdened households, plus create pathways to home ownership.

Lastly, part of any equitable response includes hearing from the experts on homelessness – those with lived expertise. No decisions regarding addressing homelessness should be implemented without the meaningful input of individuals who have lived through or are currently experiencing homelessness.





AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS THE BARRIER & THE SOLUTION

There is only one true solution to homelessness – housing. Particularly in this region, housing continues to be the leading cause of homelessness.

Address the Housing Gap

All sources on homelessness point to the largest issue in the metro-Denver region being access to affordable housing. The National Low Income Housing Coalition’s Out of Reach: 2021 Data lists Colorado as having the 9th highest housing wage in the nation.



In the metro-Denver region, affordability of housing plummets further.



The required housing wages puts housing affordability out of reach for many occupations, including most positions in restaurants and retail, administrative workers, bookkeepers, home health and personal care aides, construction laborers, and many others for a one-bedroom unit.

When two-bedroom affordability is analyzed, tractor-trailer truck drivers and other heavy equipment operators, elementary school teachers, and others are further eliminated.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is an estimated shortfall of 113,110 affordable units for extremely low income households, or those making below \$28,790 for a four-person household. These households constitute 21% of all renters across the state.



A FRAMEWORK FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS

The ultimate goal of all programs aimed at those experiencing homelessness must be stable housing. This comes in many forms, and a true continuum of care can meet the unique needs of all of those either experiencing homelessness and support those at-risk of becoming homeless. A Coordinated Entry System, such as the region's OneHome system, seeks to standardize a community's services to homelessness to provide a more efficient and equitable homelessness response system. As part of this system, the region must get to a place where we know in real time exactly who is experiencing homelessness by name (commonly referred to as a By-Name List or BNL). This is the first step in an effective response to homelessness.

With a coordinated response, it is critical to address the inflow into homelessness by providing well-resourced prevention and diversion efforts. Oftentimes, homelessness is avoidable with minimal investments to avoid or rapidly resolve a situation. Ultimately, this solution is much more cost effective and humane as it allows a household to maintain housing.

Should homelessness occur, a coordinated, regional response is needed. This begins with street outreach and low-barrier shelters paired with navigation to ensure the safety of individuals while they work towards stability. Ideally, shelter would be paired with navigation to create a timely, comprehensive solution to an individual's homelessness. Couples, families, and those with pets are often excluded from shelter together, meaning they must make difficult decisions on whether to seek shelter alone, potentially separated from their loved ones, or remain outdoors. In the 2020 PIT count, individuals staying outside were asked why they did not seek shelter.

The most common responses included:

- Safety concerns
- Cleanliness
- Prefer outside
- Rules
- Independence
- Hours
- Availability
- Location

Additional low-barrier shelter with the ultimate goal of moving households into housing is needed throughout the region to address the unique needs of those experiencing homelessness.

In some cases, temporary support is sufficient, often in the form of rapid re-housing. This service provides temporary subsidies for rental housing at market rent. In response to COVID-19 crisis, federal, state, and local funding have made significant investments in the homelessness response. While this is incredibly helpful in the immediate future, permanent support will still be needed to ensure their long-term stability.

9 | THE PLAYBOOK

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs recently published its **Making Homelessness History in Colorado Playbook**. The following are evidence-based approaches for ending homelessness.

SHARED VISION

KEY GOALS

STOP HOMELESSNESS BEFORE IT STARTS.

IDENTIFY INDIVIDUALS AT RISK & ENSURE THEY ARE SAFE.

CONNECT PEOPLE WITH SUPPORTS THEY NEED TO QUICKLY EXIT HOMELESSNESS.

CREATE ACCESS TO LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS.

CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

LEADING WITH EQUITY

Tackling homelessness through anti-racist practices and community-driven solutions is critical to eliminating racial disparities and inequitable outcomes.

REAL-TIME, PERSON-SPECIFIC DATA

A real-time list of people experiencing homelessness by name can provide a shared understanding of who needs support, whether efforts are working, and how to best target resources.

HOUSING FOCUSED

Helping those experiencing homelessness find stable, secure, and affordable housing as soon as possible provides a foundation to effectively tackle other challenges and opportunities they face.

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Screening for social determinates of health across benefit programs, educational systems, healthcare providers, and reentry planning improves care navigation, reduces emergency system utilization, and increases stability.

PROVEN SOLUTIONS

PREVENTION & DIVERSION

Programs that identify people at high risk of homelessness and provide supports that can help them to avoid it can help reduce the number of people entering homelessness.

COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEMS

Standardized and coordinated systems of care over a given geographic area can help ensure that homelessness services are provided equitably, efficiently, and effectively.

STREET OUTREACH

Street outreach programs can help to identify and help those who feel unsafe in or are otherwise unable to come into traditional shelters.

LOW-BARRIER SHELTERS

Shelters without restrictive entry requirements help create spaces in which people can feel safe and connect with resources.

ANTI-POVERTY SUPPORTS

Programs that provide services, supports, and benefits help struggling households lead stable, productive, fulfilling, and dignified lives. Examples include access to physical and behavioral healthcare, childcare, employment, and nutritional services.

RAPID RE-HOUSING

Providing families and some individuals experiencing homelessness with steeply declining subsidies for market-rate rental housing can help resolve an immediate financial crisis.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Combines affordable, community-based housing with access to voluntary wrap-around supportive services to help ensure safety and stability for extremely low-income households who face complex barriers and have long lengths of homelessness.

AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING

Ensuring that a given geographic area has enough affordable rental housing to meet its population's needs can help prevent families & individuals from falling into homelessness.

HOMEOWNERSHIP SUPPORTS

Providing opportunities for low- and middle-income families to purchase homes protects them from rent increases and gentrification that can contribute to homelessness.

Additional Information can be found at : The Colorado Community Health Alliance, The National Alliance to End Homelessness, & The Center for Evidence-Based Solutions to Homelessness.

10 | GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

Child(ren): Includes anyone 17 and under (not yet 18). *please note, this can include both accompanied and unaccompanied youth; this report does not include parents/guardians of accompanied children.

Chronic homelessness: HUD defines persons experiencing chronic homelessness as those who (a) are homeless, (b) are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, (c) have been homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless across those occasions is at least 12 months, and (d) have a disability.

Continuum of Care (COC): A regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. CoCs are responsible for collecting multiple data points around overall homelessness in their geographic reach.

Cumulative: Describes a methodology of counting that occurs continuously where people can be included in the count as soon as they are identified as homeless. The data provided generally represents a year time period.

Literal Homelessness (HUD Homelessness): is an Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter (including safe haven or transitional living program).

McKinney-Vento Homelessness: Includes anyone meeting the Literal Homelessness definition and children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; and migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described herein.

Newly homeless: Newly homeless is defined as a person who has been experiencing homelessness for less than one year and this was their first episode of homelessness.

Point in Time (PIT): Describes a methodology of counting that occurs at a singular point in time, generally over the course of only a few days. The data presented only provides data on those that were identified as homeless during that point in time.

Safe Haven: A project that offers supportive housing that (1) serves hard to reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who came from the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services; (2) provides 24-hour residence for eligible persons for an unspecified period; (3) has an overnight capacity limited to 25 or fewer persons; and (4) provides low demand services and referrals for the residents.

Shelter: A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. In metro Denver, there are variations of shelter types, including family shelters where households may stay for 14- 90 days on average, and nightly shelter for individuals which may be nightly only or longer term depending on the program.

Transitional Housing: A project that provides temporary lodging and is designed to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families into permanent housing within a specified period of time, but typically no longer than 24 months. In transitional housing, there are generally higher eligibility and program requirements than in emergency shelter. Participants may be asked to pay rent or fees to stay in these programs.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (ED Definition):

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (HUD Definition): a person below the age of 25 who is experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. For purposes of this report refer to the data source for the definition of homelessness. This will be a duplicative number of those represented in the children and youth categories.

Unsheltered (HUD Definition): With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

Youth: includes anyone between the ages of 18-24 (not yet 25) *please note, not all youth are unaccompanied therefore in this document you will see a number of youth and a separate number for unaccompanied youth.

Abbreviations

CoC: Continuum of Care

CDE: Colorado Department of Education

CE: Coordinated Entry, commonly referred to as OneHome in metro-Denver

LEA: Local Education Agency

VI-SPDAT: Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool