



# STATE OF HOMELESSNESS

| 2020 Report

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

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not be possible without the support of numerous individuals, partners, and agencies.

First and foremost, we would like to thank the individuals who shared their experiences of homelessness throughout the report. We appreciate your expertise and courage in sharing your stories. A particular thanks to The Denver Foundation for use of images and quotes from their Close to Home campaign as well as Lynne Rienner Publishers for the rights to reprint excerpts from the book *Journeys out of Homelessness: The Voices of Lived Experience*. These two sources help provide the first-hand insight of the experience of homelessness present throughout the report. We are infinitely grateful for the permission to include this important perspective.

Additionally, we would like to thank the organizations which assisted in the data collection efforts that made this report possible. This includes data publicly available from The Colorado Department of Education, the 2019 Comprehensive Homeless Count

from Jefferson County, Colorado, and each of the dozens of organizations that utilize the regional Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and OneHome (Coordinated Entry) that contributed to this body of work. Lastly, we are incredibly grateful to the individuals that assisted in planning and conducting the region's Point in Time (PIT) count in January of 2020. This count is a collaboration among numerous organizations across the region and would not be possible without their partnership and the dedication of the hundreds of volunteers that participate in this effort. Thank you to MDHI's PIT committee for their year-round dedication to this effort.

Without the strong, meaningful collaboration of each of these partners, this report would not be possible. We appreciate the support of our region and the strong coordination that makes ending homelessness a future possibility.



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Reader,

You have in front of you the 2020 Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative's State of Homelessness Report. This report is thanks to several regional and statewide partners and represents our contribution to the larger understanding of homelessness throughout the metro region. In previous years the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) released an annual comprehensive Point in Time (PIT) report. While this State of Homelessness report includes the annual 2020 PIT data, it seeks to expand the body of knowledge by including several additional data sets that demonstrate the broader issue of homelessness. Thanks in part to the region's efforts to implement a comprehensive, widely used Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), there is now comprehensive 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. One glaring consistency is the fact that BIPOC individuals experience homelessness at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts. This is the result of systemic oppression and policies which continue to ignore this racial disparity. Second, homelessness continues to be one of the most pressing challenges in our region. The majority of the data contained within this report was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic impact of which is

just now beginning to unfold. This pandemic is only compounding the racial and economic divide in our country. Left unchecked, homelessness will expand at exponential rates within our community and across the nation. The time for action is now. We must come together to not only address the immediate needs of our unhoused neighbors but also create long-term solutions to ensure equity and stability for all.

I would like to thank all the partners in this work that made this report possible and those doing the important work of ending homelessness. MDHI is incredibly grateful to each of you. Also, thank you, reader, for your interest in this topic. Only through joining efforts and working together is an end to homelessness possible.

Sincerely,

**Matthew Meyer, PhD**

Executive Director

Metro Denver Homeless Initiative

# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>6</b>
INTRODUCTION	6
INTENDED USE	6
OVERVIEW	6
DATA SUMMARY	7
RACIAL INEQUITY	8
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>
PURPOSE	9
LIMITATIONS	10
OVERVIEW	11
<b>CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>BRIEF EXPLANATION OF DATA SOURCES</b>	<b>13</b>
POINT IN TIME (PIT) DATA	13
HMIS DATA	14
ONEHOME DATA	15
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA	16
<b>CRITICAL DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>DATA BY POPULATION</b>	<b>18</b>
ADULTS	19
FAMILIES	26
YOUTH	33
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA	41
<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>48</b>

# 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.

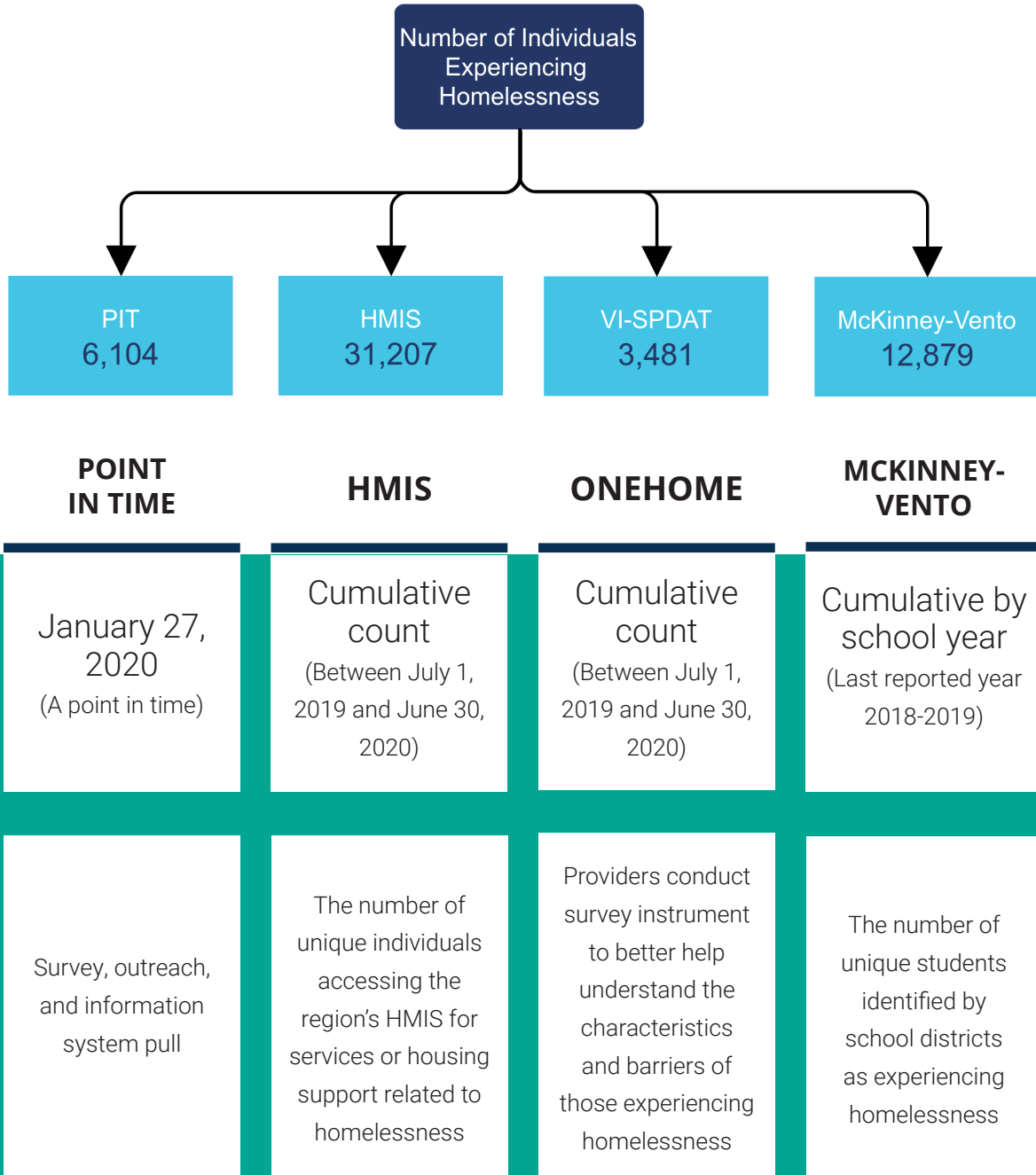
## **INTENDED USE**

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 assisting readers in creating a broader understanding of the breadth and experience of homelessness. This first version includes multiple data sources with the hope of expanding this information in future iterations. The views contained within are those of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative.

## **OVERVIEW**

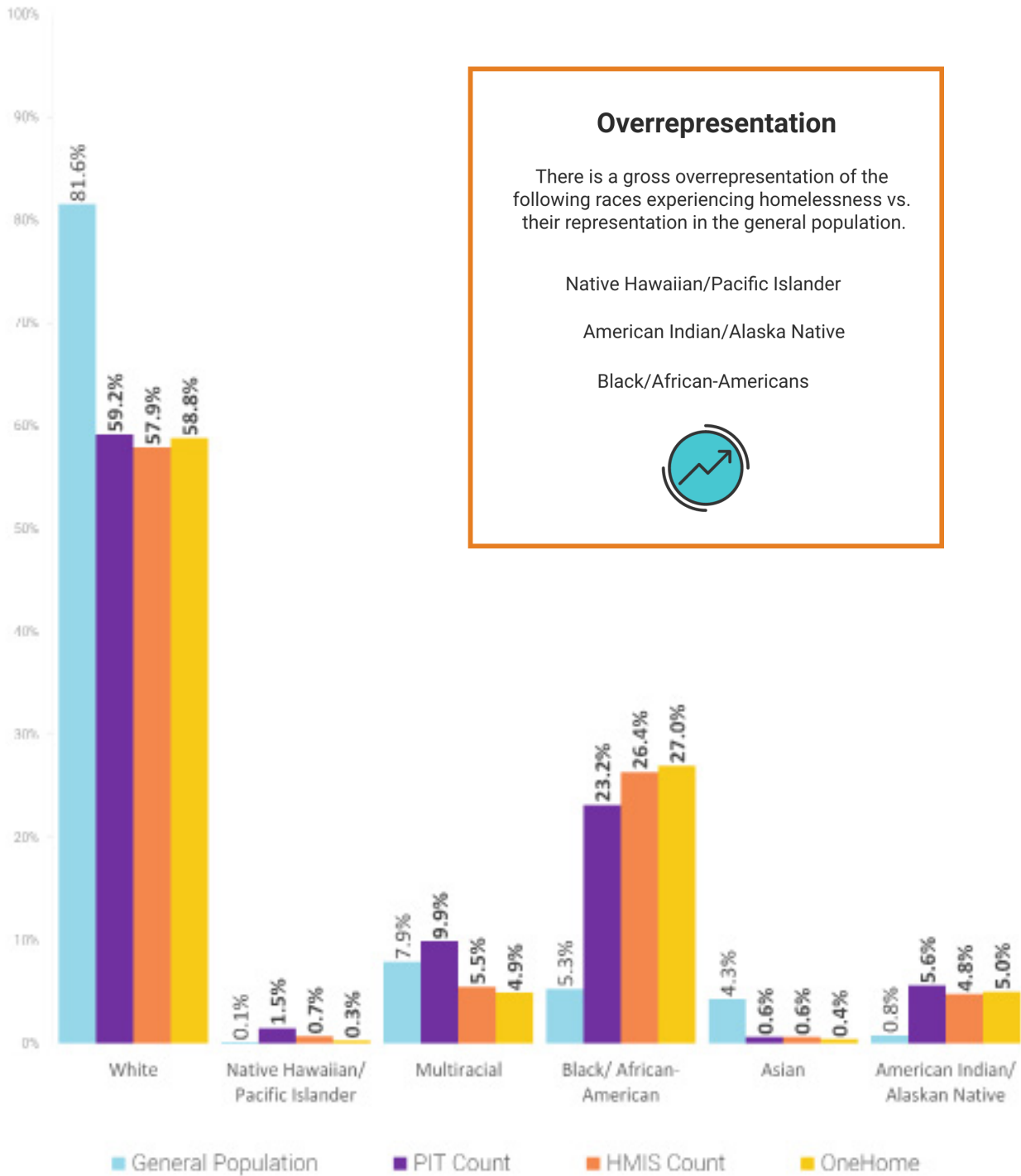
This report highlights two overarching trends in homelessness. First, inherent in homelessness, is the racial inequity that must be addressed. Second, the only long-term solution to homelessness is housing. The region faces a significant affordable housing crisis, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic's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

# DATA SUMMARY



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

# RACIAL REPRESENTATION OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS VERSUS REGIONAL CENSUS DATA





## 2 | INTRODUCTION

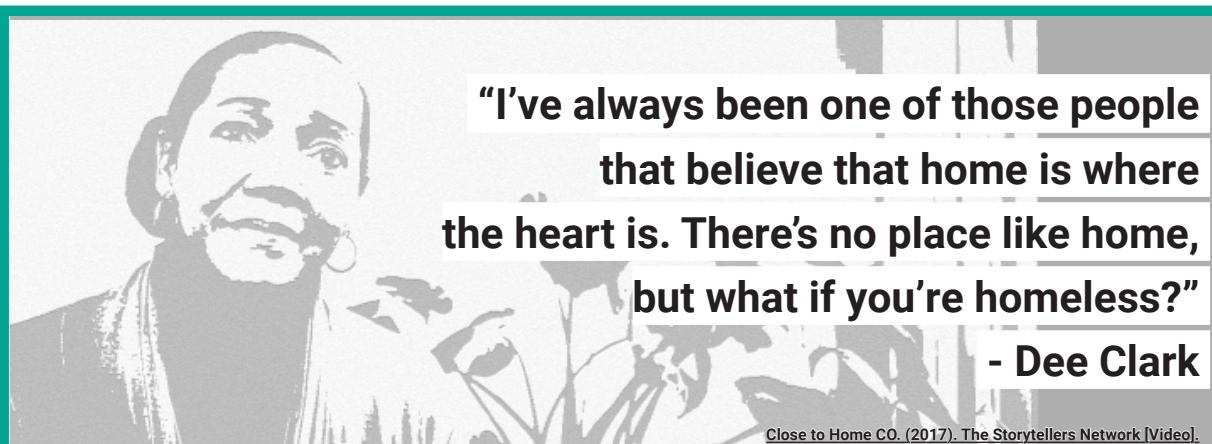
The issue of homelessness continues to worsen throughout the metro-Denver region. While the hard-working providers in our community dedicate themselves to housing our most vulnerable, market conditions, economic conditions, systemic racial inequities, and numerous other factors continue to plague our community, leading to the current homelessness crisis. As the economic impact of COVID-19 continues to unfold in the unemployment numbers, eviction protections expire, and swift federal support to address these issues is not forthcoming, these challenges will continue to grow.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is twofold.

First, it seeks to consolidate existing data within the seven-county region on the issue of homelessness. In previous years, MDHI released an annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Report. While incredibly useful in understanding the issue of homelessness, the PIT is only one lens through which to examine homelessness. This current report 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 comprised of children, families, youth, and others comprising the invisible homeless. Nor are the causes of homelessness what most believe. It is important to understand the current reality of homelessness and stop perpetuating stereotypes on this issue, particularly in light of the economic crisis unravelling in our country as a result of COVID-19.

Secondly, this report provides implications and next steps. These actions are critical components in addressing the current state of homelessness in our region, mitigating against the impacts of the pandemic, and ultimately ending homelessness.



Close to Home CO. (2017). The Storytellers Network [Video].

## 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 sources. 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.

It is important to understand the definitional variances among the data sets regarding 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. These differences in definitions help explain the wide variation in the number of individuals identified as 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. Additionally, due to the federal definitions of race, those identifying as Hispanic are forced to choose one of the narrowly-defined categories, skewing the racial data to most often include these individuals as white.

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 report that can be improved upon 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.



**DEFINITIONAL  
VARIANCES**



**POINT-IN-TIME  
VS CUMULATIVE**

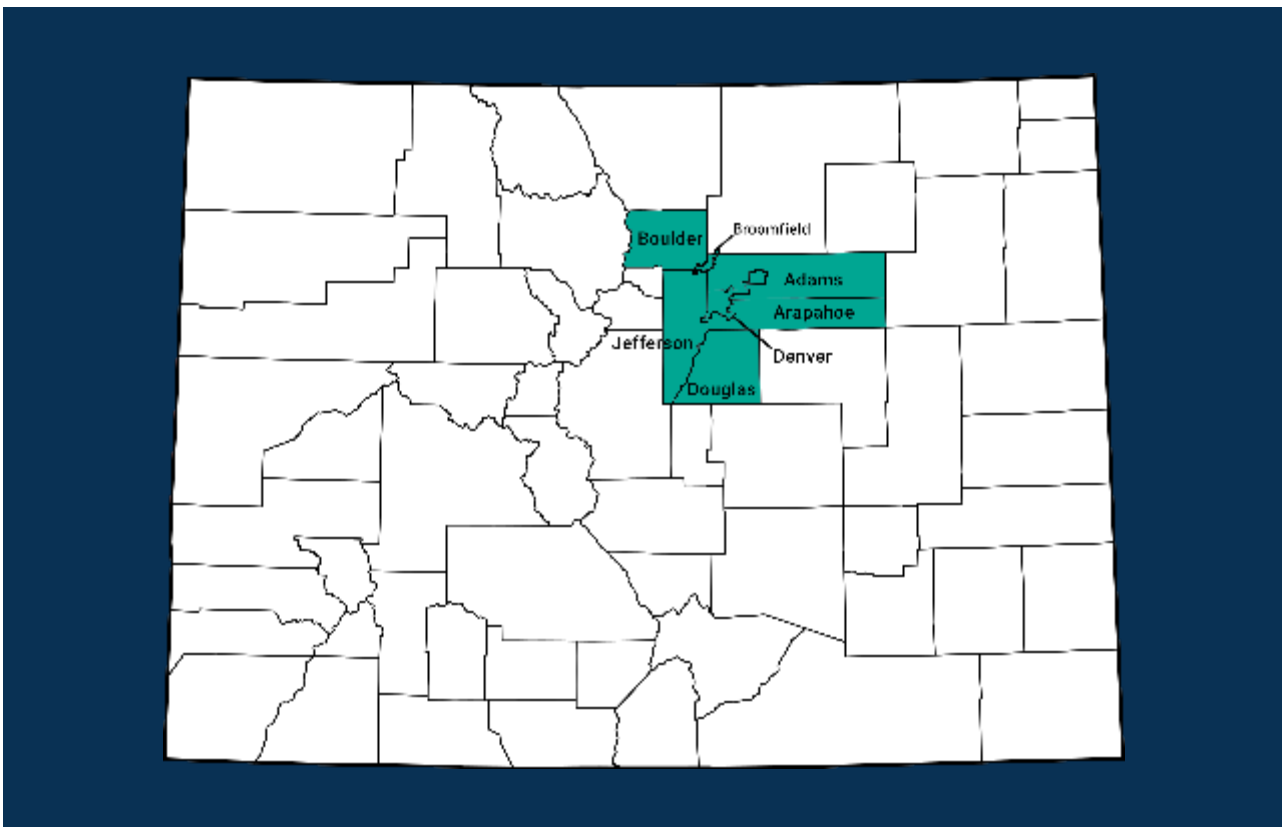


**INITIAL ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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. Moreover, housing costs, trauma, and family and relational dysfunction are a consistent cause of homelessness, as is the significant need for increased affordable housing resources. Lastly, this data can provide a baseline for the pre-COVID-19 state of homelessness in the region across all data sets as the timeframes for collection mostly occur prior to the full economic fallout. Future iterations will demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 and the region's response to the crisis.

## OVERVIEW

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. 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, called OneHome. Each of these activities provides data points on homelessness included in this report. The most recent data from the Department of Education, academic year 2018-2019, is included to provide a fuller look on homelessness among families, children, and youth in the region as well as the effects of this issue on our region's children.

# 3 | 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 someone 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. Housed residents of the region cited unemployment, substance use, and mental health as the most common causes of homelessness. However, actual data from the Point-in-Time (PIT) count indicate **the top reasons of homelessness in the region are high housing costs, a lost job or inability to find work, and relationship or family break up as the most common causes among those experiencing homelessness.**

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

This, coupled with other systemic causes such as racial inequities, stagnate wages, and affordable healthcare to name a few, create economic conditions in which many among us are unable to secure and maintain stable housing. These issues are exacerbated by the current crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The cost of housing in the metro region continues to rise.

**Denver ranks second in the nation**, only behind San Francisco-Oakland, as the **most gentrified city** in the United States. (National Community Reinvestment Coalition)

The **median value** of a home in Jefferson County is **5.13 times greater** (3.71 for the US) than the median annual income of the household. (2019 Comprehensive Homeless Count from Jefferson County, Colorado )

**Median mortgage payments** in Jefferson County account for **50%** of a household's **net income**; however, nationally this number is a mere 38% of net income.

This creates conditions in which an increased number of households 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 will only worsen this shortage as thousands of our neighbors will struggle with their mortgages and rent, many for the first time. At its core, there is only one way to truly impact homelessness – housing.

4

# BRIEF EXPLANATION OF DATA SOURCES

## 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:

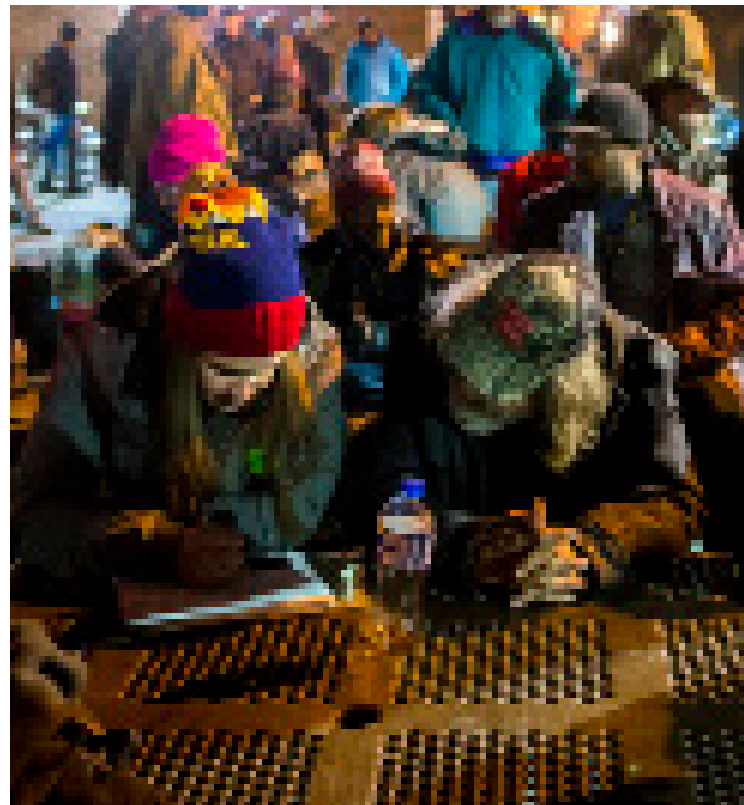
January 27, 2020  
(a point in time)

### Method:

Survey, outreach, and  
information system pull

### Definition of Homelessness:

HUD Definition of Literally  
Homeless



The 2020 PIT count for Metro Denver asked people across the region where they spent the night of Monday, January 27, 2020. 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). One of the PIT’s main benefits is serving as an annual count of the region’s unsheltered population.

**6,104**  
people  
counted that night

## HMIS DATA



### **Type:**

Cumulative for date range of 7/1/2019 - 6/30/2020

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### **Method:**

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

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### **Definition of Homelessness:**

HUD Definition of Literally Homeless

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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. Each Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for selecting an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD’s data collection, management, and reporting standards.”<sup>1</sup>

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. It represents data related to those households receiving services related to homelessness.

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

**31,207**  
people  
with activity in HMIS during this time

## ONEHOME COORDINATED ENTRY DATA

Providers conduct 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:

Cumulative for date range of  
7/1/2019 - 6/30/2020

### Method:

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

### 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 those experiencing homelessness and at-risk of homelessness.

This information is collected and stored in the region’s OneHome system and gives extensive insight into the characteristics and barriers of those experiencing homelessness for those engaged in services and being prioritized for housing.



During the defined date range, 3,481 clients completed the VI-SPDAT. <sup>2</sup>

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

**3,481**  
people

completed the VI-SPDAT

## COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA



### Type:

Cumulative by school year

(number of students that were identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the school year 2018-2019)

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### Method:

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

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### Definition of Homelessness:

U.S. Department of Education definition

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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.

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. It is the most comprehensive source of data on family and student homelessness.

**12,879**  
students

identified as experiencing homelessness



## 4

# 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 (HUD DEFINITION)

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.

# 5 | DATA BY POPULATION

## REPORT ORGANIZATION

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

5-1

## HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN

# ADULTS

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

Over 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.

“He [white male Vet Center employee] said the very same thing I said; he and I made sure of that, but, oh my gosh, the response was totally different when a white male approached the situation...

You see, they never heard me when I said the very same thing; I was invisible and voiceless because if you are roofless, you have no choice, no sense, and no value. Like I said,

I am black; how can I be invisible?”

**- Michelle, Veteran**

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

# PIT DATA ADULTS

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in January. The following data was collected on January 27, 2020 and provides a snapshot of adult homelessness on a single day.

# 4,650 single adults

counted that night

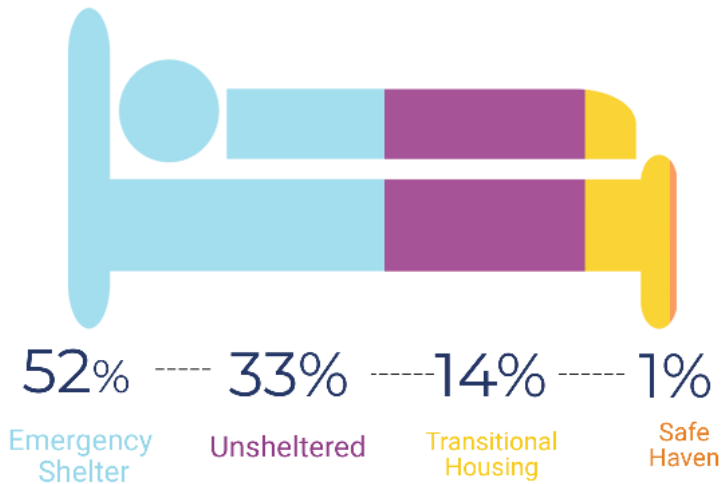
## New vs Chronic Homelessness in Adults



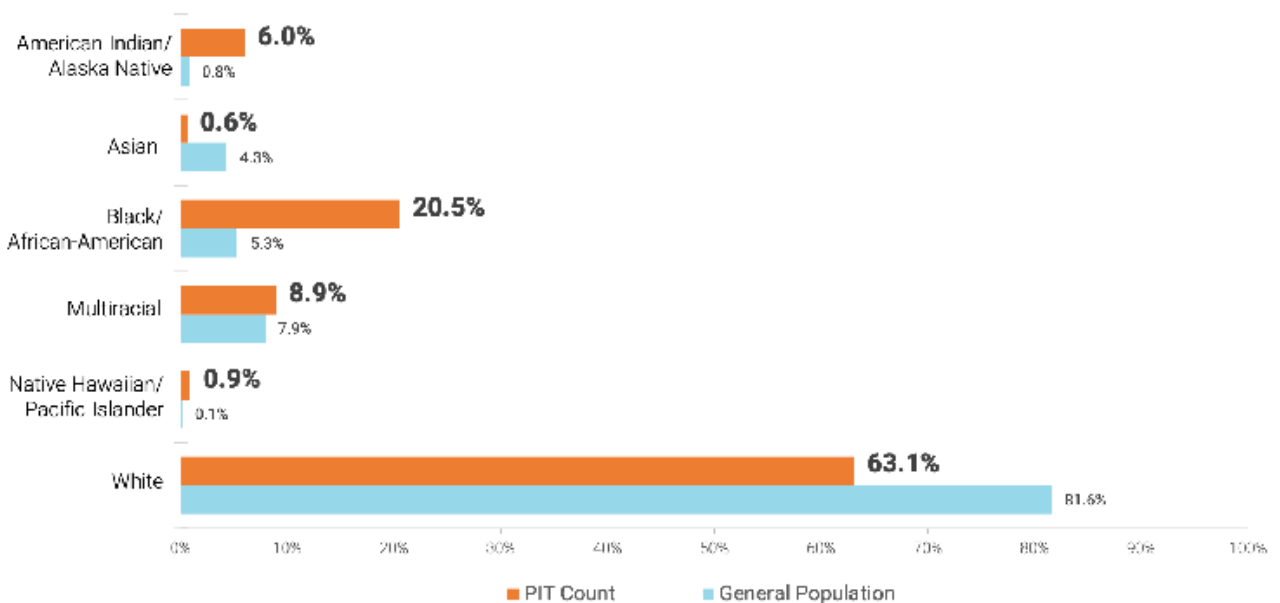
### Unsheltered

HUD defines Unsheltered as "...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..."

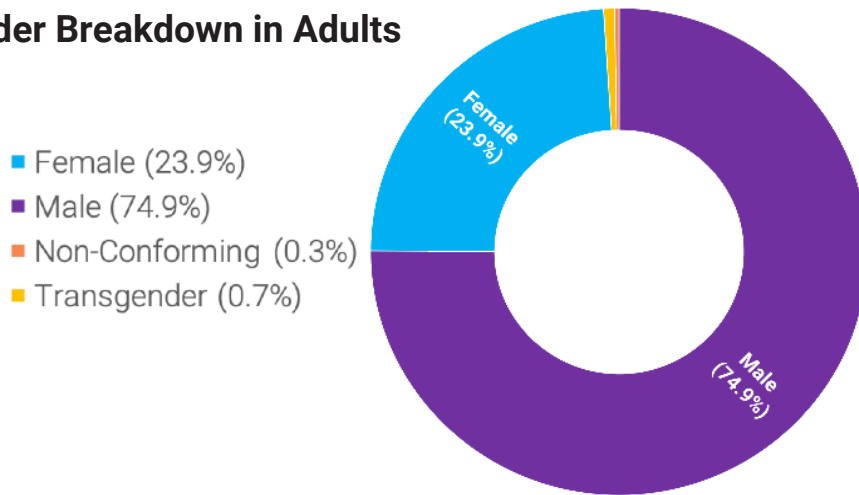
## Where They Slept the Night Before



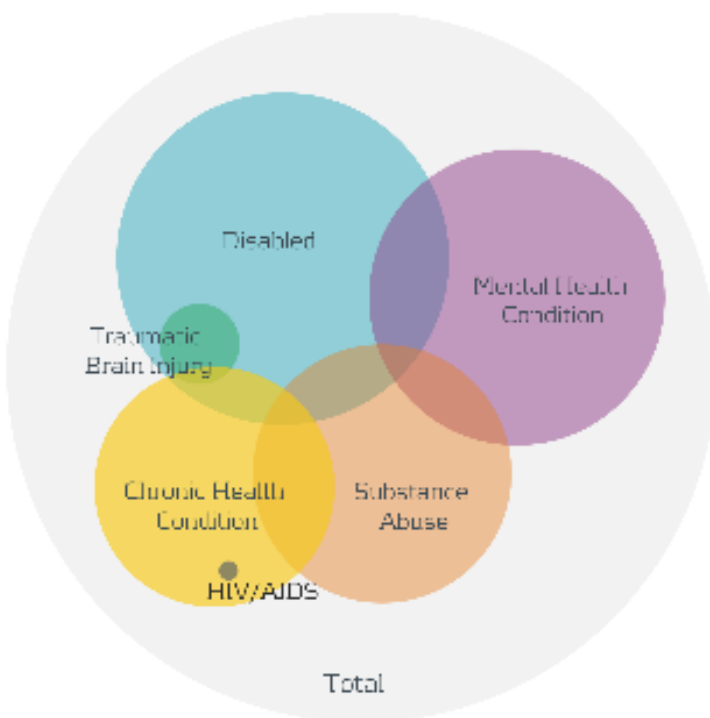
## Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)





## Gender Breakdown in Adults



## Causes of Homelessness for Adults




  
 The social isolation of chronic illness is suffocating.
   

  
**- Caroline**
  
Rife, J., Barnes, D. W. (2010). *Survivors out of homelessness: The voices of lived experience*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

## Co- and Tri-Morbidity for Adults

Many of those experiencing homelessness have **Co- or Tri-Morbidity**, meaning they have more than one of the barriers listed above.



Mental Health Concern and Physically Disabled



Mental Health Concern and Drug/Alcohol Abuse



Physically Disabled and Drug/Alcohol Abuse



Mental Health Concern, Physically Disabled, and Drug/Alcohol Abuse

# HMIS DATA

## ADULTS

This data represents the number of adults accessing services or housing related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

# 21,765

## single adults

with activity in HMIS at this time

### Newly vs Chronically Homeless

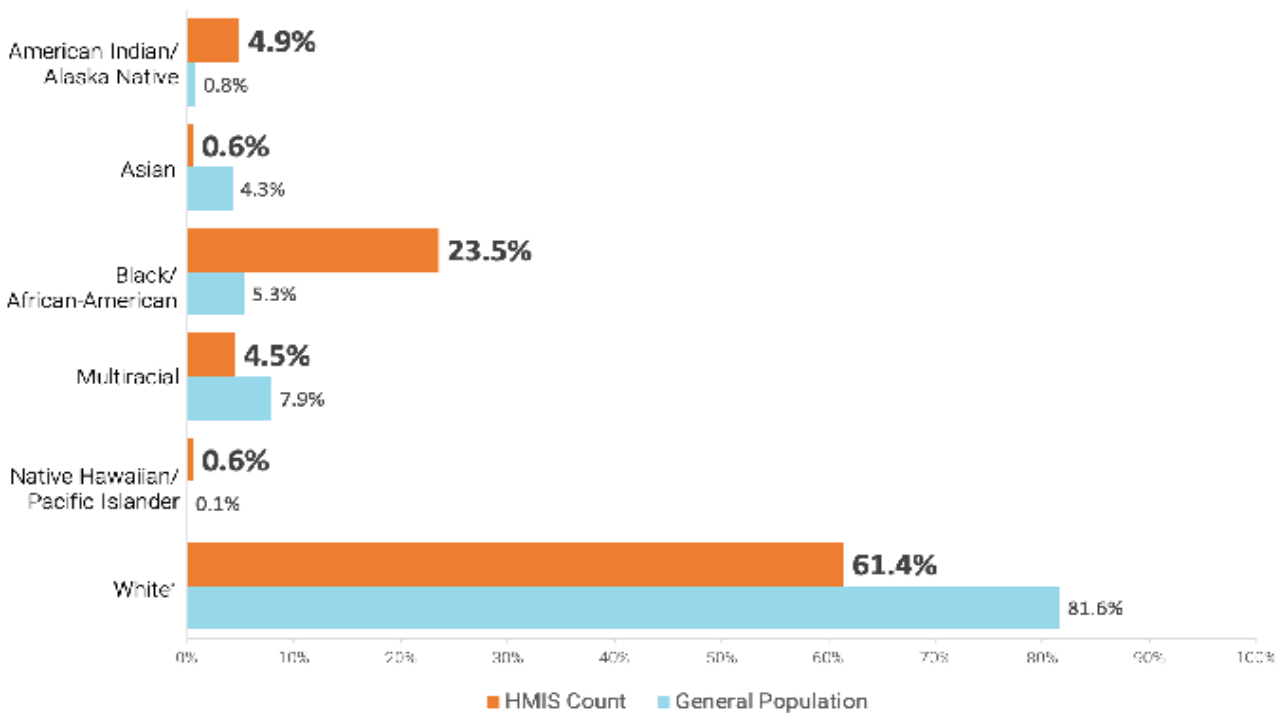


Like many others during the financial collapse of 2008...I was laid off...I lost my safety net and my housing. I would be without a home for sixteen months.

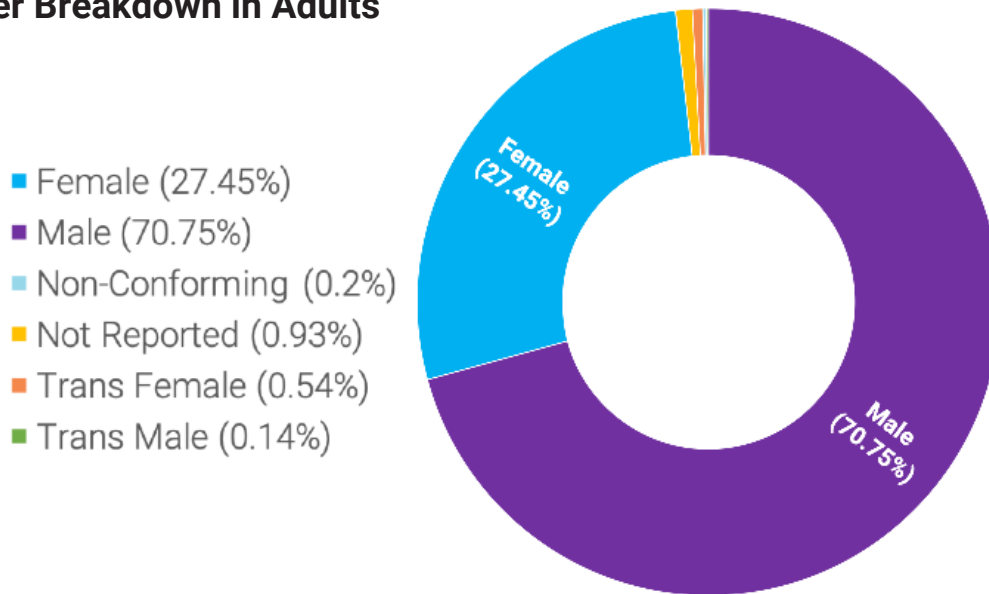
**- Leanne, Veteran**

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

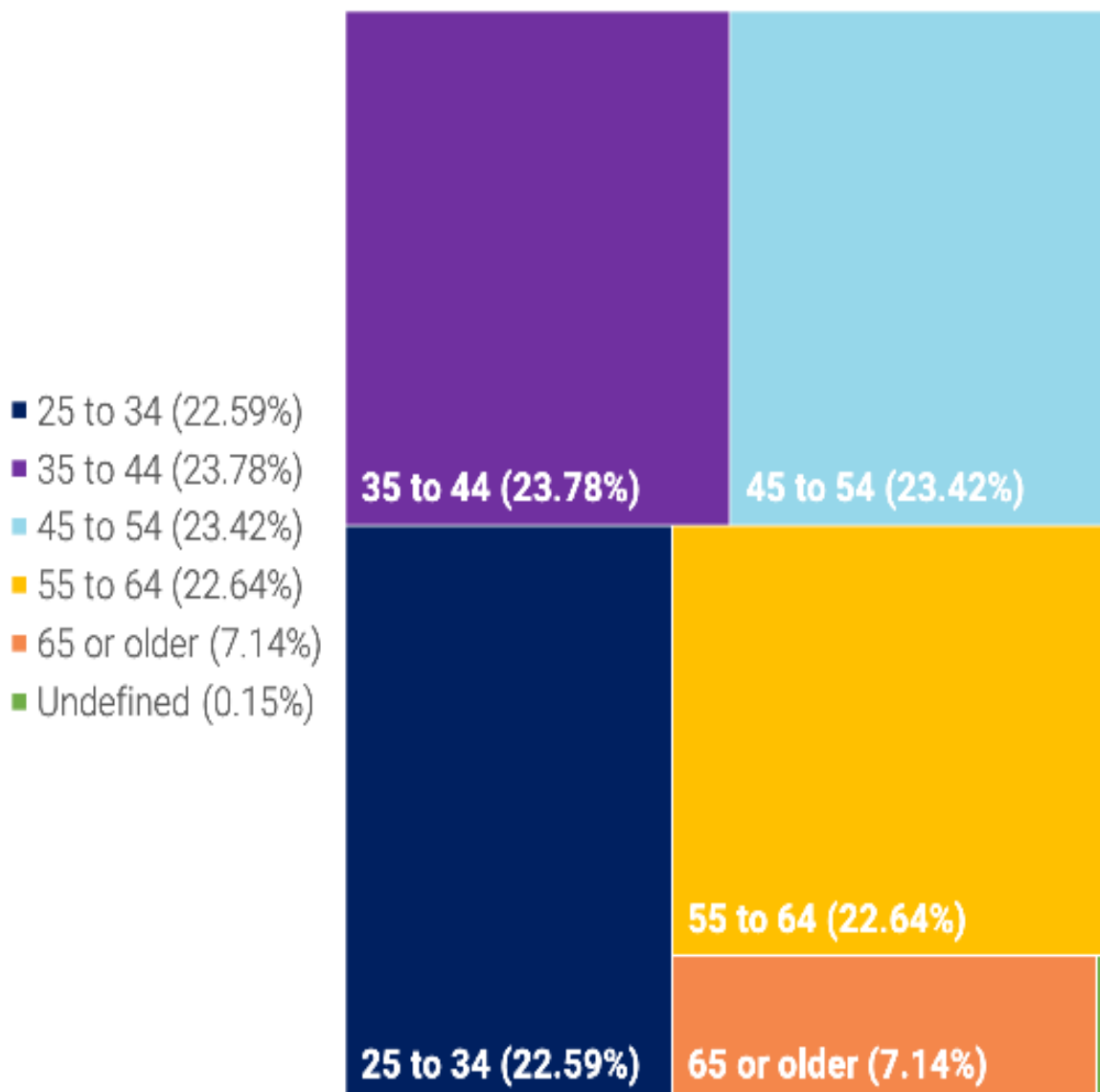
### Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)



## Gender Breakdown in Adults



## Age Breakdown in Adults



# ONEHOME DATA

## ADULTS

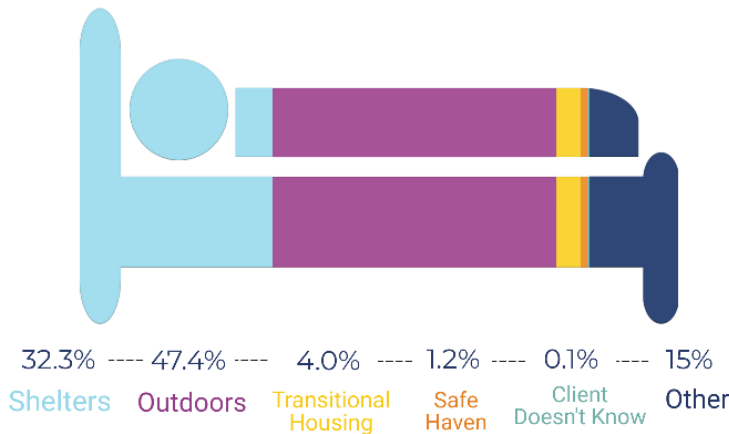
The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region's adult individuals experiencing homelessness. During the data range, 2,266 adults in households without children completed the VI-SPDAT.

# 2,266

## single adults

completed the assessment

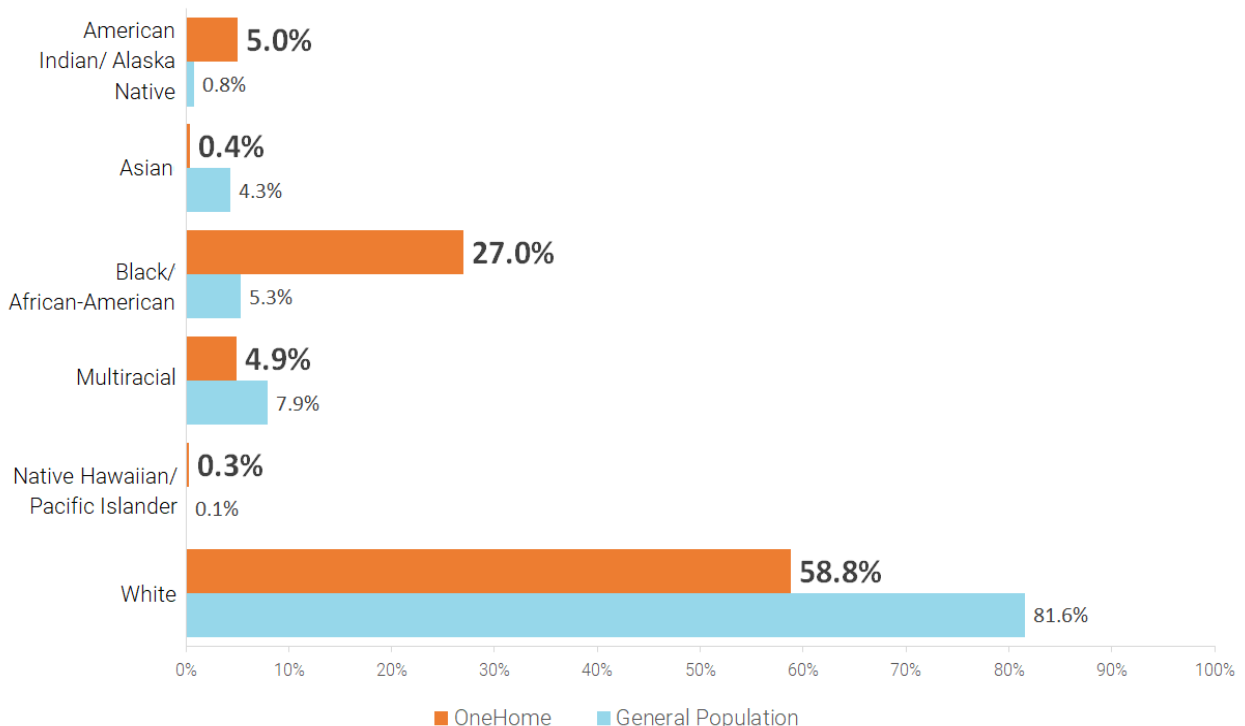
### Where They Slept the Night Before



### Shelters

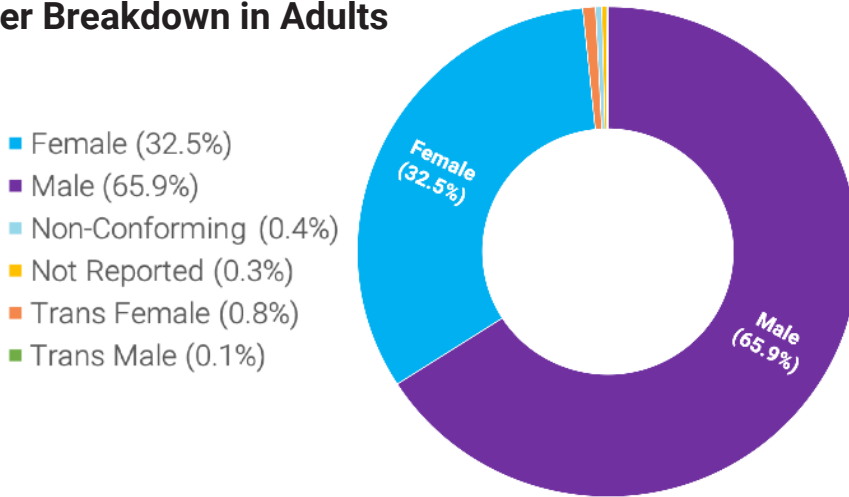
A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. In metro Denver, there are variations of shelter types, including family shelters where households may stay for 14- 90 days on average, and nightly shelter for individuals which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

### Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)

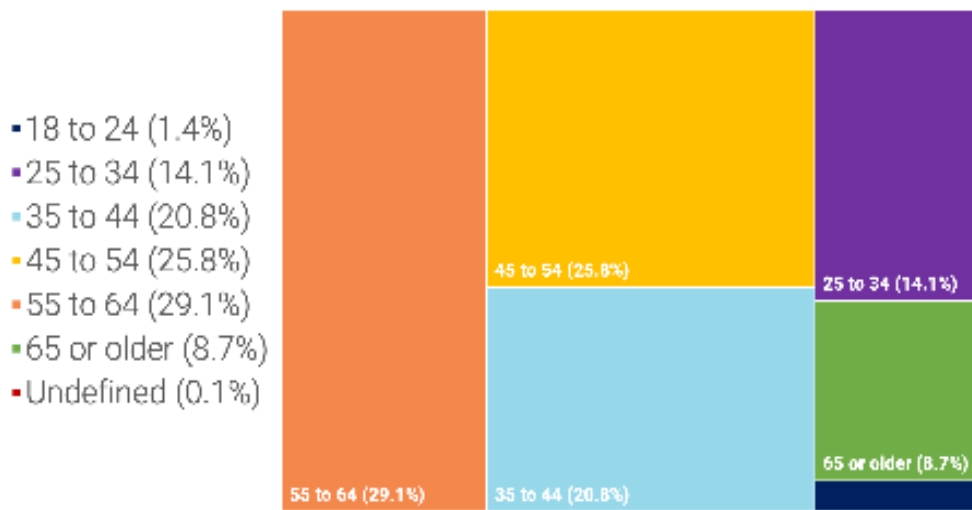




## Gender Breakdown in Adults



## Age Breakdown for Adults



## Adults as Veterans



**Status**  
22% said they were a veteran.

## Trauma Experience in Adults



**66%** said they have been through trauma in their life.

## 5-2 | HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN 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.

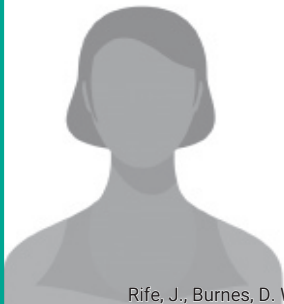
Family homelessness is perhaps where economic challenges and systemic inequities are most visible.

There is a significant overrepresentation of females comparatively, plus black/African Americans as well as American Indian/Alaska Native.

The vast majority of these households have one to three children, over half identify trauma as contributing to their homelessness, and 30% disclosed that their homelessness resulted in their children not attending school regularly.

“To me, having a home means having a place that is steady enough where you aren’t worried about what stuff you are leaving behind each time you move.

At the age of ten, I started becoming responsible for moving my own awards from school, family photos, and other momentos.



I never knew what precious memory I might leave behind every time we moved.”

- Marie

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

# PIT DATA FAMILIES

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in January. The following data was collected on January 27, 2020 and shows 1,446 individuals across 421 households as experiencing homelessness.

# 1,446

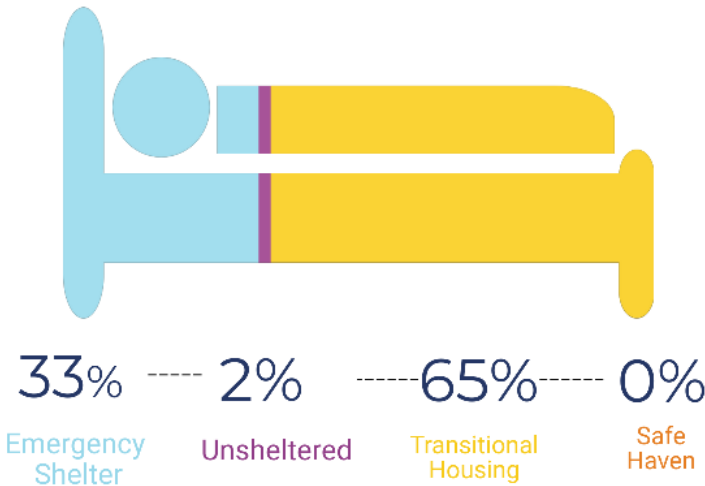
## in families

counted that night

### Newly vs Chronically Homeless



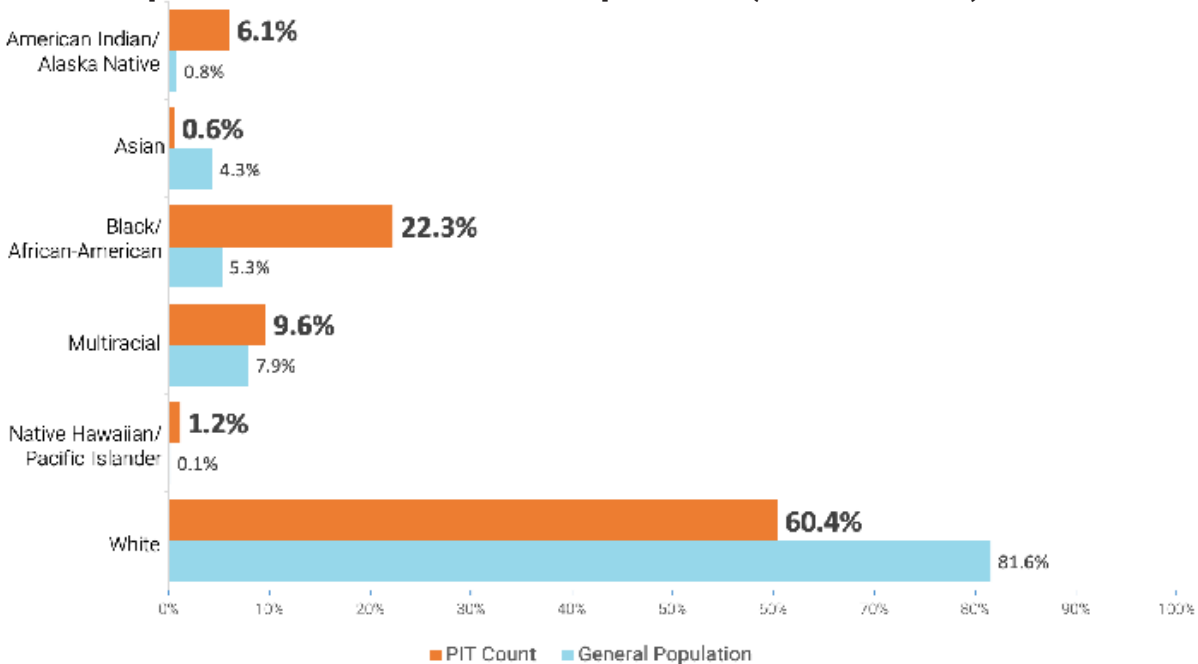
### Where They Slept the Night Before



**Unsheltered**

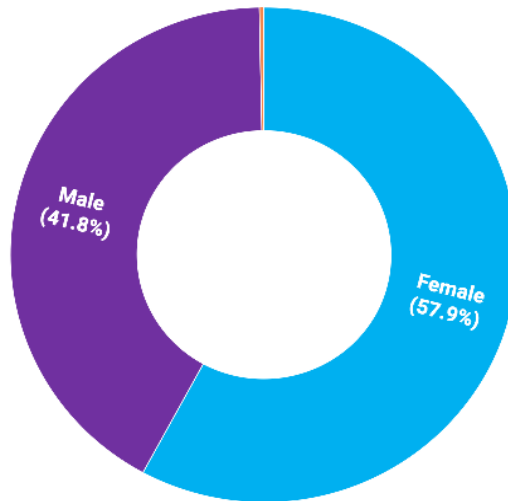
HUD defines Unsheltered as "...with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground..."

### Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)

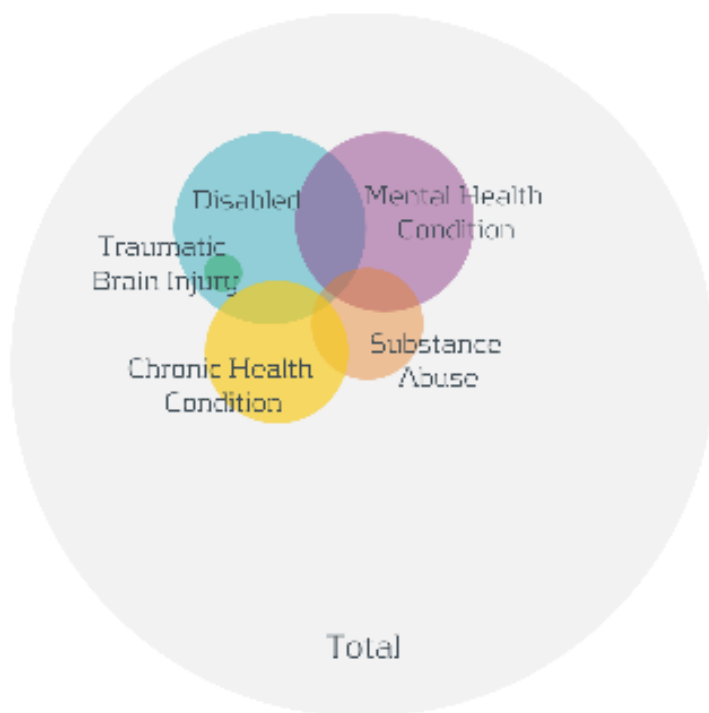




## Gender Breakdown

- Female (57.9%)
- Male (41.8%)
- Not Reported (0.3%)



## Causes of Homelessness

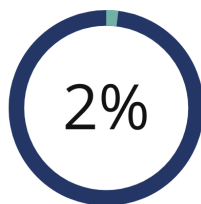



  
 The real tragedy of losing your house is that it makes all of the shameful conditions of your life visible for all to see.
   

  
**- Barb**

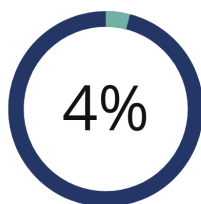
Rife, J., Burnes, D. W. (2020). *Journeys out of homelessness: The voices of lived experience*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

## Co- and Tri-Morbidity for Families

Many of those experiencing homelessness have **Co- or Tri-Morbidity**, meaning they have more than one of the barriers listed above.



Mental Health Concern and Physically Disabled



Mental Health Concern and Drug/Alcohol Abuse



Physically Disabled and Drug/Alcohol Abuse



Mental Health Concern, Physically Disabled, and Drug/Alcohol Abuse

# 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, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

# 2,437 families

with activity in HMIS at this time

## Newly vs Chronically Homeless

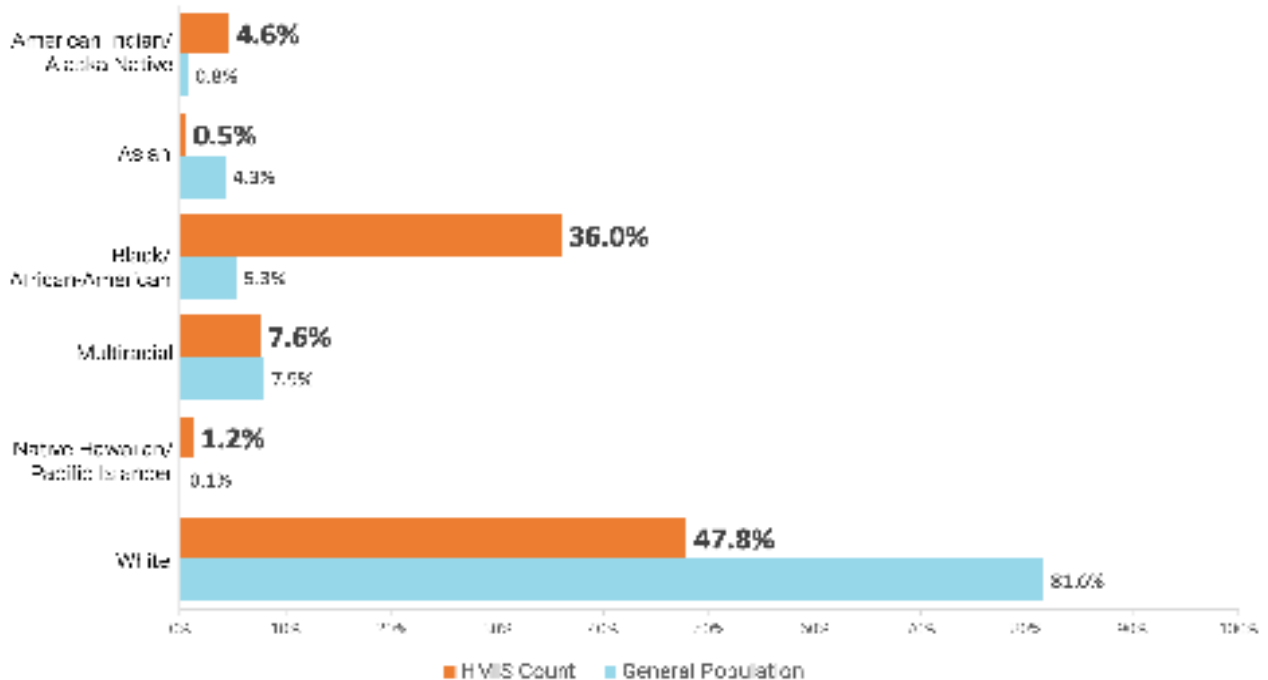


“The hardest part about being doubled up is that you are never sure how long the arrangement is going to last, and you hold on to it being temporary.”

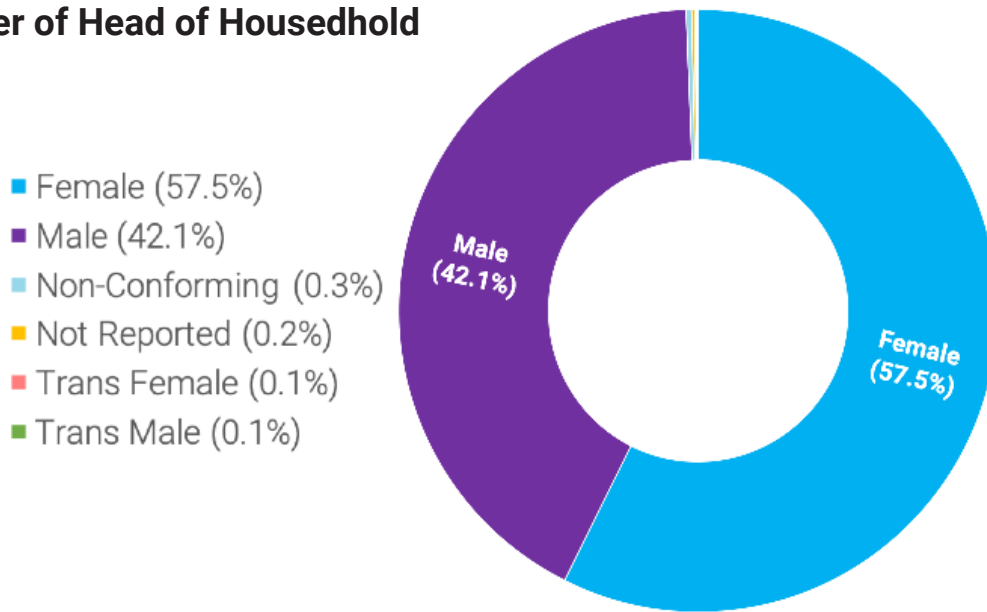
**- Marie**

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

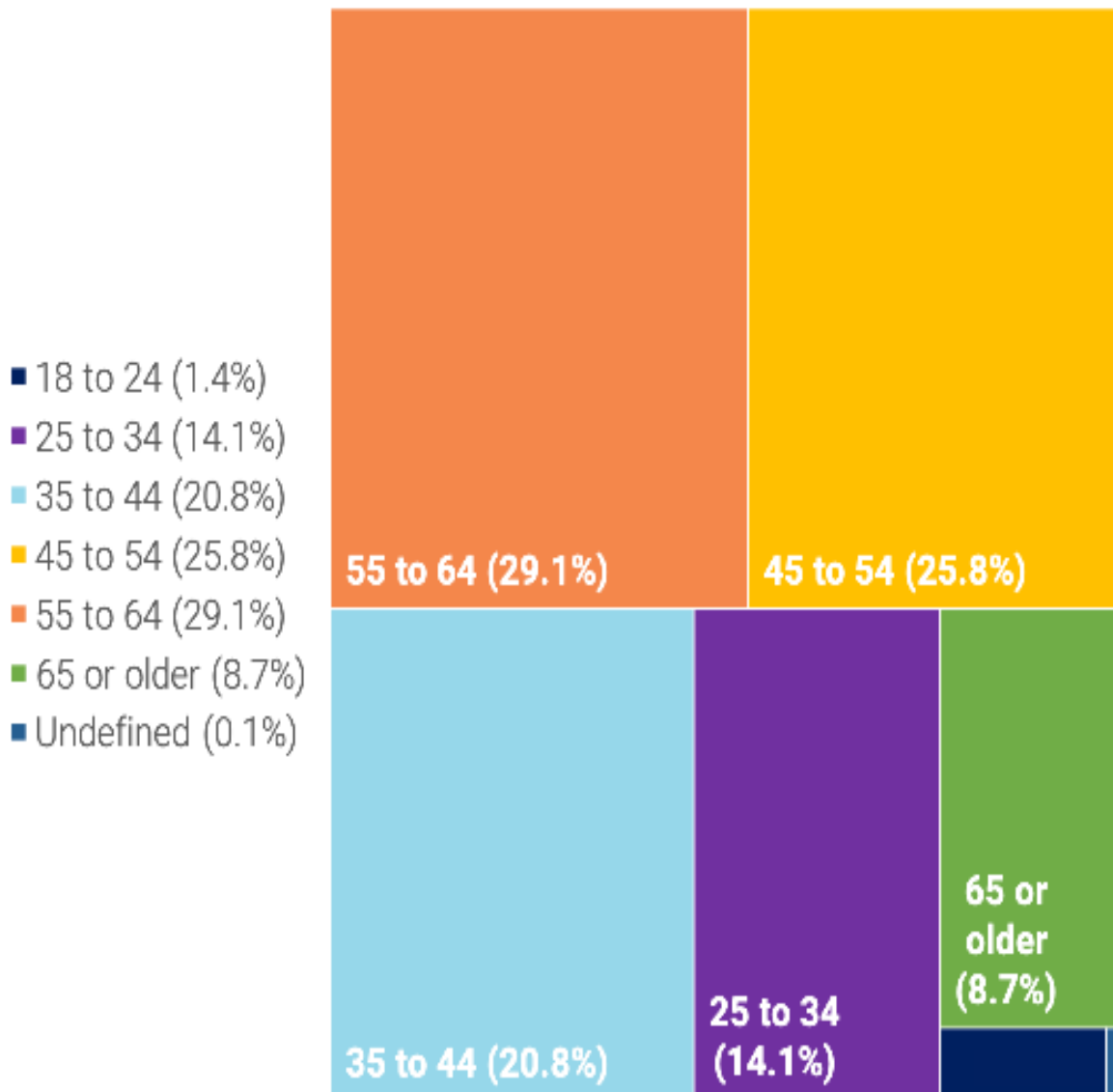
## Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)



## Gender of Head of Household



## Age of Head of Household



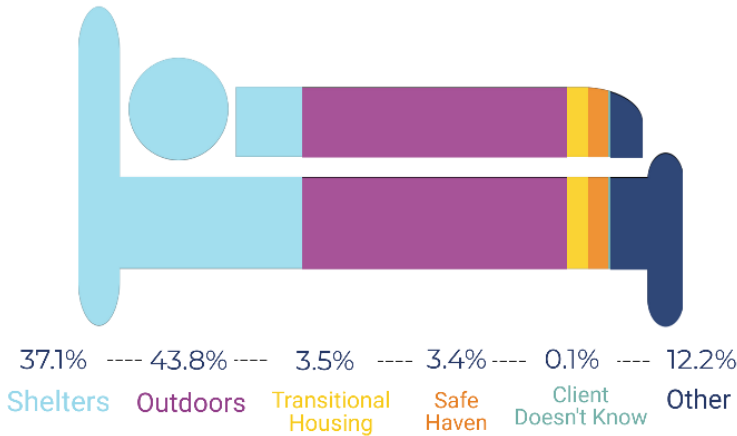
# ONEHOME DATA FAMILIES

The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region's families experiencing homelessness. During the data range, 863 heads of households in families completed the VI-SPDAT.

# 863 families

completed the assessment

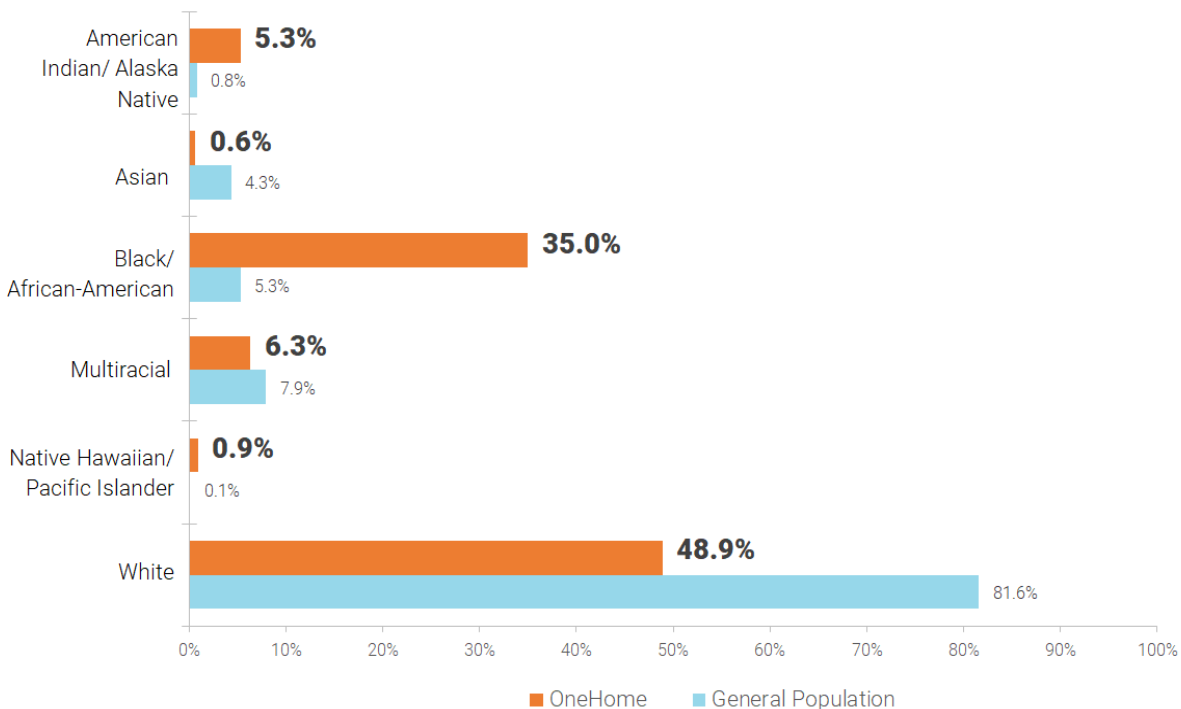
## Where They Slept the Night Before



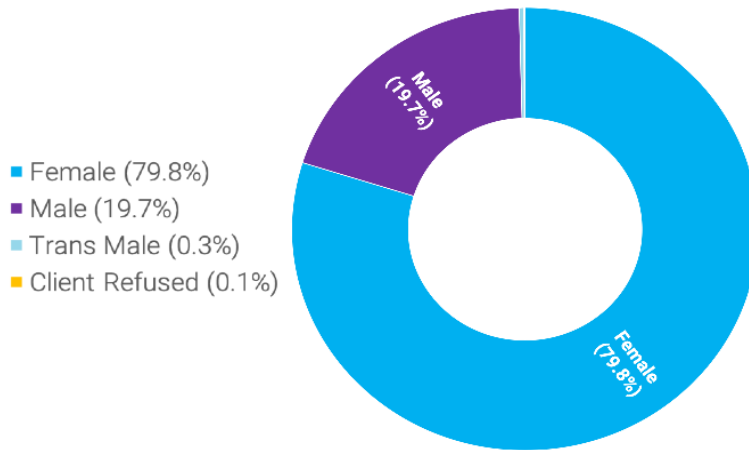
### Shelters

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.

## Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)



## Gender Breakdown in Families

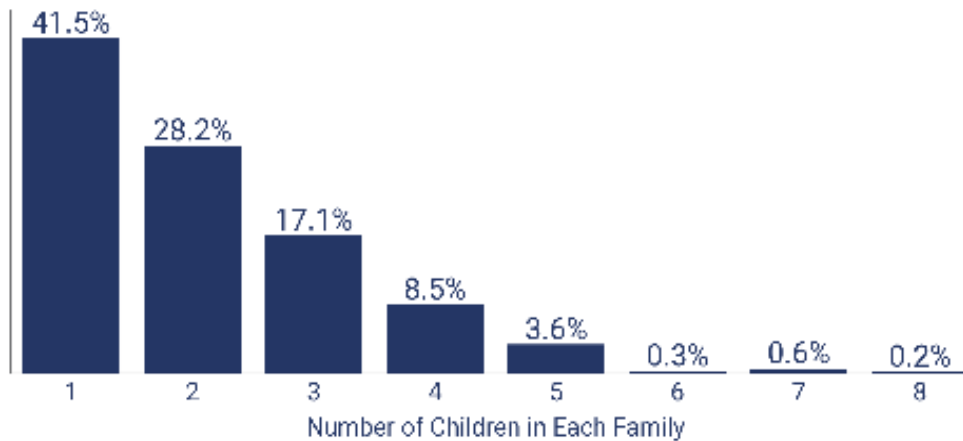


## Trauma Experience in Families



**55%** said they have been through trauma in their life.

## Number of Children in Families



## Effects on School Attendance

Thirty percent disclosed their children do not attend school more often than than not as a result of their homelessness. More than three percent refused to answer.



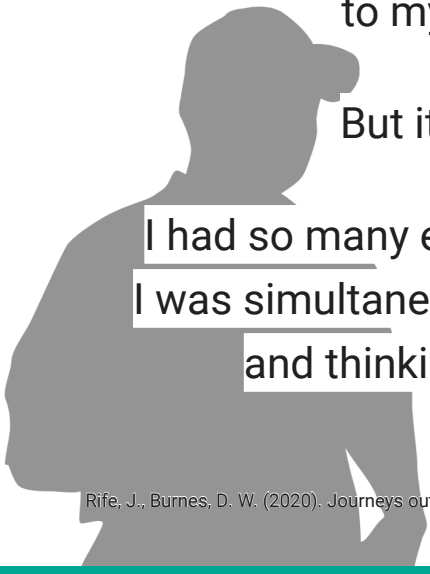


## 5-4 | YOUTH

The following data demonstrates the breadth and depth on 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**. Over 4 in 10 youth experiencing homelessness also have a history of foster care, demonstrating a need for stronger, more robust support for young adults as they transition out of care.

Family dysfunction is the leading cause of youth homelessness, forcing many young people into housing instability without the necessary supports.



“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.

# PIT DATA

## YOUTH

The Point in Time survey is a count on a single night in January. The following data was collected on January 27, 2020 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.

# 278

## youth

counted that night

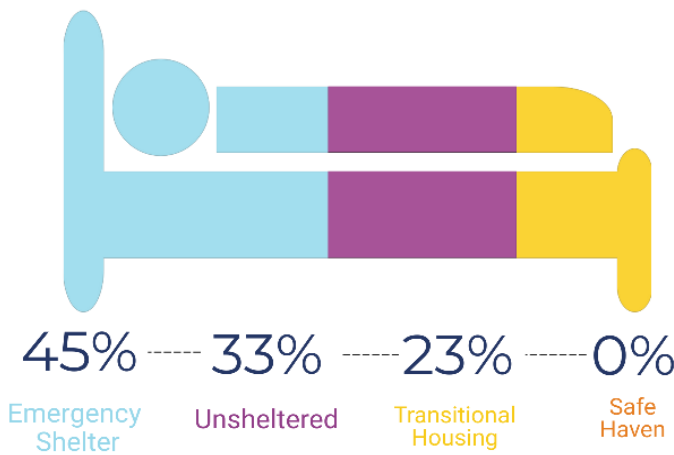
### Newly vs Chronically Homeless



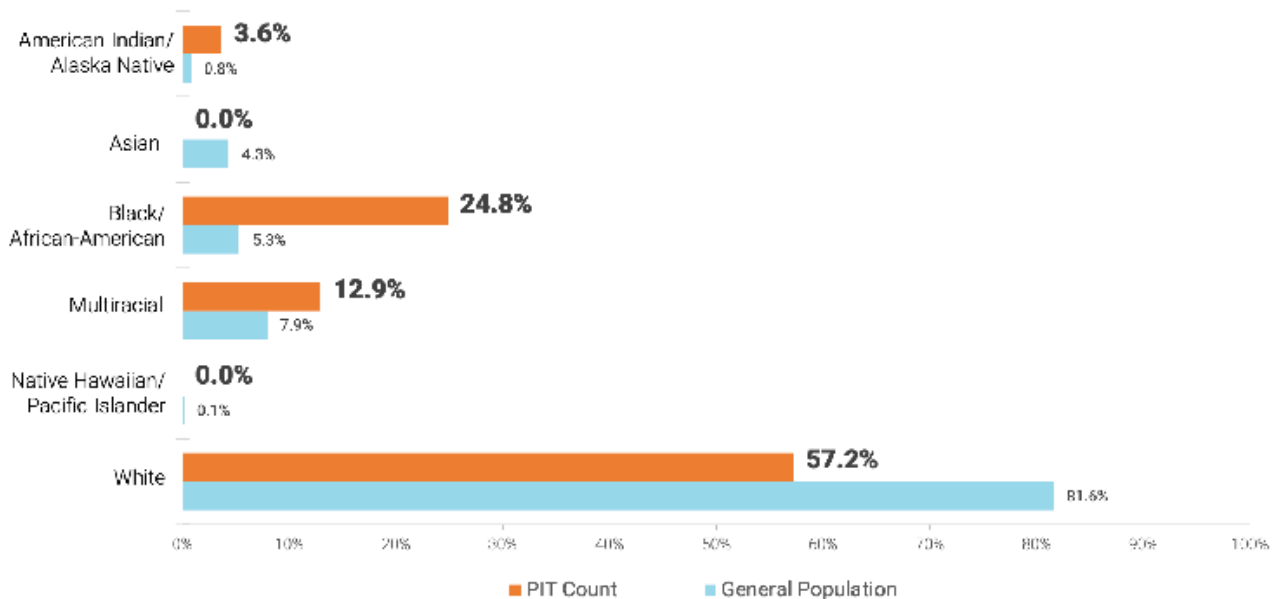
**Unsheltered**

HUD defines Unsheltered as "...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..."

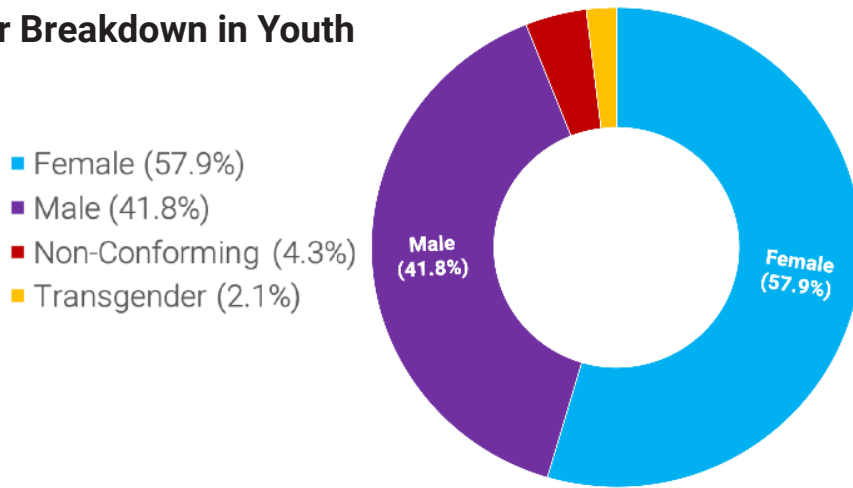
### Where They Slept the Night Before



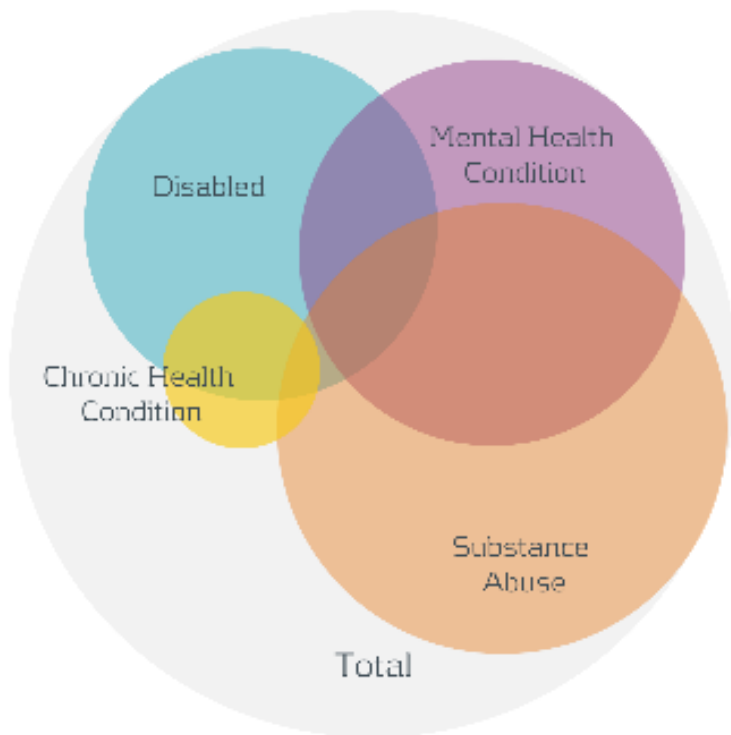
### Racial Representation versus General Population (Census Data)





## Gender Breakdown in Youth



## Causes of Homelessness for Youth




  
 I have scars and open wounds from the past and now.
   

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

## Co- and Tri-Morbidity for Youth



hey have

# HMIS DATA

## YOUTH

This data represents the number of youth accessing services or housing related to experiencing homelessness at agencies utilizing HMIS between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

**2,370**  
youth  
with activity in HMIS at this time

### Newly vs Chronically Homelessn in Youth

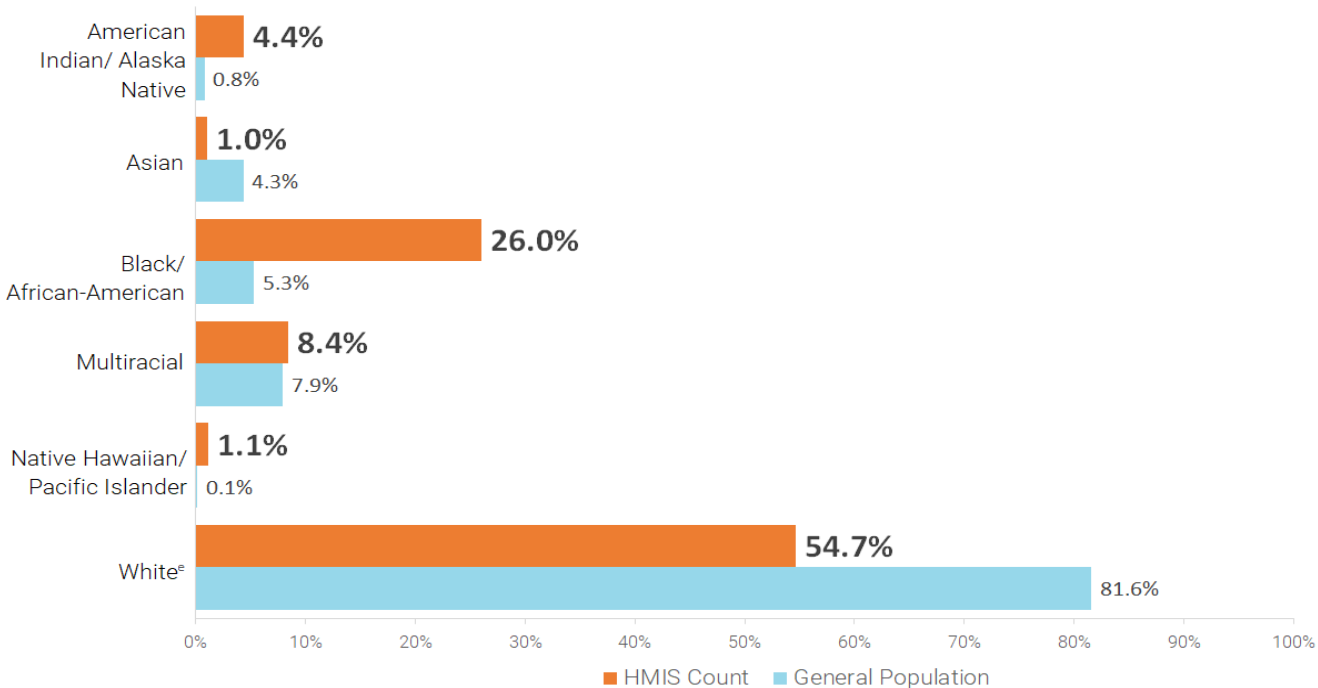


There's more than one way to experience poverty, and poverty caused my experiences of homelessness."

**- Tiffany**

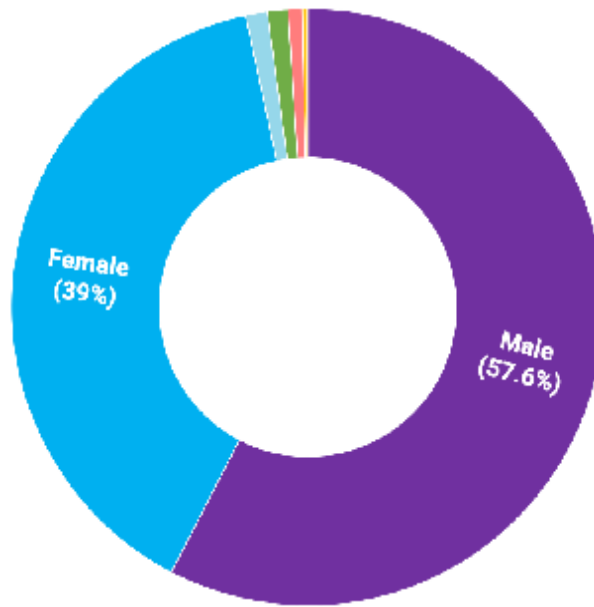
Rife, J., Blumes, D. W. (2020). Journeys out of homelessness: The voices of lived experience. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

### Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)



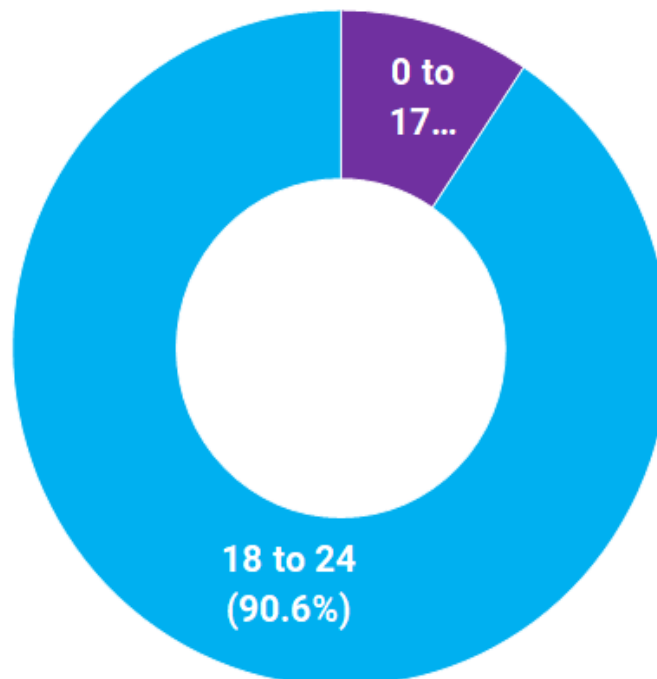
## Gender Breakdown

- Female (39%)
- Male (57.6%)
- Non-Conforming (1.2%)
- Not Reported (0.3%)
- Trans Female (0.8%)
- Trans Male (1.1%)



## Age Breakdown

- 0 to 17 (9.4%)
- 18 to 24 (90.6%)

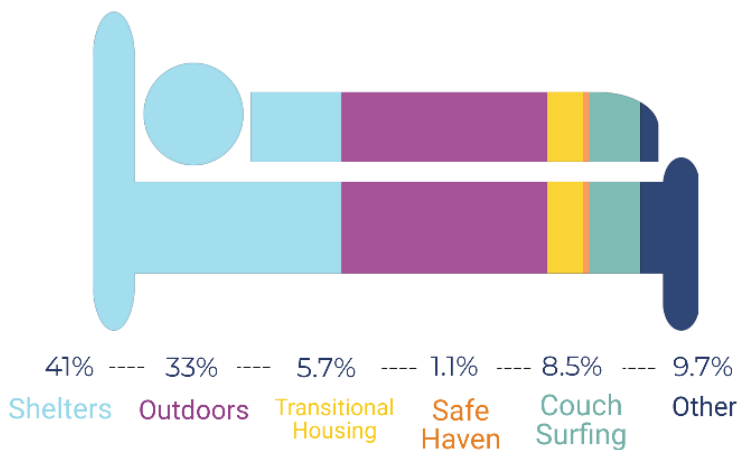


# ONEHOME DATA YOUTH

The following data provides a deeper look into the characteristics of the region's youth experiencing homelessness. Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, 352 youth completed the assessment.

**352**  
youth  
completed the assessment

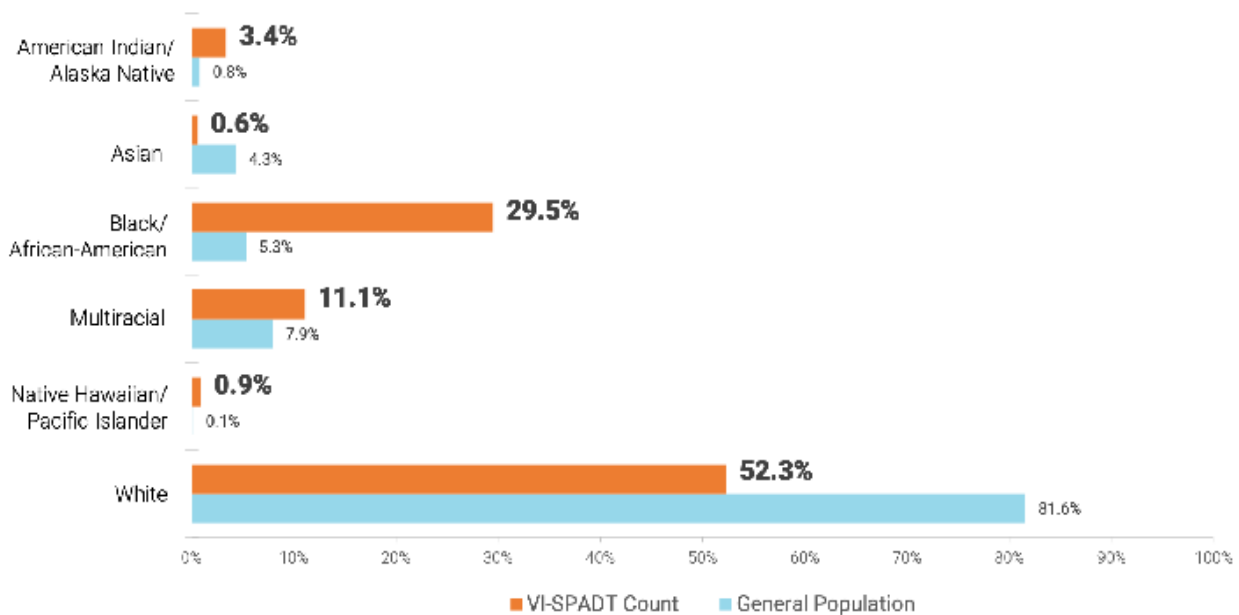
## Where They Slept the Night Before



### Shelters

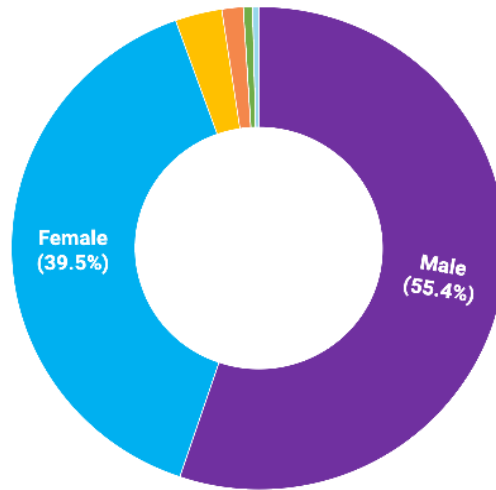
A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. In metro Denver, there are variations of shelter types, including family shelters where households may stay for 14- 90 days on average, and nightly shelter for individuals which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

## Racial Representation vs General Population (Census Data)

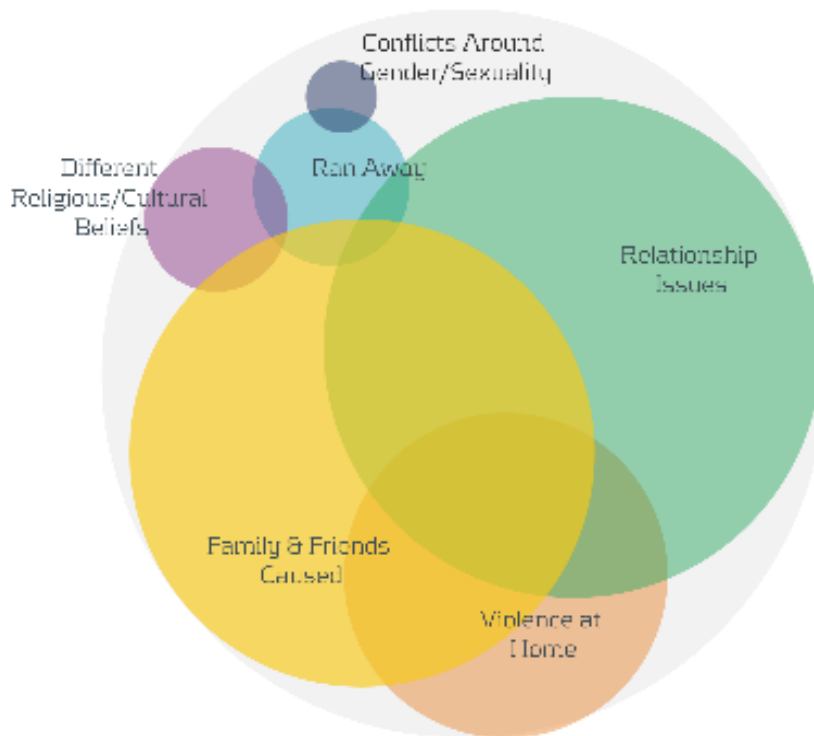


## Gender Breakdown

- Female (39.5%)
- Male (55.4%)
- Non-Conforming (3.1%)
- Not Reported (0.3%)
- Trans Female (1.4%)
- Trans Male (0.6%)



## Causes of Homelessness



## Background in Foster Care

**Pipelines**  
40.1% have a background in Foster Care

# COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA

## YOUTH

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

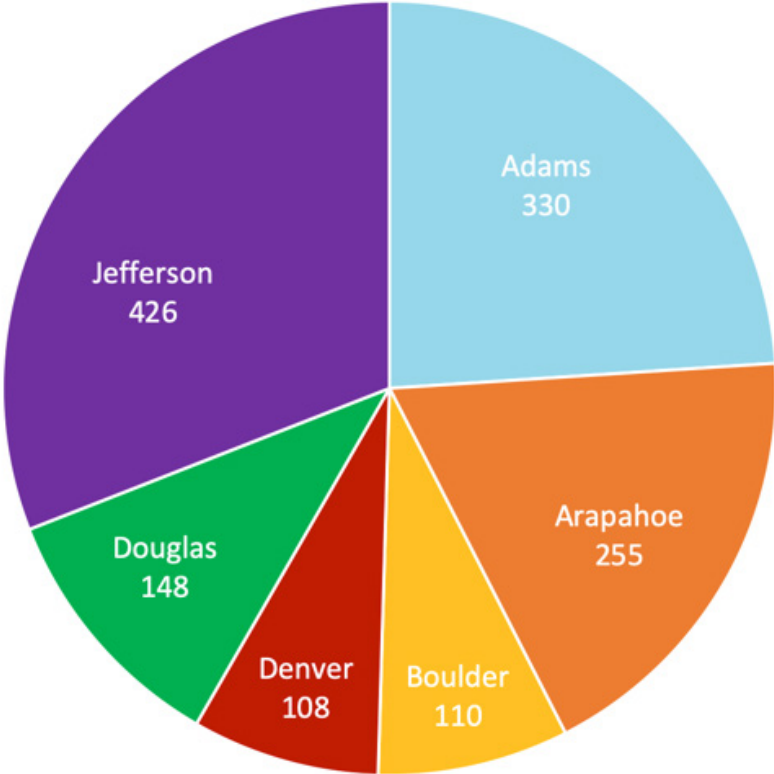
Similarly to the information noted in the family section of this report, this is a collective count that indicates the number of unaccompanied youth who at some point during the year experienced the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of homelessness.

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 Youth in Each County

There were a total of **1,337 unaccompanied youth** experiencing homelessness.

During the 2018-2019 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:





# 5-3 | COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA

The Colorado Department of Education collects data on the number of students identified as experiencing homelessness each academic year. This is a cumulative 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--

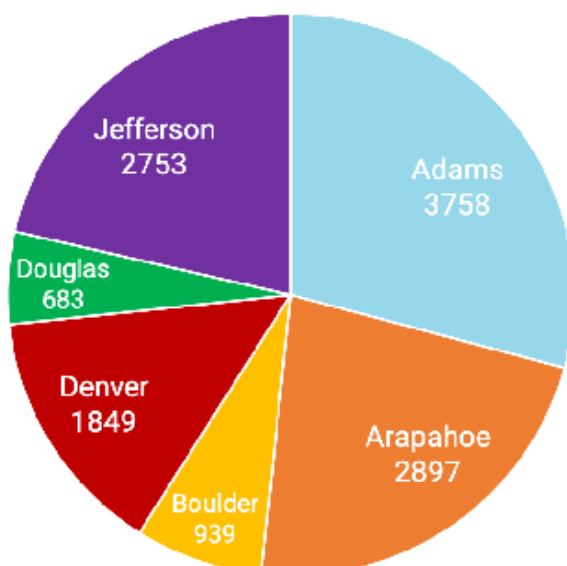
(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters;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

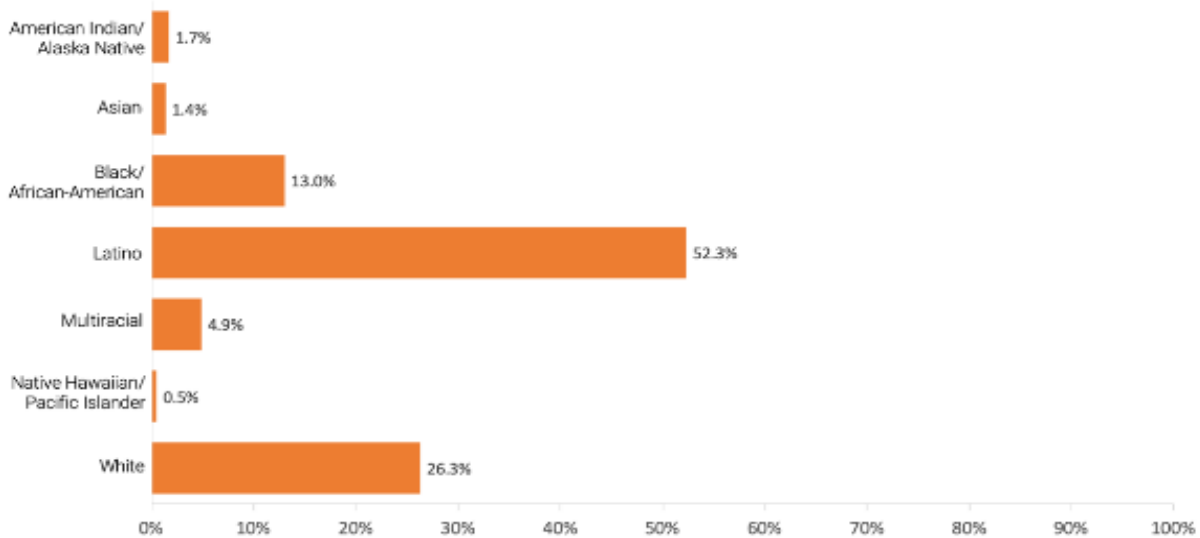
## Total Count of Students Identified in Each County



**12,879**  
students  
identified as experiencing homelessness

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

## Racial Representation of Students Experiencing Homelessness



## Graduation Rates

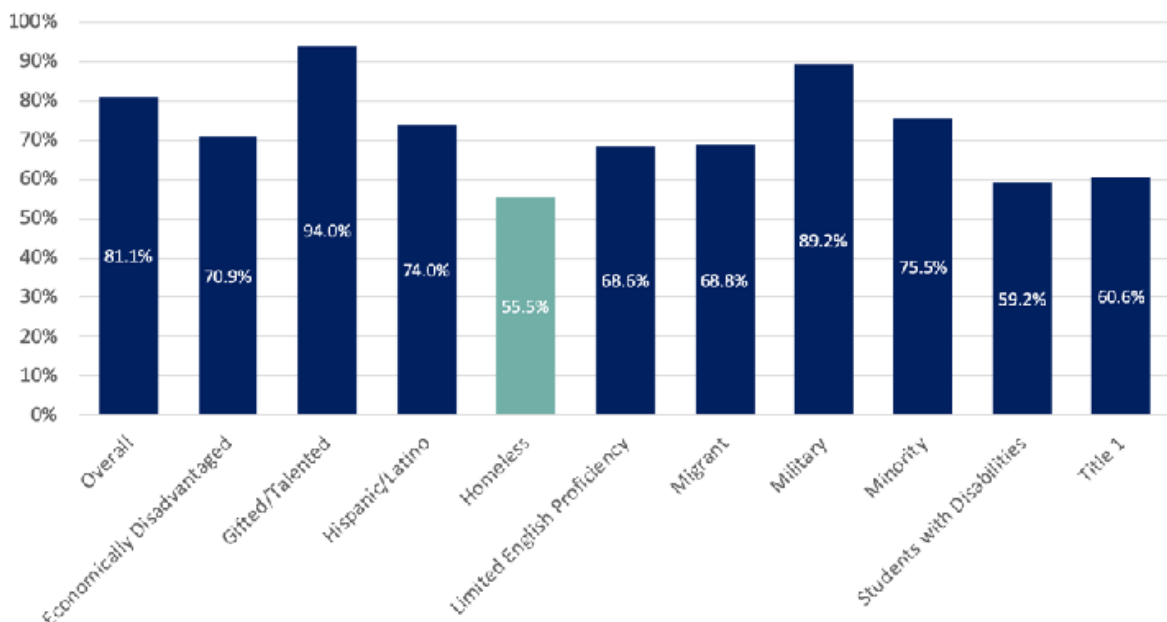
Due to privacy concerns and the Federal Education Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA), only aggregate data is available to ensure the protection of students and their families. Colorado was one of the first states in the nation to begin collecting and releasing data on the graduation and completion rates of 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 55.5%** 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.

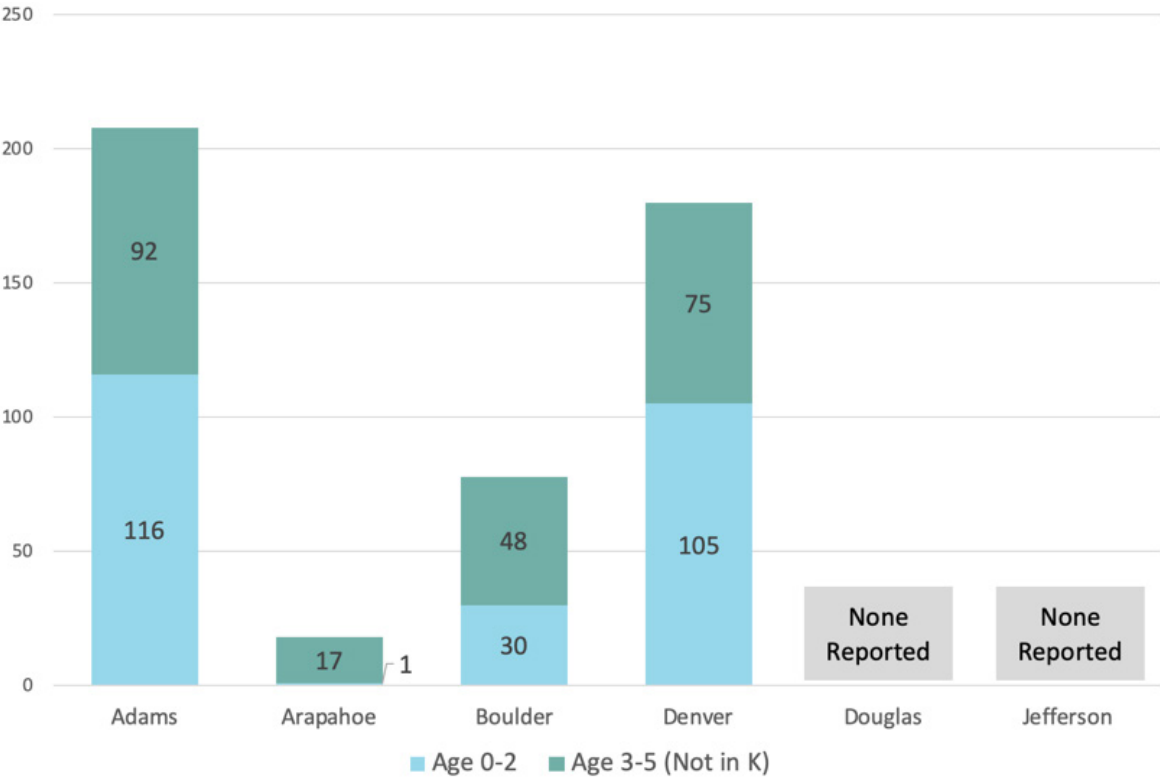
For comparison, here is an overview of four-year statewide graduation rates by subpopulation for the class of 2019:



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 2018-2019 school year. Some districts in the region did not report any students in these age ranges.



# 7 | IMPLICATIONS

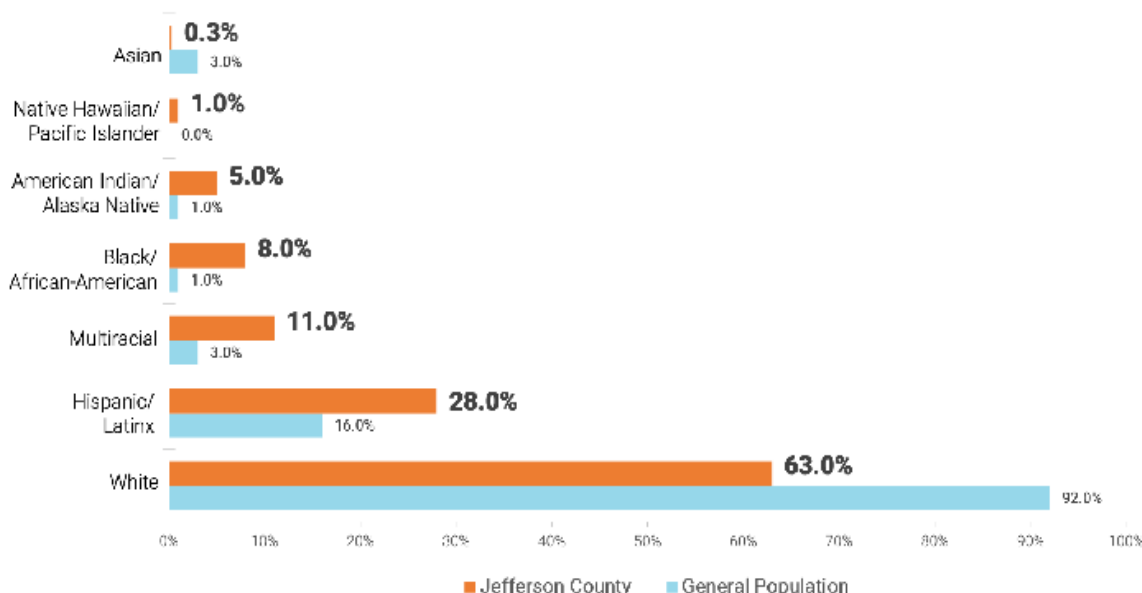


## ADDRESSING EQUITY

At its core, homelessness is a result of systemic issues and the resulting inequities which disproportionately affect different races. As evident in this report, and all data on the issue, there is a glaring overrepresentation of BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) in the homeless population.

The Jefferson County report once again reinforces the racial inequities present in the

### Racial Representation of Jefferson County Count vs General Population (Census)



As a community, we must strive for racially 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 response with the ultimate goal of eliminating overrepresentation of any one population.

Beyond the homelessness response, inequities in other systems such as criminal justice, child welfare, and healthcare must be addressed. Additionally, we must seek to enhance the supports that contribute to the economic stability of the region’s households such as quality childcare, employment at a living wage, and education opportunities, with these supports specifically targeting housing-burdened households.

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



## HOUSING AS A SOLUTION TO HOMELESSNESS

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: 2020 Data lists Colorado as having the 9th highest housing wage in the nation.



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



The Jefferson County report includes staggering data which sheds light on the burden housing costs place on individuals and families, even in suburban communities. It also points to the sheer amount of hidden homelessness with which all communities within the region grapple.

According to a 2020 analysis from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), there is a shortage of approximately 114,940 units of affordable housing in Colorado. Nearly a quarter of all middle income earners are housing cost burdened. Among those that are severely low income, or those making 0-30% of the Average Median Income (AMI), 86.5% are housing cost burdened and 73.5% are severely cost burdened, meaning they are spending more than half their income on housing cost.

The Jefferson County report provides a comprehensive look at the gap between housing services needed and housing services available. In that survey, 66% of individuals indicated a need for housing assistance. However, a mere 5% of respondents were receiving housing assistance. Additionally, a recent survey conducted by Denver’s Homeless Out Loud found that 88-90% of residents at the Morey Middle School encampment indicated housing as their preferred solution to solving the debate around their encampment.



## A COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF CARE

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 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 and 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 or quickly resolve their housing crisis.

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 coupled 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 most recent 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, the CARES act will provide millions to the state in the form of rapid rehousing to temporarily assist those affected by the pandemic. While this is incredibly helpful in the immediate future, permanent support will still be needed in the form of supportive housing for those with significant mental or physical health needs. Permanent supportive housing is the ultimate solution for those with barriers to ensure their long-term stability.



## EFFECTS OF COVID-19

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At the time of the release of this report, the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have yet to unfold. Similarly to previous economic crises faced by this country, it is difficult to estimate the economic impact of the pandemic on the region.

A recent analysis of census data by The Aspen Institute puts  
**30-40 million people**  
**at risk of eviction**  
as a result of COVID-19.

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An analysis from Columbia University found that  
**homelessness could increase 40% to 45%**  
**by the end of 2020,**  
data based on the correlation between  
unemployment and homelessness.

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While local, state, and federal agencies have enacted eviction moratoriums, policies such as these simply delay the inevitable wave of evictions without additional supports. Anecdotally, providers in the region are reporting households faced with rental arrears with amounts upwards of eight months of rent plus late payments. This creates a snowball effect for households from which they will not be able to escape without significant government investment. This creates a looming eviction crisis. Swift governmental action is needed to ensure both the short and long-term economic effects of COVID-19 are mitigated against.

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# 8 | GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

**Child(ren):** Includes anyone 17 and under (not yet 18).

**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



## GLOSSARY

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**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 (USED Definition):** A youth who fits the definition of homeless and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

**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

**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 (HUD Definition):** Includes anyone between the ages of 18-24 (not yet 25)