

AUSTIN / TRAVIS COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE NEEDS AND GAPS

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This report provides an overview of the Homelessness Response System (HRS), how people utilize the services that are available, and what else is needed to end homelessness in Austin and Travis County. The HRS serves a diverse population with needs ranging from minimal housing assistance to permanent housing programs like [Rapid Re-Housing \(RRH\)](#)¹ and [Permanent Supportive Housing \(PSH\)](#).² Our goal is to make this report both technically comprehensive and colloquially accessible so that the Continuum of Care's (CoC) governance may use it for CoC planning and funding priorities, service providers may use it for strategic and operational planning, and other stakeholders and the public can also use it as an overview and reference guide for the Homelessness Response System.

DATA

The majority of this report analyzes data from the previous full calendar year (January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021). Sections or measures with different reporting periods are noted in the text. Most agencies enter information into a secure, centralized database, the local [Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\)](#).³ Like the [2021 Needs and Gaps Report](#),⁴ this report uses data exported from HMIS to analyze the broadest group of people experiencing homelessness for whom the HRS has comprehensive data. Reports in years prior to the 2021 report used a different data set of Coordinated Entry System (CES) assessments from people seeking entry to RRH and PSH programs. The 2022 report's analyses also do not exclude enrollments from project types such as Prevention, Supportive Services Only, and Other that may not require homelessness as an entry criterion.

ABOUT ECHO

The [Ending Community Homelessness Coalition \(ECHO\)](#)⁵ is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves as the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care (CoC) Lead Agency, CoC Collaborative Applicant, Coordinated Entry System manager, and local HMIS database administrator. We are tasked with planning and coordinating community-wide strategies to end homelessness in the Austin / Travis County geographic region. We work in collaboration with people with lived experience of homelessness, community nonprofits, and government agencies to coordinate services and housing resources for the people who are experiencing homelessness in our community. We use research and evidence-based practices to advocate for the resources to bring the local Homelessness Response System to scale and meet our community's goal of ending homelessness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The Research and Evaluation department at the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition works collaboratively: this report was made possible through the expertise and support of Akram Al-Turk, our Director of Research and Evaluation, as well as Claire Burrus, our Research and Evaluation Manager. Furthermore, this report is based primarily on data exported from HMIS, which were gathered by our local service provider partners. In addition to the on-the-ground case management and direct assistance these agencies offer clients, the same staff who provide these services also record vital information in HMIS, which allows not only for their own agencies' required grant reporting but also for larger system analyses such as this Needs and Gaps report. ECHO is grateful for our partners' ongoing commitment to data quality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

The Homelessness Response System is not a controlled laboratory environment. The most current HMIS data may be in flux if corrections are being made, missing values are being caught (or remain missing), or if information is either initially reported or recorded incorrectly. For these reasons it is possible that identical analyses conducted at different points in time could yield slightly different results, but which do not change the overall trends or big picture of what the data show. Since the following analyses are largely for the previous full calendar year, this allows us to confidently use the most stable and accurate data.

Furthermore, there are several concepts touched upon or mentioned in this report for which we would prefer to conduct deeper analyses, so we intend to conduct further studies to publish independent reports on these topics in the future, which may include but are not limited to:

- Coordinated Entry System Flow: especially for clients who have not been referred to permanent housing projects – and Coordinated Assessment access, geographic mapping, and utilization.
- Total funding amounts, proportions, and cost effectiveness analysis of dollars allocated to different intervention types.
- Further qualitative studies in collaboration with people who have lived experience of homelessness in our community.

Most importantly, the data we are working with are not just numbers, but real *people* and information about these people. Quantitative analyses cannot do justice to any of these individual people's personal experiences.

2021 PROJECTS AND ENROLLMENTS

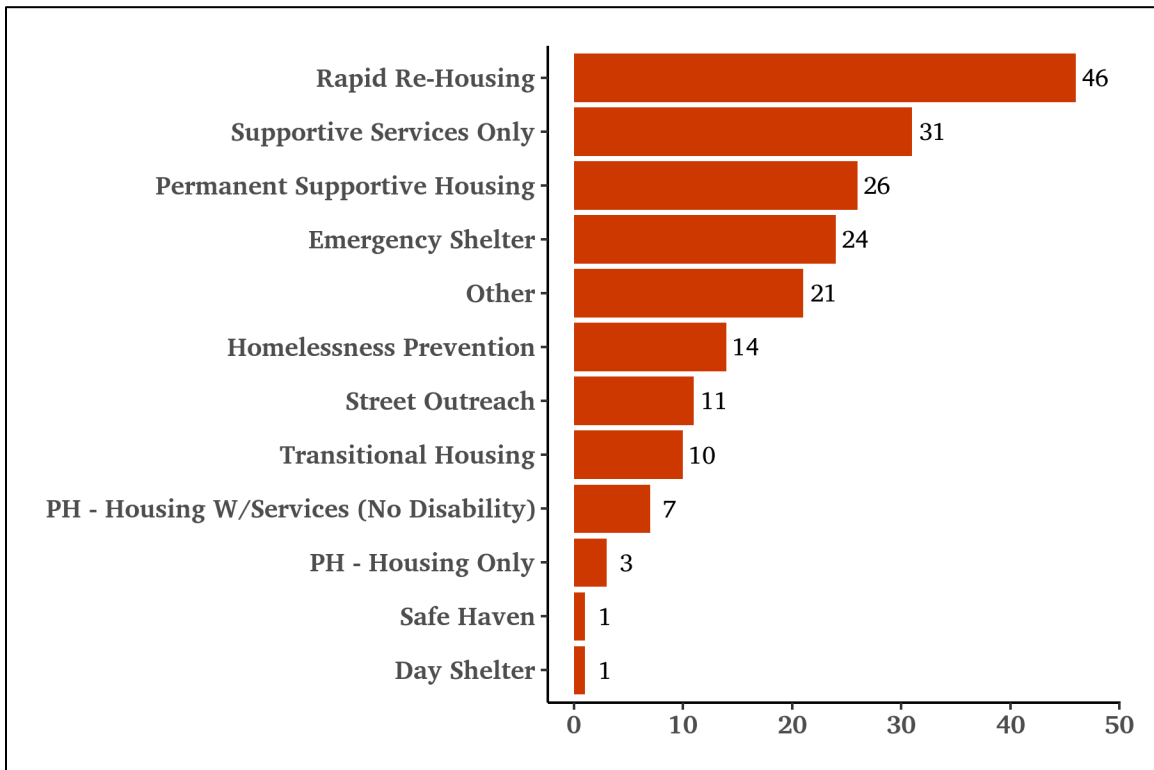
Per the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) current [HMIS Data Standards](#),⁶ there are 13 HMIS classifications for project types. Please see the [glossary](#) for HUD’s definitions of these project types.

- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- PH – Permanent Supportive Housing
- Street Outreach
- Services Only
- Other
- Safe Haven
- PH – Housing Only
- PH Housing with Services (no disability required for entry)
- Day Shelter
- Homelessness Prevention
- PH – Rapid Re-Housing
- Coordinated Entry

NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY TYPE

In 2021, of the active homelessness services projects in HMIS, approximately a quarter (23.6%) were Rapid Re-Housing projects, followed by Supportive Services Only projects (15.9%), Permanent Supportive Housing projects (13.3%), and Emergency Shelter projects (12.3%). Six projects do not have a project type assigned to them, and there is one Coordinated Entry project, for a total of 202.

Figure 1: Total Number of Projects by Type in 2021

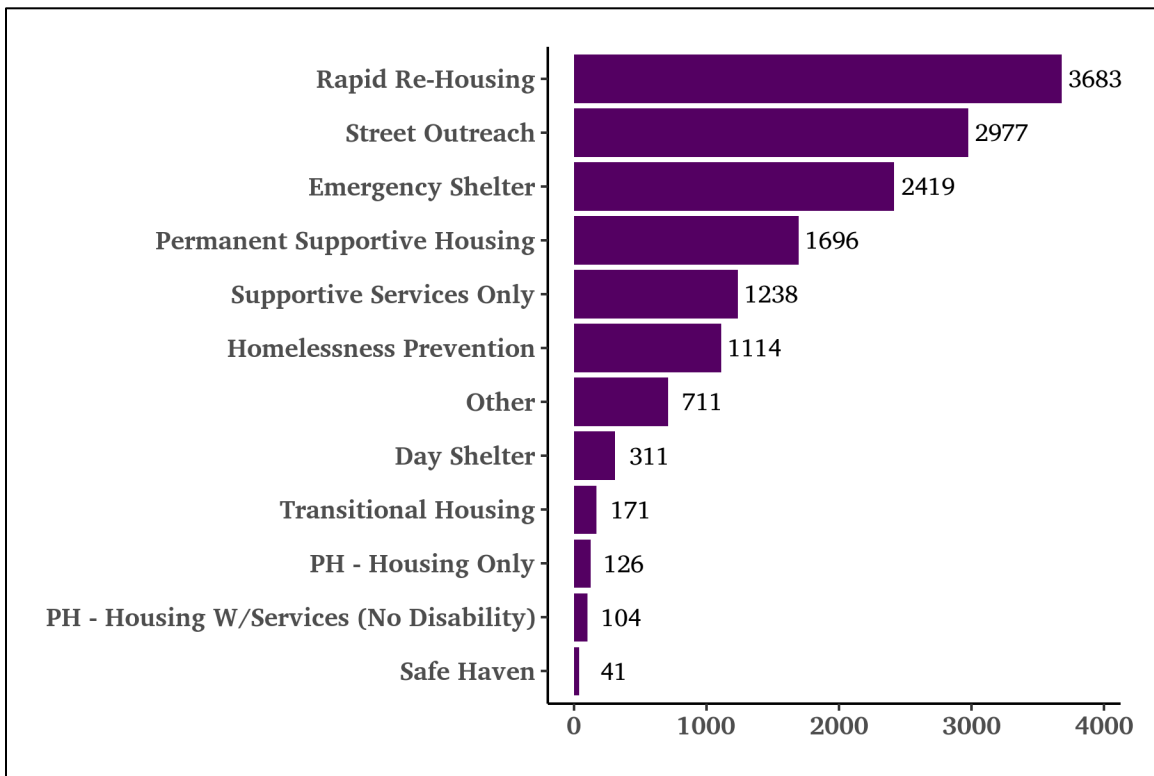


PROJECT ENROLLMENTS

Calculating utilization of projects by participants is nuanced given that there can be carryover for certain project types: for example, a participant in RRH may have been enrolled and housed in 2020 but continued receiving housing stability case management and rental assistance into 2021 until their exit that year. For the purposes of this report, the “universe” of enrollments examined for 2021 includes clients who were active in RRH and/or PSH projects during 2021 (whether newly enrolled that year or still enrolled having been enrolled in a previous year) and, for other project types, clients who were enrolled during the 2021 calendar year.

Rapid Re-Housing followed by the Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, and Permanent Supportive Housing project types, respectively, had the highest total number of enrollments in 2021. Please note that in some cases the same individual may potentially enroll in multiple projects and/or in the same project more than once, so “total enrollments” are not always equal to “unique clients.”

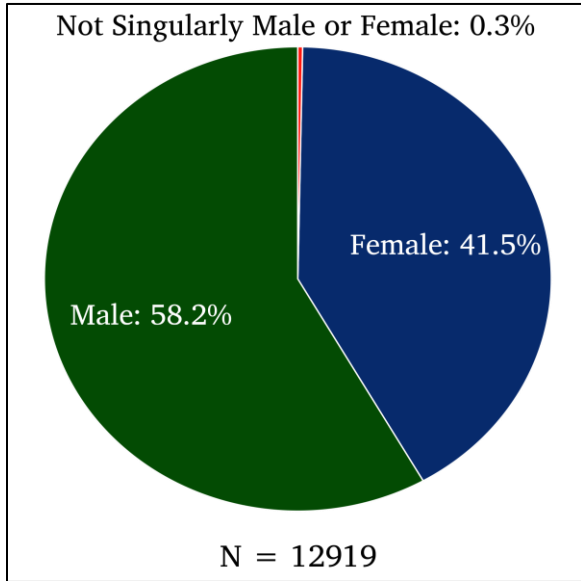
Figure 2: Total Number of Project Enrollments by Type in 2021



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

GENDER

Figure 3: Gender in 2021

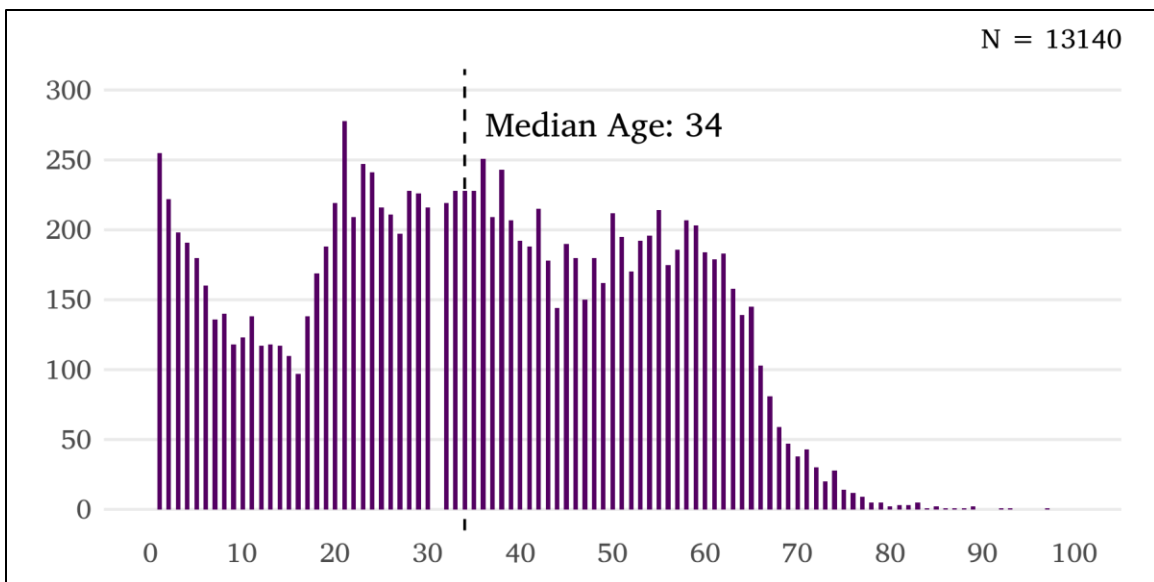


The difference between the percentage of male and female clients was smaller in 2021 than it was in 2020, during which 61.6% of clients reported being cisgender males, 37.7% of clients reported being cisgender females, and 0.8% of clients reported being in a third category including transgender or gender non-conforming. In this year's report, clients who reported being transgender are counted under whichever gender they identify with. The percentage of clients who reported being transgender in 2021 was 0.55%.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

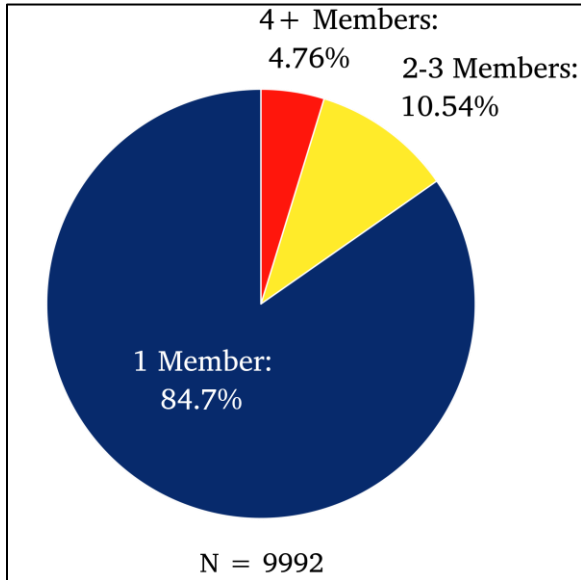
The age distribution in 2021 was similar overall to 2020, although the number of newborns and children was higher in 2021 and the median age was four years lower, down to 34 from 38.

Figure 4: Age Distribution in 2021



HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Figure 5: Household Size in 2021

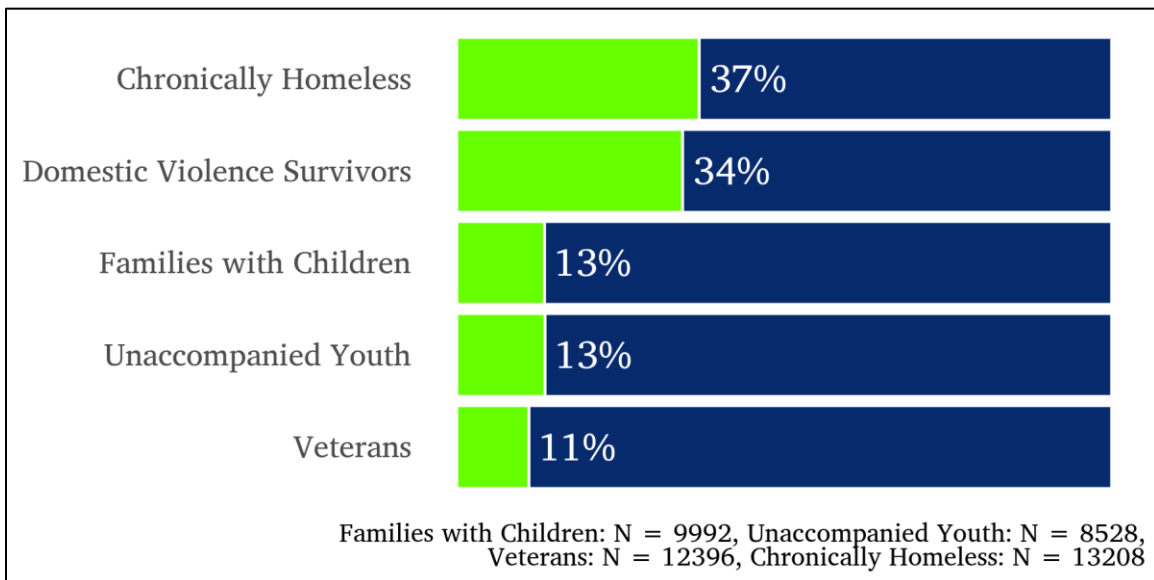


The largest household size category represented in the HMIS data for the Homelessness Response System in the year 2021 remained single member households, although that percentage decreased by 5.6 percentage points from the previous proportion of 90.3% during 2020. Meanwhile, the percentages of two to three member households and of four or more member households rose somewhat from 6.7% (an increase of 3.84 percentage points) and 2.9% (an increase of 1.86 percentage points), respectively.

SUBPOPULATIONS

The 2021 breakdown of HUD classifications of subpopulations was similar to the analysis from 2020, with the most noticeable change being a decrease in the chronically homeless population and an increase in families with children, both by four percentage points.

Figure 6: Subpopulations in 2021



Note: Subpopulations are not mutually exclusive so the same individual may be a member of two or more subpopulations.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Burrus (2022), in the 2022 Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care Racial Disparities report released by ECHO more fully outlines and analyzes the current and historical inequities present in the Homelessness Response System, including that “Black people in Austin / Travis County are significantly more likely to experience homelessness than are members of other racial or ethnic groups” (21), and that “The probability of experiencing homelessness in Travis County for a Black/African American person is over six times than that of a White person, based on the racial composition of the population” (7).

The latter of these two points is shown in Figure 7 on the next page. For further, more in-depth information regarding racial disparities in the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care, please see the [2022 Racial Disparities Report](#).⁷

The Travis County information used in Figure 7 comes from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Data published by the United States Census Bureau, which was accessed from the [United States Census Bureau Application Programming Interface \(API\)](#)⁸ with [R](#)⁹ using the “[tidycensus](#)”¹⁰ package created by Kyle Walker, Matt Herman, and Kris Eberwein.

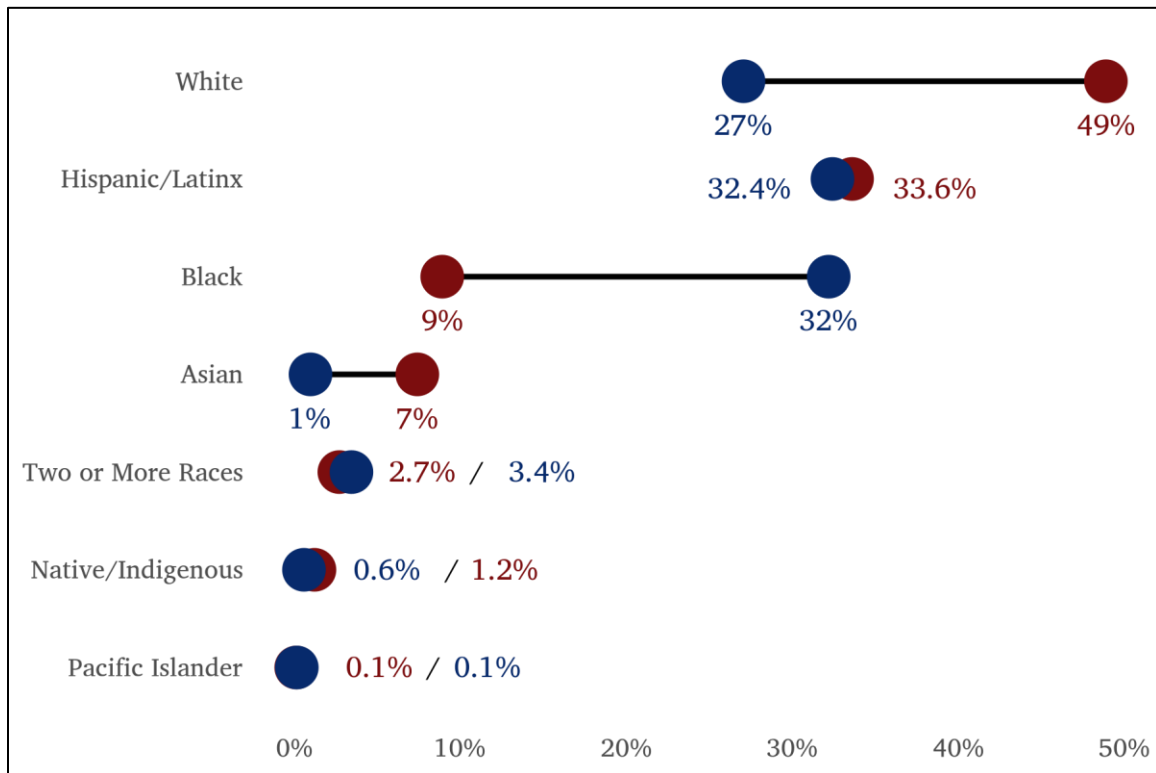
Note: This product uses the Census Bureau Data API but is not endorsed or certified by the Census Bureau.

Specifically, Figure 7 on the following page shows what percent each of the racial/ethnic categories listed on the lefthand side make up of People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) as recorded in HMIS (represented by the blue circles and text) and the general Travis County population as captured by the U.S. Census Bureau (represented by the red circles and text). If the two circles are closer together, then the percentages of the two populations (People Experiencing Homelessness and the general Travis County population) that particular racial/ethnic category makes up are more proportionally similar, whereas if the two circles are further apart then the percentage of the two populations that racial/ethnic category makes up are more proportionally different.

If the percentage of the red circle (representing the general Travis County population) is greater than that of the blue circle (representing People Experiencing Homelessness) then that racial/ethnic category makes up a higher percentage of the general Travis County population than it does the population experiencing homelessness. This is the case with the White racial category below, as well as with the Asian category to a lesser extent.

Alternatively, if the percentage of the blue circle is greater than that of the red circle, then that racial/ethnic category makes up a higher percentage of the population experiencing homelessness than it does the general Travis County population. This is the case with the Black racial category below.

Figure 7: Travis County and PEH Populations Race and Ethnicity



Note: These racial/ethnic categories are mutually exclusive. For example, those who chose to identify as Hispanic/Latinx will be counted under that category and not any others, and people who chose to identify as Two or More Races are counted under the category with that label.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM FLOW

In the 2021 calendar year, 2,534 clients took their first Coordinated Assessment (CA). The median and mean days from the start of these clients' homelessness to their first CA were 232 days and 656 days, respectively.

Also in the same year, 1,338 clients who had taken a CA were referred to housing programs. The Coordinated Entry System sends out referrals to participating projects when they report openings and request referrals be sent. For those 1,338 clients who were referred to programs after taking a CA, the median and mean days from CA to referral were 33 days and 74 days, respectively.

However, many people have taken a CA but have not yet been referred to a housing program, and they may have been waiting many months or longer which is not reflected in this measurement.

Different future analyses will account for clients who have taken a CA but have not been enrolled yet, as well as for how many times clients take a CA during an episode of homelessness before they are referred to a program.

Finally, the median and mean days from program referral to program enrollment were 17 days and 41 days, respectively. The median and mean days from program enrollment to housing move-in were 71 days and 110 days, respectively.

Table 1: Coordinated Entry System Flow

Measure	Median	Mean	People
Days From Homelessness Start to First CA	232	656	2,534
Days from CA to Program Referral	33	74	1,338
Days from Referral to Program Enrollment	17	41	855
Days from Program Enrollment to Move-In	71	110	613

Note: Calculations of median and mean in Table 1 are rounded to the nearest full day.

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD: DISABLING CONDITIONS

For enrollments in all project types, the majority of heads of household (HOH) report some kind of disabling condition. PSH is the main intervention often requiring a disabling condition for entry (PSH projects generally require [chronic homelessness](#)¹¹ as part of their eligibility criteria, which means clients must have a disabling condition in addition to meeting the chronicity timeline), but large percentages of clients in non PSH projects also report disabling conditions, making the presence of a disability highly prevalent across all clients enrolled in the HRS.

Table 2: Heads of Households Reporting Disabling Conditions by Program Type

Project Group	Mental Health	Physical	Chronic Health	Developmental	Substance Use	HIV/AIDS	Any Disabling Condition	Total
Non-PH	51%	31%	35%	19%	25%	3%	69%	6,124
PSH	59%	47%	44%	13%	36%	6%	85%	1,047
RRH	52%	34%	35%	17%	22%	3%	70%	1,408

Note: Disabling conditions are not mutually exclusive. The same individual may report two or more disabilities. The data above reflect information collected during enrollment at a client's most recent program entry.

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD: SUBPOPULATIONS

Several of our community's subpopulation-specific resources and gaps are reflected below: the [HUD-VASH](#)¹² (Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing) program is reflected in that PSH for veterans accounts for more than half of our PSH, and the HUD [YHDP](#)¹³ (Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project) program for youth is reflected in a higher percentage of youth enrollment for RRH than other project types. It is also notable that many of the vouchers our community's PSH projects are paired with are only usable for and by single individuals and are not compatible with families, which make up only six percent of PSH enrollments.

Table 3: Heads of Households by Subpopulation by Program Type

Project Group	Youth	Veterans	Families	Chronically Homeless	Domestic Violence Survivor	Any Subpopulation	Total
Non PH	13%	6%	15%	47%	40%	76%	5,473
PSH	1%	57%	6%	63%	29%	95%	1,325
RRH	23%	12%	26%	56%	49%	85%	1,702

Note: Subpopulations are not mutually exclusive so the same individual may be a member of two or more subpopulations.

SYSTEM ANALYSIS, NEEDS, AND PROJECT CAPACITIES

OVERVIEW

As of May 2022, we estimate that approximately 3,467 people are currently experiencing homelessness in Austin / Travis County. Please see the [Austin / Travis County Homelessness Dashboard](#)¹⁴ for more details. The HRS has a limited total capacity as well as several bottlenecks in the system. Even though the total amount of housing units (project “beds”) programmatically available to permanently house people has increased since 2020, the Austin / Travis County geographic area’s housing market does not have a sufficient amount of *affordable housing* units for program participants to rent. In other words, an available slot in a permanent housing project does not mean there is an available or accessible affordable unit in Austin / Travis County for that client to rent due to the tight and increasingly unaffordable rental market as well as discrimination faced by people exiting homelessness.

Grant-funded projects’ abilities to pay rental assistance for participants may be contractually limited by [Fair Market Rent \(FMR\)](#),¹⁵ [rent reasonableness](#),¹⁶ or other guidelines. This could be problematic in Austin since the [FY22 FMR for the Austin-Round Rock MSA](#)¹⁷ is \$1,092 for an efficiency unit and \$1,236 for a one-bedroom unit, while the most up-to-date [seasonally adjusted average rent](#)¹⁸ in Austin is approximately \$1,869 (Zillow 2022). See page 18 and Figure 9.

Also, some Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) projects may cap the total rental assistance available for a client per enrollment to around, for example, \$6,000. Utilization of the “progressive engagement” model of rental assistance is outlined as a minimum standard for a project to be considered Rapid Re-Housing per the current [TX-503 Written Standards for Program Delivery](#),¹⁹ so the proportion of monthly rental assistance paid by a project should ideally taper down over time as client and case manager coordinate together on housing stability and independence per the guidelines outlined in a project’s rental determination policies and procedures, but in cases where a client may need the full amount, or a heavy percentage, of their rent assisted by their housing program for the first several months after moving in or for a longer period of time, then projects with spending caps this low may only be able to sustain as few as three months of assistance for such clients in the current rental environment in Austin.

Furthermore, prolonged unsheltered homelessness is correlated with negative health outcomes, including death on the streets, and makes it harder for people to exit homelessness (negative health outcomes that don't result in death can result in disability and/or otherwise make it hard or impossible to work and earn an income to sustain rent). Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in 2022 only receive \$841 in monthly benefits if no amounts are deducted ([SSA nd](#)).²⁰ This fixed income is \$251 less than the local FY22 FMR for an efficiency and \$1,028 less than the estimated current seasonally adjusted average rent in Austin.

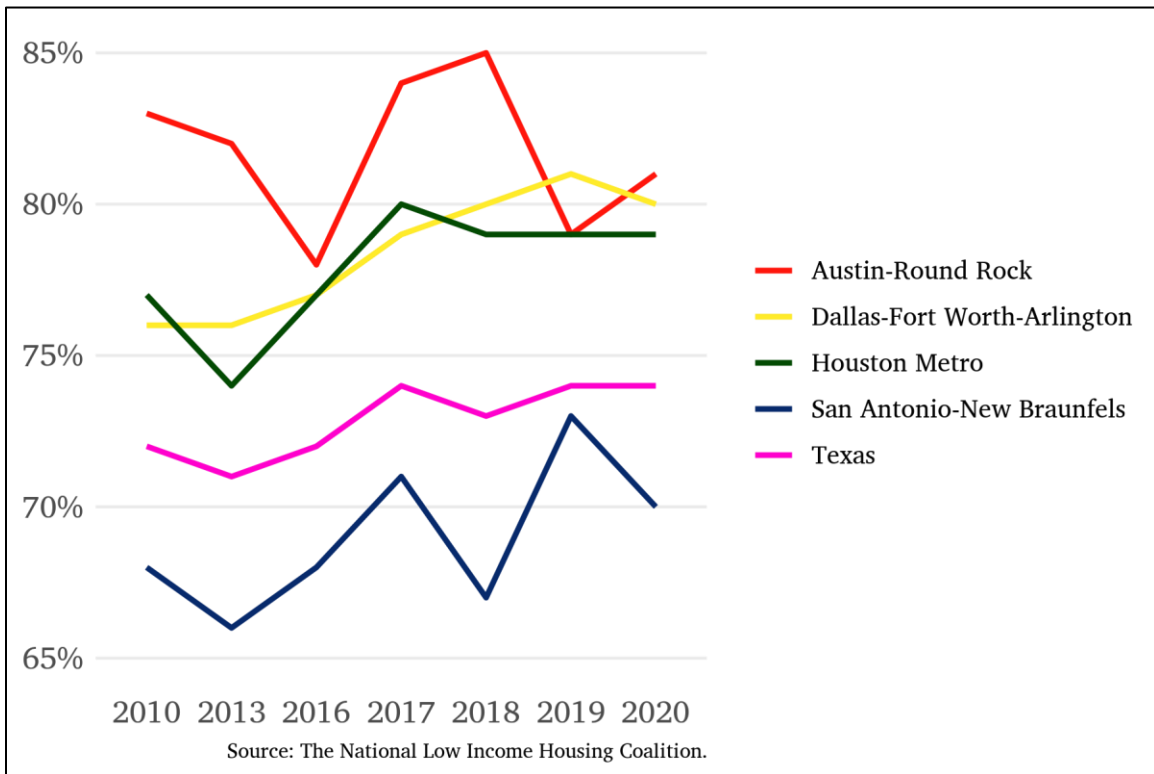
It is also notable that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or "Food Stamps" benefits only cover edible food items, so in addition to the \$251 to \$1,028 or greater rent gap, plus any healthcare gap, clients with only SSI and SNAP as income will also find themselves unable to pay for other basic necessities like household cleaning and personal hygiene supplies. Other cost gaps for low-income clients include transportation, cellphone/communication access and equipment, and utilities including internet.

These various bottlenecks make it harder for the system to make a dent in homelessness in the long run. The following pages examine some of the contributions to homelessness in Austin / Travis County and then examine the current system capacity and needs and how we could develop effective, comprehensive homelessness prevention programming, particularly with a racial equity lens, considering that Black people are among the most likely to experience homelessness in our community compared to other racial/ethnic groups, and Black clients are also more likely than average to report having been born and raised in Austin, along with Hispanic/Latinx clients (Burrus 2022, 22).

TEXAS HOUSING COST BURDENS

The information below comes from the National Low Income Housing Coalition and shows the percent of extremely low-income renter households with severe housing cost burdens in the largest Texas metro areas as well as the State of Texas as a whole. Austin has been consistently high or highest in this measure except for a crossover with the Dallas / Fort Worth / Arlington metroplex around 2019.

Figure 8: Percent of Extremely Low-Income Renters with Severe Housing Cost Burdens in Texas



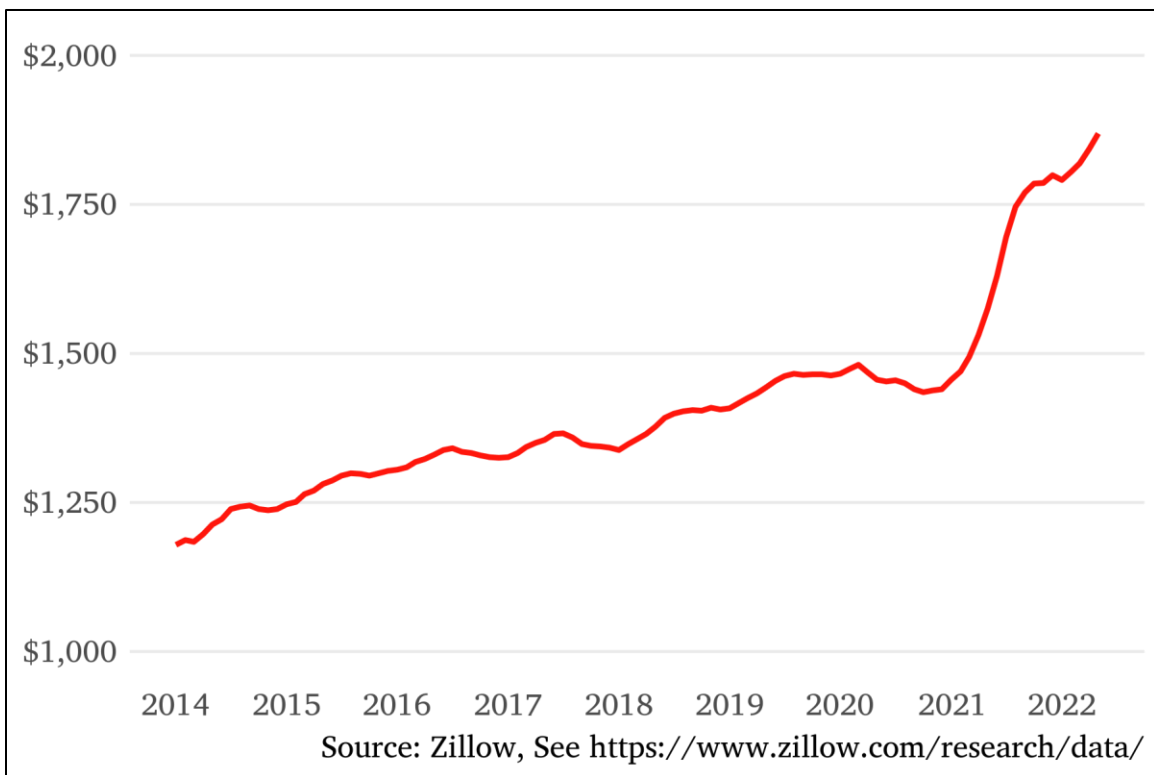
Notes: (1) Extremely low-income renter households are those who make less than 30% of area median income. (2) Severe housing cost burden is defined as paying more than 50% of income on housing and utilities.

AVERAGE RENT IN AUSTIN

The information below comes from [Zillow Observed Rent Index²¹](#) (ZORI) data. The seasonally adjusted average rent in Austin has been consistently rising year by year and is around \$1,869 per month according to the latest available data at the time of this report’s publication. As previously mentioned, this is higher than the current Fair Market Rent for the area (by \$573 for a one-bedroom and by \$777 for an efficiency) and significantly higher than the current SSI monthly income (by \$1,028).

A monthly rent payment of \$1,869 comes out to \$22,428 worth of rent yearly. In order for that amount to match the universal maxim of “30% of an individual’s income,” an individual would need to make a minimum salary of \$74,760 per year. Not only is that required minimum salary \$64,668 more than the annual total of a single individual’s SSI income in 2022, but it is also almost double — to even more than double — the general income of case managers working in the Homelessness Response System. The current rental market can potentially be untenable for many of our system’s own employees, and it is openly hostile to the people we serve, who are earning even lower or fixed incomes.

Figure 9: Seasonally Adjusted Average Rent in Austin



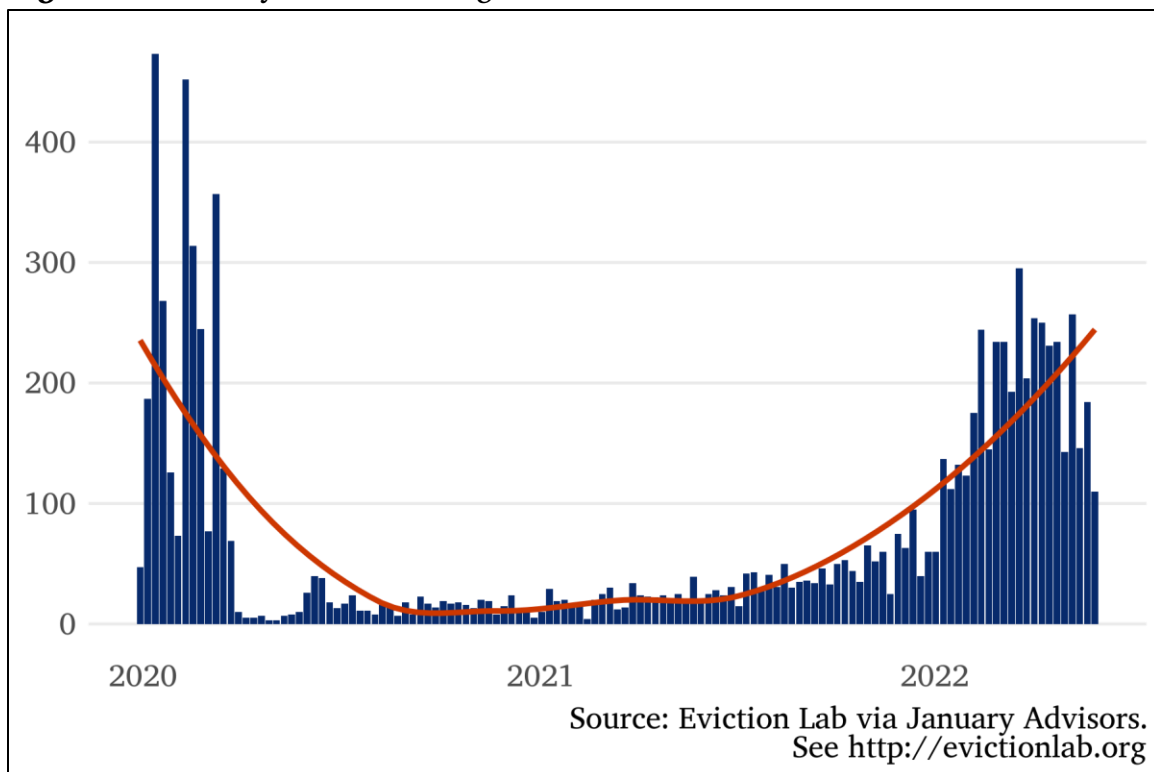
EVICTIONS IN AUSTIN

In response to financial difficulties that quickly arose during the start of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, various eviction moratoria were enacted by the CARES Act from March 27, 2020 through July 24, 2020 ([CARES Act § 4024](#))²² and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) from September 4, 2020 through August 26, 2021 ([85 FR 55292](#)),²³ in addition to local Austin / Travis County policies — all of which have since expired.

The information below comes from [Eviction Lab](#).²⁴ A sharp decline in evictions is apparent beginning in the early months of 2020 as eviction moratoria came into effect and lasting through the end of 2021 with evictions rising as they began to lift. The lack of new openings available for lease during the eviction moratoria could have played some role in the challenges HRS projects faced in finding housing units for participants even while new COVID-19 response funding was available for rental assistance. Currently, even with new units opening up due to evictions, those open units may have asking rents that participants cannot meet.

At the same time, the lifting of eviction moratoria also means that our clients could be targeted for eviction after program assistance ends, or that the population experiencing homelessness may increase as those who are currently experiencing housing and financial instability are summarily evicted instead of assisted.

Figure 10: Weekly Eviction Filings in Austin

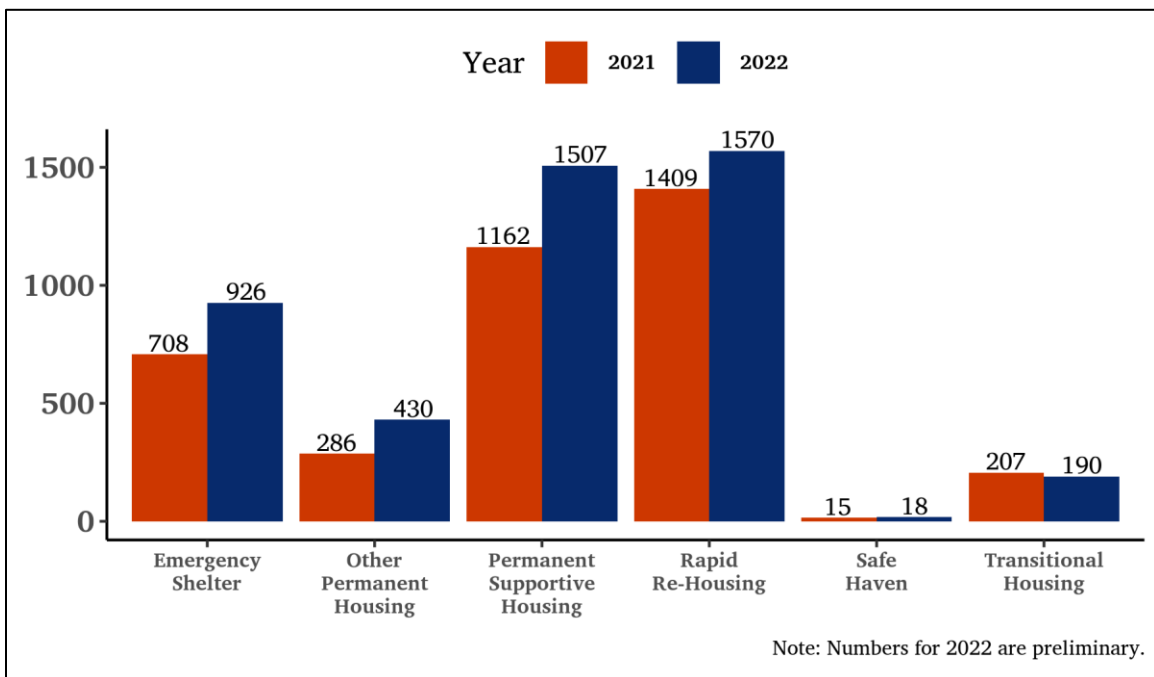


HOUSING INVENTORY COUNT

The [Housing Inventory Count \(HIC\)](#)²⁵ provides an estimated capacity snapshot of a Continuum of Care’s project capacity inventory conducted annually during the last ten days in January, during the same timeframe as the unsheltered Point in Time (PIT) Count. The HIC report tallies the number of beds and units available on the night designated for the count by program type, and includes beds dedicated to serving persons who are homeless as well as persons in permanent housing projects. Because the HIC is conducted in January, this section utilizes preliminary 2022 HIC information, since the previous 2021 HIC information will be approximately a year-and-a-half old at the time of this report’s publication.

The 2022 HIC shows 3,077 total combined RRH and PSH beds. Considering that for the January 2022 point in time snapshot in the HIC, PSH projects reported being at 81% capacity (meaning there would be approximately 282 available beds to fill), RRH projects reported being at 100% capacity (meaning that they had no current openings and new enrollments would occur as clients were exited), and that we estimate approximately 3,247 people were experiencing homelessness in that timeframe, it would mean that — without accounting for whether clients are prioritized for PSH or RRH, household size, any overlap between clients who are already enrolled in RRH or PSH, or the rate at which RRH exits and new enrollments were occurring — the system may have had approximately 2,965 more people experiencing homelessness than available beds at that point in time, even though most project types have seen a modest to moderate increase in capacity since the last HIC.

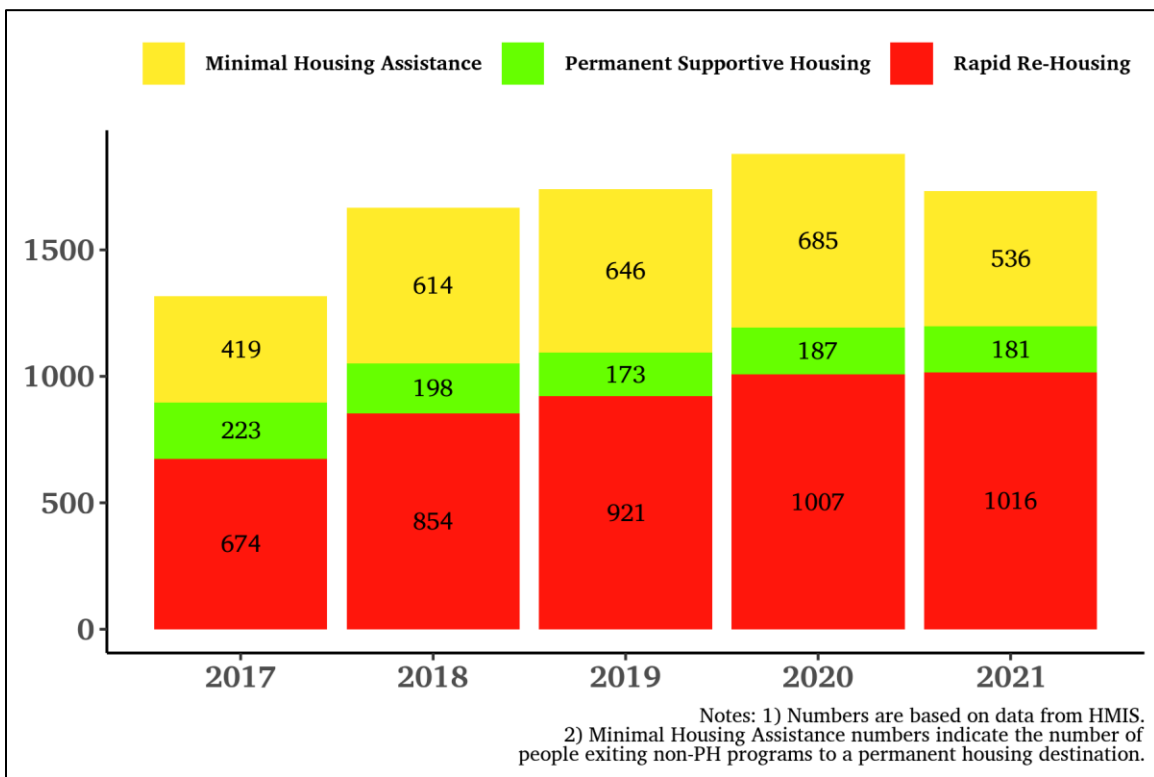
Figure 11: Number of Year-Round Beds by Project Type per the HIC Report



PERMANENT HOUSING PROGRAM MOVE-INS

Although investment and funding into our system has increased overall (including through COVID-19 response measures such as CARES Act funding), Emergency Shelter, PSH, and RRH move-ins have remained relatively similar, and Minimal Housing Assistance (MHA) move-ins decreased from 2020 to 2021. As previously mentioned, even with increases in programmatic funding and capacity there are still a number of challenges that projects face in finding affordable units for those enrolled in programs — ranging from few openings to high rent for the openings that exist.

Figure 12: 2021 Permanent Housing Program Move-Ins



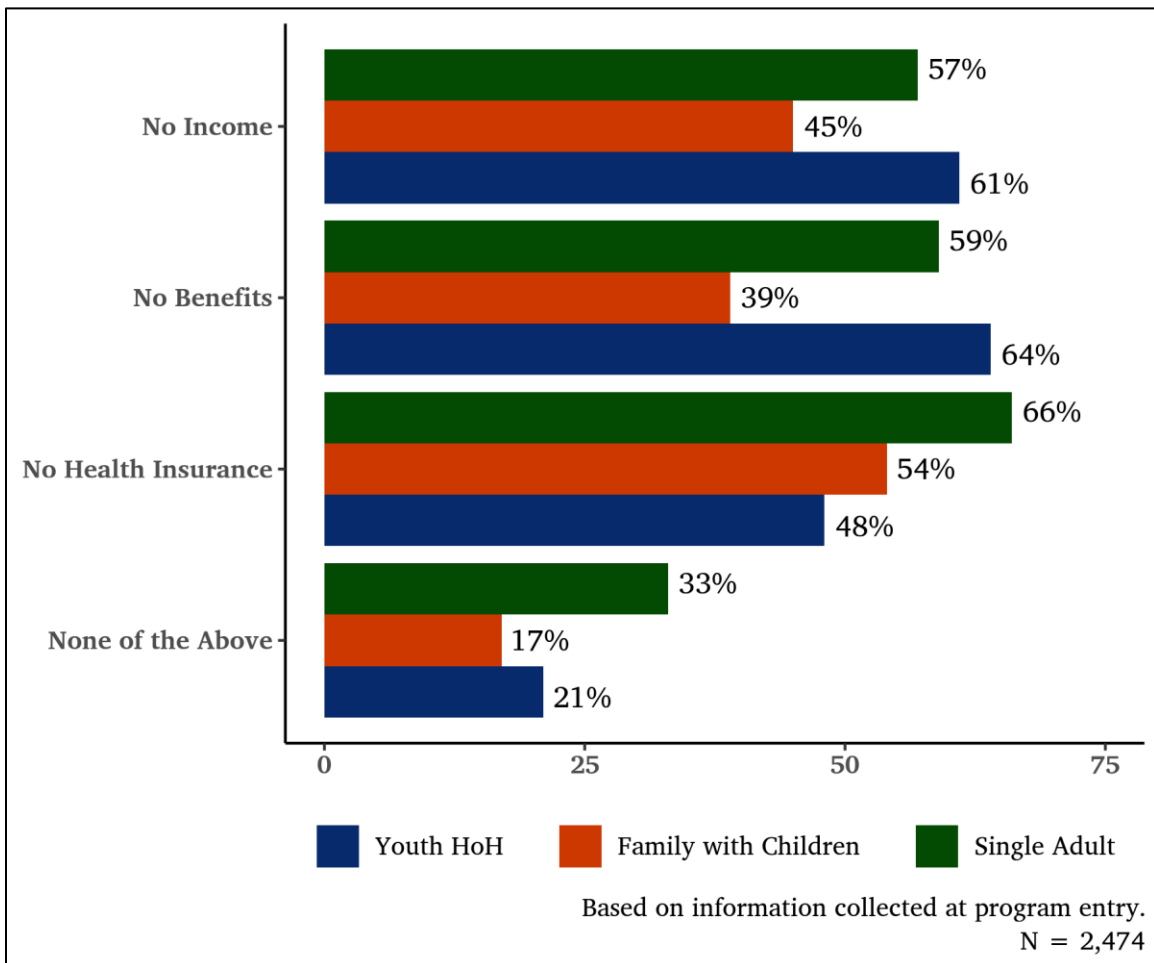
LACK OF INCOME, BENEFITS, AND HEALTH INSURANCE AT PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

The following chart shows the breakdown of clients entering programs who lack income, benefits, health insurance, and all three at the time of their enrollment as of early 2022.

In this sample, over half of single adults and youth heads of household entered with no earned income, as did almost half of families with children. A similar pattern is seen with benefits, with a slightly lower percentage of families with children entering with no benefits. One resource that is available to this subpopulation and not others is [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#)²⁶ (TANF).

A little under half of youth, a little over half of families with children, and approximately two-thirds of single adults enter with no health insurance. About one-third of single adults, and slightly under one quarter (seventeen percent of youth) enter with no income, no benefits, and no health insurance.

Figure 13: Percent of Households Without Income, Benefits, or Insurance



SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

In 2009, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was amended by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, which combined the Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care Program, and Moderate Rehabilitation / Single Room Occupancy Program, and changed the name of the Emergency Shelter Grants program to the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program. It also required all ESG and Continuum of Care (CoC) projects to record services and activities as part of a consolidated local Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and established as a condition of community funding criteria to measure and assess communities’ homelessness response system performance and progress through the [System Performance Measures](#).²⁷

Current and historical nationwide System Performance Measure (SPM) data may be accessed at:

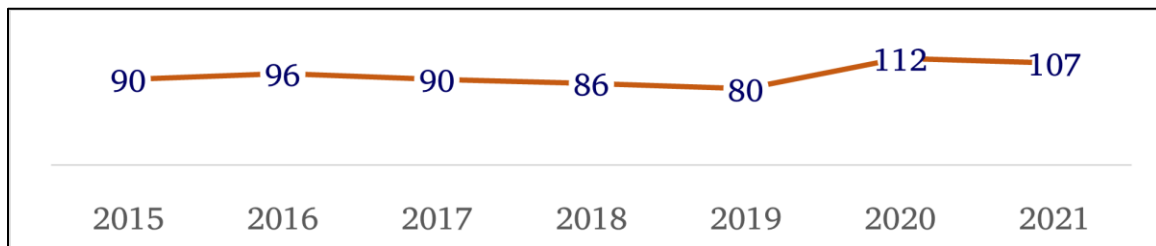
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/system.performance.measures.hud.public.data/viz/HUDCoCSystemPerformanceMeasures/>

The System Performance Measures section uses the same data submitted to HUD for our SPMs, for which the reporting period is the United States Federal Government’s fiscal year. For the 2021 fiscal year (FY21) this time period was October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

MEASURE 1: AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

This measure looks at the average length of stay, in days, that clients spend in the Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing project types. The lowest recorded average length of stay on record was in FY19. The average length of stay was at its highest recorded point in FY20 and has decreased by five days in FY21 but still remains at its second highest recorded level.

Figure 14: System Performance Measure 1 – Length of Stay in ES, SH, and TH



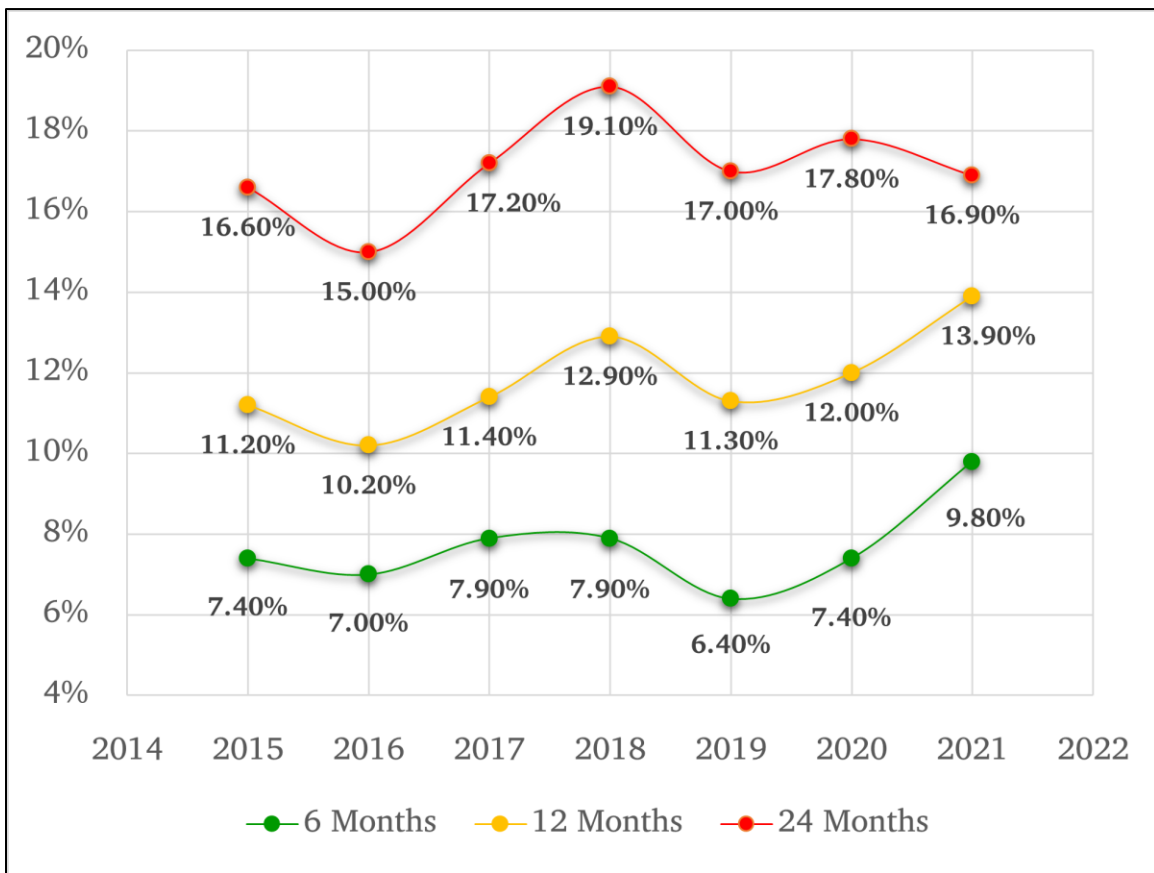
MEASURE 2: RETURNS TO HOMELESSNESS

This measure looks at returns to homelessness at six, twelve, and twenty-four months for clients who exited to permanent housing destinations from Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing Projects.

The figure below shows that after a mild uptick in 24-month returns in FY20, 24-month returns in FY21 dropped below their FY19 level and continued a relative decline since their highest level in FY18.

The figure also shows that both 12-month and 6-month returns to homelessness have risen steadily since FY19 and were at their highest recorded levels in FY21.

Figure 15: System Performance Measure 2 – Returns to Homelessness



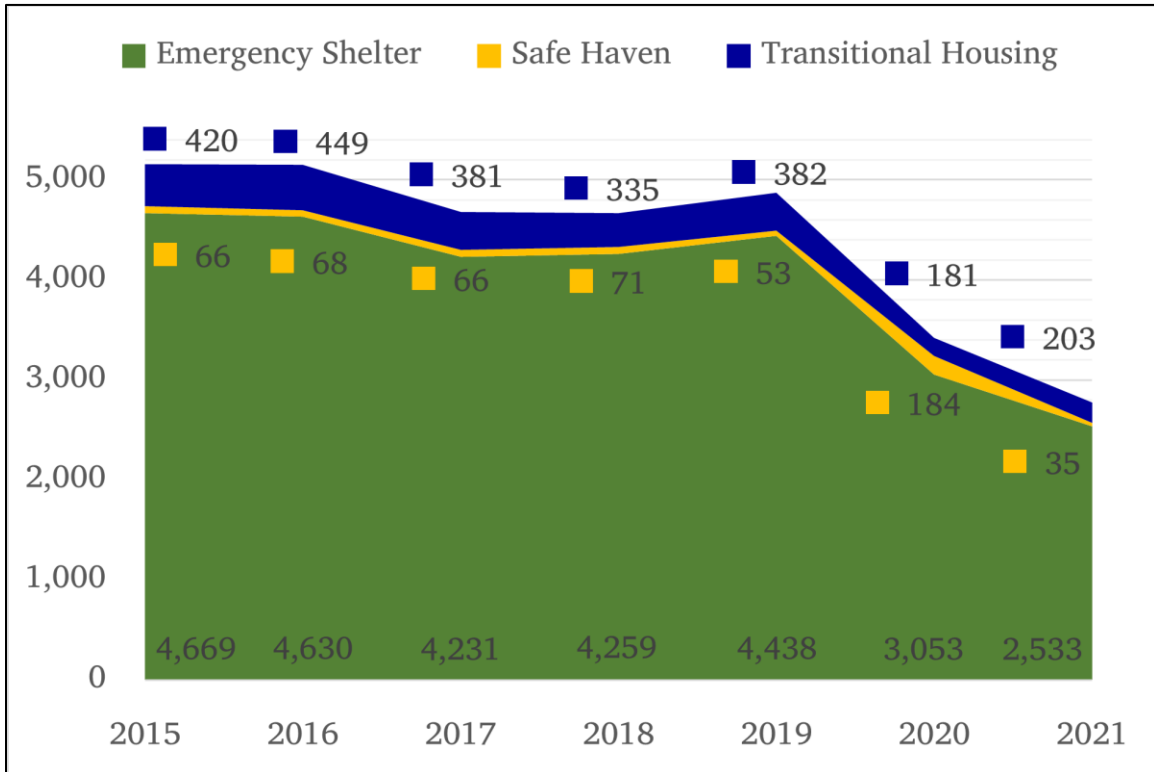
MEASURE 3: HMIS COUNTS

Metric 3.2 uses HMIS data to determine the unduplicated counts of active clients for each of the Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing project types throughout the fiscal year reporting period.

In this graphic, the larger the width of the colored bar at each year the higher the count was that year for that project type. The total number of counts for all three types is all three colored bars together, so in this case following the top of the blue bar shows the total counts over time from FY15 through FY21.

The total HMIS counts for these project types, especially Emergency Shelter, have dropped significantly since their pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

Figure 16: System Performance Measure 3 – HMIS Counts

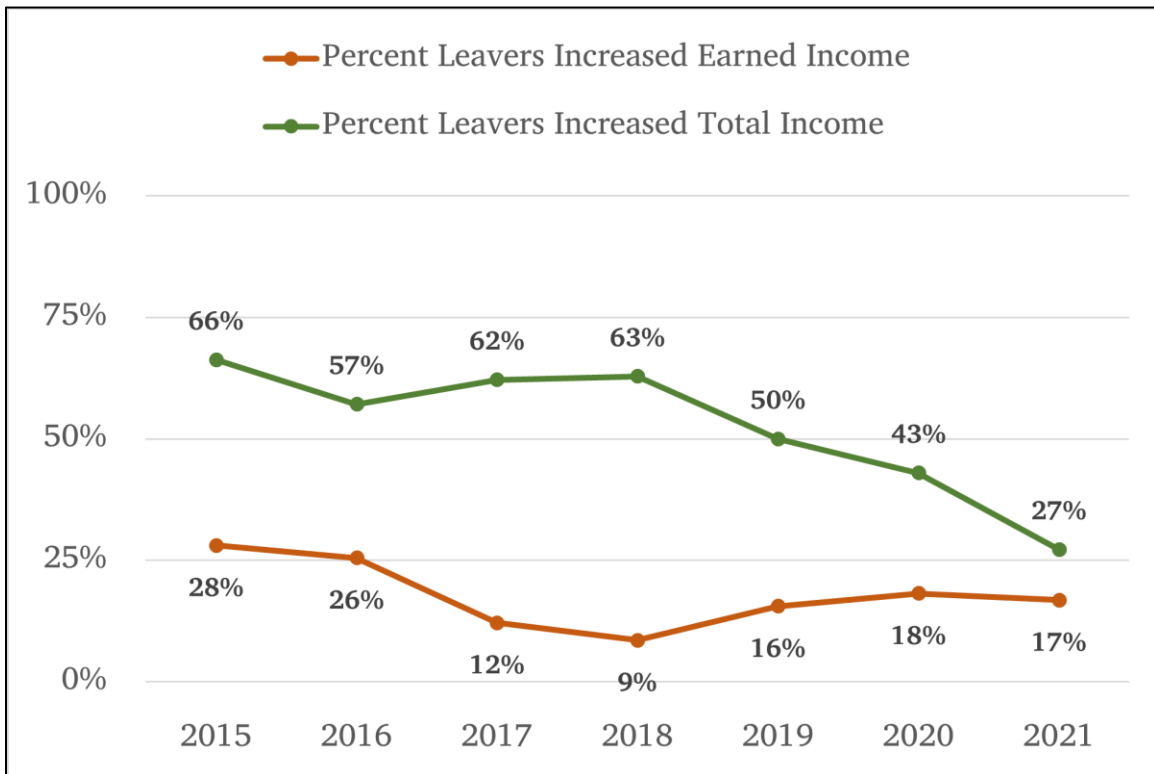


MEASURE 4: INCREASED INCOME FOR LEAVERS

This measure looks at clients who exited a CoC-funded program during the fiscal year reporting period and were not active in other CoC-funded programs afterward (“leavers”). Specifically it examines how many exited with higher incomes at the time of their exit than when they entered the program. This section examines both CoC program leavers who exited gaining *earned* income (Measure 4.4) such as from employment, and/or *total* income from any source (Measure 4.6), which could include benefits such as SSI/SSDI.

The percentages of CoC-funded program leavers with an increase in earned income and with an increase in any total income both decreased from FY20 to FY21, with a sharper decline of 16 percentage points in increased total income for leavers. While the percent of leavers with increased earned income has been on a general moderate rise since FY17-FY18, the percent of leavers with increased total income has generally been on a more notable decline since FY17-FY18.

Figure 17: System Performance Measure 4 – Increased Income for Leavers



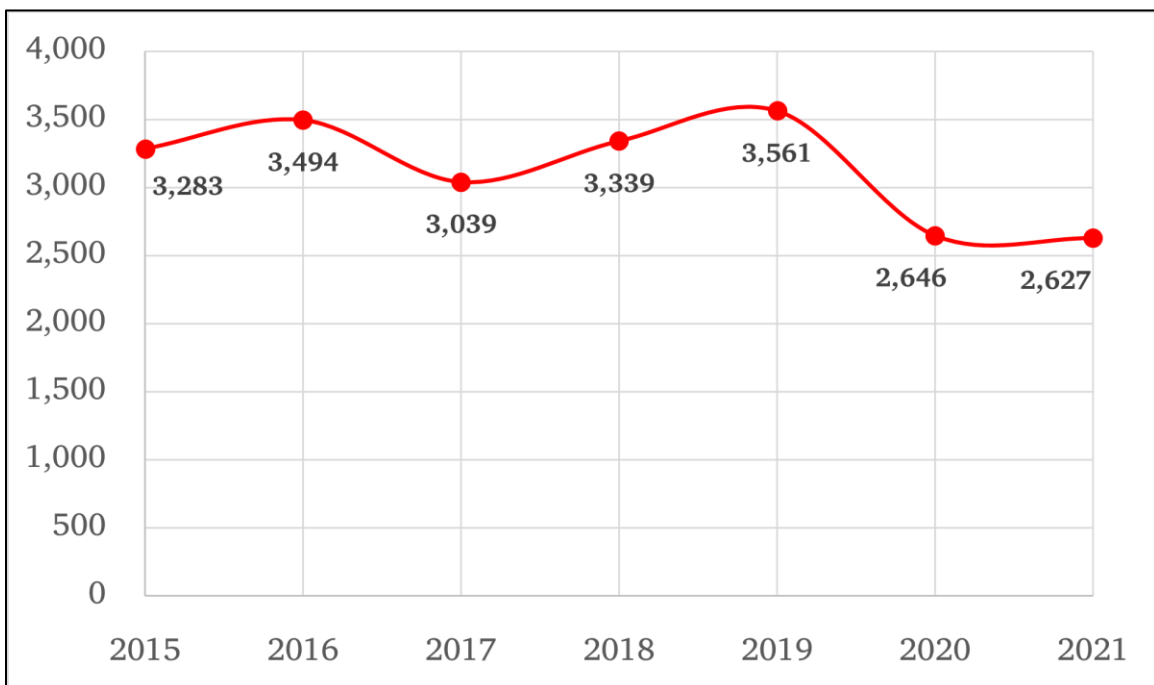
MEASURE 5: FIRST TIME HOMELESSNESS

This looks at the number of clients enrolling in Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing programs as “newly homeless,” which is defined by HUD in this context as not having been enrolled in any shelter or housing project for the preceding 24 months before their first enrollment in the fiscal year reporting period ([HUD 2022](#)).²⁸

FY21 saw the lowest number recorded in this measure, following an apparent downward trend since its highest point in 2019. This measure shows *service utilization*, but it is not a barometer for the total population of people experiencing homelessness since it only reflects HMIS data recorded per enrollments into Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing projects, and may not capture increases in the total local population experiencing homelessness if those people are not enrolled in services and recorded in HMIS.

According to System Performance Measure 5, first-time homelessness appears to be in decline, yet total homelessness is increasing (page 15), so this indicates the HRS has a backlog of still-unhoused people, along with people who have returned to homelessness, that is building up. This could be attributable to a combination of our system’s capacity and the rate at which people are housed, especially through RRH, and additional efforts such as diversion and rapid exit. Our system is having trouble keeping up and must address the backlog of clients waiting for assistance. This is related to the System Flow dilemma mentioned on page 13.

Figure 18: System Performance Measure 5 – First Time Homelessness Enrollments

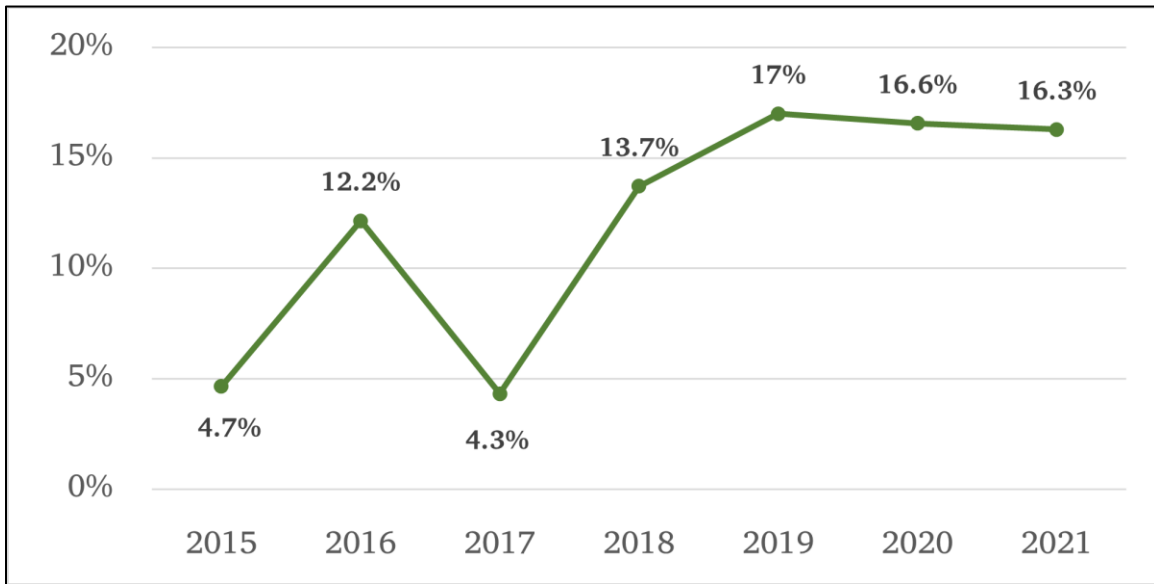


MEASURE 7A1: SUCCESSFUL STREET OUTREACH

This measure looks at the percent of exits to temporary or permanent housing from street outreach projects.

The FY21 percentage decreased slightly from the previous fiscal year, but this measure has remained relatively higher for the past three fiscal years than previously back to FY15.

Figure 19: System Performance Measure 7a1 – Successful Street Outreach

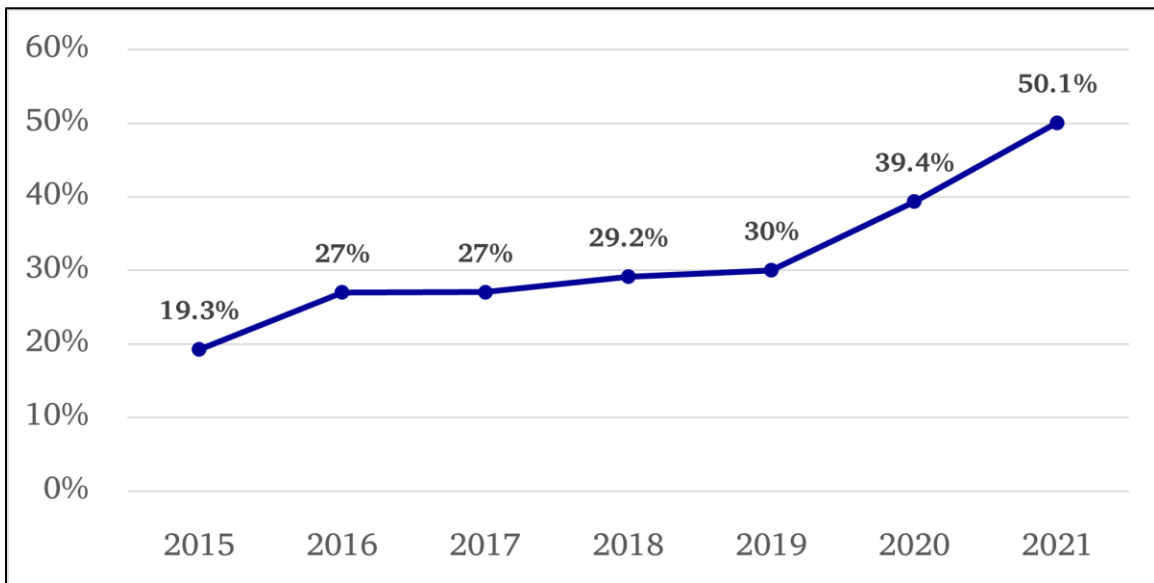


MEASURE 7B1: SUCCESSFUL EXITS

This measure looks at the number of successful exits from Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, Transitional Housing, and Rapid Re-Housing for clients enrolled in those project types.

This measure has been steadily rising since 2015 with an increase of 10.7 percentage points from FY20 to FY21.

Figure 20: System Performance Measure 7b1 – Successful Exits

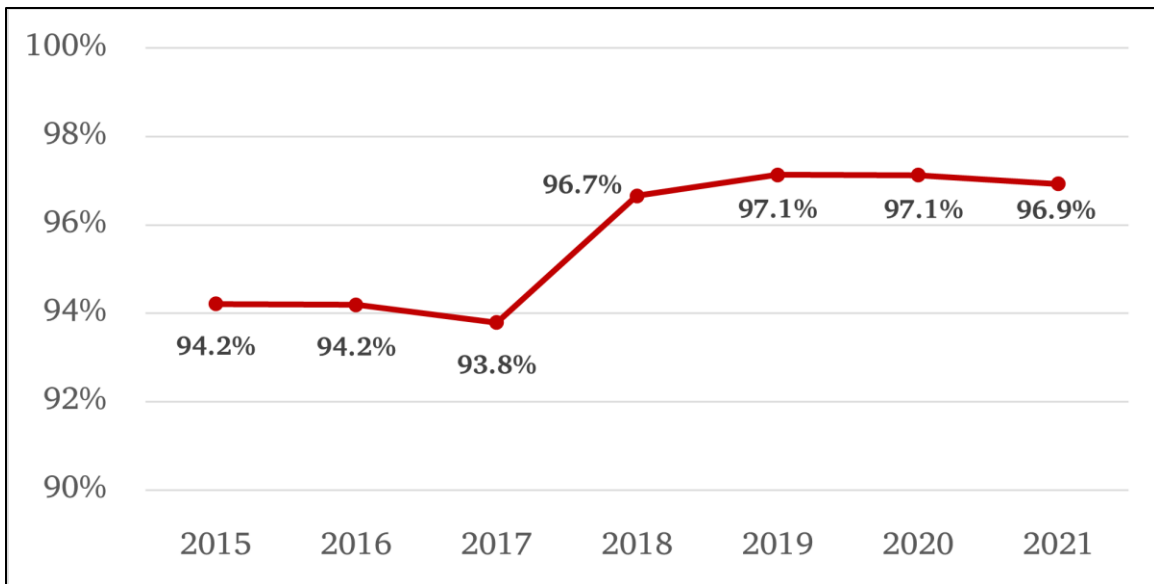


MEASURE 7B2: SUCCESSFUL EXITS FROM PH

This measure looks at the number of successful exits from permanent housing projects to permanent housing destinations or retention of permanent housing beyond six months, not including Rapid Re-Housing.

After a sharp rise from FY17 to FY18 this measure has remained relatively steady. There was a 0.2 percentage point decrease from FY20 to FY21.

Figure 21: System Performance Measure 7b2 – Successful Exits



ADDRESSING KEY NEEDS & GAPS

Over the past several years, the increased tightening of the rental housing market, the continued grip of deep-rooted structural racism and other impediments to racial equity, and a large volume of hostile and inaccurate propaganda leading to the re-criminalization of many of the daily realities surrounding the already traumatic experience of homelessness itself have all combined to exacerbate the acute humanitarian crisis experienced by those who are suffering without housing in our community, and to intensify the bottlenecks that impede the efforts of those working in the Homelessness Response System.

In light of the current state of housing instability and homelessness in our community, in solidarity with our neighbors who are currently without housing, and in response to the analyses laid out in this Needs and Gaps report, several final key options for strategic approaches that could be beneficial to consider for system improvement in the coming year are summarized below.

CENTRALIZED HOUSING PORTFOLIO

With the rental market in its increasingly perilous condition, it is of paramount importance to bolster Centralized Housing Portfolio efforts, build partnerships with community landlords and developers, and secure affordable housing units for the people we serve. As shown in the Coordinated Entry System Flow analysis (see page 13), once clients have taken a Coordinated Assessment, for those who are referred, then enrolled, then housed, the greatest length of time is from program enrollment to housing move-in, with the median and mean timeframes between CA to referral and referral to enrollment being notably shorter — by as much as or in some cases more than half the amount of time.

ECHO acknowledges that our Centralized Housing Portfolio needs further improvement, and efforts are underway to upgrade the Centralized Housing Portfolio system in greater transparency towards and accountability to our partners. ECHO has secured new funding to help in furthering a more sustainable and equitable approach that can accommodate the complex needs and safety of the families and individuals participating in services, as well as the evolving needs of our partner agencies. However, this funding will only support a small share of the centralized housing need, and we need to work with the community to collaboratively secure additional, sustainable funding for the system's true needs to be met.

SUBPOPULATIONS

Considering how the high prevalence of veteran-specific PSH resources is reflected in over half of the community's current PSH utilizers falling into the veteran subpopulation category (see page 14), ensuring that new PSH projects are not subpopulation-specific could allow for greater access to PSH for everyone who needs and qualifies for it.

Furthermore, while the greatest quantity of need for PSH is for single individuals, working with local housing authorities to develop ways to increase our local PSH capacity to house families could help to ensure that larger households who need PSH are also able to utilize it.

For all interventions and services beyond just PSH, while some agencies may have unique specializations that make them particularly well-suited to providing services to specific subpopulations, a systemwide focus on ensuring that new programs and services are not limited to serving specific subpopulations, as well as an emphasis on increasing the quantity, capacity, and accessibility of programs that offer unrestricted and expedient access to services for all those in need, could help the system to better serve all clients due to there being fewer eligibility screening barriers, less time constraints, and increased system flow.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

Black people in our community remain disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness than other racial and ethnic groups, and they are drastically overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness compared to the general population of Travis County. Continued system and program level development and implementation of antiracist policies and strategies are needed to address this.

Recommendations include continued analysis and refinement of the local Coordinated Entry assessment, the Austin Prioritization Assessment Tool (APAT); building concrete racial equity assessment metrics into CoC program performance scorecards and the project performance monitoring requirements in other grant contracts; ensuring that RFPs for funding examine applicants' policies, practices, and performance in terms of racial equity; and bolstering qualitative research in collaboration with people with lived experience of homelessness and community racial equity advocates.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND GRANT MANAGEMENT

For CoC and YHDP project spending ending in 2021, approximately \$558,470 worth of the total funds distributed to our community were unspent according to the data available from [Sage HMIS Reporting Repository](#)²⁹ as of July 2022.

If affordable housing units are harder to locate and enrolled clients are still in the housing search phase, it can become more difficult for projects to spend rental assistance funds exactly as originally planned, but with a stronger, healthier central support system that all agencies can access and tap into, our community could more reliably ensure that all funding is spent strategically and on-time.

With an increase in the total number of people who are experiencing homelessness (see page 15) and a backlog in the system (see pages 13 and 27), it is imperative that all money allocated to ending homelessness be spent on ending homelessness. Leaving federal grant money such as CoC and YHDP funding unspent could result in a decrease in the total amount of funding that HUD is willing to allocate to the Austin and Travis County region in the future.

More direct and active monitoring of CoC and YHDP spending by the CoC Board, including revisiting and updating the CoC Reallocation and Deobligation Policy, could aid our community in ensuring that all funding is either spent effectively or strategically reallocated to where it will have the most impact for people in need. As the Collaborative Applicant and CoC Planning agency, ECHO is available to provide technical assistance to our community's CoC and YHDP agencies and others who request our support. ECHO has added further staff capacity to increase systemwide access to technical assistance, training, and support.

The CoC Board could also consider strategies to publish all homelessness services spending practices more transparently for oversight and analysis; ways to ensure that all agencies collaborate in finding resources and accessing training and technical assistance to collectively build a stronger spending infrastructure in our community; the establishment of a new funding strategies and accountability committee or workgroup in the governance structure; and the formalization of networking support for those in our system responsible for program spending and grant management at all agencies, including ECHO and the City of Austin. This type of stronger funding strategies system framework could lead to more efficient financial results which could tie into more beneficial outcomes for the clients we serve. These resources combined with other systemwide supports including the Centralized Housing Portfolio can help move the HRS further toward our shared mission of ending homelessness.

GLOSSARY

Chronic Homelessness: An individual experiencing homelessness who has a disability, as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(9)), who: lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a Safe Haven, or in an Emergency Shelter and has been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights. (See Also: <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/definition-of-chronic-homelessness/>)

Continuum of Care: “A Continuum of Care (CoC) is the group organized to carry out the responsibilities prescribed in the [CoC Program Interim Rule \[24 CFR 578\]](#)³⁰ for a defined geographic area. A CoC should be composed of representatives of organizations including: nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons. Responsibilities of a CoC include operating the CoC, designating and operating an HMIS, planning for the CoC (including coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system within its geographic area that meets the needs of the individuals and families who experience homelessness there), and designing and implementing the process associated with applying for CoC Program funds.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014)

Coordinated Entry (Project Type): “A project that administers the continuum's centralized or coordinated process to coordinate assessment and referral of individuals and families seeking housing or services, including use of a comprehensive and standardized assessment tool.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 42)

Day Shelter (Project Type): “A project that offers daytime facilities and services (no lodging) for persons who are homeless.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 40)

Emergency Shelter (Project Type): “A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. Requirements and limitations may vary by program, and will be specified by the funder.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 40)

Homelessness Prevention (Project Type): “A project that offers services and/or financial assistance necessary to prevent a person from moving into an Emergency Shelter or place not meant for human habitation.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 39)

Other (Project Type): “A project that offers services, but does not provide lodging, and cannot otherwise be categorized as another project type, per above. Any project that provides only stand-alone supportive services (other than outreach or coordinated entry) and has no associated housing outcomes should be typed as 'Other.' For example, a project funded to provide child care for persons in permanent housing or a dental care project funded to serve homeless clients should be typed 'Other.' A project funded to provide ongoing case management with associated housing outcomes should be typed 'Services Only.’” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 45)

PH – Housing Only (Project Type): “A project that offers permanent housing for persons who are homeless, but does not make supportive services available as part of the project.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 42)

PH – Housing with Services (no disability required for entry) (Project Type): “A project that offers permanent housing and supportive services to assist homeless persons to live independently, but does not limit eligibility to individuals with disabilities or families in which one adult or child has a disability.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, pp. 41-42)

PH – Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (Project Type): “A project that offers permanent housing and supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability (individuals with disabilities or families in which one adult or child has a disability) to live independently.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 41)

PH – Rapid Re-Housing (Project Type): “A permanent housing project that provides housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 41)

Safe Haven (Project Type): “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.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, pp. 40-41)

Services Only (Project Type): “A project that offers only stand-alone supportive services (other than outreach or coordinated entry) to address the special needs of participants (such as child care, employment assistance, and transportation services) and has associated housing outcomes. If the Services Only project is affiliated with any one of the following:

- One residential project AND
 - Does not offer to provide services for all the residential project clients; OR
 - Only serves clients for a portion of their project stay (e.g.: provides classes); OR
 - Information sharing is not allowed between residential project and service provider.
- Multiple residential projects of the same project type (e.g. multiple PH:PSH) AND
 - Does not serve all the residential project clients; OR
 - Information sharing is not allowed between residential projects and service provider.
- Multiple residential projects of different project types (e.g. PH:RRH and PH:PSH)
- Emergency Shelter(s)

Then the project type will be 'Services Only' and 'Affiliated with a Residential Project' will be 'Yes.' Each of the residential projects with which the Services Only project is associated must be identified.

If the Services Only project provides only services (other than outreach or coordinated entry), has associated housing outcomes, and is not limited to serving clients of one or more specific residential projects, then the project type will be 'Services Only' and 'Affiliated with a Residential project' will be 'No.'

A residential project that is funded under one or more separate grants to provide supportive services to 100% of the clients of the residential project will be set up as a single project with the appropriate residential project type. All federal funding sources must be identified in 2.06 Funding Sources.” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, pp. 42-45)

Street Outreach (Project Type): “A project that offers services necessary to reach out to unsheltered homeless people, connect them with Emergency Shelter, housing, or critical services, and provide urgent, non-facility-based care to unsheltered

homeless people who are unwilling or unable to access Emergency Shelter, housing, or an appropriate health facility. Only persons who are "street homeless" should be entered into a street outreach project. Projects that also serve persons other than "street homeless" must have two separate projects to be set up in HMIS, one 'Street Outreach' and the other 'Services Only.'" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, pp. 39-40)

Transitional Housing (Project Type): "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 no longer than 24 months. Requirements and limitations may vary by program, and will be specified by the funder." (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021, p. 40)

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- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “What is a Continuum of Care?” HUD Exchange, July 2014. <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/programs/continuum-of-care-coc-program/program-administration/general/what-is-a-continuum-of-care/>.

FULL TEXT HYPERLINKS

-
- ¹<https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/rapid-re-housing/>
 - ²<https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/permanent-supportive-housing/>
 - ³<https://www.austinecho.org/hmis/>
 - ⁴https://www.austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/20210818_Needs_And_Gaps-1.html
 - ⁵<https://www.austinecho.org/>
 - ⁶<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/FY-2022-HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual.pdf>
 - ⁷<https://1zdndu3n3nla353ymc1h6x58-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022-Racial-Disparities-Report.pdf>
 - ⁸<https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets.html>
 - ⁹<https://www.r-project.org/>
 - ¹⁰<https://walker-data.com/tidycensus/>
 - ¹¹<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/definition-of-chronic-homelessness/>
 - ¹²<https://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>
 - ¹³<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/yhdp/>
 - ¹⁴<https://www.austinecho.org/leading-system-change/performance-monitoring/#section-dashboard>
 - ¹⁵<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>
 - ¹⁶<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-leasing-rental-assistance-requirements/reasonableness/>
 - ¹⁷https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2022_code/2022summary.odn?&year=2022&fmrtype=Final&cbsasub=METRO12420M12420
 - ¹⁸<https://www.zillow.com/research/methodology-zori-repeat-rent-27092/>
 - ¹⁹<https://www.austinecho.org/leading-system-change/coalition-leadership/#section-written-standards>
 - ²⁰<https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/SSI.html>
 - ²¹<https://www.zillow.com/research/data/>
 - ²²<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-116publ136/pdf/PLAW-116publ136.pdf>
 - ²³<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2020-19654>
 - ²⁴<http://evictionlab.org>
 - ²⁵<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-housing-inventory-count-reports/>
 - ²⁶<https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/613>
 - ²⁷<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/system-performance-measures/#data>
 - ²⁸<https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-HMIS-Programming-Specifications.pdf>
 - ²⁹<https://www.sagehmis.info/>
 - ³⁰<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-578>