

THE COST OF INACTION ON HOMELESSNESS AND EVICTION

Anne N. Sosin, MPH, Vermont Affordable
Housing Coalition
Legislative Testimony



“And I really need to be inside because you know my health would just just go downhill fast. Before I was lucky enough to stay here. I was in my car and my doctor said that if I didn't get inside that I was gonna die. So then somehow I get into this program and I'm so thankful because, you know, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for this program.”

55-year-old female motel resident, Upper Valley

“I’ve been addicted to a number of drugs since I was like 17 years old. Now I’m 2X and decided to get clean this summer...I went to rehab for seven days...So, but now I'm here just trying to get everything together. I'm trying to get my doctors and all my doctor stuff put together. I have hepatitis C. So I'm trying to get that worked out and I'm taking pills for it. Trying to get it I'm trying to hold the job. I just got one.”

Upper Valley Motel Resident

OBJECTIVES TODAY

- Emergency of Homelessness in Vermont
- Cost of Inaction
- Evidence for Action

HOMELESSNESS IN VERMONT

- Second highest per capita rate of homelessness in the US
- Vermonters are entering homelessness faster than they are exiting it— 2,400 became homeless in 2022 while 2,200 left homelessness.²
- More than 80% of Vermonters experiencing homelessness sheltered in motels.³
- Motel program participants cited rental assistance or subsidy and support securing rental housing as the greatest housing need.²
- 37 motel guests are from out of the state (AHS).²

1. The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2023. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.
2. <https://housingdata.org/profile/housing-needs/homelessness>
3. AHS Care Coordination Program Research Teams Assessment, Agency of Human Services, February 2023.

A POPULATION AT RISK

Significant vulnerability:

- 75% of households have an individual with a disability
- More 25% had previously stayed in a psychiatric hospital
- Nearly 25% had stayed in a substance use treatment facility
- More than 40% (966), had one or more trips to an ER.

Strong evidence that these groups of Vermonters can be housed

COLLIDING CRISES

- Lowest rental vacancy rates in the US and record housing costs
- Eviction are on the rise:
 - Rates have risen from 25 to 35 per week since end of VERAP in November 2022.¹
 - 1350 cases filed in 2022; on track to have >1800 in 2023



1. Vermont Legal Aid Preliminary Analysis, shared March 27, 2023.

“We were very grateful for that, and for comments by Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray that it was more costly to cut shelter beds, because then people wound up in emergency departments or police stations.”

The homeless demand is causing an unsettling change in the balance of the shelters’ mission.

COSTS OF INACTION

“Our board in November made a commitment to let everyone indoors and not let anyone die outside,” Yazwinski said, “but we had hoped to continue directing funds from shelters to finding more housing, and now we have to reshift the focus.

Eliminating Homelessness Funding Does Not Eliminate its
Impacts or Costs

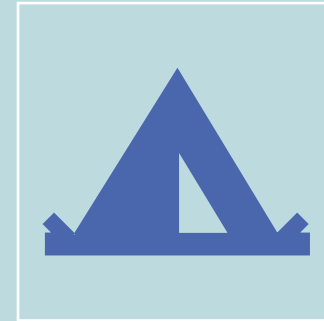
Instead of taking beds down in the shelters – something that had been possible in recent years – Yazwinski will have to use money to add more.

DISPLACEMENT OF IMPACTS AND COSTS



Sheltered Homelessness

Homelessness budget and funding streams



Unsheltered Homelessness

- Municipalities
- Health Systems
- Criminal Justice Systems
- Schools
- Public services

The “frequent fliers” account for the running red ink in the hospital’s finances. Parkland needed to do something about them, and beginning in 2015 it did. That year, the Parkland Health and Hospital System christened a new \$1.3 billion hospital, a 17-story glass-and-steel behemoth, shiny on the outside and quiet on the inside, funded by municipal bonds and donations from local oil zillionaires. It also launched an innovative new initiative that would reset the hospital’s ledger by creating a safety net for the city’s most vulnerable citizens.

The New York Times

Number of Homeless Students Rises to New High, Report Says

The report found that more than 1.5 million public school students experienced homelessness in the 2017-18 school year, the highest in more than a dozen years.

A Person Trapped in the Homelessness-Jail Cycle Costs Denver Nearly \$4,000 in Criminal Justice-Related Costs over 90 Days

Cost and number of justice system interactions for one person experiencing long-term homelessness in Denver in 2016



Source: Sarah Gillespie, Benjamin Chartoff, Devlin Hanson, and Mary K. Cunningham, “The first step toward breaking the homelessness-jail cycle,” *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, May 18, 2016, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/first-step-toward-breaking-homelessness-jail-cycle>.
 Notes: These data do not represent actual citations, arrests, jail stays, or other police contacts. They are simulated to match the distribution of actual interactions for a person experiencing chronic, or long-term, homelessness cycling in and out of jail. Costs are based on estimates provided by the City of Denver for the average cost of one citation (\$175), arrest (\$430), jail stay (\$80),

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HOUSING IS HEALTH: HOMELESSNESS HAS ADVERSE HEALTH IMPACTS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Prenatal and postnatal homelessness associated with adverse health outcomes.¹

Children who have experienced homelessness are more likely to experience serious health conditions and to become more vulnerable to abuse and violence.²

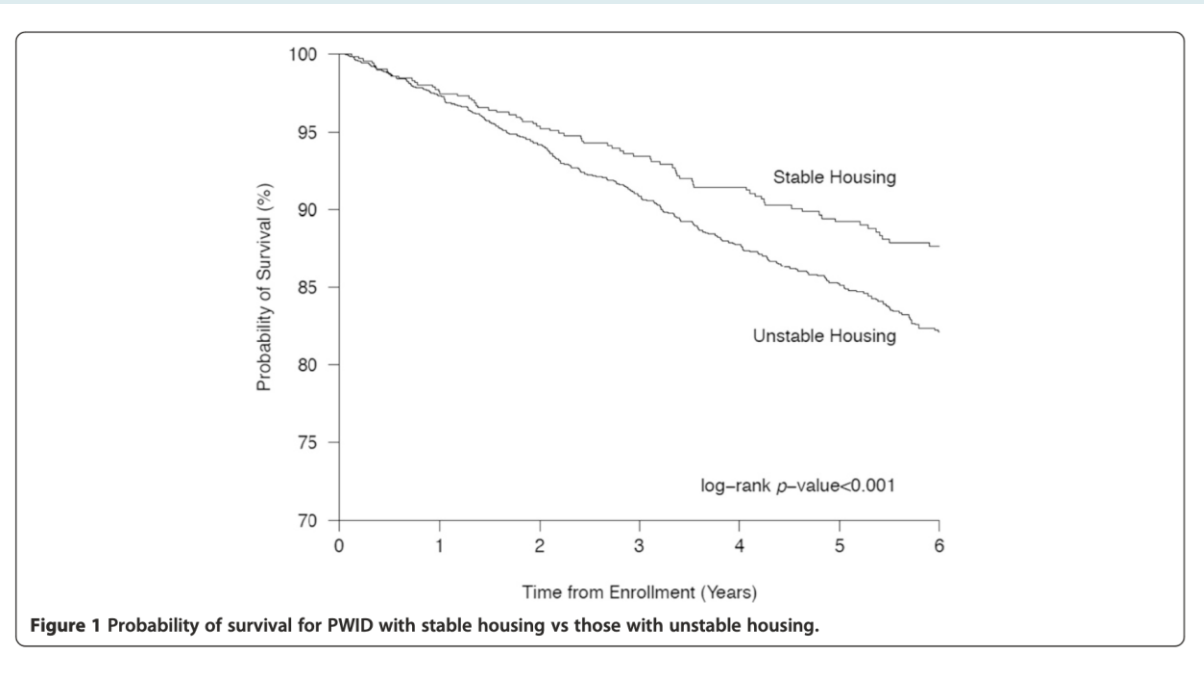
Youth experiencing homelessness are at elevated risk for poor physical, mental health outcomes, face barriers to care, and are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors and experience violence.³

Homelessness is associated with a broad range of poor health outcomes in **adults**.⁴

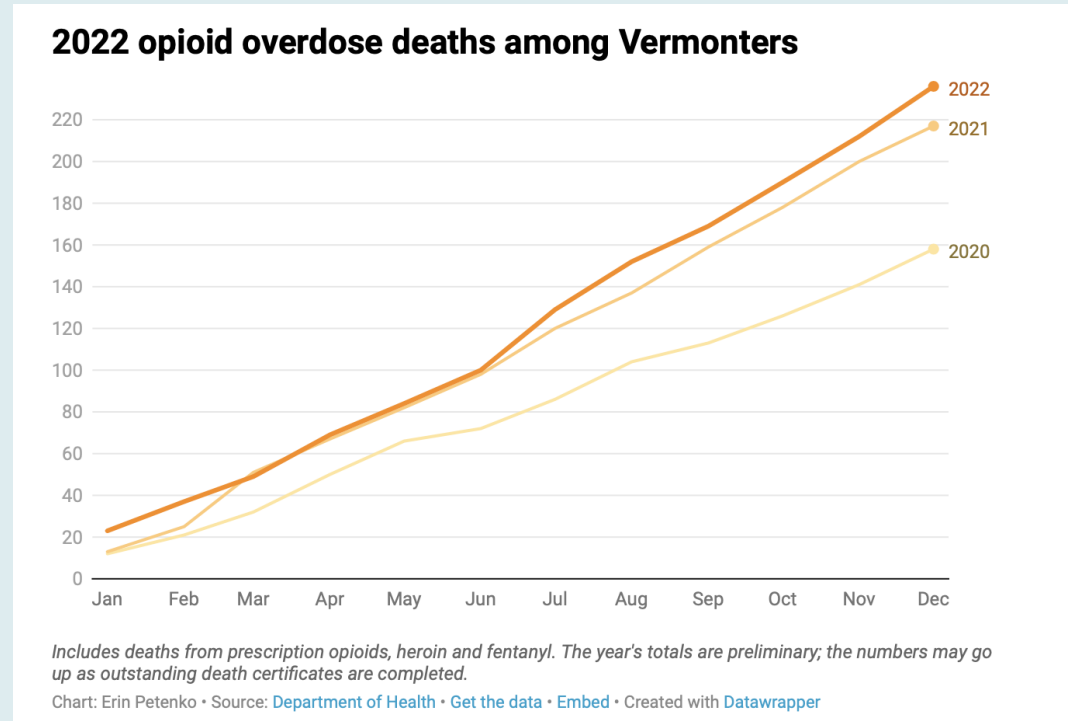
Large and growing mortality gap for people experiencing homelessness.^{5,6,7}

1. Sandel, Megan, Richard Sheward, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Sharon Coleman, Timothy Heeren, Maureen M. Black, Patrick H. Casey, et al. "Timing and Duration of Pre- and Postnatal Homelessness and the Health of Young Children." *Pediatrics* 142, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): e20174254. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-4254>.
2. Sandel, Megan, Richard Sheward, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Sharon M. Coleman, Deborah A. Frank, Mariana Chilton, Maureen Black, et al. "Unstable Housing and Caregiver and Child Health in Renter Families." *Pediatrics* 141, no. 2 (February 1, 2018): e20172199. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-2199>.
3. Smith-Grant, Jennifer, Greta Kilmer, Nancy Brener, Leah Robin, and J. Michael Underwood. "Risk Behaviors and Experiences Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 23 U.S. States and 11 Local School Districts, 2019." *Journal of Community Health* 47, no. 2 (April 2022): 324–33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-021-01056-2>.
4. "Housing And Health: An Overview Of The Literature." Project HOPE, June 7, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577>.
5. Hwang, Stephen W. "Causes of Death in Homeless Adults in Boston." *Annals of Internal Medicine* 126, no. 8 (April 15, 1997): 625. <https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-126-8-199704150-00007>.
6. Dickens, Kirsten A., Danielle R. Fine, Logan D. Adams, Nora K. Horick, Elizabeth Lewis, Sara E. Looby, and Travis P. Baggett. "Mortality Trends Among Adults Experiencing Homelessness in Boston, Massachusetts From 2003 to 2018." *JAMA Internal Medicine*, March 13, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2022.7011>.
7. Baggett, Travis P., Stephen W. Hwang, James J. O'Connell, Bianca C. Porneala, Erin J. Stringfellow, E. John Orav, Daniel E. Singer, and Nancy A. Rigotti. "Mortality Among Homeless Adults in Boston: Shifts in Causes of Death Over a 15-Year Period." *JAMA Internal Medicine* 173, no. 3 (February 11, 2013): 189. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.1604>.

HOUSING IS HEALTH: OVERDOSE CRISIS

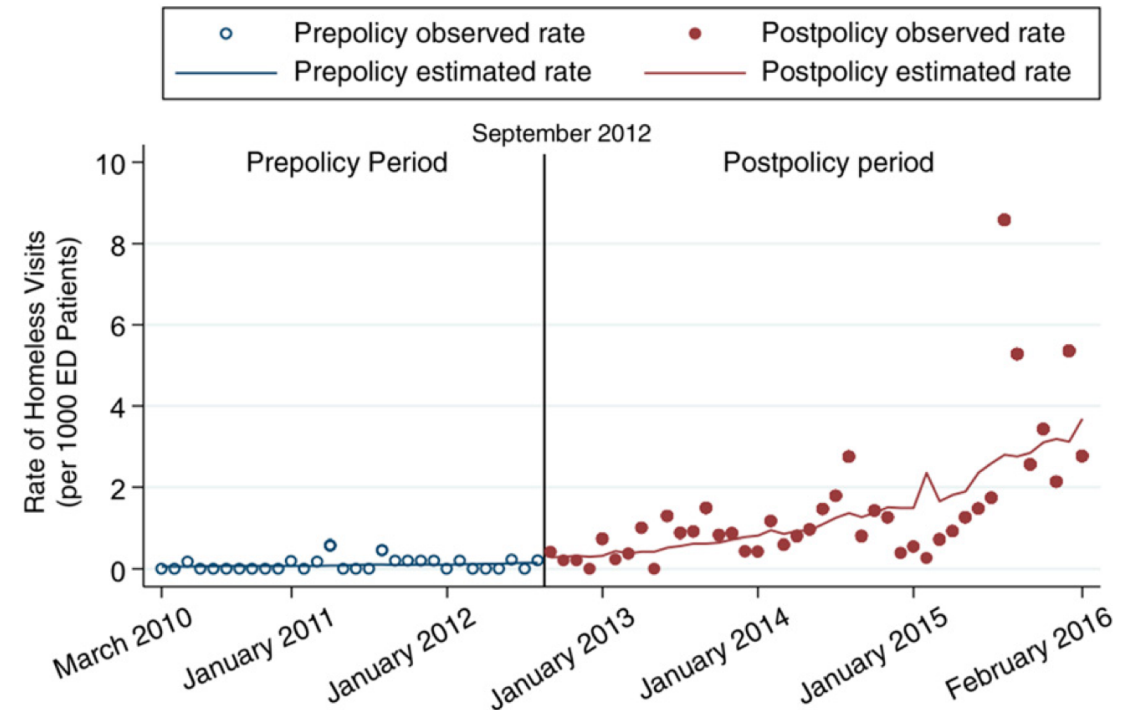
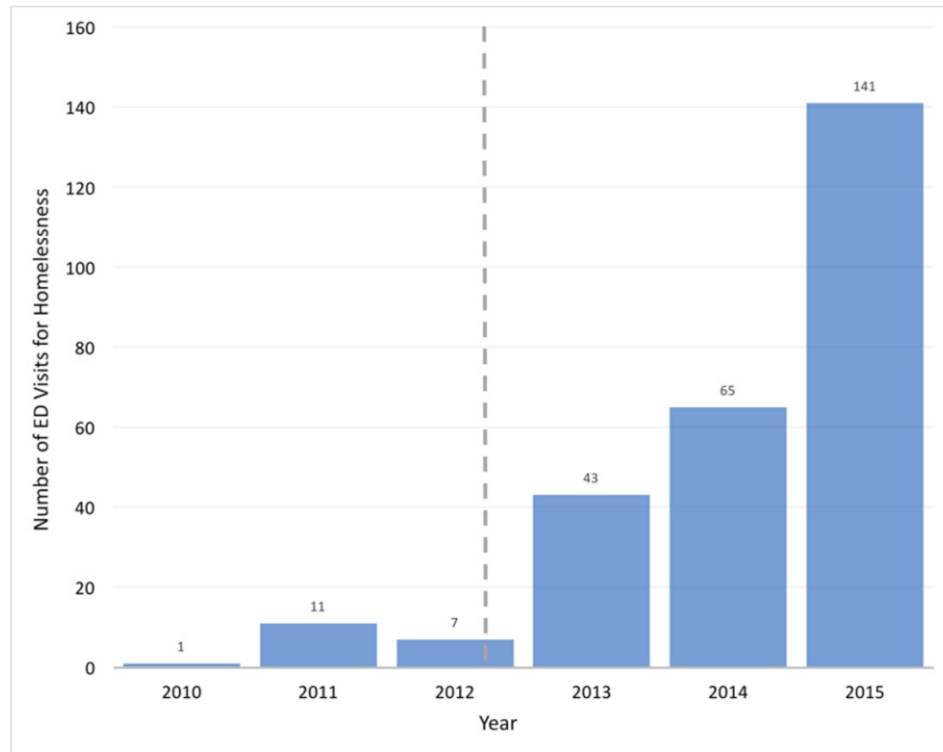


Zivanovic, R., Milloy, M., Hayashi, K. et al. Impact of unstable housing on all-cause mortality among persons who inject drugs. BMC Public Health 15, 106 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1479-x>



<https://vtdigger.org/2023/03/23/vermonts-2022-opioid-deaths-set-a-record-for-the-3rd-straight-year/>

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS: MA POLICY CHANGE



Stewart, Amanda M., Mia M. Kanak, Alana M. Gerald, Amir A. Kimia, Assaf Landschaft, Megan T. Sandel, and Lois K. Lee. "Pediatric Emergency Department Visits for Homelessness After Shelter Eligibility Policy Change." *Pediatrics* 142, no. 5 (November 1, 2018): e20181224. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-1224>.

HOUSING IS HEALTH: EVICTION CONTRIBUTES TO POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES



Newborns whose mothers are **evicted** during their pregnancy are more likely to have preterm birth, low birth weight, neonatal intensive care unit stays, extended hospitalization.¹

Eviction is associated with greater odds of fair or poor health for young children, emergency room admissions, food insecurity, and developmental risk.^{2,3}

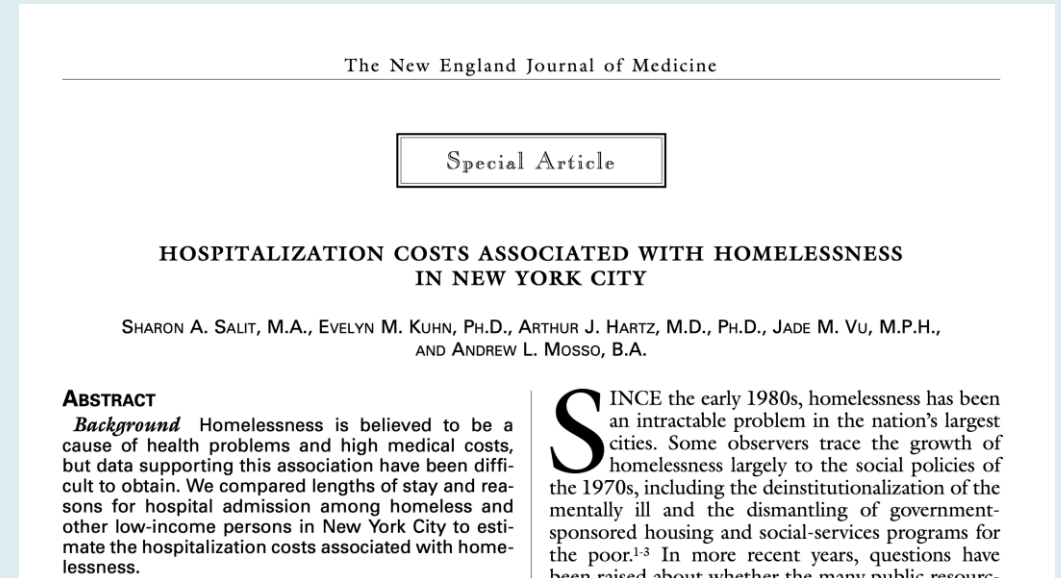
Evictions also associated with a broad range of health conditions, including increased all-cause mortality.⁴

1. Leifheit, Kathryn M., Gabriel L. Schwartz, Craig E. Pollack, Kathryn J. Edin, Maureen M. Black, Jacky M. Jennings, and Keri N. Althoff. "Severe Housing Insecurity during Pregnancy: Association with Adverse Birth and Infant Outcomes." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 22 (November 21, 2020): 8659. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17228659>.
2. Cutts, Diana B., Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Allison Bovell-Ammon, Chevaughn Wellington, Sharon M. Coleman, Deborah A. Frank, Maureen M. Black, et al. "Eviction and Household Health and Hardships in Families With Very Young Children." *Pediatrics* 150, no. 4 (October 1, 2022): e2022056692. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-056692>.
3. Leifheit, Kathryn M., Gabriel L. Schwartz, Craig E. Pollack, Maureen M. Black, Kathryn J. Edin, Keri N. Althoff, and Jacky M. Jennings. "Eviction in Early Childhood and Neighborhood Poverty, Food Security, and Obesity in Later Childhood and Adolescence: Evidence from a Longitudinal Birth Cohort." *SSM - Population Health* 11 (August 2020): 100575. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100575>.
4. "When Storms Collide: Evictions, COVID-19, And Health Equity," August 4, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1377/forefront.20200730.190964>.

COSTS OF HOMELESSNESS

Cost of unsheltered homeless—
upwards of \$30,000 per year.^{1,2,3,4}

Costs absorbed by healthcare systems
schools, criminal justice system, public
services, health systems, and
communities

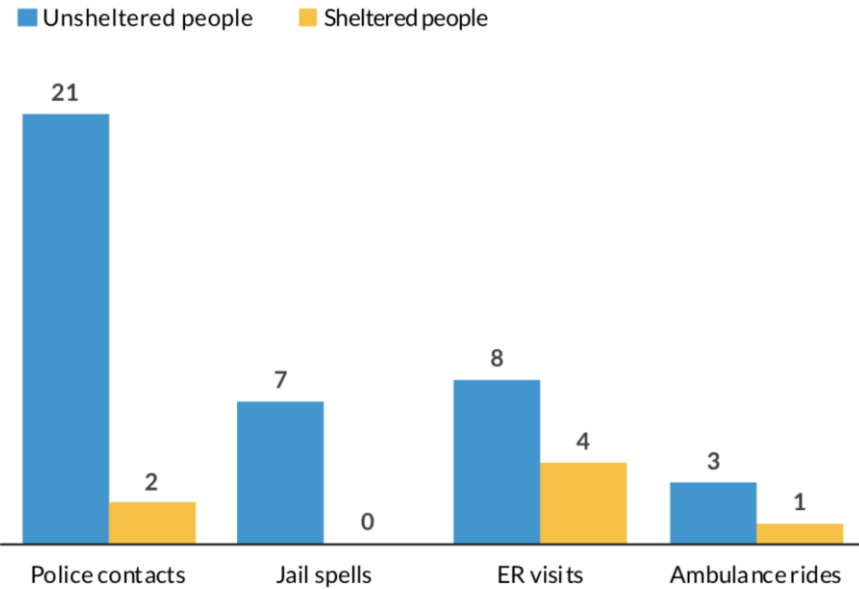


1. https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Ending_Chronic_Homelessness_in_2017.pdf
2. "Ending Chronic Homelessness Saves Taxpayers Monday," Policy Brief, National Coalition to End Homelessness, <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cost-Savings-from-PSH.pdf>.
3. Salit, Sharon A., Evelyn M. Kuhn, Arthur J. Hartz, Jade M. Vu, and Andrew L. Mosso. "Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City." *New England Journal of Medicine* 338, no. 24 (June 11, 1998): 1734–40. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJM199806113382406>.
4. "The Cost of Long-Term Homelessness in Florida," Rethink Homelessness, 2014. <https://shnny.org/uploads/Florida-Homelessness-Report-2014.pdf>

HOMELESSNESS-JAIL CYCLE

People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness Are More Likely to Interact with the Justice System and Emergency Services Than People in Shelters

Average number of interactions in previous six months



Source: Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke, "Health Conditions among Unsheltered Adults in the US," California Policy Lab, October 6, 2019, <https://www.policylab.org/health-conditions-among-unsheltered-adults-in-the-u-s/>.

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A Person Trapped in the Homelessness-Jail Cycle Costs Denver Nearly \$4,000 in Criminal Justice-Related Costs over 90 Days

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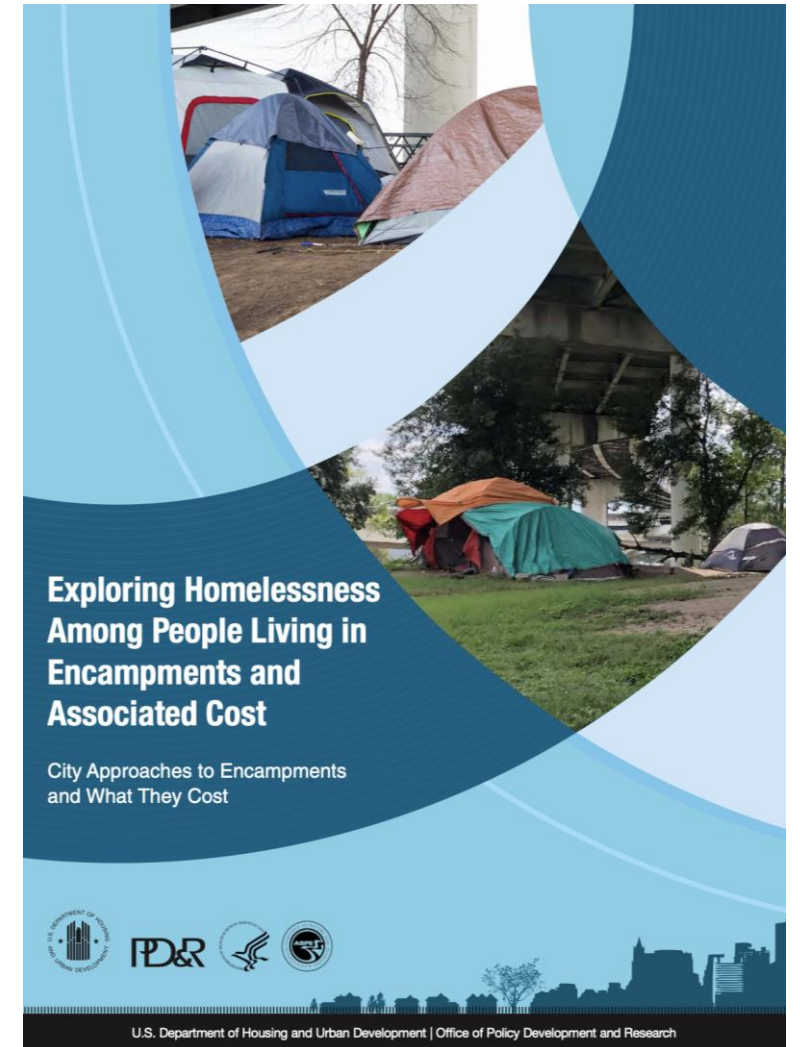
MUNICIPAL IMPACTS

- Unsheltered homelessness is resource intensive for communities
- 90% of costs absorbed by municipalities; most costs not supported by HUD funding

Exhibit 6-1. Total costs and cost per capita of encampment-related expenditures by city, FY 2019

	Total spending on encampment activities	Population	Cost per capita
San Jose	\$ 8,557,000	1,035,317	\$ 8.27
Tacoma	\$ 3,905,000	213,418	\$ 18.30
Chicago	\$ 3,572,000	2,716,450	\$ 1.31
Houston	\$ 3,393,000	2,312,717	\$ 1.47

Sources: City cost data; U.S. Census



Exploring Homelessness Among People Living in Encampments and Associated Cost

City Approaches to Encampments and What They Cost



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | Office of Policy Development and Research

A Sandwich Shop, a Tent City and an American Crisis

As homelessness overwhelms downtown Phoenix, a small business wonders how long it can hang on.

 Give this article



 2K



INVISIBLE COSTS

“So...if a client doesn't have a place to sleep that night, but she can choose to go to a shelter, or maybe stay with a guy that she knows she's going to have to have sex with in order to have a place to stay, things like that. So we'll see that pretty consistently. And then over time, we'll see that they're staying there and that they're starting to use and things like that. So it just there's like this path that happens. Because housing is is is an issue that's like the root cause.”

Northeast Kingdom Healthcare Provider

The Shockingly Simple, Surprisingly Cost-Effective Way to End Homelessness

Why aren't more cities using it?

BY SCOTT CARRIER; PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM MCAULEY FEBRUARY 17, 2015



It's early December, 10:30 in the morning, and Rene Zepeda is driving a Volunteers of America minivan around Salt Lake City looking for reclusive homeless people, those camped out next to the railroad tracks or down by the river or up in the foothills. The winter has been unseasonably warm so far—it's 60 degrees today—but the cold weather is coming and the van is stacked with sleeping bags, warm coats, thermal underwear, socks, boots, hats, hand warmers, protein bars, nutrition drinks, canned goods. By the end of the day, Rene says, it will all be gone.

A SOLVABLE CRISIS

Evidence for Action

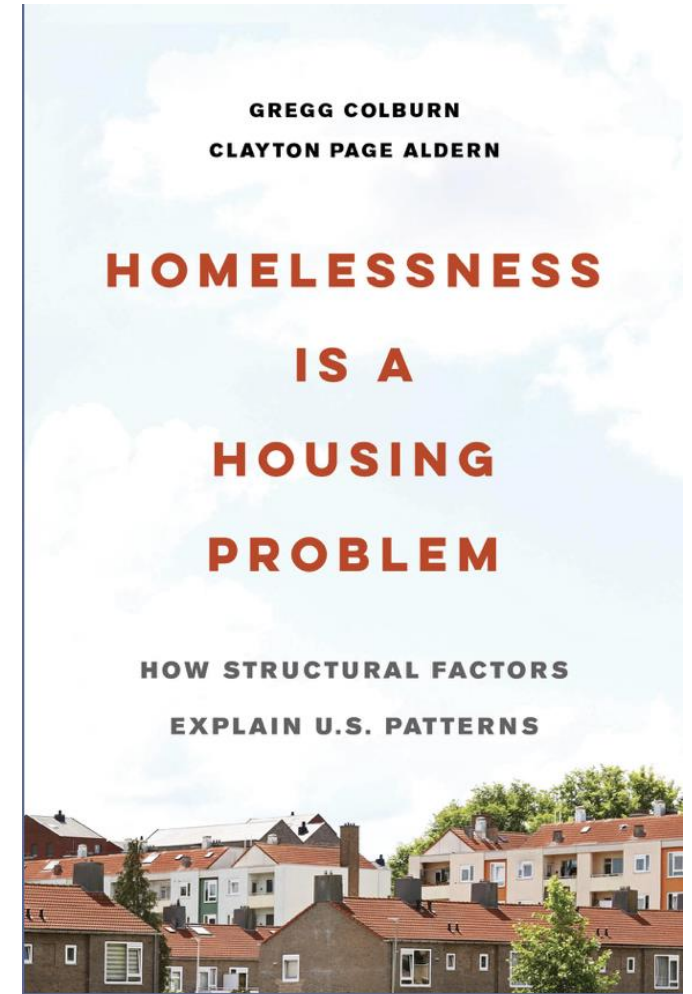
These supplies make life a little easier for people who live outside, but Rene's main goal is to develop a relationship of trust with them, and act as a bridge to get them off the street. "I want to get them into homes," Rene says. "I tell them, 'I'm working for you. I want to get you out of the homeless situation.'"

And he does. He and all the other people who work with the homeless here have

HOMELESSNESS IS A HOUSING PROBLEM

Housing affordability and supply, not substance use, mental illness, poverty, climate, local political context, availability of services, accounts for regional variation in homelessness.

Colburn and Aldern 2022



“Sometimes I wish I was magic and just take your magic wand and say there's an apartment complex. Right? I'm in there. But it doesn't work that way. I truly believe that homelessness is more a housing problem than it is anything else. There's a lack of housing, lack of stock. I mean, there are other issues and other barriers, but I think they're all taken second fiddle to there isn't anywhere to put them because they can get some case management services and and get the services they need once they get in there.”

Northeast Kingdom Homelessness Service Provider

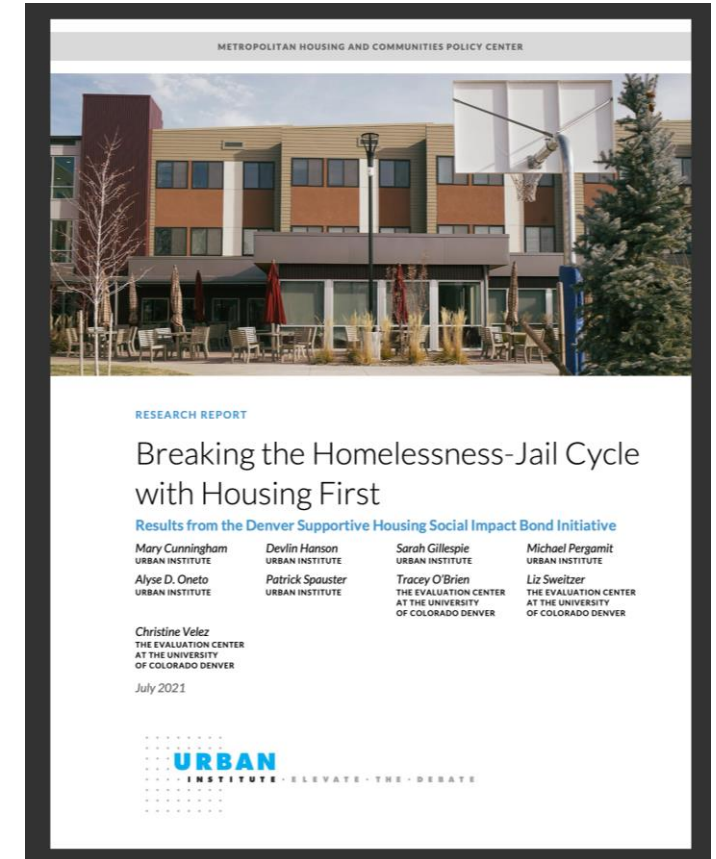
MOST PEOPLE CAN BE HOUSED

Housing First Works

Robust evidence that the vast majority of people experiencing homelessness can be successfully housed.

Denver Social Impact Bond: 79% of participants with chronic homelessness and frequent interactions with criminal justice housed; 86% still housed after one year and 77% after three years.

Project Welcome Home: 86% of individuals with significant medical conditions, healthcare utilization, and encounters with the criminal justice systems were successfully housed and remained housed after one year.



1. <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/metropolitan-housing-and-communities-policy-center/projects/denver-supportive-housing-social-impact-bond-initiative/what-we-learned-evaluation>

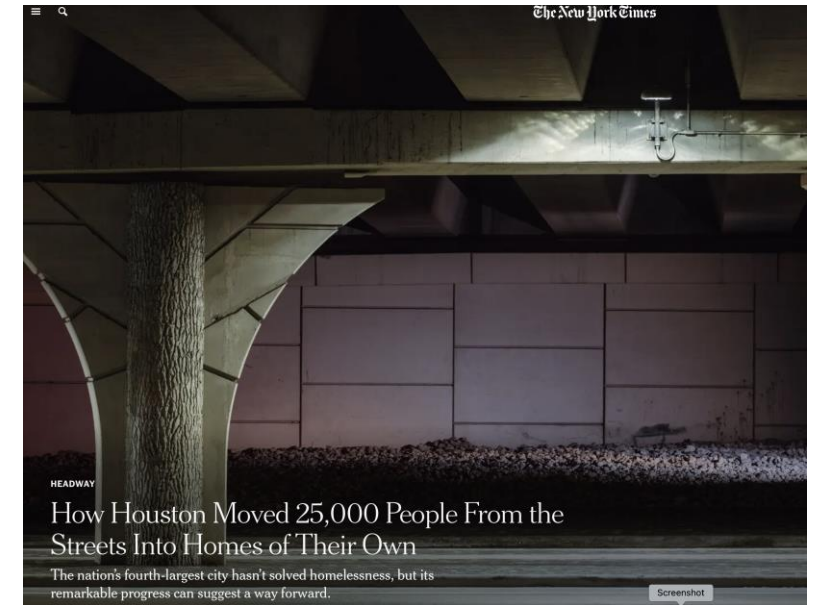
2. Raven MC, Niedzwiecki MJ, Kushel M. A randomized trial of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with high use of publicly funded services. Health Serv Res. 2020 Oct;55 Suppl 2(Suppl 2):797-806. doi: 10.1111/1475-6773.13553. PMID: 32976633; PMCID: PMC7518819.

REAL WORLD PROGRESS

Cities employing evidence-based solutions solutions at scale—Houston, Milwaukee—making progress.

Veterans Administration (VA): Veterans experiencing homelessness decreased by 11% since January 2020 and 55% since 2020

1. https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/pit_count.asp



LESSONS FROM OTHER STATES

California: Project Roomkey and Homekey

- Transition from pandemic hotel program to permanent housing strategy
- 5911 units created

Oregon: Project Turnkey

- Statewide Hotels-to-Housing
- \$71.7 million investment in rapid conversion of hotels to housing
- 19 new shelters and 865 units in 7 months

Homekey Round 1 At-A-Glance



A HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN SHORT-TERM SHELTER & LONG-TERM HOUSING

\$74.7M to acquire hotels and motels as safe, socially distanced shelters for people affected by fires and COVID-19.	19 TURNKEY PROPERTIES
20% increase in the state supply of emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness, achieved within seven months.	13 COUNTIES STATEWIDE
	865 NEW HOUSING UNITS

2

1. <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-and-funding/homekey>
2. <https://oregoncf.org/assets/PDFs-and-Docs/PDFs/project-turnkey-report.pdf>

CONCLUSION

- Homelessness is a housing problem and a policy choice.
- Eliminating homelessness funding does not eliminate the impacts of costs of homelessness.
- We have strong evidence for interventions to address homelessness.
- Most people, including chronically unhoused with severe mental illness, can be housed with positive retention rates, health outcomes, and cost benefits.



“If somebody doesn't have housing, then they can't necessarily to cure or prepare nutritious foods. That is a big one. If they don't have housing, almost in almost every time DCF has is going to be involved with that family. So if they don't have housing, it's almost like they don't have the right to their own children. So that becomes really difficult...I mean, it's just not even a priority to see their primary care to follow up with doctors. They don't have housing. It's difficult for them to maintain the job or even get employment. You have to have an address to do anything, you know, so it definitely impacts their health care...So if a child is brought up, without housing, it affects everything, their nutrition, their ability to get to the pediatrician getting their vaccinations on time.”

Northeast Kingdom Service Provider