



**Vermont 211**

**Homeless  
Contact Report**  
2019 - 2020



**February 2021**

# Vermont 211 Homeless Contact Report

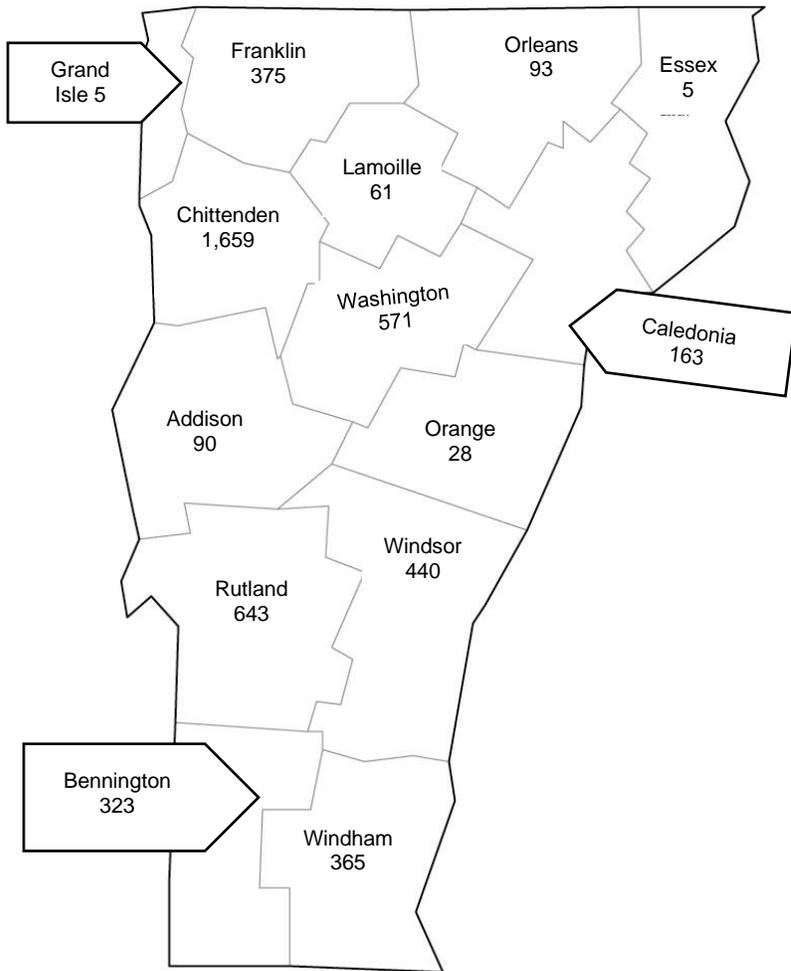


Vermont 211 received 4,821 calls from 2,542 unique individuals and families who were homeless in fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020). Vermont 211 Information & Referral Specialists provided needs assessment, problem solving support, and information and referrals to a wide range of services, including: homeless shelters, housing organizations, rent and security deposit assistance, food, clothing, transportation, health and mental health services, and domestic violence services.

Total 211 Contacts	35,797
Total Contacts Related to Homelessness	4,821
Total After Hours Emergency Housing Requests	4,794
Total of Unique Callers	2,542
Total 2020 Point-In-Time Count	1,110

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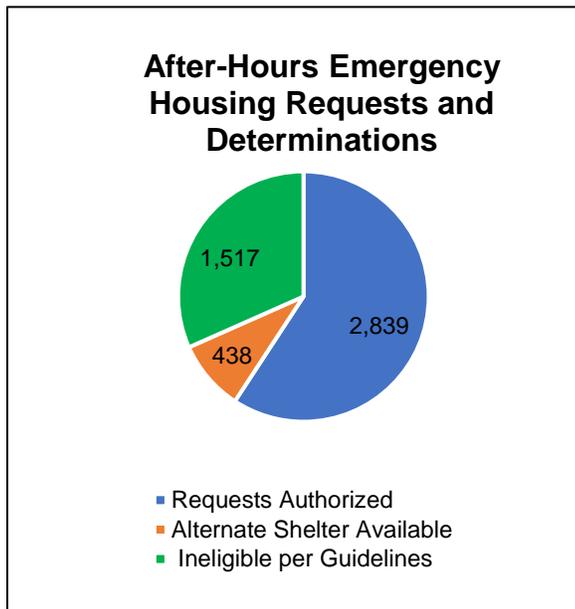


## Vermont 211 Contacts by County

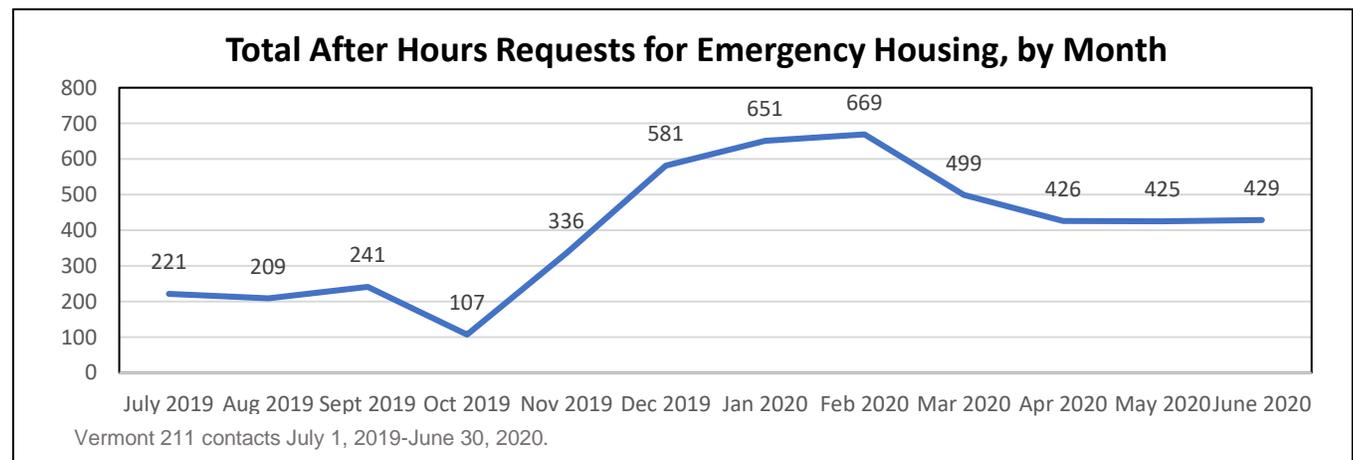
(Vermont 211 contacts July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020)

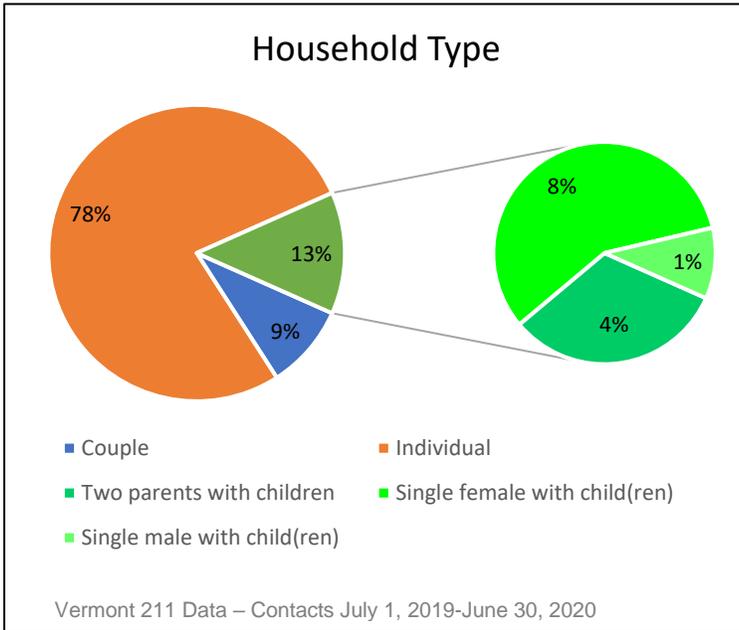
## After Hours Emergency Housing

Beginning in June 2010, Vermont 211 entered a partnership with the Agency of Human Services (AHS) Economic Services Department (ESD) to provide after-business-hours emergency housing assistance. AHS calls are routed to Vermont 211 from 4:30pm to 7:45am weekdays and 24/7 on weekends to provide continuous access to existing AHS emergency housing services. Vermont 211 staff have been trained in both the eligibility criteria to determine housing eligibility and trained in accessing the State ACCESS database containing specific program information on existing clients. Vermont 211 adheres to strict protocols outlined by AHS/ESD program guidelines.



**Requests Authorized** indicates the caller met the vulnerable population criteria as defined by AHS and was housed (providing there was a vacancy) in an approved motel for a set number of evenings. **Alternate Shelter** indicates the caller had resources to meet the emergency need. Resources could include a community or bad weather shelter, the home of a relative or friend, or available resources to pay for a motel room. **Ineligible** indicates the caller either did not meet the vulnerable population criteria as defined by AHS/ESD, has already utilized the maximum housing benefit for one year, or has failed to follow through with AHS/ESD program guidelines.





Vermont 211 data show that Vermonters experiencing homelessness fall into three **household categories**: single individuals (3,716), families with children (639), and couples (444), as shown in the pie chart above. The families with children households are further broken down to show three family types: single females with child(ren) (367); two parents with children (206); and single males with child(ren) (66).

***“COVID is teaching us many lessons-lessons that stretch beyond the direct impacts of what effective and well informed leadership looks like in times of crisis. One of these lessons is that we do have the ability to house everyone in our community.” ... “What has been lacking is the will and commitment to bring sufficient resources to bear to move from a position of mitigating homelessness to functionally ending it.”***

- Josh Davis, Executive Director of Groundworks Collaborative in Brattleboro

## Homeless – The Count

Vermont 211 tracks calls from individuals and families seeking emergency housing through the state’s General Assistance program. This program typically houses homeless Vermonters in motels and hotels during winter months; however, starting with the pandemic, has extended the program to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Vermont 211 also refers callers experiencing homelessness to available shelter beds. The 211 call/text data provide a partial picture of Vermonters experiencing homelessness issues.

## PIT Count

There is no one single source that provides a complete count of all people experiencing homelessness in Vermont. The closest portrayal is an annual “snapshot” conducted on a single night every January for U.S. Housing and Urban Development, using its definition of “literal” homelessness. Called the Point-in-Time Count (PIT), it includes the numbers of people who are unsheltered and those staying in emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and motels and hotels. The PIT Count totaled 1,110 unique individuals on January 22, 2020.<sup>1</sup>

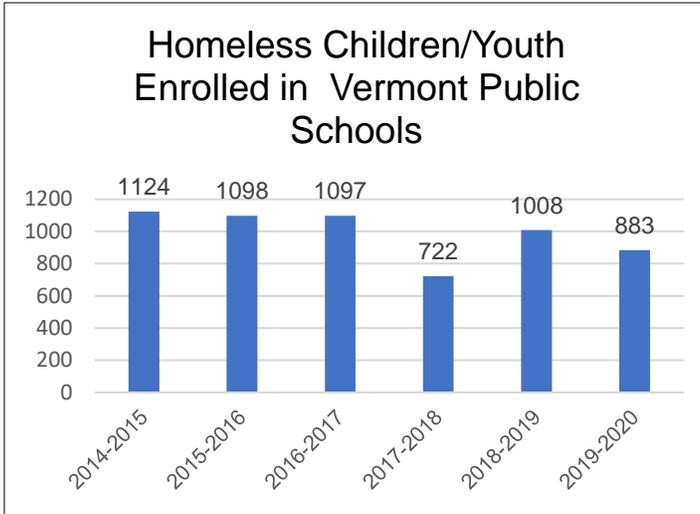
That doesn’t take into account the numbers of precariously housed Vermonters at risk of becoming homeless; those who are “doubled up and/or couch surfing.” What the PIT Count does provide is a picture of specific trends in homelessness.

## Other sources

Other estimates of homelessness suggest a higher count may be more accurate. “In 2017, the number of homeless individuals who received services throughout the calendar year was roughly three times the number counted in the PIT Count.”<sup>2</sup>

This is based on data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), administered by the Institute for Community Alliances, which reported that 4,407 people received services that year.<sup>3</sup>

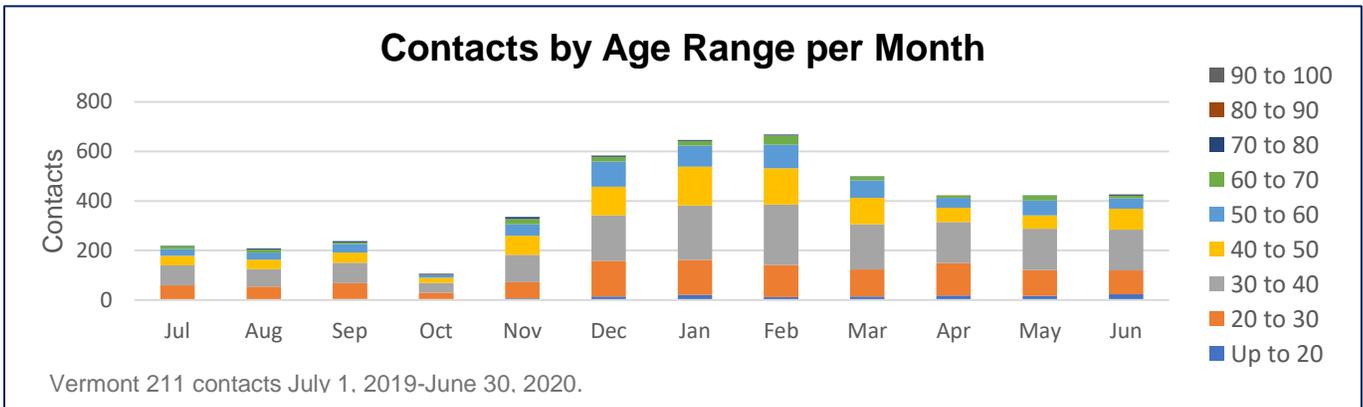
It is estimated that the actual number might be even higher, since that total doesn’t include people fleeing domestic violence and sexual violence. That could potentially increase it by 12%. Also not counted in the HMIS data are the number of people served by the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, which provides motel/hotel stays. That could add an additional 2,289.<sup>4</sup>



According to the Point-in-Time Count the **estimated of numbers of children** living in families that are experiencing homelessness are 216 children and youth under age 18 and 127 youth ages 18-24. Of the older youth group, 16 were parents with children.

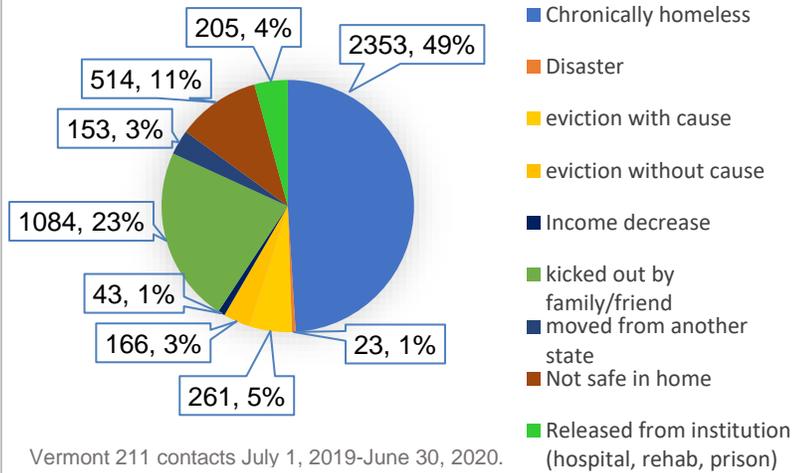
However, review of **Vermont Agency of Education** data show 883 homeless children and youth were enrolled in public school for the school year 2019-20.<sup>5</sup>

Vermont Department of Education website: Retrieved: 2/8/2021 School years. <https://education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/homeless-education>



Review of 211 data showing **contacts by age range**, reveals a consistent pattern throughout the year: most common were people in the 30-40-year-old age range (35.9%), followed by individuals a decade younger, 20-30 (23.4%), and then by individuals a decade older, 40-50 (19.6%). The oldest group, age 60 and older, represented 4.8% of calls and the youngest group, age 19 and younger, represented 2.9%.

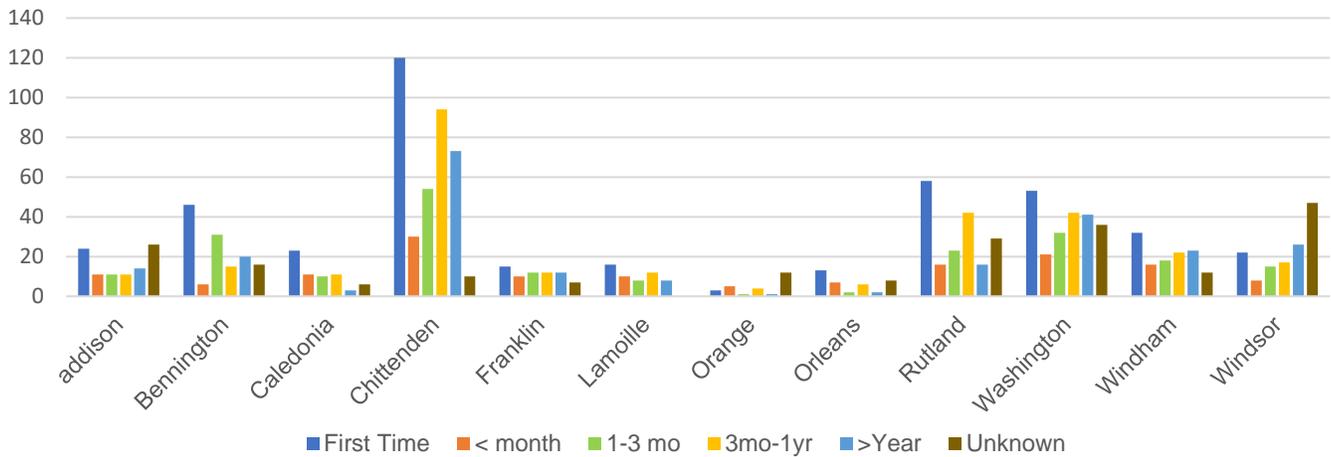
## Causes of Homelessness



During the course of a year, housing situations can change, as is the case for many people who contact Vermont 211. Someone who initially reports being evicted without cause may end up later reporting actual eviction with cause and a “couch-surfer” may report, on more than one occasion, being forced to leave a friend’s house. A single individual may have been in many homeless circumstances over a year’s time, so there may be some overlap in figures represented. This accounts for a higher number of reports of homelessness compared to the actual number of callers. There

were 2,353 individuals who reported that they were chronically homeless. That is defined as having a disability and being homeless for a year or more or at least four times during the last 3 years.

## Length of Time in Homelessness by County

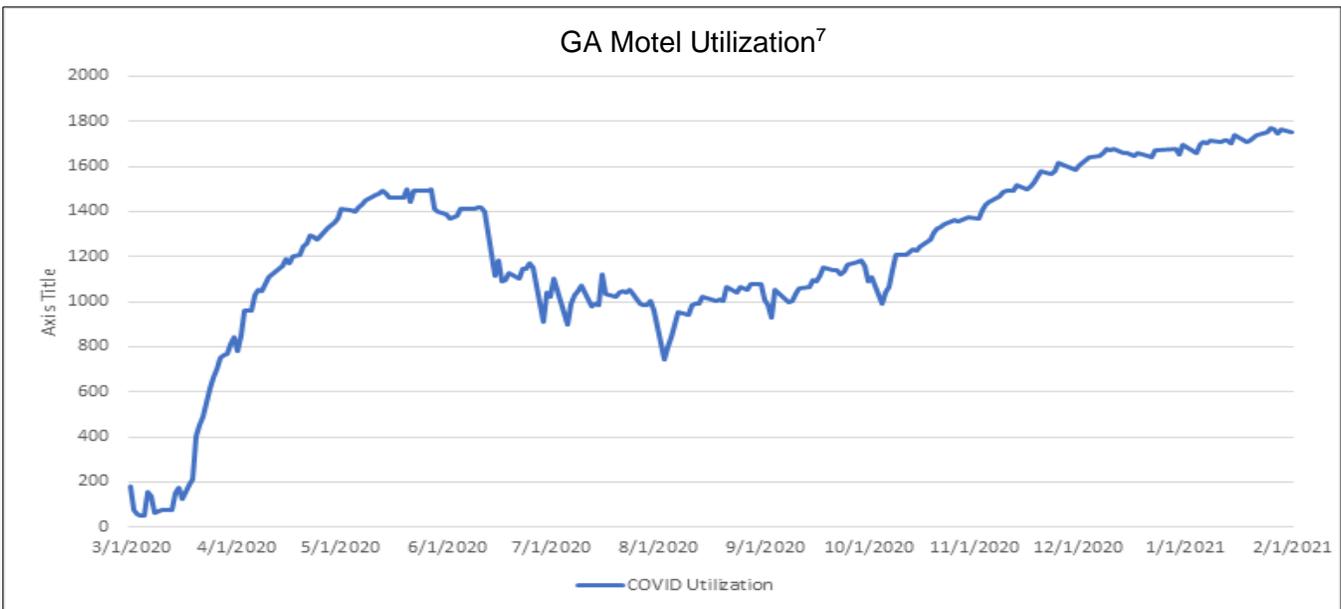


2020 PIT Count. No homeless people counted in Essex or Grand Isle Counties.

As part of the PIT Count January 22 in 2020, people experiencing homelessness were asked how long they had been in that situation. Statewide, those new to homelessness represented 27.7% of people counted that night. People who had been homeless for one or fewer months made up 9.8%, for one to three months were 14.1%, and those homeless for three months to one year were 18.8%. Those individuals who had been homeless for a year or more represented 16%. 13.6% did not disclose how long they had been without a home.

## The Impact of the COVID pandemic

Concern about the spread of COVID-19 and related precautionary measures ordered by the state to maintain a six-foot distance from others, to avoid group gatherings, and to wear masks had a restrictive impact on homeless shelters, which required a reduction in the number of people they could house. In an effort to prevent the spread of the virus, the General Assistance (GA) program for emergency housing placed unsheltered people in motels and hotels beyond their customary allowances. In effect, this changed the situation for most people experiencing homelessness – from an unpredictable patchwork of shelters, precarious housing, and limited use of GA motels/hotels – to being stably housed.



*\*Note-this chart does not include leased hotels (currently Holiday Inn and Ho-Hum)*

For Homelessness Awareness Day, January 2021, a video underscored the statistics and possibilities:

*“The pandemic has made it clear that housing is health care. By prioritizing housing for the most vulnerable, Vermont helps slow the spread of the pandemic.*

*Among people experiencing homelessness, there were only 6 diagnosed cases and zero reported deaths from COVID-19.*

*Despite an eviction moratorium and rental assistance, in the first week of 2021, 2,512 Vermonters, including 386 children, were living in hotels because they had no home to safely stay in.*

*We’ve shown that with political will and resources, we can effectively put homelessness to a halt.*

*Now is the time to make Vermont’s success during the pandemic permanent and **end homelessness in Vermont.**”<sup>6</sup>*

## Vermont 211 Referrals for services to support people experiencing homelessness

4703	Homeless Intake
179	Domestic Violence Hotlines
136	Community Shelters
86	Extreme Weather Shelters
22	Home Sanitation
12	General Relief
11	Domestic Violence Shelters
4	Community Meals
4	Food Pantries
4	Sexual Assault Hotlines
2	Heating Fuel Payment Assistance
2	Housing Search Assistance
2	Human Trafficking Prevention
2	Individual Advocacy
2	Mental Health Crisis Lines
2	Rent Payment Assistance
1	Community Action Agencies
1	Comprehensive Information and Referral
1	Diapers
1	Extreme Heat Cooling Programs
1	General Crisis Intervention Hotlines
1	Homeless Drop In Centers
1	Housing Related Coordinated Entry
1	Job Finding Assistance
1	Legal Counseling
1	Legal Representation
1	Municipal Police
1	Public Health Advisories
1	Public Parking
1	Red Cross Disaster Service Centers
1	Runaway/Youth Shelters
1	Sexual Assault Shelters
1	Specialized Information and Referral
1	Tax Preparation Assistance
1	Transitional Housing/Shelter

### **5192 TOTAL Referred Services**

(Vermont 211 contacts July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020)

## Sources:

- 1 Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness & Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, *2020 POINT IN TIME COUNT REPORT: VERMONT'S ANNUAL STATEWIDE COUNT OF THE HOMELESS*. June 2020.
- 2 Vermont Housing Finance Agency. Housingdata.org  
<https://www.housingdata.org/profile/population-household/homelessness>)
- 3 Institute for Community Alliances, *The State of Homelessness in Vermont, 2017 Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Report*, December 2018, Cited in Vermont Housing Finance Agency, *Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2020-2024 Completed for the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development*, February 2020, page 113.  
<https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/Housing/VT%20HNA%202020%20Report.pdf>
- 4 Vermont Housing Finance Agency, *Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2020-2024*. Page 117, citations.
- 5 Agency of Education: <https://education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/homeless-education>
- 6 Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition VISTA volunteers.
- 7 Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division. 2021. GA Emergency Housing and Security in Motels.

## Note:

Vermont 211 data in this report are not unduplicated except for the unique count on the first page (2,542) and on page 5 (2,353, referring to individuals reporting as Chronically Homeless). For the rest of the report; the 211 data represent the situations and needs of people experiencing homelessness as expressed by calls and texts received by 211. The same individual may call several times through the year, and their living situation, location and household status may have changed during that time.

