

Facts on the Ground

Vermont has one of the highest rates of unhoused people in the country. According to the 2024 Vermont Point in Time count, there were 3,458 unhoused Vermonters in a single night, including 737 children and 646 Vermonters 55 years old or older.ⁱ This number is an undercount, as it reflects only the people who engaged with our state’s dedicated and perpetually under-resourced shelter service providers on the PIT count day. When compared with states across the United States, last year Vermont had the 4th highest rate of unhoused people per capita in the country.ⁱⁱ And, Vermont’s crisis is getting worse – with an over 300 percent increase in unhoused people between 2020 and 2024.ⁱⁱⁱ

Vermont has a severe need for additional year-round homes. According to the 2024 Vermont Housing Needs Assessment, Vermont needs 24,000 – 36,000 additional year-round homes by 2029 “to meet demand, normalize vacancy rates, house the homeless and replace homes lost from the stock through flooding and other causes.”^{iv} This includes 3,295 homes to address homelessness^v and approximately 13,000 homes to meet the needs of the projected growth in low-income households (below 80% AMI).^{vi} In other words, roughly 15,000 of the 30,000 homes we must add this decade must be affordable. The report also notes that rising rents and home costs have disproportionately impacted low- and middle-income Vermonters and that rising rents and “inadequate housing quality” have left hundreds of rental housing vouchers on the table,^{vii} both of which further fuel Vermont’s rising homelessness crisis.

The General Assistance Emergency Housing is the safety net for thousands of vulnerable unhoused Vermonters – there is no backup plan beyond this. To give some perspective on how large of a problem this is, Vermont’s statewide shelter capacity is 655 households, and all are full.¹ Because of this gap in shelter availability, the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, which is only available to Vermonters the state has deemed vulnerable,² remains the vital safety net for thousands of vulnerable unhoused Vermonters. The hundreds of households who lost their shelter on April 1 and the many more who will lose shelter as they reach their 80 day limit this spring are in addition to the state’s 655 household shelter capacity. The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. Vermont has no plan or capacity to shelter these vulnerable Vermonters if they are evicted. There is literally no safe place for potentially thousands of vulnerable Vermonters to go.

The human and economic costs of failing to provide shelter are greater than the costs of shelter. Homelessness is linked with a broad range of negative health conditions, including premature death. People experiencing homelessness also are far more likely than the general population to be a victim of crime. Unsheltered homelessness is harsh and alienating. In

¹ See., Vermont Dept. of Children and Families, March 31st Housing Report, p. 13, Mar. 25, 2025, available at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Act-113-Monthly-Housing-Reporting-3.31.2025.pdf>.

² Eligibility is limited to: (1) is 65 years of age or older; (2) has a disability that can be documented by: (A) receipt of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance; or (B) a form developed by the Department as a means of documenting a qualifying disability or health condition that requires: (i) the applicant’s name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the applicant’s Social Security number or other identifying number; (ii) a description of the applicant’s disability or health condition; (iii) a description of the risk posed to the applicant’s health, safety, or welfare if temporary emergency housing is not authorized pursuant to this section; and (iv) a certification of a health care provider, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9481, that includes the provider’s credentials, credential number, address, and phone number; (3) is a child 19 years of age or under; (4) is pregnant; (5) has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor child that caused the household to lose its housing; (6) has experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, or hurricane; (7) is under a court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to circumstances over which the household has no control; or (8) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or lifethreatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a household member that caused the household to lose its housing.

addition, the economic costs associated with the failure to provide shelter - including on health systems, schools, criminal legal systems, and other public services - fall on municipalities and the state to cover. For example, the \$80 per day cap on the cost for hotel/motel in GA Program^{viii} is substantially cheaper than the \$260 daily cost to incarcerate someone in Vermont^{ix} or the \$1,386 average cost for an ER visit in Vermont (a pre-COVID number).^x Pre-COVID, the estimated annual cost costs the taxpayer an average of \$35,578 per year.^{xi} Adjusted for inflation, this annual cost would be approximately \$45,592 in 2024 dollars, which is substantially more than the annual cost of a GA motel room (\$80 x 365 = \$29,200), which can also provide emergency shelter to more than one person.

Black Vermonters are significantly less likely to own their home and are unhoused at a staggering rate. In 2023, 74 percent of White Vermonters owned their home compared with just 27 percent of Black Vermonters.^{xii} To make matters worse, VSHA's housingdata.org tracks Vermont's homeownership rates since 2009, and according to this data set Black Vermonters saw a six percent decrease in homeownership between 2011 and 2023.^{xiii} In 2024, Black Vermonters were also 5.6 times more likely to be unhoused compared with white Vermonters.^{xiv} In Chittenden County, Black Vermonters were 6.6 times more likely to be unhoused compared with white Vermonters.^{xv} As this data clearly shows, the housing and homelessness crisis has been disproportionately felt by Black Vermonters.

Vermont's housing and homelessness crises will take sustained long-term investments to fully solve. Vermont's housing and homelessness crisis is the result of multiple factors, the core of which is the severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes^{xvi} and a widening gap between incomes and housing costs.^{xvii} We urge the legislature to make the sustained long-term investments necessary to ensure perpetually affordable housing, including with any necessary support services, to meet the demand, and to provide the resources necessary to ensure sufficient emergency shelter and supports while we get there.

2025 Legislative Solutions

Expand the production of affordable housing. We urge the Legislature to invest \$25 million in funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), which will allow VHCB to continue the pipeline of desperately needed affordable housing. This is in addition to VHCB's full statutory share of the property transfer tax.

Invest in homelessness prevention programs and services. We urge the legislature to support the House Human Services Committee's recommendation of an additional \$3.75 million to fund 33 critical case management positions that are set to go away in June when federal ERAP money expires. Without these vital positions, we will see more of our neighbors become unhoused. This is in addition to the Housing Opportunity Grant Program funds that are already in the budget.

Ensure emergency shelter for Vermonters in need. We urge the Legislature to support the House Human Services Committee's recommendation of \$44.6 million to ensure that unhoused Vermonters defined as vulnerable by the state, including seniors, families with children, those with disabilities, and people who are pregnant, can maintain shelter through the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. To be clear, without these funds our state's solution will be sending children and vulnerable adults into the streets and woods to live.

ⁱ Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, et. al., 2024 Vermont's Annual Point-in-Time Count, June 2024, p. 1, available at <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-final.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1 - PIT Estimates of Homelessness, Dec. 2024, p. 76-79, available at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Supra note 1 at p. 2.

^{iv} Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2025-2029, June 2024, p. 6, available at https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/2025-2029/VT-HNA-2025.pdf.

^v *Id.* at p. 5.

^{vi} *Id.* at p. 13.

^{vii} *Id.* at p. 7.

^{viii} See, Act 113, Sec. E.321(h)(2024).

^{ix} Vermont spends \$95,000 annually to incarcerate someone. That breaks down to \$260 a day to incarcerate someone in Vermont. See, ACLU of Vermont, Investing in People, not Prisons, March 1, 2023, available at <https://www.acluvt.org/en/news/investing-people-not-prisons>.

^x Jessica Learish, The most expensive states for ER visits, ranked, CBS News, Dec. 4, 2020, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/emergency-room-visit-cost-most-expensive-states/>.

^{xi} National Alliance to End Homelessness, Ending Chronic Homelessness Saves Taxpayers Money, Feb. 17, 2017, available at <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/ending-chronic-homelessness-saves-taxpayers-money-2/>.

^{xii} Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Homeownership by Race, 2023, available at <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/homeownership-costs/homeownership-by-race>.

^{xiii} Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Homeownership by Race, 2011 - 2023, available at <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/homeownership-costs/homeownership-by-race>.

^{xiv} Supra note 1 at p. 1.

^{xv} Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, et. al., 2024 PIT Report – Racial Disparity Worksheet, available at <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024-PIT-Report-Race-Disparity-Data.xlsx>.

^{xvi} National Low Income Housing Coalition, No State Has an Adequate Supply of Affordable Rental Housing for the Lowest-Income Renters, available at <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

^{xvii} National Low Income Housing Coalition, How Much Do You Need to Earn to Afford a Modest Apartment in Your State?, available at <https://nlihc.org/oor>.

March 2025 Interim Housing - Demographics*

Coordinated Entry District	Addison	Bennington	Caledonia /Essex	Chittenden	Franklin/ Grand Isle	Lamoille	Orange/ Windsor North	Orleans	Rutland	Washington	Windham South	Windsor S/Windham N	Total
Total number of persons served	120	456	150	1004	284	113	329	113	622	902	617	261	4971
Adults	90	332	115	866	229	93	259	68	461	654	495	197	3859
Children	30	123	35	138	55	19	70	45	161	243	122	64	1105
Mental Health Disorder	4	182	41	527	108	65	171	23	317	476	361	116	2,391
Alcohol Use Disorder	0	9	2	61	3	9	17	2	14	41	40	0	198
Drug Use Disorder	0	24	12	176	33	15	50	1	63	80	98	31	583
Both Alcohol and Drug Use Disorder	0	20	10	119	2	14	24	0	26	64	48	13	340
Chronic Health Disorder	2	131	10	391	53	56	102	14	125	297	225	41	1,447
HIV/AIDS	0	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	5	0	22
Developmental Disability	0	111	15	277	31	27	58	7	74	216	180	32	1,028
Physical Disability	0	106	33	326	89	50	105	28	175	261	221	78	1,472
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	0	2	0	16	10	1	2	1	5	5	1	3	46
Asian or Asian American	0	0	0	15	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	19

Black, African American, or African	11	28	2	170	10	0	13	1	19	48	38	2	342
Hispanic/Latina/e/o	6	6	1	16	4	2	8	0	3	20	4	3	73
Middle Eastern or North African	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
White	98	404	140	717	242	103	269	106	546	772	509	237	4,143
Multi-Racial	1	10	3	24	14	4	16	0	22	15	30	7	146
Multi-Racial Hispanic/Latina/e/o	3	5	4	32	2	2	13	5	25	25	28	9	153
Client Doesn't Know/Prefers Not to Answer	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	9
Data Not Collected	1	1	0	5	0	0	2	0	1	15	4	0	29
Under 5	8	43	10	52	19	6	24	15	52	70	46	20	365
Age 5-12	16	52	18	55	21	7	19	19	74	102	48	28	459
Age 13-17	6	28	7	31	15	6	27	11	35	71	28	16	281
Age 18-24	6	47	17	59	21	7	23	11	47	60	60	21	379
Age 25-34	17	72	27	190	48	7	55	7	89	133	96	44	785
Age 35-44	24	82	37	267	71	23	66	20	120	173	133	59	1075
Age 45-54	14	52	16	177	33	27	60	11	103	113	92	33	731
Age 55-64	50	59	12	134	42	18	29	14	72	111	73	23	637
Age 65+	9	20	6	39	14	11	26	5	30	64	41	17	282
Client	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Data Not	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	6
LOS - 0-7	4	19	1	8	12	2	10	1	15	13	7	2	94

LOS - 8-14	0	22	0	17	2	4	9	0	9	9	4	4	80
LOS - 15-21	1	13	6	18	6	4	19	6	20	17	6	5	121
LOS - 22-30	3	14	3	25	9	3	6	0	13	18	8	6	108
LOS - 31-60	8	51	13	73	8	23	27	5	33	35	38	31	345
LOS - 61-90	6	49	18	76	15	13	23	12	41	30	46	21	350
LOS - 91-180	16	76	39	196	76	18	70	19	121	132	150	50	963
LOS - 181-365	49	119	33	307	100	31	69	29	183	259	156	89	1424
LOS - 366-730	21	80	29	176	52	12	62	26	135	234	137	48	1012
LOS - 731-	6	4	8	85	4	0	16	7	44	101	48	5	328
LOS - 1,096-	2	3	0	11	0	3	11	7	5	40	9	0	91
LOS - 1,461-	2	6	0	7	0	0	3	1	3	12	7	0	41
Los - More	2	0	0	5	0	0	4	0	0	2	1	0	729
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	14	70	14	138	48	19	32	20	98	116	113	32	714
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	20	80	23	134	39	21	46	7	103	110	98	34	715
Total persons	3	20	7	19	28	9	12	3	24	45	25	15	210

* All data