



NH Coalition
to End Homelessness

THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

AN EXAMINATION OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED
ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS, AND
CHANGES AT THE STATE AND COUNTY LEVELS

2016



NH Coalition to End Homelessness

The New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness (NHCEH), a nonprofit organization with headquarters in Manchester, NH, was founded in 1990 during a time in which the issue of homelessness was becoming increasingly visible across the state. As concern about the increasing numbers of individuals and families facing homelessness was intensifying among policymakers, service providers and concerned citizens, it became clear that effectively addressing the problem would require strong leadership that could ensure the development of collaborative, thoughtful and informed solutions to this troubling problem. The NHCEH was formed to provide this leadership and has since played a key role in helping the State of New Hampshire plan, develop, and implement collaborative and constructive solutions to homelessness.



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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness (NHCEH), I am pleased to present the fifth annual State of Homelessness in New Hampshire report. For the past five years, this report has helped to increase awareness and understanding about homelessness in New Hampshire and has been widely distributed among policy makers, service providers, advocates, and concerned citizens. At the Coalition, we believe strongly that finding lasting solutions to homelessness requires a thorough understanding of its complex causes and consequences. While this report is one contribution to this effort, it is not enough. As a state, we are in great need of additional research that will further inform the creation of lasting and effective solutions to this troubling problem. I am happy to announce that over the next year, the NHCEH will be implementing the New Hampshire Homeless Research Program, a new initiative designed to engage faculty, students and researchers in the effort to collect and analyze the most recent and relevant data about the specific experiences of people who become homeless in New Hampshire. Armed with this data, we will be in a stronger position to implement solutions that have the greatest capacity to permanently end homelessness in our state.



As shown in the pages that follow, 2016 saw significant reductions in our overall homeless numbers. Data among specific subpopulations of the homeless also indicates that important progress is being made. The number of individuals living unsheltered continued to drop over the past year and homelessness among veterans and among the chronically homeless also declined. After an increase in 2015, the number of families experiencing homelessness also saw a significant decline in 2016. This data is encouraging and reflective of the hard work and commitment of hundreds of highly trained service providers who work each day to safely house those who find themselves in the midst of a housing crisis.

I am encouraged by the many new initiatives across the state that are focused on continuing our progress to assist those without homes. After being reestablished in September of 2015, the NH Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness (NHICH) has spent the past year working to advance several key initiatives that will have enduring impact on the lives of those most vulnerable. Under the leadership of the NHICH, the state has made significant progress towards creating a Supportive Housing Services Benefit for Medicaid beneficiaries who are experiencing homelessness. Research consistently shows that combining affordable housing with tenancy support services and care coordination can help those with the greatest challenges to live with stability and wellness. Establishing this benefit is a key component in the state's efforts to end homelessness among those with multiple complex needs. Additionally, the NHICH is working to help the state identify opportunities to further assist low-income individuals and families in gaining a stable foothold

in the labor market, thereby preventing or quickly ending a homeless experience. Over the next year, the NHICH will be working to help the state identify areas in which changes to programs or policies can help to ease the transition from public assistance to full time employment, thereby increasing chances of long term economic stability and success. Finally, over the past year, many communities across the state have made significant progress implementing new Homeless Coordinated Entry Systems, leading to even stronger collaborations and more integrated care for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Once again, I am so proud of the excellent work being done by service providers, volunteers, advocates, policy makers, community leaders, and concerned citizens to end homelessness in our state. It is clear that our work is making an impact! Despite our progress, however, there are still far too many men, women and children who are homeless in New Hampshire. Over the next year, it will be important that we continue our commitment to permanently and immediately house anyone who falls into homelessness in New Hampshire. For our part, the Coalition remains steadfast in our belief that, together, we can and will end homelessness in New Hampshire, I invite you to join us as we work towards this achievable goal.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy K". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Kuhn Ph.D
Director

STATEMENT CONC

Introduction

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Introduction

*The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire 2016*¹ examines homelessness in the state between 2014 and 2016. Homeless census data during this time period has shown declines in almost every county in the state. Situations have improved for several key populations including those who are unsheltered, veterans, and people in families. Moreover, at the same time that unemployment continues to decline in New Hampshire, median income of renters has shown slight increases. While these are all positive signs, data also show increasing rents compounded by alarmingly low vacancy rates across the state, two key factors which significantly hinder the state's progress in ending homelessness.

This report examines key homeless census, economic and demographic data over a three year time frame with the goal of tracking the state's progress towards ending homelessness. By monitoring homeless numbers and specific indicators that affect trends in homelessness, this report provides a unique year-to-year analysis on New Hampshire's state of homelessness. Data included in this report are derived from various sources, including the New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority, New Hampshire Bureau of Homeless and Housing Services, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Chapter I presents data on homelessness at the state and county levels using the State of New Hampshire Official Point-In-Time Count estimates reported to the New Hampshire Bureau of Homeless and Housing Services by the three Continuums of Care (CoC) across the state. Additionally, Chapter I reviews data on student homelessness as collected and reported by the New Hampshire Department of Education. Chapter II describes key economic and housing factors that impact homelessness, including unemployment, median incomes, median rents and vacancy rates.

What is Homelessness?

Homelessness is a highly complex issue with a wide range of contributing factors. Social service providers, policy makers and researchers continue to have an ongoing dialogue about the definition of homelessness; yet, the responses remain inconsistent. Although this discussion is outside the scope of this report, it is clear that inconsistencies about what it means to be homeless do have serious implications for the state's ability to adequately respond to the problem and to serve those who are in need. In order to facilitate a complete understanding of the issue, *The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire 2016* references data sources that utilize different definitions of homelessness, which can create some apparent inconsistencies among common data elements. More information regarding a particular set of data can be found by referring to the cited sources.

The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire

Chapter I of this report includes data from the 2014, 2015, and 2016 State of New Hampshire Official Point-In-Time Count and chronicles changes in overall homelessness and in homelessness among subpopulations

¹ This report is modeled after *The State of Homelessness in America*, an annual report produced by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

across the state.² In order to track trends in homelessness across the country, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mandates that each Continuum of Care (CoC) conduct a count of homelessness during one 24-hour period during the last week in January, an event commonly referred to as the “Point-In-Time Count.” In some respects, the data captured from these counts is limited not only because it merely captures the extent of homelessness at one moment in time, but also because of the varying methodologies utilized by CoCs across the state and nation in conducting these counts. However, despite these limitations, when compared over time, the counts can provide an indication of upward or downward trends in the number of homeless people throughout New Hampshire and across the country.

Also included in Chapter I of this report is data from the U.S. Department of Education’s annual counts of students that are attending public schools reported as being homeless, from preschool through high school. In the enumeration of students experiencing homelessness, the U.S. Department of Education utilizes a definition of homelessness that is notably different from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s definition. While not directly comparable to the Point-in-Time Counts, these counts are useful in tracking trends in homelessness among young people and families in New Hampshire.

Notable trends in these counts include:

- After decreasing marginally by three percent between 2014 and 2015, the number of people experiencing homelessness has dropped significantly over the past year, with Merrimack County experiencing the biggest drop in the overall rate of homelessness, a 56 percent reduction since 2014.
- The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and those living outside or in other places not meant for human habitation dropped by 45 percent from 2015 (262) to 2016 (143), continuing declines that first began in 2014.³
- After rising by eight percent last year, the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness dropped by 29 percent, from 760 people in 2015 to 539 people in 2016.
- From the 2014–2015 school year to the 2015–2016 school year, the statewide number of students experiencing homelessness rose marginally, by just under one percent. This rise continues a pattern of increases in the number of students experiencing homelessness in recent years.

Housing and the Economics of Homelessness

Chapter II examines various housing and economic indicators that are helpful in assessing conditions that may impact the number of people who become homeless in New Hampshire. This chapter describes changes

² New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). Point in time surveys. Retrieved from <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs/bhhs/homelessdata.htm>

³ In 2016, the state modified the methodology utilized to count unsheltered and total homeless persons causing the decrease in unsheltered persons to appear greater than it actually was. If the same methodology had been applied in 2016, the decrease in unsheltered homeless persons between 2015 and 2016 would have been 28 people instead of 119 people.

in some of these housing and economic indicators using data from the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Notable trends in these indicators include:

- The rate of people living at or below the poverty line in New Hampshire has increased over the past several years. Since 2012, the poverty rate has increased marginally, rising from 8.4 percent in 2012 to 8.9 percent in 2014.
- The unemployment rate remains low in New Hampshire, holding steady at three percent in 2016.
- Increases in median gross rents continued to outpace increases in median household renter incomes, narrowing an already sparse market of affordable housing.
- Vacancy rates continue to decrease to alarmingly low levels across New Hampshire, with the state average falling from 2.2 percent in 2015 to 1.5 percent in 2016. A healthy vacancy rate is normally around five percent.⁴

⁴ New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority. (2014). Rental market in New Hampshire continues to tighten. Retrieved from <http://newhampshirehousingheadlines.org/2014/06/19/rental-market-in-new-hampshire-continues-to-tighten/>

Chapter I

Chapter I: State of Homelessness in New Hampshire

- 1.1 Overall Homelessness
- 1.2 Chronic Homelessness
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Chapter I: The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire

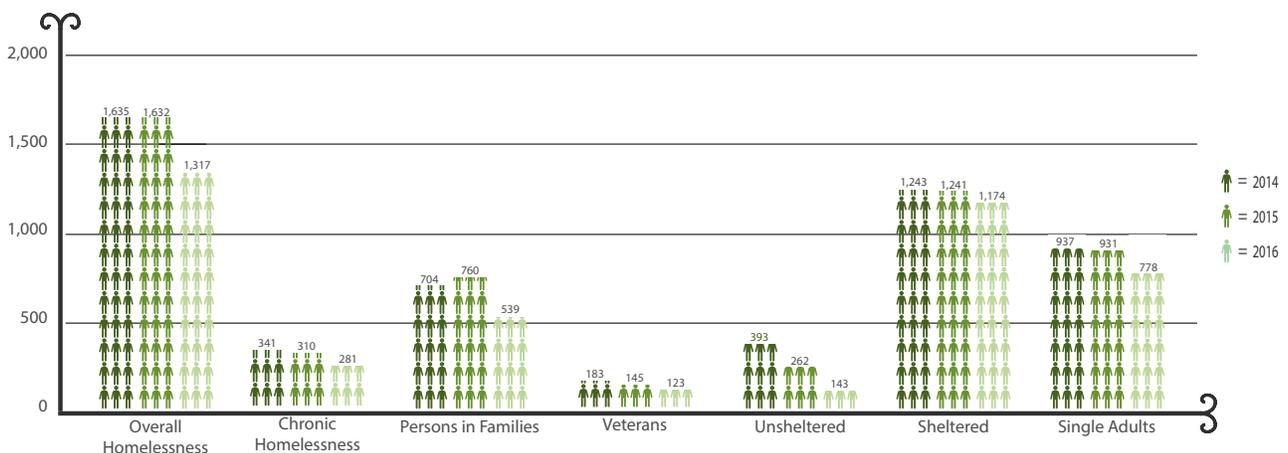
Overall homelessness showed a strong decline over the past year, a welcome change to an otherwise slow decline occurring over many years. Data among specific subpopulations of the homeless also indicate that important progress is being made. The number of individuals living unsheltered continues to drop, with 2016 estimates below 2014 estimates by more than half (a 63 percent decrease).⁵ Similarly, homelessness among veterans and among those identified as chronically homeless declined significantly over the past year. The number of families experiencing homelessness also saw a significant decline, reversing the increase seen between 2014 and 2015. While these estimates can vary rather from year-to-year, in part due to changes in the number of people experiencing homelessness and in part due to the difficulties of obtaining accurate data on a transient population, these trends do suggest that those who are often considered to have the greatest barriers to stable housing have been increasingly successful in attaining permanent housing. Moreover, unlike in previous years when reductions among one subpopulation would often correlate with increases in other subpopulations, this year’s data suggest progress among all key subpopulations of the homeless.

Figure 1.1 illustrates comparisons between various subpopulations of persons experiencing homelessness in New Hampshire. Notable findings during this period include the following:

- Approximately 40 percent of persons experiencing homelessness are families with children (539 people in 185 households).
- Among those experiencing homelessness, 21 percent are considered chronically homeless (283 people).
- Veterans comprise roughly nine percent of the homeless population (125 people).

Figure 1.1 also illustrates trends between the various subpopulations between 2014 and 2016. Notable trends

Figure 1.1: Trends in Homelessness By Population, 2014 to 2016



⁵ In 2016, the state modified the methodology utilized to count unsheltered and total homeless persons causing the decrease in unsheltered persons to appear greater than it actually was. If the same methodology had been applied in 2016, the decrease in unsheltered homeless persons between 2015 and 2016 would have been 28 people instead of 119 people.

during this period include the following:

- Unsheltered homelessness has dropped by 63 percent from 2014 (393 people) to 2016 (143 people), including a 45 percent decline over the past year from 2015 (262) to 2016 (143 people).⁶
- Following a stagnant period between 2014 and 2015, the number of people living in temporary shelters has decreased over the past year by 5.4 percent.⁷
- After an increase between 2014 and 2015, the number of homeless persons in families declined significantly by about 29 percent from 2015 to 2016.

⁶ In 2016, the state modified the methodology utilized to count unsheltered and total homeless persons causing the decrease in unsheltered persons to appear greater than it actually was. If the same methodology had been applied in 2016, the decrease in unsheltered homeless persons between 2015 and 2016 would have been 28 people instead of 119 people.

⁷ Temporary shelter includes people residing in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven Programs in New Hampshire.

1.1 Overall Homelessness

The number of people who are living without a home in New Hampshire continues an encouraging decline, a trend that began in 2012. As the economy across the state and nation continues to improve, so does overall homeless census data, which shows the number of people experiencing homelessness on a steady decline. These trends suggest that with continued investment in our system of homeless services, in conjunction with a commitment to the creation of additional affordable housing, ending homelessness in New Hampshire is possible and within reach.

Map 1.1 and Table 1.1 illustrate changes in the total number of persons experiencing homelessness from 2014 to 2016 for each of the ten counties in New Hampshire.⁸ Overall, the state saw a nineteen percent decrease in homelessness from 2014 to 2016. However, changes in homelessness varied significantly across counties. Nine counties experienced decreases in homelessness between 2014 to 2016, ranging from a four percent decrease in Grafton County to a 56 percent decrease in Merrimack County. Only one county, Cheshire, experienced a rise in overall homelessness, increasing by 3.2 percent. Merrimack, Carroll, and Sullivan counties saw the largest shifts in their homeless population, with all three counties decreasing at 56.2, 36.8, and 36.6 percent, respectively.

Map 1.1: Changes in Overall Homelessness, 2014 to 2016

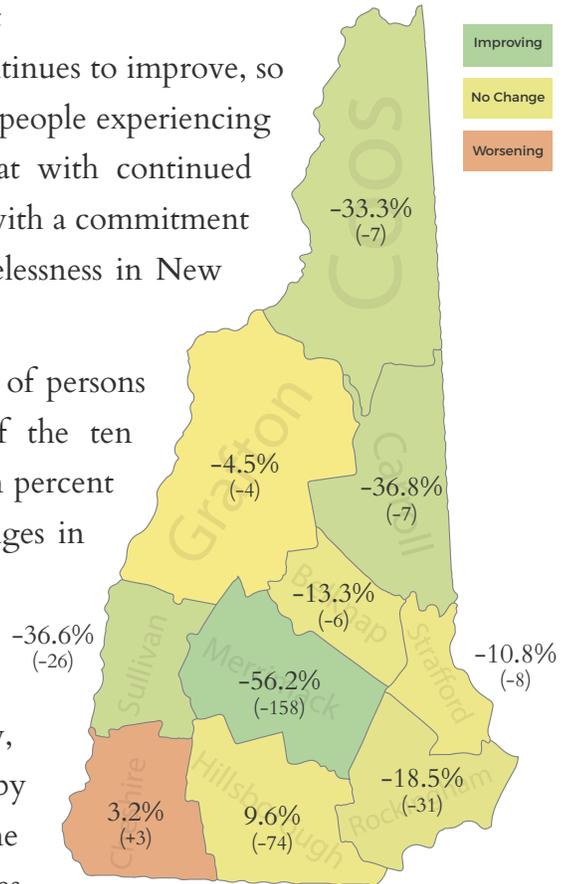


Table 1.1: Overall Homelessness

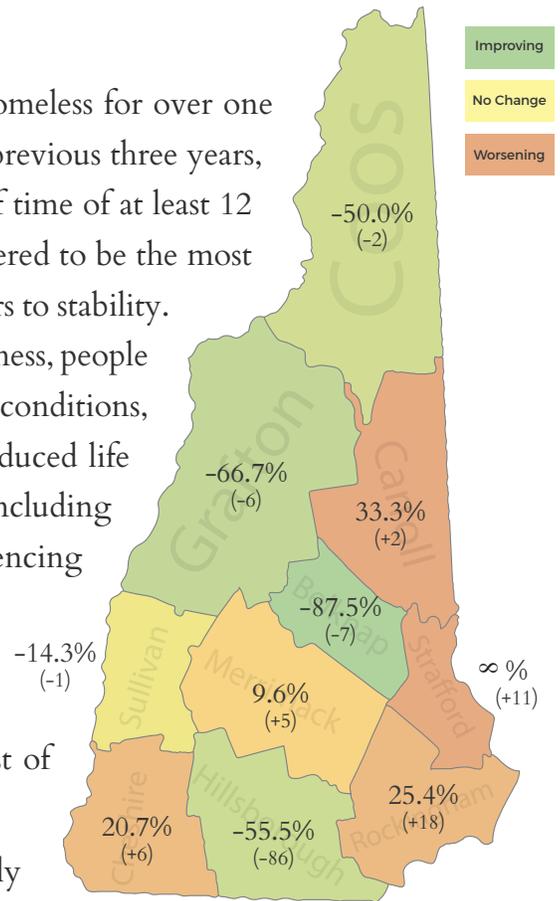
	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	1,635	1,632	1,317	-19.45%
Belknap	45	65	39	-13.33%
Carroll	19	14	12	-36.84%
Cheshire	93	106	96	3.23%
Coos	21	12	14	-33.33%
Grafton	89	85	85	-4.49%
Hillsborough	774	837	700	-9.56%
Merrimack	281	201	123	-56.23%
Rockingham	168	187	137	-18.45%
Strafford	74	76	66	-10.81%
Sullivan	71	49	45	-36.62%

⁸ New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *Point in time surveys*. Retrieved from <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs/bhhs/homelessdata.htm>

1.2 Chronic Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development formally defines “chronic homelessness” as a subpopulation of people who have a disability and have been continuously homeless for over one year, or have experienced four episodes of homelessness in the previous three years, where the combined occasions of homelessness total a length of time of at least 12 months.⁹ Those who are chronically homeless are often considered to be the most difficult population to house, as they often face numerous barriers to stability. Compared to other populations of people experiencing homelessness, people who are chronically homeless often have complex medical conditions, higher utilizations of emergency services and a significantly reduced life expectancy. Many studies in communities across the nation, including New Hampshire, have found that housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness saves costs for municipalities.¹⁰ These studies found that, after entering housing, people who had experienced chronic homelessness utilize emergency services at a significantly reduced rate, which outweighs the financial cost of providing housing.¹¹

Map 1.2: Changes in Chronic Homelessness, 2014 to 2016



Map 1.2 and Table 1.2 illustrate the changes of chronically

Table 1.2: Chronic Homelessness				
	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	341	310	281	-17.59%
Belknap	8	11	1	-87.50%
Carroll	6	10	8	33.33%
Cheshire	29	35	35	20.68%
Coos	4	4	2	-50.00%
Grafton	9	5	3	-66.67%
Hillsborough	155	97	69	-55.48%
Merrimack	52	37	57	9.61%
Rockingham	71	90	89	25.35%
Strafford	0	8	11	∞%
Sullivan	7	13	6	-14.29%

9 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. “Defining Chronic Homelessness Final Rule”. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Defining-Chronically-Homeless-Final-Rule.pdf>. Accessed October 14, 2016.

10 The New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness. (Sept 2016). *The personal and financial costs of insufficient housing, case studies of high frequency service users in Manchester, NH*. Retrieved from <https://www.nhceh.org/research-advocacy/latest-reports/2016-case-study-the-personal-and-financial-costs-of-insufficient-housing>

11 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2016, April 15). *People experiencing chronic homelessness*. Retrieved from <http://usich.gov/population/chronic>

homeless persons from 2014 to 2016 for each county in New Hampshire. Over this period, the state saw a 17.6 percent decrease in people experiencing chronic homelessness. The number declined over the past year (9.4 percent) after a similar decrease between 2014 and 2015. While chronic homelessness at the state level has decreased over the past year, largely due to a decrease of 29 percent (28 people) in Hillsborough County, many counties only experienced small declines over the past year and five counties are still above their 2014 levels. Since many counties contain small populations of people experiencing chronic homelessness, small changes can lead to large, but deceptive, percentile changes.

1.3 Family Homelessness

While homelessness tends to be perceived as an issue primarily associated with single adults, particularly single men, families compose a substantial proportion of the population. In 2016, the number of persons in families contributed to 41 percent of the overall homeless population. Homelessness for families can be extremely distressing, often resulting in higher rates of familial separation within this population. Compounding their homelessness, persons in families often have histories of violence and trauma, which can have harmful effects on the long-term wellbeing of both adults and children.¹²

Map 1.3 and Table 1.3 depict the change of people in families experiencing homelessness from 2014 to 2016 in New Hampshire. The number of people in families experiencing homelessness rose by about eight percent from 2014 to 2015, the first time this population had increased since 2012 when it shot up to a high of 884 people. The number of people in homeless families has since dropped by 29 percent. The decrease in families experiencing homelessness over the past year is primarily the result of sharp decreases in Hillsborough (22 percent) and Rockingham (49 percent) counties. In recent years, attention at the federal level has turned to eliminating homelessness among families. This federal focus, in conjunction with further concern about the extreme shortage of affordable rental housing in New Hampshire, can help to reduce the number of families without homes.

Map 1.3: Changes in Homeless People in Families, 2014 to 2016

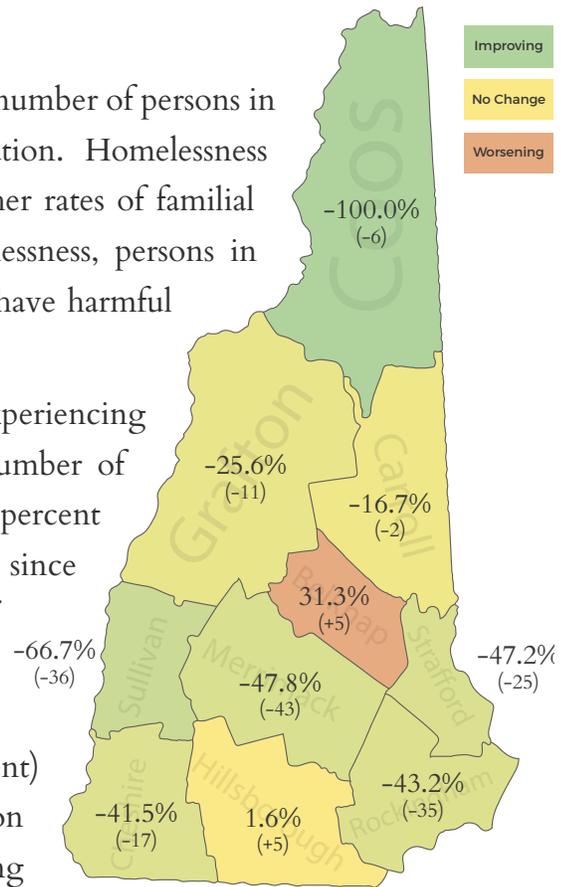


Table 1.3: Homeless People in Families

	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	704	760	539	-23.44%
Belknap	16	39	21	31.25%
Carroll	12	11	10	-16.67%
Cheshire	41	34	24	-41.46%
Coos	6	2	0	-100.00%
Grafton	43	28	32	-25.58%
Hillsborough	308	399	313	1.62%
Merrimack	90	79	47	-47.78%
Rockingham	81	90	46	-43.21%
Stafford	53	55	28	-47.17%
Sullivan	54	23	18	-66.67%

12 The National Center on Family Homelessness. "What is family homelessness?" Last modified 2016. Accessed Oct. 15, 2016. <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/facts.php?p=tm>

1.4 Veteran Homelessness

Addressing veteran homelessness has been on the forefront of national policies and efforts, particularly since the release of the federal strategic plan to end homelessness, known as “Opening Doors.”¹³ A significant federal investment has been made to provide housing and services for veterans experiencing homelessness, with federal agencies encouraging more in-depth collaborations among community providers and local Veteran Administration. Over the past two years, several cities and even some states across the nation have declared that they have ended “functional homelessness” for veterans, meaning that they have a system in place that would provide housing to any veteran experiencing homelessness in less than 90 days.¹⁴

In New Hampshire, significant efforts have been made to reach functional zero among the state homeless veteran population. With substantial support from the Governor’s Office, numerous agencies serving veterans across the state are working together to identify and immediately house any veteran who is either unsheltered or residing in an emergency shelter or transitional living program. These efforts are reflected in the continual declines that the state has seen in its homeless veteran population. Since 2014, homelessness for veterans in New Hampshire has decreased by about 33 percent.

Just over the past year, veteran homelessness dropped by 15 percent. The large majority of veterans

Map 1.4: Changes in Veteran Homelessness, 2014 to 2016

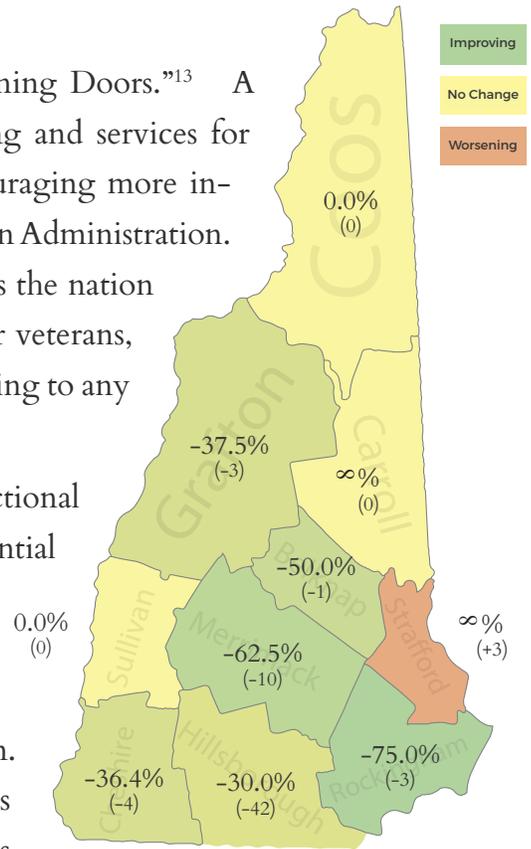


Table 1.4: Veteran Homelessness

	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	183	145	123	-32.78%
Belknap	2	2	1	-50.00%
Carroll	0	1	0	∞%
Cheshire	11	14	7	-36.36%
Coos	1	1	1	0.00%
Grafton	8	7	5	-37.5%
Hillsborough	140	85	98	-30.00%
Merrimack	16	28	6	-62.50%
Rockingham	4	5	1	-75.00%
Strafford	0	1	3	∞%
Sullivan	1	1	1	0.00%

13 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (June 2015). Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. Retrieved from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf
 14 Goldberg, Eleanor. (2015, April 21). New Orleans ends veteran homelessness, proves it’s not an impossible problem. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2016/04/21/michelle-obama-new-orleans_n_7108756.html

experiencing homelessness are located in Hillsborough County, presumably because many programs and services are available in Manchester and Nashua, including medical care at the Manchester VA Medical Center. Although many counties in the state report very small numbers of homeless veterans, numbers have declined in nearly every county since 2014.

1.5 Unsheltered Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are defined in one of two distinct categories: those who are living in temporary shelters, such as emergency shelters or transitional housing, and those who are living unsheltered, such as outside in a tent, a car, or somewhere else not meant for human habitation. People experiencing unsheltered homelessness often have higher mortality rates due to exposure to hazardous environments and conditions and lower access to preventative healthcare. Providing appropriate interventions as quickly as possible for people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness, particularly for those who are newly homeless, is critical to preventing the development of additional complications associated with long-term, chronic homelessness.¹⁵

The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness dropped significantly from 2014 (393 people) to 2016 (262 people), reaching a low last seen in 2010 (257 people). Between 2015 and 2016, the number dropped substantially, by 45 percent.¹⁶ In recent years, the unsheltered homeless population has been most prevalent in Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties. While this is still the case, Hillsborough County saw a dramatic 45 percent decrease in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness from 2015 (126 people) to 2016 (69 people). Merrimack

Map 1.5: Changes in Unsheltered Homelessness, 2014 to 2016

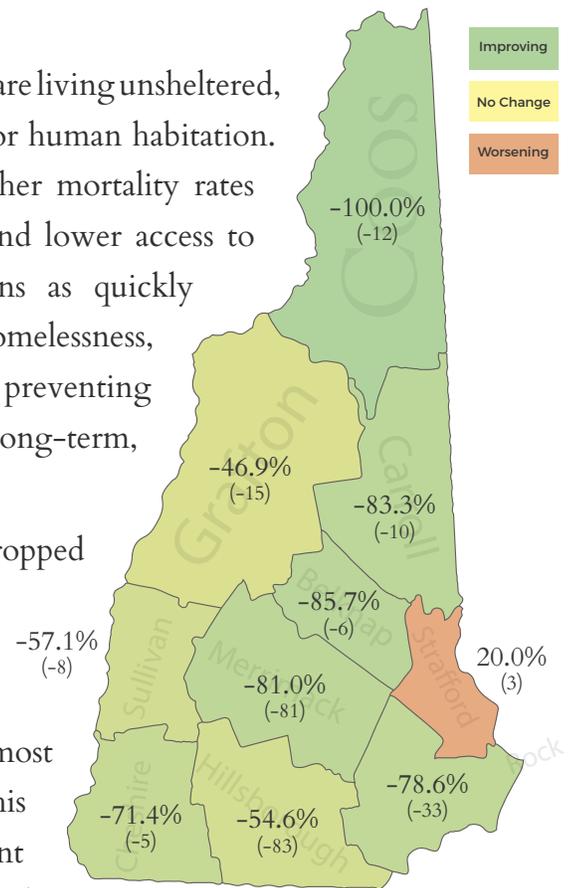


Table 1.5: Unsheltered Homelessness

	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	393	262	143	-63.61%
Belknap	7	6	1	-85.71%
Carroll	12	5	2	-83.33%
Cheshire	7	16	2	-71.43%
Coos	12	6	0	-100.00%
Grafton	32	26	17	-46.88%
Hillsborough	152	126	69	-54.61%
Merrimack	100	8	19	-81.00%
Rockingham	42	51	9	-78.57%
Strafford	15	17	18	20.00%
Sullivan	14	1	6	-57.14%

15 National Coalition for the Homeless. (2009, July). *Health care and homelessness*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/health.html>

16 In 2016, the state modified the methodology utilized to count unsheltered and total homeless persons causing the decrease in unsheltered persons to appear greater than it actually was. If the same methodology had been applied in 2016, the decrease in unsheltered homeless persons between 2015 and 2016 would have been 28 people instead of 119 people.

County saw an increase in unsheltered homelessness from 8 in 2015 to 19 in 2016. After seeing a slight increase between 2014 and 2015, Rockingham County saw a sharp decline between 2015 and 2016, declining 82 percent from 51 in 2015 to just 9 in 2016.

1.6 Student Homelessness

The New Hampshire Department of Education annually collects statewide data on school-aged students experiencing homelessness.¹⁷ Students experiencing homelessness may be couch-surfing, living in a shelter, or outside in a car or tent, and may be accompanied with family, friends or may be unaccompanied. The experience of homelessness often has extensive detrimental effects on children, including severe depression, anxiety and poor physical health. Additionally, students experiencing homelessness often struggle to maintain their academic standing.¹⁸ As mandated by the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, each public school district has a designated staff member to assist students experiencing homelessness, known as “homeless liaisons.” Through Title 1 funding, homeless liaisons can assist students and their families to immediately enroll in public education, access transportation to and from school, acquire necessary school essentials, connect to community services and navigate issues related to legal guardianship requirements.

After rising by 50 students between the 2014 and 2015 school years, the number of students living without a home increased by

Map 1.6: Changes in Student Homelessness, 2013 to 2016

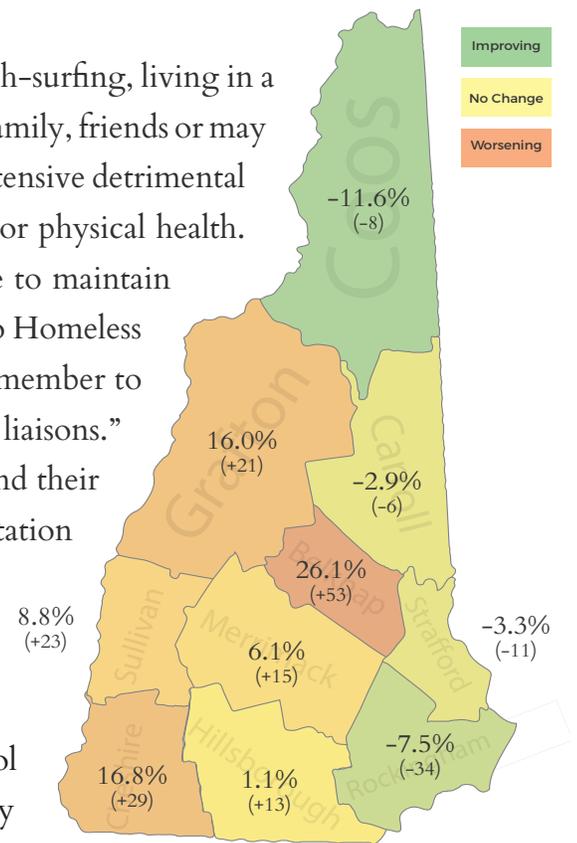


Table 1.6: Student Homelessness				
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	% Change, 2013-2016
State	3272	3322	3350	2.38%
Belknap	203	243	256	26.11%
Carroll	208	171	202	-2.88%
Cheshire	173	165	202	16.76%
Coos	69	82	61	-11.59%
Grafton	131	155	152	16.03%
Hillsborough	1187	1246	1200	1.10%
Merrimack	247	248	262	6.07%
Rockingham	456	402	422	-7.46%
Strafford	337	326	287	-14.84%
Sullivan	261	284	306	17.24%

sourced from the same annual Point-in-Time Count event, the U.S. Department of Education collects data on students experiencing homelessness and uses a different surveying methodology. Additionally, within the context of the data collected by the New Hampshire Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s definition of “homeless” is amended to include students that are couch-surfing or are otherwise living doubled-up. It is critical to acknowledge that this data is neither a subset of the “Overall Homelessness” data presented in Chapter 1, since it is derived from a different data source, nor is it constrained to the same rules (e.g. definition, methodology) as the other data presented in Chapter 1. Thus, while the data for student homelessness may seem to be in conflict with other homeless data, it is not.

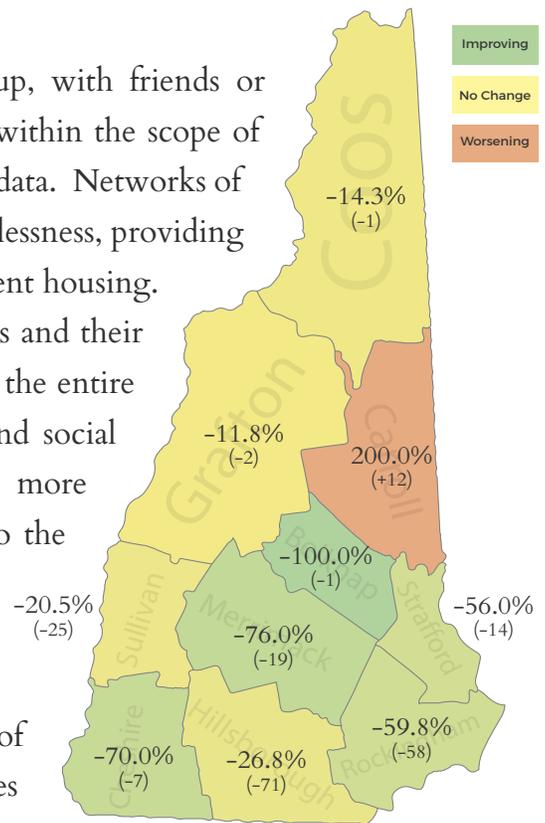
18 National Coalition for the Homeless. (2008, June). Retrieved from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/youth.html>

28 students over the past year. Stark increases in the number of homeless students over the past year were seen in Cheshire (22 percent, or 37 students) and Carroll (18 percent, or 31 students) Counties. Significant decreases in students experiencing homelessness were seen in Strafford (12 percent, or 39 students) and Coos (26 percent, or 21 students) Counties.

1.7 Temporarily Doubled-Up

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has a very precise definition of what it means to be experiencing homelessness. People who are living temporarily doubled-up, with friends or family members or those that are “couch-surfing” do not fall within the scope of this definition and thus are not included in the homeless census data. Networks of friends and family can prevent someone from falling into homelessness, providing some with the stability and support needed to regain independent housing. Yet, this population often lives at the precipice of homelessness and their living arrangements, which are typically unplanned, can cause the entire doubled up household to experience a number of financial and social stressors. Sometimes, these doubled-up situations can cause more harm than good, not only for the person or persons added to the home, but for the receiving household as well.¹⁹ Since 2014, the number of people living temporarily doubled-up has significantly dropped, decreasing from 562 people in 2014 to 389 people in 2016. The decrease was not necessarily the result of changes in one county, as nine out of ten counties saw decreases in their doubled-up population during this period. While this is certainly a positive trend, it is important to note that this population

Map 1.7: Changes in Temporarily Doubled-up, 2014 to 2016



	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	562	526	389	-30.78%
Belknap	1	2	0	-100.00%
Carroll	6	5	18	200.00%
Cheshire	10	15	3	-70.00%
Coos	7	14	6	-14.29%
Grafton	17	13	15	-11.76%
Hillsborough	265	218	194	-26.79%
Merrimack	25	12	6	-76.00%
Rockingham	97	91	39	-59.79%
Strafford	25	23	11	-56.00%
Sullivan	122	133	97	-20.49%

¹⁹ Counting the number of doubled-up people has been methodologically challenging for Continuums of Care across the country. Although the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development does not include people in these situations in their official counts of homelessness, many CoCs have attempted to get estimates of the number of people who are doubled-up during their annual Point-in-Time counts. Due to the methodological difficulties in finding and counting people who are doubled-up on the day of the count, however, it is widely believed that these numbers are a vast underestimate of the true numbers of doubled-up individuals and families in the state.

is commonly referred to as the “hidden homeless” and is therefore one of the most difficult to accurately and consistently measure. Although each CoC makes efforts to capture this population during the annual Point-in-Time count, only those people who happen to have contact with a homeless service agency and self-report as living doubled-up are enumerated. As such, this data is often viewed as a significant undercount of the true population total. More accurately capturing the numbers and experiences of people living in doubled up situations will require a more thorough approach specifically focused on the unique dynamics of this population.

Chapter II

Chapter II: Housing and the Economics of Homelessness

2.1 Unemployment Rate

2.2 Poverty Rate

2.3 Median Household Renters Income & Gross Rate

2.4 Vacancy Rate: 2-Bedroom Units

Chapter II: Housing and the Economics of Homelessness

Although there are many factors that can lead an individual or family into homelessness, poverty and the lack of affordable housing are key drivers of homelessness in New Hampshire. This chapter utilizes economic and housing data from the American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor Statistics as well as from the New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority to explore the economic landscape for those struggling to attain or maintain housing.

2.1 Unemployment Rate

The loss of employment for individuals and families can quickly lead to housing instability and put people at a greater risk of homelessness, especially if that unemployment persists over a long period. While a significant portion of people experiencing homelessness is employed, many are underemployed or working part-time. Table 2.1 and Map 2.1 show the changes in the unemployment rate from 2014 to 2016.²⁰ New Hampshire has traditionally experienced a lower unemployment rate than the rest of the nation, with its current rate under three percent compared to about five percent nationally. The unemployment rate declined slightly between 2015 and 2016, continuing the decline seen between 2014 and 2015, with a low of 2.4 percent in Sullivan County and a high of 4.0 percent in Coos County.²¹

While low unemployment rates are being enjoyed across all New Hampshire counties, it's important to note that even when working full time, many low income people are still unable to attain stable housing due to low wages and/or temporary and irregular work opportunities. One recent analysis reports that someone working full time at minimum wage would need to work 91 hours per week in order to afford a one bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent in New Hampshire.²²

Map 2.1: Changes in the Unemployment Rate, 2014 to 2016

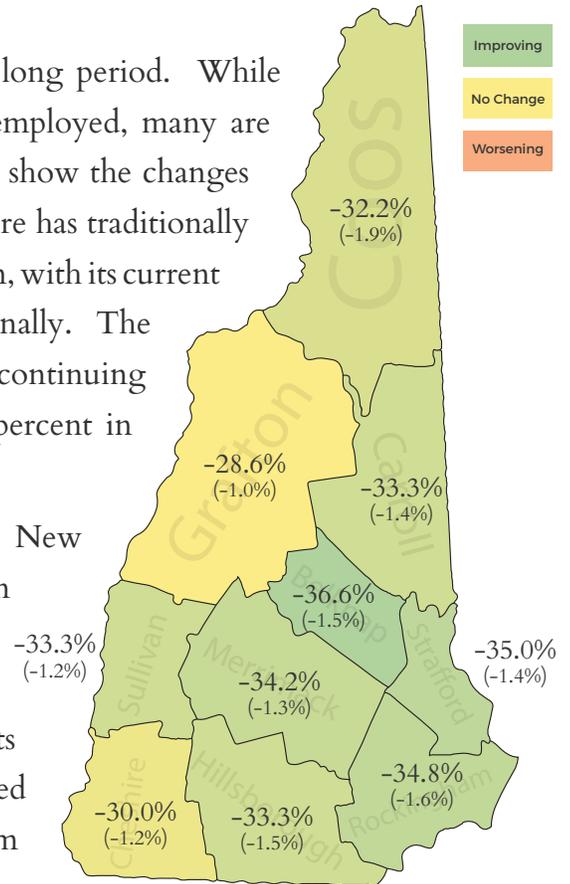


Table 2.1: Unemployment Rate

	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	4.2%	3.4%	2.8%	-33.2%
Belknap	4.1%	3.3%	2.6%	-36.6%
Carroll	4.2%	3.6%	2.8%	-33.3%
Cheshire	4.0%	3.2%	2.8%	-30.0%
Coos	5.9%	4.7%	4.0%	-32.2%
Grafton	3.5%	2.9%	2.5%	-28.6%
Hillsborough	4.5%	3.6%	3.0%	-33.3%
Merrimack	3.8%	3.1%	2.5%	-34.2%
Rockingham	4.6%	3.6%	3.0%	-34.8%
Stafford	4.0%	3.1%	2.6%	-35.0%
Sullivan	3.6%	2.9%	2.4%	-33.3%

20 Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map. Retrieved from <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet>

21 2016 data is an average of the monthly unemployment rates from January through October.

22 National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2016). Out of Reach 2016. Retrieved from <http://nlihc.org/oor/new-hampshire>

2.2 Poverty Rate

Although there are many factors that can lead to homelessness, those who have the lowest incomes are often at greatest risk, as one unexpected financial, medical or social event can cause them to fall into homelessness. As a result, many low income households often find themselves fluctuating in and out of homelessness year after year. The rate at which people are living below the poverty line can be an important indicator of the extent to which people are living on the fringes of homelessness.

Table 2.2 and Map 2.2 depict change in the rate of poverty in New Hampshire from 2012 to 2014. Since 2012, the poverty rate has increased each year, from 8.4 percent to 8.9 percent, a 6% increase.²³ While New Hampshire’s poverty rate continues to be considerably lower than the national average (at 15.6 percent for 2014), given the link between homelessness and poverty, the steady increase in the state has the potential to slow recent decreases in the number of homeless individuals and families.

Map 2.2: Changes in the Poverty Rate, 2012 to 2014

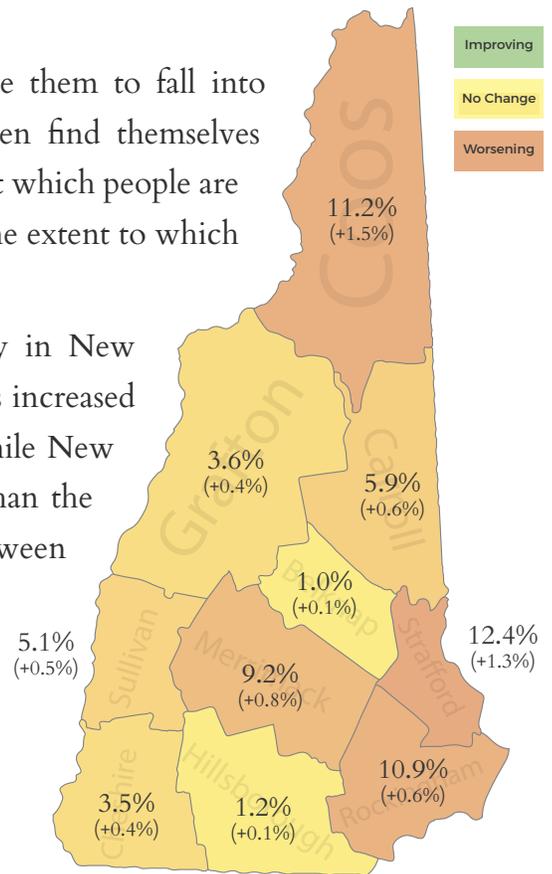


Table 2.2: Poverty Rate				
	2012	2013	2014	% Change, 2012-2014
State	8.4%	8.7%	8.9%	5.9%
Belknap	9.7%	9.9%	10.2%	1.0%
Carroll	10.3%	10.1%	9.6%	5.9%
Cheshire	10.6%	11.4%	11.7%	3.5%
Coos	13.0%	13.4%	13.2%	11.2%
Grafton	11.0%	11.2%	11.2%	3.6%
Hillsborough	8.0%	8.6%	8.6%	1.2%
Merrimack	8.9%	8.7%	9.5%	9.2%
Rockingham	5.2%	5.5%	5.7%	10.9%
Strafford	11.2%	10.5%	11.2%	12.4%
Sullivan	10.2%	9.9%	9.1%	5.1%

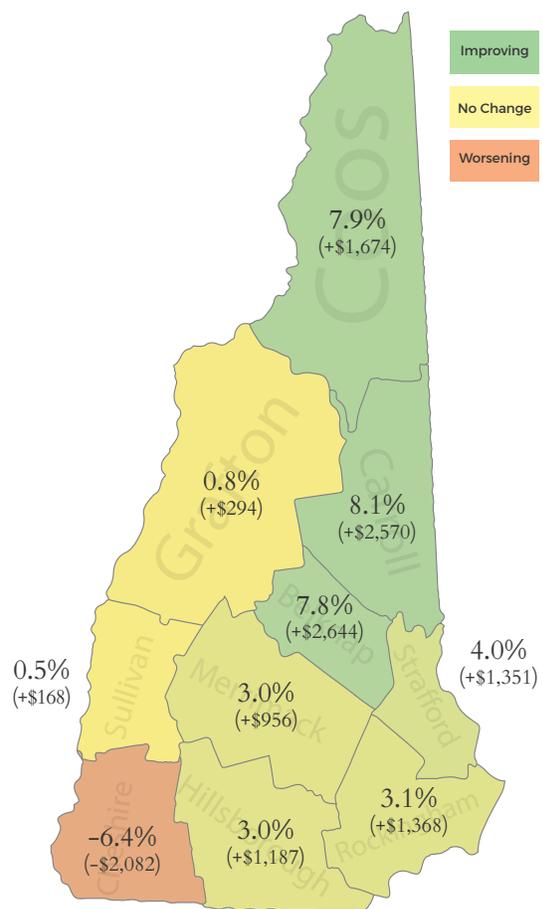
23 United States Census Bureau. (2015). QuickFacts: New Hampshire. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/IPE120215/33>

2.3 Median Household Renter Income & Gross Rent

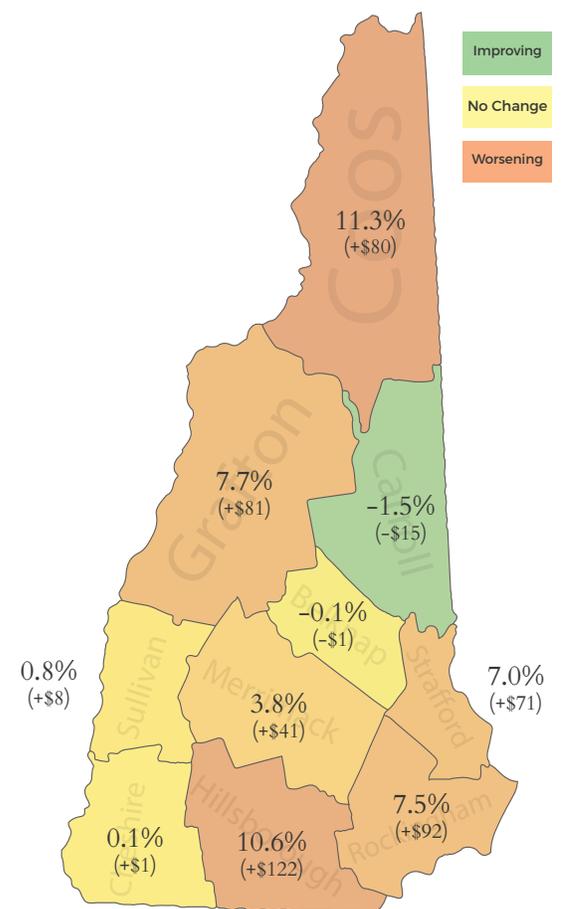
The relationship between income and rent is an important indicator of the extent to which people are able to access housing. When gross rents outpace the growth of household renter income, housing becomes less and less affordable, forcing renters, particularly less affluent renters, into a position where they either need to cut expenses in other parts of their lives or attempt to find other more affordable housing.

Table 2.3.1 and Map 2.3.1 show the change in median household renter incomes between 2014 and 2016, while Table 2.3.2 and Map 2.3.2 show the change in median gross rents during that same time frame. Both sets of data are based on New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority’s Annual Residential Rental Cost Surveys.²⁴ Statewide, median renter incomes have increased by about 3.7 percent, from \$36,593 in 2014 to \$37,949 in 2016 (an annual increase of \$1,356). While the increase in median income is a positive sign, it is being outpaced by increases in median rents across the state, which have risen by about nine percent, from \$1,108 in 2014 to \$1,206 in 2016 (an annual increase of \$98). With the exception of slight decreases in

Map 2.3.1: Changes in the Median Household Renter Income, 2014 to 2016



Map 2.3.2: Changes in the Monthly Median Gross Rent, 2014 to 2016



24 New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority. (2014, 2015, 2016). Residential Rental Cost Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.nhhfa.org/studies-publications-presentations>

Belknap and Carroll County, rents have increased in almost all areas of the state, with the largest increases occurring in the Hillsborough and Coos Counties. For those with incomes below the median, the increase in rents across the state is especially burdensome.

Table 2.3.1: Median Household Renter Income				
	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	\$36,593	\$37,326	\$37,949	3.71%
Belknap	\$34,046	\$34,577	\$36,690	7.77%
Carroll	\$31,834	\$31,980	\$34,404	8.07%
Cheshire	\$32,737	\$32,104	\$30,655	-6.36%
Coos	\$21,160	\$21,808	\$22,834	7.91%
Grafton	\$36,811	\$37,530	\$37,105	0.80%
Hillsborough	\$39,295	\$39,724	\$40,482	3.02%
Merrimack	\$32,368	\$32,967	\$33,324	2.95%
Rockingham	\$43,700	\$43,398	\$45,068	3.13%
Strafford	\$33,506	\$35,052	\$34,857	4.03%
Sullivan	\$31,800	\$32,317	\$31,968	-0.53%

Table 2.3.2 Monthly Median Gross Rent 2-Bedroom Units				
	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	\$1,108	\$1,157	\$1,206	8.84%
Belknap	\$997	\$997	\$996	-0.10%
Carroll	\$1,001	\$1,010	\$986	-1.50%
Cheshire	\$1,044	\$1,069	\$1,045	0.10%
Coos	\$710	\$790	\$790	11.27%
Grafton	\$1,053	\$1,080	\$1,134	7.69%
Hillsborough	\$1,156	\$1,219	\$1,278	10.55%
Merrimack	\$1,079	\$1,113	\$1,120	3.80%
Rockingham	\$1,229	\$1,270	\$1,321	7.49%
Strafford	\$1,012	\$1,026	\$1,083	7.02%
Sullivan	\$957	\$964	\$965	0.84%

2.4 Vacancy Rate: 2-Bedroom Units

Map 2.4: Changes in the Vacancy Rate for 2-Bedroom Units, 2014 to 2016

Vacancy rates are the percentage of available rental units in a given area.²⁵ An adequate number of vacancies allows for normal changes in the housing market and for consumers to have a reasonable level of choice. A balanced rental market is thought to have vacancy rates of around five percent, while lower rates indicate fewer options for renters and higher rates indicate that the available options may not be desirable for renters.

Statewide, the number of available rental units has continued to decrease every year with a current vacancy rate of just 1.5 percent. Between 2014 and 2016, changes in vacancy rates varied from an increase of 22 percent in Cheshire County to a decrease of 61 percent in Carroll County. Of particular concern are the very low rates in many counties in the state including 1.2 percent in Merrimack, 1.0 percent in Rockingham and 0.9 percent in Hillsborough County. These low vacancy rates further exacerbate the scarcity of affordable housing in these populous regions of the state, making it even more difficult for low income renters to find stable housing. The combined impact of rising rents and declining vacancy rates often leads many individuals and families to still live in temporary rooming houses or motels, often thought of as the housing of last resort by many advocates. These living environments can be particularly difficult for children and families who are forced to relinquish their privacy and to live in very cramped and sometimes unsafe quarters in order to maintain some semblance of shelter.

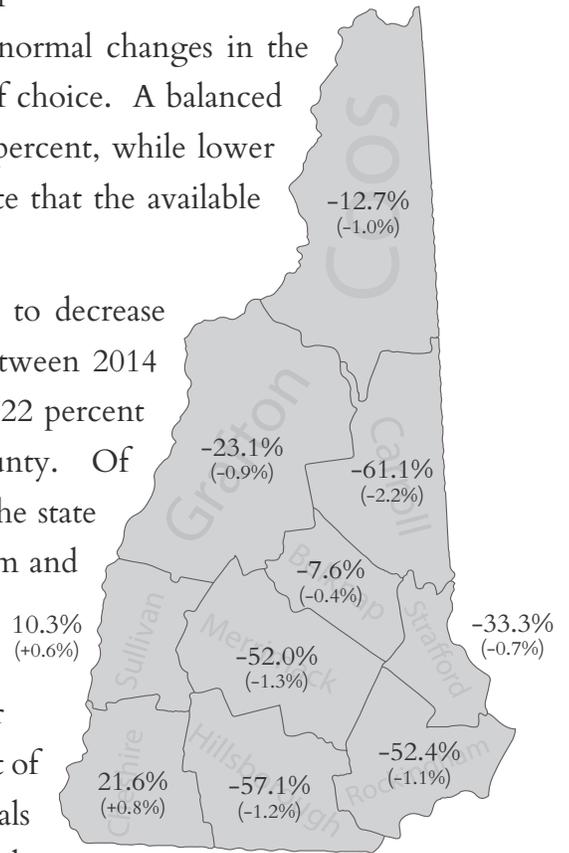


Table 2.4: Vacancy Rate: 2-Bedroom Units				
	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2014-2016
State	2.50%	2.20%	1.50%	-40.00%
Belknap	5.30%	1.20%	4.90%	-7.55%
Carroll	3.60%	3.90%	1.40%	-61.11%
Cheshire	3.70%	3.20%	4.50%	21.62%
Coos	7.90%	9.20%	6.90%	-12.66%
Grafton	3.90%	2.70%	3.00%	-23.08%
Hillsborough	2.10%	2.30%	0.90%	-57.14%
Merrimack	2.50%	1.70%	1.20%	-52.00%
Rockingham	2.10%	1.90%	1.00%	-52.38%
Strafford	2.10%	2.30%	1.40%	-33.33%
Sullivan	5.80%	2.70%	6.40%	10.34%

25 New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority. (2014, 2015, 2016). Residential Rental Cost Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.nhhfa.org/studies-publications-presentations>

Conclusion

Much of the data in this report indicates that over the last year, the state has made significant progress in ending homelessness for those most vulnerable in our state. While some of this progress may be due to the continued economic recovery after the most recent recession, homeless service providers have worked tirelessly to implement new programs and initiatives that have housed hundreds of homeless individuals and families in New Hampshire. It is through their dedication and unwavering belief that safe and affordable housing should be accessible to all populations, not just to those with the greatest incomes and resources, that this progress was possible.

The state has seen reductions in homelessness across all subpopulations. Since 2010, the federal government has targeted programs ending homelessness among veterans and those who are considered to be “chronically homeless.” New Hampshire has capitalized on these federal investments and has implemented dozens of new programs designed to provide permanent housing to these populations. As a result, we have seen significant decreases in homelessness among these groups. In 2015, the federal government began to turn its attention to ending homelessness among families with children and among unaccompanied youth. While we may already be seeing some of the impact of this investment with a focus on new Rapid Rehousing Programs designed to provide short term housing assistance and light touch services to families who have become homeless, the effectiveness of these programs is still being evaluated and it is unclear whether this model of service will produce lasting results for families and children. As the nation continues to develop interventions to meet the needs of these distinct populations, it will be important to remember the complex situations that drive homelessness and the limitations of the one-size-fits-all approach to solving it.

Despite the progress that we have made, it remains clear that too many adults and children are still falling through the cracks and are facing long waiting lists for any sort of assistance. While they wait, they continue to suffer, in some cases developing emotional and physical illnesses that can have a lasting impact on their health and wellness. Until there is a significant investment in and commitment to the creation of a robust housing stock that can meet the needs of the state’s diverse population, we will not see an end to this very troubling problem. For adults with more skills and work histories who can attain employment that pays a living wage, additional affordable housing stock is needed to prevent them from falling into homelessness. For those with fewer skills and greater challenges to attaining higher paying employment, additional housing subsidies are needed to bridge the gap between their low wages and the increasing cost of rent. Additionally, for those with complex challenges to housing stability such as mental and physical illnesses, histories of trauma and violence and/or addictive disorders, the provision of housing that is safe and affordable in conjunction with tenancy support is needed to ensure their long term wellness. Only when our housing stock is able to meet the needs of New Hampshire’s diverse population will we see meaningful reductions in homelessness. In addition to a more robust housing stock, there is also a great need to increase our understanding and awareness of homelessness in the state. Over the next year, the Coalition will implement the New Hampshire

Homeless Research program, aimed at engaging faculty and students across the state in helping to analyze and more fully understand the experience of homelessness in New Hampshire. We hope that through this initiative, we will facilitate the production of much needed research that can help us to better serve those who become homeless in New Hampshire. This research will be used not only to inform solutions, but also to raise awareness among decision makers, policy makers and the general public about the problem of homelessness in our state. As always, the New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness will be working hard not only to spread awareness about the extent of homelessness, but also to raise the voices of those who become homeless so that they might share their courageous and inspiring stories with those who are making decisions about this important issue. We urge you to join us in this work and become part of the solution to ending homelessness across New Hampshire.

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Chapter II: Housing and the Economics of Homelessness

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