

**NH Coalition
to End Homelessness**

**The State of
Homelessness
in New Hampshire**

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



NH Coalition to End Homelessness

The New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness (NHCEH) annually publishes *The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire* report, which covers a range of topic areas related to homelessness. The report traditionally highlights factors that contribute to homelessness and the impacts on various populations in the state. The 2022 report reflects a more streamlined approach. This year's publication examines the statewide trends in overall homelessness and provides an in-depth look into unsheltered and chronic homelessness. NHCEH remains committed to examining and understanding how homeless experiences affect a variety of populations, including families, veterans, youth, and the disproportionate impacts of homelessness on racially and ethnically diverse populations. Look to our website and social media for spotlights on these populations and others throughout the year. We hope this report will help shine a light on how homelessness affects Granite Staters and contributes to efforts to reduce, and ultimately end, homelessness in New Hampshire.

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**Our mission is to end homelessness through
research, education, and advocacy.**

The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire

New Hampshire has a relatively high median household income as a state and consistently ranks among the top ten states in the country for this income measure. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the state's median household income for 2022 at around \$89,000. ^[1] At the same time, one in four Granite State households had less than \$50,000 per year in income, and about one in six households had less than \$35,000 in income in 2022. ^[2] However, these median household income numbers mask the economic conditions faced by many Granite State households struggling to make ends meet.

In more recent surveys designed to gauge economic stability, the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey found that between January and August 2023, one in three Granite State households reported difficulty paying for usual household expenses. ^[3] As household budgets are stretched ever tighter due to a range of economic pressures, the lack of available and affordable housing for people across the income spectrum increases the risk of homelessness for many Granite Staters. For New Hampshire residents living in or near poverty, there is a stark reality of hardships and challenges that leave these residents at an even greater risk of homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as experiencing one or more of the following conditions: (1) *Literal Homeless* – defined as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including places not meant for human habitation or living in a public/private shelter designed as a temporary residence only; (2) *Imminent Risk of Homelessness* – defined as one's primary residence will be lost within 14 days, and no subsequent residence or resources are identified for other permanent housing; (3) *Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes* – defined as unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age or families who meet specific definitions and longevity with housing instability; or (4) *Fleeing or Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence* – described as also having no other residence or resources to secure other permanent housing. ^[4]

When assessing the homeless population in New Hampshire, most data are collected using the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) systems. A CoC is a collaborative group of homeless service providers and other regional partners who work together to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. The state is separated into three regions: the Manchester CoC, the Greater Nashua CoC, which comprises the city of Nashua and nine surrounding towns, and the Balance of State CoC, which includes all remaining cities and towns. In recent years, the three CoCs have increased collaboration to support a seamless homeless response system across the state. This partnership has helped to ensure greater uniformity in data collection, sharing of resources, and enhanced communication for improved policies and programs. ^[5]

The State of Homelessness in New Hampshire annual report utilizes a cross-section of data sources to support the analysis of homelessness in this region. The two primary data sources for this report are: (1) the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, which is conducted annually on a single day in January, and (2) the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is a HUD mandated reporting tool collecting client-level data from all state and federally funded homeless service programs. The Institute for Community Alliances is contracted by the state Department of Health and Human Services to maintain the PIT and HMIS data for the state. Analyzing these two data sources together helps to provide insight into statewide trends in homelessness in New Hampshire.

The *State of Homelessness in New Hampshire* report presents statewide trends in homelessness, using data collected for 2022. As evidenced by the data, there was a marked increase in homelessness overall from 2021 to 2022 in New Hampshire. In particular, the data document an increase in chronic homelessness and in unsheltered homelessness; the negative effects of these trends are highlighted in the following pages. This report also discusses the impacts of a significant lack of affordable housing in the state and how the rising cost of housing is outpacing growth in wages, which places housing far out of reach for many Granite Staters and contributes to homelessness in the state.

Key Definitions

Unsheltered – a person who resides in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or campground.

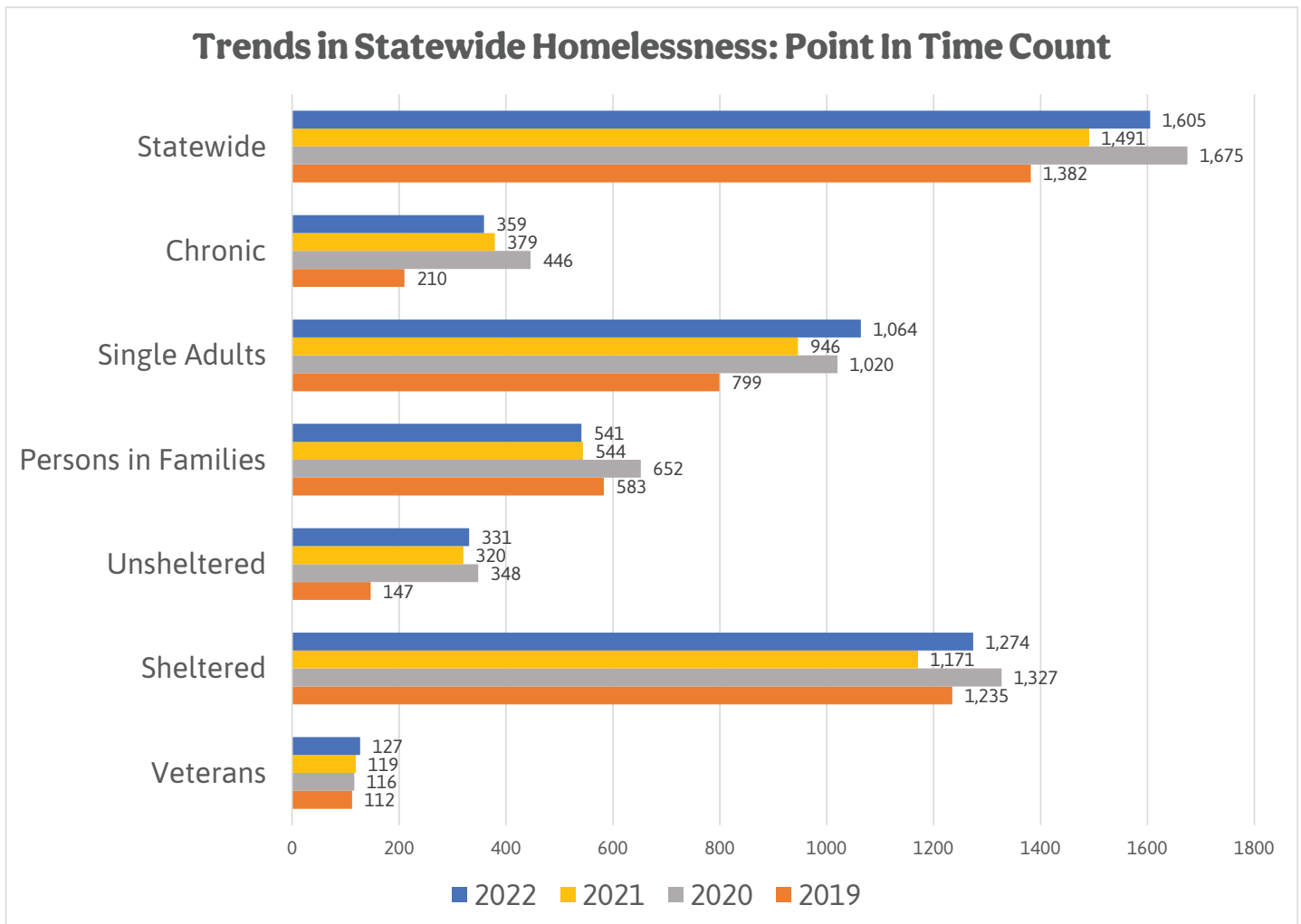
Sheltered – a person who resides in an emergency shelter or in transitional or supportive housing for people who were originally unsheltered.

Chronic – an individual or a person in a family in which the head of household: (1) has a disabling condition and (2) has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time is at least 12 months.

Trends in Statewide Homelessness: Point-in-Time Count

Each year on a single night in January, New Hampshire and other states around the country conduct the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count in an effort to document the number of individuals who are experiencing homelessness in the state. Figure 1 uses PIT data that are unduplicated counts of New Hampshire residents experiencing homelessness in one 24-hour period in the last week of January. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that Continuum of Care organizations report these counts biennially, but New Hampshire conducts a PIT count every year. Based on PIT estimates, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness increased from 1,382 in 2019 to 1,675 in 2020, the month before COVID-19 emerged as a global pandemic. The PIT count then declined to 1,491 in 2021, due in part to federal funding and a federal moratorium on eviction administered to offset the economic effects of the pandemic. As these federal supports declined, the number of New Hampshire residents experiencing homelessness rose again to 1,605 in 2022.

Figure 1



Source: Institute for Community Alliances

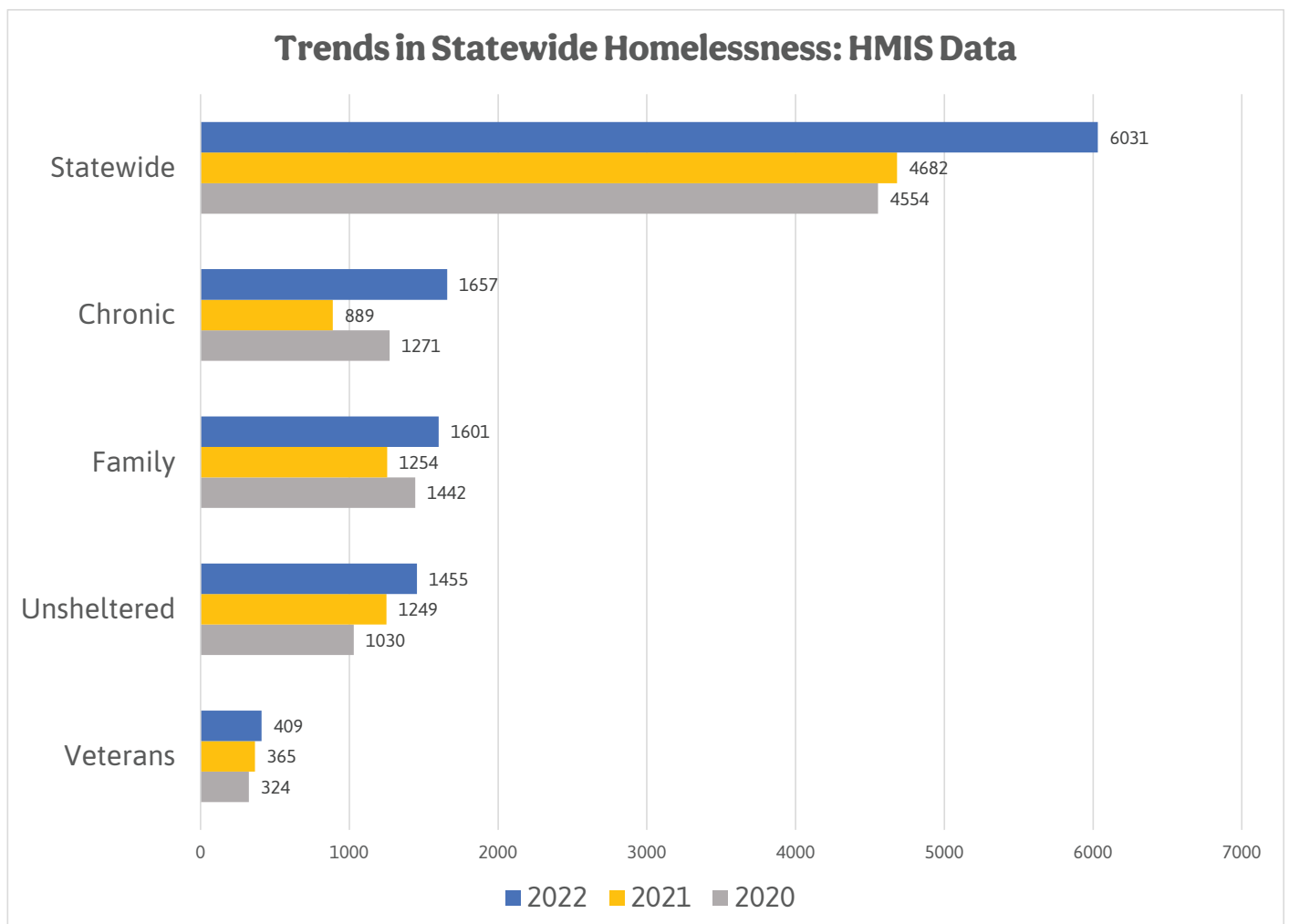
Figure 1 provides raw PIT data for the years 2019 to 2022. Notably, there has been a shift in the proportion of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness since 2019. The proportion of sheltered homelessness declined from 89.4% of the total population in 2019 to 79.2% in 2020 and remained stable at around 80% for the subsequent two years. This resulted in a much larger proportion of the total homeless population experiencing unsheltered homelessness, which doubled from 10.6% in 2019 to 20.8% in 2020. The state's Bureau of Homeless Services (BHS) attributed some of this increase to enhanced and expanded count efforts aided by a BHS-instituted statewide initiative to improve counting of this subpopulation before the 2020 PIT count. While the number of people experiencing sheltered homelessness remained stable between 2019 and 2022, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness grew by 125%, suggesting unsheltered homelessness is the primary driver of increased homelessness in New Hampshire. Since 2020, at least one in five people experiencing homelessness did so without shelter.

PIT data also revealed a substantial increase in chronic homelessness, from 15.2% of the total homeless population in 2019 to 26.6% in 2020. Although the proportion of chronic homelessness decreased slightly in 2021 and again in 2022, overall chronic homelessness remains high; a little over one in five unhoused individuals are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Trends in Statewide Homelessness: Homeless Management Information System

Data on homelessness are collected throughout the year using the state’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The HUD defines an HMIS as “a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to individuals, families, and persons at risk of homelessness.” [6] Unlike the PIT counts collected once a year, HMIS counts are collected throughout the year and therefore provide a more comprehensive indicator of homeless experiences than the PIT data. [7] Hence, the counts in Figure 2 are considerably higher than counts based on PIT data shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2



Source: Institute for Community Alliances

Figure 2 displays unduplicated counts of statewide homelessness for a three-year span from 2020 to 2022, depicting a marked increase in the statewide count for 2022 to 6,031. The rate of homelessness in New Hampshire increased from 330.6 per 100,000 residents in 2020 to 432.3 in 2022, reflecting a rate increase of 30.8%.^[8] Homelessness increases for subpopulations with available data are shown in Figure 2. After a notable decline from 2020 to 2021, a pronounced increase in chronic homelessness appears in the chart from 889 individuals in 2021 to 1,657 in 2022, reflecting an increase of 86.4%. Family homelessness mirrors the pattern for chronic homelessness. Family homelessness declined from 1,442 in 2020 to 1,254 in 2021, then increased by 27.7% to 1,601 in 2022. In contrast, unsheltered homelessness increased steadily from 1,030 in 2020 to 1,249 in 2021 and then again to 1,455 in 2022, which is a 41.3% increase from 2020 to 2022. Veteran homelessness increased steadily from 324 in 2020 to 365 in 2021 and then to 409 in 2022, indicating a 26.2% increase from 2020 to 2022. The most significant increases appearing in both Figure 1 and Figure 2 relate to chronic and/or unsheltered homelessness.

The rate of homelessness in NH increased from 331 per 100,000 residents in 2020 to 432 in 2022, reflecting a rate increase of nearly 31%.

A Closer Look at Chronic & Unsheltered Homelessness

Nationally, the increase in chronic homelessness between 2020 and 2022 was 15.6%.^[9] It was double that percent increase in New Hampshire at 30.4%, using HMIS data. People experiencing chronic homelessness are an especially vulnerable subpopulation by definition. According to HUD, chronic homelessness occurs when an individual or a person in a family in which the head of household: (1) has a disabling condition and (2) has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time is at least 12 months. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, people experiencing chronic homelessness typically have long-term mental and/or physical health conditions, including substance use disorders.^[10] The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness documents that most do not access ongoing out-patient care thus putting them at great risk for a health crisis that leads to emergency or in-patient care.^[11] Hence, while chronic homelessness accounts for 27.5% of the overall homeless population in 2022 for the state, the costs associated with it are compounded by lack of ongoing support for a disabling condition. Permanent supportive housing has proven to be the most effective way to address chronic homelessness.^[12]

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness are also at higher risk for an array of vulnerabilities compared to people living in shelters. Numerous studies document that these individuals experience a higher prevalence of substance use disorder, serious mental illness, and/or chronic health problems than people living in shelters; many of these health conditions occur in tandem with one another as well.^[13] These health problems are not necessarily the cause of unsheltered homelessness; living unsheltered frequently initiates these problems and certainly exacerbates them. Moreover, these risk factors largely account for greater risk for premature death.^[14] Unsheltered individuals also interact more often with the police and exhibit a higher rate of incarceration with more time in jail. A 2019 study of 187 U.S. cities by the National Law Center on Homelessness documents the prevalence of ordinances targeting the unsheltered homeless in the form of bans on resting, sleeping, or camping in public places.^[15] A history of incarceration adds to an already long list of barriers to securing housing. Additionally, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are at heightened risk for victimization of crime, including violent crime.^[16]

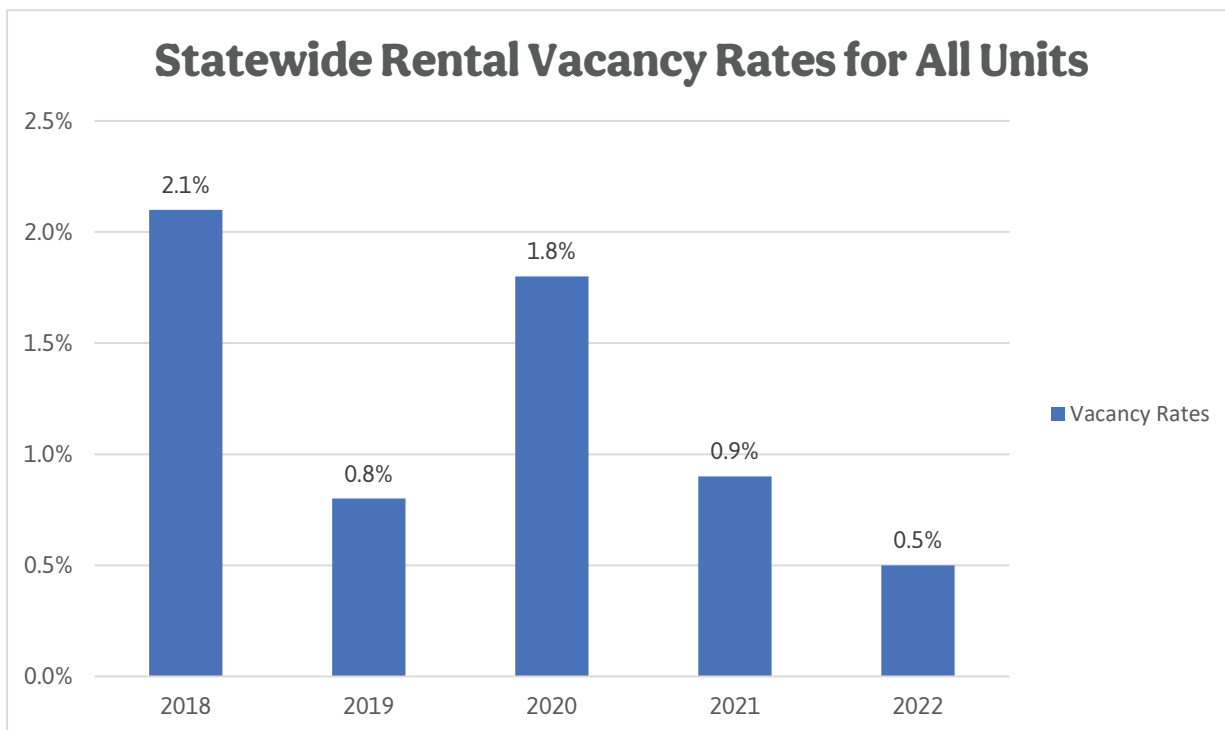
“The data is clear that we need dramatically greater federal resources for those experiencing chronic and unsheltered homelessness and a greater commitment to affordable housing for everyone.”

– Ann Oliva, CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness

The Need for Affordable Housing

Studies consistently demonstrate that a lack of affordable housing related to diminished housing stock and rising housing costs permeates the United States. Exacerbating this problem are increasingly fewer jobs paying a living wage for less skilled Americans. ^[17] New Hampshire faces these same challenges. Figure 3 below presents trends in statewide rental vacancy rates using data provided by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (New Hampshire Housing), which notes that an optimal vacancy rate is 5%. The vacancy rate is the percentage of residential rental units in a specified area that are currently unoccupied or available. As the trend data show, the rental vacancy rates in New Hampshire continue to fall well below the 5% optimal vacancy rate. The statewide rate for 2022 is 0.5%, or 1/10th the optimal vacancy rate. However, not displayed in the graph is the fact that Grafton, Hillsborough, Merrimack, and Rockingham counties have vacancy rates below 0.5%. Moreover, the comparable vacancy rate specifically for a two-bedroom rental unit is at only 0.3%. ^[18] There is simply not enough available housing to meet the need.

Figure 3

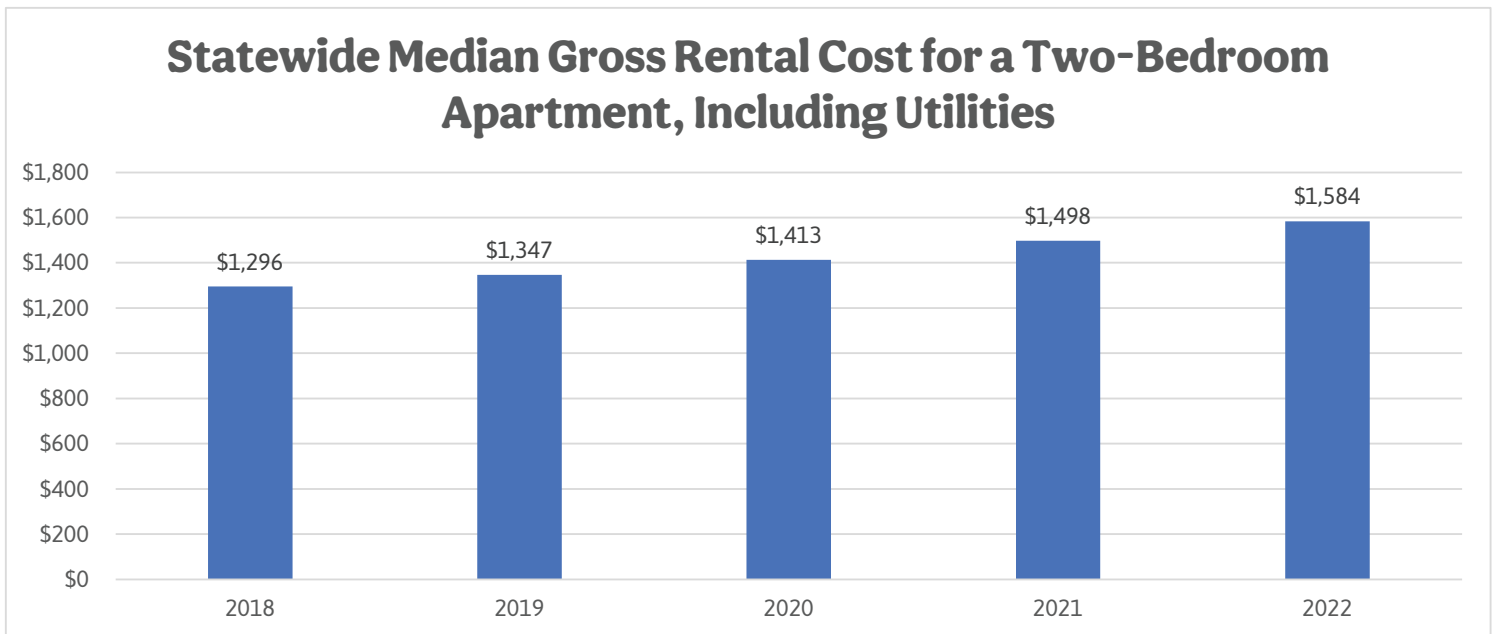


Source: NH Housing Finance Authority, 2022 NH Residential Rental Cost Survey Report

While an optimal rental vacancy rate is 5%, the vacancy rate for NH in 2022 was 0.5%, or 1/10th the optimal vacancy rate.

New Hampshire Housing also documents that the cost of housing has risen significantly. Figure 4 displays the median monthly gross rent for a two-bedroom apartment, including utilities, from 2018 to 2022. The median monthly rental housing cost increased from \$1,296 in 2018 to \$1,584 in 2022, which is a 22% increase in just five years. Housing costs for rent or mortgage should not exceed 30% of household income to be considered affordable. Based on this measure, New Hampshire Housing documents that the annual income needed to afford the average two-bedroom apartment is \$63,400, which is 131% of the median renter household income.^[19] The minimum wage in New Hampshire continues to be \$7.25, thereby requiring an individual to work 168 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment priced at \$1,584. Given a 40-hour work week for 52 weeks, a renter would need an hourly wage of nearly \$31 to afford such a rental, but the median hourly wage in 2022 for New Hampshire was \$23.04.^[20] Housing in New Hampshire is financially out of reach for many Granite Staters.

Figure 4



Source: NH Housing Finance Authority, 2022 NH Residential Rental Cost Survey Report

The statewide median gross rental cost for a two-bedroom apartment including utilities increased 22%, from \$1,296 in 2018 to \$1,584 in 2022.

Key Takeaways

Far too many individuals and families continue to experience homelessness in New Hampshire. The following outlines key findings and insights revealed in this report of the data for 2022:



Point-in-Time data show increases in homelessness in 2022 following the loss of federal pandemic-related funding support.

PIT data document an increase in statewide homelessness as pandemic-related funding and supports diminished. The PIT count of homelessness decreased from 1,675 people in 2020 (prior to the start of the pandemic) to 1,491 people the following year (after the influx of funding through the CARES Act). However, 2022 PIT data approaches the level of homelessness seen prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1,605 individuals experiencing homelessness on that one day in January.



Yearlong data from HMIS document a 32% increase in the unduplicated counts of individuals experiencing homelessness.

HMIS data compiled throughout the year document higher numbers of Granite Staters experiencing homelessness. The number of people experiencing homelessness in 2022 increased 32% from 4,554 in 2020 to 6,031 in 2022. These data translate into an increased rate of homelessness in New Hampshire, from 330.6 per 100,000 residents in 2020 to 432.3 in 2022. A pattern of homelessness is evident in the 2022 data.



Unsheltered homelessness is increasing and requires enhanced support and attention.

Data from PIT and HMIS document concerning trends in the increase of unsheltered homelessness. Figure 1 documents a 125% increase in unsheltered homelessness from 147 people in 2019 to 331 people in 2022. HMIS data in Figure 2 show that the number of people living unsheltered rose steadily from 2020 to 2022, representing a 41% increase in three years. New Hampshire residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness are at a higher risk of developing a disabling condition and falling into chronic homelessness than sheltered residents. Living on the streets or in other unsheltered environments considerably compromises wellness, thus leading to higher morbidity and mortality than those living in shelters.



Chronic homelessness is increasing and is an area of critical concern.

An area of growing concern in both PIT and HMIS data relates to chronic homelessness. Figure 1 (PIT data) documents that one in five people experiencing homelessness is chronically homeless; the comparable HMIS data, generally considered to be a more consistent and comprehensive measure, indicate that one in four is experiencing chronic homelessness. Moreover, HMIS data document an 86% increase in the number of Granite Staters experiencing chronic homelessness, from 889 people in 2021 to 1,657 people in 2022. Individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness are especially vulnerable to a host of complications that make securing and maintaining permanent housing extremely difficult.



The lack of affordable housing is a leading contributor to the rise in homelessness in New Hampshire.

Although the causes of homelessness are complex and varied, the lack of affordable housing unequivocally continues to be a leading factor. The vacancy rate for rental housing in New Hampshire is substantially below the ideal rate of 5%. The overall vacancy rate in New Hampshire is 0.5% and the vacancy rate for two-bedroom units is .3%. These extremely low vacancy rates push up prices, making it nearly impossible for some residents to secure housing.

The housing stock that is available is financially out of reach for many Granite Staters. The cost of housing increased by 22% from 2018 to 2022. Individuals and families that spend more than 30% of their income on housing are considered cost burdened. The median hourly wage in 2022 was \$23.04 per hour. And yet, in order to afford the median two-bedroom apartment in New Hampshire, a person would need to earn nearly \$31 per hour.

The steady rise in housing costs is outpacing the growth in wages, which makes it increasingly challenging to afford housing. The lack of supply and high cost of housing coupled with wages insufficient to meet basic needs contribute to the rise of homelessness.



Supportive policies and additional resources are necessary to address housing needs and reduce homeless experiences.

The recent rise in homelessness in the state, combined with the lack of affordable housing, calls for immediate action. As housing pressures continue to grow, New Hampshire may see greater numbers of individuals, families, and youth experiencing homelessness. Creating additional housing resources, including permanent supportive housing programs and income-based rental units, will be necessary to ensure appropriate housing options are available for all New Hampshire residents.

The additional funding resources made available throughout the pandemic helped many residents and families to maintain housing and lowered rates of homelessness in New Hampshire. These successes demonstrate that effective strategies exist to reduce homelessness. Sustained investments in similar policies and supports will help to reverse the rising trend in levels of homelessness and put New Hampshire on a path to ensuring housing stability for all residents.

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