

# Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: Homelessness

During 2019 the average length of stay in Vermont’s publicly funded emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and youth shelters was at an 18-year high point of 52 days.<sup>1</sup> A total of 4,407 homeless persons received services in 2017 (the latest year this data is available) from Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) partner agencies.<sup>2</sup> This number would be even higher if it also included those who stayed in domestic violence shelters and those who received emergency housing services through the Vermont General Assistance program.

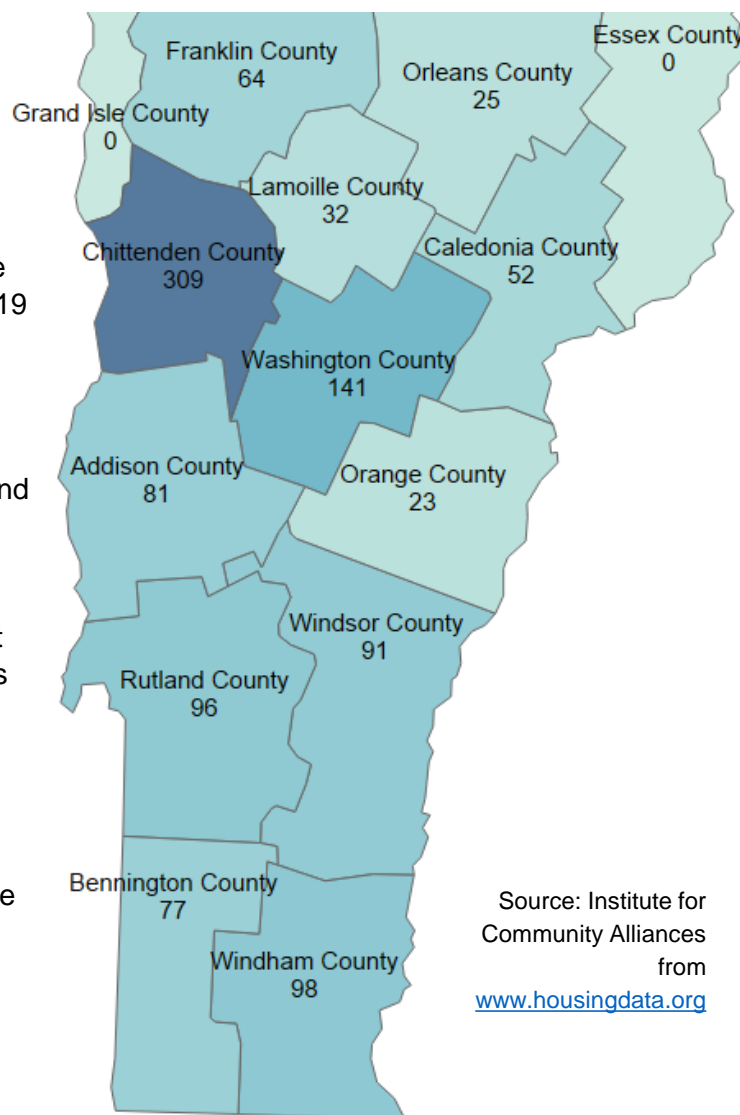
The 2019 Point-in-Time (PIT) count found 1,089 Vermonters homeless. The PIT count is a statewide count of people experiencing homelessness on one night in January each year. Vermont has two HUD-recognized Continua of Care that lead the count. The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness is the Balance of State Continuum of Care which includes 11 local Continuums of Care. The Chittenden Homeless Alliance is the Chittenden County Continuum of Care.

PIT counts underrepresent homelessness due to its transitory nature, methodological inconsistencies during the count, the unseen homeless (i.e. sleeping in cars or institutionalized in hospitals and jails) and HUD definitions of homelessness.

## 1,089 Vermonters experienced homelessness during 2019 Point-In-Time Count

### Characteristics

- **Race:** Persons identified as Black, African American, Hispanic or Latino were disproportionately represented in the homeless population (relative to these groups’ representation in the total state population) in the 2019 PIT count. 15% of all people counted in 2019 identified themselves as a race other than white.
- **Chronically Homeless:** The 2019 PIT count identified 190 chronically homeless persons statewide.<sup>3</sup>
- **Families with Children:** 408 Vermont parents and children in families were among the homeless in the PIT 2019 count.
- **Veterans:** The population of homeless veterans has declined steadily to 87 in the 2019 PIT count since the 2013 count when it peaked at 128. This likely reflects the coordinated efforts of veterans’ service providers to move this number towards “functional zero”.<sup>4</sup>
- **Unaccompanied Youth:** The 2019 PIT count found 122 youth under the age of 25 who were unaccompanied and homeless. Of these, 27 were parents of young children.
- **Domestic and sexual violence:** The 2019 PIT count found that 133 people experiencing homeless in Vermont were fleeing domestic/sexual violence.



## Housing and services

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory Count Report offers a snapshot of CoC's housing inventory count (HIC) during the last ten days of January.

### Housing Inventory Count in 2019

**Chronically Homeless Individuals and Families:** 326 beds  
**Families with children:** 1,081 units/beds  
**Veterans and Their Families:** 354 beds  
**Unaccompanied Youth:** 85 beds

Source: HUD 2019 Continuum of Care Housing Inventory Count Report, aggregated to state level.

Of the 771 households counted during the 2019 PIT Count, 87% were staying in emergency shelters, publicly funded hotel rooms or transitional housing. The remaining 102 households were unsheltered.

A variety of local and statewide organizations make up Vermont's network for providing services to Vermonters experiencing homelessness, some of which are tailored to specific subpopulations. For example, the Family Supportive Housing (FSH) Program is a key player in addressing homelessness among families. The FSH program provides in-depth case management and service coordination to homeless families with children to stem homelessness and facilitate the transition to permanent housing. Funding is administered through the Vermont Department for Children and Families Office of Economic Opportunity. In turn, a network of community-based providers deliver FSH programming in conjunction with affordable housing providers and private landlords.<sup>5</sup>

## System gaps

Persistent gaps between the needs of Vermont's homeless population and the corresponding supportive facilities and services have been identified by several studies conducted during the past five years. In 2017, Vermont commissioned the Roadmap to End Homelessness project and hired the Corporation for Supportive Housing to identify gaps and solutions.<sup>6</sup> Following this, Vermont's Specialized Housing Vouchers Working Group was formed to study the state's underutilization of federal rental assistance subsidies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for vulnerable populations including individuals and families experiencing homelessness.<sup>7</sup> In 2019, Vermont Legal Aid conducted a study focused on the role evictions play in leading to homelessness.<sup>8</sup>

The studies identified gaps including lack of affordable and supportive housing units, lack of service coordination, and lack of rental assistance and assistance with arrearages to prevent eviction.

## Next steps

To end homelessness in Vermont new affordable and supportive housing must be created, according to the Vermont Roadmap to End Homelessness. The report concludes that 3,148 new permanent housing interventions will be needed to end homelessness in five years. These interventions consist of newly developed and leased supportive housing, newly developed affordable housing, rapid rehousing assistance (short-term rental assistance coupled with short-term supportive services) and prevention efforts (services to assist people seeking shelter by helping them stabilize and preserve existing housing or identify immediate alternate housing arrangements).

The Specialized Housing Vouchers Working Group's identified action steps for improving services funding, services design, delivery and coordination, housing availability and barriers to lease up.

Vermont Legal Aid's eviction report made recommendations in these areas: (1) Direct funding for rental arrearages to prevent eviction, (2) Court-based eviction prevention, (3) Expand and develop programs to help tenants manage their rental payments and (4) Expand rental subsidies and affordable housing programs.

### Vermont Roadmap to End Homelessness action steps

1. Scale Supportive Housing in Vermont
2. Complete the Design and Roll Out of Vermont's Coordinated Entry System
3. Increase the Supply of Affordable Rental Housing
4. Support What Already Works
5. Design and Test New Innovative Programs

- 1 [Vermont Department for Children & Families, Housing Opportunity Grant Program \(HOP\) Annual Report-State Fiscal Year 2019](#)
- 2 Institute for Community Alliances, [The State of Homelessness in Vermont, 2017 Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\) Report](#), Dec. 2018
- 3 The 2019 Point-in-Time Count defines “chronically homeless” as persons with a disability who have experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years (cumulative of at least 12 months).
- 4 [2017 PIT Count Report](#), Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance. “Functional zero” is defined as the number of veterans who are homeless being no greater than the monthly housing placement rate for veterans.
- 5 Vermont Department of Children & Families, [Family Supportive Housing Program—Annual Report: State Fiscal Year 2019](#)
- 6 Vermont Agency of Human Services, [Homelessness Study: "Vermont Roadmap to End Homelessness", 2017](#)
- 7 [Specialized Housing Vouchers Working Group](#), Report to the Vermont Legislature, November 2019.
- 8 Vermont Legal Aid, [Eviction in Vermont: A Closer Look, 2019](#)