

## Homelessness Among Utah Women

### Setting the Stage

In 2020, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reported that an estimated 3,131 Utah residents experienced homelessness on any given day.<sup>1</sup> And, according to data shared by the Office of Homeless Services under the Utah Department of Workforce Services,<sup>2</sup> 24,037 people accessed homelessness services in Utah sometime during 2021. Clearly, homelessness is a grave concern for many Utah women and families. As the Utah Women & Leadership Project seeks to strengthen the impact of all Utah girls and women, understanding homelessness for female residents is important. This research snapshot focuses on three key areas:

- 1) An overview of homelessness in the nation and trends across the last several years.
- 2) A synopsis of homelessness in Utah, including demographic information, influencing factors, and state spending.
- 3) A discussion of current efforts in the state to decrease homelessness and meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

### National Overview

In February 2022, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released its annual homeless assessment report to Congress.<sup>3</sup> The report analyzed point-in-time data in which Continuums of Care tracked the number of individuals who experienced homelessness on a single night during the last 10 days of January 2021. The total number of individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness—those in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other temporary settings—was 326,126.<sup>4</sup> Compared to 2020 national data, this represented an 8.0% decrease. Looking at specific subpopulations, the number of people who experienced sheltered homeless as part of a family declined 15.0%, and the number of veterans who experienced sheltered homelessness declined 10.0%. However, there was a 20.0% increase in the number of people with patterns of chronic homelessness.

*An estimated 3,131 Utah residents experienced homelessness on any given day in 2020, and 24,037 people accessed homeless services in Utah sometime during 2021.*

Because of the pandemic, there are several factors to consider when reviewing the sheltered homelessness data. First, some emergency shelters reduced capacity to meet recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reduced capacities and peoples' hesitancy to utilize shelter resources because of health risk likely contributed to the overall decrease in sheltered homelessness from 2020 to 2021. Second, COVID-19 financial relief efforts may have positively impacted the rate of people experiencing sheltered homelessness, specifically families. For example, increased government assistance and eviction moratoriums may have helped keep more individuals in homes.<sup>5</sup> Although various pandemic factors affected the decline from 2020 to 2021, and rates fluctuate from year to year, long-term data from 2007 onward confirms that sheltered homelessness is decreasing overall.<sup>6</sup>

Unsheltered homelessness describes individuals "whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people."<sup>7</sup> Due to COVID-19, in 2021 the HUD waived the requirement to count unsheltered homelessness. Thus, only 54.0% of communities of care conducted a full or partial point-in-time count. The limited data available suggested that unsheltered homeless was stable from 2020 to 2021. Data available for specific subpopulations indicated that individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness decreased while families experiencing unsheltered homelessness increased. The latter pattern is opposite to the sheltered homelessness data but should be interpreted with caution, given the incompleteness of the data.<sup>8</sup> For context, the HUD reported that 226,080 individuals experienced unsheltered homelessness on a single day in 2020,<sup>9</sup> and 211,293 experienced the same in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Nationally, males are more likely than females to experience homelessness. According to the most recent comprehensive point-in-time dataset from 2020, 22 of every 10,000 males were homeless compared to 13 of every 10,000 females. In total, the number of men experiencing homelessness was 352,211 versus 223,578 females.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, there were 3,161 transgender individuals and 1,460 non-binary individuals who experienced homelessness. While White individuals make up the largest number

experiencing homelessness, people of color, including individuals who are Pacific Islanders, Black, or Native American, have the highest rates of homelessness.<sup>12</sup>

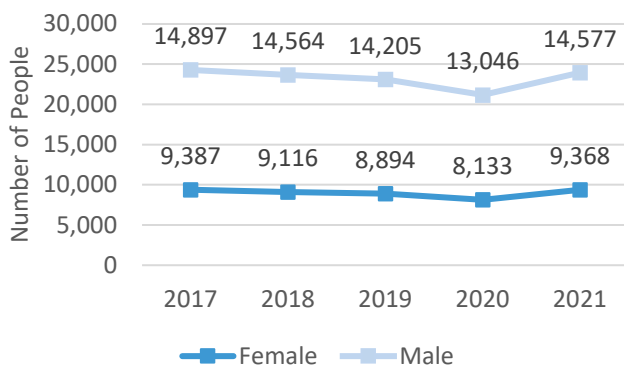
## Utah

Working with the State Homeless Coordinator and Data Manager from the Utah Office of Homeless Services, we gathered data on the number of people in Utah, particularly women, who had accessed homeless services because of the risk of being homeless, because they were experiencing temporary or chronic homelessness, or because they were in transition to permanent housing. In addition, we worked with the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition to gather information on women who had accessed homeless services and had experienced domestic violence in the past or were currently fleeing domestic violence.

As noted above, 24,037 people accessed homeless services in Utah sometime during 2021.<sup>13</sup> To put this in perspective with recent national numbers, 18 of every 10,000 people in the US have experienced homelessness, whereas 9.8 of every 10,000 people in Utah have experienced homelessness.<sup>14</sup> Females made up 39.0% (9,368 of 24,037) of the individuals who accessed homeless services in Utah in 2021.<sup>15</sup> Of the 9,368 women, approximately 23.0% (2,153) were under the age of 18.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of females and males who accessed homeless services in Utah from 2017 to 2021. As with national trends, more males than females access homeless services and experience homelessness in Utah. Many women (5,052) who accessed homeless services in 2021 participated in street outreach, emergency shelters, or transitional housing projects, and 3,800 women were in households with adults and children. Figure 1 shows an up-tick in the number of people accessing homeless services from 2020 to 2021. The rise is corroborated by a state report finding that during the fiscal year 2021, 7,712 individuals experienced homeless for the first time in Utah, an increase of almost 1,000 from the previous fiscal year.<sup>16</sup>

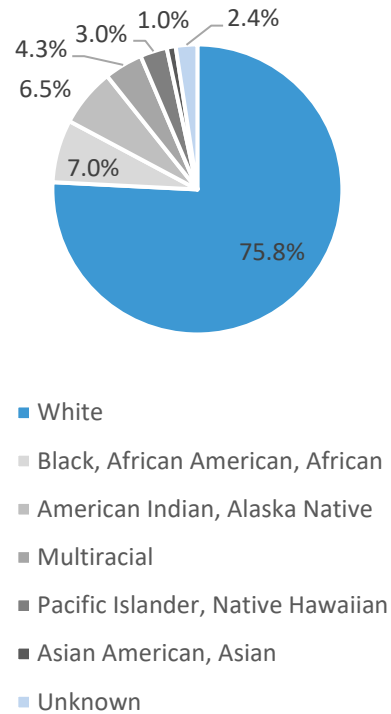
**Figure 1: Homelessness in Utah by Gender**



**Race and Ethnicity:** According to racial demographic data about females who accessed homeless services in 2021,

75.8% were White, 7.0% were Black, 6.5% were American Indian, 4.3% were multiracial, 3.0% were Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian, and 1.0% were Asian (see Figure 2).<sup>17</sup> Of the total Utah women who accessed homeless services, 22.6% identified as Hispanic. When comparing female homelessness by race percentages to overall female by race percentages in Utah,<sup>18</sup> Hispanic women; Black, African American, and African women; American Indian and Alaska Native women; and Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian women are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

**Figure 2: Utah Female Homelessness by Race**

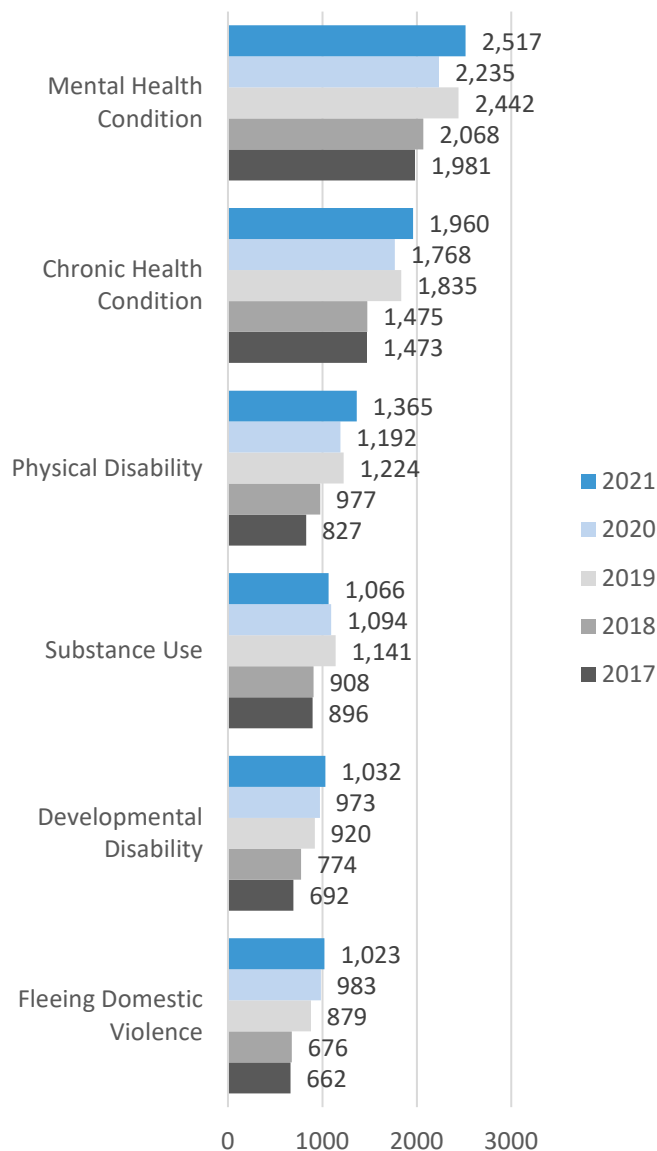


**Influencing Factors:** As reported in 2021 by Utah girls and women who accessed homeless services, the primary individual factors affecting their ability to find housing included the following: mental health conditions, chronic health conditions, physical disability, substance use, fleeing domestic violence, and developmental disability.<sup>19</sup> Figure 3 illustrates a range of factors that have impacted women’s ability to secure housing across the last five years. It is important to note that the number of women accessing homeless services who are fleeing domestic violence has nearly doubled from 2017 (662 women) to 2021 (1,023 women). According to 2021 data, the number of women accessing homeless services who have experienced domestic violence at some time in the past was 2,502: 26.7% of all females.

**State Spending:** During the 2022 general legislative session, the legislature allocated \$45.5 million in state funds for the fiscal year 2023 to address homelessness. This included, but was not limited to, one-time funds to participate in a county match program, new ongoing funds for shelter

cities and public safety, funds matched by federal grants, and funds matched by the philanthropic community.<sup>20</sup> In addition to state funds, the state appropriated \$74.9 million in federal funds with the bulk of those dollars (\$55.0 million) coming to the state as a one-time contribution from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and a one-time \$13.0 million housing grant.<sup>21</sup> Overall, in the 2022 legislative session, the legislature invested historic amounts of funding into addressing homelessness in Utah (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3: Number of Women Impacted by Homelessness Factors**

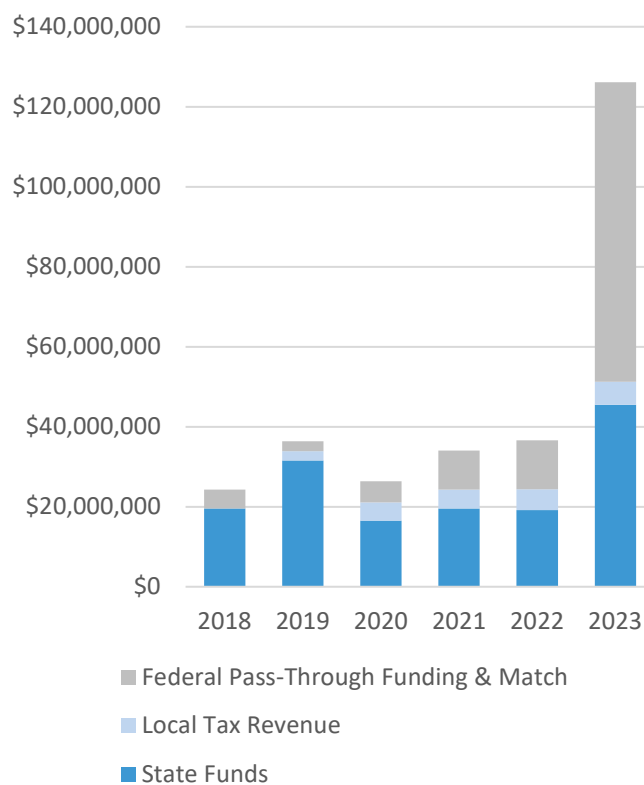


### What Utahns Can Do

Utah has been known for setting challenging goals<sup>22</sup> and undertaking innovative approaches<sup>23</sup> to address homelessness in the state. Additionally, state funding for homeless services and initiatives has increased dramatically over the last several years. However, considering recent rises in

homelessness, policy makers and community leaders need to continue prioritizing this important issue. One key factor affecting Utah’s rate of homelessness is the housing and rental market, including prices, interest rates, and the number of available units.<sup>24</sup> Affordable, accessible housing is an overall concern for any growing population, but especially for those experiencing homelessness and low incomes. Multiple strategies are necessary to ensure that those experiencing homelessness have access to a strong network of resources and stable housing. Ongoing efforts should also focus on developing homelessness services in underserved areas. Furthermore, we need to better understand and address other predictive factors of homelessness, such as mental and physical health and domestic violence.

**Figure 4: Utah Funding for Homelessness**



Many service providers and organizations are involved in addressing homelessness in communities throughout Utah. To coordinate these efforts, Utah has designated 13 Local Homeless Councils to develop a common vision for reducing homelessness in their areas of the state. These councils cannot succeed without the input and involvement of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including housed residents. We encourage Utahns to become more aware of resources for individuals experiencing homelessness, support legislative and community efforts to reduce homelessness, and increase their participation in volunteer efforts. To become involved in solutions and learn more about providers in your community, please visit [endutahhomelessness.org](http://endutahhomelessness.org) to connect with the Local Homeless Council in your area.

## Conclusion

Although Utah's rate of homelessness is less than the national rate, thousands of individuals and families experience sheltered and unsheltered homelessness each year. We

must continue efforts to provide resources for those currently experiencing homelessness and develop strategies that ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.<sup>25</sup> As we do so, we will not only strengthen the impact of more Utah girls and women, but also their families.

<sup>1</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Roddey, C., Gayen, S., & Bednar, T. J. (2021, January). *The 2020 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-in-time estimates of homelessness*. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *Data on women experiencing homelessness* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022, February 4). *HUD releases 2021 annual homeless assessment report part 1*. [https://www.hud.gov/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/hud\\_no\\_22\\_022](https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_22_022)

<sup>4</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022).

<sup>5</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Tano, C., Dick, N., Hull, R., Shea, M., Morris, T., & Morris, S. (2022, February). *The 2021 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-in-time estimates of sheltered homelessness*. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Tano, C., Dick, N., Hull, R., Shea, M., Morris, T., & Morris, S. (2022, February).

<sup>7</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Tano, C., Dick, N., Hull, R., Shea, M., Morris, T., & Morris, S. (2022, February).

<sup>8</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022).

<sup>9</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Roddey, C., Gayen, S., & Bednar, T. J. (2021, January).

<sup>10</sup> Henry, M., Watt, R., Mahathey, A., Ouellette, J., & Sitler, A. (2020, January). *The 2019 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress. Part 1: Point-in-time estimates of homelessness*. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2022). *State of homelessness: 2022 edition*. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>

<sup>12</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2022).

<sup>13</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *Data on women experiencing homelessness* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services. It is important to note that of the 24,037 individuals accessing homeless services in 2021, 0.4% identified as transgender or gender-questioning: 92 identified as female-transgender (53), female-questioning (7), male-transgender (30), or male-questioning (2). Data reported throughout the Utah section reflects individuals identifying as only female or male.

<sup>14</sup> Henry, M., de Sousa, T., Roddey, C., Gayen, S., & Bednar, T. J. (2021, January).

<sup>15</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *Data on women experiencing homelessness* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>16</sup> Workforce Services: Homeless Services. (2022). *Annual data report on homelessness*. <https://jobs.utah.gov/homelessness/homelessnessreport.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *Data on women experiencing homelessness* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>18</sup> Internal UWLP calculations based on 2021 American Community Survey 1-year estimates of Utah by age and sex (see <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=utah%20by%20sex&tid=ACST1Y2021.S0101>) and of Utah by race and sex (see <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Utah%20Race%20and%20Ethnicity&tid=ACSDT1Y2021.B01001A>, including Tables B01001B through B01001I).

<sup>19</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *Data on women experiencing homelessness* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>20</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *OHS funding 2018–2022* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>21</sup> Utah Office of Homeless Services. (2022). *OHS funding 2018–2022* [Unpublished data]. Utah Department of Workforce Services.

<sup>22</sup> McEvers, K. (2015, December 10). Utah reduced chronic homelessness by 91 percent; Here's how. *National Public Radio: All Things Considered*. <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/10/459100751/utah-reduced-chronic-homelessness-by-91-percent-heres-how>

<sup>23</sup> Hubbard, H. (2022, November 6). A village for Salt Lakers experiencing homelessness is designed for self-sufficiency. *National Public Radio: Economy*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/06/1134230388/village-salt-lake-city-chronic-homelessness-housing>

<sup>24</sup> McKellar, K. (2022, June 22). Time's up: Housing crisis, pandemic fallout has caught up to Utah. Homelessness is on the rise. *Deseret News*. <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2022/6/22/23178475/housing-crisis-pandemic-fallout-caught-up-utah-homelessness-on-the-rise-homeless-population>; McKellar, K. (2022, October 20). The housing market is correcting—but Utah's affordability crisis isn't going away. *Deseret News*. <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2022/10/20/23413486/housing-market-correction-impact-utah-housing-shortage>

<sup>25</sup> Workforce Services: Housing & Community Development. (2020). *The state of Utah strategic plan on homelessness*. <https://jobs.utah.gov/homelessness/homelessnessstrategicplan.pdf>

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