



Homelessness 2024

Rosemary Powers, Theresa Power-Drutis, and Local Advocates

Homelessness 2024

- Welcome & Conversation
- Current Research & Policy Briefing
- Addressing Homelessness in Pierce County
- Taking Action
- Presenters
 - Virtual Unit Meeting: Jake Nau
 - East Pierce Unit Meeting: Ric Rose
 - Tacoma Unit Meeting: Sally Perkins

Sharing Our Experience

10 minutes to discuss 2 Questions

1. How has homelessness touched you?
2. What issues - related to homelessness - would you like to know more about?

Then we'll come back to the group and share a few thoughts



“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

~Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Defining Homelessness

Defining Homelessness

HUD definitions

The Point in Time Count

- as proxy for “how many are homeless” and “who is homeless”
- Pierce County 2023 PIT report



2023 Homeless Point-In-Time Count Results

Each January, Pierce County surveys people experiencing homelessness. This homeless “point-in-time count” is a one-day snapshot that captures the characteristics and situations of people living here without a home. We counted 2,148 people on our streets and in our shelters, but roughly 6,500 were connected to our homeless crisis response system during the same time. The lower Point-in-Time count number reflects the challenge of counting a large, geographically distributed unsheltered population over a 24-hour period. Like all surveys, the Homeless PIT Count has limitations. Results from the count are influenced by the weather, availability of overflow shelter beds, the number of volunteers, and the level of engagement of the people volunteers interview.

2,148

People counted
during the homeless
Point-in-Time count

6,500

People connected to
our homeless crisis
response system



36%
Female



8%
Veterans



22%
55+ Years Old



25%
Chronically homeless



41%
Black, Indigenous, or
People of Color



7%
Households with
children



8%
Adult survivors of
domestic violence

Not all people experiencing homelessness sleep outside



59%
Emergency
shelter



6%
Transitional
housing



15%
Out of doors
(street, tent, etc.)



6%
Vehicle

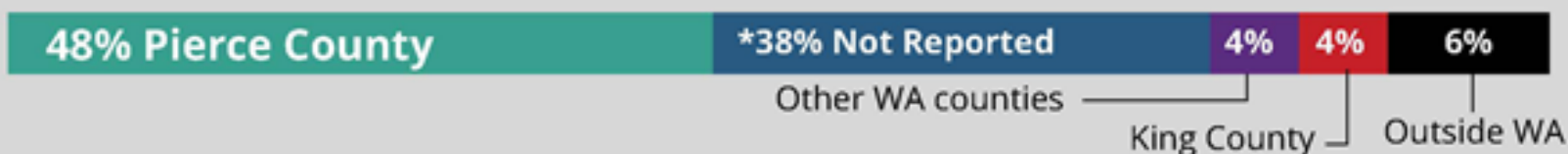


14%
*Not reported/
Other

Sheltered

Unsheltered

Most told us they lived in Pierce County before they became homeless

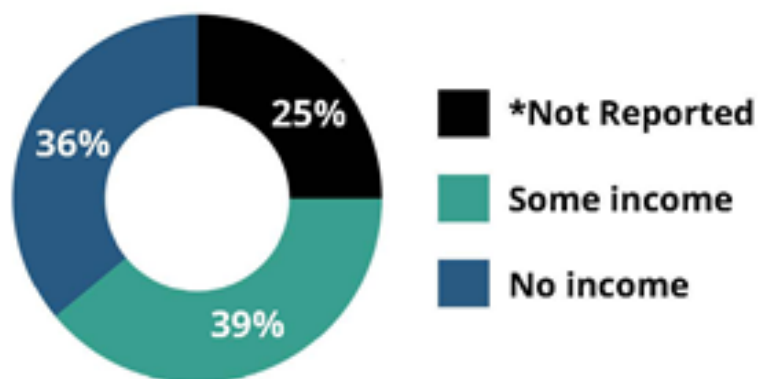


There are often many causes for experiencing homelessness

The top three most commonly reported answers are:

1. Family crisis
2. No affordable housing
3. Eviction and mortgage foreclosure

Some people experiencing homelessness have an income



Mental illness is the most commonly reported disability

Here is the breakdown of the most commonly reported disabilities. Some people reported having multiple disabilities.

Mental illness

37%

Chronic health condition

29%

Substance use

27%

Physical disability

25%

Developmental disability

12%

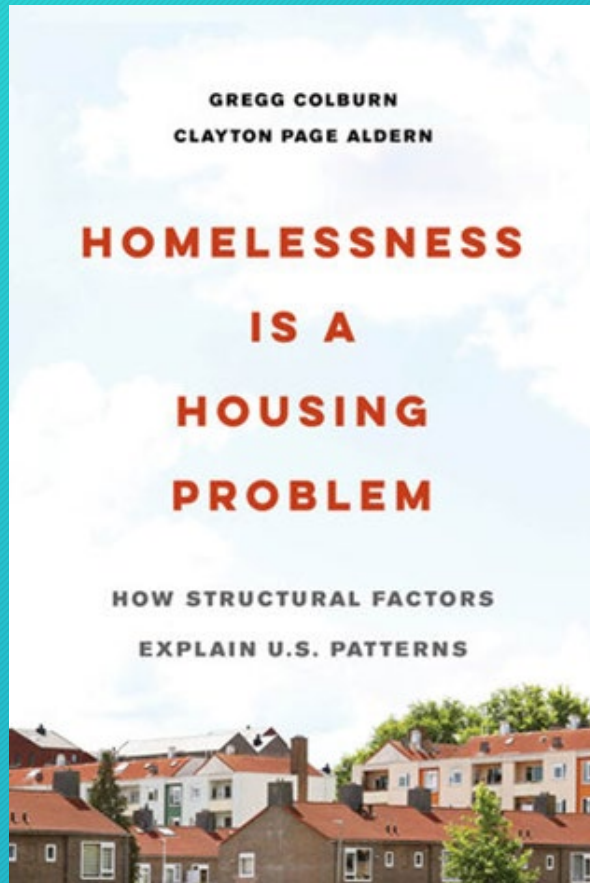
Current Research & Policy Briefing

What's on the Menu

- Homelessness is a Housing Problem - 2022
- Out of Reach and The Gap NLIHC annual reports - 2023
- California State Study of Persons Experiencing Homelessness - 2023
- The Costs and Harms of Homelessness—A Learning Brief - 2023
- From Evidence to Action: A Federal Research Agenda - 2024-2028

Homelessness Is a Housing Problem

How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns



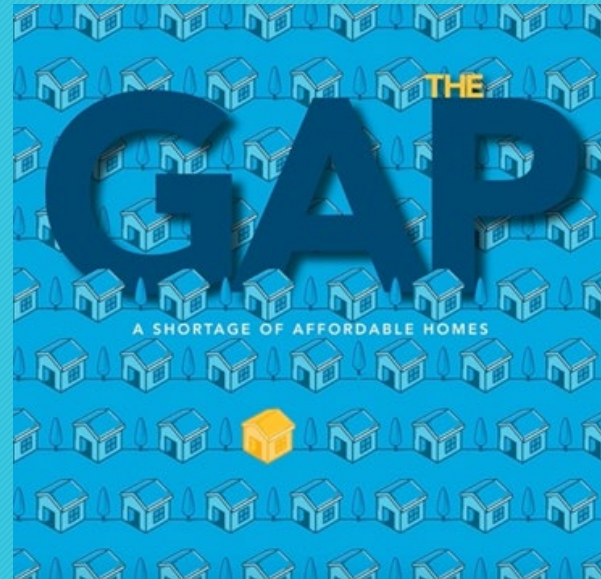
[Link to 8 minute video:](#) What are the Root Causes of Homelessness

by Gregg Colburn & Clayton Page Aldern
March 2022

2 Major Data Resources By NLIHC



Out of Reach



The Gap

Toward a New Understanding

The California Statewide Study of
People Experiencing Homelessness

June 2023

Link to full study [here](#)

Benioff Homelessness
and Housing Initiative

UCSF

University of California
San Francisco



The Costs and Harms of Homelessness Community Solutions 2023

A learning brief (Sept 2023)
examining the costs borne by
individuals, communities,
systems and society.

authors Hannah Chimowitz &
Adam Ruege

Link to resource [here](#).

KEY THINGS
TO KNOW



From Evidence to Action: A Federal Homelessness Research Agenda 2024-28

US Interagency Council on
Homelessness (USICH)

Published Nov 2023

Read the 19 page document [here](#)



Ending Homelessness in Pierce County

What makes this so hard?

Major obstacles to progress

1. Almost no housing for 30% AMI and under (Coordinated Entry challenges)
2. Lack of designated regional leadership
3. Inadequate accountability measures (plans on the shelf)
4. Insufficient funding
5. Communication & Silos





Unresolved Debates about Street Homelessness

Public space as contested space

Competing rights

- Right to move freely in public space
- The Commons: parks, sidewalks, entrances to businesses
- Right to meet basic human needs
- Norms of public behavior

A question of belonging

- Who gets to be in what spaces?
- How long can we stay?
- What community agreements?
- Who gets to decide?



Answering the Question with Sweeps

Criminalizing Homelessness

More about camping bans and sweeps

Tacoma residents voice irritations over camping ban that is 'not solving the problem'

9th Circuit Decisions:

- Martin v. Boise
- Johnson v. Grants Pass



Criminalizing “conduct that is an unavoidable consequence of being homeless

Based on the Eighth Amendment's protection against cruel and unusual punishment:

In *City of Johnson v. Grants Pass*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled against Grants Pass, reasoning that the city's laws imposed “cruel and unusual punishments” because there were not enough shelter beds to house the entire homeless population.

SCOTUS & the Johnson v. Grants Pass Decision

- Case challenging the decision was brought by Grants Pass
- Dozens of briefs filed, including from the Department of Justice, members of Congress, and state attorneys general
- Justices are scheduled to hear oral arguments April 22

According to the ACLA of Northern California, the Supreme Court hearing could...

“reopen a definition of cruel and unusual punishment that protects Americans, housed and unhoused, from unconstitutional treatment in the criminal legal system.”

More about the case and potential consequences

WEBINAR: Homelessness and the Supreme Court

Proposed Solutions

How to make homelessness “rare, brief, and non-recurring”

Self
Managed
Camps

permanent
supportive
housing

Tiny
houses/
villages

Medical
respite
sites

Micro
Housing
& SROs

Preserve
Mobile
Home
Parks

Social housing

Targeted
Universalism

Rental
Assistance

Eviction
protection

Safe
parking

Congregate
shelters

Rent
Stabilization

Hygiene
Centers

guaranteed
annual
income

Overdose
prevention
sites

Land
Trusts &
Co-ops

Rapid
Rehousing

Shared
Housing and
Co-Housing

Day
Centers

Housing
First

The Challenge of Seeking Common Ground





Check out the website [here](#)

DONATE YOUR SMALL TALK:

A Toolkit for Effective Conversations on Homelessness

In our daily interactions with baristas, rideshare drivers, family, friends, and colleagues, we can raise awareness and spread empathy around the challenge of addressing homelessness in our region. We know this might sound silly or awkward, but it's easier than it sounds. This toolkit will guide you through best practices for **donating your small talk**.



**HOMELESSNESS IS A SERIOUS CHALLENGE.
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT.**

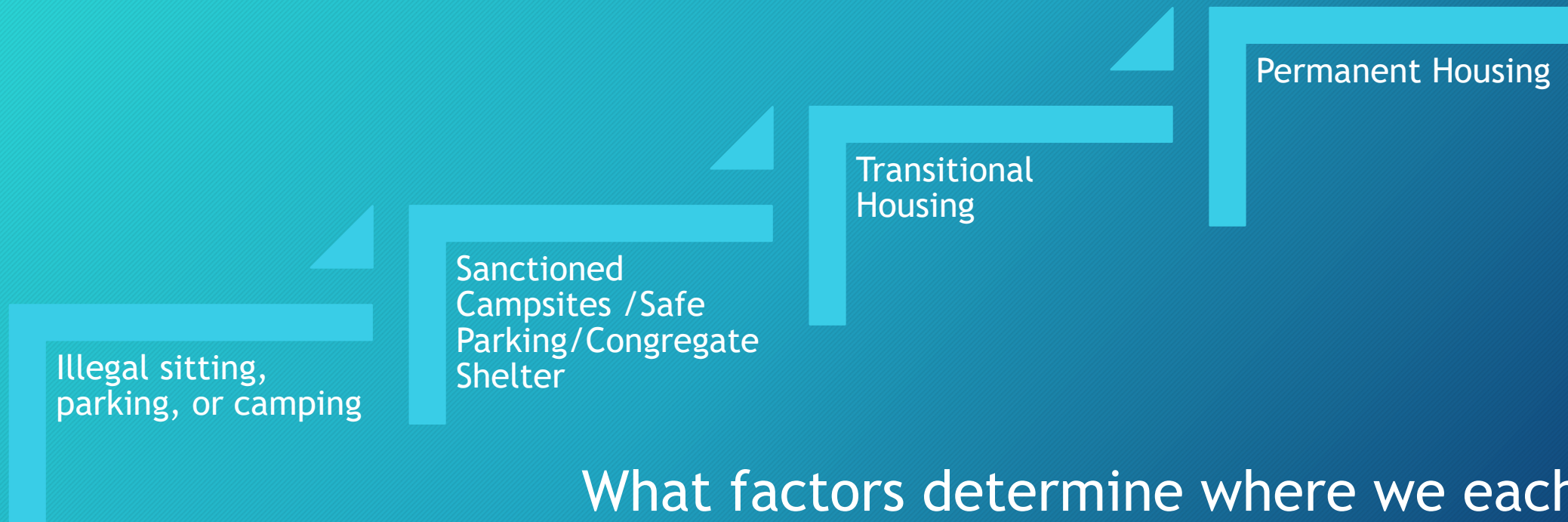
When homelessness comes up in small talk, it's important to acknowledge the feelings you're hearing and find common ground where you can. Check out some examples:

If you hear someone complaining about the need to clean up the streets...

➡ **You might say:** You're right, there are a lot of areas where folks need to be brought inside. Tents on sidewalks or an underpass aren't safe places for anyone to live. But **when encampments are cleared, the people there often aren't connected to alternative housing or services.** We can't just continue pushing them to a different spot on the street. Keeping our public spaces safe and clean for all means working to bring our unsheltered neighbors inside into stable, permanent situations and connecting them to the services they need.

Other Sources and Examples

Shelter: A Need We All Share



What factors determine where we each fall on this continuum?

Shelter: A Need We All Share



What factors determine where we each fall on this continuum?

Reframing

Combating myths and promoting compassion

Messaging Resource:

Safe Sites 4 All

MythBusters and Critical Issues

Community Solutions

Affirming Truths About Homelessness

Interested in helping build a “Talking Points” Resource for Pierce County? Zoom in on Wednesday mornings at 9-9:50 am

Zoom link to The Communications and Advocacy Team is posted on the Tacoma/Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness website



What about “large” talk?

Engaging in the public domain

Legislators, Shelter Policies & Funding

VoteWA: Voter registration and ballot management portal

- easy and no passwords needed
- All registered voters in WA have an account

What's there:

- Elections calendar
- Your elected officials & contact info
- Your registration and voting history
- Downloadable ballot information
- Links to update your information and other voter services



Vote 411
FAN
WLIHA

Follow the Washington State LWV Advocacy Team

Visit the LWVWA [Advocacy Page](#) for information and resources needed to take action.

Check out LWVWA's [Housing and Homelessness](#) page where our Issue Chair, Cynthia Stewart, provides LWV policies and Washington State legislative updates.

Can Advocacy Make a Difference?

Yes!

On March 21, 2023, the Pierce County Council passed ordinance 2022-81s, also known as the Maureen Howard Affordable Housing Act



Three new homeless shelters may open Pierce County this year

BUT ... advocacy is need to keep other shelters from being shut down

Other Successes and Setbacks

Washington State Legislature

- Rent Stabilization - did not pass
- Co-housing - passed
- Capital budget - \$127 million for Housing Trust Fund
- Document Recording Fee - \$60 million budgeted to backfill

National

Washington chosen as one of 8 accelerator states for 2024

Resources and opportunities for action

Pierce County's Comprehensive plan to end homelessness

review research, track progress, demand accountability

Testify, call, write, send messages in bottles

Contact elected officials at city, county, state, and national levels

Tacoma-Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness

Weekly zoom meetings Fridays 9-11 am, informational listserv and opportunities for action



Speak Up!

Tacoma/Lakewood/Pierce County Continuum of Care Plan

Public Comment on the Draft Plan Ends April 5, 2024

Join us for an on-line presentation and discussion lead by Cynthia Stewart

Tuesday, March 19, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

More details and Zoom link in

- [March Voter](#) or the [LWVTPC Calendar](#)

Background Documents

1. [Introduction narrative](#)
2. [CoC 5-year plan update](#)
3. [Existing Conditions Report](#)

Opportunities for action

Volunteer Opportunities

Nativity House and Stability Site need help with meals

Help Associated Ministries with Homeless Connect Project

A collaboration of small nonprofits needs help with

- Managing Storage for outreach
- Organizing and distributing survival gear, home-start kits, etc.

**“Home is
where somebody
notices when
you are no
longer there.”**

ALEKSANDAR HEMON

