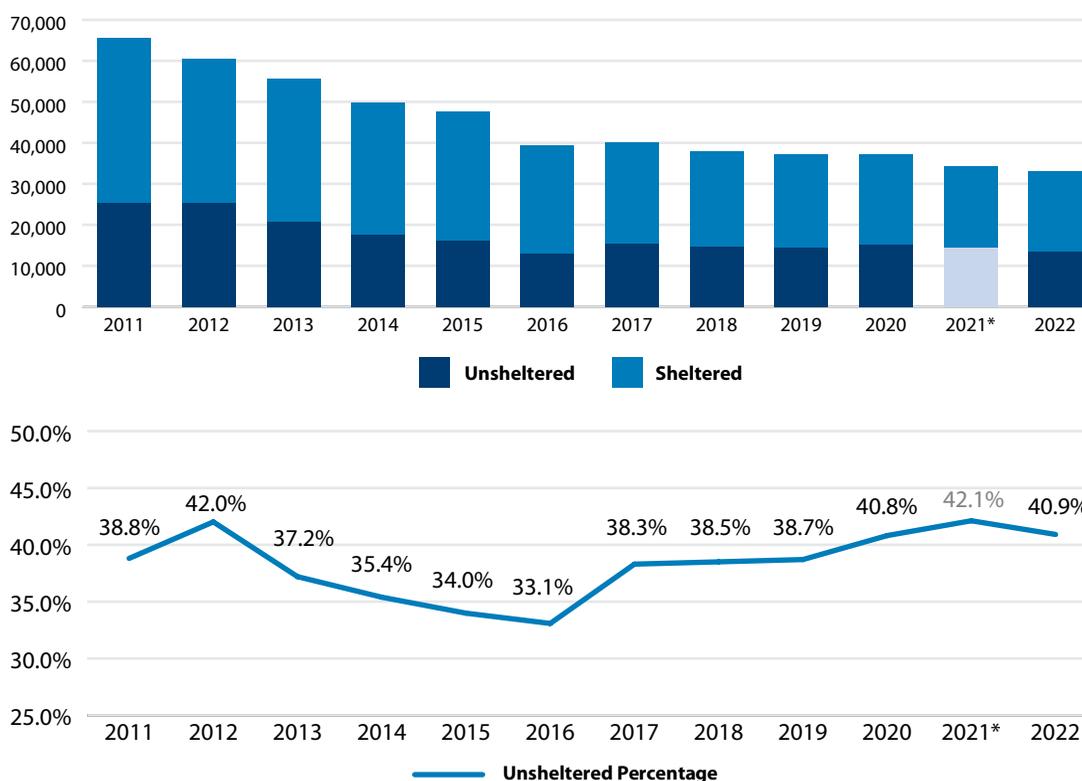


UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

As unsheltered homelessness has become more visible, there has been a troubling rise in state and local laws that criminalize and worsen homelessness by making it illegal for people without a home to do certain activities in public that are otherwise legal in the setting of a home, such as sleeping, sitting, and eating.

All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness recognizes that there has been a rise in unsheltered homelessness across the country and has highlighted strategies to help respond to this urgent crisis.

Veteran PIT Count Trends



*An average of the 2020 and 2022 Unsheltered PIT Count was utilized to represent the 2021 Unsheltered PIT count.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The overall number of homeless Veterans has decreased for both sheltered and unsheltered populations.
- Out of the total number of homeless Veterans, the percentage of unsheltered Veterans decreased until 2016, with an increase in percentage each subsequent year.
- VA efforts to address the 2012-2016 decline included:
 - **Increasing Contract Emergency Residential Services beds.**
 - **Increasing Coordinated Entry (CE) efforts** and awarding of new CE Specialist positions.
 - **Creating a national hiring initiative** in 2015, recruiting approximately 800 staff across the country in just 6 months, leading VA Homeless Programs staffing rates to exceed 92% nationally as of September 2015 and remaining above 90% for most of 2016.
- Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program was no longer included in the PIT count as of 2017.

VETERAN RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

- History of combat exposure or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Higher physical and mental health comorbidity burden, or “sicker” individuals
- Disability, most often associated with combat
- History of substance use disorder
- Lack of social support
- Having low income or living in poverty
- Lack of access to affordable housing after exiting active duty

Around 70% of the chronically homeless adults remain unsheltered throughout the duration of their homelessness, consequently exacerbating existing health conditions and increasing the risk for premature death.

CHARACTERISTICS OF VETERANS ENDURING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

Recent statistics demonstrate that the demographic characteristics of the unsheltered homeless Veteran population may be changing, indicating a more diverse picture. Specifically, younger Veterans may be more vulnerable to homelessness following active duty.

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Unsheltered Veterans who completed the VA Homeless Operations Management and Evaluation System's (HOMES) intake assessment were more likely to utilize VA outpatient services in the months to follow, indicating an increase in the continuity of preventive medicine and access to care rather than relying on emergency services to have their care needs met.

PROFILES OF UNSHELTERED VETERANS (2013)

- Older in age (50-69 years of age)
- Male
- White in race
- History of serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder
- Not receiving VA service-connected disability
- Low VA healthcare service use



PROFILES OF UNSHELTERED VETERANS (2022)

- Younger in age (< 49 years of age)
- Male
- Hispanic ethnicity
- Educated, having some college education
- History of combat exposure and/or military sexual trauma
- Receiving VA service-connected disability
- Low VA healthcare service use

Unsheltered Veterans enter the HUD-VASH program at three times the rate of sheltered Veterans and are likely to experience a positive housing solution.

ENDING UNSHELTERED VETERAN HOMELESSNESS IS POSSIBLE

VA has implemented effective strategies that remove and reduce barriers that systematically delay or deny access to unsheltered homeless Veterans, including:

- **Outreach** to provide a variety of resources to unsheltered Veterans.
- **An array of programs** that seek to mitigate homelessness and unstable housing among Veterans, including the Low Demand Safe Haven model that utilizes a harm reduction approach to unsheltered homelessness.
- **Community partnerships** with local city, county, public works, and law enforcement entities to leverage services to Veterans being moved from encampments.

Veterans or family members seeking help with unsheltered homelessness can make a confidential call to the **National Call Center for Homeless Veterans** 24 hours, 7 days a week at **1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838)**, or chat online at www.va.gov/homeless/nationalcallcenter.asp.

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