

A Humanitarian Crisis on the Streets of Seattle

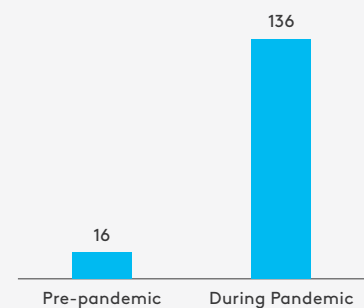
April 2021

Introduction

Seattle and King County have long struggled with supporting the needs of a growing unhoused population. In 2015, the city and county declared a state of emergency, calling for all city residents to have access to shelter. In 2019, King County Executive Dow Constantine and Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan signed an interlocal agreement creating a King County Regional Homelessness Authority to oversee a coordinated and unified response to homelessness. Despite those and other efforts undertaken by local government service providers, the number of people living unsheltered in our community has continued to grow. The crisis has only been made worse by the pandemic.

This report examines available data on the state of the interrelated crises of homelessness, addiction and untreated mental-health issues in our community. This information comes from a variety of sources and focuses on just a few of the many factors contributing to homelessness.

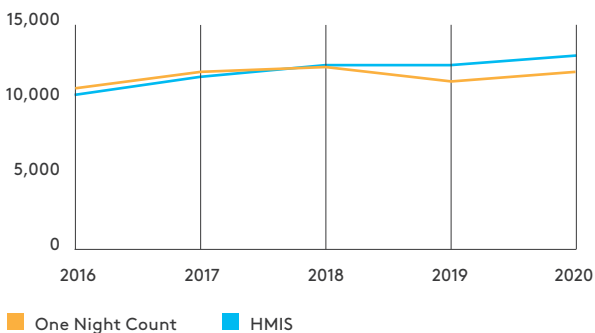
A Drastic Increase in Tents During the Pandemic Metropolitan Improvement District, average daytime tent counts



Source: Metropolitan Improvement District. The MID serves the Belltown, Denny Triangle, Pioneer Square, Retail Core, Waterfront and West Edge neighborhoods of downtown Seattle. Pre-pandemic counts were conducted from January 2019 through January 2020 and counts during the pandemic were conducted from September 2020 through March 2021.

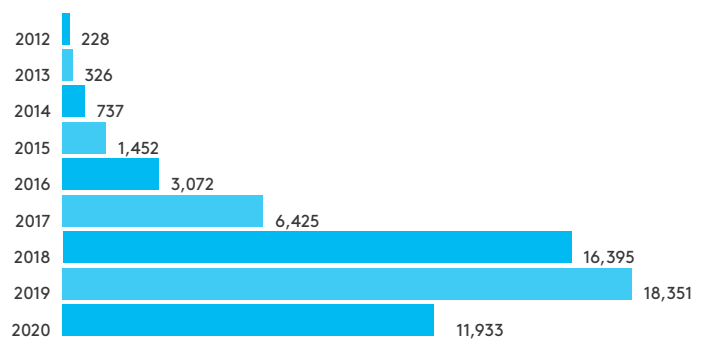
A Growing Issue

Counts of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness One Night Count compared to King County's Homeless Management Information System (for January of each year)



Sources: King County Department of Community and Human Services' Homeless Management Information System and All Home King County. HMIS figures represent those accessing services through King County's coordinated entry program.

Homelessness-related Calls Increased Over the Past Decade Communications made to the city of Seattle mentioning "encampments" or "homeless"



Source: City of Seattle, Office of Financial and Administrative Services

~20,000

households access the King County homeless response system each year.

Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services

~50%

of those counted in the last annual One Night Count were sleeping outside, despite the survey being conducted during the coldest month of the year in Seattle, where the average nighttime temperature is just 36 degrees Fahrenheit.

Source: All Home King County

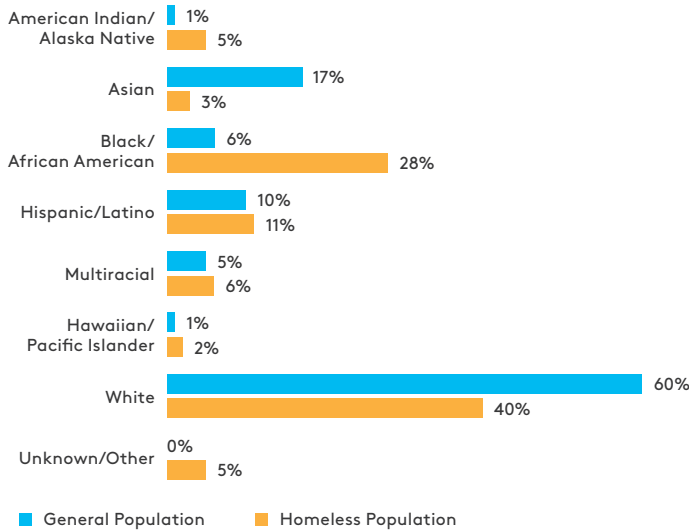
90%

of those living in encampments have been experiencing homelessness for more than a year.

Source: REACH, Public Defender Association

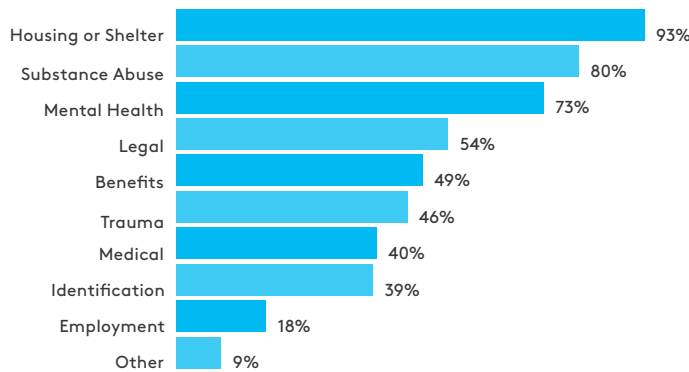
A Population in Crisis

Homelessness Disproportionately Affects People of Color King County general population compared to homeless population



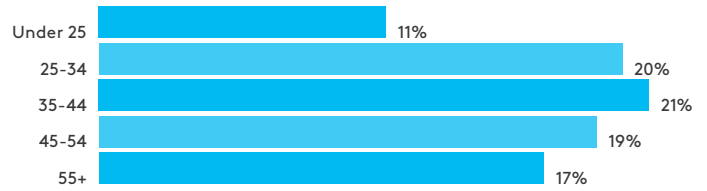
Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services' Homeless Management Information System

Support Services Requested by Those Living in Encampments JustCare program, October 2020-March 2021



Source: REACH and the Public Defender Association. Based on outreach conducted at encampments in Pioneer Square and the International District as well as targeted outreach at Denny Park. This outreach was conducted as part of the CARES Act funded JustCare Program.

More Than Half of Those Experiencing Homelessness Are Under the Age of 45 Age of population experiencing homelessness in King County, November 2020



Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services' Homeless Management Information System

500+
overdose deaths occurred in King County in 2020 and more than one in 10 victims did not have stable housing. Among those experiencing homelessness, substance abuse is a leading cause of death.

Manner of Death Among Those Experiencing Homelessness

Manner of Death	Substance Related? No	Substance Related? Yes
Accident	22	55
Fetal Death	1	0
Homicide	9	0
Natural	50	4
Pending	7	1
Suicide	10	0
Undetermined	10	1

Source: DSA Review of 2020 Death Reports from King County Medical Examiner

DSA is a partner of Compassion Seattle, an alliance of diverse business, nonprofit and community leaders with the mission of making a tangible impact on homelessness. The alliance proposes to do this through a charter amendment requiring the city to take specific, measurable actions to invest in housing and treatment for mental health and substance use disorder.

Learn more:
[compassionseattle.org](https://www.compassionseattle.org)