



For Immediate Release

New Report Shows Rise in Homelessness in Advance of COVID-19 Crisis

Limited Resources Fall Short of Meeting Demand

March 18, 2021, Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) [2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress \(Part 1\)](#) shows that 580,466 people were counted as homeless during the 2020 Point-in-Time count, representing a 2.2% increase over 2019. This marks the fourth consecutive annual increase in homelessness, following sustained reductions between 2010 and 2016.

The count took place in January 2020, in the weeks preceding the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. As such, the findings shed light on a homelessness system that was overburdened and under-resourced long before the COVID-19 pandemic forced economic disruption and housing crises on households nationwide.

Among the most significant increases were those among people experiencing chronic homelessness and people living unsheltered. Chronic homelessness increased by 15% between 2019 and 2020, a marker suggesting rising needs and vulnerabilities among the homeless population. Meanwhile, the report points to a 7% increase among individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, marking the first time there are more individuals (people living without families) living unsheltered than in shelter.

Meanwhile, progress has stalled for two populations that had seen dramatic progress within the last decade: veterans, and people in families. While the increases among each were modest (veterans increased by 0.4% and families increased by 0.1%), the inability to sustain reductions for these populations is troubling, as each has benefited from targeted prioritization of programs and resources for several years.

Throughout the findings, racial inequity remains a persistent theme. African Americans, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders continue to be overrepresented among the homeless population compared to their share of the U.S. population. People identifying as African American accounted for 39 percent of all people experiencing homelessness and 53 percent of people experiencing homelessness as members of families, despite representing only 13 percent of the total U.S. population.

“The 2020 report provides a deeply troubling accounting of homelessness in the United States,” said Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. “These results were tabulated practically on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, and they show a system under-resourced to meet the needs of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness, much less the coming

consequences of the global pandemic and recession. Although the Alliance is encouraged by the historic investments that federal leaders have made in homelessness and housing resources during the pandemic, the numbers make it clear that these investments are tragically overdue. The Alliance calls upon the Biden Administration and federal, state, and local leaders to continue their commitments to funding evidence based best practices for ending homelessness and addressing the nation's affordable housing crisis. The challenges ahead of us absolutely demand it."

About the National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. As a leading voice on the issue of homelessness, the Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions; works collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity; and provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and educate the public and opinion leaders nationwide.

CONTACT:

Tom Murphy

Director of Communications

202-942-8254

tmurphy@naeh.org

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