The University of Tennessee College of Social Work
Office of Research and Public Service

Nate First, LCSW, MA, KnoxHMIS Program Manager
David Patterson, PhD, KnoxHMIS Director/Principal Investigator
Forrest Wentzel, BA, IT Specialist I

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Project number: 21025
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Executive Summary

2020 was, of course, a year like no other, and that was certainly the case for homeless services in Knox County, Tennessee. Many Knox residents were furloughed or lost their jobs,¹ and many of the community’s most housing-vulnerable individuals and families had to make do with less: lower income, fewer services, and restricted access to supports. With these added challenges, one might have expected the numbers experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity to climb. And yet, among KnoxHMIS partner agencies, the total number of clients served fell by 21% in 2020, as compared with the year before. How could this be?

While the reasons for this community-wide drop in clients served would be hard to parse out with certainty, a few core factors are likely relevant. Perhaps foremost among these have been the CARES Act and Centers for Disease Control eviction moratoriums issued since March 2020.² In addition, for a time, many providers were restricted in how many persons they could serve: some shelters had to limit the number of beds per room due to social distancing, while others had fewer in-person staff to deliver services. Likewise, there is some evidence that many who experienced homelessness or housing precarious situations in the early months of the pandemic were hesitant to enter congregate settings due to COVID-related concerns. As such, some potential factors point to reduced need (i.e., clients remaining housed who might otherwise have been evicted), while others may highlight restricted access (i.e., clients who normally would have sought help who were now either hesitant or unable to do so).

National Trends: Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing 2015–2020

Whatever the answers, our Knox community was not alone: a recent report from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office shows that the number of individuals in Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing projects in 2020 dropped by 11% (see above, “National Trends”).³

It is also worth noting that while 2020 had unusually few clients, 2019 had an unusually high client count, which may also be a factor in the drop. See page 9 for a five-year trend.

In 2020, all homeless service project types in Knoxville–Knox County saw a reduction in the number of clients served, but the declines for Street Outreach (-30%) and Services Only (-27%) were the most pronounced. In comparison, CHAMP, Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Housing saw smaller declines (-9%, -5%, and -8%, respectively). Of all subgroup counts, clients new to homelessness saw the greatest drop (-34%). See page 13 and chart immediately below.

2020 in Context: Semi-Annual Trends by Project Type

Each bar represents a count of clients served by project type in half-year increments. 2020 counts are salmon-colored.

Here and throughout, the data included in this report are annual counts unless otherwise noted. Thus, for example, 7,796 is the total number of individuals who received services at some point in the entire year, which is much larger than the total number experiencing homelessness on a single given night. While Point In Time counts come with their own complications, KnoxHMIS’s from 2020 serves as an important comparison: on a single night in January 2020, there were 701 individuals reported to be literally homeless in Knoxville/Knox County, less than one-seventh of the total count confirmed literally homeless across the entire year (4,950), and less than one-tenth of all those served by a KnoxHMIS partner (7,796). Homelessness is an ever-shifting condition: some are homeless for years, others only for a few days.

Beyond those who were literally homeless in 2020 (those staying in shelters or in places not meant for habitation), this report also includes individuals at imminent risk of losing housing, as well as some who, after one or more episodes of homelessness, now receive formal support from KnoxHMIS partners to remain stably housed. All such services are key to our community’s strategic response to reduce the prevalence and negative impact of homelessness.

To access a copy of this 2020 Annual Report with clickable links, along with an archive of prior reports, please visit: https://knoxhmis.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu/resources/
Numbers at a Glance

In 2020...

130 HMIS users at 19 KnoxHMIS Partners served 7,796 persons experiencing homelessness in Knoxville/Knox County, including 664 families with 1,998 members, 5,248 single adults, and 550 unaccompanied youth.

These Knox neighbors collectively had over 15,000 project entries in 74 programs and received over 325,000 units of service (e.g., meals, bed-nights, rental assistance, counseling sessions). For 72% of projects entered, clients left to a better housing situation than when they began, while 17% exited with negative destinations and 11% to destinations equivalent or unknown.

Compared with the prior year, 2020 saw 21% fewer total clients, including 34% fewer new clients and a 12% drop in returning clients (see page 1).

By the end of 2020, KnoxHMIS recorded its 58,641st unique client record, representing over 16 years of service since 2004.
KnoxHMIS Partners & Programs

Since 2004, KnoxHMIS has served as an empirical window into the state of homelessness in our Knox community and, just as much, into the ongoing daily efforts of hundreds of staff and volunteers among our 19 partner agencies. The thousands they serve, and the broader Knox community, have benefited greatly from their efforts.

In 2020, our Knox community delivered homeless service programs of the following types:

**Coordinated Entry (CHAMP)**

The Coordinated Housing Assessment Match Plan (CHAMP), housed in KnoxHMIS since 2018, is our Knox community’s coordinated entry system. CHAMP is not really a traditional “project” so much as a community-wide collaborative effort between homeless service providers and stakeholders. CHAMP aims to make homelessness rare and brief by assessing the vulnerabilities, strengths, and needs of those experiencing a housing crisis, and then matching them to the resources, services, and housing available in Knoxville/Knox County.

**Emergency Shelter**

Emergency shelters provide short-term overnight shelter (“bed-nights”) for people experiencing homelessness.

**Emergency Shelter projects in 2020:**
- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC): ESG Hotel Program
- Catholic Charities: Samaritan Place — Emergency Shelter
- Family Promise of Knoxville
- KARM: Overnight
- McNabb Center: Family Crisis Center — Emergency Shelter
- McNabb Center: Runaway Host Homes
- Salvation Army: Joy Baker Center
- VMC: The Foyer

**Homeless Prevention**

Homeless prevention projects offer services or financial support needed to keep a person in a precarious housing situation from becoming literally homeless.

**Homeless Prevention projects in 2020:**
- CAC: ESG-CV Housing Assistance Program
- McNabb Center: Runaway Prevention
- McNabb Center: Youth LINC Supportive Community Living
- Volunteers of America: SSVF Homeless Prevention
- Volunteers of America: SSVF Rapid Resolution

Learn more at [www.knoxhmis.org](http://www.knoxhmis.org) | September 2021
Permanent Housing

Permanent housing (PH) programs offer permanent, community-based housing so that formerly homeless individuals and families live as stably and independently as possible.

Permanent Housing projects in 2020:
Catholic Charities-Samaritan Place-Permanent Supportive Housing
KCDC: HUD VASH
McNabb Center: Cedar Crossing*
McNabb Center: Pleasantree *
McNabb Center: Ginn Road*
McNabb Center: Maple Grove Apts.*
McNabb Center: Morgan Street*
McNabb Center: New Hope Apartments*
McNabb Center: The Willows*
McNabb Center: Washington Oaks*
Knoxville Leadership Foundation: Flenniken Landing*
McNabb Center: Middlebrook Pike*
VMC: Minvilla Manor*
VMC: Positively Living*

* = Permanent Supportive Housing, which involves case management and other support and requires the client to have a disabiling condition

The Knox community reported 388 Permanent Housing beds on the night of the Housing Inventory Count (January 24, 2020).

Rapid Re-Housing

Rapid re-housing (RRH) programs emphasize housing search and relocation services and short-term and medium-term rental assistance to move homeless persons and families (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing.

Rapid Re-Housing projects in 2020:
CAC: Elizabeth Homes
CAC: ESG-CV Rehousing Program
CAC: Families in Need (FIN)
CAC: Homeward Bound Families In Need Program
CAC: Homeward Bound
Salvation Army: Bootstrap RRH
VMC: THDA Rapid-Rehousing
Volunteers of America: SSVF
Salvation Army: THDA Community Rapid Re-Housing

Services Only

Services Only projects provide stand-alone supports (other than those from coordinated entry or street outreach) to help a person become or remain stably housed. Services might include meals and other basic needs, childcare, employment assistance or case management.

Services Only projects in 2020:
CAC/KCDC: Case Management Program
CAC: Project LIVE
Street Outreach

The goal of Street Outreach projects is to connect with unsheltered homeless people and equip them to access shelter or stable housing, health care, and other critical basic needs.

Street Outreach projects in 2020:
CAC: Knox County CDBG
CAC: REACH (Resources Extended to Assist the Chronically Homeless)
McNabb: PATH
Next Step Initiative: Trenches to Treatment
VMC: Street Outreach
VMC: Street Outreach — Covid

Transitional Housing

Transitional Housing projects provide lodging to homeless individuals and families for up to 24 months, with the goal of facilitating successful placements in permanent housing.

Transitional Housing projects in 2020:
Catholic Charities: Samaritan Place
KARM: Serenity
McNabb Center: Family Crisis Center
McNabb Center: Youth LINC Transitional Living
Salvation Army: Bootstrap Transitional Housing
Salvation Army: Bridge of Hope
Steps House
YWCA: Keys of Hope
Salvation Army: Transitional Housing
Thank you to our community partners for your relentless efforts to serve our most vulnerable neighbors.
**Most Vulnerable Housing Status** (2020) captures the highest degree of housing vulnerability reported for each KnoxHMIS client over the course of the year, from literally homeless to permanently housed.

Thus, if a person stayed on the street or in a shelter for any point during the year, even if they were later housed, they are listed here as "homeless" because this was their highest point of housing vulnerability during the year. Regardless of their most vulnerable status above, **1,958 of these individuals were housed by the end of the year (1,361 stably housed and 597 at risk).**

- **Homeless:** Individuals staying in places not meant for habitation, shelters, or transitional housing. In keeping with HUD guidelines, this count does not include individuals who are "doubled up" or "couch surfing" temporarily with extended family or friends.
- **Chronically homeless:** Persons experiencing homelessness steadily for a total of at least 12 months within the prior three years.
- **Homeless or at risk:** The 1,437 clients in this category were not actively enrolled in KnoxHMIS partner projects in 2020. Each client listed received services targeting homeless or housing precarious populations by one or more partner agency, but their 2020 housing status was not explicitly defined. The most common services rendered were meals and other basic needs.
- **At risk:** Precariously housed clients receiving supports to prevent homelessness.
- **Stably housed:** Individuals with prior experiences of homelessness now permanently housed with supports as needed for housing stability.
Comparison of Total Active Clients 2007–2020
### Prior Living Situation as Reported by Adult Heads of Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place not meant for habitation</td>
<td>1,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter, including voucher-paid hotel stays</td>
<td>1,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with extended family</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with a friend</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client doesn’t know</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe haven</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data not collected</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client in a public housing unit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence situation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with GPD TIP housing subsidy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with HCV voucher (tenant or project based)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care home or foster care group home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim housing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client refused</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host home (non-crisis)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with family, temporary tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized housing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prior Living Situation as Reported by Adults (2020)** is not necessarily the residence where the client was staying just prior to their current episode of homelessness. Rather, it delineates the most recent living situation prior to the individual’s entry into a homeless services project.
Client Demographics 2020

Clients by Race

Other Race: <2% American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Asian, or Other.

Ethnicity: 4% Hispanic/Latino

Race was not collected for 549 individuals.

KnoxHMIS data reflects that 32% of 2020 clients were Black/African American, a disproportionate rate of those experiencing homelessness given that Knox County’s total population is 9% Black/African American.4

Clients by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 and under</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–17</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–55</td>
<td>4,191</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56–61</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62+</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Percentages are of clients who reported their age)

Client Ages by Gender5

Peak age range for males was 57–61
Average age: 57
Standard deviation: 14

Peak age range for females was 57–61
Average age: 57
Standard deviation: 14


5 Clients reporting as transgender or gender non-conforming were fewer than 1% of the total client count.
**Client Disability 2020**

20% of clients reported having a **disability**.

14% of clients reported having a **long-term disability**.

The chart above shows the number of active clients with a reported disability “expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration” (per HUD guidelines). The count includes both adults and children under 18. Since one person may report more than one disability type, the count of disabilities reported is greater than the sum of reporting clients.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Problem</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Medical</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Health Condition</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Alcohol and Drug Abuse</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/Medical</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Diagnosis</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

New and Total Clients 2007–2020

New and Total Clients (2007–2020) parses the total number of active clients each year into those that are new to KnoxHMIS (represented by the light green region – those who first received homeless services in 2020) and returning clients (represented by the pink region – those who received services both in 2020 and in at least one prior year). It is important to note that fluctuations in counts since 2007 are influenced not only by rises and falls in the number of homeless and housing precarious individuals, but also by factors such as improvements in agency data quality, increased utilization of KnoxHMIS, and the involvement of new partner agencies. The early spike between 2008-2010 may reflect in part the economic downturn beginning at the end of 2007. Other likely influences at play are structural economic issues such as trends in housing prices and wages.
Primary Causes of Homelessness 2020

As reported by Head of Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>New Head of Household (%)</th>
<th>All Heads of Household (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot find affordable housing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eviction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of job</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleeing domestic violence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underemployment/low income</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-violent family confrontation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal activity in past</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term medical condition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharge from jail</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe housing/substandard housing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Parent relationship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/safety</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Runaway</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharge from hospital</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility shutoff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Aged out of foster care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage foreclosure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of transportation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of public assistance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Youth specific

(n = 3,301)

Primary Causes of Homelessness (2020) delineates the most significant factor contributing to why households first became homeless in 2020, as reported by the designated head of each household. This variable—self-reported at program intake—is based on the client’s perception. Thus, these responses are likely subject to the social desirability bias, in which individuals tend to respond in ways that will be viewed favorably by others.
29% of KnoxHMIS partner clients reported having health insurance.

Six clients (not listed) had insurance obtained through COBRA.
Subpopulations

Six subgroups (families, youth, veterans, chronically homeless, street homeless, and seniors) have traditionally been included in the KnoxHMIS Annual Report because they are either a national or a local priority initiative. Addressing Street and Senior homelessness are local partner priorities. Ending family, youth, veteran, and chronic homelessness are national initiatives issued by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2017 and renewed in their 2020 strategic plan. A seventh area of focus on race was added in 2020 to respond to local and federal priorities.

This section tracks subpopulation trends over time and in comparison with the total client population. Various factors affect changes in the subpopulations such as the amount of funding designated to services, mandated data reporting and input, and data quality can increase or decrease the number included in a subpopulation.

---

The following summary compares subpopulation counts and rates between 2018 and 2020. As total client counts fluctuated across these years, representation from each population stayed fairly steady.

### Subpopulations of Active Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subpopulation</th>
<th>2018 (n=9,183)</th>
<th>% of Active Clients</th>
<th>2019 (n=9,892)</th>
<th>% of Active Clients</th>
<th>2020 (n=7,796)</th>
<th>% of Active Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals in Families</td>
<td>716 families (2,246 members)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>808 families (2,502 members)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>664 families (1,998 members)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Homeless</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Homeless</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2,415</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1,943</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Primary Causes of Homelessness by Subpopulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NEW</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
<th>Unaccompanied Youth</th>
<th>Chronic</th>
<th>Unsheltered</th>
<th>Seniors</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Find Affordable Housing</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eviction</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Job</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underemployment/low income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleeing Domestic Violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Violent Family Confrontation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Relationship (YOUTH ONLY)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaway (YOUTH ONLY)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the chart above, the darker the cell, the more often the given cause of homelessness (see columns) was reported by members of the subgroup (rows). Responses are self-reported, and thus may be subject to the social desirability bias, in which people may be inclined to respond in ways they believe will be favorably received by others.

Compared with 2019, the top reported causes remained fairly constant, with “Cannot Find Affordable Housing,” “Eviction,” and “Loss of Job” as the three most commonly cited causes for both years.
**Clients by Race 2020**

Roughly two-thirds of KnoxHMIS partner clients in 2020 were white, and roughly one-third were Black/African American (66% and 32%, respectively). As only 1.8% of reporting clients claimed any other race (e.g., American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander), this sample was excluded from the following report.

As noted below, the rate of homelessness for Black/African American individuals in Knox County was more than threefold what their share of the population would suggest (32% of KnoxHMIS clients, compared with 9% of the total population). As individuals and families experiencing homelessness, those who were Black/African American were on average far more likely than their White counterparts to be children, or in families with children. Households were more likely to cite a lack of affordable housing and less likely to cite substance use as their primary cause of homelessness. Among KnoxHMIS clients, those who were Black/African American were more likely to find permanent housing placements once services were sought.

**Comparisons by Race & Household Type**

![Comparison chart showing differences in individuals adults and adult-only households and persons in families (households with at least one child under 18) between Black or African American and White demographics.]

**Top 5 Living Situations at Project Start by Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living situation</th>
<th>Black/African American</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place not meant for habitation</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>1,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying with family</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying with friends</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental by client, with or without subsidy</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Black/African American clients were more likely to be children. 16% of Black/African American HMIS clients (377/2376) were under age 10, compared with 6% of White clients (330/4889).

Comparisons by Race & Exit Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exit destinations from homeless service projects*</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Black/African American</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Exits</td>
<td>4,532</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>2,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exits to Permanent Housing</td>
<td>1,997</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>1,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent exiting to permanent housing</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This count is of project exits, not individuals: one client may have exited multiple projects over the course of a year.
Comparison by Race & Reported Reason for Homelessness

- **Cannot find affordable housing**: 36% Black, 25% White
- **Eviction**: 14% Black, 12% White
- **Feeling Domestic Violence**: 7% Black, 6% White
- **Loss of job**: 9% Black, 7% White
- **Mental Health**: 7% Black, 4% White
- **Non-violent family confrontation**: 6% Black, 4% White
- **Substance abuse**: 9% Black, 4% White
- **Underemployment/low income**: 5% Black, 5% White

Comparison by Race & Gender

- **Black/African American**: 51% Men, 48% Women, 1% Transgender/Nonbinary
- **White**: 55% Men, 44% Women, 1% Transgender/Nonbinary

Learn more at [www.knoxhmis.org](http://www.knoxhmis.org) | September 2021
Homeless Subpopulations 2020

Family Characteristics

Families are households with a minimum of two individuals, at least one of whom must be under age 18.

1,998 individuals in 664 families

Leading reported causes of homelessness:
- 30% Could not find affordable housing
- 19% Evicted
- 12% Fled from domestic violence

Engagement with agencies:
- Returning: 51%
- New: 49%

55% of those in families engaged with family-specific agencies.

Households:
- 86% Women
- 14% Men
- <1% Transgender or nonbinary

Who makes up households?
- 1,034 child dependents under 18
- 664 heads of household
- 300 other adult dependents

Families 5-year comparison:

Individual family members:
- 2016: 782
- 2017: 641
- 2018: 716
- 2019: 808
- 2020: 664

Families:
- 2016: 2,382
- 2017: 1,784
- 2018: 2,246
- 2019: 2,502
- 2020: 1,998
Unaccompanied Youth Characteristics

Unaccompanied Youth (UY) are defined as persons ages 12 through 24 on their own without a parent or guardian (as per federal HEARTH Act and Runaway Homeless Youth Act guidance).

555 / 7,796
(7% of all KnoxHMIS clients served in 2020)

Housing status

- 60% Literally homeless
- 15% Stably housed
- 20% At risk of losing housing
- 4% Indeterminate

Institutional living

- Unaccompanied youth formerly in juvenile detention: 31
- Unaccompanied youth formerly in foster care: 78

Engagement with Agencies

35% of all youth engaged with youth-specific agencies.

Youth-specific programs accessed by youth include CAC's Youth WINS program as well as the following McNabb programs: Runaway Host Homes, Runaway Prevention, Youth LINC Supportive Community Living, and Youth LINC Transitional Living.

Learn more at www.knoxhmis.org | September 2021
Homeless Subpopulations 2020

Unaccompanied Youth Characteristics

More were white and not Hispanic

Race
- 58% White
- 41% Black
- 1% Other

Other Race: American Indian or Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; Other
1% NULL
Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

Ethnicity: 94% Non-Hispanic/Latino; 6% Hispanic/Latino

Most identified as female
- 64% Female
- 36% Male
<1% Transgender or gender non-conforming

Average age 19

LGBTQ+ 17%

Unaccompanied youth 5-year comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homeless Subpopulations 2020

**Veteran Characteristics**

A veteran is defined by KnoxHMIS as any person who self-reports they were enrolled in or actively serve in the United States Armed forces. Veteran status is not dependent on a person’s military discharge status. A dishonorable discharge limits veterans' eligibility for certain Veteran Affairs benefits and programs, but they are still counted as a veteran by KnoxHMIS.

655 / 7,796

(8% of all active KnoxHMIS clients served in 2020)

Housing status

- Literally homeless: 62%
- Stably housed: 28%
- At risk of losing housing: 6%
- Indeterminate: 4%

Most identified as male

- Gender: 90% Male
- 10% Female
- <1% Transgender or nonbinary

Age:

Average: 53

Veterans 5-year comparison

- 2016: 1,053
- 2017: 799
- 2018: 774
- 2019: 739
- 2020: 655

Learn more at www.knoxhmis.org | September 2021
Chronic Homelessness Characteristics

Chronic Homelessness is a characteristic of an individual’s homelessness experience and is defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development as an individual or family who has been living in a place not meant for human habitation, safe haven, or emergency shelter continually for at least a year or has had at least four separate occasions of homelessness in the last three years and is the head of household in a family or the individual has a diagnosable disabling condition.

760 / 7,796
(10% of all active KnoxHMIS clients served in 2020)

Most identified as male

65% Male
35% Female
<1% Transgender or nonbinary

Average Age: 46

Chronic homelessness 5-year comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unsheltered ("Street Homeless") Characteristics

Unsheltered Homelessness (also known as "Street Homelessness") is a characteristic of an individual’s homelessness experience and is defined by KnoxHMIS as any individual living in a place not meant for human habitation such as sleeping in a public space, car, abandoned building, and/or camping outdoors. The housing status for unsheltered individuals may fluctuate over time as they spend nights in shelters, institutional settings, or others and then back to the street.

1,943 / 7,796
(25% of all active KnoxHMIS clients served in 2020)

Leading reported causes of homelessness
- 33% Could not find affordable housing
- 14% Evicted
- 7% Loss of job

Most were white and not Hispanic
- 66% White
- 32% Black
- 2% Other

Other Race: 2% American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander, or Other Multi-racial

Ethnicity: 3% Hispanic/Latino

Engagement with agencies
- Returning: 57%
- New: 43%

Also spent at least one night in shelter: 1,240
Exited to permanent housing by December 31: 405

Street homelessness 5-year comparison

Learn more at www.knoxxmis.org | September 2021
Homeless Subpopulations 2020

**Unsheltered (“Street Homeless”) Characteristics**

**Gender was equally divided**
- 50% Male
- 50% Female
- <1% Transgender or gender non-conforming

**Average length of stay in Street Outreach Project**
- 91 days

**Most were 25–55 years old**
- 5 and under: 6%
- 6–17: 8%
- 18–24: 8%
- 25–56: 61%
- 56–61: 10%
- 62+: 8%
Homeless Subpopulations 2020

Senior Characteristics

Seniors are defined by KnoxHMIS as any person who is equal to or older than 62 years of age.

996 / 7,796
(13% of all active KnoxHMIS clients served in 2020)

Housing status

- Literally homeless: 61%
- Stably housed: 29%
- Indeterminate: 5%
- At risk of losing housing: 4%

“Stably housed” typically refers to those with recent history of homelessness, many are now in permanent supportive housing due to support from community providers. Percentages based on clients with reported housing status. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounded subtotals.

Most identified as male

- 66% Male
- 34% Female
- <1% Transgender or nonbinary

Engagement with Agencies

31% of all seniors engaged with senior-specific agencies.

Senior-Specific Programs included the Knoxville-Knox County’s Community Action Committee (Office on Aging, High Rise Case Management, and Project LIVE), as well as Catholic Charities Samaritan Place (Emergency Shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Transitional Housing).

28% of seniors were veterans.

Seniors 5-year comparison

- 2016: 792
- 2017: 881
- 2018: 995
- 2019: 1,060
- 2020: 996

Learn more at www.knoxxmis.org | September 2021
Additional Resources featuring KnoxHMIS Partner Data

**Community Dashboard on Homelessness**
For more current quarterly trends in Knox community homelessness data, please visit the Knoxville Community Dashboard on Homelessness, an interactive, public-facing website that has homelessness counts, length of stay, time to exit, return to homelessness, housing placement status, point in time counts, bed-utilization rates, and subpopulation data (e.g., youth, families, veterans, and seniors). The Community Dashboard is the fruit of an ongoing collaboration between KnoxHMIS, UT SWORPS, and the City of Knoxville. For those reading a paper copy, please visit: http://knoxhmis.org/dashboard/.

**Knox Housing Help**
A public-facing directory of services provided by community partner agencies for those experiencing homelessness or a housing crisis.

**National Alliance to End Homelessness: State of Homelessness Report 2020**
The *State of Homelessness in America* is a public-facing website that charts progress in ending homelessness in the United States. Features include national, state, and county level data filters. Using the most recently available national data, the website is intended to serve as a reference for policymakers, journalists, advocates, and the public on trends in homelessness, homeless assistance, and at-risk populations at the national and state levels.

**CoC Housing Inventory Count (HIC) Reports**
A community’s inventory of housing that is conducted annually during the last ten days of January. Inventories are available at the national and state level, as well as for each CoC. The reports tally the number of beds and units available on the night designated for the count by program type and include beds dedicated to serve persons who are homeless as well as persons in Permanent Supportive Housing. New for this year, the reports also include data on beds dedicated to serve specific subpopulations.

**CoC Homeless Populations and Subpopulations Reports**
A report that provides counts for sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons by household type and subpopulation, available at the national and state level and for each Continuum of Care.

**National Summary System Performance Measures 2015 – 2020 *interactive***
An interactive report on trends in homeless service system performance, nationally and for communities nationwide, since 2015. The Continuum of Care for Knoxville-Knox County is TN-502.

To access a copy of this 2020 Annual Report with clickable links, along with an archive of prior reports, please visit: https://knoxhmis.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu/resources/