



APRIL 2025

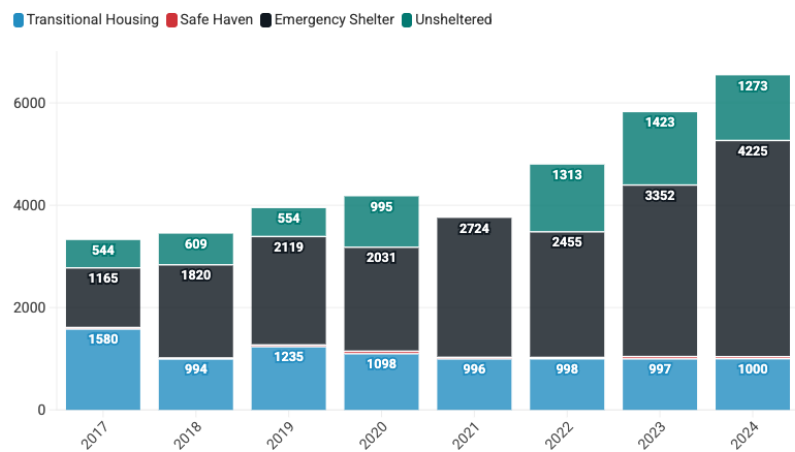
HOUSING FIRST AND WORK FIRST: DISSECTING COLORADO'S HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE AND OUTCOMES

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There are two broad responses to homelessness. **Housing first** views housing as a basic human right and provides it without requiring sobriety or employment, though supportive services are offered. **Work/treatment first** emphasizes self-sufficiency, linking housing access to sobriety and employment. Data on homelessness trends suggest policymakers should consider the allowance of more federal funding to flow towards work/treatment-first approaches such as those practiced in places like San Antonio, El Paso County and developing in Aurora.

Housing First Areas Homelessness Counts

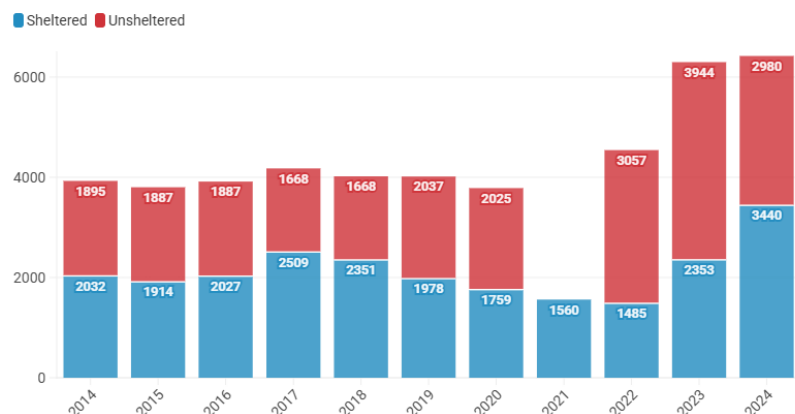
Denver Point In Time Count by Year Subcategory



Source: MDHI PIT



Portland, Gresham/Multnomah County CoC PIT Count by Year



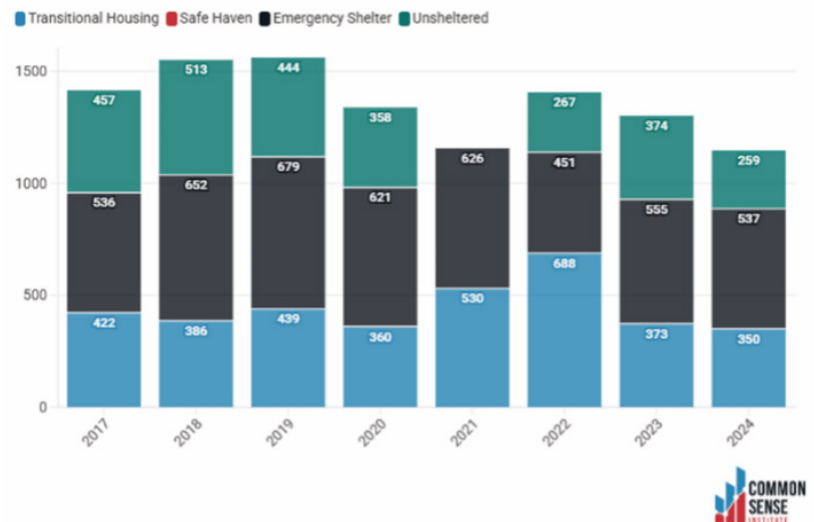
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



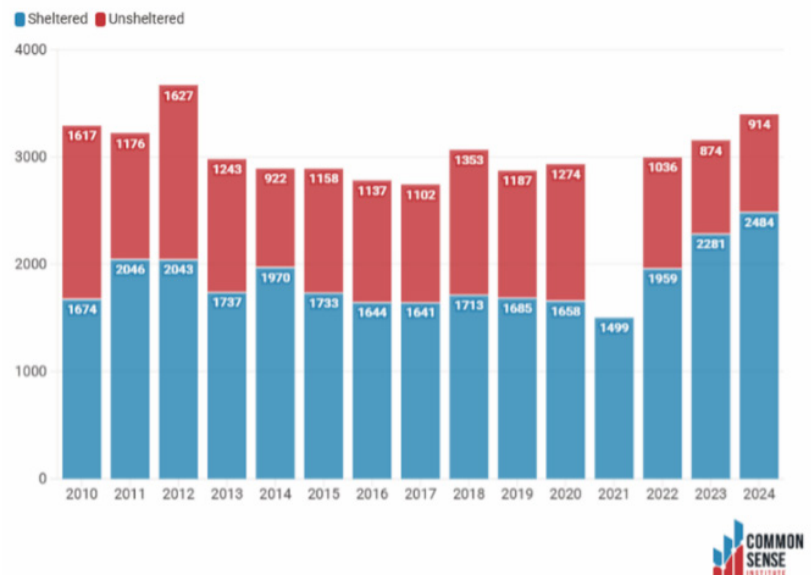
Work/Treatment First Areas Homelessness Counts

Since Haven for Hope opened in 2010, San Antonio, a city focused on work/treatment first approaches, has experienced a 77% reduction in unsheltered homelessness in the downtown area. In the entire San Antonio Continuum-of-Care area, unsheltered homeless fell 43% from 2010 to 2024. Accounting for both sheltered and unsheltered homeless, the total population of unhoused individuals has risen more recently between 2020 and 2024, but in contrast, during the same time period, total Denver metro homelessness increased 63%. El Paso County, another city promoting some work/treatment strategies first saw a 12% decrease in total homelessness in 2024. This change is largely driven by decrease in unsheltered population, which has gone down by 30.7%.

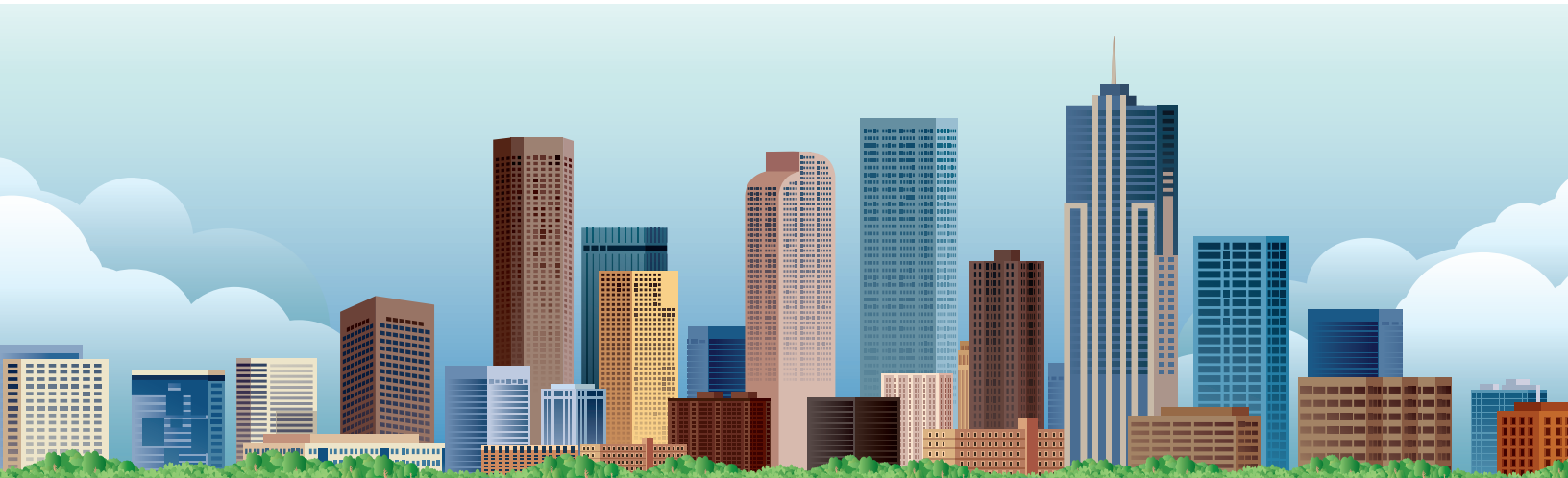
El Paso PIT 2017-2024



San Antonio/Bexar County PIT Count by Year



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All in Mile High: Denver Snapshot

All In Mile High, launched by Mayor Mike Johnston, aims to provide housing, shelter, and services to unhoused individuals by utilizing hotels, micro-communities, and other temporary housing solutions.



Trends - While the city has prioritized addressing homelessness, in 2024, the number of unhoused individuals in the Denver metro area rose by 10% from the previous year. There were 9,977 unhoused individuals counted in 2024, a 74% rise since 2019 and an all-time high.



Numbers - As of December 17, 2024, the All In Mile High Program has served 2,233 individuals experiencing homelessness. Per person, the cost to the city has so far been \$69,413 per person served.



Costs - \$16 million were spent on individuals who continued to be in unsheltered status after exiting the All-In Mile High program.

Policy Considerations

While programs like Denver's All In Mile High reflect the federal government's housing first priority, work/treatment first initiatives struggle to access federal aid due to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) current funding preferences. Policymakers should let HUD offer flexible grants so states and cities can try other approaches. Block grants could support alternatives that emphasize self-sufficiency, sobriety, mental health, and employment.

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