

CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

2021 HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM REPORT



PUBLISHED BY COUNCIL FOR THE HOMELESS

2021 HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM REPORT | CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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2021 HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM REPORT | CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Overview

People often ask us whether homelessness is increasing in our community. Analyzing the numbers from 2021 shows the complexity and nuance involved in answering this question. There are two trends that, at first, may appear to contradict one another. But taken together, they highlight the effect the pandemic and the response to it have had on homelessness. While the number of households experiencing homelessness increased by 1.6% from 2020 to 2021, the number of people new to homelessness fell by 8%.

The good news: The 8% decrease in people new to homelessness shows the effectiveness of federal and state efforts during the pandemic. An influx of federal funding to pay arrears and future rent for households impacted by COVID-19 resulted in \$30,690,312 in rent assistance. That paid for 27,219 months of rent for nearly 4,785 households. This is twice as much rent assistance distributed than the previous year. **It appears that this intervention, in combination with the eviction moratoria, prevented the predicted wave of new homelessness.**

The bad news: The number of people able to self-resolve homelessness without assistance from a program is decreasing. The result: The number of people experiencing homelessness at any given time rose. Contributing factors

“People look at me like I am not even human. Nobody really wants to live like this. But this is all I have right now.”

– Jim, experiencing homelessness in Clark County

included low vacancy rates, rising rents, lower apartment turnover during the pandemic, and a pandemic response that largely focused on keeping people housed rather than helping them exit homelessness. **If not for the 8% decrease in newly homeless households, the overall increase in homelessness would have been considerably larger.**

How is system-wide data collected?

Thirty-three local providers input their homeless services data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Council for the Homeless administers the database and supports the providers in their use of the system. Data is used to evaluate the Homeless Crisis Response System (HCRS) analyzing metrics including individual program outcomes and population based outcomes. Continuum of Care partners consider which interventions are meeting the needs of the community. They analyze which populations are being successfully served and which populations are not. Information is used to

adjust programming and promote cross-sector and cross-cultural collaboration. This system level data also drives the goals and outcomes in the Clark County Homeless Action Plan.

A public dashboard displaying program data is available at <https://www.councilforthehomeless.org/system-dashboard/>. The data is updated monthly by Council for the Homeless (CFTH).

Commitment to Equity

In 2020, the Homeless Crisis Response System report called for an increased focus on assistance to Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) individuals and families. The Council worked closely with BIPOC and partner organizations operated by and for the culturally specific people they serve. This collaboration led to increased awareness among BIPOC community members about available resources. **Forty-four percent of the households that received rent assistance in 2021 were BIPOC.** The forthcoming Council for the Homeless Equity Report will explore additional progress and needs for Homeless Crisis Response System improvements to help BIPOC community members.

Growing Outreach Connections

Notably, near the end of 2021, Clark County saw an increase in shelter capacity and in the numbers of Street Outreach workers

“Thank you for helping my tenant with her rent. When you helped her, you helped me, too.”

– Suzanne, a Clark County landlord

across multiple agencies. Thanks to these new resources, more people living in cars, RVs and encampments are being identified and connected to essential services and housing. This increase in identification is critical to allocating resources to make inroads in solving unsheltered homelessness.

Thank You

Council for the Homeless expresses appreciation to the many partners that contribute to the work of the HCRS. Your dedication, skills and collaborative approach to solving the homeless crisis makes our community stronger.

We also want to recognize the people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in Clark County. Your determination to be safe, live with dignity and secure a permanent home under tremendously difficult circumstances is humbling.

Please read on for analysis of the 2021 Homeless Crisis Response System data organized by population and by type of service.



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Homeless System Numbers | 2021

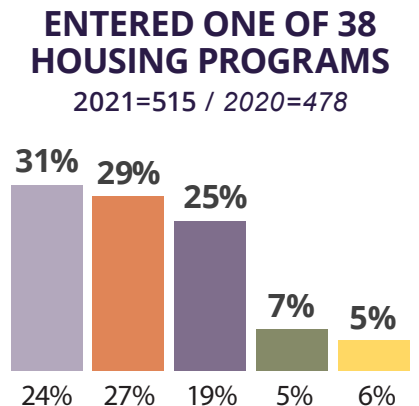
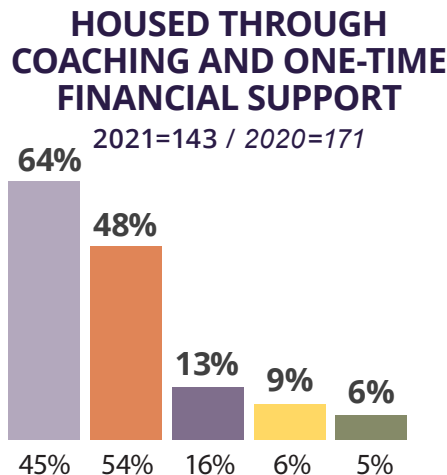
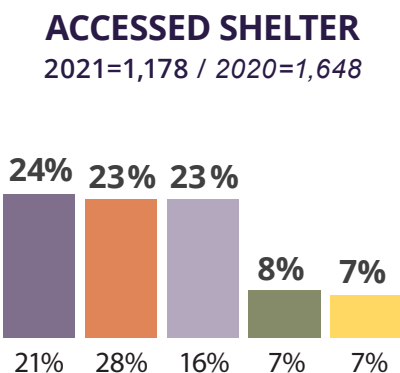
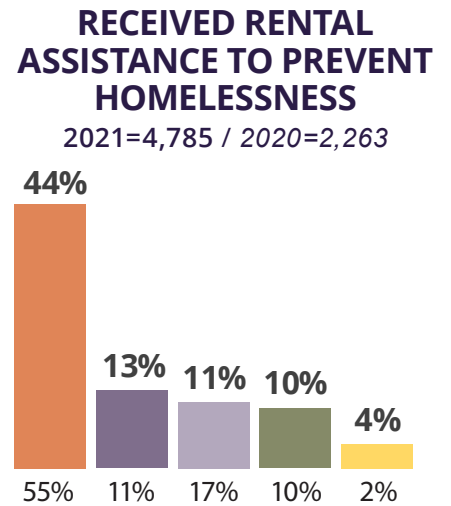
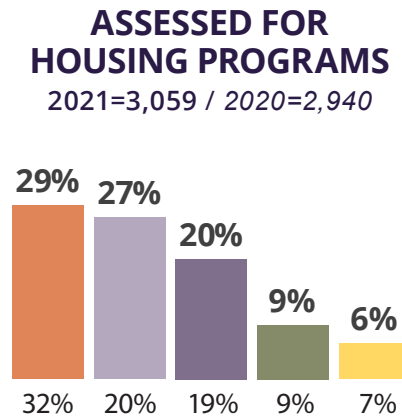
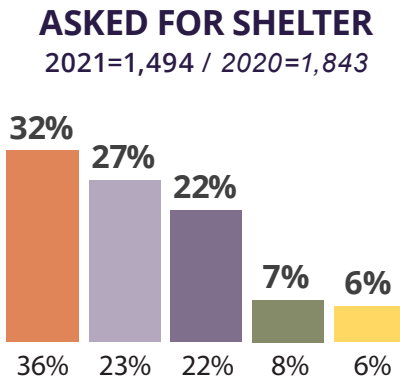
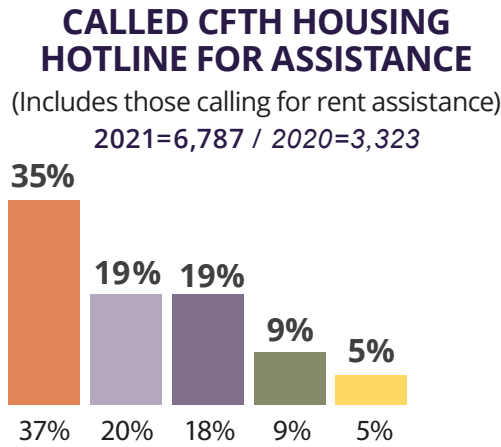
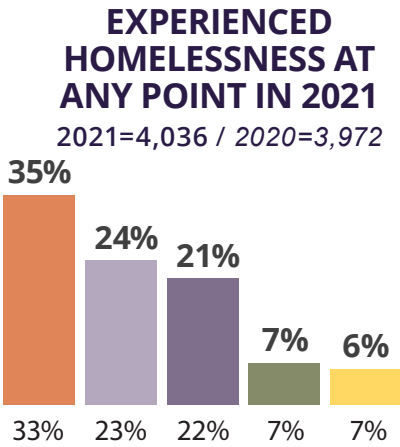
STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN CLARK COUNTY

The data below illustrates the state of homelessness in Clark County, WA, in 2021. The whole numbers (example 4,036) represent households, not individuals. Percentages do not add up to 100% as households often fit in more than one demographic category. *Data from 2020 is italicized and listed below each bar for comparison.*

DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES

- Families
- Seniors
- BIPOC
- Youth (12-24)
- Veterans

BIPOC=Black, Indigenous and People of Color



No single number can tell the whole story. Learn more at [CouncilForTheHomeless.org](https://www.CouncilForTheHomeless.org)
All data from Clark County, WA, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), March 2022

Key Takeaways by Service Type

- Rent Assistance to Prevent Homelessness
- Diversion (coaching and one-time financial assistance)
- Shelter
- Housing Programs

Rent Assistance to Prevent Homelessness

There were 4,785 households who received rental assistance in 2021 to help people keep their housing, more than double the number in 2020. The HCRS emphasized clear and consistent messaging to the community including specific outreach to BIPOC communities, a large segment of the renter population that was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. 44% of the households that received rent assistance in 2021 were BIPOC households.

Diversion (coaching and one-time financial assistance)

During the pandemic, fewer households were assisted through diversion. Diversion is intended to end an individual's or family's homelessness and divert them from requiring longer-term homeless system assistance.

Diversion assistance focuses on households that have an income that will help them sustain a stable living situation. Diversion includes coaching and one-time financial support, often in the form of move-in cost assistance paid directly to the property owner or management company.

Notably, diversion served 374 households in 2019, compared with 171 in 2020 and 143 in 2021. Due to the health and economic hardships caused by COVID-19, people were more likely to stay in their current living situation even if their situation was unstable.

Shelter

COVID-19 protocols significantly reduced shelter capacity in Clark County throughout most of 2021. During the pandemic our community saw a significant decrease in shelter availability because of the need to provide physical distancing to reduce the spread of the virus. We also saw decreased demand for shelter from

Key Takeaways by Service Type (continued from page 6)

people experiencing homelessness due to concerns about COVID-19 safety. In 2021, our community found creative solutions to create more space, and to provide personal protection equipment and shelter alternatives. These included providing motel vouchers for people who tested positive for, or who contracted, COVID-19 while experiencing homelessness.

During an extremely severe weather event in late 2021, Clark County's largest shelter opened its doors to keep people from freezing to death. Moving into 2022, we have the largest-ever shelter capacity. Yet we still have a significant amount of families and individuals sleeping outside or in their cars.

At the end of 2021, we saw the opening of Bertha's Place, which adds to our community 100 year-round beds for single women, the elderly and couples. In addition to Bertha's Place, a supported shelter site was opened. This added an additional 40 noncongregate beds for singles and couples.

Thanks to partnerships with faith-community congregations, the system added 55 to 100 additional beds during the winter with

expanded coverage available seven days per week.

Housing Programs

Due to increased funding as a response to COVID-19, we served more households with our programs. Expanded funding for housing and for homelessness programs continued in 2021. Because of this, we were able to serve 40 additional households in HCRS housing programs. However, the total number of housing placements still only accounts for less than 17% of the total number of households who received housing assessments. We have seen good outcomes in HCRS housing programs.

It is important to note that our community still has a lack of affordable places for people in housing programs to live. Moreover, the same dollar amount of housing program support serves fewer households due to increases in rent. If we were able to provide housing placements to 100% of the people who needed it rather than 17%, we believe we would functionally eliminate homelessness in our community.

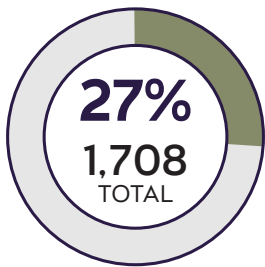
Homeless System Numbers | 2021

2021 DEMOGRAPHICS SUMMARY



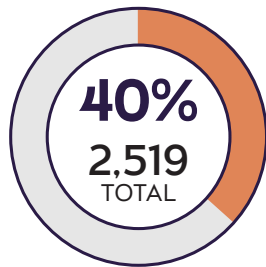
6,285 people from **4,036** households were homeless in Clark County at any given time during 2021. Of those 6,285:

IDENTIFIED AS CHILDREN UNDER 18



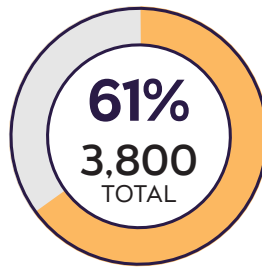
2020: 26%
1,661 TOTAL

IDENTIFIED AS BIPOC



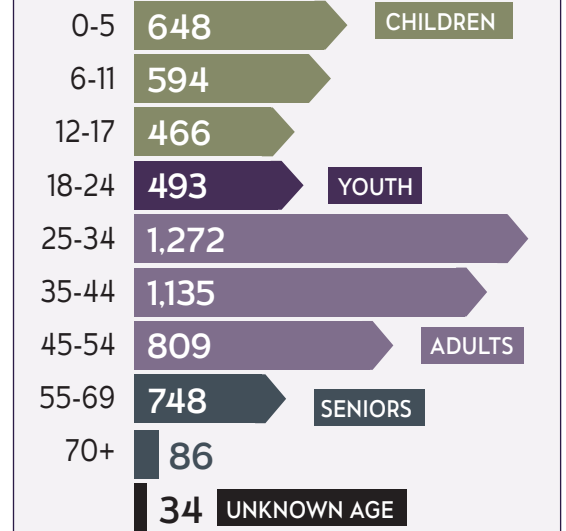
2020: 37%
2,378 TOTAL

IDENTIFIED AS NEWLY HOMELESS



2020: 65%
4,121 TOTAL

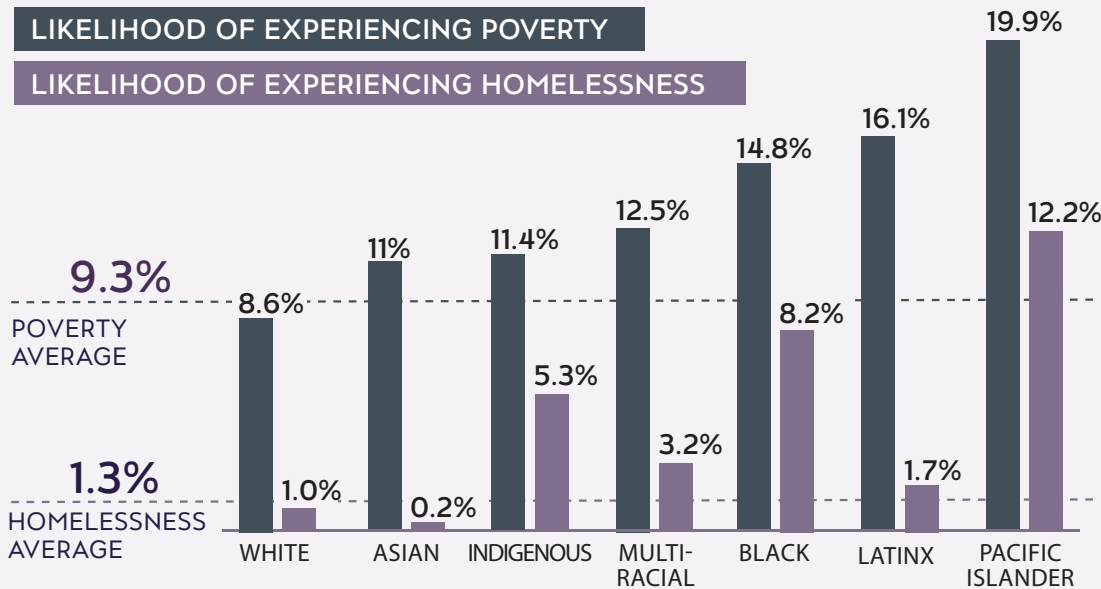
AGES



RACIAL DISPARITIES

LIKELIHOOD OF EXPERIENCING POVERTY

LIKELIHOOD OF EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



People of color are significantly more likely to experience poverty and homelessness in Clark County, Washington.

Numbers above the lines indicate greater vulnerability.

Source: Clark County Population and Poverty Count numbers are from the most-recent 2019 ACS 5-year estimates "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months" table.

Key Takeaways by Population

- Families
- Veterans
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- Youth (ages 12 to 24)
- Seniors

Families

- Fewer families requested emergency shelter in 2021. However, about the same number of families accessed emergency shelter as in 2020. The reduction in requests for this population is likely influenced by the increase in emergency rental assistance to keep people housed, as well as by the hesitancy to seek shelter because of COVID-19 concerns.
- When the Homeless Crisis Response System coordinates with school systems, particularly the Family Community Resource Centers, families benefit significantly. As schools reopened for in-person instruction in fall 2021, these partnerships were key in assisting unsheltered families.

“Getting help to pay our rent was a lifesaver for our family. Our hours were cut at work. Kids were doing school at home. We would not have made it.”

– Samantha, received rent assistance to prevent homelessness in Clark County

Veterans

- Coordinated efforts to house Veterans increased in 2021. Clark County implemented the tools and best practices of Community Solutions’ Built for Zero initiative. Veterans are a focus population for the local Built for Zero Coalition, led by Council for the Homeless with partners across multiple agencies and systems. Partners analyze real-time data and collaborate on solutions for each veteran on a by-name list (BNL). These tools helped the service providers more effectively and efficiently serve veterans experiencing homelessness.
- In addition to the Built for Zero initiative, we also strengthened partnerships with veteran service providers. We found new ways to connect veterans experiencing homelessness to Veterans Affairs and civilian programming and supports. In many communities, veteran and nonveteran programming operate in silos. In our community, we saw an increase in integration of program delivery and coordination of services.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

- BIPOC communities continued to be disproportionately unhoused. Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) experience homelessness at disproportionate rates. If the Homeless Crisis Response System were functioning equitably, BIPOC households would access shelter and housing programs at the same rate (or higher) than the rate they experience homelessness. In 2021, BIPOC households made up 35% of households that experienced homelessness. They comprised 32% of households requesting shelter. However, BIPOC households accounted for

Key Takeaways by Population (continued from page 9)

only 23% of households accessing shelter and 29% of the households placed in a housing program. The upcoming **2021 Racial Equity Report** will look further into these disparities and the potential causes so that the system partners can focus on eliminating them over the coming year.

- On a positive note, the community's work over the past few years to ensure that the Clark County Assessment Tool (C-CAT) does not perpetuate racial disparities has shown success. The evidence: BIPOC households were placed in housing programs at the same rate that they received housing assessments. This shows that the same focus and process can eliminate the disparities outlined above.

“ Sleeping outside was the scariest. I have a job but it was hard to be clean and on time. I am grateful to have a place to live now.”

– Sabrina, newly housed in Clark County

Youth (ages 12 to 24)

- Trends in unaccompanied youth homelessness and housing instability remained similar from 2020 to 2021. There was a decrease in the number of youth asking for and accessing shelter, but an increase in youth who were referred to ongoing assistance through a housing program.
- Youth face unique and broad barriers to resolving homelessness. They are often not equipped to identify resources. Instead, they tend to focus on daily and nightly survival rather than longer-term solutions. Further complicating their lives, systems are not designed to help people under the age of 18. People who are underage cannot sign a lease, have more limited income opportunities, and face discriminatory assumptions about their ability to be responsible and to uphold commitments such as rent payments.

Seniors

- A focus on housing seniors is succeeding. The number of seniors who experienced homelessness decreased slightly in 2021 from 2020. This decrease comes after the senior population trended upward for several years. Also in 2021, housing placements for seniors increased significantly. This reflects that seniors have become a priority population in an effort to shelter and house our most vulnerable citizens.

Clark County, Washington Homeless System Clients by Zip Code of Last Permanent Address



JANUARY 1, 2021 - DECEMBER 31, 2021

The numbers below show the reported permanent residence prior to homelessness for all unduplicated individuals who identified as homeless in our Clark County Homeless Management Information System during 2021 and reported a valid "Zip Code of Permanent Address" to service providers.

City	Zip Code	# of People	% of Clark County Total	% of Overall Total
Amboy	98601	11	0.5%	0.3%
Battle Ground	98604	63	2.7%	2.0%
Brush Prairie	98606	10	0.4%	0.3%
Camas	98607	38	1.6%	1.2%
La Center	98629	12	0.5%	0.4%
Ridgefield	98642	30	1.3%	1.0%
Vancouver	98660	225	9.5%	7.1%
Vancouver	98661	699	29.4%	22.2%
Vancouver	98663	104	4.4%	3.3%
Vancouver	98664	119	5.0%	3.8%
Vancouver	98666	18	0.8%	0.6%
Vancouver	98668	14	0.6%	0.4%
Vancouver	98683	105	4.4%	3.3%
Vancouver	98684	128	5.4%	4.1%
Vancouver	98687	5	0.2%	0.2%
Vancouver (uninc.)	98662	207	8.7%	6.6%
Vancouver (uninc.)	98665	174	7.3%	5.5%
Vancouver (uninc.)	98682	226	9.5%	7.2%
Vancouver (uninc.)	98685	64	2.7%	2.0%
Vancouver (uninc.)	98686	61	2.6%	1.9%
Washougal	98671	78	3.3%	2.5%
Woodland	98674	24	1.0%	0.8%
Yacolt	98675	22	0.9%	0.7%

Reason	# of People	% of People
Cannot Afford Housing	840	26.6%
Domestic Violence	501	15.9%
Household Crisis	447	14.2%
Eviction	164	5.2%
Substance/Alcohol Dependency	127	4.0%

State	# of People	% of Total
Washington	2,643	83.9%
Clark County	2,376	75.4%
Vancouver	2,149	68.2%
Oregon	263	8.3%
Portland	153	4.9%
California	58	1.8%
Texas	23	0.7%
Colorado	9	0.3%
Idaho	10	0.3%
Alaska	9	0.3%
Utah	9	0.3%
Hawaii	8	0.3%
Montana	8	0.3%
Florida	7	0.2%
Arizona	7	0.2%
Georgia	7	0.2%
Nevada	6	0.2%
Ohio	6	0.2%
Oklahoma	5	0.2%
Wisconsin	5	0.2%
Arkansas	4	0.1%
Kansas	4	0.1%
Massachusetts	4	0.1%
New York	4	0.1%
Wyoming	4	0.1%
Kentucky	4	0.1%
Missouri	4	0.1%
Other States	41	1.3%
Overall Total	3,152	

Note: These numbers do not represent all people experiencing homelessness from Jan. 1, 2021 through Dec. 31, 2021 as 31.1% of adults did not have a valid "Zip Code of Last Permanent Residence" recorded in HMIS. These numbers are based on the 68.9% of clients where the data was available and represented a valid US zip code.

Zip codes are not intended for geographical mapping use, so some zip codes are both inside and outside of a given geography. In these cases, they are assigned to whichever geography covers the majority of the zip code.

Clients are asked to provide the primary reason for their homelessness when they access some services. Answering this question is entirely optional. The top five responses for clients experiencing homelessness in 2021 are shown above.

No single number can tell the whole story. Learn more at councilforthehomeless.org

Map of Clark County, WA Homeless System Clients by Zip Code of Last Permanent Address

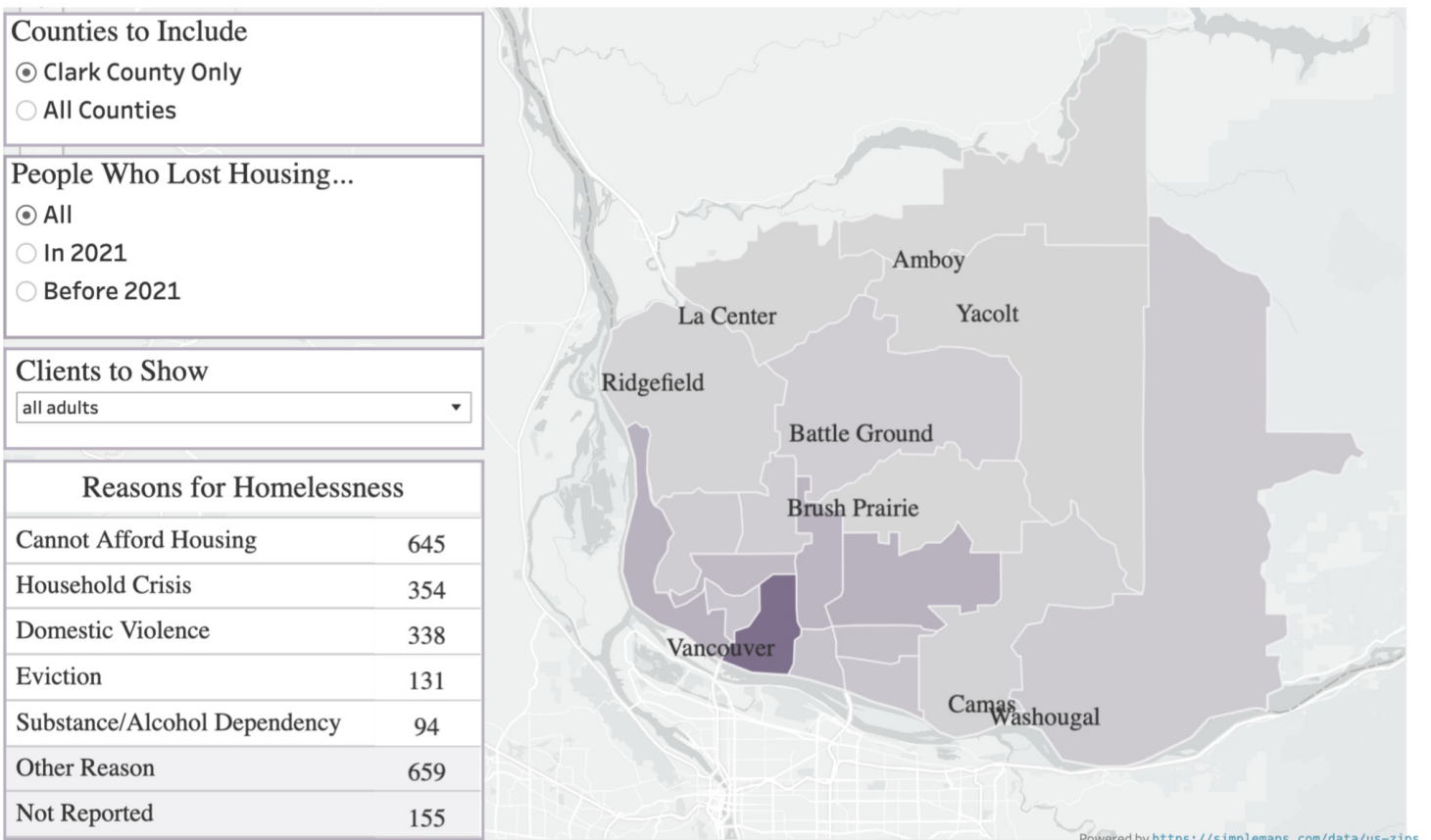
For an interactive zip code map please visit:

www.councilforthehomeless.org/annual-system-data/

2021 Zip Code Interactive Map

People who access services through the homelessness crisis response system in Clark County are given the option to provide their last permanent zip code and the primary reason they lost their housing. This information is entered into HMIS, a secure database, and can be used to identify regional patterns.

This map is shaded from purple to green. Zip codes shown in purple saw more people losing their housing than expected, while zip codes shown in green saw fewer. Select a client population from the menu on the left or hover over a zip code for more information.



All local data from Clark County, WA HMIS



Call to Action

Council for the Homeless recommends the following initiatives:

- **Increase permanent housing options.** Clark County needs more housing that is affordable for those below 50% of the median income, with particular focus on those below 30%. This includes further diversifying housing options, including small homes, du-/tri-/quadplexes, studios, utilization of motels, and alternative dwelling units (ADUs). Increase funding for supportive services that assist people in remaining housed.
- **Increase housing program capacity within the HCRS.** Accomplishing this would close the gap between those in need who are eligible for a housing program, and the number of housing program openings.
- **Expand the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database.** Ensure that all publicly funded programs that support people moving out of homelessness are entering data into HMIS in order to track the overall system outcomes and program successes.
- **Improve homeless youth tracking.** Leverage the Anchor Community Initiative project to create a by-name list and coordinated entry process for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Prioritize finding housing for veterans and people experiencing chronic homelessness.** Support the Built for Zero initiative so that veterans and those who have experienced homelessness the longest are the top two housing priorities.
- **Break down silos between systems of care.** The only way to end homelessness is through intentional collaborations among those organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness. Silos prevent us from helping people with complex social, health, and housing needs.
- **Implement anti-racist practices in the Homeless Crisis Response System.** These include emphasizing relationships with, and investing in, agencies and organizations that are By and For people who identify as BIPOC.

Please join us **July 12, 2022**, for a **webinar** focused on the **2021 System Numbers**.

Register at councilforthehomeless.org/community-education.

Follow progress on these action items by signing up for one or more of our email lists at tinyurl.com/CFTHnews.

Homeless System Numbers | 2021

CLARK COUNTY PARTNERS WORKING TOWARD COMMON GOALS



Collaboration amongst agencies and organizations serving people experiencing homelessness or risk of homelessness in Clark County is essential to helping individuals and families secure the resources and housing they need. The 33 agencies listed below all enter records of their homelessness related services and programs into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The agencies in bold type provide the Transitional Housing Programs, Rapid Re-Housing Programs, and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs accessed by 515 households in 2021.

211info

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church

Bridgeview Resource Center

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

Clark County Veterans Assistance Center

Clark County Volunteer Lawyers

Clark Public Utilities

Columbia River Mental Health Services

Sea Mar – CSNW

Community Voices Are Born

Family Promise of Clark County

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Impact NW

Janus Youth

Lifeline Connections

Living Hope Church

Open House Ministries

Outsiders Inn

Partners In Careers

REACH Community Development

River City Church

Second Step Housing

Share

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

St. Paul Lutheran Church

The Cowlitz Tribe

The Giving Closet

The Noble Foundation

The Salvation Army

Vancouver Housing Authority

XChange Ministries

YWCA of Clark County

All data from Clark County, WA, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), March 2022