

THE COLORADO STATE OF HOMELESSNESS REPORT 2022



INTRODUCTION

This report documents the state of Homelessness in Colorado in 2022. An exact count is difficult to determine due to many factors around homelessness including: reliance on self-reporting and volunteers, count methodology, participation in rural communities, and other factors that vary by count. However, by assessing the tools at hand and viewing comparisons across years, we are able to see a snapshot of current levels of homelessness on one night in 2022.

METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND:

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that states use a Continuum of Care (CoC) model to support nonprofit and government efforts to actively work towards preventing and ending homelessness. A CoC is a planning and resource coordination body that supports the provision of housing and services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. CoCs collect data, bring leaders working on homelessness together, provide guidelines for service delivery, and coordinate resources for direct services like permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, outreach, and shelter.

Each CoC is required to conduct an annual Point in Time (PIT) Count, which attempts to count the number of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on a single night to determine the scope of homelessness, provide key demographic data, generate public awareness, and garner financial support. Although the PIT is a valuable tool that provides a snapshot of homelessness during one night, it is not a perfect tool and is almost certainly an underestimate of the unhoused population. The 2022 point in time count was conducted among Colorado's four CoCs:

- Metro Denver Homeless Initiative - Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, City of Aurora, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties
- Northern Colorado - Larimer and Weld counties
- Pikes Peak - El Paso county
- Balance of State Region - 17 of the 54 counties outside of the front range (fluctuates year-to-year)

For the **sheltered count**, CoCs count all individuals and families living in shelters that provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by

36%



Percentage of the unhoused population that is experiencing chronic homelessness

36%



Decrease in the number of individuals in families with children seeking homelessness services since 2017

130%



Increase in chronic homelessness in CO over the last ten years

THOUGH APPROXIMATIONS VARY, WE ESTIMATE THE TRUE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CO IS BETWEEN 10,000-53,000

10,397



Total number of Coloradans experiencing homelessness according to PIT count

15,374



Students experiencing homelessness, doubled-up, or unstably housed in the 2020-2021 school year

32,233



People who accessed homelessness services according to HMIS data

53,000



Individuals without stable housing covered by Medicaid in 2019

charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs). The **unsheltered count** includes those with a primary nighttime residence that is not designed for humans to sleep, including a car, park, bus or train station, camping ground, or abandoned building. Every odd year, CoC's are required to conduct both unsheltered and sheltered counts. Even years only require a sheltered count, but CoCs often opt to do both. Due to the pandemic, CoCs that conducted an unsheltered count in 2020 were able to opt out of the 2021 count, and only the Balance of State region conducted an unsheltered count in 2021. The Balance of State region did not do an unsheltered count in 2022, so HUD carries over the figure from the previous year.

ABOUT THE POINT IN TIME COUNT

In 2022, Colorado's four CoCs conducted a Point-in-Time (PIT) Count on Monday, January 24th (24-hour period). The PIT count has two major goals: conducting an unduplicated count of individuals and families meeting the HUD definition of homelessness, and capturing information about demographic characteristics, including disabling conditions and subpopulations within the community.

PIT counts are required to be conducted at least biennially by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition of applying for HUD homeless assistance funds. In January 2020, HUD named Larimer and Weld Counties as a fourth CoC, Northern CO, in the state of Colorado. These counties were previously included in the Balance of State region.

PIT counts are important because they are the only count conducted nationally each year, they provide data to quantify the scope of homelessness on one night, and they help national, state, and local policymakers track progress towards the goal of ending homelessness. Ultimately, PIT data are used to help determine federal funding that goes toward resolving homelessness. In addition, it helps identify trends and service needs, and allows for volunteers to connect with the homeless community and generate awareness.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PIT COUNT

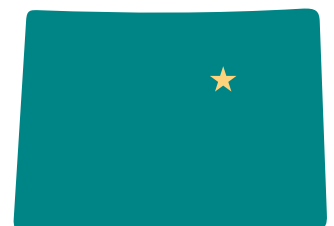
It is important to recognize that despite its importance, Point in Time counts also have their limitations and should not be the only metric used to understand the population of people experiencing homelessness.

Due to the transient nature of the population and the large geographic areas that these surveys cover, it is extremely difficult to identify and count all individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Comparisons over time are also tricky due to changes in methodology, definitions, volunteer support, and weather conditions each year. In addition, PIT counts also rely on self-reported data. Individuals may be unwilling to disclose certain information, especially disabling conditions or health factors that carry stigma. Lastly, COVID has caused additional unforeseen challenges for people experiencing homelessness and surveying this population. For these reasons, CoC leadership recommends caution in interpreting PIT data over time, and note that the counts should be considered an underrepresentation of homelessness across the state.

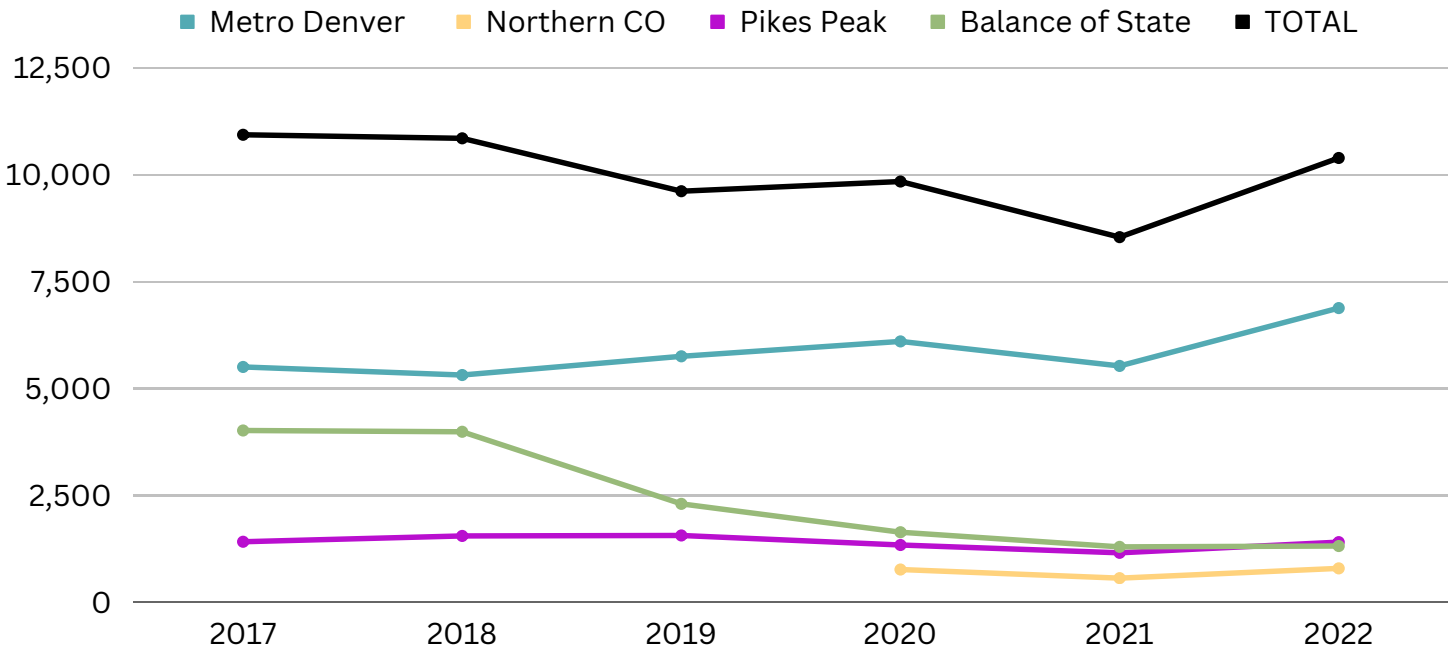
BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides snapshot of homelessness and demographics • Identifies trends and service needs • Opportunity for community volunteers to connect with unhoused community • Community awareness through media exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals, couch surfing, motels, and jails are not included • Volunteer participation varies annually • Weather in January can alter count drastically • Location/landscape/services play a large role in count • Community/media takes numbers at face value

COLORADO

- Chronic and unsheltered homelessness remain high across Colorado.
- From 2012 to 2022, chronic homelessness in CO increased 130% (1,612 to 3,703).
- In 2022, 66.2% of Colorado's homeless population was concentrated in the Denver seven-county metro region.



TOTAL HOMELESSNESS IN COLORADO (FROM POINT IN TIME COUNTS)



DENVER 7-COUNTY METRO AREA

- From 2020 to 2022, unsheltered homelessness in the Denver 7-county metro area increased from 1,561 to 2,078.
- Overall homelessness in the Denver 7-county metro area increased by 12.8% (6,104 to 6,884) between 2020 and 2022.
- 2,455 people identified as newly homeless in 2022, up from 1,326 in 2020. This is an 85% increase over the two year period.

PIKES PEAK

- 1 in 5 people experiencing homelessness in the region was under the age of 18.
- 28% of the unhoused population in the Pikes Peak CoC was experiencing chronic homelessness.
- White people make up 83% of the population, but only accounted for 64% of people experiencing homelessness.

BALANCE OF STATE

- 13% of people experiencing homelessness in the region were fleeing domestic violence.
- 66% of adults reported at least one disabling condition.
- 18% of adults met the definition of chronically homeless.

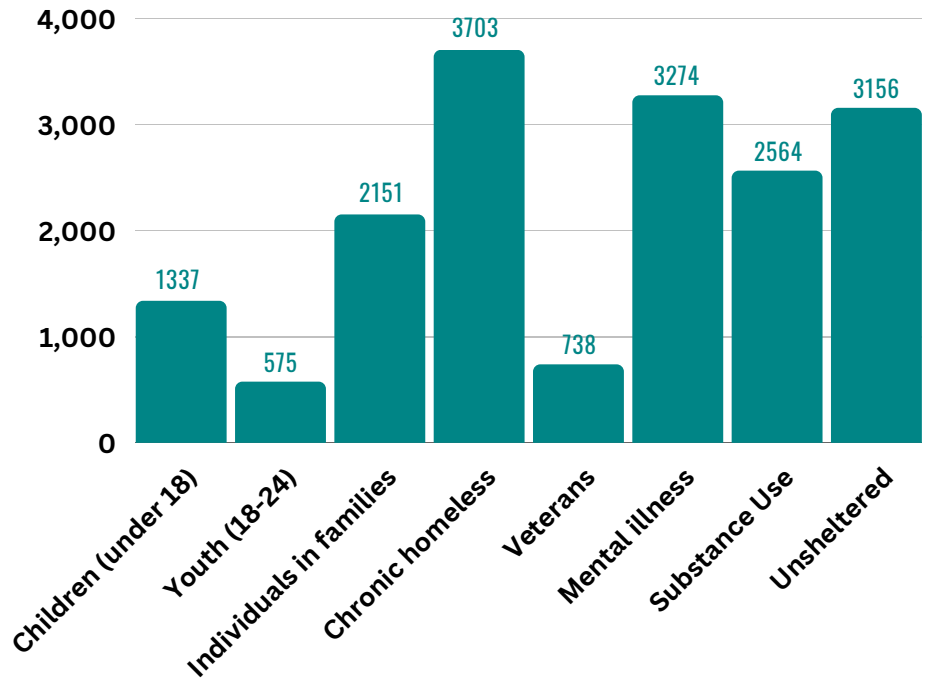
NORTHERN COLORADO

- This CoC was formalized in January 2020.
- 35.7% of people experiencing homelessness were unsheltered.
- White people make up 91% of the population of Larimer and Weld counties, but accounted for only 80% of the unhoused population.

CoC	Children (<18)	Youth (18-24)	Individuals in families	Chronic Homeless	Veterans	Mental Illness	Substance Abuse	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Total
Metro Denver	797	337	1246	2573	432	2524	1835	2078	4806	6884
Northern Colorado	100	37	171	249	54	174	170	283	509	792
Pikes Peak	283	110	464	396	148	364	199	267	1139	1406
Balance of State	157	91	270	485	104	212	360	528	787	1315
TOTAL	1337	575	2151	3703	738	3274	2564	3156	7241	10397

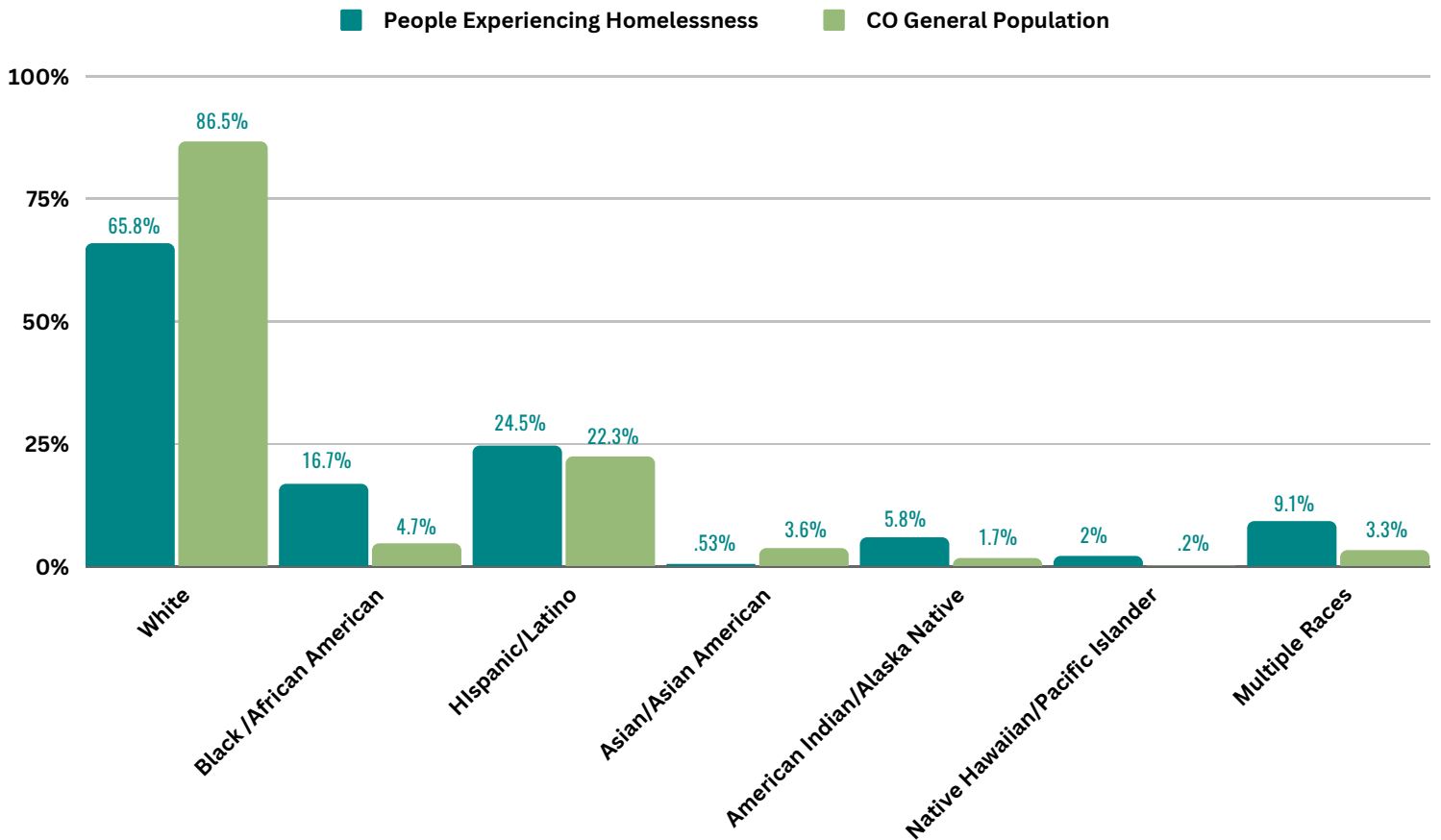
SUBPOPULATIONS

- Racial minorities were overrepresented in the unhoused population.
- About 30.4% of Coloradans experiencing homelessness were unsheltered.
- Between 2020 and 2022, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness dropped from 1,044 to 738 (down 29.3%).
- The number of individuals with severe mental illness increased from 2,047 in 2017 to 3,274 in 2022.
- The number of people experiencing homelessness with substance use issues has increased from 1,740 in 2017 to 2,564 in 2022.



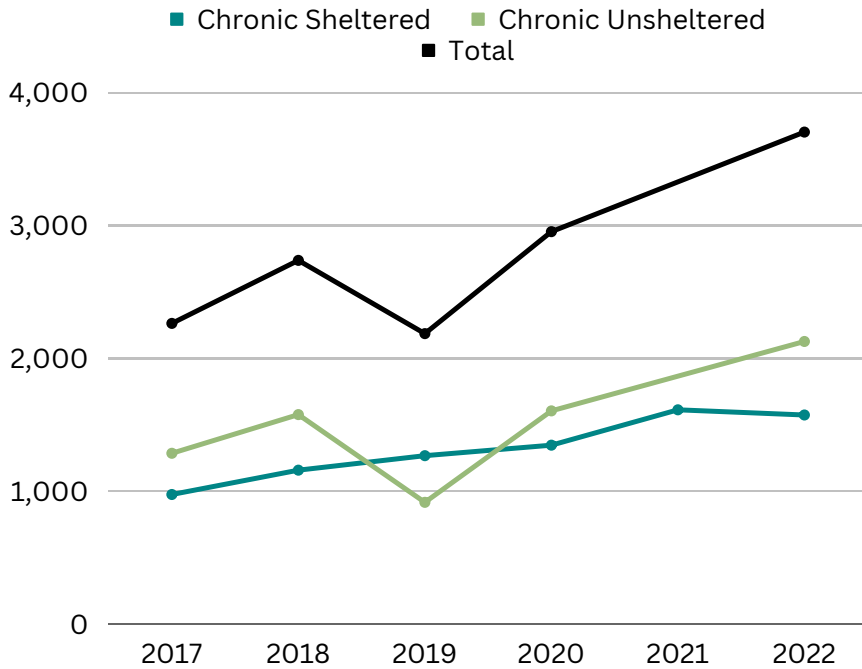
*These numbers represent various subgroups and do not constitute parts of a whole.

RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

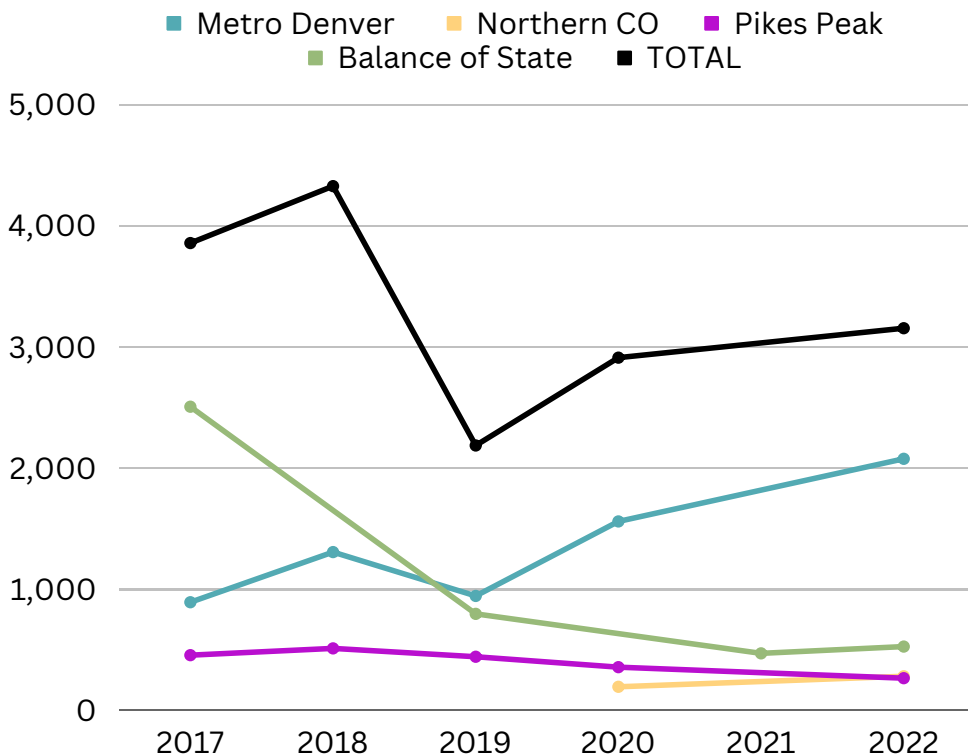
Chronic homelessness describes people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year, or in repeated instances adding up to a year, while living with a disabling condition such as a physical disability or mental illness.



- Chronic homelessness is steadily rising across the state
- Roughly 35.6% of the unhoused population is experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Not all CoCs collect this data, but 66% of people in the Balance of State region reported a disabling condition.
- In 2022, most people experiencing chronic homelessness were unsheltered.
- From 2019 to 2022, the number of chronically homeless individuals in the Denver 7-county metro region increased from 1,158 to 2,573.

UNSHELTERED COUNT

HUD considers individuals and families sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g., abandoned buildings, train stations, or camping grounds) as “unsheltered” homeless.



- Due to concerns with the pandemic, only the Balance of State region held an unsheltered count in 2021.
- The Balance of State region conducts full unsheltered and sheltered counts in odd years only. In even years, they only do a sheltered count.
- From 2020 to 2022, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the Denver 7-county metro area rose from 1,561 to 2,078. This represents a 33% increase.
- In just Denver county, unsheltered homelessness rose 32% (996 to 1,313 individuals) between 2020-2022.

OTHER METRICS

In addition to the PIT count, other estimates and observations help inform our understanding of the population of people experiencing homelessness. For example, the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program collects information on students experiencing homelessness through the Department of Education. In the 2020–2021 school year, they identified 15,374 students that met their definition of homelessness. This Department of Education number, even without accounting for family members of students, is much larger than the Point in Time Count's total number of Coloradans experiencing homelessness.

Another metric that the State uses to estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness, which also demonstrates the undercount of the PIT, is the number of people who use Medicaid for health insurance purposes and report homelessness and housing instability. Data from 2019 show that over 53,000 individuals without stable housing were covered by Colorado Medicaid, over 5 times the number that the 2019 PIT count identified (9,619).²

Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) are local information technology systems used by CoCs to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to people experiencing homelessness. Between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021, the HMIS showed 32,233 individuals accessed services related to homelessness in Colorado. According to Metro Denver Homeless Initiative Executive Director Jamie Rife, "on a given night we might find about 6,000 people experiencing homelessness like we did in 2020. What we see over the course of a year is about five times more people experiencing homelessness."³

CoC	PIT COUNT	DEPT OF ED
MDHI	6,884	8,240
Northern CO	792	2,850
Pikes Peak	1,406	1,048
Balance of State	1,315	2,334

Similarly, although the Balance of State CoC saw a large decline in the number of unhoused individuals, leaders from the region advise to take this trend with a grain of salt. They add that the decline is largely due to methodological issues tied to the pandemic, and ongoing reductions in volunteer support, staff availability, and shelter capacity. It is more likely that the number of people experiencing homelessness is on the rise throughout the region.

Overall, the Coalition estimates that the true number of people experiencing homelessness falls somewhere between 10,397 (as identified in the Point in Time count) and 53,000 (the number of individuals without stable housing covered by Medicaid).

REFERENCES

The information in this report comes from Point in Time data from the four Continuums of Care, HUD reports, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education program.

¹ https://www.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/homeless_data

² https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/doh_ahttf_presentation_9-21-21.pdf

³ <https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/report-finds-uptick-in-newly-homeless/73-97ed6e34-65f1-4bf6-b276-a3884acc98e0>