

City of Boston

42nd Annual Homeless Census

Mayor's Office of Housing

BOSTON - June 9, 2022 - Today Mayor Michelle Wu announced the results of the 42nd annual homeless census. On the night of February 23, Mayor Wu led a group of volunteers, including City and federal officials, homeless services providers, and public health and safety first responders, in conducting the City of Boston's 42nd annual unsheltered [homeless street count](#). During the annual Census, the City of Boston collects data on individuals who are spending the night unsheltered on the street, and individuals and families staying in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or domestic violence shelter programs. This point-in-time count is a national requirement for cities who are receiving funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

This year's census required logistical modifications to maintain the health and safety of both volunteers and unsheltered Bostonians, and was delayed one month from the last week in January to the last week in February due to a winter surge in COVID-19 cases. The protocol for conducting this year's survey followed the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Boston Public Health Commission guidance: teams were reduced in size; persons from separate households did not share vehicles while traveling to assigned survey locations; and all census takers wore masks. Due to these restrictions, much of this year's census was conducted by observation and data collection rather than interviews.

City of Boston 2022 Homeless Census Summary Data

	2021 ¹		2022		% Change	
Household Type						
Single Adults	Individuals		Individuals		Individuals	
Street Count	170		119		-30.00%	
Emergency Shelter	1,216		1,121		-7.81%	
Transitional Housing	202		238		17.82%	
Safe Haven ²	71		67		-5.63%	
Subtotal: Single Adults	1,659		1,545		-6.87%	
Families	Persons in Families	Number of Families	Persons in Families	Number of Families	Persons in Families	Number of Families
Emergency Shelter	2,798	843	2,841	929	1.54%	10.20%
Hotels/Motels	0	0	0	0	NA	NA
Transitional Housing	91	36	53	26	-41.76%	-27.78%
Subtotal: Families	2,889	879	2,894	955	0.17%	8.65%
Total	4,548		4,439		-2.40%	

City of Boston 2022 Homeless Census Subpopulation Data

The following tables report on specific subpopulations, all of which are included in the “Homeless Census Summary Data” table above.

	2021	2022	% Change
Subpopulation Type			
Persons in domestic violence (DV) programs	212	193	-8.96%
Unaccompanied youth (up to age 24)	84	87	3.57%
Veterans	213	180	-15.49%

¹ Prior to 2022, MOH has reported domestic violence (DV) programs separately from individual or family households. MOH is now reporting individual and family household numbers with anyone served by DV programs included in the category of their household type (individual vs. family), and separately highlighting program usage. For this census report, 2021 individual and family household numbers also include anyone served by DV programs under the appropriate household type (individual vs. family) for comparative purposes. Utilization of DV programs is highlighted in the subpopulation table below.

² Prior to 2022, MOH has included “Safe Haven” in Emergency Shelter numbers. Here, a Safe Haven refers to a model of temporary supportive housing for homeless individual adults who are veterans. For this census report, Safe Haven has also been separated out for 2021 for comparative purposes.

Key Findings by Populations

Single Adults

- Overall, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Boston on the night of the census decreased by 2.4 percent, from 1,659 individuals in 2021 to 1,545 individuals in 2022. This reduction builds on a decrease of 24.7 percent from 2020 to 2021, which was due in part to individuals becoming more reluctant to enter shelter during the pandemic. It also reflects continuing successful efforts in housing vulnerable homeless and at-risk individuals or diverting them from emergency shelter to safe alternatives whenever possible.
- The number of unsheltered persons staying on the street on the night of the census decreased by 30 percent, or 51 individuals, from 170 individuals in 2021 to 119 individuals in 2022. After two years of increased unsheltered homelessness, likely due at least in part to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's street count is slightly lower than the pre-pandemic total of 121 in 2019.

Two targeted initiatives contributed to this reduction in unsheltered homelessness:

- In July 2021, the Mayor's Office of Housing, Mayor's Office of Recovery Services and city and community agencies launched a **Street-to-Home (S2H) Initiative** focused on placing persons experiencing long-term unsheltered homelessness in permanent housing with wrap-around services. Participants were identified from a city-wide list of unsheltered individuals with a particular focus on the Mass Cass area. By the night of the unsheltered count in late February, 150 individuals had been housed.
- In November 2021, Mayor Wu named a special advisor to elevate efforts to address the growing humanitarian crisis in the Mass Ave and Melnea Cass area of Boston, and the abutting neighborhoods. Leading with a public health approach, the Mayor's Office of Recovery Services, Boston Public Health Commission Homeless Services Bureau and other city and community agencies went tent to tent to assess and assist persons seeking alternatives to unsafe, unsanitary and dangerous conditions with the onset of winter weather. With a January deadline for the encampment closure, extensive efforts by city and community agencies resulted in **154 individuals** being referred to low-threshold beds at 6 sites funded by City and State agencies that provide shelter and ongoing support for individuals to stabilize medically, access substance use treatment and pursue potential housing pathways.

The Street-to-Home Initiative and long-term treatment and housing placement efforts at the 6 low-threshold sites are on-going.

- The number of individuals in emergency shelter on the night of the census decreased by 7.81 percent, from 1,216 individuals in 2021 to 1,121 individuals in 2022.
- The number of individuals staying in transitional housing increased by 17.82 percent, or 36 people, from 202 individuals in 2021 to 238 individuals in 2022.
- The number of individuals in Safe Havens decreased by 4 people, from 71 in 2021 to 67 in 2022, a decrease of 5.63 percent. Here, a Safe Haven refers to a model of temporary supportive housing for homeless individual adults who are veterans. Prior to 2022, MOH has included “Safe Haven” in Emergency Shelter numbers. For this census report, Safe Haven has also been separated out for 2021 for comparative purposes.

Families

- For the fourth consecutive year, there were no homeless families staying in Boston hotels or motels on the night of the census.
- There were no unsheltered families on the streets of Boston on the night of the census, as has been true for more than the past decade.
- The total number of homeless persons in families – homeless children and adults in all family emergency shelters and transitional housing – increased by 5 people from 2021 to 2022, an 0.17 percent increase from 2,889 to 2,894 people.
- The total number of homeless family households increased by 76 households, from 879 households in 2021 to 955 households in 2022.
- The number of persons in families in emergency shelter increased by 1.54 percent, from 2,798 to 2,841. The number of family households in emergency shelter increased by 10.20 percent, from 843 households to 929 households.
- The number of persons in families in transitional housing decreased by 41.76 percent, from 91 in 2021 to 53 in 2022. The number of family households in transitional housing programs decreased by 27.78 percent, from 36 families in 2021 to 26 families in 2022.

Subpopulations

- The number of homeless persons in domestic violence (DV) programs decreased by 8.96 percent, from 212 in 2021 to 193 in 2022.
- The number of unaccompanied youth (up to age 24) experiencing homelessness on the night of the census increased by 3 people, from 84 to 87, a 3.57 percent increase.
- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness decreased by 15.49 percent, from 213 veterans in 2021 to 180 veterans in 2022.