



coalition
for the
homeless

June 2025

STATE OF THE HOMELESS 2025

Nowhere to Go



Photo by Seze Devres

Image description: A parent and their child standing side by side in an urban park setting. On the left, the child wears a light grey hoodie, while the parent on the right wears a grey "NEW YORK" sweatshirt. Bare trees and apartment buildings are visible in the background.

STATE OF THE HOMELESS 2025

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Image description: A person in a black puffy jacket over a dark sweater stands against a stone wall. They have gray hair and wear a beaded necklace. Their expression is pleasant.



Image description: A white blanket covers a person lying on cardboard against a wall with red and grey graffiti. Various discarded items including food packaging are scattered nearby on the sidewalk.



Image description: Two children in winter jackets standing together in an urban park. One child has braided hair with a serious expression, while the other has short hair, is smiling, and has an arm around their companion's shoulder.



Image description: A person with gray beard, wearing glasses, and a black winter jacket over a green shirt. They have a friendly expression and are walking through a corridor.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With dramatic political developments dominating so much of the public discourse in 2024, sound bites and attention-grabbing headlines overshadowed the reality of homelessness in NYC – a year of ***increases without meaningful improvements***. Such noise included Mayor Adams scapegoating asylum seekers and demonizing those dealing with serious mental illness to provide justification for increases in encampment sweeps, increases in involuntary removals of individuals from streets and subways, and increases in the number of asylum seekers and other new arrivals (“new arrivals”) subjected to shelter time limits. Similarly, Governor Hochul used incidents in the subway system to increase the number of national guard and law enforcement-led outreach teams patrolling the subways. But such efforts failed to result in any meaningful change.

In fact, homelessness in New York City has been growing. **In calendar year 2024, the number of New Yorkers in shelters (excluding new arrivals) increased by roughly 12 percent**. This worsening crisis has been largely ignored by Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul.

Mayor Adams has frequently touted increases in the number of households exiting shelter. Certainly, the Department of Social Services (“DSS”) deserves credit for a **24 percent increase in the total number of exits (reflecting 18,629 households) from Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) shelters, including a 22 percent increase in the use of CityFHEPS and other subsidized housing**. However, the continued growth in the shelter census *despite* the increased exits confirms that these efforts alone are not meaningful enough to outweigh the number of longer-term New Yorkers who are falling into homelessness and entering the shelter system.

The fact remains that there simply is not enough housing in the city that is affordable to homeless and extremely low-income (“ELI”)¹ New Yorkers. This reality is illustrated by the **0.39 percent vacancy rate for the lowest rent apartments, and by the fact that, in 2024, only 2,063 units of newly constructed rental housing were completed that were affordable to the city’s over 820,000 ELI households**. This is why building from the bottom up is essential if we are to end continued mass homelessness.

Mayor Adams’ and Governor Hochul’s approaches to homeless individuals who sleep unsheltered in public spaces has also failed to address the underlying problems. The Mayor celebrated increases in the removal of unhoused individuals from public spaces (involuntarily or through encampment sweeps), without acknowledging that such efforts only resulted in an appalling **3 percent (or 114) of removed individuals during the first nine months of 2024 being connected to permanent housing**. This means most removed people returned to the streets and subways at a time when there were approximately 4,000 vacant supportive housing units in the city.

¹ ELI households are those making up to 30 percent of the Area Median Income (“AMI”) which in 2024 was up to \$32,650 for a single adult or up to \$41,950 for a family of 3.

Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul squandered a unique opportunity to build on the City's and State's past success of effectively eliminating chronic homelessness among veterans. Instead of utilizing that same, proven, model of providing permanent supportive housing and mental health care services for the thousands of unsheltered individuals currently in need of such, they simply doubled-down on approaches aimed at simply removing people in need from public sight. And so the revolving door between shelters, hospitals, jails, and the streets sadly continues.

The data show that Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul have failed to achieve the outcomes that New Yorkers want. And unfortunately, the current political reality and threats to Federal funding and critical programs and services mean that homeless, formerly homeless, and ELI New Yorkers are now at even greater risk. It is therefore even more imperative that the next mayor and Governor Hochul abandon the rhetoric and failed policies that have contributed to *increases without meaningful improvements* and instead invest in increasing housing affordable for ELI and homeless households and ensuring that unsheltered individuals with mental health needs have access to permanent supportive housing and voluntary mental health care and other services.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. FIVE YEARS OF COMPOUNDING CRISES

Over the past five years, New York City’s housing and homelessness crisis has been complicated by a series of factors that have significantly impacted the shelter census, government policies, and almost every aspect of the pre-existing systems in place to address it.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant, albeit temporary and artificial, decline in the NYC shelter census.² But when pandemic-era eviction protections expired in 2022, the number of people sleeping in shelters again began to climb.³ This increase in homelessness was almost immediately overshadowed by the rapid and dramatic surge in the number of new arrivals immigrating to New York City and in need of temporary shelter and services.

As a result of **both** the increase in local homelessness and the influx of new arrivals, **the total number of people sleeping each night in NYC shelters grew by 142 percent (more than 79,000 people) between March 2022, when 55,702 people slept in NYC shelters, and January 2024, when the census hit an all-time high of 134,963.**

² The shelter census was dropping pre-pandemic and during the pandemic in part because the City implemented policies that the Coalition has advocated for many years: preventing homelessness by paying rent arrears and providing lawyers to stop evictions (evictions by City Marshals dropped by 41 percent from 2013 through 2019 – see NYC Office of Civil Justice, “ANNUAL REPORT,” report, Human Resources Administration, 2020, at p 24 https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2020.pdf); and providing more permanent housing (using the threat of eminent domain, the City converted substandard shelters to affordable, habitable permanent housing for people in shelter -- see “Mayor De Blasio Moves to Convert Cluster Buildings Into Permanent Affordable Housing,” The Official Website of the City of New York, December 12, 2017, [https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/757-17/new-tool-combat-homelessness-mayor-de-blasio-moves-convert-cluster-buildings-permanent#\(0\)](https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/757-17/new-tool-combat-homelessness-mayor-de-blasio-moves-convert-cluster-buildings-permanent#(0))).

³ “State of the Homeless 2024: Rights under Attack, Leadership in Retreat,” Coalition for the Homeless, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2024/>.

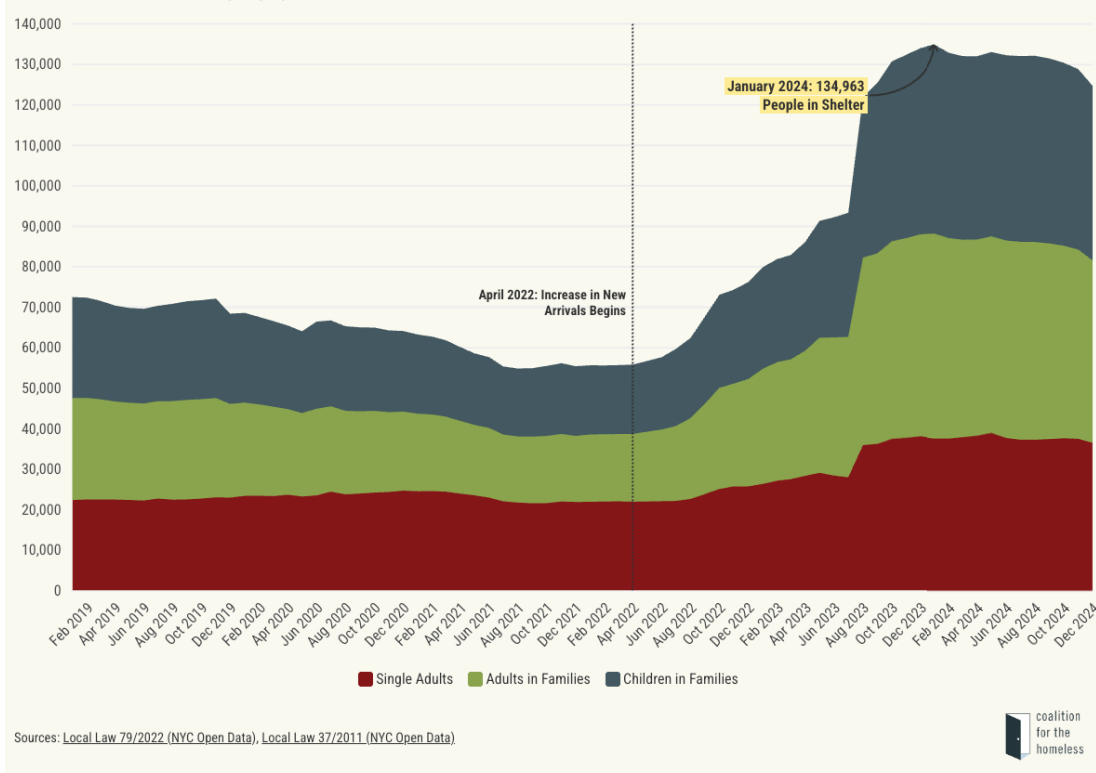
Figure 1.1

Image Description: A stacked area chart labeled, “NYC Shelter Census by Population, January 2019 to December 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers 0 to 140,000 in increments of 10,000. The horizontal axis shows a time range between January 2019 and December 2024 in two month increments. There is also a vertical dashed line above April 2022, with a label stating “April 2022: Increase in New Arrivals Begins.” The chart depicts a three-color area that breaks down the overall shelter population between single adults in red at the bottom, adults in families in green in the middle, and children in families in dark blue on top. There is an arrow pointing to the highest point of the chart, saying “January 2024: 134,963 People in Shelter.”

Figure 1.1

NYC Shelter Census by Population, January 2019 to December 2024

The chart below shows the average nightly shelter census in each month.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

B. THE PAST YEAR: A SHIFTING SHELTER POPULATION AND RISING LOCAL HOMELESSNESS

While the number of new arrivals in the shelter system remained high, it **declined steadily throughout 2024**, falling by **25 percent** over the course of the year. This occurred for various reasons,⁴ including federal actions resulting in fewer new entrants seeking asylum, such as the threshold that triggered temporary closure of the border,⁵ and restrictions imposed by Mayor Adams on how long new arrivals can remain in a shelter placement.⁶ But no evidence suggests that those who left the shelter system were able to get the help they needed to obtain housing, employment, and stability.⁷

4 These reasons include:

1. New arrivals voluntarily exiting shelters on their own after brief stays;
2. New arrivals exiting shelters with the help of City or State relocation programs;
3. People exiting shelters out of fear of arrest and deportation following the November elections. In fact, the number of new arrivals in shelter declined precipitously following the January 2025 inauguration.

5 See “Southwest Land Border Encounters (by Component),” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters-by-component>.

6 These restrictions included ones that were imposed before the court settlement in March 2024 that stopped the Mayor’s effort to gut the right to shelter.

7 The obstacles faced by the tens of thousands of new arrivals seeking stability in our community are significant. The draconian, xenophobic, and even unconstitutional (in the case of the executive order seeking to end birthright citizenship) actions of the Trump administration have created a climate of fear and anxiety, and have made it even more difficult to provide the shelter, housing, and services that the newest New Yorkers need to stabilize in the community. (See “Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship,” The White House, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-meaning-and-value-of-american-citizenship/>, and see US Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 1.). A full analysis of the City, State, and Federal governments’ responses to the arrival of the roughly 230,000 new arrivals to New York City since March 2022 lies outside the scope of this report.

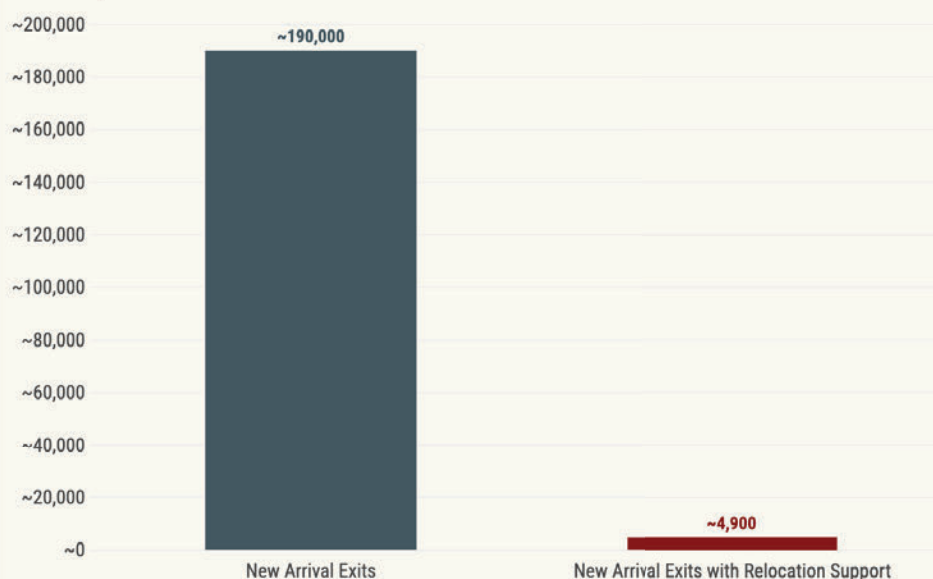
In fact, the City and State failed to implement the type of robust reception and relocation system that the Coalition for the Homeless along with numerous advocates, business leaders, and faith communities strongly urged Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams to fund and implement throughout 2024.⁸ Therefore, only the limited State Migrant Relocation Assistance Program and the City's solely financial asylum moveout assistance effort were available, and these resources were limited to families with children. As a result, by January 2025, only **1,400 new arrival households** (fewer than **5,000 individuals**) had exited shelter with any kind of City- or State-supported relocation assistance. This means that out of the approximately **190,000 new arrivals** who left the shelter system between March 2022 and January 2025,⁹ **more than 97 percent (about 185,000 people)** did so with **no programmatic relocation support of any kind**.¹⁰

Figure 1.2

Image Description: A bar chart labeled, "Approximate Number of New Arrivals Who Exited the NYC Shelter System vs. Number of New Arrivals Who Exited Shelters with City or State Relocation Support, March 2022 – January 2025." The vertical axis lists numbers ~0 to ~200,000 in increments of ~20,000. Two bars are shown: a tall dark blue bar on the left labeled "New Arrival Exits," with the number ~190,000 above it, and a short dark red bar on the right labeled "New Arrival Exits with Relocation Support," with the number ~4,900 above it.

Figure 1.2

Approximate Number of New Arrivals Who Exited the NYC Shelter System vs. Number of New Arrivals Who Exited Shelters with City or State Relocation Support, March 2022 - January 2025



Methodological Note: "New Arrival Exits" and "New Arrival Exits with Relocation Support" are both estimates calculated from Mayor's Office press releases and exit data provided to the Coalition by the City.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

⁸ "Recommendations for Improving New York's Reception and Relocation System for New Arrivals," Coalition for the Homeless, January 2025, <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Full-Recommendations-for-Improving-Reception-and-Relocation.pdf>.

⁹ The 190,000 figure reflects the difference between the City's estimate of over 229,000 new arrivals entering NYC seeking services between March 2022 and January 2025 and the roughly 39,000 new arrivals remaining in shelter as of the end of January 2025. (See "Mayor Adams Announces New Round of Migrant Shelter Closures, Including One of City's Largest Facilities, after 27 Straight Weeks of Shelter Census Declines," The Official Website of the City of New York, January 10, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/019-25/mayor-adams-new-round-migrant-shelter-closures-including-one-city-s-largest>.)

¹⁰ Given recent decisions by the State to end its program, fewer families will receive MRAP in the future. Arya Sundaram, "NY State Set to End Resettlement Program for Migrant Families in City Shelters," *Gothamist*, April 18, 2025, <https://gothamist.com/news/ny-state-set-to-end-resettlement-program-for-migrant-families-in-city-shelters>.

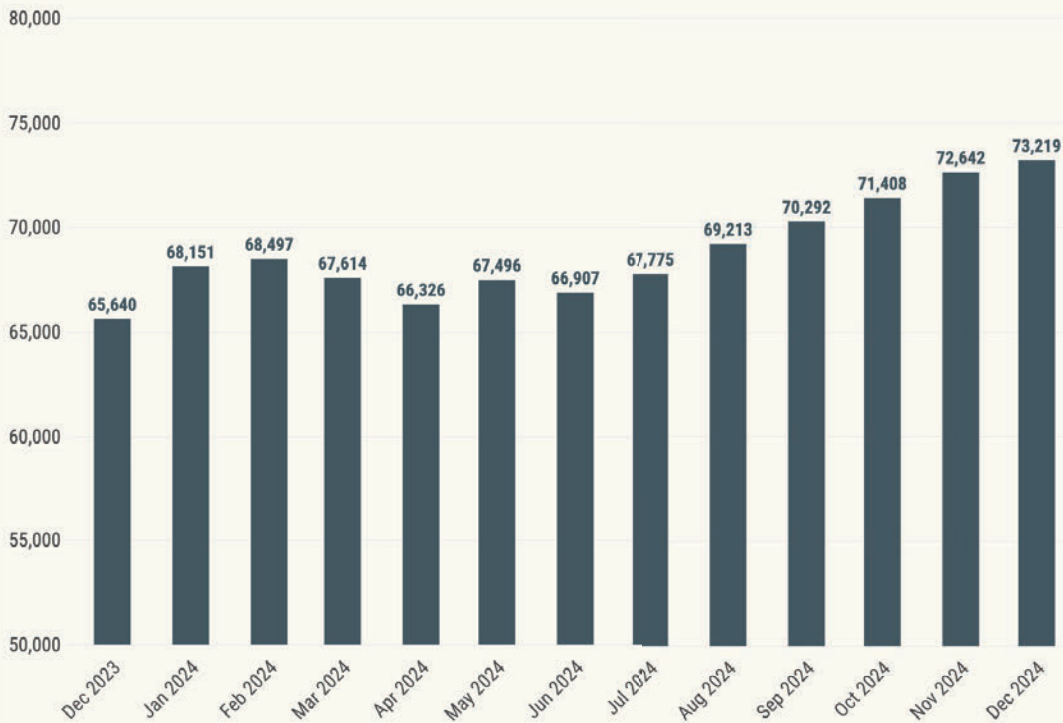
While so much of the public dialogue has (understandably) been centered around the needs of the new arrival population, far too little attention has been paid to the rapidly increasing number of longer-term New Yorkers sleeping in shelters each night, which grew from 65,640 in December 2023 to 73,219 in December 2024, representing a **one-year increase of 11.5 percent**.

Figure 1.3

Image Description: A vertical bar chart labeled, “Longer-Term New Yorkers in NYC Shelters.” The vertical axis lists numbers 50,000 to 80,000 in increments of 5,000. The horizontal axis shows monthly dates from December 2023 to December 2024. Each month is represented by a dark blue bar, with data labels displayed on each bar. The final bar, labeled “Dec ‘24,” is marked 73,219.

Figure 1.3**Longer-Term New Yorkers in NYC Shelters**

Does not include New Arrivals.



Methodological Note: Figures in this chart were calculated by deducting the number of new arrivals, as reported in weekly census data provided to the Coalition by the City, from the total monthly average daily overnight census for DHS and HPD facilities, as reported by the City pursuant to Local Law 79.



Interactive chart available [here](#)¹¹

¹¹ Figures in this chart were calculated by deducting the number of new arrivals, as reported in weekly census data provided to the Coalition by the City, from the total monthly average daily overnight census for DHS and HPD facilities, as reported by the City pursuant to Local Law 79.

C. CORE SYSTEMIC FAILURE

For the foregoing reasons, *State of the Homeless 2025* focuses primarily on two broad topics:

1. The increase in homelessness among longer-term New Yorkers, and
2. Mayor Adams' and Governor Hochul's failures to address the needs of homeless individuals with mental illness at every level.

Each of these concerns stem from the same core systemic failure: the lack of affordable housing for those who need it most.

None of the other attendant problems can be solved without housing. Until we create enough affordable housing that is targeted to homeless and ELI households and that includes adequate units to meet the accessibility needs of those with various disabilities, the shelter census will continue to increase. People will continue to sleep on the streets and in the subways. The mental health care needs of those sleeping unsheltered will go unaddressed. The City will continue to waste time, effort, and money on ineffective and dehumanizing sweeps and involuntary hospitalizations. It's time to stop simply oiling the hinges on the revolving door between the streets, shelters, jails, and hospitals, and instead invest in a more rational and coordinated approach that results in health, housing, and stability.

All New Yorkers want to see an end to mass homelessness. It is certainly within the power of the Mayor and Governor to establish policies and priorities that will put us on that path.

A photograph of a family of four standing on a city sidewalk at night. The mother, a Black woman with long braids and glasses, stands in the back center wearing a black puffer jacket. To her left is a young boy in a blue and white puffer jacket with 'AE' on it. In front of him is a young girl in a grey puffer jacket with a white mountain pattern. To the mother's right is another young girl in a black puffer jacket with a white star on the sleeve. They are all wearing winter clothing. The background shows a large glass window reflecting city lights and a yellow taxi. The text 'II. TRAJECTORY OF MASS HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK' is overlaid in large white letters at the bottom.

II. TRAJECTORY OF MASS HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK

Image description: A parent stands together with their three children on a city sidewalk in front of a large glass window, all wearing winter clothing.

II. TRAJECTORY OF MASS HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK

Homelessness in New York City continues to worsen. The most useful way to measure and track the scope of the crisis is by examining the average nightly census of the municipal shelter system, since New York’s Right to Shelter obligates the City, through DHS, to ensure that enough beds are available in their system as more people become homeless and require shelter. While this particular shelter census figure does not include individuals in shelters that are *not* operated by DHS,¹² nor the thousands of people sleeping unsheltered in public spaces each night, nor the hundreds of thousands of people without homes who are temporarily sleeping on the floors or couches of others, accurate figures do not exist for the latter two populations. As such, the census for DHS shelters and those operated by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”) – which the Coalition has monitored for more than 40 years – functions as a useful proxy for tracking the state of mass homelessness in New York City.

Tracking the number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters became more complicated after the new arrival population began increasing rapidly in March 2022, as the City did not begin disaggregating the census data into new arrivals and longer-term New Yorkers until July 2023. However, it is possible to compare the number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters before March 2022 with current numbers, to get a sense of how much “home-grown” homelessness has worsened in NYC.

In the three-year period from December 2021 to December 2024, the number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters increased by 17,793 people, or by more than 32 percent. And, as noted above, 2024 alone saw the number of longer-term New Yorkers in shelters increase by more than 7,500 people, or 11.5 percent. By the beginning of 2024, the number of longer-term New Yorkers in DHS and HPD shelters alone roughly matched the historical high it reached in December 2019 of approximately 63,000 people.¹³

¹² How Many People Are Homeless in NYC Altogether? Coalition for the Homeless, last modified June 3, 2025, <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-many-total-people-are-homeless-in-nyc/>.

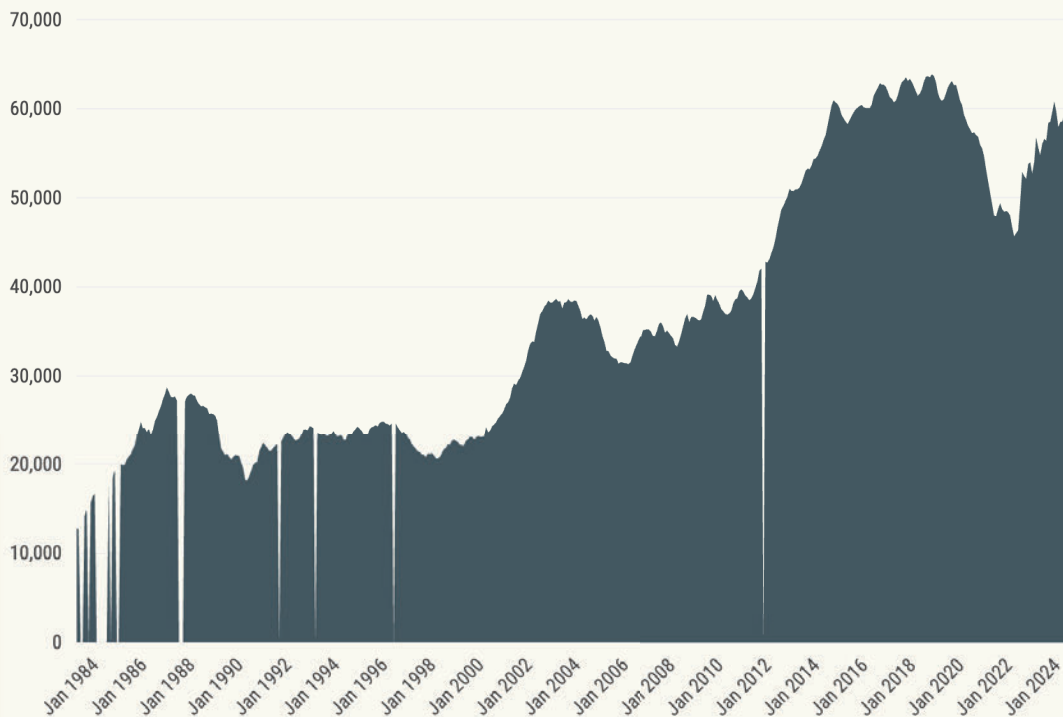
¹³ The data for March 2022 through June 2023 was generated by examining the number of new arrivals in DHS shelters in those months and subtracting those amounts from the *total* census of DHS and HPD shelters.

Figure 2.1

Image Description: An area chart labeled, “Number of Longer-Term New Yorkers Sleeping in DHS and HPD Shelters Each Night, June 1983 to December 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers 0 to 70,000 in increments of 10,000. The horizontal axis shows time in two-year increments from January 1984 to January 2024. A dark blue area fills the chart, representing the number of people sleeping in shelters each night. The final point on the chart, at the far right, reaches slightly above 60,000.

Figure 2.1**Number of Longer-Term New Yorkers Sleeping in DHS and HPD Shelters, June 1983 to December 2024**

The chart below shows the nightly average number of people sleeping in NYC shelters each month. Does not include New Arrivals.



Sources: Local Law 79/2022 (NYC Open Data), Local Law 37/2011 (NYC Open Data), Asylum Seekers Terms and Conditions (NYC City Council)

Methodological Note: City data does not disaggregate the number of New Arrivals in shelter until July 2023. To estimate the number of longer-term New Yorkers prior to July 2023, the difference in the number of New Arrivals between March 2022 and June 2023 was evenly distributed across those months.



Interactive chart available [here](#)¹⁴

What makes these figures more alarming is the fact that in FY2024 DSS made some progress helping more households exit shelters into permanent housing (meaning that without such efforts, the shelter census would have been even higher). But, such efforts, while commendable, simply were not at the scale necessary to keep up with the number of people becoming homeless and entering shelters. For the shelter census to come down, more families and individuals must get the help they need to avoid becoming homeless, and more investments are required to address two primary obstacles to increasing shelter exits into permanent housing: 1) lack of affordable housing supply for homeless and ELI households, and 2) numerous barriers restricting access to existing affordable housing.

Before elaborating on these two areas, it is important to examine both the drivers of the current state of homelessness and the exits that the City facilitated in 2024.

¹⁴ Because the City did not disaggregate the number of new arrivals in shelter until July 2023, to calculate the number of longer-term New Yorkers prior to July 2023, the number of new arrivals were interpolated assuming a straight line from March 2022 until June 2023.

A. DRIVERS OF HOMELESSNESS

1. Lack of Truly Affordable Housing

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s 2025 report, “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” **for every 100 ELI households in New York State, there are merely 36 affordable and available rental units.**¹⁵ The worsening housing precarity is evidenced by the growing rent burdens borne by these residents. **Seventy-three percent of NYC’s roughly 820,000 ELI households are severely rent-burdened, spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing.**¹⁶ This financial strain severely limits the capacity of ELI households to afford other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and childcare, and leaves hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers teetering on the verge of homelessness.

Such rent burdens exist largely because the supply of housing affordable to the lowest income households is essentially non-existent. The most recent Housing Vacancy Survey states that the vacancy rate for rent stabilized units was less than 1 percent in 2023 – down from an already distressingly low 4.6 percent in 2021.¹⁷ More to the point, **the vacancy rate for apartments renting for less than \$1,100 per month was only 0.39 percent.** Effectively, there are no affordable apartments left in New York City for those who need them most.¹⁸

15 “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” National Low-Income Housing Coalition, March 2025, <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

16 “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes.”

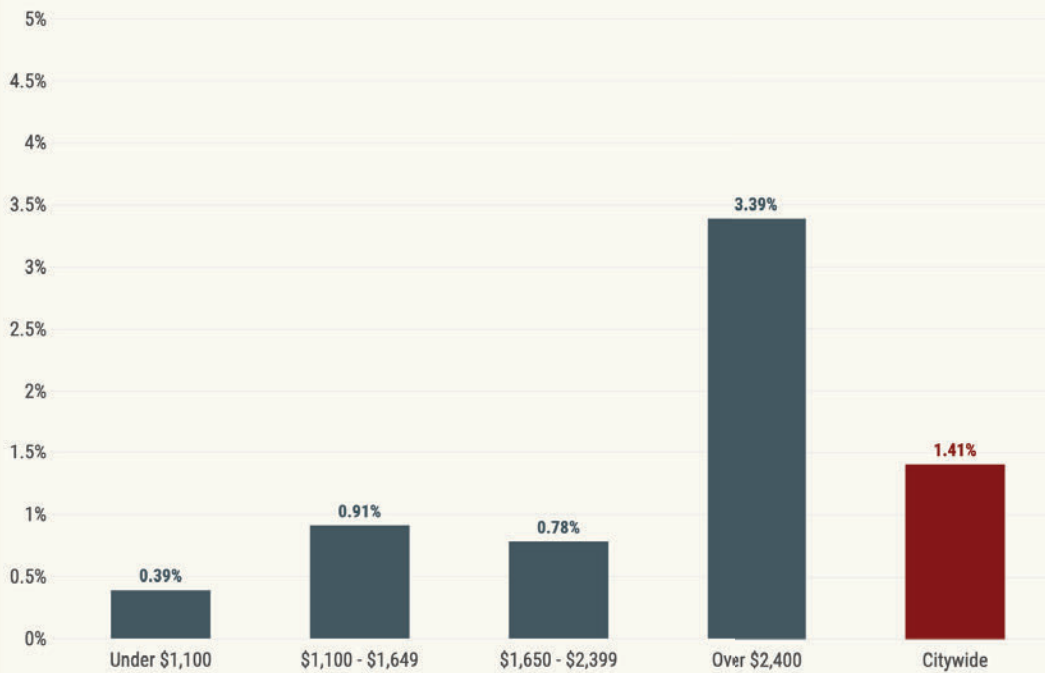
17 Gaumer, E., “2021 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey: Selected Initial Findings. New York, NY: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development,” 2022, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/2021-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

18 Gaumer, E., “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey: Selected Initial Findings. New York, NY: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development,” 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

Figure 2.2

Image Description: A bar graph labeled “Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Asking Rent, Calendar Year 2023.” The vertical axis shows percentages from 0% to 5% in increments of 0.5%. The horizontal axis shows rent amount ranges of Under \$1,100, \$1,100 - \$1,649, \$1,650 - \$2,399, Over \$2,400, and Citywide. Each rent amount range includes a dark blue bar labeled with a corresponding net rental vacancy rate, ranging from 0.39% for Under \$1,100 to 3.39% for Over \$2,400. The bar for Citywide is red, and it displays a net rental vacancy rate of 1.41%.

Figure 2.2
Net Rental Vacancy Rate by Asking Rent, Calendar Year 2023



Source: NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings (US Census, 2023)



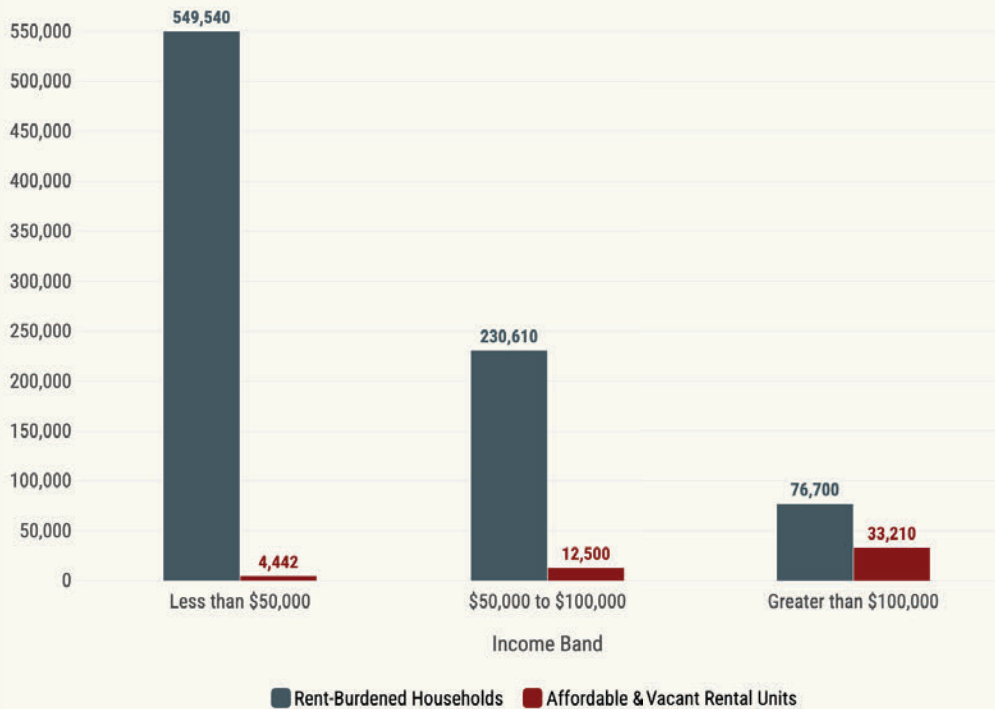
Interactive chart available [here](#)

To further put this in perspective, **there were only 4,442 vacant units affordable to the more than half-million households earning less than \$50,000 per year**, and even fewer vacant units for families and individuals receiving public assistance who are at risk of entering and remaining in shelter.

Figure 2.3

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, “Rent-Burdened Households vs. Cumulative Affordable & Vacant Rental Units.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 550,000 in increments of 50,000. The horizontal axis displays three income bands: “Less than \$50,000,” “\$50,000 to \$100,000,” and “Greater than \$100,000.” Each income band contains two bars: a taller dark blue bar representing rent-burdened households and a shorter dark red bar representing affordable and vacant rental units. In the first income band, “Less than \$50,000,” the dark blue bar is labeled 549,540 and the dark red bar is labeled 4,442. In the final income band, “Greater than \$100,000,” the dark blue bar is labeled 76,700 and the dark red bar is labeled 33,210.

Figure 2.3
Rent-Burdened Households vs. Cumulative Affordable & Vacant Rental Units



Source: NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings (US Census, 2023)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

2. Increasing Evictions

According to the State Comptroller’s Office, the New York State Unified Court System recorded 191,230 eviction filings statewide in 2024.¹⁹ The increase in evictions is particularly affecting low-income residents and communities of color and further straining the city’s social safety net.

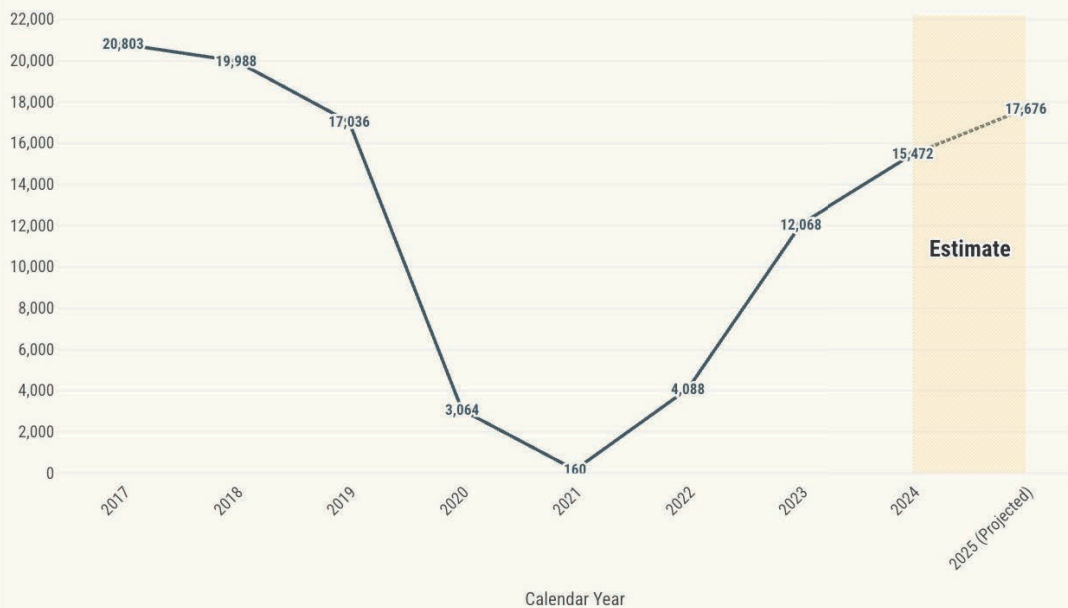
In New York City, the number of marshal-executed residential evictions and possessions has been rapidly escalating, well exceeding 15,000 in 2024.

¹⁹ New York State Comptroller, “New Yorkers in Need: Homelessness in New York State,” 2025, <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/pdf/new-yorkers-in-need-homelessness-nys.pdf>.

Figure 2.4

Image Description: A line chart labeled, “Marshal-Executed Residential Evictions & Possessions in NYC.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 22,000 in increments of 2,000. The horizontal axis shows calendar years from 2017 to 2024, with an additional entry marked as “2025 (Projected).” Each year is represented by a dark blue data point connected by a solid line, with the exception of the line in the estimated section, which is a dashed line. A yellow shaded area highlights the projected year. The data point for 2024 is marked 15,472. The final data point, labeled “2025 (Projected),” is marked 17,676.

Figure 2.4
Marshal-Executed Residential Evictions & Possessions in NYC



Source: [Evictions \(NYC Open Data\)](#)

Methodological Note: “2025 (Projected)” estimate is calculated using the monthly average count of the first four months of 2025.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

According to the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, there have been more than 29,000 residential evictions by court-ordered marshals since the pandemic era protections put in place in 2020 ended in January 2022.²⁰

“Eviction” in court or by landlords or prime tenants in the absence of court cases was in fact the second-most common answer given as “reason for homelessness” by families with children entering the DHS shelter system in FY2024 (with “Domestic Violence” being the most common reason).

²⁰ “NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor,” Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/nycrcrisismonitor>.

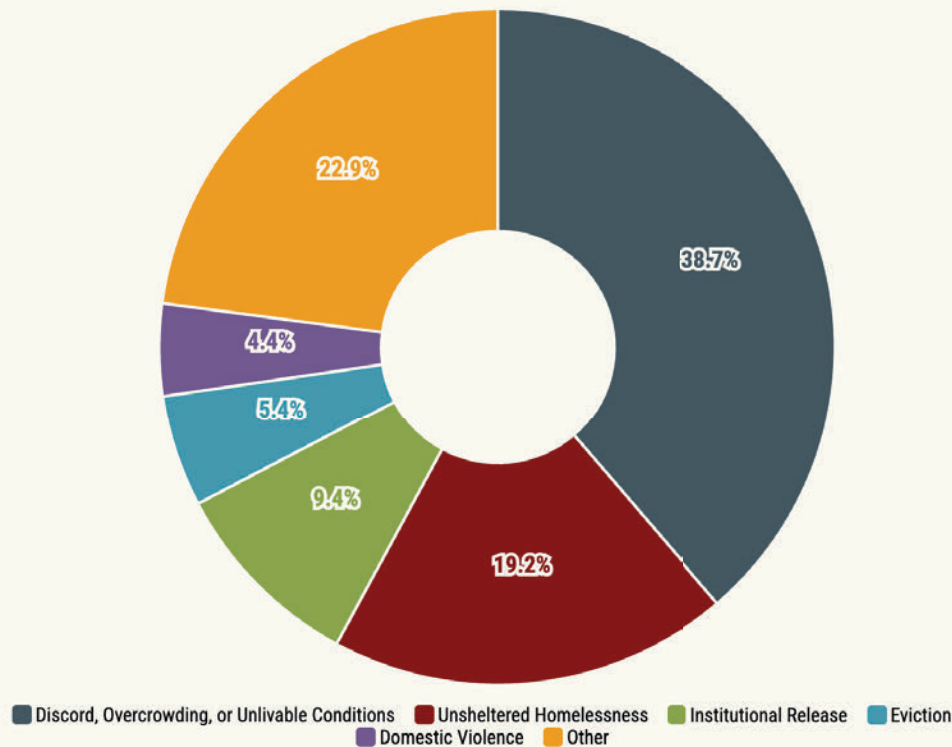
Figure 2.5

Image Description: A donut chart labeled, “Top Reasons for Homelessness Among Single Adults, Fiscal Year 2024.” The chart is divided into six color-coded segments. A large dark blue segment on the right is labeled “38.7%.” A dark red segment at the bottom is labeled “19.2%.” A green segment on the lower left is labeled “9.4%.” A light blue segment above it is labeled “5.4%.” A purple segment on the left is labeled “4.4%.” An orange segment at the top is labeled “22.9%.”

Figure 2.5

Top Reasons for Homelessness Among Single Adults, Fiscal Year 2024

Does not include New Arrivals.



Source: FOIL Data from NYC Department of Social Services

Methodological Note: Categories are presented in aggregate.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

Notably, “Overcrowding” was the third-most common reason for homelessness among families with children. As **nearly a quarter (23 percent) of New York City households with at least one child are overcrowded**,²¹ and **the city has more than 170,000 households living with more than 1.5 people per room**²² – conditions that are frequently a precursor to homelessness – such statistics portend greater levels of mass homelessness if the City and State do not invest in more housing affordable for these households.

Overcrowding and the discord it creates is a leading precipitating factor of shelter stays among single adults as well: **nearly 40 percent of single adults reported either “Overcrowding,” “Discord,” or “Unlivable conditions” as their reason for entering DHS shelters in FY2024.**

21 Gaumer, E., “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey: Selected Initial Findings. New York, NY: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development.”

22 Sean Campion, “A Building Crisis,” Citizens Budget Commission of New York, June 27, 2024, <https://cbcny.org/building-crisis>.

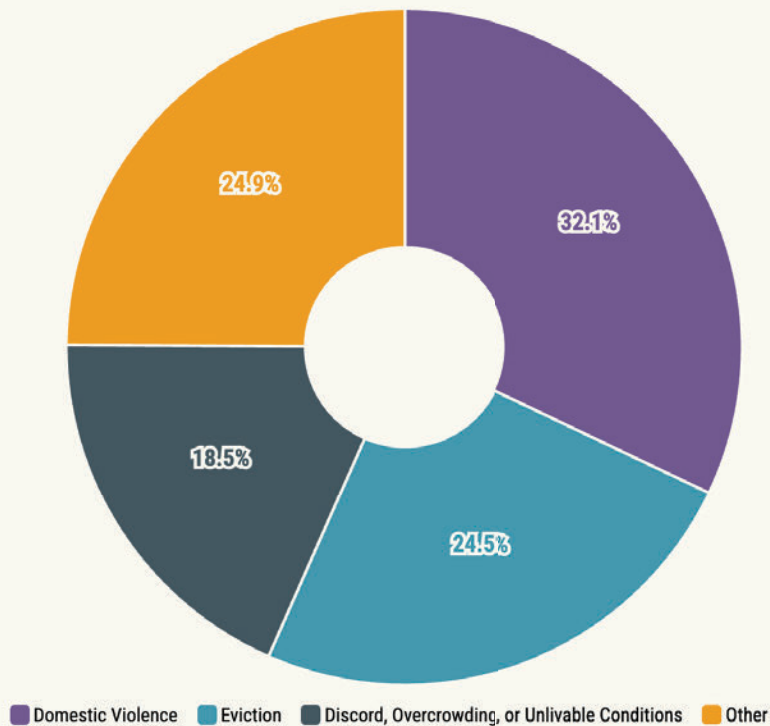
Figure 2.6

Image Description: A donut chart labeled, “Top Reasons for Homelessness Among Families with Children, Fiscal Year 2024.” The chart is divided into five color-coded segments. A purple segment on the upper right is labeled “32.1%.” A light blue segment on the lower right is labeled “24.5%.” A dark blue segment on the lower left is labeled “18.5%.” A gold segment at the top is labeled “24.9%.”

Figure 2.6

Top Reasons for Homelessness Among Families with Children, Fiscal Year 2024

Does not include New Arrivals.



Source: FOIL Data from NYC Department of Social Services

Methodological Note: Categories are presented in aggregate.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

3. Institutional Feeders

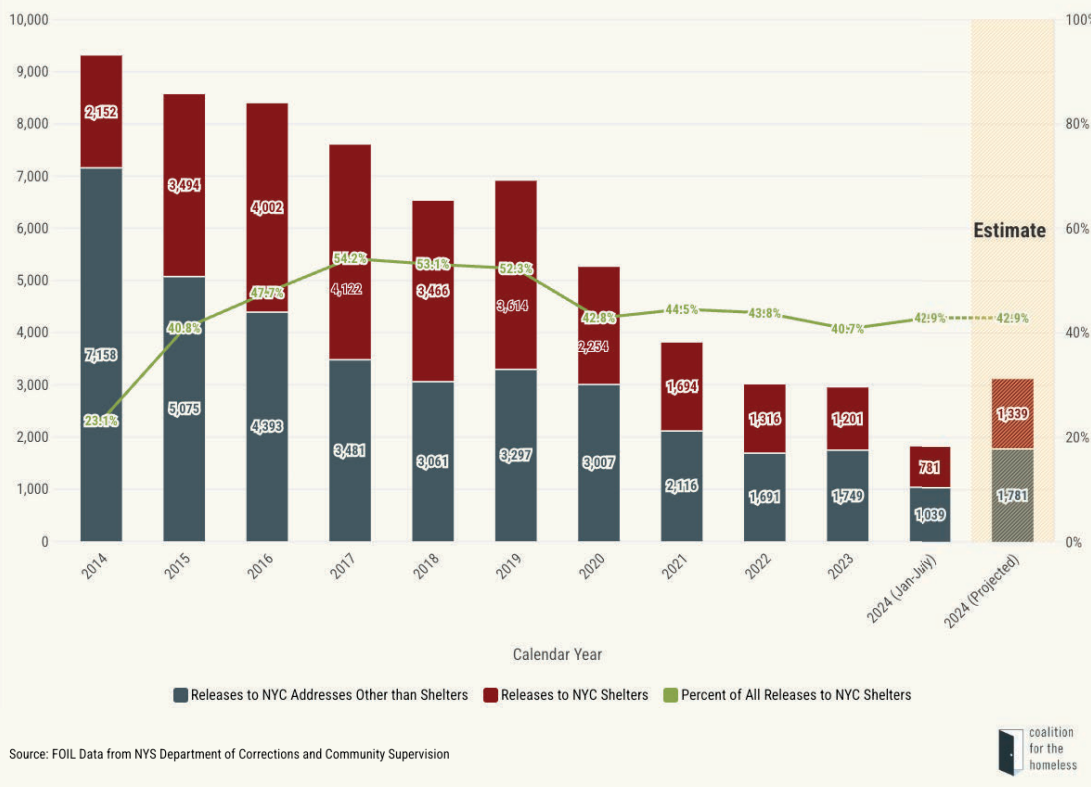
Also notable from Figure 2.5 above is that nearly 10 percent of single adults entered the shelter system directly from other institutions or systems. These are individuals who should have received effective interventions by those institutions to avoid homelessness. However, the DHS shelter system continues to serve as a de facto “catch-all,” providing an alternative to sleeping on the streets for all those whom these institutions and systems continue to fail including state prisons, jails, medical and psychiatric hospitals, foster care, and other shelters.

For years, New York State has failed to provide adequate discharge planning for those exiting State prisons, instead relying on New York City’s Right to Shelter to pick up the slack and pushing more costs onto the City. As a result, **roughly 43 percent of those discharged from State prisons continue to be sent to NYC shelters.**

Figure 2.7

Image Description: A combination line graph and stacked bar chart labeled “New York State Prison Releases into NYC by Location of Release.” The vertical axes show numbers of individuals from 0 to 10,000 in increments of 1,000 on the left, and percentage of people released from prison directly into shelters from 0% to 100% in increments of 20% on the right. The horizontal axis shows a time range in calendar years between 2014 and the first seven months of 2024. Above each year are bars in two sections: a dark blue section at the bottom shows releases to NYC addresses other than shelters, with a value of 1,039 for the first seven months of calendar year 2024, and a red section on top shows releases to NYC shelters, with a value of 781 for the same period. A green line marks the percentage of all releases sent to NYC shelters each year versus non-shelter addresses in NYC, with a value of 42.9% for the first seven months of calendar year 2024. Immediately to the right of this entry is an additional year labeled, “2024 (Projected Full Year).” This vertical section has yellow shading and a label reading “Estimate.” The full year of calendar year 2024 is projected to have 1,781 releases to NYC addresses other than shelters and 1,339 releases directly into NYC shelters.

Figure 2.7
New York State Prison Releases into NYC by Location of Release



Interactive chart available [here](#)

The analysis in last year’s State of the Homeless can unfortunately be repeated:

This trend is not merely a byproduct of systemic inefficiency; rather, it reflects deep-seated issues within the State’s reentry planning and both the City’s and State’s failure to provide access to affordable housing. While the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision asserts that it is making efforts to place individuals in alternative housing arrangements, the high percentage of those ending up in shelters over the past decade is telling.

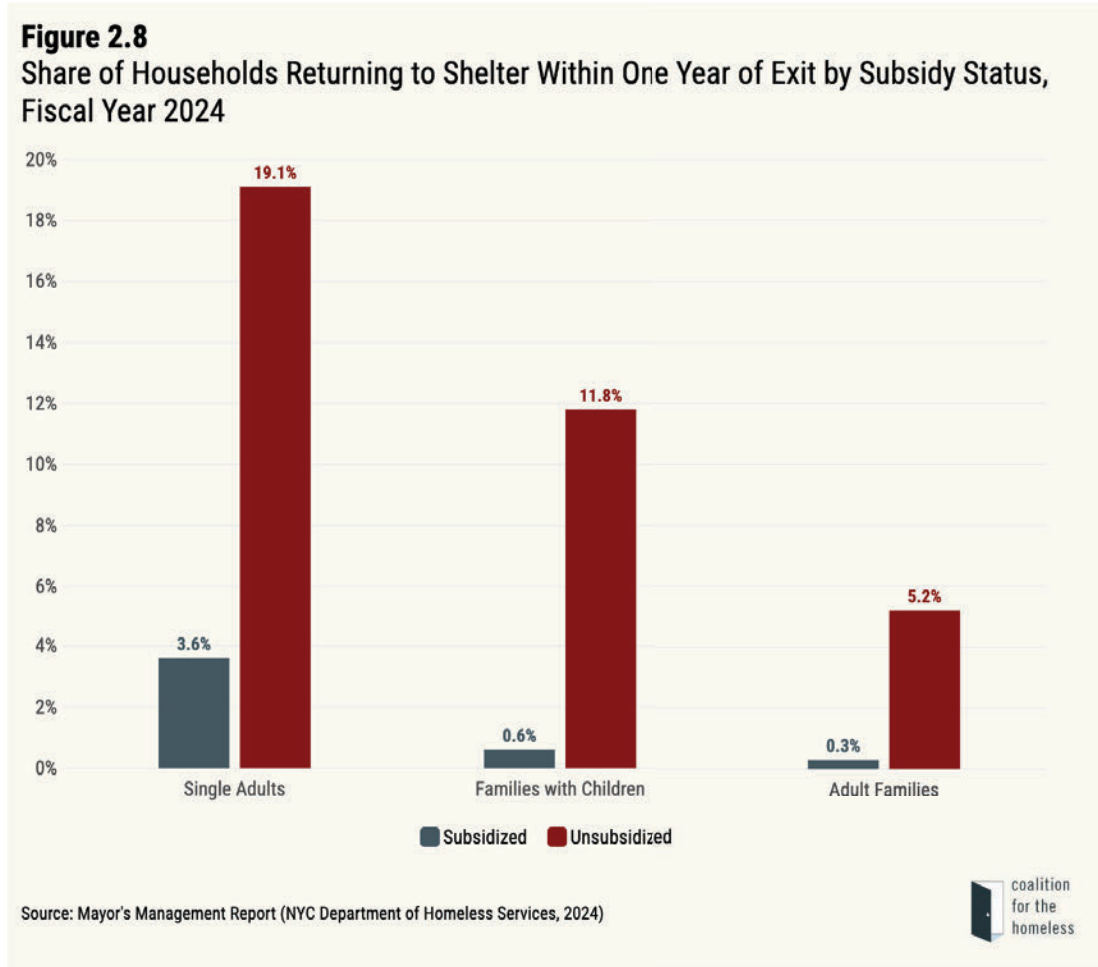
Even so, beyond straining the shelter system, the government’s chronic neglect in providing needed reentry planning has left many without supports in rebuilding their lives after incarceration, often resulting in extended periods within the shelter system and making it harder for formerly incarcerated people to gain employment, care for their physical and mental health, and complete parole supervision. This failure of policy and compassion significantly impacts Black and Latino New Yorkers, who each make up a disproportionate share of both the prison system and the shelter population. As it stands, the State’s inadequate discharge practices largely serve to reinforce the cycle of disadvantage and systemic bias that pervade our society.

B. SHELTER EXITS

The nightly shelter census has continued to grow even as the City has made some progress in increasing the number of subsidized exits from shelters. Subsidized shelter exits, whether involving rent vouchers, supportive housing, set-aside units, or New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”) units, are far more likely to lead to long-term stability for the household, and less likely to result in a return to the shelter system.

Figure 2.8

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, “Share of Households Returning to Shelter Within One Year of Exit by Subsidy Status, Fiscal Year 2024.” The vertical axis lists percentages from 0% to 20% in increments of 2%. The horizontal axis displays three household types: “Single Adults,” “Families with Children,” and “Adult Families.” Each group contains a dark blue bar for subsidized households and a dark red bar for unsubsidized households. In the first group, “Single Adults,” the dark blue bar is labeled 3.6% and the dark red bar is labeled 19.1%. In the second group, “Families with Children,” the dark blue bar is labeled 0.6% and the dark red bar is labeled 11.8%. In the final group, “Adult Families,” the dark blue bar is labeled 0.3% and the dark red bar is labeled 5.2%.



Interactive chart available [here](#)

As seen in Figure 2.8 above, in FY2024 fewer than one percent of adult families and families with children, and less than four percent of single adults, return to the shelter system when it was a subsidized exit. The rates in previous years were not materially different.

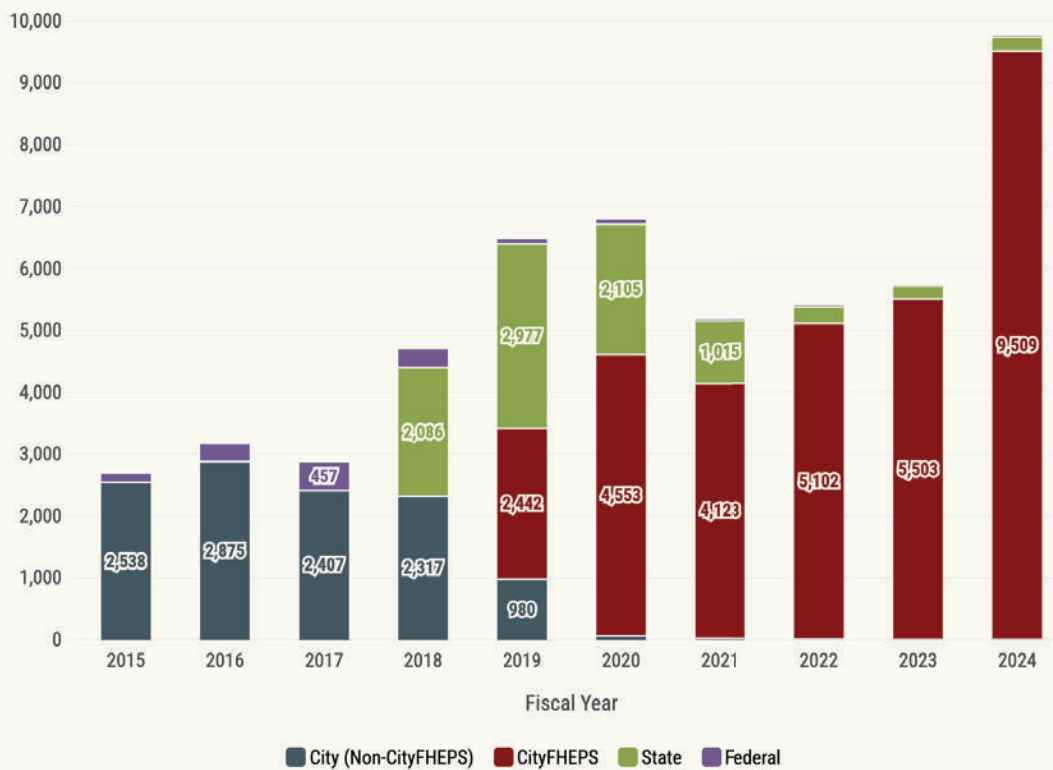
1. Shelter Exits with Rent Vouchers

As illustrated in Figure 2.9, recent efforts by DSS to better utilize CityFHEPS vouchers to help households move out of shelters has resulted in a marked increase in subsidized exits. The progress, while welcome, is unfortunately still not at the scale needed to counter the number of people becoming homeless and entering the shelter system. Like placements into supportive housing, set-asides, and NYCHA, exits via CityFHEPS are constrained by housing supply and the many barriers to access.

Figure 2.9

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “Subsidized Household Exits from Shelter by Funding Source.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 10,000 in increments of 1,000. The horizontal axis displays years from 2015 to 2024. Each bar is divided into up to four color-coded segments representing funding sources: dark blue for City (Non-CityFHEPS), dark red for CityFHEPS, green for State, and purple for Federal. The final bar, labeled “2024,” consists of a dark red segment marked 9,509, a small green segment, and a very thin purple segment.

Figure 2.9
Subsidized Household Exits from Shelter by Funding Source



Source: Special Initiatives Moveouts and Placements (NYC Open Data)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

2. Shelter Exits to Supportive Housing

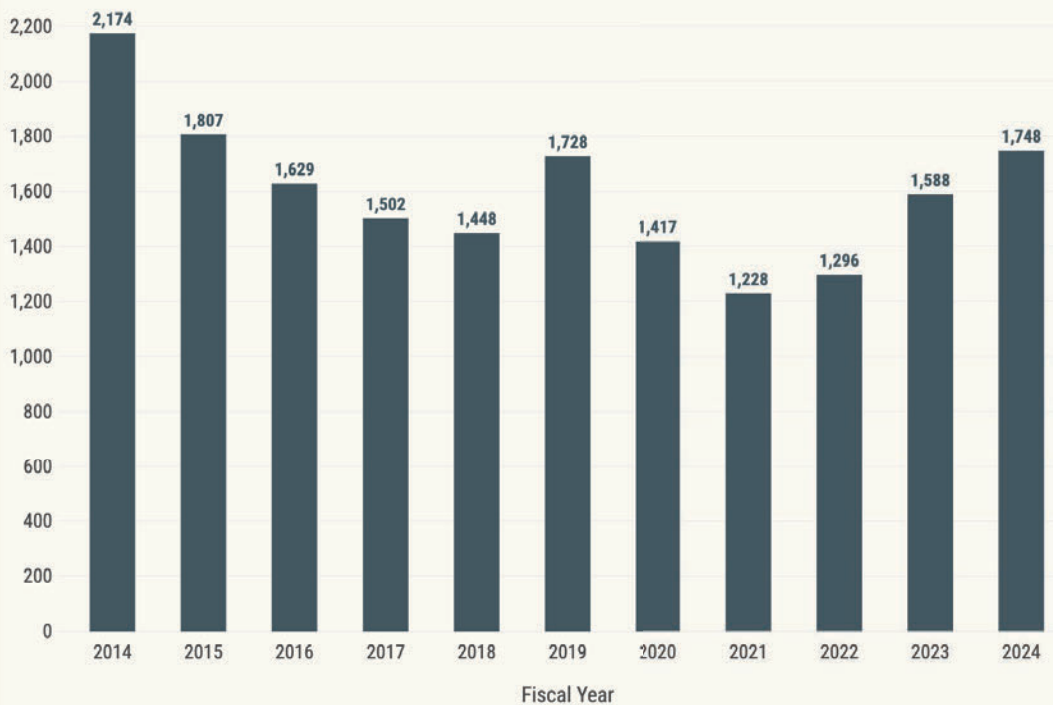
Single adult shelter exits into supportive housing have increased steadily since hitting a low of 1,228 in FY2021, returning to roughly pre-pandemic levels. While we are pleased to see exits into supportive housing increasing, the number has yet to make up for the nearly steady seven-year decline from 2014 to 2021.²³

²³ This decline can be largely attributed to delays in the supportive housing pipeline during this time when the State did not enter into a NY/ NY IV supportive housing agreement with the City because the then Governor attempted to shift what had been State costs in the NY/NY I, II, III agreements to the City.

Figure 2.10

Image Description: A vertical bar chart labeled, “Single Adult Supportive Housing Placements.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 2,200 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis displays fiscal years from 2014 to 2024. Each year is represented by a dark blue bar. The final bar, labeled “2024,” is marked 1,748.

Figure 2.10
Single Adult Supportive Housing Placements



Source: FOIL Data from NYC Department of Social Services



Interactive chart available [here](#)

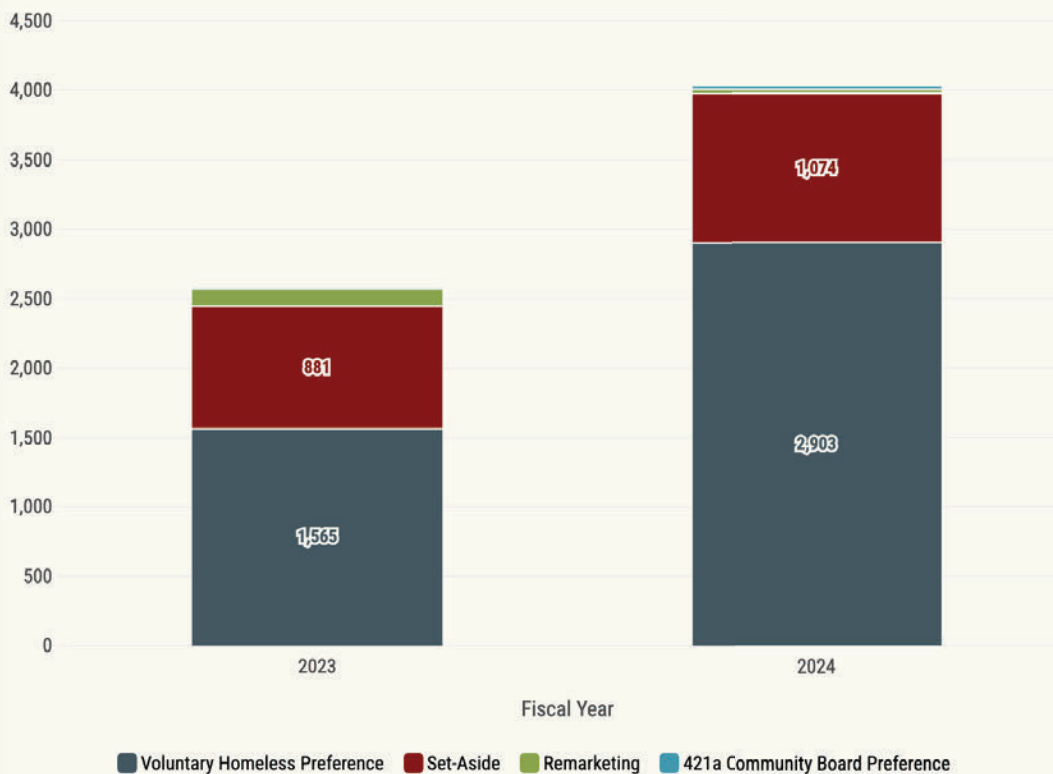
3. Shelter Exits to Set-Asides and Other Designated Units

“Set-asides” are housing units reserved specifically for homeless households.²⁴ Some homeless households also exit shelters into units that landlords have elected to make available, referred to as “Voluntary Homeless Preference” units. Placements into these units, 421a units and remarketing units, are shown in Figure 2.11 below.

²⁴ Set-asides include units created under Local Law 86 of 2019 which requires developers of residential buildings with more than 40 units and that receive any kind of City support to designate 15 percent of the units in those buildings for households in the shelter system.

Figure 2.11

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “Homeless Households Moved into Set-Asides and Other Designated Units.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 4,500 in increments of 500. The horizontal axis displays fiscal years 2023 and 2024. Each bar is divided into up to four color-coded segments representing programs: dark blue for Voluntary Homeless Preference, dark red for Set-Aside, green for Remarketing, and light blue for 421a Community Board Preference. The second bar, labeled “2024,” consists of a dark blue segment labeled “2,903,” a dark red segment labeled “1,074,” and very thin green and light blue segments.

Figure 2.11**Homeless Households Moved into Set-Asides and Other Designated Units**

Source: FOIL Data from NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development



Interactive chart available [here](#)

Again, while there is a welcome increase in the number of households being placed into set-asides, voluntary homeless preference units, and similar designated units, the increasing shelter census indicates that neither the preventative nor rehousing solutions are being implemented at the necessary scale.

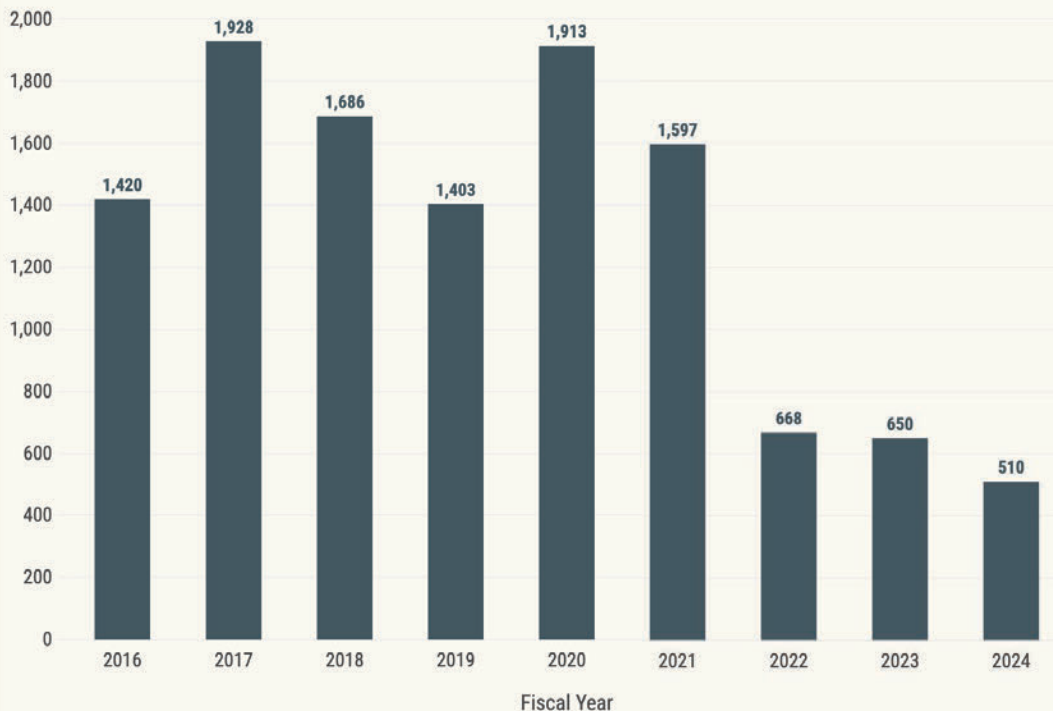
4. Shelter Exits to NYCHA

Figure 2.12

Image Description: A vertical bar chart labeled, “Homeless Applicants Placed in NYCHA Housing.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 2,000 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis displays fiscal years from 2016 to 2024. Each year is represented by a dark blue bar. The final bar, labeled “2024,” is marked 510.

Figure 2.12

Homeless Applicants Placed in NYCHA Housing



Source: Mayor's Management Report (NYC Department of Homeless Services, 2024)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

As the city's largest source of permanent affordable housing, public housing administered by NYCHA has long been an important source of housing for formerly homeless households. However, as Figure 2.12 illustrates, the City has been failing to utilize this critical resource, and the number of individuals who moved into NYCHA housing has continued to decline to the lowest levels in recent memory: in FY2024, only 510 households were placed into NYCHA units. Yet, there are over 5,000 apartments sitting empty that should be filled with households currently living in shelter.²⁵ The City should sufficiently fund the Vacant Unit Readiness Program and eliminate the long turn-around times to re-lease NYCHA units after the prior tenant vacates.

²⁵ Mayor's Office of Operations, *Mayor's Management Report: Fiscal 2024*, (New York, NY: 2025), 429 https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2024/2024_mmr.pdf.



III. OBSTACLES TO BE ADDRESSED TO INCREASE SHELTER EXITS & REDUCE SHELTER INFLOW

Image description: An elderly person with short silver hair and a gentle expression, wearing a dark zip-up jacket over a black top. They are standing against a neutral-colored background.

III. OBSTACLES TO BE ADDRESSED TO INCREASE SHELTER EXITS & REDUCE SHELTER INFLOW

The primary reason for ongoing mass homelessness in New York and the main obstacle to moving people out of shelters and off the streets is the lack of affordable and supportive housing. Without adequate supply – and specifically, supply that is targeted to homeless and ELI households – the situation will not improve. But increasing supply alone will not be sufficient if existing barriers to available units are not addressed. These limitations on voucher and housing eligibility, needless administrative obstacles, and the lack of skilled shelter staff able to assist individuals with their housing search.

A. SUPPLY

1. Affordable Housing

As noted above, New York City’s vacancy rate for apartments renting for under \$1,100 per month is less than 0.4 percent, and the overall vacancy rate is 1.4 percent – the lowest it has been since the city began measuring it in 1968.²⁶ Rapidly increasing rent levels, wages that are not keeping pace with inflation and housing costs, and increasing population²⁷ are all contributing to a worsening shortage in affordable housing – especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

The City’s sole plan for addressing the shortage of affordable housing in New York is the “City of Yes” plan. As stated in last year’s *State of the Homeless*, this plan does not include any requirements for deep affordability and will likely have no impact on New York’s homelessness crisis even with the modifications secured by the City Council. As illustrated below, the City’s affordable housing investments have disproportionately benefited those who are moderate or middle income (i.e., those with incomes amounting to 80 percent of AMI or above, which in 2024 would mean an annual income of no less than \$86,960 for a household of one or \$111,840 for a household of three).

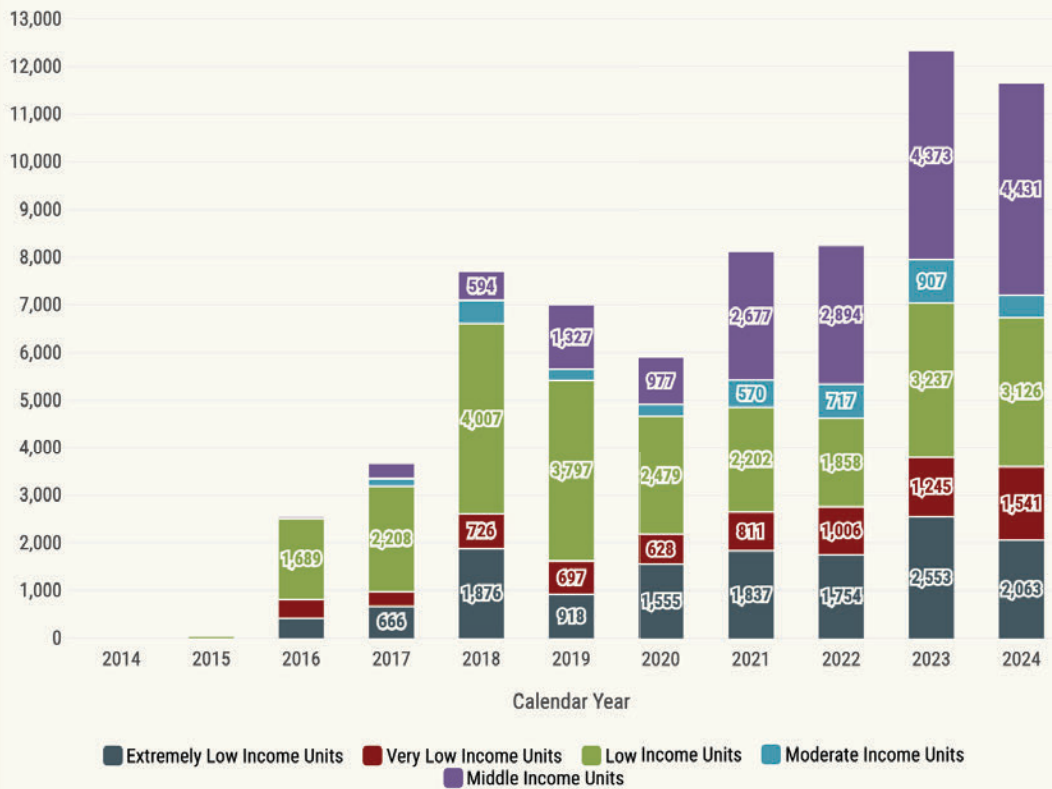
²⁶ “New York City’s Vacancy Rate Reaches Historic Low of 1.4 Percent, Demanding Urgent Action,” The Official Website of the City of New York, February 8, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hpd/news/007-24/new-york-city-s-vacancy-rate-reaches-historic-low-1-4-percent-demanding-urgent-action-new#/0>.

²⁷ US Census Bureau, “Growth in Metro Areas Outpaced Nation,” Census.gov, March 13, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025/population-estimates-counties-metro-micro.html>.

Figure 3.1

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “New Affordable Rental Housing Completions by AMI.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 13,000 in increments of 1,000. The horizontal axis displays calendar years from 2014 to 2024. Each bar is divided into up to six color-coded segments representing income bands: dark blue for Extremely Low Income Units, dark red for Very Low Income Units, green for Low Income Units, light blue for Moderate Income Units, and purple for Middle Income Units. The final bar, labeled “2024,” consists of a dark blue segment marked 2,063, a dark red segment marked 1,541, a green segment marked 3,126, a small light blue segment with no visible label, and a purple segment marked 4,431.

Figure 3.1
New Affordable Rental Housing Completions by AMI



Source: Affordable Housing Production by Building (NYC Open Data)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

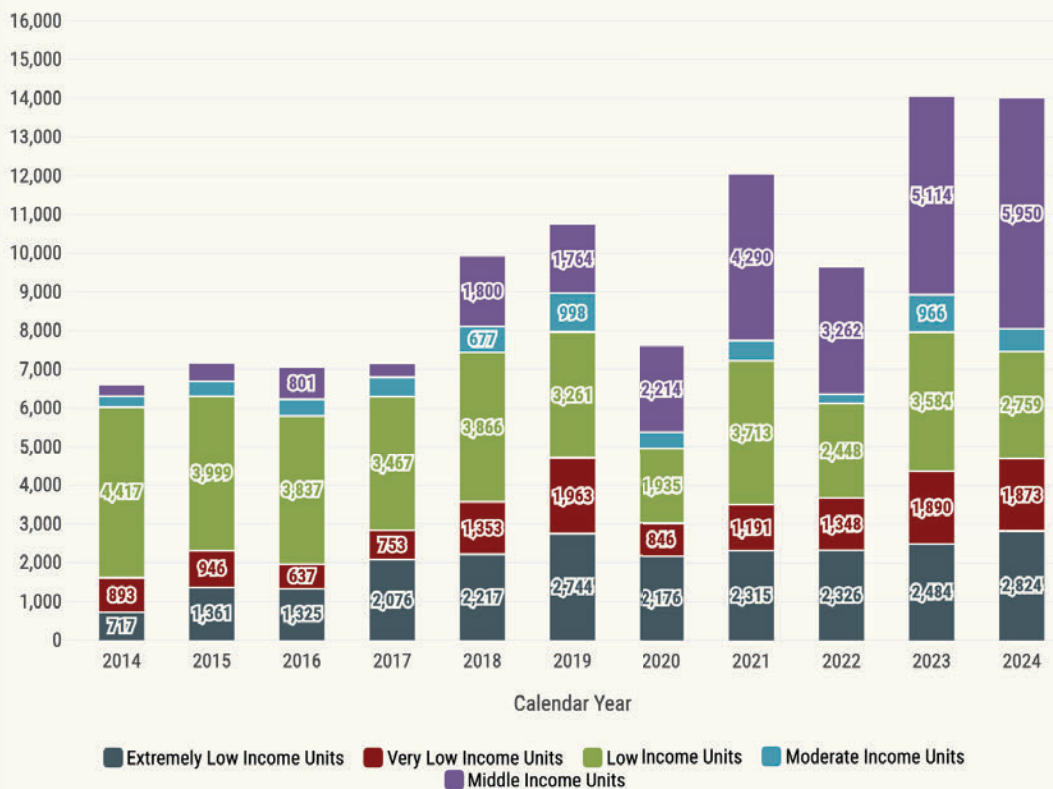
Building more market rate housing or encouraging the creation of more “affordable” housing for those earning 80 percent – or even 120 percent – of AMI will do nothing for the tens of thousands of people in NYC sleeping in shelters or on the streets, or the hundreds of thousands of doubled-up and precariously housed ELI New Yorkers. **Trickle-down housing strategies do not work.**

To begin to finally end mass homeless, the City should be financing at least 12,000 units of affordable housing per year for five years, targeted specifically to homeless and ELI households. As shown below, the City has yet to invest in housing for ELI households at such levels, which accounts for the small number of affordable ELI units completed year after year as shown in Figure 3.1 above. This will not change without intentional efforts undertaken *now*, especially since it will take years before those investments materialize into units that are ready for occupancy.

Figure 3.2

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “New Affordable Rental Housing Starts by AMI.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 16,000 in increments of 1,000. The horizontal axis displays calendar years from 2014 to 2024. Each bar is divided into up to six color-coded segments representing income bands: dark blue for Extremely Low Income Units, dark red for Very Low Income Units, green for Low Income Units, light blue for Moderate Income Units, and purple for Middle Income Units. The final bar, labeled “2024,” consists of a dark blue segment marked 2,824, a dark red segment marked 1,873, a green segment marked 2,759, a light blue segment, and a purple segment marked 5,950.

Figure 3.2
New Affordable Rental Housing Starts by AMI



Source: Affordable Housing Production by Building (NYC Open Data)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

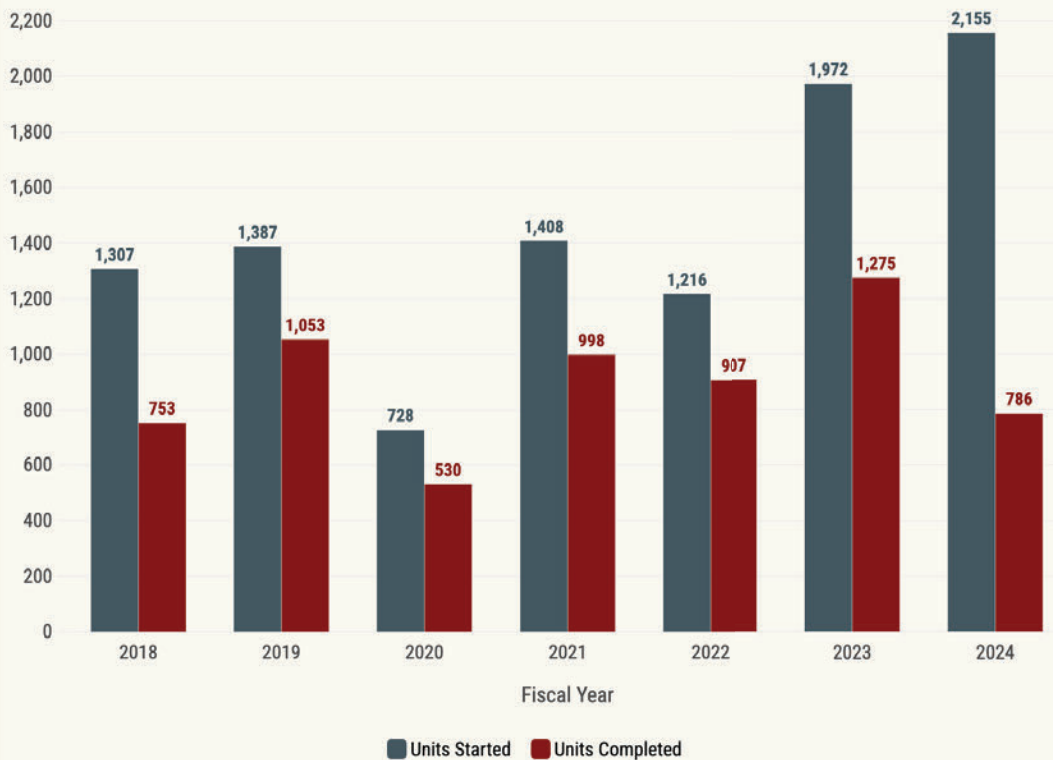
2. Supportive Housing

Supportive housing for homeless individuals with mental illness and other disabilities is not only proven to provide long-term stability for the individuals housed, but increases property values in the neighborhoods where it is built, and saves taxpayers approximately \$10,000 per year in averted costs for shelters, emergency rooms, justice involvement, and other government agencies and services. However, there is currently only about one available supportive housing unit for every five people deemed eligible. As shown in Figure 3.3, the City completed only 786 supportive housing units in FY2024 – the lowest number since FY2020.

Figure 3.3

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, “Supportive Housing Units Started and Completed for Homeless Households.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 2,200 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis displays fiscal years from 2018 to 2024. Each year contains two bars: a dark blue bar for units started and a dark red bar for units completed. The final group, labeled “2024,” includes a dark blue bar marked 2,155 and a dark red bar marked 786.

Figure 3.3
Supportive Housing Units Started and Completed for Homeless Households



Source: Mayor's Management Report (NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, 2024)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

In 2015, the City had committed to creating 15,000 supportive housing units by 2030 under the NY 15/15 program, but by the end of FY2024 had completed only 3,853 of those units.²⁸ While the number of supportive housing units started has increased in each of the past three years, the City must award contracts for all of the outstanding units by 2028, and should conduct annual assessments of need to ensure that there are always sufficient numbers of supportive units in the pipeline. Furthermore, the City should conduct any and all necessary repairs and renovations on any and all vacant and offline supportive housing units so that they can be configured appropriately to meet the needs of, and be available to, the homeless New Yorkers most in need of supportive housing placements.

28 “POLITICO Pro: Supportive Housing Production Falls Far Behind Schedule,” May 13, 2024, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2024/05/supportive-housing-production-falls-far-behind-schedule-00157518>.

The State similarly should undertake the necessary steps to rectify the delay in the 20,000 units of supportive housing statewide that Governor Cuomo had promised by 2030.²⁹ According to the Supportive Housing Network of New York,³⁰ only 8,400 of these units had received permanent awards by April 2024 and, of those, only 5,444 units had opened. **In other words, roughly two-thirds of the way into the timeline, only 27 percent of the target had been reached.**

3. Set-Asides

As noted above, the data in the Mayor's Management Report on the number of set-aside units financed and completed each year are inclusive of the supportive housing numbers. Figure 3.4 shows the number of set-aside units other than supportive housing units completed and financed each year.

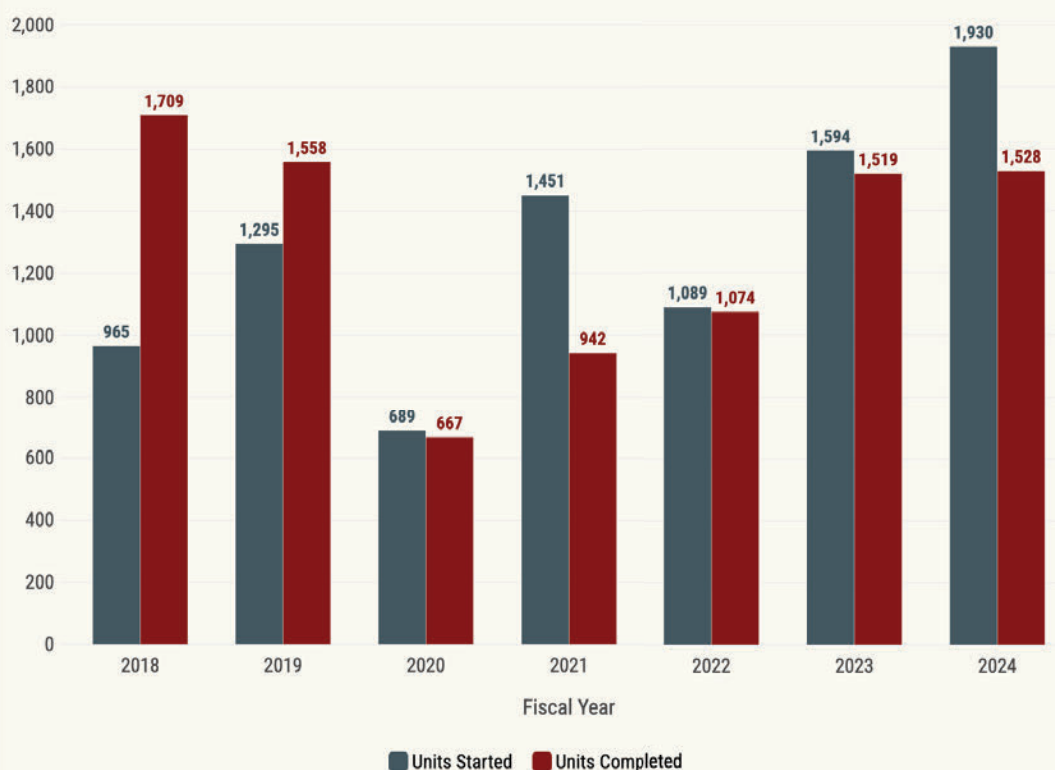
Figure 3.4

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, "Housing Units Started and Completed for Homeless Households." The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 2,000 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis displays fiscal years from 2018 to 2024. Each year contains two bars: a dark blue bar for units started and a dark red bar for units completed. The final group, labeled "2024," includes a dark blue bar marked 1,930 and a dark red bar marked 1,528.

Figure 3.4

Housing Units Started and Completed for Homeless Households

Does not include supportive housing units. Figures reflect the number of HPD-financed housing units for homeless households, including set-asides, voluntary preferences, and other placements intended for people exiting homelessness.



Source: Mayor's Management Report (NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, 2024)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

²⁹ In his 2016 State of the State address, then-Governor Cuomo committed to creating 20,000 units of supportive housing statewide by 2030. Governor Cuomo, however, refused to work with then-Mayor de Blasio on a new joint NY/NY supportive housing plan, and so the City's and State's efforts were never coordinated as they had been in the past. Production of the State units was also delayed when Governor Cuomo made appropriation of the \$1.9B for the first phase of the plan subject to a memorandum of understanding between the executive and legislature and then refused to move the MOU forward. It took 37 consecutive weeks of demonstrations by the Coalition and other advocates outside the Governor's Manhattan offices to convince him to release those funds.

³⁰ Supportive Housing Network of New York, *State of Supportive Housing*, 2024, 26, https://shnny.org/uploads/State_of_Supportive_Housing_4.4.24_final.pdf.

The number of set-aside units completed in FY2024 was roughly the same as in the previous year, and while the numbers are improved over the pandemic-era lows, they have not yet caught up to pre-pandemic levels. The number of set-aside units started has been increasing, however, and hit a high of 1,930 in FY2024. But it will take some time before NYC realizes the benefits of these increased investments.

B. ACCESS BARRIERS

1. CityFHEPS

Given that CityFHEPS vouchers have proven to be one of the more effective tools for moving homeless households into housing and stability, there is broad agreement that their use should be expanded to help more homeless and at-risk New Yorkers. In 2023, the City Council passed four laws to expand eligibility criteria and make other fixes to the program.³¹

But even though the four laws were passed, **Mayor Adams has refused to implement any of the reforms other than elimination of the 90-day shelter requirement** and the City is now engaged in protracted litigation with no end date in sight. Meanwhile, this restriction on CityFHEPS eligibility further contributes to a rising NYC shelter census.

This situation is further exacerbated by the unnecessary delays and hurdles that plague every step of the CityFHEPS process. Clients of the Coalition experience extended delays in processing their applications for CityFHEPS, approvals of apartments, and payments to landlords. For instance, one of our multiply-disabled adult family clients found an apartment that was accessible for them. But securing approval to use their CityFHEPS voucher for the apartment and moving in required our staff to make dozens of phone calls and send numerous emails to DHS administrators and rehousing staff over eight long months. Such extended effort was necessary in this and many other cases because of high staff turnover and lack of staff training at the shelters, communication challenges between different agencies, and a systemic inability within the shelter system to prioritize client move-outs and engage in problem solving when complications arise.

Formerly homeless families and individuals rehoused with CityFHEPS vouchers and households who used the vouchers to avoid eviction also face significant challenges with recertification, the conditions of their units, and other issues that threaten their tenancies. Homebase, the Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) program that provides homelessness prevention services throughout the city, is so overwhelmed with the many needs of tenants in housing court that their role as the only aftercare provider to CityFHEPS recipients often leads to missed opportunities and crises for people facing homelessness. The Coalition recently helped two households who, despite being eligible for CityFHEPS, **were evicted from their homes and entered the shelter system simply because they could not get an appointment with Homebase.** (The Coalition was able to quickly intervene and access the resources needed to get both families back in their homes.)

These examples reflect a broken and dysfunctional system that needlessly traumatizes people and wastes resources.³²

³¹ The package of reforms would:

- expand eligibility to households earning up to 200 percent of federal poverty level (FPL);
- remove the requirement that a household must have had resided in a DHS shelter for 90 days before becoming eligible, or that the household is currently or was previously in a DHS shelter;
- eliminate the work requirement for eligibility; and
- prohibit the City from deducting a utility allowance from the maximum rental allowance for a voucher.

³² To address some of these issues, on June 27, 2024, DHS launched its Rehousing Customer Service Call Center through which individuals can obtain status updates and brief guidance regarding certain aspects of the process. From Coalition’s own experience and those of our clients, while a welcome resource, there remain significant limitations to the assistance provided and the ability to resolve administrative barriers.

Addressing the problems with CityFHEPS alone will of course not solve mass homelessness. The DSS Commissioner noted in testimony to the City Council that **as of January 20, 2025, there were more than 11,000 households in the DHS shelter system with CityFHEPS shopping letters** (the document that allows someone to start looking for an apartment). Unless the City invests in creating more permanent housing for homeless and ELI households, this backlog will only continue to grow.³³

2. State FHEPS

So many NYC households require rent vouchers because the public assistance rent allowance, set by the State, is at a level far below actual rents in New York.³⁴ Governor Hochul must address this critical flaw. The State's FHEPS program, which is designed to bridge that gap, could and should play a much larger role in reducing the number of people in shelters, but its narrow entitlement eligibility requirement excludes all single adults and adult families as well as most families with minor children (who either have not been sued in eviction proceedings in Housing Court, or have not been evicted in a Housing Court proceeding and subsequently entered DHS shelter within 12 months of applying).

It is the State's responsibility to correct this problem, which impacts tens of thousands of homeless and at-risk New Yorkers. Broadening eligibility for the State's FHEPS voucher, or more to the point, increasing the public assistance rent allowance to fair market rent ("FMR") levels, would significantly reduce the need for emergency shelters in New York.

3. Section 8 Vouchers

Due to the high demand and limited number of vouchers available, the waitlist for Section 8 vouchers had been closed since 2009. Fortunately, in 2024 NYCHA reopened the waitlist. However, only 1,200 places on the waitlist were currently set aside for people sleeping in DHS shelters – a figure that is far too low given the scale of homelessness in New York City. More New Yorkers who are in the greatest need should be given priority for this invaluable tool, and the number of places on the waitlist for homeless households should be increased to 3,000.

The future of Section 8 voucher funding broadly remains to be seen. Already, the Federal government has decided to no longer fund the Emergency Housing Voucher program across the country. Given the City's 7,581 leased vouchers,³⁵ housing precarity and homelessness will likely increase in the year ahead, requiring the City and State to maximize all available resources, including Section 8 vouchers, to ensure fewer individuals end up on the street.

³³ New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare Oversight Hearing Administration of CityFHEPS, January 27, 2025, statement of Molly Wasow Park, Commissioner NYC Department of Social Services, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/Calendar.aspx>.

³⁴ The public assistance rent allowance is \$215/month for a single adult and \$400/month for a family of three with minor children. The comparable HUD FMR levels used by NYCHA in 2024 for basic Section 8 vouchers are \$2,696 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$3,027 for a two-bedroom apartment.

³⁵ Reflects total number of leased vouchers in NYC through HPD (with 2043 leased vouchers) and NYCHA (with 5538 leased vouchers). "Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Data Dashboard | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)," n.d., <https://www.hud.gov/helping-americans/housing-choice-vouchers-emergency-dash>, visited May 19, 2025.

4. Supportive Housing

The Coalition has long documented the difficulties that many homeless individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions encounter when attempting to establish eligibility for supportive housing with the Placement Assessment and Client Tracking (“PACT”) unit at HRA. They are subjected to lengthy and complex application processes laden with unnecessary documentation that result in the continued disenfranchisement of those whom supportive housing providers aim to serve. Supportive housing applicants are given no agency in the application process, as all documentation and every step of the process must go through an approved provider. High turnover rates and shortages in knowledgeable shelter staff intensify these challenges, making it difficult for shelter residents to get the help they need to navigate the cumbersome and opaque supportive housing application process.

In addition, **there is no official, impartial process for a supportive housing applicant wishing to challenge a negative eligibility determination**, and nothing documented on the eligibility decision (or anywhere else) instructing an applicant how to appeal. While some advocates are knowledgeable enough to know that they can contact a PACT reviewer to dispute a negative determination, ad hoc advocacy cannot be expected to address a systemic problem.

Further adding to these concerns are the reported plans by the State Office of Mental Health (“OMH”) and HRA to change the supportive housing approval categories to create a more binary approach: applicants would be eligible either for licensed or for unlicensed housing, based on the assessed severity of their mental health needs by individuals who do not meet, or have any meaningful contact, with the applicant. As such, applicants who could be eligible for both categories will no longer be able to access both licensed and unlicensed units to find an apartment that best meets their needs.³⁶ Accordingly, more individuals may find themselves unable to access housing that meets their needs.³⁷

³⁶ Those deemed eligible only for licensed housing would presumably have access only to “Level II” housing. These outdated models do not fully balance people’s needs with their strengths, agency, and the power that more integrated models can hold for recovery. Most providers of such units utilize institutional models of care for both financial and operational reasons, which strive to schedule the individuals’ days, require management of their benefits as a condition of residency (including becoming the individual’s payee through Social Security), and include a disproportionate number of shared (vs. single) units. These conditions and requirements are viewed negatively by many people in need of supportive housing and discourage them from considering these options.

³⁷ In addition to limiting options available to clients, this change reinforces many of our pre-existing concerns about licensed housing which reportedly has a high vacancy rate in part due to its undesirability and inappropriateness for many of the clients we serve. More specifically, from conversations with clients and providers, we understand that clients often find these units to be in poor condition and inaccessible – despite tenants paying a higher portion of their income towards their rent for those units as noted above. The shared spaces also have led to serious conflicts and safety concerns. Further, our clients convey that the level of care offered does not recognize their experience of having survived independently for years in the community, and so they frequently turn down offers to reside in these units.

Overcoming eligibility hurdles is just part of the challenge. Administrative bottlenecks and chronic underfunding hamper effective operation and service delivery within supportive housing frameworks. Persistent barriers, such as referral processes that do not account for the various accessibility needs of individuals, inaccessible interview locations, and mismatched eligibility assessments serve to exacerbate the gap between the availability of supportive placements and the swelling demand. The processes lack transparency and do not empower individuals involved to participate actively in decisions about their living arrangements. As the Coalition and Legal Aid Society pointed out more than four years ago in testimony before the City Council Committee on General Welfare:³⁸

Applicants must undergo an interview with a supportive housing provider, where experiences vary widely. There is no central oversight to ensure consistent best practices among housing providers – a negative byproduct of having multiple sources of government funding and regulations for supportive housing. This inconsistency is extremely challenging for many applicants. For example, although homeless applicants have already submitted extensive documentation with their 2010e applications, some supportive housing providers ask them to submit additional materials. We have also encountered examples of providers violating local laws in refusing to provide translation services and, in some cases, refusing to consider a client for a particular housing development because the provider does not want to secure language access for the client. . . . Matching applicants to units that can accommodate their disabling conditions has been problematic, and the evaluation requirements often do not take into consideration the applicant’s physical disabilities. Because of inconsistencies between providers, applicants are often left confused, overwhelmed, and unprepared for the interview process.

Accordingly, as shown in Figure 3.5, less than 25 percent of eligible households are accepted into supportive housing.

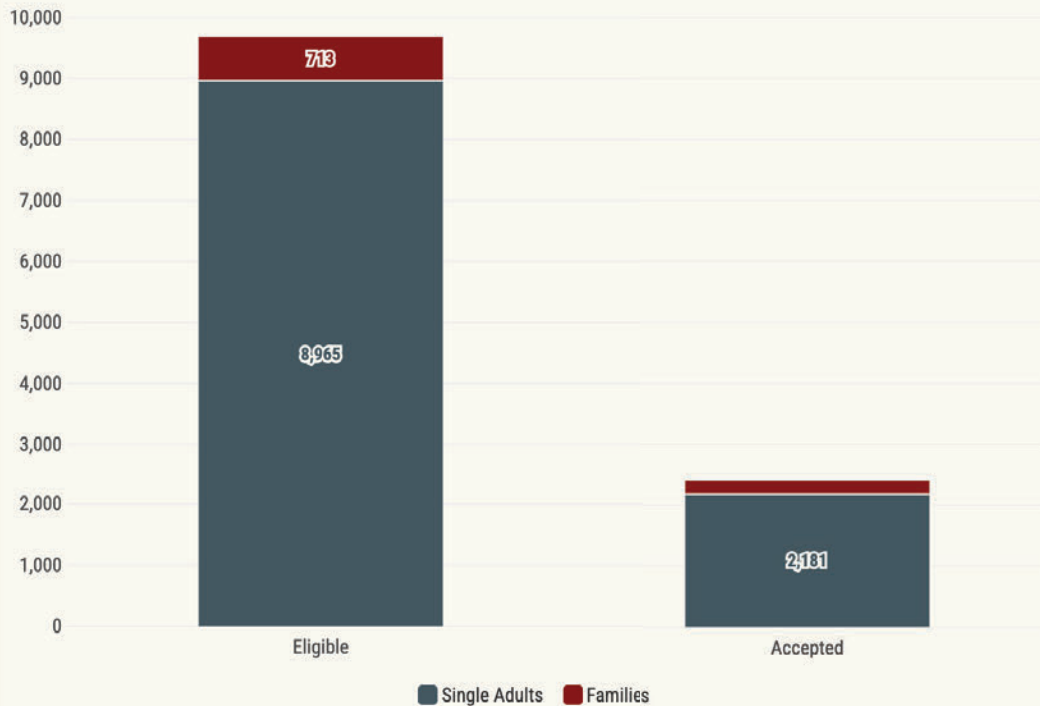
38 Giselle Routhier & Josh Goldfein, “Testimony of Coalition for the Homeless and the Legal Aid Society on Oversight: Supportive Housing,” December 14, 2020, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Testimony_SupportiveHousingOversight_FINAL.pdf.

Figure 3.5

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “Unique Households Determined Eligible vs. Accepted to Supportive Housing, Fiscal Year 2024.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 10,000 in increments of 1,000. The horizontal axis displays two categories: “Eligible” and “Accepted.” Each bar is divided into two color-coded segments: dark blue for single adults and dark red for families. The first bar, labeled “Eligible,” contains a dark blue segment marked 8,965 and a dark red segment above it, labeled “713.” The final bar, labeled “Accepted,” contains a dark blue segment marked 2,181 and a thin dark red segment above it.

Figure 3.5

Unique Households Determined Eligible vs. Accepted to Supportive Housing, Fiscal Year 2024




Source: Local Law 3/2022 (NYC Department of Social Services, 2024)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

In FY2024, there were 146 DHS and DHS-contracted shelters (69 percent of 211 shelters) that had zero supportive housing applications approved (or a number so low that it could not be reported for concern of identifying a specific individual) – far more than the 65 shelters (31 percent of the total) that had more than five households accepted into supportive housing.³⁹ Those are even worse numbers than in the previous year, when 115 shelters had zero applications approved (or a number so low that it could not be reported).

³⁹ This analysis is based only on Local Law 3 and not other placements that occur outside of the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS). “NYC HRA CAS LOCAL LAW 3 REPORTING ON COORDINATED ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM (CAPS),” NYC HRA CAS LOCAL LAW 3 REPORTING ON COORDINATED ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM (CAPS), 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/news/HRA-Local-Law-3-CFY2024-08272024.pdf>.



IV. SHELTER, HOUSING, AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

Image description: A subway platform at Bushwick-Aberdeen station with white tiled walls and a yellow safety edge. A person sits on the ground with their belongings strewn around them.

IV. SHELTER, HOUSING, AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

Concerns about unhoused individuals with perceived serious mental illness (“SMI”) in the transit system have dominated much of the public discourse regarding homelessness in NYC, driven largely by headlines in the tabloids. Mayor Adams and Governor Hochul, in their efforts to increase subway ridership, have responded by framing this as an issue of public safety and law enforcement, instead of as a tragic failure of our mental health and housing systems that leave thousands of people in our city without the help they want and need. As a result, every level of engagement and assistance for these individuals is under-resourced, poorly designed, or misdirected.

These failures extend to individuals with mental health conditions in the shelter system, explaining in part why so many end up bedding down in public spaces until they find some way of securing permanent housing and mental health care that meets their needs.

A. FORCED REMOVALS OF UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS

Since Mayor Adams took office, he has been laser-focused on removing unhoused New Yorkers from the streets and subways without any real plan to address their needs. Invoking rhetoric characterizing them as criminals, he has doubled down on using law enforcement to temporarily extract these New Yorkers from public view, conducting approximately 2,300 encampment sweeps from January to September 2024⁴⁰ and thousands of involuntary removals of individuals experiencing SMI in 2024.⁴¹

City data shows that **of the nearly 3,600 individuals impacted by encampment sweeps, only 114 were placed into shelters and none were placed into permanent or supportive housing.**⁴² But because the City fails to adequately track the outcomes of the involuntary removals conducted, it is not clear how many individuals with SMI were transported, how many of them were actually admitted to the hospital, and what happened to them after leaving the hospital⁴³ The only thing we can surmise is that targeted individuals are further traumatized, do not get the treatment they need, and eventually return to the very places from which they were removed.

In each of Mayor Adams’ and Governor Hochul’s approaches, the consistent theme has been to increase police involvement in lieu of investing in permanent supportive housing and adequate voluntary and community-based mental health care. The more than \$3.6 million spent by the City in 2024 alone in connection with sweeps (\$1 million of which was for NYPD)⁴⁴ could have instead enabled the City to house more than the 175 of the 955 unsheltered people who had been approved for supportive housing during just a few months of 2024.⁴⁵

40 NYC Department of Homeless Services, *Local Law 34 of 2024 Quarterly Interagency Reporting on Encampment Cleanups and Aided Removals*. New York: Quarters 1-3 of FY2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page>.

41 Mayor’s Office of Community Health, *2024 Annual Report of Involuntary Transports*, (New York, NY: January 31, 2025), https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/?sdm_process_download=1&download_id=7069.

42 NYC Department of Homeless Services, *Local Law 34 of 2024 Quarterly Interagency Reporting on Encampment Cleanups and Aided Removals*.

43 Mayor’s Office of Community Health, *2024 Annual Report of Involuntary Transports*.

44 NYC Department of Homeless Services, *Local Law 34 of 2024 Quarterly Interagency Reporting on Encampment Cleanups and Aided Removals*.

45 Gwynne Hogan, “Most Street-Homeless Housing Applicants Never Get a Shot, Inside Stats Show,” *THE CITY* - NYC News, January 6, 2025, <http://www.thecity.nyc/2025/01/06/homeless-supportive-housing-eric-adams-statistics/>.

B. OUTREACH TO UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING SMI

Given what New Yorkers observe on the streets and subways, one may be surprised that the City and State launched numerous programs targeted to unsheltered individuals experiencing SMI, several of which include, or are connected with, NYPD. However, despite their apparent prevalence, there is limited data available regarding the effectiveness of this alphabet soup of outreach groups, some of which are outlined in the table below. What is known is that many of them – such as the IMT and ACT teams – are underfunded and thus hampered by extensive waitlists, impacting even those who seek assistance voluntarily.⁴⁶ Other efforts are misguided in their approach, and none of them effectively place individuals without homes into permanent housing that meets their needs – which is the only way to end the inhumane and ineffective revolving door between subways, shelters, hospitals, jails, and the streets.

Taken together, this suggests that the City and State should cease promulgating more outreach programs, especially those utilizing law enforcement, and instead focus on housing placements, on necessary modifications to make these services more effective in achieving their intended goals, and on improved data tracking and evaluation of existing programs to inform future funding.

⁴⁶ For instance, as of March 2025, it was reported that IMT and ACT had waitlists of 672 and 682, respectively. (Caroline Lewis, “NYC Council Press Officials to Cut Wait Times for Mobile Mental Health Teams,” *Gothamist*, March 24, 2025, <https://gothamist.com/news/nyc-council-press-officials-to-cut-wait-times-for-mobile-mental-health-teams>.) Note that with respect to ACT, this marks a reduction of over half of those who were on the waitlist as of October 2024 per data on file with Coalition for the Homeless, received in response to a FOIL request.

SEVERAL CITY AND STATE PROGRAMS TARGETED TOWARD UNSHELTERED NEW YORKERS

CITY-FUNDED PROGRAMS		
Program Name	Agencies Involved	Program Intent and Details
B-HEARD Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) • FDNY Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative 911 response for mental health crises in certain pilot police precincts in the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. • Dispatches teams of mental health professionals and FDNY EMS instead of police for certain mental health-related calls. • Provides on-site stabilization, crisis counseling, and connections to outpatient or inpatient care. • Of the 51,329 mental health 911 calls in B-HEARD’s operational areas during FY2024, only 40 percent (or 20,528 calls) were deemed eligible for a B-HEARD response and B-HEARD teams responded to only 73 percent (or 14,955) of such referrals.⁴⁷ Ultimately, this means that B-HEARD was dispatched to only 29 percent of the mental health calls in the areas in which it is operational.
CRT Co-Response Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOHMH • NYPD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pairs mental health professionals with specially trained NYPD officers. • Proactive outreach to individuals with known mental health needs who may pose a risk to themselves or others. • De-escalates crises on scene, connects individuals to treatment, and provides follow-up support. • Given staffing shortages, currently only has a single daily shift operating Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with fewer vehicles.
HOME-STAT Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses daily canvassing and 24/7 outreach teams to locate individuals in need, with a special emphasis on Manhattan business districts. Also responds to 311 calls citywide. • Develops the “by-name” list of every person living on NYC streets. • Connects people encountered through outreach to mental health services, shelter, supportive housing, and other resources.

⁴⁷ The Mayor’s Office of Community Mental Health, “Re-imagining New York City’s mental health emergency response,” 2024, <https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/bheard-data>.

CITY-FUNDED PROGRAMS		
Program Name	Agencies Involved	Program Intent and Details
IMT Intensive Mobile Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOHMH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves individuals with complex mental health needs who have difficulty engaging in traditional treatment. • Multidisciplinary teams that do not include law enforcement provide flexible, long-term outreach and support (often in home or street settings). • Addresses housing stability, medication management, and social services. • While some positive results identified regarding retention rates, recent audit flagged need for better performance measures and data tracking to assess client outcomes.
PATH Partnership Assistance for Transit Homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYPD Transit Bureau • DHS • NYC Health + Hospitals (“H+H”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects unsheltered individuals with shelter, mental health services, and other supports. • Pairs NYPD officers with nurses and social workers from DHS & H+H. • Conducts outreach at subway stations (primarily evening/overnight hours).
SHOW Street Health Outreach & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operated by H+H, in partnership with community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deploys mobile units to provide basic health services, mental health screenings, COVID-19 testing/vaccinations, and harm reduction supplies to unsheltered individuals. • Staffed by nurses, social workers, and peer counselors who offer on-site mental health assessments and referrals to ongoing care. • Often collaborates with DHS Street Outreach Teams to ensure continuity of services but SHOW itself does not facilitate transition from streets to housing.

STATE-FUNDED PROGRAMS		
Program Name	Agencies Involved	Program Intent and Details
ACT Assertive Community Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMH • Partnerships with community providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multidisciplinary teams (psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, peer specialists) deliver in-home/community-based services. • Target individuals with SMI who have high hospitalization or justice-system involvement. • Provide continuous, wraparound support including medication management, therapy, and life-skills training.
CTI Critical Time Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multidisciplinary teams (mental health professionals, nurses, social workers, peer specialists) deliver in-home/community-based services. • Target individuals with SMI who need assistance during transitions in their care (i.e., discharge from inpatient psychiatric care, ER, etc.). • Provides up to 9 months of assistance.
FACT Forensic Assertive Community Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMH • Operates in NYC through contracted providers that specialize in forensic populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ACT model adapted for individuals with criminal justice involvement and SMI. • Uses a multidisciplinary team (psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, peer specialists, etc.) to engage clients in the community—including those who may be homeless or unstably housed. • Focuses on reducing recidivism and improving treatment adherence by providing intensive, wraparound services (medication management, therapy, case management).
SCOUT Subway Co-response Outreach Team ⁴⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOHMH • MTA PD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mobile outreach initiative designed to engage the most severe cases of individuals experiencing SMI in NYC subways. • Clinician-led teams conduct on-site crisis assessments, deliver immediate support, and facilitate direct referrals to shelters and hospitals. • Operates 2 teams in Manhattan during daytime; expecting to expand to 10 teams in 2025 operating in other boroughs.
SOS Safe Options Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMH • Collaborations with local providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized outreach to individuals with SMI who are homeless or unstably housed. • Employ harm-reduction strategies, connect people to housing and mental health services. • Work closely with local shelters, hospitals, and community organizations.

48 "SCOUT (Subway Co-Response Outreach Teams)," presented to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board, March 27, 2024, <https://new.mta.info/document/135741>.

While placement into permanent supportive housing with adequate and appropriate mental health care services is always the desired outcome, there are indeed some individuals who first need psychiatric hospitalization due to the severity of their illness. But the State has failed to ensure that there are enough psychiatric beds to meet the need. In fact, **there were fewer inpatient psychiatric beds at the end of FY2024 than there were in 2014.**⁴⁹ The 2023-2024 State Budget included funding for 150 new psychiatric beds, **but only two of those beds are in New York City.**

Further, even though the 2024-2025 Budget provided an additional 200 State-operated psychiatric beds, as of early 2025 only 125 had opened throughout the state, of which in NYC, 25 are for homeless individuals with SMI who also have a substance use disorder and 25 are for individuals with SMI from Rikers or other city jails.⁵⁰ Many more beds are required in NYC to address current needs even before the expansion of involuntary removal pushed by Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams in 2025.⁵¹

C. SHELTERS

1. Deficiencies in Meeting Needs of Individuals with SMI in Shelter

Individuals with SMI in shelters similarly experience the City's and State's failures at providing the services that meet their needs. And more broadly speaking, **emergency shelters are not adequate settings for people with SMI, who need permanent housing and access to mental health care.**

Some of the challenges exist at the outset as people with apparent psychiatric and/or cognitive needs often experience difficulty accessing shelter. Adult families in particular have higher rates of mental health issues, disabilities, and other medical needs. Therefore, the complex shelter eligibility process is inaccessible and poses a significant challenge.⁵²

As illustrated in the following chart – and consistent with the historic lows of the past two years – an appallingly low 22 percent of adult families were found eligible for shelter.

49 New York State Office of Mental Health, "December 2014 Monthly Report: OMH Facility Performance Metrics and Community Service Investments," <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/transformation/docs/2014/december-2014-report.pdf>; New York State Office of Mental Health, "June 2024 Monthly Report: OMH Facility Performance Metrics and Community Service Investments," <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/transformation/docs/omh-monthly-report-jun-2024.pdf>.

50 "Governor Hochul Announces 125 New Psychiatric Beds Opened at State-Operated Facilities Since December 2024," Governor Kathy Hochul, April 3, 2025, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-125-new-psychiatric-beds-opened-state-operated-facilities-december>.

51 The Mayor announced the launch of "Bridge to Home" through which H&H will provide 100 beds to individuals experiencing SMI to avoid their discharge to the streets. However, it is unclear when these beds will become available and how individuals will access them.

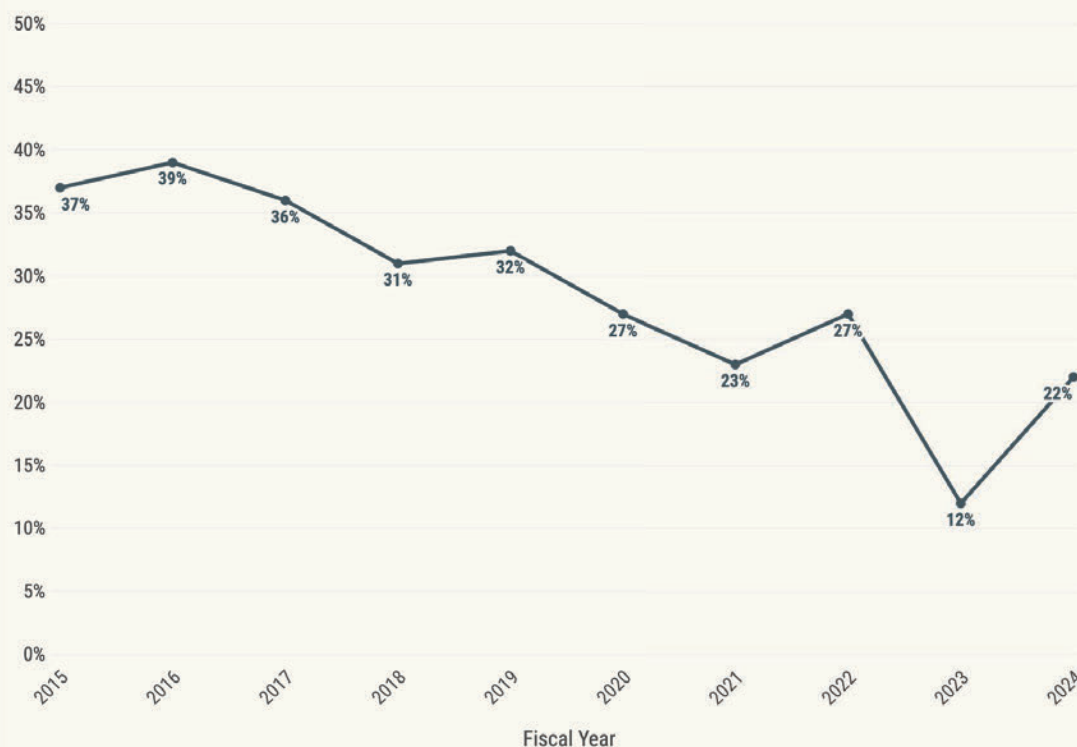
52 For instance, the requirement to provide a detailed and documented housing history is difficult for any applicant to meet, but impossible for adult families who have spent long periods living on the streets.

Figure 4.1

Image Description: A line graph labeled “Percentage of Adult Families Found Eligible for DHS Shelter.” The vertical axis lists percentages from 0% to 50% in increments of 5%. The horizontal axis shows Fiscal Years 2015 to 2024. One dark blue line displays percentages for the adult families eligibility rate each fiscal, with a value of 22% for 2024.

Figure 4.1

Percentage of Adult Families Found Eligible for DHS Shelter



Source: Local Law 79/2022 and 136/2024 (NYC Open Data)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

But even this number fails to tell the full story, because many of those found eligible had to submit multiple applications before receiving such determination. As illustrated in Figure 4.2 below, hundreds of applications are submitted each month for shelter, yet relatively few people are successful. What the chart is unable to show is that, in more cases than not, those who were successful in one particular month filed applications months before eventually being approved. For instance, **in December 2024, 17 percent of adult families found eligible had to submit six or more applications over the course of multiple months before being approved.**

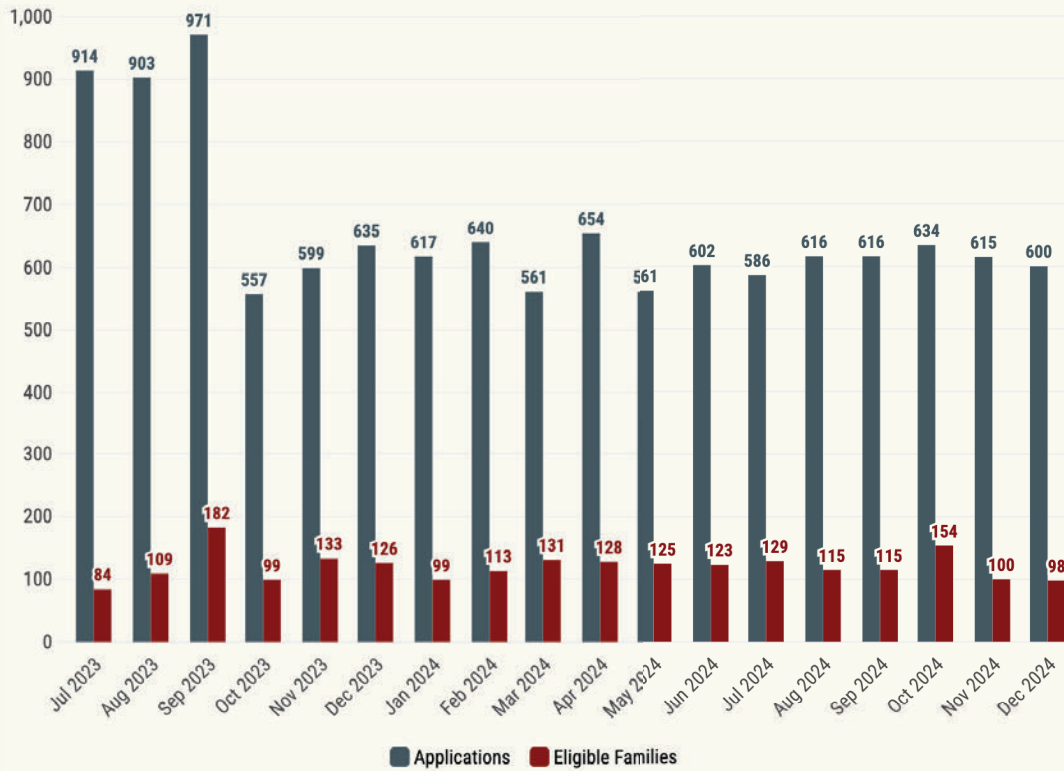
Put simply, the system for determining shelter eligibility for adult families is broken and does not meet the needs of the population it is designed to serve – and, as a result, people in need of shelter are systematically being turned back out onto the streets.

Figure 4.2

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, “Applications for Shelter from Adult Families vs. Unduplicated Adult Families Found Eligible for Shelter.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 1,000 in increments of 100. The horizontal axis displays monthly dates from July 2023 to December 2024. Each month contains two bars: a dark blue bar for applications and a dark red bar for eligible families. The final group, labeled “Dec ‘24,” includes a dark blue bar marked 600 and a dark red bar marked 98.

Figure 4.2

Applications for Shelter from Adult Families vs. Unduplicated Adult Families Found Eligible for Shelter



Source: Local Law 79/2022 and 136/2024 (NYC Open Data)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

But even if individuals are able to navigate these challenges, their needs are not being identified during shelter intake and assessment, despite the City’s current screening tools. And even in the case where their needs are identified, many remain unaddressed – regardless of an individual’s placement in one of the approximately 40 “mental health shelters.”⁵³ This is partly related to the fact that these facilities are often congregate shelters, the configuration and operation of which are known to trigger or exacerbate pre-existing psychiatric symptoms. In addition, the City often fails to properly assess, approve, and fulfill reasonable accommodations (“RAs”) for these individuals.⁵⁴ Further, our work with numerous shelter residents has illustrated that these facilities often:

- **Wrongly characterize** symptoms or behaviors related to individuals’ disabilities as “non-compliance,” resulting in adverse outcomes such as **criminalization** or, in the months ahead, grounds for **sanctions and ejection from shelter**.⁵⁵
- Have **low staffing levels**, which preclude them from meeting a resident’s mental health needs throughout the day, particularly during the shelter’s busiest times and overnight.
- **Do not require any specialized skill set** to work at a mental health shelter.
- **Are not required to offer specialized services on site**, nor are any direct linkages made if those services are not available on site.
- **Fail to provide services** that could assist residents to engage in care if interested.
- **Do not make specialized training available to mental health shelter staff** to ensure identification of client needs.

2. Low Barrier Shelter Beds

Placement in Safe Havens and stabilization beds (“low-barrier shelters”) is far preferable to placement in the larger congregate facilities, even those characterized as mental health shelters which often fail to provide the needed level of mental health care services. However, the number of low-barrier shelter beds, which are available for various unsheltered homeless individuals in addition to those experiencing SMI, is far below what is needed. In fact, the approximately 4,000 beds currently existing are consistently full. The City has been slowly increasing the number of low-barrier shelter beds, and the Mayor recently announced adding 900 more such beds,⁵⁶ but even so, the number remains far short of what is needed.

53 The term “mental health shelter” is somewhat of a misnomer. Even though these facilities may have some specialized staff and on-site behavioral services, they are not treatment facilities. In fact, DHS policy explicitly provides that individuals being transferred from a medical facility to DHS “who require a Mental Health Shelter placement must be linked to community mental health treatment prior to referral to DHS. Mental Health Shelters do not provide skilled nursing services, assistance with activities of daily living, or supervised medication administration.” NYC Department of Homeless Services, *Referral from Healthcare Facilities to DHS Single Adult Facilities*, DHS-PB-2018-009 (R1), January 4, 2023, <http://onlineresources.wnyc.net/nychra/docs/pb-2018-009.pdf> (accessed May 22, 2025).

54 Some notable problems experienced by Coalition clients regarding RAs include:

- People experiencing SMI often receiving **incorrect determinations** of “insufficient evidence” that the requested RAs will meet their needs, despite recommendations by clinical professionals.
- People are often **denied RAs for “lack of evidence”** if they are disconnected from care.
- Certain RAs have **long fulfillment wait times**, even after approval.

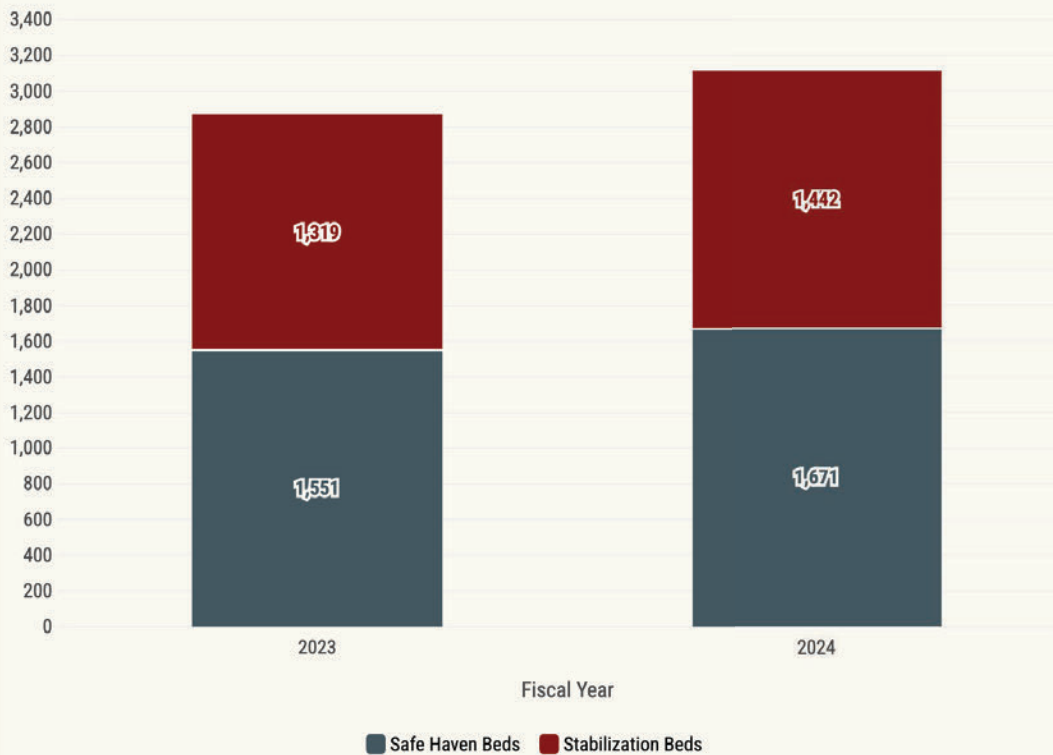
55 The City recently announced that it will reinstitute a policy of removing people from shelter for reasons permitted under State law. As of the date of this report, the final policy has not been released and no official start date has been announced, however, the City has identified about 20 shelters at which to launch the effort. Gwynne Hogan and Katie Honan, “City Tests New Shelter Rules Advocates Warn Will Lead to More Street Homelessness,” *THE CITY* - NYC News, March 19, 2025, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/03/18/street-homeless-shelter-adams-bloomberg-rules-molly-park-dhs/>.

56 Mayor Eric L. Adams, “STREET HOMELESS SOLUTIONS 2025: Adams Administration’s Approach to Achieving a Continuum of Care,” 2025, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2025/StHomelessSolution_v7.pdf.

Figure 4.3

Image Description: A stacked vertical bar chart labeled, “Actual Capacity Levels for Low-Barrier Shelter Beds.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 3,400 in increments of 200. The horizontal axis displays two fiscal years: 2023 and 2024. Each bar is divided into two color-coded segments: dark blue for Safe Haven Beds and dark red for Stabilization Beds. The first bar, labeled “2023,” includes a dark blue segment marked 1,551 and a dark red segment marked 1,319. The final bar, labeled “2024,” includes a dark blue segment marked 1,671 and a dark red segment marked 1,442.

Figure 4.3
Actual Capacity Levels for Low-Barrier Shelter Beds



Source: Adult Shelter Daily Statistics (NYC Department of Homeless Services)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

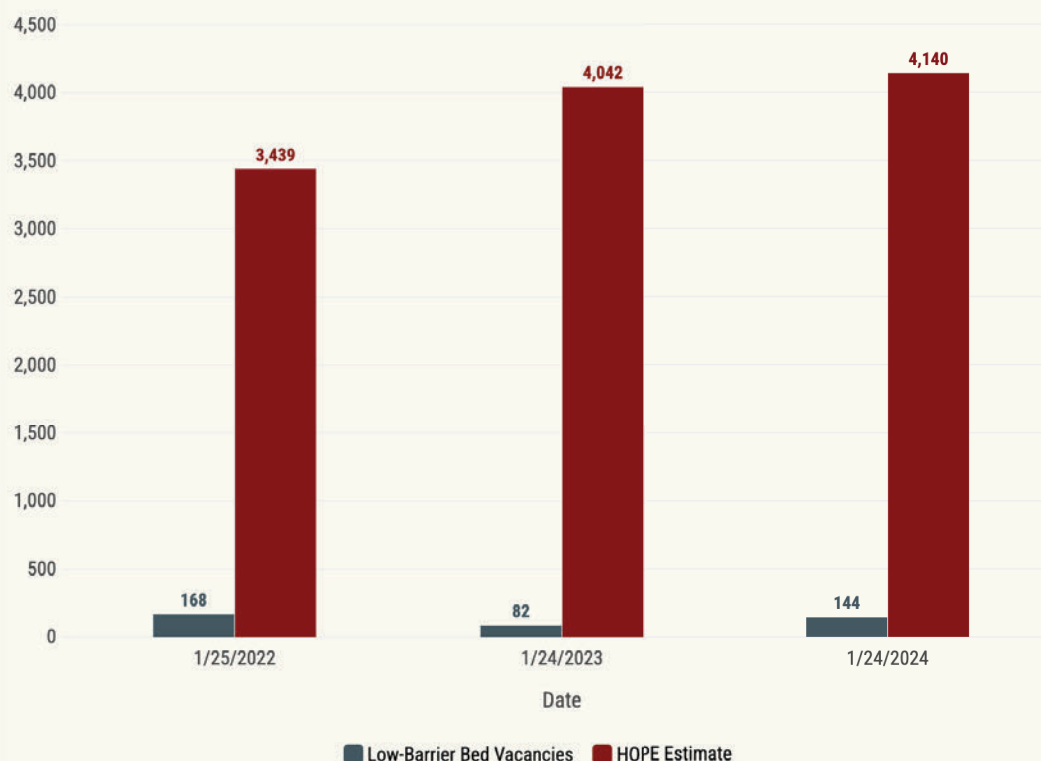
The Federally-mandated annual HOPE estimate conducted by the City captures only a portion of the number of people sleeping unsheltered in NYC due to its flawed methodology.⁵⁷ But comparing even that underestimate with the number of vacant low-barrier shelter beds illustrates how far short the City is falling.

⁵⁷ Coalition for the Homeless, “How Many People are Homeless in NYC Altogether?”

Figure 4.4

Image Description: A grouped vertical bar chart labeled, “Low-Barrier Shelter Bed Vacancies vs. Annual HOPE Estimate of Unsheltered Homeless Individuals.” The vertical axis lists numbers from 0 to 4,500 in increments of 500. The horizontal axis displays three dates: 1/25/2022, 1/24/2023, and 1/24/2024. Each date contains two bars: a short dark blue bar for Low-Barrier Bed Vacancies and a tall dark red bar for the HOPE Estimate. The final group, labeled “1/24/2024,” includes a dark blue bar marked 144 and a dark red bar marked 4,140.

Figure 4.4
Low-Barrier Shelter Bed Vacancies vs. Annual HOPE Estimate of Unsheltered Homeless Individuals



Sources: Stabilization Daily Statistics (NYC Department of Homeless Services), Safe Haven Daily Statistics (NYC Department of Homeless Services), Homeless Outreach Population Estimate Results (NYC Department of Homeless Services, 2024)



Interactive chart available [here](#)

Setting aside the deficiency in numbers, in September 2024, the City adopted a new policy establishing that only individuals with certain immigration status and documented health conditions and periods of living unsheltered will be eligible for these low-barrier beds.⁵⁸ If upheld by the court,⁵⁹ this policy has the effect of relegating many individuals, particularly those experiencing SMI, to the streets and subways where they will be further subjected to trauma, criminalization, and involuntary treatment.

⁵⁸ NYC Department of Homeless Services, *Joint Command Center's Facility Placement Process*, DHS-PB-2024-13, September 24, 2024, http://onlineresources.wnyc.net/nycra/docs/dhs-pb-2024-013_jcc_facility_placement_process.pdf (accessed May 22, 2025).

⁵⁹ The Safety Net Project of Urban Justice Center filed a lawsuit on January 23, 2025, challenging this policy on procedural grounds given the City's failure to follow the City Administrative Procedure Act in promulgating this new rule. *Urban Justice Center v. Park et. al.* 151065/2025



V. RECOMMENDATIONS

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Instead of doubling down on involuntary removals, encampment sweeps, and both shelter practices and housing policies that continue to fail all New Yorkers, it is time the City and State adopted the evidenced-based solutions we have proposed, which, include the following.

INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY & RESOURCES TO RETAIN HOUSING

The next Mayor must:

- Build at least 12,000 new units of deeply-subsidized affordable housing for homeless and ELI households every year for the next five years, ensuring that a portion will accommodate individuals' specific accessibility needs.
- Fulfill the promise to create 15,000 supportive housing units within the next three years, and make sure all who need supportive housing can get it going forward.
- Implement the CityFHEPS expansions passed by the City Council.
- Expedite the CityFHEPS lease-up process.
- Allocate at least 3,000 NYCHA units per year for households in DHS shelters.
- Combat Source of Income discrimination by increasing funding and staffing for the City Commission on Human Rights.
- Increase funds for Right to Counsel to ensure that all low-income households (instead of only 40 percent of eligible households) have lawyers in Housing Court.
- Expand eligibility for supportive housing to homeless people leaving jail and prison, preventing unnecessary shelter stays or street homelessness that are currently required to qualify as "chronically homeless." ([Intro. 1100-2024](#))
- Ensure that the over 5,000 apartments currently sitting empty are filled with households currently living in shelter.
- Sufficiently fund the Vacant Unit Readiness Program and eliminate the long turn-around times to re-lease NYCHA units after the prior tenant vacates.
- Ensure that New Yorkers who are in the greatest need are given priority for Section 8 vouchers and that the number of places on the waitlist for homeless households is increased to 3,000.

INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY & RESOURCES TO RETAIN HOUSING

Governor Hochul must:

- Expedite the implementation of the Housing Access Voucher Program, a new a State-funded rent subsidy for homeless and ELI households.
- Expand access to State FHEPS as an entitlement.
- Increase temporary assistance to individuals and families living in poverty, including:
 - Raising the amount of the cash assistance basic needs allowance that helps people pay for transportation, utilities, cleaning and personal care products, and clothing. Currently it is only \$183 per month for a single adult. ([A.106/S.1127](#))
 - Increasing the shelter allowance, which is used to pay for housing costs, and has not been increased for households without children since 1988 (currently \$215 for a single adult in New York City) and for families with children since 2003 (currently \$400 for a family of three, for example). ([A.108/S.113](#))
- Remove all State budget appropriation restrictions on New York City's authority to claim reimbursement for all rent subsidy, rent supplement, public assistance, or other rental assistance programs.
- Accelerate the pace of production of the 20,000 units of supportive housing pledged by former Governor Cuomo in 2016 by fully funding the construction and operation of the remaining 11,600 units.
- Expedite the development of 3,500 new OMH housing units authorized in the 2023-2024 State budget to ensure their rapid deployment to help ease the housing crisis for people with SMI.
- Pass legislation to allow New York City to offer CityFHEPS vouchers to people who are undocumented and often have been in shelter for years ([S.958/A.1503](#)).
- Require the City to earmark funds for quality case management services designed to help new arrivals over a sufficient amount of time necessary to achieve stability.
- Ensure that every new arrival is screened for available immigration relief and work authorization through rapid-response services, while building the infrastructure of immigration legal services.

The next Mayor and Governor Hochul should together:

- Expand access to supportive housing and other permanent housing for adult families – a population with disproportionately high levels of disability and complex needs.
- Ensure effective reentry planning for individuals being released from court supervision, prisons, and jails.

ADDRESS NEEDS OF UNSHELTERED POPULATION, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH SMI

The next Mayor must:

- Implement a true “Housing First” approach to connecting unsheltered people with SMI with permanent, supportive housing that meets their needs.
- Allocate \$196 million to add 4,000 new low barrier beds for unsheltered New Yorkers.
- Invest \$22 million in baselined funds to create additional IMT teams. This additional funding would bring the total to \$64 million and help address the critical shortage of services.
- Remove NYPD and Department of Sanitation from homeless outreach and end “Quality of Life” enforcement against homeless individuals. Calls to 311 regarding homeless individuals should dispatch only trained outreach workers, potentially including peer specialists.
- Refrain from, or cease, issuing temporary suspensions of individuals’ access to shelter for violating shelter rules or failing to comply with their independent living plans as such sanction policy results in more unsheltered homelessness, and will disproportionately impact those with SMI.
- Improve data tracking and evaluation of existing outreach programs to inform both future funding and necessary modifications to make these services more effective in achieving their intended goals.

Governor Hochul must:

- Require that local social services agencies ensure that any homeless person who is involuntarily transported to a hospital by police or outreach teams be connected to housing upon discharge, utilizing the proven Housing First approach.
- Given the functional elimination of veterans’ homelessness through a similar approach, New York City should start by leveraging whatever portion of the 4,000 vacant supportive housing beds that are available and that are acceptable to those involuntarily removed. This may require some renovation of those units as well as some modifications to program requirements to make these units more desirable and to ensure they meet the individuals’ needs.
- Add 14 new ACT adult teams in New York City to eliminate the wait list.

The next Mayor and Governor Hochul should together:

- Except in cases where an individual is having a psychiatric emergency as identified by the individual, an appropriately trained medical professional, or an advocate, friend, or family member with knowledge of the individual’s situation, prohibit involuntary transport for any person who is on a waiting list for voluntary services, and immediately connect that person with voluntary services.



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for the
homeless

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