PIPE DREAMS & PICKET FENCES:

DIRECTION FROM DENVER'S HOUSELESS PEOPLE ON HOUSING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF TODAY'S PUBLIC HOUSING

SURVEY & REPORT BY:

HOUSEKEYS ACTION NETWORK DENVER

HAND

MARCH 2023

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Acknowledgments

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with support from
Western Regional Advocacy Project

Executive Summary

2022 Housing Survey

What kind of housing must we fight for that will lead to enduring change? The 2022 Housing Survey, conducted by Housekeys Action Network Denver (HAND) in Denver, Colorado, documents nearly 1,000 houseless people's input around the housing needed today. This report shares the results of surveys, interviews, forums, and community meetings. If we are working to "end homelessness," as is so often stated, this work must be directed by houseless people themselves. Lived experience offers an intimate understanding and ability to identify current and foreseeable obstacles that perpetuate this ever-pressing issue. This report provides direction, for and by houseless people, around the kind of housing sought – the priorities, desires, barriers, pathways to accessing, and support needed for housing.

Key Findings
- **Between 93% and 99% of houseless people want some form of housing.**
- **Personal qualities** are top motivators for wanting or preferring housing - the top qualities are **safety**, **autonomy or freedom**, and **community**.
- The most important housing amenities are **climate control** (being able to warm or cool a space), **bathrooms** with shower access, and viable housing **locations**.
- **Affordable housing (or lack thereof)** is the **number one barrier** to accessing housing and **most needed support:**
  - **81-88%** of respondents need housing **under $1,000 per month**
  - **60-69%** of respondents need housing **under $600**
  - **17-29%** of these respondents needed housing to be **free.**
  - The top 2 barriers to housing are **not having money** (53%) and having a **low credit score** (38%).
    - Beyond financial barriers - the next top **housing barriers** are **not having a phone** (35%), not having **official documents** (32.8%), and having a **felony charge** on one's criminal record (31.8%).
  - The top support needed to stay in housing is **financial support** (63%).
    - **43%** of respondents need **financial support alone** to maintain housing.
    - Beyond financial support - the next top supports needed were **allowing guests/visitors** (36%), navigating **paperwork/bureaucracy** (25%) and **legal support** (24%) followed closely by **mental health support** (24%).
- The top housing program rules viewed as **"deal-breakers"** for living there are **curfew** (49%), **not being allowed, or limits on, guests** (44%), and **staff room checks** (40%) followed closely by **religious requirements** (39%) and **not being allowed roommates or partners** (39%).
- Houseless people rightfully **lack faith in the housing system**. Their doubt is backed by **years-long waitlists, abysmal housing lottery odds**, and a dependency on **service providers and case managers as gatekeepers**.
  - Respondents report waiting on housing waitlists for an **average of 2.4 years**, and **almost 4 years** for housing.
  - Houseless people recognize that a critical part of the process, and one that proves a major barrier, is **qualifying for housing**, namely by belonging to a **demographic group**, having **good credit**, a spotless **criminal record**, and various **official documents and paperwork** at the ready.
- Denver's houseless repeatedly highlight the prominence of significant **shelter issues**.
  - Over 36% of respondents are currently living in shelters, while 27% answered "shelter" as the second most common type of supportive housing program having lived in.
  - Over 56% reflect negatively on supportive housing programs, including shelters.
    - Top three reasons for negative experiences: **stealing**, **violence**, and **doesn't help with housing**.
- Despite housing vouchers being regarded as the most current "pathway to housing", **over 50% of respondents don't know what a housing voucher is, how it works, nor know anyone who has ever had one.**

- - Less than 44% of survey respondents have ever personally, or know anyone personally, who has **found housing with a voucher**.
  - **Only 28%** of respondents preferred housing vouchers to affordable housing units
    - Top factors involved in preference one way or another were the existent **housing barriers** (the top being **landlord discrimination**), the need for **support or services**, (namely **housing navigation**), and having the choice to choose the type of housing.

Public Housing Research

What happened to public housing in the last 10 years? In addition to 2022 Housing Survey results, this report also includes new research on public housing, both nationally and in Denver, over the past 10 years: fiscal trends, units lost, and voucher use. We reveal a continued loss of public housing and a turn to private-public partnerships where the market controls housing and its cost.

Key Findings

The national and local government trends have turned to the private market as the main source of low-income housing using subsidies or tax breaks. This does not create the housing people need.

- **HUD funding for construction-focused programs – building affordable housing or projects – has generally decreased or remained stagnant** while **funding for assistance-based programs or neighborhood/community development or revitalization have remained or increased**.
- Over the **last 10 years**:
  - There was an **18% reduction in funding for the public housing capital fund**. This reduction is "matched" by a **13% increase in funding for tenant-based vouchers**.
    - There has been a **national loss of 228,289 low-income public housing units**.
      - In **Denver,** we have **lost 731 public housing units**.
    - **The rate of success for finding housing using a voucher has been unacceptably low**.
      - In **Denver**, there was an **increase of 1,429 housing vouchers issued**.
      - In 2021, five months after receiving vouchers through the Denver Housing Authority (over one month beyond the current 120-day expiration), only 77 of 1,000 people with vouchers got housing. This is an **8% chance of finding housing using a voucher**.
  - Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) allocations in Colorado increased, with federal credits increasing **181% from 2012 to 2021**.
    - This did not match an equally high increase of actual units. The increase in unit numbers was the **highest in 2015 at 2,794 units** and has not returned to that level since.
    - Most LIHTC housing is at 60% American Median Income (AMI).
      - **In all of Colorado, over the last 10 years, only 3,029 housing units have been built with LIHTC funding for people under 30% AMI compared to 12,588 for 40-70% AMI.**

There is greater interest in putting money into private developers'/ landlords' pockets than affordable housing.

- As the federal government turns to the private market for low-income housing, housing is subsidized for wealthy homeowners (most over 100% AMI) through Tax Increment Financing. **The total in tax deductions awarded nationwide was just under $200 billion in 2019, while the entire budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was $53 billion.**

Our nation's funding priorities are skewed towards the wealthy and war.

- While **HUD's budget has remained fairly stagnant, the Department of Defense's budget has greatly increased.**

2022 Housing Survey & Public Housing Research Implementation

Report Background

2022 HAND Housing Survey

Every day, thousands of people are living without housing in Denver, Colorado. Every day, high-end apartments are being built that only those with high incomes can afford. Every day, people without housing are trying to find it. This is the paradox that we live in right now. Housing is a commodity built for the rich, and poor people[1] are left to struggle and fight for the few scraps of housing left for the poor.

Housing development and policies are not, and have never been, created under the direction of poor and houseless[2] people. Both locally and nationally, decisions are being made about how houseless people can get housing, the kind of housing 'they' need, and all other policies and budget allocations for low income housing without the direction of those needing that housing.

The Housekeys Action Network Denver (HAND) 2022 Housing Survey offers direction and insight from 828 houseless individuals in Denver about the housing we need. The information shared with us about housing desires, experiences, and needs clearly outlines what must be our priorities for housing.

The 2022 Housing Survey was created by HAND and Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP). Whilst originating in Denver, materials and support for the Housing Survey are available for other cities around the nation to replicate (in fact, the Housing Survey is now being conducted in the small town of Montrose, Colorado, among others!) Given the diverse experiences of respondents and the similar institutional landscapes that plague houseless folks across the United States, the Action Directives that this Housing Survey affords us is not only relevant to Denver, but to our whole nation. It reveals how and where the houseless housing system is not working, and what priorities should be driving a functional housing system.

Our 2022 Housing Survey asked 24 questions. You can reference the Full Housing Surveys in English and Spanish in the final pages of this report. Questions covered a wide range of topics, including but not limited to:
- *What barriers have you experienced in getting housing?*
- *What is the process you need to go through to get into housing?*
- *When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of?*
- *Do you know what a housing voucher is and how vouchers work?*
- *What house rules would be deal-breakers for you to accept that housing?*
- *What do you think the government could do better to address homelessness?*
- *If you could find housing you could afford according to your current income, would you move in?*

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[1] Referring to those experiencing poverty as "the poor" is done herein to recognize a heterogenous class of people that struggle under economic duress. The reclamation of the term "poor" has occurred in many powerful social movements, including but not limited to Martin Luther King Jr's Poor People's Campaign. Though often used in its place, the term "low-income" is more often defined by its government use as a measure which draws a hard line for accessing benefits, contributing to perpetuation of poverty.

[2] The term "houseless" is used in place of the term "homeless" to focus attention on the definition of a person within this population as being someone who cannot/does not presently maintain payments, and has no assistance in making payments, on a rent or mortgage towards a housing property. One's inability (for a myriad of herein-discussed reasons) to pay money towards a capital asset does not deny them the human sentience of having a home, and its many emotional and communal derivatives. Thus "homeless" is perceived by many within this community to be dehumanizing and inaccurate.

Public Housing Research

As we surveyed 828 houseless people in Denver about housing, we also wanted to look at the current state of public housing, both in Denver and nationally. We partnered with Denver University's Poverty and Economics Masters-level class, and with PhD candidate Lauren Brown, to answer questions about the trends in public housing over the past ten years. This research builds on WRAP's extensive research on federal funding trends for affordable housing from the early 1980's through today. In 2006, and updated in 2010, WRAP published *Without Housing: Decades of Federal Housing Cutbacks, Massive Homelessness, and Policy Failures*. For the first time, the *Without Housing* Report documented in detail the relationship between funding trends and the growth of mass houselessness in the United States. By doing so, it demonstrated why numerous federal responses to houselessness have failed to resolve the problem. HAND's new public housing research shows the continued pattern of defunding public housing and privatizing low-income and public housing, using government data to reveal what has been happening to our public housing over the past 10 years.

Our Public Housing Research covered the following questions:

Housing Costs, Rent Burden
- *How much is rent increasing in Denver?*
- *How much is the average apartment?*
- *How many people are rent cost burden at Area Median Income (AMI) levels?*

Fiscal Trends
- *What is the national trend in spending on public housing?*
- *What is the trend for federal public housing funding in Denver?*
- *What is the trend for State and local funding for low-income housing?*
- *Where is this money going (AMI, housing programs)?*

Units Lost
- *How many public housing units have been lost/gained nationally?*
- *How many public housing units have been lost/gained in Denver?*

Vouchers
- *How does the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program work in Denver (how you apply, time it takes to find units, cost requirements, acceptance rate of vouchers)?*
- *How many people apply in the lottery, how many get a voucher, and how many ultimately get housing?*

"Pipe Dreams and Picket Fences"

In staying true to the voices of the people represented throughout this report, the title of the HAND Housing Report – Pipe Dreams and Picket Fences – is a combination of two quotes from survey respondents answering the question: *"When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of?"*

"A SMALL ONE OR TWO BEDROOM APARTMENT. A SMALL HOUSE TO OWN WOULD BE, OR IS, MY GOAL BUT IT SEEMS LIKE A **PIPE DREAM** THESE DAYS."

This response contains three simultaneous, sometimes competing, thoughts shared by many. On the one hand, this respondent shows humility and practicality in concisely describing a basic housing type to suit immediate housing needs. On the other hand, there is the dream of long-term permanency in housing ownership. Finally, they express doubt in ever being able to achieve that "pipe dream" in the current housing environment.

"NOT SURE IF WHITE **PICKET FENCES** ARE STILL ON THE TABLE? THAT BEING SAID I WOULD LOVE A SPOT TO RAISE A TINY DOG AND MAYBE A KID"

Another respondent shares similar hope when answering with their own question, harkening back to a time when housing policy made the emblematic "white picket fence" American Dream more tangible. They then settle for a place that allows them the human, personal qualities of raising a family in a loving home.

Context of Houselessness

Houselessness in the United States is the most brutal and severe face of widespread poverty. It stems from systemic causes that play out via the individual biographies of people experiencing houselessness.

Houselessness is a direct result of the decisions and funding priorities of the federal government within a larger context of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and neoliberalism. If the federal government had chosen to support affordable housing, healthcare, anti-poverty wages and programs, worker's protections, and quality education — rather than war, tax breaks for the wealthy, and corporate welfare — mass houselessness would not exist in our nation.

At the epicenter of these systemic causes is over three decades of federal disinvestment from our affordable housing infrastructure and programs that public policy debates and media representations tend to overlook. Instead of addressing the shortage of adequate housing, federal policies have only further driven the commodification of housing as a speculative asset.

Historical context is critical to understanding who is hardest hit by forty years of social disinvestment. Ongoing systems of white supremacy and settler colonialism affect *everything* — from housing to healthcare, education to transportation, and especially the criminal (in)justice system. Thus houselessness and its myriad of related traumas disproportionately impact people along intersectional lines of race, gender, sexuality, disability, immigration, and so on (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Anti-houseless laws are being enforced against black and brown people at far higher rates (Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, 2020). BIMPOC[3], 2SLGBTQI+[4], and people living with disabilities deal with ongoing systemic disadvantages in accessing housing, leading to disproportionate rates of homelessness among these populations (NAEH, 2020). This is no accident. Numerous laws and practices reserved land ownership for white people, while racist practices of segregation, redlining, urban renewal, discriminatory housing policies, lending practices, and gentrification further dispossessed communities of color. Many of these practices continue in various forms today.

As for housing in general, the federal government cut tens of billions of dollars from affordable housing programs beginning in the early 1980s. There was a 77% reduction in federal funding for low-income public housing between 1978 and 1983, with no fresh funding for new public housing since. Relying on the market to deliver affordable housing has only worsened the problem. Between 1995 and 2010, 261,419 units of public housing were lost (WRAP, 2010).

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[3] BIMPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, Middle eastern People of Color.
[4] 2SLGBTQIA+ stands for Two-Spirit (used by Indigenous communities), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the plus reflects the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify.

***HAND Public Housing Research found that in the last 10 years, from 2011 to 2021,
an additional 228,289 public housing units were lost – for a total of
489,708 units lost in the last 25 years.***

Since then, every federal plan to address houselessness has primarily focused on disappearing houseless people rather than the broken housing system. Forty years ago, shelters were funded as temporary facilities to provide short term emergency shelter (Boden, 2023). The initial mindset was that the flood would end and the crisis would self-correct. In the early 1980s, houselessness was seen as symptomatic of a downturn in the economy - the public was told that this, along with individuals' interpersonal faults, was the only reason people were in the streets, despite contemporary studies revealing the primary causes to be high housing costs and poverty (Wood et.al, 1990). Today, we have more people in the streets than ever before… How can that be, after all these years of plans to end houselessness? Here, Jerusalem Demsas aptly describes Elliott Sclar's ever-relevant musical chairs analogy[5].

> When you zoom out, determining individualized explanations for America's homelessness crisis gets murky. Sure, individual choices play a role, but why are there so many more homeless people in California than Texas? Why are rates of homelessness so much higher in New York than West Virginia?[6]
>
> To explain the interplay between structural and individual causes of homelessness, some who study this issue use the analogy of children playing musical chairs. As the game begins, the first kid to become chairless has a sprained ankle. The next few kids are too anxious to play the game effectively. The next few are smaller than the big kids. At the end, a fast, large, confident child sits grinning in the last available seat.
>
> You can say that disability or lack of physical strength caused the individual kids to end up chairless. But in this scenario, chairlessness itself is an inevitability: The only reason anyone is without a chair is because there aren't enough of them.
>
> Now let's apply the analogy to homelessness. Yes, examining who specifically becomes homeless can tell important stories of individual vulnerability created by disability or poverty, domestic violence or divorce. Yet when we have a dire shortage of affordable housing, it's all but guaranteed that a certain number of people will become homeless. In musical chairs, enforced scarcity is self-evident. In real life, housing scarcity is more difficult to observe—but it's the underlying cause of homelessness. (Demsas, 2022)

Instead of addressing housing scarcity by providing housing options at all income levels, houseless policy has focused on a series of underfunded, patchwork efforts that pit subpopulations of people experiencing houselessness, service providers, and advocates against each other in battles for meager funds. Houseless policy in the United States has devolved into using byzantine formulas to count the number of houseless people and determine whether or not someone "qualifies'' for housing and services via required enrollment in a massive national database tracking nearly every aspect of people's lives.[7] Moreover, all of the funding to address mass houselessness and affordable housing in the United States pales in comparison to military spending and tax breaks for corporations and wealthier homeowners.

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[5] Sclar, Elliott PhD. "Homelessness and Housing Policy: A Game of Musical Chairs." American Journal of Public Health, 1990, pp. 1039-1040, https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.80.9.1039.
[6] Colburn, Gregg and Page Aldern, Clayton. "Homelessness is a Housing Problem: How Structural Factors Explain U.S. Patterns." *University of California Press,* 2022.
[7] This national database is called the Homeless Management Information System, or HMIS, and the concrete risks to individuals' privacy and safety by its existence are manifold. The Electronic Privacy Information Center details many of these risks in a document addressed to HUD titled *In The Matter of Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) Data and Technical Standards Notice*.

It was relatively recent history when approaches to addressing extreme poverty were significantly different. In response to the monumental economic collapse of the Great Depression and the demands put forward by strong social movements, the federal government developed the New Deal in the 1930s: a series of safety net and social welfare policies designed to address the shortcomings of the free market. New Deal policies – particularly the federal funding of job programs, Social Security, and affordable housing production – effectively minimized the mass houselessness created during the Great Depression.

Comparison of Federal Funding Priorities

2013 Dollars (in Billions)

2 VIRGINIA CLASS ATTACK SUBMARINES	$4.25 — 10 in Inventory
ALL HOMELESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS	$1.73
29 F-35 FIGHTERS (JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER)	$9.17 — 100 in Inventory
ALL PUBLIC HOUSING OPERATING FUND	$4.06
4 LITTORAL COMBAT SHIP (LCS)	$2.24 — 8 in Inventory
ALL PUBLIC HOUSING CAPITAL FUND	$2.18
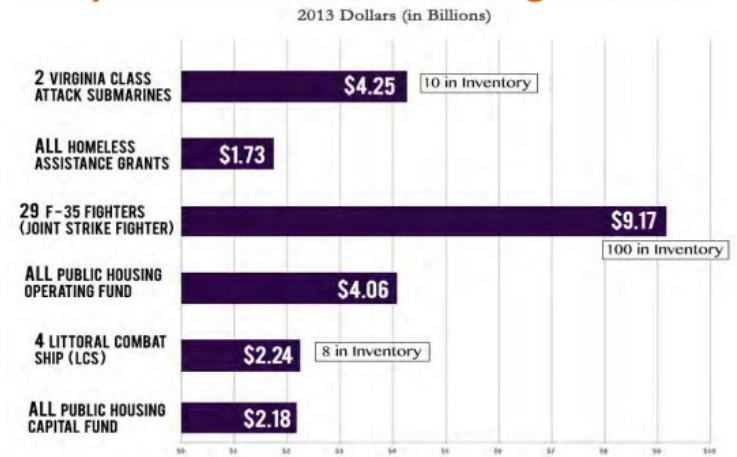
WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT: WITHOUT HOUSING

THE REAGAN REVOLUTION IS ALIVE AND WELL!

In the 1980s, however, the Reagan administration launched a dramatic assault on both Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon's Great Society[8] policies. Guided by "free market" principles – the now discredited "trickle down" economic theory and anti-government ideology – Reagan systematically removed several rungs in the ladder of opportunity by disrupting social safety nets, increased military spending, and bestowed tax breaks for wealthy people and corporations. Couched in the rhetoric of bootstraps and rugged individualism, Reagan and a Democrat-led Congress slashed federal funding of social programs designed to assist the poor, most significantly the federal funding of affordable housing production.

In 1998, sixteen years after the federal government began reimbursing nonprofit agencies for operating emergency shelters through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the federal government passed the "Contract With America" welfare reform act, cynically named the Personal Responsibility Act. This act, along with seven other harrowing proposed "reforms", stipulated that the federal government was no longer responsible for ensuring housing for a majority of Americans. It's no wonder that houselessness remains as much a crisis for those experiencing it today as it was in 1983 – and now, there are so many more of us.

Then came the HOPE VI Program, which facilitated a massive reduction of housing units available to poor people - "demolishing tens of thousands of units, only half replaced, thousands evicted" (NLIHC, 2019a) . Under the guise of improving living conditions in public housing, poor residents were pushed out of units as focus shifted to "mixed income" housing instead of permanent housing for the poor.

From top to bottom, the government response to houselessness has failed for one simple reason: It has never acknowledged through action, only words, that the number one cause of houselessness is the absence of housing. To this day, there has been an entrenched reluctance to create affordable housing. The response has been a continual rearranging of the deck chairs on the Titanic.

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[8] In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson's administration hoped to answer the demands of the civil rights movement with Great Society policies, which included the birth of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as well as Medicare/Medicaid and food stamps, all of which remain largely utilized today.

Instead of creating attainable housing, cities direct their funding, energy, and action toward laws and tactics that criminalize and hide houseless people. Despite these attempts, people continue to land on the streets at faster rates.

Houseless people are constantly shouldering the blame for a broken housing system while being targets for (often violent) removal and displacement.

Within this context, we conducted the 2022 Housing Survey with houseless people to direct our work for housing for all.

"Sit down and talk to us and find out what we actually need instead of sitting down there and looking at us and telling us what you think we need."

- Sue, HAND one-on-one interview

Methodology

2022 HAND Housing Survey Methodology

Survey Development

The 2022 Housing Survey was developed by WRAP and HAND together. The survey asks 24 questions surrounding people's experiences, priorities, and desires around housing. A test run of the survey was performed by HAND staff with 10 houseless people to ensure the questions made sense, make any additions, and clarify the overall flow of the survey. Changes were made based on this feedback before finalizing the survey.

Survey Response Collection

Survey respondents were offered $15 VISA gift cards to compensate them for their time and participation in the survey. To qualify as a respondent, individuals had to currently be unhoused (whether residing on the streets, at a shelter, transitional/ temporary housing) or have been recently unhoused within the last five years. This time period was used in awareness of the lack of housing policy changes that have happened in the last five years, as well as to include individuals who have experienced houselessness due to the pandemic. Survey participants could either fill out the survey themselves or dictate their answers for an Outreach Team member to transcribe.

The 828 surveys were conducted at locations across Denver where houseless people live or gather for resources. These locations included but were not limited to:

- Parks
- Hotels
- Shelters
- Libraries
- Day centers
- Free meal lines
- Halfway-houses
- Safe Parking sites
- Street vehicle camps
- Street encampments
- Outdoor street corner

… And more. We are grateful to the service organizations that allowed us to meet with folks on-location.

Data Analysis

Data entry

Completed surveys were stored in a secure location until they were entered into a database by volunteers with computer experience/skills, after which they were analyzed under the direction of several professional data analysts.

Thematic analysis of written responses

HAND staff members and volunteers, under the guidance of expert data analysts, undertook a thematic analysis of the written response, open-ended questions. Responses were first alphabetized to visualize initial groupings of similar responses. Then they were reviewed and adjusted several times to determine numerous thematic categories which became Tier 2 and Tier 3 subcategories. These were then grouped to reveal larger themes, or Tier 1 categories. Categorizations, along with notes describing any unclear rules or groupings, were reviewed by other individuals to determine if groupings were appropriate. Many responses were thorough and mentioned more than one theme, meaning that the number of categorizable written responses was often greater than the number of respondents. Percentages are initially calculated for Tier 1 stats out of the total number of respondents who answered the question to illustrate how many individuals mentioned certain themes. From there, percentages within subcategories are calculated based on the number of responses within that subcategory, as opposed to overall respondents.

Reflections on Survey Methodology

Paper survey collection

The fact that many survey respondents added unprompted commentary to clarify their answers was in-part by design, and in-part an aspect that could be improved upon. A number of questions were intentionally open-ended to allow for individual interpretation (most notably questions numbered 1-5, 9, 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 24). Despite these opportunities throughout the survey, we still received additional commentary on every multiple-choice question. While one option to capture more data in the future is to restrict respondents' ability to answer multiple-choice questions beyond the choices offered, say by using electronic tablets instead of physical paper copies, we found that recording every comment written underneath questions or in the margins provided further insight and a deeper understanding of individuals' perspectives. Also, we believe their willingness to provide more information beyond what was asked shows that, by living the experience firsthand, the unhoused community has a far more intricate understanding of their obstacles, barriers, and abilities within the present housing system than they are allotted opportunities to speak on. If we are to hope to address the ever-growing reality of houselessness, those with the power to affect political change must direct their questions to those at the center of the issue in a manner that allows the unhoused opportunities to provide solutions beyond what those in political power could imagine without first-hand experience.

Survey question design

Percentages exceeding 100%

Two types of questions, paired with how data was calculated and presented, made it possible for responses, either as individual category percentages or as a sum of all category percentages, to exceed 100%. These two types were: the open-ended written response questions where an individual's answer could fit multiple categorical themes (1-5, 9, 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 24), and "check all that apply" questions offering multiple pre-listed options (16, 20, 21, 22, and the demographic questions). For written response questions, individual category percentages can exceed 100% by dividing the number of responses belonging to one category by the number of respondents who answered the question. Similarly, when each individual can select from multiple pre-listed answers, the sum of all answers provided for that question will naturally be higher than the number of respondents who answered the question, making the sum of all options' percentages surpass 100%. The choice to calculate Tier 1 category responses using the number of *respondents* as opposed to number of *responses* was intentional – this shows how many respondents believed in or had experienced a theme. Other groups may prefer to perform data analysis in a different manner to avoid percentages over 100%.

Demographic questions

Placement of demographic questions on the last page resulted in far less reporting than other questions. For the purposes of this survey, HAND did not emphasize the strict collection of this data given the community's considerable sensitivity to such questions owed to the contemporary practice of provider assessments collecting demographic information to essentially bar many in-need from qualifying for housing. While placing these questions at the start of the survey may have resulted in greater reporting, it would likely have also affected respondents' answers to following questions by reminding them of their identities and associated perceptions. That being said, research surrounding intersectional identities within the houseless population is scant, and has profound implications in our understanding of an appropriate response to the issue. Those who reproduce this survey may include demographics and insist on their reporting (through outreach staff training and survey administration that doesn't allow question-skipping) if that were the intended focus of their work.

Rank-order preference

Question 18 on the 2022 Housing Survey asked respondents to ***"Rank your housing or living preference from 1 through 10: (1 is best and 10 is worst)"***. Our intention was to assign each listed option a unique numerical ranking between 1 and 10, with 1 being the top most preferred housing/living situation. Even with additional Outreach Team training and attention, this direction proved to be inadequate in ensuring uniform collection of responses. Had this question been administered digitally, we may have been able to control how answers were inputted.

Data exclusions

In the original survey design, several of the "check all that apply" questions (16, 20, 21, and the unnumbered series of demographic questions) ask respondents to select answers without offering an option like "none" or "not applicable" (as is offered in question 22). This meant that it was difficult to determine if respondents chose to leave a question blank, or if they intentionally didn't select any of the options offered to signify that they did not identify with them. We attempted to account for this high occurrence in the last two pages of the survey by determining which respondents didn't answer any of the questions on the final pages, and excluding them from the dataset. For questions 20 through 22, 31 respondents were excluded from the dataset. For questions 23 through the demographic questions, 16 respondents were excluded from the dataset. The particular placement of the demographic questions without insistence on their completion likely also lead to poor response rates, especially with gender identity. In future work, one could correct for this by including an option for respondents to not identify with any of the offered answers. This would also self-correct if surveys were done electronically as opposed to on-paper, such that the respondent couldn't proceed to the next question without first providing an answer.

Outreach Team

Our paid Outreach Team exclusively consisted of community members who were currently experiencing houselessness, had experienced it in the past, were in transitional housing, and/or were at critical risk of losing their housing. All surveys were conducted on paper, in-person, and returned to the HAND outreach coordinator at the end of each day. Teams of 3 to 4 Outreach Team members collected survey response data for 3 to 4 hours per day, 3 days per week, in 2-week cycle periods. This was to allow more opportunity for more individuals to join the team. This schedule included 2 hours of training every Monday on how to respectfully and conscientiously approach our intended demographic and conduct the survey. They were instructed not to direct surveyors on how to answer questions, but how to ensure respondents understood the questions. Having an Outreach Team consisting entirely of individuals with shared, yet differing, experiences of current or recent houselessness contributed to our great success in building community trust and proliferating news of the survey opportunity throughout the Denver houseless community. It also allowed us to bring mutual aid elements and resource connections to our outreach by staff's familiarity with and ability to ascertain urgent needs – an integral two-way exchange that should always be maintained during street outreach.

HAND Community Forums

HAND held four Unhoused Community Forums to dig into questions deeper through group discussion. One forum held for all houseless or recently houseless people had 60 people attend. The other three forums focused on specific identities: Black/African American/Descendants of American Slaves (27 attendees), Queer (24 attendees), and Spanish-speaking (13 attendees). These forums gave deeper insight to the housing experiences and needs of these communities. Together, 124 people participated in these forums. Demographic specific forums were facilitated by HAND members of that demographic. Forums were audio recorded and transcribed. Key quotes from these forums which highlight themes raised by the group were included as quotes throughout this report.

HAND One-on-One Interviews

To dig deeper into people's housing experiences, needs, and priorities, we used many of the same questions asked on the survey in one-on-one interviews with 38 individuals.[9] Our Outreach Team members talked with houseless people at similar locations to where the survey was conducted. All interviews were recorded, then transcribed. Interview participants were awarded $15-30 in VISA gift cards depending on duration of interview. Quotes from these interviews are present throughout this report alongside corresponding topics to allow for more personal and detailed perspectives.

In total, nearly 1,000 houseless people in Denver contributed their voices to this effort through HAND to direct housing needs and priorities.

Public Housing Research Methodology

Question Development

The research questions on public housing were developed by WRAP and HAND to provide updated data on the state of public housing, both nationally and locally in Denver. In 2006 and again in 2010, WRAP did in-depth research on similar topics which are published in the *Without Housing* Report. Our research herein expands upon their findings with more contemporary data from the last 10 years. Questions spanned the following main topics: Housing Costs and Rent Burden, Fiscal Trends, Units Lost, and Vouchers.

Research Teams

Professor Daniel Brisson, MSW, Ph.D, director of the Center for Housing and Homelessness Research, dedicated his 2022 Poverty and Community Economic Development class of the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work to undertaking this research. Students were grouped and assigned to individual research questions. Data was collected from primary government sources in all cases when possible and alternative secondary sources where the government sources did not have available data. Students provided reports at the end of the quarter with not only what they found but how they found it and any barriers finding the answers.

Following the student's work HAND and WRAP partnered with Lauren Brown, Ph.D student and houselessness researcher, to fact-check the students' findings and further develop the research on HCVs through a detailed analysis of Denver Housing Authority's policies and data as well as meeting with DHA staff to clarify details.

Throughout this report, footnotes provide further information on public housing data collection and analysis.

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[9] Refer to final sections of this Report to see the one-pager of Interview Questions used.

Survey Demographics

HAND obtained responses from 828 currently and recently houseless people – making it, to our knowledge, the largest houseless surveyed population in Denver. This is 17.3% of the 4,794 houseless people estimated in January 2022's Point In Time (PIT) Count (MDHI, 2022).

Current Living Situations

Houseless people often live at various locations at once due to recurring forced displacement through sweeps or harassment, curfew restrictions, and guest restrictions, among other factors. Respondents were asked to "check all that apply" for current living situation(s).

Out of 812 survey respondents,
- 39.8% (*n=323*[10]) are currently living outside/in a tent,
- 36.5% (*n=296*) are living in shelters,
- 11.1% (*n=90*) live in houses/apartments,
- 11.0% (*n=89*) are living in hotels,
- another 11.0% (*n=89*) live with friends or family,
- 10.6% (*n=86*) spend time living in vehicles,
- 9.1% (*n=74*) selected "Other", both with/without comment,
- 7.8% (*n=63*) spend time living in so-called "sanctioned encampments", also known locally as Safe Outdoor Spaces,
- 5.2% (*n=42*) live in transitional housing,
- 4.1% (*n=33*) live in Tiny Homes, and
- 2.2% (*n=18*) did not specify.

Under "Other", people left comments like:

"Abandoned housing"

"Cold basement"

"Laundry rooms"

"Nowhere"

"Stairwells"

"Where I can lay my head"

"Workplace where they change tires"

> "Right now I'm living with somebody renting a room, but a lot of times that don't last... People go say, well, I rent this room for you, but then when you get in a situation... Most of the time it's not so good. 'Cause you don't know the whole story. You got to check every month and after they offer you a roof over your head, then... All the rules change. So it's kinda difficult. They're in a position of power."
>
> - Linda, HAND one-on-one interview

2022 HAND Housing Survey Respondents' Living Situations

Percentages out of 812 respondents
2.2% (*n=18*) did not specify

1. **Outside / in a tent** 39.8% (*n=323*)
2. **In shelter(s)** 36.5% (*n=296*)
3. **In a house / apartment** 11.1% (*n=90*)
4. **In hotel(s)** 11.0% (*n=89*)
5. **With friends / family** 11.0% (*n=89*)
6. **In vehicle(s)** 10.6% (*n=86*)
7. **"Other" places** 9.1% (*n=74*)
8. **At "sanctioned encampment(s)"** 7.8% (*n=63*)
9. **In transitional housing** 5.2% (*n=42*)
10. **In Tiny Home(s)** 4.1% (*n=33*)

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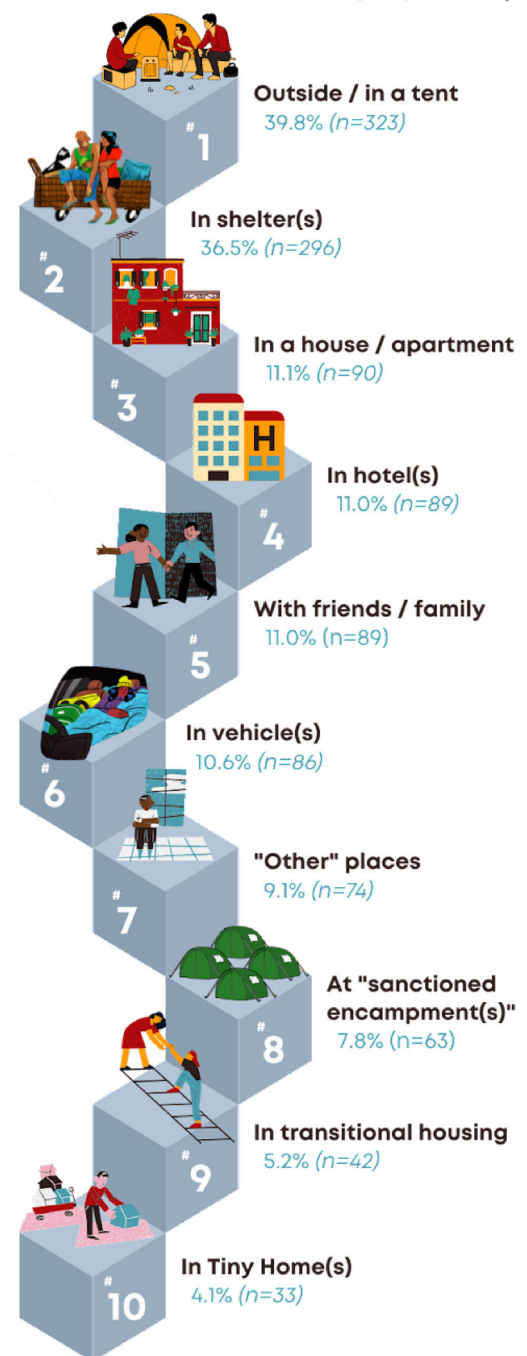
[10] The letter "n" is used in statistical analysis and throughout this report to denote the number of responses belonging to a group.

Racial/ethnic identities of 2022 Housing Survey respondents
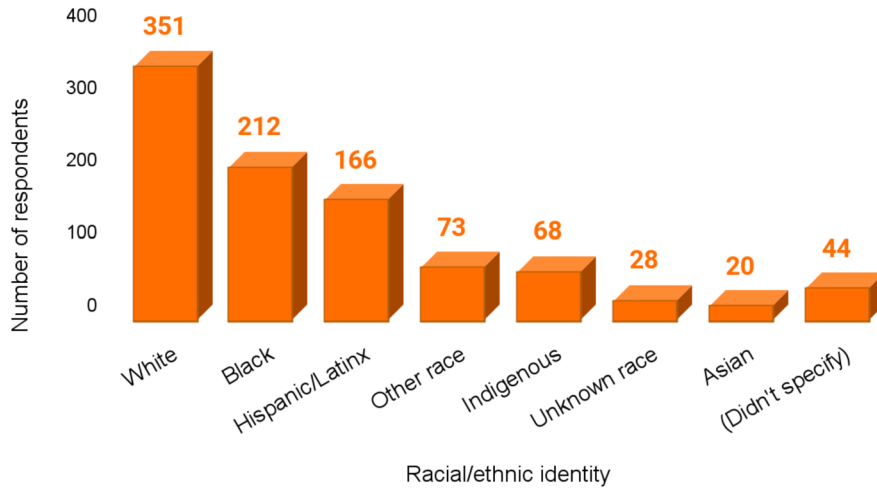
Race/Ethnicity

Given our understanding of the intersectionality of race/ethnicity with houselessness under white supremacy, HAND was intentional about representing racially diverse populations in the data. In fact, our population demographics over-represented several communities of color – specifically "Black", "Multiracial", and "Asian" identities – when compared to the 2022 PIT Count[11] results (MDHI, 2022). The intersectionality of race/ethnicity is evident in part through comparison with 2022 Census data on Denver's estimated population (US Census Bureau, 2022)[12].

As with Current Living Situation, respondents were offered a list of identities and asked to "check all that apply".

Race/Ethnicity	2022 HAND Survey	2022 PIT Count	2022 Denver Census
White	45.7% *(n=351)*	60.2%	80.5%
Black (or African American)	27.6% *(n=212)*	22.8%	9.9%
Hispanic (or Latinx)	21.6% *(n=166)*	25.5%	29.0%
Multiracial (or Two or More Races)	13.3% *(n=102)*	6.7%	3.5%
Other race	9.5% *(n=73)*	NA	NA
Indigenous (or Native American/ Alaska Native)	8.9% *(n=68)*	6.6%	1.8%
Unknown race	3.6% *(n=28)*	NA	NA
Asian	2.6% *(n=20)*	0.5%	4.1%

These stats suggest that Native Americans/Alaska Natives are 3.7 times more likely, Black or African American individuals are 2.3 times more likely, and Multiracial individuals are 1.9 times more likely to become houseless compared to the general population in Denver County.

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[11] Although this report references the PIT Count – which has become an industry standard practice/measure for houseless population information – in various places, several factors (recognized by MDHI themselves on their website) can make it an inadequate estimation, including but not limited to "weather, volunteer engagement, and capacity that could result in an undercount".

[12] For better comparison with these two sources, the above HAND percentages are calculated from the 768 of respondents who selected at least one identity (rather than a total of 812, which would include the 44 who did not choose to identify, since "none" was not provided as an option).

Gender/Sexuality

Imperfect placement on the paper survey, as well as a general lack of education/understanding of gender identity in the houseless community, led to only 57.4% (*n=475*) of the 828 total respondents providing gender identity responses. In reality, we expect the number of non-"man" identities to be significantly higher. As with Current Living Situation and Racial/Ethnic Identities, respondents were offered a list of options and asked to "check all that apply". Due to underreporting, we do not offer any gender-based findings in this report.

Of 475 respondents,
- 78.5% (*n=373*) identified as "Man"
- 16.0% (*n=76*) as "Woman"
- 4.2% (*n=20*) as "Gender non-conforming, fluid, or non-binary"
- 3.2% (*n=15*) as "Transgender"
- 2.9% (*n=14*) as "Other LGBTQIA"
- 0.8% (*n=4*) as "Questioning"

Age

Similar to gender, age categories were underreported – 68.8% (*n=570*) of 828 total survey respondents provided qualifying responses. Respondents who selected more than one response were not counted. Options were based on age standards presently used to qualify individuals for housing-related opportunities, specifically youth programs that support individuals up until age 25 and senior housing services for those over age 55. This illustrates that many of our survey respondents do not qualify for such support. As with other demographics, respondents were offered a list of options and asked to "check all that apply".

Of 570 respondents,
- 64.7% (*n=369*) were between 26-54 years old
- 27.9% (*n=159*) were over 55 years old
- 6.8% (*n=39*) were between 18-25 years old
- 0.5% (*n=3*) were under 18 years old

Disability

35.8% (*n=291*) of respondents indicated they identified with having a disability by leaving a mark next to ***"Person with a mental and/or physical disability and/or chronic illness"***.

Some people offered additional comments:
"40 minutes of cardiac arrest & 8 strokes"

"Asthma"

"Bad stroke"

"Brain damage, speech impairment"

Disability identities of 2022 Housing Survey Respondents

Marked "yes"
35.8%
291

Left unmarked
64.2%
521

"Depression, pain in my left leg"

"Physical disability, chronic illness"

Non-Native English Speakers

10.0% (*n=81*) of respondents marked *"English as a second language or non-english speaker"*.

Additional comments included attempts at excusing this trait, likely due to the added discrimination and prejudice experienced by those who identify as such:

"Bilingual English/Spanish"

"But I do have love and respect"

"I do speak or write English."

"No hablo ingles"

"Yes! :("

Marked "yes"
10.0%

81

Left unmarked
90.0%

731
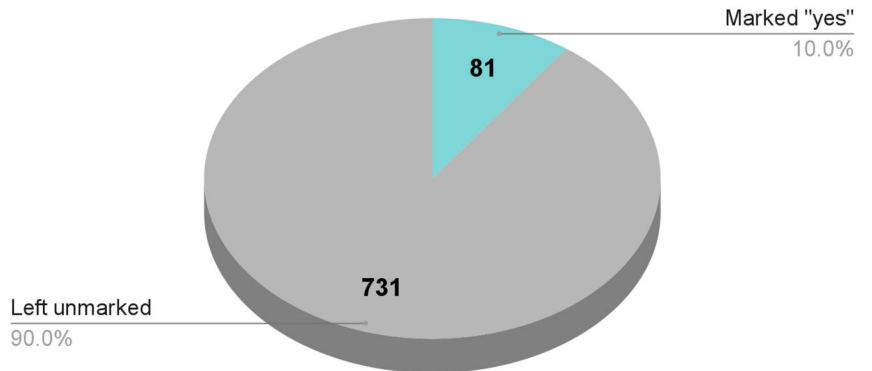
"Many people don't know the [housing] process and I guess one of the reasons is that many of those programs are in English, and if you don't speak English, there are few people who speak Spanish."

- HAND Spanish Speakers Houseless Community Forum attendee

Veteran Status of 2022 Housing Survey Respondents

Veterans

8.0% (*n=66*) of survey respondents marked "Veteran".

Marked "yes"
8.1%

66

Left unmarked
91.9%

746
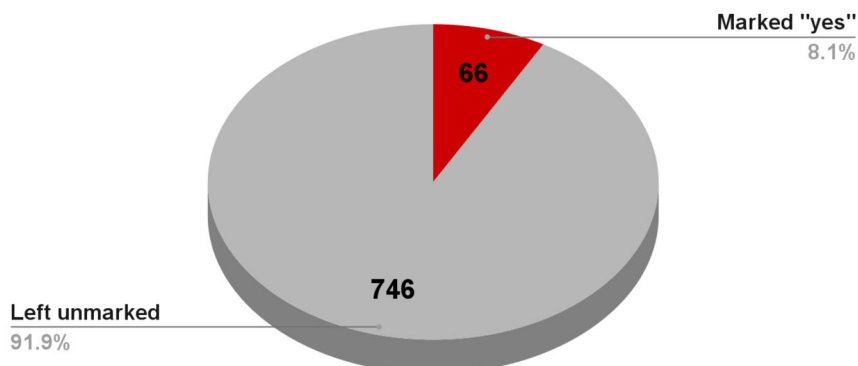
> "They told me to go to the outskirts. Well, that's what I'm saying. Two and a half hours away. Canyon city. How you supposed to get there?"
>
> - Keith, HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

Desired Housing

It's all too common to read an op-ed or overhear someone casually rattle off something like "these people are choosing to be homeless." This narrative of "choiceful houselessness" perpetuates our society and pushes policy makers toward treating the issue as one about individuals needing to be fixed rather than a housing system in need of fixing. So, is it true? And, when asking *if* houseless people want housing, why aren't we asking *what kind* of housing people want?

To better understand houseless people's desire, or lack of desire, for housing, survey respondents were asked **"*If you could find housing you could afford according to your current income, would you move in?*"**

Out of 803 responses:
- 82.7% (*n=665*) said "Yes"
- 10.2% (*n=82*) were "Unsure"
- 7.1% (n=57) answered "No"

2022 Housing Survey Respondents Moving Into Affordable Housing

Unsure 10.2%
No 7.1%
82
57
665
Yes 82.7%

Some respondents offered additional insight.

Of those who answered "Yes":

"Definitely"

"Dumb question, DUH!"

"FUCK YES"

"Has to meet my need"

"I'm unemployed"

"I have no current income"

"If private owner approved of it"

"Other issues involved with me"

It's important to note how some assumed that, if they had no income, they could not afford the housing to move into, affecting their answers.

Many comments left by those who answered "unsure" showed concern or skepticism with how their rights would be respected in the affordable housing options available to them – as opposed to suggesting that they did not want *any* housing. Additional comments throughout the survey responses repeatedly tie respondents' interest in moving into housing to their concerns with how the housing is run, and the type of housing being offered.

Of those who answered "Unsure" or didn't select any of the options:

"Must not forfeit rights"

"No income"

"Tell me the details"

> "I was downtown the other day... Two guys were walking. One guy said, 'man, there's homeless everywhere'. The other guy said, 'yeah, they don't want to be housed'. I just looked at them and thought, 'scuse me?! Let me take your house and see if you want housing."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

But what do people mean by housing? What kind of housing do people want? And what aspects of housing are most important to people? Are people just looking for four walls and a roof, or does functional housing mean more than that?

Thoughts on Wanting Housing

To begin exploring this, our survey asked: *"When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of?"*

As with every written response question in the Housing Survey, some people offered long, thoughtful responses that spoke to multiple themes therein, while others wrote succinct answers that summed up a single idea. For this question, 825 respondents lead to 1,451 individually categorizable written responses (range of number of responses = 1 - 8; average number of responses = 1.8).

Out of 825 respondents, recurring themes were
1. Personal qualities*[13] - 59.6% (*n=492*)
2. Housing structure* - 29.6% (*n=244*)
3. Amenities* - 28.8% (*n=238*)
4. Program-related* - 18.4% (*n=152*)
5. Affordability - 14.8% (*n=122*)
6. Not the streets/shelters - 10.3% (*n=85*
7. Long-term or ownership - 5.2% (*n=43*)
8. Housing rights* - 4.1% (*n=34*)
9. Alternative housing - 2.4% (*n=20*)
10. Uncategorizable[14] - 1.8% (*n=15*)
11. Not wanting housing - 1.0% (*n=8*)
12. Unsure - 0.1% (*n=1*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Thoughts on Wanting Housing
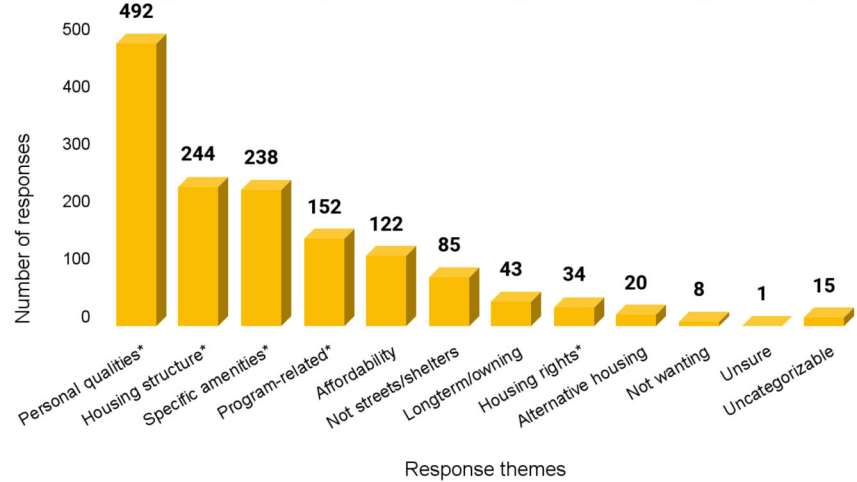
It is important to note that only 8 people did not want any kind of housing at all. This further confirms the houseless community's desire for housing. 20 respondents named various alternatives to traditional housing. Both groups gave us important information about the different forms of housing desired, most of which didn't involve a lease, but did offer **personal qualities** such as autonomy and safety that housing offers. Comments included:

"A secure place to put my tent"

"Freedom to be left alone outside"

"I am really looking for a small piece of land in the Denver Metro area that I can purchase relatively inexpensively (good luck), and then put a prefab shed on, then move all of my stuff (tired of living out of overpriced storage units) and myself there permanently"

"I want to take my airstream trailer out of storage; address the minor (storage-related) maintenance issues so I can live in it. So a no-or-low cost place to park it with utilities to facilitate this"

"I'm done with renting. I'm homeless till I saved the cash to buy. Found 3 acres of land for $11,000"

"Minimal functional shelter"

"the Ramada Inn"[15]

"Travel trailer to see this beautiful country"

These thoughtful comments revealed an emphasis on independence from current normative housing process' financial and lifestyle restrictions. While the rights and desires of the 8 people who don't want any housing should be respected, 1% is a very small fraction of the houseless population who do not want housing of any kind.

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[13] Themes accompanied by "*" throughout the report are further classified into subcategories and expanded upon.

[14] This category, for all questions, contains responses deemed undecipherable – that is, unrecognizable or random words/statements.

[15] This low-cost hotel which had been utilized by many houseless individuals and their case managers has since been torn down.

Formerly unhoused artist Queen painted this image of the feelings generated by thoughts of housing when she was living at a women's shelter. Music is a driving force in her life as a lifelong musician and deejay, while the mountains and creeks in nature inspire her. Such thoughts brought her peace as she dreamt of her future home.

1. Personal Qualities

The most mentioned theme houseless people describe when it comes to wanting housing is "personal qualities'' - that is, the sentimental value associated with the experience of having a home. Nearly 60% of respondents desire personal, human aspects of housing above its physical characteristics, or anything else.

Out of 492 "Personal Quality" responses:
- Safety - 21.7% (*n=107*)
- Autonomy - 16.5% (*n=81*)
- Community, including family or pets - 15.9% (*n=78*)
- Home or place to live - 15.7% (*n=77*)
- Stability - 14.4% (*n=71*)
- Privacy - 5.9% (*n=29*)
- Health-related - 3.9% (*n=19*)
- Other personal qualities - 3.5% (*n=17*)
- Comfort - 2.6% (*n=13*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Thoughts on Wanting Housing - Personal Qualities

Type of personal quality described	Number of responses
Safety	107
Autonomy	81
Community	78
Home/place to live	77
Stability	71
Privacy	29
Health	19
Comfort	13
Other personal qualities	17
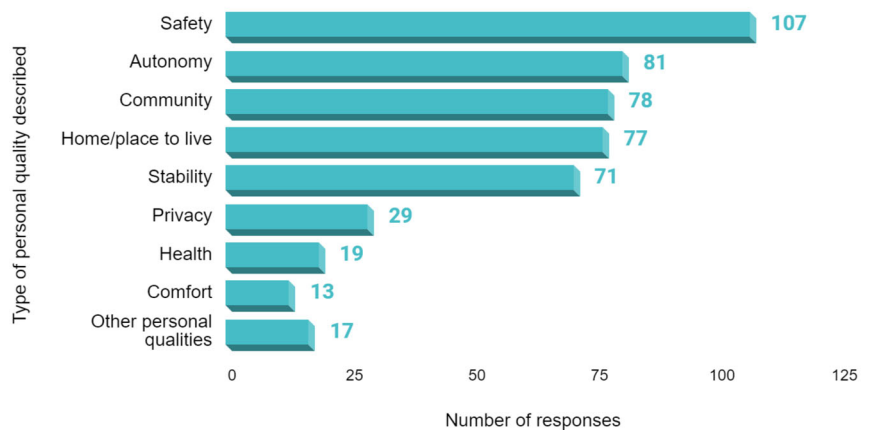
The top personal quality for desired housing was **safety**. Again and again, people wrote about both wanting the safety that housing provides, and wanting housing that is safe:

"I think about somewhere that I can be safe at night, as well as my belongings being safe. A place to be able to rest and actually sleep. Without housing currently, it doesn't feel safe often to sleep or let my guard down. I could go on with much more."

"A place I can be without fear."

Autonomy was the second most common personal quality mentioned. People want housing to be independent - not controlled by providers, hosts letting them stay somewhere with stipulations, group dependence on the streets, or other ways in which autonomy is prevented when unhoused. One respondent put it this way:

"Having my own name on an apartment lease– to call it my own. To be treated like a 'non-homeless/came from the streets' individual, and given the same respect as any other person."

It is important to note that **community** comes right after autonomy as a top desire for housing, showing the want and need for community to be together in the ways that work.

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Thoughts on Wanting Housing - Housing Structure
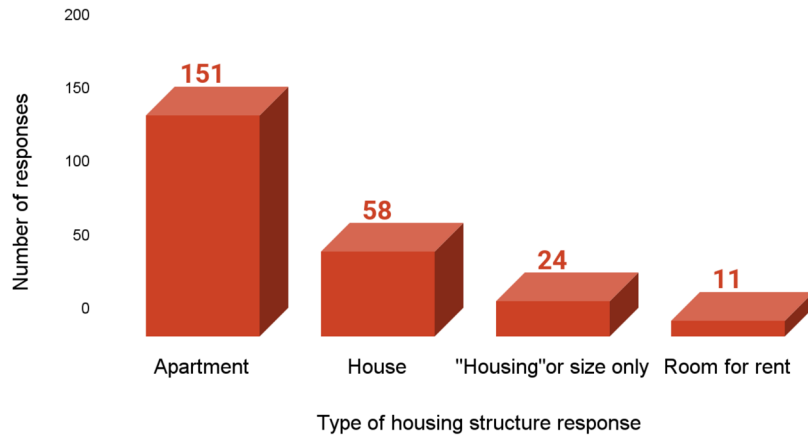
2. Housing Structure and Size

The second most frequent response theme on wanting housing was structure-related.

Of 244 "housing structure" responses:
- Apartment - 61.9% (*n=151*)
- House - 23.8% (*n=58*)
- General "housing", or described the desired size only (i.e. 1-bedroom) - 9.8% (*n=24*)
- Room for rent - 4.5% (*n=11*)

Apartment was by far the most common, suggesting that many view an apartment as either most desirable, or most accessible.

Of 65 responses related to the size of the housing:
- 1-bedroom - 52.3% (*n=34*)
- Studio - 24.6% (*n=16*)
- 2-bedroom - 18.5% (*n=12*)
- 3-bedroom - 3.1% (*n=2*)
- 5-bedroom - 1.5% (*n=1*)

3. Specific Amenities

Of 236 "specific amenities" responses:
- "Controlled climate" - 33.9% (*n=80*)
- Bathroom-related - 20.3% (*n=48*)
- Location - 14.4% (*n=34*)
- Cooking/kitchen-related - 11.4% (*n=27*)
- Outside feature - 5.9% (*n=14*)
- Other amenities - 5.1% (*n=12*)
- Storage - 4.7% (*n=11*)
- Utilities - 4.2% (*n=10*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Thoughts on Wanting Housing - Specific Amenities
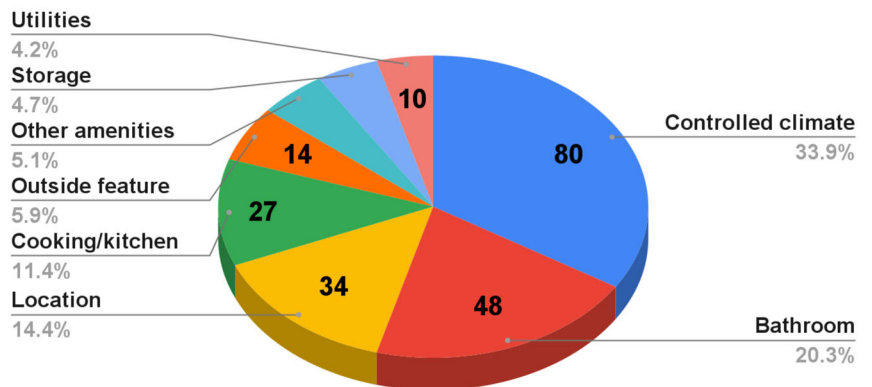
> "Housing means to me, my own place, stability, having peace of mind just in your own place, luxury living. Having some air condition, heater, being able to maintain a patio, being able to cook again, being able to hang your clothes in a closet, being able to wash clothes and being able to use the bathroom."
>
> — Teri, HAND one-on-one interview

Controlled climate - the top "amenity" - described shelter from the elements, or protection from cold and hot weather. The fact that **bathrooms/hygiene-related amenities** followed speaks to the basic needs met by housing, and the desire to access these regularly.

It's also important how often people bring up **kitchens and cooking**, especially since many hotels and other alternative houseless housing, let alone shelters or so-called "sanctioned encampments", do not have any means of cooking.

Location is ranked high as a priority for housing also. Some people spoke to many of these categories at once:

"A steady home for my dog and I. A Place with running lights and water. Where I'm not moving place to place"

"Any place to lay down, warm, running water, security, and not out of my means of income"

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Thoughts on Wanting Housing - Program-related
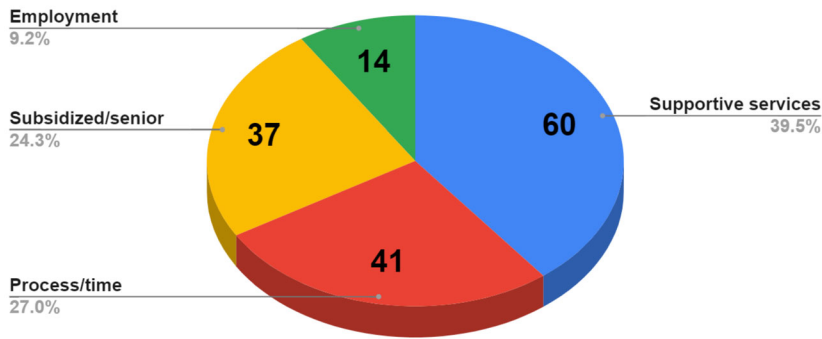
4. Program-related
This thematic category refers to organizational programs meant for and utilized by the houseless community for resources, including both housing search and attainment services beforehand, and continued resource and bureaucratic support once in housing.

Out of 153 program-related responses:
- Supportive services - 39.2% (*n=60*)
- Sense of process/time - 26.8% (*n=41*)
- Subsidized, for seniors - 24.8% (*n=38*)
- Employment support - 9.2% (*n=14*)

This showed up in survey comments like:

"I am a mother of 4 children. It's hard to get help with rent or low income housing. Housing social services involved. it feels like I'm stuck because I can't get enough help because I don't qualify for substance treatment and because of that there aren't very many programs for housing for me."

"I'm thinking that it needs to be a shorter process in getting into housing. It is too long of a wait!!!"

"Need to go back to the people at the hospital who help me apply for housing/apartments, but it's too far…"

"Something achievable in the struggles I come in, not having a job, not qualifying for housing, the housing we have where it takes years, or some more money, that we don't have, and make it more available than one."

The 60 people who mentioned supportive services through a program show that this is something they want maintained as part of their housing. As seen above, most of the 41 people who mention process or time described the serious issues with the process for accessing housing, and the years-long wait to get housing.

"I'm afraid to live by myself. So live-in homecare, 'cause I need somebody to look after me. I need care. I was trying to get Spalding Rehabilitation. I heard it's really a good rehabilitation hospital."

- Susan, HAND one-on-one interview

8. Housing Rights

Responses related to housing rights were further categorized:

Of 34 "housing rights" responses:

- Housing laws and rights - 58.8% (*n=20*)
- Landlord treatment - 41.2% (*n=14*)

Some responses included:

"I want to not be judged for my past choices and past bad decisions. I want affordable housing and how can government set that when the deposit, first, and last month's rent is due and it's impossible to have a job and be homeless."

"Having my own name on an apartment lease- to call it my own. To be treated like a "non-homeless/came from the streets" individual, and given the same respect as any other person."

"Housing should come to everybody equally, equally meaning, felons, single parents, grandparents, and the like, affordable, obtainable, goal reachable, etc."

"I think that we need housing that not only is affordable, but housing that belongs to us where we're not renting from a landlord who is just getting richer off of us, capitalizing on us, still putting us in this system where the 'White Man' is above us."

"... But not just owning the housing, owning the block, because if any of us have lived here for a long time, we've seen how Five Points has changed. We've seen how it's been gentrified and ravaged by these white folks. So it's not just about owning the property, it's about owning the neighborhood so [we can] protect each other from these crazy white folks."

- HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendees

29

Past Housing Situations

Our Housing Survey asked, **_"What kinds of housing have you lived in?"_** Respondents selected all options that applied.

For the 769 respondents who answered, past housing included:
- Rented, on a lease - 60.7% (*n=467*)
- Staying with family or friends - 56.0% (*n=431*)
- Owned by myself or my family - 47.5% (*n=365*)
- Rented, not on a lease - 33.7% (*n=259*)
- "Other" - 29.0% (*n=223*)
- With rental subsidies - 17.6% (*n=135*)
- Part of a mandatory service program - 10.0% (*n=77*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Past Housing Situations

Past housing situation type	Number of respondents
Rented, lease	467
Family/friends	431
Owned	365
Rented, no lease	259
"Other"	223
Subsidized	135
Service program	77
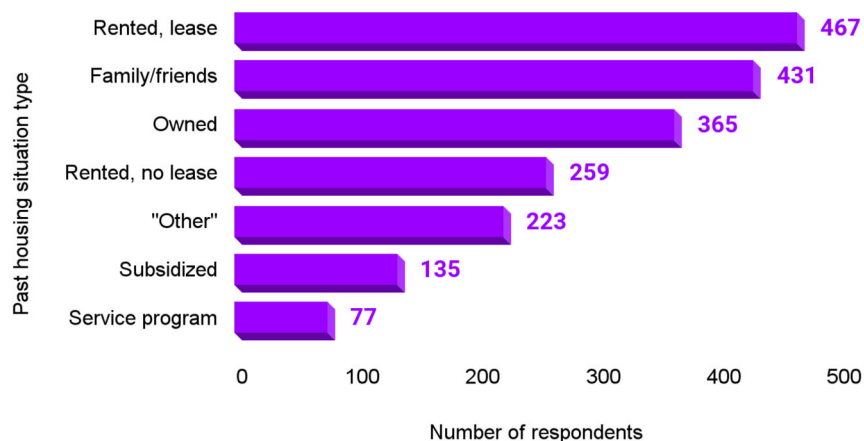
Currently houseless people have lived in a range of housing situations, as houselessness has a plethora of causes and affects people of varying backgrounds. This is further shown by the assortment of descriptive comments left by many of the 223 respondents under "Other":

40 people described having lived **outside**, such as:

"IN THE WILD CAMPING OR BUILDING SHELTER"

"OUTDOOR LIVING"

"SLEEPING AT PARKS"

"STREETS"

"TENT CITY"

"UNDER THE BRIDGE"

29 people listed **shelters,**

20 listed **vehicles**, 12 of which were cars, trucks, or vans, and the other 8 being campers or RVs,

15 just wrote "**homeless**" while another 15 specified "**nothing**" or:

"NO HOME EVER"

"I'VE NEVER HAD A STABLE PLACE TO RESIDE"

14 respondents offered miscellaneous places, such as:

"BOAT"

"COTTAGE BY THE SEA"

"COUCH SURFING"

"FARM"

"HALFWAY HOUSE FOR EX-CONS"

"RENTED A PAY WEEKLY APARTMENT WITH SHARED RESTROOM AND KITCHEN"

"STABLE"

"THE RESERVATION INDIAN LAND"

We then asked the two-part, open-ended question, of *"Which of these kinds of housing did you like most, and why?"*

Out of 652 respondents, 52.3% (*n=341*) of their responses did not fit neatly into the aforementioned pre-listed housing situation options. Instead, they offered additional insight into the factors of housing that decide its desirability. Here we discuss both the pre-listed housing options, as well as the write-in responses.

From the pre-listed housing situation options, out of 652 respondents,

- Owned - 15.3% (*n=100*)
- Staying with family/friends - 12.0% (*n=78*)
- Rented, on a lease - 9.4% (*n=61*)
- With rental subsidies - 9.0% (*n=59*)
- Rented, not on a lease - 3.7% (*n=24*)
- Part of a service program - 1.4% (*n=9*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Past Living Situation - Most Preferred
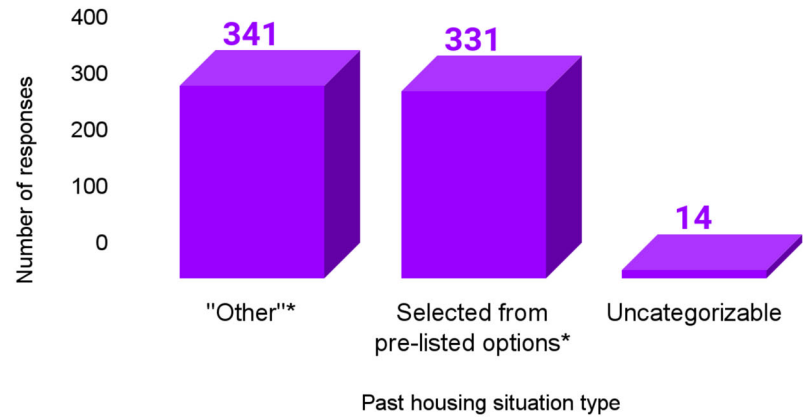
2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Past Living Situations - Most Preferred
Regarding pre-listed housing/living situation options
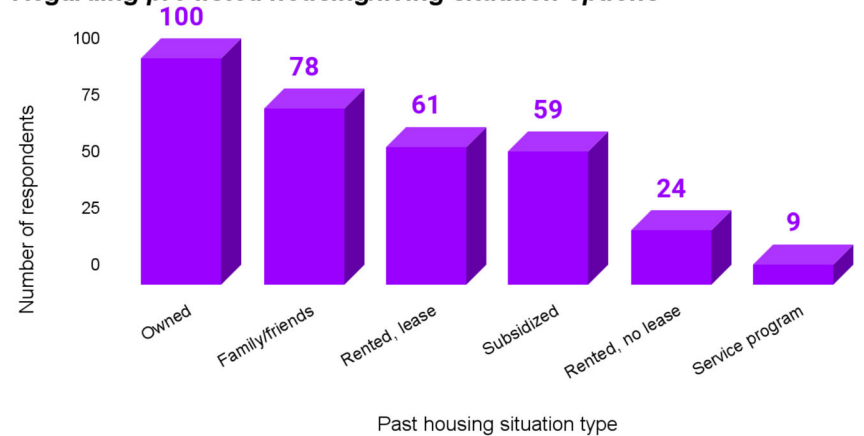
While housing owned by respondents or their families ranked third under housing lived in, it ranked highest as the most preferred option. It also shows a preference for being with friends and family. Renting with a lease was preferred more than renting without lease, but it is of note that 24 people preferred renting without. Also of note is that only 9 people liked housing through a mandatory service program best.

When it came to *why* certain housing situations were preferred over others, six main categorical themes came to light.

2022 Housing Survey Respondents Past Housing Situations - Reasons for Preference
Regarding pre-listed housing situation options
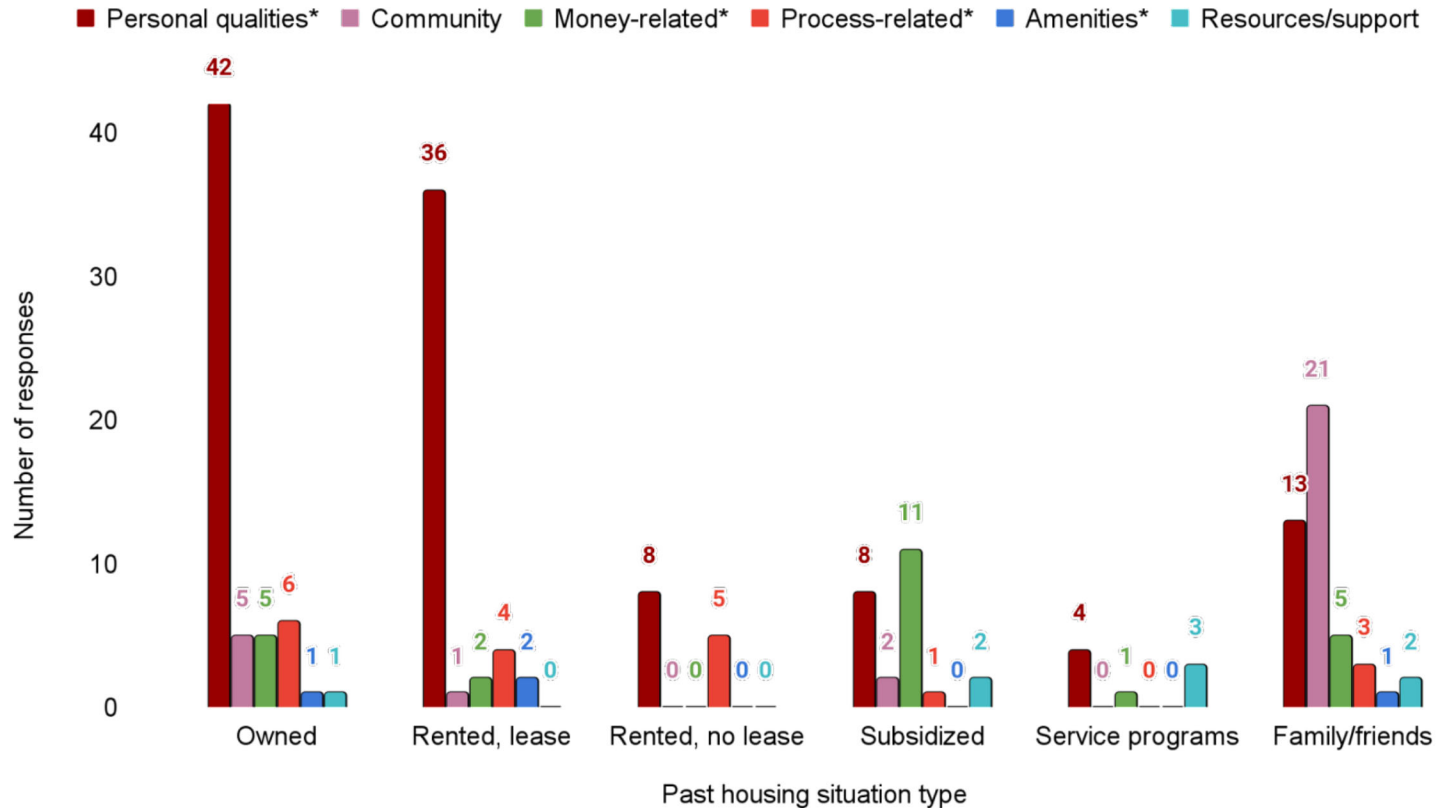
Here we can see that once again, **personal qualities** associated with having a home show high rates across the board. While staying with family and friends reasonably has **community** as the only factor surpassing sentimental value, subsidized housing is the only housing situation more preferred for **money-related** aspects. This contradicts the myth that providing subsidized housing to the masses would make people too comfortable, as money is the main and only reason one would prefer it over all other options.

The below table depicts the same information in numerics for ease of comparison.

2022 HAND Housing Survey - Reasons for Preference of Past Housing Situations						
	Personal Qualities*	Community	Money-related*	Process-related*	Amenities*	Resources/ Support
Owned	**42**	5	5	**6**	1	1
Rented, lease	36	1	2	4	**2**	0
Rented, no lease	8	0	0	5	0	0
Subsidized	8	2	**11**	1	0	2
Service programs	4	0	1	0	0	**3**
Family/friends	13	**21**	5	3	1	2

This data can be compared to that of the leading "other" category of written-in alternative housing/living situations.

Personal qualities is consistently a top theme motivating choices surrounding housing, regardless of how the question is posed.

So what did 341 respondents offer as alternate preferred housing and living situations?

2022 Housing Survey Past Living Situations - Reasons for Preference
Regarding "other" written-in housing/living situations

Responses encompassed a wide range:

- Rented, didn't specify if on a lease - 24.6% (*n=84*)
- "My own" place - 15.2% (*n=52*)
- Housing structure - 11.4% (*n=39*)
  - House (*n=20*)
  - Apartment (*n=19*)
- No favorite/none of them - 10.6% (*n=36*)
- Houseless/outside/tent - 6.7% (*n=23*)
- All/any housing - 6.2% (*n=21*)
- Never had housing - 5.6% (*n=19*)
- Alternative housing type - 5.3% (*n=18*)
  - RV or vehicle (*n=11*)
  - Hotel or motel (*n=4*)
  - Tiny house (*n=2*)
  - Farm (*n=1*)
- Unsure - 4.7% (*n=16*)
- "By myself" - 3.5% (*n=12*)
- General "home"/"housing" - 2.6% (*n=9*)
- Shared living, or single room occupancy (SRO) - 1.2% (*n=4*)
- Shelter, or Safe Outdoor Space[16] (SOS) - 0.9% (*n=3*)
- Rent-to-own - 0.9% (*n=3*)
- Transitional - 0.6% (*n=2*)
- "Other" - 0.3% (*n=1*)

The top three most frequent "other" response themes speak to the unhoused preference for housing first and foremost, be it **rented through some method**, providing **autonomy and space**, or embodying a specific **housing structure**. It emphasizes how the overwhelming difference between someone who is housed and someone who is houseless is that one of them pays rent or mortgage toward a capital asset. While 6.7% of those surveyed preferred some version of houselessness outdoors, a comparable percentage (5.6%) couldn't name a housing preference because they'd never had housing. While some have had such bad experiences with past housing that they prefer their time on the streets, a similar rate of folks lacked the opportunity to decide. A handful less prefer alternative housing types that likely provide more of the personal qualities desired from their living situations – the most-named personal quality being **freedom**.

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[16] This is the program name for "sanctioned encampment" programs in Colorado.

Freedom here was assigned according to the presence of at least one of four different factors - descriptions of independence (*n=38*), using the phrase "my own" to suggest a sense of autonomy (*n=38*), feeling in control (*n=23*), or not being tied down (*n=12*). The rest of the personal qualities subcategories are below. These statistics apply to all responses, regardless of the specific housing/living situation.

2022 Housing Survey Reasons for Preferring Past Living Situations - Personal Qualities
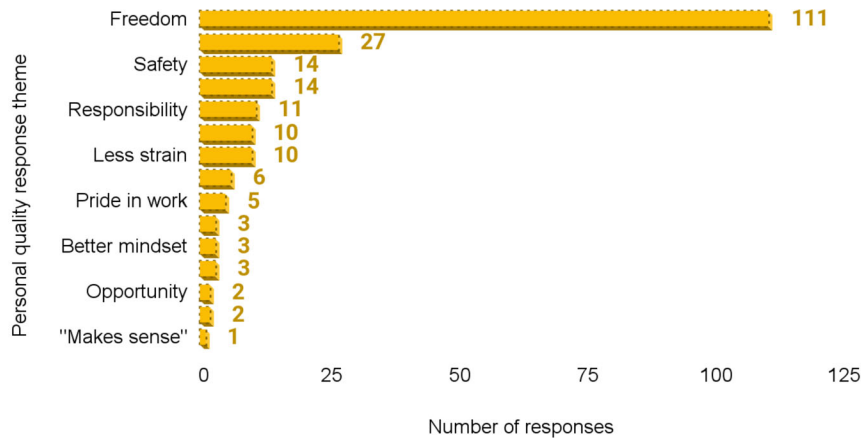
Of 222 "personal quality" responses:
- Freedom - 50.0% (*n=111*)
- Privacy - 12.2% (*n=27*)
- Safety - 6.3% (*n=14*)
- Stability - 6.3% (*n=14*)
- Responsibility - 5.0% (*n=11*)
- Comfort - 4.5% (*n=10*)
- Less strain - 4.5% (*n=10*)
- Home - 2.7% (*n=6*)
- Pride in work - 2.3% (*n=5*)
- Dignity - 1.4% (*n=3*)
- Better mindset - 1.4% (*n=3*)
- Peace - 1.4% (*n=3*)
- Opportunity - 0.9% (*n=2*)
- Health - 0.9% (*n=2*)
- "Makes sense" - 0.5% (*n=1*)

Community, or having loved ones there, was the next most mentioned of the six. Following that was **money-related**, which could be classified into the following:

Of 37 money-related responses:
- Affordable - 43.2% (*n=16*)
- Paid for/subsidized - 43.2% (*n=16*)
- Income-based - 10.8% (*n=4*)
- Monthly rent - 2.7% (*n=1*)

This was then followed by **process-related** and **housing amenities** response themes:

Of 30 process-related responses:
- Can't be evicted - 40.0% (*n=12*)
- Off the streets - 23.3% (*n=7*)
- Landlord-related - 20.0% (*n=6*)
- Avoid housing barriers or process - 13.3% (*n=4*)
- No police - 3.3% (*n=1*)

Of 29 responses describing amenities:
- Bath/hygiene - 17.2% (*n=5*)
- Outside element, like a yard or garden - 17.2% (*n=5*)
- Location - 17.2% (*n=5*)
- Amenities in general - 13.8% (*n=4*)
- Cooking/kitchen - 13.8% (*n=4*)
- Having extra space - 10.0% (*n=3*)
- Bed/sleep - 10.3% (*n=3*)

Of the 12 responses concerning **resources offered or support in general**, some of them included comments such as:

"Anything that helps"

    "Because you have help at home"

        "Housing for programs because I get benefits like substance abuse help etc."

      "I did like being supplied with every need; I am just ready to do things/try for myself now"

        "It's affordable and offered groups to help with substance use and mental illnesses"

          "Place for senior citizens away from crime violence and help through day"

Rank-Order Housing/Living Preferences

To explore preferences further, we asked respondents to rank the following housing/living options from 1 to 10, where "1 is best and 10 is worst"[17].

2022 HAND Housing Survey - Rank Order of Preferred Housing/Living Situations										
Housing / living situation	Rank 1 Best	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8	Rank 9	Rank 10 Worst
House	432	76	25	13	16	7	7	10	5	48
Apartment	194	275	61	37	25	8	15	12	19	19
SRO	48	26	138	105	85	32	30	30	23	48
Collective/shared	35	14	34	75	107	65	62	53	41	64
SOS	26	11	24	33	52	99	82	84	72	59
RV	70	33	66	73	67	69	86	49	22	27
Car	32	17	23	29	58	69	75	123	69	57
Shelter	37	15	16	17	31	38	52	66	120	175
Outdoor/streets	44	14	14	9	27	25	30	39	74	278
Tiny house	85	60	120	96	87	44	25	16	14	20

This table shows how frequently each of the preferred housing/living situations received a ranking of 1 (the best and most preferred), and every whole number thereafter, all the way through rank 10 (the worst and least preferred). Instructions were for respondents to assign each housing/living situation its own unique numerical rank. Here we can see that **house** is by far the highest ranked by most frequently being assigned Rank Order 1, receiving 43.1% (*n=432*) of all the Rank 1 responses, which are listed in the first numerical column and add up to 1,003. Following in this stride, **apartment** received 50.8% (*n=275*) of all 541 Rank 2 responses, and **single room occupancy (SRO)** most frequently received both the Rank 3 (*n=521*) and Rank 4 (*n=487*) positions, at 26.5% (*n=138*) and 21.6% (*n=105*) respectively. **Tiny house** was the only situation to not rank highest under any of the rankings, however it did receive 120 selections under Rank 3 as a close second to SROs. **Collective or shared living** sits firmly as most frequently ranked 5 with 19.3% (*n=107*) of all 555 Rank 5 responses. 21.7% (*n=99*) of 456 Rank 6 responses belonged to **Safe Outdoor Space (SOS)** while **recreational vehicles (RVs)** received the most Rank 7 responses - that is, 18.5% (*n=86*) of 464 responses. **Cars** ranked 8 the most times with 25.5% (*n=123*) of 482 Rank 8 selections. **Shelters** as a response occurred in high concentrations in the latter rankings, with the most Rank 9 selections at 26.1% (*n=120*) of 459 responses. Finally, for Rank 10, the **outdoors or living on the streets** received 35.0% (*n=278*) of the 795 rankings for the worst living situation.

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[17] Refer to the Reflection on Methodology section for discussion surrounding the question design.

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Top Ranked (#1) Living Situation
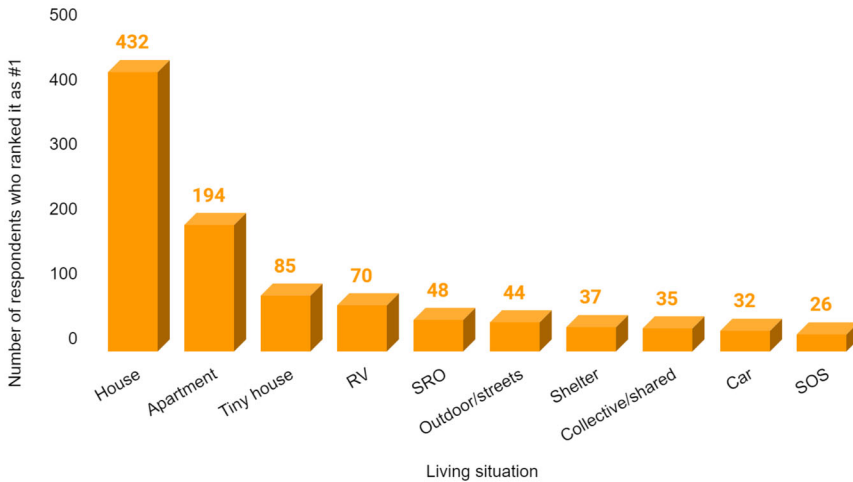
This is the graphical depiction of the Rank 1 column on the previous table. As previously noted, a strong preference for houses is shown, surpassing that of apartments. Tiny houses and RVs both rank relatively high even compared to collective or shared living. SOS ranks last as a top option people want to live in, with even fewer people assigning the highest preference Rank 1 to it than the outdoors or streets.

Additional Housing Options

We also asked individuals if there were other housing options they would like to access.

Out of 551 respondents who answered:
- Just housing/no other option- 59.0% (*n=325*)
- Assisted living - 8.3% (*n=46*)
- Alternative housing* - 5.3% (*n=29*)
- Housing structure* - 5.1% (*n=28*)
- Resources/support* - 4.5% (*n=25*)
- Demographic-specific* - 4.5% (*n=25*)
- All/any options, "yes" - 4.4% (*n=24*)
- Section 8/subsidized - 4.2% (*n=23*)
- Unsure - 4.2% (*n=23*)
- Shelter/SOS/THV - 1.8% (*n=10*)
- Nursing home - 1.3% (*n=7*)
- Long-term/owning - 1.1% (*n=6*)
- Affordable - 1.1% (*n=6*)
- Independent - 0.9% (*n=5*)
- Collective/SRO - 0.7% (*n=4*)
- Uncategorizable - 2.2% (*n=12*)

2022 Housing Survey - Other Desired Forms of Housing
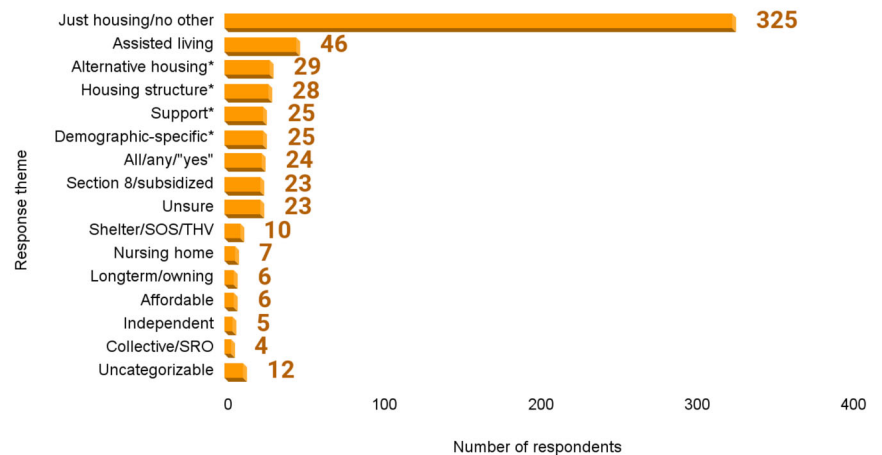
By far, the answer provided that surpassed all others was something along the lines of **just wanting housing**.

> "I don't wanna live in assisted living places because I'm independent."
>
> - Linda, HAND one-on-one interview

The next highest answer was **assisted living**. Of note, the question did offer both "assisted living" and "nursing home" as examples, making these more likely to be named. That being said, the latter example option only had seven people list it as a housing option they would want, suggesting that assisted living was more preferable of the two.

Of 29 alternative housing responses:
- RV - 34.5% (*n=10*)
- Farm/land/outside - 31.0% (*n=9*)
- Hotel/motel - 13.8% (*n=4*)
- Temporary/transitional - 10.3% (*n=3*)
- Housing to flip - 3.4% (*n=1*)
- Container home - 3.4% (*n=1*)
- "Rockstar living" - 3.4% (*n=1*)

This shows a continued trend throughout the survey of both **RVs** or **land** as desired housing options.

Of 28 housing structure responses:
- Apartment - 60.7% (*n=17*)
- House - 39.3% (*n=11*)

Of 25 resources/support responses:
- Mental health - 24.0% (*n=6*)
- Housing navigation - 20.0% (*n=5*)
- Halfway house/sober - 20.0% (*n=5*)
- Financial support - 16.0% (*n=4*)
- Employment support - 4.0% (*n=1*)
- General support - 4.0% (*n=1*)
- Benefits navigation - 4.0% (*n=1*)
- Phone acquisition - 4.0% (*n=1*)
- Bus tickets - 4.0% (*n=1*)

Of 25 demographic-specific housing support responses:
- Disabled - 28.0% (*n=7*)
- Senior - 28.0% (*n=7*)
- Family - 16.0% (*n=4*)
- Veteran - 12.0% (*n=3*)
- Non-senior - 8.0% (*n=2*)
- Middle class - 8.0% (*n=2*)

> "I work at a temp service occasionally and it's really hard on the streets to get up and go to work every day, have clean clothes, be presentable and be on time. I've had five cell phones stolen, five purses. I lost my ID. Having an alarm clock, knowing what time it is... I stayed at Smith Road a few times... I refused to stay there at the overflow shelter. It's inhumane, you know, I mean you have 150 beds that are four inches apart. At this point, I'm in a tent behind a dumpster... Basically an apartment, something affordable like based on income. I've worked with Colorado Coalition... I've been on their list for a couple years and I haven't got anything, but you can't contact me 'cause I don't have a phone.."
>
> - Hillary, HAND one-on-one interview

Of note, all but 10 "other housing" categories were a form of housing or support, highlighting key issues with the existing housing options available.

2022 Housing Survey - Housing/Vouchers Awarded but Refused

Yes
7.1%

57

748

No
92.9%
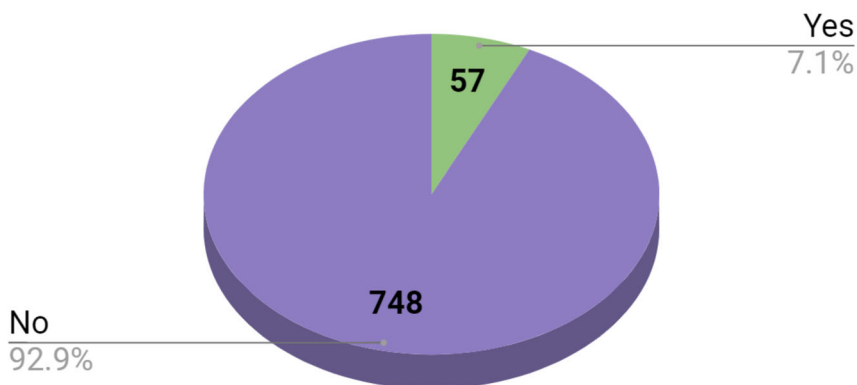
Reasons for Refusing Housing

To understand more about why certain kinds of housing may not work for some people, we asked respondents, *"Have you been offered housing or a housing voucher and refused it?"*

Out of 803 respondents[18]:
- 93.1% (*n=748*) said "No"
- 7.1% (*n=57*) said "Yes"

---

[18] Two respondents selected both "yes" and "no", and their answers were included.

This reaffirms the mass desire for housing. When offered housing, over 93% of people take it.

Determining the motivation or reasons behind 7% of respondents who did not accept a housing offer helps us better understand what housing works for people, or not. So, we followed up the yes-or-no question with, **"If yes, why?"**

Out of 58 people offering additional insight:
- Other - didn't refuse - 29.8% (*n=17*)
  - Not applicable, "no" (*n=11*)
  - Missing documents (*n=2*)
  - Property denied them (*n=2*)
  - Interested, never had (*n=2*)
- Distrust/false hope - 12.3% (*n=7*)
- Uncategorizable - 12.3% (*n=7*)
- Found other housing - 10.5% (*n=6*)
- Extenuating circumstances - 8.8% (*n=5*)
  - Medical reasons (*n=3*)
  - Probation (*n=2*)
- Unsure - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Location - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Inattentive program - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Alternative to renting - 5.3% (*n=3*)
  - "Homeless" (*n=1*)
  - Housing ownership (*n=1*)
  - Motel voucher (*n=1*)
- Didn't finish process - 5.3% (*n=3*)
- Expensive with voucher - 5.3% (*n=3*)
- Limited good housing available - 5.3% (*n=3*)
- Pets - 1.8% (*n=1*)
- No reason given - 1.8% (*n=1*)

2022 Housing Survey - Reasons for Refusing Housing or Vouchers

Type of response	Number of respondents
Other - didn't refuse*	17
Distrust/false hope	7
Found other housing	6
Ext. circumstance*	5
Unsure	4
Bad location	4
Inattentive program	4
Alternative to renting*	3
Didn't finish process	3
Too expensive	3
Limited good housing	3
"Yes", no reason	1
Pets	1
Uncategorizable	7
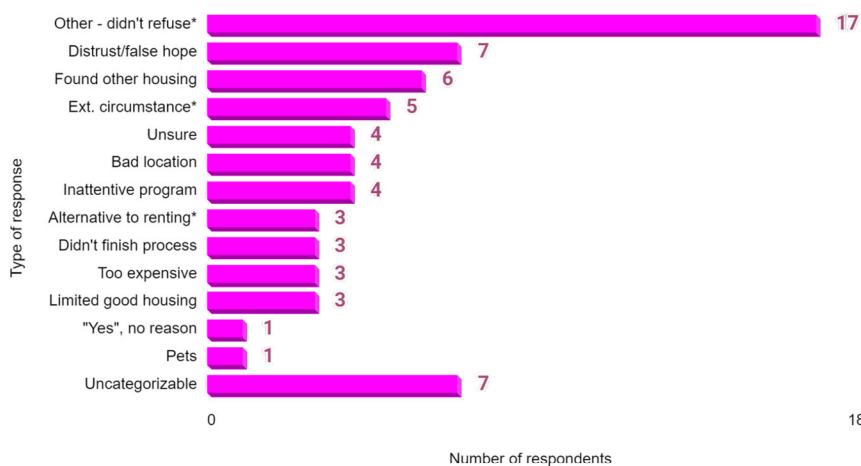
"The only ones toward that 7% were traveling kids like me. So that does show that lifestyle, some of them are content with what they're doing, but some people just aren't going to take it. But I'm guessing that's that 7%.."

— Ana, HAND Community Meeting attendee

While 7% said they've refused a housing offer, when asked why, nearly 30%, almost a third, of these responses contradicted their original answers by suggesting that they **hadn't actively refused housing**. These responses included:

"Only because mail sent to MHCD [Mental Health Center of Denver, or WellPower] who didn't forward to me until after deadline."

"Englewood House turned me down after living on the streets for 2 years. Because of background. Not ok! Also what does that have to do with me living somewhere, taxes-paying citizen."

The next highest response theme points to the community's **distrust or false hope for housing**. Some examples:

"Because don't trust CCH [Colorado Coalition for the Homeless] to find housing other than their housing."

"I was called by the Salvation Army and was told I was given a place, but they were waiting, why it was an eviction, and I was asked to get my [Social Security] card and my I.D. which I did. All they did was give me false hope. Then they never called me back."

Just over 10% wrote that they'd **found other housing**, while 8.8% cited **extenuating circumstances**. 5.3% could not find housing because their voucher **did not cover the full rent amount**. Ultimately, significantly less than 7% of responses suggest they *actually* refused housing. The 3 people listing **alternatives to renting** either do not want to or cannot rent. On the whole, of those who did refuse housing or a housing voucher, none stated the reason as not wanting any housing at all, but rather that the housing offered was not a good fit.

What we see from these answers is that the massive majority of people do not refuse housing. We also see that those who do refuse housing often do so not of their own initiative, but because they are prevented from accessing housing due to logistical reasons that prevented them from completing the process, organizational or system failures, poor health or legal obligations, pets, crisis, or other such situations. Those who intentionally refuse housing do so for important reasons, such as the location, or bad experiences in the past with the provider or their rules.

Accessing Housing

> **"Yeah, talk to a case manager and they fill out the paperwork for you and they say, we'll get back with you. And they end up quitting, moving, quitting, moving, and [you] have to start all over. You end up dying before ever getting it..."**
>
> - Keith, HAND one-on-one interview

> **"They sent me to another place and then that place would send me to another place, and that place would tell me I gotta go back to this other place, and I just give up. Whatever."**
>
> - Jon Jon, HAND one-on-one interview

Despite how most houseless people *do* want and *are* seeking housing, the process one must go through to try and access housing poses critical barriers. Understanding this process from houseless people's perspective sheds light as to why this process does not lead to housing for so many.

Community Understanding of the Housing Process

We asked the open-ended question, ***"What is the process you need to go through to get into housing?"***

Out of 813 respondents:
- 122.6%[19] (*n=997*) responses described housing process steps
- 38.0% (*n=309*) reflected on the housing process
- 19.3% (*n=157*) were unsure or didn't know
- 0.6% (*n=9*) felt it didn't apply, or there was none
- 1.7% (*n=14*) of responses were uncategorizable

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Understanding of the Housing Process

_____
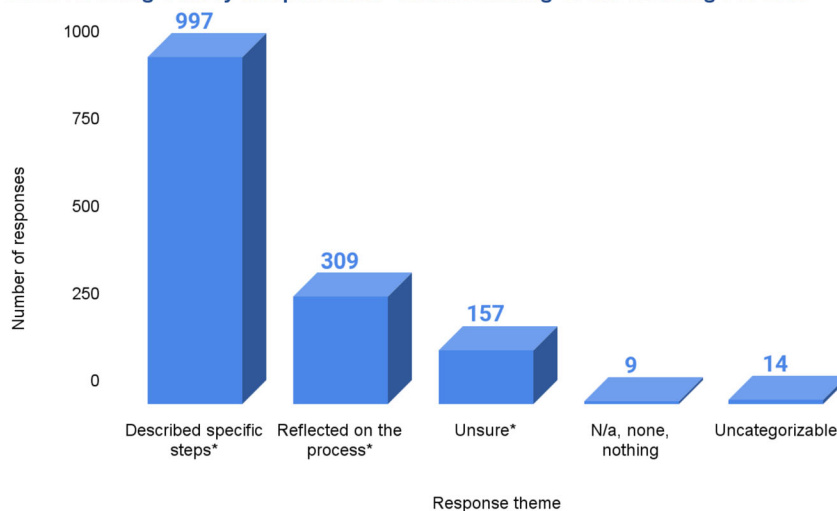
[19] This can surpass 100% when a respondent has multiple steps, i.e. more than one categorical response themes, within their answer.

Housing Process Steps

Of 997 housing process step responses:

1. Program participation* - 16.5% (*n=165*)
2. Access support* - 15.4% (*n=154*)
3. Have money* - 13.9% (*n=139*)
4. Qualify* - 12.4% (*n=124*)
5. Apply - 9.7% (*n=97*)
6. Submit official documents* 8.4% (*n=84*)
7. Self-work/initiative* - 7.4% (*n=74*)
8. Join waitlist(s) - 6.3% (*n=63*)
9. Submit paperwork* - 5.1% (*n=51*)
10. Housing navigation - 2.4% (*n=24*)
11. "Move"* - 1.3% (*n=13*)
12. Lottery system - 0.9% (*n=9*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Understanding of the Housing Process - Process Steps
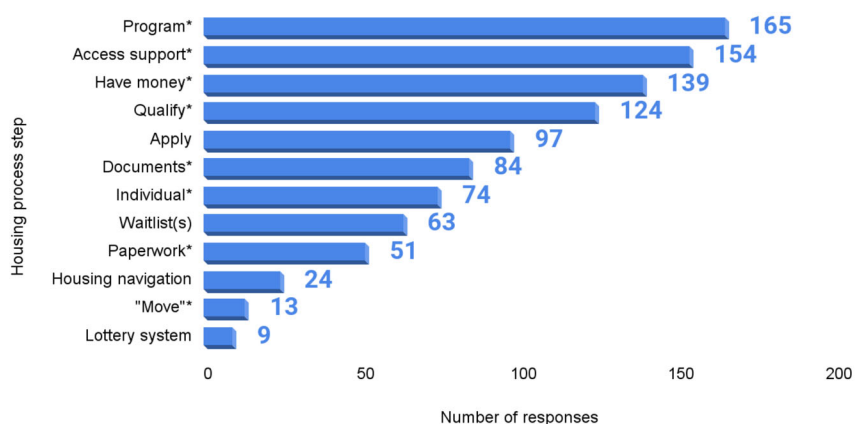
The most alluded-to housing process step was to participate in some program through an organization. This, coupled with "access support" as the second most common answer, lend themselves to the fact that most houseless people are unable to find housing through the usual means of searching the market independently, but must instead rely on agencies and case workers as gatekeepers to securing housing. The fact that only 9 people named the Section 8 housing lottery system through the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) reflects the reality that only a very small number of houseless people acquire housing through that lottery.

1. Program Participation

When we breakdown how respondents described program participation, we see that, most commonly, they referred to utilizing a **housing program in general** without specifying. Out of 165 program-related responses:

- In general/unspecified - 49.1% (*n=81*)
- Government/subsidized - 26.7% (*n=44*)
- Shelter - 7.9% (*n=13*)
- Group living - 5.5% (*n=9*)
- Demographic-specific programs - 4.8% (*n=6*),
    - Veteran support (*n=3*)
    - Health clinic (*n=2*)
    - Senior support (*n=2*)
    - Youth support (*n=1*)
- Temporary/transitional - 3.6% (*n=6*)
- Class/training - 2.4% (*n=4*)

> "I've been doing exactly that. I've been going to different organizations and talking to 'em and putting stuff in. It never happened."
>
> - HAND one-on-one interview

106 people named specific programs, by far the most named program was Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH).

1. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) - 41.5% (*n=44*)
2. Denver Housing Authority (DHA) - 7.5% (*n=8*)
3. Housing & Urban Development (HUD); Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD); Salvation Army; Volunteers of America (VOA) - 4.7% each (*n=5*)
4. Colorado Village Collaborative (CVC); Denver Rescue Mission (DRM); St. Francis Center (SFC); Veterans' Association (VA) - 3.8% each (*n=4*)
5. (Human services); (Welfare) - 2.8% each (*n=3*)
6. Haven of Hope - 1.9% (*n=2*)
7. Colorado Housing & Finance Authority (CHFA); Department of Local Affairs (DOLA); Family Tree; Ft. Lyons; Harm reduction Action Center (HRAC); OneHome[20]; Senior Supportive Services (SSS); The Initiative; Urban Peak; ("The state") - 0.9% each (*n=1*)

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[20] OneHome is the required national database – accessible only by service providers – for houseless people who are seeking housing.

2. Access Support

The next highest response theme surrounded accessing support - the top example being **case management.**

Of 154 support responses:
- Case management/counselor - 60.4% (*n=93*)
- Expert/general support - 17.5% (*n=27*)
- Information or resources - 9.7% (*n=15*)
- Community support - 6.5% (*n=10*)
- Financial support - 5.8% (*n=9*)

The frequency of the first subcategory reflects the reality of the housing process necessitating houseless people to go through a case manager or other case worker to get housing. With only a few small exceptions, almost every housing option for people under 30% AMI[21] requires you to go through an agency with a case manager.

> "They told me I would get a case manager within the next three weeks, which ended up [being] in the next four months. I stayed at the shelter for approximately four months without knowing, seeing a case manager of my own. I call it hell in there, just like living on the street. You gotta deal with so many characters, so many attitudes, I mean, so much that goes on with the staff. The staff is horrible, and then you gotta deal with the everyday life of everybody that they bring in the shelter."
>
> - Teri, HAND one-on-one interview

This poses significant problems given the scant ratio of case managers to people-in-need, the scraps of housing resources available that case managers compete for, the high turnover rate of case managers, and other issues with the case management system.

It is also important to note that because of the way this current system is set-up, houseless people's direct connection to the housing search is through a case manager employed by an agency, *not* with property owners, nor the larger housing system making housing unattainable. This can create complicated relationships between houseless people and case workers.

3. Have Money

Of 139 money-related responses:
- Generating or receiving income - 66.2% (*n=92*)
- Having savings/ money in general - 26.6% (*n=37*)
- Move-in costs - 7.2% (*n=10*)

Of the 92 **income-related** responses, 75.0% (*n=69*) point to a **job/employment** as the source, while 14.1% (*n=13*) describe **fixed income** – specifically Supplemental Security Income (SSI, *n=7*), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI, *n=5*), and Old Age Pension (OAP, *n=1*) – and 10.9% (*n=10*) were **unspecified**, or mentioned income in general.

This reflects both the need for more traditional income to achieve housing outside of the houseless housing system, as well as housing programs' income requirements to receive housing - such as income-based housing for people above 30% AMI.

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[21] AMI stands for Area Median Income, which is a region's income distribution midpoint such that half of the population earns more and half earns less than the median income amount. Percentages of AMI are used to distinguish between economic classes and qualify certain populations for support - although, interestingly, more support exists for higher earning AMI divisions in certain areas, including housing, than do for lower percentage AMIs.

4. Qualify

Individuals described the housing process step of qualifying for the housing before being able to receive it.

Out of 124 "qualify" responses:

- Demographic group-specific - 27.4% (*n=34*)
- Income-based - 25.8% (*n=32*)
- Background check - 22.6% (*n=28*)
- Approval/unspecified - 12.1% (*n=15*)
- Credit check - 6.5% (*n=8*)
- Needs-based - 5.6% (*n=7*)

Housing is not accessible just to rent, but rather, a person must prove they fit a specific criteria before being able to live there.

One of the main ways in which one qualifies is by belonging to a specific **demographic group**.

Of 34 demographic qualifying responses:

- Disabled - 32.4% (*n=11*)
- Houseless - 23.5% (*n=8*)
- Family - 17.6% (*n=6*)
- Sober - 11.8% (*n=4*)
- Elderly - 8.8% (*n=3*)
- Able-bodied - 2.9% (*n=1*)
- Domestic violence victim - 2.9% (*n=1*)

> **"I just got housing. So I know what it takes and what they put you through. They gotta know your income. They gotta know your background. They gotta know credit, they run your credit. Three times your income, and it should never be that because I got a voucher and they went beyond that to keep me from getting it - they raised the market just to go over the voucher."**
>
> **- HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee**

These kinds of demographic-focused housing options are prevalent in the houseless housing system, and while they purport to create opportunities for more equitable housing access for vulnerable subpopulations within the houseless community, in practice, they can do the exact opposite. Here, Paul Boden of Western Regional Advocacy Project offers several examples of how the houseless system uses demographic program qualifiers to restrict access to insufficient resources, as he orally explained this history to HAND members:

> When they were doing HOPE VI and they knew god damn well that one third of the people leaving were not going to come back, they went into qualifying people, and half didn't qualify because of felony records, immigrant status… Same thing for intake for shelter beds… Instead of denying people for housing, they set up systems of intake and screening designed to maximize the number of people deemed ineligible for service so as to not admit to the fact that there isn't anywhere near the adequate slots for housing, or treatment, or even emergency shelter at this point.

When you don't have the capacity to meet the demand, you make it harder to become eligible.

> In that way you're not just telling people to 'fuck off', they 'didn't qualify' for the 'benevolent' services you're offering. 'We don't have to increase demand, they're just not eligible'. The harder and more expensive it is to serve the population, the more stringent the intake requirements. Look at families compared to single adults – it's amazing what families have to go through to be eligible for a shelter bed. Absolutely brutal, and the intakes can take weeks while they're waiting for their bed. By prioritizing who then is deemed eligible, it provides a divide and conquer – 'I'm as hard up for the bed but you got it and I didn't'. That's where I really like that analogy of musical chairs because the last one that got it isn't any more or less worthy than the ones who lost that chair.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness and the Corperation for Supportive Housing were the primary bakers of the National Homelessness Project which fucked over houseless families and youth. All these programs shut down and reopened as chronically single homelessness programs. If a family doesn't have their kid, they have to be with the child. You can't leave the kid at a cousin's or aunt's house to stay warm. You have to check-in to stay on the list. If you're in another county, or you call and say you're staying at a friend's house, then you are taken off the [housing wait-] list.

6. Official Documents

Of 84 responses about needing to submit official identifying documents to get housing:

- I.D. - 53.6% (*n=45*)
- Birth certificate - 17.9% (*n=15*)
- Social security number or card - 17.9% (*n=15*)
- Unspecified - 8.3% (*n=7*)
- Award letter - 1.2% (*n=1*)
- Medical documents - 1.2% (*n=1*)

In a separate question, lack of access to documents for this process ranked fourth under people's barriers to housing.

> "Well, I don't have papers to say so, but we want a house, of course. None of us have a house here, and we don't want to make it difficult when we don't have our own documents."
>
> - HAND Spanish Speakers Houseless Community Forum attendee

Furthermore, there is no way for individuals without citizenship to participate in the current housing system, making these individuals incredibly vulnerable.

7. Individual Initiative

Notably, many people wrote about the need for one to work hard and show initiative in order to get housing. The fact that this showed up in this particular section of the report is emblematic of the community's belief that you have to work to deserve what is given to you, despite public perceptions and twisted political campaigns surrounding recipients of social program benefits. This theme was brought up continuously at every stage of the report's creation, all the way through final peer reviews by unhoused community members. Of 74 self-initiated responses:

- General gumption/showing initiative - 51.4% (*n=38*)
- Consistency/follow-up, including appointments, meetings, and calls - 41.9% (*n=31*)
- Personal ability, skills, stability - 6.8% (*n=5*)

> "I did it on my own. [My case manager] was supposed to help me find, or assist me finding, housing and stuff like that. She never did. She sent me a couple of things like she was doing her job, but then she also end up informing me that she doesn't go to any of the sites. She doesn't leave the premises of the facility of the Coalition to help you... If you wanna be somewhere,... don't leave it in nobody's hands. Do it for yourself."
>
> - Teri, HAND one-on-one interview

This further reflects the struggle people have with a lack of case managers – the system-appointed gatekeepers to housing – and many simultaneously not doing their job and experiencing high rates of burnout and turnover, leading to many of the unhoused having to "do the work yourself", i.e. navigate an opaque and inconsistent housing system that often relies on luck and personal connections without expert guidance.

9. Submit Paperwork

51 people mentioned filling out paperwork – oftentimes accompanied by the prefix "a LOT of". Difficulty and length of such documents, which often must be received at a physical mailing address, can further stifle one's housing progress.

Of 51 paperwork responses:
- Unspecified - 80.4% (*n=41*)
- Assessment, including the VI-SPDAT[22] - 9.8% (*n=5*)
- Lease - 9.8% (*n=5*)

> "When I tried to reconcile with my ex-wife and she got the paperwork that she's schizophrenic and has a lot of mental issues, they told us 3 years. What am I supposed to do when I'm trying to go to work when my wife can barely be around other people, let alone with me? Some of us just give up. I'm just going to crawl back into my tent and go to sleep and wake up tomorrow... You get disillusioned."
>
> — HAND Community Meeting attendee

11. "Move"

13 people talked about the need to "move" but in different senses: 8 responses meant to **move-in** as a step in the process, while the remaining 5 referred to the need to **move *out*** of Denver, or even Colorado, for housing, primarily due to it being unaffordable to live here.

Reflections on Housing Process

While 997 of the aforementioned responses to the question about what the housing process is provided specific steps within that process, another 309 people responded less literally with more of a reflection on its ease/efficacy… Or lack thereof.

Of 309 reflection responses:
1. General negative sentiment - 44.0% (*n=136*)
2. Duration-specific - 36.2% (*n=112*)
3. Barriers to housing - 18.4% (*n=57*)
4. Easy/quick process - 1.3% (*n=4*)

1. Negative sentiments

Of 136 negative responses:
- "A lot"/hard - 20.6% (*n=28*)
- Produces no results - 15.4% (*n=21*)
- Inconsistency with/ poor communication on behalf of staff/housing officials - 14.0% (*n=19*)
- Unspecific negative comment - 13.2% (*n=18*)
- "Jumping through hoops" - 9.6% (*n=13*)
- Corrupt - 8.8% (*n=12*)
- Too expensive - 6.6% (*n=9*)
- Luck-based - 5.9% (*n=8*)
- "Not for me" - 5.9% (*n=8*)

> "The other obstacle is no credit, bad credit, previous issues from my divorce and becoming homeless. Knowing the housing application process: if I'm even gonna qualify or is it just a waste of time per place that I'm trying to apply for.'"
>
> — Hillary, HAND one-on-one interview

These responses reflect a widespread experience in the houseless community with struggle, lack of results, and continual jumping through hoops for housing.

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[22] VI-SPDAT stands for "Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool", and is a federally mandated assessment used to determine risk/vulnerability of unhoused individuals and families for prioritization of services/support. The issues presented by this method are discussed later in this report.

2. Duration-specific

112 people spoke specifically to the **length of time** it takes to get housing.

Of 112 time-specific responses:
- Long time/wait in general - 61.6% (*n=69*)
- Specific amount of time - 18.8% (*n=21*)
- More than (>) some amount of time - 10.7% (*n=12*)
- "Months" to "years" - 8.9% (*n=10*)
  - "Years" in general, unspecified (*n=7*)
  - "Months" in general, unspecified (*n=3*)

> "Now even to get my name on something, I'm starting the process again. So I started this process seven years ago, but now I gotta start again."
>
> - Mark, HAND one-on-one interview

Several instances throughout the survey offered respondents a chance to provide qualitative estimates related to time in the houseless housing system. Here, responses that named a specific duration were calculated as a dataset for an average of **approximately 3.9 years** with a median of 2.5 years. Answers spanned from 2 weeks until 20 years.

"More than" answers were calculated separately to reveal a similar average of **more than 3.4 years** with a median of more than 3.0 years exactly. Responses in this instance ranged from "more than 1 month" to "more than 10 years".

These reflections illuminate the system's failure to provide effective housing support within appropriate timeframes.

People are jumping through endless hoops, dependent on service agencies and case workers that don't and can't do what's needed, pitted against other unhoused people in competition for the same handful of housing options, forced to go through years of process while trying to survive without housing.

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Faith in Housing Process

Unsure 31.5% — 247
Somewhat 23.2% — 182
Yes 21.8% — 171
No 23.6% — 185
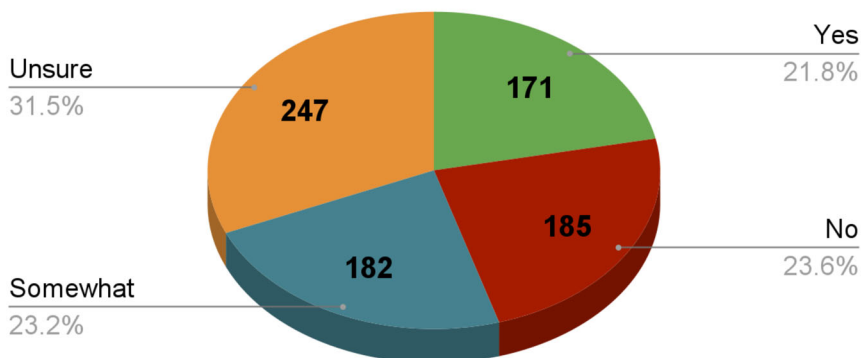
Faith in the Housing Process

After defining "the housing process" for themselves, respondents were then asked, ***"If you have gone through that housing process, does that process work?"***

Out of 785 respondents,
- 31.5% (*n=247*) selected "Unsure"
- 23.6% (*n=185*) selected "No"
- 23.2% (*n=182*) selected "Somewhat"
- 21.8% (*n=171*) selected "Yes"

Some respondents offered additional comments alongside their answers, including:

Of those who selected "Unsure":

"Don't know because I'm looking to buy"

"Haven't been through it"

"I don't know. I need the info."

"Program"

"Still trying all the time"

Of those who selected "Somewhat":

"Half-ass"

"It works when someone helps you"

"Too slow"

Of those who selected "No":

"BLAMED ON SOMETHING ELSE"

"HOMELESS"

"NOT FOR ME"

Of those who selected "Yes":

"FRIEND HELPED ME GET INTO PLACE. MET AT SHELTER."

"IF FOLLOW THROUGH"

"LONG BUT YES"

These findings reveal widespread distrust in the housing process leading to housing effectively, and even those who do believe the current processes work acknowledge that success is dependent on special conditions.

> "It took us 7 years and 4 months to get in. Ten years later, I gotta move because she passed on. I don't know who to blame - the government, City, State..."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

Barriers to Housing

So, what are more of the factors that have led to such significant distrust in the housing process? In order to better understand what barriers people face when seeking housing, we asked just that: *"What barriers have you experienced in getting housing?"* Respondents were asked to "check all that apply" from provided options.

Out of 793 respondents:

1. Not having money - 53.0% (*n=420*)
2. Bad credit score - 38.0% (*n=301*)
3. Not having a phone - 35.3% (*n=280*)
4. Not having official documents - 32.8% (*n=260*)
5. Having a felony - 31.8% (*n=252*)
6. Not having internet - 28.6% (*n=227*)
7. Difficulty of paperwork - 28.6% (*n=227*)
8. Racial discrimination - 21.7% (*n=172*)
9. Having a disability - 21.4% (*n=170*)
10. Police displacement - 17.2% (*n=136*)
11. Eviction/back rent - 16.1% (*n=128*)
12. Physical health needs - 13.7% (*n=109*)
13. Other barriers - 11.5% (*n=91*)
14. Requiring an ADA unit - 5.8% (*n=46*)
15. Immigration status - 4.3% (*n=34*)

> "You must have documents, they ask you to have documents from this country to access. Those are an important point now. So people who do not have the documents here cannot access this type of housing."
>
> - Jesus, HAND one-on-one interview

Once again, we see that the **unaffordability** of housing is a top barrier, followed by another financial obstacle – having a bad **credit score**. Credit scores are commonly used as a reason to deny someone a lease on an apartment. Renting a place is no longer just a matter of having the money or the income, but also having a favorable credit history. It is also noteworthy how high the barriers related to **not having a phone or even internet** are, making the process of searching and applying for apartments nearly impossible. **Having a felony** also ranked high as a barrier to getting housing due to the discriminatory practice of background checks.

Of 91 "other" housing barrier responses:
- Selected "other" with no additional comments - 20.9% (*n=19*)
- "N/a", no, none - 14.3% (*n=13*)
- Trauma-related - 12.1% (*n=11*)
  - General pre-houseless trauma (i.e. family, gang) (*n=6*)
  - Trauma related to the condition of being houseless (*n=5*)
- No support - 5.5% (*n=5*)
- Court/warrant/other criminal record - 4.4% (*n=4*)
- No job - 4.4% (*n=4*)
- Family/roommates - 3.3% (*n=3*)
- Long time/wait/waitlists - 3.3% (*n=3*)
- Not "bad enough" to qualify - 3.3% (n=3)
- Non-racial discrimination - 3.3% (n=3)
- Politics/systemic - 3.3% (n=3)
- Unsure - 3.3% (n=3)
- Mental health issues - 3.3% (n=3)
- "Myself" as a barrier - 2.2% (n=2)
- "First time" being houseless, "never tried" - 2.2% (n=2)
- "Any" - 1.1% (n=1)
- No time - 1.1% (n=1)
- No transportation - 1.1% (n=1)
- Having pets - 1.1% (n=1)
- Substance use - 1.1% (n=1)

> "Once you're labeled that criminal in the system, it just makes your life harder... And then you can also lose your, if you do have a housing voucher that you worked so hard for months and a half up to four years, one DV could potentially just blow that all out the window. And you know, we black, we got a different way of sorting out our problems that your white neighbor might think is an emergency. A 911 worthy emergency. Somebody calls the cops. That's all, that's all that has to happen. Someone calls the cops, we go to jail, we're in the system."
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

Top "other" housing barriers brought up were related to **trauma**, **not having support**, and **other legal issues**.

Housing Barriers and Intersectional Identities

Effects of racial/ethnic identity on racial discrimination as a barrier

When you look specifically at how racial discrimination affects people as a housing barrier, you see that, unsurprisingly, people of color are far more likely to face racial discrimination in housing than white people.

Compared to the overall 21.7% (*n=172*) of respondents who selected racial discrimination as a barrier to housing:
- Indigenous - 42.4% (*n=28*)
- Other race - 31.0% (*n=22*)
- Unknown race - 29.6% (*n=8*)
- Black - 28.8% (*n=59*)
- Hispanic/latinx - 25.8% (*n=42*)
- Asian - 25.0% (*n=5*)
- White - 14.0% (*n=48*)

2022 Housing Survey - Racial/Ethnic Identities & Racial Discrimination as a Housing Barrier
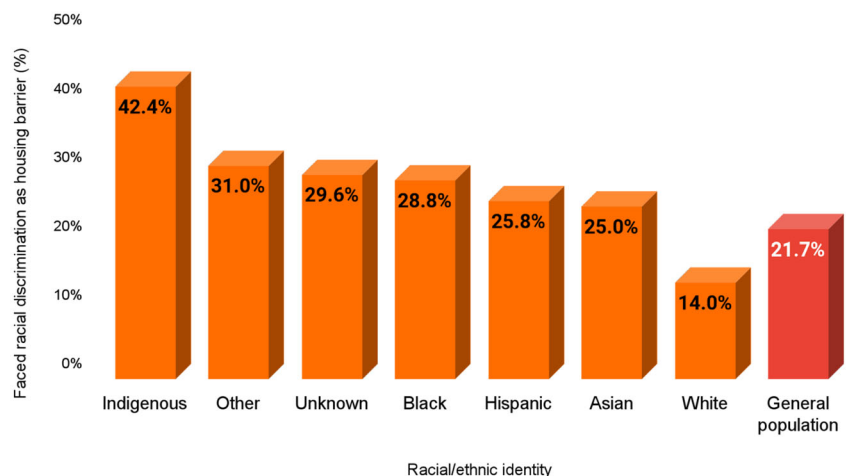
Effects of racial/ethnic identity on immigrant status as a barrier

2022 Housing Survey - Racial/Ethnic Identities & Immigrant Status as a Housing Barrier
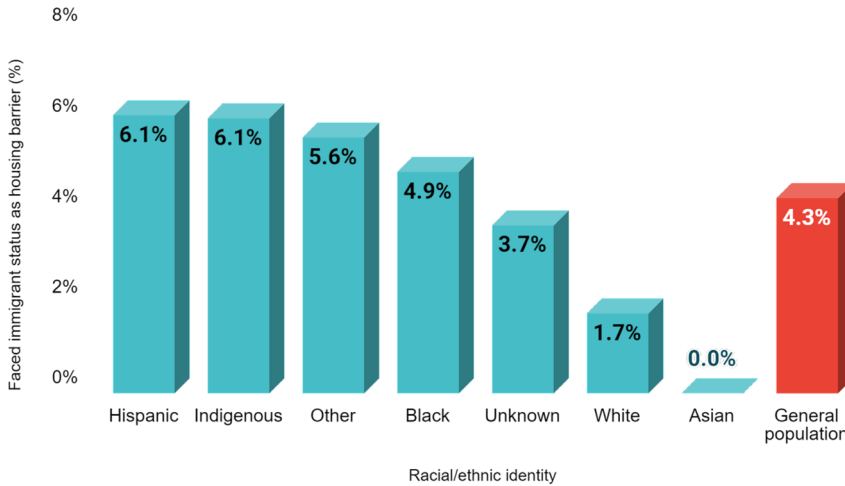
Compared to the overall 4.3% (*n=34*) of respondents who selected immigrant status as a barrier to housing:

- Hispanic - 6.1% (*n=10*)
- Indigenous - 6.1% (*n=4*)
- Other race - 5.6% (*n=4*)
- Black - 4.9% (*n=10*)
- Unknown - 3.7% (*n=1*)
- White - 1.7% (*n=6*)
- Asian - 0.0% (*n=0*)

We see here that immigration status is a significant barrier for Hispanic/Latinx and Indigenous people, somewhat for Black people, and 2.5 times *less* likely of an issue for White people than the general populace.

> "I don't see anyone who doesn't want a home here, go home from work and rest."
>
> - HAND Spanish Speakers Houseless Community Forum attendee

Effects of disabilities on needing ADA units as a barrier

Compared to the overall 5.8% (*n=46*) of respondents who said that requiring an ADA unit was a housing barrier, those who identify as being disabled are almost twice as likely to experience this as a barrier at 10.8% (*n=30*).

2022 Housing Survey - Disabled Respondents & Requiring ADA Units as a Housing Barrier
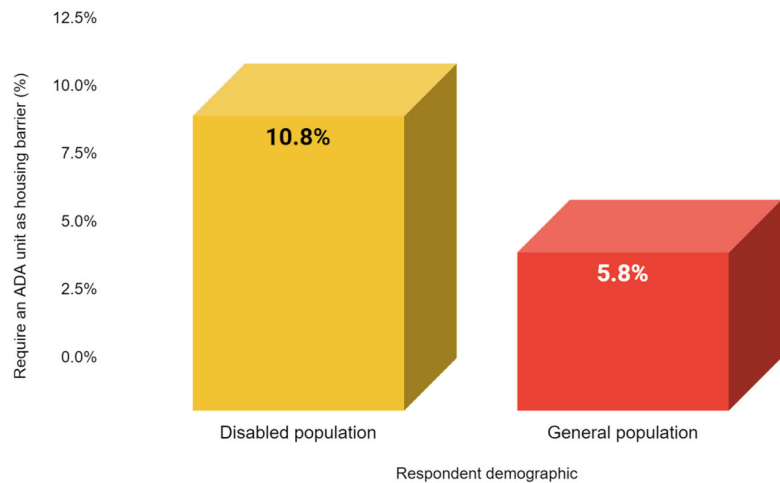
> "I can't climb the stairs there."
>
> - Jesus, HAND one-on-one interview

Overall, being a person of color, especially an immigrant of color, and/or disabled significantly increases your barriers to accessing housing. Despite this relatively nominal excerpt on the topic, the effects on these subpopulations within the community are extensive and deserving of continued exploration to envision and create inclusive pathways to housing for all.

> "I'm on disability 'cause according to the government, I'm not capable of working, but they don't pay me enough to pay the rent."
>
> - HAND Queer Houseless Community Forum attendee

Housing Waitlists

Population on Housing Waitlist(s)
When asked if respondents were on housing waitlist(s), out of 814 respondents:
- 53.7% (*n=437*) selected "No"
- 27.8% (*n=226*) selected "Yes"
- 10.8% (*n=88*) were "Unsure"
- 7.7% (*n=63*) "Were in the past"

Some notable comments:
"BEEN FOR YEARS"
"FOR TOO LONG"
"IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA"
"NOT YET"

2022 Housing Survey Respondents on Housing Waitlist(s)

Unsure 10.8%
In the past 7.7%
88
63
226
Yes 27.8%
437
No 53.7%
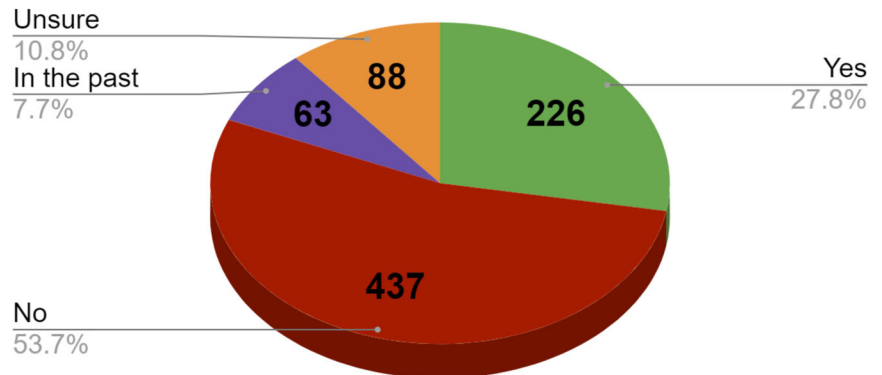
This suggests that around half of houseless people in Denver are not on any housing waitlist – whether it's because they have not received support from low-income housing agencies that run the waitlists, lack faith in their ability to get housing through these waitlists, or some other reason.

As we know from respondents' answers on housing desired, at least 93% of houseless people want housing, so that is not why 53% of people are not on waitlists. It is also of note that 10% of respondents don't know if they're on a waitlist. This indicates the confusion people have with the housing service system and the low level of connection some have with the case managers responsible for placing them on waitlists. It may also indicate that some case managers are not adding houseless people to housing waitlists in programs that require case manager referrals.

"I'm still waiting on a waitlist to hear about if I'm on a waitlist"

- HAND Community Meeting attendee

"I'm in a shelter, and if I'm supposed to be on this waitlist, why am I not?"

- HAND Community Meeting attendee

Additionally, while the VI-SPDAT assessment and the DHA/HUD voucher lottery are not technically housing waitlists, most houseless people experience them as such when they complete these processes alongside a case manager in the process of attaining housing, so it is sensible to infer that a portion of respondents would have noted "yes" to being on a waitlist if they took the VI-SPDAT or were entered into the HUD lottery.

Number of Waitlists Per Person
We then asked how many waitlists respondents were on.
Out of 230 responses:
- **Most common answer = 1**
  - 43.0% said this (*n=99*)
- **Highest answer = 30**
  - 0.9% said this (*n=2*)
- **Average of all answers = 2.9**

After "1 waitlist", the next most common answers were:
- 2 waitlists (21.3%, *n=49*)
- 3 waitlists (17.4%, *n=40*)
- 4 waitlists (4.8%, *n=11*)
- 5 waitlists (3.9%, *n=9*)

Time Spent on Waitlists

209 respondents told us how much time they've spent waiting on waitlists.

2022 HAND Housing Survey: Time Spent on Housing Waitlists	
Maximum length of time	8,030 days (22 years)
Minimum length of time	4 days
Average length of time	890.8 days (*2.4 years*)
Most reported length of time (mode)	365 days (*1 year*)

Many who didn't offer exact durations instead gave insight into their thinking with unprompted comments like:

"Didn't help"

"Don't need it"

"Every lottery they do I check"

"Just waiting"

"No idea, never checked"

"Not U.S. Citizen yet"

"Way too long"

"Who knows?"

"If you've got a waitlist for 200 people, you're waiting for someone to die or move on."

- HAND Community Meeting attendee

These comments highlight two different realities: one where there is no clear method by which someone on a housing waitlist can check their place in line on that waitlist, and another where those without citizenship are prohibited from applying for housing through the prevailing systems.

Effects of race/ethnicity on time spent on waitlists

When people's answers to this question were analyzed based on race, here is what we found.

Compared to the overall average of 891 days (2.4 years) spent on housing waitlist(s):

- Asian - 2,038 days or 5.6 years (*n=5*)
- Indigenous - 1,233 days or 3.4 years (*n=23*)
- Hispanic - 970 days or 2.7 years (*n=41*)
- White - 855 days or 2.3 years (*n=88*)
- Unknown race - 793 days or 2.2 years (*n=7*)
- Black - 756 days or 2.1 years (*n=59*)
- Other race - 470 days or 1.3 years (*n=19*)

2022 Housing Survey - Racial/Ethnic Identities & Average Time Spent on Waitlists

Racial/ethnic identity	Average time spent on housing waitlist(s) (days)
Asian	2038
Indigenous	1233
Hispanic	970
White	855
Unknown	793
Black	756
Other	470
General	891
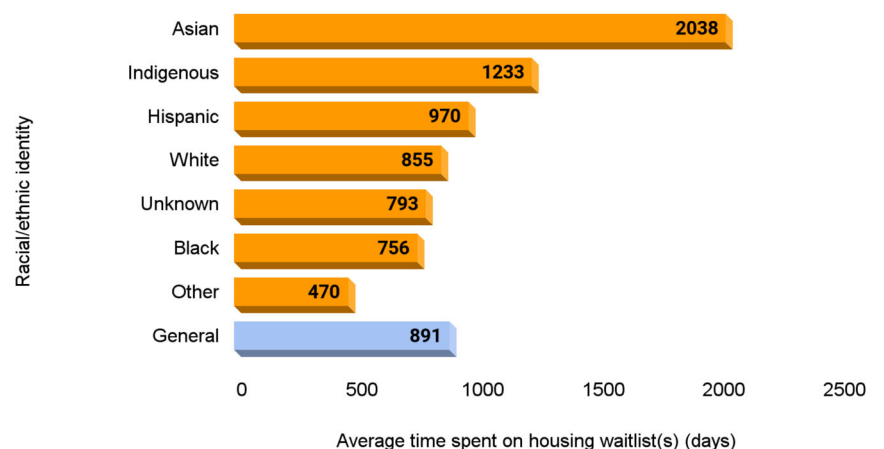
The 2022 PIT Count and Census data estimated that just over 60% of the houseless population in Denver identifies as Black (or African American or Descendant of American Slaves), so when 80.5% of Denver's general population identifies as such, it means that a Black person in Denver is 2.3 times more likely to be houseless. One reason for this group reporting the lowest number of days spent on housing waitlists could be that affirmative housing action in recent years has attempted to address this notable racial factor, and so such efforts should be lauded. This would also explain why Asian-identifying people experience the longest waitlist durations; when only 0.5% of Denver's unhoused are Asian in a city that is 4.1% Asian, this demographic group has the least chance of becoming houseless, even when compared to the white populace.

> "I'll just run on this hamster wheel again, and slave myself away just to avoid the process of having to prove income and having to run my credit, having to [have a] clean background. It's really hard to run into a black person that has a clean criminal background and perfect credit."
>
> - **HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendees**

That being said, the average waitlist duration for the Black unhoused person is still *over 2 years* – a disturbing and unreasonable amount of time! Furthermore, one could make the point that being Indigenous (or Native American or an Alaska Native) makes one 3.7 times more likely to be houseless in Denver – even greater than that of a Black person – and yet, they seem to experience the second longest waitlist durations at an average of 3.4 years. If affirmative action is behind apparent racial disparities in housing waitlist duration, then Indigenous people are being excluded from such efforts.

Faith in Waitlists

Respondents were asked, ***"If you are on waitlist(s), are you expecting to receive housing through that process?"***

Out of 677 respondents:
- 39.1% were "Unsure" (*n=265*)
- 36.0% said "No" (*n=244*)
- 24.8% said "Yes" (*n=168*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Faith in Housing Waitlists

Yes
24.8%
168

Unsure
39.1%
265

244

No
36.0%
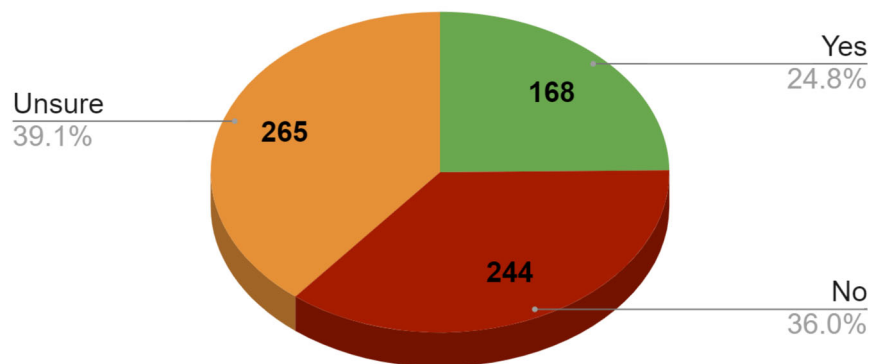
These housing waitlist questions reveal that, of the less than one third of houseless people who actually know they're on a waitlist, people across racial identities must wait between one and three years, with little faith in ever receiving housing through this process.

Public Housing Waitlists

We also researched DHA/HUD and VI-SPDAT "waitlists" to see what the official records reveal about these pathways. Due to insufficient data collection by HUD, data showing how many people are on public housing waitlists is not available. However, HUD does provide data on the average time spent on waitlists:

- Between 2011 and 2021, the average months a household spent on the public housing waiting list in Denver **increased by a net average of 16 months (1.3 years)**.
- In 2021, a household recorded spending an average of 21 months on the Denver public housing waitlist, almost a **two year period of time to receive housing**. This is only for public housing units, not the lottery for vouchers which is not a waitlist. It also only counts the people who actually got housing, not those who were on the waitlist and never got housing.
  - This closely resembles the average reported time of 2022 Housing Survey respondents.
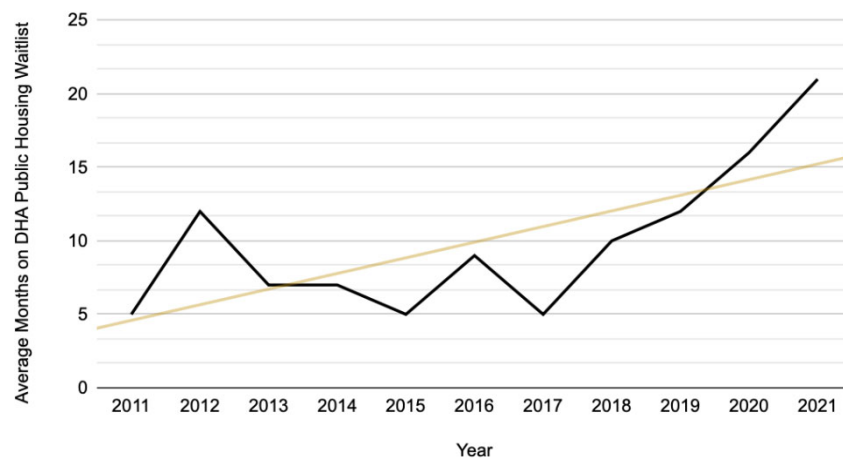
The beige line represents the data trendline. Waitlist times were found using HUD's picture of subsidized housing data tool (HUD, 2021).

OneHome Database

Every city in the country seeking federal funding for houseless services and housing must go through the OneHome system. Though it does not capture all houseless people seeking housing (as evidenced by the 53% of our Housing Survey respondents that state they are not on any housing waitlist), anyone going through traditional service providers – as either access points to housing or owners of a large majority of very low-income housing – will be in this database.

Data from 2018 shows that 3,239 households (individuals, couples, or families) in the 7-County Denver Metro area were able to access the OneHome system, and 661 households got housing that year. The slide from HOST[23] included here depicts these numbers while noting in very fine print: "Not all of those housed in 2018 were also assessed in 2018.

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[23] HOST is the Department of Housing Stability. Slide included in powerpoint presentation was created by HOST for City Council on January 31, 2019.

Some may have been assessed in prior years." Therefore, the 661 people who received housing in 2018 does not exclusively belong to those 3,239 who accessed the OneHome system that year, but includes those who accessed OneHome in prior years, and waited however long they did before receiving housing in 2018. Thus the number of people who were assessed in OneHome for housing and received it within that same year is less than 661, and not included here, because that data is not accessible. This means that *less than* 20.4% of households received housing through OneHome that year while more than 79.6% (*n=2,578*) did not. Data from 2021 shows that 4,325 households in the Denver Metro area accessed OneHome – an increase of over one third, or 33.5%, since 2018 – yet only 540 households got housing.[24] Following the same understanding that this 540 does not belong solely to those who accessed OneHome that same year, this means that less than 12.5% of households who accessed the system got housing. This shows that even fewer people are getting housing from an even larger pool of people in need.

It is important to understand that the OneHome database is not herein considered a waitlist because, instead of operating on a first-come, first-serve basis, it uses the VI-SPDAT to determine risk and prioritization when providing assistance to those who are houseless, or at-risk of becoming houseless. People can be picked from the database in different orders that are not related to the order people signed up.

HUD Definition of Homelessness

The constrained HUD definition of "homeless" is used to acquire funding and qualify certain individuals for housing options, leaving out countless people in the process – including, for example, anyone crashing on a friend's couch. Furthermore, HUD added a definition of "Chronically Homeless" which limits who qualifies for housing resources even more.

Since the implementation of this "chronic homeless" definition in 2016, many housing programs have been directed exclusively for people who meet these specific criteria:

- A homeless individual with a disability as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(9)), who:
  - Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, and
  - Has been homeless and living as described for at least 12 months* or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described.
- An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility for less, including jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria of this definition before entering that facility**; or
- A family with an adult head of household (or, if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

*A "break" in homelessness is considered to be 7 or more nights.
**An individual residing in an institutional care facility does not constitute a break in homelessness.
(HUD, Definition of Chronic Homelessness)

As many programs shifted focus to "chronic homelessness," there was a notable decrease of federal funding and housing set aside for families and others who don't meet this definition.

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[24] Data provided by Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative. Further note, in Denver County specifically, in 2021, there were roughly 3,043 households who accessed the OneHome system - this is an estimate given that the way vets were being counted changed, so the number of veterans is estimated at 600 compared to last year's number.

As a case-in-point, the following is an excerpt from an email received from a City official after HAND asked for support with finding housing for an elderly man who had been crashing on the couch of a person on Section 8, who was effectively risking their own housing to take care of this man. We have taken the liberty of highlighting the problematic effects of this definition.

> Good Morning,
>
> Thank you all for reaching out to us regarding this issue. The urgency of this situation is clear, and I understand that we all want to help as quickly as possible. However, Douglas County doesn't currently have an emergency shelter or a housing voucher program.
>
> I have reached out to MDHI to see what options may be available and to see if he may qualify for the OneHome program. Unfortunately, the OneHome entry system must follow HUD's definition of "literally homeless" and it does not include staying with friends or family. Access to the OneHome program isn't an option for him, currently.
>
> Below is a list of shelter's that would be available to him from Douglas County's access point. We recommend that if he becomes homeless again, that a VI-SPDAT be conducted by one of these agencies to aid in the process of resource qualification and to get on housing wait lists.

This email from a City official tasked with helping houseless people in a nearby county shows how this definition of "literally homeless" forces people to "literally" have to leave a safe couch at a friend's house, live in the streets in a tent to qualify just to fill out the VI-SPDAT, then wait on a list where you may or may not ever be picked for a housing opening.

> "The elders definitely housed-up before the youth. You know, it's easier for us to deal with the crazy conditions. Then obviously if you got some crazy disabilities, you should be in a house a little bit earlier, too. Other than that, I think everything should be flat. The same thing. Everything should be affordable."
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendees

Community's Take on Prioritizing Vulnerable Populations
While the OneHome system's use of the VI-SPDAT not only bars some people from qualifying for housing but forces others into more dangerous situations for the chance to gain access to housing support, the unhoused community still mostly agrees that certain people need more immediate intervention in the form of housing.

Survey respondents were asked if particular vulnerable demographics should be prioritized for housing opportunities:
"Do you think families, disabled people or seniors should get priority access to housing opportunities?"

Out of 799 responses provided:
- 76.7% selected "Yes" (*n=613*)
- 14.4% selected "Unsure" (*n=115*)
- 8.9% selected "No" (*n=71*)

This shows widespread agreement among many who are unhoused themselves that more vulnerable people, namely families, disabled people, and seniors, should be prioritized for housing – even if it means delaying their own.

2022 Housing Survey: Priority Housing for Families, Disabled People, Seniors

No
8.9%
Unsure
14.4%
71
115
613
Yes
76.7%
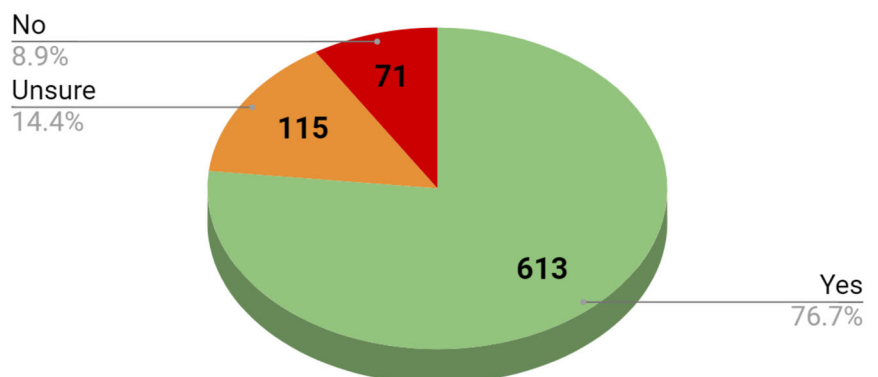
Unprompted commentary concerning risk prioritization included:

Of those who answered "Yes":
"Also high risk… People who have been raped, harassed, or victim of circumstance"
        "I think that's humane and for elderly people"
"If they lookin like [they're] putting in their part"
        "It depends"
"More difficult, our very lives could be in danger."
        "Older people and those with children"
"Seniors"
        "They all should be 1st on life, vets too"
"Unemployed folx too, everyone should be housed"

> "I'm getting housed before much sicker people in my hotel. We need to prioritize the people who are sicker or with kids off the streets."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

Of those who answered "Unsure":
"Depends case by case"
        "I agree it's easier to be on the streets when you're by yourself, but often get swept to the backburner and overlooked"

Of those who answered "No"
"All equal, first come first serve"
        "Build enough housing, that way it's immediate

> "They should build a unit just for black people, because no matter what we do in life, we are the last one to get any fucking thing and the first to lose everything."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

> "If the government would get off their ass, you wouldn't have to prioritize. Instead of being one apartment at a time, they should fill several at a time so you can address each one of these categories at the same time and no one would have to be prioritized first. If housing is a human right, we wouldn't even need the VI-SPDAT because we all need the same thing."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

Multiple comments show interest in prioritizing other groups of vulnerable people outside of families, disabled people, and seniors. Additionally, one person described the effects of current prioritization practices as feeling "swept to the backburner and overlooked", while yet another spoke to how prioritization should not be necessary at all – everyone should have access to housing.

Affordability

Affordability of housing, or lack thereof, was a top response throughout the survey, whether folks were asked what people want in housing, what barriers to housing they've experienced, what support is needed to stay in housing, in fact it ranked high in every open-ended question we asked. It is abundantly clear that the lack of *truly* affordable housing is the top reason houseless people are not living in housing.

Housing Costs & Rent Burden

Nationally, there is a massive shortage of affordable rental homes for low-income renters. Rental costs have risen across the U.S. – a 15 percent increase since 2001 – and neither wages nor federal rental assistance have caught up (CBPP, 2022). Those with household incomes at or below the poverty guideline (30% AMI) face a shortage of rental homes in every state and major metropolitan area. Only 36 affordable and available rental homes exist for every 100 extremely low-income (at or below 30% AMI) renter households nationwide (NLIHC, 2022a). Colorado is no exception: it ranks 8th in the country for its large gap between renters' income and housing cost.

In Colorado, only 29 affordable and available apartments exist for every 100 people at or below 30% AMI. For 100% AMI, there are 102 such apartments for every 100 people. (NLIHC, 2022b)

An estimated 367,000 low-income Colorado renters pay more than half of their income for housing (CBPP, 2022). Households at the lower end of the Area Median Income (30% AMI), an estimated 22 percent of renters statewide, could afford an apartment at $884/month (NLIHC, 2022a). A minimum wage worker in Denver County who works full time could afford an apartment that costs $825 per month. For someone on fixed income ($879 SSI) an affordable rent is $264/month. Finding somewhere to rent for that much is impossible in Denver without it being public or subsidized or some miracle housing. These 'affordable' rents are far lower than Denver's median and average rents.

Median rent for a 1-bedroom: $1,440
Median rent for a 2-bedroom: $1,780

$222.02 rent increase in **one** year

MEDIAN RENT IN DENVER

A minimum wage worker would need to work **69** hours per week in order to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment.

In Denver, rents have gone up $222.02 over the last year, and the demand for units compared to supply remains tight, with near historic lows in vacancy (Daniels College of Business, 2022). In this competitive rental market, as of June 2022 the median rent for a 1-bedroom is now $1,440, and a 2-bedroom is $1,780 (Apartment List, 2022).[25] If you look at the average rent cost, this number jumps to $1,997 (Rent Cafe, 2022).

A minimum wage worker would need to work 69 hours per week to afford a modest 1-bedroom apartment.[26]

Those paying more than 30% of their income for housing and utilities are considered cost-burdened. In the Denver Metro area, 86 percent of renter households with extremely low-income (at or below 30% Area Median Income), are cost-burdened.

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[25] Median rent is from Apartment List Rental Report for the City of Denver (*Apartment List Rent Estimates:* monthly estimates of the median rent paid for new leases in a given market - Apartment List Rent Estimates are tabulated using fully-representative median rent statistics for recent movers taken from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey).

[26] Calculation: $1,440*12 = $17,280 yearly rental cost; $17,280/0.3 = $57,600 total income needed to afford $17,280 in rent at 30% of income. $57,600/$15.87 per 1 hour (minimum wage) = 3,629.49 total hours a minimum wage worker would need to reach this amount. 3,629.49/52 weeks = approximately 69 hours per week.

Those spending more than half of their income on housing and utilities are also considered extremely cost-burdened. This is the case for 73% of the nearly 84,000 renter households in the Denver metro area. With only 23,512 affordable and available rental homes, there is an estimated deficit of 60,294 homes for people with extremely low-income, and 82,754 for those making at or below 50% Area Median Income in the Denver Metro area (NLIHC, 2022b). (Note: This does not count houseless people, including not counting people doubled-up in housing, in jails, and others). If you include the housing needs of all houseless people, this deficit would be much higher). The need for affordable and available rental housing continues to grow because of unaffordably high rents, and federal housing assistance not keeping up[27].

Community Meaning of Affordable Housing

The 2022 Housing Survey asked a number of questions about housing affordability.

One open-ended question asked **"What does affordable housing mean to you?"** This enabled us to hear people's unprompted thoughts on the matter.

> **"What about if all the housing was just affordable for everyone, no matter who you are?"**
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendees

2022 Housing Survey - Meaning of "Affordable Housing"
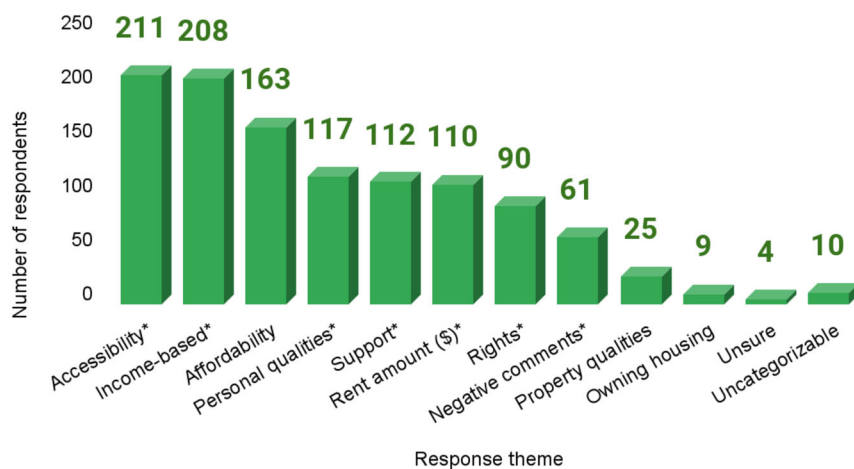
Out of 818 respondents:
1. Accessibility* - 25.8% (*n=211*)
2. Income-based* - 25.4% (*n=208*)
3. Affordability - 19.9% (*n=163*)
   - "Affordable" (*n=129*)
   - "Cheap" (*n=34*)
4. Personal qualities* - 14.3% (*n=117*)
5. Support* - 13.7% (*n=112*)
6. Rent amount ($)* - 13.4% (*n=110*)
7. Housing rights* - 11.0% (*n=90*)
8. Negative comments* - 7.5% (*n=61*)
9. Property qualities - 3.1% (*n=25*)
10. Uncategorizable - 1.2% (*n=10*)
11. Ownership - 1.1% (*n=9*)
12. Unsure - 0.5% (*n=4*)

Accessibility, **income-based**, and **affordability** (a category consisting of responses that said it simply means "affordable" or "cheap") were the top three most-mentioned themes. The close connection made between affordable and accessible shows how housing is *not* accessible *unless and until* it is affordable. Most people associated positive **personal qualities** with affordable housing, while fewer still associated it with **negative sentiments** - mostly related to the fact that the housing called affordable is not actually affordable.

> **"Not for free but cheap because [housing] is expensive-expensive. Very expensive-expensive."**
>
> - HAND Spanish Speakers Houseless Community Forum attendee

[27] Denver City proper shows a shortage of roughly 20,000 units for people under 30% AMI, but this again does not count houseless people.

1. Accessibility

Of 211 accessibility responses:

- Able to pay non-rent/other expenses* - 73.0% (*n=154*)
- Able to pay rent - 12.8% (*n=27*)
- Attainable - 7.1% (*n=15*)
- Reasonable - 7.1% (*n=15*)

2022 Housing Survey - "Affordable Housing" as Accessibility

Reasonable
7.1%

Attainable
7.1%

Able to pay rent
12.8%

15

27

154
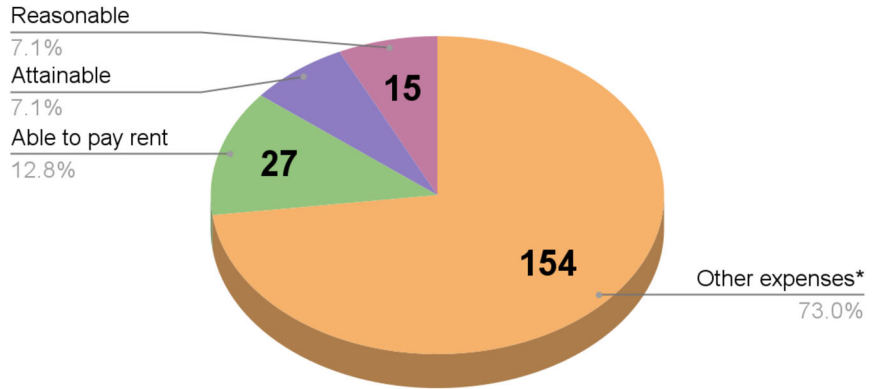
Other expenses*
73.0%

Ability to pay non-rent/other expenses

154 people brought up stated that affordable housing must enable them to cover **other life expenses** besides housing. Comments included:

"It means something that I can pay according to my budget, to be able to get ahead with my family and to be able to have opportunities to start a business or study…"

"Less than cost of living, i.e. food, gas, etc."

"Within my budget, but not having to sacrifice food and transportation"

This shows how desperate people are when the ability to have *any* money for more than housing is a main concern.

Of 154 "other expenses" accessibility responses:

- Life expenses (i.e. car, food) - 31.2% (*n=48*)
- Within my budget/within my means - 22.1% (*n=34*)
- Other bills payable (i.e. utilities) - 20.8% (*n=32*)
- Recreational funds after rent - 11.7% (*n=18*)
- No strain/stress - 7.8% (*n=12*)
- Ability to save money - 6.5% (*n=10*)

"Having some free time to do what I want to do versus having to work two or three jobs to put food on the table or a roof over my head."

- Mrs. Michael Whitmore, HAND one-on-one interview

2. Income-based

Here is a breakdown of what people mean by income-based affordability.

Of 208 income-based responses:

- General income-based - 40.4% (*n=84*)
- Specific percentage (%) of income - 30.3% (*n=63*)
- Low-income - 14.4% (*n=30*)
- Government, or fixed, income - 10.6% (*n=22*)
- Payable at minimum wage - 4.3% (*n=9*)

"They're trying to up the prices so that, to me, it feels like the homeless don't really get a chance to even work with other agencies or programs that do support or help us to get housing.."

- Myriah, HAND one-on-one interview

Percent (%) of income

Of 63 "percent (%) of income" income-based responses:

- "30-39%" by 49.2% (*n=31*)
  - 42.9% (*n=27*) of income-based responses stated that 30% income was affordable.
- "20-29%" by 27.0% (*n=17*)
- "50-59%" by 9.5% (*n=6*)
- "10-19%" by 4.8% (*n=3*)
- "40-49%" by 3.2% (*n=2*)

Four responses (6.3%) described what percentage of income it should *not* be:

"A price that is not 100% of your income"

"Housing that doesn't take half of my monthly income"

"Rent that doesn't cost 100% of my paycheck"

"That I am not spending 3/4 of my income on rent"

2022 Housing Survey - "Affordable housing" as Income-based: Percent (%) of Income

4. Personal Qualities

Of 117 responses describing some form of personal quality, or positive impact, afforded through affordable housing:

- It means "a lot"/"everything" - 28.2% (*n=33*)
- Better life, opportunity - 18.8% (*n=22*)
- Safety/security - 11.1% (*n=13*)
- Peace/stability - 8.5% (*n=10*)
- "Place to live" - 7.7% (*n=9*)
- "Home" - 6.0% (*n=7*)
- Other personal quality - 6.0% (*n=7*)
- Comfortability - 5.1% (*n=6*)
- Rest/sleep - 5.1% (*n=6*)
- "Roof over my head", warmth - 3.4% (*n=4*)

Responses included:

"A chance to survive"

"A need (highly appreciated)"

"Figuring out for myself what I need to write the next chapter in my life"

"It means a lot because as of now I could not afford my own place"

"Safety, stability, and peace of mind"

"Security, comfort, so many more things to positively improve my life as well as help others how I can."

"Something that makes you feel okay with living"

"Somewhere all of us can stay in peace"

These heartfelt, earnest responses show the deep, personal importance of affordable housing as the critical path to not only move into housing, but also into a new life chapter.

5. Support

112 responses included some kind of support, almost exclusively in the form of paying for the housing.

Of 112 responses about support:

- Demographic-specific support - 45.5% (*n=51*)
- DHA/HUD/Section 8/subsidies/vouchers - 22.3% (*n=25*)
- General aid/help - 21.4% (*n=24*)
- Non-government program - 6.3% (*n=7*)
- Rent control - 4.5% (*n=5*)

Demographic-specific support

Of 51 demographic-specific support responses:

- Disabled/SSDI/SSI - 47.1% (*n=24*)
- Couples, families - 29.4% (*n=15*)
- Houseless/poor people - 17.6% (*n=9*)
- Veterans - 3.9% (*n=2*)
- Generally "needs-based" - 2.0% (*n=1*)

Nearly half of the demographic-specific support defined affordable as being able to afford housing on disability income. These included answers like:

"...FREE TO VETS. SERVICE PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL ABILITIES"

"AS A DISABLED CITIZEN IT'D BE APPRECIATED: THE GOVERNMENT'S HELP IN BEING ABLE TO FIND AFFORDABLE HOUSING BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS TOO EXPENSIVE"

"TO BE QUITE HONEST – AT THIS STAGE IN MY LIFE, NEEDING BACK SURGERY AND WAITING FOR DISABILITY TO BE EITHER APPROVED OR DENIED. I CAN'T WORK, I'VE TRIED – AND ONLY TO MAKE MY HEALTH ISSUE WORSE."

These answers follow a pattern throughout the survey of prioritizing disabled people, seniors, and families.

Other responses included:

"AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO ME WOULD BE EITHER A FREE HOUSING BECAUSE I HAVE 0 INCOME OR SSI THAT YOU GET MONTHLY TO HELP PAY YOUR HOUSING BASED ON YOUR INCOME OR A MAX HOMELESS PERCENTAGE BASED ON COLORADO RENTAL PRICES."

"ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTIALLY-CHALLENGED FOLKS SO THEY MAY LIVE IN EQUIVALENT-TO-LOCAL STANDARDS THAT THE GENERAL POPULATION DOES"

"FIX INCOME HOUSING FOR POOR PEOPLE"

"I'M ON A FIXED INCOME – BETWEEN $800-900 – BUT WHEN I WAS A SINGLE WORKING MOM, SECTION 8 HOUSING IN 1998 WAS $20-200 INCLUDING UTILITIES. NOW THAT I'M ON MY OWN, I WISH I HAD THAT BACK."

"SOMETHING THAT IS HELPFUL TO ME (FINANCIAL LEEWAY)"

2022 Housing Survey - "Affordable Housing" as Monthly Rent Amounts ($)
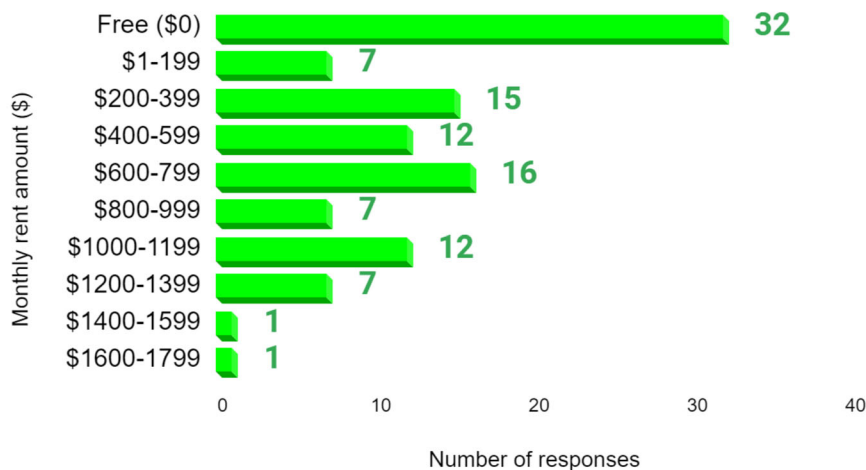
6. Rent Amount

Of 110 specific monthly rent amount responses:

- Free ($0) - 29.1% (*n=32*)
- $600-799 - 14.5% (*n=16*)
- $200-399 - 13.6% (*n=15*)
- $400-599 - 10.9% (*n=12*)
- $1000-1199 - 10.9% (*n=12*)
- $1-199 - 6.4% (*n=7*)
- $800-999 - 6.4% (*n=7*)
- $1200-1399 - 6.4% (*n=7*)
- $1400-1599 - 0.9% (*n=1*)
- $1600-1799 - 0.9% (*n=1*)

The most common rent amount provided was $0, or "free", followed by "$600-800", then "$200-400".

Contextualizing the data

Many people answered this question by naming an amount that is considered affordable *now*, *not* an amount that is affordable to them. This is apparent when comparing responses here to another question discussed later in this report that asked respondents what price housing would need to be for them to be able to afford it.

7. Housing Rights

Of the 117 responses talking about affordable housing as protection of housing rights:

- Off the streets, no longer houseless - 43.3% (*n=39*)
- Freedom/equitable treatment* - 28.9% (*n=26*)
- Create housing for all - 27.8% (*n=25*)

This goes to show that our houseless respondents are just as concerned about creating housing opportunities for everyone as the independence/freedom gained from affordable housing.

2022 Housing Survey - "Affordable Housing" as Housing Rights
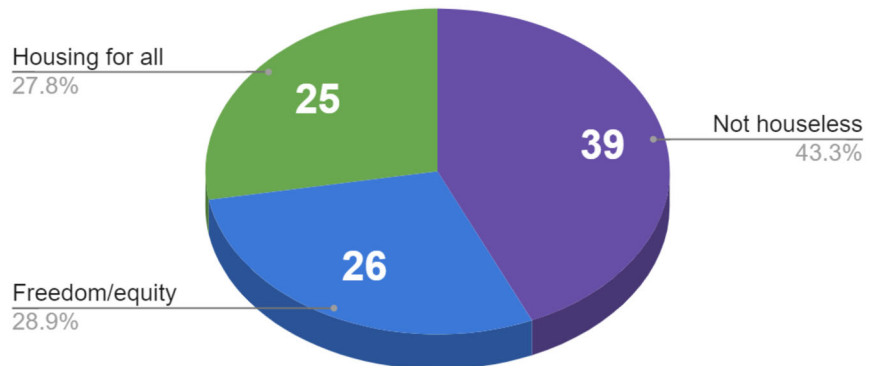
Freedom and equitable treatment

Of 26 housing rights responses surrounding freedom and equitable treatment:

- Freedom, independence, "my own" - 46.2% (*n=12*)
- No fear of eviction/losing home - 23.1% (*n=6*)
- Equal treatment by others/society - 19.2% (*n=5*)
- Guests/visitors allowed - 11.5% (*n=3*)

2022 Housing Survey - "Affordable Housing" as Housing Rights: Freedom & Equitable Treatment
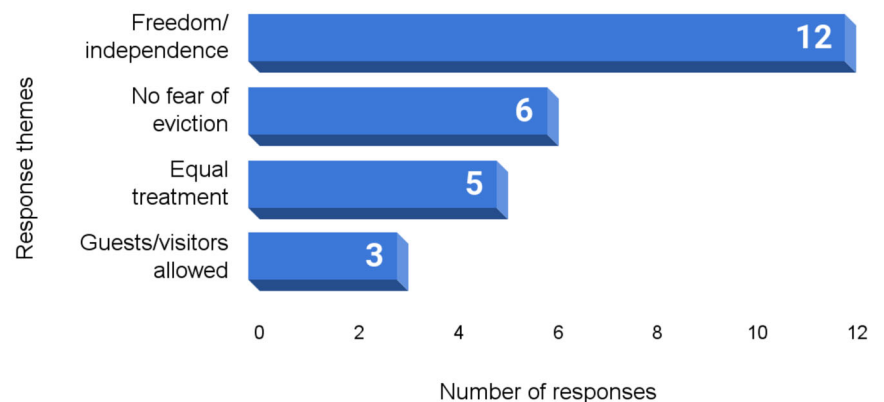
8. Negative comments

Those who thought negatively when it came to affordable housing said the following.

Of 61 negative responses:

- Current economic/social systems - 31.1% (*n=19*)
- Gave up, impossible, inaccessible - 21.3% (*n=13*)
- Nonexistent - 18.0% (*n=11*)
- Too expensive - 16.4% (*n=10*)
- In bad places/environments - 8.2% (*n=5*)
- Takes too long - 4.9% (*n=3*)

2022 Housing Survey - Negative Thoughts on "Affordable Housing"

Negative response theme	Number of responses
Critiques of system	19
Impossible/inaccessible	13
Nonexistent	11
Too expensive	10
Bad place/environment	5
Takes too long	3
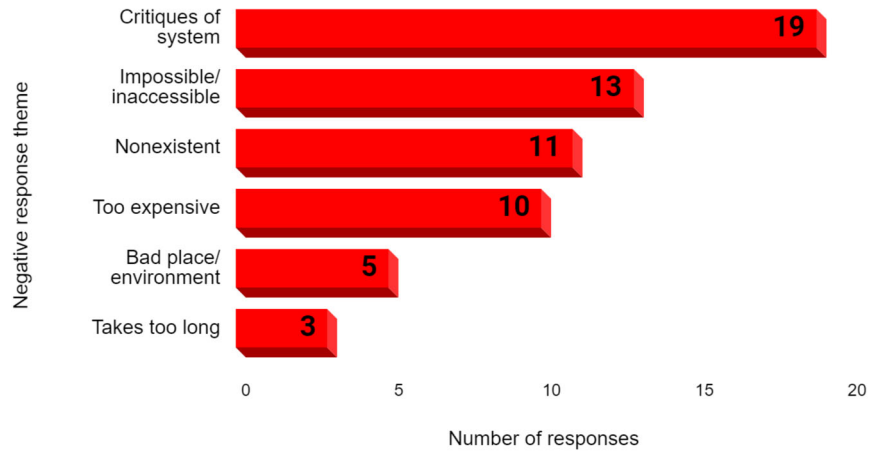
Nearly all these answers – excluding the five comments related to being in bad places or environments – describe unaffordability, or lack of affordable housing. By and large, most of the critiques are not about it being bad housing, or not wanting to live there. This is significant when compared to what many wealthy homeowners say about affordable housing as something they do not want near them.

Government Meaning of Affordable Housing

After asking people what affordable housing meant to them, we then asked **"When you hear the government talk about affordable housing, what do you think they mean?"**

First, responses were assigned negative, positive, or neutral assignments according to their content. Overall there was a high frequency of negative responses to this question.

2022 Housing Survey - Sentiments Towards Government's Meaning of "Affordable Housing"

Sentiment of response	Number of respondents
Negative	442
Positive	374
Neutral	195
Uncategorizable	10
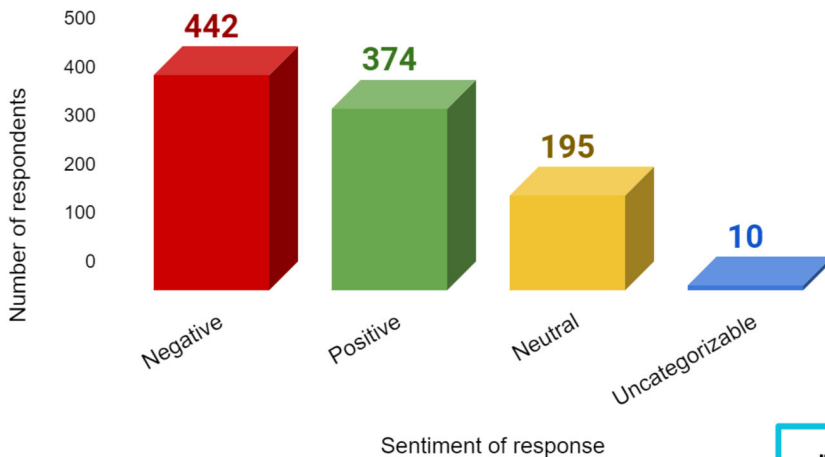
Out of 813 respondents:

- Negative view - 54.4% (*n=442*)
- Positive view - 46.0% (*n=374*)
- Neutral view - 24.0% (*n=195*)
- Uncategorizable - 1.2% (*n=10*)

> "They going to give all this money to all these landlords and land developers trying to destroy and gentrify our neighborhoods, but they can't help us the fuck out."
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

Next, the key themes were color-coded by the main sentiment surrounding responses belonging to that theme.

2022 Housing Survey - Perceived Government Meaning of "Affordable Housing"

Out of 813 respondents:
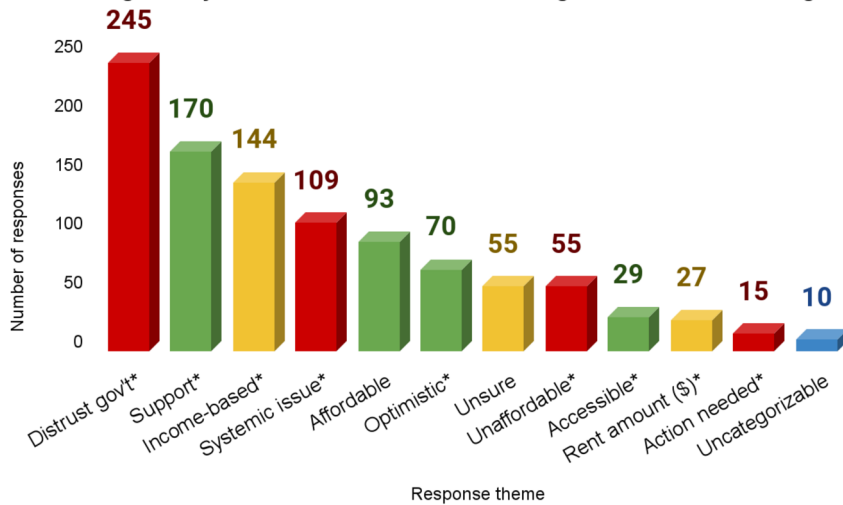
1. Distrust government* - 30.1% (*n=245*)
2. Support* - 20.9% (*n=170*)
3. Income-based* - 17.7% (*n=144*)
4. Systemic issues* - 13.4% (*n=109*)
5. Affordable - 11.4% (*n=93*)
6. Optimistic* - 8.6% (*n=70*)
7. Unsure - 6.8% (*n=55*)
8. Unaffordable* - 6.8% (*n=55*)
9. Accessible* - 3.6% (*n=29*)
10. Specific rent amount ($)* - 3.3% (*n=27*)
11. Action needed* - 1.8% (*n=15*)
12. Uncategorizable - 1.2% (*n=10*)
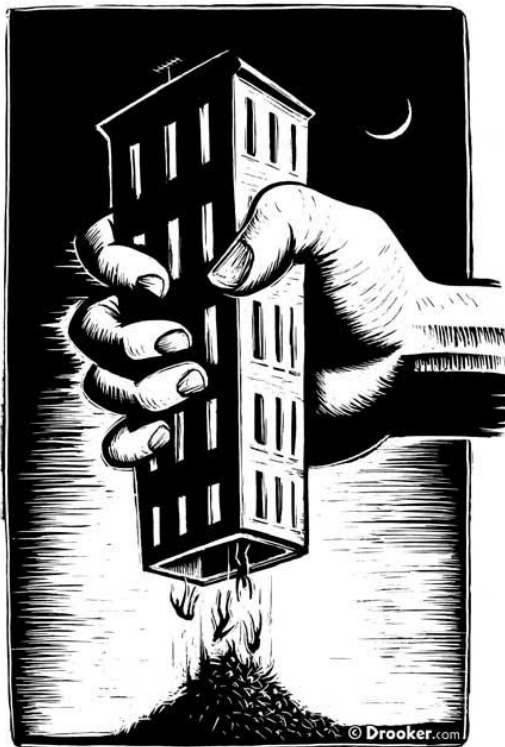
> "The government doesn't know what the fuck affordable housing is. It used to be that if you live well below the proverty line, you could get into subsidized/public housing or things of that nature. When they switched to using AMI, it went up, which means that a lot of lower-, middle- class, downward, were eligible for that housing. It's no longer those at or below the poverty line, but the middle class, even upper class, even some rich people can be accepted to get low income housing because of the way they're doing that. That was never the case back in the 60's, 70's, 80's, probably early 90's. The low income properties became really valuable. So we have to ask what the government considers affordable housing, what is the criteria for that?"
>
> - Jerry, HAND African American / Black /
> Descendants of American Slaves
> Houseless Community Forum

1. Distrust of government

Of 245 responses surrounding the widespread distrust felt towards the government:

- "Bullshit", lies - 29.8% (*n=73*)
- For their benefit, not ours - 20.0% (*n=49*)
- Bad environments/places - 10.6% (*n=26*)
- Government control - 10.6% (*n=26*)
- Out of touch - 10.6% (*n=26*)
- Programs/shelters - 9.4% (*n=23*)
- Maintain the status quo/cycle of poverty - 4.9% (*n=12*)
- Imprisonment - 4.1% (*n=10*)

Many houseless people see what the government says about affordable housing as **lies**:

"I truly do not trust anything they say, cause they never follow through on their promises"

"If it was affordable, we wouldn't be in this situation."

"Red tape, lies, and false absolutions"

"They say that but we are still struggling."

People also see the government as being more focused on **their benefit** – that is, the government and wealthy – through affordable housing rather than that of poor people:

"A nice way for them to get more money from the government – that, to be real, I myself or any of my 'peers' will [not] ever see or benefit from."

"Affordable for them. Whether it's jail, shelters, low income apartments that violate your rights"

"Places for the homeless people to live so they are out of sight"

"Housing that supports corporations (since they own the housing)"

"Not going to help me"

"Something only the people they want to live next to them can afford"

There is also widespread concern with **government control** over one's life in affordable housing:

"A place where they can put everyone in 1 spot like a warehouse – it's a study to see how the homeless fit in living society – it's not good housing."

"Keeping the poor all together in areas like the projects so that they know where to put extra law enforcement etc."

2. Government Support
The second most frequent answer to this question was around different types of government support or aid for housing.
Of 170 supportive responses:
- Subsidized housing/vouchers - 45.9% (*n=78*)
- Houseless-specific support - 31.2% (*n=53*)
- General aid/help - 22.9% (*n=39*)

3. Income-based
The third most noted theme was that the government's definition of "affordable housing" was income-based.
Of 144 income-based responses:
- Low income - 36.8% (*n=53*)
- Generally income-based - 27.1% (*n=39*)
- Specific percent (%) of income* - 18.8% (*n=27*)
- For "poor" people - 17.4% (*n=25*)

Percent (%) of Income
The majority of people who named a specific percentage (%) of income as part of that definition listed 30%.
Of 27 income-based "specific % income" responses:
- "30-39%" - by 74.1% (*n=20*)
  - *Every one* of these responses were either 30% or one third
- "20-29%" - by 18.5% (*n=5*)
- "50-59%" - by 7.4% (*n=2*)

> "Even if they were able to give us just a percentage of the rent, 'we can help you out with $700 a month on rent'. That's pretty much like half a rent. Or even $500 a rent, you know what I mean?"
>
> - Ashley, HAND one-on-one interview

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> " I think the biggest and only [barrier] would be that there were stipulations. Evictions, because I've had two evictions within the last five years and not due to my own actual doing, but due to my company. It's a traumatizing event."
>
> - Myriah, HAND one-on-one interview

4. Systemic Issues

Over 100 respondents spoke to systemic failures surrounding the government's approach towards affordable housing.

Of 109 systemic failure responses:

- Stipulations* - 48.6% (*n=53*)
- Barriers/housing process issues* - 33.0% (*n=36*)
- Limited resource - 18.3% (*n=20*)

Stipulations to Qualifying for Affordable Housing

People explained issues involving stipulations, or qualifiers otherwise barring people from affordable housing, as follows.

Of 53 stipulations related to different paths to housing, people must:

- Have a job - 34.0% (*n=18*)
- Not be single (i.e. family) - 20.8% (*n=11*)
- Have fixed income (i.e. SSDI) - 20.8% (*n=11*)
- Be able-bodied - 3.8% (*n=2*)
- Have felony record - 3.8% (*n=2*)
- Be of a specific gender - 3.8% (*n=2*)
- Have a clean record - 3.8% (*n=2*)
- Be a veteran - 3.8% (*n=2*)
- Use substances - 1.9% (*n=1*)
- Be elderly - 1.9% (*n=1*)
- Have mental health issues - 1.9% (*n=1*)

> "I have an emergency housing voucher. It's not Section 8. Why did I have to be the victim of a crime to get something like this? And yes, thank God I don't have any felonies because I would have been barred out of the program."
>
> - HAND LGBTQIA+ Queer Houseless Community Forum attendee

People experience many stipulations to accessing housing, particularly those concerning their identities. The fact that so much of the already limited low- to no-income housing is made for specific demographic groups perpetuates certain populations being granted housing while others are not.

Housing Process Barriers

Many people also spoke to the barriers to housing and issues with the process.

Of 36 barrier responses:

- Long time spent waiting - 30.6% (*n=11*)
- Complicated, confusing - 13.9% (*n=5*)
- Inaccessible - 11.1% (*n=4*)
- Lacking funding - 11.1% (*n=4*)
- Houseless haven't heard of "affordable housing" - 8.3% (*n=3*)
- Racial discrimination - 8.3% (*n=3*)
- Bureaucracy, red tape - 5.6% (*n=2*)
- Predatory landlords - 5.6% (*n=2*)
- Requiring official documents - 2.8% (*n=1*)
- General group exclusions - 2.8% (*n=1*)

These answers emphasize the prevalence of issues faced when attempting to access whatever affordable housing exists.

6. Optimism

In contrast to many of the other themes, 70 responses were rather optimistic about this topic:

- Home, place to live - 25.7% (*n=18*)
- Housing for all - 24.3% (*n=17*)
- Opportunity for a future - 17.1% (*n=12*)
- Hopeful in general - 14.3% (*n=10*)
- Good places/environments - 11.4% (*n=8*)
- Permanent housing - 7.1% (*n=5*)

These answers support an ever-present desire for housing.

8. Unaffordable

Of the 55 responses speaking specifically to what the government means by affordable housing as being unaffordable:

- Meant for the rich or middle/upper class - 58.2% (*n=32*)
- Generally too expensive - 41.8% (*n=23*)

This echoes earlier themes of distrust regarding the government's affordable housing being one that is not for the benefit of the houseless or the poor, but for property owners and corrupt financial interests.

9. Accessible

Some people spoke of accessibility of affordable housing. Of 29 accessible responses:

- Excess funds after rent for other bills/life expenses - 44.8% (*n=13*)
- Available housing - 34.5% (*n=10*)
- Reasonable housing - 20.7% (*n=6*)

10. Specific rent amount ($)

Some people named specific amounts of money that they believe the government is referring to.

Of 26 numerical responses surrounding monthly rent amounts ($):

- Free ($0) - 26.9% (*n=7*)
- $800-999 - 15.4% (*n=4*)
- $1400-1599 - 15.4% (*n=4*)
- $1-199 - 11.5% (*n=3*)
- $400-599 - 7.7% (*n=2*)
- $200-399 - 3.8% (*n=1*)
- $1000-1199 - 3.8% (*n=1*)
- $1200-1399 - 3.8% (*n=1*)
- $1800-$1999 - 3.8% (*n=1*)
- $2400-2599 - 3.8% (*n=1*)
- $2800-2999 - 3.8% (*n=1*)

2022 Housing Survey - Government's "Affordable Housing" as Specific Rent Amount ($)
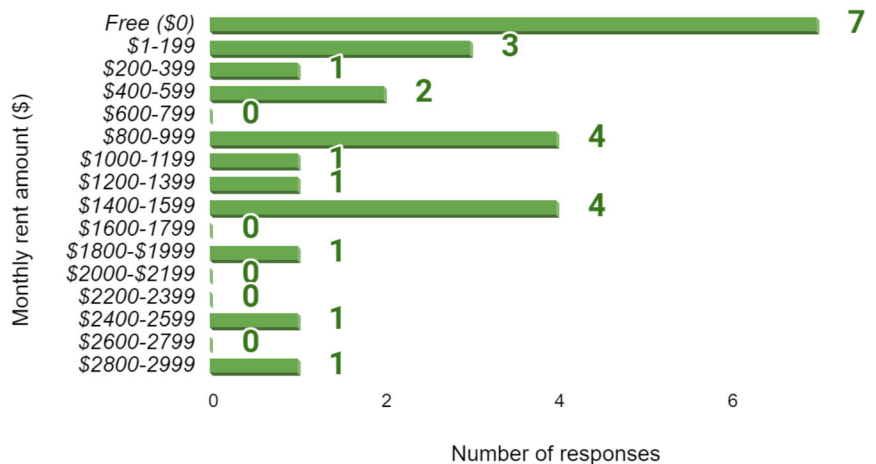
One person wrote ″ᴀ ᴄᴇʀᴛᴀɪɴ ᴀᴍᴏᴜɴᴛ ᴏғ ᴍᴏɴᴇʏ″ without specifying the amount, for a total of 27 responses concerning monthly rent amounts. Most people spoke to the need for free housing or housing under $1,000 a month. Some people spoke to higher prices, indicating these higher prices are what the government means by affordable housing, but this is not affordable to them.

11. Government Action Needed

Lastly, some spoke to specific actions the government should take regarding affordable housing. Of 15 action items:

- Rent control - 20.0% (*n=3*)
- Fill currently vacant units - 13.3% (*n=2*)
- More houseless support - 13.3% (*n=2*)
- More non-rent support (i.e. ID, SNAP, other financial support) - 13.3% (*n=2*)
- Raise minimum wage - 13.3% (*n=2*)
- More housing - 6.7% (*n=1*)
- Public housing - 6.7% (*n=1*)
- Storage solution - 6.7% (*n=1*)
- Weekly income-based rent - 6.7% (*n=1*)

> "Well, they're building a lot of apartments now, but they need to put it in a position where only the homeless can get that right now. The economy got the rich moving in."
>
> - James, HAND one-on-one interview

Price of Affordable Housing

When respondents were asked, **"*What price would [housing] need to be for you to afford it? ($ per month)*",** these were the top answers. Out of 586 respondents:

2022 Housing Survey - Price of Actual Affordable Housing	
Top monthly rent ($) ranges	**Percentage (%) of responses**
$0-199	**29.9% (n=175)**
$200-399	**21.2% (n=124)**
$400-599	**17.7% (n=104)**
$600-799	**10.1% (n=59)**
$800-999	**9.6% (n=56)**

That is a total of 88.4% (*n=518*) of respondents needing rent under $1,000 a month. 16.7% (*n=98*) of respondents need housing to be <u>completely free</u> to be affordable.

2022 Housing Survey - Price of Actual Affordable Housing
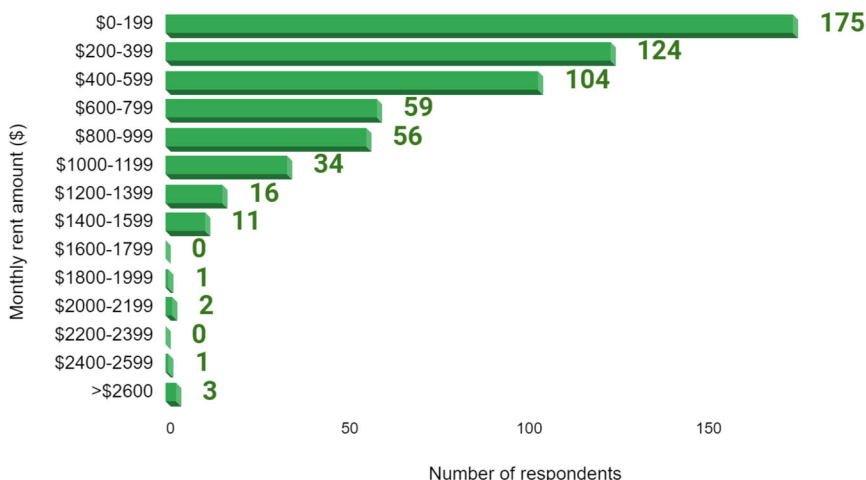
Most respondents could afford some rent for housing based on their current income, but only 3.1% (*n=18*) of unhoused respondents could afford the median rent of $1,440 for a 1-bedroom in Denver (Apartment List, 2023), while even fewer - 1.0% (*n=6*) of respondents - could afford the average rent of $1,997 in Denver. There are no affordable options. 68.8% (*n=403*) of respondents need a place under $600. All of these people need housing under 30% AMI. A single individual making exactly 30% AMI could not afford more than $684 a month on rent without being

cost-burdened.[28] In Denver, there are a total of just over 18,000 places at that price – all of which are occupied until someone dies, is evicted, or leaves on their own – for roughly 40,000 people under 30% AMI (see the Department of Housing Stability's Five Year Plan, 2021, pg 14). Needless to say, without lower rents or rental assistance, houseless people cannot afford housing as it exists on the market today.

Affordable Housing Price Cross-Comparison

In this survey, there were three questions that revealed answers about specific prices for affordable housing.

2022 HAND Housing Survey - "Price of Affordable Housing" Questions Cross-Comparison			
Price range	*"What does affordable housing mean to you?"* (n=110)	*"What price would housing need to be for you to afford it?"* (n=586)	*"When you hear the government talk about affordable housing, what do you think they mean?"* (n=26)
Free ($0)	**29.1%**	**16.7%**	**26.9%**
$1-199	**6.4%**	**13.1%**	**11.5%**
$200-399	**13.6%**	**21.2%**	**3.8%**
$400-599	**10.9%**	**17.7%**	**7.7%**
$600-799	**14.5%**	**10.1%**	**0**
$800-999	**6.4%**	**9.6%**	**15.4%**
$1000-1199	**10.9%**	**5.8%**	**3.8%**
$1200-1399	6.4%	2.7%	3.8%
$1400-1599	0.9%	1.9%	15.4%
$1600-1799	0.9%	0	0
$1800-1999	**0**	**0.2%**	**3.8%**
$2000-2199	0	0.3%	0
$2200-2399	0	0	0
$2400-2599	0	0.2%	3.8%
>$2600	**0**	**0.5%**	**3.8%**

As you can see from this comparison, what people can actually afford and what people see the government calling affordable do not match up. A steady decrease is observed in the first four price ranges under what the government

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[28] If you take the income limit for 30% AMI and divide it by 12 months and then divide that by ⅓ for affordable rent this equals $684.

considers affordable housing that differs from both of the questions assessing respondents' affordable housing pricing. In reality, housing will be considered "affordable housing" even up to 120% AMI - which would be rent of $2,736 per month. The majority of housing created in Denver considered affordable is around 60% AMI - which is around $1,319 per month (HOST, 2021).

Fiscal Trends

For the past four decades, the federal government has continually divested from affordable housing and increasingly transferred this responsibility to the private market. Out of the 5.2 million households across the country that receive some form of federal housing assistance, over half now live in privately owned properties (Rosen, 2020).

Housing-Related Tax Policies Support the Upper Class[29]

The federal government does give housing subsidies, but the majority have gone to tax benefits for homeownership rather than programs that benefit low-income renters. Since 1981, tax benefits for homeownership have amounted to more than HUD's entire budget and have dwarfed direct expenditures for programs that benefit low-income renters (WRAP, 2006). The total deductions awarded nationwide was just under $200 billion in 2019, while the entire budget for HUD was $53 billion (HUD, 2020).[30] One major home ownership subsidy is the Mortgage Interest Deduction, which permits homeowners to deduct the interest paid on their mortgages from their tax liability. When the data on Mortgage Interest Deductions is broken down by Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), it is clear that the policy disproportionately benefits those with an AGI of $100,000 or greater.

Share of Total US Mortgage Interest Deductions Filed (by AGI)

Legend:
- $1 - $10,000
- $10,000 - $25,000
- $25,000 - $50,000
- $50,000 - $75,000
- $75,000 - $100,000
- $100,000 - $200,000
- $200,000 - $500,000
- $500,000 - $1,000,000
- $1,000,000 +
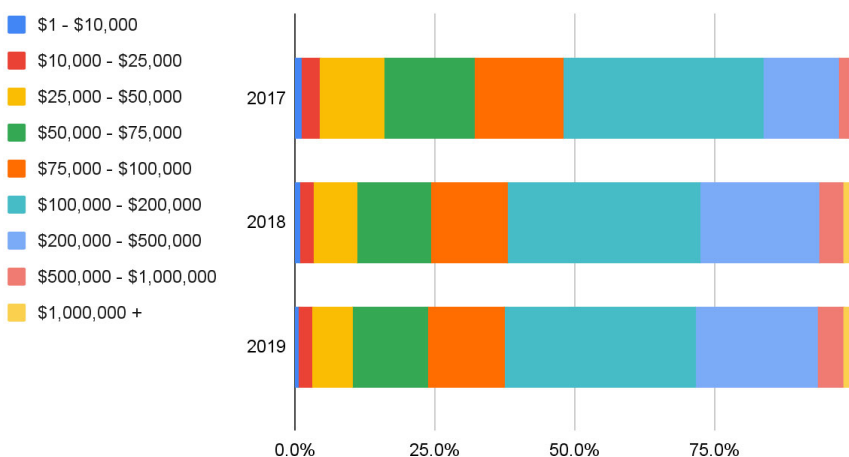
This tax policy disproportionately benefits those with high incomes, at the expense of billions of dollars in funding for public benefits, infrastructure, and affordable housing initiatives. The federal government invests more public money in home ownership for families that can afford homes than in decent, affordable housing for those who cannot (Shapiro, 2017).

Sources: Tax Policy Center (2022a, 2022b)

Deep-Subsidy Assistance

Meanwhile, there are 5.2 million households in the US that use federal rental assistance to afford low-income housing (CBPP, 2022a), and many more who need it but cannot access it. The three main forms of deep-subsidy assistance offered by HUD are: 1. traditional public housing, 2. tenant based housing vouchers, and 3. project based vouchers and rental assistance.

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[29]Regarding Mortgage Interest Deduction graphs and data: We used data sets from the Tax Policy Center. The Tax Policy Center is a collaboration between the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution. Mortgage Interest Deduction by State was sed to identify a trend line in total value of deductions between 2010 and 2019. Data also includes the number of deductions filed in Mortgage Interest Deduction by State and AGI which contained information from 2015 - 2019, but their method of collecting data shifted in 2017, so we only used data from 2017 - 2019 to identify trends.

[30] $53 billion is the annualized CR based on the FY 2020 Congressional Justifications.

Traditional public housing is owned by HUD and operated by local Public Housing Authorities. This kind of public housing was a cornerstone of federal housing policy until the 1970s. For over 40 years, this publicly owned and operated housing stock has been replaced by other voucher and rental assistance programs that largely subsidize privately built and operated housing developments (NLIHC, 2019a; Shapiro, 2017).

Changes in Funding Levels for Key HUD Programs (FY10-FY20)

Legend:
- Community Development Fund (CDBG)
- Public Housing Operating Fund
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Housing for the Elderly (202)
- Housing for Persons with Disabilities (811)
- Public Housing Capital Fund
- Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (Vouchers)
- Project-Based Rental Assistance

Changes (Millions): -1,744; -998; -770; -165; -146; -35; 2,751; 2,629

Changes (%): -34%; -18%; -36%; -17%; -42%; -1%; 13%; 26%

Note: Adjusted for inflation

Source: NLIHC (2019b)

For example, the fastest growing area for federal housing assistance is Tenant Based Rental Assistance through HCVs. Tenant based rental assistance ties the voucher subsidy to the individual or family, rather than the unit. The voucher recipient finds an eligible unit on the private market and the voucher pays a portion of their rent.

Project Based Vouchers (PBV) and Project Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) are also prevalent. With project-based vouchers or rental assistance, the subsidy is attached to the unit, which may be publicly or privately owned.[31]

The number of households in traditional public housing has dropped as more funding goes to housing vouchers. There are 896,700 households living in traditional public housing units, while 245,000 households use Project Based Vouchers (PBV) and 1.2 million households use Project Based Rental Assistance (CBPP, 2022a, 2022b). The number of households receiving tenant-based HCVs has steadily increased since 1993 (Kingsley, 2017), reaching a total of 2.3 million in 2022 (HUD data dashboard, 2022). This is currently the largest subsidy program nationwide.

An additional 154,500 households are receiving housing subsidies for supportive, elderly, and disabled members of the household, and 268,900 households are receiving USDA rural rental assistance (CBPP, 2022a).

Filling a $54 billion affordable housing hole with $1.4 billion in homeless assistance funding is an exercise in futility that can never be compensated for by any amount of local coordination or consolidation.

In the current scheme of national priorities, we give policies such as corporate welfare and tax breaks for the wealthy the positive label of "stimulus packages." At the same time, we designate basic safety net programs and housing assistance for poor individuals and families with the negative label of "handouts" to people who have failed to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. (WRAP, 2006)

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[31] Project Based Vouchers (PBV) are administered by state and local housing agencies and are distinct from Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), a program through which property owners have contracted directly with HUD to rent units. Congress has generally ended HUD's authority to sign new PBRA contracts, so PBVs are the largest, most available tool to create new project-based rental assistance. Unlike PBV residents, PBRA tenants generally do not have the right to move with a tenant-based voucher and consequently cannot move to a new location without giving up their rental assistance (CBPP, 2022a, 2022b).

HUD Total Outlays (2010-2023*)

Millions of Dollars (2021 Constant) | *2022 & 2023 estimates
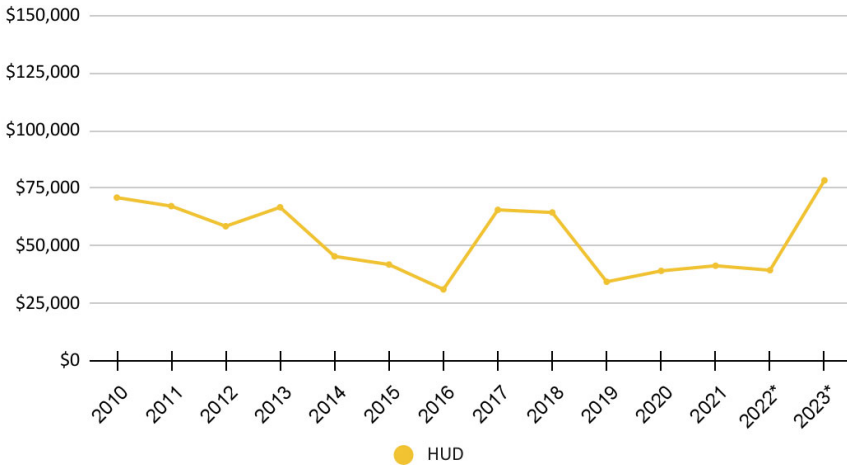
HUD Federal Outlays Remain Stagnant Overall[32]

HUD funding has remained between $25 billion and $75 billion for the last 10 years.

This stagnancy persists despite the effects the pandemic had on other funding. Total federal outlays swelled in 2020 with COVID-19 relief dollars, but this swell is not represented meaningfully in HUD.

Relief dollars likely funneled to disaster response rather than housing programs.

HUD & Total Federal Outlays (2010-2023*)

Millions of Dollars (2021 Constant) | *2022 & 2023 estimates
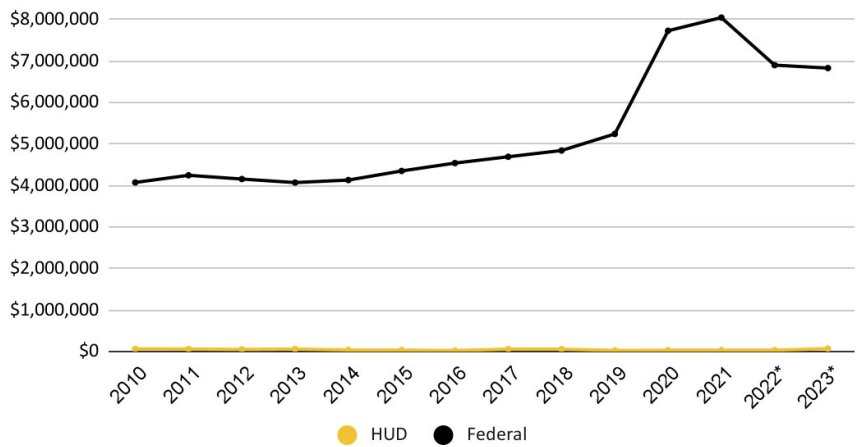
DoD & HUD Outlays (2010-2023*)

Millions of Dollars (2021 Constant) | *2022 & 2023 estimates
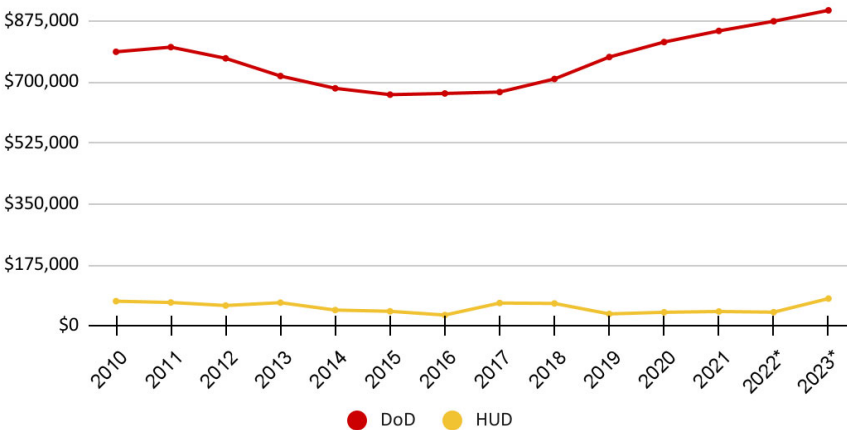
Department of Defense (DoD) funding has steadily increased since 2016 while HUD funding has remained comparatively stagnant.

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[32] Total federal and departmental outlays were downloaded from the Office of Management and Budget Historical Tables website. The data, in 2012 constant dollars, was updated to 2020 constant dollars using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation Adjustment Method: the formula for calculating constant dollars (or real purchasing power) is FYDV*(CPI²/CPI¹)=SYDV such that FYDV = First Year Dollar Value, CPI² = CPI for Second Year (base year), CPI¹ = CPI for First Year and SYDV = Second Year Dollar Value (X – solving for this).

In Colorado and in Denver, the total grantee funding for all HUD programs in the state of Colorado, as well as a slice of data showing funding that went specifically to organizations in Denver-Lakewood-Aurora's Continuum of Care (CoC 503) paints a clearer picture. Refer to the legend below to decipher the abbreviated program signifiers in the following graphs.[33]

PROGRAM SIGNIFIERS			
ADM	HMIS or Program Planning	**PSH**	Permanent Supportive Housing
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant	**RR**	Rapid Rehousing
CoC	Continuum of Care	**S+C**	Shelter Plus Care
ESG	Emergency Solutions Grants	**SHP**	Supportive Housing Program
HOME	HOME Investment Partnerships Program	**SS**	Supportive Services
HOPWA	Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS	**TH**	Transitional Housing
NSP	Neighborhood Stabilization Program		

HUD Programs, CO

*2021 data not available | **Established 2016
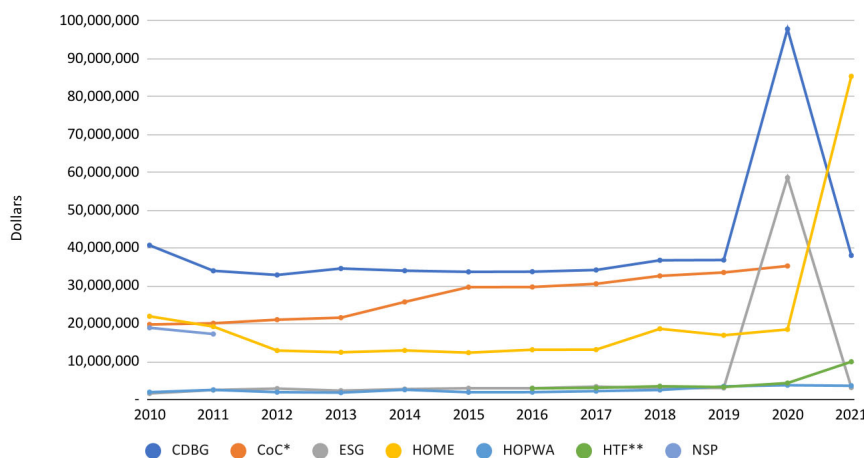
Massive boosts in 2020 COVID-related funding can be observed in the Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) programs. In the following year, those programs return to previous funding levels while some new funding is injected into the HOME Investment Partnership Program.

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[33] Regarding all HUD Program fund trend graphs: HUD budgets were downloaded from 2010-2023 from the HUD Website, which has the PDFs in several locations. From each budget we scraped actuals, which are from two years prior to the year of the budget (i.e. the 2020 budget was published in 2019 and contains actuals from 2018). After pulling the data, we attempted to identify like programs, or those with name changes over the span of years, and consolidate them into single line items. Budget items containing "…" or "-" were assumed to be "$0" and left off of our outlay spreadsheet. Actuals were then adjusted to be in 2021 constant dollars. The HUD Exchange has a query tool that was used to aggregate the data. We selected years 2010-2021, Colorado, All Grantees, and ticked the boxes for all of the programs. We then cleaned the data making program titles match (i.e. adjusting all "Family Tree inc" and "Family Tree" entries to match the most recent title "Family Tree, Inc."). We then created an additional column for program "Signifiers" which we define as the acronym that describes the general use of grant or purpose of program. Because it was unclear if these numbers were constant or nominal, we did not adjust for inflation.

The Denver area is highly dependent on CoC funding more than any other funding source. CoC-503, Denver-Aurora-Lakewood's Continuum of Care, has received steady increases in funding over the last ten years. This warrants a closer look, as it would be helpful to know if services or emergency shelters are being disproportionately funded rather than creating more affordable housing units. CoC funds go for a wide range of housing and services and thus do not represent funding for housing without further breakdown of the data.

HUD Programs in Denver (CDBG, CoC, ESG, HOME, HOPWA, NSP)
Relative dollars | *CoC data for 2021 unavailable
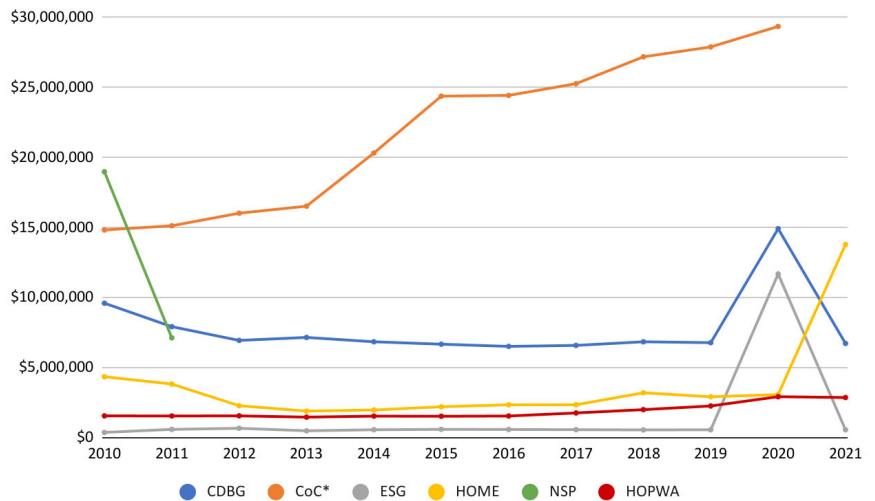
Overall, program funding levels have remained relatively flat, with only modest increases, even as the housing crisis gained steam and the issue of policy-driven houselessness grew.

In general, HUD funding for construction-focused programs – building affordable housing or projects – has decreased or remained stable while funding for assistance-based programs or neighborhood/community development or revitalization have remained steady or increased in funding. Examples of both increases and decreases in federal funding include:

- Choice Neighborhoods (a private-public partnership that funds local collaborations to address distressed public housing through various means) funding has significantly increased since 2013.
- The Office of Capital Improvements has been steadily decreasing Public Housing Capital Funds since 2013, with a dramatic decrease from the 2018 actuals and the 2023 requested amount, by over 1,000 million.
- Funding for the HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance stayed relatively stable from 2012-2022 but the funding request for 2023 spiked from 25,951 million to 31,042 million .
- Funding for the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, which provides formula grants to states and localities to use to build, buy and redevelop affordable housing, saw a dip in funding in 2021 and 2021 but has rebounded. The 2023 funding request exceeds the pre-pandemic actuals.
- Homelessness Assistance Programs saw a large increase in 2021 funding, up over 2,000 million from 2021, but the funding request for 2023 looks similar to funding in 2021.

Across federal funding streams, we see this trend to defund actual public housing and instead fund housing that is part of the private housing market.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

As public low-income housing continues to be destroyed, Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) has become the go-to funding source for private developers who include low-income units. LIHTC provides financial incentives for developers to invest in low-income housing. In Denver and nationwide, most housing developments that are considered "affordable" use LIHTC funding.

Units Allocated LIHTC by AMI Level

The amounts of both federal and state housing tax credits increased from 2012 to 2021 with federal credits increasing 181%. While the credits increased this much this does not seem to match in an equally high increase of actual units.

LIHTC units at 60% of AMI have been the most common since 2015. From 2017 to 2021, the number of LIHTC units at 30% AMI increased steadily.
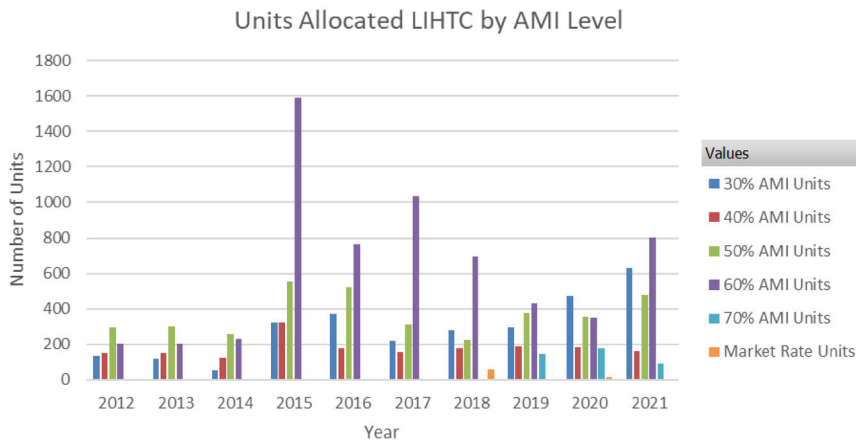
The total number of units created with LIHTC in Colorado in the last 10 years was 16,115.[34]

2022 HAND Public Housing Research - Housing Units & LIHTC Units Cross-Comparison by Percent (%) AMI							
Year	Total Units[35]	LIHTC Units	30% AMI	40% AMI	50% AMI	60% AMI	70% AMI2	Market Rate
2012 total	847	788	134	153	296	205	0	0
2013 total	892	775	120	152	299	204	0	0
2014 total	700	668	51	126	260	231	0	0
2015 total	2803	2794	325	322	554	1593	0	0
2016 Total	1866	1838	370	178	522	766	0	0
2017 Total	1933	1923	275	182	323	1061	0	0
2018 total	1442	1383	282	178	226	694	0	59
2019 total	1923	1921	340	201	487	565	145	0
2020 Total	1793	1775	499	216	379	353	180	16
2021 Total	2256	2250	633	164	480	804	89	0
Overall total 2012-2021	16455	16115	3029	1872	3826	6476	414	75
Percentage of total	100%	97.93%	18.41%	11.38%	23.25%	39.36%	2.52%	0.46%

[34] The LIHTC data was compiled using the award reports for each included year, the "Statewide Listing" spreadsheet, and the Housing Tax Credit Interactive Project Map.
[35] It is not uncommon for developments to contain multiple funding streams for units aside from LIHTC.

We can see here an increase in units since 2015 that has stayed in the thousands since, but has yet to return to the 2015 high of 28,000. It can also be seen that the only year when more units were created for 30% AMI than there were for 60% AMI was in 2020. While the number of 30% AMI units is increasing, 60% and 70% AMI units are increasing more.

This shows us that in all of Colorado, over the last 10 years, only 3,029 units of housing have been built with LIHTC funding for people under 30% AMI.

Public Housing Units Lost

While houselessness and rents have continued to skyrocket, public housing has been lost both nationally and in Denver. Housing owned by Public Housing Authorities continues to be sold off and demolished. Instead of more permanently affordable low-income housing options owned by PHAs, vouchers for housing on the private market are being turned to as the way to house poor people. As seen under the fiscal trends, more and more money is going to vouchers and less and less is going to brick and mortar public housing. And, as will be discussed more in the section on vouchers, these are not an effective way for poor and houseless people to secure housing, or for housing to be kept affordable.

"You got unemployment, you got social security, but I'm gonna still make you wait 5, 7, 9, 50, 11 years. No, we tired of that... What, I'm supposed to die on this? I am. I'm not finna die in these streets. That's not fair to us. People got health conditions, all kind of things that they need to be inside for."

- HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

Public Housing Units Available vs. Year
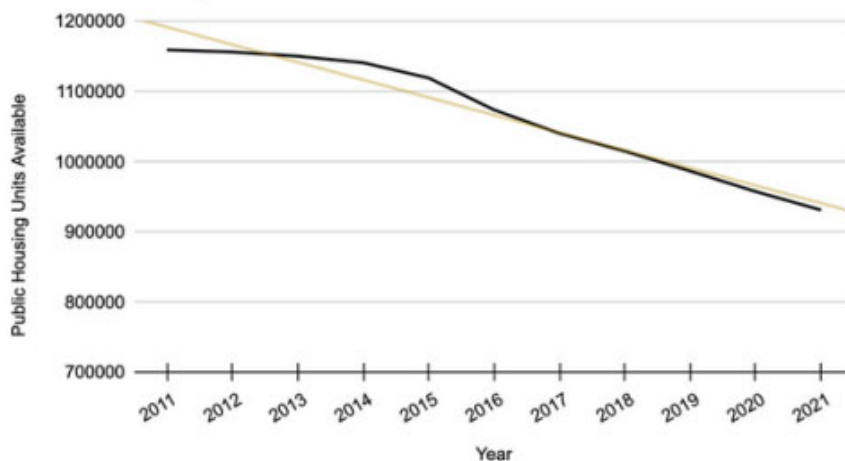
Here are the disturbing numbers showing the loss of public low-income housing over the last 10 years.

The national public housing program saw a 228,289 net unit loss between 2011 and 2021.

When we add this to the 261,419 units of public housing lost between 1995 and 2010 that makes a total of 489,708 units lost in 25 years. This also shows a significant increase in the loss of public housing units over the last 10 years even compared to the 15 years before that.[36]

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[36] This data was gathered from the HUD USER Assisted Housing: National and Local Picture of Subsidized Households Query tool (Office of Policy Development and Research, Assisted Housing: National and Local, 2021). To access the national data, the tabs were filled out as follows: Select a year - Relevant year chosen, Summary level - U.S. Total, Program - Each individual program selected available for that year to reveal all data, Variable - All. To access the DHA data, the tabs were filled out as follows: Select a year - Relevant year chosen; Summary Level - Public Housing Agency; PHA - Housing Authority of the City and County of Denver; Program - Public Housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, & Mod Rehab; Variable - All.

The Denver public housing program saw a 731 net unit loss between 2011 and 2021.

As of 2021, there are a total of 3,242 public housing units in Denver.

These losses mean that 731 fewer poor and houseless households in Denver have an option for an affordable place to live while houselessness has grown by at least 2,075 people (MDHI, 2022) and housing prices have increased by at least $446 per month (Daniels College of Business, 2022).

Denver Public Housing Units Available vs. Year
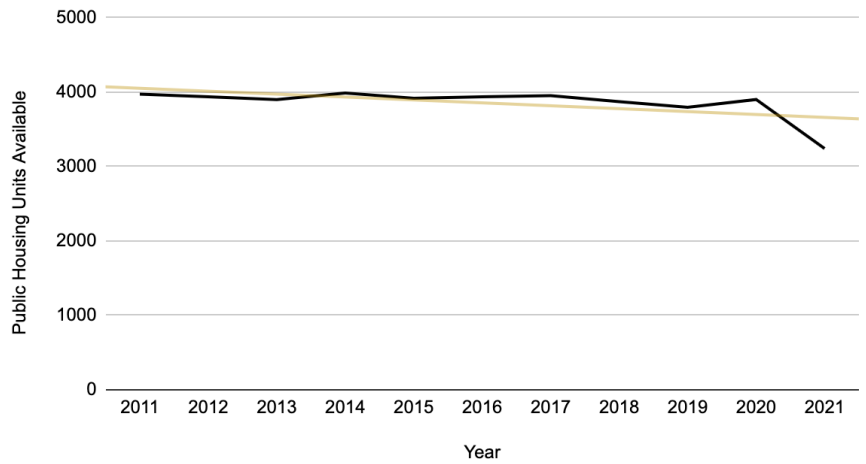
It is also important to know that there is a federal law called the **Faircloth Amendment** that passed in 1999 that states:

> The Department cannot fund the construction or operation of new public housing units with Capital or Operating Funds if the construction of those units would result in a net increase in the number of units the PHA owned, assisted or operated as of October 1, 1999. (HUD, n.d.a)

This law prevents Housing Authorities from building more public housing units beyond that net amount, encouraging the decrease in housing units to lower and lower levels. Instead of at least staying at 1999 levels, nationwide public housing is continuing to decrease below even the number of units that existed in 1999. This results in more and more people suffering and having nowhere to find affordable housing every year.

Housing Vouchers

As we have seen from the fiscal trends and public housing units lost, across the nation, vouchers are being revered more and more as the end-all solution to houselessness.

Community Knowledge of Housing Vouchers

So, we asked houseless people: ***"Do you know what a housing voucher is and how vouchers work?"***

Out of 786 respondents:
- 54.1% (*n=425*) said "No"
- 45.9% (*n=361*) said "Yes"

Some people (0.6%, *n=5*) intentionally chose not to select "Yes" or "No" but showed a limited understanding of what vouchers are or do by writing things like:

"Kɪɴᴅ ᴏғ"

    "Nᴏᴛ ʀᴇᴀʟʟʏ"

        "Sᴏᴍᴇᴡʜᴀᴛ"

            "Uɴsᴜʀᴇ"

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Knowledge of Housing Vouchers

No 54.1% — 425

Yes 45.9% — 361
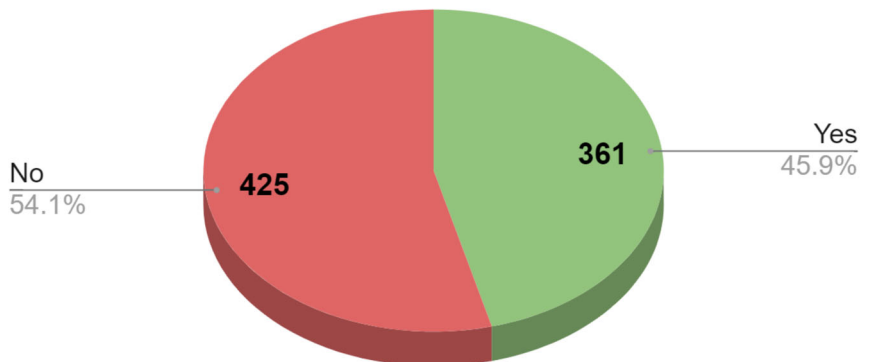
Additional comments included:

Of those who answered "No":

"Just recently found out, no one told me or anything, missed out"

"Not exactly but sure"

"Would like to know"

Of those who answered "Yes":

"Have to go to CCH [Colorado Coalition for the Homeless]"

"I know what it is, not how it works"

"I would love to have one"

"Kind of"

"They Gave me one I didn't use it"

"When you go look for your housing to get it for your voucher"

This data suggests that over half of Denver's houseless population do not know what a housing voucher is, which is a massive challenge people face in finding housing without basic information about how the housing system works.

2022 Housing Survey - Personally or Know Someone Who Has Received a Housing Voucher

No 55.5% — 448

Yes 44.5% — 359
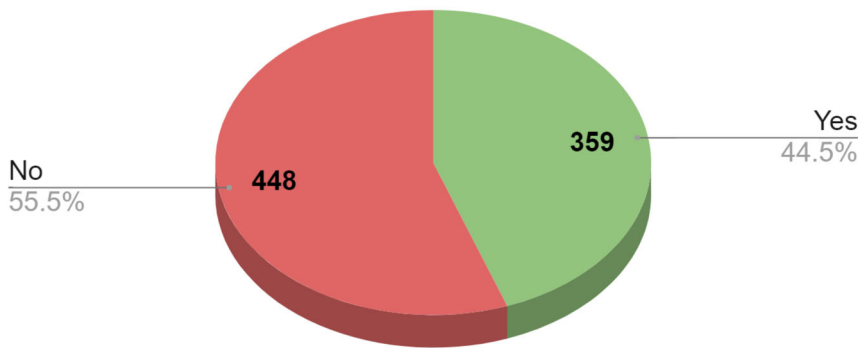
Receiving Vouchers

We followed-up by asking, *"Have you or someone you know ever had a housing voucher?"*

Out of 807 respondents,
- 55.5% said "No" (*n=448*)
- 44.5% said "Yes" (*n=359*)

Over half of the additional comments stated that someone else, *not* the respondent, was the one who received a housing voucher.

These included:

"But not me"

"Friend"

"I didn't use it"

"My ex had housing voucher from New York"

"Not me"

"People I know"

"Someone"

Effects of race/ethnicity on voucher access

When this is broken down by race, we see higher percentages of Indigenous and Black people with vouchers than White folks, likely due to the disproportionate percentage of Indigenous and Black houseless and poor people overall.

2022 Housing Survey - Racial/Ethnic Identities Who Are/Know Voucher Recipients
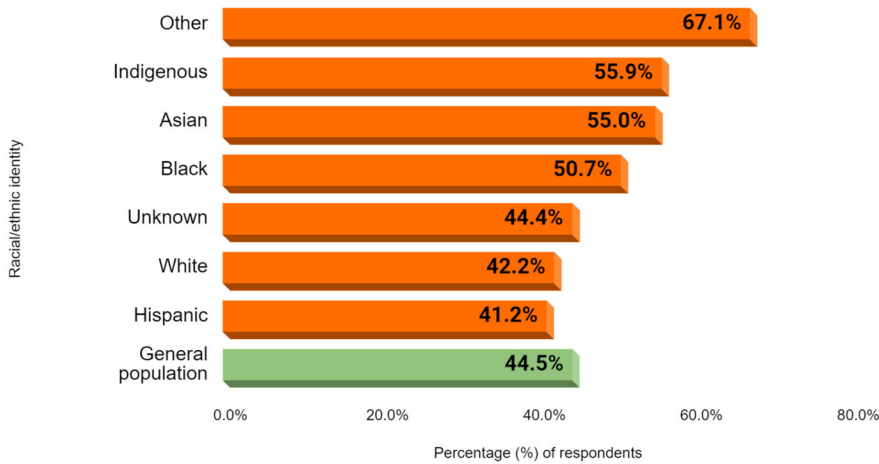
Compared to the overall 44.5% (*n=359*) of respondents who personally have had/ know someone with a housing voucher:

- Other race - 67.1% (*n=47*)
- Indigenous - 55.9% (*n=38*)
- Asian - 55.0% (*n=11*)
- Black - 50.7% (*n=106*)
- Unknown race - 44.4% (*n=12*)
- White - 42.2% (*n=143*)
- Hispanic/latinx - 41.2% (*n=68*)

Contextualizing the data

One of the criteria to be eligible for a housing voucher is being an American citizen with a social security number. Much of the hispanic/latinx houseless community is undocumented, and thus are left at a huge disadvantage when it comes to securing safe, long-term housing. The data reflects this as members of this community are least likely to personally receive or know someone who has received a voucher. One person stated in answer to a later question about vouchers,

<div align="center">

"I'm Colombian, I've lived in Denver for 4 years and I have no rights."

</div>

This exclusion from housing vouchers as a path to housing was very apparent at the Spanish speaking community forum we held. None of the participants in this forum could qualify for a housing voucher. All our questions about vouchers were irrelevant for this community. This is at the same time as our nation touts housing vouchers as the main path to end houselessness.

<div align="center">

It is imperative that legislation be established to create a pathway to housing for undocumented houseless people, who have and will always play an integral role in our community.

</div>

2022 Housing Survey - Disabled Respondents Who Are/Know Voucher Recipients
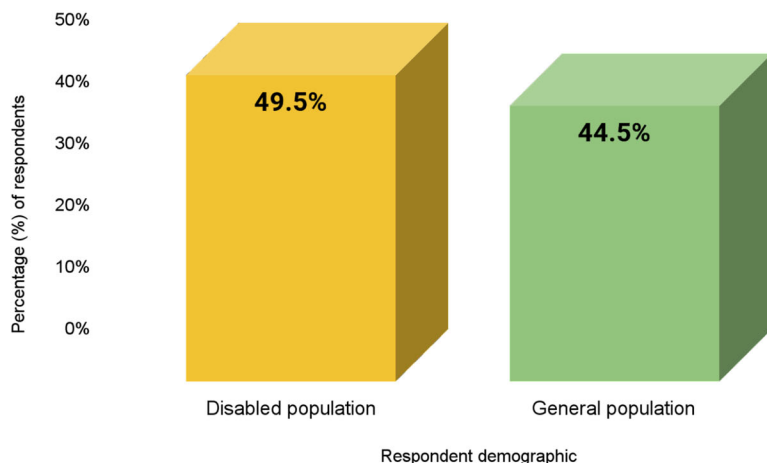
Effects of disabilities on voucher access

Compared to the overall 44.5% (*n=359*) of respondents who personally have had or know someone with a housing voucher, those who identify as being disabled experienced such at 49.5% (*n=144*).

We see a slight increase in connection to vouchers for people with disabilities, likely due to some federal vouchers being specifically set aside for this population. This does not mean, however, that more people with disabilities are successfully finding housing with these vouchers.

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> "I've had a voucher for months, and keep in mind, the voucher took me six months of beating my head against a wall for three or four days a week. Just dead end, after dead end, after dead end. I have a housing voucher and I'm still unhoused. What's up with that? I'm really curious about what the numbers of vouchers out there are compared to the people that have actually been able to utilize them."
>
> — HAND Queer Houseless Community Forum attendee

2022 Housing Survey - Respondents' Success Acquiring Housing with Vouchers

No
43.6%

219

283

Yes
56.4%
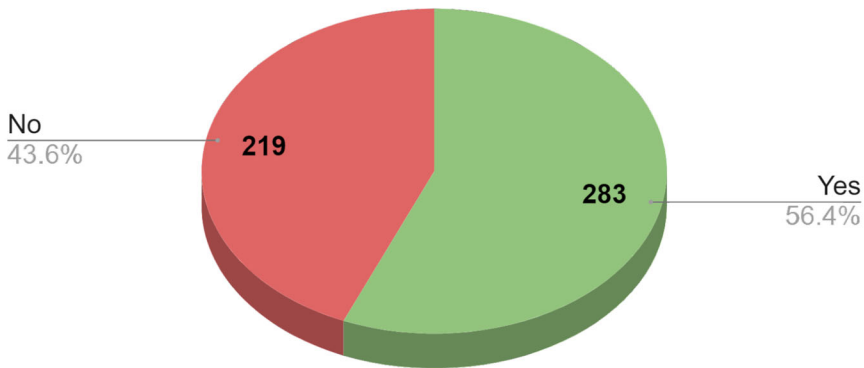
Acquiring Housing Through Vouchers

Our survey then asked, *"Were you (or they) able to find a unit to rent using the housing voucher?"*

Out of 502 survey respondents:
- 56.4% (*n=283*) said "Yes"
- 43.6% (*n=219*) said "No"

This success rate is in fact higher than reality, likely in part because it included others aside from self. Voucher success rate data is far more abysmal as shown later in this report.

> "They can give me 1,000 and 1 vouchers, but I still have to go through Colorado Legal Aid before, to get anything. I can't. I have no other options here."
>
> — Rain, HAND one-on-one interview

Effects of race/ethnicity on acquiring housing through vouchers

Compared to the overall 56.4% who personally, or know someone, that successfully found housing with a voucher,

- Black - 61.0% (*n=89*)
- Indigenous - 60.9% (*n=28*)
- Other race - 58.2%% (*n=32*)
- White - 55.7% (*n=108*)
- Unknown race - 55.6% (*n=10*)
- Didn't specify - 52.8% (*n=19*)
- Hispanic/latinx - 49.5% (*n=55*)
- Asian - 27.8% (*n=5*)

2022 Housing Survey - Racial/Ethnic Identities & Housing Acquisition Through Vouchers
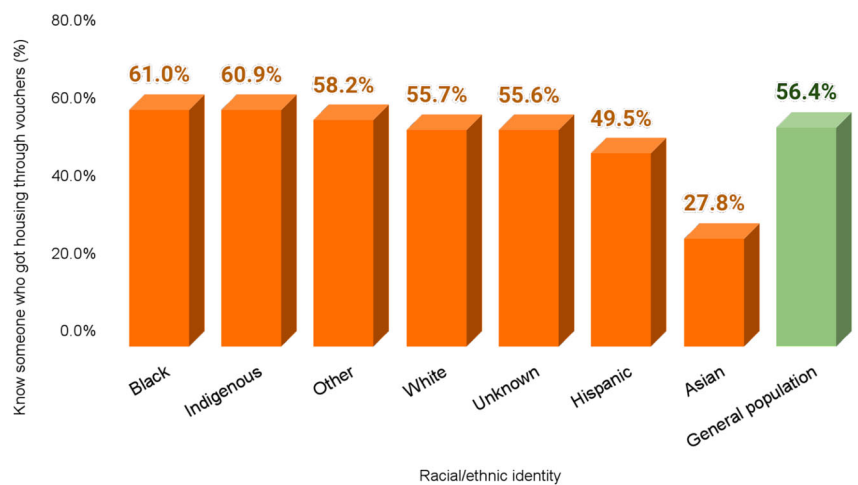
These trends mimic that of voucher receival, with the only exception being that of the Asian population. Our findings suggest that Asian people may receive vouchers at a comparable rate as Black or Indigenous populations, but the success of finding housing with these vouchers is much lower - even more so than that of Hispanic populations. This could also be owed to how few people identified as Asian to begin with - however, this is still an opportunity for further research.

2022 Housing Survey - Disabled Respondents & Housing Acquisition Through Vouchers
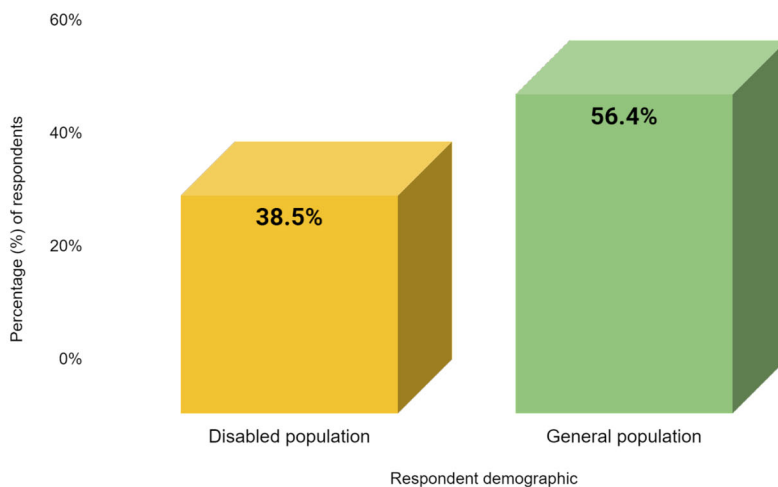
Effects of disabilities on acquiring housing through vouchers

While the disabled population reported receiving vouchers at a 5% higher rate as the general population, they report significant difficulty with accessing housing through these vouchers. Only 38.5% (*n=112*) of respondents known by disabled respondents had been able to acquire housing using those vouchers.

Our understanding of the lack of ADA accessible units suggests that disabled people cannot find the sort of housing needed to fit their needs. There is a huge lapse in accessibility amenities such as roll-in showers, grab bars, flashing lights for doorbells, lower counters, etc. In 2022, HAND worked one-on-one with a particular individual who was both deaf and in a wheelchair, and found that even transitory housing at a hotel did not have flashing light doorbells and had to be on the first floor, meaning that he left his door cracked most times, which left him particularly vulnerable and lead to property being stolen during his stay.

Property owners and service providers need to educate themselves under the leadership of disability advocates, act in accordance with awareness of these various disabilities, and accept reasonable modification requests to afford them the same respect, dignity, and protections as any of their clientele.

Affordable Unit vs. Housing Voucher

Respondents were also asked **"*Do you think it's better to offer people a specific unit they can afford or a housing voucher where they have to find a landlord to accept the voucher?*"**

2022 Housing Survey - Preference for Affordable Housing Units vs. Housing Vouchers
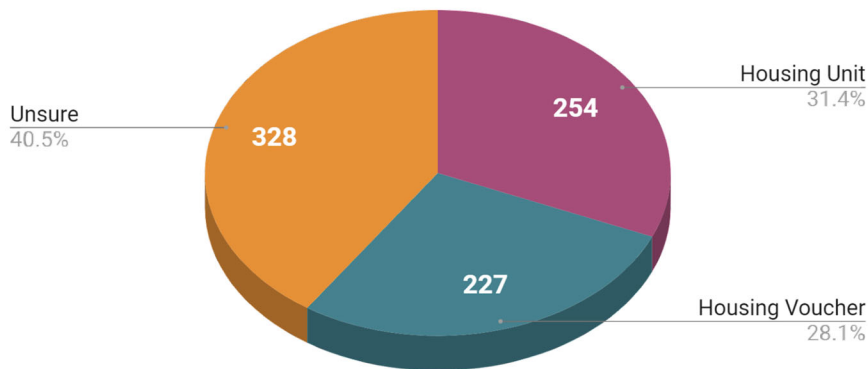
Out of 809 responses:
- 40.5% (*n=328*) were Unsure
- 31.4% (*n=254*) preferred Units
- 28.1% (*n=227*) preferred Vouchers

A number of respondents who answered unsure commented "ʙᴏᴛʜ". We see here that most respondents are unsure which is better, and that housing units are slightly preferred to vouchers. It is also important to note that some respondents may have been confused by the question based on comments given.

We followed up by asking **"*why*"** people preferred a housing unit versus a housing voucher, or both. 409 people shared their reasons and fell into the following general categories:

1. Housing barriers* - 16.9% (*n=69*)
2. Support or services* - 15.2% (*n=62*)
3. Having the ability to choose* - 14.9% (*n=61*)
4. Differs by individual* - 12.0% (*n=49*)
5. Unsure* - 11.0% (*n=45*)
6. Any housing/both in general - 9.8% (*n=40*)
7. Affordability* - 8.8% (*n=36*)
8. Easier - 7.8% (*n=32*)
9. Housing in-hand - 4.6% (*n=19*)
10. Uncategorizable - 3.4% (*n=14*)
11. Anti-voucher* - 3.2% (*n=13*)
12. Personal quality* - 2.9% (*n=12*)
13. Faster - 2.7% (*n=11*)
14. Demographic-specific - 2.7% (*n=11*)
15. Individual initiative - 2.4% (*n=10*)
16. No reason for answer given - 2.4% (*n=10*)
17. Whatever's available - 1.5% (*n=6*)
18. Reduce houselessness - 1.5% (*n=6*)
19. Benefits landlords - 0.7% (*n=3*)
20. Fairness - 0.5% (*n=2*)
21. Hotel voucher - 0.2% (*n=1*)

8 respondents listed both Housing Unit and Housing Voucher themes in their responses, one of which commented "I ɢᴇᴛ ᴄᴏɴғᴜsᴇᴅ". Two respondents selected all three options. These illustrate the desire to have both options available for individuals to choose from.

> **"I think a particular unit, 'cause I think [housing] is hard to find, especially for the person that needs it, to find the right landlords or properties that allow Section 8 or whatever voucher. So I think actually offering them, 'Hey, here are three properties that you can afford.'"**
>
> — **Hillary, HAND one-on-one interview**

> **"[Raise] not the rent, but [raise] the voucher to where it'd be competitive to where you can move into... [and] the landlords are getting paid more to accept the voucher."**
>
> — **Myriah, HAND one-on-one interview**

> **"He was under Section 8, but he didn't carry me on the lease. So when he died, they wouldn't let me take over the rent or nothing. So that put me out on the streets. And I'm not used [to] it. But I'm trying to deal with it."**
>
> — **Linda, HAND one-on-one interview**

1. Housing barriers

Of 69 housing barrier responses:

- Landlord discrimination - 58.0% (*n=40*)
- Condition of being houseless - 27.5% (*n=19*)
- Race/societal discrimination - 8.7% (*n=6*)
- Criminal record - 5.8% (*n=4*)

Most people who referred to **landlord discrimination** preferred housing units, and were speaking of issues with landlords against voucher holders:

"IF YOU LEAVE IT TO LANDLORDS, THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO REFUSE. IF THEY CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO AFFORD IT THEN THEY'LL CHOOSE THAT SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE STIPULATIONS. A LOT OF PRETENSES."

"IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO FIND A PRIVATE LANDLORD TO WORK WITH. MOST APARTMENTS AND RENTAL HOMES ARE RUN BY CORPORATIONS WHO ARE UNWILLING TO WORK WITH ANYONE."

"LANDLORDS ARE BIGOTS"

"LANDLORDS CRUEL JUDGE WITH JUST SEEING A PERSON OR BY THE WAY THEY TALKED."

"MOST PLACES DON'T TAKE HOUSING VOUCHER."

"PREJUDICE; RESIDENTIAL CHALLENGED INDIVIDUALS ARE EASILY TURNED DOWN DUE TO STEREOTYPICAL ASPECTS SUCH AS THEY ARE GENERALLY ERRONEOUSLY ASSUMED TO BE IRRESPONSIBLE"

The **condition of being houseless** poses a barrier when it comes to the extra steps of having to search for housing:

"BOTH [UNITS AND VOUCHERS] – IF THEY OFFERED A UNIT, IT MIGHT NOT BE SATISFACTORY. I LOVED THE UNIT BUT HAD ISSUES WITH THE LOCATION. WHEN YOU'RE HOMELESS YOU'RE SO ANXIOUS TO GET IN THAT YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT THE QUESTIONS TO ASK."

"EARLY ON THE DISAPPOINTMENTS AND CONSTANT SEARCHING TEARS YOU DOWN AND GIVING UP IS TOO EASY AN OPTION WITH OUR DEPRESSION."

"HARD TO FIND [A] SPOT IF YOU HAVE NO TRANSPORTATION OR PHONE. YOU JUST GOT TO DO WHAT YOU GOT TO DO. SOME PEOPLE NOT SMART ENOUGH TO FILL OUT APPLICATION."

Societal discrimination and racism also affect one's options:

"I'M COLOMBIAN, I'VE LIVED IN DENVER FOR 4 YEARS AND I HAVE NO RIGHTS"

"ON ONE HAND IT COULD EVOLVE INTO A GHETTO OR WAY TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THOSE WITH LOWER INCOME IF IT WAS SPECIFIC HOUSING UNIT BUT IT IS ALSO CHALLENGING TO FIND A LANDLORD TO ACCEPT HUD"

Similarly, most people who spoke of issues with **criminal record** referred to this as an issue with vouchers.

2. Support or services

Of all 62 people who mentioned support and services,

- Housing navigation - 58.1% (*n=36*)
- General support - 17.7% (*n=11*)
- Continued support after housing - 14.5% (*n=9*)
- Community support - 6.5% (*n=4*)
- Paperwork - 3.2% (*n=2*)

Most people who talked about **housing navigation** and **general support** showed preference for an affordable housing unit. Answers included:

"BECAUSE I BEEN SEARCHING FOR 3 MONTHS NOW"

"THE HOUSING UNIT BECAUSE WITH A VOUCHER THEY STILL HAVE TO SEARCH FOR ONE."

> "You gotta do your research and look and see how much these apartments is, and see if you can find something in a range of your voucher. It helps if you know somebody that's already in a place with a voucher, because... that means they accepting them."
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

Many people also talked of the challenges of not having access to a phone or the internet and of getting around the city to look for places with no transportation. One person noted, "It can be cold while searching for a place"

3. Ability to choose

Of 61 "choice" responses:

- Have choice in general - 49.2% (*n=30*)
- Choosing location of housing - 41.0% (*n=25*)
- Choosing housing structure - 6.6% (*n=4*)
- Choosing landlord - 3.3% (*n=2*)

Choice in general often referred to the need for both affordable housing units and housing vouchers:

"People should have many options housing should be a Right not a privilege."

Most who mentioned **choice of location** referred to preferring a housing voucher:

"I don't want them to say 'It's this place here with all the bed bugs.'"

"It opens the grid as to where you wanna stay and what it looks like."

4. Differs by individual

Of 49 differential responses:

- Different capabilities - 38.8% (*n=19*)
- Different housing needs - 34.7% (*n=17*)
- Situational/circumstantial - 26.5% (*n=13*)

When it came to **different capabilities of houseless renters**, some included mental and physical disabilities that make the housing search difficult and require specific housing needs, while others were more general:

"Because it's difficult for some people to communicate (mental health) and transportation"

"Case by case basis, depends on individual & how proactive they want to be, some may need baby steps to living independently after being institutionalized by system"

"I don't have resources to travel around looking or just call around. Word of mouth is not very dependable. One person may get housing and say 'Hey come here!' but won't work for others. Not accessible. I want to ask landlord about building and how it's managed or 'toilet needs fixed' when I'm in. But I don't want to offend people. you have to make sure it's compatible for me and them."

"Limited mobility"

Other answers concerning **housing needs** included:

"People are individuals. What works for 'Bob' may not work for 'Larry'."

"We are still humans and have needs and rights like choosing where we live."

5. Unsure

Of 45 "unsure" responses:

- Lacking information on vouchers - 42.2% (*n=19*)
- No firsthand experience - 22.2% (*n=10*)
- Unsure in general - 22.2% (*n=10*)
- Unclear on difference between units and vouchers - 8.9% (*n=4*)
- Question incomprehension - 4.4% (*n=2*)

Many people noted some version of: "I'm not sure why, don't understand."

This again points to the overall lack of education on housing systems for people affected.

7. Affordability

Of 36 affordability responses:

- Affordable in general - 69.4% (*n=25*)
- Affordable in case of lost of, or no, income - 30.6% (*n=11*)

People referred to affordability both of housing units and of vouchers, as preference was often based on the understanding of which option was more affordable. One's ability to have income and the security of housing without it was present in nearly one third of affordability responses.

11. Anti-voucher

Of 13 voucher-specific critiques:

- Voucher expiration - 30.8% (*n=4*)
- Unable to use it - 23.1% (*n=3*)
- Long time/waitlists - 23.1% (*n=3*)
- Only current path to housing - 15.4% (*n=2*)
- Up to chance - 7.7% (*n=1*)

Some answers included:

"Both – because of the possibility of losing the voucher if you don't find a place on your own quick enough."

"Cus the voucher will run out eventually & then the rent would be sky high"

"Vouchers have lots of problems, they call you & say they're waiting for you & then you're back on the streets."

12. Personal qualities

Of 12 personal quality responses:

- Privacy - 75.0% (*n=9*)
- Stability - 25.0% (*n=3*)

Once again, personal qualities are driving forces behind individuals' decisions surrounding housing. When it comes specifically to preference of a housing unit or housing voucher, **privacy** and **stability** are determinants.

14. Demographic-specific

Of 11 demographic-specific responses:

- Disabled - 45.5% (*n=5*)
  - Mentally handicapped (*n=4*)
  - Physically disabled (*n=1*)
- Families - 36.4% (*n=4*)
- Seniors - 9.1% (*n=1*)
- Substance users - 9.1% (*n=1*)

The specific needs of **disabled individuals** and **families** are highlighted as reasons that houseless people are owed a housing process with awareness of such needs, and housing options that make long-term living possible.

> ***When the private housing market cannot sufficiently meet the needs of special populations,
> it falls to the responsibility of the government to provide suitable housing.***

15. Individual initiative

Answers like these contradict the myth that houseless people are looking for a free-ride without wanting to work, despite the many barriers and obstacles that prevent so many from achieving housing:

"Better responsibility"

"I ain't built like that — make me work for it"

"If diligent can find a place, don't want to live in CCH housing."

"It's better when you can do it yourself"

"Know how to handle and budget your money"

"You can do what you need to do, otherwise you're stagnant & don't deserve it"

"You got to be on your own toes if you're grown"

Overall, we see from these answers for preference one way or another that people want housing options that don't allow for **landlord discrimination**, including towards **victims of racism such as immigrants** and people with **felony records**, are **accessible to navigate**, allow them the **ability to choose both the process of acquiring housing and the housing itself depending on their capabilities and needs**, especially housing **location**, and ultimately are **affordable**, among other things.

Housing Vouchers Research

Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) are the largest source of rental assistance in the U.S. and have largely replaced the public housing subsidies once supplied by the federal government (Rosen, 2020). The expansion of the voucher program means that much of the responsibility for providing affordable housing has been transferred to the private market. Nationally, over half of the five million households receiving some form of federal housing assistance live in privately owned properties. Despite being the largest program, there are many low-income families that qualify for a voucher but never receive it. Only 21% of those who need housing assistance in the U.S. actually get housing vouchers (Kingsley, 2017)
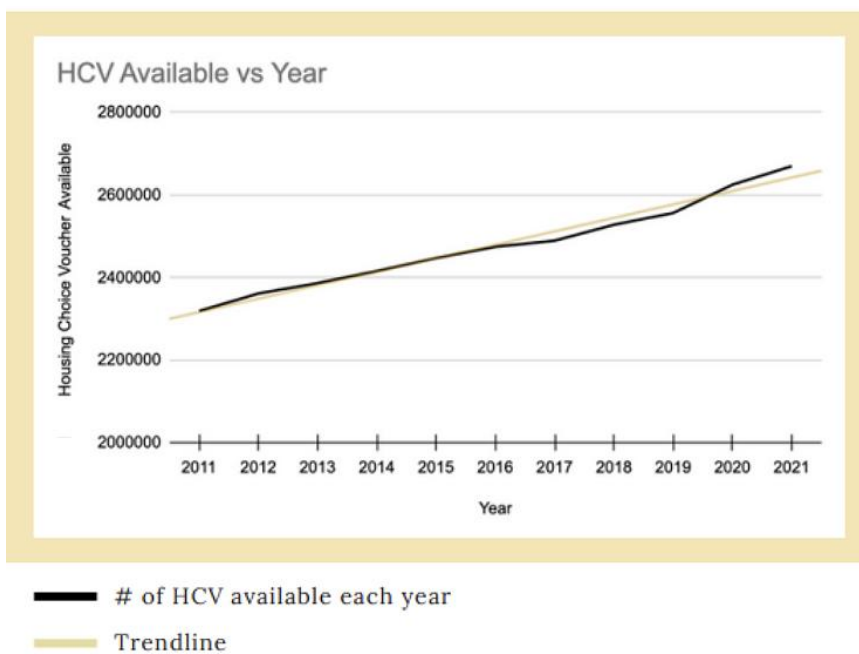
The HCV is intended to cover the difference between what a household can afford and the cost of a private market unit. Typically, voucher holders contribute 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities or a minimum rent determined by the housing authority. The voucher pays the difference between the tenant's contribution and the unit's total rent and utility costs (CBPP, 2021). Nationally, between 2011 and 2021 there was a net gain of 350,985 housing vouchers funded[37]. This, however, does not count the number of vouchers which were actually able to be utilized. If the number utilized were counted instead, this would be significantly lower.

While HUD does not report or share data on the number of vouchers able to be used each year, they do report total households housed with vouchers. This data does not show all the people who were issued a voucher and never find a place with it, but it does show that an increase in vouchers issued does not mean an increase in people housed.

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[37] Both the national data and Denver data on HCVs authorized was obtained from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) Housing Choice Voucher Utilization Data. CBPP downloaded and compiled this data from HUD's Resident Characteristics Report (RCR) or Picture of Subsidized Households, depending on the data available for a given year. The graphs were compiled by this student research team, using the data obtained from CBPP.

HAND Public Housing Research: HUD Data on People Housed with HCV[38]	
Year	**Number of People Housed Nationally with Housing Choice Vouchers**
2012	**5,327,432**
2013	**5,360,333**
2014	**5,223,951**
2015	**5,322,160**
2016	**5,350,188**
2017	**5,288,023**
2018	**5,259,207**
2019	**5,248,994**
2020	**5,231,073**
2021	**5,192,254**
2022	
Net Change	**(-)135,178**

If the loss of public housing units meant the gain in vouchers, this *should* indicate an increase of 122,696 housing options over the last 10 years. However, this assumes people are actually using all the housing vouchers funded to successfully gain housing, which is not the case. As will be discussed in more detail for Denver later in this report, in 2021, only around 8% of the vouchers funded were able to be used to rent housing. Assuming similar voucher use nationwide, this would mean roughly only 9,815 additional housing options in the entire country over 10 years - while, at the same time, rents skyrocket.

In Denver, there was an increase of 1,429 housing vouchers issued over the last 10 years, but what this does not tell us is how many people were actually able to secure housing with the issued voucher. Assuming a 10% success rate (higher than that in 2021) that would mean 142 of these vouchers were actually put to use in housing. This does not make up for the 731 public housing units lost in the same time frame.

Don Burns, Founder and Senior Adviser of Burnes Institute of Poverty Research under Colorado Center on Law and Policy, sent HAND a preview of his to-be published book this November, *When We Talk By: Forgotten Humanity, Broken Systems, and the Role We Can Each Play in Ending Homelessness in America*, in which he drives this point home.

> This pattern of unused housing vouchers can be seen across the country: 11,000 unused vouchers for veterans across the country; $500,000 of unused voucher money for people in various categories in Vermont. These numbers are shocking, especially when we consider that most vouchers are utilized by existing renters to stay in their current apartments*. Because of the disconnect between the supply of affordable housing and the demand, landlords do not have strong incentives to spruce up or repair properties, lower the rent, or forgive late payments because they know they can find new tenants quickly and easily.

[38] This data was found on the Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) HUD User website and based on the 2010 census U.S. total. To find the number of people housed nationally, we had to select the year and then find the number in the chart.

*In Don's interview with Brenda Mascarenas, head of the voucher program for the Adams County, CO housing authority, Maiker Housing, she indicated that only about 10% of their housing voucher fund could be used for new renters. 90% was used to keep existing renters in their apartments (Don's Interview with Brenda Mascarenas, August 2, 2022).

In 2021, Public Housing Authorities reported having a record number of "vouchers on the street," or vouchers issued to families that are still searching for housing, as well as fewer families served overall, and reported a low "success rate," or rate at which an issued voucher actually leases (HUD 2021 Review/2022 Preview). The competitive rental market and landlord discrimination are two likely causes.

One study found that voucher holders needed to screen 39 apartment advertisements to find one potentially eligible unit. From there, many landlords of these potentially eligible units denied accepting vouchers outright or applied conditions to their acceptance (Cunningham, et al., 2018).[39]

Housing Voucher Lottery Steps
Nationally, applying for a tenant-based HCV varies by Housing Authority, but there is always a waitlist or lottery system. Some Housing Authorities keep the HCV program waitlist open and accept applications at any time. Others only open the waitlist for short application periods. In Denver, the HCV Program uses a lottery pool to allocate tenant-based vouchers. The lottery pool opens once per year and tens of thousands of applications are received during the 48-hour period. Individual numbers are pulled at random from the lottery pool throughout the year to be considered and screened for the available HCV. At the end of each year, the HCV lottery pool is purged, so people need to reapply each year if their number is not chosen (DHA, 2020).

If an individual's number is drawn from the lottery pool, then a letter, checklist, and an application packet are mailed to the physical mailing address provided in their submission. This is an initial point at which the approved households could lose their approval packet - individuals move, lose access to their physical mailing addresses for a myriad of reasons, are unable to access them due to legal obligations, etc.

This approval letter then includes the date and time of a required interview with the HCV Admissions Eligibility Department. If they are able to secure transportation and have no other pressing obligations to be able to attend this appointment, and if they then answer interview questions satisfactorily, only then are they issued a voucher and left to find housing. It is incumbent on the tenant to find a landlord in the private market willing to lease to them.

"You should have as long as it takes for someone to accept that voucher. When you lose that voucher, you have to re-apply again. ."

- HAND Community Meeting attendee

Since 2020, the amount of time a voucher holder has to find housing is 240 days. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of time was 120 days and will return to that time limit in 2023. No extensions are currently given and if the recipient does not find housing in this time period, the voucher is expired and reissued to a new applicant.

If a voucher recipient finds housing, they submit a "request for tenancy approval" and the proposed lease to the DHA. Typically, voucher holders contribute 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities or a minimum rent determined by the housing

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[39] Denver City/County has had a source-of-income anti-discrimination law since 2019, and Colorado since 2021 (HB 20-1332). If an applicant experiences discrimination, they need to file a complaint with Denver's Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships within 180 days. Some states, cities, and counties have adopted similar protection laws based on source-of-income, but these protections are not in place nationwide.

authority. The voucher pays the difference between the tenant's contribution and the unit's total rent and utility costs (CBPP, 2021). In Denver, a voucher holder usually pays 30 percent of the family's Monthly Adjusted Income for rent and must not pay more than 40 percent when they first receive the voucher (DHA, 2020). If it's over 40% of their income they will not be able to use the voucher.

HOUSING VOUCHER STEP by STEP PROCESS

1 An individuals # is drawn from the lottery pool for a potential housing voucher.

2 A letter, checklist, and an application packet are mailed to the address provided in their submission.

3 Letter includes the date and time of a required interview with the HCV Admissions Eligibility Department, where the applicant is either approved or denied.

4 If the applicant is approved, they are issued a voucher to find housing.

5 Now, the tenant must find a landlord in the private market willing to lease to them.

*Voucher extension reverted back to 120 days from 240 days post covid. No extensions are currently given and if the recipient does not find housing in this time period, the voucher expires and is reissued to a new applicant.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER
Part 1

Names Pulled
1,000

- TOTAL LOTTERY ENTRIES
- NAMES PULLED FROM ENTRIES
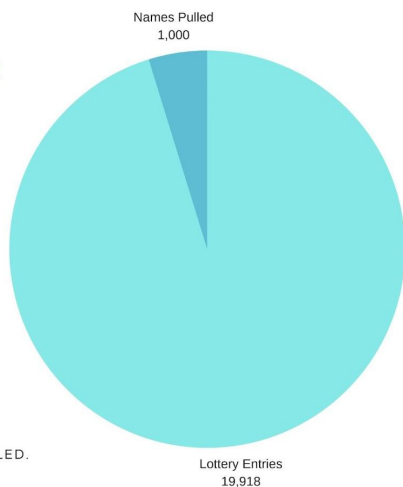
LOTTERY APPLICANTS HAD ROUGHLY A **6%** CHANCE OF THEIR APPLICATIONS BEING PULLED.

Lottery Entries
19,918

"Success Rate" of the Housing Voucher Lottery

According to the Denver Housing Authority, there were 19,918 lottery entries in September 2021. DHA pulled 1,000 names. Based on the 2021 lottery and budget projections, lottery applicants had a roughly 6% chance of having their applications pulled (Rubino, 2021). By the end of the one year mark, only 500 of these 1,000 vouchers were officially issued to people, who then faced the challenge of actually finding housing with their vouchers.[40] That makes a 50% chance of having a voucher issued to you if your name is pulled from the voucher pool - mimicking 2022 Housing Survey reported data on percentage of respondents receiving vouchers (44.5%). DHA has not provided information on how many of these 500 vouchers issued actually received the voucher in hand, and how many of those found a place with that voucher. We were, however, able to make estimations based on data at the five-month mark, in January of 2022.

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[40] HUD doesn't compile data on "success rates" across PHAs and there hasn't been a national study since 2001, so usually the only way to get this number is by asking individual PHAs. **They do not track or will not provide the reasons why people are not able to lease a unit with their voucher**. HUD and the local PHAs also only have basic data on "attrition" and nothing on the reasons people leave the program (being evicted, moving to better housing, etc).

As of January 2022[41]:

- Only 344 households from the 1,000 had their applications processed and vouchers issued,
- Only 214 ultimately received their vouchers,
- And finally, only 77 had found a place to live with their vouchers.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER
Part 2

- NAMES PULLED
- APPLICATIONS PROCESSED
- VOUCHERS IN HAND
- FOUND HOUSING

Found Housing
77

ROUGHLY **8%** CHANCE OF FINDING HOUSING IF YOUR NAME WAS PULLED FROM THE LOTTERY.

Vouchers in Hand
214

Names Pulled
1,000

Applications Processed
344

UPDATED TO 500 BY THE END OF 2022. THAT IS ROUGHLY A **50%** CHANCE OF HAVING A VOUCHER ISSUED TO YOU IF YOUR NAME IS PULLED FROM THE VOUCHER POOL.
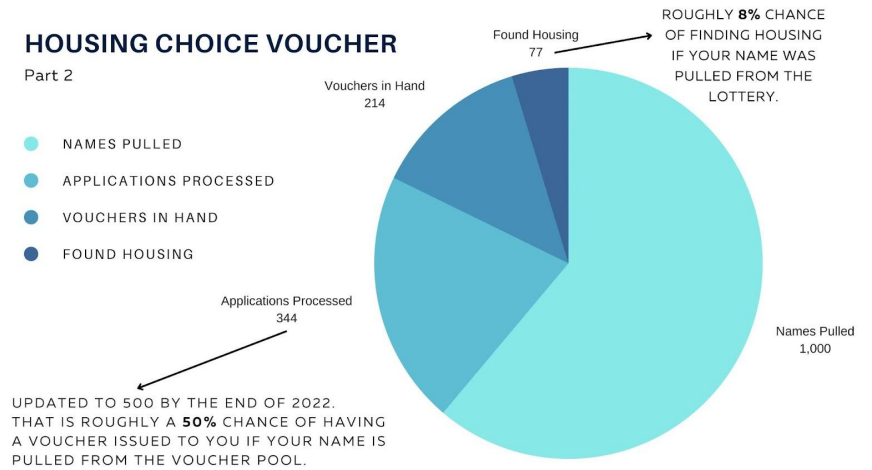
When only 77 households find housing five months after 1,000 names were pulled in the lottery, that is a less than 8% chance of finding housing if your name is pulled.

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER
Part 3

- TOTAL # OF LOTTERY ENTRIES
- # OF PEOPLE THAT FOUND HOUSING

Found Housing
77

THAT IS ROUGHLY A **0.4%** CHANCE OF FINDING HOUSING AS A RESULT OF ENTERING THE LOTTERY.

Lottery Entries
19,918
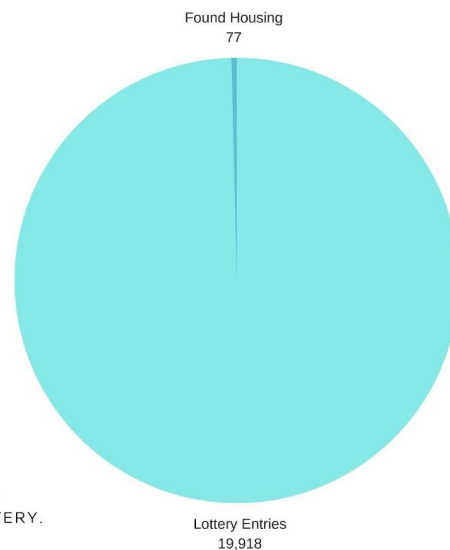
Moreover, when 77 households successfully found housing out of the 19,918 lottery entries from September 2021, that means you have less than a 0.4% chance of finding housing as a result of entering the lottery.

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[41] The pie chart data presented in "Part 2" is specifically of January 2022, 5 months after the lottery opened. We asked DHA for updated data at the end of the year. We did not receive it. During the Covid state of emergency, voucher recipients had double the time, 240 days, to find housing. If it was not for this extension, these 5 months would have been well-past the full 120 days normally allowed to find housing before a housing voucher expires.

New Admissions Trend

Legend: ● Non-Homeless Admissions ● Homeless Admissions

(x-axis: 1/31/2021, 2/28/2021, 3/31/2021, 4/30/2021, 5/31/2021, 6/30/2021, 7/31/2021, 8/31/2021, 9/30/2021, 10/31/2021, 11/30/2021, 12/31/2021, 1/31/2022, 2/28/2022, 3/31/2022, 4/30/2022, 5/31/2022, 6/30/2022)

(data labels: 42.0, 49.0)
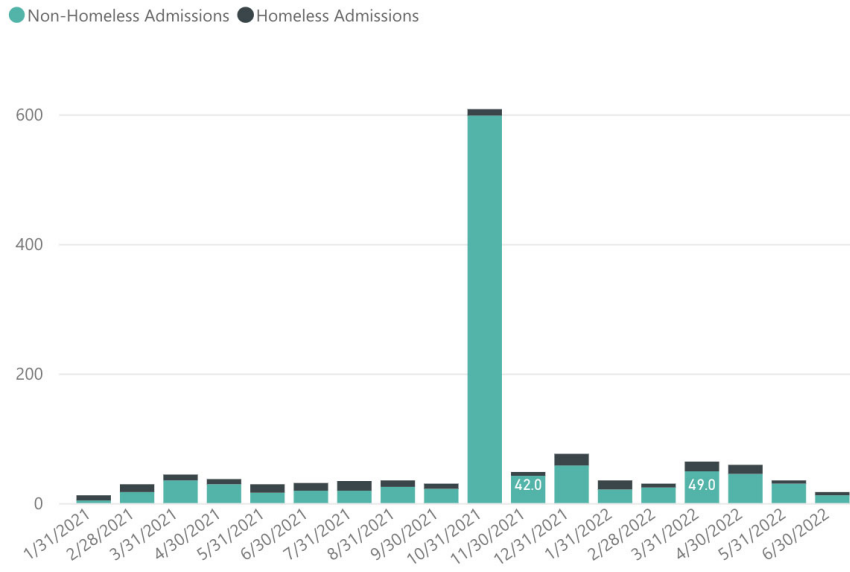
New Admissions Trend

To make matters worse, the portion of new admissions to the voucher program that go to houseless folks is just a small fraction of the total (HUD Data Dashboard, 2022). Nearly all vouchers go to people who already have housing but are moving into public affordable housing - not those in shelter or on the street. October is the month after the lottery was pulled, which resulted in especially high numbers for that month.

Average Cost Per Voucher

The average cost per voucher unit has gone up with rising rents. In 2015 in Denver, the cost per unit was $759.42. As of June 2022, the average cost per unit was $1,263.65 (HUD Data Dashboard, 2022a).

Voucher payments are not keeping up with rising rents.

As of May 1, 2022, the maximum voucher payment for a one-bedroom apartment was

Average Per Unit Cost since 2015

(y-axis: $800, $1,000, $1,200; x-axis: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

$1,364 (not including utilities) while the median rent was $1,440. This mismatch means voucher holders have the added challenge of finding apartments below the median rent for the Denver area.

> "They had been raised, they rent a hundred dollars over the voucher. So I called up my housing case manager. She don't leave the premises now to go help you do nothing."
>
> - HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee

HAND Public Housing Research: Denver Median Rent Amounts and Awarded Voucher Payments as of June 2022		
Bedroom size	Median Rent[42]	2022 Voucher Payment[43]
1	$1,440	$1,364
2	$1,780	$1,659

During the month of July, the voucher payment increased to $1,500 for a one-bedroom apartment and $1,825 for a one-bedroom apartment. This, however, still does not come close to matching the average rent of $1,994 (Rent Cafe, 2022). The median rent is quickly rising above $1,500, with rising voucher payments playing a contributing factor in the rising rents. As housing prices go up, so do voucher prices, and vice versa. There is a mutual push upwards in cost.

It is clear that housing vouchers are not creating the needed housing or making housing that is accessible to poor and houseless people. Turning to vouchers as the way to housing for all will never stop the market from driving housing prices and making housing unaffordable for the poor.

Supportive Housing Programs

Supportive Housing History
By the mid-1980s, alongside emergency responses to houselessness, "supportive housing" began to emerge as a strategy to permanently house disabled people experiencing houselessness. Funded by the federal government as a supportive housing demonstration project in 1987, the McKinney Act combined subsidized housing with on-site case management services targeted at severely disabled houseless people.

This "supportive housing" policy recognized that many unhoused people were in desperate need of the residential healthcare services that had all but disappeared for poor people: an inadequate solution to the lack of universal health care.

However, since its inception nearly 35 years ago, the supportive housing model has failed to end houselessness. First, supportive housing is neither a housing development program nor a community-based residential treatment program, but an underfunded hybrid of both. Not all houseless people require residential treatment (as evident from the 2022 Housing Survey), but for those who do, supportive housing is often an inadequate substitute. These programs rely heavily on local service dollars for case management, often a significant barrier to producing permanent positive results. Second, as a pseudo-housing program, supportive housing has not funded the production of anything remotely close to the number of new units needed to address the shortage of affordable housing in the United States.

Without the federal funding necessary to construct new housing, local governments have often chosen to implement supportive housing programs (SHPs) not by building new units, but instead by leasing previously existing hotel rooms from for-profit landlords, replacing current residents with houseless people, installing a few case workers (at best) in the front office, and then declaring that they have created new housing for the houseless. Finally, when supportive housing –

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[42] Median rent from Apartment List Rental Report for the City of Denver for June, 2022. Apartment List Rent Estimates are monthly estimates of the median rent paid for new leases in a given market. They are tabulated using fully-representative median rent statistics for recent movers taken from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.
[43] Voucher payment standards are based on HUD Fair Market Rents for Denver. Payments are prior to July of 2022 (see DHA, 2022).

a program originally slated for severely disabled unhoused people – is seen as the primary or only solution to houselessness, it reinforces the illusion that the massive rates of national houselessness are due to individual biographical factors rather than societal, structural causes.

Population Having Lived in SHPs
To understand people's experiences in SHPs we also asked *"Have you lived in a homeless or supportive housing program?"*

2022 Housing Survey Respondents Having Lived in Supportive Housing Programs

Out of 800 respondents:
- 65.1% said "No" (*n=521*)
- 34.9% said "Yes" (*n=279*)
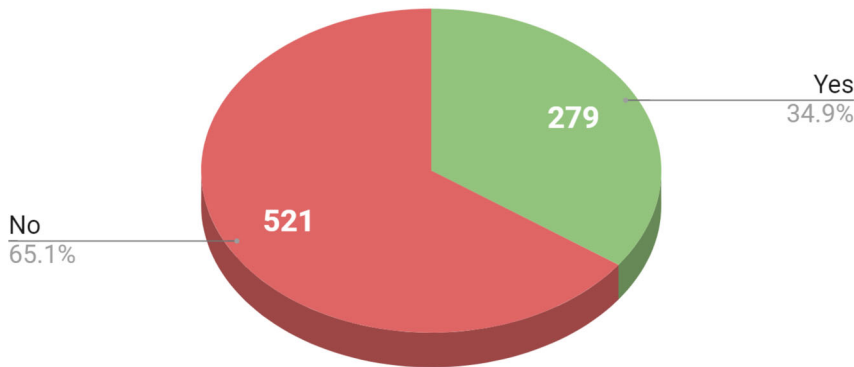
Types of SHPs
We then asked *"If you have lived in a homeless or supportive housing program (non-shelter), what kind(s) of housing program?"*

Out of 311 respondents:
1. SHP or alternate SHP* - 32.5% (*n=101*)
   - SHP (*n=89*)
   - Alternate SHP (*n=12*)
2. Shelter or alternate shelter* - 27.0% (*n=84*)
   - Shelter (*n=64*)
   - Alternate shelter (*n=20*)
3. Personal development housing* - 20.6% (*n=64*)
4. Housing or alternate housing* - 17.0% (*n=53*)
   - Housing (*n=36*)
   - Alternate housing (*n=17*)
5. N/a, no, none - 8.4% (*n=26*)
6. Non-housing - 6.4% (*n=20*)
7. Uncategorizable - 5.8% (*n=18*)
8. Unsure - 1.6% (*n=5*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' SHP Participation
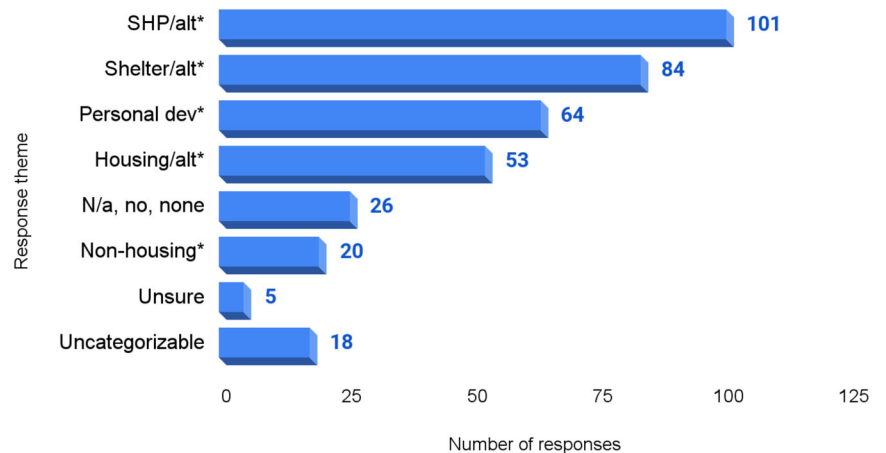
1. SHPs or alternate SHPs

Of 89 SHP responses:
- General - 43.8% (*n=39*)
- Demographic-specific - 25.8% (*n=23*)
  - Domestic violence (DV) victims, non-men (*n=9*)
  - Mental health (*n=4*)
  - Youth (*n=4*)
  - Family (*n=3*)
  - Employment (*n=2*)
  - Men (*n=1*)
- Transitional housing - 14.6% (*n=13*)
- Church program - 6.7% (*n=6*)
- "All", "many" - 5.6% (*n=5*)
- Rapid rehousing - 3.4% (*n=3*)

Alternate SHPs act somewhat like SHPs in that they have basic amenities of housing, such as climate control/protection from the elements/privacy in the form of your own four walls, but lack other housing elements like kitchens. They also don't involve signing a lease, unlike actual SHPs.
- Protective action hotels - 75.0% (*n=9*)
- Tiny home villages - 25.0% (*n=3*)

Protective action hotels were temporarily funded through FEMA during the coronavirus national health emergency to protect the disabled and elderly from infection. With that funding ending, these vulnerable unhoused people are now being systematically evicted across Denver, and many will end back on the streets.

Of 172 specifically named SHP organizations:
1. Denver Rescue Mission - 7.6% (*n=13*)
   - *The Crossing (n=2)*
2. Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH); Salvation Army - 4.1% each (*n=7*)
3. Delores Project - 2.9% (*n=5*)
4. St. Francis Center; Urban Peak - 2.3% each (*n=4*)
5. Aurora Mental Health Center (AUMHC); Catholic Charities; Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD); Volunteers of America (VOA) - 1.7% each (*n=3*)
   - Catholic Charities - *Guadalupe Center in Greeley (n=1)*
6. Family Homestead; Social Impact Bond - 1.2% each (*n=2*)
7. Boulder Bridge House; Boulder Rapid Rehousing; Catholic Worker; Family Promise; Family Tree; Mile High Ministries; Muscatine Center for Social Action (MCSA); Open Door Ministries (ODM); Potter's Wheels Ministries; SafeHouse Denver; Second Step; Turning Points - 0.6% each (*n=1*)
   - Boulder Bridge House - *Ready to work (n=1)*
   - Mile High Ministries - *Joshua Station (n=1)*

2. Shelters or alternate shelter types

Of 64 shelter responses:
- General - 57.8% (*n=37*)
- Domestic violence, non-men - 17.2% (*n=11*)
- Men - 15.6% (*n=10*)
- Sober - 7.8% (*n=5*)
- Family - 1.6% (*n=1*)

Alternate shelters have some level of independence and private space without housing structural elements, and are still managed and operated like shelters.

Of 20 alternate shelter responses:
- Sanctioned encampments/SOS sites - 70.0% (*n=14*)
- Safe parking lots/CSPI lots - 15.0% (*n=3*)
- Temporary respite stay - 15.0% (*n=3*)

> "Denver helps you with food, clothes, everything. But at the same time it limits you. Because at eight at night, studying, you can be doing nothing. They already have to be in the shelter and sleeping when you could really be working. You could be celebrating something."
>
> - HAND Spanish Speakers Houseless Community Forum attendee

3. Personal development housing

As opposed to offering privacy in the form of four walls and a roof, these are group living housing programs that offer some level of treatment towards a goal and have (often strict) program rules. The biggest difference between this sort of program and a SHP is that SHPs involve the signing of a lease agreement, while these don't.

Of 64 personal development housing responses:
- Sober living - 43.8% (*n=28*)
- Rehabilitation facility - 18.8% (*n=12*)
- Halfway house - 17.2% (*n=11*)
- Ex-convict/felon - 7.8% (*n=5*)
- General treatment facility - 4.7% (*n=3*)
- Mental health - 3.1% (*n=2*)
- DV - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- General group - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Maternity - 1.6% (*n=1*)

> "I got this lady off the street, she was in a group home going through sobriety with MHCD when she got a housing voucher and was ready to get housed. Because she had a history of alcoholism, they wanted her to sign a conservatorship where someone's taking care of her money, and she walked away from it. Her family keeps contacting me. No one knows anything."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

4. Housing and alternate housing

Of 36 general housing responses:
- Section 8/subsidized/voucher - 52.8% (*n=19*)
- Affordable, general housing - 19.4% (*n=7*)
- Low income - 8.3% (*n=3*)
- Room for rent/SRO - 8.3% (*n=3*)
- Veteran housing - 5.6% (*n=2*)
- Church program - 2.8% (*n=1*)
- Public housing - 2.8% (*n=1*)

Of 17 alternate housing responses:
- Hotel/motel - 41.2% (*n=7*)
- Staying with family or friends - 35.3% (*n=6*)
- Foster care - 11.8% (*n=2*)
- Native reservation - 5.9% (*n=1*)
- RV - 5.9% (*n=1*)

6. Non-housing

Of 20 non-housing responses:
- Houseless, on the streets - 55.0% (*n=11*)
- Resources accessed - 30.0% (*n=6*)
- Prison - 15.0% (*n=3*)

We can see from these responses that there is a wide variety of places that people listed as SHPs. Many people have lived in many types of programs geared towards various kinds of personal development, rehabilitation, or the like. Many people still listed shelters, even when it was specified that we were asking about housing, *not* shelters. This points to how the line between housing and shelters is not always clear, and how the absence of housing leads many to view any form of shelter as housing. Aspects we considered in categorizing a place as a shelter, housing, or otherwise had to do with the physical structure, amenities, privacy, personal rights, being on a lease, and other such factors.

It is also of note that 3 people listed *prison* as a housing program. When housing is so unattainable that people see prison as a housing program, we have a major problem!

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Sentiments Towards SHPs

Bar chart — Number of respondents by Overall sentiment of response:
- Negative: 190
- Positive: 129
- Neutral: 44
- Uncategorizable: 11
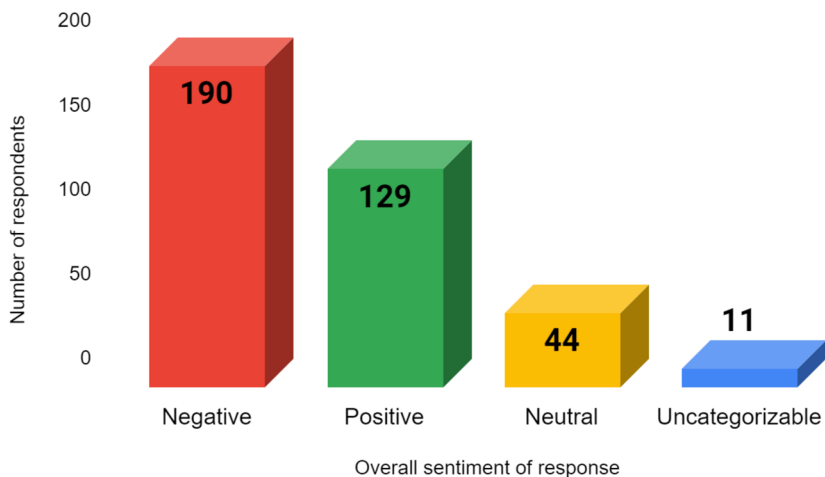
Experiences at SHPs

We then asked people *"If you've lived in a homeless or supportive housing program (non-shelter), how would you describe your experience there?"*

Out of 338 respondents:
- Negative sentiment* - 56.2% (*n=190*)
- Positive sentiment* - 38.2% (*n=129*)
- Neutral sentiment* - 13.0% (*n=44*)
- Uncategorizable - 3.3% (*n=11*)

Negative experiences

Of the 190 negative responses here were the themes brought up.
- Stealing, violence, unsafe/dangerous, traumatic - 21.6% (*n=41*)
- Doesn't help with housing/still houseless, lack of support, ineffective, temporary, difficult to access - 17.9% (*n=34*)
- "Bad" synonyms (i.e. awful, not good) - 16.8% (*n=32*)
- Negative feelings (i.e. hell, hard, outcasted, stressful) - 13.2% (*n=25*)
- Controlling program/rules/staff, no rights - 11.1% (*n=21*)
- Lack order/chaotic/unruly/crazy - 5.3% (*n=10*)
- Competition for resources/crowded - 5.3% (*n=10*)
- Unhealthy/unhygienic - 4.7% (*n=9*)
- Other negative aspect - 4.2% (*n=8*)

Comments included:

"Housing is key to my sobriety Story: Got ticket for 'illegal camping' got approved for new section 8 apt. in Lamar but then told I was disqualified b/c of warrant for camping ticket. Still lost housing. Timed out (2 years) of ft. Lyons – came back to Denver where I got ticket, Left and been in shelter. Trying to convert section 8 to CO."

"Irritating because it feels like a teaser for housing and it's temporary."

"It's a constant battle and war, everyone's trying to ruin the 3% that succeed. They don't want to succeed just the amount that guarantees grants continuing the programs."
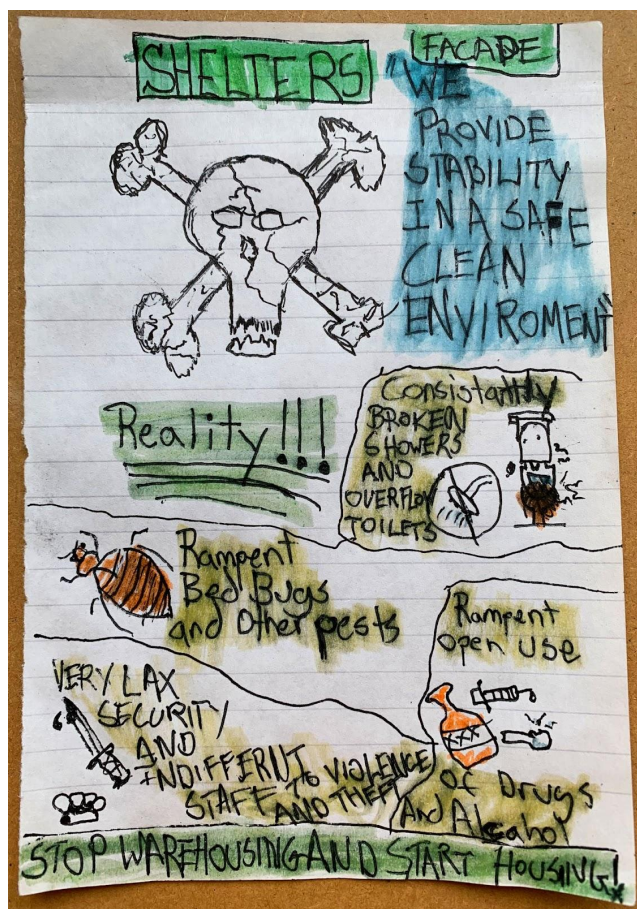
"It was a very bad experience. There was a girl that got stabbed to death while I was there."

- Sue, HAND one-on-one interview

"I found a woman dead on the toilet at five in the morning."

- Susan, HAND one-on-one interview

Positive experiences

Of the 129 positive responses here were the themes brought up.

- Good" synonyms (i.e. excellent, great) - 38.2% (*n=47*)
- Supports positive trajectory, stability, helpful experience - 18.7% (*n=23*)
- Supportive community/staff - 16.3% (*n=20*)
- Positive feelings (i.e. beautiful, comfortable, fulfilling) - 14.6% (*n=18*)
- Better than streets/nothing/other programs, basic/roof, safety/security - 12.2% (*n=15*)
- Housing-specific resources/support - 4.9% (*n=6*)

Many of these responses were general positive words like "GOOD":

"IT'S GOOD, I LIKE, IT WILL HELP ME GET INTO HOUSING (8 MONTHS - 2 YEARS TO GET INTO HOUSING)."

"MY EXPERIENCE WAS THAT YOU EXCEEDED ANYTHING I COULD HAVE EVER ASKED FOR."

Neutral experiences

Of the 44 neutral responses here were the themes brought up.

- "OK" synonyms (i.e. alright, fair, fine) - 47.7% (*n=21*)
- General program aspect, didn't qualify - 36.4% (*n=16*)
- Both bad and good without details, unsure - 15.9% (*n=7*)

Answers included:

"FAIRLY GOOD, NOT MUCH SUPPORT FOR MY MENTAL ISSUES."

"IT'S OKAY GOT TO MAKE THE MOST OF ANY POSITIVE OUTCOME GIVEN."

"SOMEONE HELPED ME FIND IT — IT WAS BAD, BUT NOW THEY ARE HELPING ME."

We can see from these responses that more people had negative experiences than positive ones. These negative experiences are due to issues with the program, issues with the housing, issues with the other guests, and more. A large percentage of people brought up the fact that the program did not help them get into stable housing after it ended. Positive experiences included many general "good" answers, as well as some specifics of good experience with staff, healing, and getting into permanent housing out of the program.

More should be done to gather experiences and direction from formerly houseless people specifically in permanent SHPs, as this survey ended up getting experiences from a much broader spectrum of program types.

In addition to how often people answered these questions in the survey with reference to some kind of shelter or program that would not usually be considered housing, we also found that in our one-on-one interviews and in the community forums, people frequently talked about issues with shelters and other sheltering-type programs. Many shared very strong negative opinions about their experiences in these places.

> "I was in one of those kinds of programs a few years ago, The Next Step at Denver Rescue Mission. You can't work proper hours because they won't let you. Those programs have so many rules to them that it makes it impossible."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

> "They'll paste it up there for you to look at and you're thinking it's the same rules, but you see other things, then they try to highlight what they changed if you're not paying attention."
>
> - Mark, HAND one-on-one interview

> "CCH dropped me as soon as I got my apartment, it's been a fucking nightmare."
>
> - HAND Community Meeting attendee

Support Needed

Supportive housing is widely considered *the* type of housing for unhoused people. However, to know what support is really needed in so-called supportive housing, one must consult houseless people. Respondents checked-all-that-apply: ***"What support would you need, if any, to stay in the housing?"***

Out of 795 respondents:

1. Financial support - 62.5% (*n=497*)
2. Guests allowed - 35.5% (*n=282*)
3. Paperwork/bureaucracy - 25.3% (*n=201*)
4. Legal support - 23.8% (*n=189*)
5. Mental health - 23.6% (*n=188*)
6. Health support - 18.6% (*n=148*)
7. Disability/in-home - 17.9% (*n=142*)
8. No support - 17.2% (*n=137*)
9. Confidential location - 12.7% (*n=101*)
10. Substance use support - 11.1% (*n=88*)
11. Navigating neighbors - 8.9% (*n=71*)
12. Other - 7.8% (*n=62*)

2022 Housing Support - Supportive Services Needed to Stay in Housing

Number of responses vs Type of support needed: Financial support 497, Guests allowed 282, Paperwork/bureaucracy 201, Legal support 189, Mental health 188, Health support 148, Disability/in-home 142, None 137, Confidential location 101, Substance use support 88, Neighbor support 71, Other 62
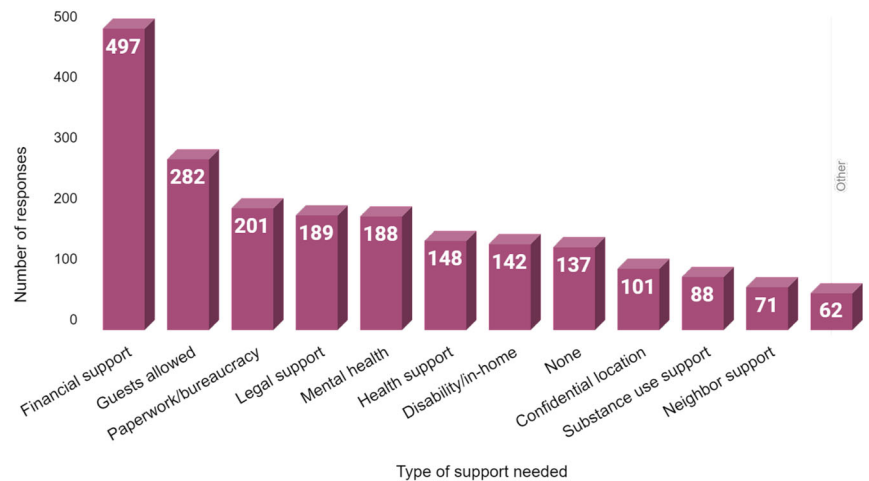
This tells us that the **affordability of housing**, again, is the top need for housing. Furthermore, some people specified that they need financial assistance beyond paying for housing.

> "The thing that was challenging was that they had a curfew where you had to be back, I think by 10:00 PM, and that you could only be gone for maybe a couple of nights, which was not fun because I would visit my kids."
>
> - Mrs. Michael Whitmore, HAND one-on-one interview

The second highest need for support is that provided by family or friends. The **need for community** is also reflected in other areas of this survey, including with guest exclusions being the most unwanted rule. Many more people simply need their community to be allowed to be with them in their home than need "professionals" or treatment.

When it does come to professional support, **navigating convoluted paperwork and dealing with bureaucracy** - a typical role for case managers - was a highly noted need. This is especially the case for those with housing vouchers, as the paperwork can be too complicated for most anyone to understand.

> "A lot of people don't even wanna deal with Section 8 no more."
>
> - Sharon, HAND one-on-one interview

Legal support and **mental health support** follow closely. Many people needing the latter asked for regular counseling sessions.

Viewing the support people ask for broken down in this way can help identify the resources our community needs so we can work to address them. Just saying housing is "supportive" does not necessarily mean the residents' support needs are being met. Each kind of support is different and cannot be lumped into one catch-all category. Ensuring these resources are available and accessible is critical for those who need these supports to have their basic needs met.

Of the nearly 60% of respondents seeking financial assistance to maintain their housing, 16.2% (*n=129*) of them *ONLY* seek financial assistance, while the remaining population sought other means of support. Adding that to the 17.2% of the population needing no support at all once housed would make *one third - 33.4% - of the surveyed population needing only affordability when it comes to housing.*

Recognizing the diversity of support needs is critical for meeting what needs people have. This survey did not go in-depth into *how* exactly to support those with higher levels of need; more work should be done to understand specifics. 62 responses made note of "other" support services needed:

- Selected "other" with no additional comment - 29.5% (*n=18*)
- Rights protected - 11.5% (*n=7*)
- "All", "any", support in general - 11.5% (*n=7*)
- Uncategorizable - 6.6% (*n=4*)
- Case management - 4.9% (*n=3*)
- Food support - 4.9% (*n=3*)
- Employment - 4.9% (*n=3*)
- Morale/motivation - 3.3% (*n=2*)
- Pet-related - 3.3% (*n=2*)
- Security-related - 3.3% (*n=2*)
- As-needed support - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- "Just a chance" - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- "Change in criteria" - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Childcare - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Domestic violence support - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Toilet access - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Moving support - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Online pay portal - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- "My own place" - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Smoker-friendly - 1.6% (*n=1*)
- Unsure - 1.6% (*n=1*)

> **"It's like I'm still locked up, confined, because they got all these rules and stipulations. It's not bars, but invisible bars. And like, if you don't fit to do what you gotta do, you pass or fail UA, or follow the rules... You know, work, and this and that, you get kicked out."**
>
> **- HAND African American / Black / Descendants of American Slaves Houseless Community Forum attendee**

Housing Rule Deal-Breakers

Much of today's "permanent supportive housing" has rules far beyond standard lease agreements. To better understand what housing rules do or do not work for people, we asked ***"What house rules would be deal-breakers for you to accept that housing?"*** and provided a list of common rules.

Out of 793 respondents:

- Curfew - 48.8% (*n=387*)
- No/limited guests - 44.4% (*n=352*)
- Room checks - 40.2% (*n=319*)
- Religious requirements - 39.6% (*n=314*)
- No roommates/partners - 39.2% (*n=311*)
- Distance with no transportation support - 36.9% (*n=293*)
- No animals - 35.9% (*n=285*)
- No weed - 33.8% (*n=268*)
- Requiring prescribed meds - 32.8% (*n=260*)
- Criminal background checks/exclusions - 31.1% (*n=247*)
- ID checks at front entrance - 30.5% (*n=242*)
- Gender-segregated - 27.6% (*n=219*)
- No alcohol - 26.6% (*n=211*)
- Mandatory case management - 25.2% (*n=200*)
- No illegal substances - 21.6% (*n=171*)
- Other deal-breakers - 11.0% (*n=87*)

These answers tell us key reasons some housing is not workable for many people. Aside from curfew, which is an unnecessarily punitive rule for peoples' homes, not being allowed any or limited guests was a highly rated deal-breaker.

Of 87 "other" deal-breaker responses:
- Marked "other" with no additional comment - 23.0% (*n=20*)
- No deal-breakers when it comes to housing - 18.4% (*n=16*)
- Fair treatment - 16.1% (*n=14*)
  - Controlling treatment (*n=9*)
  - Unequal/unfair treatment (*n=3*)
  - Slumlords (*n=2*)
- Bad environment - 9.2% (*n=8*)
  - Certain amenities missing or included (*n=4*)
  - Police presence (*n=2*)
  - Pest-infested (i.e. bed bugs, rats) (*n=2*)
- No rules wanted - 9.2% (*n=8*)
- Uncategorizable - 9.2% (*n=8*)
- Program-related - 4.6% (*n=4*)
  - No support services offered (*n=2*)
  - Not mixed income/houseless-only) (*n=1*)
  - Homeowner's association (*n=1*)
- "N/a", no - 4.6% (*n=4*)
- Depends/unsure - 3.4% (*n=3*)
- Specific rules - 2.3% (*n=2*)
  - Must live with stranger (*n=1*)
  - Must be a senior (*n=1*)

> "Having a spot to call my own without a bunch of stipulations or policies that are really hard to follow. Able to have visitors, time away from the outside world. Not feeling like I'm constantly watched by higher authority or other people in a sense of what I do where I'm putting my items."
>
> — Myriah, HAND one-on-one interview

> "They claim they have a lot of rules, but then none of 'em really are followed through with, it's kind of just a mad house. Usually when you go in those places, it seems like you can't go to sleep. You gotta worry about your stuff getting stolen from you."
>
> — James, HAND one-on-one interview

All these answers should give direction to what rules and practices do not work for many people in housing.

Government Action Needed

"WE ALL KNOW THE ANSWER"

After gathering direction from houseless people on what people prefer and desire in housing, their experiences with housing, and how the process of accessing housing is or is not working, we asked what they thought should be done. The last question our survey asked was ***"What do you think the government could do better with housing to address homelessness?"*** Most respondents agree that the government must take action.

Out of 726 respondents:
- Action item proposed - 136.0% (*n=987*)
- Unsure - 7.4% (*n=54*)
- "Yes"- 3.2% (*n=23*)
- System is "good as is" - 3.2% (*n=23*)
- Local governments' responsibility - 2.2% (*n=16*)
- "No" - 1.2% (*n=9*)
- Limited or no role for government - 0.8% (*n=6*)
- Uncategorizable - 1.2% (*n=9*)

2022 Housing Survey Respondents' Views on Need for Government Action

Response theme	Number of respondents
Action item	987
Unsure	54
"Yes"	23
"Good as is"	23
Local government	16
"No"	9
Limited/no role for	6
Uncategorizable	9
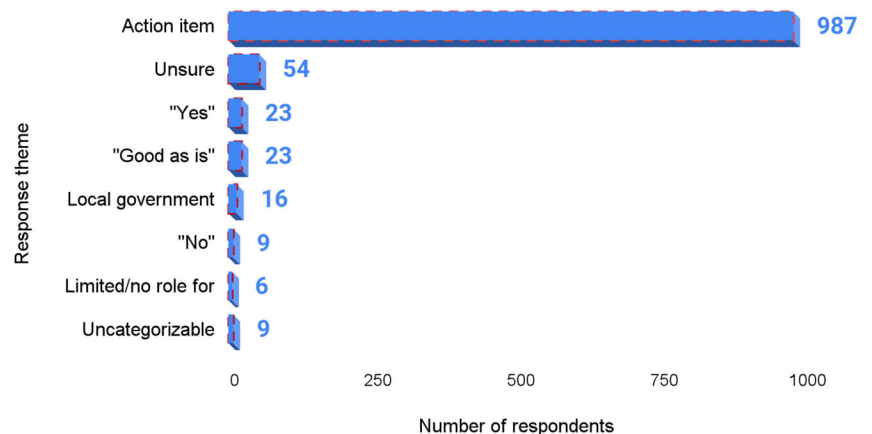
This in itself is significant. Despite serious distrust of the government when it comes to affordable housing, respondents are in widespread agreement that government action is needed to create the housing we need. Even the simple affirmative of "yes" occurs 2.5 times more frequently than "no".

Government Action Item Proposals

Of 987 action item proposals:

1. Housing-specific* - 21.9% (*n=216*)
2. Demographic-specific* - 15.4% (*n=152*)
3. Confronting barriers* - 14.4% (*n=142*)
4. Anti-government* - 14.1% (*n=139*)
5. Services and support* - 6.0% (*n=59*)
6. Treat people better* - 5.8% (*n=57*)
7. Increase funding* - 4.5% (*n=44*)
8. Alternate housing types* - 3.2% (*n=32*)
9. Programs* - 2.8% (*n=28*)
10. Houseless leadership - 2.8% (*n=28*)
11. Street outreach - 2.6% (*n=26*)
12. Shelters* - 2.4% (*n=24*)
13. Misuse of funds* - 2.3% (*n=23*)
14. Create opportunities - 1.3% (*n=13*)
15. Hygiene support - 0.4% (*n=4*)

2022 Housing Survey - Government Action Proposals

Proposed action item	Number of responses
Housing*	216
Demographic*	152
Confront barriers*	142
Anti-government*	139
Services/support*	59
Treatment of people*	57
Increase funding*	44
Alternate housing*	32
Programs*	28
Houseless leadership	28
Street outreach	26
Shelters*	24
Misuse of funds*	23
Create opportunities	13
Hygiene support	4

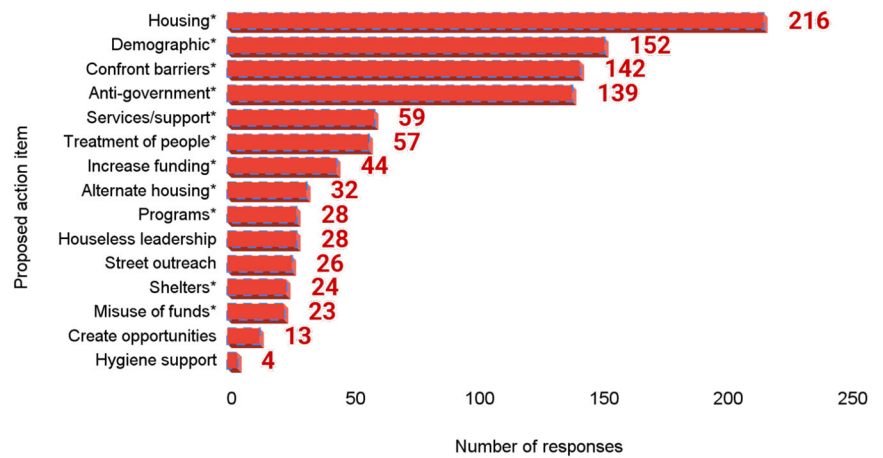To dig deeper into these answers, we broke them down into more specific categories. Many of the themes for proposed action areas contain further delineation into how we should begin to realize them.

1. Housing-Specific Action

Of 216 housing-specific responses:

- Make housing affordable - 26.9% (*n=58*)
  - General affordable housing action needed (*n=38*)
  - Attainment via lower rent/rent control (*n=20*)
- Give/provide housing - 23.1% (*n=50*)
- More housing in general - 16.7% (*n=36*)
- Build new housing - 16.2% (*n=35*)
- Voucher housing - 8.3% (*n=18*)
  - More vouchers needed (*n=9*)
  - Change allocation process (*n=5*)
  - Change amount covered (*n=2*)
  - "Not in a drawer"/use them (*n=2*)
- Utilize vacant spaces/units - 6.5% (*n=14*)
- Improve conditions in existent housing - 2.3% (*n=5*)

2. Demographic-Specific Action

Of 152 demographic-specific responses:

- Houseless - 36.2% (*n=55*)
- Disabled/mental health conditions - 15.1% (*n=23*)
  - Unspecified disability (*n=13*)
  - Mental health condition (*n=10*)
- Support for all/everyone - 11.2% (*n=17*)
- Age-determined - 4.6% (*n=7*)

> "You building all these apartments, but you still got all these homeless people. And then you got all these abandoned buildings."
>
> - Steve, HAND one-on-one interview

> "I know the one place that I was gonna get housing through would be the methadone clinic originally, and that was to speak with the case manager. And what I was told, to get put in the lottery, and the lottery is when you get picked for a house or apartment."
>
> - George, HAND one-on-one interview

- Employed - 4.6% (*n=7*)
- Substance user - 4.6% (*n=7*)
- Low income - 4.6% (*n=7*)
- Ex-convict/felon - 3.9% (*n=6*)
- Citizen/state native - 3.3% (*n=5*)
- Family - 2.6% (*n=4*)
- Sober - 2.6% (*n=4*)
- Single - 2.0% (*n=3*)
- Veteran - 2.0% (*n=3*)
- LGBTQIA+ - 0.7% (*n=1*)
- "Hostage" - 0.7% (*n=1*)
- No mental health issue - 0.7% (*n=1*)
- No income - 0.7% (*n=1*)

3. Action to Confront Housing Barriers

Out of 142 housing barrier responses:
- Housing process - 49.3% (*n=70*)
  - Difficult/inaccessible (*n=30*)
  - Lengthy time/waitlists (*n=25*)
  - Address prerequisites (*n=11*)
  - Address difficult paperwork (*n=4*)
- Communication issues - 17.6% (*n=25*)
- Discrimination - 12.0% (*n=17*)
  - General stigma/prejudice (*n=7*)
  - People with criminal records (*n=7*)
  - Sexual orientation (*n=1*)
  - Racial discrimination (*n=1*)
  - Substance users (*n=1*)
- Limited housing availability - 9.2% (*n=13*)
- Rules - 5.6% (*n=8*)
  - Guests/roommates/visitors (*n=4*)
  - Less stringent/no rules in general (*n=4*)
- Condition of being houseless - 4.2% (*n=6*)
- Landlord refusal - 1.4% (*n=2*)
- Location - 0.7% (*n=1*)

> "I think they could do better by sending people around just like y'all. Seeing what's really happening out here. See how it is firsthand instead of assuming."
>
> - Steve, HAND one-on-one interview

4. Anti-Government Critiques

Out of 139 government-critical responses:
- Take action/help in general - 28.8% (*n=40*)
- Criminalization of houselessness - 21.6% (*n=30*)
  - Defaulting to arresting the houseless in general/other forms of criminalization (*n=14*)
  - Stop the sweeps! (*n=9*)
  - Lack of private property protection (*n=4*)
  - Improved legislation needed (*n=3*)
- Corrupt nature in general - 12.9% (*n=18*)
  - Improving conditions is not in their interest (*n=6*)
  - Preference for developers (*n=5*)
  - Preference for "the rich" aside from developers (*n=4*)

> "Instead of doing these sweeps that they do, they could find some kind of cheap system, maybe the storage pods or something. We convert them into little hotels, even if it's a one-bedroom with plumbing."
>
> - HAND one-on-one interview

- Generally corrupt (*n=3*)
- Economy and/or inflation - 11.5% (*n=16*)
  - Address cost of living/economy/ inflation (*n=8*)
  - Provide debt/tax relief for houseless/poor (*n=6*)
  - Raise the minimum wage (*n=2*)
- Politics/politicians - 7.2% (*n=10*)
- Need for transparency - 6.5% (*n=9*)
- Need for accountability - 5.0% (*n=7*)
- General dislike/disbelief - 3.6% (*n=5*)
- Government employees/staff - 2.9% (*n=4*)

It is of note that 30 people brought up issues with criminalization of houselessness unprompted, and under a question about housing action needed.

5. Action Around Support and Services

Of 59 support/service-type responses:
- Employment support - 22.0% (*n=13*)
- Housing navigation - 18.6% (*n=11*)
- Specific item - 13.6% (*n=8*)
- Case management - 10.2% (*n=6*)
- Residential support once housed - 10.2% (*n=6*)
- More support in general - 8.5% (*n=5*)
- Critiques of current support systems - 8.5% (*n=5*)
- Education/training - 5.1% (*n=3*)
- Mental health treatment - 3.4% (*n=2*)

Some comments that mentioned the need for support related to specific items include:

"Resident card/social support and card/ID"

"Make it immediate housing units and provided food places"

"How could they give a PO Box to homeless!"

"More sleeping bag, homes"

"Barring housing – provide storage unit aid so homeless people have a place to store their belongings, enabling them to seek employment without risking losing their belongings while absent to thieves."

6. Treat Houseless People Better

Of 57 treatment-type responses:
- Caring - 50.9% (*n=29*)
- Ensuring safety - 17.5% (*n=10*)
- Attentive - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Human/humane - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Not homogenous - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Respect in general - 7.0% (*n=4*)
- Respecting privacy - 3.5% (*n=2*)

7. Increase Funding

Out of 44 responses about increasing funding, this meant:
- Funds towards housing/houselessness in general - 47.7% (*n=21*)
- Funds directly to individuals, Universal Basic Income - 34.1% (*n=15*)
- Funds for programs/shelters - 11.4% (*n=5*)

- Local funds (City/State) - 6.8% (*n=3*)

8. Explore Alternate Housing

Of 32 alternate housing responses:

- Land - 50.0% (*n=16*)
  - Campground for tents (*n=8*)
  - Private to individuals (*n=7*)
  - Farm work program (*n=1*)
- Hotel - 25.0% (*n=8*)
- Tiny home - 18.8% (*n=6*)
- RV/vehicle - 6.3% (*n=2*)

9. Program-related Action

Of 28 program-related responses:

- More needed - 64.3% (*n=18*)
- Program critiques - 21.4% (*n=6*)
- New program ideas - 14.3% (*n=4*)

Here are some program-related comments:

"Better staffed and funded organizations to deal with the drug and mental health issues that are one of the biggest obstacles to many homeless people."

"Financing housing – Denver Rescue Mission got $5 million & used it on food, but why not housing? They could've bought a building & housed people according to their circumstances. With campers, EHS is spending so much money to clean up after people when they could just house them."

"More dedicated people see the programs are beneficial and safe for the community"

"More places like the Coalition apartments (with less security)"

"No churches"

"We spend billions building weapons to kill but we can't feed, clothe and have homes for those in need. Better programs and more funding for crucial problems."

12. Shelter-related Action

Of 24 shelter-related responses:

- More needed - 45.8% (*n=11*)
- Shelter critiques - 41.7% (*n=10*)
- New shelter ideas - 12.5% (*n=3*)

"Catholic Charities, regardless of how much money you get from me being at your 24-hour shelter every month, why is it that if I was to really be vocal about my gender identity, I would not be accepted there?"

- HAND Queer Houseless Community Forum attendee

Here are some shelter-related comments:

"Better shelters with case management. Work with more motels and hotels if lack of space, put in more care and effort or people that care"

"Do what they say. Investing more money in affordable housing. Instead of sweep teams or putting people in shelters, put people in hotel and support them with self-care."

"Empty buildings could be shelters. Somebody older w/ experience on the streets should run the place. Special buildings for people with disabilities, wheelchair access and elevators…"

"Have more and way safer, better and more accessible shelter…"

"I know it will never be favored in public opinion but give people a more direct access to housing, provide more financial support to shelters (cleanliness + sanitation is a major problem)"

13. Misappropriation/Misuse of Funds Currently
Below are key themes brought up regarding how funding is allocated, should be addressed, and how often mentioned:

THROUGH BETTER OVERSIGHT (x3),
THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DIVEST FROM:

1. KILLING/MILITARY/WAR (x4)
2. SHELTERS (x3)
3. OTHER AGENCIES/PROGRAMS MEANT TO SUPPORT THE HOUSELESS BUT ARE NOT (x2)
4. DHA/HUD (x2)
5. OTHER COUNTRIES (x2)
6. COMPANIES
7. CORPORATE BUSINESS OWNERS
8. RICH PEOPLE
9. SPECIAL INTERESTS
10. SWEEPS

WITH FUNDS FROM:

1. STATE MARIJUANA SALES (x1)
2. TAXES (x1)

AND INSTEAD INVEST IN:

1. HOUSING (x9)
2. THE HOUSELESS COMMUNITY AND HOUSELESSNESS (x4)
3. WORK-FOCUSED, SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAMS (x1)

Overall, respondents provided critical solutions for addressing housing needs. They are clear in stating that government action is required to ensure attainable housing for houseless people. Solutions brought by respondents would direct the government to move money, land, and resources from housing for the rich, to housing our community can actually afford. The majority of proposed actions surround creating accessible housing – *not* shelters or sanctioned camps. There is a strongly shared sentiment that the government must prioritize creating housing for houseless people.

"Spend less money trying to put up fences around the city and shit like that, and maybe put that toward people's rent or, you know, use some abandoned buildings that are all over and are being used for nothing."

- George, HAND one-on-one interview

Conclusions

The HAND 2022 Housing Survey, combined with community forums and in-depth interviews, provides clear direction from roughly 1,000 houseless people in Denver about what kind of housing we need to be fighting for. We must look to these findings to direct the work to create housing for all who need it in Denver and beyond. The Public Housing Data warns of the current status quo - the destroying, defunding, and privatization of public housing.

Each section of the HAND Housing Report is filled with critical details, quotes, and data offering in-depth insight. We hope readers will refer to the direct words of houseless people in Denver who spoke to their experiences and priorities around housing as we further the fight for the housing we need.

Here are some significant conclusions to be taken from the 2022 Housing Survey and Public Housing Research:

1. **Houseless people want housing**. When asked what respondents thought when it came to wanting housing, less than 1% specified that they did not want housing in any form. As for moving into housing if it were affordable, 7% would not while 10% were unsure, and both groups later clarified that it had to do more with concerns surrounding the type of housing offered. For many, it matters what kind of housing is made available - the powers at play benefit from a narrative that minimizes their responsibility to provide housing that works for the population's wide range of needs. The falsehood that houseless people are houseless by choice is unfounded, and needs to stop. Across the board people want a safe place to live, protection from the elements, and rights to privacy and security. 93% of people would move into an appropriate housing option given to them that they could afford, around 7% of people have more concerns and needs for a specific different type of housing that will work for them.

2. **Housing is more than four walls and a roof, and the people in it make it a home**. While climate control in the form of four walls and a roof is notably mentioned throughout the survey, respondents principally describe housing that comes with safety, autonomy, community, amenities, and rights. Like anyone, houseless people want housing that works for their needs. Significantly, 44% of people name bans/limits on guests as a rule that would prevent them from accepting housing. This issue of freedom to have guests or partners or family is repeated throughout this survey by respondents. As far as amenities go, hygiene-related and cooking-related aspects come up again and again. People are very clear that they want housing where you have the safety of private space and climate control, the freedom to be yourself, connect with your community, and the resources needed for support in life - just like the housing built for people with more means to access it.

3. **Housing affordability is the number one barrier to accessing housing and the number one support needed for housing**. The lack of housing options to rent for a few hundred dollars leaves people houseless. 85% of respondents need housing under $1,000 a month, 65.6% of these respondents need a place under $600, and 17% of these respondents need housing to be free. Housing is not being built at these prices. In 2022 there were only about 523 new housing options created in Denver for people under 30% AMI. There are 29 apartments for every 100 people in the 30-40% AMI [bracket]. For higher AMI percentages, it's about 92 apartments for every 100 people (NAEH 2020) This is for a need of roughly 20,000-40,000 people in this income bracket who are cost burden or houseless.

4. **Houseless people rightfully lack faith in the houseless housing system, and their doubt is backed by data revealing years-long waitlists, abysmal housing lottery odds, and a dependency on providers and case managers as gatekeepers for resources**. The process for seeking housing makes people dependent on providers.

With a few, rare exceptions, any pathway to very low-income or no-income housing requires one to have a case manager through an agency. A majority of houseless people do not have successful experiences with this system, leading them to feel hopeless about securing housing. The data on waitlist times and vouchers backs up this lack of faith shared in the houseless community. People on average are waiting **almost 4 years for a housing opportunity to come up, 2.4 of those years on housing waitlists,** with many lacking the needed assistance to complete a housing search. This lack of faith in the housing system does not mean that people are expecting housing to happen to them without any work on their part - respondents recognized the need for **individual initiative** as part of the housing process.

5. **While shelters were explicitly not mentioned in the 2022 Housing Survey questions, respondents repeatedly highlight the prominence of shelter issues in their experiences with the housing process.** Respondents expressed issues with shelter sanitation -including bedbugs and sickness, lack of privacy, curfew hours which conflict with work hours, thief in the shelter, abusive and power hungry staff, too many people living in trama, and other serious issues. These critiques of the shelter system led to solutions offered, including using hotels for temporary housing instead of warehouse shelters. Hotels are an important part of the landscape for quick cheap housing which could replace shelter warehousing. Many issues brought up with shelters are met by using hotels for emergency housing including privacy, no curfew, individual space without shared sickness or theft, and less staff interaction. In addition hotels can create quick housing that does not require IDs, birth certificates, background checks, and many other barriers named in the housing process. For hotels to be used as emergency quick housing they must be cheap enough for low-income people and/or be paid for by government or other agencies. Cheap hotels used currently by poor people also must not displace current residents in order to be used for other low-no-income people. Vacant or high end hotels should be used to create new free and cheap hotels, and cheap hotels should be preserved and conditions improved.

6. **Beyond the lack of housing at attainable prices, which was the top reason given for not securing housing, the barriers to housing are vast.** Housing acceptance policies or procedures that screen people based on credit score, income of three times the rent, criminal and eviction records, immigration status, and more keep people houseless. Processes for housing search that require phones, internet access, ID and other documents on-hand, and transportation around the city prove significant barriers. Racial discrimination stops people of color from getting housing, just as a lack of ADA accessible housing units does for those with certain disabilities.

7. **Beyond financial support - the most-mentioned support needed - many, but not all, people need other types of resources and support to stay in housing.** These kinds of support and resources should be accessible for people, period - both when without housing, and once they get housing. Some needs, like financial assistance, are shared by most, while other needs, like legal help or mental health support, are only needed by some. While 22% of people do want mental health support and 10% of people want substance misuse support, 78% and 90% of people respectively do not need these services. While needed, these services are not necessary for all. The top resources or support people that ask for: financial support, the right to guests/visitors, and paperwork/bureaucracy support. Any poor person needs financial assistance, any person needs loved ones at home, and lots of people need help with complicated housing paperwork.

8. **In addition to some of the housing rules that have been brought up, like prohibitions and limits on guests, there are other rules that respondents identify as "deal-breakers" to wanting to live in the housing.** Curfew came up as the top deal-breaker rule for housing. People need the freedom to come and go as needed regardless of hours. Religious requirements were a deal-breaker for many. Room checks were named by many as

a prohibitive rule. The need for transportation assistance based on location ranked high. Other rules, like no pets or no weed, were also deal-breakers for many people. A significant issue for many is housing that requires ID checks at the front door. This essentially stops people from having friends over who are houseless (losing IDs all the time) or immigrants without ID. Housing providers should consider if they would want to live in housing with those rules before making the rules.

9. **Despite housing vouchers being regarded as the most current "pathway to housing", over half of our houseless respondents do not know much about housing vouchers, and far less will ever receive housing through one.** Immigrant populations are completely left out of the housing voucher system without any alternative pathway to housing, while those who do receive a housing voucher may not be able to use it due to **landlord discrimination**, steep **housing market prices**, and many **housing navigation barriers** such as unhelpful case managers, transportation, not having a phone, and more. In Denver you have roughly a 8% chance of finding housing with your voucher if your name is pulled from the lottery. This horrifyingly low success rate is not being advertised. HUD nor DHA are releasing this data - in fact, our research discloses that HUD is not even tracking it! Furthermore, vouchers have to continually compete in the market and do not create lasting low-income housing. While actual public housing units are being lost, more and more funding is going to vouchers and housing prices go up, up, up.

10. **The national and local government trend of turning to the private market with subsidies or tax breaks as the source of housing for low-income people is not creating the low-income housing needed.** The 18% reduction in funding for the public housing capital fund is matched by a 13% increase in funding for tenant-based vouchers (which we know does not mean all those vouchers-funded actually lead to housing for someone). The national loss of 228,289 low-income public housing units over 10 years is not replaced by other publicly-owned, price-controlled, accessible housing, but by vouchers on the private market and by shelters and tents on the streets. Expensive and ineffective vouchers and LIHTC units are supposed to make up the difference, but can't. Without public housing owned and operated by a public entity, housing is utterly at the mercy of the markets - which are designed to continually increase in price, not to ensure attainable housing for all in need.

Action Directives

1. Create housing that is affordable to poor and houseless people at the scale of the need: At least 85% of this housing needs to be under $1000 a month, at least 65% of that needs to be at or under $600 a month, and at least 17% of that needs to require no payment. These price ranges at the respective percentages should direct the price levels for new housing options created for low- to no-income people. Overall, new housing creation should match the levels of need in Denver recorded by the City in this report (HOST, 2021, p. 14) with a priority on expediting housing for houseless people.
   - In order to achieve this, housing creation plans should not be made at the scale that capitalist development sets in order to justify creating it - on profit as opposed to need. There must be legal parameters set to counter capitalist development greed.
2. Create housing in locations that are accessible by bus, bike, and walking distance from people's resources and needs.
3. Have bathrooms and kitchens (even if only basic capacity for heating and storing food) in housing.
4. Create housing that does not require a case manager to be the gatekeeper to access that housing.
   - Ensure pathways to housing that do not require going through a VI-SPDAT. There must be a reconciliation of the fact that this assessment excludes people who need housing, pits houseless people against each other, does not in fact prioritize the most in need, and violates the privacy of houseless people.
   - The VI-SPDAT, or other assessments, should lower the screening criteria for initial assessments towards eligibility. Use income criteria to get someone into the waiting lists and then match that person/family to the housing program that best meets their needs.
5. Increase the number of dedicated, quality case workers able to assist in housing navigation.
6. Improve training, pay, and work conditions for case workers.
7. Increase case workers time and ability to meet people where they are at (streets, shelters, ect) to assist with housing navigation.
8. Ensure case managers' ability to do in-person housing search assistance with houseless people seeking housing.
9. Ensure case managers time and ability to continue supporting individuals once they get into housing.
10. End credit checks in housing applications.
11. End requirements for proof of income multiple times the rent.
12. Limit application fees for housing opportunities.
13. Increase options for month to month or short term leases.
14. End criminal background checks in housing applications.
15. Allow renters with evictions on record.
16. Ensure rental properties policies, housing vouchers and other housing programs are available to all, regardless of immigration status.
17. Enforce fair housing laws against racial discrimination in housing.
18. Provide housing with accessibility features for individuals with all types of disabilities (roll-in showers, grab bars, flashing lights for doorbells, lower counters, etc.) Accept reasonable modification requests.
19. Create housing options that do not require IDs, birth certificates, SS cards, or passports.
20. Enable housing application processes that can be done entirely in-person walk up to housing, applications, and follow up.
21. Ensure low- to no-income people, including those on a fixed income, receive financial support beyond what is needed to pay for housing and utilities from existing federal programs, and/or additional financial support from local governments such as basic income programs.

22. Create direct connections for low- to no-income people, houseless or in housing, to legal services - in particular legal issues that create barriers to getting or staying in housing.
    ○ This includes automatically assigned legal representation for people facing eviction.
23. Make housing policies and processes that do not require or pressure houseless people to use "services" or participate in service programs.
24. Housing providers should have the resources to connect residents who are more in-need to those additionally-needed services - including deeper, critical levels of assistance.
25. Do not impose curfews.
26. Allow residents to have visitors to ensure equitable guest policies regardless of past houselessness.
    ○ Ensure pathways available for friends and family members of residents to cohabitate.
    ○ Remove required ID checks to enter housing as a guest and as a resident.
    ○ Protect rights to privacy in personal home space by limiting or prohibiting room checks and ensure proper notice before entering.
27. Ensure housing is not placing religious requirements on residents without their expressed consent.
28. Have more housing that allows for pets.
29. Have more housing with no penalties for substance use.
30. Increase widespread education on housing vouchers and the process for attaining them.
31. Redirect funding back to creating actual public housing units instead of primarily investing in housing vouchers for the private market.
    ○ Address the various points along the housing voucher process at which recipients lose contact with the organizations/individuals connecting people to vouchers.
    ○ Enforce Denver and Colorado's "Source of Income" law[44] against landlords who are discriminating against voucher holders.
32. Publicize routine, third-party audits of the City and service provider programs related to houselessness.
    ○ Require HUD and local housing authorities to track voucher use rates and report reasons for vouchers not being used.
33. Reestablish funding for public housing at the scale of the need, including maintenance and quality construction.
34. Repeal the Faircloth Amendment to ensure an increase in public housing creation through housing authorities.
35. Make housing a public good, not a commodity on the market. Federal, State and local governments have a responsibility to create housing as public infrastructure to ensure all have a place to live, regardless of income.

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[44] HB 20-1332, 2020, Reg. Sess., CO 2020 https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2020a_1332_signed.pdf

Future Work

Continued work is needed to more precisely report on for effective solutions:

1) the number of low-income housing being built through private-public funding partnerships without LIHTC funding,
2) the trends in levels of affordability for these type of housing private-public housing,
3) government subsidization of homeownership for the rich,
4) the use of Continuum of Care funds for housing vs services,
5) the success rate for housing voucher recipients and reasons for not finding housing,
6) the effect of housing vouchers on the market and visa versa,
7) eviction rates and reasons for eviction in low-income or non-profit housing,
8) more identity-specific research concerning the effects of intersectional identities on the experience of being houseless.

We hope that universities, government entities, housing authorities, and others will step into this work with us.

Continued street outreach with houseless people is necessary to ensure that the housing being created is the housing needed. This outreach should give further direction to support services needed, best practices for housing rules, effective processes for housing connection, and more. We hope that service providers, housing developers, landlords, people who are or have been houseless, and others will work with us on this.

Finally, we want to reiterate how grateful we are to the 828 houseless people who shared their direction on the fight for housing through this Housing Survey, the additional 100 who shared through community forums, and the 38 who shared through interviews. You all are the foundation of this work to create housing for all.

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Full 2022 Housing Surveys

HAND Housing Survey - English version

Date _____   City_____   Surveyor _____

Hello, thank you for taking the time to give your input today!
Housekeys Action Network Denver (HAND), alongside Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), is doing an outreach survey to hear about housing desires and needs from people without housing, currently and within the last 5 years. This survey is meant to lift up the priorities and experiences of houseless people as, together, we take our fight for housing to the local, regional, and national levels.
Join us in this fight for rights, dignity, and housing!

1. When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of?

2. What does affordable housing mean to you?

3. When you hear the government talk about affordable housing, what do you think they mean?

4. What is the process you need to go through to get into housing?

5. If you have gone through that housing process does that process work? (circle one)

      Yes   No   Somewhat   Unsure

6. Are you on a housing waitlist? (circle one)

      Yes   No   Unsure   Was in the past

If yes, how many waitlists are you on? _____

If yes, for how long (cumulative weeks/months/years including all waitlists)? _____

7. If you are on waitlist(s), are you expecting to receive housing through that process?

      Yes   No   Unsure

8. If you could find housing you could afford according to your current income, would you move in? (circle one)

      Yes   No   Unsure

What price would it need to be for you to afford it? $_____ /month

9. Have you lived in a homeless or supportive housing program, other than a shelter? (circle one)

      Yes   No

If yes, what kind(s) of housing programs? _____

_____

_____

10. If you've lived in a homeless or supportive housing program (non-shelter), how would you describe your experience there?

11. Do you know what a housing voucher is and how vouchers work? (circle one)

     Yes   No

If no: The Housing Choice Voucher Program was created by the Federal Government to replace their previous role of developing and subsidizing affordable housing units. A person applies for a voucher and, if approved, they have a limited period of time (120 days) to find a private landlord who is willing to enter into an agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to receive rental subsidies directly from HUD.

12. Have you or someone you know ever had a housing voucher? (circle one)

     Yes   No

If yes, were you (or they) able to find a unit to rent using the housing voucher? (circle one)

     Yes   No

If no, why? _____

_____

_____

13. Have you been offered housing/a housing voucher and refused it? (circle one)

     Yes   No

If yes, why? _____

_____

_____

14. Do you think it's better to offer people a specific unit they can afford or a housing voucher where they have to find a landlord to accept the voucher? (circle one)

     Housing Unit   Housing Voucher   Unsure

Why?

15. Should a person be required to enroll in mandatory services (such as case management, substance misuse/ mental health treatment, etc) to get housing? (circle one)

     Yes   No

16. What kinds of housing have you lived in? (check all that apply)

_____ Housing that myself or my family owned

_____ Housing that I rented, on a lease

_____ Housing that I rented, not on a lease

_____ Housing with rental subsidies

_____ Housing as part of a mandatory service program

_____ Staying with family or friends

_____ Other _____

_____

_____

17. Which of these kinds of housing did you like most, and why?

18. Rank your housing or living preference from 1 through 10: (1 is best and 10 is worst)

_____ House

_____ Apartment

_____ Single room occupancy hotel with shared kitchen, bathroom, etc

_____ Collective/ shared living

_____ Tiny house

_____ Tent at managed site

_____ RV

_____ Car

_____ Shelter

_____ Outdoor/ tent/ street

19. Are there other housing options you want access to? (examples: Assisted Living, Nursing Home, etc. Please list)

20. What house rules would be deal-breakers for you to accept that housing? (check all that apply)

_____ No animals

_____ No, or limited, guests

_____ No roommates or partners

_____ Gender segregated

_____ ID checks at front entrance

_____ Room checks

_____ Curfew

_____ No weed

_____ No alcohol

_____ No illegal substances

_____ Mandatory case management

_____ Required to take prescribed meds

_____ Religious requirements (e.g. mandatory mass attendance or mission work)

_____ Distance from places you need to go with no transportation assistance

_____ Criminal background checks/ criminal record exclusions

_____ Other _____

21. What barriers have you experienced in getting housing? (check all that apply)

_____ Racial discrimination

_____ Having a disability

_____ Needing an ADA accessible unit

_____ Not having a phone

_____ Not having internet

_____ Difficulty of paperwork

_____ Not having documents

_____ Physical health care needs

_____ Having a felony on record

_____ Immigration status

_____ Eviction (owing back rent)

_____ Credit score

_____ Not having money

_____ Being moved/ displaced by police

_____ Other: _____

_____

22. What support would you need, if any, to stay in the housing? (check all that apply)

_____ None

_____ Financial

_____ Paperwork/ dealing with Bureaucracy

_____ Legal assistance

_____ Mental Health professionals

_____ Health treatment/ assistance

_____ Conflict resolution/ mediation with neighbors

_____ Disability accommodations/ in-home care

_____ Partner/ family/ friends allowed to live/ visit freely

_____ Substance misuse assistance

_____ Confidential location

_____ Other _____

_____

23. Do you think families, disabled people or seniors should get priority access to housing opportunities? (circle one)

      Yes   No   Unsure

24. What do you think the government could do better with housing to address homelessness?

I currently live (in)… (check all the apply)

___ Outside/tent	___ At friend or family's house	___ Tiny home
___ Vehicle	___ Transitional housing	___ House/apartment
___ Shelter	___ Safe Outdoor Space	___ Other
___ Hotel		

I identify as… (check all that apply)

___ Black	___ Woman	___ Under 18 years old
___ Indigenous	___ Man	___ 18-25 years old
___ Hispanic/Latinx	___ Gender non-conforming/	___ 26-54 years old
___ Asian	fluid/ non-binary	___ Over 55 years old
___ White	___ Transgender	
___ Other race	___ Other LGBTQIA	
___ Unknown race	___ Questioning	

___ Person with a mental and/or physical disability and/or chronic illness

___ English as a second language or non-english speaker

___ Veteran

Fecha _____   Ciudad _____   Topógrafo _____

Hola, ¡gracias por tomarse el tiempo para dar su opinión hoy!
Housekeys Action Network Denver (HAND), junto con Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), está realizando una encuesta de divulgación para conocer los deseos y necesidades de vivienda de las personas sin hogar, actualmente y en los últimos 5 años. Esta encuesta está destinada a resaltar las prioridades y experiencias de la comunidad de las personas sin hogar mientras, juntos, llevamos nuestra lucha
por la vivienda a los niveles local, regional, y nacional.
¡Únase a nosotros en esta lucha por los derechos, la dignidad, y la vivienda!

1. Al hablar de querer una vivienda, ¿qué es lo que se imagina?

2. ¿Qué significa para usted una vivienda accesible?

3. Cuando escucha al gobierno hablar de viviendas accesibles, ¿qué cree que ellos quieren decir?

4. ¿Cuál es el proceso que tiene que realizar para conseguir una vivienda?

5. Si usted ya realizó este proceso, ¿cree que funcionó? (elija una opción)

Sí   No   Más o menos   No sé

6. ¿Se encuentra en una lista de espera de vivienda actualmente? (elija una opción)

Si   No   Más o menos   Antes *(o en el pasado)*

En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿en cuantas listas de espera se encuentra? _____

En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿por cuánto tiempo ha estado esperando (acumulativo semanas/meses/años

incluyendo todas las listas)? _____

7. Si se encuentra en lista(s) de espera, ¿está esperando recibir la vivienda a través de ese proceso?

Si   No   No se

8. Si pudiese encontrar vivienda accesible de acuerdo a su ingreso actual, ¿se mudaría ahí?

Sí   No   No se

¿Qué precio debería tener la vivienda para que pudiese pagarla? $_____ al mes

9. Aparte de un refugio temporal, ¿ha vivido en un programa de vivienda? (elija una opción)

Sí   No

En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿cuál(es) tipo(s) de programas de vivienda? _____

_____

_____

10. Si ya vivió en un programa de vivienda (no refugio temporal), ¿cómo describiría su experiencia viviendo allí?

11. ¿Sabe qué es un vale de elección de vivienda y cómo funciona? (elija una opción)

     Si   No

Si no es el caso: El programa de Vale de Elección de Vivienda está fundado por el gobierno federal para reemplazar su responsabilidad anterior de desarrollar construcción y subvencionar unidades habitacionales. Alguien aplica para un vale y, si se aprueba, tiene un período de tiempo limitado (120 días) para encontrar un propietario privado que esté dispuesto a firmar un contrato de arrendamiento para recibir subsidios directamente del Departamento de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano (HUD - Department of Housing and Urban Development).

12. ¿Usted o alguien que conoce ya tuvo un vale de elección de vivienda?

     Si   No

En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿podría usted (o la otra persona) encontrar una unidad habitacional? (elija una opción)

     Si   No

En el caso de responder "No", ¿por qué? _____

_____

_____

13. ¿Ha rechazado la oferta de un vale de elección a vivienda? (elija uno)

     Si   No

En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿por qué? _____

_____

_____

14. ¿Cree usted que es mejor ofrecer una unidad habitacional que pueda costear o un vale de elección de vivienda para lo cual tiene que encontrar un propietario que acepte el vale?

     Unidad Habitacional   Vale de Elección de Vivienda   No se

¿Por qué?

15. ¿Cree que una persona debería estar inscripta en servicios obligatorios (como por ejemplo: gestión de casos, consumo de substancias, tratamiento para salud mental, etc) para poder recibir una vivienda? (Elija una opción)

Si   No

16. ¿En qué tipos de vivienda ha residido? (elige todos que apliquen)

_____ Vivienda que yo mismo o mi familia poseía

_____ Vivienda que alquilaba, con un contrato

_____ Vivienda que alquilaba, sin un contrato

_____ Vivienda con subsidios de renta

_____ Vivienda como parte de un programa de servicio obligatorio

_____ Quedándome con familia o amigo(s)

_____ Otro: _____

_____

17. ¿Cuál(es) de estos fue el que más le gustó y por qué?

18. Por favor, enumere de 1 a 10 (1 es lo mejor, 10 es lo peor) su tipo de vivienda preferida:

_____ Casa

_____ Apartamento

_____ Ocupación de hotel (habitación individual) con espacios compartidos (cocina, baño, etc)

_____ Vivienda compartida/colectiva

_____ Casa pequeña

_____ Carpa en un sitio gestionado

_____ Casa rodante

_____ Carro

_____ Refugio temporal

_____ Afuera/ En la calle/carpa

19. ¿Hay otras opciones de vivienda a las cuales le gustaría poder acceder (por ejemplo: Vida asistida, Asilo de Ancianos)? Por favor, escríbalos aquí abajo:

20. ¿Cuáles reglas son innegociables para que acepte una vivienda? (elige todas las opciones que apliquen)

_____ No animales

_____ No invitados (o limitados)

_____ No compañerxs o parejas

_____ Separado por género

_____ Verificación de identidad a la entrada

_____ Revisiones del cuarto

_____ Toque de queda

_____ Marijuana no permitida

_____ Alcohol no permitido

_____ Substancias ilegales no permitidas

_____ Gestión de casos obligatorio

_____ Obligación a tomar medicinas prescritas

_____ Obligaciones religiones (por ejemplo: misa obligatoria, trabajo misionero)

_____ Distancia de lugares que tiene que ir sin asistencia de transporte

_____ Verificaciones o exclusiones de antecedentes penales

_____ Otro _____

21. ¿Cuáles desafíos ha enfrentado a la hora de conseguir una vivienda?

_____ Discriminación racial

_____ Tener discapacidad

_____ Necesitar una unidad que es accesible a ADA

_____ No tener teléfono

_____ No tener internet

_____ Dificultad de trámites

_____ No tener documentos

_____ Necesidades de salud físico

_____ Tener delito grave registrado

_____ Estado de inmigración

_____ Desalojo (deber renta)

_____ Puntaje de crédito

_____ No tener dinero

_____ Ser mudado/desplazado por policía

_____ Otro : _____

22. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo necesita (en el caso de necesitarlo) para poder permanecer en la vivienda?
(Elija todas las opciones que apliquen)

_____ Ninguno

_____ Financiero

_____ Manejar trámites/burocracia

_____ Asistencia Legal

_____ Profesionales de salud mental

_____ Tratamiento/asistencia de salud físico

_____ Resolución de conflicto/mediación con vecinxs

_____ Cuidado en casa/acomodaciones de discapacidad

_____ Permitir visitas y compañía de pareja/ familiar/ amigo(s)

_____ Asistencia con el abuso de substancias

_____ Ubicación confidencial

_____ Otro : _____

23. ¿Cree que las familias, gente con discapacidades, o personas mayores deberían tener prioridad al acceso a las oportunidades de vivienda? (elija uno)

Si   No   No se

24. ¿En qué manera(s) cree que el gobierno puede manejar la provisión de viviendas para hacer frente a la crisis de alojamiento?

Actualmente vivo en (elija todas las opciones que apliquen):

___ En la calle/carpa

___ Carro/vehículo

___ Refugio temporal

___ Hotel

___ La casa de unx amigx/familiar

___ Vivienda de transición

___ Espacio exterior seguro

___ Casa pequeña

___ Casa/apartamento

___ Otro _____

_____

Datos demográficos: Yo me identifico como… (Elige todos que apliquen)

___ Negrx

___ Indígena

___ Hispánicx/Latinx

___ Asiáticx

___ Blancx

___ Otra raza

___ Raza desconocida

___ Mujer

___ Hombre

___ Genero fluido, no binario/ no conforme

___ Transgénero

___ Otro LGBTQIA

___ Cuestionando

___ Menos de 18 años

___ 18-25 años

___ 26-54 años

___ Mayor que 55 años

___ Persona con discapacidad física/mental y/o enfermedad crónica

___ Inglés como Segundo Idioma o No hablo inglés

___ Veteranx

HAND In-Depth Interview Housing Questions

In-depth Interview Questions - English

1. When you talk about wanting housing, what are you thinking of? *What imagery do you visualize?*

   Dig deeper. Housing in terms of:

   - Protection from the elements…
   - Amenities…
   - Privacy…
   - Autonomy…
   - Safety…
   - Community…
   - Resources…
   - Other things…

2. What is the process you need to go through to get into housing?

   - Talk about all the steps and your experience with each step…

3. What barriers have you faced trying to get housing?

   - If none, what has stopped you from starting the housing process?

4. Have you lived in a homeless or supportive housing program, other than a shelter? Which one(s)? What was your experience like? *Talk about:*

   - Rules…
   - Supports/ services…
   - Community…
   - Other things…

5. For how long were you part of the program(s)?

6. What about your experience at a shelter?

7. What rules for housing do you want or not want?

8. What support do you need to stay in housing?

9. Have you or someone you know ever had a housing voucher? If yes, were you (or they) able to find a unit to rent using the housing voucher? *Talk about this process step by step…*

10. Do you think it's better to offer people a specific unit they can afford or a housing voucher where they have to find a landlord to accept the voucher? *Talk about why…*

11. What do you think the government could do better with housing to address houselessness?

In-depth Interview Questions - Spanish

1. Al hablar de querer una vivienda, ¿qué es lo que se imagina? *¿Que visualizas?*

   Más profundamente. Viviendas cerca de:

   - Protección contra el clima…

   - Comodidades del apartamento…

   - Privacidad…

   - Autonomía…

   - Seguridad…

   - Comunidad…

   - Recursos…

   - Otras cosas…

2. ¿Cuál es el proceso que tiene que realizar para conseguir una vivienda?

   - Hablas sobre todos los partes del proceso y tu experiencia con cada parte…

3. ¿Cuáles desafíos ha enfrentado a la hora de conseguir una vivienda?

   - Si ninguna, ¿qué le ha impedido iniciar el proceso de obtener vivienda?

4. Aparte de un refugio temporal, ¿ha vivido en un programa de vivienda? ¿Cuál(es)? ¿Cómo describiría su experiencia viviendo allí? Habla de:

   - Reglas…

   - Tipas de apoyos y servicias…

   - Comunidad…

   - Otras cosas…

5. ¿Por cuánto tiempo fuiste parte del (de los) programa(s)?

6. ¿Cómo describiría su experiencia en un refugio temporal?

7. ¿Cuáles reglas quieres o no quieres parte de su vivienda?

8. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo necesita (en el caso de necesitarlo) para poder permanecer en la vivienda?

9. ¿Usted o alguien que conoce ya tuvo un vale de elección de vivienda? En el caso de responder "Sí", ¿podría usted (o la otra persona) encontrar una unidad habitacional? *Habla sobre cada paso del proceso…*

10. ¿Cree usted que es mejor ofrecer una unidad habitacional que pueda costear o un vale de elección de vivienda para lo cual tiene que encontrar un propietario que acepte el vale? *Di porqué…*

11. ¿En qué manera(s) cree que el gobierno puede manejar la provisión de viviendas para hacer frente a la crisis de alojamiento?

Housekeys Action Network Denver 2023