

HOMELESS VETERAN
PROGRAM



Texas Veterans
Commission



HOMELESSNESS AMONG WOMEN VETERANS



WHO ARE YOU? OH, WHO AM I?



Gary Medina
PROGRAM MANAGER



CONTACT ME

Gary.Medina@tvc.texas.gov

Gary Medina is a dedicated advocate with over a decade of experience in supporting veterans and their families. His journey began in California, where his expertise in community advocacy led to the drafting of reports for congressional members, some of which served as the foundation for bills introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. In Kern County, Gary's commitment deepened as he assisted veterans with VA claims, healthcare, education, and appeals. He also championed the cause of homeless veterans, organizing collaborative stand-downs to address their needs.

For the past four years, Gary has been a vital part of the Texas Veterans Commission. His versatile roles have included Education Specialist, Career Advisor, and Government Relations Officer/ Interim Director. Now, he represents veteran community through a new role as the Homeless Veteran Program Manager.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF HOMELESS?



- “The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidance defines unsheltered homelessness as staying in places not meant for human habitation such as sidewalks, abandoned buildings, bus stations, and vehicles parked for long periods”
(2024 AHAR)

“24 CFR § 576.2 – Definitions”



INTRODUCTIONS

- . Overview of homelessness in the U.S.
- . Special focus on women veterans and their unique challenges.
- . Women veterans are 2-3 times more likely to experience homelessness compared to non-veteran women.
- . Brief outline of topics to be covered.



HOMELESSNESS IN U.S.A

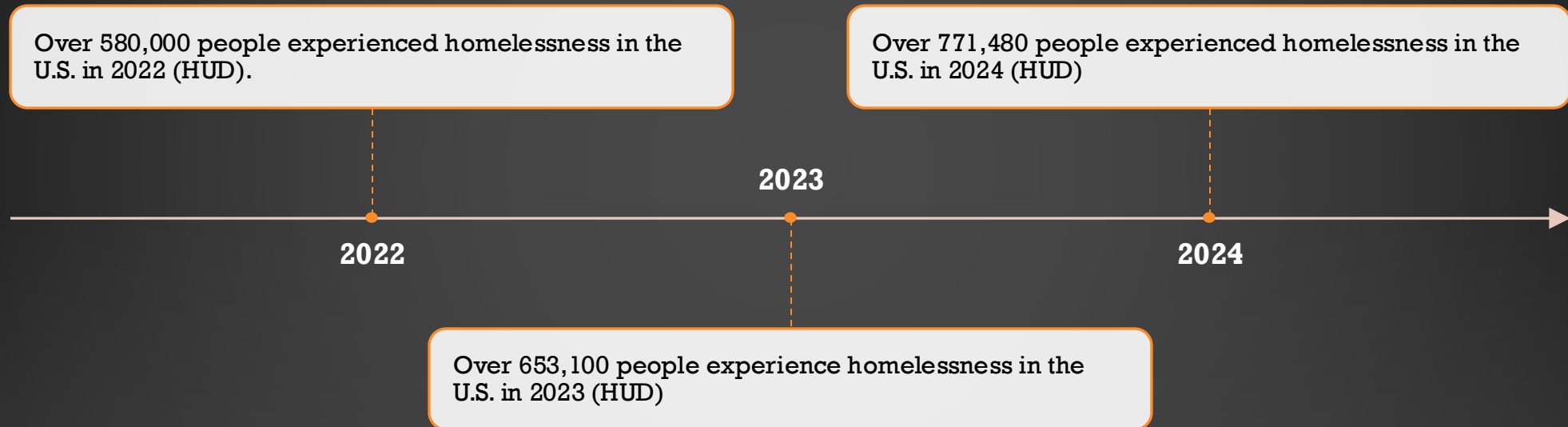
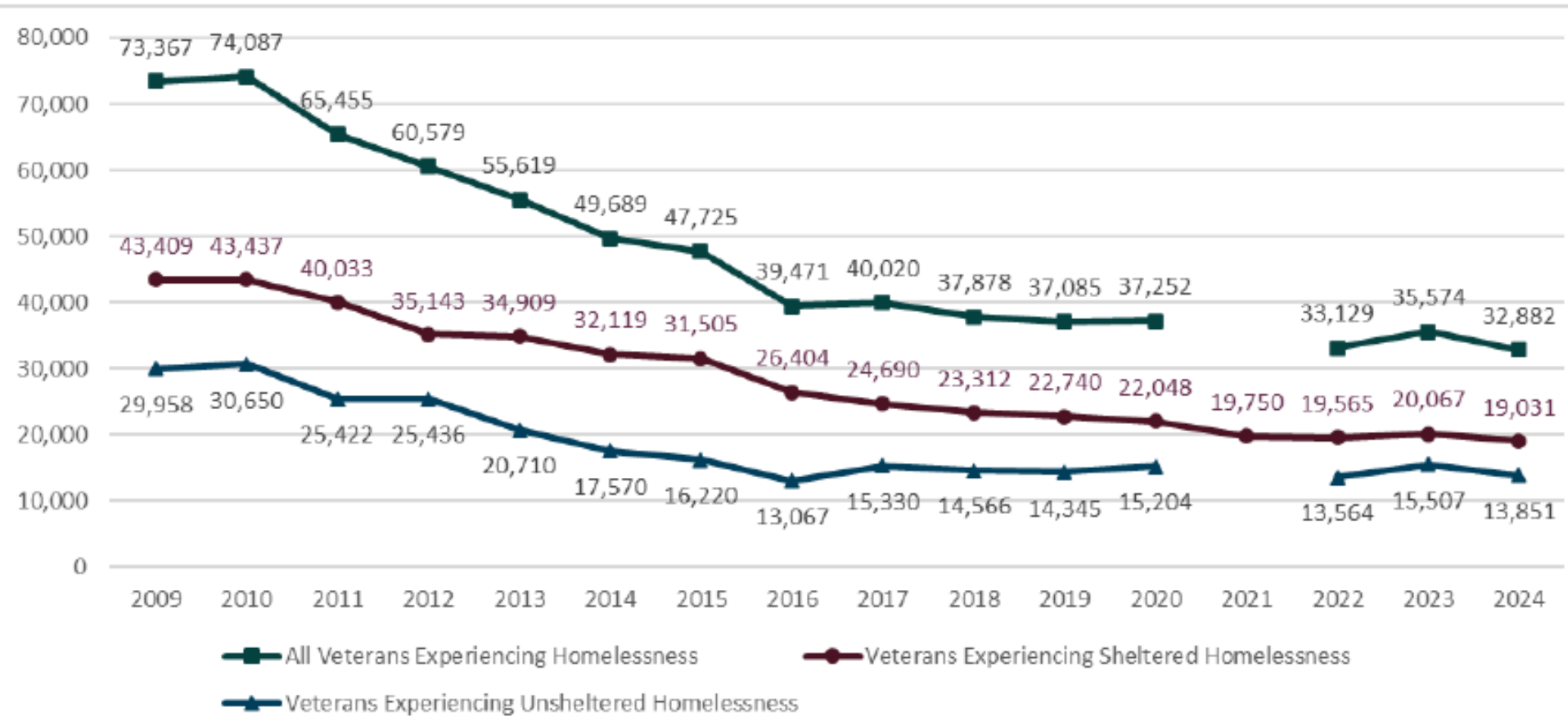


Exhibit 5-1: PIT Estimates of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness by Sheltered Status, 2009-2024



Statistics on Women Veterans

What you do matters



- Total population of women veterans in the U.S.: Approximately 2 million (Census Bureau).
- Percentage of experiencing homelessness: 4% of homeless veterans are women (HUD).
- Geographic hotspots: Texas, California, and Florida have the highest numbers of homeless women veterans (HUD).

THANK YOU!

Women Veterans Who Are Homeless

Annual Homelessness Assessment Report 2023

EXHIBIT 5.4: Demographic Characteristics of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness
2023

	All Veterans		Sheltered Veterans		Unsheltered Veterans	
All Veterans	35,574	100%	20,067	100%	15,507	100%
Gender						
Female	3,980	11.2%	1,815	9.0%	2,165	14.0%
Male	31,231	87.8%	18,148	90.4%	13,083	84.4%
Transgender	173	0.5%	74	0.4%	99	0.6%
A Gender that is not Singularly 'Female' or 'Male'	161	0.5%	21	0.1%	140	0.9%

A 16.35 percent decrease

651 decrease!

Annual Homelessness Assessment Report 2023

Exhibit 5-4: Gender Identity of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness, 2024

	All Veterans Experiencing Homelessness		Sheltered Veterans		Unsheltered Veterans	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Woman	3,329	10.1%	1,661	8.7%	1,668	12.0%
Man	29,189	88.8%	17,252	90.7%	11,937	86.2%
Transgender	110	0.3%	51	0.3%	59	0.4%
Gender Questioning	12	<0.1%	2	<0.1%	10	0.1%
Culturally Specific Identity	26	0.1%	6	<0.1%	20	0.1%
Different Identity	13	<0.1%	1	<0.1%	12	0.1%
Non-Binary	105	0.3%	27	0.1%	78	0.6%
More Than One Gender	98	0.3%	31	0.2%	67	0.5%

Note: In 2024, HUD changed the way data on gender were collected by both expanding the categories and allowing for multiple selections, creating more inclusive identification and reporting. See Appendix B for definitions of gender categories.

SINGLE MOTHERS AMONG WOMEN VETERANS

- Percentage of homeless women veterans who are single mothers: 30% (National Homeless Veterans Coalition).
- Challenges faced by single mothers:
 - Lack of affordable childcare.
 - Balancing work and caregiving responsibilities.
- “Between 2023 and 2024, 39 percent more people in families with children experienced homelessness” (2024 AHAR)

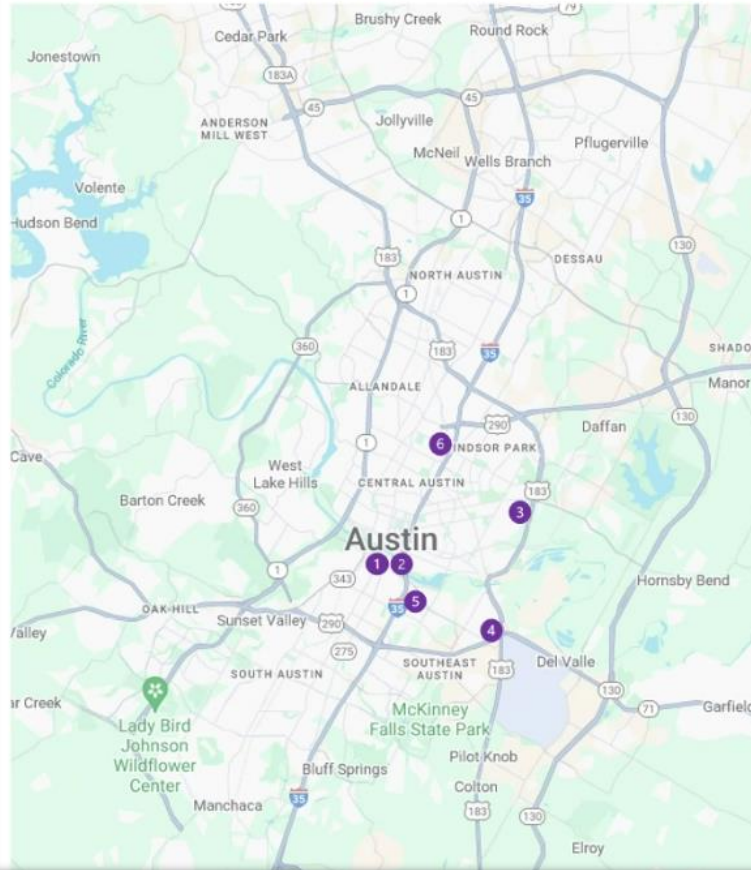


Did you
know...

the City of
Austin owns
six shelter
locations.

AUSTIN EMERGENCY SHELTER NETWORK

CITY-OWNED SHELTER LOCATIONS

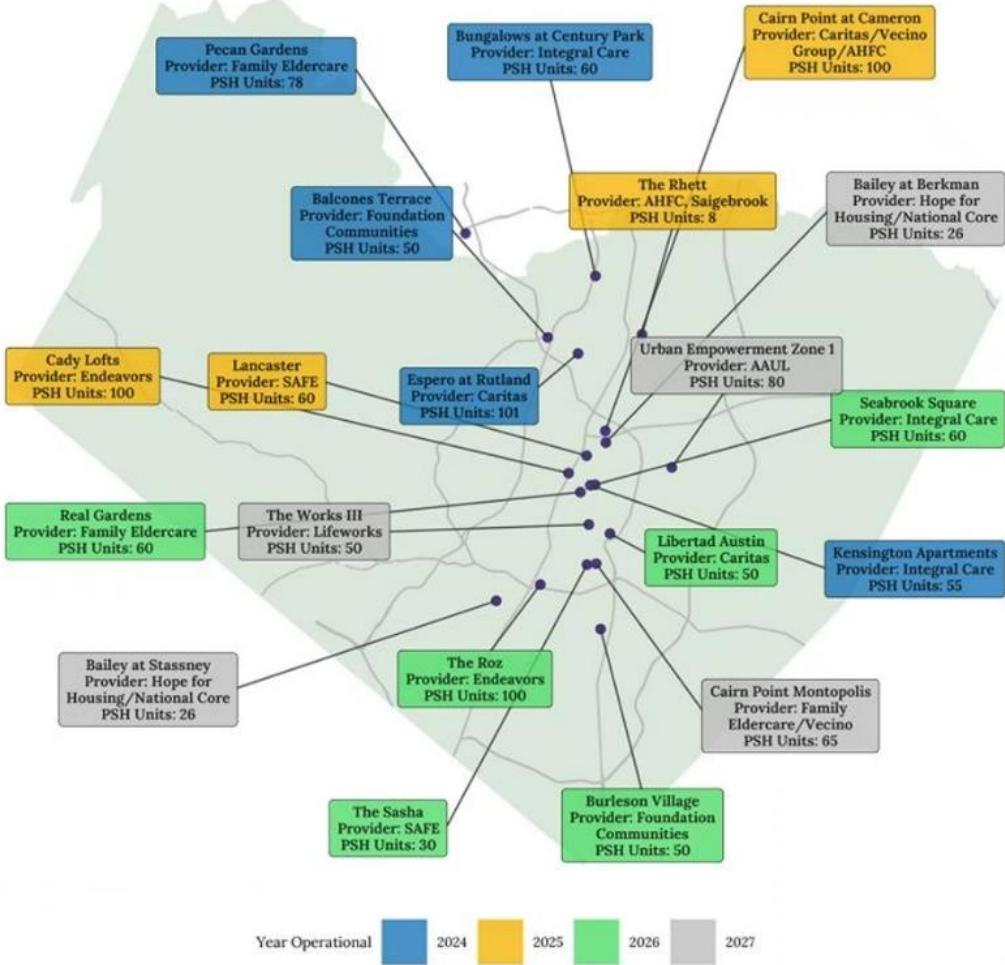


Shelter Name and Location

1. Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH)
130 semi-congregate beds
Male clients
2. Eighth Street Shelter for Women
160 semi-congregate beds
Women and transgender clients
3. Austin Shelter for Women and Children
81 semi-congregate beds
Women and children clients
4. Marshalling Yard Emergency Shelter
300 congregate beds
Adult clients (no children)
5. Southbridge Shelter
145 semi-congregate beds (hotel conversion)
Adult clients (no children)
6. Northbridge Shelter
125 semi-congregate beds (hotel conversion)
Adult clients (no children)

Total shelter beds at City shelters: 941

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING MAP



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RISK FACTORS FOR HOMELESSNESS

- Mental health illness: 60% of homeless women veterans have PTSD or depression (VA data).
- Discharge status: 15% received other-than-honorable discharges, limiting access to benefits.
- Military sexual trauma: 1 in 4 women veterans report MST, increasing vulnerability to homelessness (VA).

Homeless Veteran Program



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LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES

- Challenges in accessing VA services:
 - Long wait times.
 - Limited awareness of available programs.
- Availability of shelters and transitional housing:
 - Only 9% of veteran-specific shelters are tailored to women (Texas Homeless Network).

LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Social stigma and cultural disconnection post-service.
 - Many women veterans feel "invisible" within veteran communities.
- Lack of peer support networks.
- Psychological effects of isolation:
 - Higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation (peer-reviewed studies).

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THE WAGE GAP



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- Median income: Women veterans earn 15% less than male veterans (BLS data).
- Impact on housing affordability:
 - Average housing cost: \$1,200/month (HUD data).
- Industries commonly employing women veterans:
 - Healthcare, education, and administration.

Opportunities for Housing

- Programs specifically for veterans:
 - HUD-VASH: Combines housing vouchers with supportive services.
- Success stories and best practices:
 - Texas CoCs' "Housing First" initiatives.
 - VA practices the same type of initiative



Intersectionality: Gender, Race, and Homelessness

- **Disproportionate impact on women veterans of color:**
 - **33% of homeless women veterans are African American, despite being 14% of the population (HUD).**
 - **Policy implications of racial disparities.**
- **Median Age: The median age of women veterans was 51 years in 2023, compared with 48 years for male veterans (VA Open Data, 2024).**

Health Impacts of Homelessness

- Physical health challenges:
 - High rates of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and hypertension.
- Mental health issues exacerbated by homelessness:
 - Anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

Social Services and Support Systems

- Role of local CoCs in providing services:
 - Emergency shelters.
 - Job training programs.
- Importance of integrated care:
 - Mental health + housing support.



The Role of Advocacy

- Key organizations supporting homeless women veterans:
 - National Homeless Veterans Coalition.
 - Texas Homeless Network.



Best Practices and Successful Models

Examples of successful housing-first initiatives:

- Houston's veteran housing programs.
- Peer mentorship programs:
 - Pairing newly housed veterans with mentors.
- Texas Veterans Commission:
 - Homeless Veteran Program
 - Military & Veteran Peer Network:
 - Over 60 Peer Service Coordinators stationed across Texas.

Current Gaps in Policy and Practice

- Limitations in federal and state policies:
 - Insufficient funding.
- Areas needing more research:
 - Long-term outcomes of housing programs.
- Insights from university-led studies.
- The cancelation of programs from each administration.

Preventive Measures

- Early intervention strategies:
 - Financial literacy and career training during military service.
- Role of military transition programs:
 - TGPS programs (Transition Assistance).
- Skill Bridge Program:
 - Helping transitioning service members acquire jobs before leaving the service

Recommendations for the Future

- Strengthening public-private partnerships.
- Enhancing women's veteran programs.
- Enhancing accessibility to VA services.

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POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- Among all homeless population groups only Veterans have seen a decline in homelessness.
 - “Between 2023 and 2024, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness declined by eight percent, or 2,692 fewer veterans.”
 - “Veterans experiencing homelessness has declined by 55 percent since data collection about veteran homelessness began in 2009”
(2024 AHAR)

POSITIVE OUTCOMES CONTINUED

◦ Unemployment Rate

- In 2023 women veterans' unemployment rate was: 3.2%
 - Compared to non-women veterans was 3.4% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024a).
- Median Weekly Earnings (2023): \$1,025 for women veterans, compared to \$912 for women non-veterans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024c).
- Occupational Distribution (2023) (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024b):
 - Management, professional, and related occupations: 46.9%
 - Service occupations: 19.2%
 - Sales and office occupation: 22.5%
 - Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupation: 2.0%
 - Production, transportation, and material moving occupations: 9.4%

RURAL VETERANS

- 4.4 Million veterans reside in rural communities.
- These reason could be:
 - “closer proximity to family, friends, and community; open space for recreation; more privacy; lower cost of living; and less crowded towns and schools”
 - While others just love rural living

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4. VA Open Data. (2024). Women Veterans in the United States [Data report]. Retrieved from <https://www.data.va.gov/stories/s/Women-Veterans-in-the-US/wci3-yrsv/>