



New York State Comptroller
THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI

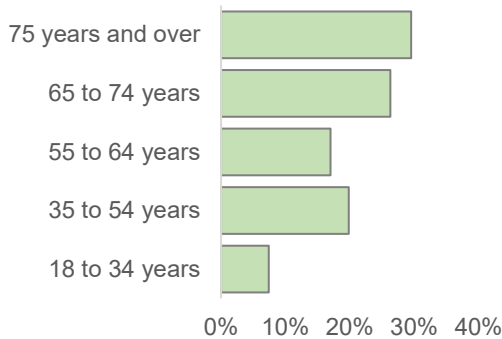
Economic and Policy Insights

Reductions in Homelessness Among New York's Veterans

November 2023

Overview of Veterans in New York State

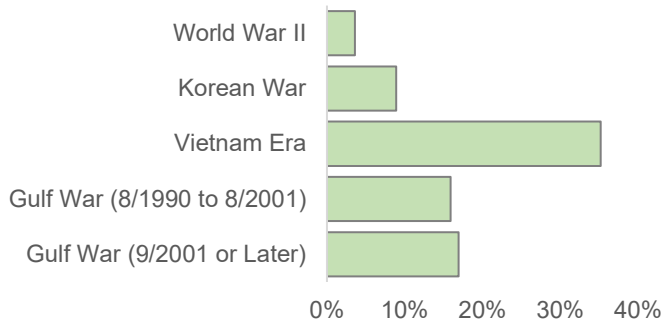
Age



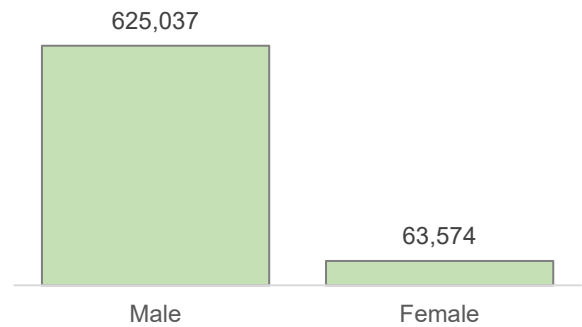
New York Veterans, 2021

	Veterans	Non-Veterans
Civ. Population 18+	665,257	15,206,795
Median Income	\$45,566	\$37,720
Unemployment	5.0%	6.2%
Poverty	7.5%	12.3%
With Disability	28.4%	13.0%

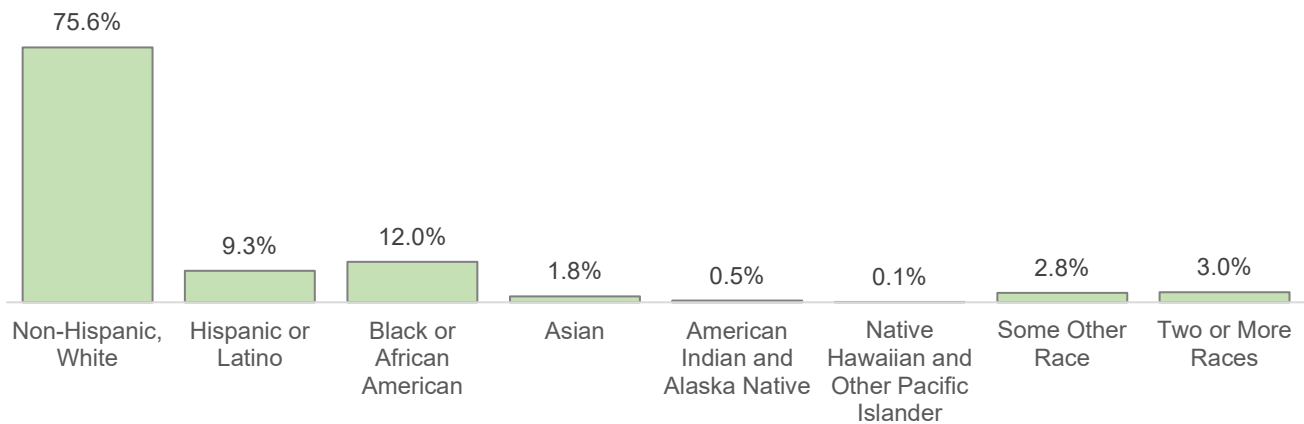
Period of Service



Gender



Race / Ethnicity



Sources: U.S. Census, ACS 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates; OSC Calculations

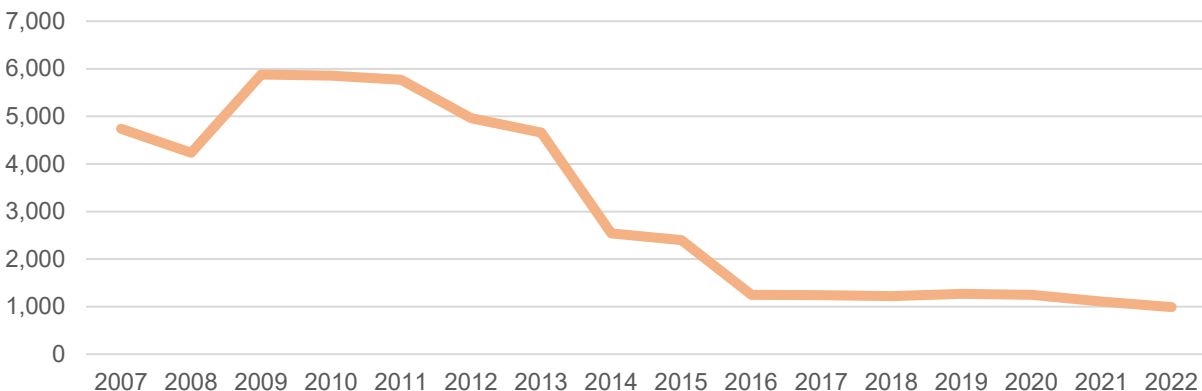
Veteran Homelessness: National and State Progress

A 2010 report issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) noted veterans were overrepresented among the homeless population, accounting for 16 percent of homeless adults in the nation, but only 9.5 percent of the total adult population over the age of 18.⁴ According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), veterans experience homelessness for some of the same reasons as others, such as a lack of affordable housing, low wages and long-term unemployment.⁵ However, studies show veterans experience high rates of injury and unique trauma due to their military service that can result in health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), or substance use disorders that increase their risk of homelessness.⁶

Federal, State and local governments have recognized these high-risk factors and the severity of homelessness for veterans, and efforts have yielded results in reducing veteran homelessness since numbers peaked in 2009. Between 2010 and 2022, the number of homeless veterans nationwide dropped by 55 percent (from 74,087 to 33,129) and veterans represented just 6 percent of the national homeless population in 2022.⁷

In New York, the progress has been even more substantial: Between 2010 and 2022, the number of homeless veterans in the State fell by 83 percent (from 5,857 to 990)—the largest percentage decline in the nation.⁸ The share of homeless adults that are veterans was reduced from 9 percent in 2010 to just 1 percent in 2022.⁹ The greatest reduction in the State occurred between 2011 and 2016 when the number declined by 78 percent (from 5,765 to 1,248), largely driven by federal investments in housing subsidies.

Figure 2
New York's Homeless Veteran Population, 2007-2022



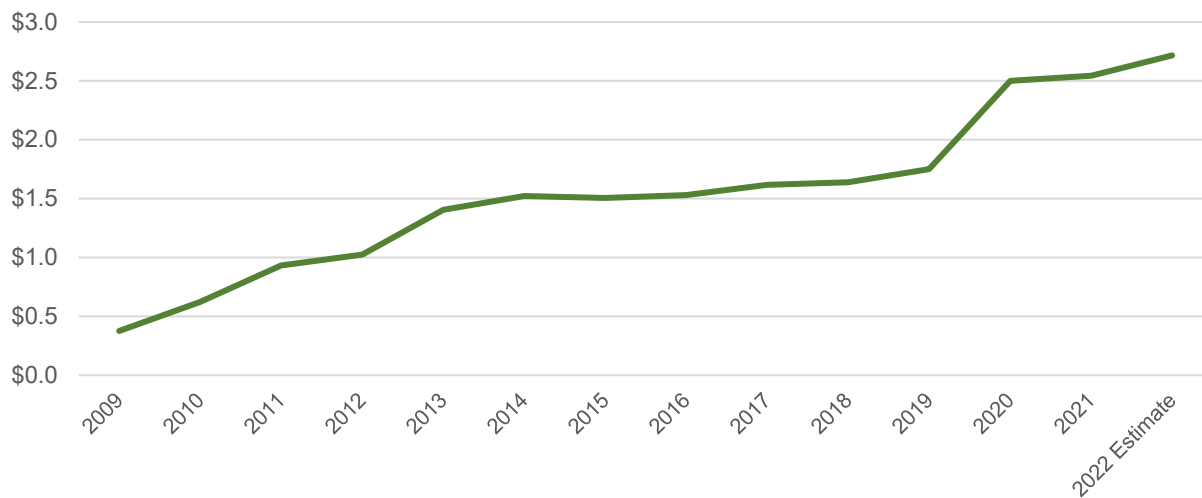
Source: HUD Point-In-Time Estimates, 2007-2022

Black or African American veterans persistently represent a disproportionate share of those experiencing homelessness. In 2022, Black or African Americans accounted for 69 percent of overall homelessness in the State (yet make up just 15 percent of the total civilian population aged 18 or older). This disparity holds true in the veteran population as well. In 2022, Black or African Americans accounted for 53 percent of homeless veterans in the State, but only 11.1 percent of the overall veteran population.¹⁰

Robust Federal Support Facilitates Reductions

The State's achievements in reducing veteran homelessness have been driven by policy and funding at the federal level beginning in 2010 with release of the first Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness by USICH, as well as other later initiatives like the Veterans Administration's (VA) 25 Cities Initiative and the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness.¹¹ Federal funding for programs addressing veterans' homelessness through the VA in 2009 totaled \$376 million, and has grown steadily since then; by 2022, federal funding had increased 635 percent to \$2.8 billion.

Figure 3
Federal Funding Obligations for VA Homeless Veterans Programs, 2009-2022
(dollars in billions)



Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Annual Budget Submissions 2010-2023

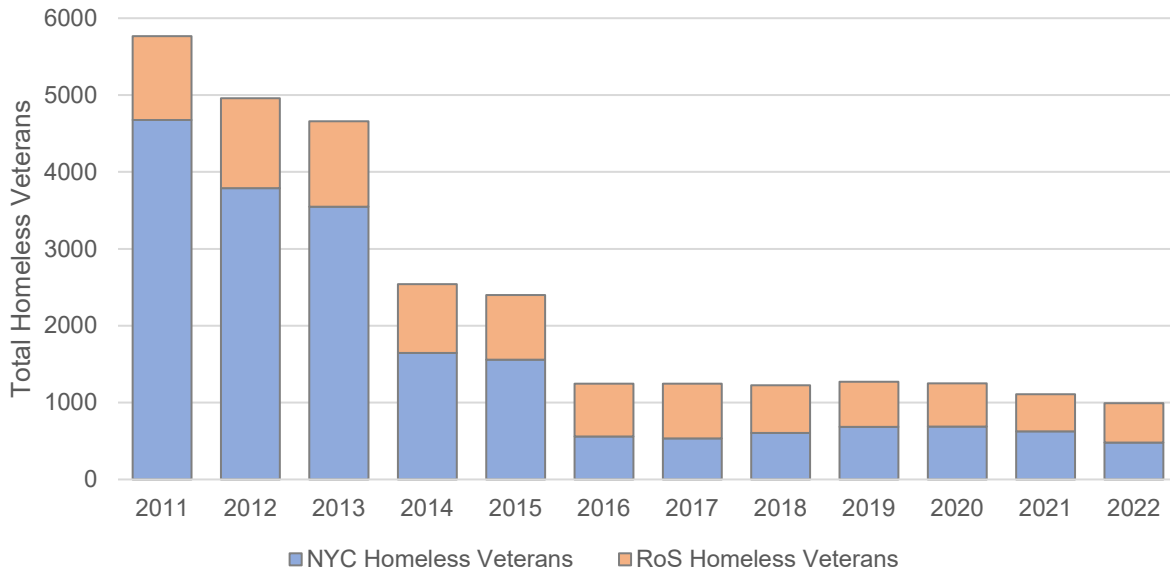
Robust federal funding has supported successful implementation of programs to help veterans, primarily through rental assistance funds from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program. These programs provide HUD rental assistance vouchers and supportive case management services from the VA to help veterans find and sustain housing in their community.¹² They also provide funding to community-based organizations in New York that help low-income veterans either experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of losing their home.¹³

The 2022 federal funding included \$945 million for HUD-VASH, \$699 million for SSVF and \$396 million for GPD.¹⁴ In addition, the Biden-Harris Administration recently announced new actions to prevent and reduce homelessness among veterans including \$3.1 billion in grant funding through HUD to support State and local efforts to rehouse homeless veterans and their families.¹⁵

Most of the progress made statewide is the result of New York City's use of federal funding. From 2011 to 2022, the total number of homeless veterans in New York City was reduced by 90 percent, from 4,677 to 482 individuals.¹⁶ In terms of the overall impact, in 2011 New York City

accounted for 81 percent of all homeless veterans in the State. By 2022, New York City’s share of homeless veterans was reduced to 49 percent.¹⁷ New York City’s progress reducing veteran homelessness over this period accounts for 96 percent of the total statewide reduction between 2011 and 2022.

Figure 4
Reduction in Veteran Homelessness, New York City and Rest of State (RoS), 2011-2022



Source: HUD Point-In-Time Estimates, by State and by CoC, 2011-2022

As the result of programs implemented by the Mayor’s Office of Veterans’ Affairs (MOVA) utilizing federal funding, in 2015 the federal government declared that New York City had effectively ended chronic homelessness among veterans, defined as homelessness lasting longer than a year, or repeated intermittent homelessness over a longer period.¹⁸ Since that time, New York City has maintained success, in part, with creation of the City’s Department of Veterans’ Services (NYCDVS) in 2016 to replace the MOVA.¹⁹ NYCDVS was the first standalone City agency in the country dedicated to serving veterans.²⁰ In partnership with the New York City Housing Authority, NYCDVS continues the work of MOVA by combining effective use of rental assistance vouchers under the HUD-VASH program with NYCDVS peer-to-peer outreach and support. NYCDVS uses a three-step peer support approach to housing veterans:

- Veteran Peer Coordinator Program, comprised of a team of veteran peer coordinators that provide assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans in identifying available affordable housing, transportation services to apartment viewings, and help with attaining rental subsidies;
- House-A-Veteran Program, where NYCDVS focuses on increasing housing supply by finding brokers and landlords who want to rent to veterans; and
- Aftercare Assistance, providing regular check-ins, referrals to additional services and support to make sure that veterans stay housed.²¹

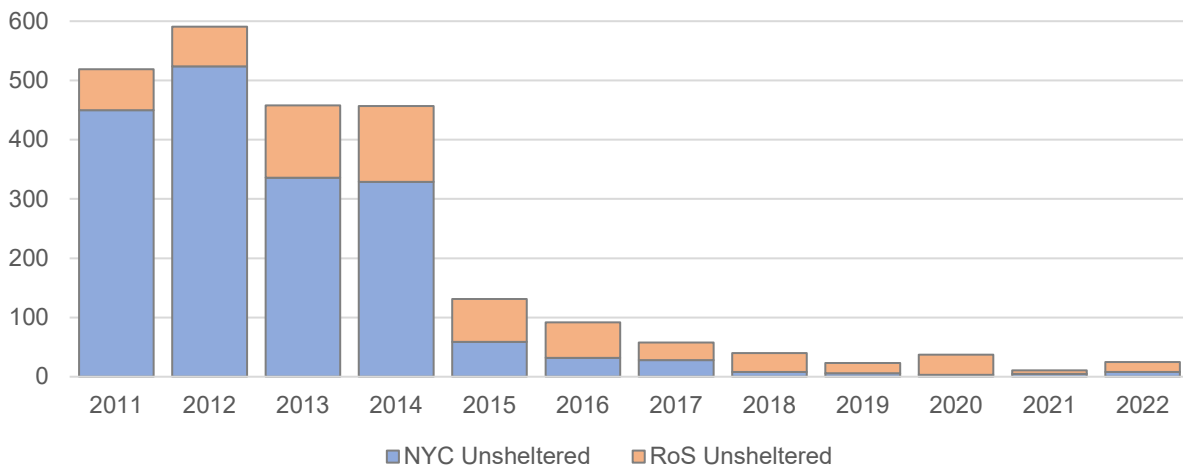
This significant reduction in veterans' homelessness has been achieved despite an increase in the overall number of homeless individuals in New York City, which rose from 51,123 to 61,840 between 2011 and 2022.²² This disparity in progress results from a lack of the same robust federal funding for homeless veterans being available to the non-veteran homeless population.

Trends in Unsheltered Homelessness

Although most veterans experiencing homelessness have found respite in emergency or transitional housing, a small percentage go unsheltered.²³ While the share of unsheltered veterans remained at 41 percent nationally in both 2010 and 2022, in New York, the share declined from 13.8 percent in 2010 to 2.5 percent in 2022.

New York City shows a similar trend in decreasing unsheltered veteran homelessness, reducing its number of unsheltered homeless veterans by 98 percent between 2011 and 2022. In 2022, New York State had the third-lowest share of veterans experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the nation, mostly due to this progress in New York City. New York City's progress accounts for almost 90 percent of the overall State progress with this subgroup.²⁴

Figure 5
Reduction in Unsheltered Homeless Veterans, New York City and Rest of State (RoS), 2011-2022



Source: HUD Point-In-Time Estimates, by State and by CoC, 2011-2022

Conclusion

Great strides have been made in reducing veteran homelessness in New York, mostly attributable to New York City's model of effective peer-to-peer outreach and support services, combined with its use of federal housing subsidies. All of New York State has access to HUD-VASH funding, and other localities should consider approaches used by New York City.

Veterans answered the call to serve in our nation's military and deserve our gratitude and support. Continued attention to housing and other issues affecting veterans is a necessary expression of our appreciation and a recognition of our obligation to support those who chose to serve this nation.

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Community Planning and Development, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans, *Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, at <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/2010AHARVeteransReport.pdf> (last accessed on October 30, 2023); Coalition for the Homeless, *War and Homelessness: How American Wars Create Homelessness Among United States Armed Forces Veterans*, March 27, 2003, at https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Briefing-War_and_Homelessness-03-2003.pdf.
- ² U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates, Veterans Select Demographic Data.
- ³ See ACS 2017-21 Five-Year Estimates (Periods of Service are broken down by: WWII era, Korean War era, Vietnam era, Gulf War Pre-9/11, and Gulf War Post-9/11); The Washington Post, “The Military Draft Ended 50 Years Ago, Dividing a Generation,” January 27, 2023, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2023/01/27/draft-end-conscription-1973/>; U.S. Selective Service System, *History and Records*, at <https://www.sss.gov/history-and-records/> (last accessed on October 30, 2023).
- ⁴ HUD, *Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress*, at <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/2010AHARVeteransReport.pdf>.
- ⁵ USICH, *Report to Congress on Homeless Veterans*, December 2012, at https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH-Report_to_Congress_on_Homeless_Veterans.pdf.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, *Evidence Matters*, Summer 2012, at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer12/highlight1.html>; RAND Corporation, 2008, *Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and Cognitive Care Wounds of America’s Returning War Veterans*,” at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2008/RAND_RB9336.pdf (finding that approximately 18.5 percent of U.S. servicemembers who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq currently have post-traumatic stress disorder or depression; and 19.5 percent report experiencing a traumatic brain injury during deployment); see also NYN Media, “Non-Profit Study: NY’s Homeless Veterans Need Continued Support,” August 3, 2023, at <https://www.nynmedia.com/news/2023/08/nonprofit-study-nys-homeless-veterans-need-continued-support/389110/>.
- ⁷ HUD, Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless Estimates, 2007-2022, at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2022-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>. HUD’s PIT estimates offer a snapshot of homelessness on a single night, usually conducted during January.
- ⁸ HUD, PIT Estimates, 2007-2022.
- ⁹ In 2010, veterans represented 7 percent of the overall State population; in 2021, this share was 4.2 percent (see U.S. Census ACS 2017-2021 Five-Year Estimates).
- ¹⁰ HUD, PIT Estimates, 2007-2022.
- ¹¹ See Office of the State Comptroller, *Homeless Veterans in New York State*, November 2017, at <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/special-topics/pdf/veterans-2017.pdf>; see also HUD, “USICH Opening Doors – 2010 Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,” June 2015, at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1237/usich-opening-doors-federal-strategic-plan-end-homelessness/>; VA & USICH, *The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: Home, Together*, National Permanent Housing Conference, November 2019, at <https://www.va.gov/vetaffairs/2019/11/2019-11-2020-0-veteranhomelessnessnys-report-final.pdf>; NYS Division of Veterans’ Services, *Report on Veteran Homelessness in New York State*, June 30, 2020, at https://veterans.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/11/2020-0_veteranhomelessnessnys_report_final.pdf.
- ¹² VA, *Homeless Programs*, at https://www.va.gov/homeless/for_homeless_veterans.asp (last accessed on October 31, 2023).
- ¹³ See id.; National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Case Study: Housing First Cut Veteran Homelessness by 50%*, at <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Housing-First-Veteran.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Annual Budget Submissions 2010-2023, Volume 2, Medical Programs and Information Technology at <https://department.va.gov/administrations-and-offices/management/budget/>. In September 2023, HUD and VA awarded \$16.1 million in new HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers to 71 public housing agencies across the country (see USICH, Press Release, September 22, 2023, at <https://www.usich.gov/news/hud-and-va-award-new-vouchers-for-veterans-experiencing-homelessness>).

- ¹⁵ White House, Press Release, June 29, 2023, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/29/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-takes-action-to-address-veteran-homelessness/>.
- ¹⁶ HUD Exchange, *CoC Homeless Populations and Subpopulations Reports*, at https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/?filter_Year=2011&filter_Scope=CoC&filter_State=NY&filter_CoC=NY-600&program=CoC&group=PopSub; https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2011_NY_2011.pdf (2011) and https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2022_NY_2022.pdf (2022); see also HUD PIT Veteran Counts by CoC, 2011-2022, at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2022-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>. Continuums of Care (CoC) are local planning bodies responsible for coordinating homeless assistance programs in a geographic area (which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or an entire state; see HUD, Office of Community Planning and Development, *2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Definition of Terms*, at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>).
- ¹⁷ HUD PIT Estimates, by State and by CoC, 2011-2022.
- ¹⁸ See Letter from USICH to Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor of NYC, December 29, 2015, at https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2015/NYC_Confirmation_Chronic_Milestone.pdf; National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Chronic Homelessness*, at <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/who-experiences-homelessness/chronically-homeless/#:~:text=Chronic%20homelessness%20is%20used%20to,use%20disorder%2C%20or%20physical%20disability>.
- ¹⁹ Int. 3014-2014, New York City Council Local Law to amend the city charter and administrative code to establish the Department of Veterans Services, and repeal sections of the charter and the administrative code relating to the Office of Veterans' Affairs, enacted December 10, 2015 at <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1739320&GUID=0D5918DB-F678-48A3-8EE5-D6165B32BF62>
- ²⁰ Hendon, James W, *Message from the Commissioner*, New York City Department of Veterans' Services, accessed November 3, 2023 at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/veterans/about/commissioners-statements.page>
- ²¹ NYCDVS, *Ending Chronic Veteran Homelessness*, at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/veterans/initiatives/ending-chronic-veteran-homelessness.page>.
- ²² HUD, PIT Estimates, 2007-2022.
- ²³ Unsheltered Homelessness is defined by the VA as when a person has a primary nighttime location that is typically not a place where individuals sleep, such as streets, vehicles, or parks (see 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress; VA, *The State of Unsheltered Veteran Homelessness*, at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/The-State-of-Unsheltered-Veteran-Homelessness.pdf>).
- ²⁴ In 2022, HUD reports that there were only 8 unsheltered homeless veterans in New York City and 17 in the rest of the State. The rest of the State reduced its unsheltered veteran population by 75 percent between 2011 to 2022 and accounts for roughly 10 percent of the statewide reductions.

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