

Housing and Public Health

You may be familiar with the phrase “housing is healthcare”. This isn’t new language. According to a June 7, 2018 *Health Affairs* health policy brief, [Housing and Health: An Overview of the Literature](#), “There is strong evidence characterizing housing’s relationship to health. Housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all affect health outcomes, as do physical and social characteristics of neighborhoods.”

The *Health Affairs* brief goes on to highlight **four pathways** connecting housing and health shown in the figure here. The literature review and analysis also highlights opportunities for additional research and policy implications in each of these areas. The brief can be found here:

<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20180313.396577/>

Considering these four pathways connecting housing and health, we can reflect on our local situation. According to our **2023 Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)**:

Stability and Neighborhood

- 2% of adults lived in a car or shelter in the past year
- 8.6% reported living with a friend or relative in the past 2 years due to a housing emergency

Quality and Safety

- 45.6% had some level of concern regarding household hazards and safety (e.g. radon, mold, pests, lead, and carbon monoxide)
- 9.5% report living in unhealthy or unsafe housing conditions, compared to 12.2% of US residents

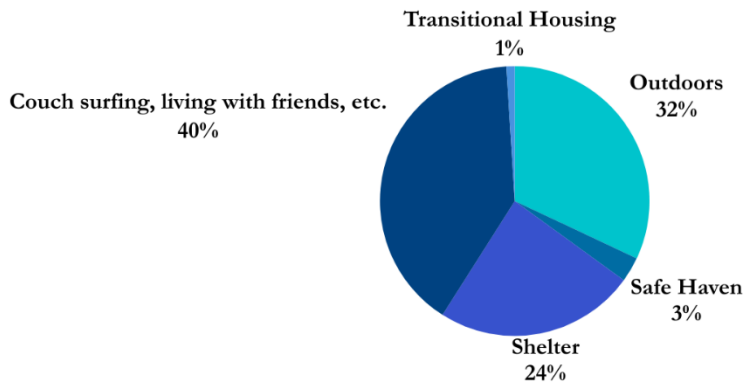
Affordability

- 26.1% worried or stressed about paying their rent or mortgage at least once in the past year



The Continuum of Care's **2022 Yellowstone County Trends in Homelessness (YCTH)** offers information on circumstances, some of the causes, as well as some of the impacts homelessness has on overall health. In **2021, 1,756 individuals were entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).**

Living Situations



Characteristics of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in Yellowstone County

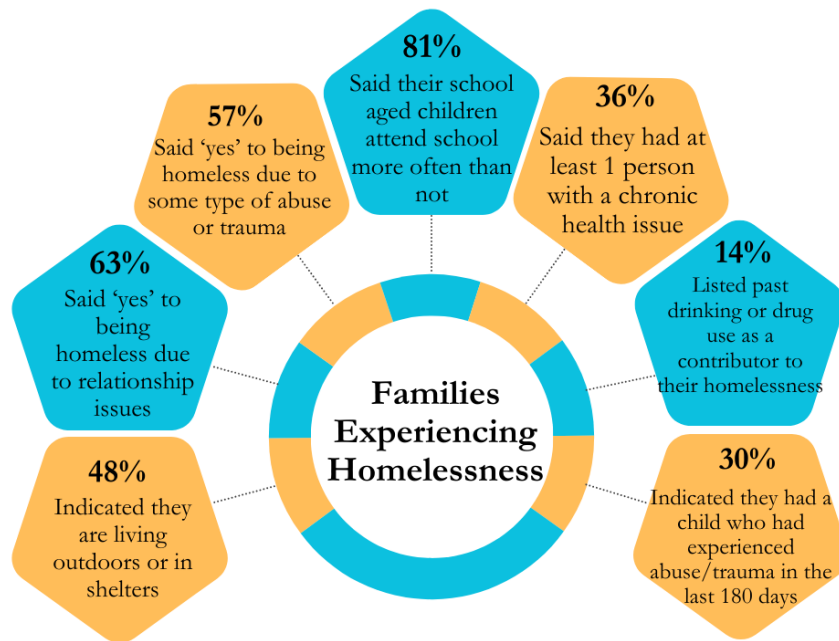
1 in 3 under 25 years old.

53% of people were White or Caucasian

56% identified as female.

Recurrence of homelessness in the past three years:

39% once 47% 2-9 times 12% 10 or more



If you're interested in more information on transitional aged youth (18-24) experiencing homelessness, contact RiverStone Health Epidemiologist Taylor Cook at 406-247-2132.

Current local public health efforts to promote healthy housing:

- Community data collection and dissemination
- Participant and convener of community conversations and groups, including:
 - Continuum of Care (CoC) Coalition
 - Rapid Re-housing Committee (Homeless Management Information System)
 - City of Billings Nuisance Property Task Force
- Healthcare for the Homeless offered via the RiverStone Health Community Health Center
- Emerging lead poisoning prevention initiative, with a focus on household exposures
- Supporting implementation and development of permanent housing
- Co-locating supportive services with housing for chronically unhoused individuals
 - Supportive services include mental health, primary care, resource connectors, and peer mentorship

According to aforementioned health policy brief, “The evidence on the relationship between housing and health is complex but compelling. The health care sector, businesses, community-based organizations, foundations, and government each have unique roles to play in improving housing conditions in the United States.”

How can we address our local housing challenges and opportunities, both within our sector and collectively?

Contact our Public Health Leadership Team for more information:

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Sources:

Figure Source (noted in article): Adapted by the author from [Gibson et al. 2011](#), [Sandel et al. 2018](#), [Maqbool et al. 2015](#), and [Braveman et al. 2011](#).

Source/Methodology: The CHNA is conducted every three years and uses primary and secondary data. A phone survey is conducted collecting a statistically significant number of Yellowstone County resident responses. Published here: <https://www.healthybydesignyellowstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-PRC-CHNA-Report-Yellowstone-County-MT.pdf>

Source/Methodology: The 2022 YCTH is a report offering data from the 1,756 individuals who were entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in 2021.