Institute for Community Alliances

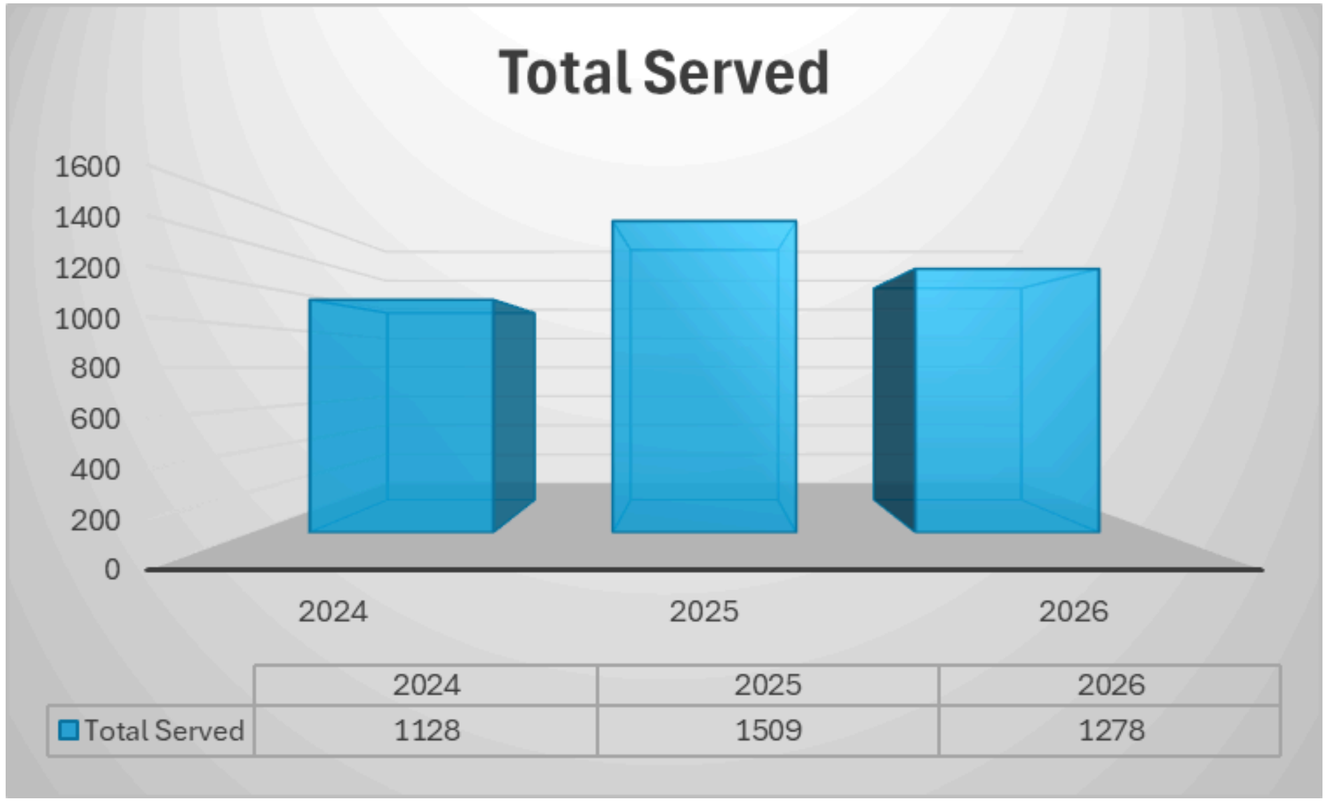
MKE Warming Shelter & PIT Data

Total Clients Served

Milwaukee's warming shelters have experienced shifting demand over the past three winter seasons. During the 2023-2024 season, shelters served just over 1,000 individuals. Demand rose sharply in 2024-2025, reaching approximately 1,509 people seeking refuge, highlighting the increasing need for safe shelter during the city's harsh winter months.

In 2025-2026, usage declined by more than 200 individuals, totaling 1,278. While this marks a decrease from the previous year, demand remains significantly higher than earlier levels, underscoring the continued importance of warming shelter services in Milwaukee.

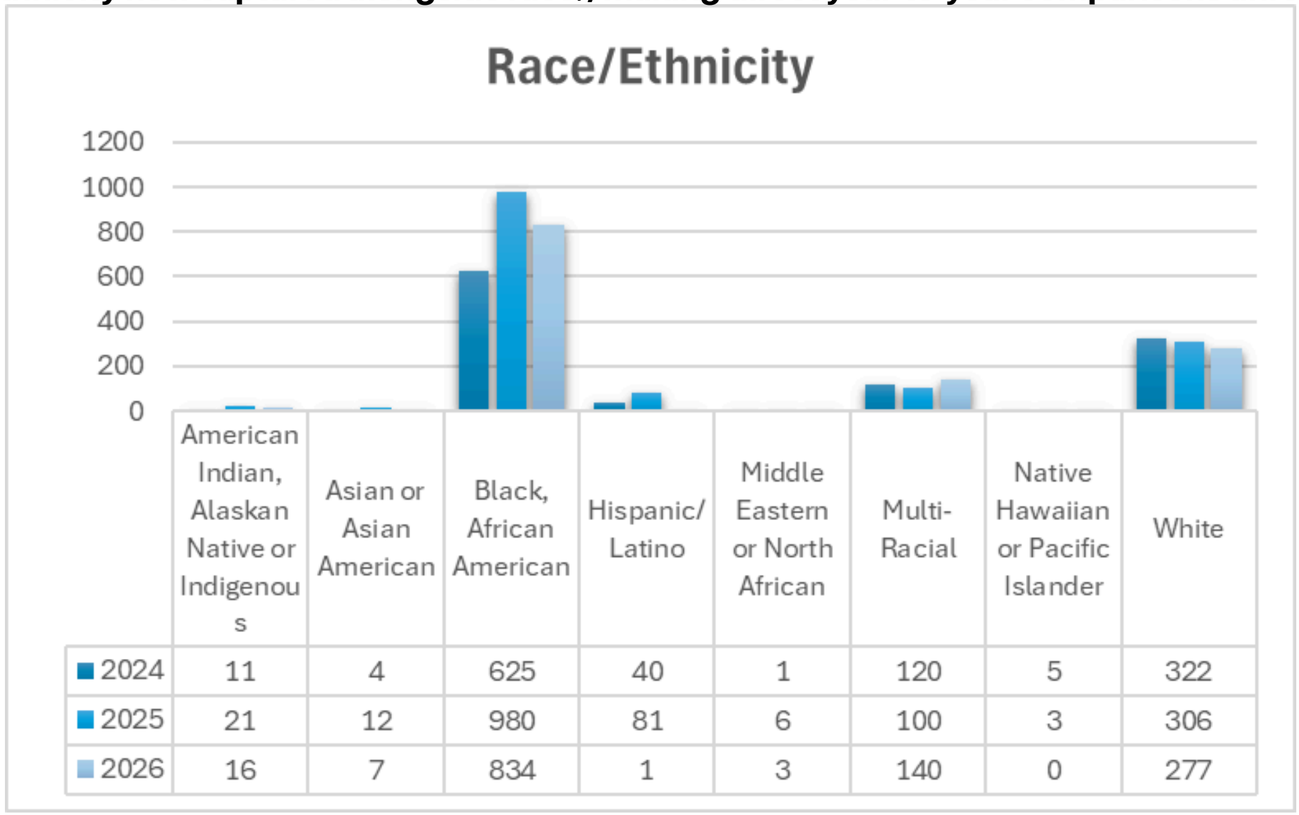
Seasonal shelters included in this count are Unity Lutheran Church, Guest House of Milwaukee, Tippecanoe, Repairers of the Breach, and St. Ben's.



Racial Breakdown

Race & Ethnicity Trends in Milwaukee Warming Shelters (2024-2026)

Black or African American individuals remain the largest group, increasing from 625 (2024) to 980 (2025), then decreasing to 834 (2026), still above 2024 levels.
White individuals show a steady decline from 322 (2024) to 277 (2026).
Multi-Racial individuals increased overall (120 → 100 → 140), rebounding in 2026.
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous individuals rose in 2025 (21) and remained higher than 2024 (16 in 2026).
Asian or Asian American individuals increased in 2025 (12) before declining to 7 in 2026.
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander counts declined to zero by 2026.
Hispanic/Latino counts sharply drop in 2026, reflecting continued impacts of HUD reporting changes (ethnicity now captured alongside race), making direct year-to-year comparisons unreliable.

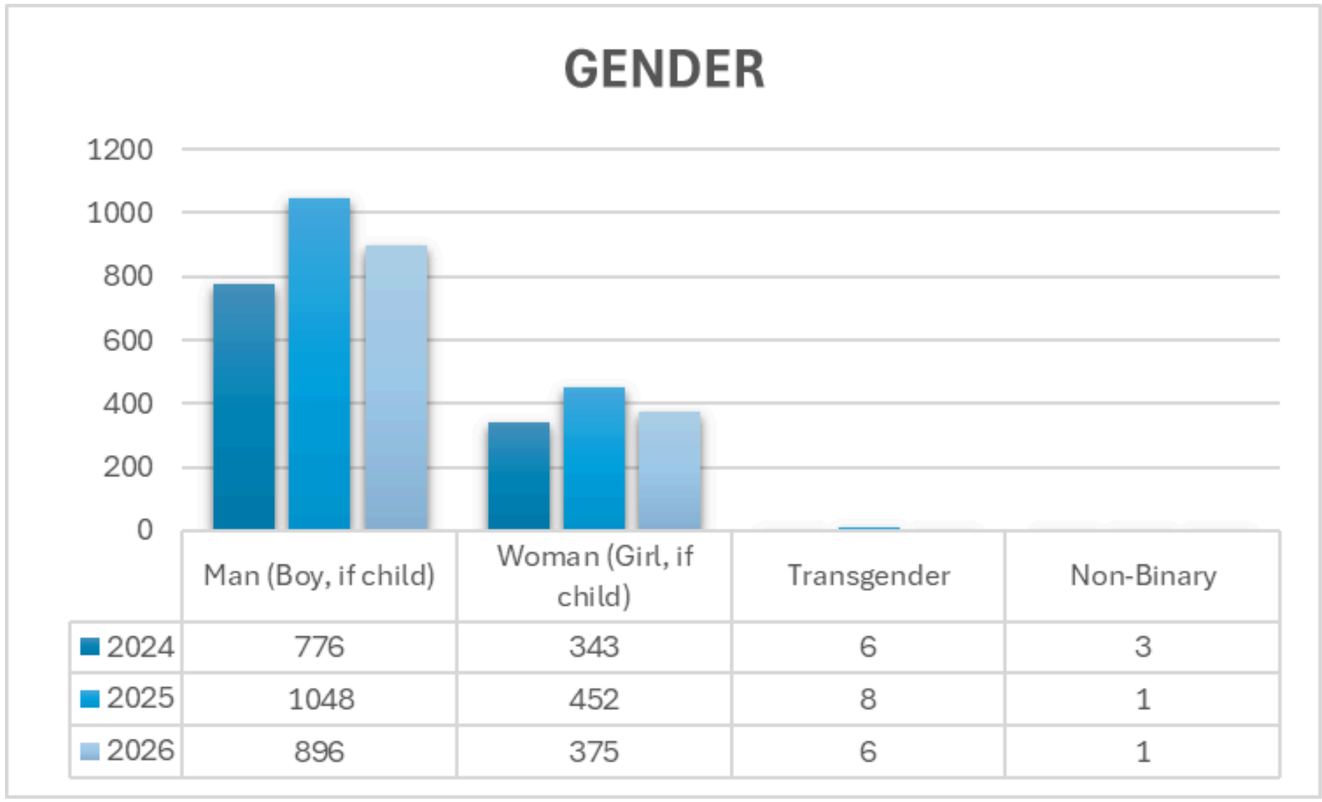


	American Indian, Alaskan Native or Indigenous	Asian or Asian American	Black, African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Middle Eastern or North African	Multi-Racial	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White
2024	11	4	625	40	1	120	5	322
2025	21	12	980	81	6	100	3	306
2026	16	7	834	1	3	140	0	277

Gender

Gender Breakdown - Milwaukee Warming Shelters (2024-2026)

Men/Boys remain the majority served: 776 (2024) → 1,048 (2025) → 896 (2026).
Women/Girls are the second-largest group: 343 (2024) → 452 (2025) → 375 (2026).
Transgender individuals remain a small but consistent population: 6 → 8 → 6.
Non-binary individuals remain very low: 3 → 1 → 1.
While overall service numbers fluctuate year to year, men continue to represent the largest share of individuals served, followed by women. Smaller gender-diverse populations remain consistently represented.
Despite federal shifts making gender reporting optional, Milwaukee continues to collect this data as a local priority to ensure more complete and inclusive service tracking.

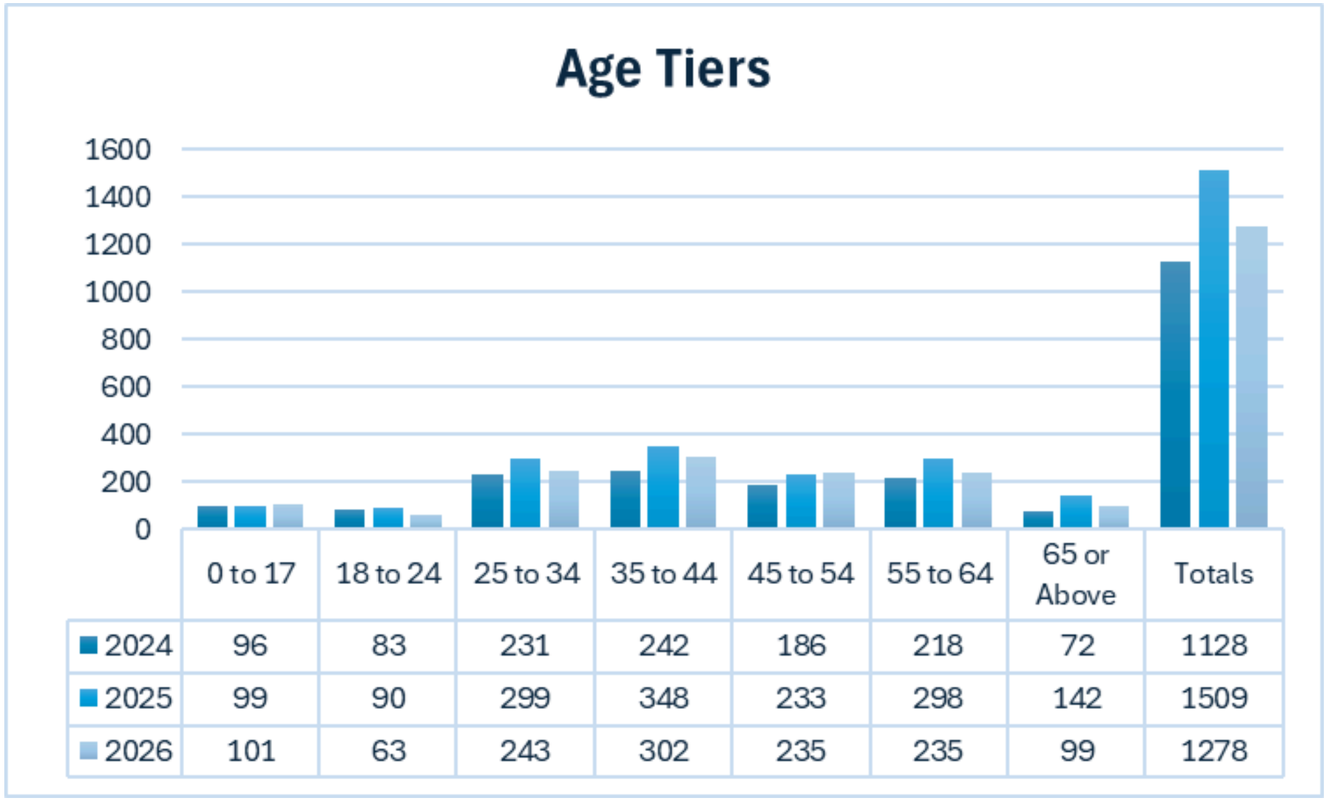


	Man (Boy, if child)	Woman (Girl, if child)	Transgender	Non-Binary
2024	776	343	6	3
2025	1048	452	8	1
2026	896	375	6	1

Age

Age Tiers 2024 to 2026

Warming shelter utilization across age groups remained relatively stable overall, increasing from 1,128 individuals in 2024 to 1,509 in 2025 before decreasing to 1,278 in 2026. Adults between ages 25-44 consistently represented the largest share of individuals accessing warming shelters, with the 35-44 age group reaching the highest utilization in both 2025 and 2026. Older adults ages 45-64 also continued to represent a substantial portion of shelter use across all three years. Youth and young adults showed mixed trends, with the 18-24 population declining in 2026 after previous growth, while individuals ages 0-17 remained relatively consistent. Overall, the data indicates that warming shelter demand continues to be concentrated among working-age adults while maintaining a need for services across all age groups, including families and older adults.

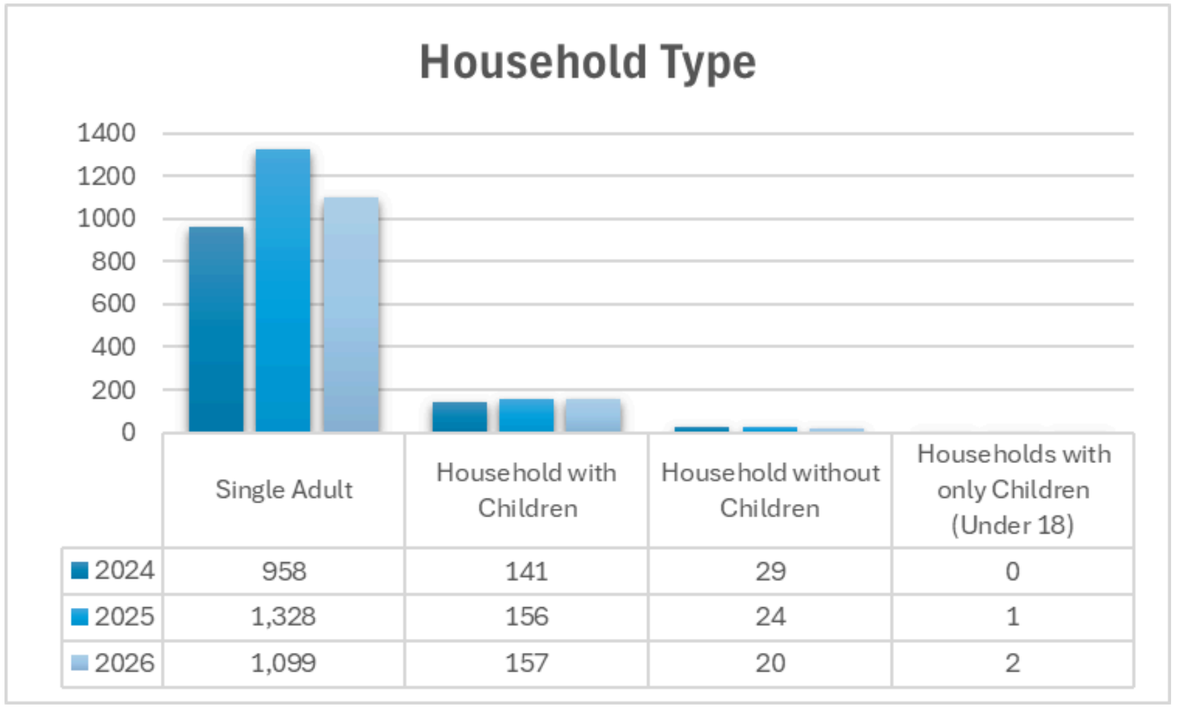


	0 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 or Above	Totals
2024	96	83	231	242	186	218	72	1128
2025	99	90	299	348	233	298	142	1509
2026	101	63	243	302	235	235	99	1278

Household Composition

Household Composition 2024 to 2026

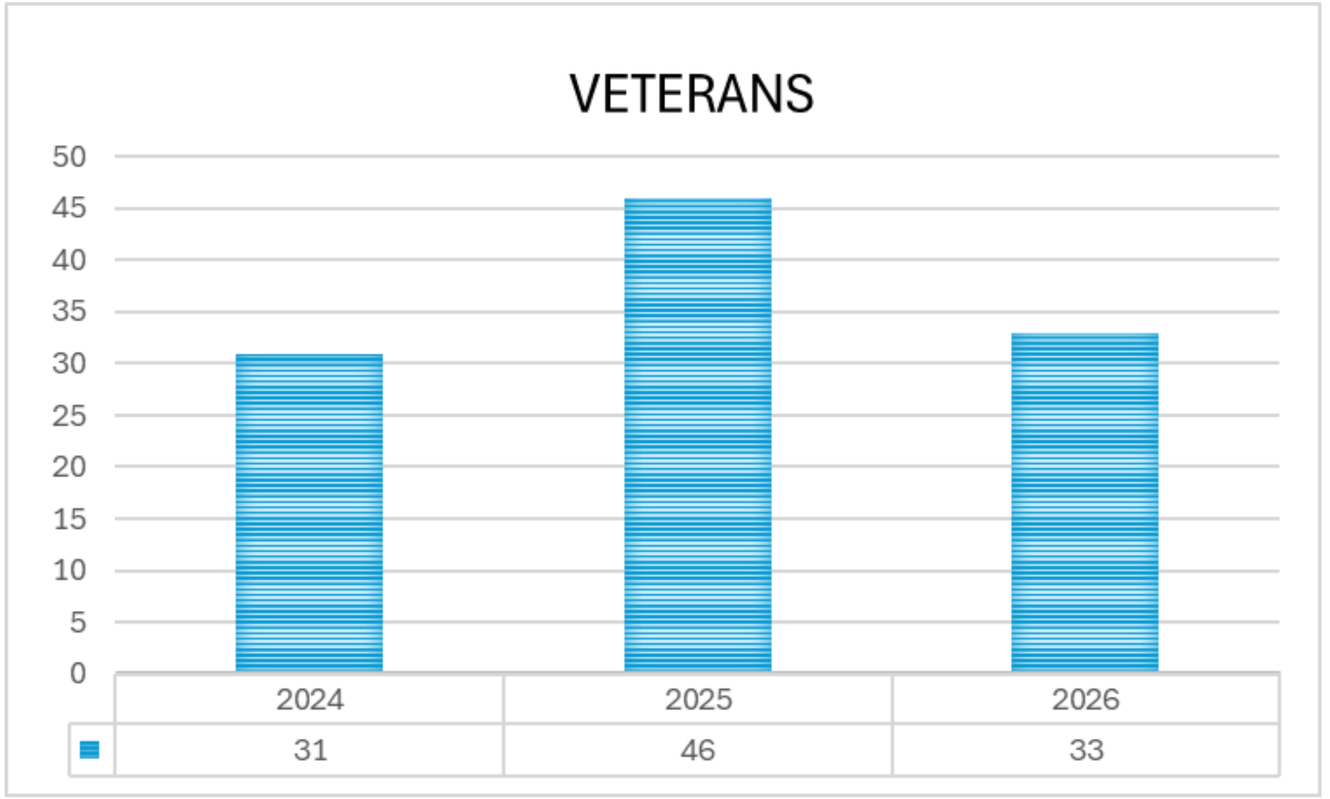
Single adults consistently represented the largest population accessing warming shelters, increasing from 958 individuals in 2024 to 1,328 in 2025 before decreasing to 1,099 in 2026. Single adults are defined as individuals over age 18 who do not have minor children or other adults included in their household composition. Households with children remained relatively stable across all three years, serving between 141-157 households annually. These households consist of at least one adult with one or more minor children. Households without children, which include two or more adults in a household without minors (including adult children age 18+), represented a smaller but consistent portion of utilization. Households with only children remained extremely limited, with 1-2 households identified in recent years; these typically represent youth under age 18, often 17-year-olds, who are permitted to access traditional shelter settings when youth-specific shelter options are unavailable. Overall, the data demonstrates that while warming shelters continue to primarily serve individual adults, they also maintain a critical role in supporting families and accommodating unique youth circumstances during severe weather events.



	Single Adult	Household with Children	Household without Children	Households with only Children (Under 18)
2024	958	141	29	0
2025	1,328	156	24	1
2026	1,099	157	20	2

Veteran Status

In 2025, Milwaukee's warming shelters served 46 veterans, up from 31 in 2024, marking a 48% increase. This local rise contrasts with national trends, where veteran homelessness has been on the decline. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the number of veterans experiencing homelessness nationwide decreased by nearly 8%, from 35,574 in 2023 to 32,882 in 2024, reaching the lowest levels on record. This national decline is attributed to targeted funding and interventions utilizing evidence-based practices. The increase in Milwaukee suggests that, despite overall national progress, certain regions may face unique challenges requiring localized strategies to effectively address veteran homelessness. ADD 2026 - 33



Final Points

Warming Season Overview & System Implications

The 2025–2026 Warming Season highlighted both the ongoing demand on Milwaukee's homeless response system and progress in strengthening coordinated services. A total of $725,270 in funding supported seasonal operations and helped sustain the Medical Respite program through its planned conclusion in August. Of that amount, $575,270 directly supported warming shelter operations, demonstrating the importance of flexible funding to meet both emergency and specialized service needs.

This season also showed meaningful improvements in system coordination. Enhanced Coordinated Entry processes resulted in 125 individuals transitioning directly from Warming Shelter into Emergency Shelter, creating stronger pathways beyond immediate crisis response. The Medical Respite program also continued serving individuals with significant medical needs who required additional stabilization and support.
Participants stayed in warming shelter for an average of 23 days, underscoring both the level of need and the ongoing challenge of moving individuals into permanent housing opportunities. The data also reflects a growing aging population, with 346 individuals age 55 and older utilizing services this season.

At the same time, Milwaukee saw approximately 350 fewer individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time compared to 2025. While this may indicate progress in prevention and diversion efforts, continued inflow into the system reinforces the need to strengthen strategies that reduce new entries and preserve system capacity.

Point in Time Data

Importance of Point in Time

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is crucial for understanding the scale of homelessness in a community. It provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a specific night, helping local, state, and federal agencies make informed decisions about resource allocation and program development. The data collected from the PIT count helps guide policymakers in prioritizing interventions for vulnerable populations, such as families, youth, and individuals with chronic conditions.

The PIT count also plays a key role in advocacy, raising awareness about homelessness and highlighting the urgent need for action. It provides concrete data that can be used by advocacy groups to push for more funding and support, challenging misconceptions about homelessness. Additionally, it serves as a tool for measuring progress, allowing communities to track changes in homelessness over time and assess the effectiveness of their efforts.

Federal funding for homelessness programs, such as the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grants, often relies on PIT count data to determine the level of assistance needed in specific areas. The count also helps identify gaps in services, ensuring that outreach and shelter programs are targeting the most underserved populations.

Overall, the PIT count is vital for shaping effective policies, securing funding, and providing services that meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness.

2026 Homeless Point in Time Count

Milwaukee County / January 2026

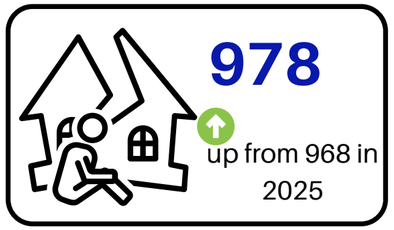
Each year, Milwaukee conducts a Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to capture a one-night snapshot of individuals and families experiencing homelessness, including those in shelters, transitional housing, and unsheltered locations. The most recent count took place on January 28, 2026. More than just a number, the PIT Count helps drive federal Continuum of Care (CoC) funding, shape local strategies, and identify emerging trends and gaps in services. While it represents only one night and cannot capture the full scope of homelessness, it provides a powerful lens into the community's needs and serves as a critical tool for turning data into action.

Between 2024 and 2026, Milwaukee's homelessness data tells a story of both consistency and emerging shifts in the population being served. While the profile of who is accessing services has remained relatively stable, the overall number of people experiencing homelessness has continued to rise, reaching 978 individuals in 2026. Single adults remain the driving force behind system demand, accounting for the largest share each year. The number increased from 617 individuals in 2024 to 747 in 2025 and remained elevated at 726 in 2026, reinforcing that single adults continue to represent the majority of people experiencing homelessness.

Family homelessness has shown a different pattern, remaining relatively steady over the three-year period. Families served increased modestly from 64 in 2024 to 73 in 2025 before settling at 69 in 2026, suggesting persistent but stable family needs.

Total Homeless Count

94% (918) sheltered



978

up from 968 in 2025

6% (60) unsheltered

Gender No longer a reportable field in Federal Reports.

Adults (25-54) ***481***

Youth (18-24) ***29***

Seniors (55+) ***270***

Youth homelessness continues to represent a smaller portion of the overall population, though 2026 saw a noticeable increase when youth and young adults are combined, signaling a need to monitor this trend closely. Veteran homelessness also rose, reaching 99 individuals in 2026 and highlighting ongoing challenges for a population often connected to targeted supports.

One of the more significant shifts is the increasing presence of older adults within the homeless population. In 2026, 270 individuals experiencing homelessness were age 55 or older, reflecting a growing trend that may require greater attention to age-related health, housing, and service needs. Overall, the data suggests that while homelessness in Milwaukee continues to affect many of the same populations year after year, the changing demographics point toward evolving system demands and opportunities for targeted intervention.

Racial Disparities

Approximately 76% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Milwaukee identify as BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), despite BIPoC populations representing only about 22% of Wisconsin's population and approximately 64% of Milwaukee's population according to U.S. Census estimates. This disparity highlights the disproportionate impact of homelessness on communities of color.