

William G. McGowan Charitable Fund—Learning and Impact
Landscape Analysis of Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area
May 2021

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Executive Summary

The high cost of living in the Denver Metro area has outpaced wage increases, driving affordable housing out of reach for many. The cost of living in the area is so high (128.7% of the national average) that the Colorado minimum wage of \$12/hour does not provide a living wage even for a family of two working adults and no children. Poverty in Denver is concentrated in areas with higher proportions of Latinos/Hispanics and Black populations. Native Americans and Black residents are disproportionately represented among homeless individuals and unaccompanied youth. Significantly, 40% of homeless youth in Colorado have been in the foster care system, pointing to lack of safety nets. Although the area has seen a net increase in population, the trend will likely not be sustained without an increase in affordable housing.

1. Overview of Denver Metropolitan Area

1.1 General demographics

The total resident population in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) changed from 2,554,588 as of July 1, 2010, to an estimated 2,991,231 as of July 1, 2020, an increase of 436,634 (approx. 17.1%). As of 2019, this metropolitan area was ranked as the 19th-largest metropolitan area in the country. Of the 1,152,457 households in Metro Denver as of 2019, 61.6% were married couples, 12.3% had single female heads, and 19.9% were non-family households. The mean number of persons per household was 2.5, about the same as in the entire state of Colorado and slightly less than the mean number of persons per household for the United States.

The median age as of 2019 was 36.7 years old, slightly younger than the national average of 37.7. Two thirds (63.5%) of residents were non-Hispanic white, 5.5% were Black, 0.5% were Native American, 4.2% were Asian, 0.1% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.2% were of some other race alone. People of two or more races made up 2.7% of the population, while Latinos/ Hispanics made up 23.3%.

Males are overrepresented in the 15-34 age group, compared to females (51% vs. 49%). This is characteristic of areas with high mobility and more seasonal jobs. However, this disproportion presents important challenges in terms of employment, services and some community risk factors (e.g., rates of violence are higher in areas with higher proportion of unemployed young adult males).

From 2013 to 2017, Metro Denver experienced a net migration of 35,000, a decrease compared to the period of 2009 to 2013 where it experienced a net migration of 39,000. Of the major metro areas, Metro Denver had the largest net migration gain from Chicago, followed by New York, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Dallas. The Metro Denver area's largest net losses were primarily to other metropolitan areas within the Western United States. Four of the top 10 metropolitan areas which Denver residents migrated to are also in Colorado.

As of the 2010 census, Mexican Americans made up 24.9% of the population of Denver city, with Latinos/ Hispanics in general making up 31.8%. The Latino/ Hispanic population is concentrated primarily in Northeast Denver as well as the Valverde, Athmar Park, Ruby Hill, and Sun Valley neighborhoods in West Denver, Globeville in North Denver, and East Colfax in East Denver. About 20.2% of inhabitants in the metro area as of 2019 spoke a language other than English at home, while 11.9% of the population was foreign born, of which 47% were born in Latin America. Denver city is also home to one of the largest populations of Mongolian Americans in the country, with the community numbering approximately 2,000 strong. The single largest Asian American community in the city as of 2010 were Vietnamese, with approximately 0.8% of residents claiming Vietnamese ancestry.

The total housing stock available in 2019 was 1,216,335 units, of which 94.8% were occupied, two thirds (64.3%) by their owners. The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2019 was \$437,800. Average per capita income in Metro Denver was \$44,806, while median household income was \$85,641. Over a fourth (26.9%) of households earned less than \$50,000, while 12.4% earned more than \$200,000. Eight percent of Metro Denver residents live below the poverty line; among children, this figure increased to 9.9%, while among seniors it dropped to 6.4%. The city of Denver had a higher poverty rate, with 11.7% of residents living below the federal poverty line; 14.9% among children and 9.8% among seniors. Slightly less than a third of households in the city (32.4%) earned less than \$50,000, while 11.7% earned

more than \$200,000. Per capita personal income in Metro Denver rose from \$44,119 in 2010 to \$59,283 in 2019, an increase of \$15,164 (34.4%).

Regional Price Parity (RPP) or the differences in price levels across states and metropolitan areas for a given year, changed from 103.9 in 2010 to 104.2 in 2019, an increase overall but a decrease relative to 2017, when the RPP peaked at 104.7. The cost of living in Denver is 128.7%, compared to the national average.

Educational attainment in Metro Denver is higher than the U.S. average: 92.2% of metro residents had at least a high school diploma, while 45.8% had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to the national averages of 88.6% and 33.1%, respectively.

Veterans constitute 7.1% of the population of Metro Denver, approximately 164,527 in total of which 149,122 are male. There are 50,473 Vietnam veterans, and 89,680 veterans of post-1990s wars in the Middle East.

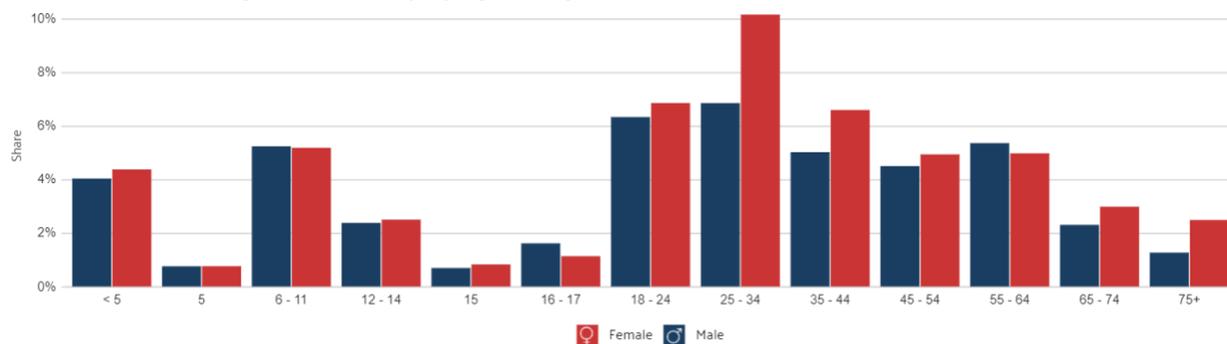
1.2 Poverty, wages, cost of living, and housing

Poverty

One in seven (13.8%) of the population in Denver, CO live below the poverty line, higher than the national average of 13.1%. The largest demographic living in poverty are Females 18-34. More women than men over the age of 18 live in poverty (Figure 1). This disparity is particularly stark among people aged 25-34, and over 65. Women in Denver are also affected by wage inequality. Full time male employees make 1.33 times more, on average, than their female counterparts. Figure 2 shows the gender-based wage disparity in the five most common occupations.

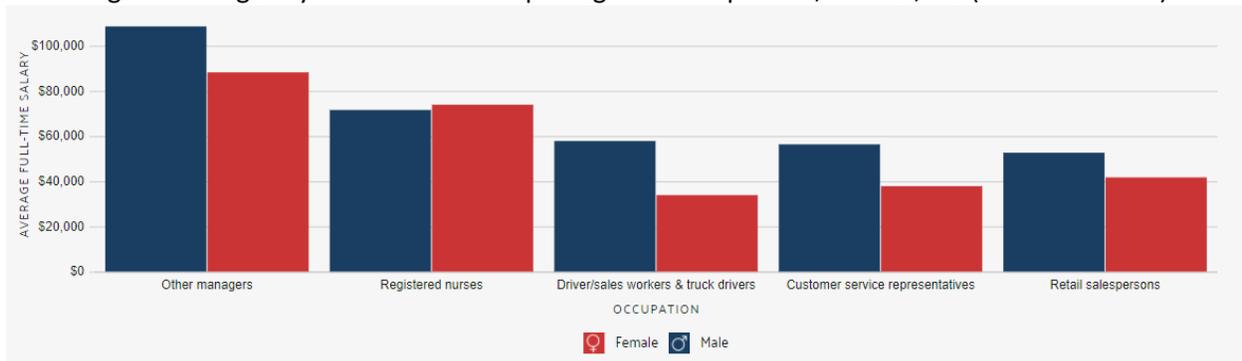
In terms of race and ethnicity, 57.6% of the population (approx. 33,000) living in poverty is non-Hispanic white. Latino/ Hispanic residents represent 20.6% of the poor (11,844), and Black residents represent 8.92% (5,116). Both groups have poverty rates about three times in excess of their overall demographic representation.

Figure 1. Poverty by age and gender in Denver, CO (ACS 2014-2019)



The ethnic group with the largest number of people living below the poverty line in Denver is non-Hispanic whites (63,500), followed by Latinos/Hispanics (40,000), Blacks (15,200), and Native Americans (14,000) (ACS, 2018). Proportionally, 28.5% of Blacks, 22.7% of Native Americans, 14.5% of Latinos/Hispanics, and 7.4% of non-Hispanic whites live below poverty level.

Figure 2. Wages by Gender for the top 5 regional occupations, Denver, CO (ACS 2014-2019)



Poverty in the city of Denver is concentrated in the west and north parts of the city. The map shown below (Figure 3) displays an estimation of the equity index, a composite indicator (scale of 1-5) that ranks areas by socioeconomics, built environment, access to care, morbidity, and mortality. There is a strong correspondence between poverty and low equity index. On the map, low equity areas (less than 2.5) are shaded red, and high equity areas are blue. This map corresponds almost exactly to the areas of higher concentration of Latino/Hispanic families (Figure 4). The remaining low equity areas have high concentrations of Black residents.

Cost of living and wages

Workers in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$29.58 in May 2019, about 15% above the nationwide average of \$25.72. Wages in the local area were higher than their respective national averages in 16 of the 22 major occupational groups, including sales and related, management, and transportation and material movement. The arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupational group was the only one with wages significantly below the national average.

Despite higher wages in the Denver Metro area, and with the minimum wage in Colorado at \$12/hour, the cost of living in the area is so high (128.7% of the national average), that such wages do not provide a living wage to any family, not even to a family of two working adults with no children (MIT living-wage calculator: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/metros/19740>). The living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs. The calculations displayed in Tables 1 and 2 correspond to a market-based approach that uses geographically specific (Denver-Aurora metropolitan statistical area) expenditure data related to a family’s likely minimum costs for food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities such as clothing and personal care items. According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado, 2018, published by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, it costs approximately \$83,940 to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Denver (two adults, an infant and preschooler)—or more than three times the federal poverty level.

Table 1. Denver - Aurora MSA living hourly wages by family size (dollars)

ADULTS	1 adult				2 adults (1 working)				2 adults (both working)			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Living Wage	17.4	36.6	45.5	60.1	27.0	32.6	36.4	41.0	13.0	19.5	24.6	30.2
Poverty Wage	6.13	8.29	10.4	12.6	8.29	10.4	12.6	14.7	4.14	5.22	6.30	7.38
Minimum Wage	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0

Table 2 shows the typical annual and hourly salaries paid by the main occupation areas in the Denver-Aurora MSA. The typical salaries paid in the food preparation and service sector (\$14/hour or \$26,129/year) are insufficient for even a single individual to earn a living wage for the area. A single parent with one child needs a job that pays \$24.7/hour or \$51,355/year or above. A single parent with two children needs to earn above \$45.50/hour or \$94,640/year.

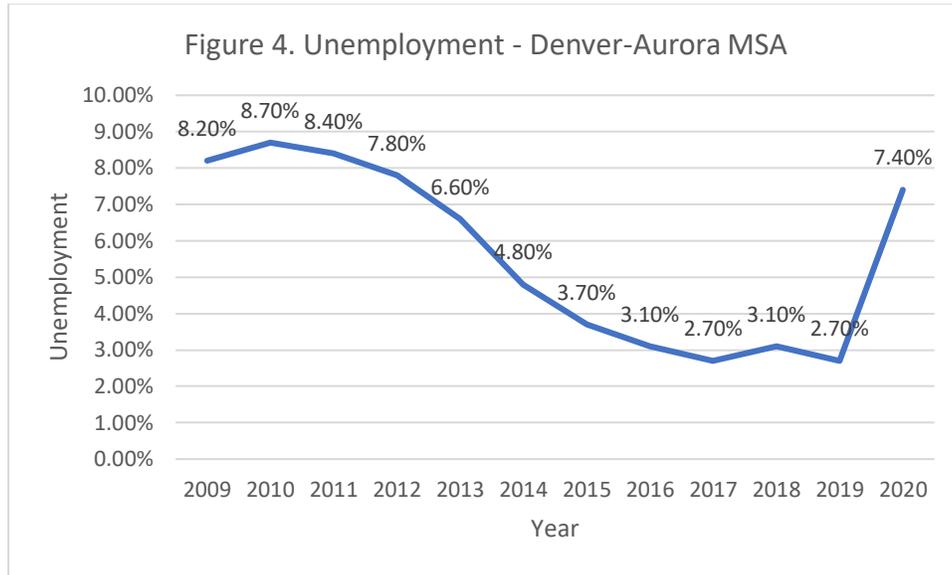
Table 2. Denver - Aurora MSA living wages by occupational area and family size

Occupational Area	Typical Annual Salary	Typical Hourly Salary
Management	\$133,232	\$64
Computer & Mathematical	\$98,745	\$47
Legal	\$98,059	\$47
Architecture & Engineering	\$88,279	\$42
Business & Financial Operations	\$77,373	\$37
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$77,128	\$37
Life, Physical, & Social Science	\$73,731	\$35
Community & Social Service	\$51,613	\$25
Education, Training, & Library	\$52,032	\$25
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	\$52,984	\$25
Construction & Extraction	\$51,899	\$25
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	\$52,626	\$25
Office & Administrative Support	\$43,183	\$21
Protective Service	\$42,027	\$20
Sales & Related	\$38,886	\$19
Production	\$38,446	\$18
Transportation & Material Moving	\$37,454	\$18
Healthcare Support	\$33,986	\$16
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	\$30,108	\$14
Personal Care & Service	\$29,208	\$14
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	\$29,494	\$14
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$26,129	\$13

Living wage by family type		
	1 adult 0 children	\$17.4
	2 adults 2 working 2 children	\$24.69
	1 adult 1 child	\$36.6
	2 adults 1 working 2 children	\$36.41
	1 adult 2 children	\$45.5

1.3 Unemployment and job market

Unemployment in the Denver-Aurora MSA was at 6.7% in March of 2021, lower than at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 4). The sector with the highest unemployment rate is leisure and hospitality, with a 12-month change of -23.6%. The only sector that gained jobs in the past 12 months is trade, transportation and utilities (+2.1%), adding 8,000 jobs since March of 2020.



The labor market in Denver has thousands of job openings. Table 3 shows the current openings posted by the top 10 employers in the area. Four of these 10 are in the health sector, which is projected to grow over 15,000 jobs between 2019 and 2029 (Table 4). The food services, hospitality, and accommodations sector does not provide living wages for families with children and has lost thousands of jobs in the past few months (Table 6). The sectors with the largest growth are professional and business services, administrative and support, and wholesale trade.

Table 3. Employers with the Highest Number of Job Openings
Denver-Aurora MSA, May 5, 2021

Rank	Employer Name	Job Openings
1	UCHealth	1,574
2	Centura Health	1,279
3	Adams 12 Five Star Schools	1,253
4	University of Colorado	1,164
5	HCA Healthcare, Inc.	891
6	Denver Public Schools	710
7	DISH Network L.L.C.	576
8	Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp.	563
9	Lockheed Martin Corporation	539
10	SCL Health	498

Table 4. Industries by Projected Growth, Denver-Aurora MSA

Industry	2019 Estimated Employment	2029 Projected Employment	Total Annual Percent Change	Total 2019-2029 Employment Change
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	146,141	179,850	2.10%	33,709
Educational Services	115,538	135,597	1.61%	20,059
Hospitals	48,763	58,770	1.88%	10,007
Social Assistance	32,139	39,355	2.05%	7,216
Management of Companies and Enterprises	34,356	40,240	1.59%	5,884
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	22,044	26,175	1.73%	4,131
Warehousing and Storage	10,779	14,685	3.14%	3,906
Couriers and Messengers	9,911	12,555	2.39%	2,644
Chemical Manufacturing	3,867	5,036	2.68%	1,169
Crop Production	2,609	3,364	2.57%	755

The majority (97.68%, or 60,382) of jobs advertised online as of May 5, 2021, in the Denver-Aurora MSA request one to two years of experience. Of the current openings, 2,281 ask for a high school diploma or equivalent, and 320 ask for technical, vocational, or associate’s degrees. Unfortunately, the majority (91.97%, or 56,851) of jobs currently posted online do not specify the level of education required. The most common tool or technology in employment ads in Denver-Aurora MSA was Microsoft (MS) Office.

The second most common tool and technology was Microsoft PowerPoint and the third was Structured Query Language (SQL) (Table 5).

Table 5. Top 10 Advertised Tools and Technology in the Denver – Aurora, MSA, April 2021

Rank	Advertised Detailed Tool or Technology	Advertised Tool and Technology Group	Job Opening Match Count
1	Microsoft (MS) Office	Office Suite Software	11,077
2	Microsoft PowerPoint	Presentation Software	4,063
3	Structured query language (SQL)	Database User Interface and Query Software	3,468
4	Python	Object or Component Oriented Development Software	3,368
5	Restraints	Patient Stabilization/Fall Prevention Devices or Accessories	3,252
6	Ladders	Ladders	3,246
7	Urinals	Patient Urinals for General Use	3,163
8	Ice packs	Therapeutic Heating/Cooling Pads/Compresses or Packs	3,081
9	Linux software	Operating System Software	2,786
10	Cell Phone	Mobile Phones	2,600

Table 6. Current Employment Statistics, Denver-Aurora, MSA, March 2021

Title	Employment	Previous Month	Over the Month Employment Change
Professional and Business Services	273,200	270,300	2,900
Administrative and Support and Waste Man	88,800	86,900	1,900
Wholesale Trade	75,200	73,500	1,700
Other Services	56,500	54,800	1,700
Mining, Logging and Construction	106,800	105,200	1,600
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	285,900	284,500	1,400
Government	199,000	197,900	1,100
Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	24,000	23,000	1,000
Employment Services	27,500	26,500	1,000
Professional, Scientific, and Technical	147,500	146,600	900
Educational and Health Services	190,300	189,600	700
Transportation and Warehousing	72,200	71,600	600
Services to Buildings and Dwellings	24,400	23,800	600
State Government	47,000	46,400	600
Transportation Warehousing and Utilities	76,000	75,500	500
Computer Systems Design and Related Serv	39,800	39,300	500
State Government Educational Services	26,600	26,100	500
Local Government	123,300	122,800	500
Specialty Trade Contractors	65,800	65,400	400
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	48,200	47,800	400
Architectural, Engineering, and Related	31,800	31,400	400
Educational Services	27,600	27,200	400
Ambulatory Health Care Services	76,100	75,700	400
Full-Service Restaurants	40,800	40,400	400
Construction of Buildings	17,500	17,200	300
Air Transportation	15,700	15,400	300
Health Care and Social Assistance	162,700	162,400	300
Accommodation	11,100	10,900	200
Computer and Electronic Product Manufact	6,400	6,300	100
Couriers and Messengers	15,900	15,800	100
Publishing Industries	11,600	11,500	100
Software Publishers	10,000	9,900	100
Management of Companies and Enterprises	36,900	36,800	100
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	8,800	8,800	0
NonDurable Goods	27,700	27,700	0
Information	50,900	50,900	0
Telecommunications	18,700	18,700	0
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	30,300	30,300	0
Management, Scientific, and Technical Co	24,200	24,200	0
Hospitals	31,400	31,400	0
Repair and Maintenance	12,800	12,800	0
Federal Government	28,700	28,700	0
Manufacturing	68,500	68,600	-100
Durable Goods	40,800	40,900	-100
Food and Beverage Stores	26,800	26,900	-100
Utilities	3,800	3,900	-100
Warehousing and Storage	15,400	15,500	-100
Local Government Educational Services	65,800	65,900	-100
Credit Intermediation and Related Activi	31,000	31,200	-200
Insurance Carriers and Related Activitie	32,800	33,000	-200
Real Estate	24,000	24,200	-200
General Merchandise Stores	27,600	28,000	-400
Financial Activities	111,100	111,800	-700
Finance and Insurance	80,800	81,500	-700
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	17,000	17,700	-700
Retail Trade	134,700	135,500	-800
Full-Service Restaurants	91,600	92,400	-800
Limited-Service Eating Places	50,800	52,000	-1,200
Accommodation and Food Services	108,300	109,900	-1,600
Food Services and Drinking Places	97,200	99,000	-1,800
Leisure and Hospitality	125,300	127,600	-2,300

1.4 Housing affordability

Home Ownership

In 2019, 63.9% of households in Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area owned their homes. This is lower than the state of Colorado (65.2%) and lower than the homeownership rate in the United States (64%). Between 2000 and 2019, the homeownership rate in the area fell by 3%. In 2019, the homeownership rate for white householders was 66.8%, compared to 67.7% in Colorado and 69.5% in the United States. During this same period, the homeownership rate for Black householders in the area was 39.6%, lower than Colorado's 39.7% average, and lower than the United States rate of 41.8%. Home ownership for Latinos/Hispanics is at 47.9% in Denver, 50.4% in Colorado, and 47.3% in the United States.

Compared to other areas where the McGowan Fund invests, an aging and deteriorating housing inventory is not as big a problem. Housing affordability in Denver is mostly determined by raising prices influenced by educated high earners and out-of-town investors looking for alternatives to the stock market. Denver is among cities across the country where housing prices have outpaced wages. Median income in Denver increased about 8% between 2015 and 2018, while rent increased 13% and home prices by 17%.

According to the Denver Metro Association of Realtors' (DMAR) March 2021 market report, the median residential home price in the city and county has increased over 15% year-over-year. Meanwhile, properties spend an average of just 19 days in the multiple listing service (MLS). That represents a 20% decrease from the previous month and a 36% decrease from April 2020. Denver had not seen a decrease in housing inventory between February and March since 2014. At the end of March 2021, just 1,111 homes were actively on the market, compared to the 3,829 that were available last year.

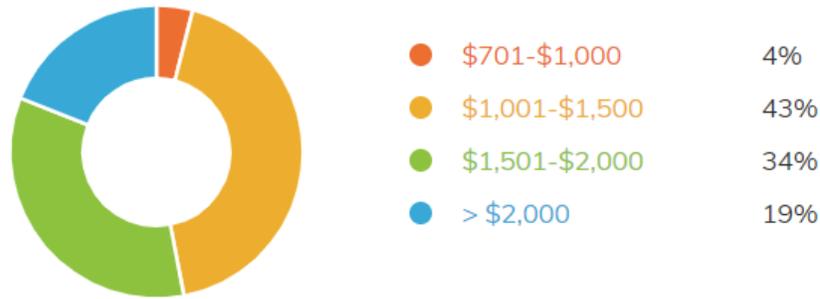
The average closing price of a single-family home in Denver was \$560,000 in March 2021, \$35,000 higher than in February, while for townhomes and multifamily developments, the average closing price was \$353,000, \$20,000 higher than the previous month. The mean sale price of a home in greater metro Denver more than doubled from 2011 (\$200,000) to 2020 (\$450,000). Many of the homes sold are becoming investments or second homes. In 2020, second-home sales increased 44%.

The share of owner households that were moderately or severely cost burdened in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area decreased from 26.7% in 2014 to 22.5% in 2019. This share is lower than Colorado's 22.6%, and higher than the United States, where 22.3% of homeowners were cost burdened in 2019.

Renters

The monthly median rent in Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area rose from \$998 in 2014 to \$1,380 in 2019 (38.3%). During this same period, the annual median family income in the area rose from \$79,641 to \$98,577 (growth of 23.8%). The majority of rental units were priced over \$1,000, with only 4% of rental units priced below \$1,000 (Figure 5). The rental market in Denver has been consistently priced \$250 above the national average.

Figure 5. Apartment Rent Ranges in Denver, CO, March 2021



The share of renter households in the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area that were moderately or severely cost-burdened in 2019 (48%) was lower than the share in Colorado (48.4%), and higher than the share in the United States (46%). The share of cost-burdened renters has not decreased in the past 7 years. Figure 6 shows the share of cost burdened renters in 2014 and 2019. Although the share of cost burdened households under \$20,000/year of household income remains very high, it decreased 4%, while the share of cost burdened households increased very significantly for households earning over \$20,000/year, with those between \$35,000 and \$50,000 increasing by 27%. This is particularly important since housing assistance progressively disappears as household income increases, leaving households in this latest group unable to cover other basic needs.

Figure 6. Share of Cost Burdened Renter Households by income group, Denver, 2014 and 2019.

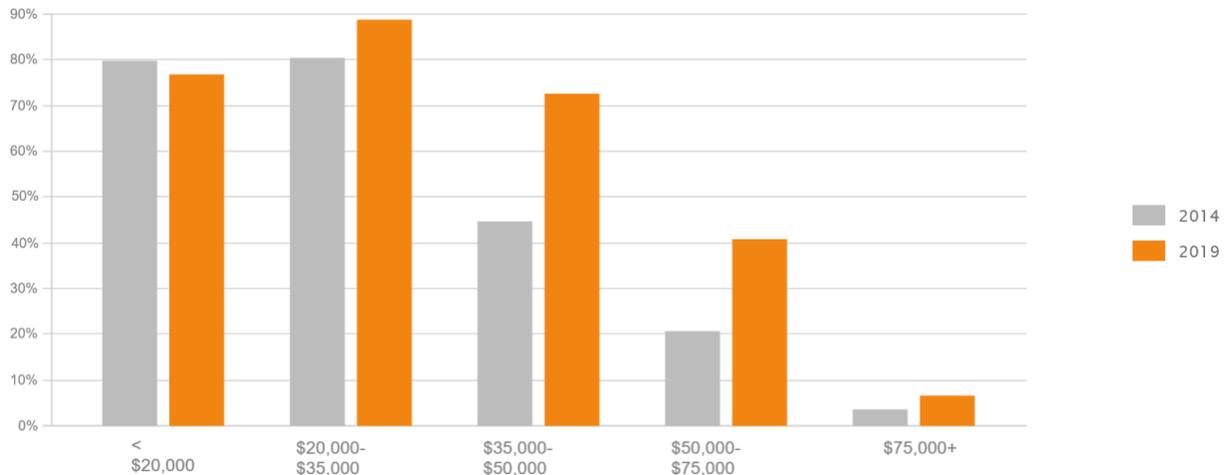


Table 7 compares the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the Denver area to the wages needed to pay monthly rent. A single mother with two children must work 100 hours a week at minimum wage to afford the rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Denver.

Table 7. Housing Affordability vs. Minimum Wage, Denver, CO, 2020

				
Fair Market Rent for 2-bd	Minimum wage	Wage needed to afford a 2-bd	Full time employment	Needed to work to afford a 2-bd at CO min wage

2. Homelessness in the Denver City and County Area

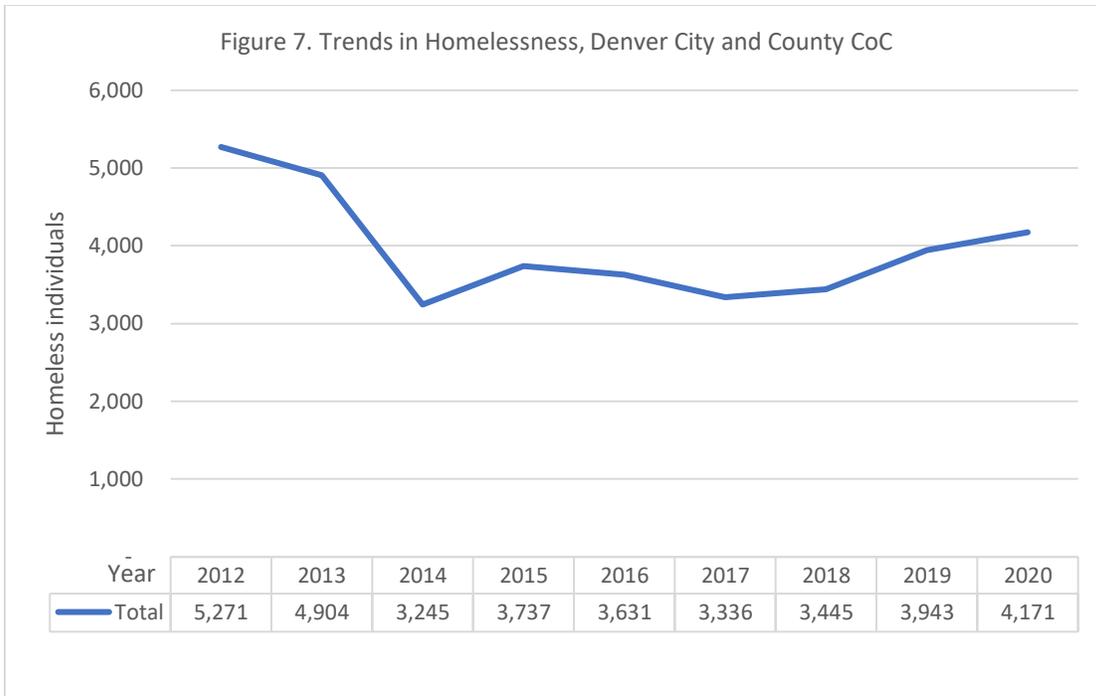
2.1 Continuum of Care Collaborative (MDHI)

The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) was formed in 1994 to coordinate service and housing assistance available from organizations throughout the metro area. For over 25 years, MDHI has brought together 70 organizations, including homeless service and housing providers, local and state governmental agencies, foundations, mental health centers, neighborhood groups, and people with lived experience of homelessness to develop a Continuum of Care (CoC). MDHI gathers support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other public and private sources, and acts as the regional leadership body coordinating resources and services, identifying needs, and disseminating evidence-based practices to end homelessness.

MDHI also leads the process for the annual HUD CoC NOFA application. Each year, MDHI convenes a series of meetings for stakeholders to identify local service gaps and funding priorities. Identified priorities are used to develop a comprehensive application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since its inception, MDHI has brought in over \$100 million in grants for the Denver Metro area.

2.2 Homelessness data trends

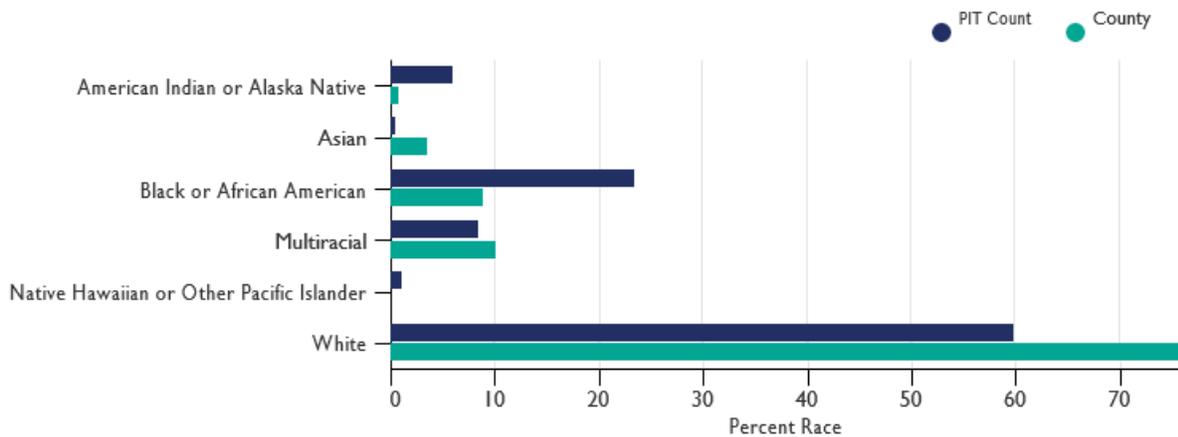
The 2020 Point in Time (PIT) count showed 4,171 homeless households and 6,104 individuals, 47% in emergency shelters (2,911), 27% in transitional housing (1,632), and 25.6% unsheltered (1,561). The number of homeless individuals in the 2020 PIT count is higher than in 2019. Although the count is much lower than in 2012, it appears to be rapidly increasing since 2017 (Figure 7).



The racial representation among homeless individuals in 2020, in comparison with the general population, shows Native Americans are 7.5 times overrepresented (5.85% vs. 0.78%) and Black residents 4.7 times overrepresented (25.8% vs. 5.31%). The proportion of white homeless individuals is lower than in the general population (58% vs. 81.57%), and the proportion of Latinos/ Hispanics is about the same (23.14% vs 22.55%) (Figure 8).

The percentage of unsheltered homeless in Denver (25.6%) is significantly lower than the national average (39%). Almost a third (29.3%) of the individuals experiencing homelessness are considered chronically homeless (1,790), and more than half of them (941) are unsheltered. Over a third (34%) of individuals suffer from serious mental health illness, and 29% suffer from substance abuse. Over 10% (627) of the homeless in Denver are veterans, compared to 7.9% for the entire country during the same PIT count.

Figure 8. Individuals Experiencing Homelessness by Race, Denver, CO CoC — 2020 PIT count



Of all individuals experiencing homelessness, males represent a larger proportion of those for whom substance abuse is a concern (70.25% vs. 77.7%), are chronically homeless (76.41%), and are veterans (90.76%). Conversely, females are overrepresented among newly homeless (34.2%), homeless with mental health concerns (29.81%), and fleeing domestic violence (45.59%).

In the population experiencing homelessness in 2020 for whom substance abuse was a concern, the proportion of Native Americans is 9.5 times greater than the proportion of this group in the general population (7.41% vs. 0.78%). The proportion of Blacks in this situation is 3.3 times greater (17.77% vs. 5.31%). Latinos/Hispanics are slightly overrepresented in this group (24.15% vs. 22.55%), while non-Hispanic whites are slightly underrepresented (75.85% vs. 77.45%).

Among the 278 unaccompanied youth, females represent 29.84%, males 64.4%. The race distribution among homeless youth is similar to the overall homeless populations, with Native Americans and Blacks representing 5 times as many as in the general population. One in four (26%) homeless youth is Black (vs. 5.3% general population), while over half (54.7%) are white (vs. 82% general population). Forty percent of homeless youth in Colorado have been in the foster care system. The percentage of gender non-conforming youth in Denver was 5.76%, 4.5 times greater than the U.S. (1.3%), suggesting that homelessness is an important risk factor among LGBTQ youth in this area.

3. Conclusions

- The Denver Metro area is economically active but is experiencing important demographic changes. After decades of population growth, the area is no longer as attractive to newcomers, likely due to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing. Natural growth (births – deaths) is also declining. In the short term, the area will gain population as people move in, but unless the region addresses the lack of affordable housing, this trend will not be sustained.
- The area has median incomes significantly higher than the U.S. population, but the increase in cost of living has outpaced wage increases.
- Inequity and Poverty in Denver are concentrated in areas with higher proportions of Latinos/Hispanics and Black. Almost 15% of children live in poverty, a percentage slightly higher than the national average.
- The current minimum wage in Colorado falls short of the wages needed to cover the cost of living in the region and falls below the FPL.
- The Denver Metro area has an active job market for people with all education levels, but most of the demand is for skilled jobs with at least one year of job experience. Basic computer skills, word processing, and spreadsheet skills are in high demand.
- The area has good public transportation. Geographical access to job opportunities does not seem to be a problem.
- The Denver City and County area has a strong Continuum of Care coalition, with coordinated entry and active engagement in policy making. In the past five years, homeless housing capacity has increased, but the number of chronic and veteran homeless remain high. LGBTQ youth seem to be at higher risk of homelessness in Denver than in other areas of the country.
- The percentage of Black homeless individuals is disproportionately high compared to the ethnic composition of the general population of the area. The proportion of homeless for whom drug use is a concern is also higher than national averages.

- Youth who aged out of the foster care system are a high proportion (40%) of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. This may point to insufficient financial resources to assist youth transitioning out of foster care, and/or a lack of a systemic (wraparound) approach to prevent homelessness.