



HOPE ATLANTA
**FIELD
REPORT**

NOVEMBER 2023

An Inside Look at the State of
Homelessness in Our Communities



Dear friends,

It's the season of giving thanks, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude.

Before we delve into the issues impacting our clients and community, I want to express my deepest appreciation to those who give me HOPE.

Thank you to our veterans and their families, who deserve our utmost support – on Veterans Day and beyond. We are proud to work with veteran clients every day to ensure our heroes have a place to call home.

Collaboration is central to our efforts to prevent and end homelessness. **I want to thank all of our community partners,** some of whom you'll see highlighted in this edition of our field report.

The Atlanta community never ceases to inspire. On the heels of our annual Heroes for HOPE event, where compassion, generosity, and camaraderie were on full display, **I want to thank our Board, corporate sponsors, and supporters.**

Finally, thank you to our hardworking staff, volunteers, and you, the reader, for your interest in these issues. We invite you to join us and be part of the solution, be it through donations, volunteerism, or advocacy. Together, we can transform lives and make a lasting impact.

Wishing you a warm and HOPEful holiday season,



Julio Carrillo, CEO



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO
CONNECT, JOIN THE
CONVERSATION, AND DISCOVER
WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!**

UNPACKING THE

Cost of Homelessness

At HOPE Atlanta, a common refrain is that homelessness isn't just a problem for those affected. It's all of our problem, not only because it is a humanitarian crisis but also because it is costly to our communities.

Just as economic factors like income inequality, inflation, and affordable housing shortages are to blame for homelessness, homelessness also has economic implications. Individuals experiencing homelessness exhibit higher rates of emergency room visits, inpatient admissions, and extended hospital stays, often due to severe mental illness, substance abuse, or physical disabilities.

People experiencing homelessness often find themselves entangled in the criminal justice system for acts related to their survival, such as entering private property or sleeping on public benches. This can result in tickets, fines, penalties, and even incarceration.

Between the costs of public services, social services, hospitals, and jails, there's a high price tag for taxpayers. A person experiencing chronic homelessness costs taxpayers an average of \$45,093 per year, according to a study by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (and adjusted for inflation).² With 10,689 people experiencing homelessness in Georgia³, the annual cost to the public is \$482 million. It would cost far less – about \$245 million – to house each of these people, based on the average rent⁴ for a one-bedroom apartment in Atlanta.

Homelessness doesn't just affect single adults; families with children are also impacted.

Atlanta Homelessness from 2022-2023

ESTIMATES FROM THE LATEST POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

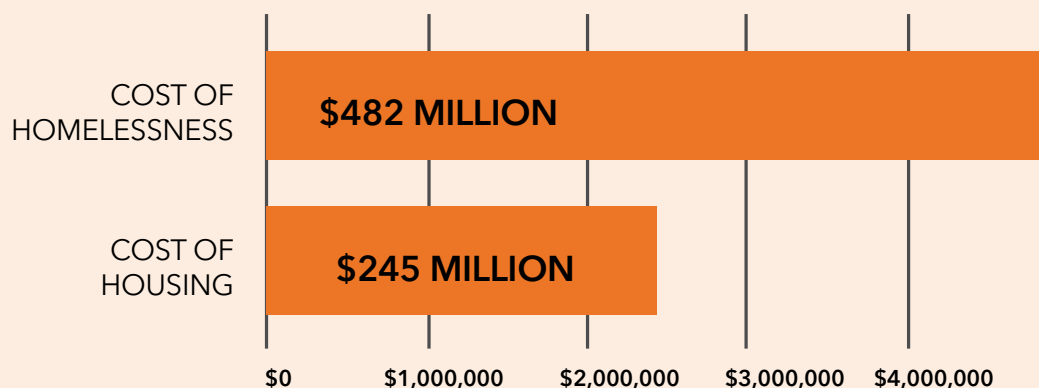
84% increase in the number of people in **emergency shelters**

15% increase in the number of **unsheltered individuals**

34% of the unhoused population are **55 and older**.

Source: Partners for Home 2023 PIT Count¹

THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS VS. THE COST OF HOUSING



¹<https://partnersforhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2023-PIT.pdf>

²<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cost-Savings-from-PSH.pdf>

³<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-dashboards/?State=Georgia>

⁴<https://www.rent.com/georgia/atlanta-apartments/rent-trends>

THE COST OF HOMELESSNESS, CONT.

As rents increase, so does the number of homeless students. More than 4% of students⁵ in Atlanta Public Schools reported experiencing homelessness during the 2022-23 school year. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to be bullied, miss school, and fall far behind in reading and math⁶. They are also more likely to be separated from their families and placed into the foster care system; in FY21, a fifth of foster care placements cited insufficient housing as a reason for removing children from their homes.

Besides the many heartbreaking ways homelessness impacts these children's daily lives, there are long-term implications for our community. Children who experience may suffer adverse effects as adults that make self-sufficiency more difficult. Studies show that homelessness during youth is associated with poor nutrition, mental illness, substance abuse, and lower academic performance.⁷ Adults who experience homelessness as children are also more likely to commit crimes and have chronic health conditions, further perpetuating the cycle of inequality, and negative economic outcomes.

While these numbers are broad strokes, they underscore the importance of addressing the root causes of homelessness rather than only treating the "symptoms."

At HOPE Atlanta, we provide individualized support and services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to help them obtain housing, overcome their unique obstacles, and achieve self-sufficiency.

Families with children are also impacted by homelessness.

More than **4%** of **Atlanta Public School** students experienced **homelessness** last year.

20% of foster care placements cited **insufficient housing** when removing a child from their home.

Adults who experience homelessness as children are **more likely to commit crimes or have chronic health conditions.**

OUR YOUNGEST CLIENTS

HOPE Atlanta's Women's Community Kitchen serves as a support system for families, providing meals for 30-40 food-insecure neighbors each day as well as resources and supplies donated by the community.



⁵<https://atlantaciviccircle.org/2023/08/28/more-atlanta-students-homeless-this-school-year/>

⁶<https://georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/5.-Homelessness-and-Children-FINAL.pdf>

⁷<https://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-021-03142-0>

SUPPORTING THOSE

Who Served

According to a Housing Assistance Council study sponsored by The Home Depot Foundation⁸, nearly a quarter (23.4%) of Georgia veterans live in housing that is not considered affordable for their income. More than 40,000 Georgia veterans live in poverty, and 664 are homeless on a given day. In Atlanta, the most recent Point-in-Time Count found 252 veterans experiencing homelessness.

Nearly a third of Georgia's veterans have a disability connected to their military service. Other factors, like increased risk for mental health disorders, also make veterans overrepresented in the homeless population⁹. Unfortunately, Georgia is ranked among the worst states for mental health care.¹⁰

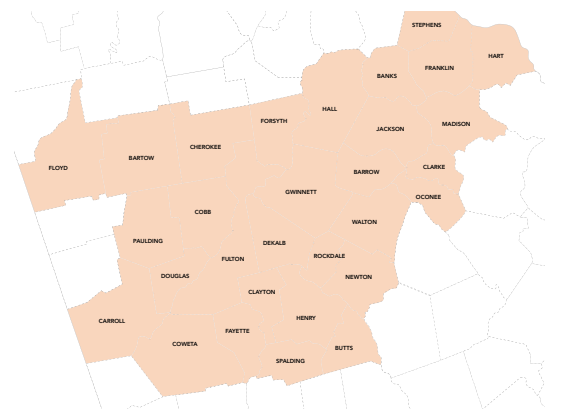
Our heroes deserve better. At HOPE Atlanta, we provide a lifeline for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness across 30 counties and the City of Atlanta. Besides preventing evictions and helping unsheltered veterans secure stable housing, our team provides wraparound services to help them reclaim their self-sufficiency. This can include connecting veterans to mental health services, reuniting them with their families, providing transportation, and connecting them to legal services.

Did you know...

HOPE Atlanta is the **largest provider of homeless services for veterans in Metro Atlanta.**

We provide a critical support systems to **veterans across 30 counties and the City of Atlanta.**

Last year, **we served a total of 872 veterans** experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



MEET VANNARETTE

Vannarette worked as an intelligence analyst in the military before becoming a mental health counselor, helping veterans, abused women, and people in prison. She caught severe COVID while working in a correctional facility. Unable to work during her long road to recovery, she was facing something she never thought she'd experience: homelessness.

She contacted the VA, who put her in touch with HOPE Atlanta. We quickly got to work to help her obtain a HUD voucher. **Today, Vannarette is living in her own apartment and just a few credits away from earning her PhD.**

HOPE is a wonderful word for this organization.

It allowed me to begin a healing process and the opportunity to be persistent in caring for myself, and to excel in my next life journey."



VANNARETTE
HOPE Atlanta Client

⁸<https://veteransdata.info/states/2130000/GEORGIA.pdf>

⁹<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4521393/>

¹⁰<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/health-insurance/worst-states-for-mental-health-care/>

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Atlanta Legal Aid

Atlanta Legal Aid provides free civil legal services to help low-income people meet basic needs and remove barriers to justice. The organization has a long history of serving veterans in Atlanta, dating back to World War I, when veterans often fell victim to the payday loan industry. It officially launched its Veteran Law Project in 2022. In just a year, it has served 367 veterans, including many HOPE Atlanta clients, and achieved \$293,000 in financial outcomes for clients.

After HOPE Atlanta begins working with a veteran experiencing homelessness, Atlanta Legal Aid often partners with us to remove barriers to affordable housing, help them navigate their healthcare and disability benefits, and increase their income by maximizing government benefits.

"Most of our clients are sheltered because they're HOPE Atlanta clients and they're being sheltered by a HOPE Atlanta program," says Kristin Verrill, Managing Attorney for the Veterans Law Project. "We do have some who are unsheltered, and we usually work with HOPE Atlanta caseworkers to try to find emergency shelter for them. Then we will help address legal issues or barriers to housing."

Now that the pandemic-era hold on evictions has been lifted, eviction court cases have

resumed, and almost all courts are caught up on their backlogs. HOPE Atlanta and Atlanta Legal Aid have seen an influx of veteran clients who have been evicted or are at risk.

"A lot of our clients are low-income clients, and since the pandemic, they have evictions on their record," says Verrill.

"The laws in Georgia are very landlord-friendly, so if they don't have a court eviction on their record, they probably have a debt to a landlord on their record on their credit history, and so that inhibits a lot of people from finding appropriate and affordable housing."

Like HOPE Atlanta, Atlanta Legal Aid works to build rapport with clients, following up regularly if they're not yet ready to receive help.

"We have a system where if we can't reach a client, our paralegals will get a report and check on those clients every month or so, just say, 'Hey, are you ready to talk to us now?'" says Verrill. "We've always said sometimes all it takes is a call from a lawyer, and that makes a massive difference in how you can help somebody."

VETERAN LAW PROJECT CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS



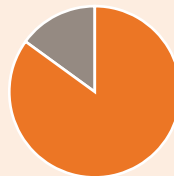
40% ARE FEMALE



75% LIVE WITH A DISABILITY



35% ARE SENIORS



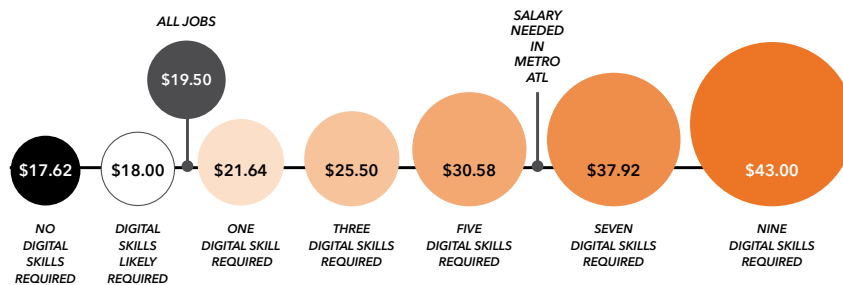
85% LIVE IN 5 METRO COUNTIES

NARROWING THE

Digital Skills Divide

More than 92% of all jobs require digital skills, according to a study by the National Skills Coalition in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.¹¹ However, one-third of workers do not have foundational digital skills, which can hinder one's ability to earn a living wage and advance their career.

In metro Atlanta, the salary needed to live comfortably is **\$66,580, or about \$33 per hour.**¹² Jobs in that pay range require at least five digital skills, and even jobs that pay half as much tend to require some digital skills. At HOPE Atlanta, one of the ways we work to empower clients to achieve self-sufficiency is through educational programs like financial literacy and career readiness. This Fall, in partnership with TechBridge, we graduated our first Digital Literacy cohort. Part of the TechBridge Technology Career Program, this free course provides the opportunity to gain technology skills, professional development, and exposure to multiple career pathways in technology – a growing \$5 trillion industry.



Source: Closing the Digital Skill Divide by National Skills Coalition with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (2023)



I enrolled in this program, developing essential digital skills, teamwork, and effective communication. As a program graduate, I look forward to using my newfound knowledge to secure remote employment and pursue further education in business."

MILDRED BROWN
Digital Literacy graduate

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALL 2023 DIGITAL LITERACY GRADUATES!



Participant Age Range: **27-54**

Graduation Success Rate: **53%**

Length of Training: **6 weeks, plus two additional weeks** for technical training, professional development, and office hours.

Graduates earned a **digital badge** showcasing their skills, a **certificate of completion**, and post-program **professional development opportunities** through TechBridge partners Insight Global and IBM Skillsbuild.

¹¹<https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2023/08/10/baseline-for-work-92-percent-of-jobs-require-digital-skills>

¹²<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/04/04/the-salary-you-need-to-live-comfortably-in-15-major-us-cities.html>

THANKS FOR STAYING INFORMED.

NOW, JOIN US IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

During the winter and holiday season, “home” becomes more important than ever. Home is where we gather with family, share meals, and make memories. It’s also a luxury that many tend to take for granted.

Visit HOPEAtlanta.org to sign up for updates, learn about volunteer opportunities, make a donation, and more.

