



LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO

Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County, 2024-2026



Accredited on May 17, 2016
Reaccredited on August 21, 2023

County of San Diego, Health and Human
Services Agency, Public Health Services,
Community Health Statistics Unit

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Introduction

Homelessness In San Diego

In 2025, the United States was home to over 340 million people, where on a single night, 745,652 people were experiencing homelessness.^{1,2} Of the persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) in the United States in 2025, 24% were located in California, and 9,905 were located in San Diego County.³ In 2025, San Diego County had the third largest number of PEH in California and the eighth largest number of PEH in the United States.² PEH face a variety of health risks, including poverty, chronic disease, overcrowding in shelters, poor mental health, and substance use disorders.⁴ Collection and examination of data identifying PEH and their health outcomes is crucial to understanding this population's health disparities.

This brief provides key take aways from the Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County Dashboard, 2024-2026, located here: [Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County, 2024-2026 | Tableau Public](#). This includes data from the 2016-2026 Point-in-Time Count for San Diego County, homeless student data from the 2024-2026 California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System for San Diego County, the 2024 California Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) data for medical encounters among persons experiencing homelessness treated in a San Diego County facility, and the 2024 Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS) data among persons experiencing homelessness in San Diego County.

Definitions

Point-in-Time Count Definition²

Definitions of homelessness vary by data source. To be considered homeless in the Point-in-Time Count, a person needs to meet the definition of experiencing homelessness used by HUD². It is defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning the following:



In 2025, there were **745,652** persons experiencing homelessness in the United States (US).



In 2025, there were **181,934** persons experiencing homelessness in California, accounting for **24%** of the US homeless population.



In 2025, there were **9,905** persons experiencing homelessness in San Diego County, accounting for **5.4%** of California's homeless population.

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground; or
- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals).

California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) Definition⁵

To be considered a homeless student in the CALPADS data, enrolled students must have reported experiencing homelessness at any point in time during the academic year. This includes students residing in a hotel, motel, or a temporary shelter, living temporarily doubled up, or were temporarily unsheltered.

Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) Definition⁶

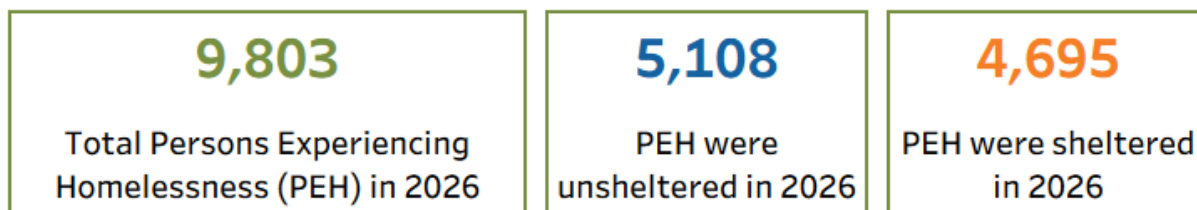
In the 2023 Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) Emergency Department Discharge Data and Hospital Discharge data, a person was considered homeless if the homelessness indicator was marked 'Yes', or an ICD-10 diagnosis code for reporting homelessness was included in the patient record. This includes Z59.00, Z59.01, and Z59.02.

Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS) Definition⁷

In the data from the Vital Records and Business Intelligence System (VRBIS), a person was considered to have been experiencing homelessness if the homeless status as entered on death certificate field 25A was 'Yes.'

Point-in-Time Count Data

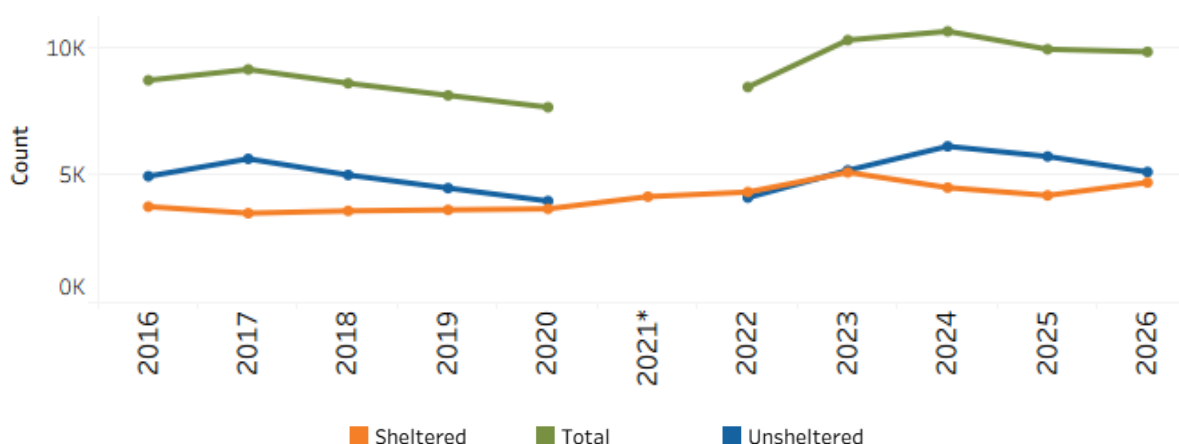
Persons Experiencing in Homelessness in San Diego County



In 2026, there were 9,803 persons experiencing homelessness on any given night in San Diego County. Of those, over half (52.1%) were unsheltered, and 47.9% were sheltered.

Trends Among Persons Experiencing Homelessness

Figure 1: Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County, 2016-2026



**The Point-in-Time Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2016-2026.*

Overall, the number of persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) has increased from 2016 to 2026.

The number of PEH increased from 8,692 in 2016 to 9,803 in 2026. Similarly, the number of unsheltered PEH increased from 4,940 in 2016 to 5,108 in 2026. The number of sheltered PEH increased from 3,752 in 2016 to 4,695 in 2026.

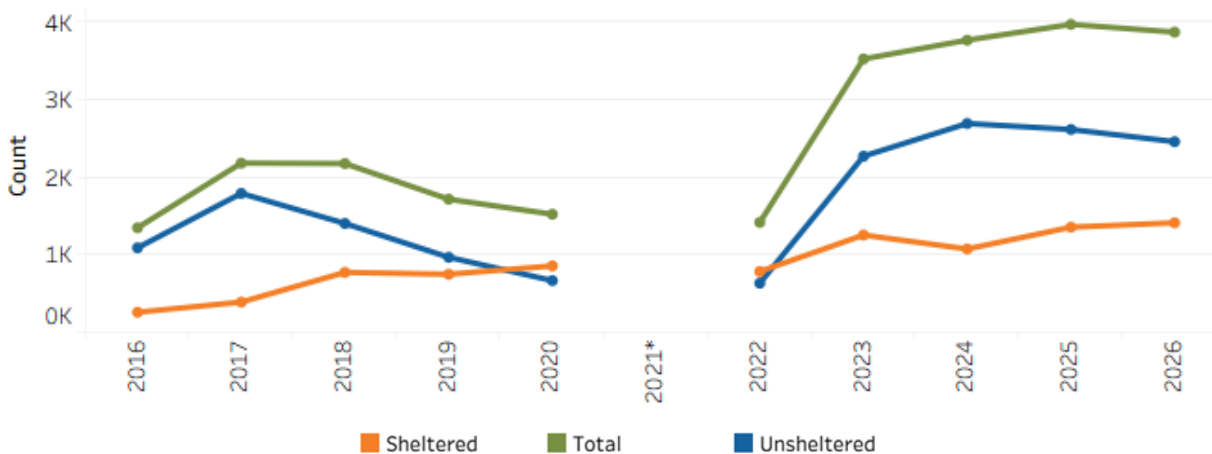
However, 2025 saw the first decrease in total PEH from the prior year since 2020 and the number continued to decrease in 2026.

From 2024 to 2026, the number of PEH decreased from 10,605 to 9,803. The number of unsheltered PEH decreased from 6,110 in 2024 to 5,108 in 2026, and the number of sheltered PEH increased from 4,495 in 2024 to 4,695 in 2026.

Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

An individual is considered chronically homeless if the individual has a disability and has been continuously experiencing homelessness for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time experiencing homelessness on those occasions is at least 12 months.²

Figure 2: Count of Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness, San Diego County, 2016-2026



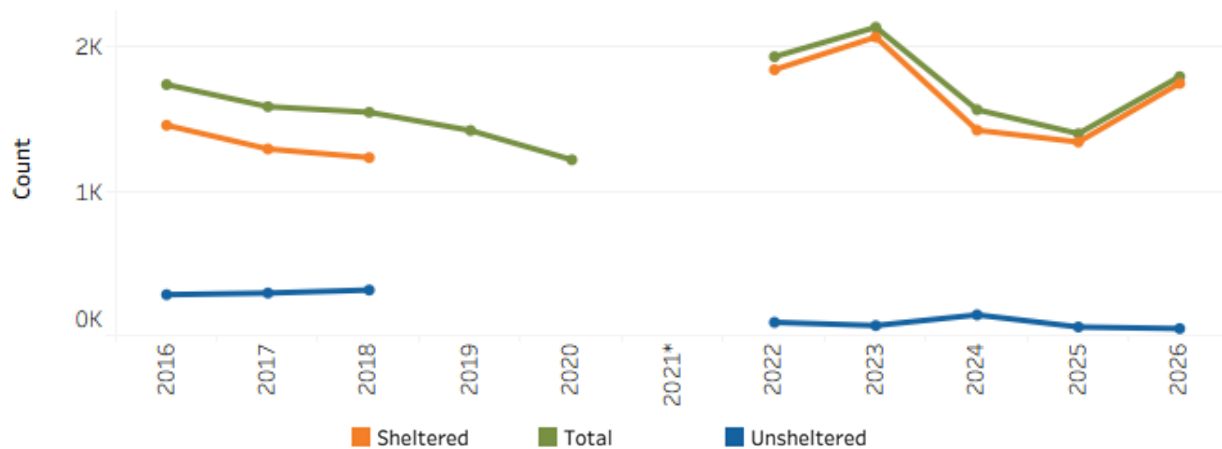
**The Point-in-Time Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2016-2026.*

- In 2026, the chronically homeless population accounted for 39% of the homeless population in San Diego County. Over 63% of the chronically homeless population was unsheltered.
- The number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness decreased from 3,961 in 2025 to 3,861 in 2026.
- The number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness more than doubled from 2022 (1,414) to 2023 (3,516). The majority of the increase was among unsheltered PEH.

Families Experiencing Homelessness

A household is considered a family household experiencing homelessness if the household is made up of at least one adult aged 18 or older and one child under 18 years old that were experiencing homelessness together on the night of the point-in-time count.²

Figure 3: Count of Families (Total Individuals) Experiencing Homelessness, San Diego County, 2016-2026



**The Point-in-Time Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Counts of individuals in families experiencing homelessness are not available by sheltered and unsheltered status for 2019-2020.

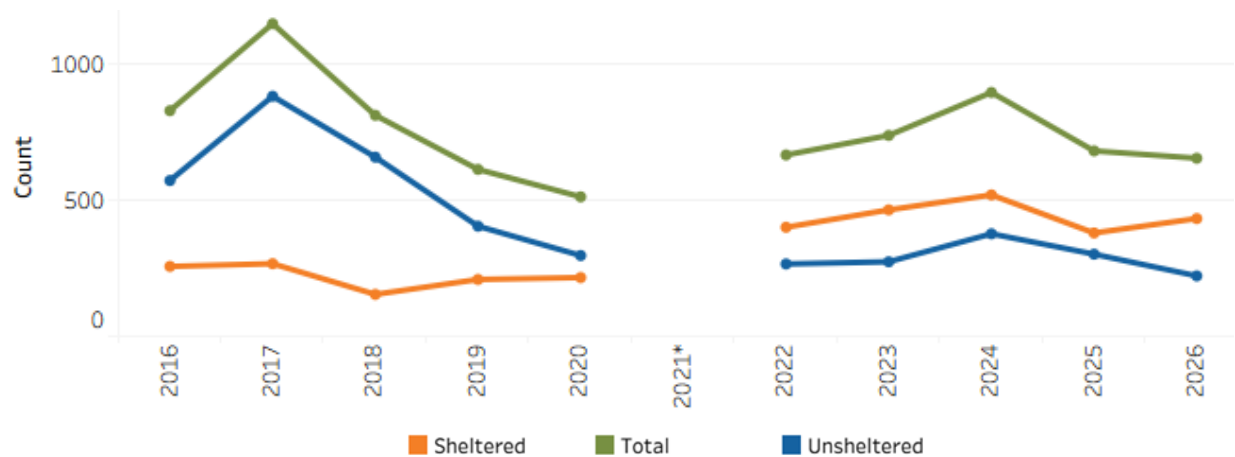
Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2016-2026.

- In 2026, the number of individuals in families experiencing homelessness accounted for 18% of the total PEH population. A large majority of families experiencing homelessness were sheltered (97%).
- The total number of individuals in families experiencing homelessness increased from 1,392 in 2025 to 1,792 in 2026.
- The number of individuals in families that were unsheltered remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2026.

Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Unaccompanied Youth/Children (under 18) are people in households with only children under the age of 18 who are not part of a family with children or accompanied by their parents or guardians during their experience of homelessness. Unaccompanied Youth (18-24) are young adults in households without children who are not part of a family with children or accompanied by their parent or guardian during their episode of homelessness.²

Figure 4: Count of Youth Experiencing Homelessness, San Diego County, 2016-2026



**The Point-in-Time Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

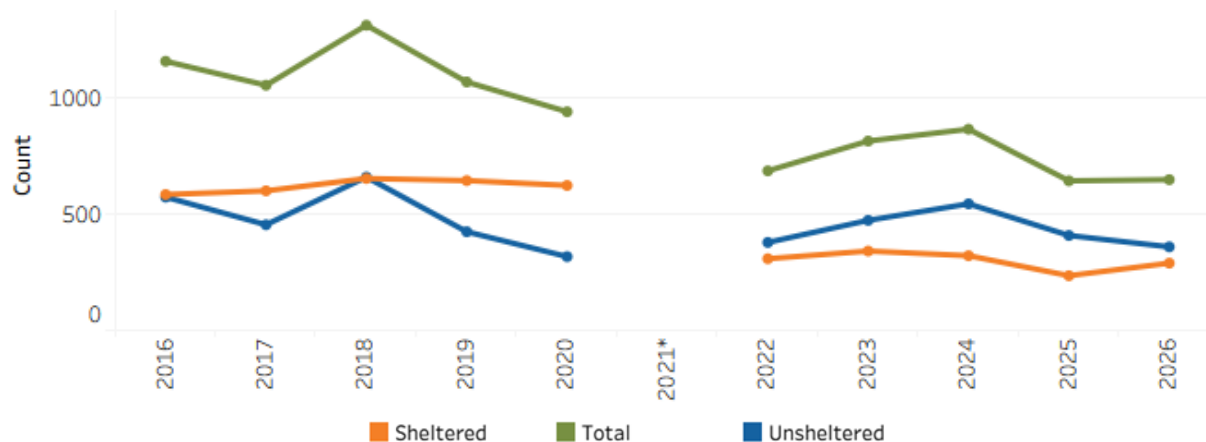
Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2016-2026.

- In 2026, unaccompanied youth accounted for nearly 7% of the PEH population. About 34% of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness were unsheltered.
- There was an increase in the total number of youth experiencing homelessness from 2020 to 2024. However, the number decreased from 897 in 2024 to 655 in 2026.
- Since 2022, sheltered individuals have made up a larger proportion of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness than unsheltered individuals.

Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Veteran refers to any person who served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. This includes Reserves and National Guard members who were called up to active duty.² Veterans are vulnerable to homelessness due to a variety of reasons, including military-related factors such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and military skills that may not be transferable to the civilian workforce.⁸

Figure 5: Count of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness, San Diego County, 2016-2026



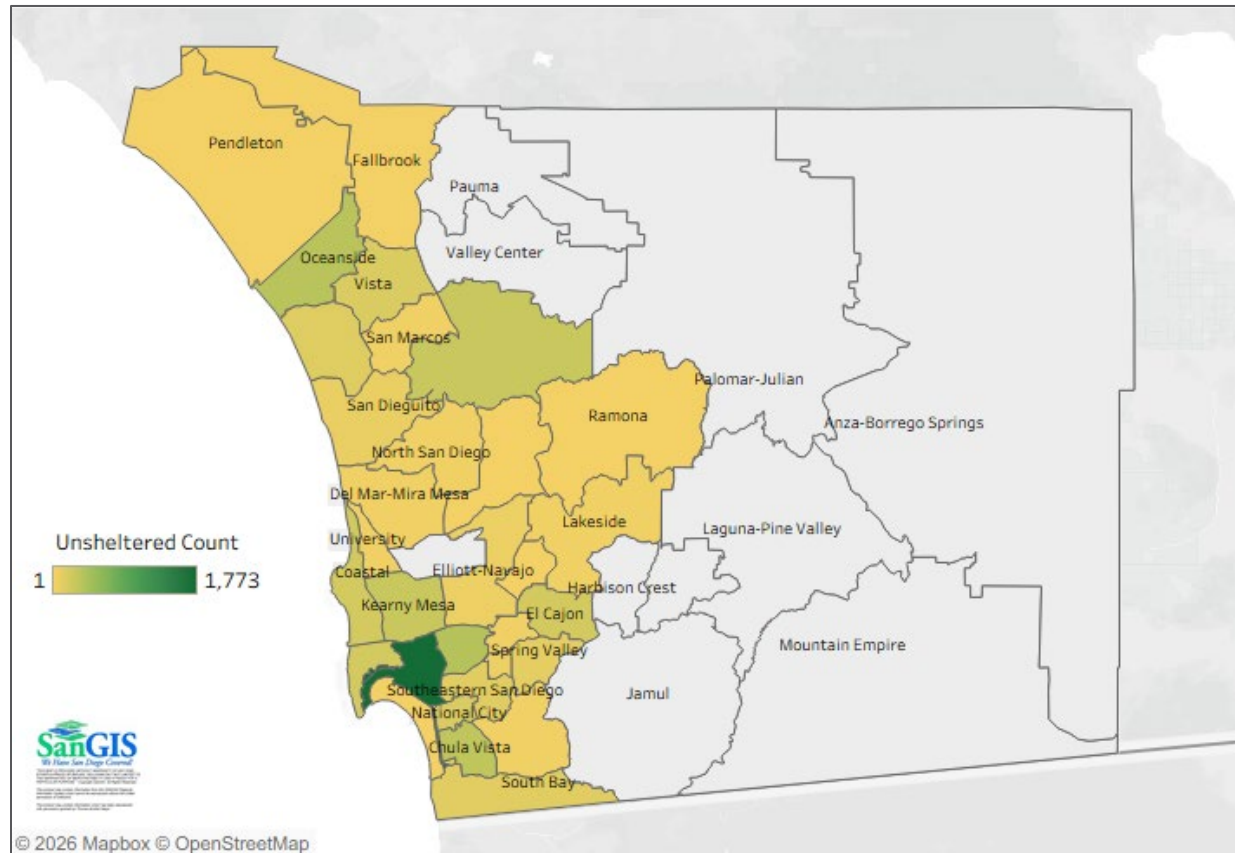
**The Point-in-Time Count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2016-2026.

- In 2026, veterans accounted for nearly 7% of the PEH population. Over half of veterans experiencing homelessness were unsheltered (55%), and 45% were sheltered.
- Overall, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness decreased from 1,157 in 2016 to 648 in 2026.
- There were a higher number of unsheltered than sheltered veterans every year from 2022 to 2026.

Unsheltered Counts by Subregional Area (SRA)

**Figure 6: Unsheltered Point-in-Time Counts (PITCs) by Subregional Area (SRA),
San Diego County, 2026**



Source: Regional Task Force on Homelessness, Point-in-Time Count, 2026.

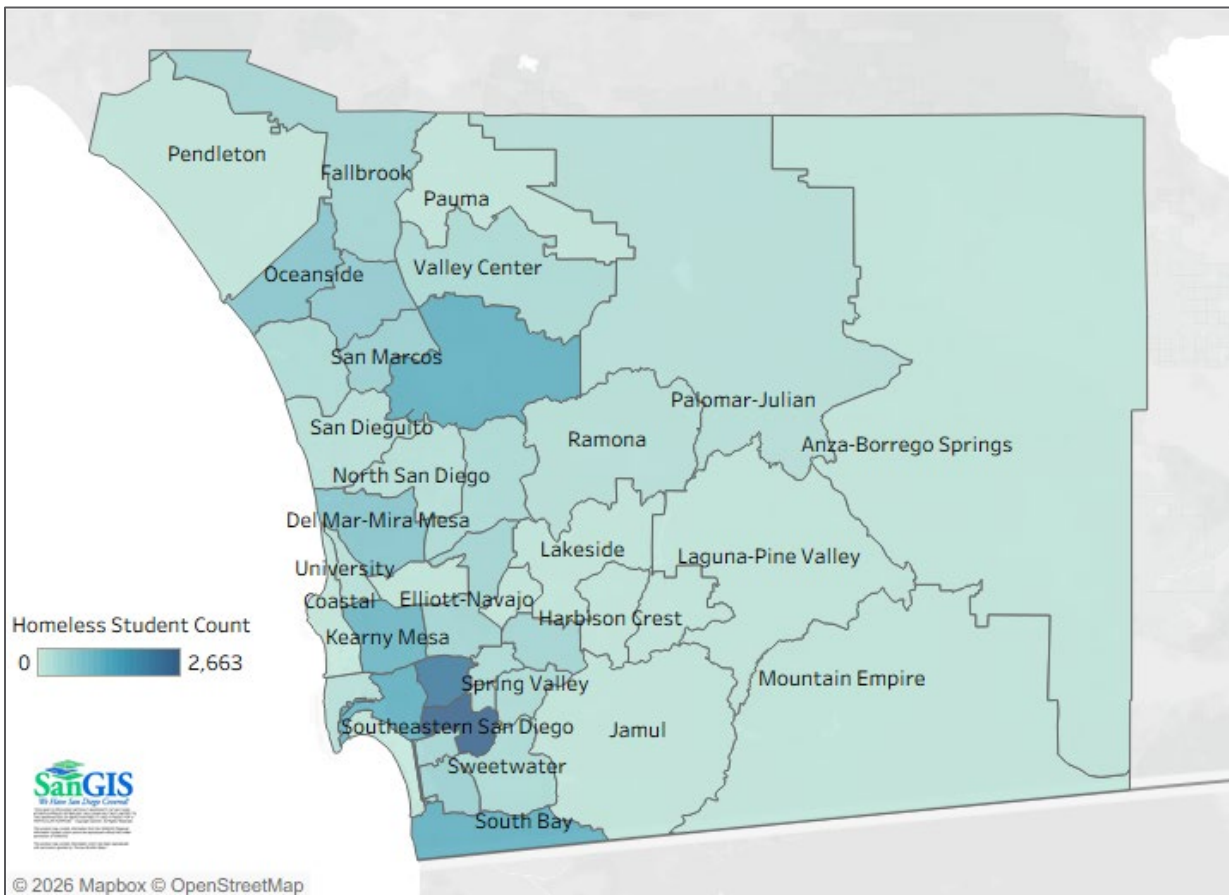
Central San Diego Subregional Area (SRA) had the greatest number of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness in Central Region and San Diego County overall.

In 2026, about 1,770 unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness were counted in Central San Diego SRA.

Students Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless Students in San Diego County

Figure 7: Homeless Student (Preschool-Adults) by Subregional Area (SRA), San Diego County, 2025-2026

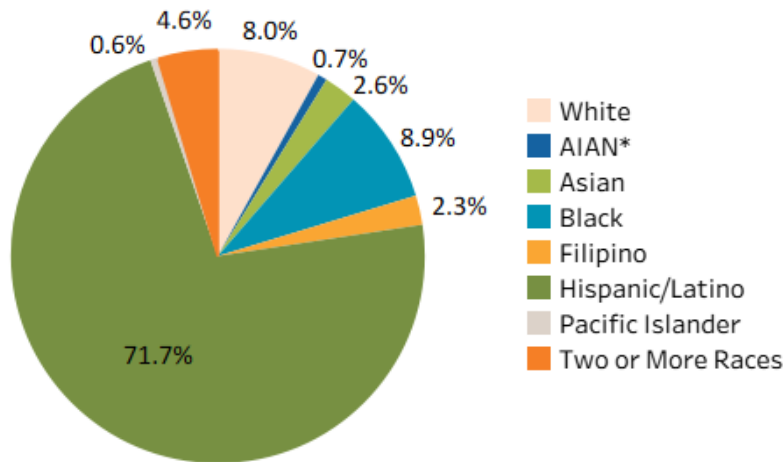


Source: California Department of Education, California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), 2023-2024.

In the 2025-2026 school year, there were 18,161 students experiencing homelessness in San Diego County.

Among Subregional Areas (SRAs) in San Diego County, Southeastern San Diego had the greatest number of students experiencing homelessness (2,663), followed by Mid-City (2,130).

Figure 8: Homeless Student Population by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County, 2024-2025



In the 2024-2025 school year, the majority of the homeless student population was Hispanic or Latino.

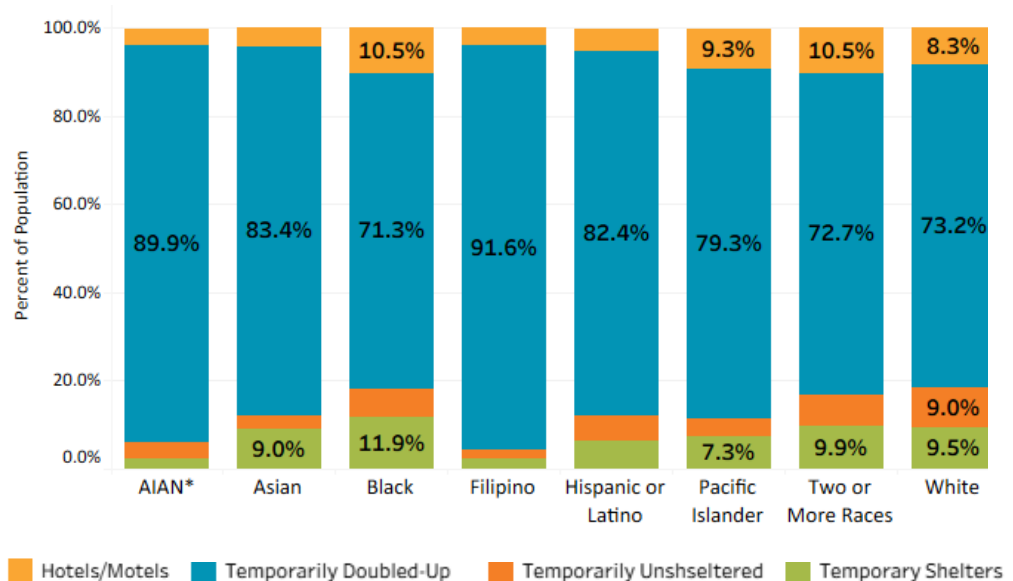
The Hispanic/Latino population made up nearly 72% of the homeless student population, 1.4 times the proportion of Hispanic students in San Diego County overall (49.5%). Black students made up 8.9% of the homeless student population, twice the proportion of Black students in San Diego County overall (4.3%).

Source: California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2024-2025 Homeless Student Enrollment by Dwelling Type, San Diego County Report Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity. Accessed 6/9/2026.

In the 2024-2025 school year, the majority of the homeless student population, regardless of race/ethnicity, was temporarily doubled-up.

The Black and multiple race homeless student populations had the highest proportion of students living in hotels/motels (10.5%), and the Black homeless student population had the highest proportion of students living in temporary shelters (11.9%). The White student population had the highest proportion of students who were temporarily unsheltered (9.0%).

Figure 9: Homeless Student Count by Race/Ethnicity and Dwelling, San Diego County, 2024-2025



Source: California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2024-2025 Homeless Student Enrollment by Dwelling Type, San Diego County Report Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity. Accessed 6/9/26.

Medical Encounters

Hospitals in San Diego County are beginning to adopt the practice of indicating select social determinants of health in patients' medical records through defined codes (ICD-10 Z codes). This information was utilized to examine hospital and emergency department (ED) discharge data for persons experiencing homelessness in 2024. Data in this section are unduplicated counts of individuals whose records indicated they were experiencing homelessness.

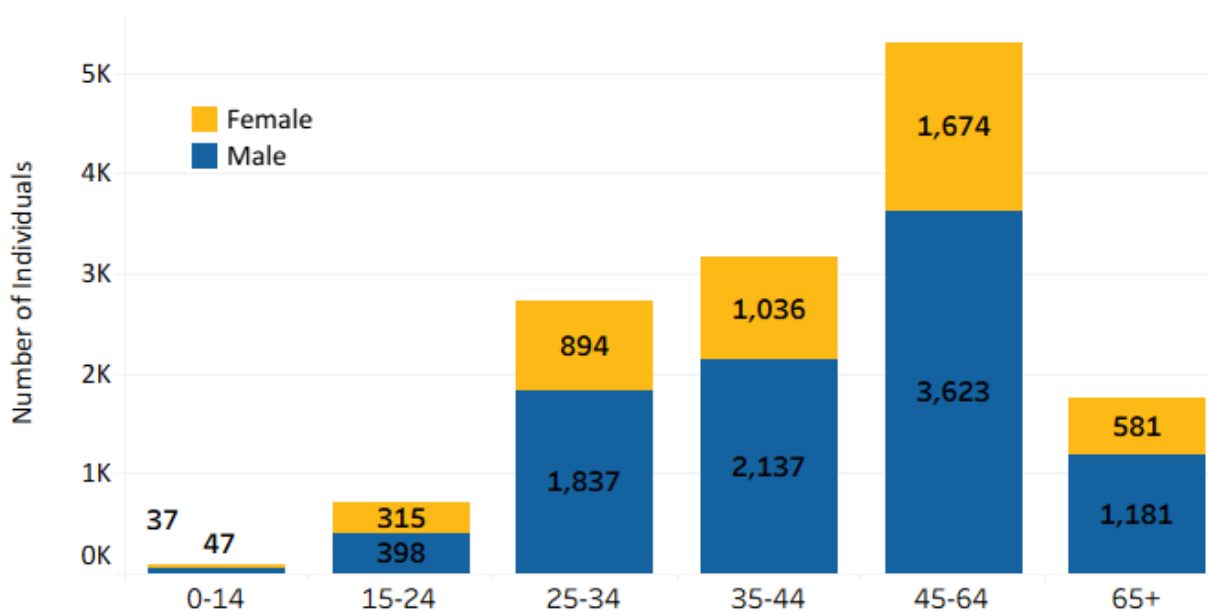
Emergency Department Discharges

Number of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Discharged from the ED	Total Number of ED Discharges Experiencing Homelessness	Average Number of Visits per Person
13,765	41,537	3.0

In 2024, 13,765 persons experiencing homelessness were discharged from the Emergency Department (ED) in San Diego County. There was a total of 41,537 ED discharges of persons experiencing homelessness in 2024, indicating an average of about 3.0 visits per person experiencing homelessness.

Demographics

Figure 10: ED Discharges by Age and Sex, San Diego County, 2024

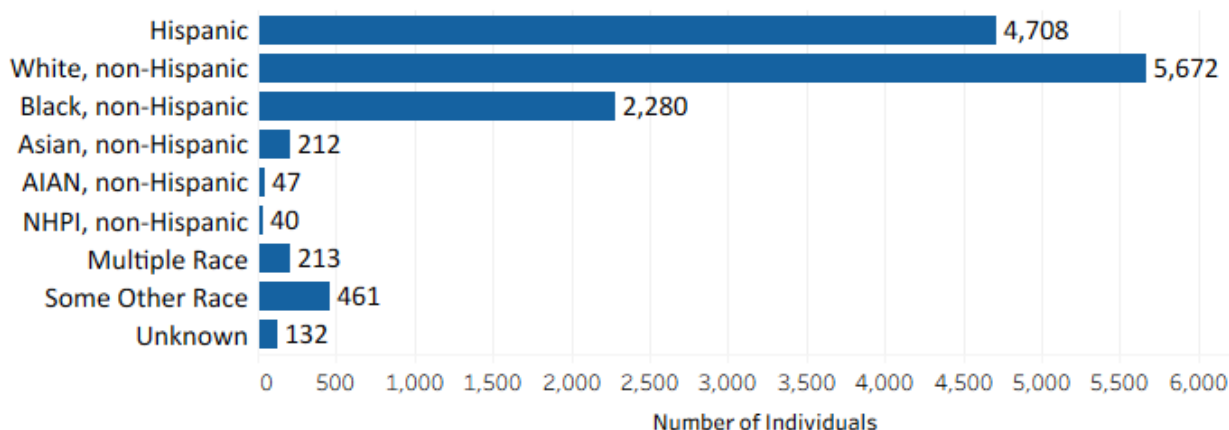


Individuals with unknown gender or age are not included in count of gender by age.

Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department Discharge Data, 2024.

Among PEH that were discharged from the ED, the highest number of discharges was among 45–64-year-olds for both males and females. There were more male PEH discharged from the ED than female PEH.

Figure 11: ED Discharges by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County, 2024



AIAN: American Indian/Alaska Native. NHPI: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department Discharge Data, 2024.

Among PEH discharged from the ED, the highest number of discharges was among non-Hispanic White PEH (5,672 discharges), followed by Hispanic (4,708 discharges), and non-Hispanic Black (2,280 discharges).

Geography

Emergency Departments in zip code 92103 had the greatest number of emergency discharges of PEH (7,398 discharges) compared to other zip codes.

Expected Source of Payment

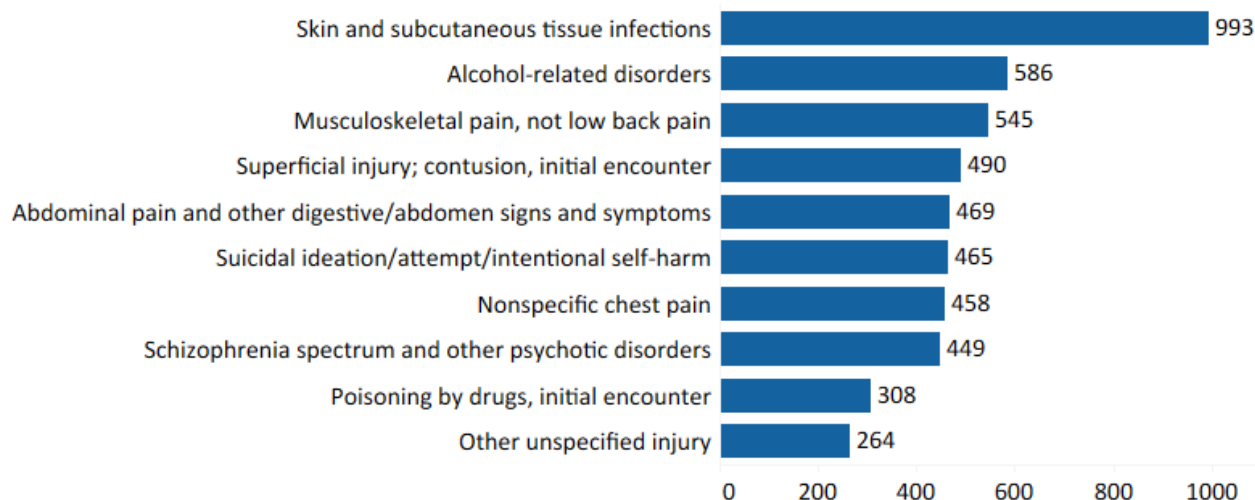
The majority of PEH discharged from emergency departments in San Diego County in 2024 had Medi-Cal (9,724 discharges) as the expected source of payment.

Patient Disposition

The majority of PEH discharged from the emergency departments in San Diego County in 2024 were discharged to home or self-care (routine discharge) (11,810 discharges) or left against medical advice or discontinued care (717 discharges).

Primary Diagnoses

Figure 12: Top 10 Primary Diagnoses Among PEH Discharged from Emergency Departments, San Diego County, 2024



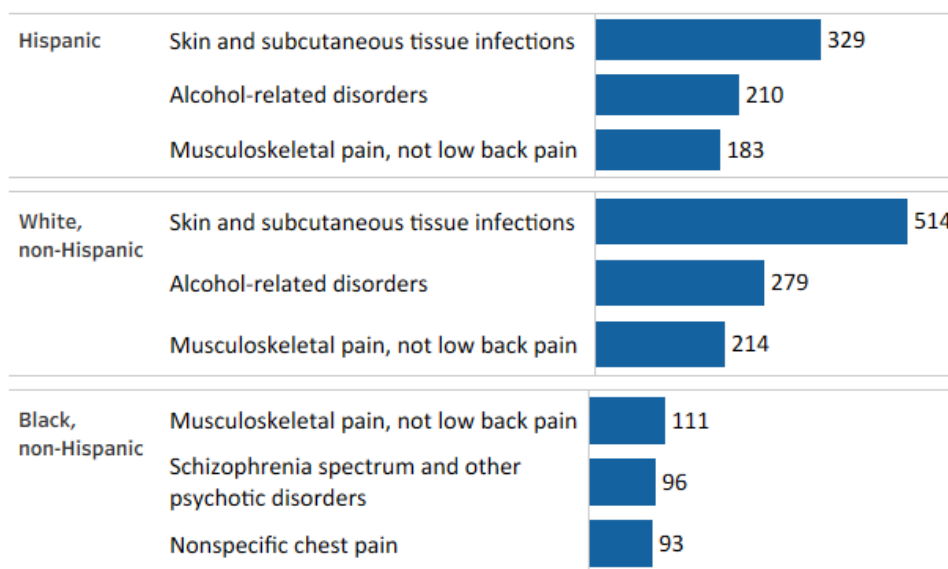
Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department Discharge Data, 2024.

The top diagnosis among PEH discharged from emergency departments in San Diego County was skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (993 discharges), followed by alcohol-related disorders (586 discharges), and musculoskeletal pain, not low back pain (545 discharges).

The top diagnosis among Hispanic PEH discharged from emergency departments in San Diego County was skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (329 discharges), followed by alcohol-related disorders (210 discharges), and musculoskeletal pain, not low back pain (183 discharges).

The top diagnosis among non-Hispanic White PEH discharged from emergency departments in San Diego County was skin and subcutaneous

Figure 13: Top 3 Primary Diagnoses Among PEH Discharged from Emergency Departments by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County, 2024



Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department Discharge Data, 2024.

tissue infections (514 discharges), followed by alcohol-related disorders (279 discharges), and musculoskeletal pain, not low back pain (214 discharges).

The top diagnosis among non-Hispanic Black PEH discharged from emergency departments in San Diego County was musculoskeletal pain, not low back pain (111 discharges), followed by schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders (96 discharges), and nonspecific chest pain (93 discharges).

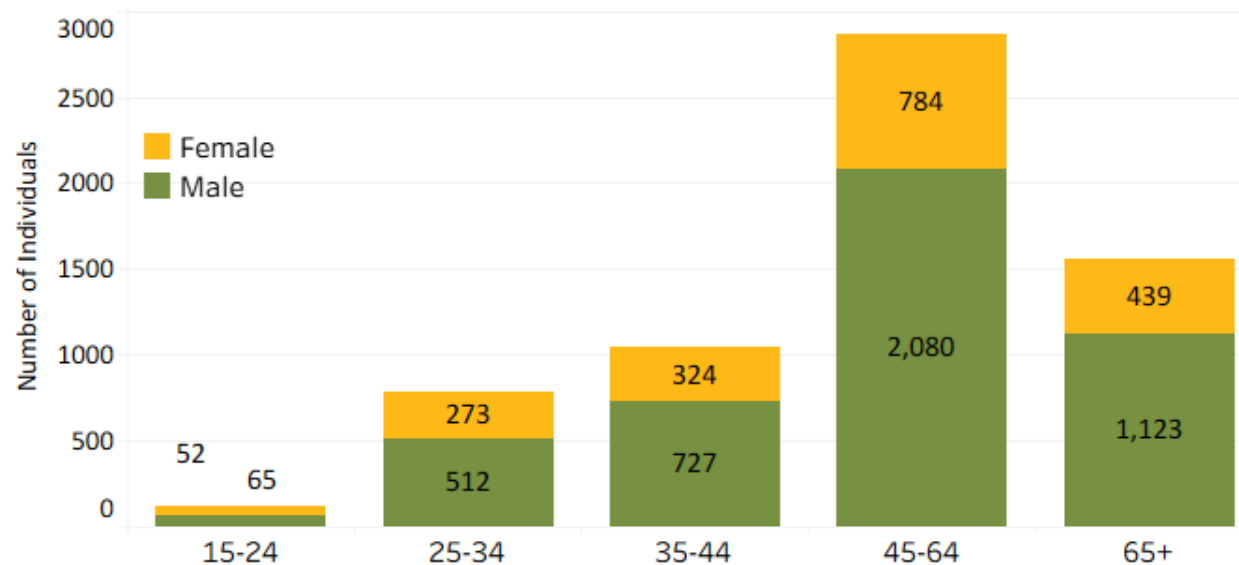
Hospital Discharges

Number of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness Discharged from the Hospital	Total Number of Hospital Discharges Experiencing Homelessness	Average Number of Visits per Person
6,389	11,711	1.8

In 2024, 6,389 persons experiencing homelessness were discharged from a hospital in San Diego County. There was a total of 11,711 hospital discharges of persons experiencing homelessness in 2024, indicating an average of 1.8 visits per person experiencing homelessness.

Demographics

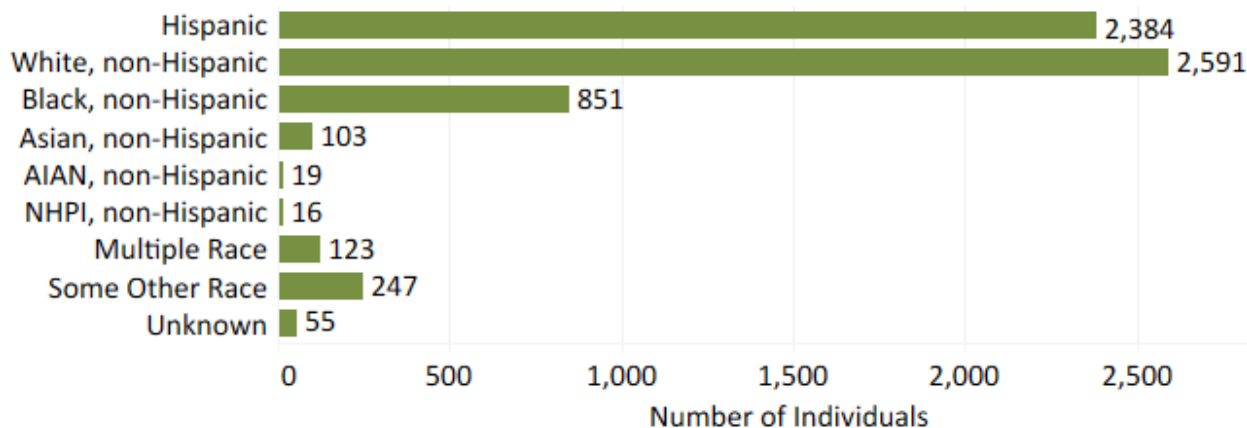
Figure 14: Hospital Discharges by Age and Sex, San Diego County, 2024



Individuals with unknown gender or age are not included in count of gender by age.
Source: California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data, 2024.

Among PEH discharged from the hospital, the highest number of discharges was among 45–64-year-olds for both males and females. There were more male PEH discharged from the hospital than female PEH.

Figure 15: Hospital Discharges by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County, 2024



AIAN: American Indian/Alaska Native. NHPI: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Source: California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data, 2024.

Among PEH that were discharged from the hospital, the highest number of hospital discharges was among non-Hispanic White PEH (2,591 discharges), followed by Hispanic (2,384), and non-Hispanic Black (851).

Geography

Hospitals in the zip code 92103 had the greatest number of discharges of PEH (2,897 discharges) compared to other zip codes in 2024.

Source of Payment

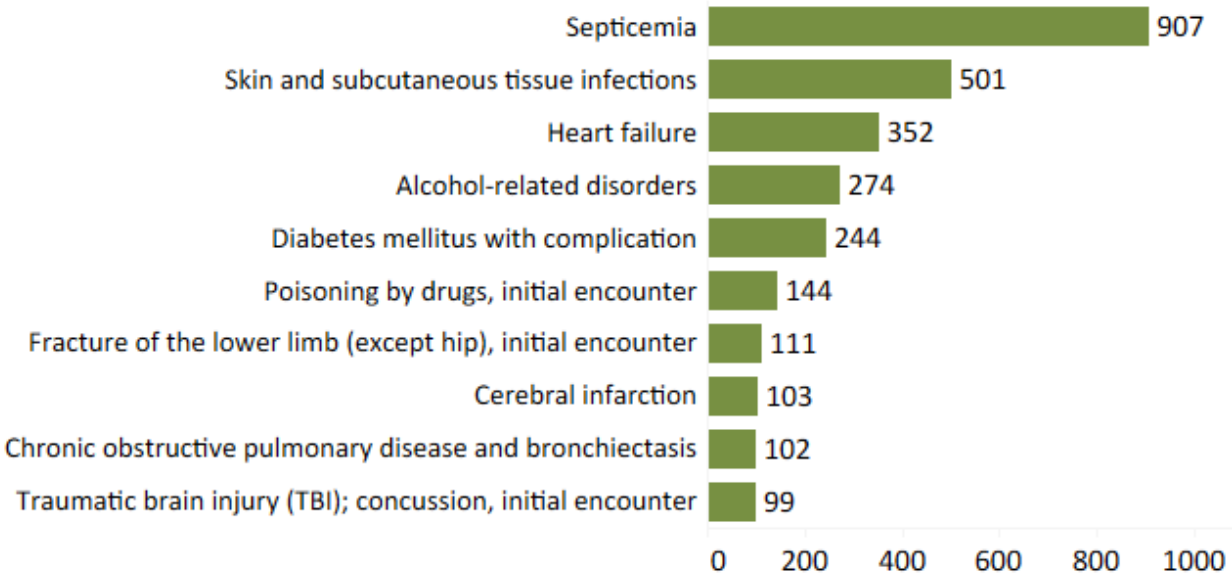
The majority of PEH discharged from hospitals in San Diego County in 2024 had Medi-Cal (4,153 discharges) or Medicare (1,801 discharges) as the expected source of payment.

Patient Disposition

The majority of PEH discharged from the hospitals in San Diego County in 2024 were discharged to home or self-care (routine discharge) (3,793 discharges) or were discharged/transferred to a skilled nursing facility (SNF) with Medicare certification in anticipation of skilled care (1,253 discharges).

Primary Diagnoses

Figure 16: Top 10 Primary Diagnoses Among PEH Discharged from Hospitals, San Diego County, 2024



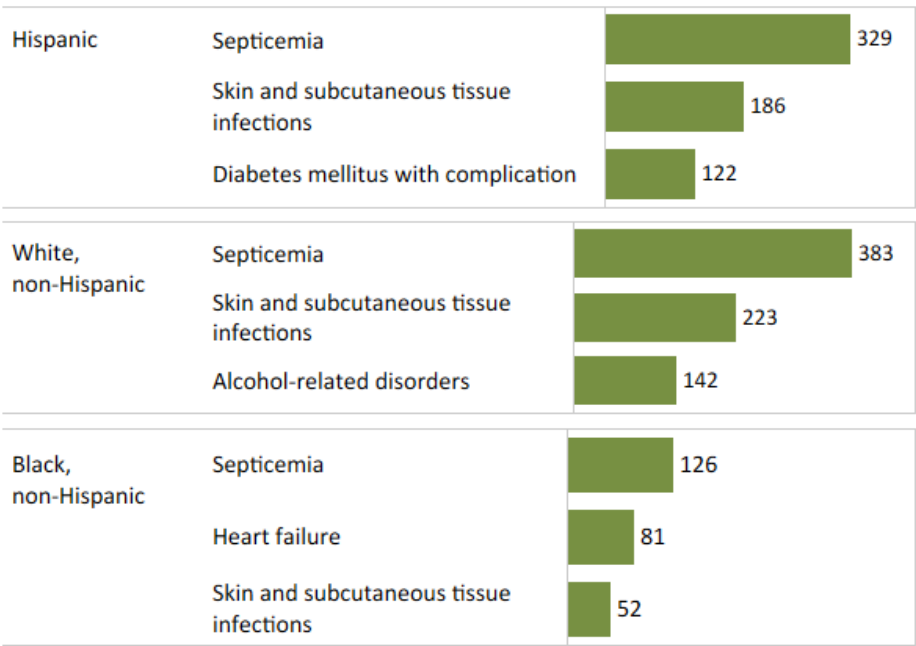
Source: California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data, 2024.

The top diagnosis among PEH discharged from hospitals in San Diego County was septicemia (907 discharges), followed by skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (501 discharges), and heart failure (352 discharges).

The top diagnosis among Hispanic PEH discharged from hospitals in San Diego County was septicemia (329 discharges), followed by skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (186 discharges), and diabetes mellitus with complication (122 discharges).

The top diagnosis among non-Hispanic White PEH discharged from hospitals in San Diego County was septicemia (383 discharges), followed by skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (223 discharges), and alcohol-related disorders (142 discharges).

Figure 17: Top 3 Primary Diagnoses Among PEH Discharged from Hospitals by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County, 2024

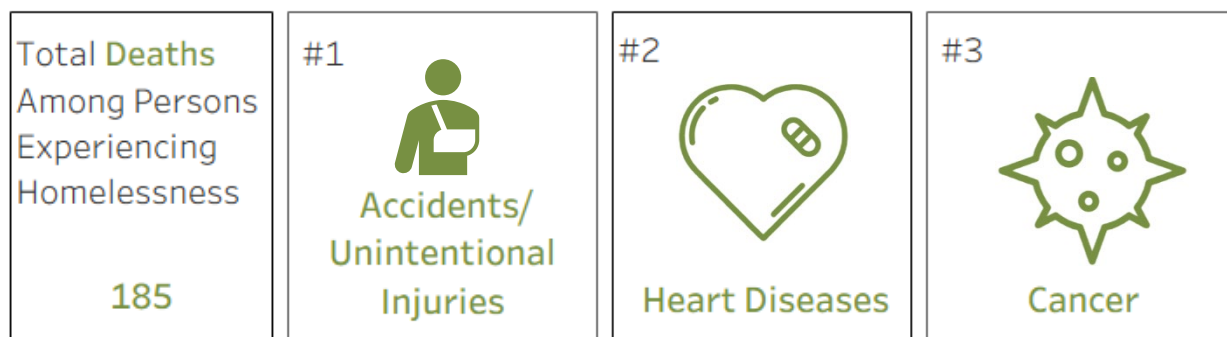


Source: California Department of Healthcare Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data, 2024.

The top diagnosis among non-Hispanic Black PEH discharged from hospitals in San Diego County was septicemia (126 discharges), followed by heart failure (81 discharges) and skin and subcutaneous tissue infections (52 discharges).

Mortality

Figure 18: Leading Causes of Death
Among Persons Experiencing Homelessness in San Diego County, 2024



Rank is based on total number of deaths in each of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) "rankable" categories. The top 3 leading causes of death presented here are based on deaths that occurred in San Diego for their respective years. Cause of death is based on the underlying cause of death reported on death certificates as classified by ICD-10 codes. Source: State of California, California Department of Public Health, Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS), California Comprehensive Death File, 2024, created on September 15, 2025.

The top three leading causes of death among persons experiencing homelessness in San Diego County in 2024 were accidents/unintentional injuries, heart diseases, and cancer.

Demographics

Table 1: Deaths among Persons Experiencing Homelessness, San Diego County, 2024		
Demographic	Count	% of Total
Sex		
Male	150	81.1%
Female	35	18.9%
Age		
Ages 0-9	NA	NA
Ages 10-19	NA	NA
Ages 20-29	NA	NA
Ages 30-39	29	15.7%
Ages 40-49	34	18.4%
Ages 50-59	41	22.2%
Ages 60-69	60	32.4%
Ages 70-79	12	6.5%
Ages 80 Plus	NA	NA
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic	49	26.5%
NH White	102	55.1%
NH Black	25	13.5%
NH API	NA	NA
NH Other	NA	NA
Total	185	100.0%

Table contains deaths that occurred in San Diego County. NA: Not shown for fewer than 11 deaths. NH: Non-Hispanic. Source: State of California, California Department of Public Health, Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS), California Comprehensive Death File, 2024, created on September 15, 2025.

Sex

Males made up the majority of the deaths among PEH (81.1%).

Age

Over half of the deaths among PEH were among those aged 50-69 (54.6%).

Race/Ethnicity

The Non-Hispanic White population accounted for 55.1% of deaths among PEH, followed by Hispanic (26.5%), and Non-Hispanic Black (13.5%).

Conclusion

Homelessness continues to increase across the United States, California, and San Diego County. Lack of adequate and stable housing exacerbates existing health problems and can cause new ones, including chronic disease, poor mental health, and increased complications following infection or injury. Collection and examination of data identifying persons experiencing homelessness and their health outcomes is crucial to understanding the population's health disparities. These data may inform decisions regarding targeted resources and interventions.

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