



UNITED WAY CHAMPIONS  
Local solutions. Lasting impact.

# FIGHTING HOMELESSNESS

## YOUR INVESTMENT AT WORK



FALL 2019

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

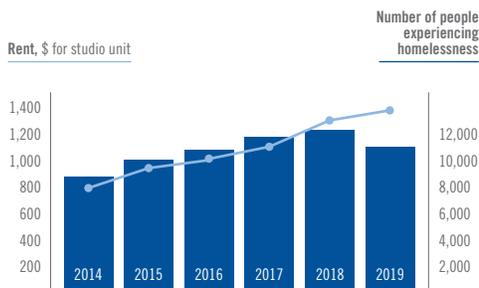
Homelessness continues to be a crisis in many west coast cities. While this was the first year since 2012 that King County saw a drop in the number of people experiencing homelessness—the numbers are still too high. The [2019 Point-in-Time count](#) found 11,199 people experiencing homelessness. Throughout the year, 30,000 people will experience homelessness.

Why is the problem so persistent? Consider these troubling facts:

- **Housing prices are outpacing incomes.** In the last decade, home prices have risen nearly 60%, three times the national growth rate. Today, even a middle-income household can no longer afford to rent, let alone buy, a home in most of the county's zip codes.

Housing prices are seven times the median income in King County. Recent research by Zillow found this correlation between homelessness and median income affordability: when median rent exceeds 32% of median income, cities see faster growth in homelessness.

All of this, combined with stagnant wages for low-skilled workers, a dearth of section 8 housing vouchers and an unstable safety net have contributed to our homelessness crisis.



Rent increases in Seattle and King County show a strong correlation with homelessness.

Fair-market rent (FMR) and homeless population in King County

- **People of color continue to experience homelessness at an even higher rate.** In 2019, more than half of individuals experiencing homelessness in King County identified as people of color. This is compared to people of color making up only 33% of the general population in King County. These disparities exist because people of color are less likely to have benefited from multigenerational inherited wealth. Racism persists and they may have experienced displacement due to gentrification and are more likely to experience employment and housing discrimination.

### YOUR INVESTMENT IS HELPING DRIVE PROGRESS

Donors like you helped connect more than 2,200 people to housing through [Streets to Home](#) and more than 1,500 people experiencing homelessness to part- and full-time employment. With more resources, we know that housing and income can end this crisis.

Additional progress made:

#### Hundreds of families received financial assistance to prevent an eviction

A catalytic gift from The Seattle Mariners—and donations from dozens of companies and individuals—allowed for the rollout of an eviction prevention program this year. Home Base combines emergency funds with legal assistance from the King County Bar Association



to keep families in their homes. More than 1,000 households received legal assistance and 405 families received financial assistance to prevent an eviction.

With 40% of Americans not able to cover a \$400 emergency expense, the threat of eviction can be just one paycheck away. Your donation allows us to stop the pipeline into homelessness—a critical strategy to fighting our community’s current crisis.

Who qualifies for eviction prevention through Home Base? Clients must have:	
• Been served an eviction	• Proof of income
• Ability to pay rent going forward	• Home Base must be able to save tenancy or extend it for at least 30 days

### Raising awareness of limitations of one-way bus tickets.

The ongoing crisis of homelessness has left people wondering what to do and who to blame. This year we’ve heard recommendations that include criminalizing homelessness and spending \$1 million to transport people to other communities. Evidence shows that neither [criminalization](#) nor [bussing strategies](#) work.

With the attention from KOMO’s Seattle is Dying piece—and a recurring issue in local elections—the community-wide debate around paying for bus tickets gained national attention in September. We know that bussing people out of town is not the answer. For example, in our Streets to Program, we know that reuniting clients to family/friends in other areas is only a viable option for fewer than 5%. We need more housing and we need more money to implement the strategies that are working.

United Way has been part of the local and national conversation, sharing that while bus tickets work for some people—we paid for 116 one-way bus tickets last year—it can be a distraction from what we know works. We are seeing greater results by focusing on connecting people on the streets to housing and income.

Some key articles on the subject:

- New York Times, September 15, 2019, [Homeless Residents Got One-Way Tickets Out of Town. Many Returned to the Streets.](#)
- Seattle Times, September 10, 2019, [King County Councilmember proposes spending \\$1 million to bus homeless people out of the region](#)

## WHAT WE’VE SEEN THIS YEAR

**People facing eviction have higher housing debt than anticipated.** Through the launch of [Home Base](#), we’ve met more than a thousand families on the brink of eviction. What we’ve seen is that many families are further behind than we thought. Perhaps there have been verbal agreements between tenants and landlords—and suddenly a family is two months behind instead of one. The average cost per household to prevent an eviction in these early months has been \$3,600. Recent wins in legislation have limited late fees—this should help keep those fines from escalating too quickly. We are also working to create a coordinated system that will help families sooner.

**Flexible funds are a learning curve for agencies.** For good, historical reasons, service providers often have a ‘scarcity mindset’ when it comes to their funding. The idea of having flexible funds to spend—when clients need it—is new. For example, a family may be unsheltered and likely candidates for the Streets to Home program. Because agencies often have this mindset, they may wait until the next Family Resource Exchange to help the family. We know that families should be screened and served on the spot—and maintain our commitment to fundraise so that more people can be served. We’ve been working closely with our agency partners, bringing them together for training, etc. to help them get more comfortable with this new idea. We expect this to be fully resolved in the upcoming year.

**Employers are leaning in.** Jobs Connect continues to match a high number of people experiencing homelessness to jobs. We’ve seen success with the likes of UPS, FedEx and Amazon—and we’d like to expand our efforts. Engaging more employers to participate in outreach and onboarding requires a coordinated effort on our part. We’ll continue to use the Community Resource Exchange as a point of entry and dedicate staff time to building out the number of employer partners.

## YOUR INVESTMENT PROVIDES

**Leverage.** We continue to leverage business partnerships in creative ways. The Seattle Mariners' recent investment in eviction prevention with a Home Base partnership is just one example. Starbucks continues to drive the expansion of the Community Resource Exchange to reach families across the county—serving families through large, public events five times throughout the year.

In addition, we have 10 AmeriCorp members—a federally funded resource—on the ground year-round to deliver the Streets to Home program and help people experiencing homelessness navigate other resources.

**Influence.** Last year, donors invested millions of dollars to ensure people have homes. This sort of commitment and grantmaking ability allows us to take leadership roles in regional efforts to end homelessness.

Our resolve to focus funding in areas that will help close the racial disparities gaps is raising the bar for other funders. We are also working with employers to expand Jobs Connect.

**Effectiveness.** Despite housing costs outpacing incomes and the high number of people experiencing homelessness, United Way funding helped more than 2,000 people get connected to housing last year—and even more stay in their homes and avoid eviction.

## YOU MAKE THIS WORK HAPPEN

It's clear that without your support, our community would not be as strong:

- **More people would be living on the street.** Your support has enabled us to invest in keeping people in their homes. This includes our partnership with Neighborhood House, helping low-income college students stay in their homes, and with Wellspring Family Services and Urban League, helping families avoid eviction through Home Base.
- **Fewer people struggling with homelessness would be connected to employment.** You helped 1,573 people connect to a variety of long-term employment: forklift training, retail coaching, full culinary programs and apprenticeship programs for sheet metal fabrication and machinist.

**Thank you for your commitment to this important work!**

