

Homelessness in Austin

Presentation to: Community Development Commission

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Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)

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Agenda



About ECHO



Scope of Homelessness in Austin/Travis County



Challenges: The landscape in Austin/Travis County



Causes and Risk Factors



Solutions to Homelessness



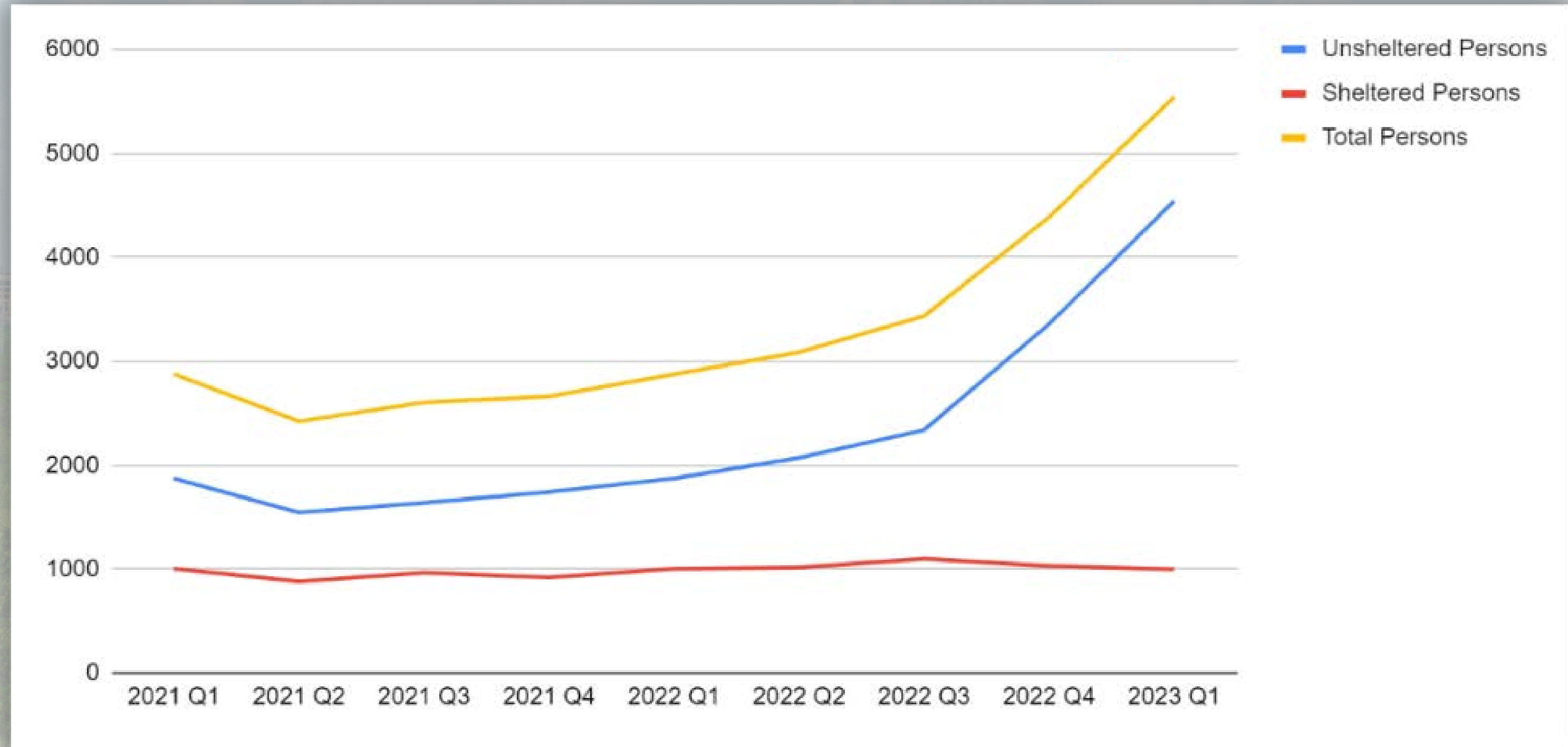
About ECHO

ECHO's Roles

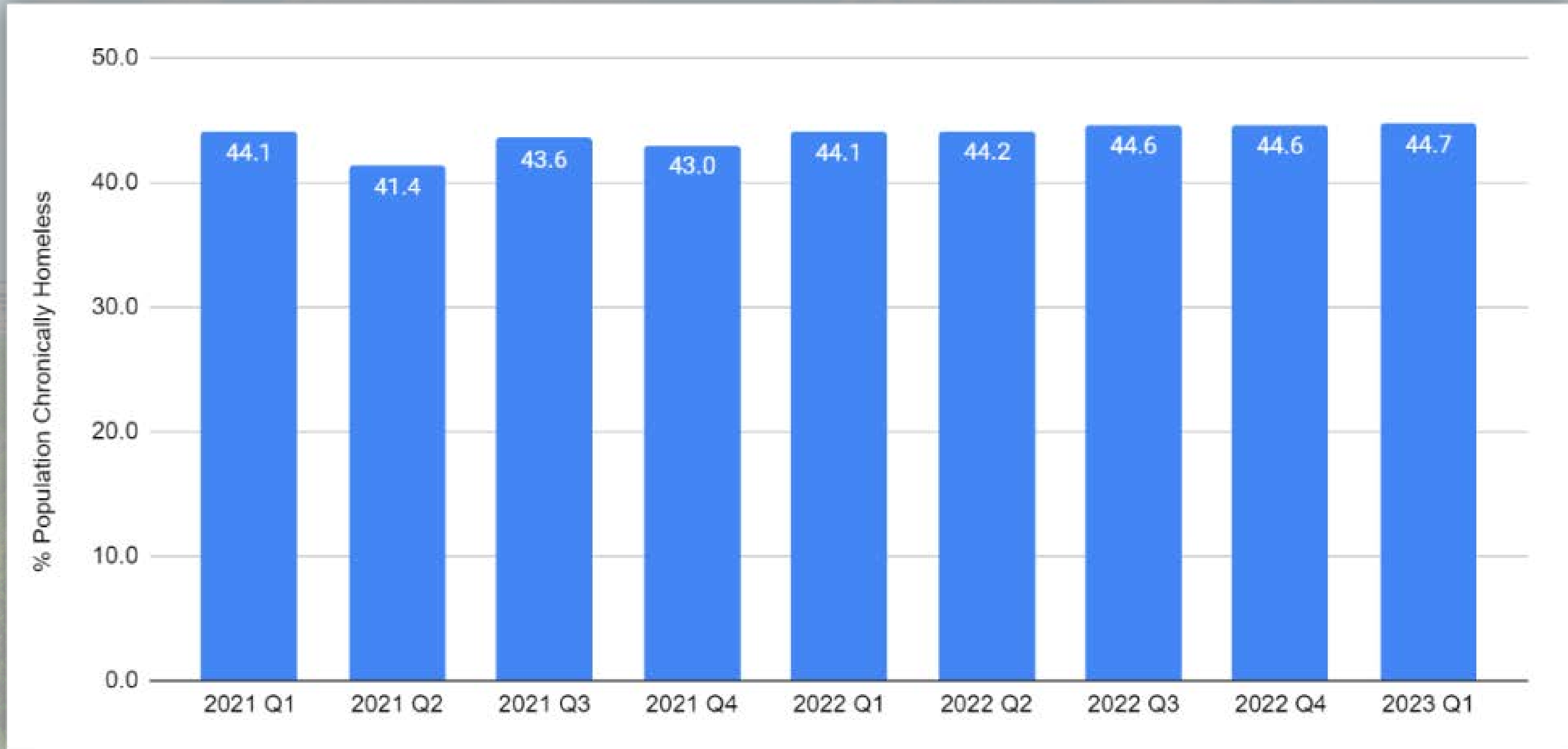
- Coordinates **community-wide, data-driven strategies and funding** to end homelessness
- **Collaborates with direct service providers** who are connecting people with housing and supportive services
- Administers **person-level community database** to track demographics and service needs over time



Scope of Homelessness



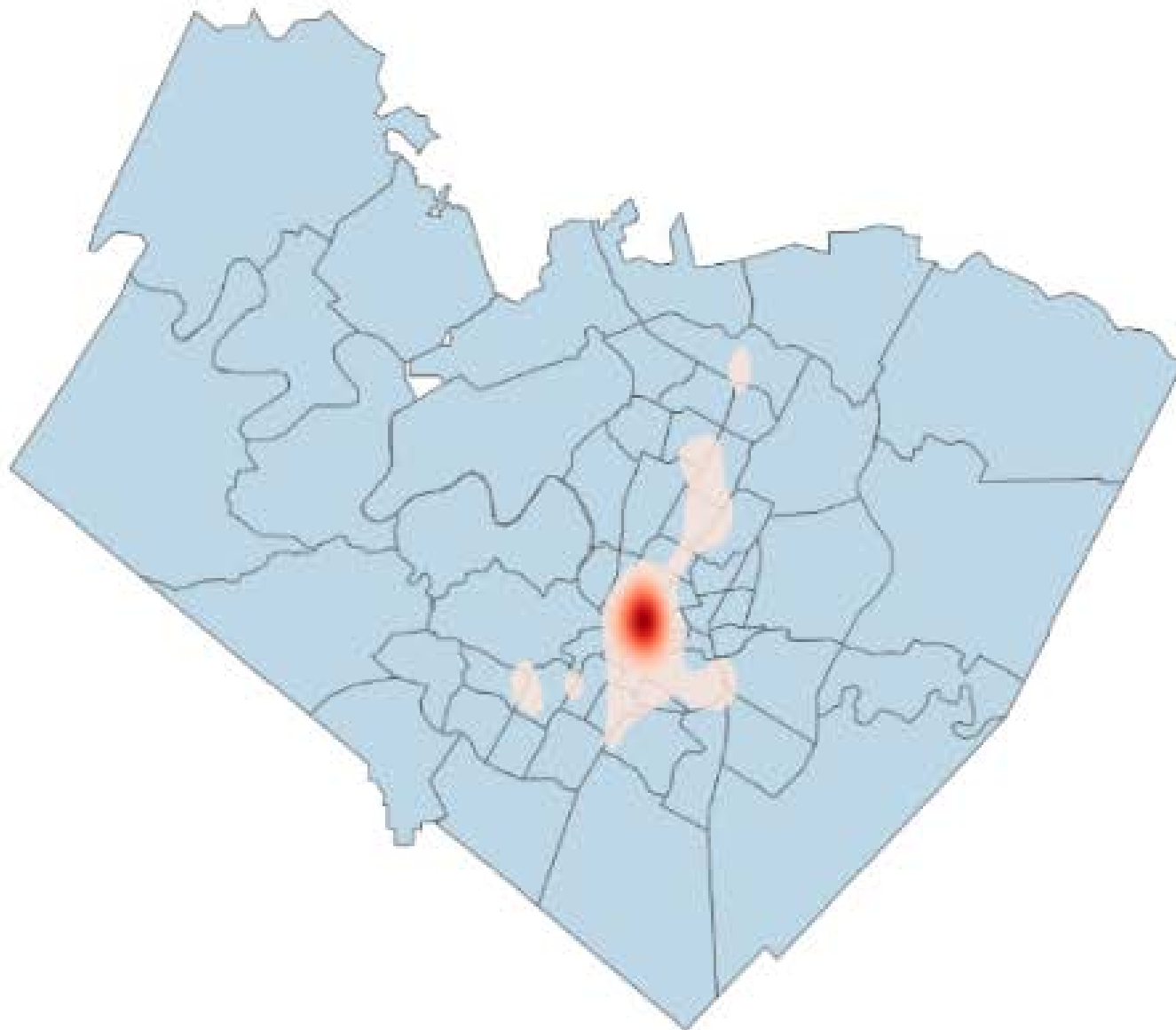
Scope of Homelessness



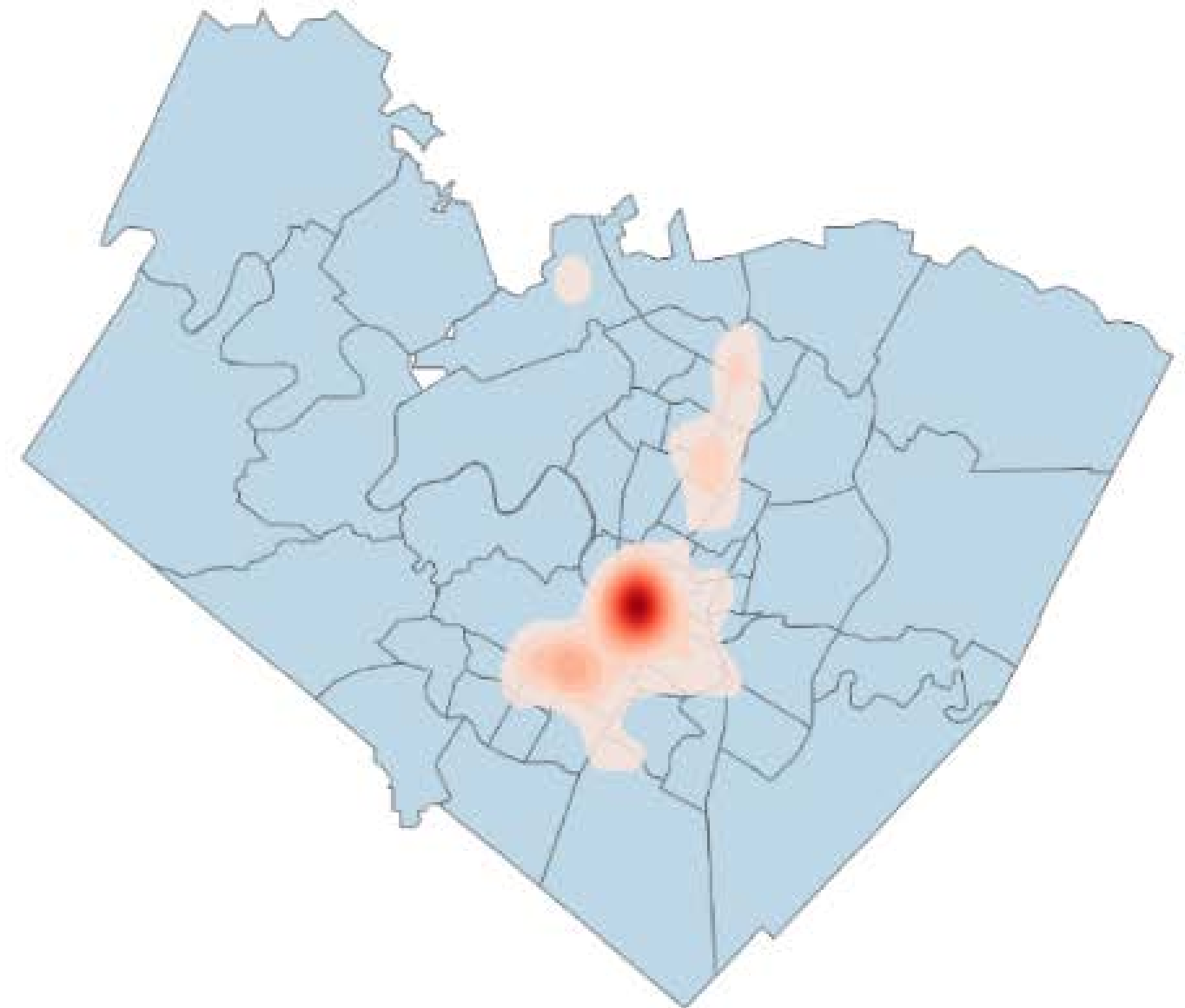
Scope of Homelessness

Geographic Distribution - Heatmaps

PIT Count 2020



PIT Count 2023



Homelessness in Austin

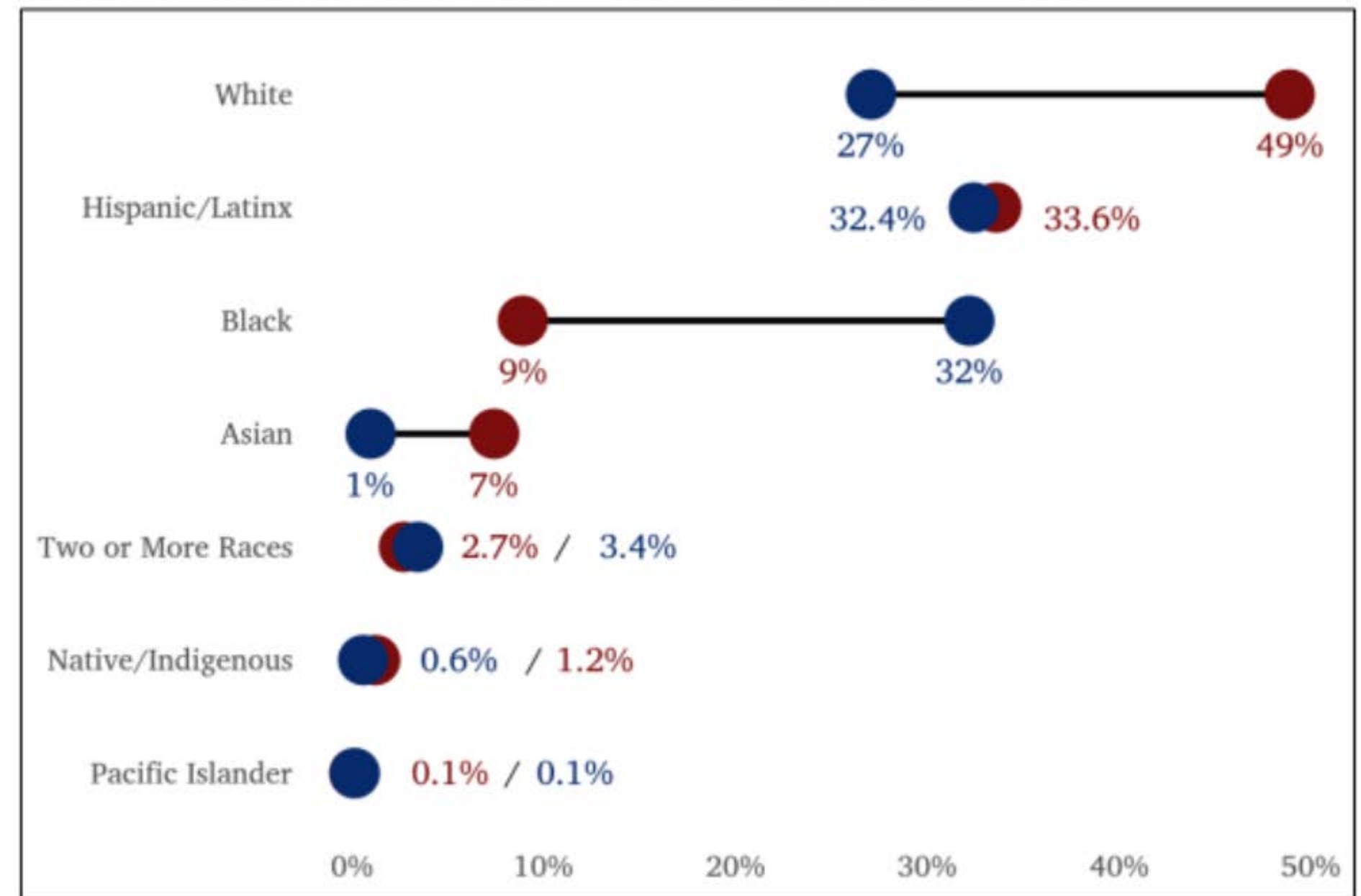
Demographics (HMIS data)

- In 2021, Austin's unhoused population was:
 - Disproportionately Black (**32%**)
 - Majority male (**58.2%**)
 - Mostly single households (**84.7%**)
 - Mostly born/raised or last permanently housed in Austin (**63%**)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [2022 Racial Disparities Report](#)
- [2022 Needs & Gaps Report](#)
- [Blog Post | Five Takeaways: Racial Disparities and Needs & Gaps in Austin's Unhoused Community](#)

Figure 7: Travis County and PEH Populations Race and Ethnicity



● People Experiencing Homelessness
● Travis County Population

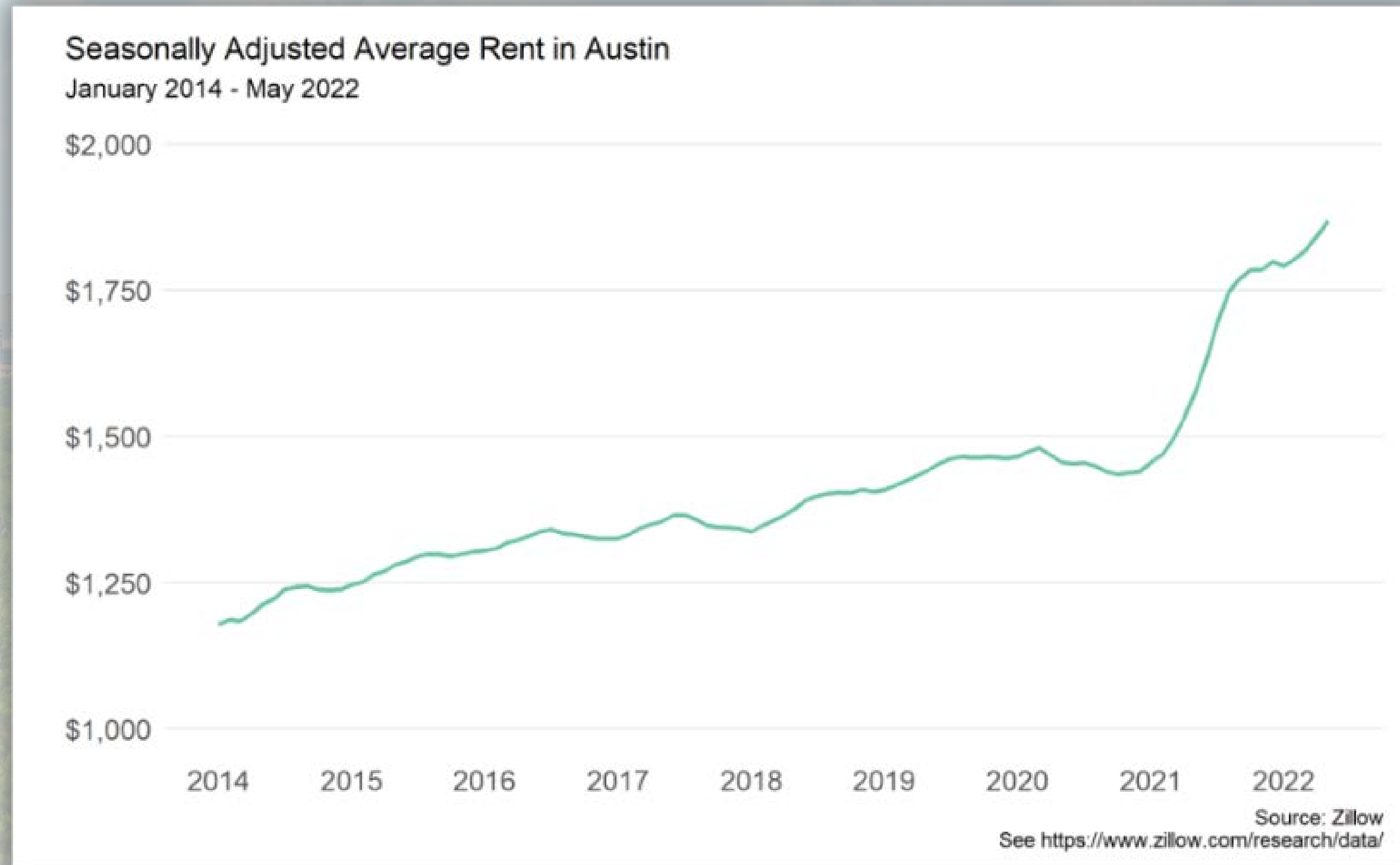
Challenges

Housing Market

- **Limited capacity and increasingly unaffordable**
- Resulting in **bottlenecks** in our system
- People experiencing homelessness often **wait months before moving into housing**
- Prolonged unsheltered homelessness **compounds the problem:**
 - Negative, **potentially life-threatening** health outcomes
 - **Harder to end someone's homelessness**
- Response system plays catch-up on an **ever-increasing backlog of people in need of housing**, slowing progress toward ending homelessness



Challenges



Causes of Homelessness

Causes vs. Risk Factors

- Everyone has a **certain level of risk** of homelessness
- **Life challenges** can add to a person's risk, including:
 - Medical bills
 - Substance abuse
 - Job loss
 - Death of a family member
 - Mental health obstacles
 - Domestic violence
- **Many people remain stably housed** forever with some combination of these risk factors
- Individual circumstances are unique, but every person experiencing homelessness has one thing in common: **nowhere to live**
- What causes homelessness is a lack of housing



Causes of Homelessness

Lack of Housing

- External to Homelessness Response System:
 - Lack of **Affordable Housing**
 - Rising **rents** & occupancy rates
 - Low, stagnant **wages**
- Internal to Homelessness Response System
 - **Thousands of units** shy of need
 - Mostly scattered-site, not site-based, so **subject to rental market forces** like any renter
 - **Recent gains** are steps in the right direction

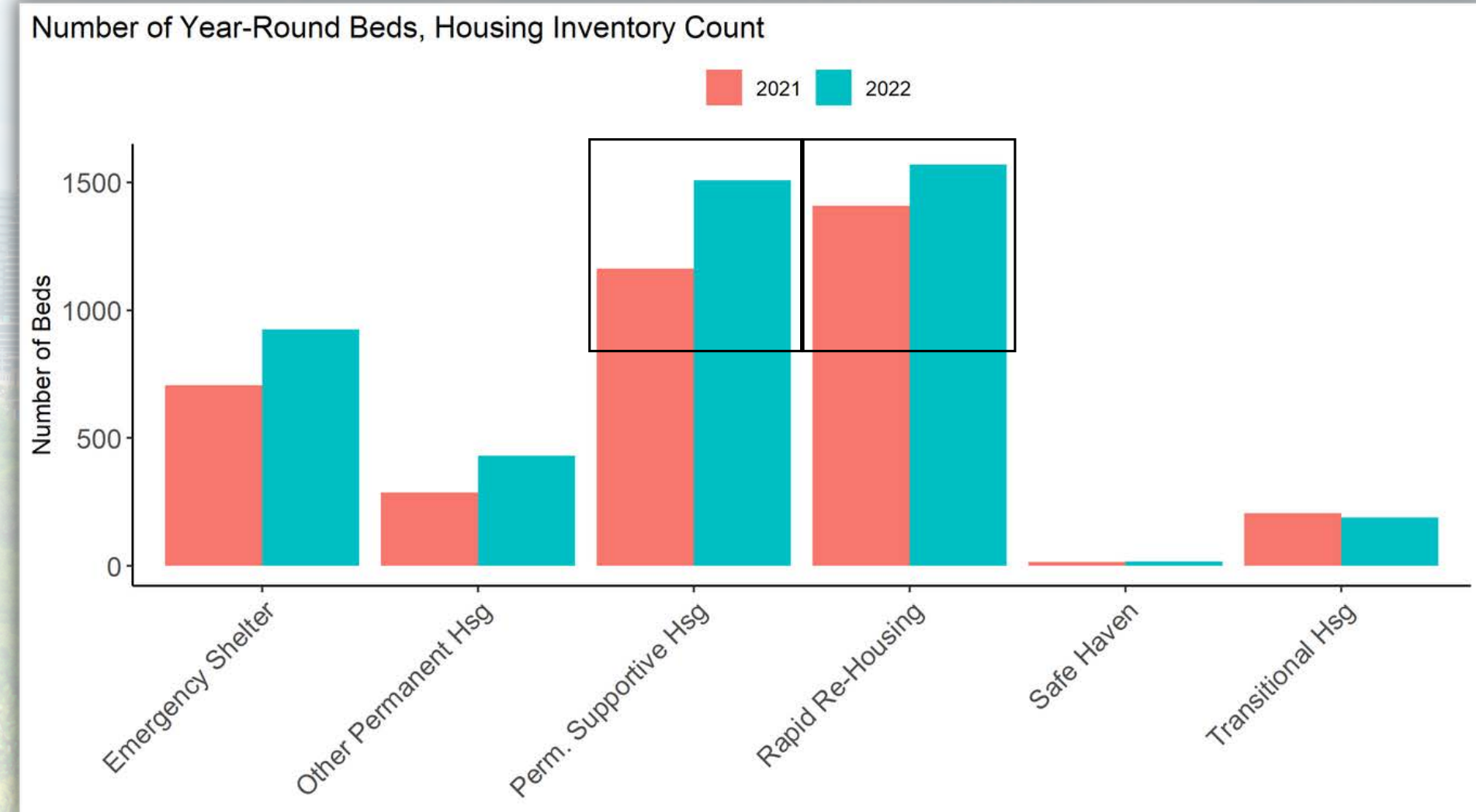
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing](#)



[The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes](#)



Causes of Homelessness

Systemic Racism

- Black Austinites are **six times more likely** to experience homelessness than white Austinites
 - Due to **systemic racism** in housing, healthcare, education, policing, employment, & many more
- Black & Brown Austinites **tend to be younger** when they experience homelessness
 - Indicates it takes Black & Brown people less time to **suffer enough setbacks** to end up unhoused

Table 3. Intersections of Race/Ethnicity and Age Among 2021 Homelessness Services Clients

Race/Ethnicity	0 to 18	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and Over	Total
Asian	27% (34)	13% (17)	24% (30)	16% (20)	13% (16)	6% (8)	2% (2)	100% (127)
Black	26% (1095)	11% (486)	17% (734)	14% (586)	13% (559)	14% (603)	4% (189)	100% (4252)
Hispanic/Latinx	33% (1393)	15% (628)	17% (715)	15% (628)	11% (485)	8% (338)	2% (95)	100% (4282)
Native/Indigenous	11% (8)	5% (4)	24% (18)	9% (7)	31% (23)	17% (13)	3% (2)	100% (75)
Pacific Islander	0% (0)	6% (1)	11% (2)	11% (2)	33% (6)	33% (6)	6% (1)	100% (18)
Two or more races	29% (130)	9% (42)	14% (62)	16% (71)	15% (68)	14% (64)	4% (16)	100% (453)
White	6% (205)	8% (282)	17% (603)	21% (749)	20% (727)	22% (780)	6% (228)	100% (3574)
Total	22% (2865)	11% (1460)	17% (2164)	16% (2063)	15% (1884)	14% (1812)	4% (533)	100% (12781)

Solutions to Homelessness

Housing First

- **National best practice** model for connecting people to stable places to live
- A set of principles that conveys: **Housing is a basic human right, not a privilege or a reward for good behavior**
- **Not housing only** – prioritizes housing paired with supportive services, tailored to an individual's needs, that contribute to long-term success
- Studies show **Housing First programs connect people more quickly to housing, help them remain stable longer, and save on public costs**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [What Housing First Really Means](#)
-  [12 Month Return on Investment: Integral Care Terrace at Oak Springs](#)
-  [How Houston Moved 25,000 People From the Streets Into Homes of Their Own](#)



“ —

When you're drowning, it doesn't help if your rescuer insists you learn to swim before returning you to shore. You can address your issues once you're on land. Or not. Either way, you join the wider population of people battling demons behind closed doors.

Solutions to Homelessness

Emergency Shelter

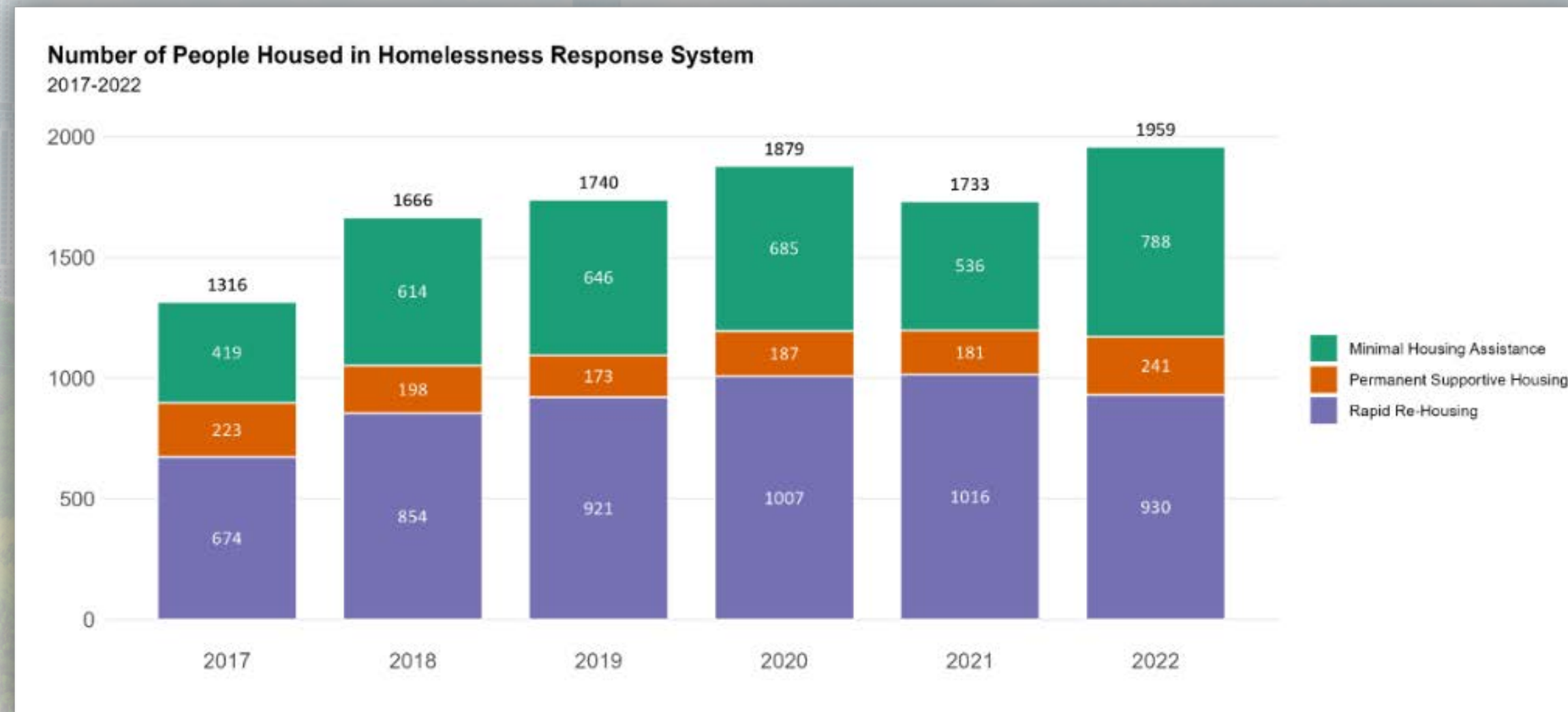
- Austin had about **1,100 beds dedicated to Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing** in January 2022
 - People in these programs are **still experiencing homelessness**
- Austin shelters now using **housing-focused case management** model to increase housing connections
- New types of **non-congregate shelter** coming online
 - Esperanza Community (The Other Ones Foundation)
 - City of Austin bridge shelters
- Important interventions, but **not solutions to homelessness**



Solutions to Homelessness

Scaling the Solution

- In January 2023, there were about **4,000 total permanent housing units** in system, majority occupied
 - **Thousands more people needed a place to live that day and didn't get one**
- Additional **1000+** Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units in pipeline through 2025



For more data:

austinecho.org/dashboard

