2023
Homelessness
Summary Brief

NY-508

Erie | Niagara | Genesee | Orleans | Wyoming Counties

Prepared by The Homeless Alliance of Western New York

Introduction

Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences a person can endure. The purpose of this summary brief is to provide the total estimate of homelessness for the five counties within the NY-508 Continuum of Care and a breakdown of the number of people experiencing homelessness. Further demographic breakdown for the clients served in Erie, Niagara and Genesee-Orleans-Wyoming counties can be found on the Homeless Alliance of Western New York's website under local statistics.

The Homeless Alliance of Western New York (HAWNY) is responsible for leading efforts to address homelessness in Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties. We coordinate what's known as the Continuum of Care (CoC), a region-wide system designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the HEARTH Act. This makes us responsible for organizing the CoC's application for HUD funding and ensuring that all local homelessness programs work together efficiently.

We also manage the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which gathers data from both HUD-funded and non-HUD-funded providers, including those offering street outreach, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and transitional housing. The data in this report comes from these providers and is aligned with the federal fiscal year, covering October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023.

In fiscal year 2023, homelessness trends across the CoC region reflected both progress and ongoing challenges. A total of 8,504 people in our community faced the hardship of losing their housing. Homelessness across Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties rose by 3.3% compared to last year, signaling a stabilization after the significant increase seen the year before. While this overall slowdown is encouraging, we invite you to explore our county-specific reports for a deeper look at trends and statistics in each region. As we continue to address rising homelessness, our commitment to securing affordable and sustainable housing remains unwavering.

Key Findings

Annual Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness

Region	FY2022 Totals		FY2023 Totals		% Change
	HMIS	Estimated Count	HMIS	Estimated Count	
NY-508	7364	8235	7377	8504	3.3%
Erie County	5906	6405	5682	6240	-2.6%
Niagara County	1030	1369	1241	1832	33.8%
Genesee County	206	218	229	229	5.0%
Orleans County	315	348	409	409	17.5%
Wyoming County	66	66	80	80	21.2%

Table 1: Count and percent change of people experiencing homelessness in NY-508 by County and Year. Percent change calculated using the estimated count.

Methods of Tabulation

The adjusted total is determined using repeat rates based on the number of duplicated clients served at HMIS-participating providers to account for clients who could have been counted in both participating and non-participating programs. Only providers who receive city and federal funding are required to use HMIS; other service providers may opt in. Those who do not have an entire year's worth of data in HMIS provide the Homeless Alliance of WNY with annual counts of the number of clients they served. In order to account for clients who may have been served by both participating and non-participating HMIS providers, we adjust their provided total based on the duplication rates for that project type and county of operation in HMIS.

	Duplication Rate
Erie County Emergency Shelters	0.7081
Erie County Transitional Housing	1.0000
Overall Erie County	0.8955
Niagara County Emergency Shelters	0.8824
Niagara County Transitional Housing	1.0000
Overall Niagara County	0.9261
Genesee County Emergency Shelters	0.9957
Overall NY-508	0.9803

Table 2: Duplication rates used to determine likely duplication among non-HMIS participating providers based on data from HMIS participating providers.

Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

Homelessness isn't just a statistic—it's the harsh reality for thousands of our neighbors, many of whom are facing impossible choices between paying rent, affording medication, or putting food on the table. But the good news is that we have the power to create change. Here are some steps our community can take to make housing more affordable and accessible for everyone:

Build More Affordable Homes and Expand Support for People Who Need It Most

Homelessness is a complex issue, with different populations facing unique challenges that require tailored housing and services. The data shows that **we need 5,770 supportive housing units** in the NY-508 region to adequately serve the most vulnerable groups, including individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, the elderly, unaccompanied youth, domestic violence survivors, chronically homeless individuals, and veterans.

Prioritize Mental Health and Substance Use Services
The largest need is for individuals with mental health disorders (1,916 units) and substance use disorders (376 units). Creating supportive housing units that integrate **on-site mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and recovery programs** will be essential in helping these individuals achieve stability.

Support Our Aging Population

With over 1,100 units needed for individuals aged 55 and older, expanding affordable **senior housing that includes medical services and accessibility features** is critical. Many elderly individuals have unique health and mobility needs, making supportive housing a vital component of their well-being.

Increase Support for Unaccompanied Youth (18-24)

Young adults aged 18-24 are a particularly vulnerable group, often transitioning out of foster care or unstable family situations. With a need for 666 units, we recommend expanding joint transitional and rapid rehousing options that offer **job training, educational opportunities, and life skills programs** to help youth move towards independence.

Ensure Safety for Domestic Violence Survivors

Domestic violence remains a significant driver of homelessness, particularly for women and children. We need 833 supportive units that offer **safe, trauma-informed environments with legal advocacy, counseling, and resources** to help survivors rebuild their lives.

Focus on Long-Term Solutions for Chronically Homeless Individuals and Veterans

Chronically homeless individuals and veterans often face complex challenges, including disabilities, trauma, and health issues. With 555 units needed for the chronically homeless and 319 for veterans, expanding permanent supportive housing with **wraparound services** is crucial to ensure they stay housed and receive the help they need.

With over 5,700 people in our community needing supportive housing, we must **prioritize expanding these essential services**. By investing in housing that addresses the unique needs of each group—whether it's mental health support, addiction recovery, or safety from domestic violence—we can break the cycle of homelessness and give everyone a chance at stability and a brighter future.

Focus on Equity for All

It's unacceptable that Black and Hispanic families are disproportionately affected by homelessness. To change this, we need to ensure that housing programs are accessible to everyone, and that no one is left behind. By creating **targeted outreach and services** that address the unique challenges these communities face, we can make housing a reality for all.

Work Together for Bigger Impact

Tackling homelessness requires all of us—local governments, nonprofits, and the public—working together. By **coordinating our efforts and sharing resources**, we can ensure that every dollar spent makes a difference. Let's come together as a community to help our most vulnerable neighbors get back on their feet.