

# The Ripple Effect of Homelessness Across Washington State

## Homelessness Spreading Beyond Seattle

Washington saw an increase of 4,657 people who experienced homelessness from 2007-2023, a 19.9% increase per The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The current policies have been a failure. Washington's growth in homeless population is only surpassed by California and New York. It has extended beyond the city limits, affecting surrounding suburbs and rural areas across Washington state. Notably, only about half of Washington's homeless individuals are in the Seattle-King County area, highlighting that this issue is no longer confined to urban centers.

The significant spread of homelessness underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive, statewide approach. This challenge now impacts communities throughout the state, making it a concern for all Washingtonians. Laws are in place but not enforced, we have resources to get homeless off the streets, there needs to be the political will to get it done.

On a single night in January 2023, Washington (4% of the U.S. total) was one of four states that accounted for more than half of the nation's entire homeless population. The other states were California (28%), New York (16%), and Florida (5%).



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### **Supreme Court Decision Impact**

The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision to uphold Grants Pass, Oregon's criminalization of sleeping in public spaces could have far-reaching implications for Washington state. While this ruling may lead some cities to consider similar policies, it also raises concerns about the potential for increased criminalization of homelessness without addressing the root causes. A balanced approach is necessary—one that protects public spaces while also providing sustainable solutions for those experiencing homelessness.

### **State Leadership's Role**

During this critical period, some have voiced concerns that Washington's leadership has been too focused on national political ambitions rather than pressing state issues. Governor Jay Inslee's presidential bid and Attorney General Bob Ferguson's involvement in national civil lawsuits have drawn attention away from the growing homelessness crisis within the state. As a result, both the homeless population and the broader community have felt the impact of these decisions. A more concentrated focus on state-specific issues is needed to address this growing problem effectively.

## The Call for Focused Leadership

Washington needs leaders who are fully committed to tackling the state's unique challenges. Dr. Raul Garcia, running for U.S. Senator, and Dave Reichert, running for Washington State Governor, offer a shift towards moderate, pragmatic solutions. These candidates emphasize a balanced approach to homelessness, advocating for compassionate policies that support the homeless while also considering the needs of business owners and residents. Voters have the opportunity to choose leaders who prioritize state issues and offer practical approaches to tackling homelessness. Now is the time to elect leaders who will focus on the issues that matter most to Washington state.

For more information on homelessness in Washington state, visit these sources:

- [Washington rise in homelessness](#)
- [Housing and Homelessness in Washington by the Numbers](#)
- [New numbers show increase in Washington homelessness](#)
- [Record High Homeless Count in 2023 for U.S. and WA](#)



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