

Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: A Statewide Challenge

Seattle's Homeless Population Soars

Seattle is the 18th largest city in the country, yet our homeless rate ranks #3. According to data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Seattle/King County has a homeless population of 14,149 in 2023. This ranks us behind only New York City and Los Angeles. This is a disgrace to all leaders who have not acted to stop this race to the bottom while providing policies and not enforcing laws that would have avoided this meteoric fall. [link](#)

Drug addiction and mental illness are a large portion of the homeless problem. Dr. Raul Garcia, candidate for the US senate is in favor of mandatory rehab. As an ER doctor, he has seen first hand of what it takes to rehabilitate addicts. Our current process of detox and release does not work.

Between January 2022 and January 2023, there was a 9% increase, according to a new report from the [Department of Commerce](#). Rising rent along with stagnant fixed income rates have been some of the biggest drivers of this increase.

People of color in Washington are [disproportionately affected](#) by homelessness. About 13% of the state's homeless population is American Indian, Alaska Native or Indigenous while only 4% of the population is in that demographic group. Similarly, about 18% of the homeless population is Black or African American compared to only 6% of Washington's population.

At least 13,000 people ages 12 to 24 are experiencing homelessness or are in unsafe or unstable housing situations, according to the Department of Commerce.



Washington has been reactionary to homelessness instead of solving the problem

By 2044, it's estimated Washington will need more than 523,000 units that are affordable for some of the state's lowest earners – that's more than 26,100 units annually. But in 2023, the state only funded 3,443 of these units. That's only 13% of what's needed every year. Both Dave and Raul have plans to solve the problem, rather than try to chase keeping up with it.

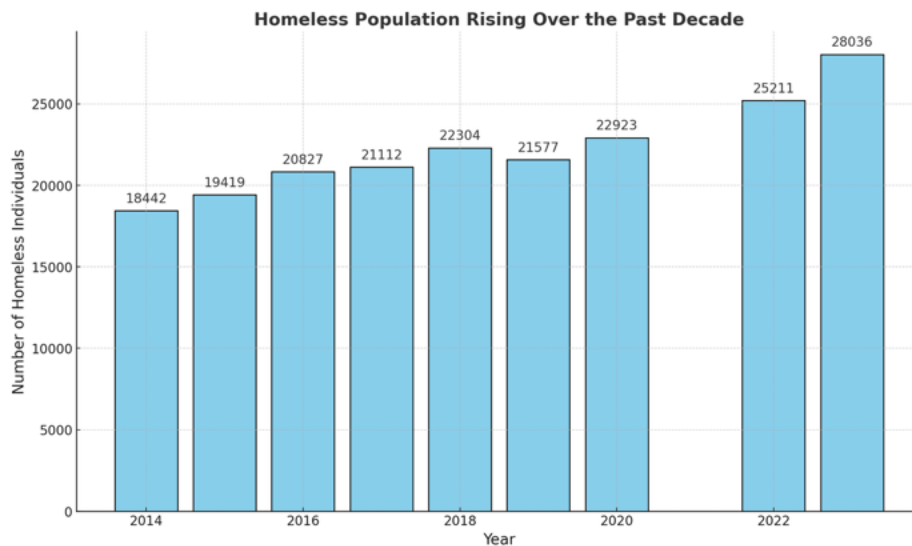
Policy Shifts and Legal Decisions

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to uphold Grants Pass, Oregon's criminalization of sleeping in public spaces may have significant implications for Washington state. This ruling could lead to an increase in the displacement of homeless individuals as cities may feel empowered to clear homeless camps. This legal shift adds complexity to an already challenging situation, highlighting the need for balanced and humane solutions.

Photo credit Whitney Bryen/ InvestigateWest

The Need for Focused Leadership

The rise in homelessness has coincided with a period where state leadership has faced multiple demands. While Governor Jay Inslee pursued a presidential bid and Attorney General Bob Ferguson focused on national policy issues, Washington state has grappled with significant challenges, including rising crime, educational concerns, homelessness, and an increasing cost



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

of living. Addressing homelessness effectively requires leaders who are dedicated to tackling the specific issues facing Washington state.

Moderate Leadership for Washington State

Washington state has two moderate candidates running in statewide races who bring a deep understanding of the complexities of homelessness and are committed to addressing it with compassion and practicality. Dr. Raul Garcia, running for U.S. Senator, and Dave Reichert, running for Washington State Governor, offer thoughtful and balanced approaches to this critical issue. Their policies aim to support homeless individuals while also considering the needs of businesses and residents, ensuring that solutions are fair and sustainable. They are focused on fixing the problem. For example, Dr. Garcia supports mandatory treatment for addicts, which he asserts is the only way for them to recover.

If you are concerned about the rising homelessness in Washington state, it's important to stay informed and consider supporting candidates who prioritize state issues and offer solutions.

For more information on homelessness in Washington state, visit [here](#) or [here](#)