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The NYC Department of Social Services Announces HOPE 2026 Estimate

2026 Survey Results Show Less Than Five Percent of New Yorkers Experiencing Homelessness are Unsheltered

New York City Continues to Have the Lowest Rate of Unsheltered Homelessness Among Individuals Experiencing Homelessness of any Large City in the United States

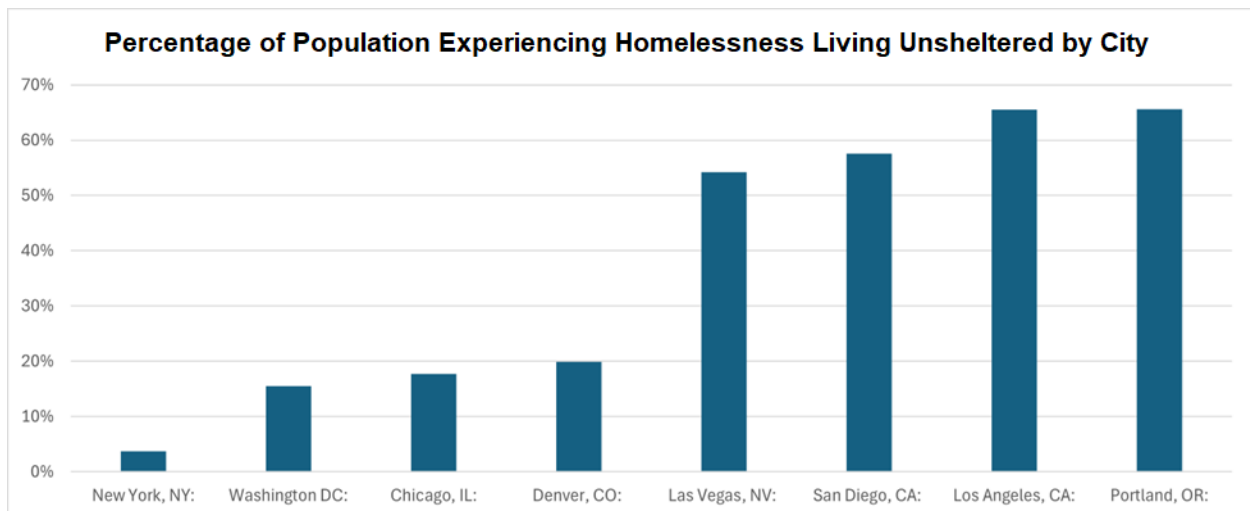
2026 Survey Also Showed a Significant Decrease in the Number of Individuals Encountered in the Subway System

NEW YORK— Today, the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) announced the results of the 2026 Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey, the annual estimate of the number of New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Based on the results of the survey, the Agency estimates that 4,991 individuals were unsheltered in New York City on the night of March 10, 2026. While the HOPE survey is typically conducted in late January, this year's effort was postponed as a result of historic winter weather. The average temperature on the day the survey was conducted was nearly 60 degrees – the highest ever on the day of the HOPE survey and about 20 degrees above recent years.

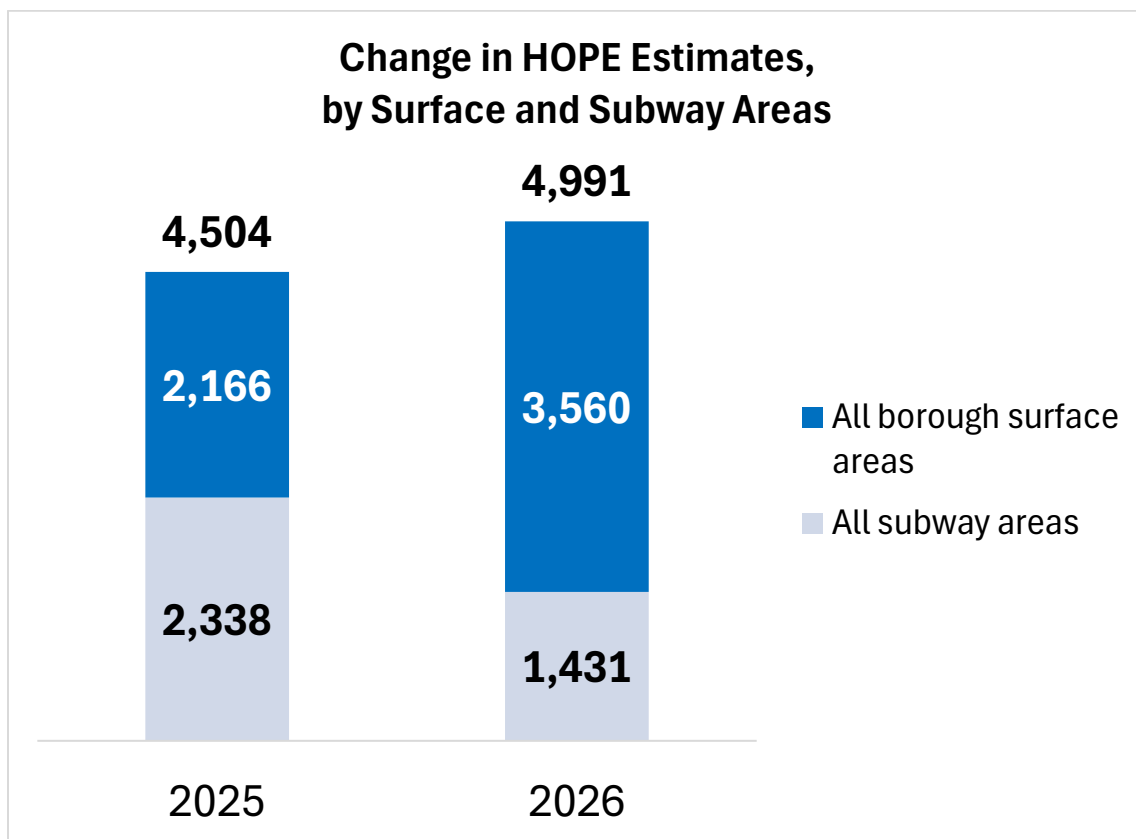
Regardless of the variation in weather conditions at the time of the survey, the HOPE Count serves as an important local data point to help us better understand unsheltered homelessness, allocate resources and direct outreach efforts across the five boroughs.

The City regularly deploys around 400 outreach workers, including clinicians and nurses, working 24X7 to build trust and encourage some of the hardest-to-reach New Yorkers to come inside and accept services. DSS helped over 51,000 New Yorkers move from shelters to permanent housing. The Agency's prevention-based efforts helped nearly 33,000 households avoid shelter and stay stably housed.

According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) New York City has one of the lowest rates of unsheltered homelessness of any major U.S. jurisdiction. Last year, around 3.5% of persons experiencing homelessness in NYC were unsheltered -- in stark contrast to other large jurisdictions around the country.



This year's survey showed a significant decrease in the number of people encountered in the subway, the lowest total since the pandemic, while the number of individuals encountered in surface areas rose, with the most marked increases in Brooklyn (+279 individuals) and Manhattan (+961 individuals).



Despite the modest increase in the overall estimate of unsheltered New Yorkers, New York City continues to have the lowest rate of unsheltered homelessness among individuals experiencing homelessness of any large city in the United States, with the 2026 HOPE results confirming that,

as in past years, less than five percent of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness are unsheltered.

“I am grateful for the hundreds of volunteers and outreach providers who came together in March to help us understand the extent of unsheltered homelessness in our community,” **said DSS Commissioner Erin Dalton**. “While we recognize, and this year’s count confirms, that most people experiencing homelessness in NYC are in shelter, I place the utmost importance on reaching those living unsheltered and offering the individualized housing options and supports that meet their unique needs and position them for long-term stability.”

During the first quarter of 2026, the Agency connected over 300 New Yorkers who were living on the City’s streets and subways to permanent housing from low-barrier sites. During that time the City also brought over 430 new low-barrier beds online, nearly 300 of which were [opened in the midst of this year’s extended stretch of winter storms and dangerously cold temperatures](#) to ensure that as many shelter resources as possible were available to serve New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Key Survey Context: This year’s survey was conducted on the night of March 10, 2026, the first time the survey has been conducted in March since 2005. The survey was delayed so outreach staff could focus their efforts on engaging New Yorkers during the winter storm and connecting them to safe shelter rather than collecting data. The average temperature on the day of the survey was also the highest recorded on a HOPE night, 59 degrees, about 20 degrees higher than the average temperature in recent years. This likely contributed to the significant increase in individuals found above ground and corresponding decrease in the number of individuals encountered in the subway system.

While these results are anomalous due to the conditions in which the survey was conducted, the survey methodology remained consistent, with the Agency relying on a combination of both volunteers and professional outreach staff to conduct the survey. While volunteer recruitment efforts were disrupted due to postponements of the survey date, volunteer turnout outperformed recent years, with 60% of registrants showing up to their assigned location to canvass.

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About the New York City Department of Social Services: DSS, comprised of the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA), serves millions of New Yorkers annually through a broad range of services that aim to address poverty and prevent homelessness. DHS oversees a broad network of shelters, re-housing solutions, and outreach programs designed to help New Yorkers experiencing homelessness get back on their feet. HRA serves over three million New Yorkers through the administration of more than 15 major public assistance programs. DSS is central to the City’s mission to expand opportunity for New Yorkers in need, address housing insecurity, and ensure that low-income New Yorkers receive the benefits and assistance for which they may be eligible.