

# Homelessness and Shelter Needs Across the US

Regional Staff Committee

June 2026



Puget Sound Regional Council

# Background



The Regional Housing Strategy was adopted by the Executive Board in February 2022.

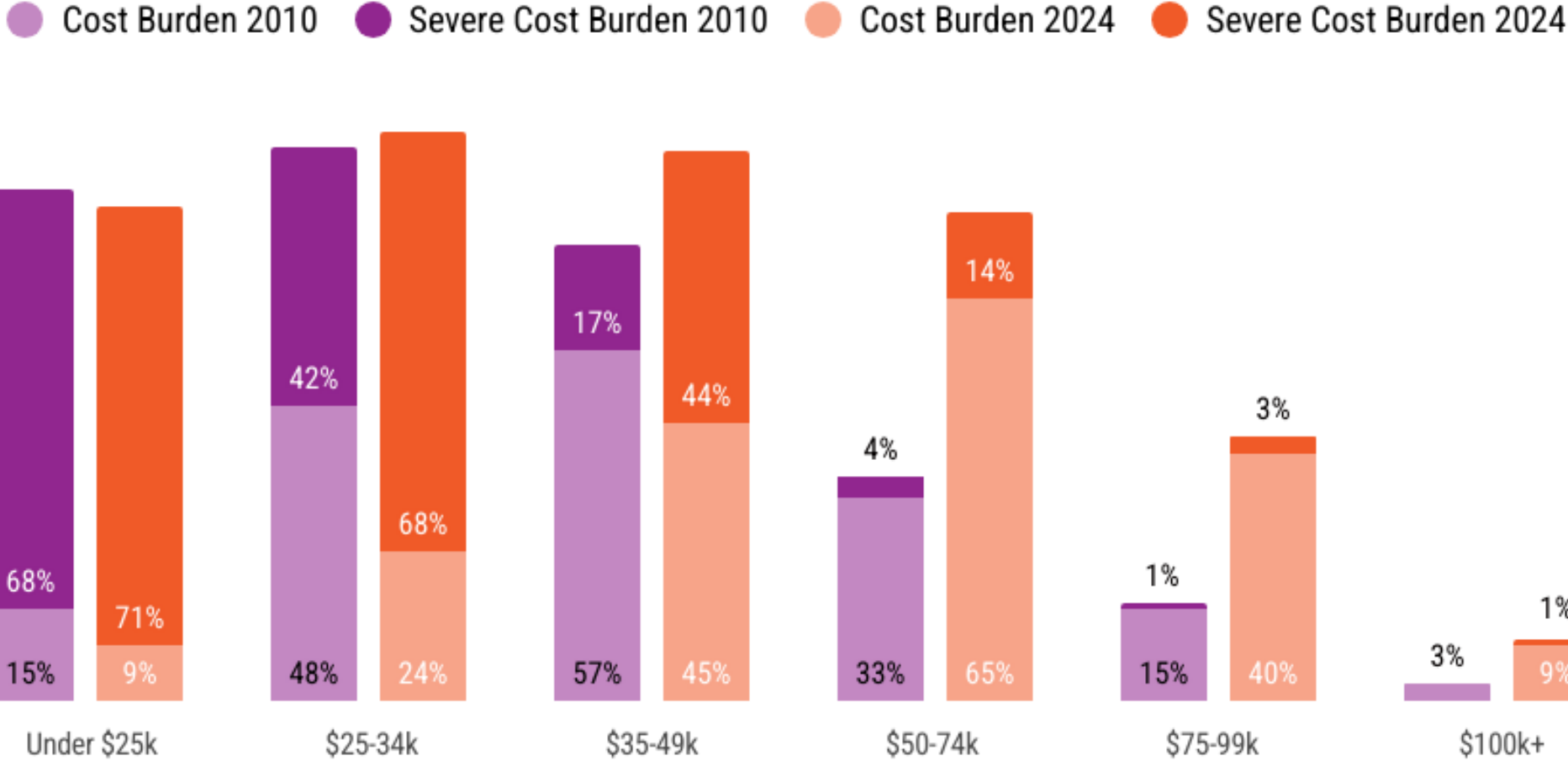
PSRC provides ongoing updates, resources, and support throughout strategy implementation.

This presentation continues that work, monitoring and presenting the state of the region's housing landscape.



# Background – Rental Affordability

Homelessness has many drivers, but a lack of housing affordable to most residents will only worsen the crisis



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010 and 2024 5-Year Public Use Microdata Sample



# Background– Emergency Housing Need

By 2044, jurisdictions across the region are planning for

- 80,000 permanent supportive housing units (PSH)
- 77,000 emergency housing beds



# Definitions

## Sheltered Homelessness

- When a person stays in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program, or safe haven (KCRHA)

## Unsheltered Homelessness

- When a person lives outside or in places not meant for human habitation, like a car, RV, tent, or abandoned building (National Alliance to End Homelessness)



# Definitions

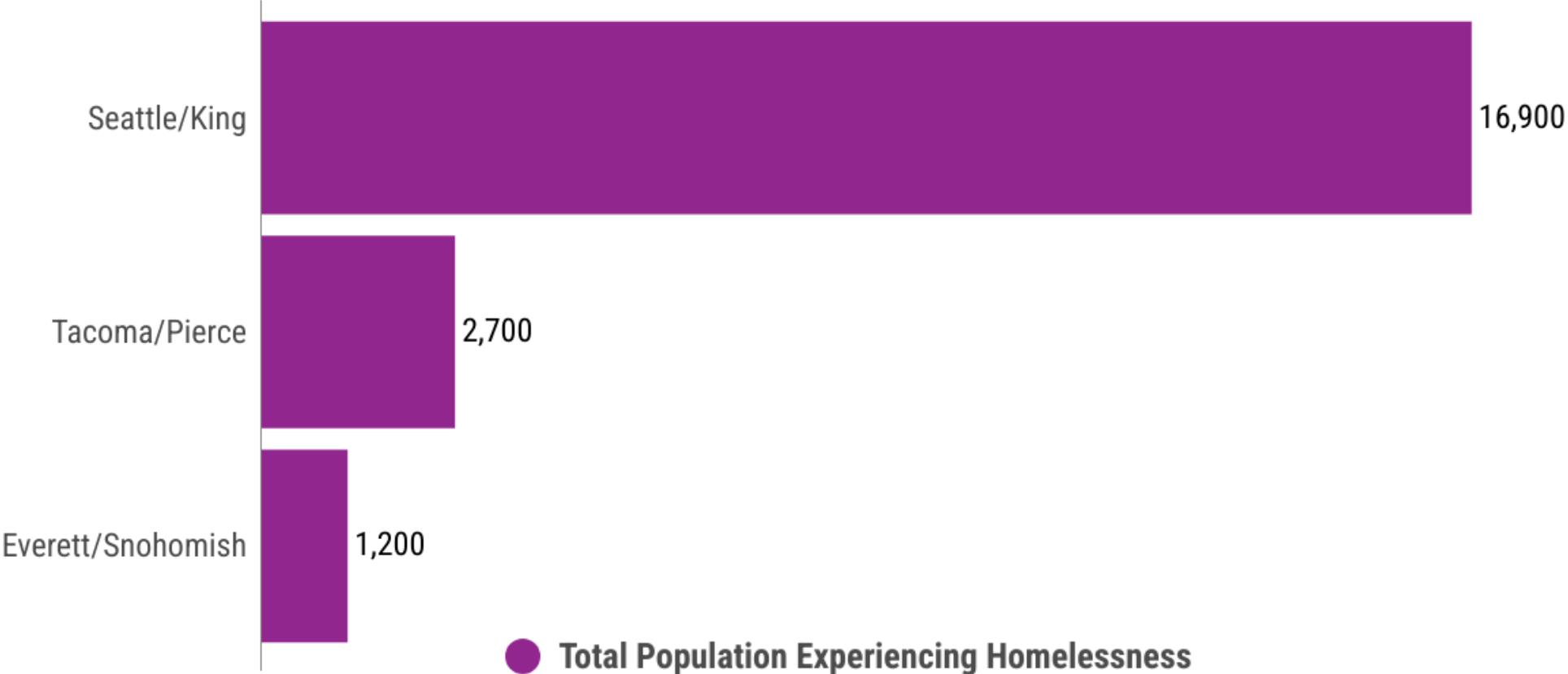
## Continuum of Care (CoC)

- The organization that **receives federal funding (HUD) and coordinates homelessness services** for a defined area. The local governments, non-profits, etc. at the CoC determine the area served, which varies nationally
- The counties of **King, Pierce, and Snohomish** are each **served by their own CoC's**. Kitsap County is grouped in with other rural counties in WA
- CoC's collect the point-in-time count data



# Regional breakdown

Homelessness is a regionwide problem, though the largest populations are in King County

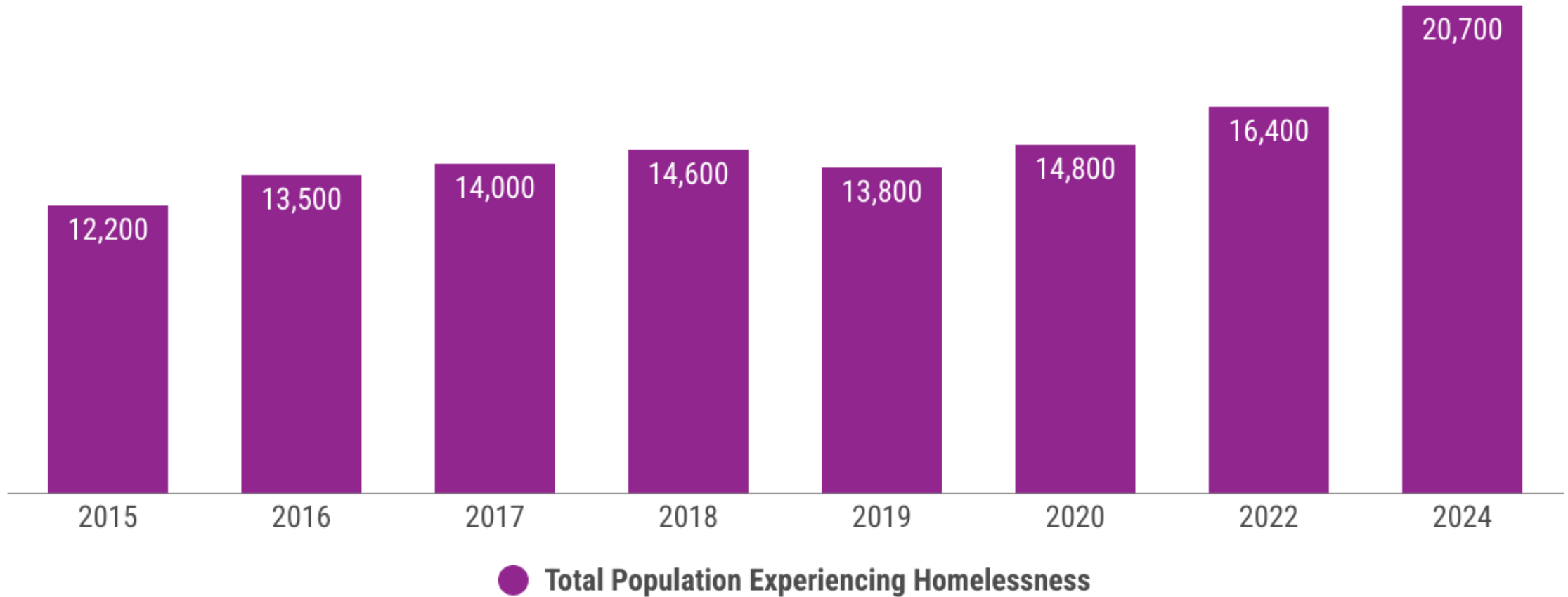


Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC). King, Pierce, Snohomish Counties



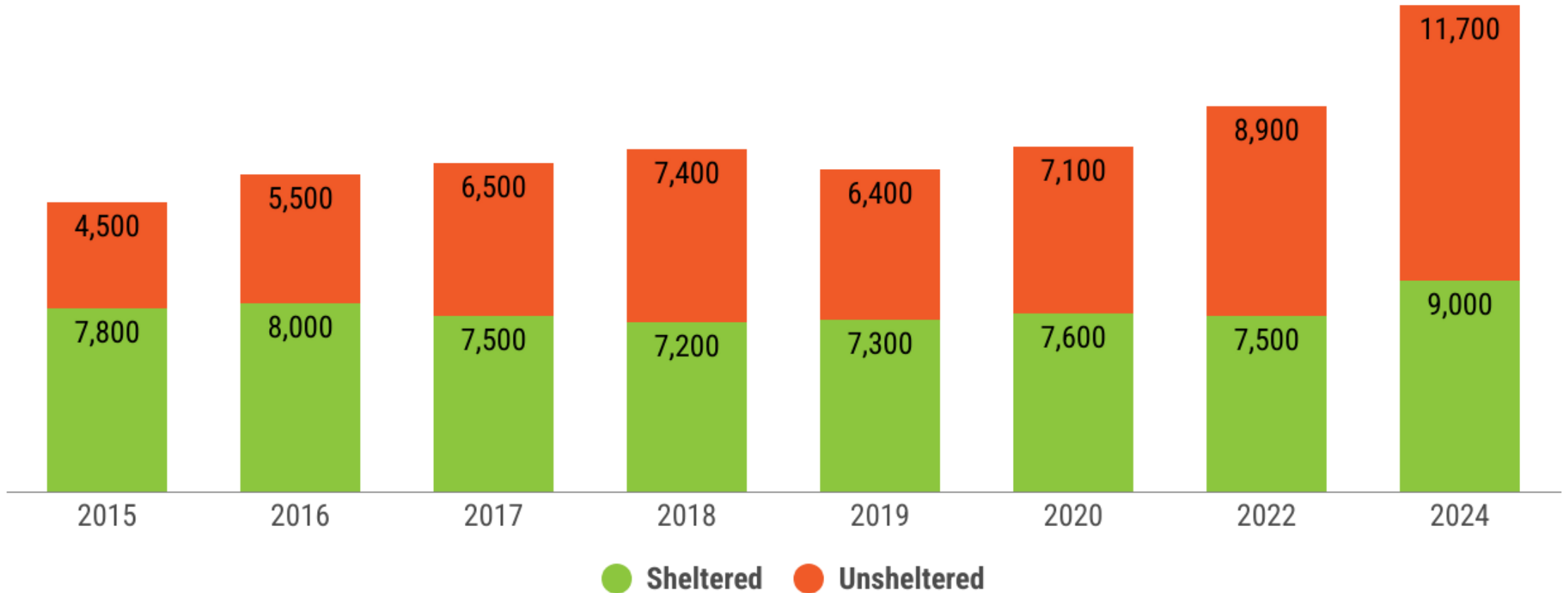
# The PSRC Region

Homelessness has nearly doubled over the last 10 years in the PSRC region



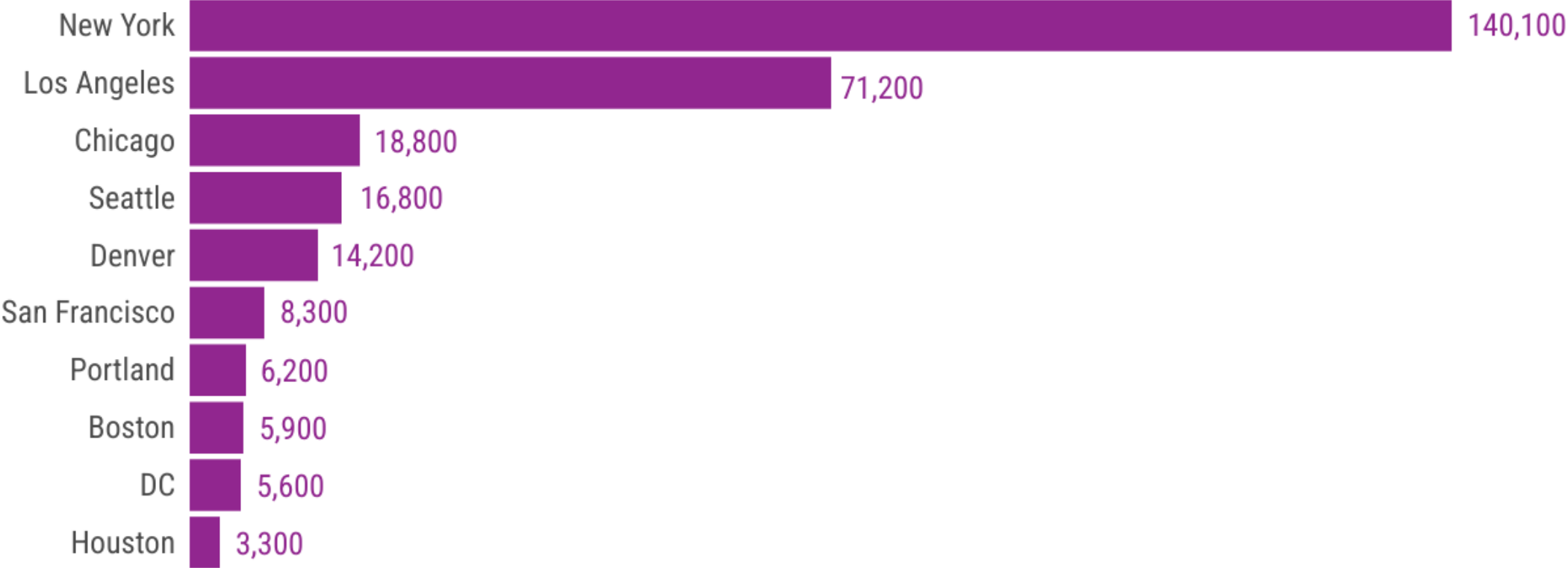
# The PSRC Region

Unsheltered homelessness is the most visible, and has almost tripled since 2015



# National Comparisons – Total Homeless Population

The largest homeless populations are in some of the largest, expensive cities (140,000 in NYC & 71,000 in LA)



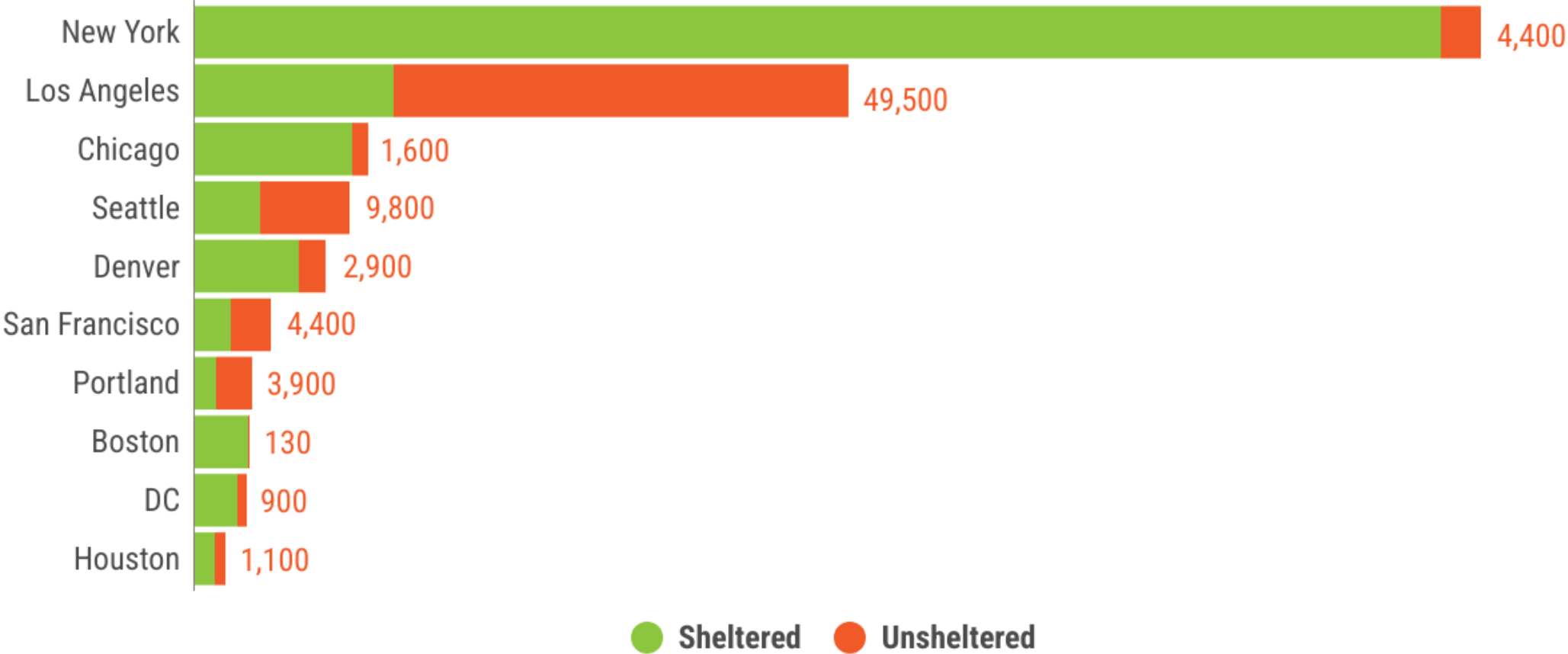
● Total Population Experiencing Homelessness

Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# National Comparisons – Sheltered vs Unsheltered

Significant variation exists in **sheltered** vs **unsheltered**. In NYC 4,400 sleep outside each night vs 50,000 in LA.

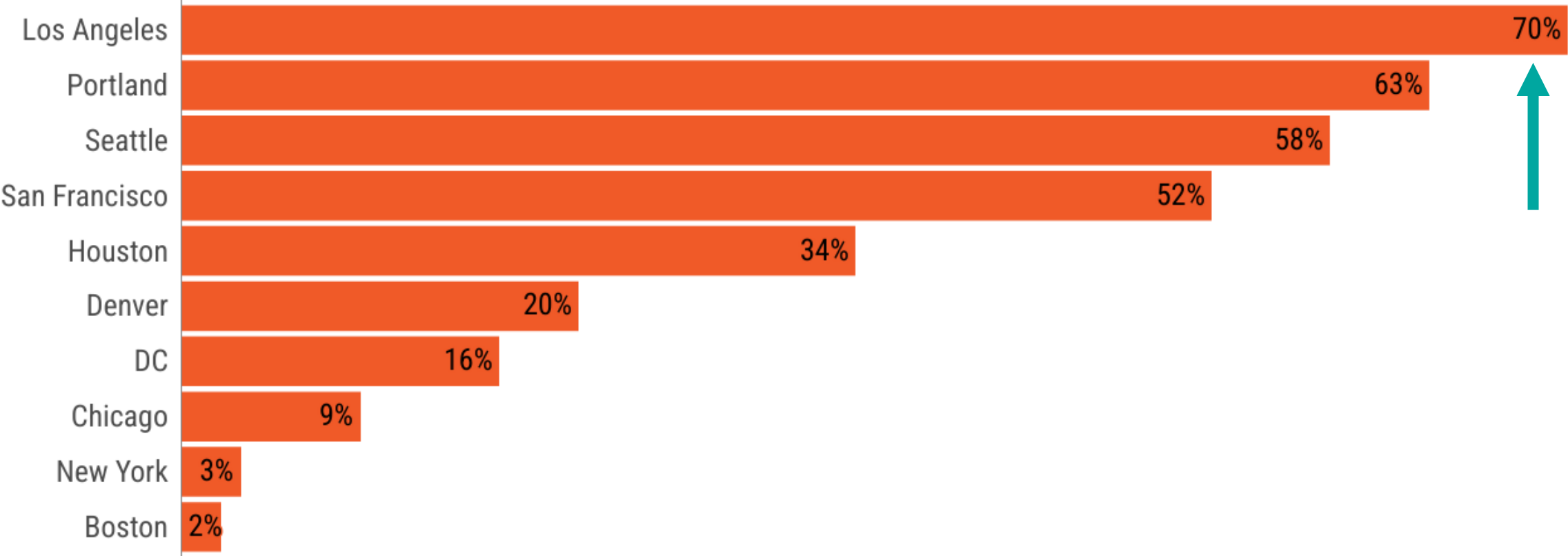


Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# National Comparisons – Percent Unsheltered

70% of people experiencing homelessness in LA do not have a warm/dry place to sleep or a consistent bathroom to use



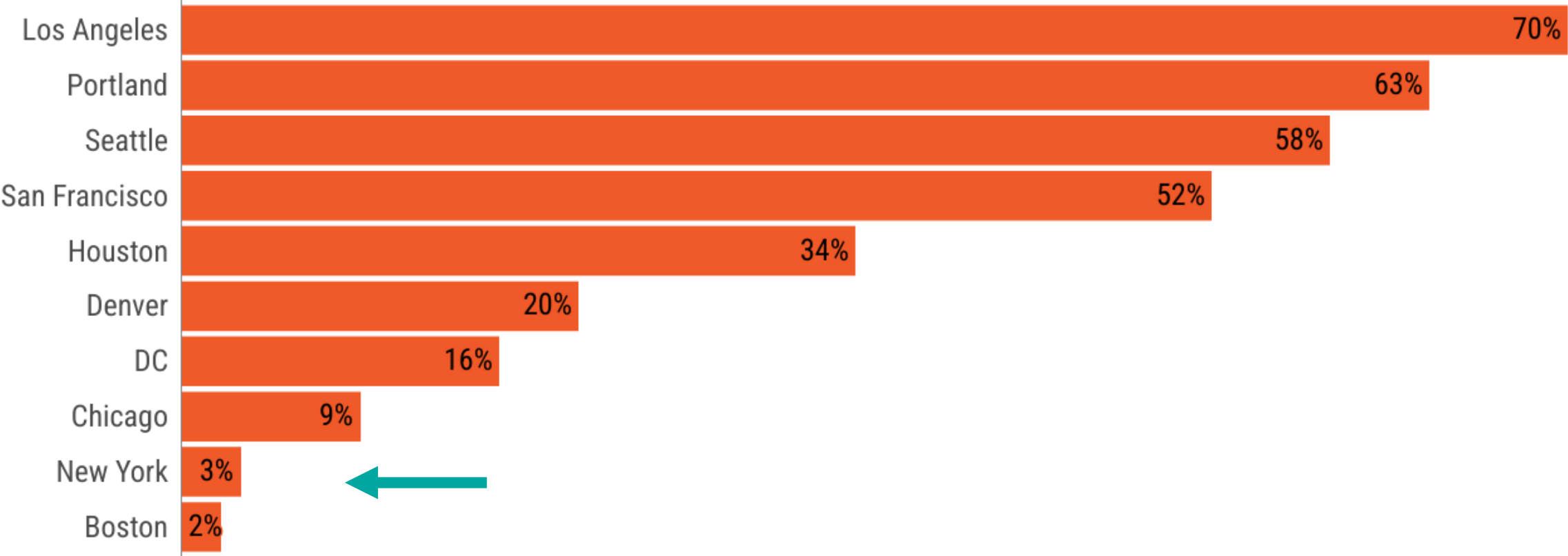
● Unsheltered

Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# National Comparisons – Percent Unsheltered

Which is in stark contrast to Boston, New York, and Chicago with unsheltered percentages at 2%, 3%, and 9% respectively



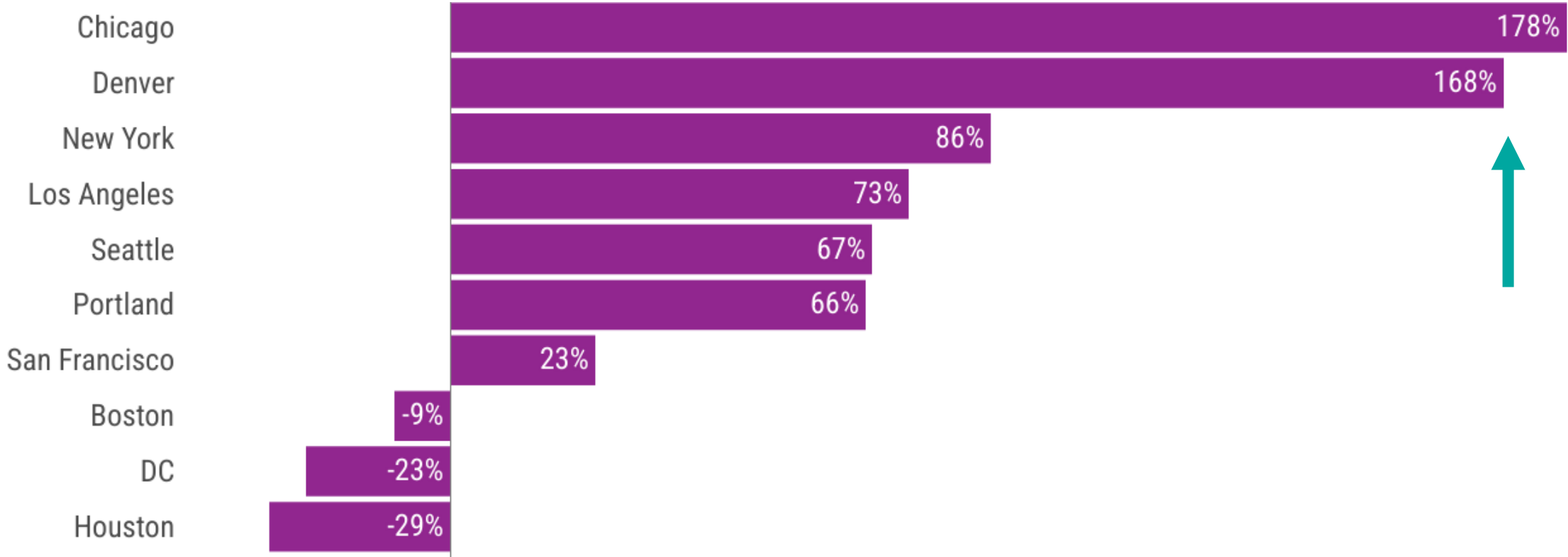
● Unsheltered

Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# National Comparisons – Total Population

Since 2015, Chicago and Denver have seen total homeless populations rise the fastest



● Change in Total Population Experiencing Homelessness (2015-2024)

Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# National Comparisons – Total Population

Boston, DC, and Houston have all seen declines in total homeless populations, even as national numbers climb



● Change in Total Population Experiencing Homelessness (2015-2024)

Source: HUD Point-in-time (PIT) Counts, 2024 by Continuum of Care (CoC)



# What is Working?



The DC CoC credits their success in reducing total homelessness *and* unsheltered homelessness:

- **Switching away from congregate shelter** to apartment-style units
- **Providing quicker connections to exit assistance**, rapid-rehousing
- **Significant one-time federal support** following the pandemic

Numbers are again rising given the expiration of federal support



# Takeaways



Policies used to address homelessness vary widely:

- **New York Approach:** Address **unsheltered** homelessness but not the housing crisis driving it
- **DC, Houston Approach:** Reduce homelessness overall by addressing **sheltered** and **unsheltered** homelessness
- **LA, Portland, Seattle Approach:** Have not made enough progress on either front



# Takeaways



- Investments that support people experiencing homelessness **can produce results** if they are sustained!
- Addressing **unsheltered homelessness** does not solve homelessness, but it does reduce human suffering, keeps public spaces accessible, and supports a stronger social safety net



# Takeaways

- Recent updates to comprehensive plans address the need for shelter *and* permanent housing (PSH) as part of larger housing goals
- Ultimately **public subsidies will be required** to provide housing for all who need it



# TOOLBOX Session

Local Approaches to  
Housing and Supportive  
Services

Friday, June 26 10-11:30a

[Register Now](#)



# Thank You

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