

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Charlotte-Mecklenburg State of Housing Instability and Homelessness Report (SoHIH) presents a comprehensive view of housing conditions across the full housing continuum from housing instability to homelessness to stable, permanent, affordable housing. Drawing on local, regional, and national data sources, including the American Community Survey, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, City of Charlotte, INLIVIAN, and education and detention system data, the report provides an annual snapshot of trends shaping housing access and stability in Mecklenburg County. Together, these data describe the scale, characteristics, and outcomes of housing instability and homelessness in the community.

Housing instability remains widespread and increasingly affects households across a broader range of incomes. In 2024, half of renter households in Mecklenburg County were housing cost-burdened, and nearly one-quarter were severely cost-burdened. While low-income renters remain the most affected, cost burden has grown significantly among moderate-income households, reflecting the widening gap between wages and housing costs. Rising rents, stagnant wages, and the continued loss of naturally occurring affordable housing have left many households vulnerable to eviction and displacement following even minor financial shocks. Eviction filings increased sharply in FY25, placing tens of thousands of households at risk of housing loss and creating lasting barriers to future housing access.

These upstream pressures are reflected in homelessness trends across the county. Homelessness remains persistent, driven by continued inflow into the system and a growing share of people experiencing prolonged or repeated episodes. While many households enter homelessness for the first time, a smaller subset remains homeless for extended periods, contributing disproportionately to overall system demand and the visibility of unsheltered homelessness. Racial inequities remain pronounced: people who identify as Black, African American, or African are significantly overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness compared to their share of the county population, reflecting the cumulative effects of historic and ongoing inequities in housing, income, health, and opportunity.

System performance data show both progress and capacity limitations. Emergency shelter utilization remains high, and average lengths of stay have increased as exits to permanent housing have slowed due to limited availability of deeply affordable units. At the same time, median lengths of stay have declined, suggesting that many households are exiting shelter more quickly. Returns to homelessness among households who access permanent housing remain relatively low, indicating that housing interventions are effective when available.

The stable housing section underscores the central role of long-term, deeply affordable housing in achieving lasting reductions in homelessness. While short- and medium-term rental assistance provides critical stabilization for some households, these interventions are often insufficient for households with extremely low incomes or ongoing support needs. Although housing supply has expanded in recent years, households earning at or below 30% of Area Median Income continue to face a severe shortage of affordable units, leaving the most vulnerable residents without access to stable housing.

Taken together, the findings in this report highlight persistent pressures across the housing continuum and underscore the importance of aligning prevention, crisis response, and housing strategies. Grounding decisions in data and monitoring system performance and equity outcomes remain essential to ensuring that homelessness in Charlotte-Mecklenburg becomes rare, brief, and non-recurring, and that all residents have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.