

HUD: Number of homeless veterans continues to drop

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By [Leo Shane III](#)
Staff writer

The number of homeless veterans dropped under 50,000 last year, the fourth consecutive year of decreases since White House officials refocused efforts on getting that population into stable housing.

Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual point-in-time count of homeless Americans — conducted each January — showed **49,933 veterans living on the street this year**. Data from the Department Housing and Urban Development's annual point-in-time count of homeless Americans showed **8,000 fewer homeless vets since the 2013 count**.

That's down almost 8,000 individuals since the 2013 count and almost 25,000 since 2010. HUD and the Veterans Affairs Department praised the progress so far, but noted the work is not yet done.

"We have an obligation to ensure that every veteran has a place to call home," HUD Secretary Julián Castro said in a statement. "In just a few years, we have made incredible progress reducing homelessness among veterans, but we have more work to do."

White House officials set a public goal of ending veterans homelessness by 2015. Leaders in Phoenix, Salt Lake City and several other major metropolitan areas have already declared an end to chronic veterans homelessness.

But the latest numbers also show the difficulty of completely ending the problem. Despite focused efforts and increased funding for veterans assistance projects, officials will have to double their progress from the past five years in order to reach that 2015 goal.

VA Secretary Bob McDonald in a statement praised federal and local partnerships on the effort but added "so long as there remains a veteran living on our streets, we have more work to do."

Housing advocates have praised HUD, VA and the Interagency Council on Homelessness for their efforts with outside groups in recent years, noting federal voucher programs and the "housing first" approach has helped quickly move veterans off the streets and into stable shelter.

The VA Supportive Housing voucher program alone has served more than 74,000 veterans since 2008, providing direct funding to community groups who can assist individuals with immediate needs.

Also on Tuesday, the White House will announce a new partnership with TriWest Healthcare Alliance to connect women veterans facing homelessness to employment and benefits services. Pilot programs will launch later this year in five cities: Seattle, Phoenix, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Honolulu.

About 8 percent of the homeless veteran population (about 4,000) are women veterans, but they often face extra challenges in affording housing due to child care issues and gaps in health care offerings.