

Executive Summary



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Report Overview

The 2025 Bellevue Human Services Needs Assessment, conducted between January and June 2025, captures the state of human services during a period of sweeping reductions to federal funding. While resident voices presented here reveal significant gaps and unmet needs across Bellevue's human services ecosystem, the impacts of budget cuts are creating a more perilous situation for our most vulnerable residents.

The 2025 Bellevue Human Services Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive, data-informed analysis of community needs, service accessibility, and systemic gaps across the city. This report integrates input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, human services providers, and regional data partners to support informed decision-making by City Council, funding partners, and community-based organizations. The primary objective of the assessment is to advance equitable access to services, guide strategic resource allocation, and ensure that Bellevue's growing and increasingly diverse population is supported by responsive and culturally competent systems of care.

Stakeholder Participation and Engagement

To ensure broad representation and community relevance, the assessment used a multi-method approach to engage Bellevue's varied population and service ecosystem. Key data sources included:



- **SME Interviews:** The team conducted 14 interviews with subject matter experts (SMEs) working across housing, behavioral health, child care, legal services, financial assistance, and other key sectors. These professionals offered system-level insight into resource gaps, service fragmentation, and opportunities for cross-agency coordination and policy alignment.
- **Focus Groups:** To center the voices of residents with lived experience, the project team conducted 8 focus groups, which included 118 individuals, with historically underrepresented population—including youth, older adults, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and other community members. These conversations highlighted barriers to access, service mismatches, and community-defined priorities such as safety, trust, and cultural relevance.
- **Community Survey:** A citywide survey gathered responses from 535 Bellevue residents on service needs, utilization patterns, satisfaction levels, and barriers to access. The survey was offered in nine languages and intentionally promoted across neighborhoods and identity groups to ensure broad inclusivity.
- **Provider Survey:** 62 nonprofits and human service agencies serving Bellevue residents were surveyed regarding the types of services they offer, client needs they encounter, unmet demands, and operational challenges such as funding constraints, staffing shortages, and language access gaps.



Key Themes and Cross-Cutting Barriers

- **Access Barriers:** Transportation gaps, digital divides, complex eligibility rules, and restrictive program requirements limit residents' ability to obtain support.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Gaps:** Insufficient culturally responsive services, language barriers, and limited disability accommodations reduce engagement and satisfaction.
- **Service Capacity and Workforce Strain:** Staffing shortages, burnout, and funding instability constrain provider capacity, limiting scale and continuity of services.
- **Stigma and Trust Issues:** Particularly in behavioral health, domestic violence, and substance use services, stigma prevents residents from seeking help.
- **Disproportionate Impact:** Low-income households, people of color, older adults, residents with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals are most affected.

Areas of Need

Shelter

Participants and experts underscored the acute shortage of safe, reliable emergency shelter—particularly for low-income families. The system is often unprepared for real-time crises, leaving providers to "scramble" to find space. The lack of trauma-informed environments and the stigma attached to seeking shelter were recurrent concerns. Stakeholders emphasized the need for expanded, culturally responsive shelter options and wraparound services to stabilize clients beyond the initial crisis.



Housing Stability

Affordable housing emerged as a consistent and deeply felt concern. Both community members and subject matter experts emphasized how housing instability affects nearly every aspect of life—from physical and mental health to employment and family stability. Participants pointed to rising rents, long waitlists, and restrictive eligibility requirements as persistent barriers. The current housing system was often described as fragmented and reactive, with limited coordination and insufficient support to keep people stably housed.

Financial Assistance

Residents expressed both gratitude and frustration toward financial aid systems. While some support exists, it often falls short—especially when benefits taper off too soon or exclude those just above income thresholds. SMEs highlighted funding instability and complex eligibility rules as major barriers. Participants called for streamlined, equitable access to emergency funds, rental support, and utility relief. Increased investment is needed to meet community needs and expand services to overcome current system barriers.

Food & Basic Needs

Although food banks and pantries were frequently mentioned as trusted resources, many residents still struggle to consistently meet day-to-day needs like hygiene products, diapers, and weather-appropriate clothing. These “everyday basics” are often overlooked in funding priorities. SME insights stressed that inflation, supply chain disruptions, and limited



culturally relevant options further limit food security and basic needs access for Bellevue’s most vulnerable residents.

Survivor Advocacy & Safety from Violence

Safety was discussed in emotional, physical, and systemic terms, especially for families and marginalized communities. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence face stigma, underfunded services, and generic models that fail to account for trauma. Navigating help during a crisis, often through confusing websites or disjointed hotlines, was cited as a major challenge. Both participants and SMEs called for more anonymous, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed support systems.

Behavioral Health

Community members frequently raised concerns about behavioral health, identifying it as a persistent and deeply felt challenge across diverse populations. Participants described long waitlists, a lack of culturally competent providers, and stigma that deters people from seeking help. While some praised peer-based programs and drop-in models, the system as a whole was viewed as underfunded and difficult to navigate. Many respondents called for integrated, community-based care that prioritizes prevention, trust-building, and emotional safety.

Childcare & Early Learning

Affordable, accessible childcare was named as a critical need—particularly by parents in lower-income households. While some respondents could find care in a reasonable time and location, many reported long waitlists,



high costs, and limited accommodations for cultural or disability needs. SME voices warned that workforce shortages and high turnover jeopardize both quality and continuity.

Medical & Dental Care

Most respondents reported being able to access medical care or insurance, but significant gaps remain—especially for wait times, affordability, and cultural responsiveness. Trust in traditional medical systems is fractured among some immigrant and BIPOC communities, who may prefer holistic care that is often unaffordable. While basic access is relatively strong compared to other services, disparities persist, especially for people requiring disability accommodations or linguistically inclusive care.

Navigation, Legal, Case Management & Other Supportive Services

Navigating the human services landscape was described as confusing and emotionally taxing. Residents often rely on word of mouth or trusted intermediaries rather than official directories, which are often outdated or overwhelming. SME interviews confirmed that clients need human guidance, not just online forms or call centers. Many respondents called for “warm handoffs,” better case coordination, and city investment in culturally rooted community navigators.

Fostering Well-being in the Face of Bias, Hate & Discrimination

Support to address bias, hate, and discrimination remains underdeveloped in Bellevue. Focus group participants shared deep emotional tolls from ongoing racism and exclusion, with a strong call for the City to fund



grassroots, culturally and linguistically specific initiatives. Both SMEs and residents stressed that community safety also means being seen, valued, and protected in identity—not just in crisis.

Final Reflections and Implications

The findings in this report serve as a roadmap for shaping inclusive policies, strategic investments, and collaborative partnerships that reflect the city's evolving needs. By centering resident voices and lived experiences, Bellevue can build a more resilient and connected community where well-being is defined not just by access, but by dignity and belonging.



Demographics

Demographics

Context: Bellevue in 2025 - Community Snapshot & Trends

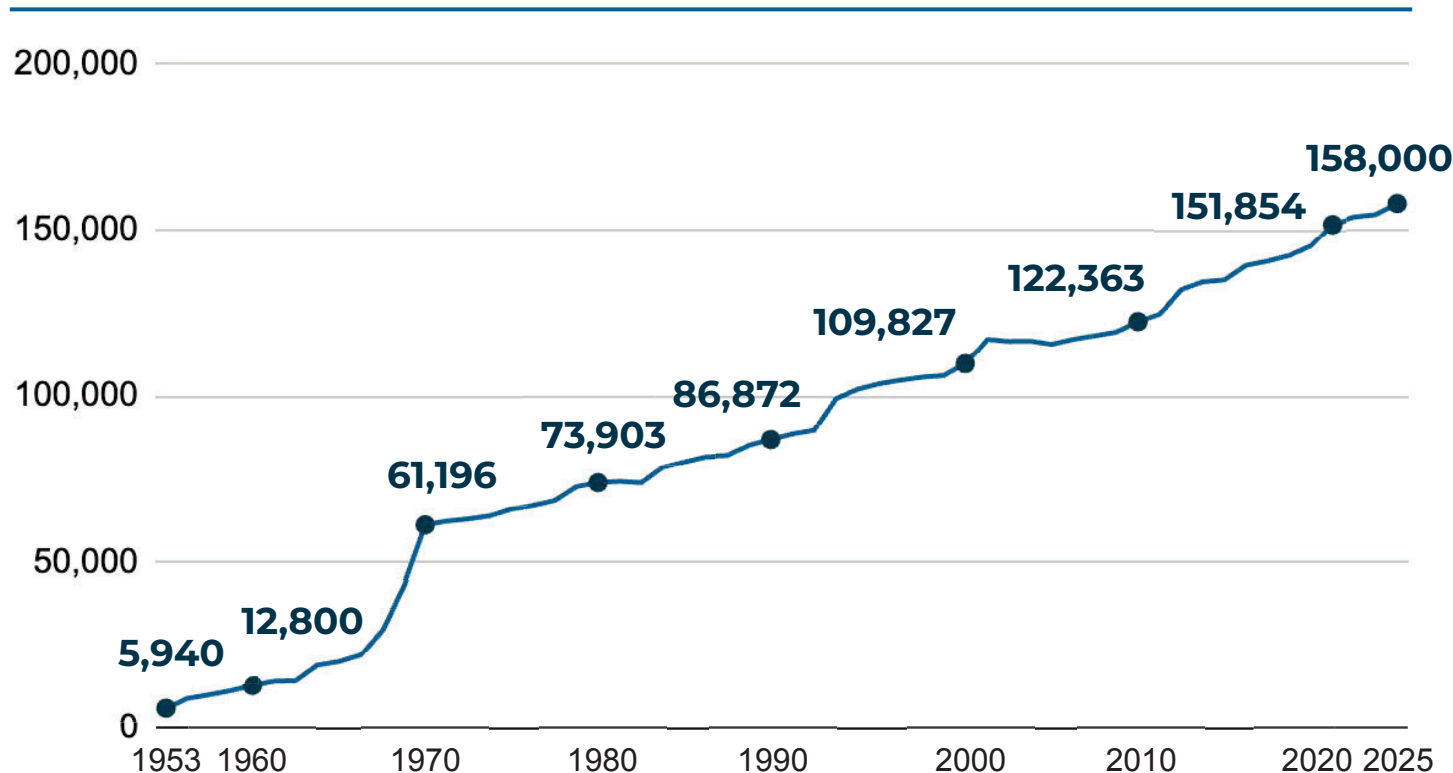
Bellevue continues to evolve as one of the most dynamic and demographically diverse cities in the Pacific Northwest. As of 2024, the city is home to an estimated 155,000 residents, with significant growth and density concentrated in the downtown core, which now houses over 15,900 people according to the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. This urban expansion reflects Bellevue's broader transformation—from a suburban outpost to a regional economic and cultural center.

The city is also defined by its diversity. 59% of Bellevue's residents identify as people of color, highlighting the shifting racial and ethnic landscape that shapes local experiences, institutions, and service needs. Moreover, nearly 45% of Bellevue's population is foreign-born, a clear indication of the city's emergence as a global hub for talent, migration, and multicultural life. Immigrant communities contribute deeply to Bellevue's identity, economy, and civic fabric—while also facing unique challenges in accessing linguistically and culturally specific services.

This demographic composition presents both opportunities and imperatives. As Bellevue continues to grow, the city's human services infrastructure must keep pace—not only in scale, but in cultural relevance, accessibility, and equity.

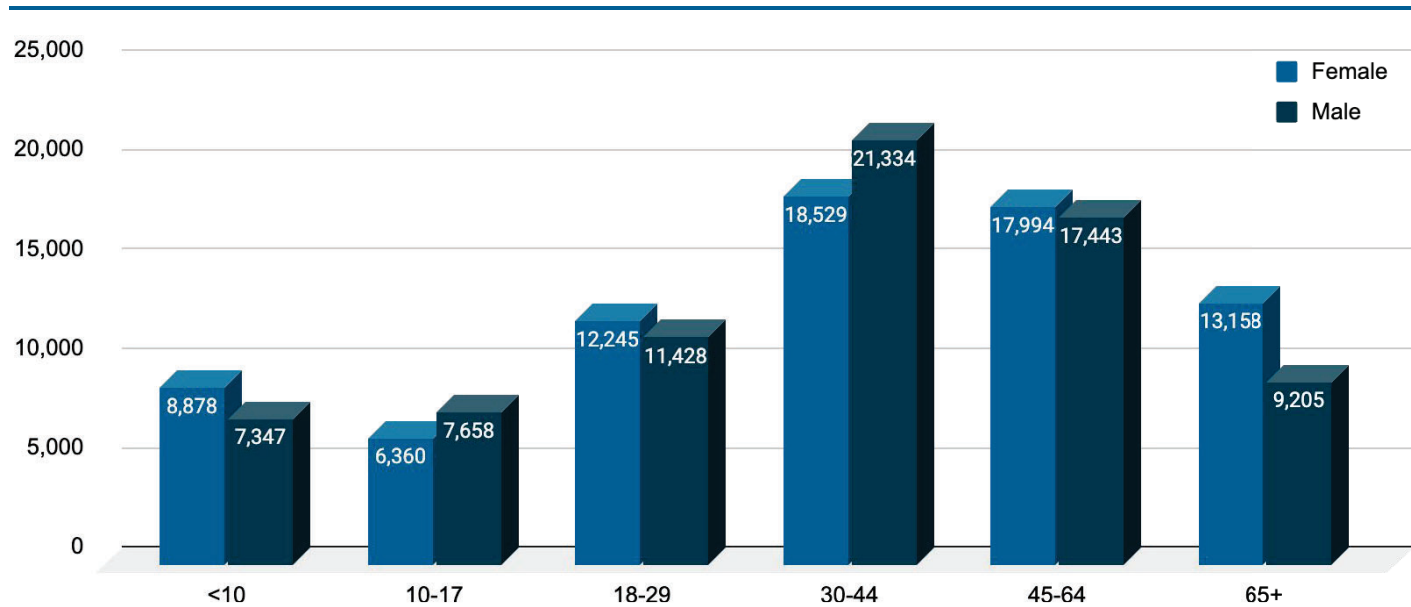


Count of Bellevue Residents Over Time (1953-2025)



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

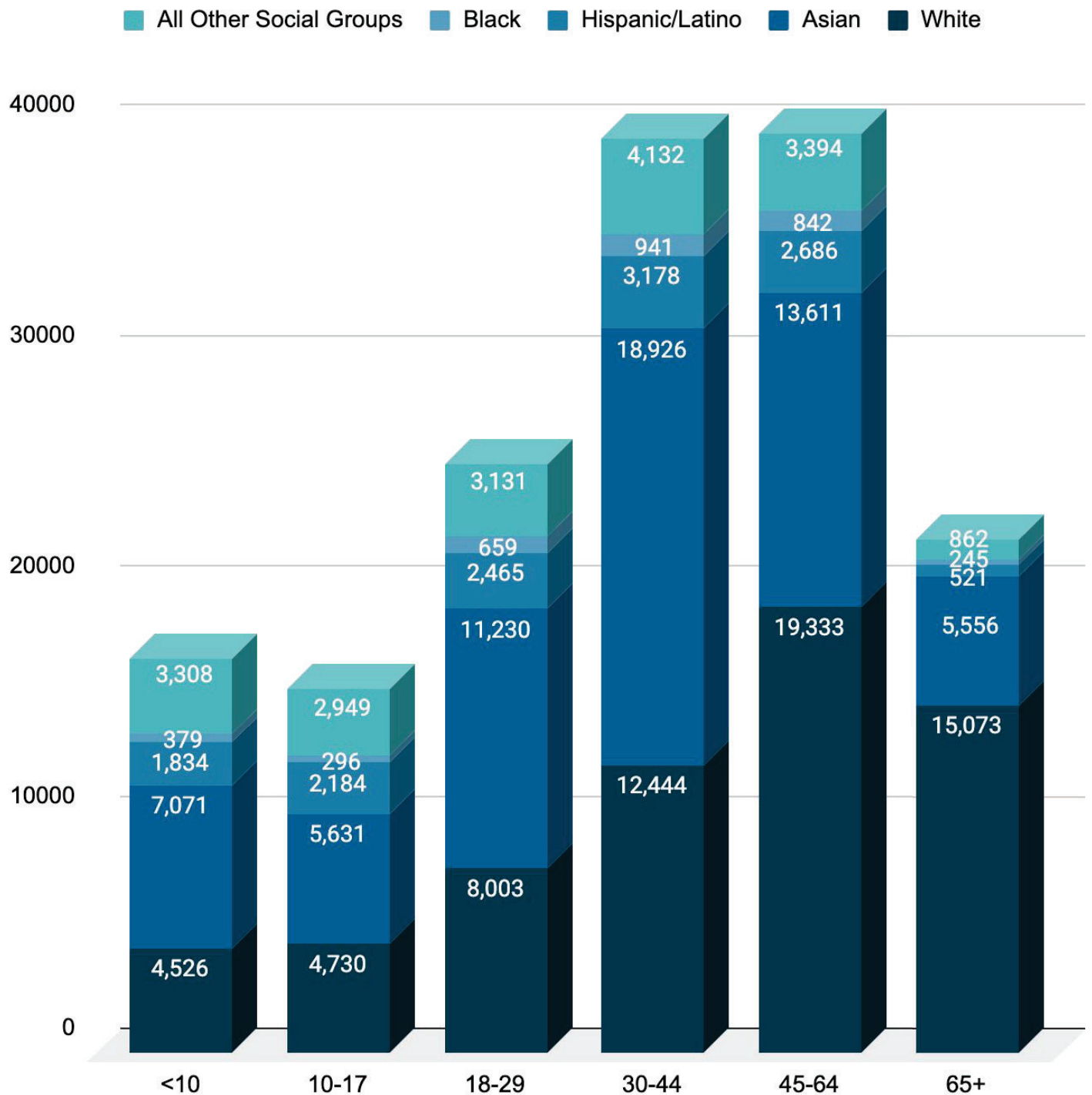
Count of Bellevue Residents by Age and Gender (2023)



Source: 2023 American Community Survey



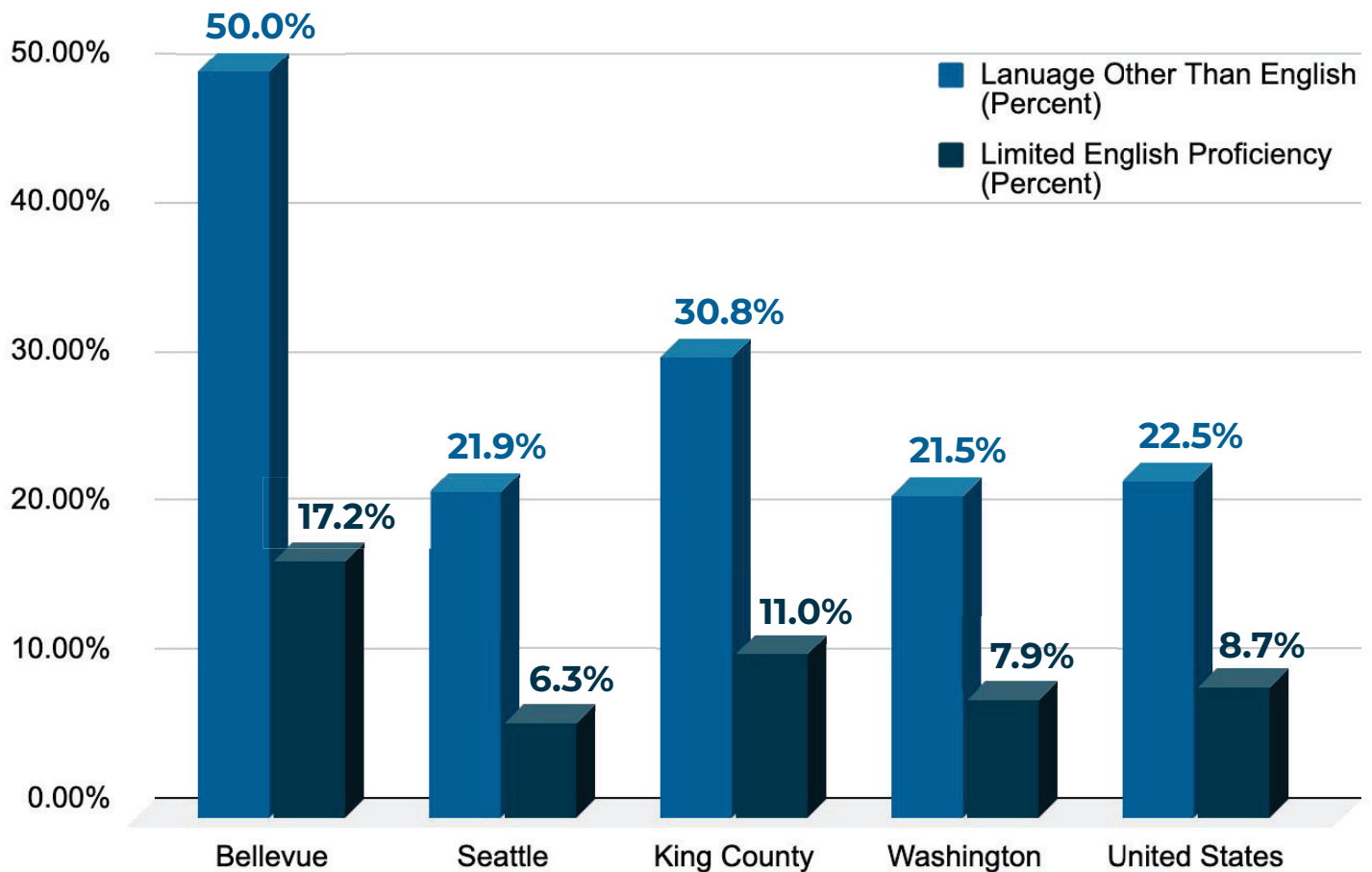
Count of Bellevue Residents by Age & Race/Ethnicity (2019-2023)



Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey



Percentage of Residents by Primary Language Spoken at Home & English Proficiency (2023)



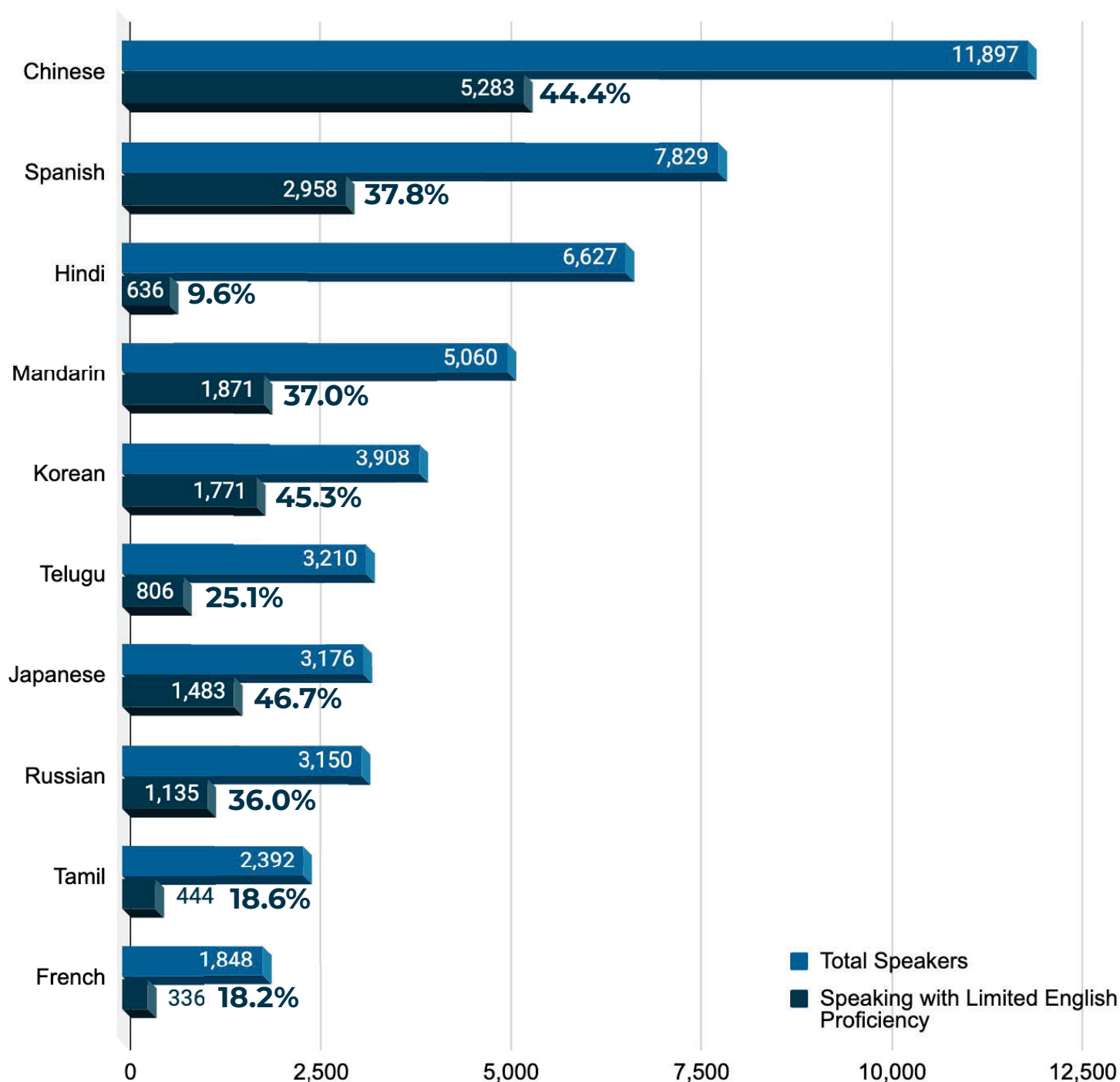
Source: 2023 American Community Survey

Language & Cultural Diversity

- More than 100 languages are spoken in households throughout Bellevue. Among the most commonly spoken languages are Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Spanish, Telugu, Russian, Hindi, Korean, Tamil, Japanese, Marathi, and Vietnamese.
- An estimated 22% of Bellevue residents report speaking English less than “very well,” underscoring the importance of language-accessible services.



Count of Bellevue Area Residents by Primary Language & English Proficiency (2019-2023)

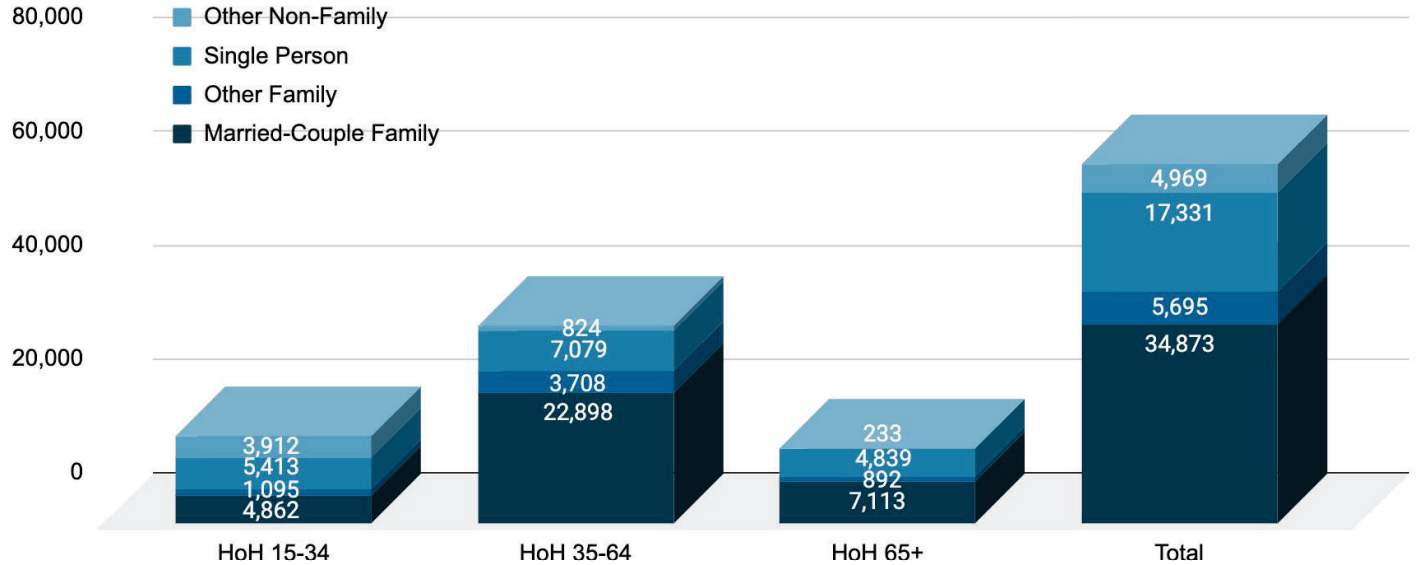


*Percentages represent the proportion of LEP residents within each language category

Source: 2019-2023 American Community Survey



Household Type & Head of Household Age (2023)



Source: 2023 American Community Survey

Household Composition & Age Trend

- **Median age:** The median age in Bellevue is approximately 38 years.
- **Average household size:** ~2.47 persons.
- **Household types:** Household composition in Bellevue includes approximately 30% single-person households and 35% two-person households, with the remainder consisting of households with three or more people and multi-generational households.

Income & Economic Snapshot

- **Median household income (2023):** Estimated at \$158,253, with a \pm \$9,294 margin of error.
- Despite the high median income, economic disparities remain, especially among renters, seniors, and households with limited English proficiency or immigration status challenges.



- Per capita income is estimated at over \$90,000; however, residents continue to face high costs related to housing, childcare, and healthcare.

Housing & Cost of Living

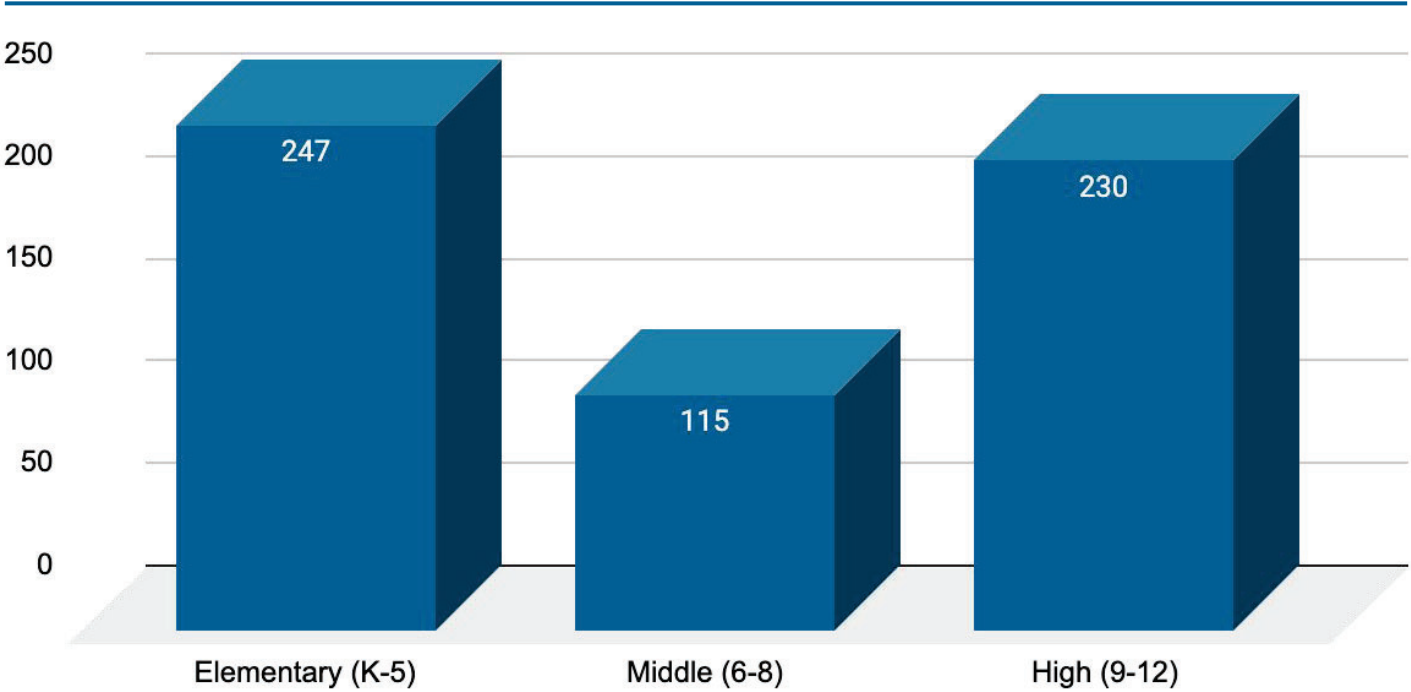
- **Homeownership:** ~53% of Bellevue residents own their homes; ~47%rent.
- **Cost burden:** Roughly 27–37% of households spend 30% or more of their income on housing—this includes both renters and owners with mortgages.
- The average rent in Bellevue is \$2,482/month. This is 51% higher than the national average, making Bellevue one of the most expensive cities in the US. Typical monthly pricing by apartment unit size includes \$2,127 for studios, \$2,482 for a one-bedroom, \$3,079 for a two-bedroom and \$4,145 for a three-bedroom (Apartment.com, Sept. 2025).

Education & Workforce

- Bellevue residents are highly educated: over 76% of adults 25+ hold at least a bachelor's degree, and nearly half of those have graduate or professional degrees.
- Foreign-born workers comprise a large portion of Bellevue's labor force, reflecting both international talent attraction and immigrant-driven economic participation.
- Industries such as technology, healthcare, and professional services dominate the employment landscape, though gaps remain in equitable access to training, mentorship, and mobility.

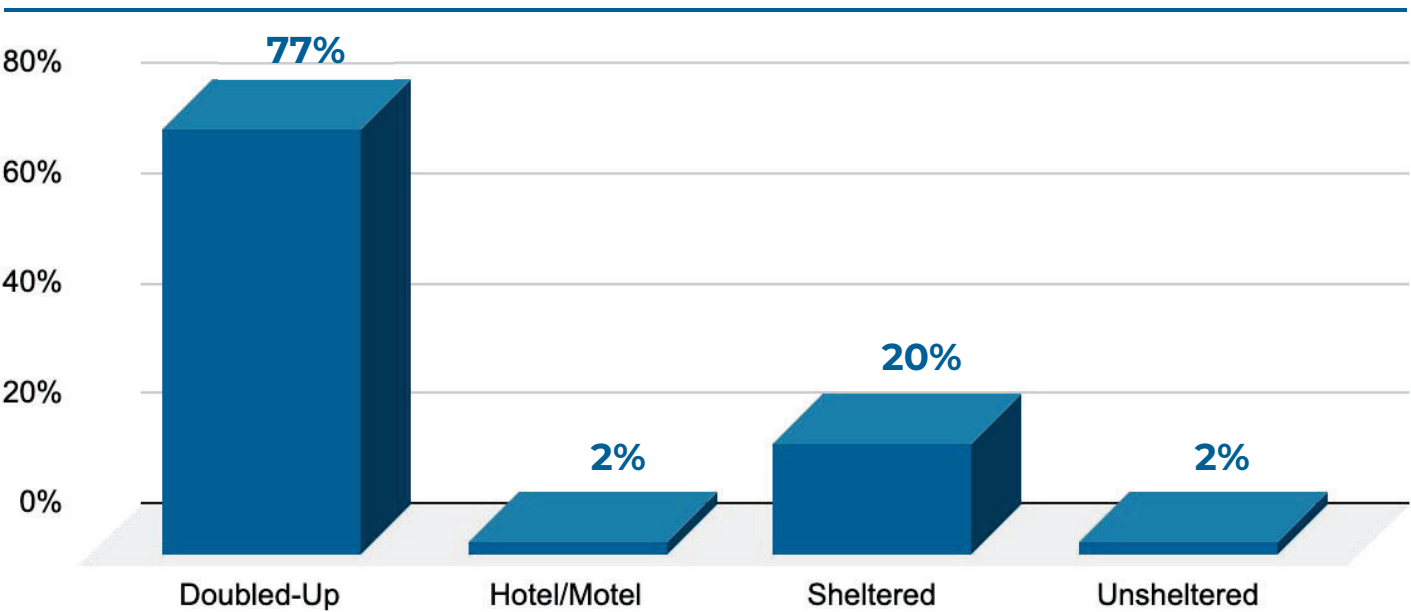


Students Experiencing Homelessness by Grade Band



Source: Local Data and Outcomes Dashboards: Student Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools

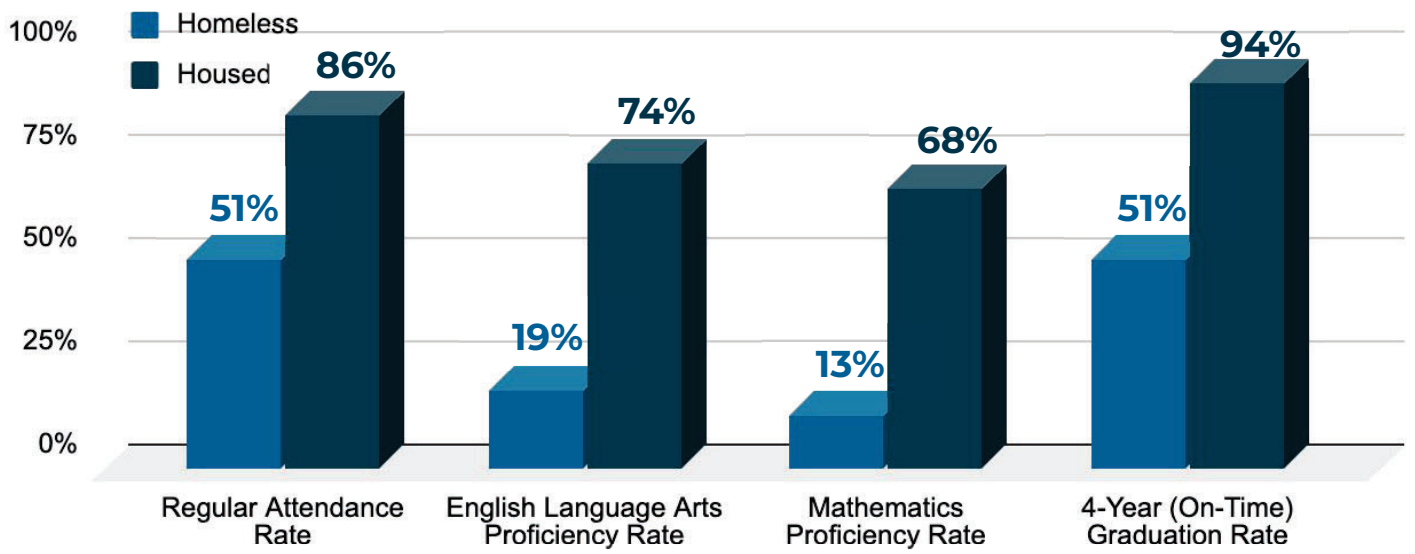
Nighttime Residence of Students Experiencing Homelessness



Source: Local Data and Outcomes Dashboards: Student Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools



Student Outcomes

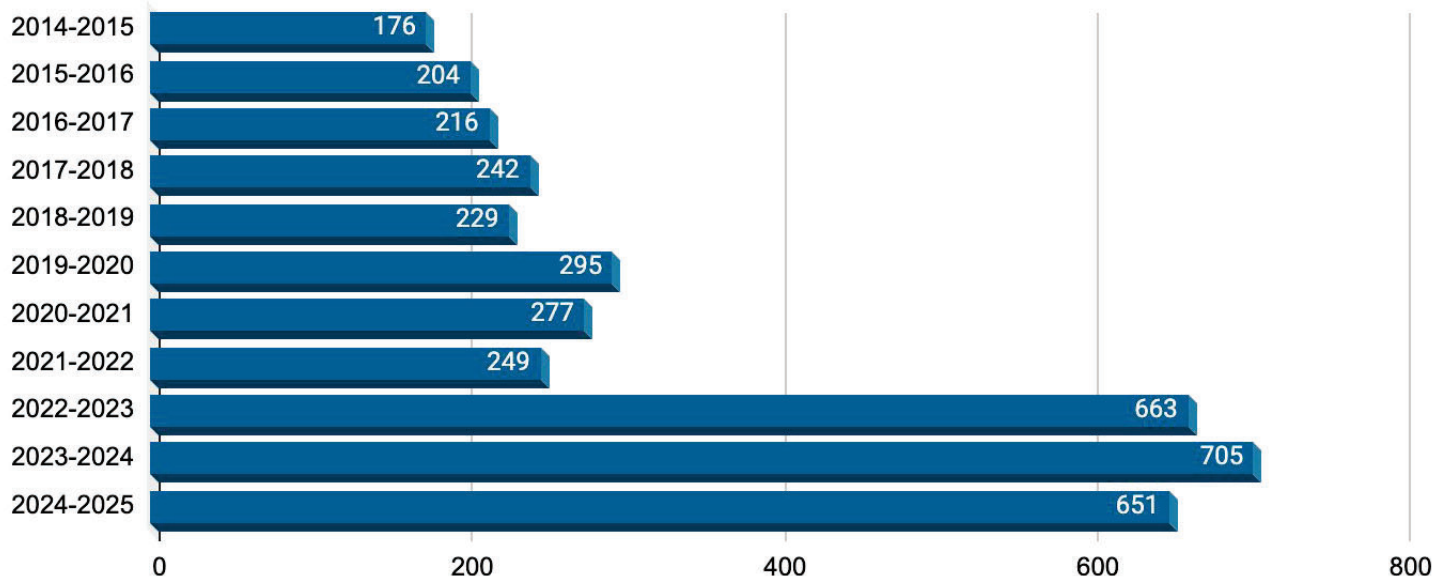


*Data are suppressed to protect student privacy

Data are for the 2022-23 school year. Results are computed using school-level data obtained from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Student counts are duplicated across schools in some cases and may vary from other reported sources. All school buildings located within a district are included.

Source: Local Data and Outcomes Dashboards: Student Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools

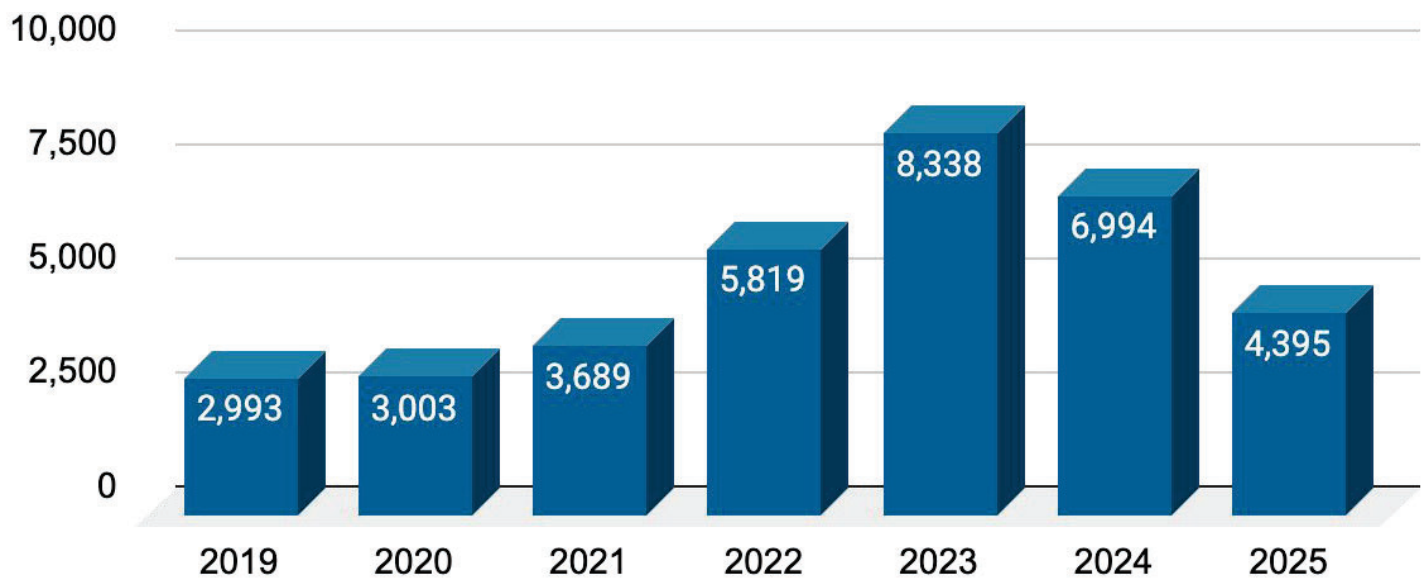
Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Bellevue School District by School Year



Source: Data from Bellevue School District



Number of EMS Treated Opioid Overdoses in King County



Source: King County Emergency Medical Services

Implications for 2025 Human Services Planning

- Human services delivery must reflect Bellevue's deep linguistic and cultural diversity, prioritizing language access, cultural relevance, and community partnerships.
- The disconnect between high median incomes and the levels of unmet need demands a focused approach on low- and moderate-income households, particularly renters, seniors, and newcomers.
- Housing stability, childcare affordability, and behavioral health remain top-tier challenges requiring targeted funding and scalable interventions.
- Bellevue's educational strengths can be leveraged for capacity-building and community engagement, particularly among immigrant communities and young adults.

