



Housing Insecurity in New Mexico and Doña Ana County

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Photo by Jon Tyson

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Future Unclear For Renters as Eviction Moratoriums Approach Their Expiration Dates

Last year New Mexico ordered a statewide eviction moratorium in response to the COVID-19 national emergency. This eviction moratorium provided essential leniency to New Mexico residents for utility and rent bills while unemployment took an unforeseeable spike. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention also established a federal eviction moratorium that added an extra layer of protection for renters. Both the federal and statewide moratoriums expire at the end of June, and it is unclear whether the eviction moratoriums will be extended further. For many renters, including families with children and people of color, this means potentially facing eviction unless rent debts are paid. Let's look at what we know about homelessness and housing security from before the pandemic to today.

Pre-Pandemic: Homelessness and Housing Insecurity

Pre-Pandemic Homelessness

Before the pandemic, poverty and the lack of affordable housing in New Mexico resulted in many families living in emergency shelters or on the streets. Throughout the state, an estimated 3,333 people experienced homelessness on any given day.⁽¹⁾ In Doña Ana County (DAC), between 200-300 homeless people slept on the streets or in a local shelter every night.⁽²⁾ Many who experienced homelessness were families with children.⁽²⁾

Pre-Pandemic Doña Ana County:

An estimated **200 to 300 homeless people** slept on the streets or in a local shelter every night.

Half of renters in Doña Ana County spend

more than 30% of their income on housing.



Pre-Pandemic Housing Insecurity

Many in Doña Ana County struggled to pay for basic needs on top of high housing costs. Half of renters in DAC have a high housing burden, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs every month.⁽³⁾ This leads to difficulty purchasing other necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. In the past, DAC residents who tried to get assistance through affordable housing services reported difficulties such as long waitlists (2 to 6 years on average) and strict income limits.⁽⁴⁾

Mid-Pandemic: A Potential Rent-Debt Crisis



People of color (POC) are **disproportionately burdened** by rent debt in New Mexico.

Photo by Bran Sodre

Rent Debt and Racial Inequity in Doña Ana County and New Mexico

As of May 2021, there are approximately 2,125 households behind on their rent in Doña Ana County.⁽⁵⁾ On average, each of these households is behind in payments by \$2,258.⁽⁵⁾ This equates to nearly \$4.8 million in rent debt within Doña Ana County, and a disproportionate number of these households may consist of people of color.⁽⁵⁾ About 63% of New Mexico residents identify as people of color, yet people of color comprise 85% of those behind on their rent.⁽⁶⁾⁽⁵⁾ The imbalance of rent debt between people of color and their White non-Hispanic counterparts reflects **systemic inequality perpetuating the racial wealth gap and limiting opportunities for people of color**. In New Mexico, a typical White non-Hispanic household earns between \$17,000 - \$24,000 more income annually than Black, Hispanic or Latino, and Native American households.⁽⁷⁾ In addition, people of color in New Mexico were disproportionately affected by job loss during the pandemic; Hispanics or Latinos were 1.2 times as likely as White non-Hispanics to be unemployed.⁽⁸⁾

Resources and Future Research

As New Mexico residents face the end of eviction moratoriums, finding housing and utility assistance is more critical than ever. Below is a list of resources for financial assistance, legal assistance and counseling, and other services that can ease the economic toll of the pandemic and minimize the risk of eviction.

Resources for Those in Need of Assistance:

- [Doña Ana County Emergency Rent & Utilities Assistance Program](#)
- [New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty](#)
- [New Mexico Homeowner Assistance Fund](#)
- [Doña Ana County Assistance Programs](#)
- [The Doña Ana Resilience Leaders](#)
- [Anna, Age Eight](#)

Future Research

Further data is needed to track housing insecurity and homelessness across the state while recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. [The Center for Community Analysis](#) is currently collaborating with researchers from New Mexico State University and the [Anna, Age Eight Institute](#) to analyze food and housing security and access to basic services among university students, faculty, and staff. Stay posted for information about the upcoming report.

Sources:

- (1) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020
- (2) Mesilla Valley Community of Hope
- (3) U.S. Census Bureau ACS 1-Year Estimates, 2019
- (4) 100% Community Survey, Doña Ana County, 2020
- (5) National Equity Atlas, Rent Debt Dashboard
- (6) U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts, 2019
- (7) U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019
- (8) Economic Policy Institute, 2020