



# Housing: The Hidden Link to Learning and Livelihood

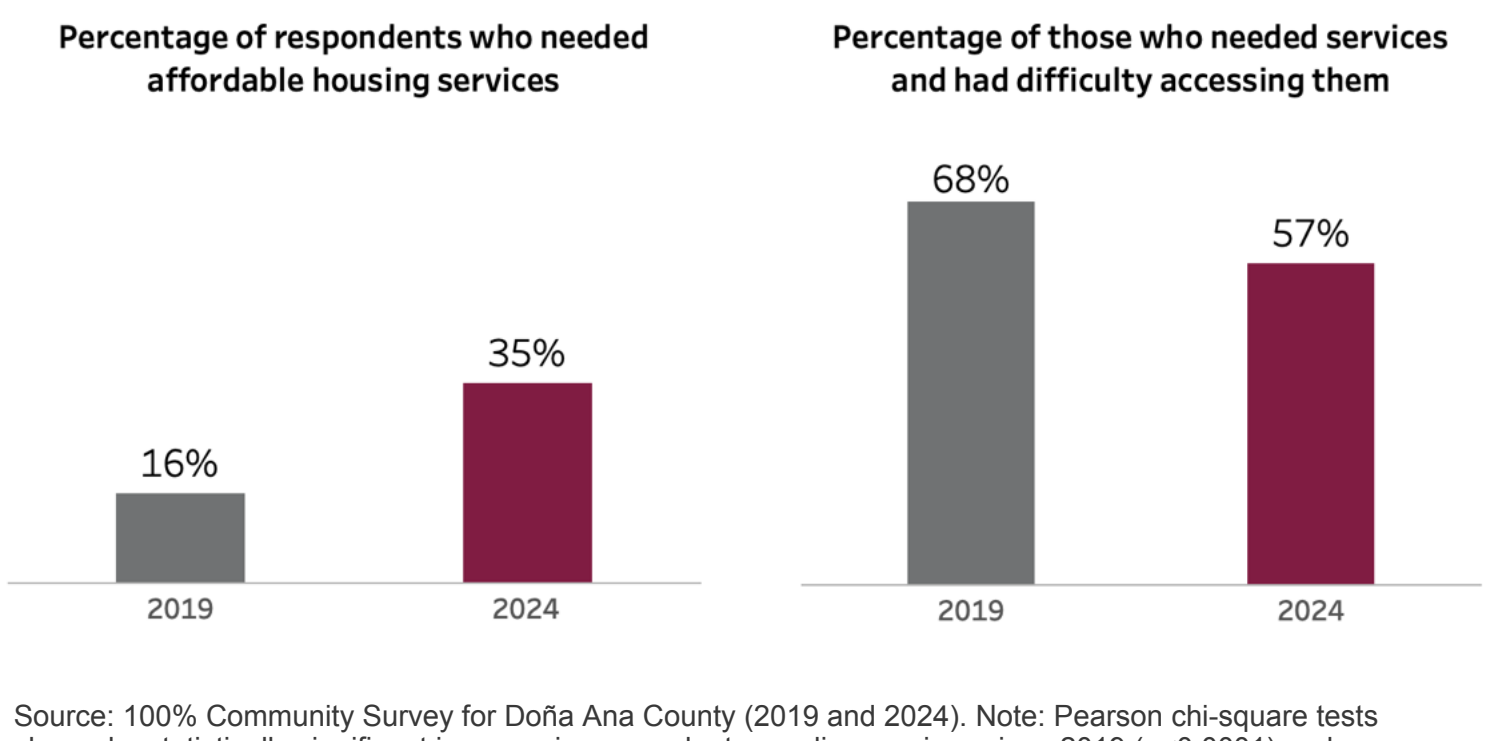
## How Home Stability Shapes Education and Employment Equity

When talking about education and employment equity, housing is not always part of the conversation, but it should be. Organizations like the [Doña Ana County Resilience Leaders](#) and [NMSU's Anna, Age Eight Institute](#) remind us that families need access to essential services, including safe and affordable housing, to thrive. A stable home forms the foundation for success in school and the workplace. When families have a secure place to live, children can focus on learning, and adults can pursue steady employment. However, when housing is unstable, barriers emerge at every stage of life, from kindergarten to career. In Doña Ana County, recent insights reveal how housing conditions shape opportunity, and where we can collaborate to create lasting change.

## Housing Need and Student Homelessness in Doña Ana County

Homelessness in Doña Ana County affects families, students, and workers across the community. Housing costs remain high, with 59% of renters facing a high housing burden and 34% experiencing a severe housing burden [\(1\)](#). **These pressures increase the demand for affordable housing services, such as Section 8 or other housing assistance programs, as reflected in the 100% Community Survey.**

In 2019, 16% of respondents reported a need for affordable housing services; by 2024, that number had more than doubled to 35%, showing a significant increase in demand over time. Among those needing services, there has been a statistically significant decrease in difficulty accessing them, from 68% in 2019 to 57% in 2024, highlighting a positive improvement in service availability, yet still leaving room for further progress [\(2\)](#).



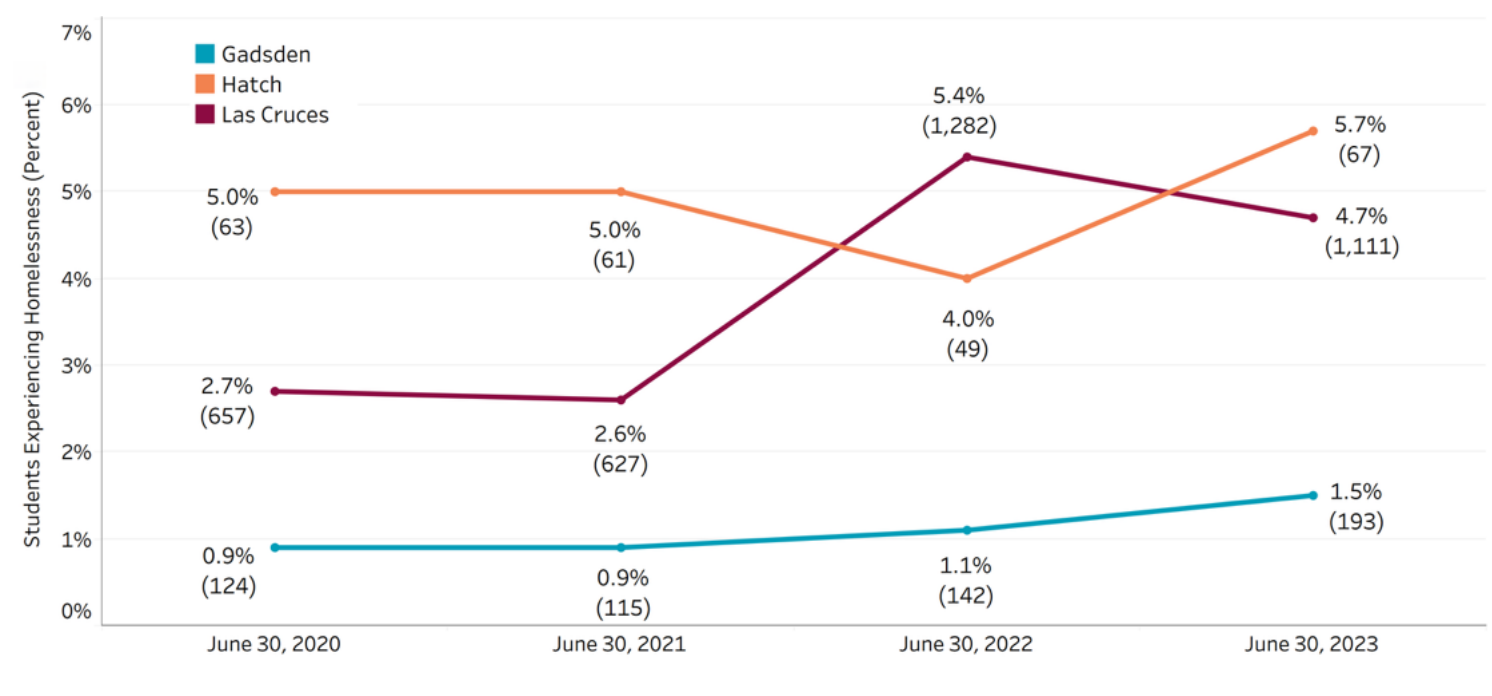
Source: 100% Community Survey for Doña Ana County (2019 and 2024). Note: Pearson chi-square tests showed a statistically significant increase in respondents needing services since 2019 (p<0.0001) and a statistically significant decrease in difficulty accessing services since 2019 (p = 0.02).

[Click here to access the 100% Community Housing and Job Training Results](#)

Schools across the county report persistent levels of student homelessness, highlighting how housing instability affects educational access and well-being. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), 5.7% of students in Hatch Valley Public Schools (HVPS) (67 students) are experiencing homelessness, compared with 4.7% (1,111 students) in Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) and 1.5% (193 students) in Gadsden Independent School District (GISD). HVPS currently reports the highest percentage, reflecting the unique housing and economic challenges faced by rural families.

From 2020 to 2023, the percentage of students experiencing homelessness in each district has fluctuated slightly year to year but shows no sustained decline. These trends underscore that housing instability persists as a significant issue across all three districts.

## Trends in the Number and Percentage of Students Experiencing Homelessness in HVPS, LCPS, and GISD (2020-2023)



Source: The U.S. Department of Education, ED Data Express, and SchoolHouse Connection Child and Youth Homelessness Data Profiles.

## Housing Instability, Student Outcomes, and Equity

Housing equity is the foundation of educational and career equity. Where a family lives and whether they have a safe, stable home shape nearly every opportunity available to them [\(4\)](#). Families in neighborhoods with limited housing options often face compounded disadvantages: fewer resources, higher stress, and reduced access to quality schools and job opportunities.

One of the most visible ways these housing inequities surface is in the lives of students. **Certain groups are disproportionately represented among students experiencing homelessness.** During the 2022–2023 school year in Doña Ana County, the homeless student population was 74% Hispanic or Latino, 33% English Language Learners, and 20% students with a disability [\(5\)](#). Students experiencing homelessness also faced significant barriers: 60% were chronically absent, compared to 37% of all students.

Chronic absenteeism is linked to lower proficiency in English, math, and science, and it can also influence whether a student graduates on time [\(6\)](#). In 2024, only 60% of unhoused students in New Mexico graduated from high school, an improvement from 51% in 2019 [\(7\)](#). When families struggle to keep a roof over their heads, student success, job training, and career growth often take a backseat.

**In 2024, 60% of New Mexico's unhoused high school seniors graduated — an improvement from 51% in 2019.**

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED).

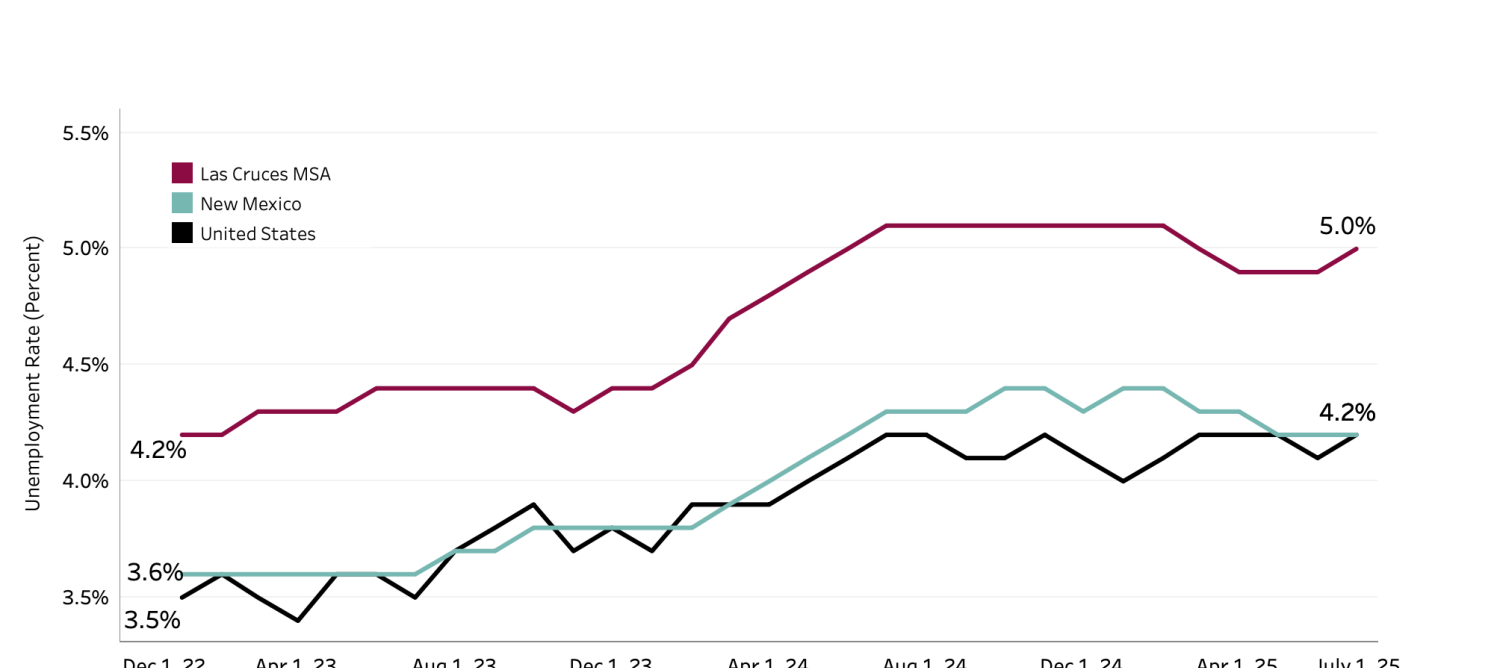
Without stable housing, access to essentials like reliable transportation, internet, or a quiet place to study or prepare for interviews becomes limited, creating barriers to learning and employment [\(8\)](#). Individuals may also face discrimination due to not having a physical address, which is often required for job, housing, or financial applications.

In Doña Ana County and across New Mexico, racial and neighborhood disparities in housing access mean that some students face barriers to success before they even enter the classroom [\(9\)](#). Homeownership data reveal racial and ethnic disparities in Doña Ana County: White households are slightly overrepresented among homeowners, while Hispanic and Native American families, in particular, are underrepresented relative to their share of the population [\(10\)](#).

## Employment and Income Stability

The effects of housing instability ripple into the workforce. In Doña Ana County, the percentage of **survey respondents needing job training programs increased from 23% in 2019 to 35% in 2024**. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has steadily risen to 5%, surpassing both the state average (4.2%) and the national average (4.2%) as of July 2025 [\(11\)](#). These interconnected challenges underscore the need for comprehensive solutions that address housing in conjunction with education and employment strategies. Stable housing does more than provide shelter; it creates the opportunity for learning, working, and thriving in New Mexico.

## Las Cruces Metropolitan Statistical Area Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted) (2022-2025)



Source: New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. Note: Seasonal adjustment is a statistical technique that attempts to measure and remove the influence of predictable seasonal patterns to reveal how employment and unemployment change from month to month (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). The Las Cruces Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) includes all of Doña Ana County.

## Local Solutions: Building Resilience Through Housing and Education Opportunity

Despite these challenges, Doña Ana County is taking action. Local leaders and organizations are collaborating to develop solutions to housing needs. In 2025, Las Cruces received \$11 million as part of a statewide investment to expand affordable housing and create more pathways out of homelessness [\(12\)](#).

Organizations are also developing solutions to address the impact of homelessness. For example, [FYI+](#) offers several housing services for low-income families, LGBTQ+ youth, and young adults who lack support services [\(13\)](#). [Ngage NM](#) and the [Success Partnership's Kinder-Career Coalition](#) launched the Supported Success Internship Program (SSIP). SSIP is a paid internship program designed to reach high school juniors and seniors who are often excluded from traditional opportunities due to barriers such as economic hardship, language access, and learning differences. Through programs like SSIP, students can continue their education while gaining paid work-based learning experiences that help them move toward long-term career goals.

These efforts demonstrate the power of community-driven solutions. By investing in housing and aligning it with education and workforce strategies, we can create a stronger, more resilient future for every resident of Doña Ana County.

## Final Thoughts

When we invest in housing, we invest in opportunity. A stable home enables children to focus on learning, empowers families to pursue education and employment opportunities, and strengthens entire communities. Housing inequity is not just about shelter; it is about access, stability, and pathways to success. As Doña Ana County continues to align its housing, education, and employment efforts, we have the chance to build a future where every child has the stability to learn, every adult has the support to work, and every family has the security to thrive.

[Click here to access the 100% Community Housing and Job Training Results](#)

- Sources:
- (1) [Cost Burdens High Across the Country](#)
  - (2) [100% Community Housing and Job Training Results for Doña Ana County](#)
  - (3) The U.S. Department of Education, ED Data Express, and the SchoolHouse Connection Child and Youth Homelessness Data Profiles
  - (4) [Graduating High School as a Teen Experiencing Homelessness](#)
  - (5) [CCA Dashboard: Chronic Absenteeism in Doña Ana County, NM and Annual State, Districts and Schools Attendance Report](#)
  - (6) [CCA Newsletter: Chronic Absenteeism](#)
  - (7) [New Mexico Public Education Department](#)
  - (8) [Employed and Experiencing Homelessness: What the Numbers Show](#)
  - (9) [CCA Newsletter: Rezoning of the Las Cruces Public School District](#)
  - (10) [2025 New Mexico Housing Needs Assessment](#)
  - (11) [New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions](#)
  - (12) [Las Cruces Awarded \\$11 Million for Housing Projects - The City of Las Cruces](#)
  - (13) [FYI+ Housing Services](#)