

SECURITY NOTICE

ALL WEAPONS PROHIBITED

NO
OVERFLOW
TONIGHT

SIN desbordamiento ESTA
Noche

DENVER COLD WEATHER SHELTER ACCESS: SURVEY + REPORT

Housekeys Action Network Denver

May 2024



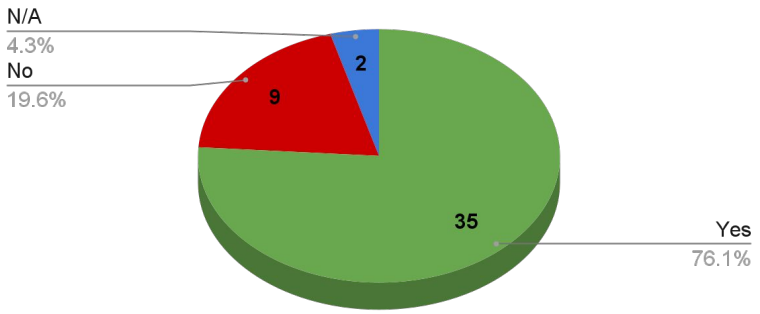
Part I:
Cold Weather Shelter
Access Survey

Survey Background

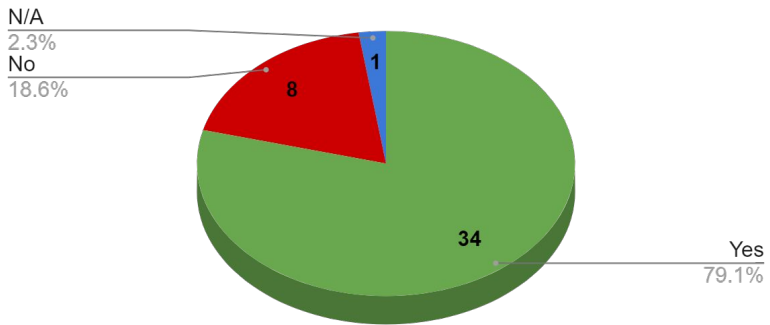
- Surveyed January-February 2024
 - 46 houseless people
 - 23 questions about access to cold weather shelter, experiences at cold weather shelters, and suggested improvements
 - Variety of Denver locations:
 - Downtown shelters (St. Francis Center, Denver Rescue Mission)
 - Day centers (The Gathering Place)
 - Large encampments
 - Scattered streets where unhoused people spend time
 - Compensated for survey with a bus ticket
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Survey Results: Key Findings

Percentage of people who have tried accessing day shelters during cold weather



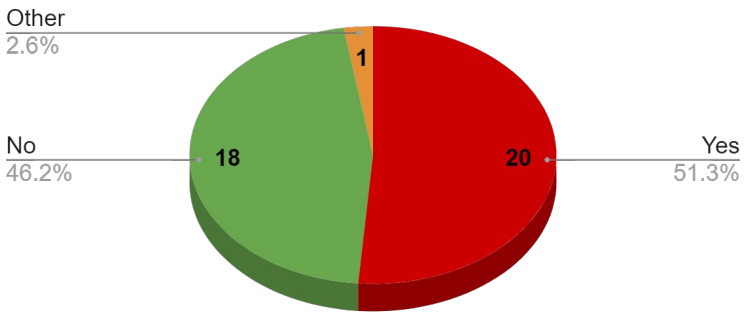
Percentage of people who have tried accessing night shelters during cold weather



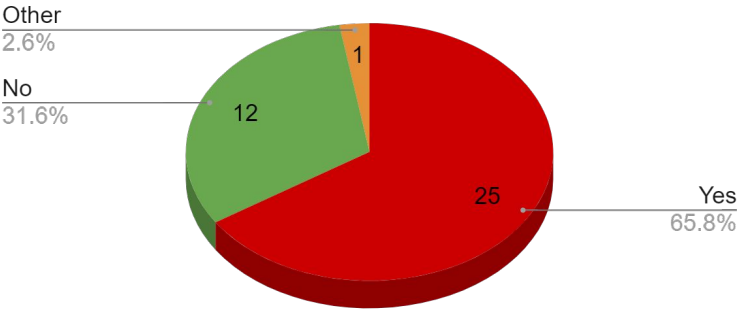
1. Many unhoused people are turned away from shelter during cold weather
 - a. 76-79% have attempted to access cold weather shelters, either during day or night
 - i. One person “had to get there in a wheelchair”



Percentage of people turned away from day shelters, including during cold weather emergencies



Percentage of people turned away from night shelters, including during cold weather emergencies



- 1. Many unhoused people are turned away from shelter during cold weather
 - b. >50% had been turned away from day shelters, nearly 66% from night shelters



“If so, why did the shelter say they turned you away?”

Capacity was, once again, the main reason given for not entering shelter in over half of these responses.

- Capacity 64% (*n*=16)
 - “No overflow”
 - “Capacity (that was a lie)”
 - Shelter fault 16% (*n*=4)
 - “The person I was with is Trans”
 - “Not being nice, He was not letting no else in”
 - Rules 12% (*n*=3)
 - Curfew (*n*=1)
 - DNR (*n*=1)
 - Drunk (*n*=1)
 - I don’t know 4% (*n*=1)
 - Not on list 4% (*n*=1)
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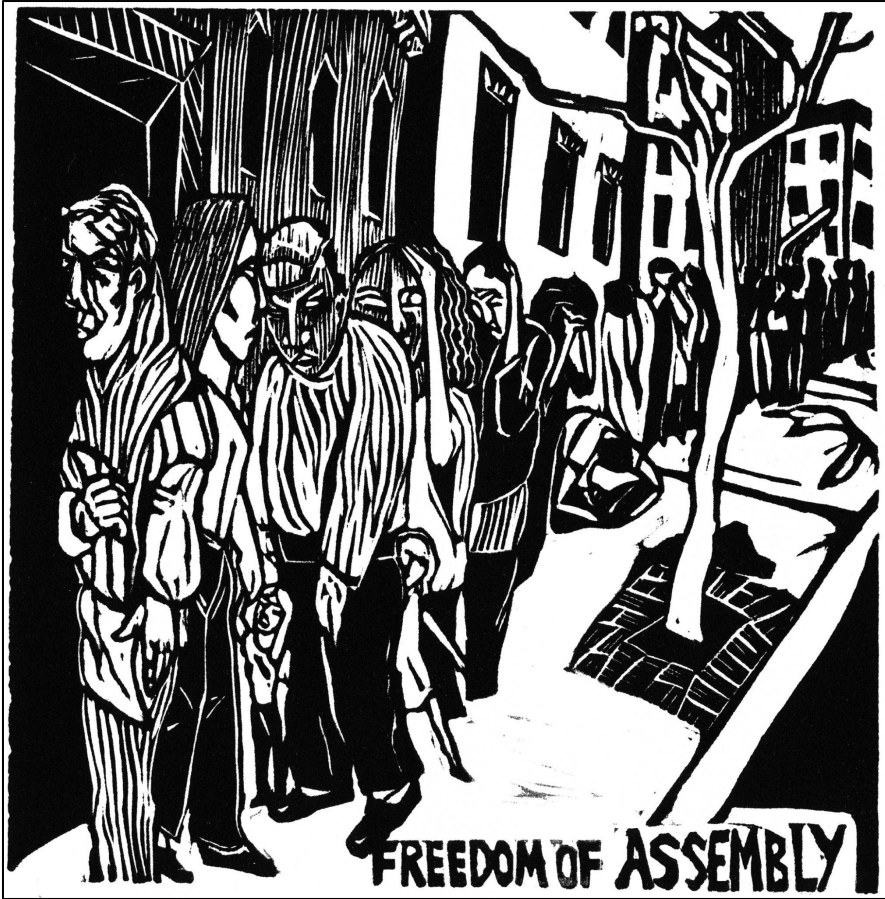


2. Most of these people stay/sleep outside when they cannot access shelter.
 - a. >56-73% of those turned away end up staying outside as a result, with those attempting to access night shelter making up the larger percentage.
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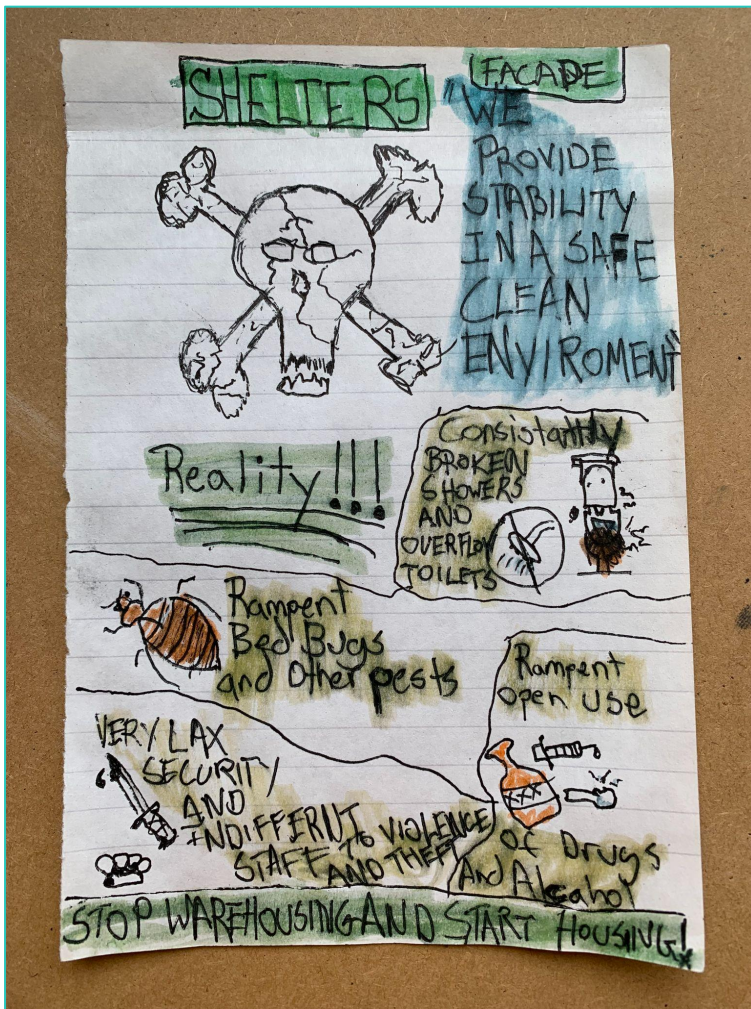
“What did you do when you were turned away?”

- “Felt suicidal”
- “Turn and felt sad”
- “Passed out in alley”
- “Sleep on sidewalk in front”
- “Used trash bags to stay warm”
- “Go back outside to find a place to shelter myself”
- “Rode the busses to stay warm, slept on a bus bench”
- “Walked to see if there was another one. no help, slept in the cold”





3. People travel great distances, most often by foot, in cold, to access shelters
 - a. Average travel time = 1.7 hours
 - b. Average distance = 3 miles
 - c. Most walk (or wheel) themselves, followed by taking City buses



4. There are reasonable explanations for why people don't go to shelters, even in the cold
 - a. Top reasons + chaotic, inhumane, stressful environment created by both other shelter seekers & disrespectful, authoritative

“If so, what are the reasons?”

- Others' behavior in shelter 26% (n=10)
- Shelter staff mistreatment 23% (n=9)
- Not preferred over other options 21% (n=8)
 - Outside (n=4)
 - Other places in general (n=2)
 - Actual housing (n=1)
 - Friend's place (n=1)
- Bugs 5% (n=2)
- Partner not allowed 5% (n=2)
- Distance 5% (n=2)
- Restrictive rules 5% (n=2)
 - Need to have ID (n=1)
 - Can't bring property (n=1)
- Specific shelter preferred 5% (n=2)
 - Emergency shelter (n=1)
 - Samaritan House (n=1)
- No capacity 3% (n=1)
- Shelter temperature (cold) 3% (n=1)

Most common responses relate to issues with other people - both other shelter guests and shelter staff.

“What has your experience been like at cold weather **day** shelters?”

- Negative experiences 55% (n=24)
 - “I don't want to go”
 - “Long lines, turned away”
 - “I should be somewhere with physical therapy”
 - “Just beds no chairs, I had to go to sleep at 6PM”
 - “They treated everyone like we are in jail, and limit their to services to anyone”
 - “Standing in the cold, hands cold, feet cold, Didn't have enough gear, No cover, nose running. I keep asking when we can go inside, they give no answers”
 - “Emotionally disturbing, overwhelming, crowded, uncomfortable”
 - Positive experience 34% (n=15)
 - “Nice to have roof”
 - “Very good service, provide me w/ the things I need”
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“What has your experience been like at cold weather **night** shelters?”

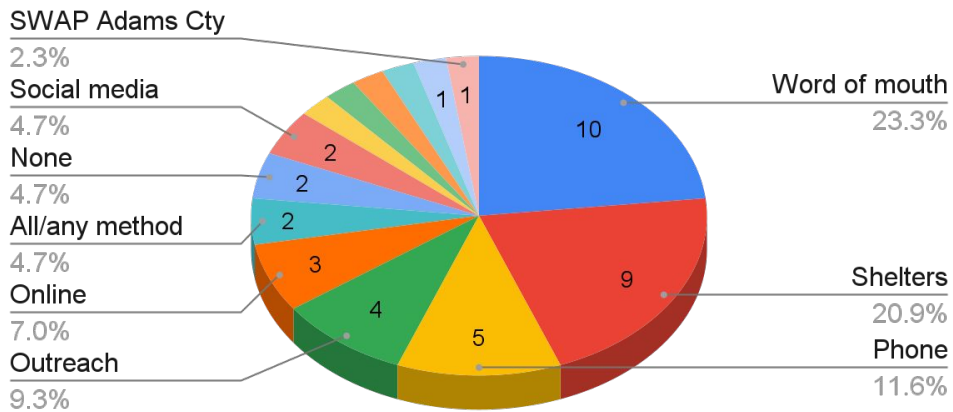
- Negative experience 61% (n=34)
 - “Stressful, locked in”
 - “Horrible, stress on people”
 - “5 stalls & sinks for 48 people”
 - “CRAZY! No discipline as far as staff. No experience w/ houseless ppl”
 - “Very bad, threats of rape due to being trans”
 - “Management stops w/ petty rules and no space, no accommodations”
 - “Horrible, unacceptable treatment like I’m in jail”
 - Positive experience 29% (n=16)
 - “Not freezing to death or frostbite”
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5. Top proposed shelter system improvements, in order:

1. Increase accessibility by expanding hours, capacity, locations, & transportation
2. Improve staff treatment towards shelter residents
3. Offer more supportive services, including case management & community service opportunities
4. Get rid of curfew
5. Improve hygiene, including with more/better bathrooms & treating for bed bugs
6. Improve communication to people regarding shelter resources

Methods of accessing information regarding cold weather shelters



- Unhoused people mostly rely on Word of Mouth to find out information about shelters
 - The same question on a previous survey in December of 2023 regarding sweeps in freezing weather yielded similar results

Part II: Shelter Capacity & Usage Data

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Capacity & Usage Data: Non-Emergency Congregate Shelter

Date	Total Guest	Overall Total	Nightly Capacity	Date	Total Guest	Overall Total	Nightly Capacity	Date	Total Guest	Overall Total	Nightly Capacity
10/1/2023	1779		1853	10/23/2023	1835		1853	11/14/2023	1932		1928
10/2/2023	1814		1853	10/24/2023	1896		1853	11/15/2023	1954		1928
10/3/2023	1759		1853	10/25/2023	1855		1853	11/16/2023	1961		1928
10/4/2023	1767		1851	10/26/2023	1934		1853	11/17/2023	1934		1928
10/5/2023	1794		1851	10/27/2023	1950		1891	11/18/2023	1934		1928
10/6/2023	1828		1853	10/28/2023	1991		1891	11/19/2023	1990		1928
10/7/2023	1804		1853	10/29/2023	1988		1891	11/20/2023	1973		1928
10/8/2023	1817		1853	10/30/2023	1937		1891	11/21/2023	1969		1924
10/9/2023	1800		1853	10/31/2023	1955		1891	11/22/2023	1932		1924
10/10/2023	1829		1813	11/1/2023	1927		1891	11/23/2023	2029		1924
10/11/2023	1829		1853	11/2/2023	1908		1891	11/24/2023	1947		1924
10/12/2023	1881		1853	11/3/2023	1852		1891	11/25/2023	1946		1924
10/13/2023	1863		1853	11/4/2023	1881		1891	11/26/2023	1954		1924
10/14/2023	1881		1853	11/5/2023	1874		1891	11/27/2023	2041		1924
10/15/2023	1858		1853	11/6/2023	1897		1891	11/28/2023	2018		1924
10/16/2023	1843		1853	11/7/2023	1882		1891	11/29/2023	2021		1924
10/17/2023	1802		1853	11/8/2023	1956		1891	11/30/2023	1944		1924
10/18/2023	1859		1853	11/9/2023	1640		1891	12/1/2023	2036		1924
10/19/2023	1833		1853	11/10/2023	1947		1891	12/2/2023	2019		1924
10/20/2023	1849		1853	11/11/2023	2132		1891	12/3/2023	2024		1924
10/21/2023	1844		1853	11/12/2023	1940		1891	12/4/2023	2002		1924
10/22/2023	1858		1853	11/13/2023	1923		1928	12/5/2023	1976		1924

Between October 1st, 2023 & January 31st, 2024 - for 82 out of these 123 nights, 67% of the time - Denver shelters were over-capacity

Date	Total Guest Overall	Total Nightly Capacity
12/6/2023	1948	1924
12/7/2023	1992	1924
12/8/2023	1906	1924
12/9/2023	1932	1924
12/10/2023	1706	1924
12/11/2023	2030	1924
12/12/2023	1681	1924
12/13/2023	2038	1924
12/14/2023	2008	1924
12/15/2023	2015	1924
12/16/2023	1962	1924
12/17/2023	1982	1924
12/18/2023	1988	1924
12/19/2023	1979	1924
12/20/2023	1993	1924
12/21/2023	2013	1924
12/22/2023	2034	1924
12/23/2023	1998	1924
12/24/2023	1953	1924
12/25/2023	1948	1924
12/26/2023	2057	1924
12/27/2023	2026	1924

Date	Total Guest Overall	Total Nightly Capacity
12/28/2023	2043	1924
12/29/2023	2025	1924
12/30/2023	1976	1924
12/31/2023	1909	1924
1/1/2024	1923	1924
1/2/2024	1963	1951
1/3/2024	1970	1951
1/4/2024	1944	1951
1/5/2024	1879	1951
1/6/2024	1901	1951
1/7/2024	1915	1951
1/8/2024	1936	1951
1/9/2024	1923	1951
1/10/2024	1923	1951
1/11/2024	1929	1951
1/12/2024	1886	1951
1/13/2024	2066	1951
1/14/2024	2073	1951
1/15/2024	2079	1951
1/16/2024	2043	1951
1/17/2024	2002	1951
1/18/2024	2002	1951

Date	Total Guest Overall	Total Nightly Capacity
1/19/2024	2051	1951
1/20/2024	2045	1951
1/21/2024	2021	1951
1/22/2024	2047	1951
1/23/2024	2002	1991
1/24/2024	2026	1991
1/25/2024	2021	1991
1/26/2024	1997	1991
1/27/2024	1988	1991
1/28/2024	1943	1991
1/29/2024	1937	1991
1/30/2024	1932	1991
1/31/2024	1944	1991

Between October 1st, 2023 & January 31st, 2024 - for 82 out of these 123 nights, 67% of the time - Denver shelters were over-capacity

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Capacity & Usage Data: Cold Weather Emergency Shelter

	Coliseum	New Directions	Total
28-Oct	232	80	312
29-Oct	283	82	365
30-Oct	190	90	280
	Coliseum	New Directions	Total
24-Nov	225	95	320
25-Nov	274	104	378
26-Nov	320	93	413
	Denver Navigation Campus	New Directions	Total
30-Nov	185	70	255
	Denver Navigation Campus	New Directions	Total
8-Dec	180	94	274
9-Dec	150	82	232
	Denver Navigation Campus		Total
24-Dec	217		217
25-Dec	247		247

	Denver Navigation Campus	New Directions	McNichols	Total	
5-Jan	220	0		220	
6-Jan	230	0		230	
7-Jan	254	0		254	
8-Jan	312	0		312	
9-Jan	259	14		273	
10-Jan	225	70		295	
11-Jan	280	81		361	
12-Jan	289	88		377	24-hour begins 1/12 7pm
13-Jan	255	71		326	
14-Jan	308	88	31	427	
15-Jan	300	92	67	459	24-hour ends 1/16 10am
16-Jan	288	13	28	329	
17-Jan	275		22	297	
18-Jan	307	15	25	347	
19-Jan	268			268	

For every night that these shelters were open, there were between 217 -459 people who used them.

Part III: **First-HAND Experiences**



“It was snowing hard that night. It was around midnight, and I had just clocked out at my job in the kitchen of a restaurant. I knew that all the shelters had ended the program where you could show your time card for the day and be allowed in after curfew. That was no more, and here it was, after curfew, snowing, and I had nowhere to go. Just then I remembered being told that shelters had to accept people that were brought by the cops or other emergency personnel. I called Denver non-emergency and explained the situation. They sent a cop to meet me. I had to be handcuffed to ride in the cop car to Crossroads, including being cuffed with the lights flashing right in front of my work! Needless to say how embarrassing it is to have to do this after working a 10-hour shift in a hot kitchen, just to get a dirty mat on a vermin-infested floor to sleep on, so I wouldn't freeze to death.”

**Absolutely No Shelter
Available The Night
After Warming Center
Pilot Program Ends,
Many Stranded:
Confirmed by Mayor's
Office**



**David Kicked to the
Streets from Shelters
after surgery for
“Inability to care for
self”&^%**



**Denver Must Open
Warming Centers in
Under 32 Degree
Weather!**

**This man was put
out of the hospital
onto the streets
with nothing,
walked to a bus
stop, and told
“Good luck”.**

housekeysactionnetwork.com

Update from Zuni Camp Migrant Sweep Wednesday



Part IV: Conclusion & Recommendations

Denver doesn't have enough shelter space for all houseless people seeking shelter in cold weather, as evidenced by:

- Direct experience of unhoused
- Data from City's shelter records
- Advocates' experiences in assisting those seeking shelter

Until Denver secures enough real housing for all in need - which would be the best way forward! - Denver needs to open enough emergency shelter space for everyone seeking shelter, especially in the winter.

Top recommendations to improve cold weather sheltering:

- Open shelter access to all hours (with no curfew)
 - Open shelters in various parts of town to reduce travel time
 - Offer transportation to shelters (though not mandated to get in)
 - Have better treatment by staff
 - Allow people who have been ATL'd from other shelters
-

Unhoused people have completely valid reasons for not wanting to seek shelter, cold weather or otherwise

- Top reason given: not wanting to be around others who could mistreat them in this setting
 - Abusive/inconsiderate shelter staff
 - Other shelter residents
 - This reason can in-part be addressed through non-congregate sheltering with individual rooms
-

Humans are not meant to live outside during cold Denver winters...

- Risks of hypothermia, frostbite, even death...
- 2023 was a record high year for unhoused deaths
- Not “too expensive” when City budget is able to allocate excessive funds for additional policing & pickleball.

**Denver should not be a City where death is acceptable if you are poor & houseless.
Act now to protect our lives!**

Questions?

- Housekeys Action Network Denver
- info@housekeysactionnetwork.com
- 701-484-2634
