

Executive Summary

HousingWorks Austin is a nonprofit organization that aims to increase the supply of affordable housing in Austin by providing research, education, advocacy, and thoughtful, workable affordable housing policy recommendations.

The second iteration of HousingWorks' Affordable Housing County Analysis for the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)¹ highlights the impacts of a changing housing market throughout the Austin region and gives some indications of the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on housing affordability issues. The past year has presented many challenges to Austin-regional communities. A need for safe and affordable housing opportunities has come into sharp relief.

Despite the economic difficulties many households have experienced during the pandemic, the housing market continues to boom across the Austin metropolitan area and the average Austin household has gained wealth.²

- In the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA, homes sold for \$26,000 more on average in 2020 than they did in 2019, an annual increase of 8.2%.
- The poverty rate in the MSA has gone down by 1.5% to 10.8%, suggesting that Austin-area households continue to gain wealth.

However, gains in home sale prices and decreasing poverty rates have not occurred equally across the region.

- Caldwell County, one of only two counties in the MSA that contain a majority of individuals who identify as a Person of Color (POC) at 60%, Travis County as the other with 51% POC, has not experienced equal levels of wealth accumulation as many of the other areas in the MSA.
- The poverty rate in Caldwell County grew to 18.9% in 2020, a 1.2% increase from 2019, whereas in Williamson County a 7% poverty rate in 2019 continued to drop to 6.4% in 2020.
- Median Family Income (MFI) grew by more than 7% in all counties except for Caldwell, which only saw a 3.8% increase in income from 2019 to 2020.
- Within Travis County alone, Precincts 1 & 4 have Median Family Incomes more than \$40,000 lower than those in Precincts 2 & 3.



Other trends suggest that the Austin area is following a national pattern that has seen families displaced by rising housing costs in inner-city neighborhoods moving to areas on the peripheries of metropolitan areas, where housing costs are cheaper.³

- Many families within the MSA struggle to pay for their housing, with 31% of households paying more than 30% of their monthly income to housing costs (cost-burdened), 14% of whom pay 50% or more (extremely cost-burdened).
- In Travis County and Hays County, two of the central counties in the region, over a third of households are cost-burdened.
- Bastrop and Caldwell Counties, the only two counties in the MSA in which the City of Austin does not partially fall, contain the lowest Median Family Incomes, lowest Average Rents, and lowest Median Home Prices. However, both have experienced rising housing prices since last year, with a 4.4% increase in Rent and 5.2% increase in Home Price in Bastrop and a 11.6% increase in Rent and 10.1% increase in Home Price in Caldwell.

Efforts to build more affordable housing in all parts of the region are necessary to ensure that the Austin region remains affordable for all.

- At the regional level, 78% of all affordable housing units in the MSA are located within Travis County despite containing only 58% of the region's population.
- In Travis County the number of affordable housing units located outside of the city limits of Austin more than doubled, with 2,983 such units in 2019 increasing to 6,182 in 2020.
- However, Precincts 1 & 4 (including areas within the City of Austin) contain 78% of all subsidized housing in Travis County.



Filling the need for affordable housing in parts of the region that currently lack such options remains an important piece of expanding housing opportunities. Additionally, the efforts to add affordable units outside of the City of Austin, as illustrated in the increase in affordable units in Travis County outside of Austin, should continue.

At the same time, locating affordable housing away from critical services located centrally can further strain the finances of low- and moderate-income families. To ensure that households across the region can access housing opportunities in all areas, expanding public transportation into areas outside of the center of Austin is necessary.

On a broader level, housing in the MSA faces a critical problem that must balance economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with addressing a housing shortage. In a tightening market where homeownership has become out of reach for many and gains in wealth differ spatially, affordable and accessible housing remains a critical need across the entire region.

We hope that this 2020 Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA County Analysis helps inform organizations, policymakers, and community members working to expand housing options so that everyone can enjoy a region that has “All Kinds of Homes, In All Parts of Town, For All Kinds of People.”

Nora Linares-Moeller
Executive Director, **HousingWorks Austin**



Key Takeaways for the Five-County Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA

BASTROP COUNTY:

- Bastrop County has the highest percentage of seniors in the region, with 15% of their total population Aged 65 or older.
 - Bastrop County has the highest percentage of homeowners in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA, with 77% owning their homes.
 - Residents of Bastrop County drive more often than residents in the other Austin region, driving 25,688 miles on average every year. Efforts to increase public transportation in Bastrop County should accompany affordable housing projects to ensure that all households that wish to move to Bastrop are able to.
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CALDWELL COUNTY:

- Caldwell County residents have less wealth on average than residents in the other four counties in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA. Caldwell has the lowest Median Family Income at \$62,105; Williamson County has the highest MFI at \$100,844, 62% higher than the Caldwell MFI. At the same time, Caldwell County has the highest Poverty Rate at 18.9% which is nearly three times the Poverty Rate in Williamson at 6.4%.
 - With 52% of residents describing their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, Caldwell County has the highest percentage of Hispanic/Latino residents in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA.
 - Caldwell County experienced the highest percent increase in Average Rent prices in the Austin region, rising from \$882 to \$952, an 11.6% increase since last year.
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HAYS COUNTY:

- With over 1 in 3 households paying more than 30% of their income toward housing costs, a higher percentage of households in Hays County experience housing cost burden than in other counties in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA. Additionally, nearly 1 in 6 Hays County households are extremely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income toward housing costs.
 - Hays County residents are younger on average than residents of other counties in the MSA, with a Median age of 32.
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TRAVIS COUNTY:

- Travis County contains the highest population with nearly 1.3 million people and the most subsidized affordable housing with 46,375 units in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA. Despite containing 58% of the region's population, 78% of the affordable housing units in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA are in Travis County alone.
 - With a Median Home Price of \$405,000 and an Average Rent of \$1,273, Travis County has the most expensive housing in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA.
 - Since last year, the Median Family Income in Travis County increased by nearly \$10,000, This 11% increase in MFI is the largest in the Austin region.
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WILLIAMSON COUNTY:

- With an MFI of \$100,844 and a Poverty Rate of 6.4%, the average Williamson County household has higher incomes and experiences lower rates of poverty than residents in the other Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA counties.
 - Despite containing 26% of the region's population, Williamson County only contains 6,462 units of subsidized affordable housing, 11% of all subsidized affordable housing in the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA.
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Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown MSA County Analysis Sources & Methodology

The county and precinct analyses are based on a variety of sources and these are mentioned on each county and precinct analysis sheet. The numbers below correspond with the numbers marked on the figure above for reference.

Sources

- **SOURCE 1:** Combination of sources below along with data from the 2019 County and Precinct Analysis
- **SOURCE 2:** United States Census Bureau, 2019 5-Year American Community Survey. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1A.
- **SOURCE 3:** United States Census Bureau, 2019 5-Year American Community Survey. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1.
- **SOURCE 4:** Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) 2020. Data Available at Precinct Level.
- **SOURCE 5:** United States Census Bureau, 2019 5-Year American Community Survey. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1.
- **SOURCE 6:** Austin Investor Interests, Q3 2020. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 2.
- **SOURCE 7:** Austin Board of Realtors (ABOR), Q3 2020.
- **SOURCE 8:** United States Census Bureau, 2019 5-Year American Community Survey. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1.
- **SOURCE 9:** Multiple sources are combined to create a comprehensive list for precinct or counties respectively.
 - Housing and Planning Department City of Austin, Accessed 2021
 - Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, Accessed 2021
 - National Low Income Housing Coalition and Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation, Accessed 2021
 - Housing Authority of the City of Austin, Accessed 2020
 - Housing Authority of Travis County, Accessed 2020
 - United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Accessed 2020
 - Austin Tenants' Council, 2019
 - Various county housing resources.
 - Precinct Analysis based on methodology 3.
- **SOURCES 10-11:** United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Dataset, 2013-2017. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1.
- **SOURCES 12-13:** Center for Neighborhood Technology Housing and Transportation Affordability Index, 2020. Precinct Analysis based on methodology 1.



TRAVIS COUNTY AT A GLANCE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING 2020

1 DEMOGRAPHICS

34.2

MEDIAN AGE

RACE/ETHNICITY

- 49% White
- 34% Hispanic/Latino
- 8% Black/African American
- 7% Asian
- 3% Other



2 SUBSIDIZED HOUSING



6,182

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS IN COUNTY OUTSIDE OF AUSTIN CITY LIMITS*

TOTAL SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS IN COUNTY*

46,375

* Data includes existing and planned units

3 COST OF LIVING



\$1,273

AVERAGE RENT PER MONTH

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

\$96,847



\$405,000

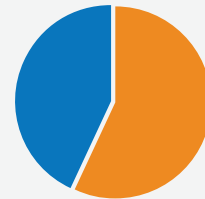
MEDIAN HOME PRICE

4 RENTER VS. OWNER

43%

RENTERS

518,343



57%

HOMEOWNERS

683,291

5 SENIOR POPULATION



9.5%

AGE 65+

2.8%



AGE 65+ WITH A DISABILITY

6 HOMELESSNESS

1,552



OF PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREETS

7 POVERTY RATE



12.0%

POVERTY RATE

143,785

INDIVIDUALS BELOW POVERTY

8 COST BURDENED

8

28% ARE COST BURDENED

13% ARE EXTREMELY COST BURDENED

STATE OF TEXAS

33% ARE COST BURDENED

15% ARE EXTREMELY COST BURDENED

TRAVIS COUNTY

9 TRANSIT CHOICES



89

AVERAGE ANNUAL MASS TRANSIT TRIPS TAKEN COUNTYWIDE

20,266



AVERAGE ANNUAL VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED COUNTYWIDE



HousingWorks
AUSTIN

5-County MSA Sources: Austin Board of Realtors, Austin Investor Interests, Austin Tenants' Council, Center for Neighborhood Technology, Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, National Low Income Housing Coalition, City of Austin Housing & Planning Department, Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation, Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, United States Census Bureau, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development



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Methodology

Methodological Note: *To better align with processes and methodology HousingWorks used to produce the 2018 and 2019 Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint Scorecards, the methodologies for the 2020 County and Precinct Analysis differ slightly from last years County and Precinct Analysis report.*

The 5-MSA County analysis takes information summarized at the county-level from various sources outlined in the list above. Additionally, point data that is associated with distinct addresses, such as the data collected from the sources listed above, is linked to county boundaries by its overlap.

The Travis County precinct analysis is based on a number of resources and different geographical scales. The other four counties are not based on geographical scales. Furthermore, the precinct data is analyzed in the context of the boundaries of the Travis County Precincts. This has led to three separate approaches based on geographic scale of source data:

1. Census tract data: Data available at the census tract level is analyzed based on a methodology developed after conversation with the City of Austin demographic staff. Census tracts are divided according to their overlap with the Austin City Council District boundaries. Tracts that overlap between two council districts are attributed to one council district based on the overlap area and the existing land use type. Once all the tracts have been linked to a council district, the corresponding data is calculated for that district. For average values such as median rent and home price, the data is weighed for each census tract based on its total population using Microsoft Excel.

a. The precinct analysis is similar to 1 but with updated census tracts shared by the City Demographer. The rest of this methodology performs the same analysis as methodology 1.

2. Zip code data: Data available at the zip code level is analyzed using the Zonal Statistics as Table tool in the Spatial Analyst toolbox of the ArcGIS software. This requires converting vector source data into the raster format and then using the tool to summarize the values of the raster based on the zones of another dataset (Austin City Council District boundaries in this case). The results from the generated table then provide a value at the district level.

3. Point Data: Data associated with distinct addresses, such as the data collected from the sources above, is linked to Austin City Council District boundaries by its overlap.

DEFINITIONS

- **Poverty** - The income cutoffs used by the Census Bureau to determine the poverty status of families and unrelated individuals included a set of forty-eight thresholds arranged in a two-dimensional matrix consisting of family size.
- **Subsidized Housing** – Housing funded through some form of subsidy to ensure units are affordable that limits how much income households can make to rent specific units based on their income.
- **Cost Burdened** - Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing related costs are considered cost burdened.
- **Extremely Cost Burdened** - Households that spend more than 50% of their income on housing related costs are considered cost burdened.
- **Vehicle Miles Traveled** - The average annual auto travel by a household. This includes commute travel, as well as all other daily auto trips.
- **Mass Transit Trips Taken** - The average annual number of fixed-route public transportation trips taken by a household.



LIMITATIONS

- American Community Survey (ACS) is based on sampling and thus the data from ACS involves a margin of error. This margin of error varies for 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year data, with decreasing levels of margin of error.
- Considering the varied sources, different geographical scales, and multiple methodologies it is important to understand that most of the data for each county and precinct is best evaluated comparatively and not referenced as absolute numbers.
- The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Dataset from Housing and Urban Development is based on a rotation of 3-year and 5-year ACS data. This limits the availability of the data in certain years.
- The HUD-defined Median Family Income is used in affordable housing developments to set income limits within the Austin MSA. However, since this analysis aims to show MSA-level data disaggregated by county and precinct for comparison within the Austin region, we have used Median Family Income data from the American Community Survey, at the county and Census tract-level. The ACS data will differ from the HUD-defined MFIs since it takes median incomes for all household sizes, where the HUD-defined MFI breaks down according to household size.
- Due to rounding, percentages represented in these graphics may not total 100%.

SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES - COUNTIES

A. Age and Gender by County in the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area

	Austin-Round Rock MSA (Total)	Austin-Round Rock MSA (%)	Bastrop County	Caldwell County	Hays County	Travis County	Williamson County
Total Population	2,114,441	-	84,522	42,144	213,366	1,226,805	547,604
Male	1,059,553	50.1%	42,810	21,313	106,252	619,629	269,549
Female	1,054,888	49.9%	41,712	20,831	107,114	607,176	278,055
Population 65+	222,115	10.5%	12,303	5,771	22,818	116,483	64,740
Population 65+ with a disability	68,494	3.2%	4,680	2,308	6,915	34,149	20,442

Source: American Community Survey (2015-19)

B. Race/Ethnicity by County in the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area

	Austin-Round Rock MSA (Total)	Austin-Round Rock MSA (%)	Bastrop County	Caldwell County	Hays County	Travis County	Williamson County
White	1,101,527	52.1%	44,228	16,718	114,727	600,694	325,160
Hispanic/Latino	685,531	32.4%	31,852	21,993	83,069	414,745	133,872
Black/African American	146,472	6.9%	5,977	2,360	8,207	96,367	33,561
Asian	122,709	5.8%	710	407	3,210	81,212	37,170
Other	58,202	2.8%	1,755	666	4,153	33,787	17,841

Source: American Community Survey (2015-19)