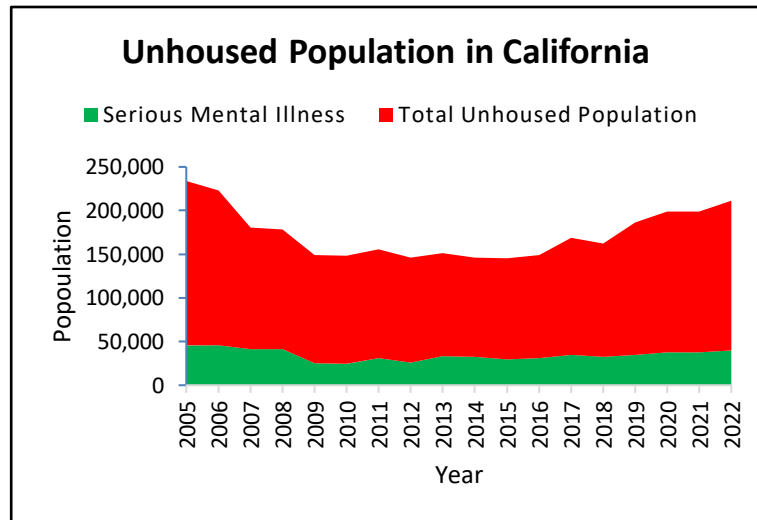


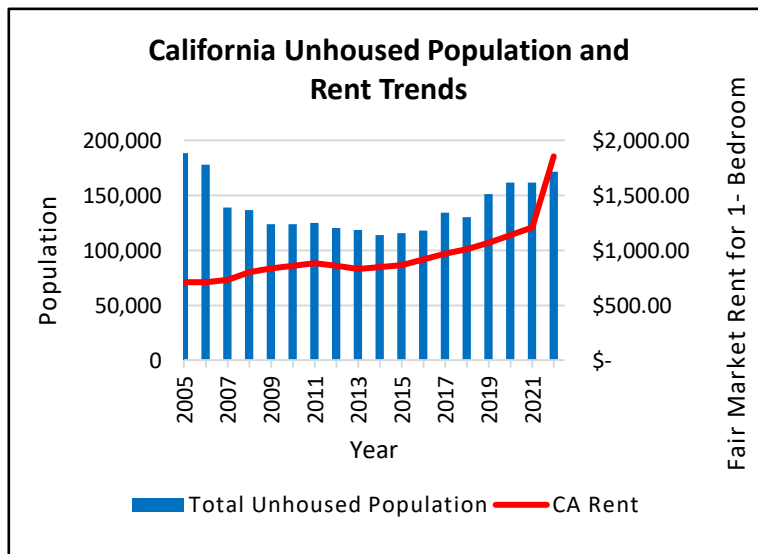
# Data Shows Serious Mental Illness is not the Cause of Unhoused Population Increase in California

Governor Newsom’s Behavioral Health Modernization Proposal seeks to reduce the number of unhoused people by focusing Mental Health Services Act funds on this population. However, California’s high number of people without homes is primarily a housing affordability and access issue, not a behavioral health crisis. Data shows that California’s Serious Mental Illness (SMI) subpopulation stays relatively stable while there are dramatic decreases and increases in the unhoused population<sup>1</sup> (See Figure A).

**FIGURE A**



**FIGURE B**



Housing in California is increasingly unaffordable (see Figure B). In 2022, the average fair market rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in California was \$1,854 a month<sup>2</sup>, requiring an hourly wage of \$34.76 to be affordable. As of May 2023, the fair market rent for a 1-bedroom apartment is \$1,969 a month<sup>3</sup>. Currently, there are 1.1 million people<sup>4</sup> in California who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), with a potential maximum payment of \$1,134 per month for individuals and \$1,928 per month for couples<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Continuum of Care Program, 2023)

<sup>2</sup> (RentData.org, 2023)

<sup>3</sup> (RentData.org, 2023)

<sup>4</sup> (Social Security Administration, 2023)

<sup>5</sup> (Social Security Administration, 2023)

Additionally, California is not building the housing needed for people with low and very low incomes. Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) data indicates that in order to meet local housing needs, 40% of all housing permits approved need to be for Low and Very Low income earners (see Figure C)<sup>6</sup>. However, the vast majority of housing being permitted in the current housing cycle is for people with Moderate and Above Moderate Incomes (See Figure D).<sup>7</sup>

FIGURE C

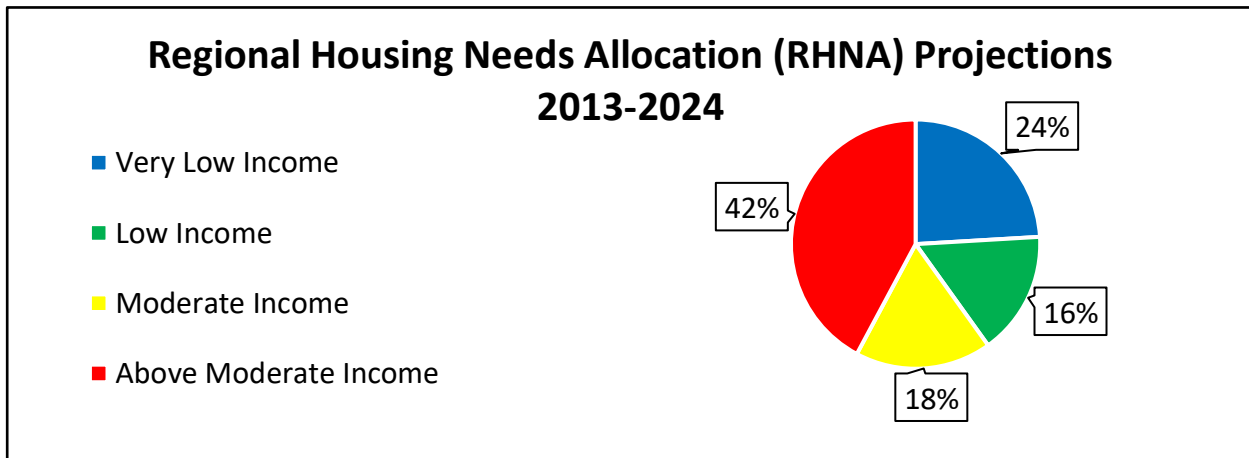
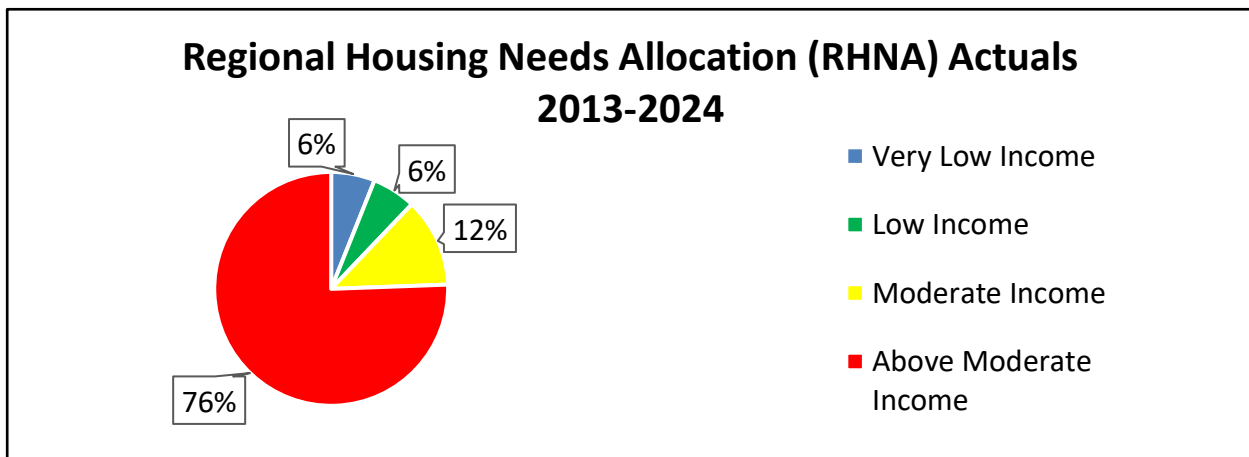


FIGURE D



The high number of Californians without homes is not a mental health issue, it is a housing access and affordability crisis. Being unhoused not only exacerbates existing mental health conditions it causes new ones. Instead of diverting funds necessary for mental health services, the state must ensure that local governments are held accountable for building sufficient housing for people with low and very low incomes in accordance with their Regional Housing Needs Allocations.

<sup>6</sup> (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2023)

<sup>7</sup> (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2023)