

APPENDIX F – POLICY TRENDS IN WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

A review of proposed legislation association with the following descriptive tags:

- “Homeless Persons” (Figure 1 and 2),
- “Low-Income Persons” (Figures 4 and 5),
- an amended “Housing and Homes” tag¹ (Figure 3), and
- housing related bills with the term “Affordable” in the sentence summary (Figure 6 and 7). All categories illustrated a general increasing trend in bills introduced.

For the descriptive tag “Homeless Persons”, bill introductions and passage peaked during the 2017-18 and 2019-20 biennia. Since these legislative sessions, bill introductions and passage have tapered off while remaining greater than the sessions prior to this peak. Likewise, the amended “Housing and Homes” tag and the “Affordable” term search in housing related bills saw peaks in the 2019-20 biennium with tapering introductions and passages. These bill categories are returning to levels prior to that of their peaks. The “Low-Income Persons” tag an introduction peak in 2017-18 but has remained steady in higher than typical passage and introduction rates, especially when consider the percentage these bills make of total bills introduced and passed. These trends could have several explanations, which this analysis did not seek to explain. Legislative peaks could be indicative of lack of collaboration and coordination between legislative actors, leading to high numbers of competing bills during a time of sudden interest or activity around a subject. Subsequent sessions may have lower bill numbers as legislative actors work together to co-create legislation. Other competing interests or issues could also lead to a tapering effect after a peak. The last five years have also been marked by the COVID-19 global health situation that disrupted typical governmental work. Ramifications of the pandemic may still be lingering.

The recent biennium and legislative interest in housing, homelessness, and low-income persons cannot necessarily be readily explained by typical causal events. Bill introductions suggest that “Low-Income Persons” bills follow periods of economic recessions, peaks of bill introductions in the 2001-2002 and the 2009-2010 biennia. Small peaks in “Homeless Persons” and the amended “Housing and Homes” tags during and after the Great Recession suggest connections to economic casual factors. However, the recent surges in the Homeless Persons and the amended Housing and Homes tags suggest increased interest in these areas in the past decade along with alignment of terminology around these issue areas.

The complexity at the intersection of housing insecurity is highlighted by a review of the legislative arena. Considering the descriptive tags alone, determining what legislation that is

¹ The “Housing and Homes” descriptive tag has a wide spectrum of topics covered. Here, we narrowed this focus to include bills that also included the descriptive tags “Homeless Persons” and/or “Low-Income Persons” and/or the term “Affordable” (including its variations) in the one-sentence summary.

applicable to the situation is difficult to parse. “Housing and Homes”, which has had various names throughout the biennia, includes all things related to homes and housing. When coupled with the descriptive tags “Homeless Persons” and “Low-Income Persons”, the resulting bill list does not always include bills that have the term “affordable housing” or its variations in their summary. In this analysis, further investigation would need to include housing for at-risk populations, such as those with intellectual and developmental disabilities or consideration of substance use. The many descriptive terms, used alone or together, illustrate the different areas that housing security touches, along with that these bills did not always share all descriptive terms applied in the review. Descriptive terms, to which the legislative arena was solely assessed for description, fail to encapsulate the breadth of issues around housing security and the multi-faceted problem streams that intersect it.

Figure 1. Legislative Activity Related to “Homeless Persons”: Proposed Bills from 2001-2024

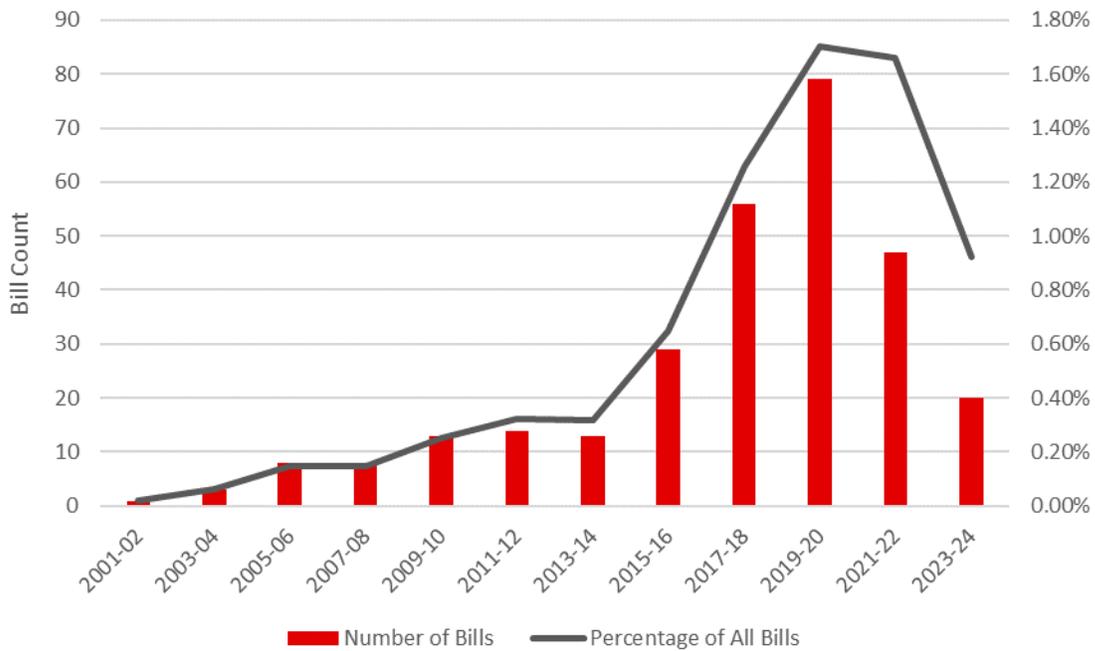


Figure 2. Legislative Activity Related to “Homeless Persons”: Passed Bills from 2001-2024

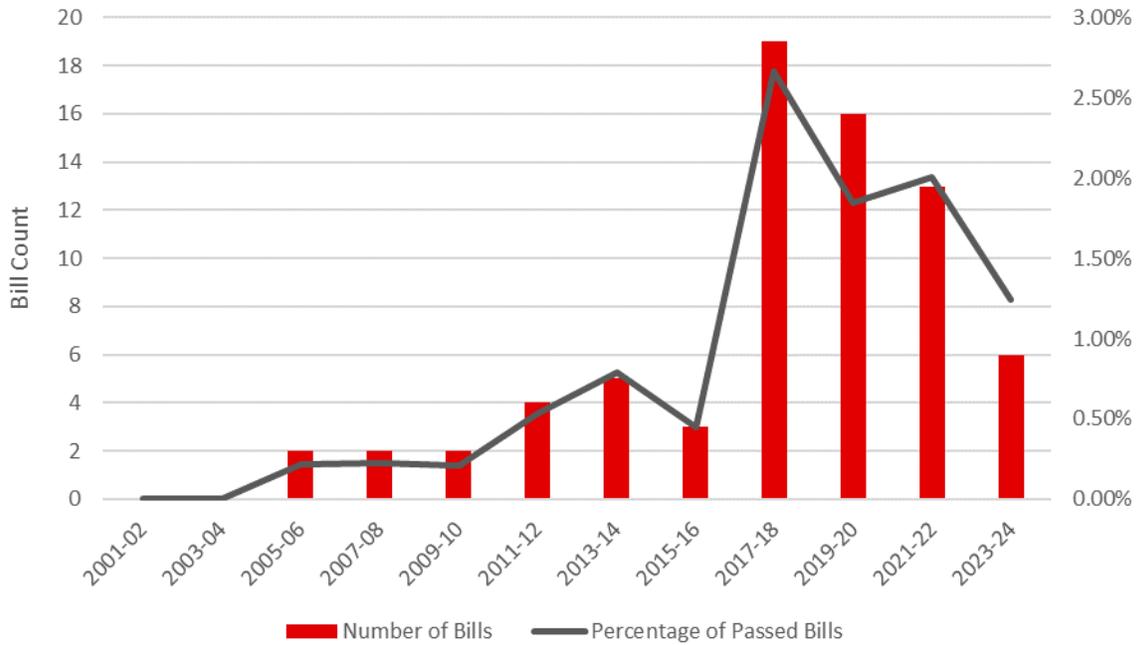


Figure 3. Legislative Activity Related to Amended “Housing and Homes”: Proposed Bills from 2001-2024

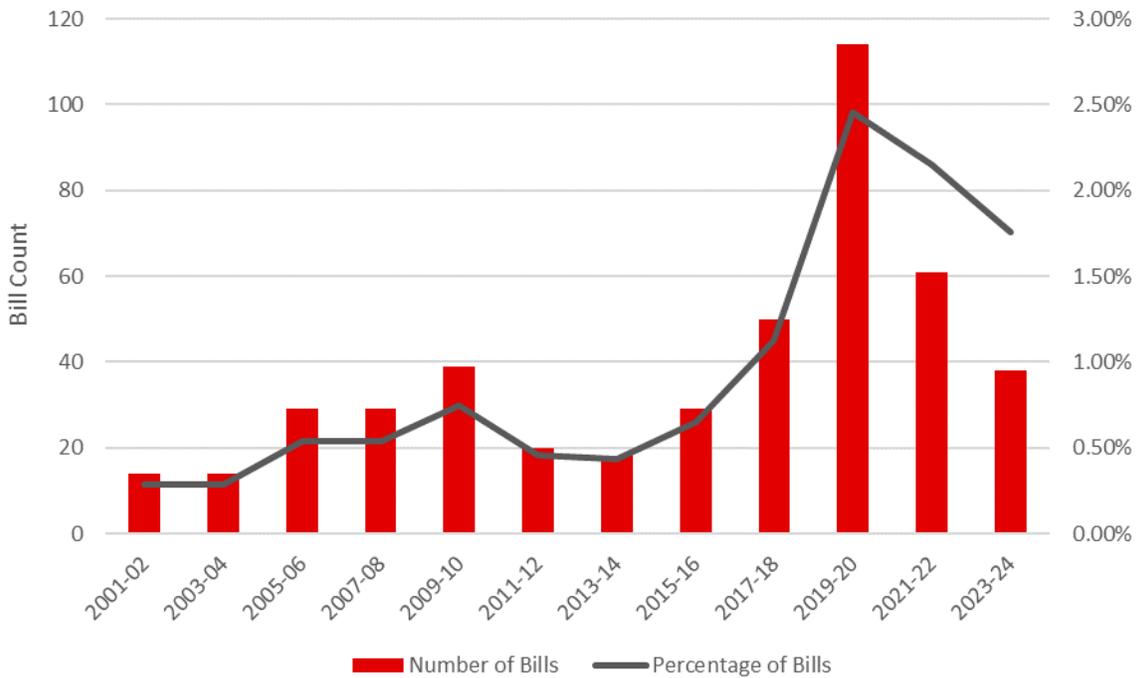


Figure 4. Legislative Activity Related to “Low-Income Persons”: Proposed Bills from 2001-2024

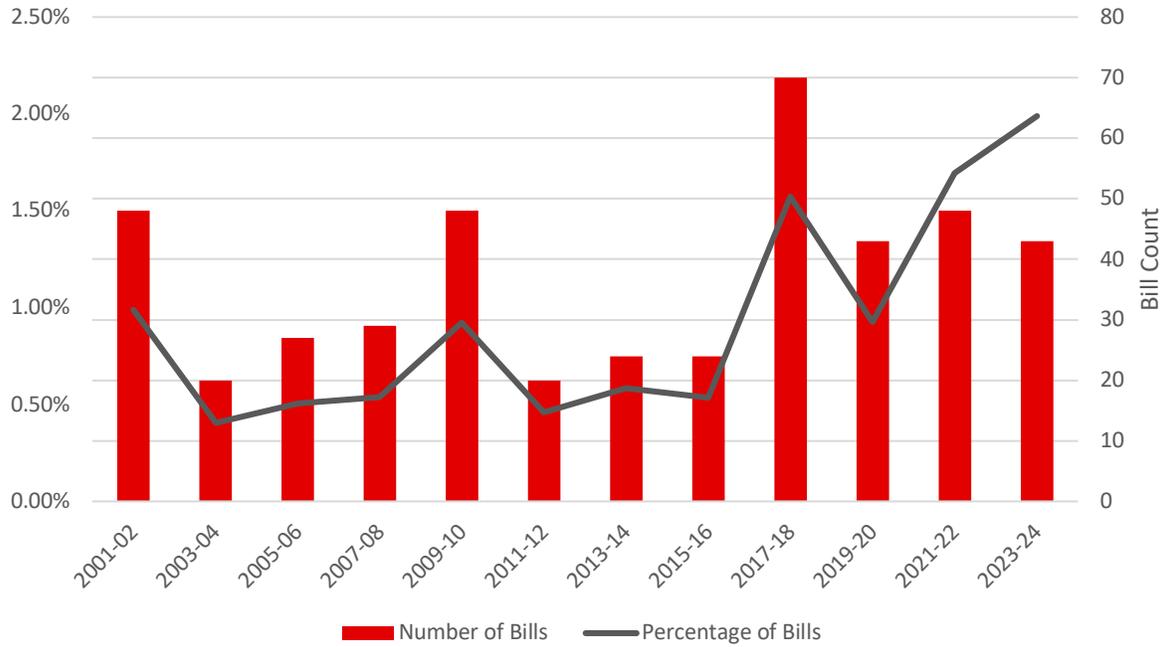


Figure 5. Legislative Activity Related to “Low-Income Persons”: Bills Passed from 2001-2024

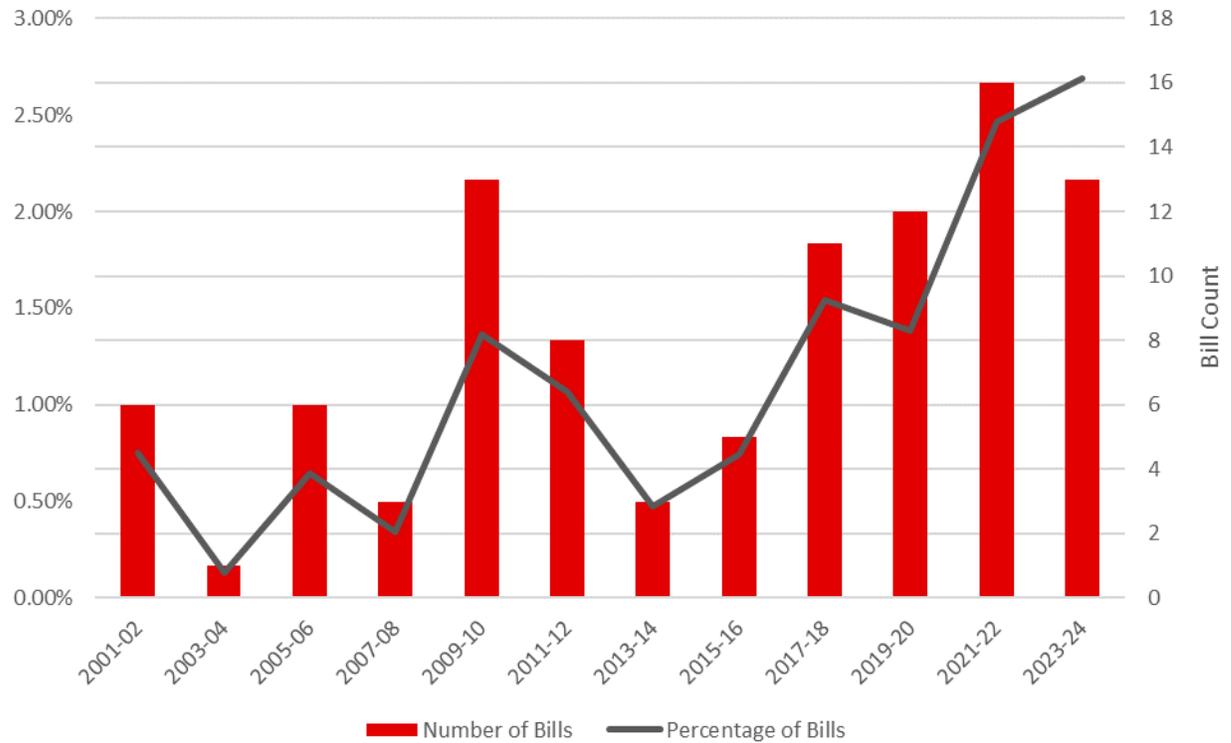


Figure 6. Legislative Activity Related to “Housing and Homes” with “Affordable”: Bills Proposed 2001-2024

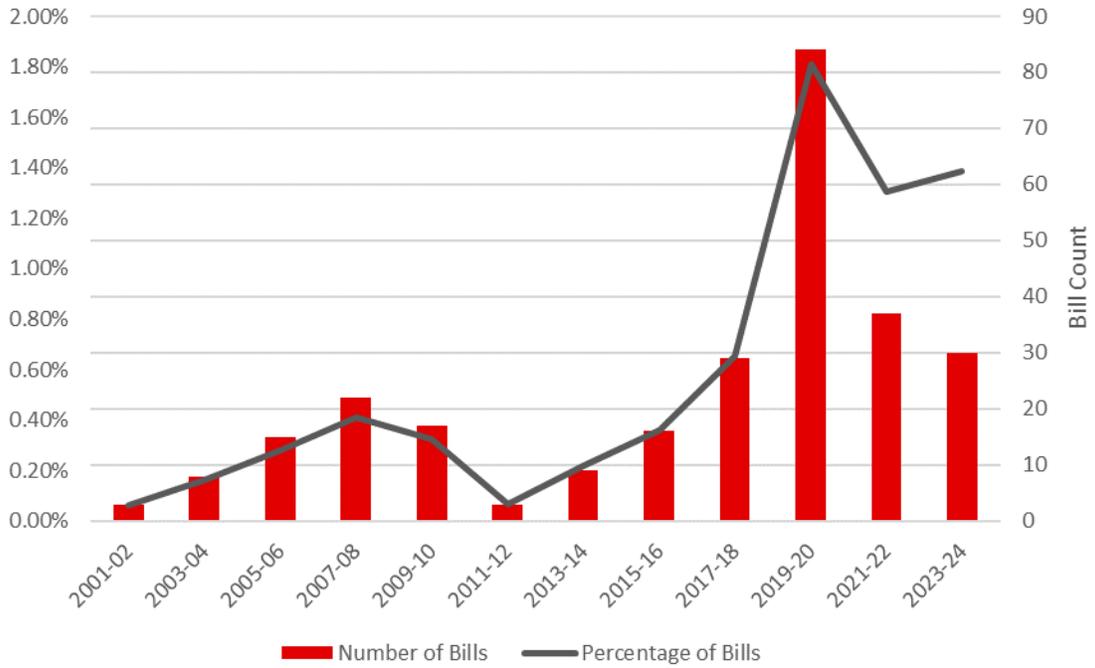


Figure 7. Legislative Activity Related to “Housing and Homes” with “Affordable”: Bills Passed 2001-2024

