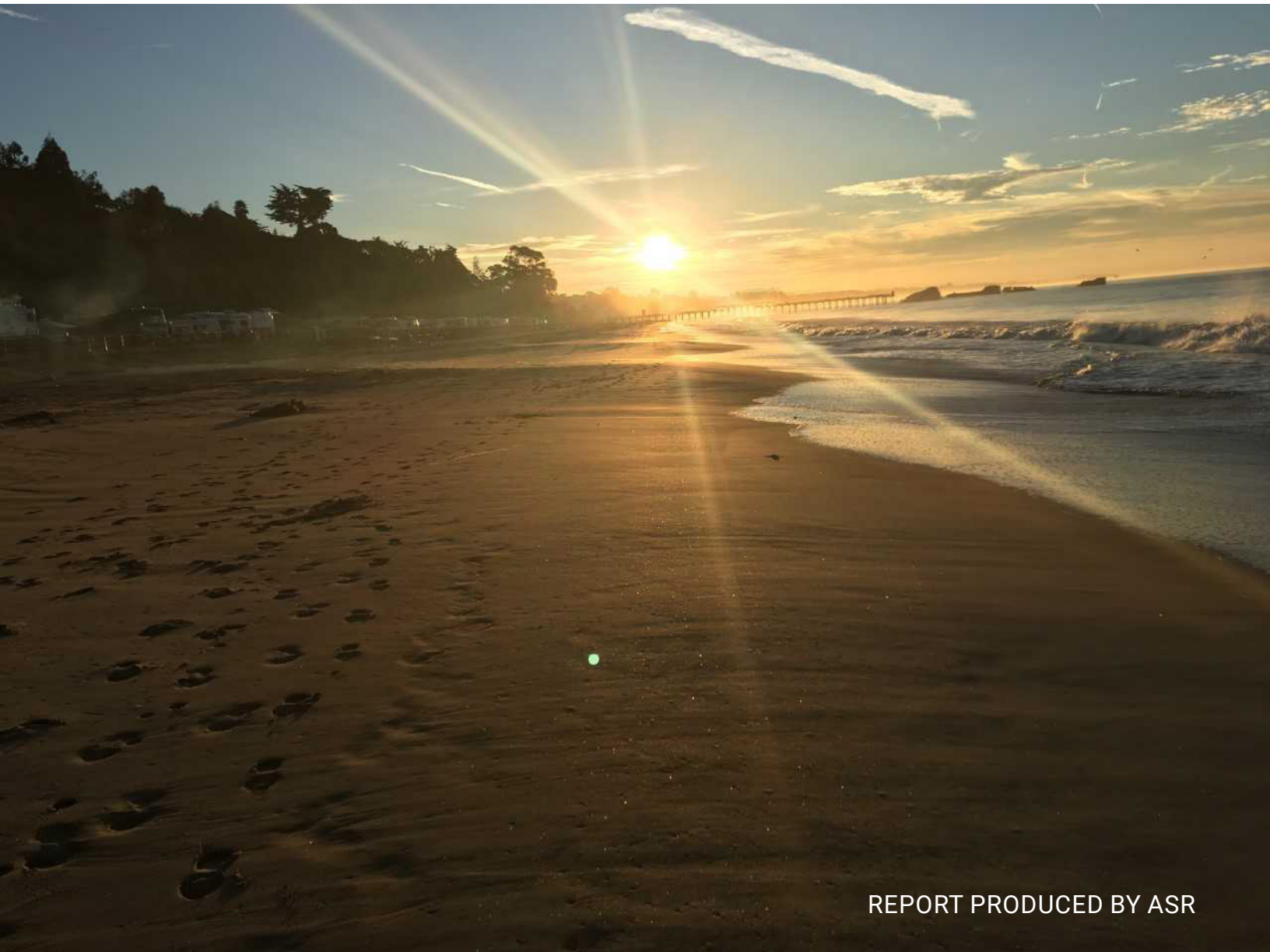

Santa Cruz County

HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019



REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Introduction

Every two years, during the last ten days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local population experiencing homelessness. Point-in-Time Counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community and collect information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as on people sleeping on the streets, in cars, abandoned properties, or other places not meant for human habitation. In an effort to better track trends and align with federal recommendations, Santa Cruz County opted to conduct a biennial unsheltered count beginning in 2005.

The Point-in-Time Count is currently the only source of nationwide data on both sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and is required by HUD of all jurisdictions receiving their federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Currently, the Santa Cruz County Continuum of Care (CoC), known locally as the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP), receives approximately \$3.3 million dollars annually in federal funding, a key source of funding for the county's homeless services.

The CoC reports the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count annually to HUD, though the unsheltered count component is conducted in odd-ending years only. This information ultimately helps the federal government to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Point-in-Time Count and Survey data also help to inform the local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to prevent and end homelessness.

Santa Cruz County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration (census counts) and needs assessment and is based in Santa Cruz County and has been the principal researcher for PIT counts since 2000.

The Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count consists of two primary components:

- (1) Point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness, including those sleeping outdoors, on the street, or in parks, tents, or vehicles
- (2) Point-in-time enumeration of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in temporary shelter, including emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities.

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of 32 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, 63 community volunteers, staff from various city and county departments, and law enforcement, the entire county including the University was canvassed between the hours of 4:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. on January 31, 2019. This resulted in a peer-informed visual count of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness and families residing on the streets and in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation. Specialized outreach teams also canvassed more concealed areas of the County including

Aptos, UCSC, mid-county parking spots, and Pajaro River levee areas. Shelters and transitional housing facilities also reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the night prior to the day of the count, January 30, 2019.

A specialized count of unaccompanied children under the age of 18 and transition-age youth under the age of 25 was conducted on the same day. This dedicated count was designed to improve the understanding of the scope of youth homelessness as youth are frequently undercounted in the general unsheltered morning count effort. Trained youth enumerators who are currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in specific areas where youth experiencing homelessness were known to congregate. The results of this effort contribute to HUD's initiative to measure progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020.

In the weeks following the January 31 street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 399 unsheltered and sheltered individuals and families. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization.

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County on a single night in January. Unstably housed persons living without vouchers in hotel/motels, double up situations or temporarily in a jail or hospital are not included in this effort. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations, including chronically homeless persons, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and transition-age youth between the aged to 18 and 24.

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2005, are provided where available and applicable.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the 2019 Santa Cruz County Point-in-Time Count and Survey to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings in Fall 2018 with local community members. These community members were drawn from City and County departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These representatives comprised the 2019 Planning Committee, and were instrumental to ensuring the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2019 Planning Committee worked towards several important project goals:

- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2017 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey, and to track progress toward ending homelessness
- To assess the status of specific subpopulations, including veterans, families, unaccompanied children, transition-age youth, and those who are chronically homeless
- To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds
- To improve the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population
- To increase public awareness of overall homeless issues and generate support for constructive solutions.

This report is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local, state, and federal governments in gaining a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measuring the impact of current policies and programming, and planning for the future.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count is used. This definition includes individuals and families:

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; or
- With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

Santa Cruz County

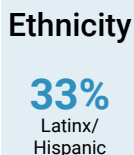
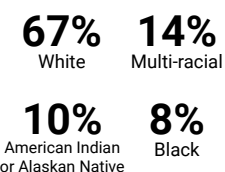
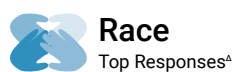
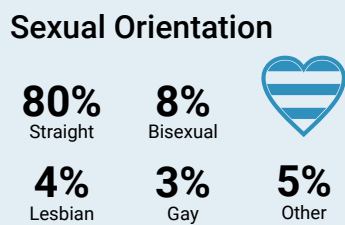
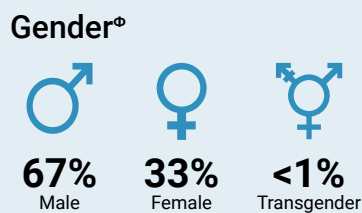
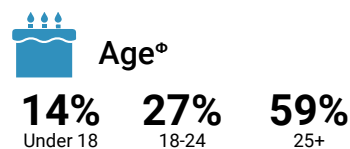
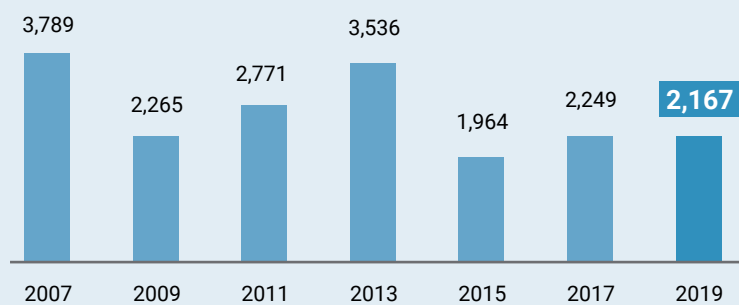
Homeless Census & Survey

2019 Executive Summary

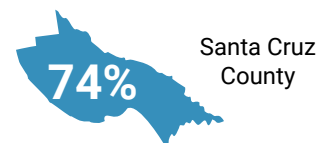
Every two years, during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local homeless populations in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each local Continuum of Care.

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on January 31st, 2019. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 399 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.

Census Population: Longitudinal Trend



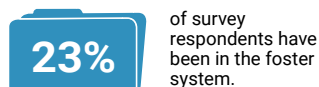
Residence Prior to Homelessness



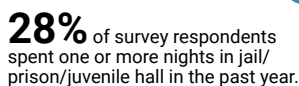
Length of Time in Santa Cruz County



Foster Care



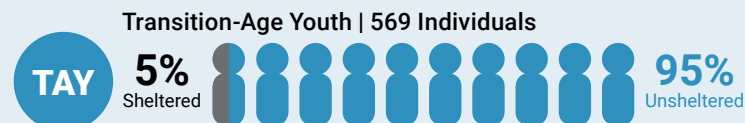
Justice System Involvement



Sheltered/ Unsheltered Population^o



Subpopulation* Data^o



Employment Status

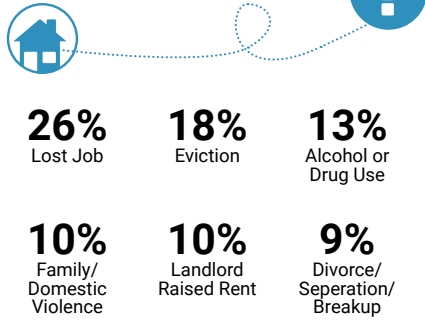


Unemployment Status



Primary Event or Condition That Led to Homelessness*

Top 6 Responses^Δ

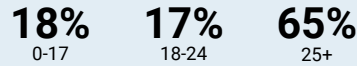


First Episode of Homelessness



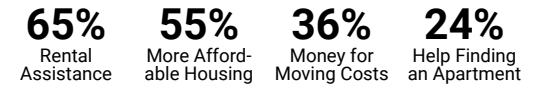
40% of survey respondents indicated their current episode of homelessness was their first.

Age at First Episode of Homelessness



Ways to Obtain Permanent Housing*

Top 4 Responses^Δ

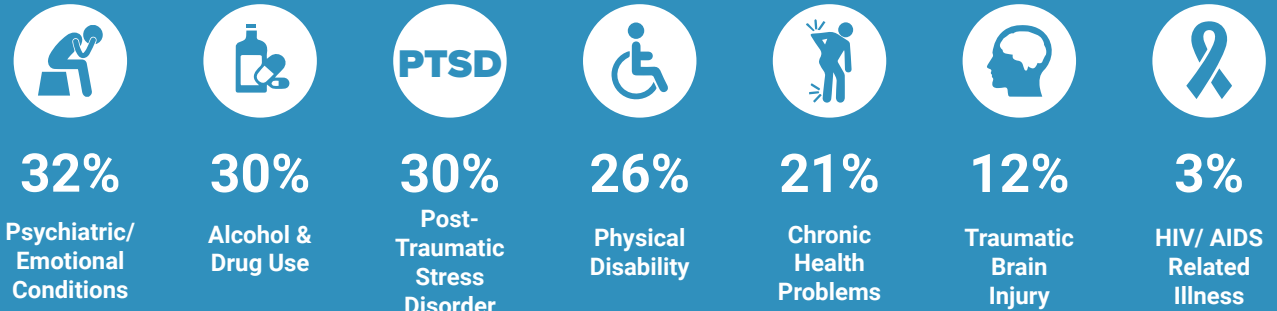


Duration of Current Episode of Homelessness



Self-Reported Health*

Current health conditions that may affect the housing stability or employment of those experiencing homelessness.



Disabling Conditions

39% of survey respondents reported having at least one disabling condition.



A disabling condition is defined by HUD as a developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, or a long-term physical or mental impairment that impacts a person's ability to live independently, but could be improved with stable housing.

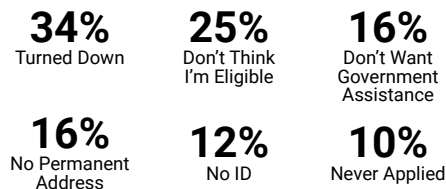
Services and Assistance



63% of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.

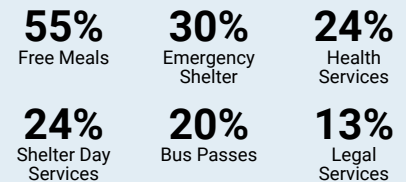
Reasons for Not Receiving Any Government Assistance*

Top 6 Responses^Δ



Services Currently Accessing*

Top 6 Responses^Δ



*Subpopulation Definitions

Chronically Homeless

An individual with one or more disabling conditions or a family with a head of household with a disabling condition who:

- » Has been continuously homeless for 1 year or more and/or;
- » Has experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years.

Veterans

Persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Families

A household with at least one adult member (persons 18 or older) and at least one child member (persons under 18).

Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults

Youth under the age of 18 and young adults from the ages of 18 to 24 years old (TAY) who are experiencing homelessness and living without a parent or legal guardian.

+ Multiple response question, results may not add up to 100%.

Δ Only displaying top responses, all response data will be available in full report.

Φ Sourced from census data rather than survey data.

Note: Some percentages have been rounded so total percentage will equal 100%.

The complete comprehensive report includes a more detailed profile of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. It will be available summer 2019.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2019, Santa Cruz County Homeless Census & Survey, Watsonville, CA.



Point-In-Time Count

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered persons experiencing homelessness. The general street count was conducted on January 31, 2019 from approximately 4:30AM to 10AM and covered all of Santa Cruz County. The shelter count was conducted on the previous evening (persons registered in a shelter the night of January 30) and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters and persons listed in the County's official housing inventory chart in these categories. The general street count and shelter count methodology were the same as those used in 2017.

The methodology used for the 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey is commonly described as a "blitz count" since it is conducted by a large team in a very short period of time. This method results in an observation-based count of individuals and families who are assessed by the peer and volunteer observation team as currently experiencing homelessness. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Santa Cruz County's Homeless Management Information System.

The count was followed by an in-person representative survey of 399 individuals. The results were used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey is used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements and inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

In a continuing effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, Santa Cruz County also conducted a dedicated youth count with HUD recommended best practice methods in 2017 to better ensure unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were not included in both the general street count and youth count. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, de-duplication, and project methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

A total of 2,167 individuals experiencing homelessness were counted during the 2019 Point-in-Time census. This represents a small decrease of 4% from 2017. Twenty-two percent of individuals experiencing homelessness were staying in shelters with slightly more than a third (36%) of individuals were unsheltered.

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

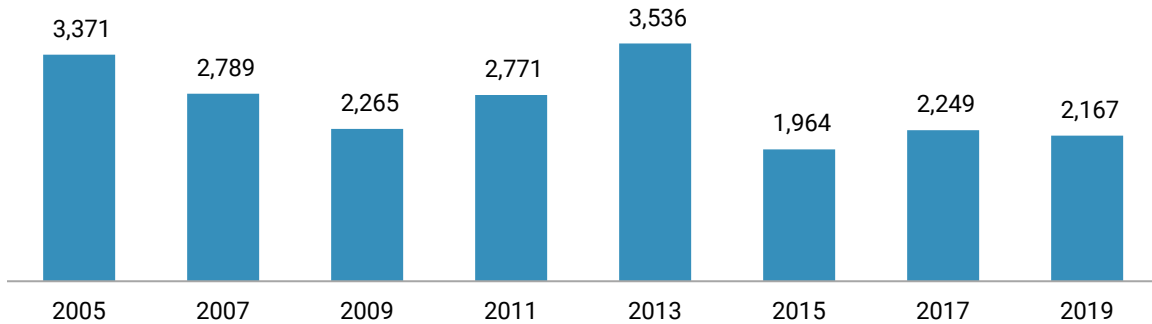
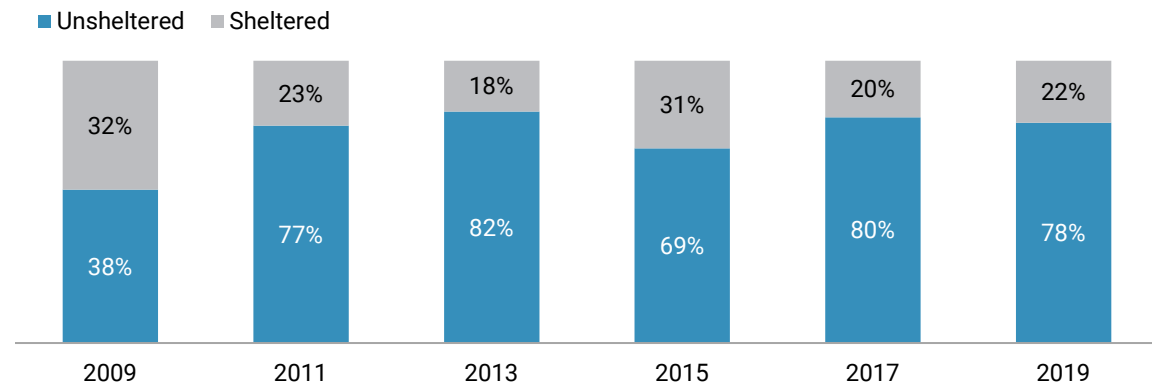


FIGURE 2. TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



2009 n= 2,265; 2011 n= 2,771; 2013 n= 3,536; 2015 n= 1,964; 2017 n=2,249; 2019 n=2,167

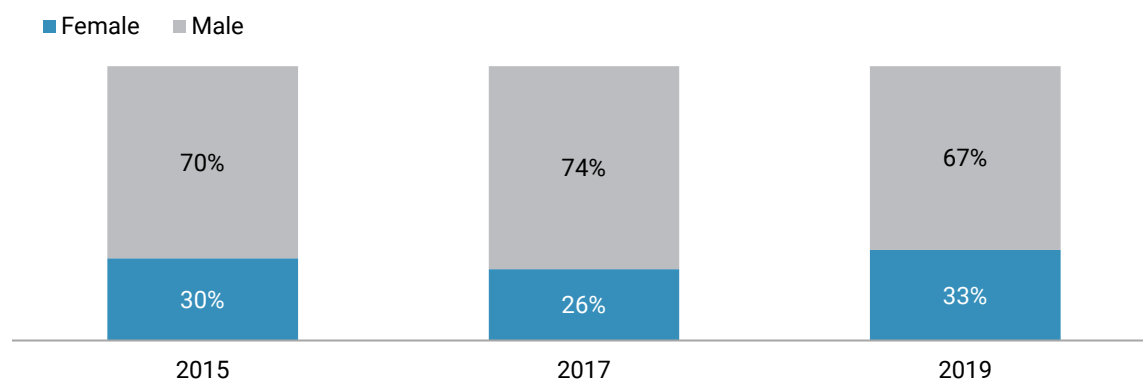
The City of Santa Cruz continues to have the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the county, with 1,197 persons counted during the census. The Cities of Capitola, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville saw little to no change in the numbers of persons experiencing homelessness from 2017 to 2019.

FIGURE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY JURISDICTION AND SHELTER STATUS

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED		SHELTERED		TOTAL		
	2017	2019	2017	2019	2017	2019	17-19 NET CHANGE
Total Incorporated	1,314	1,132	429	445	1,707	1,577	-130
City of Capitola	21	6	0	0	21	6	-15
City of Santa Cruz	934	865	306	332	1,204	1,197	-7
City of Scotts Valley	19	4	0	0	19	4	-15
City of Watsonville	340	257	123	113	463	370	-93
Total Unincorporated/ Confidential Scattered Site	485	493	21	22	542	515	-27
Total County Office of Education	*	75	-	-	*	75	75*
Total	1,799	1,700	450	467	2,249	2,167	-82

*Note: COE data was not collected in 2017, but was collected in 2019.

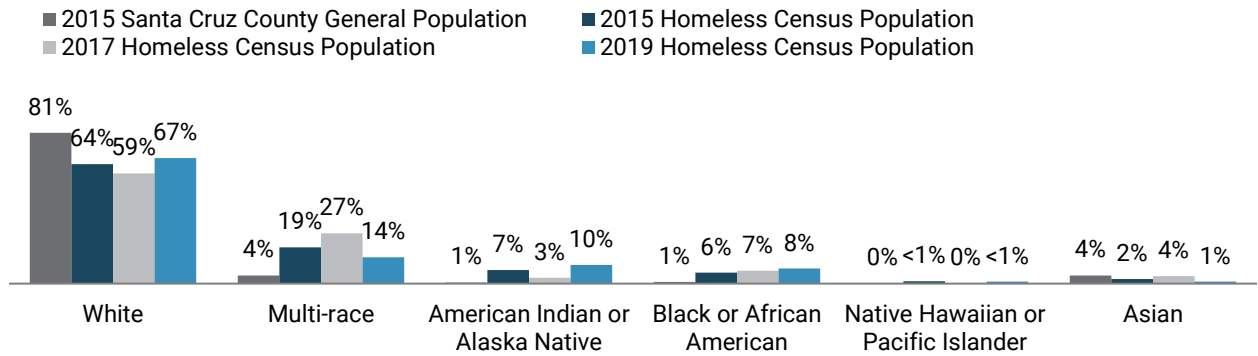
FIGURE 4. TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION BY GENDER



2015 n= 1,964; 2017 n=2,249; 2019 n=2,167

Two thirds of persons experiencing homelessness identified as white in 2019, up from 59% in 2017. Eight percent identified as Black or African American, an over-representation when compared to the general population (1%). Following US Census practices, race and ethnicity are separated. One third (33%) of the population was Hispanic/Latinx, similar to past years.

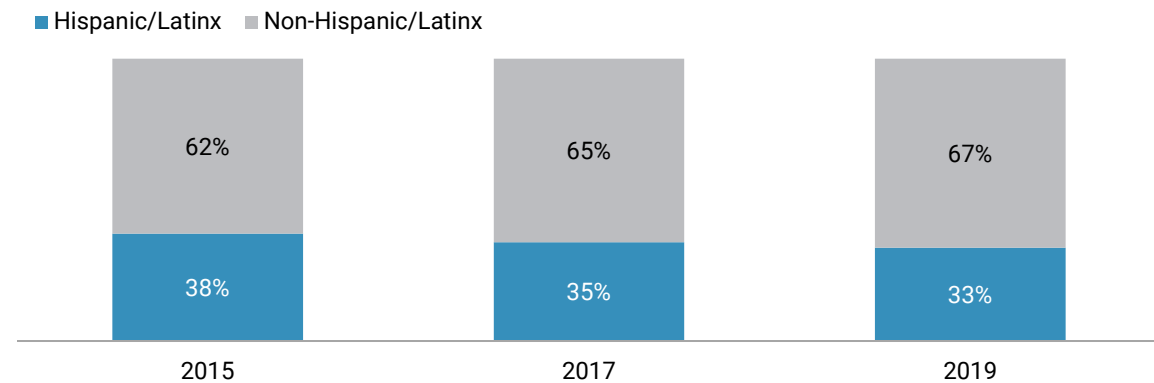
FIGURE 5. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE



2015 n=1,964; 2017 n= 2,249; 2019 n=2,167

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 6. HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY ETHNICITY



2015 n=1,964; 2017 n= 2,249; 2019 n=2,167

Homeless Survey Findings

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between January 31 and February 28, 2019. This effort resulted in 399 complete and unique surveys.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 2,167 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 399 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in Santa Cruz County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be 95% certain that the results would be within 4 percentage points of the current results.

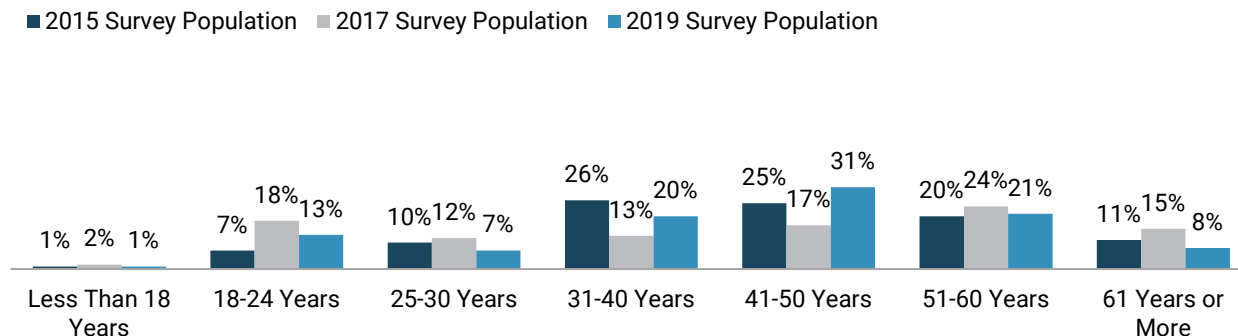
In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values were intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted. For more information regarding the survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

The following data points represent findings from the survey effort. There is some overlap with previous data points from the PIT Count section, particularly in areas around race/ethnicity and gender. There will be some slight differences between these data points, so please use caution when comparing them.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County, respondents were asked basic demographic questions regarding age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Sixty percent of survey respondents were over the age of 41, though there were fewer over the age of 51 than in 2017.

FIGURE 7. SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

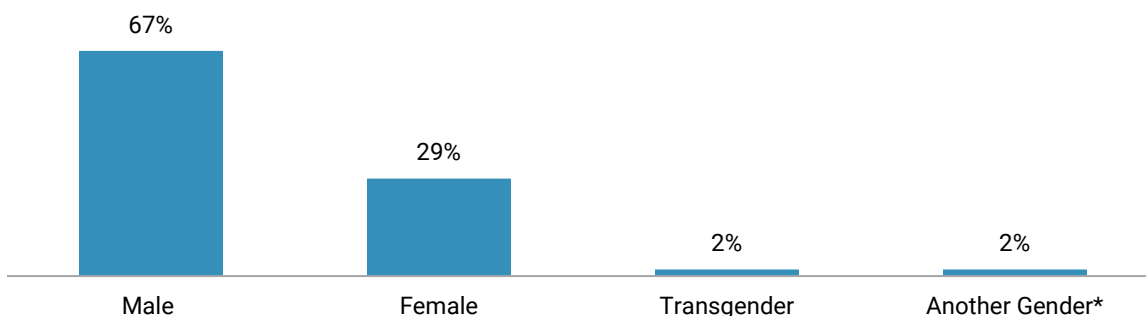


2015 n=344, 2017 n= 459; 2019 n=399

GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of 2019 survey respondents identified as female, 67% identified as male, 2% identified as transgender, and 2% identified as another gender, nearly identical to 2017.

FIGURE 8. GENDER IDENTITY



2019 n= 399

*Includes respondents whose individual gender categories represent <1% of the total, including Gender-queer; Gender non-conforming; Non-binary; Do not identify as male, female, or transgender; and other not listed.

While limited data is available on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggest LGBTQ+ individuals experience homelessness at higher rates – especially among those under the age of 25. Twenty percent (20%) of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+ in 2019. Since 2015, the percentage of survey respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ has increased from 13% to 20%. Of those identifying as LGBTQ+, 41% identified as bisexual, an increase from 23% in 2015.

FIGURE 9. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

	2015	2017	2019
	%	%	%
LGBTQ+ STATUS			
Yes	13%	16%	20%
No	87%	84%	80%
BREAKOUT OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING YES			
Gay	21%	17%	13%
Lesbian	9%	10%	18%
Queer	2%	40%	5%
Bisexual	23%	14%	41%
Transgender	7%	0%	9%
Other/Don't Identify	43%	24%	27%

LGBTQ+ 2015 n=344; Breakout n=44 respondents offering 46 responses; LGBTQ+ 2017 n=459; Breakout n=72 respondents offering 75 responses; LGBTQ+ 2019 N=399, Breakout n=78 respondents offering 88 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

ETHNICITY AND RACE

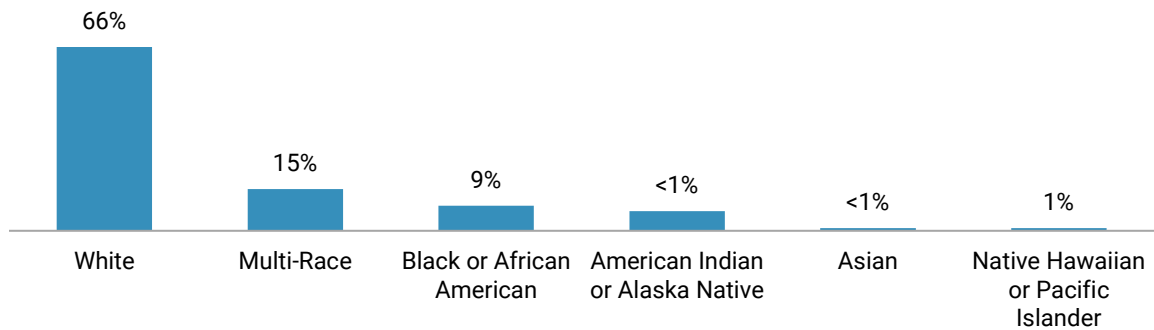
HUD gathers data on ethnicity and race through two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. When asked about their ethnicity, 30% of survey respondents identified as Hispanic or Latinx. When asked about their race, 66% as White, 15% as multi-race, 9% identified as Black or African American, and 7% as American Indian or Alaska Native.

FIGURE 10. HISPANIC OR LATINX ETHNICITY



2019 n=381

FIGURE 11. RACE



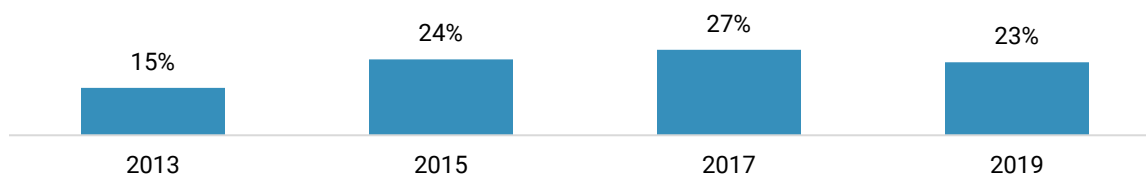
2019 n=366

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

FOSTER CARE

Nationally, it is estimated that at least one-third of persons in foster care experience homelessness after exiting care.¹ In 2019, 22% of local respondents reported a history of foster care, down slightly from 27% in 2017.

FIGURE 12. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



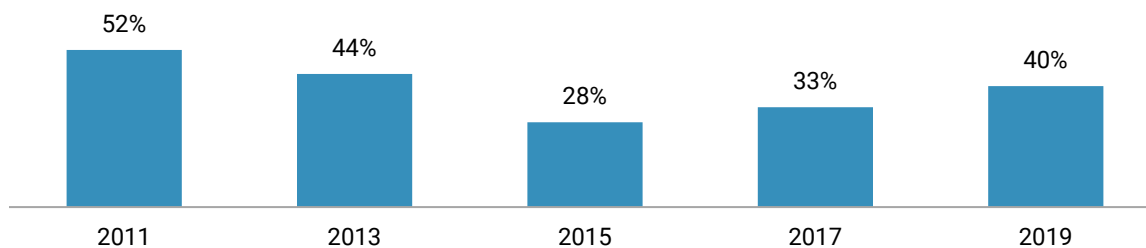
2013 n=364; 2015 n=344; 2017 n=447; 2019 n= 377

DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues are some of the factors that contribute to individuals having recurring episodes of homelessness. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability. Forty percent (40%) of survey respondents reported their current episode of homelessness was their first, up from 34% of respondents in 2017.

Thirty seven (37%) of respondents in 2019 reported experiencing homelessness two or more times in the past three years. The percentage of survey respondents who indicate their current experience of homelessness has lasted for more than a year continues a steady rise, reaching 64% in 2019, up from 51% in 2013.

FIGURE 13. FIRST TIME EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (“YES”RESPONDENTS)

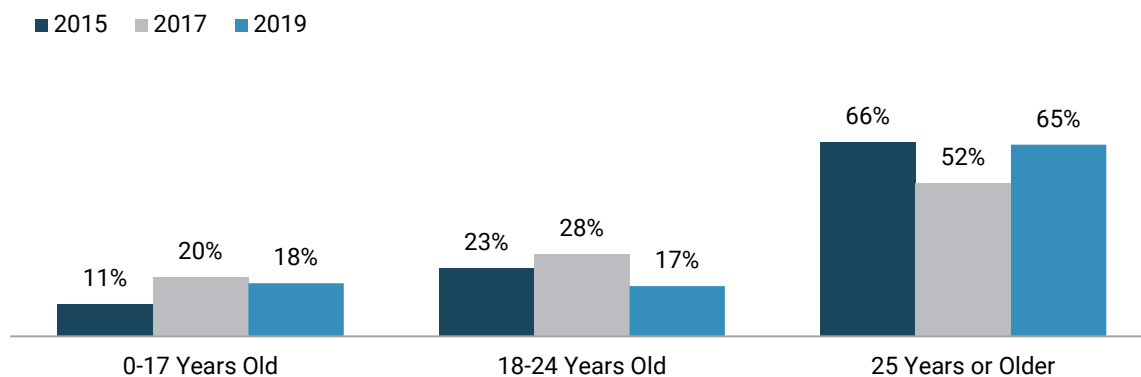


2011 n=496; 2013 n=369; 2015 n=343; 2017 n= 459; 2019 n=386

¹ Dworsky, A., Napolitano, L.; and Courtney, M. (2013). Homelessness During the Transition From Foster Care to Adulthood. Congressional Research Services, Am J Public Health. 2013 December; 103(Suppl 2): S318–S323. Retrieved 2018 from 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301455.

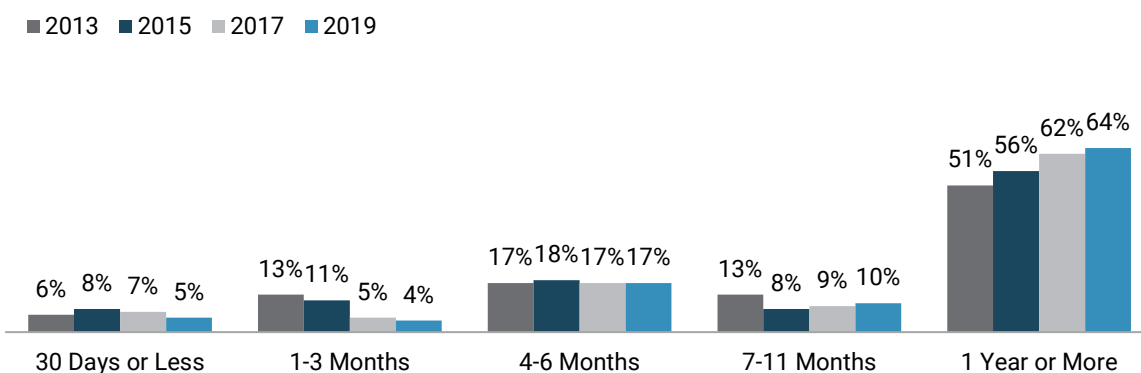
Eighteen percent (18%) of 2019 survey respondents first experienced homelessness as a child under the age of 18, 17% first experienced homelessness as a young adult between the ages of 18 and 24, and almost two-thirds (65%) reported their first time experiencing homelessness occurred over the age of 24, a decrease from 62% in 2017.

FIGURE 14. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



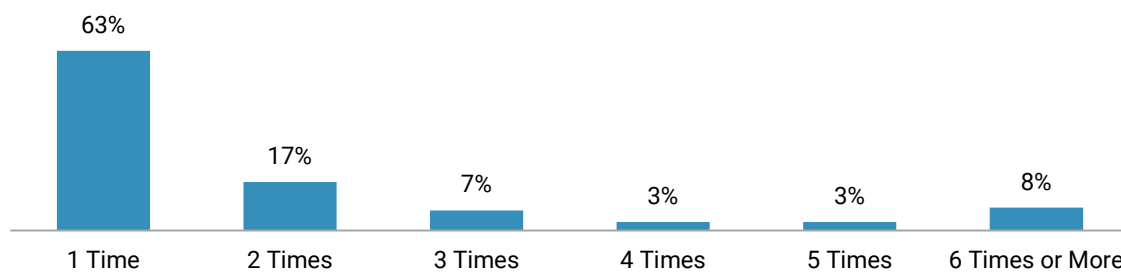
2015 n=336; 2017 n= 459; 2019 n=393

FIGURE 15. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2011 n=496; 2013 n=360; 2015 n=342; 2017 n=459; 2019 n=396

FIGURE 16. RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS, IN THE PREVIOUS 3 YEARS



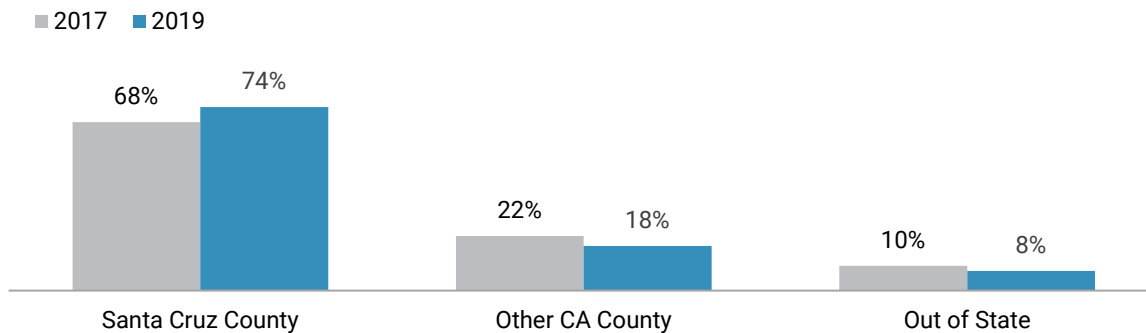
2019 n=396

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

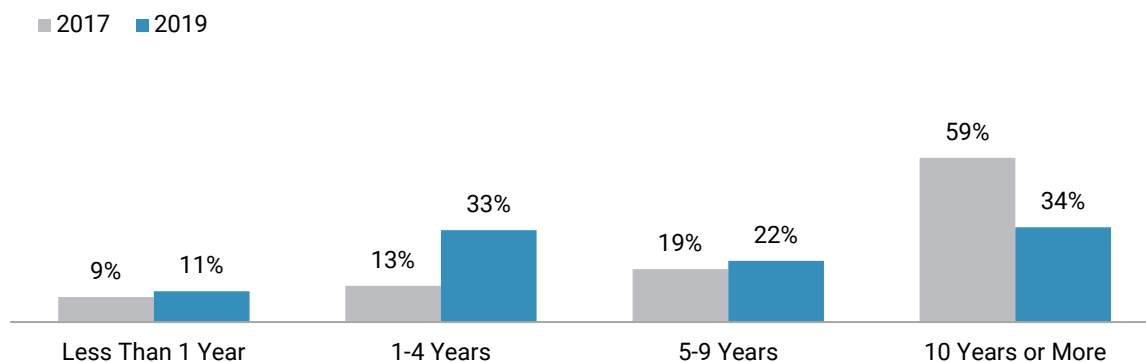
Almost three quarters (74%) of respondents reported they were living in Santa Cruz County at the time they most recently lost their housing, an increase from 68% in 2017. Of these persons living in Santa Cruz County at the time they most recently experienced homelessness, 2019 saw a large drop (59% to 34%) in the number of respondents indicating they have been here for 10 years or more. The percentage who indicated they had lived in Santa Cruz County for 1 to 4 years increased to 33% from 13% in 2017).

FIGURE 17. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



2017 n= 447, 2019 n= 383

FIGURE 18. TIME LIVED IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

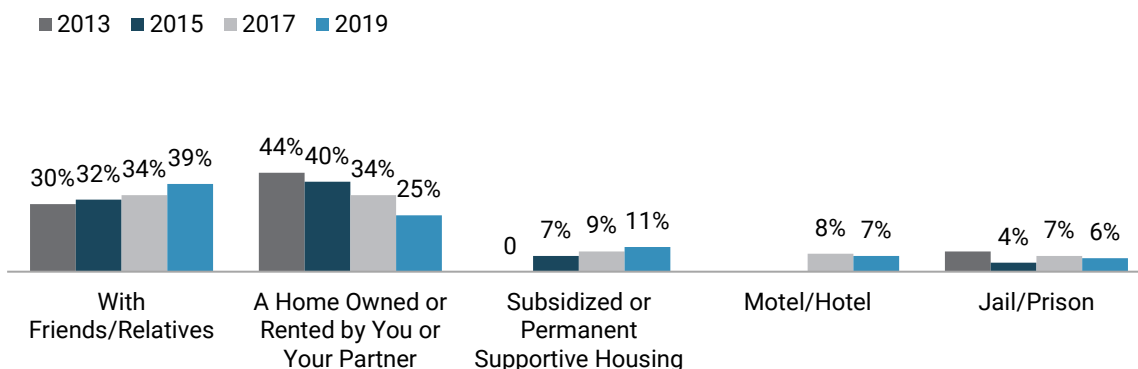


2017 n= 298, 2019 n= 371

PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Prior to their current experience of homelessness, most respondents were staying in a home rented or owned by themselves, a partner, or family or friends. In 2019, 25% of respondents reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner immediately prior to becoming homeless. The data clearly shows a consistent trend in housing instability since 2013. Thirty-nine percent (39%) reported staying with friends or family, 7% in a motel or hotel, 6% in a jail/prison facility, and 1% in a hospital or treatment facility.

FIGURE 19. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS (TOP FIVE 2019 RESPONSES)



2011 n=497, 2013 n=358; 2015 n=332; 2017 n= 447; 2019 n=370

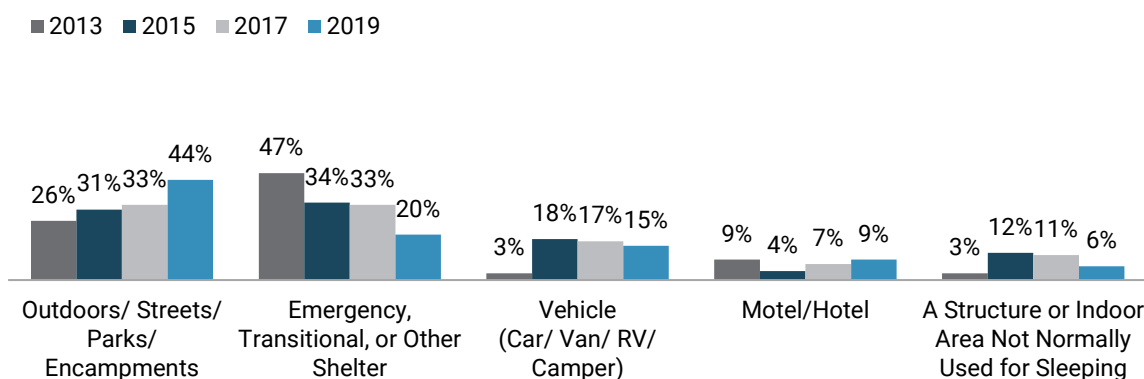
Note: Response option "Motel/Hotel" was added in 2017 and do not have comparisons in past years. "Permanent Supportive Housing" option was added in 2015.

CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

While basic information on where individuals were observed during the general street count effort is collected, survey respondents are also asked about their usual nighttime accommodations.

The percentage of survey respondents who indicated they were staying outdoors on the night of the count has steadily increased since 2013, reaching a high of 44% in 2019. The percentage staying in shelters has seen a decrease from nearly half in 2013 to 20% in 2019. Six percent (6%) reported staying in a structure or indoor area not intended for human habitation, 9% were staying in a motel or hotel, and 15% were in a vehicle.

FIGURE 20. LOCATION STAYED ON NIGHT OF THE COUNT



2011 n=498; 2013 n=369; 2015 n=317; 2017 n= 459; 2019 n=399

Note: 2013 response option specified that motel/hotel was paid for by agency or service provider.

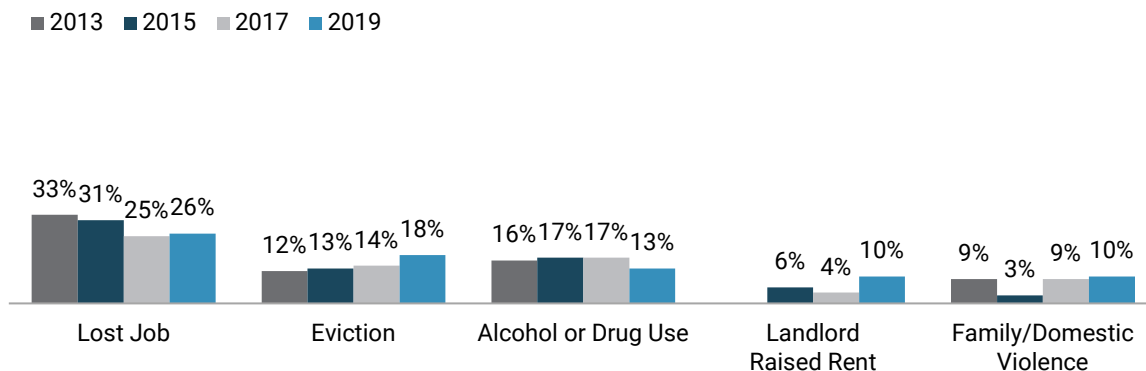
Note: Six percent of respondents chose the "Other" response option in 2019 and are not displayed in the above chart.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual’s inability to obtain or retain housing is often difficult to pinpoint, as it may be the result of multiple or inter-related conditions, economic, health, social, etc.

The most common self-reported cause of homelessness continues to be job loss, as it was noted by 26% of survey respondents. Eviction was the second most common (18%) response, while alcohol and drug abuse (13%) was third. There was an increase in the percentage of respondents who cited an either eviction or an increase in rent as the as a primary cause of their homelessness.

FIGURE 21. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE 2019 RESPONSES)



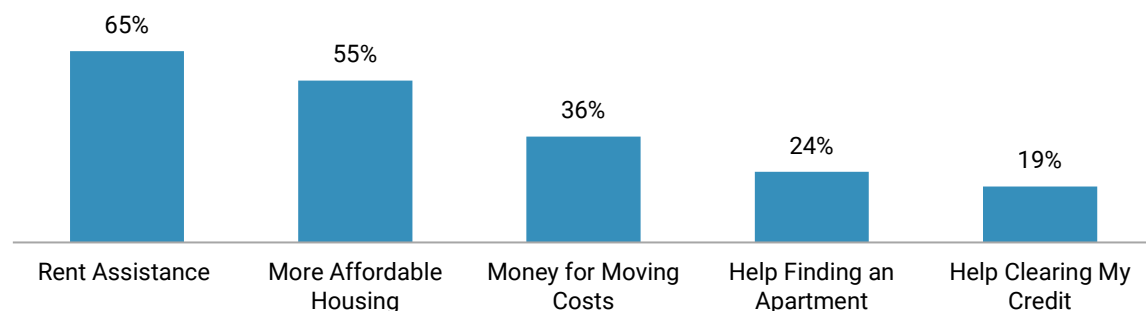
2011 n=493; 2013 n=359; 2015 n=336 respondents offering 404 responses; 2017 n= 451 respondents offering 599 responses; 2019 n=385 offering 539 responses

Note: Response option “Landlord Raised Rent” was added in 2015.

SUPPORT NEEDED TO OBTAIN PERMANENT HOUSING

When asked what would help them to obtain permanent housing, 2019 respondents most often cited rental assistance (65%), more affordable housing (55%), money for moving costs (36%), help finding an apartment (24%) and help clearing credit (19%).

FIGURE 22. SUPPORT NEEDED TO OBTAIN PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



2019 n= 388 respondents offering 1,055 responses

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

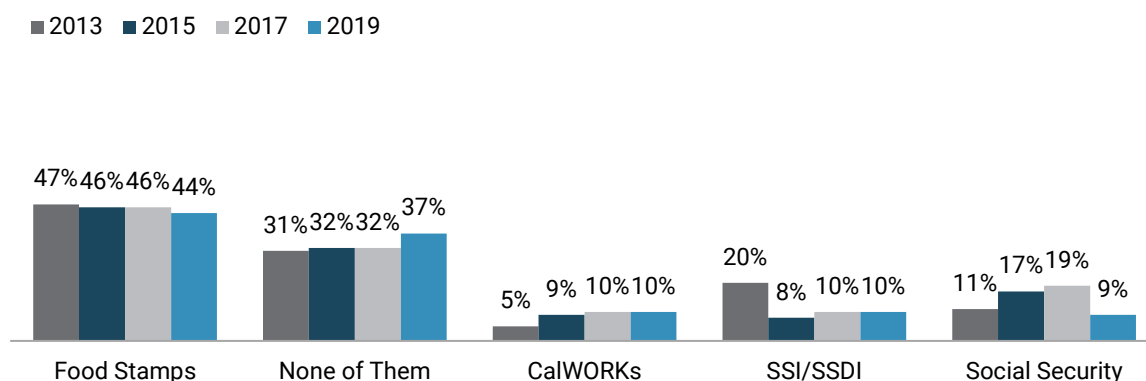
Santa Cruz County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain income and support. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services, as many believe that they are ineligible for assistance.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

There are several types of government assistance available to individuals experiencing homelessness. However, usage of these supports is impacted by knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma of receiving governmental assistance.

The majority of survey respondents (63%) indicated receiving some type of government assistance, similar to 2017 when 68% indicated receiving some form of government assistance. The largest percentage (44%) reported receiving food stamps. There was an increase in the number of persons receiving no government assistance and a big drop in those receiving social security.

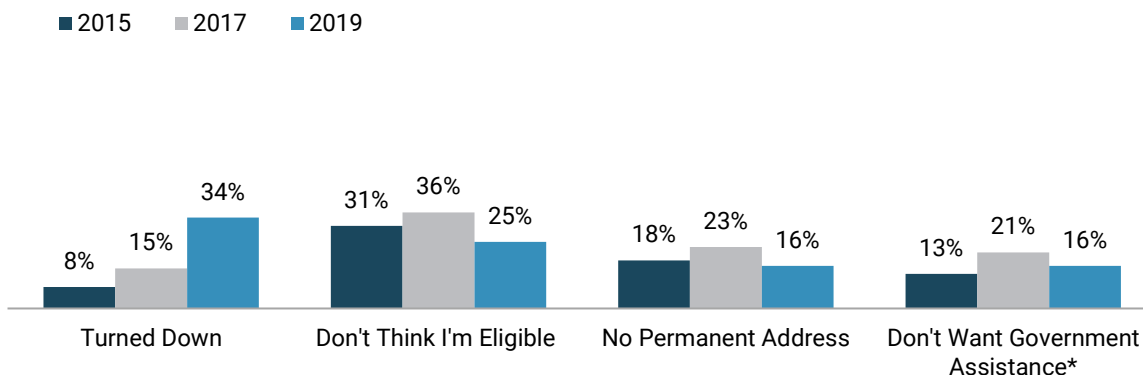
FIGURE 23. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP FIVE 2019 RESPONSES)



2011 n=496 respondents offering 692 responses; 2013 n=254 respondents offering 441 responses; 2015 n=310 respondents offering 357 responses; 2017 n=443 respondents offering 540 responses; 2019 n=372 respondents offering 418 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

There was a marked increase in the percentage of respondents who had been turned down for government assistance, increasing from 15% in 2017 to 34% in 2019.

FIGURE 24. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE



2011 n=157 respondents offering 239 responses; 2013 n=110 respondents offering 190 responses; 2015 n=91 respondents offering 148 responses; 2017 n=124; 2019 n=134 respondents offering 191 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.
 *Response option changed in 2015 from "Don't Need" to "Don't Want."

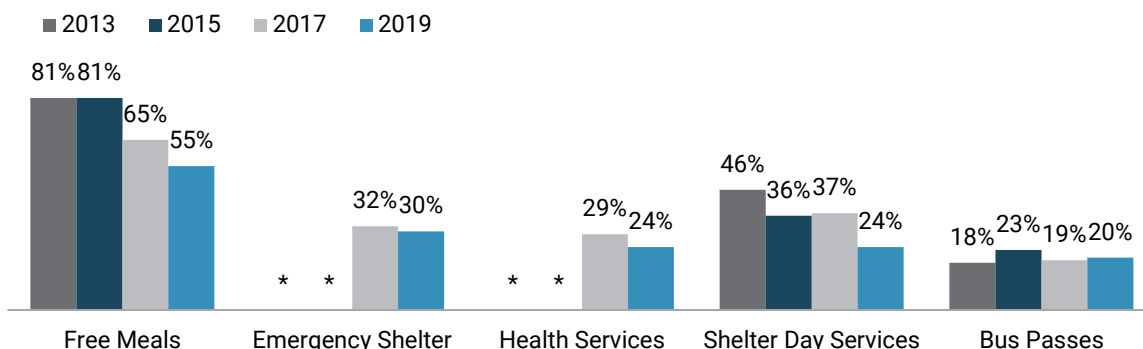
SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

In addition to government assistance, there are numerous community-based services and programs that serve persons experiencing homelessness. These services range from day shelters and meal programs to job training and healthcare.

A large majority of survey respondents (84%) indicated accessing services or assistance in the community. Respondents most frequently reported accessing free meals (55%), while "shelter day services" was the second most common response (24%), though it has seen a large decrease since 2013 (43%). Overall there was a general decline in persons receiving services when compared to previous years.

Just over half (51%) of all survey respondents indicated that they do not usually get enough to eat.

FIGURE 25. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE



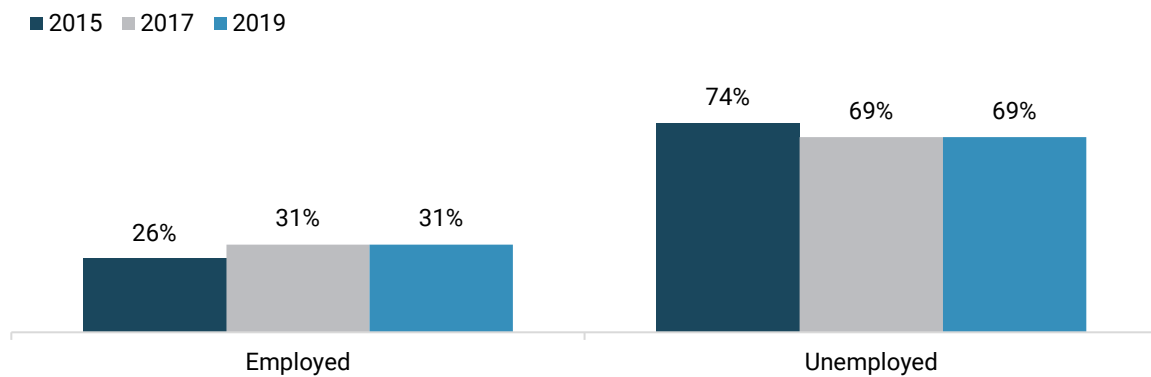
2013 n=352 respondents offering 1,035 responses; 2015 n=298 respondents offering 604 responses; 2017 n=447 respondents offering 1219 responses; 2019 n=364 respondents offering 801 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.
 Note: Emergency Shelter and Health Services were not options in 2013 or 2015.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

While the majority of survey respondents reported being unemployed, almost one third reported part-time or full-time work and many were receiving an income, either public or private. Despite some income, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.

The unemployment rate in Santa Cruz County in January 2019 was at 6.5%, up from 3.6% in 2017. The unemployment rate for respondents experiencing homelessness was 69%, the exact same as in 2017. Thirty-five percent (35%) of unemployed respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work, 52% indicated they were currently unable to work, an increase from 43% in 2017, and 14% of respondents were currently not looking for work.

FIGURE 26. EMPLOYMENT



2015 employment status n: 326; 2017 employment status n: 452; 2019 n=312

Note: Respondents were challenged by this income question and the low response for employed and unemployed income is subject to a high margin of error.

HEALTH

Without regular access to healthcare and without safe and stable housing, individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-housed patients.²

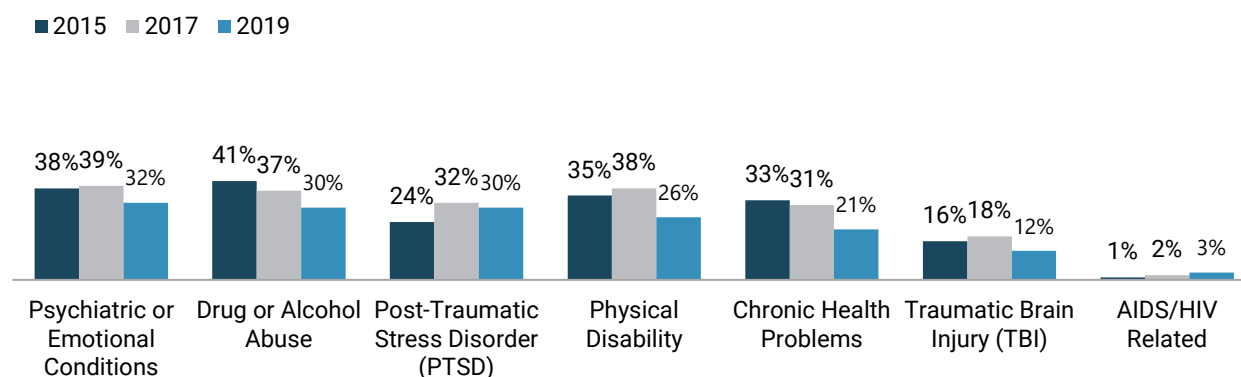
HEALTH CONDITIONS

In Santa Cruz County, approximately 39% of individuals surveyed reported one or more disabling health conditions, a decrease from 55% in 2017. These conditions include physical disabilities, chronic substance abuse, and severe mental health conditions and must prevent the individual from obtaining housing or maintaining a job to qualify as disabling.

The most frequently reported health conditions in 2019 were psychiatric or emotional conditions (32%), followed by PTSD (30%) and drug or alcohol abuse (30%). Twenty-six percent (26%) reported experiencing physical disability, 21% reported chronic health problems, 12% reported a traumatic brain injury, and 3% reported an HIV related conditions. When asked about their history of treatment, 27% of survey respondents indicated they had received treatment for mental health issues and 37% indicated they had received treatment for drug or alcohol abuse.

One third of all survey respondents reported needing healthcare but were unable to obtain it. Slightly more than a third of respondents (35%) indicated they had been hospitalized for physical issues in the year previous to taking the survey. Thirteen percent (13%) indicated they had been hospitalized for mental health issues.

FIGURE 27. HEALTH CONDITIONS



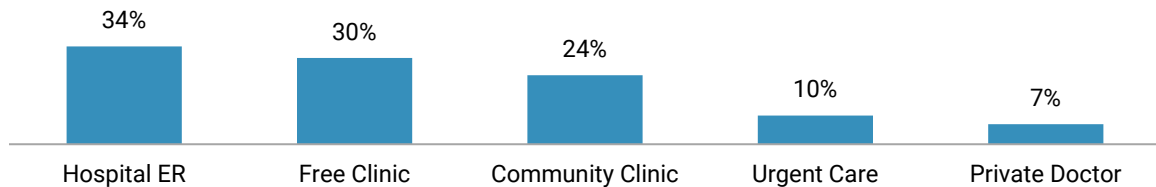
2015 n=327-335; 2017 n=11-179; 2019 n=399

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

² Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

Just over a third (34%) of respondents reported the hospital ER as their normal destination for medical treatment, followed by free (30%) and community (24%) clinics.

FIGURE 28. LOCATION OF TREATMENT



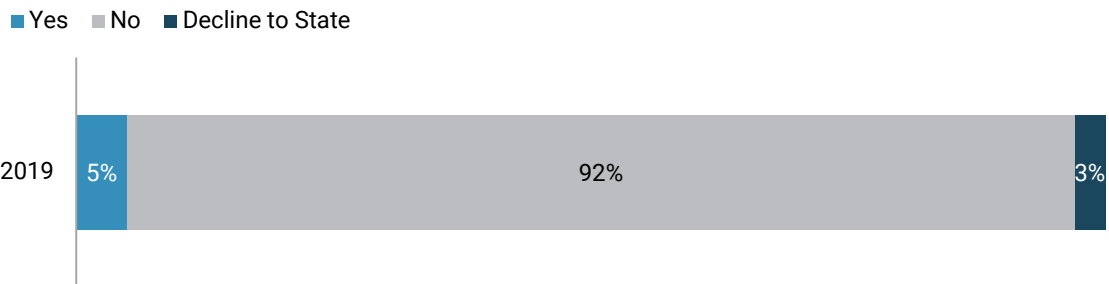
2019 n=399

DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Histories of domestic violence and partner abuse are prevalent among persons experiencing homelessness, and can be the primary cause of homelessness for many.

Five percent (5%) of survey respondents reported currently experiencing domestic violence or abuse, similar to the proportion reported in 2017 (6%). Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents reported experiencing domestic violence or abuse in the past, down from 39% in 2017.

FIGURE 29. CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2019 n=377

FIGURE 30. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



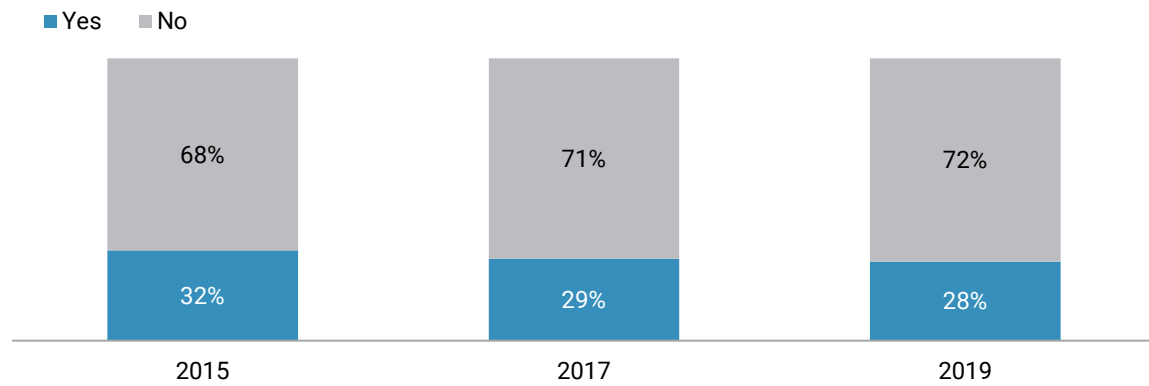
2019 n=378

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Homelessness and incarceration are often correlated. Individuals with past incarceration face significant barriers to exiting homelessness due to stigmatization and practices affecting their ability to gain employment and access housing opportunities.³

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of survey respondents in 2019 reported spending at least one night in jail in the last 12 months, a similar response rate to the previous two counts.

FIGURE 31. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 n=329; 2017 n= 456; 2019 n=386

³ Greenberg, GA, Rosenheck, RA. (2008). Jail Incarceration, Homelessness, and Mental Health: A National Study. *Psychiatric Services*, 2008 Feb;59(2): 170-7.



HUD Defined Subpopulations

Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness among all populations in the United States.

In order to adequately address the diversity within the population experiencing homelessness, the federal government identifies four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs, including:

1. Chronic homelessness among people with disabilities
2. Veteran;
3. Families with children
4. Unaccompanied children and transition-age youth.

The following sections examine each of these four subpopulations, identifying the number and characteristics of individuals included in the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey.

Of the 399 surveys completed in 2019, there were 71 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, 33 veterans experiencing homelessness, 27 individuals in families experiencing homelessness, and 52 unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth. Surveys were completed in unsheltered and transitional housing settings. The number of surveys completed per subpopulation type is relatively small and therefore the data below should be used and applied with caution. The margin of error for the chronic population data is 10.57%, veterans is 15.13%, families is 16.71% and youth and young adults is 13.02%. The results are, however, consistent with previous research efforts in Santa Cruz and with those in neighboring communities.



INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer—or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months in the last three years—and also has a disabling condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing. This definition applies to individuals as well as to heads of household who meet the definition.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of the housed population.⁴ Data from communities across the country show that public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services.

HUD reported that roughly 24% of the national homeless population of 86,962 individuals was chronically homeless in 2017.⁵

In 2019 there were a total of 403 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness or roughly 19% of the Santa Cruz County homeless population, a notable decrease from 600 (27%) in 2017. Forty-nine (12%) of those individuals were living in families experiencing homelessness. Nearly three quarters (77%) of those experiencing chronic homelessness were living on the street, a decrease from 90% in 2017. The number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who are unsheltered has decreased by nearly half (46%) since 2013, while those staying in shelters has increased by 60%.

⁴ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: June 2010. Retrieved 2017 from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf

⁵ Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

FIGURE 32. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

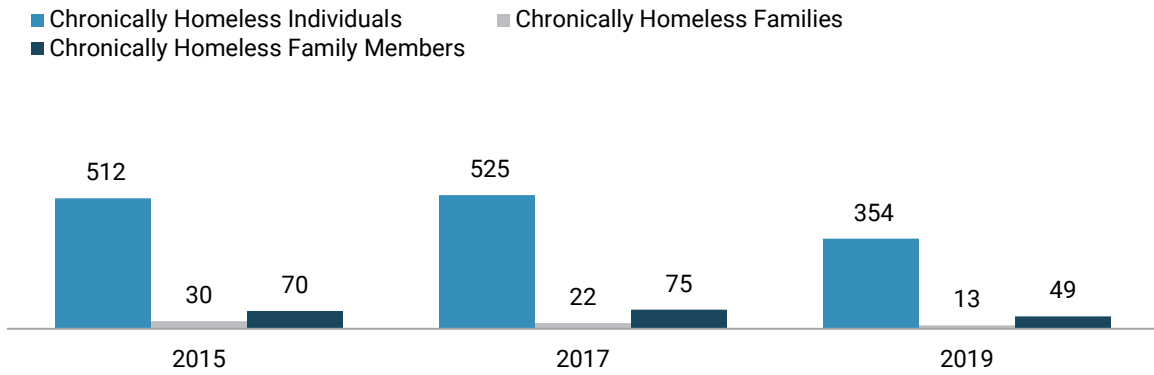
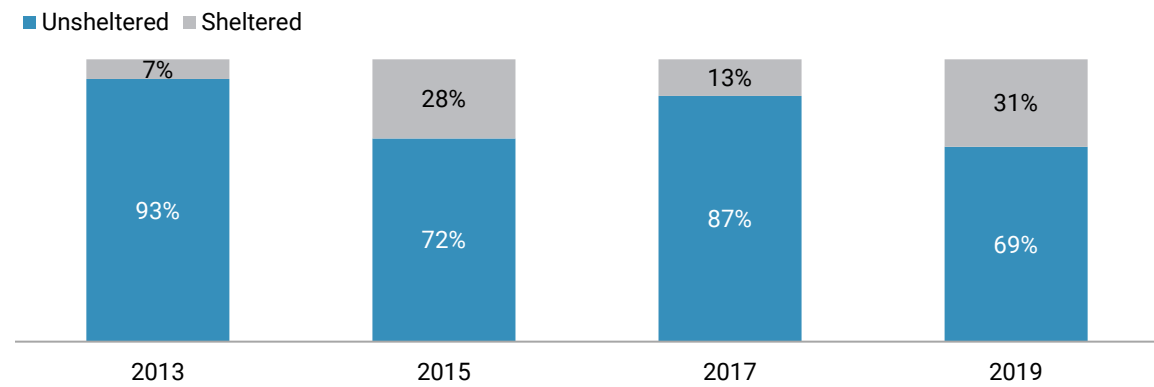


FIGURE 33. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS

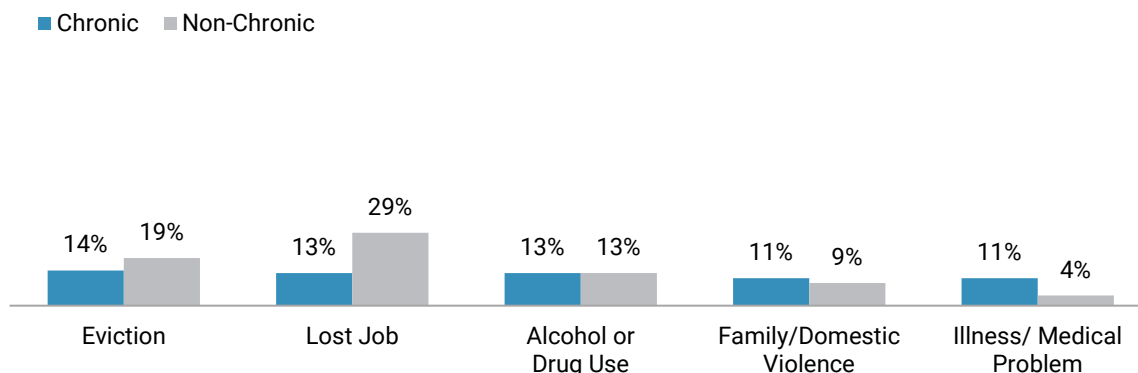


	2013	2015	2017	2019	17-19 % CHANGE
Sheltered	69	165	77	123	60%
Unsheltered	920	417	523	280	-46%
Total	989	582	600	403	-33

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Thirteen percent (13%) of chronically homeless survey respondents identified job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness and 13% reported substance use issues as a primary cause of homelessness. The most common response was eviction at 14%.

FIGURE 34. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

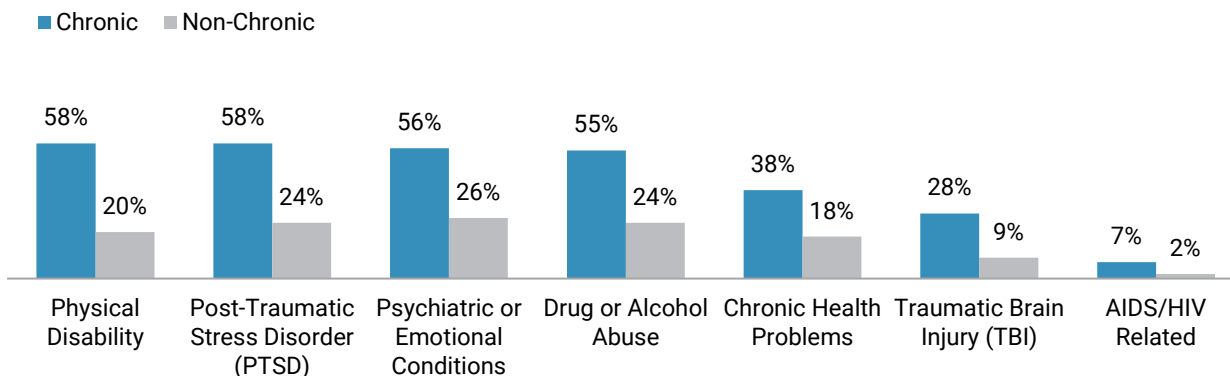


Chronic Survey Population n=70, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=315
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Many respondents reported experiencing multiple physical or mental health conditions. As expected, survey respondents experiencing chronic homelessness suffered from health conditions at a much higher rate than others experiencing homelessness. For example, 58% of chronically homeless individuals reported having a physical disability compared to 20% of non-chronically homeless individuals.

FIGURE 35. HEALTH CONDITIONS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

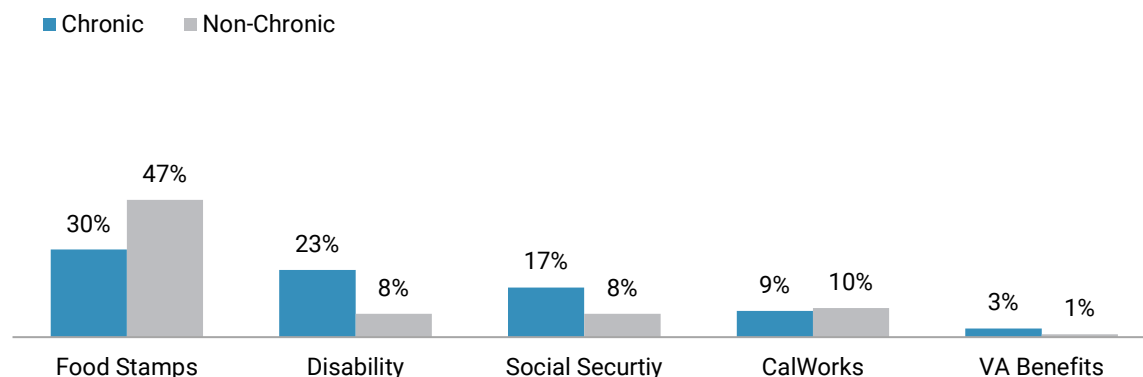


Chronic survey population n = 71; Non-chronic survey population n = 328
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Thirty-four percent (34%) of chronically homeless respondents reported they were not receiving government assistance. Thirty percent (30%) reported receiving food stamps, 23% received Disability benefits, 17% received Social Security, 9% received CalWorks, and 3% received VA benefits.

FIGURE 36. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

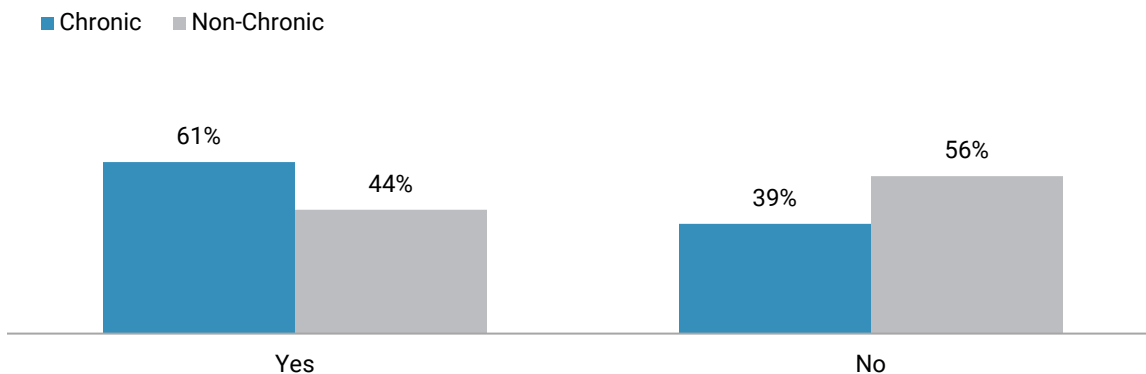


Chronic Survey Population n=70, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=302

INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were more likely to be arrested compared with those who were not chronically homeless (Fig. 38). Sixty-one percent (61%) of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness reported being arrested one or more times in the past three years, up from 49% in 2017.

FIGURE 37. ARRESTED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS



2019 Chronic Survey Population n=59, 2019 Non-Chronic Survey Population n=222



VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Many U.S. veterans experience conditions that place them at increased risk for homelessness. Veterans experience higher rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), sexual assault, and substance abuse when compared to the non-veteran population. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the street than in shelters, and often remain on the street for extended periods of time.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a broad range of benefits and services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. These benefits can involve different forms of financial assistance, including monthly cash payments to disabled veterans, health care, education, and housing benefits. In addition to these supports, the VA and HUD partner to provide housing and support services to veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homeless.

VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were 151 veterans experiencing homelessness in 2019, 85% of whom were living unsheltered. The overall number of veterans represents a decrease of 36% since 2017, though it is very similar to 2015. The percentage of unsheltered veterans, however, increased to 15% from 8% in 2017. The number of female veterans experiencing homelessness continues to increase and was 18% in 2019.

FIGURE 38. TOTAL NUMBER OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

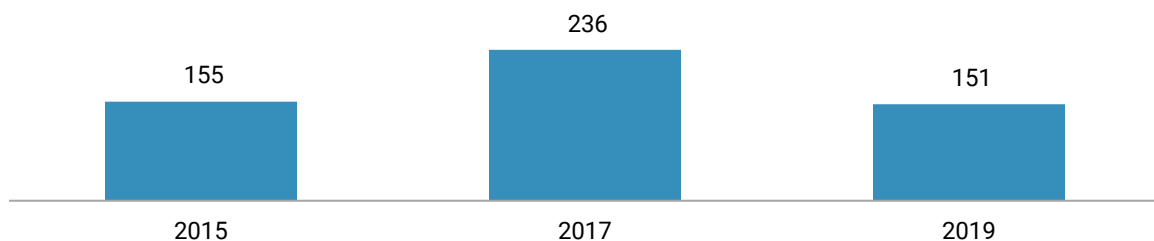
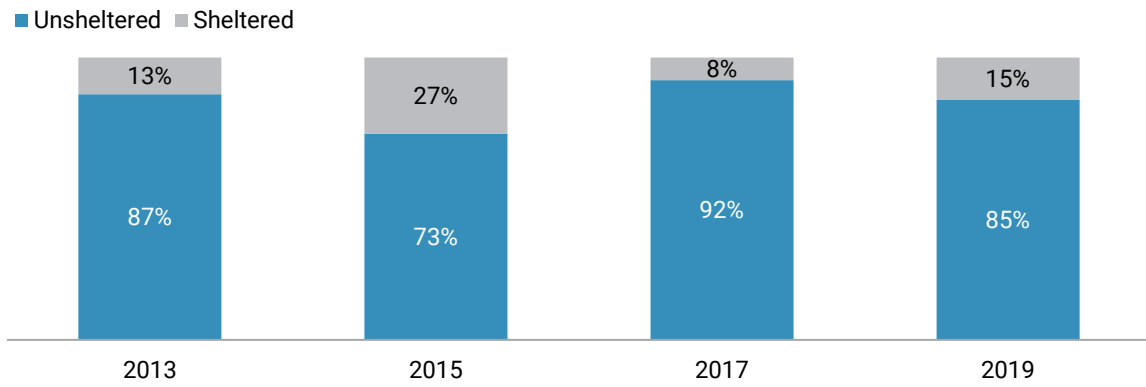
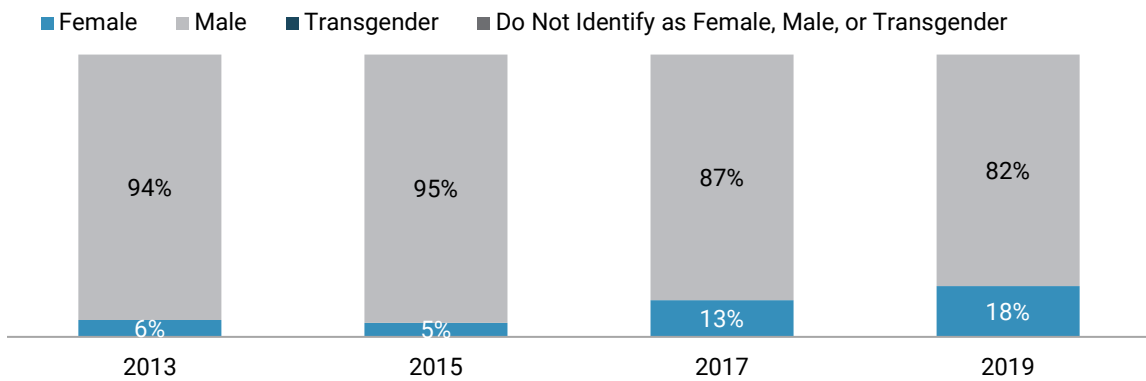


FIGURE 39. VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2017	2019	17-19% CHANGE
Sheltered	52	42	19	23	21%
Unsheltered	343	113	217	128	-41%
Total	395	155	236	151	-36%

FIGURE 40. VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER

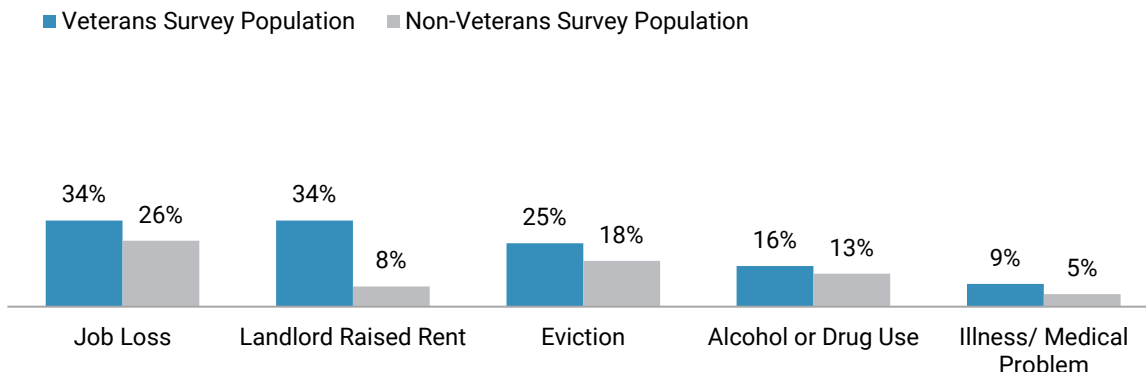


2013 n=395 ; 2015 n=155 ; 2017 n=236 ; 2019 n=151

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

The most frequently cited causes of homelessness among veterans were job loss and a rent increase, affecting 34% of the veterans experiencing homelessness. Eviction was next at 25%, followed by substance abuse (16%) and illness/medical problem (9%).

FIGURE 41. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

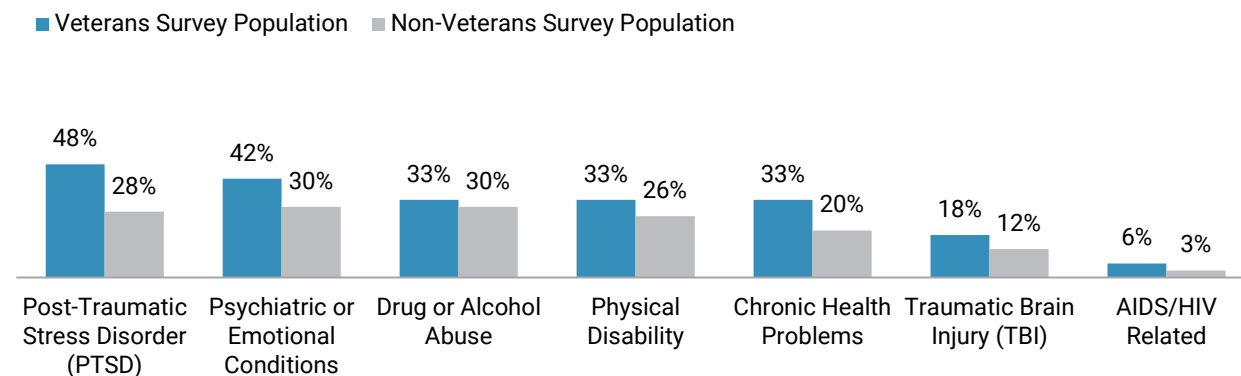


Veterans Survey Population n=32, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=350
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Forty-five percent of veteran respondents reported having one or more disabling conditions, compared to 39% of non-veteran respondents.

FIGURE 42. HEALTH CONDITIONS



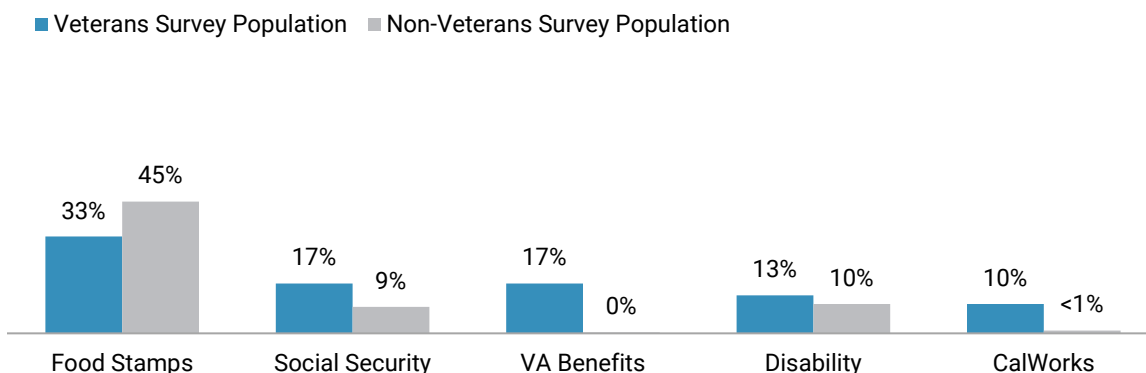
Veteran survey population n = 33; Non-veteran survey population n = 363
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG VETERANS

Overall, the number of veterans connected to any form of government assistance was similar to non-veteran respondents: 67% compared to 63%, respectively.

The most frequently used benefit was food stamps (33%), followed by VA and Social Security benefits (17%), Disability (13%), and CalWORKS (10%).

FIGURE 43. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



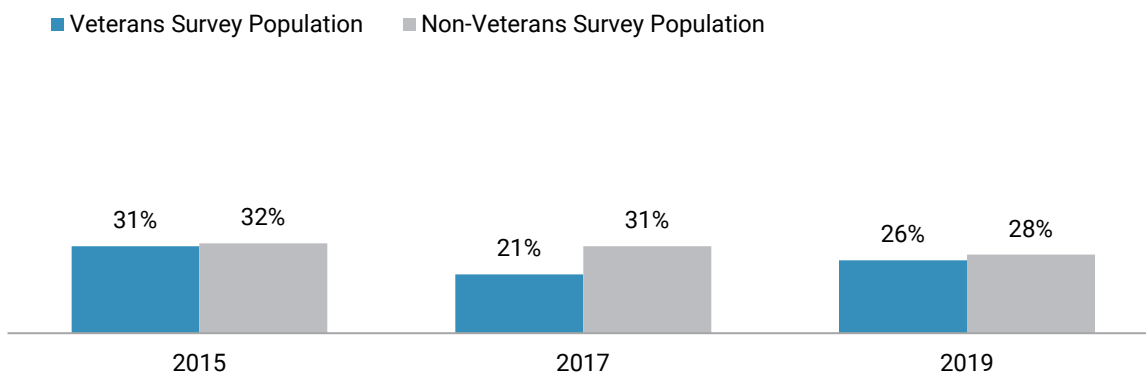
Veterans Survey Population n=30, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=339

INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Nationally, among all veterans who are incarcerated, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be first time offenders, to have committed a violent offense, and to receive longer prison sentences. Veterans who are incarcerated may temporarily lose their various VA benefits.⁶

Locally, a similar percentage of veterans experiencing homelessness (26%) reported having spent a night in jail in the last 12 months when compared to non-veterans (28%).

FIGURE 44. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 Veterans Survey Population n=36, 2015 Non-Veterans Survey Population n=323; 2017 Veterans Survey Population n=70, 2017 Non-Veterans Survey Population n=386; 2019 Veterans Survey Population n=31, 2019 Non Veterans Survey Population n=352

⁶ Military Benefits. (2014). Incarcerated Veterans. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-benefits/incarcerated-veterans.html>.



FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

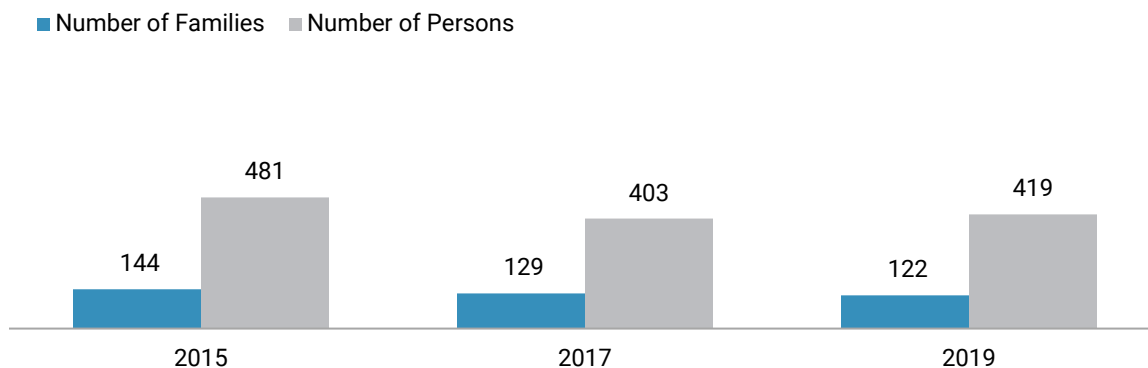
National data from 2017 suggest that 33% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families.⁷ Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, as public shelters serve more than 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth.

Nationally, the majority of homeless families are households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.⁸ Children in families experiencing homelessness report increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable living accommodations.⁹

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were 122 families with 419 individuals experiencing homelessness in 2019 (19% of the total homeless population). While the number of families decreased slightly, from 129 to 122, the number of family members increased by 4% since 2017. Slightly more than half (53%) of families were living unsheltered, down from 2017 (68%).

FIGURE 45. TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



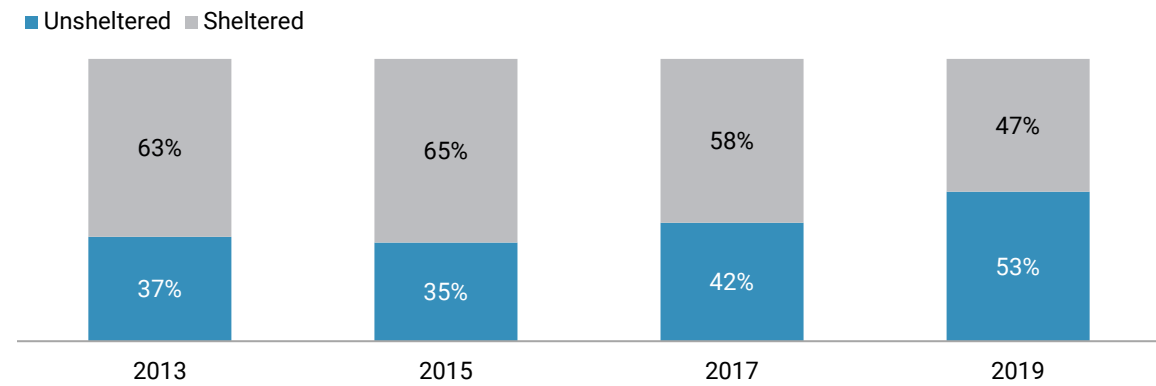
7 Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

8 U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2018 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

9 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2018 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

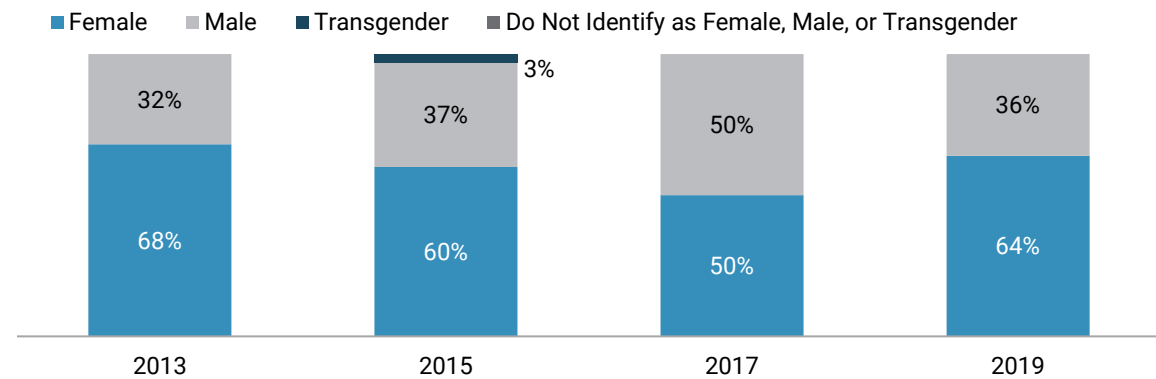
The percentage of families experiencing homelessness who were living on the streets has been on the rise since 2015, reaching 53% in 2019. This represents a large increase from 35% in 2015.

FIGURE 46. INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILIES BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2017	2019	17-19% CHANGE
Sheltered	234	313	234	196	-16%
Unsheltered	201	168	169	223	32%
Total	544	481	403	419	4%

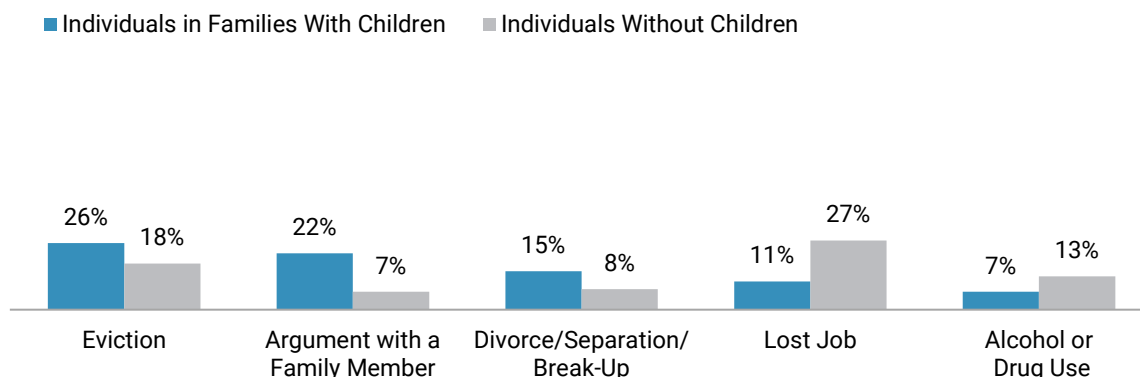
FIGURE 47. FAMILY MEMBERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER



PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES

Locally, the most frequently reported cause of homelessness among families with children was eviction (26%), similar to 2017 (30%). Twenty-two percent reported an argument with family member, 15% reported divorce, 11% reported job loss, 7% reported alcohol or drug use.

FIGURE 48. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

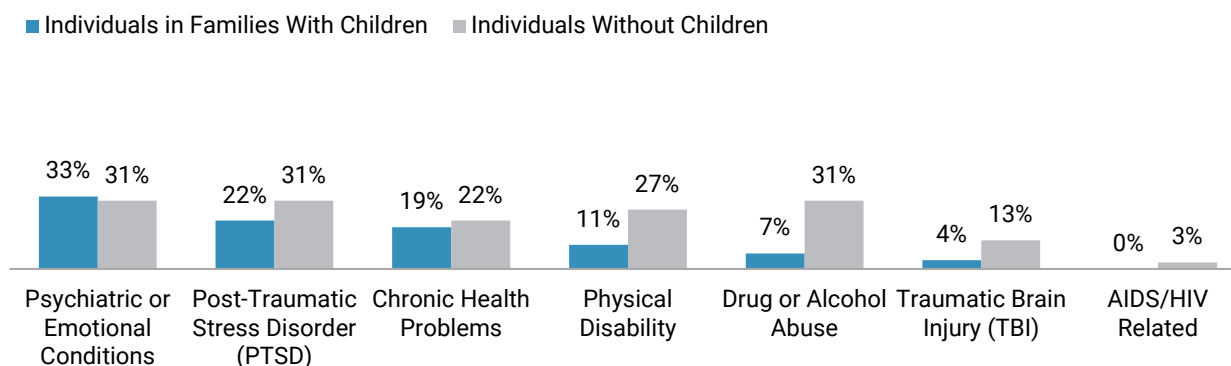


Families with Children Survey Population n=27, Non-Families with Children Survey Population n=358
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In general, survey respondents in families reported suffering health conditions at lower rates than their non-family counterparts. The most frequent health condition suffered by survey respondents in families, and only one where it was greater than non-families, was psychiatric or emotional conditions, where one third of family respondents indicated they were suffering such conditions. Twenty-two percent (22%) reported PTSD, 19% reported chronic health problems, 11% reported physical disability, 7% reported drug or alcohol use, and 4% reported a traumatic brain injury.

FIGURE 49. HEALTH CONDITIONS, FAMILIES AND NON-FAMILIES



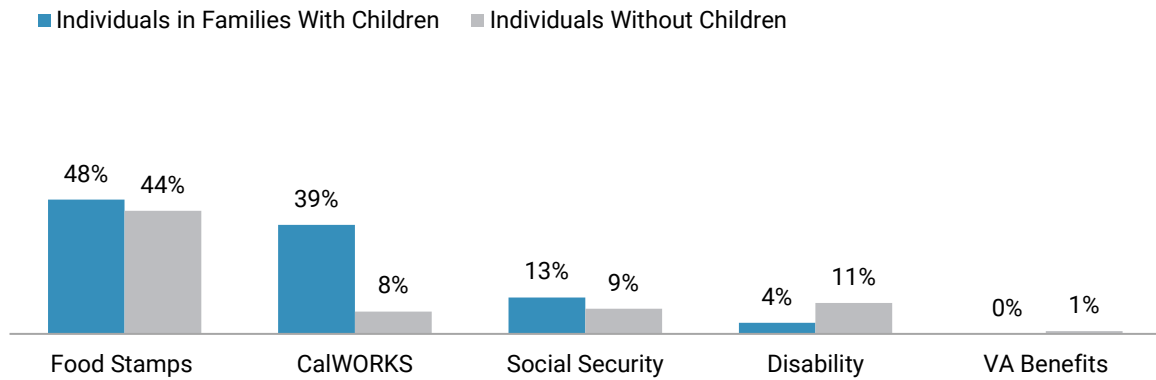
Families with Children Survey Population n=27, Non-Families with Children Survey Population n=372
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AMONG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Overall, the number of individuals in families with children experiencing homelessness connected to any form of government assistance was similar to non-family individuals, 62% compared to 65% of.

Slightly less than half (48%) of individuals in families experiencing homelessness with children reported receiving food stamps. Thirty-nine percent (39%) reported receiving CalWORKS, 13% reported using Social Security, and 4% reported receiving Disability.

FIGURE 50. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



Families with Children Survey Population n=23, Non-Families with Children Survey Population n=349



UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Due to the difficulty of identifying youth experiencing homelessness, limited data are available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, nationwide estimates from 2017 suggest there are at least 40,799 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth on the streets and in public shelters, an increase of 14% over 2016.¹⁰ This increase may be due, in part, to the focus on unaccompanied youth during the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, which served as a nationwide baseline year.

Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services including shelter, medical care, and employment. Reasons may include the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services tailored to young people.¹¹

In 2012, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness amended the federal strategic plan to end homelessness to include specific strategies and supports to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless children and transition-age youth. As part of this effort, HUD placed increased focus on gathering data on unaccompanied homeless children and youth during the 2019 Point-in-Time Count.

¹⁰ U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). The 2017 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

¹¹ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were 51 unaccompanied children under the age of 18 and 569 transition-age youth enumerated in 2019 for a total of 620 unaccompanied youth representing almost 29% of the entire homeless population in the County. The number of unaccompanied children decreased by 69%, while the number of transition-age youth increased by 35% in this increase in youth homelessness. Nearly all of the unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were living on the streets, continuing a trend of unsheltered homelessness from past years.

FIGURE 51. TOTAL NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

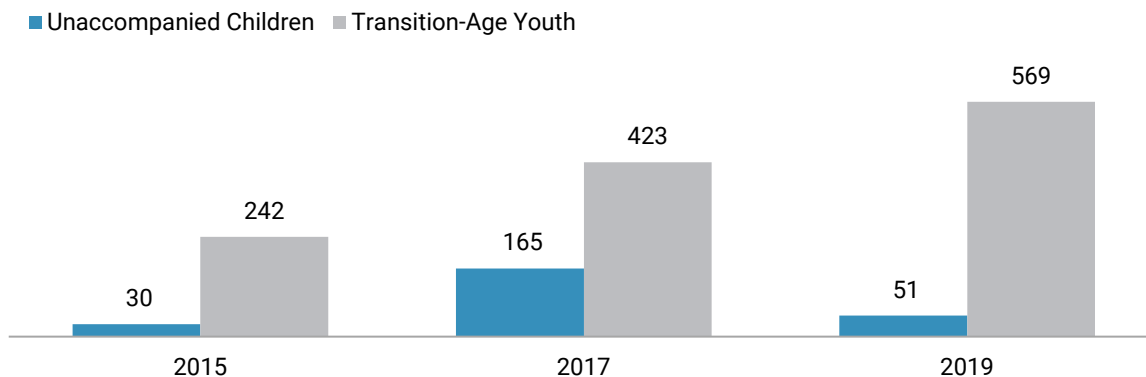
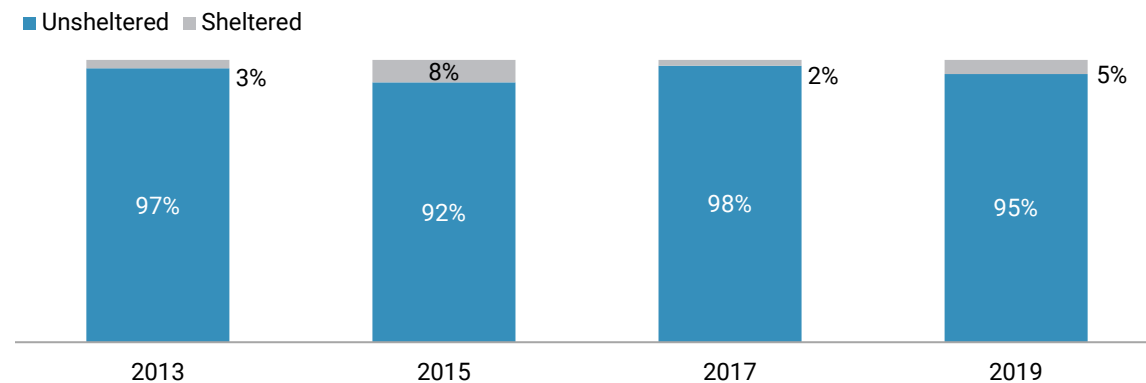


FIGURE 52. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH BY SHELTER STATUS

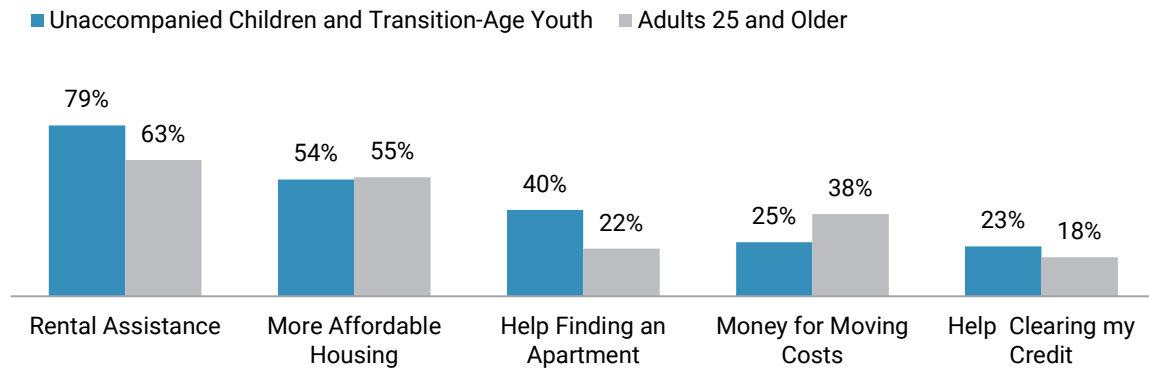


2013 n=947 ; 2015 n=272 ; 2017 n=588 ; 2019 n=620

OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

When asked what might help them obtain permanent housing, unaccompanied children and transition-age youth most often cited rental assistance as the most helpful. Nearly eighty percent cited rental assistance, compared with the 63% of adults 25 and older who did so. And help finding an apartment was a greater concern for unaccompanied children and transition-age youth than it was for adults 25 and older (40% to 22%, respectively). Additionally, unaccompanied children and transition-age youth also mentioned help receiving credit more frequently than adults 25 and older.

FIGURE 53. WHAT WOULD HELP YOU OBTAIN PERMANENT HOUSING



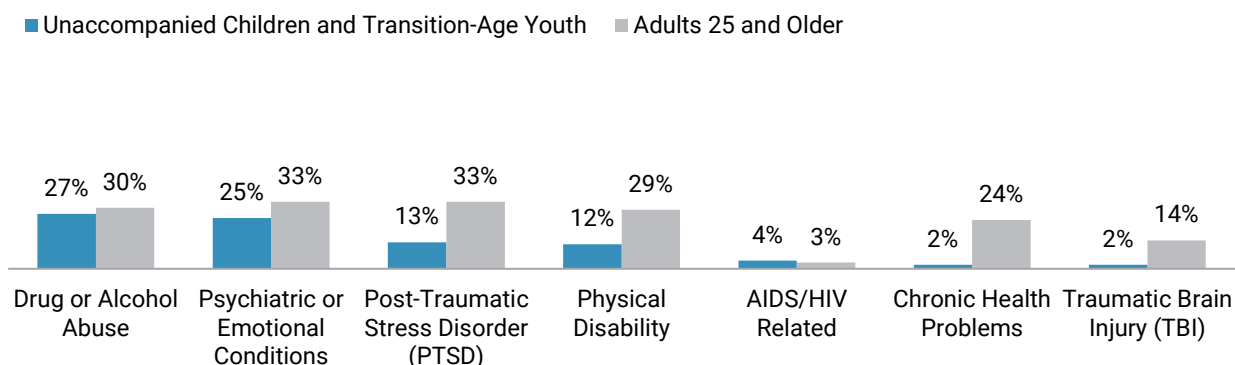
Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age-Youth Survey Population n=48, Non-Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age-Youth Survey Population n=337

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

While youth tend to have fewer health conditions than the general homeless population, health concerns are still an issue among young people experiencing homelessness. Twenty-one percent (21%) of youth reported one or more disabling health conditions compared to 41% of non-youth respondents.

FIGURE 54. HEALTH CONDITIONS, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH AND NON-UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH COMPARISON

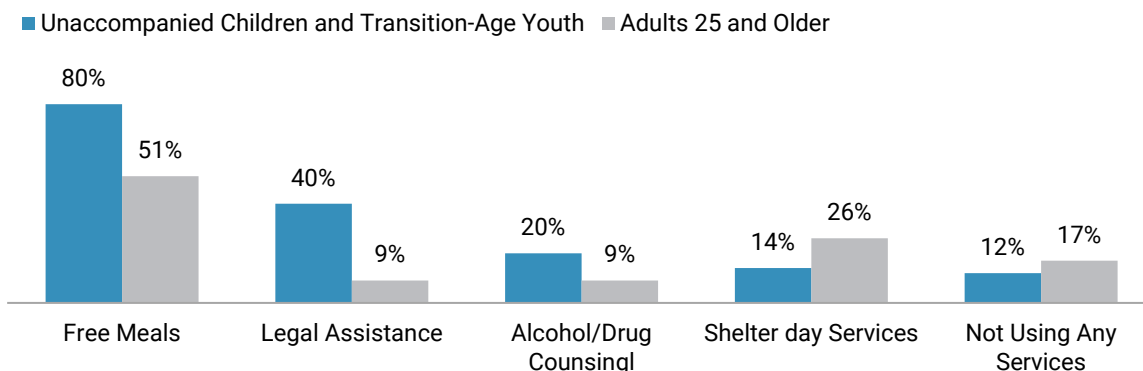


Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age-Youth Survey Population n=52, Adults 25 and Older Survey Population n=347
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

ASSISTANCE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Eighty percent (80%) of youth reported receiving free meals, as compared to 51% of individuals over 25. Forty percent indicated receiving legal assistance, while just 9% of adults 25 and older indicated receiving legal assistance.

FIGURE 55. ASSISTANCE RECEIVED, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH AND NON-UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH COMPARISON



Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age-Youth Survey Population n=50, Adults 25 and Older Survey Population n=322
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Santa Cruz County Homeless Census

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

One-third (33%) of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth identified as LGBTQ+, greater than the 25+ adult population at 18%.

FIGURE 56. SEXUAL ORIENTATION LGBTQ+

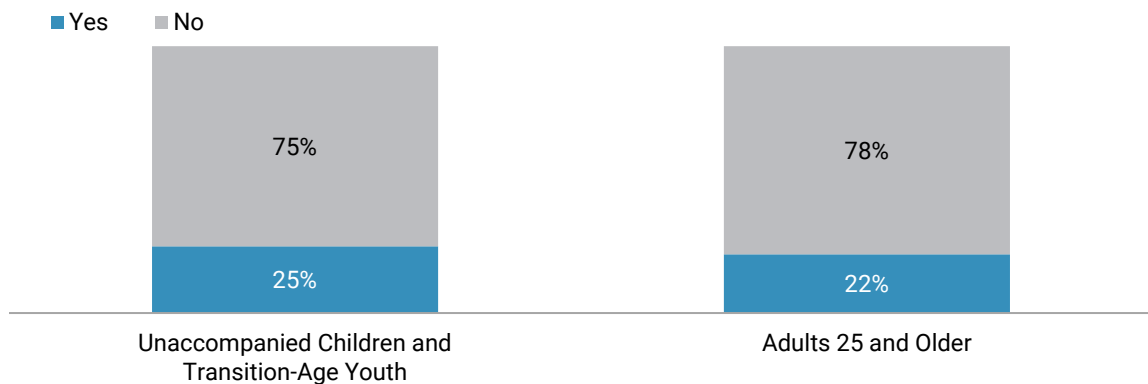


LGBTQ+ n=52

FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

One quarter (25%) of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth indicated that they had a history in foster care, similar to the population of adults 25 and older (22%).

FIGURE 57. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth Survey Population n=52, Adults 25 and Older n=334



Conclusion

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2019 Point-in-Time Count identified 2,167 persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. This represents a decrease of 4% from the count conducted in 2017.

The survey component continues to provide valuable insight into the experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Santa Cruz County. Among survey respondents, slightly more than three-quarters (76%) reported living outdoors: on the streets, in parks, in vehicles, or in encampment areas. Although pinpointing a single cause of homelessness is difficult, financial and housing issues continue to be key contributing factors of homelessness in Santa Cruz County. Many individuals experiencing homelessness face significant barriers to obtaining permanent housing. Financial obstacles (cost of rent, no income, no money for moving costs, and lack of transportation) continue to be barriers limiting individuals from obtaining housing.

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different needs. Key insights gleaned through the Homeless Census and Survey include:

- Homeless did not change significantly from 2017 to 2019 and the county continues to only shelter 78% of the homeless population
- Those experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County are our friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Seventy-four (74%) percent of respondents indicated they were living in the county before experiencing homelessness.
- Two of the four HUD defined subpopulations saw their numbers decrease from 2017, individuals experiencing chronic homelessness decreasing by 33% and veterans experiencing homelessness decreasing by 36%.
- Just under 30% of the entire homeless population are unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age and 95% of these youth are unsheltered.
- Fewer people experiencing homelessness reported suffering from adverse health conditions when compared to 2017. In 2019, 39% of individuals experiencing homelessness state that they suffered from a disabling condition, a decrease from 55% in 2017. Fewer individuals reported suffering from health conditions (PTSD, psychiatric and emotional conditions, alcohol and drug abuse) when compared to 2017.

- The number of persons in families experiencing homelessness stayed relatively similar to 2017, increasing just 4% to 419 persons.
- The percentage of County residents experiencing their first episode of homelessness has risen since 2015 including reaching a high of 40% in 2019. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents indicated they were 25 or older when they first experienced homelessness.

The data in the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Census and Survey can help educate the public, service providers, and policy makers on the status of homelessness in our community.



Appendix A: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey was to produce a point-in-time estimate of people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County, a region which covers approximately 607 square miles. The results of the street counts were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County on a given night, using the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count. The subsequent, in-depth qualitative survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those counted. A more detailed description of the methodology follows.

COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The Point-in-Time Count methodology used in 2019 had five primary components:

1. General street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals between the hours of 4:30AM to 10:00AM;
2. Youth street count: a targeted enumeration of unsheltered homeless youth under the age of 25 between the hours of 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM;
3. Shelter count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals on the night before the street count;
4. Survey: an in-person survey of unsheltered and sheltered individuals conducted by peer surveyors in the weeks following the general street count; and
5. Santa Cruz County Office of Education count: an enumeration of families previously identified by McKinney-Vento data as possibly meeting the definition of homelessness.

The general street count was designed to take place before most shelters released persons who slept at the shelter the previous night. In areas with shelters, the immediate area surrounding the shelter was prioritized to eliminate potential double counting of individuals.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated on community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical plans, methodological decisions, and interagency coordination efforts. ASR provided technical assistance for these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 19 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the HUD publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, as well as in the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago publication, *Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit*.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. Thanks to local efforts, the count included enumerators with a diverse range of knowledge, including expertise regarding areas frequented by homeless individuals, individuals living in vehicles, and persons residing in encampments. Community partners were also key in recruiting individuals with lived experience of homelessness to participate in the street count and survey efforts.

STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of unsheltered homeless persons was used:

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train stations, airport, or camping ground.

This definition does not include individuals who were “doubled-up” or “couch surfing,” as well as individuals who were staying in hotels, motels, jail, or hospitals on the night of the count.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The 2019 street count methodology followed an established, HUD approved methodology used in the past counts.

ASR has been working with Santa Cruz County since 2002, so the count has an established and mature methodology that is mostly unchanged on a cycle-to-cycle basis. There were no major changes to the methodology this year, other than changing the start time to 4:30 am instead of 6:00 am.

VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in Santa Cruz County supported the county’s effort to enumerate the local homeless population. In 2019, 95 community volunteers and homeless guides participated in the general street count on January 31, 2019.

Extensive outreach efforts were conducted, including outreach to local non-profits and volunteer agencies that serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Local shelters and service providers recruited and recommended the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless guides were paid \$15 for attending an hour-long training as well as \$15 per hour worked on the day of the count.

Volunteers and guides served as enumerators on the morning of the count, canvassing the county in teams to visually count homeless persons. County and ASR staff supported each of the two dispatch centers at the Homeless Services Center in Santa Cruz and Salvation Army in Watsonville, greeting volunteers and guides, distributing instructions, maps, and supplies to enumeration teams, and collecting data sheets from returning teams.

In order to participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to attend an hour-long training before the count. Trainings were held in multiple locations throughout the county. Training covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homelessness, how to identify homeless individuals, potential locations where homeless individuals may be located, how to safely and respectfully conduct the count, how to use the tally count sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered, as well as other tips to help ensure an accurate count.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Law enforcement agencies were notified of pending street count activity in their jurisdictions. In census tracts with a high concentration of homeless encampments, specialized teams with knowledge of those encampments were identified and assigned to those areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take every safety precautions possible, including bringing flashlights and maintaining a respectful distance from those they were counting.

STREET COUNT DEPLOYMENT CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of the county within the morning timeframe, the planning team identified two areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the morning of the count: HSC in Santa Cruz and the Salvation Army in Watsonville. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration based on their familiarity with the area or their convenience. The planning team determined the enumeration routes and assigned them to the dispatch center closest or most central to the coverage area to facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field.

LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION

On the morning of the street count, teams of two or more persons were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was generally composed of at least one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide, and provided with their assigned census tract maps, tally sheets, training guidelines, and other supplies.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traversed by foot or car. Homeless enumerators were instructed to include themselves on their tally sheets for the street count if they were not going to be counted by the shelter count. Dispatch center volunteers provided each team with tally sheets to record the number of homeless persons observed in addition to basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center volunteers also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment log sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas.

Special outreach teams and staff were recruited and deployed to areas where they had established relationships and knowledge. This included persons living in vehicles, areas in Aptos, Camp Ross, the University, Westside, the Pajaro levee, slough and gulch areas and other encampment locations.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION COUNT

In the days following the January 31 Point-in-Time Count, representatives from seven school districts called households known to have recently experienced homelessness to ascertain where they stayed on the night of January 30. These results were reviewed with the results of the general street count and potential duplicate counts were eliminated for final reporting. This is a tremendous effort, involving hundreds of phone calls placed by district employees and the results allow an unparalleled look into homelessness at the school level.

YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the 2019 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied homeless children and youth under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. Many homeless children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As in all years, planning for the 2019 supplemental youth count included homeless youth service providers and youth with lived experience of homelessness. Local service providers identified locations where homeless youth were known to congregate and recruited youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate homeless youth to serve as guides for the count. Late afternoon and early evening enumeration was the ideal time recommended by advocates to conduct the youth count.

A focus group was held with currently and previously homeless youth to identify areas to canvass for the supplemental youth count. *Encompass Community Services* took the lead on recruiting youth to work as peer enumerators in addition to youth service provider staff members who accompanied and transported the youth around the county. These teams counted homeless youth in the identified areas of Santa Cruz County on January 30, 2019.

Youth workers were paid \$15 per hour for their time, including time spent in training prior to the count. Youth and youth service provider staff members were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

DATA COLLECTION

It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours rather than in the early morning when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately 3:00PM to 7:00pm on January 30, 2019. Youth worked in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers.

Both HUD and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness recognize that youth do not commonly comingle with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth. For this reason, these agencies accept and recommend that communities count youth at times when they can be seen rather than during traditional enumeration times.

STREET COUNT DE-DUPLICATION

Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and de-duplicated by assessing location, gender, and age. In total, 86 persons under the age of 25 were identified as duplicates and removed from the data set.

SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the shelter and institution count is to gain an accurate count of persons temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across Santa Cruz County. These data are vital to gaining an accurate, overall count of the homeless population and understanding where homeless persons receive shelter.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of sheltered homelessness for Point-in-Time Counts was used. This definition includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The homeless occupancy of shelters in Santa Cruz County was collected for the night of January 30, 2019. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Santa Cruz County's Homeless Management Information System.

CHALLENGES

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as large and diverse as Santa Cruz County. Point-in-Time Counts are "snapshots" that quantify the size of the homeless population at a given point during the year. Hence, the count may not be representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the homeless population seasonally or over time.

For a variety of reasons, persons experiencing homelessness generally do not wish to be seen and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of the homeless population will result, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as families and youth.

The methods employed in a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers, the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy. Many factors may contribute to missed opportunities, for example:

- It is difficult to identify homeless persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Homeless families with children often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or in makeshift shelters.

Even though the Point-in-Time Count is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed—coupled with the homeless survey—is the most comprehensive approach available.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A survey of 399 unique individuals experiencing homelessness was conducted between January 30 and February 28, 2019 to yield qualitative data about people experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning.

The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, duration and recurrence of homelessness, nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by peer survey workers with lived homeless experience. Training sessions were facilitated by ASR, Santa Cruz County staff, and community partners. Potential interviewers were led through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information as well as detailed

instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Peer survey workers were compensated at a rate of \$7 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily obtained if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2019 homeless survey. The socks were easy to distribute, had wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Survey was administered by the trained survey team between January 30 and February 28. In all, the survey team collected 399 surveys.

SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 2,167 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 399 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of individuals experiencing homelessness in Santa Cruz County.

The 2019 survey was administered in shelters, transitional housing facilities, and on the street. In order to ensure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs.

Strategic attempts were also made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. Since 2009, the ASR survey methodology has prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach every third person they considered to be an eligible survey respondent. If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed.

DATA COLLECTION

Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the street or shelter location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to be candid in their responses and were informed that these responses would be framed as general findings, would be kept confidential, and would not be traceable to any single individual.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey requested respondents’ initials and date of birth so that duplication could be avoided without compromising the respondents’ anonymity. Upon completion of the survey effort, an extensive verification process was conducted to eliminate duplicates. This process examined respondents’ date of birth, initials, gender, ethnicity, length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other survey questions.

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The 2019 Santa Cruz County Homeless Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, a smaller number of surveys were conducted among families than in previous years.

There may be some variance in the data that individuals experiencing homelessness self-reported. However, using a peer interviewing methodology is believed to allow the respondents to be more candid with their answers and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Further, service providers and county staff members recommended individuals who would be the best suited to conducting interviews and these individuals received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. Service providers and county staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.



Appendix B: Definitions & Abbreviations

Chronic homelessness – Defined by HUD as an unaccompanied individual or head of a family household with a disabling condition who has either continuously experienced homelessness for a year or more, or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months, in the past three years.

Disabling condition – Defined by HUD as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, PTSD, or brain injury that is expected to be long-term and impacts the individual’s ability to live independently; a developmental disability; or HIV/AIDS.

Emergency shelter – The provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 180 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for survivors and their children.

Family – A household with at least one adult and one child under the age of 18.

Homeless – Under the Category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

HUD – Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Sheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

Single individual – An unaccompanied adult 18 and over in age.

Transition-age youth – Young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years old who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren). Sometimes referred to as TAY.

Transitional housing – Housing in which individuals and families experiencing homelessness may live and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services – which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination – may be provided by the organization managing the housing, or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

Unaccompanied children – Children under the age of 18 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

Unsheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.



Appendix C: Table of Figures

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Appendix D: Figure Sources

All Point in Time Count Data: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2005-2019) Santa Cruz Homeless Census and Survey*.

All Homeless Survey Findings: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2005-2019) Santa Cruz Homeless Census and Survey*.

All Subpopulation Data: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2005-2019) Santa Cruz Homeless Census and Survey*.

All U.S. Census Data: The figure source for the data is *Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>*.



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