San Luis Obispo County

HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019

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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Acknowledgements

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The 2019 San Luis Obispo Census & Survey planning team would like to thank the many individuals and agencies who contributed to this project. The participation of community volunteers and partner agencies is critical to the success of the count. Hundreds of community volunteers, City and County employees, and local community-based organizations assisted with all aspects of the count from the initial planning meetings, to the night of the count, to the publication of this report. We would also like to thank the following organizations for their help:

- 5 Cities Homeless Coalition
- Atascadero Bible Church
- City of Arroyo Grande
- City of Atascadero
- City of Grover Beach
- City of Morro Bay
- City of Paso Robles
- City of Pismo Beach
- City of San Luis Obispo
- Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)
- County of San Luis Obispo Administrative Office
- County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services
- County of San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Office

- Eckerd Kids
- El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) Services
- Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County
- Good Samaritan Shelter
- Homeless Services Oversight Council of San Luis Obispo (HSOC)
- Paso Cares
- People Assisting the Homeless
- Prado Day Center
- Rotary Club of Los Osos
- San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
- The LINK
- Transitions Mental Health Association
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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.

The Point-in-Time Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and is required by HUD of all Continuums of Care receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Continuums of Care report the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count annually to HUD. This information ultimately helps the federal government to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide and the impact of local efforts to end it. Point-in-Time Counts and Survey data also help to inform communities' local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to prevent and end homelessness.

San Luis Obispo County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessments that has worked with San Luis Obispo County on their Point-in-Time Counts for several years.

The San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count consists of two primary components: (1) a point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families, such as those sleeping outdoors, on the street, or in parks, tents, or vehicles, and (2) a point-in-time enumeration of homeless individuals and families residing in temporary shelter, including emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities.

The 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of individuals with lived experience of homelessness, community volunteers, staff from various city and county departments, and law enforcement, the entire county was canvassed between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. on January 28, 2019. The result is a peer-informed visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets and in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation on a single day. Emergency 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.

A specialized count of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth under the age of 25 was conducted on the same day but later in the afternoon. This dedicated count was designed to improve the understanding of the scope of youth homelessness who commonly do not comingle with older persons experiencing homelessness. Trained youth enumerators who currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in specific areas where homeless youth were known to congregate

under the direction and with the support of their local agency advocates and case managers. The results of this effort contribute to HUD's initiative to measure progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020, a stated HUD national goal.

In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 481 unsheltered and sheltered individuals and families. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization and provided the research team with data critical to HUD reporting requirements and local assessment needs.

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County on a single night in January. Special attention was given to specific subpopulations, including chronically homeless persons, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and transition-age youth between the ages of 18 and 25.

To better understand the dynamic trends of SLO homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2015 and 2017, are provided where available and applicable.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Count and Survey to best reflect and incorporate the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings with local community members. These community members were drawn from city and county departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2019 Planning Committee, and were instrumental to ensuring the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey addressed the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2019 Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- 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 measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey, and to track progress toward ending homelessness;

- To increase public awareness of overall homeless issues and generate support for constructive solutions; and

- To assess the status of specific subpopulations, including veterans, families, unaccompanied children, transition-age youth, and those who are chronically homeless.

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

In 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.
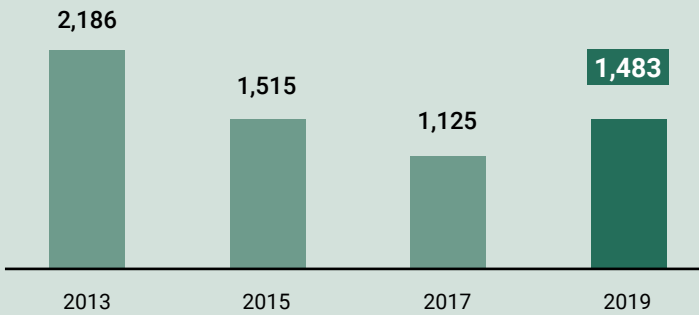
San Luis Obispo County
Homeless Census & Survey
2019 Executive Summary

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 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on January 28th, 2019. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 418 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.
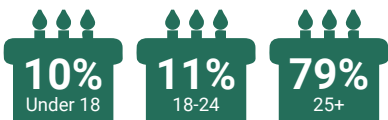
Census Population: Longitudinal Trend

2013	2015	2017	2019
2,186	1,515	1,125	1,483

2019 Sheltered/ Unsheltered Population

79% Unsheltered n=1,172

21% Sheltered n=311

Age

10% Under 18

11% 18-24

79% 25+

Residence Prior to Homelessness

San Luis Obispo County **74%**

Gender

68% Male

32% Female

0% Transgender

Sexual Orientation

78% Straight

7% Bisexual

6% Other

5% Gay

4% Lesbian
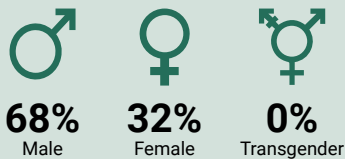
Length of Time in San Luis Obispo County

19% < 1 Year

24% 1-4 Years

13% 5-9 Years

44% 10 Years+

Foster Care

14% of survey respondents have been in the foster system.

Race
Top Responses△

72% White

16% Multi-racial

6% Black

4% American Indian or Alaskan Native

Ethnicity

28% Latinx/ Hispanic

Justice System Involvement

37% of survey respondents spent one or more nights in jail/ prison/juvenile hall in the past year.

Subpopulation* Data

Chronically Homeless | 298 Individuals

84% Unsheltered

16% Sheltered

Veterans | 144 Individuals

97% Unsheltered

3% Sheltered

Families | 67 Familes with 222 Members

38% Unsheltered

62% Sheltered

Unaccompanied Children | 23 Individuals

100% Unsheltered

0% Sheltered

Transition-Age Youth | 151 Individuals

96% Unsheltered

4% Sheltered

Employment Status

12% Employed

88% Unemployed

Unemployment Status

50% Unable to Work

29% Looking for Work

20% Not Looking for Work

Primary Event or Condition That Led to Homelessness[+]

Top 6 Responses[Δ]

30% Lost Job

20% Alcohol or Drug Use

11% Divorce/ Seperation/ Breakup

17% Eviction

10% Argument with Family/Friend
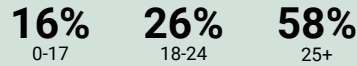
7% Family/ Domestic Violence
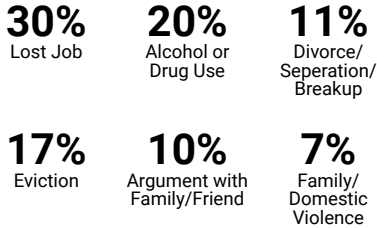
First Episode of Homelessess

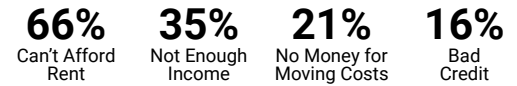**27%** of survey respondents indicated their current episode of homelessness was their first.

Age at First Episode of Homelessess

16% 0-17

26% 18-24

58% 25+

Barriers to Obtaining Permanent Housing[+]

Top 4 Responses[Δ]

66% Can't Afford Rent

35% Not Enough Income

21% No Money for Moving Costs

16% Bad Credit

Duration of Current Episode of Homlessness

14% 30 Days or Less

34% 1-11 Months

51% 1 Year or More

Self-Reported Health[+]

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

36% Alcohol & Drug Use

31% Psychiatric/ Emotional Conditions

26% Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder

23% Chronic Health Problems

21% Physical Disability

8% Traumatic Brain Injury

4% HIV/ AIDS Related Illness

Disabling Conditions

41% 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.
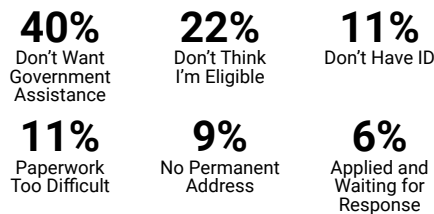
Services and Assistance

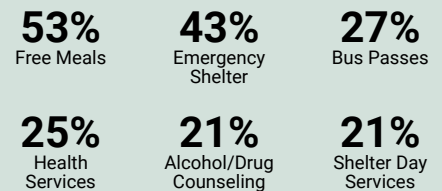**87%** of survey respondents reported receiving benefits.

Reasons for Not Receiving Any Government Assistance[+]

Top 6 Responses[Δ]

40% Don't Want Government Assistance

22% Don't Think I'm Eligible

11% Don't Have ID

11% Paperwork Too Difficult

9% No Permanent Address

6% Applied and Waiting for Response

Services Currently Accessing[+]

Top 6 Responses[Δ]

53% Free Meals

43% Emergency Shelter

27% Bus Passes

25% Health Services

21% Alcohol/Drug Counseling

21% Shelter Day Services

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

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

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 San Luis Obispo County. It will be available summer 2019.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2019, San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey, Watsonville, CA.

ASR

Point-In-Time Census

The 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on January 28, 2019 from approximately daybreak to 10AM and covered all of San Luis Obispo County. The shelter count was conducted on the previous evening and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to 2017 though the survey effort was slightly different.

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 over a very short period of time. As this method was conducted in San Luis Obispo County, the result was an observation-based count of individuals and families who appeared to be homeless based on the assessment of the lived experience team member in consult with his/her volunteer team partner.

The occupancy of homeless shelters in San Luis Obispo County was collected for the night of January 28, 2019. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from San Luis Obispo County's Homeless Management Information System.

The count was followed by an in-person representative survey, the results of which 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. As mentioned above, the 2017 effort, though similar, attempted to integrate a vulnerability assessment in conjunction with the count and survey. This effort had merits but, in operational terms, was challenging to complete successfully within the narrow confines of a HUD compliant count.

In a continuing effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, San Luis Obispo County also conducted a dedicated youth count similar to the youth counts that have been conducted since 2015. The dedicated youth count methodology was improved in 2017 to better ensure unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were duplicated and counted 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 IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

On January 28, 2019 there were 1,483 individuals in San Luis Obispo County who met the HUD definition of homelessness. This represents an increase of 32% from 2017.

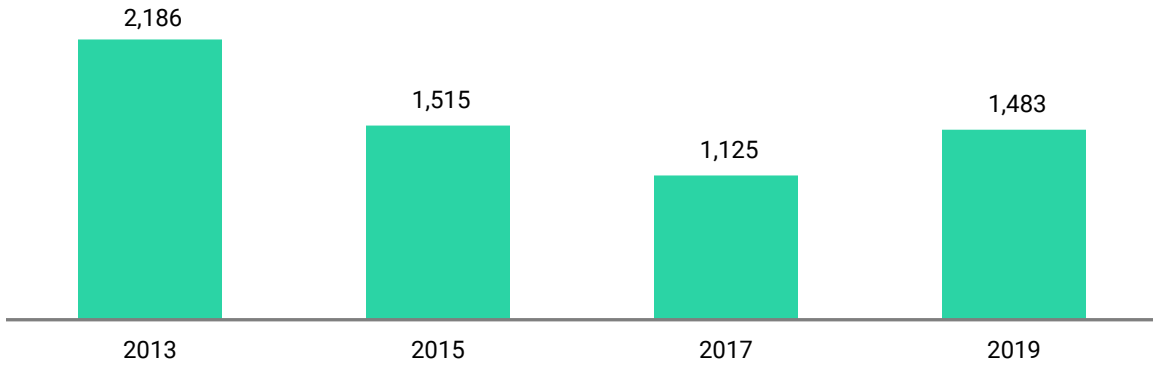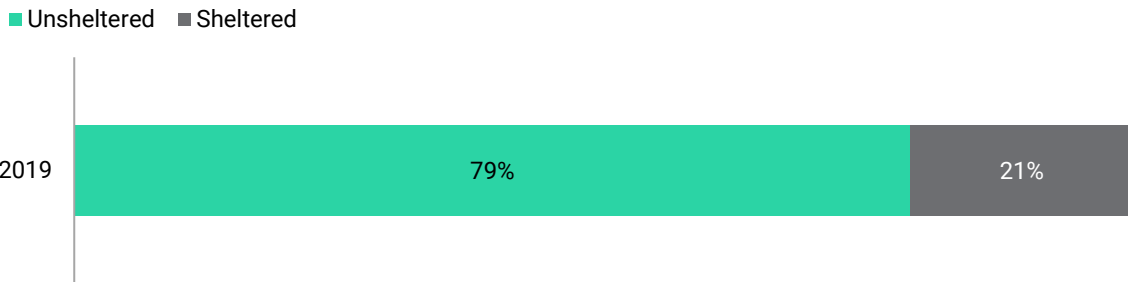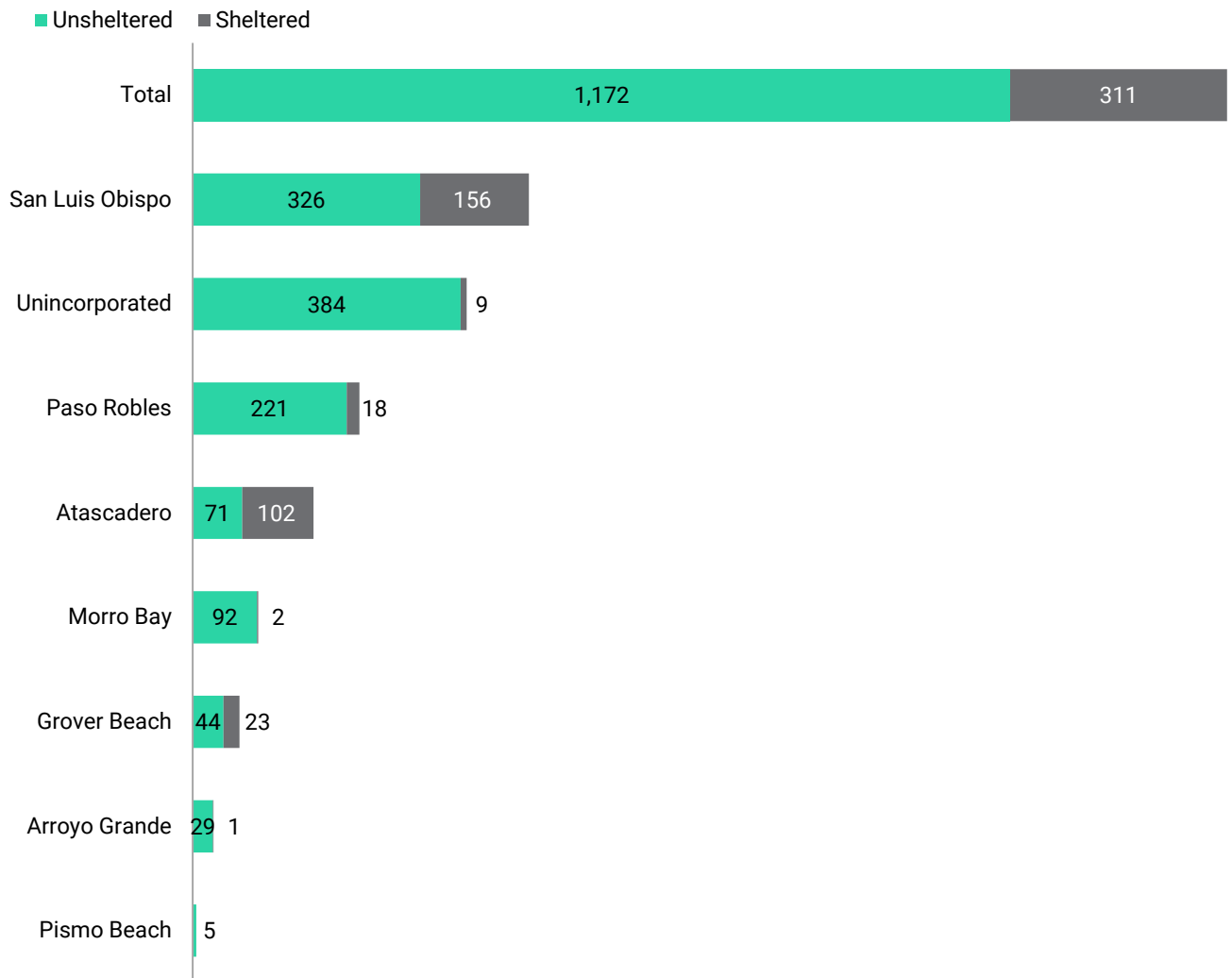FIGURE 1.   TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS ENUMERATED

FIGURE 2.   TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS
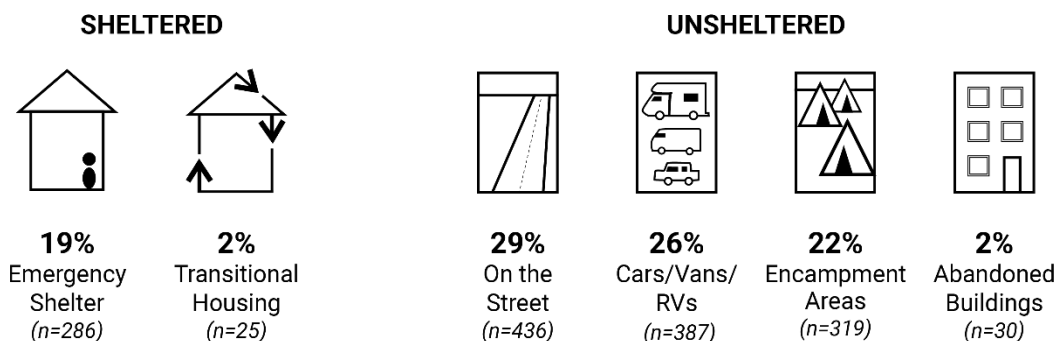

2019 unsheltered n=1,172; sheltered n=311

FIGURE 3.   JURISDICTIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE POPULATION, 2019

■ Unsheltered   ■ Sheltered

Jurisdiction	Unsheltered	Sheltered
Total	1,172	311
San Luis Obispo	326	156
Unincorporated	384	9
Paso Robles	221	18
Atascadero	71	102
Morro Bay	92	2
Grover Beach	44	23
Arroyo Grande	29	1
Pismo Beach		5

2019 unsheltered n=1,172; sheltered n=311

FIGURE 4.   TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION

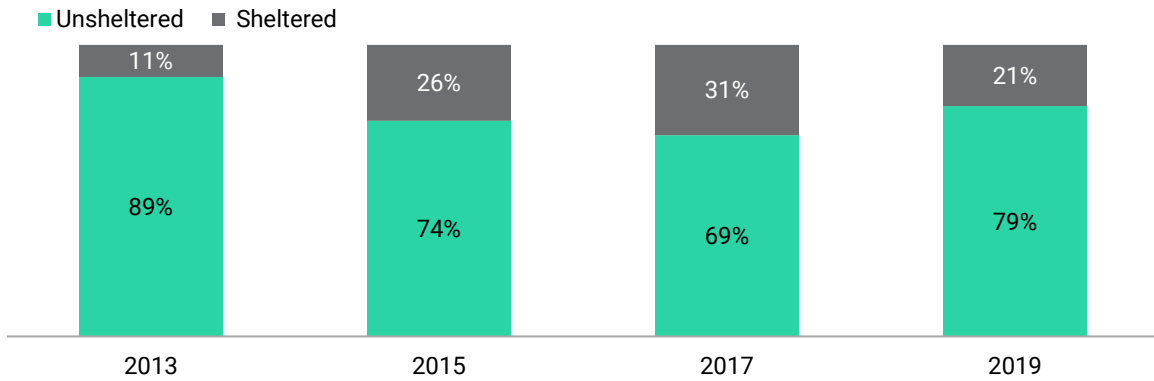**SHELTERED**   **UNSHELTERED**

| **19%** Emergency Shelter *(n=286)* | **2%** Transitional Housing *(n=25)* | **29%** On the Street *(n=436)* | **26%** Cars/Vans/ RVs *(n=387)* | **22%** Encampment Areas *(n=319)* | **2%** Abandoned Buildings *(n=30)* |

2019 unsheltered n=1,172; sheltered n=311

FIGURE 5.   PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION, BY REGION

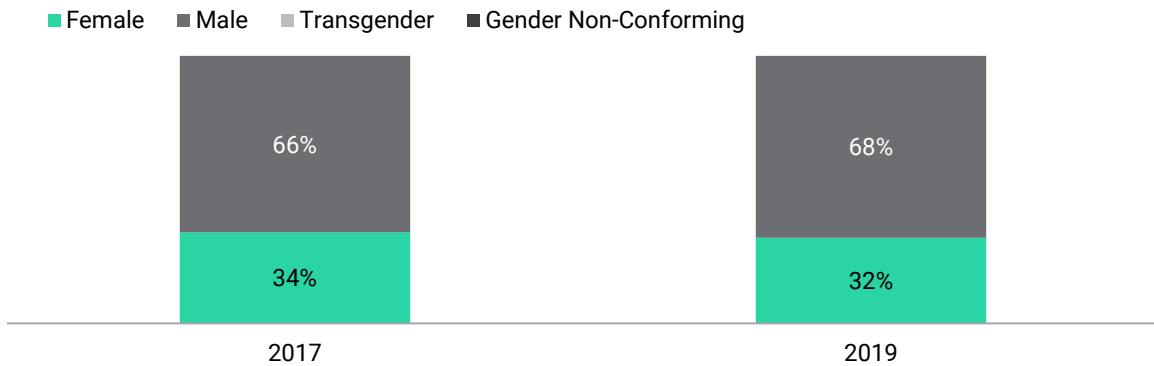| Sleeping Accommodation	COAST	SAN LUIS OBISPO	SOUTH COUNTY	NORTH COUNTY	TOTAL
Emergency Shelter	3	135	24	124	286
Transitional Housing	0	0	25	0	25
On the Street	55	199	70	112	436
Encampment Areas	60	140	28	91	319
Cars/Vans/RVs	91	97	61	138	387
Abandoned Buildings	14	0	3	13	30
Total	**223**	**571**	**211**	**478**	**1,483**

FIGURE 6.   TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION WITH TREND BY SHELTER STATUS

■ Unsheltered ■ Sheltered

	2013	2015	2017	2019
Sheltered	11%	26%	31%	21%
Unsheltered	89%	74%	69%	79%

2013 n= 2,180; 2015 n= 1,515; 2017 n= 1,125; n=1,483

FIGURE 7.   TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER

■ Female ■ Male ■ Transgender ■ Gender Non-Conforming

	2017	2019
Male	66%	68%
Female	34%	32%

2017 n= 1,125; 2019 n= 1,483

FIGURE 8.   TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE

■ 2017 SLO General Population ■ 2015 Homeless Census ■ 2017 Homeless Census ■ 2019 Homeless Census

	White	Multi-race	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Asian
2017 SLO General Population	86%	4%	2%	1%	<1%	4%
2015 Homeless Census	75%	17%	6%	3%	<1%	1%
2017 Homeless Census	80%	5%	6%	7%	1%	<1%
2019 Homeless Census	72%	16%	6%	4%	1%	1%
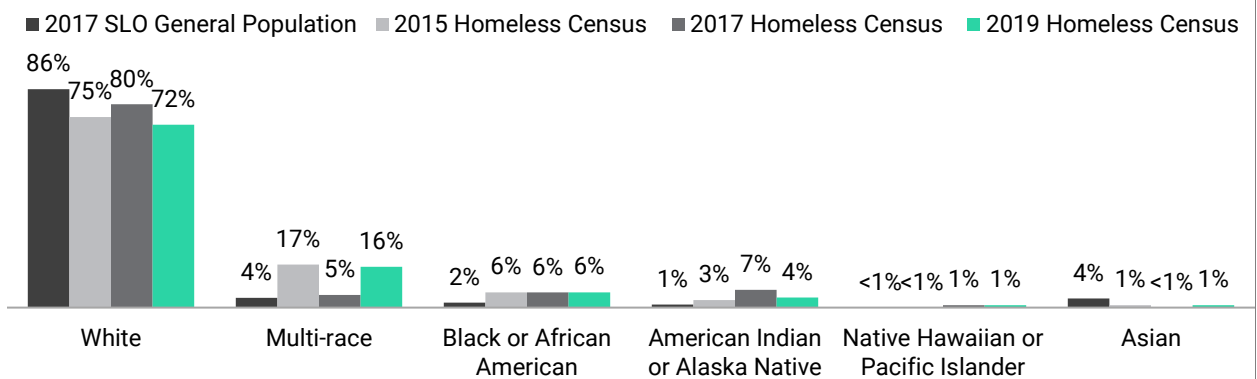
2015 n= 1,515; 2017 n= 1,125; 2019 n= 1,483
U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2019). American Community Survey 20171-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from http://factfinder2.census.gov
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Homeless Survey Findings

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between January 27 and February 28, 2019. This effort resulted in 418 complete and unique surveys.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,483 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 418 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4.06% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo 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*.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

For a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo, respondents were asked basic demographic questions including age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

AGE

Seventeen percent (17%) of survey respondents were under the age of 25 at the time of the survey compared to 33% of general population of San Luis Obispo. Forty-one percent (41%) were between the ages of 25 and 40, 34% were between the ages of 41 and 60, and 8% were 61 years or older. Compared to the general population of San Luis Obispo, survey respondents were far likelier to be ages 31 and up.

FIGURE 9.   SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

AGE GROUP	2017	2019
Less than 18 Years	0%	1%
18-24 Years	8%	16%
25-30 Years	9%	17%
31-40 Years	17%	24%
41-50 Years	27%	19%
51-60 Years	27%	15%
61 Years or More	12%	8%

2017 n= 153; 2019 n=418

GENDER IDENTITY

Of survey respondents in San Luis Obispo County, sixty-three percent (63%) of survey respondents identified as male and 36% identified as female, similar to 2017 survey results.

FIGURE 10.   GENDER IDENTITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
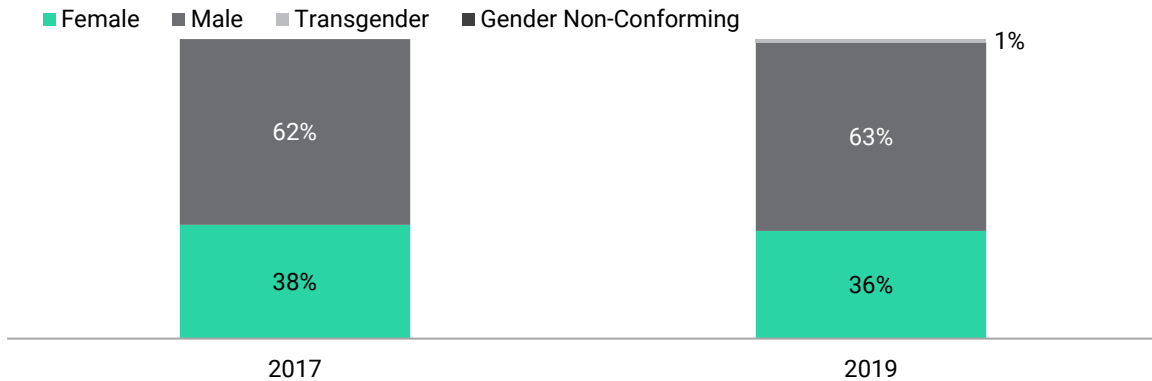

2017 n=153; 2019 n=410

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. When asked if they identified as Hispanic or Latino, over one-quarter (27%) of homeless survey respondents reported they did not identify as Hispanic or Latino. In regards to race, 69% identified as White, 17% Multiracial/Other, 8% as Black or African American, 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 19% as Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or other.

FIGURE 11.   HISPANIC OR LATINX ETHNICITY
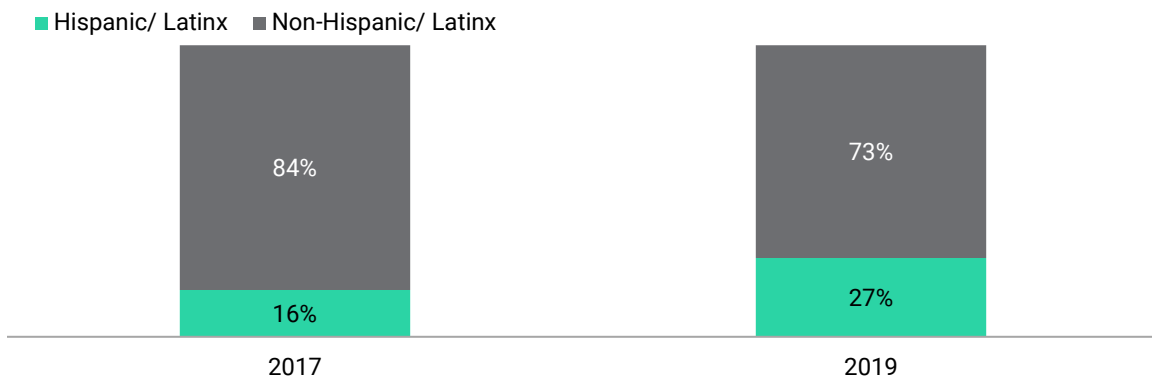
2017 n= 147; 2019 n= 393

FIGURE 12.   RACE

■ 2015 Survey Respondents   ■ 2019 Survey Respondents
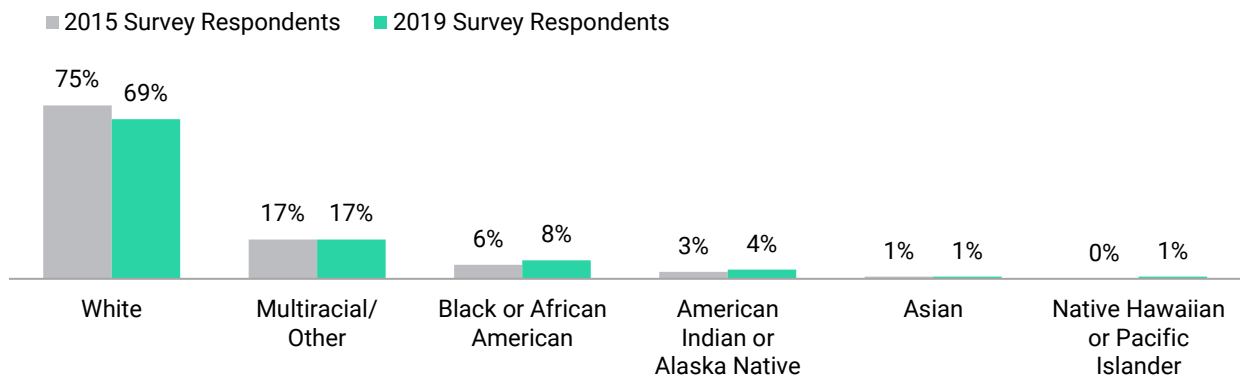
2015 n= 376; 2019 n=385
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

FOSTER CARE

Nationally, it is estimated that at least one-third of foster youth experience homelessness after exiting care.[1] In the state of California, many foster youth are eligible to receive extended care benefits as they transition into adulthood, up until their 21st birthday. Implemented since 2012, the aim of extended foster care is to assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from experiencing homelessness.

In San Luis Obispo County in 2019, 14% of respondents reported a history of foster care, the same as 2017 (14%).

FIGURE 13.   HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE

■ Yes   ■ No
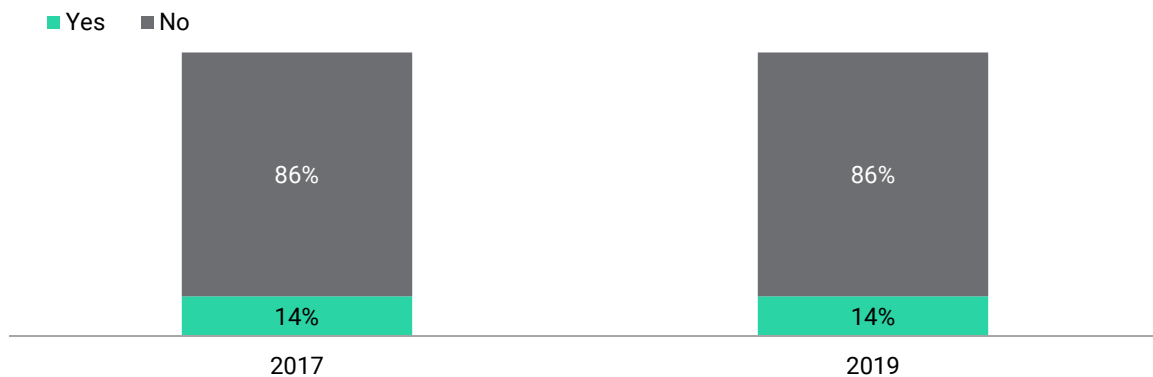
2017 n= 108; 2019 n= 390

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[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.

DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability.
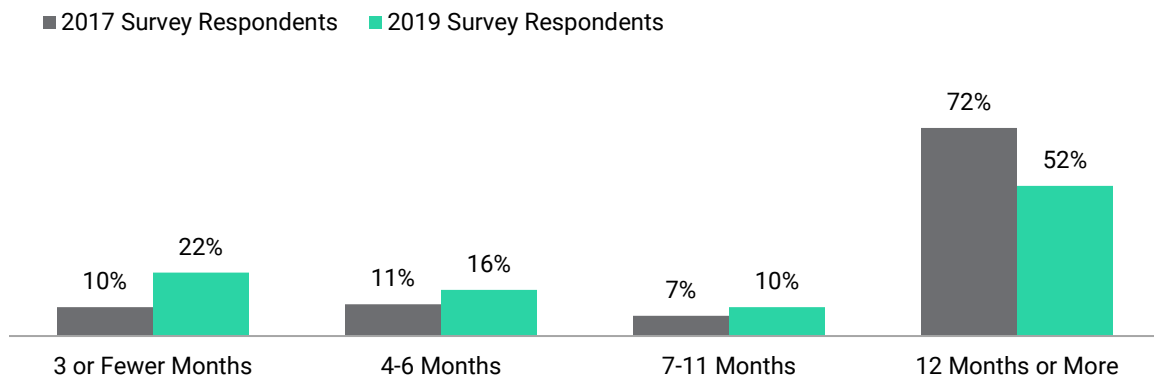
Many individuals who experience homelessness will do so numerous times, as people often cycle in and out of stable housing. Recurring homelessness is also an indicator of the homeless assistance and housing systems ability to address individuals' needs for stable, permanent housing. For many survey respondents (73%) this was not the first time they had experienced homelessness. Just over half (52%) of survey respondents reported their current episode of homelessness lasting for a year or longer, indicative of a reduction in length of homelessness compared to 2017 (72%).

FIGURE 14. FIRST TIME HOMELESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING "YES")

2017 n= 159; 2019 n= 376

FIGURE 15. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

2017 n= 145; 2019 n=381

FIGURE 16.   RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS- LAST THREE YEARS

■ 2017 Survey Respondents   ■ 2019 Survey Respondents

	1 Time	2 Times	3 Times	4 Times	5 Times or More
2017	34%	43%	9%	3%	12%
2019	46%	20%	13%	6%	14%
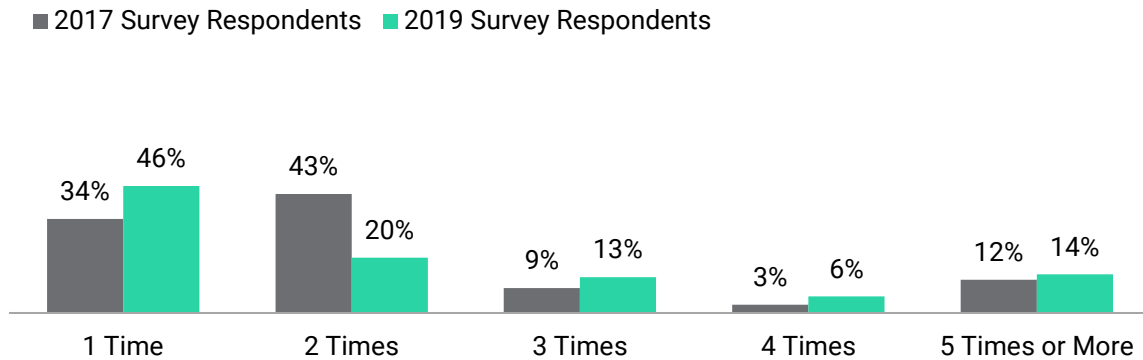
2017 n=159; 2019 n=365

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness and where they have lived since impacts the way they seek services, as well as their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and to opportunities for systemic improvement and homelessness prevention.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Knowing where individuals were living prior to their housing loss informs discussions regarding how local the homeless population is to the region. This information can also influence changes to available support systems if the Continuum of Care finds increasing numbers of individuals living locally before experiencing homelessness.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents reported they were living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they most recently became homeless, higher than 2015 (57%) and indicating the strong local nature of homelessness commonly found in other studies.

The majority of respondents (56%) reported that they had lived in San Luis Obispo for five or more years, while nearly one-in-five (19%) respondents had lived in San Luis Obispo for less than a year.

FIGURE 17.   PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT THE MOST RECENT TIME RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED HOMELESS

■ 2015 Survey Respondents   ■ 2019 Survey Respondents

|	San Luis Obispo County	Other County in CA	Out of State
2015	57%	26%	16%
2019	74%	16%	10%
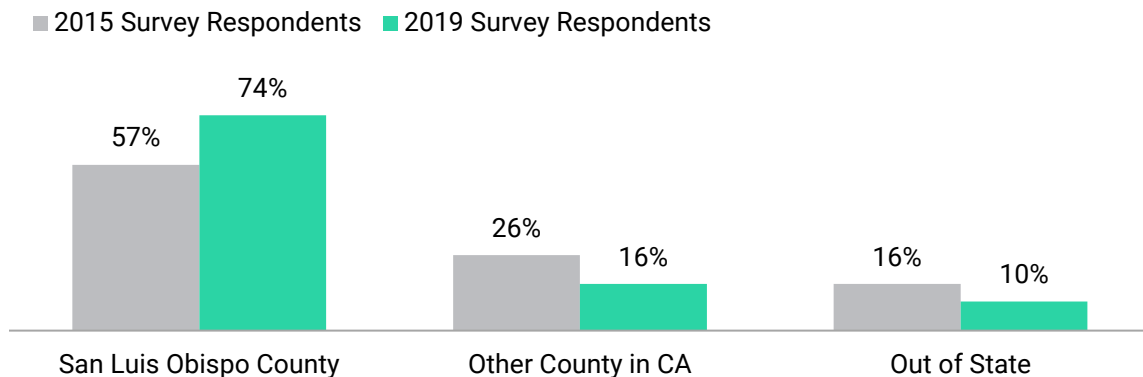
2015 n=390; 2019 n=411
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

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. Understanding the types of places individuals experiencing homelessness are sleeping can help inform local outreach efforts.

Over one-third (34%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors, either on the streets, in parks, or in encampment areas. Twenty percent (20%) reported staying in a homeless shelter or transitional housing. Fourteen percent cited staying in a place not made for human habitation, 12% reported they were staying in a hotel or motel, and 11% reported staying sleeping in a vehicle.

FIGURE 18.   USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT
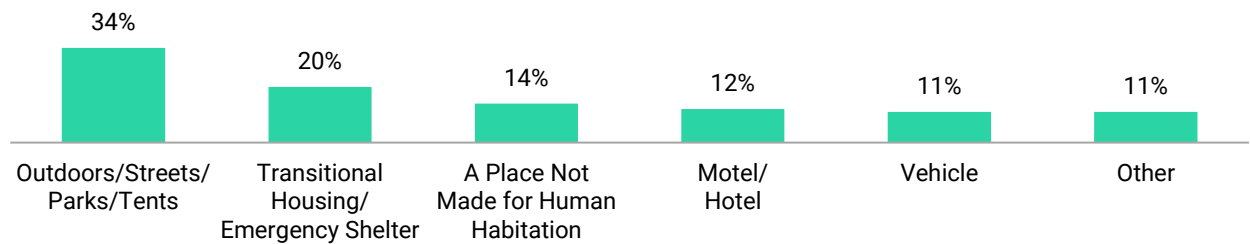
2019 n= 418

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual's inability to obtain or retain housing is often difficult to pinpoint, as it is often the result of multiple and compounding causes. An inability to secure adequate housing can also lead to an inability to address other basic needs, such as healthcare and adequate nutrition.

Thirty percent (30%) of respondents reported the primary cause of their homelessness being a result of job loss. Alcohol or drug use was the next most frequently reported cause of homelessness at 20%. Eviction was the next leading cause (17%) followed by a divorce or breakup (11%).

FIGURE 19.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES IN 2019)

■ 2015 ■ 2019

	Lost Job	Alcohol or Drug Use	Eviction	Divorce/ Separation/ Breakup	Argument/ Family or Friend Asked You to Leave
2015	23%	17%	10%	12%	11%
2019	30%	20%	17%	11%	10%
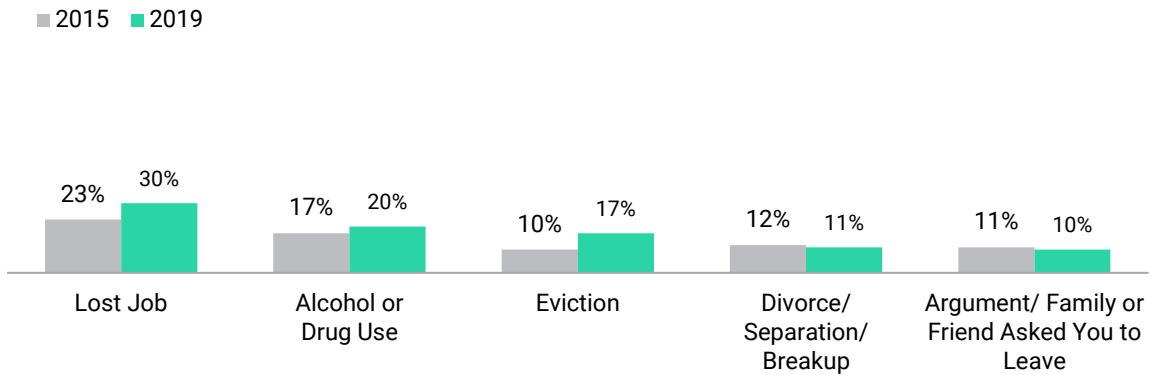
2015 n=396 respondents offering 464 responses; 2019 n=409 respondents offering 551 responses
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Many individuals experiencing homelessness face significant barriers in obtaining permanent housing. These barriers can range from housing affordability and availability to accessing the economic and social supports (e.g., increased income, rental assistance, and case management) needed to access and maintain permanent housing.

When asked what prevented them from obtaining housing, the most common response was "can't afford rent," reported by 66% of survey respondents. This was followed by 35% who reported a lack of job or income, 13% who reported a lack of housing availability, and 21% who said that they had no money for moving costs.

FIGURE 20.   OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP RESPONSES IN 2019)
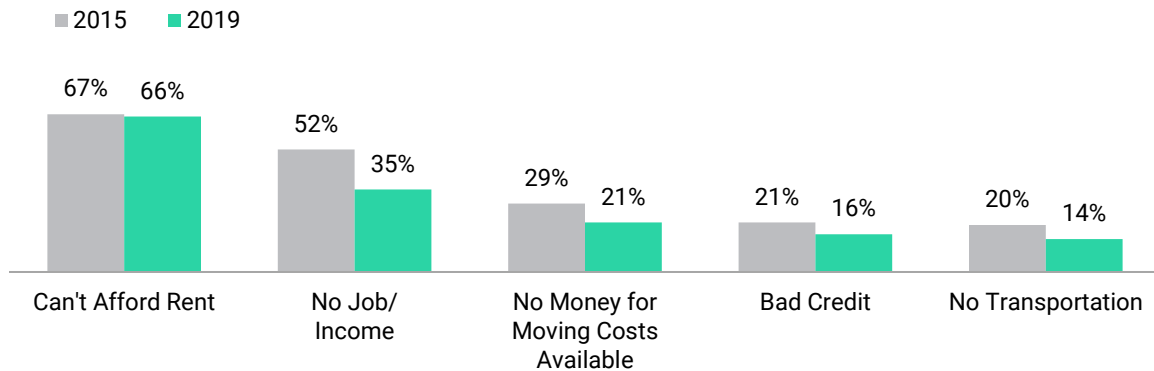
2015 N=388 respondents offering 1,057; 2019 N=407 respondents offering 900 responses.
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

San Luis Obispo 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. Connecting homeless individuals and families to these support services creates a bridge to mainstream support services and can prevent future housing instability.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

There are various forms 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.

Most respondents (82%) in 2019 reported they were receiving some form of government financial assistance. The reasons for not receiving assistance were similar to 2015. Sixty percent had a challenge in application and 40% claimed they did not want help.

Of those receiving government assistance, the largest percentage (55%) of respondents reported receiving food stamps, twenty-nine percent were receiving Medi-Cal/Medicare, twenty-five percent (25%) reported receiving General Assistance (GA), and 18% were receiving SSI/SSDI/Disability benefits.
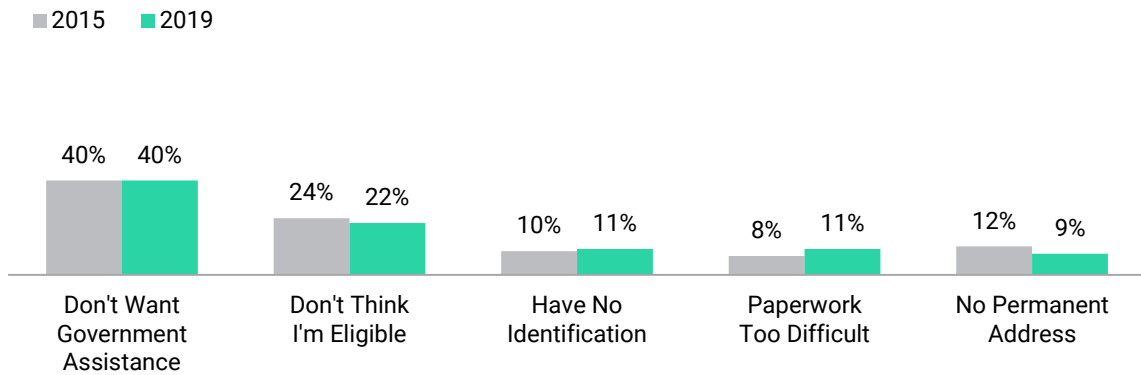
FIGURE 21.   RECEIPT OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP RESPONSES IN 2019)
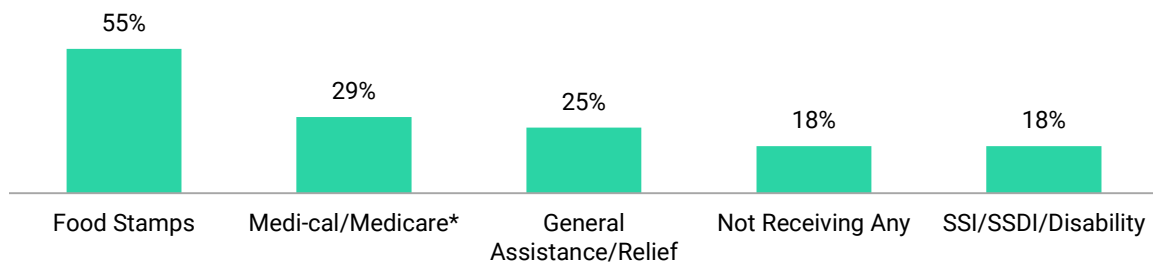
2019 N=376 respondents offering 651 responses
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

FIGURE 22.   REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP RESPONSES IN 2019)

■ 2015   ■ 2019

2015 N=110 respondents offering 149; 2019 N=65 respondents offering 83 responses.
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.
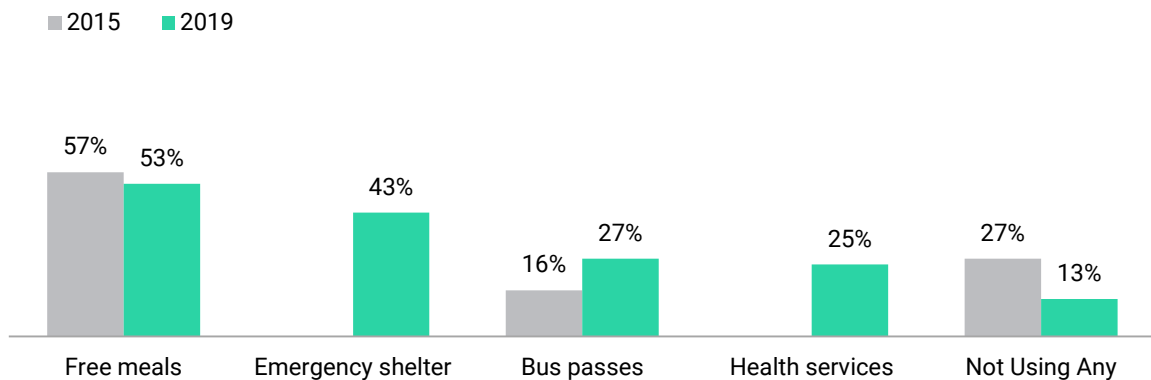*Note: This question was not asked in 2017*

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

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

A large majority (87%) of survey respondents in 2019 reported they were accessing other services and assistance beyond government assistance, a higher percentage than in 2015 (73%). The most frequently cited types of assistance respondents reported accessing were meal services (53%), emergency shelter (43%), and bus passes (27%).

FIGURE 23.   RECEIPT OF OTHER SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (TOP RESPONSES IN 2019)

■ 2015   ■ 2019

2015 N=875 respondents offering 1,960 responses; 2017 N=570 respondents offering 1,247 responses; 2019 N=379 respondents offering 922 responses
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.
Note: This question was not asked in 2017
Note: Emergency shelter and health services were added as responses in 2019.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

It is important to recognize that the unemployment rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It does not represent all joblessness, nor does it address the types of available employment.

The unemployment rate among homeless survey respondents was 88%, an increase from 80% in 2015. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of unemployed respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work, 20% indicated they were not, while half (50%) indicated they were currently unable to work.

While the majority (88%) of survey respondents reported being unemployed, a number reported having part-time or seasonal/sporadic employment (9%) and even full-time employment (3%). Despite some income, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs. For example, of the employed homeless survey respondents, two-thirds (65%) were making less than $1,100 monthly, and unsurprisingly, even more unemployed survey respondents (90%) were making less than $1,100 monthly. Typically, income for unemployed homeless individuals comes from government benefits, recycling, and panhandling.

FIGURE 24.   EMPLOYMENT STATUS

2015 N=378; 2019 N=392
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

FIGURE 25.   MONTHLY INCOME BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS

|	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Less Than $750	66%	54%	81%	72%
$750-$1,099	23%	11%	14%	18%
$1,100-$1,499	7%	24%	3%	6%
$1,500 or More	4%	11%	2%	4%

2015 N=378; 2019 N=385
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

HEALTH

Without regular access to healthcare and without safe and stable housing, homeless 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-homeless patients.[2]

The top health conditions survey respondents reported experiencing in 2019 were: drug/alcohol abuse (36%); a psychiatric or emotional condition, such as depression and schizophrenia (31%); Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD (26%); and chronic health problems (23%). Health issues were very consistent with data collected in 2015.

FIGURE 26.   HEALTH CONDITIONS

■ 2015   ■ 2019
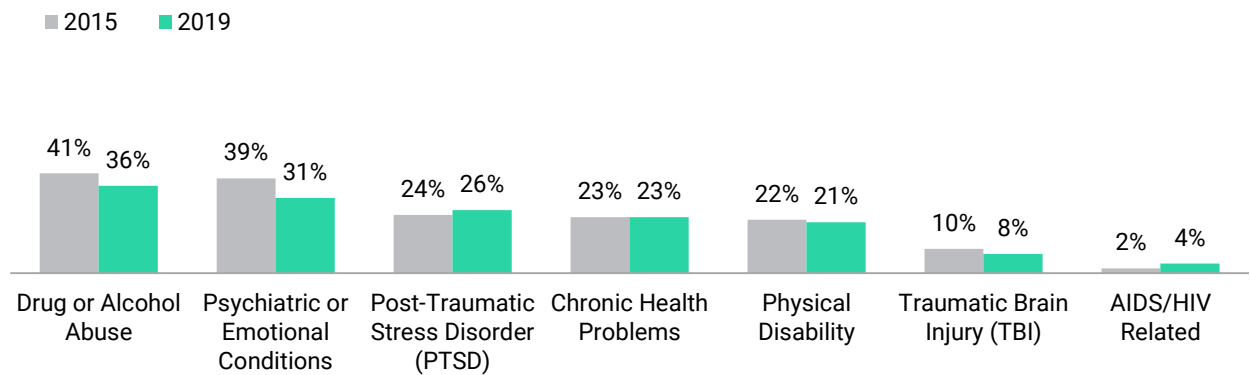
2015 N=373-384; 2019 N=418.
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

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

DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Histories of domestic violence and partner abuse are prevalent among individuals experiencing homelessness, and can be the primary cause of homelessness for many. Survivors often lack the financial resources required for housing, as their employment history or dependable income may be limited.

When asked about experiences throughout their lifetime, 22% reported domestic/partner violence or abuse, lower than in 2015 (30%). Survey responded were also asked whether or not they were currently experiencing domestic/partner violence, eight percent responded yes, and six percent declined to answer.

FIGURE 27.   HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

■ Yes ■ No ■ Decline to State

Year	Yes	No	Decline to State
2015	30%	55%	13%
2019	22%	70%	8%
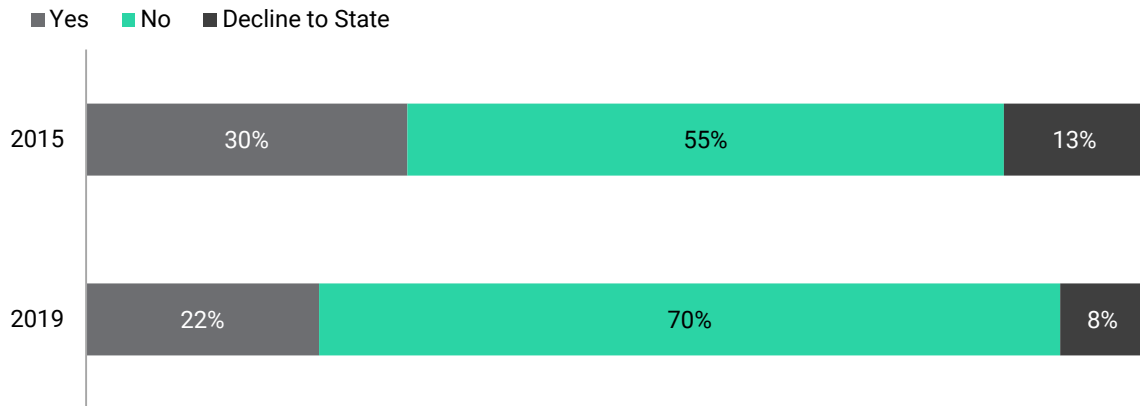
2015 N=378; 2019 N=396.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Homelessness and incarceration are often interrelated. Individuals without stable housing are at greater risk of criminal justice system involvement, particularly those with mental health issues, veterans, and youth. Individuals with past incarceration face significant barriers to exiting homelessness due to stigmatization and policies affecting their ability to gain employment and access housing opportunities.[3]

INCARCERATION

When asked if they had spent a night in jail or prison in the last 12 months, thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents experiencing homelessness reported that they had, similar to 2015 (39%).

FIGURE 28.   SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS
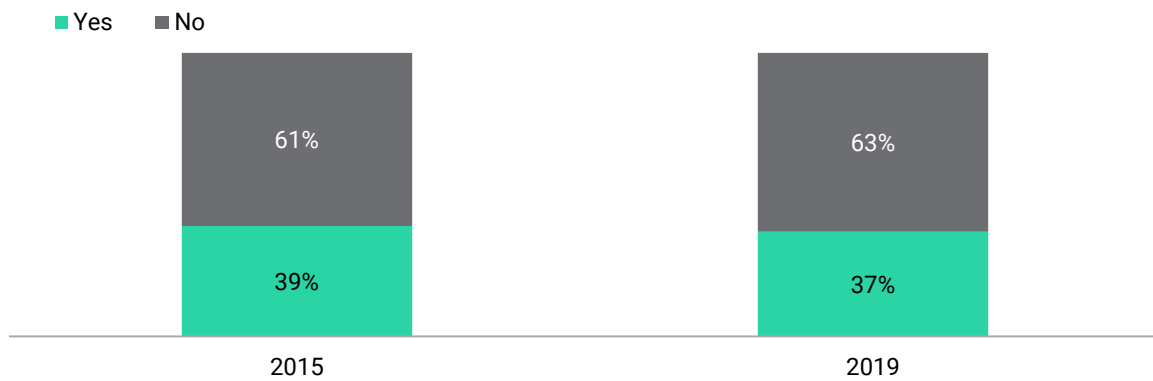
2015 n= 383; 2019 n=400
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

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[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. Veterans;

3. Families with children; and

4. Youth and young adults

Consequently, these subpopulations represent important reportable indicators for measuring local progress toward ending homelessness.

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

INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless person 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 heads of household who meet the definition.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable profiles seen on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of the general population.[4] Data from communities across the country reveal that public costs incurred by those experiencing chronic homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing persons with permanent housing and supportive services.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that 86,962 individuals, representing 24% of the overall homeless population, were experiencing chronic homelessness.[5] Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability.

ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

There were a total of 298 individuals experiencing chronic homeless in 2019, representing an increase of 14% since 2017. This is just over 20% of the overall homeless population.
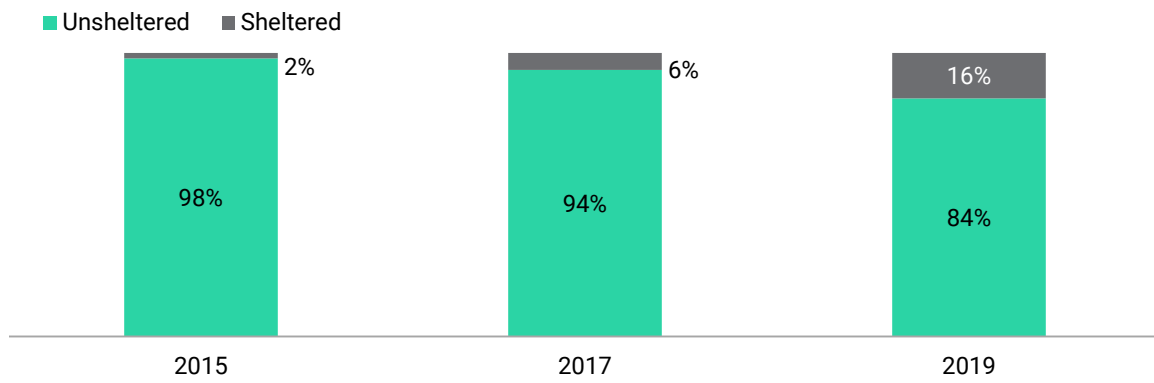
FIGURE 29.   INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS, TOTAL COUNT
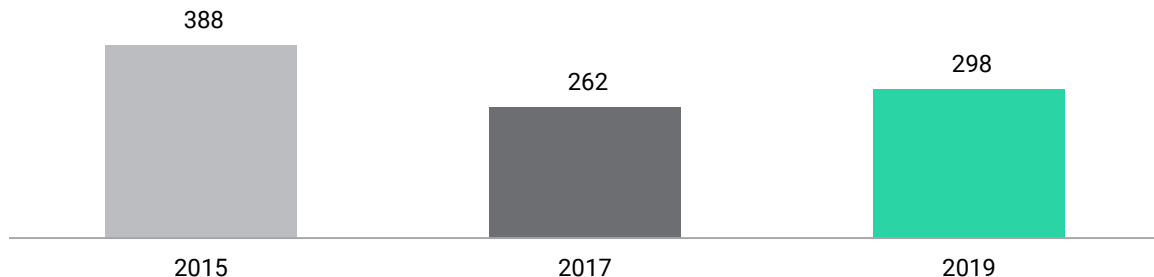
[4] United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: June 2010. Retrieved 2017 from
https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf
[5] Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

FIGURE 30.   INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS

■ Unsheltered   ■ Sheltered

|	2015	2017	2019
Sheltered	2%	6%	16%
Unsheltered	98%	94%	84%

2015 n= 388; 2017 n=262; 2019 n=298

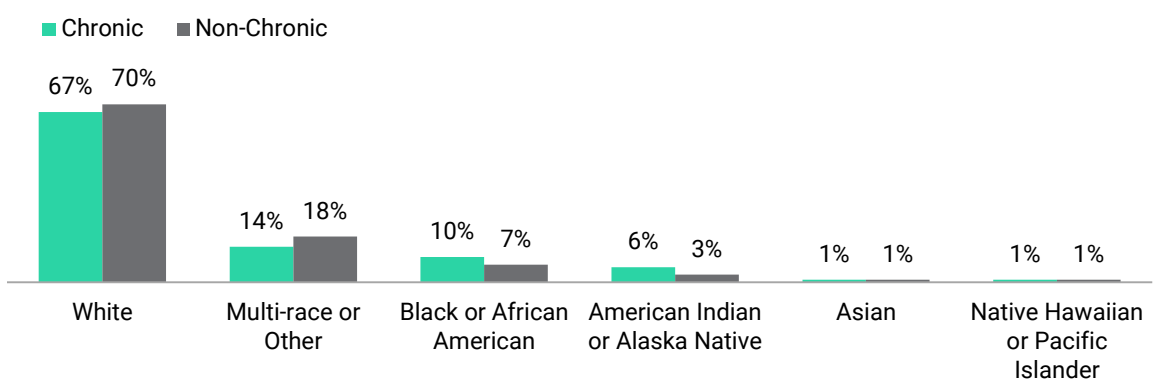## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The majority (64%) of chronically homeless survey respondents identified as male, slightly higher than the non-chronically homeless population (62%). In terms of race, the majority of chronically homeless respondents were White (67%) similar to the non-chronic population, at 70%. In terms of disproportionality, among those experiencing chronic homelessness, they were slightly more likely to be Black/African America, American Indian or Alaskan native.

FIGURE 31.   PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER
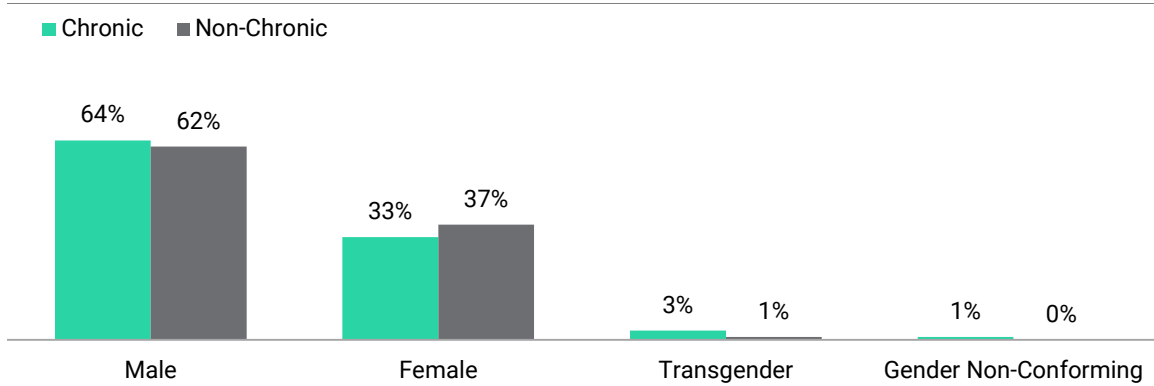
Chronic N=80; Non-Chronic N=330

FIGURE 32.   PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY RACE

Chronic N=79; Non-Chronic N=306

PRIMARY CAUSE OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Alcohol/drug abuse was the most common cause of homelessness cited by chronically homeless survey respondents (33%) much higher than the 17 % of non-chronic homeless individuals. The next most frequently cited response was job loss (21%), lower than the non-chronic population (32%).

FIGURE 33.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES)
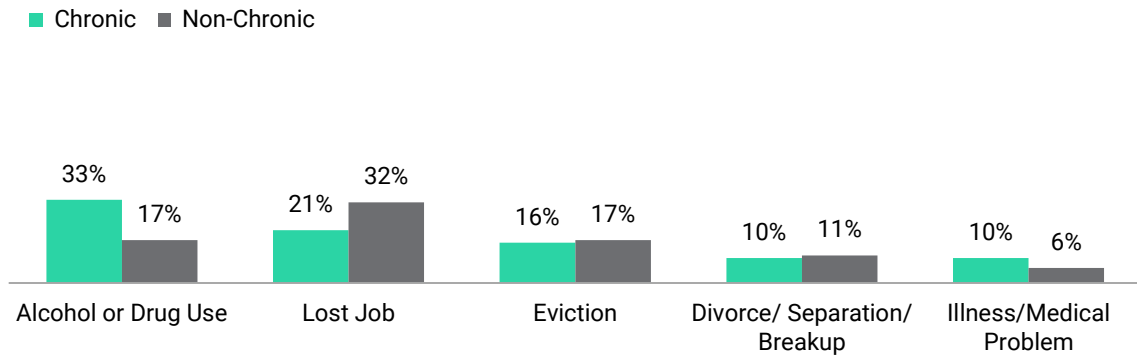
Chronic N=80 respondents offering 105 responses; Non-Chronic N=329 respondents offering 446 responses

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

To meet the definition of chronic homelessness, an individual must be experiencing at least one disabling health condition, so they will naturally have more health issues than the non-chronic population. In general, higher rates of health conditions were reported among those who were chronically homeless compared to their non-chronically homeless counterparts.

Of the chronically homeless survey respondents, more than two thirds (72%) reported drug or alcohol abuse, nearly a half (42%) reported experiencing a psychiatric or emotional condition, and 38% reported experiencing a physical disability or chronic health problem. The data are especially noteworthy because of the large disparities between the health condition of the chronic versus non-chronic which are typically not as great as seen in San Luis Obispo.

FIGURE 34.   HEALTH CONDITIONS
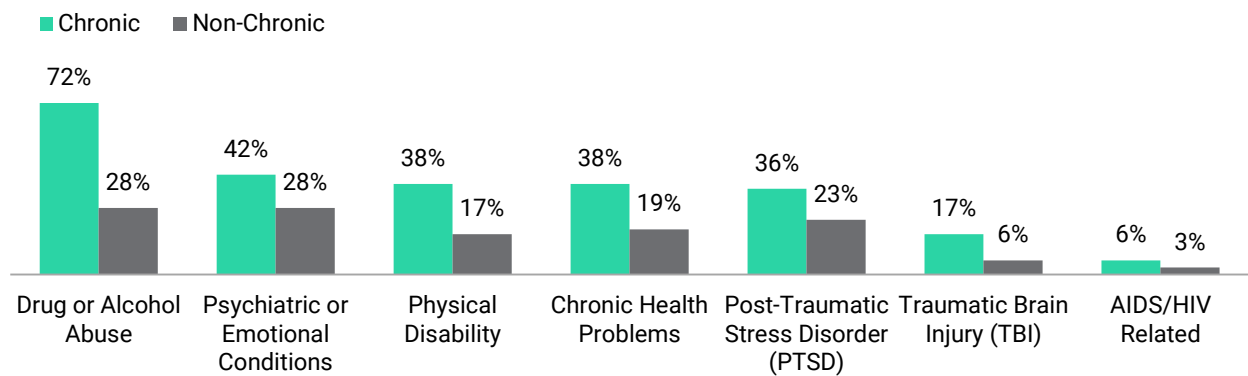
Chronic N=81; Non-Chronic N=337
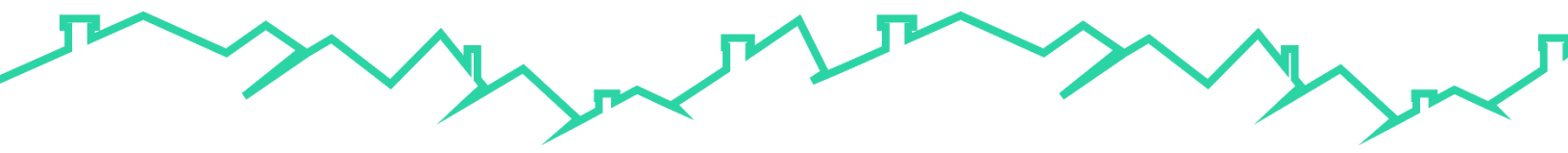
VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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. 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 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 additional housing and support services to veterans currently experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homeless.

Between 2007 and 2018, there has been a 38% decrease in the number of homeless veterans nationwide. According to data collected during the national 2016 Point-in-Time Count, 39,471 veterans experienced homelessness across the country on a single night in January 2016.[6]

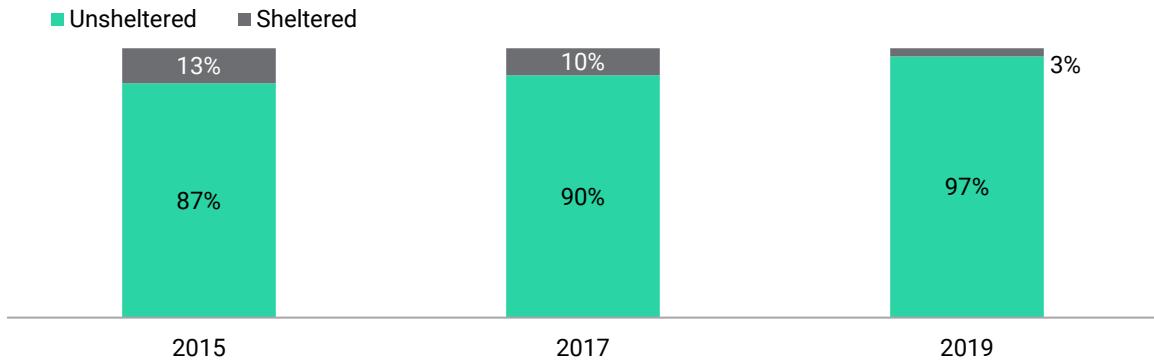### ESTIMATES OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were a total of 144 veterans experiencing homeless in 2019, representing an increase of 78% since 2017 and the highest total recorded since 2013.   This represents just under 10% of all the persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo county.

FIGURE 35.   TOTAL NUMBER OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS
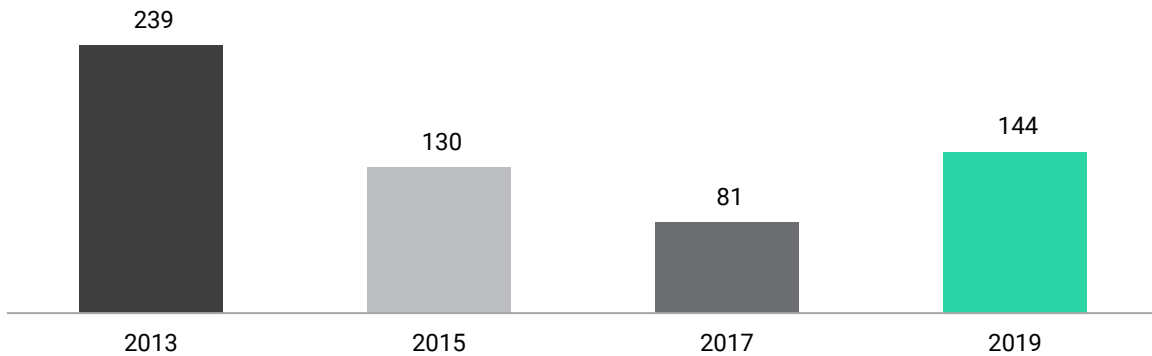
2013	2015	2017	2019
239	130	81	144

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[6] Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf

FIGURE 36.   VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS


■ Unsheltered ■ Sheltered

2015 n= 130; 2017 n= 81; 2019 n=144

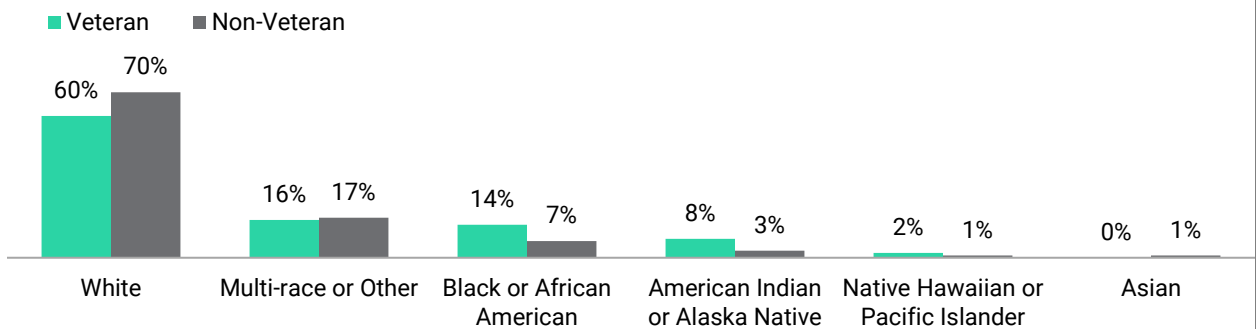## DEMOGRAPHICS OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A large majority (76%) of veterans experiencing homelessness identified as male but there is a large increase in female veterans experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. Twenty-nine percent identified as Hispanic or Latinx. In terms of racial identity, more than half (60%) identified as White, while 16% identified as multi-race or other and another 14% identified as Black or African American.

FIGURE 37.   VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER

■ Veteran ■ Non-Veteran
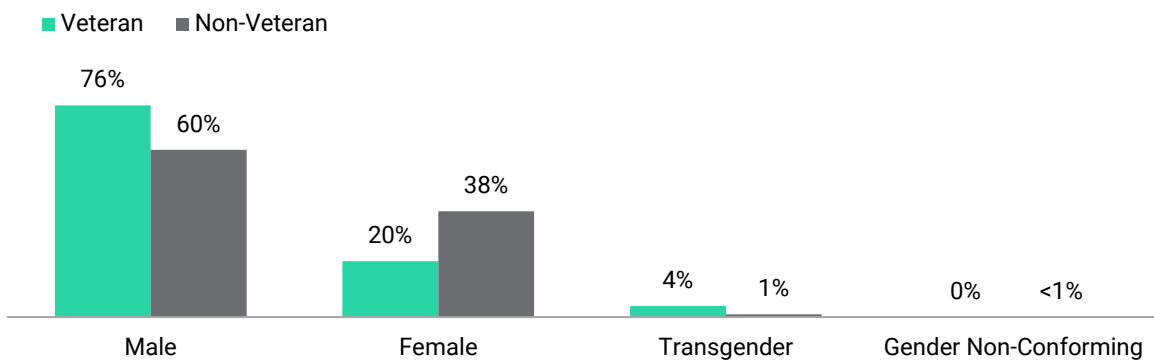
Veteran N=51; Non- Veteran N=361

FIGURE 38.   VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY RACE
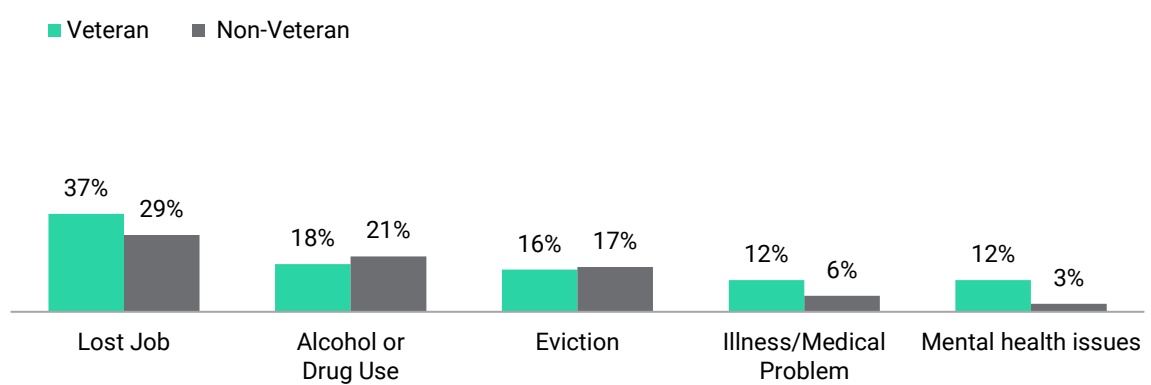

■ Veteran ■ Non-Veteran

Veteran N=50; Non- Veteran N=332

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Job loss, the cause of which was beyond the scope of the survey, was the most frequently cited cause of homelessness among veterans experiencing homelessness, reported by 37% of respondents. Further, 16% cited eviction and 12% cited illness/medical problems or mental health issues.

FIGURE 39.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES)

Veteran N=51 respondents offering 75 responses; Non- Veteran N=356 respondents offering 474 responses

## HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In general, veterans experiencing homelessness reported higher rates of health conditions than their non-veteran counterparts. Over half (56%) of homeless veteran survey respondents reported having one or more disabling conditions. The most frequently reported health condition among veterans was drug or alcohol abuse (44%). Perhaps not surprisingly, the next most commonly reported condition among veterans experiencing homelessness was PTSD (38%). This was followed by a psychiatric or emotional condition (33%), a physical disability (29%), and chronic health problems (23%).

FIGURE 40.   HEALTH CONDITIONS
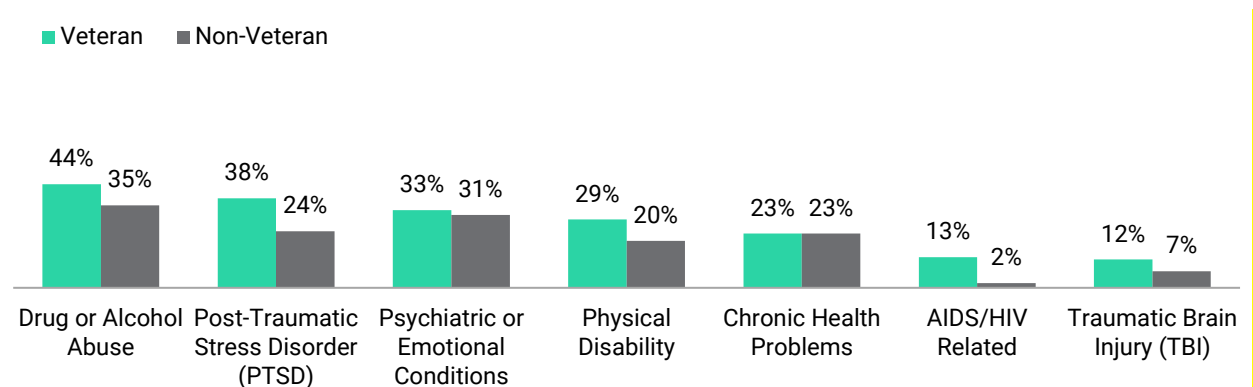
Veteran N=52; Non-Veteran N=363
Note: Caution should be applied to Veteran Health condition percentages due to small response N.
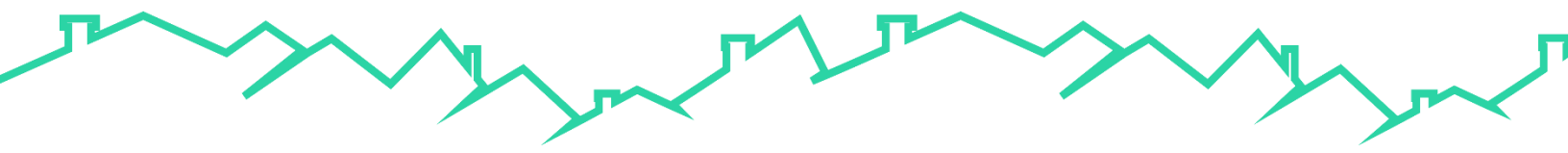
FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared with other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that they are not much different from other families living in poverty.

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 have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable living accommodations.[9]

ESTIMATES OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were 67 families experiencing homelessness with 222 individuals living in them in 2019. This represents an increase of 37% in the number of families experiencing homelessness since 2017. The number of unsheltered families rose in 2019 and while there have been limitations in data collection, this represents a major change and is the highest rate since 2013.

Persons in families represent just under 15% of the total population of persons experiencing homelessness. It should also be noted that this definition of family homelessness excludes persons who are in a "doubled-up" living situation or whose primary shelter is a hotel or motel. This is a common housing situation in San Luis Obispo and is more commonly measured through the County Office of Education's reporting done every fall.

FIGURE 41.   TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS
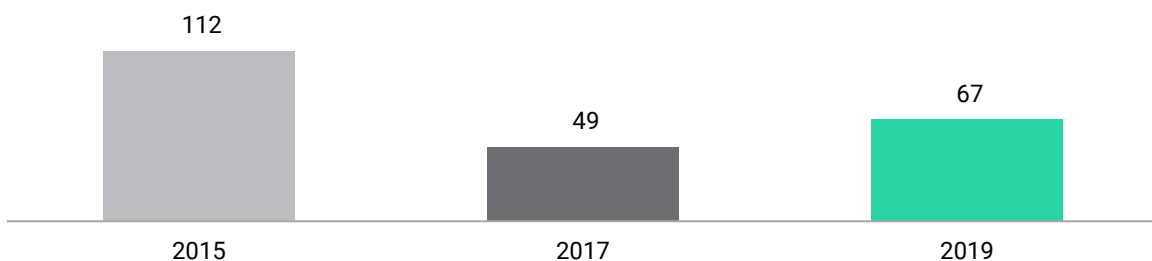

[7] U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). The 2017 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf
[8] U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2015 from http://aspe.hhs.gov/
[9] U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from http://www.usich.gov/

FIGURE 42.   INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS

■Unsheltered   ■Sheltered

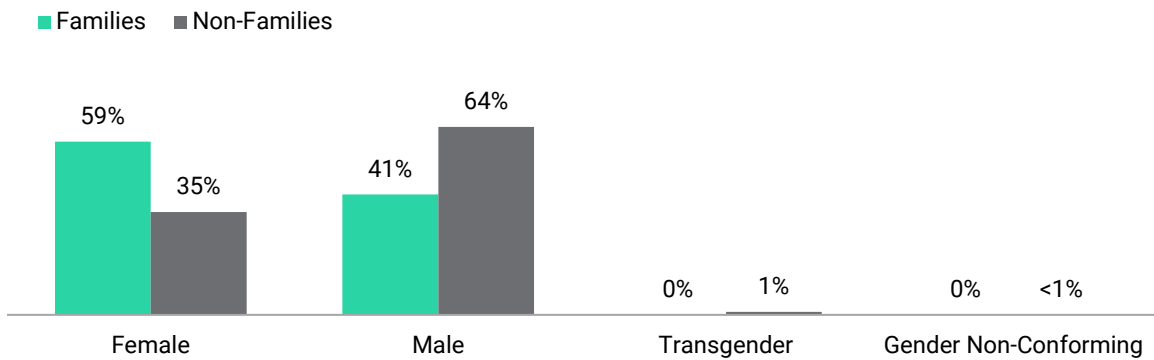|	2013	2015	2017	2019
Sheltered	21%	76%	91%	62%
Unsheltered	79%	24%	9%	38%
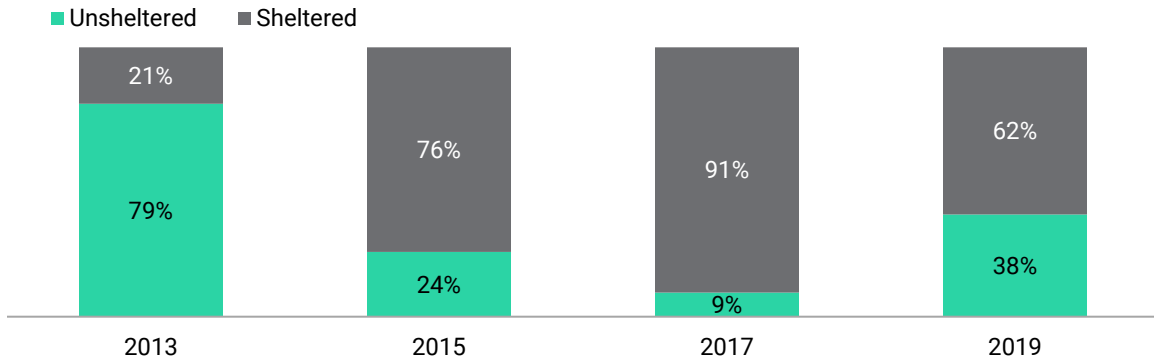
2013 n=; 2015 n= 112; 2017 n= 148; 2019 n=222

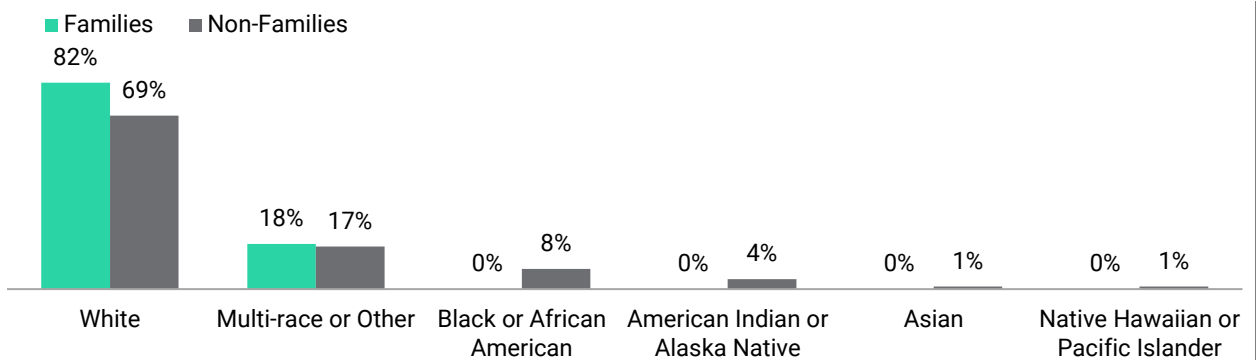## DEMOGRAPHICS OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Female family members accounted for 59% of the subpopulation of families experiencing homelessness, while males accounted for 41%. Further, nearly half (41%) identified as being of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

FIGURE 43.   INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER

■Families   ■Non-Families

	Female	Male	Transgender	Gender Non-Conforming
Families	59%	41%	0%	0%
Non-Families	35%	64%	1%	<1%

Families N=17; Non-Families N=1,306

FIGURE 44.   INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY RACE

■Families   ■Non-Families

|	White	Multi-race or Other	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
Families	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-Families	69%	17%	8%	4%	1%	1%

Families N=17; Non-Families N=368

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Eviction was the most frequently cited cause of homelessness among families experiencing homelessness, reported by 29% of respondents. Further, 24% stated an argument with a family member or friend led them to experiencing homelessness, consistent with the many relationship issues cited as causal factors of their homelessness.

FIGURE 45.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES)
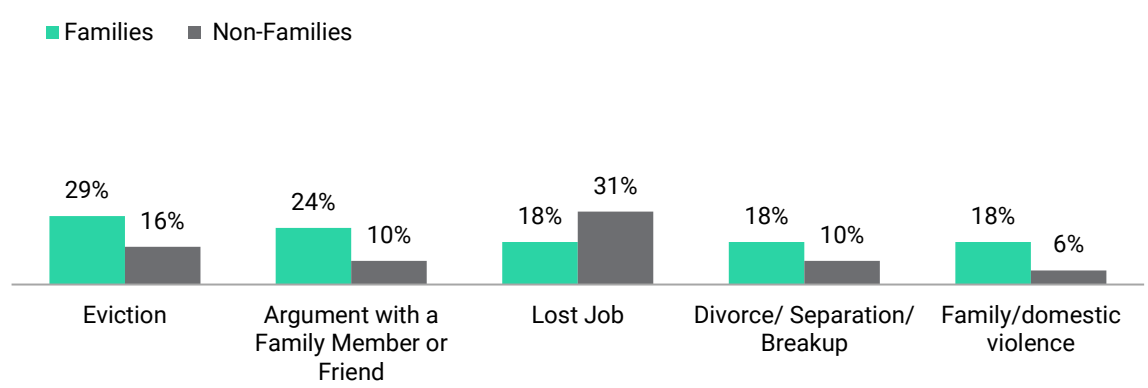
Families N=17 respondents offering 26 responses; Non-Families N=392 respondents offering 525 responses

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In general, families experiencing homelessness reported slightly lower rates of health conditions than their non-family counterparts. Almost half (47%) of family survey respondents reported having one or more disabling conditions. The most commonly reported condition among families experiencing homelessness was a psychiatric or emotional condition (47%) higher than the non-family population at 30%.

FIGURE 46.   HEALTH CONDITIONS
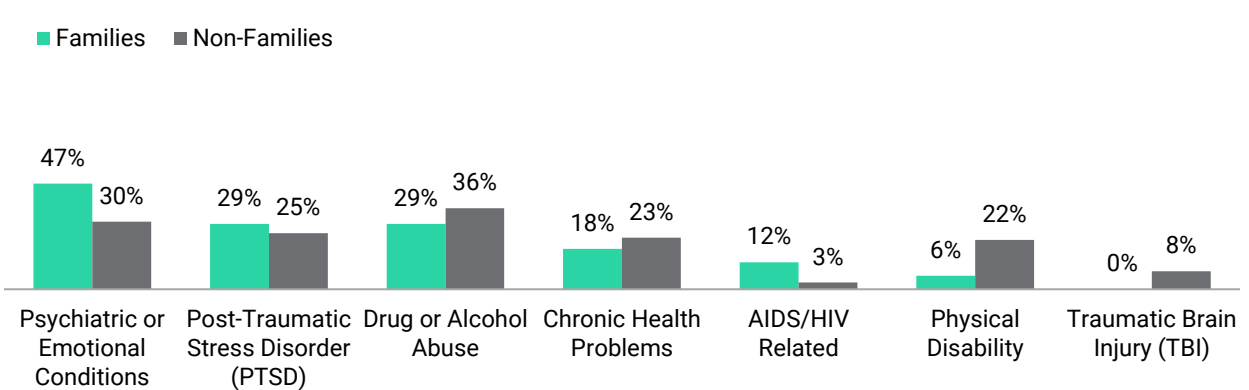
Families N=17; Non-Families N=401

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Due to the challenges of street outreach and access to youth experiencing homelessness, limited data are available on youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. This increase may be due, in part, to the focus on youth and young adults during the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, which served as a nationwide baseline year.

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 youth and young adults. As part of this effort, HUD placed increased focus on gathering data on youth and young adults during the Point-in-Time Count. The results of this effort contribute to HUD's initiative to measure progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020.

Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment. This is partially due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services targeted to young people.[10]

[10] National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from http://www.nationalhomeless.org.

ESTIMATES OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness among youth and young adults is a difficult condition to identify for a number of reasons. Youth and young adults are less likely to be found among the adult population experiencing homelessness, preferring locations and times of day that make traditional efforts at enumeration more difficult. Accordingly, a separate youth count effort was put in place, relying on knowledge gathered from youth currently experiencing homelessness who have better access to known locations and are better at identifying unstably housed youth. Additionally, their participation in the count itself has been even more important in outreach and access than it is in the general adult count.

In 2019, the general shelter and street count, combined with the targeted youth count, identified 174 youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. The overwhelming majority (98%) of these youth and young adults were unsheltered. In 2019, the youth and young adult subpopulation represented 12% of the overall homeless population in San Luis Obispo County. Only 2% of these youth were sheltered as this continues to be a challenge in the County. The gender mix of youth experiencing homeless more closely parallels the general population, compared to the general population experiencing homelessness, where approximately two thirds are male.

FIGURE 47.   YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS
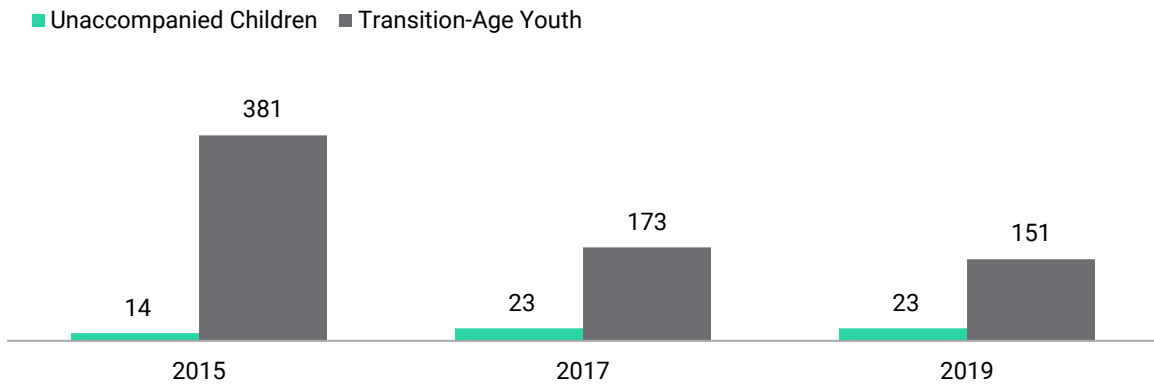
2015 n= 395; 2017 n=196; 2019 n=174

FIGURE 48.   YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS
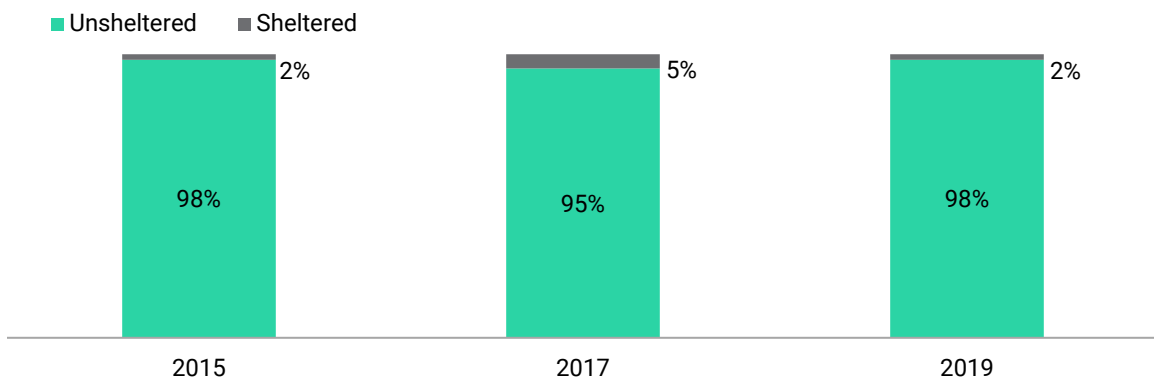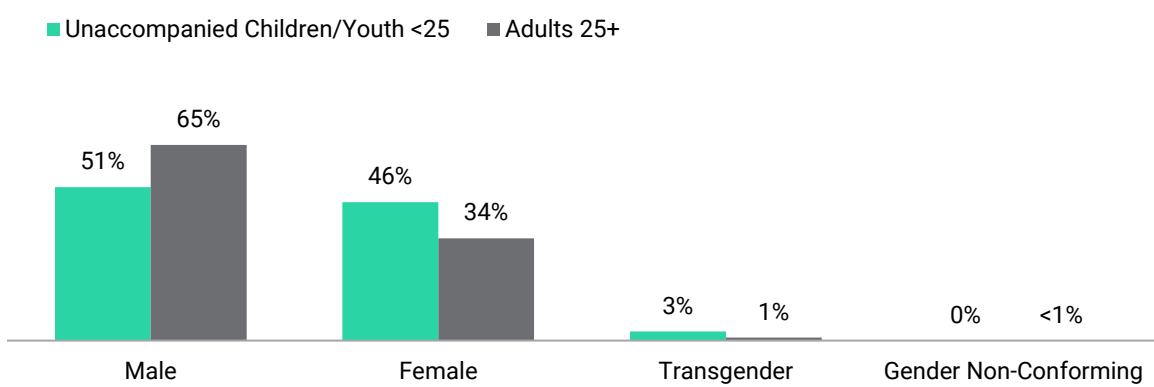

2015 n= 395; 2017 n= 196; 2019 n=174

DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS
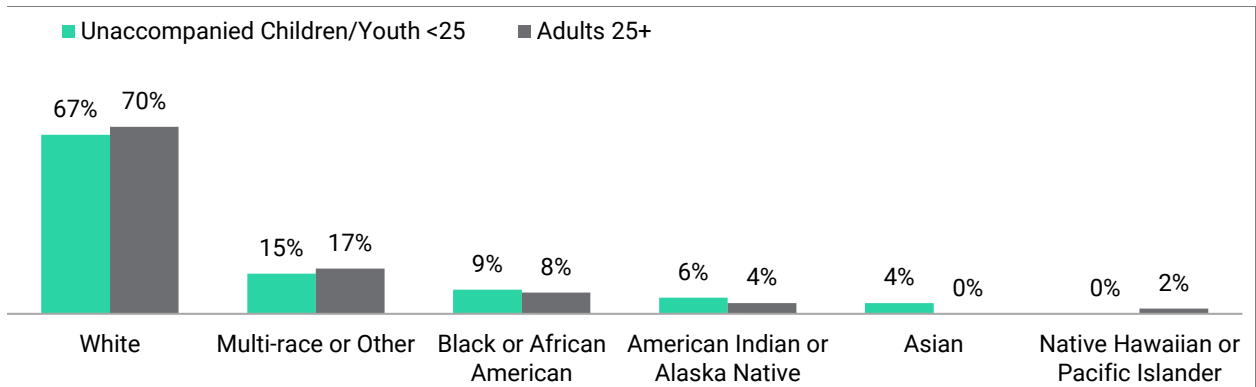
Over half (51%) of youth and young adults identified as male. Thirty-two percent (32%) identified as being of Hispanic/Latinx origin.

FIGURE 49.   YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER

Unaccompanied Children/Youth N=61; Adults N=349

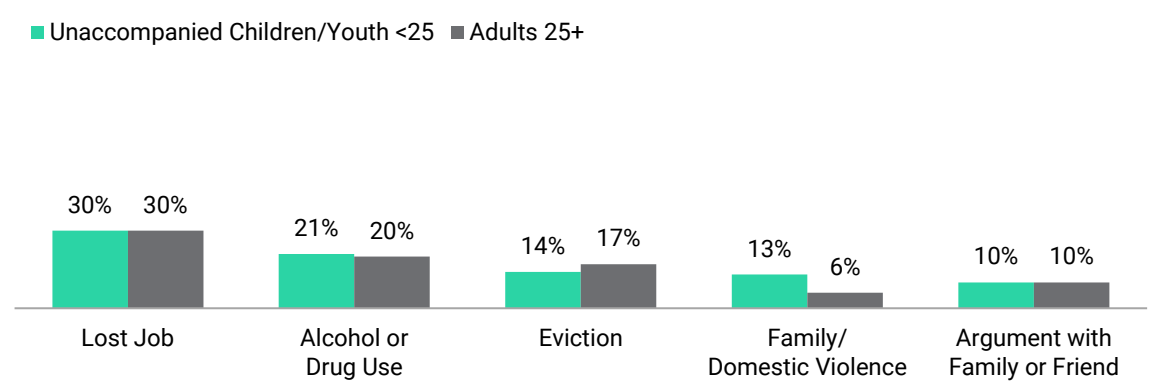FIGURE 50.   YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY RACE

Unaccompanied Children/Youth N=54; Adults N=331

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCNIG HOMELESSNESS

Youth and young adult respondents cited similar causes of homelessness compared to adult respondents. The most commonly reported causes among children and youth were job loss (30%), alcohol/drug use (21%), and eviction (14%).

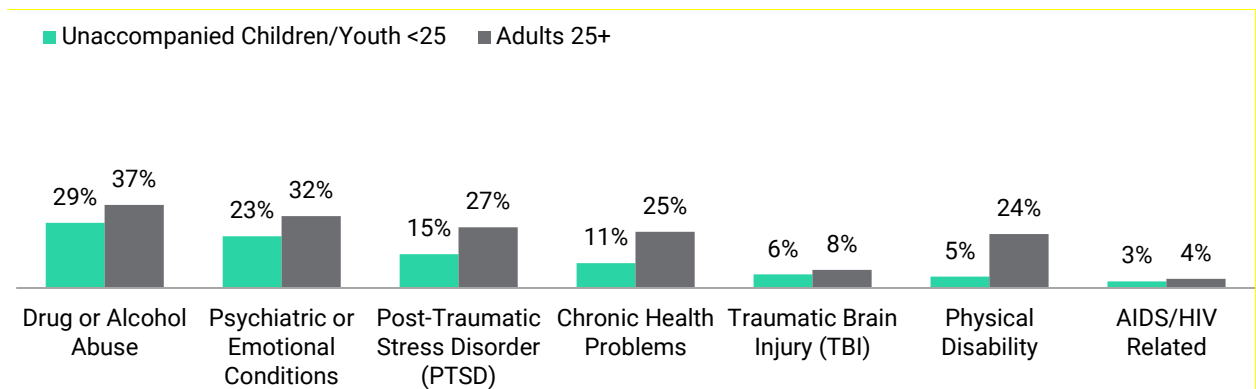FIGURE 51.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES)

■ Unaccompanied Children/Youth <25   ■ Adults 25+

	Lost Job	Alcohol or Drug Use	Eviction	Family/Domestic Violence	Argument with Family or Friend
Unaccompanied Children/Youth <25	30%	21%	14%	13%	10%
Adults 25+	30%	20%	17%	6%	10%

Unaccompanied Children/Youth N=63 respondents offering 79 responses; Adults N=346 respondents offering 472 responses

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A substantial number of youth and young adult respondents reported experiencing health issues at generally lower rates than their adult counterparts as we might expect. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents under age 25 reported drug or alcohol abuse, 23% reported a psychiatric or emotional condition, and 15% reported experiencing PTSD.

FIGURE 52.   HEALTH CONDITIONS

■ Unaccompanied Children/Youth <25   ■ Adults 25+

	Drug or Alcohol Abuse	Psychiatric or Emotional Conditions	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Chronic Health Problems	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	Physical Disability	AIDS/HIV Related
Unaccompanied Children/Youth <25	29%	23%	15%	11%	6%	5%	3%
Adults 25+	37%	32%	27%	25%	8%	24%	4%

Unaccompanied Children/Youth N=65; Adults N=353

Conclusion

HOMELESS COUNT AND SURVEY

The 2019 San Luis Obispo 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 1,483 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. This represents an increase of 32% from the count conducted in 2017 which was likely an undercount as a result of attempts to integrate the administration of the vulnerability index survey at the same time as the Count.

The 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable insights into the San Luis Obispo County homeless population from the data collected in this report, including:

- The Point-in-Time Homeless Count identified a total of 1,483 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County in 2019, an increase of 32% from the count conducted in 2017.

- Nearly four out of five (79%) persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County were unsheltered, living in places not intended for human habitation.

- Over a quarter (27%) of homeless survey respondents indicated they were experiencing homelessness for the first time, and 51% had been homeless for one year or longer.

- The biggest cited obstacles to obtaining permanent housing were economic in nature; the affordability of rent (66%), a lack of a job/income (35%), and a lack of money for moving costs (21%).

- Homeless survey respondents also reported having these health conditions: alcohol or drug use (36%), a psychiatric or emotional condition (31%), and PTSD (26%).

- The estimated counts of the four HUD-identified subpopulations in San Luis Obispo County were: chronically homeless individuals with one or more disabling condition (298 persons), homeless veterans (144), members of homeless families with children (222), and unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth (174).

In summary, the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey provides valid and useful data that help create a more comprehensive profile of those experiencing homelessness. Trend data from 2017 is limited due to the change in the survey instrument and outreach infrastructure, but longer term trends are consistent with neighboring communities. Data presented in this report fulfill federal reporting requirements for the CoC and will continue to inform outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making by local planning bodies over the years to come.

Appendix A: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2019 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey was to produce a point-in-time estimate of people experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County, a region which covers approximately 3,616 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 San Luis Obispo 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 COUNT METHOD

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

- General street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals between the hours of 6:00AM to 10:00AM;

- Youth street count: a targeted enumeration of unsheltered homeless youth under the age of 25 between the hours of 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM;

- Shelter count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals on the night before the street count; and

- Survey: an in-person survey of unsheltered and sheltered individuals conducted by peer surveyors in the weeks following the general street count;

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. Applied Survey Research (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.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The 2019 street count methodology followed an established, HUD-approved methodology used in the previous year's counts, with the addition of dedicated youth outreach in each of those years. Warming Centers were opened and operated during the night of the count. This was done to encourage youth participation in the Count. Warming Center clients were reported as "sheltered" per HUD regulations, though clients primarily live unsheltered when the temperature thresholds are not met.

VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in San Luis Obispo County supported the county's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. In 2019, numerous community volunteers and homeless guides participated in the general street count on January 28, 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 five dispatch centers (San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, Atascadero, Five Cities, and Paso Robles), 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 might 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 precaution possible, including bringing flashlights and maintaining a respectful distance from those they were counting. There were no safety incidents or issues reported during the count reported by field team members.

STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of the county within the morning timeframe, the planning team identified five areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the morning of the count: San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, Atascadero, Five Cities, and Paso Robles. 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.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION COUNT

In the days following the January 28 Point-in-Time Count, representatives from school districts within San Luis Obispo County called households known to have recently experienced homelessness to ascertain where they stayed on the night of January 28.

After the households were screened for duplication, they were added to the Point-in-Time Count results.

YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the 2019 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied children and youth experiencing homelessness under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. Many 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 these 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 were the ideal times recommended by advocates to conduct the youth count.

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 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours rather than in the early morning when the general count was conducted.

Both the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 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.

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 San Luis Obispo 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. Only shelters reported by the San Luis Obispo Continuum of Care Housing Inventory chart can be included in the shelter data presentation reflected in this report.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The homeless occupancy of shelters in San Luis Obispo County was collected for the night of January28, 2019. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from San Luis Obispo 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 San Luis Obispo 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, homeless persons 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. That said the results presented in this report should be considered a minimum number of persons experiencing homeless on a single day.

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 418 unique individuals experiencing homelessness was conducted to yield qualitative data about people experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo 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 Applied Survey Research, San Luis Obispo 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 SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 1,483 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 418 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 4.06% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo 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.

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.

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

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 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 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 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, 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.

Precariously housed – A person who is staying with the household because they have no other regular or adequate place to stay due to a lack of money or other means of support.

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

Single individual – An unaccompanied adult over the age of 18.

Transition-age youth – Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 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).

Transitional housing – Housing in which homeless individuals may live up to 24 months 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

Appendix D: Figure Sources

All Point in Time Count Data 2015-2019: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2015-2019) San Luis Obispo Homeless Count and Survey.*

All Homeless Survey Findings 2015-2019: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2015-2019) San Luis Obispo Homeless Count and Survey.*

 All Subpopulation Data 2015-2019: The figure source for the data is *Applied Survey Research, (2015-2019) San Luis Obispo Homeless Count and Survey.*

San Luis Obispo County

HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

2019