everyone counts

Metro Denver's Point in Time Survey

metro
denver
homeless
initiative | mdhi

2018

POINT IN TIME REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

PetSmart, Sock it to 'Em, HomeAid Colorado, Wal-Mart, Gary Sanford, IBEW Local Union #68, First Plymouth Congregational Church, and The Gourmet Kitchen.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PIT: A snapshot of critical information
that holds us all accountable.

WILL CONNELLY

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In the following pages, you will find detailed descriptions of the methodology and results of Everyone Counts, the 2018 Point in Time (PIT) Count for the Metro Denver Continuum of Care (CoC). These results are the product of months of planning and action around the seven-county region, and the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is grateful for the many partners who participated this year. MDHI also acknowledges the time and participation of people experiencing homelessness who agreed to answer the PIT questions, personal questions asked at odd hours by trained volunteers who are often complete strangers. The patience and resilience of people experiencing homelessness continues to humble me, especially given the mountain of good work we still need to do to make the experience of homelessness as rare and brief as possible. Data from sources like the PIT count should be used to hold ourselves and our leaders accountable to that urgent mission.

The 2018 PIT report is a snapshot of the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in Metro Denver on January 29, 2018. Using a definition of homelessness supplied by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), over three hundred volunteers and dozens of community leaders counted and interviewed people living on the streets, in shelters, and in vehicles. This count followed an approved methodology that is described later in this report. I encourage new or longtime fans of the PIT process (skeptics are welcome too, of course!) to visit the array of resources on HUD's PIT website.[1]

While the definition of homelessness used by PIT planners is narrow and not reflective of all people living in poverty, it does give us critical information on people who do not have any housing resources whatsoever. Instability is a hallmark of homelessness, and data on people experiencing this "literal" definition of homelessness (shelters, streets, camps, vehicles, etc.) is tough to capture and find. One colleague describes the PIT count as a "logistical nightmare." Another colleague calls it lovingly "a cluster." Capturing this data is essential, however, if we want to respond more effectively to people living in crisis. Without it, anecdotes and feel-good stories will continue to outweigh and outshine data and evidence-based approaches. We need both anecdotes and data, but anecdotes continue to win the day. My hope is that data from the PIT count and databases like the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)[2] will restore a balance to the homeless industry.

Yes, ending homelessness is an industry with billions of dollars and thousands of lives at stake. Without high-quality data, we are flying blind and not using the precious resources we have most effectively. I look forward to working with you to tip the balance back to data and data-driven approaches.

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this report. We hope it challenges all of us to discuss data more frequently and to collaborate more effectively to end homelessness in Colorado.

Sincerely,

Will Connelly
Executive Director
Metro Denver Homeless Initiative
www.mdhi.org
www.everyonecounts.mdhi.org

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[1] https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/pit-hic/#generalct-pit-guides-and-tools.
[2] MDHI maintains the HUD-required HMIS for the Metro Denver CoC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Key Findings

The data below were compiled from the 2018 Point in Time (PIT) survey respondents who were identified as being homeless according to the definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

A total of 5,317 persons were identified as homeless in the 2018 PIT Count for Metro Denver. Table 1 breaks down this population by where they were staying on the night of the count and by HUD household type. Households without children are often referred to as "single adults" and households with at least one adult and one child under 18 are often referred to as "families."

Table 1. Number of Persons in Homeless Living Situations by Household Type on January 29, 2018

		ES- emergency shelter	TH- transitional housing	Unsheltered	Safe Haven	Total
HUD Household Type	Household without children	2086	590	1212	22	3910
	Household with at least 1 adult and at least 1 child	486	823	93	0	1402
	Household with only children under 18	2	0	3	0	5
	Total	**2574**	**1413**	**1308**	**22**	**5317**

Figure 1. Number of Persons in Homeless Living Situations
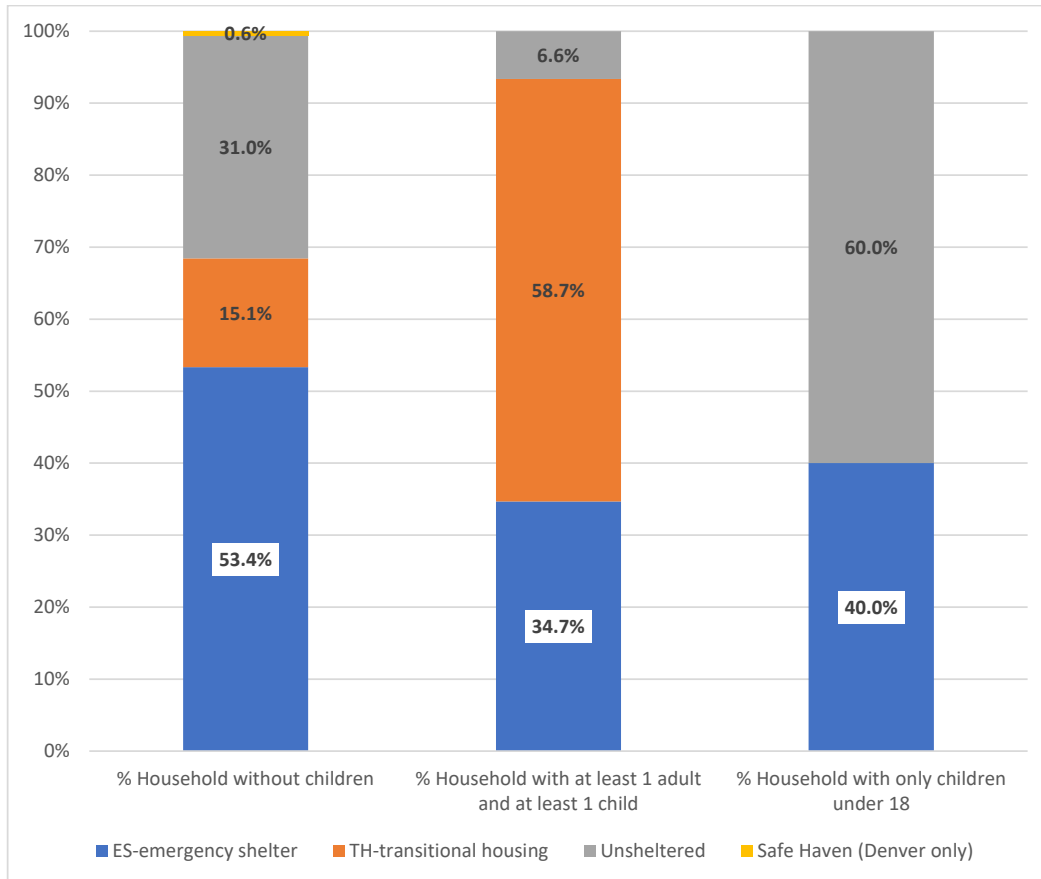
Figure 1 contains a column for each of the three types of households defined by HUD: households that include no children, households that include both children and adults, and households that include only children. Each column breaks down the persons who were found to be homeless and living in that type of household during the 2018 PIT count, showing the percentage staying in each of four major "living situations" (emergency shelters, transitional housing, unsheltered locations, or safe haven facilities) at the time of the count. This information shows that homeless families (with children and adults) in the Metro Denver community are more likely to be staying in a transitional housing situation, whereas homeless individuals are more likely to be staying in emergency shelters or unsheltered locations.

Table 2. Change in Homeless Population, 2015 – 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2015-2018
Sheltered	5177	4681	4192	4009	-22.6%
Unsheltered	827	786	924	1308	58.2%
Total Homeless	6004	5467	5116	5317	-11.4%

Sheltered homelessness (persons in shelters, transitional housing, or safe havens) has trended downward overall across the past four annual PIT counts, while unsheltered homelessness (persons in places not meant for habitation) has trended upward. Outreach to unsheltered locations was significantly expanded for the 2018 PIT count, and that likely contributed to the increase in unsheltered homelessness surveyed this year.

Figure 2. Proportion of Unsheltered and Sheltered Populations, 2015-2018
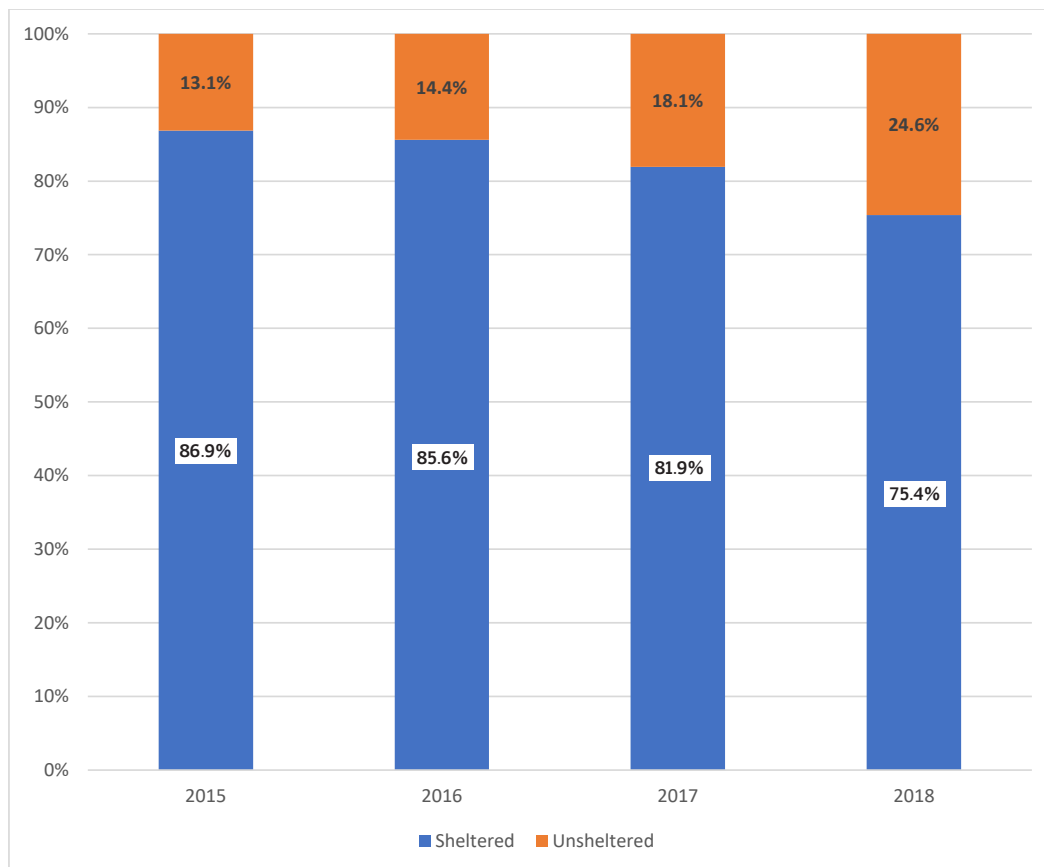
Although unsheltered persons still make up less than a quarter of the homeless population, they have nearly doubled as a percentage of that population over the last four years. The final section of this report, Summary of Metro Denver Data, provides more information about the sheltered and unsheltered subpopulations.

Figure 3. Homeless Population by County (Total 5,317)
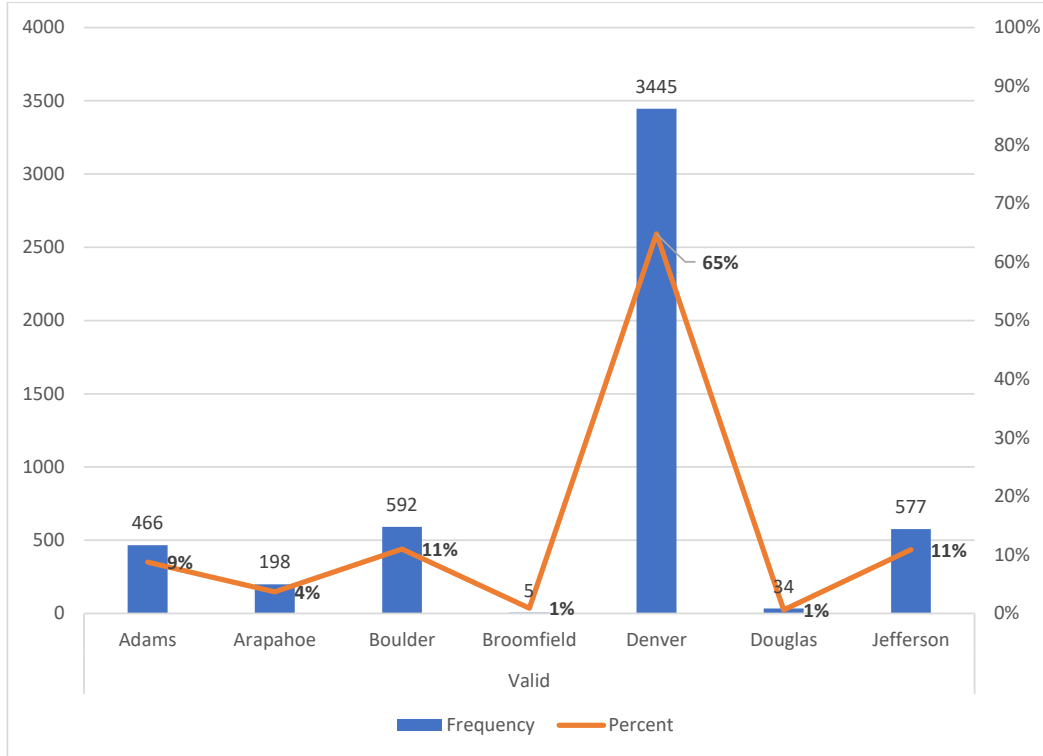
Figure 3 breaks down Metro Denver's 2018 homeless population by county. The line shows the percentage of the Metro Denver homeless population found in each county. About two-thirds of the region's homeless population were counted in the City and County of Denver.

Figure 4. Unsheltered Homeless Population (Total = 1,308)

Unsheltered is defined as living on the street, under a bridge, in an abandoned or public building, in a car, in an outdoor camp, or in any other place that is not meant for human habitation.
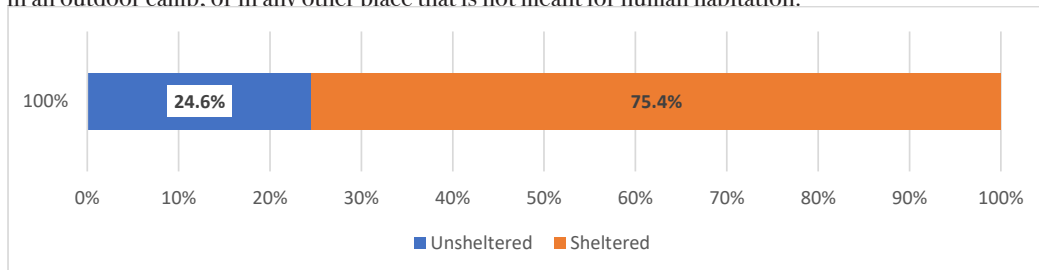
Figure 5. Homeless Family Population by Household Composition (Total = 1,402)

Households with children are defined as those that contain at least one adult over the age of 18 and at least one child under the age of 18.
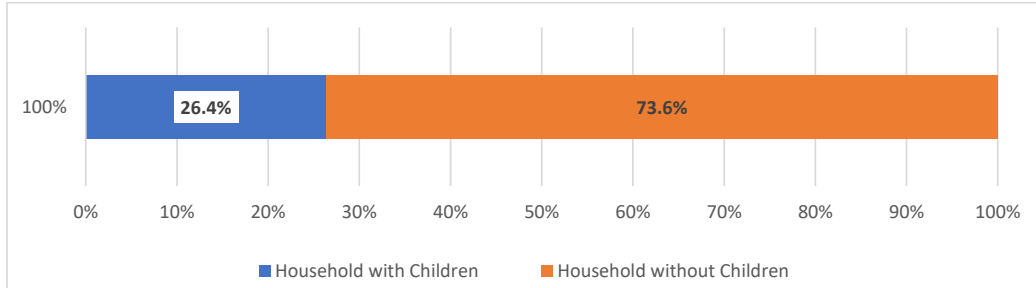
Figure 6. Chronically Homeless Population (Total = 1,596 people)

HUD defines persons experiencing chronic homelessness as those who (a) are homeless, (b) are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, (c) have been homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless across those occasions is at least 12 months, and (d) have a disability.
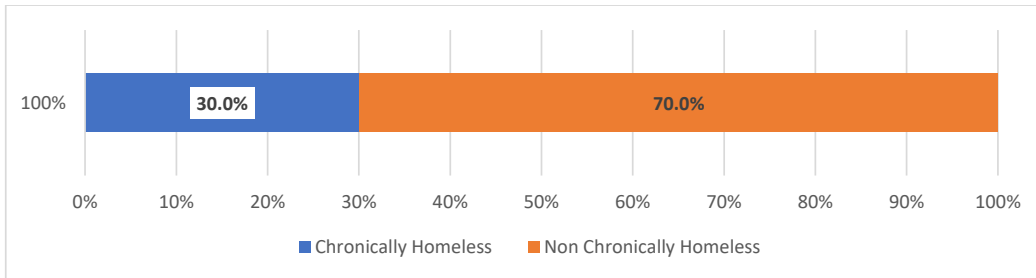
A total of 1,596 people (or 30% of the Metro Denver homeless population) self-reported that they were experiencing chronic homelessness as defined by HUD.

Figure 7. Newly Homeless Population (Total = 1,060)

Newly homeless is defined as a person who has been experiencing homelessness for less than one year and this was their first episode of homelessness.
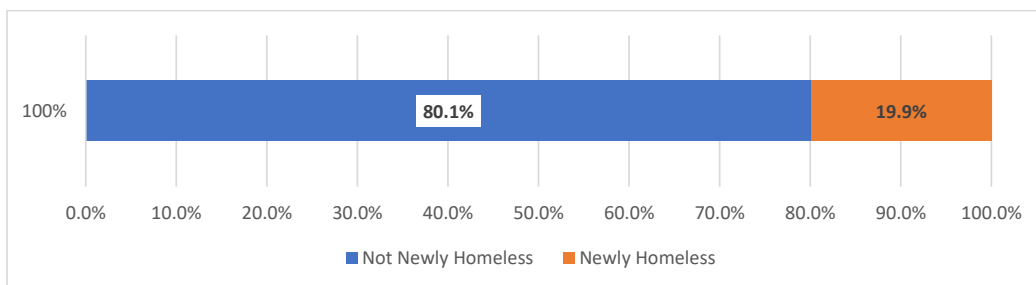
20% of the population reported they were newly homeless.

Figure 8. Unaccompanied/Transition Age Youth (Total = 237)

Unaccompanied or Transition Aged Youth are defined as single youth who are under the age of 25 and not accompanied by a parent or guardian.
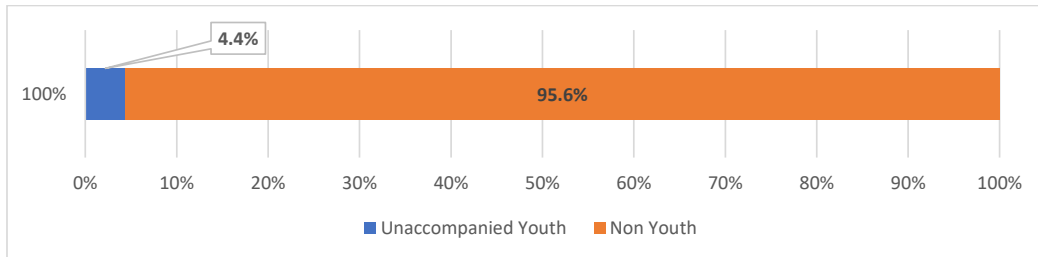
Transition age youth, under the age of 25, made up only 4.4% of the overall population

Figure 9. Currently Fleeing Domestic Violence (Total = 384)

Persons currently fleeing domestic violence are defined as those who are currently experiencing homelessness because they have fled from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
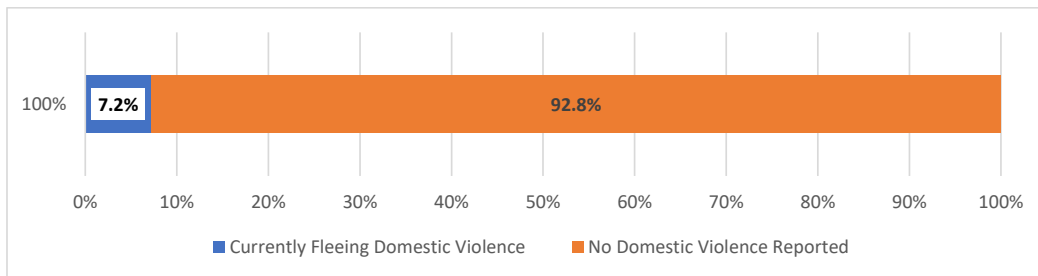
Approximately 7% of the population surveyed that night stated they were currently fleeing domestic violence.

POINT IN TIME - INTRODUCTION

PIT: Determining how many people are living unsheltered.

The Point in Time (PIT) Count is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness in communities nationwide at a single point in time—one night during the last 10 days in January. The annual PIT count for Metro Denver includes persons experiencing homelessness in the following seven counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson.

The 2018 PIT Count for Metro Denver, called _Everyone Counts_,[3] asked people where they spent the night of Monday, January 29, 2018. Persons experiencing homelessness were surveyed using a questionnaire developed by the Metro Denver Continuum of Care (CoC). Point in Time counts help communities plan services and programs to appropriately address local needs by identifying the characteristics of persons experiencing homelessness and utilizing that info to determine possible needs for services and housing, including strengths and gaps in the community's current homeless assistance system.

Communities across the nation follow the latest HUD methodology guidelines[4] for the count and tailor the survey to the needs of their own localities and regions. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines "literal homelessness" for purposes of the PIT count as living in places not meant for habitation (such as sleeping in vehicles or outdoors), in emergency shelters, or in transitional housing programs that assist people who are literally homeless. Persons in temporary living situations or who are at risk of becoming homeless (such as those staying with friends or family or paying to stay in a motel) are not included in this count.

Another often-cited data source addressing homelessness are the numbers compiled by the Colorado Department of Education for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. This is a different definition of homelessness and not reflected in the HUD defined literal homelessness reported through the Point in Time count. This definition is as follows: children or youth who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence. Since it encompasses a much broader definition of homelessness, this number is considerably higher. More information is available on the Colorado Department of Education's website[5].

Everyone Counts was conducted to help the community estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the Metro Denver area. PIT counts provide a "snapshot" of a single night and the resulting data are meant to be representative of what would be found on "any given night," especially during the winter months when PIT counts are conducted. These counts do not show how many people experience homelessness during other time periods such as seasonally or annually. PIT counts produce a standard set of data, comparable and available nationwide, that HUD provides to Congress in its Annual Homeless Assessment Report.[6]

HUD requires that all CoCs nationwide[7], including the Metro Denver CoC, complete annual PIT counts that focus on one night during the last 10 days of January. Implementation of the Metro Denver PIT counts is the responsibility of MDHI because MDHI is the lead agency for the Metro Denver CoC. PIT data are reported to HUD, often cited in the media, and used by CoCs for grant writing and community planning. Service providers, faith-based organizations, local governments, and others also utilize this information.

PIT counts are currently the CoC's best method for determining how many people are living unsheltered in Metro Denver. People experiencing

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[3] https://everyonecounts.mdhi.org/.

[4] https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4036/point-in-time-count-methodology-guide/.

[5] http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/homeless_index

[6] https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/ahar/#reports.

[7] https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/

HUD PIT Homeless Definitions[10]: CoCs must count all individuals or families who meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(ii) of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 578.3. This includes individuals and families:

Sheltered Count
"living in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals)"

Unsheltered Count
"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"

homelessness who are unsheltered (i.e., not using emergency shelters or transitional housing) may not seek assistance or may be averse to available shelter options for a variety of reasons. PIT counts also collect information from persons staying in emergency shelter that may need to be individually surveyed if the shelter does not utilize the CoC's Homeless Management Information System. (HMIS)[8]. Participating in PIT counts helps local communities learn about the presence of homelessness in their midst and encourages collaboration on efforts to end homelessness.

MDHI oversees PIT coordination and planning across the seven-county Denver metropolitan area, along with support from county, regional, and population specific coordinators as part of MDHI's PIT Committee. Representatives from homeless service agencies, other stakeholders, and interested community members volunteer their time to work with MDHI staff in implementing the PIT count at each count site and outreach area. During the night of the

count, and the ensuing 24 hours, trained volunteers and staff interview individuals and families experiencing homelessness using a standardized survey form available on paper and mobile devices.

Survey results are supplemented with available transitional housing data from HMIS and other agency databases. Families and individuals are surveyed at a variety of locations, including overnight and day shelters, transitional housing facilities, and service agencies, as well as at "magnet" events held for the PIT count and at unsheltered locations frequented by outreach workers. The data from these sources is then compiled, de-duplicated, and analyzed for HUD and public reporting. All PIT data are made available to the public on the HUD exchange.[9] In 2018, MDHI instituted several changes to the Metro Denver PIT count that were focused on improving the accuracy and coverage of the count; each is described in the following section.

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[8] MDHI maintains the HUD-required HMIS for the Metro Denver CoC.
[9] https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/?filter_Year=&filter_Scope=CoC&filter_State=CO&filter_CoC=CO-503&program=CoC&group=PopSub.
[10] Notice CPD-17-08_2018 HIC and PIT Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs, HIC/PIT Data Collection Notice September 2017

POINT IN TIME - METHODOLOGY

MDHI volunteers throughout the Metro Denver area collected Point-in-Time (PIT) data during the last week in January. Surveys were completed over a 24-hour period, from sundown Monday January, 29th to sundown Tuesday, January 30th.

KEY CHANGES IN 2018

HUD required PIT changes[11]

- • Consistent with the updated 2017 HMIS Data Dictionary[12], HUD changed the "Don't identify as male, female, or transgender" gender response option to "Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)."

- • HUD required that data reported on survivors of domestic violence should be limited to reporting on those who are currently experiencing homelessness because they are fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as opposed to reporting on survivors who have ever experienced these circumstances.

- • CoCs are now required to report the number of children of parenting youth families where the parent is under 18 separately from the children of parenting youth families where the parent is aged 18 to 24.

Shortened PIT Survey

Several changes were made to the 2017 PIT survey to streamline data collection. The streamlined survey prioritized the collection of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) required questions and focused data collection on individuals meeting the HUD definition of homelessness. By removing and updating questions, the final 2018 PIT paper survey was reduced to fit on a single page and was nine questions long.

Blitz Count

MDHI employed a "blitz approach" in which individuals were surveyed over a shorter time frame than in 2017. For the 2018 PIT count the data collection took place from sundown Monday, January 29 to sundown Tuesday, January 30. Since people are less likely to travel extensively across the region over 24 hours versus several days, this blitz count minimized duplicate records by conducting the count within a restricted time frame and allowed for less personal identifying information to be collected for de-duplication of the surveys.

Mobile Data Collection

The PIT survey has historically been completed on paper surveys. There are several limitations of paper surveys – individual's handwriting can be hard to read, questions can be left blank, and multiple responses can be mistakenly selected. To address these limitations, the survey was programmed into a web-based application which allowed volunteers to use their own cell phone or tablet to complete the survey with individuals experiencing homelessness. This method was piloted by the City of Aurora for the 2017 PIT count and offered to the full Metro Denver region for the 2018 count, although its use was not required. Agencies were encouraged to utilize the mobile survey and were also able to submit paper surveys.

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[11] Notice CPD-17-08_2018 HIC and PIT Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs, HIC/PIT Data Collection Notice September 2017

[12] https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3824/hmis-data-dictionary/

SOURCES OF DATA

PIT Survey Instrument

The paper survey instrument was developed by the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), in consultation with their research partner, OMNI Institute. The survey was revised based on input from MDHI's PIT Committee, PIT data from previous years, and HUD requirements.

A mobile version of the survey instrument was developed by MDHI, in consultation with the City of Aurora's geographic information system (GIS) team. The PIT survey was programmed into a web-based application (Survey123 for ArcGIS) that could be completed on any cell phone or tablet. There were several differences between the paper survey instrument and the mobile version. The mobile survey provided additional options for sleeping location, provided prompts to assist surveyors when asking about sensitive topics like substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence, veteran status, and did not differentiate between observations and refusals.

Shelter Data Extract

A data extract from one of the largest emergency shelters in Denver was utilized to complement the survey instrument and mobile survey. The shelter provided a single data extract for individuals in certain programs that were staying in the shelter on the night of the PIT. The data extract provided the same data elements as the PIT survey, which meant that individuals staying in that shelter did not need to complete a separate survey on the night of the count.

HMIS

In late 2017, HMIS went through a migration that caused some data elements to be missing from client records. MDHI asked transitional housing providers that use HMIS to also administer a paper survey as a way to capture any missing data required for the PIT count. Data pulled from HMIS was compared to completed paper surveys for quality assurance.

DATA ENTRY AND CLEANING

MDHI subcontracted with a data entry consultant to enter all PIT survey data. The research team performed numerous procedures to ensure that data could be combined across the three data sources and completed significant cleaning and checking procedures to identify data entry, data extract, and logic errors. For example, researchers examined datasets for missing data patterns, out of range/incorrect values, and conducted logic checks on all variables included.

Duplicates

A unique PIN number was created for each household using information provided for name and date of birth. Duplicate cases were identified using the unique PIN number in the merged data file. Several iterations of duplicate identification were then performed based on varying combinations of name and date of birth to further identify duplicate cases that did not end up with the same PIN number due to different spelling of name or mis-typed information on any of the data fields used to create the PIN. Duplicates were also flagged based on respondents indicating that they had already completed a survey during this PIT administration.

Variable Creation

Several variables were created during the cleaning process according to the HUD-provided definitions. These included:

- **Chronically Homeless Person** - A person who:

    A)   Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and

    B)   Has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least 12 months; and

    C) Has a disability.

- **Households without children:** Households with adults only. This includes households composed of unaccompanied adults (including unaccompanied youth age 18-24) and multiple adults (including households with multiple youth ages 18 to 24).

- **Households with at least one adult and one child:** Households with (at least) one adult (including youth ages 18 to 24) and one child.

- **Households with only children:** Households composed exclusively of persons under age 18, including one-child households, multi-child households or other household configurations composed only of children.

- **Parenting Youth** – A youth who identifies as the parent or legal guardian of one or more children who are present with or sleeping in the same place as that youth parent, where there is no person over age 24 in the household.

- **Unaccompanied Youth** – Unaccompanied youth are persons under age 25 who are not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as his/her child(ren). This household type is often referred to a Transition Age Youth, or TAY.

Identifying County

This report includes analysis of the results for the entire seven-county Metro Denver region. Results for each county are provided in separate county reports. The following procedures assigned a county if respondents did not indicate a county on the survey.

To identify where the respondent spent Monday night:

- • If a respondent indicated the city that they spent Monday night, the corresponding county was assigned. For example, if the respondent said they spent the night in the city of Boulder, they were assigned Boulder County.

- • If the respondent did not indicate a city or county, they were assigned the county that the survey was conducted in (the county in which the agency administering the survey was located).

- • If either of the above scenarios resulted in a city that lies in more than one county, the county was applied proportionally based on respondents where the county was known. For example, the city of Aurora lies in three counties: Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas counties.

- • Location services provided by the mobile survey were analyzed for accuracy and helped attribute city and county information for each survey.

SAMPLING

Sampling involves obtaining survey information from a subset of the homeless population within a given geographic or service area. This subset is then used to extrapolate (estimate information) to the larger homeless population within that same geographic or service area. Sampling can be used to estimate the total number of homeless individuals in a given area based on the number of individuals who participate in the sample, or it can be used to estimate information about the total sample when information is available from a subset of individuals. Sampling may provide a more accurate count of the homeless population in situations where it is difficult to survey the entire population. For the 2018 PIT, sampling was used to extrapolate information about the characteristics of homeless individuals and was not used to estimate the number of additional people who may have been homeless on the night of the PIT but were not counted.

We used a random sampling approach at one of the largest emergency shelters in Denver. At this shelter, 50% of the population was asked to complete the PIT survey. Data from this subset of the population was used to extrapolate information to the total population at that shelter on the night of the PIT count. All variables were created before extrapolation. Extrapolation was completed by taking a random set of cases from the sample. For example, if there was a surveyed sample of 75 people and the total known population was 100, a random set of 25 cases were selected and used to extrapolate. Frequencies of key demographic and descriptive variables (e.g. gender, chronic homelessness, veteran status, etc.) were taken before and after extrapolation to ensure that the extrapolated population was similar to the original sample.

INTERPRETING 2018 DATA

Each year the methodology of the PIT count is adjusted to improve data quality, maximize the number of individuals encountered and surveyed, and meet updated HUD guidelines. Due to such modifications, caution should be used when comparing PIT data across years. Differences may reflect methodological differences instead of actual changes in homeless populations.

In addition to changes in methodology, changes in local conditions may also influence the number of individuals counted each year. Unseasonably warm or cold weather may change the number of individuals who seek shelter on a PIT count night; changes in the number of volunteers year to year influences data collection capacity; and changes in county or agency level participation may also impact the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness that are included in the PIT count. In 2017 and 2018, on the night of the PIT count, warmer than usual temperatures were recorded in the Metro area.

The data from the PIT count is reported to HUD along with the data from the Housing Inventory Count (HIC)[13]. HUD requires CoCs to balance the sheltered numbers of those participating in the HIC with those that participated in the PIT. The sheltered numbers of the PIT count must match the number of filled beds utilized as reported by projects that offer shelter services. Not all sheltered projects participate in the PIT count which creates an imbalance between the HIC and PIT. This creates a deficit in the number of filled beds on the HIC. To account for the difference, the results from the PIT submitted to HUD reflect extrapolations that are done prior to submission.

In previous years, published PIT reports utilized the respondent data (surveys received) from the community. In 2018, the PIT and HIC numbers, aligned per HUD requirements by extrapolation and reported in the HUD exchange, are the same as those included in this report.

The data for number of people staying in transitional housing declined from 2017 to 2018. Some of this decline can be attributed to continuing efforts by the Lead Agency to clean the data in HMIS. In addition to deduplication, as well as the removal of persons who were not exited in the system after two years (the time limit for transitional housing). Households who were not exited from the HMIS system after two years in a single program (the time limit for transitional housing) were removed from the HMIS data count, as these were determined to be data quality errors. There were also declines in some of the larger TH providers, but it is not clear if this is due to not using HMIS or if the program component changed. One of the continuing challenges with the PIT is that it is a self-report which can skew data depending on how respondent answers a question.

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[13] Notice CPD-17-08_2018 HIC and PIT Data Collection for CoC and ESG Programs, HIC/PIT Data Collection Notice September 2017

POINT IN TIME - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION

MDHI staff and PIT committee members worked diligently to expand the coverage and improve the accuracy of the 2018 Metro Denver PIT count. Significant outreach was conducted to encourage the participation of all homeless service agencies and other organizations and institutions that may encounter persons experiencing homelessness during the PIT count. Increased efforts to reach those living in unsheltered situations though improved outreach coordination and the advent of magnet events may have contributed to the increased numbers of those surveyed in unsheltered living situations.

The following sections describe these efforts in further detail.

COMMUNITY LAUNCH

MDHI launched community engagement efforts for the 2018 PIT count at the Everyone Counts – Point in Time Launch and Community Planning Session on October 6, 2017. This was the first time that a PIT launch event had been held. The feedback that MDHI received about this event was very positive and another launch event is being planned this fall for the January 2019 count. The launch provided an opportunity to bring in new community partners, discuss planning and regional coordination, review the previous year's survey results and agency participation, and plan improvements and changes for the count. It also provided a forum for direct community feedback on the PIT process. It was open to all who were interested, and efforts were made to include people from a variety of agencies and backgrounds, such as service providers, outreach workers, government staff, law enforcement personnel, elected officials, and persons who have experienced homelessness.

EVERYONE COUNTS

For the 2018 count, the CoC developed a new PIT branding scheme, Everyone Counts, that incorporated a website,[14] logo, and positive name recognition. Having this branding helped not only in promoting the event, but also in identifying PIT materials, facilitating media engagement, linking supporting events held throughout the metro area,

and introducing PIT survey volunteers. The logos were available on the website for agencies to use in marketing count sites and events.

AGENCY & SITE COORDINATION

There was a substantial increase in PIT participation among community agencies between 2017 and 2018, in large part due to increased staff capacity at MDHI and strengthened support from the CoC's and community PIT committees. In 2018, 33 new agencies participated in the PIT count for a total of 108 participating agencies across the seven-county Metro Denver region. Counting took place at 159 separate sites in 2018, significantly more than the 125 sites used in 2017.

UNSHELTERED OUTREACH COORDINATION

MDHI improved the regional coordination and mapping of unsheltered outreach efforts for the 2018 PIT count. The unsheltered homeless population is challenging to identify and survey due to the large geographic area covered by the Metro Denver PIT count and the propensity of those who live outdoors to try to stay hidden for fear of being identified by authorities or targeted for violence or theft. Achieving a more accurate count of unsheltered homelessness was a priority for this year's count. To maximize the efficiency of survey efforts, outreach workers and others familiar with areas frequented by

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[14] https://everyonecounts.mdhi.org/

unsheltered homeless persons met several times to map out areas to be targeted using ESRI, a GIS tool. Thanks to its collaboration with the Denver Street Outreach Collaborative (DSOC), an interagency outreach team established by the City and County of Denver, the CoC was able to identify hotspots and target areas and divide them into zones. An experienced outreach worker was assigned to each zone to lead the PIT survey work, which was conducted with the help of staff from homeless service agencies and community volunteers. Training and safety were priorities for all surveyors due to the variable nature of the unsheltered environment. Some challenges arose, including homeless encampments having been closed by law enforcement, parks and recreation staff, or the Regional Transportation District (RTD) employees prior to the day of the count. In some counties, there was also an identified need for more outreach professionals to effectively cover large geographic region.

INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

MDHI actively sought to include people experiencing homelessness among those who administered surveys during the 2018 count. In the City and County of Denver, individuals participating in the Denver Day Works[15] program supported both the nighttime unsheltered outreach efforts and the counting

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[15] http://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-human-services/community-outreach/denver-day-works.html

"The events at the Arvada and Belmar Libraries exceeded our highest expectations. Not only did we get a lot of surveys completed, we genuinely relished the opportunity to spend time with and connect with our patrons experiencing homelessness in a way that we rarely have the chance to do."

Simone Groene-Nieto,
Jefferson County Public Libraries
Speaking about their Magnet Events

I volunteer because...

"It is absolutely critical that we improve our understanding of the scope and overall need in our community so that we can implement solutions."

"I don't have direct contact with the people we serve. It was a reminder of the purpose of my work."

conducted the following morning at area shelters and a transitional housing program. In Arapahoe and Jefferson counties, individuals with lived experience helped identify unsheltered locations for the survey and were given a stipend for their time and expertise. Boulder County also engaged individuals currently and recently experiencing homelessness in their unsheltered outreach count teams. MDHI plans to continue efforts to engage people experiencing homelessness in future counts.

MAGNET EVENTS

A significant change made to the PIT count in 2018 was the introduction of "magnet events." Each metro county was invited to participate in hosting these events, which were designed to encourage those living in unsheltered locations to come to the event to obtain a variety of free goods and services and be surveyed. A total of 15 events were held across the region. Incentives offered to encourage attendance included hot meals, showers, cold weather and outdoor gear, and more. These events helped the PIT count reach persons staying in places not meant for habitation, particularly in areas that lack overnight or drop-in day shelter services where identification and surveying is more difficult.

Feedback indicated that magnet events were most successful when specifically targeted to those expe-

riencing unsheltered homelessness, and where outreach was done in the week leading up to the event. Promotional outreach materials were developed by MDHI and partnering community agencies. In areas with no official outreach services, the events were promoted by homeless service and law enforcement personnel, as well as by local businesses that allowed promotional materials to be posted on their premises.

VOLUNTEERS

MDHI partnered with Mile High United Way to recruit volunteers for the 2018 PIT count. Together, they recruited more than 250 volunteers to administer surveys at shelters, other homeless service agencies, unsheltered outreach sites, and magnet events. Many participating service providers also recruited volunteers of their own, bringing the total number of volunteers to over 300. Feedback received from a follow up survey targeting the volunteers indicated that 70 percent of them participated in the PIT count for the first time in 2018, and 96 percent of them would volunteer again next year.

TRAINING

All volunteers were required to complete PIT training during the weeks leading up to the 2018 count.

New materials and techniques were developed for this training, and MDHI plans to integrate the feedback received from the 2018 volunteers to further strengthen the training offered in future PIT counts. In-person training sessions were provided for volunteers and for homeless services staff who were new to the PIT count, and an online training program was offered for experienced agency staff and for volunteers who were unable to attend in person. Additional information guides were created for survey site point-of-contacts, unsheltered outreach surveyors, and volunteers. MDHI held 15 in-person training sessions at locations across the metro area. These sessions covered the history and purpose of PIT counts, key definitions used for the counts, the survey tool (paper and mobile), tips for respectful engagement with people experiencing homelessness, and role playing related to giving and taking the survey. More than 90 percent of the volunteers who provided feedback on their PIT experience indicated that the training was effective in preparing them for the work they were asked to do.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is key to determining the usefulness of PIT efforts. MDHI staff and the members of the CoC's PIT committee participated in the review and evaluation of the 2017 PIT process, which was instrumental in strengthening this year's count. Adams and Jefferson counties, and the City of Aurora also formed local PIT committees to help prepare, carry out, and evaluate their efforts. Following the 2018 count, feedback surveys were sent to all volunteers, participating service providers, and survey-site points of contact. Debriefs were held with specific communities, outreach teams, the CoC's PIT committee, and the MDHI staff. The resulting feedback will help inform planning and guide improvements for the 2019 Point in Time Count in Metro Denver.

Joe Amon, Denver Post via Getty Images

POINT IN TIME - SUMMARY OF 2018 METRO DENVER DATA

The following data details the data points collected in the 2018 Point in Time survey, Everyone Counts. Information is provided in both tables and graphs, with example interpretations provided. Additional county-level data reports will be published in conjunction with this regional report.

Table 3. Number of People in Homeless Living Situations by Household Type on January 29, 2018

		ES- emergency shelter	TH- transitional housing	Unsheltered	Safe Haven (Denver only)	Total
HUD Household Type	Household without children	2086	590	1212	22	3910
	Household with at least 1 adult and at least 1 child	486	823	93	0	1402
	Household with only children under 18	2	0	3	0	5
	Total	2574	1413	1308	22	5317

Figure 10. Living Situation by Household Type
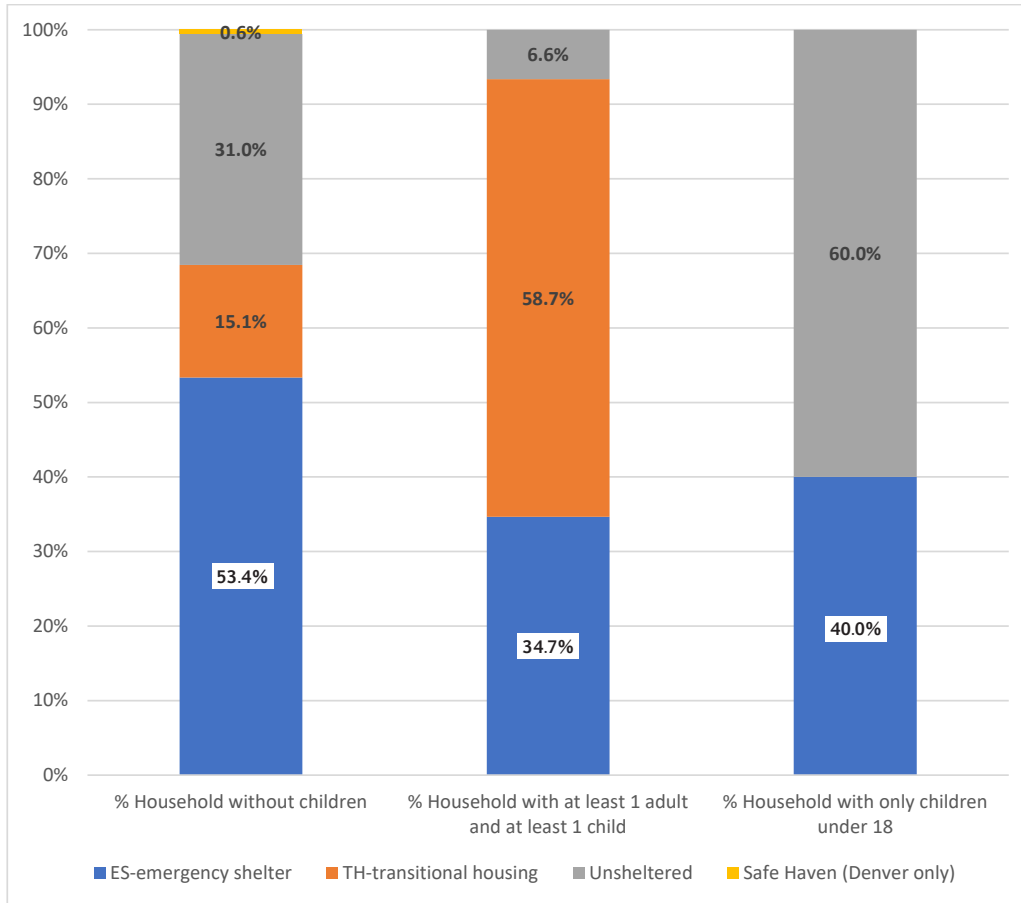
Figure 10 is a visual representation of the information presented in table 3 above. It quickly shows that a majority of individuals spent the night in emergency shelter, and a majority of families were in transitional housing at that time. Please note that the HUD household type - households with only children under 18 - is not the same as all transition age youth (under 25 years old), noted elsewhere in this report.

Table 4 shows the distribution of person in emergency shelters by household type. This table and the three that follow show the total number of homeless persons in each household type.

Table 4. Number of People in Emergency Shelters

	Household without Children		Household with at Least 1 Adult and 1 Child		Households with Only Children under 18	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Persons Staying in Emergency Shelters	2086	81.0%	486	18.9%	2	>0.1%
Total of 2,574 Persons or 48.4% of the Homeless Population						

For example, households with at least one adult and one child totaled 486 (or 18.9%) of those in emergency shelter that night.

Table 5. Number of People in Transitional Housing

	Household without Children		Household with at Least 1 Adult and 1 Child		Households with Only Children under 18	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Persons Staying in Transitional Housing **Total of 1,413 Persons or 26.6% of the Homeless Population**	590	41.8%	823	58.2%	0	0.0%

Of the 1,413 person living in transitional housing, 58.2% were considered families.

Table 6. Number of People Unsheltered

People living in an unsheltered living situation are those 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 campground.

	Household without Children		Household with at Least 1 Adult and 1 Child		Households with Only Children under 18	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Unsheltered Persons **Total of 1,308 Persons or 24.6% of the Homeless Population**	1212	92.7%	93	7.1%	3	0.2%

Table 6 shows 92.7% (or 1,212 persons) of the unsheltered population were considered adults without children. Of the total homeless population, people in unsheltered living situations make up almost one-quarter (24.6%) of the Denver Metro Area's population.

Table 7. Homeless Living Situation 2015-2018

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Emergency Shelter	1816	30.2	1814	33.1	1989	38.9	2574	48.4
Transitional Housing	3312	55.2	2811	51.4	2172	42.5	1413	26.6
Unsheltered	827	13.8	786	14.4	924	18.1	1308	24.6
Safe Haven	49	0.8	56	1.1	31	0.6	22	0.4
Total	6004	100.0	5467	100.0	5116	100.0	5317	100.0

Table 7 shows the breakdown of living situations over the past four years. Overall, decreases in TH with increases in emergency shelters and unsheltered, however variances mentioned in the methodology section above need to be considered when comparing this annual snapshot data.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Table 8 presents information about homeless persons and households that are considered to be 'chronically homeless.' HUD defines a chronically homeless individual as an adult with a disabling condition who has been homeless (sheltered or unsheltered) for at least twelve consecutive months OR has had at least four episodes in the past three years with a total duration of at least one year. A chronically homeless family is composed of at least one adult (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) and one child under 18 years old in which one adult meets the disability and chronicity definition.

Table 8. Living Situation – Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

	Emergency Shelter		Unsheltered		Safe Haven	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness **Total of 1,596 Persons or 30.0% of the Homeless Population**	830	52.0%	744	46.6%	22	1.4%

Figure 11. Percent Experiencing Chronic Homelessness (n= 1,596)
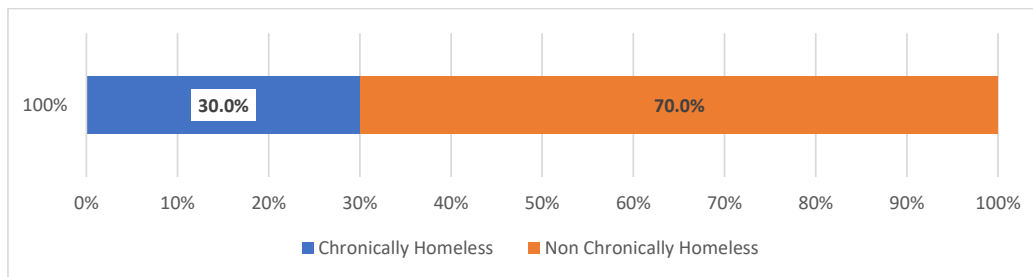
Table 9. CH by Population/HH type –Total and Percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	70	1526	101	224
Percentage of Each Household Type That Are Chronic	5.0%	39.0%	8.9%	39.6%

While individuals experience chronic homelessness at a 39% rate, only 5% of families are considered chronically homeless.
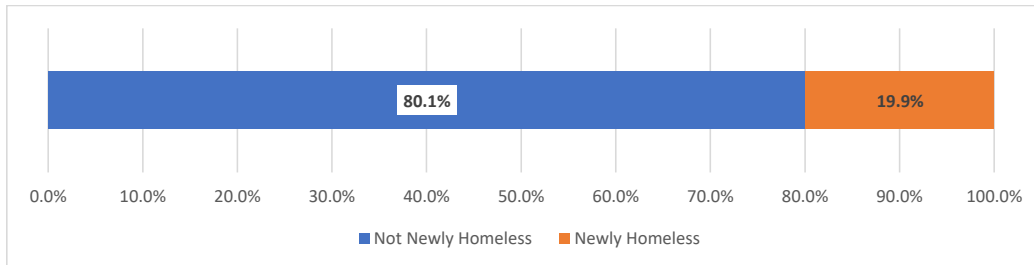
Table 10. Chronic Homeless Population 2015 - 2018

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Chronic	809	13.2	861	15.8	1085	21.2	1596	30.0

NEWLY HOMELESS

Newly homeless is defined as a person who has been experiencing homelessness for less than one year and this was their first episode of homelessness.

Figure 12. Newly Homeless (Total = 1,060))

Table 11. Newly Homeless by population/HH type – Total and Percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	393	666	294	83
Percentage of Each Household Type That Are Newly Homeless	28.0%	17.0%	26.0%	14.7%

Slightly more than one-quarter of all families and youth reported being newly homeless.

Table 12. Newly Homeless 2015 - 2018

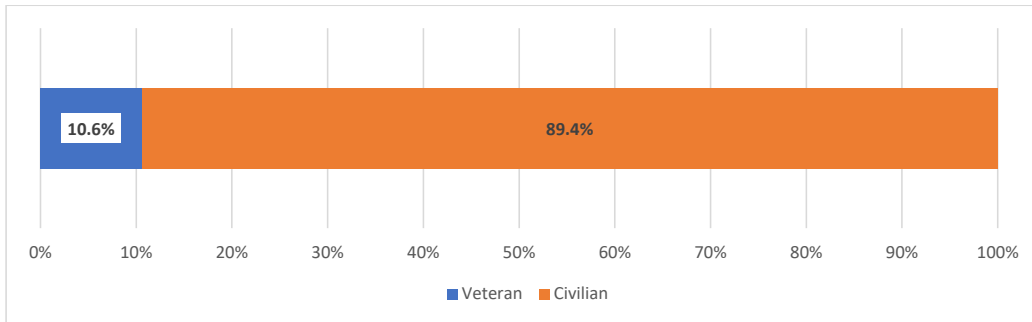|	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Newly	1500	24.5	722	19.5	779	19.4	1060	19.9

VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In past counts, HUD has required veteran status to be determined as one of a number of personal characteristics. Veteran households are treated as a separate population and additional demographic information is gathered to allow the count to describe the veteran population in greater detail.

Table 13. Veteran by Living Situation

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Unsheltered	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Veteran Homelessness	307	54.2%	113	20.0%	144	25.4%
Total of 566 Persons or 10.6% of the Homeless Population						

Figure 13. Veteran Homelessness

Table 14. Veteran Homelessness 2015 – 2018

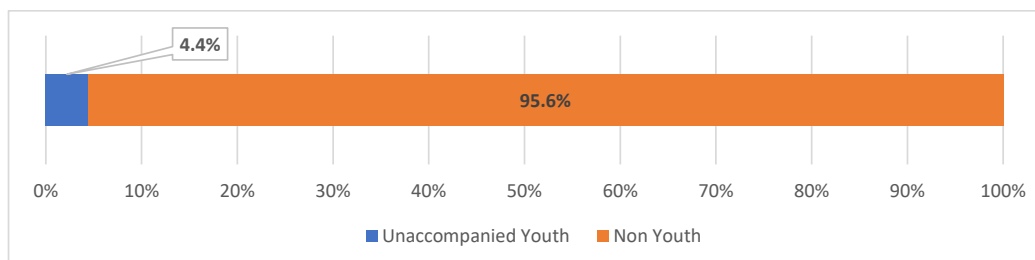|	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Veterans	586	9.6	713	13.0	569	11.1	566	10.6

UNACCOMPANIED AND TRANSITION AGE YOUTH

Unaccompanied Youth refers to persons under the age of 18 who are homeless without an accompanying adult. Transition Age Youth (TAY) are young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. They may also be unaccompanied, or may be parenting and be accompanied by their children as well as other household members.

Figure 14. Parenting Youth (Total = 130)
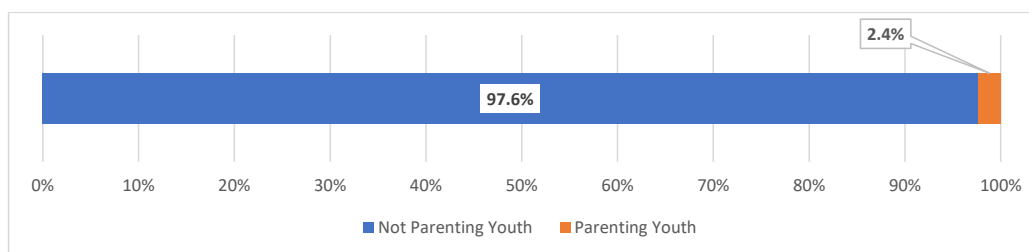
A total of 130 persons were identified as being part of a parenting youth household. This means that the head of household is between 18-24 years old, and the children are under the age of 18.

Figure 15. Unaccompanied and Transition age Youth (Total = 237)

There was a total of 237 persons surveyed in the Metro Area on the night of the PIT. This number only includes those not included as "parenting youth" in figure 14 above

Table 15. Unaccompanied Youth 2015 – 2018

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Unaccompanied Youth	355	5.8%	287	5.3%	395	7.7%	237	4.4%

CHARACTERISTICS IN THE HOMELESS POPULATION

Every year the count also seeks to estimate the prevalence of certain characteristics and disabilities among the homeless population, they are summarized below by living situation and household type.

Table 16. Indication of Mental Health Issue (Total = 1,415)

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Unsheltered		Safe Haven		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Mental Health Issue	657	46.4%	255	18.0%	481	34.0%	22	1.6%	1415

Of the 1415 people who self-reported a mental health issue, 46.4% were in emergency shelter.

Table 17. Mental Health Concern or Illness by population/HH type – Total and Percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	66	1349	79	176
Percentage of Each Household Type That Indicated Mental Health Concern or Illness	4.7%	34.5%	7.0%	31.1%

Mental health issues were most likely to be reported by individuals, with 34.5% (or 1349) of the total population said this was a concern for them.

Table 18. Currently Fleeing Domestic Violence Situation (Total = 384)

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Unsheltered		Safe Haven		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Currently Fleeing Domestic Violence	223	58.1%	76	19.8%	83	21.6%	2	0.5%	384

The 2018 count surveys clarified if people were currently fleeing a domestic violence situation; in previous years it asked about Domestic Violence in a manner that could have included any history of domestic violence.

Table 19. Currently Fleeing Domestic Violence by Population/HH type –Total and Percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	75	309	19	19
Percentage of Each Household Type Currently Fleeing Domestic Violence	5.3%	7.9%	1.7%	3.4%

Of those surveyed, 309 individuals (or 7.9% of the total population of adults without children) reported they were fleeing domestic violence that night.

Table 20. Indication of Substance Abuse Issue (Total = 1,515)

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Unsheltered		Safe Haven		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Substance Abuse	606	40.0%	312	20.6%	587	38.7%	10	0.7%	1515

Of the total PIT count (5,317) a total of 1515 persons indicated that they had a substance use or abuse issue. This is approximately 28.5% of the overall count. Those staying in shelter or in unsheltered situations reported similar rates of substance use or abuse.

Table 21. Indication of Substance Abuse Issue by population/HH type – Total and percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	36	1479	72	194
Percentage of Household Type That Indicated Substance Abuse Issue	2.6%	37.8%	6.4%	34.3%

More than one-third of homeless Individual and Veteran populations in the region reported substance use or abuse.

Table 22. Indication of Living with AIDS/HIV (Total = 61)

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Unsheltered		Safe Haven		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Living with HIV/AIDS	28	45.9%	6	9.8%	27	44.3%	0	0.0%	61

Of the total PIT count (5,317) a total of 61 persons indicated that they were living with HIV or AIDS. This is approximately 1% of the overall count.

Table 23. Living with HIV/AIDS by population/HH type –Total and Percentage

	Families (HH with at least 1 adult + 1 child)	Individuals (HH with no children)	Youth (under 25)	Veterans
Count	1	60	3	4
Percentage of Household Type That Indicated Living with HIV/AIDS	0.1%	1.5%	0.3%	0.7%

Overall, just 61 people identified themselves as living with HIV or AIDS, the highest percentage was in individuals, with 1.5% of the population.

Figure 16. Companion/Service Animal Present (Total = 134)

Respondents indicated they were accompanied by a companion or service animal.
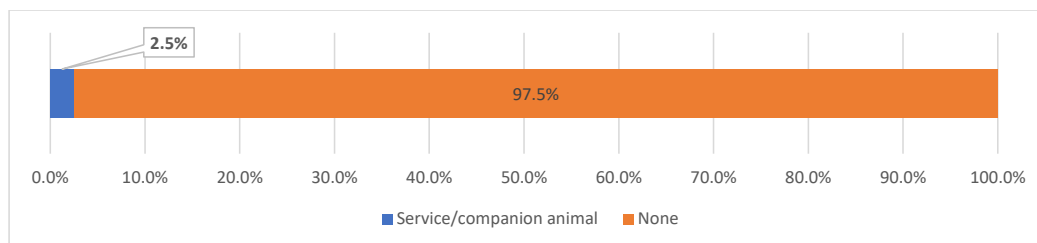
Of the total PIT count (5,317) a total of 134 persons indicated that they had a companion or service animal with them on the night of the count.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Tables 20-23 present the demographic makeup of persons experiencing homelessness in the Denver metro area.

Table 24. Gender

Gender	#	%
Female	1691	31.8
Male	3555	66.9
Transgender	18	0.3
Gender Non-Conforming	15	0.3
Missing	38	0.7
Total	5317	100.0

Table 25. Race

Race		
White	2955	55.6
Black or African-American	1055	19.8
Asian	44	0.8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	244	4.6
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	60	1.1
Multi Racial	498	9.4
Missing	461	8.7
Total	5317	100.0

Table 26. Ethnicity

Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic/Latino	3890	73.2
Hispanic/Latino	1199	22.6
Missing	228	4.2
Total	5317	100.0

Table 27. Age

Age Category	#	%
Less than 18	794	14.9%
18 - 24	338	6.4%
25 - 54	2979	56.0%
55 - 64	924	17.4%
65+	229	4.3%
Missing	53	1.0%
Total	5317	100.0%

Table 28. Removed and Sampled Data Summary

AGGREGATE	
Summary of Excluded & Sampled Data	
# Individuals in Raw Data File	**6287**
Individuals Removed and Reason:	
Observation/Refusal	528
Duplicate	456
Data quality issues	240
Insufficient PIN Information	91
Homeless Status could not be determined	89
Not Homeless	88
County Missing or Outside Denver Metro	12
Total individuals removed	**1504**
Total individuals added via sampling	**534**
Total individuals remaining in data set	**5317**