

# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

# 2017 HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

## COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

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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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### COVER PHOTO CREDIT

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# Acknowledgements

The 2017 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  
Guerilla Gardening Club  
Homeless Services Oversight Council of San Luis Obispo (HSOC)  
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. These 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 people sleeping on the streets, in cars, in abandoned properties, or in other places not meant for human habitation.

The biennial Point-in-Time Count is the only source of nationwide-data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Continuums of Care (CoC) report the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count in their annual funding application to HUD, which ultimately help the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Count 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 2017 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessment. ASR has partnered with the County since 2013, maintaining a similar methodology and thus ensuring as much consistency as possible from one year to the next.

The San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count has two primary components: a point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks, or vehicles, etc.) and a point-in-time enumeration of homeless individuals and families residing in temporary shelter (i.e. emergency shelter or transitional housing).

The 2017 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of approximately 36 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, 54 community volunteers, staff from various City and County departments, and law enforcement, the entire county was canvassed between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and noon on January 30, 2017. This effort resulted in a peer-informed visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets, in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments and other places not meant for human habitation. Shelters and facilities reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the previous evening.

San Luis Obispo County also conducted a specialized count of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth under the age of 25 years old. This dedicated count is part of a nationwide effort, established and recommended by HUD, to improve our understanding of

the scope of youth homelessness. Trained youth enumerators who are currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in targeted areas where young people experiencing homelessness were known to congregate.<sup>1</sup> This is an important year for national data on young people experiencing homelessness, as HUD will use 2017 youth count results as a baseline for measuring progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020.

In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 170 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals of all ages. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization.

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County on one night in January. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations, including chronically homeless individuals, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and transition-age youth between the ages of 18 and 24.

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2013 and 2015, are provided where available and applicable.

## 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.
  - Please note that this definition does not include persons who are living doubled up with others for economic reasons or persons who are paying for motel rooms or where friends or family are paying for their motel room.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order to for the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Census and Survey to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held regular planning meetings with local community members. These community members were drawn from county and city departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2017 Planning Committee, and were instrumental to ensuring the 2017 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2017 Planning Committee worked towards 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;

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<sup>1</sup> Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2017 to ensure unaccompanied children and youth were not captured in both the youth and general street count efforts. For more information on these efforts and the overall count methodology, please see Appendix A.

- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2015 San Luis Obispo 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 government in gaining a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measuring the impact of current policies and programming, and planning for the future.

# Point-In-Time Census

The 2017 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on January 30, 2017 from approximately 6:00 a.m. to noon and covered most of the 3,616 square miles 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 those used in 2015, with some small improvements.

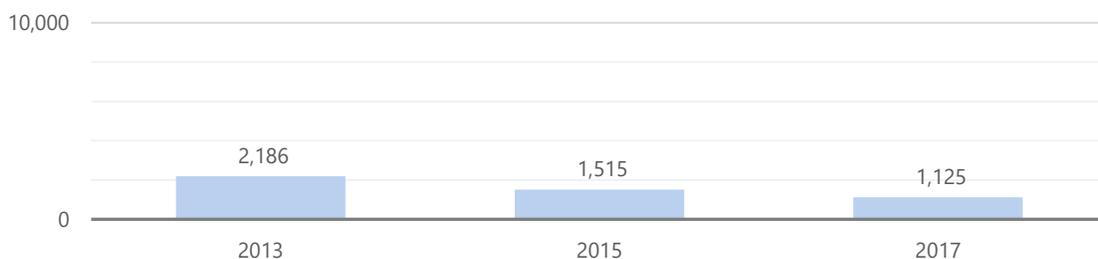
The methodology used for the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey is commonly described as a “blitz count” since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method is conducted in San Luis Obispo County the result is an observation based count of individuals and families who appear to be homeless. The count is then followed by an in-person representative survey, the results of which are 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 to inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

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 one conducted in 2015. The dedicated youth count methodology was improved in 2017 to better ensure that unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were not included in both the general street count and youth count. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, deduplication, and project methodology, please see appendix A.

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

On January 30, 2017 there were 1,125 individuals in San Luis Obispo County who met the HUD definition of homelessness. This represents a decrease of 26% from 2015.

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 3. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY REGION AND SHELTER STATUS

|              | NORTH COUNTY |            | COAST      |            | SAN LUIS OBISPO |            | SOUTH COUNTY |            | TOTAL SLO COUNTY |              |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------------|--------------|
|              | 2015         | 2017       | 2015       | 2017       | 2015            | 2017       | 2015         | 2017       | 2015             | 2017         |
| Unsheltered  | 452          | 139        | 141        | 102        | 324             | 222        | 206          | 317        | 1,123            | 780          |
| Sheltered    | 177          | 114        | 5          | 0          | 158             | 189        | 52           | 42         | 392              | 345          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>629</b>   | <b>253</b> | <b>146</b> | <b>102</b> | <b>482</b>      | <b>411</b> | <b>258</b>   | <b>359</b> | <b>1,515</b>     | <b>1,125</b> |

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

Note: North County region consists of Atascadero, Paso Robles, San Miguel, and Templeton. Coast region includes Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay. San Luis Obispo includes only the City of San Luis Obispo. South County includes Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Nipomo, and Oceano.

FIGURE 4. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY REGION

| SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION | NORTH COUNTY |      | COAST |      | SAN LUIS OBISPO |      | SOUTH COUNTY |      | TOTAL SLO COUNTY |      |
|------------------------|--------------|------|-------|------|-----------------|------|--------------|------|------------------|------|
|                        | 2015         | 2017 | 2015  | 2017 | 2015            | 2017 | 2015         | 2017 | 2015             | 2017 |
| Emergency Shelter      | 28%          | 35%  | 3%    | 0%   | 28%             | 31%  | 20%          | 12%  | 22%              | 23%  |
| Transitional Housing   | 0%           | 10%  | 0%    | 0%   | 5%              | 15%  | 0%           | 0%   | 4%               | 8%   |
| On the Street          | 21%          | 31%  | 35%   | 32%  | 23%             | 38%  | 47%          | 33%  | 27%              | 34%  |
| Encampment Areas       | 27%          | 10%  | 18%   | 22%  | 16%             | 9%   | 22%          | 28%  | 22%              | 17%  |
| Cars/Vans/RVs          | 12%          | 13%  | 42%   | 45%  | 12%             | 6%   | 10%          | 27%  | 14%              | 18%  |
| Abandoned Buildings    | 12%          | 0%   | 1%    | 1%   | 17%             | 0%   | 0%           | 0%   | 11%              | 0%   |

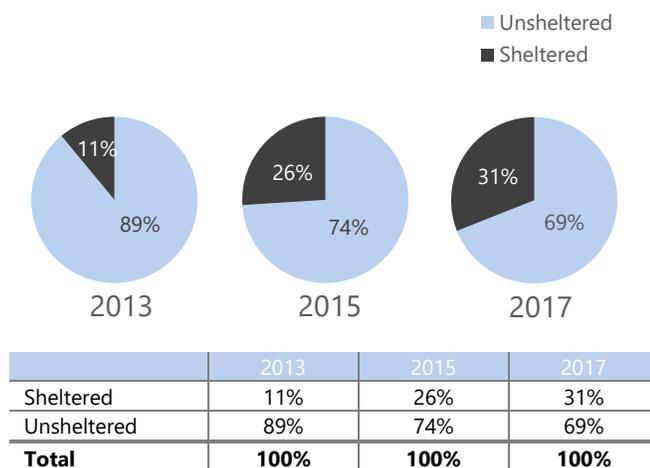
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.  
 Note: North County region consists of Atascadero, Paso Robles, San Miguel, and Templeton. Coast region includes Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay. San Luis Obispo includes only the City of San Luis Obispo. South County includes Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Nipomo, and Oceano.

FIGURE 5. JURISDICTIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE POPULATION, BY SHELTER STATUS

| JURISDICTION    | UNSHELTERED | SHELTERED  | TOTAL        |
|-----------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Arroyo Grande   | 52          | 42         | 94           |
| Atascadero      | 39          | 42         | 81           |
| Grover Beach    | 60          | 0          | 60           |
| Morro Bay       | 36          | 0          | 36           |
| Paso Robles     | 25          | 72         | 97           |
| Pismo Beach     | 9           | 0          | 9            |
| San Luis Obispo | 194         | 189        | 383          |
| Unincorporated  | 365         | 0          | 365          |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>780</b>  | <b>345</b> | <b>1,125</b> |

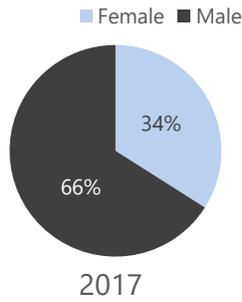
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

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



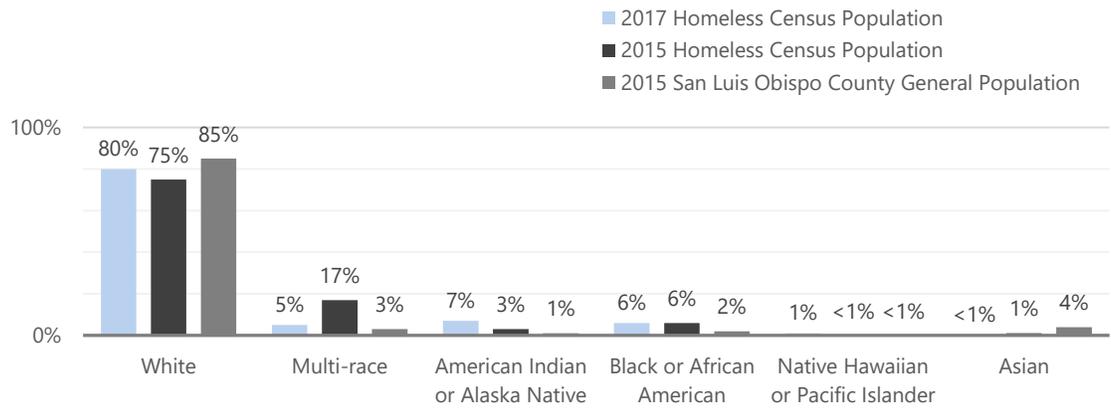
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2009-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.  
 2013 n = 2,180; 2015 n = 1,515; 2017 n = 1,125

FIGURE 7. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER



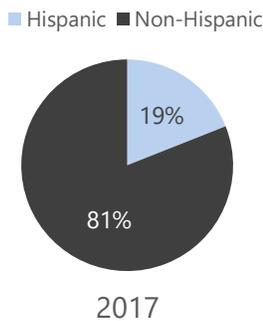
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census. 2017 n= 1,125

FIGURE 8. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE



2015 n= 1,515; 2017 n= 1,125  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census. U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). American Community Survey 2014 1-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.

FIGURE 9. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY HISPANIC/NON-HISPANIC



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census. 2017 n= 1,125

# Homeless Survey Findings

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2017 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between January 31 and April 18, 2017. This effort resulted in 170 complete and unique surveys. Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,125 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 170 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/-6.9% with an 84% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within five 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 are 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.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gain 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

Eight percent (8%) of survey respondents were under the age of 25 at the time of the survey. Twenty-six percent were between the ages of 25 and 40, 54% were between the ages of 41 and 60, and 12% were 61 years or older.

FIGURE 10. SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

| Age Group          | 2017 |
|--------------------|------|
| Less than 18 Years | 0%   |
| 18-24 Years        | 8%   |
| 25-30 Years        | 9%   |
| 31-40 Years        | 17%  |
| 41-50 Years        | 27%  |
| 51-60 Years        | 27%  |
| 61 Years or More   | 12%  |

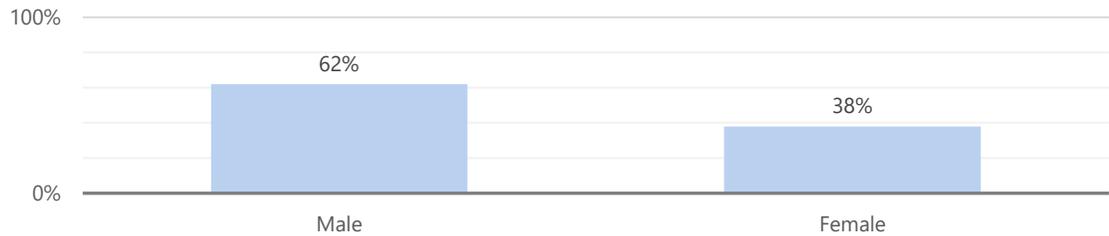
2017 n= 153

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

## GENDER IDENTITY

Of survey respondents in San Luis Obispo County, sixty-two percent (62%) of survey respondents identified as male and 38% identified as female.

FIGURE 11. GENDER IDENTITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



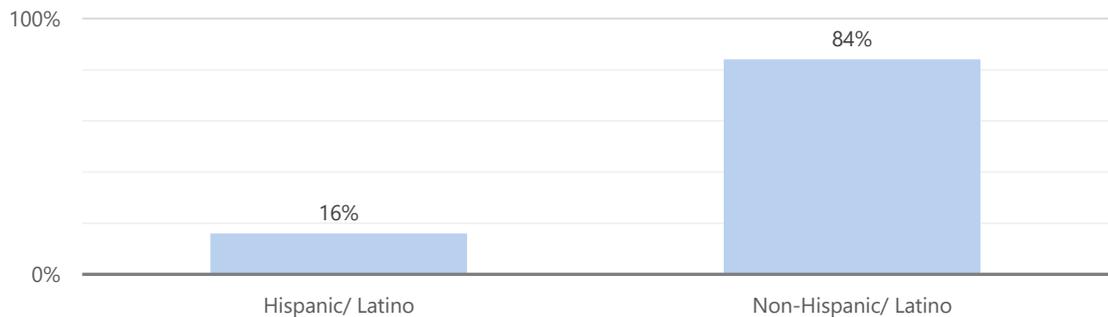
2017 n=153

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

## 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 three-quarters (84%) of homeless survey respondents reported they did not identify as Hispanic or Latino. In regards to race, 82% identified as White, 7% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% as Black or African American, 1% as Asian, and 1% identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

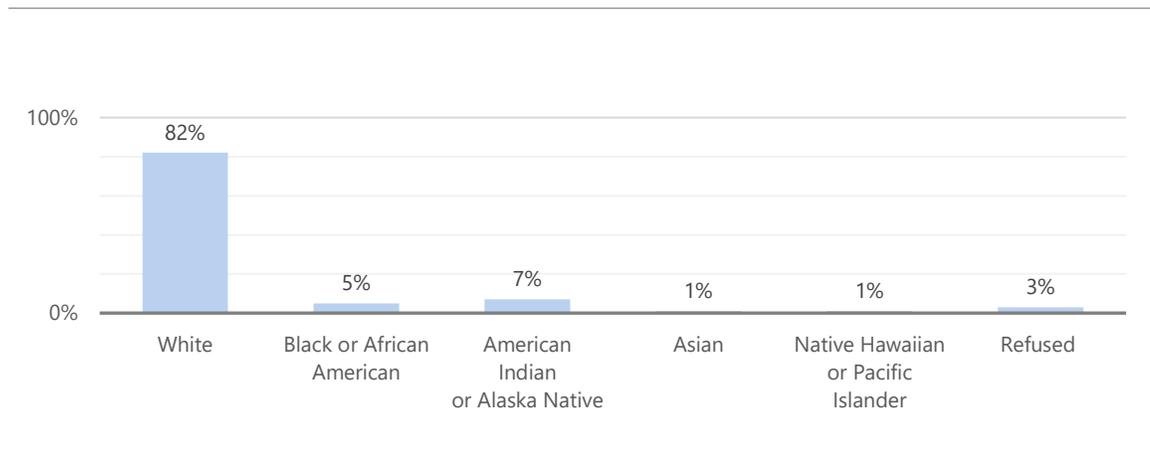
FIGURE 12. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY



2017 n= 147

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 13. RACE



2017 n= 148

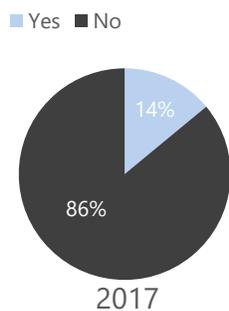
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

### FOSTER CARE

It has been estimated that one in five former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.<sup>2</sup> In the State of California, foster youth are now eligible to receive services beyond age 18. Transitional housing and supportive services for youth between ages 18-24 are provided through programs often referred to as Transitional Housing Placement-Plus. It is hoped that these additional supports, implemented in 2012, will assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless.

In San Luis Obispo County in 2017, 14% of respondents reported a history of foster care, approximately the same as 2015 (16%).

FIGURE 14. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



2017 n= 108

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

<sup>2</sup> Fernandes, AL. (2007). Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics, Programs, and Emerging Issues. Congressional Research Services, January 2007, <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/1451>.

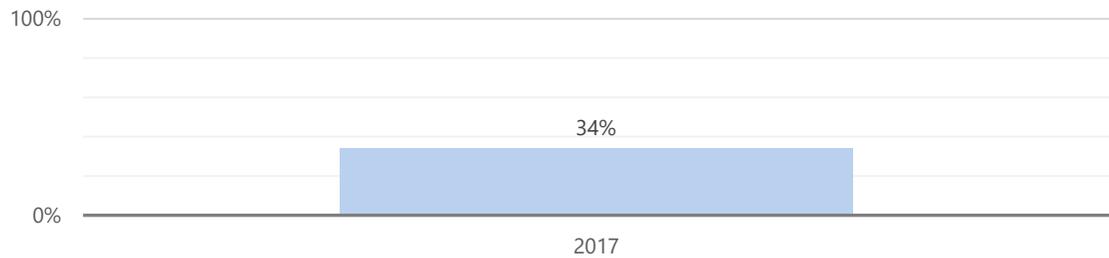
## DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

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. Over half (67%) of 2017 survey respondents reported they had previously experienced homelessness.

In addition, many individuals who experience homelessness will do so numerous times. As people cycle in and out of stable housing, it becomes important to keep track of the number of times they experience literal homelessness.

Over one third (34%) of respondents reported experiencing homelessness two or more times in the past years. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of survey respondents reported their current episode of homelessness lasting for a year or longer.

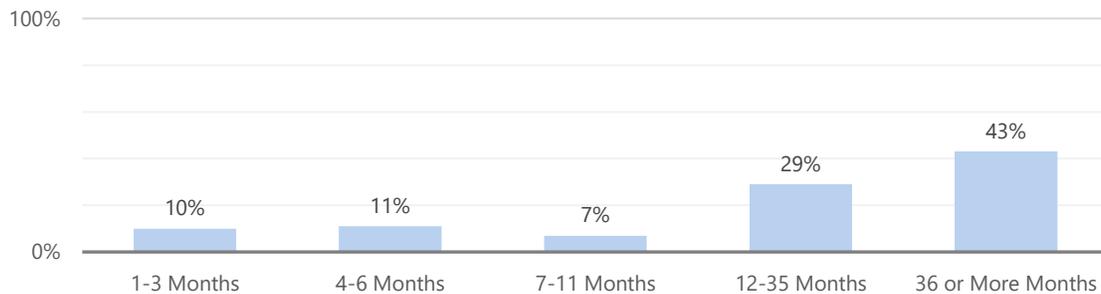
FIGURE 15. FIRST TIME HOMELESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



2017 n= 159

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

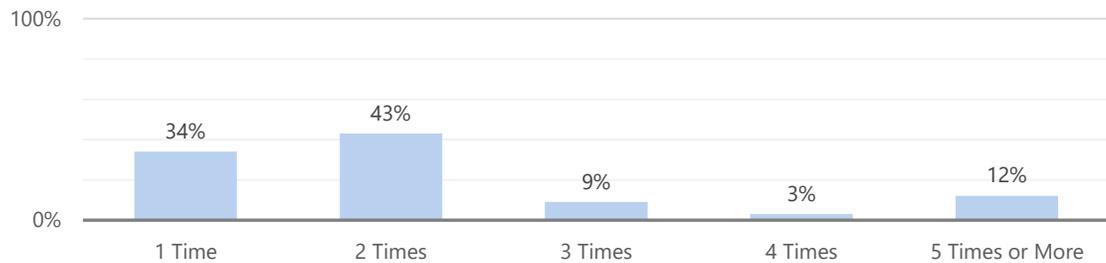
FIGURE 16. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2017 n= 145

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 17. RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS- LAST THREE YEARS



2017 n=159

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count.

## 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 reveal opportunities for systemic improvement and homeless prevention.

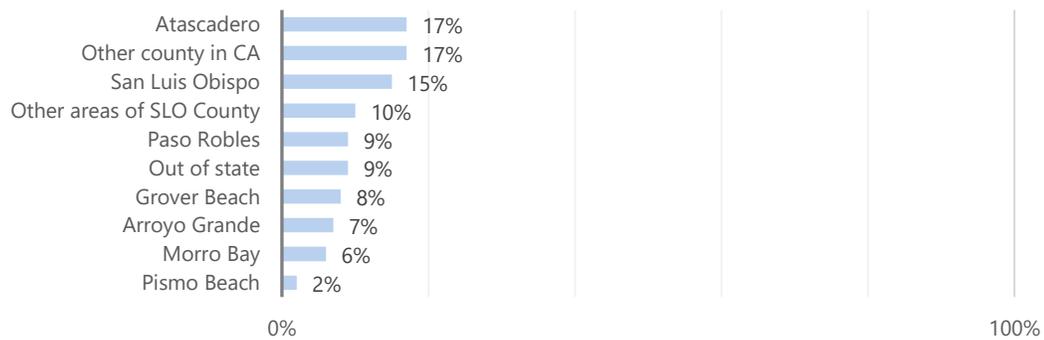
### PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Knowing where individuals were living before they most recently lost their housing 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%).

Nine percent (9%) of respondents reported that they were living out of state at the time they lost their housing, and 17% reported they were living in another county in California. Of those who were living out of the county at the time they lost housing, 49% said they came to San Luis Obispo because they had lived here before.

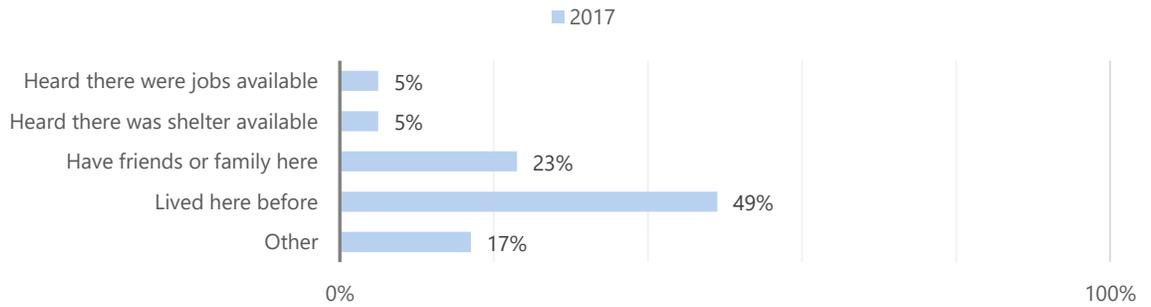
FIGURE 18. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



2017 n= 144

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 19. REASON TO COME TO SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY



2017 n= 77

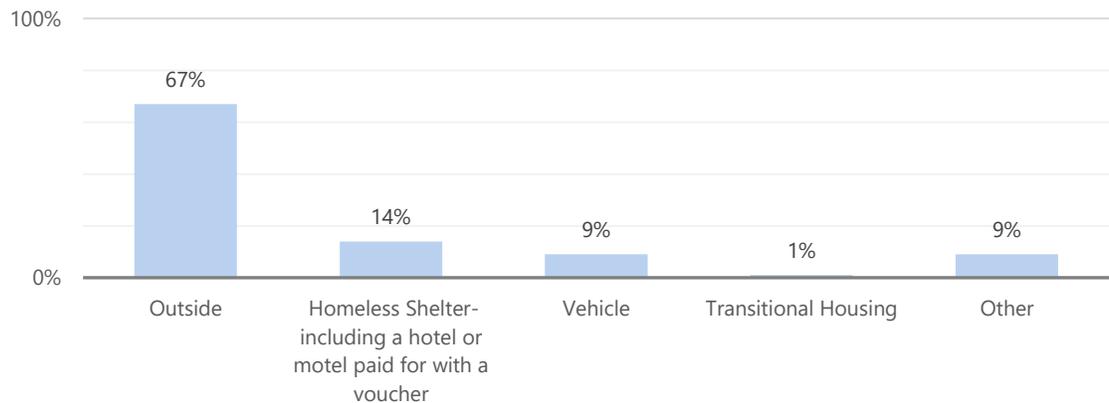
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

### 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 two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors, either on the streets, in parks, or in encampment areas. Fourteen percent (14%) reported staying in a homeless shelter, including a hotel or motel paid for with a voucher. Nine percent cited staying in a vehicle, 1% reported they were staying in transitional housing, and 11% reported staying somewhere other than these specified areas.

FIGURE 20. USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT



2017 n= 150

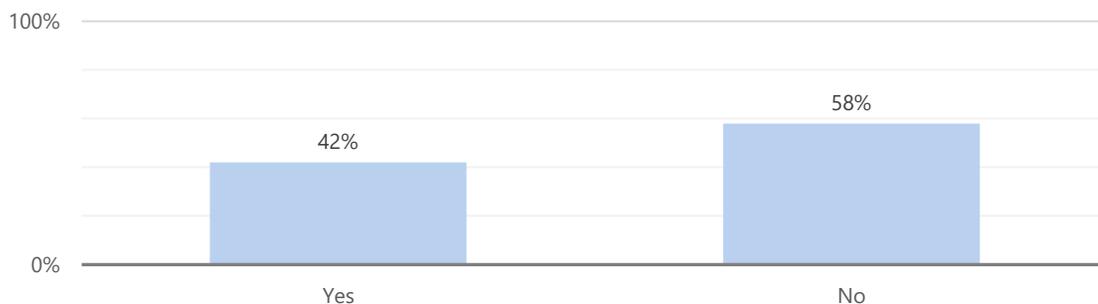
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual’s inability to obtain or retain housing is difficult to pinpoint, as it is often the result of multiple and compounding causes.

Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents reported the primary cause of their homelessness being a result of abuse or trauma. Forty-five percent (45%) reported homelessness as the result of a relationship that broke down, or an unhealthy or abusive relationship, and 15% reported physical health issues as the cause.

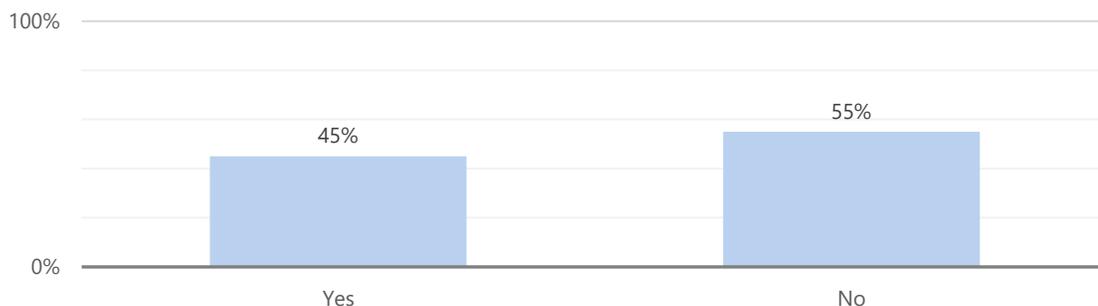
FIGURE 21. HOMELESSNESS AS A RESULT OF ABUSE OR TRAUMA



2017 n= 103

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

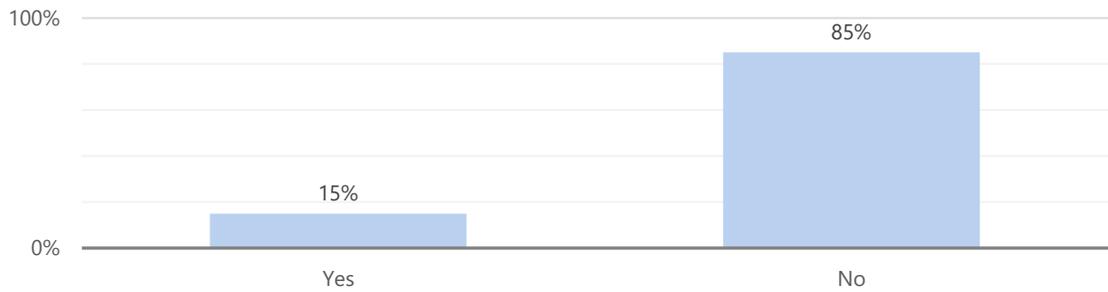
FIGURE 22. HOMELESSNESS AS A RESULT OF A RELATIONSHIP THAT BROKE DOWN, OR AN UNHEALTHY/ ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP



2017 n= 100

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 23. HOMELESSNESS AS A RESULT OF PHYSICAL HEALTH ISSUES



2017 n= 104

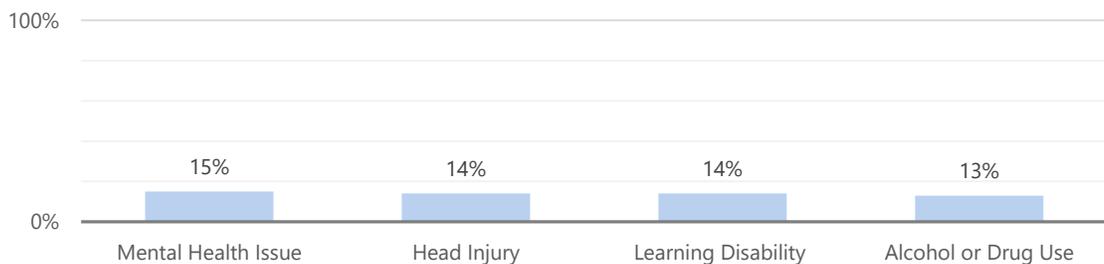
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

### 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, case management) needed to access and maintain permanent housing. An inability to find adequate housing can lead to an inability to address other basic needs, such as healthcare and adequate nutrition.

Fifteen percent (15%) of surveyed individuals reported mental health issues as the reason for inability to maintain stable housing, fourteen percent (14%) reported head injury, 14% reported a learning disability, and 13% cited alcohol or drug use, and, as the reason for difficulty maintaining stable housing.

FIGURE 24. ISSUES RESULTING IN DIFFICULTY OBTAINING STABLE HOUSING



Mental Health Issue n= 102; Head Injury n=101; Learning Disability n=104; Alcohol or Drug Use n=101

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

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

## 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. Many believe that they do not qualify or are ineligible for assistance. Connecting homeless individuals and families to these support services creates a bridge to mainstream support services and prevents future housing instability. In addition to governmental assistance, there are a 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.

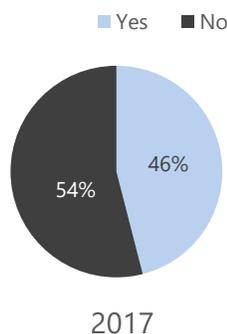
### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

There are a variety of forms of governmental assistance available to individuals experiencing homelessness. However, knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma of receiving governmental assistance can all impact the rate at which eligible individuals access these supports.

Under half (46%) of respondents in 2017 reported they were receiving some form of government financial assistance.

Of those receiving government assistance, the largest percentage (33%) of respondents reported receiving SSI/SSDI benefits, eight percent were receiving employment services, six percent (6%) reported receiving General Assistance (GA), 4% were receiving Cash Aid/CalWorks, 0% were receiving TANF, and 1% were receiving VA Service Compensation or a Non-service disability pension.

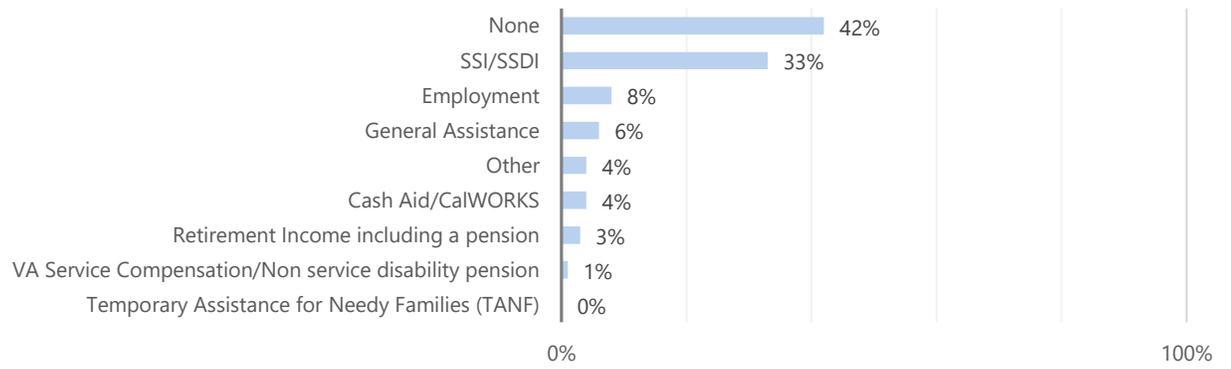
FIGURE 25. RECEIVING ANY MONEY FROM THE GOVERNMENT, A PENSION, AN INHERITANCE, WORKING UNDER THE TABLE, A REGULAR JOB, ETC



2017 n=105

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2011-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 26. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



2017 n= 105

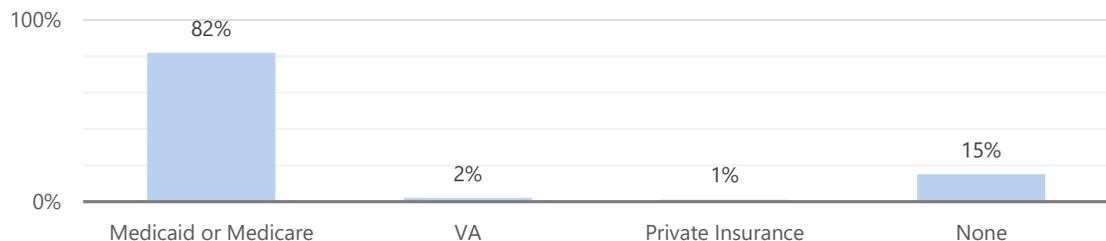
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

## HEALTH

The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to healthcare and without safe and stable housing, individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.<sup>3</sup>

Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents reported being completely uninsured. Among all survey respondents, 57% reported they had received health care at the emergency room in the past six months. Thirty-three percent (33%) reported being taken to the hospital by ambulance in the past six months, and 25% of respondents had been hospitalized overnight in that time period. In the past six months, 20% of individuals surveyed have used a crisis service, including, but not limited to, mental health services, sexual assault services, family violence services, suicide prevention services, and distress services.

FIGURE 27. HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE



2017 n=106

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 28. RECEIVED HEALTH CARE AT THE EMERGENCY ROOM IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



2017 n=99

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 29. BEEN TAKEN BY AN AMBULANCE TO THE HOSPITAL IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



2017 n=100

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

<sup>3</sup> Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). *Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City*. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

FIGURE 30. HOSPITALIZED OVERNIGHT IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



2017 n=100

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 31. USED A CRISIS SERVICE (INCLUDING SEXUAL ASSAULT, MENTAL HEALTH, FAMILY/INTIMATE VIOLENCE, DISTRESS CENTERS, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION) IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



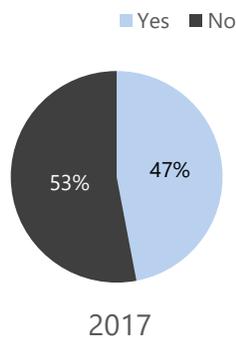
2017 n=100

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

## DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Histories of domestic violence and partner abuse are prevalent among individuals experiencing homelessness, and can be a primary cause of homelessness for many. Survivors often lack many of the financial resources required for housing due to a limited employment history or dependable income. When asked about experiences throughout their lifetime, 47% reported domestic/partner violence or abuse, higher than in 2015 (30%).

FIGURE 32. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2017 n= 140

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

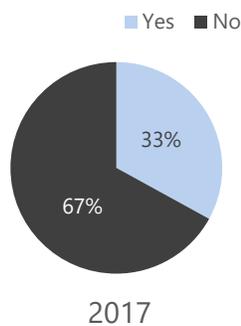
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Homelessness and incarceration are often correlative. 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 that affect both their ability to gain employment and their access housing opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

### INCARCERATION

When asked if they had spent a night in jail or prison in the last 6 months, thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents experiencing homelessness reported that they had. Sixty-three percent (63%) of surveyed individuals reported talking with the police because they had witnessed or were the victim of a crime or had been asked to “move along” in the past six months.

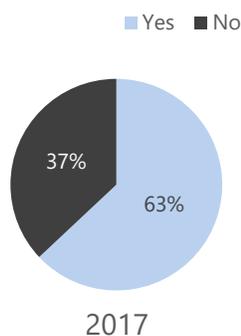
FIGURE 33. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



2017 n= 85

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 34. TALKED TO POLICE BECAUSE YOU WITNESSED OR WERE THE VICTIM OF A CRIME IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS



2017 n= 98

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

<sup>4</sup> Greenberg, GA, Rosenheck, RA. (2008). Jail Incarceration, Homelessness, and Mental Health: A National Study. *Psychiatr Serv*, 2008 Feb;59(2): 170-7.

# Subpopulations

*Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness 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. 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 2017 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey.

## CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and 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 cumulative total of the four occasions is at least one year.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population.<sup>5</sup> Data from communities across the country show that public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing individuals with permanent housing and supportive services.

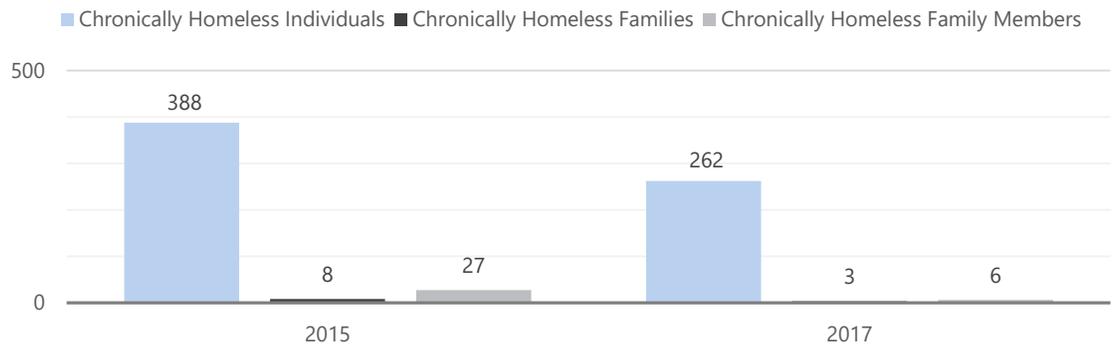
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that roughly 22% of the national homeless population, or 77,486 individuals, was chronically homeless in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the national decrease in chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints limit the amount of money available to support housing programs and services. As a result, *Opening Doors*, which began with a plan to end chronic homelessness by 2016, has extended the goal to 2017.<sup>7</sup>

5 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](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf)

6 Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

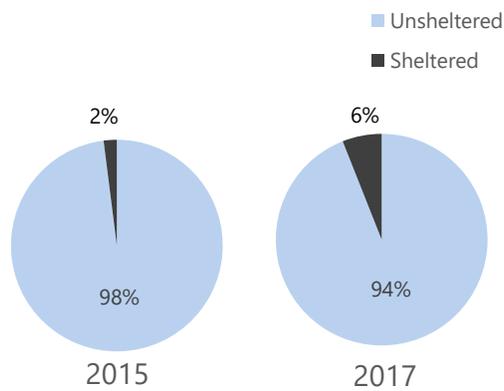
7 Cavallaro, E. (2017). Ending Chronic Homelessness, Now in 2017. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

**FIGURE 35. TOTAL NUMBER OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

**FIGURE 36. CHRONIC HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS**



2015 n= 388; 2017 n=262

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

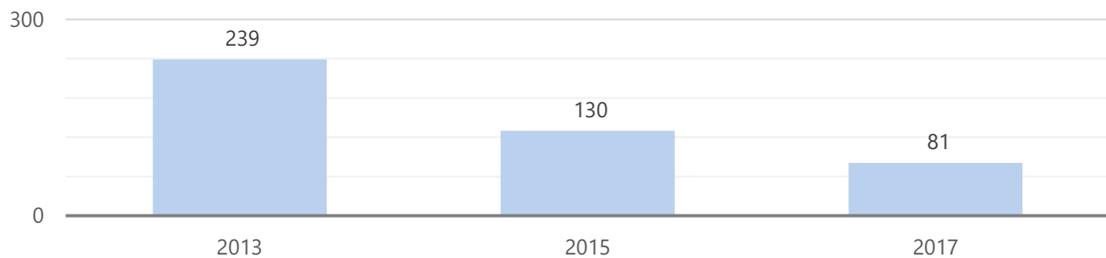
## HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

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

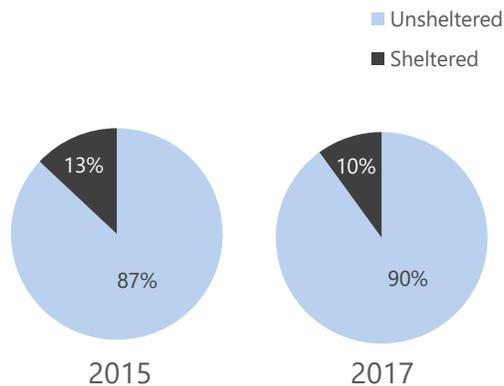
There were a total of 81 veterans experiencing homeless in 2017, representing a decrease of 38% since 2015. Veterans represented 7% of the overall population experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 37. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

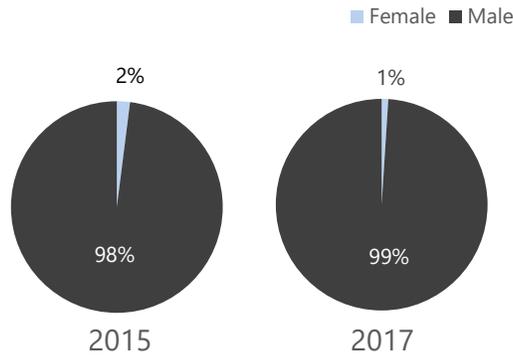
FIGURE 38. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



2015 n= 130; 2017 n= 81

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

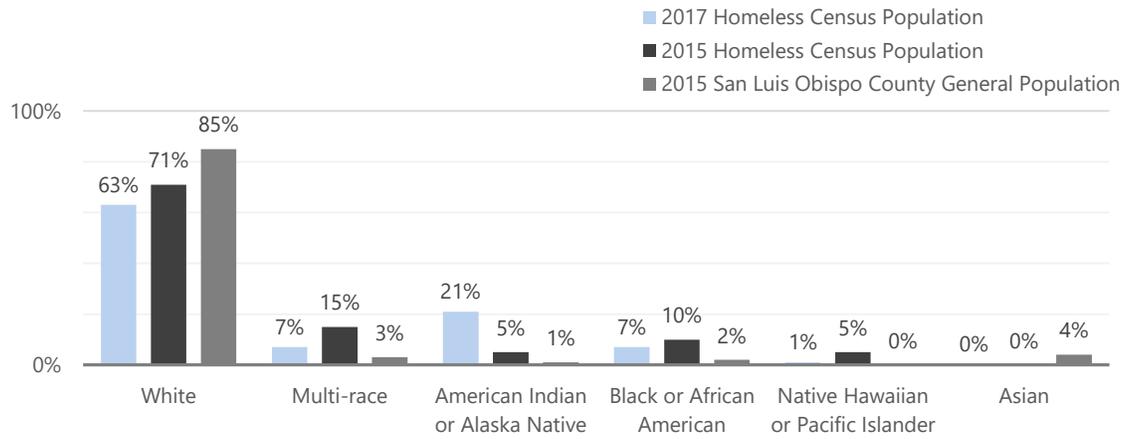
FIGURE 39. TOTAL HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER



2015 n= 130; 2017 n= 81

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 40. TOTAL HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE



2015 n=130; 2017 n= 81

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). American Community Survey 2014 1-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.

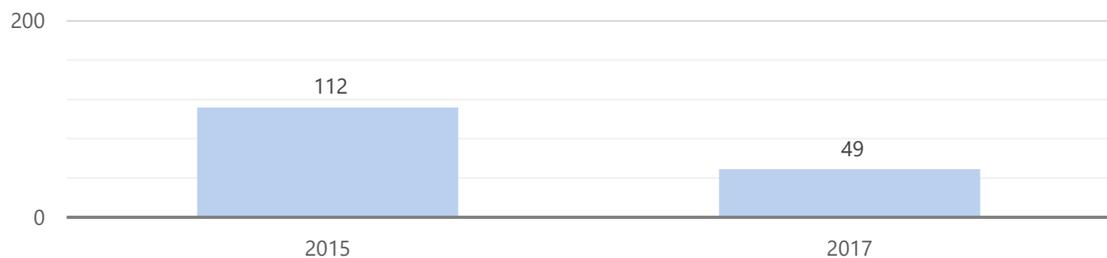
## HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2016 suggest that 35% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families. 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 to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that they are not much different from families in poverty.

The risk of homelessness is highest among households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.<sup>8</sup> Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.<sup>9</sup>

There were 49 families experiencing homelessness with 148 individuals living in them in 2017. This represents a decrease in the number of families experiencing homelessness of 56% since 2015.

FIGURE 41. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 42. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



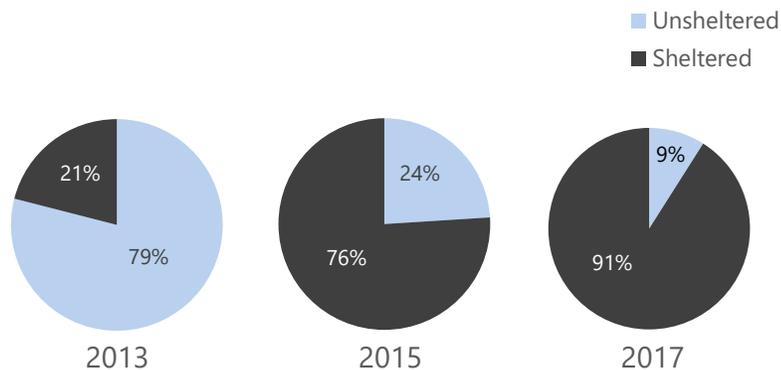
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

Note: There is a significant number of persons in homeless families who are in a “double-up” situation that may or may not fall within the HUD PIT count definition of homelessness that could not be identified due to their typical location on private property.

<sup>8</sup> U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2015 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

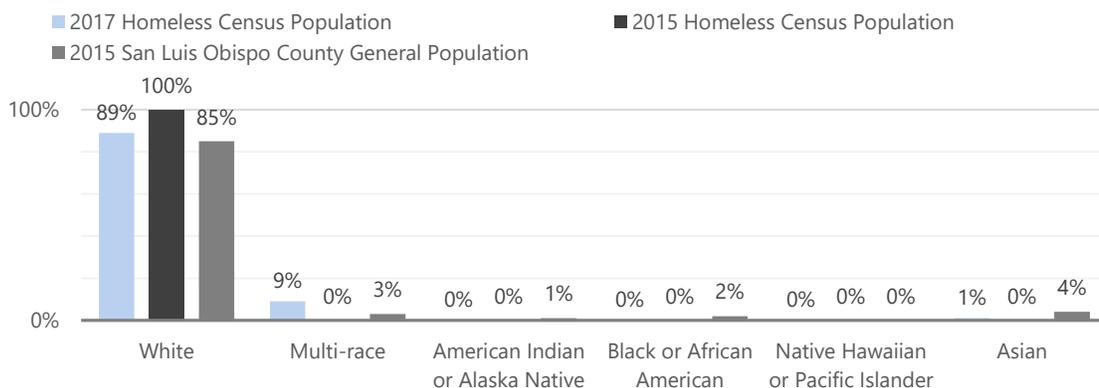
<sup>9</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

FIGURE 43. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



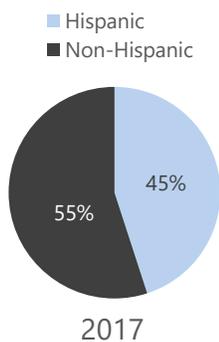
2013 n=; 2015 n= 112; 2017 n= 148  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 44. INDIVIDUALS IN HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE



2015 n= 112; 2017 n=148  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.  
 U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). American Community Survey 2014 1-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.

FIGURE 45. TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION BY HISPANIC/NON-HISPANIC



2017 n= 148  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2016-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

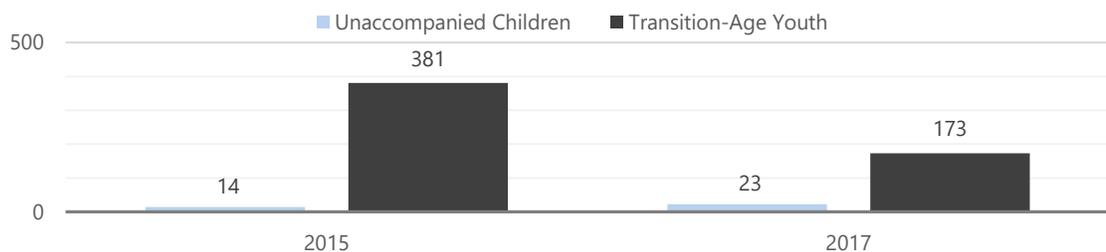
## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Due to the often hidden nature of youth homelessness, there are limited data available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, current federal estimates suggest there are 35,686 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth on the streets and in public shelters across the country.<sup>10</sup> Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services targeted to young people.<sup>11</sup>

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

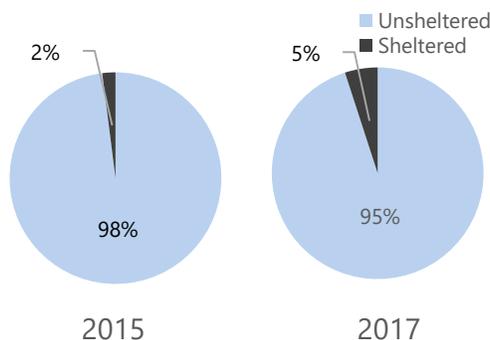
There were 196 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth living in San Luis Obispo County, 23 of whom were under the age of 18. Overall, it represents a decrease of 51% from 2015.

FIGURE 46. TOTAL NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

FIGURE 47. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



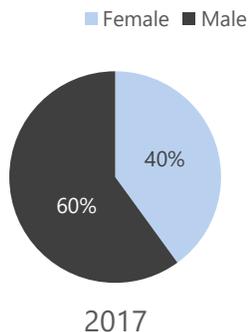
2015 n = 395; 2017 n = 196

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

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

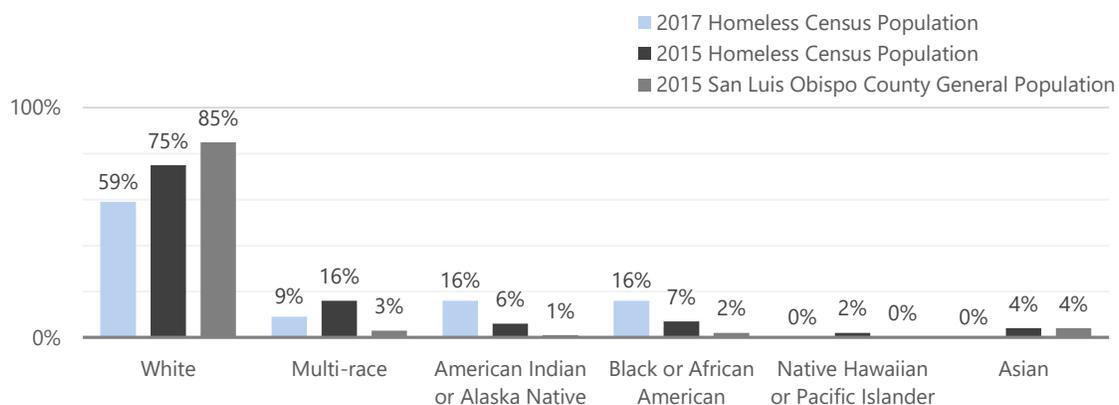
**FIGURE 48. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER**



2017 n= 196

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013-2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

**FIGURE 49. TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE**



2015 n=395; 2017 n=196

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). American Community Survey 2014 1-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.

# Conclusion

Between 2015 and 2017 San Luis Obispo County and its provider partners have made significant investments and reforms to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, moving more people off of the streets and into housing. Point-in-time data indicates a decreased number of individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to 2015. There can be many reasons for the increase, including macroeconomic concerns and difficulties finding locations to live. Additionally, it is worthwhile to compare the decrease in San Luis Obispo County's population to nearby counties, as well as similarly sized counties across the country.

The survey component continues to provide a valuable insight into the experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout San Luis Obispo County. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability, illustrated by the fact that 66% of survey respondents indicated that they had previously experienced homelessness. Knowing where individuals were living before they most recently lost their housing 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, demonstrated by the 74% of the San Luis Obispo survey respondents who reported living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they most recently became homeless. Among San Luis Obispo survey respondents, Nearly two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors: either on the streets, in parks, or in encampment areas. Although pinpointing a single cause of homelessness can be difficult, employment issues and addiction disorders continue to be key contributing factors of homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. Many individuals experiencing homelessness face significant barriers in obtaining permanent housing. Financial obstacles (cost of rent, no income, no money for moving costs, and lack of transportation) and low vacancy rates continue to be barriers limiting individuals from obtaining housing.

There have been a number of accomplishments and improvements from 2015. The data in the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey can help educate the public, service providers, and policy makers on how to best serve the homeless population and help ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time event. Study after study shows that prevention, Housing First initiatives and supportive services are the first steps in ending homelessness, and San Luis Obispo County is working diligently to develop these systems of change. In the interim, there is a lot of work to be done to address the immediate needs of the 780 persons who are unsheltered and in need of assistance.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

## OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2017 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey is to produce a point-in-time estimate of people who experience homelessness in San Luis Obispo County, a region that covers approximately 3,600 square miles. The results of the street count were combined with the results from the shelter and institution count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County on any given night. The subsequent survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those enumerated on the night of the count. A more detailed description of the methodology follows.

## COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The Point-in-Time Count methodology had three primary components:

1. The general street count between the hours of 6:00am to noon on January 30<sup>th</sup> - an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals
2. The youth street count between the hours of 3 pm and 8 pm on January 30<sup>th</sup> – a targeted enumeration of unsheltered youth under the age of 25
3. The shelter count for the night of the street count – an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals staying in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs

The unsheltered and sheltered homeless counts were coordinated to occur within the same time period in order to minimize potential duplicate counting of homeless persons.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

Beginning in November, meetings were held to prepare for the count. These meetings included input gathered from county officials, local service providers, shelter staff, youth outreach teams, youth shelter and program staff and, separately, veteran program staff in order to address specific concerns in counting these populations. These meetings focused on a variety of issues related to the planning process and were focused on a variety of issues, including logistics surrounding the count, volunteer and guide recruitment, outreach to subpopulations, and strategies for covering geographic areas. During this process, valuable feedback and input was gathered from the community and incorporated into the planning process and count preparation.

## STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION

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

### METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

ASR has been working with the county of San Luis Obispo since 2013, so the count has an established and mature methodology that is mostly unchanged on a cycle-to-cycle basis. However, there were a few methodological improvements made in San Luis Obispo County in 2017. First and foremost among those were a few focus groups held with individuals experiencing homelessness in the county. These were designed to gather “hot spot” information – locations in the county that were known as common destinations for the population experiencing homelessness. These locations helped guide a specialty vehicle count and ensure coverage of more difficult to reach areas.

### VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in San Luis Obispo County turned out to support the effort to enumerate the local population experiencing homelessness. More than 50 community volunteers and City and County staff registered to participate in the 2017 general street count. The volunteer recruitment was greatly aided by numerous shelters and day programs from throughout the county. Extensive outreach efforts were conducted, targeting local non-profits that serve the homeless and local volunteer programs, as well as other individuals who may be interested in participating in the count.

To recruit guides, shelters and day programs from throughout the county were asked to identify individuals experiencing homelessness with considerable knowledge of where to find individuals experiencing homelessness on the street, how to find encampments, how to identify if vehicles were being used as sleeping locations, and how to identify situations where safety was a concern. Additionally, shelter and program staffs were asked to recommend guides who were reliable and interested in the process. All guides were paid for their time, earning \$15 per hour worked, including a mandatory one hour training that was held in the days before the count.

### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Safety is of the utmost importance during the count, and every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Information regarding potentially dangerous encampment areas or other locations was shared when appropriate. Techniques for avoiding potentially dangerous situations were shared. The observational nature of the count was emphasized and has been found to be highly successful in minimizing potentially dangerous situations in the past. Volunteers were given guidance on how to act when canvassing encampment areas as well as how to respect a population that was likely to be sleeping. Additionally, the knowledge

and experience of guides are valuable for safety reasons and volunteers and teams are encouraged to listen to their guide when they give suggestions regarding safety.

### STREET COUNT DEPLOYMENT CENTERS

For convenience, four locations were picked to act as deployment centers on the morning of the count: one in Atascadero, one on Morro Bay, one in San Luis Obispo, and one in Arroyo Grande. Volunteers and guides were assigned to either one of these locations based on preference and expected demand. There was staff at each deployment. Staff helped to assemble teams, assign tracts, and manage the check-in once teams returned.

### STREET COUNT TEAMS

Teams are generally comprised of 2 individuals, one volunteer from the community and one guide, generally an individual who is currently experiencing homelessness. Each team is assigned 1-4 census tracts as their assignment, depending on the size of the tracts. They are responsible for covering all areas that are accessible by the public, including parks, streets, business fronts, and wherever the guide believes there may be individuals experiencing homelessness. Teams are encouraged to have their community volunteer drive their vehicle, while the guide acts as a navigator and enumerator during the process. All teams are given a brief refresher training before heading out into the field.

### DATA LIMITATIONS

While efforts were made by the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education to include data on homeless children in schools, time constraints and resources limited these efforts.

In the days before the count, there were significant weather impacts throughout the region. While anecdotal reports indicate that this had an impact on enumeration efforts, the true extent of that impact is unknowable.

## YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### GOAL

The goal of the 2017 dedicated youth count was similar to that of past youth counts in 2015, to be more inclusive of children and youth under the age of 25 experiencing homelessness. Many of these children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth.

HUD has announced that the youth count in 2017 will be the “baseline” for future years, serving as a barometer to gauge the effectiveness of future efforts to end homelessness amongst children and youth. Recognizing that youth have been underrepresented in the past and need special outreach to make sure it doesn’t happen again, ASR worked with San Luis Obispo County to develop a localized strategy to better include unaccompanied children and youth under 25 in the count. Just as in past years, the goal was to improve upon the process, not just replicate what was done in past years.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Planning for the 2017 supplemental youth count included many youth homeless service providers. Local providers worked with ASR staff to conduct focus groups to identify “hot spot” locations where homeless youth were known to congregate. Service providers throughout the county were asked to recruit currently homeless youth to participate in the count. Youth workers were paid \$15 per hour for their time, including the training conducted prior to the count. Youth were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data. It has been recognized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness that youth do not commonly congregate with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth. For this reason, they have accepted and recommended that communities count youth at times when they can be seen, rather than during general outreach times.

## DATA COLLECTION

It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours, rather than in the evening when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately 3 PM to 8 PM on January 30, 2017. Youth worked in teams of two to four people, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers.

## SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

### GOAL

The goal of the shelter count was to gain an accurate count of the number of homeless persons who were being temporarily housed in shelters across San Luis Obispo County.

### DEFINITION

An individual or family 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).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

Data was collected from shelters on the night of January 29<sup>th</sup>. The Coalition of Homeless Service Providers used the HMIS data management system to gather data on shelters in San Luis Obispo County. HMIS provides data on all individuals staying in shelters, including household status, age, gender, and race and ethnicity.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 170 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community 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, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, and

closed-ended questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

This year the County integrated a vulnerability index survey based on the VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) into the general homeless survey component of the Point-In-Time Count. This change in methodology led to a considerably longer and more challenging survey to administer, leading to a significant reduction in the overall number of surveys completed as well as a reduction in the ability to monitor and control the quality of the survey sample and therefore the representativeness of the respondents to the overall sheltered and unsheltered population. This year's survey was administered primarily by community volunteers, although some homeless workers and shelter staff assisted as well community volunteers, compared to previous years where a peer-to-peer method utilizing paid persons currently or recently experiencing homelessness. Because of these differences and methodological changes, this year's survey data is not considered to be comparable to previous years.

#### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

The 2017 San Luis Obispo County Survey was administered by the trained survey team between January 31<sup>th</sup> and April 18<sup>th</sup>. In all, the survey team collected 170 surveys.

#### SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time estimate of 1,125 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 170 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 6.9% with an 84% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County.

Strategic attempts were made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence victims, and families.

#### DATA COLLECTION

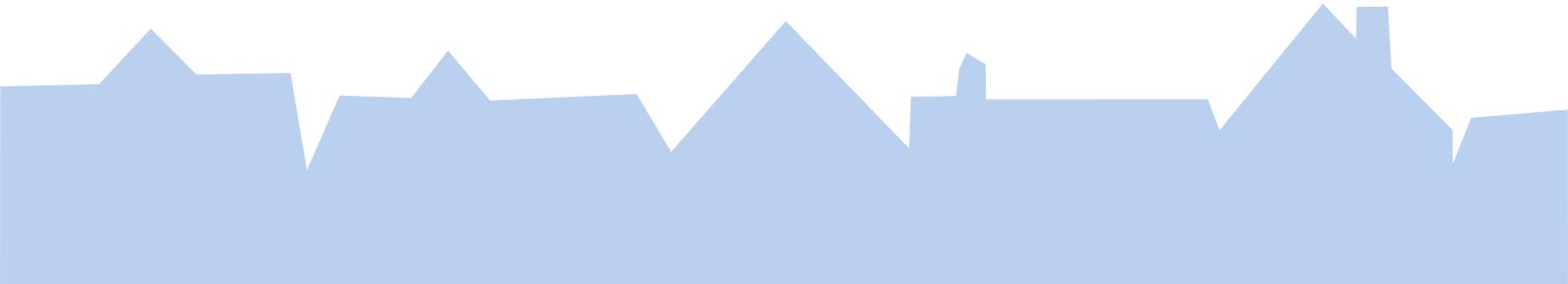
Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the street or shelter location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to be candid in their responses and were informed that these responses would be framed as general findings,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

# Appendix 2: Definitions & Abbreviations

- The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and 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 cumulative total of the four occasions is at least one year. Disabling condition, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or a developmental disability. A health condition has an impact on housing stability or employment.
- *Emergency shelter* is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets in a shelter facility. 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 victims and their children.
- *Family* is defined as a household with at least one adult and one child under 18.
- *Homeless* under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (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* is the abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- *Sheltered homeless individuals* are those homeless individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.
- *Single individual* refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth, age 18 and over.
- *Transition-Age Youth (TAY)* refers to an unaccompanied youth aged 18-24 years.
- *Transitional housing* facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. It is 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* refers to children under the age of 18 who do not have a parent or guardian present.
- *Unsheltered homeless individuals* are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.

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# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

**2017** HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY  
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

