

2013 San Luis Obispo

HOMELESS

P O I N T - I N - T I M E

CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



Report Produced by Applied Survey Research
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Homeless Services Oversight Council

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ASR is a non-profit social research organization with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and research. ASR operates out of three offices in California, in the Central Coast, the Bay Area, and Southern California.

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INTRODUCTION

Close to two million people in the United States experience homelessness each year.¹ For most, this is caused by the gap between income and the cost of housing. Yet for many, health conditions, mental illness, substance abuse, trauma, and lack of support services prevent them from obtaining stable housing.

Every two years, all jurisdictions across the United States receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for the homeless are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct a point-in-time count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons at a single time during the last ten days of January. The data collected through these counts help the federal government and local jurisdictions better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Additionally, local jurisdictions use the findings of their point-in-time count to apply for federal funding for homeless programs. In 2013, the San Luis Obispo County Continuum of Care is expected to receive slightly over \$1 million in federal funds for homeless services.

Project Overview & Goals

San Luis Obispo County partnered with Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO), El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), and received technical assistance from Applied Survey Research (ASR), on the 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey.

Together, they identified several important project goals:

- » To obtain an accurate count of the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the county;
- » To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;
- » To enhance the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- » To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population, and to track progress toward ending homelessness; and
- » To assess the status of specific subpopulations.

In this study, HUD's definition of homelessness for point-in-time counts was used. The 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.²

The methodology had three major components:

1. **Shelter Count:** A point-in-time count of the sheltered homeless population on the night of January 22, 2013, including those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and hotels/motels using vouchers;
2. **Street Count:** A point-in-time count of the unsheltered homeless population on January 23, 2013 from approximately 6 a.m. to noon, including those living outdoors (on the street, in vehicles, in encampments); and
3. **Survey:** A qualitative survey of a representative sample of the homeless population, administered between February 4, 2013 and March 15, 2013 used to profile the homeless experience and characteristics of San Luis Obispo County's homeless population.

For a detailed explanation of the methodology used for the 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey, please refer to Appendix I.

The results of both the census and survey presented in this report provide invaluable data about the size and characteristics of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County. These data can help guide community-wide efforts to mitigate and end homelessness.

COUNT OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The 2013 point-in-time count included a complete enumeration of all sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons residing in San Luis Obispo County. The following section presents the results from the point-in-time count, including breakdowns by household type, age, gender, and geographic region. Additionally, an annual count is included to give an estimate of the number of unique persons who experience homelessness throughout a given year in San Luis Obispo County as many more persons experience homelessness in a calendar year who are not represented in a point-in-time assessment methodology.

Total Population

A total of 2,186 homeless individuals were counted in San Luis Obispo County on January 23, 2013. The 2013 count represents a 3% increase from 2,129 individuals who met HUD's definition of homelessness in 2011. Of the 2013 point-in-time homeless population, the majority (89%) was unsheltered.

When looking at the homeless population by region, 38% were counted in South County, 34% were in San Luis Obispo, 21% were in North County, and 6% were in the Coastal region.³

As the homeless count on January 23, 2013 only provides a snapshot of homelessness in San Luis Obispo County at one single point-in-time, it may not adequately reflect the number of people experiencing homelessness at a different time of year or the number of people who access the homeless support system over a given year. Therefore, an annual estimation formula was used to extrapolate the number of persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County over the course of a year. This estimate was 3,497 unique homeless persons experiencing homelessness in 2013, which represents over 1% of the overall population of 271,969 people in San Luis Obispo County.⁴

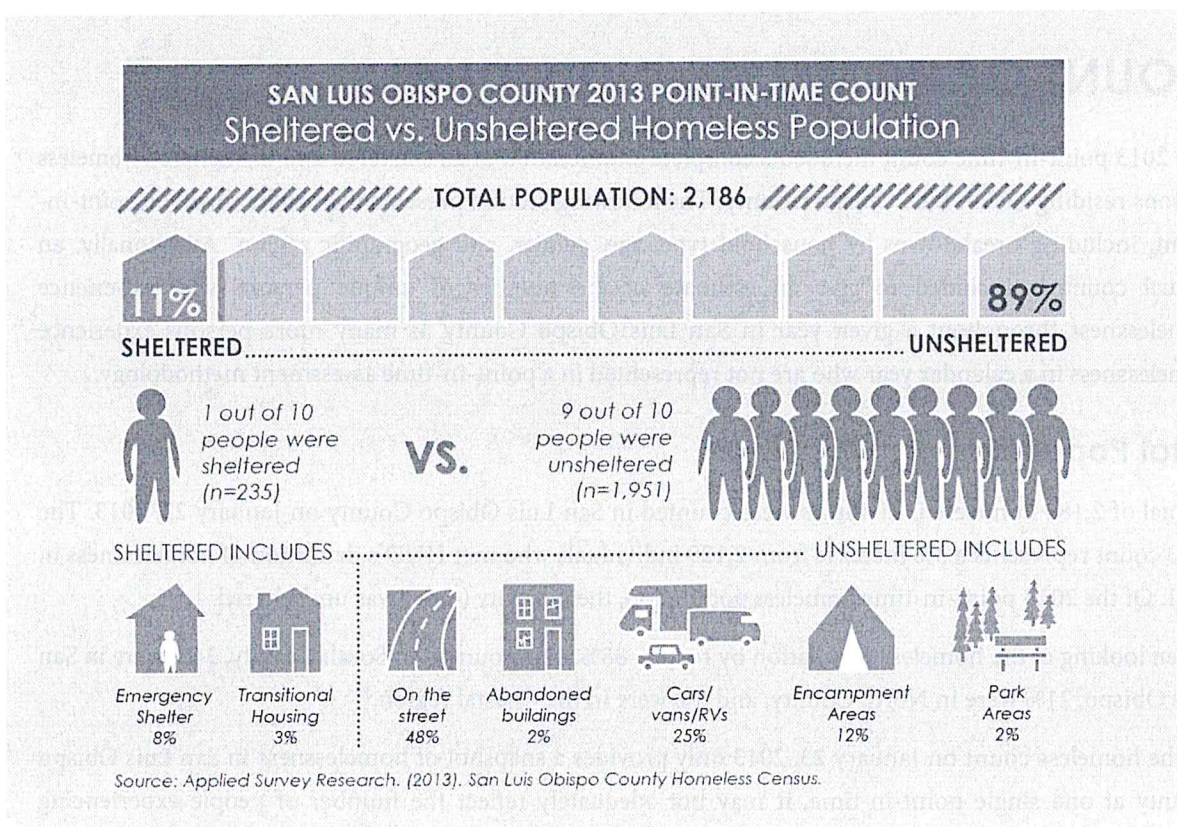
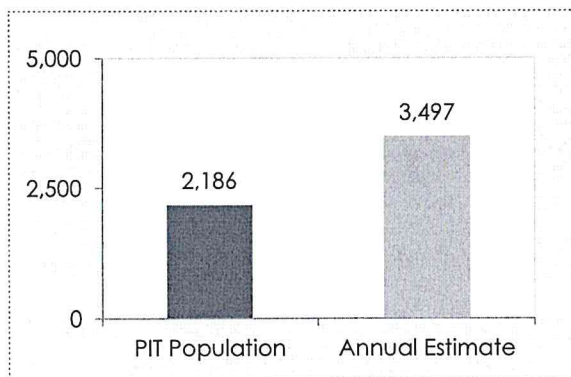


Figure 1: Total Point-in-Time (PIT) Homeless Population and Annual Estimate



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

Figure 2: Total PIT Population by Shelter Status

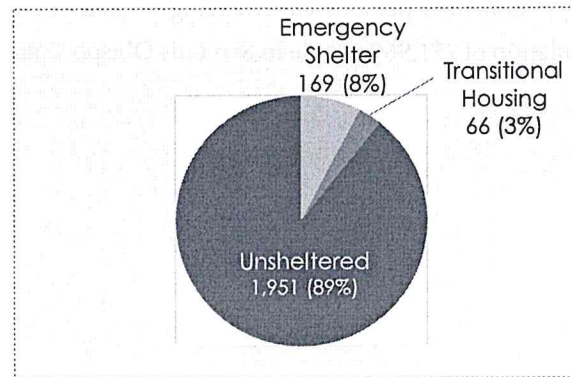
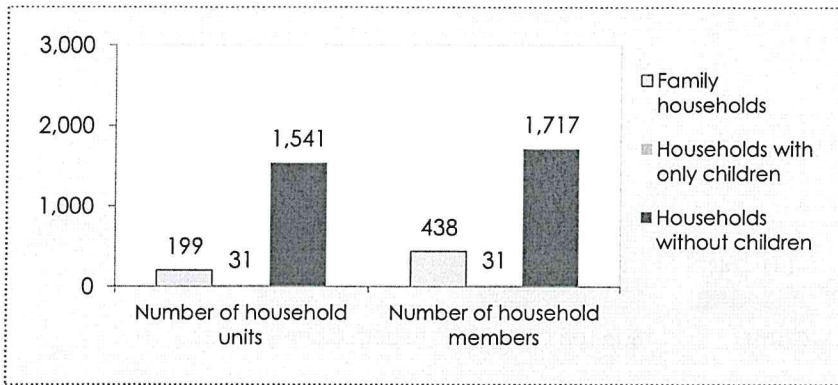


Figure 3: Total PIT Population by Household Type



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

Figure 4: Total PIT Population by Age

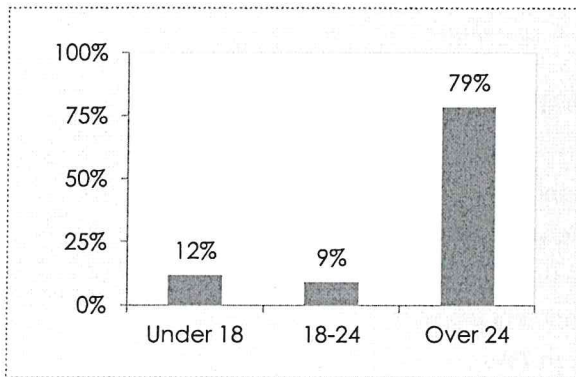
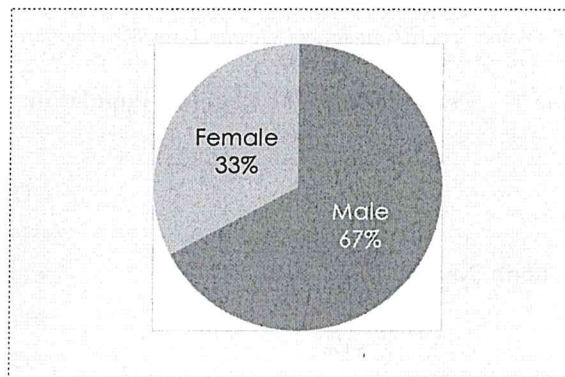
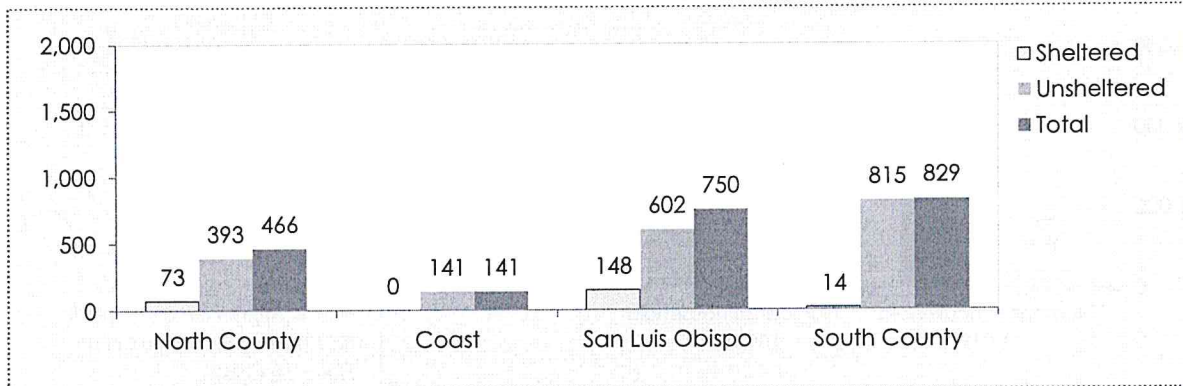


Figure 5: Total PIT Population by Gender



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

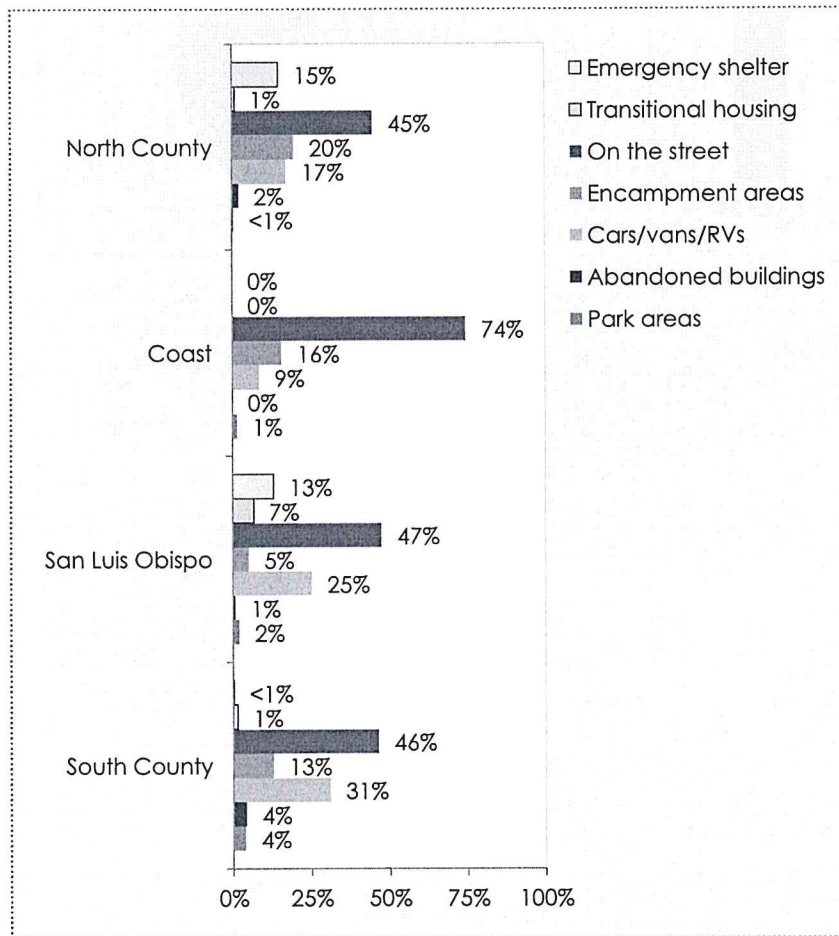
Figure 6: Total PIT Population by Region



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

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

Figure 7: Percentage of PIT Regional Population by Sleeping Accommodation

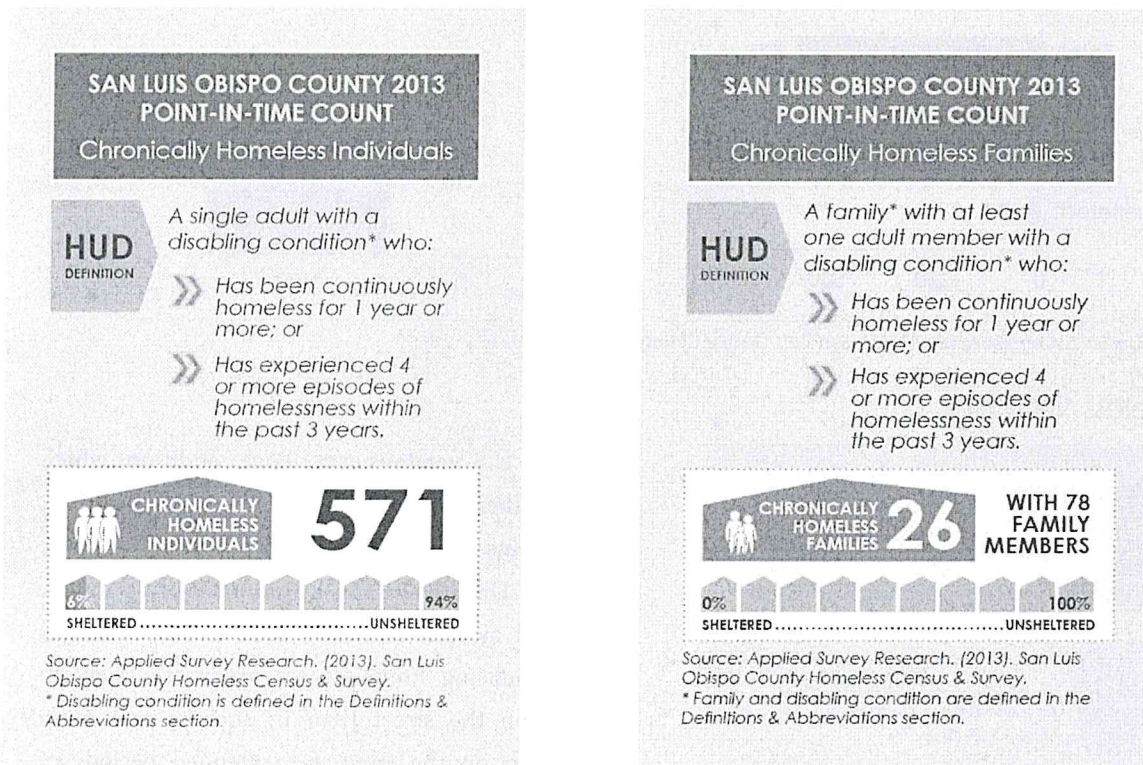


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.
 Note: Regional percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HUD-Prioritized Subpopulations

In order to move towards the goal of ending homelessness, the federal government has identified four primary subpopulations to focus on: chronically homeless individuals and families, homeless veterans, homeless families, and unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth.⁵ The following section of the report provides a summary of findings on the count of these homeless subpopulations.

Chronically Homeless Individuals & Families



The mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population.⁶ The public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to existing poverty and homeless services.⁷

Over one-quarter (26%) of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County were chronically homeless in 2013. The large majority (94%) of chronically homeless persons were unsheltered. Additionally, there were a total of 26 chronically homeless families with 78 family members. All persons in chronically homeless families (100%) were unsheltered and represent nearly one-quarter of all homeless families.

The percentage of chronically homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County in 2013 (26%) was higher than that of the nation in 2012 (16%).⁸ The federal strategic plan to end homelessness includes a plan to end chronic homelessness by 2015 by focusing on permanent supportive housing and Housing First options for those with the greatest needs and barriers to housing stability.

Figure 8: Chronically Homeless Persons (Estimated Number of Persons)

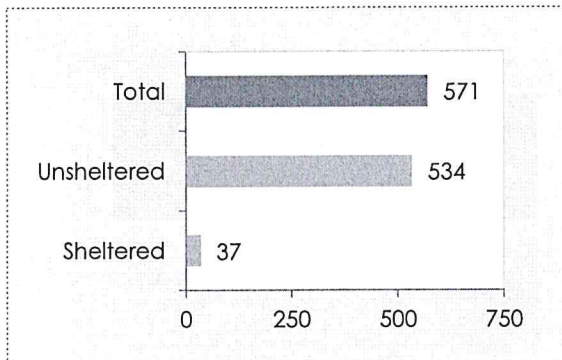
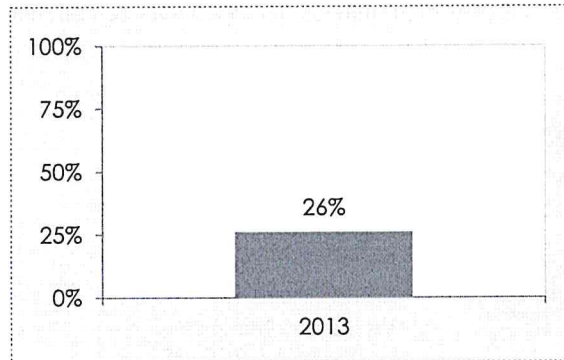


Figure 9: Chronically Homeless Persons (Percent of PIT Population)



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

Homeless Veterans

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY 2013
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT
Veterans**

HUD
DEFINITION: Veterans are adults who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States.*

VA VETERANS 239

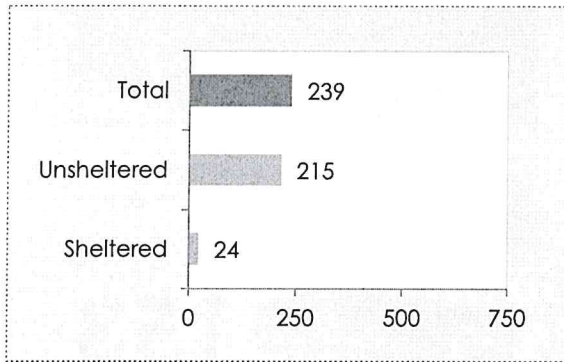
10% SHELTERED 90% UNSHELTERED

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey.
* This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Many U.S. veterans experience conditions which place them at an increased risk for homelessness. Veterans have higher rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, sexual assault, and substance abuse.⁹ 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.¹⁰

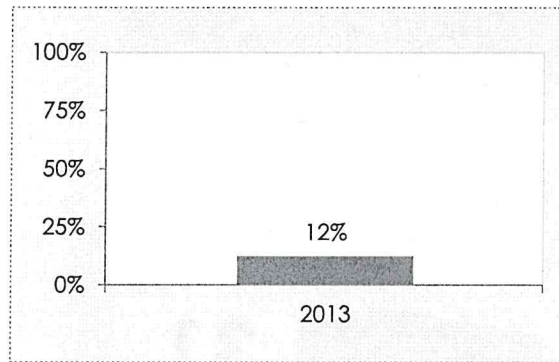
There were a total of 239 homeless veterans in San Luis Obispo County in 2013, which represents 12% of the adult homeless population, a slightly smaller percentage than the national percentage in 2012 (13%).¹¹ Ninety percent of homeless veterans were unsheltered and 5% were female.

Figure 10: Homeless Veterans (Estimated Number of Persons)



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

Figure 11: Homeless Veterans (Percent of Adult PIT Population)



Homeless Families with Children

**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY 2013
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

Families

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

HOMELESS FAMILIES 199 WITH 438 FAMILY MEMBERS

21% SHELTERED* UNSHELTERED* 79%

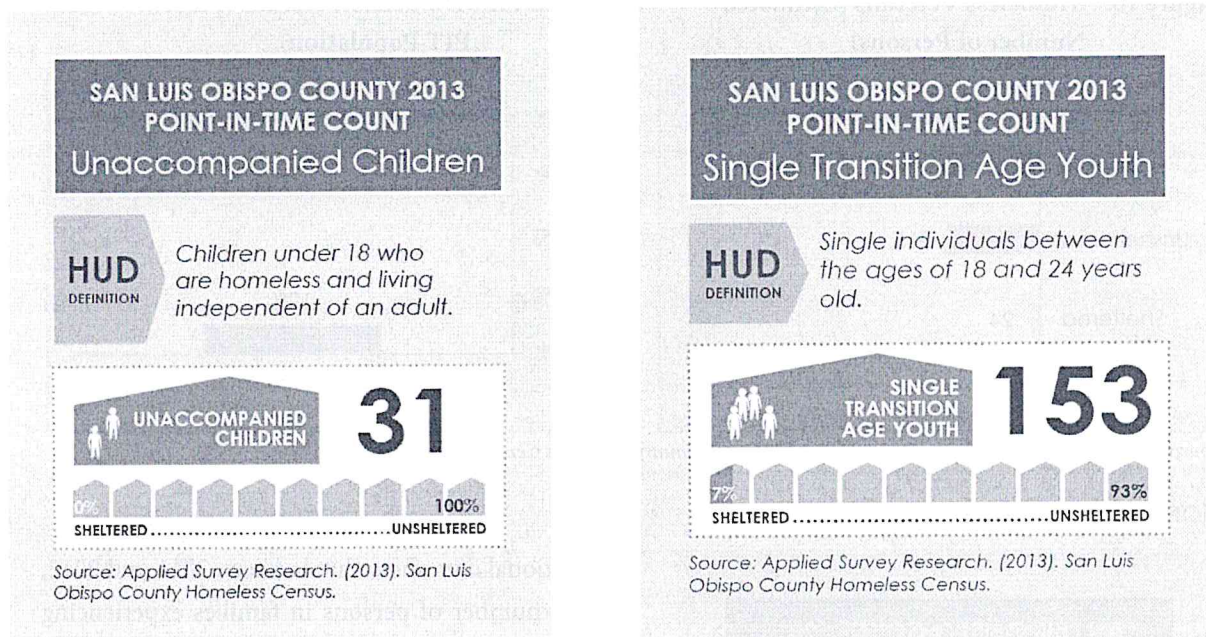
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.
* Percentages are based on the shelter status of family members.

Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidences of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable housing.¹²

National data show that between 2011 and 2012, the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness has increased by over 1%.¹³

In San Luis Obispo County, there were 199 homeless families, with 438 family members, who met the HUD definition of homelessness in 2013. This represents 20% of the overall homeless population, which is about half of the national percentage (38%).¹⁴ It is important to note that the HUD definition of homelessness is the most restrictive of the varying federal definitions of homelessness. Thus, the point-in-time count did not include those families who were doubled up with other family members due to economic necessity and who were defined as homeless under the broader definition used by the U.S. Department of Education. San Luis Obispo County included such families in the 2011 enumeration, but not in the 2013 report.

Unaccompanied Homeless Children & Single Transition Age Youth



While there is little documentation of the extent of homelessness among unaccompanied children and transition age youth, there is evidence to suggest a growing national subpopulation.¹⁵ In 2013, HUD strongly promoted an effort to develop dedicated unaccompanied children counts because of the especially elusive nature of this age group, but this was unfortunately not able to be accomplished within the scope of this project. In San Luis Obispo County, there were a total of 31 unaccompanied homeless children under the age of 18 and 153 single transition age youth (18-24 years old) who were counted in 2013.

In total, the 184 unaccompanied homeless children and single transition age youth comprised 8% of the total point-in-time homeless population in San Luis Obispo County. The large majority (93%) of unaccompanied homeless children and single transition age youth who met the HUD definition of homelessness were unsheltered. It should be noted that no local shelter in San Luis Obispo County will accept unaccompanied children, so unaccompanied homeless children must either lived doubled up with others or live unsheltered. Data from the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education indicate that the vast majority of homeless unaccompanied children in the County are living doubled up with others, but because the HUD definition excludes those living doubled up, this enumeration does not include those children.

CHARACTERISTICS & EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The following section provides an overview of the findings generated from a representative survey of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County. Included in this section is qualitative information about the homeless population, including causes and length of homelessness, previous living accommodations, and obstacles to obtaining permanent housing. The following section highlights qualitative data obtained from a survey of 385 homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County in 2013.

Brief Snapshot of the Homeless Population

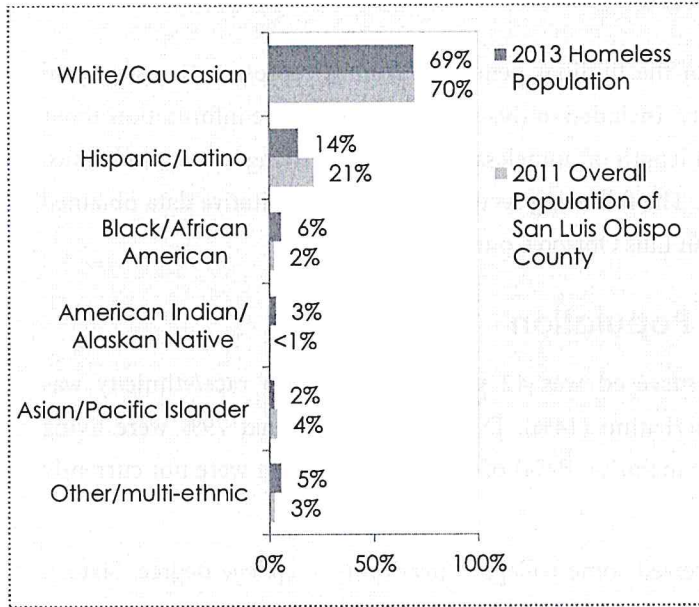
The mean age of the homeless population surveyed was 42 years old. The top race/ethnicity was White/Caucasian (69%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (14%). Data also showed that 79% were living alone. Almost half (48%) had children, and the majority (84%) of those with children were not currently living with their children.

One third of the homeless population had received some college education or a college degree. Sixteen percent had been in foster care, which is significantly higher than the general population rate and is an unfortunate gateway to homelessness. While the unemployment rate for the overall population in San Luis Obispo County was 8% in January 2013, the unemployment rate among the homeless population was 75%.¹⁶ Of unemployed homeless individuals, the majority (73%) had been unemployed for one year or more.

In 2013, respondents were asked to identify their sexual orientation for the first time because national research shows a higher prevalence of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Questioning (LGBTQ) individuals, especially among homeless youth.¹⁷ In San Luis Obispo County, 6% of the homeless population identified as bisexual, gay, or lesbian.

Race/Ethnicity

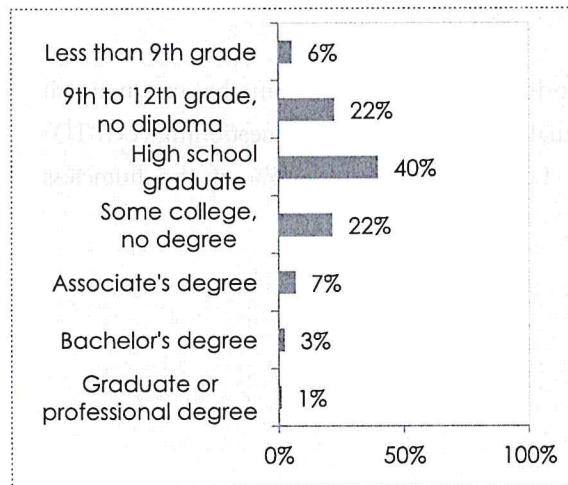
Figure 12: Race/Ethnic Distribution



N: 2013 homeless=385; 2011 overall=271,969.
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey. U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
 Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

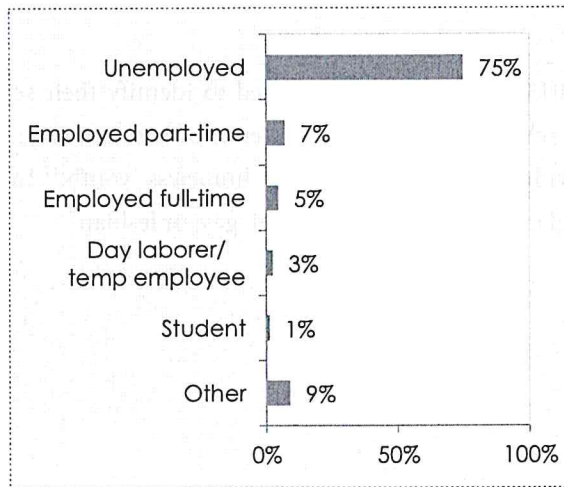
Education & Employment

Figure 13: Educational Attainment



N=379
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.
 Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

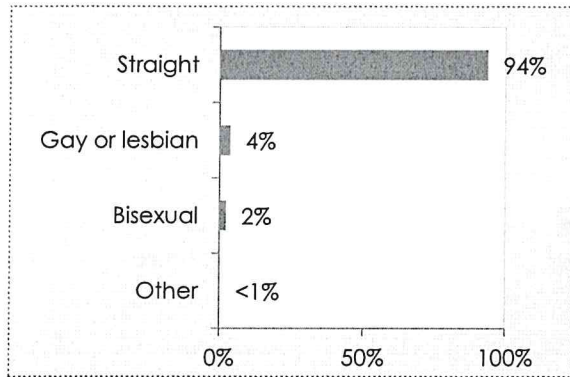
Figure 14: Current Employment Status



N=375

Sexual Orientation

Figure 15: Sexual Orientation

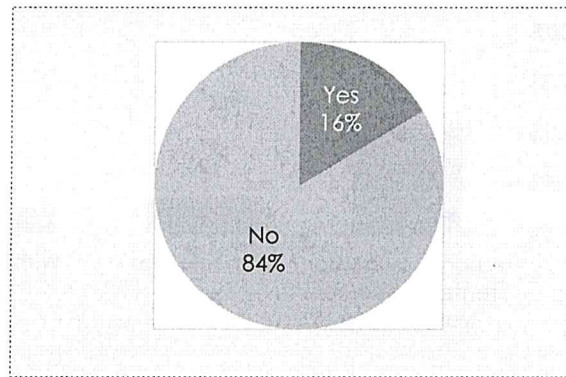


N=347

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

Foster Care

Figure 16: Percent Ever in Foster Care

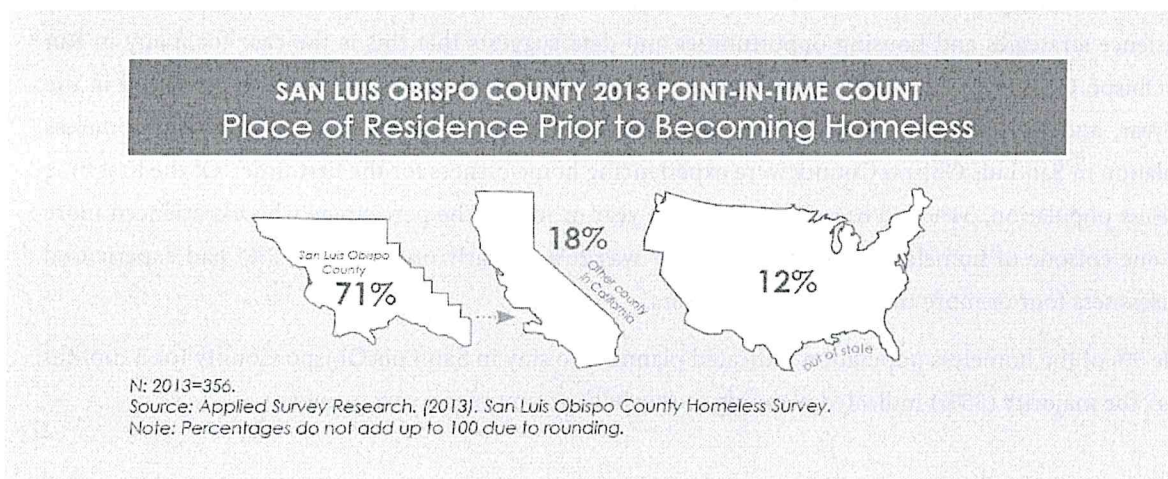


N=381

Prior to Becoming Homeless

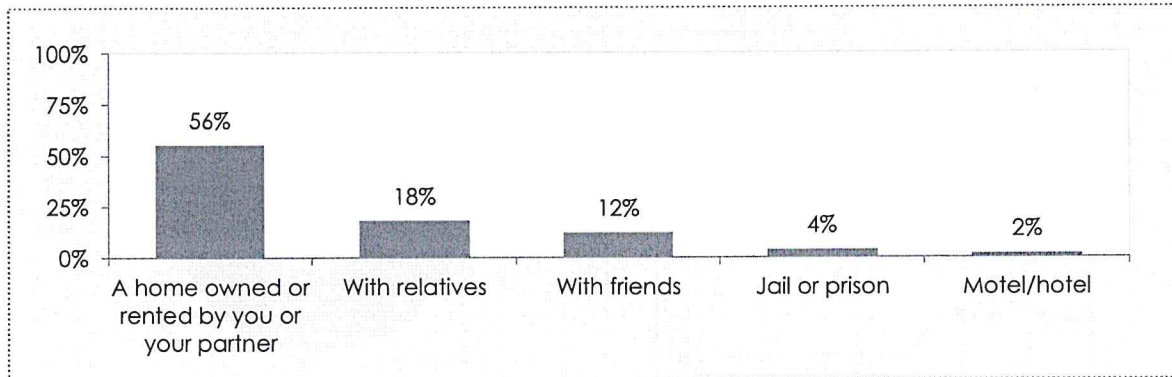
The majority (71%) of the homeless population were living in San Luis Obispo County when they became homeless. Of those, 60% had been living San Luis Obispo County for 10 years or more. In terms of living accommodations prior to becoming homeless, over half (56%) were living in a home owned or rented by them or their partner and 18% were living with relatives.

Prior Place of Residence



Prior Living Accommodations

Figure 17: Living Accommodations Immediately Prior to Becoming Homeless (Top 5 Responses)



N=373

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey*.

Becoming Homeless

An individual's experience with homelessness is often the result of multiple and compounding causes originating at both the individual and community level.¹⁸

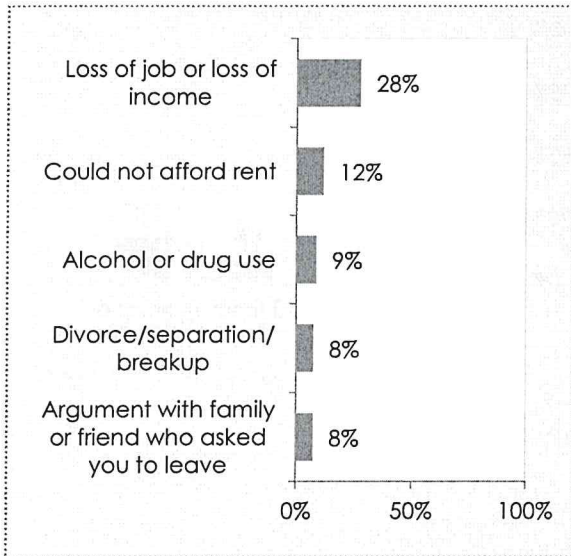
In a struggling economy, many face financial vulnerability to homelessness.¹⁹ The most commonly self-reported primary cause of homelessness in San Luis Obispo County was the loss of a job or income (28%).

The experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of residential instability for many homeless individuals. Individuals may fall in and out of homelessness as they piece together different subsistence strategies and housing opportunities and data suggests that this is the case for many in San Luis Obispo County. When asked about the number of homeless episodes they have experienced in the past year, and in the past 3 years in a subsequent question, data showed half (50%) of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County were experiencing homelessness for the first time. Of the first time homeless population, 34% had been homeless for a year or more. The percentage who experienced more than one episode of homelessness in the past year was 26%. Nearly one in five (17%) had experienced homelessness four or more times in the past 3 years.

While 9% of the homeless population indicated planning to stay in San Luis Obispo County for 3 months or less, the majority (85%) indicated planning to stay in the county for a year or more.

Causes of Homelessness

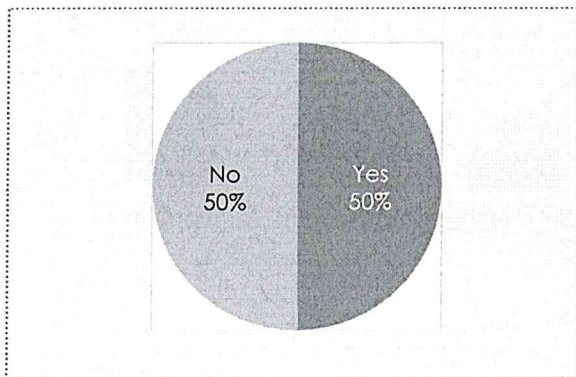
Figure 18: Primary Causes of Current Episode of Homelessness (Top 5 Responses)



N=346
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

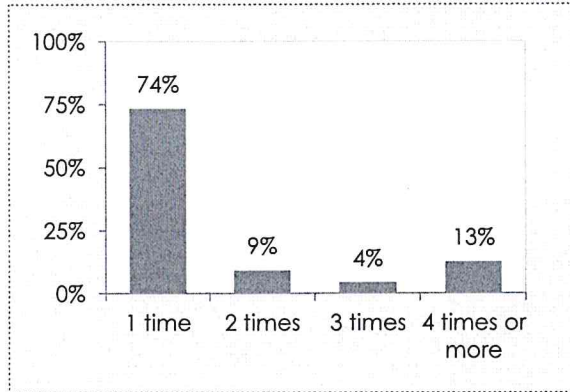
Episodes of Homelessness

Figure 19: Percent Experiencing Homelessness for the First Time



N=385
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

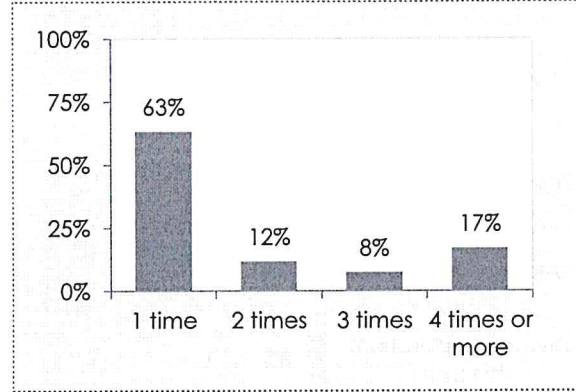
Figure 20: Homeless Episodes in the Last 12 Months (Including This Current Time)



N=385

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

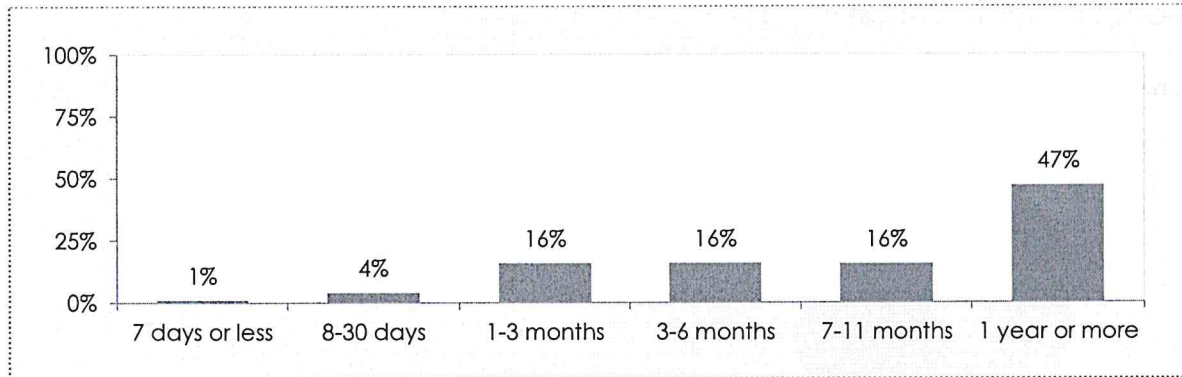
Figure 21: Homeless Episodes in the Last 3 Years (Including This Current Time)



N=385

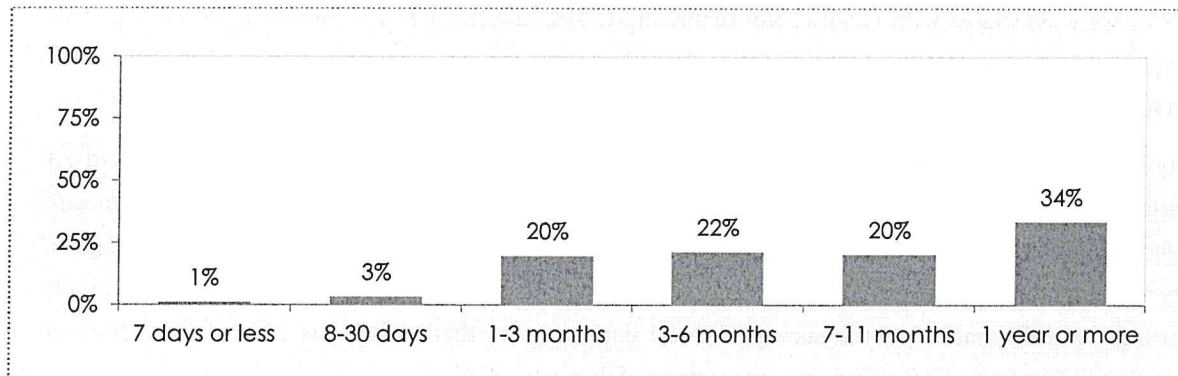
Length of Homelessness

Figure 22: Length of Current Episode of Homelessness (Overall)



N=364

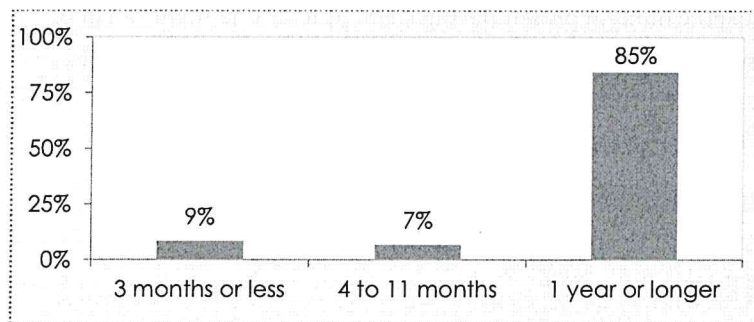
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

Figure 23: Length of Homelessness (Of Those Experiencing Homelessness for the First Time)

N=181

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

Current County Residency

Figure 24: Length of Time Planned to Stay in San Luis Obispo County

N=362

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013).
San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due
to rounding.

Health, Economic & Social Barriers

Qualitative data about the homeless population showed that individuals experience many health, economic, and social barriers while homeless reinforcing the need to provide supportive services along with permanent shelter. For instance, 66% of the homeless population self-reported currently experiencing at least one HUD-defined disabling condition.²⁰ Of those experiencing a disabling condition, 60% indicated that it limits their ability to get or keep a job or take care of personal matters, such as taking care of themselves or getting around in the community.

It is estimated that 1,055 homeless individuals (48% of the homeless population) in San Luis Obispo County were currently experiencing a severe mental illness (including chronic depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or another mental illness such as bipolar or schizophrenia) in 2013. An estimated 263 homeless individuals (12%) were currently experiencing chronic substance abuse. Additionally, 38% of the homeless population had sustained a head injury or been knocked unconscious (a sign of a traumatic brain injury), which has been linked to many mental health disabilities.

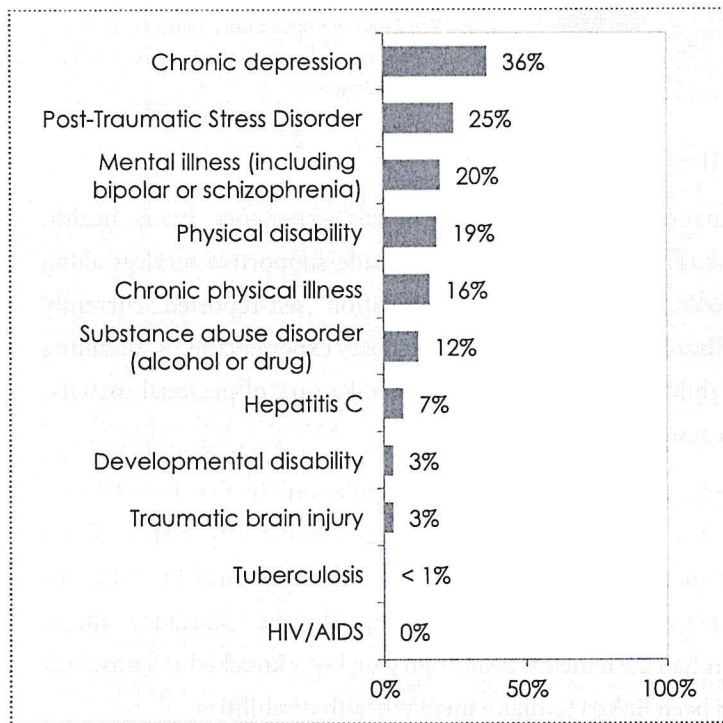
When asked about obstacles to securing employment and permanent housing, the most commonly cited obstacles were associated with income. Not surprisingly, 41% said that a lack of jobs was preventing them from getting employment, and 61% cited their inability to afford rent as a circumstance preventing them from securing permanent housing.

Safety and lack of sanctuary is another important issue for the homeless population. An estimated 58 homeless individuals (3% of the homeless population) were currently experiencing home/domestic violence or abuse. It should be noted that this domestic violence data was self-reported, and therefore is likely an under-representation as victims may have been with their abuser or felt uncomfortable about reporting this information to the surveyor. Local data suggests that as high as 25% of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County were victims of domestic violence.

Further, individuals emancipated from institutions face an increased risk for homelessness, finding greater barriers to employment and housing opportunities, and unprepared for life outside of these institutions. At the same time, those experiencing homelessness are more susceptible to incarceration that creates additional legal and economic barriers to permanent housing. More than one in three homeless individuals (38%) in San Luis Obispo County reported having spent at least one night in jail or prison in the past year. One in five homeless individuals reported currently being on probation or parole.

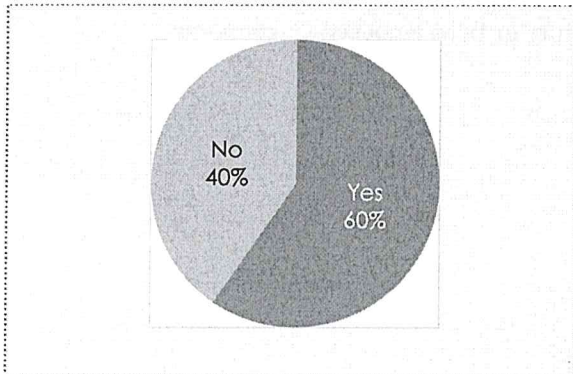
HUD-Defined Disabling Conditions

Figure 25: Type of HUD-Defined Disabling Conditions Currently Experienced



N=365
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013).
 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.
 Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 as
 this was a multiple response question.

Figure 26: Percentage Who Indicated that These Conditions Limit Their Ability to Get or a Job or Take Care of Personal Matters

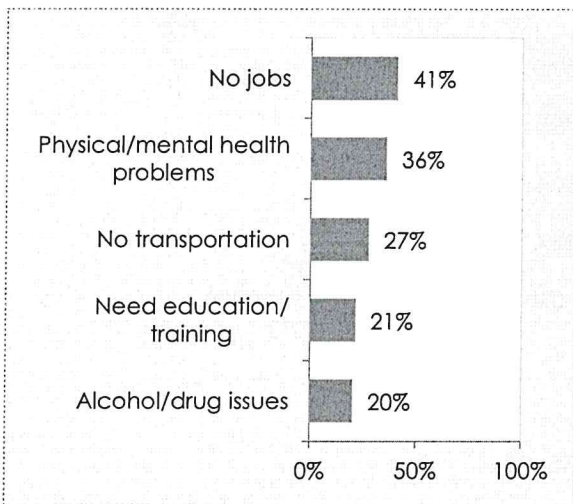


N=230

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

Obstacles to Securing Employment & Permanent Housing

Figure 27: Obstacles to Securing Employment (Top 5 Responses)

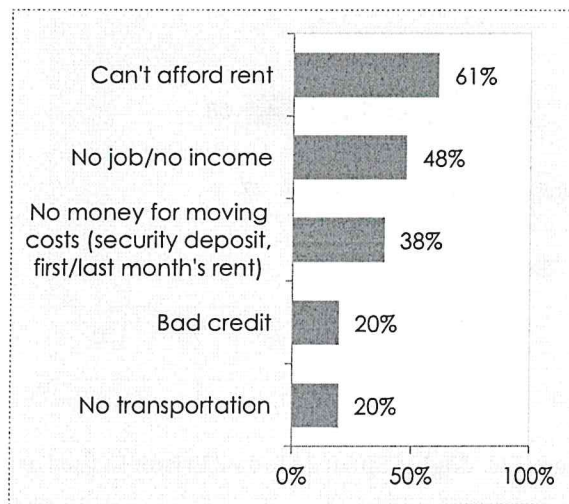


N=277

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

Note: "Obstacles to securing employment" data are of those who indicated being unemployed. Percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple response question.

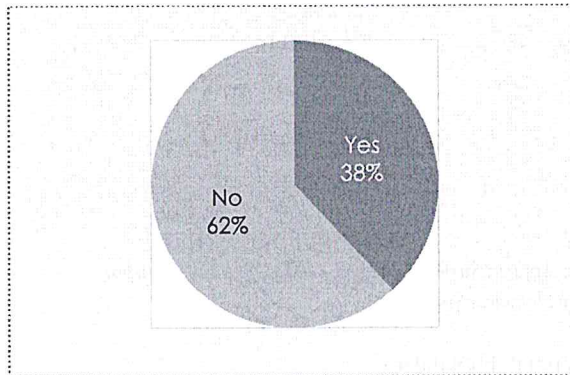
Figure 28: Obstacles to Securing Permanent Housing (Top 5 Responses)



N=367

Safety, Violence & Criminal Justice

Figure 29: Percent Who Have Ever Sustained a Head Injury or Been Knocked Unconscious



N=380

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

Figure 30: Current Experience of Home/Domestic Violence or Abuse (Estimated Number of Persons)

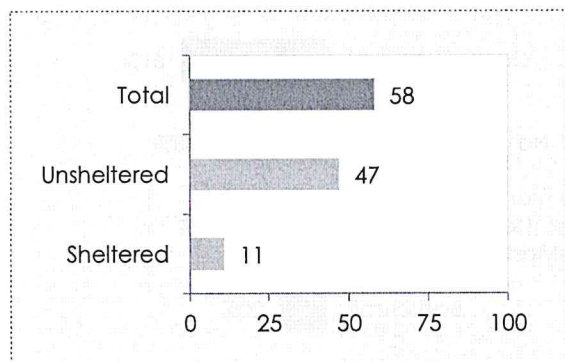
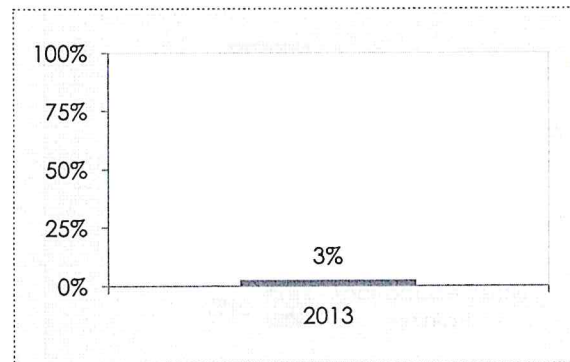
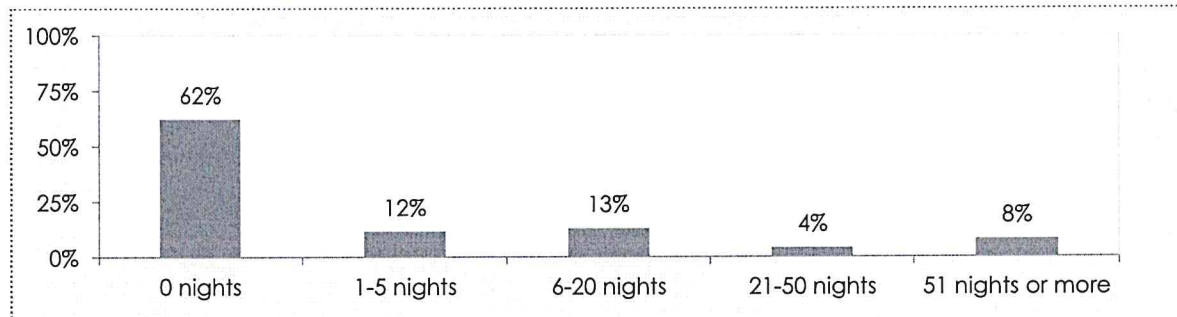


Figure 31: Current Experience of Home/Domestic Violence or Abuse (Percent of PIT Population)



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

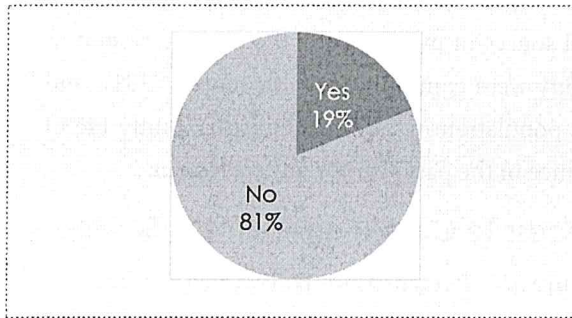
Figure 32: Nights Spent in Jail or Prison in the Last 12 Months



N=385

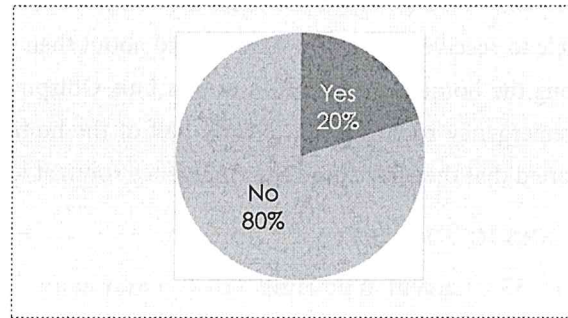
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 33: On Probation or Parole At the Most Recent Time of Becoming Homeless

N=381

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

Figure 34: Currently On Probation or Parole

N=352

Access to Support Services

To help them cope with the multiple challenges they encounter, many homeless individuals depend greatly on supportive services. For instance, 47% of the homeless population has attempted to stay at an emergency shelter in San Luis Obispo County, and 35% reported having attempted to access case management services. Currently, San Luis Obispo County can only house 10% of the homeless population.

Current research and best practices in homelessness increasingly indicate the diversity of the homeless population and the need for flexible outreach, housing, treatment, and services strategies. Limited resources have hindered many CoCs from developing the full range of customized strategies, which in turn may result in reduced contact with the care system. This also results in the promotion of the common community misconception that many local homeless do not want permanent housing, when the data indicated they do want permanent housing if it is appropriate, flexible, and available to them. The San Luis Obispo County survey data confirms this.

Over half (60%) of homeless individuals reported receiving government assistance in 2013, including Food Stamps/Cal Fresh. Utilization of other services and assistance, such as free meals and health services, were also reported by 67% of the homeless population. Of those who were not receiving government assistance, the most commonly cited reason was thinking they were not eligible (31%).

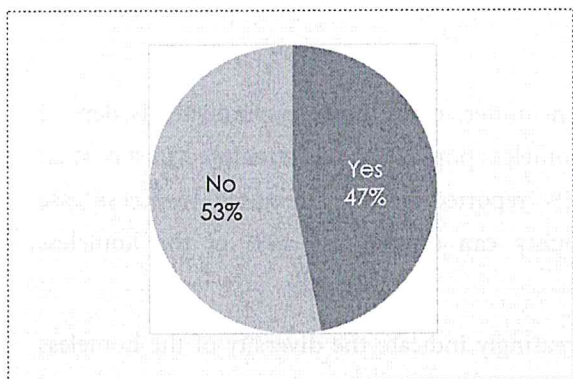
Access to medical care is vital to the health of many homeless individuals struggling with medical issues. It is estimated that when admitted to a hospital, those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.²¹ Without regular access to health care, homeless individuals not only suffer from longer hospitalizations, but also from preventable illness and a higher rate of premature death. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, the average life

expectancy for a person without permanent housing was between 42 and 52 years, more than 25 years younger than the average person in the United States.²²

Nearly one-third (33%) of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County needed health care and were unable to receive it in 2013. When asked about their usual source of medical care, the top two responses among the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County were community health centers (38%) and the emergency room (37%). Nearly half of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County (46%) reported that they have used the emergency room at least once in the past year for any treatment.

Access to Shelters

Figure 35: Percent Who Have Tried to Stay at an Emergency Shelter in San Luis Obispo County

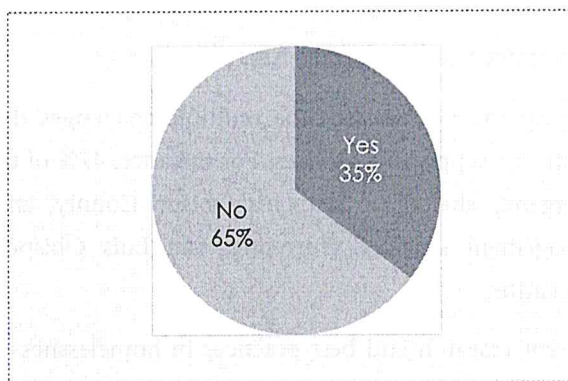


N=380

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

Access to Case Management Services

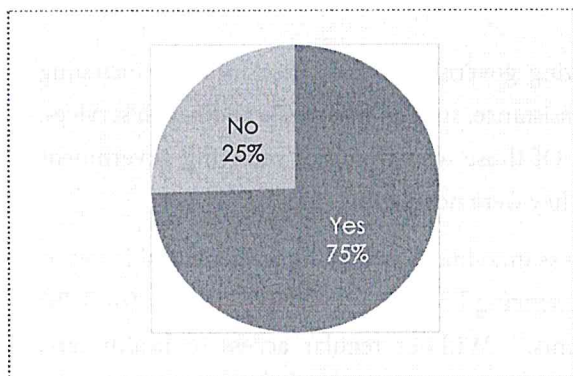
Figure 36: Percent Who Have Tried to Access Case Management Services in San Luis Obispo County



N=380

Access to Food

Figure 37: Percent Who Usually Get Enough to Eat

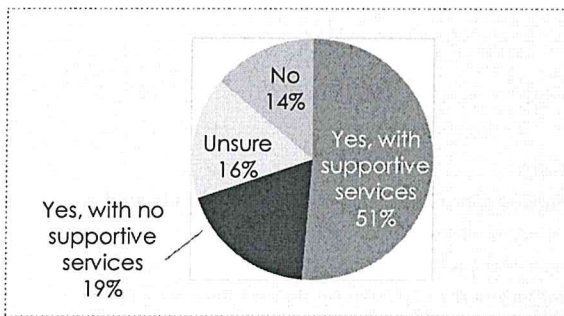


N=362

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

Access to Permanent Housing

Figure 38: Percent Who Would Want to Move into Safe, Affordable Permanent Housing If It Were Available

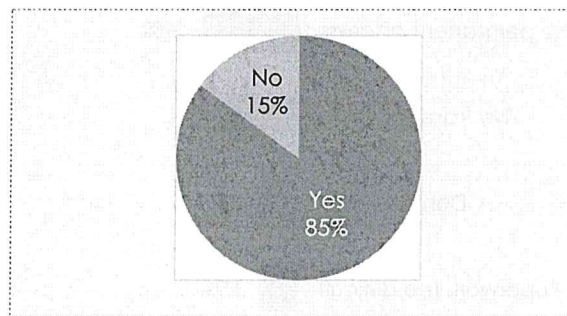


N=384

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

Note: "Percent interested in accessing services" data are of those who indicated that they would want to move into safe, affordable permanent housing (with and without supportive services).

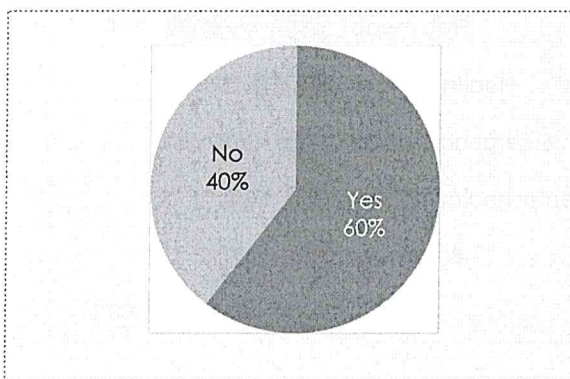
Figure 39: Percent Interested in Accessing Services to Help Make this Transition



N=250

Government Assistance

Figure 40: Percent Receiving Government Assistance

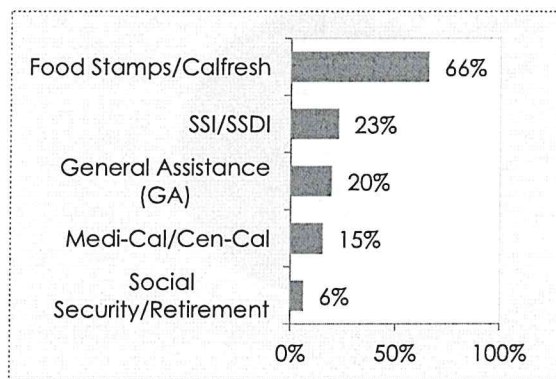


N=381

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

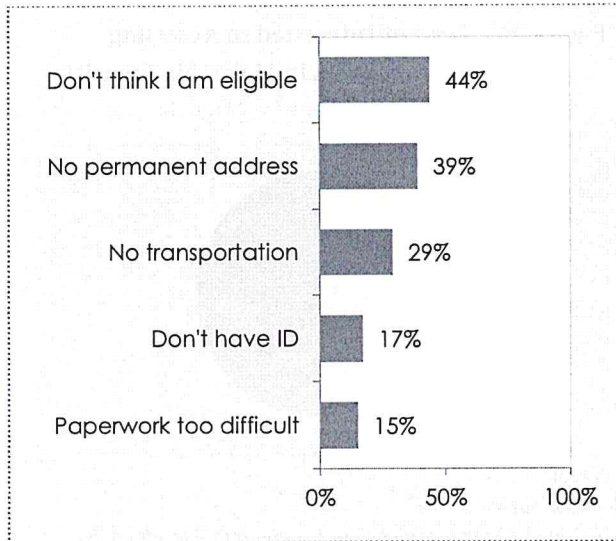
Note: "Types of assistance received" data are of those who indicated that they were receiving some form of government assistance and percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Figure 41: Types of Government Assistance Received (Top 5 Responses)



N=230

Figure 42: Reasons for Not Receiving Government Assistance (Top 5 Responses)



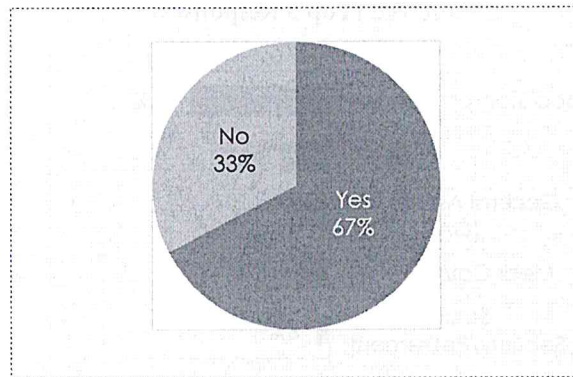
N=105

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

Note: This question was only asked of those who indicated that they were not receiving any government assistance. Percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Other Services and Assistance

Figure 43: Percent Utilizing Services/Assistance

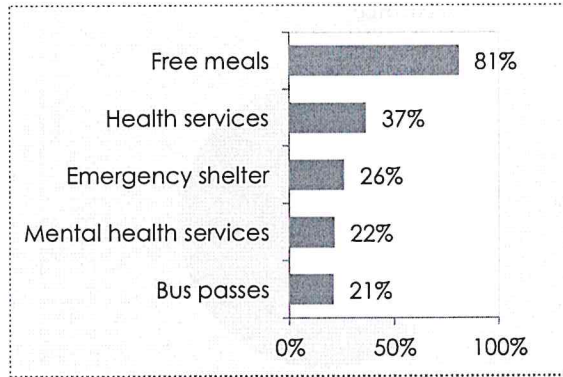


N=372

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

Note: "Types of services/assistance utilized" data are of those who indicated that they were utilizing services/assistance and percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple response question.

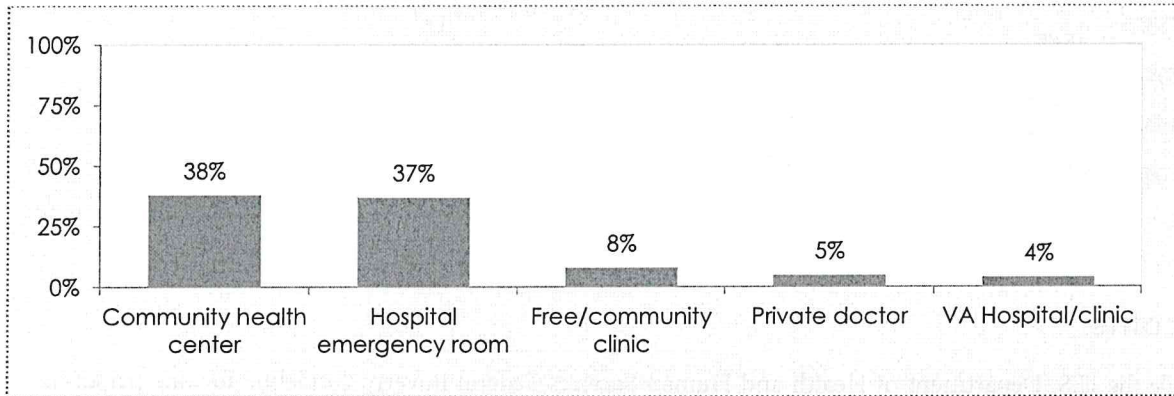
Figure 44: Types of Services/Assistance Utilized (Top 5 Responses)



N=251

Access to Care

Figure 45: Usual Source of Medical Care (Top 5 Responses)

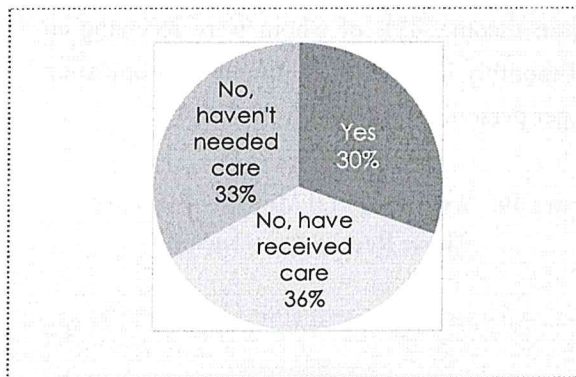


N=289

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

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 46: Percent Who Have Needed Medical Care Since Becoming Homeless and Been Unable to Receive It

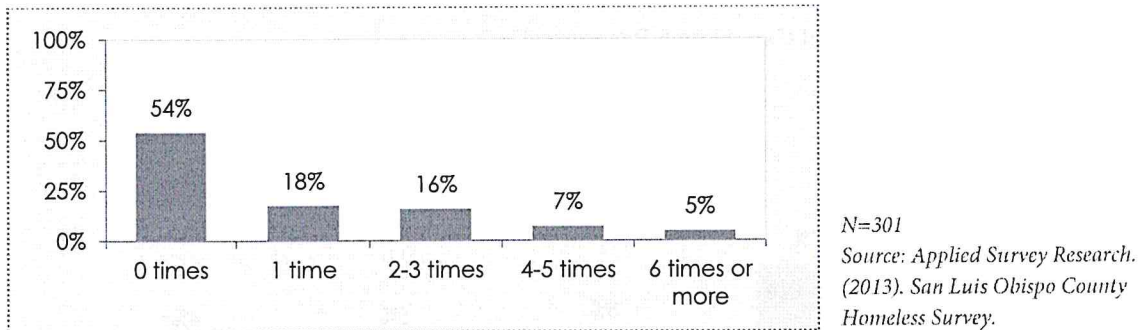


N=382

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

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

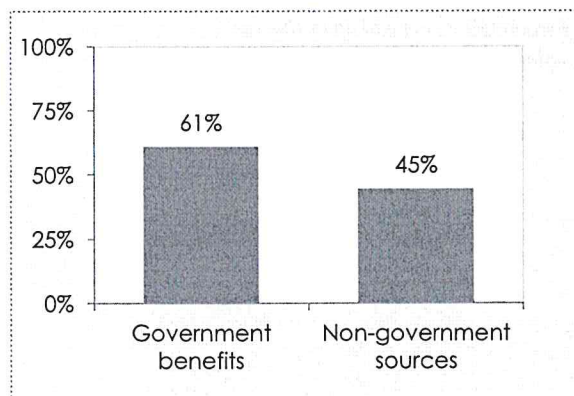
Figure 47: Emergency Room Use in the Last 12 Months for Any Treatment



Income

While the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guideline for one person is approximately \$958 per month in 2013, the self-sufficiency standard, a more realistic measure of income adequacy, in San Luis Obispo County was \$2,183 per month for a single adult in 2011.²³ The self-sufficiency standard provides a more comprehensive measure of income adequacy than Federal Poverty Threshold levels by taking into account housing, child care, health care, transportation, food, taxes, and other miscellaneous costs, as well as economic differences between counties. In 2013, 73% of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County reported having an income, 45% of whom were receiving an income from non-government sources. The average total monthly income for the homeless population receiving income from non-government sources was \$747 per person.

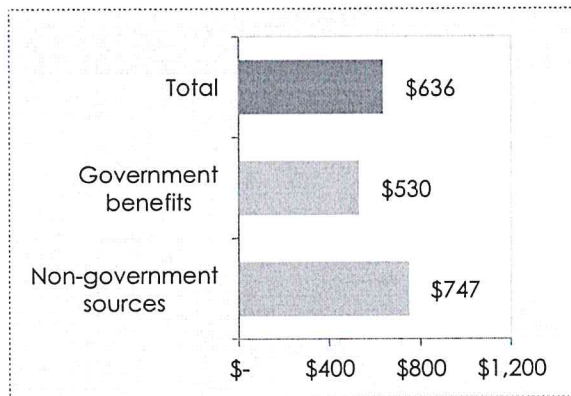
Figure 48: Percent Receiving Income from Government Benefits & Non-government Sources



N: 2013=280

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple response question.

Figure 49: Average Total Monthly Income of Those Receiving an Income



N, Government: 2013=155; N, Non-government: 2013=84;
N, Total: 2013=228

CONCLUSION

The 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey were performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2013 point-in-time count identified 2,186 homeless individuals residing in San Luis Obispo County. This count, however, should be considered conservative since it is well known that even with the most thorough methodology, many homeless individuals stay in locations where they cannot be seen or counted by enumeration teams. Further, many women, families, children, and youth try to remain hidden for safety.

Based on the 2013 point-in-time count and qualitative data, it is estimated that 3,497 unique persons experience homelessness over the course of a year in San Luis Obispo County, which represents about 1% of the overall county population.

The 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different needs; however, some consistent themes emerged from the results. Data showed that:

- » 71% were living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they became homeless;
- » The leading cause of homelessness was job loss (28%);
- » Nearly half (47%) had been homeless for one year or more;
- » 66% had at least one disabling medical condition (such as a mental illness,

chronic health problem, or substance abuse);

- » 75% were currently unemployed;
- » 25% don't usually get enough to eat; and
- » 60% were receiving some form of government assistance.

2013 census and survey data also allowed for the estimation of subpopulations in San Luis Obispo County which revealed of the homeless population:

- » 26% were chronically homeless individuals;
- » 12% of the adult homeless population were veterans; and
- » 20% were homeless families.

In conclusion, the homeless count and survey provided valid and useful data which helped create a more comprehensive picture of those experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County in 2013. It also provides a baseline for a compilation of comparable multi-year data on the experience of homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. The continued use of the same methodology will allow San Luis Obispo County to track key indicators and gauge the changing conditions experienced by homeless individuals and families throughout the county.

It is hoped that the data presented in this report will be used by planning bodies of San Luis Obispo County and other organizations within the County to inform additional outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making over the next two years as they work to address

homelessness. By sharing and evaluating the results, the support network in San Luis Obispo County will be better able to produce constructive and innovative solutions to a problem that has serious ramifications for the long term public health of its community members.

APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY

The 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey methodology had three major components:

1. **Shelter Count:** A point-in-time count of the sheltered homeless population on the night of January 22, 2013, including those staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and hotels/motels using vouchers;
2. **Street Count:** A point-in-time count of the unsheltered homeless population on January 23, 2013 from approximately 6 a.m. to noon, including those living outdoors (on the street, in vehicles, in encampments); and
3. **Survey:** A qualitative survey of a representative sample of the homeless population, administered between February 4, 2013 and March 15, 2013.

Definition of Homelessness

In this study, HUD's definition of homelessness for point-in-time counts was used. The 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.²⁴

Shelter Count

The basic approach to counting sheltered homeless individuals and families was to identify and contact agencies that temporarily house homeless people and request that those agencies send the county (via email, paper survey, telephone or facsimile) a count of the number of homeless persons housed in their programs. In 2013, the participating shelters were determined by those listed on the Housing Inventory Chart reported to HUD. Participating agencies included emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.

Street Count

To avoid potential duplicate counting of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, it was imperative to enumerate during the narrow time frame when sheltered and unsheltered homeless do not co-mingle. An early morning period was selected to increase visibility of the unsheltered homeless and so that the areas around shelters could be canvassed prior to shelter residents being out on the streets.

Volunteer and Worker Recruitment

An enumeration effort of this magnitude only can be successful with the assistance of those who possess an intimate knowledge of the activities and locations of homeless people, as well as participation of other community members. Therefore, the recruitment and training of homeless persons and community

volunteers to work as enumerators was an essential part of the street count methodology.

To work on the street count, prospective enumerators were required to attend a one-hour information and training session. Training sessions were held at multiple locations throughout the county during the week prior to the street count.

Homeless persons who completed the required training session and worked the day of the count were given a \$50.00 gift card on the morning of the street count for their work on the count.

Street Count Teams

On the morning of the street count, two and three person teams were created to enumerate designated areas of the county. Each team ideally was comprised of at least one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide, and were provided with their assigned map area, tally sheet, training guidelines, and other supplies. All accessible streets, roads, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traveled by foot, bike, or car. No direct contact with enumerated homeless people was made during the census enumeration. Homeless enumerators were also instructed to include themselves on their tally sheets for the street count, if they were not going to be counted by the shelter count.

Upon their return, teams turned in their census tally sheets and were debriefed by the deployment captains. Observational comments and the integrity of the enumeration effort were reviewed and assessed. This review was primarily done to check for double-counting (i.e., counting a family as both family members and individuals) and to verify that every

accessible road within the assigned area was enumerated. In approximately six hours, all publically accessible property in the county was enumerated.

Safety Precautions

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Precautions were taken to prepare a safe environment in all deployment centers. Law enforcement districts were notified of the planned street count activity in their jurisdictions. No official reports were received in regards to unsafe or at-risk situations occurring during the street census in any area of the county.

Survey

The survey of 385 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community. The survey elicited information that allows for greater perspective on current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services. The survey findings also provide a measure of the changes in the composition of the homeless population.

Surveys were conducted by trained homeless interviewers (who were compensated at a rate of \$5.00 per completed survey) and service provider volunteers. Training sessions led potential interviewers through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information and detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Because of confidentiality and privacy issues, transitional housing programs

administered the surveys themselves and did not have paid surveyors administer surveys.

Survey Incentive

It was determined that survey data would be more easily collected if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Because of the very cold winter, warm socks were selected as the incentive for participation. These socks were easy to obtain and distribute, were thought to have wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget.

Survey Sampling

In order to select a random sample of respondents, survey interviewers were trained to employ a randomized “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey interviewers were instructed to approach the third person they encountered whom they considered to be an eligible survey respondent.²⁵ If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed.

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

In order to assure representation of both the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population, survey quotas were created to reach individuals

and heads of family households living in these programs.

Figure 50: Sheltered PIT Census Population versus Survey Sample

Subgroup	Census	Survey
Sheltered	11%	15%
Total population	2,186	385

Based on the 2013 point-in-time count of 2,186 homeless persons in San Luis Obispo County, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 385 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/-5% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire homeless population. There is, of course, a higher confidence interval with subpopulation data.

Survey Administration

Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the 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. Overall, the interviewers experienced good cooperation from respondents. In addition to those surveyed there were 89 refusals. These refusals did not affect the enumeration results, but could have affected the survey results to the extent that it resulted in under-representation of any particular subpopulation if there were common characteristics of non-respondents. Surveyors

did not report this, so there is no objective means of measurement.

In order to avoid potential duplication of respondents, the survey requested respondents' initials and date of birth, so that duplication could be avoided without compromising the respondents' anonymity. Upon completion of the survey effort, an extensive verification process was conducted to eliminate duplicates. This process examined respondents' date of birth, initials, gender, ethnicity, and length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other questions on the survey. Surveys that were considered invalid (duplicate, incomplete, or contained false responses) were removed from the sample.

Due to the sensitive nature of the survey, respondents were not required to answer every survey question and respondents were asked to skip questions that were not applicable. For this reason, the number of respondents for each survey questions may not equal the number of surveys.

Figure 51: Survey Administration Details

Survey Detail	Number
Surveys administered	388
Invalid surveys	3
Valid surveys	385
Spanish surveys	4
Refusals	89

Annual Estimation

A point-in-time homeless count has an inherent bias of not capturing homeless persons who experience short episodes of homelessness

during other times of the year. More people experience homelessness annually than can be counted at any given point-in-time, as people cycle in and out of homelessness. For example, someone may be homeless between February and May, and another person may become homeless between October and January. Counting only those persons found in a January census could under-represent those experiencing homelessness in the other months of the year.

Therefore, based on the survey responses of the 2013 survey, ASR used the annual estimate formula detailed by the Corporation for Supportive Housing to calculate an annual estimate of the number of homeless persons in San Luis Obispo County over the course of a year. This approach is the HUD-approved method for calculating the annual estimate of homeless persons based on the PIT count.

The equation for calculating the annual estimate is as follows: $A + [(B*51)*(1 - C)] = \text{Annual estimate}$

- » A = the PIT count of currently homeless people
- » B = the number of currently homeless people who 1) became homeless within the last 7 days, or 2) were already homeless, but entered the county's boundaries within the last 7 days; and
- » C = the proportion of currently homeless people who have experienced a previous homeless episode within the past 12 months.

Assumptions of Annual Estimation

The calculations used to project an annual estimate of homelessness are based on two very important assumptions.

1. The information gathered by the homeless survey is indicative of responses that would have been given at any other time during the year and is representative of the general diversity of the study area's homeless population.
2. The point-in-time census count is reasonably indicative of a count that would have been obtained at any other time during the year.

Service providers have supported these assumptions by indicating that the demand for services stayed relatively consistent over time. Additionally, the total number of homeless accessing services does not fluctuate to a great degree, although the proportion of sheltered versus unsheltered homeless does vary with the seasons.

Estimates of the number of people who experience homelessness in a given year are important for planning purposes and HUD reporting requirements. Because many homeless experiences are relatively short-term (i.e., less than a year), it is important to account for this phenomenon when determining the annual demand for homeless services.

Given the size of the survey sample, the statistical reliability of the projections, the undercount inherent in any homeless census, as well as the use of a HUD-approved annual estimate calculation, the project committee and ASR have determined that this methodology was

the most complete and accurate of all available approaches.

Challenges & Limitations

Census

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as diverse and large as San Luis Obispo County. While homeless populations are usually concentrated around city emergency shelters and homeless service facilities, homeless individuals and families can also be found in suburbs, commercial districts, and outlying county areas that are not easily accessed by enumerators.

Homeless populations include many difficult-to-count subsets such as:

- » Persons who have children and therefore stay "under the radar" because they mistakenly believe they would have to turn their children over to Child Welfare Services;
- » Homeless youth, who tend to keep themselves less visible than homeless adults;
- » Homeless persons who are victims of domestic violence;
- » Homeless people who live in isolated rural areas; and
- » Homeless people who sleep in structures unfit for human habitation.

For a variety of reasons, homeless persons generally do not want to be seen, and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. In a non-intrusive, point-in-time, visual homeless enumeration, the methods employed, while

academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers and currently or previously homeless census enumerators, the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy.

This conservative approach is necessary to preserve the integrity of the data collected. Even though the census is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed, coupled with the homeless survey, is the most comprehensive approach available and provides valuable data for local and federal service agencies.

Survey

The survey is limited by respondents' willingness to share personal experiences with surveyor and therefore could not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences in San Luis Obispo County. Using a peer interviewing methodology allows respondents to be more candid with their answers, and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information.

APPENDIX II: SUMMARY FOR THE 2013 HOMELESSNESS DATA EXCHANGE SUBMISSION

Homeless Populations	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Safe Haven		
Households with at least one adult and one child					
Total # of households	21	9		169	199
Total # of persons (all ages)	65	28		345	438
# of persons (under 18)	39	19		173	231
# of persons (18-24)	1	0		49	50
# of persons (over 24)	25	9		123	157
Households with only children					
Total # of households	0	0		31	31
# of one-child households	0	0		31	31
# of multi-child households	0	0		0	0
Total # of persons (under 18)	0	0		31	31
# of persons in multi-child households (under 18)	0	0		0	0
Households without children					
Total # of households	87	38	0	1,416	1,541
Total # of persons (18+)	104	38	0	1,575	1,717
# of persons (18-24)	9	1	0	143	153
# of persons (over 24)	95	37	0	1,432	1,564
Total					
Total # of households	108	47	0	1,616	1,771
Total # of persons (all ages)	169	66	0	1,951	2,186

Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Safe Haven		
Chronically Homeless Subpopulations					
Chronically homeless individuals	37		0	534	629
Chronically homeless families (total # of families)	0		0	26	26
Chronically homeless families (total # of persons)	0		0	78	78
Other Homeless Subpopulations					
Veterans		24		215	239
Female veterans		2		11	13
Severely mentally ill		122		933	1,055
Chronic substance abuse		10		253	263
Persons with HIV/AIDS		0		0	0
Victims of domestic violence (optional)		11		47	58

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Chronic homelessness is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as a single homeless individual, or a family with at least one adult member, with a disabling condition and who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Disabling condition, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical or developmental disability, a chronic physical illness, a mental illness (including chronic depression, PTSD, bipolar, and schizophrenia), a chronic health problem (including Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C, and HIV/AIDS), substance abuse disorder (alcohol or drug), or traumatic brain injury.

Emergency shelter is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility, or through the use of motel vouchers. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 30 days or less. 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 by HUD as a household with at least one adult (18 or older) and one child (under 18)

Homelessness under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or

with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, and 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 residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities.

Single individuals refer to individuals in a non-family household.

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 and increase skill level, income, and self-determination, may be provided by the organization managing the housing program, or coordinated by the organization and provided by other public or private agencies.

Unsheltered homeless individuals are those homeless individuals who are living outdoors, including on the streets, in parks abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other outdoor place unfit for human habitation.

APPENDIX IV: ENDNOTES

- ¹ The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Opening doors: Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Washington, D.C.
- ² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (December 2012). Housing Inventory Count and Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons: Data Collection Guidance Version 1.1.
- ³ Refer to the “Total PIT Population by Region” chart for a list of jurisdictions in each region.
- ⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
- ⁵ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ⁶ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ⁷ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ⁸ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ⁹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors: Homelessness Among Veterans. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ¹⁰ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors: Homelessness Among Veterans. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ¹¹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ¹² U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ¹³ Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (Volume 1, 2012).
- ¹⁴ Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (Volume 1, 2012).
- ¹⁵ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>
- ¹⁶ State of California Employment Development Department. (2013). Unemployment Rates (Labor Force). Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>
- ¹⁷ National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved on 4/25/2013 from: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/lgbtq-youth>.
- ¹⁸ SAMHSA. (n.d.). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved January 2013, from Homeless Resource Center: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov>
- ¹⁹ SAMHSA. (n.d.). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved January 2013, from Homeless Resource Center: <http://homeless.samhsa.gov>
- ²⁰ Disabling condition is defined in Definitions & Abbreviations section.
- ²¹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening doors through Health Care for the Homeless.
- ²² National Coalition for the Homeless. (2009). Homelessness Among Elderly Persons. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/elderly.html>.
- ²³ Insight Center for Community Economic Development. (2011). The Self-Sufficiency Standard for California. Retrieved May 2013 from <http://www.insightcced.org/communities/cfess/ca-sss.html>.
- ²⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (December 2012). Housing Inventory Count and Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons: Data Collection Guidance Version 1.1.
- ²⁵ The survey method of systematically interviewing every n^{th} person encountered in a location is recommended by HUD in their publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, Second Revision, January 2008, p. 37.

