# 2022 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

## HOMELESS COUNT AND SURVEY COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

## ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

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

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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| 40 Prado Homeless Services Center | County of San Luis Obispo Department of Social Services |
| 5Cities Homeless Coalition | County of San Luis Obispo Administrative Office |
| City of Arroyo Grande | County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building |
| City of Atascadero | El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) |
| City of Grover Beach | Family Care Network |
| City of Morro Bay | Good Samaritan Shelter |
| City of Paso Robles | Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) |
| City of Pismo Beach | Lumina Alliance |
| City of San Luis Obispo | San Luis Obispo County Office of Education |
| Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO) | The Salvation Army |
| Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA) | County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors |
| Transitional Food and Shelter | |

# INTRODUCTION

As required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all receiving federal funding to provide homeless services, Continuums of Care (CoC) across the country report the findings of their local Point-in-Time count in their annual funding application to HUD. Currently, the San Luis Obispo County CoC receives annual federal funding.

The San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Survey was designed and implemented as part of the broader CoC-wide effort across the county. Significantly, this research effort in 2022 was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and was postponed to the end of February 2022 due to COVID-19 safety concerns including the Omicron surge.

San Luis Obispo County has partnered with ASR to conduct its Point-in-Time (PIT) Count since 2015, maintaining a similar methodology, thus ensuring as much consistency as possible from one year to the next. ASR is a locally based social research firm that has over 23 years of experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessment, having conducted homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Our work is featured as a best practice in the standard process HUD publication, A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People, as well as in the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago publication, Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the Homeless Count and Survey to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings with local community members. These community members were drawn from City and County departments, community-based service providers, and other interested and informed stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2022 Planning Committee and were instrumental to ensuring the 2022 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2022 Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- Conduct an accurate and thorough HUD compliant count that addressed the COVID-19 safety needs of all parties to the Count effort

- To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;

- To improve the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;

- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population and track the community's 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, youth, young adults, and those who are chronically homeless.

## FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

In this study, the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count was used. This definition 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.

It should be noted that the broader definition of homelessness defined by the McKinney-Vento Act and used by K-12 school districts includes persons and families living in "double-up" situations as well as hotels and motels. However, this definition could not be used for purposes of this report.
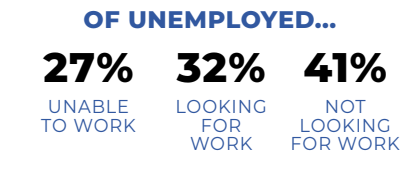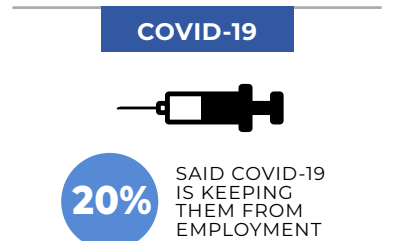
# SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

## 2022 HOMELESS POINT-IN-TIME COUNT & SURVEY

Every two years, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of individuals experiencing homelessness in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each local Continuum of Care.

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on February 23rd, 2022. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 333 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.

### 2022 SHELTERED/ UNSHELTERED POPULATION

**80%**
UNSHELTERED
n=1,156

**20%**
SHELTERED
n=292

### RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOMELESSNESS

San Luis Obispo County

**92%**

### CENSUS POPULATION: LONGITUDINAL TREND

| Year | Count |
|------|-------|
| 2015 | 1,515 |
| 2017 | 1,125 |
| 2019 | 1,483 |
| 2022 | 1,448 |

### AGE

**18%** UNDER 18
**5%** 18-24
**77%** 25+

### LENGTH OF TIME IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

**8%** < 1 YEAR
**19%** 1-4 YEARS
**21%** 5-9 YEARS
**52%** 10 YEARS+

### GENDER

**55%** MALE
**44%** FEMALE
**1%** GENDER NON-CONFORMING

### RACE

TOP RESPONSES*

**84%** WHITE
**5%** MULTI-RACE
**5%** AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE
**4%** BLACK

### ETHNICITY

**34%** IDENTIFIED AS LATINO

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**86%** STRAIGHT
**8%** BISEXUAL
**2%** OTHER
**1%** GAY
**3%** LESBIAN

### COVID-19

**20%** SAID COVID-19 IS KEEPING THEM FROM EMPLOYMENT

**38%** HAVE RECEIVED A COVID-19 VACCINE

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS

**14%** HAD SOME FORM OF EMPLOYMENT

OF UNEMPLOYED...

**27%** UNABLE TO WORK
**32%** LOOKING FOR WORK
**41%** NOT LOOKING FOR WORK

### FOSTER CARE

**15%** YES
**85%** NO

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## SUBPOP DATA

### CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS
**15%** Sheltered | **85%** Unsheltered
282 Individuals
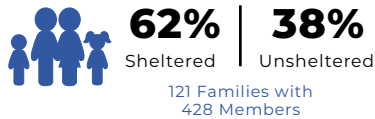
### VETERANS
**12%** Sheltered | **88%** Unsheltered
16 Individuals

### FAMILIES
**62%** Sheltered | **38%** Unsheltered
121 Families with 428 Members

### UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN
**0%** Sheltered | **100%** Unsheltered
7 Individuals

### TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH
**11%** Sheltered | **89%** Unsheltered
57 Individuals

## FIRST EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

**32%** of survey respondents indicated their current episode of homelessness was their first.
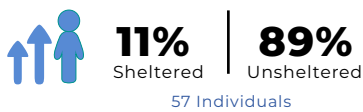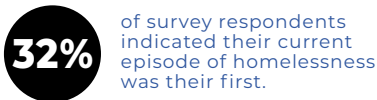
## DURATION OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

**1%** 1-30 DAYS | **16%** 1-11 MONTHS | **83%** A YEAR OR MORE

## AGE AT FIRST EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

**12%** 0-17 | **14%** 18-24 | **74%** 25+
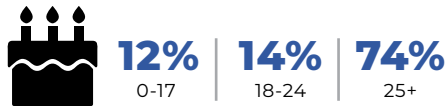
## PRIMARY CONDITION THAT LEAD TO HOMELESSNESS

**27%** ARGUMENT WITH FAMILY/FRIEND

**19%** SUBSTANCE USE

**18%** DIVORCE/ SEPARATION/ BREAKUP

**18%** EVICTION/ FORECLOSURE/ RENT INCREASE

**17%** LOST JOB
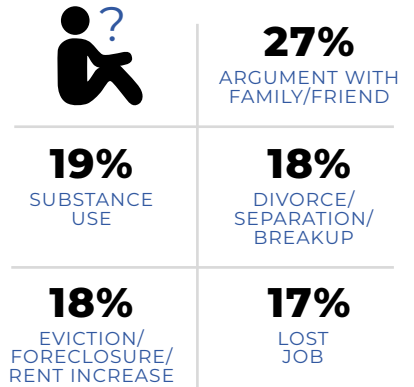
## GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

**84%** Of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.

## DISABLING CONDITIONS

**30%** OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED HAVING AT LEAST ONE DISABLING CONDITION

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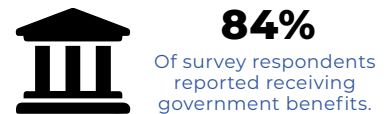
## SELF REPORTED HEALTH+

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

**46%** PTSD

**43%** PSYCHIATRIC OR EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS

**35%** ALCOHOL & DRUG USE

**31%** CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS

**27%** PHYSICAL DISABILITY

**23%** TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

**11%** DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

**3%** HIV/AIDS RELATED ILLNESS
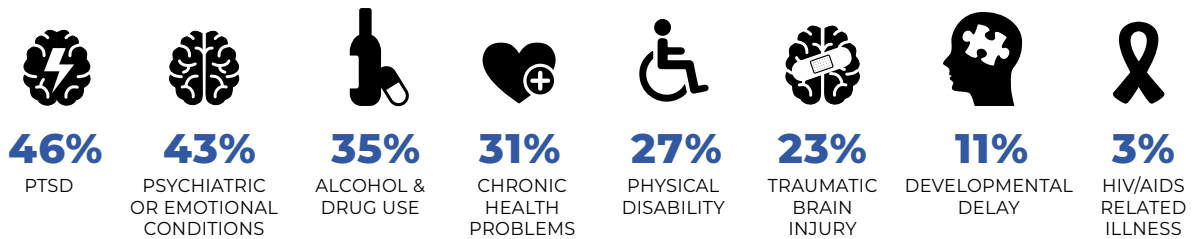
## PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS+

Survey respondents indicated the following could have prevented them from experiencing homelessness.

**38%** BENEFITS/ INCOME

**31%** RENT ASSISTANCE

**21%** EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

**19%** FOOD ASSISTANCE

**17%** TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE

+ Multiple response question, results may not add up to 100%.
* Only displaying top responses, all response data will be available in full report.
Note: Some percentages have been rounded so total percentage will equal 100%.

The complete comprehensive report includes a more detailed profile of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo. It will be available summer 2022.
Source: Applied Survey Research, 2022, San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count & Survey, Watsonville, CA.
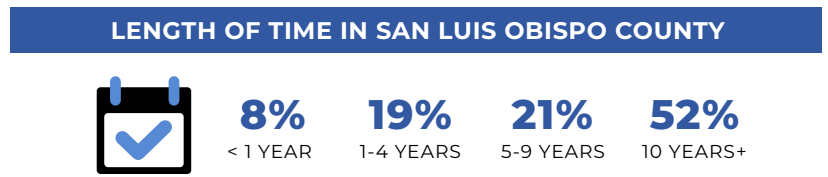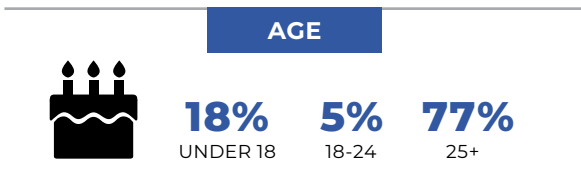
# POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS
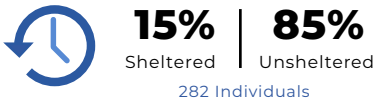
The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on February 23, 2022 from approximately daybreak to 10AM and covered all of San Luis Obispo County. The shelter count was conducted on the previous evening and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The general street count and shelter count methodology was similar to 2019 though the survey effort was slightly different.

The methodology used for the 2022 Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey is commonly described as a "blitz count" since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method was conducted in San Luis Obispo County, the result was an observation-based count of individuals and families who appeared to be homeless based on the assessment of the lived experience team member in consult with his/her volunteer team partner.

The occupancy of homeless shelters in San Luis Obispo County was collected for the night of February 22, 2022. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from San Luis Obispo County's Homeless Management Information System.

The count was followed by an in-person representative survey of a sample of persons experiencing homelessness, the results of which were used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey is used to fulfill HUD population reporting requirements and 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 youth counts that have been conducted since 2015. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, de-duplication, and project methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

# NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

On February 23, 2022 there were 1,448 individuals in San Luis Obispo County who met the HUD definition of homelessness. This represents a decrease of 2% from 2019.

**Figure 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1,515 | 1,125 | 1,483 | 1,448 |
| 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2022 |

2022 unsheltered n=1,156; sheltered n=292
Emergency Shelter n=258; Transitional Housing n=34; Building n=5; Car n=133; Outdoors n=187; RV n=185; Tent n=594; Van n=52

**Figure 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS**

| 2022 | 80% | 20% |
|---|---|---|

UNSHELTERED    SHELTERED

2022 unsheltered n=1,156; sheltered n=292

**Figure 3: JURISDICTIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE POPULATION, 2022**

| | UNSHELTERED | SHELTERED |
|---|---|---|
| TOTAL | 1,156 | 292 |
| SAN LUIS OBISPO | 248 | 137 |
| UNINCORPORATED | 492 | 5 |
| PASO ROBLES | 174 | 60 |
| ATASCADERO | 51 | 42 |
| MORRO BAY | 76 | 3 |
| GROVER BEACH | 56 | 34 |
| ARROYO GRANDE | 39 | 11 |
| PISMO BEACH | 20 | |

UNSHELTERED    SHELTERED

2022 unsheltered n=1,156; sheltered n=292

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**Figure 4: TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SLEEPING ACCOMODATOIN**
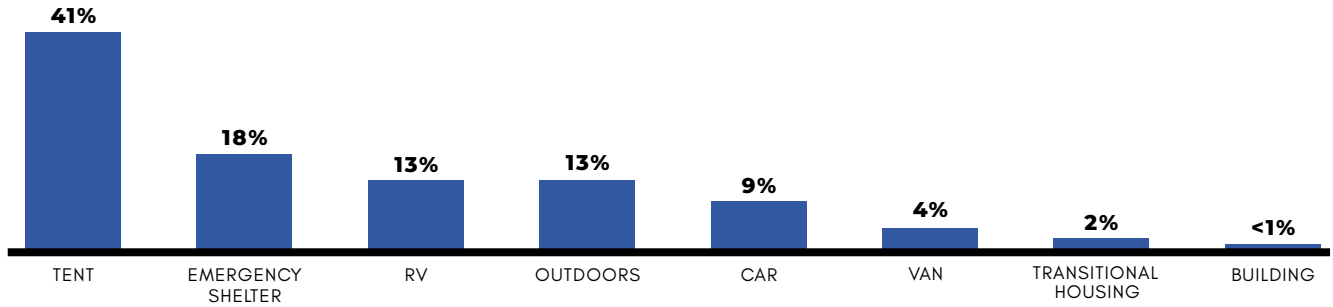


2022 unsheltered n=1156; sheltered n=292
Emergency Shelter n=258; Transitional Housing n=34; Building n=5; Car n=133; Outdoors n=187; RV n=185; Tent n=594; Van n=52



**Figure 5: TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SLEEPING ACCOMODATOIN, BY REGION**

| Sleeping Accommodation | Coast | San Luis Obispo | South County | North County | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emergency Shelter | 3 | 103 | 50 | 102 | **258** |
| Transitional Housing | 0 | 34 | 0 | 0 | **34** |
| On the Street | 27 | 91 | 38 | 31 | **187** |
| Tents | 84 | 108 | 300 | 102 | **594** |
| Cars/Vans/RVs | 51 | 191 | 81 | 47 | **370** |
| Abandoned Buildings | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **5** |
| Total | 170 | 527 | 469 | 282 | **1,448** |

**Figure 6: TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION WITH TREND BY SHELTER STATUS**

| Year | Sheltered | Unsheltered |
|------|-----------|-------------|
| 2015 | 26% | 74% |
| 2017 | 31% | 69% |
| 2019 | 21% | 79% |
| 2022 | 20% | 80% |

■ UNSHELTERED  ■ SHELTERED
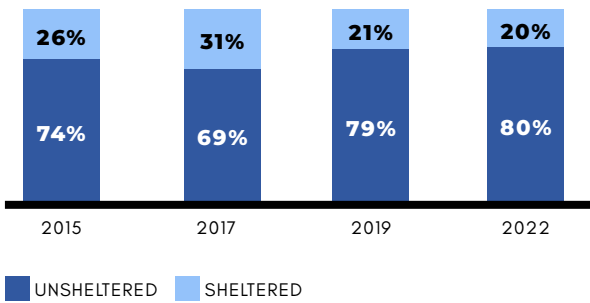
2015 n= 1,515; 2017 n= 1,125; 2019 n=1,483; 2022 n=1,448

**Figure 7: TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER**

| Year | Female | Male | Gender Non-Conforming |
|------|--------|------|------------------------|
| 2019 | 32% | 68% | |
| 2022 | 44% | 55% | 1% |

■ FEMALE  ■ MALE  ■ TRANSGENDER  ■ GENDER NON-CONFORMING
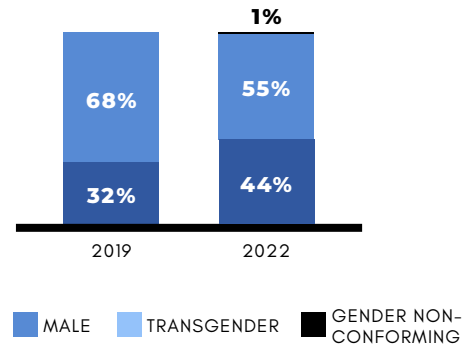
2019 n= 1,483; 2022 n=1,448

**Figure 8: TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE**

| | WHITE | MULTI-RACE | BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN | AMERICAN INDIAN | NATIVE HAWAIIAN | ASIAN |
|---|-------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------|
| 2019 SLO GENERAL POPULATION | 85% | 3% | 2% | 1% | <1% | 4% |
| 2017 HOMELESS CENSUS | 80% | 5% | 6% | 7% | <1% | 0% |
| 2019 HOMELESS CENSUS | 72% | 16% | 6% | 4% | 1% | <1% |
| 2022 HOMELESS CENSUS | 84% | 5% | 4% | 5% | 1% | 1% |

■ 2019 SLO GENERAL POPULATION  ■ 2017 HOMELESS CENSUS  ■ 2019 HOMELESS CENSUS  ■ 2022 HOMELESS CENSUS
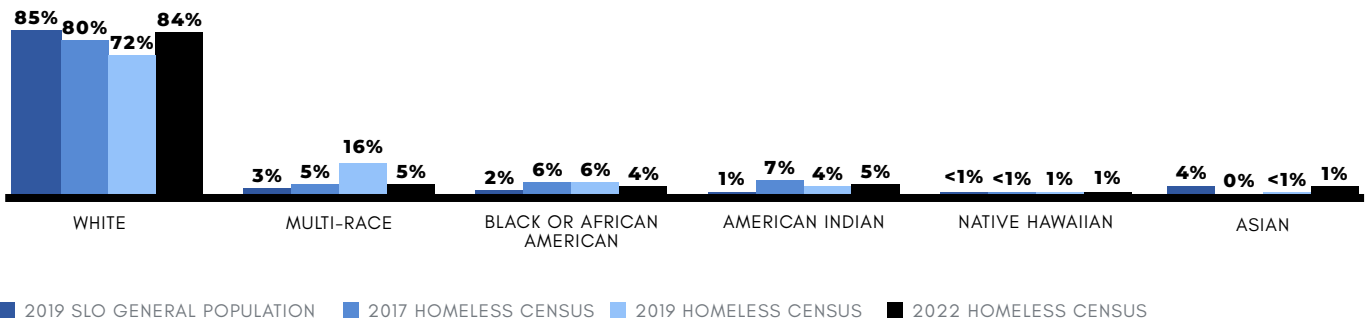
2017 n= 1,125; 2019 n= 1,483; 2022 n=1,448
U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2019). American Community Survey 2019 1-Year Estimates, Table K200201: Race. Retrieved from https://data.census.gov/
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
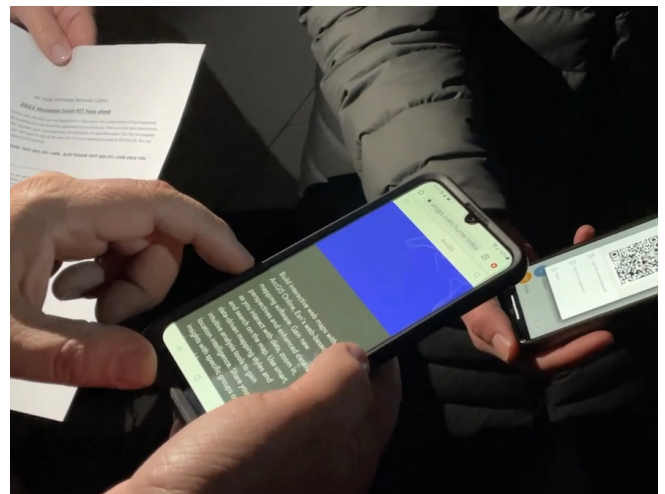
# HOMELESS SURVEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February 24th and March 15th, 2022. This effort resulted in 333 complete and unique surveys.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,448 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 333 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4.7% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be 95% certain that the results would be within <5 percentage points of the current results.

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values were intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted. 'Don't know' and 'Refused' response were omitted from percentage calculations.

For more information regarding the research methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

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

### AGE

Survey quotas were generally designed around geographic and shelter status characteristics and not age. Every effort was made to avoid age bias in sample selection where we attempted a every third person respondent selection goal. Our survey respondent profile was very different from 2019 and reflects changes in the population and an unknown impact of respondent selection bias. Twenty-five percent (25%) were between the ages of 25 and 40, 55% were between the ages of 41 and 60, and 18% were 61 years or older. Compared to the general population of San Luis Obispo, survey respondents were far likelier to be ages 31 and up.

Figure 9: SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

| Age group | 2019 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| < 18 Years | 1% | 0% |
| 18–24 Years | 16% | 2% |
| 25–30 Years | 17% | 7% |
| 31–40 Years | 24% | 18% |
| 41–50 Years | 19% | 29% |
| 51–60 Years | 15% | 26% |
| 61 Years or More | 8% | 18% |

2019 n=418; 2022 n=332

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## GENDER IDENTITY

Of survey respondents in San Luis Obispo County, fifty-eight percent (58%) of survey respondents identified as male and 41% identified as female, similar to 2019 survey results.



Figure 10: GENDER IDENTITY OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

FEMALE  MALE  TRANSGENDER  GENDER NON-CONFORMING

2019 n=410; 2022 n=328
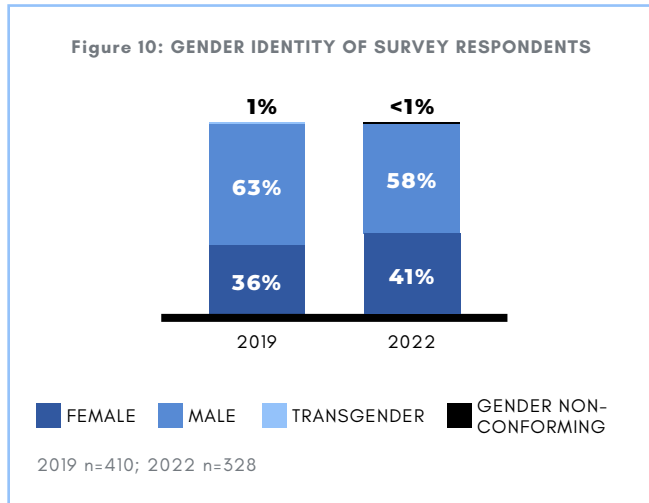
## RACE AND ETHNICITY

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, about two-thirds (66%) of homeless survey respondents reported they do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. In regard to race, 71% identified as White, 4% as Black or African American, 6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 4% as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.



Figure 11: HISPANIC OR LATINX ETHNICITY

HISPANIC OR LATINX  NON-HISPANIC OR LATINX

2019 n= 1,483; 2022 n=1,448



Figure 12: RACE

2019 SURVEY RESPONDENTS  2022 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

2019 n=385; 2022 n=320
Note: This question was not asked in 2017
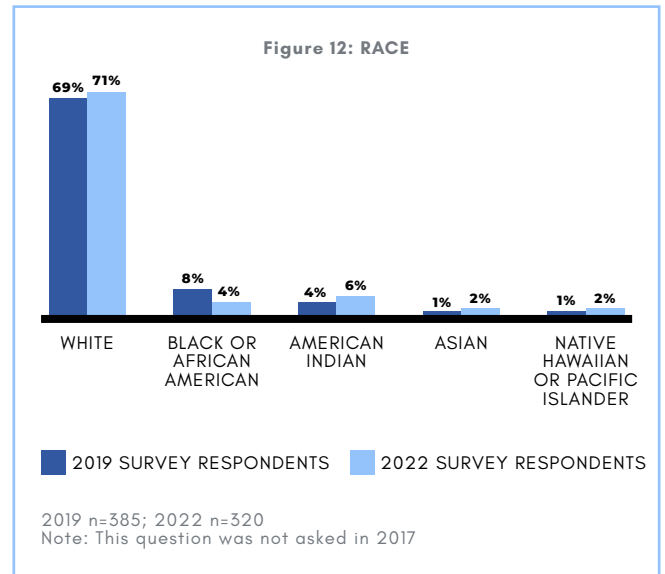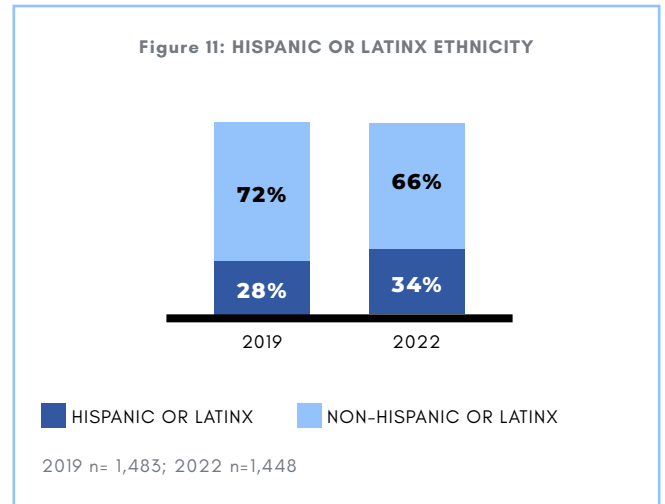
## FOSTER CARE

Nationally, it is estimated that at least one-third of foster youth experience homelessness after exiting care.[1] In the state of California, many foster youth are eligible to receive extended care benefits as they transition into adulthood, up until their 21st birthday.

In San Luis Obispo County in 2022, 15% of respondents reported a history of foster care, slightly higher than what was found in 2019 (14%).

**Figure 13: HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE**

| | 2019 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| NO | 86% | 85% |
| YES | 14% | 15% |

YES ■ NO ■

2019 n= 390; 2022 n=294
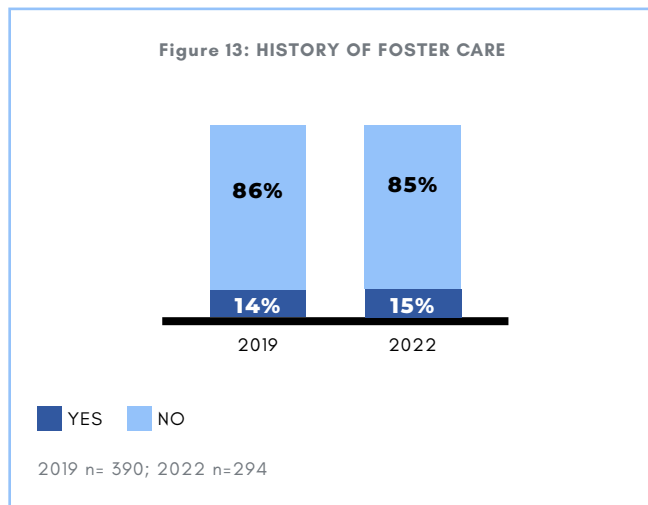
# DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Recurring homelessness can be an indicator of the homeless assistance and housing systems ability to address individuals' needs for stable, permanent housing. For many survey respondents (68%) this was not the first time they had experienced homelessness. More than three-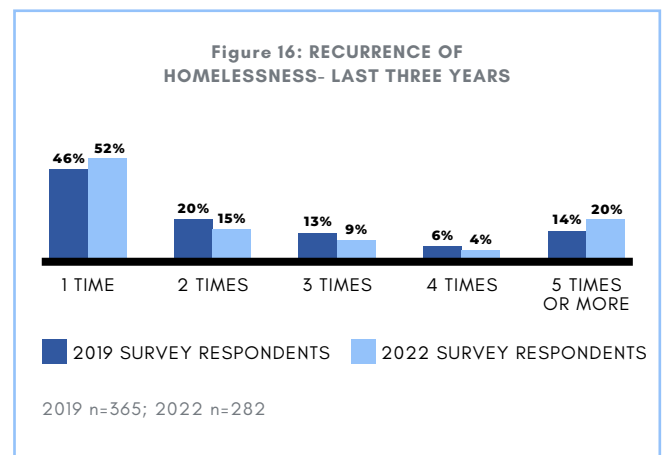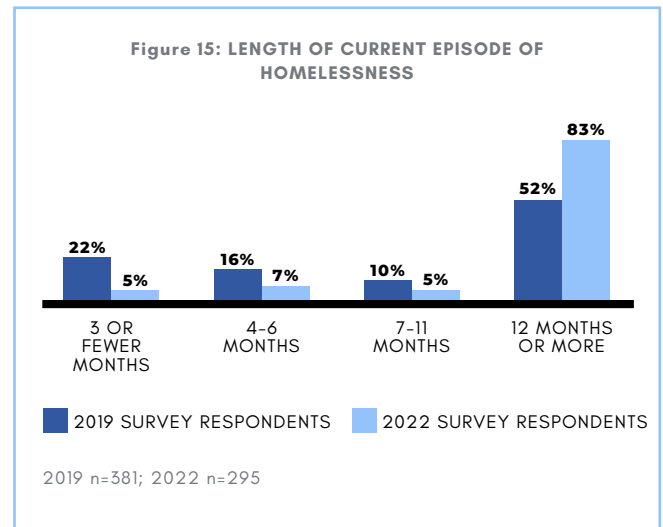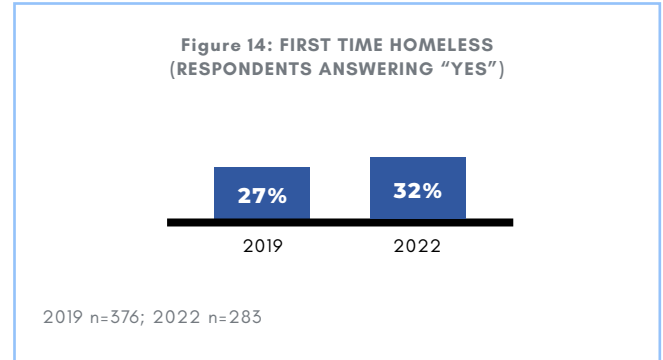quarters (83%) of survey respondents reported their current episode of homelessness lasting for a year or longer, indicative of a increase in length of homelessness compared to 2019 (52%).

**Figure 14: FIRST TIME HOMELESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING "YES")**

| 2019 | 2022 |
|---|---|
| 27% | 32% |

2019 n=376; 2022 n=283

**Figure 15: LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS**

| | 3 OR FEWER MONTHS | 4-6 MONTHS | 7-11 MONTHS | 12 MONTHS OR MORE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 22% | 16% | 10% | 52% |
| 2022 | 5% | 7% | 5% | 83% |

■ 2019 SURVEY RESPONDENTS   ■ 2022 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

2019 n=381; 2022 n=295

**Figure 16: RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS- LAST THREE YEARS**

| | 1 TIME | 2 TIMES | 3 TIMES | 4 TIMES | 5 TIMES OR MORE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 46% | 20% | 13% | 6% | 14% |
| 2022 | 52% | 15% | 9% | 4% | 20% |

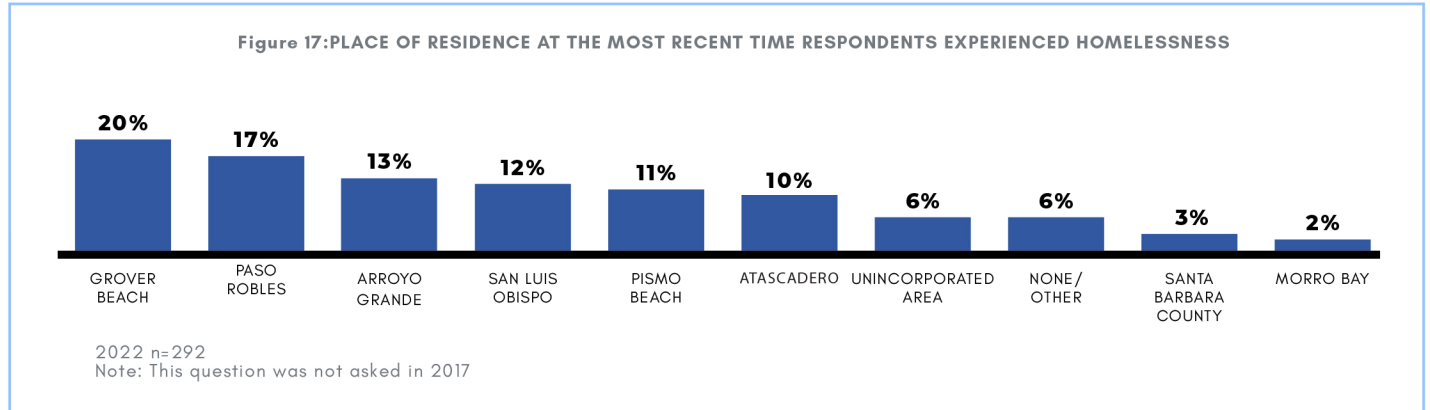■ 2019 SURVEY RESPONDENTS   ■ 2022 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

2019 n=365; 2022 n=282

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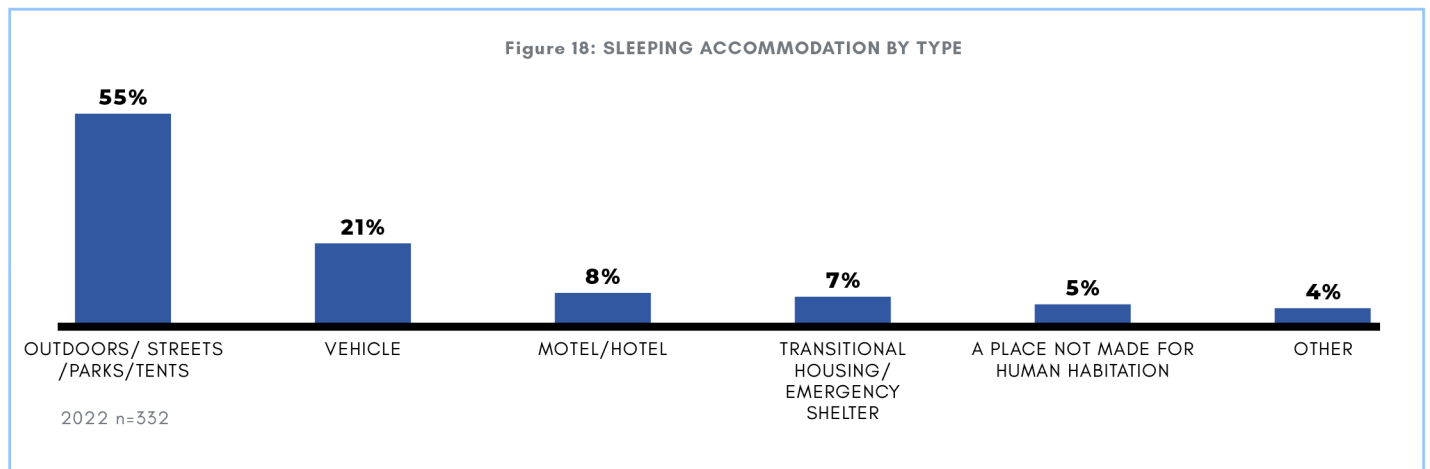
# LIVING ACCOMODATIONS

## PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents reported they were living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they most recently became homeless. Among those surveyed, 20% were living in Grover Beach, 17% Paso Robles, and 13% were living in Arroyo Grande prior to experiencing homelessness.

**Figure 17: PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT THE MOST RECENT TIME RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS**

| Location | Percent |
|---|---|
| GROVER BEACH | 20% |
| PASO ROBLES | 17% |
| ARROYO GRANDE | 13% |
| SAN LUIS OBISPO | 12% |
| PISMO BEACH | 11% |
| ATASCADERO | 10% |
| UNINCORPORATED AREA | 6% |
| NONE/ OTHER | 6% |
| SANTA BARBARA COUNTY | 3% |
| MORRO BAY | 2% |

2022 n=292
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

## CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

While basic information on where individuals were observed during the general street count effort is collected, survey respondents are also asked about their usual nighttime accommodations. Understanding the types of places individuals experiencing homelessness are sleeping can help inform local outreach efforts.

Over one-half (55%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors, either on the streets, in parks, or in encampment areas. Seven percent (7%) reported staying in a homeless shelter or transitional housing. Five percent cited staying in a place not made for human habitation, 8% reported they were staying in a hotel or motel and 21% reported staying sleeping in a vehicle.

**Figure 18: SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION BY TYPE**

| Accommodation | Percent |
|---|---|
| OUTDOORS/ STREETS /PARKS/TENTS | 55% |
| VEHICLE | 21% |
| MOTEL/HOTEL | 8% |
| TRANSITIONAL HOUSING/ EMERGENCY SHELTER | 7% |
| A PLACE NOT MADE FOR HUMAN HABITATION | 5% |
| OTHER | 4% |

2022 n=332

# PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

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

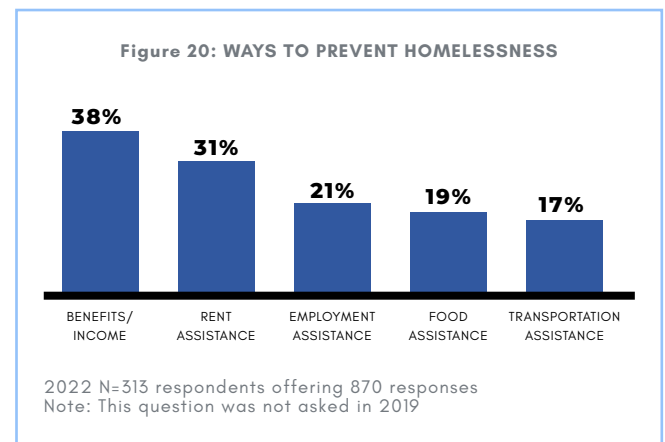Twenty-seven percent (27%) of respondents reported the primary cause of their homelessness being a result of an argument with family or a friend asking them to leave. Alcohol or drug use was the next most frequently reported cause of homelessness at 19%. A divorce or breakup was the next leading cause (18%) followed by eviction (18%).
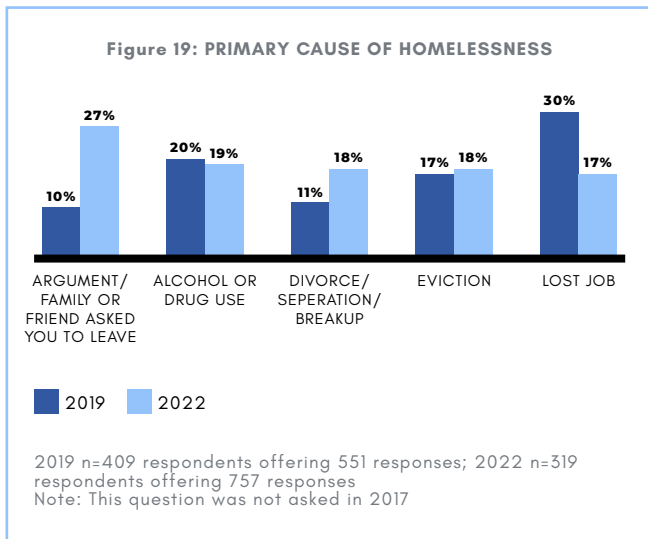
## OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

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

When asked what would have prevented them from becoming homeless, the most common response was "Benefits/income," reported by 38% of survey respondents. This was followed by 31% who reported needing rental assistance, 21% who reported needing employment assistance, and 19% who said that they needed food assistance.



Figure 19: PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

2019 n=409 respondents offering 551 responses; 2022 n=319 respondents offering 757 responses
Note: This question was not asked in 2017



Figure 20: WAYS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

2022 N=313 respondents offering 870 responses
Note: This question was not asked in 2019

# SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

San Luis Obispo County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services, as many believe that they are ineligible for assistance. Connecting homeless individuals and families to these support services creates a bridge to mainstream support services and can prevent future housing instability.

## OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

There are various forms of government assistance available to persons experiencing homelessness. However, usage of these supports is impacted by knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma of receiving governmental assistance.
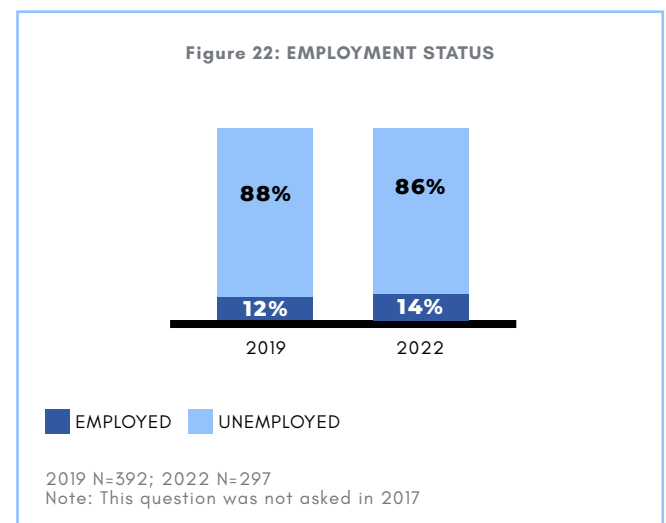
Most respondents (84%) in 2022 reported they were receiving some form of government financial assistance. Of those receiving government assistance, the largest percentage (31%) of respondents reported receiving food stamps, nineteen percent (19%) were receiving Medi-Cal/Medicare, eleven percent (11%) reported receiving COVID-19 related assistance, 5% were receiving SSI/SSDI/Disability benefits, and 5% were receiving Social Security.
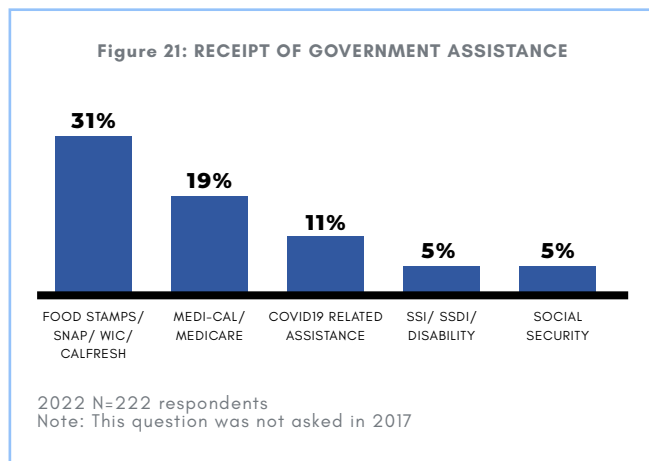
# EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

The unemployment rate among homeless survey respondents was 86%, a decrease from 88% in 2019. Thirty-two percent (32%) of unemployed respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work, 41% indicated they were not, while half (27%) indicated they were currently unable to work.

While the majority (86%) of survey respondents reported being unemployed, a number reported having part-time or seasonal/sporadic employment (8%) and even full-time employment (6%). Despite some income, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.



Figure 22: EMPLOYMENT STATUS

2019 N=392; 2022 N=297
Note: This question was not asked in 2017



Figure 21: RECEIPT OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

2022 N=222 respondents
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

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# HEALTH

The top health conditions survey respondents reported experiencing in 2022 were: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (46%); a psychiatric or emotional condition, such as depression and schizophrenia (43%); Drug or Alcohol Abuse (35%); and chronic health problems (31%). Health issues were very consistent with data collected in 2019.

**Figure 23: HEALTH CONDITIONS**

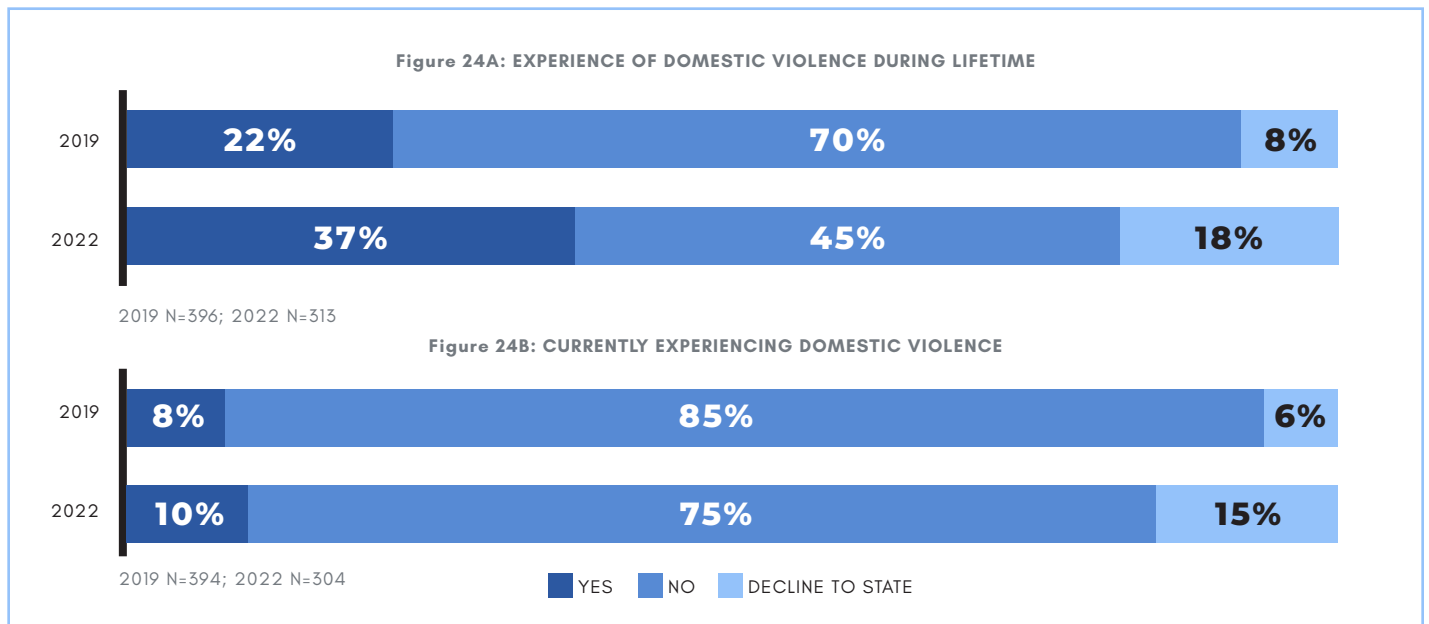| Condition | 2019 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|
| DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE | 36% | 35% |
| PSYCHIATRIC OR EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS | 31% | 43% |
| POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) | 26% | 46% |
| CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS | 23% | 31% |
| PHYSICAL DISABILITY | 21% | 27% |
| TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) | 8% | 23% |
| AIDS/HIV/ RELATED | 4% | 3% |

2019 N=418, 2022 N=286
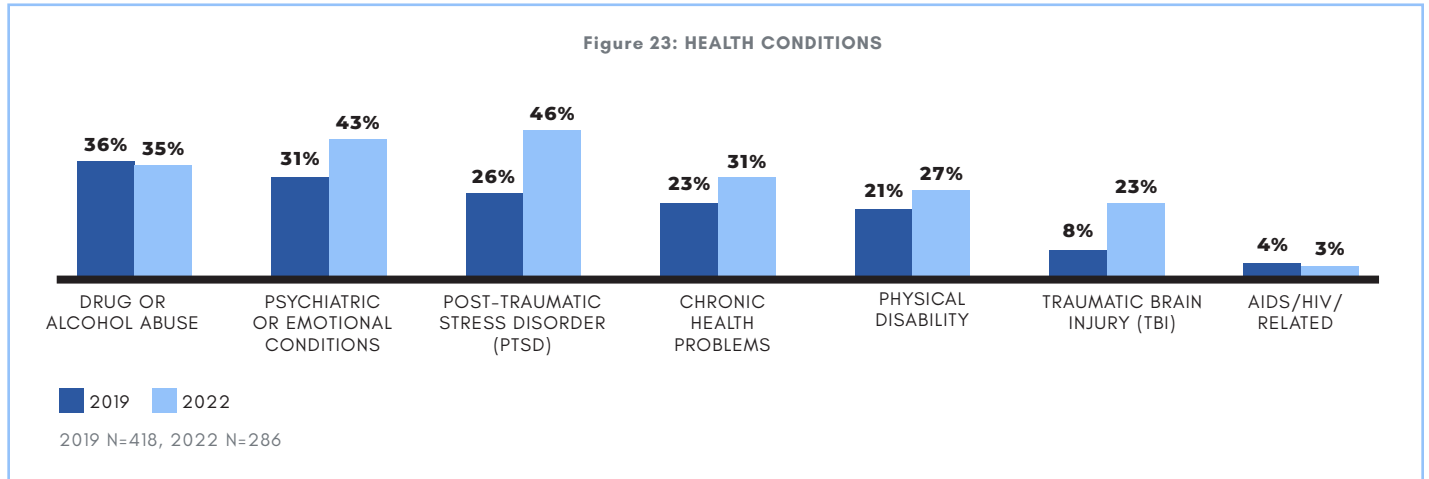
# DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

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

Data shows in 2022, there were 90 adult survivors of domestic violence according to HDX data. When asked about experiences throughout their lifetime, 37% of survey respondents reported domestic/partner violence or abuse, greater than in 2019 (22%). Survey respondents were also asked whether they were currently experiencing domestic/partner violence, ten percent (10%) responded yes, and fifteen percent (15%) declined to answer. In 2019, eight percent (8%) responded yes, and six percent (6%) declined to answer.

**Figure 24A: EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING LIFETIME**

| Year | YES | NO | DECLINE TO STATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 22% | 70% | 8% |
| 2022 | 37% | 45% | 18% |

2019 N=396; 2022 N=313

**Figure 24B: CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

| Year | YES | NO | DECLINE TO STATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2019 | 8% | 85% | 6% |
| 2022 | 10% | 75% | 15% |

2019 N=394; 2022 N=304

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

## INCARCERATION

When asked if they had interactions with the criminal justice system in the last 12 months, forty-eight (48%) of respondents experiencing homelessness reported that they had.

**Figure 25: INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN THE PAST YEAR**



| 2019 | 2022 |
|------|------|
| 63% | 52% |
| 37% | 48% |

■ YES   ■ NO
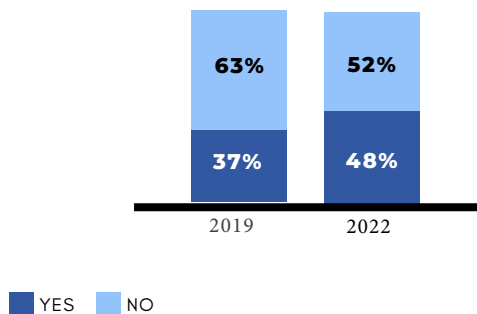
2019 N=400; 2022 N=257
Note: This question was not asked in 2017

## HUD DEFINED SUBPOPULATIONS

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

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

1. Chronic homelessness among people with disabilities;
2. Veterans;
3. Families with children; and
4. Youth and young adults

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

The following sections examine each of these four subpopulations, identifying the number and characteristics of individuals included in the 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey.
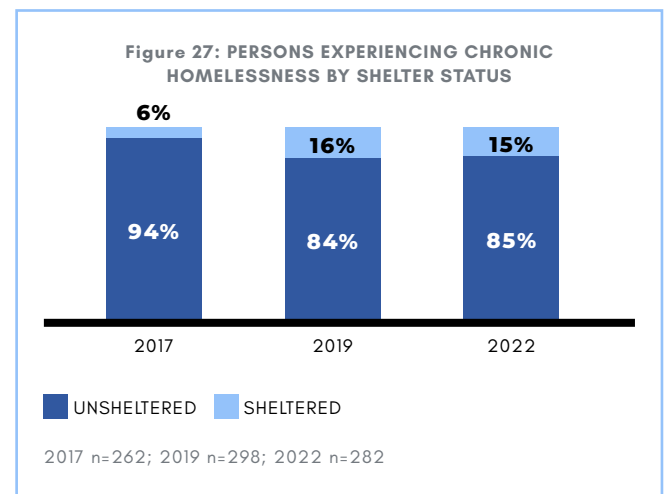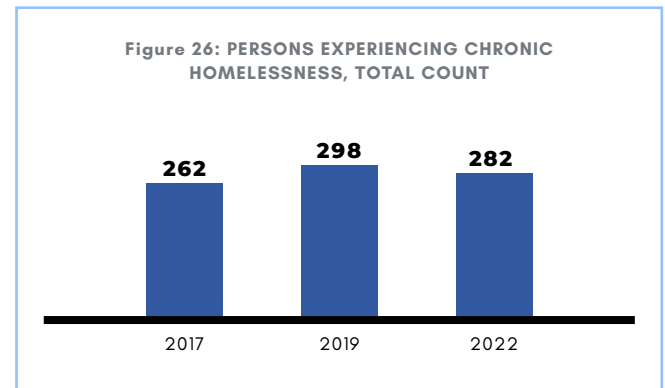
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# CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

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

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable profiles seen on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of the general population.[2] Data from communities across the country reveal that public costs incurred by those experiencing chronic homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing persons with permanent housing and supportive services.

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that 96,141 individuals, representing 17% of the overall homeless population, were experiencing chronic homelessness.[3] Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability.

## ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

There were a total of 282 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in 2022, representing an decrease of 5% since 2019. This is just under 20% of the overall homeless population.

Figure 26: PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS, TOTAL COUNT

| 2017 | 2019 | 2022 |
|------|------|------|
| 262 | 298 | 282 |

Figure 27: PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS

| | 2017 | 2019 | 2022 |
|------|------|------|------|
| SHELTERED | 6% | 16% | 15% |
| UNSHELTERED | 94% | 84% | 85% |

■ UNSHELTERED  ■ SHELTERED

2017 n=262; 2019 n=298; 2022 n=282

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

[5]Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2019). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2022 from https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf
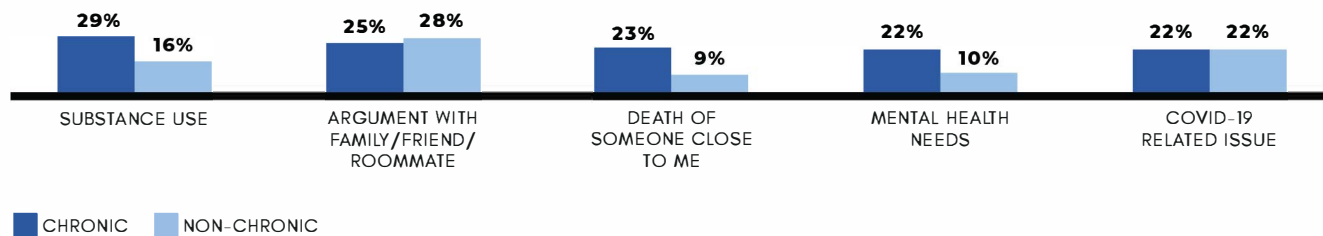
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The majority (56%) of chronically homeless survey respondents identified as male, slightly lower than the non-chronically homeless population (60%). In terms of race, the majority of chronically homeless respondents were White (86%) similar to the non-chronic population, at 84%. In terms of disproportionality, among those experiencing chronic homelessness, they were slightly more likely to be Black/African American, American Indian or Alaskan native.

**Figure 28: PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY GENDER**

| | MALE | FEMALE | TRANSGENDER | GENDER NON-CONFORMING |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CHRONIC | 56% | 44% | 0% | 0% |
| NON-CHRONIC | 60% | 40% | <1% | 0% |

Chronic n=70; non-chronic n=252

**Figure 29: PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS BY RACE**

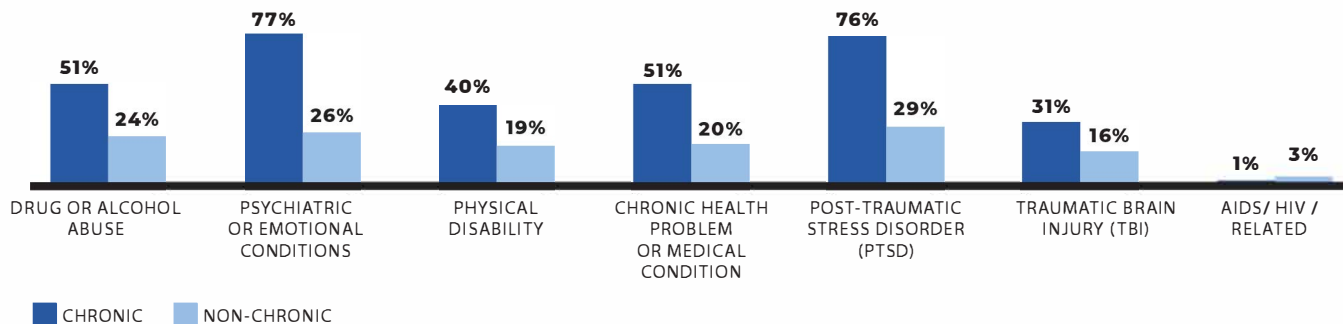| | WHITE | MULTI-RACE | BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN | AMERICAN INDIAN | NATIVE HAWAIIAN | ASIAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CHRONIC | 86% | 2% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 2% |
| NON-CHRONIC | 84% | 5% | 3% | 4% | 3% | 1% |

Chronic N=57; Non-Chronic N=199

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

**Figure 30: PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP RESPONSES)**

| | Chronic | Non-Chronic |
|---|---|---|
| SUBSTANCE USE | 29% | 16% |
| ARGUMENT WITH FAMILY/FRIEND/ROOMMATE | 25% | 28% |
| DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME | 23% | 9% |
| MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS | 22% | 10% |
| COVID-19 RELATED ISSUE | 22% | 22% |

■ CHRONIC  ■ NON-CHRONIC

Chronic N=69 respondents offering 189 responses; Non-Chronic N=250 respondents offering 568 responses

Figure 32: HEALTH CONDITIONS

| | Chronic | Non-Chronic |
|---|---|---|
| DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE | 51% | 24% |
| PSYCHIATRIC OR EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS | 77% | 26% |
| PHYSICAL DISABILITY | 40% | 19% |
| CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEM OR MEDICAL CONDITION | 51% | 20% |
| POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) | 76% | 29% |
| TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) | 31% | 16% |
| AIDS/HIV/RELATED | 1% | 3% |

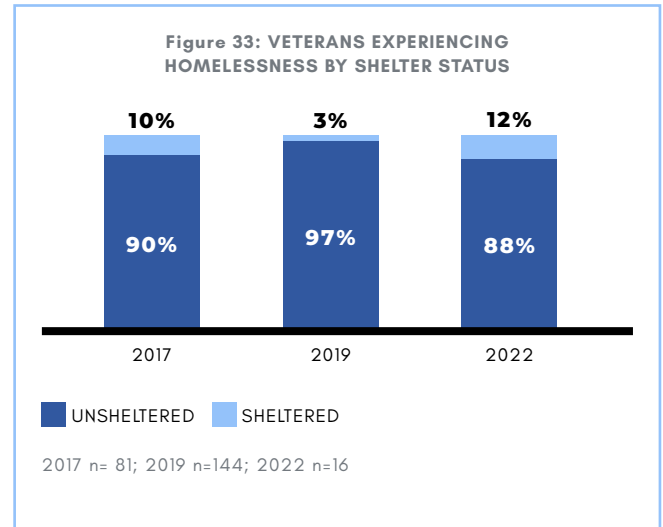■ CHRONIC  ■ NON-CHRONIC
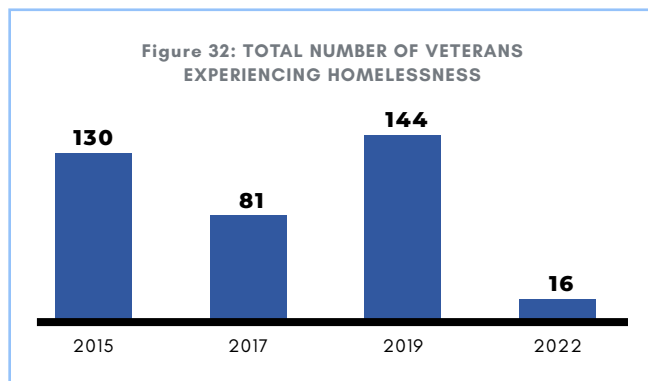
Chronic N=70; Non-Chronic N=262

# VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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

Between 2007 and 2020, there has been a 39% decrease in the number of homeless veterans nationwide. According to data collected during the national 2020 Point-in-Time Count, 37,252 veterans experienced homelessness across the country on a single night in January 2020.[4]

## ESTIMATES OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were a total of 16 veterans experiencing homeless in 2022, representing a decrease of 89% since 2019 and the lowest total recorded since 2015. This represents just over 1% of all the persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo county and represents a major success in outreach and recovery efforts for this group.



**Figure 33: VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS**

2017 n= 81; 2019 n=144; 2022 n=16



**Figure 32: TOTAL NUMBER OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

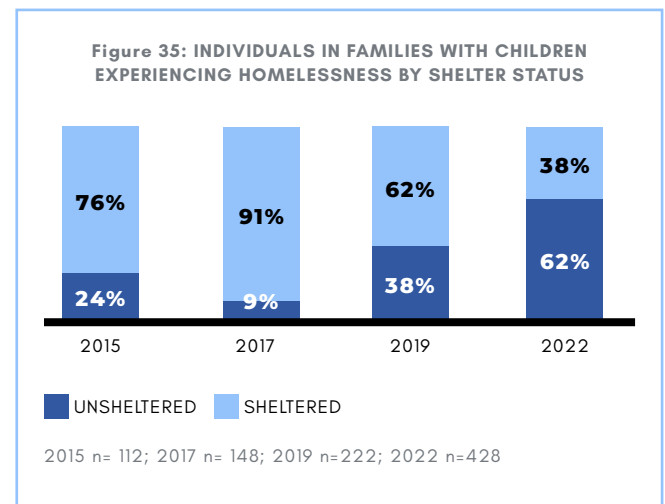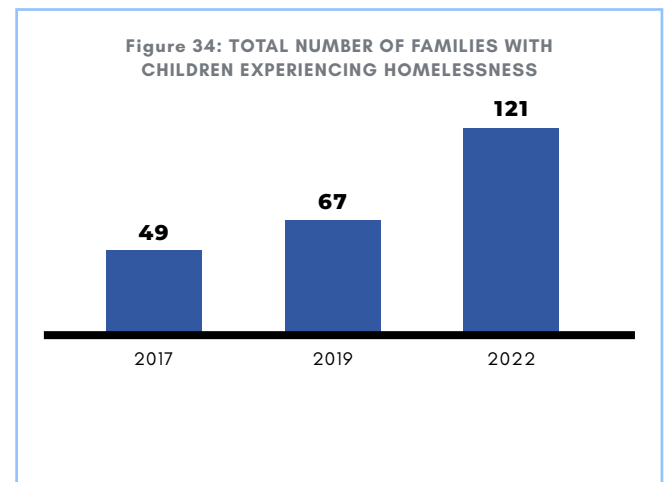# FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

National data from 2020 suggest that 30% 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 with other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth.

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

## ESTIMATES OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

There were 121 families experiencing homelessness with 428 individuals living in them in 2022. This represents an increase of 81% in the number of families experiencing homelessness since 2019. The number of unsheltered families rose in 2019 and while there have been limitations in data collection, this represents a major change and is the highest rate since 2013. This increase could also be affected by the enhanced efforts taken in 2022 to improve the profiling of family homelessness by the expanded effort to call families on housing waitlists to determine their shelter status on the evening of the count.

Persons in families represent just under 30% of the total population of persons experiencing homelessness. It should also be noted that this definition of family homelessness excludes persons who are in a "doubled-up" living situation or whose primary shelter is a hotel or motel. This is a common housing situation in San Luis Obispo and is more commonly measured through the County Office of Education's reporting done every fall.

Figure 34: TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

| 2017 | 2019 | 2022 |
|------|------|------|
| 49 | 67 | 121 |

Figure 35: INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS

| | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2022 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| SHELTERED | 76% | 91% | 62% | 38% |
| UNSHELTERED | 24% | 9% | 38% | 62% |

■ UNSHELTERED  ■ SHELTERED

2015 n= 112; 2017 n= 148; 2019 n=222; 2022 n=428

[5]U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2021). The 2021 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2022 from https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007/

[6]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

[7]U. S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from http://www.usich.gov/
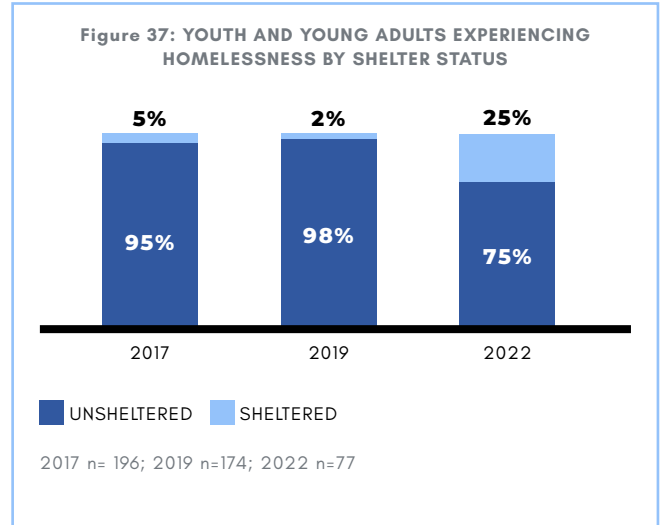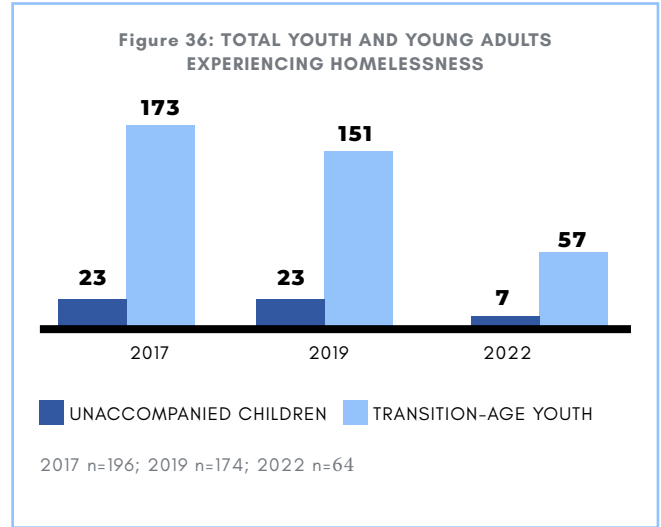
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# YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment. This is partially due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a shortage of services targeted to young people.[8]

## ESTIMATES OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness among youth and young adults is a difficult condition to identify for a number of reasons. Youth and young adults are less likely to be found among the adult population experiencing homelessness, preferring locations and times of day that make traditional efforts at enumeration more difficult.

In 2022, the general shelter and street count, combined with the targeted youth count, identified 77 youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. Three-quarters (75%) of these youth and young adults were unsheltered in '22. In 2022, the youth and young adult subpopulation represented 5% of the overall homeless population in San Luis Obispo County. Only 1% of these youth were sheltered as this continues to be a challenge in the County. The gender mix of youth experiencing homeless more closely parallels the general population, compared to the general population experiencing homelessness, where approximately two thirds are male.



**Figure 36: TOTAL YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN    TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

2017 n=196; 2019 n=174; 2022 n=64



**Figure 37: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY SHELTER STATUS**

UNSHELTERED    SHELTERED

2017 n= 196; 2019 n=174; 2022 n=77

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

# CONCLUSION

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2022 Point-in-Time Count identified 1,448 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. This represents a decrease of 2% from the count conducted in 2019.

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable insights into the San Luis Obispo County homeless population from the data collected in this report, including:

- The Point-in-Time Homeless Count identified a total of 1,448 persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County in 2022, a decrease of 2% from the count conducted in 2019.
- Four out of five (80%) persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County were unsheltered, living in places not intended for human habitation.
- Homeless survey respondents also reported having these health conditions: alcohol or drug use (35%), a psychiatric or emotional condition (43%), and PTSD (46%).
- The estimated counts of the four HUD-identified subpopulations in San Luis Obispo County were: chronically homeless individuals with one or more disabling condition (282 persons), homeless veterans (16), members of homeless families with children (428), and unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth (77).

In summary, the 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey provides valid and useful data that help create a more comprehensive profile of those experiencing homelessness. Longer term trends are consistent with neighboring communities. Data presented in this report fulfill federal reporting requirements for the CoC and will continue to inform outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making by local planning bodies over the years to come.

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# APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

## OVERVIEW

The San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Survey was designed and implemented through a collaborative CoC-wide effort that included County, city, and community-based organizations. COVID-19 related safety and public health issues were a key issue and concern in planning from both a process and staffing perspective.

The 2022 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices and using HUD's PIT Count definition of homelessness. The goal was to produce a point-in-time estimate of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County, a region which covers approximately 3,616 square miles. Several primary data collection components were integrated to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness on a given night. A detailed description of these components follows.

### COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS COUNT & SURVEY

The methodology used in the 2022 Point-in-Time Count and Survey had several main components:

**General Street Count**:
A morning count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families on February 23rd, 2022. This occurred from approximately 4:30 AM to 10:00 AM and included those sleeping outdoors on the street; at transit stations; in parks, tents, and other makeshift shelters; and in vehicles and abandoned or public properties, like parking garages and related locations. The general street count was designed to take place before shelter occupants were released. In areas with shelters, the immediate area surrounding the shelter was prioritized to eliminate potential double counting

of individuals.

**General Shelter Count:**
A nighttime count of homeless individuals and families staying at publicly and privately operated shelters on the night of February 22, 2022. This included those who occupied emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens.

**Targeted Street Count of Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults:**
An afternoon count of unsheltered unaccompanied youth under 18 and young adults 18-24 years old on February 23 and February 24, 2022. This occurred from approximately 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM and was led by special youth teams who canvassed specific areas where unaccompanied children and youth were known to congregate. Additionally, youth service providers contacted various clients known to be experiencing homelessness to inquire about their nighttime accommodations on the day of the count. Upon completion, data from this targeted count was carefully reviewed against the results from the general street count to ensure that any possible duplicate counts were removed.

**Homeless Survey:**
An in-person interview with 333 unique sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals conducted by peer surveyors between February 24th, 31 and March 15, 2022, in San Luis Obispo County. Data from the survey were used to refine the Point-in-Time Count estimates, and then used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the demographics and experiences of homeless individuals.

**The Planning Process**
To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated on community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical plans, methodological decisions, and interagency coordination efforts. ASR provided technical assistance for these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 22 years of

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experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the HUD publication, A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People., as well as in the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago publication, Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit.

**Community Involvement:**
Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. Due to COVID-19 and the public health risks, the organizing team made the decision, supported by the County Public Health office to limit participation levels in the count by the public and by persons currently experiencing homelessness out of COVID-19 transmission concerns. As a result of significant expansion of outreach services by jurisdictional and local community organizations, the organizing team felt that appropriate, safe, and thorough outreach could be achieved by using outreach staff as the primary enumerators in the field. Some lived experience persons could be integrated by outreach staff as in previous PIT count efforts, but this would be selective and subject to compliance with public health requirements.

**STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY**

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

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

**Methodological Improvements**
The 2022 street count methodology followed an established, HUD approved approach commonly called a blitz method followed by a sample survey. Very significantly, a change was made in the use of a GPS enabled smartphone in data collection using an ESRI Survey 123 application developed and customized by ASR to conform to

HUD data collection requirements and as a tool to verify the compliance with COVID-19 safety precautions established by the planning team . Also, improvements were made in pre-planning efforts to deploy outreach teams virtually, wherever possible, thereby avoiding the need for centralized deployment centers where COVID-19 transmission risks would be greater. Outreach organizations, program staff, county, and city staff along with selected community members were able to select areas for enumeration from an interactive GIS planning map tool that enabled us to plan for complete coverage of the County with prioritization of high-density homeless routes to outreach staff and personnel with direct service experience.

**Volunteer and Guide Recruitment**
As noted above, there was a planned effort to reduce the number of persons directly involved in field work and outreach in the 2022 PIT count due to COVID-19 safety concerns. In 2022, over 80 outreach workers, community volunteers and homeless guides participated in the general street count.

Outreach and program staff did limited recruitment of persons with lived experience to act as guides in order to conduct the count in 2022. Homeless guides were paid $20 per hour worked on the days of the count. To participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to view a 20-minute training video before the count. Additionally, targeted trainings were held for multiple groups throughout the county who were able to convene a large enough group of attendees. Training covered all aspects of the count:

- definition of homelessness
- how to identify homeless individuals
- how to conduct the count safely and respectfully, how to use the smart phone app and also access the smartphone app training video
- how to use the route maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered
- tips to identify vehicles
- other tips to help ensure an accurate and safe count.

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

Especially important was importance of COVID-19 safety precautions. Eligibility to participate in the count was limited to persons who were vaccinated. Proof of vaccination, however, was not a requirement. The planning committee deferred to local county, city, and organizational COVID-19 compliance and engagement.

**Logistics of Enumeration**
On the morning of the street count, teams of two or more persons were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team, typically consisted of a combination of outreach workers, lived experience guides, program staff and service experienced community volunteers. Each team had a lead and were provided with their assigned Count tract maps, smart phone access information and training, field observation tips and guidelines, including vehicle identification criteria. Teams were all assigned a unique team number and were instructed to text a Central PIT count dispatch center to confirm they were enroute and on task for enumeration of their route assignment.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traversed by foot or car. The San Luis Obispo County Survey 123 smartphone app was used to record the number of homeless persons observed in addition to basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center volunteers also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment assignment sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas.

**Unaccompanied Youth Street Count Methodology**
The goal of the 2022 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied homeless children and youth under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. Many youth and young adults experiencing homelessness do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth.

**Research Design**
As in all years, planning for the 2022 supplemental youth count included homeless youth service providers. Local service providers identified locations where homeless youth were known to congregate and. Late afternoon and early evening enumeration were the ideal times recommended by advocates to conduct the youth count.

In 2022, enhancement to the youth count effort included youth serving agencies being able to contact youth via telephone from drop-in center lists and other sources they had of youth with unstable housing. These youth were contacted and their sleeping status on the night of the count was evaluated for PIT count reporting eligibility.

Youth service provider staff members were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

**Data Collection**
The youth count was conducted by youth service providers from approximately 2pm to 7pm throughout the county.

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

**Street Count De-Duplication**
Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and de-duplicated by assessing location, gender, and age.

## SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

### Goal

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

### Definition

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

### Research Design

All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from the County's Homeless Management Information System and only programs listed on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) were used.

### Data Collection

To collect data on individuals staying in shelters, ASR worked with the County of San Luis Obispo. The County collected data on all emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and Safe Havens operating in the county. Data was collected on household status, age, gender, race and ethnicity, veteran status, chronic status, and if individuals had certain health conditions.

## CHALLENGES

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

The COVID-19 pandemic was an especially challenging issue faced by the PIT count planning team for several reasons, not the least of which was the Omicron variant surge that was peaking in the last 2 weeks of January. Our inability to better integrate persons with lived experience as route guides was a challenge though mitigated by an increased use of outreach staff.

The methods employed in a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Many factors may contribute to potential undercounts. For example:

It is difficult to identify homeless persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.

Homeless families with children and unaccompanied homeless children and youth often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or in makeshift shelters. Our ability to engage school districts to query their McKinney-Vento families and our Family Resource Centers to outreach to poor families living in unfit and unstable housing situations had a major impact on the overall count in 2022.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### Planning and Implementation

The data collected through the survey are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, duration and recurrence of homelessness, nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted primarily by outreach staff workers and individuals with lived homeless experience. Training sessions were facilitated by ASR, County staff, and community partners. Potential interviewers were led through a comprehensive orientation that included project

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background information as well as detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Survey workers were compensated at a rate of $10 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily obtained if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2022 homeless survey. The socks were easy to distribute, had broad appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

**Survey Sampling**
Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 1,448 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 333 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/-4.7% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of individuals experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County.

The 2022 survey was administered in shelters, transitional housing facilities, and on the street. In order to ensure the representation of transitional housing residents, which can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs.

Strategic attempts were also made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless children and youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an "every third encounter" survey approach. 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.

In more remote cases where respondents were sparser this survey interval was modified.

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

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

**Survey Challenges and Limitations**
The 2022 Homeless Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, finding families experiencing homelessness presents a challenge and can lead to underrepresentation in the survey results. The same applies to unaccompanied children and youth, though care is taken to ensure that youth surveyors are involved, to increase the response rate of youth survey respondents.

There may be some variance in the data that individuals experiencing homelessness self-reported, however, using a peer-centric interviewing methodology is believed to allow the respondents to be more candid with their answers and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Service providers and county staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.

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