



SANTA CLARA COUNTY



HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2015

REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

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

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SERVICE PROVIDERS

Asian Americans for Community Involvement · Bill Wilson Center · City Team International · Community Services Agency · Community Solutions · Community Technology Alliance · Downtown Streets Team · Family Supportive Housing · Gilroy Compassion Center · HomeFirst · InnVision Shelter Network · Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence · Salvation Army · Santa Clara County Office of Education · Santa Clara County Office of Supportive Housing · South County Housing · Support Network for Battered Women · Valley Homeless Health Care Program · West Valley Community Services

Santa Clara County, the City of San José and ASR would also like to acknowledge the 335 volunteers, service providers and County and City employees who registered as volunteers for the census efforts and the many community and faith-based organizations that helped to recruit volunteers.

Finally, this study would not be possible without the 190 homeless census and survey workers, 952 survey respondents, and dozens of outreach workers whose efforts are reflected throughout this report.

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POINT-IN-TIME JURISDICTIONAL FUNDERS

City of Campbell

City of Morgan Hill

City of Cupertino

City of Mountain View

City of Gilroy

City of Palo Alto

City of Los Altos

City of San José

Town of Los Altos Hills

City of Santa Clara

Town of Los Gatos

City of Saratoga

City of Milpitas

City of Sunnyvale

City of Monte Sereno

County of Santa Clara



Introduction

Every two years, during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of their homeless populations to measure the prevalence of homelessness in their communities. Communities collect information on individuals and families sleeping in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as people sleeping on the streets, in cars, in abandoned properties, or in other places not meant for human habitation.

These biennial Point-in-Time counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for homeless individuals and families. Currently, the Santa Clara County Continuum of Care receives more than \$15 million in federal funding, a key source of funding for homeless services in Santa Clara County.

Communities report the findings of their Point-in-Time counts in their annual funding applications to HUD. The data collected helps the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Biennial Point-in-Time counts are the primary source of nationwide data on the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.

The County of Santa Clara and the City of San José have worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey. ASR is a nonprofit social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and research.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

The County of Santa Clara and the City of San José partnered with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2015 Santa Clara County Census and Survey. Together, they identified four key project goals:

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

- To improve the ability of policymakers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2013 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey, and to track progress toward ending homelessness; and
- To assess the status of specific subpopulations including veterans, families, unaccompanied children and youth, and those who are chronically homeless.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

In this study, HUD's definition of homelessness for Point-in-Time counts was used. The definition includes:

- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals), or
- 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 station, airport, or camping ground¹

It does not include individuals or persons living in families who were living in “double ups,” hotels/motels, or an institutional setting.

PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

The Santa Clara County Census and Survey had four primary components:

- 1) A Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks or vehicles, etc.);
- 2) A targeted Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered, unaccompanied homeless children and youth;
- 3) A Point-in-Time count of homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter, including those staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or using hotel/motel vouchers; and
- 4) A qualitative survey of a representative sample of homeless adults and youth administered in the weeks following the census efforts.

This report is intended to assist service providers, policymakers, funders, and those in local, state, and federal government to gain a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measure the impact of current policies and programming, and plan for the future. The results of both the census and survey presented in this report provide invaluable data regarding the number and characteristics of homeless individuals and families in Santa Clara County. These data can help guide countywide efforts to mitigate and end homelessness.

¹ 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.



Point-In-Time Census

The 2015 Point-in-Time count included a complete enumeration of all sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons in Santa Clara County. The general street count was conducted on January 27 and 28 from approximately daybreak to noon. Teams of homeless guides and volunteers canvassed nearly all 1,290 square miles of Santa Clara County. Individuals in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and domestic violence shelters were counted on the evening of January 27, 2015. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to those used in 2013; however, most shelters reported data using the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) rather than paper or online surveys.

In a sustained effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, Santa Clara County conducted a dedicated youth count similar to those conducted in previous years. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, deduplication, and project methodology, please see Appendix 1.

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

A total of 6,556 individuals were counted in Santa Clara County on January 27 and 28, a decrease of 1,075 (-14%) people from 2013. While the number of individuals served by county shelters decreased slightly between 2013 and 2015, the number of unsheltered individuals showed the greatest decrease (1,047). Seventy-one percent of the population was unsheltered, living on the street, in parks, encampments, vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation.

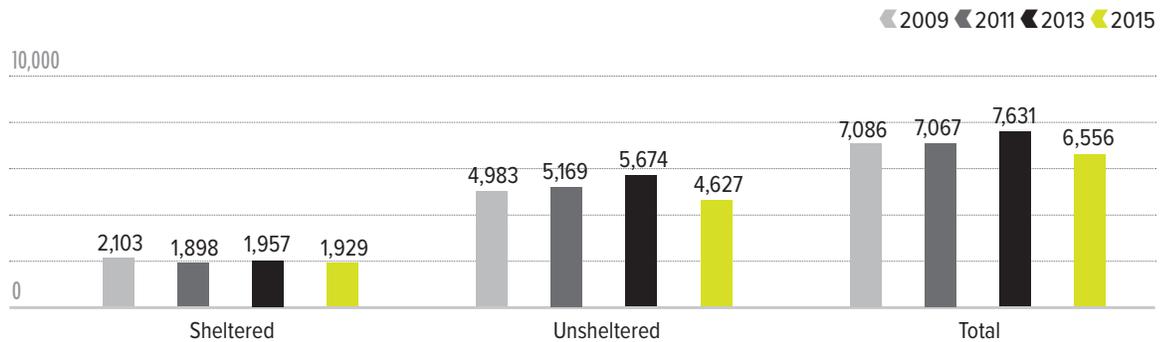
FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.

Data on Point-in-Time counts in Santa Clara County since 2004 show the lowest count in 2015. Prior to the 2015 count, the lowest Point-in-Time count was in 2007, prior to the economic downturn.

FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS BY SHELTER STATUS WITH 11 YEAR TREND



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2009). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.

Note: Changes in the shelter count may reflect changes in shelter designations and listed shelters rather than capacity or usage.

Persons in families represented 14% of the overall homeless population in 2015, similar to previous years. Ninety-three percent of those families were counted in county shelters. Sixty-three individuals in families, 7% of those in families, were unsheltered. Unsheltered family members included 35 children under the age of 18.²

The majority of people counted in the 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Census were single individuals over the age of 25 years (73%). Thirteen percent of the population were unaccompanied children and transition-age youth under the age of 25, these are children and youth living on their own without the presence of a parent or adult family member.

FIGURE 3. HOMELESS CENSUS RESULTS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND AGE GROUP

	CHILDREN UNDER 18	ADULTS 18-24	ADULTS 25+	TOTAL
Sheltered	511	152	1,266	1,929
Persons in family households	493	67	285	845
Persons in non-family households	18	85	981	1,084
Unsheltered	76	745	3,806	4,627
Persons in family households	35	6	22	63
Persons in non-family households	41	739	3,784	4,564
Total	587	897	5,072	6,556
Percent	9%	14%	77%	-

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.

² Santa Clara County Office of Education (COE) assisted with the count of homeless children, youth and families in 2015. Unsheltered families are traditionally underrepresented in Point-in-Time Counts. For more information on the participation of the COE please see Appendix 1.

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNSHELTERED AND SHELTERED HOMELESS PERSONS BY JURISDICTION**FIGURE 4. HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY JURISDICTION**

JURISDICTION	UNSHelterED		SHelterED		TOTAL	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
Total Incorporated	4,944	4,204	1,816	1,817	6,760	6,021
City of Campbell	91	53	0	0	91	53
City of Cupertino	92	50	20	23	112	73
City of Gilroy	125	179	254	260	379	439
City of Los Altos	6	18	0	0	6	18
Town of Los Gatos	11	1	0	0	11	1
City of Milpitas	95	122	0	0	95	122
City of Monte Sereno	1	1	0	0	1	1
City of Morgan Hill	61	81	0	0	61	81
City of Mountain View	136	271	3	5	139	276
City of Palo Alto	145	203	12	16	157	219
City of San José	3,660	2,810	1,110	1,253	4,770	4,063
City of Santa Clara	203	150	275	227	478	377
City of Saratoga	35	10	0	0	35	10
City of Sunnyvale	283	255	142	33	425	288
Total Unincorporated	730	423	106	77	836	500
San Martin	53	261	106	77	159	338
Other Unincorporated Areas	677	162	0	0	677	162
Confidential Locations	NA	NA	35	35	35	35
Total	5,674	4,627	1,957	1,929	7,631	6,556

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.
Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Census. San José, CA.

Note: Changes in the shelter count may reflect changes in shelter designations and listed shelters rather than capacity or usage.

As in previous years, the 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Census collected data on the geographic distribution of sheltered and unsheltered persons in Santa Clara County. These data allow for the assessment of program needs addressing homelessness at both the city and county levels. However, it is important to note that changes in the shelter count for each jurisdiction are primarily due to changes in shelter capacity and do not necessarily reflect changes in the homeless population.

Between 2013 and 2015, there were a number of changes in shelter capacity that contributed to changes in the number of persons included in each jurisdiction's count of sheltered homeless people. The largest change occurred in Sunnyvale, as a result of the closure of the Sunnyvale Cold Weather Shelter Program at the Sunnyvale National Guard Armory. Following the closure of the Armory shelter site, which held 125 seasonal emergency shelter beds, several programs were utilized to replace the capacity of the Armory with other shelter beds and motel rooms. The majority of the replacement shelter beds were located in San José, with a small number in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto (San Mateo County). In addition, two new programs were created to shelter people in motel rooms during the cold weather season. Both of these programs were based out of San José, and thus the people staying in those programs on the night of the Point-in-Time count are included under San José's shelter count, although the individual motel rooms utilized throughout the season are scattered across multiple jurisdictions.

In addition, the number of people in San José's shelter count increased due to the opening of the Homeless Veterans Emergency Housing Facility (HVEHF) in 2013 with 125 transitional housing beds. HVEHF was previously located on the grounds of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System's Menlo Park campus, which is in San Mateo County.

The City of Santa Clara's shelter count decreased due to some transitional housing units shifting to permanent housing. Formerly homeless individuals and families living in permanent housing programs are no longer homeless, and thus are not included in the Point-in-Time count.

Changes in unsheltered data reflect shifts in the number of individuals and families counted on the streets, in cars, encampments, and public spaces not meant for human habitation. Data show that some areas of the county, such as Gilroy, Milpitas, and San Martin, saw large increases in the number of unsheltered persons included in the Point-in-Time count, while the City of San José saw a decrease of 850 individuals in unsheltered locations between 2013 and 2015.



Homeless Survey Findings

The methodology used for the 2015 homeless count is described by HUD as a “blitz count” in that it is conducted by numerous people over a very short period of time in an effort to avoid duplicate enumeration. The count is followed by a face-to-face representative survey. The survey sample is then used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the county’s homeless population and subpopulations for the purposes of HUD reporting and local service delivery and strategic planning. The results of the “blitz” census, combined with the survey, are used to provide estimates of the number of people affected by a given experience, while the survey provides the foundational data elements for the characteristics discussed in the following section of the report.

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the homeless survey in Santa Clara County. Surveys were administered to individuals experiencing homelessness after the completion of the 2015 Point-in-Time count, between February 1 and March 16, 2015. The survey effort resulted in 952 complete and unique surveys.³ In an effort to mitigate sample bias and faithfully represent the overall population experiencing homelessness in the County, surveyors were recruited from multiple organizations and areas. Efforts were made to target respondents based on age, gender, shelter type, and geographic location.

³ Additional information regarding the Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey can be found in the appendices, including: the homeless survey Methodology.

The following table is a brief overview of the homeless census population and the survey population.

FIGURE 5. SURVEY AND CENSUS POPULATIONS

	CENSUS POPULATION	SURVEY POPULATION
Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age-Youth	13%	13%
Families	14%	12%
Sheltered	29%	33%
Total	6,556	952

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey. San José, CA.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of homeless residents in Santa Clara County, respondents were asked basic demographic questions including their age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

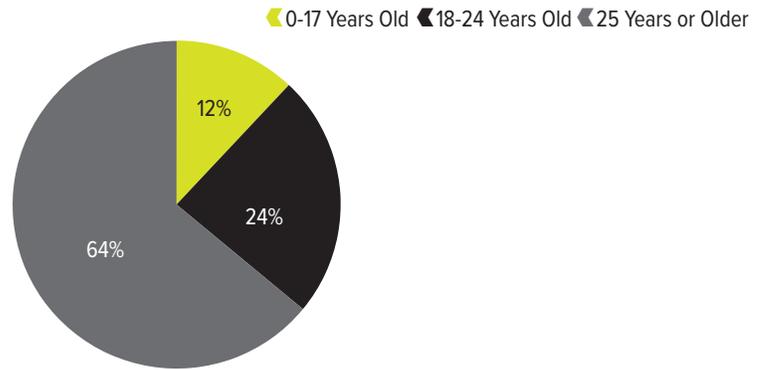
AGE

Previous data have suggested the population of individuals experiencing homelessness has been aging. However, recent research by Stephen Metraux, Ph.D. has shown that traditional outreach efforts in national Point-in-Time counts and service-based enumerations may have overrepresented the number of individuals in these older age groups. His data suggest that older individuals may be more service-connected and therefore easier to reach through traditional outreach strategies.⁴

⁴ Metraux, S. (2014). Learning from the dead: A posthumous reappraisal of homeless population characteristics. APHA 142 Annual Meeting and Expo. New Orleans, LA.

To gain a better understanding of age and experiences of homelessness, respondents were asked how old they were the first time they experienced homelessness. Twelve percent of respondents reported they were under the age of 18, 24% were between the ages of 18 and 24, and 64% were over the age of 25.

FIGURE 6. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

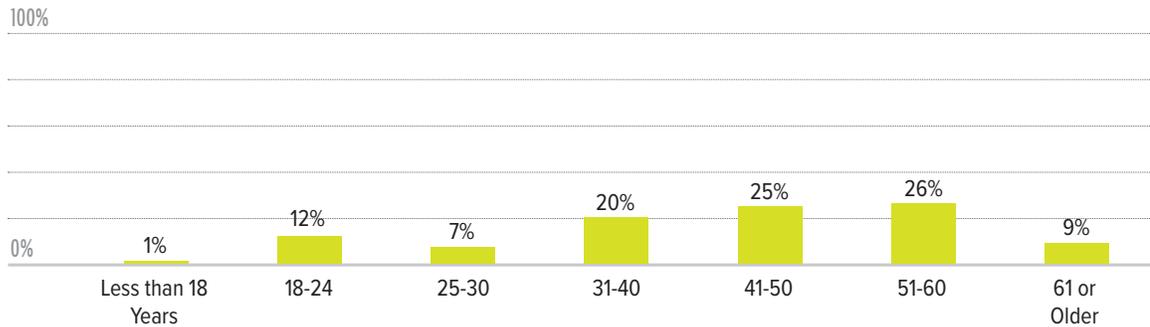


2015 n:913

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

Santa Clara County continues to excel in its efforts to reach and enumerate unaccompanied children and youth in the unsheltered Point-in-Time count through dedicated youth outreach. In order to accurately represent the high proportion of youth counted in 2015, youth surveyors conducted additional targeted outreach to youth under the age of 25. Thirteen percent of survey respondents were under the age of 25 in 2015. Thirty-five percent of those surveyed were over the age of 51. As in previous years, the greatest number of individuals surveyed were between the ages of 30 and 50 years old.

FIGURE 7. AGE (2015)



2015 n:952

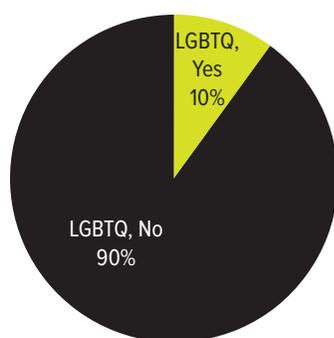
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The majority of 2015 survey respondents identified as male (63%), 36% female, and 1% transgender. This was similar to 2013, when 67% of respondents identified as male, 31% female, and 2% transgender. Compared to the 2015 Point-in-Time population, there was a slightly higher proportion of females in the survey population. This was due to increased outreach among youth, families, and those residing in Transitional Housing facilities.

While there are limited data on the number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggest LGBTQ individuals experience homelessness at higher rates, especially those under the age of 25. Ten percent of homeless survey respondents identified as LGBTQ in 2015. Of those, 53% identified as bisexual, 19% lesbian, 12% gay, 11% transgender, 4% queer, and 14% other LGBTQ. Among those who identified as LGBTQ, 53% were female. A higher percentage of youth under age 25 identified as LGBTQ (16%) than their older counterparts.

FIGURE 8. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ IDENTITY



Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	%	n
Gay	12%	11
Lesbian	19%	18
Queer	4%	4
Bisexual	53%	49
Transgender	11%	10
Other	14%	13

LGBTQ n:952; Breakout n: 93 respondents offering 105 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

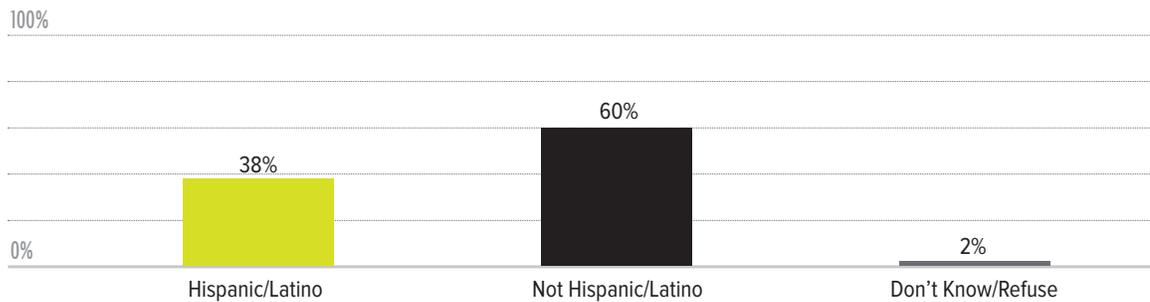
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

RACE/ETHNICITY

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the US Census. When asked about their ethnicity, 38% of homeless survey respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. In regards to race, 42% identified as White, 18% Black or African American, 7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 3% Asian, 1% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 30% multi-ethnic or other.

In comparison to the general population of Santa Clara County, a higher percentage of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino (38% compared to 27%). In terms of race, a much higher population of survey respondents identified as Black or African American, 18% compared to 3% of the general population. In contrast, 3% of homeless respondents identified as Asian, compared to 35% of the general population.

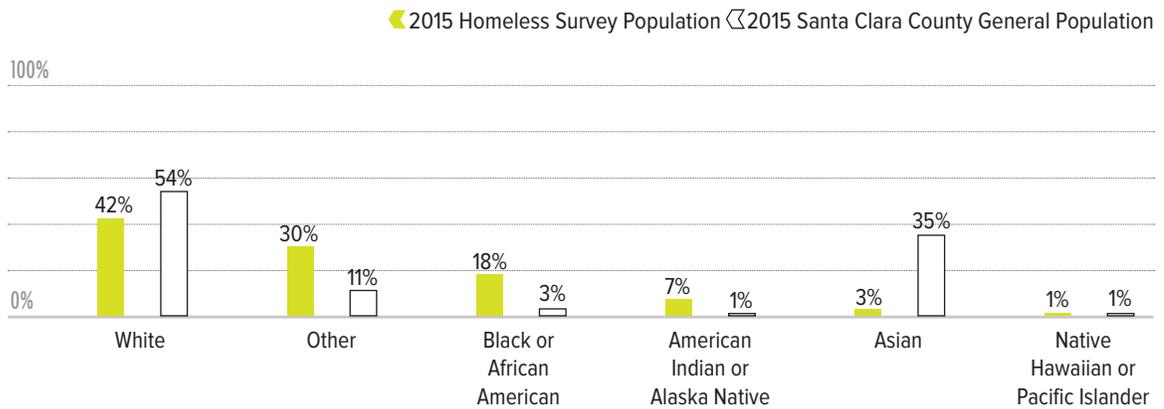
FIGURE 9. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY



2015 n:943

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

FIGURE 10. RACE



2015 n:873

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 U.S. Census Bureau. (April 2015). American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

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

FOSTER CARE

It has been estimated that one in four former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.⁵ In the State of California, foster youth are now eligible to receive services beyond age 18. Transitional housing and supportive services for youth 18-24 are provided by two programs, Transitional Housing Placement-Foster Care for youth 18-21 and Transitional Housing Placement-Plus for youth ages 18-24. It is hoped that these additional supports, implemented since 2012, will assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless. Santa Clara County currently provides extended care to foster youth, including a Transitional Housing Placement-Plus program.

In 2015, 16% of respondents reported a history of foster care, the same as in 2013 (16%). The percentage of youth under the age of 25 who had been in foster care was much higher than adults over the age of 25 (40% compared to 14%). Sixteen percent of youth reported they were living in foster care immediately before becoming homeless, representing roughly 2% of the overall homeless population. Yet less than 5% of youth under the age of 25 reported that aging out of foster care was the primary cause of their homelessness.

FIGURE 11. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



2015 n:905

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

⁵ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2012). Amendment 2012, Opening Doors: Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Washington: D.C.

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness, and where they have lived since, affects the way they seek services as well as their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and opportunities for systemic improvement and homelessness prevention. Survey respondents were asked about both the geography and environment in which they were living prior to experiencing homelessness.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Eighty-four percent of Santa Clara County survey respondents reported having lived in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless, a slight decrease from 87% in 2013. Of those living in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless, three-quarters had lived in the county for more than 10 years prior to experiencing homelessness. Of those who reported living in another California county or out of state at the time they became homeless, 50% had resided in Santa Clara County for a year or more at the time of the study.

FIGURE 12. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



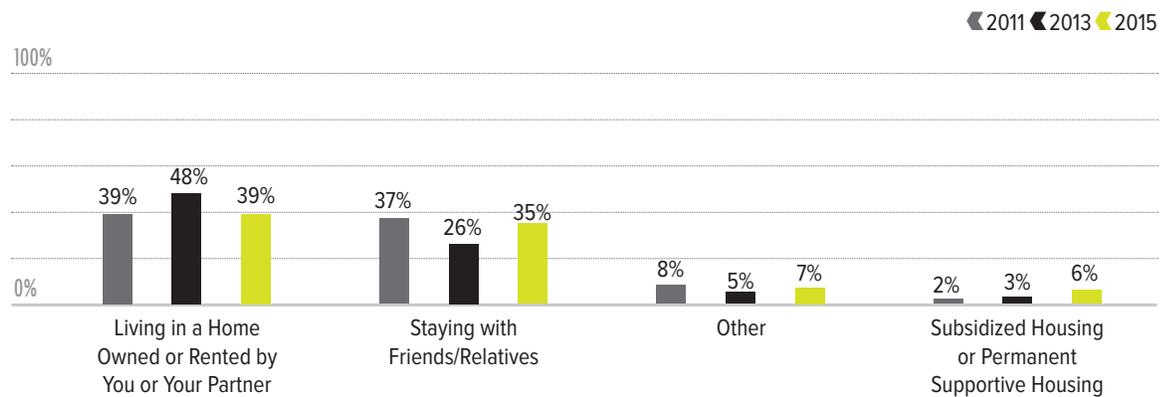
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Most often, homeless respondents reported living in a home rented or owned by themselves, a partner, family, or friends. Less often, respondents became homeless after leaving institutions.

Thirty-five percent of respondents reported staying with friends or family immediately prior to becoming homeless, similar to 2013 (26%). Thirty-nine percent reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner, down from 48% in 2013. Six percent reported they were living in subsidized or permanent supportive housing. Six percent of respondents reported they were in a jail, prison, or a juvenile detention facility immediately prior to becoming homeless. Two percent were in a hospital or treatment facility, and 2% were in foster care.

FIGURE 13. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME (TOP FOUR RESPONSES)



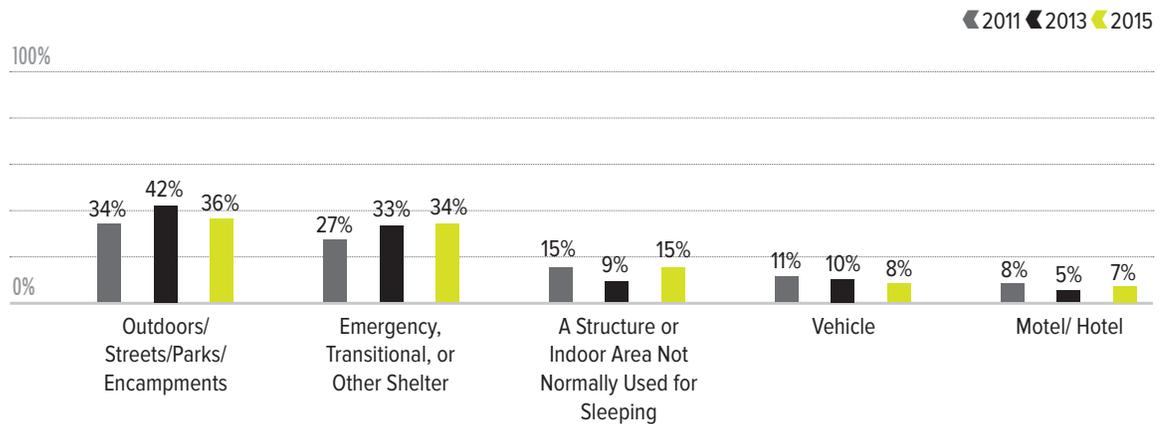
2011 n:1,004; 2013 n:811; 2015 n:886

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Data are collected on where individuals are counted during the Point-in-Time count, however survey respondents are also asked about their usual nighttime accommodations. Thirty-four percent reported staying in a public shelter (emergency shelter, transitional housing facility, or alternative shelter environment). Thirty-six percent of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors (either on the streets, in parks or encampment areas). Fifteen percent of respondents reported they were sleeping in public buildings, bus stations, foyers, hallways, or other indoor areas not meant for human habitation. Eight percent reported staying in their vehicles.

FIGURE 14. USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT



2011 n:1,012; 2013 n:850; 2015 n:926

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

LIVING IN ENCAMPMENTS⁶

Of individuals living in encampments, 73% reported they lived alone, without other family members. It was estimated that average encampment areas included between 5 and 6 people living near to one another. Thirty-five percent reported living with a dog, cat or pet of some kind.

Seventy-six percent of those living in encampments had been homeless for a year or more, a higher percentage than those who did not live in encampments (63%). Seventy-three percent reported they were over the age of 25 the first time they experienced homelessness, higher than among those living in other locations (64%). There was also a higher percentage of female respondents living in encampments, 46% compared to 36% in other locations.

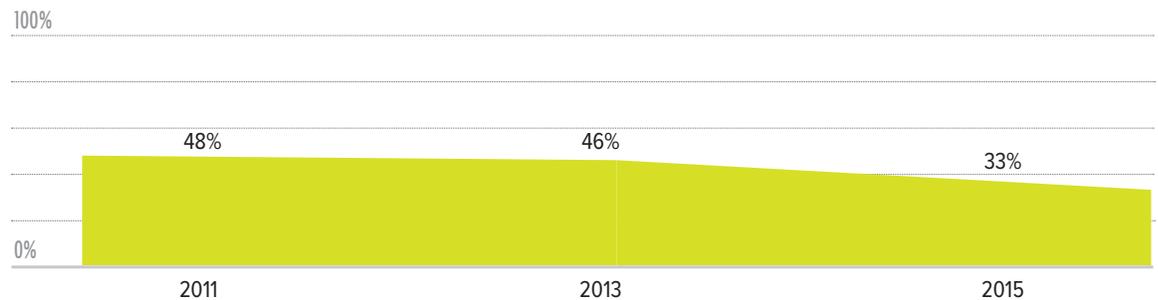
⁶ It is important to note that a small number of survey respondents self-identified as living in encampment areas, despite additional outreach to these locations. In total 41 respondents reported living in encampment areas in Santa Clara County in 2015. While caution should be used when analyzing these data, reported data are similar to results found in other local studies of homelessness.

DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. More than two thirds of 2015 respondents reported they had experienced homelessness previously. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability.

FIGURE 15. PERCENT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING 'YES')?



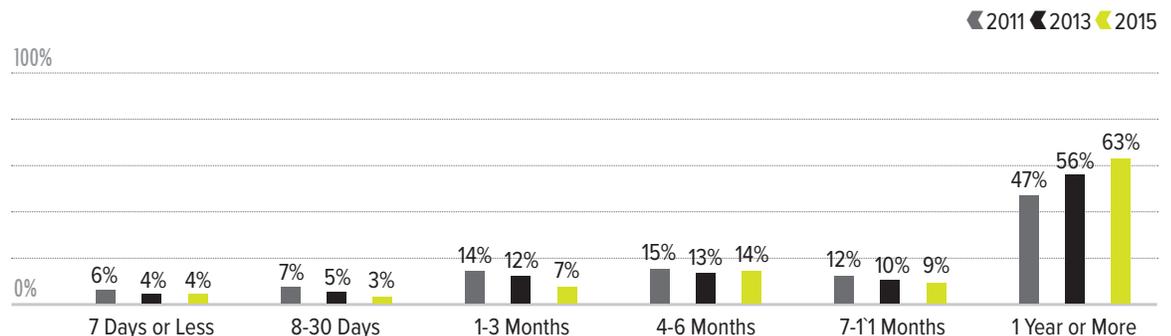
2011 n:1,009; 2013 n:855; 2015 n:937

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

Sixty-three percent of survey respondents reported they had been homeless for a year or more, an increase from 56% in 2013. Seven percent reported that their current homelessness had been for less than one month, slightly lower than in 2013 (9%).

Six percent of respondents reported they had experienced homelessness four or more times in the past year. When asked how many times they had been homeless in the past three years, 46% reported they had been homeless four or more times. This was similar to previous years.

FIGURE 16. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2011 n:992; 2013 n:836; 2015 n:911

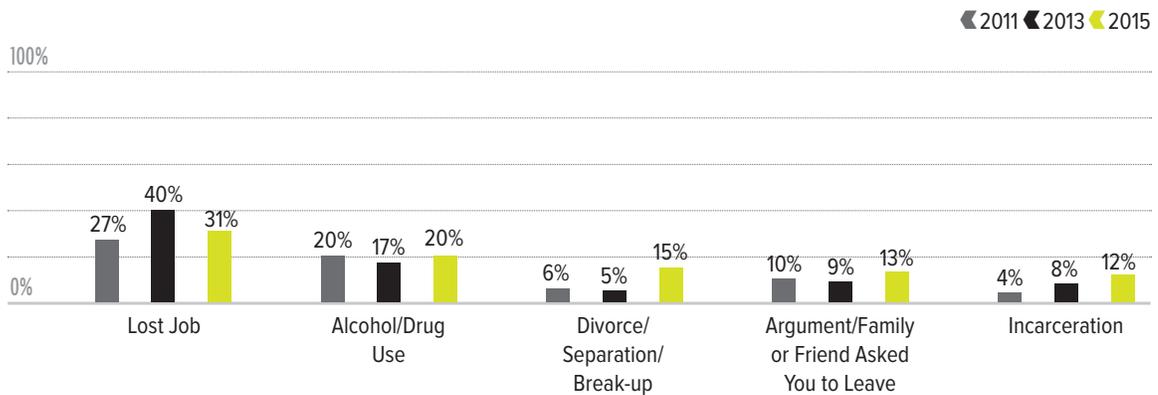
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual’s homelessness is not always clear. It is often the result of multiple and compounding causes. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents reported job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness. Twenty percent reported drugs or alcohol, higher than 17% reported in 2013. Fifteen percent reported divorce or separation, 13% an argument with a family member who asked them to leave, and 7% reported domestic violence. Seven percent reported a mental health condition, and 7% reported a physical health or medical condition.

Twelve percent of respondents reported incarceration was the primary cause of their homelessness. An additional 1% reported housing restrictions due to probation or parole. Ten percent of respondents reported eviction was the primary cause of their homelessness, 6% reported their landlord raised their rent, and 4% reported foreclosure.

FIGURE 17. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



2011 n:997; 2013 n:818 respondents offering 1,029; 2015 n:920 respondents offering 1,326 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

Note: Multiple response question (Years 2013, 2015). Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

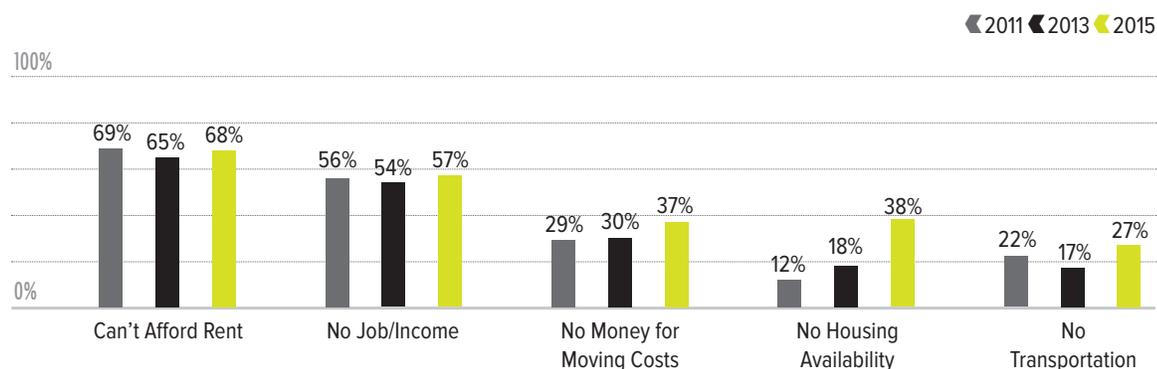
Note: Caution should be used when comparing data across years due to changes in question format.

OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

A common misconception about individuals experiencing homelessness is that they do not want housing and prefer to live in shelters or outdoors. This is sometimes referred to as “homeless by choice.” When respondents were asked if they would want affordable permanent housing, were it available, 93% said “yes.” This was the same percentage as in 2013.

Respondents were asked what obstacles prevented them from obtaining housing. Most respondents reported multiple obstacles, including a mixture of income or access-related issues. The most frequently cited obstacle was the inability to afford rent (68%) and more than half reported they had no work or income. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported there was no housing available. Twenty percent reported their criminal record prevented them from obtaining housing.

FIGURE 18. OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



2011 n:999 respondents giving 2,412 responses; 2013 n:774 respondents giving 1,831 responses; 2015 n:896 respondents giving 3,012 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

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

Respondents were asked what might have prevented them from experiencing homelessness; the most frequent response was employment assistance (34%). This was followed by rental assistance (31%) and drug or alcohol counseling (28%). Nineteen percent of respondents reported mental health services may have prevented their homelessness.

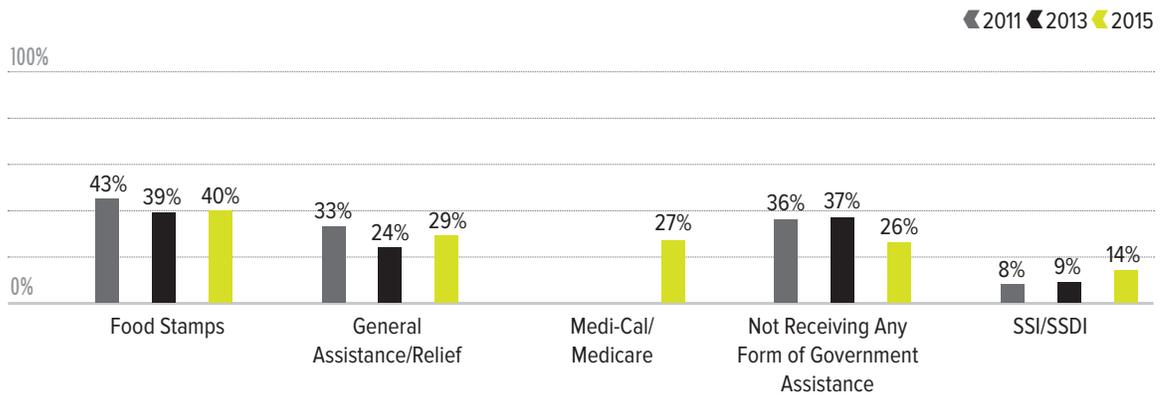
SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

Santa Clara County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain benefits and support. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services. Many believe that they do not qualify or are ineligible for assistance. Connecting homeless individuals and families to these support services helps them create the bridge to mainstream support services and helps to prevent future housing instability.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Three quarters of respondents in 2015 reported they were receiving some form of government assistance (75%). The most frequently reported benefit was CalFresh/food stamps (40%), similar to 2013 (39%). Twenty-nine percent of respondents in 2015 reported receiving General Assistance (GA), up from 24% in 2013. Fourteen percent reported receiving SSI or SSDI. Twenty-seven percent reported they were on Medi-Cal/Medicare.

FIGURE 19. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



2011 n:989 respondents offering 1,316 responses; 2013 n:811 respondents offering 1,004 responses; 2015 n:883 respondents offering 1,363 responses

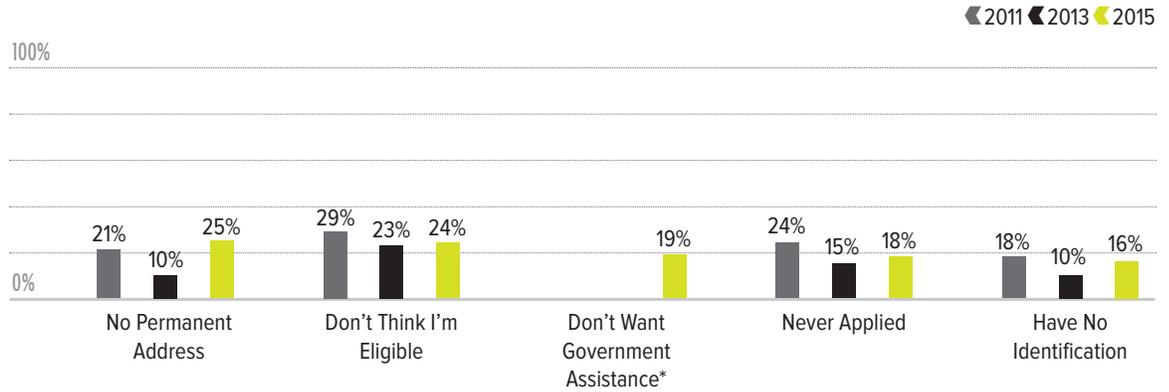
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

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

Note: Medi-cal/Medicare was added as a response option in 2015.

Of those who reported they were not receiving any form of government support, 25% reported their lack of a permanent address prevented them from assistance. Nearly one-quarter did not think they were eligible for assistance, and 19% reported they were not interested in receiving support.

FIGURE 20. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES IN 2015)



2011 n:341 respondents offering 630 responses; 2013 n:289 respondents offering 382 responses; 2015 n:206 respondents offering 335 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2013). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.
 Applied Survey Research. (2011). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

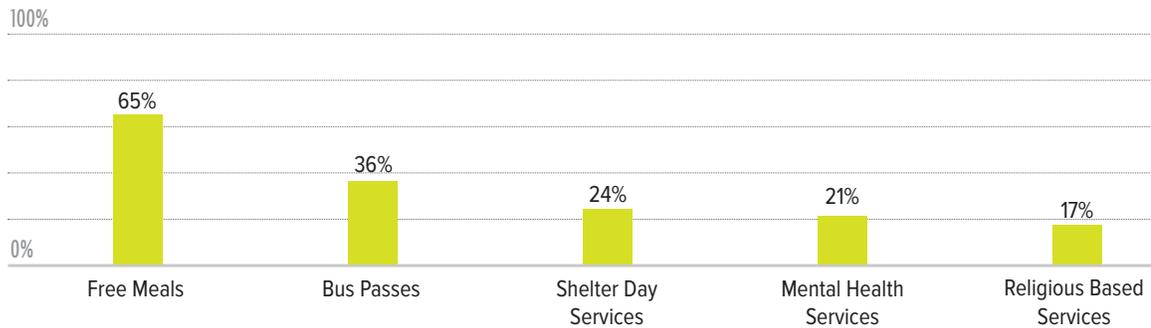
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

*Note: Response option changed in 2015 from “don’t need” to “don’t want.”

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Respondents were also asked about other forms of assistance. Sixty-five percent of respondents reported using free meal services, more than one third (36%) were accessing free or reduced price bus passes, and nearly one-quarter reported using shelter day services. Twenty-one percent were accessing mental health services. While not one of the top five responses, 13% reported using drug or alcohol treatment services, 12% reported receiving outreach services and 10% job training or employment services.

FIGURE 21. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



2015 n:875 respondents offering 1,960 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

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

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

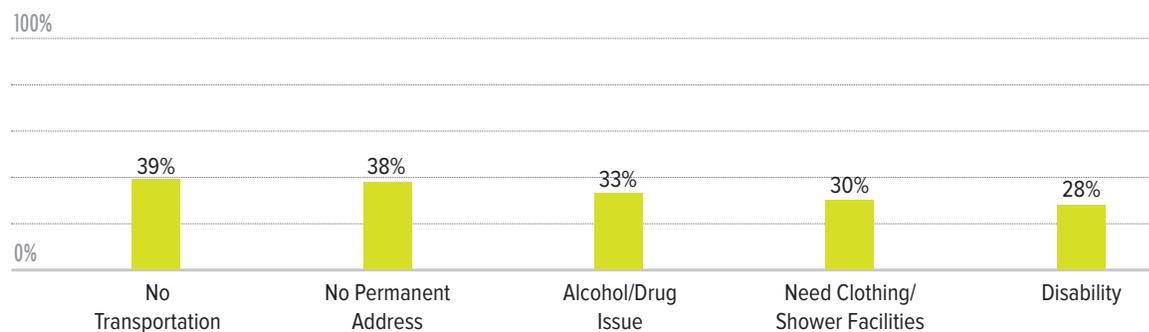
While the majority of homeless survey respondents reported being unemployed, some had part-time or full-time work. Many were receiving an income from benefits, either public or private. Yet data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.

EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Santa Clara County in January 2015 was roughly 5%, down from nearly 8% in 2013.⁷ It is important to recognize that the unemployment rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It doesn't represent all joblessness. The unemployment rate for homeless respondents was 81%, higher than in 2013 (74%).

Of those who were unemployed, 52% reported they were looking for work; 28% reported they were unable to work. The most frequently cited barrier to employment was transportation (39%). Other obstacles included basic resources such as the lack of a permanent address (38%) and clothing or shower facilities (30%). Thirty-three percent reported drug or alcohol issues prevented them from obtaining work, disability was cited by 28%, health problems 26%, and mental health 18%. Twenty-two percent reported their criminal record prevented them from obtaining work.

FIGURE 22. OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING EMPLOYMENT



2015: 733 respondents offering 2,504 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

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

Note: Question new in 2015 survey.

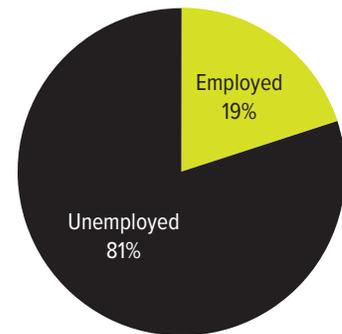
⁷ State of California Employment Development Department. (2013). Unemployment Rates (Labor Force). Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>

INCOME

Income, from all sources, varied between those with regular employment and those who were unemployed. Thirty-five percent of unemployed respondents reported an income of less than \$99 per month, in comparison to 2% of those who were employed. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling. Yet even among those with employment, roughly 29% reported an income over \$1,500. This is in comparison to an average rental price of more than \$2,000 in Santa Clara County. Respondents with an income of more than \$1,500, regardless of employment status, represented less than 8% of the survey population.

FIGURE 23. EMPLOYMENT AND MEAN MONTHLY INCOME

	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	%	n	%	n
\$0-\$99	2%	4	35%	259
\$100-\$449	12%	20	31%	230
\$450-\$749	15%	26	9%	66
\$750-\$1,099	17%	30	16%	119
\$1,100-\$1,499	25%	43	6%	46
\$1,500-\$3,000	24%	42	3%	19
More than \$3,000	5%	8	1%	5



2015 employment status n:950; Income employed n:173; Income unemployed n:744

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

HEALTH

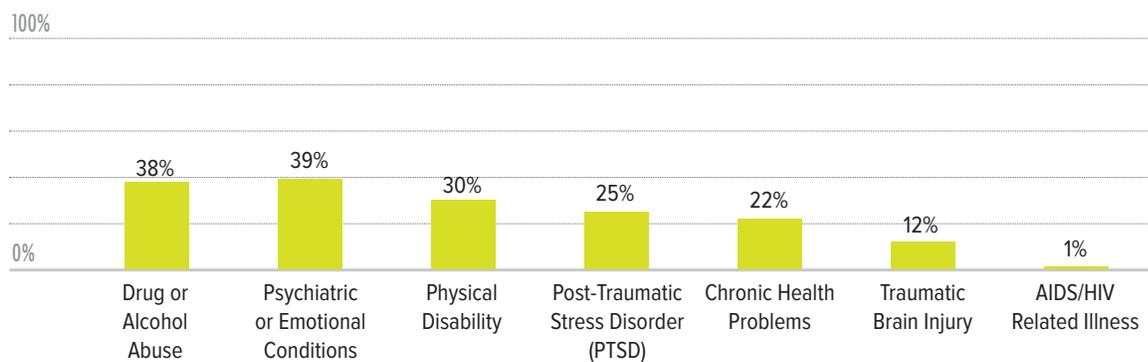
The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to health care, individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.⁸

PHYSICAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITIES

Nearly two thirds of respondents (65%) reported one or more health conditions, similar to 2013 (64%). These conditions included chronic physical illness, chronic substance abuse, and severe mental health conditions. Fifty-two percent of survey respondents with these conditions reported their condition limited their ability to take care of personal matters or get or keep a job, up from 44% in 2013.

The most frequently reported health conditions were a psychiatric or emotional condition (39%), drug or alcohol abuse (38%), followed by a physical disability (30%). Twenty-five percent of respondents reported having PTSD. Recent studies have looked at the incidence of traumatic brain injury (TBI) among those experiencing homelessness. Overall, 12% of respondents reported a TBI. Fewer than 1% of respondents reported having AIDS or an HIV-related illness.

FIGURE 24. HEALTH CONDITIONS



Drug or alcohol abuse n:899; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:892; Physical disability n:886; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:888; Chronic health problems n:902; Traumatic brain injury n:876; AIDS/HIV related n:880

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

⁸ Salit, S. A. (1998). Hospitalization costs associated with homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends asking about physical, emotional, or sexual abuse over a lifetime. Four percent of all survey respondents reported they were currently experiencing domestic/partner violence or abuse. When asked about experiences across the lifetime, 27% reported domestic violence.

When analyzed by gender, 6% of all women respondents and 2% of all men were currently experiencing domestic violence. Forty-four percent of women reported experiencing domestic violence previously, compared to 17% of men.⁹ Among respondents who reported any experience of domestic violence, 17% reported it was the primary cause of their homelessness.

FIGURE 25. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2015 n:892

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

⁹ Overall survey response rates are high, however the percentage of respondents who refused to answer current domestic violence was 5% among men and 21% among women. Seven percent of men declined to answer lifetime violence, as did 20% of women.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

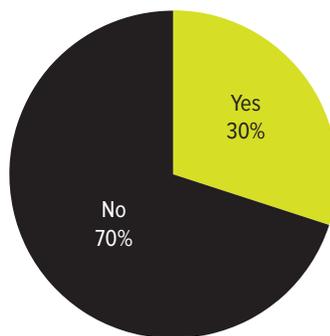
Individuals recently released from the criminal justice system often face housing challenges that may contribute to their homelessness.

INCARCERATION

Nineteen percent of respondents reported they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey, similar to 2013. Thirty percent of survey respondents had spent at least one night in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The County of Santa Clara has been focusing on developing a comprehensive system to address the needs and risks of former offenders. Implemented in 2011, the County's Reentry Program is intended to link inmates to effective in-custody and community-based programming. Fourteen percent of respondents reported they had used or were using re-entry services.

FIGURE 26. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 n:903

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.



Homeless Subpopulations

Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness in the United States. To adequately address the diversity within the population experiencing homelessness, the federal government identified four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs. The following sections look at each of these populations to identify the number of people counted during the Point-in-Time count on January 27 and 28 as well as the characteristics of each population.

The following section details the number and characteristics of individuals included in the Santa Clara County Point-in-Time Census and Survey who meet the definition of each subpopulation.

Of the 952 unique surveys completed in 2015, the results represent 317 chronically homeless individuals, 112 by homeless veterans, 112 individuals in homeless families, and 107 by unaccompanied children and Transition-Age-Youth. Surveys were completed in unsheltered environments and Transitional Housing settings.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and also has a condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing. This definition applies to individuals as well as adult household members.

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

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) reported that roughly 15% of the national homeless population was chronically homeless in 2014 or 84,291 chronically homeless individuals.¹⁰ Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the decrease in national chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints have limited the amount of money available to support housing programs and services. As a result, *Opening Doors*, which began with a goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015, has extended the plan to 2017.¹¹

FIGURE 27. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey*. San José, CA.

10 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Annual Update 2014. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

11 Cavallaro, E. (2015). Ending Chronic Homelessness, Now in 2017. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

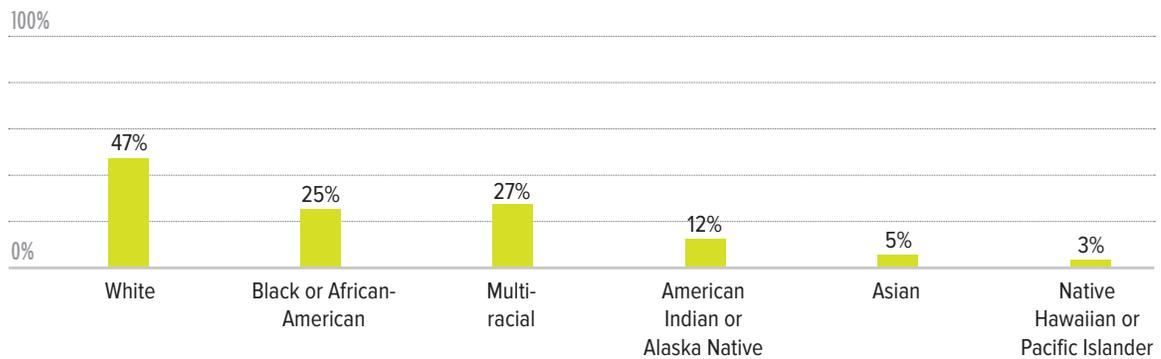
The number of chronically homeless individuals and families in Santa Clara County decreased slightly between 2013 and 2015. Based on Point-in-Time Count data, it is estimated there are 2,169 chronically homeless individuals and 13 chronically homeless families. This was in comparison to 2,509 chronically homeless individuals and 9 people in chronically homeless families in 2013.

Data from 2013 suggest that while there are fewer people experiencing homelessness in the county, a higher proportion are experiencing one or more conditions that prevent them from obtaining work or housing and they have been without housing for extended periods of time.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The majority of chronically homeless individuals were male (71%), this was a higher percentage of males than the non-chronically homeless population (59%). A higher percentage of chronically homeless respondents identified as non-Hispanic/Latino, 62% compared to 59% of non-chronic respondents. Eleven percent of chronically homeless respondents identified as veterans, similar to 12% of those who were not chronically homeless.

FIGURE 28. RACE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:290

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

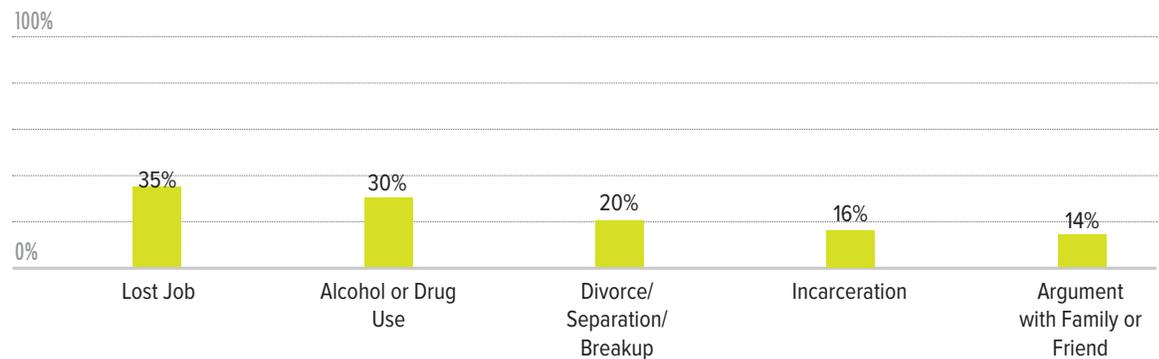
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Thirty-five percent of chronically homeless respondents reported job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, higher than non-chronic respondents (29%). Nearly one-third reported alcohol or substance abuse as the primary cause of their homelessness (30%); this was in contrast to 15% among non-chronic respondents. Fewer chronically homeless respondents reported economic factors as the primary cause of their homelessness compared to non-chronically homeless respondents. More chronically homeless respondents reported divorce or separation as a cause (20% compared to 12%), incarceration (16% compared to 10%), and illness (10% compared to 5%).

While chronically homeless respondents reported differences in the initial cause of their homelessness compared to non-chronic respondents, they reported similar things were preventing them from obtaining permanent housing. The most common responses remained the inability to afford rent (66%), lack of employment (70%), and a general lack of available housing (46%). Chronically homeless differed from non-chronic respondents in the percentage that reported transportation as a barrier (35% compared to 23%).

FIGURE 29. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:313 respondents offering 531 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

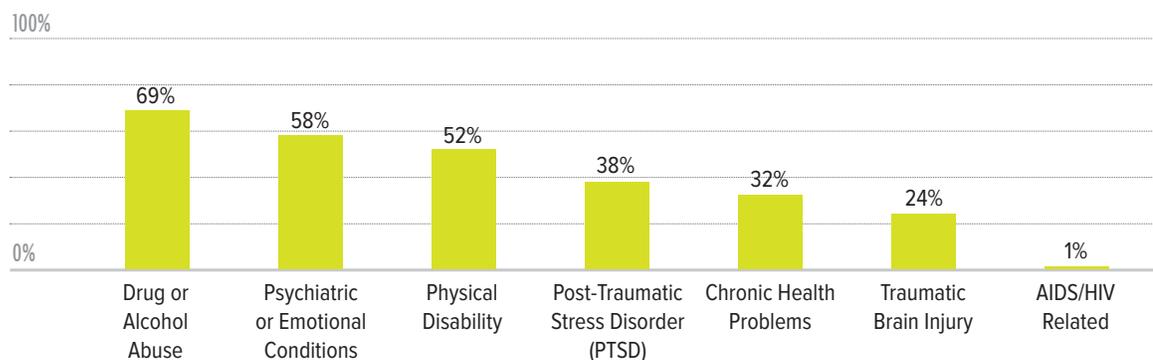
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

While the definition of chronic homelessness requires a condition that prevents an individual from maintaining work or housing, many respondents reported experiencing multiple physical or mental health conditions. Sixty-nine percent of chronically homeless respondents reported alcohol or substance abuse. Fifty-eight percent reported a psychiatric or emotional condition, and 38% reported Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). More than half (52%) reported a physical disability and 32% reported a chronic physical health condition such as cancer, tuberculosis, or diabetes. One in four chronically homeless respondents reported Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) compared to 6% of non-chronic respondents.

More than half of chronically homeless respondents reported using the emergency room as their primary source of health care (54%) compared to 30% of non-chronic respondents. The second most commonly reported source of care was the Valley Homeless Healthcare Program (VHHP), Homeless Clinic, or mobile van. These are local programs targeted to those experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 30. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



Drug or alcohol abuse n:304; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:299; Physical disability n:298; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:297; Chronic health problems n:303; Traumatic Brain Injury n:289; AIDS/HIV related n:290

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Overall, more chronically homeless respondents reported receiving some form of government assistance (76% compared to 73%). Higher percentages of chronically homeless respondents reported accessing local services such as food, shelter and medical care than non-chronic respondents. More chronically homeless respondents reported accessing free meals (76% compared to 59%) but fewer reported receiving CalFresh (35% compared to 43%). However, 19% of chronically homeless respondents reported receiving SSI/SSDI compared to 11% of the non-chronic population.

While there has been extensive outreach to improve healthcare and health insurance coverage for those without access in Santa Clara County, 22% of chronically homeless respondent's reported receiving Medi-Cal/Medicare benefits, lower than non-chronic respondents at 30%.

INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

A higher percentage of chronically homeless respondents reported they had spent one or more nights in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey, 42% compared to 24% of non-chronic respondents. Twenty-three percent were on probation or parole at the time of the survey.

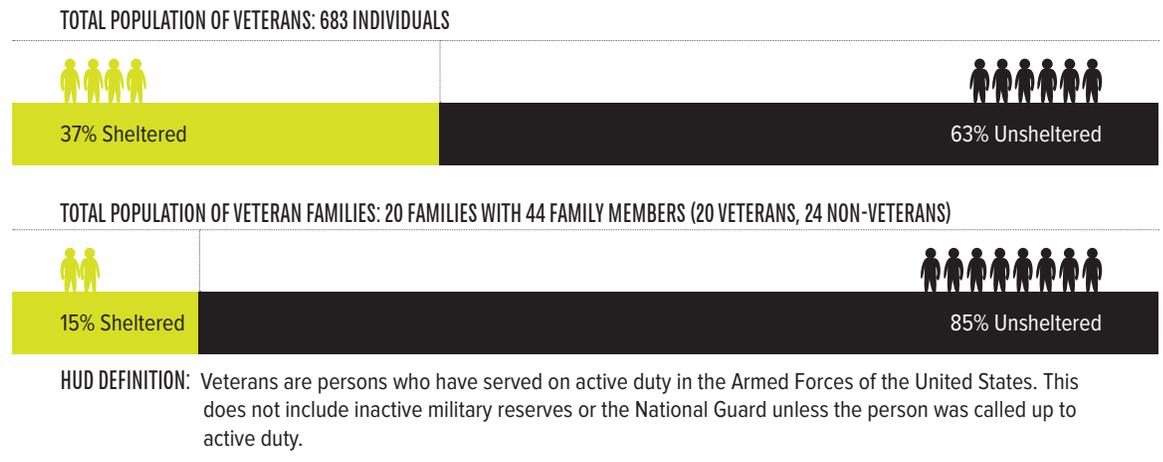
HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

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

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a broad range of benefits and services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. These benefits can include different forms of financial assistance, including monthly cash payments to disabled veterans, health care, education, and housing benefits. In addition to these supports, the VA and HUD have partnered to provide additional housing and support services to veterans currently experiencing homelessness or in danger of becoming homeless.

At the national level, there was an estimated 33% decrease in the number of homeless veterans between 2009 and 2014. According to national data collected from the January Point-in-Time count, an estimated 49,933 veterans were experiencing homelessness.¹²

FIGURE 31. HOMELESS VETERAN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey*. San José, CA.

NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS

The estimated number of homeless veterans in Santa Clara County remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2015. There were an estimated 683 single veterans and 20 veterans living in families in 2015, compared to 718 veterans in the previous count. This represents an estimated 2% decrease in veteran homelessness locally.

¹²Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS VETERANS

Thirteen percent of single veterans were female, yet females represented 65% of the veterans in families. Nineteen percent of veteran respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino. Fifty-eight percent of veteran respondents reported their racial identity as White/Caucasian, and 30% as Black/African-American.

PREVIOUS LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Seventy-one percent of homeless veterans were living in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless, slightly lower than the non-veteran population.

The greatest percentage of veterans reported they were living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner (39%), just prior to becoming homeless. This was similar to the non-veteran population (39%). Veterans more often reported they were in jail or prison just prior to becoming homeless, 10% compared to 5% of non-veterans. Eight percent reported they were in a hospital or treatment facility, compared to 1% of non-veterans.

LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Fewer veteran respondents reported they were experiencing homelessness for the first time, 23% compared to 34% of the non-veteran population. When asked about the length of their current episode of homelessness, 2% of veterans reported they had been on the street for a week or less, where as 66% reported they had been on the street for a year or more.

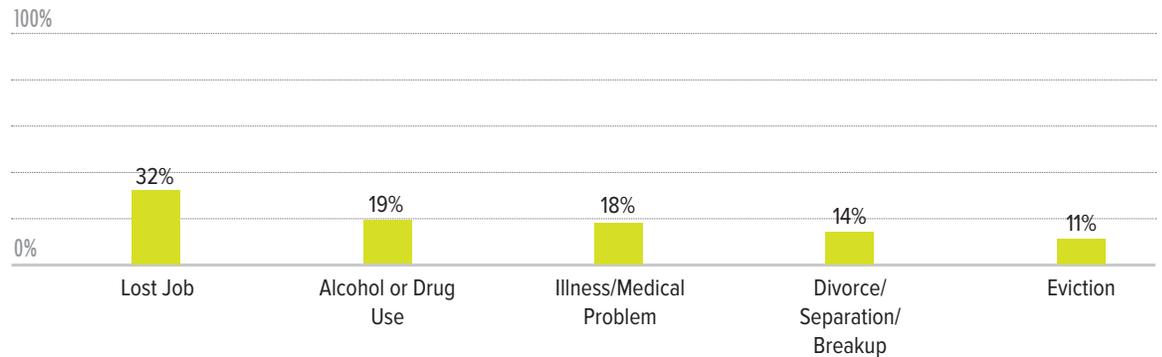
CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Based on Point-in-Time Count data, it is estimated that 314 veterans are chronically homeless in Santa Clara County. This represents 46% of the homeless veteran population. No veterans living in families were identified as chronically homeless at the time of the study.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

The most frequently cited cause of homelessness among veterans was job loss (32%), similar to the non-veteran population. While drug or alcohol use was the second most cited cause of homelessness among veterans (19%), it was slightly lower than among non-veteran respondents (20%). Eighteen percent reported a health condition was the primary cause of their homelessness. Fourteen percent of veterans reported a divorce or separation, and 3% reported an argument with a friend or family member who asked them to leave.

FIGURE 32. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



2015 n:112 respondents offering 165 responses

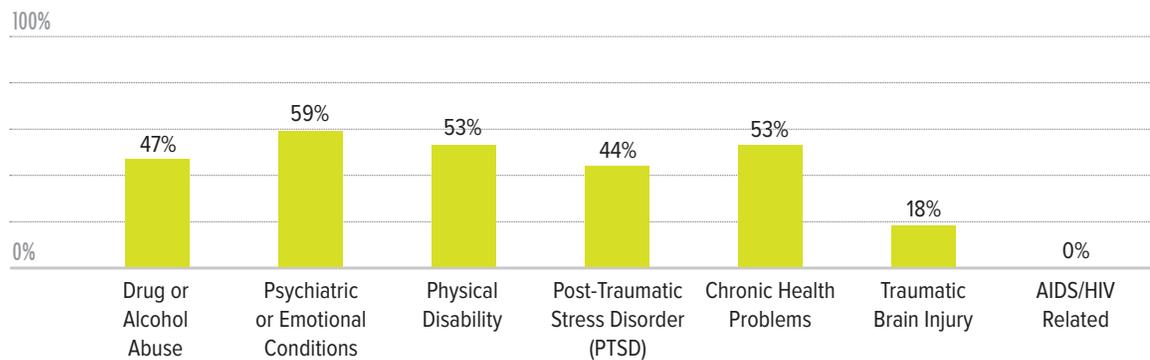
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

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

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

A slightly higher percentage of veteran respondents reported having one or more chronic health or mental health conditions, 62% compared to 51% of non-veterans. Half of veterans reported a physical disability and 53% of veterans reported chronic physical health problems. This was compared to 18% of non-veterans reporting a chronic physical health problem. Forty-four percent of veterans reported having PTSD, and 59% reported a psychiatric or emotional condition. Both were higher than the non-veteran population, where 22% of respondents reported PTSD and 37% reported a psychiatric or emotional condition. Veterans also reported higher substance abuse (47%) compared to non-veterans (37%).

FIGURE 33. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



Drug or alcohol abuse n:103; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:102; Physical disability n:101; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:99; Chronic health problems n:107; Traumatic Brain Injury n:99; AIDS/HIV related n:97

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

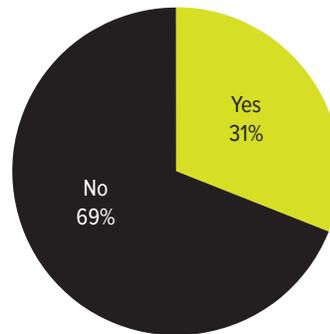
Overall, the number of veterans connected to any form of government assistance was higher than the non-veteran population (82% compared to 74%). The percentage of veterans receiving mainstream or civilian benefits was lower than non-veterans, however many veterans were connected to VA benefits. Twenty-seven percent of veterans reported receiving VA disability benefits and 54% of veterans reported using the VA as their primary source of medical care.

Veterans were more connected to many local services than non-veterans. Thirty-one percent were accessing mental health services, compared to 19% of non-veterans, and 21% were connected to drug and alcohol counseling, compared to 12%.

INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

National data show that among those who are incarcerated, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be first time offenders, to have committed a violent offense, and to have longer prison sentences. Veterans who are incarcerated may also face the loss of various VA benefits during this time.¹³ Local homeless survey data showed only a slight difference in the percentage of veteran respondents who reported they had spent one or more nights in jail or prison in the past year compared to non-veterans, 31% and 30% respectively.

FIGURE 34. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



2015 n:104

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

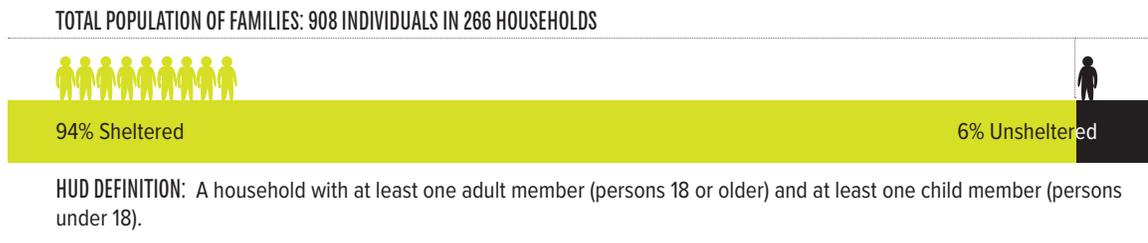
¹³ Military Benefits. (2014). *Incarcerated Veterans*. Retrieved 2014 from <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/incarcerated-veterans.html>.

HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2014 suggest that 37 percent of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families. Based upon these data, it was estimated that very few families experiencing homelessness were unsheltered. Point-in-Time counts have shown that public shelters serve 90% of homeless families in the United States, a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied youth. However, traditional outreach strategies used in Point-in-Time counts of homelessness may under represent the extent of family homelessness. Unsheltered families are often residing in locations that are difficult to find and many families hide for fear of separation.

Program level data on homeless families suggest that they are not much different from families in poverty. The risk of homelessness is highest among households headed by single women and families with children under the age of 6.¹⁴ Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.¹⁵

FIGURE 35. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey*. San José, CA.

NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Data from the Santa Clara County Point-in-Time Count showed a slight decrease in the number of homeless individuals in families. There were 908 persons in families identified during the 2015 count, down from 1,069 in 2013. Ninety-four percent of families identified during the count were staying in county shelters or transitional housing programs.

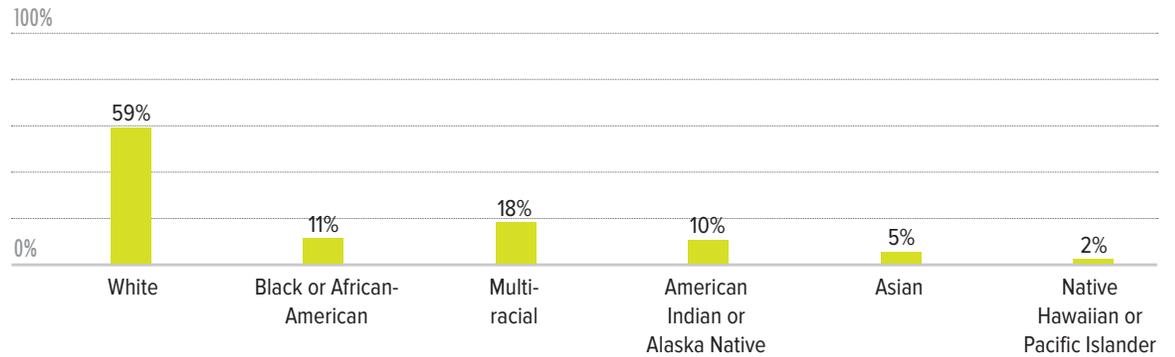
14 U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). *Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children*. Retrieved 2013 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

15 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). *Opening Doors*. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

In total, 112 heads of households with children under the age of 18 participated in the 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents in families were female, much higher than survey respondents not in families (30% female). Sixty-three percent of those surveyed identified as Hispanic or Latino.

FIGURE 36. RACE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



2015 n:110

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Santa Clara County Homeless Survey*. San José, CA.

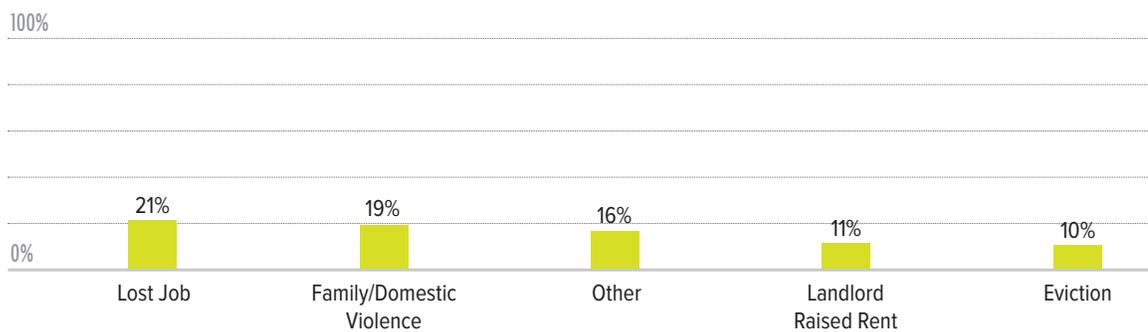
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Nearly half of respondents in families with children reported having experienced domestic violence (47%). Four percent reported they were experiencing domestic violence at the time of the study. Nineteen percent of family householders interviewed reported domestic violence was the primary cause of their homelessness. This was the second most frequently reported cause, following job loss (21%). Divorce/separation were reported by 10% of family respondents, and 10% reported an argument with a friend or family member who asked them to leave was the primary cause of their homelessness.

More respondents in families reported causes directly related to housing than did single individuals. Eleven percent reported homelessness was caused by a raise in rent. Ten percent reported eviction and 4% foreclosure.

FIGURE 37. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



2015 n:108 respondents offering 138 responses

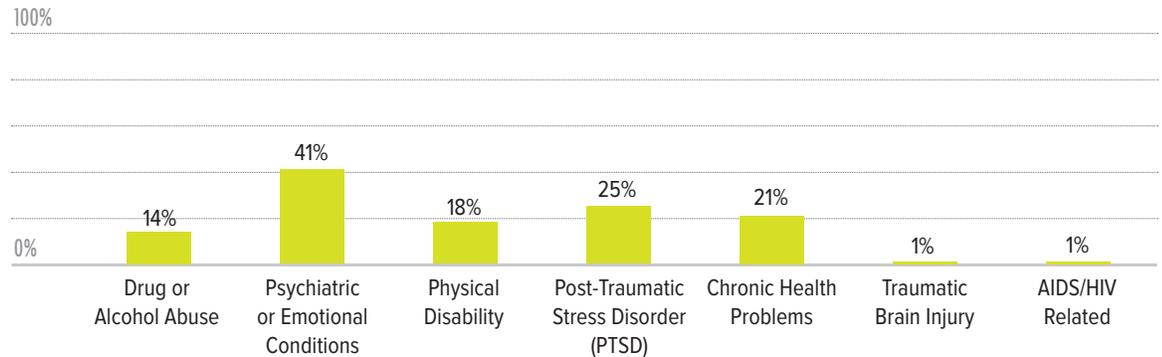
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

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

LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Forty percent of survey respondents in families reported they were experiencing homelessness for the first time, compared to 32% of single individuals. Fifty-nine percent of family households had been without housing for more than 6 months, compared to 74% of single individuals. Forty-two percent reported they had lived in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner before becoming homeless, while 39% reported they were living with a friend or family member.

FIGURE 38. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN



Drug or alcohol abuse n:110; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:109; Physical disability n:106; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:109; Chronic health problems n:110; Traumatic Brain Injury n:107; AIDS/HIV related n:109

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

In addition to most families receiving emergency shelter or transitional housing services, families were well-connected to services. More than two-thirds of respondents in families reported receiving CalFresh/Food Stamps, 62% were on Medi-Cal/Medicare, and 33% received CalWorks/TANF.

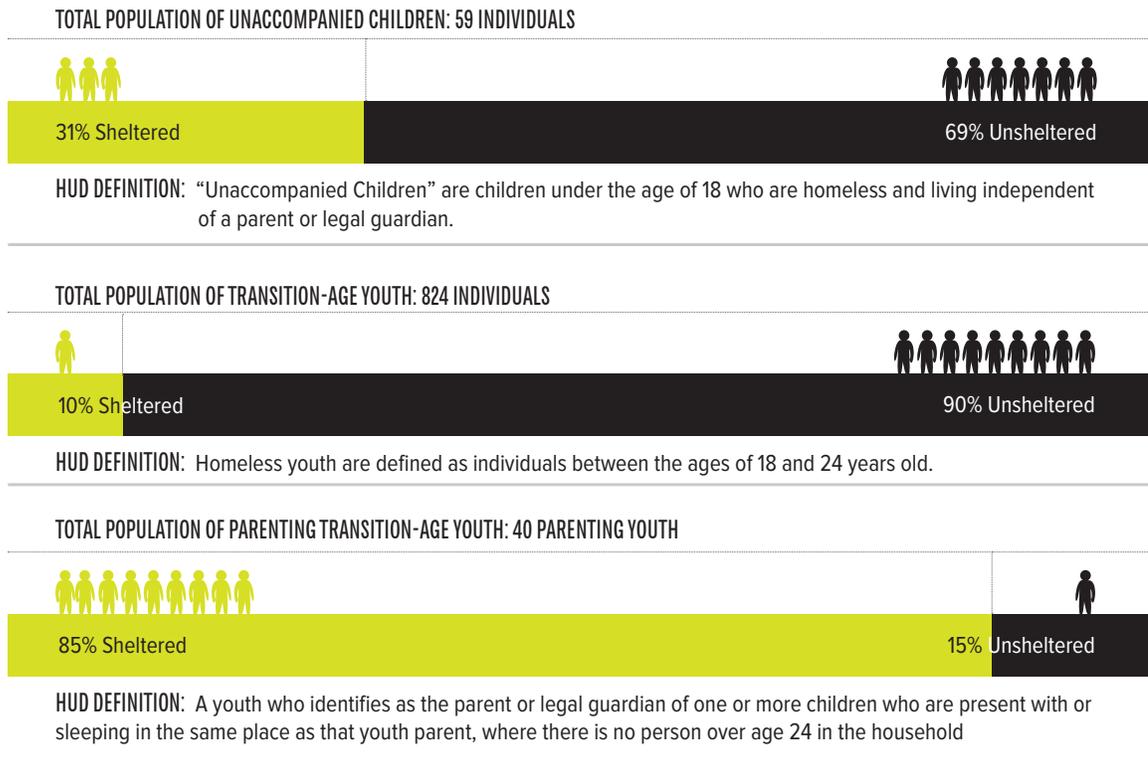
UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

There are limited data available on homelessness among unaccompanied children and youth nationally and locally. Current federal estimates suggest there are 45,205 children and youth on the streets and in public shelters.¹⁶ Homeless youth have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment.¹⁷

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

Santa Clara County has conducted dedicated youth counts since 2009 and youth survey outreach since 2011. It is the goal of this work to improve data on unaccompanied children and youth in the county and to share these insights with other communities.

FIGURE 39. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Census & Survey. San José, CA.

¹⁶ Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>

¹⁷ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

PREVALENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

The number of unaccompanied children and youth identified in the 2015 Point-in-Time count decreased. In 2015, 824 unaccompanied Transition-Age-Youth and 59 unaccompanied children were included in the count. Data were collected on the age of family householders for the first time for the first time in 2015. This resulted in an additional 40 youth headed families containing 40 youth under 25, and 51 children under the age of 18. In addition to these data on youth parents from the Point-in-Time count, survey data showed that 16% of female youth respondents reported they were pregnant at the time of the survey.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

While more than half of those under age 25 included in the Point-in-Time count were female, 56% of youth reached through the survey effort were male. Overall the ratio of females to males in the homeless population varied by age, with higher proportion of homeless females in the younger age cohorts. Three percent of youth identified as transgender, higher than the older population of respondents (less than 1%). Sixteen percent of youth respondents identified as LGBTQ, compared to 9% of older respondents. Forty percent of youth identified as Hispanic/Latino.

A slightly lower percentage of youth reported living in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless, compared to older respondents (79% and 85% respectively). Sixteen percent were from another county in California, while 5% were from out of state.

INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Forty percent of youth survey respondents reported they had been in the foster care system; 16% reported they were in Foster Care immediately prior to experiencing homelessness. Yet, only 5% of youth felt aging out of foster care was the primary cause of their homelessness.

Thirty-one percent of youth reported they had spent at least one night in jail or prison in the year prior to the study. Sixteen percent were on probation or parole at the time of the survey and 13% reported their criminal record was preventing them from obtaining work or housing.

FIGURE 40. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH



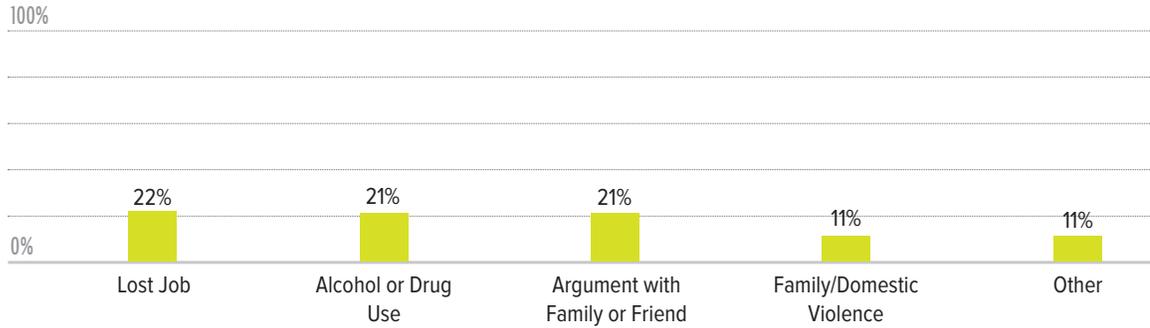
2015 n:101

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Twenty-one percent of youth reported an argument with a family member or friend was the cause of their homelessness; 21% of youth respondents also reported drug and alcohol abuse. Similar to homeless families, a higher percentage of youth respondents (11%) reported domestic violence as the primary cause of their homelessness, as compared to those ages 25 and older (7%).

FIGURE 41. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH



2015 n:105 respondents offering 132 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.

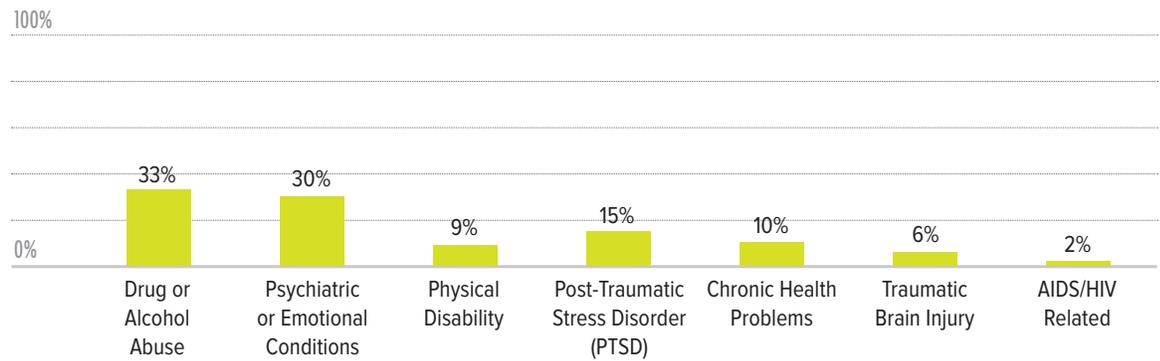
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Though better than the general homeless population, health is still an issue for homeless youth. Nearly one-third of youth (30%) reported one or more physical or mental health conditions. Thirty percent reported psychiatric or emotional conditions, and 9% reported a physical disability. Thirty-three percent reported drug or alcohol abuse. Ten percent of youth reported a chronic health condition.

Nine percent of youth reported they were receiving disability benefits. Twenty-one percent were covered by Medi-Cal. Thirty-one percent reported using the emergency room (ER) as their regular form of medical care. Twenty percent reported they had spent a night in a hospital for a mental health condition in the 12 months preceding the survey.

FIGURE 42. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



Drug or alcohol abuse n:105; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:104; Physical disability n:101; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:103; Chronic health problems n:103; Traumatic Brain Injury n:101; AIDS/HIV related n:101

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Santa Clara County Homeless Survey. San José, CA.



Conclusion

The 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey was a community-wide effort with two distinct phases:

- 1) A Point-in-Time count of homeless individuals on January 27 and 28, 2015: Santa Clara County's 2015 Point-in-Time Count identified 6,556 homeless persons. 29% of counted individuals were staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs and 71% were living on the streets or in vehicles, encampments, or other places not fit for human habitation.
- 2) A Survey of 952 individuals conducted by trained homeless individuals between February 1 and March 16, 2015: Findings from the survey provide key information about the people experiencing homelessness in Santa Clara County. The 2015 survey found that among those who are homeless:
 - » 34% are chronically homeless (2,169 individuals and 38 people in families in the Point-in-Time count).
 - » 14% are adults and children living in families (908 individuals in 266 families).
 - » 14% are unaccompanied children and transition age youth (59 unaccompanied children, 824 unaccompanied transition age youth, and 40 parenting youth with 51 children under age 18).
 - » 11% are veterans (683 individuals and 20 veterans in families).

The 2015 count shows a significant decline in homelessness from 2013 – a drop of slightly more than 1,000 homeless individuals at a single point in time. Additionally, a slightly smaller percentage of homeless individuals were unsheltered (71% unsheltered in 2015, compared to 74% in 2013). However, the need for housing and services remains high: 4,627 homeless men, women, and children were unsheltered in January 2015. Taking into account vacancies in existing facilities and projects under development, over 4,000 temporary and permanent housing units are needed just to meet the immediate need to move unsheltered individuals and families off the streets. Locally, a diverse group of

public and private partners have come together to address this need through implementation of the Community Plan to End Homelessness in Santa Clara County 2015-2020. This plan creates a communitywide road map toward ending homelessness by disrupting systems, building housing, and serving people through client-centered strategies targeting resources to the specific individual or household.



Appendix 1: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey was to produce a Point-in-Time (PIT) estimate of the number of people in Santa Clara County who experience homelessness. The results of the street count were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total number of homeless people in Santa Clara County at one point in time. A more detailed description of the methodology used for the homeless census and survey follows.

COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The census methodology had two components:

- The street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals
- The shelter and institution count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals

STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION

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

- Individuals and families 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 station, airport, or camping ground.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Santa Clara County covers approximately 1,291 square miles. The logistics for conducting a PIT street count of homeless people in a county this large and densely populated required the enumeration to take place over a two-day period. The unsheltered and sheltered homeless counts were coordinated to occur within the same time period in order to minimize potential duplicate counting of homeless persons.

VOLUNTEER AND WORKER RECRUITMENT

An enumeration effort of this magnitude can only be successful with the assistance of those who possess an intimate knowledge of the activities and locations of homeless people. Therefore, the recruitment and training of homeless persons to work as enumerators was an essential part of the street count methodology. Previous research has shown that homeless people, teamed with staff members from homeless service agencies, can be part of a productive and reliable work force.

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 Santa Clara County during the week prior to the street count. These sessions were attended primarily by homeless persons, staff from homeless service agencies, and staff from the County of Santa Clara, the City of San José, and the City of Palo Alto.

Homeless persons who completed the required training session were paid \$10 on the morning they reported to work for the street count. Homeless workers were also paid \$10 per hour for their work on the count, and were reimbursed for any expenses (mainly transportation costs) they incurred during the hours they worked.

STREET COUNT TEAMS

On the mornings of the census, two or more person teams were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. A team was ideally composed of one volunteer and one homeless person who had attended a training and information session. Street count teams were provided with census tract maps of their assigned areas, census tally sheets, a review of the census training documents and techniques, and other supplies. Prior to deployment, volunteers and workers were provided with a reminder of how to enumerate thoroughly without disturbing homeless people or anyone else encountered during the street census. Over the two day census period, 339 census tracts in Santa Clara County were enumerated. Two census tracts were not enumerated as they span the ridgeline on the edge of the County; these are high road mileage tracts that have yielded no counts in prior years.

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 pending 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.

STREET COUNT DEPLOYMENT

Since it was necessary to conduct the enumeration over a period of two days, January 27 and 28 2015, Santa Clara County was divided into two areas: the area to the east of Highway 17 and Interstate 880 and the area to the west of these freeways. On January 27, the cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill, portions of the cities of Campbell, Los Gatos, Milpitas, San José, and the unincorporated areas in the eastern and southwestern parts of the county were enumerated. The following morning, January 28, remaining portions of the cities of Campbell, Milpitas, Los Gatos, and San José as well as the cities of Cupertino, Monte Sereno, Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Palo Alto, Saratoga, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, and the unincorporated areas in the northwestern part of the county were enumerated.

The two-day enumeration effort was conducted between the hours of 6:30 AM and 11:00 AM. This early morning enumeration strategy was selected in order to avoid duplicate counting of sheltered homeless persons and to increase the visibility of the street homeless.

All accessible streets, roads, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traveled by foot, bike, or car. 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 a shelter or institutional census.

Upon their return, teams turned in their census tally forms 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 and to verify that every accessible road within the assigned area was enumerated.

No direct contact with enumerated homeless people was made during the census enumeration.

TARGETED STREET OUTREACH-YOUTH

Unaccompanied youth tend to be difficult to enumerate in the morning census, since they do not usually come in line with the adult homeless population. For this reason, special youth enumeration teams consisting of homeless youth and formerly homeless youth were formed to conduct the targeted count. Youth enumerators were deployed from the Bill Wilson Drop-In Center and were given a general geographical area in Santa Clara County to count rather than specific census tract maps. These teams counted between 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM when homeless youth are most likely to be visible on the streets and were assigned to specific areas to minimize duplication. They enumerated unaccompanied homeless children under age 18 and youth 18 to 24 years old.

In 2015, a female youth from South County participated in the youth count. She provided insight into the whereabouts of unaccompanied youth in Gilroy, San Martin, and Morgan Hill. She also conducted the count in the mid-afternoon.

TARGETED STREET OUTREACH-ENCAMPMENTS

The City of San José and Santa Clara County have explored numerous service and outreach initiatives related to the burgeoning growth of encampments in urban locations near waterways, public works, and other general urban open space areas. The City of San José, in particular, funds a homeless outreach and engagement program with Outreach Worker staff dedicated to linking encamped homeless to services and housing. These teams frequent encampments and build relationships that encourage participation in local homeless service initiatives, whether it is housing or other supportive services.

Larger encampment areas in the City of San José were identified prior to the census count and special teams of outreach workers, familiar with these areas, were organized to count those residing in these larger encampments on the dates of the count. Targeted encampment areas were identified on general street count maps, and homeless persons residing in those encampments were counted by the outreach workers rather than the census street teams. The result was the most comprehensive profile of homeless encampments in San José.

While this effort was similar to the methods employed in 2013, the nature of encampment areas in Santa Clara County have changed. After one of the largest encampments was closed in late 2014, people residing in encampments have tended to occupy smaller encampments, many of which are on the outskirts of the city. This resulted in many encampment areas being enumerated by volunteer and guide teams, rather than outreach workers.

TARGETED STREET OUTREACH-VEHICLES

Identifying individuals residing in vehicles is difficult during the morning hours of the census count. By the time the sun rises, those residing in vehicles have often moved on to more remote locations or have found places where they blend in. North Santa Clara County recognized the need for targeted outreach and provided a dedicated outreach worker to enumerate vehicles prior to sunrise.

SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

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

DATA COLLECTION

The basic approach was to identify and contact agencies that temporarily house homeless people and request that those agencies send ASR a count of the number of homeless persons housed in their programs on the night of January 27, 2015. In 2013, the participating shelters were determined by those listed on the Housing Inventory Count reported to HUD. Participating agencies included:

- Emergency Shelters
- Transitional Housing Facilities
- Safe Havens

Shelter facilities reported their occupancies for the night of the count between census days through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Shelter data were then reported to ASR by Community Technology Alliance (CTA), the administrators of the local HMIS system.

HOMELESS CENSUS CHALLENGES AND ASSUMPTIONS

CHALLENGES

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as diverse and large as Santa Clara 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:

- Chronically homeless persons who may or may not access social, health, or shelter services;
- Persons living in vehicles who relocate every few days;
- Persons who have children and therefore stay “under the radar” for fear of Child Protective Services;
- Homeless youth, who tend to keep themselves less visible than homeless adults;
- Homeless people who live in isolated rural areas; and
- Homeless people who sleep in unfit structures.

CENSUS UNDERCOUNT

For a variety of reasons, homeless persons generally do not want to be seen and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful the outreach effort is, an undercount of the homeless population will result, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as unaccompanied youth and families.

In a non-intrusive 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.

By counting the minimum number of homeless persons on the streets at a given Point-in-Time, the homeless census methodology is conservative and therefore most likely results in an undercount of homeless persons with immigration issues, the working homeless, families, and street youth. 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 does provide valuable data for local and federal service agencies.

EFFORTS TO INCLUDE SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) gathers data on the number of children receiving services through their homeless assistance programs. However, this organization employs a broader definition of homelessness in its recordkeeping.

In 2015, efforts were made by the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) to confirm the total number of children, and family members, meeting the Point-in-Time definition of homelessness on January 27 and 28, 2015. These efforts continue to be a challenge and participation by many of the identified districts was limited.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 952 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in Santa Clara County. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, 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. The survey findings also provide a measure of the changes in the composition of the homeless population since 2013.

In addition to the general survey, youth under the age of 25 were given additional questions, which asked specifically about their experience as homeless children and youth. Due to changes in the survey methods, fewer than 50 youth completed these additional questions. Due to the sample size, these questions have limited use. However, the first two pages of the survey were completed by more than 100 youth under 25, providing insight into their lives on the street and in county shelters. Surveys were conducted by other homeless youth workers in order to maintain the peer-to-peer protocol. The overall protocol for youth surveys was similar to the general survey.

Surveys were conducted by homeless workers and service provider volunteers who were trained by ASR. 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, service providers typically conducted the surveys administered within shelters. No self-administered surveys were accepted from individuals over the age of 18 in order to maintain a standardized and consistent protocol. Homeless workers were compensated at a rate of \$5 per completed survey.

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. Socks were selected as an incentive to participate in the survey. 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 workers were trained to employ a randomized “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach the third person they encountered whom they considered to be an eligible survey respondent. If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed. It is important to recognize that while efforts are made to randomize the respondents, it is not a random sample methodology.

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

Trained peer interviewers administered surveys to homeless individuals on the “street.” Surveys were also administered in shelters and transitional housing programs. To ensure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs.

DATA COLLECTION

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

Overall, the interviewers experienced excellent cooperation from respondents. This was likely influenced by the fact that nearly all of the street interviewers were homeless workers who had previously been, or were currently, fellow members of the homeless community. Another reason for interview cooperation may have been the incentive gift, which was given to respondents upon the completion of the interview.

DATA ANALYSIS

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

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. This left 952 valid surveys for analysis. 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 question may not total 952.

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The 2015 Santa Clara County Homeless Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. However, as mentioned previously, based on a Point-in-Time estimate of 6,556 homeless persons, the 952 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated homeless population in Santa Clara County.

There may be some variance in the data that the homeless individuals would have self-reported. In self-reporting survey research, there is always some room for misrepresentation. However, using a peer interviewing methodology is believed to allow the respondents to be more candid with their answers and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Further, service providers and county staff members recommended individuals who would be the best to conduct interviews and they received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. The service providers and city staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.



Appendix 2: 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 “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition 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 disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or a developmental disability.
- **Emergency shelter** is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility, or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 90 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for victims and their children.
- **Family** is defined as a household with at least one adult and one child under 18.
- **Homeless** under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.
- **HUD** is the abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- **Sheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.
- **Single individual** refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth.
- **Transition-Age Youth (TAY)** refers to an unaccompanied youth aged 18-24 years.
- **Transitional housing** facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. It is housing in which homeless individuals may live up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services – which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination – may be provided by the organization managing the housing, or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.
- **Unaccompanied children** refers to children under the age of 18 who do not have a parent or guardian present.
- **Unsheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

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