



Sonoma County

HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019

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

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Sonoma County

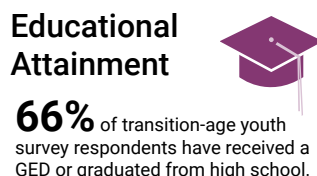
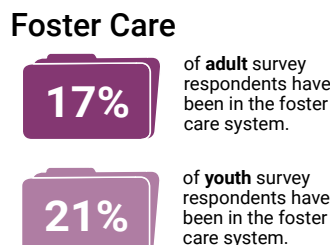
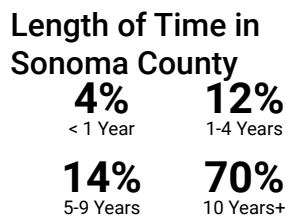
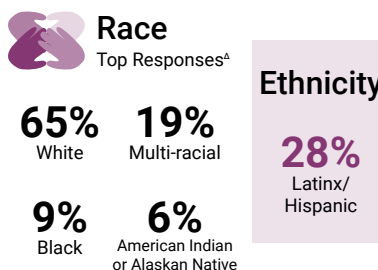
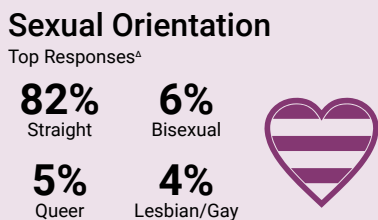
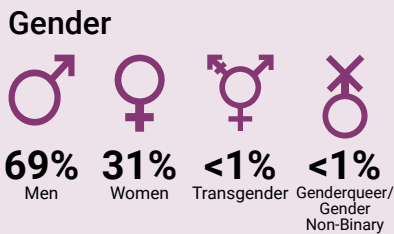
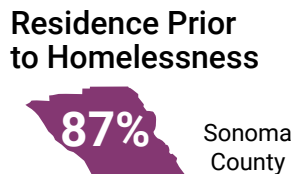
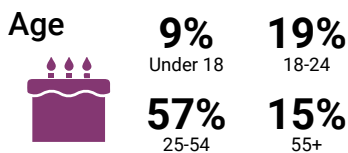
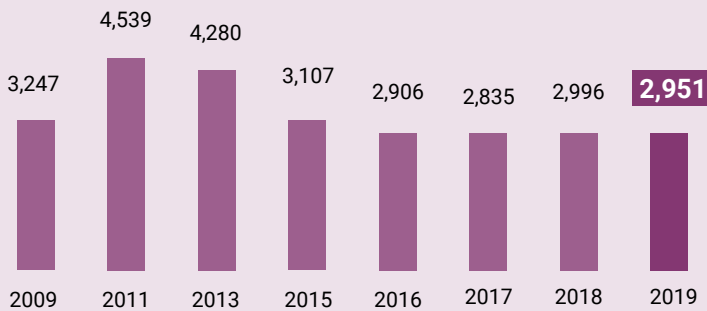
Homeless Census & Survey

2019 Executive Summary

Every two years during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local homeless populations in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each local Continuum of Care.

The 2019 Sonoma County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on January 25th, 2019. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 2,951 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.

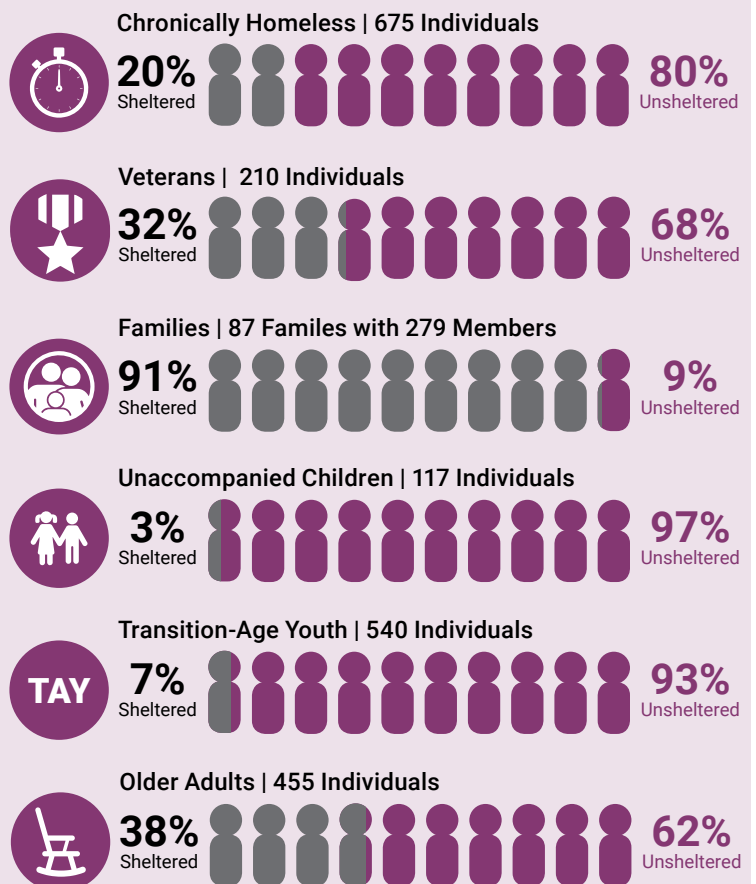
Census Population: Longitudinal Trend



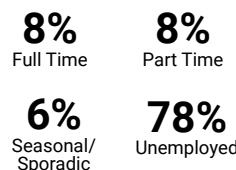
2019 Sheltered/ Unsheltered Population



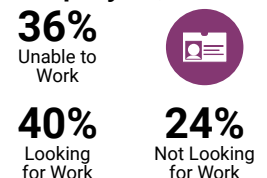
Subpopulation* Data



Employment Status



If Unemployed, Currently...



First Episode of Homelessness

30% indicated their current episode of homelessness was their first.

44% of those respondents were homeless for one year or more.

History of Domestic Violence

34% reported they had experienced domestic violence.



Sex Trade Involvement

16% traded sex for money or a place to stay.

7% have a history of being trafficked.

Primary Event or Condition That Led to Homelessness*

Top 4 Responses^Δ

19% Lost Job **18%** Argument with Family/Friend **16%** Alcohol or Drug Use **12%** Eviction

Age at First Episode of Homelessness



17% 0-17 **33%** 18-24 **36%** 25-49 **14%** 50+

Obstacles to Permanent Housing*

Top 4 Responses^Δ

68% Can't Afford Rent **48%** No Job/Not Enough Income **25%** No Money for Moving Costs **24%** No Housing Available

Duration of Current Episode of Homelessness

9% 30 Days or Less **34%** 1-11 Months **57%** 1 Year or More



Self-Reported Health*

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



38%
Alcohol & Drug Abuse



35%
Psychiatric/Emotional Conditions



25%
Physical Disability



25%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



23%
Chronic Health Problems



9%
Traumatic Brain Injury



3%
HIV/ AIDS Related Illness

Disabling Conditions

42% of survey respondents reported having at least one disabling condition.



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

Interest in Permanent Housing



89% of survey respondents said they would like affordable permanent housing if it became available soon.

Government Services and Assistance

71% of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.

Reasons for Not Receiving Any Government Assistance*

Top 6 Responses^Δ

31% Don't Think I'm Eligible **24%** Don't Want Government Assistance **15%** No Permanent Address
12% Don't Have ID **11%** Applied and Waiting for Response **11%** Never Applied

Non-Government Services Currently Accessing*

Top 6 Responses^Δ

60% Free Meals **44%** Bus Passes **40%** Emergency Shelter
27% Shelter Day Services **26%** Health Services **18%** Mental Health Services

*Subpopulation Definitions

Chronically Homeless

An individual with one or more disabling conditions or a family with a head of household with a disabling condition who:

- » Has been continuously homeless for 1 year or more and/or;
- » Has experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years.

Veterans

Persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

Families

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

Unaccompanied Youth & Transition-Age Youth (TAY)

Children under the age of 18 and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years old (TAY) who are experiencing homelessness and living without a parent or legal guardian.

+ Multiple response question, results may not add up to 100%.

Δ Only displaying top responses.

Note: Some percentages have been rounded so total percentage will equal 100%.

The complete comprehensive report includes a more detailed profile of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. It will be available in summer 2019.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2019, Sonoma County Homeless Census & Survey, San Jose, CA.

Sonoma County

Community-Wide Telephone Survey

2019 Executive Summary



In January 2019, Sonoma County and ASR implemented a representative, telephone-based household survey to understand the impacts of the fall 2017 fires. A total of 1,132 valid surveys were conducted in this additional assessment of unstably housed and fire-affected populations.

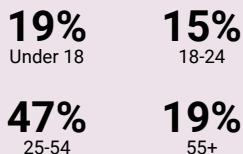
These data are intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and state governments in gaining a better understanding of how the 2017 fires affected the county at large and the characteristics of those who are not homeless but lack a residence of their own.

Temporarily Housed Population

Temporarily Housed | 21,725 Individuals



Temporary Residents by Age



28% of households were impacted by the fires.



Temporary Residents by Gender



44%
Women/
Girls



56%
Men/
Boys

How Housing Situations Were Impacted by the Fires

60%
Evacuated and Allowed to Return

16%
Other



14%
Home/Apartment Burned

8%
Home/Apartment Damaged by Smoke

3%
Could No Longer Afford Home/Apartment

Temporary Residents and Connection to Housing Assistance

7%
Section 8 Housing Voucher

3%
Another Subsidized Housing Program



1%
Low Income Unit, Not Section 8

79%
Not Connected

10%
Don't Know

Primary Causes of Temporary Residence



25%
Rent Raised

24%
Home Burned

15%
Don't Know

10%
Health Issues

6%
Home Damaged by Smoke

5%
Landlord Repurposed Property

Sonoma County Housing Supply

Housing Prior to Fires

Occupied Housing Units | 189,043



Housing Destroyed in Fires

Destroyed Housing Units | 5,297 (3% of Total)



Temporary Residents Access to Homeless Assistance

8% of respondents said they were accessing homeless assistance.

The complete comprehensive report includes a more detailed profile of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. It will be available in late summer 2019.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2019, Sonoma County Homeless Census & Survey, San Jose, CA.





Introduction

Every two years during the last ten days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local population experiencing homelessness. Point-in-Time Counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community and collect information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as on people sleeping on the streets, in cars, abandoned properties, or other places not meant for human habitation. In an effort to better track trends and align with federal recommendations, Sonoma County opted to conduct an annual unsheltered count beginning in 2015.

The Point-in-Time Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness and is required by HUD of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Currently, the CoC receives approximately \$3.6 million dollars annually in federal funding, a key source of funding for the county's homeless services.

CoC reports the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count annually to HUD. This information ultimately helps the federal government to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Point-in-Time Census and Survey data also help to inform communities' local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to prevent and end homelessness.

Sonoma County worked in conjunction with ASR to conduct the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and needs-assessment that has worked with Sonoma County on their Point-in-Time Counts since 2009.

The Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count consists of three primary components: (1) a point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families, such as those sleeping outdoors, on the street, or in parks, tents, or vehicles, and (2) a point-in-time enumeration of homeless individuals and families residing in temporary shelter, including emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities.

The 2019 Sonoma Homeless Point-in-Time Census was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of 96 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, 163 community volunteers, staff from various city and county departments, and law enforcement, the entire county was canvassed between the hours of 5:00 AM and 10:00 AM on January 25, 2019. This resulted in a peer-informed visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets and in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation. Shelters and transitional housing facilities also reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the night prior to the day of the count.

A specialized count of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth under the age of 25 was conducted on the same day. This dedicated count was designed to improve the understanding of the scope of youth homelessness. Trained youth enumerators who currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in specific areas where homeless youth were known to congregate. The results of this effort contribute to HUD's initiative to measure progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020.

In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 520 unsheltered and sheltered individuals and families. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization.

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

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, are provided where available and applicable.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the 2019 Sonoma County Point-in-Time Census and Survey to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings with local community members. These community members were drawn from city and county departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2019 Planning Committee, and were instrumental to ensuring the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2019 Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;
- To improve the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2018 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey and to track progress toward ending homelessness;
- To increase public awareness of overall homeless issues and generate support for constructive solutions; and
- To assess the status of specific subpopulations, including veterans, families, unaccompanied children, transition-age youth, and those who are chronically homeless.

This report is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local, state, and federal governments in gaining a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measuring the impact of current policies and programming, and planning for the future.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

In this study, the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count is used. This definition includes individuals and families:

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; or
- With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.



Point-in-Time Census

The 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on January 25, 2019 from 5:00 AM to 10:00 AM and covered all of Sonoma County. The shelter count was conducted on the previous evening and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to those used in 2018.

The methodology used for the 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey is commonly described as a “blitz count” since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method was conducted in Sonoma County, the result was an observation-based count of individuals and families who appeared to be homeless.

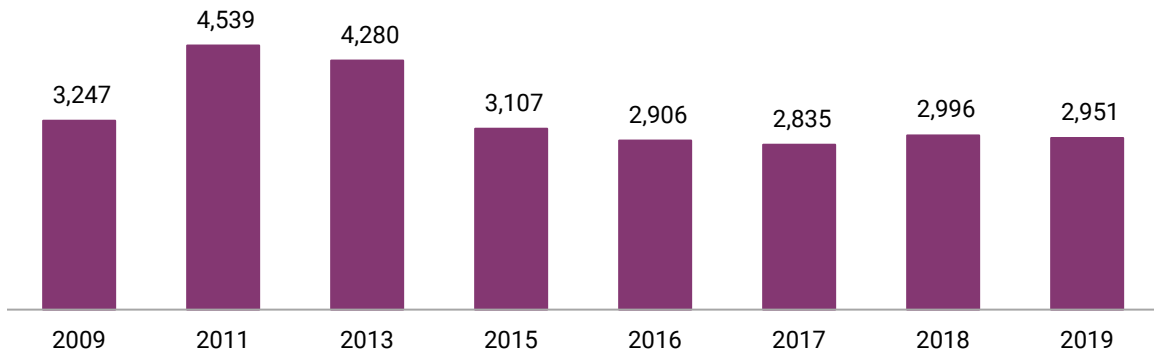
The occupancy of homeless shelters in Sonoma County was collected for the night of January 24, 2019. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Sonoma County’s Homeless Management Information System.

The count was followed by an in-person representative survey, the results of which were used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey was used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements and inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

In a continuing effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, Sonoma County also conducted a dedicated youth count similar to the youth counts that have been conducted since 2009. The dedicated youth count methodology was improved in 2017 to better ensure unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were not included in both the general street count and youth count. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, de-duplication, and project methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

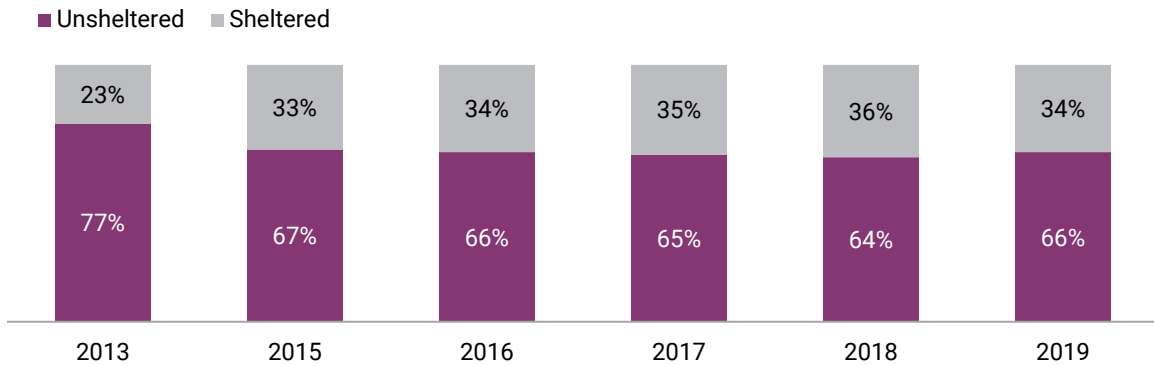
NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SONOMA COUNTY

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, WITH TREND



There was a 2% decrease in the number of homeless individuals enumerated in Sonoma County between 2018 and 2019. The sheltered count decreased by 7% to 994 and the unsheltered count increased by 2% to 1,957. While the overall difference is relatively small, there are often greater differences when reviewing the results at a jurisdictional and regional level. These differences may be the result of a variety of factors, including local policy, law and code enforcement, and other initiatives.

FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2013-19 % Change
Sheltered	971	1,037	1,000	988	1,067	994	↑ 2%
Unsheltered	3,309	2,070	1,906	1,847	1,929	1,957	↓ 41%
Total	4,280	3,107	2,906	2,835	2,996	2,951	↓ 31%

FIGURE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY LOCATION

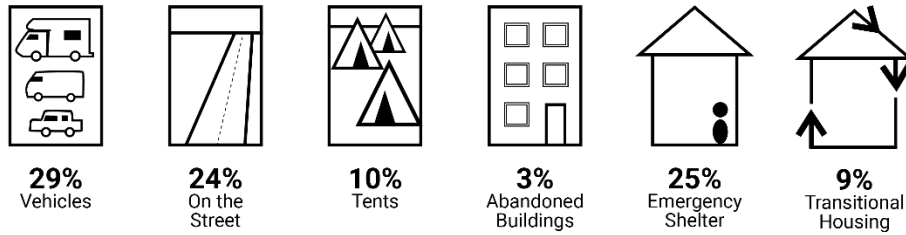
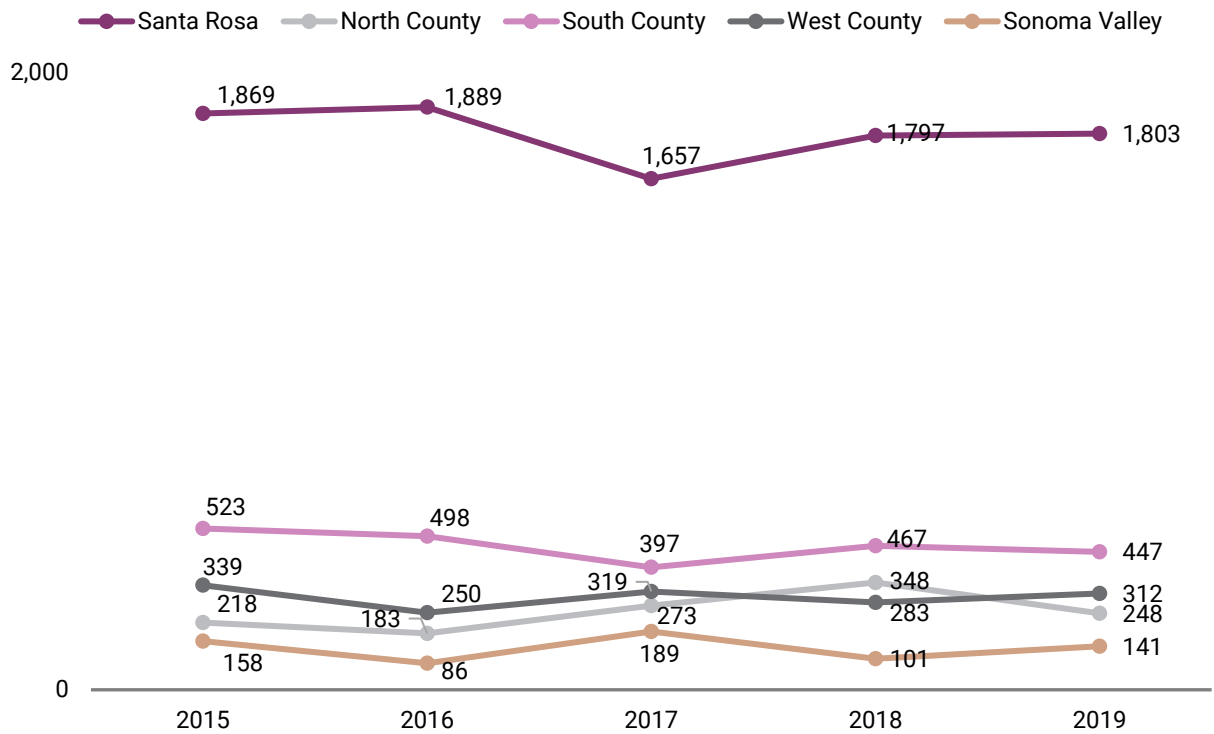


FIGURE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY JURISDICTION AND SHELTER STATUS

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED			SHELTERED			TOTAL		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
North County	227	295	232	46	53	16	273	348	248
Cloverdale	28	75	52	4	5	7	32	80	59
Healdsburg	69	81	64	42	48	9	111	129	73
Town of Windsor	46	75	53	0	0	0	46	75	53
Unincorporated	84	64	63	0	0	0	84	64	63
South County	219	262	305	178	205	142	397	467	447
Cotati	9	1	44	0	0	0	9	1	44
Petaluma	113	91	138	170	194	127	283	285	265
Rohnert Park	76	127	114	8	11	15	84	138	129
Unincorporated	21	43	9	0	0	0	21	43	9
West County	279	243	271	40	40	41	319	283	312
Sebastopol	71	69	101	0	0	0	71	69	101
Unincorporated	208	174	170	40	40	41	248	214	211
Sonoma Valley	156	64	101	33	37	40	189	101	141
Sonoma	78	15	32	13	15	18	91	30	50
Unincorporated	78	49	69	20	22	22	98	71	91
Santa Rosa	966	1,065	1,048	691	732	755	1,657	1,797	1,803
Santa Rosa	769	863	954	675	700	707	1,444	1,563	1,661
Unincorporated	197	202	94	16	32	48	213	234	142
Total	1,847	1,929	1,957	988	1,067	994	2,835	2,996	2,951

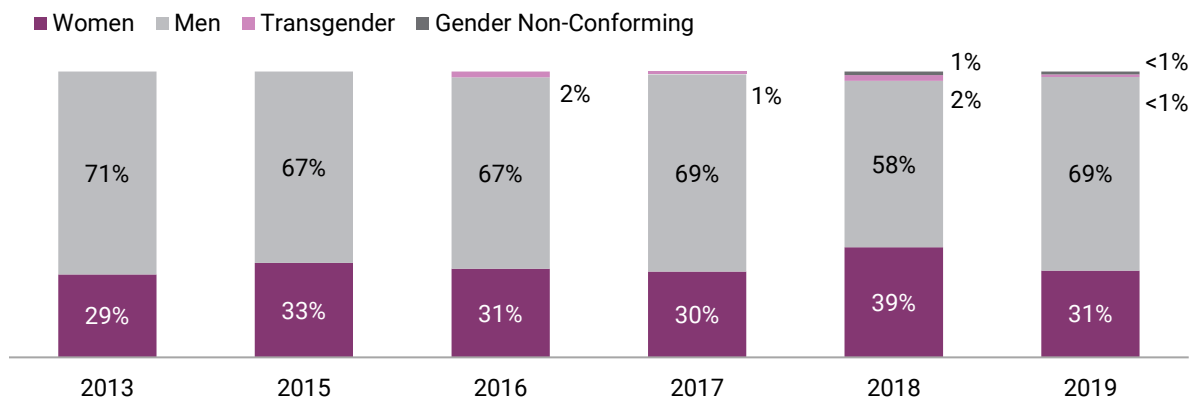
Note: In previous reports, confidential beds have been counted separately. Confidential beds have been included in their respective jurisdiction(s) since 2018.

FIGURE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY COUNTY REGION



Basic demographics were estimated for those enumerated in 2019, including gender, race, and ethnicity. Comprising 31% of the overall homeless population, 916 women were identified during the 2019 Point-in-Time Count, which resulted in a 21% decrease from 2018 but was in line with previous years.

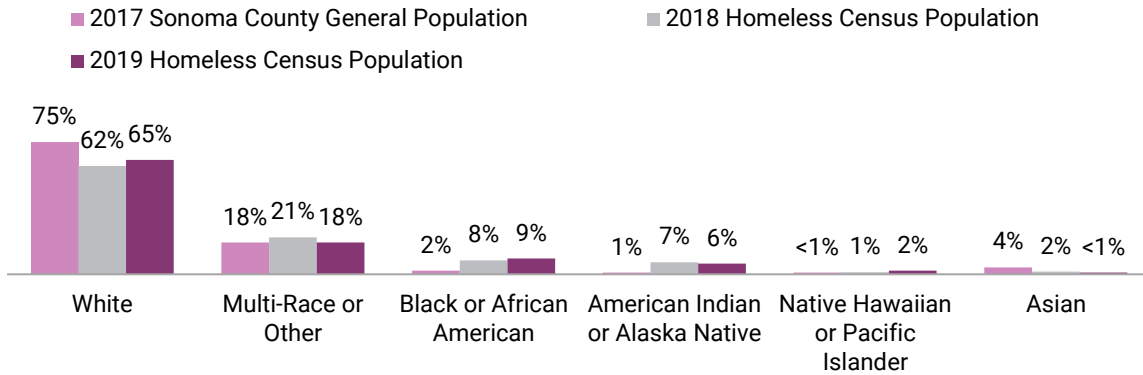
FIGURE 6. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY GENDER



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Transgender data were not collected prior to 2016 and Gender Non-Conforming data were not collected prior to 2018.

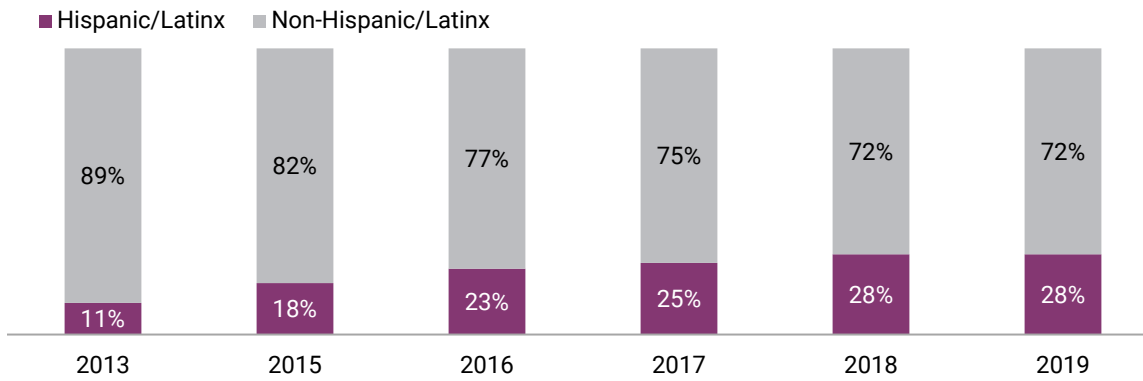
Additionally, in a trend seen in many other communities, persons of color were overrepresented in the homeless population when compared to the general population. The number of those identifying as Hispanic/Latinx remained constant from preceding years.

FIGURE 7. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY RACE¹



2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 8. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY ETHNICITY



n= 2,906; 2017 n=2,835; 2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951
 Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Beginning in 2015, survey respondents were asked to identify their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latinx in a separate question from race, which could account for the shift in the percentage of respondents identifying as Hispanic/Latinx.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

SUBPOPULATIONS

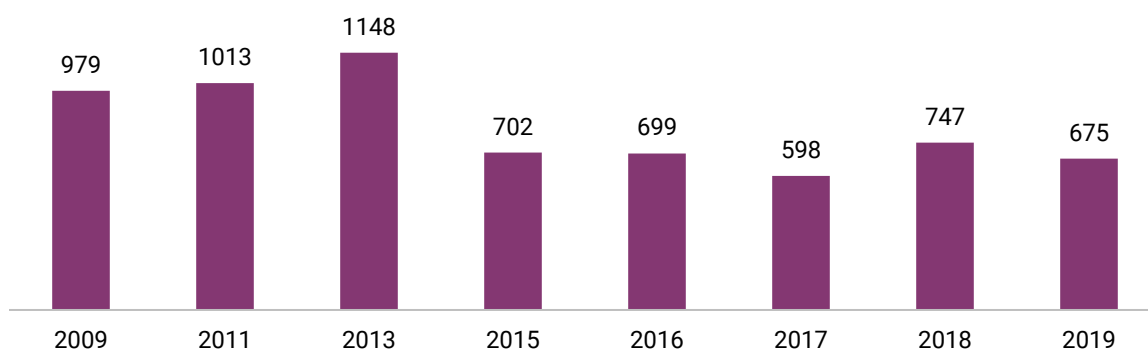
CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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 totaling 12 months in the last three years—and also has a disabling condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing. This definition applies to individuals as well as to heads of household who meet the definition.

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 that of the general population.² Data from communities across the country show that public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing individuals with permanent housing and supportive services.

In 2018, HUD reported that 88,640 individuals, representing 24% of the overall homeless population, were experiencing chronic homelessness in the US.³ Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. In Sonoma County, there was a 10% decrease in those experiencing chronic homelessness to 675 in 2019, comprising 23% of the total population experiencing homelessness.

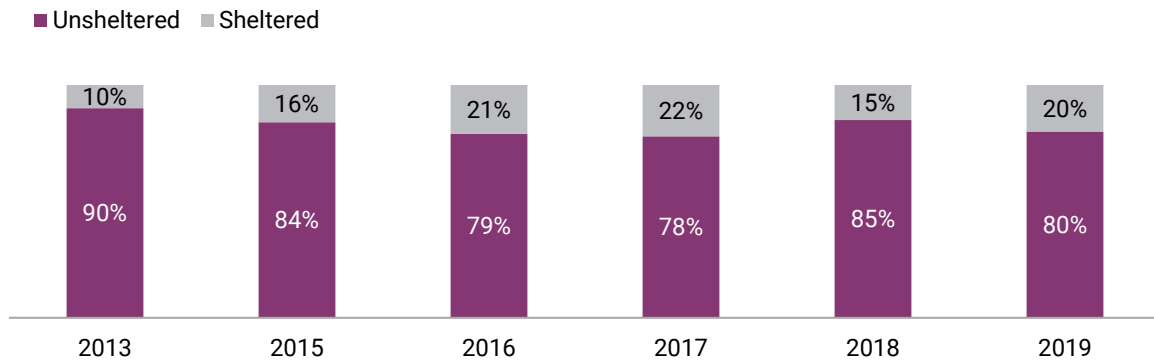
FIGURE 9. TOTAL CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND



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

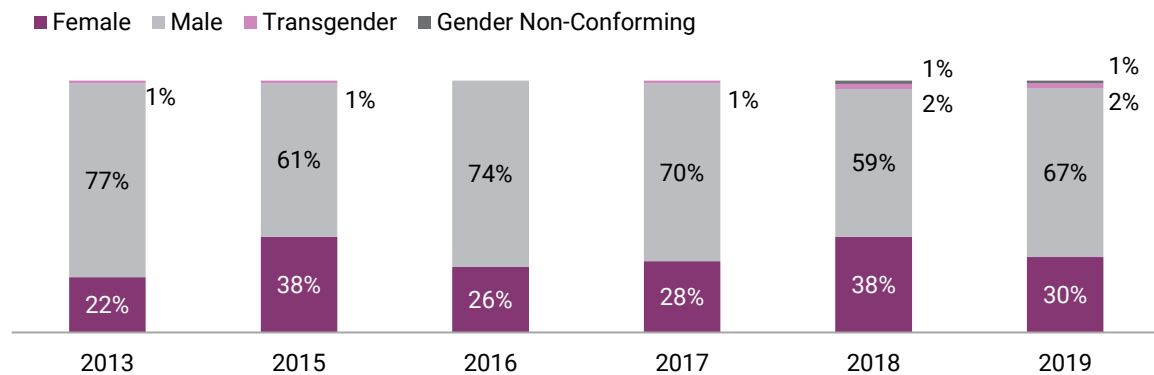
³ Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

FIGURE 10. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS, WITH TREND



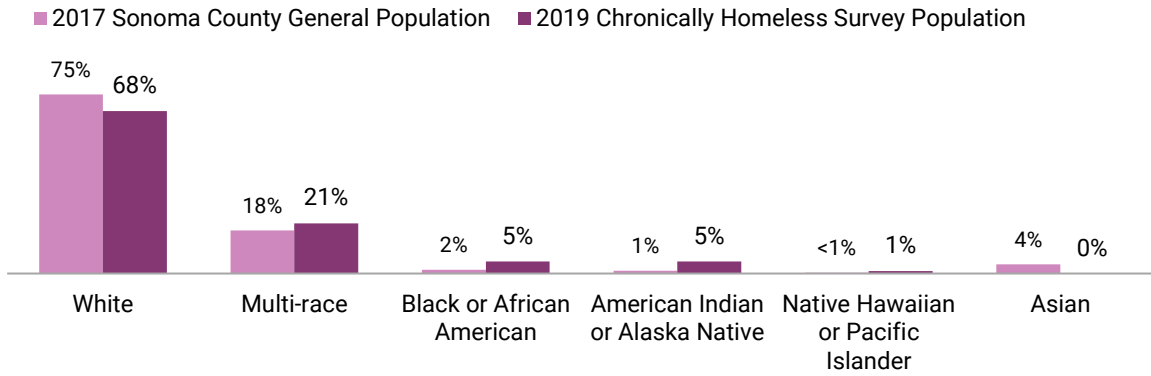
	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2013-19 % Change
Sheltered	119	114	150	134	115	138	↑ 16%
Unsheltered	1,029	591	549	464	632	537	↓ 48%
Total	1,148	702	699	598	747	675	↓ 41%

FIGURE 11. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2013 Chronically Homeless Population n=1,148; 2015 Chronically Homeless Population n=702; 2016 Chronically Homeless Population n=699; 2017 Chronically Homeless Population n=598; 2018 n=747; 2019 Chronically Homeless Population n=675. Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

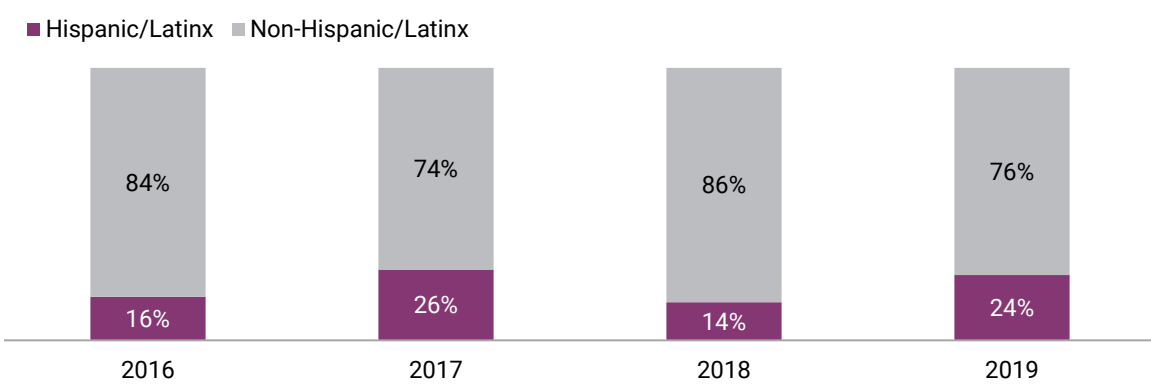
FIGURE 12. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE⁴



2019 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=96

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

FIGURE 13. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY



2016 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=172; 2017 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=177; 2018 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=153; 2019 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=123

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

HOMELESS VETERANS

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

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

The number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County has remained steady over the past three years, rising 1% to 210 in 2019.

FIGURE 14. TOTAL HOMELESS VETERANS CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND

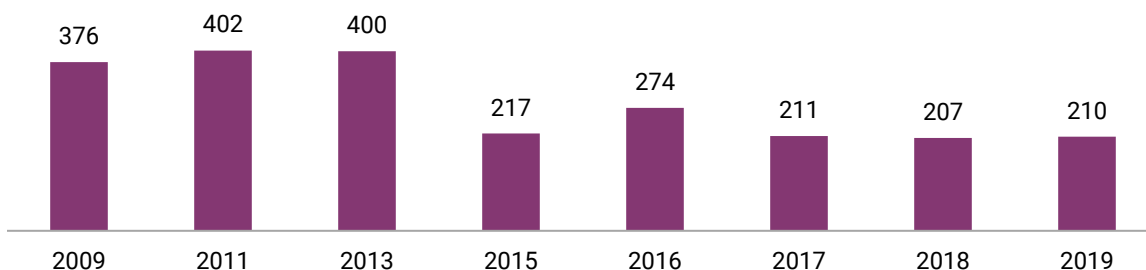
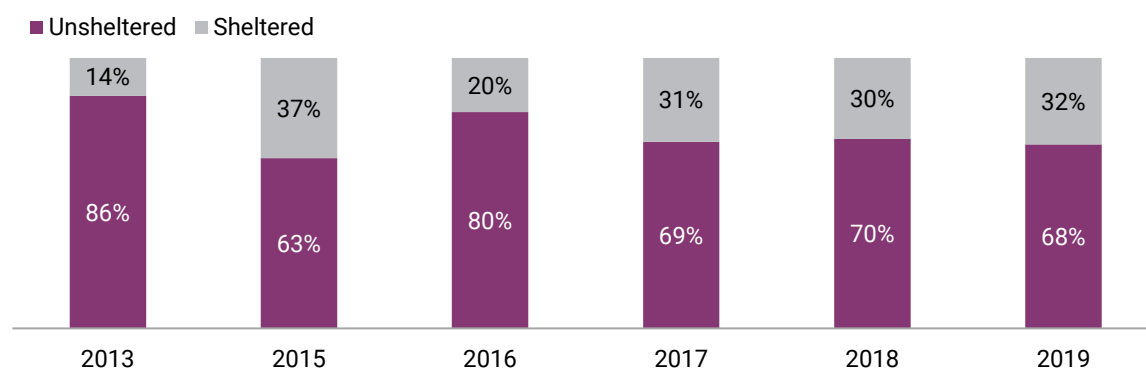
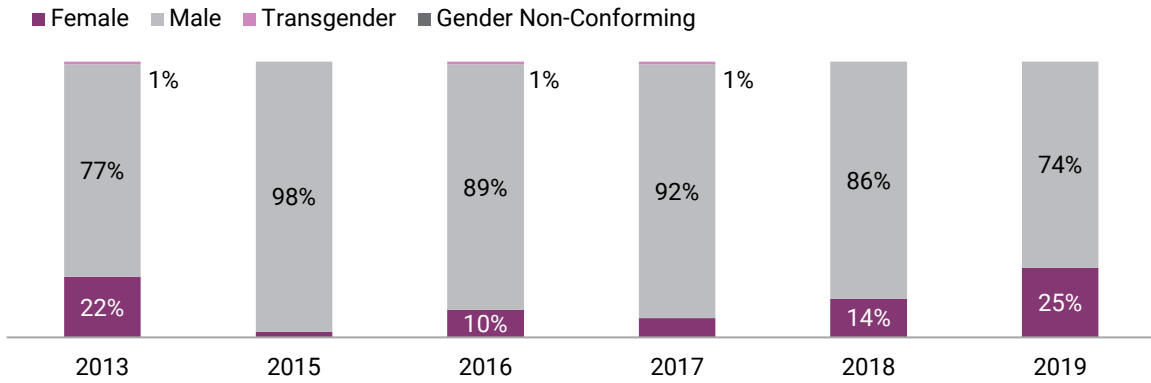


FIGURE 15. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS, WITH TREND



	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2013-19 % Change
Sheltered	57	81	54	66	63	68	↑ 19%
Unsheltered	343	136	220	145	144	142	↓ 59%
Total	400	217	274	211	207	210	↓ 48%

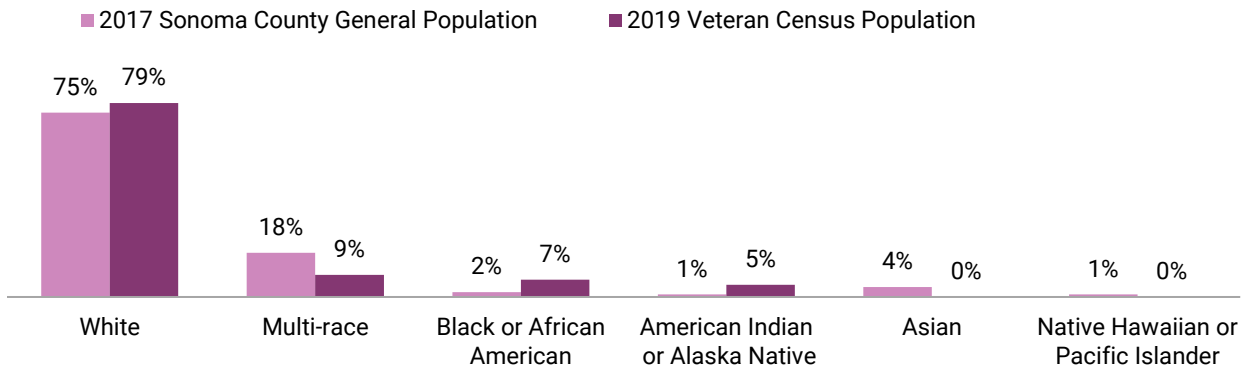
FIGURE 16. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2016 n=274; 2017 n=211; 2018 n=207; 2019 n=210

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

FIGURE 17. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE⁵

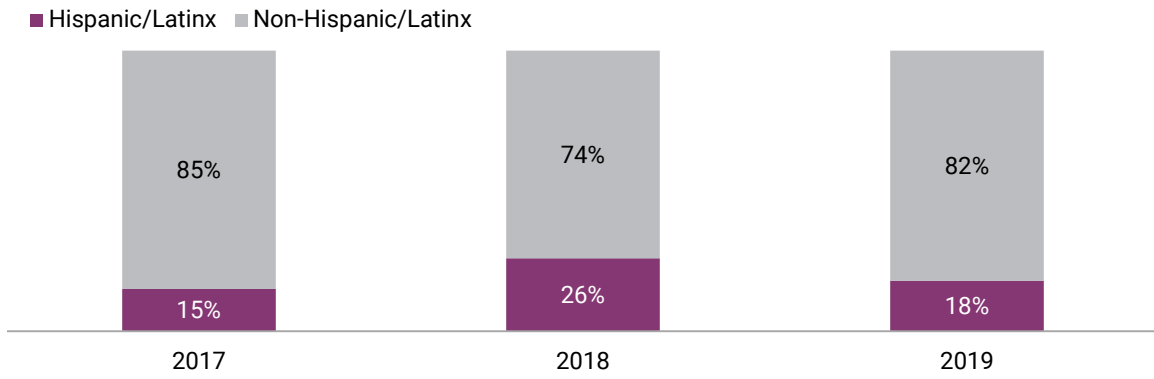


2019 Homeless Veterans Census Population n=210

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

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

FIGURE 18. HOMELESS VETERANS CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY



2017 Veterans n=211; 2018 Veterans n=207; 2019 Veterans n=210

HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

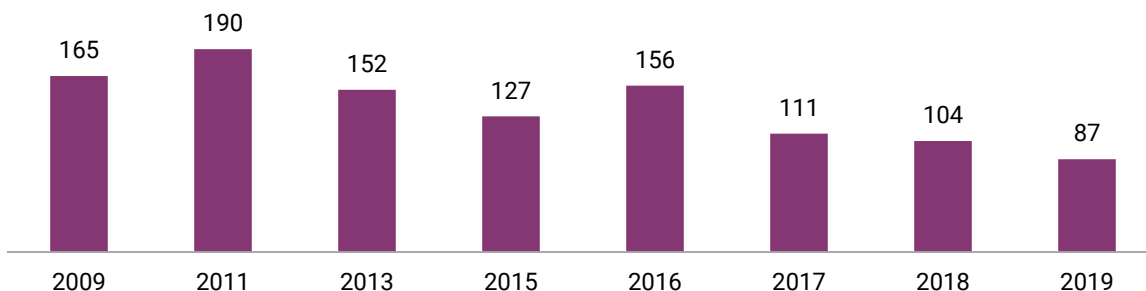
National data from 2017 suggest that 33% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families.⁶ Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, as public shelters serve more than 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that their circumstances are not much different from other families in poverty.

Nationally, the majority of homeless families are households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.⁷ Children in families experiencing homelessness report increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable living accommodations.⁸ In Sonoma County, the number of homeless families with children has continued to decrease since 2016. In 2019, there were 87 families with 279 family members experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County.

FIGURE 19. HOMELESS PERSONS IN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



FIGURE 20. TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND



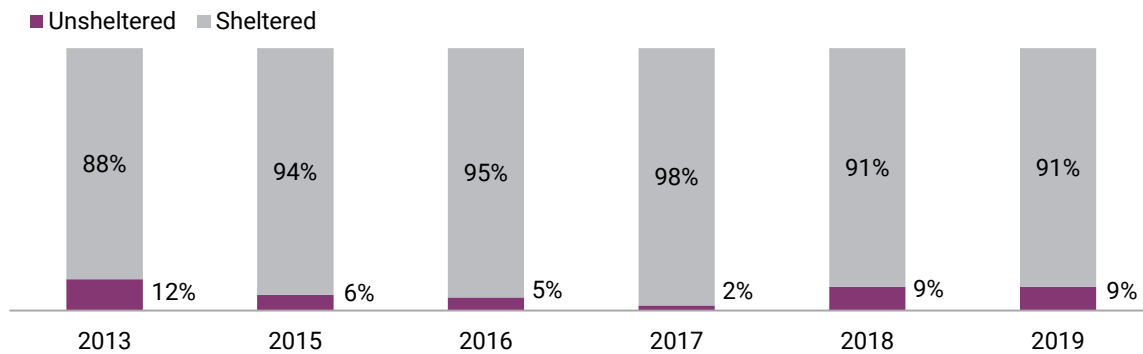
Note: There is a significant number of persons in homeless families who are in a “doubled-up” situation that may or may not fall within the HUD Point-in-Time Count definition of homelessness, and who could not be identified due to their typical location on private property.

⁶ Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁷ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2018 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

⁸ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2018 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

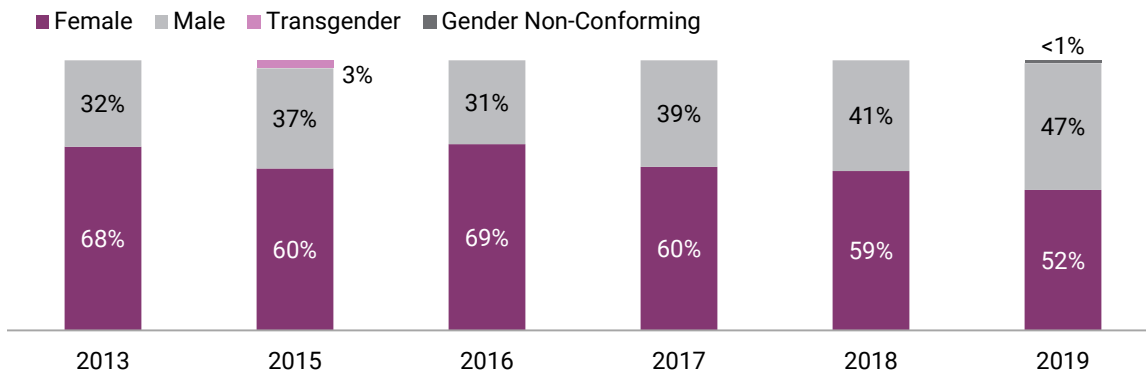
FIGURE 21. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2013-19 % Change
Sheltered	397	344	369	319	307	253	↓ 36%
Unsheltered	54	23	20	7	32	26	↓ 52%
Total	451	367	389	326	339	279	↓ 38%

Note: Percent change is not presented due to the small number of individuals.

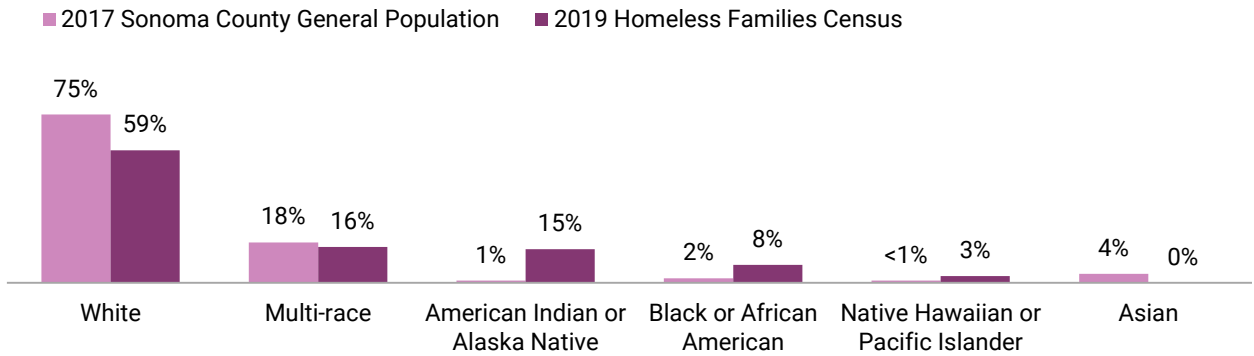
FIGURE 22. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY GENDER



2015 n= 367; 2016 n= 389; 2017 n= 326; 2018 n=339; 2019 n=279

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

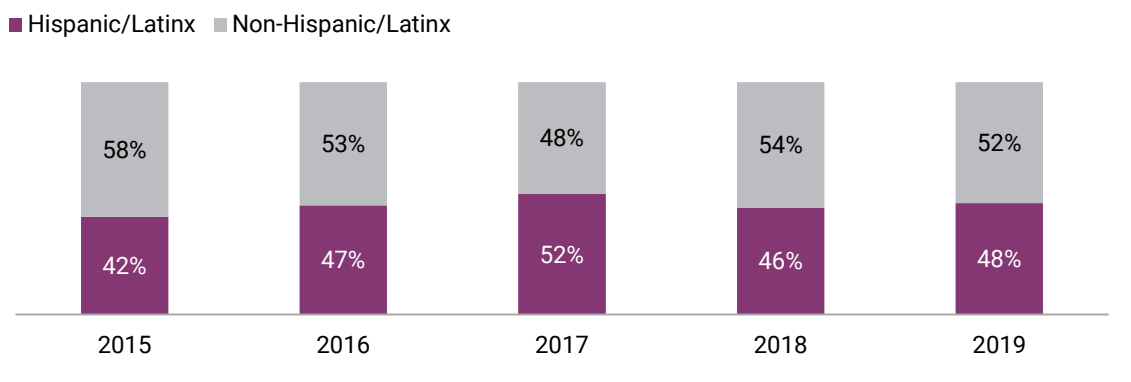
FIGURE 23. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY RACE⁹



2019 Homeless Families n=279

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

FIGURE 24. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY ETHNICITY



2015 Homeless Families n=367; 2016 Homeless Families n=389; 2017 Homeless Families n=326; 2018 Homeless Families n=339; 2019 Homeless Families n=279

Note: HDX data were prioritized for the 2018 and 2019 reports. Previous reports include survey demographic data for family ethnicity.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

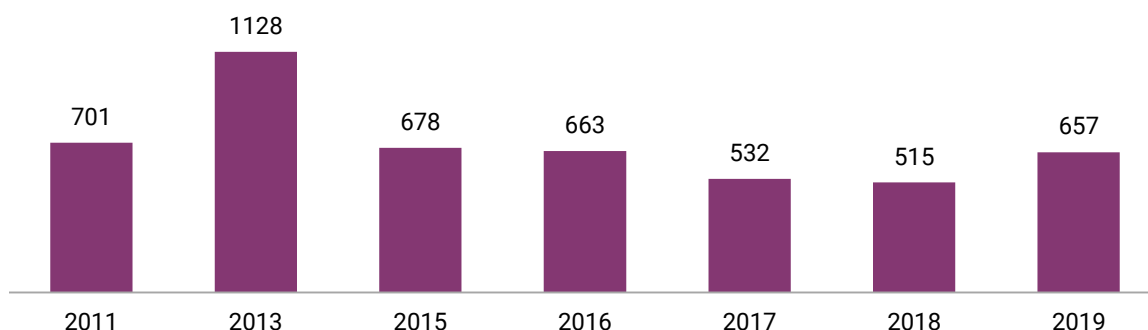
Due to the often hidden nature of youth homelessness, limited data are available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, nationwide estimates from 2017 suggest there are at least 40,799 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth on the streets and in public shelters, an increase of 14% over 2016.¹⁰ This increase may be due in part to the focus on unaccompanied youth during the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, which served as a nationwide baseline year.

Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services including shelter, medical care, and employment. This is due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services tailored to young people.¹¹

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

In Sonoma County, the number of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth increased dramatically. The number of unaccompanied children increased 244% to 117 and the number of transition-age youth increased 15% to 540.

FIGURE 25. TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND



¹⁰ U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). The 2017 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

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

FIGURE 26. TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND

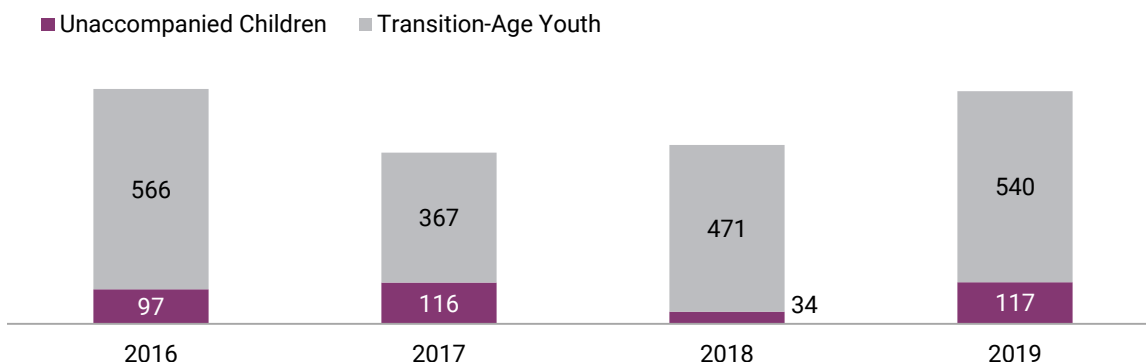
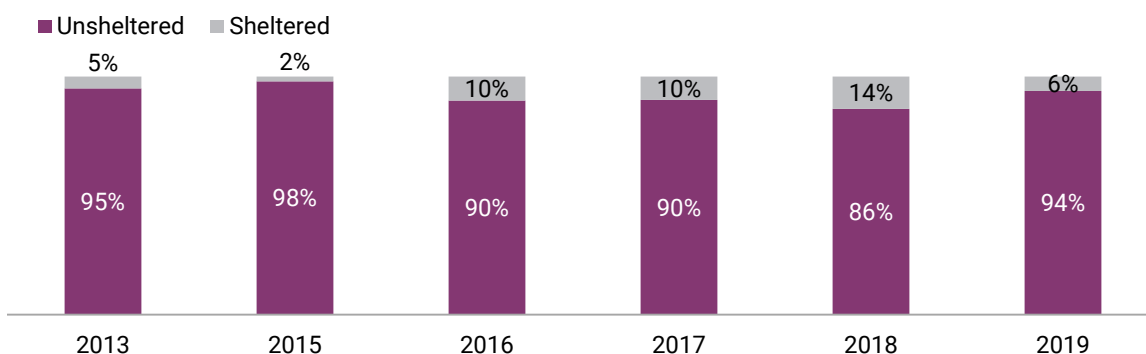
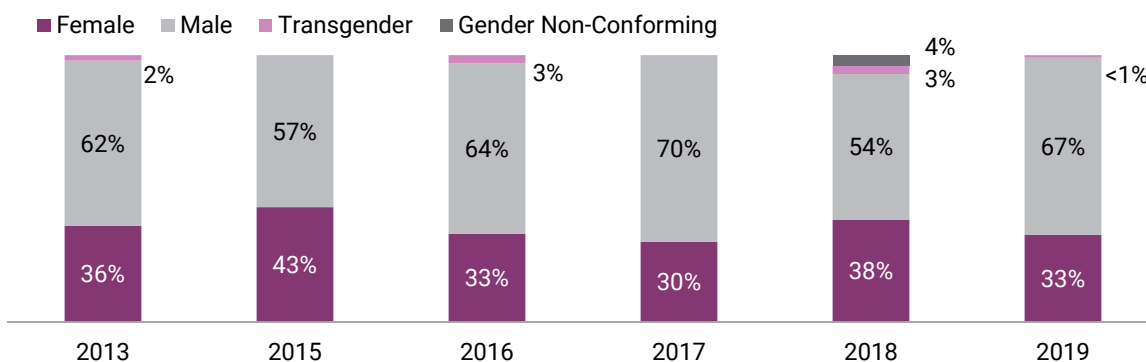


FIGURE 27. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2013-18 % Change
Sheltered	57	38	67	52	70	41	↓ 28%
Unsheltered	1,071	640	600	486	445	616	↓ 43%
Total	1,128	678	667	538	515	657	↓ 42%

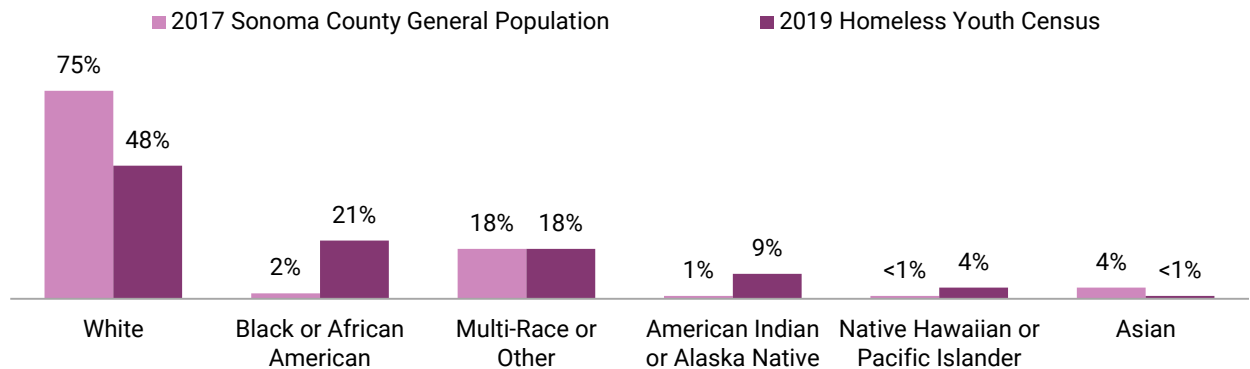
FIGURE 28. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2015 n=69; 2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=657

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

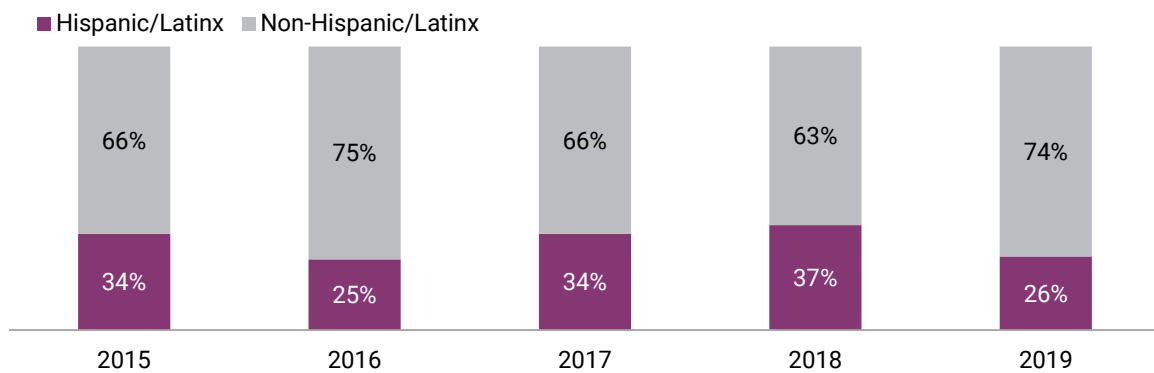
FIGURE 29. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE¹²



2019 Homeless Youth Census n=657

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

FIGURE 30. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY



2015 n=69; 2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=657

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS OVER AGE 55

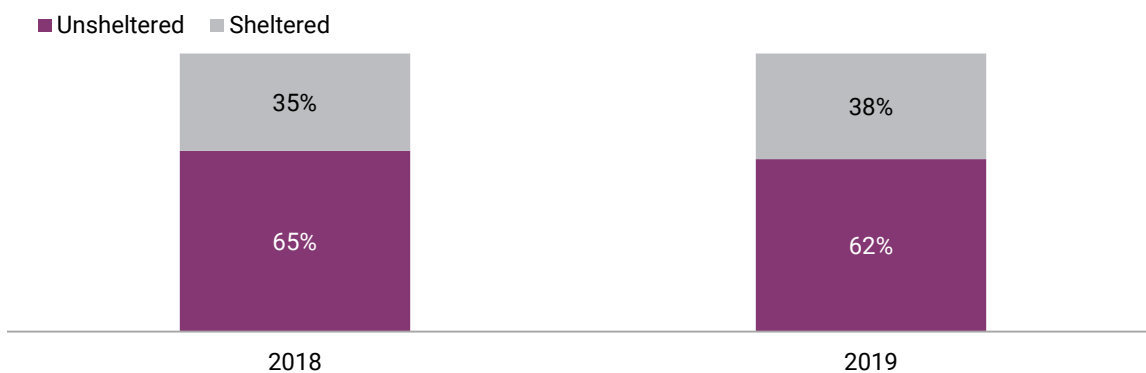
The population of older adults experiencing homelessness has risen in accordance with the overall growth of the population in the U.S. Because older adults experiencing homelessness have unmet mental health, substance use, and physical health needs, their mortality rates are higher than that of the general population.¹³

While this population has not been identified as a specific subpopulation of interest by the federal government, Sonoma County recognized the growing trend and initiated an effort to gather additional information on the population. The number of older adults experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County increased by 11% to 455 in 2019.

FIGURE 31. TOTAL OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, WITH TREND



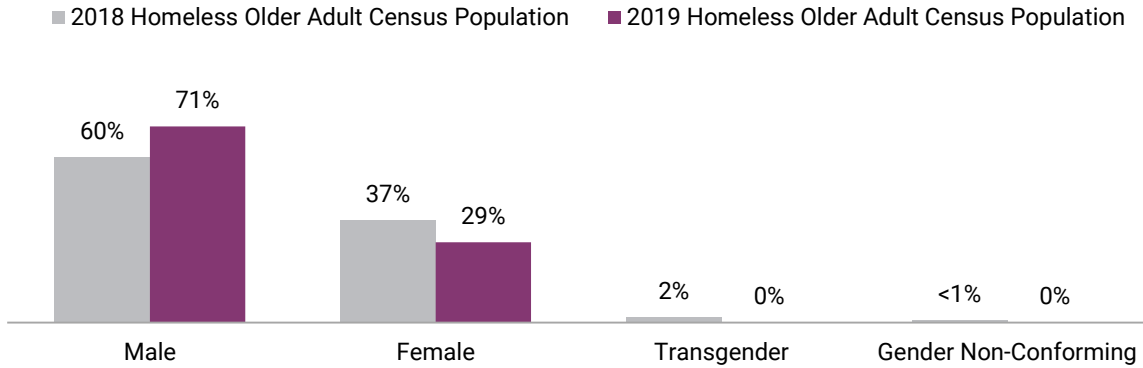
FIGURE 32. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS, WITH TREND



	2018	2019	% Change 18-19
Sheltered	143	171	↑ 20%
Unsheltered	266	284	↑ 7%
Total	409	455	↑ 11%

¹³ CSH & Hearth (2011). Ending Homelessness among Older Adults and Elders through Permanent Supportive Housing. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.csh.org/>.

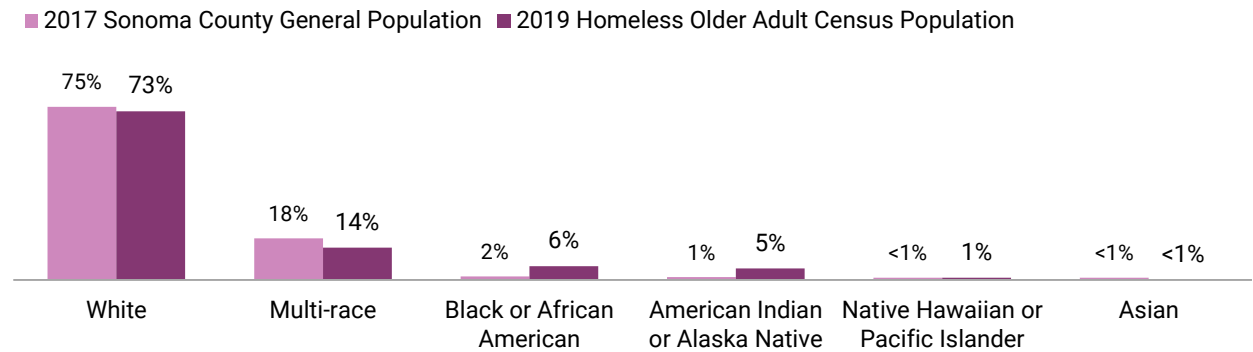
FIGURE 33. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2018 n=409; 2019 n=455

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender non-conforming was added in 2018.

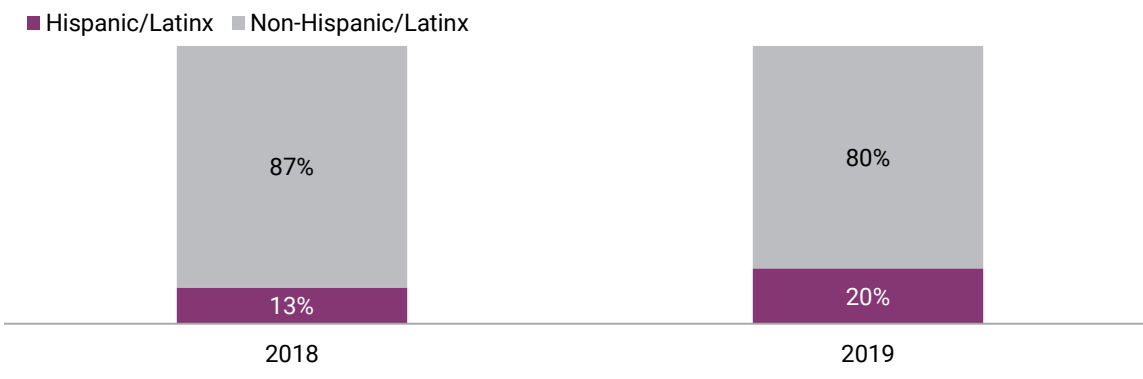
FIGURE 34. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE¹⁴



2019 Homeless Older Adult Census Population n=455, 2019 Homeless Under 55 Census Population n=2,496

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

FIGURE 35. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY



2018 Older Adult Census Population n=409; 2019 Older Adult Census Population n=455

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

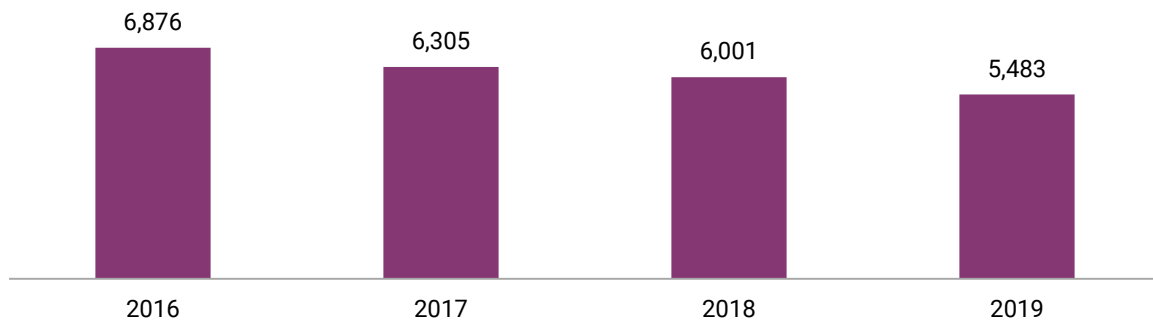
ANNUALIZATION

By definition, the Point-in-Time Count only provides a snapshot of homelessness during a single point in time and therefore may not adequately reflect the number of people experiencing homelessness throughout the year. Consequently, it does not reflect the number of people who are homeless at other times or the total number who access the homeless support system throughout the year.

To address this shortcoming, an annual estimation formula can be used to profile the number of persons who may have experienced homelessness in Sonoma County over the course of a year. While this estimate is valuable and can inform the complexity of enumerating those persons experiencing homelessness, the calculation can also be volatile due to survey sampling and, in particular, the impact of certain variables such as the prevalence of short-term homelessness, specifically when it is under 7 days. In 2019, a monthly annualization estimate was used due to a significant difference in the sampling of those experiencing short-term homelessness.

The 2019 Sonoma County annual estimate is 5,483 unique homeless experiences over a year, continuing a decrease from 6,876 unique homeless persons since 2016.

FIGURE 36. ANNUALIZATION





Homeless Survey Findings

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2019 Sonoma Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between January 25 and February 13, 2019. This effort resulted in 520 complete and unique surveys.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 2,951 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 520 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in Sonoma County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be 95% certain that the results would be within 4 percentage points of the current results.

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values were intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted. For more information regarding the survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

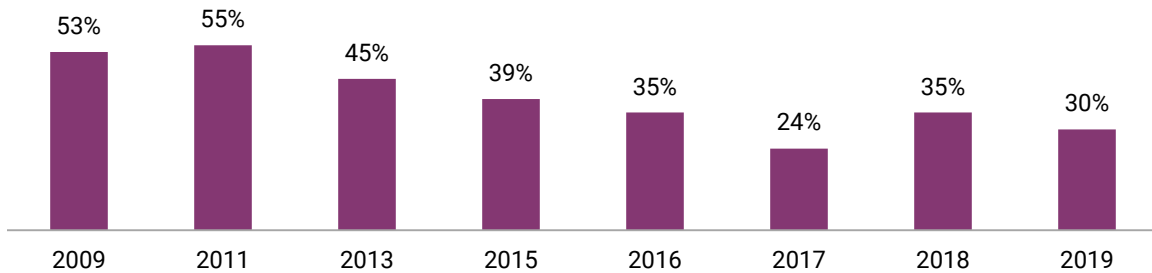
DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability.

DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

The number of survey respondents who indicated experiencing homelessness for the first time fell from a high of 55% in 2011 to a low of 24% in 2017. After an increase to 35% in 2018, 30% were experiencing homelessness for the first time in 2019. For those experiencing homelessness for the first time, 44% had been homeless for one year or more.

FIGURE 37. FIRST TIME HOMELESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)

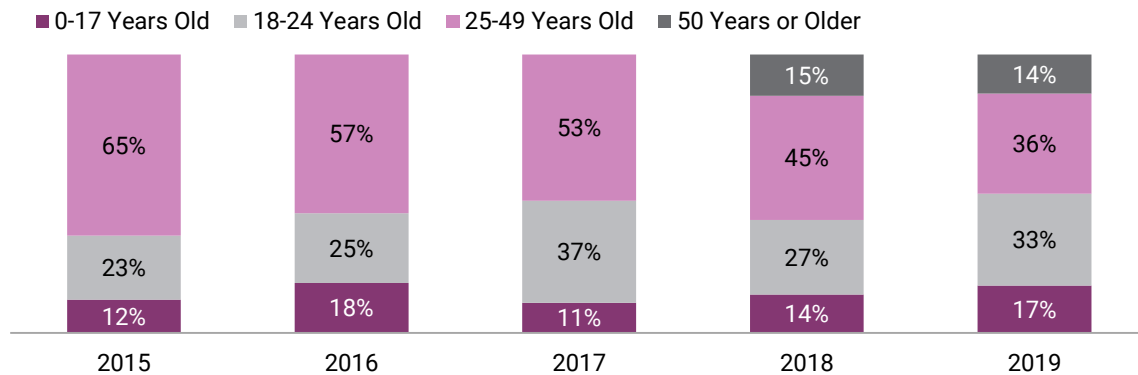


2009 n=600; 2011 n=617; 2013 n=533; 2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=678; 2018 n=519; 2019 n=498

AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

As shown in the figure below, half (50%) of respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time under the age of 25, an increase from 41% in 2018. The number of respondents experiencing homelessness for the first time at age 50 or older remained steady at 14%.

FIGURE 38. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



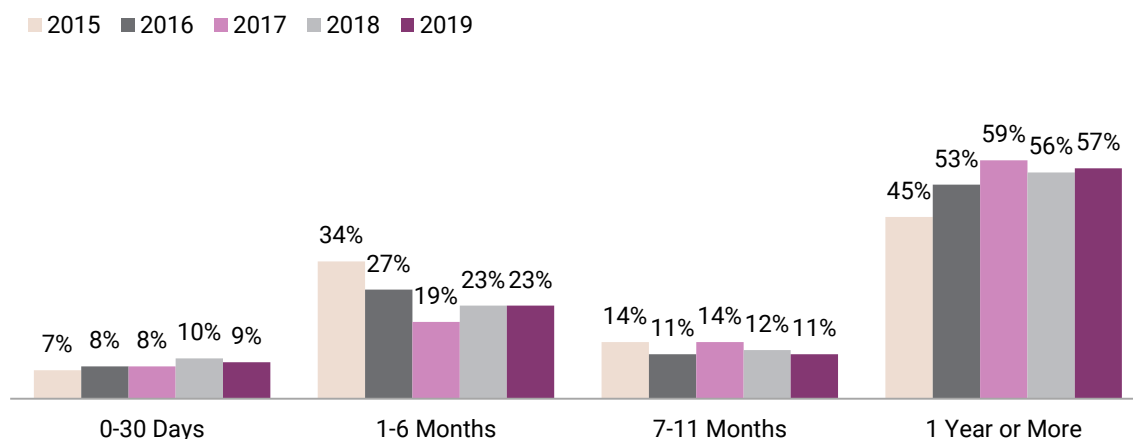
2015 n=605; 2016 n=599; 2017 n=675; 2018 n=513; 2019 n=511

Note: Age at first experience of homelessness was first asked in the 2015 survey. Fifty years or older was added as a response option beginning in 2018.

DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

Many individuals who experience homelessness will do so numerous times and for varying lengths of time. Similar to 2018, 57% of respondents indicated that their current episode of homelessness had lasted for a year or more. On the other end of the spectrum, 9% of respondents had been homeless for less than one month. Of the 30% of respondents who were experiencing homelessness for the first time, 44% had been homeless for one year or more.

FIGURE 39. DURATION OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2015 n=608; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=680; 2018 n=519; 2019 n=516

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness and where they have lived since impacts the way they seek services as well as their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and to opportunities for systemic improvement and homelessness prevention.

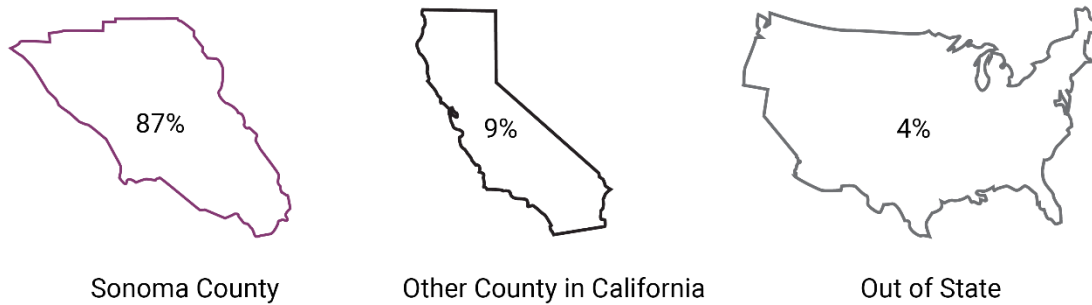
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Knowing where individuals were living prior to their housing loss informs discussions regarding how local the homeless population is to the region. This information can also influence changes to available support systems if the CoC finds increasing numbers of individuals living locally before experiencing homelessness.

Prior to becoming homeless, 87% of survey respondents reported living in Sonoma County, an increase from 84% in 2018 and 79% in 2017. Nine percent (9%) of respondents were living in another county in California at the time they became homeless and 4% were living in another state.

Of those living in Sonoma County at the time of their housing loss, 70% had lived in Sonoma County for 10 or more years, a marked increase over 65% in 2018 and 56% in 2017. Additionally, just 4% of those living in Sonoma County at the time of their housing loss reported residing in the county for less than a year.

FIGURE 40. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



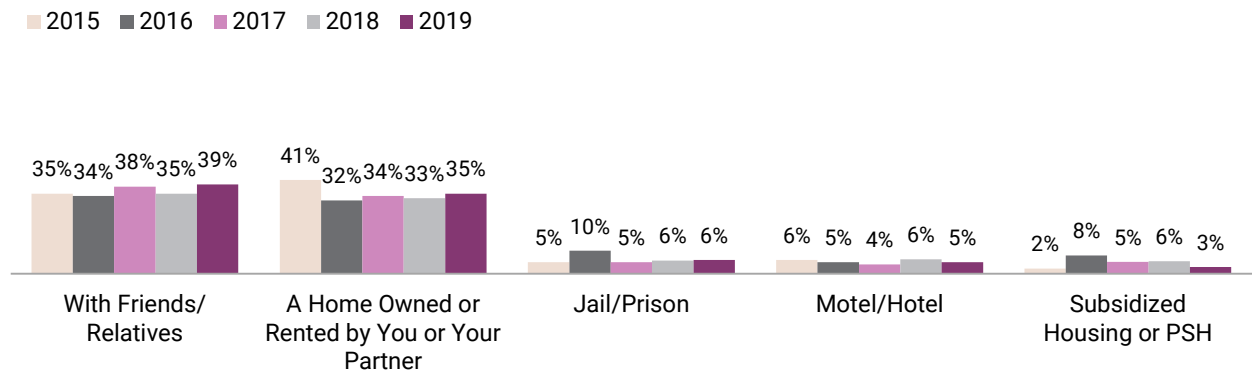
2019 n=517

PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Similar to previous place of residence, the type of living arrangements maintained by individuals before experiencing homelessness can influence what types of homeless prevention services might be offered to help individuals maintain their housing.

Immediately before becoming homeless, 39% of survey respondents reported living with friends and/or relatives and 35% reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner.

FIGURE 41. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME (2019 TOP 5)



2015 n=589; 2016 n=488; 2017 n=652; 2018 n=506; 2019 n=501
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EFFECTS OF 2017 FIRES

In October of 2017, the Tubbs, Nuns, and Pocket fires burned significant portions of Sonoma County, including populated areas in Santa Rosa. Over 7,000 structures, including many homes, were destroyed across the 112,380 acres that burned through Sonoma and Napa counties. It is estimated that 3,300 residents emigrated out of Sonoma County in the year after the fires, resulting in a net loss in population.¹⁵

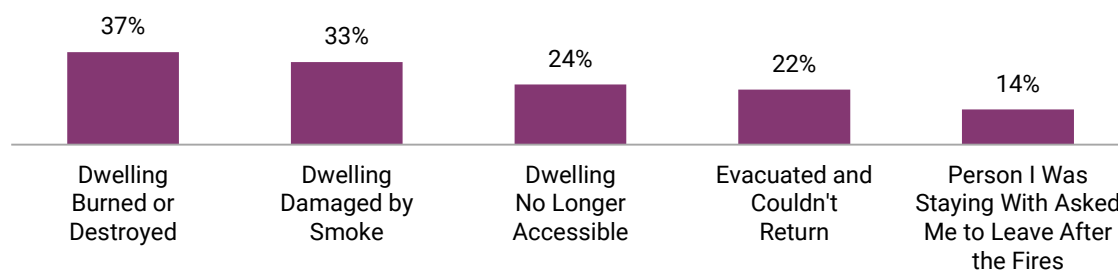
The fires exacerbated a housing market with already historically low vacancy levels, leading to questions of how the residents would be affected. For the second year, Sonoma County added fire-related questions to the survey component of the annual Point-in-Time Count and conducted a representative community telephone survey to understand the impacts of the fires countywide. The effects of the fires have proved long-lasting, affecting those experiencing homelessness and others in the community, and therefore it remains important to track how the fires affected the community one year later. The representative household survey results can be found in the *Community Telephone Survey* section of this report.

EFFECTS OF FIRES ON THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In 2019, 19% of survey respondents reported that their previous housing or sleeping location had been affected by the fires in some way, a significant decrease from 34% in 2018. Of those affected by the fire, 37% reported that their home or sleeping location was burned or destroyed, 33% reported that their home or sleeping location was damaged by smoke, and 24% reported that they were evacuated and could not return to their home or sleeping location. Of the 4% of respondents who cited the fires as their primary cause of homelessness, 62% were unsheltered and 38% were sheltered.

Ten percent (10%) of those impacted by the fires were transition-age youth age 18-24, 66% were between the ages of 25 and 54, and 24% were over age 55.

FIGURE 42. IMPACTS ON THOSE AFFECTED BY THE FIRE

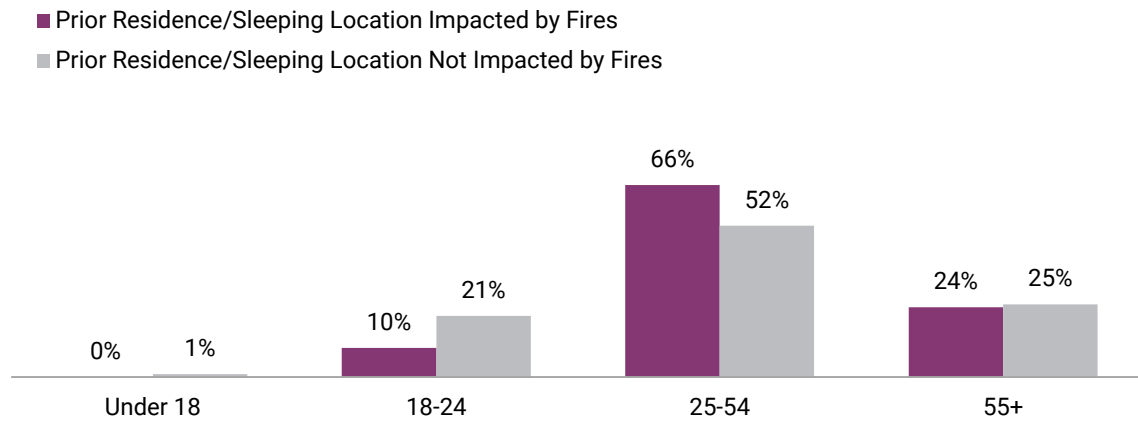


2019 n=92

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

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

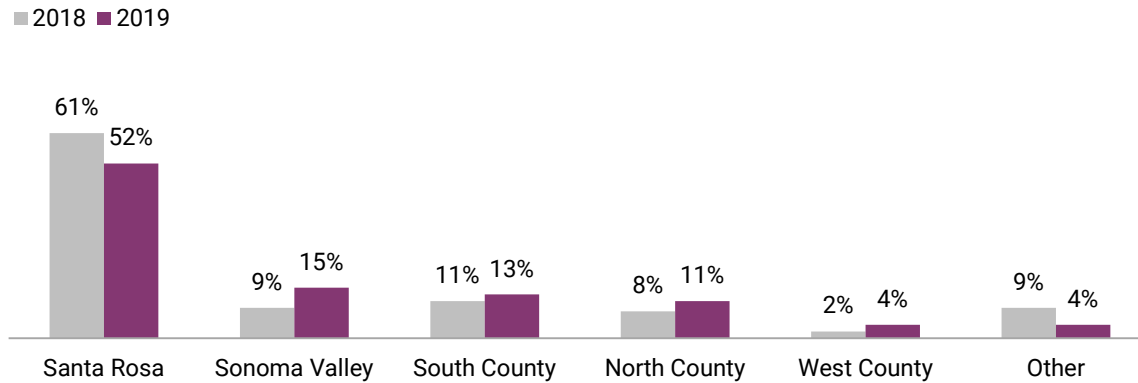
FIGURE 43. AGE OF THOSE WHOSE PRIOR RESIDENCE OR SLEEPING LOCATION IMPACTED BY THE FIRES AND NOT IMPACTED BY THE FIRES



2019 Prior Residence/Sleeping Location Impacted by Fires n=94; Prior Residence/Sleeping Location Not Impacted by Fires n=404
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add to 100.

Over half (51%) of respondents impacted by fires were living in Santa Rosa and 15% were living in Sonoma Valley prior to the fires. Additionally, 13% of those impacted by the fires were living in South County communities and 11% in North County communities before the fires.

FIGURE 44. RESIDENCE PRIOR TO FIRES OF FIRE-IMPACTED SURVEY RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



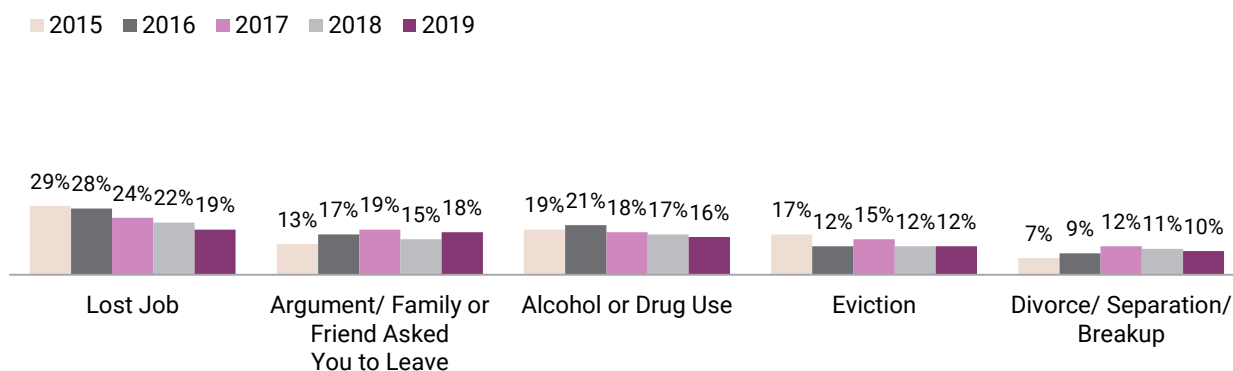
2018 n=177; 2019 n=92

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

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

In 2019, 19% of survey respondents reported job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, the most common cause of homelessness, although it continued a decrease from 29% in 2015. The percentage of respondents reporting that an argument led to their housing loss increased slightly to 18%, and the percentage reporting alcohol or drug use as the cause slightly decreased to 16% in 2019 from 17% in 2018.

FIGURE 45. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS



PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS	2019	PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS	2019
Lost Job	19%	Don't Know/Decline to State	5%
Argument/Family or Friend Asked You to Leave	18%	Family/Domestic Violence	5%
Alcohol or Drug Use	16%	Fire	4%
Eviction	12%	Landlord Raised Rent	3%
Divorce/Separation/Breakup	10%	Foreclosure	2%
Other	7%	Probation/Parole Restrictions	2%
Incarceration	7%	Hospitalization/Treatment	1%
Illness/Medical Problem	6%	Aging Out of Foster Care	<1%
Mental Health Issues	6%		

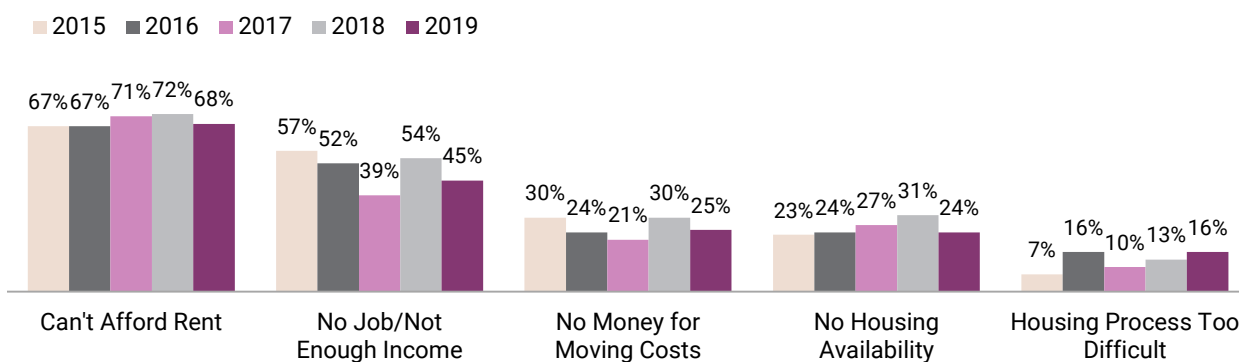
2015 n=601 respondents offering 738 responses; 2016 n=576 respondents offering 782 responses; 2017 n=660 respondents offering 917 responses; 2018 n=506 respondents offering 660 responses; 2019 n=511 respondents offering 635 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

OBSTACLES TO PERMANENT HOUSING

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

The majority of survey respondents (68%) indicated their inability to afford rent as their primary obstacle to obtaining permanent housing. Nearly half (45%) of survey respondents reported that they did not have a job or enough income to find permanent housing. Additionally, moving costs (25%) and housing availability (24%) remained significant barriers to those seeking permanent housing.

FIGURE 46. OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

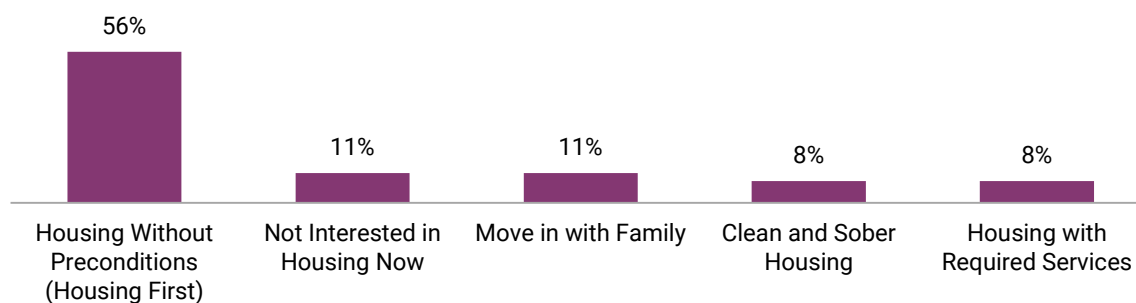


2015 n=597 respondents offering 1,471 responses; 2016 n=581 respondents offering 1,573 responses; 2017 n=659 respondents offering 1,642 responses; 2018 n=503 respondents offering 1,489 responses; 2019 n=513 respondents offering 1,331 responses. Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HOUSING TYPE

Although vacancy rates are low in the San Francisco Bay Area, and especially limited in Sonoma County since the 2017 fires, respondents were asked what type of housing they would prefer if it were available right now. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents who were unsheltered or staying in emergency shelters were interested in housing. More than half of all respondents (56%) desired housing without preconditions (i.e., housing first).

FIGURE 47. HOUSING TYPE DESIRED



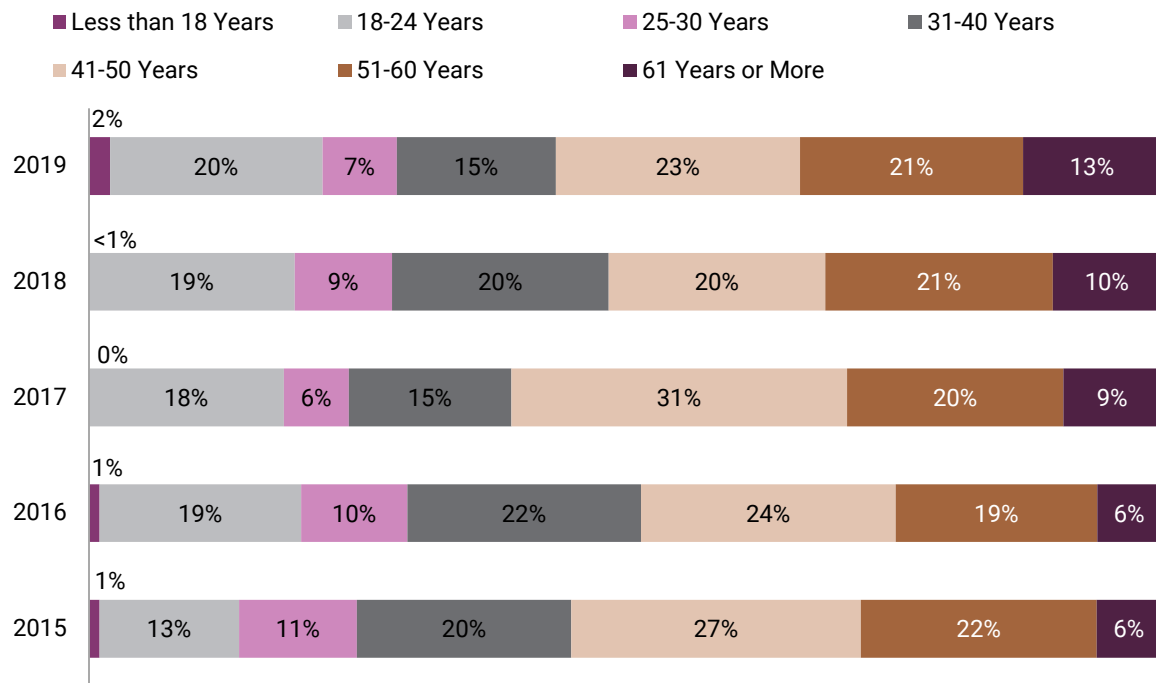
2019 n=350

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In 2019, 64% of survey participants identified as male, 34% identified as female, and 2% identified as transgender. Similarly to years past, about one-fifth (22%) of survey respondents were under the age of 25 and just under half (45%) of survey respondents were between the ages of 25 and 50. One-third (33%) of survey respondents were 51 years of age or older.

FIGURE 48. SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

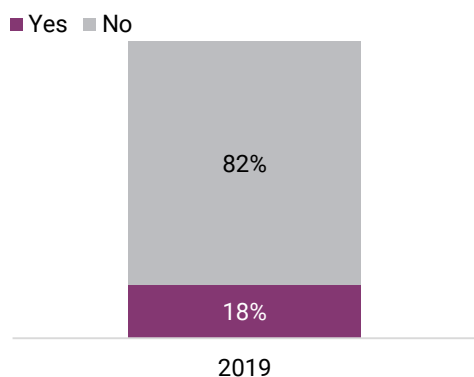


2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=687; 2018 n=519; 2019 n=520
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Persons identifying as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender non-conforming, transgender, or queer) are overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population: as of 2018, 4.5% of the US population identified as LGBT.¹⁶ According to the 2019 Sonoma Homeless Survey, 18% of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+. Among those identifying as LGBTQ+, 33% identified as bisexual, 9% identified as lesbian, and 16% identified as gay.

¹⁶ Newport, F. (2018). In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%. *Gallup*. Retrieved 2019 from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>.

FIGURE 49. LGBTQ+ IDENTITY



Breakout of LGBTQ+ Respondents	2019%	n
Gay	16%	15
Lesbian	9%	8
Queer	30%	28
Bisexual	33%	30
Other	11%	10
Transgender	9%	8
Gender Non-Conforming	*	*

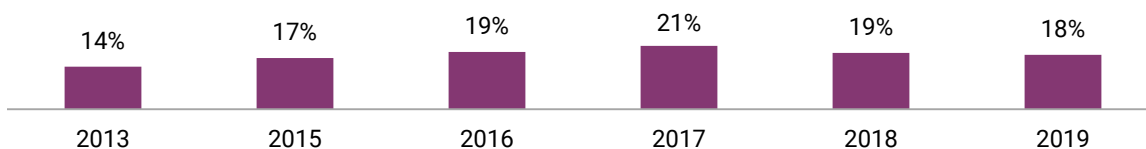
2019 n=520, Breakout n=92 respondents offering 100 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.
 * Suppressed due to small sample size.

FOSTER CARE

Nationally, it is estimated that at least one-third of foster youth experience homelessness after exiting care.¹⁷ In the state of California, many foster youth are eligible to receive extended care benefits as they transition into adulthood, up until their 21st birthday. Implemented since 2012, the aim of extended foster care is to assist foster youth with the transition to independence and to prevent them from experiencing homeless.

In 2019, 18% of respondents reported a history of foster care. Youth under the age of 25 reported a history of foster care at a slightly higher rate than survey respondents over the age of 25 (21% compared to 17%). One percent (1%) of all survey respondents reported that aging out of the foster care system was the primary cause of their homelessness, and 2% reported living in foster care immediately before becoming homeless this current time.

FIGURE 50. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



2013 n=533; 2015 n=600; 2016 n=563; 2017 n=645; 2018 n=510; 2019 n=504

¹⁷ Dworsky, A; Napolitano, L.; and Courtney, M. (2013). Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood. Congressional Research Services, Am J Public Health. 2013 December; 103(Suppl 2): S318–S323. Retrieved 2018 from 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301455.

SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

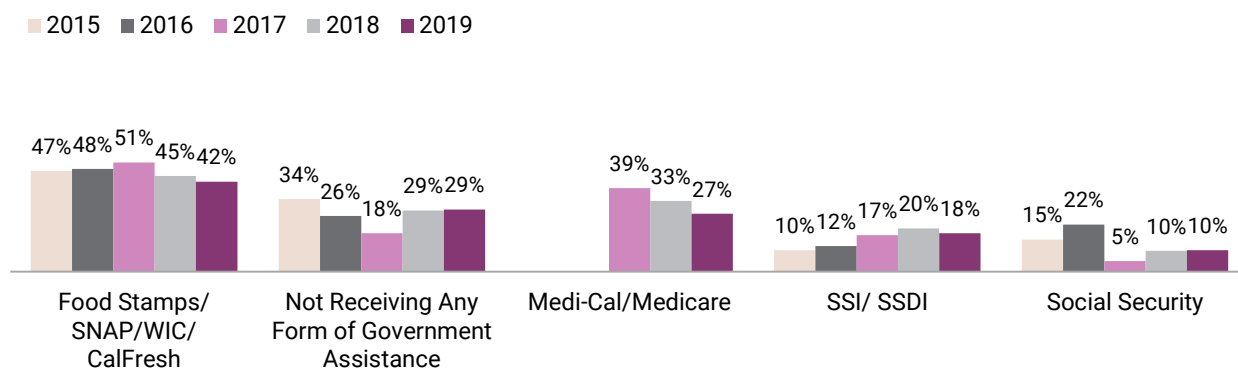
Sonoma County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain income and support. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services,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

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

There are various forms of government assistance available to individuals experiencing homelessness. However, usage of these supports is impacted by knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma of receiving governmental assistance.

Food assistance remained the most frequently cited form of government assistance received among survey respondents, with 42% of respondents receiving benefits from Food Stamps, SNAP, WIC, or CalFresh programs in 2019; this is a continued decrease from 51% in 2017. The percentage of respondents reporting enrollment in Medi-Cal or Medicare services programs also decreased, from 39% in 2018 to 27% in 2019.

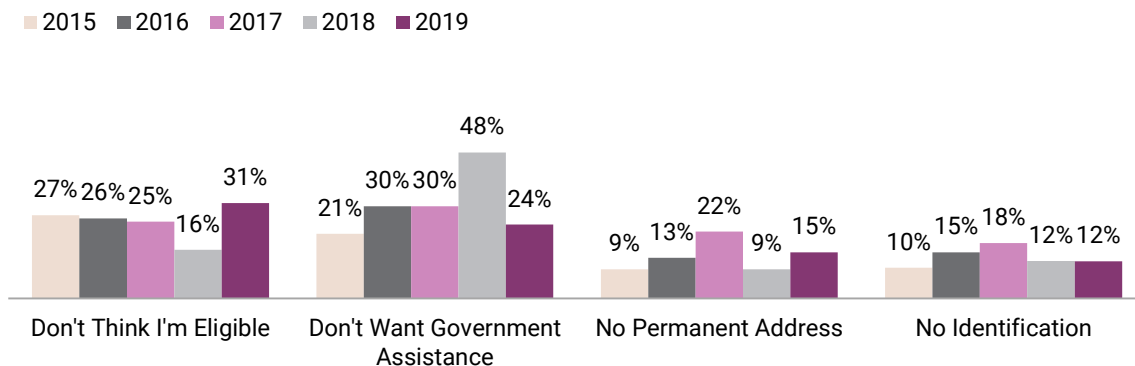
FIGURE 51. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



2015 n=578 respondents offering 655 responses; 2016 n=475 respondents offering 569 responses; 2017 n=581 respondents offering 956 responses; 2018 n=494 respondents offering 765 responses; 2019 n=505 respondents offering 691 responses. Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100. Medi-Cal/Medicare was asked beginning in 2017.

The percentage of those reporting they were not receiving any form of government assistance remained steady at 29%. When asked why they were not accessing government assistance, the top four reasons were not thinking they were eligible (31%), not wanting government assistance (24%), not having a permanent address (15%), and lacking a form of identification (12%). Additionally, 11% of respondents had not applied for government assistance and 11% had applied and were awaiting a response.

FIGURE 52. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE



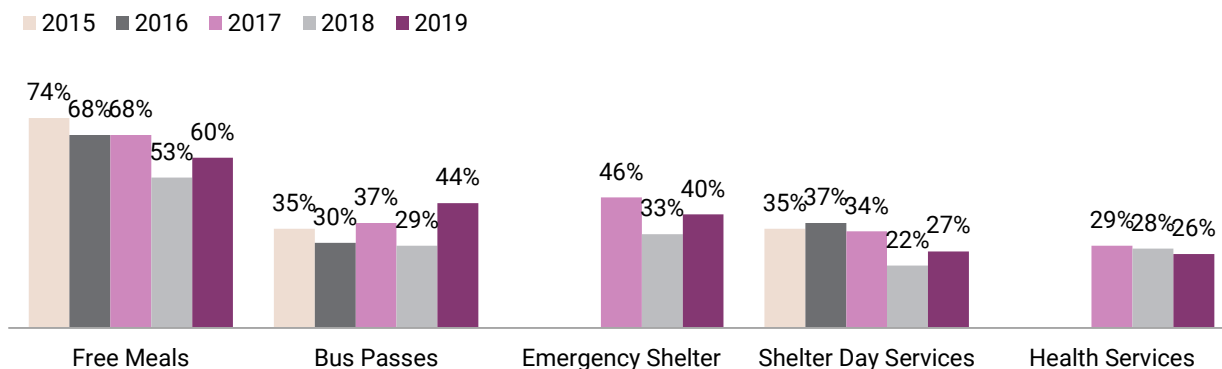
2015 n=276 respondents offering 360 responses; 2016 n=114 respondents offering 178 responses; 2017 n=106 respondents offering 181 responses; 2018 n=139 respondents offering 184 responses; 2019 n=292 respondents offering 421 responses. Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

In addition to government assistance, there are numerous community-based services and programs made available to individuals experiencing homelessness. These services range from day shelters and meal programs to job training and healthcare. Overall, survey respondents in 2019 reported using more services than in 2018.

The top five most commonly used services were free meals (60%), bus passes (44%), emergency shelter (40%), shelter day services (27%), and health services (26%). The percentage of respondents indicating they did not receive any services or use any programs decreased to 16% in 2019 from 21% in 2018, showing that more people were using available services.

FIGURE 53. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE

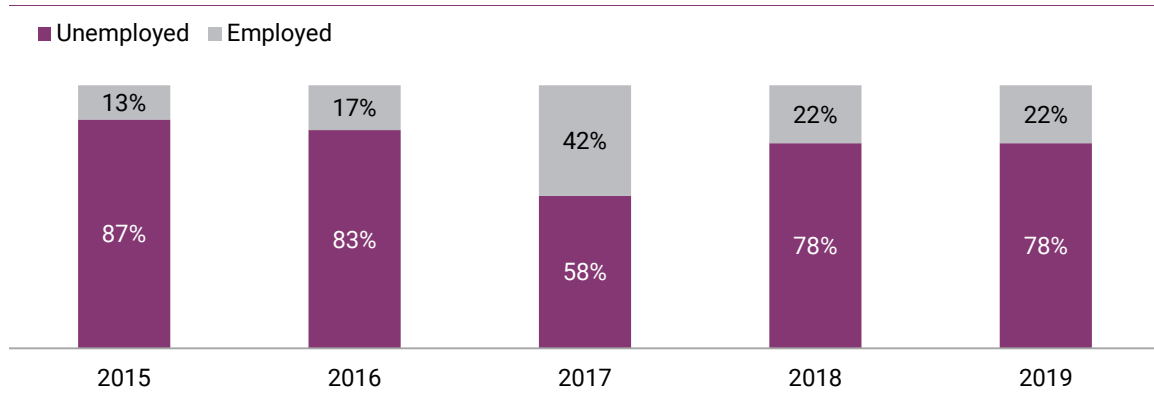


2015 n=513 respondents offering 1,010 responses; 2016 n=527 respondents offering 1,085 responses; 2017 n=622 offering 1792 responses; 2018 n=491 respondents offering 1,212 responses; 2019 n=495 respondents offering 1,328 responses. Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100. Emergency shelter and health service usage were not asked prior to 2017.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

The majority of survey respondents (78%) in 2019 continued to report being unemployed. Eight percent (8%) of survey respondents reported being employed full-time, 8% were employed part-time, and 6% reported seasonal or sporadic employment.

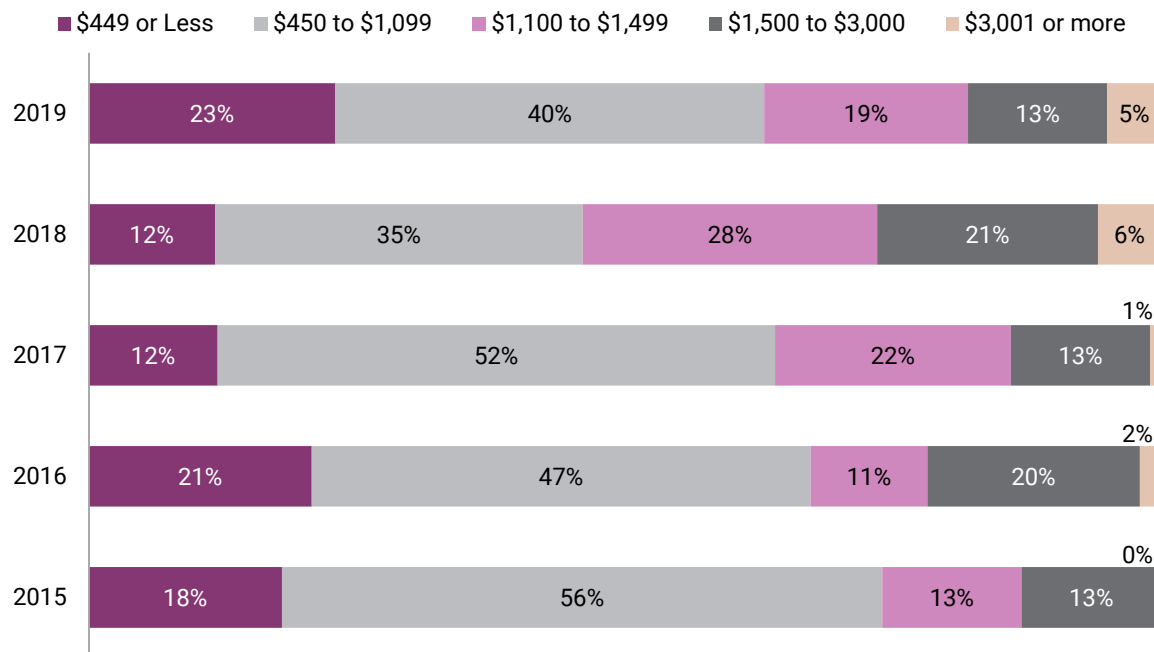
FIGURE 54. EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND MONTHLY INCOME



2015 Employment Status n=514; 2016 Employment Status n=490, M; 2017 Employment Status n=645; 2018 Employment Status n=500; 2019 Employment Status n=500

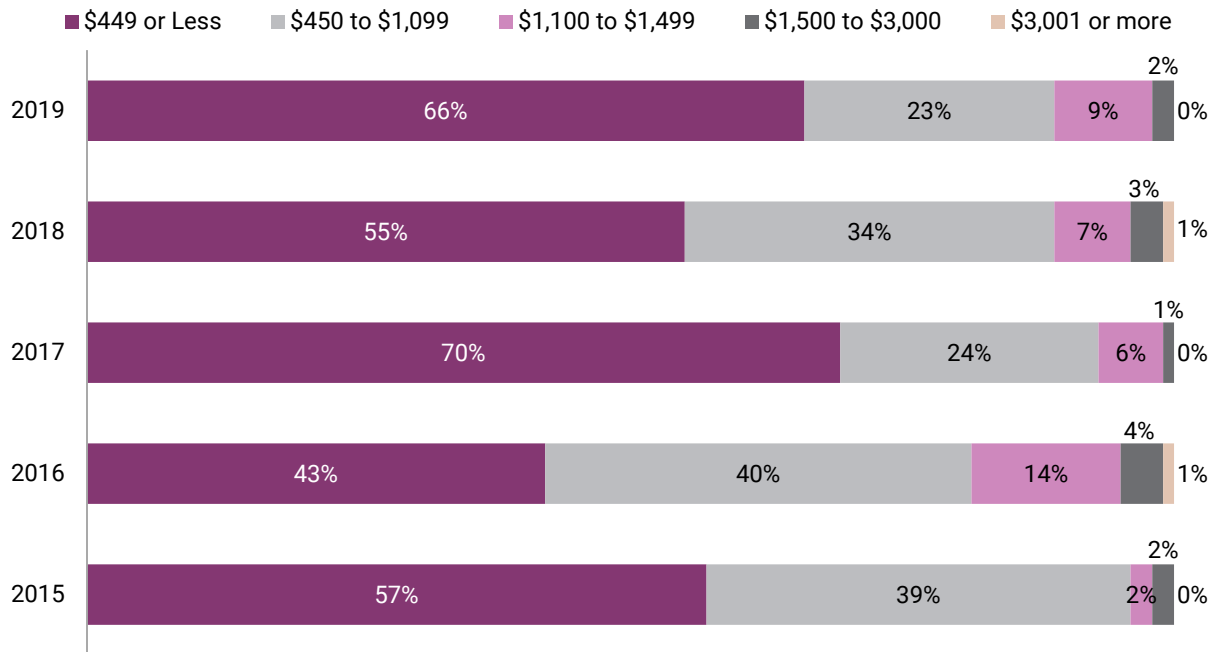
The income levels of those who reported being employed dropped to under \$1,100 a month for the majority (63%) of respondents in 2019. Similarly, two-thirds (66%) of those who were unemployed reported making \$449 or less per month.

FIGURE 55. MONTHLY INCOME, EMPLOYED



2015 Employed n=38; 2016 Employed n=54; 2017 Employed n=267; 2018 Employed n=109; 2019 Employed n=109
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 56. MONTHLY INCOME, UNEMPLOYED



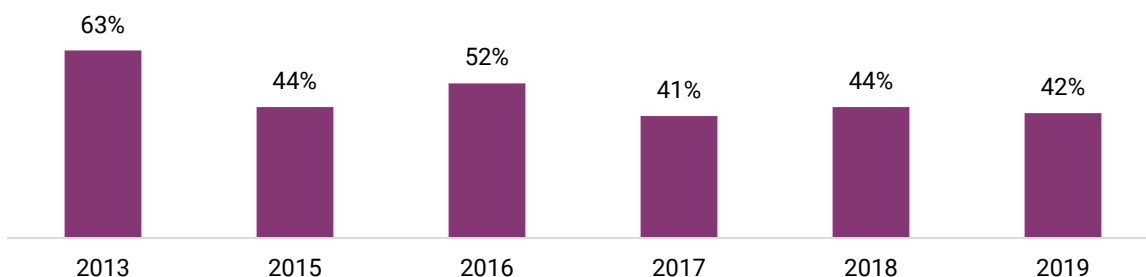
2015 Unemployed n=200; 2016 Unemployed n=252; 2017 Unemployed n=374; 2018 Unemployed n=385; 2019 Unemployed n=344
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HEALTH

The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to healthcare and without safe and stable housing, individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.¹⁸

In Sonoma County, 68% of survey respondents reported one or more health conditions. Forty-two percent (42%) of survey respondents indicated that their condition was disabling, preventing them from holding employment, living in stable housing, or taking care of themselves.

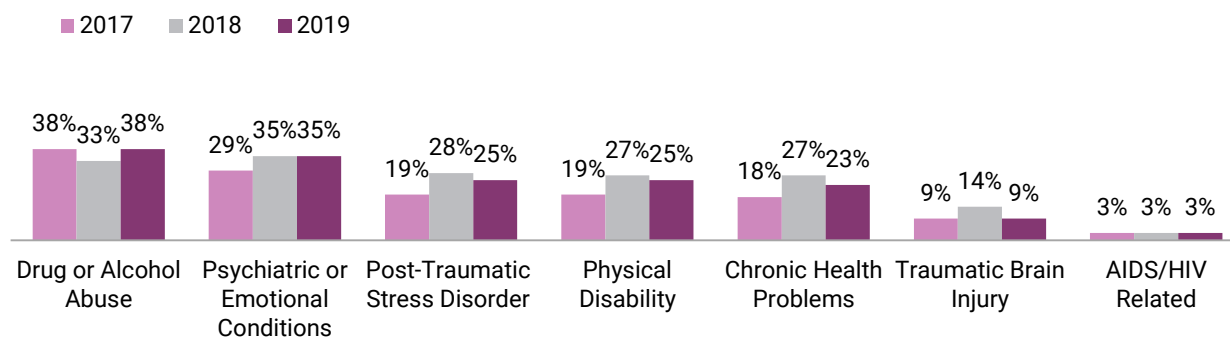
FIGURE 57. HUD DISABLING CONDITION



2013 n=492; 2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=687; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=520

The most common health condition reported by individuals in 2019 was drug or alcohol abuse, which rose to 38% in 2019 from 33% in 2018. This was followed by 35% reporting a psychiatric or emotional condition, 25% reporting PTSD, 25% reporting a physical disability, and 23% reporting a chronic health problem.

FIGURE 58. HEALTH CONDITIONS



2015 n=595-602; 2016 n=588-603; 2017 n= 680-685; 2018 n=519; 2019 n=520

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

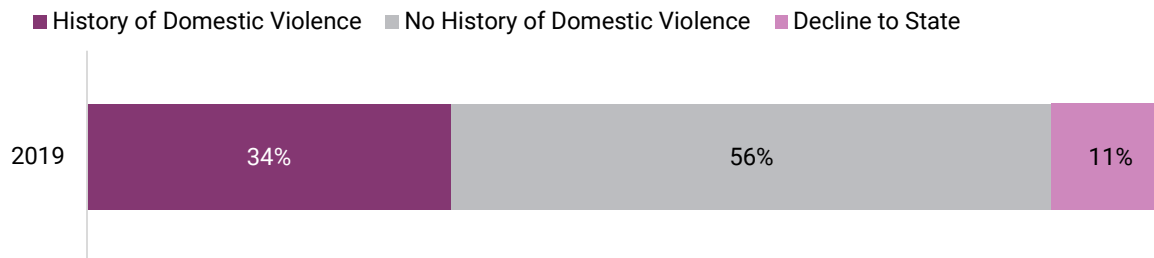
¹⁸ Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

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

The percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County who indicated a prior experience of domestic violence or partner abuse was 34%, the same as in 2018. Five percent (5%) of survey respondents identified domestic violence as the primary cause of their homelessness.

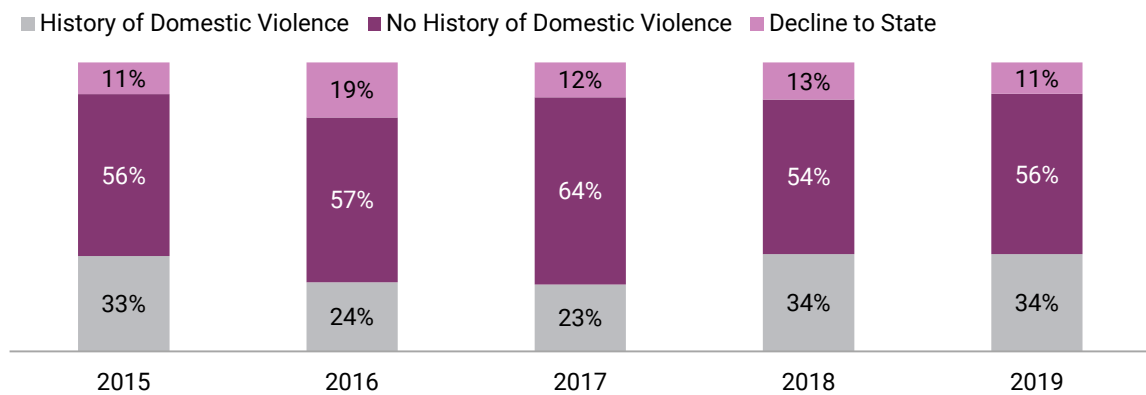
FIGURE 59. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2019 n=499

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

FIGURE 60. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WITH TREND



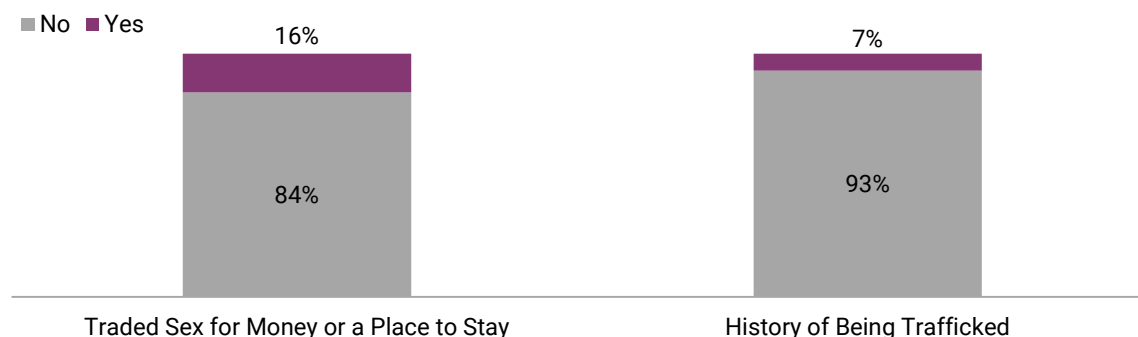
2015 n=577; 2016 n=565; 2017 n=621; 2018 n=494; 2019 n=499

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

SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT

Due to their vulnerable circumstances and precarious access to basic needs, many of those experiencing homelessness have a history of being involved in the sex trade. Sixteen percent (16%) of survey respondents reported trading sex for money or a place to stay, and 7% reported being trafficked (i.e., forced commercial sex). When disaggregated by gender, women are likelier to have been involved in the sex trade: 21% of women report trading sex for money or a place to stay, and 10% report being trafficked.

FIGURE 61. SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT



2019 Trading Sex for Money or a Place to Stay n=495, History of Being Trafficked n=492

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

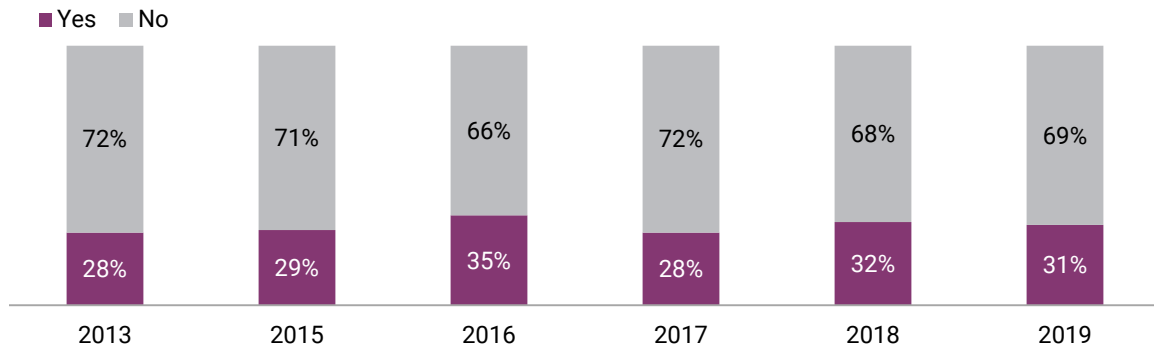
Homelessness and incarceration are often correlative. Individuals without stable housing are at greater risk of criminal justice system involvement, particularly those with mental health issues, veterans, and youth. Individuals with past incarceration face significant barriers to exiting homelessness due to stigmatization and policies affecting their ability to gain employment and access housing opportunities.¹⁹

INCARCERATION

Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents experiencing homelessness reported spending at least one night in jail or prison within the past 12 months, remaining steady from 31% in 2018. Seventeen percent (17%) of survey respondents reported that they were on probation or parole at the time they most recently became homeless, and 20% reported they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey.

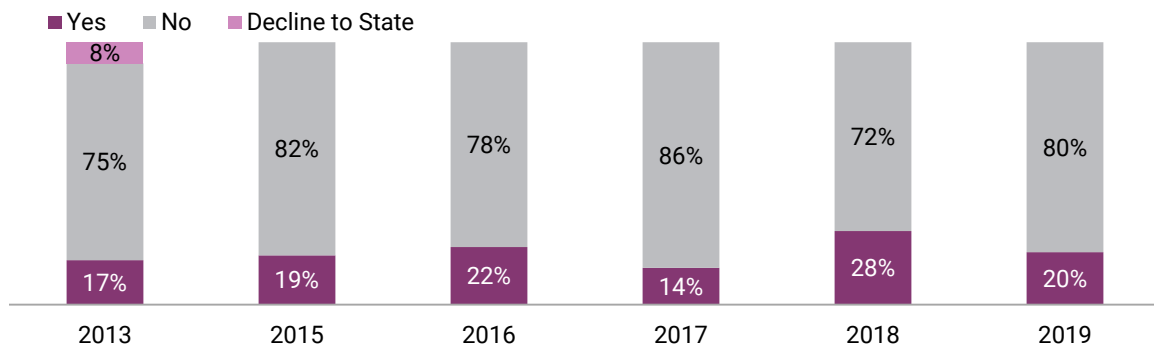
¹⁹ Greenberg, GA, Rosenheck, RA. (2008). Jail Incarceration, Homelessness, and Mental Health: A National Study. *Psychiatric Services*, 2008 Feb;59(2): 170-7.

FIGURE 62. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2013 n=473; 2015 n=602; 2016 n=574; 2017 n=744; 2018 n=500; 2019 n=505

FIGURE 63. CURRENTLY ON PROBATION OR PAROLE



2013 n=524; 2015 n=569; 2016 n=536; 2017 n=737; 2018 n=488; 2019 n=489

Note: Decline To State was given as an answer option solely in 2013.



Subpopulations

Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness among all populations in the United States.²⁰

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

- Chronic homelessness among people with disabilities;
- Veterans;
- Families with children; and
- Unaccompanied children and transition-age youth.

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

The following sections examine each of these four subpopulations, identifying the number and characteristics of individuals included in the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. Sonoma County has identified older adults as an additional population with particular challenges or needs and therefore includes them in the following section.

²⁰ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). *Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*: June 2010. Retrieved May 2019 from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Home-Together-Federal-Strategic-Plan-to-Prevent-and-End-Homelessness.pdf



CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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 totaling 12 months in the last three years—and also has a disabling condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing. This definition applies to individuals as well as heads of household who meet the definition.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of the general population.²¹ Data from communities across the country reveal 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.

In 2017, HUD reported that 86,962 individuals, representing 24% of the overall homeless population, were experiencing chronic homelessness.²² Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. In Sonoma County, 675 individuals were chronically homeless in 2019.

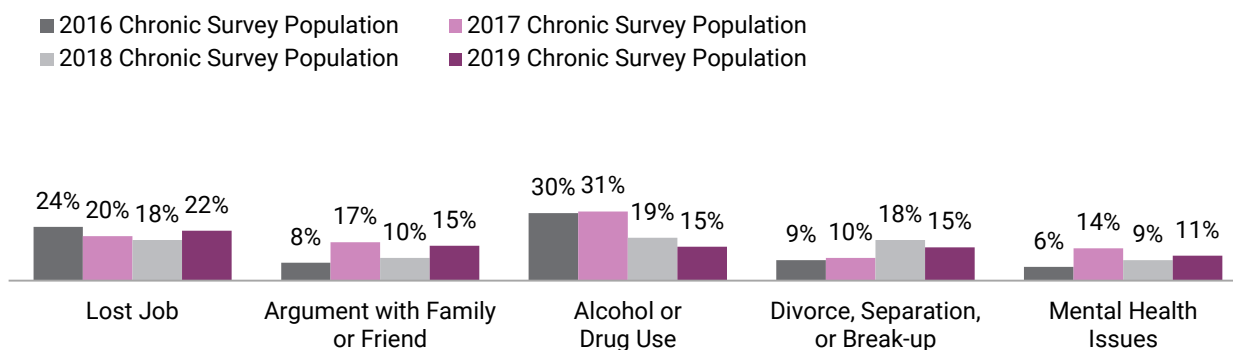
PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Twenty-two percent (22%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported a lost job as the primary cause of their homelessness, compared to 18% of all other survey respondents. Chronically homeless and all other survey respondents reported similar rates of homelessness due to alcohol or drug use, with 15% of chronically homeless and 16% of all other survey respondents. Interestingly, 11% of chronically homeless survey respondents reported mental health issues as their primary cause of homelessness, with only 4% of all other survey respondents citing mental health issues as the primary cause.

²¹ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: June 2010. Retrieved 2017 from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf

²² Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

FIGURE 64. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG CHRONICALLY HOMELESS (2019 TOP 5)

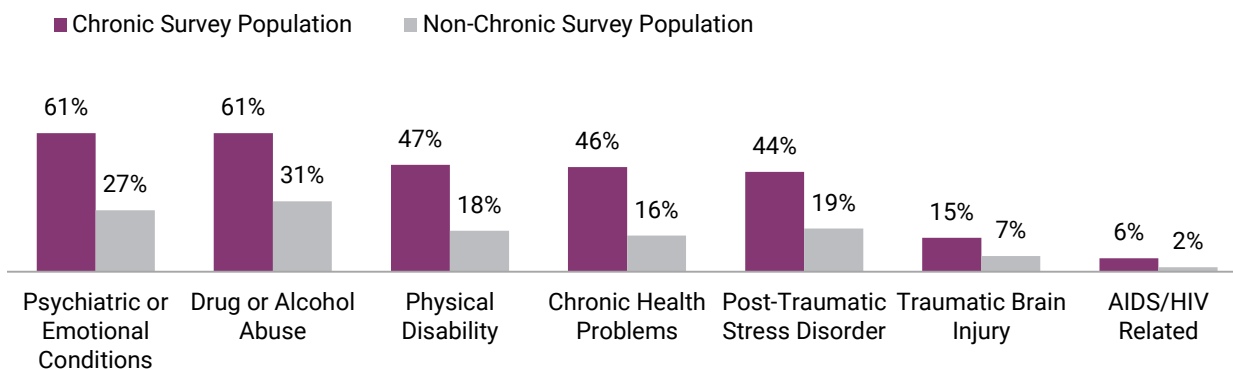


2016 n=164; 2017 n=183; 2018 n=152; 2019 n=123
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

To meet the definition of chronic homelessness, an individual must be experiencing at least one disabling condition. Those who were chronically homeless experienced higher rates of all health conditions than those in the general survey population. Sixty-one percent (61%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported having a psychiatric or emotional condition, compared to only 27% of all other survey respondents. Similarly, 61% of chronically homeless survey respondents reported alcohol or drug abuse, a notably higher percentage than the 31% of all other survey respondents

FIGURE 65. HEALTH CONDITIONS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

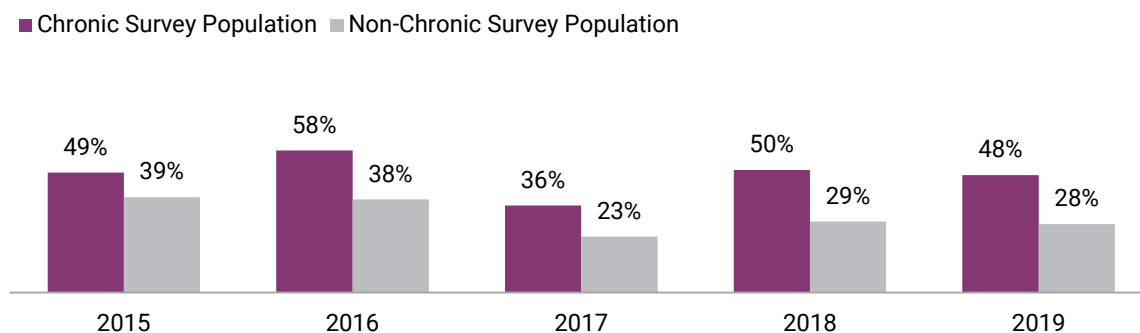


2019 Chronic Survey Population n=125, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=395
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EMERGENCY ROOM USE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Nearly half (48%) of chronically homeless respondents reported visiting the emergency room at least once in the last three months, a higher rate than non-chronically homeless survey respondents (28%).

FIGURE 66. EMERGENCY ROOM USE AT LEAST ONCE IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

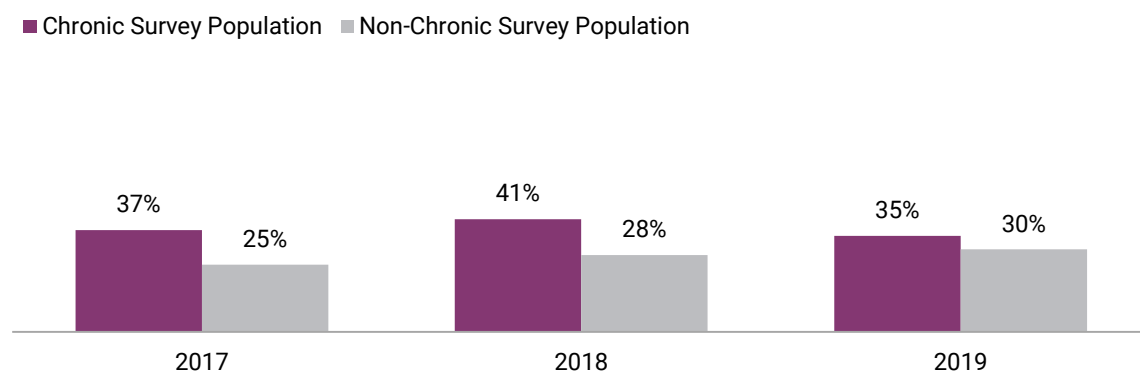


2015 Chronic Survey Population n=116, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=310; 2016 Chronic Survey Population n=133, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=269; 2017 Chronic Survey Population n=185, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=488; 2018 Chronic Survey Population n=128, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=322; 2019 Chronic Survey Population n=109, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=325

INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The percentage of chronically homeless survey respondents who spent at least one night in jail over the past year fell slightly to 35% from 41% in 2018. Those who were chronically homeless and the general population had similar rates of currently being on probation or parole and at the time they became homeless; 19% of chronically homeless and 20% of non-chronically homeless survey respondents reported currently being on probation or parole, and 18% of chronically homeless and 17% of non-chronically homeless survey respondents reported being on probation or parole at the time they most recently became homeless.

FIGURE 67. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON



2017 Chronic Survey Population n=180 Non-Chronic Survey Population n=472; 2018 Chronic Survey Population n=150, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=350; 2019 Chronic Survey Population n=124, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=381



HOMELESS VETERANS

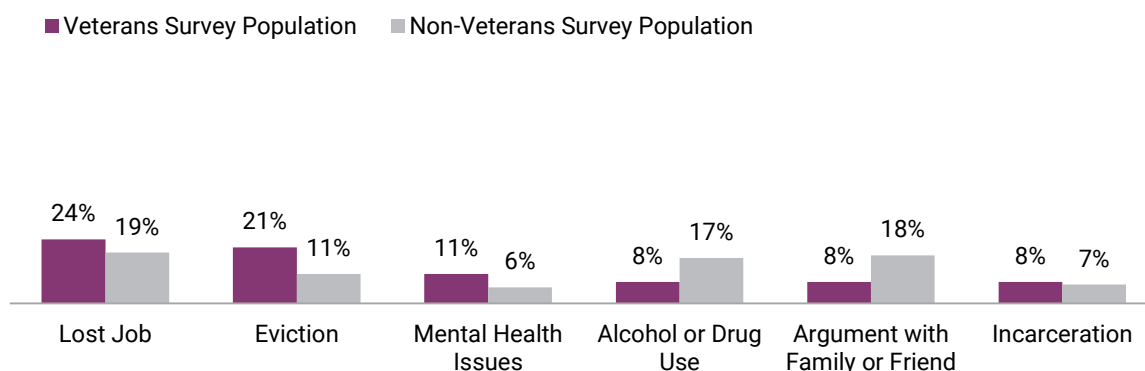
Many U.S. veterans experience conditions that place them at increased risk for homelessness. Veterans experience higher rates of PTSD, TBI, sexual assault, and substance abuse than the general population. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the street than in shelters and often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

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

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Nearly a quarter (24%) of veteran survey respondents reported a lost job as the primary cause of their homelessness, with 21% citing eviction. In a steep drop from 2018, only 8% of veteran survey respondents reported alcohol or drug use as the primary cause of their homelessness, much lower than 31% in 2018. In a reversal of past trends, more non-veteran survey respondents cited alcohol or drug use as their primary cause of homelessness (17%) than veteran survey respondents (8%). In another change from 2018, 5% of veteran survey respondents reported that the 2017 fires were the primary cause of their homelessness, down significantly from 12% in 2018.

FIGURE 68. PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON

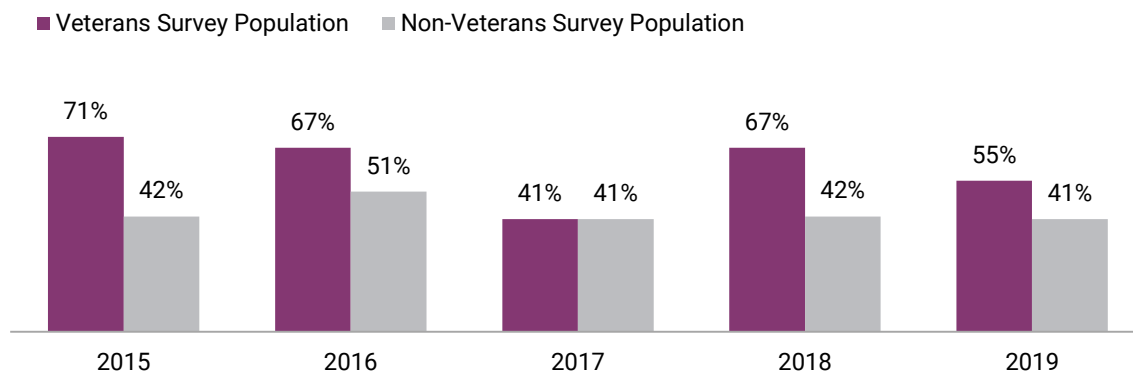


2019 Veterans Survey Population n=38; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=467
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Over half (55%) of veteran survey respondents reported one or more disabling conditions, higher than the 41% of non-veteran survey respondents, and representing a 67% decrease from the 2018 veterans survey population.

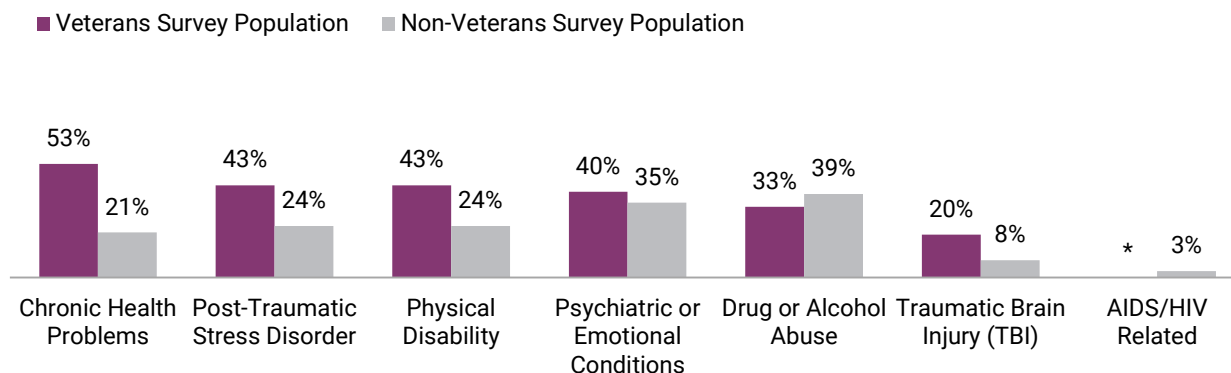
FIGURE 69. DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



2015 Veterans Survey Population n= 49, Non-Veterans Survey Population n= 560; 2016 Veterans Survey Population n= 69, Non-Veterans Survey Population n= 536; 2017 Veterans Survey Population n= 137, Non-Veterans Survey Population n= 550; 2018 Veterans Survey Population n=42, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=473; 2019 Veterans Survey Population n=40, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=474

Over half (53%) of veteran respondents reported living with chronic health problems, compared with 21% of non-veterans. Forty-three percent (43%) of veteran survey respondents reported living with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and 43% reported a physical disability, both higher than non-veterans (each 24%).

FIGURE 70. HEALTH CONDITIONS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



2019 Veterans Survey Population n=40; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=474

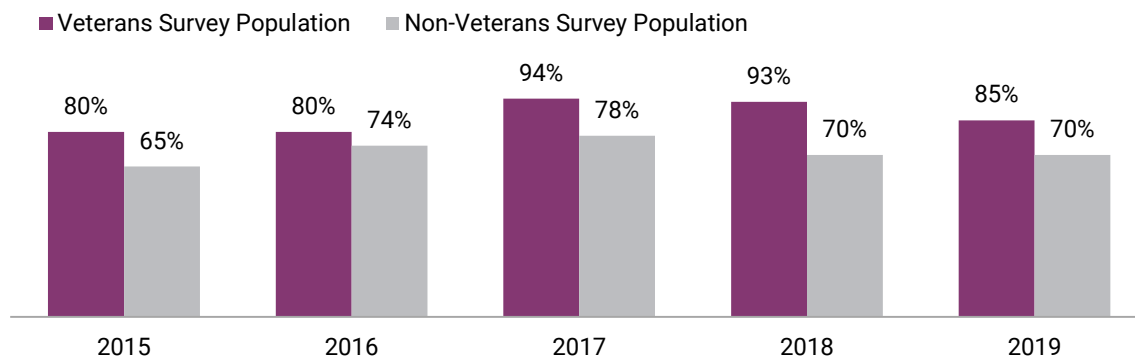
* Suppressed due to small sample size.

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

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES AMONG VETERANS

Eighty-five percent (85%) of veteran survey respondents reported receiving some form of government assistance, compared with 70% for non-veteran survey respondents and a decrease from 93% in 2018. In a continuing trend from 2018, the most common form of government assistance received among veterans were Medi-Cal or Medicare benefits (33%). Veteran survey respondents received food stamps/SNAP/WIC/CalFresh (30%) at a lower rate than non-veterans (44%) and SSI/SSDI compensation at a higher rate than non-veterans (30% and 17% respectively). Twenty-three percent (23%) of veteran survey respondents received VA disability compensation, while 18% received other veterans' benefits such as GI and health.

FIGURE 71. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



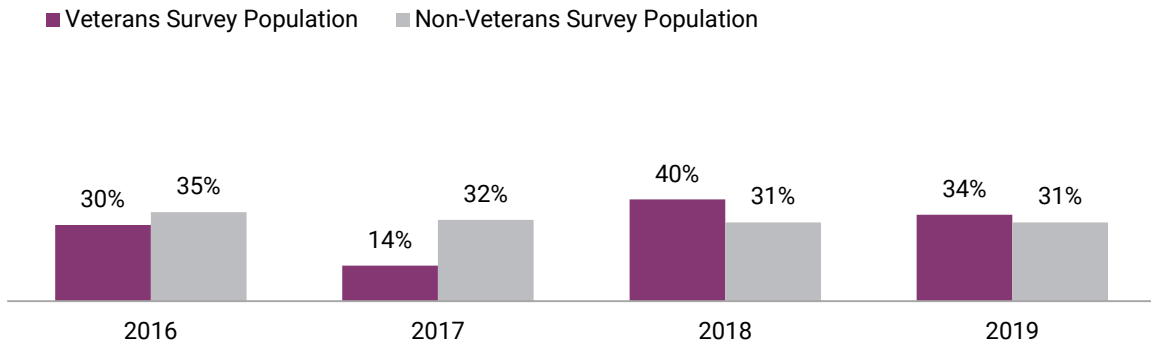
2015 Veteran Survey Population n=45, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=533; 2016 Veteran Survey Population n= 60, Non-Veteran Survey Population n= 415; 2017 Veteran Survey Population n=125, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=456; 2018 Veteran Survey Population n=41, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=453; 2019 Veteran Survey Population n=40, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=459.

INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Nationally, 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 receive longer prison sentences. Veterans who are incarcerated may also face the loss of various VA benefits during this time.²³

Thirty-four percent (34%) of veteran survey respondents indicated spending at least one night in jail in the 12 months prior to the survey, a slight decrease from 40% in 2018. Additionally, 33% of veteran survey respondents reported being currently on probation or parole, compared with 19% of non-veteran respondents.

FIGURE 72. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



2016 Veterans Survey Population n=66; 2016 Non-Veterans Survey Population n=508; 2017 Veterans Survey Population n=132; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=520; 2018 Veterans Survey Population n=42; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=458; 2019 Veteran Survey Population n=38, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=461.

²³ Military Benefits. (2014). Incarcerated Veterans. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-benefits/incarcerated-veterans.html>.



HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2017 suggest that 33% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families.²⁴ Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, as public shelters serve 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared with other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that their experience is not much different from other families in poverty.

Nationally, the majority of homeless families are households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.²⁵ Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable living accommodations.²⁶

PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

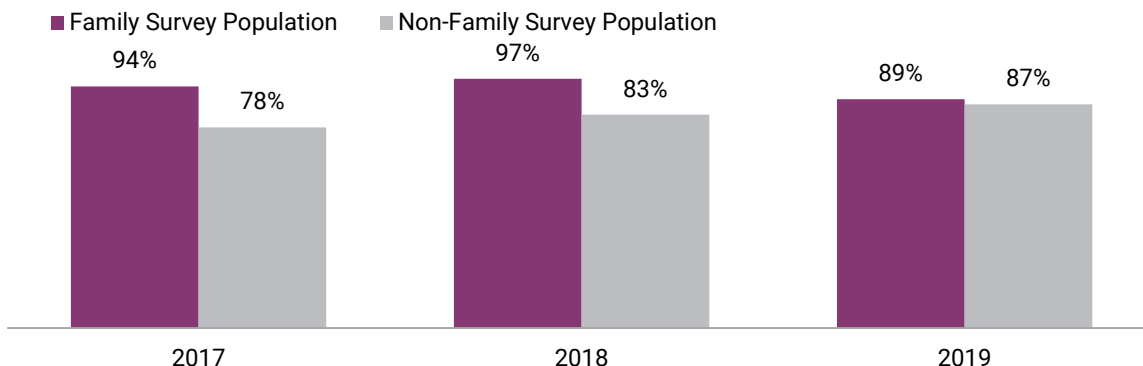
Eighty-nine percent (89%) of homeless families were living in Sonoma County at the time they most recently became homeless, representing a decrease from 2018 when 97% of survey reported living in Sonoma County at the time of their most recent housing loss.

24 U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). The 2017 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

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

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

FIGURE 73. LIVING IN SONOMA AT THE TIME BECAME HOMELESS, FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY COMPARISON

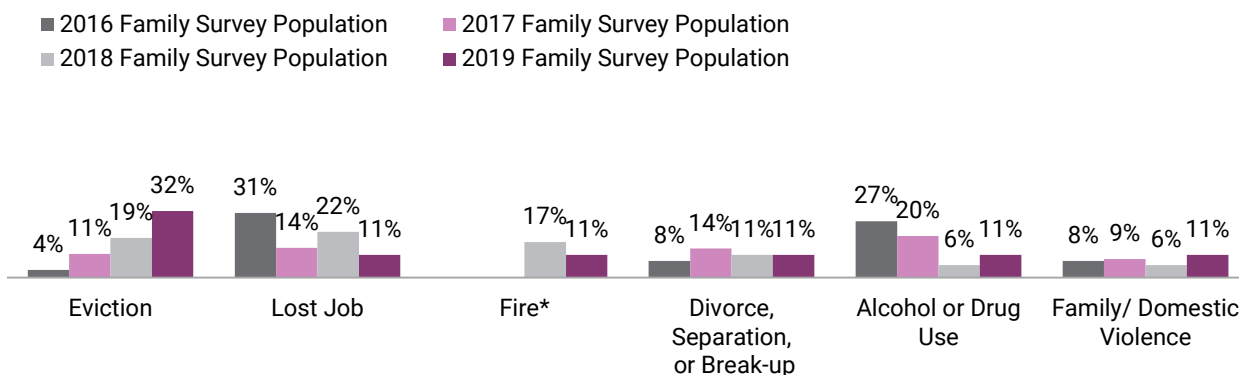


2017 Family Survey Population n=35; Non-Family Survey Population n=637; 2018 Family Survey Population n=38; Non-Family Survey Population n=398; 2019 Family Survey Population n=19, Non-Family Survey Population n=498.
 Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

The primary reasons reported for homelessness among families with children differs from year to year. Thirty-two percent (32%) of survey respondents in families with children reported eviction, up from 19% in 2018. Eleven percent (11%) each reported the following as their primary cause of homelessness: lost job, the 2017 fires, family dissolution, and alcohol or drug use. Eleven percent (11%) also cited family or domestic violence, an increase from 6% in 2018.

FIGURE 74. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES



2016 Family Survey Population n=26; 2017 Family Survey Population n=35; 2018 Family Survey Population n=36; 2019 Family Survey Population n=19

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

*Fire was not given as an option prior to 2018.

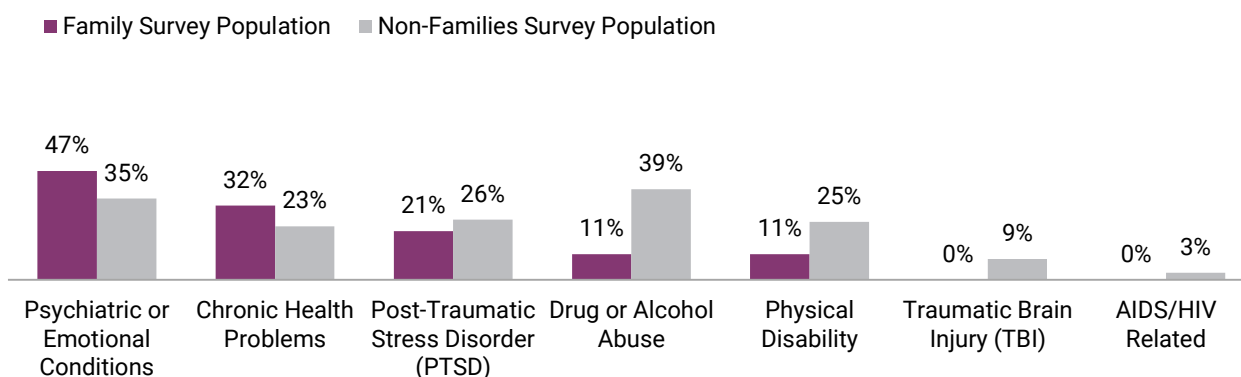
Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

The most common health conditions reported among respondents in families with children were psychiatric or emotional conditions, which rose to 47% from 25% in 2018. Chronic health problems among this population also increased to 32% in 2019 from 21% in 2018. The greatest difference between family and non-family survey respondents was in the number abusing drugs or alcohol: 11% of families and 39% of non-families reported having this health condition.

Survey respondents in families with children had lower percentages of most health conditions than all other survey respondents, with the exception of psychiatric or emotional conditions and chronic health problems.

FIGURE 75. HEALTH CONDITIONS, FAMILIES AND NON-FAMILIES COMPARISON



2019 Family with Children Survey Population n=19; Non-Family with Children Survey Population n=501

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

Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results.



UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Due to the often hidden nature of youth homelessness, limited data are available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, nationwide estimates from 2017 suggest there are at least 40,799 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth on the streets and in public shelters, an increase of 14% over 2016.²⁷ This increase may be due, in part, to the focus on unaccompanied youth during the 2017 Point-in-Time Count, which served as a nationwide baseline year.

Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment. This is due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services targeted to young people.²⁸

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

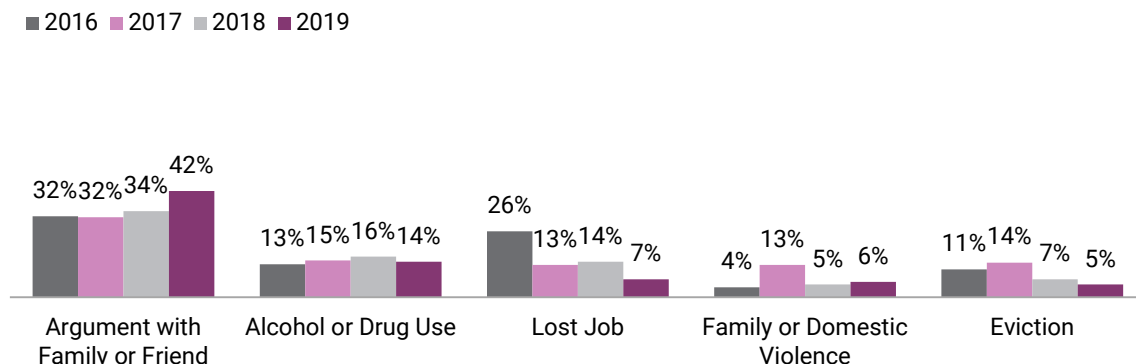
PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Those under age 25 often lack the social support networks of adults, increasing the likelihood that an argument would result in homelessness. Forty-two percent (42%) of youth survey respondents indicated that an argument with friends or family led to them become homeless, a significantly higher percentage when compared to adults (11%). The next most common cause of youth homelessness was alcohol or drug use, with 14% of youth identifying this as the primary cause of homelessness.

²⁷ U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). The 2017 Annual Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved 2018 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

²⁸ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

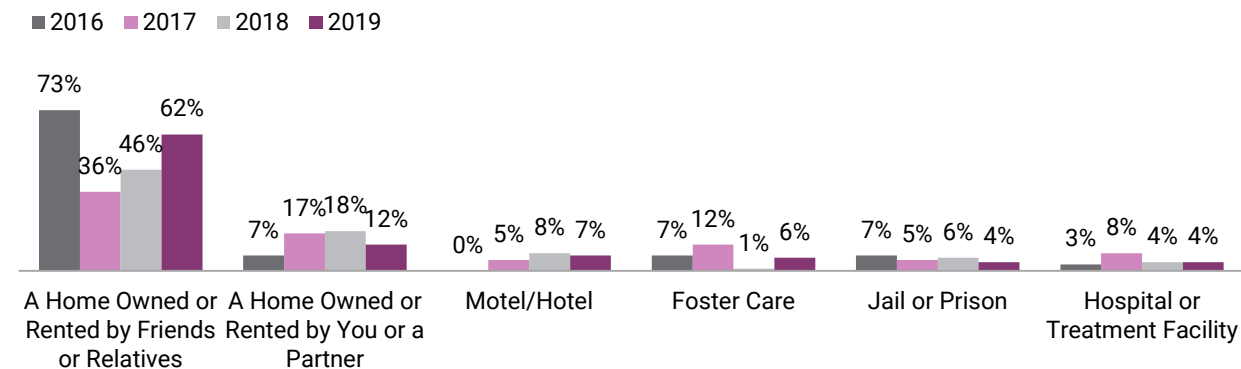
FIGURE 76. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH (2019 TOP 5)



2016 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) Survey Population n=105; 2017 UC/TAY n=117; 2018 UC/TAY Survey Population n=89; 2019 UC/TAY Survey Population n=111
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

Immediately prior to becoming homeless, 62% of youth respondents reported living with friends or relatives, 12% reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner, and 7% reported living in a hotel or motel. Six percent (6%) of youth reported they were living in foster care immediately before becoming homeless this current time.

FIGURE 77. PREVIOUS LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH (2019 TOP 6)



2016 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth Survey Population (UC/TAY) n=30; 2017 UC/TAY n=118; 2018 UC/TAY n=90; 2019 UC/TAY n=109
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

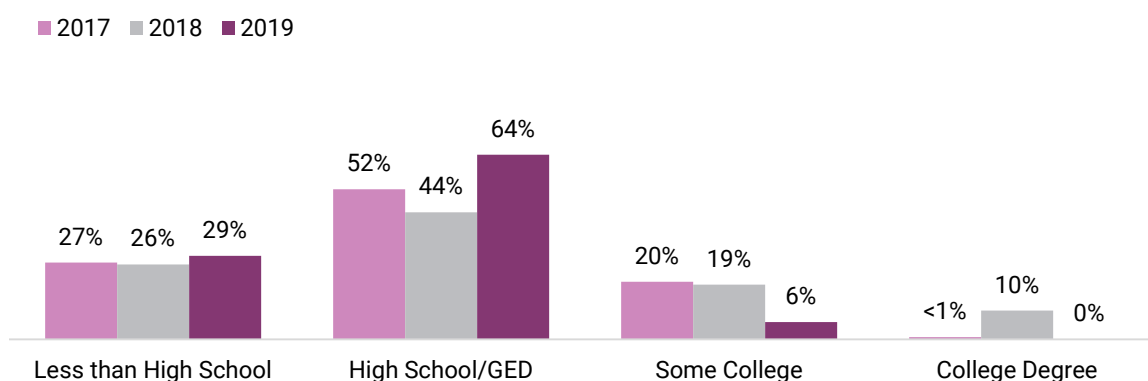
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

In March of 2017, a national study examining homelessness among community college students reported that on average, between 13% and 14% of community college students are homeless, with 27% of these students under the age of 21. Of those who reported being homeless, just over 2% reported spending time in a shelter.²⁹ Community college students do not appear to be a large part of the survey population because only 6% of youth reported having attended some college, but that may be due to the survey selection bias and may not accurately reflect the college population in Sonoma County.

While all but nine unaccompanied youth survey respondents were over the age of 18, 29% had not obtained a GED or high school diploma, a slight increase over 2018. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of youth had their high school diploma or GED, and 6% reported attending some college.

Additionally, one-third (33%) of youth respondents reported some form of employment, either full-time, part-time, or seasonal.

FIGURE 78. HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OBTAINED AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

	2017	2018	2019
Less than High School	32	23	32
High School/GED	62	39	70
Some College	24	17	7
College Degree	1	9	0
Total	119	88	109

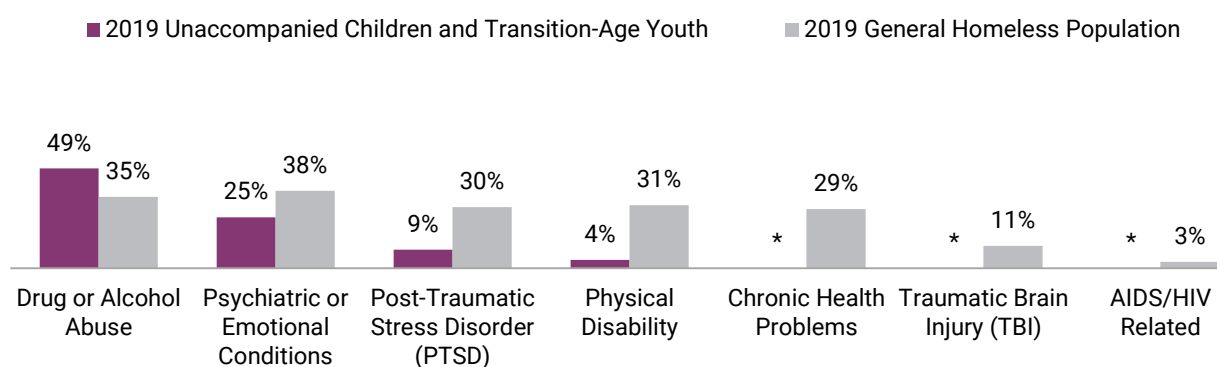
29 Goldrick-Rab, S. Richardson, J. & Hernandez, H. (2017). Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education. Retrieved 2017 from <http://wihopelab.com/publications/hungry-and-homeless-in-college-report.pdf>

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

While homeless youth tend to have fewer health conditions than the general homeless population, health concerns are still an issue among young people experiencing homelessness: 62% of youth surveyed reported having at least one health condition.

Nearly half (49%) of youth reported drug or alcohol abuse, a significant increase from 31% in 2018. This increase could be interpreted alongside the recent implementation of California Proposition 64, which legalized the adult use of marijuana. One quarter (25%) of youth survey respondents reported a psychiatric or emotional condition, followed by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (9%).

FIGURE 79. HEALTH CONDITIONS, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH AND NON-UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH COMPARISON



2019 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth n=112; General Population n=408

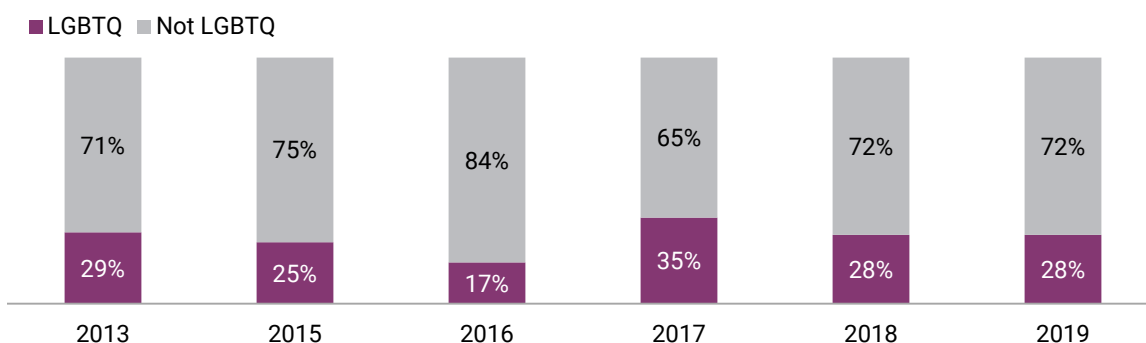
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

* Suppressed due to small sample size.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of youth survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+ in 2018 compared with just 15% of the general population. Of youth respondents identifying as LGBTQ+, 55% identified as bisexual, 16% as lesbian, and 16% as gay. Thirteen percent (13%) of youth respondents identified as transgender.

FIGURE 80. LGBTQ+ STATUS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2013 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=97; 2015 UC/TAY n=79; 2016 UC/TAY n=115; 2017 UC/TAY n=120; 2018 UC/TAY n=95; 2019 UC/TAY n=112

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

FIGURE 81. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Breakout of Respondents Answering, "Yes"	2019 %	n
Gay	16%	5
Lesbian	16%	5
Queer	*	*
Bisexual	55%	17
Transgender	13%	4
Gender Non-Conforming	0%	0
Other	*	*

2019 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth n=112; Breakout n=31 respondents offering 34 responses

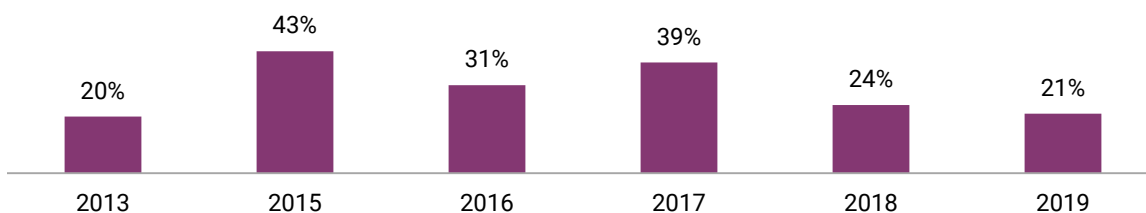
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

* Suppressed due to small sample size.

FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Twenty-one percent (21%) of youth survey respondents reported a history of foster care, compared with 17% of the adult homeless population.

FIGURE 82. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

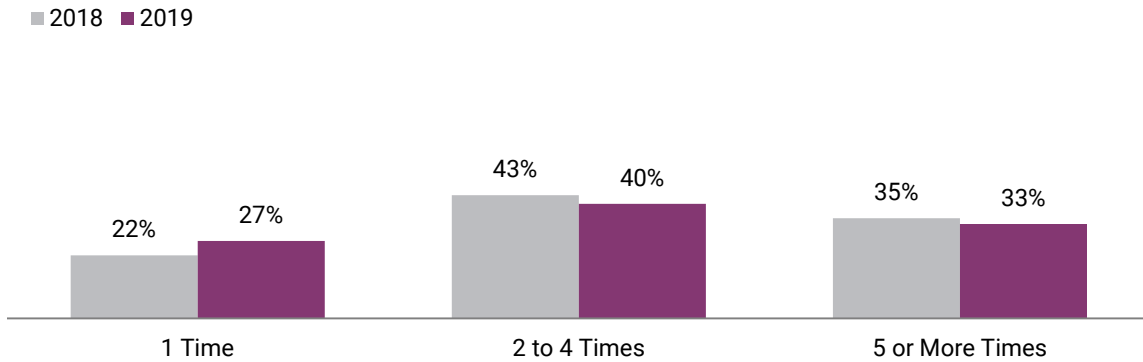


2013 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=106; 2015 UC/TAY n=75; 2016 UC/TAY n=101; 2017 UC/TAY n=113; 2018 UC/TAY n=93; 2019 UC/TAY n=110

HOUSING INSTABILITY AND FAMILY CONTACT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Often, people will experience housing instability such as couch-surfing or living in hotels or motels before homelessness. When asked how many times they had experienced housing instability over the past three years, 27% of unaccompanied homeless children and transition-age youth reported one time.

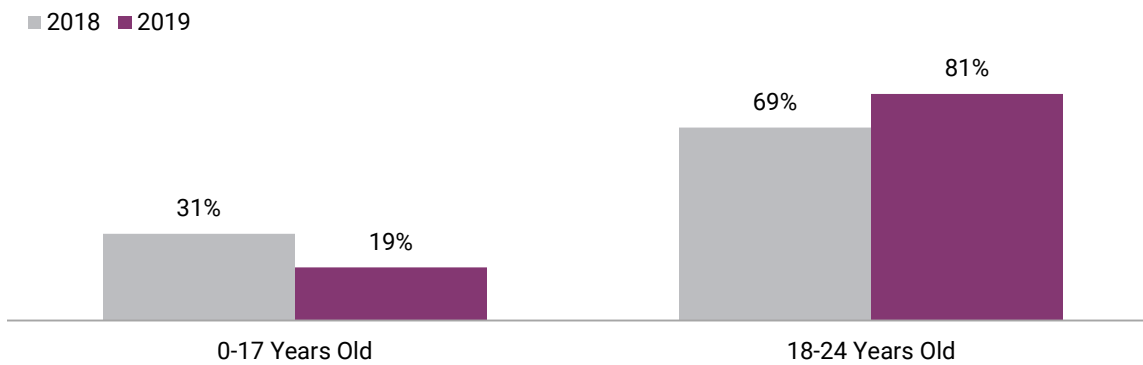
FIGURE 83. HISTORY OF HOUSING INSTABILITY AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=79; 2019 UC/TAY n=88

Unaccompanied children and transition-age youth respondents were also asked about the age at which they first experienced homelessness. Nineteen percent (19%) reported becoming homeless for the first time under age 18, and 81% reported becoming homeless for the first time from age 18-24.

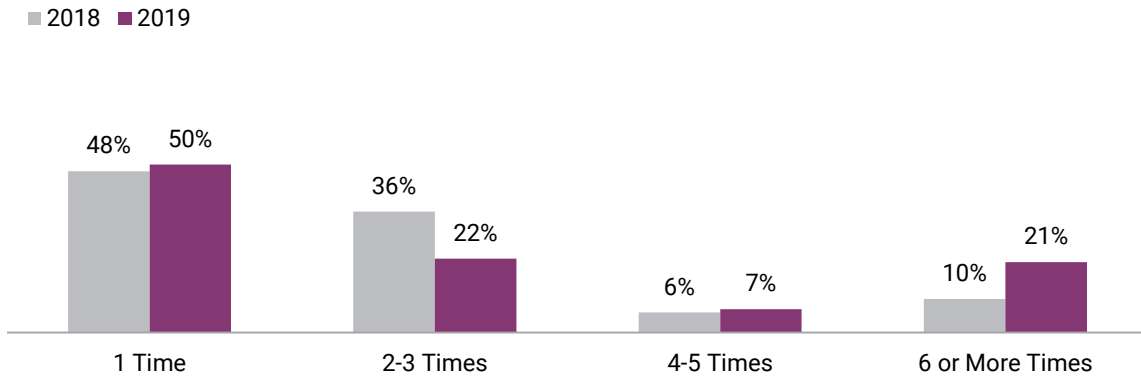
FIGURE 84. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=93; 2019 UC/TAY n=108

When asked how many times they had tried to move back in with their parents or other family members, half (50%) had attempted to move back in one time. Twenty-one percent (21%) reported trying to move back six or more times, an increase from 10% in 2018.

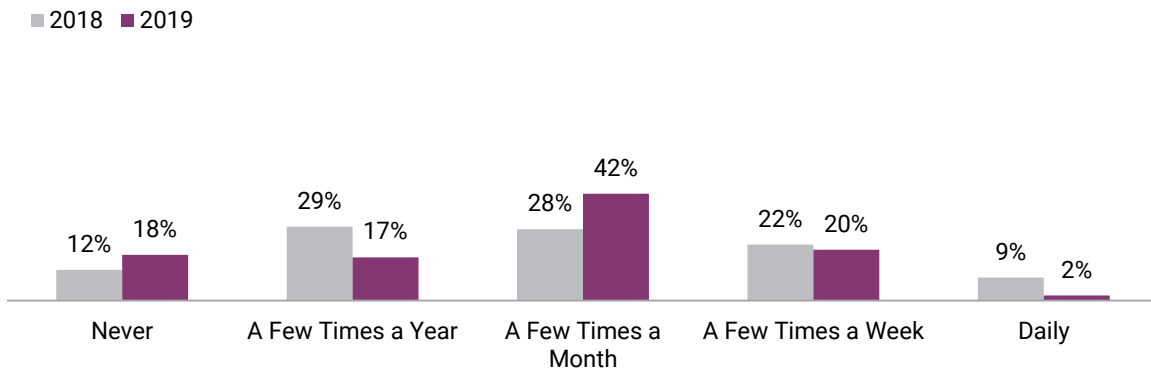
FIGURE 85. TIMES ATTEMPTED TO MOVE BACK IN WITH PARENTS OR FAMILY AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=61; 2019 UC/TAY n=72

Unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were also asked how many times they had contact with their families in the past 12 months. In 2019, an increased number of youth (18%) reported never speaking with family in comparison to 12% in 2018. However, the majority (64%) of youth spoke with family between daily and a few times per month, with 20% speaking to family a few times per week.

FIGURE 86. FAMILY CONTACT IN THE PAST YEAR AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

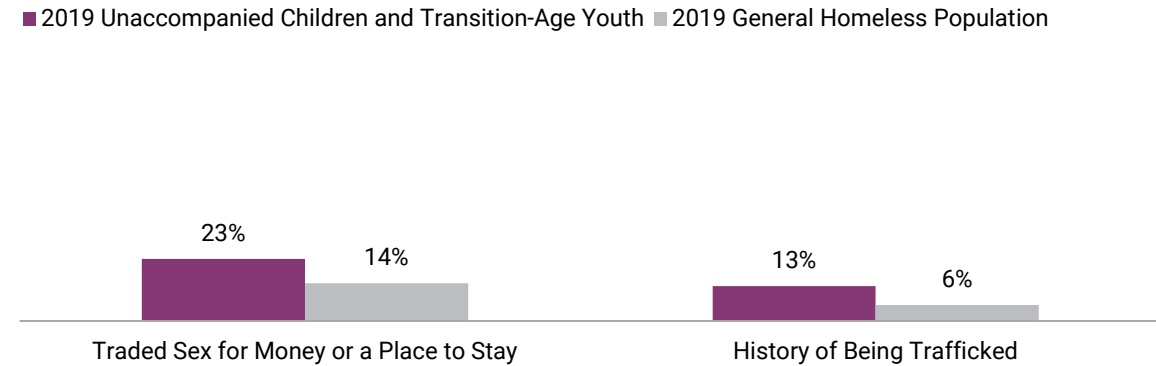


2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=78; 2019 UC/TAY n=88

SEX TRADE

Due to their vulnerable circumstances and precarious access to basic needs, youth experiencing homelessness may have a history of being trafficked (i.e., forced commercial sex) or trading sex for money or a place to stay. Unaccompanied Children and Youth reported being involved in the sex trade at a much higher rate than those over 25, with 23% of youth reporting having traded sex for money or a place to stay, compared to 14% of the general homeless population. Likewise, 13% of youth reported being trafficked, while only 6% of the general homeless population reported being trafficked.

FIGURE 87. SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT AMONG YOUTH

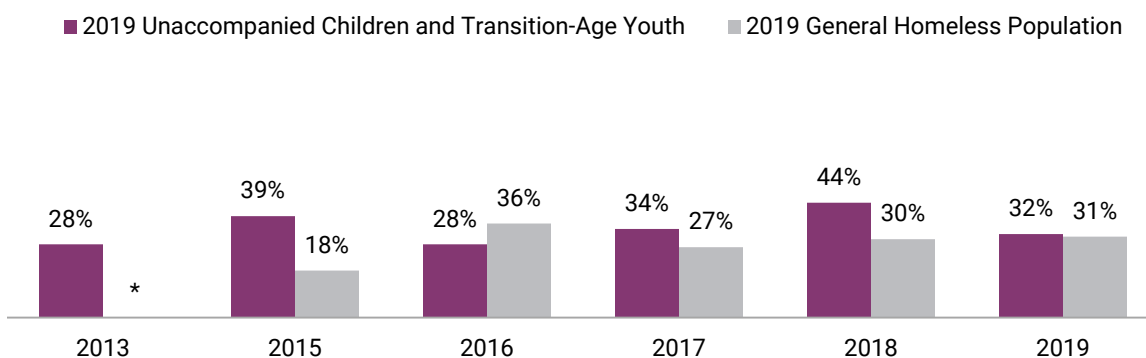


2019 Trading Sex for Money or a Place to Stay n=495, History of Being Trafficked n=492

EXPERIENCE WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The number of youth survey respondents who reported spending a night in jail or prison in the past year decreased to 32% in 2019 from 44% in 2018, bringing it in line with the general population (31%). This coincides with only 10% of youth reporting they were on probation or parole at the time they became homeless, compared with 25% in 2018. Additionally, 10% of youth reported being on probation or parole at the time of the survey, compared with 22% of the general population. Just 4% of youth respondents were in a juvenile justice facility immediately prior to experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 88. UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH WHO SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2013 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=96, 2013 General Survey Population n=411; 2015 UC/TAY n=80, 2015 General Survey Population n=523; 2016 UC/TAY n=107, 2016 General Survey Population n=490; 2017 UC/TAY n=119, 2017 General Survey Population n=533; 2018 UC/TAY n=88, 2018 General Survey Population n=412; 2019 UC/TAY n=109, 2019 General Survey Population n=396

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

*General population data unavailable for 2013.



HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS OVER AGE 55

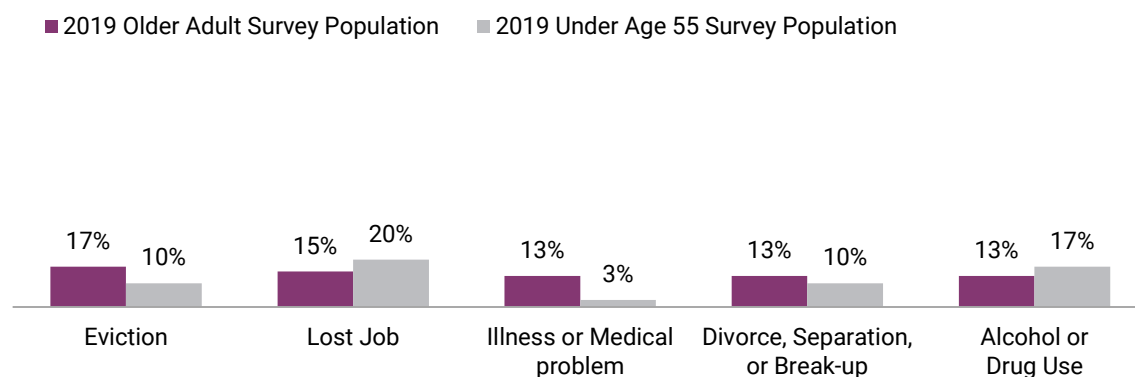
The population of older adults experiencing homelessness has risen in accordance with the overall growth of the population in the U.S. Because older adults experiencing homelessness have unmet mental health, substance use, and physical health needs, their mortality rates are higher than that of the general population.³⁰ Homeless older adults face different challenges than other populations and may benefit from targeted services.

While homeless older adults have not been identified as a specific subpopulation of interest by the federal government, Sonoma County recognizes the growing trend and initiated an effort to gather additional information on this vulnerable population. The following section details the characteristics of adults ages 55 and older experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

The most common cause of homelessness reported by older adults was eviction (17%) followed by lost job (15%). Corresponding with anecdotal evidence that older adults have differing needs than the younger population, 13% reported that an illness or medical problem was the primary cause of their homelessness, compared with only 3% of those under age 55.

FIGURE 89. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (2019 TOP 5), OLDER ADULTS AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON



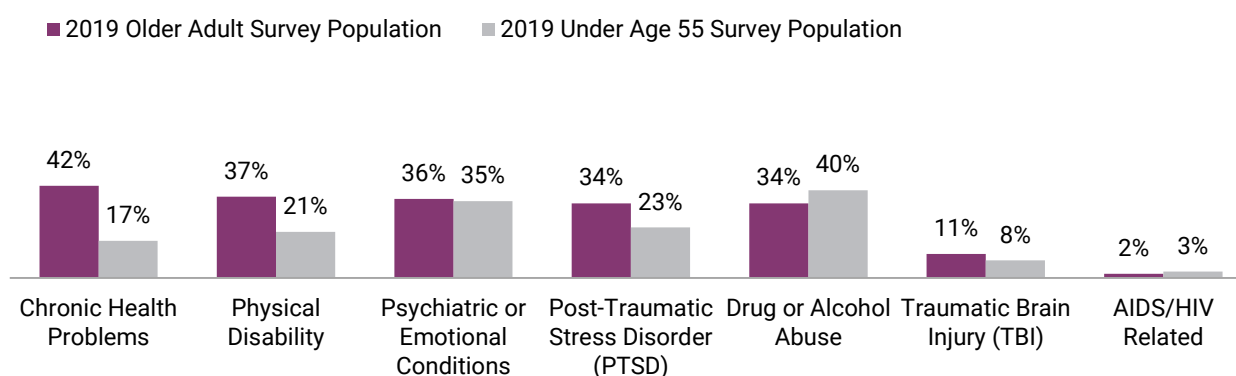
2019 Older Adults n=127; 2019 Under Age 55 n=384.
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

³⁰ Romaszko, J., Cymes, I., Dragańska, E., Kuchta, R., & Glińska-Lewczuk, K. (2017). Mortality among the homeless: Causes and meteorological relationships. PLoS one, 12(12), e0189938. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0189938

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

Homeless older adults have additional health issues that tend to be exacerbated by poor living conditions and limited access to services. Over three-quarters (76%) of homeless older adults reported at least one health condition, with just under half (48%) reporting a disabling condition (a health condition that makes it difficult to find housing and/or work). The biggest disparity between older adults and those under 55 remained chronic health problems: 42% of older adult survey respondents reported a chronic health problem with only 17% of those under age 55 experiencing a chronic health problem. Similarly, a higher percentage of homeless older adults reported a physical disability when compared with other survey respondents (37% and 21%, respectively). Older adults and those under age 55 had similar rates of psychiatric or emotional conditions, underscoring that mental health is a necessary resource for anyone experiencing homelessness, regardless of age.

FIGURE 90. HEALTH CONDITIONS, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON

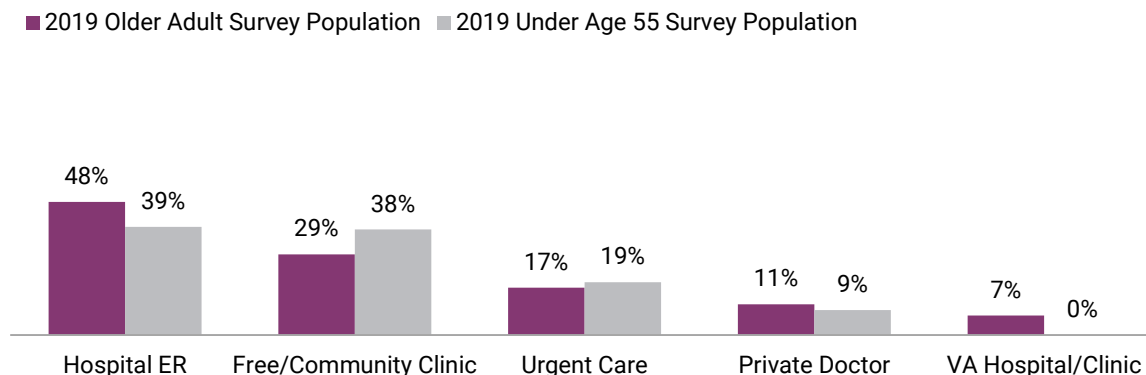


2019 Older Adults n=130; 2019 Under Age 55 n=390
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

With such high rates of health issues reported, access to healthcare is imperative. Sixty percent (60%) of older adult survey respondents reported receiving medical care when needed since becoming homeless, compared to 46% of those under 55. Older adults did report accessing Medi-Cal or Medicare benefits at higher rates than those under 55 (34% and 24%, respectively), which may account for this difference.

Differences also emerged regarding where older adult survey respondents received care in comparison to those under 55. Nearly half (48%) of older adults reported receiving care most often at the hospital emergency room compared with 39% of those under age 55. Older adults were also less likely to receive their usual care at a free or community clinic than those under 55, with 29% of older adults and 38% of those under age 55 receiving care at such facilities.

FIGURE 91. WHERE CARE USUALLY RECEIVED, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON (2019 TOP 5)

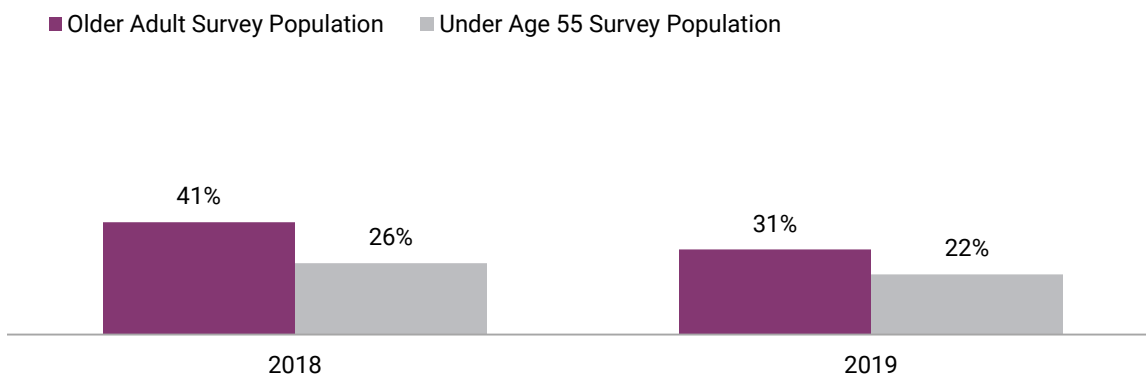


2019 Older Adults n=84 offering 100 responses; 2019 Under Age 55 n=298 offering 344 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

Chronic homelessness is defined by having a disabling condition that interferes with work and/or finding housing in addition to have been homeless for at least a year. Therefore, it follows that an increased amount of older adults qualify as chronically homeless than those under the age of 55. Thirty-one percent (31%) of older adult survey respondents indicated experiencing chronic homelessness, compared to 22% of survey respondents under age 55. Three-quarters (75%) of older adult survey respondents reported being homeless for one year or more, in comparison with 52% of those under age 55.

FIGURE 92. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON

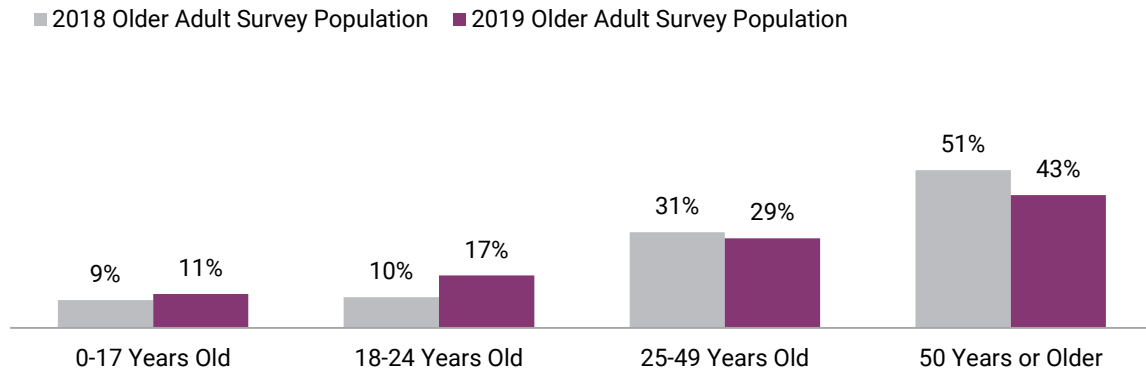


2018 Older Adults n=115; 2018 Under Age 55 n=404; 2019 Older Adults n=130; 2019 Under Age 55 n=390.

AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of older adult survey respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time before age 25, meaning that over a quarter of this population has experienced homelessness on and off for at least 30 years. This underscores the need to address youth homelessness early, as those who experience homelessness at a young age tend to fall in and out of homelessness throughout their lives. It is noteworthy that 43% of older adults had their first experience of homelessness after age 50, highlighting the additional need of older populations.

FIGURE 93. OLDER ADULT AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



2018 Older Adults n=114; 2019 Older Adults n=127.



Community Telephone Survey

The annual Sonoma County Point-in-Time Count only profiles those who are living in sheltered and unsheltered locations, but it does not count those in the community who are temporarily doubled up, precariously housed, or otherwise vulnerable to homelessness. For the second consecutive year, Sonoma County conducted an additional assessment of unstably housed and fire-affected populations in addition to the unsheltered count. Individuals discussed in the following section are not included in the Point-in-Time Count, and the data presented are supplemental findings meant to increase understanding and inform planning efforts.

The study was a representative, telephone-based household survey implemented in January 2018 to understand the impacts of the October 2017 fires on the unstably housed in Sonoma County. This report provides an overview of the findings from the household survey and an estimate of the population of unstably housed residents in Sonoma County.

Telephone surveys were administered to a randomized sample of Sonoma County residents between January 11 and January 22, 2019. This resulted in 1,132 complete and unique surveys.³¹ Based on a 2017 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau of 185,825 households in Sonoma County, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 1,132 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of Sonoma County.³² In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within 3 percentage points of the current results. For more information regarding the community telephone survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

This section is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and state governments gain a better understanding of the population of individuals who are not homeless but who lack a residence of their own, how the 2017 fires affected the county at large, and service provision planning for the future.

STUDY POPULATION

This study examined those who were temporarily doubled up due to the loss of housing from economic or social factors or the fall 2017 Sonoma County wildfires. The population includes households that reported someone was temporarily residing at the location who would otherwise be without housing. This

³¹ Out of a total of 1,250 surveys, 118 respondents reported no longer living in Sonoma County. Of these former Sonoma County residents, 16% reported leaving the county due to the fires.

³² U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Annual Estimates of Housing Units for the United States, Regions, Divisions, States, and Counties: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

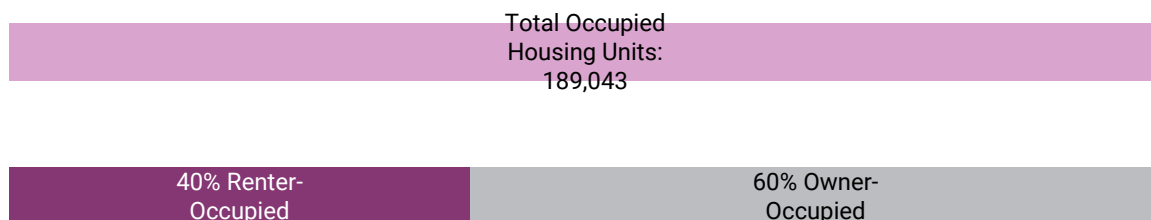
study does not include multi-generational households, households that are over-crowded, or other living situations in which multiple households share one residence on a more permanent basis. For more information about methodology, please see *Appendix A*.

EFFECTS OF FIRES ON SONOMA COUNTY HOUSING

In October 2017, the Tubbs, Nuns, and Pocket fires burned significant portions of Sonoma County. Over 5,000 housing units were destroyed among the 112,380 acres burned across Sonoma and Napa counties. The fires exacerbated a housing market with already low vacancy levels, leading to concerns about how residents would be affected.

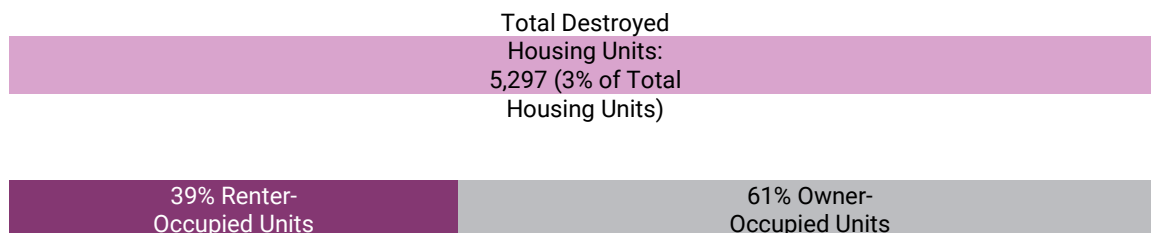
In 2016 (prior to the fires), Sonoma County had 189,043 occupied housing units, a homeowner vacancy rate of 1%, and a rental vacancy rate of 3%. Of the inhabited units in the county, 40% were renter-occupied and 60% were owner-occupied.³³ With already low vacancy rates, the fires had a significant effect on housing availability in Sonoma County.

FIGURE 94. STATUS OF HOUSING UNITS PRIOR TO FIRES



A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) needs assessment reported that a total of 5,297 or 3% of housing units were destroyed in the 2017 fires, of which 39% were renter-occupied and 61% were owner-occupied. Three percent (3%) of owner-occupied and 3% of renter-occupied homes were destroyed.^{34,35}

FIGURE 95. HOUSING UNITS AFFECTED BY FIRES



³³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). American Community Survey 2015 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2018 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

³⁴ United States. Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA Unmet Needs Assessment. Washington, DC: FEMA, 2017.

³⁵ This product uses the Federal Emergency Management Agency's API, but is not endorsed by FEMA.

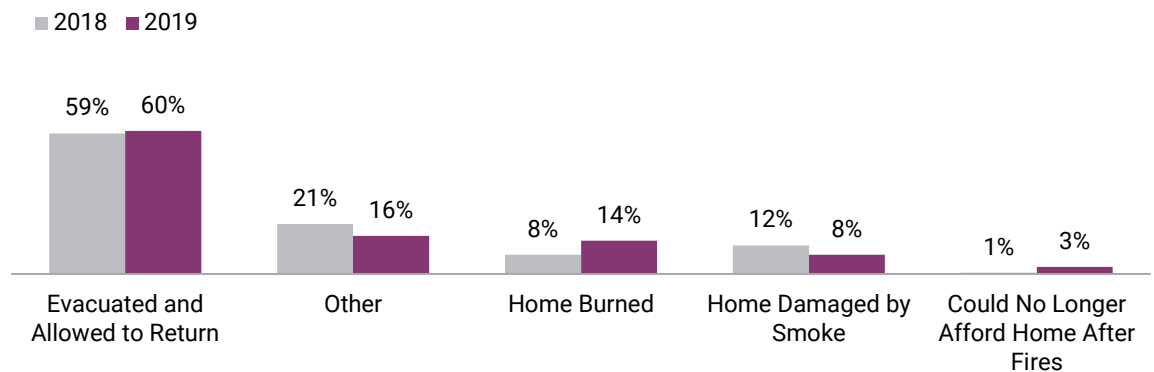
In 2019, 28% of county households reported that their housing situation was affected by the fires, a decrease from 34% of households in 2018. Sixty percent (60%) of these households were evacuated and allowed to return, 14% reported their home burned, 8% reported their home was damaged by smoke, and 3% reported that they could no longer afford their home after the fires. The “other” reasons reported included property damage, hosting those who were evacuated or displaced by the fires, utility shutoffs, rent increases, and housing scarcity.

FIGURE 96. HOUSING AFFECTED BY FIRES



2018 n=1,151; 2019 n=1,091

FIGURE 97. HOW HOUSING AFFECTED BY FIRES



2018 n=395; 2019 n=309

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

TEMPORARILY HOUSED

As of January 2019, 7% of households in Sonoma County were staying with another household on a temporary basis. It is estimated that 21,725 persons are temporarily housed in Sonoma County, an increase of 1% from 2018. Thus, for every person experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County, seven are precariously housed (1:7), representing no change from 2018. This remains lower than the national rate: for every person experiencing homelessness, eight are precariously housed (1:8) nationally.³⁶ While many of these people will recover stable housing of their own, some will not and will be at risk of homelessness.

Among those temporarily housed, it is estimated that 26% are doubled up due to the direct loss of housing from the Sonoma County wildfires. Twenty six percent (26%) also lost their housing as a result of indirect effects such as displacement by owners returning to their rental properties and rent increases. Nearly half (48%) of all temporarily housed residents were doubled up due to circumstances external to the Sonoma County wildfires.

FIGURE 98. TOTAL TEMPORARILY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS

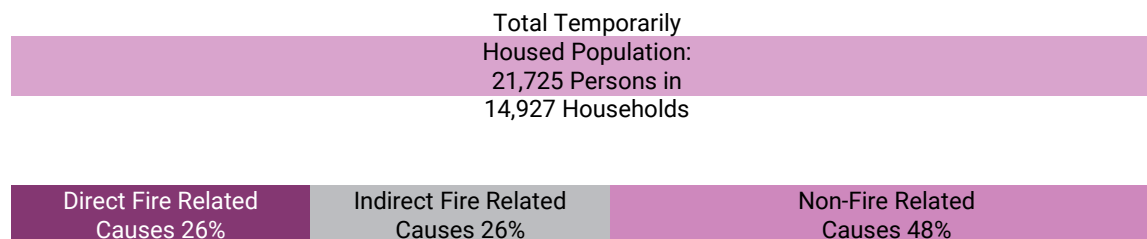
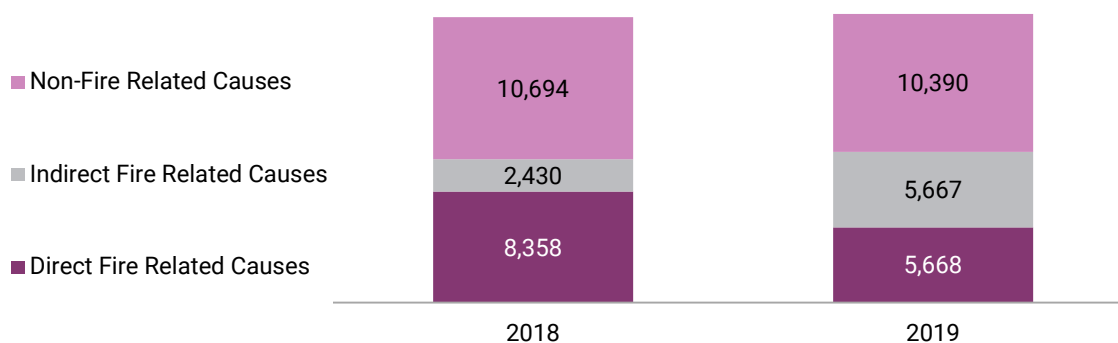


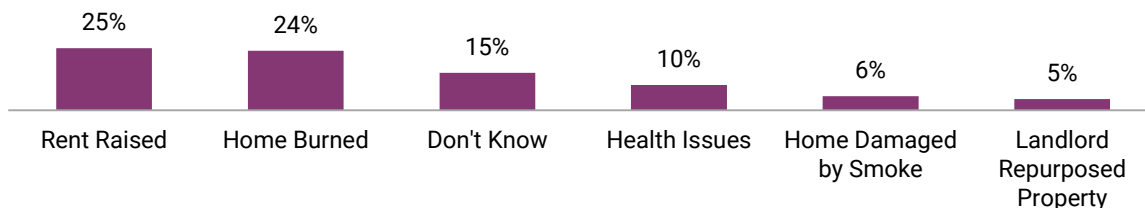
FIGURE 99. TOTAL TEMPORARILY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS, WITH TREND



³⁶ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2018). The State of Homelessness in America. Retrieved May 2018 from <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/>

One-quarter (25%) of temporarily housed residents reported that a rise in rent was their primary cause of housing instability, with 24% reporting that their home burned in the fall 2017 wildfires. Additionally, 15% did not know the cause of their temporary housing status. One-tenth (10%) reported health issues, including either physical health, mental health, or drug or alcohol abuse.

FIGURE 100. CAUSE OF TEMPORARY HOUSING STATUS

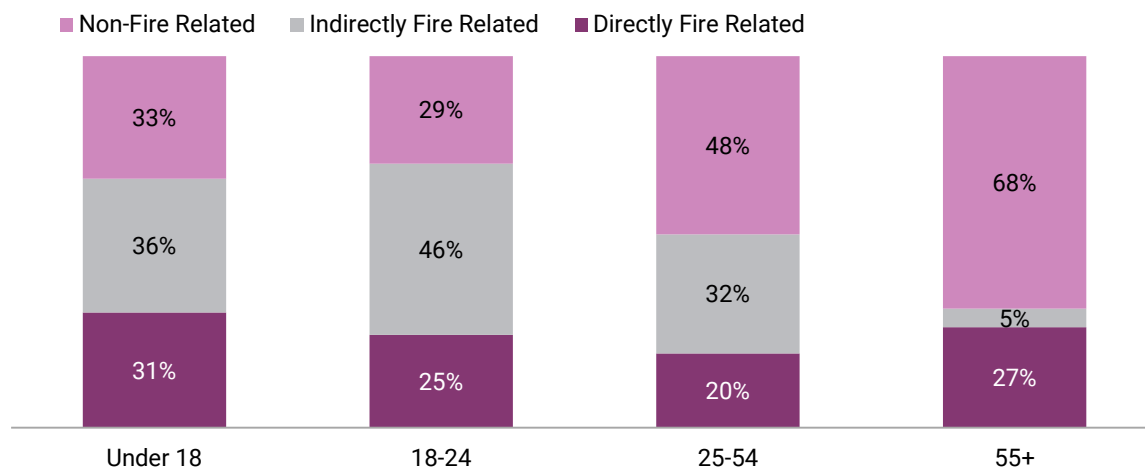


2019 Temporarily Housed Households n=88
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TEMPORARY RESIDENTS

Two-thirds (66%) of temporarily housed residents were adults age 25 and older, while 19% were children under 18 and 15% were transitional-age youth between age 18 and 25. Slightly over half (56%) of these residents were men/boys and 44% were women/girls.

FIGURE 101. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS BY AGE AND CAUSE OF TEMPORARY HOUSING



2019 Temporary Residents n=190

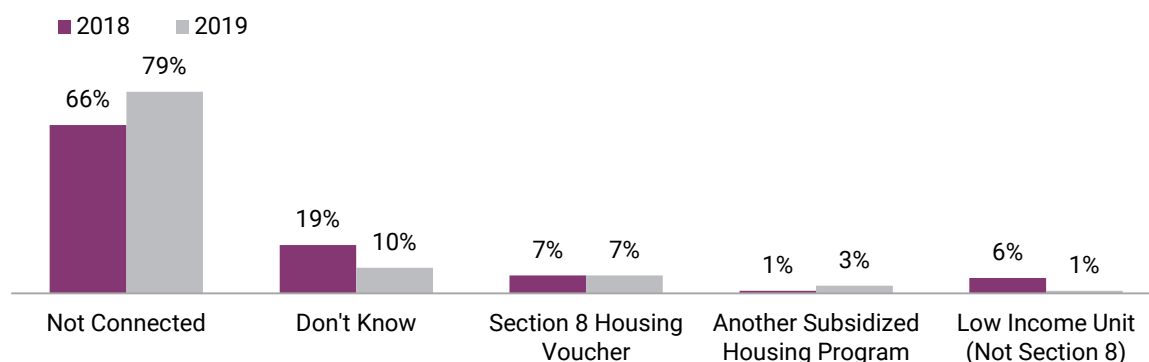
FIGURE 102. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS BY GENDER



2019 Temporary Residents n=190

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of those temporarily housed in Sonoma County were not on a waitlist for any type of housing assistance. Eleven percent (11%) were on a waitlist for some type of housing, 7% were on a waitlist for a Section 8 Housing Voucher, 3% were on a waitlist for another subsidized housing program, and 1% were on a waitlist for a low-income housing unit. Fewer temporarily housed respondents were unsure of their waitlist status, with 10% responding “Don’t Know” in 2019, a decrease from 19% in 2018.

FIGURE 103. TEMPORARY RESIDENT CONNECTION TO SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAITLISTS

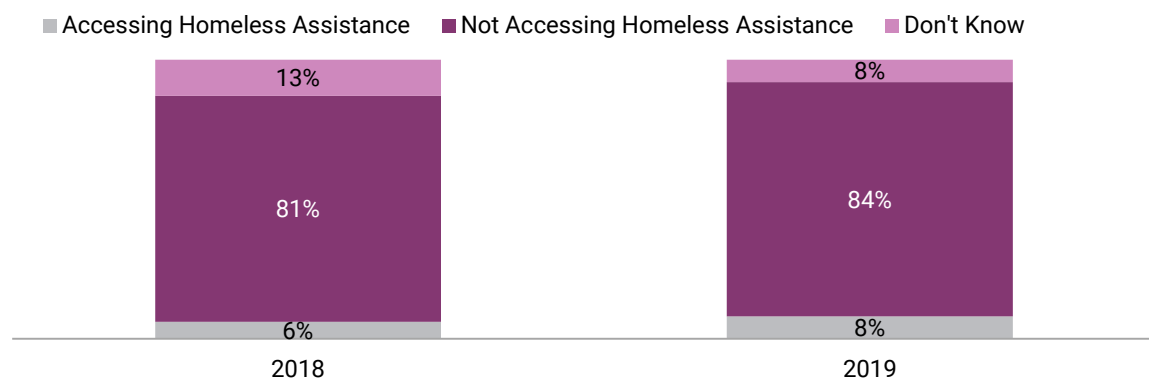


2018 Temporary Residents n=79; 2019 Temporary Residents n=184

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

Although a slight increase from 2018, only 8% of temporarily housed residents were accessing homeless assistance such as counseling, housing placement assistance, or busing to/from school.

FIGURE 104. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS ACCESS TO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE



2018 Temporary Residents n=78; 2019 Temporary Residents n=184



Conclusion

HOMELESS CENSUS AND SURVEY

The 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Census and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2019 Point-in-Time Count identified 2,951 persons experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. This represents a decrease of 2% from the count conducted in 2018.

Interpretations of the cause of the slight decrease include both an intensive countywide focus on prevention and housing retention and continuing efforts to re-house those who became homeless after the fires. The slight increase in those experiencing homelessness in 2018 was likely a direct result of the fires; additionally, recent data showing a net outflow of 3,300 residents from the county in the year since the fires may have resulted in a lower count in 2019.³⁷ The shifts in the impact of the fires among the community telephone survey suggest that the final impact of the fires on homelessness in Sonoma County is yet to be seen.

The 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable insights into the Sonoma County homeless population from the data collected in this report for both the overall population and specified subpopulations, including:

Overall Conclusions

- The sheltered count decreased by 7% and the unsheltered count increased by 2%.
- 29% of the population was counted in vehicles, an increase from 24% in 2018.
- 87% of those experiencing homelessness became homeless while living in Sonoma County.
- 50% of survey respondents experienced homelessness for the first time before age 25.
- Over two-thirds (68%) of survey respondents cited unaffordable rent as the primary cause of their homelessness.
- 89% of respondents who were unsheltered or staying in emergency shelter would move into housing if it were available. 56% preferred housing without preconditions.
- Those identifying as LGBTQ+ were overrepresented in the homeless population. Although only 4.5% of the U.S. population identifies as LGBTQ+, 18% of those experiencing homelessness identified as LGBTQ+. Furthermore, 28% of youth survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+.

³⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

Conclusion

- A decreasing percentage of respondents were accessing government-provided food assistance, down from 51% in 2017 to 42% in 2019.
- 21% of women reported trading sex for money or a place to stay, and 10% reported being trafficked.

Conclusions by Subpopulation

Chronically Homeless

- The count of chronically homeless individuals decreased by 10% from 2018.

Veterans

- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County has remained steady over the past three years, rising 1% to 210 in 2019.
- 55% of veteran survey respondents reported one or more disabling conditions, higher than 41% of non-veterans.
- The number of women veterans increased to 25% in 2019 from 14% in 2018.

Families with Children

- The number of homeless families continued to decrease from a high of 190 families in 2011 to 87 in 2019.

Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth

- The number of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth increased dramatically. The number of unaccompanied children increased 244% to 117 and the number of transition-age youth increased 15% to 540.
- 42% of youth survey respondents indicated that an argument with friends or family led to them becoming homeless, a much higher percentage when compared to adults (11%).
- 50% of youth fell into homelessness in 2019 after only one episode of housing instability.
- 42% of youth spoke with family a few times per month, with 20% speaking to family a few times per week.
- 23% of youth reported trading sex for money or a place to stay.
- Homeless youth were incarcerated at the same rate in the past year as homeless adults.

Older Adults

- 28% of older adults had experienced homelessness on and off for at least 30 years.
- The number of homeless older adults increased by 11% to 455.

COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY

The second consecutive Sonoma County community telephone survey facilitated understanding of the state of the county's precariously housed residents and the continuing impacts on housing from the fall 2017 wildfires.

The community telephone survey resulted in an estimate of 21,725 precariously housed persons in Sonoma County, a 1% increase from 21,482 in 2018. Of these precariously housed persons, it is estimated that 26% (5,668 individuals) were doubled up or temporarily housed directly due to loss of housing related to the Sonoma County wildfires. An additional 26% (5,667 individuals) of temporarily housed individuals lost their housing due to economic effects of the fires, such as rising rents or owners

moving back into rental properties. Nearly half (48%, 10,390 individuals) of those precariously housed were doubled up or temporarily housed due to circumstances unrelated to the Sonoma County wildfires.

The community telephone survey revealed the diverse factors leading to and affecting housing stability of the temporarily housed population. Valuable insights from the data collected from this survey include:

- 28% of all respondents reported their housing was affected by the fires in some way.
- 60% of those who reported being affected by the fires were evacuated and allowed to return to their homes.
- The total number of temporarily housed individuals increased 1% to 21,725 individuals in 14,927 households.
- For every person experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County, seven were precariously housed (1:7), slightly lower than the national rate of 1:8.
- 25% of those temporarily housed lost stable housing due to rising rents and 24% lost stable housing due to their homes burning.
- 19% of temporarily housed individuals were children under the age of 18.
- 79% of those who were temporarily housed were not connected to housing assistance.
- 8% of temporarily housed residents were accessing homeless assistance.

The 2017 Sonoma County wildfires had a deep impact on many of the county's residents. The full extent of its effects on the precariously housed and homeless populations, as well as the long-term economic impacts of the fires, will likely be understood in the coming years. Community telephone survey data are intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and state governments to gain a better understanding of the population of individuals who are not homeless but who lack a residence of their own, how the 2017 fires affected the county at large, and how to best plan for the future.

CLOSING

The 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey provides valid and useful data that help create a more comprehensive profile of those experiencing homelessness. The dissemination and evaluation of this effort will help the CoC and all Sonoma County stakeholders continue to produce and refine constructive and innovative solutions to end homelessness and make it a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence. Through innovative and effective housing programs and services, Sonoma County remains committed to moving homeless persons into permanent housing.

Data presented in the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey report fulfill federal reporting requirements for the CoC, and will continue to inform additional outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making by local planning bodies over the next year as Sonoma County continues to address homelessness.



Appendix A: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey was to produce a point-in-time estimate of people experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County, a region which covers approximately 1,576 square miles. The results of the street counts were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County on a given night, using the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count. The subsequent in-depth, qualitative survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those counted. A more detailed description of the methodology follows.

COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The Point-in-Time Count methodology used in 2019 had five primary components:

- 1) General street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals between the hours of 5:00 AM and 10:00 AM;
- 2) Youth street count: a targeted enumeration of unsheltered homeless youth under the age of 25 between the hours of 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM;
- 3) Shelter count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals on the night before the street count;
- 4) Survey: an in-person survey of unsheltered and sheltered individuals conducted by peer surveyors in the weeks following the general street count; and
- 5) Sonoma County Office of Education count: an enumeration of families previously identified as unsheltered.

The general street count was designed to take place before most shelters released persons who slept at the shelter the previous night. In areas with shelters, the immediate area surrounding the shelter was prioritized to eliminate potential double counting of individuals.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated on community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical plans, methodological decisions, and interagency coordination efforts. ASR provided technical assistance for these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 19 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the HUD publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, as well as in the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago publication *Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit*.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. Thanks to local efforts, the count included enumerators with a diverse range of knowledge, including expertise regarding areas frequented by homeless individuals, individuals living in vehicles, and persons residing in encampments. Community partners were also key in recruiting individuals with lived experience of homelessness to participate in the street count and survey efforts.

STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION

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

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

METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The 2019 street count methodology followed an established, HUD-approved methodology used in the 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 counts, with the addition of dedicated youth outreach in each of those years.

VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in Sonoma County supported the county's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. In 2019, 163 community volunteers and 96 homeless guides participated in the general street count on January 25, 2019.

Extensive outreach efforts were conducted, including outreach to local nonprofits and volunteer agencies that serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Local shelters and service providers recruited and recommended the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless guides were paid \$15 for attending an hour-long training session as well as \$15 per hour worked on the day of the count.

Volunteers and guides served as enumerators on the morning of the count, canvassing the county in teams to visually count homeless persons. County and ASR staff supported each of the five dispatch centers (Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Guerneville, Healdsburg, and Sonoma Valley), greeting volunteers and guides, distributing instructions, maps, and supplies to enumeration teams, and collecting data sheets from returning teams.

In order to participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to attend an hour-long training session before the count, which were held in multiple locations throughout the county. Training covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homelessness, how to identify homeless individuals, potential locations of homeless individuals, how to safely and respectfully conduct the count, how to use the tally count sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered, as well as other tips to help ensure an accurate count.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Law enforcement agencies were notified of pending street count activity in their jurisdictions. In census tracts with a high concentration of homeless encampments, specialized teams with knowledge of those encampments were identified and

assigned to those areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take every safety precaution possible, including bringing flashlights and maintaining a respectful distance from those they were counting.

STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of the county within the morning timeframe, the planning team identified five areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the morning of the count: Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Guerneville, Healdsburg, and Sonoma Valley. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration based on their familiarity with the area or their convenience. The planning team determined the enumeration routes and assigned them to the dispatch center closest or most central to the coverage area to facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field.

LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION

On the morning of the street count, teams of two or more persons were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was generally composed of at least one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide and was provided with their assigned census tract maps, tally sheets, training guidelines, and other supplies.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traversed by foot or car. Homeless enumerators were instructed to include themselves on their tally sheets for the street count if they were not going to be counted by the shelter count. Dispatch center volunteers provided each team with tally sheets to record the number of homeless persons observed in addition to basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center volunteers also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment log sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas.

SONOMA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION CENSUS

In the days following the January 25 Point-in-Time Count, representatives from 17 school districts throughout the county determined which households were known to have recently experienced homelessness or were vulnerable to homelessness (i.e., doubled up or in shelter). They called those who qualified to ascertain where they stayed on the night of January 24.

School district representatives attempted to contact a total of 201 households in the week after the census, with 137 confirming their sleeping location on the night of the Point-in-Time Count. The majority of the 137 households were in a doubled up situation, motel/hotel, or in shelter. Two households confirmed that they were unsheltered on the night of the count. These two households were comprised of six children under age 18 and three adults age 25-54. The households were added to the Point-in-Time Count results after screening for duplication.

YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the 2019 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied homeless children and youth under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. Many homeless children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As in all years, planning for the 2019 supplemental youth count included homeless youth service providers and youth with lived experience of homelessness. Local service providers and youth themselves identified locations where homeless youth were known to congregate and recruited youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate homeless youth to serve as guides for the count. Late afternoon and early evening were the ideal times recommended by advocates to conduct the youth count.

A focus group was held with currently and previously homeless youth to identify areas to canvass for the supplemental youth count. Social Advocates for Youth and VOICES Sonoma took the lead on recruiting thirteen youth to work as peer enumerators in addition to nine service provider staff members who accompanied and transported the youth around the county. These teams counted homeless youth in the identified areas of Sonoma County on January 25, 2019.

Youth workers were paid \$15 per hour for their time, including time spent in training prior to the count. Youth and youth service provider staff members were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

DATA COLLECTION

It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours rather than in the early morning when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM on January 25, 2019. Youth worked in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers.

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

STREET COUNT DE-DUPLICATION

Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and de-duplicated by assessing location, gender, and age. In total, 26 persons under the age of 25 were identified as duplicates and removed from the data set. Vehicles were also de-duplicated based on the last four digits of license plates. Fourteen vehicles were identified as duplicates and removed from the data set.

SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

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

DEFINITION

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

RESEARCH DESIGN

The homeless occupancy of shelters in Sonoma County was collected for the night of January 24, 2018. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Sonoma County's "Efforts to Outcomes" Homeless Management Information System. Although additional individuals were counted at Kaiser Santa Rosa, The Sonoma County Stabilization Unit, and Sonoma County Main and North County Adult Detention Facilities, they cannot be included due to stipulations from HUD. A brief overview of these individuals is available in *Appendix B: Additional Populations*.

CHALLENGES

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

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

The methods employed in a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers, the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy. Many factors may contribute to missed opportunities, for example:

- It is difficult to identify homeless persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Homeless families with children often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or in makeshift shelters.

Even though the Point-in-Time Count 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.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A survey of 520 unique individuals experiencing homelessness was conducted between January 25 and February 13, 2019 to yield qualitative data about people experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning.

The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, duration and recurrence of homelessness, nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by peer survey workers with lived homeless experience. Training sessions were facilitated by ASR, Sonoma County staff, and community partners. Potential interviewers were led through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information as well as detailed instruction

on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Peer survey workers were compensated at a rate of \$7 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily obtained if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2019 homeless survey. The socks were easy to distribute, had wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 2,951 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 520 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County.

The 2019 survey was administered in shelters, transitional housing facilities, and on the street. In order 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.

Strategic attempts were also made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. Since 2009, the ASR survey methodology has prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach every third person 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.

DATA COLLECTION

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

DATA ANALYSIS

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

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, a smaller number of surveys were conducted among families than in previous years.

There may be some variance in the data that individuals experiencing homelessness self-reported. 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 suited to conducting interviews, and these individuals received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. Service providers and county staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.

COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

GOAL

A community-wide telephone-based survey was conducted to better understand those individuals who are not homeless but who lack a residence of their own, how the 2017 fires affected the county at large, and how to best plan for the future as housing costs continue to rise.

DEFINITION

For the 2019 community telephone survey, respondents were asked if they had anyone staying with them temporarily who might otherwise be homeless or without housing. They were also asked if they themselves were staying with someone else and would themselves otherwise be homeless or without housing. Respondents were asked where they were currently residing, assessing their current housing status. Forty-one (41) individuals contacted through these efforts were identified as literally homeless, 93% of whom were unsheltered. It is assumed that these individuals were included in the Homeless Census and Survey and were not included in the unstable or doubled up population estimates or the Point-in-Time Count total.

SAMPLING

Telephone surveys were administered to a randomized sample of Sonoma County residents between January 11 and January 22, 2019. This resulted in 1,132 complete and unique surveys.³⁸ Based on a 2017 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau of 185,825 households in Sonoma County, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 1,132 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of Sonoma County.³⁹ In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within 3 percentage points of the current results.

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values were intentionally

³⁸ Out of a total of 1,250 surveys, 118 respondents reported no longer living in Sonoma County. Of these former Sonoma County residents, 16% reported leaving the county due to the fires.

³⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2019). Annual Estimates of Housing Units for the United States, Regions, Divisions, States, and Counties: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Retrieved 2018 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted.

DATA ANALYSIS

Working with the most recent household data, the results of the community telephone survey were extrapolated out to the general household population by residence type (owned or rented). The population was estimated based on the average household size of each type of residence as well as cause of temporary residence, as those who had lost their homes due to the fire were more frequently in multi-person households.

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

It is important to recognize that while a large sample of households was contacted, temporary residents are still considered a rare event. Therefore, data resulting from these rare events have a relatively high margin of error. It is for this reason that data presented on the population are largely referenced in terms of percentages rather than extrapolated numbers.

SURVEY IMPLICATIONS

This survey provides a small glimpse into what is happening locally in private homes and residences. Based upon the 2019 Homeless Survey data, a high percentage of respondents reported living with friends or family prior to their homelessness. These living situations can be tenuous; however, understanding the extent to which residents are relying on social support networks provides Sonoma County an opportunity to connect with individuals and families prior to housing loss and prevent entry into the homeless service system. Understanding the underlying cause of homelessness and engaging in prevention efforts are essential to decreasing the number of sheltered and unsheltered persons in Sonoma County.

Appendix B: Additional Populations

The following section details those counted in Sonoma County’s Main and North County Jails, Kaiser Santa Rosa Hospital, and the Sonoma County Crisis Stabilization Unit during the 2019 Point-in-Time Count. While these persons do not fall under the HUD definition of homelessness, these populations are some of the most vulnerable to homelessness in Sonoma County and therefore should be accounted for when planning.

ADDITIONAL HOMELESS POPULATION

All of those counted entered the facilities within the last 90 days, had a release date between January 25 and February 7, 2019, and were without housing at the time of their entrance.

FIGURE 105. ADDITIONAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

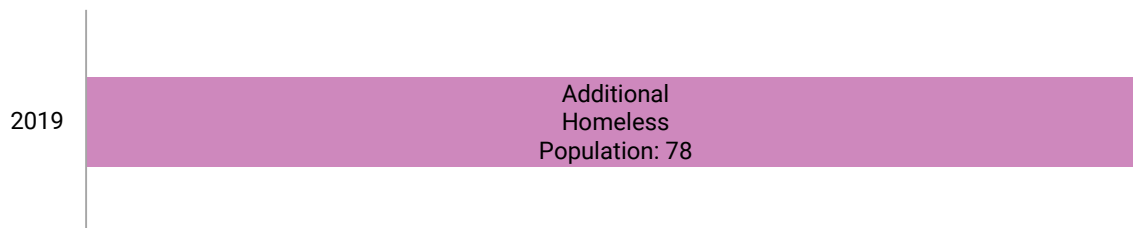
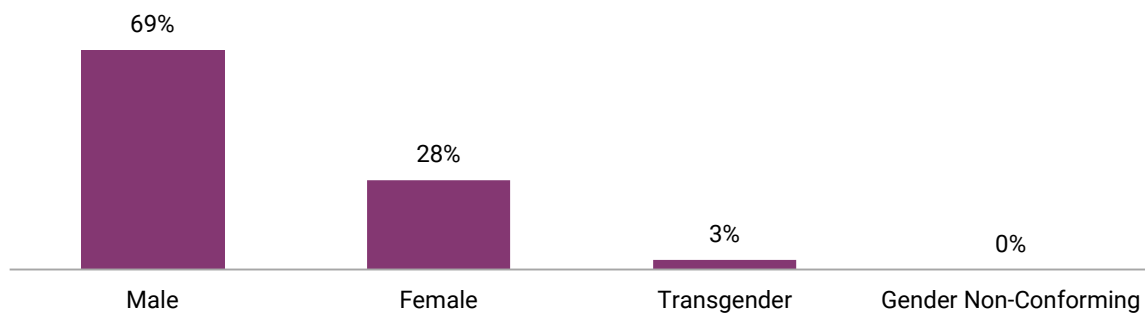


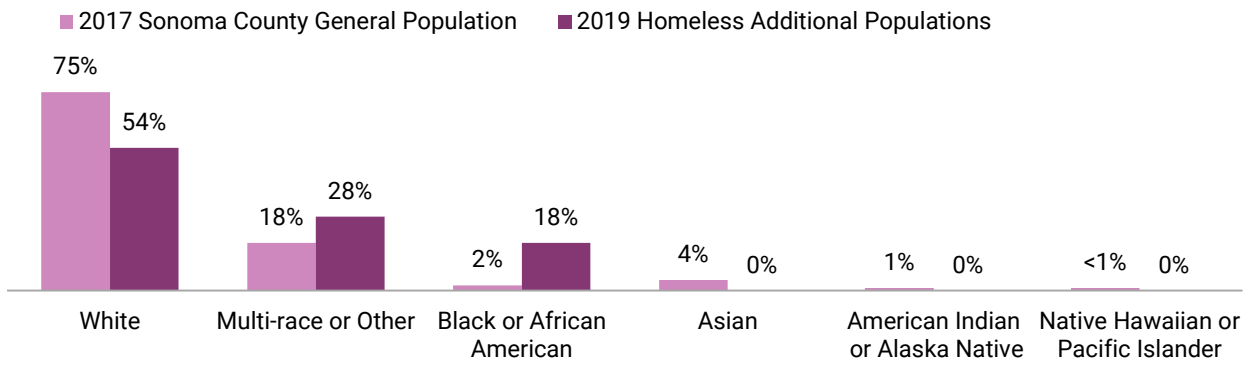
FIGURE 106. ADDITIONAL POPULATION, BY GENDER



2019 n=78

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender non-conforming was added in 2018.

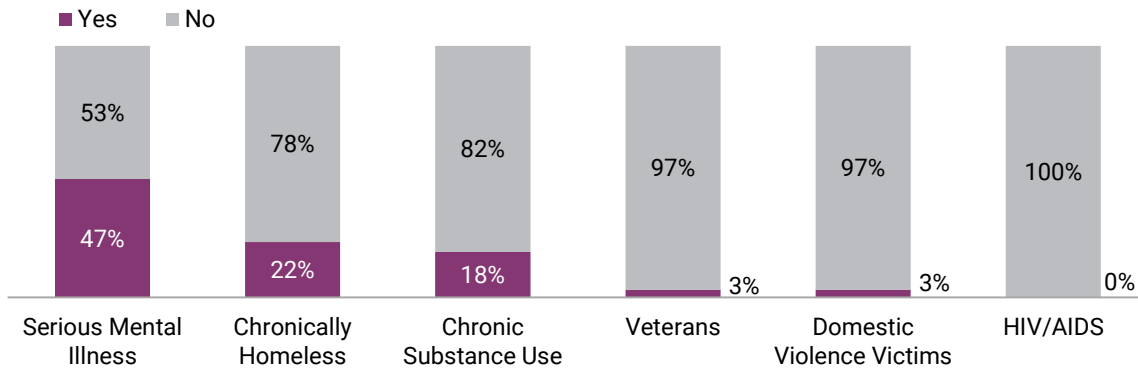
FIGURE 107. ADDITIONAL POPULATIONS, BY RACE⁴⁰



2019 n=78

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

FIGURE 108. ADDITIONAL POPULATIONS, BY SUBPOPULATION



2019 n=78

⁴⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>



Appendix C: Definitions & Abbreviations

Chronic homelessness – Defined by HUD as an unaccompanied individual or head of a family household with a disabling condition who has either continuously experienced homelessness for a year or more, or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months, in the past three years.

Disabling condition – Defined by HUD as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, PTSD, or brain injury that is expected to be long-term and impacts the individual’s ability to live independently; a developmental disability; or HIV/AIDS.

Emergency shelter – 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 180 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for survivors and their children.

Family – A household with at least one adult and one child under the age of 18.

Homeless – Under the Category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

HUD – Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Precariously housed – A person who is staying with the household because they have no other regular or adequate place to stay due to a lack of money or other means of support.

Sheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

Single individual – An unaccompanied adult over the age of 18.

Transition-age youth – Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

Transitional housing – 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 – Children under the age of 18 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

Unsheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.



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HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019