



# Homelessness in Sacramento County

Results from the 2019 Point-in-Time Count

A report prepared by California State University, Sacramento  
for Sacramento Steps Forward



## Acknowledgments

The research team would like to thank the approximately 900 volunteers who participated in the 2019 Homeless Count—the largest turn out of volunteers to date in Sacramento--who collectively canvassed over 42 square miles of area in Sacramento County, and walked a combined 462 miles of canvassing routes, to talk and engage with some of the most marginalized members of our community. The overwhelming response from our diverse community to the call for more volunteers was inspiring and exceeded our expectations. The breadth and scope of this project would have not been possible without the generosity of time and effort exhibited by hundreds of volunteers.

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-

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# Executive Summary

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Every two years Sacramento County and its incorporated cities undertake an extensive effort to document every individual in the county experiencing homelessness during a twenty-four-hour period. This effort, known as the “Point-in-Time Homeless Count” (Homeless Count), provides a single-night snapshot of nearly all individuals and families staying at emergency/transitional shelters in the county, as well as those sleeping outside, in tents or vehicles, under bridges, or other places not meant for human habitation. Homeless Counts are coordinated across the nation to fulfill a federal funding requirement from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). However, the Homeless Count is also a detailed and timely information source for local stakeholders and the broader community to assess the state of homelessness in their region.

Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) has partnered for a second time with faculty researchers from Sacramento State University and the Institute for Social Research, to develop and implement the 2019 Homeless Count for Sacramento County. This year’s Homeless Count was a much more ambitious endeavor than previous years—deploying new statistical methods as well as greater community engagement to improve the scope of the count. Approximately 900 community volunteers participated in the 2019 Homeless Count, who collectively walked 462 miles of canvassing routes, to talk and engage with some of the most marginalized members of our community. This report summarizes some of the key findings from these efforts as well as general conclusions about the state of homelessness in Sacramento County.

## General Findings

- **Similar to statewide trends, Sacramento County continues to experience substantial increases in nightly homelessness.** The number of individuals experiencing homelessness on any given night in the county increased by an estimated 19 percent since 2017.<sup>1</sup> This increase in nightly homelessness in the county follows an estimated 30 percent growth from 2015 to 2017.<sup>2</sup> The two results combined suggest that while the *rate of growth* may have abated a bit since 2017, homelessness continues to show marked increases in Sacramento County during the last 4-5 years, much like the rest of the West Coast.<sup>3</sup>

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1 It is important to note that this year’s count used a modified methodology from 2017 and so the raw totals for 2017 and 2019 cannot be compared directly. As described in Section 3 of this report, statistical adjustments were made to account for changes in methodology, which allow an estimate of a real (adjusted) increase of 19% from 2017-2019 in the number of people experiencing homelessness.

2 It should be noted that the 30% growth for 2015-2017, was also an adjusted estimate that the researchers calculated.

3 The two-year 19% increase in Sacramento County is consistent with increases already reported by other counties across California in 2019 at the time of this reporting. For example: County of San Francisco reports a 17% increase since 2017; Santa Clara County reports a 31% increase; Alameda County reports a 43% increase.

- **On the night of the 2019 Homeless Count an estimated 5,570 individuals experienced homelessness throughout the county—which is the highest estimate of nightly homelessness reported for our community.** Per capita, this corresponds to 36 per 10,000 residents in the county experiencing homelessness each night. In 2018, the state average was 33 per 10,000 Californians experiencing homelessness each night, whereas in the US more broadly it was 17 per 10,000 individuals. We anticipate that Sacramento County’s per capita average will be similar to the per capita rate that HUD will report for California later in 2019.
- **The vast majority of individuals experiencing homelessness each night in Sacramento County are *sleeping outdoors* or in vehicles, abandoned buildings or other location not suitable for human habitation.** Approximately 70 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness in the county are unsheltered, which is consistent with California’s large and growing outdoor homeless population (estimated at 69% in 2018).
- **The estimate of 5,570 people who are homeless each night could correspond to between 10,000 to 11,000 residents in Sacramento County experiencing homelessness during the span of the year.** The Homeless Count provides only a snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness in one night—but during the course of a year *different* individuals enter, exit and return to a state of homelessness in our community. Taking into account this dynamic of homelessness, we estimate that between 10,000 to 11,000 residents of the county will experience at least one episode of homelessness during the course of the year.

## Unsheltered Homelessness

The 2019 Homeless count resulted in nearly **550 in-person interviews conducted with individuals sleeping outdoors during a twenty-four hour period**; the highest number of surveys conducted on record in Sacramento County.<sup>4</sup> This large number of surveys means better information about individuals who are unsheltered (i.e., not using the shelter system). Consequently, this report presents a number of new findings related to unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento County.

- **Despite some local concern that many people experiencing homelessness are from other communities, the vast majority (93%) are from Sacramento County.** Almost all unsheltered individuals (93%) identified as either “long-time residents of Sacramento County” or as “originally from Sacramento.” Only seven percent (7%) of respondents said they had moved to Sacramento County within the last year. A few of these individuals said they had moved to Sacramento as a result of the Northern California Camp Fire that occurred in the fall of 2018.
- **Many more families with children are sleeping outside of shelters each night (and particularly, in vehicles) than had been previously assumed;** on the night of the Homeless Count

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<sup>4</sup> While 550 surveys were collected, only 525 met the threshold for analysis.

approximately 195 families were estimated to be unsheltered, which represented 52 percent of all families experiencing homelessness that night.

- **A substantial proportion of individuals sleeping outdoors (approximately 30%) are older adults** over the age of 50, and one-in-five are 55 or older. Older adults are more likely to report various health conditions and other challenges than younger adults, which can complicate their transition into stable housing. Older adults experiencing homelessness are less likely to be staying with others at the time of the interview, and may have limited support systems.
- **For the first time, we were able to gain an understanding of how gender and sexual orientation intersect with experiences of unsheltered homelessness in our community.** Approximately nine percent (9%) of unsheltered respondents identified their sexual orientation as gay/lesbian, bisexual or another sexual identity other than heterosexual.
- Though almost half of the individuals interviewed outside identified their race as White, they are nonetheless underrepresented given the demographics of the county (which is approximately 64% White). In contrast, **Black and American Indian/Alaska Native people are significantly overrepresented in the unsheltered homeless population; this is particularly the case for unsheltered families.**
- **Approximately 30 percent of people experiencing homelessness met the definition of “chronic homelessness” as defined by HUD, a *slightly lower rate than anticipated*.** In 2017, 31 percent of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness met the HUD definition of chronic homelessness (which is based on both length of time homeless and presence of a disabling condition). Given the substantial 19 percent increase in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the community, and particularly those reporting long-term homelessness lasting over a year, we anticipated a substantial and proportional increase in the rate of chronic homelessness for Sacramento County. The rate instead remained stagnant, and some groups even indicated some modest declines in chronic homelessness, such as older adults and veterans. Though it is beyond the limits of the data to explore this possible decline, efforts to engage chronic homeless populations could have had a mitigating effect on the broader upward trends of long-term homelessness.

While significant increases in homelessness in Sacramento County are concerning, this report discusses some key contextual factors that contributed to these larger estimates in the 2019 Homeless Count.

## Contextual Considerations

- **The 2019 rise in homelessness reflects the continued challenges with housing affordability locally and across the state.** A number of studies show that rental market conditions are the strongest predictors of community levels of homelessness; one of the most salient conditions is the proportion of renters that spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on

rent—which represent nearly 30 percent of all renters in the county.<sup>5</sup> Sacramento has seen major increases in rental rates in the context of a state-wide housing crisis. From January 2017 to April 2019, the median rent in Sacramento rose 14 percent, compared to a five percent (5%) increase nationally. And in 2017-2018 Sacramento faced the highest rent increases among California cities. This continues a broader five-year upward trend in which Sacramento renters experienced the second highest continuing increases in rent among major California cities.<sup>6</sup>

- **The increase in homelessness in Sacramento County is consistent with the double-digit increases being reported across communities in California.** Double-digit increases are being reported in Southern California counties, as well as nearby counties of San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties. Moreover in the past year, 43 communities and 11 major cities throughout California have formally declared a shelter crisis in their respective areas. While homelessness is undoubtedly a local community issue, it is nonetheless impacted by state-wide trends. This suggests that partnerships across local, regional, and state entities are going to be required to address factors such as the lack of affordable housing.
- **The 2019 Sacramento Homeless Count provides a more accurate estimate of individuals sleeping outdoors than ever before, consequently direct comparisons to previous counts are less intuitive.** Readers of this report should note that the 2019 Homeless Count employed a number of design modifications that greatly improved the accuracy of the estimate, but also make it different from previous community efforts to document homelessness. These modifications include deploying hundreds of additional volunteers (e.g., over 900 in 2019 vs. 300 in 2017), canvassing different parts of the county over *multiple nights*, and using sampling and statistical techniques to estimate the number of individuals sleeping in locations not canvassed. These modifications improve the overall accuracy and scope of the count and we therefore caution against direct comparisons of raw estimates to previous counts. Given this, a later section of this report (Section 3) discusses how readers should interpret the 2019 nightly estimates in the context of the total numbers reported in 2017.

In the final section of this report, we discuss both policy recommendations for Sacramento County and methodological considerations that we believe will continue to improve the accuracy and consistency in the 2021 Homeless Count.

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<sup>5</sup> The US Census *American Community Survey* (2018) estimates that 28.5% of renters in Sacramento County are severely burdened renters; meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on rent.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). Financial characteristics: Sacramento County, CA. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Washington, D.C.: Author.

<sup>6</sup> RentCafe. (June 2019). *Sacramento, CA: Rental market trends*. Retrieved from <https://www.rentcafe.com/average-rent-market-trends/us/ca/sacramento/>

Bizjak, T. (2019, September 6). Sacramento had state's second highest rent increase. But there's good news for tenants, too. *The Sacramento Bee*. Retrieved from <https://www.sacbee.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article217796560.html>

# Introduction: 2019 Homeless Count

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Every two years Sacramento County and its incorporated cities undertake an extensive community effort to document every individual in the county experiencing homelessness during a twenty-four-hour period. This effort, known as the *Homeless Point-in-Time* Count, results in a *census* of all individuals in the county accessing shelters and transitional housing (“sheltered homelessness”). The count also estimates the total number of individuals who, in the same period, are sleeping outdoors in tents, cars, or other locations not suitable for extended human habitation (“unsheltered homelessness”).

Most communities conduct the Point-in-Time Count (hereafter referred to as the “Homeless Count”) every two years, during the last week of January, to fulfill a federal funding requirement from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Accordingly, Homeless Counts must adhere to an evolving set of guidelines and methodologies established and updated by HUD each year--though HUD allows some flexibility given the varying contexts of communities (e.g., rural vs. urban areas). In addition to providing information about the total counts and demographics of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless in the community, Homeless Counts must also report on specific at-risk populations, including veterans, transition age youth, and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

The results from the Homeless Count depict a “snapshot” of total homelessness in the county, and provide detailed and timely information for local stakeholders and the broader community to assess the state of homelessness in our region. Moreover, hundreds of surveys conducted with individuals not using the shelter system, offer unique insights into the experiences of unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento County in 2019.

Sacramento Steps Forward has partnered for a second time with faculty researchers from Sacramento State and the Institute for Social Research to develop and implement the 2019 Homeless Count for Sacramento County. This report summarizes some of the key findings from these efforts and provides recommendations for future homeless counts.

## A Collaborative Effort

Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) is the administrative entity for the community's Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. The CoC is led by a 25-member community board that coordinates homelessness planning efforts and federally funded programs. CoCs are typically charged with implementing Homeless Counts because of their strong connections to a variety of stakeholders.

In late summer of 2018, SSF solicited a request for proposal (RFP) for researchers to outline a new strategy to update and improve the accuracy of the 2019 Sacramento Homeless Count. Responding to continuing concerns in the community that Homeless Counts may substantially underreport the

true rate of unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento - and echoing recommendations raised by the 2017 Homeless Count report - SSF requested that researchers propose a more robust strategy to improve the accuracy of the unsheltered count. In fall 2018, SSF selected the proposal submitted by Sacramento State and commissioned the authors to implement an improved Homeless Count design, the process of which is discussed in the appendix of this report. While SSF held primary responsibility for the 2019 Homeless Count, including outreach to partners and recruiting and training volunteers, the Sacramento State research team held primary responsibility for the design of the study, data collection, and analyses of the data. However, many other stakeholders, community volunteers, and Sacramento State students were instrumental in this effort.

## Report Roadmap

The goal of this report is to provide community members with a general understanding of the key findings from the 2019 Sacramento Homeless Count as well as to highlight contextual factors to consider in light of these findings. The report also points to some general conclusions about the level of need in the community and provides recommendations for future Homeless Counts. Given these goals, the report is organized in the following four sections:

**Section 1** presents general findings of the 2019 Homeless Count, and summarizes the total homeless estimate of both sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento County. In this section we discuss what these estimates mean in terms of a per capita rate of nightly homelessness, as well as how these numbers can be interpreted as annualized estimate of homelessness throughout the year. Lastly, we present breakdowns of overall demographics and household characteristics of sheltered and unsheltered individuals.

**Section 2** provides further analysis of the 550 surveys collected with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. We focus on three key subpopulations that are at higher risk for experiencing homelessness. Specifically, we present detailed data on transitional age youth (ages 18-24), families with children, and older adults. We also present data on veterans experiencing homelessness.

**Section 3** presents the results of our analysis to assess the changes over time in the size of the homeless population as indicated by a careful comparison of the 2017 and 2019 Counts. The 2019 Count modifications improved the accuracy and scope of the count, but also required a statistical accounting for these modifications, which provide an *estimate a 19 percent relative increase in homelessness in Sacramento County since 2017*. We discuss the improved methodology and our process for accounting for methodological changes in Section 3.

**Section 4** summarizes the general homeless trends that the 2019 Count uncovered, and highlights policy recommendations according to the authors. We also discuss our methodological recommendations for future Homeless Counts in Sacramento.

**Methodology Appendix** summarizes the updated research design of the 2019 Homeless Count, focusing primarily on the specific changes implemented this year as compared to previous Counts.

*Readers of this report should note that these methodology modifications make the 2019 Homeless Count substantially different from previous community efforts to document homelessness. These modifications include deploying hundreds of additional volunteers, canvassing different parts of the county over multiple nights, and using sampling and statistical techniques to estimate the number of individuals sleeping in locations not canvassed.*

# Section 1: The State of Homelessness in 2019

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In this section, we discuss the general results of the 2019 Homeless Count, starting first with the estimates for nightly homelessness in Sacramento County. We elaborate on the significance of these estimates in terms of the ratio of sheltered to unsheltered homelessness, as well as how these numbers correspond to per capita and annualized rates of homelessness for the county. We also discuss these estimates in the broader context of increasing homelessness in California. Later in this section we overview the demographic profile of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County, including both those that were sheltered and unsheltered on the night of the count.

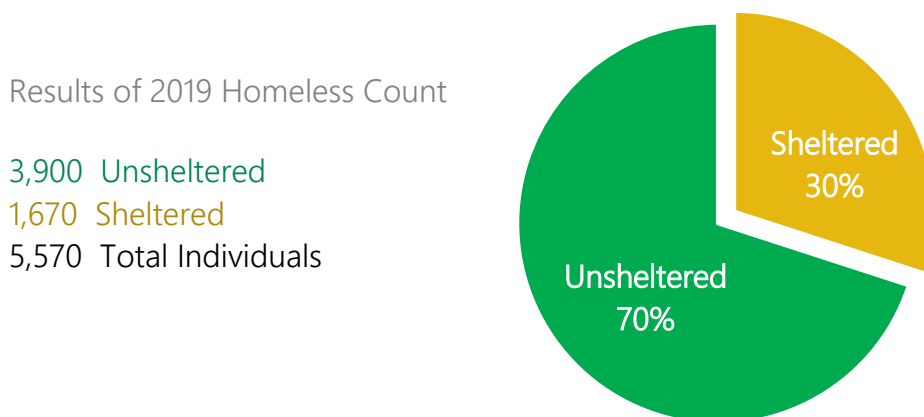
## Estimates of Homelessness in Sacramento County

On a single night in January 2019 an estimated **5,570 individuals** were experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County.

- This is the largest report of nightly homelessness on record for Sacramento County.
- The estimate of 5,570 includes the 1,670 *sheltered* individuals who accessed emergency shelters or transitional housing the night of the count, and the 3,900 *unsheltered* individuals who slept outside or in a location not suitable for human habitation (e.g., on the street, in a vehicle, or in a tent).
- This suggests that over 70 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness in the county are unsheltered as opposed to sheltered on any given night (i.e., not accessing shelters or transitional housing).

Figure 1 | Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Individuals in 2019 Homeless Count

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The high number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our region signals a troubling trend first noted in the 2017 Sacramento Homeless Count, that the vast majority of county residents facing homelessness today are unsheltered, even during presumably one of the coldest nights of the year.

- The 2017 Homeless Count was the first year that Sacramento County reported more people experiencing unsheltered than sheltered homelessness (56% vs. 44%).
- Though this trend has continued to worsen, it follows a larger pattern of growing unsheltered homelessness reported across communities in California.
- According to HUD, California reports the highest proportion of unsheltered homelessness in the country, currently averaging 69 percent (HUD, 2018). This proportion of unsheltered homelessness has grown over the last four years, consistent with the growth observed in Sacramento.

Given Sacramento County's population of approximately 1.5 million residents, the estimate of 5,570 people experiencing homelessness each night suggests that approximately 36 in every 10,000 residents in the county experience homelessness each night.<sup>7</sup>

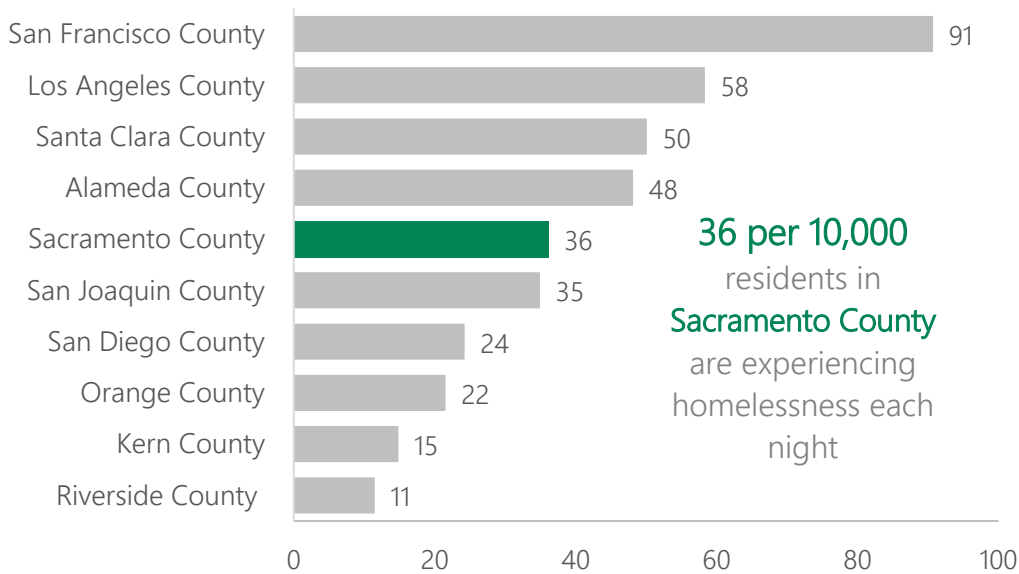
- This per capita rate of nightly homelessness is about ten percent higher than the 2018 state average of 33 per 10,000 Californians experiencing homelessness each night.<sup>8</sup>
- While 2019 data for the state will not be available until 2020, we anticipate that the per capita homelessness rate for California will rise and Sacramento County will approximate the state average (i.e., we anticipate that the state average will reach or exceed 36 out of 10,000).

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). Financial characteristics: Sacramento County, CA. 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Washington, D.C.: Author.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD]. (2017). 2017 AHAR, Part 2, Section 4: Unaccompanied homeless youth in the United States. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-2-Section-4.pdf>.

Figure 2 | 2019 Per Capita Homelessness, by County<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> US Census, 2018

San Joaquin Continuum of Care. (2019, April 22). *San Joaquin Continuum of Care report on the point in time count of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless*. Retrieved June 6, 2019, from <http://www.sanjoaquinccoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/San-Joaquin-Continuum-of-Care-Report-on-the-2019-Point-in-Time-Count.pdf>

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<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/opa/newsroom/Documents/2019%20Homeless%20Census%20News%20Release.pdf>

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## 2019 Annualized Estimate

A common misconception of the Point-in-Time Homeless Count is that it provides a total yearly estimate of all of the individuals experiencing homelessness within the community--for example, approximating the total number of individuals who fall into homelessness or access shelters across the span of the year. As the name implies, however, the Point-in-Time count provides only a snapshot of one night of homelessness in a community.

- During the course of an entire year *different* individuals enter, exit, and return to a state of homelessness in our community. In other words, the homeless population is in constant flux as different individuals enter and exit homelessness each week.
- Taking into consideration this dynamic of homelessness, researcher can use the results of the Point-in-Time Count to approximate the total number of individuals who will likely experience homelessness or access shelters at least once during the course of the year. These annualized estimates are typically calculated as two to three times the nightly estimate of nightly homelessness.<sup>10</sup>
- The 2019 Homeless Count suggests that approximately 10,000 to 11,000 residents in Sacramento County will experience homelessness during the next year.<sup>11</sup>
- This is consistent with a recent analysis by Sacramento Steps Forward of the Housing Management Information System (HMIS).<sup>12</sup> It is not clear, however, how many individuals encountered during the Homeless Count overlap with individuals interacting with broader system of homeless services.

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<sup>10</sup> Burt, M.R. & Wilkins, C. (2005). Estimating the need: Projecting from Point-in-Time to annual estimates of the number of homeless people in a community and using this information to plan for Permanent Supportive Housing. New York, NY: Corporation for Supportive Housing. Retrieved from <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Estimating-the-Need.pdf>.

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<sup>11</sup> We used the conventional Burt & Wilkins (2005) formula to extrapolate an annualized estimate from survey responses from the 2019 Homeless Count. Similar to other techniques, the Burt & Wilkins formulas considers the number of individuals who reported becoming homeless in the past week, while discounting the proportion of all homeless individuals who have had a previous homeless episode in the past year. While these estimates are generally accepted as a reliable approximation of the true annualized rate, future analyses may be able to integrate aspects of HMIS data to provide more accurate estimates.

<sup>12</sup> Data provided by Sacramento Steps Forward, June 7, 2019.

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It is estimated that approximately 10,000 to 11,000 residents in Sacramento County will experience homelessness during 2019.

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## Changes over Time

The 2019 Homeless Count provides a more accurate estimate of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County than ever before—indicators for unsheltered homelessness in particular appear more aligned with state and regional trends than prior counts. However, readers of this report should note that the improvements to methodology make direct comparisons to previous counts less intuitive.

For instance, comparing the raw results of the 2019 Homeless Count with previous counts done in Sacramento County is problematic given that a larger geographic area was canvassed for the unsheltered count in 2019 than in previous years (with three times the number of volunteers deployed this year compared to 2017). In addition, we used new statistical techniques in 2019 to estimate the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in areas not canvassed. Nonetheless, in Section 3 of this report we statistically account for these modifications and estimate an adjusted-increase to help readers interpret trends.

- We estimate a 19 percent relative increase in homelessness in Sacramento County since 2017 (See Section 3).
- This 19 percent increase follows an already-reported 30 percent increase from 2015 to 2017.
- The two results combined suggest that while the *rate of growth* may have abated a bit since 2017, Sacramento continues to experience substantial increases in homelessness, much like the rest of the West Coast. At the time of this reporting, several communities in California have reported similar substantial increases during the last two to four years of reporting.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> As of June 2019, these percent increases were not yet official but had been reported in the media.

While it is not clear at this point to what extent differences in percent increase across different Californian communities are a result of methodological change or real differences in change, the main takeaway from the figure above is that the rate of homelessness since 2017 has increased in the double digits across almost all California counties. Housing market conditions remain the main driver of this growth in homelessness, particularly the availability of affordable housing in our region. From January 2017 to April 2019, the median rent in Sacramento rose 14 percent, compared to a five percent (5%) increase nationally; and from 2017-2018 Sacramento faced the highest rent increases among California cities.<sup>14</sup>

## Description of Homelessness in Sacramento County

Below we provide some general descriptive and demographic information of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County. We start by reviewing the household composition of all people experiencing homelessness (including both sheltered and unsheltered homeless) and later focus more specifically on unsheltered individuals who were interviewed during the 2019 Homeless Count. In the next section of the report, we delve deeper into survey results to report on specific populations (e.g., transitional age youth, older adults etc.)

### Household Composition of Total Sacramento Homeless Population

People experiencing homelessness can be found in various household situations; some people navigate homelessness by themselves, while others experience homelessness as a family or household. The 2019 Homeless Count indicates that the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County (73%) are *single adults*, most of whom of who are unsheltered.<sup>15</sup>

- Over half (56%) of all people experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, single-adults. Single-adults who are sheltered represent another 17 percent of all people experiencing homelessness.
- People in *families with children* represent 20 percent of all people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County. Half of these families were encountered in shelters and transitional housing (representing 10% of the total population) and the other half outside of shelters (10% of total population). As we elaborate in Section 2 of this report, this is a relatively high proportion of families staying outside of shelters.<sup>16</sup>

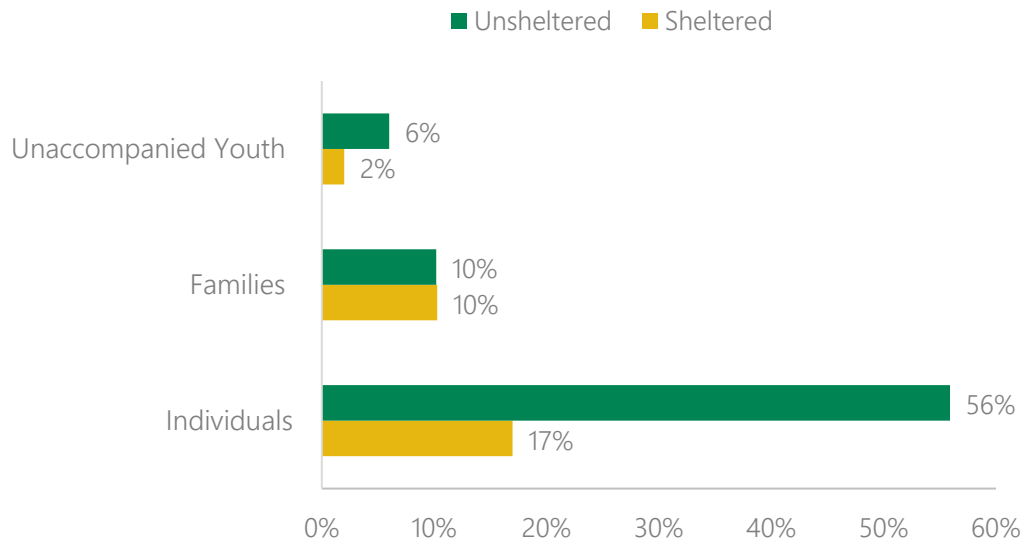
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<sup>14</sup> RentCafe, 2019; Bizjak 2019

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that this analysis simplified the distinction between single-adult and multi-adult households with no children (e.g., married/partnered couples). This was to align this particular analysis with HUD reporting conventions. Nonetheless, approximately 75% of single adults reported that they were indeed in a household of one.

<sup>16</sup> US Census, 2018

Figure 3 | Type of Household by Sheltered Status in 2019 Homeless Count

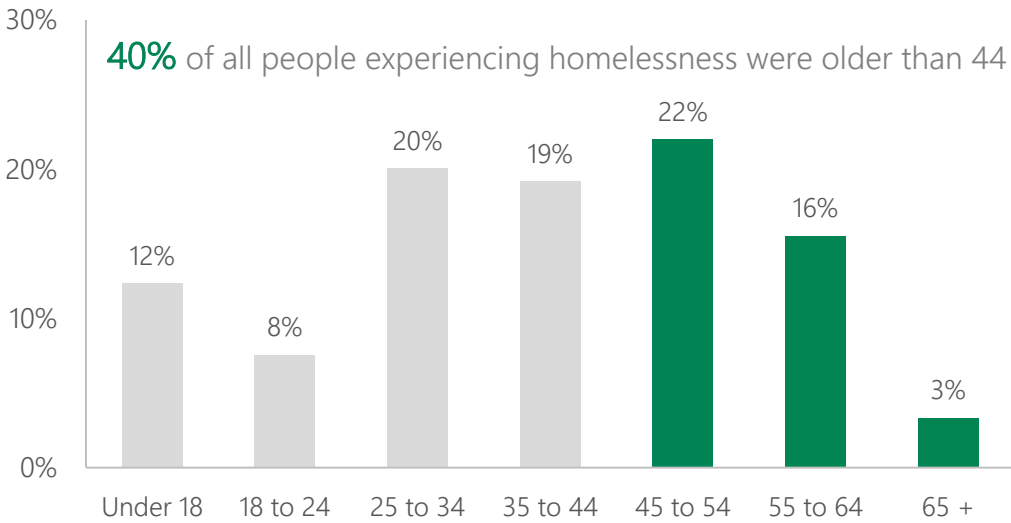


Finally, approximately eight percent (8%) of individuals experiencing homelessness would be considered *unaccompanied youth households*-this includes some minors (under 18) but is comprised mostly of transitional age youth (ages 18-24). Section 3 of this report also elaborates on the survey responses from this group, particularly those who are transitional age youth.

## Age Groups of Total Sacramento Homeless Population

People experiencing homelessness also represent a wide range of ages, from very young children to seniors in their 70s. As Figure 4 below shows, the vast majority of people experiencing homelessness (80%) were adults aged 25 and over, nonetheless a substantial proportion were children under age 18 (12%) and transitional age youth (ages 18-24; 8%).

Figure 4 | Age Distribution of Total Homeless Individuals in 2019

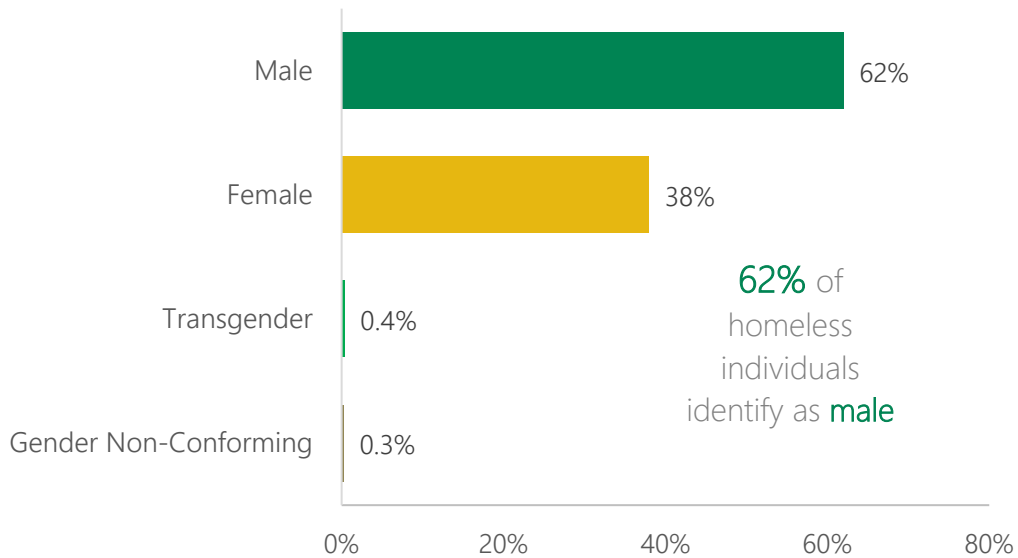


- The distribution of ages also indicates that the homeless population tends to be older; over 40 percent of all people experiencing homelessness are older than 44, and almost one-in-five are older than 54.
- Additional analyses indicate that the average of people experiencing homelessness was 39, with unsheltered adults reporting significantly older ages than adults staying in shelters (average age of 42 vs. 37).

## Gender of Total Sacramento Homeless Population

The majority of people experiencing homelessness self-identified their gender as male (62%), while 38 percent self-identified as female (see Figure 5 below). Approximately 25 adults identified as transgender, and approximately 16 identified as gender non-conforming (each representing less than 1%).

Figure 5 | Gender within the Total 2019 Homeless Count



## Sexual Orientation of the Unsheltered Sacramento Homeless Population

In addition to questions about gender identity, unsheltered adults were also asked about their sexual orientation during the 2019 Homeless Count—a new addition to this year’s effort. Results indicated that approximately nine percent (9%) of individuals identified as either Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual or another non-heterosexual orientation. More specifically, three percent (3%) identified as Gay/Lesbian, three percent (3%) as Bisexual and two percent (2%) of respondents chose to self-describe with another term or other category.

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9 percent of the unsheltered homeless population identify their sexual orientation as either Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or another term or category.

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## Ethnicity and Race of Total Sacramento Homeless Population

Approximately 18 percent of people experiencing homelessness identified their ethnicity as Hispanic, while the majority identified as non-Hispanic (82%). With respect to racial identity, the majority of individuals identified as either White (47%) or Black/African American (34%). As

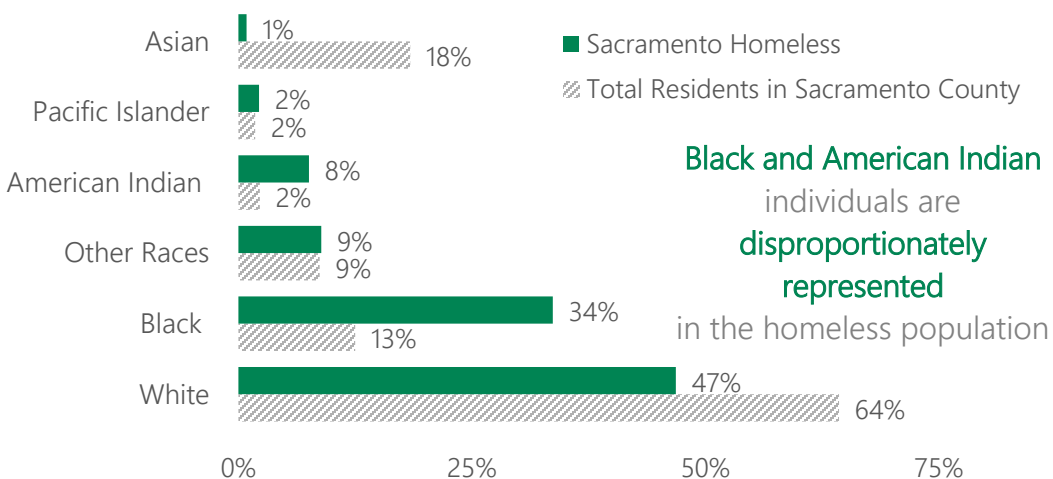
Table 1 shows, a substantial proportion of individuals also identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (8%), while nine percent (9%) identified themselves with multiple races or considered themselves Multiracial. Relatively few individuals identified as either Hawaiian-Pacific Islander (2%) or Asian (1%).

Table 1 | Ethnicity and Race within the 2019 Homeless Count

Ethnicity	Total Homeless Count	
	#	%
Hispanic	985	18%
Non-Hispanic	4,585	82%
Race		
White	2,608	47%
Black	1,875	34%
Asian	49	1%
American Indian	421	8%
Native Hawaiian	123	2%
Multiracial	494	9%

Comparing the racial composition of people experiencing homelessness to the total racial composition of all residents of Sacramento County reveals some notable trends (see Figure 6 below).

Figure 6 | Racial Composition: Sacramento Co. Total Population vs. 2019 Homeless Count



- While Whites comprise the largest racial group of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County (47%), they are nonetheless underrepresented given that 64 percent of Sacramento County residents identify as White.<sup>17</sup>
- In contrast, Blacks/African Americans are disproportionately represented in the county's homeless population (34% vs 13% of Sacramento County).
- American Indian/Alaska Native individuals are also overrepresented in the homeless population in Sacramento County (8% vs. 2% of Sacramento County), which mirrors national trends.<sup>18</sup>
- In contrast, individuals who identify as Asian are substantially underrepresented in the homeless population (1% vs 18% of Sacramento County).

It should be noted that the overrepresentation of racial minorities in the homeless population is largely consistent with trends reported across California, as well as the United States more broadly. These patterns reflect the racialized and enduring levels of inequality in our state and community.<sup>19</sup>

## Unsheltered Homeless Experiences

Volunteers interviewed hundreds of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness for the 2019 Homeless Count. These survey responses were combined with the count data to generate demographic estimates of the unsheltered homeless population. Below we highlight some general demographic trends revealed in the survey responses provided by individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

### Demographic Patterns of People Who Are Unsheltered

Analysis of the survey data suggests that demographic composition of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness varies slightly from those who are sheltered.

- Unsheltered individuals are on average five years older than individuals staying in shelters/transitional housing (42 vs. 37).

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<sup>17</sup> US Census, 2018

<sup>18</sup> Biess, J. (2017, April 11). Homelessness in Indian Country is a hidden, but critical, problem. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/homelessness-indian-country-hidden-critical-problem>

<sup>19</sup> The racial disproportionality of homelessness was the subject of a recent groundbreaking report by the Los Angeles County Department of Homeless Services, which offers a series of recommendations to address policies that have led to this overrepresentation. LAHSA (2018, December). Report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=2823-report-and-recommendations-of-the-ad-hoc-committee-on-black-people-experiencing-homelessness>

- Individuals encountered outside were also much more likely to report themselves in a single-adult household (78%) than those in shelter/transitional housing (56%).

As the demographic tables illustrate below, a higher proportion of individuals sleeping outside identified as male than those in sheltered situations (65% vs 53%). In contrast, a slightly lower proportion of unsheltered individuals self-identified as either White (45%) or Black/African American (31%) compared to sheltered individuals (50% and 40%, respectively).

Table 2 | Ethnicity and Race within the 2019 Homeless Count

Ethnicity	Unsheltered Count		Sheltered Count	
	#	%	#	%
Male*	2,549	64%	882	53%
Female	1,318	34%	780	47%
Transgender	19	.5%	6	.4%
Gender Non-Conforming	14	.5%	2	.1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Hispanic	663	17%	322	19%
Non-Hispanic	3,237	83%	1,348	81%
<b>Race</b>				
White**	1,768	45%	840	50%
Black**	1,214	31%	661	40%
Asian	32	1%	17	1%
American Indian	380	10%	41	3%
Native Hawaiian	112	3%	11	1%
Multiracial	394	10%	100	6%

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01

Despite these differences, however, unsheltered individuals indicated similar responses with respect to ethnicity (Hispanic and Non-Hispanic), other racial identities, as well as transgender and non-gender conforming identities.

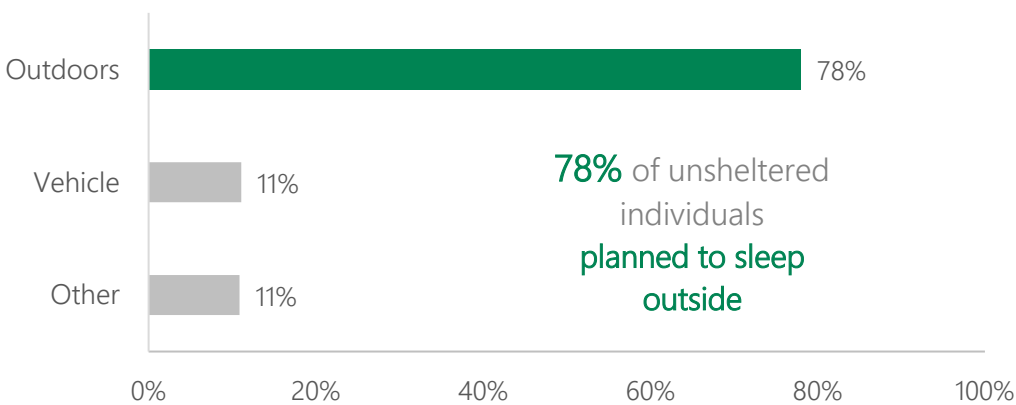
In sum, unsheltered individuals were more likely to be older, single, and male compared to sheltered individuals.

## Sleeping Locations of Unsheltered Individuals

At the start of each interview, unsheltered individuals were asked where they anticipated sleeping for the evening of January 30th (or where they had slept that night, if the survey was conducted after the 30th).<sup>20</sup> Analysis of how individuals responded to this open-ended question indicated the following:

- Most unsheltered people (78%) were planning to *sleep literally outside* such as “on the sidewalk or underpass,” an “outdoor encampment, or “other outside location.”
- Eleven percent (11%) indicated that they were sleeping in a vehicle.
- Eleven percent (11%) cited another location, such as an abandoned building, motel/hotel with a county voucher, or a bus station.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 7 | Sleeping Locations of Total Unsheltered Population in 2019



## Geographic Distribution of Unsheltered Individuals

The survey data also indicated the general region of the county where unsheltered homeless individuals were residing on the night of the county. Overall, the geographic distribution of

<sup>20</sup> This open-ended question was one of the several HUD-required questions in the survey instrument designed to assess respondents' homelessness status.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that HUD now considers individuals staying at a hotel/motel paid by a county/program voucher, to be technically sheltered homeless. Because the sheltered count already includes individuals using motel/hotel vouchers--and to ensure there was not a double count-- the researchers cross-referenced the birth month and ages of surveyed individuals who reported using a hotel/motel vouchers on the night of the count, with the birth month and ages of individuals who were documented in the sheltered portion of the count. Because there was no match with any of the survey respondents, it was unclear if these individuals had accessed a program outside of the CoC, or in some case believed they would be using a hotel/motel voucher that night but ultimately did not. This may have been the case for some youth who were interviewed earlier in the day than other individuals.

unsheltered individuals was reflective of population densities in the county, though not always proportional to the total populations within these regions.

Table 3 | Geographic Distribution of the Unsheltered Individuals

	Total Unsheltered Count	Percent of County's Unsheltered
<b>Areas in Sacramento County</b>		
City of Sacramento	2,858	73%
Rancho Cordova	249	6%
Citrus Heights	45	1%
Folsom	17	0.4%
Galt	10	0.3%
Elk Grove	7	0.2%
Isleton <sup>22</sup>	3	0.1%
Other areas (Cites & Unincorporated)	711	18%
<b>Total Sacramento County</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>100%</b>

A large proportion of unsheltered homeless reside within the City of Sacramento (approximately 2,858 individuals out of the 3,900 estimated throughout the county). This is not surprising given that the City of Sacramento is the geographically largest and most populous area in the county; it also encompasses a number of high-density census tracts. However, the City of Sacramento represents 33 percent of the total population of the county but 73 percent of unsheltered homelessness. Rancho Cordova, on the other hand, has a rate of nightly homelessness (249 per night) that is proportionate with its relative population size in the county (5% vs 6%). Similarly, Galt and Isleton are estimated to have small numbers of unsheltered homeless individuals (less than 1% combined) which correspond to their relatively small populations overall. In contrast, the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom and Elk Grove have relatively small numbers of unsheltered homeless populations (45, 17 and 7 nightly homeless, respectively, or about 1.6% combined) despite their sizable overall populations (collectively making up 22% of the county's total population). The remaining 18 percent of unsheltered homelessness is distributed across the unincorporated parts of the county.

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that Isleton was outside of the sampling frame for the 2019 Homeless Count, given its distance from the main deployment center and low population density. Nonetheless, the researchers were asked to provide an estimate of nightly homelessness within Isleton to demonstrate the likely distribution of homelessness in this region of the county. The researchers estimated a low count given the low population density of Isleton.

## Episodes and Length of Homelessness

Adult individuals who were unsheltered were asked a series of questions about their current and possibly past experiences of homelessness (e.g., length of time, prior experiences, and episodes). To simplify the complexity across how individuals answered these questions, we synthesized their responses into four general homeless situations (Figure 8). We provide these synthesized situations because it is difficult to interpret respondents' answers to any one of these questions without considering how they also answered others.

- For example, approximately half of respondents indicated that this was their “first time homeless,” but these same individuals could report varying lengths of time being homeless. In follow-up questions, some individuals reported that they had just become homeless in the past few weeks, while others indicated that this single episode of homelessness had lasted over a year.
- In contrast, some individuals described more intermittent episodes of homelessness during the last couple of years; situations of straddling back and forth between finding and losing housing. Within this group of individuals, however, the length of these episodes varied from weeks to years.

For these reasons, we present a more synthesized analysis of these questions as opposed to individual responses to single questions.

### **Homeless Situation 1 | First Time and Recent**

Approximately six percent (6%) of individuals were facing a “first time and recent-homeless” situation. More specifically, these individuals had recently become homeless for the first time, sometime during the last six months.

### **Homeless Situation 2 | Episodic and Moderate-Length**

Ten percent (10%) were experiencing “episodic and moderate-length” homelessness. This group included individuals who reported between 2-3 episodes of homelessness during the last three years (with each episode lasting between three months to almost a year). Some individuals reported more frequent, but briefer periods of homelessness (between 3-4 episodes that were under three months). This group also included individuals who both reported being homeless for the first time, or had been homeless before, but nonetheless had been struggling for over six months during the past year with a single episode of homelessness.

### **Homeless Situation 3 | Episodic and Long-Term**

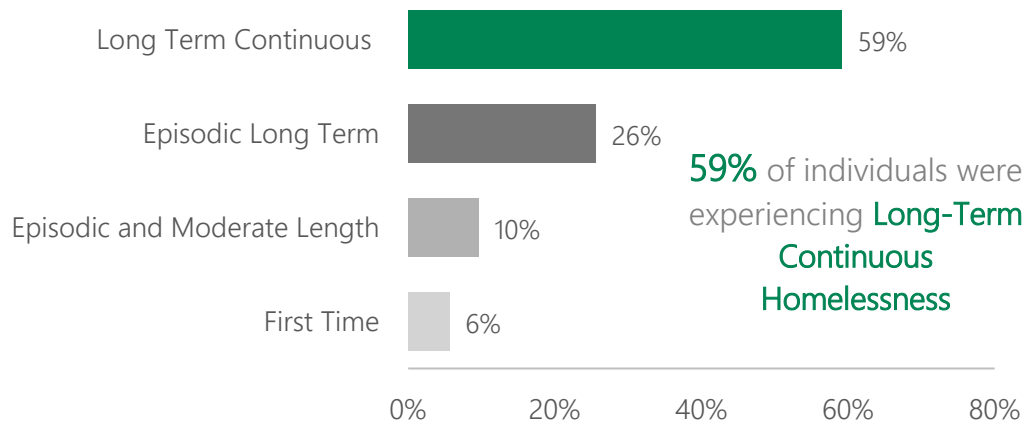
A quarter of respondents (26%) could be characterized as experiencing “episodic and long term” homelessness. Similar to the group above, these individuals also reported experiencing 2-4 episodes of homelessness in the past three years, but indicated periods of homelessness that were substantially longer (a single period or periods that exceed a year or more). This also included individuals who stated that they had been homeless before, but that this single period had lasted

approximately a year. Because some individuals in this group have been technically homeless for approximately 12 months over the course of the past three years, they would fall under the HUD characterization of chronic homelessness, if they additionally reported a disability condition (who are discussed below).

#### Homeless Situation 4 | Long-Term Continuous

Finally, over half (59%) could be characterized as experiencing a “long term and continuous” bout of homelessness that has lasted over a year. The majority of this group consisted largely of individuals who reported being previously homeless, but were nonetheless currently experiencing one or more years of continuous homelessness (sometimes for several years). Also included were a substantial number of individuals who said they had been continuously homeless for well over a year and for the first time. This group was also inclusive of some individuals who reported several episodes of homelessness during the past three years, but indicated long periods that essentially spanned the majority of the past 36 months. A substantial proportion of individuals included in this group were characterized as chronically homeless, given their prolonged experience of homelessness (exceeding a year) and reported a disability.

Figure 8 | Length of Homelessness for the 2019 Total Homeless Population



#### HUD’s Definition for “Unsheltered Chronic Homelessness”

The above findings related to length of homelessness indicate that a high proportion (59%) of unsheltered individuals have been experiencing long-term and continuous periods of over a year. This suggests that unsheltered people in Sacramento County are having more prolonged experiences with homelessness than before, which may indicate greater barriers to housing. This finding, coupled with the high rate of unsheltered homelessness overall, would suggest that a growing proportion of individuals would also be meeting HUD’s criteria for chronic homelessness

(which is based on both length of homelessness and presence of a disabling condition).<sup>23</sup> Indeed, early reporting from other communities indicating substantial increases in homelessness are reporting an uptick in the proportion of individuals that meet HUD's definition for chronic homelessness.

The estimate for chronic homelessness, however, has remained stagnant even though individuals are spending more time homeless.

- Even though Sacramento County is observing an increase in unsheltered homelessness, the overall chronic homeless proportion for 2019 is almost identical to 2017 (31% in 2017 compared to 30% in 2019), and substantially lower within the unsheltered population (31% chronically homeless in 2019 vs. 39% in 2017).
- A closer examination of the survey data suggests that while a fair amount of unsheltered individuals report significant challenges (discussed below) a smaller percentage appears to report disabling conditions.
- Though it is beyond the limits of the 2019 Homeless Count to explore this decline conclusively, it is apparent that the rate of chronic homelessness has at least remained stagnant, and for some groups even indicated some modest declines, particularly for older adults and veterans.
- This pattern could reflect better efforts to engage disabled individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the county; even with substantial increases in unsheltered homelessness it is likely that some groups have benefited from targeted efforts to transition them into housing and services.

## Unique Experiences and Challenges

Unsheltered individuals were also asked about specific experiences and challenges that may complicate their transition to stable housing.<sup>24</sup> Some of these questions were HUD-required and directly asked respondents about their health challenges, disabilities and possible use of non-medical drugs and alcohol. Other questions were age-specific and were developed to assess the unique

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<sup>23</sup> HUD designates individuals as chronically homeless if they meet two conditions, one pertaining to the length of time an individual has been homeless and the other to suffering from one of a potential group of disabilities. Specifically, a chronically homeless person must have been continuously homeless for over a year; OR has had four (4) or more episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years. A chronically homeless person must also have a physical, developmental or mental disability that hinders their ability to maintain gainful employment. It should be noted, however, that in the context of the unsheltered Homeless Count, disabilities are self-reported and may be underreported

<sup>24</sup> Some questions were HUD-required and directly asked respondents about their health challenges, disabilities, and possible use of non-medical drugs and alcohol.



challenges faced by transitional age youth.<sup>25</sup> More general questions asked all adults about their length of residency in the county, and if they were new to the community. Below we report key findings that emerged from these questions.

A significant proportion of unsheltered adults report severe disabilities and/or health conditions that correlate with their prolonged experiences with homelessness. Approximately four out of 10 unsheltered adults indicated that they *have one or more disabling health conditions* that prevent them from being employed and/or maintaining stable housing. Nearly 75 percent of these same individuals have been homeless significantly longer than a year (median of 3 years) and would be characterized as chronically homeless by HUD. With respect to specific conditions unsheltered adults cited:

- 26 percent have a debilitating cognitive or physical impairment.
- 21 percent have a severe psychiatric condition (such as severe depression or schizophrenia).
- Eight percent (8%) indicated an ongoing medical condition (diabetes, cancer, or heart disease).
- Nine percent (9%) reported that their use of alcohol or drugs prevents them from keeping a job or maintaining stable housing.<sup>26</sup>
- Most who indicated having a disabling condition (77%) cited two or more specific conditions; the most common combination was a psychiatric condition with a cognitive or physical impairment.

Despite some local concern that many people experiencing homelessness are from other areas or regions, the vast majority of unsheltered homeless individuals in Sacramento County are from Sacramento County. Approximately 93 percent of unsheltered respondents identified as either a “long-time resident of Sacramento” (55%) or “originally from Sacramento” (38%). In contrast, only seven percent (7%) of individuals said they had moved to Sacramento County within the last year; three percent (3%) had arrived within the past six months.

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<sup>25</sup> Other questions were age-specific and were developed to assess the unique challenges faced by transitional age youth. More general questions asked all adults about their length of residency in the county, and if they were new to the community.

<sup>26</sup> More generally speaking, 60% of respondents reported that they use alcohol or non-medical drugs, but only 15% of these respondents indicated that their use of substances affected their ability to hold down a job or have stable housing.

This suggests that approximately 95 adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness each night (i.e., 3%) have arrived in Sacramento within the past six months. Just over half of these newcomers say they were experiencing homelessness before they arrived in Sacramento (approximately 53 adults). About 10 percent of these adults who were homeless before arriving in Sacramento (which would correspond to an estimated 5 adults) indicated that they had moved to Sacramento as a direct result of the Camp Fire in Paradise, California (which occurred in Fall 2018).

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## 93% of unsheltered respondents identified as a long-term resident of Sacramento or originally from Sacramento.

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Former foster youth in the United States face risk for becoming homeless as adults, and this is true in Sacramento County also.<sup>27</sup> However, most of these individuals are not transitional age youth (as might be presumed) but are primarily adults over 35 years old who are homeless. Approximately 1-in-4 unsheltered adults said that they had previously spent time in foster care before age 18. This is consistent with findings from across the country but also from the 2017 Count, which reported that 22 percent of adults were been former foster youth. Also consistent from the 2017 Count, the majority of former foster youth in 2019 were adults over 35 years old (60% vs. 57%).

## What can Sacramento do better to help people experiencing homelessness?

All unsheltered individuals were asked, “What two things could Sacramento do better to help people who are experiencing homelessness?” This question was intentionally designed to elicit a short conversation between the respondent and interviewer about issues that they felt were most pressing to their experiences, to give respondents “the last word” before the survey ended. Indeed, respondents were encouraged to elaborate on whatever initiative, broad policy, or specific program changes, they felt could improve the conditions of people experiencing homelessness.<sup>28</sup> Most individuals (77%) responded to this question.

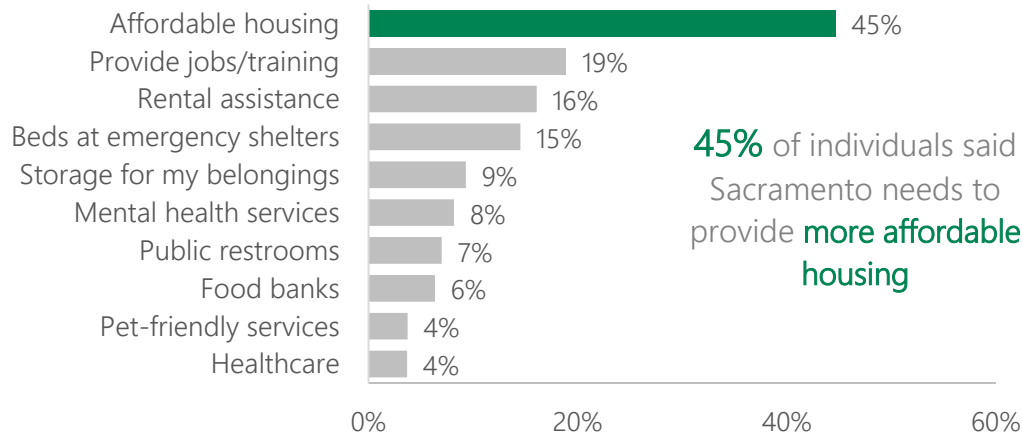
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<sup>27</sup> Berzin, S. C., Rhodes, A. M., & Curtis, M. A. (2011). Housing experiences of former foster youth: How do they fare in comparison to other youth?. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(11), 2119-2126.

Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K. & Vorhies, V. (2011). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Midwest-Eval-Outcomes-at-Age-26.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Interviewers were trained to give respondents ample space to elaborate their points, but also to gently guide the discussion to two main issues to structure the conversation. Interviewers then identified key themes discussed on the survey tool (either by typing a short descriptive narrative in the open field, or by selecting the various themes that the researcher team had pre-developed during the field testing of the survey instrument).

Table 4 | What Sacramento Could Do Better to Help People Experiencing Homelessness<sup>29</sup>



By far, the most commonly mentioned topic was the need for Sacramento County to provide “more affordable housing”—almost half of every conversation cited the lack of affordable housing as the key issue facing individuals experiencing homelessness. Nearly one out of five respondents also discussed the need for more jobs training (19%). A similar topic that was brought up by 1-in-5 respondents, was the need for more rental assistance in the county. Other notable suggestions included more beds at emergency shelters, better storage for belongings in shelters, better mental health access, and better access to restrooms/showers.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Respondents were asked to state their top two recommendations which were then recorded into pre-existing categories at the discretion of the interviewer. Responses other than the provided categories were analyzed individually and placed into a category when possible.

<sup>30</sup> Approximately 33 percent of total unsheltered respondents made a recommendation that could not be easily placed into a category.

## Section 2: Description of Subpopulations

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In this section we delve deeper into survey findings from interviews conducted with four subpopulations of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento County: transitional age youth, families with children, older adults, and veterans. These subpopulations were identified by the Homeless Count Advisory Board as key groups to structure the 2019 Count Report, given their rising numbers in the estimates of unsheltered homelessness in our community.

For each group, we provide some brief context about the unique characteristics and situations associated with the group, followed by a summary of the estimated nightly homeless count. Next, we review key findings for each group in terms of their answers to specific survey questions.<sup>31</sup>

### Transitional Age Youth

There is growing recognition that *early adulthood*—roughly defined as the age period between 18 and 25—is a time when young people navigate a number of critical developmental and social transitions related to their changing status as adults (i.e., transitions that are both physiological and cognitive, but also social, in terms of school, work, career, relationships, family etc.).<sup>32</sup> Policymakers and researchers have recently emphasized, however, that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (particularly those who grew up in poverty and/or have experienced conflict with their families) often have limited economic resources to draw upon during this turbulent and critical phase of life. Young adults who face such social disadvantages are generally categorized as “transitional age youth” and are much more likely to experience housing insecurity and struggle to maintain stable income.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> As previously discussed, demographic estimates of unsheltered homelessness were derived from the 525 surveys that were collected during the count. To broadly approximate the unsheltered population, and to account for the stratification of the sample design, the analyses of survey responses were weighted to the unsheltered distributions indicated by the 2019 Homeless Count. Specifically, researchers calculated an inverse-probability weight for each survey based on the location of where the survey had been conducted, and the household composition reported by the respondent.

<sup>32</sup> A growing body of research shows that how well a young person navigates this transitional period has far-reaching consequences throughout the life course—consequences related to socioeconomic status, family structure and wellbeing.

Shanahan, Michael J. 2000. "Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1): 667-692.

Hayward, Mark D. and Bridget K. Gorman. 2004. The long arm of childhood: The influence of early-life social conditions on men's mortality. *Demography*, 41(1):87-107.

<sup>33</sup> Osgood, D. W., Foster, E. M., & Courtney, M. E. (2010). Vulnerable populations and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of Children*, 209-229.

Indeed, transitional age youth experiencing homelessness face increased risk for victimization, incarceration, sexual exploitation, and substance use while homeless.<sup>34</sup> These experiences can have destabilizing and long term consequences on a young person's life,<sup>35</sup> including decreasing their chances of maintaining employment, completing formal education, securing housing and establishing healthy relationships.<sup>36</sup> Further, some sub-populations of youth face increased vulnerability while on the street, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, youth of color, and women.<sup>37</sup> Given the scope and far reaching consequences of youth homelessness, it is increasingly viewed as a potential site for effective interventions to have long-term impacts. HUD, for example, continually cites youth homelessness as a key at-risk group for communities to target and track. For similar reasons, HUD considers most homeless young people under 25 as "unaccompanied youth," though the term can also apply to minors.<sup>38</sup>

## Youth | Nightly Estimate

During the night of the 2019 Count, approximately **415 transitional age youth** were experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County.<sup>39</sup>

- Transitional age youth (TAY) represent approximately 8 percent of the total homeless population.
- Similar to other groups, the majority of TAY were experiencing unsheltered homelessness on the night of the count (59%).

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<sup>34</sup> Bender, K., Ferguson, K., Thompson, S., Komlo, C., & Pollio, D. (2010). Factors associated with trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder among homeless youth in three US cities: The importance of transience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 23*(1), 161-168.

<sup>35</sup> Morton, M. H., Rice, E., Blondin, M., Hsu, H., & Kull, M. (2018). *Toward a system response to ending youth homelessness: New evidence to help communities strengthen coordinated entry, assessment, and support for youth.* Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

<sup>36</sup> Courtney, 2009; Osgood et al., 2010

<sup>37</sup> Abramovich, I. A. (2013). *No fixed address: Young, queer, and restless.* In S. Gaetz, B. Grady, K. Buccieri, J. Karabanow, & A. Marsolais (Eds.), *Youth homelessness in Canada: Implications for policy and practice.* Toronto, ON: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

Gattis, M. N., & Larson, A. (2016). Perceived racial, sexual identity, and homeless status-related discrimination among Black adolescents and young adults experiencing homelessness: Relations with depressive symptoms and suicidality. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 86*(1), 79.

Ensign, J., & Panke, A. (2002). Barriers and bridges to care: Voices of homeless female adolescent youth in Seattle, Washington, USA. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 37*(2), 166-172.

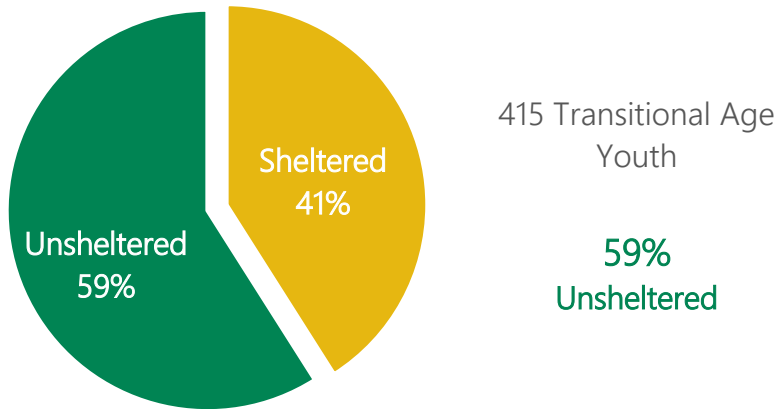
<sup>38</sup> The term "unaccompanied homeless youth" refers to young people who are homeless and who are not in the supervision of a parent or guardian. The term can be applied to youth who are under 18 ("unaccompanied minors") and youth who are ages 18-24 ("transitional age youth") (AHAR, 2017), though the majority of unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness are between ages 18-24

Morton, M. H., Dworsky, A., Matjasko, J. L., Curry, S. R., Schlueter, D., Chávez, R., & Farrell, A. F. (2018). Prevalence and correlates of youth homelessness in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 62*(1), 14-21.

<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that an additional 28 unaccompanied minors (14 unsheltered and 14 sheltered) were experiencing homelessness.

- In contrast, 41 percent of youth were experiencing sheltered homelessness, most of whom were staying in a transitional housing program.

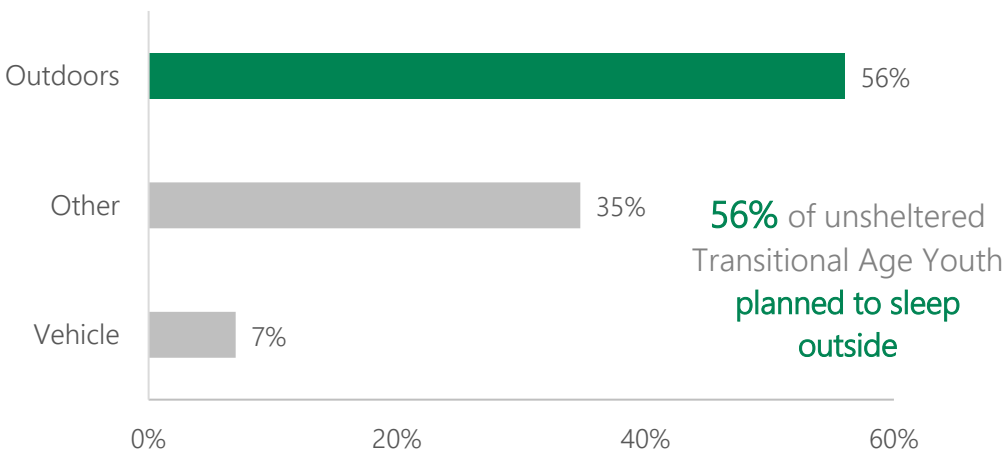
Figure 9 | Sheltered Status of Total Homeless Youth in 2019



### Youth | Sleeping Locations

When asked about where they planned to sleep, a slight majority of unsheltered TAY respondents said would be *sleeping literally outside* (56%). Nonetheless, TAY were actually less likely to report sleeping in an outdoor location compared to other adults age 25 and over (56% vs 84%). Approximately 35 percent of unsheltered TAY reported sleeping in another location such as a hotel/motel paid for by a program or the county. Seven percent (7%) reported staying in a vehicle.

Figure 10 | Sleeping Locations of Unsheltered Youth in 2019



## Youth | Demographic Characteristics

Comparing the demographic composition of individuals who are unsheltered and over age 25 to unsheltered transitional age youth (ages 18-24) reveals a couple notable findings.

Table 5 | Demographic Characteristics of Unsheltered Transitional Age Youth

Transitional Age Youth	
Gender	
Male	58%
Female	39%
Transgender	0%
Gender Non-Conforming	3%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	24%
Non-Hispanic	76%
Race	
White	27%
Black*	50%
Asian	1%
American Indian	0%
Native Hawaiian	0%
Multiracial	23%
Sexual Orientation	
Straight	77%
Gay or Lesbian	3%
Bisexual	6%
"Other"	7%
Refuse	8%

\* $p < .05$ ,  $n = 244$

- Transitional age youth are more likely to identify as Black than other adults age 25 and over. Half of the youth identified as Black (50%), compared to 27 percent of the 25+ adult population, a statistically significant difference. This is consistent with national studies that find Black individuals most overrepresented in the age category 18-24 for homelessness compared to all other age categories.<sup>40</sup>
- TAY appear less likely to identify their sexual orientation as "straight" compared to adults age 25 and over. They appear more likely to identify as Hispanic/Latinx. However, these differences did not reach statistical significance.

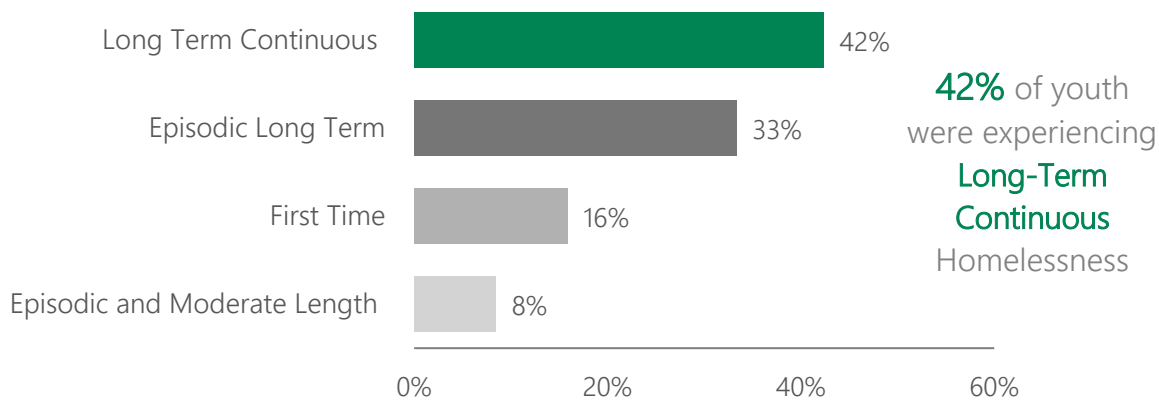
<sup>40</sup> Homeless Policy Research Institute. (2018, December). Safe parking programs. Los Angeles, CA: Sol Price Center for Social Innovation. Retrieved from <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Safe-Parking-Literature-Review.pdf>

## Youth | Length of Homelessness

As described in Section 1, respondents were asked a series of questions about their experiences with homelessness (e.g., prior experiences, length of time, prior episode etc.). Similar to other groups, we synthesized four general homeless situations that describe respondents' combined answers to ease interpretation of how individuals answered these questions collectively (see earlier discussion in Section 1 for how these situations were operationalized).

- Approximately 16 percent of transitional age youth were in a "first time and recent-homeless" situation. That is, these individuals had recently become homeless for the first time, sometime during the last six months. TAY were more likely to be newly homeless for the first time (16%) than other the general homeless populations (6%) or among families (2%).
- Eight percent (8%) of TAY were in an "episodic and moderate-length" homelessness" situation.
- One-third (33%) of TAY were in a situation that could be characterized as "episodic and long term" homelessness.
- Finally, 42 percent could be characterized as experiencing a "long term and continuous" bout of homelessness that has lasted over a year.

Figure 11 | Length of Homelessness of Unsheltered Youth in 2019



## Youth | Unique Experiences and Risk Factors

All individuals were asked about their specific experiences or challenges that may complicate their transition to stable housing, but youth were also asked age-specific questions (e.g., questions about educational attainment or early parenting). Analyses of these questions revealed the following:

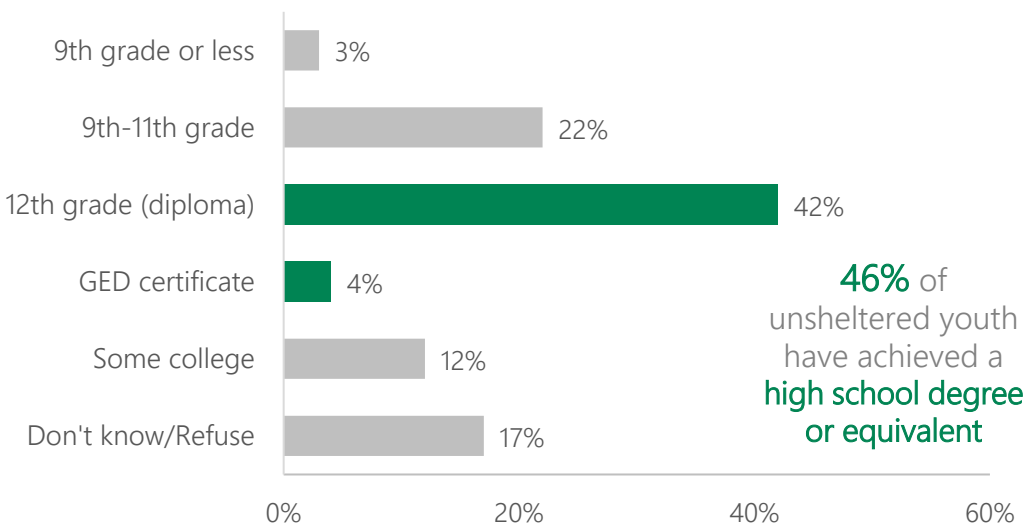
- Approximately one third (34%) of unsheltered youth indicated that they had been in foster care or a group home before the age of 18.



- Eight percent (8%) of unsheltered youth indicated they were currently pregnant or expecting to become a parent in the next 9 months. There were 33 TAY who were unsheltered and parenting in households that included 65 children.
- The vast majority of these unsheltered youth parents were female (81%) and Black (61%), and 18 percent identified as Hispanic/Latinx. Five of the unsheltered TAY-headed households met the criteria for chronic homelessness.
- The majority of unsheltered TAY (62%) indicated that they were long-time residents of Sacramento County (more than a year), while 34 percent of TAY indicated that they were originally from Sacramento County. Only three percent (3%) indicated that they had recently arrived (within the last six months).

Young adults under 24 were also asked specific questions about their education. Responses indicated that while the average age of TAY respondents was 22, only 46 percent of unsheltered TAY have achieved a high school diploma or equivalent.

Table 6 | Educational Attainment of Unsheltered Youth



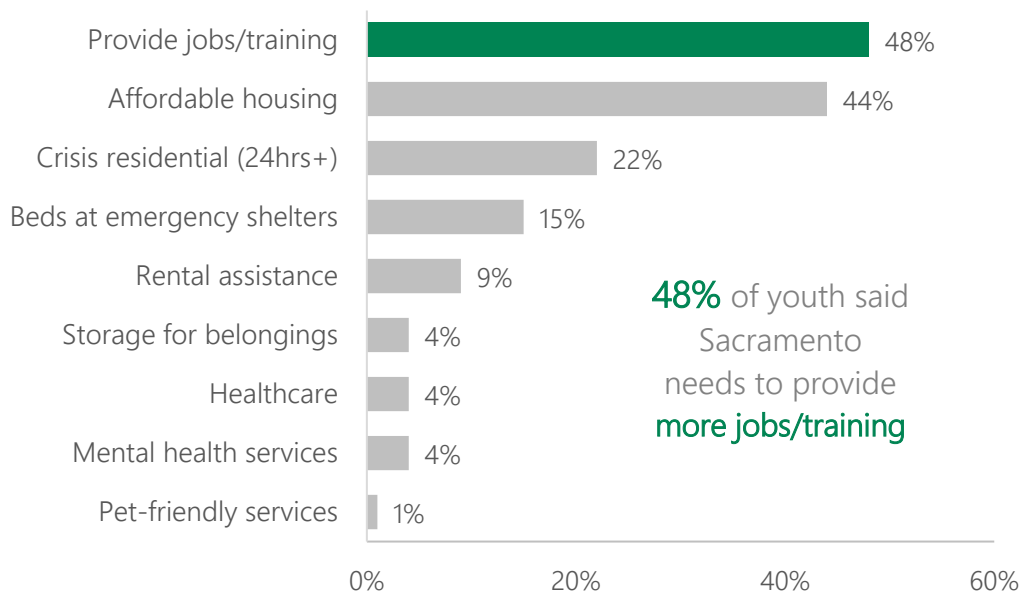
- The highest proportion (42%) of transitional age youth had completed 12th grade (and received a high school diploma), four percent (4%) have a GED, and 12 percent who had completed some college.
- None had received vocational training, a postsecondary degree, though 12 percent had attended some college.
- Twenty-two percent of youth whose highest level of education was 9th-11th grade and three percent (3%) have a 9th grade education or less, meaning that 25 percent of unsheltered TAY in Sacramento County left school before graduating from high school.

- Among unsheltered TAY who responded to the question about school enrollment, 12 percent indicated that they were currently enrolled in school, 76 percent indicated that they were not currently in school, and 12 percent said that they were not sure or did not want to say.

## Voices of Youth | What Could Sacramento Do Better?

Transitional age youth provided a variety of responses to the question, “What two things could Sacramento do better to help people who are experiencing homelessness?” The most commonly mentioned area for improvement noted by youth experiencing homelessness was “provide more jobs/training” (48%), followed by “more affordable housing” (44%) and “crisis residential [beds] available for more than 24 hours” (22%). Other notable suggestions included more beds at emergency shelters (15%) and rental assistance (9%). Suggestions that did not fall into pre-identified categories included financial training, stop criminalizing camping, less pressure from law enforcement, more housing for families, and “don’t look down on us.”<sup>41</sup>

Figure 12 | What Unsheltered Youth Believe Sacramento Could Do Better



<sup>41</sup> Approximately 24 percent of TAY provided suggestions that could not be easily placed into a category.

## Families with Children

Across the United States, families with children make up approximately one-third of those experiencing homelessness. A disproportionate share of this population, however, lives in California, including 12 percent of the nationwide total.<sup>42</sup> This trend likely reflects the expensive housing market across the state, which has been correlated to homelessness amongst families with children.<sup>43</sup>

Homelessness is associated with many negative effects for children and families such as parental depression and behavioral problems and mental health symptoms among their children.<sup>44</sup> In addition, children who have been homeless have higher rates of elevated lead levels and death compared to other children, and more mental health problems compared to housed low-income children.<sup>45</sup> Homeless families with children may also face stigma and greater scrutiny of their parenting behaviors.<sup>46</sup> This increased scrutiny could lead some families experiencing homelessness to avoid shelters or other needed services. This, coupled with potentially living in unsanitary conditions, results in high service needs among families who have experienced homelessness, which continue even after they obtain housing.<sup>47</sup>

Although the number of families experiencing homelessness has decreased on average throughout the United States these numbers are thought to be underestimates of the actual rate of families lacking housing for several reasons.<sup>48</sup>

- Families with children experiencing homelessness may be obtaining services such as short-term motel vouchers, and thus may not have met the earlier definitions of homelessness.
- Families who are fearful of separation may consequently avoid shelters or areas that are frequently counted in Homeless Counts.

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<sup>42</sup> Henry, M., Mahathey, A., Morrill, T., Robinson, A., Shivji, A., Watt, R., & Associates, A. (2018). *The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. Retrieved from

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5783/2018-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us/>

<sup>43</sup> Fargo, J. D., Munley, E. A., Byrne, T. H., Montgomery, A. E., & Culhane, D. P. (2013). Community-level characteristics associated with variation in rates of homelessness among families and single adults. *American Journal of Public Health*(103), S340-347. doi:0.2105/AJPH.2013.301619

<sup>44</sup> Mcguire-Schwartz, M., Small, L. A., Parker, G., Kim, P., & McKay, M. (2015). Relationships between caregiver violence exposure, caregiver depression, and youth behavioral health among homeless families. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 25(5), 587-594.

<sup>45</sup> Kerker, B. D., Bainbridge, J., Kennedy, J., Bennani, Y., Agerton, T., Marder, D., . . . Thorpe, L. E. (2011). A population-based assessment of the health of homeless families in New York City, 2001-2003. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(3), 546-553.

Bassuk, E. L., Richard, M. K., & Tsertsvadze, A. (2015). The prevalence of mental illness in homeless children: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 54(2), 86-96.

<sup>46</sup> Shinn, M. B., Rog, D. R., & Culhane, D. P. (2005). Family homelessness: Background research findings and policy options. *Departmental Papers (SPP)*, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Culhane, D. P., Park, J. M., & Metraux, S. (2011). The patterns and costs of services use among homeless families. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 39(7), 815-825.

<sup>48</sup> Henry et al., 2018

- Finally, some unsheltered families with children may prefer to reside in tents or vehicles—locations that are difficult to initiate a survey. In general, Homeless Count protocols state that individuals sleeping in these settings should not be disturbed, potentially leading counts to miss families with children. This issue may be particularly significant in Sacramento, as the 2015 and 2017 Sacramento Homeless Counts revealed a substantial increase in the number of tents and cars where it is suspected that individuals are sleeping.

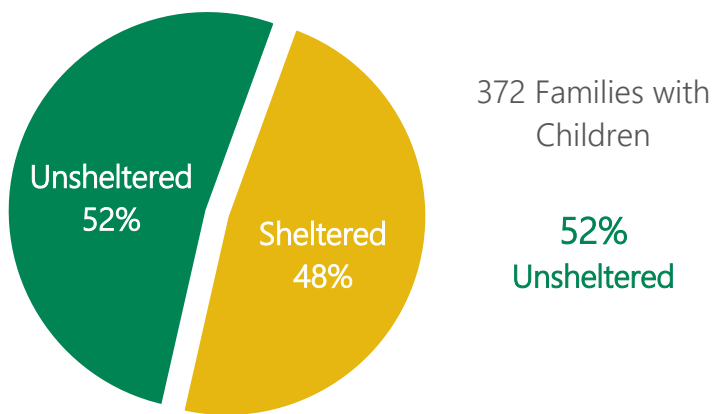
The 2019 Homeless Count instituted significant methodological improvements to better reach families with children experiencing homelessness. These efforts may have contributed to a larger estimate of unsheltered families than in previous years.<sup>49</sup>

### Families with Children | Nightly Estimate

On a single night in January, approximately **372 families with children** were experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County.

- These 372 households consisted of 451 adults and 688 children under age 18 (1,139 in total), representing approximately 20% of all persons experiencing homelessness in the county.
- About half of family *households* with children experiencing homelessness (52% or 195 households) were unsheltered.

Figure 13 | Sheltered Status of Total Families with Children in 2019



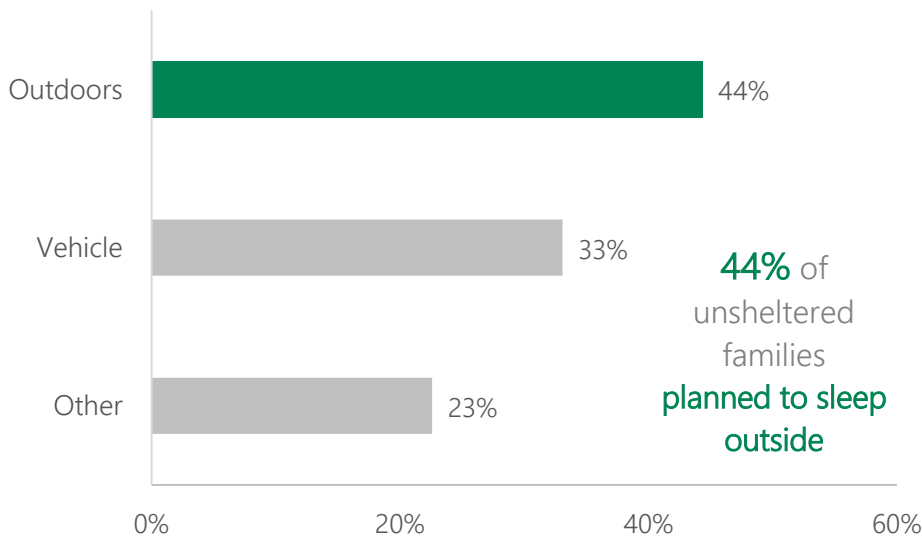
<sup>49</sup> As discussed there was a more coordinated effort to conduct *day-after service count* at day programs serving families. For example, CSUS researchers visited two agencies serving homeless families with children and interviewed a number of families who had stayed in vehicles or a county-paid motel on the night of the count. This year 363 tents and 168 cars/RVs were reported. Based on the reports of volunteers, approximately 15-20% of cars and 10-15% of tents were occupied by families.

- There were 567 persons within 195 unsheltered families with children, which represent approximately 15 percent of the unsheltered homeless population in Sacramento County (567 individuals in families out of 3,900 total persons who were unsheltered). This rate is much higher than national averages, where 90-95 percent of families are found in shelters.<sup>50</sup>
- There were 542 persons within the 174 sheltered families, which represent 34 percent of the sheltered homeless population (542 out of the 1,670 total persons who were sheltered).

## Families with Children | Sleeping Locations

Surveys conducted with unsheltered families with children revealed that the most common sleeping location was outdoors, including under a highway underpass, on the street, in a park or an outdoor encampment (44%). One third (33%) reported sleeping in a vehicle such as a car, RV or truck. The remaining 20% of families reported staying temporarily in a motel/hotel because of an emergency voucher from a program or the county, or at a bus station. While these individuals in motels/hotels paid for by a program were not previously included in Point-in-Time Homeless Counts, HUD now defines these families as homeless.

Figure 14 | Sleeping Locations of Unsheltered Families with Children in 2019



<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2018). The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress: Part 1 Point-in-Time estimates of homelessness. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

## Families with Children | Demographic Characteristics

The composition of unsheltered families can vary substantially (e.g., single parent with between 1-5 children vs. two-parent household with one child), nonetheless, the modal homeless family sleeping outdoors consists of a single, female-headed household, where the parent is Black/African-American, in their mid-30s, is with 1-2 young children (aged between 4-9). More specifically results indicate 63 percent of families were single-headed, while 37 percent reported a present partner. The average age of parents was 38, though age varied significantly (most ranging in age from teens to parents in their mid-40s, with some over 55). Parents tended to be younger than non-parents (and in particularly more likely to be 18-24 than other groups). Seventeen percent of households with children experiencing homelessness were headed by someone aged 18-24 (i.e., transitional age youth). Parents reported an average of 1-2 children and the average family was a three-person household.

Next, looking at individual adult parents in these households, as might be expected, parents were more likely to be female than non-parents, though some male parents, as well as some single-male parents were interviewed. Irrespective of gender, however, the racial disproportionality of Black/African Americans experiencing homelessness was much more acute for parents than non-parents. Parents were twice as likely to report being Black than non-parents, and this difference was statistically significant.

Table 7 | Demographics of Unsheltered Parents

<b>Adult Parents</b>	
<b>Age</b>	
18-24*	17%
25-34	25%
35-44	22%
45-54	31%
55+	6%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male*	44%
Female*	56%
Transgender	0%
Gender Non-Conforming	0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	27%
Non-Hispanic	73%
<b>Race</b>	
White**	20%
Black**	55%
Asian	0%
American Indian	4%
Native Hawaiian	4%
Multiracial	17%

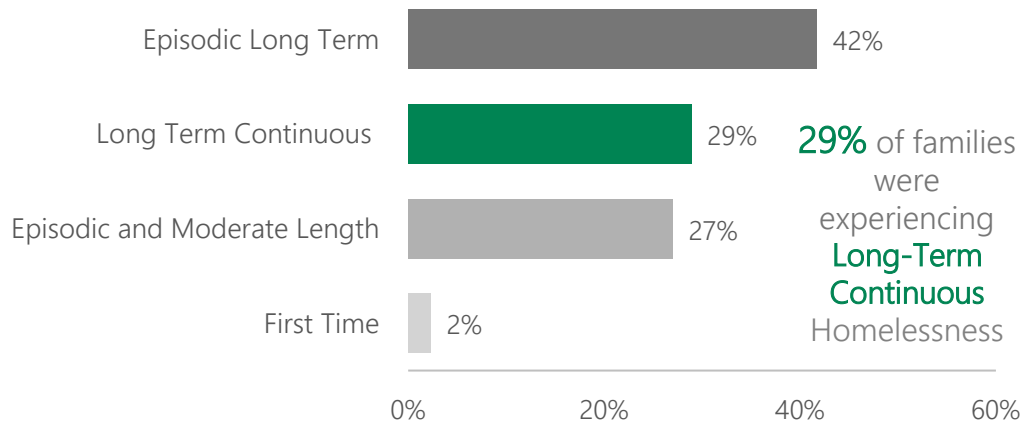
\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01, n = 235

## Families with Children | Length of Homelessness

Very few unsheltered families (2%) were in a “first time and recent-homeless” situation. Instead, a much larger proportion (27%) were facing an “episodic and moderate-length” homelessness” situation. Another 42 percent of unsheltered families were in a situation that could be characterized as “episodic and long term” homelessness. Finally, 29 percent could be characterized as experiencing a “long term and continuous” bout of homelessness that has lasted over a year.

Overall, a smaller proportion of family households were experiencing long-term, continuous homelessness (29%) than the overall population (59%), families were experiencing long periods of episodic homelessness, likely moving in and out of homelessness with periods of intermittent housing insecurity.

Figure 15 | Length of Homelessness for Unsheltered Families with Children in 2019



## Families with Children | Unique Experiences and Risk factors

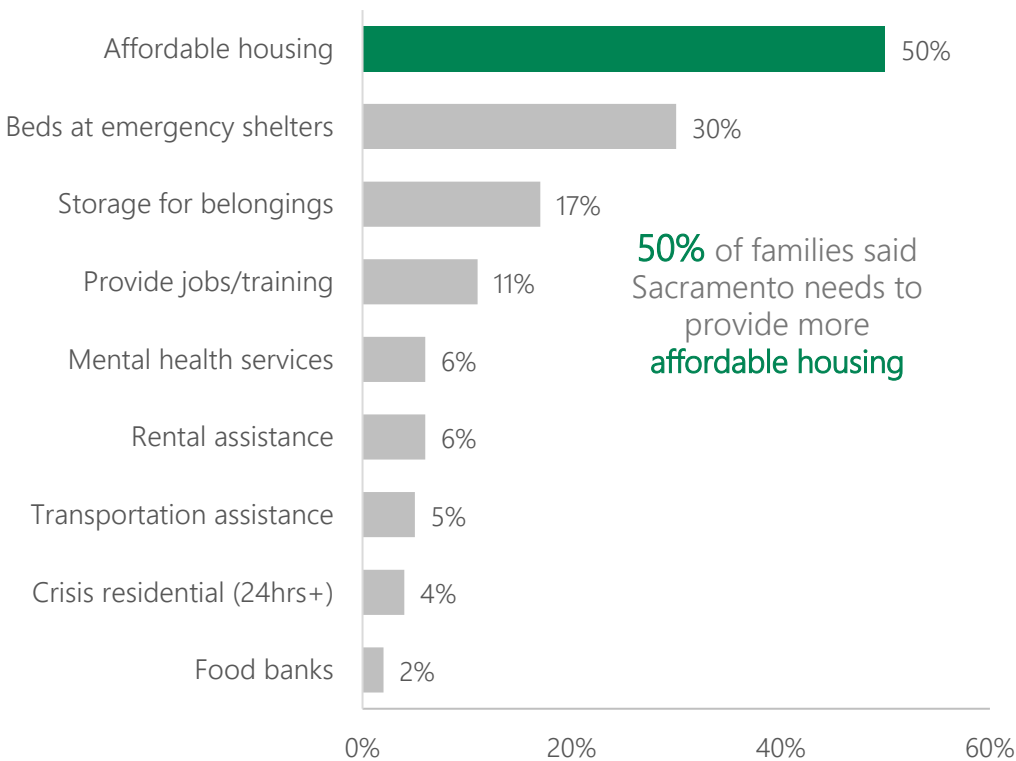
Approximately 29 percent of unsheltered parents met the specific criteria of chronic homelessness in terms of the length of time they had experienced homelessness and having a disability. The majority of these parents reported having a mental or physical disability that is preventing them from accessing stable housing and/or employment. Per HUD guidelines, if any person within a household is chronically homeless, then everyone in that household is considered chronically homeless. Consequently, the number of chronically homeless individuals within these households is relatively high (around 38%).

## Voices of Families with Children | What Could Sacramento Do Better?

Families with children that were experiencing homelessness reported many service and support needs. These included permanent and temporary housing supports, as well as employment, mental health services, transportation, and food banks. Specifically, half of unsheltered parents believed that Sacramento should address the gap in affordable housing. Many (30%) also mentioned a need for

more beds at emergency shelters and 17 percent indicated a need for storage space for belongings. Other recommendations<sup>51</sup> listed in the open-ended section included a charging station for cell phones; a place to throw away trash; public showers and bathrooms; family therapy; having a place to stay without police harassment; more family-specific shelters/housing; show more sympathy/empathy; and self-referral to shelters/needs instead of the DHA list.

Figure 16 | What Unsheltered Parents Believe Sacramento Could Do Better



## Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Demographers estimate that during the next decade the population of older adults in the United States will experience marked growth, largely due to the aging Baby Boomers generation; by 2030, it is estimated that 1-out-of-5 Americans will be over 65.<sup>52</sup> This ongoing demographic shift is anticipated to have substantial impacts on the number of people experiencing homelessness, particularly individuals over the age of 50. Baby Boomers may be more prone to experience homeless

<sup>51</sup> Half of unsheltered parents provided a suggestion that could not be combined with other responses into a category, but are nonetheless listed in the text.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2014



in later life than previous generations, and some anticipate a 33 percent net increase in older adult homelessness by 2020.<sup>53</sup>

There are two main dynamics commonly noted by which more people are today experiencing homelessness in later life: some chronically homeless individuals are gradually maturing into older age after years of living on the street, while others are facing housing insecurity for the first time in their lives due to a sudden destabilizing event. Particularly with respect to the latter dynamic, studies find that a substantial number of older individuals face homelessness due to a sudden social and economic disruption related an employment change, divorce, an ailing parent or family member, or foreclosure.<sup>54</sup> Many older adults in the U.S. are susceptible to housing insecurity given insufficient savings and retirement plans, but also due to the mismatch between the rapid increases in the costs of housing and fixed-incomes of most seniors who rent.

Regardless of the entry point, the experience of being homeless accelerates the aging process substantially, with some researchers suggesting that homeless individuals age twice as fast as those securely housed.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, homelessness is associated with a much higher prevalence of interrelated health problems, including hypothermia, sleep deprivation, dehydration, infectious diseases (e.g., tuberculosis), osteoarthritis, and osteoporosis. Homelessness in later age is also associated with the early onset of cognitive and mental health challenges as older adults struggle to manage the

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<sup>53</sup> Donley, A. M. (2010). Sunset years in sunny Florida: Experiences of homelessness among the elderly. *Care Management Journals*, 1(4), 239-244. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/1521-0987.11.4.239>

Kimblar, K. J., DeWees, M. A., & Harris, A. N. (2017). Characteristics of the old and homeless: Identifying distinct service needs. *Aging & Mental Health*, 21(2), 190–198. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2015.1088512>

<sup>54</sup> Burns, V. F., Sussman, T., & Bourgeois-Guérin, V. (2018). Later-life homelessness as disenfranchised grief. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 37(2), 171-184. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0714980818000090>

<sup>55</sup> A number of studies find that by the time a chronically homeless adult reaches 50 years old, they already present with typically classified geriatric conditions and, thus, are better considered “elderly” –in the sense of being more similar to those who are over 80 years old and domiciled.

Bazari, A., Patanwala, M., Kaplan, L. M., Auerswald, C. L., & Kushel, M. B. (2018). “The thing that really gets me is the future”: Symptomatology in older homeless adults in the Hope Home study. *Journal of Pain & Symptom Management*, 56(2), 195–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2018.05.011>

Brown, R. T., Hemati, K., Riley, E. D., Lee, C. T., Ponath, C., Tieu, L., Guzman, D., & Kushel, M. B. (2017). Geriatric conditions in a population-based sample of older homeless adults. *Gerontologist*, 57(4), 757–766. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnw011>

Grenier, A., Sussman, T., Barken, R., Bourgeois- Guérin, V., & Rothwell, D. (2016). ‘Growing old’ in shelters and ‘on the street’: experiences of older homeless people. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 59(6), 458-477. DOI: 10.1080/01634372.2016.1235067

Martins, D. C., and Sullivan, M. A. (2006). *Vulnerable older adults: Health care needs and interventions*, 123-144. New York, NY: Springer.

Salem, B., Ma-Pham, J., Chen, S., Brecht, M.-L., Antonio, A., & Ames, M. (2017). Impact of a community-based frailty intervention among middle-aged and older prefrail and frail homeless women: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 53(6), 688–694. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-017-0147-2>

Shinn, M., Gibbons-Benton, J., & Brown, S. R. (2015). Poverty, homelessness, and family break-up. *Child Welfare*, 94(1), 105-122.

Conright, K., Simonis, R., Wagar, M. A., and Chau, D. (2018). End-of-life considerations in homelessness and aging. In Chau, D., & Gass, A. P. M. F. (Eds.). *Homeless older populations: A practical guide for the interdisciplinary care team*, 273-283. New York, NY: Springer.

“symptom burden” of living with insecure housing. Moreover, most programs and services that work with the homeless are often ill prepared to address the varied and complex needs of older individuals.<sup>56</sup>

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The average age of the unsheltered adult was 42, with over 40 percent of participants reporting ages above 45.

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## Older Adults | Nightly Estimate

As discussed in Section 1, the average age of the unsheltered adult in Sacramento County was 42, with over 40 percent of participants reporting ages above 45 years old. Accordingly, a sizable proportion of the adult homeless population in Sacramento are in their 50s or older (32%). Older adults (age 55 and over) make up 1-out-of-5 of the individuals experiencing homelessness on the night of the 2019 Count in Sacramento. However, there is also a clear decline in the number of unsheltered individuals over 59. This pattern is consistent with a number of studies that similarly cite both the *greying of the homeless population* but also the clear underrepresentation of individuals in their 60s living on the streets.<sup>57</sup>

On a single night in January approximately **1,079 older adults** (55 and older) were experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County.

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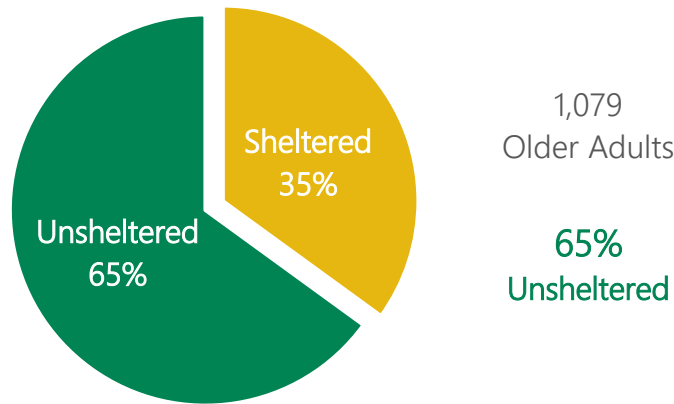
<sup>56</sup> Bazari, A., Patanwala, M., Kaplan, L. M., Auerswald, C. L., & Kushel, M. B. (2018).

<sup>57</sup> This pattern is may be due, in part, to safety net programs targeting senior citizens that commence at age 65, (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, etc.) which improve an individual’s ability to transition to secure housing.<sup>57</sup> However, people experiencing homelessness have 3-4 times higher rates of age-adjusted mortality than adults who are not homeless. Indeed, the majority of homeless deaths occurs between 42 and 52, long before safety net programs commence. Cagle, J. G. (2009). Weathering the storm: Palliative care and elderly homeless persons. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 23(1), 29-46. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02763890802664588>

Donley, A. M. (2010); Martins & Sullivan, 2006;

Hibbs, J. R., Benner, L., Klugman, L., Spencer, R., Macchia, I., Mellinger, A. K., & Fife, D. (1994). Mortality in a cohort of homeless adults in Philadelphia. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 331(5), 304-309.

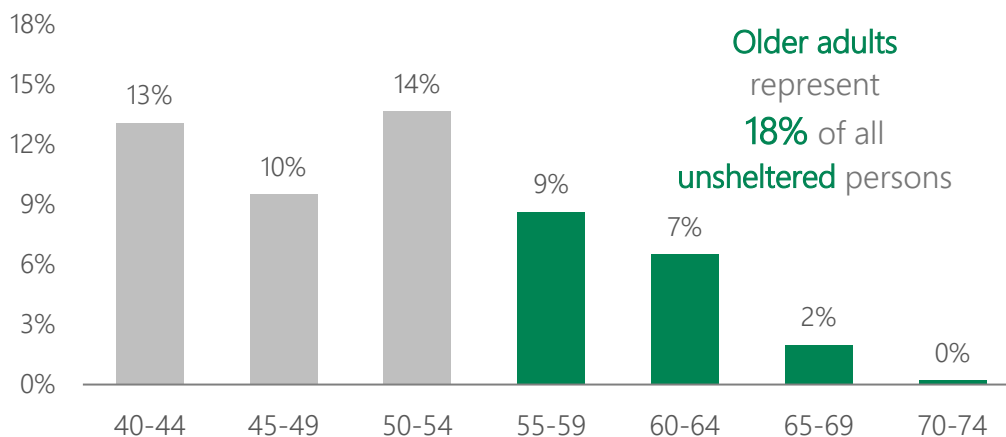
Figure 17 | Sheltered Status of Total Seniors in 2019



As the figure above shows, an estimated 700 older adults were experiencing unsheltered homelessness (65%) while a total 376 older adults were staying in shelters (35%).

- Older adults represent 1-out-of-4 individuals staying in shelters (23% of 1,670), and 1-out-of-5 of all individuals sleeping outside (700 out of 3,900).
- Though older adults over 54 represent a significant proportion of individuals using shelters, the data nonetheless indicate that the majority of elders *were not* using shelters but rather were unsheltered (65% vs. 35%).

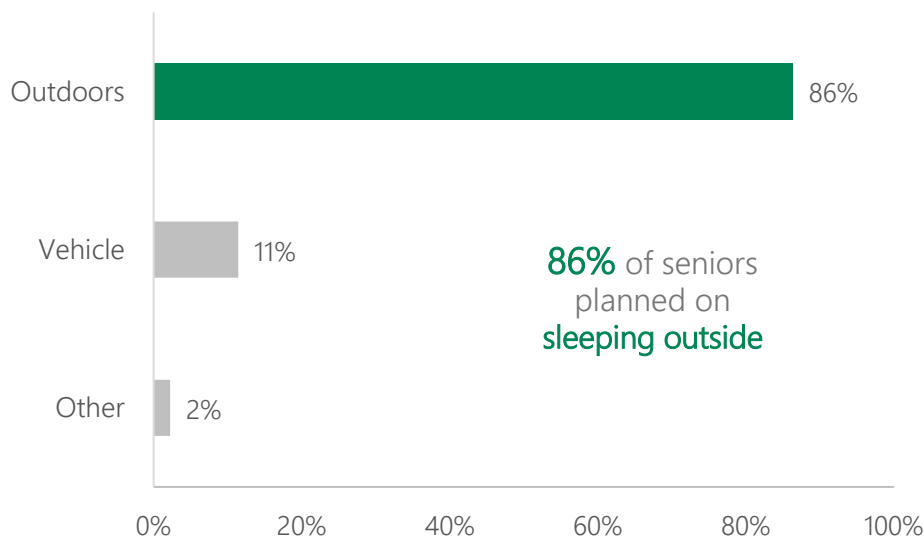
Figure 18 | Age Distribution of Unsheltered Adults 40 and Older in 2019



## Older Adults | Sleeping Locations

The vast majority of unsheltered individuals over 54 (86%) reported *sleeping literally outside* on the night of the Homeless Count; including the 65 percent that had planned to sleep on “the streets or underpass” or some type of “outdoor encampment” (12%), or other “outside location” (9%). A significant, but substantially smaller proportion of individuals indicated sleeping in a vehicle (11%).

Figure 19 | Sleeping Locations of Unsheltered Adults 40 and Older in 2019



## Older Adults | Demographic Characteristics

The general demographic profile of older adults suggest that a slight majority of adults self-identified as White (55%) and cisgender male (68%). However, this is not substantially different than the general composition of adults under age 55 sleeping outdoors (45% and 65%).

- Older adults were much less likely to self-identify as Hispanic compared to younger individuals sleeping outside (8% vs 21%) or identify as American Indian (4% vs. 11%).
- Interestingly, there was no significant difference between the sexual orientation of older and younger adults as might be presumed; approximately 10 percent of older adults identified as either Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual or some other non-conforming sexual identity--which is not significantly different from younger age groups.

Table 8 | Demographics of Unsheltered Seniors (55+)

<b>Seniors</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	68%
Female	32%
Transgender	0%
Gender Non-Conforming	0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	8%
Non-Hispanic**	92%
<b>Race</b>	
White	55%
Black	32%
Asian	0%
American Indian*	4%
Native Hawaiian	2%
Multiracial	7%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Straight	89%
Gay or Lesbian	5%
Bisexual	1%
Other	4%
Refuse	2%

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01, n = 703

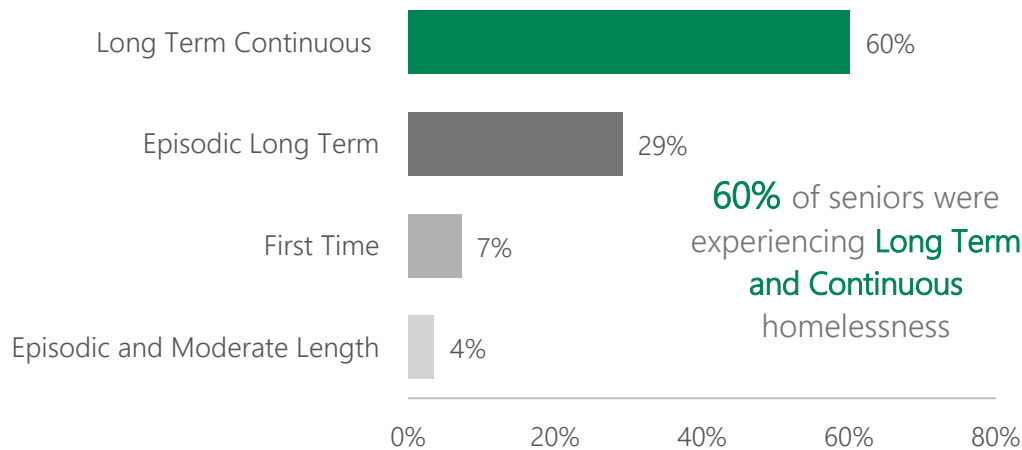
## Older Adults | Length of Homelessness

Findings from the survey of unsheltered adults were analyzed to look at the length of homelessness among older adults.

- Approximately seven percent (7%) of older adults were in a “first time and recent-homeless” situation. These individuals had become for the first time in their lives, during the last six months.
- About four percent (4%) of older adults were in an “episodic and moderate-length” homelessness” situation and 29 percent of older adults were in a situation that could be characterized as “episodic and long term” homelessness.
- Finally, 60 percent could be characterized as experiencing a “long term and continuous” bout of homelessness that has lasted over a year.

For the most part, these patterns were not very different than other adults, as reported previously; though it is notable that a significant proportion (7%) of older adults are experiencing homelessness for the first time in later life. Older adults were less likely to specifically experience “episodic and moderate-length” situations compared to the total population (4% vs. 10%). Instead, older adults were much more likely to report prolonged periods and continuous experiences with homelessness than shorter or intermittent situations.

Figure 20 | Length of Homelessness for Unsheltered Adults 40 and Older in 2019



### Older Adults | Unique Experiences and Risk Factors

Similar to other groups already discussed, older adults were asked questions about various experiences and challenges that may complicate their transition to stable housing. Below are the most notable patterns that emerged.

Older adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness are mostly younger elders (i.e., between 55-65), from Sacramento, sleeping literally outside and alone. As previously discussed, the age distribution of older adults shows that there is a substantial proportion of adults 55 and older sleeping literally outdoors, but the size of this group quickly declines between age 60 to 65; there are relatively few individuals older than 65. Most of these older adults were interviewed by themselves (59%) or with one other friend (28%), who is not a partner or family member. Further, the overwhelming majority of elders (96%) who are homeless in the County are either long-time residents of Sacramento (68%) or originally from the region (28%).

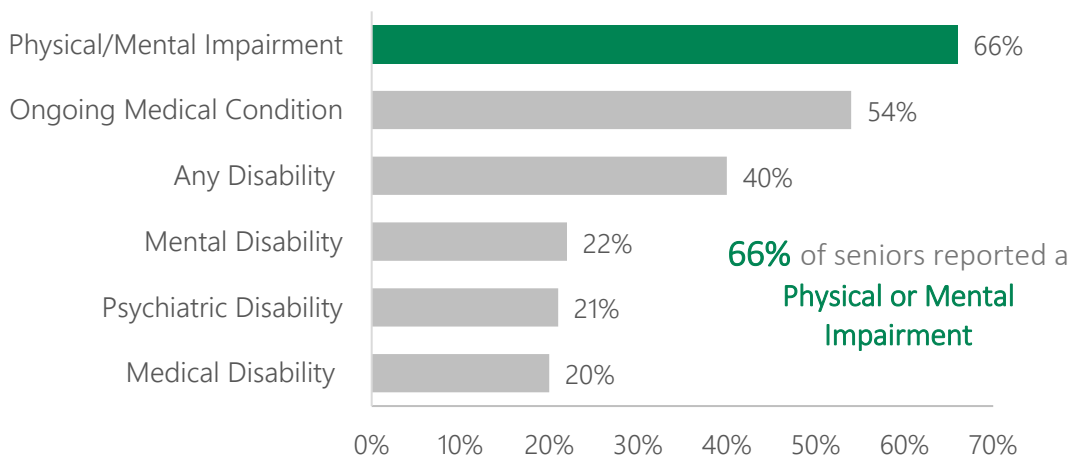
The experience of being homeless clearly compounds the effects of health and mental health conditions. Older adults are more likely to report an ongoing medical condition (54%) and a mental or physical disability (66%), compared to younger adults. Though these conditions contribute to challenges that older adults face, they were not more or less likely to say that these conditions were severe enough to prevent them from obtaining employment or securing housing, as compared to unsheltered homeless (41% vs 40%).

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## The social condition of being homeless clearly compounds the effects of health and mental health conditions.

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Figure 21 | Reported Conditions of Unsheltered Seniors (55+)

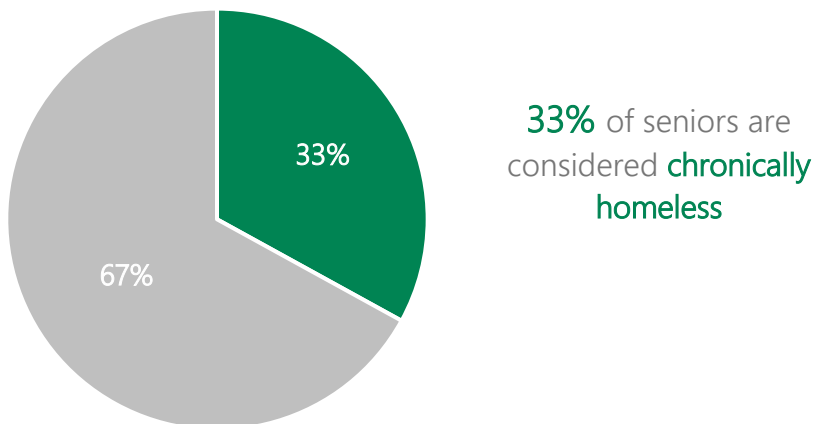


Older adults were much more likely to be veterans than younger adults; nearly a third of adults 55 or older had served in the military. Put differently, over 45 percent of all unsheltered veterans are 55 or older. Interestingly, older adults are less likely to report Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than younger adults (32% vs. 45%), though they are as likely to indicate experiencing depression or anxiety (51% vs. 52%). Older adults are also less likely to say that these conditions are debilitating. Thirty three percent (33%) met the HUD definition for chronically homeless.

Older adults are more likely to be receiving some sort of social support via public benefit (either Social Security Insurance (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)); however, the rate in which they say they are enrolled in these programs is lower than might be expected. Approximately, 40 percent of older adults report receiving either SSI or SSDI, which is twice the rate of younger adults (18%).

Figure 22 | Chronic Homeless Status of Unsheltered Seniors (55+)

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### Voices of Older Adults | What Could Sacramento Do Better?

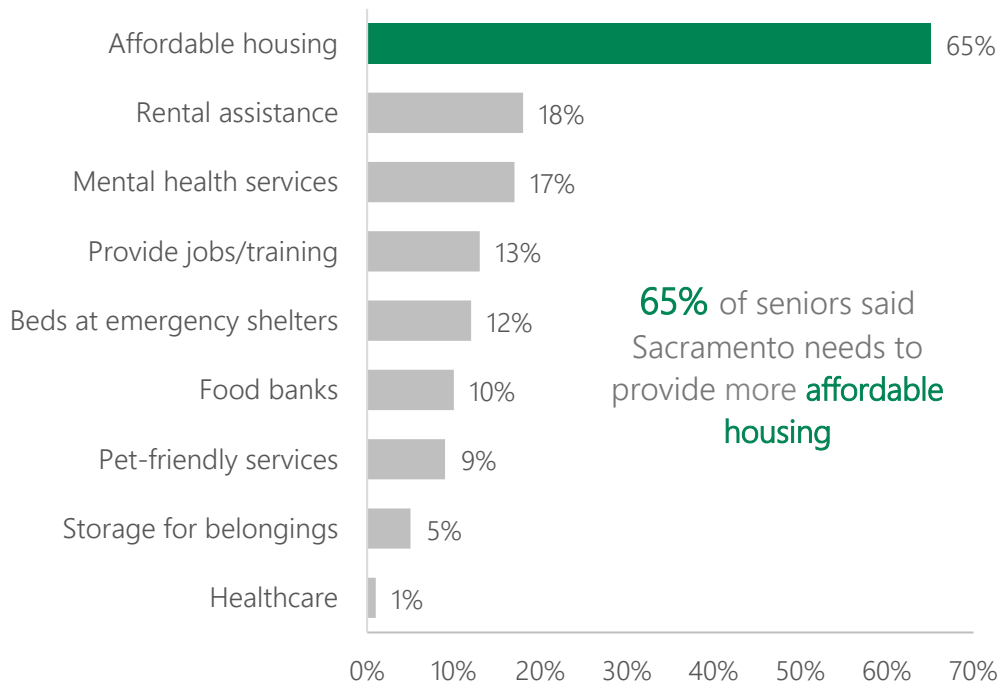
Older adults were more adamant than any other group that affordable housing is a critical issue that needs to be addressed in the county; while nearly every group identified the need for more affordable housing, older adults were three times more likely to raise this issue than any other (65%). For some respondents, this was the only issue that they raised with interviewers. Older adults similarly discussed the need for rental assistance programs (18%) as well as better access to mental health programs. One of the more unique views expressed by older adults was the need for more shelters and housing programs that accept pets as well as the need for more food banks in the county (both issues, raised by approximately 10 percent of older adults).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Approximately 36 percent of seniors made a recommendation that could not be easily placed into a category.



Figure 23 | What Unsheltered Older Adults Believe Sacramento Could Do Better



## Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

Most recent national estimates suggest that approximately nine percent of all adults experiencing homelessness are veterans.<sup>59</sup> For the purposes of the Homeless Count, veterans are individuals who have served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or on active duty through the National Guard or as a Reservist. There are a variety of reasons why veterans are at risk of homelessness, including poverty, other economic hardships, social isolation, family conflict, trauma, and mental health conditions.<sup>60</sup>

Although rates of homelessness among veterans have been declining the United States (as much as 45.5% from 2009-2017), individuals with a military background remain at higher risk of homelessness than the non-veteran population.<sup>61</sup> While national trends suggest that veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to sheltered than unsheltered, the reverse is true in California where

<sup>59</sup> Henry, M., Mahathey, A., Morrill, T., Robinson, A., Shivji, A., Watt, R., & Associates, A. (2018). The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved from

<sup>60</sup> Tsai, J. & Rosenheck, R.A. (2015) Risk factors for homelessness among U.S. veterans. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 37(1) 177- 195.

<sup>61</sup> AHAR 2017; National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2016). *The state of homelessness in America*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from: <https://www.endhomelessness.org/soh2016>

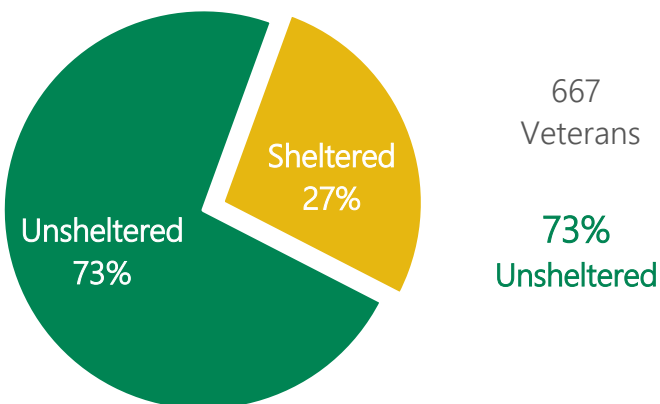
the vast majority of veterans experiencing homelessness in California are unsheltered (67%).<sup>62</sup> California is also home to the highest proportion of veterans experiencing homelessness in any state (25%).<sup>63</sup>

## Veterans | Nightly Estimate

On a single night in January, **667 veterans** were experiencing either sheltered or unsheltered homelessness in Sacramento County.

- Veterans represent approximately 12 percent of all persons experiencing homelessness in the county.
- The majority (73%) of these veterans were unsheltered, a similar unsheltered proportion as in the overall homeless population in Sacramento County (70%).
- Of those who were sheltered, half were in emergency shelters and half were in transitional housing programs.

Figure 24 | Sheltered Status of Total Veterans in 2019



<sup>62</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018). *Homelessness in America: Focus on veterans*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Homelessness\\_in\\_America.\\_Focus\\_on\\_Veterans.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Homelessness_in_America._Focus_on_Veterans.pdf)

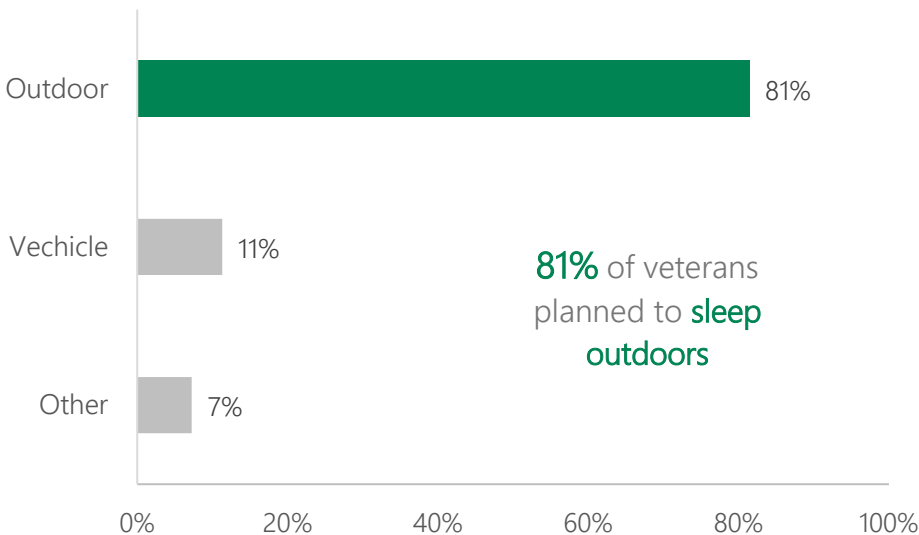
<sup>63</sup> AHAR, 2018

## Veterans | Sleeping Locations

As shown in Figure 25 below, the majority (81%) of unsheltered veterans were staying outdoors, such as on the street, sidewalk, underpass, in a park, or an outdoor encampment. Eleven percent (11%) reported staying in a vehicle, and seven percent (7%) reported staying in another location such as an abandoned building or a bus/train station.

Figure 25 below, the majority (81%) of unsheltered veterans were staying outdoors, such as on the street, sidewalk, underpass, in a park, or an outdoor encampment. Eleven percent (11%) reported staying in a vehicle, and seven percent (7%) reported staying in another location such as an abandoned building or a bus/train station.

Figure 25 | Sleeping Locations of Unsheltered Veterans in 2019



## Veterans | Demographic Characteristics

Unsheltered veterans were on average approximately eight years older than non-veteran adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness (50 versus 42 years old respectively). Compared to unsheltered non-veteran adults, the population of unsheltered veterans had a higher proportion who were male, higher proportion white, and lower proportion Hispanic/Latinx, however the differences between veterans and non-veterans across these demographic characteristics were not statistically significant.

Table 9 | Demographics of Unsheltered Veterans

<b>Veterans</b>	
<b>Age</b>	
18-24	1%
25-34	11%
35-44	20%
45-54	26%
55+	42%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	72%
Female	26%
Transgender	1%
Gender Non-Conforming	2%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic	9%
Non-Hispanic	91%
<b>Race</b>	
White	57%
Black	24%
Asian	0%
American Indian	8%
Native Hawaiian	3%
Multiracial	8%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Straight	88%
Gay or Lesbian	4%
Bisexual	<1%
Other	6%
Refuse	1%

n = 488

## Veterans | Length of Homelessness

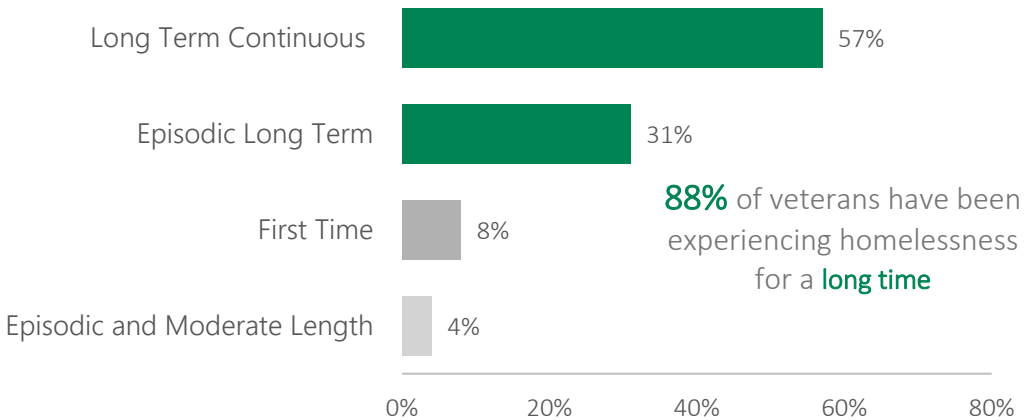
Veterans were also asked about their length of homelessness situation.

- Approximately eight percent (8%) of veterans were in a “first time and recent-homeless” situation.

- Four percent (4%) of veterans were in an “episodic and moderate-length” homelessness” situation.
- About a third of veterans (31%) were in a situation that could be characterized as “episodic and long term” homelessness. Finally, 57 percent could be characterized as experiencing a “long term and continuous” bout of homelessness that has lasted over a year.

Overall, length of homelessness among unsheltered veterans looks very similar to patterns seen among unsheltered older adults age 55+ and the total unsheltered population. In particular, very few veterans were experiencing a recent or first-time homeless experience. In contrast, 88 percent of veterans have been experiencing homelessness for a long time, and most have been experiencing long-term and continuous homelessness (without breaks).

Figure 26 | Length of Homelessness of Unsheltered Veterans in 2019

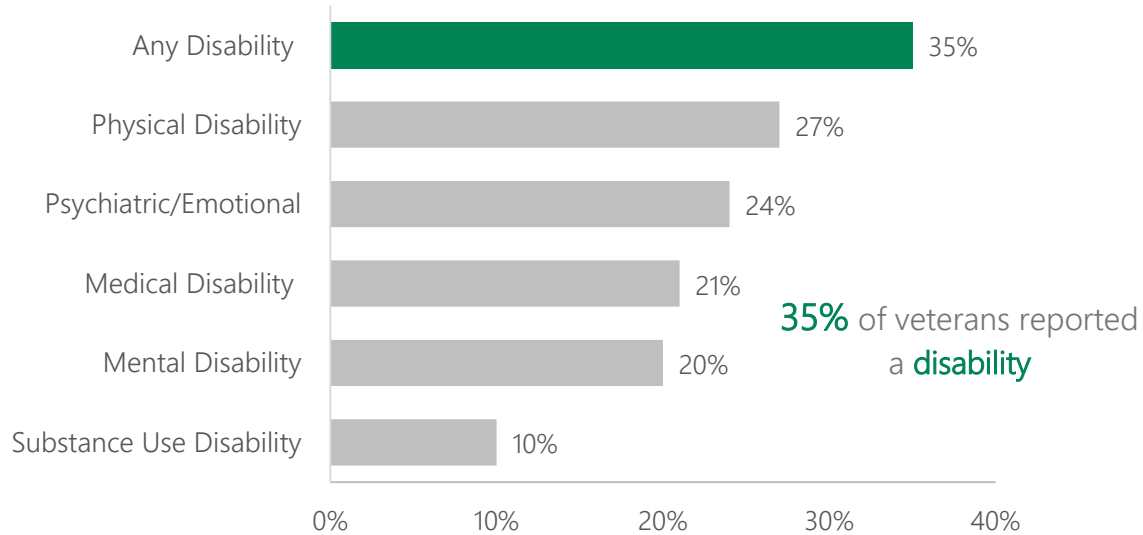


## Veterans | Disabling Conditions

Approximately one-third of veterans reported a severe disability and/or health condition that has prevented them from being employed and/or maintaining stable housing. In particular, approximately equal proportions of veterans report a physical disability (27%) and severe psychiatric/emotional disorder (24%) and 21 percent reported an ongoing “medical disability” (condition such as disabling diabetes, cancer or heart disease). Twenty percent (20%) reported a disabling mental disability (e.g., a cognitive impairment). These proportions are approximately equivalent to rates seen in the total unsheltered homeless population in Sacramento County. Additionally, 54 percent of unsheltered veterans reported that they live with PTSD, a significantly higher proportion than in the total unsheltered homeless population (41%). However, most of these respondents did not indicate that their PTSD was debilitating (i.e., not included in the 24% with a severe psychiatric/emotional condition).

- Among all veterans experiencing homelessness, 27 percent were chronically homeless, and the vast majority of those who were chronically homeless were unsheltered (80%).

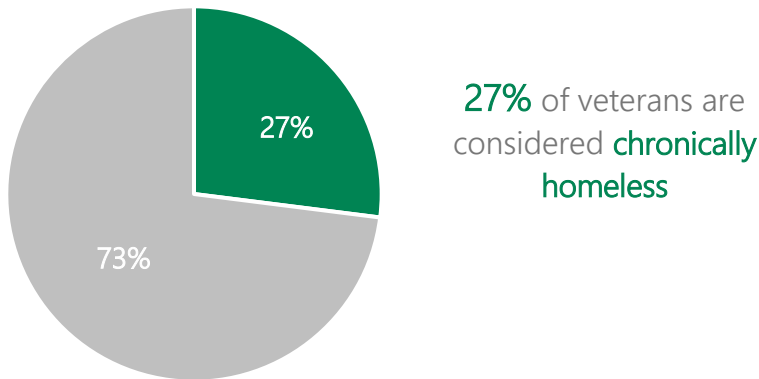
Figure 27 | Reported Conditions of Unsheltered Veterans<sup>64</sup>



54 percent of unsheltered veterans reported that they live with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

<sup>64</sup> That affect ability to maintain stable housing or employment.

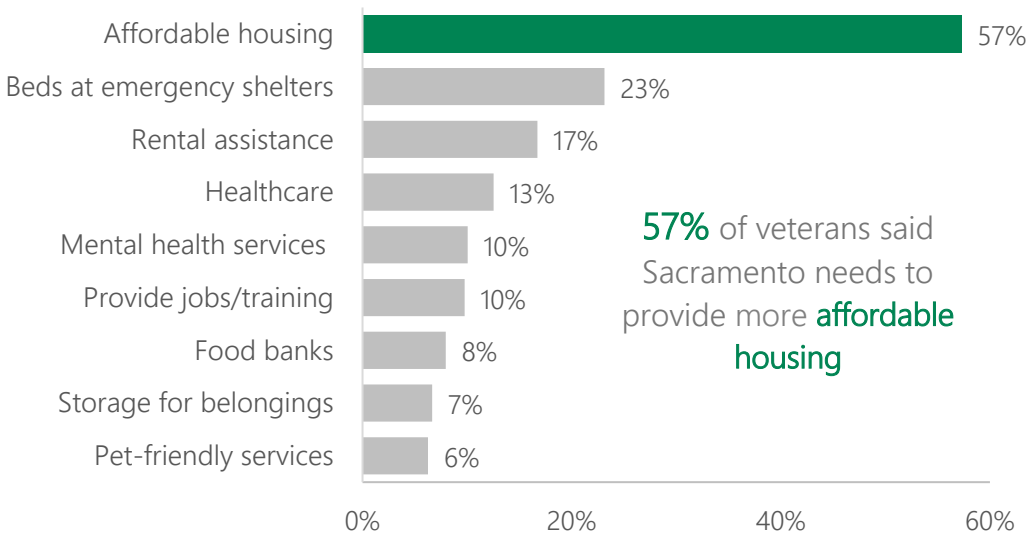
Figure 28 | Chronic Homeless Status of Total Veterans



### Voices of Veterans | What Could Sacramento Do Better?

Much like older adults, unsheltered veterans who participated in the survey noted the need for more affordable housing at a higher rate than the total unsheltered population (57% versus 53%). Veterans also noted the need for more shelter beds (23%), rental assistance (17%), and better health care (13% of veterans versus 4% of the total unsheltered population). Veterans expressed the need for mental health care at a similar rate to the total unsheltered population (10%).<sup>65</sup>

Figure 29 | What Unsheltered Veterans Believe Sacramento Could Do Better



<sup>65</sup> Forty percent of veterans made a recommendation that could not be easily combined into a category, but the most common suggestions are included in the text.

## Section 3: Comparing Estimates across Years

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The 2019 Count significantly increased the accuracy and scope of the estimate of nightly homelessness in Sacramento; moving forward, future counts will be able to more effectively document and track the change in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the community over time. While clear comparisons to previous counts will be more challenging and less intuitive (particularly for Counts done before 2017), the results of the 2019 Count establish a new benchmark for assessing this growing social issue in our community.

In this section we discuss a final analysis that assesses the relative change in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness between 2017 and 2019 in Sacramento County. Comparing the 2019 results to previous years is not a simple “apples-to-apples” comparison, given that the 2019 Homeless Count deployed different strategies and methodologies. Indeed, simply comparing the raw results of the 2017 and 2019 counts would be problematic given that a larger geographic area was canvassed for the unsheltered count in 2019 than in previous years (with three times the number of volunteers deployed this year compared to 2017). However, the research team intentionally retained some similarities from past counts so that some cautious comparisons would be possible with some adjustments. Taking into account these design similarities, as well as differences, we present below the results of our analysis, which statistically adjust count results to assess change over time. Though it is beyond the limits of the existing data (particularly the 2017 data) to provide definitive estimates of which specific groups of people experiencing homelessness may have increased (e.g., whether family homelessness has increased), our results indicate that nightly homelessness overall has generally increased--across all populations-- in Sacramento County by at least 19 percent.

### Comparing the 2017 and 2019 Homeless Counts

As is discussed in Appendix A of this report, there was ample evidence in 2017 and 2019 that the increased scope of homelessness in Sacramento County necessitated some substantial changes to the unsheltered portion of the Sacramento Homeless Count, particularly in terms of a much larger and more sophisticated canvassing strategy than years prior. We believe that the expanded methodology of 2019 has resulted in a more accurate count than before and provide a reliable estimate that can be compared in future years. Below we discuss the key similarities and differences between the two counts and provide a description of how we arrived at an estimate of 19 percent increase in homelessness between 2017 and 2019.

All Point-in-Time Homeless Counts necessarily provide an undercount of the true prevalence of homelessness--even with seamless implementation or incorporation of new methods and statistical techniques, Homeless Counts will always miss some individuals in the official estimates of nightly homelessness in a community. That being said, Homeless Count results can nonetheless reliably *approximate* trends in the size of the homeless population over time if the design is implemented broadly enough but also consistently from year to year. That is to say, if the same components of the Count are implemented every year, and to the same degree (i.e., sending similar number of



canvassing teams to a similar number of locations) the methodology can provide a reliable approximation of relative increases or decreases in the overall homeless population.<sup>66</sup> There is, then, a natural tension between efforts to improve the accuracy of the count and efforts to retain the reliability of doing the same type of count each year.

In Table 10 below, we list the components of the Homeless Counts in 2017 and 2019 to begin to demonstrate similarities and differences in design:

Table 10 | Components of 2017 and 2019 Homelessness Counts

Components	2017 Count	2019 Count
1. Census of sheltered homelessness	●	●
2. Canvassing of known locations	●	●
3. Randomized canvassing of known locations in all regions		●
4. Randomized canvassing of potentially unknown locations		●

There are a number of similarities between the 2017 and 2019 Counts that allow an approximate comparison. An abbreviated list of some of the most important similarities include:

- The methods used for the *sheltered* portions of the 2017 and 2019 Counts were analogous to previous years (Component 1, above).
- The core strategies for the unsheltered portion of the 2017 and 2019 Counts similarly relied on the identification of known locations to structure the canvassing of large areas in Sacramento County (Component 2, above).
  - Known locations were identified, mapped, and canvased using essentially identical procedures.
  - All known locations that were identified as “hot” (suspected to have large number of homeless individuals) were fully censused in both years.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Assuming the same sources of systematic bias are in place from year to year, even inaccurate but nonetheless reliable undercounts of homelessness can--to a degree-- be useful indicators of the change over time in the community. However, this assumption assumes that communities are adequately able to identify known locations where people experiencing homelessness are staying, that there are no changes in the proportion of known locations sampled, and that there are no changes in the proportion of people experiencing homelessness who are counted in known locations each year. These challenges may be addressed through a broad sampling of known locations and possibly randomization and extrapolation of unknown locations, though these techniques are still being explored.

<sup>67</sup> Downtown, Midtown, and some of the surrounding area within the city of Sacramento were fully censused in both years.

Despite many similarities, the following notable differences between the 2017 and 2019 make direct comparisons problematic:

- In 2017 only *some* of the warm locations were sampled in a random manner suited for statistical inference, while in 2019 all warm locations were systematically randomized.<sup>68</sup>
- The 2019 stratified sampling strategy was specifically employed for the purpose of estimating the number of homeless individuals in known locations that would not be canvassed, while in 2017 the random sampling was not used for such a purpose (Component 3, above).
- The 2019 sampling strategy also included a stratified random selection of potentially “unknown” locations where homeless individuals could be residing, while in 2017 this was not done (Component 4, above).<sup>69</sup>

In the table below, we statistically disaggregate the final estimates in terms of Count components, and then recalibrate the 2017 results so that they approximate a count as though it had been done with similar components implemented in 2019. In other words, we adjust the 2017 estimate by extrapolating additional counts that would have likely been recorded if the 2019 components had been implemented. While this analysis makes a number of assumptions about the distribution of homelessness across the two periods, the analysis approximates an “apples-to-apples” comparison of the two counts.

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<sup>68</sup> Random sampling of “warm” locations was conducted each year, but in 2017 this was limited to a few areas in the unincorporated regions of the county and not done for the explicit purpose of extrapolation. Approximately two weeks before the 2017 Count, it was discovered that the number of known locations identified that year (141) would exceed volunteer capacity. Because a number of new locations identified by community members in 2017 were in regions not previously canvassed in 2015, the 2017 team decided to randomly select locations in these areas for that year’s Count; to prioritize resources to regions that had been previously canvassed in prior efforts but use a portion of volunteer resources to verify the reliability of this new information through random sampling. Results from 2017 indicated that many, though not all, of the volunteer teams sent to these new locations reported significant counts, which contributed to this year’s efforts to broaden the scope of the Count methodology. While researchers in 2017 did estimate the number of likely missing individuals in uncanvassed known locations, these calculations were not included in the final 2017 results as the random sampling was not systematically done in all regions of the county. The 2019 Count, however, employed a systematic stratified sampling of all known locations throughout the county, except for Midtown Sacramento, where all warm locations were canvassed.

<sup>69</sup> To assess the degree to which there may still be an undercount of unknown locations where homeless individuals are residing throughout the county--locations that are unknown by others in the community and hence would be missed in a traditional count-- the research team also generated a stratified random sample of 64 unknown locations within a 284 square-mile region of the county to be canvassed.

Table 11 | Statistically Adjusted Annual Counts: The “Apples-to-Apples” Comparison

	2017 Count ( <i>Estimated Adjustment</i> )	2019 Count	Difference in Counts	% Increase
Component 1: Sheltered Count	1,613	1,670		
Component 2: Unsheltered Count at Canvassed Known Locations	2,052	2,763		
Component 3: Extrapolated Count at Known Locations Not Canvassed	(786)	851		
Component 4: Unsheltered Count at Canvassed Unknown Locations	(241)	286		
Total Sheltered	1,613	1,670	+57	3.5%
Total Unsheltered	2,052 (3,079)	3,900	+821	26.7%
<b>Total</b>	3,665 (4,692)	<b>5,570</b>	<b>+878</b>	<b>18.7%</b>

As the above table shows, the 2019 Count included all homeless individuals who were counted in shelters/transitional housing (Component 1: 1,670) and those counted in known locations that had been canvassed (Component 2: 2,763), which were similar components implemented in 2017 (1,613 and 2,052), though fewer known locations were canvassed overall in 2017 compared to 2019 (51 vs 81). In both years, there were more known locations identified than could have been practically canvassed with volunteers, but only 2019 included an attempt to extrapolate the number of homeless individuals who would have been encountered if canvassing teams had been sent to these locations (Component 3). This was done in 2019 by using information about the distribution of homelessness indicated from canvassed locations, to then estimate homelessness in the non-canvassed locations. For the 2019 Count, this statistical extrapolation added an extra 851 people experiencing homelessness to the final results.<sup>70</sup>

Though this extrapolation component was not part of the 2017 Count, we used information collected that year from locations that were both surveyed and *randomly selected*, and then applied the same stratification and weighting formula used in 2019. This resulted in an estimated 786 additional homeless individuals to the total unsheltered estimate.

Besides the extrapolation of the unvisited known locations, the other notable difference in 2019 was the canvassing of potential, currently unknown, locations where homelessness individuals could be counted (Component 4). These were locations that were selected at random and stratified across a

<sup>70</sup> Extrapolation is performed in the way that makes the least assumptions. Specifically, when zones are selected randomly from a larger list, the point estimate for the mean of unvisited known zones is the same as the mean for visited known zones. In our case there are five lists, one for each region. Consequently, for each region, the extrapolated people in the unvisited known zones is equal to the sample mean of the randomly selected visited “warm” zones in that region multiplied by the number of unvisited warm zones in that region. The total amount of extrapolated homeless is equal to the sum of extrapolated homeless in all five regions.

284 square mile area (i.e., sampling frame) of the county. While the vast majority of locations yielded zero (or very low) counts, the canvassing teams sent to these randomly selected locations reported an additional 286 people experiencing homelessness.<sup>71</sup>

To estimate the number of homeless individuals who *may have been* counted in 2017 in unknown locations we calculated the most likely outcome if 2017 had deployed a similar number of volunteers to these locations as had been in 2019. Moreover, we also made the assumption that homelessness increased approximately equally both in and outside of known locations over the last two years. That is, we made an assumption that the difference in the unknown locations would approximate the broader differences observed in the combined difference in the sheltered and unsheltered counts across both years.<sup>72</sup> This indicates that approximately 241 individuals may have been counted in these unknown locations.

Once the appropriate adjustments are made, sheltered homelessness increased by 3.5 percent, unsheltered by 26.7 percent, yielding a total increase in homelessness of 18.7 percent. The results provide evidence that a significant increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness nightly has occurred in Sacramento County by approximately 19 percent. Because of the data limitations, however, we cannot say with certainty which specific groups may have increased faster than other groups; rather we estimate that all homeless populations have likely increased by 11- 27 percent.

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<sup>71</sup> No extrapolation was done in the unknown zones given the immense uncertainty such a statistical extrapolation would entail. Later in this report we discuss what we learned from sampling in the unknown zones and how we might apply those findings to the future.

<sup>72</sup> However, since this aspect of the count plays a relatively small part in the overall homeless count, it would not significantly impact any of our conclusions even if this assumption were false.

## Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

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The 2019 Homeless Count was a county-wide effort that involved many Sacramento organizations, agencies, and volunteers. We are confident that this latest count represents the most accurate numbers of people experiencing homelessness in the county, and that these estimates are parallel to the increases seen across the state. In this section, we review the major findings of the 2019 Homeless Count in Sacramento County, provide context for these findings, and provide policy recommendations as well as methodological recommendations for future Homeless Counts in Sacramento County.

Major findings of the 2019 Homeless Count in Sacramento County include the following.

- Sacramento County experienced substantial 19 percent increases in nightly homelessness, much like the rest of California.
- On the night of the 2019 Count an estimated 5,570 individuals experienced homelessness throughout the county—which is the highest estimate of nightly homelessness reported for our community.
- The vast majority of individuals (70%) experiencing homelessness each night in Sacramento County are *sleeping outdoors* or in vehicles, abandoned buildings or other location not suitable for human habitation.
- The estimate of 5,570 people who are homeless each night could correspond to between 10,000 to 11,000 residents in Sacramento County experiencing homelessness during the span of the year.
- Despite some local concern that many people experiencing homelessness are from other communities, the vast majority (93%) are from Sacramento County.
- Black and American Indian/Alaska Native people are significantly overrepresented in the unsheltered homeless population; this is particularly the case for unsheltered families.
- Many more families are sleeping outside of shelters each night (and particularly, in vehicles) than had been previously assumed.
- A substantial proportion of individuals sleeping outdoors (approximately 30%) are older adults over the age of 50, and 1-in-5 are 55 or older.
- Approximately nine percent (9%) of unsheltered respondents identified their sexual orientation as gay/lesbian, bisexual or another sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

- Approximately 30 percent of people experiencing homelessness met the definition of “chronic homelessness” as defined by HUD, a slightly lower rate than anticipated. Though it is beyond the limits of the data to explore this possible decline, efforts to engage chronic homelessness could have had a mitigating effect on the broader upward trends of long-term homelessness.

While the significant increases in homelessness in Sacramento County are concerning, this report discusses some key contextual factors that contributed to these larger estimates in the 2019 Homeless Count.

## Contextual Considerations

**The 2019 rise in homelessness reflects the continued challenges with housing affordability locally and across the state.** The 2019 rise in homelessness reflects the continued challenges with housing affordability locally and across the state. A number of studies show that rental market conditions are the strongest predictors of community levels of homelessness; one of the most salient conditions is the proportion of renters that spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on rent—which represent nearly 30 percent of all renters in the county.<sup>73</sup> Sacramento has seen major increases in rental rates in the context of a state-wide housing crisis. From January 2017 to April 2019, the median rent in Sacramento rose 14 percent, compared to a five percent (5%) increase nationally; from 2017-2018 Sacramento faced the highest rent increases among California cities.<sup>74</sup> This continues a broader five-year upward trend in which Sacramento renters experienced the second highest continuing increases in rent among major California cities.<sup>75</sup>

**The increase in homelessness in Sacramento County is consistent with the double-digit increases being reported across communities in California.** Double-digit increases are being reported in Southern California counties, as well as nearby counties of San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Alameda Counties. Moreover, in the past year 43 communities and 11 major cities throughout California have formally declared a shelter crisis in their respective areas. While homelessness is undoubtedly a local community issue, it is nonetheless impacted by state-wide trends. This suggests that partnerships across local, regional, and state entities are going to be required to address factors such as the lack of affordable housing.

## Policy recommendations

These empirical findings regarding the scope and characteristics of the homeless population in Sacramento County highlight a number of policy considerations. With two recent Homeless Counts demonstrating double-digit increases in homelessness (in 2015-2017 and 2017-2019), Sacramento County is facing an enduring problem that continues to affect the lives of many. These increases are

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<sup>73</sup> The US Census *American Community Survey* (2018) estimates that 28.5% of renters in Sacramento County are severely burdened renters; meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on rent.

<sup>74</sup> RentCafe, 2019

<sup>75</sup> Bizjak, 2018

consistent with state-wide increases, necessitating a state-wide approach and partnerships across localities. As demonstrated by the high volunteer interest in the 2019 Homeless Count in Sacramento County, it is clear that there exists a public will to address this social problem. Ultimately, as our community takes steps to alleviate the problem, we will also need to grapple with complex solutions that involve patience and enduring investment.

Based on these findings and contextual considerations, we make the following policy recommendations:

**Address the needs of the large unsheltered population in Sacramento County.** Approximately 70 percent of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County are unsheltered, reflecting larger patterns of growing unsheltered homelessness reported across communities in California. Given this persistently high rate of unsheltered homelessness in our community and in our state, and in the context of a gap in shelter beds to meet the need, we anticipate growing tensions in the community over the use of public spaces. We recommend that city and county leaders give careful consideration about how to appropriately and humanely protect the rights and safety of those who are living outdoors while also addressing other citizen concerns related to sanitation, public safety. Our community needs to address these goals simultaneously and avoid narratives that exclude individuals experiencing homelessness as legitimate members of our community.<sup>76</sup>

**Address factors related to overrepresentation of Black and American Indian people in the homeless population.** Black/African American people are disproportionately represented in the county's homeless population (34% vs 13% of Sacramento County). Black/African American people experiencing homelessness are further impacted by institutional and structural racism, manifested in everyday activities such as looking for employment and finding a place to live.<sup>77</sup> We recommend a strong investment in additional outreach and involvement of people of color in decision-making efforts regarding housing, social services, and homeless services in Sacramento County. Sacramento County should also consider further investigation into structural barriers that may be preventing Black people from accessing needed resources that could prevent homelessness or may aid a quick resolution to a short-term homeless crisis.

**Build on new information about unsheltered family homelessness and consider alternative short-term options for unsheltered families.** During the 2019 Homeless Count in Sacramento, approximately 429 individuals (11% of the 3,900 unsheltered individuals) were staying in a vehicle, and overall 168 vehicles in which someone was living were counted. However, a much greater proportion of families with children (33%) were staying in a vehicle than in the total unsheltered population. Due to risks associated with living in a vehicle, such as lack of sanitary conditions, risk of parking citations and risk of break-ins or other vulnerabilities, Sacramento County may want to consider addressing the needs of families in vehicles through non-traditional options. One approach to consider might be Safe Parking Zones, which provide a space for people living in vehicles a legal and safe place to park

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<sup>76</sup> Laurensen, P., & Collins, D. (2006). Towards inclusion: Local government, public space and homelessness in New Zealand. *New Zealand Geographer*, 62(3), 185–195.

<sup>77</sup> Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2018

overnight, often with access to waste disposal, bathrooms and showers.<sup>78</sup> As discussed in a report by the Homeless Policy Research Institute, in cities such as Santa Barbara, Seattle, and San Diego, Safe Parking Zones have ranged in terms of size, services, and structure.<sup>79</sup>

**Acknowledge the unique needs of an aging population.** Among individuals over 55, 65 percent are unsheltered. Older adults (66%) were more likely to report having a health condition than younger adults. There are a variety of recommendations for standards of care when working with or designing responsive programs for aging and elderly persons who are experiencing homelessness. Common barriers should be addressed that work against older adults exiting homelessness or simply accessing services; these include isolation, shame, anxiety surrounding declines in health and functioning, and mistrust of service providers and institutions. There is a need for safer and responsive shelters, designed for older clients exhibiting complex health and mental health conditions. Relatedly, in efforts to provide these basic services, the realities of social estrangement, existential distress, and end of life care planning are often left unaddressed, in particular challenges involved with delivering hospice care to dying homeless adults result in much unnecessary suffering at the end of life.<sup>80</sup>

**Continue to focus on chronic homelessness, but also the problem of long-term homelessness.** Our data suggest that it may be very difficult to exit homelessness in Sacramento County, given the very high proportion of individuals who have experienced homelessness for a year or more. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that individuals experiencing chronic homelessness did not increase as a proportion of the total homeless population—as might have been expected with the substantial increase in unsheltered homelessness and the length of time of homeless. This suggests that programs and/or policies are potentially making an impact in helping one of the most vulnerable groups of people who experience homelessness transition into more stable housing. Though it is beyond the scope of this report to quantify this impact, the evidence is promising that chronic homelessness may not be growing in Sacramento as it is in other communities. We recommend continued efforts to address this often difficult-to-service population.

## Methods Recommendations

It is important to recognize that in any Homeless Count, it is often necessary to make slight changes to methodology in order to account for context and lessons learned in previous years. However, in 2019 the shift in methodology was much more significant in order to improve the accuracy of the unsheltered count. The larger shift in methodology in 2019 took place in part because of continuing concerns in the community that Homeless Counts may substantially underreport the true rate of *unsheltered* homelessness in Sacramento. In response to these concerns, we proposed a more robust strategy to improve the accuracy of the *unsheltered count*. We believe that these efforts have

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<sup>78</sup> Homeless Policy Research Institute. (2018, December). *Safe parking programs*. Los Angeles, CA: Sol Price Center for Social Innovation. Retrieved from <https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Safe-Parking-Literature-Review.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> Homeless Policy Research Institute, 2018

<sup>80</sup> Cagle, J. G. (2009).



provided the community a much more accurate understanding of the scope and demographics of the homeless population in Sacramento County. While shifts will need to take place every year to some extent, very large shifts in methodology should not occur each time a Homeless Count is conducted as it would make comparisons from year-to-year much more challenging. Below we discuss the benefits and challenges of some of these changes and provide recommendations for future Homeless Counts in Sacramento County:

**Incorporating mobile technology to improve the collection of data.** The use of a mobile application for data collection in the unsheltered count helped immensely to improve the quality and completeness of count and survey data. We recommend that an application be used in all subsequent Homeless Counts, though recommend some slight adjustments. In particular, we recommend cautious use of geolocation data through the application as a back-up method of verifying the zone in which a volunteer completed a survey or a count. In 2019, some volunteers did not properly indicate the zone in which an individual was located or surveyed, necessitating follow-up calls and other investigation to determine the zone canvassed by that volunteer.

**Increased efforts to recruit and train community volunteers.** An unprecedented 1,400 Sacramento County residents signed up to volunteer for the 2019 Homeless Count, reflecting immense community interest in addressing this social problem. Ultimately, 900 volunteers were trained during the weeks before the Count and deployed during the two nights of the Count. These efforts were incredibly helpful to increase the number of zones that could be canvassed, including “unknown” zones (an innovation this year). Additionally, partnership with the Sacramento LGBT Community Center to train volunteers about how to appropriately ask survey questions regarding gender identity and sexual orientation should be replicated in the 2021 Homeless Count. However, as with any large increase in volunteers came additional logistic needs that necessitated staff time to address volunteer needs and coordinate trainings and deployments. For the 2021 Homeless Count, we recommend replication of efforts to recruit community volunteers, but additional resources to communicate with, train, and deploy volunteers. Further efforts to improve trainings, particularly regarding cultural sensitivity to sometimes personal questions, can also continue to be improved.

**Increased efforts to identify transitional age youth and families through targeted efforts.** Efforts to reach a higher proportion of transitional age youth and families with children involved the coordination and planning with many youth and family agencies in the community. Many of these agency staff themselves led these efforts, particularly in implementing the “Every Youth Counts” event. Partnership with community agencies in the development of “supplemental” questions that were asked of youth and involvement of youth with lived experience with homelessness only was also very useful. These efforts very likely improved our understanding of the scope, characteristics, and experiences of youth and families in Sacramento County. However, there were some “lessons learned” in 2019 that could lead to improved methodology in 2021. In particular, we recommend additional recruitment efforts to unsheltered minor youth and transitional aged youth, improved efforts to ensure completeness of survey data, and involvement of youth and adults with lived experience of homelessness. Further, we recommend an earlier start to the planning stage of the effort. The ability to start planning in the summer would improve feasibility of additional pre-Count data collection (including improved development of “known zone” locations) and additional

partnerships such as those with schools, additional agencies, and other important entities who could improve inclusion of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as youth and families.

**Random sampling of known and unknown locations.** One of the new and innovative components of the 2019 Homeless Count was the completely randomized selection of some canvassing locations to which volunteers were deployed. A total of 64 canvassing teams were sent to a randomly selected set of coordinates within a 242 square-mile region of Sacramento County (a 284-square mile sampling frame that excluded the already identified locations as well as locations that would have been impossible to access). This component functioned as an experiment to assess the degree to which identified locations may be somewhat biased and provide an incomplete picture of all the locations where homeless individuals might be encountered.<sup>81</sup> The results indicate that the majority (over 75%) of the teams sent to these teams did not encounter individuals suspected to experience homelessness. Though a few locations did yield some significant counts, the amount and quality of data reported from these teams were not sufficient to calculate reliable estimates of missed individuals in these and other unknown locations throughout Sacramento County. The results nonetheless generally indicate that there were likely more individuals that could have been counted during the night of the 2019 Count—though it is unclear to what degree. More broadly, this suggests that information about homelessness locations is continuing to improve, but a broader engagement with stakeholders and community members may enhance the efficiency by which locations are identified. We recommend that future counts continue to implement a completely randomized component, in which volunteers are sent to areas with unknown reports of homelessness. This will help assess the information that organizers are using over time to establishing canvassing routes. Collecting this information over time will also help future researchers develop more effective strategies of sampling in the counting, as well as to develop analyses that assess the severity of undercounting.

**In sum,** it is important that researchers, along with stakeholders, continually strive to improve the scope and breadth of the Homeless Count so that it yields accurate and reliable information about the realities of homelessness in our community. While findings from the Homeless Count can sometimes highlight somber findings, we believe it is only by confronting these difficult realities, with honest and accurate information, that we as a community can address them effectively.

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<sup>81</sup> Another experimental aspect of this component was to assess the applicability of extrapolating counts to the entire 242 square-mile area of the sampling frame (the 284 square mile region minus the areas already being canvassed). However, results indicated high very levels of variability in reported counts, and consequently a high level of uncertainty to the estimates. More specifically, we calculated confidence intervals that were unreasonable to use for an official estimate of homelessness—particularly estimates that would be later used to assess change over time. Future Counts in Sacramento could deploy more resources to these unknown areas, and improve the reliability of estimates, though this should be done only if there are also sufficient resources to canvass most known locations where homeless individuals can be located. Because of the skewed distribution of homelessness across most areas, we advise against a purely randomized sample.

# Appendix A: 2019 Count Methodology

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The 2019 Homeless Count employed a number of design improvements from previous community efforts to document unsheltered homelessness. These modifications include deploying hundreds of additional volunteers, canvassing different parts of the county over multiple nights, and using sampling and statistical techniques to estimate the number of individuals sleeping in locations not canvassed.<sup>82</sup> For the unsheltered portion of the Homeless Count, each Continuum of Care is responsible for conducting a robust canvassing of areas in regions where people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are likely to be sleeping. As in previous years the Sacramento Homeless Count employed a “public places” methodology, the HUD recommended procedure most commonly used in urban areas (also known as the known location strategy). Historically Sacramento has implemented HUD’s “Method 2,” which generally speaking, incorporates four basic components:<sup>83</sup>

- **Soliciting input from the community** about “known locations” in the county where individuals sleeping outdoors have been recently observed (preferably collected within weeks of the Count).
- **Using this information to construct canvassing maps** of targeted “hot” and “warm” locations where there is a high probability of encountering individuals on the night of the count.
- **Deploying volunteer teams to systematically canvas** all hot and warm locations, and record the number individuals encountered that are suspected of experiencing homelessness.<sup>84</sup>
- **Training volunteers to interview a subgroup of respondents** using a standardized demographic survey. This information is later analyzed to construct a general estimate of the demographic composition of the unsheltered population.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> As discussed earlier, the Homeless Count is technically a census of all individuals in the county experiencing homelessness—both sheltered and unsheltered—during a coordinated time period in January. The sheltered portion of the homeless count is typically accomplished by aggregating data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)—a client database which SSF coordinates for all HUD-funded and county-funded homeless service providers. For the 2019 Count, and similar to past Counts, SSF compiled and analyzed HMIS records of all individuals accessing shelter/transitional housing on the night of January 30th, 2019. SSF also collected information from programs serving homeless individuals that do not report to HMIS.

<sup>83</sup> HUD lists three typical methods for surveying public places, noting that each method can be accomplished by searching in “known locations” strive for complete coverage (HUD, 2008, pp. 16-17).

<sup>84</sup> Per HUD guidelines, volunteers were trained to count every individual they encountered, *unless it appeared that the individual was obviously not homeless* (i.e., markers that the individuals were headed to or from work, frequenting a restaurant or bar etc.).

<sup>85</sup> As recommended by HUD, demographic information was collected via in-person survey conducted with a subsample of individuals encountered on the streets. This survey data was later statistically weighted to the count data to estimate the demographic composition of the unsheltered population. Specifically, researchers calculated “inverse probability” weights for each survey response based on two primary characteristics: the region in which the survey was administered and the household size of those individuals surveyed. The weights calculated matched the

Because homelessness is suspected to be highly concentrated within a limited number of areas, it is assumed that this strategy of canvassing all identified hot and warm “known locations,” will enumerate a large percentage of the homeless population in the community. This strategy can provide reasonably reliable estimates of the change in homelessness from year to year if a similar proportion of known locations are surveyed each year. Assuming the methodology is implemented consistently each year—of sending the same approximate number of canvassing teams to a similar number of known locations—the results likely provide reliable assessments of the relative change in the census of homelessness from year to year.<sup>86</sup>

We nonetheless modified some aspects of the sampling methodology in 2019 to incorporate new goals born out of the RFP and ongoing discussions with Sacramento Steps Forward. These modifications, which align with HUD’s “Method 3” approach, were designed by Sacramento State to address four general concerns raised from the 2017 Count.<sup>87</sup> These included:

**1. The growing number of reported “known locations” of homelessness in Sacramento County.** In 2017, information from community members indicated over 119 “warm” known locations and 19 “hot” locations, while previous counts indicated only 70-100 known locations in total.<sup>88</sup> As a result it will become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to simply canvas all known locations in Sacramento County in one night, even with substantial increases in the number of volunteers deployed. Future Counts in Sacramento will need to incorporate collecting information from a random sample of known locations, and using this data to estimate homelessness in locations not canvassed.

**2. Concern about potentially *unknown* locations in the county where people experiencing homelessness could be found.** Identification about known locations has undoubtedly improved with the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, as well as the incorporation of new public data sources (e.g., call data from 311). Nonetheless, it is suspected that there are a number of homeless locations that are not currently known or identified by community members. Though HUD encourages

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distribution of these survey characteristics (location and household composition) to the distributions indicated by the count data.

<sup>86</sup> Assuming the same sources of systematic bias are in place from year to year, even inaccurate but nonetheless reliable undercounts of homelessness can—to a degree—be useful indicators of the change over time in the community. However, this assumption assumes that communities are adequately able to identify known locations where people experiencing homelessness are staying, that there are no changes in the proportion of known locations sampled, and that there are no changes in the proportion of people experiencing homelessness who are counted in known locations each year. These challenges may be addressed through a broad sampling of known locations and possibly randomization and extrapolation of unknown locations, though these techniques are still being explored.

<sup>87</sup> This method outlines a statistical technique that stratifies known areas according to expected homeless density, randomly samples among the strata, and then extrapolates the number of people experiencing homelessness in those areas that were unvisited at the time of the count. Essentially, the method approximates the number of people who are homeless that would have been counted if the CoC had sufficient teams to cover all known zones. A number of communities, such as Orange County, employ this method in years where they cannot do a full census of all known zones. The specifics of this technique and the methods employed in the sampling stratification and subsequent analysis are detailed in the appendix of this report.

<sup>88</sup> While information about known locations has improved in Sacramento County, the increase in locations also reflects substantial increases in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

communities to prioritize known locations in Homeless Counts, the methodology can also incorporate a sampling of unknown locations to assess the potential bias in how homeless locations are identified.<sup>89</sup>

**3. Concerns that some groups are systematically undercounted, particularly transitional aged youth and families.** It is well documented that some groups are systematically undercounted in Homeless Counts. Some groups, like unaccompanied minors and transitional aged youth, may intentionally avoid canvassing teams of adult volunteers. Other groups, like families with children, may prefer sleeping in locations that are hidden from view and/or are locations that are difficult to conduct an interview. Family members sleeping in car, van or RV, for example, are rarely interviewed during the night of the count given the standard interview protocols recommended by HUD. This may create a specific undercount in Sacramento given the increasing numbers of vehicles reported by volunteers as suspected sleeping locations for individuals and families.

**4. Community interest in incorporating mobile technology to improve the collection of data.** Past Counts in Sacramento have relied on paper surveys, which are difficult to administer given the sometimes complex skip patterns of the survey tool. Recording survey responses on paper at night is also notoriously difficult. These challenges likely contribute to incomplete data and introduced substantial inaccuracy.

Given these concerns and interests, the 2019 Homeless Count employed a variety of design improvements, both in terms of how data were collected, but also how this information was later compiled and analyzed. While it is beyond the scope of this report to review these modifications in detail, they can be generally characterized in four clusters of activities:

#### Random sampling of known and unknown locations

- Because it is no longer reasonable to canvass every known location in the county where homelessness may be present, the research team generated a stratified random sample of locations to which volunteers would be deployed. The goal was to collect sufficient information from sampled locations, to then calculate reasonably reliable estimates of the number of homeless individuals in all known locations. That is, we used information about the distribution about homelessness collected from canvassed locations to extrapolate counts in known locations that were not canvassed.
- To increase the statistical precision of the estimate, the random sample of known locations was stratified by geographic areas (e.g., city level) and by the types of known location (hot and warm locations).
- To assess the degree to which there may still be an undercount of *unknown* locations where homeless individuals are residing throughout the county--locations that are unknown by others in the community and hence would be missed in a traditional count-- the research

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<sup>89</sup> Given the stigmatized status of homelessness, concerns about being located by law enforcement, and safety concerns among some people experiencing homelessness, many individuals may set up encampment or sleep in areas hidden from public view.

team also generated a stratified random sample of 64 unknown locations within a 284 square-mile region of the county to be canvassed.

- Ultimately, volunteers were deployed to a total of 168 locations representing approximately 42 square miles in the county. This equates to a 136 percent increase in coverage compared to 2017. We extrapolated counts to an additional 56 known locations throughout the county.

### **Increased efforts to recruit and train community volunteers**

- To enhance the capacity and scope of canvassing, the research team encouraged SSF to substantially increase volunteer outreach efforts to a diverse and broad group of community members. At the same time, SSF was encouraged to do targeted outreach for individuals with a social service background. Approximately 1,400 individuals registered for the event, which is almost one thousand more registrations than in 2017.
- Approximately 900 volunteers were ultimately trained and deployed, representing three times the number of participating volunteers than in the past.
- We proposed a two-tier system of volunteer training: a general volunteer training and a specific Interviewer/Team Lead training for individuals with a social service background. The research team designed the curriculum of the interviewer training to emphasize engagement strategies and other best-practices recommended by HUD (e.g., practicing cultural sensitivity with certain questions etc.). It was assumed that providing specialized training for interviewers with a social/human service background would improve the response rate for the demographic survey. Notably, volunteers conducted approximately 550 interviews during the 24-hour period of the 2019 Count, the highest on record and about four times the number of 2017.
- Volunteers were also trained on how to administer the survey via a new mobile-phone app.

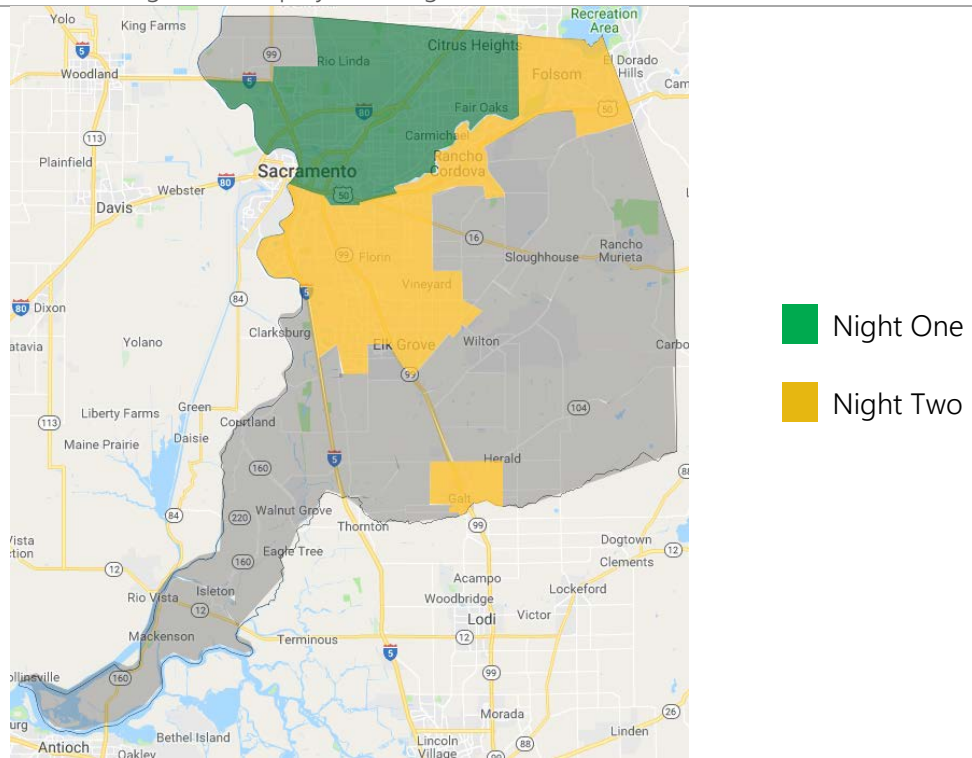
### **The addition of a second night and multiple deployment sites to increase data collection capacity**

- To handle the increased number of volunteers, SSF organized two main deployment sites in downtown Sacramento: the Sacramento State Downtown School and the Sacramento County Department of Human Services (DHA) office in Midtown Sacramento. Volunteers were also separately deployed from Citrus Heights and Isleton.<sup>90</sup>
- For the first time in our community, a two-night count rather than one-night count was implemented to improve the ability to canvass more area within the county. On the first night (January 30th) volunteers were deployed to 106 canvassing sites across the central, northern and western regions of the county (see below map). On the second night (January 31st) volunteers were deployed to 65 locations across southern regions of the county. Per HUD guidelines, canvassing locations were strategically grouped across the two nights in order to ensure they were several miles away from each other so that it would be unlikely that individuals would be double-counted both nights.

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<sup>90</sup> To further improve the flow of increased volunteers and avoid gridlock at the deployment sites, the researchers and SSF organizers created a staggered deployment schedule so that volunteers checked-in and were deployed throughout the night.

Figure 30 | Map of Night One and Night Two Deployment Regions



- To ensure that surveys captured the homeless experiences associated on a single night (January 30th), individuals interviewed on the first night were asked about their housing experiences of that night (January 30th), while individuals interviewed on the second night were asked about their accommodations of the previous night. In other words, despite which night individuals completed the survey, they were asked about their type of sleeping location on January 30, 2019.

### Increased efforts to identify transitional age youth and families through targeted efforts

- We developed a number of *targeted strategies* to address the challenge of locating unsheltered transitional age youth and families.
- To improve the youth aspect of the count, the research team partnered with key youth agency providers involved in the 100-Day Challenge to organize a “magnet event” on the day of the count, a HUD-recommended “best practice” for improving the unsheltered enumeration of youth (also referred to as a “come and be counted” event).<sup>91</sup> Youth who

<sup>91</sup> The 100-Day Challenge is a HUD-sponsored national initiative to improve community responses to youth homelessness. In Fall of 2018, Sacramento was one of five communities in the country selected for the initiative, in which service providers, youth advocates and youth themselves come together to identify ambitious system goals for the community to address in three months. One of the activities pursued by the Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team was to improve outreach to youth experiencing homelessness during the 2019 Homeless Count. Coordinating with

attended the “Every Youth Counts” event in Sacramento during the count were invited to complete a survey in a private office by a trained staff member or volunteer. Only those youth who were staying in a location that would be considered “homeless” by the HUD definition were included in the count.

- We also collaborated with youth providers to conduct follow-up calls with youth on the Sacramento housing waitlist on February 1, 2019. Youth who were “active” on the housing waiting list received a phone call by a youth agency staff member and administered the survey. Youth were asked where they had spent the night on the primary night of the count (January 30, 2019).
- With respect to improving the count of families, we collaborated with family providers to organize a service-based count on the morning of February 1st. We conducted a number of interviews with parents in the day programs facilitated by Mustard Seed School and Maryhouse, both programs of Loaves & Fishes in Sacramento. Many of the parents interviewed reported that they had been either sleeping with their children in a car, tent or a motel room paid by a county voucher on the primary night of the count (January 30, 2019). Parents who reported sleeping in cars and tents provided general geographic information about their locations on the night of the count (general regions of cities), which notably correlated with the substantial number of cars and tents reported by canvassing teams in these regions.
- Demographic information collected from youth and families through these additional efforts, were later analyzed together with all the surveys collected on the nights of the count. Because participants provided generalized information about their locations on the night of the count, this information was accounted for in the final weighting of surveys. Particularly for families, these additional surveys were critical for providing otherwise missing demographic information about individuals sleeping in vehicles.<sup>92</sup>
- It should be noted that in all of these follow-up efforts, we took steps to reduce risk of double-counting by asking participants: a) if they had already completed a survey; and b) some identifying information (initials and date of birth) that had been asked of all participants. A few individuals (both youth and parent), were found to have been interviewed more than once through these efforts; in these situations the second interviews collected

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youth providers, the 100-Day Team organized an effective “Every Youth Counts” magnet event on the day of the count involving a range of services available, fun and creative activities, and incentives for participating in a survey. The 100-Day Team also helped coordinate a follow-up call session with youth on a housing wait list, a few days after the count (discussed below). The research team appreciates the great effort put forth by 100-Day Team and partners to organize these events and improve the Count.

Horwitz et al., 2017; HUD, 2014

<sup>92</sup> As discussed above, canvassing teams reported a high number of vehicles in the 2019 Count (approximately 168) that they suspect people were using as a sleeping location. Per HUD guidelines, volunteers were instructed not to initiate an interview in these locations unless occupants were encountered outside of their vehicles—which did occur in some situations. Nonetheless, volunteers were instructed to passively observe, if possible, the general composition of occupants (i.e., whether adults or adults with children were present). The information collected from these observations suggest that approximately 15%-20% of vehicles had at least one minor present (similarly, 10%-15% of the 353 tents were likely occupied by parents with children). While these visual reports were not used in our demographic estimates, they did corroborate and support our suspicion that families sleeping in cars and tents are substantially undercounted if additional efforts are not taken to interview parents after the night of the count.



from these specific individuals were removed from the final analysis. A number of individuals also reported that they had stayed at a shelter on January 30th, even though they may have slept in a car or tent in subsequent nights. Because these individuals would already be accounted for in the sheltered portion of the count, their information was excluded from our unsheltered analysis.

## Appendix B: 2019 Tables

**Table 1**  
**Total Households and Persons**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Households	903	370	1,273	2,687	<b>3,960</b>
Total Number of Persons	1,139	531	1,670	3,900	<b>5,570</b>
Number of Children (under age 18)	218	152	370	346	<b>716</b>
Number of Persons (18 to 24)	62	109	171	244	<b>415</b>
Number of Persons (over age 24)	859	270	1,129	3,310	<b>4,439</b>

### Gender

Female	539	241	780	1,318	<b>2,098</b>
Male	595	287	882	2,549	<b>3,431</b>
Transgender	3	3	6	19	<b>25</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	2	0	2	14	<b>16</b>

### Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	922	426	1,348	3,237	<b>4,585</b>
Hispanic/Latino	217	105	322	663	<b>985</b>

### Race

White	595	245	840	1,768	<b>2,608</b>
Black or African-American	431	230	661	1,214	<b>1,875</b>
Asian	16	1	17	32	<b>49</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	27	14	41	380	<b>421</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	8	3	11	112	<b>123</b>
Multiple Races	62	38	100	394	<b>494</b>

**Table 2**  
**Persons in Households with at Least one Adult and one Child**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Households	103	74	177	195	<b>372</b>
Total Number of Persons (Adults & Children)	338	234	572	567	<b>1,139</b>
Number of Children (under age 18)	209	147	356	332	<b>688</b>
Number of Persons (18 to 24)	10	23	33	39	<b>72</b>
Number of Persons (over age 24)	119	64	183	196	<b>379</b>

**Gender**

Female	195	148	343	280	<b>623</b>
Male	143	86	229	287	<b>516</b>
Transgender	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Ethnicity**

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	256	183	439	489	<b>928</b>
Hispanic/Latino	82	51	133	78	<b>211</b>

**Race**

White	137	96	233	72	<b>305</b>
Black or African-American	163	111	274	353	<b>627</b>
Asian	1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	3	4	53	<b>57</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	2	3	11	<b>14</b>
Multiple Races	35	22	57	78	<b>135</b>

**Table 3  
Persons in Households Without Children**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Households	791	291	1,082	2,478	<b>3,560</b>
Total Number of Persons (Adults)	792	292	1,084	3,319	<b>4,403</b>
Number of Children (under age 18)	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Persons (18 to 24)	52	86	138	205	<b>343</b>
Number of Persons (over age 24)	740	206	946	3114	<b>4,060</b>

**Gender**

Female	341	92	433	1,033	<b>1,466</b>
Male	446	197	643	2,253	<b>2,896</b>
Transgender	3	3	6	19	<b>25</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	2	0	2	14	<b>16</b>

**Ethnicity**

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	659	238	897	2,734	<b>3,631</b>
Hispanic/Latino	133	54	187	585	<b>772</b>

**Race**

White	450	149	599	1,687	<b>2,286</b>
Black or African-American	267	116	383	856	<b>1,239</b>
Asian	15	1	16	32	<b>48</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	26	11	37	327	<b>364</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	1	8	101	<b>109</b>
Multiple Races	27	14	41	316	<b>357</b>

**Table 4  
Unaccompanied Youth Households**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Unaccompanied Youth Households	60	83	143	163	<b>306</b>
Total Number of Unaccompanied Youth	61	91	152	219	<b>371</b>
Number of Unaccompanied Children (Under age 18)	9	5	14	14	<b>28</b>
Number of Unaccompanied Young Adults (18-24)	52	86	138	205	<b>343</b>
Number of Persons (over age 24)	-	-	-	-	-

**Gender**

Female	20	35	55	65	<b>120</b>
Male	39	53	92	154	<b>246</b>
Transgender	1	3	4	0	<b>4</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>

**Ethnicity**

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	44	76	120	182	<b>302</b>
Hispanic/Latino	17	15	32	37	<b>69</b>

**Race**

White	32	31	63	85	<b>148</b>
Black or African-American	23	50	73	104	<b>177</b>
Asian	0	1	1	0	<b>1</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	1	0	<b>1</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
Multiple Races	5	8	13	30	<b>43</b>

**Table 5  
Persons in Households with only Children**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Households	9	5	14	14	<b>28</b>
Number of Children (under age 18)	9	5	14	14	<b>28</b>

**Gender**

Female	3	1	4	5	<b>9</b>
Male	6	4	10	9	<b>19</b>
Transgender	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Ethnicity**

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	7	5	12	14	<b>26</b>
Hispanic/Latino	2	0	2	0	<b>2</b>

**Race**

White	8	0	8	9	<b>17</b>
Black or African-American	1	3	4	5	<b>9</b>
Asian	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Multiple Races	0	2	2	0	<b>2</b>

**Table 6  
Total Veteran Households**

	Sheltered			Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional	Total		
Total Number of Veterans	101	78	179	488	<b>667</b>

**Gender**

Female	4	9	13	104	<b>117</b>
Male	97	69	166	371	<b>537</b>
Transgender	0	0	0	5	<b>5</b>
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Ethnicity**

Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	90	71	161	440	<b>601</b>
Hispanic/Latino	11	7	18	48	<b>66</b>

**Race**

White	59	42	101	272	<b>373</b>
Black or African-American	34	32	66	117	<b>183</b>
Asian	3	0	3	0	<b>3</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	1	44	<b>45</b>
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0	1	16	<b>17</b>
Multiple Races	4	3	7	39	<b>46</b>

# Appendix C: Glossary

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## Annualized Count

A calculation of expected number of homelessness projected over a year based on the data collected from a PIT count.<sup>93</sup>

## Cisgender

"A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not transgender."<sup>94</sup>

## Child only household

"A household with only children is any household comprised only of children under 18 years of age. This includes unaccompanied children, adolescent parents and their children, adolescent siblings, and any other household configurations composed only of children."<sup>95</sup>

## Chronically Homeless

"'A homeless individual with a disability,' as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act who: (i) Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and (ii) Has been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (1)(i). Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility; (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Burt, M. R., & Wilkins, C. (2005, March). Estimating the need: Projecting from point-in-time to annual estimates of the number of homeless people in a community and using this information to plan for permanent supportive housing. Corporation for Supportive Housing. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Estimating-the-Need.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> UC Davis, LGBTQIA Resource Center. (2019). *LGBTQIA resource center glossary*. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

<sup>95</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (2019). *HUD Exchange: HDX FAQ*. Retrieved June 10, from <https://www.hudexchange.info/faqs/828/what-is-considered-a-household-with-only-children/>

<sup>96</sup> 24 C.F.R. § 91.5 2018. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2018-title24-vol1/xml/CFR-2018-title24-vol1-sec91-5.xml>



## Continuums of Care (CoC)

"Local planning bodies responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area, which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or an entire state."<sup>97</sup>

## Disabled/disabling condition

"A disabling condition is defined as 'a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions.' A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living."<sup>98</sup> Additionally, other HUD definitions of a 'disability,' to determine certain program eligibility, have included, the "inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months".<sup>99</sup>

## Emergency Shelter

Defined as "any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary or transitional shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless."<sup>100</sup>

## Family household

Are people residing together "who are homeless as part of a household that has at least one adult (age 18 and older) and one child (under age 18)."<sup>101</sup>

## Homeless Individual

"An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; as well an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings."<sup>102</sup> "Individuals refers to a person who is not part of a family with children during an episode of homelessness. Individuals may be homeless as single adults, unaccompanied youth, or in multiple-adult or multiple-child households."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> HUD. (2018, December). *The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress*. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> Office of Community Planning and Development. (2006). *Questions and answers: A supplement to the 2006 continuum of care homeless assistance NOFA and application*. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://archives.hud.gov/funding/2006/cocqa.doc>

<sup>99</sup> HUD (n.d.). HUD occupancy handbook: Glossary. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/43503GHS GH.PDF>

<sup>100</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). *Glossary of HUD terms*. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://archives.huduser.gov/portal/glossary/glossary.html>

<sup>101</sup> HUD. (2018, December). *The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR to congress)*. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.). *Glossary of HUD terms*. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://archives.huduser.gov/portal/glossary/glossary.html>

<sup>103</sup> HUD. (2018, December). *The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR to congress)*. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

### Point-in-Time Count

An “unduplicated 1-night estimate of both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations. The 1-night counts are conducted by Continuums of Care nationwide and occur during the last week in January of each year.”<sup>104</sup>

### Sheltered

Individuals or families “living in a supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals)”<sup>105</sup>

### TAY

“Transitional Age Youth (TAY) are young adults, age 18 – 24, who are transitioning from public systems (like foster care) or are at risk of not making a successful transition to adulthood.”<sup>106</sup>

### Unsheltered

According to HUD, individuals or families are considered unsheltered when residing “in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings.”<sup>107</sup>

### Veteran

“The term “veteran” means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> HUD. (2018, December). The 2018 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR to congress). Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2016, August 8). HIC/PIT Data Collection Notice. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/16-13CPDN.PDF>

<sup>106</sup> City of San Francisco: Mayor’s office of housing and community development. (n.d.). Transition age youth housing. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://sfmohcd.org/transition-age-youth-housing>

<sup>107</sup> Office of Community Planning and Development (2004, October). HUD’s homeless assistance programs: A guide to counting unsheltered homeless people. Retrieved June 11, 2019, from <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/Guide-for-Counting-Unsheltered-Homeless-Persons.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> HUD (n.d.). HUD occupancy handbook: Glossary. Retrieved June 10, 2019, from <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/43503GHS GH.PDF>



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