



SOLANO COUNTY



# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

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## **ABOUT THE RESEARCHER**

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

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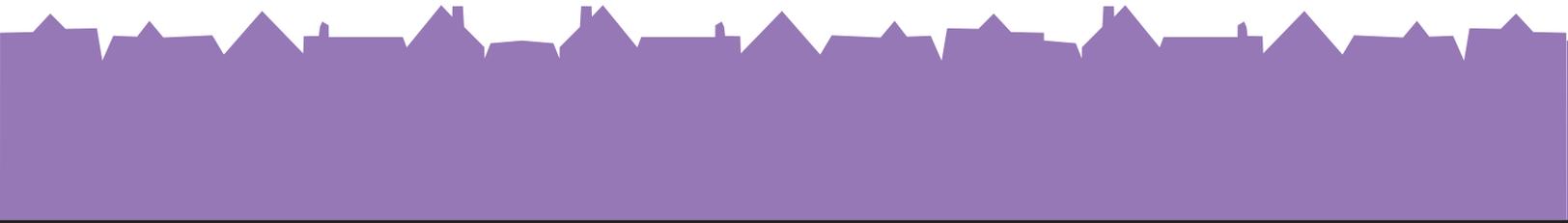
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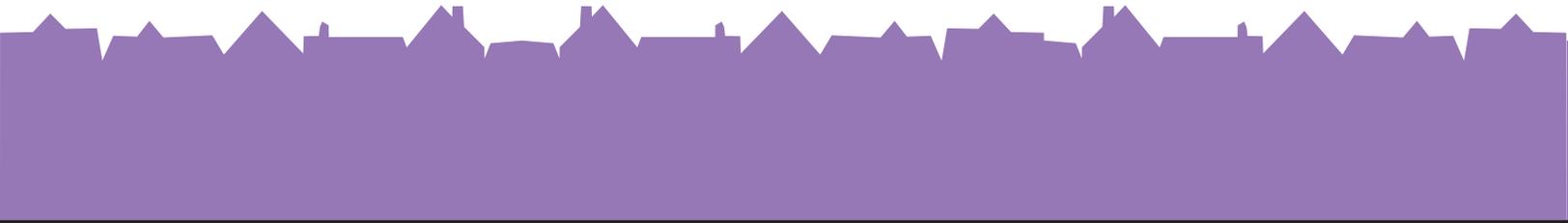
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# Acknowledgments

The 2015 Solano County Census and Survey planning team would like to thank the many individuals and agencies who contributed to this project. The participation of community volunteers and partner agencies is critical to the success of the count. Volunteers provide local knowledge and the transportation necessary to cover the entirety of Solano County. Local shelters and partner agencies provide recommendations for knowledgeable and reliable homeless guides, in addition to integral information regarding vulnerable populations and their locations.

A special thanks must be given to the following groups and individuals for their time and effort throughout the Solano County Census and Survey: Sonya Russell and her family of the Community Life Integration Foundation, the Solano team at HomeBase in San Francisco, Colleen Erdes at Opportunity House, Nick Fisher and Ron Marlette at Mission Solano, Keetra Welling at Community Action North Bay (CANB), Dawn La Bar of the City of Fairfield, and Ronald Grassi and Glenda Lingenfelter of Solano County.

We appreciate the following programs and sites that provided data and helped with the Solano County shelter data collection: Heather House, LIFT3 Gateway, CINOH, Benicia CAC, Caminar Laurel Creek, Caminar Gateway, Community Action North Bay VA, Community Action North Bay Building Better Lives, Hope Haven, John's Place – Southern Solano Alcohol Council, Joshua House Men's Center, Global Center for Success, Vallejo Lord's Fellowship, Hugs to a Fresh Start, Opportunity House, SafeQuest, and Mission Solano.





# Introduction

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

Every Continuum of Care is required to provide an annual snapshot of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night during the last 10 days of January. In addition to the annual shelter count, every other year (odd numbered years) communities must conduct a count of both the unsheltered and sheltered populations on a single night. These biennial Point-in-Time counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for homeless individuals and families.

Each jurisdiction reports the findings of its Point-In-Time Count in its annual funding application to HUD, and the data collected helps the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. The biennial Point-in-Time counts are the primary source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

Solano County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2015 Solano Homeless Count and Survey. ASR is a non-profit social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and research.

The Solano homeless count had two primary components: a Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks, vehicles, etc.) and a Point-in-Time enumeration of homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter (those staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or using stabilization rooms).

The 2015 Solano Point-in-Time Count was a county-wide effort. With the support of community volunteers and homeless individuals led by the planning team, the entire county was canvassed between daybreak and noon on January 30, 2015. This resulted in a visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets, vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation. Shelters and facilities reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the same evening.

After completion of the Point-in-Time count, over the next several months, an in-depth qualitative survey was administered to 360 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals of all ages. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization.

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in Solano on a single night. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations including chronically homeless, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and unaccompanied youth, also known as Transitional Age Youth (TAY), between the ages of 18 and 24 years.

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

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

- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals), or
- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (December 2012). Housing Inventory Count and Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons: Data Collection Guidance Version 1.1.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND GOALS

The 2015 Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;
- To improve the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population and to track progress toward ending homelessness;
- To increase public awareness of overall homeless issues and generate support for constructive solutions; and
- To assess the status of specific subpopulations including veterans, families, unaccompanied children under 18, transition-age youth, and those who are chronically homeless.

This report is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local, state, and federal government, helping them to gain a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measure the impact of current policies and programming, and plan for the future.





# Point-In-Time Census

The 2015 Point-in-Time count included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on January 30, 2015, from approximately daybreak to noon and covered all of Solano County. The shelter count was conducted the previous night and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. A more detailed description of the project methodology can be found in Appendix 1.

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SOLANO COUNTY

The number of individuals counted in the 2015 general street count and shelter count was 1,082.

Approximately 73% of all individuals counted in the 2015 Solano County Point-in-Time Count were unsheltered.

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



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Of the 1,082 individuals counted in the shelter count, 287 persons (27%) were in shelter settings. Of those that were staying in a shelter setting, 62% were staying in transitional housing units, while 38% were living in emergency shelters.

**FIGURE 2.** TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS BY SHELTER STATUS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

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

People in families represented about 11% of the count population.

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

	CHILDREN UNDER 18	ADULTS 18-24	ADULTS 25+	TOTAL
Sheltered	45	17	225	287
Persons in family households	45	5	47	97
Persons in non-family households	0	12	178	190
Unsheltered	17	100	678	795
Persons in family households	8	1	8	17
Persons in non-family households	9	99	670	778
Total	62	117	903	1,082
Percent	6%	11%	83%	-

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF UNSHELTERED AND SHELTERED HOMELESS PERSONS BY JURISDICTION

The 2015 Solano Homeless Count data are presented below.

Vallejo had the greatest number of unsheltered homeless individuals. Based on data from the 2015 General Count, 45% of the unsheltered population was identified in Vallejo. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the unsheltered population was identified in Fairfield. Ten percent (10%) of the unsheltered population was identified in the Vacaville area. Many homeless individuals were enumerated in unincorporated areas, representing an additional 14% of the unsheltered population.

**FIGURE 4.** HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY JURISDICTION

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED	SHELTERED	TOTAL	
	n	n	n	%
Total Incorporated	684	287	971	90%
Benicia	36	4	40	4%
Dixon	11	12	23	2%
Fairfield	166	178	344	32%
Rio Vista	19	0	19	2%
Suisun City	13	8	21	2%
Vacaville	79	43	122	11%
Vallejo	360	42	402	37%
Total Unincorporated	111	0	111	10%
Total	795	287	1,082	100%

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

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



# Homeless Survey Findings

The methodology used for the 2015 homeless count is described by HUD as a “blitz count” in that it is conducted by numerous people over a very short period of time in an effort to avoid duplicate enumeration. As this method was conducted in Solano County, the result is an observation-based count of individuals and families who appear to be homeless. The count is followed by a face-to-face representative survey. The survey sample is then used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of Solano County’s homeless population and subpopulations for the purposes of HUD reporting and local service delivery and strategic planning.

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the 2015 Solano Homeless Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February and March, 2015. This effort resulted in 360 complete and unique surveys. Based on a Point-in-Time count of 1,082 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 360 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in Solano. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within four percentage points of the current results for countywide data.

In order to ensure safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values have been intentionally omitted from the survey results; therefore, the total number of respondents for each question does not always equal the total number of surveys administered.

The following table details where the surveys were administered and how they are reflective of the target population.

**FIGURE 5. SURVEY DISTRIBUTION BY GEOGRAPHY AND SHELTER STATUS**

JURISDICTION	UNSHelterED	ShelterED	TOTAL	
	n	n	n	%
Dixon	0	3	3	1%
Fairfield	138	41	179	50%
Rio Vista	11	0	11	3%
Vacaville	30	4	34	9%
Vallejo/Benicia/ Suisun City	106	27	133	37%
Total	285	75	360	100%

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census and Survey. Watsonville, CA.

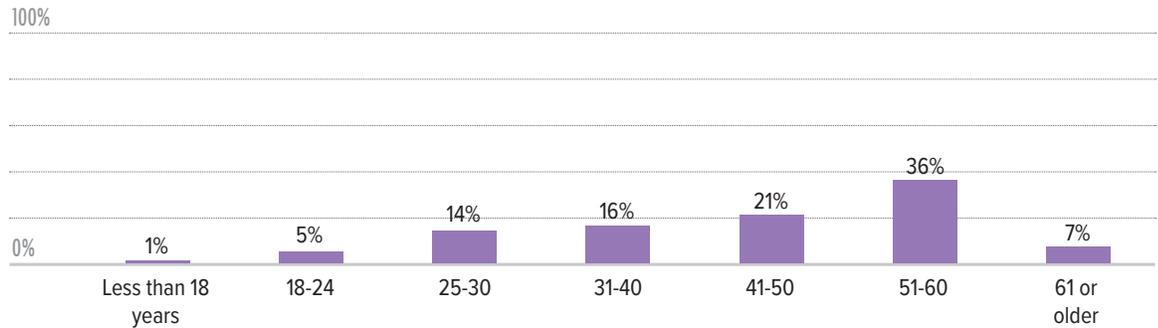
### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of homeless residents in Solano County, respondents were asked basic demographic questions including age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

#### AGE

Forty-three percent of survey respondents in Solano County were over the age of 50 and 51% were between the ages of 25 and 50.

**FIGURE 6. AGE**

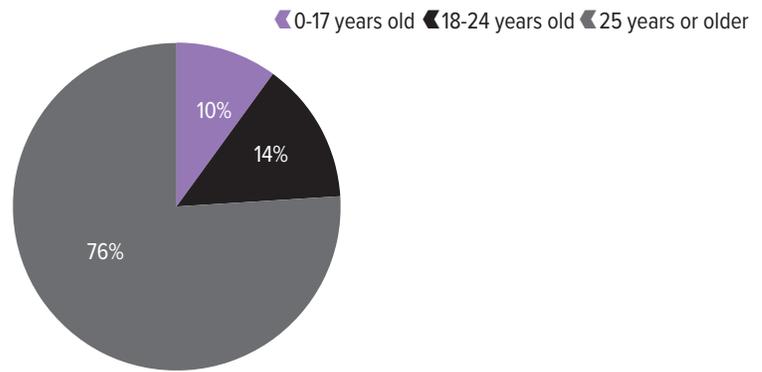


2015 n:360

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

Respondents were asked how old they were the first time they experienced homelessness, 10% reported they were under the age of 18, 14% reported they were between the ages of 18-24, 76% reported they were over the age of 24.

**FIGURE 7.** AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:350

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

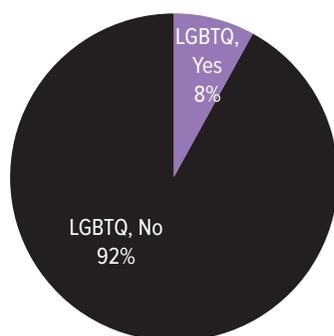
## GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One third of survey respondents (43%) identified as female, 57% male, and less than one percent identified as transgender. While there are limited data on the number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggest LGBTQ individuals experience homelessness at higher rates, especially those under the age of 25.

Eight percent (8%) of homeless survey respondents identified as LGBTQ in 2015. Of those, 48% identified as lesbian, 31% bisexual, 14% gay, 3% transgender and 3% other.

Respondents who identified as LGBTQ were more likely to report they had been physically, emotionally or sexually abused (57% compared to 23%). They were also more likely to have been without housing for less than a year (57%). They were less likely (35% vs. 42%) to report a disabling health condition. This was primarily due to a lower percentage of LGBTQ respondents reporting any chronic health problem or medical condition (19%), compared to 28% of respondents who did not identify as LGBTQ. LGBTQ respondents reported higher incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (33% compared to 19%).

**FIGURE 8.** SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ IDENTITY



Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	%	n
Gay	14%	4
Lesbian	48%	14
Queer	0%	0
Bisexual	31%	9
Transgender	3%	1
Other	3%	1

LGBTQ n:360; Breakout n: 29 respondents offering 29 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

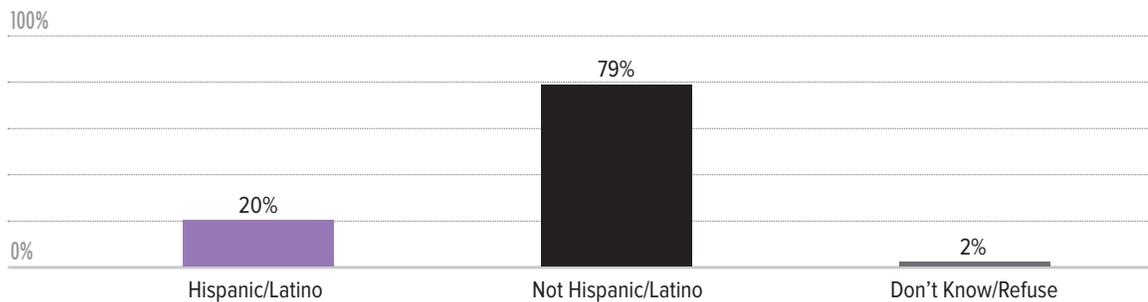
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

**RACE/ETHNICITY**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the US Census. When asked about their ethnicity 20% of homeless survey respondents reported they were Hispanic or Latino. In regards to race, 43% identified as White, 38% Black or African-American, 7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 4% Asian, 1% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and 19% multi-ethnic or other.

There are disparities between racial and ethnic groups as represented in the general population and those experiencing homelessness. In comparison to the general population of Solano, a slightly lower percentage of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino (20% compared to 25%). In terms of race, a much higher population of survey respondents identified as Black or African-American, 38% compared to 17%. Four percent (4%) of homeless respondents identified as Asian, compared to 18% of the general population.

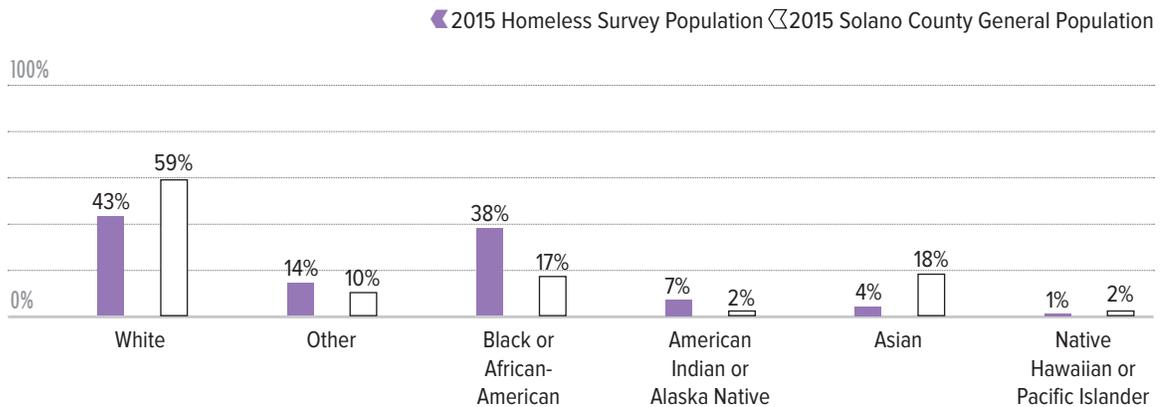
**FIGURE 9. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY**



2015 n:329

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

**FIGURE 10. RACE**



2015 n:328

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA. U.S. Census Bureau. (April 2015). American Community Survey 2011-2013 3-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

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

**FOSTER CARE**

It has been estimated that one in four former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.<sup>2</sup> In the State of California, foster youth are now eligible to receive services beyond age 18. Transitional housing and supportive services for youth 18-24 are provided by two programs, Transitional Housing Placement-Foster Care for youth 18-21 and Transitional Housing Placement-Plus for youth ages 18-24. It is hoped that these additional supports, implemented since 2012, will assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless.

In 2015 16% of all respondents reported a history of foster care. When survey respondents were asked where they were living prior to becoming homeless, 2% of respondents indicated that they were in foster care. One percent (1%) of all survey respondents indicated that aging out of the foster care was the primary event that led to their homelessness. Although only 20 unaccompanied children and youth were surveyed, one of those respondents has been in foster care.

**FIGURE 11. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE**



2015 n:331

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

<sup>2</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2012). Amendment 2012, Opening Doors: Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Washington: D.C.

## LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

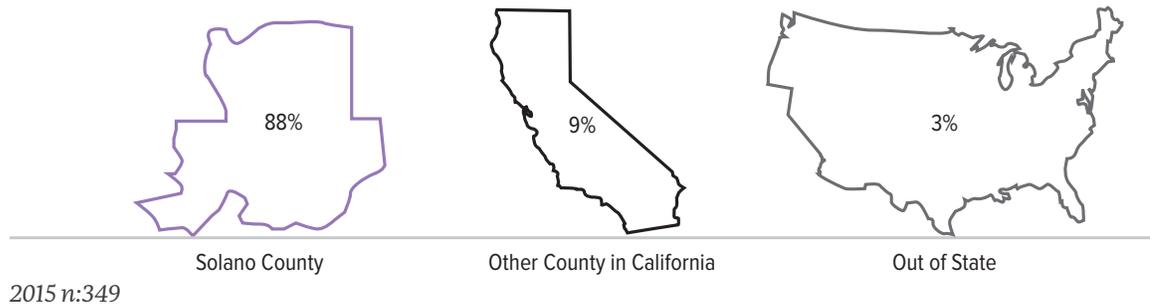
Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness and where they have lived since affects the way they seek services as well as their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and opportunities for systemic improvement and homeless prevention. Survey respondents reported many different living accommodations prior to becoming homeless, although most lived in or around the Solano area with friends, family, or on their own in a house or apartment.

### PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of residents reported they were living in Solano at the time they most recently became homeless. Nearly half (47%) of survey respondents had lived in Solano for ten years or more. Twelve percent (12%) had lived in Solano County for less than one year.

Three percent (3%) of respondents reported they were living out of state when they became homeless and 9% reported they were living in a neighboring county (6%).

**FIGURE 12.** PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS

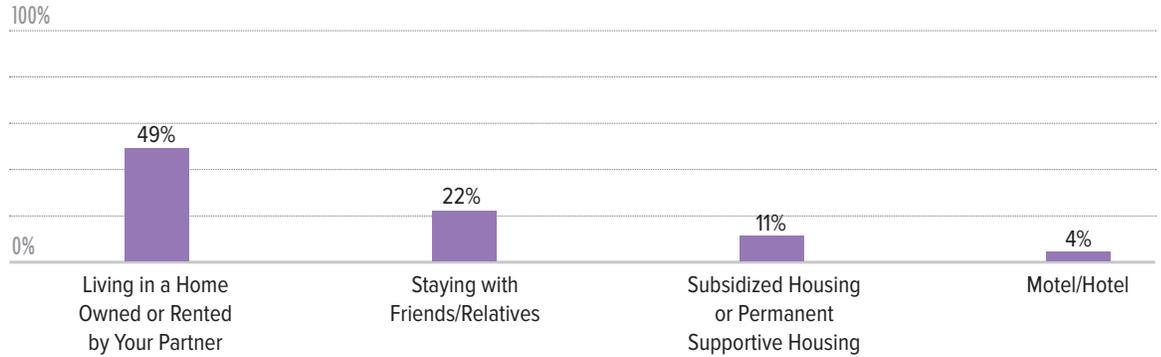


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

**PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents reported staying in a home owned or rented by themselves or their partner. Twenty-two percent (22%) reported they were living in a home owned or rented by friends or relatives. Eleven percent (11%) were staying in a subsidized housing or permanent supportive housing facility immediately prior to becoming homeless. Four percent (4%) were in a motel or hotel and another four percent (4%) were in jail or prison.

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



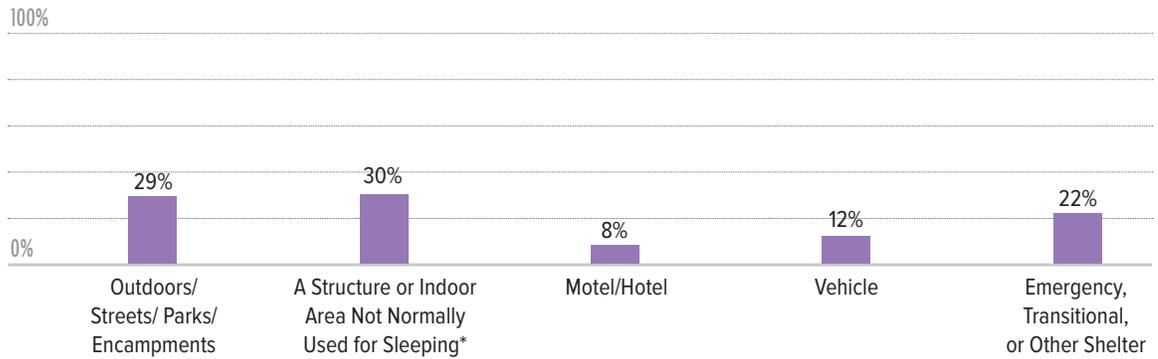
2015 n:343

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

**CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

About one in four (29%) survey respondents reported currently living outdoors, either on the streets, in parks or encampment areas. One in five (22%) survey respondents reported staying in a public shelter (emergency shelter, transitional housing facility, or alternative shelter environment). Thirty percent of respondents reported they were sleeping in a structure or indoor area not normally used for sleeping.

**FIGURE 14. USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT**



2015 n:343

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

Note: Refers to both a backyard or storage structure and a place in a house not normally used for sleeping.

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100.

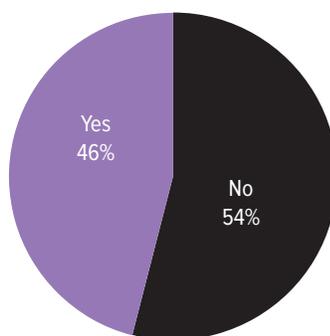
## DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

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

### DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

Forty-one percent (41%) of survey respondents reported they had been homeless for a year or more. One in ten had been homeless for less than one month.

**FIGURE 15.** PERCENT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



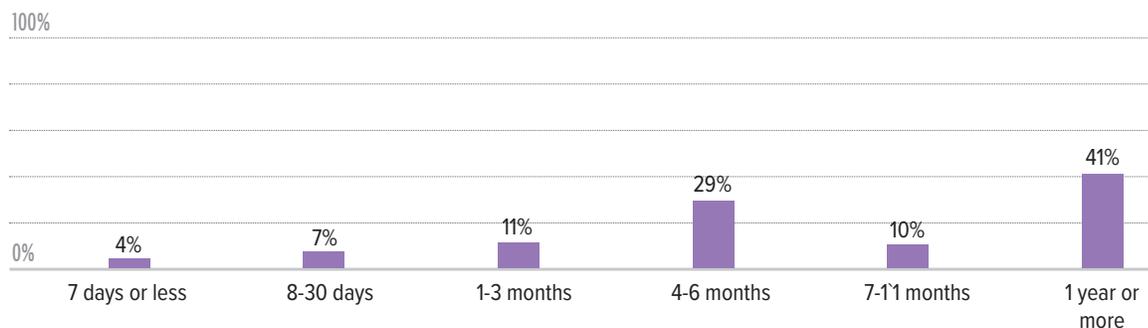
2015 n:355

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

### RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Most survey respondents (84%) indicated that they have only been homeless once in the last 12 months. Three percent (3%) of respondents reported they had experienced homelessness four or more times in the past year. When asked how many times they had been homeless in the past three years, 22% reported they had been homeless four or more times.

**FIGURE 16.** LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:354

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

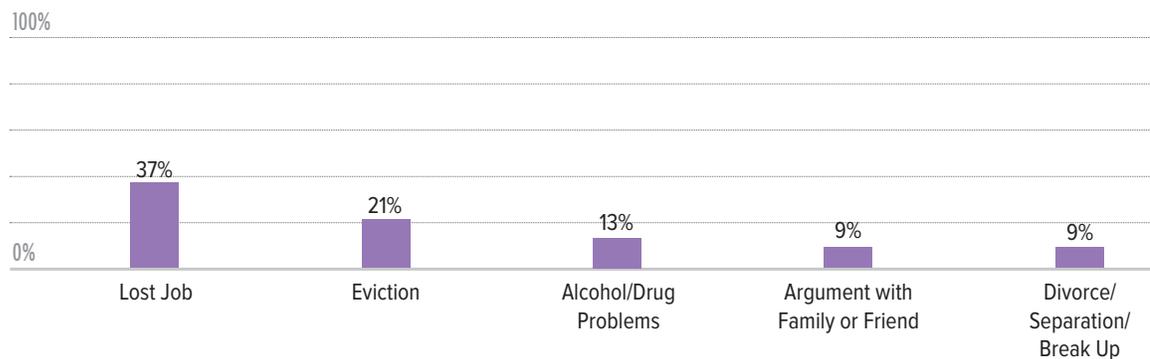
## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

### PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual's homelessness is not always clear. It is often the result of multiple and compounding causes.

One-third (37%) of survey respondents reported job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness. Twenty-one percent (21%) reported eviction. Thirteen percent (13%) reported an alcohol or drug use problem, nine percent (9%) reported an argument with family or friend who asked them to leave, and seven percent (7%) reported mental health issues as a primary event that led to their homelessness.

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



2015 n:352 respondents offering 472 responses.

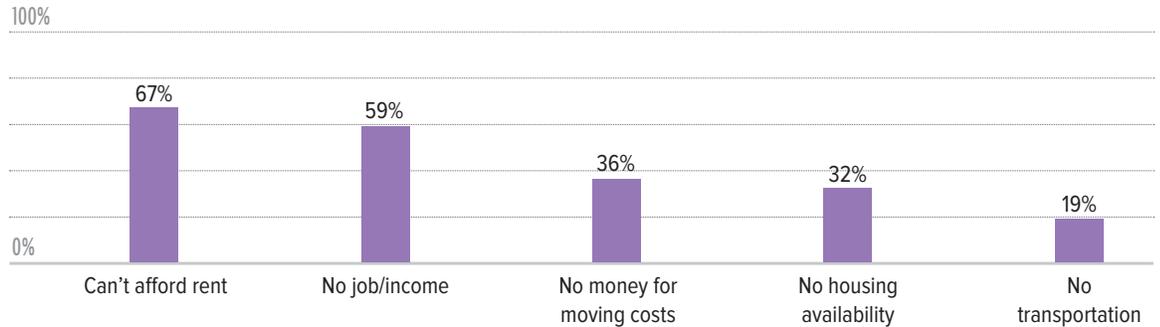
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

### OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Respondents were also asked what prevented them from obtaining housing. The greatest percentage (67%) reported they could not afford rent. Most other respondents reported a mixture of other income or access related issues, such as a lack of income/no job (59%), bad credit (13%), and eviction record (10%). Eleven percent (11%) of survey respondents indicated that a medical/health issue was preventing them from getting permanent housing. When asked if affordable permanent housing was available to them, 87% indicated that yes, they would want to move in, and that 89% of those would be willing to access services to help them in this transition.

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



2015 n:346 respondents offering 963 responses.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

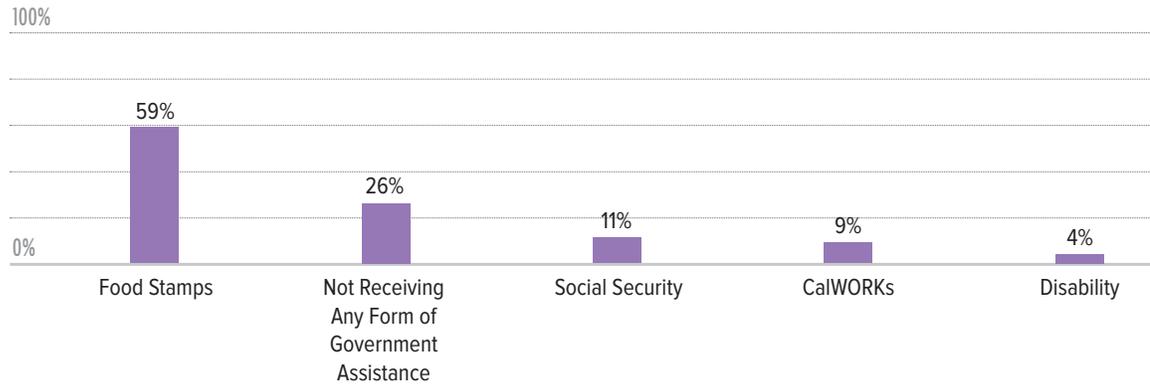
## SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

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

### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Nearly three out of four (74%) respondents in 2015 reported they were receiving some form of government assistance. The largest percentage (59%) reported receiving CalFresh (food stamps) and 11% reported receiving social security. Four percent (4%) of respondents indicated that they were receiving government disability compensation.

**FIGURE 19.** GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



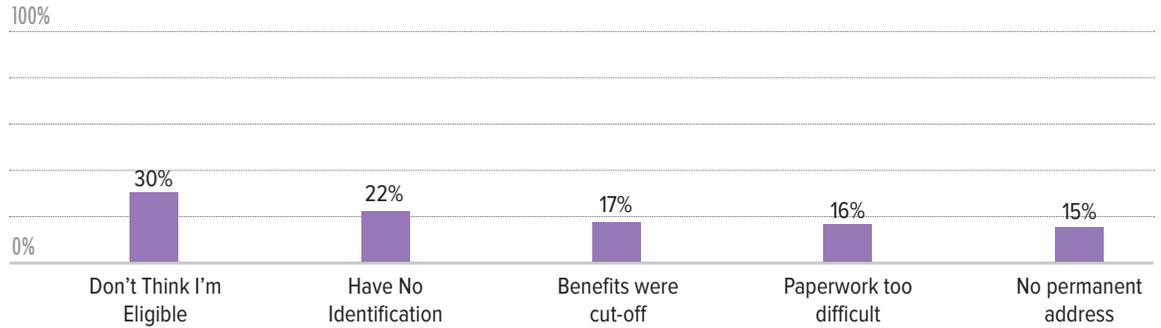
2015 n:327 respondents offering 365 responses.

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

Of those who reported they were not receiving any form of government support, the greatest percentage reported they did not think they were eligible for assistance (30%). Respondents also reported challenges applying for services, 22% percent reported they did not have required identification, 16% reported the paperwork was too difficult, and 15% reported no permanent address to use on applications. Another 11% reported they did not know where to go to seek assistance.

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



2015 n:81 respondents offering 131 responses.

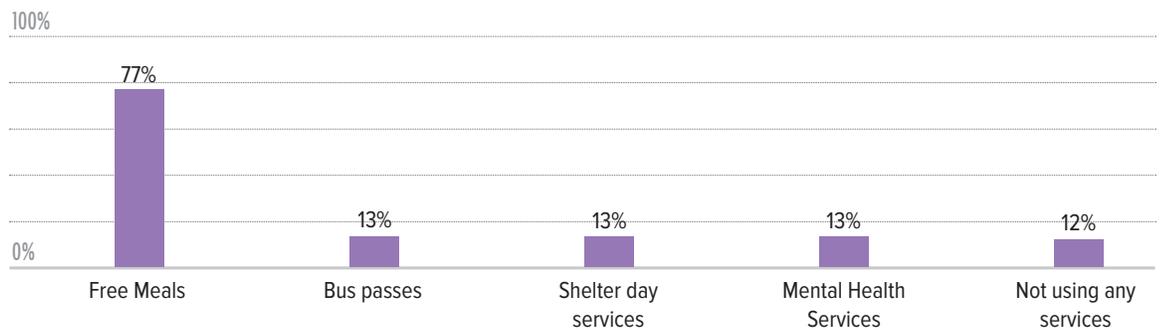
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents reported using services. By far the most commonly used service was free meal services at 77%. Thirteen percent (13%) of respondents reported using each of the following: mental health services, bus passes, and shelter day services. Nine percent (9%) of respondents utilized alcohol and drug counseling services, while 7% used job training and employment services.

**FIGURE 21. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**



2015 n:301 respondents offering 457 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

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

### EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Solano County in January 2015 was 6.9%, down from 10.5%, in 2013.<sup>3</sup> It is important to recognize that the unemployment rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It doesn't represent all joblessness. The unemployment rate for homeless respondents was 85% in Solano County. Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents reported working full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, or casual employment.

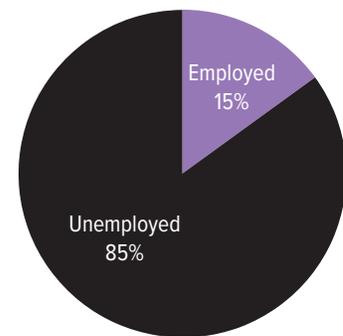
Of those who were unemployed, 62% indicated they were looking for work, 26% indicated that they were unable to work, and 12% that they were not currently looking for work.

### INCOME

Income varied widely between survey respondents that were currently employed and those that were unemployed. Among unemployed respondents, 58% were receiving less than \$450 a month. Of the survey respondents that indicated they were employed 43% (9 respondents) indicated that they earn \$1,100 or more a month, compared to 6% of unemployed respondents. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling.

FIGURE 22. EMPLOYMENT AND MEAN MONTHLY INCOME

	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	%	n	%	n
\$0-\$99	0%	0	6%	6
\$100-\$449	14%	3	52%	53
\$450-\$749	29%	6	16%	16
\$750-\$1,099	14%	3	21%	22
\$1,100-\$1,499	10%	2	3%	3
\$1,500-\$3,000	33%	7	3%	3
More than \$3,000	0%	0	0%	0



2015 employment status n:315; Income employed n:21; Income unemployed n:103

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

<sup>3</sup> State of California Employment Development Department. (2013). Unemployment Rates (Labor Force). Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>

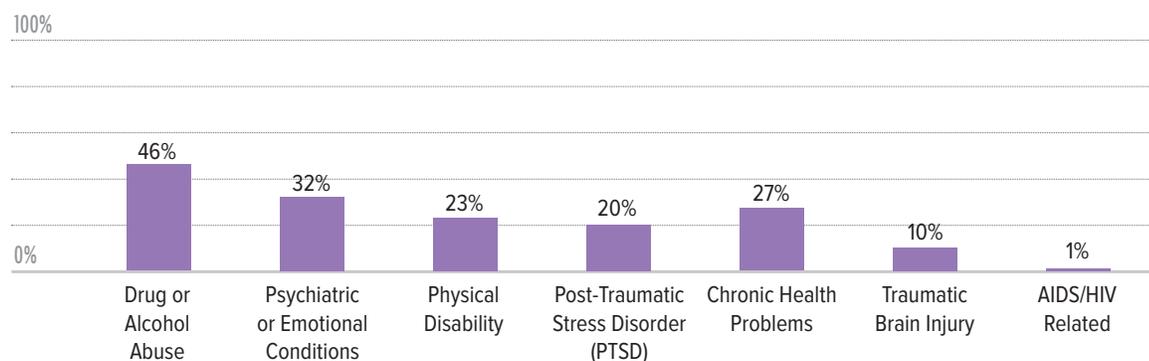
## HEALTH

The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to health care, homeless individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.<sup>4</sup>

### PHYSICAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITIES

Nearly half of respondents (46%) reported drug or alcohol abuse. Almost one-third (32%) of survey respondents indicated that they have psychiatric or emotional conditions, while one in four (27%) survey respondents reported chronic health problems. One in five survey respondents (20%) revealed that they suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

**FIGURE 23. HEALTH CONDITIONS**



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:346; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:346; Physical disability n:347; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:348; Chronic health problems n:345; Traumatic Brain Injury n:339; AIDS/HIV related n:344*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.*

### FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity is associated with adverse health outcomes. It is associated with the increased prevalence of chronic health conditions, and prevents those already ill from improving health outcomes. Respondents were asked if they usually get enough to eat. Twenty-seven percent (27%) reported that did not usually get enough to eat.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

### DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends asking about physical, emotional, or sexual abuse over a lifetime. In 2015 homeless survey respondents were asked two main questions related to domestic/partner violence. They were asked about both current experiences with domestic/partner violence as well as domestic/partner violence throughout their lifetime. Six percent (6%) of all survey respondents reported they were currently experiencing domestic/partner violence or abuse. When asked about experiences across their lifetime, 26% reported experiencing domestic violence, emotional, or sexual abuse at some point.

Domestic violence varied by gender: 33% of female respondents reported current experiences of domestic violence, compared to 18% of men. Three percent (3%) of all respondents reported domestic/partner violence as a primary cause of their homelessness; however, when looking at homeless respondents in families, that percentage jumped to 9%.

**FIGURE 24.** HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2015 n:331

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

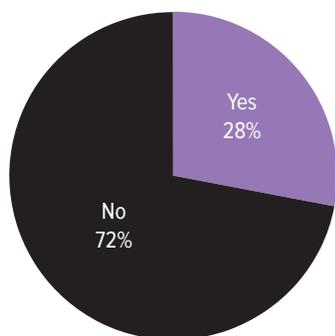
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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

### INCARCERATION

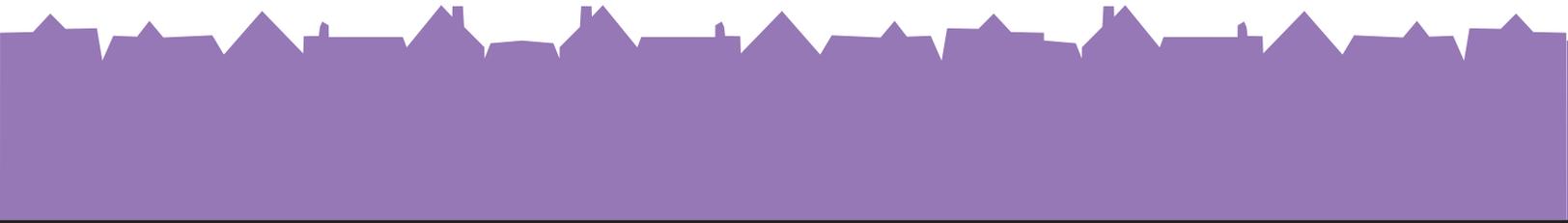
Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents reported they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey. Eighteen percent (18%) of 2015 respondents reported they were on probation or parole prior to their homelessness. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of survey respondents had spent at least one night in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey and 7% had been arrested six or more times in the last three years.

**FIGURE 25.** SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 n:338

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.



# Homeless Subpopulations

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

The following section details the number and characteristic of individuals included in the Solano County Point-in-Time Count and Survey who meet the definition of each subpopulation.

Of the 360 surveys completed in 2015, the results represent 84 chronically homeless individuals, 39 homeless veterans, 23 individuals in homeless families, and 20 unaccompanied children and transition age youth. Surveys were completed in unsheltered environments and Transitional Housing settings.

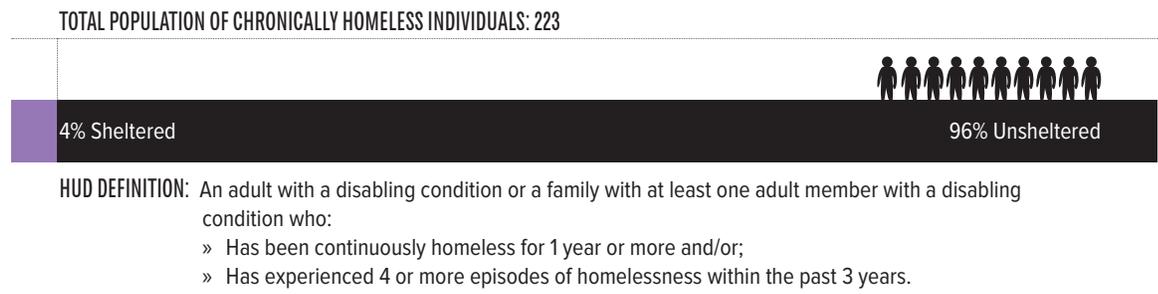
## CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

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

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

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) reported that roughly 15% of the national homeless population was chronically homeless in 2014, for a total of 84,291 chronically homeless individuals. Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of permanent supportive programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the decrease in national chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints have limited the amount of money available to support housing programs and services. As a result, *Opening Doors'* original goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015, has been extended until 2017.

**FIGURE 26.** CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Solano County Homeless Census & Survey*. Watsonville, CA.

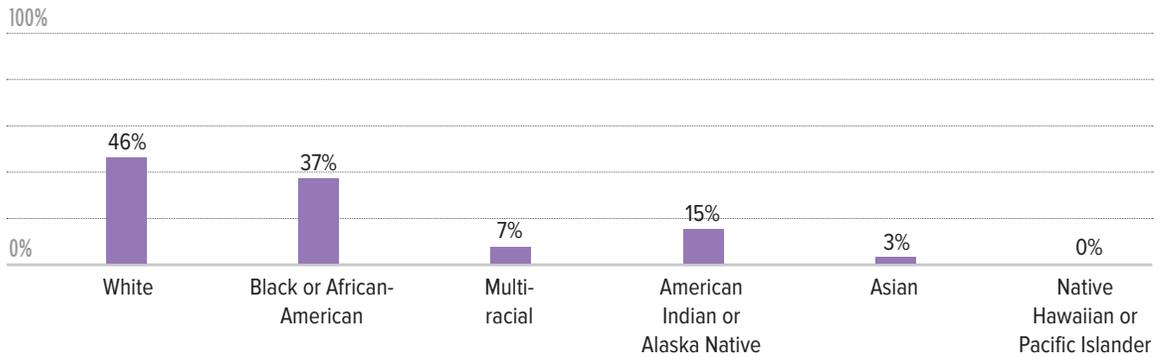
## PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

There were a total of 223 chronically homeless individuals in Solano County in 2015 and only one chronically homeless family.

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS**

Of the chronically homeless survey respondents, 63% were male. Forty-six percent (46%) identified as White, 37% identified as Black or African-American, and 15% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. When compared to the non-chronically homeless population we see similar numbers (42% White and 38% Black or African-American).

**FIGURE 27. RACE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**



2015 n:76

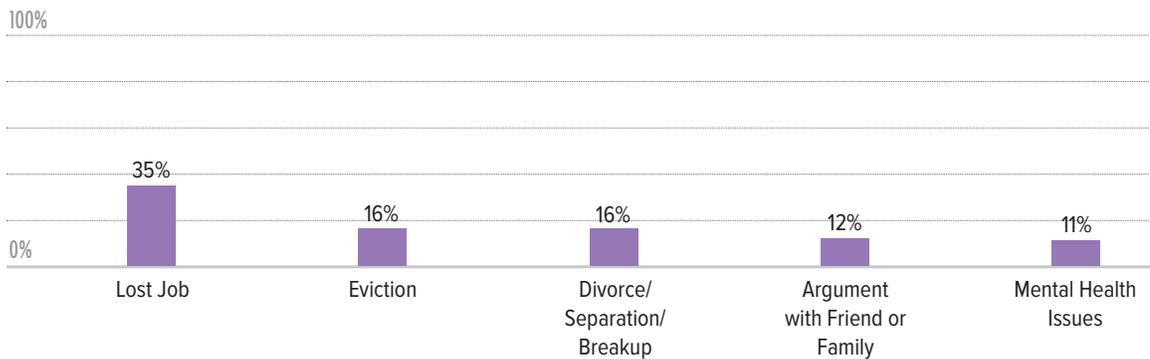
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

When asked what the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness was, 35% of the chronically homeless survey respondents reported it was due to the loss of a job. Sixteen percent (16%) stated it was due to eviction and another 16% reported it was due to a divorce or separation.

**FIGURE 28. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**



2015 n:84 respondents offering 107 responses

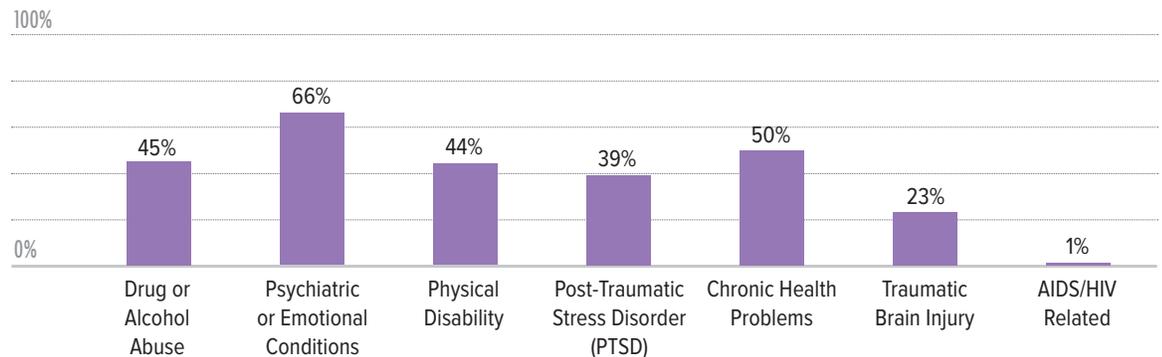
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Fifty percent (50%) were suffering from chronic health problems. The largest number of respondents reported experiencing a psychiatric or emotional condition at 66%. Forty-five percent (45%) of the chronically homeless were experiencing drug or alcohol abuse, 44% reported having a physical disability, and 39% were suffering from PTSD.

**FIGURE 29.** HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:82; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:82; Physical disability n:80; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:82; Chronic health problems n:80; Traumatic Brain Injury n:80; AIDS/HIV related n:83*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.*

### EMERGENCY ROOM USE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Forty-six percent (46%) of the chronically homeless population had been to the Emergency Room (ER) at least once in the past three months, while 34% of the non-chronically homeless population had been to the ER in the same time frame.

### ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Eighty-four percent (84%) of chronically homeless respondents reported using some sort of service or public assistance. The most commonly used service is free meals. Seventy-nine (79%) of the chronically homeless are receiving meals. One fifth of respondents were accessing shelter day services. In regards to government assistance options, 56% were receiving food stamps. The chronically homeless respondents who were not receiving any services stated it was because they did not think they were eligible (43%) and because they did not have a permanent address to use (29%).

### INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Fifty-three percent (53%) of the chronically homeless respondents had been arrested at least once in the last three years, while 35% of respondents had spent a night in jail in the last 12 months.

## HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

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

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

Between 2009-2014, nationwide data shows that there has been a 33% decrease in the number of homeless veterans. According to data collected during the 2014 Point-in-Time Count across the country, 49,933 veterans experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2014.<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 30. HOMELESS VETERAN POPULATION ESTIMATES**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census & Survey. Watsonville, CA.

## NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS

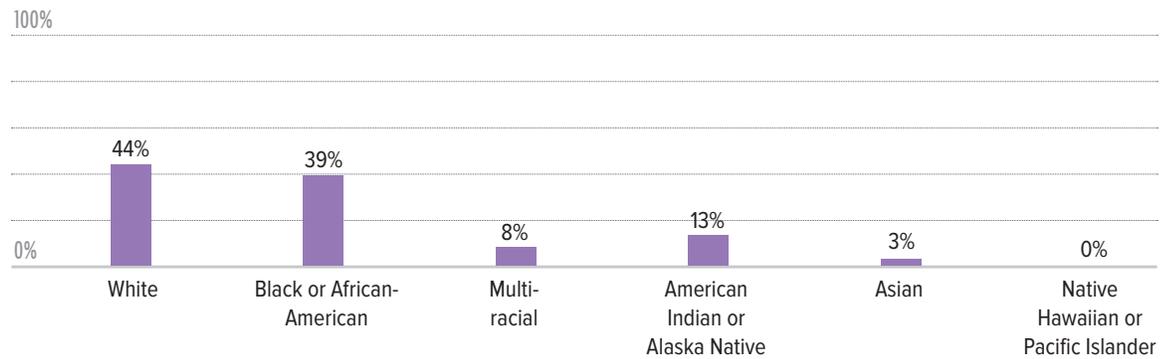
There are an estimated 140 homeless veterans in Solano County, representing 13% of the total homeless population.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS VETERANS**

Ninety percent (90%) of homeless veterans in Solano County are male, compared to 53% of the non-veteran population. Of all of the veteran survey respondents, 44% identified as White, 39% were Black or African-American, 13% were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 8% identified as mixed-race. Eighty percent (80%) of the homeless veterans in Solano County were living within Solano County when they became homeless.

**FIGURE 31. RACE AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



2015 n:39

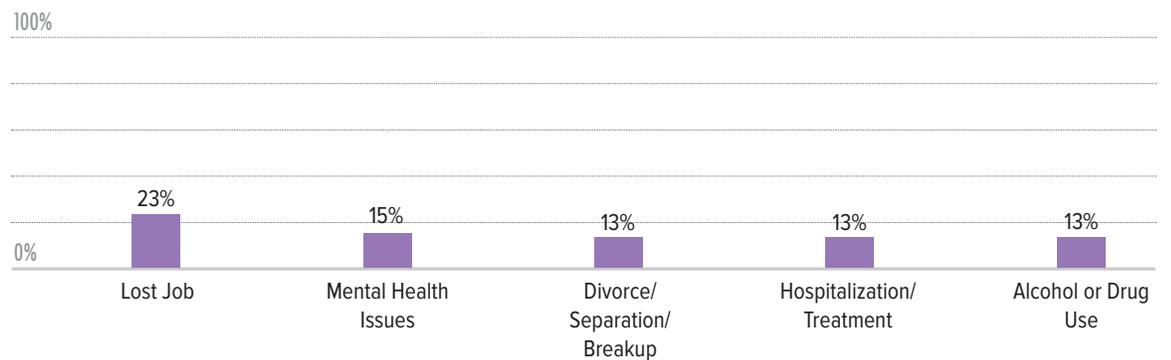
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

When asked about the primary event or condition that led to their current episode of homelessness, 23% reported it was due to the loss of a job. Some of the other primary causes stated were mental health issues (15%), the abuse of alcohol and drugs (13%), and undergoing a hospitalization or treatment (13%). Prior to becoming homeless, 46% of homeless veterans stated they were living in a home they or their partner owned or rented, and 26% of respondents reported living in a home owned or rented by friends or relatives.

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



2015 n:39 respondents offering 53 responses

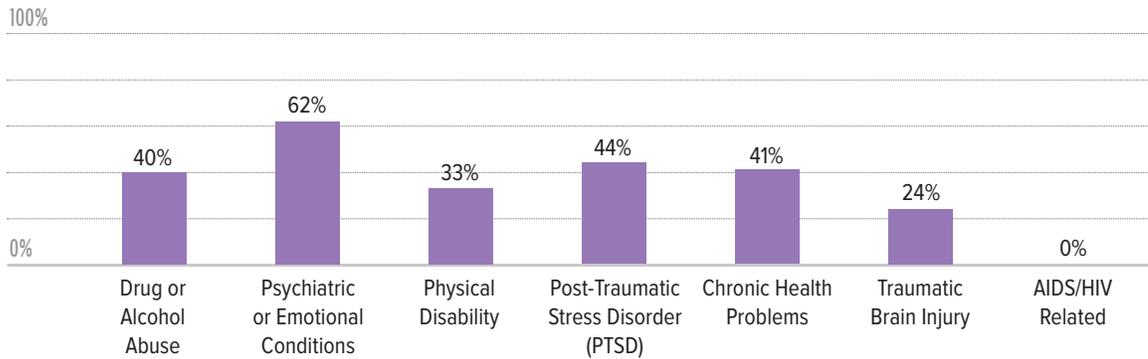
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

A little over half (51%) of homeless veteran survey respondents in Solano County reported having one or more disabling conditions. Sixty-two percent (62%) of veteran respondents have a psychiatric or emotional condition, 44% have suffered from PTSD, 40% have abused drugs or alcohol, 33% have a physical disability, and 24% have a Traumatic Brain Injury.

**FIGURE 33. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:38; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:39; Physical disability n:39; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:39; Chronic health problems n:39; Traumatic Brain Injury n:38; AIDS/HIV related n:39*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.*

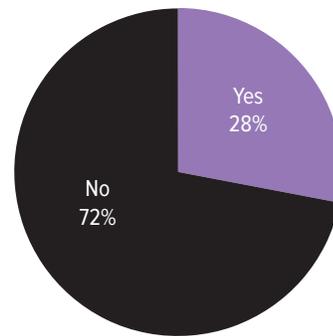
### ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Eighty-four percent (84%) of homeless veterans reported using some sort of service or assistance program. The most accessed service was free meals with 74% of veteran respondents were receiving free meals. Twenty-three percent of homeless veterans were receiving a bus pass and 19% accessed mental health services. In regards to government assistance, 37% of homeless veterans in Solano County were receiving food stamps, 24% received VA benefits, and 21% had social security. Of the 34% not receiving any form of government assistance, they stated it was because they had applied and were turned down (33%), had benefits that were cut off (25%), and because they found the paperwork too difficult (25%).

### INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of homeless veteran respondents had spent a night in jail in the last 12 months, but only 12% were on probation or parole at the time of the survey. A total of 48% of homeless veterans had been arrested at least once in the last 3 years.

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



2015 n:39

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

### HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2014 suggest that 37% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families. Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered. Public shelters serve 90% of homeless families in the United States, a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied youth. Data on homeless families suggest that they are not much different from families in poverty.

The risk of homelessness is highest among households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.<sup>6</sup> Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 35.** HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census & Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

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

### NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

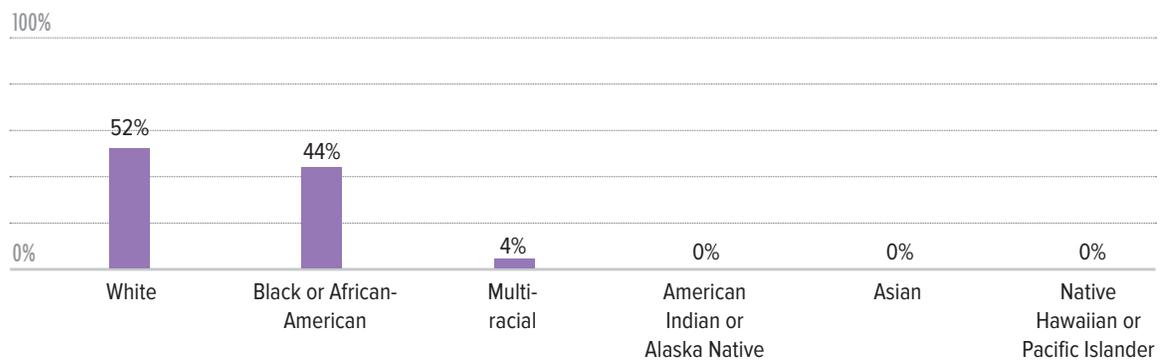
There were a total of 34 families experiencing homelessness in Solano County in 2015. Those families included 114 individuals, of which 15% were living unsheltered on the street. “Double-up” families are excluded from the results in this report per HUD guidelines.

There were only survey responses for a total of 23 homeless families with children, so the data in the following categories will mainly be addressed by the number of respondents representing families as well as some percentages in the figures.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Fifteen of the 23 homeless family survey respondents were female, and half (12) of them identified as White. Ten of the respondents identified as Black or African-American.

**FIGURE 36. RACE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



2015 n:23

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

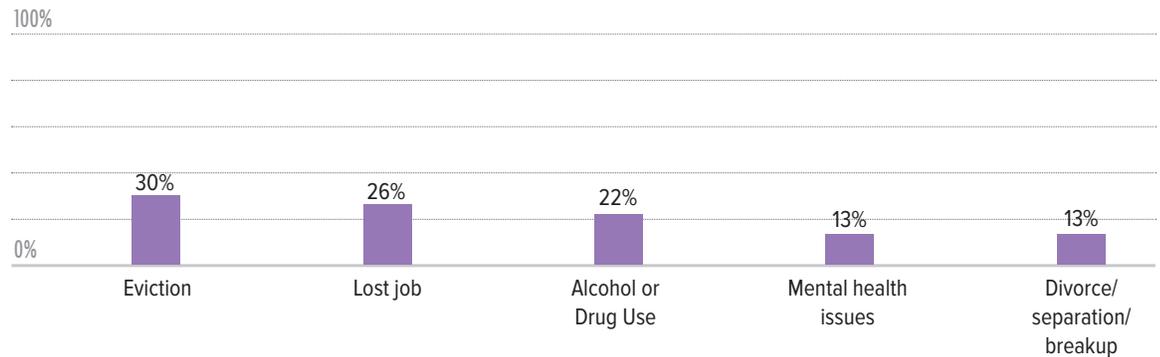
### PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Sixteen of the homeless families indicated that they were living in Solano County when they most recently became homeless.

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESS AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

When asked what was the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness was, seven families stated it was due to an eviction from their previous living accommodation, six respondents indicated it was due to the loss of a job, and five respondents stated it was due to the use of alcohol or drugs.

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



2015 n:23 respondents offering 34 responses

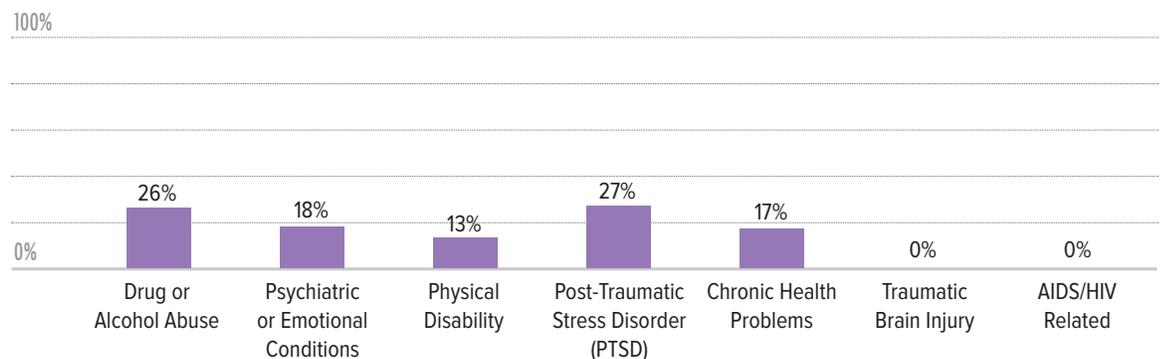
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

The majority of respondents in homeless families reported that they are not experiencing a disabling condition. There were six respondents who stated abusing drugs or alcohol and six respondents who are suffering from PTSD.

**FIGURE 38. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



Drug or alcohol abuse n:23; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:22; Physical disability n:23; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:22; Chronic health problems n:23; Traumatic Brain Injury n:22; AIDS/HIV related n:22

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

### UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

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

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

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



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Census & Survey. Watsonville, CA.

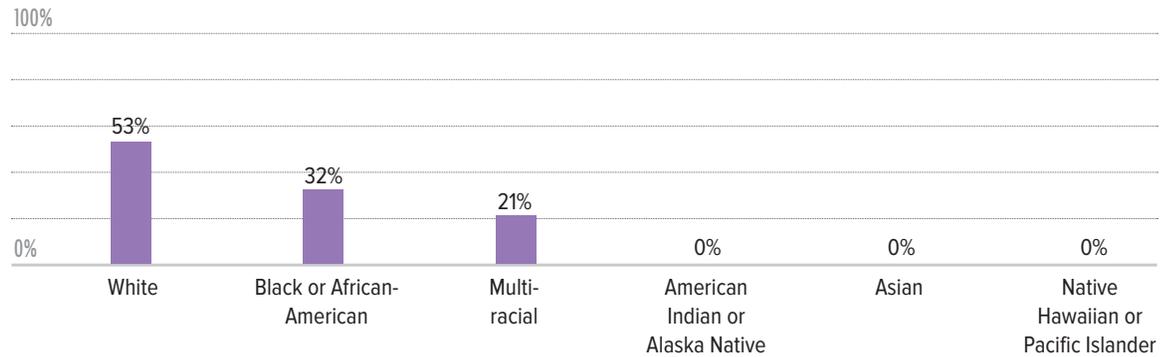
### PREVALENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

There were a total of 120 unaccompanied children and transition-aged youth in Solano County. There were a total of 20 surveys completed by unaccompanied children and transition-aged youth, so the survey findings should be reviewed with statistical caution.

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Half (10) of the unaccompanied children and youth respondents were male and the other half were female. Ten of the respondents identified as White, six identified as Black or African-American, and four identified as Multi-Racial. Six of the 20 respondents stated that they were Hispanic/Latino.

**FIGURE 40. RACE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**



2015 n:19

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Only one respondent out of the 20 reported having been in foster care.

**FIGURE 41. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH**



2015 n:20

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

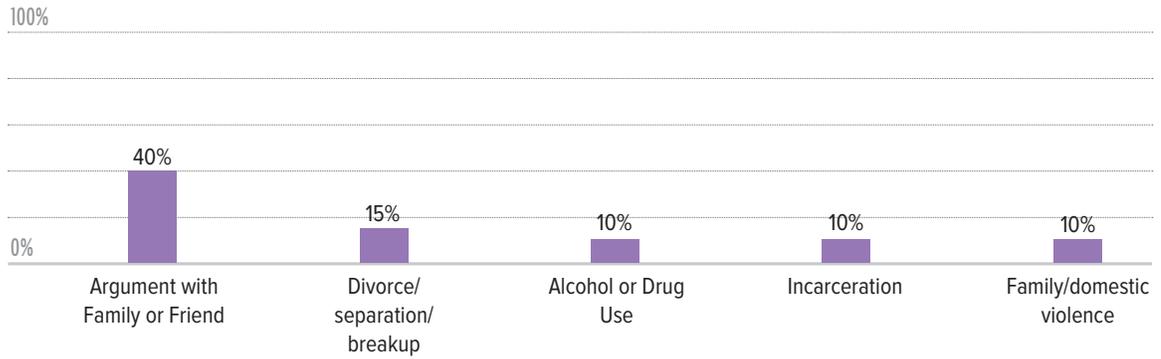
**PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Fourteen of the unaccompanied children and youth respondents were living in Solano County at the time they became homeless.

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

When asked about the primary event or condition leading to their homelessness, the most common response (eight children or youth) stated it was due to an argument with family or friends who asked them to leave.

**FIGURE 42. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**



2015 n:20 respondents offering 23 responses

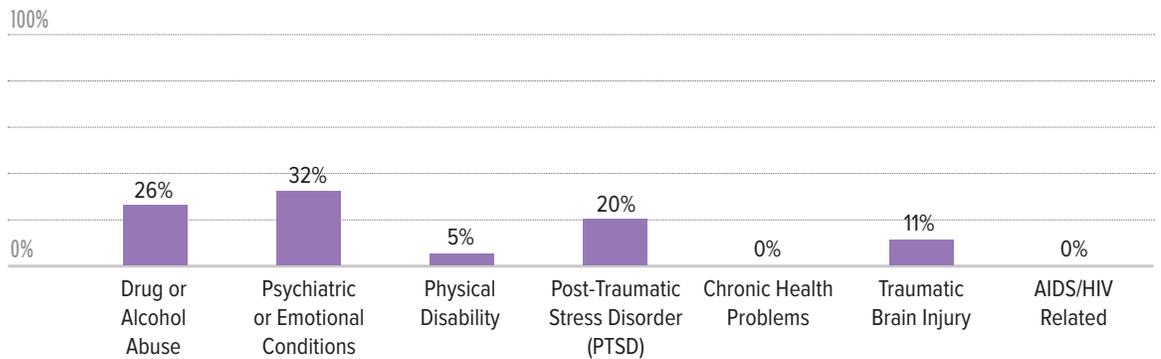
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Of the children and youth experiencing a disabling condition, the most common was a psychiatric or emotional condition (32%). The next common conditions experienced by children and youth were alcohol or substance abuse (26%) and PTSD (20%).

**FIGURE 43. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

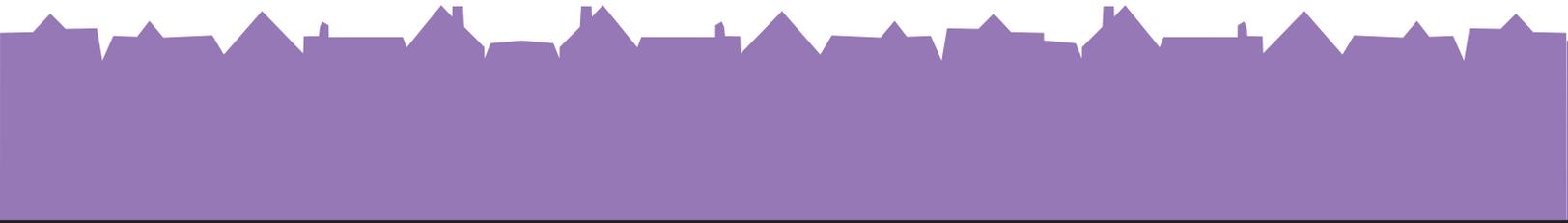


Drug or alcohol abuse n:19; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:19; Physical disability n:20; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:20; Chronic health problems n:20; Traumatic Brain Injury n:19; AIDS/HIV related n:20

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Solano County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

**VIOLENCE AND CRIME AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Eleven of the 20 children and youth respondents reported spending at least one night in jail in the last 12 months, and 7 of the respondents were on probation or parole when they became homeless.



# Conclusion

On the morning of January 30, 2015 community volunteers and homeless guides covered all of Solano County to provide a Point-in-Time count of all homeless individuals within its boundaries. The count found 1,082 individuals experiencing homelessness living in the county. The count can be considered conservative, considering that, even with the most thorough methodology, many homeless individuals stay in hidden, difficult-to-enumerate locations.

There are numerous explanations for this decrease in the number of homeless individuals in the county. The 2015 count effort followed the strict definition of homelessness, as outlined by HUD. While little is known about the 2013 methodology and census logistics plan, it was reported to Applied Survey Research that many census surveys were done in congregant day service locations and food/meal program locations. To our knowledge there was not a systematic filter applied to the sleeping locations for these people to determine if they met the HUD definition for homelessness versus being in a “double-up” living situation. It is not recommended that the longitudinal comparisons be made between the two study efforts without a better understanding of the methods used in 2013. Neighboring counties have seen mixed results; Sonoma County has seen a decrease in homelessness, while San Francisco has remained the same and Marin has increased.

The 2015 Solano County Homeless Census and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable takeaways from the data contained in this report including:

- 73% of the population were living unsheltered
- 88% of respondents reported living in Solano County before becoming homeless
- There were 223 chronically homeless individuals in Solano County, 21% of the total homeless population
- There were an estimated 140 veteran homeless individuals

- There were 34 families, with 114 family members, experiencing homelessness
- 74% of individuals were receiving some form of government assistance
- 85% of homeless individuals were unemployed

As these findings show, there are many challenges to face in order to eliminate homelessness in Solano County. Addressing issues of affordable housing, job training, mental health services, knowledge and availability of government services, and others will be important components of a responsive action plan.

There are plenty of strengths to build upon in combating homelessness. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the individuals in families are sheltered, and there are a relatively low number of veterans experiencing homelessness which indicates that these vulnerable populations are staying off the streets. Using these strengths, and others, present a foundation on which to build and address other areas for improvement.

It is hoped that the data presented in this report will be used by planning bodies of Solano County and other agencies and organizations within the county to inform additional outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making over the next two years as they work to address homelessness. By sharing and evaluating this enumeration effort and results, the support network in Solano County will be better able to produce constructive and innovative solutions to a problem that is clearly growing and has serious ramifications for the long term public health of its community members.



# Appendix 1: Methodology

## OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2015 Solano Homeless Point-in-Time Census & Survey was to produce a Point-in-Time estimate of people who experience homelessness in Solano, a region which covers approximately 907 square miles. The results of the street count were combined with the results from the shelter and institution count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in Solano County on a given night. The subsequent, in-depth qualitative survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those counted. A more detailed description of the methodology follows.

## COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The Point-in-Time count methodology had three primary components:

- The general street count between daybreak and noon – an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals
- The shelter count for the night before the street count – an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals.

The unsheltered and sheltered homeless counts were coordinated to occur within the same time period in order to minimize potential duplicate counting of homeless persons.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated in community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical planning, methodological decision-making, and interagency coordination efforts. Applied Survey Research (ASR), a non-profit social research firm, provided technical assistance with these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 16 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in HUD's publication: *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless service providers and advocates were active and valued partners in the planning and implementation of this homeless count. The planning team was led by Applied Survey Research who worked with the following organizations throughout the count and survey process: Mission Solano Fairfield, CANB in Fairfield, Opportunity House Vacaville, Benicia Community Action Council, Community Life Integration Foundation of Vallejo, Dixon Family Services, and Lighthouse Ministries in Rio Vista. Applied Survey Research invited feedback and discussion on the methodology in order to have a county-wide endorsement of the count.

## STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION

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

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

### VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in Solano turned out to support the County's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. To have a successful enumeration effort of this magnitude, it is crucial to have volunteers and homeless persons who have an intimate knowledge of the local areas. Approximately 40 homeless individuals and 50 community volunteers participated in the 2015 general street count. Outreach efforts were conducted targeting local nonprofits that serve homeless individuals and local volunteer programs. Local shelters and service providers recruited the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless persons were paid \$10 an hour for the training that they received. They were also paid \$10 for each hour they spent out on the day of the count.

All homeless individuals and volunteers who participated in the count were asked to participate in a training review on the day of the count. This training covered all aspects in the count, including the definition of homelessness and how to recognize homeless individuals, potential locations homeless individuals may be located at and how to safely and respectfully approach them, and how to use the tally sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered.

### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. A short training and safety review presentation was conducted prior to deployment on the day of the census. Form review, data quality, and safety precautions were reviewed. Enumerators were instructed not to interact with unsheltered persons and visually observe and profile only. Enumeration teams were advised to take all safety precautions possible, including bringing along flashlights and maintaining distance from those they were counting. Teams were asked to stay together and not venture into encampment locations without prior knowledge of the safety profile of the area. While law enforcement was made aware of the census activity for the PIT count, they were integrated into data collection efforts only in those areas deemed to be a safety risk.

### STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of Solano County within the allotted timeframe, the planning team identified six main areas from which to dispatch enumerators: Vacaville, Fairfield, Vallejo, Benicia, Dixon, and Rio Vista. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration, based on familiarity with the area or convenience. The planning team divided up the enumeration routes based on census tracts and assigned them to the dispatch center closest or most central to the coverage area in order to facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field.

### LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION

On the morning of the street count, two or more person teams were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was ideally composed of one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide, and they were provided with their assigned census tract map area, tally sheet, training guidelines and other supplies. In some cases where safety concerns were at a premium, public safety personnel were the sole enumerators on the team. All accessible streets, roads, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traveled by foot or car. Typically, no direct contact with enumerated homeless people was made during the census enumeration. Homeless enumerators were also instructed to include themselves on their tally sheets for the street count if they were not going to be counted by the shelter count. Dispatch center coordinators provided each team with tally sheets to record the number of homeless persons observed and basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center volunteers also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment log sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas, staying out for as long as it took to cover each tract.

In the communities of Vallejo, Rio Vista, and Dixon there were no law enforcement or code enforcement personnel involved in the enumeration. In Vacaville, there was a small Code Enforcement outreach team that participated in the count and was involved in the enumeration of some of the more active locations. Fairfield was enumerated with 2 agencies, Mission Solano for the area north of Air Base Parkway and Community Action North Bay (CANB) for the area south of the Parkway. While Mission Solano worked with their clients, staff and volunteers to enumerate their territories, CANB enumerated their assigned areas with some clients but with a majority of law enforcement and safety personnel as well as their own staff. These officers enumerated their territories based on Fairfield Police Department knowledge and outreach information that was on file.

## **YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY**

### **GOAL**

Many homeless children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth. This year there was not a dedicated youth count in Solano County. It was difficult to find agencies in Solano County that work with unaccompanied youth and transition-age youth who were willing to participate on the count and survey process. The only street youth connections that ASR could develop were the homeless youth in families who had knowledge of street youth locations, but those connections were limited and in a narrow radius of locations. This is an area that ASR hopes to develop more fully in the future as this population was underrepresented in our findings.

## **SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY**

### **GOAL**

The goal of the shelter and institution count was to gain an accurate count of persons temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across Solano County. These data were vital to gaining an accurate overall count of the homeless population and understanding where homeless persons received shelter.

### **DEFINITION**

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

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

All shelter data were collected by Applied Survey Research. Each shelter in Solano County was contacted by ASR and received a file to fill out basic demographic information on the number of people staying in their shelter for the night before the count, January 29. Follow-up calls were made to those unable to complete the form. Finally, ASR coordinated with HomeBase of San Francisco to validate the shelter count results with their housing inventory chart.

### **CHALLENGES**

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

### POINT-IN-TIME UNDERCOUNT

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

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

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

Even though the Point-in-Time Count is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed, coupled with the homeless survey, is the most comprehensive approach available.

### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

#### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 360 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in Solano County. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by homeless workers and shelter team members, who were trained by Applied Survey Research. Training sessions led service providers and potential interviewers through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information and detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Homeless workers were compensated at a rate of \$5 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily collected if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were given as an incentive for participating in the 2015 homeless survey. The socks were easy to obtain and distribute, were thought to have wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. This approach enabled surveys to be conducted at any time during the day. The gift proved to be a great incentive and was widely accepted among survey respondents.

#### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

- The 2015 Solano Homeless Survey was administered by the trained survey team between February 19, 2015, and March 27, 2015.
- In all, the survey team collected 360 unique surveys using a stratified quota sample based on shelter status, shelter location, and geography.

### **SURVEY SAMPLING**

Based on the Point-in-Time count of homeless persons with a randomized survey sampling process, the 360 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in Solano County.

The 2015 survey was administered in both transitional housing facilities and on the street. In order to assure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs. Individuals residing in emergency shelters were reached through street surveys during the day when emergency shelters were closed.

Strategic attempts were made via a stratified quota sample to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence victims, and families.

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

### **DATA COLLECTION**

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

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

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

### **SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The 2015 Solano County Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, a greater number of surveys were conducted among transitional housing residents than in previous years. However, this provided an increased number of respondents living in families and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the overall population.

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



# Appendix 2: Definitions & Abbreviations

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



SOLANO COUNTY

# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

