

2017 Seattle/King County Count Us In Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

As the lead agency for the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care (CoC), All Home is responsible for conducting and reporting the findings of the local Point-in-Time Count in the annual funding application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These findings ultimately help communities and the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide, and inform local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time experience in King County.

METHODOLOGY CHANGES

Formerly known as the One Night Count, Count Us In is the annual Point-in-Time Count of individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County. This year, All Home worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research to conduct 2017 Count Us In, implementing new and improved data collection methods for obtaining comprehensive, accurate, and actionable data on the local population experiencing homelessness.

Key changes to the methodology of the 2017 Point-in-Time Count in Seattle/King County included:

- Countywide participation of paid guides and surveyors, who were individuals with current or recent lived experience with homelessness engaged in the data collection process;
- A shift from a “known areas” approach for the general street count to a canvassing of census tracts in King County;
- A sample-based qualitative survey including shelter and service locations, as well as street locations; and
- The incorporation of a youth and young adult count component focused on unaccompanied youth and young adults under 25 years of age, previously conducted separately from the Point-in-Time Count.

Increased coverage during the general street count featured heightened outreach to individuals living in vehicles and in encampments, as well as in areas of the county beyond the urban cores. This was achieved through increased partnerships with individuals with lived experience, outreach workers, experts in vehicle residency, and community stakeholders familiar with specific areas and encampments.

In addition to helping understand the experiences and needs of individuals experiencing homelessness across Seattle/King County, survey data collected in the weeks following the street count were used to estimate the number of individuals living in vehicles, tents, and abandoned buildings. Individual multipliers for individuals residing in these locations were developed based on survey data, and applied to the number of vehicles and structures observed on the night of the street count where the number of individuals residing in these settings was unknown. Further, survey data were used to estimate the size of certain subpopulations by applying percentages of survey respondents meeting the definition of chronic homelessness and identifying as veterans to the number of individuals, youth, and families identified during the general street count.

Due to the significant changes in the count methodology in 2017, caution is advised in noting trends from previous years' count data, which will not be presented in this report. This is especially true of subpopulation data, where the survey effort was able to provide significantly more reliable data about the unsheltered population. This year's report establishes a new baseline for Seattle/King County.

IMPLEMENTATION

With over 160 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, nearly 600 community volunteers, staff from various city and county departments, and other community partners dedicated to ending homelessness, Count Us In was a comprehensive community effort. This resulted in completing the following core components of Count Us In:

- 1) General Street Count – a peer-informed visual count of unsheltered individuals, conducted between the hours of 2:00 AM and 6:00 AM in most areas on January 27, 2017, with more rural or remote locations covered at daybreak on the same day;
- 2) Youth and Young Adult Count – a focused, survey-based count of unsheltered, unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24, conducted at both site-based and street-based locations throughout the day on January 27, 2017;
- 3) Sheltered Count – a count of individuals residing in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or safe haven programs the night prior to the general street count; and
- 4) Survey – an in-person representative survey of unsheltered and sheltered individuals conducted by peer surveyors in the weeks following the general street count.

COUNT US IN REPORT

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County on a single night in January. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations, including those experiencing chronic homelessness, veterans, families with children, and unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24.

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

- Are living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter (including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and safe havens) designated to provide temporary living arrangements; or
- Have 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 (including any sanctioned or unsanctioned encampment location).

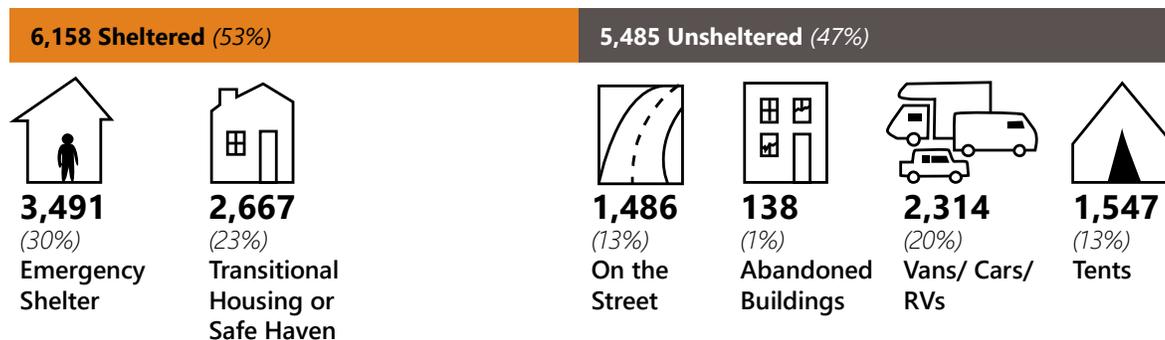
Data presented in this report are sourced from the four components of the count, and frequently from a combination of components. The sources of data are cited below each finding, and detailed information on the methodology can be found in *Appendix 1*.

COUNT US IN RESULTS

On the night of the 2017 Point-in-Time Count in Seattle/King County, there were 11,643 people experiencing homelessness

A total of 11,643 individuals experiencing homelessness were counted on January 27, 2017. Forty-seven percent (47%) of the population was unsheltered, living on the street, in parks, encampments, vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation.

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *Seattle/King County Count Us In*. Includes data collected from the following count components: General Street Count, Youth and Young Adult Count, Count Us In Survey, Sheltered Count. For more information on the methodology, please see *Appendix 1*.

People experiencing homelessness are our neighbors

During the Count Us In Survey, seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents reported living in King County at the time they most recently lost their housing. Twenty percent (20%) of survey respondents reported being born or growing up in King County, and 24% reported having lived in King County for a decade or longer.

Seventy percent (70%) of the county’s unsheltered population identified during the street count were residing in Seattle. Seattle was also the location of the majority (76%) of individuals residing in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or safe havens on the night of the count. Twenty percent (20%) of unsheltered individuals were residing in the Southwest region; this area includes the cities of Renton, Burien, Auburn and Kent. Lower percentages of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness were residing in East County (5%), Northeast County (2%), North County (1%), and Southeast County (1%). For regional definitions, please see *Appendix 5*.

2017				
REGION	UNSHelterED		SHelterED	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
East County	5%	284	6%	347
North County	1%	53	2%	148
Northeast County	2%	119	1%	47
Seattle	70%	3,857	76%	4,665
Southwest County	20%	1,102	15%	915
Southeast County	1%	70	1%	36
TOTAL	100%	5,485	100%	6,158

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *Seattle/King County Count Us In*. Includes data collected from the following count components: General Street Count, Youth and Young Adult Count, and Count Us In Survey. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1. For regional definitions, please see Appendix 5.

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

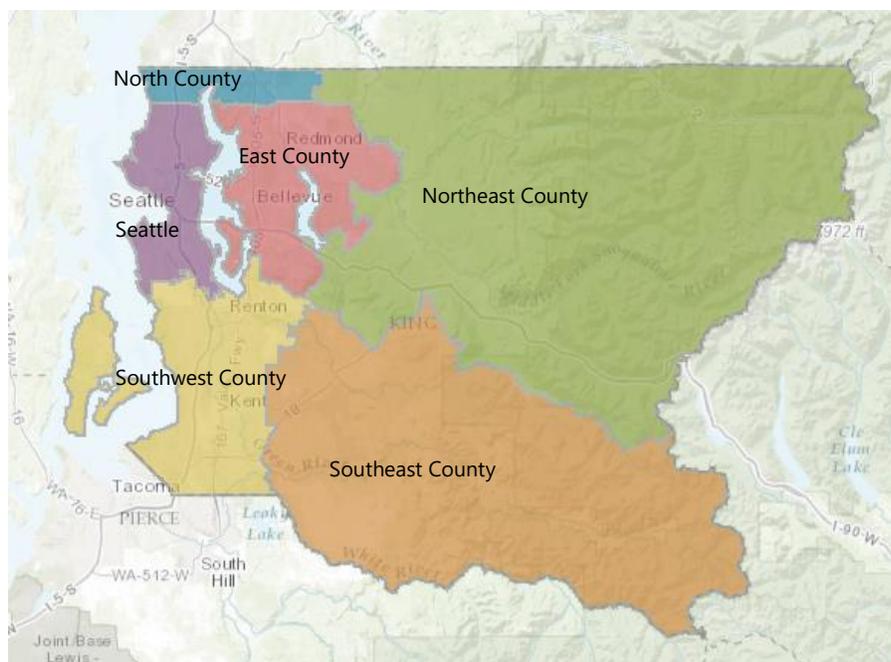


FIGURE 2. WHERE WERE YOU LIVING AT THE TIME YOU MOST RECENTLY LOST YOUR HOUSING?



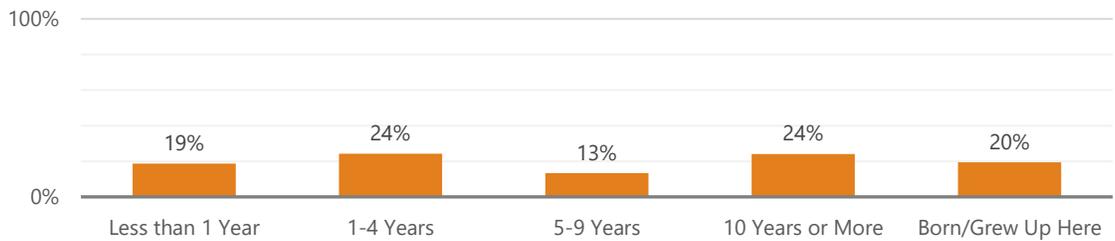
2017 n=866

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Seattle/King County Count Us In.

Includes data collected from the following count components: Count Us In Survey. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1.

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

FIGURE 3. HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN KING COUNTY?



2017 n=845

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Seattle/King County Count Us In.

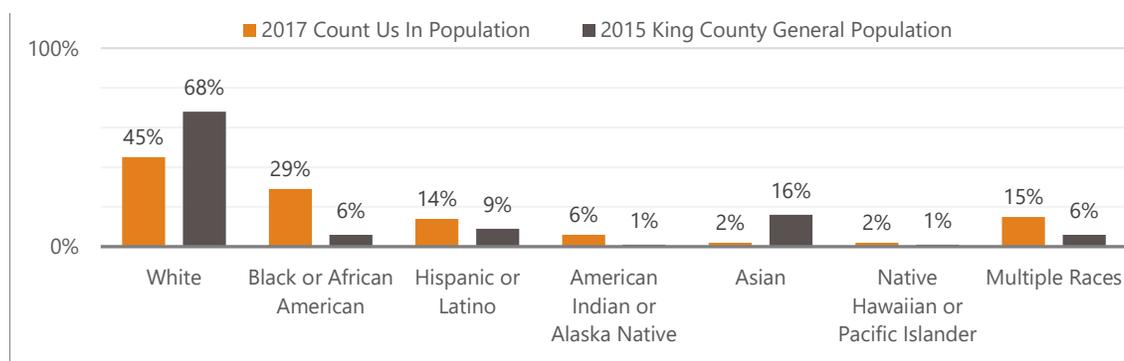
Includes data collected from the following count components: Count Us In Survey. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1.

About our neighbors experiencing homelessness

Homelessness disproportionately impacts people of color

In 2017, approximately 55% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County identified as people of color. When compared to the demographic racial profiles of the county’s general population, the largest disparities were observed among those who identified as Black or African American (29% compared to 6%), Hispanic or Latino (14% compared to 9%), American Indian or Alaska Native (6% compared to 1%), and with multiple races (15% compared to 6%).

FIGURE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



2017 n=11,643

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Seattle/King County Count Us In.

U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). American Community Survey 2015 1-Year Estimates, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

Count Us In Population includes data collected from the following count components: General Street Count, Count Us In Survey, Youth and Young Adult Count, Sheltered Count. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1.

Note: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity through two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. For the purposes of this report, race and ethnicity are presented together. Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

Young people identified themselves as LGBTQ at higher rates than other survey respondents

The majority of Count Us In survey respondents identified as straight (82%), while 7% identified as bisexual, 5% identified as gay or lesbian, and 2% identified as queer. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of unaccompanied youth and young adults under 25 years old identified as LGBTQ, compared to 14% of other survey respondents.

An estimated 2,773 individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as sleeping in places not meant for human habitation or staying in emergency shelters for a year or longer, or experiencing at least four such episodes of homelessness in the last three years, *and* also living with a disabling condition such as a chronic health problem, psychiatric or emotional condition, or physical disability. On the night of Count Us In, 64% of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were unsheltered and 36% were residing in sheltered locations.

An estimated 1,329 individuals identified as veterans. Over half (52%) of veterans were unsheltered, while 48% were sheltered on the night of Count Us In. Approximately 32% of veterans were experiencing chronic homelessness, while 28 veterans were part of family households.

An estimated 2,833 individuals were in families with children. These individuals represented 905 family households, 135 of which were households headed by a young parent under 25 years of age. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of persons in families were sheltered on the night of the count, while 3% were unsheltered.

An estimated 1,498 individuals were unaccompanied youth and young adults. These young people represent 13% of the total count population, and comprise unaccompanied youth and young adults under 25 years of age, including 221 unaccompanied minors under 18 years old. Over three-quarters (76%) of unaccompanied youth and young adults were unsheltered, while 24% were sheltered on the night of the count.

Experience with domestic violence and foster care

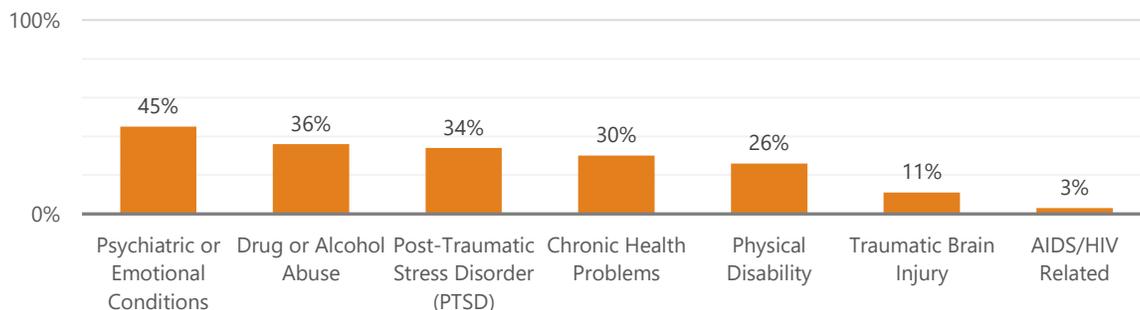
Forty percent (40%) of Count Us In survey respondents reported a history of domestic violence or partner abuse, with 7% reporting that they were currently experiencing domestic violence. Among all survey respondents, 58% of individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ); 54% of families with children; and 43% of unaccompanied youth and young adults reported histories of domestic violence. These groups of individuals also reported domestic or family violence as the primary cause of their homelessness at higher rates when compared to other survey respondents.

Nineteen percent (19%) of Count Us In survey respondents reported a history of foster care, with rates of foster care involvement highest among respondents identifying as LGBTQ (33%) and unaccompanied young people under 25 years of age (29%).

Behavioral health

Half (50%) of Count Us In survey respondents reported at least one disabling condition, and among those individuals 66% reported living with two or more disabling conditions. Behavioral health conditions were the most frequently reported disabling conditions among Count Us In survey respondents, with 45% experiencing psychiatric or emotional conditions, 36% reporting drug or alcohol abuse, and 34% living with post-traumatic stress disorder.

FIGURE 5. DISABLING CONDITIONS REPORTED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



2017 n=1,158

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Seattle/King County Count Us In. Includes data collected from the following count components: Count Us In Survey, Youth and Young Adult Count. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1.

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

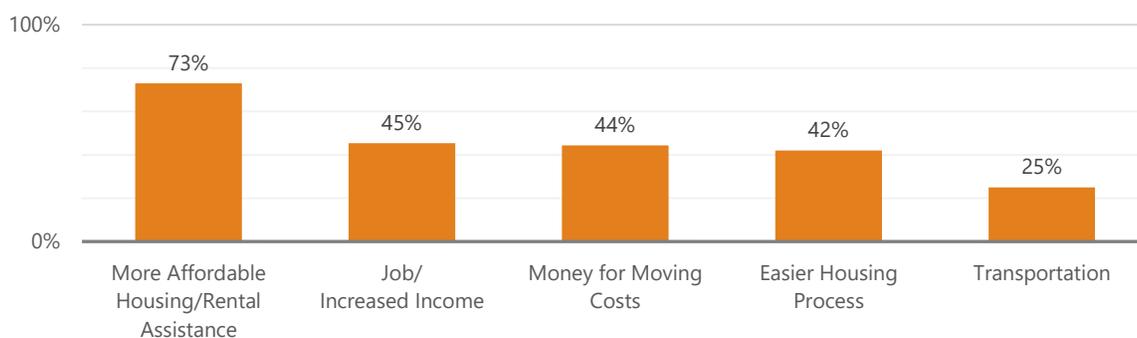
Housing ends homelessness

Ninety-two percent (92%) of Count Us In survey respondents said they would move into safe and affordable housing if it were offered. Although not necessarily residing in shelter on the night of the count, 42% of respondents reported accessing emergency shelter and 33% reported accessing transitional housing programs.

Prior to losing their housing, nearly three-quarters of Count Us In survey respondents reported living either in a home owned or rented by themselves or their partner (43%), or with friends or relatives (31%). Approximately 23% of survey respondents indicated that issues related to housing affordability were the primary conditions leading to their homelessness, including eviction (11%), inability to afford a rent increase (6%), family or friend could no longer afford to let them stay (4%), and foreclosure (2%).

When asked what would help individuals experiencing homelessness to obtain permanent housing, Count Us In survey respondents reported more affordable housing and rental assistance (73%) as key to ending their homelessness.

FIGURE 6. WHAT WOULD HELP YOU OBTAIN PERMANENT HOUSING?



2017 n= 867

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). Seattle/King County Count Us In.

Includes data collected from the following count components: Count Us In Survey. For more information on the methodology, please see Appendix 1.

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

Overall, these findings compare with similar local research and other cities up and down the West Coast

Findings of the 2017 Seattle/King County Count Us In Point-in-Time Count are consistent with other research efforts of Applied Survey Research, including its *2016 City of Seattle Homeless Needs Assessment* and Point-in-Time Count efforts in other West Coast communities.¹

Noted similarities include:

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are generally from the community
- Overrepresentation of people of color and people who identify as LGBTQ compared to the general population
- High rates of domestic violence and abuse, particularly among families and young people
- Large numbers of individuals residing in encampments or in vehicles
- Significant need for behavioral health services and treatment
- Strong desire for affordable housing and need for financial resources to achieve housing stability, including increased income, rental assistance, and money for moving costs
- Challenges in navigating current services, from basic logistics of transportation and personal documentation to organizational and systemic issues related to outreach, staff follow-up, and program eligibility

¹ Applied Survey Research. (2017, April). *City of Seattle 2016 Homeless Needs Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://coshumaninterests.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/City-of-Seattle-Report-FINAL-with-4.11.17-additions.pdf>