

## News Release



**May 31, 2017**

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## **Count Us In 2017 report offers comprehensive look at regional homelessness in Seattle-King County**

A new, more comprehensive point-in-time homelessness report released today provides critical information on homelessness in Seattle and King County. Utilizing a nationally recognized count methodology, a countywide canvas of census tracts, and a person-to-person survey of people experiencing homelessness, the 2017 Count Us In tally counted a total of 11,643 people experiencing homelessness countywide. The total includes 6,158 people sheltered in transitional housing or emergency shelters and 5,485 people on the streets, sleeping in vehicles, tents or encampments (both sanctioned and unsanctioned). Obtaining reliable, accurate and actionable data through the annual point-in-time count is a requirement for federal funding, and imperative to informing local strategies to address homelessness.

“This year’s count reflects what we already know: skyrocketing rents and the growing demand for behavioral and mental health services continue to make homelessness a regional challenge. We are already moving more people into housing faster, while cutting in half the number of people slipping back into homelessness. With comprehensive data from Count Us In, we can do even more to target resources where they are needed most,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine. “We have a plan to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time, and the renewal of the Veterans and Human Services Levy is a big part of it – increasing homeless outreach and connections to treatment while creating more affordable housing to move people permanently out of homelessness.”

“We set out to do a more rigorous, comprehensive, and thorough count than ever this year so we could assess the specifics of this crisis and develop concrete solutions to it,” said Seattle Mayor Ed Murray. “Since this count was taken, we’ve aggressively implemented a hands-on approach to addressing this crisis. Our Navigation Team of social workers, health professionals, and police officers have successfully engaged with more 600 people and connected services and housing to more than 250. This is how individualized services can help and how having a complete picture of this crisis helps us better service those experiencing it.”

### **A new, more comprehensive count**

The 2017 count, coordinated by All Home and Applied Survey Research (ASR) is substantially different from previous years. It includes a street count held on January 27, 2017 that covered virtually every census tract in King County, a shelter count the same night, a youth and young adult

count, and a person-to-person survey completed by 1,158 people reflecting a representative sample of the sheltered and unsheltered population across the county. The results of the survey can be generalized to the entire population of people experiencing homelessness with 95% confidence.

### **Homelessness in Seattle-King County includes our neighbors and friends**

The comprehensive report provides details on the people counted and the causes of homelessness. Among the findings are the following:

- **People experiencing homelessness in King County are overwhelmingly local.** Ninety-one percent are from Washington state, including 77 percent who said they were last housed in King County. Only 9 percent reported a last home address out of state.
- **History of domestic violence or partner abuse is prevalent;** 40 percent said they had experienced abuse and 7 percent said it was the current cause for their homelessness.
- **Homelessness disproportionately impacts people of color.** In all, about 55 percent of the local homeless population are people of color.
- **Half of all people surveyed reported a disabling condition,** and more than a third have two or more conditions. Most mentioned were mental illness, substance use, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Nearly a **third are maintaining employment.**
- **Loss of job (30%), drug/alcohol problems (20%), or eviction (11%)** were the leading causes of homelessness.
- **Homelessness is not a choice. Ninety-two percent** said they would take safe and affordable housing today if it was available.
- **Rental assistance and affordable housing were the top two supports needed** to end the experience of homelessness.

“This new count is the most comprehensive to date, and confirms that homelessness is prevalent throughout the county,” said Mark Putnam, Director of All Home. “People who are homeless want housing, and we are housing more people than ever. Yet the count confirms that more people are becoming homeless here. This is true wherever there is a severe lack of affordable housing.”

### **Making progress: Working to transform services and systems to move people from homeless to housed**

All Home, the City of Seattle and King County together with their partners are moving more people from homelessness to permanent housing – and doing so faster than ever.

- **Over 7,500 homeless households were housed in 2016 - a 52 percent increase from 2013** - people are waiting fewer days to be connected to permanent housing, and fewer are returning to homelessness once housed.
- Focused regional efforts to engage homeless families are beginning to make a difference; **97 percent of homeless families were sheltered on the night of the count.**
- **New prevention efforts are helping** families and youth stay housed.
- **Flexible funding and increased diversion are quickly re-housing individuals and families;** 54% of households enrolled in diversion are successfully housed without entering shelter or other homeless housing and less than two percent return seeking homeless services.

- Increased access to rapid re-housing is shortening the time people are homeless and **95 percent of families who obtain housing through rapid re-housing are stably housed** at exit and less than 5% return to homelessness within two years.
- **Enhanced shelters**, including a new family shelter at White Center, the planned Seattle Navigation Center, and a shelter opening this summer on Seattle’s First Hill, are linking safe beds to housing-focused case management and pathways out of homelessness.
- **More inpatient treatment beds for mental illness** opened in 2016 (46 beds) and more will open in 2017 (46) to improve access to mental health and crisis services.
- **New opioid and other drug treatment facilities** opened or will open in 2017, including a new Seattle detox facility opening in summer 2017, that will remove barriers to treatment, reduce or eliminate wait lists and improve access to treatment for people in need.

### **Addressing homelessness requires commitment and resources**

Local businesses, philanthropy, faith communities, and residents across King County are stepping up to contribute so that all people in King County have a safe and stable home.

“The ongoing crisis of homelessness and housing instability in King County demands collaboration, innovation and compassion,” said Gordon McHenry, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer of Solid Ground and co-chair of the All Home Coordinating Board. “Solving homelessness will require commitment, resources and action from our entire community to make King County a place where all our neighbors can have a place to call home.”

The full Count Us In 2017 Report is available on the [All Home website](#).

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**All Home** is the lead agency for the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care (CoC), which annually applies for Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds and reports required data to the federal government on behalf of the continuum. All Home partners include King County, City of Seattle, United Way of King County, other cities, philanthropic funders such as the Bill & Melinda Gates and the Raikes foundations, housing and homeless service providers, faith communities, advocates and persons who have experienced homelessness.

**Applied Survey Research (ASR)** is a social research firm founded in the principle that community improvement, sustainability and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses. They have 18 years of experience conducting Point in Time Counts throughout California and the U.S.