



2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Point-in-Time homeless count and how often is it conducted?

The biennial Point-in-Time Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Every two years, during the last ten days of January, Santa Clara County conducts a comprehensive count of the local population experiencing homelessness. This count measures the prevalence of homelessness in our community, and collects information on individuals and families residing 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.

Following the point-in-time census, Santa Clara County takes a comprehensive survey of a sampling of people experiencing homelessness which is used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the population and subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness. The data collected from the count and survey are then presented together in the *2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey Report*.

What methodology changes occurred since the last survey was conducted in 2015?

The Point-in-Time count methodology generally remained consistent with prior counts, though the youth count was much more thorough in 2017. The number of outreach workers dedicated to counting unaccompanied homeless children and transition-age youth nearly doubled from 18 in 2015 to 34 this year. These 34 outreach workers were deployed throughout Santa Clara County to conduct this portion of the overall homeless census. In addition to more workers on the youth street count, 12 school districts reported on homeless families this year, more than the 1-2 districts that have participated in prior years.

Key data points from the 2017 Count:

This year's homeless census confirmed that jurisdictions within, and including, Santa Clara County experienced an increase in the overall homeless population of 12.8 percent; 7,394 homeless individuals in 2017 versus 6,556 homeless individuals in 2017 (+883).

Santa Clara County's intensified effort to more accurately identify the number of unaccompanied homeless children and transition-age youth coupled with other contributing factors, such as rising rental and housing costs, tight supply of affordable housing units, and increasing cost of living resulted in these homeless subpopulations rising:

- Families with children increased from 266 families with 908 family members in 2015 to 294 families with 1,075 family members in 2017 (+28 families, +167 family members).
- The unaccompanied homeless children subpopulation increased from 59 in 2015 to 509 in 2017 (+450).
- The transition-age youth (ages 18-24) subpopulation increased from 824 in 2015 to 2021 in 2017 (+1,179).
- **The youth category is the only population in Santa Clara County to reflect a significant increase in 2017.**

The 2017 homeless census did show that Santa Clara County experienced decreases in the number of homeless veterans and chronically homeless.

- The chronically homeless individual subpopulation decreased from 2,169 in 2015 to 2,097 in 2017 (-72).
- The homeless veteran subpopulation decreased from 703 in 2015 to 660 in 2017 (-43).

How does Santa Clara County's Point-in-Time count compare to other counties in the Bay Area and California?

- Los Angeles County experienced a 23% increase in its homeless population.
- Alameda County experienced a 39% increase in its homeless population.
- San Francisco experienced a .5% decrease in its homeless population.
- Monterey County experienced a 23% increase in its homeless population.
- San Diego experienced a 4% increase in its homeless population.

When will the 2016 Measure A Affordable Housing Bond funds be put to use?

\$215M of the Measure A Affordable Housing Bond funds will be available in the fall of 2017. The data collected from this year's homeless count will assist in strategically investing these resources to meet identified needs and to complement our current county investments that provide essential services to our homeless residents.

Why did the number of people who are homeless increase from 2015?

The cost of housing is too high, incomes are too low, and the lack of affordable housing units is creating the perfect storm that is pushing more residents into homelessness.

Rents in San Jose are among the highest in the country. The average rent for a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment in the City was \$2,318 for all "classes" of apartments in the first quarter of 2017. Rents have increased 33% over the previous five years, far in excess of increases in household incomes during the same time. In 2016, the median income for a household of two in San José was \$85,700 while the annual salary required to afford a two-bedroom/two-bath "market rate" apartment was \$113,040. The rental vacancy rate is a paltry 4.9%.

Is this census an accurate count of the total homeless population?

Point-in-Time counts are generally considered to be less reliable than annual data, as homeless populations are based on visual identification of unsheltered populations during a single point in time.

Unaccompanied youth and families can be especially difficult to count. The 2017 Count included special efforts to identify these subpopulations, including a more comprehensive youth count and stronger collaboration and coordination with the Santa Clara County Office of Education to count families. Special efforts were also made to find and count people living in encampments and vehicles. In addition, we recruited a higher number of volunteers for the count than in years past, allowing for a more thorough street count.

How many people are homeless in a year? Why isn't there an annual estimate this year?

The 2017 Homeless Census and Survey does not include an annual estimate of the number of people who are homeless because it is no longer recommended to extrapolate annual numbers from point-in-time data. In 2013 and prior years, an estimate was made based on a Federally-approved formula that used point-in-time data and survey questions about length of homelessness. Most communities have moved away from using formulas because a small margin of error in a survey question can lead to a huge margin in the estimates.

Why did the homeless population in South County increase?

Overall, the homeless population in Santa Clara County rose over the past two years. However, jurisdictions in the southern part of the county, including Gilroy, Morgan Hill, and San Martin, experienced increases in homelessness. Some possible explanations for this change include:

- There is more uninhabited land in South County, where it is easier for people to camp, remain undetected and avoid being disturbed.
- Smaller cities in South County have fewer law enforcement resources to enforce trespassing ordinances which may make it easier for individuals to stay in South County.
- There are fewer services and resources for those who are homeless in South County, making it more difficult for people to escape homelessness.
- Morgan Hill expanded the number of volunteers who had an expertise in locating the city's homeless residents this year.
- Unlike previous years, the County opened a cold weather shelter for 35 families at the Ochoa Migrant Center in Gilroy.

Why is the number of homeless youth so high?

There are a number of possible explanations for the elevated numbers of homeless, unaccompanied youth. Youth are less likely to be able to afford the housing situations in which youth traditionally live, such as room rentals, moving in with roommates, and renting smaller dwellings; instead, those housing situations - which now rent at higher rates - are being occupied by households with higher incomes. Another housing barrier for youth is their lack of rental or credit history, and with low vacancy, landlords have been more selective about picking tenants who have a demonstrated history of good tenancy.