



# SOUTH COUNTY

# 2017 HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY

## JURISDICTIONAL REPORT





## ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a 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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# Acknowledgements

The 2017 Santa Clara 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. Hundreds of community volunteers, city and county employees, and local community-based organizations assisted with all aspects of the count, from the initial planning meetings, to the night of the count, to the publication of this report.

ASR would like to give special thanks to the individuals experiencing homelessness who acted as surveyors and guides during the count. Without their dedication and knowledge, the Santa Clara County Census and Survey would not be able to conduct these efforts. They provide access and knowledge about the community that is unobtainable without their support. These individuals took time from their day to participate in this effort and we owe them thanks.

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## POINT-IN-TIME JURISDICTIONAL FUNDERS

City of Cupertino  
City of Gilroy  
City of Los Altos  
Town of Los Altos Hills  
Town of Los Gatos  
City of Milpitas  
City of Monte Sereno  
City of Morgan Hill  
City of Mountain View  
City of Palo Alto  
City of San José  
City of Saratoga  
City of Santa Clara  
City of Sunnyvale  
County of Santa Clara

## OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following organizations were involved in the planning and data reporting process: Abode, Bill Wilson Center, Bitfocus, Destination:Home, City of San Jose, City of Sunnyvale, County Office of Supportive Housing, Diocese of San José, Gardner Family Health Network, HACSC, HomeFirst, Housing Choices Coalition, PATH, Sacred Heart Community Services, Santa Clara University, SCCOE, and St. Joseph's Family Center.

The following locations acted as deployment centers and we are very thankful for their participation and support during the count: Bill Wilson Drop-In Center, Emmanuel House, Salvation Army, Gilroy Compassion Center, City Team Ministries, Southside Community Center, West Valley Community Services, and Opportunity Health Center.

# Introduction

Every two years, during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local population experiencing homelessness. These counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community, and collect 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.

The biennial Point-in-Time Census 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.

Continuums of Care report the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count in their annual funding application to HUD, which ultimately helps the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Count data also help to inform communities' local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to prevent and end homelessness.

For the purposes of the count, Southern Santa Clara County was defined as Morgan Hill, San Martin, and Gilroy, in addition to all of the unincorporated areas surrounding those cities. Southern Santa Clara County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2017 Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessment. ASR has partnered with the county since 2007, maintaining the same methodology and ensuring as much consistency as possible from one year to the next.

The Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Count in South County has two primary components: a point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness and a comprehensive survey sampling of people experiencing homelessness.

The 2017 Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Census in South County was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of approximately 20 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, 18 community volunteers, staff from various City and County departments, and law enforcement, the entire South County was canvassed between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and noon on January 24, 2017.

Southern Santa Clara also conducted a specialized count of unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth under the age of 25 years old. This dedicated youth count is part of a nationwide effort, established and recommended by HUD, to improve our understanding of the scope of youth homelessness. Trained youth enumerators, who are currently or recently experienced homelessness, conducted the count in targeted areas where young people

experiencing homelessness were known to congregate.<sup>1</sup> This is an important year for national data on young people experiencing homelessness, as HUD will use 2017 youth count results as a baseline for measuring progress toward ending youth homelessness by 2020.

In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 150 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 Southern Santa Clara County on one morning in January.

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2013 and 2015, are provided where available and applicable.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the 2017 Santa Clara County Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings with local community members. These community members were drawn from county and city departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2017 Planning Committee, and were instrumental to ensuring the 2017 Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The Planning Committee worked towards 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 since the 2015 Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey, 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, 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 in gaining a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measuring the impact of current policies and programming, and planning for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2017 to ensure unaccompanied children and youth were not captured in both the youth and general street count efforts. For more information on these efforts and the overall count methodology, please see Appendix A.

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

In this study, the HUD definition of homelessness from the National Point-in-Time Count Handbook is used. This definition includes individuals and families:

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; 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.

# Point-In-Time Census

The 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey in South County included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly sheltered homeless persons. The general street count in South County was conducted on January 24, 2017 from approximately 5:30 a.m. to noon and focused on Morgan Hill, San Martin, Gilroy, and surrounding areas. The shelter count was conducted on the night of the 24 and included all individuals staying in: emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to those used in 2015, with some small improvements.

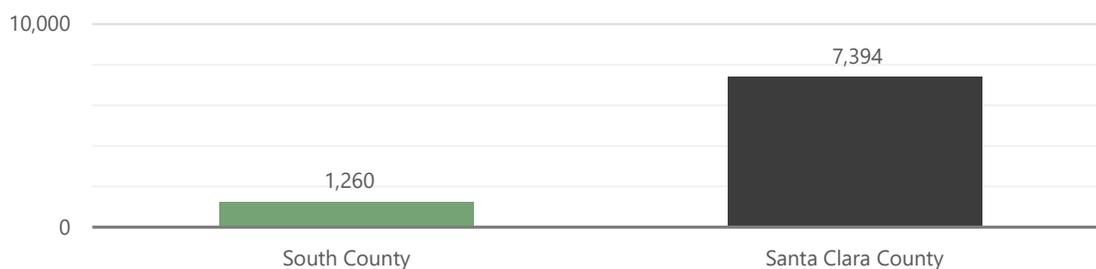
The methodology used for the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey is commonly described as a “blitz count and survey” since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method is conducted in Santa Clara County the result is an observation based count of individuals and families who appear to be homeless. The count is then followed by an in-person representative survey, the results of which are used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey is used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements, and to inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

In a continuing effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, Santa Clara County also conducted a dedicated youth count similar to the one conducted in 2015. The dedicated youth count methodology was improved in 2017 to better ensure that unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth were not included in both the general street count and youth count. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, deduplication, and project methodology, please see Appendix 1.

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN THE SOUTH COUNTY

There were a total of 1,260 individuals experiencing homelessness in South County. More than half (57%) were unsheltered.

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



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *South County Homeless Census and Survey*.

**FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS, SHELTERED AND UNSHELTERED**



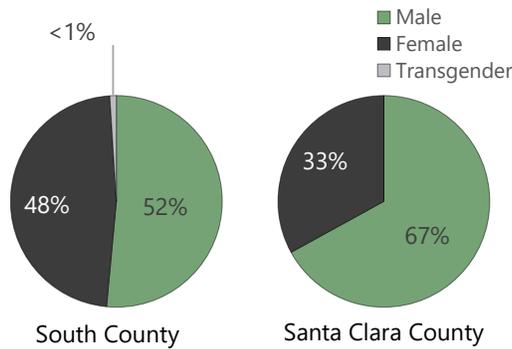
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

**FIGURE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS BY SHELTER STATUS**

	UNSHeltered	Sheltered	TOTAL
South County	720	540	1,260
Santa Clara County	5,448	1,946	7,394

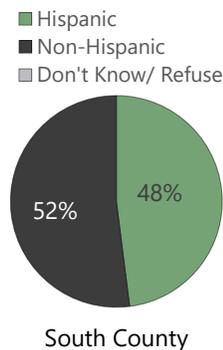
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

**FIGURE 4. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

**FIGURE 5. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY HISPANIC/NON-HISPANIC**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

# Homeless Survey Findings

The methodology used for the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Census is described by HUD as a “blitz count and survey” in that it is conducted by numerous people over a very short period of time in an effort to avoid duplicate enumeration. The census is followed by a face-to-face representative survey. For the purposes of HUD reporting, local service delivery and strategic planning, and estimate the condition and characteristics of the county’s homeless population and subpopulations for the purposes of HUD reporting and local service delivery and strategic planning. The results of the “blitz” census, combined with the survey, are used to provide estimates of the number of people affected by a given experience, while the survey provides the data elements for the characteristics discussed in the following section of the report.

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the survey component of the 2017 Santa Clara Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February 6 and March 24, 2017. This effort resulted in 150 complete and unique surveys. Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,260 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 150 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 8% with a 95% confidence level, when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in Santa Clara County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within eight percentage points of the current results.

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values are intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in South County, respondents were asked basic demographic questions including age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

FIGURE 6. SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE

AGE GROUP	SOUTH COUNTY	SANTA CLARA COUNTY
Less than 18 Years	0%	<1%
18-24 Years	5%	7%
25-30 Years	9%	7%
31-40 Years	23%	16%
41-50 Years	32%	27%
51-60 Years	24%	34%
61 Years or More	7%	9%

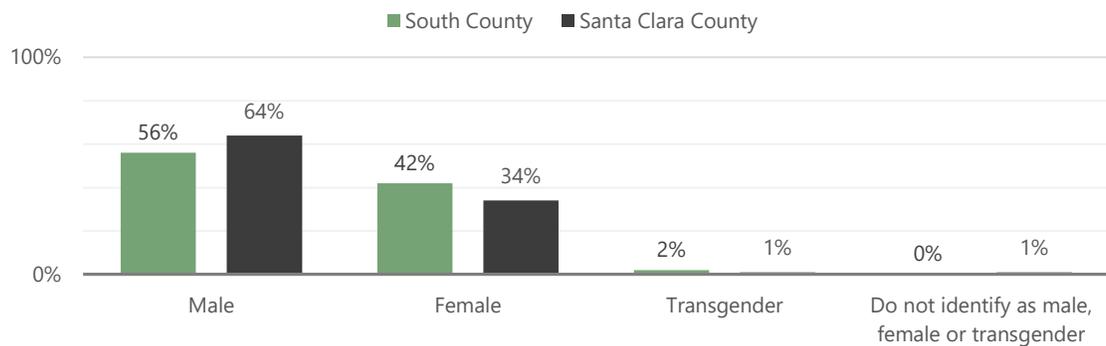
*South County 2017 n=150; Santa Clara County 2017 n=587*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Less than one half of survey respondents in South County (42%) identified as female, 56% as male, and 2% as transgender. While limited data are available on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggests LGBTQ individuals experience homelessness at higher rates – especially among those under the age of 25.

Eighteen percent (18%) of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ in South County 2017. Of those, 41% identified as bisexual, 26% lesbian, 26% gay, 11% transgender, and 4% queer.

FIGURE 7. GENDER IDENTITY



*South County 2017 n= 150, Santa Clara County 2017 n=586*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

FIGURE 8. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ IDENTITY

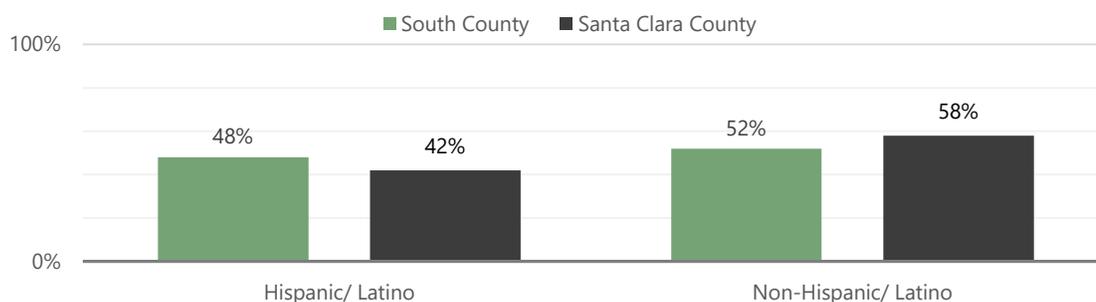
	SOUTH COUNTY		SANTA CLARA COUNTY	
	%	n	%	n
<b>LGBTQ Status</b>				
Yes	18%	27	29%	172
No	82%	123	71%	415
<b>BREAKOUT OF RESPONDENTS ANSWERING YES</b>				
Gay	26%	7	7%	12
Lesbian	26%	7	9%	16
Queer	4%	1	1%	1
Bisexual	41%	11	76%	130
Transgender	11%	3	7%	12
Other	4%	1	5%	9

*LGBTQ 2017: South County n=150; Santa Clara County n=586; Breakout: South County n=27 respondents offering 30 responses; Santa Clara County n=172 respondents offering 180 responses*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*  
*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.*

## ETHNICITY AND RACE

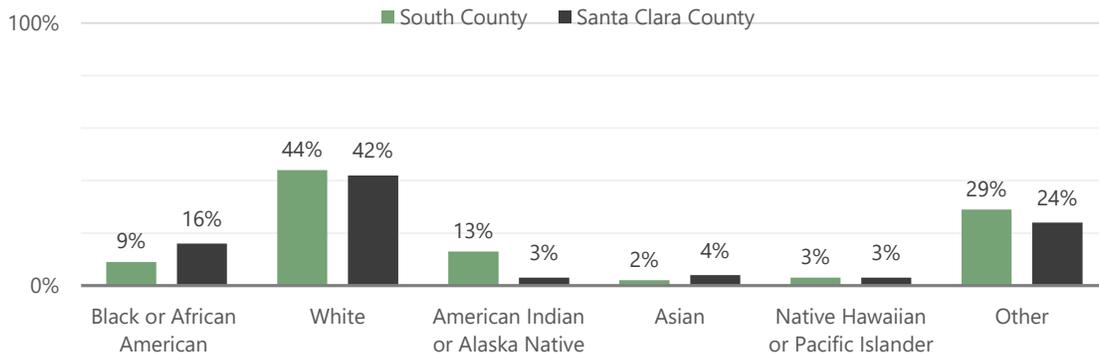
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on ethnicity and race through two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. When asked about their ethnicity, 48% of respondents in South County identified as Hispanic or Latino as compared to 42% of respondents in Santa Clara County. In regards to race, 9% of respondents in South County identified as Black or African American, 44% as White, 13% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 2% as Asian, 3% as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 2% as multiracial.

FIGURE 9. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY



*South County 2017 n= 146, Santa Clara County 2017 n= 577*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

FIGURE 10. RACE



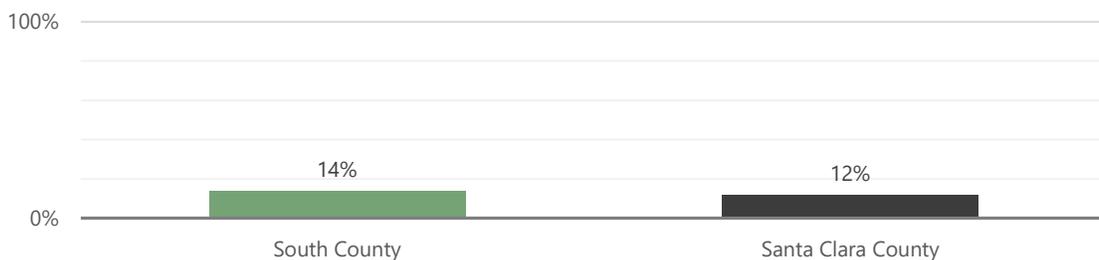
South County 2017 n= 133, Santa Clara County 2017 n=521  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

### HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE

It has been estimated that one in five 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 through programs often referred to as Transitional Housing Placement-Plus. It is hoped that these additional supports, implemented in 2012, will assist foster youth within the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless.

In 2017, 14% of respondents in South County and 12% of respondents in Santa Clara County reported a history of foster care.

FIGURE 11. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



South County 2017 n= 84, Santa Clara County 2017 n=566  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Fernandes, AL. (2007). Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics, Programs, and Emerging Issues. Congressional Research Services, January 2007, <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/1451>.

## LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness and where they have lived since impacts 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 reveal opportunities for systemic improvement and homeless prevention.

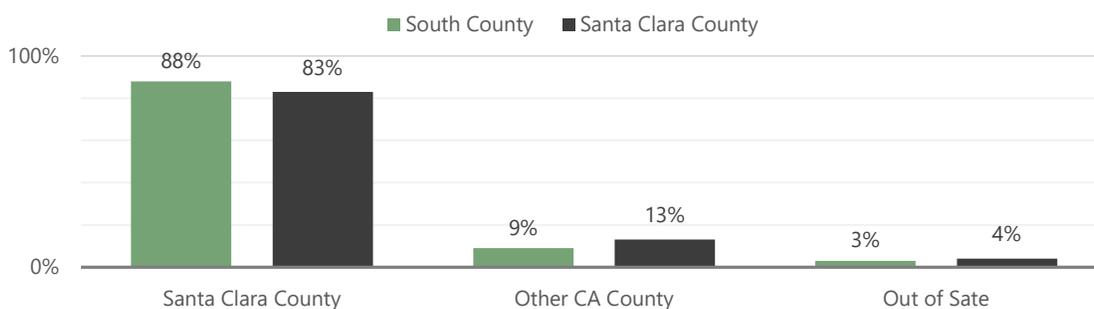
Survey respondents reported many different living accommodations prior to becoming homeless, although most lived in or around Santa Clara County with friends, family, or on their own in a home or apartment.

### PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Knowing where individuals were living before they most recently lost their housing informs discussions regarding how local the homeless population is to the region. This information can also influence changes to available support systems if the Continuum of Care finds increasing numbers of individuals living locally before experiencing homelessness.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents in South County reported they were living in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless. This is slightly higher than the 83% of respondents from Santa Clara County as a whole. Nine percent (9%) of respondents in South County reported they were living in another county in California, and 3% reported they were living out of state at the time they lost their housing.

FIGURE 12. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



*South County 2017 n=148; Santa Clara County 2017 n=580*

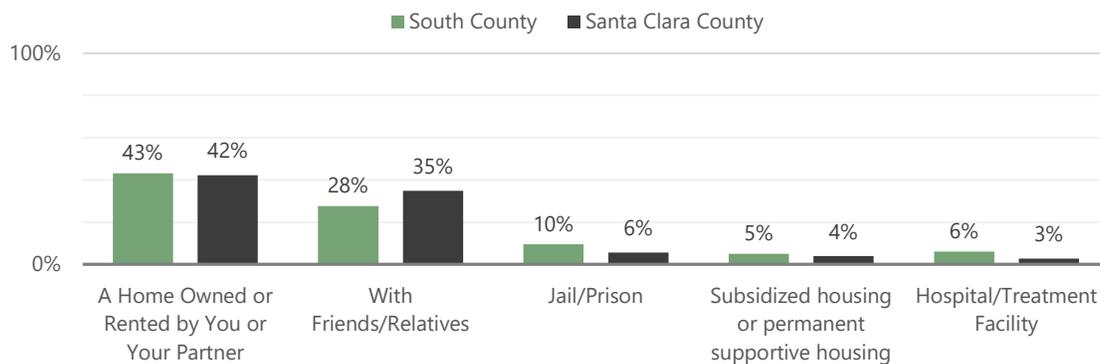
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

### PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Similar to previous place of residence, the type of living arrangements maintained by individuals before experiencing homelessness provides a look into what types of homeless prevention services might be offered to help individuals maintain their housing.

Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents in South County reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or a partner immediately prior to becoming homeless. This is compared to 42% of respondents in Santa Clara County. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents in South County reported staying with friends or family, 10% in a jail/prison facility, 5% in subsidized housing or permanent supportive housing, and 6% were in a hospital or treatment facility.

FIGURE 13. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME



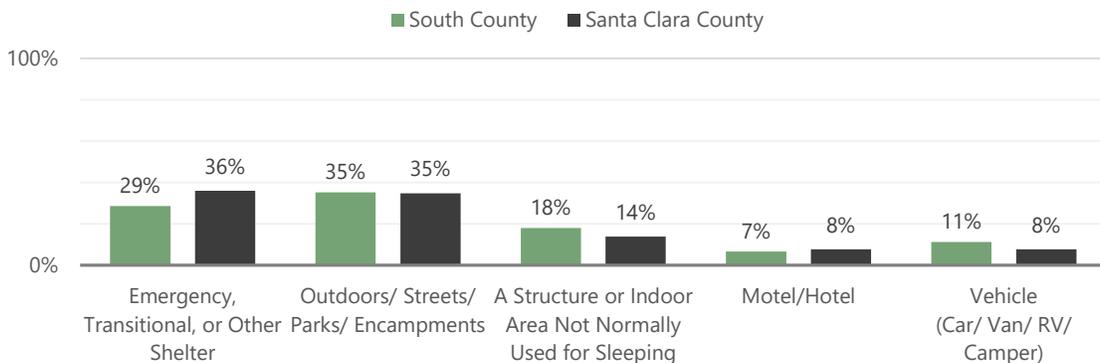
South County 2017 n=148; Santa Clara County 2017 n=575  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to basic information on where individuals were observed during the general street count, survey respondents are also asked about their usual nighttime accommodations. Understanding the types of sleeping arrangements of individuals experiencing homelessness are sleeping can help inform local outreach efforts.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents in South County reported staying in an emergency, transitional, or other type of shelter, compared to 36% in Santa Clara County. Thirty-five percent (35%) of survey respondents in South County reported staying outdoors, either on the streets, in parks or encampments. Eighteen percent (18%) reported staying in a structure or indoor area not intended for human habitation, 7% were staying in a motel or hotel, and 11% were in a vehicle. It should be noted that the Gilroy Armory is one of the largest shelters in the county.

FIGURE 14. USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT



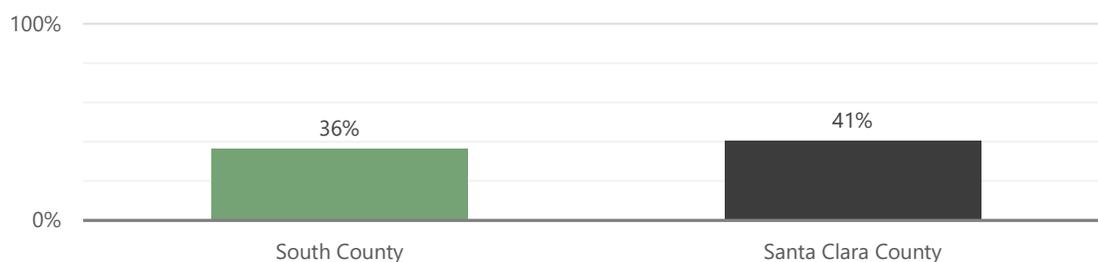
South County 2017 n=150; Santa Clara County 2017 n=587  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

## DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Many individuals who experience homelessness will do so numerous times. As people cycle in and out of stable housing, it becomes important to keep track of the number of times they experience literal homelessness.

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability. Almost half (41%) of Santa Clara County 2017 survey respondents reported they had previously experienced homelessness as compared to 36% in South County.

FIGURE 15. FIRST TIME HOMELESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



*South County 2017 n=149; Santa Clara County 2017 n=585*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

Nine percent (9%) of respondents in South County first experienced homelessness from the ages of 0-17, 28% first experienced homelessness from the ages of 18-24, and 64% were 25 years or older when they first experienced homelessness.

FIGURE 16. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

	0-17 YEARS OLD	18-24 YEARS OLD	25 YEARS OR OLDER
South County	9%	28%	64%
Santa Clara County	7%	18%	75%

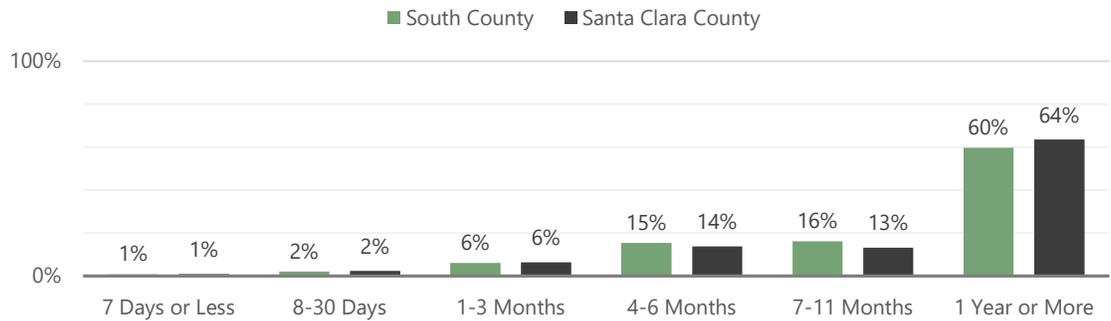
*South County 2017 n=134; Santa Clara County 2017 n=557*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

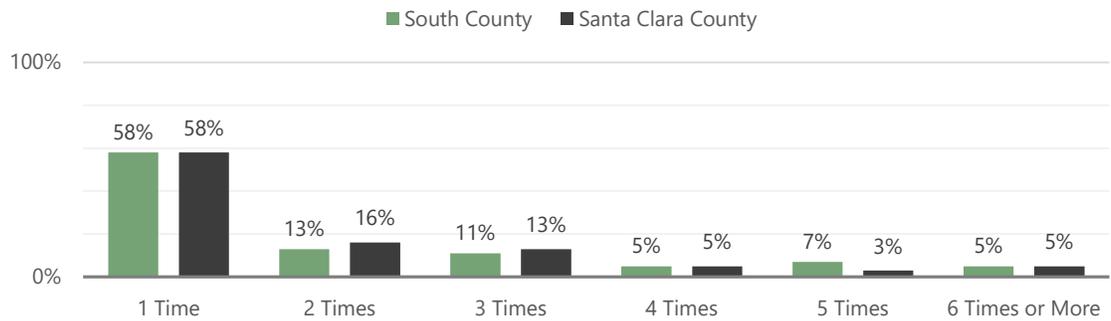
Over half (60%) of respondents in South County reported their current episode of homelessness lasting for a year or longer. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents in South County reported experiencing homelessness three or more times in the past three years, as opposed to 26% of respondents in Santa Clara County.

FIGURE 17. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



South County 2017 n=149; Santa Clara County 2017 n=585  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

FIGURE 18. RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



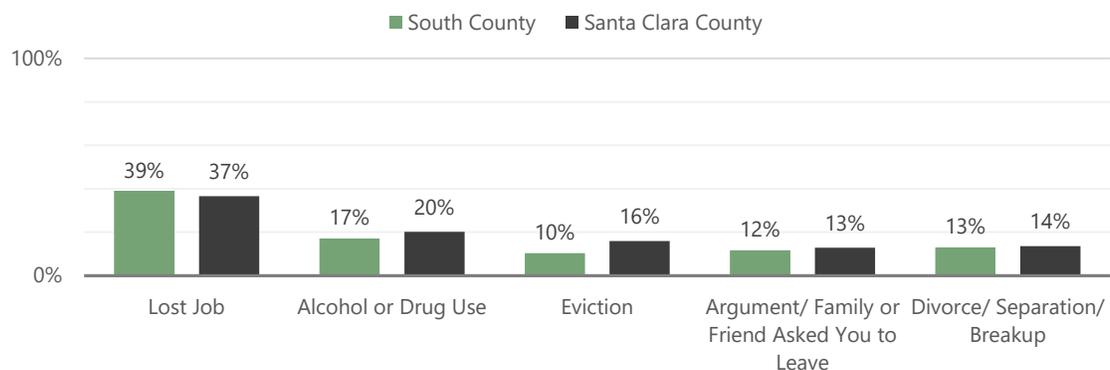
South County 2017 n= 149, Santa Clara County 2017 n=585  
 Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual's homelessness is often difficult to pinpoint, as it is often the result of multiple and compounding causes that can be both personal and systemic in nature. When asked to identify the primary event or condition that led to their current homelessness experience, over one third (39%) of respondents in South County cited losing a job as the reason. Seventeen percent (17%) reported alcohol or drug use as the primary reason for their homelessness, 10% reported being evicted as the catalyst, 12% reported an argument with family or friends they were staying with, and 13% reported divorce, separation, or a breakup.

Although not among the five most frequent responses, other reported causes of homelessness in South County also included mental health issues (3%), landlord raising the rent (6%), and aging out of foster care (5%).

FIGURE 19. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS



*South County 2017 n=146 respondents offering 199 responses; Santa Clara County 2017 n=580 respondents offering 793 responses*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

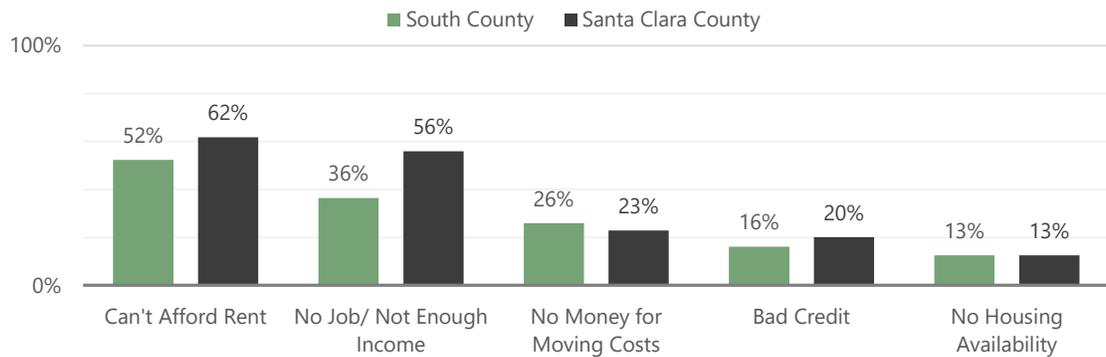
## OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Many individuals experiencing homelessness face significant barriers in obtaining permanent housing. These barriers can range from housing affordability and availability to accessing the economic and social supports (e.g. increased income, rental assistance, case management) needed to access and maintain permanent housing. An inability to secure adequate housing can lead to an inability to address other basic needs, such as healthcare and adequate nutrition.

When asked what is keeping them from obtaining permanent housing, 2017 respondents in South County most often cited being unable to afford rent (52%), not having a job or enough income (36%), not having money for moving costs (26%), having bad credit (16%), and having a criminal record (15%).

Other reasons for being unable to obtain permanent housing frequently reported by survey respondents in South County included no housing availability (13%), medical issues (11%), the housing process being too difficult (9%), and transportation issues (7%).

FIGURE 20. OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING



*South County 2017 n=143 respondents offering 316 responses; Santa Clara County 2017 n=571 respondents offering 1382 responses*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

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

## SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

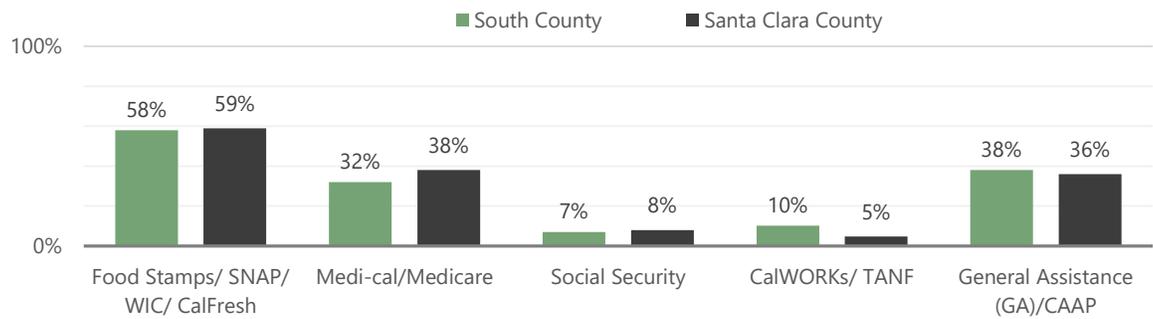
South County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain income and other supports. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services. Many believe they do not qualify for assistance. Connecting individuals and families to these support services creates a bridge to mainstream support services and prevents future housing instability.

### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

There are various forms of government assistance available to individuals experiencing homelessness. However, knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma associated with receiving governmental assistance can all impact the rate at which eligible individuals access these resources.

The majority of survey respondents (71%) in South County indicated accessing some form of government assistance. The largest percentage (58%) of respondents in South County reported receiving food stamps/ SNAP/ WIC/ CalFresh. Nearly one-third (29%) of respondents in South County reported not receiving any form of government assistance. Eligibility issues, compliance with documentation and general confusion regarding access to services are frequently noted as barriers to accessing what is available.

FIGURE 21. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



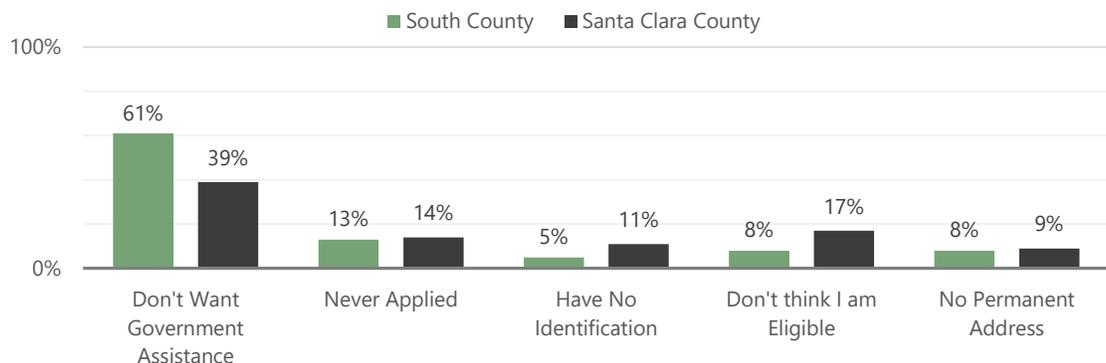
South County 2017 n=139 respondents offering 259 responses; Santa Clara County 2017 n=557 respondents offering 1011 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

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

Of those who reported they were not receiving any form of government support, the greatest percentage reported they did want government assistance (61%), thirteen percent (13%) indicated that they never applied and eight percent (8%) did not think they were eligible.

FIGURE 22. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE



South County=38 respondents offering 40 responses; Santa Clara County n=133 respondents offering 164 respondents

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

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

## SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

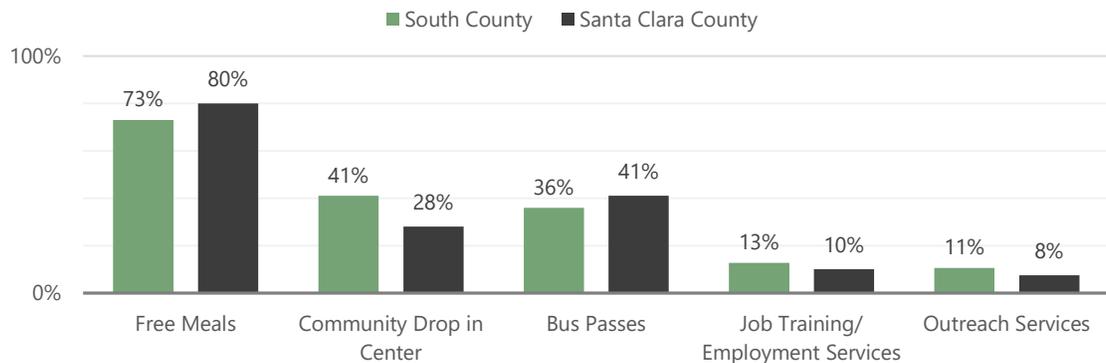
In addition to governmental assistance, there are numerous community-based services and programs available to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These services range from day shelters and meal programs, to job training and healthcare, and help provide support for immediate, basic needs and investments in long-term self-sufficiency and housing stability.

The majority of survey respondents (80%) in South County indicated accessing services or assistance in the community. Most respondents in South County reported accessing free meals (73%), community drop in centers (41%), bus passes (36%), job training and

employment services (13%), and outreach services (11%). Respondents in South County also cited behavioral health services (9%), religious based services (6%), and legal assistance (7%), as services accessed by survey respondents. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents reported they were not currently accessing any services or assistance, compared to 14% of respondents in Santa Clara County as a whole.

Despite challenges in navigating services in the community, 84% of survey respondents in South County answered yes when asked if they would move into safe, affordable, permanent housing if it were offered.

FIGURE 23. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE ACCESSED (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)



South County 2017 n=142 respondents offering 314 responses, Santa Clara County 2017 n=570 respondents offering 1,247 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

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

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

While the majority of survey respondents reported being unemployed, a number reported part-time or full-time work and many were receiving an income, either public (through assistance) or private. Despite some income, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.

The unemployment rate in Santa Clara County in January 2017 was at 3.6%, slightly down from 4.7% in 2015.<sup>3</sup> It is important to recognize that the unemployment rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It does not represent all joblessness, nor does it address the types of available employment. The unemployment rate for homeless respondents in South County was 90%. Fifty percent (50%) of unemployed respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work, 30% indicated they were currently unable to work, and a fifth (20%) of respondents were currently not looking for work.

Income from all sources varied between those with regular employment and those who were unemployed. Over one-fifth (23%) of unemployed respondents reported an income of \$99 or less per month, in comparison to 7% of those who were employed. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling. Overall income for those with employment was higher than those without. For example, 34% of employed respondents reported making \$750 or more per month, compared to 21% of unemployed respondents.

FIGURE 24. EMPLOYMENT AND MONTHLY INCOME

	SOUTH COUNTY		SANTA CLARA COUNTY	
	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED
\$0-\$99	7%	23%	7%	37%
\$100-\$449	27%	45%	26%	39%
\$450-\$749	33%	12%	28%	9%
\$750-\$1,099	7%	10%	14%	10%
\$1,100-\$1,499	27%	6%	14%	4%
\$1,500-\$3,000	0%	4%	12%	2%
More than \$3,000	0%	1%	0%	<1%

*Employment status: South County n=15; Santa Clara County n=43 Unemployment status: South County n= 129; Santa Clara County n=510*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

*Note: Respondents were challenged by this income question and the low response for employed income is subject to a high margin of error.*

<sup>3</sup> State of California Employment Development Department. (2017). Unemployment Rates (Labor Force). Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>

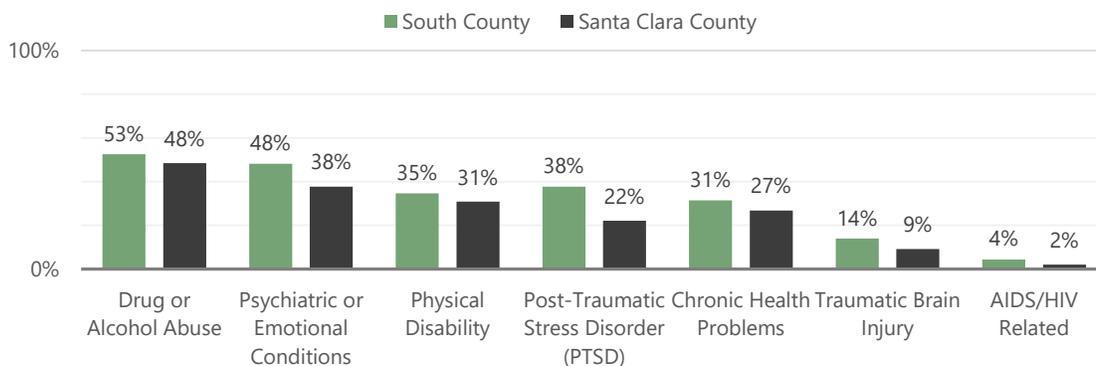
## HEALTH

The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to healthcare and without safe and stable housing, 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> It should be noted that South County residents seemed to experience more chronic health conditions as compared to the whole county.

### CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

The two most frequently reported disabling conditions in South County were drug or alcohol use (53%) and psychiatric or emotional conditions (48%). These disabling conditions are comparable to the most frequently reported disabling conditions in Santa Clara County as a whole, which were drug or alcohol use (48%) and psychiatric or emotional conditions (38%). In South County, respondents also reported having a physical disability (35%), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (38%), chronic health problems (31%), traumatic brain injury (14%), and AIDS and HIV related conditions (4%).

FIGURE 25. HEALTH CONDITIONS



South County n=135-139, Santa Clara County; n= 548-570

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

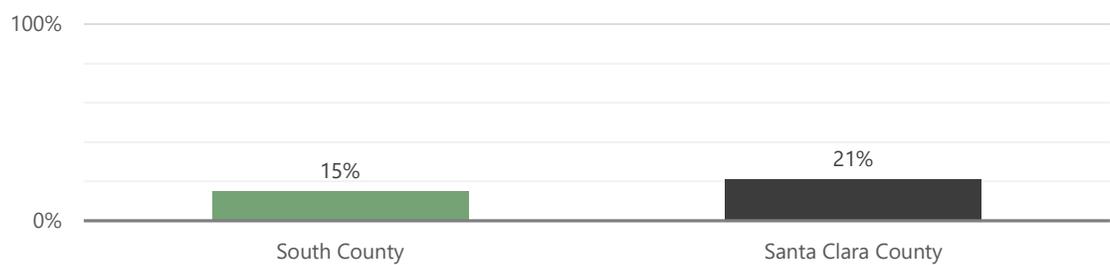
<sup>4</sup> Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). *Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City*. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

## DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Histories of domestic violence and partner abuse are prevalent among individuals experiencing homelessness, and can be the primary cause of homelessness for many. Survivors often lack many of the financial resources required for housing, as their employment history or dependable income may be limited.

Two percent (2%) of survey respondents in South County reported currently experiencing domestic violence or abuse, as compared to 3% of respondents in Santa Clara County. Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents in South County reported experiencing domestic violence or abuse in the past, compared to 21% of respondents in Santa Clara County.

FIGURE 26. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



*South County 2017 n= 144, Santa Clara County 2017 n=1074*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

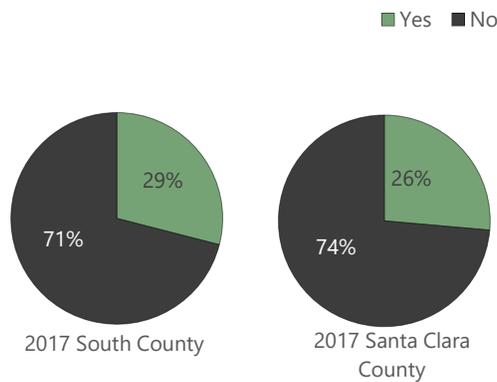
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Homelessness and incarceration are often correlative. Individuals without stable housing are at greater risk of criminal justice system involvement, particularly those with mental health issues, veterans, and youth. Individuals with past incarceration face significant barriers to exiting homelessness due to stigmatization and policies that affect both their ability to gain employment and their access to housing opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

### INCARCERATION

In South County, 29% of survey respondents reported spending at least one night in jail in the last 12 months. This is a slightly higher percentage compared to Santa Clara County, where 26% of respondents reported spending at least one night in jail in the last 12 months.

FIGURE 27. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



*South County 2017 n=147; Santa Clara County 2017 n=573*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

<sup>5</sup> Greenberg, GA, Rosenheck, RA. (2008). Jail Incarceration, Homelessness, and Mental Health: A National Study. *Psychiatr Serv*, 2008 Feb;59(2): 170-7.

# HUD Defined 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 identifies four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs. Consequently, these subpopulations represent important reportable indicators for measuring local progress toward ending homelessness.

The following sections examine each of these four subpopulations, identifying the number and characteristics of individuals included in the 2017 South County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey.

Of the 150 surveys completed in 2017, the results represent 52 chronically homeless individuals, 13 homeless veterans, 6 individuals in homeless families,<sup>6</sup> 7 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Surveys were completed in unsheltered environments, shelters, and transitional housing settings.

## CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The Department of Housing and Urban Development 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 heads of household who meet the definition.

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.<sup>7</sup> Data from communities across the country show that public costs incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing individuals with permanent housing and supportive services.

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<sup>6</sup> Homeless families are somewhat underrepresented in Santa Clara's Homeless Survey data due sample execution issues. The majority of homeless families in Santa Clara are currently residing in shelters and transitional housing facilities. In 2017, shelter staff reported difficulties completing surveys of families, due to a variety of reasons.

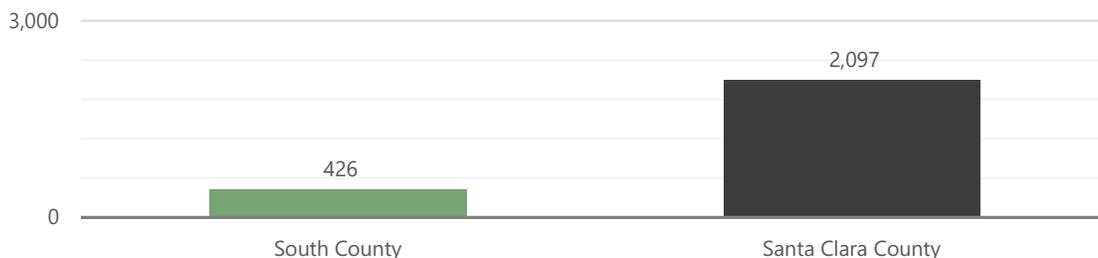
<sup>7</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: June 2010. Retrieved 2017 from [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/BkgrdPap\\_ChronicHomelessness.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that roughly 22% of the national homeless population, or 77,486 individuals, was chronically homeless in 2016.<sup>8</sup> Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of their permanent supportive housing programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the national decrease in chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints limit the amount of money available to support housing programs and services. As a result, *Opening Doors*, which began with a plan to end chronic homelessness by 2016, has extended the goal to 2017.<sup>9</sup>

### CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

There 426 homeless individuals identified as chronically homeless in South County, almost all (92%) of whom were unsheltered. Chronically homeless individuals represent 34% of the total homeless population in South County. Additionally, women experiencing homelessness in South County at a much greater rate than Santa Clara County overall (46% vs 32%, respectively).

FIGURE 28. TOTAL NUMBER OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS

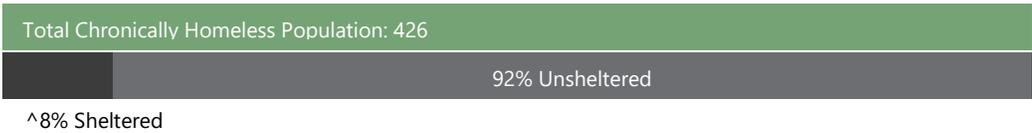


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *South County Homeless Census and Survey*.

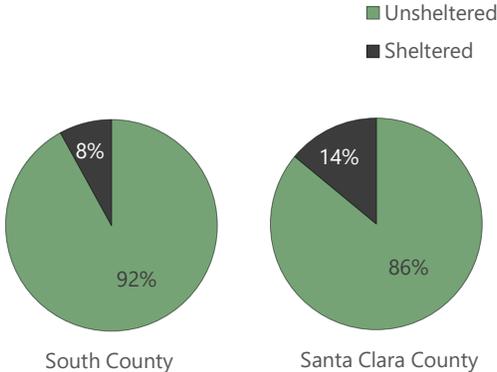
8 Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

9 Cavallaro, E. (2017). Ending Chronic Homelessness, Now in 2017. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

FIGURE 29. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS POPULATION ESTIMATES

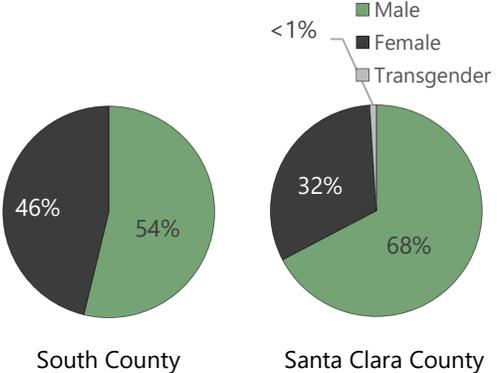


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

FIGURE 30. TOTAL CHRONIC HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER

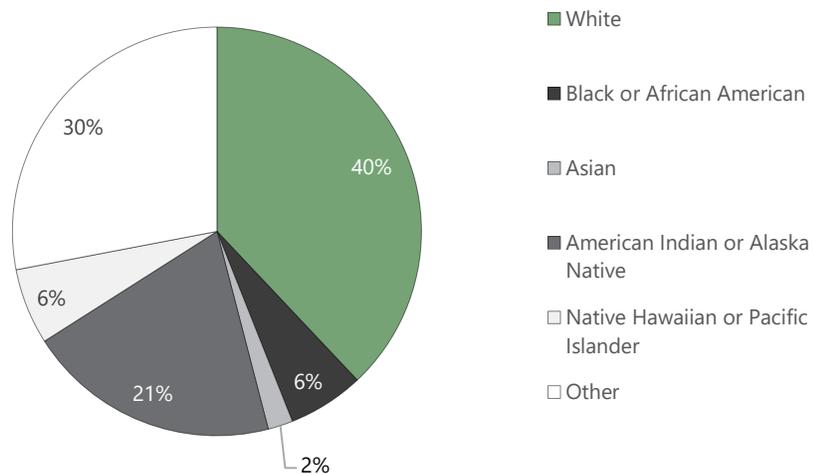


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS SURVEY RESPONDENTS

In South County, there was a greater percentage of chronically homeless female respondents (46%) than non-chronic respondents (40%). The same percentage of chronically homeless respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino compared to non-chronically homeless respondents (48%). Ten percent (10%) of chronically homeless respondents identified as veterans.

FIGURE 31. RACE AMONG PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



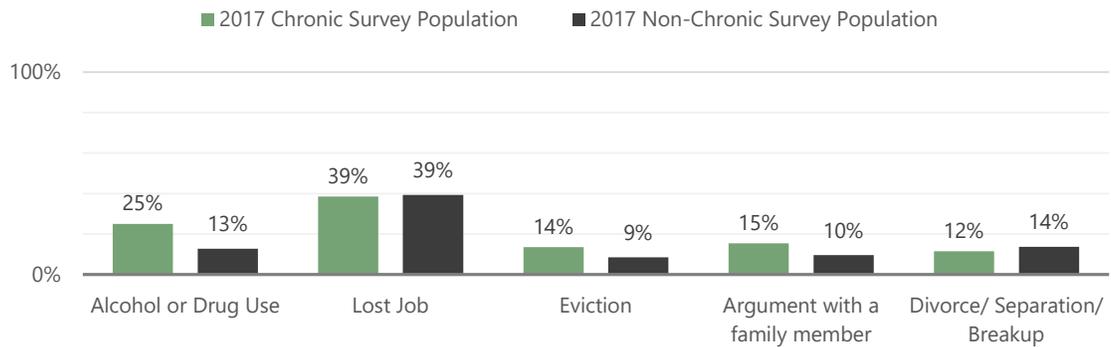
N= 47

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Over a third (39%) of chronically homeless survey respondents identified job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, same as the non-chronic survey population (39%). A quarter (25%) of chronically homeless respondents reported alcohol or drug use as a primary cause compared to 13% of non-chronically homeless respondents, respectively. Moreover, chronically homeless respondents were also more likely to report eviction and an argument with a family member as a primary cause of their homelessness.

**FIGURE 32. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON, SOUTH COUNTY**



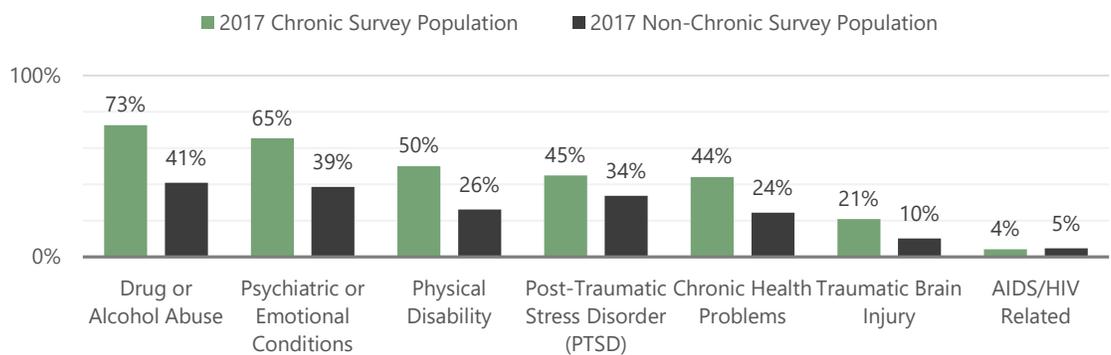
*Chronic Survey Population n=52; Non-Chronic Survey Population n=94*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*  
*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.*

**HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

The definition of chronic homelessness requires a condition that prevents an individual from maintaining work or housing, and many respondents reported experiencing multiple physical or mental health conditions. Seventy-three percent (73%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported drug or alcohol abuse. Sixty-five percent (65%) reported psychiatric or emotional conditions.

In general, higher rates of health conditions were reported for those who were chronically homeless compared to their non-chronically homeless counterparts.

**FIGURE 33. HEALTH CONDITIONS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON, SOUTH COUNTY**

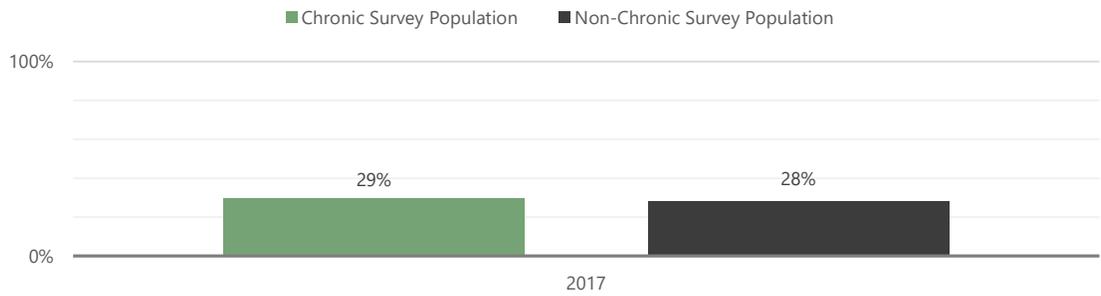


*Chronic Survey Population n=48-51; Non-Chronic Survey Population n=87-90*  
*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*  
*Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.*

INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

A similar percentage of chronic and non-chronic homeless respondents (29% and 28%, respectively) reported they had spent one or more nights in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey.

FIGURE 34. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON



*Chronic Survey Population n: 51; Non-Chronic Survey Population: 96*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015-2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

## VETERANS

Many U.S. veterans experience conditions that place them at increased risk for homelessness. Veterans experience 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.

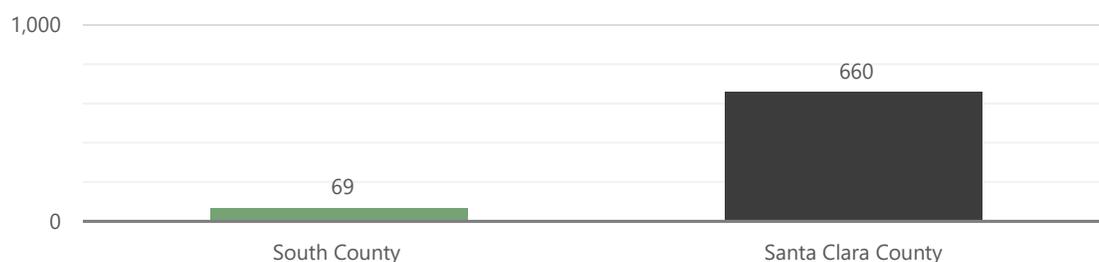
The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a broad range of benefits and services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. These benefits can involve different forms of financial assistance, including monthly cash payments to disabled veterans, health care, education, and housing benefits. In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

Between 2009 and 2016, there has been a 48% decrease in the number of homeless veterans nationwide. According to data collected during the national 2016 Point-in-Time Count, 39,471 veterans experienced homelessness across the country on a single night in January 2016.<sup>10</sup>

### HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

There were 69 homeless veterans living in South County, nearly 90% of whom were living unsheltered. The percentage homeless veterans in South County was noticeably higher than the percentage of homeless veterans in Santa Clara County as a whole (86% compared to 68%, respectively). Eighty-six percent of veterans living in South County were male, a similar percentage to the overall Santa Clara percentage.

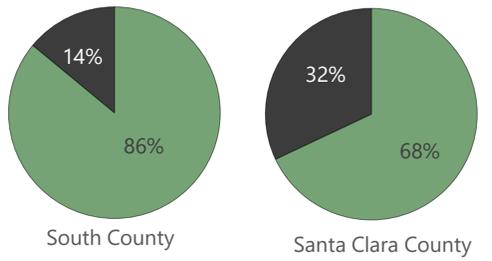
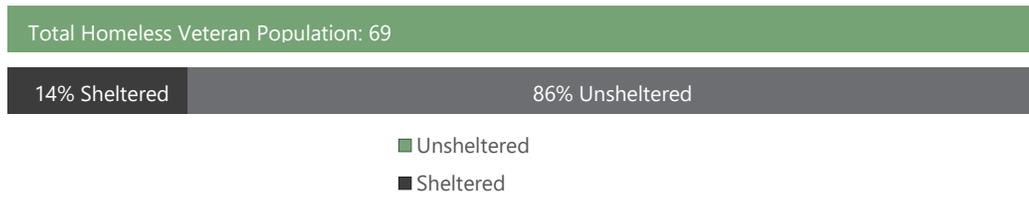
FIGURE 35. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *South County Homeless Census and Survey*.

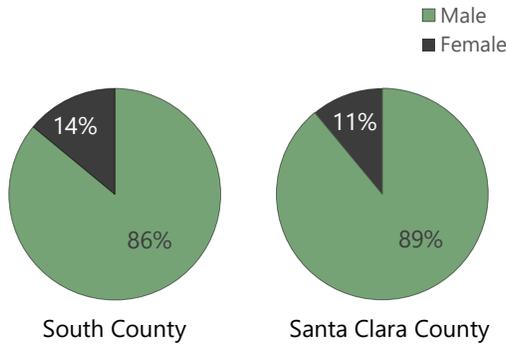
<sup>10</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2017). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>

FIGURE 36. HOMELESS VETERAN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census.

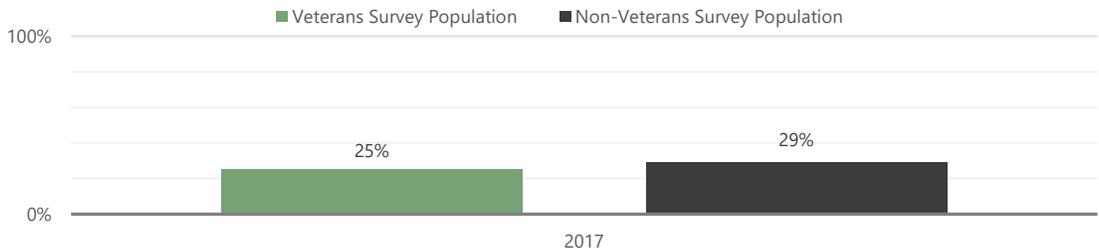
FIGURE 37. TOTAL HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

The number of veterans experiencing homelessness who had spent a night in jail or prison in the 12 months previous to the survey was similar to the non-veteran population (25% to 29%, respectively).

FIGURE 38. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, VETERAN AND NON-VETERAN COMPARISON



Veteran Survey Population n: 12; Non-Veteran Survey Population: 135

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015-2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

## FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2016 suggest that 35% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families. Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, as public shelters serve 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that they are not much different from families in poverty.

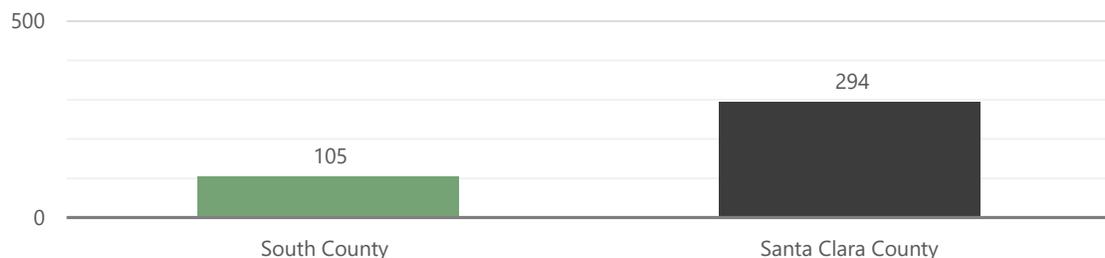
The risk of homelessness is highest among households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.<sup>11</sup> Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.<sup>12</sup>

### HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

South County saw 105 families with 396 individuals experiencing homelessness. All of those families were living in shelters, compared to the county as a whole, for which 28% of families were unsheltered.

2017 saw the largest increase in participation in the history of the Census from local school representatives, thanks to the County Office of Education (COE). McKinney-Vento representatives have unparalleled access into families experiencing homelessness, a population that is difficult to enumerate without their help. While not all districts participated, far more participated than in past years, providing increased access to a frequently overlooked population. McKinney-Vento representatives also gather data on families that do not meet the federal definition of homelessness used in this count, or where it cannot be determined whether they meet the definition. These families are frequently staying in unconverted garages, hotels or motels, or other areas on private property that enumeration teams are unable to access.

FIGURE 39. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS

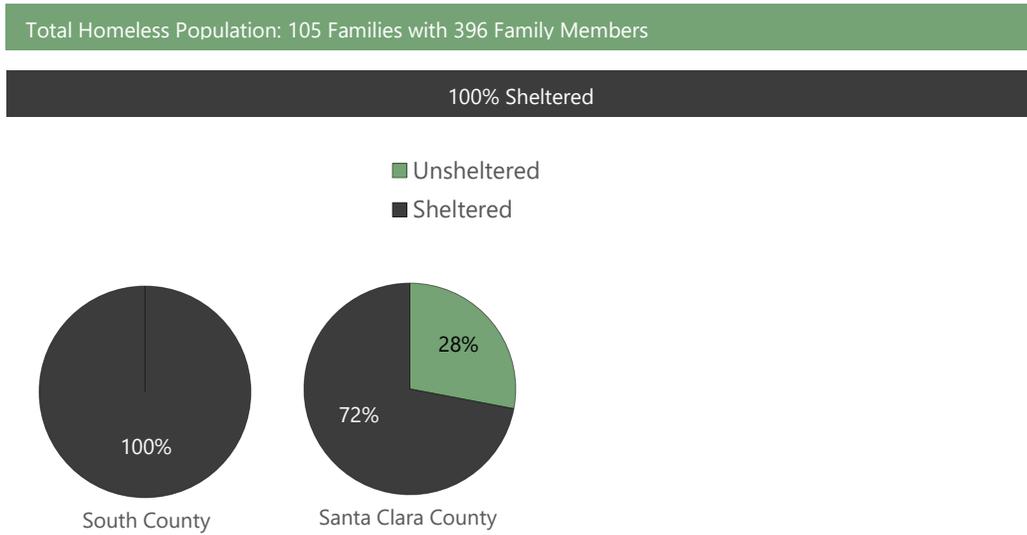


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

<sup>11</sup> U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2015 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

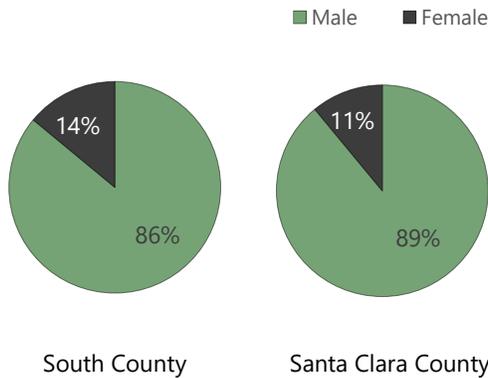
FIGURE 40. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

Note: There is a significant number of persons in homeless families who are in a “double-up” situation that may or may not fall within the HUD PIT count definition of homelessness that could not be identified due to their typical location on private property.

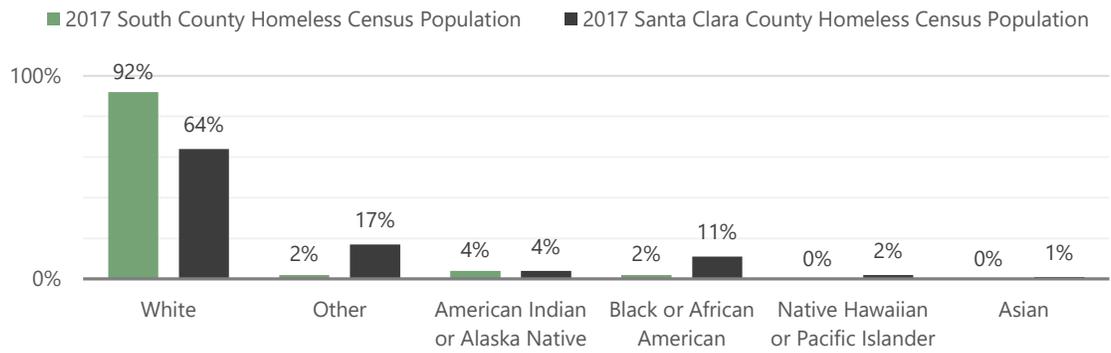
FIGURE 41. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION BY GENDER



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.

Note: This chart represents the gender of all household members.

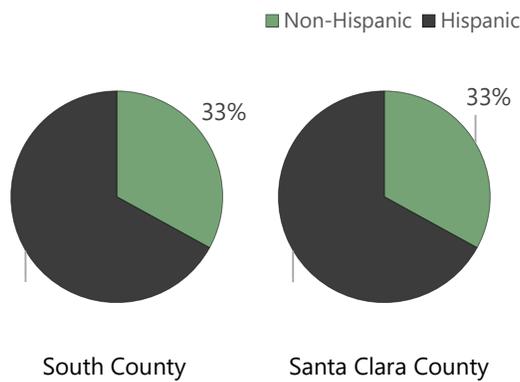
**FIGURE 42. TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION BY RACE**



2017 n= 396

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *South County Homeless Census and Survey*. U.S. Census Bureau. (May 2016). *American Community Survey 2014 1-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.

**FIGURE 43. TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION BY HISPANIC/NON-HISPANIC**



Santa Clara N: 1075; South County N: 396

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). *South County Homeless Census and Survey*.

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Due to the often hidden nature of youth homelessness, there are limited data available on unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, current federal estimates suggest there are 35,686 unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth on the streets and in public shelters across the country.<sup>13</sup> Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services targeted to young people.<sup>14</sup>

In 2012, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness amended the federal strategic plan to end homelessness to include specific strategies and supports to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless children and transition-age-youth. As part of this effort, the Department of Housing and Urban Development placed increased focus on gathering data on unaccompanied homeless children and youth during the Point-in-Time Count.

Santa Clara County implemented a dedicated youth census and survey in 2013 to improve data on unaccompanied children and youth in the county. These efforts were replicated in 2015. In 2017, efforts at enumerating unaccompanied youth and transition-age youth were expanded. This led to an increase in the number of enumeration teams, better training and preparation for those teams, increased participation from program staff, and expanded coverage of the areas youth frequent in Santa Clara County.

The following section provides an overview of the findings on unaccompanied children and youth identified in Southern Santa Clara County's general point-in-time census, as well as in the specific youth census.

### UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Homelessness among children and transition-age youth is a difficult problem to identify. Children and transition-age-youth are less likely to be found among the adult population experiencing homelessness, preferring locations and times of day that make traditional efforts at enumeration difficult. Accordingly, a separate youth count effort was put in place, relying on knowledge gathered from youth currently experiencing homelessness as well as their participation in the count itself.

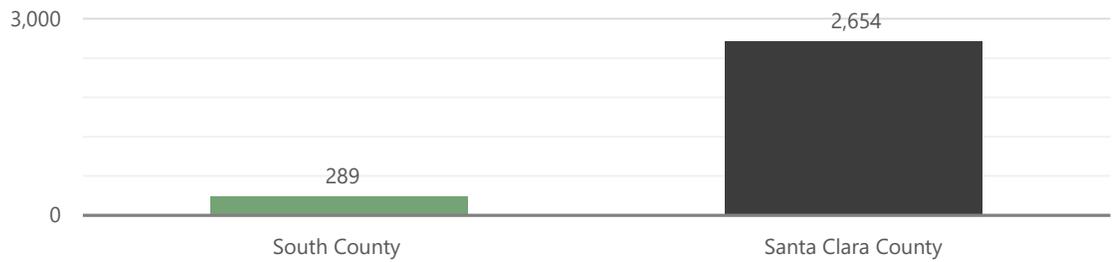
There were a total of 289 children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness in South County, more than half of whom were under the age of 18. All of the children and transition-age youth were unsheltered, similar to the entire county, in which 96% of unaccompanied children and transition-age-youth were unsheltered. This represents almost 23% of the entire South County homeless population.

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<sup>13</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2017 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

**FIGURE 44. TOTAL NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS**



*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

**FIGURE 45. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH POPULATION ESTIMATES**

Total Unaccompanied Homeless Children Population and TAY: 289

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2017). South County Homeless Census and Survey.*

*Note: There is a significant number of persons in homeless families who are in a “double-up” situation that may or may not fall within the HUD PIT count definition of homelessness that could not be identified due to their typical location on private property.*

# Conclusion

Between 2015 and 2017 Santa Clara County and its provider partners have made significant investments and reforms to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, moving more people off of the streets and into housing. However, point-in-time data indicates an increased number of individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to 2015. There can be many reasons for the increase, including macroeconomic concerns and difficulties finding locations to live. Additionally, it is worthwhile to compare the increase in Santa Clara County's population to nearby counties, as well as similarly sized counties across the country.

The survey component continues to provide a valuable insight into the experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Southern Santa Clara County. For example, in South County, there were more individuals experiencing homelessness who were Hispanic (48% vs 42%) than in Santa Clara County as a whole, though this may be related to the increased general population of Hispanic individuals in South County. Twenty-three percent of the overall homeless population was 25 or under. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability, exemplified by the fact that 60% of survey respondents indicated that they had previously experienced homelessness.

Knowing where individuals were living before they most recently lost their housing informs discussions regarding how local the homeless population is to the region. This information can also influence changes to available support systems if the Continuum of Care finds increasing numbers of individuals living locally before experiencing homelessness, demonstrated by the 88% of the South County survey respondents who reported living in Santa Clara County at the time they most recently became homeless. Among South County survey respondents, over a third (35%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors: either on the streets, in parks, or in encampment areas.

Although pinpointing a single cause of homelessness can be difficult, employment issues and alcohol and drug use continue to be key contributing factors of homelessness in South County. Many individuals experiencing homelessness face significant barriers in obtaining permanent housing. Financial obstacles (cost of rent, no income, no money for moving costs, and lack of transportation) continue to be barriers limiting individuals from obtaining housing.

There have been a number of accomplishments and improvements from 2015. The data in the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey in South County can help educate the public, service providers, and policy makers on how to best serve the homeless population and help ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time event. Study after study shows that prevention, Housing First initiatives and supportive services are the first steps in ending homelessness, and Santa Clara County is working diligently to develop these systems of change. In the interim, there is a lot of work to be done to address the immediate needs of the 1,260 persons who are experiencing homelessness and in need of assistance.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

## OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County is to produce a point-in-time estimate of people who experience homelessness in Southern Santa Clara County. 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 Santa Clara County on any given night. The subsequent survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those enumerated on the night of the count. 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 the hours of 5:30a.m. - 11:00a.m. on January 24 and 25<sup>th</sup> – an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals. The South County portion of the count took place on January 24.
- The youth street count between the hours of 3 pm and 8 pm – a targeted enumeration of unsheltered youth under the age of 25 on January 24.
- The shelter count for the first morning of the street count – an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals staying in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs.

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.

## STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of unsheltered homelessness for Point-in-Time Counts is used. This definition includes individuals and families 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's definition of homelessness does not include those living in "double-up" or "couch surfing" situations, those staying with friends/family on a temporary basis, those who happened to be staying at a hotel or motel for the night, those in jail, or those admitted into a hospital.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodology used for the 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey in South County is commonly described as a “blitz and survey count,” since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method is conducted in Santa Clara County the result is an observation based count of individuals and families who appear to be homeless. The count is then followed by an in-person representative survey, the results of which are used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey is used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements, and to inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

Continuing the same methodology from past efforts in Santa Clara County is an important part of the count methodology and allows for relevant comparisons across the many years of the count. Accordingly, there were few changes to the methodology in 2017. In conjunction with the Planning Committee, a start time 30 minutes earlier than in 2015 was adopted. Five focus groups were held with individuals experiencing homelessness, so that “hot spots” could be identified and noted on maps for teams on count day.

## VOLUNTEERS AND WORKER RECRUITMENT

Many individuals who live and/or work in Santa Clara County turned out to support the effort to enumerate the local population experiencing homelessness. More than 215 community volunteers and City and County staff registered to participate in the 2017 general street count, including approximately 20 who helped to enumerate South County. The volunteer recruitment effort was led by the Planning Committee and was greatly aided by numerous shelters and day programs from throughout the county. Extensive outreach efforts were conducted, targeting local non-profits that serve the homeless and local volunteer programs, as well as other individuals who may be interested in participating in the count.

The planning committee sent a press release informing the community about the count and making an appeal for volunteer participation approximately two weeks before the count. Volunteers registered to participate, and received additional details on the count via a dedicated email account monitored and staffed by Applied Survey Research (ASR) support staff.

To recruit guides, shelters and day programs from throughout the county were asked to identify individuals experiencing homelessness with considerable knowledge of where to find individuals experiencing homelessness on the street, how to find encampments, how to identify if vehicles were being used as sleeping locations, and how to identify situations where safety was a concern. Additionally, shelter and program staffs were asked to recommend guides who were reliable and interested in the process. All guides were paid for their time, earning \$15 per hour worked, including a mandatory one-hour training that was held in the days before the count.

## STREET COUNT TEAMS

Teams are generally comprised of two individuals, one volunteer from the community and one guide, generally an individual who is currently experiencing homelessness. Each team is assigned one to four census tracts as their assignment, depending on the size of the tracts. They are responsible for covering all areas that are accessible by the public, including parks, streets, business fronts, and wherever the guide believes there may be individuals experiencing homelessness. Teams are encouraged to have their community volunteer drive their vehicle, while the guide acts as a navigator and enumerator during the process. All teams are given a brief refresher training before heading out into the field.

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Safety is of the upmost importance during the count and every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Information regarding potentially dangerous encampment areas or other locations was shared when appropriate. Techniques for avoiding potentially dangerous situations were shared. The observational nature of the count was emphasized and has been found to be highly successful in minimizing potentially dangerous situations in the past. Volunteers were given guidance on how to act when canvassing encampment areas as well as how to respect a population that was likely to be sleeping. Additionally, the knowledge and experience of guides are valuable for safety reasons, and volunteers and teams are encouraged to listen to their guide when they give suggestions regarding safety. No safety incidents were reported to the research team.

## STREET COUNT DEPLOYMENT

To achieve complete coverage of the County within the timeframe, the planning team identified six locations to serve as deployment centers on the morning of the count. Deployment centers were spread around the county, to give teams convenient locations from which to meet and then head to their assigned locations. Each deployment center was assigned a number of enumeration routes, also based on location, to assure timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field. Volunteers and guides were assigned deployment centers based on preference and the need to make sure that each center had the appropriate number of teams.

## TARGETED STREET OUTREACH - YOUTH

The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness recognize that youth do not commonly co-mingle with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth. It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours, rather than in the evening when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately 3 p.m.-8 p.m. on January 24, 2017. Youth worked in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers.

## TARGETED STREET OUTREACH - VEHICLES

Identifying individuals residing in vehicles is difficult during the morning hours of the census count. By the time the sun rises, those residing in vehicles have often moved on to more remote locations or have found places where they blend in. North Santa Clara County recognized the need for targeted outreach and provided a dedicated outreach worker to enumerate vehicles prior to sunrise.

## CENSUS UNDERCOUNT

For a variety of reasons, individuals experiencing homelessness generally do not want to be located, and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of those experiencing homelessness will persist at varying levels, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations, such as unsheltered families, undocumented individuals, and unaccompanied children and youth.

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

- It is difficult to identify persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Individuals residing in isolated rural areas that are difficult to access or otherwise identify for the purposes of the count.
- Individuals whose physical appearance differs from traditional visual cues associated with people experiencing homelessness can be mistaken for housed individuals. This is especially true of unaccompanied children and youth, who often “hide in plain sight” and present similarly to their housed peers.
- Families with children experiencing homelessness often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or makeshift shelters.

By counting the minimum number of individuals experiencing homelessness during a given point-in-time, the count methodology is conservative and therefore most likely results in an undercount of certain unsheltered individuals. A margin of error on the final count is not available, though the data presented is to be considered a minimum estimate. However, this conservative approach is necessary to preserve the integrity of the data collected. Even though the census is most likely an undercount of the population experiencing homelessness, the methodology employed is the most comprehensive approach available and provides invaluable data for local and federal service agencies.

## SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

### GOAL

The goal of the shelter count was to gain an accurate count of the number of homeless persons who were being temporarily housed in shelters across the Southern region of Santa Clara County.

### DATA COLLECTION

To collect data on individuals staying in shelters on the night of January 24, ASR worked with BitFocus, the HMIS system administrators for Santa Clara County. BitFocus collected data on all emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and Safe Havens operating in the county. Data was collected on household status, age, gender, race and ethnicity, veteran status, chronic status, and if individuals had certain health conditions. There were a small, limited number of shelters that do not participate in the HMIS system. To gather their data, ASR collected the same data using a web-based system of reporting.

### EFFORTS TO INCLUDE SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA

Significant efforts were made to include data from all school districts within Santa Clara County. ASR and partners from the county met with district representatives to prepare them for the count and train them in data collection procedures. District representatives were trained to call all families that met the HUD definition of homelessness and ask where they had been staying on the night of the count. That information was then included in the appropriate census tract. Twelve out of 32 school districts were included, a large increase from past years.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 150 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in Southern Santa Clara 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 staff, who were trained by Applied Survey Research. Training sessions led 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 \$7 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 2017 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. Socks are continually in demand by individuals experiencing homelessness.

### SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time estimate of 1,260 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 150 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 8% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in Santa Clara.

The 2017 survey continued the practice from 2013 and 2015 of a survey that was an integration of previous approaches and 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 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. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. Like past surveys, the 2017 survey also prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors. While we target a confidence level of +/- 5%, we did not have the time nor funding to administer 300 surveys.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained 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, and length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other questions on the survey.

#### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

- The 2017 Santa Clara County Homeless Survey in South County was administered by the trained survey team in the weeks after the count.
- In all, the survey team collected 150 unique surveys.

#### SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The 2017 Santa Clara Homeless Survey in South County did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, a lesser number of surveys were conducted among transitional housing residents than in previous years. 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 City 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 City staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.

There were a few challenges in collecting surveys and survey data throughout Santa Clara County. First and foremost was the weather and its impact. The series of storms that impacted Santa Clara County and the Bay Area during the survey period caused a variety of difficulties related to data collection. Surveyors repeatedly mentioned difficulties finding enough respondents because many were not in their normal sleeping locations due to weather related movement. Staff members at participating shelters and programs frequently mentioned the added difficulties that the inclement weather contributed, specifically dealing with the large influx of families experiencing homelessness after flooding drove dozens of families to seek shelter, necessitating the creation of a temporary shelter for families that had to be staffed by shelter staff.



# Appendix 2: Definitions & Abbreviations

**Chronic homelessness** – Defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as an unaccompanied individual or head of a family household with a disabling condition who has either continuously experienced homelessness for a year or more, or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

**Disabling condition** – Defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, or brain injury that is expected to be long-term and impacts the individual's ability to live independently; a developmental disability; or HIV/AIDS.

**Emergency shelter** – 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 survivors and their children.

**Family** – A household with at least one adult and one child under the age of 18.

**Homeless** – Under the Category 1 definition of homelessness in the 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** – Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Sheltered homeless individuals** – Individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

**Single individual** – An unaccompanied adult over the age of 18.

**Transition-age-youth** – Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

**Transitional housing** – 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 children** – Children under the age of 18 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

**Unsheltered homeless individuals** – Individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.

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CITY OF GILROY

**2017** HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY  
JURISDICTIONAL REPORT



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# SOUTH COUNTY

# 2017

**HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY**  
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