



MARIN COUNTY



# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

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## **ABOUT THE RESEARCHER**

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

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

Special thanks must be given to the Sausalito Police Department, which generously supplied a boat and police officers in order to count the anchor-out population in Sausalito.

Thanks must also be given to the following individuals for their time and effort: Jason Satterfield, Felice McClenon, Sparkie Spaeth, Benjamin Leroi, Suzanne Walker, Andrew Hening, Jaclyn Epter, Lisa Mertes Sepahi, Paul Fordham, Mary Kay, Peter Planteen, Cory Bytof, Stephanie Lovett, Tom Adams, and Zara Babitzke. We would also like to thank some of our guides: Travis, Lovely, Sara, James, and Jonathan.

We appreciate the following programs and sites that provided data for the sheltered count: Homeward Bound, Ritter Center, Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity, Marin Partnership to End Homelessness, REST, Center for Domestic Peace, Gilead House, and St. Vincent de Paul Society.





# Introduction

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

These biennial Point-in-Time counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for homeless individuals and families.

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

Marin County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2015 Marin County Homeless Census and Survey. ASR is a nonprofit social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and research.

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

The 2015 Marin County Point-in-Time Count was a county-wide effort. With the support of community volunteers, and staff from the entire county was canvassed between daybreak and noon on January 29, 2015. Supplemental canvassing was also done at other times for particular subpopulations or geographic areas based on need. This resulted in

a visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets, in vehicles, on boats, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation. Shelters and facilities reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the same evening.

Marin County also conducted a dedicated count of unaccompanied children and youth under the age of 25 years in the hours after the general unsheltered count. This dedicated youth count was part of a nationwide effort, established and recommended by HUD, to understand the scope of youth homelessness. The youth count was conducted after the morning count, between the hours of 10 AM and 6 PM, when unaccompanied children and youth were more likely to be visible. The count was conducted by trained youth enumerators who were or had recently experienced homelessness.<sup>1</sup> A special homeless Youth Connect event was also planned in conjunction with the youth count. It was organized by the youth advocacy group, Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity (AHO).

In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 360 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals of all ages. The survey gathered basic demographic details, as well as information on service needs and utilization.

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

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

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

- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals), or
- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2015 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 1.

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

## **PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY**

The Marin County Census and Survey had four primary components:

- 1) A Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks or vehicles, etc.);
- 2) A targeted Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered, unaccompanied homeless children and youth including a “Youth Connect” event;
- 3) A Point-in-Time count of homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter, including those staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing; and
- 4) A qualitative survey of a representative sample of homeless adults and youth, administered in the weeks following the census efforts.

The results of both the census and survey presented in this report provide invaluable data regarding the number and characteristics of homeless individuals and families in Marin County. These data can help guide countywide efforts to mitigate and end homelessness.





# Point-In-Time Census

On the morning of January 29, 2015 the Point-in-Time Census counted 1,309 homeless individuals living on the streets and shelters of Marin County. Sixty-four percent of the individuals experiencing homelessness were living unsheltered.

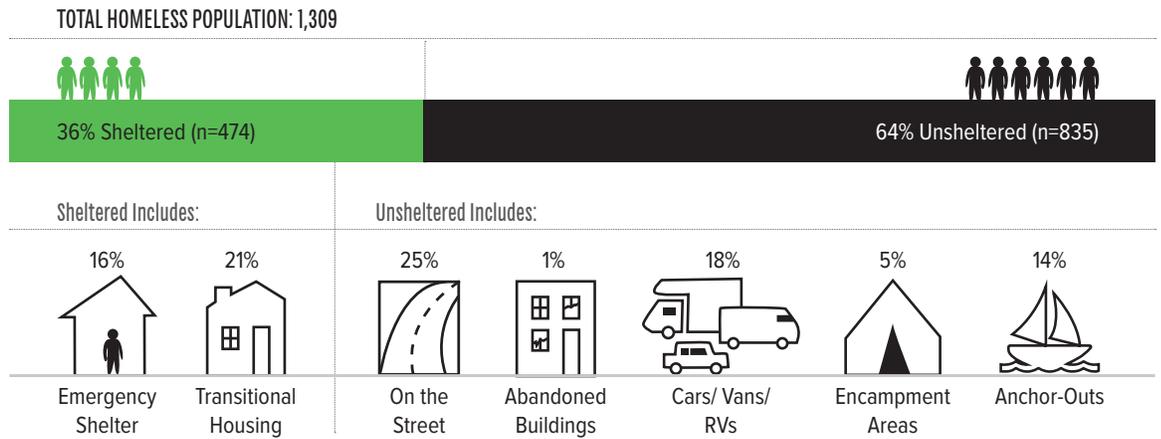
Forty percent of homeless persons in Marin County were under the age of 25. Almost 15% of homeless persons were under in families.

Enumerator teams counted 31% of the unsheltered population in San Rafael. The next most common areas were Richardson Bay (22%) and Novato (13%).

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN MARIN COUNTY

On the morning of January 29, 2015, the Point-in-Time Census counted 1,309 homeless individuals living on the streets and shelters of Marin County. Sixty-four percent of the individuals experiencing homelessness were living on the streets.

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



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

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



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

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

A majority (60%) of homeless individuals in Marin County were over the age of 25. Eleven percent of homeless individuals were under the age of 18, and 29% were ages 18-24.

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

	CHILDREN UNDER 18	ADULTS 18-24	ADULTS 25+	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
<b>Sheltered</b>	134	29	311	474	36%
Persons in family households	134	13	38	185	14%
Persons in non-family households	0	16	273	289	22%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	10	348	477	835	64%
Persons in family households	4	3	2	9	1%
Persons in non-family households	6	345	475	826	63%
<b>Total</b>	144	377	788	1,309	100%
<b>Percent</b>	11%	29%	60%	-	-

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

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

San Rafael was the most common location for the unsheltered homeless population in Marin County, followed by Novato and Sausalito. Sausalito has a large population of homeless individuals living on boats in its harbor.

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

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED	SHELTERED	TOTAL
<b>Incorporated</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>954</b>
Belvedere	18	0	18
Corte Madera	11	0	11
Fairfax	17	0	17
Larkspur	3	0	3
Mill Valley	30	0	30
Novato	112	110	222
San Anselmo	13	0	13
San Rafael	255	323	578
Sausalito	62	0	62
<b>Unincorporated</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>131</b>
Alto	3	0	3
Kentfield	5	0	5
Lagunitas	32	0	32
Marin City	10	0	10
Point Reyes	9	0	9
Strawberry	9	0	9
Tamalpais	1	0	1
Woodacre	10	0	10
Other unincorporated	52	0	52
<b>Anchor-Outs</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>183</b>
Richardson Bay	183	0	183
Rotating shelter*	0	41	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>1,309</b>

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

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

Note: The rotating shelter moves across jurisdictions throughout Marin County and thus cannot be assigned to a single jurisdiction.

Note: Please see the Appendix 1 Section on Methodology for further information.



# Homeless Survey Findings

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

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the 2015 Marin County Homeless Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals (based on shelter status and geographic location) between February 20 and March 27. This effort resulted in 362 complete and unique surveys.

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

Surveys were coordinated to ensure a representative sample, garnering information from subpopulations that are often hidden or hard to reach. Efforts were made to target respondents based on living accommodation, age, and neighborhood.

The following table is a brief overview of the census population and the survey population.

**FIGURE 5. SURVEY AND CENSUS POPULATIONS**

	CENSUS POPULATION	SURVEY POPULATION
Unsheltered	64%	62%
Sheltered	36%	38%
Total	1,309	362

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

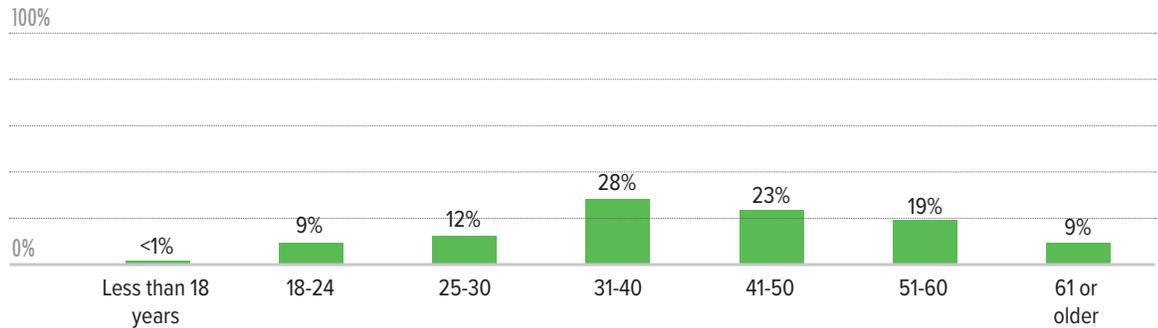
Note: When surveying, the youth population was much more difficult to access. When youth were found, they were often unlikely to be willing to participate.

### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

#### AGE

The survey sample age distribution is listed in the chart below. While just under 27% of the homeless population was under 25 years old, only around 10% of surveys were able to be administered to this group due to challenges in recruiting their population.

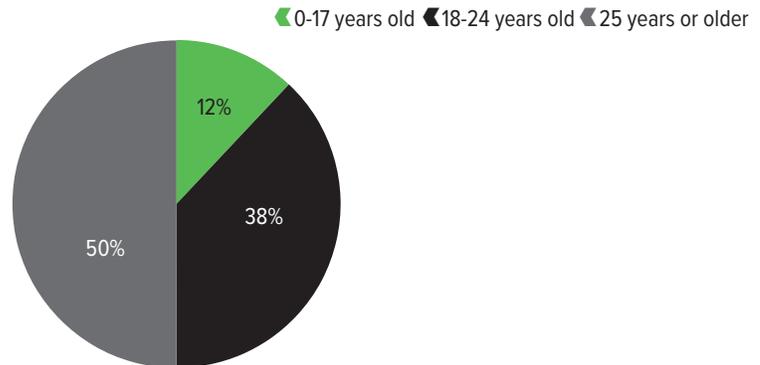
**FIGURE 6. AGE**



2015 n:362

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

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



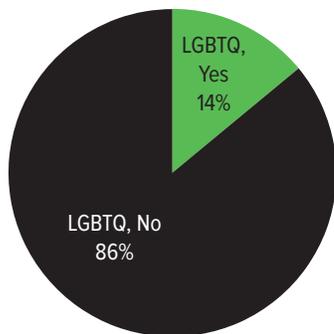
2015 n:345

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

**GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Fourteen percent of the population identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ). Of those who identified as LGBTQ, nearly half (46%) identified as gay or lesbian, while 15% identified as transgender. While there are limited data on the number of LGBTQ individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggest they experience homelessness at higher rates than the general population, especially those under the age of 25. LGBTQ respondents indicated the primary cause of their homelessness as an argument with family or friends who asked them to leave (17%) at rates much higher than the non-LGBTQ population (5%). These rates are possibly higher due to the lower response rate of children and youth under 25 years old.

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



Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	%	n
Gay	19%	10
Lesbian	27%	14
Queer	8%	4
Bisexual	23%	12
Transgender	15%	8
Other	21%	11

LGBTQ n:362; Breakout n: 52 respondents offering 59 responses

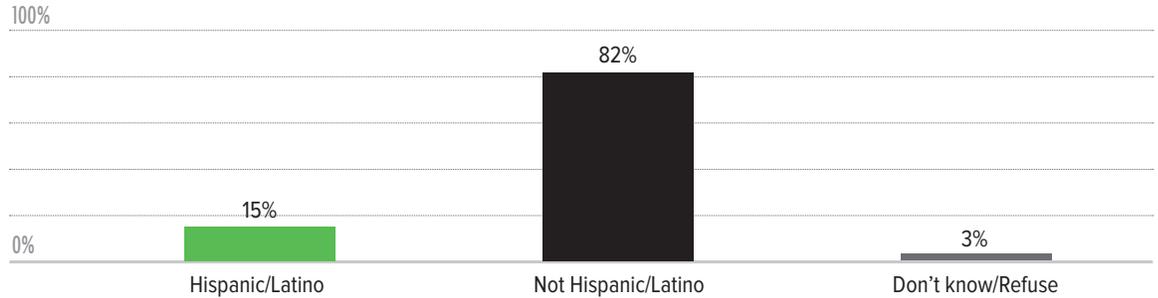
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**RACE/ETHNICITY**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. When asked about their ethnicity, 15% of respondents reported they were Hispanic or Latino. When asked about race, a majority (62%) of respondents indicated they were White, followed by African-American (20%) as the next most common response. African-Americans were overrepresented in the homeless population compared to the general population of Marin County, where they represented just 4% of the population.

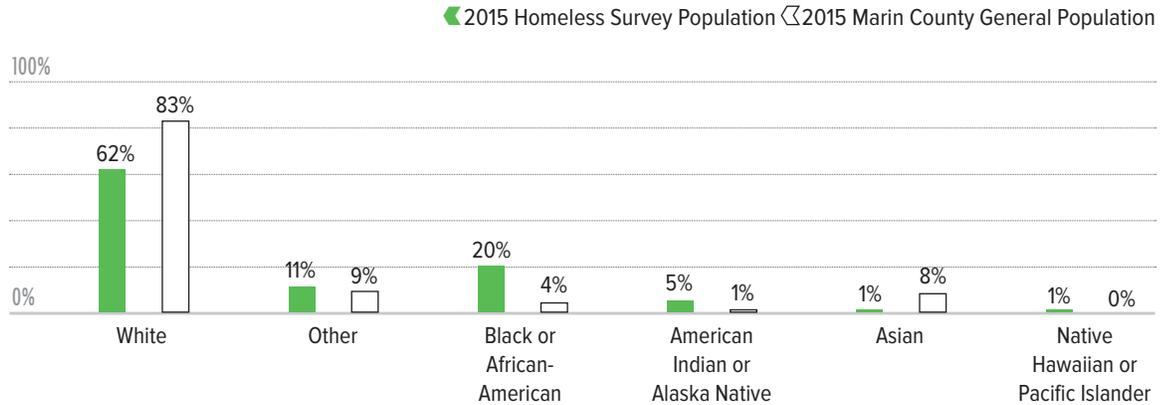
**FIGURE 9. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY**



2015 n:338

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

**FIGURE 10. RACE**



2015 n:332

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

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

**FOSTER CARE**

It has been estimated that one in four former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.<sup>3</sup> In the State of California, foster youth are now eligible to receive services beyond age 18. Transitional housing and supportive services for youth 18-24 are provided by two programs, Transitional Housing Placement-Foster Care for youth 18-21 and Transitional Housing Placement-Plus for youth ages 18-24. It is hoped that these additional supports, implemented in 2012, will assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless. Fourteen percent of the population indicated they had been in the foster care system at some point. Unaccompanied children and youth reported having been in foster care at nearly twice the rate of adult respondents (27% vs. 13%).

**FIGURE 11. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE**



2015 n:332

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

**LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS**

Typically, homeless persons can be found near their hometowns, and will move to be close to families, friends, and employment opportunities.

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE**

A sizable majority (71%) of homeless individuals reported living in Marin County before becoming homeless the most recent time. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported living in Marin County for at least five years before becoming homeless.

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



2015 n: 334

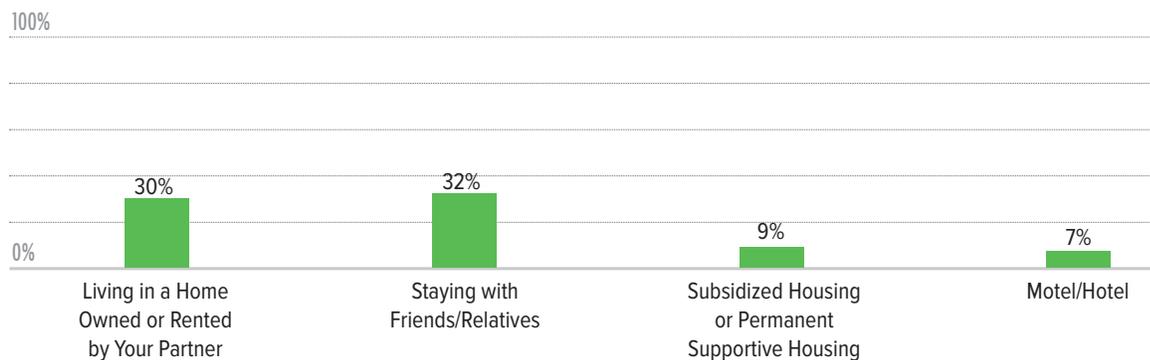
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

<sup>3</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2012). Ammendment 2012, Opening Doors: Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. Washington: D.C.

**PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

Immediately before becoming homeless, nearly one third of respondents indicated they lived in a home rented by them or a partner, followed by 32% who had been staying with friends or family. Seven percent of respondents reported being in jail or prison immediately before becoming homeless.

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



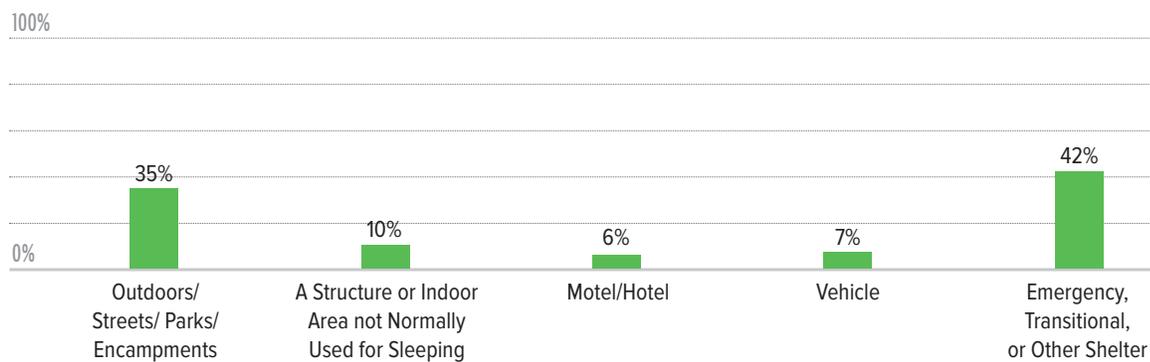
2015 n:318

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

**CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

A large minority (42%) of individuals experiencing homelessness were living in shelters, emergency, transitional, or otherwise, followed by slightly more than a third (34%) who were living on the streets.

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



2015 n:326

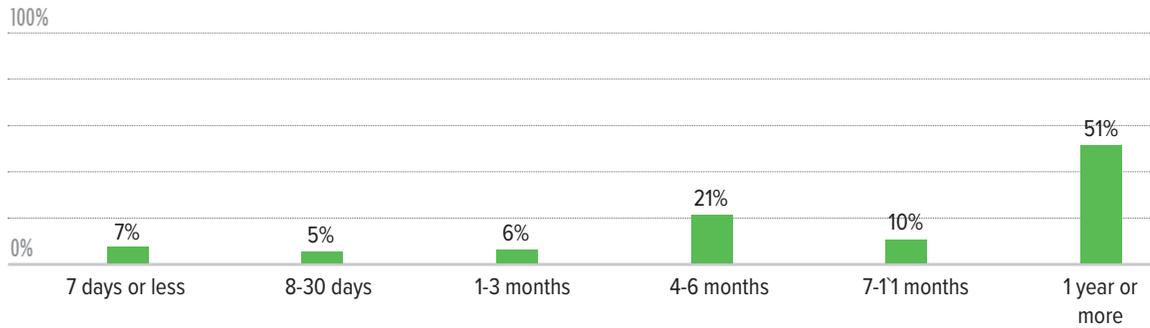
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

## DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

### DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

More than half of respondents reported their current incidence of homelessness lasting for at least a year, while just 13% reported it lasting for a month or less. Additionally, more than half of survey respondents reported being under the age of 25 when they first became homeless.

**FIGURE 15.** LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



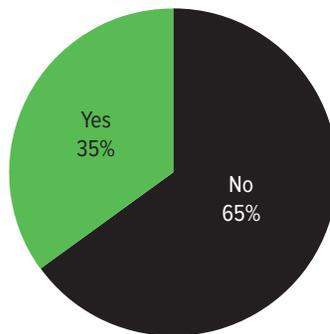
2015 n:352

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

### RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Over a third (35%) of survey respondents reported this was their first time experiencing homelessness.

**FIGURE 16.** PERCENT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME



2015 n:357

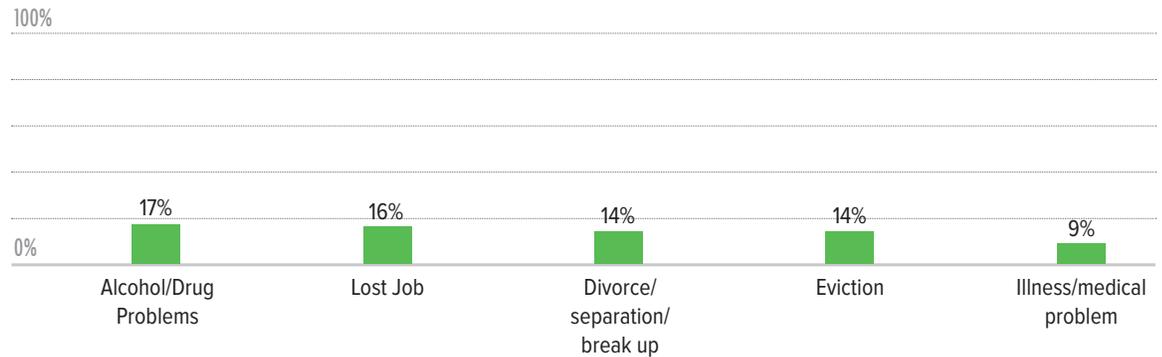
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual's homelessness is not always clear. It is often the result of multiple and compounding causes. Homeless self-assessments have been candid and accurate when reviewed by most service providers.

There was a variety of causes of homelessness among individuals in Marin County. When asked about the primary cause of their homelessness, the most common response was alcohol or drug problems (17%), followed closely by the loss of a job (16%). Seven percent of respondents reported mental health issues led to their homelessness, while 6% reported family or domestic violence led to their homelessness.

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



2015 n:355 respondents offering 432 responses

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

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

## SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

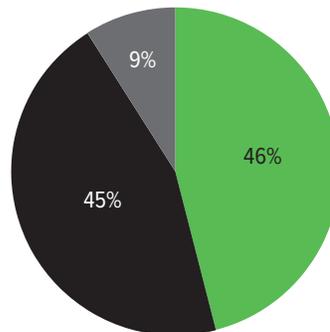
Marin County and its service providers deliver services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain benefits and support. However, many individuals and families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

### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Nearly half (45%) of survey respondents indicated they were not receiving any forms of governmental assistance. Of those who did not receive services, more than 20% reported not having an I.D. as the primary reason they did not receive services. Six percent and five percent of respondents reported the difficulty of paperwork or not knowing where to go, respectively, as the reason they were not receiving services, indicating more work is needed to increase the awareness surrounding benefits. The two most common responses to the question of what services homeless individuals were receiving were free meals and emergency shelter (43% and 36%, respectively). Nearly a fifth (18%) of individuals reported using mental health services.

**FIGURE 18.** PERCENT RECEIVING ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

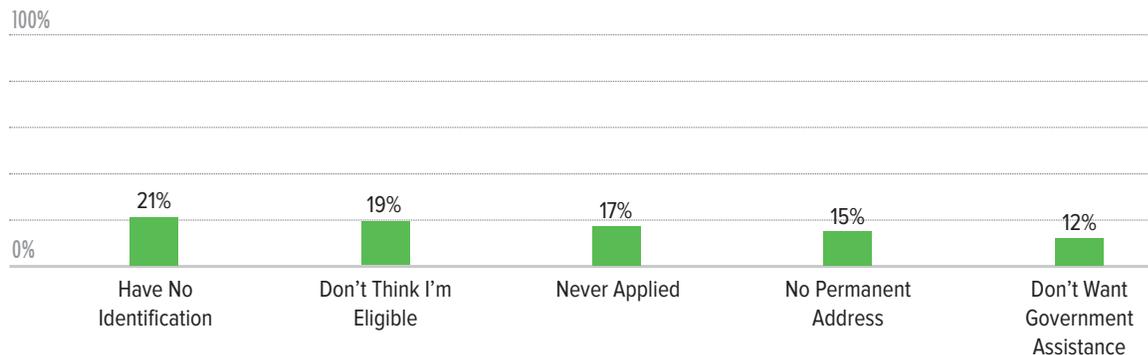
Yes No Decline to state



2015 n:321

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

**FIGURE 19. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**



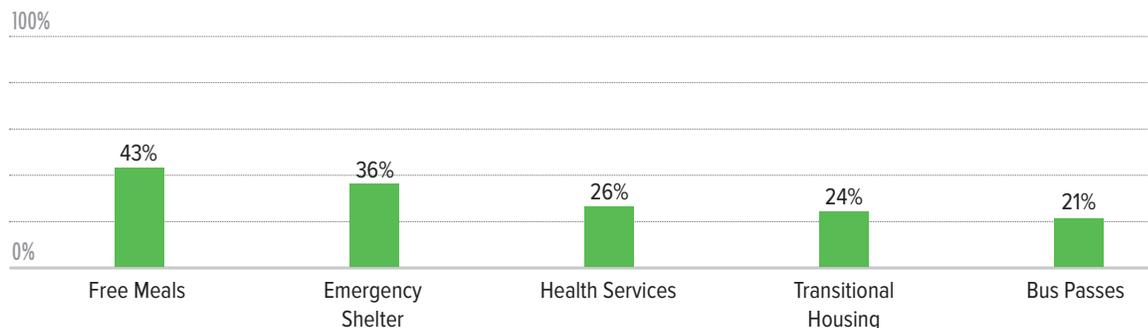
2015 n:156 respondents offering 190 responses

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

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

**SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

**FIGURE 20. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**



2015 n:350 respondents offering 768 responses

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

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

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

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

### EMPLOYMENT

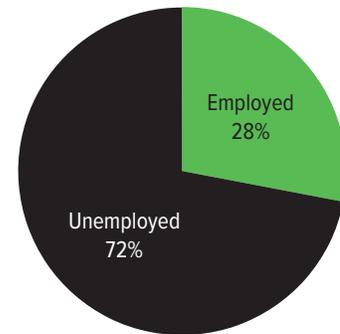
Slightly more than a quarter (28%) of individuals experiencing homelessness in Marin County reported some form of employment. This a very high percentage compared to similar communities. Forty percent of unemployed homeless individuals reported they were unable to work, while 37% reported they were looking for work.

### INCOME

Fifty-nine percent of unemployed homeless individuals were making less than \$449 in a month, while 28% of employed homeless individuals were making more than \$1,100 in a month. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling.

FIGURE 21. EMPLOYMENT AND MEAN MONTHLY INCOME

	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	%	n	%	n
\$0-\$99	19%	16	41%	88
\$100-\$449	6%	5	18%	38
\$450-\$749	27%	22	20%	43
\$750-\$1,099	20%	16	16%	34
\$1,100-\$1,499	12%	10	4%	8
\$1,500-\$3,000	12%	10	<1%	1
More than \$3,000	4%	3	<1%	1



2015 employment status n:303; Income employed n:82; Income unemployed n:213

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

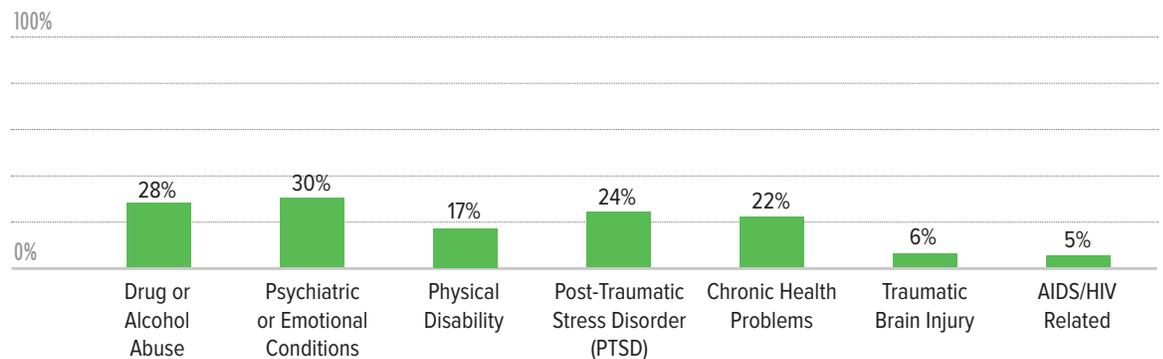
## HEALTH

The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to health care, individuals suffer preventable illnesses 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.

### PHYSICAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITIES

Slightly more than one third of survey respondents indicated they were suffering from at least one disabling condition. Of those, the most common were a psychiatric or emotional conditions (30%), followed closely by drug or alcohol abuse. Nearly a quarter of respondents were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while 5% had HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the respondent pool is much higher than other Bay Area communities.

FIGURE 22. HEALTH CONDITIONS



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:348; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:338; Physical disability n:337; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:340; Chronic health problems n:344; Traumatic Brain Injury n:339; AIDS/HIV related n:343*

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

### DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends asking about physical, emotional, or sexual abuse over a lifetime. Almost a quarter (24%) of respondents reported suffering from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a partner or other person they stayed with. When asked if they were currently experiencing abuse, only 2% indicated they were. Women reported suffering from abuse at a much greater rate than men, 50% compared to 11%, respectively. HUD has expanded the definition of domestic/partner violence or abuse to include persons who have “ever” been victims, versus the previous approach of their current status.

**FIGURE 23.** HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2015 n:343

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

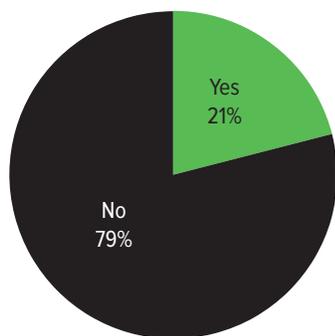
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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

### INCARCERATION

A fifth (21%) of respondents indicated they had spent at least one night in jail in the 12 months previous to the survey. A similar number (20%) reported that they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey. Just 2% reported being on probation or parole at the most recent time they became homeless.

**FIGURE 24.** HAVE YOU SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



2015 n:343

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



# Homeless Subpopulations

HUD's publication, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness in the United States. In order to adequately address the diversity within the population experiencing homelessness, the federal government identified four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs. The following sections look at each of these populations to identify the number of people counted during the Point-in-Time count on January 29, 2015 and the characteristics of each population.

The following section details the number and characteristics of individuals and families included in the Marin County Point-in-Time Census and Survey who meet the definition of each subpopulation. Not all subpopulations had large enough sample sizes to be an accurate representation, and so caution should be used when interpreting results in those cases.

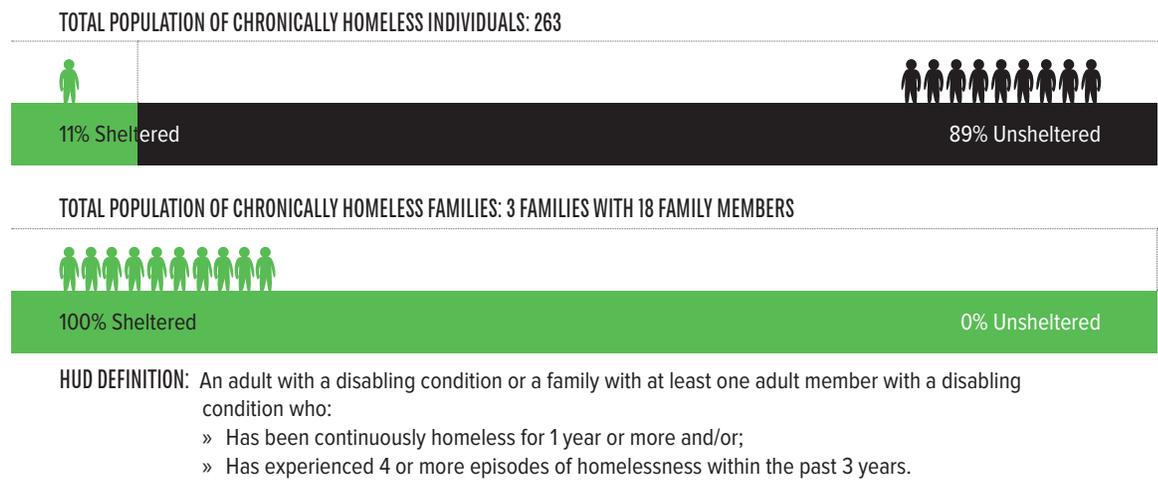
## CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

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

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population. Data from Marin County and communities across the country have shown 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.

The USICH reported that roughly 15% of the national homeless population was chronically homeless in 2014 or 84,291 chronically homeless individuals.<sup>4</sup> Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of permanent supportive programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the recent decrease in national chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints have limited the amount of money available to support housing programs and services. As a result, *Opening Doors*, which began with a goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015 has extended the plan to 2017.<sup>5</sup>

FIGURE 25. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS POPULATION ESTIMATES



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

4 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Annual Update 2014. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

5 Cavallaro, E. (2015). Ending Chronic Homelessness, Now in 2017. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

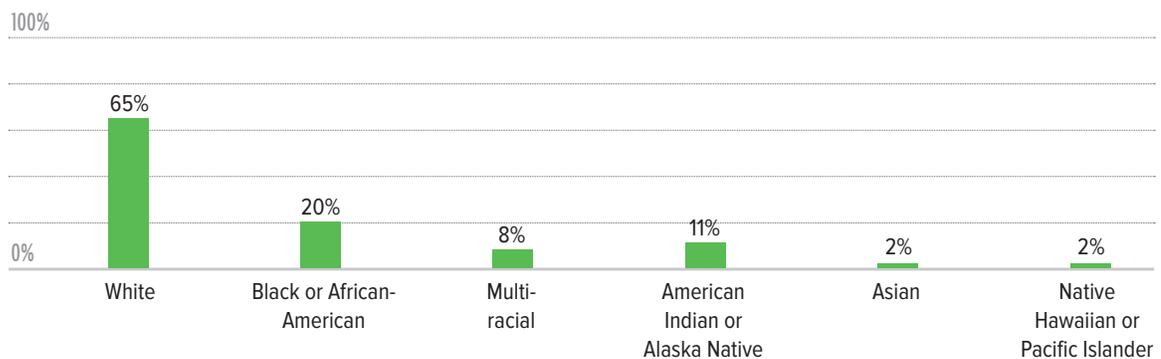
### PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

There were 263 chronically homeless individuals in Marin County in 2015, only 11% of whom were sheltered or roughly 21% of the overall homeless population. Additionally there were 3 chronically homeless families with 18 total family members, all of whom were sheltered.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

A majority (65%) of chronically homeless individuals identified as White. Following the lead of HUD and the U.S. Census, the survey collected separate data on ethnicity and race. Accordingly, 14% of the chronically homeless identified as Hispanic or Latino, similar to the non-chronically homeless population (15%). Sixty-six percent of chronically homeless individuals were male, nearly identical to the non-chronic population (65%). Twenty-one percent of the chronically homeless population had been in foster care, compared to 12% of the non-chronic homeless population.

**FIGURE 26.** RACE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:66

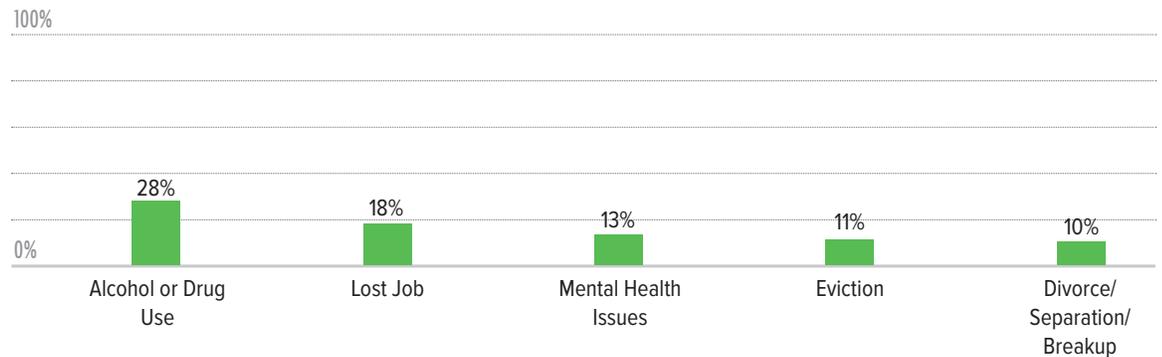
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Marin County Homeless Survey*. Watsonville, CA.

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding and/respondents noting multiple race background.

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

The cause of an individual's or family's homelessness often comes from multiple sources or reasons. The most common response of the chronically homeless when asked about the cause of their homelessness was alcohol and drug use; 28% of the chronically homeless cited alcohol and drug use, nearly double the rate of the non-chronic homeless respondents at 14%. Chronically homeless respondents also responded that mental health issues were the cause of their homelessness at greater rates than the non-chronic homeless population (13% vs. 5%, respectively).

**FIGURE 27.** PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n:71 respondents offering 98 responses

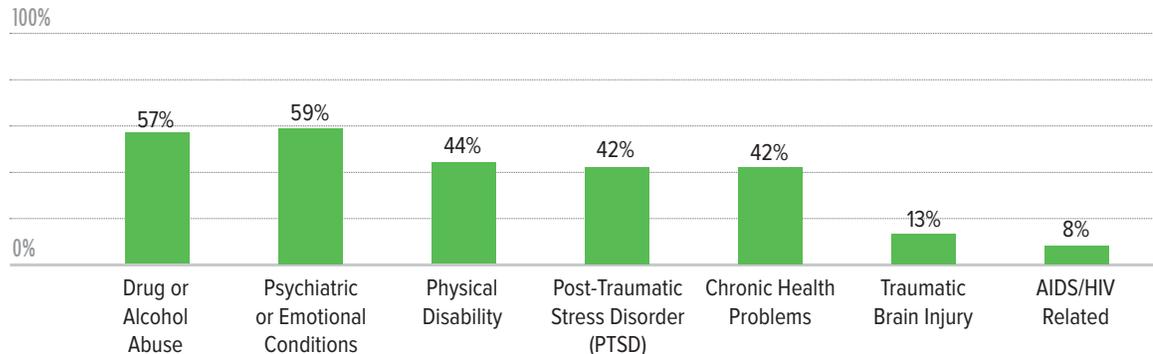
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *Marin County Homeless Survey*. Watsonville, CA.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

All of the chronically homeless in Marin County were suffering from a disabling condition, while only 22% of the non-chronically homeless were suffering from one. Psychiatric or emotional conditions were the most common (59%) form of disabling condition, followed closely by drug or alcohol abuse. Chronically homeless individuals in Marin County suffered from disabling health conditions at much greater rates than the non-chronically homeless.

**FIGURE 28.** HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:74; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:69; Physical disability n:71; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:71; Chronic health problems n:72; Traumatic Brain Injury n:70; AIDS/HIV related n:72*

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

### ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Chronically homeless individuals accessed free meals at much greater rates than the non-chronically homeless, 61% compared to 38%. However, 16% of the chronically homeless population reported not using any services while 9% of non-chronically homeless are not using services. When asked why they were not receiving services, 29% of the chronically homeless population replied that they didn't think they were eligible, while 21% replied that their benefits had been cut off.

### INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Thirty-four percent of the chronically homeless population had spent at least one day in the 12 months previous to the survey in jail, nearly double the rate (17%) at which non-chronically homeless reported. Similarly, 30% of the chronically homeless population reported being on probation or parole at the time of the survey, greater than the non-chronically homeless at 17%.

## HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

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

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

Since 2010, there has been a 33 percent decrease nationally in the number of homeless veterans. According to data collected during the 2014 Point-in-Time census, 49,933 veterans experienced homelessness nationwide on a single night in January 2014.

## NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS

There were a total of 66 homeless veterans identified in Marin County in 2015, slightly less than two thirds of whom were living on the street. Homeless veterans housed in permanent supportive housing arrangements are excluded from PIT reporting.

**FIGURE 29.** HOMELESS VETERAN POPULATION ESTIMATES



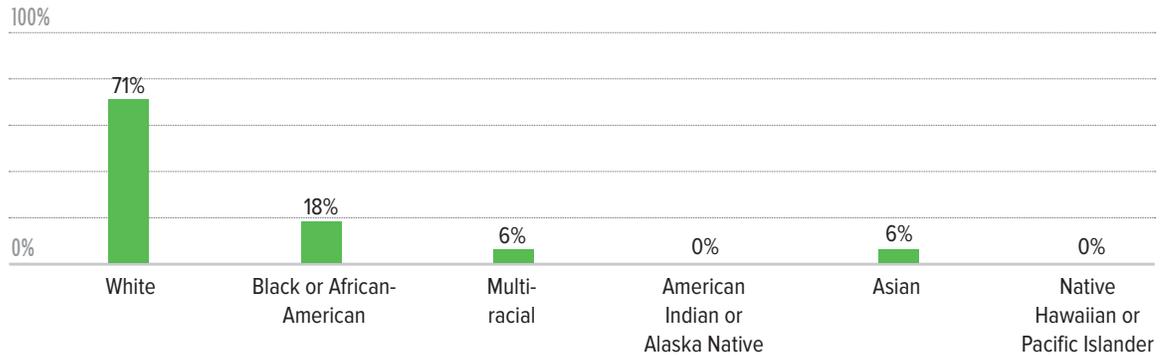
**HUD DEFINITION:** Veterans are persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.

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

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS VETERANS**

One hundred percent of homeless veteran survey respondents were male. Slightly more than 70% of veterans were white, followed by 18% of who were African-American. Additionally 12% indicated they were LGBTQ.

**FIGURE 30. RACE AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



2015 n:17

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

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

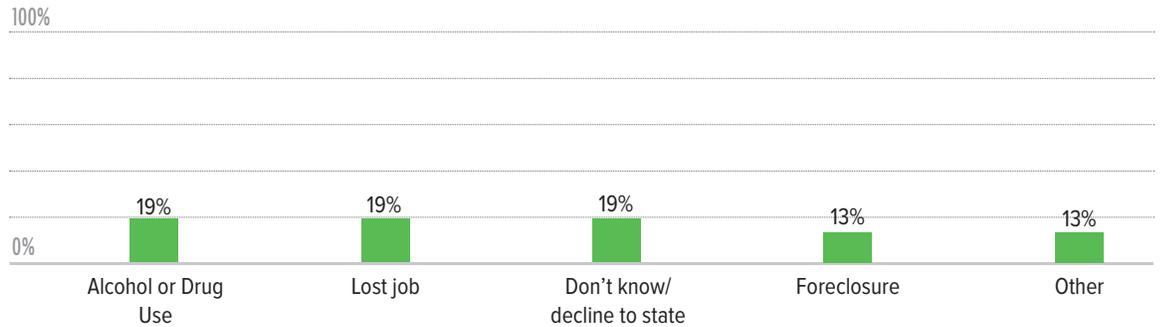
**LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

Sixty-five percent of homeless veterans have been homeless for at least a year, a noticeably greater percentage than the non-chronic population at 50%. Sixty-three percent of veterans experiencing homelessness reported living in Marin County before becoming homeless.

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

Nineteen percent of veterans responded that the loss of a job or drug or alcohol abuse was the primary cause of their homelessness.

**FIGURE 31. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



2015 n:16 respondents offering 18 responses

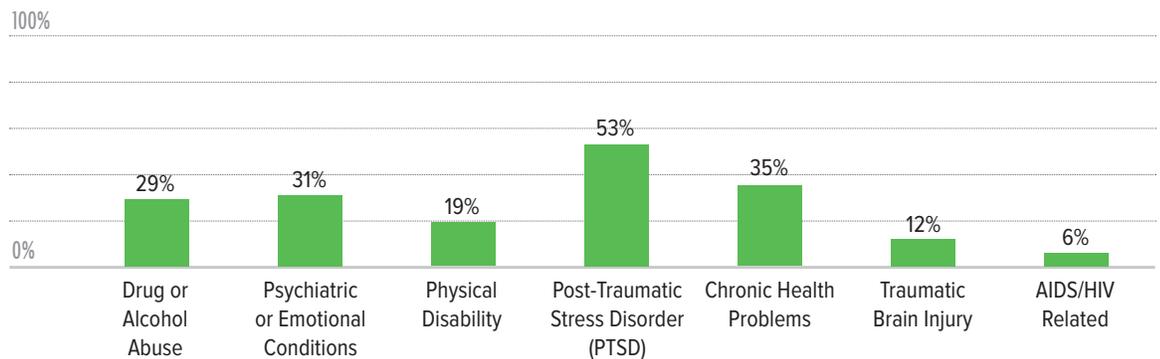
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

Over half (53%) of veterans experiencing homelessness reported suffering from PTSD, a much greater percentage than the non-veteran population at 23%. The percentage of veterans suffering from a disabling condition was slightly higher than the non-veteran population, 47% compared to 37%, respectively.

**FIGURE 32. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



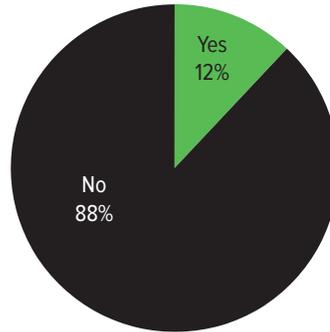
Drug or alcohol abuse n:17; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:16; Physical disability n:16; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:17; Chronic health problems n:17; Traumatic Brain Injury n:17; AIDS/HIV related n:16

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

### INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Twelve percent of homeless veterans reported spending at least one night in jail during the 12 months prior to the survey, slightly less (21%) than the non-veteran homeless population.

**FIGURE 33.** A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



2015 n:17

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

## HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

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

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

There were only 19 family members surveyed in Marin County, so data must be treated cautiously as it does not represent all families experiencing homelessness in Marin County.

**FIGURE 34.** HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES



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

## NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

There were 57 families with 194 family members experiencing homelessness in Marin County, nearly all (96%) of whom were staying in shelters. These families represent 15% of the total homeless population.

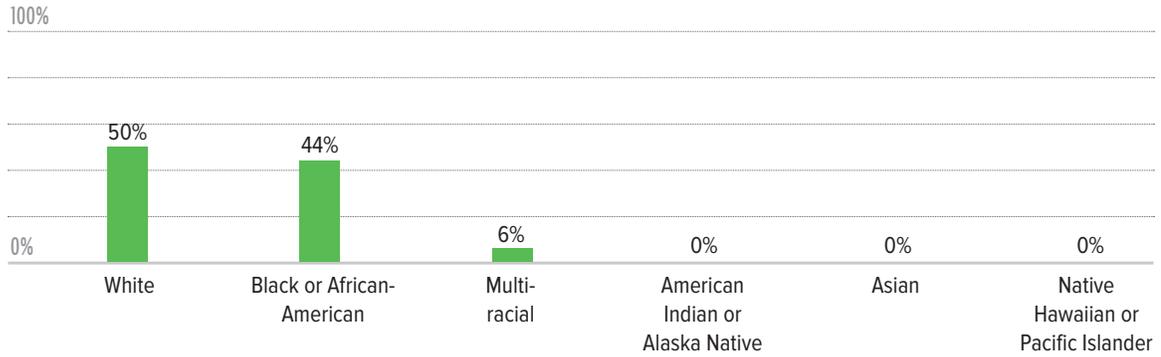
6 U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). *Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children*. Retrieved 2013 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

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

**DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

The survey component of the project surveyed just one member of the family. Fifteen, or 79%, reported they were female. Half of respondents identified as White, a smaller percentage than the non-family homeless population (67%).

**FIGURE 35. RACE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



2015 n:18

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

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

**PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

Eighteen heads of household of the 19 family members surveyed reported living in Marin County before becoming homeless.

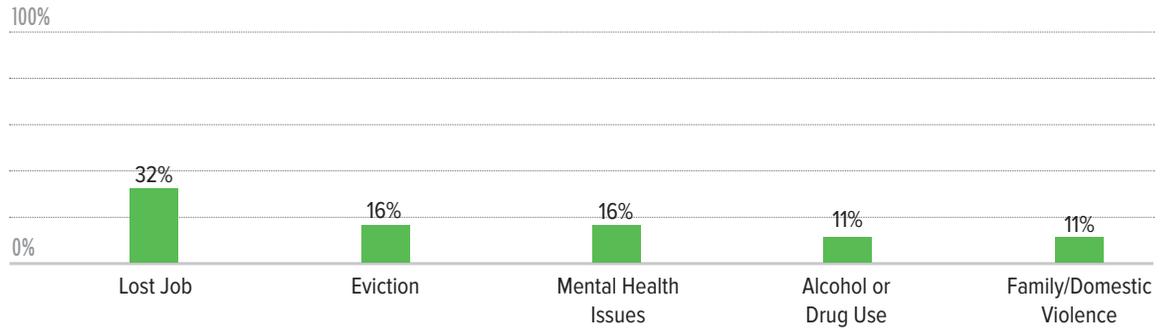
**GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

Fifteen of the homeless family members reported they were currently staying in transitional housing shelters. Nine family members reported using mental health services.

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

The loss of a job was the most common response for a family member of a homeless family when asked what the primary cause of their homelessness was. Nine of the families reported that rent or mortgage assistance would have prevented them from becoming homeless.

**FIGURE 36. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



2015 n:19 respondents offering 21 responses

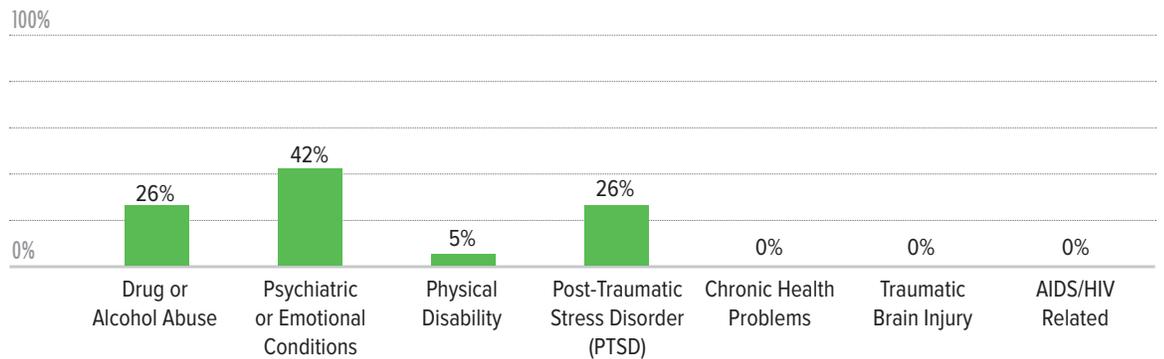
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). Marin County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA.

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

**HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

Eight of the 19 family members reported suffering from psychiatric or mental problems.

**FIGURE 37. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



Drug or alcohol abuse n:19; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:19; Physical disability n:19; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:19; Chronic health problems n:19; Traumatic Brain Injury n:19; AIDS/HIV related n:18

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

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

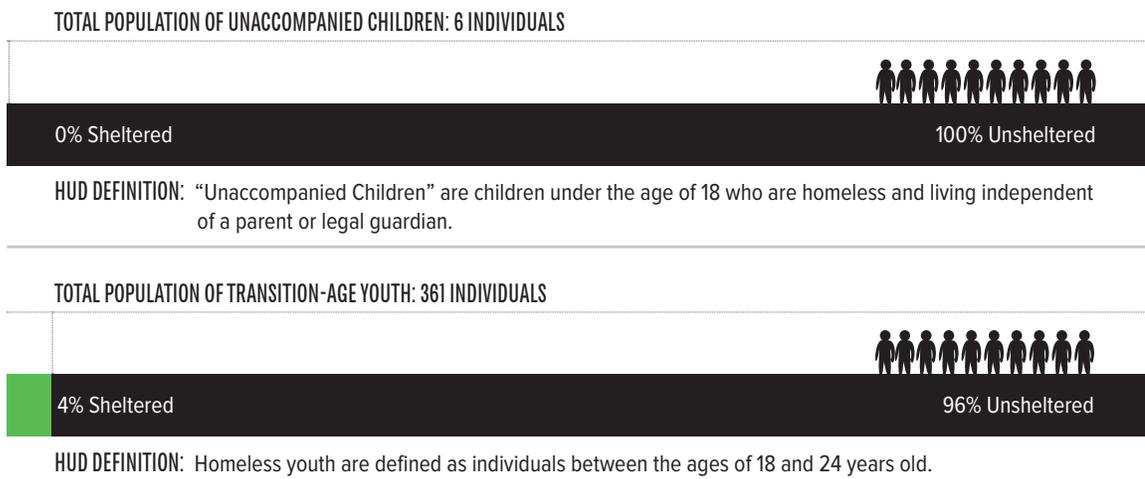
There are limited data available on homelessness among unaccompanied children and youth nationally and locally. Current federal estimates suggest there are 45,205 children and youth on the streets and in public shelters. Homeless youth have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical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

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

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

There were six unaccompanied children in Marin County, all of whom lived on the streets. In addition, there were 361 Transition-age youth (TAY) in Marin County, 96% of whom were living on the streets. This represents 28% of the total homeless population. Twenty-eight percent of the total homeless population are youth under the age of 24.

**FIGURE 38.** UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH POPULATION ESTIMATES



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

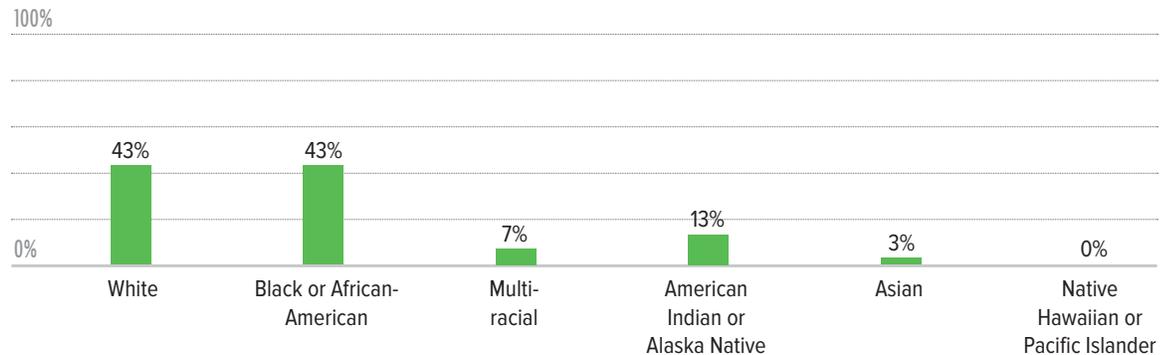
Note: Due to the small sample size of the survey, results should be reviewed with caution. The results, however, are consistent with other communities whose youth response rate was similar.

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

Of the 30 surveyed unaccompanied children and youth, 43% identified as White and 43% identified as African-American, while 10% identified as Hispanic or Latino. Six, or nearly 20%, of respondents identified as LGBTQ, slightly greater than the rate of the non-children and youth population (14%).

Eight, or 27%, of unaccompanied children and youth respondents reported being in foster care, greater than the non-children and youth population at 13%.

**FIGURE 39.** RACE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH



2015 n:30

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

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

**FIGURE 40.** HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH



2015 n:30

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

### EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Half of respondents in the youth survey reported not having finished high school, while just a combined 5% had completed college or finished a post-graduate degree. Only 23% were currently enrolled or attending school.

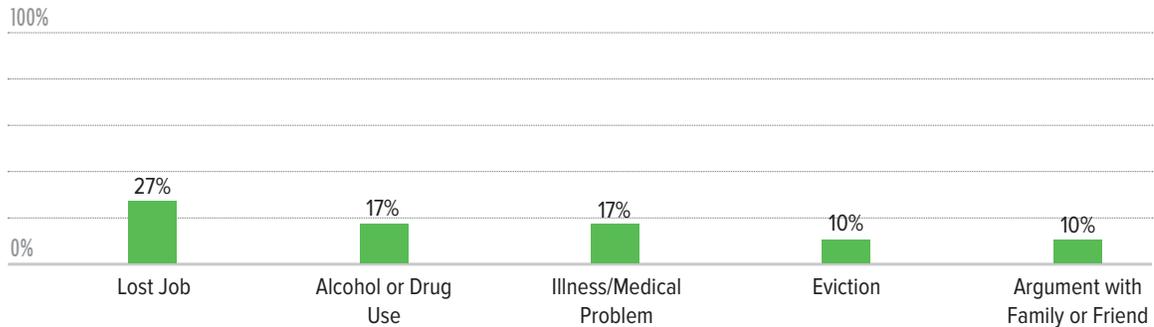
### PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Almost three quarters of youth survey respondents reported living in Marin County before becoming homeless, a similar percentage to the non-youth population (72% compared to 71%, respectively).

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

The loss of a job was the most common response of unaccompanied children and youth when asked what the primary cause of their homelessness was. When asked where they were living before becoming homeless, 76% reported living with one or both of their parents. Slightly less than half reported attempting to live with their parents after becoming homeless. Fifty-five percent of youth respondents reported a fight with their parents or guardians as contributing to their homelessness, while 41% reported sexual abuse as a factor.

**FIGURE 41.** PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH



2015 n:30 respondents offering 39 responses

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

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

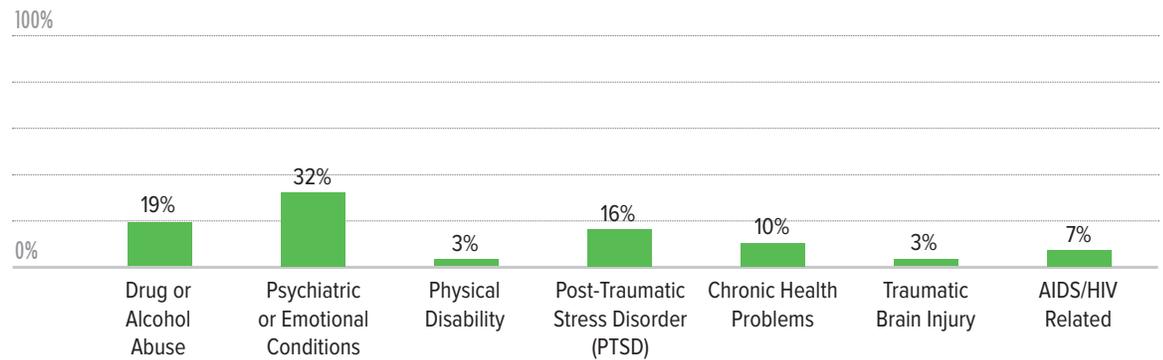
### SERVICES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

When asked how often they had accessed youth-specific services in the past 12 months, 57% responded “never,” while just 4% responded as using those services “often” or “always.” When asked about the services they do receive, the most common responses were for free meals and bus passes (41% and 31%, respectively). Shelter and housing was a need for 74% of the youth population, followed by job training and employment (65%) and transportation (59%). Fifty percent reported a need for health care, while slightly fewer reported a need for counseling or mental health care.

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Nearly a third (32%) of all youth respondents reported suffering from psychiatric or mental health conditions, the most common response. Sixteen percent reported suffering from PTSD. Forty-seven percent of youth survey respondents reported their health as “very good” or “good.”

**FIGURE 42.** HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



*Drug or alcohol abuse n:31; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n:31; Physical disability n:31; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n:31; Chronic health problems n:30; Traumatic Brain Injury n:31; AIDS/HIV related n:30*

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

### SAFETY AND INCARCERATION AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH

Fifty-six percent of unaccompanied child and youth respondents reported trading sex or drugs for a place to stay for the night, the vulnerability of homeless youth is a recurring theme in many communities. Only one of the survey respondents reported being on probation or parole immediately before becoming homeless. Seventeen percent of youth survey respondents reported feeling “not at all” safe in their current living situation, while only 21% reported feeling very safe. A majority (60%) reported being assaulted or being physically assaulted in the 12 months previous to the survey, again highlighting the extreme vulnerability of this population.



# Conclusion

On the morning of January 29, 2015, community volunteers and homeless guides covered all of Marin County to provide a Point-in-Time (PIT) count of all homeless persons within its boundaries. The count found 1,309 individuals experiencing homelessness living in the county. The count can be considered conservative, considering that, even with the most thorough methodology, many homeless individuals stay in hidden, difficult-to-enumerate locations. Additionally, the narrow definition of homeless prescribed in this report excludes double-up sleeping situations, “couch-surfing”, and hotel/motel accommodations.

There are numerous explanations for this apparent increase in the number of homeless individuals in the Marin County, including a different methodology, continuing economic struggles, rising home prices, and many other potential factors. Neighboring counties have seen mixed results in their PIT count efforts; Sonoma County has seen a decrease in homelessness, while SF has remained the same and Solano has decreased.

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

- 64% of the population was living unsheltered.
- 40% of the population were under the age of 25.
- 14% of the population identified as LGBTQ.
- 28% were unaccompanied children or transition-age youth.
- 5% or 66 persons were veterans.
- 71% of respondents reported living in Marin County before becoming homeless.
- There were 263 chronically homeless persons in Marin County or 20% of the total homeless population.

- There were 57 families, with 194 family members, experiencing homelessness, representing almost 15% of the total homeless population.
- 45% of individuals were not receiving any form of government assistance.
- 28% of homeless individuals were employed.
- 37% of homeless individuals were suffering from at least one disabling condition.

As these findings show, there are still many challenges to face in order to eliminate homelessness in Marin County. Addressing issues of affordable housing, job training, mental health services, knowledge and availability of government services, and others will be important steps to take.

There are plenty of strengths to build upon in combating homelessness. Nearly half of homeless individuals were receiving some form of government assistance. The relatively low number of veterans experiencing homelessness indicates that this vulnerable population is staying off the streets. Only a small percentage of the population reported being on parole or probation when they became homeless. These strengths, and others, present a foundation on which to build and address other areas for improvement.

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



# Appendix 1: Methodology

## OVERVIEW

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

## COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

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

- The general street count between daybreak and 10 AM – an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals
- The youth street count between 10 AM and 6 PM – a targeted enumeration of unsheltered youth under the age of 25 including a “Youth Connect” event
- The shelter count for the night of the street count – an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals.

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

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

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

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless service providers and advocates have been active and valued partners in the planning and implementation of this and previous homeless counts. The planning team worked closely with a number of organizations, including the following: the Downtown Streets Team, the Ritter Center, St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, Homeward Bound of Marin, the Marin County Homeless Policy and Steering Committee, the City of Sausalito Police Department Harbor Patrol Division, Community Action Marin, and the Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity. The Police Chief for the City of San Rafael participated in the street count, and the Police Chief for the City of Sausalito was at the dispatch center in her city. In addition, there were a number of City and County representatives who volunteered on the day of the count. Applied Survey Research invited feedback and discussion on the methodology in order to have a county-wide endorsement of the count. Currently homeless guides provided innovative assistance in navigating the county in the thorough search for unsheltered persons.

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The planning team was led by Applied Survey Research who coordinated with all of the organizations mentioned above. The methods used in the 2015 PIT Count were significantly different from 2013 and much was learned that will help in further efforts.

## STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION

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

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

### VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in Marin turned out to support the County's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. To have a successful enumeration effort of this magnitude, it is crucial to have volunteer and homeless persons who have an intimate knowledge of the local areas. Approximately 30 homeless individuals and 50 community volunteers participated in the 2015 general street count. Outreach efforts were conducted by targeting local nonprofits that serve the homeless and local volunteer programs. Local shelters and service providers recruited the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless persons were paid \$10 to attend a training on count procedures and quality control. They were given this money on the morning they reported to work for the street count. They were also paid \$10 for each hour they spent out on the day of the count.

All homeless individuals and volunteers who participated in the count were asked to attend a one-hour training prior to the day of the count. There was a training in Novato and a training in San Rafael, as well as a number of individual training tutorial sessions. The training process covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homelessness and how to recognize homeless individuals, potential locations homeless individuals may be located at and how to safely and respectfully approach them, and how to use the tally sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered.

### SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Volunteers were encouraged to attend a training session that educated individuals on how to enumerate the homeless without any contact. High-volume areas and encampments were covered by specifically trained teams who were comfortable with the areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take all safety precautions possible, including bringing along flashlights and maintaining distance from those they were counting. Local law enforcement was made aware of the count, but they were typically not brought in to participate. No official reports were received noting unsafe or at-risk situations occurring during the street count in any area of the county.

### STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of Marin County within the allotted time frame, the planning team identified three areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the day of the count in San Rafael, Novato, and Sausalito. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration, based on familiarity with the area or convenience. The planning team divided up the enumeration routes based on United States census tracts and assigned them to the dispatch center closest or most central to the coverage area, to facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field.

## LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION

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

In addition to the regular teams sent out for enumeration, there was a special team created to cover the anchor-out homeless individuals in south Marin County around Richardson Bay. During the planning phase, Applied Survey Research worked with the City of Sausalito Police Department, Harbor Division, in order to have a team cover the homeless population that lives in anchor-out boats off the coast of Sausalito. There was also a special team effort to cover West Marin by the Mental Health Outreach Workers who are affiliated with the Community Action of Marin; their primary knowledge in outreach has been to work with older and chronic homeless people. Instead of having a traditional team of a volunteer and a homeless guide enumerating in the streets, outreach workers from Community Action of Marin covered the West Marin area on the day of the count. Additionally, to address the reported significant number of under 25 youth in Fairfax and West Marin, there was also a team of youth count enumerators who covered the same West Marin area later in the day. Their numbers and individual demographics were compared to the outreach workers to prevent duplication while also ensuring that every individual in that area was counted.

## DATA LIMITATIONS

The County Office of Education gathers information on homeless children at the beginning of the school year to provide assistance to children through McKinney-Vento programs and funding. The McKinney-Vento district liaisons at the Marin County Office of Education were unable to validate current accommodation status of homeless children in K-12 schools due to time constraints. Based upon August enrollment data, 1,174<sup>8</sup> homeless children are estimated to live in the county. The majority of these students (1,105 or X%) are “doubled-up” and live with family or friends and therefore do not fall under HUD’s narrow PIT count definition of homelessness. In addition to the “double-up” students, there are 65 children (X%) who were “sheltered” in public or private shelters. Lastly, there are a reported total of 4 unsheltered students (X%). Unfortunately, due to the timing of school intake and limitations of district staff these state reported results are excluded in the overall number of homeless Point-in-Time count of Marin County. Importantly these figures do not include non-school age children or parent information.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.kidsdata.org/topic/793/homeless-students-residence/table#fmt=1210&loc=320&tf=79&ch=1132,1133,1134,1135&sortColumnId=0&sortType=asc>

## YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### GOAL

The youth count was developed to be more inclusive of homeless children and youth under the age of 25. Many homeless children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth. In 2015, the goal was to improve upon youth count techniques used across the United States in 2013 and have a successful count of the homeless youth in Marin County. This goal was strongly recommended by HUD and is a special expertise of ASR.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

It has been recognized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness that youth do not commonly come along with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth. For this reason, they have accepted and recommended that communities count youth at times when they can be seen, rather than during general outreach times. This process takes a different planning technique than used for the adult street count.

Planning for the 2015 supplemental youth count included youth homeless service providers. There were two techniques used to count the youth, the visual street count and a Youth Connect Event held the day of the count where homeless youth were invited to receive services, giveaways, and food. Local service providers identified youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate and enumerate youth experiencing homelessness. The youth who agreed to participate in the enumeration on the day of the count worked with the planning team to identify locations where homeless youth were known to congregate. They also determined to have two separate times for the street count at 10 AM and later in the afternoon at 3 PM.

The idea of hosting an event on the day of the homeless youth count came from the “We Count” initiative of The California Research Library and The California Wellness Foundation. We Count provides technical assistance to communities throughout California in its effort to promote a more thorough and complete youth count for homeless youth and young adults during the Point-in-Time count process. The Marin connect event was hosted by the Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity. The Youth Connect Event began at 1 PM and ran for a few hours, and all of the homeless youth who attended the event were counted by filling out anonymous sign-in forms at the entrance. The youth could fill out where they had stayed the night before, a process that allowed Applied Survey Research to determine if the youth was unsheltered or not.

The youth street count began at 10 AM out of the San Rafael dispatch center, with two teams of two youth each. They canvassed Novato and San Rafael in the morning hours. Then, at 1 PM the youth who participated in the street count attended the event in order to make sure they did not double count any youth who they saw on the street and also at the event. The youth teams went out a second time in the afternoon from 3 PM to 6 PM when they had predetermined there might be more youth out. At this time the youth covered the South County region down to Sausalito and West Marin, including the greater Fairfax region. The youth who covered the West Marin area were also instructed to count adult homeless individuals they found, and those tally sheets were compared against those from the adult count and de-duplicated. This process ensured that the West Marin and Fairfax areas were fully covered and all of the homeless individuals there were counted appropriately and without duplication.

Youth workers were paid \$10 per hour for their time, including the training conducted prior to the count. Youth were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

## **SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY**

### **GOAL**

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

### **DEFINITION**

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

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

All shelter data were collected by the County of Marin, with some help from Applied Survey Research to ensure that every shelter in the County was included. Shelters reported the number of individuals they had sleeping at their shelter the night before the count (January 28). They reported their basic demographic information as well.

### **CHALLENGES**

All shelter data reporting was based on only those shelters registered in the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). Some qualitative data was derived from the county HMIS system but the majority of data was from survey responses.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 362 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in Marin County. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

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

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

### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

- The 2015 Marin Homeless Survey was administered by the trained survey team between February 20, 2015 and March 27, 2015.
- In all, the survey team collected 362 unique surveys.

### SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on the Point-in-Time count of homeless persons with a randomized survey sampling process, the 362 individuals surveyed created a representative sample of Marin County to generalize the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in Marin County. Administering surveys to youth proved challenging and this group was significantly under-represented. Additionally, the number of veteran surveys was low. On a positive note, in shelter persons were well represented as were anchor-outs in Sausalito.

The 2015 survey was administered in both transitional housing facilities and on the street. In order to ensure 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, veterans, domestic violence victims, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. The 2015 survey prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection.

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. This is a challenging approach in a “rare occurrence” survey population but surveyors did their best to follow the sampling plan and reduce selection bias.

#### **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 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The 2015 Marin County Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences.

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



# Appendix 2: Definitions & Abbreviations



- **Chronic homelessness** is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”
- **Disabling condition**, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or a developmental disability.
- **Emergency shelter** is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility, or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 90 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for victims and their children.
- **Family** is defined as a household with at least one adult and one child under 18.
- **Homeless** under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.
- **HUD** is the abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- **Sheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.
- **Single individual** refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth.
- **Transition-Age Youth (TAY)** refers to an unaccompanied youth aged 18-24 years.
- **Transitional housing** facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. It is housing in which homeless individuals may live for 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** refers to children under the age of 18 who do not have a parent or guardian present.
- **Unsheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.



MARIN COUNTY

# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

