



DATA BRIEF:

Allegheny County 2016 Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness

November 2016

The annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of people experiencing homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered, on a single night in January as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Allegheny County data are collected by outreach teams conducting interviews and by searching the County's Homeless Management Information System and case management records.

This data brief focuses on the 2016 PIT count. For an analysis of previous years' PIT data and more information about the annual data collection process, see related reports by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS).¹

¹ Related reports about past PIT counts include "[Allegheny County 2015 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data](#)" and "[Allegheny County Point-in-Time Homelessness Data, 2010 through 2014](#)."

LIMITATIONS OF THE PIT COUNT

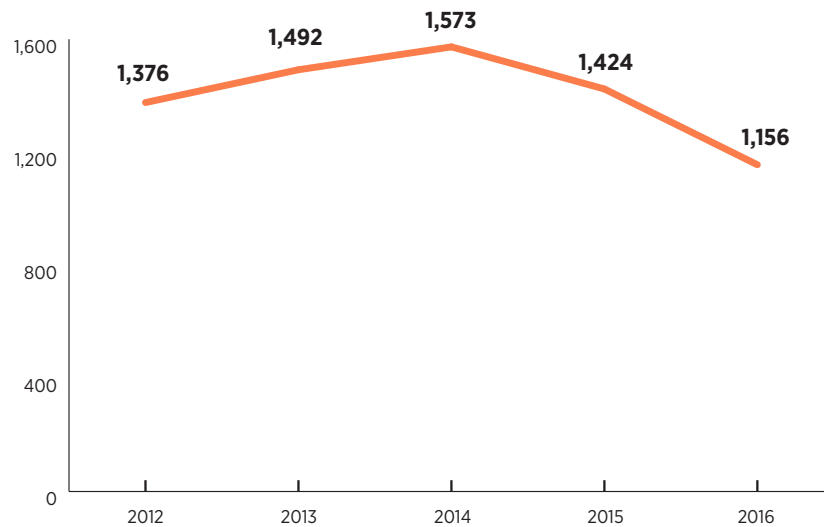
Guidelines for conducting annual PIT counts are issued by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) each year; variations in count methodologies over the years may contribute to artificial increases or decreases year to year. In addition, fluctuations in the number of volunteer outreach teams, weather conditions, and availability and distribution of federal funding may result in variations across time. Certain populations that are in unstable housing but not considered literally homeless by HUD's definition² are not included in the PIT count; it also does not include those who are in danger of becoming homeless in the near future, living in doubled-up situations or living in permanent supportive housing.

² HUD's definition of homelessness is available at: https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN 2016

During the 2016 PIT count, 1,156 people experiencing homelessness were identified, which represents a decrease of 268 individuals from 2015 (see **Figure 1**). One reason for this decrease is that individuals in Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans were not included in this year's count per HUD's guidelines, though they were included in previous years' counts; last year, 40 people were in veterans' Domiciliary Care. In addition, the County's move toward a Rapid Re-housing model, which aims to help people experiencing a temporary housing crisis get into permanent housing as quickly as possible, means that some individuals who were counted as homeless previously may now be considered permanently housed.

FIGURE 1: Total PIT Count of People Experiencing Homelessness, 2012 through 2016



TYPES OF HOUSING

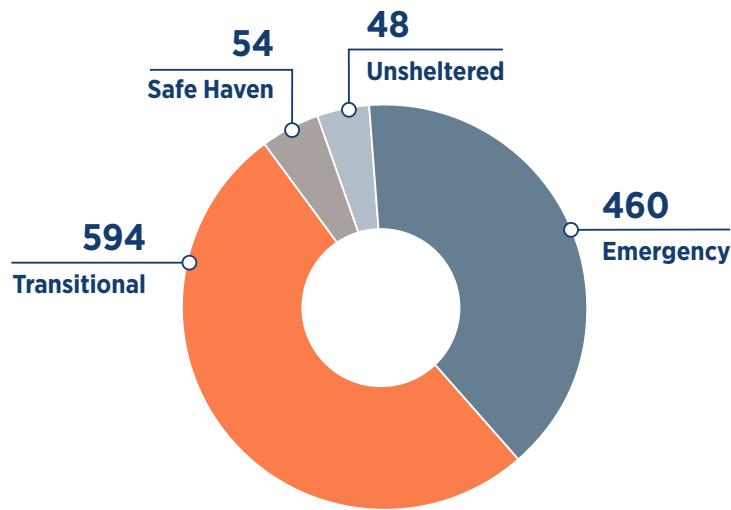
Four percent (48 people) were unsheltered on the night of the count, meaning that they were living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as on the street, in an underpass, in a park or in an abandoned building. This is compared to 38 people living in unsheltered locations in 2015; the slight increase in 2016 may be due to warmer temperatures and an increase in the size of the team counting people in unsheltered situations, specifically in Penn Hills, where four people who were unsheltered were counted.

The majority of people counted (51%) were residing in transitional housing, which is designed to provide temporary housing and facilitate movement to independent living within a short period of time, usually 24 months. People residing in transitional housing are considered homeless under HUD's guidelines.

Forty percent of people experiencing homelessness were residing in emergency shelters, which include both year-round facilities and temporary severe-weather emergency shelters, open when conditions include freezing rain, heavy snowfall or severe wind chill, or when the temperature is predicted to fall below 25°F. On the night of the 2016 PIT count, severe-weather emergency shelters were open, although temperatures were warmer than in the previous year.

Five percent (54 people) were sheltered in safe haven facilities, supportive housing for hard-to-reach individuals experiencing homelessness who also have severe mental illness.

FIGURE 2: Homeless Population by Housing Type

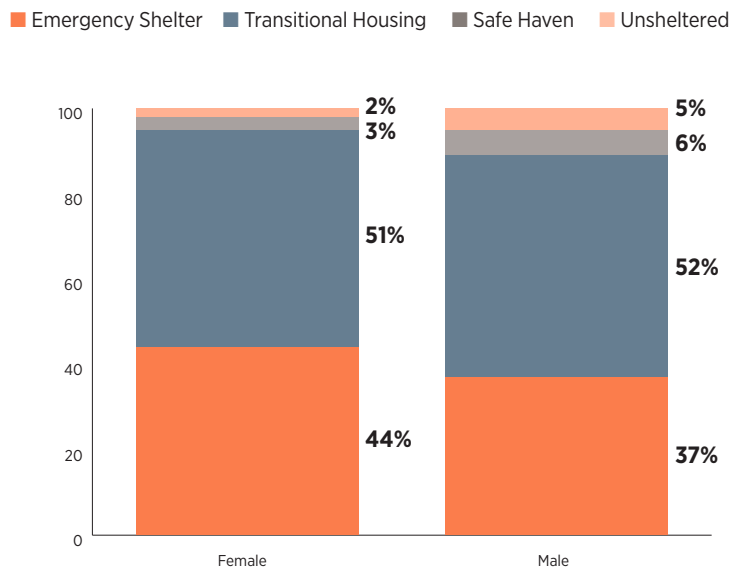


DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Gender

There were 673 males (making up 58% of the homeless population) and 481 females recorded during the PIT count. Both genders were represented proportionally in transitional and emergency housing, while the percentage of males in safe havens was two times that of females, and the percentage of unsheltered males was two and a half times that of females.

FIGURE 3: Housing Type, by Gender



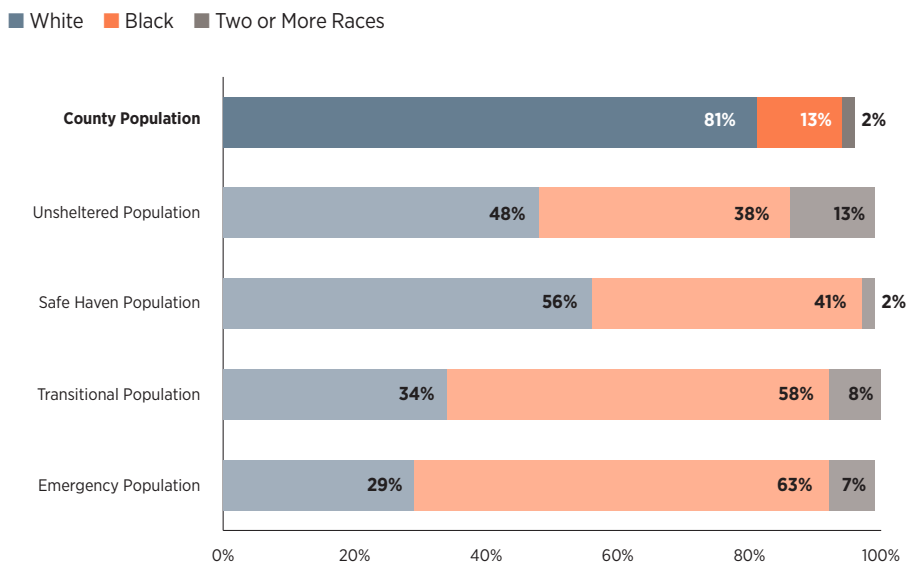
Race

The largest race represented was black (675), with white second (385) and mixed race third (85). People also identified as Asian (seven), American Indian/Alaska Native (four) and Hispanic/Latino (19).

As shown in **Figure 4**, black people made up a disproportionately large percentage of those experiencing homelessness compared to their proportion of the total population of Allegheny County. As of 2010, black people accounted for approximately 13 percent of Allegheny County residents,³ but represented 58 percent of those counted by the 2016 PIT count. When looking at housing type, the largest disproportionality between white and black individuals occurred in emergency shelters, where black people made up 63 percent of residents.

³ 2010 United States Census Bureau data

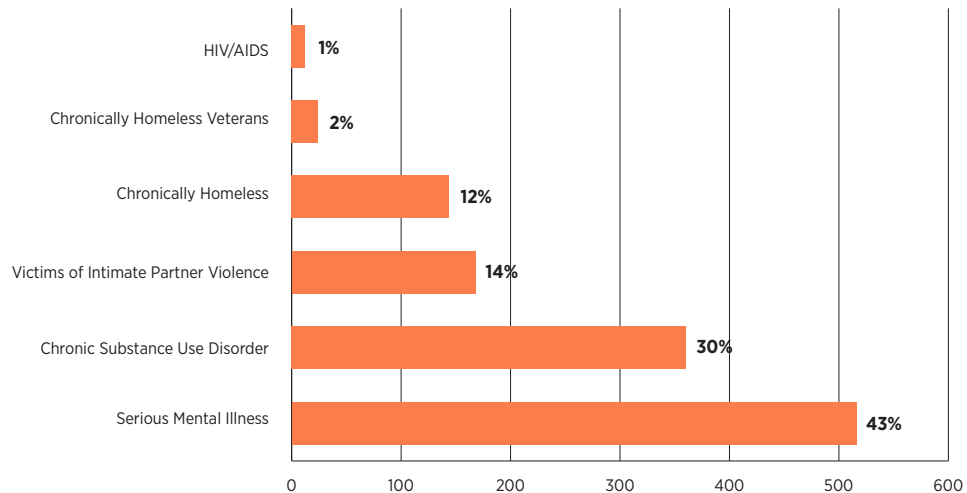
FIGURE 4: Racial Demographics of Homeless Population vs. County Population



Homeless Subpopulations

As shown in **Figure 5**, many people experiencing homelessness were experiencing other challenges simultaneously. The largest subpopulation was people with a serious mental illness, who made up 43 percent of the total PIT count population. Since these categories are self-reported, some of these subpopulations may be even larger than what is presented here.

FIGURE 5: Self-Reported Subpopulations of People Experiencing Homelessness as a Percentage of the Total PIT Count



Note: People may be included in more than one category.

YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The number of youth experiencing homelessness (defined as individuals 24 years old or younger not residing with family members older than age 24) can be even more difficult to identify than adults because youth tend to stay in places like friends' houses or motels, locations not included in HUD's count guidelines. In 2016, the total number of youth counted was 158, which includes single homeless youth, homeless parents between the ages of 18 and 24, and children residing with parents in this age group. No homeless youth under age 18 living without parents were identified during the count, which is consistent with DHS's child welfare practice to provide housing for all under-18 unaccompanied homeless children.

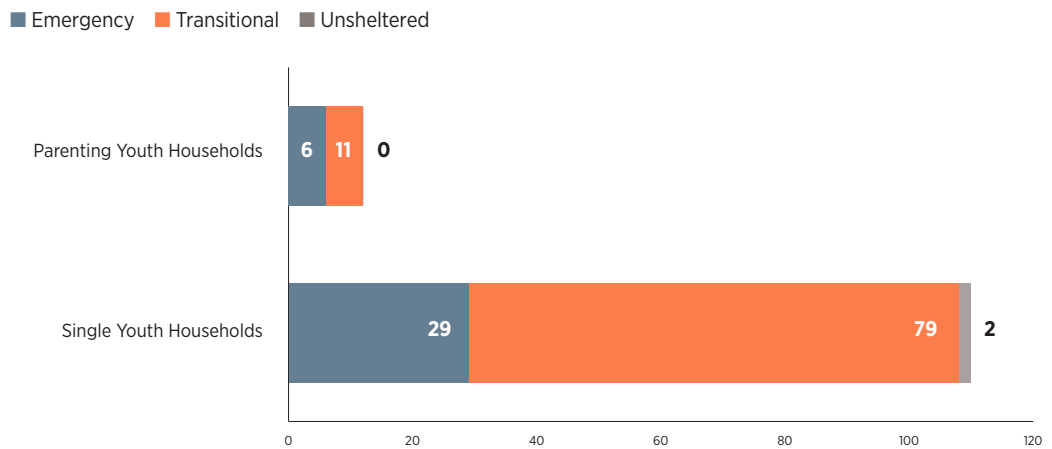
Of the 158 youth counted, 30 were children under 18 residing with parents age 24 and younger. The remaining 128 youth were ages 18 through 24, 18 of whom were parents and 110 of whom were not parents. **Table 1** displays gender and race/ethnicity information for the 128 youth ages 18 through 24. Compared to the demographics of the overall homeless population counted by the PIT count, these youth were more likely to be female (66% of youth experiencing homelessness were female compared to 42% of all people counted) and more likely to be black (76% of youth experiencing homelessness were black compared to 58% of all people counted). The demographic differences between youth and the overall homeless population are especially apparent when looking at the population of parenting youth; all parenting youth were female and all but one were black.

TABLE 1: Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Youth Experiencing Homelessness, Ages 18 through 24

| | NOT PARENTS | PARENTS | TOTAL | PERCENT OF HOMELESS YOUTH, 18-24 |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------|-------|----------------------------------|
| GENDER | | | | |
| Female | 67 | 18 | 85 | 66% |
| Male | 43 | 0 | 43 | 34% |
| RACE/ETHNICITY | | | | |
| Black | 80 | 17 | 97 | 76% |
| White | 28 | 1 | 29 | 23% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2% |
| Multiple Races | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1% |
| Other Race | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1% |

Most youth — both those with children and those without — were in transitional housing, while single youth made use of emergency shelters more than youth with children did, as shown in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6: Youth Households and Types of Housing



NEXT STEPS

Allegheny County is increasing Rapid Re-housing programs for those experiencing a temporary housing crisis. Since individuals involved with Rapid Re-housing programs are considered to be permanently housed, they are not considered homeless by HUD; therefore, increased capacity in this type of program may lead to further decreases in the PIT count of the homeless population in the future.

In addition, the County continues to improve its methods for understanding the volume and needs of homeless youth, both those who fall within HUD's definition of homelessness and those who do not. For the second year, a separate survey that collected information about homeless youth and youth at risk for homelessness was conducted. This will add to the County's understanding of this population's particular needs and aid in improving future count methodology.

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