

DATA BRIEF: Allegheny County 2018 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data

Each year, Allegheny County participates in a national effort required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to count the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless count enumerates the sheltered (residing in emergency homeless shelters or transitional housing programs) and unsheltered (residing in places not meant for human habitation) homeless population within the County.

The winter PIT count, as mandated by HUD, occurs during the last 10 days in January and occurred in 2018 on Jan. 31. The temperature on that night was 8 degrees Fahrenheit. Although not required by HUD, Allegheny County also conducted a summer PIT count on July 31, 2018, to better understand warm weather trends. Data was collected from the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) — which gathers client-level data input by homeless system providers — and by outreach teams that interviewed people in unsheltered locations.

This data brief focuses primarily on the January 2018 PIT count, with results of the July 2018 PIT count included for comparison. 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

Guidelines for conducting annual PIT counts are issued by HUD each year; variations in count methodologies over the years may contribute to increases or decreases year to year. In addition, fluctuations in the number of volunteer data collectors, weather conditions, and availability and distribution of federal funding may result in variations across time.² Certain populations that are in unstable housing situations but not considered literally homeless by HUD's definition are not included in the PIT count; for example, the PIT count does not include those who are in danger of becoming homeless in the near future, living in doubled-up situations, or enrolled in permanent housing programs for the formerly homeless.

¹ Related reports about past PIT counts include [“Allegheny County 2017 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data,”](#) [“Allegheny County 2016 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data,”](#) [“Allegheny County 2015 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data”](#) and [“Allegheny County Point-in-Time Homelessness Data, 2010 through 2014.”](#)

² For historical homelessness data and a view of homelessness over time, see the [interactive dashboard](#).

Emergency Shelter: A facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter. People utilizing emergency shelters are considered to be homeless.

Homelessness: According to HUD, a person or family is literally homeless if they fall in one of the following categories: (1) lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, which includes a place not meant for human habitation or a shelter; (2) will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days; (3) is an unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 or a family with children that has experienced persistent instability; or (4) is fleeing domestic violence and has no other residence. A full definition can be found [here](#).

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Combines housing with more intensive services for those with one or more chronic disabling conditions and does not have a limit on length of stay as long as the tenant pays their portion of the rent and follows the rules of their lease. People residing in PSH are not considered to be homeless.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): Programs that assist individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and to achieve stability in that housing through a combination of rental assistance, housing search and supportive services. People utilizing RRH programs are considered to be homeless.

Safe Haven: A form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless people with severe mental illness who come primarily from the streets and have been unwilling to participate in housing services. These types of shelters currently serve eligible veterans. People utilizing Safe Havens are considered to be homeless.

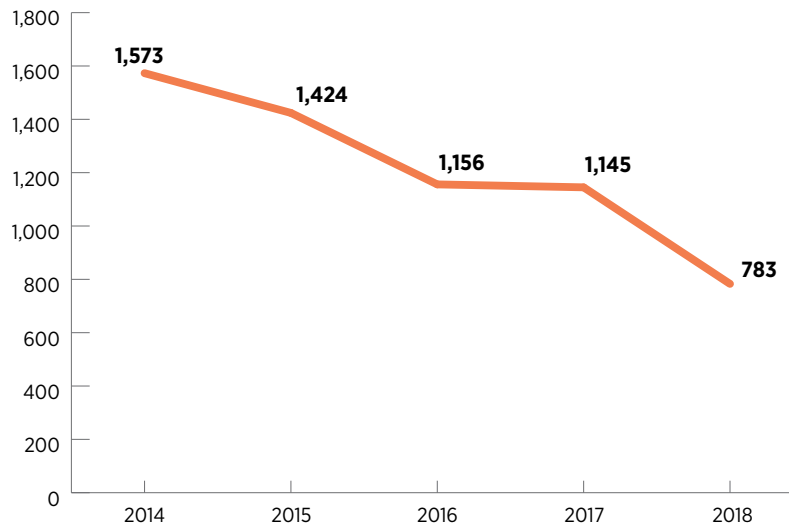
Winter Shelter: Previously called the Severe Weather Emergency Shelter (SWES), this emergency shelter provides sleeping accommodations between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., Nov. 15 through March 15. People utilizing a Winter Shelter are considered to be homeless.

Transitional Housing: A facility designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to homeless people to facilitate movement to independent living within a reasonable amount of time, usually 24 months. People utilizing transitional housing are considered to be homeless.

JANUARY 2018 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT TRENDS

During the 2018 PIT count, 783 people were experiencing homelessness, which represents a decrease of 362 people compared to 2017 (**Figure 1**). The decrease can be attributed in part to (1) a decrease in the number of transitional housing and Safe Haven beds available in 2018, and (2) a lower number of people residing in emergency shelters, particularly Winter Shelters, as compared to 2017. Despite these decreases, there was an increase in the number of people served in family shelters, which resulted in an increase of 36 more people in families being served in shelters. See below for more detail about fluctuations in the number of people served by different program types.

FIGURE 1: Total PIT Count, 2014 through 2018



Decrease in Transitional Housing as Permanent Housing Programs Expand

The decrease in the total count from 2017 to 2018 can be attributed in part to a smaller number of people residing in transitional housing, where there was a decrease of 302 people (a 67% decrease) from 2017 to 2018 (Figure 2 and Table 1). The Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board³ strategically focused on decreasing transitional housing while increasing the county's HUD-funded permanent housing capacity over the past three years. This was achieved by reallocating funding from transitional housing programs to Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing initiatives, which are both considered to be permanent housing and therefore not included in the annual PIT count.⁴

³ The Homeless Advisory Board is a public-private partnership formed to assist Allegheny County in reviewing public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts that will eliminate homelessness and improve the well-being of homeless individuals and families.

⁴ While permanent housing beds are not included in the Point-in-Time count, the County has seen an increase from 2,299 people served in these programs on the night of the 2015 Point-in-Time count to 3,046 people in 2018.

FIGURE 2: PIT Trends by Program Type, 2014 through 2018

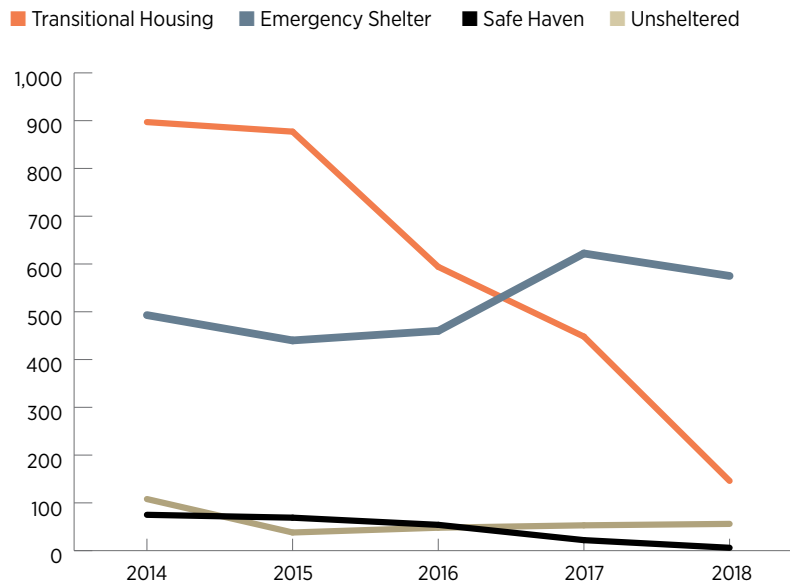


TABLE 1: Point-in-Time Count by Shelter Type and Household Type, Change from 2017 to 2018

	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UNSHELTERED	CHANGE FROM 2017 TO 2018
People in families with children	+36	0	-151	0	-115
People without children	-83	-16	-151	+3	-247
Total	-47	-16	-302	+3	-362

Phasing Out of Safe Haven Programs

The number of people served by Safe Haven programs has been steadily decreasing due to the phasing out of this type of housing. Safe Haven housing, which provides shelter for chronically homeless people with severe mental illness is being replaced by long-term Permanent Supportive Housing. Safe Haven facilities began to close in 2014, and all HUD-funded programs closed at the end of 2017. In October 2017, six Safe Haven beds, funded through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, were made available to eligible veterans. This change in Safe Haven bed availability resulted in a decrease from 22 people in 2017 to six in 2018.

Increase in Family Emergency Shelter Usage, While the Number of Single People Decreased

In 2014 through 2017, emergency shelters saw an increase in both individuals and families. In 2018, however, there were 47 fewer people than in the previous year in emergency shelters. Despite the overall decrease in the count of people in emergency shelters in 2018, usage by families in these types of shelters saw an increase of 16 percent over the previous year. The increase may be due in part to the six additional family shelter units that were added between 2017 and 2018.

Slight Increase in the Number of Street Homeless Counted

Seven percent (56 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, in a car or in an abandoned building. This is compared to 53 people living in unsheltered locations in 2017. The slight increase in 2018 may be attributed to an increase in the areas and number of teams counting people living in unsheltered locations.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Individuals and Families

Eighty-six percent of the households (507) counted were adult-only households. Fourteen percent of households (85) had at least one child under the age of 18. More than half of the children (59% or 101) were school age (five to 17 years old). The remaining 41 percent (71 children) were four years old or younger.

Gender

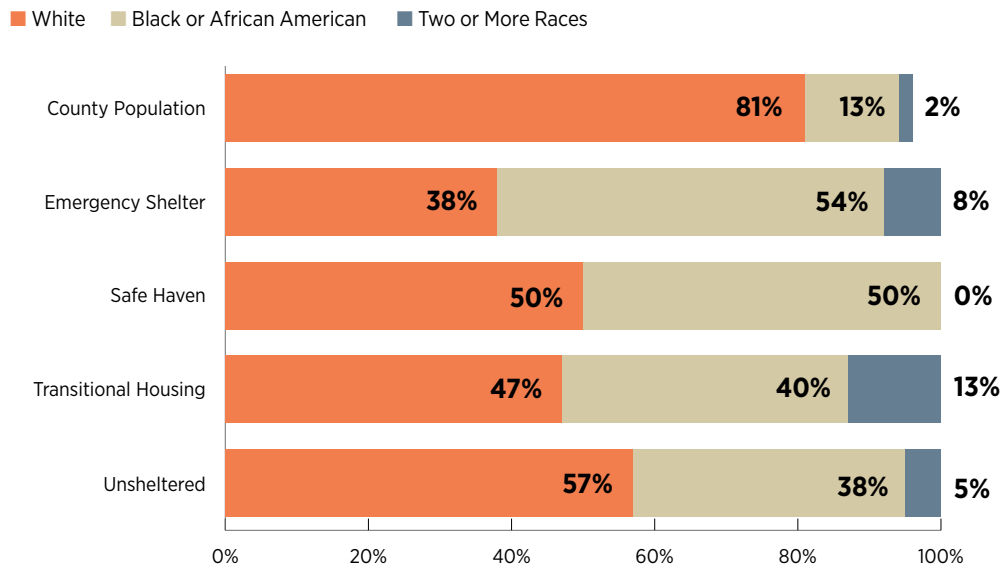
There were 490 males (63% of the homeless population), 291 females, and 2 people who identified themselves as transgender during the January count. There was a greater proportion of males than females in all homeless project types in the count. For Safe Havens, only males were identified although veterans of any gender are eligible for the program. In unsheltered situations, males accounted for 88 percent of the population.

Race

The largest race represented was black/African American (395), followed by white (320), and a mix of two or more races (52). Fewer people identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (11) and Asian (5).

As shown in **Figure 3**, black/African American people made up a disproportionately large percentage of the homeless population in the PIT count (51%) compared to their proportion of the total population of Allegheny County (approximately 13% as of the 2010 U.S. Census). In other words, 24 out of 1,000 black/African American people in the County were considered to be homeless by the PIT count. This is compared to a rate of less than 1 per 1,000 for white people in the County.

FIGURE 3: Racial Demographics of Homeless Population



Note: Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander percentages are not included in figure due to small counts.

Homeless Subpopulations

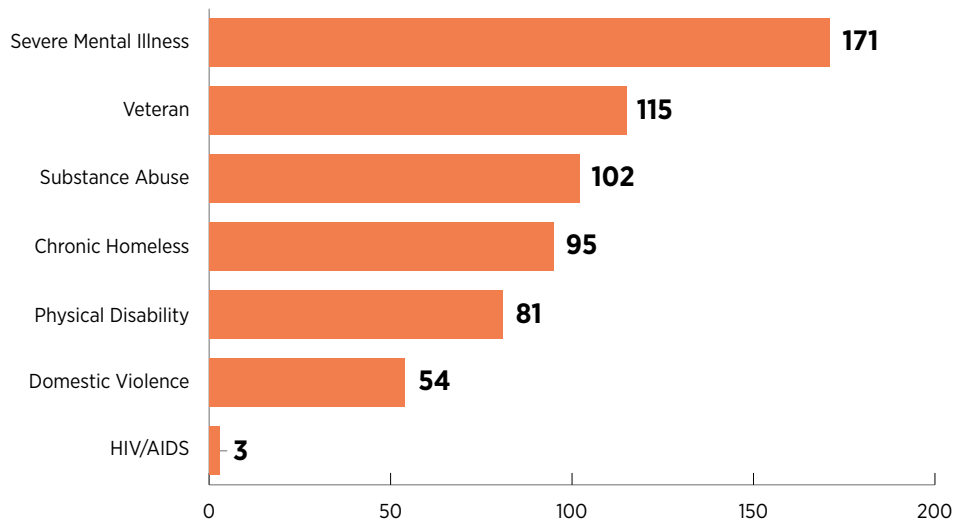
As part of the PIT count, people experiencing homelessness are asked about other challenges they may face such as mental illness and substance use disorder.⁵

The largest subpopulation counted during the PIT count was adults with severe mental illness (171 people). Other subpopulations included veterans (115 people), adults with substance use disorder (102 people), people with physical disabilities (81 people), victims of domestic violence (54 people), and people with HIV/AIDS (three people).

The chronically homeless population (95 people) is at times the most difficult to engage and move to a permanent housing solution quickly. HUD defines chronically homeless as being continuously homeless (sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation or living in an emergency shelter) for four episodes in the last three years where the time spent being homeless combined is at least 12 months, or one episode of homelessness that lasts at least 12 consecutive months.

⁵ Since these categories are self-reported and data collection may be inconsistent across providers, these categories may undercount the people in these subpopulations.

FIGURE 4: Homeless Subpopulations (Duplicated Counts)

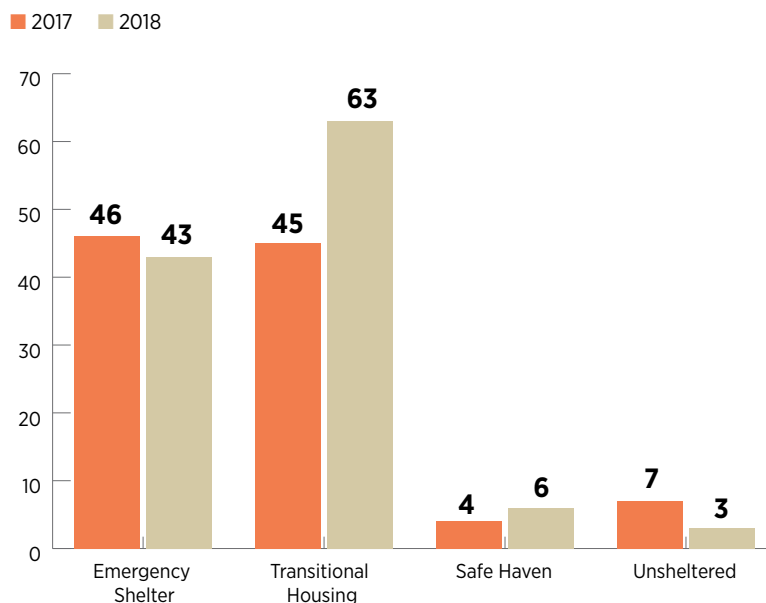


Homeless Veterans

⁶ A veteran is defined as any person who served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This includes participants in military reserves and National Guard who were called up to active duty.

The number of homeless veterans⁶ grew from 2017 to 2018, with an increase in the number of veterans in transitional housing and Safe Haven programs and a decrease in the number of veterans in emergency shelters and unsheltered locations. These changes come as Allegheny County continues to work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and local veterans-focused homeless service providers to prioritize homeless veterans and house them quickly as soon as they are identified.

FIGURE 5: Veteran Households and Types of Housing, 2017-2018



Homeless Youth

The number of youth experiencing homelessness (defined as people 24 years or younger not residing with family members older than age 24) can be more difficult to identify than older homeless people because youth tend to stay in places like friends' houses or motels, locations not included in HUD's PIT count. As a result, the size of this population fluctuates from day to day and year to year and is difficult to capture in a point-in-time analysis. In 2018, there were 57 youth counted, 66 fewer than in 2017. Some of this decrease may be attributed to an increase in permanent housing programs dedicated to homeless youth. Most youth households (88%) were staying in emergency shelters. No unaccompanied homeless youth under age 18 were identified, which is consistent with DHS's child welfare practice to provide housing for all under-18 unaccompanied homeless children.

JULY 2018 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

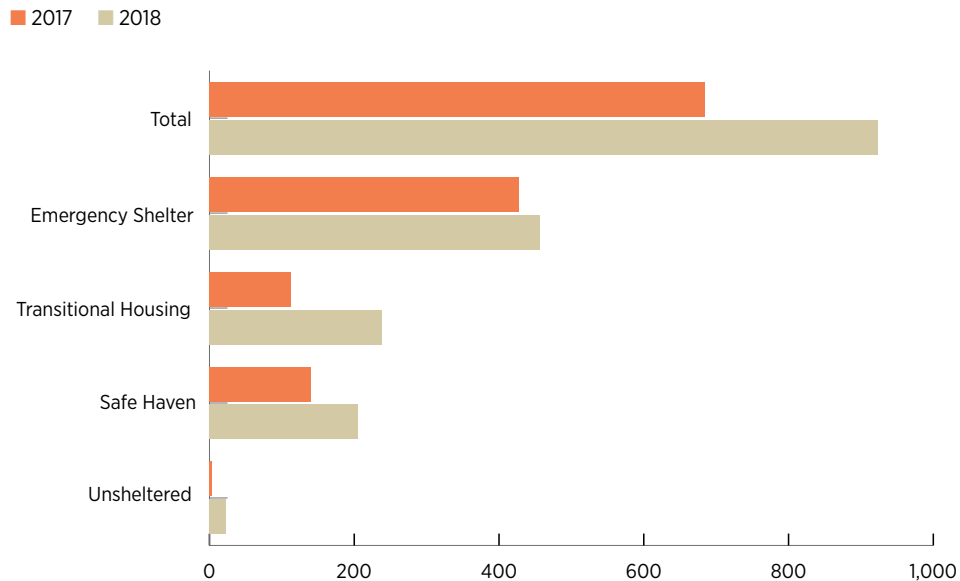
In 2018, a summer PIT count was conducted to better understand the seasonality of homelessness (Table 2). The results show that there was a 13 percent decrease in homeless people (99 fewer people) in the summer compared to the winter. There were significantly fewer homeless people utilizing emergency shelter and transitional housing in the summer compared to the winter, while there were significantly more people residing in unsheltered locations in the summer (140) than in the winter (56). As with the January PIT count, the overall number of people served by transitional housing is declining due to the closing of transitional housing programs. Winter Shelters were not in use during the summer count, which resulted in a drop in the emergency shelter count from January to July and several shelters being under capacity during the summer count. There was also a decrease in the number of households with children served, from 81 households in the winter to 72 households in the summer (a decrease of nine families).

TABLE 2: Comparison of January and July 2018 Point-in-Time Counts

	JANUARY 2018					JULY 2018				
	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
People in families with children	252	0	22	0	274	226	0	21	3	250
People without children	323	6	124	56	509	201	4	92	137	434
Total	575	6	146	56	783	427	4	113	140	684

Compared to the summer 2017 PIT count, there was a homeless population decrease of 26 percent. Reductions were seen in transitional housing as well as unsheltered counts between the two years. As previously discussed, the impact of strategically moving from transitional housing and Safe Haven housing to permanent housing has resulted in fewer people counted in recent years, in both summer and winter.

FIGURE 6: Comparison of July 2017 and July 2018 Point-in-Time Counts by Shelter Type



NEXT STEPS

Allegheny County will continue to conduct both winter and summer PIT counts, working to improve the count of people in unsheltered locations in particular by assessing and expanding the locations that street outreach teams visit.

The County is also continuing to monitor the impact of Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing programs on the entire homeless system. Since people involved with Rapid Re-Housing programs are considered permanently housed, they are not considered homeless by HUD. Therefore, increased capacity in this type of program has led to decreases in the PIT count, specifically in the transitional housing population.

The success of having Winter Shelters open the entire winter has led to a recommendation by the Homeless Advisory Board to develop a low-barrier emergency shelter to address the need for additional beds for single unsheltered adults all year round. The year-round shelter is scheduled to open later this year.

DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS

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