

ALLEGHENY COUNTY 2019 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data

January 2020

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 count, as mandated by HUD, occurs during the last 10 days of January every year. In 2019, the count took place on January 30. The low temperature on that night was -7 degrees Fahrenheit. This was the coldest night during which the Allegheny County Continuum of Care¹ had ever conducted a PIT count since its inception in January 1999.

This data brief focuses on the January 2019 PIT count, with results of the January 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).²

HUD issues guidelines each year for conducting the annual PIT counts; 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.³ Certain populations that are in unstable housing situations but not considered 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.

JANUARY 2019 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT TRENDS

During the 2019 PIT count, 774 people were experiencing homelessness, which is nine fewer people than in 2018 (**Figure 1**) and likely a result of fewer people residing in family Emergency Shelters. Despite the overall decrease between 2018 and 2019, single adult shelters served 36 more people in 2019, perhaps due to the extreme temperatures. For the first time in several years, there was an increase in the number of people in transitional housing — the result of a new U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Transitional Housing program for veterans — and a slight increase in the number of families served. See next page for more detail about fluctuations in the number of people served by different program types.

¹ The Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC) is the wide array of housing options and services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including: shelter, housing and supportive services; outreach, engagement and assessment; and prevention strategies. The CoC also refers to the diverse group of individuals who comprise the community-based, homeless-assistance, program-planning

network supporting Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of McKeesport and the Municipality of Penn Hills.

² 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](#)."

³ 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 into 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 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 with moving 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 not considered to be homeless.

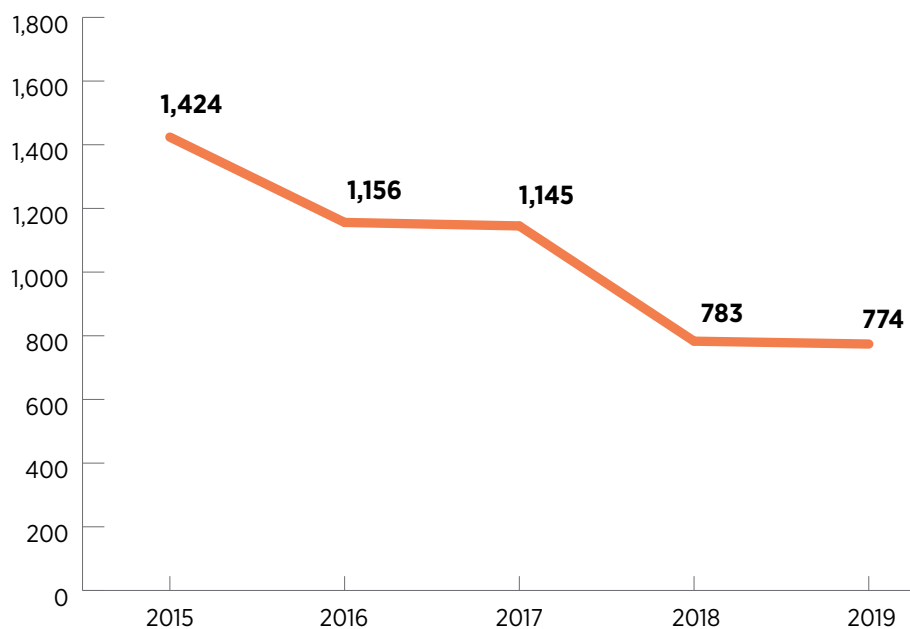
Safe Haven: A form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless people who have severe

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: An emergency shelter that provides sleeping accommodations between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., November 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 their moving to independent living within a reasonable amount of time, usually 24 months. People utilizing Transitional Housing are considered to be homeless.

FIGURE 1: Total PIT Count, 2015 through 2019



Family Emergency Shelters serve fewer people while Single Adult Shelters serve more

The decrease in the total count from 2018 to 2019 can be attributed in part to a smaller number of people accessing family Emergency Shelter housing; there was a decrease of 43 people (a 17% decrease) or 14 families from 2018 to 2019 (Table 1).

The Allegheny County Homeless Advisory Board⁴ strategically focused on increasing the county’s HUD-funded permanent housing capacity over the past four years. The Board reallocated funding from Transitional Housing programs to Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing initiatives, which are both considered to be permanent housing. This effort has allowed families to more quickly enter Rapid Re-Housing programs directly from an Emergency Shelter and exit the homelessness system to a permanent housing unit. Families in these types of units are not considered homeless and are therefore not included in the PIT count.⁵

Likely due to the extreme cold on the night of January 30, 2019, shelters for single individuals saw an increase in the number of people served: 36 more people served in 2019 than in 2018. Single individual shelters were at or near capacity, and the Severe Weather Shelter was at capacity (133 people).

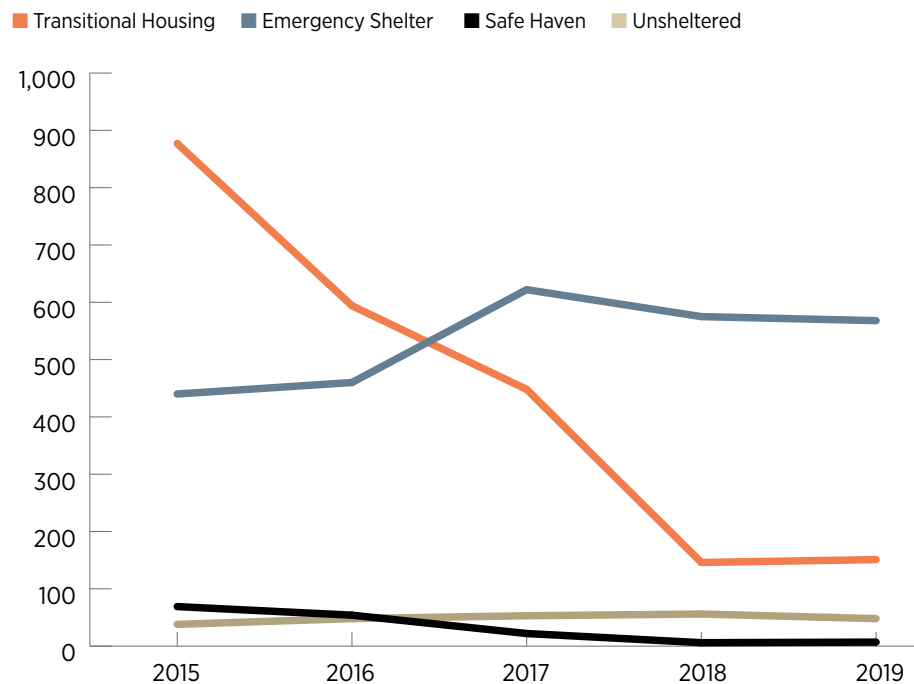
TABLE 1: PIT Count by Shelter Type and Household Type, Change from 2018 to 2019

	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL CHANGE 2018 TO 2019 BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE
People in families with children	-43	0	+7	0	-36
People without children	+36	+1	-2	-8	+27
Total change 2018 to 2019 by shelter type	-7	+1	+5	-8	-9

⁴ 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 people and families.

⁵ While permanent housing beds are not included in the PIT count, the County has seen an increase from 2,299 people served in these programs on the night of the 2015 PIT count to 3,021 people in 2019.

FIGURE 2: PIT Trends by Shelter Type, 2015 through 2019



Phasing out Safe Haven programs

The number of people using Safe Haven programs has been steadily decreasing due to the phasing out of this type of housing. Long-term Permanent Supportive Housing is replacing Safe Haven housing, which provides shelter for chronically homeless people experiencing severe mental illness. Safe Haven facilities began to close in 2014, and all HUD-funded programs closed at the end of 2017. In October 2017, seven Safe Haven beds, funded through the VA, were made available to eligible veterans.

Decrease in the number of street homeless counted

Despite extremely cold temperatures, 48 individuals were in unsheltered locations, 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 year, DHS used a more coordinated approach to count the street population. Street outreach workers, as well as residential and supportive services staff from other organizations that serve the homeless, led the teams. The teams covered over 35 communities and neighborhoods within the City of Pittsburgh and throughout Allegheny County. Despite the improved coordination among PIT count teams, they identified eight fewer people in unsheltered locations than in 2018. The slight decrease may be attributed to individuals seeking Emergency Shelters or staying with family or friends due to the extreme temperatures on this night.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

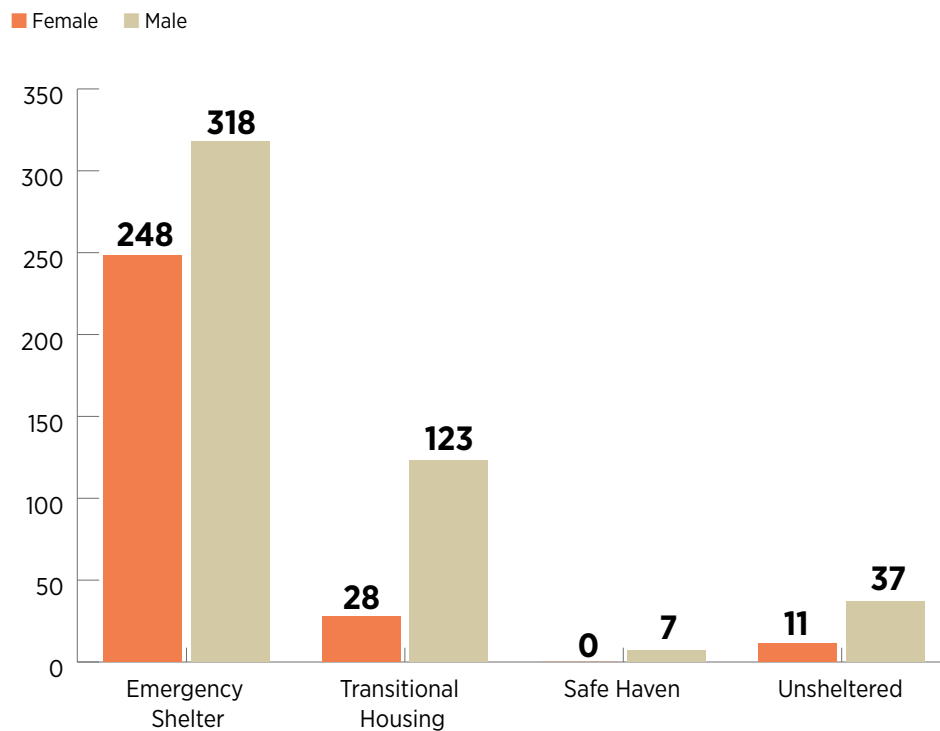
Individuals and Families

Eighty-eight percent of the households (535) counted were adult-only households. Twelve percent of households (72) had at least one child under the age of 18. More than half of the children (64%, or 72) were school age (5 to 17 years old). The remaining 36% (40 children) were 4 years old or younger.

Gender

There were 485 men (63% of the homeless population), 287 women, and two people who identified as transgender during the count. There was a greater proportion of men than women in all homelessness program types in the count with a significant gender difference in the Unsheltered population (77% male). The ratio of men to women in each type of housing remained the same from 2018 to 2019.

FIGURE 3: Gender of Homeless Population by Program Type, 2019



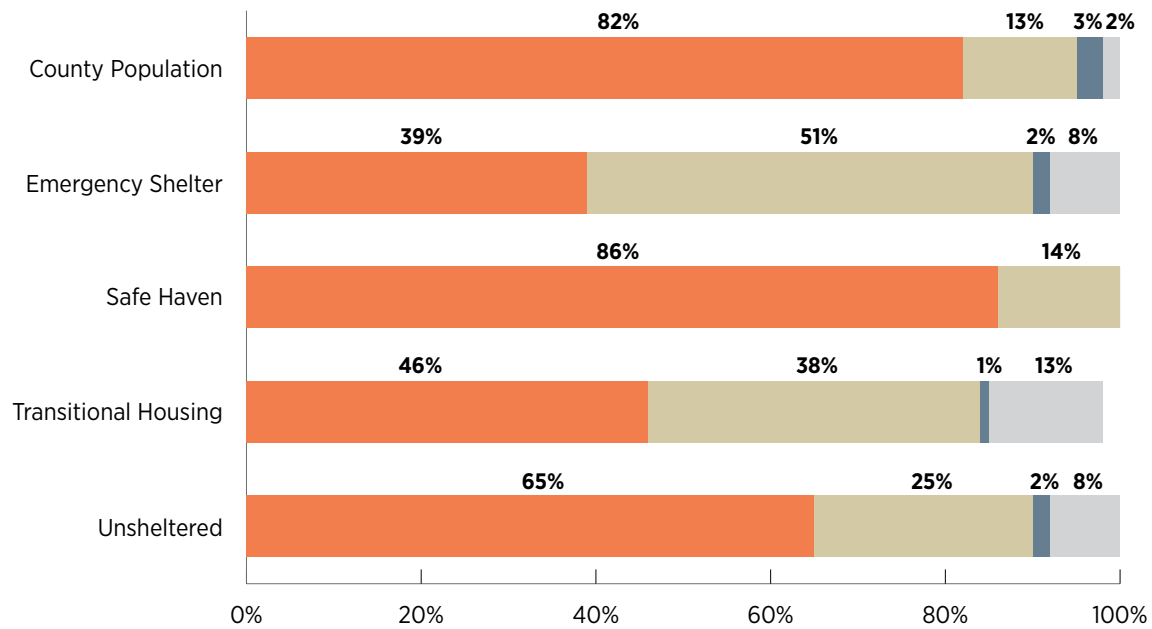
Note: Due to the low count, the figure does not include the two individuals who identified as transgender.

Race

The majority of those counted were Black (370), followed by White (320), then two or more races (69). Fewer people identified as Asian (8), American Indian/Alaska Native (2), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5).

Black people made up a disproportionately large percentage of the homeless population in the PIT count (48%) compared to their proportion of the total population of Allegheny County (approximately 13% as of the 2010 U.S. Census).

FIGURE 4: Racial Demographics of Homeless Population, 2019



Note: "Other" includes Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander percentages.

Homeless Subpopulations

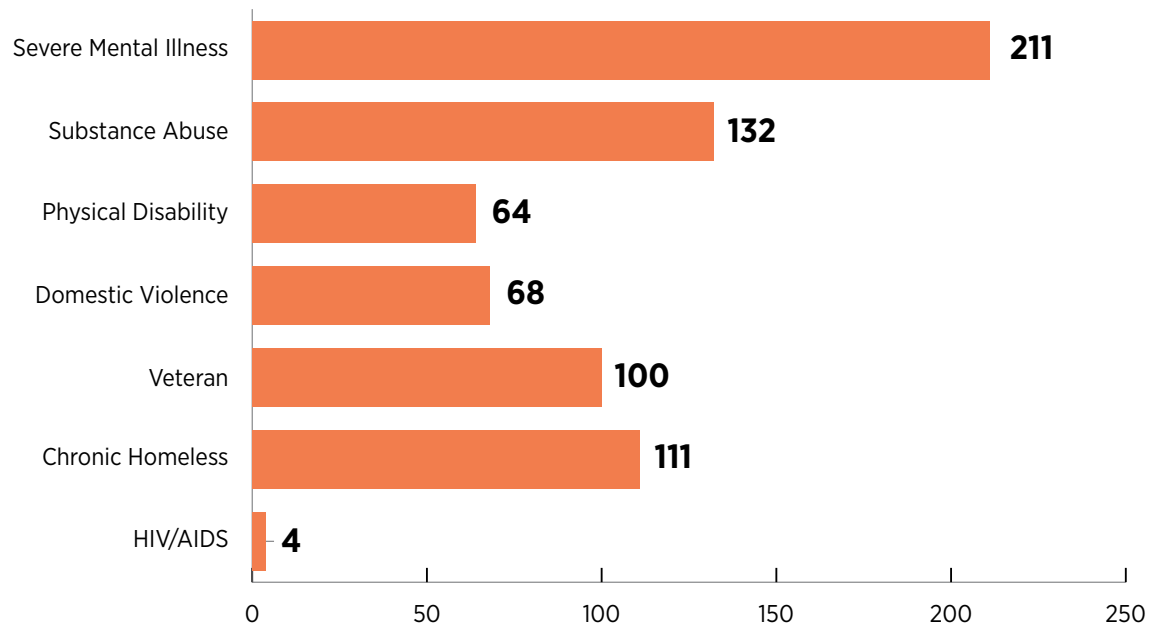
As part of the PIT count, people experiencing homelessness are asked about other challenges they may face such as mental illness and substance use disorder.⁶

Adults with severe mental illness (211 people) comprised the largest subpopulation. Other subpopulations included adults with substance use disorder (132 people), veterans (100 people), victims of domestic violence (68 people), people with physical disabilities (64 people) and people with HIV/AIDS (4 people).

⁶ Since these categories are self-reported and data collection may be inconsistent across providers, these categories may undercount the people in these subpopulations.

The chronically homeless population (111 people) is at times the most difficult to engage and to move to a permanent housing solution quickly. HUD defines the chronically homeless as those with a disabling condition 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 homeless combined is at least 12 months, or one episode of homelessness that lasts at least 12 consecutive months.

FIGURE 5: Homeless Subpopulations (Duplicated Counts), 2019

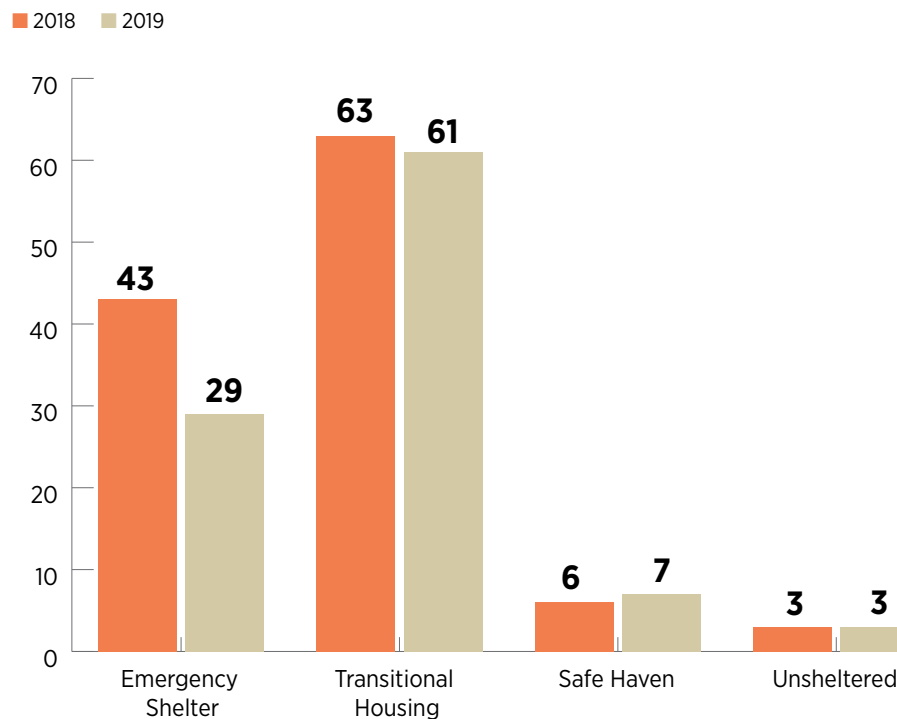


Homeless Veterans

The total number of homeless veterans⁷ decreased from 2018 (115) to 2019 (100), with a decrease in the number of veterans in Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter programs and a slight increase in the number of veterans in Safe Havens. The number of Unsheltered veterans remained the same. These changes come as Allegheny County continues to work with the VA and local veterans-focused homelessness service providers to prioritize homeless veterans and house them as soon as they are identified.

⁷ HUD defines a veteran 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.

FIGURE 6: Veteran Households and Types of Housing, 2018–2019



Unaccompanied and Parenting Homeless Youth

The number of unaccompanied and parenting 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 PIT analysis. In 2019, PIT teams counted 52 unaccompanied youth, 10 more than in 2018. Most youth households (71%) 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 2019 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

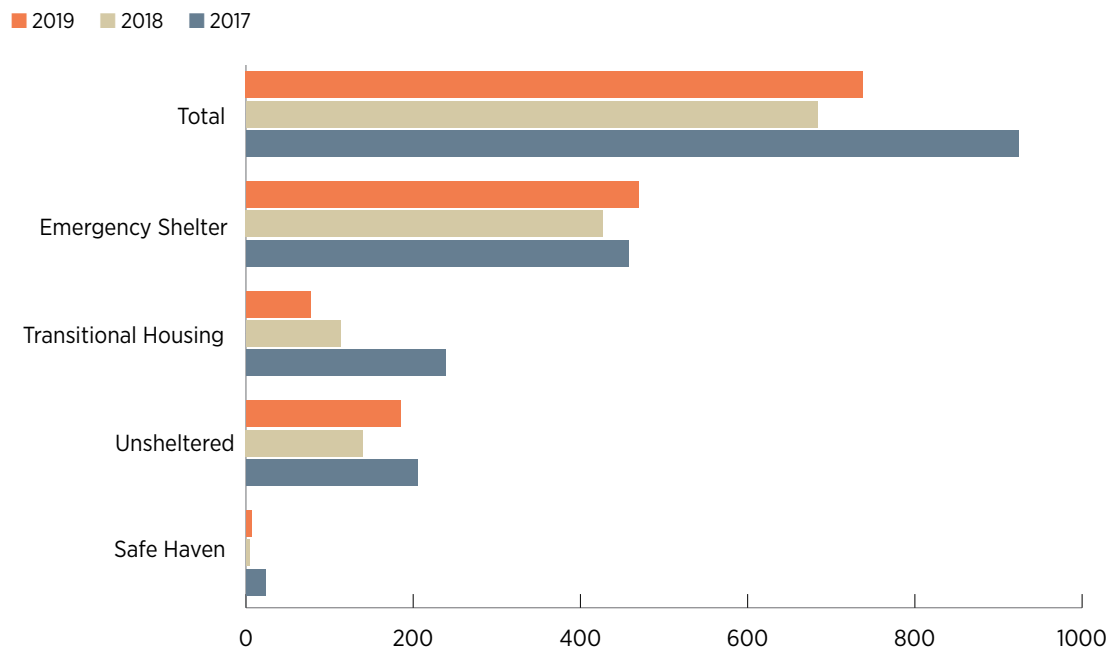
In 2019, DHS conducted a summer PIT count to better understand the seasonality of homelessness (**Table 2**). The results show that there was a 5% decrease in homeless people (36 fewer people) in the summer compared to the winter. There were significantly fewer homeless people using Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing in the summer compared to the winter, while there were significantly more people residing in unsheltered locations in the summer (185) than in the winter (48). Winter Shelters were not in use during the summer count, which resulted in a drop in the Emergency Shelter count from January to July.

TABLE 2: Comparison of January and July 2019 Point-in-Time Counts

	JANUARY 2019					JULY 2019				
	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UN-SHELTERED	TOTAL	EMERGENCY SHELTER	SAFE HAVEN	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	UN-SHELTERED	TOTAL
People in families with children	209	0	29	0	238	248	0	27	0	275
People without children	359	7	122	48	536	221	7	50	185	463
Total	568	7	151	48	774	469	7	77	185	738

From July 2018 to July 2019, the team counted 54 more people, an increase of 8%. This is in part attributed to a broader street outreach (Unsheltered) effort as the summer count organization has improved. In the summer 2018 count, people were counted in seven neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and McKeesport. In 2019, there were 45 separate locations surveyed, including additional locations in the City of Pittsburgh and additional municipalities in Allegheny County.

FIGURE 7: Comparison of July 2017, 2018 and 2019 Point-in-Time Counts by Shelter Type



NEXT STEPS

Allegheny County will continue to conduct winter counts as required by HUD, working to improve the count of people in unsheltered locations in particular by assessing and expanding the locations that street outreach teams and other service providers visit.

DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS
Terri Laver, Andy Halfhill