



2020

SONOMA COUNTY

**HOMELESS CENSUS
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT**

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

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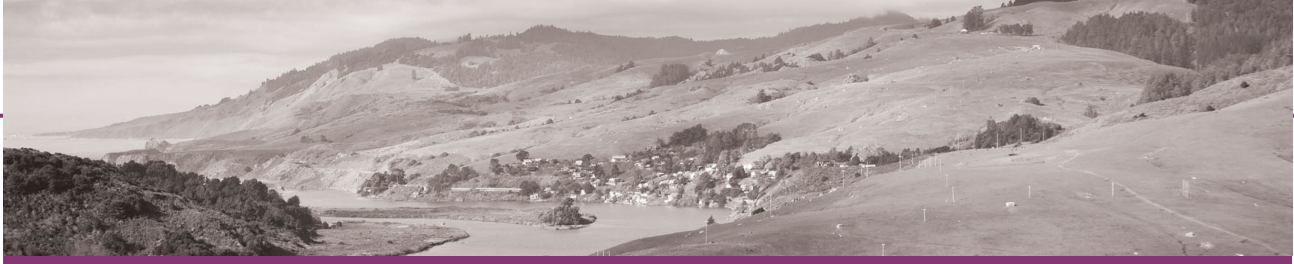
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INTRODUCTION

In late February, volunteers and guides fanned out across the County of Sonoma as part of an annual effort to understand the needs, number, and circumstances of persons experiencing homelessness. Point-in-Time Counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community and collect information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as on people sleeping on the streets, in cars, abandoned properties, or other places not meant for human habitation.

The Point-in-Time Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness and is required by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all jurisdictions receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Currently, Home Sonoma County, in its role as the HUD-mandated Continuum of Care (CoC) planning effort, receives approximately \$3.9 million dollars annually in federal funding, a key source of funding for the county's homeless services.

Home Sonoma County reports the findings of their local Point-in-Time Count annually to HUD. This information ultimately helps the federal government to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. Point-in-Time Census and Survey data also help to inform communities' local strategic planning, capacity building, and advocacy campaigns to prevent and end homelessness.

Sonoma County worked in conjunction with ASR to conduct the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. ASR is a social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessment that has worked with Sonoma County on their Point-in-Time Counts since 2009.

The Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count consists of two primary components: (1) a point-in-time enumeration of unsheltered, tents, or vehicles, and (2) a point-in-time enumeration of homeless individuals and families, such as those sleeping outdoors, on the street, or in parks and families residing in temporary shelter, including emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities.

The 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of over 100 individuals with lived experience of homelessness, over 200 community volunteers, staff from various city and county departments, and law enforcement, the entire county was canvassed between the hours of 5:00 AM and 10:00 AM on February 28, 2020. Special note must be given to the fact that this count took place a month later than in past years. The count was postponed to the end of February due to the locally declared emergency regarding health and safety concerns around a large encampment of persons experiencing homelessness at the Joe Rodota trail and which required a coordinated County response. Consistent with previous efforts, peer-informed visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets and in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation was conducted. Shelters and transitional housing facilities in the Home Sonoma County's annual Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) also reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the night prior to the day of the count.

A specialized count of unaccompanied children and transition-age youth under the age of 25 was conducted on the same day. This dedicated count was designed to improve the understanding of the prevalence and scope of youth homelessness. Eighteen trained youth enumerators who currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in specific areas where homeless youth were known to congregate.

In the weeks following the street count, a comprehensive, close-ended survey was administered to 444 unsheltered and sheltered individuals and families. 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 Sonoma County on a single night in February. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations, including chronically homeless persons, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and transition-age youth between the ages of 18 and 25.

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years, including 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015-2019 are provided where available and applicable.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

In order for the 2020 Sonoma Point-in-Time Count and Survey to best reflect the experience and expertise of the community, ASR held planning meetings with local community members to review current goals and address continuous improvement goals. These community members were drawn from city and county departments, community-based service providers, and other interested stakeholders. These individuals comprised the 2020 Planning Committee and were instrumental to ensuring the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2020 Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- To preserve current federal funding for homeless services and to enhance the ability to raise new funds;
- To improve the ability of policy makers and service providers to plan and implement services that meet the needs of the local homeless population;
- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2019 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey, and to track progress toward ending homelessness;
- To increase public awareness of overall homeless issues and generate support for constructive solutions; and
- To assess the status of specific subpopulations, including veterans, families, unaccompanied children, transition-age youth, and those who are chronically homeless.

This report is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local, state, and federal governments in gaining a better understanding of the population currently experiencing homelessness, measuring the impact of current policies and programming, and planning for the future.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

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

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement; or
- With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

Sonoma County

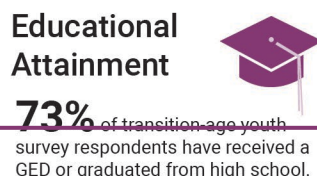
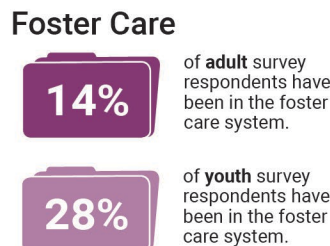
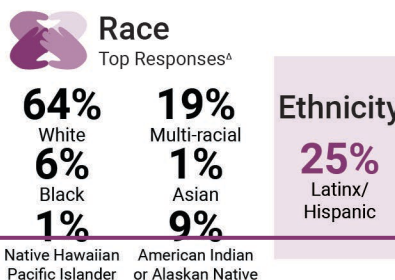
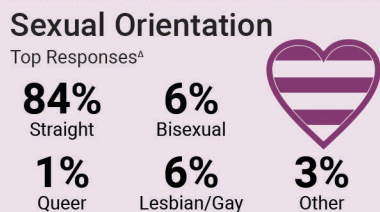
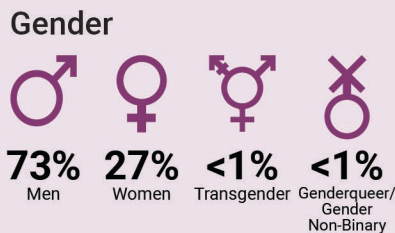
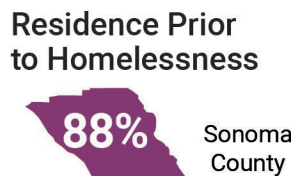
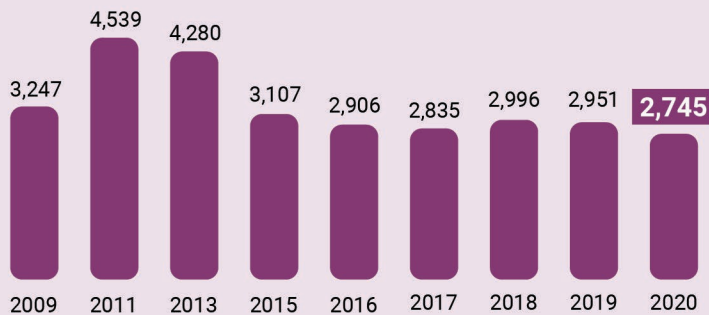
Homeless Census & Survey

2020 Executive Summary

Every year in the County of Sonoma, volunteers and guides gather together to conduct a count of persons experiencing homelessness.

The 2020 Sonoma County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on February 28th, 2020. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 444 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.

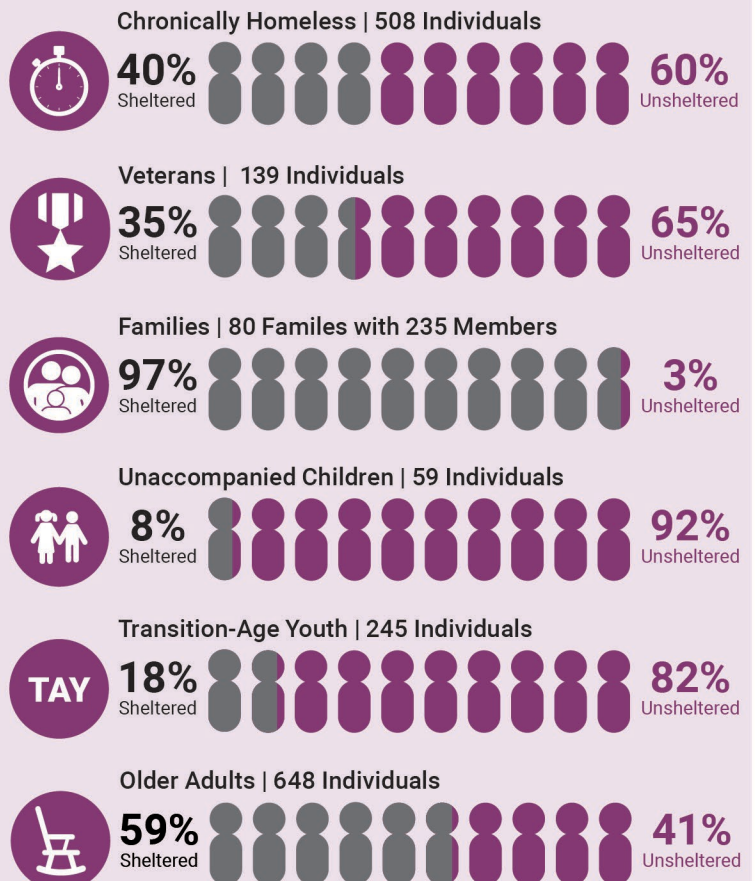
Census Population: Longitudinal Trend



2020 Sheltered/ Unsheltered Population



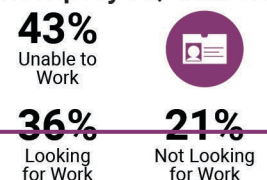
Subpopulation* Data



Employment Status



If Unemployed, Currently...



First Episode of Homelessness **31%** indicated their current episode of homelessness was their first.

History of Domestic Violence **39%** reported they had experienced domestic violence.

Sex Trade Involvement

- 15%** traded sex for money or a place to stay.
- 4%** have a history of being trafficked.



Primary Event or Condition That Led to Homelessness*

Top 4 Responses^Δ

- 22%** Lost Job
- 15%** Argument with Family/Friend
- 16%** Alcohol or Drug Use
- 10%** Fire


Age at First Episode of Homelessness



- 17%** 0-17
- 31%** 18-24
- 33%** 25-49
- 19%** 50+

Obstacles to Permanent Housing*

Top 4 Responses^Δ



- 70%** Can't Afford Rent
- 50%** No Job/Not Enough Income
- 31%** No Money for Moving Costs
- 20%** No Housing Available

Duration of Current Episode of Homelessness



- 10%** 30 Days or Less
- 21%** 1-6 Months
- 9%** 7-11 Months
- 62%** 1 Year or More

Self-Reported Health*

Current health conditions that may affect the housing stability or employment of those experiencing homelessness.



36%
Alcohol & Drug Abuse



40%
Psychiatric/Emotional Conditions



23%
Physical Disability



29%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



23%
Chronic Health Problems



10%
Traumatic Brain Injury



1%
HIV/AIDS Related Illness

Disabling Conditions

40% of survey respondents reported having at least one disabling condition.



A disabling condition is defined by HUD as a developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, or a long-term physical or mental impairment that impacts a person's ability to live independently but could be improved with stable housing.

Interest in Permanent Housing

84% of survey respondents said they would like affordable permanent housing if it became available soon.



Government Services and Assistance

77% of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.



Reasons for Not Receiving Any Government Assistance*

Top 6 Responses^Δ

- 15%** Don't Think I'm Eligible
- 52%** Don't Want Government Assistance
- 10%** No Permanent Address
- 7%** Don't Have ID
- 8%** Don't know where to go
- 12%** Never Applied

Non-Government Services Currently Accessing*

Top 6 Responses^Δ

- 53%** Free Meals
- 35%** Bus Passes
- 34%** Emergency Shelter
- 27%** Shelter Day Services
- 27%** Health Services
- 21%** Mental Health Services

***Subpopulation Definitions**

Chronically Homeless

An individual with one or more disabling conditions or a family with a head of household with a disabling condition who:

- » Has been continuously homeless for 1 year or more and/or;
- » Has experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years.

Veterans

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.

Families

A household with at least one adult member (persons 18 or older) and at least one child member (persons under 18).

Unaccompanied Youth & Transition-Age Youth (TAY)

Children under the age of 18 and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years old (TAY) who are experiencing homelessness and living without a parent or legal guardian.

+ Multiple response question, results may not add up to 100%.

Δ Only displaying top responses.

Note: Some percentages have been rounded so total percentage will equal 100%.

The complete comprehensive report includes a more detailed profile of the characteristics of those experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. It will be available in summer 2020.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2020, Sonoma County Homeless Census & Survey, San Jose, CA.



POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS

The 2020 County of Sonoma Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on February 28, 2020 from approximately 5:00 AM to 10:00 AM and covered all of Sonoma County. The shelter count was conducted on the previous evening and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to those used in 2019 and previous years.

The methodology used for the 2020 Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey is commonly described as a “blitz and survey count” since it is conducted by a large team over a very short period of time. As this method was conducted in Sonoma County, the result was an observation-based count of individuals and families who appeared to be homeless.

The point-in-time occupancy of homeless shelters in Sonoma County was collected for the night of February 27, 2020. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Sonoma County’s Homeless Management Information System. All shelter occupants were listed on the HIC report that the Home Sonoma County submits to HUD.

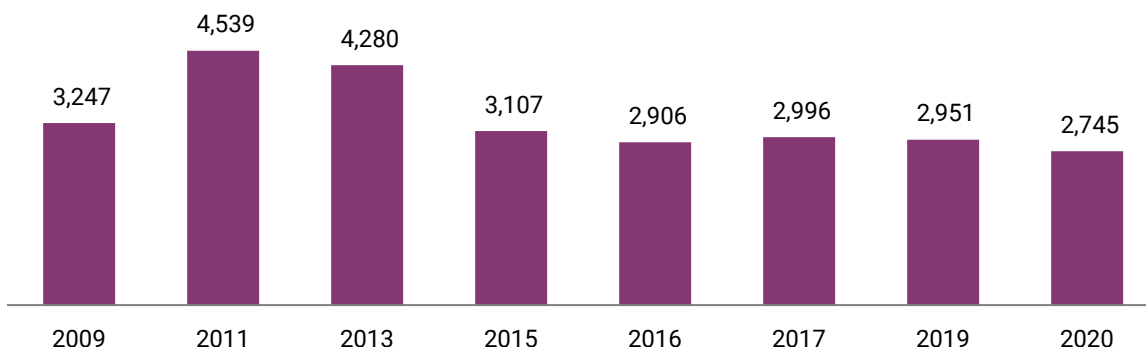
The count was followed by an in-person representative survey of persons currently experiencing homelessness. In Sonoma County, the results of which were used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey was used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements and inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

In a continuing effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, Sonoma County also conducted a dedicated youth count similar to the youth counts that have been conducted since 2009. The dedicated youth count methodology was improved in 2017 to better ensure unaccompanied children and transition-age youth were not included in both the general street count and youth count. For more information regarding the dedicated youth count, de-duplication, and project methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SONOMA COUNTY

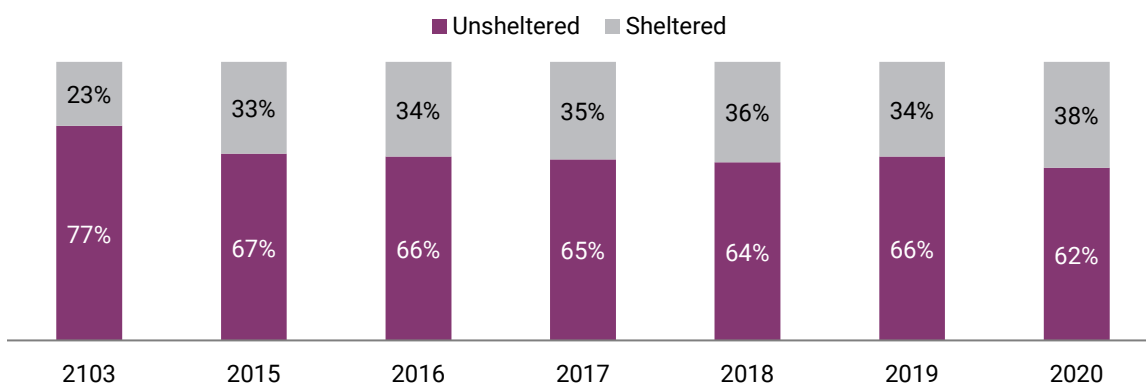
There was a total of 2,745 individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County on February 28th. This represents a decrease of 7% from 2019, continuing a downward trend since 2011.

FIGURE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS



The shelter count increased by 5% to 1,043 and the unsheltered count decreased by 13% to 1,702. There are often greater differences when reviewing the results at the jurisdictional and regional level. These differences may be the result of a variety of factors, including local policy, law and code enforcement, and other initiatives.

FIGURE 2. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019-20 % CHANGE
Sheltered	971	1,037	1,000	988	1,067	994	1,043	↑ 5%
Unsheltered	3,309	2,070	1,906	1,847	1,929	1,957	1,702	↓ 13 %
Total	4,280	3,107	2,906	2,835	2,996	2,951	2,745	↓ 7%

FIGURE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY LOCATION

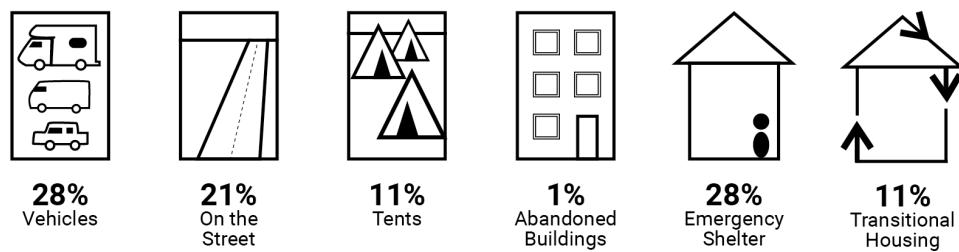
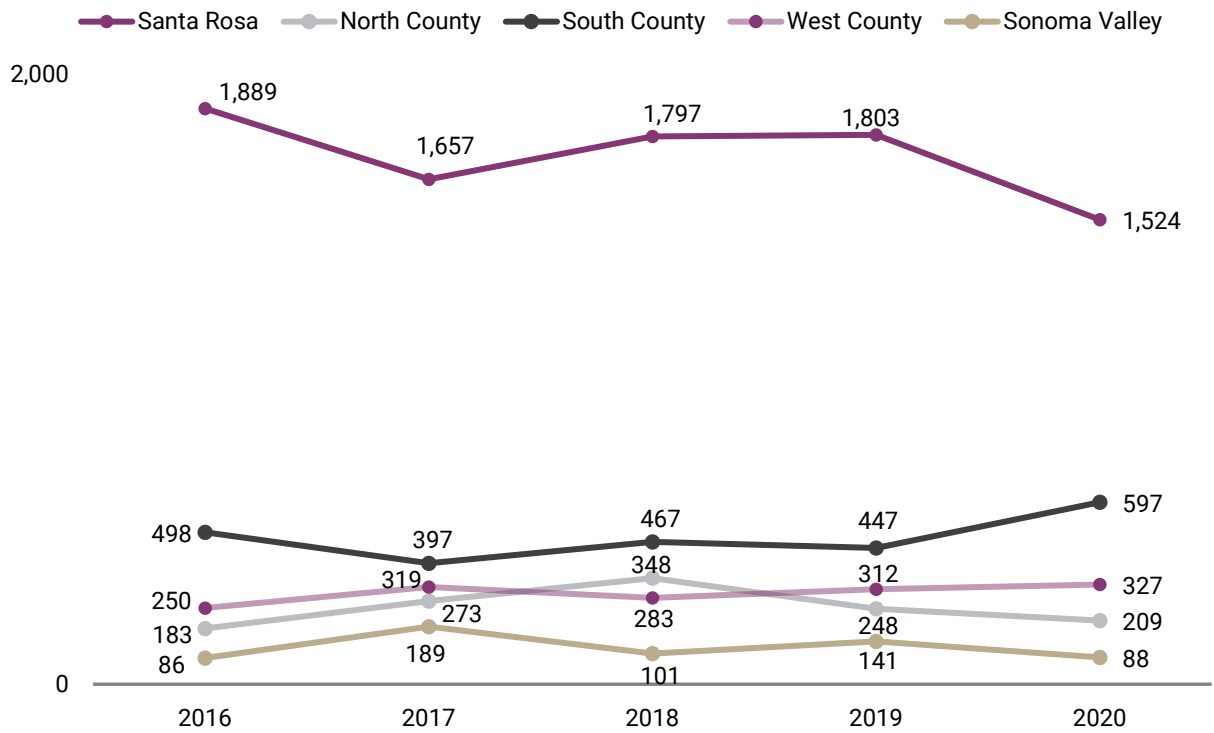


FIGURE 4. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY JURISDICTION AND SHELTER STATUS

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED			SHELTERED			TOTAL		
	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
North County	295	232	205	53	16	4	348	248	209
Cloverdale	75	52	29	5	7	4	80	59	33
Healdsburg	81	64	69	48	9	0	129	73	69
Town of Windsor	75	53	38	0	0	0	75	53	38
Unincorporated	64	63	69	0	0	0	64	63	69
South County	262	305	427	205	142	170	467	447	597
Cotati	1	44	37	0	0	0	1	44	37
Petaluma	91	138	133	194	127	163	285	265	296
Rohnert Park	127	114	241	11	15	7	138	129	248
Unincorporated	43	9	16	0	0	0	43	9	16
West County	243	271	290	40	41	37	283	312	327
Sebastopol	69	101	129	0	0	0	69	101	129
Unincorporated	174	170	161	40	41	37	214	211	198
Sonoma Valley	64	101	54	37	40	34	101	141	88
Sonoma	15	32	46	15	18	15	30	50	61
Unincorporated	49	69	8	22	22	19	71	91	27
Santa Rosa	1,065	1,048	726	732	755	798	1,797	1,803	1,524
Santa Rosa	863	954	719	700	707	742	1,563	1,661	1,461
Unincorporated	202	94	9	32	48	56	234	142	67
Total	1,929	1,957	1,702	1,067	994	1,033	2,996	2,951	2,745

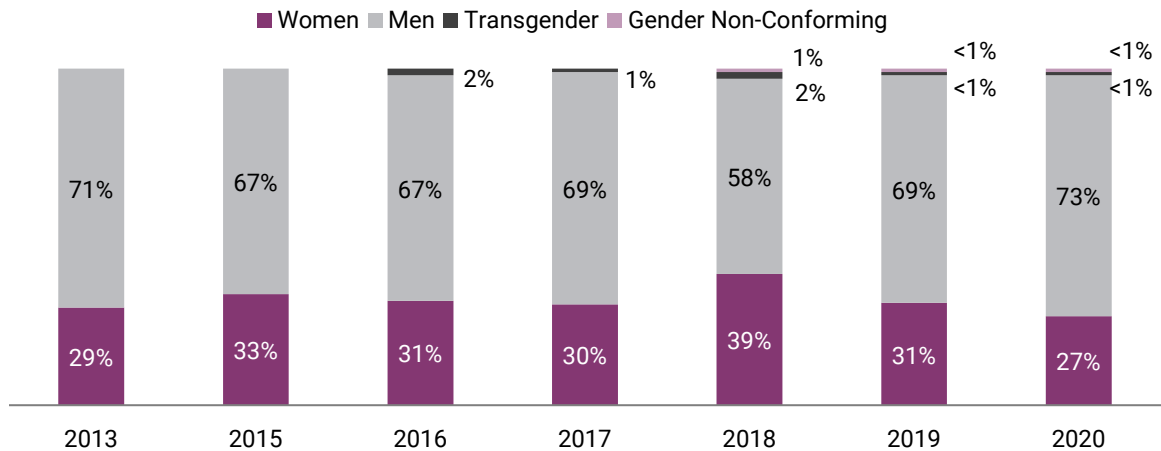
Note: Confidential beds have been included in their respective jurisdiction(s) since 2018.

FIGURE 5. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY COUNTY REGION



Basic demographics were estimated for those enumerated in 2020, including gender, race, and ethnicity. Comprising 27% of the overall homeless population, 709 women were identified during the 2020 Point-in-Time Census, which resulted in a continuation of a downward trend since a high of 39% in 2018.

FIGURE 6. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY GENDER

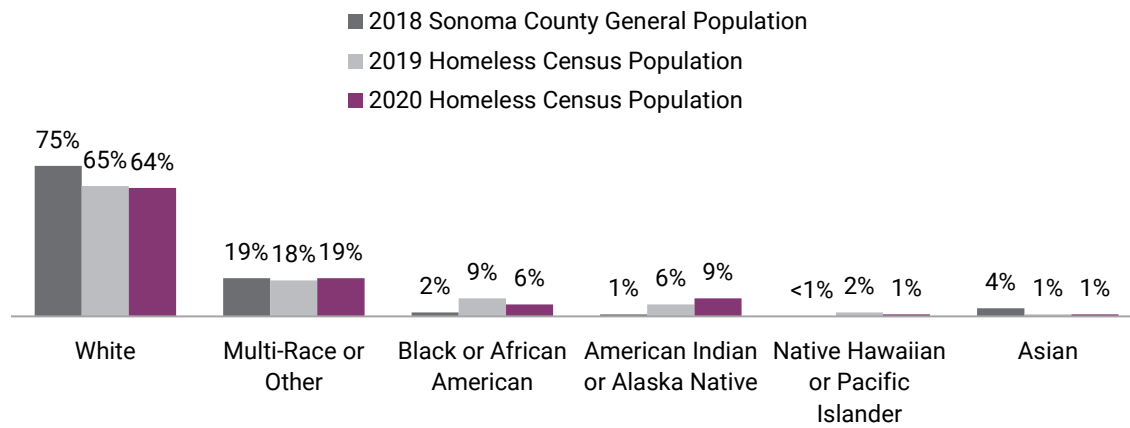


2013 n=4,280; 2015 n=3,107; 2016 n=2,906; 2017 n=2,835; 2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951; 2020 n=2,638

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Transgender data were not collected prior to 2016 and Gender Non-Conforming data were not collected prior to 2018.

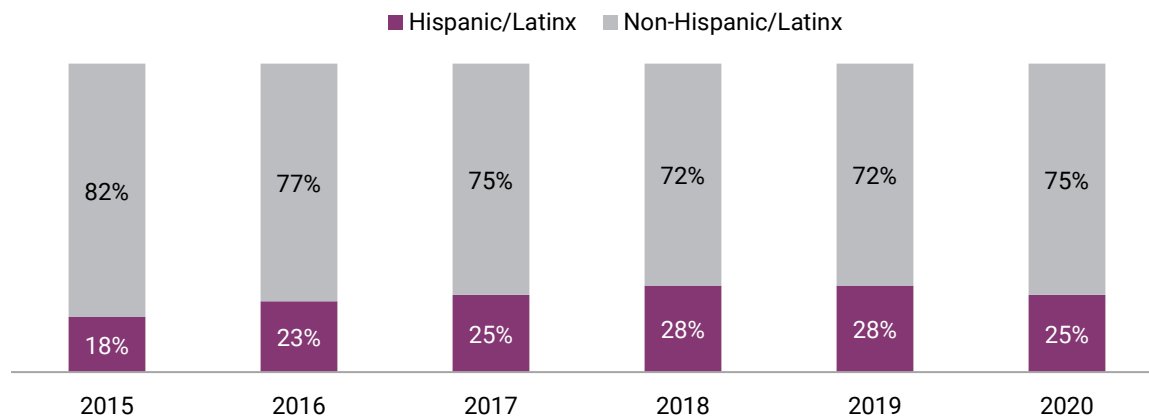
Additionally, in a trend seen in many other communities, persons of color were overrepresented in the homeless population. The number of those identifying as Hispanic/Latinx remained constant from preceding years.

FIGURE 7. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY RACE¹



2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951; 2020 n=2,638
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 8. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY ETHNICITY



2015 n= 3,107; 2016 n=2,906; 2017 n=2,835; 2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951; 2020 n=2,638
 Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

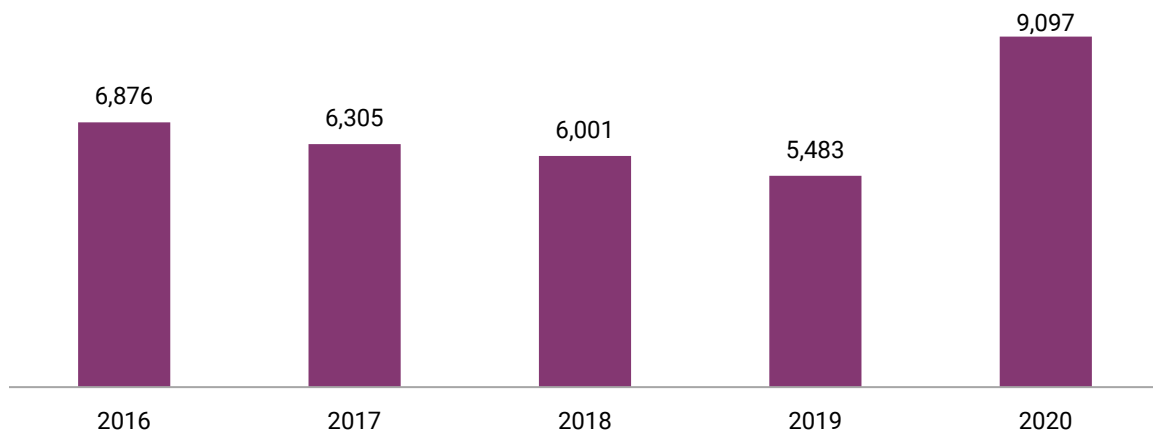
ANNUALIZATION

By definition, the Point-in-Time Count only provides a snapshot of homelessness during a single point in time and therefore may not adequately reflect the number of unique persons experiencing homelessness throughout the year. Consequently, it does not reflect the number of people who are homeless at other times or the total number who access the homeless support system throughout the year.

To address this shortcoming, an annual estimation formula can be used to profile the number of persons who may have experienced homelessness in Sonoma County over the course of a year. While this estimate is valuable and can inform the complexity of enumerating those persons experiencing homelessness, the calculation can also be volatile due to survey sampling and, in particular, the impact of certain variables such as the prevalence of short-term homelessness, specifically when there are many respondents whose homeless experience is 7 days or less.

With these caveats laid out, the 2020 Sonoma County annual estimate is 9,097 unique homeless experiences over a year, a large increase (66%) from past years. Again, this increase should be read in the context of how individuals' fluctuations in single variables can have large impacts on the overall result.

FIGURE 9. ANNUALIZATION





HOMELESS SURVEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the *survey* component of the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February 29 and March 18, 2019. The survey period was cut short due to the shelter in place order enacted by Sonoma County on March 18, 2020 in response to the coronavirus spread. This effort resulted in 444 complete and unique surveys.

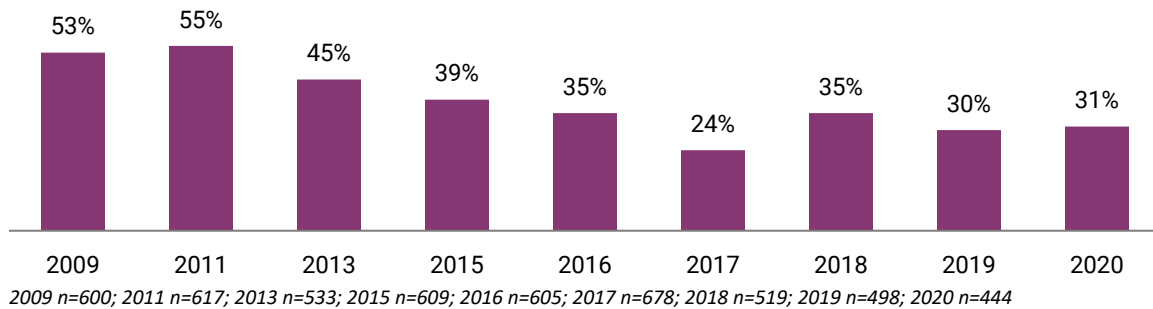
Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 2,745 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 444 valid surveys would represent a confidence interval of +/- 4.4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals in Sonoma County. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be 95% certain that the results would be within 4.4 percentage points of the current results. Despite the shorter survey period and smaller number of surveys compared to last year, the confidence level is still strong.

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions though they were asked to be generally responsive to all questions. Missing values were intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted. For more information regarding the survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability.

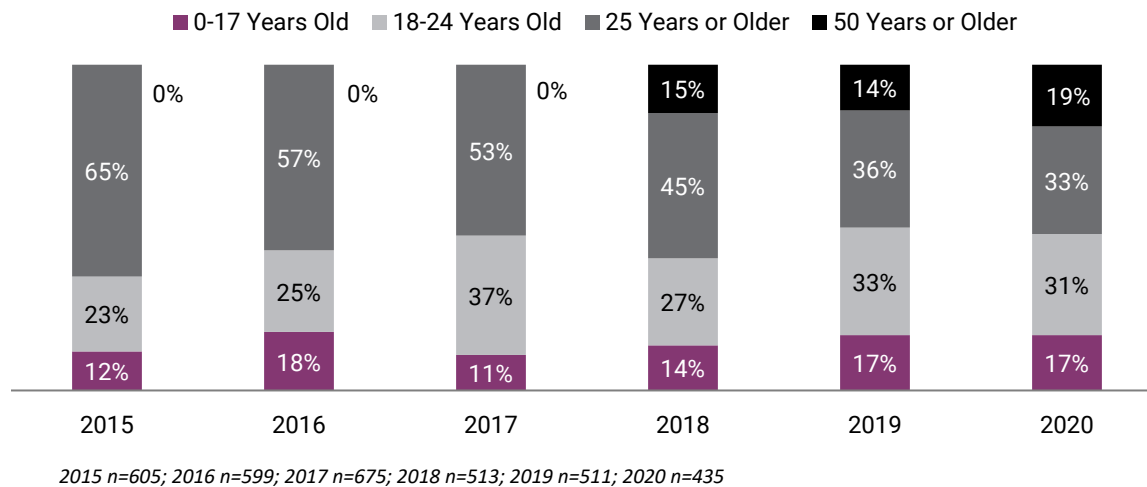
FIGURE 10. FIRST TIME EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

In an effort to better understand the experiences and age distribution of those experiencing homelessness, respondents were asked how old they were the first time they experienced homelessness. Since 2018, there is an emerging trend of those experiencing homelessness for the first time at age 50 or older.

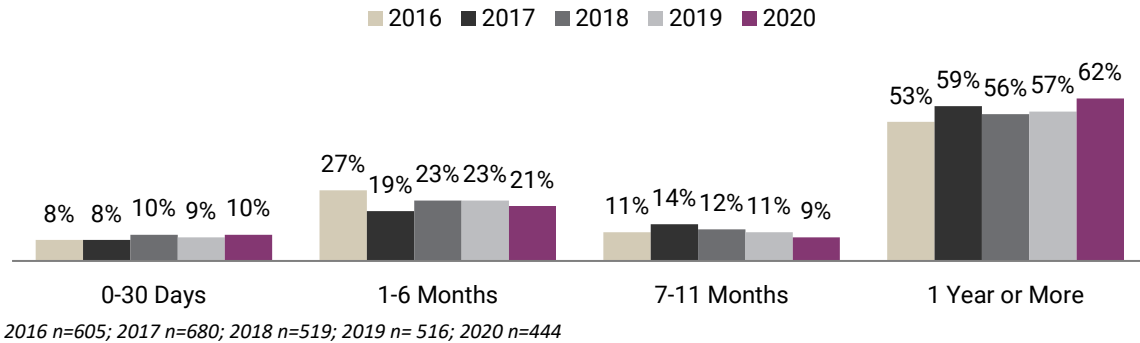
FIGURE 11. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

Many individuals who experience homelessness will do so numerous times and for varying lengths of time. When asked how long they had been experiencing homelessness for this current episode, a majority (62%) indicated experiencing homelessness for a year or more, an increase from 2019 (57%).

FIGURE 12. LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



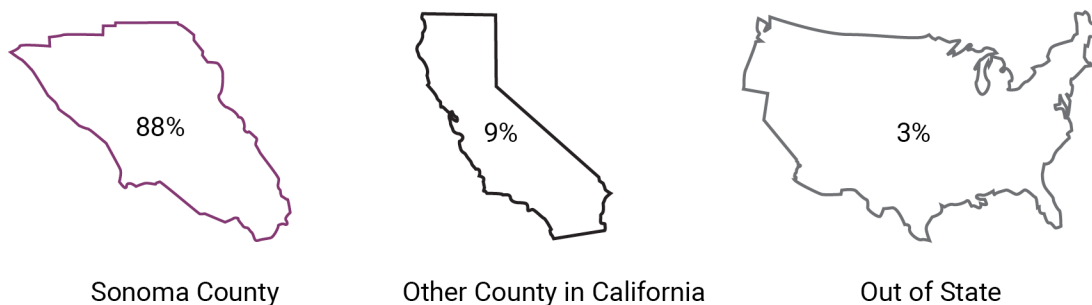
LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

Where individuals lived prior to experiencing homelessness and where they have lived since impacts the way they seek services, as well as their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and to opportunities for systemic improvement and homelessness prevention. Survey respondents reported many different living accommodations prior to experiencing homelessness, although most lived in or around Sonoma County with friends, family, or on their own or with a partner in a home or apartment.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE

During the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless survey, 88% of survey respondents reported they were living in Sonoma County at the time they most recently experienced homelessness, similar to that reported in 2019 (87%). Of those, 64% had lived in Sonoma County for 10 years or more and 8% had lived in Sonoma County for less than one year.

FIGURE 13. PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS

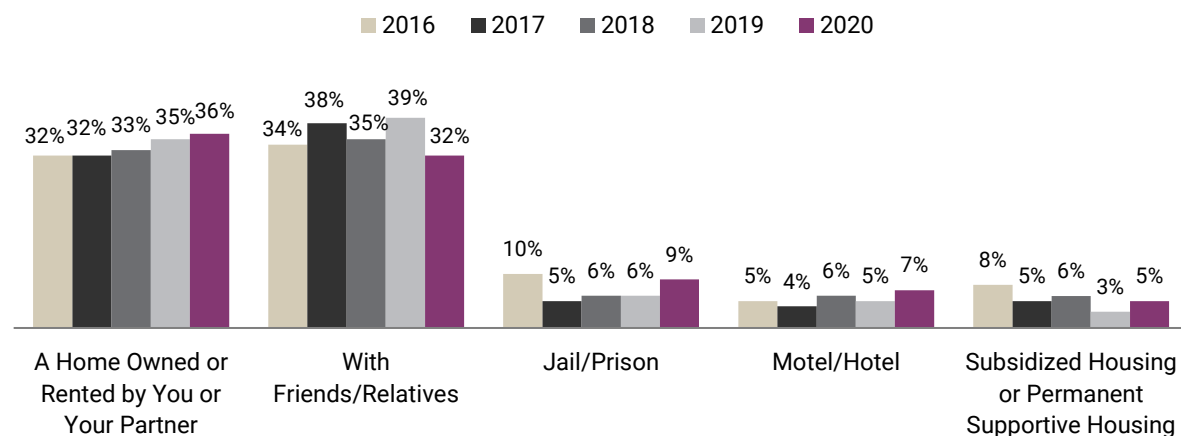


2020 n=432

PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Similar to our respondents' previous place of residence, the type of living arrangements maintained by individuals before experiencing homelessness can influence knowledge of and access to various types of homeless prevention services available to help individuals maintain their housing.

FIGURE 14. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME (2020 TOP 5)



2016 n=488; 2017 n=652; 2018 n=506; 2019 n=501; 2020 n=431

EFFECTS OF 2017 AND 2019 FIRES

In October of 2017, the Tubbs, Nuns, and Pocket fires burned significant portions of Sonoma County, including populated areas in Santa Rosa. Over 7,000 structures, including many homes, were destroyed across the 112,380 acres that burned through Sonoma and Napa counties. It is estimated that 3,300 residents emigrated out of Sonoma County in the year after the fires, resulting in a net loss in population².

The fires exacerbated a housing market with already historically low vacancy levels, leading to questions of how the residents would be affected. For the third year, Sonoma County added fire-related questions to the survey component of the annual Point-in-Time Census and conducted a representative community telephone survey to understand the impacts of the fires countywide and potential impacts to County homelessness. The effects of the fires have proven to be long-lasting, affecting those experiencing homelessness and others in the community, and therefore it remains important to track how the fires affected the community two years later. The representative household survey results can be found in the *Community Telephone Survey* section of this report.

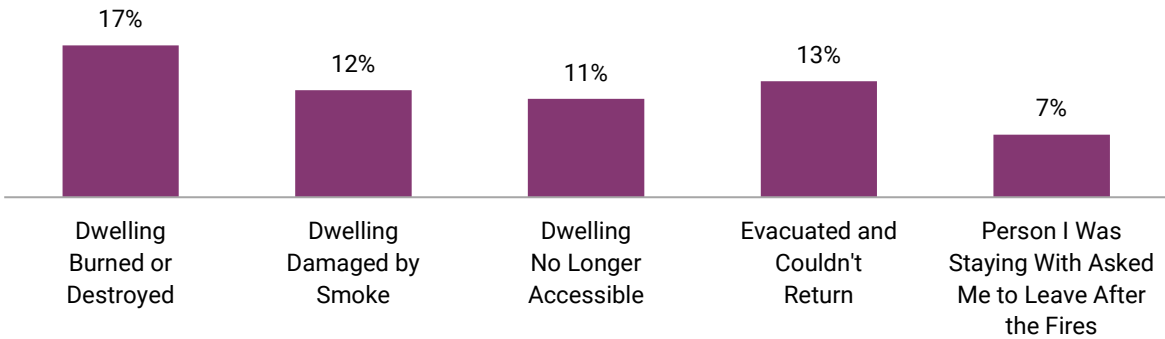
EFFECTS OF FIRES ON THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In 2020, 31% of survey respondents reported that their previous housing or sleeping location had been affected by the fires in 2017 and 2019 in some way, an increase from 28% in 2019, but close to the reported 34% in 2018. Of the 9.7% of respondents who cited the fires as their primary cause of homelessness, 89.1% were unsheltered and 10.9% were sheltered.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

Eleven percent (11%) of those impacted by the fires in 2017 and 2019 were transition-age youth age 18-24, 64% were between the ages of 25 and 54, and 25% were over age 55.

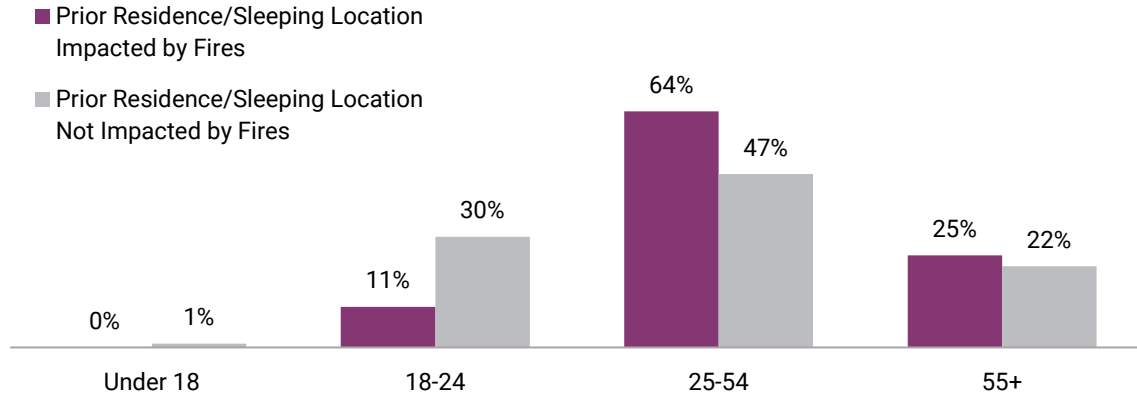
FIGURE 15. IMPACTS ON THOSE AFFECTED BY THE FIRE



2020 n=422

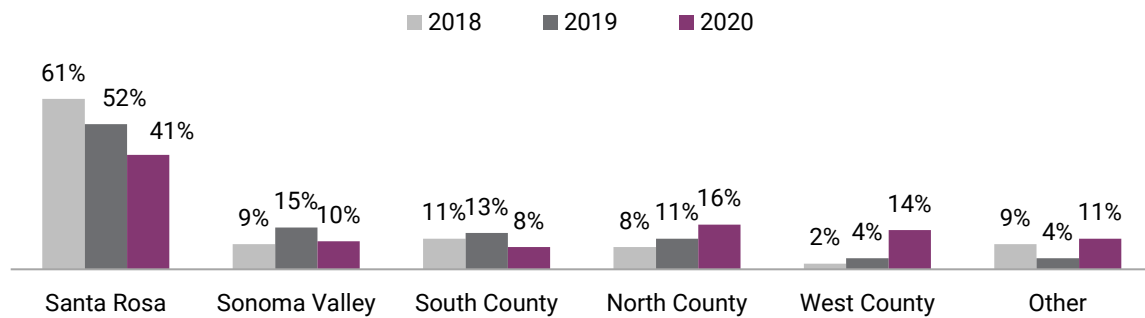
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add to 100.

FIGURE 16. AGE OF THOSE WHOSE PRIOR RESIDENCE OR SLEEPING LOCATION WAS IMPACTED BY THE FIRES AND NOT IMPACTED BY THE FIRES



2020 Prior Residence/Sleeping Location Impacted by Fires n=149; Prior Residence/Sleeping Location Not Impacted by Fires n=326

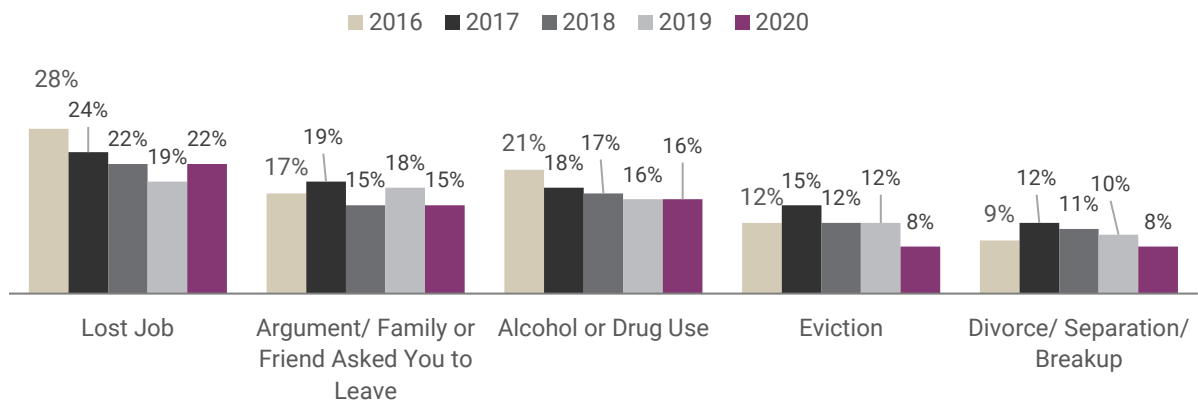
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add to 100.

FIGURE 17. RESIDENCE PRIOR TO FIRES OF FIRE-IMPACTED SURVEY RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

2018 n=177; 2019 n=92; 2020 n=428

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of a person or family's inability to obtain or retain housing is often difficult to pinpoint, as it is often the result of multiple, inter-related causes. An inability to secure adequate housing can also lead to or result in an inability to address other basic needs, such as healthcare and adequate nutrition. In our survey question, respondents were asked to list their self-assessed *primary* cause of the experience of homelessness.

FIGURE 18. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

2020 PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

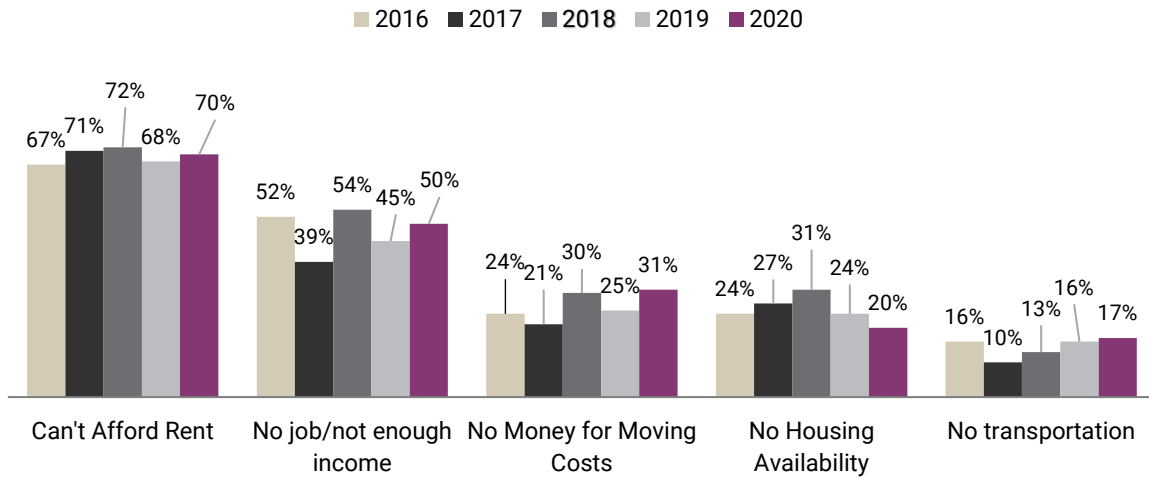
Lost Job	22%	Incarceration	5%
Alcohol or Drug Use	16%	Family/Domestic Violence	5%
Argument with Family or Friend	15%	Landlord Raised Rent	4%
Fire	10%	Don't Know/Decline to State	4%
Other	9%	Probation/Parole Restrictions	2%
Eviction	8%	Hospitalization/Treatment	2%
Divorce/Separation/Break Up	8%	Foreclosure	1%
Mental Health Issues	6%	Aging Out of Foster Care	1%
Illness/Medical Problem	6%		

2016 n=576 respondents offering 782 responses; 2017 n=660 respondents offering 917 responses; 2018 n=506 respondents offering 660 responses; 2019 n=511 respondents offering 635 responses; 2020 n=438 respondents offering 542 responses

OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Respondents were also asked what prevented them from obtaining housing. Most reported multiple obstacles, often a mixture of income or access-related issues. The vast majority (84%) reported that they would accept permanent housing if it became available.

FIGURE 19. OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

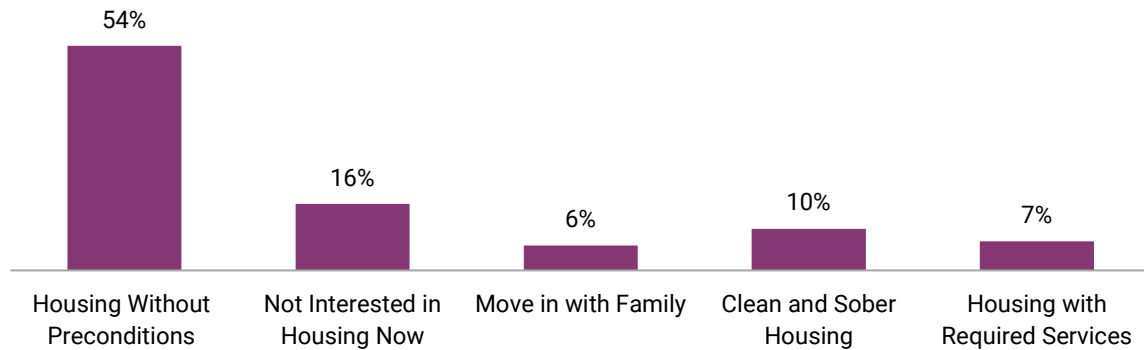


2016 n=581 respondents giving 1,573 responses; 2017 n=659 respondents giving 1,642 responses; 2018 n=503 respondents giving 1,489 responses; 2019 n=513 respondents giving 1,331 responses; 2020 n=436 respondents giving 1,130 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HOUSING TYPE

Although vacancy rates are low in the San Francisco Bay Area, and especially limited in Sonoma County since the 2017 fires, respondents were asked what type of housing they would prefer if it were available right now. Most respondents (54%) reported a preference for housing without preconditions (Housing First), 10% reported a preference for clean and sober housing, and 7% reported a preference for housing with required services

FIGURE 20. HOUSING TYPE DESIRED



2020 n=417

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

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

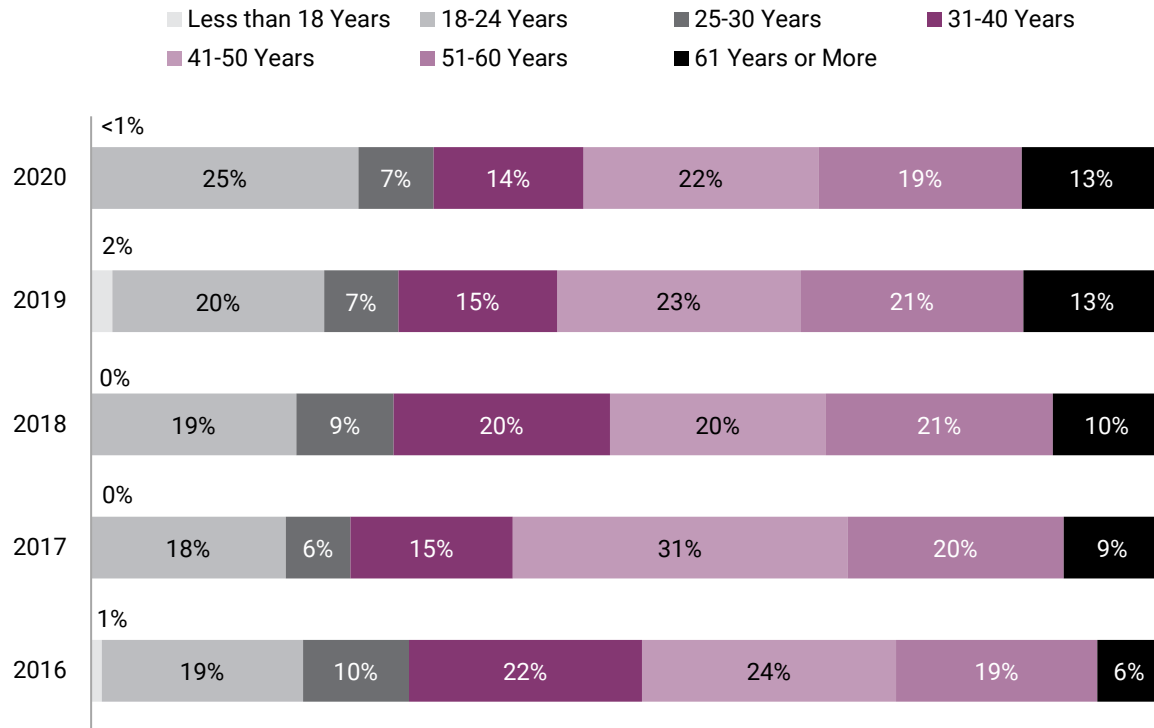
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In 2020, 63% of survey participants identified as male, 33% identified as female, 2% identified as transgender, and 2% did not identify as male, female or transgender. Among the female respondents, 6% indicated that they were currently pregnant.

AGE

Twenty-six percent (25%) of survey respondents were under the age of 25 at the time of the survey. Twenty-one percent (21%) were between the ages of 25 and 40, 41% were between the ages of 41 and 60, and 13% were 61 years or older.

FIGURE 21. SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE



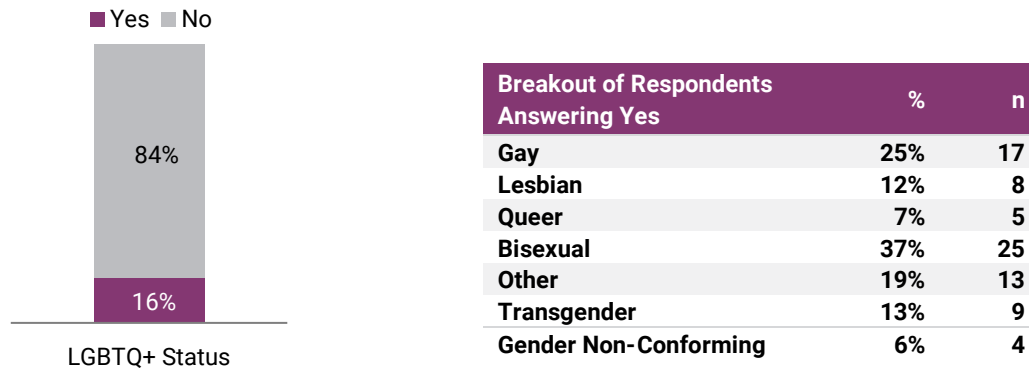
2016 n=605; 2017 n=687; 2018 n=519, 2019 n=520, 2020= 444

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

LGBTQ+ STATUS

Persons identifying as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender non-conforming, transgender, or queer) are overrepresented in the population experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population: as of 2018, 4.5% of the US population Identified as LGBT.³ According to the 2020 Sonoma Homeless Survey, sixteen percent (16%) of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ in 2020, down from 18% in 2019.

FIGURE 22. LGBTQ+ IDENTITY



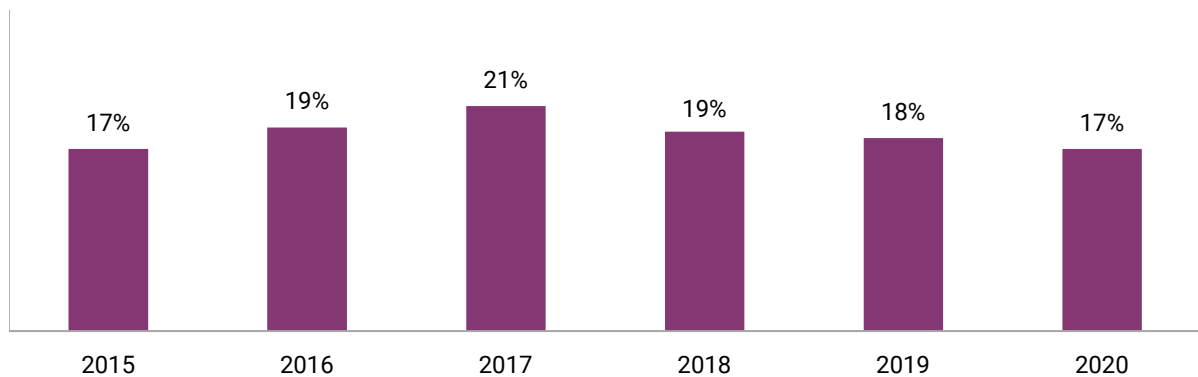
LGBTQ 2020 n=444

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

FOSTER CARE

Nationally, it is estimated that at least one-third of foster youth experience homelessness after exiting care.⁴ In 2020, 17% of survey respondents reported a history of foster care, nearly the same as in 2019 (18%).

FIGURE 23. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



2015 n=600; 2016 n=563; 2017 n=645; 2018 n=510; 2019 n=504; 2020 n=423

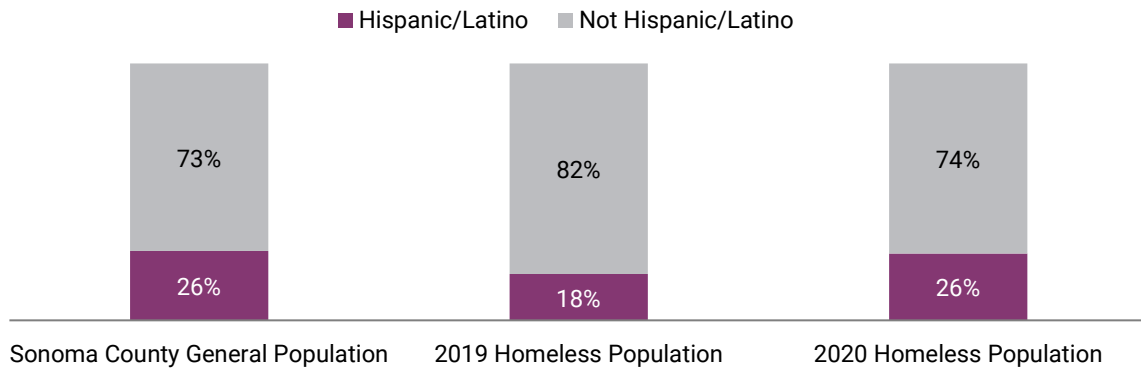
³ Newport, F. (2018). In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%. Gallup. Retrieved 2019 from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>.

⁴ Dworsky, A.; Napolitano, L.; and Courtney, M. (2013). Homelessness During the Transition From Foster Care to Adulthood. Congressional Research Services, Am J Public Health. 2013 December; 103(Suppl 2): S318–S323. Retrieved 2018 from 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301455.

RACE/ETHNICITY

HUD gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the U.S. Census. The percentage of respondents experiencing homelessness identified as Hispanic or Latino (up from 18% in 2019), is similar when compared to the general population of Sonoma County.

FIGURE 24. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY

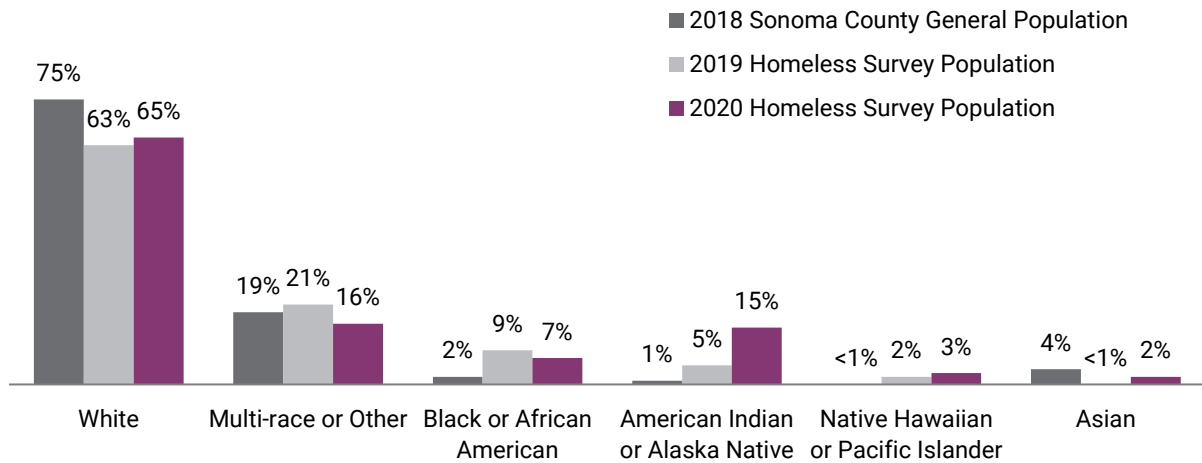


2019 n=520; 2020 n = 440

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

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

FIGURE 25. RACE



2019 n=466; 2020 n =431

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

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

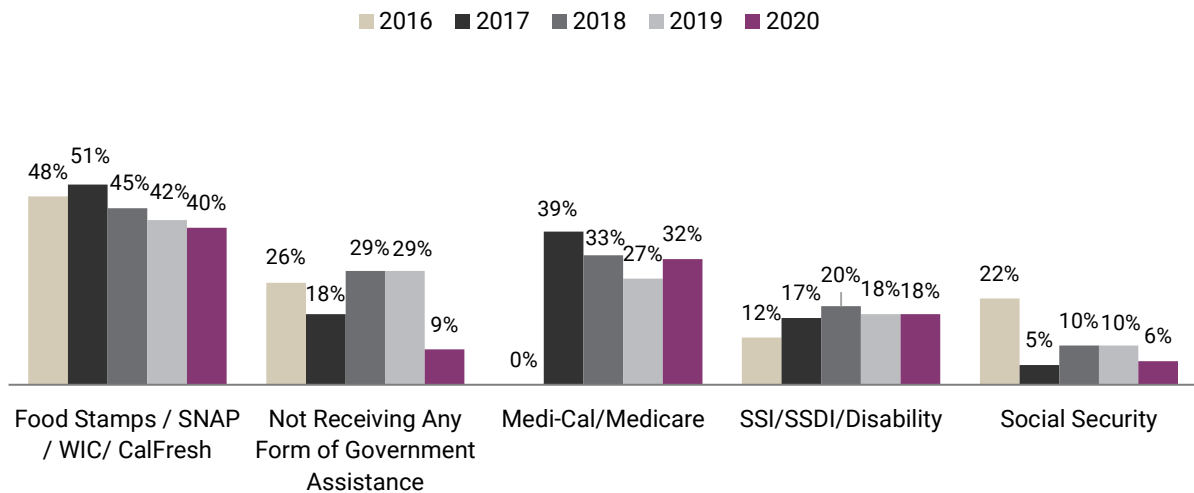
SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

Sonoma County provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services, as many are not interested in receiving assistance or believe that they are ineligible for assistance.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

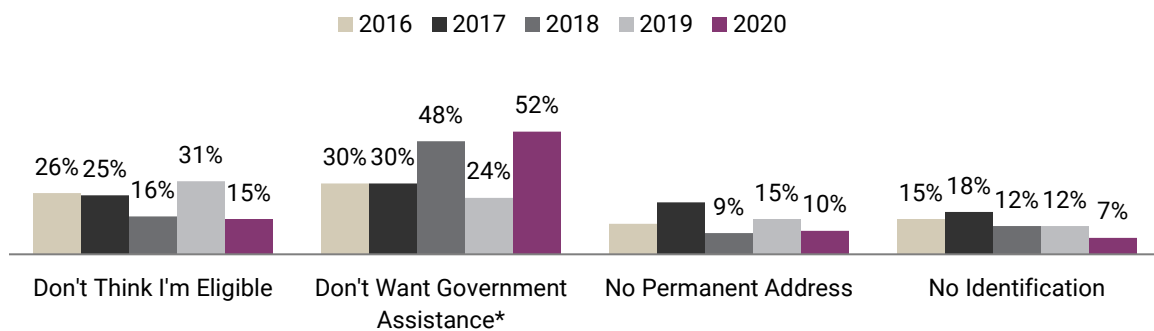
There are various forms of government assistance available to individuals experiencing homelessness though usage of these supports is impacted by knowledge of services available, understanding of eligibility requirements, and perceived stigma of receiving governmental assistance.

FIGURE 26. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



2016 n=663 respondents offering 916 responses; 2017 n=437 respondents offering 537 responses; 2018 n=580 respondents offering 855 responses; 2019 n=315 respondents offering 586 responses; 2019 n=419 respondents offering 600 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

FIGURE 27. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

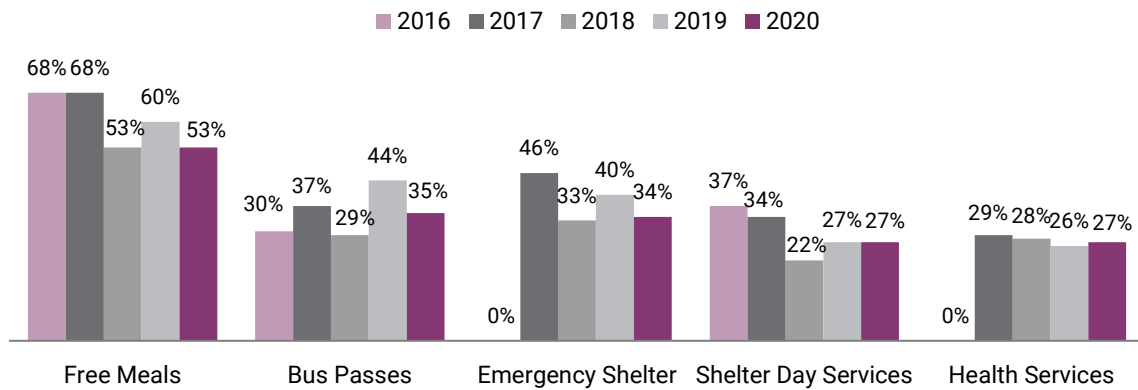


2016 n=114 respondents offering 178 responses; 2017 n=106 respondents offering 181 responses; 2018 n=139 respondents offering 184 responses; 2019 n= 292 respondents offering 421 responses; 2020 n=138 respondents offering 162 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

In addition to government assistance, there are numerous community-based services and programs made available to individuals experiencing homelessness. These services range from day shelters and meal programs to job training and healthcare.

FIGURE 28. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE



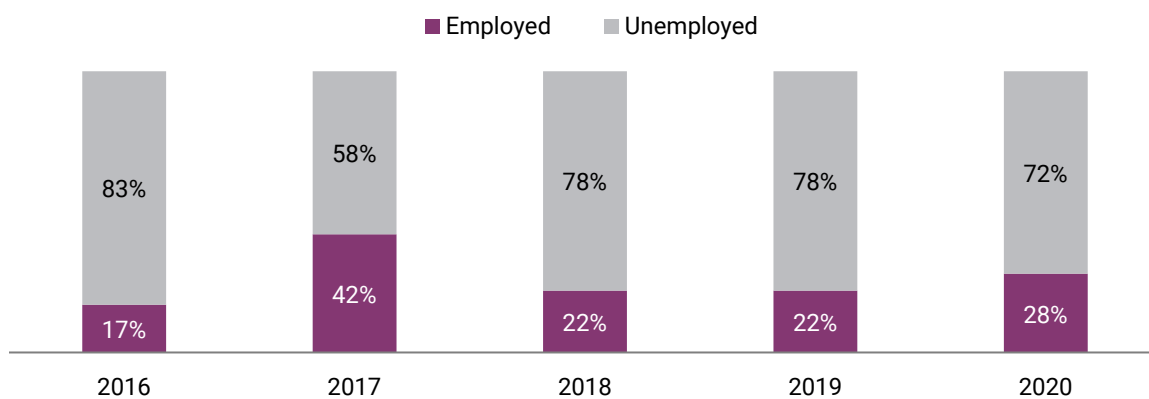
2016 n=527 respondents offering 1,085 responses; 2017 n=622 respondents offering 1,792 responses; 2018 n=491 respondents offering 1,212 responses; 2019 n=495 respondents offering 1,328 responses; 2020 n=429 respondents offering 1,160 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

While almost three quarters (72%) of survey respondents reported being unemployed, a number reported part-time (12%) or full-time work (12%) and many were receiving an income, either public or private. Despite this income, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.

The unemployment rate in Sonoma County was 2.4% in February 2020, slightly down from 3.3% in 2019. Of the respondents who indicated that they were unemployed, just over one third (36%) reported that they were currently looking for work, forty-three percent (43%) indicated that they were unable to work, and one fifth (21%) reported that they were not looking for work.

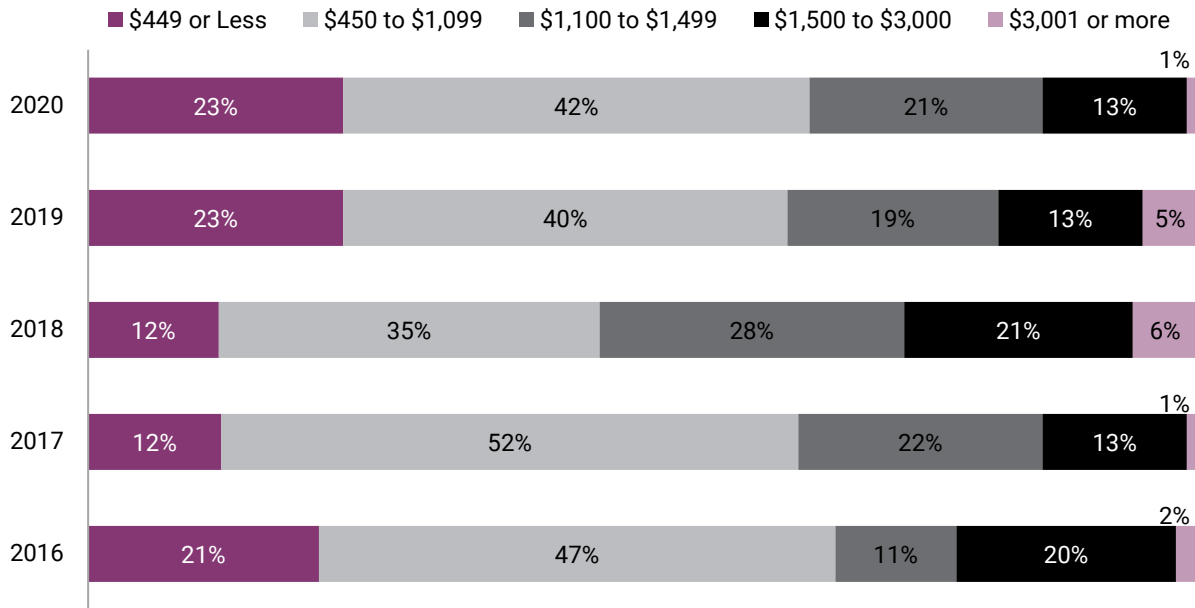
FIGURE 29. EMPLOYMENT STATUS



2016 Employment Status n=490; 2017 Employment Status n=645; 2018 Employment Status n=500; 2019 Employment Status n=500; 2020 Employment Status n=428

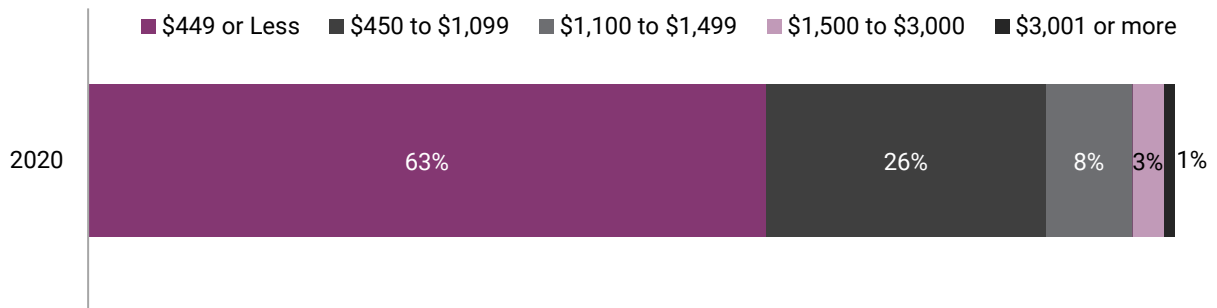
FIGURE 30. MONTHLY INCOME, EMPLOYED

Income from all sources varied between those with employment including those who are full-time and those who were unemployed. Less than half (44%) of unemployed respondents reported an income of \$99 or less per month, in comparison to 4% of those who were employed. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling. Overall income for those with employment was higher than those without. For example, over half (56%) of employed respondents reported making between \$750 and \$3,000 per month, compared to 29% of unemployed respondents. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the survey respondents who were unemployed reported a total monthly income of \$749 or less, compared to 43% of those who were employed.



2016 Employed n=54; 2017 Employed n=267; 2018 Employed n=109; 2019 Employed n=109, 2020 Employed n=116
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 31. MONTHLY INCOME, UNEMPLOYED



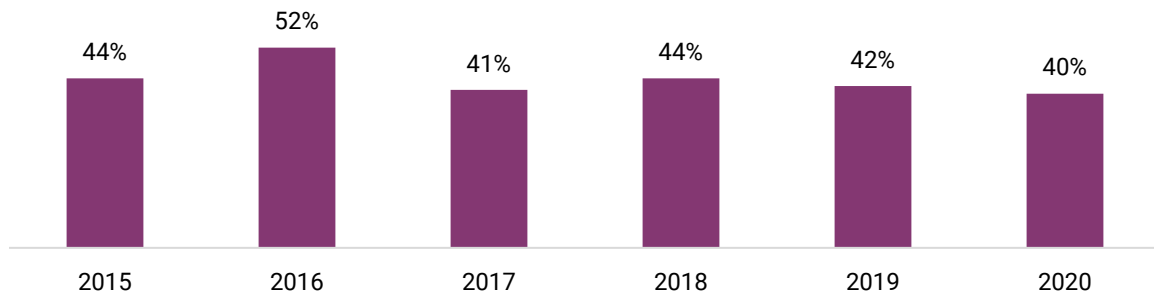
2016 Unemployed n=252; 2017 Unemployed n=374; 2018 Unemployed n=385; 2019 Unemployed n=344; 2020 Unemployed n=307
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

HEALTH

There are two main focuses when discussing the health of survey respondents, all survey respondents are asked if they are experiencing a range of health conditions. Those who indicate they are experiencing at least one of those conditions are asked follow-up questions to determine if they meet the level of HUD-disabling conditions, health

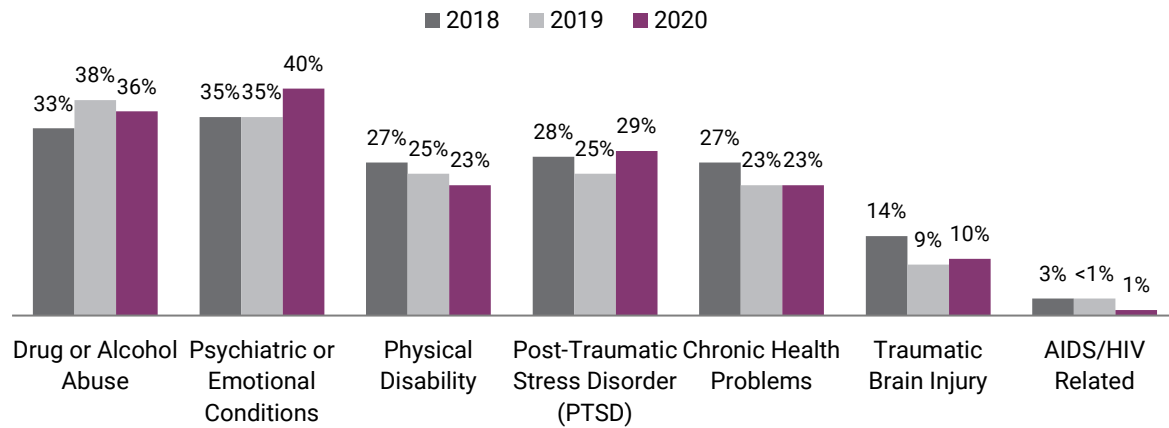
conditions that prevent them from maintaining housing and/or a job. In Sonoma County, almost two thirds (64%) of survey respondents reported one or more health conditions.

FIGURE 32. HUD DISABLING CONDITION



2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=687; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=520; 2020 n=478

FIGURE 33. HEALTH CONDITIONS



2018 n=519; 2019 n=520; 2020 n=722

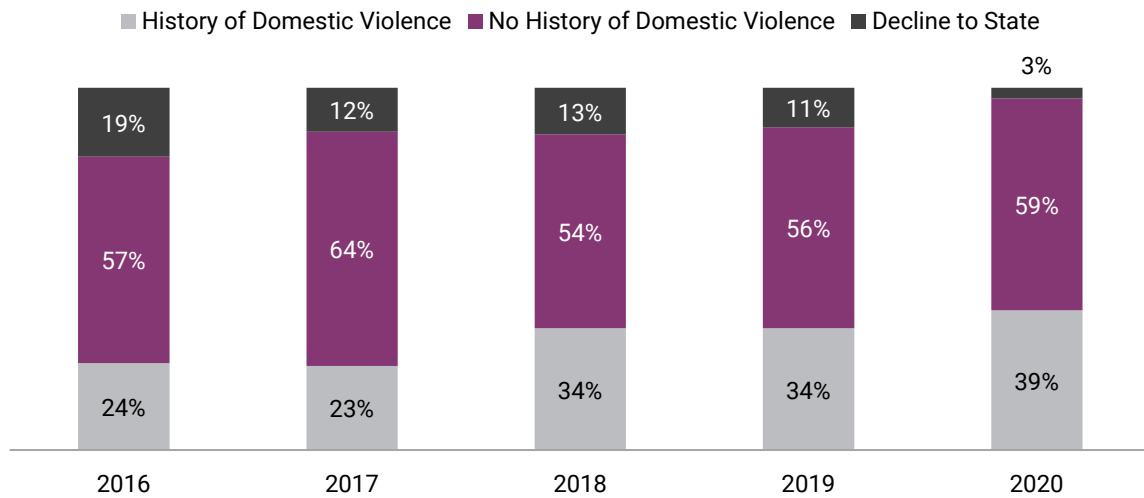
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Histories of domestic violence and partner abuse are prevalent among individuals experiencing homelessness and is often the primary cause of homelessness for many. Survivors often lack the financial resources required for housing.

When analyzed by gender, 13% of female respondents and 5% of male respondents were currently experiencing domestic violence at the time of the survey. A slightly higher percentage of total respondents (39%) reported having experienced domestic violence in their lifetime, compared to that reported in 2019 (34%).

FIGURE 34. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



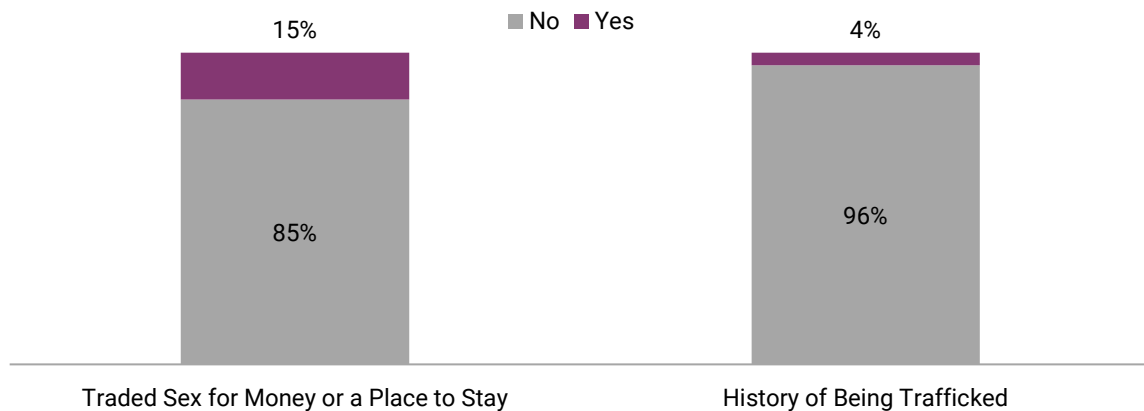
2016 n=565; 2017 n=621; 2018 n=494; 2019 n=499; 2020 n=421

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

SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT

Due to their vulnerable circumstances and precarious access to basic needs, many of those experiencing homelessness have a history of being involved in the sex trade. When disaggregated by gender, women are likelier to have been involved in the sex trade: 24% of women report trading sex for money or a place to stay, and 7% report being trafficked.

FIGURE 35. SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT



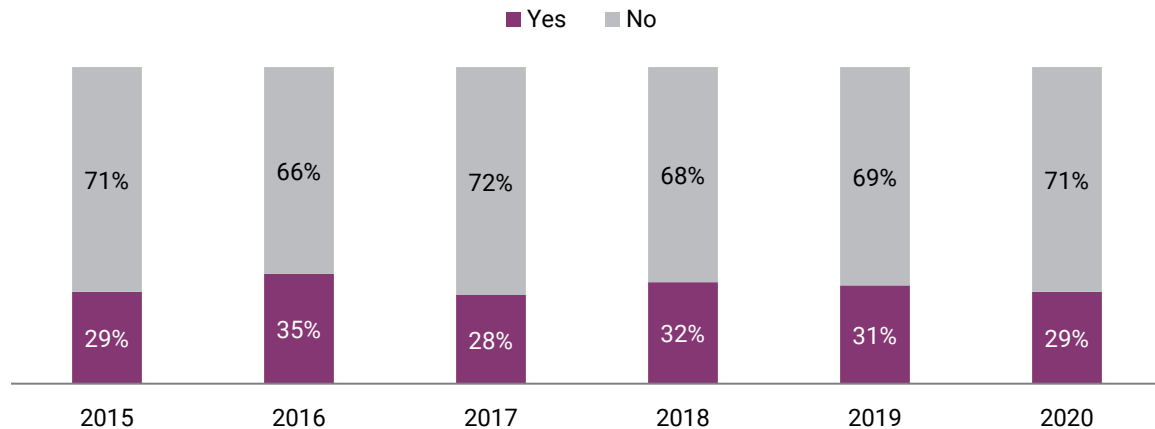
2020 Trading Sex for Money or a Place to Stay n=421, History of Being Trafficked n=418

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Individuals without stable housing are at greater risk of criminal justice system involvement, particularly those with mental health issues, veterans, and youth.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE EXPERIENCE

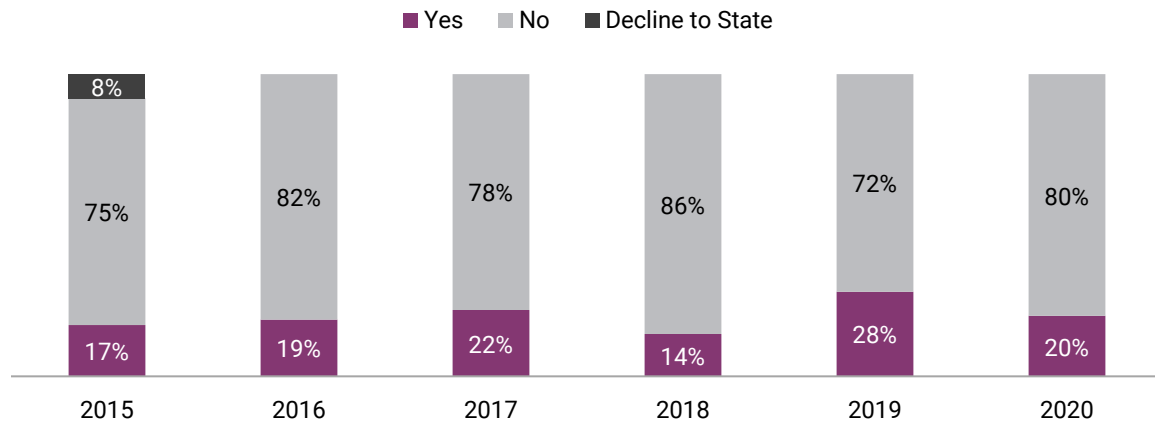
FIGURE 36. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 n=602; 2016 n=574; 2017 n=744; 2018 n=500; 2019 n=505; 2020 n=427

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%

FIGURE 37. CURRENTLY ON PROBATION OR PAROLE



2015 n=569; 2016 n=536; 2017 n=737; 2018 n=488; 2019 n=489; 2020 n=427

Note: Decline To State was given as an answer option solely in 2013



HUD DEFINED SUBPOPULATIONS

Home, Together: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness among all populations in the United States.

In order to adequately address the diversity within the population experiencing homelessness, the federal government identifies four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs, including:

- Chronic homelessness among people with disabilities;
- Veterans;
- Families with children; and
- Unaccompanied children (<18) and transition-age (18-24) youth.

Consequently, these subpopulations represent important reportable indicators for measuring local progress toward ending homelessness.

The following sections examine each of these four subpopulations, identifying the number and characteristics of individuals included in the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey.

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer—or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months 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 heads of household who meet the definition.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street; the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than that of the general population.⁵

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that 96,141 individuals, representing 24% of the overall homeless population, were experiencing chronic homelessness. In Sonoma County, there was a 25% decrease in those experiencing chronic homelessness to 508 in 2020, comprising 21% of the total population experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 38. TOTAL CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION

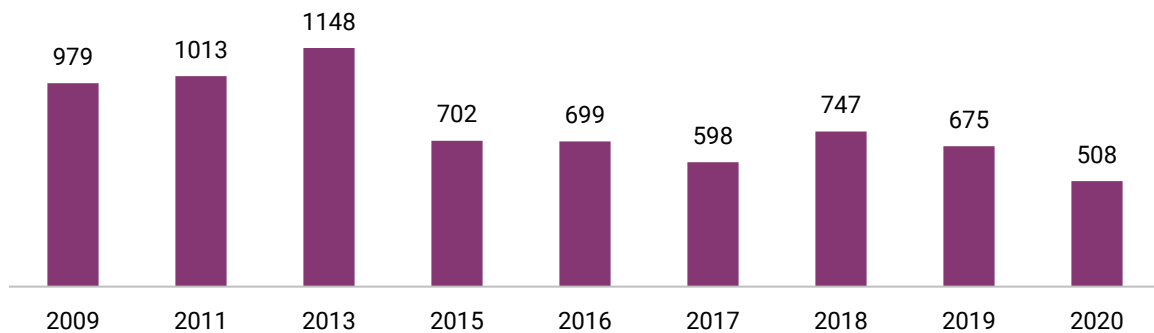
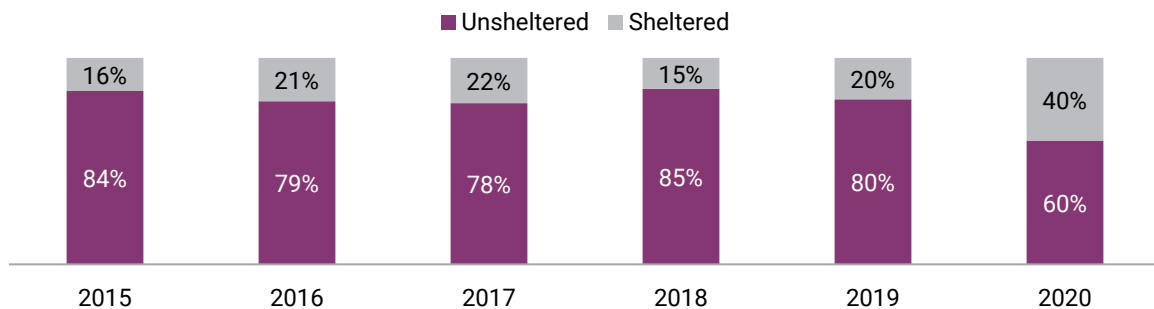


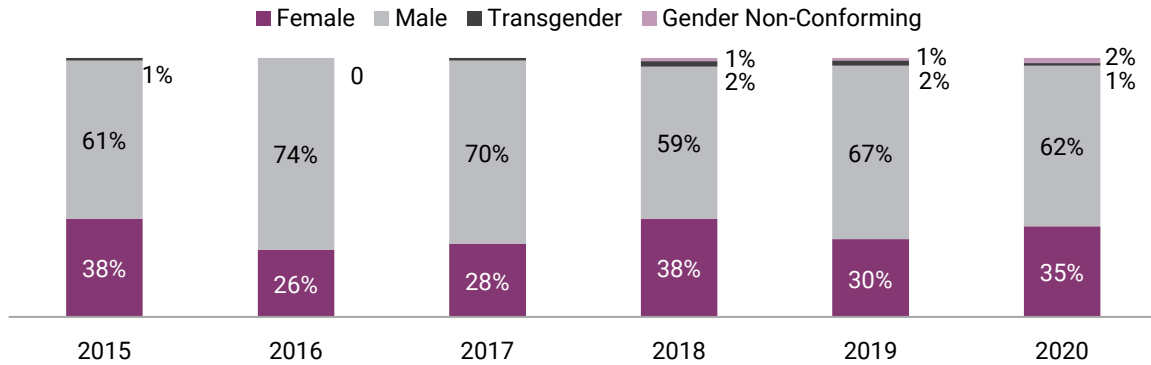
FIGURE 39. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019-20 % Change
Sheltered	114	150	134	115	138	174	↑ 26%
Unsheltered	591	549	464	632	537	334	↓ 38%
Total	702	699	598	747	675	508	↓ 25%

⁵ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2010). Supplemental Document to the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: June 2010. Retrieved 2017 from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf

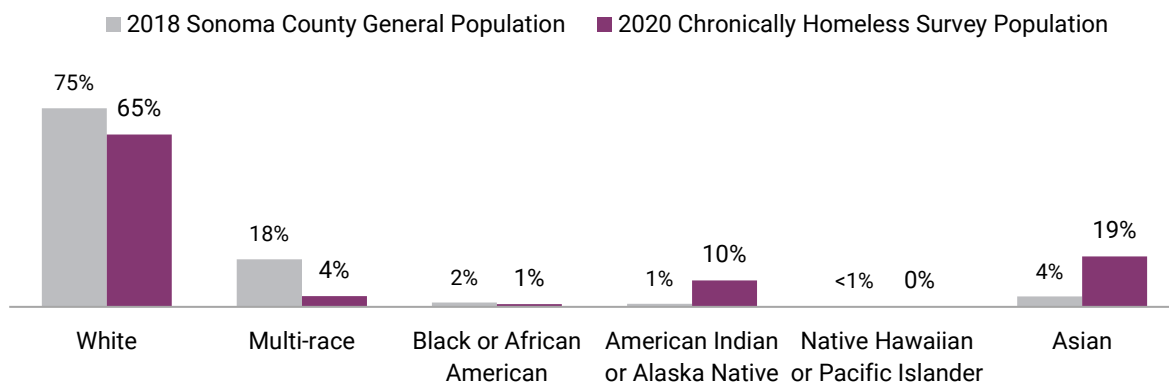
FIGURE 40. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2015 Chronically Homeless Population n=702; 2016 Chronically Homeless Population n=699; 2017 Chronically Homeless Population n=598; 2018 n=747; 2019 Chronically Homeless Population n=675; 2020 Chronically Homeless Population n=562

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

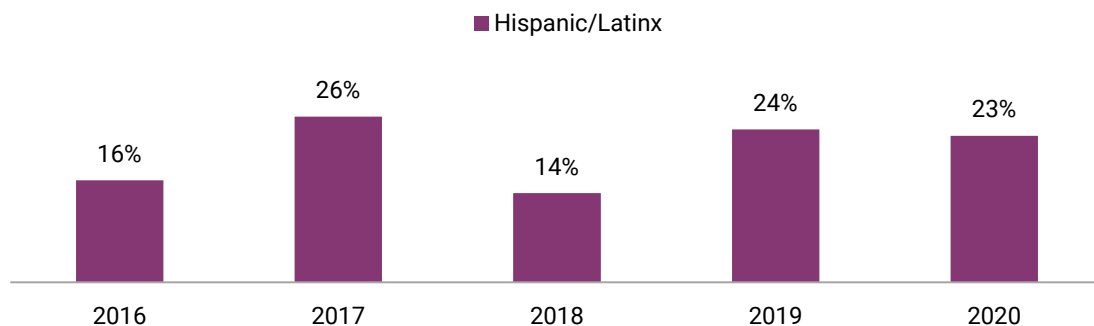
FIGURE 41. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION, BY RACE⁶



2020 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=562

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

FIGURE 42. CHRONICALLY HOMELESS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY



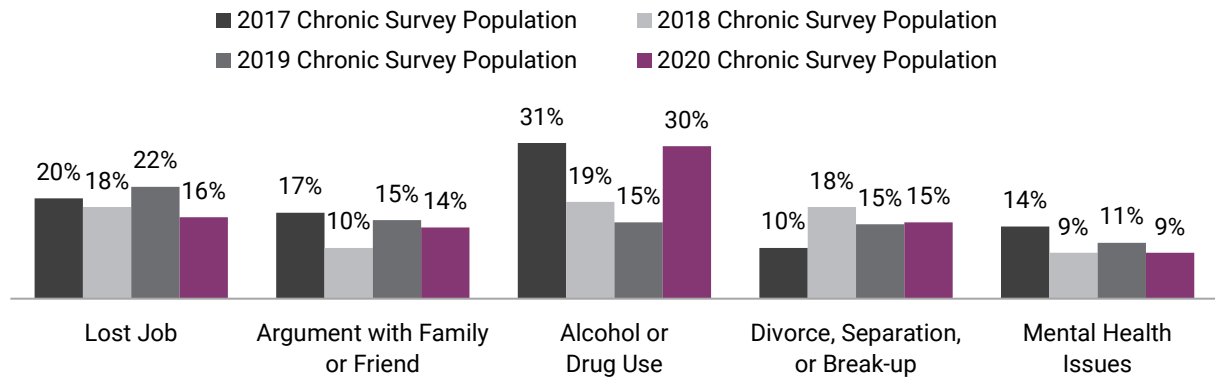
2016 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=172; 2017 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=177; 2018 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=153; 2019 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=123; 2020 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=562

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Thirty percent (30%) of chronically homeless survey respondents reported alcohol or drug use as the primary cause of their homelessness, compared to 13% of all other survey respondents. This causal factor was the largest change we observed of all the factors and was one of the few areas that did not see a downward trend.

FIGURE 43. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG CHRONICALLY HOMELESS (2020 TOP 5)

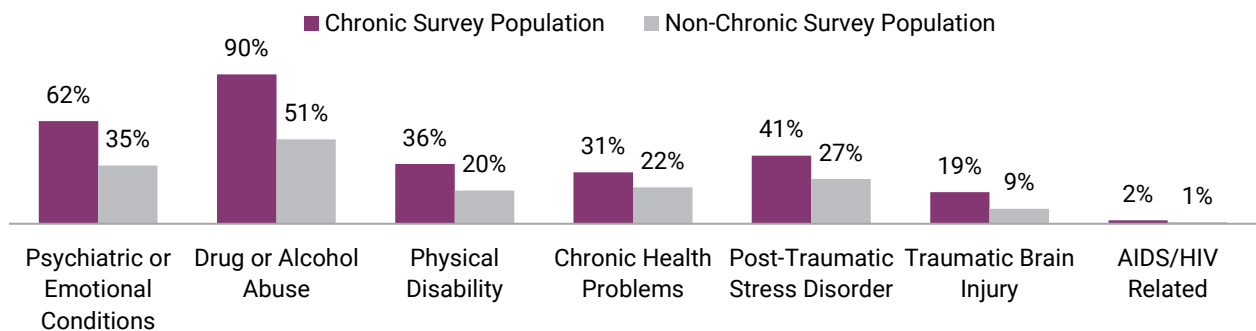


2016 n=164; 2017 n=183; 2018 n=152; 2019 n=123; 2020 n=80
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

To meet the definition of chronic homelessness, an individual must be experiencing at least one disabling condition. Those who were chronically homeless experienced higher rates of all health conditions reported than those in the general survey population.

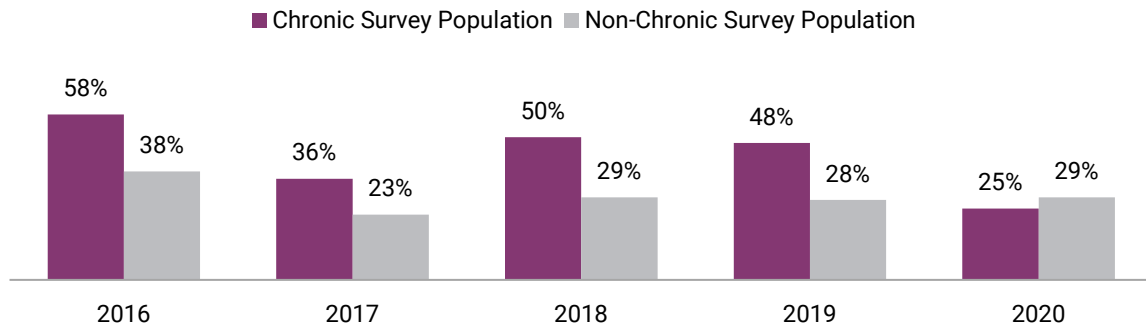
FIGURE 44. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG CHRONICALLY HOMELESS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON



2020 Chronic Survey Population n=81, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=363
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EMERGENCY ROOM USE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

FIGURE 45. EMERGENCY ROOM USE AT LEAST ONCE IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON

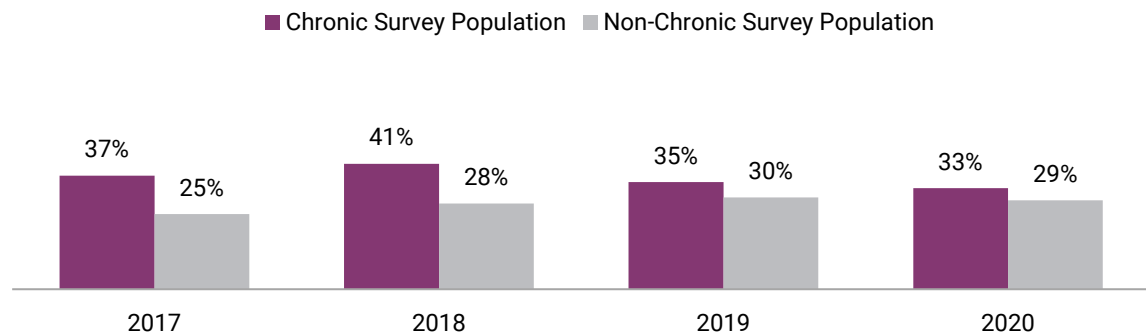


2016 Chronic Survey Population n=133, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=269; 2017 Chronic Survey Population n=185, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=488; 2018 Chronic Survey Population n=128, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=322; 2019 Chronic Survey Population n=109, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=325; 2020 Chronic Survey Population n=81, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=363

INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The percentage of chronically homeless survey respondents who spent at least one night in jail over the past year continued to decline, from 35% in 2019 to 33% in 2020. Those who were chronically homeless had higher rates of currently being on probation or parole at 35% compared to 24% of non-chronically homeless survey respondents. Twenty-nine (29%) of chronically homeless and 19% of non-chronically homeless survey respondents reported being on probation or parole at the time they most recently became homeless.

FIGURE 46. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, CHRONIC AND NON-CHRONIC COMPARISON



2017 Chronic Survey Population n=180 Non-Chronic Survey Population n=472; 2018 Chronic Survey Population n=150, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=350; 2019 Chronic Survey Population n=124, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=381; 2020 Chronic Survey Population n=80, Non-Chronic Survey Population n=347

HOMELESS VETERANS

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

The number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County has sharply decreased after remaining steady since 2017, dropping 34% to 139 in 2020.

FIGURE 47. TOTAL HOMELESS VETERANS CENSUS POPULATION

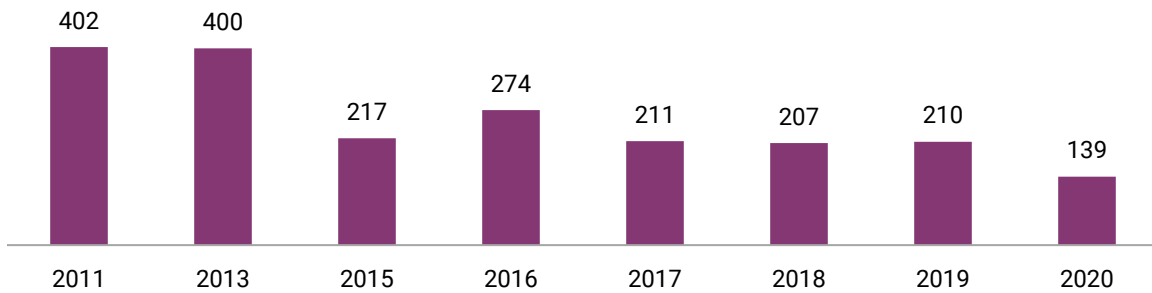
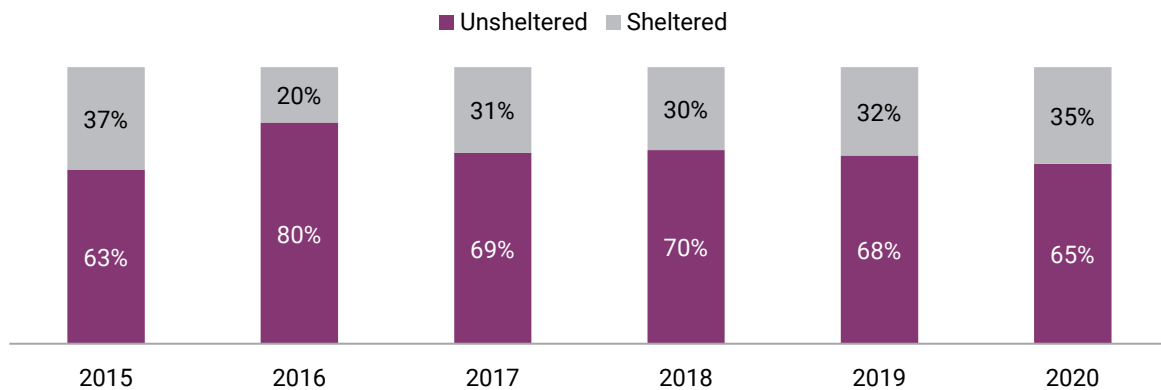
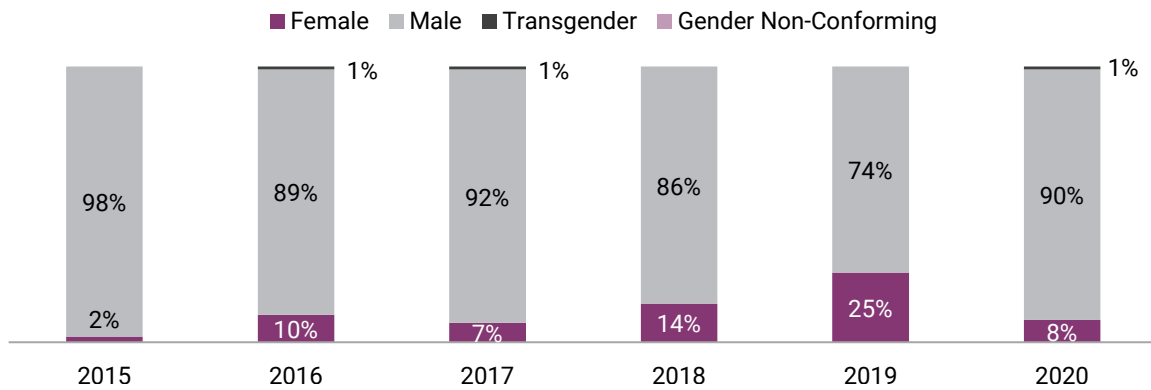


FIGURE 48. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019-20 % Change
Sheltered	81	54	66	63	68	47	↓ 31%
Unsheltered	136	220	145	144	142	92	↓ 35%
Total	217	274	211	207	210	139	↓ 34%

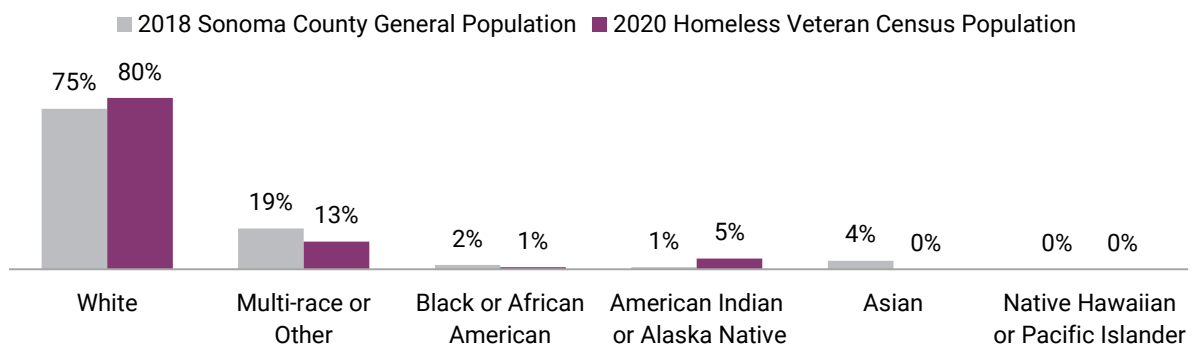
FIGURE 49. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2015 n=702; 2016 n=274; 2017 n=211; 2018 n=207; 2019 n=210; 2020 n=134

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

FIGURE 50. HOMELESS VETERAN CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE⁷

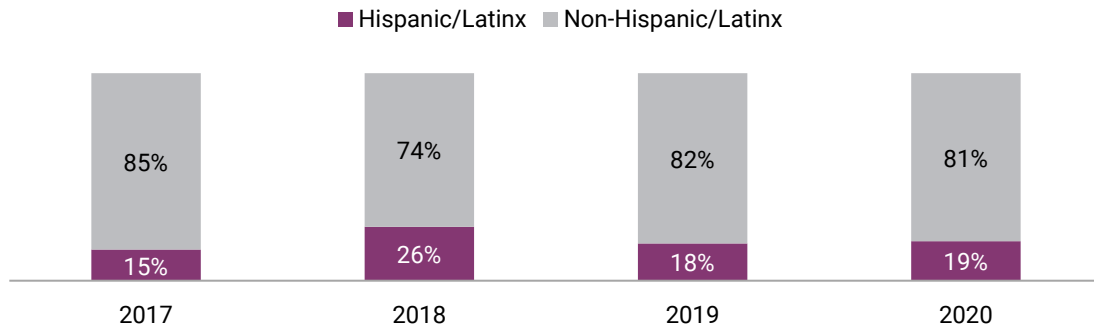


2020 Homeless Veterans Census Population n=134; 2020 Homeless Non-Veterans Census Population n=2,504

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

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

FIGURE 51. HOMELESS VETERANS CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY

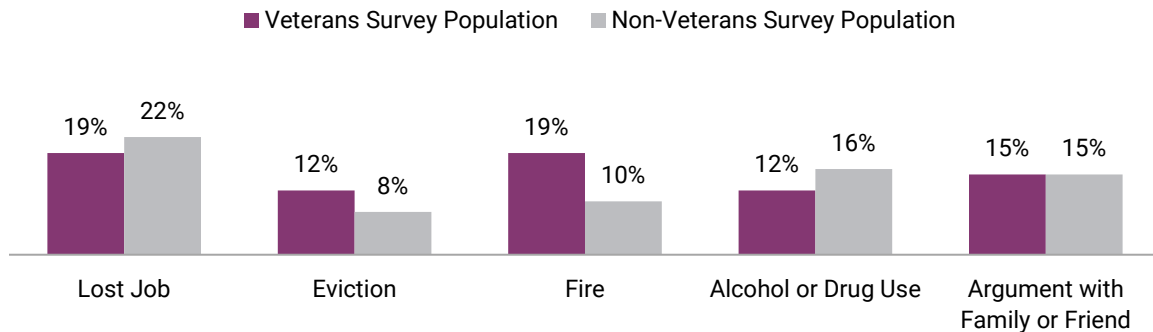


2017 Veterans n=211; 2018 Veterans n=207; 2019 Veterans n=210; 2020 Veterans n=134

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

In a reversal of past trends, more non-veteran survey respondents cited alcohol or drug use as their primary cause of homelessness (16%) than veteran survey respondents (12%). In another change from 2019, 19% of veteran survey respondents reported that the 2017 fires were the primary cause of their homelessness, up significantly from 5% in 2019.

FIGURE 52. PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON

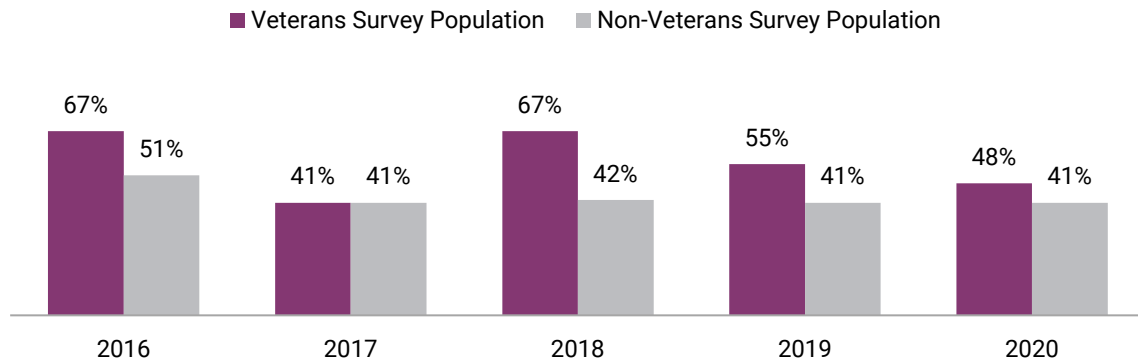


2020 Homeless Veterans Survey Population n=26; Homeless Non-Veterans Survey Population n=412
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

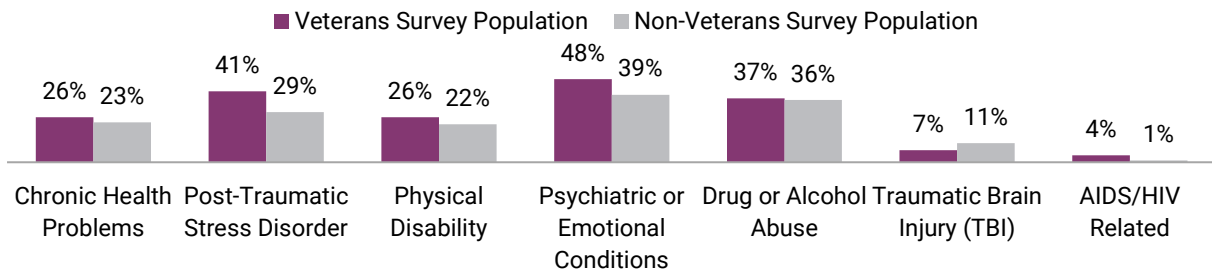
Almost half (48%) of veteran survey respondents reported one or more disabling conditions, higher than the 41% of non-veteran survey respondents, and representing a decrease from the 2019 (at 55%) veterans survey population.

FIGURE 53. DISABLING CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



2016 Veterans Survey Population n= 69, Non-Veterans Survey Population n= 536; 2017 Veterans Survey Population n= 137, Non-Veterans Survey Population n= 550; 2018 Veterans Survey Population n=42, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=473; 2019 Veterans Survey Population n=40, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=474; 2020 Veterans Survey Population n=27, Non-Veterans Survey Population n=417

FIGURE 54. HEALTH CONDITIONS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



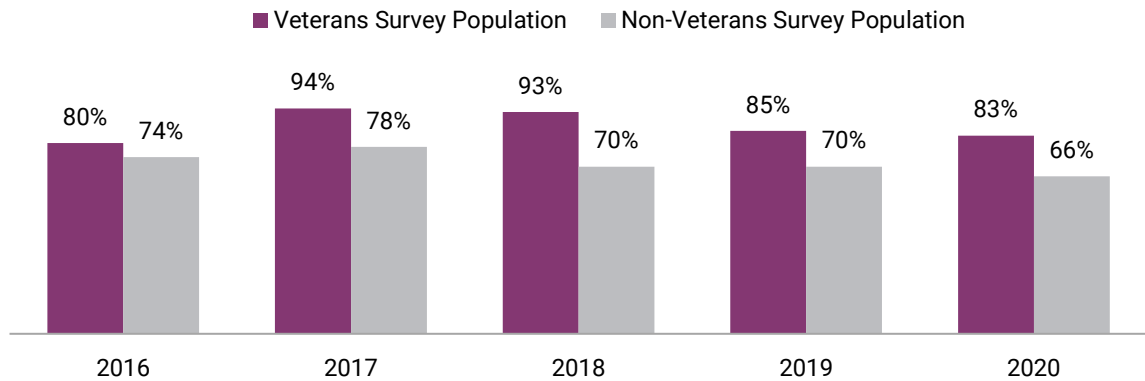
2020 Veterans Survey Population n=27; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=417

* Suppressed due to small sample size.

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

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES AMONG VETERANS

FIGURE 55. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON

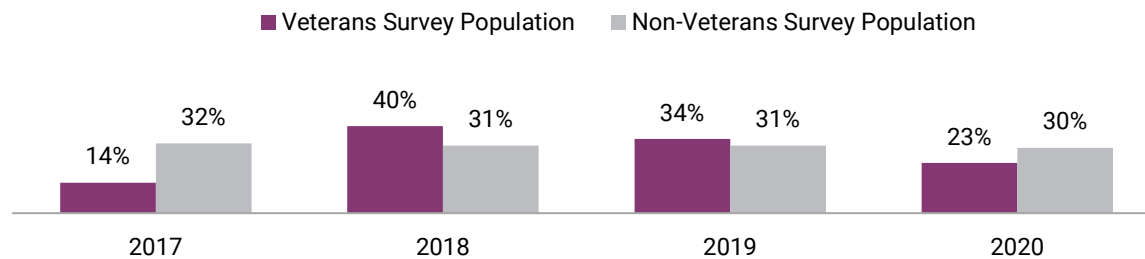


2016 Veteran Survey Population n= 60, Non-Veteran Survey Population n= 415; 2017 Veteran Survey Population n=125, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=456; 2018 Veteran Survey Population n=41, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=453; 2019 Veteran Survey Population n=40, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=459; 2020 Veteran Survey Population n=79, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=340

INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Nationally, among those who are incarcerated, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be first time offenders, to have committed a violent offense, and to receive longer prison sentences. Veterans who are incarcerated may also face the loss of various VA benefits during this time.⁸

FIGURE 56. A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS, VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS COMPARISON



2017 Veterans Survey Population n=132; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=520; 2018 Veterans Survey Population n=42; Non-Veterans Survey Population n=458; 2019 Veteran Survey Population n=38, Non-Veteran Survey Population n=461; 2020 Veterans Survey Population n=26; 2020 Non-Veterans Survey Population n=401

⁸ Military Benefits. (2014). Incarcerated Veterans. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-benefits/incarcerated-veterans.html>.

HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

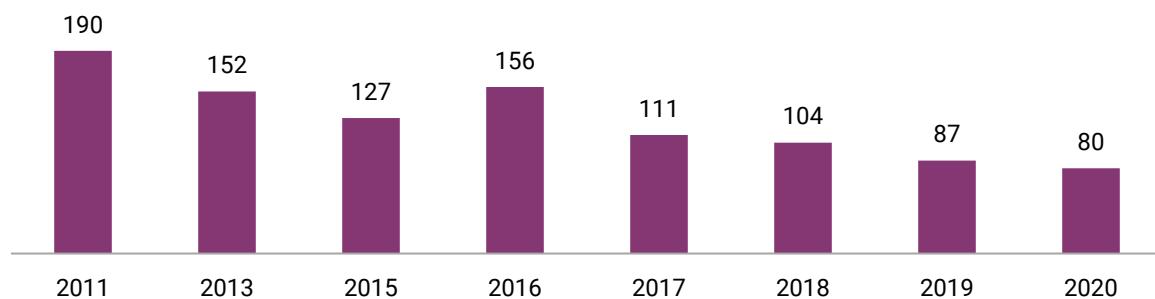
National data from 2019 suggest that 30% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families.⁹ Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, as public shelters serve more than 90% of homeless families in the United States; this is a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied children and transition-age youth. Data on families experiencing homelessness suggest that their circumstances are not much different from other families in poverty.

Nationally, the majority of homeless families are households headed by single women and families with children under the age of six.¹⁰ Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with stable living accommodations.¹¹

Families experiencing homelessness can be difficult to identify and even harder to survey. Because of the wide array of supports available to them, families experiencing unsheltered homelessness frequently receive the support necessary to enter shelters or other housing options. This can lead to difficulties in surveying large numbers of families experiencing homelessness, leading to survey results that can be subject to greater fluctuation than other subpopulations. Please use caution when interpreting these results.

In Sonoma County, the number of homeless families with children has continued to decrease since 2016. In 2020, there were 80 families with 235 family members experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County representing 9% of the total persons experiencing homelessness.

FIGURE 57. TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION

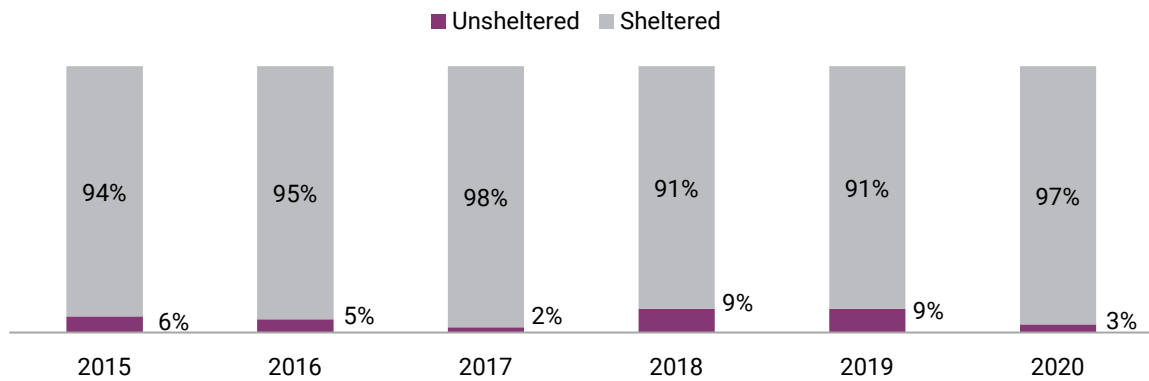


⁹ Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2019). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2020 from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

¹⁰ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2015 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

¹¹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

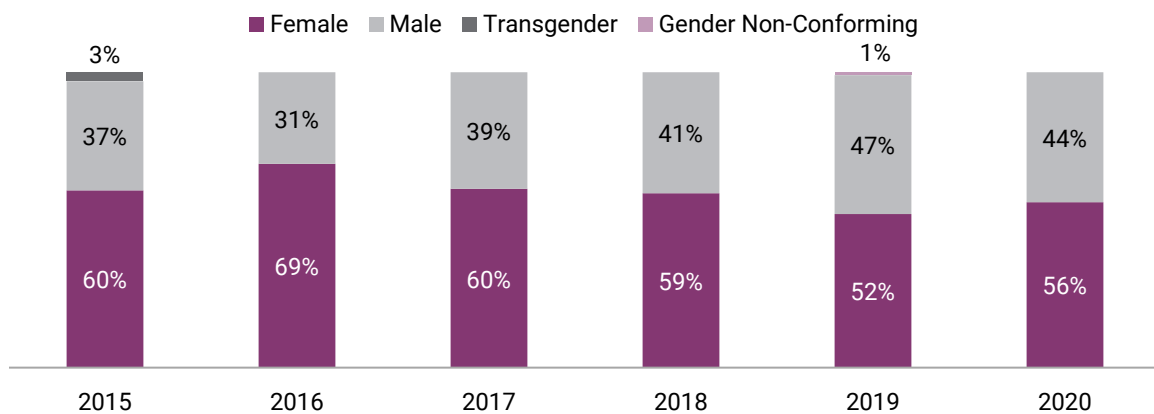
FIGURE 58. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019-20 % Change
Sheltered	344	369	319	307	253	227	↓ 10%
Unsheltered	23	20	7	32	26	8	-
Total	367	389	326	339	279	235	↓ 16%

Note: Percent change is not presented due to the small number of individuals.

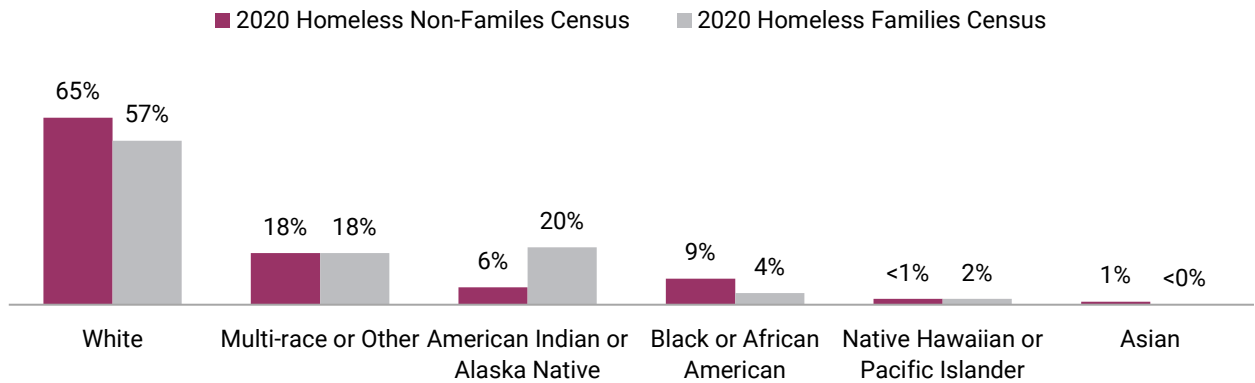
FIGURE 59. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY GENDER



2015 n= 367; 2016 n= 389; 2017 n= 326; 2018 n=339; 2019 n=279; 2020 n=235

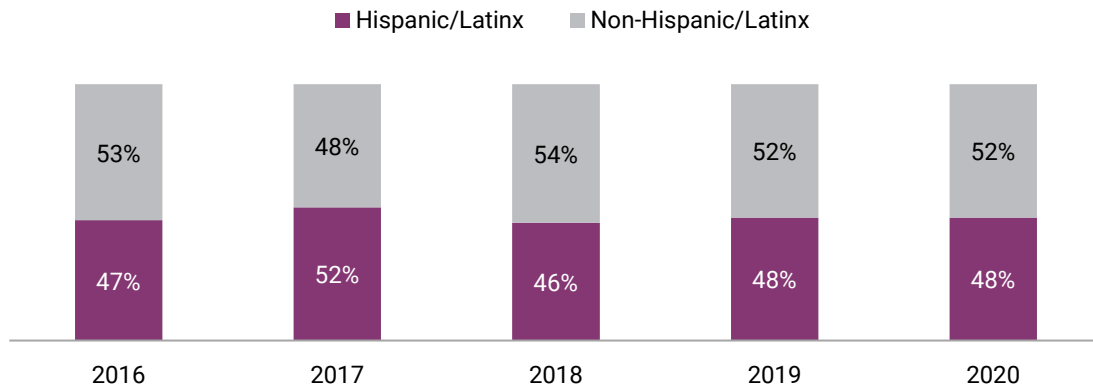
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

FIGURE 60. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY RACE¹²



2020 Homeless Families n=235; 2020 Homeless Non-Families n=2,405
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 61. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN CENSUS POPULATION, ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, BY ETHNICITY



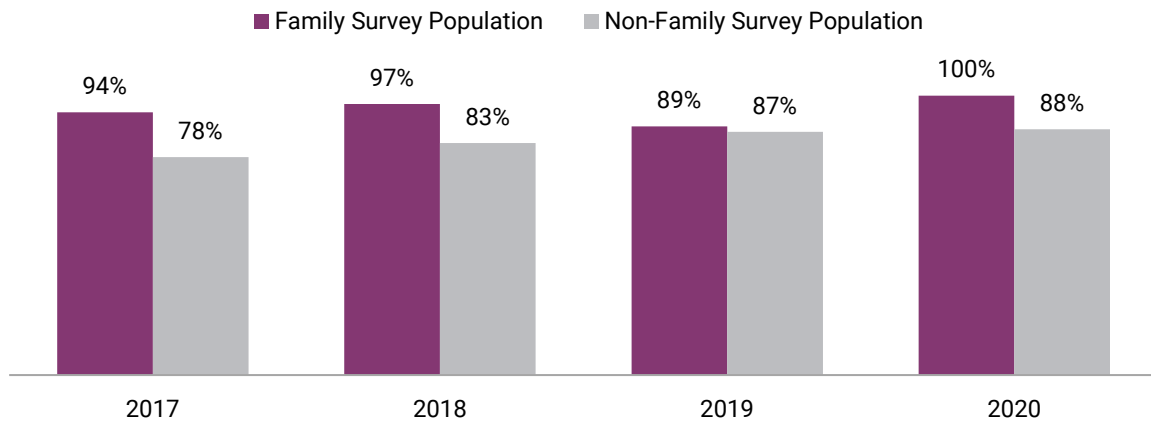
2016 Homeless Families n=389; 2017 Homeless Families n=326; 2018 Homeless Families n=339; 2019 Homeless Families n=279; 2020 Homeless Families n=233

Note: HDX data were prioritized for the 2018 and 2019 reports. Previous reports include survey demographic data for family ethnicity.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

FIGURE 62. LIVING IN SONOMA COUNTY AT THE TIME BECAME HOMELESS, FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY COMPARISON

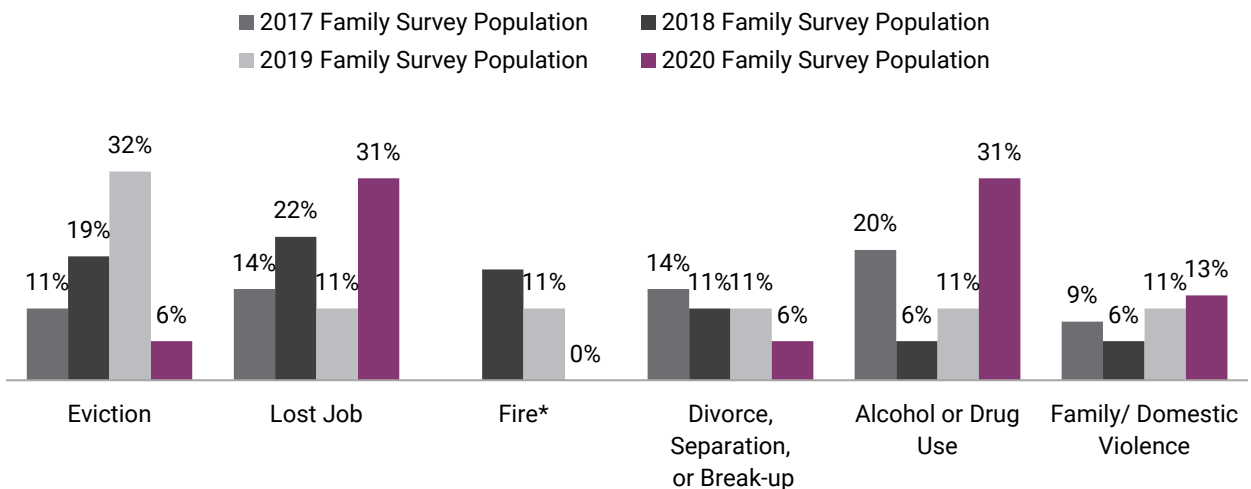


2017 Family Survey Population n=35; Non-Family Survey Population n=637; 2018 Family Survey Population n=38; Non-Family Survey Population n=398; 2019 Family Survey Population n=19, Non-Family Survey Population n=498; 2020 Family Survey Population n=16, Non-Family Survey Population n=373

Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

FIGURE 63. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES



2017 Family Survey Population n=35; 2018 Family Survey Population n=36; 2019 Family Survey Population n=19; 2020 Family Survey Population n=16

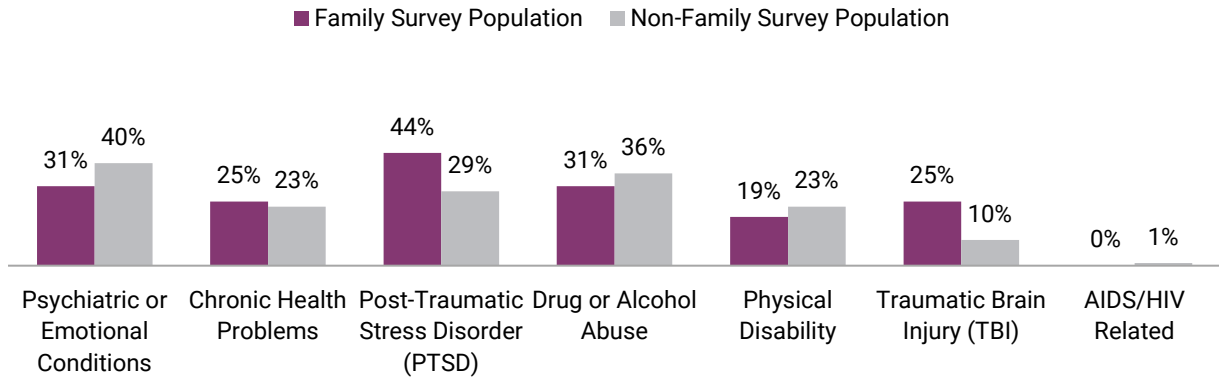
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

*Fire was not given as an option prior to 2018.

Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

FIGURE 64. HEALTH CONDITIONS, FAMILIES AND NON-FAMILIES COMPARISON



2020 Family with Children Survey Population n=16; Non-Family with Children Survey Population n=428

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

Note: Due to a small sample size, please use caution when interpreting results.

UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Although largely considered an undercount, nationwide estimates from 2019 suggest there are at least 35,038 unaccompanied children and transition-age youth on the streets and in public shelters, a decrease of 9% over 2017. Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment. Some reasons include the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services targeted to young people.¹³

Due to the especially challenging outreach and access efforts necessary to profile the nature of youth homelessness, limited data are available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness.

In Sonoma County, the number of unaccompanied children decreased 45% from 117 in 2019 to 64 in 2020 and the number of transition-age youth decreased 46% from 549 in 2019 to 297 in 2020. A little over 13% of all those experiencing homelessness in 2020 are unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age.

FIGURE 65. TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION

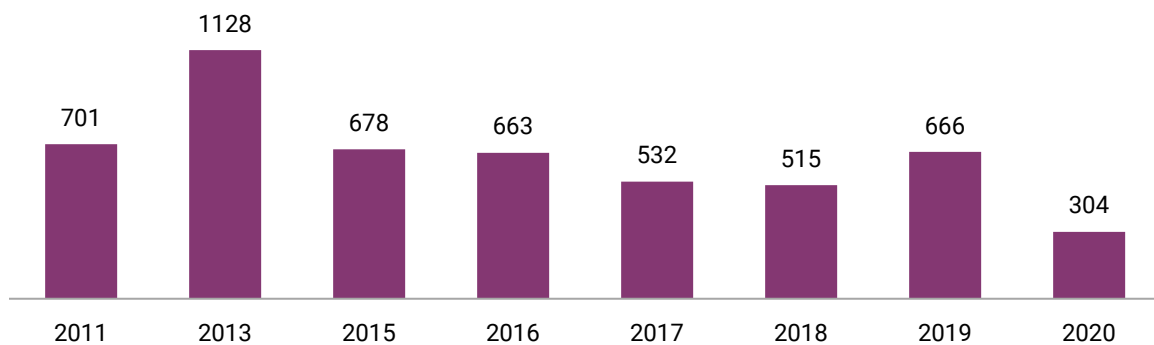
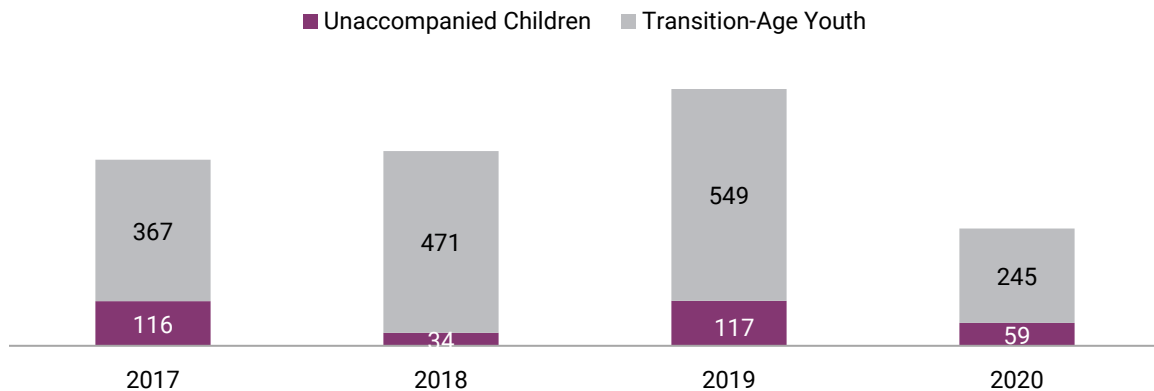
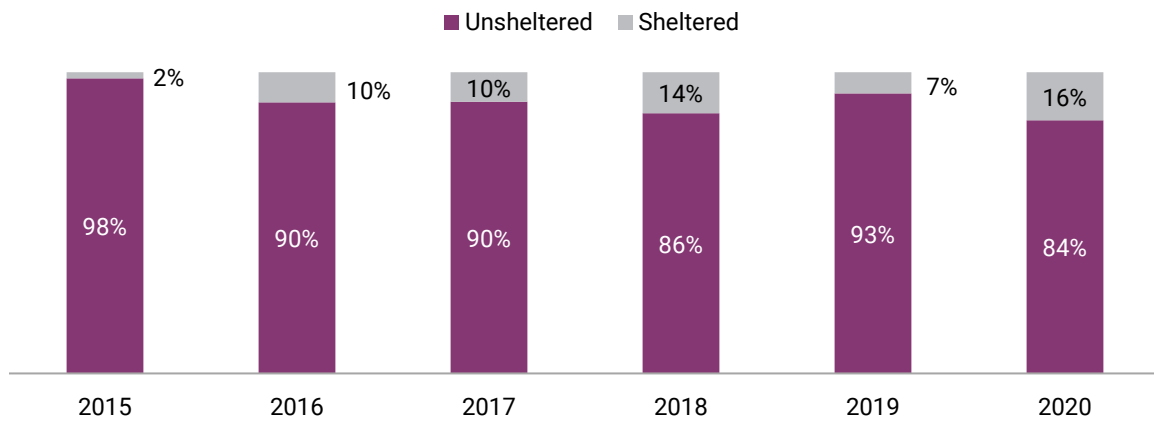


FIGURE 66. TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH COUNT POPULATION



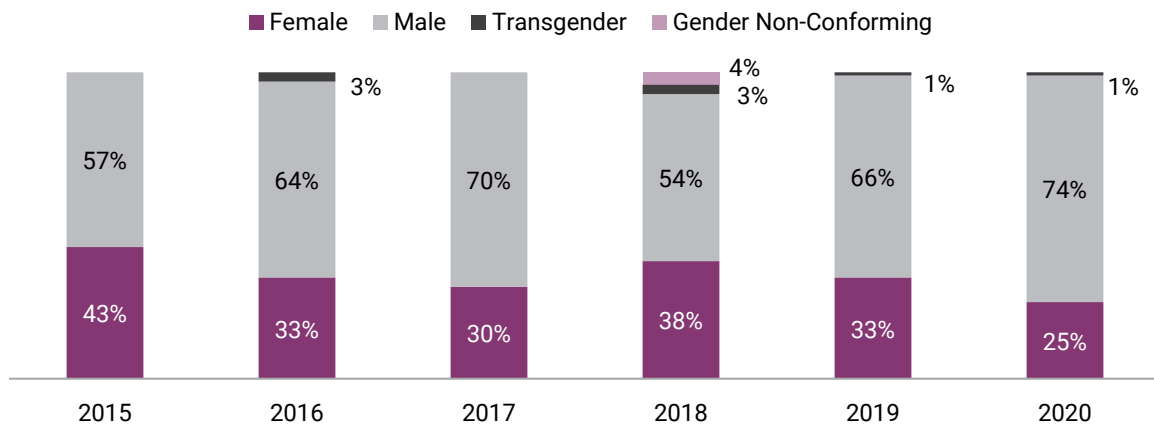
¹³ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

FIGURE 67. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019-20 % Change
Sheltered	38	67	52	70	43	59	↑ 37%
Unsheltered	640	600	486	445	623	245	↓ 61%
Total	678	667	538	515	666	304	↓ 54%

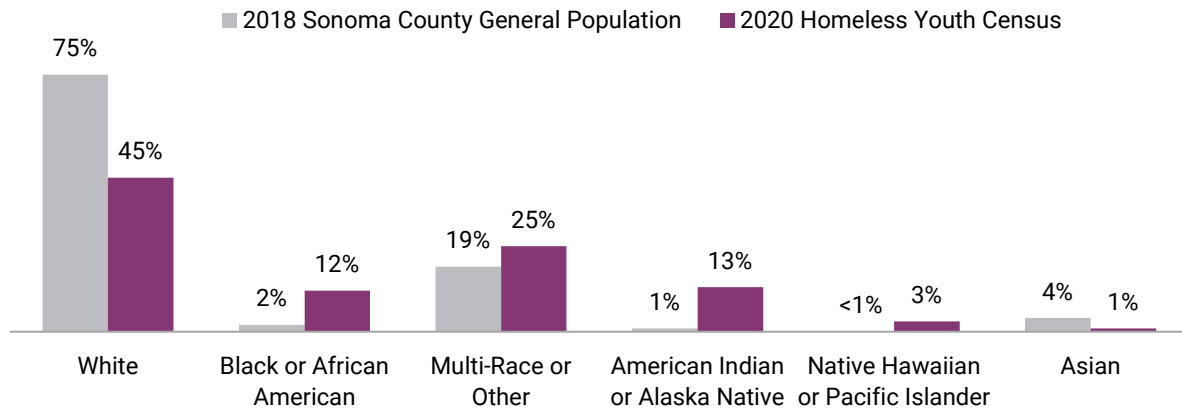
FIGURE 68. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2015 n=69; 2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=666; 2020 n=357

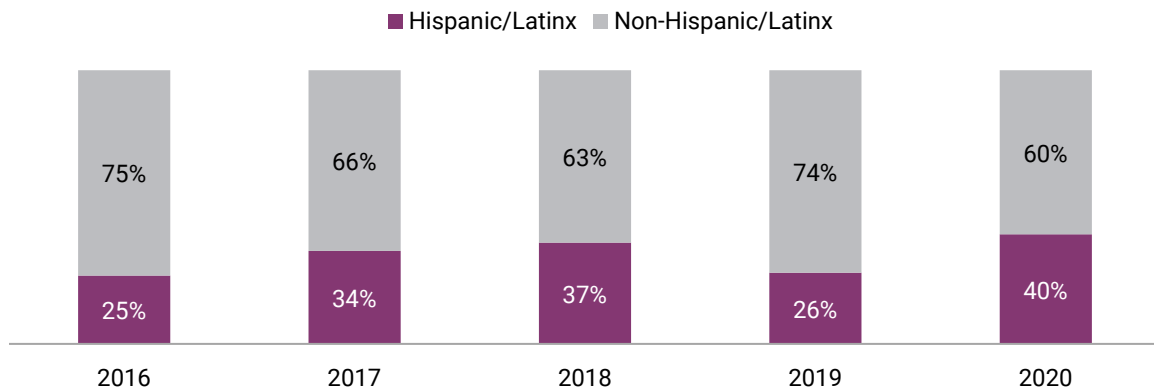
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

FIGURE 69. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE¹⁴



2020 Homeless Youth Census n=; 2020 Homeless Adult Census n=347
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

FIGURE 70. UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY

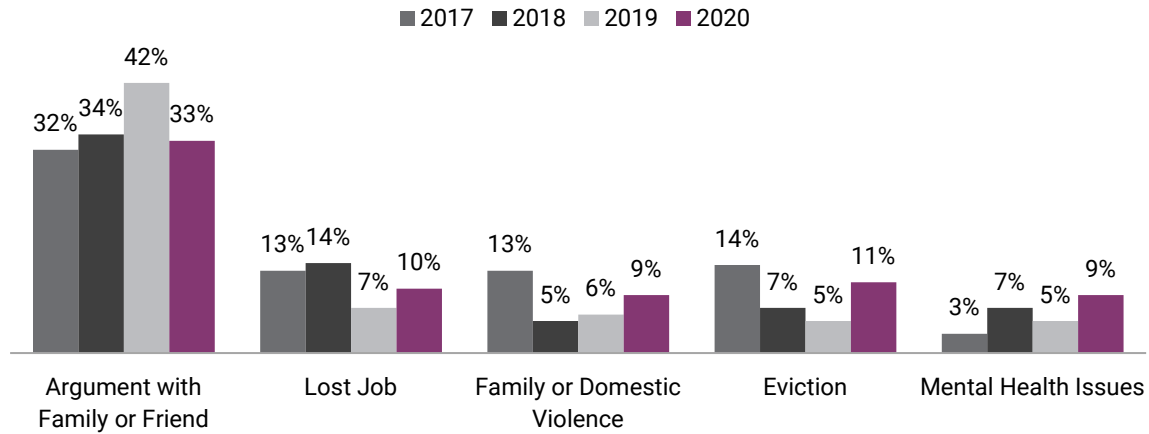


2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=666; 2020 n=347

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>

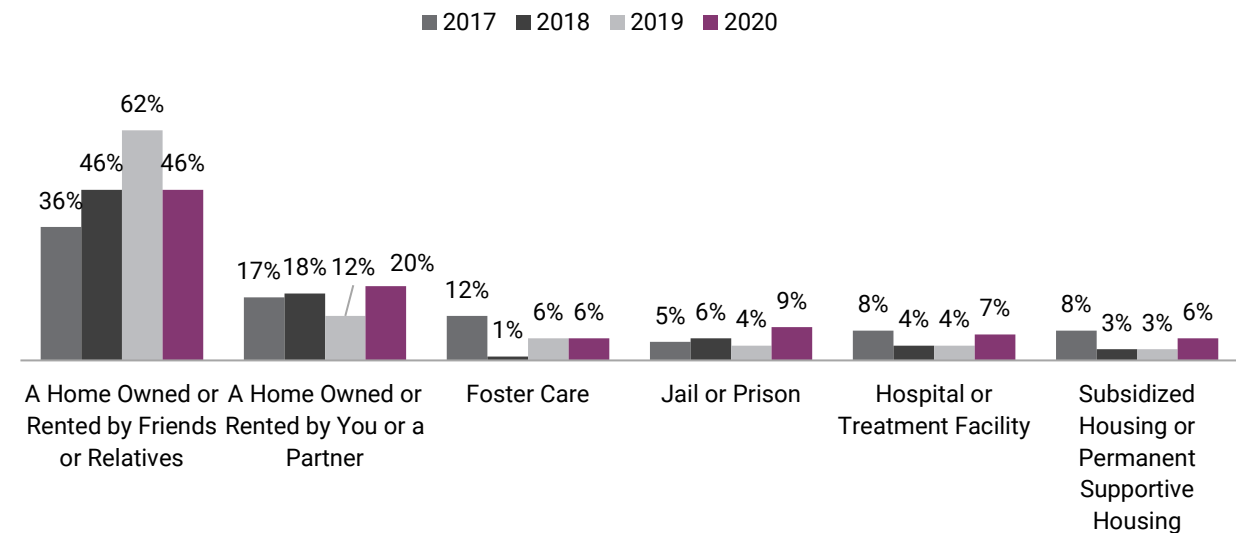
PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

FIGURE 71. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH (2020 TOP 5)



2016 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) Survey Population n=105; 2017 UC/TAY n=117; 2018 UC/TAY Survey Population n=89; 2019 UC/TAY Survey Population n=111; 2020 UC/TAY Survey Population n=109
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

FIGURE 72. PREVIOUS LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH (2020 TOP 6)

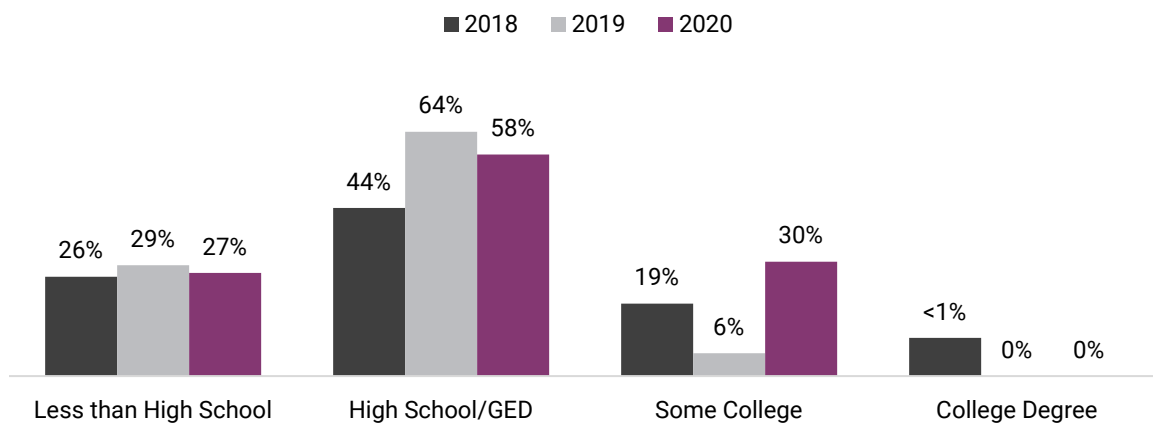


2017 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth Survey Population (UC/TAY) n=118; 2018 UC/TAY n=90; 2019 UC/TAY n=109; 2020 UC/TAY n=109
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

In March of 2017, a national study examining homelessness among community college students reported that on average, between 13% and 14% of community college students are homeless, with 27% of these students under the age of 21. Of those who reported being homeless, just over 2% reported spending time in a shelter.¹⁵ In 2020, 30% of youth reported having attended some college, which is a large increase over 2019 at 6%. It should be noted that this may be due to the survey selection bias and may not accurately reflect the college population in Sonoma County.

FIGURE 73. HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OBTAINED AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

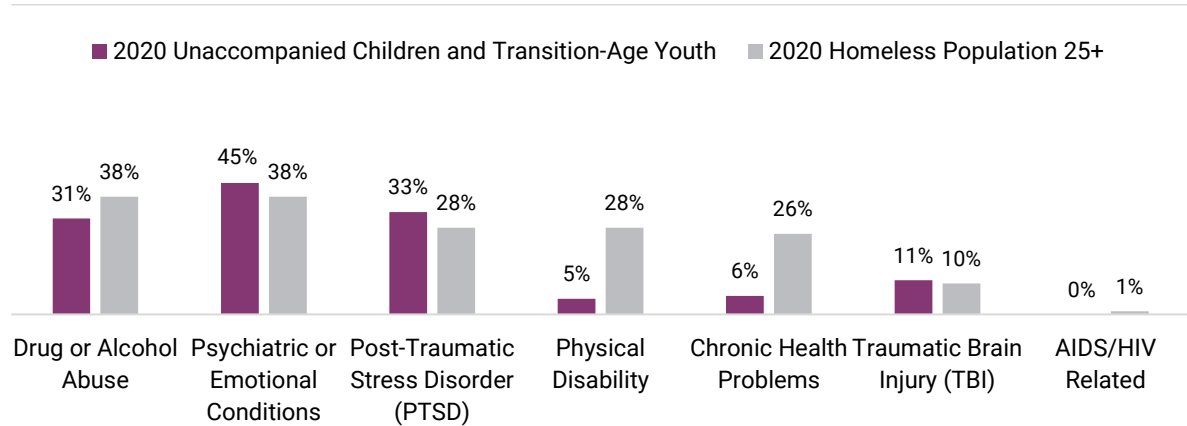
	2018	2019	2020
Less than High School	23	32	29
High School/GED	39	70	63
Some College	17	7	16
College Degree	9	0	0
Total	88	109	108

15 Goldrick-Rab, S. Richardson, J. & Hernandez, H. (2017). Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education. Retrieved 2017 from <http://wihopelab.com/publications/hungry-and-homeless-in-college-report.pdf>

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

While homeless youth tend to have fewer health conditions than the general homeless population, health concerns are still an issue among young people experiencing homelessness: 61% of youth surveyed reported having at least one health condition.

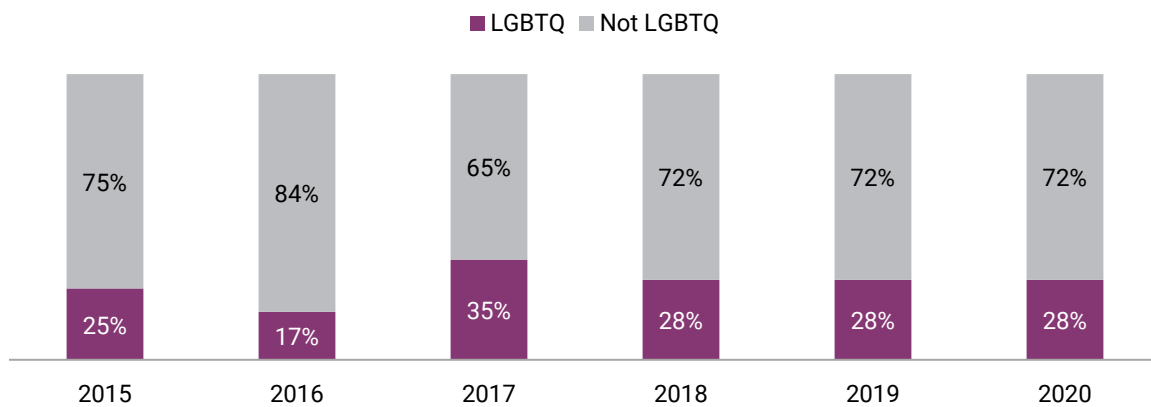
FIGURE 74. HEALTH CONDITIONS, UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH AND ADULT POPULATION COMPARISON



2020 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth n=110; General Population n=334
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

FIGURE 75. LGBTQ STATUS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2015 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=79; 2016 UC/TAY n=115; 2017 UC/TAY n=120; 2018 UC/TAY n=95; 2019 UC/TAY n=112; 2020 UC/TAY=110 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

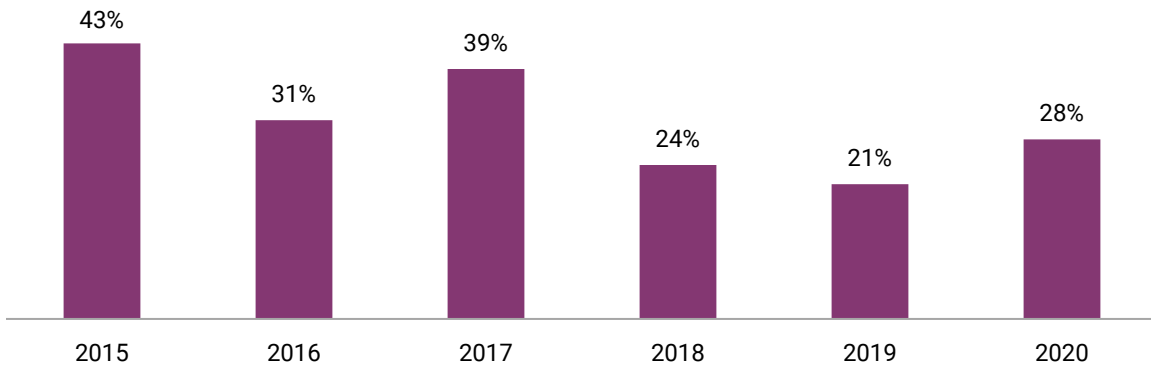
FIGURE 76. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Breakout of Respondents Answering, "Yes"	2020 %	n
Gay	16%	5
Lesbian	16%	5
Queer	13%	4
Bisexual	45%	14
Transgender	5%	6
Gender Non-Conforming	5%	5
Other	10%	3

2020 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth n=110; Breakout n=31 respondents offering 31 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

FIGURE 77. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

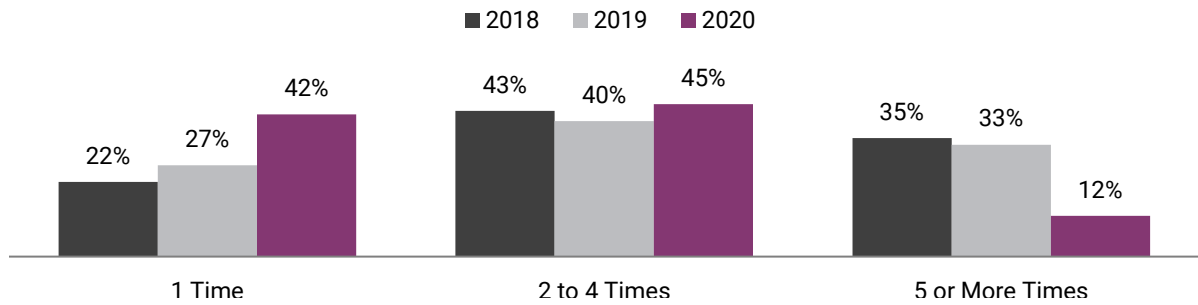


2015 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=75; 2016 UC/TAY n=101; 2017 UC/TAY n=113; 2018 UC/TAY n=93; 2019 UC/TAY n=110; 2020 UC/TAY n=105

HOUSING INSTABILITY AND FAMILY CONTACT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Often, people will experience housing instability such as couch-surfing or living in hotels or motels before homelessness. When asked if they had experienced housing instability previously, 42% of youth respondents indicated they had.

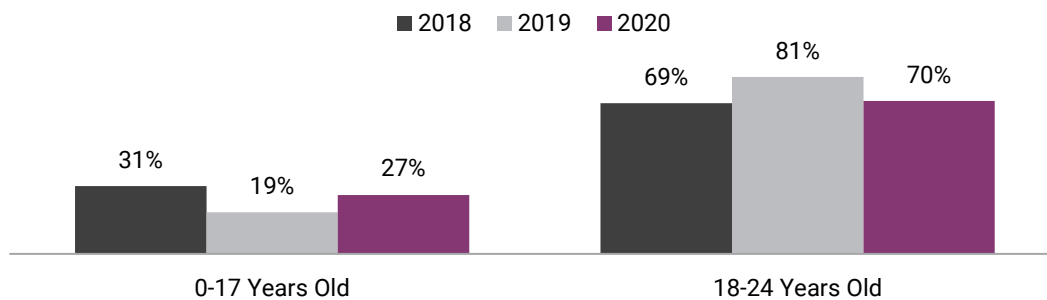
FIGURE 78. HISTORY OF HOUSING INSTABILITY AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=79; 2019 UC/TAY n=88; 2020 UC/TAY n=118

Unaccompanied children and transition-age youth respondents were also asked about the age at which they first experienced homelessness.

FIGURE 79. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

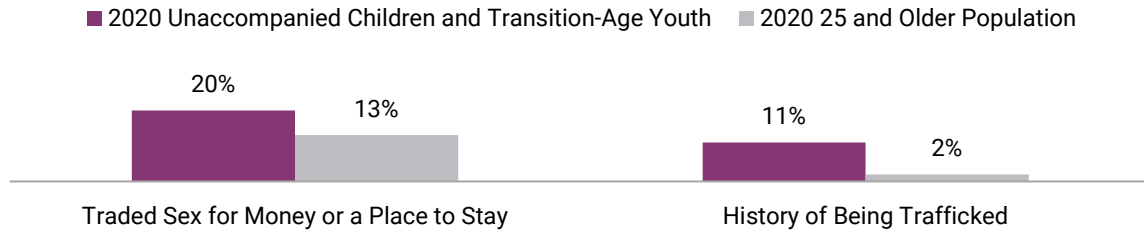


2018 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=93; 2019 UC/TAY n=108; 2020 UC/TAY n=107

SEX TRADE

Due to their vulnerable circumstances and precarious access to basic needs, youth experiencing homelessness may have a history of being trafficked (i.e., forced commercial sex) or trading sex for money or a place to stay.

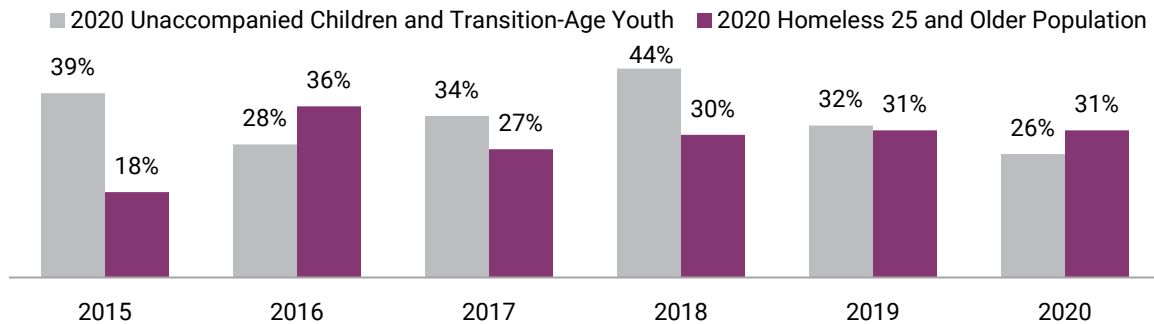
FIGURE 80. SEX TRADE



2020 Trading Sex for Money or a Place to Stay n=421, History of Being Trafficked n=418

EXPERIENCE WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

FIGURE 81. UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH WHO SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (UC/TAY) n=80, 2015 General Survey Population n=523; 2016 UC/TAY n=107, 2016 General Survey Population n=490; 2017 UC/TAY n=119, 2017 General Survey Population n=533; 2018 UC/TAY n=88, 2018 General Survey Population n=412; 2019 UC/TAY n=109, 2019 General Survey Population n=396; 2020 UC/TAY n=110, 2020 General Survey Population n=317

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

HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS OVER AGE 55

While homeless older adults have not been identified as a specific subpopulation of interest by the federal government, Sonoma County recognizes the growing trend and initiated an effort to gather additional information on this vulnerable population. The following section details the characteristics of adults ages 55 and older experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County.

The population of older adults experiencing homelessness has risen in accordance with the overall growth of the population over age 45 in the U.S. Because older adults experiencing homelessness have unmet mental health, substance use, and physical health needs, their mortality rates are higher than that of the general population.¹⁶

The number of older adults experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County increased by 42% to 648 in 2020.

FIGURE 82. TOTAL OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION

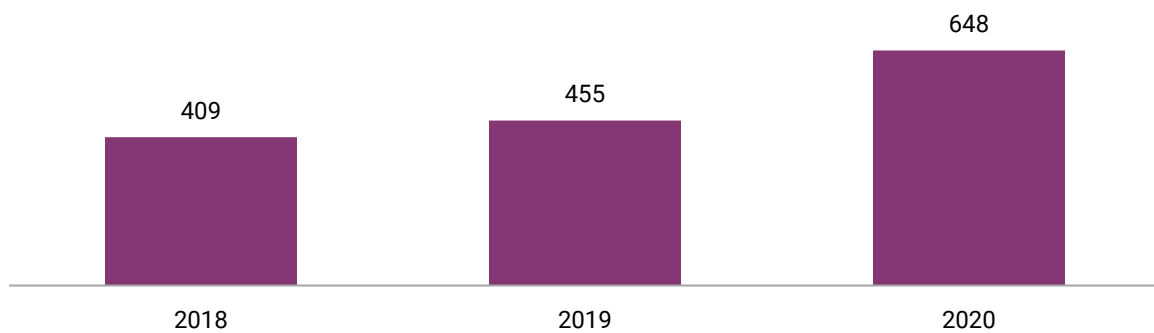
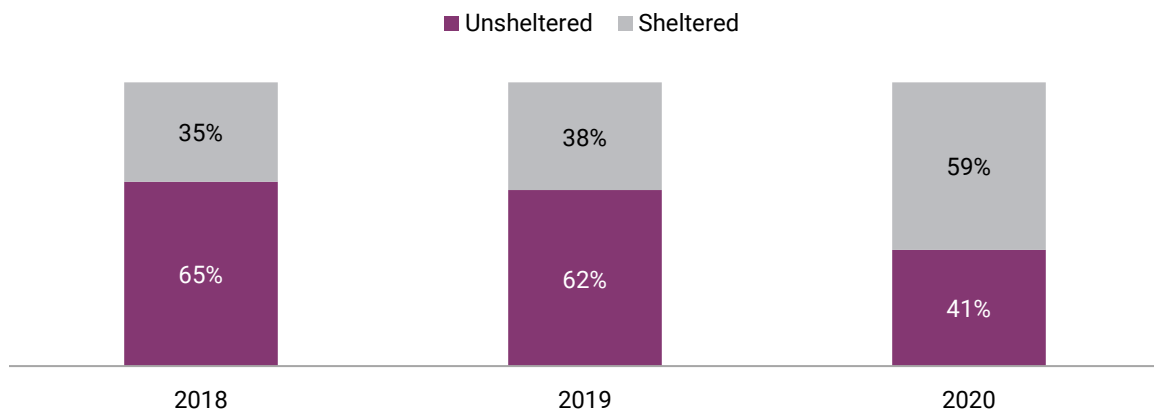


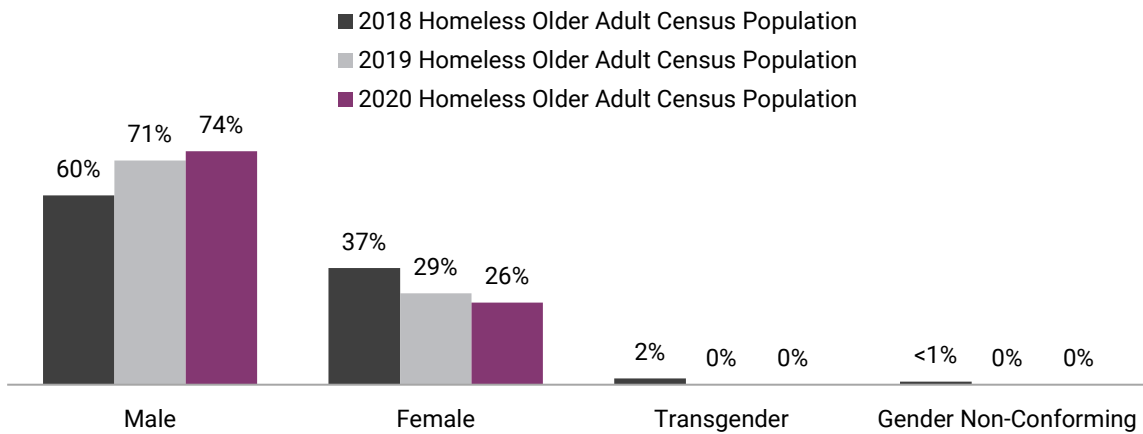
FIGURE 83. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION BY SHELTER STATUS



¹⁶ CSH & Hearth (2011). Ending Homelessness among Older Adults and Elders through Permanent Supportive Housing. Retrieved 2017 from <http://www.csh.org/>.

	2018	2019	2020	% Change 18-20
Sheltered	143	171	383	↑167%
Unsheltered	266	284	265	↓7%
Total	409	455	648	↑ 58%

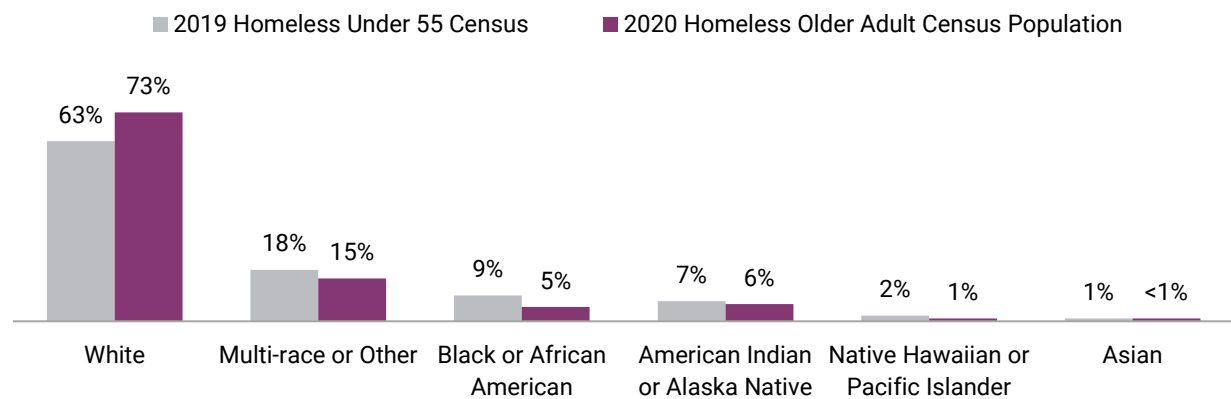
FIGURE 84. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER



2018 n=409; 2019 n=455; 2020 n=648

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender non-conforming was added in 2018.

FIGURE 85. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE¹⁷

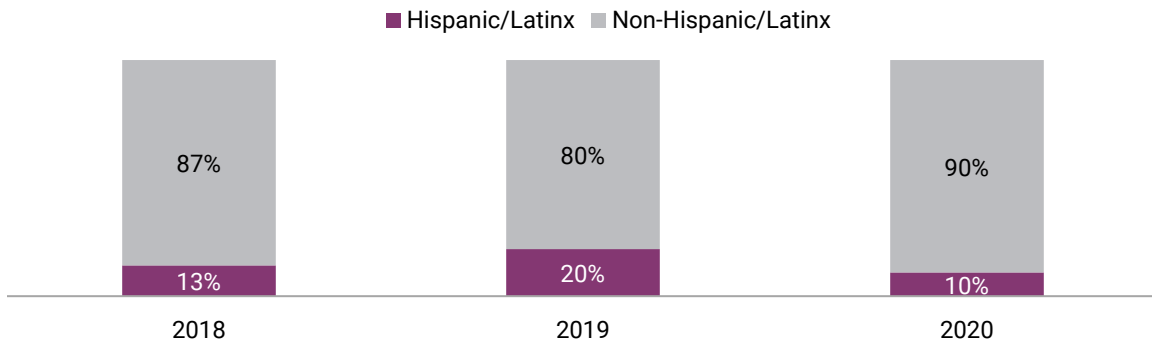


2020 Homeless Older Adult Census Population n=2,097, 2020 Homeless Under 55 Census Population n=648

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

FIGURE 86. HOMELESS OLDER ADULT CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY

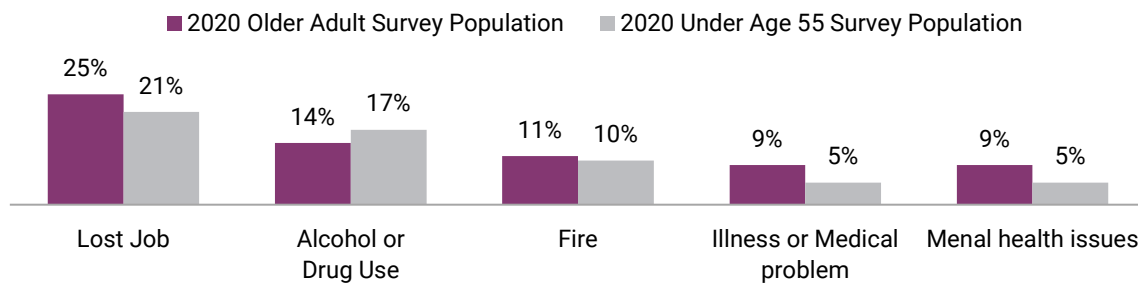
¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2014-2018). Sonoma County, California, DP05 Demographic and housing characteristics [Data]. 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved 2020 from <https://factfinder.census.gov>



2018 Older Adult Census Population n=409; 2019 Older Adult Census Population n=455; 2020 Older Adult Census Population n=648

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

FIGURE 87. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (2020 TOP 5), OLDER ADULTS AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON

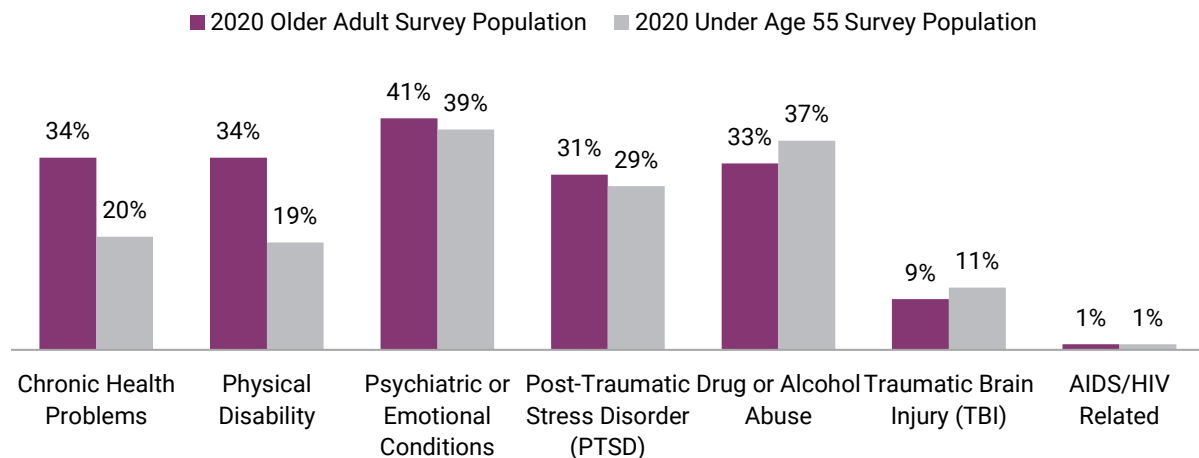


2020 Older Adults n=106; 2019 Under Age 55 n=332

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

HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

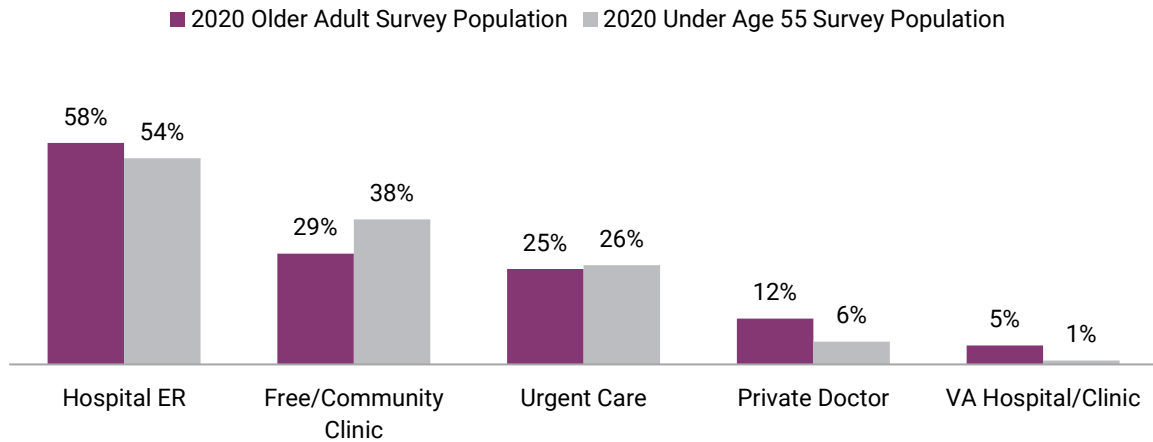
FIGURE 88. HEALTH CONDITIONS, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON



2020 Older Adults n=107; 2020 Under Age 55 n=337

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

FIGURE 89. WHERE CARE USUALLY RECEIVED, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON (2020 TOP 5)

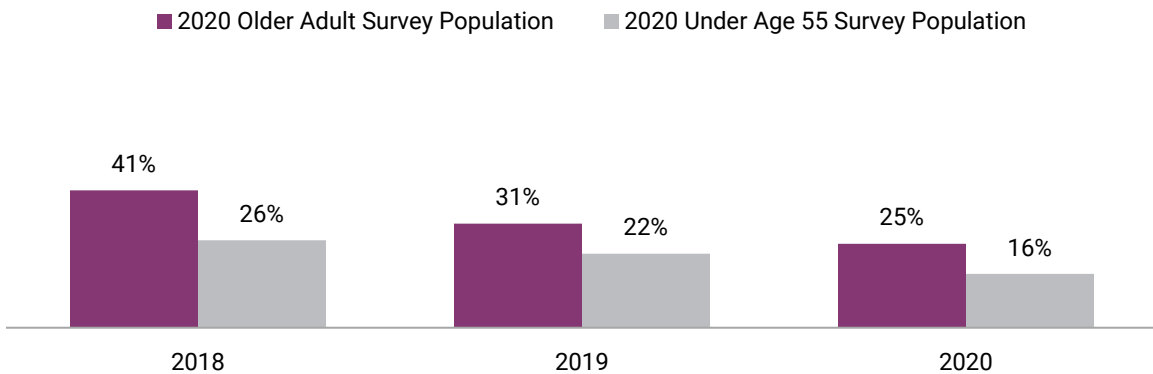


2020 Older Adults n=60 offering 68 responses; 2020 Under Age 55 n=209 offering 217 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS OLDER ADULTS

Chronic homelessness is defined by having a disabling condition that interferes with work and/or finding housing in addition to having been homeless for at least a year.

FIGURE 90. CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS, OLDER ADULT AND UNDER AGE 55 COMPARISON

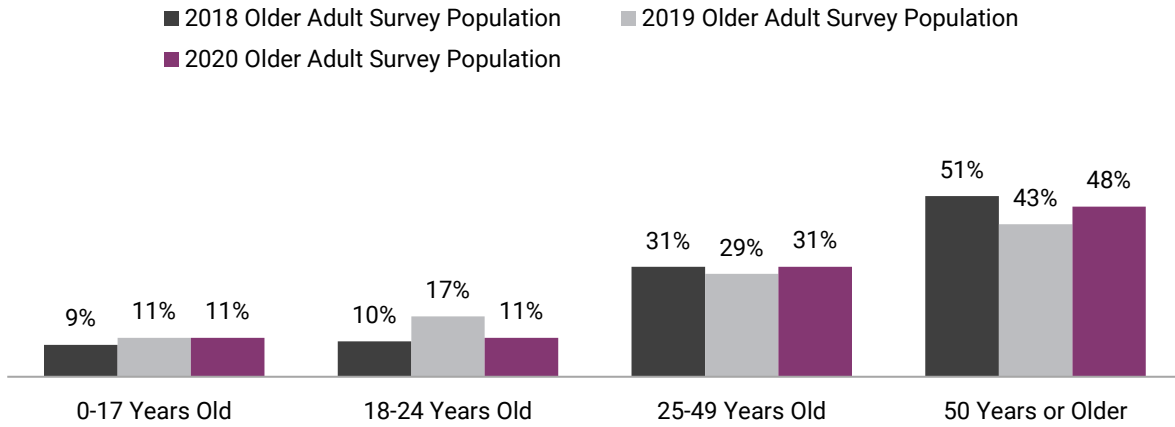


2018 Older Adults n=115; 2018 Under Age 55 n=404; 2019 Older Adults n=130; 2019 Under Age 55 n=390; 2020 Older Adults n=112; 2020 Under Age 55 n=370

AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Twenty-two percent (22%) of older adult survey respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time before age 25, meaning that nearly one-quarter of this population has experienced homelessness on and off for at least 30 years. Conversely, 48% of older adults had their first experience of homelessness after age 50.

FIGURE 91. FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS AT AGE 50 OR OLDER



2018 Older Adults n=114; 2019 Older Adults n=127; 2020 Older Adults n=104



COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY

The annual Sonoma County Point-in-Time Count only profiles those who are living in sheltered and unsheltered locations, but it does not count those in the community who are temporarily doubled up, precariously housed, or otherwise vulnerable to homelessness. For the third consecutive year, Sonoma County conducted an additional assessment of unstably housed and fire-affected populations in addition to the unsheltered count. Individuals discussed in the following section are not included in the Point-in-Time Count, and the data presented are supplemental findings meant to increase understanding and inform planning efforts.

The study was a representative, telephone-based household survey implemented in February and March 2020 to understand the impacts of the 2017 and 2019 fires on the unstably housed in Sonoma County. This project has continued in order to track the longer term impacts that may still be impacting the community and to help provide guidance for future steps. This report provides an overview of the findings from the household survey and an estimate of the population of unstably housed residents in Sonoma County.

Telephone surveys were administered to a randomized sample of Sonoma County residents between February 24 and March 13, 2020. This resulted in 1,250 complete and unique surveys.¹⁸ Based on a 2017 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau of 185,825 households in Sonoma County, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 1,250 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of Sonoma County.¹⁹ In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within 3 percentage points of the current results. For more information regarding the community telephone survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

This section is intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and state governments gain a better understanding of the population of individuals who are not homeless but who lack a residence of their own, how the 2017 and 2019 fires affected the county at large, and service provision planning for the future.

STUDY POPULATION

This study examined those who were temporarily doubled up due to the loss of housing from economic or social factors of the 2017 and 2019 Sonoma County wildfires. The population includes households that reported someone was temporarily residing at the location who would otherwise be without housing. This study does not include multi-generational households, households that are over-crowded, or other living situations in which multiple households share one residence on a more permanent basis. For more information about methodology, please see Appendix A.

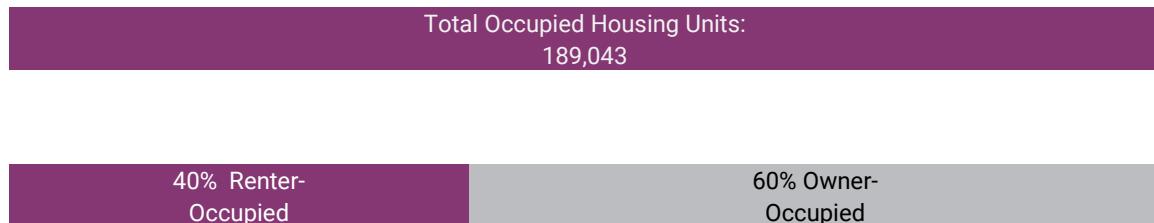
¹⁸ Out of a total of 1,250 surveys, 118 respondents reported no longer living in Sonoma County. Of these former Sonoma County residents, 16% reported leaving the county due to the fires.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). Annual Estimates of Housing Units for the United States, Regions, Divisions, States, and Counties: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Retrieved 2019 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

EFFECTS OF FIRES ON SONOMA COUNTY HOUSING

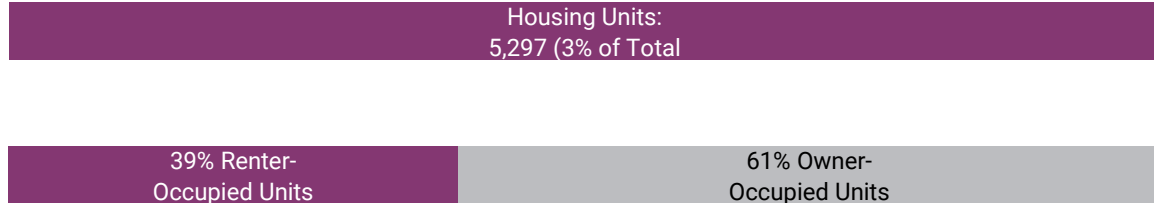
In 2016 (prior to the fires), Sonoma County had 189,043 occupied housing units, a homeowner vacancy rate of 1%, and a rental vacancy rate of 3%. Of the inhabited units in the county, 40% were renter-occupied and 60% were owner-occupied.²⁰ With already low vacancy rates, the fires had a significant effect on housing availability in Sonoma County.

FIGURE 92. STATUS OF HOUSING UNITS PRIOR TO FIRES



A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) needs assessment reported that a total of 5,297 or 3% of housing units were destroyed in the 2017 fires, of which 39% were renter-occupied and 61% were owner-occupied. Three percent (3%) of owner-occupied and 3% of renter-occupied homes were destroyed.^{21,22}

FIGURE 93. HOUSING UNITS AFFECTED BY FIRES



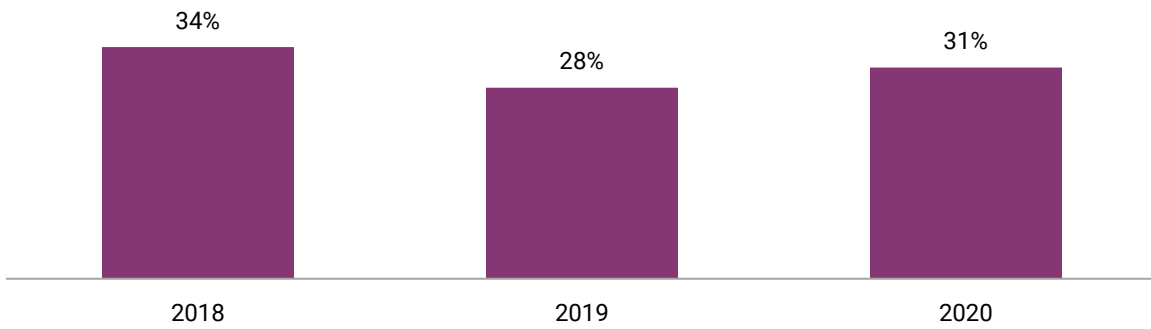
In 2020, 33% of county households reported that their housing situation was affected by the fires of 2017 and 2019, an increase from 28% of households in 2019. Seventy percent (70%) of these households were evacuated and allowed to return, 13% reported their home burned, 11% reported their home was damaged by smoke, and 4% reported that they could no longer afford their home after the fires. The “other” reasons reported included property damage, hosting those who were evacuated or displaced by the fires, utility shutoffs, rent increases, and housing scarcity.

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). American Community Survey 2015 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved 2018 from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

²¹ United States. Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA Unmet Needs Assessment. Washington, DC: FEMA, 2017.

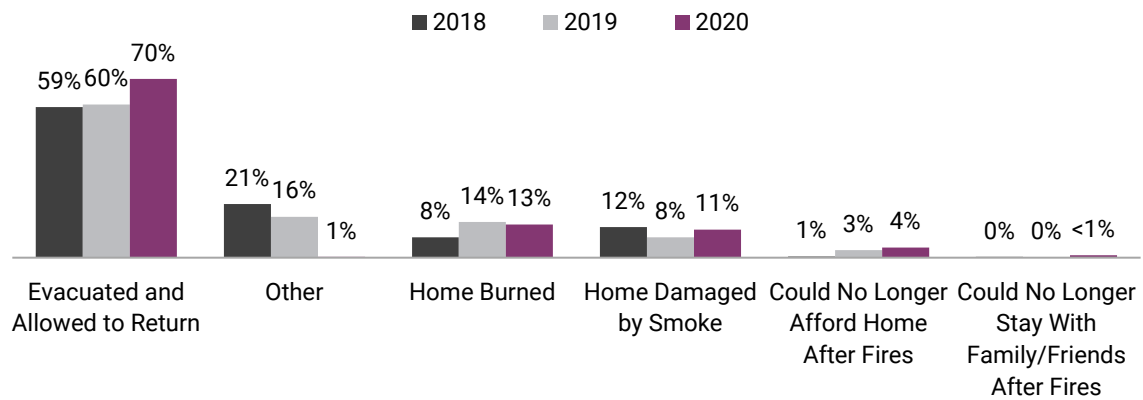
²² This product uses the Federal Emergency Management Agency's API, but is not endorsed by FEMA.

FIGURE 94. HOUSING AFFECTED BY FIRES, TELEPHONE SURVEY POPULATION



2018 n=1,151; 2019 n=1,091; 2020 n=439

FIGURE 95. HOW HOUSING AFFECTED BY FIRES



2018 n=395; 2019 n=309; 2020 n=350

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

TEMPORARILY HOUSED

As of March 2020, 7% of households in Sonoma County were staying with another household on a temporary basis. It is estimated that 23,694 persons are temporarily housed in Sonoma County, an increase from 2019. This remains lower than the national rate: for every person experiencing homelessness, eight are precariously housed (1:8) nationally.²³ While many of these people will recover stable housing of their own, some will not and will be at risk of homelessness.

Among those temporarily housed, it is estimated that 15% are doubled up due to the direct loss of housing from the Sonoma County wildfires. Fifteen percent (15%) also lost their housing as a result of indirect effects such as displacement by owners returning to their rental properties and rent increases.

FIGURE 96. TOTAL TEMPORARILY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS

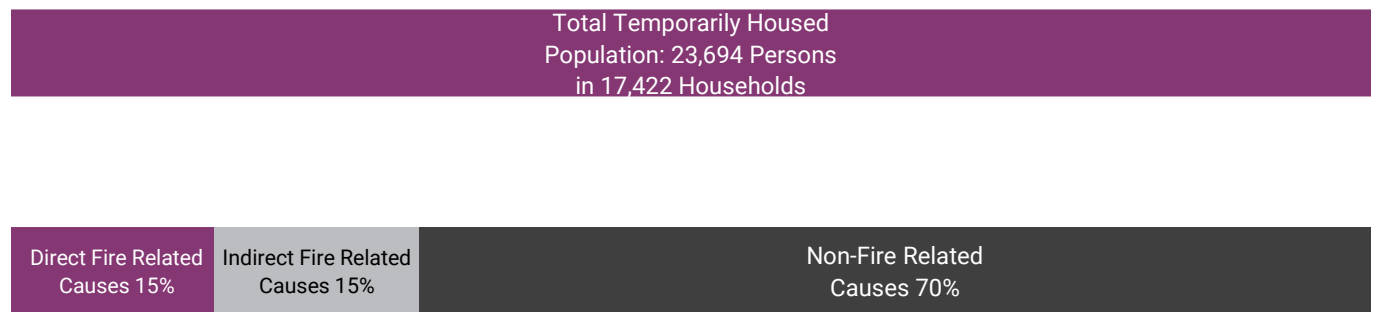
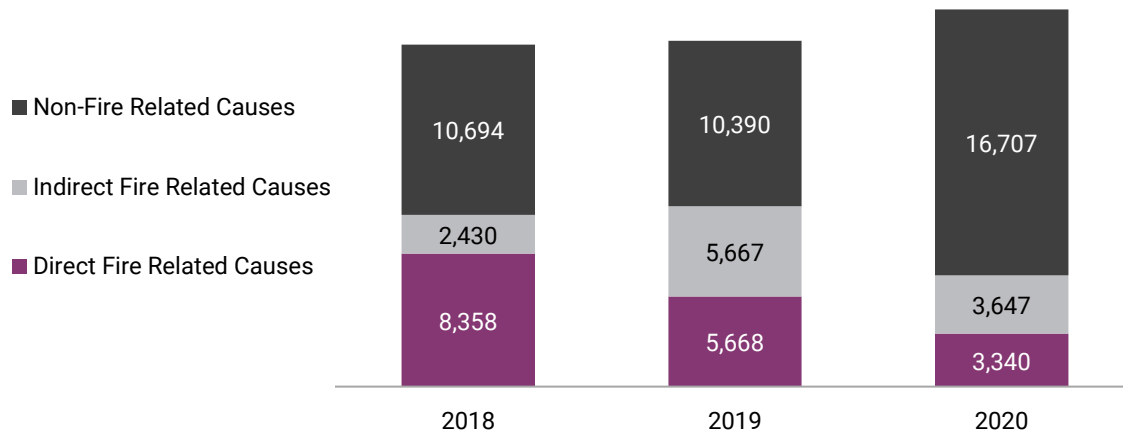


FIGURE 97. TOTAL TEMPORARILY HOUSED INDIVIDUALS

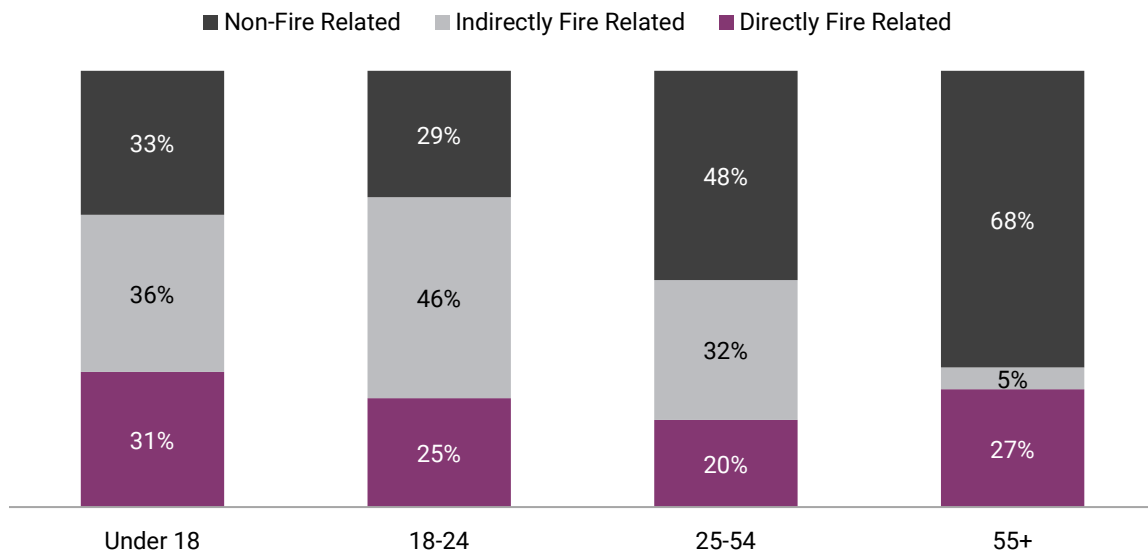


²³ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2018). The State of Homelessness in America. Retrieved May 2018 from <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/>

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TEMPORARY RESIDENTS

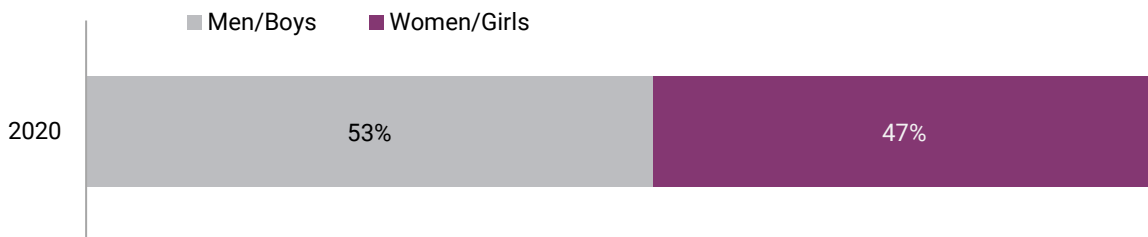
Three-quarters (75%) of temporarily housed residents were adults age 25 and older, while 15% were children under 18 and 10% were transitional-age youth between age 18 and 25. Slightly over half (53%) of these residents were men/boys and 47% were women/girls.

FIGURE 98. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS BY AGE AND CAUSE OF TEMPORARY HOUSING



2020 Temporary Residents n=144

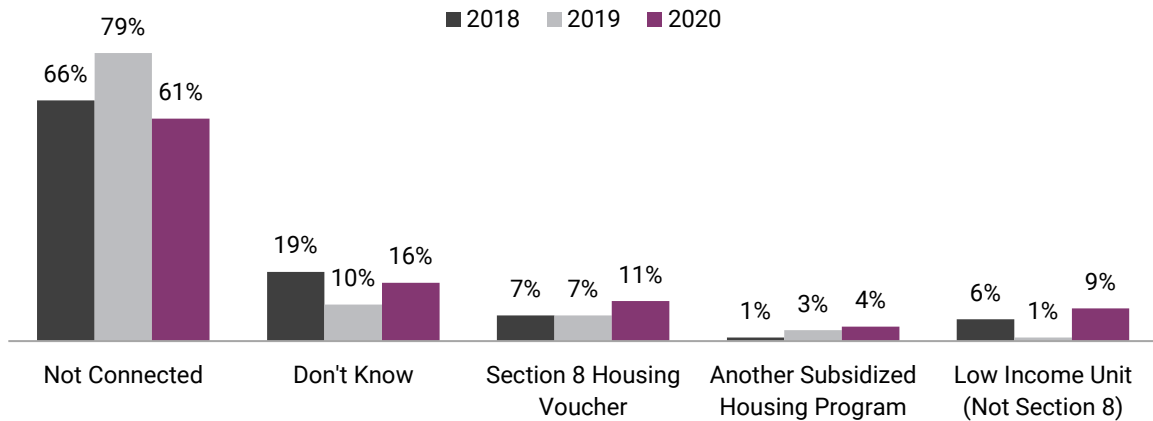
FIGURE 99. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS BY GENDER



2020 Temporary Residents n=144

Sixty-one percent (61%) of those temporarily housed in Sonoma County were not on a waitlist for any type of housing assistance. Almost one-quarter (24%) were on a waitlist for some type of housing, 11% were on a waitlist for a Section 8 Housing Voucher, 4% were on a waitlist for another subsidized housing program, and 9% were on a waitlist for a low-income housing unit. Fewer temporarily housed respondents were unsure of their waitlist status, with 16% responding “Don’t Know” in 2020, an increase from 10% in 2019.

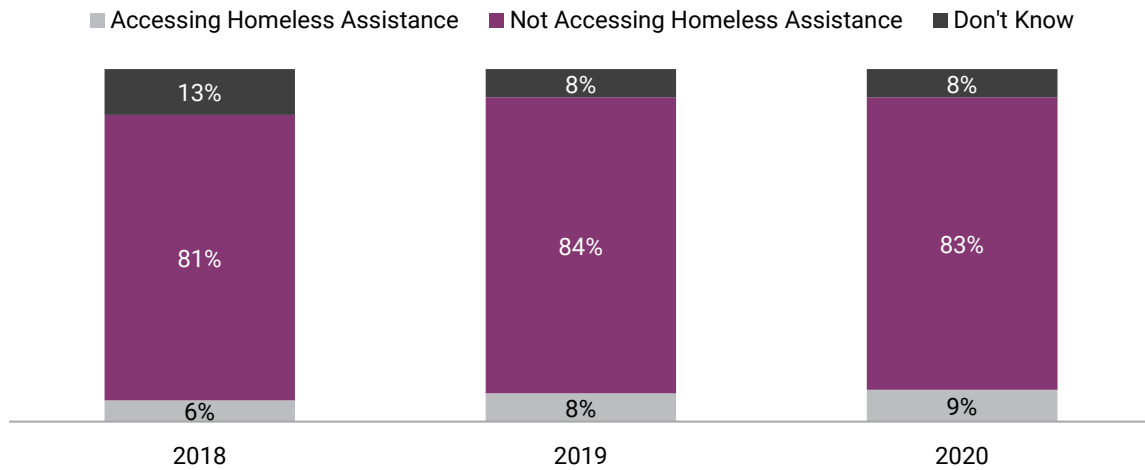
FIGURE 100. TEMPORARY RESIDENT CONNECTION TO SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WAITLISTS



2018 Temporary Residents n=79; 2019 Temporary Residents n=184; 2020 Temporary Residents n=76
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Although a slight increase from 2019, only 9% of temporarily housed residents were accessing homeless assistance such as counseling, housing placement assistance, or busing to/from school.

FIGURE 101. TEMPORARY RESIDENTS ACCESS TO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE



2018 Temporary Residents n=78; 2019 Temporary Residents n=184; 2020 Temporary Residents n=78

CONCLUSION

HOMELESS COUNT AND SURVEY

The 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2020 Point-in-Time Count identified 2,745 persons experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. This represents a decrease of 7% from the count conducted in 2019.

There are numerous interpretations for the cause of the reported decrease including the continued focus on prevention and housing retention, the successes of Coordinated Entry, as well as efforts to re-house those who became homeless after the fires.

The 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey revealed a diverse population with many different trends and needs. There are many valuable insights into the Sonoma County homeless population from the data collected in this report, including:

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- The sheltered count increased by 5% and the unsheltered county decreased by 13%.
- 28% of the population was counted in vehicles.
- 88% of those experiencing homelessness became homeless while living in Sonoma County.
- 48% of survey respondents experienced homelessness for the first time before age 25. In a growing demographic, 19% reported experiencing homelessness for the first time at age 50 or older.
- Almost one-quarter (22%) of survey respondents cited job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness. 70% reported unaffordable rent as an obstacle to securing permanent housing and another 50% cited no job or not enough income as an obstacle.
- 89% of respondents who were unsheltered or staying in emergency shelter would move into housing if it were available. 54% preferred housing without preconditions.
- Those identifying as LGBTQ+ were overrepresented in the homeless population. Although only 4.5% of the U.S. population identifies as LGBTQ+, 16% of those experiencing homelessness identified as LGBTQ+. Furthermore, 45% of youth survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+.
- The percentage of respondents were accessing government-provided food assistance was down from 51% in 2017 to 40% in 2020.
- 15% of women reported trading sex for money or a place to stay down from 21% in 2019, and 4% reported being trafficked down from 10% in 2019.

CONCLUSIONS BY SUBPOPULATIONS

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

- The count of chronically homeless individuals decreased 25% from 2019.
- Thirty percent (30%) of those surveyed reported alcohol and/or drug use as the primary cause for homelessness.

VETERANS

- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County declined 34% from 210 individuals in 2019 to 139 in 2020.
- 48% of veteran survey respondents reported one or more disabling conditions, as compared to 41% of non-veterans.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

- The number of homeless families continued to decrease from a high of 190 families in 2011 to 80 in 2020.
- The primary cause of homelessness shifted in 2020 with job loss and alcohol and/or drug use both reported by 31% of respondents. Eviction, the leading cause in 2019 at 32% dropped to 6% in 2020.

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

- The number of unaccompanied children increased 16% from 2019 to 136 and the number of transition-age youth decreased 46% to 298.
- 32% of youth survey respondents indicated that an argument with friends or family led to them becoming homeless, a much higher percentage when compared to adults (11%).
- 13% of youth reported trading sex for money or a place to stay.
- Homeless youth were incarcerated (31%) at a higher rate in the past year as homeless adults (26%).

OLDER ADULTS

- 22% of older adults had experienced homelessness on and off for at least 30 years.
- The number of homeless older adults increased by 42% to 648.

In summary, there are still many challenges to overcome in achieving the goal of eliminating homelessness in Sonoma County and in helping homeless individuals and families access necessary services and support. There are also significant successes, noticeably among subpopulations, including decreases in the numbers of chronically homeless persons, veterans experiencing homelessness, and youth experiencing homelessness. While there are areas that still need more attention, the successes in reducing numbers in subpopulations show a path towards future reductions.

COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY

The third consecutive Sonoma County community telephone survey facilitated understanding of the state of the county's precariously housed residents and the continuing impacts on housing from the 2017 and 2019 wildfires.

The community telephone survey resulted in an estimate of 23,694 precariously housed persons in Sonoma County, a 9% increase from 2019. Of these precariously housed persons, it is estimated that 15% were doubled up or temporarily housed directly due to loss of housing related to the Sonoma County wildfires of 2017 and 2019. An

additional 15% of temporarily housed individuals lost their housing due to economic effects of the fires, such as rising rents or owners moving back into rental properties. More than half (70%) of those precariously housed were doubled up or temporarily housed due to circumstances unrelated to the Sonoma County wildfires.

The community telephone survey revealed the diverse factors leading to and affecting housing stability of the temporarily housed population. Valuable insights from the data collected from this survey include:

- 31% of all respondents reported their housing was affected by the fires in some way.
- 70% of those who reported being affected by the fires were evacuated and allowed to return to their homes.

The 2017 and 2019 Sonoma County wildfires had a deep impact on many of the county's residents. The full extent of its effects on the precariously housed and homeless populations, as well as the long-term economic impacts of the fires, will likely be understood in the coming years. Community telephone survey data are intended to assist service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and state governments to gain a better understanding of the population of individuals who are not homeless but who lack a residence of their own, how the 2017 and 2019 fires affected the county at large, and how to best plan for the future.

CLOSING

The 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey provides valid and useful data that can help create a more comprehensive profile of those experiencing homelessness. The dissemination and evaluation of this effort will help Home Sonoma County and all Sonoma County stakeholders continue to produce and refine constructive and innovative solutions to end homelessness and make it a rare, brief, and one-time occurrence. Through innovative and effective housing programs and services, Sonoma County remains committed to moving homeless persons into permanent housing.

Data presented in the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey report fulfills Home Sonoma County federal reporting requirements for Continuums of Care, and will continue to inform additional outreach, service planning, and policy decision-making by local planning bodies over the next year as Sonoma County continues to address homelessness.



APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2020 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey was to produce a point-in-time estimate of people experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County, a region which covers approximately 1,576 square miles. The results of the street counts were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County on a given night, using the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count. 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 COUNT METHOD

The Point-in-Time Count methodology used in 2020 had five primary components:

- General street count: an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals between the hours of 5:00AM to 10:00AM;
- Youth street count: a targeted enumeration of unsheltered homeless youth under the age of 25 between the hours of 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM;
- Shelter count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals on the night before the street count;
- Survey: an in-person survey of unsheltered and sheltered individuals conducted by peer surveyors in the weeks following the general street count; and
- Sonoma County Office of Education count: an enumeration of families previously identified as unsheltered.

The general street count was designed to take place before most shelters released persons who slept at the shelter the previous night. In areas with shelters, the immediate area surrounding the shelter was prioritized to eliminate potential double counting of individuals.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated on community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical plans, methodological decisions, and interagency coordination efforts. Applied Survey Research (ASR) provided technical assistance for these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 19 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the HUD publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, as well as in the *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago* publication, *Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit*.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. Thanks to local efforts, the count included enumerators with a diverse range of knowledge, including expertise regarding areas frequented by homeless individuals, individuals living in vehicles, and persons residing in encampments. Community partners were also key in recruiting individuals with lived experience of homelessness to participate in the street count and survey 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 stations, airport, or camping ground.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The 2020 street count methodology followed an established, HUD approved methodology used in the 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 counts, with the addition of dedicated youth outreach in each of those years.

VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Many individuals who live and/or work in Sonoma County supported the county's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. In 2020, 300 community volunteers and homeless guides participated in the general street count on February 28, 2020.

Extensive outreach efforts were conducted, including outreach to local non-profits and volunteer agencies that serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Local shelters and service providers recruited and recommended the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless guides were paid \$15 for attending an hour-long training as well as \$15 per hour worked on the day of the count.

Volunteers and guides served as enumerators on the morning of the count, canvassing the county in teams to visually count homeless persons. County and ASR staff supported each of the five dispatch centers (Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Guerneville, Healdsburg, and Sonoma Valley), greeting volunteers and guides, distributing instructions, maps, and supplies to enumeration teams, and collecting data sheets from returning teams.

In order to participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to attend an hour-long training before the count. Trainings were held in multiple locations throughout the county. Training covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homelessness, how to identify homeless individuals, potential locations where homeless individuals may be located, how to safely and respectfully conduct the count, how to use the tally count sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered, as well as other tips to help ensure an accurate count.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Law enforcement agencies were notified of pending street count activity in their jurisdictions. In census tracts with a high concentration of homeless encampments, specialized teams with knowledge of those encampments were identified and assigned to those areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take every safety precaution possible, including bringing flashlights and maintaining a respectful distance from those they were counting.

STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of the county within the morning timeframe, the planning team identified five areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the morning of the count: Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Guerneville, Healdsburg, and Sonoma Valley. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration based on their familiarity with the area or their convenience. The planning team determined the enumeration routes 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, teams of two or more persons were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was generally composed of at least one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide, and provided with their assigned census tract maps, tally sheets, training guidelines, and other supplies.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traversed by foot or car. Homeless enumerators were 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 in addition to 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.

SONOMA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION COUNT

In the days following the February 28th Point-in-Time Count, representatives from one district called households known to have recently experienced homelessness to ascertain where they stayed on the night of February 27th.

A total of 15 households were contacted in the week after the count and confirmed their sleeping location on the night of the Point-in-Time Count.

After the households were screened for duplication, they were added to the Point-in-Time Count results.

YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the 2020 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied homeless children and youth under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. 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.

RESEARCH DESIGN

As in all years, planning for the 2020 supplemental youth count included homeless youth service providers and youth with lived experience of homelessness. Local service providers identified locations where homeless youth were known to congregate and recruited youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate homeless youth to serve as guides for the count. Late afternoon and early evening enumeration was the ideal time recommended by advocates to conduct the youth count.

A focus group was held with currently and previously homeless youth to identify areas to canvass for the supplemental youth count. SAY took the lead on recruiting 15 youth to work as peer enumerators in addition to 12 youth service provider staff members who accompanied and transported the youth around the county. These teams counted homeless youth in the identified areas of Sonoma County on February 28, 2020.

Youth workers were paid \$15 per hour for their time, including time spent in training prior to the count. Youth and youth service provider staff members were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

DATA COLLECTION

It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during daylight hours rather than in the early morning when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately

2:00PM to 7:00PM on February 28, 2020. Youth worked in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers.

Both the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness recognize that youth do not commonly congregate with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth. For this reason, these agencies accept and recommend that communities count youth at times when they can be seen rather than during traditional enumeration times.

STREET COUNT DE-DUPLICATION

Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and de-duplicated by assessing location, gender, and age. No duplicates were found.

SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the shelter and institution count is to gain an accurate count of persons temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across Sonoma County. These data are vital to gaining an accurate, overall count of the homeless population and understanding where homeless persons receive shelter.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of sheltered homelessness for Point-in-Time Counts was used. This definition includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The homeless occupancy of shelters in Sonoma County was collected for the night of February 27, 2020. All shelter data were gathered either directly from the shelter or from Sonoma County's Homeless Management Information System.

CHALLENGES

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as large and diverse as Sonoma County. Point-in-Time Counts are "snapshots" that quantify the size of the homeless population at a given point during the year. Hence, the count may not be representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the homeless population seasonally or over time.

For a variety of reasons, homeless persons generally do not wish to be seen and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of the homeless population will result, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as families and youth.

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

- It is difficult to identify homeless persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Homeless families with children often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or in makeshift shelters.

Even though the Point-in-Time Count is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed—coupled with the homeless survey—is the most comprehensive approach available.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A survey of 444 unique individuals experiencing homelessness was conducted between February 27 and March 18, 2020 to yield qualitative data about people experiencing homelessness in Sonoma 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, duration and recurrence of homelessness, 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 peer survey workers with lived homeless experience. Training sessions were facilitated by Applied Survey Research, Sonoma County staff, and community partners. Potential interviewers were led through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information as well as detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Peer survey workers were compensated at a rate of \$7 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily obtained if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2019 homeless survey. The socks were easy to distribute, had wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 2,745 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 444 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 4.4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of individuals experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County.

The 2020 survey was administered in shelters, 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.

Strategic attempts were also made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. Since 2009, the ASR survey methodology has prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors.

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 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.

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 single individual.

DATA ANALYSIS

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, length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other survey questions.

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Due to the impact of the coronavirus, fewer surveys were completed than targeted, with the greatest impact coming from the Santa Rosa area.

There may be some variance in the data that individuals experiencing homelessness 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 suited to conducting interviews and these individuals received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. Service providers and county staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.



APPENDIX B: DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Chronic homelessness – Defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as an unaccompanied individual or head of a family household with a disabling condition who has either continuously experienced homelessness for a year or more, or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months, in the past three years.

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

Emergency shelter – The provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 180 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for survivors and their children.

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

Homeless – Under the Category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

HUD – Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Precariously housed – A person who is staying with the household because they have no other regular or adequate place to stay due to a lack of money or other means of support.

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

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

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

Transitional housing – Housing in which homeless individuals may live up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services – which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination – may be provided by the organization managing the housing or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

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

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

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