



# COUNTY OF SONOMA 2022 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT RESULTS

# ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

**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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# 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, The Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) receives approximately \$3.9 million dollars annually in federal funding, a key source of funding for the county's homeless services.

The Sonoma County CoC 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 2022 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 2022 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count was a comprehensive community effort. With the support of individuals with lived experience of homelessness, 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 25, 2022.

The count was a 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 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 2022 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 2022 Planning Committee and were instrumental to ensuring the 2022 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey reflected the needs and concerns of the community.

The 2022 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 2020 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:

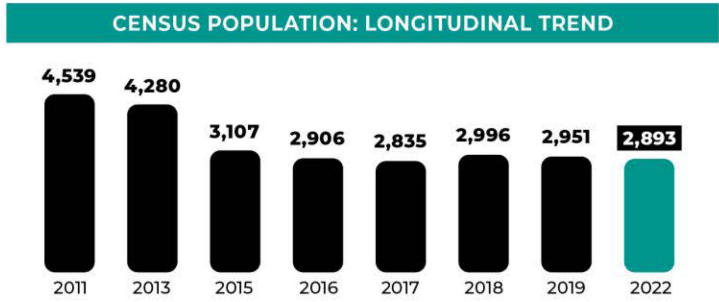
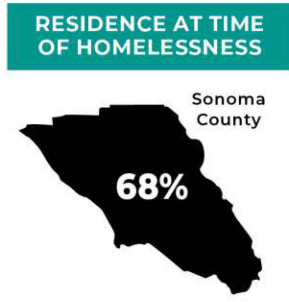
- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement;  
or
- With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park,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

# SONOMA COUNTY

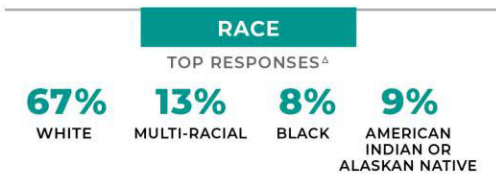
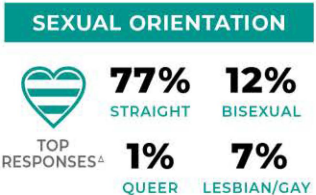
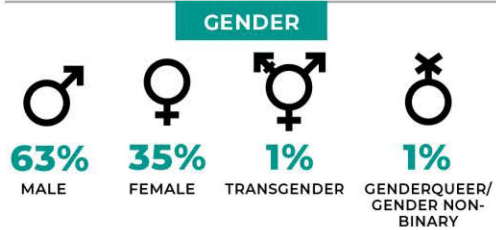
## 2022 HOMELESS POINT-IN-TIME COUNT & SURVEY

Every two years during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local homeless populations in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each local Continuum of Care.

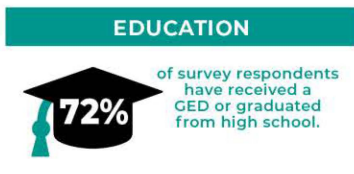
The 2022 Sonoma County Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on February 25th, 2022. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 291 unsheltered and sheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in order to profile their experience and characteristics.



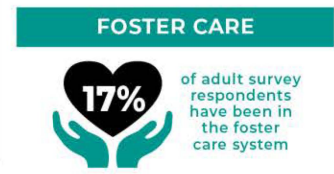
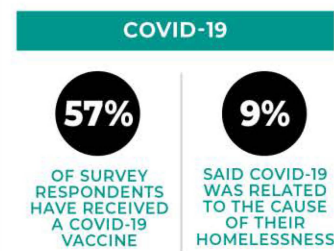
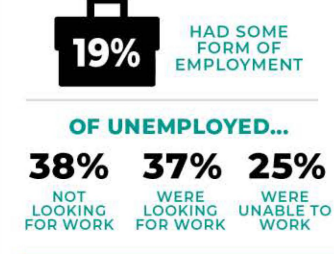
### LENGTH OF TIME IN SONOMA COUNTY



### SUBPOPULATION\* DATA:



### EMPLOYMENT STATUS





### SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT

**17%** traded sex for money or a place to stay

have a history of being trafficked **5%**

### HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**24%** reported they had experienced domestic violence

### PRIMARY EVENT OR CONDITION THAT LEAD TO HOMELESSNESS+

TOP 4 RESPONSES<sup>Δ</sup>

**23%** LOST JOB    **11%** ARGUMENT WITH FAMILY/FRIEND    **10%** DIVORCE/SEPARATION/BREAK-UP    **9%** EVICTION

### AGE AT FIRST EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

**14%** 0-17    **20%** 18-24    **50%** 25-49    **16%** 50+

### OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING+

TOP 4 RESPONSES<sup>Δ</sup>

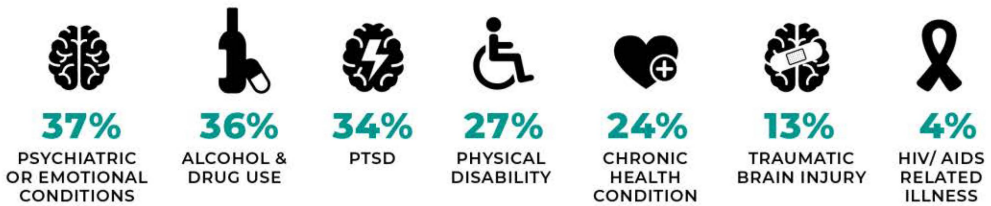
**63%** CAN'T AFFORD RENT    **45%** NO JOB/NOT ENOUGH INCOME    **29%** NO MONEY FOR MOVING COSTS    **28%** BAD CREDIT

### DURATION OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

**6%** 30 DAYS OR LESS    **25%** 1-11 MONTHS    **69%** A YEAR OR MORE

### SELF REPORTED HEALTH+

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



### DISABLING CONDITIONS



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.

### GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE



**70%** Of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.

### REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING ANY GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE+ Top 6 Responses<sup>Δ</sup>

**24%** DON'T WANT GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE    **16%** DON'T THINK I'M ELIGIBLE    **16%** DON'T HAVE ID

**14%** NO PERMANENT ADDRESS    **13%** PAPERWORK TOO DIFFICULT    **12%** NEVER APPLIED

### NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICES CURRENTLY ACCESSING+ Top 6 Responses<sup>Δ</sup>

**50%** FREE MEALS    **22%** BUS PASSES    **13%** MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**9%** SHELTER DAY SERVICES    **8%** EMERGENCY SHELTER    **7%** LEGAL ASSISTANCE

### \*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, all response data will be available in full report.  
 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 Monterey. It will be available summer 2022.

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2022, Monterey County Homeless Census & Survey, Watsonville, CA.

# POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS

The 2022 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 25, 2022 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 2020 and previous years.

The methodology used for the 2022 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 24, 2022. 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 Sonoma County CoC submits to HUD.

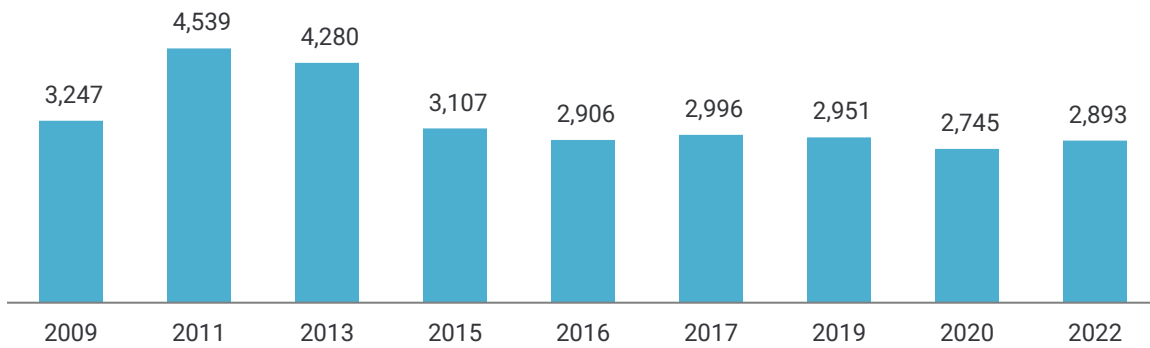
The count was followed by an in-person representative survey of persons currently experiencing homelessness. In Sonoma County, the results of which were used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of the local homeless population. Information collected from the survey was used to fulfill 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*.

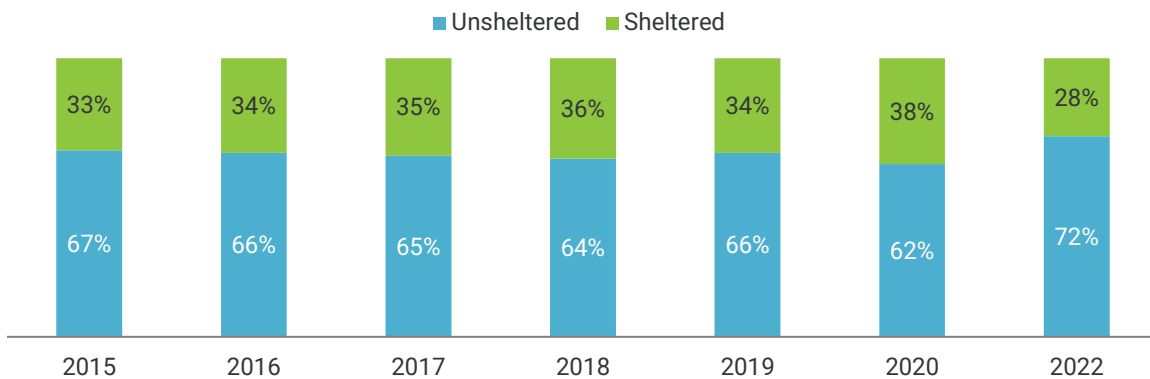
# NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SONOMA COUNTY

There were 2,893 persons experiencing homelessness in the County of Sonoma in 2022, representing an increase of 5% from 2020. Nearly three quarters (72%) of persons experiencing homelessness were living on the streets, an increase from 62% in 2020.

Total Number of Homeless Persons



Total Homeless Census Population by Shelter Status

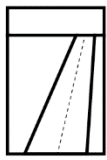


	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2020-22 % CHANGE
<b>Sheltered</b>	1,037	1,000	988	1,067	994	1,043	805	-23%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	2,070	1,906	1,847	1,929	1,957	1,702	2,088	23%
<b>Total</b>	3,107	2,906	2,835	2,996	2,951	2,745	2,893	5%

# TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS, BY LOCATION



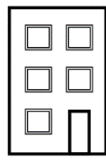
**18%**  
Vehicles



**46%**  
Outdoors



**19%**  
Tents



**2%**  
Abandoned  
Buildings



**9%**  
Shelter



**6%**  
Motels/  
Hotels

Total Number of Homeless Persons, by Jurisdiction and Shelter Status

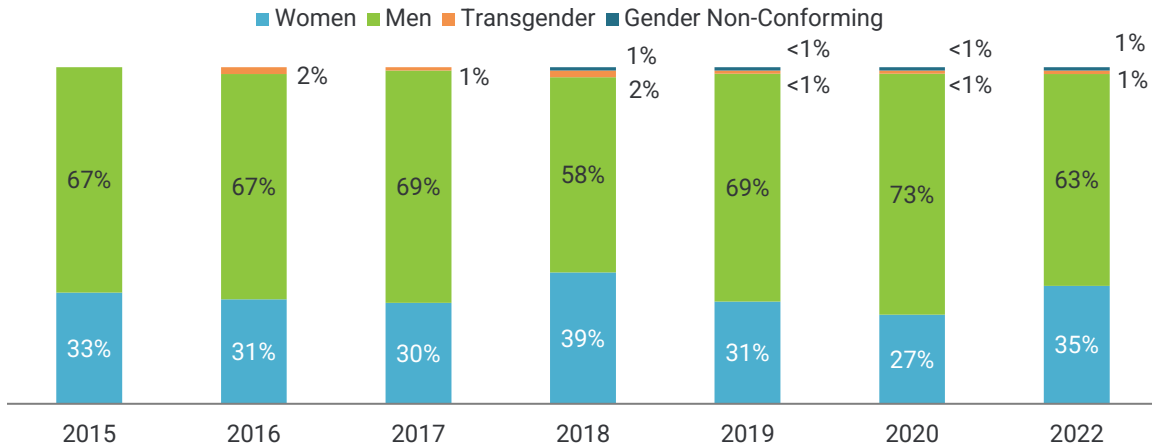
JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED			SHELTERED			TOTAL		
	2019	2020	2022	2019	2020	2022	2019	2020	2022
North County	232	205	155	16	4	40	248	209	195
Cloverdale	52	29	23	7	4	0	59	33	23
Healdsburg	64	69	97	9	0	0	73	69	97
Town of Windsor	53	38	8	0	0	40	53	38	48
Unincorporated	63	69	27	0	0	0	63	69	27
South County	305	427	679	142	170	89	447	597	768
Cotati	44	37	79	0	0	6	44	37	85
Petaluma	138	133	214	127	163	79	265	296	293
Rohnert Park	114	241	365	15	7	4	129	248	369
Unincorporated	9	16	21	0	0	0	9	16	21
West County	271	290	62	41	37	65	312	327	127
Sebastopol	101	129	40	0	0	38	101	129	78
Unincorporated	170	191	22	41	37	27	211	228	49
Sonoma Valley	101	54	93	40	34	29	141	88	122
Sonoma	32	46	66	18	15	15	50	61	81
Unincorporated	69	8	27	22	19	14	91	27	41
Santa Rosa	1,048	726	1,099	755	798	582	1,803	1,524	1,681
Santa Rosa	954	719	1,089	707	742	569	1,661	1,461	1,658
Unincorporated	94	9	10	48	56	13	142	67	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,957</b>	<b>1,702</b>	<b>2,088</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>2,951</b>	<b>2,745</b>	<b>2,893</b>

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

Total Number of Homeless Persons, by County Region

Men made up nearly two thirds (63%) of the persons identified during the PIT count, a decrease from 73% in 2020. Women were 35% of the persons identified, while transgender and gender non-conforming respondents were 1% each.

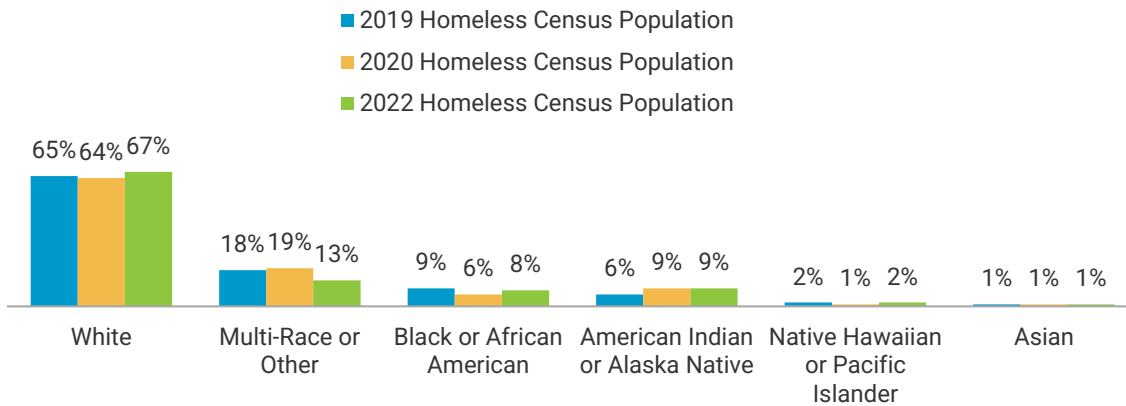
### Total Number of Homeless Persons, by Gender



2015 n=3,107; 2016 n=2,906; 2017 n=2,835; 2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951; 2020 n=2,638; 2022 n=2,893

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.

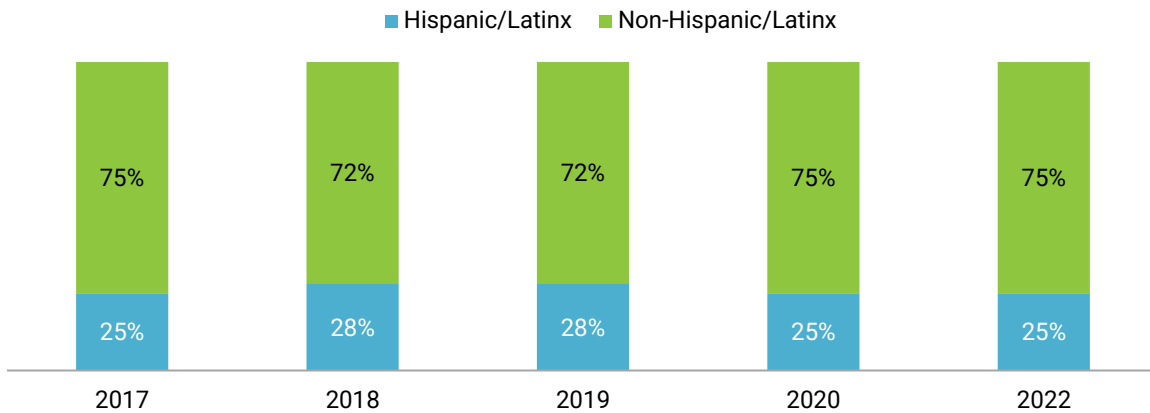
### Total Number of Homeless Persons, By Race



2018 n=2,996; 2019 n=2,951; 2020 n=2,638; 2022 n=2,893

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

## 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; 2022 n=2,893

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

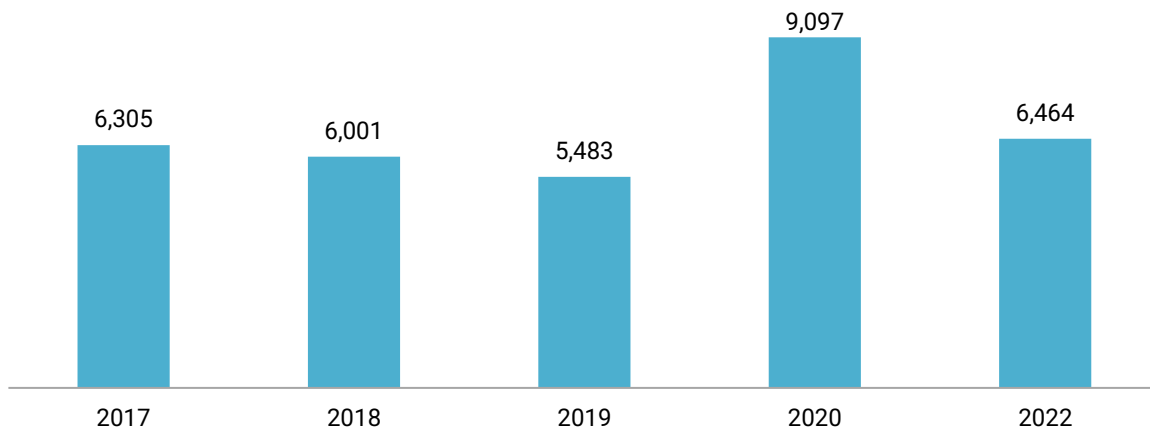
## ANNUALIZATION

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 2022 Sonoma County annual estimate is 6,464 unique homeless experiences over a year, a large decrease (29%) from 2020.

### Annualization



# HOMELESS SURVEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the *survey* component of the 2022 Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February 28 and March 28, 2022.

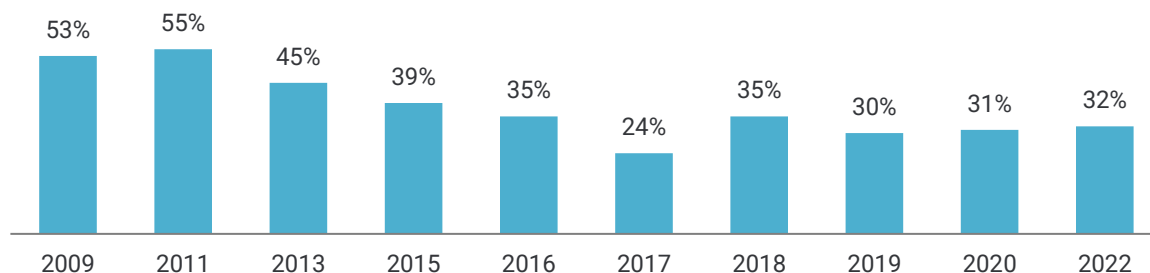
Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 2,893 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 428 valid surveys would represent a confidence interval of +/- 4.3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the entire estimated population of homeless individuals 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.

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.

### First Time Experiencing Homelessness (**Respondents Answering “Yes”**)

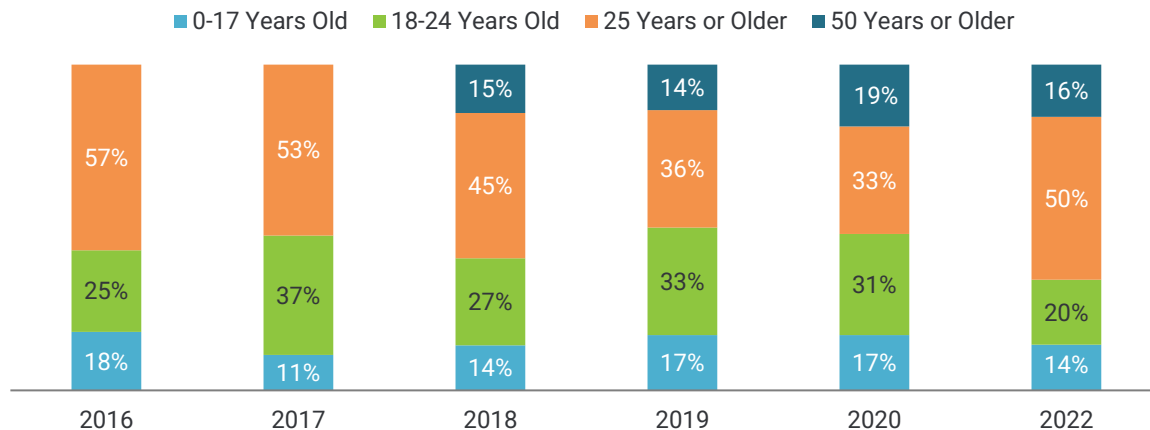


2009 n=600; 2011 n=617; 2013 n=533; 2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=678; 2018 n=519; 2019 n=498; 2020 n=444; 2022 n=385

### 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.

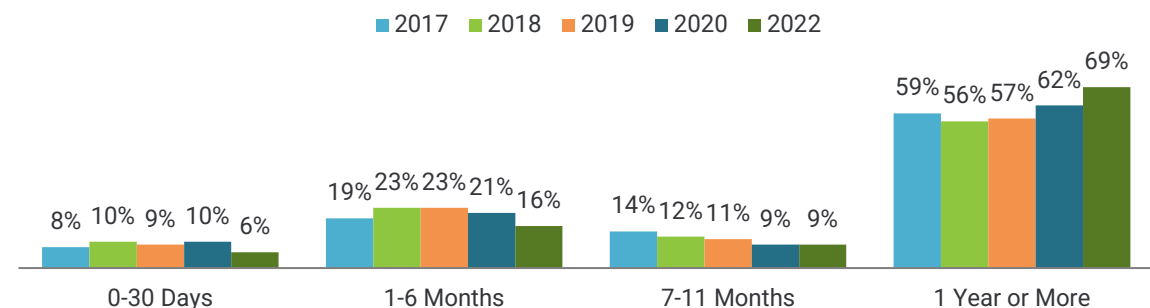
# AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS



2016 n=599; 2017 n=675; 2018 n=513; 2019 n=511; 2020 n=435; 2022 n=413

Duration of Homelessness

# LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



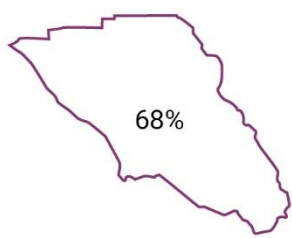
2017 n=680; 2018 n=519; 2019 n= 516; 2020 n=444; 2022 n=420

# 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.



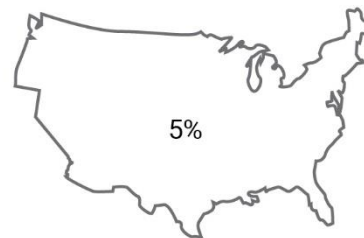
# PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



Sonoma County



Other County in California



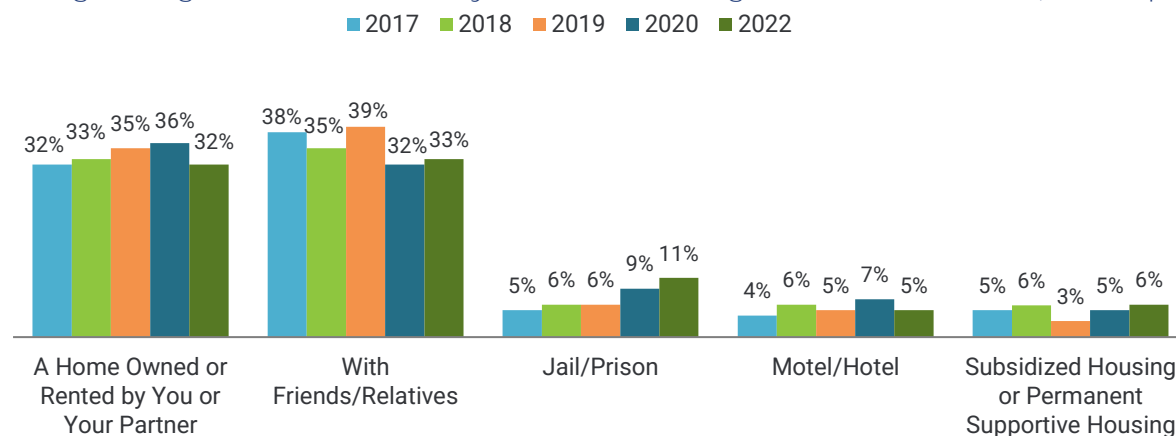
Out of State

2022 n= 354

## 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.

## Living Arrangements Immediately Prior to Becoming Homeless This Time (2022 Top 5)

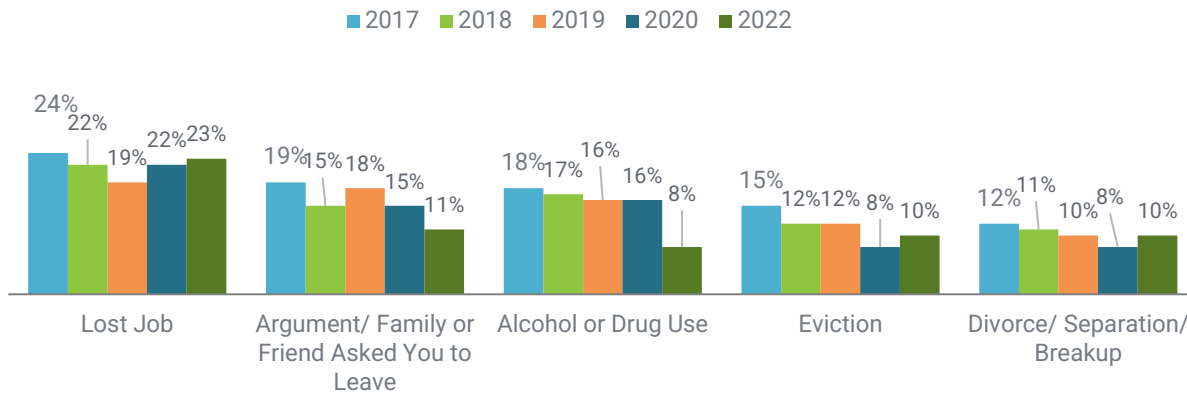


2017 n=652; 2018 n=506; 2019 n=501; 2020 n=431; 2022 n=396

# 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.

## Primary Cause of Homelessness



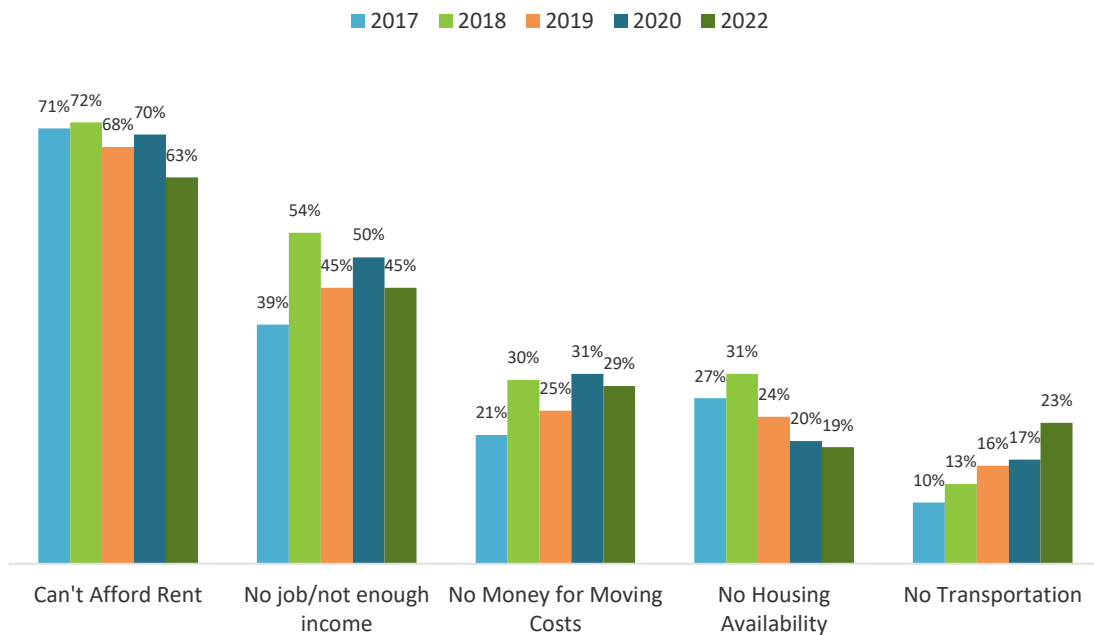
2022 PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS			
Lost Job	23%	Fire	4%
Argument with Family or Friend	11%	Family/Domestic Violence	5%
Eviction	10%	Landlord Raised Rent	7%
Divorce/Separation/Break Up	10%	Don't Know/Decline to State	8%
Other	11%	Probation/Parole Restrictions	2%
Alcohol or Drug Use	8%	Hospitalization/Treatment	1%
Incarceration	8%	Foreclosure	2%
Mental Health Issues	6%	Aging Out of Foster Care	2%
Illness/Medical Problem	5%		

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; 2022 n=397 respondents offering 475 responses

## OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

When asked about the obstacles to permanent housing, the most common response amongst survey respondents was an inability to afford rent, with 63% choosing that option. Lack of job or income was the second most common (45%), followed by difficulties affording moving costs (29%).

## Obstacles to Obtaining Permanent Housing

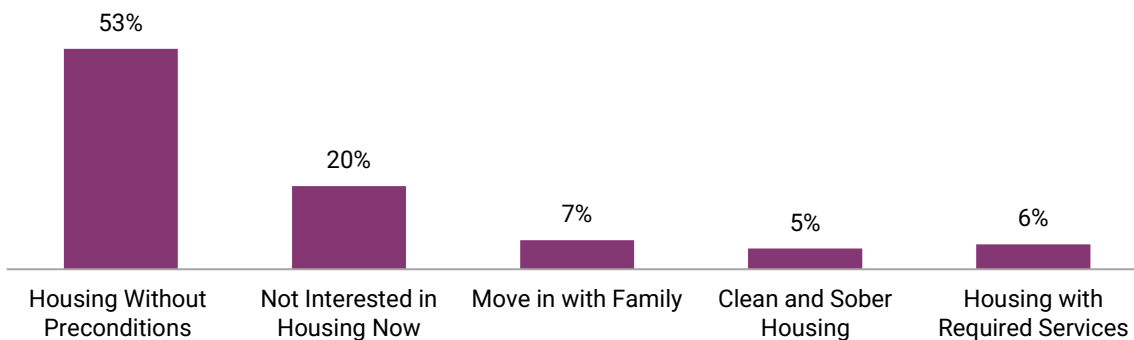


2017 n=659 respondents giving 1,642 responses; 2018 n=503 respondents giving 1,489 responses; 2019 n=513 respondents giving 1,331 responses; 2020 n=436 respondents giving 1,130 responses; 2022 n= respondents 404 giving 1,145 responses  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

## Housing Type

Survey respondents most desired housing without any sort of preconditions, were it to be offered to them.

### Housing Type Desired



2022 n=270

## 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.

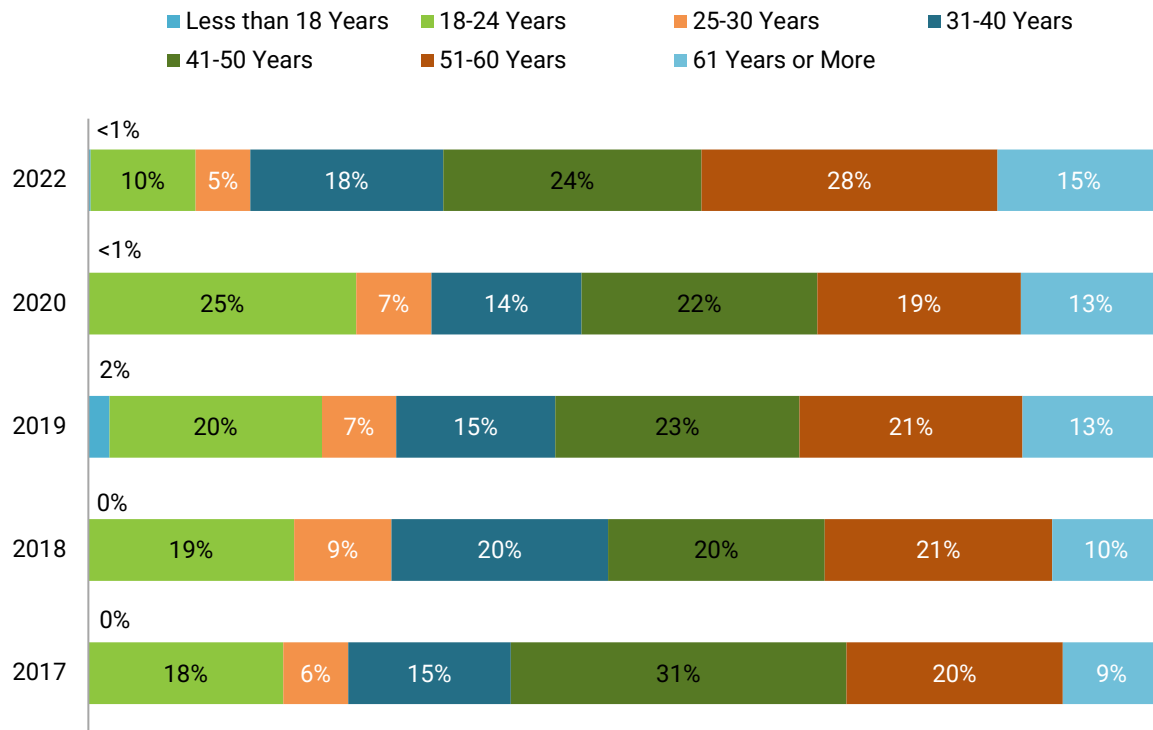
### Demographic information

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

Two thirds of survey respondents were over the age of 41, slightly more than in past years. The age group with the most respondents was 51-60 years old.

### Survey Respondents by Age



2017 n=687; 2018 n=519, 2019 n=520, 2020 n=444; 2022 n=428

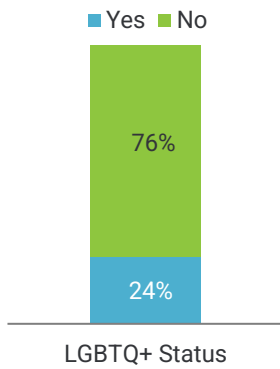
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2020 Sonoma Homeless Survey, sixteen percent (16%) of survey respondents identified as LGBTQ in 2020, down from 18% in 2019.

## LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

<sup>1</sup> 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>.



Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	%	n
Gay	4%	17
Lesbian	3%	11
Queer	1%	6
Bisexual	12%	50
Other	4%	15

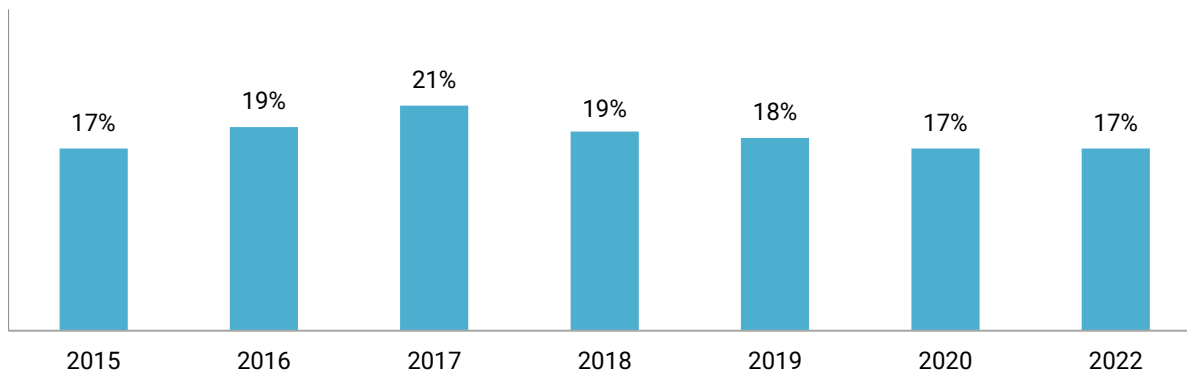
LGBTQ 2022 n=420

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.<sup>2</sup> In 2022, 17% of survey respondents reported a history of foster care, very similar to previous years.

## HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE



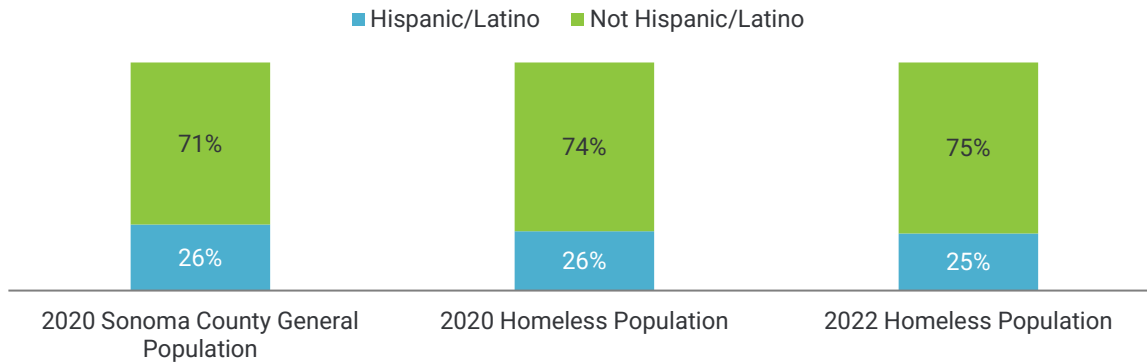
2015 n=600; 2016 n=563; 2017 n=645; 2018 n=510; 2019 n=504; 2020 n=423; 2022 n=408

## RACE / ETHNICITY

A quarter of survey respondents identified as having Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, nearly identical to 2020 and similar to the overall county population.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

## Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity

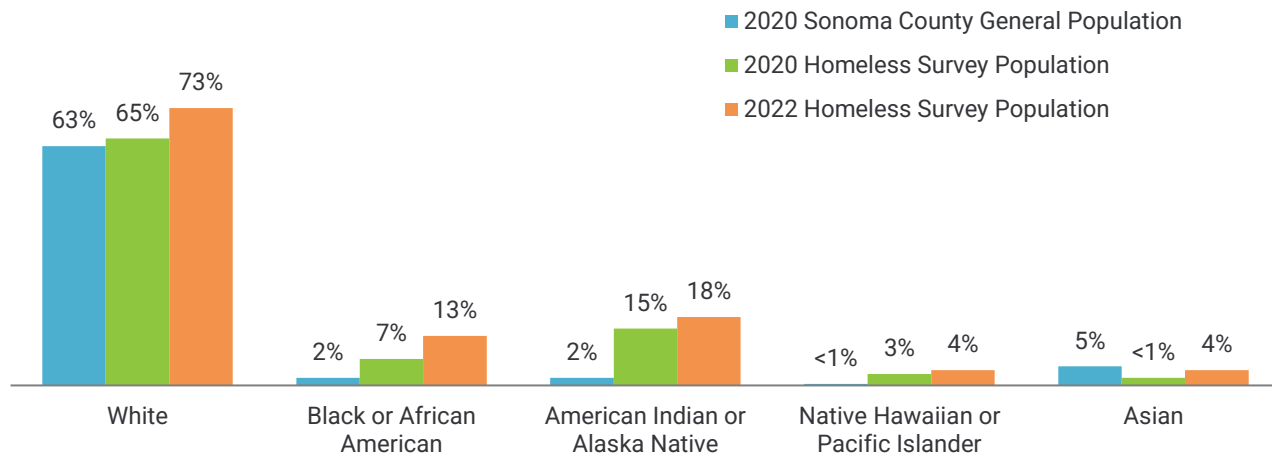


2020 n = 440; 2022 n=388

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.

## Race



2020 n=431; 2022 n =412

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.

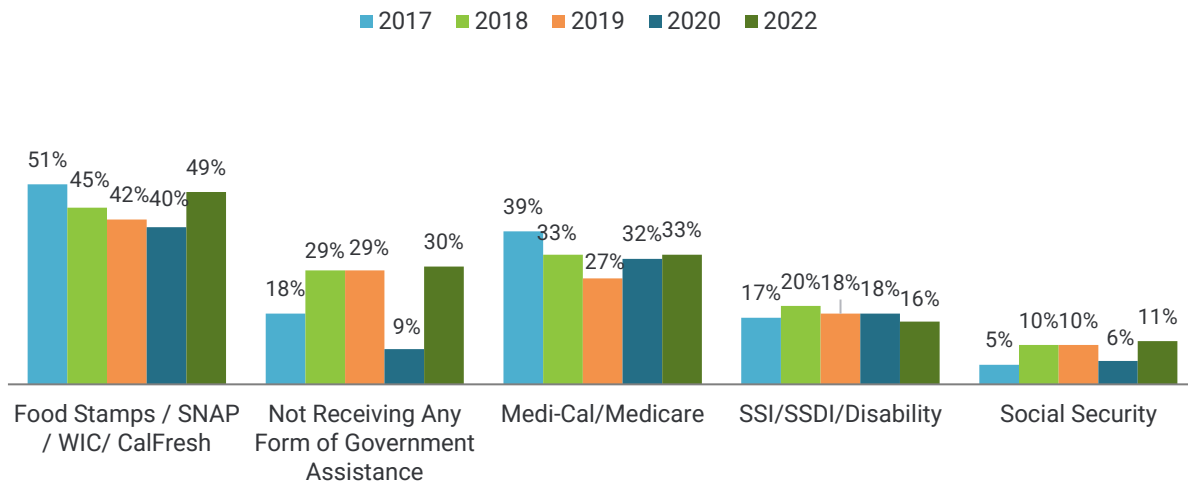
# GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

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.

Nearly half (49%) of survey respondents were receiving food stamps, SNAP, WIC, and/or CalFresh assistance, an increase from 40% in 2020. Thirty percent of respondents reported not receiving any form of governmental assistance, an increase from 9% in 2020, though similar to past years.

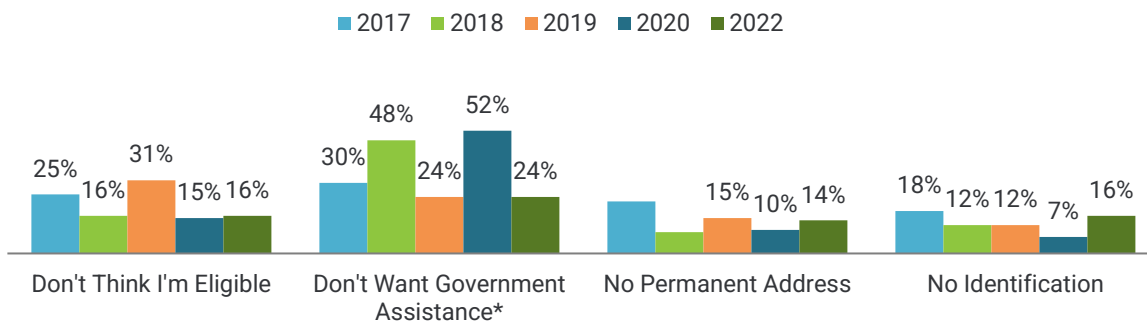
When asked why they weren't receiving any governmental assistance, 24% of respondents replied that they were not interested in doing so. However, this represented a large drop from 52% in 2020.

## Government Assistance Received



2017 n=437 respondents offering 537 responses; 2018 n=580 respondents offering 855 responses; 2019 n=315 respondents offering 586 responses; 2020 n=419 respondents offering 600 responses; 2022 n= 397 respondents offering 631 responses  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

## Reasons for Not Receiving Government Assistance

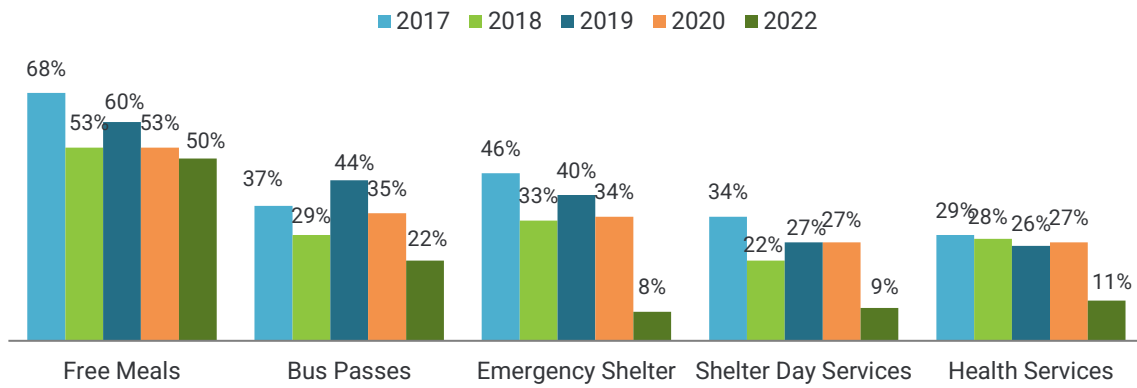


2017 n=106 respondents offering 181 responses; 2018 n=139 respondents offering 184 responses; 2019 n= 292 respondents offering 421 responses; 2020 n=138 respondents offering 162 responses; 2022 n= 276 respondents offering 422 responses

# 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.

## Services or Assistance



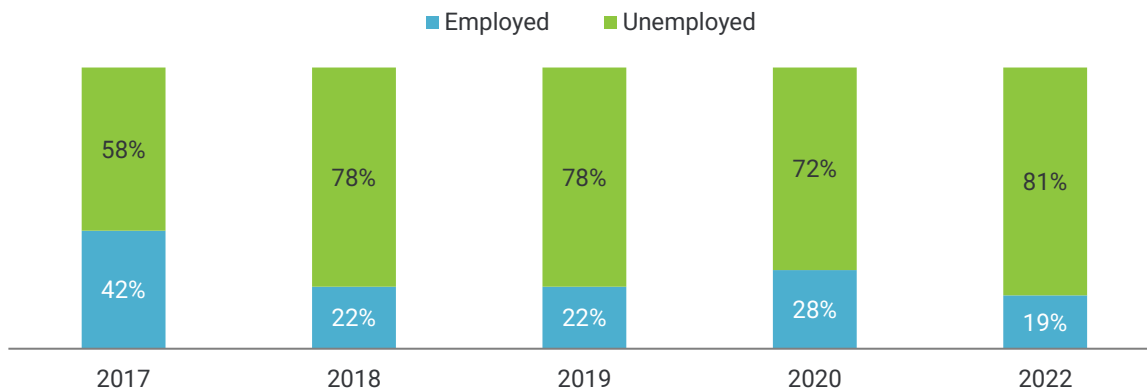
2017 n=622 respondents offering 1,792 responses; 2018 n=491 respondents offering 1,212 responses; 2019 n=495 respondents offering 1,328 responses; 2020 n=429 respondents offering 1,160 responses; 2022 n= 381 respondents offering 613 responses  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add 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.

Four fifths (81%) of survey respondents reported they were at least somewhat employed. This includes seasonal, part-time, and full time employment.

### Employment Status



2017 Employment Status n=645; 2018 Employment Status n=500; 2019 Employment Status n=500; 2020 Employment Status n=428; 2022 Employment status n=386

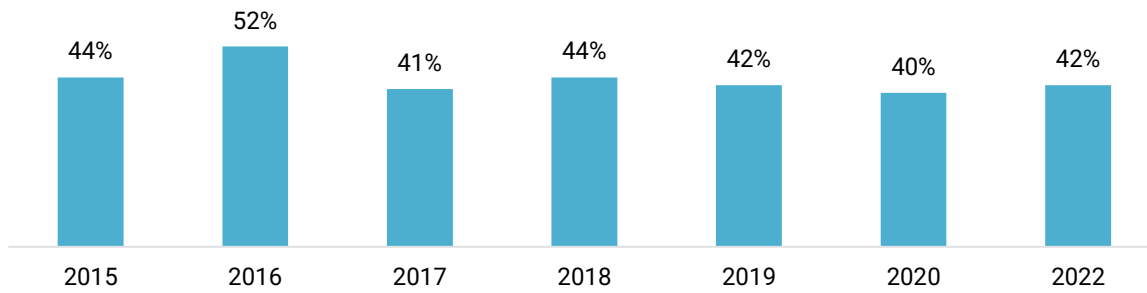
## HEALTH

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.

Similar to previous years, 42% of survey respondents reported suffering from at least one HUD-disabling condition. The two most common health conditions experienced by respondents were drug or alcohol abuse and psychiatric problems (40% for both), followed by PTSD (36%).

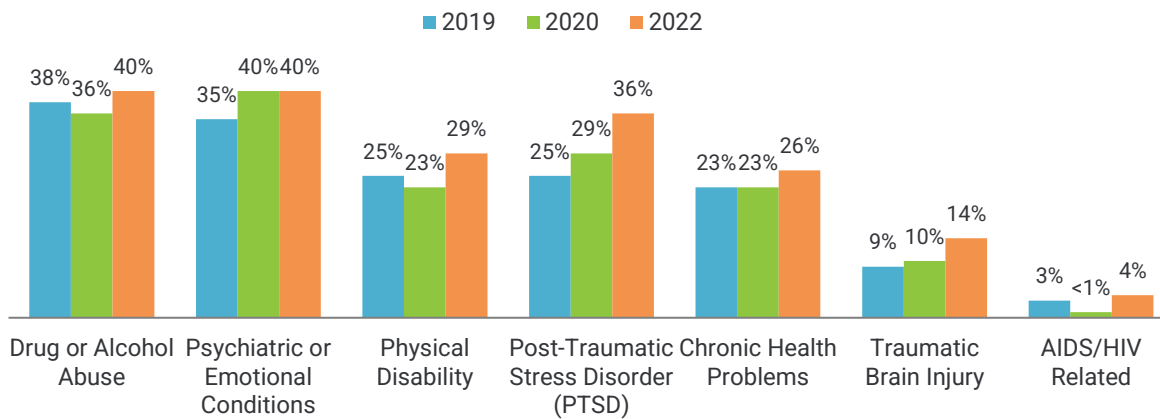


## Hud Disabling Conditions



2015 n=609; 2016 n=605; 2017 n=687; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=520; 2020 n=478; 2022 n=451

## Health Conditions



2019 n=520; 2020 n=722; 2022 n=412

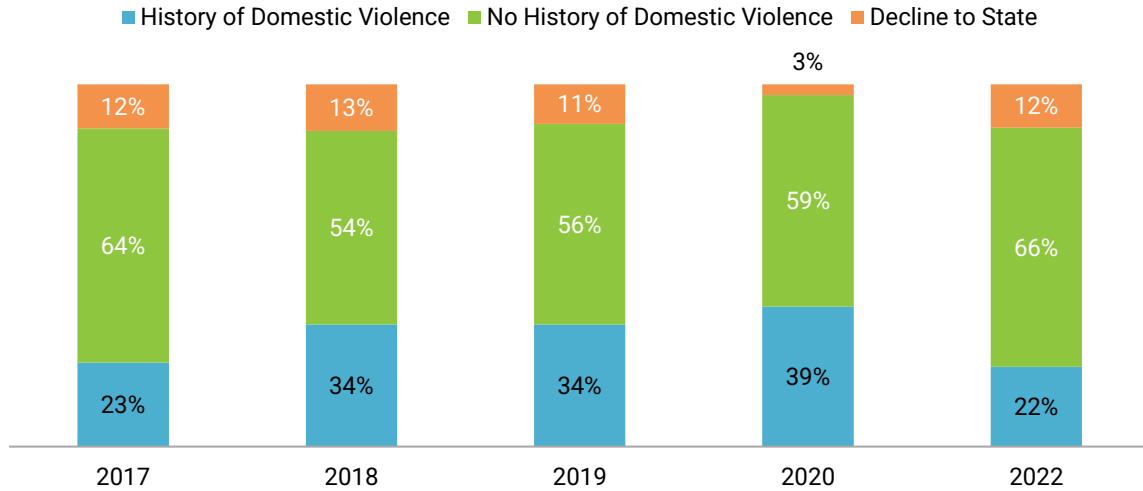
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

## 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 asked if they had experienced domestic violence in their past, 22% of respondents reported having such a past. This represents a decrease from 2020, when it was 39%. Six percent of respondents reported that they were currently experiencing domestic violence.

## History of Domestic Violence

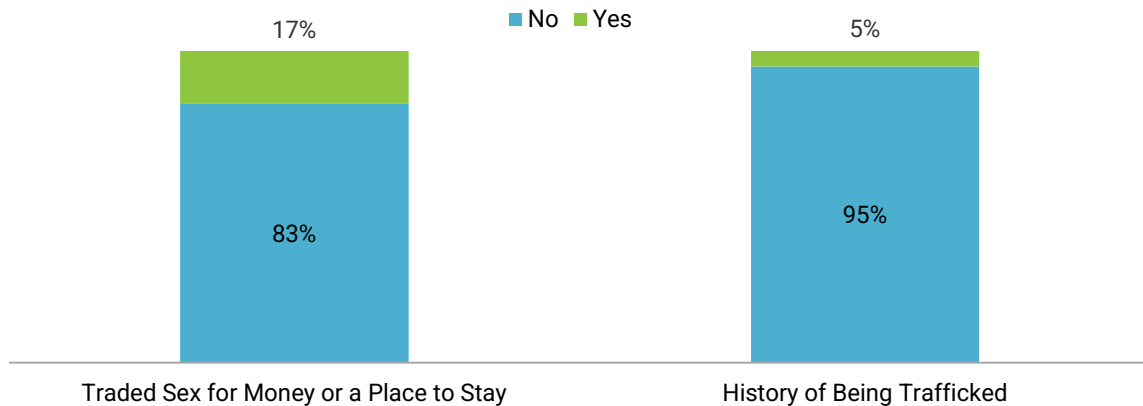


2016 n=565; 2017 n=621; 2018 n=494; 2019 n=499; 2020 n=421; 2022 n=403  
 Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## 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. Seventeen percent of survey respondents reported trading sex for money or a place to stay, in the past. And 5% reported being trafficked in the past.

## SEX TRADE INVOLVEMENT



2022 Trading Sex for Money or a Place to Stay n=259, History of Being Trafficked n=258

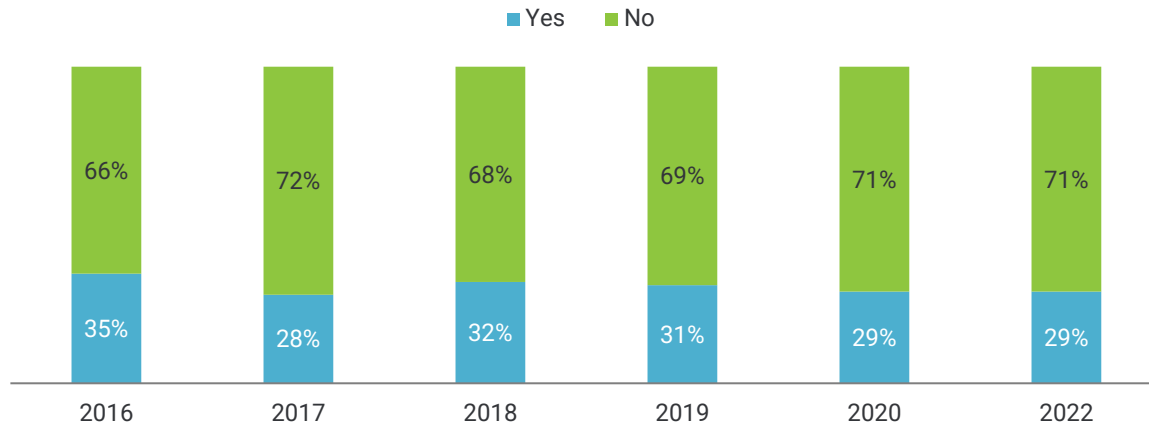
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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

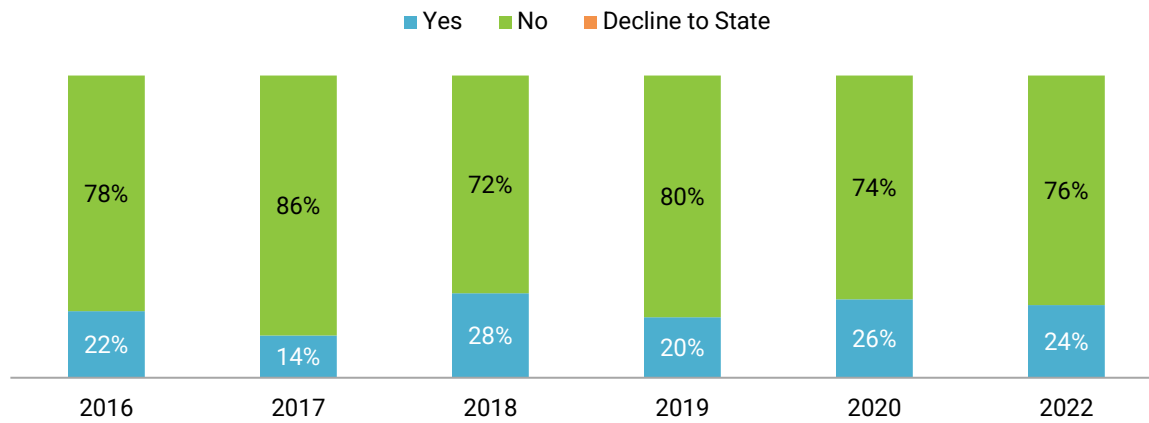
Similar to previous years, 29% of respondents reported spending a night or jail in the 12 months previous to taking the survey. Just under a quarter (24%) of respondents reported being on parole or probation at the time of the survey.

### 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; 2022 n=391  
 Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%

### Currently on Probation or Parole



2016 n=536; 2017 n=737; 2018 n=488; 2019 n=489; 2020 n=427; 2022 n=391  
 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.

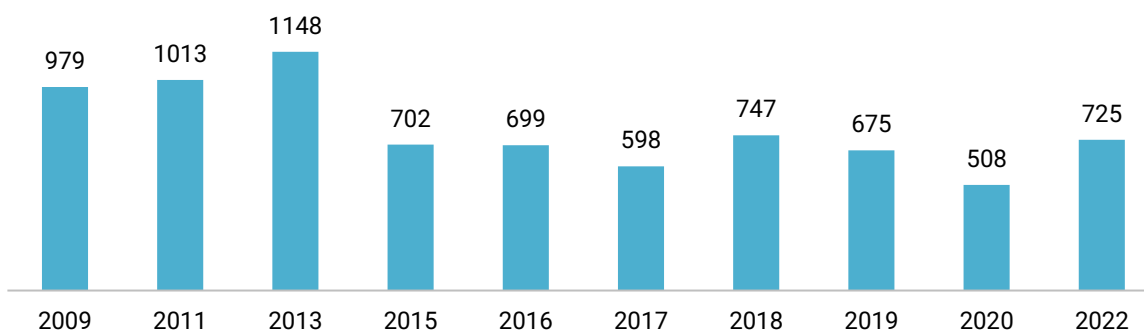
## CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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.<sup>3</sup>

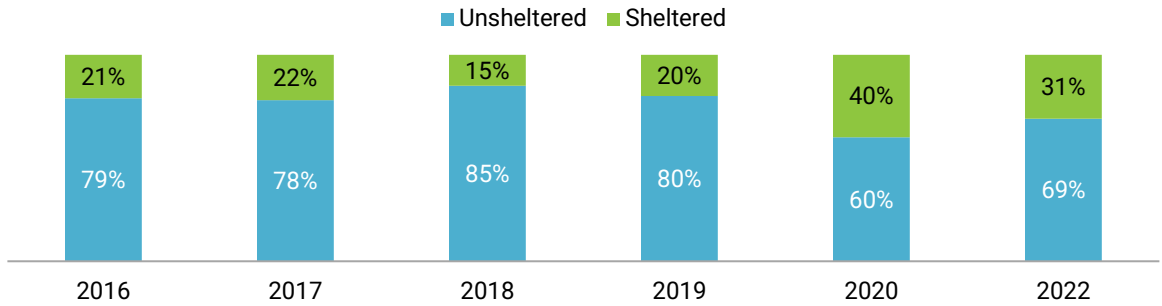
After falling from 2019 to 2020, the chronically homeless population rose 43% to 725 in 2022. Just under a third (31%) of the chronically homeless population was sheltered. Sixty-nine percent of the population was male, while 28% was female.

### Total Chronically Homeless Census Population



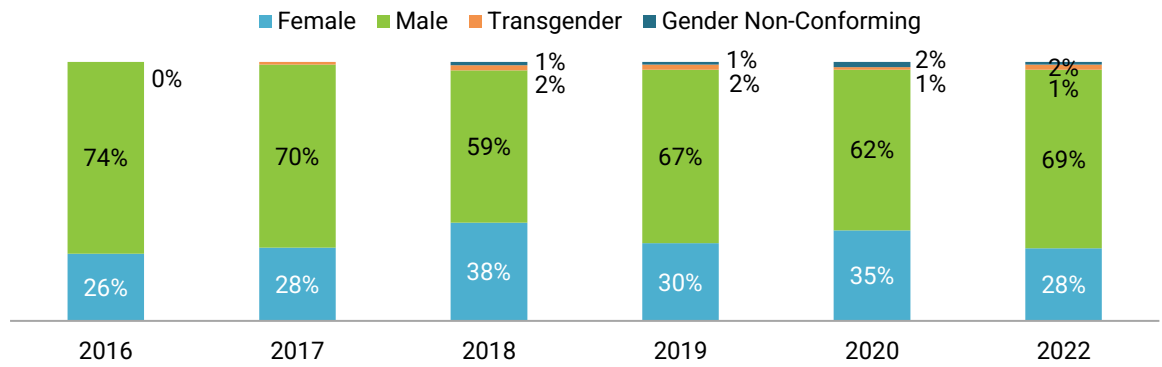
### Chronically Homeless Census Population by Shelter Status

<sup>3</sup> 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](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_ChronicHomelessness.pdf)



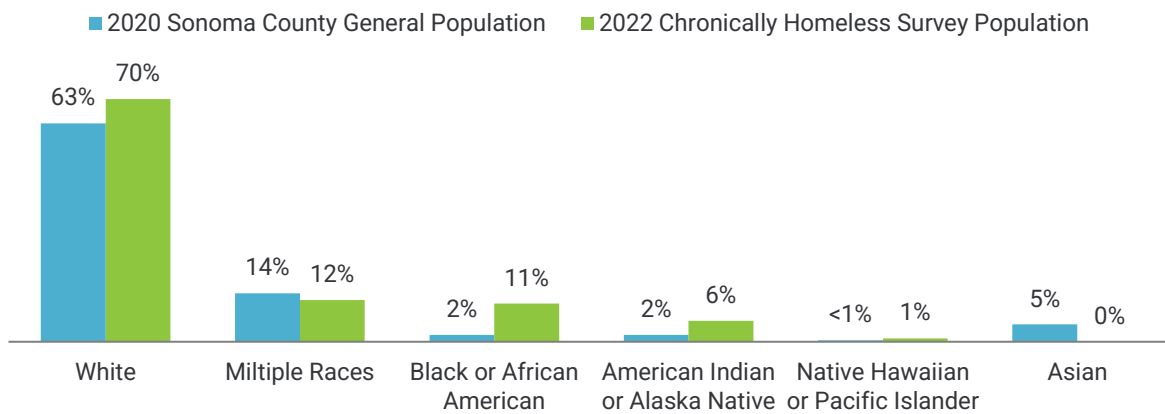
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2020-22 % Change
Sheltered	150	134	115	138	174	224	29%
Unsheltered	549	464	632	537	334	501	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>43%</b>

### Chronically Homeless Population by Gender



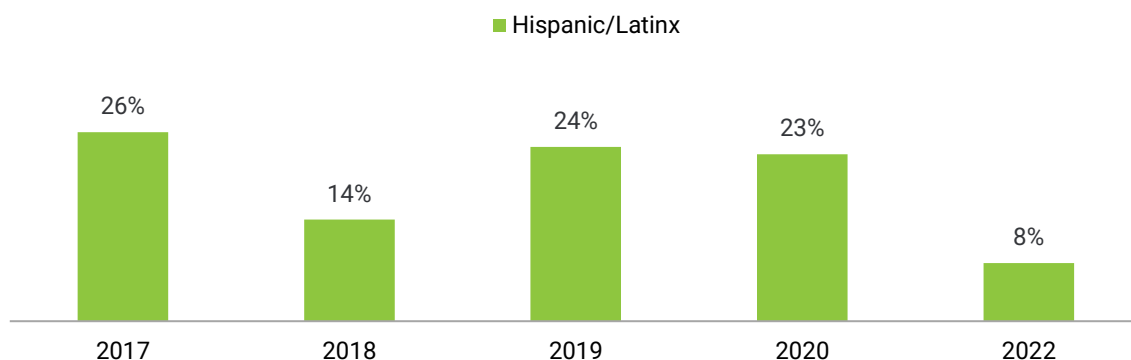
2015 Chronically Homeless Population n=702; 2016 Chronically Homeless Population n=699; 2017 Chronically Homeless Population n=598; 2018 n=747; 2019 Chronically Homeless Population n=675; 2020 Chronically Homeless Population n=562; 2022 Chronically Homeless Population n=725  
 Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Gender Non-Conforming category was added in 2018.

### Chronically Homeless Population by Race<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> 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>

## Chronically Homeless Population by Ethnicity

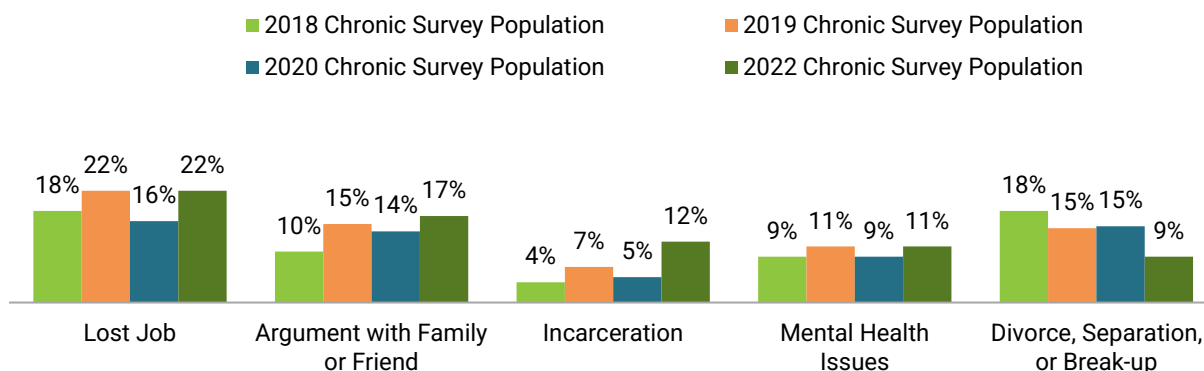


2016 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=172; 2017 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=177; 2018 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=153; 2019 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=123; 2020 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=562; 2022 Chronically Homeless Survey Population n=725

## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The most common cause of homelessness amongst those experiencing chronic homelessness was the loss of a job (20%), followed by an argument with family or friend (17%).

### Primary Cause of Homelessness Among Chronically Homeless (2022 top 5)



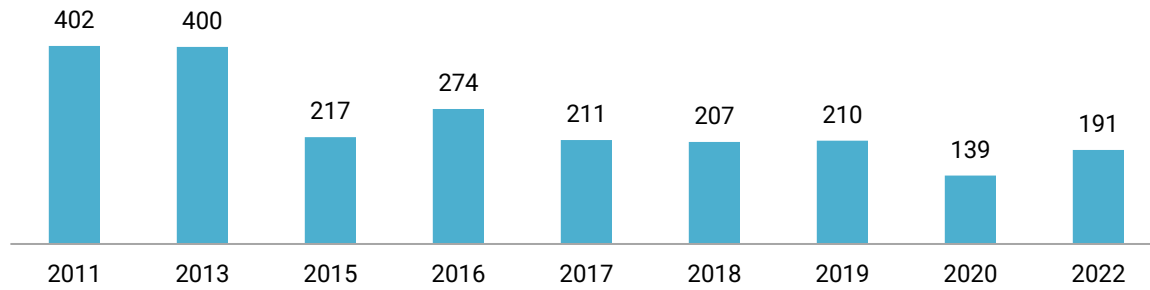
2016 n=164; 2017 n=183; 2018 n=152; 2019 n=123; 2020 n=80; 2022 n=100  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

## HOMELESS VETERANS

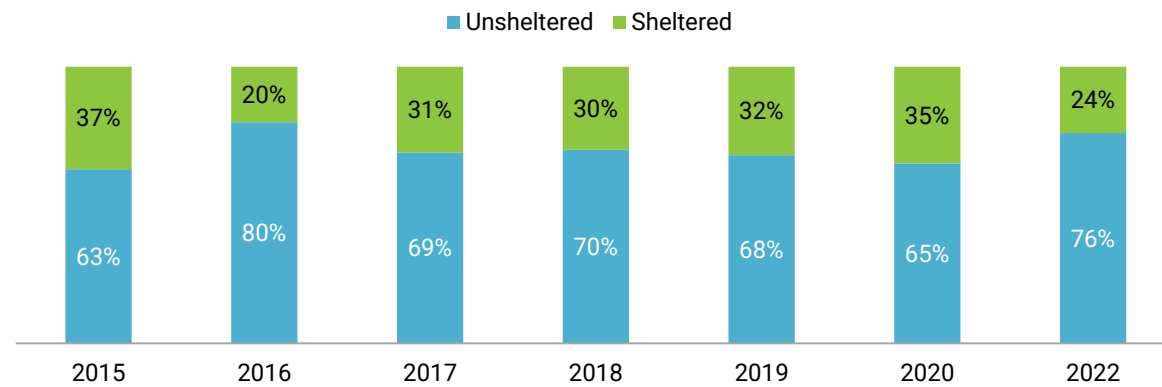
Many U.S. veterans experience conditions that place them at increased risk for homelessness. Veterans experience higher rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), sexual assault, and substance abuse. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the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

After a drop to 139 in 2020, the number of veteran experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County rose to 191 in 2022, similar to 2017-2019. Three quarters of veterans were unsheltered, an increase from 65% in 2020. Sixty five percent of veteran respondents identified as White, while 22% identified as Hispanic/Latino.

### Total Homeless Veterans Census Population

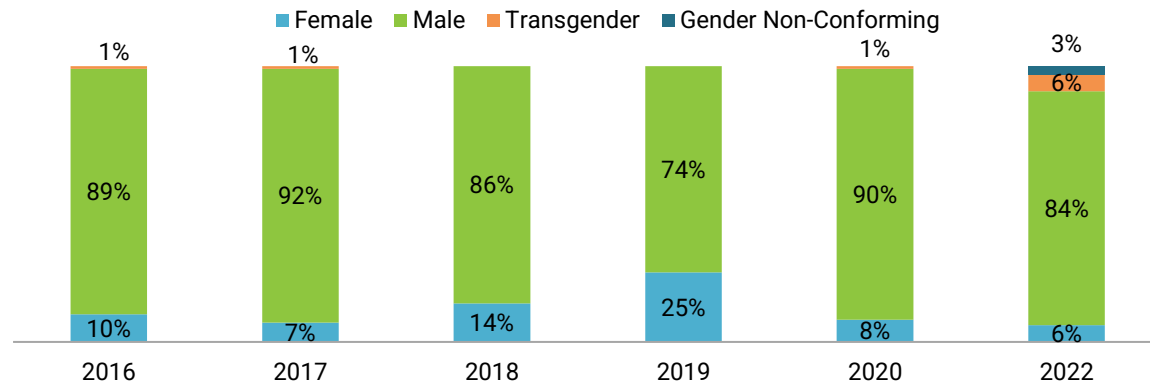


### Homeless Veterans Census Population by Shelter Status



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2020-22 % Change
<b>Sheltered</b>	54	66	63	68	47	45	-4%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	220	145	144	142	92	146	59%
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>37%</b>

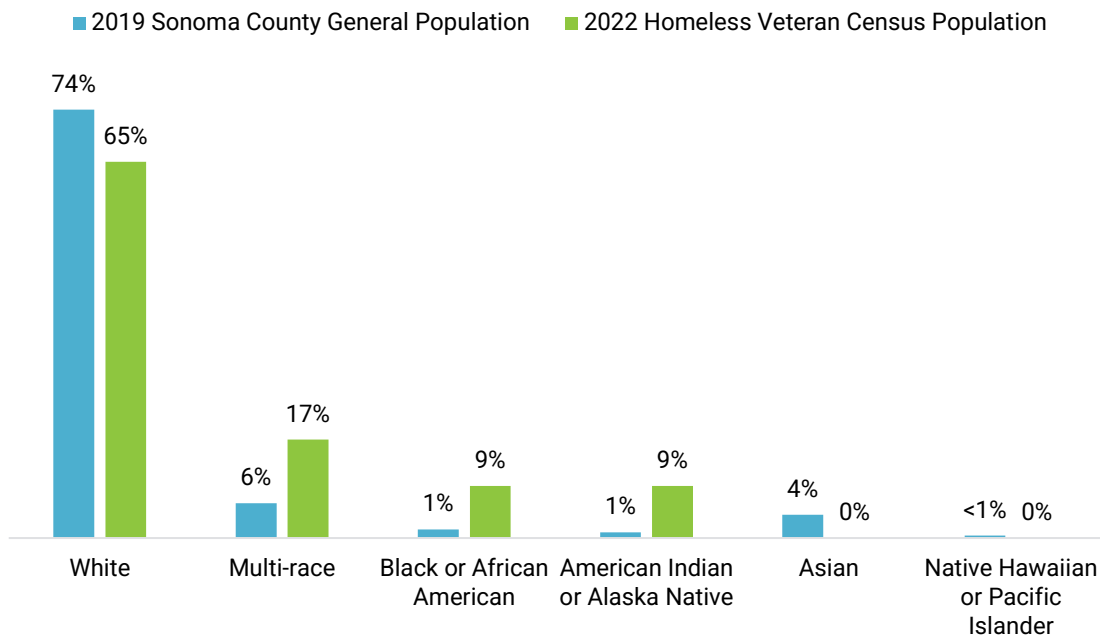
### Homeless Veterans Census Population by Gender



2015 n=702; 2016 n=274; 2017 n=211; 2018 n=207; 2019 n=210; 2020 n=134; 2022 n=191

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

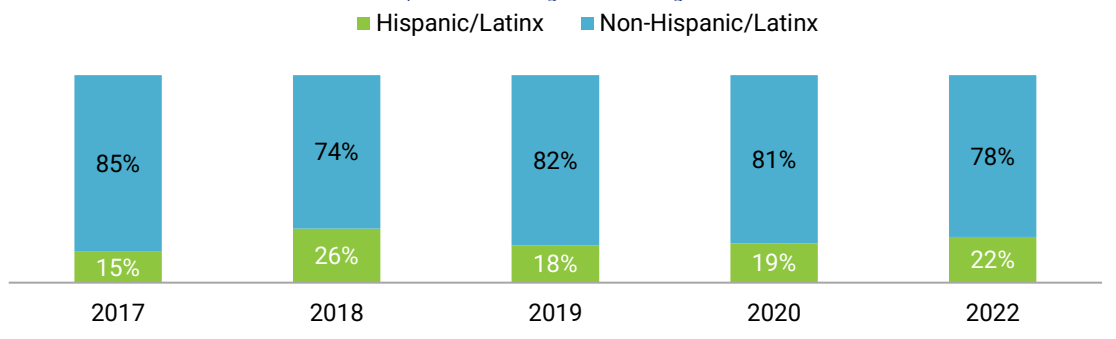
## Homeless Veterans Census Population by Race<sup>5</sup>



2022 Homeless Veterans Census Population n=191; 2022 Homeless Non-Veterans Census Population n=2,702

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

## Homeless Veterans Census Population by Ethnicity



2017 Veterans n=211; 2018 Veterans n=207; 2019 Veterans n=210; 2020 Veterans n=134; 2022 Veterans n=191

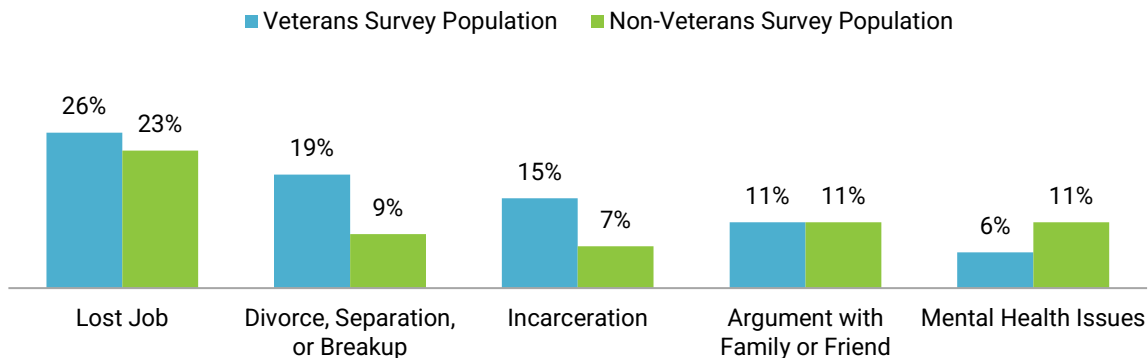
## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Veterans were more likely to cite the loss of a job, divorce, separation, and breakup, and incarceration as the cause of their homelessness, when compared to the non-Veteran population.

### Primary Causes of Homelessness, Veterans and Non-Veterans comparison

<sup>5</sup> 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>





2020 Homeless Veterans Survey Population n=27; Homeless Non-Veterans Survey Population n=369

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

## HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2019 suggest that 30% of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.

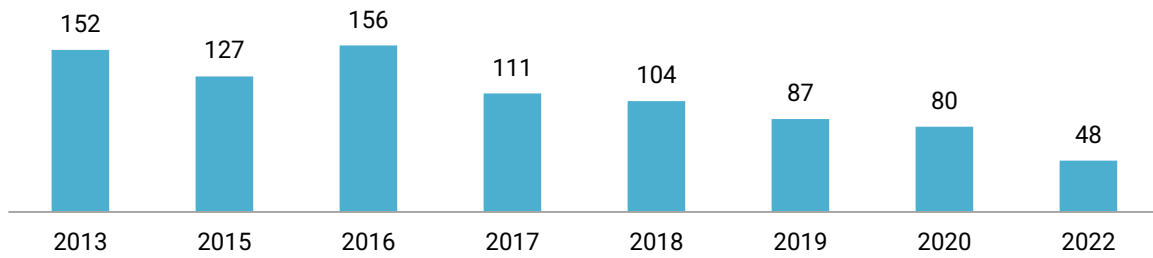
In Sonoma County, the number of homeless families with children has continued to decrease since 2016. In 2022, there were 48 families with 155 family members experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County representing 5% of the total persons experiencing homelessness.

<sup>6</sup> 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>

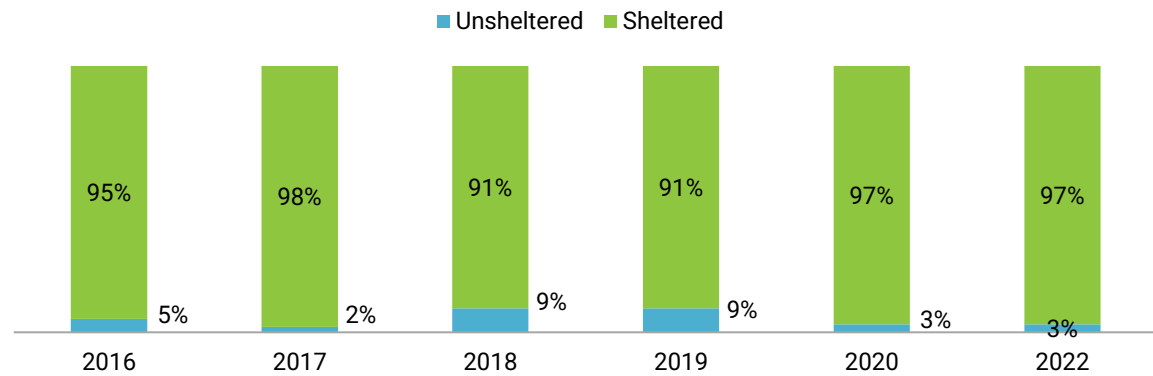
<sup>7</sup> U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2015 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

## Total Homeless Families with Children, Census Population



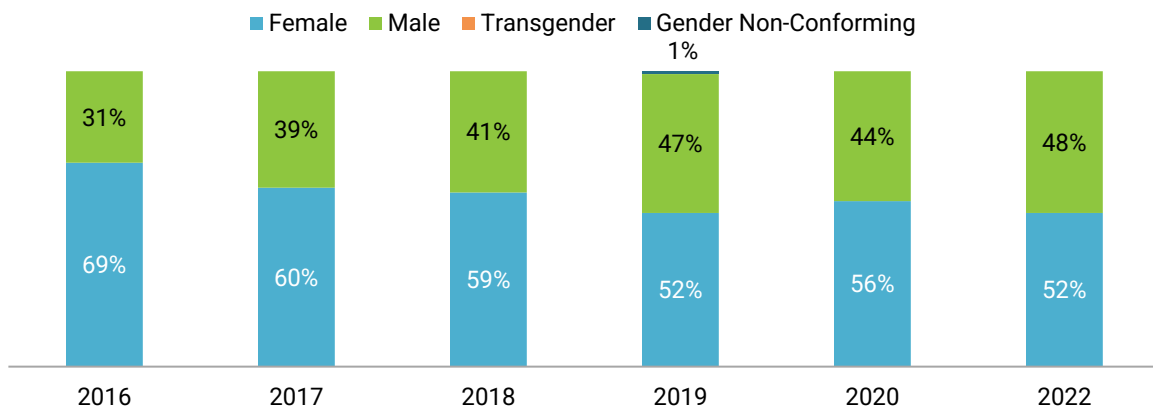
## Homeless Families with Children Census Population, All Family Members, by Shelter Status



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2020-22 % Change
<b>Sheltered</b>	369	319	307	253	227	150	-34%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	20	7	32	26	8	5	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>-34%</b>

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

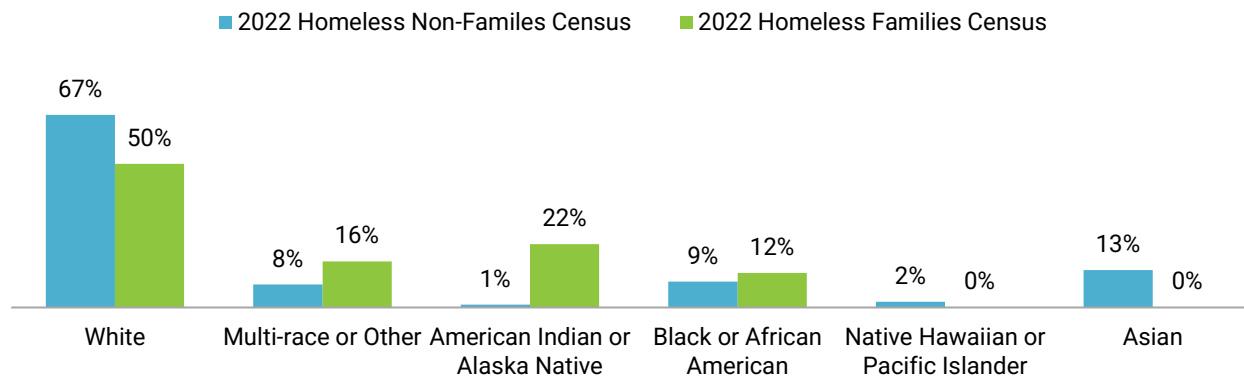
## Homeless Families with Children Census Population, All Family Members, by Gender



2016 n= 389; 2017 n= 326; 2018 n=339; 2019 n=279; 2020 n=235; 2022 n=155

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

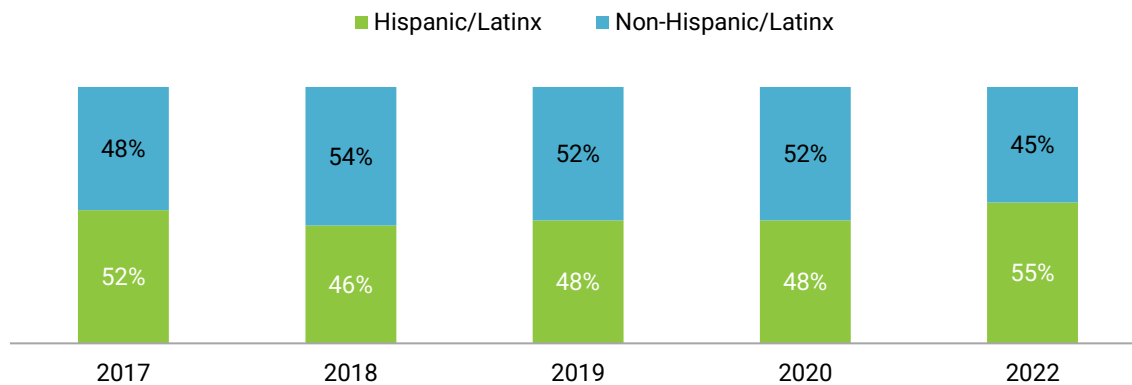
## Homeless Families with Children Census Population, All Family Members, by Race<sup>9</sup>



2022 Homeless Families n=155; 2022 Homeless Non-Families n=2,738

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

## Homeless Families with Children Census Population, All Family Members, by Ethnicity



2017 Homeless Families n=326; 2018 Homeless Families n=339; 2019 Homeless Families n=279; 2020 Homeless Families n=233; 2022 Homeless Families n=155

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

## 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.<sup>10</sup>

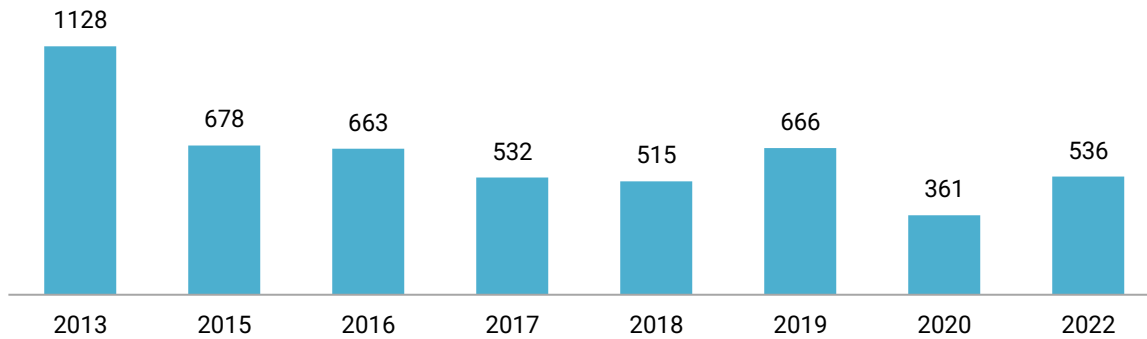
Due to the especially challenging outreach and access efforts necessary to profile the nature of youth homelessness, limited data are available on unaccompanied children and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness.

<sup>9</sup> 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>

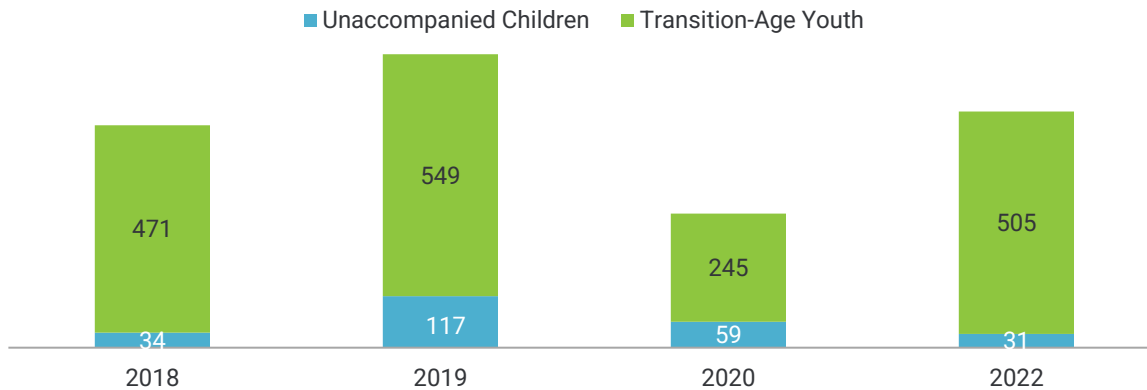
<sup>10</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

In Sonoma County, the number of unaccompanied children decreased 52% from 64 in 2020 to 31 in 2022 and the number of transition-age youth increased 70% from 297 in 2020 to 505 in 2022. A little under 19% of all those experiencing homelessness in 2022 are unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age.

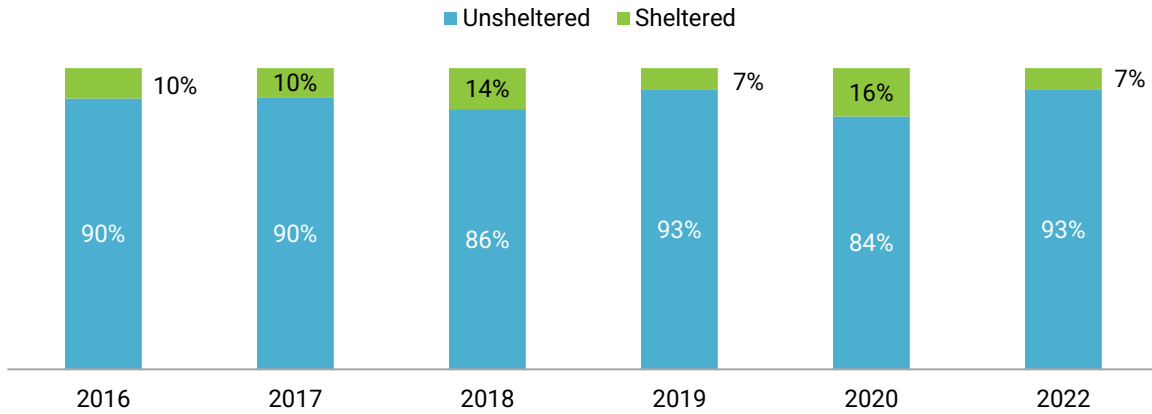
## TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION



## TOTAL UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH COUNT POPULATION

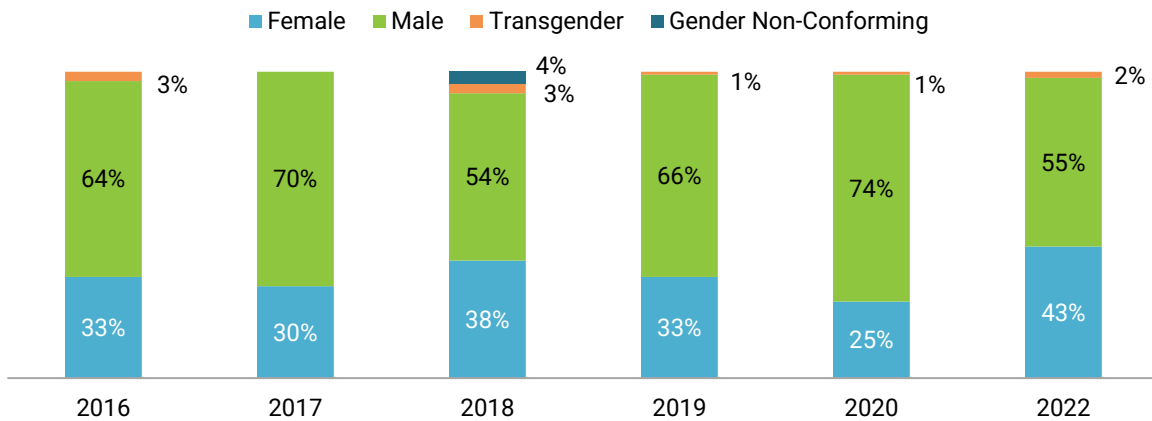


## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY SHELTER STATUS



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2020-22 % Change
<b>Sheltered</b>	67	52	70	43	57	35	-39%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	600	486	445	623	304	501	65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>48%</b>

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY GENDER

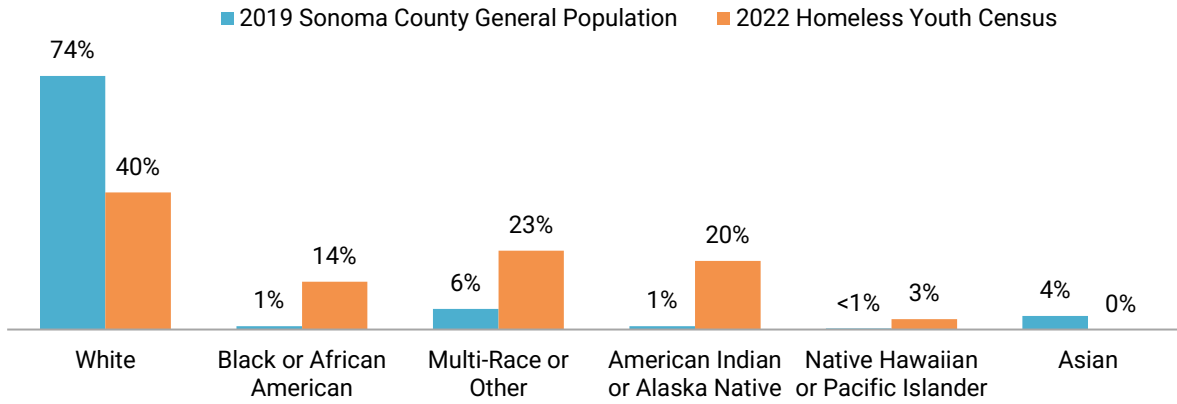


2015 n=69; 2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=666; 2020 n=357; 2022 n=528

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

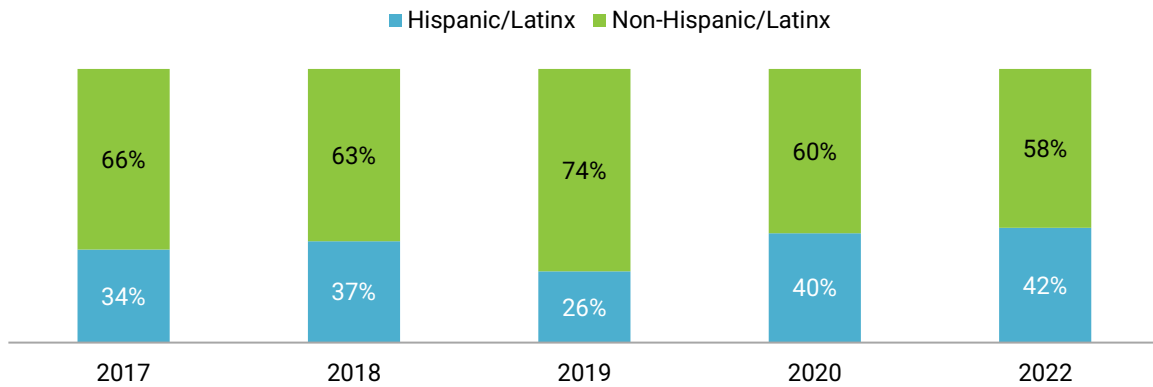
## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY RACE <sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 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>



2020 Homeless Youth Census n=528; 2019 Sonoma County General Population n=494,336  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH CENSUS POPULATION, BY ETHNICITY

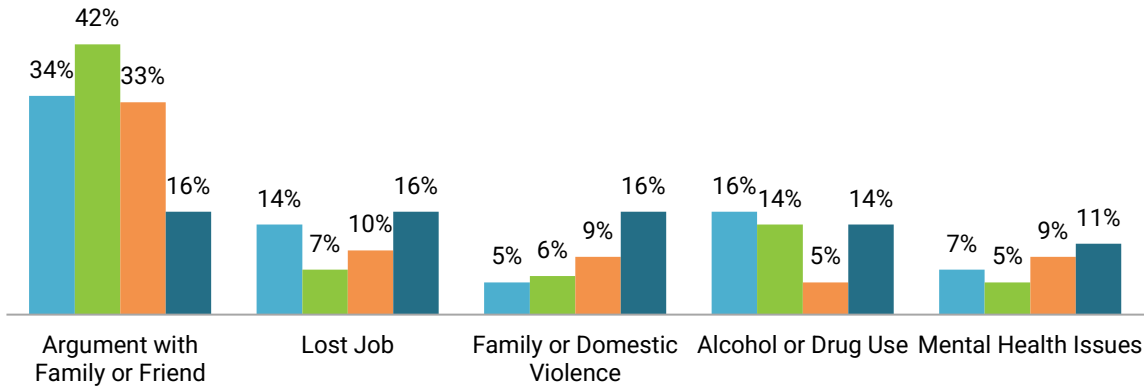


2016 n=669; 2017 n=538; 2018 n=515; 2019 n=666; 2020 n=347; 2022 n=528

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

Primary Cause of Homelessness Among Unaccompanied Children and Transition-Age Youth (2022 Top 5)

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2022



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; 2022 UC/TAY Survey Population n=37  
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

# CONCLUSION

## HOMELESS COUNT AND SURVEY

The 2022 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices for counting and surveying the homeless population. The 2022 Point-in-Time Count identified 2,893 persons experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County. This represents an increase of 5% from the count conducted in 2020.

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 2022 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 decreased by 23% and the unsheltered county increased by 23%.
- 26% of the population was counted in vehicles.
- 68% of those experiencing homelessness became homeless while living in Sonoma County.
- 24% of survey respondents experienced homelessness for the first time before age 25. In a growing demographic, 16% reported experiencing homelessness for the first time at age 50 or older.
- Almost one-quarter (23%) of survey respondents cited job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness. 63% reported unaffordable rent as an obstacle to securing permanent housing and another 45% 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.

## CONCLUSIONS BY SUBPOPULATIONS

### Chronically Homeless

- The count of chronically homeless individuals increased 43% from 2020.

### Veterans

- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County increased 37% from 139 individuals in 2020 to 191 in 2022.

### Families with Children

- The number of families experiencing homelessness continued to decrease from a high of 190 families in 2011 to 48 in 2022.

### Unaccompanied Children and transition-Age youth

- There were 23 unaccompanied children experiencing homelessness, and 498 transition age youth.

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.

## CLOSING

The 2022 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 the Sonoma County CoC 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 2022 Sonoma County Homeless Count and Survey report fulfills the Sonoma County CoC's 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 2022 County of Sonoma Homeless Census and Survey was performed using HUD-recommended practices and using HUD's definition of homelessness. The primary purpose was to produce a point-in-time estimate of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County, a region which covers approximately 1,768 square miles. The results of several components were combined to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness on a given night. A detailed description of these components follows.

### Components of the Homeless Count Method

The methodology used in the 2022 Point-in-Time Census and Survey had four components:

- 1) **General Street Count:** A morning count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families on February 25, 2022. This occurred from approximately 5:00 AM to 10:00 AM and included those sleeping outdoors on the street; at bus and train stations; in parks, tents, and other makeshift shelters; and in vehicles and abandoned properties. The general street count was designed to take place before shelter occupants were released. In areas with shelters, the immediate area surrounding the shelter was prioritized to eliminate potential double counting of individuals.
- 2) **General Shelter Count:** A nighttime count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness staying at publicly and privately-operated shelters on February 25, 2022. This included those who occupied emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens. All shelter data were gathered either from Sonoma County's Homeless Management Information System or directly from the shelter.
- 3) **Targeted Street Count of Youth and Young Adults:** An afternoon count of unsheltered youth and young adults on February 25, 2022. This occurred from approximately 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM and was led by special youth teams who canvassed specific areas where youth and young adults were known to congregate. Upon completion, data from this targeted count was carefully reviewed against the results from the general street count to ensure that any possible duplicate counts were removed.
- 4) **Homeless Survey:** An in-person interview with sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness conducted by peer surveyors between February 28 and March 28, 2022. Data from the

survey were used to refine the Point-in-Time Census estimates and then used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the demographics and experiences of homeless 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 22 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 2022 street count methodology followed an established, HUD approved methodology used in the 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 counts, with the addition of dedicated youth outreach in each of those years.

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. Due to COVID-19 and the public health risks, the organizing team made the decision, supported by the County Public Health office to limit participation levels in the count by the public and by persons currently experiencing homelessness out of COVID-19 transmission concerns. As a result of significant expansion of outreach services by jurisdictional and local community organizations, the organizing team felt that appropriate, safe and thorough outreach could be achieved by using outreach staff as the primary enumerators in the field. Some lived experience persons could be integrated by outreach staff as in previous PIT count efforts, but this would be selective and subject to compliance with public health requirements.

## Volunteer and Guide Recruitment and Training

As noted above, there was a planned effort to reduce the number of persons directly involved in field work and outreach in the 2022 PIT count due to COVID-19 safety concerns. In 2022, over 150 outreach workers, community volunteers and homeless guides participated in the general street count.

Outreach and program staff did limited recruitment of persons with lived experience to act as guides, and in some cases embedded reporters, in order to conduct the count in 2022. Homeless guides were paid \$20 for online training as well as \$20 per hour worked on the days of the count.

In order to participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to view a 20-minute training video before the count. Training covered all aspects of the count including:

- definition of homelessness,

- how to identify homeless individuals,
- how to safely and respectfully conduct the count, how to use the smart phone app and also access the smartphone app training video,
- how to use the route maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered,
- tips to identify vehicles, and

other tips to help ensure an accurate and safe 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.

## Logistics of Enumeration

On the morning of the street count, teams of two or more persons deployed to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was composed of any combination of outreach workers, lived experience guides, program staff and service experienced community volunteers. Each team had a lead and prior to the count were provided with their assigned census tract maps, smart phone access information and training, field observation tips and guidelines, including vehicle identification criteria. Teams were all assigned a unique team number and were instructed to text a central PIT count dispatch center to confirm they were enroute and on task for enumeration of their route assignment.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traversed by foot or car. The Sonoma County Survey 123 smartphone app was used 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 assignment sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas.

To ensure that the privacy of individuals experiencing homelessness was respected and that safety concerns were kept as a priority for enumeration teams, teams were asked to conduct observation-only counts and to not have any contact with individuals experiencing homelessness. When they encountered a structure or vehicle that they believed to be inhabited, they had the option to indicate that it was inhabited but that they didn't know the number or the demographic detail (age and gender) of its residents if this could be determined by the team. In order to determine the number of residents of these dwelling types, ASR uses the survey data from respondents who indicated they stayed in the named dwelling type. Demographic detail for those inhabitants is gathered from count data.

# YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

## Goal

The goal of the 2022 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 2022 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.

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 25, 2022.

Youth workers were paid \$20 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 25, 2022. 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 24, 2022. 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 individuals experiencing homelessness was conducted between February 27 and March 28, 2022 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 \$10 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 and \$5 gift cards were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2022 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 2,983 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 428 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 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 2022 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 AND 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.