



**For Immediate Release**  
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## ***NUMBER OF UNSHELTERED PEOPLE IN CLARK COUNTY UP FROM 2017*** **Annual Point In Time Count shows 39 percent increase in number of people living outside**

### **Background:**

Staff from Council for the Homeless, partner agencies and volunteers conducted the 2018 Point In Time Count on, January 25, 2018. The count captures a one-day snapshot of the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Clark County. The count takes place annually on the last Thursday of January and is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and by Washington State. The count is generally regarded as an underreporting of the total number of people experiencing homelessness and is one of many ways people who are unsheltered are counted.

The count identifies the number individuals and families who are sheltered and unsheltered throughout Clark County. Volunteers span the county to engage with persons they encounter, offering toiletry kits and bus tickets to the Project Homeless Connect service event happening that same day. Data gathered informs efforts to assist people in need and shape programs and policies to end homelessness.

### **Definitions:**

“Unsheltered” means living in a place not meant for human habitation such as a car, a tent, or a trailer with no running water or electricity. People staying in an emergency or transitional shelter are counted in the “sheltered” count. People who are doubled-up with friends or family are not counted in these numbers.

### **Key data from the unsheltered count:**

Overall, the total number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness rose from 269 in 2017, to 374 in 2018, a 39% increase. In both the 2017 and 2018 count, there were 44 unsheltered families with children. The number of adults in households without children who were unsheltered rose from 132 in 2017 to 227 in 2018. The number of senior citizens aged 65 or older who were unsheltered increased from three to nine. The number of people who are chronically homeless and unsheltered, increased from 26 to 60.

### **More people with disabilities and people working multiple jobs experiencing homelessness:**

The Point In Time count is useful because gives the community a baseline number of the *minimum number* of people that are sleeping outside on that night and it allows trends to be tracked over time. **The 2018 count, confirms what we are seeing in a number of different indicators, which is that homelessness is increasing in our community.**

“The face of homelessness continues to change in Clark County as we see more families, couples and single individuals who are working one, two, sometimes even three jobs, fall into homelessness because

rent costs are skyrocketing and moving into a new unit is so costly,” said Kate Budd, executive director of the Council for the Homeless. “The cost of moving into a new unit is \$2,500 on average, which households living paycheck to paycheck struggle to save.”

People who report disabilities also made up a larger percent of this year’s unsheltered count, close to 40 percent. This coincides with the increased number of people considered chronically homeless and male Veterans. People in those categories tend to struggle with health and/or substance use challenges that could make obtaining and stabilizing in housing more of a struggle.

### **Skyrocketing Rental and move-in costs forcing more people into homelessness**

In one year, Clark County rental costs have risen by 3.9%, with the fair market rent rising by over \$400 in the last four years for a two bedroom, one bath unit. Rental costs are greatly outpacing employment wages meaning those who are working minimum wage, full-time jobs are struggling to afford their rental costs. Rental cost increases are making it particularly difficult for seniors and people with disabilities who have stagnant incomes, often forcing them to make difficult decisions between housing and basic necessities.

“Everyday people call our housing hotline because they have 20 days (outside the City of Vancouver) to find a new rental unit, save for move-in costs and move all their belongings,” Budd shared. “This is an often impossible situation, which leads directly to households moving into their car or on the street. This is particularly concerning as we see the number of seniors experiencing homelessness, even those in their 70s and 80s, increase.”

### **Increased focus on Family Housing Stability paying off**

The data is also showing the programs that exist *are* working. This is particularly true for families, who did not see an increase in homelessness this year. There has been considerable investments in stabilizing families through partnerships and efforts by the local school districts’ family community resource centers (FCRCs), the public sector through grants, the Vancouver Housing Authority, and local philanthropists’ contributions to the Council for the Homeless Housing Relief Fund.

Clark County housing programs that assist people who are homeless have an 86% success rate, which is to say that within two years of graduating from a housing program, 86% of participants have not returned in need of additional assistance. However, over the course of last year only 10% of people who actively pursued accessing one of these housing programs got in.

Local shelters for people who are living outside and programs that help people re-gain stable housing are effective. However, if we keep only providing shelter to 40% of people who need it and housing assistance to 10%, the problem will keep getting worse.

“The long-term solution is to create more housing that is affordable to people at low-incomes and in the meantime we must invest more in the full continuum of assistance, from restrooms and showers to move-in assistance and supports. The increased funding made available through the last legislative session is a key way this will happen in the near future,” shared Budd.

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Council for the Homeless is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide community leadership, compelling advocacy, and practical solutions to prevent and end homelessness in Clark County, WA.

[www.councilforthehomeless.org](http://www.councilforthehomeless.org)