

2020 Clark County, WA Point in Time Count - Overview Report

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INTRODUCTION:

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count provides an unduplicated snapshot of how many people experienced homelessness in a community on a given night, or a "point in time." The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that communities receiving federal funds from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program conduct an annual sheltered count during the last week of January and a biannual unsheltered count. A PIT Count is also required by the Washington Department of Commerce to occur annually, within the last ten days of January and across all WA Counties. In 2020, the Clark County, WA PIT Count took place on Thursday, January 30, 2020.

The PIT count includes people both sheltered (living in emergency shelter or transitional living facilities) and unsheltered (living on the streets or in areas unfit for human habitation) populations. This count does not include people who are doubled-up or couch-surfing.

The Point in Time Count provides a one-night snapshot of homelessness in Clark County. Locally and nationwide, the PIT Count is regarded as an undercount, recognizing not all people experiencing homelessness can be identified in one day. The greatest value of a PIT Count is the ability to track trends and identify systemic changes and needs. The PIT Count should be used as one of many tools used to track progress, increase public awareness, and identify resources needed to effectively reduce homelessness in Clark County. As a one night snapshot, the PIT Count does not serve as a count of the overall number of people experiencing homelessness in Clark County. The 2019 Clark County Homeless System Data should be referenced for those details.

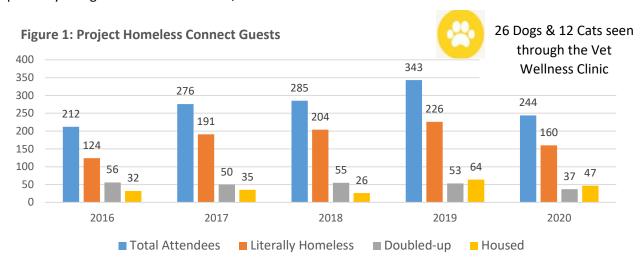
METHODOLOGY:

Similar to previous years, the 2020 unsheltered Point in Time (PIT) count was conducted by homeless outreach workers, elected officials, homeless crisis response system staff, people with experience of homelessness and local volunteers, who work in teams to canvas an assigned area of the Clark County between the hours of 6am and 10pm. Two formal trainings were provided for interested community volunteers. With 60 people volunteering to count, this was the largest number of counters in the last decade. All surveyors were asked to engage potential respondent by first asking, "Where did you stay last night?"

The 16 street count teams utilized the *Counting Us* smart phone app to count and survey the people who appeared to be living in places not meant for human habitation. This includes individuals and families living in parks, cars, rest stops, and tents. Two additional counting zones, for a total of 12, were designated for PIT teams to visit in 2020.

Data from our HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) is used to produce the counts for the Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing programs types. HMIS data from services-only programs, such as Share House meals, Giving Closet and Janus Youth The Perch are also used to provide information for their unsheltered clients served on the day of the count. Surveys were also collected at service locations not connected to the local HMIS such as safe-park programs, community libraries and food banks throughout Clark County.

In the interest of having the most accurate data possible, Project Homeless Connect (PHC), a one-day resource fair targeted to people who are homeless or unstable in housing is held on the same day. For the past six years Project Homeless Connect has been held at St. Joseph Catholic Church. Those who attend PHC are asked to fill out the PIT Count survey. The number of people attending the 2020 Project Homeless Connect was lower than in previous years. Based on feedback, this can be attributed to the Share Day Center being open and providing veterinary care (PIT count surveys were collected there), the weather being mild with no rain and individuals without homes being scattered throughout the county and not primarily being in the downtown core, like in 2019.



People experiencing sheltered homelessness (meaning they reside in an emergency shelter or transitional housing facility) are counted through data collected from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This is the database used by homeless service providers to track the need for services and how well the community is meeting the need for services. Using HMIS to gather number of people in emergency and transitional housing leads to high reliability in the sheltered PIT Count numbers.

Building on a successful outreach approach for families experiencing homelessness in the school districts, extra surveys were made available to the libraries, food banks, food programs, grassroots groups, faith-based efforts and recovery programs. Similarly, youth with current and previous experiences of homelessness were recruited to lead teams during an extended 24-hour window after the night of the PIT count in order to identify and count homeless youth through the *Counting Us* app.

WEATHER:

The weather during the 2020 PIT was mild for winter, with highs in the 50's and lows in the high 30's. The sky were clear with intermittent sunbreaks throughout the day. The night of January 30, 2020, was not a severe weather night, as determined by the Council for the Homeless, meaning the temperature was not forecasted to be 32 degrees or less and snow or freezing rain was not in the forecast. When the weather is mild, people experiencing homelessness are less apt to find refuge in a building and to venture outside of their camping area.

CLARK COUNTY, WA POINT IN TIME COUNT STATISTICS AND TRENDS:

Total Number Homeless

Overall the total number of people experiencing homelessness **decreased** by 4% between 2019 and 2020 (See Figure 2). Within this population, 145 people identified as single women and 372 people identified as members of a family.

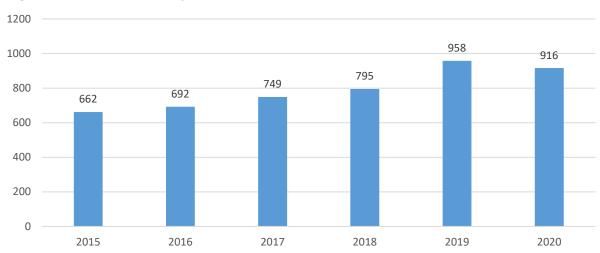
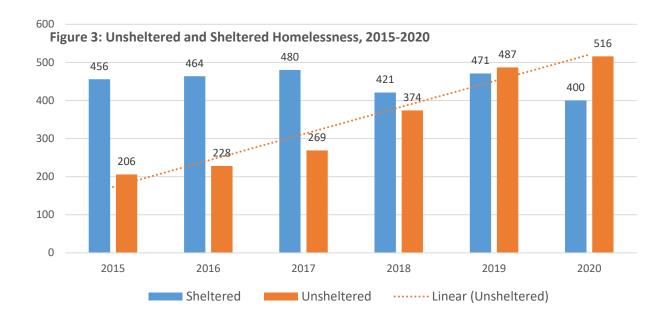


Figure. 2: Total Homeless Population, 2015-2020

Sheltered and Unsheltered

The 2020 count identified 516 people living unsheltered on the street, in a car or in a location not meant for habitation. The number of people who are homeless and unsheltered **increased** by 6% from the previous year (from 487 persons in 2019 to 516 in 2020) (See Figure 3).

The count identified 400 people living in sheltered homelessness, including in emergency shelters and transitional housing indicating a **decrease** of 15% (from 471 persons in 2019 to 400 in 2020) (See Figure 3). The number of people in shelter was the lowest recorded number among all the Point in Time counts, since 2005. This can be significantly attributed to Share Orchards Inn, a local family shelter with capacity for 50 persons, including families and single women, being closed for remodeling during the 2020 PIT Count. In addition, January 30, 2020 was not a severe weather night, meaning additional church shelter beds did not open.



Household Demographics

Family homelessness **decreased** by 10% (from 133 families in 2019, to 120 in 2020) (See Figure 4). The families, including 104 children, were identified as living in sheltered (emergency or transitional) or unsheltered environments, including a tent, car, or place not meant for habitation, like a garage, or shed.

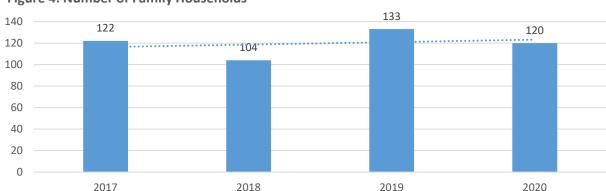


Figure 4: Number of Family Households

Population Demographics

People of Color experiencing homelessness **increased** by 1%. In 2019, 23% of the overall homeless population identified as a person of colors, compared to to 24% of the overall homeless population in 2020. (See Figure 5). Based on the PIT Count, people who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Black/African American and as Multiple Races are most at-risk of homelessness when compared to the general 2019 Clark County population based on the U. S. Census Bureau American Communities Survey (ACS). This is also in-line with the 2019 National PIT Count data.

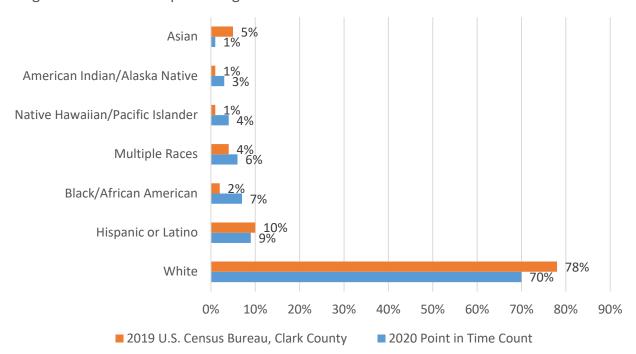


Figure 5: Race and Hispanic Origin

Seniors

The number of seniors, age 62 or older and experiencing homelessness **increased** 7% (from 57 in 2019 to 61 in 2020) (See Figure 6). Notably, 12 seniors were over the age 70 in 2020. Studies have shown, the longer someone lives outside or in a vehicle the greater the symptoms related to physical and mental health become and the more quickly they compound. Coupled with advanced age, homelessness can rapidly deteriorate a person's health and lead to severe repercussions, including death.

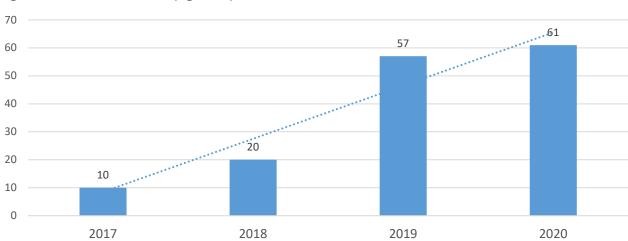


Figure 6: Number of Seniors (Age 62 +)

Unaccompanied Children and Youth

The number of youth, age 18-24, experiencing homelessness **increased** by 24% (33 in 2019 and 41 in 2020) (See Figure 7). The majority of the increase can be attributed to the Vancouver Housing Authority opening Caples Terrace in the Skyline neighborhood. This Transitional Housing complex serves youth, 18-24 who have exited foster care, were living in a doubled-up situation or were experiencing homelessness.

The number of unaccompanied minors, under age 18, **decreased** by 47% (15 in 2019 and 8 in 2020) (See Figure 7). Unaccompanied minors are defined as children, under 18, who are experiencing homelessness without their family, a parent or a legal guardian.

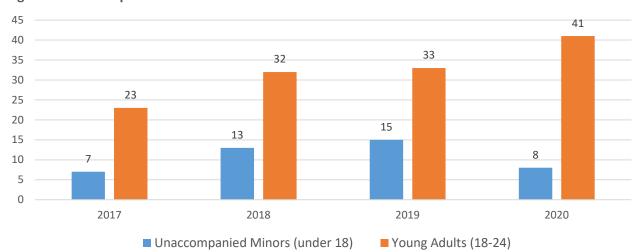


Figure 7: Unaccompanied Children and Youth

Gender

People identifying as male made up 55% of the overall PIT Count, compared to 45% female identifying. One person identified as gender non-conforming (See Figure 8).

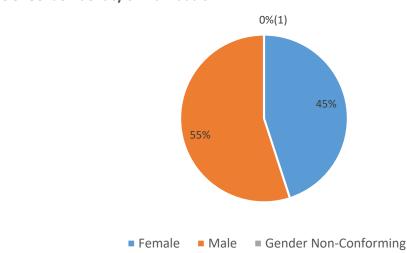


Figure 8: Gender Identity of Individuals

Chronic Homelessness

People and families who are defined as chronically homeless meet a specific U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition. They have a disability and have been homeless continuously for at least one year <u>or</u> on four separate occasions in the last three years, where the combined length of time homeless during those occasions total at least 12 months.

The HMIS system and PIT Count survey have specific questions that allow administrators to determine if individuals or families meet this HUD definition.

The number of people who are Chronically Homeless **increased** by 23% (from 152 individuals and eight people in two families in 2019, to 190 individuals and seven people in two families in 2020) (See Figure 9).

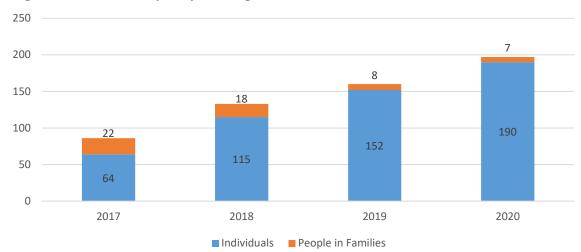


Figure 9: Number of People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

Veterans

Veteran homelessness **decreased** 2% (from 55 veterans in 2019 to 54 in 2020) (See Figure 10). Among the total number of people counted as unsheltered, 33 identified as Veterans. This three more Veterans than those counted in 2019. In addition, approximately 67% of Veterans identified they have an Honorable discharge status.

■ Veterans-Unsheltered ■ Veterans- Sheltered ■ Total Veterans

Figure 10: Number of Veterans

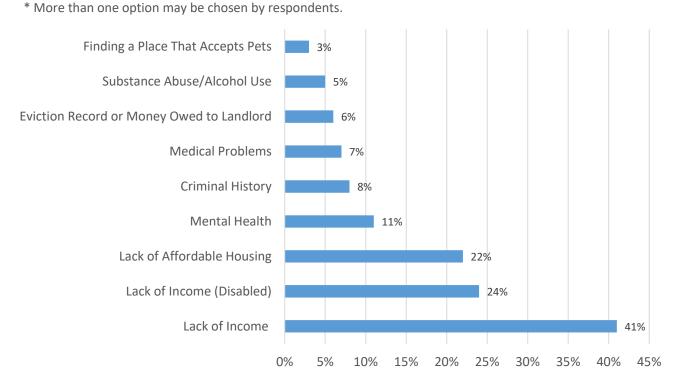
Insight Questions

The answers to these questions were provided by people experiencing homelessness during the street count. This information is collected in order to provide informed insight into the challenges and realities faced by people in Clark County who are experiencing homelessness.

What is currently your biggest barrier to becoming permanently housed (See Figure 11)?

There were 88 respondents (app only) out of the 516 surveyed and more than one answer may have provided.

Figure 11: Biggest Barriers to Becoming Permanently Housed?

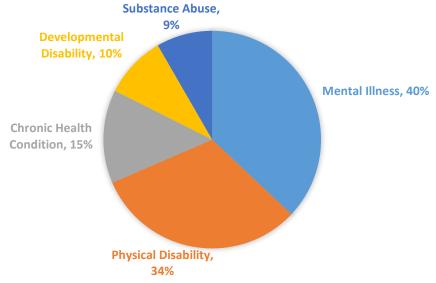


If you have a Disability, what type do you have (See Figure 12)?

There were 408 respondents out of the 916 surveyed and more than one answer may have been provided.

FIGURE 12: IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY, WHAT TYPE?

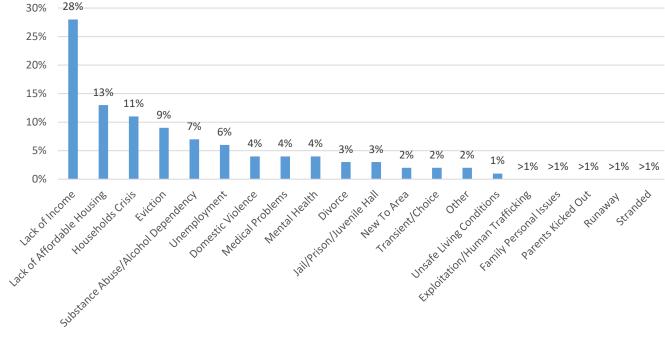
*MORE THAN ONE OPTION MAY BE CHOSEN BY RESPONDENTS



What is the Primary Cause for Becoming Homeless (See Figure 13)?

There were 277 respondents out of the 516 surveyed and all identified one primary cause.





Pets

For the first time, the PIT Count survey included questions regarding pets, which for the purposes of the 2020 survey, includes service, companion and therapeutic animals. Thanks to the Humane Society of Southwest WA for being a new partner with the Point in Time Count and for providing Veterinarian care to 26 dogs and 12 cats as a part of the overall Project Homeless Connect efforts. All human guests at the Vet clinic were surveyed for the PIT Count.





The PIT Count trends match what is anecdotally seen in the community as challenges:

- More people visibly living on the street can be equated to the 23% increase in people who are chronically homeless. Typically families, youth and people who are newer to homelessness go to great lengths to be undetectable as homeless.
- More seniors, age 62 or older are becoming homeless, based on a 7% increase. In the PIT
 Count survey, nearly 100% of the seniors identified a lack of income as the reason for their
 homelessness. Social Security and pensions are not keeping up with increasing rents, utilities
 and food costs, especially when living alone. When a senior no longer has a support system
 to keep them stable in housing, they have few options, but to become homeless.
- Among those who reported a disability/ies, over 40% identified having mental illness. This is
 well aligned with community concerns. Many people living on the streets are ill and getting a
 job or making major life changes is unrealistic when they are simply surviving hour-by-hour.
- The number of young adults, age 18-24, who are homeless is increased by 24%. When looking at the 2019 reasons for youth homelessness by zip code, "Cannot Afford Housing" is the primary reason, though Household Crisis, which prominently includes being kicked out of their home for identifying as LGBTQ+, as the second highest reason. This number does not include the young adults who are couch surfing or doubled-up with family or friends.
- Rents are too high and incomes are too low. The vast majority of people who responded to the question, "What is your primary cause for becoming homeless?" or "What is the biggest barrier for you to becoming permanently housed?" indicated a lack of income or lack of affordable housing. Nearly 200 people chose these responses, 33% of whom are employed.

Incremental Progress Continues in the Community

- As the coordination of the PIT Count becomes more sophisticated nationally and locally, it is
 reasonable to assume increases in specific populations can be partially attributed to more
 effective counting methods. This may include working more closely with youth experiencing
 homelessness to count youth experiencing homelessness and working with street outreach
 staff to identify people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- The number of families experiencing homelessness remains relatively stagnant. This can be attributed to the increasing number of formal and informal programs and groups that support families who are unstable in housing and experiencing homelessness. The Family-Community Resource Centers in all school districts have been instrumental in identifying families with school age children experiencing homelessness and helping them regain housing stability through internal and partner supports.
- The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness remained stagnant. There are many
 programs serving Veterans in this community working to meet the basic, emergency and longterm needs of Veterans. In addition, an active Clark County Veterans By Name List (VBNL)
 committee meets every other week to make sure all known Veterans without homes are on

the list. Then, a few focus households are identified and barriers are broken down to effectively house them.

- The number of people experiencing homeless was down by 5% compared to 2019. While there are many reasons this may not be a realistic, including a 50 bed shelter being closed, it is worse identifying, as it will be regarded as positive on the State and Federal levels.
- The number of emergency shelter beds has increased considerably since the PIT Count. This includes Share Orchards Inn re-opening, St. Paul Lutheran remaining open during the non-winter months, X-Change Recovery opening additional Transitional Housing. In addition, to mitigate the impact of the COVID crisis, St. Andrew Lutheran Church and Share House Emergency Shelter Overflow remain open after the winter season to shelter individuals and families. Living Hope Church has opened a 20 tent sanctioned tent encampment, Immanuel Lutheran Church opened up as a 10th SafePark location and many of the SafePark churches already involved increased their capacity.



Community Action Needed to Reduce Homelessness

Clark County has seen a steady increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. This is particularly true for those who are unsheltered. The Point in Time Count illustrates the gaps that exist within the homeless crisis response system. Opportunities to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness include:

- INCREASE SHELTER BEDS: The <u>Clark County Homeless Action Plan</u> identifies a need for nearly 100 new 24/7, year-round shelter beds, including those for people with high health needs, youth and domestic violence survivors. These are all populations that rose in the 2020 PIT Count. At the time of the PIT Count, zero new publicly funded beds had been created. Whether they are called bridge, wraparound, emergency, family or transitional housing, the desired outcome of permanent, safe, stable housing remains. Placing a stable roof over someone's head allows them to meet their basic needs while they are reducing barriers to permanent housing.
- INCREASE RENT ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES: For every new shelter bed, transitional housing or encampment bed that is created, the community must fund additional permanent housing programs that provide rent assistance and supportive services (Rapid Re-housing and Permanent Supportive Housing). Supports must exist to move people from temporary environments to permanent housing, otherwise movement out of shelters stagnates, people in shelters languish and people on the streets cannot move into shelter. Permanent housing supports must also be culturally responsive and specific for persons of colors and those who identify as LGBTQ+.
 - Rapid Re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness quickly and return to permanent housing by providing three core program activities including housing identification, time limited financial assistance and housing based supportive services. Due to the lack of affordable housing in our community, many households need longer-term rental assistance and support.

- o For individuals who are chronically homeless (those with a disability and long history of homelessness), stable housing and supportive services are the foundation for stability. Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs are permanent housing linked with supportive services that help residents maintain housing and improve their quality of life. In turn, those in PSH have been shown locally and nationally to reduce their dependence on systems of care and access behavioral/physical health supports.
- See the <u>Clark County Homeless System Dashboard</u> to learn more about local housing program outcomes.
- CREATE SHARED HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES: With an increase in the number of youth, seniors and domestic violence survivors experiencing homelessness shared housing can offer stable housing in untraditional and affordable ways. A program focused on seniors experiencing homelessness should be funded with a focus on outcomes versus outputs, recognizing long-term stability is more important than the number of matches. Host home programs focused on youth age 24 and younger should be explored and additional opportunities to support DV survivors with shared housing should be created.
- EXPAND AND ENHANCE STREET OUTREACH: Street Outreach staff are often the only connection to high-risk persons living in encampments or places not meant for human habitation. Health care professionals in partnership with outreach staff and people with lived experience of homelessness, must be deployed as "Street Medicine Teams." These teams would visit people living on the streets to assess, treat and educate patients in need of medical assistance, and provide follow up evaluation and care as needed, delivering care directly to them in their own environment. It is the first essential step towards a pathway to securing housing and stability.
- DEVELOP DATA DRIVEN PROGRAMS: All programs for people experiencing homelessness must focus on data driven outcomes and changes. New, creative and innovative ideas are exciting, promising and potentially offer great successes. However, if there is no way to measure how those new investments their value is lessened. Projects like tiny homes, encampments and affordable housing impact may positively impact the overall homeless system and there is no way of knowing if data is not collected. All homelessness focused programs that are publicly funded must utilize the same systemic requirements, which includes being outcomes focused, engaging with coordinated entry, working with system partners and using HMIS. Without this approach, there is no way of knowing if investments are actually resulting in the desired outcomes.
- ADOPT AN OUTCOME FOCUS: Identifying and progressing outcomes are the key to change. Any
 program or effort that is created or changed must have a clear outcome(s) it is trying to address.
 Otherwise we will have many well-meaning programs that are focused on the symptoms of
 homelessness, like trash, crime or camping. These band aid approaches do not actually reduce
 homelessness and effect the changes this community wants to see in the Point in Time Count. A
 focus on outcomes results in real change.
- DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH EXTRAORDINAILY LOW-INCOMES: Clark
 County must dedicate itself to increasing the supply of housing and creating new housing
 opportunities for people with diverse incomes. This includes people who have zero income, those
 who rely on the Aged, Blind and Disabled (ABD) program and those who receive a type of social
 security.

Addendum A: PIT Count Report Form

January 30th, 2020 WA-508 Clark County PIT Report Form



Part 1: Homeless Population	Sheltered			
	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered 2020	Unsheltered 2019
Number of Families with Children (Family Households):	25	29	66	59
Number of Households without Children:	151	54	286	277
Number of Households <u>without</u> Adults (nobody over 17 years old):	6	0	2	5
1. Number of Persons in Families with Children:	98	75	199	201
Number of persons (under age 18)	59	43	104	110
Number of persons (Age 18-24)	5	6	1	0
Number of persons (over Age 24)	34	26	94	91
2. Number of Single Individuals and Persons	164	57	315	277
in Households <u>without</u> Children:				
Number of persons (Age 18-24)	9	17	15	22
Number of persons (over Age 24)	155	40	300	255
3. Number of Persons in Households without				
Adults (nobody over 17 years old):	6	0	2	9
Total Persons: (Add Lines Numbered 1, 2 & 3)	268	132	516	487
	Sheltered			
Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered 2020	Unsheltered 2019
a. Chronically Homeless Individuals	70	N/A	120	98
b. Chronically Homeless Families	1	N/A	1	0
c. Persons in Chronically Homeless Families	5	N/A	2	0
d. Veterans - Male	15	4	31	28
e. Veterans - Female	1	1	1	2
f. Veterans – Gender Non-Conforming	0	0	1	0
g. Senior citizens (aged 62 or older)	19	5	37	30

Notes:

- 1. 6% Increase of people who are unsheltered from 2019 to 2020.
- 2. Clark County is continuing to see an increase in the number of senior citizens and people who are chronically homeless individuals or in households w/o children (single adults & couples).
 - a. Chronic homeless individuals increased 22%.
 - b. Unsheltered seniors increased 23%. 12 individuals were over 70 years of age.
- 3. Number of unsheltered people in Families with children and Veterans are holding at the same level to 2019.

Addendum B: 2020 Clark County, WA Point in Time County Hard Copy Survey

9. Agency/Location: Project Homeless Connect Thank you for helping us improve services to persons who are homeless. Contact Dale Whitley for return of completed forms. Email: dwhitley@councilforthehomeless.org Phone:360-993-9571

Clark County Homeless Count 2020 Thursday, January 30, 2020 Sample script: Hi, I'm (first name) a volunteer helping with the Clark County Point in Time Street Count. The information we get is confidential and will help the community plan for the types of housing and services that people need. I have some questions to ask you if that's okay? If yes, complete survey. 1. RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM PARTICIPANT: 2. Last Permanent Zip Code (3 months or more) SIGNATURE: Date: Zip OR City Have you or someone in your household completed this survey today? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, thank them; only 1 survey per household 3a. Current living situation: Where did you stay last night? (check one)? On the Street, camping, abandoned building Temporarily living with family or friends Emergency Shelter Vehicle or car Transitional Housing Prog. Jail Other 3b Did you stay in Clark County last night? (check one)
Yes
No 3c. Is this your first time homeless? 3d. Have you been continuously homeless for over a year? 3e How many episodes of homelessness have you had in the past 3 years? (check one) 0 □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 or more 3f. If 4 or more episodes, added together how many total months have you been homeless? Who is in the family/household with you? # in Household: Adults_____ Children or unaccompanied youth (under age 18) □ Just myself My children and me ☐ My partner and me My partner, my children and me □ Other (check one) Any Disabilities DOB Ethnicity LAST NAME FIRST NAME Highest Served Develop-Drug Mental Physical ship to Head (Hispanic Health (at least first 2 letters) of yes/no) completed Insur-Military Disability Household Y/N Y/N ance 5b 5d 5f 51 5c 5e 5h 5i 5k 5m 5g 5i 5n Self 6. Mark Homelessness Primary Reason (Check only one) Source(s) household income (Check all that apply) Deemed at Risk (By Law) □ Lack of Income □ Parents Kicked Out (LGBTQ+) ■ None Other Enforce, CPS or Adult Protect.) □ Divorce □ Jail/Prison/Juvenile Hall Parents Kicked Out (Other) Child Support Social Security □ Domestic Abuse/Violence ☐ Mental Illness □ Runaway Youth Day Labor Job □ SSI ☐ Substance/Alcohol Dependency □ SSD □ Eviction (No Cause) ☐ Medical Problems □ Employment □ Eviction (other) ■ Mental Health □ Transient/Choice □ Food Stamps □ TANF Exploitation/Human Trafficking ■ New to Area □ Unemployment □ Public Asst ■ Unemployment ■ No Affordable Housing ☐ Household Crisis Unsafe Living Environment ■ VA income/pension ☐ Workers comp Are you homeless because you are currently fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking?

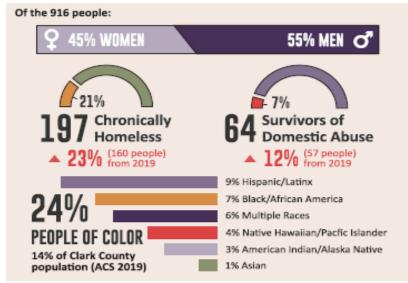
Yes Volunteer Name

Addendum C: 2020 Clark County, WA Point Time Count Results



2020 CLARK COUNTY, WA POINT IN TIME COUNT RESULTS WITH 2019 COMPARISONS









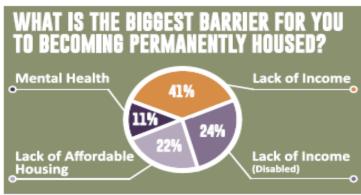
PRIMARY CAUSES FOR BECOMING HOMELESS Top 3 responses:

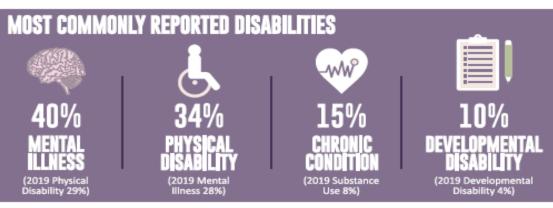
28%

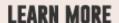
13% LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING



11%







All data is from the 2020 Point in Time Count and Clark County Homeless Management System (HMIS).





TAKE ACTION:



BE KIND



SPEAK UP SHARE TIME



RENT or HIRE

LEARN MORE: COUNCILFORTHEHOMELESS.ORG