



2020 Point in Time Homeless Report

Thurston County Public Health and Social Services

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THURSTON COUNTY

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THURSTON COUNTY POINT IN TIME

Our Commitment

Thurston County is committed to leading a regional effort addressing homelessness through active partnerships with all County jurisdictions, sustained engagement with service providers, and work informed by best practices as they emerge. Led by the Thurston County Department of Public Health and Social Services Office of Housing and Homeless Prevention, the County will continue to facilitate conversations and actions to meet the goals in the [Homeless Crisis Response Plan](#).

Our Vision

The Office of Housing and Homeless Prevention believes that homelessness in Thurston County is not inevitable and can be mitigated by the concerted efforts of this department, the jurisdictional partners, and the homeless crisis response system providers including volunteers and individuals with lived experience. The vision of collaborative action that embraces work appropriate for both urban and rural responses to homelessness, highlights Thurston County as a leader in homeless response in Washington State.

Our Community

Thurston County has a rich culture of service with hundreds of organizations and thousands of people who volunteer and donate their time and skills to build community and improve lives. The successes achieved are a measure of this gift and proof that the work is not done alone. According to the US Census Bureau, Thurston County's population surpassed 290,000 people in 2019. As the county continues to build and grow, there is the opportunity to use the information in this Report to increase our resilience through better understanding of gaps in our system.

“What moved me were the number of volunteers who slogged around in the pouring rain in their quest to count, and their heartfelt engagement with folks. Such dedication!”

Volunteer 2020 PIT

This Report

The annual Point in Time (PIT) is a census of people experiencing homelessness that is mandated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Each year during the last ten days of January, HUD requires counties across the nation to collect data and count how many people are homeless. In the State of Washington, each Continuum of Care (CoC) is responsible for conducting and managing its PIT; King, Pierce, Snohomish, Chelan, and Spokane County each consist of their own CoC. The remaining 34 of Washington's 39 counties make up the Balance of State CoC, of which Thurston County is part. The PIT collects data on people who are unsheltered (without any place to sleep), sheltered (sleeping in an emergency shelter), or transitionally housed. The PIT is vital to meeting the 1st objective in Thurston County's Homeless Crisis Response Plan, to "quickly identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness under the state definition, and all unaccompanied youth under any federal definition, through outreach and coordination between every system that encounters people experiencing homelessness."

The Thurston County Point in Time Report seeks to establish the practice of providing our community with thorough, deeply contextualized information and data on the results of our PIT efforts. 2020 marks the first year that Thurston County has led the design, implementation, and analysis of its PIT. In previous years, Thurston County contracted out the PIT work to various contractors, most often the City of Olympia.

While the data collected through surveys and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS, used by Department of Commerce to collect and store information on those experiencing homelessness in Washington State) are the basis of this reporting, the County recognizes that people are much more complex than numbers. This report attempts to create meaning around the data to provide a useful tool that the entire community can utilize to better understand causes, barriers, and potential interventions for homeless citizens. Collected by 230 volunteers and staff, the surveys completed by unsheltered persons represent a compelling story of trauma and resilience, and a way to more fully understand the human costs of homelessness.

Point in Time Methodologies

The Point in Time census is an attempt to gain some universal metrics around homelessness at local levels, but through a national lens. HUD designed the process and mandates questions on certain topics be asked, at a certain time of year, in a certain way. While States and Counties have some

leeway in how they plan and administer the PIT, most of the process and procedures are dictated by HUD.

The design is intentional to try to capture the homeless population at a time when only the most vulnerable, with no other option, would be living in shelters or in places unfit for human habitation. This timing also increases the logistical challenges associated with conducting the PIT census. There are various HUD approved methodologies, of which Thurston County opted for a direct count census for those unsheltered, and a direct count report from providers as a part of the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) for the night of the PIT, for those in Emergency Shelter (ES) and Transitional Housing (TH). This one-day count was then followed by a “7-day count.” This methodology provided an opportunity to follow-up with individuals accessing regular services in the 7 days following the PIT which expanded opportunities to include more individuals. The 7-day count is an extension of the PIT, as folks were only asked about where they slept on the night of the PIT count day – it is not an ongoing count of those accessing services each night for the next 6 days.

The count takes place over the course of 24 hours, 12:00am – 11:59pm on the designated day. This is handled for the 7-day count, by confirming which night is being discussed. This can seem confusing, when you simply talk about the PIT, which is meant to be the count of one night, but spans across two night times. More information is available on the Department of Commerce [website](#).

For the unsheltered population, a focused encampment and street count ensured volunteers engaged houseless individuals throughout Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater. Thurston County has a lot of rural area, and a complete coverage census is simply not feasible. Events were planned in Yelm and Lacey, providing meals and service connection to targeted houseless populations. These counts were then verified through HMIS to ensure there were no duplications. Efforts were also made to cross-reference individual’s program entry into permanent housing did not fall on the day of the PIT census (if their permanent housing starts during the 24hours of the PIT, they are considered housed, and therefore not eligible to be included in the count).

Included in the PIT census are people staying in Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing programs. Emergency shelter, also termed homeless shelters, provides emergency housing for up to 90 days. Transitional Housing is defined as housing designed to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals or families to permanent housing within a set timeframe, around 24 months or less.

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and PIT are done concurrently, to capture a snapshot of system capacity and utilization at a given point in time and to help prevent individuals being counted twice. HUDs PIT methodology standard provides the following guidance:

COCs must ensure that during the PIT count homeless persons are only counted once. It is critical that counting methods be coordinated to ensure that there is no double counting. Therefore, COCs must also collect sufficient information to be able to reliably deduplicate the PIT count (i.e. ensure that the same homeless person was not counted more than once).

The PIT census helps orient funding and policy decisions, yet accurate data collection is a challenge as there is always an undercount of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is hard to tell a compelling funding story without information about who is experiencing what. Sound data helps the community assess its resources by looking at what shelter and housing is available, what the need is, and allowing for an examination of the gap and ways to help bridge it. The PIT also helps support long-term planning by tracking how trends occur over time. Year-by-year data comparison can help further hone and guide funding decisions, jurisdictional collaboration, and policy recommendations.

Participation in the PIT is voluntary and many declined either in full or in part to participate in the survey. Surveys are considered “consent refused” when respondents partially fill out a survey yet do not meet a minimum identification criterion (such as their full legal name). Consent refused surveys were not officially included.

The 2020 PIT survey (included in [Appendix A](#)) gathers basic demographic information and asks questions aimed at understanding the root causes of homelessness and barriers individuals and their households have experienced in accessing housing. Survey questions also included current housing situation, previous permanent address, sexual orientation, and substance use history. Domestic violence is also asked about and necessitates additional safeguards. For anyone who indicated they were actively fleeing violence, or for anyone under the age of 18, no identifying information is asked or entered into HMIS. This includes full name and DOB. Some of these additional questions may be sensitive issues for the survey taker which can significantly impact PIT survey responsiveness depending on the approach of the census volunteer.

Other systemic challenges that can impact an accurate PIT count include but are not limited to the following:

1. Data quality requirements mandated by HUD include disclosing a first name, last name, and full date of birth. These data elements are the minimum required to count a person for PIT. Many unsheltered individuals may use only street names and may be hesitant to give personal information like their birthdate to strangers. Even if a person signs their consent to be included, without these 3 pieces of information, they are counted as 'consent refused', making it harder to de-duplicate and justify data.
2. Balance of State counties in Washington are unable to use any online software or digital survey device because the software used by the State for HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) is not compatible with online software systems. Paper surveys are subject to damage from weather and data is often lost due to the inability to read or recover water-damaged surveys.
3. The PIT depends on volunteers to administer surveys. Gathering information from people is a skill that takes time to develop and the population surveyed for PIT can be difficult to engage with effectively. While Thurston County continues to update and improve training methods, it is acknowledged that sending first time survey volunteers to gather information presents certain challenges.

New practices for Thurston County 2020

With approval from the Department of Commerce, the Thurston County PIT census team implemented several new methods for collecting surveys. The intent of implementing these changes was to offset some of the challenges mentioned above, and to attempt to address the unique challenges of working with rural homeless populations, high risk, and hard to reach populations. Some of the new processes used in 2020 include:

- Engagement with Nisqually Tribal Leadership to collect data on non-Tribal people living outdoors on Nisqually lands.
- Engagement of CIELO, an organization that promotes the Latinx/Hispanic population, to include non-English speaking populations in our census.
- Inclusion of a "7-Day Count" for hard to reach populations that could be engaged by with approval from the Department of Commerce known nonprofit service providers over a 7-day period following the PIT day. People surveyed in this way were asked where they slept on the night of January 23rd while accessing regular services. Locations for the 7-Day Count included ROOF (Rochester Organization of Families), Together!, Family Support

Center of South Sound, Safeplace walk in services, Capital Recovery Center, and the BUPE Clinic.

- Engagement of a large team of persons with lived experience to survey camps and those sleeping in RV's and vehicles throughout Thurston County. Just Housing Olympia, under the leadership of Tye Gundel, led a team of 30 surveyors.
- Incentives for our unsheltered neighbors were informed by asking these folks what they wanted and needed. Volunteers gave out first aid & sewing kits, flashlights, batteries, and ponchos on PIT day.
- The County worked with transitional housing and shelter providers to gather supplemental data that is normally not collected from these populations to better understand the causes of homelessness for this group.
- Volunteers were encouraged to collect surveys for all people, regardless of where they stayed or if they wanted to share their core information (name, DOB, any questions they wanted to answer were gathered). This resulted in far more surveys & data collected for sheltered persons, and greater engagement of unsheltered population including those counted as 'consent refused'.
- Redesigned and reorganized all volunteer training to include trauma informed care practices.

TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY CARE

Nationally, there is growing awareness that people experiencing homelessness are likely to have experienced significant trauma both before and after they lost access to permanent housing. While service providers and advocacy groups have been working to integrate Trauma Informed Care (TIC) practices into their work, Thurston County sees the need to also include these principles and practices into policy and action work at the County level. Following best practices, the 2020 PIT was an initial effort in applying TIC to the census design, project frameworks, and comprehensive mandatory volunteer trainings.

What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) is an overarching structure and treatment attitude that emphasizes understanding, compassion, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. TIC also looks at physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both participants and providers, and provides tools to empower folks on the pathway to stability.

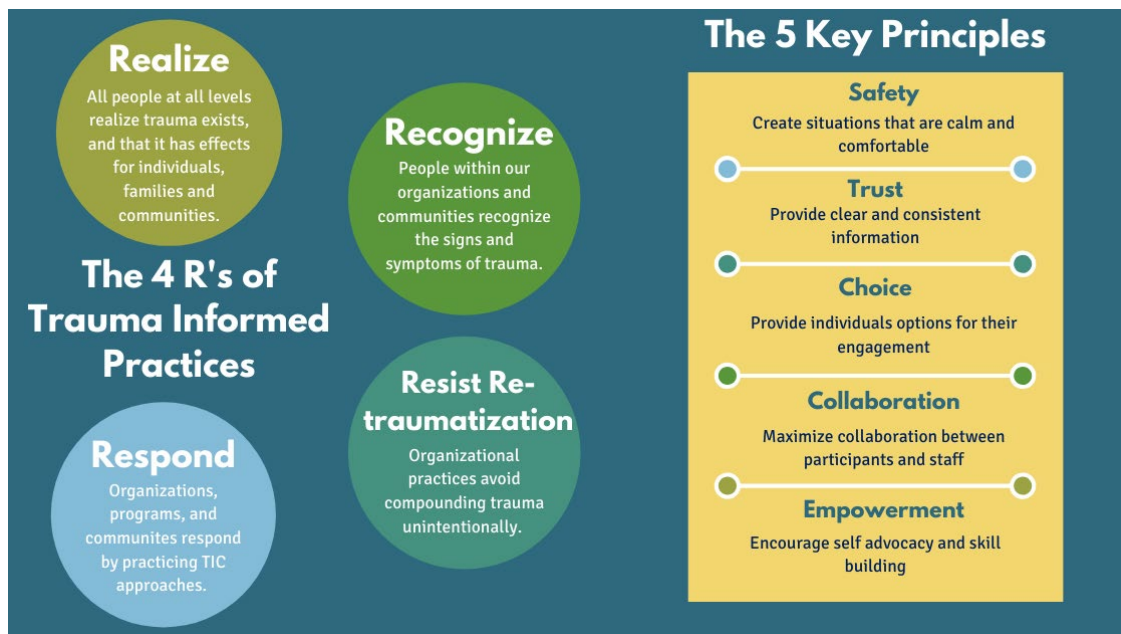
Becoming “trauma-informed” means recognizing that people have many different traumatic experiences which often intersect in their lives. Well-meaning advocates and outreach workers can often re-traumatize homeless participants who need understanding, support, and individually-conscious care.¹ Trauma informed practices then arise out of the knowledge of trauma within a population, the desire to avoid re-traumatization, and the understanding that people with complex traumas are far more likely to engage when providers and advocates intentionally set high standards for safety.

In the case of the PIT, including TIC practices is as simple as educating volunteers, practicing compassionate interviewing, and respecting each person. By doing this, it allows our processes and interventions to be a part of community building, mutual understanding, and a greater capacity to respond to crisis with compassion.

¹ National Coalition for the Homeless, Building a Movement to End Homelessness

Why does it Matter?

The PIT census, particularly the survey of unsheltered individuals and families, is dependent on the willing engagement of people who are experiencing homelessness. In order to effectively engage with this population, the volunteer teams need to be trained in engagement practices that emphasize compassion, physical and psychological safety, and a willingness to show mutual respect across differences. In this way, project planners can design the PIT for the greatest possible impact by ensuring all processes align with the goal of being trauma informed. Volunteers who are trained in TIC practices are also more prepared to interact with unsheltered individuals because the principles of TIC work in all directions; the safety created is for both volunteers and those served.



TIC Key Principles and Practices, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA, 2018)

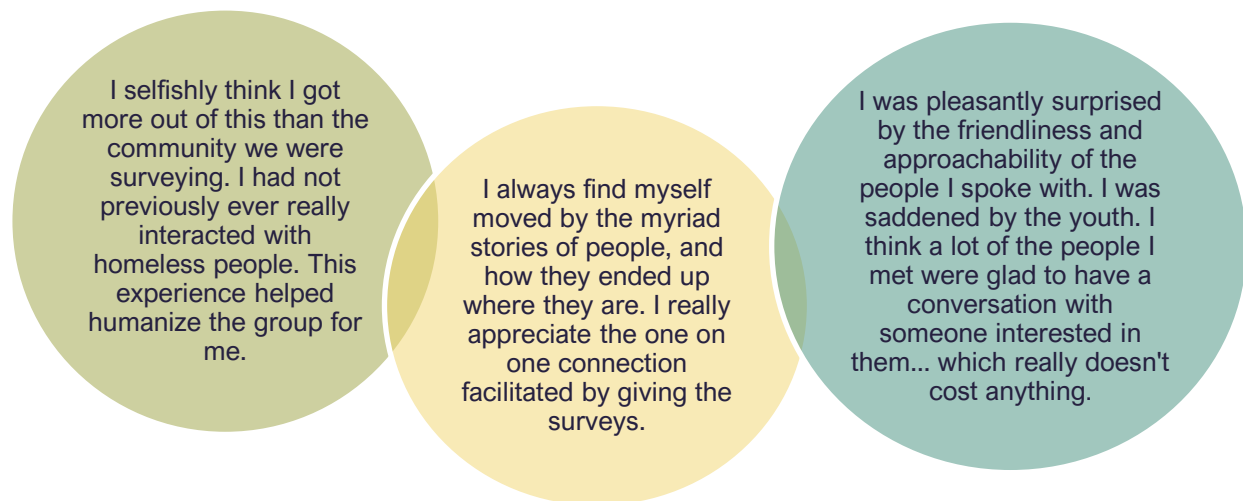
Best practices encourage TIC for outreach because “Homelessness deprives individuals of...basic needs, exposing them to risky, unpredictable environments. In short, homelessness is more than the absence of physical shelter, it is a stress-filled, dehumanizing, dangerous circumstance in which individuals are at high risk of being witness to or victims of a wide range of violent events”.² The 2020 PIT used a framework emphasizing compassionate practice in every phase of planning and implementation. Partnerships, outreach, and volunteer engagement were all based in the concept of ‘nothing about us without us’, or the intentional engagement of groups and individuals who have

² Fitzpatrick KM, LaGory ME, Ritchey FJ. Dangerous places: Exposure to violence and its mental health consequences for the homeless. *Am J Orthopsychiatry* 1999; 69: 438-47

current, ongoing, trusting relationships with the community they wished to survey. For instance, only people with lived experience of homelessness did outreach surveys in camps. By designing our processes to allow those surveyed to speak with people they already know, or with people who share common circumstances, we were able to offset some of the inherent difficulties of interviewing an at-risk population about topics that are deeply personal and perhaps triggering.

Additionally, practicing TIC in addressing homelessness acknowledges the historical and ongoing traumas that specifically effect traditionally marginalized populations and racial minorities who continue to be over-represented in our homeless population. People in these populations are disproportionately affected by various forms of trauma and adversity including violence, poverty, incarceration, lack of access to health care, marginalization and low social status.³ Trauma informed practices are a recognized tool to help Thurston County meet goal #5 in its Homeless Crisis Response Plan, to “address racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness”.

While it is hard to measure outcomes from the use of TIC in the PIT this year, feedback from volunteers reflected a shift in experience for both volunteers and participants with the use of this new framework. Below are a few quotes from our amazing community members who gave their time.



³ Healing the Hurt: Trauma Informed Approaches to the Health of Boys and Young Men of Color, <https://unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/HealingtheHurt-Trauma-Rich%20et%20al.pdf>

PARTNERSHIPS & PROCESSES

Establishing Teams & Distributing Action

The PIT census team began planning in September and October of 2019. County PIT lead, Keylee Marineau, reached out to providers and jurisdictions to begin conversations around the upcoming census to begin building teams to function within specific areas of effort. A coordinator for PIT was contracted in November, rounding out the County PIT team. The County team worked from the principle that each jurisdiction knows best what is needed for their citizens, and as such would own its own PIT planning process within the broader scope of County plans.

After initial conversations, five core groups emerged to coordinate PIT activities with the County:

- City of Olympia
- City of Lacey
- City of Tumwater
- Yelm (Love Abounds Here)
- Camp Count Teams (Just Housing Olympia)

These core groups provided the backbone for events and activities designed to engage unsheltered individuals and families throughout Thurston County. For example, in Yelm a luncheon was organized to serve those in need, along with a bus to bring folks from encampments to the event location. In Lacey, the City and Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason, Thurston Counties created a resource fair and food specifically for families and students. Tumwater sponsored work by Together! to better reach youth and families in crisis. The City of Olympia and the Camp Count Teams set up tents with survival goods and food outside of three key encampments and engaged outreach staff to lead teams throughout Olympia.

Additionally, a number of providers were recruited to assist in surveying their clients and participants who would not otherwise be counted:

- Lacey Veteran's Hub
- Family Support Center of South Sound
- Senior Services for South Sound
- Safeplace
- Capital Recovery Center
- CIELO
- Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF)
- Together!

Volunteer Recruitment & Training

The Thurston County PIT Census team began recruiting volunteers and partner organizations to collect surveys in November and December 2019. Drawing from previous volunteer lists, jurisdictional staff, and community outreach, nearly 230 people were recruited to assist in the PIT efforts.

Part of the planning process was developing an intentional, focused training. This year, training was mandatory for all volunteers assisting with surveys in the unsheltered population. The County's commitment to Trauma Informed practices led to a one-hour volunteer training that sought to build both confidence and compassion in the teams of outreach volunteers. In addition, there was a trainer on-site at the PIT headquarters throughout the day of the PIT so volunteers who were not able to attend the pre-scheduled trainings were still able to receive training. Every person who volunteered received the basic training for TIC and survey completion.

Keylee Marineau and Meg Martin (Executive Director, Interfaith Works) also offered 2 optional full-length Trauma Informed Care training sessions, which many community members chose to attend.

Day of PIT

The 2020 PIT was held on Thursday, January 23 on what proved to be a very cold and rainy day. Despite the environmental challenges, nearly 230 volunteers and staff from nonprofits and jurisdictions fanned out across Thurston County to collect surveys. An impressive number of surveys were completed (674), including 465 unsheltered survey pages (some with multiple persons surveyed), 148 sheltered surveys, and 61 surveys of people temporarily staying with friends or family. Not all of these individuals were found to have been homeless according to the HUD definition; for example, some were entered into HMIS in projects, and as such would be considered a duplicate in the unsheltered count.

Surveys were collected by each of the partners listed above, with small events held in Yelm, at Senior Services of South Sound, Lacey Veterans Hub, City Life Church, Rosie's Place Youth Shelter, and at the Olympia Center (at the PIT Coordination Hub). Key survey teams included the camp count, the Downtown Ambassadors, Transit Center, West Olympia, Tumwater & Lacey street outreach, Salvation Army and teams who collected surveys from car and RV campers.

POINT IN TIME CENSUS RESULTS

By the Numbers

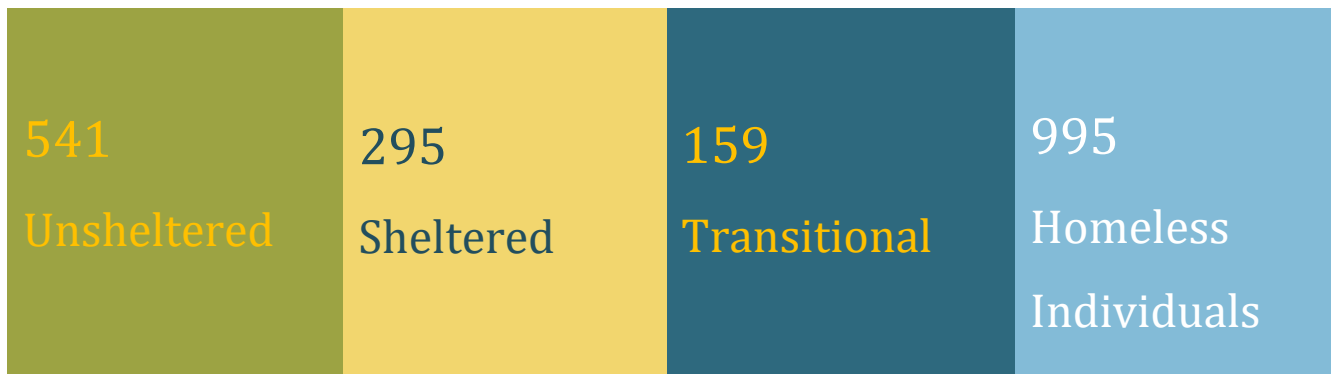
To be included in the PIT census, individuals must meet the HUD definition of homelessness on the night of January 23rd, 2020. The PIT data presents a compelling story of where individuals are finding refuge, if at all. Although the following data presents a snapshot, homelessness does not exist only on one night of the year.

54% of homeless individuals counted in 2020 are living unsheltered, which is an increase from 2019 where 49% indicated they were unsheltered. In 2021 when the PIT is conducted, this number is likely to continue to increase, as shelter capacity due to COVID-19 has decreased in Thurston County, and there is not a significant increase in available Transitional or Permanent Housing.

Definitions of Homelessness

This census report is based on the Federal definitions of homelessness. The total number of homeless individuals is comprised of people living in the following three types of accommodations:

- **Unsheltered** - places not meant for human habitation such as cars, tents, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street. Also falling under the unsheltered category is-
Substandard Housing - defined as a dwelling lacking drinking water, restroom, heat, ability to cook hot food, or ability to bathe.
- **Sheltered** - also termed homeless shelters, provides emergency housing for up to 90 days.
- **Transitional Housing** - a form of temporary housing assistance lasting for less than two years.

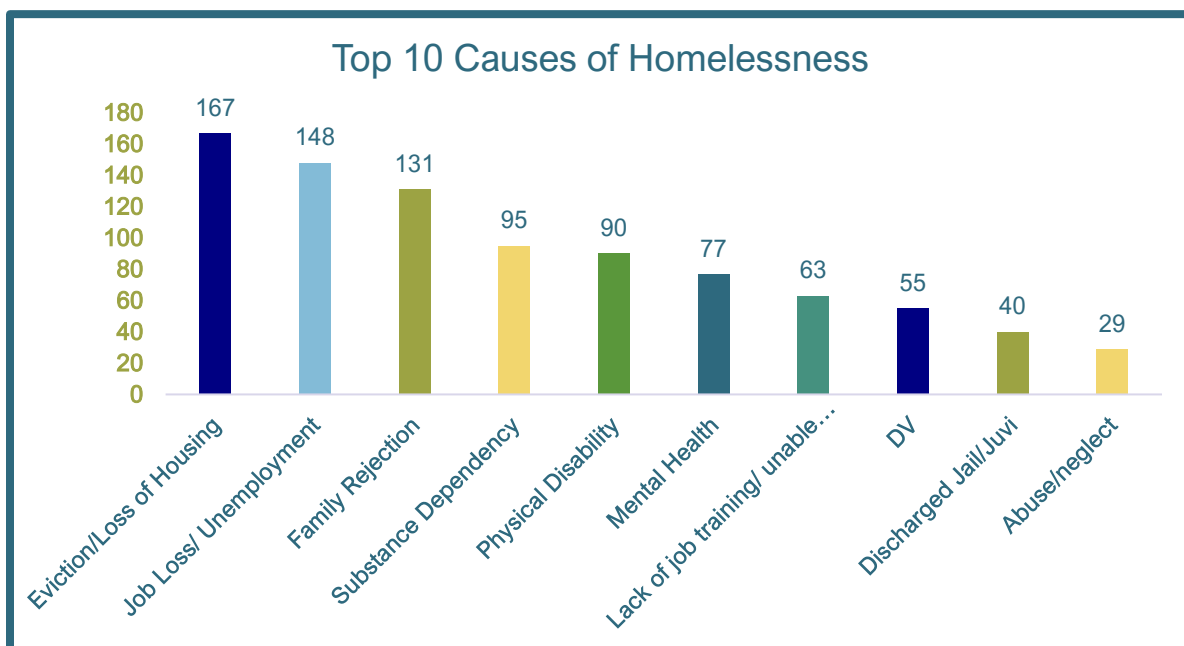


Not included in the official Point in Time census are people temporarily staying with friends or family, or 'couch surfing'. This population is counted as homeless by the McKinney-Vento rules that count homeless students, as further defined, and explained in analyzing the OSPI (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) data later in this report. Data for this population is included separately from the main PIT data analysis *see [Homelessness in Public Schools](#)*.

The following series of charts present the results of the 2020 PIT Homeless Census. Please note: Some respondents only answered the threshold PIT questions of name, gender and where did you stay to be included in the formal PIT Census. Each person could choose to complete the survey in full, or in part, as a result, some questions reflect a smaller, actual number of respondents for each question. Additionally, for several of the data points most data is from the unsheltered population surveyed by volunteers.

Causes of Homelessness

Understanding the root causes of homelessness is key to identifying the most appropriate resource allocation in Thurston County. The chart below presents the self-reported causes of homelessness by respondents in the county census. Each respondent was asked to report all circumstances that applied, recognizing that there are multiple causes of homelessness and each situation does not happen in a bubble. This information also helps to tell more clearly the real story of how individuals and families became homeless while dispelling myths and inaccurate information.

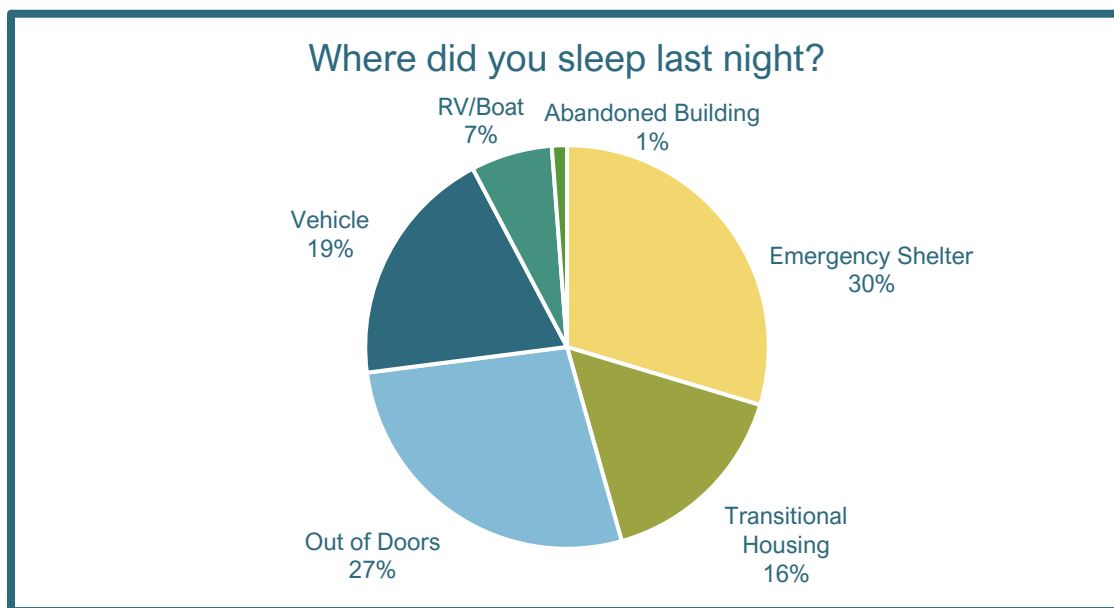


In keeping with previous years PIT data, eviction (28% of respondents) and job loss (25% of respondents) are the top two answers given by people answering the question: what led to their homelessness. This year, the positions are reversed; for the last two years job loss was number one and eviction number two. The 2020 results show a surprising rise in people who answered that family rejections (kicked out of a family living situation, divorce, or other forms of familial stressors) led to homelessness, with 131 people or 22% citing this as a reason for their current situation.

A high number of respondents identified substance and alcohol addiction, physical disabilities, mental illness, and domestic violence as what caused them to lose stable housing. Answers also point out the difficulty of finding housing when people have been discharged from jail or juvenile detention, making it much more challenging to pass a rental background check.

Where did you sleep last night?

A little over half of all people experiencing homelessness in Thurston County are living unsheltered in 2020. 541 people answered that they were sleeping in an abandoned building, a tent or encampment, on the streets, in a vehicle, or in an RV or boat without basic amenities. All 995 homeless persons in Thurston County are represented in this data.



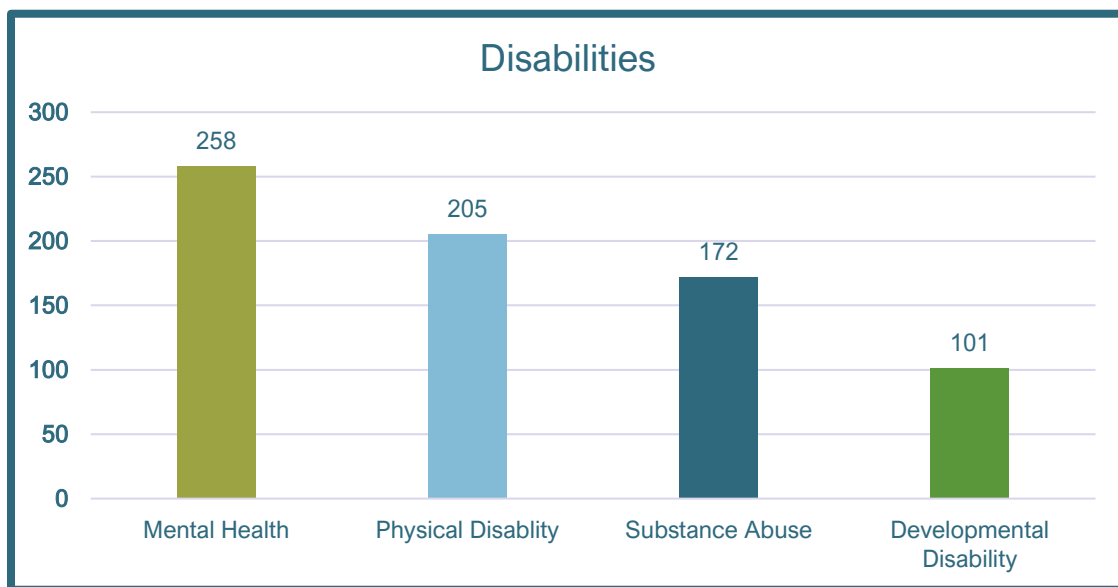
These numbers represent a change from 2019, in that there seems to be a rise in people sleeping in vehicles and RV's. In 2019, only 14% of respondents reported sleeping in vehicles, RV/Boats, or in

abandoned buildings, compared to 27% this year. 257 people answered that they slept in a vehicle, or RV/Boat on January 23rd, with just under half (46%) being women – a much higher ratio than in the rest of the homeless population, where women are closer to 39% of the population. Anecdotally, this suggests that many of those choosing to sleep in vehicles are women with children (58 people under 18 slept in vehicles), in part because the vehicle is private and perceived as a safer place than a shelter or encampment.

Disabilities & other challenges

Many people who experience homelessness self-report that they live with disabilities. These can impact their ability to access social services, find work, and stay housed. In 2020, the largest reported challenge for our houseless neighbors was mental health, with 258 persons reporting struggles with mental health. There also continues to be many respondents who have significant physical disabilities.

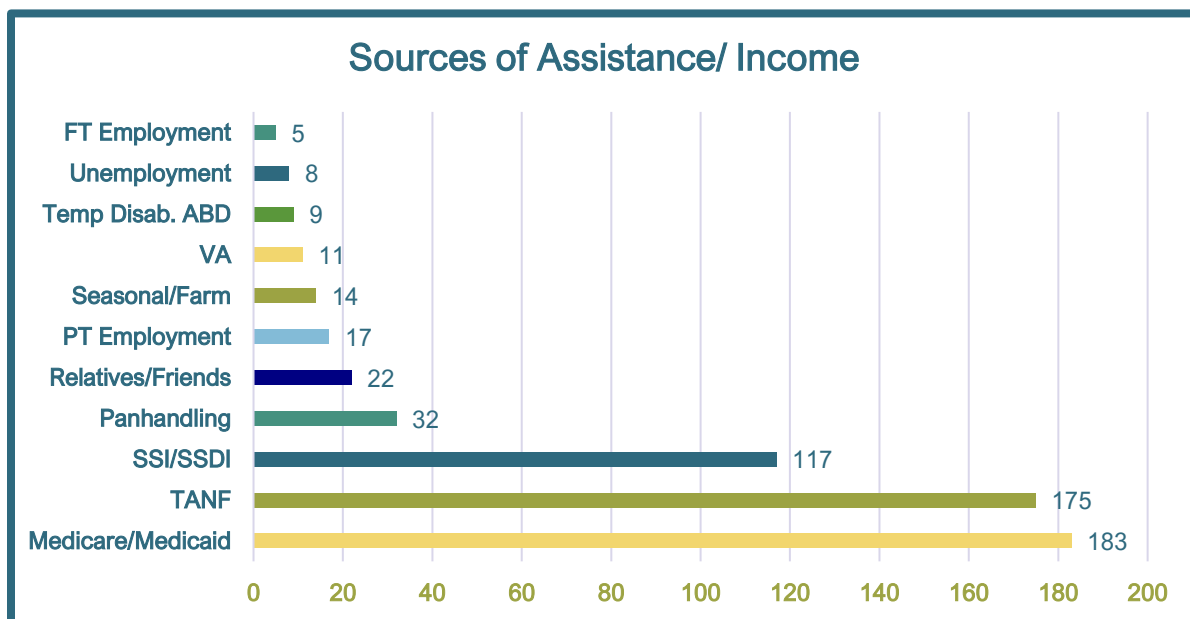
It should be noted for this data set that most of the data comes from the unsheltered surveys taken on January 23. Both the sheltered and transitionally housed populations had low answer totals for this question. Only 63 answers were collected for the sheltered population and 41 for transitional housing occupants, compared to 475 individual answers for the unsheltered population.



Sources of Income

Of the 995 individuals included in the PIT, 403 (40%) reported having income of some kind, 180 (18%) reported no current source of income, and either the data was not collected or is unknown for the remaining 412 individuals.

In Thurston County, houseless individuals rely on the continued funding of basic service programs like EBT (food stamps), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Social Security and Social Security Disability (SSI, SSDI), Veterans Assistance (VA) and medical assistance programs like Medicare and Medicaid. With job loss or unemployment being high on the list of causes of homelessness, most people without housing in our community rely on public programs such as meal services, clothing closets, and hygiene products and services to meet their basic needs



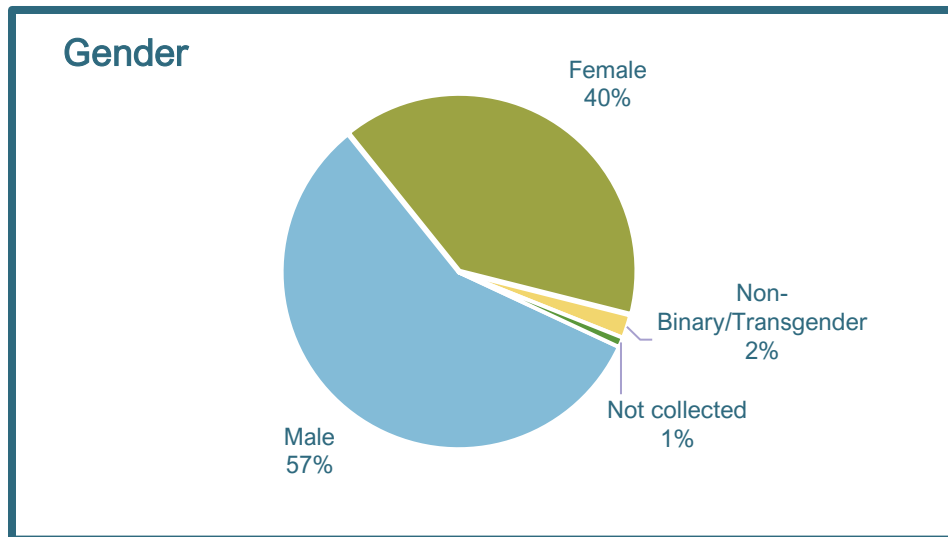
Looking beyond household income, housing affordability and cost of living are important factors to consider in determining accessibility of housing. If the minimum wage does not allow individuals to comfortably rent a home and afford basic living necessities, it can cause individuals to resort to alternative methods of meeting their basic needs needs. These survival methods are often not sustainable and make the slide into homelessness that much easier when unexpected issues or expenses arise.

It is something to note that 22 individuals reported being either a FT or PT employee and yet are unable to secure steady housing. This data challenges narratives that individuals experiencing

homelessness “choose” to be homeless, are “lazy”, or they simply “refuse to get a job”; hyperbole that is dehumanizing and does not recognize the lived experiences of each individual.

Basic Demographics

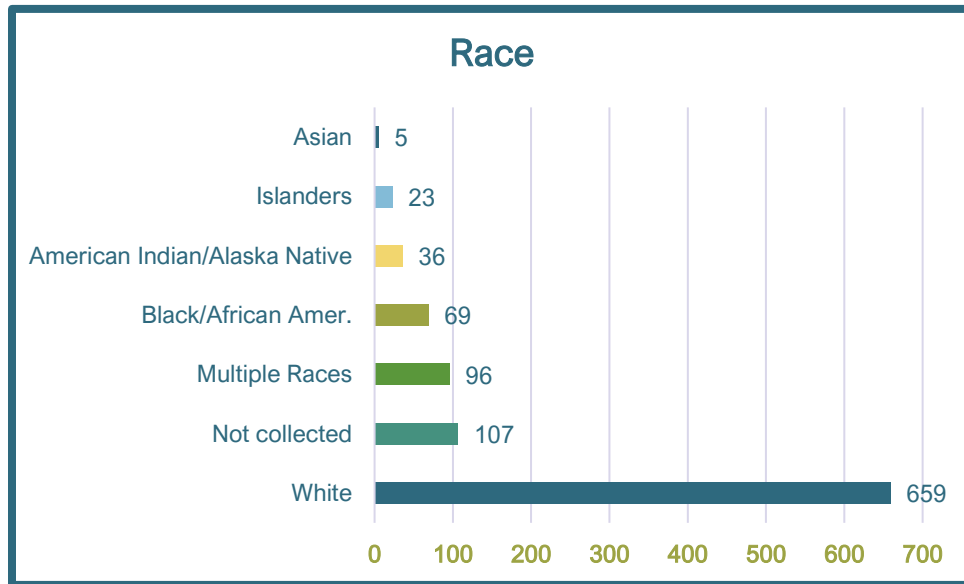
What follows is a series of charts with basic demographics of the Thurston County PIT homeless population. For complete data on specific populations (unsheltered, sheltered, and transitionally housed) please see the Complete Data in [Appendix B](#). For demographics, percentages are of 995 total people counted for the PIT. For any small group where the data was not collected, these graphs will note that as ‘Not Collected’ to maintain a consistent percentage and value.



While the PIT consistently shows more men than women in the homeless population, it should be noted that this is in part because the PIT and HUD definitions of homelessness do not count those temporarily staying with friends or family (couch surfing, doubled up) or those who stay in hotels through a variety of voucher programs. Women, especially with children, are likely to use friend networks or go to family in times of crisis and stress if that option is available. A higher percentage of those captured in the “temporarily staying with friends or family” category are women and/or DV survivors (around 59%). In 2020, the PIT census team added a demographic question to the survey, asking respondents if anyone in their family group identified as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer).

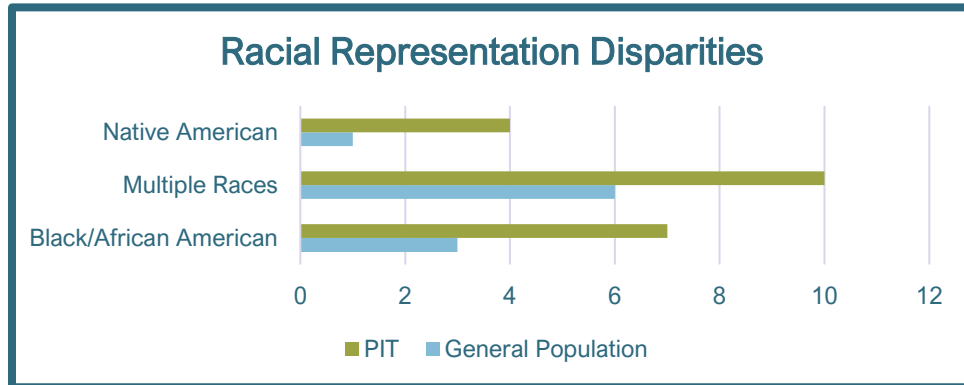
While PIT results continue to show a small number of people (21 in 2020) who identify as transgender or gender non-binary in the homeless community, anecdotal reports suggest there may be more.

Violence is commonly experienced in this population, which can make it feel unsafe for individuals to self-identify their gender identity, especially to strangers. Transgender people are a protected class in the state Fair Housing law, and it is necessary for shelters and housing programs that receive local, state, or federal dollars to abide by non-discrimination and other Fair Housing provisions. That is not required of privately funded organizations, whether faith based or other, so it is up to those entities to determine if and how they will serve this population.

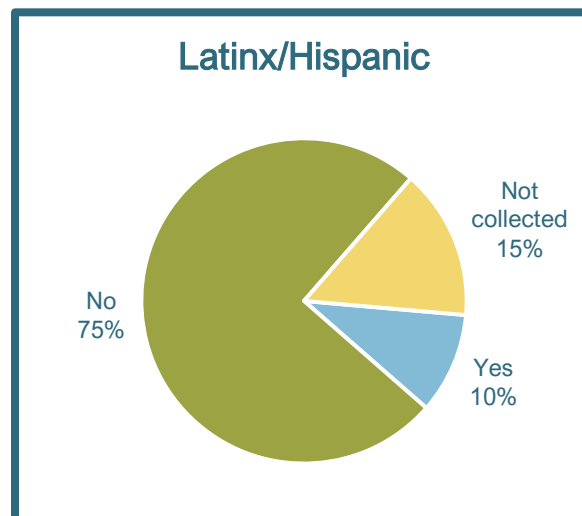


Race in a subpopulation is best understood through contextualizing it based on representation in the overall population. If a demographic is more or less represented than in the overall population, there is likely an underlying story to tell. For BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) people, that story is often one of over representation, which is reflected in the PIT numbers. The proportion of minorities remains significantly higher in the homeless population than in the general population. The racial makeup of the county from 2014-2018⁴ was 82% white, 6% Asian, 3% Black or African American, 1% American Indian, 1% Pacific Islander, 1% from other races, and 6% from two or more races. Compare these numbers to percentages of people of color in the PIT count: 7% Black or African American (over twice the general population), 4% Native American/ American Indian (four times the general), 10% multiple races (almost twice the general).

⁴ <https://www.trpc.org/449/Race-Ethnicity>

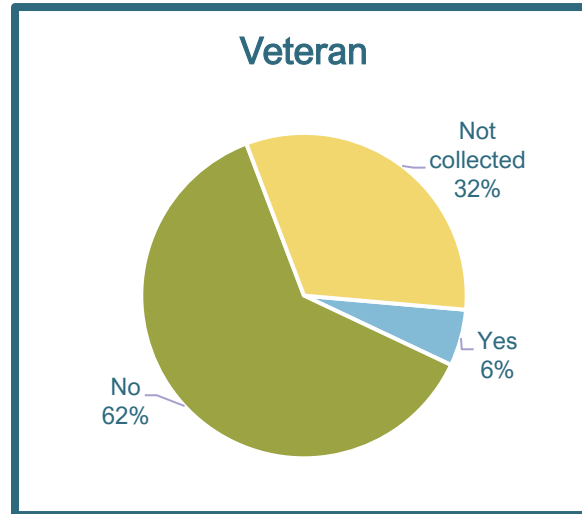


This continued disparity in representation by race in our homeless population highlights the need to continue to build comprehensive trauma informed practices at the County level and to support transition to these practices with the State, local jurisdictions, and service providers. This data supports strategies identified in the Homeless Crisis Response Plan, “The work of incorporating racial equity principles and best practices is a lengthy and ongoing process which requires system-wide personal and professional buy-in. In conversations ... it was crucial to acknowledge the commitment to a meaningful and purposeful approach about how to address the disproportionate percentages of POC experiencing homelessness in the community. Truly assessing, analyzing, and implementing practices to address equity and related disparities will take years of effort, and a system fully committed to the process.”



The Hispanic homeless population in Thurston County reflected a nominal disparity, with 10% of survey respondents identifying as Latinx/Hispanic in a community with an average of 9%

Latinx/Hispanic population. There is anecdotal evidence that this may reflect an undercount of this population, something that will be considered in future PIT counts and efforts.

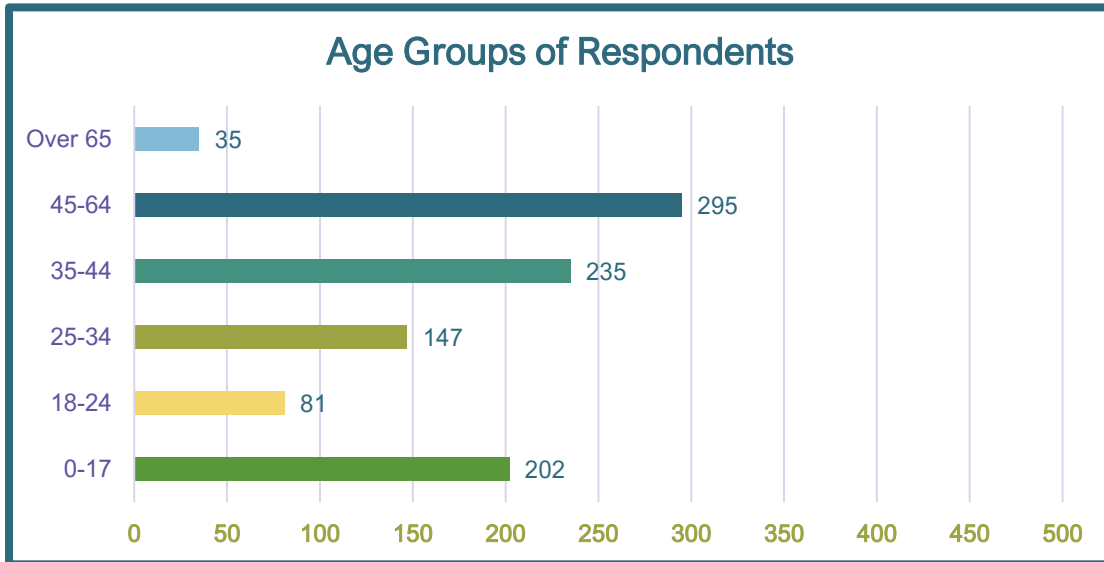


The homeless veteran population have historically had low response rates for the PIT census. This year, only 6% of those surveyed identified their veteran status. Many veterans refuse to self-identify⁵, and the methods of PIT are particularly apt to miss female veterans, the fastest growing demographic of homeless veterans nation-wide. This may be because “Women veterans who are at risk for homelessness or experiencing homelessness are likely to avoid both sleeping outside (and hence are missed during the PIT count) and staying in shelters (and thus are missed during the aggregate count of services used)”⁶.

The City of Lacey hosts the Veteran Services Hub, a collaboration of providers and advocates that creates a space for veterans to reach many services through one access point. The Veteran Services Hub operates low-barrier drop-in services to connect individuals to programs including but not limited to: substance and mental health treatment, VA healthcare, and veteran specific housing assistance.

⁵ <https://www.governing.com/blogs/view/gov-how-Michigan-got-better-at-counting-homeless-veterans-.html>

⁶ https://www.finalsaluteinc.org/uploaded/files/WhitePaper-Revised_%20070319.pdf?direct=1



In Thurston County an individual is more likely to be homeless if they are under 18, or over 45. There are limited housing resources available to both populations and securing income to maintain housing can be a challenge. For young people experiencing homelessness, there is a youth and young adult shelter in Olympia, and an organization that works with homeless families with children. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act works through the school districts and helps coordinate resources for homeless youth that are school-aged. This population is examined in more detail in [Homelessness in Public Schools](#).

There are single adult providers, but there is no specific organization working with homeless elders. 182 out of 344 (53%) individuals over 45 years old acknowledged that they have an income from sources such as SSI/SSDI and Medicare/Medicaid funds. However, finding and maintaining permanent housing on fixed incomes presents a significant obstacle.

Youth Data Breakout (0-17 yrs. old)

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	101	0-9	134	Yes	32
Female	98	10-17	68	No	168
Non-Binary/Transgender	0			Not collected	2
Not collected	3				
WHERE SLEPT		RACE		DISABILITIES	
Transitional Housing	69	White	123	Developmental Disability	20
Vehicle	58	Multiple Races	41	Chronic Health Condition	9
Emergency Shelter	53	Black/African Amer.	19	Mental Health	5
RV/Boat	18	Islander/Hawaiian	12	Physical Disability	2

Abandoned Building	2	American Indian/Alaska	4	Substance Abuse	1
Out of doors	2	Not collected	3		
		Asian	0		

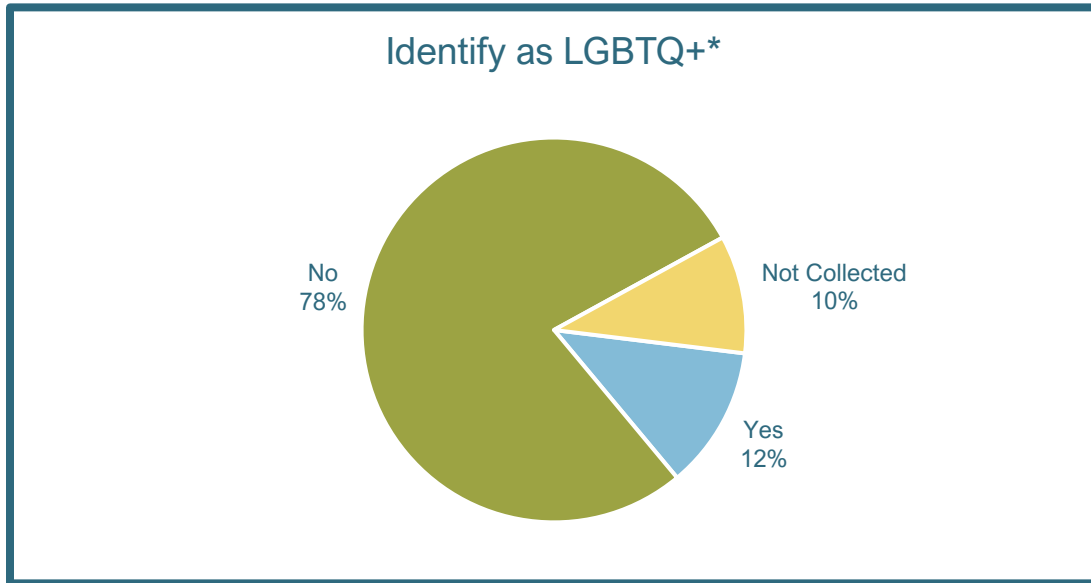
Unaccompanied Youth Households (0-24 years old)

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	45	Under 18	13	Yes	9
Female	18	18-24	62	No	60
Non-Binary/Transgender	12			Not collected	6
Not collected	0				
PARENTING		RACE		HOUSEHOLD	
Parenting Youth (under 18)	0	White	48	Total Households	68
Parenting Youth (18-24)	10	Multiple Races	8	Total Persons	75
Children in households with youth parents	14	Black/African Amer.	8	Emergency Shelter	33
Female Parenting Youth	10	American Indian/Alaska	4	Transitional Housing	25
Latinx/Hispanic Parenting Youth	4	Islander/Hawaiian	1	Unsheltered	17
		Asian	0		

Youth Location Breakout *

OLYMPIA		LACEY		TUMWATER	
0-17	54	0-17	Suppressed	0-17	Suppressed
18-24	17	18-24	3	18-24	2
YELM		THURSTON		OTHER WA/NOT REPORTED	
0-17	Suppressed	0-17	1	0-17	50
18-24	1	18-24	0	18-24	5

This data on youth location is included under the specific jurisdictions, but not in the total reported numbers for each as it is extrapolated from the head of household, and not formally included in data captured in HMIS. This also means this data only represents minors captured in surveys in the PIT, and will not include any in ES or TH. For example, any youth living with their parent or guardian would have participated under their parent/guardian on the PIT – they would not be given their own census. When entering this data into HMIS, location is only entered for the head of household. By breaking out the youth's location, we are considering them to be in the same location as the participating head of household.

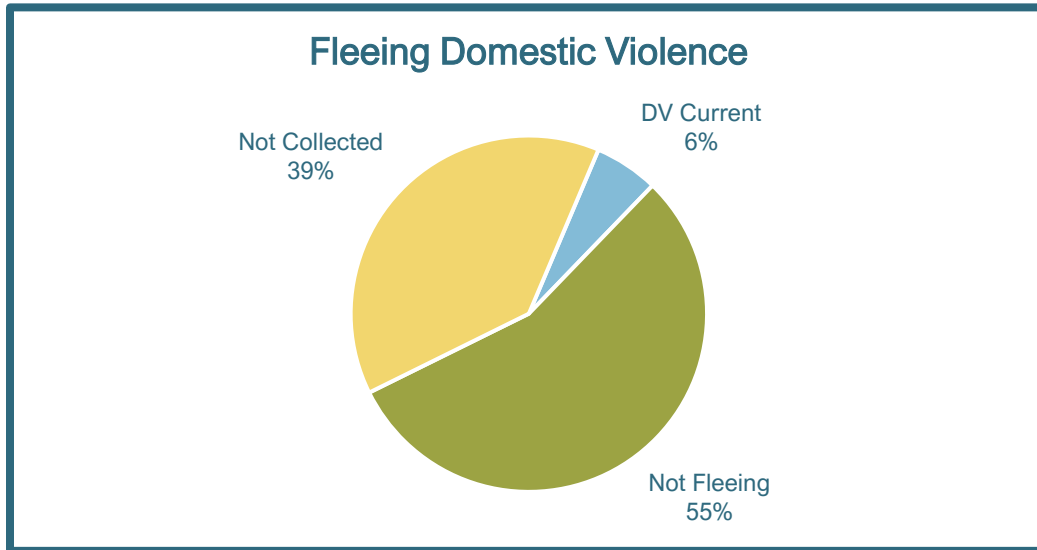


* as a percentage of 675 respondents

The LGBTQ+ population is overrepresented in the surveyed homeless population: 12% of respondents self-identified as LGBTQ+ compared to a national average of around 4.5% of the general population⁷. We can and must do more to develop meaningful programs to give LGBTQ+ youth and adults alternatives to homelessness if they are not accepted at home. Research on the percentage of LGBTQ+ homeless youth varies, but it is estimated they make up 20-40% of this population⁸. While there are large discrepancies between the homeless and general population in other demographic areas, at 3x the general population, LGBTQ+ folks are significantly overrepresented. This number only includes those who self-identified taking the survey, and does not represent those individuals not surveyed in ES or TH. It also does not include any youth and young adults, as they would be included under their head of household on the PIT survey, and outside of the PIT, this is not currently data being collected in HMIS.

⁷ UCLA School of Law, Williams Institute, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT#density>

⁸ Durso, LE & Gates, GJ. (2012). Serving our youth: findings from a national survey of service providers working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.



According to the US Department of Justice, “Domestic violence is one of the primary causes of homelessness for women and their children in the United States. According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence, between 22 and 57 percent of women and children are homeless due to domestic violence, with 38 percent of all victims experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives due to domestic violence.”⁹ The PIT count at 6% is significantly below the national percentage. However, if we include people temporarily staying with friends/family the rate goes up to 10.4%. It is understood that low PIT survey participation for this demographic is likely, as giving personal information, even if not identifying, can feel threatening or unsafe to those actively fleeing DV.

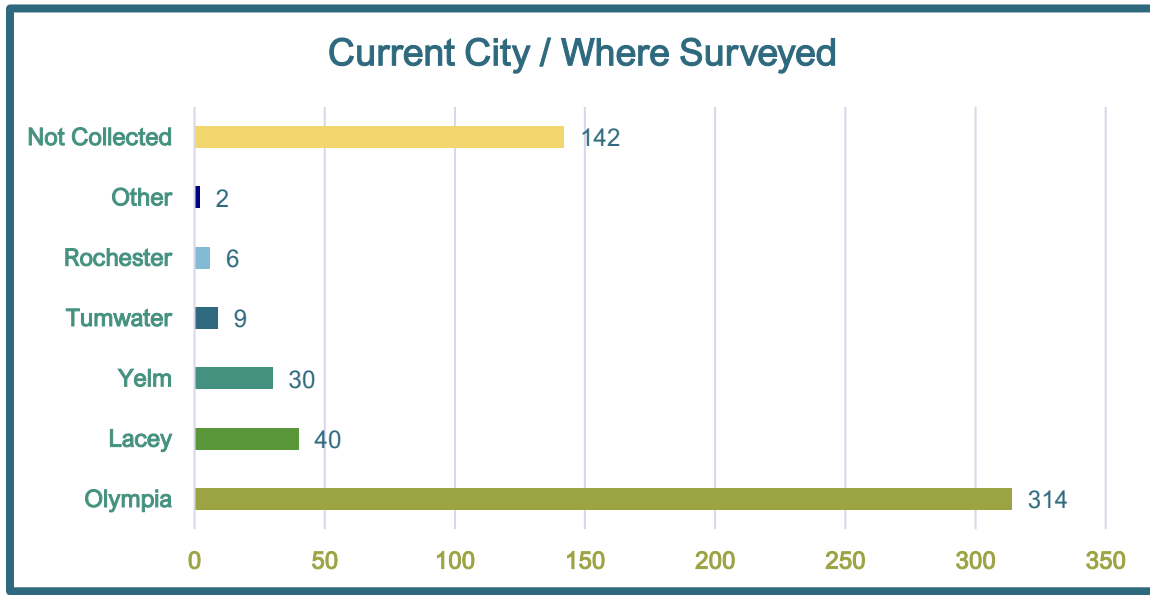
Geography of Homelessness

This section examines where houseless individuals are currently living, as well as their previous permanent address. To further clarify prior permanent addresses, people tell us where they last received mail, or where they last lived in a house or apartment of their own. Additionally, another question was added to the survey inquiring how long they had lived in Thurston County when they became homeless. This enabled the gathering of new data on the movements of people in and around Thurston County who have become homeless.

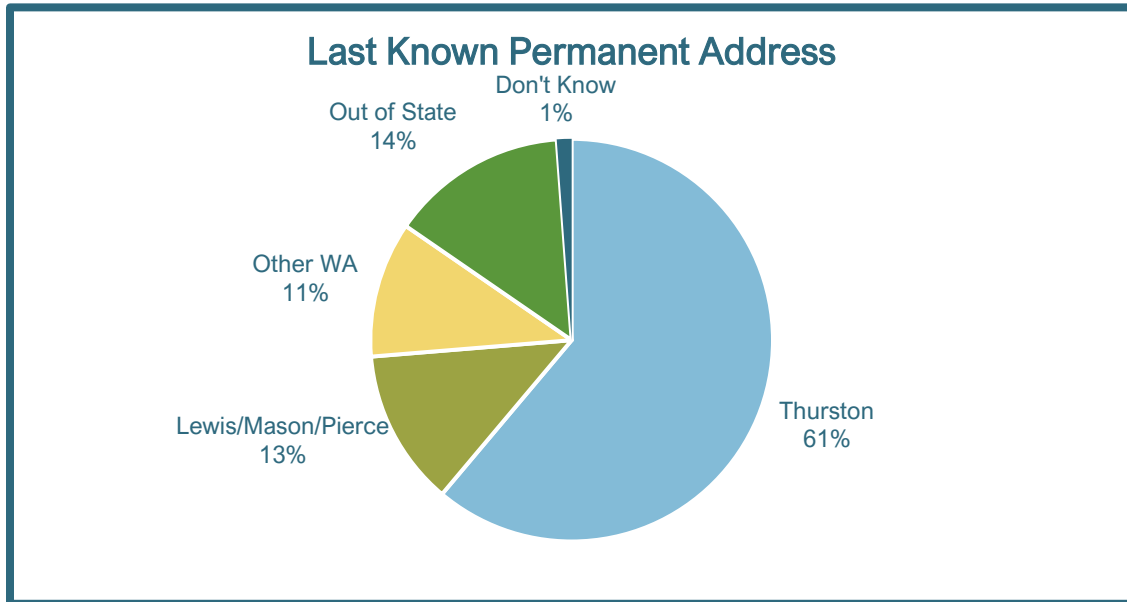
Data on the current city of residence was collected from those that completed surveys within the unsheltered population. This was not captured for those in ES or TH who were not surveyed. Some

⁹ <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/transitional-housing-programs-and-empowering-survivors-domestic-violence>

extrapolation was done, from where surveys were conducted, if they did not otherwise indicate their city of residence. For example: someone surveyed at the Mitigation Site who did not indicate their current city was entered as an Olympia resident. There may be a few instances where this resulted in a false indication of residence, but the methodology was consistent across jurisdictions.

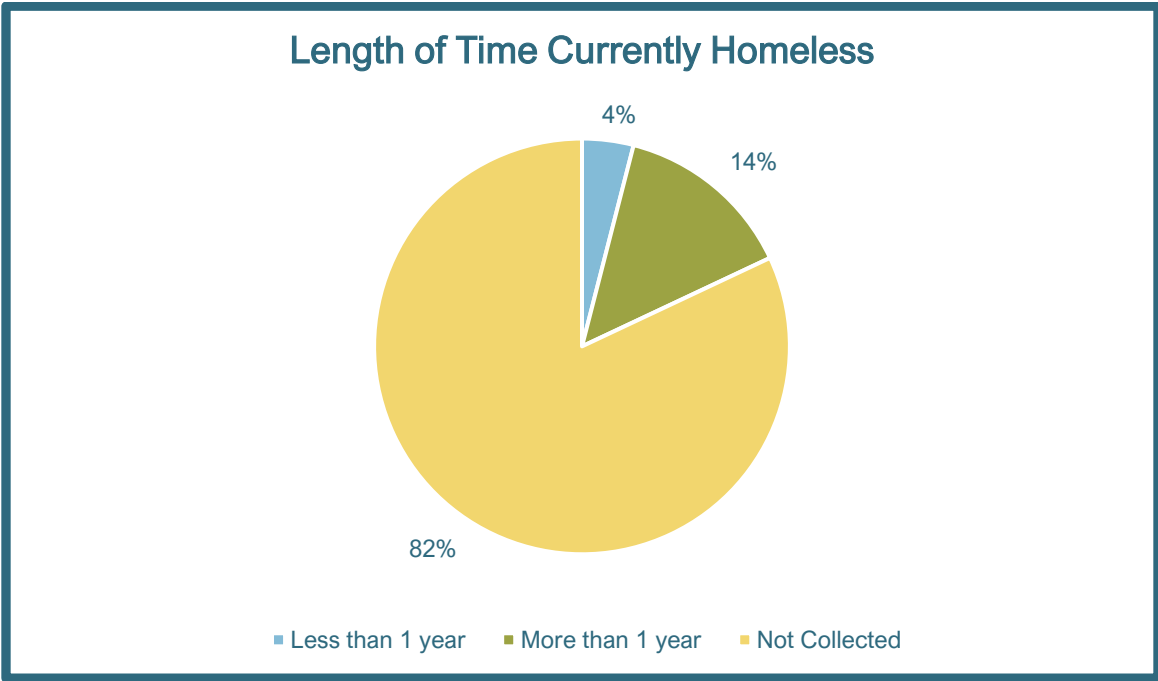


According to the surveys completed by unsheltered individuals, 58% identify as currently living in Olympia. Downtown Olympia hosts the highest density of shelters, meal services, food bank, service providers, showers, and other services for those experiencing homelessness. Having access to these services can be crucial for an individual's survival, while lack of access can also make it difficult to engage in other essential life activities such as applying for jobs or attending treatment appointments.



As can be seen from the chart above, the majority (61%) of people surveyed identified their last permanent home in Thurston County. Another 13% of those surveyed last had homes in counties neighboring Thurston. The responses indicated that last known addresses were located primarily in Shelton, Lakewood, Chehalis, and Centralia. Therefore, approximately 75% of respondents had a last known address from inside of Thurston County or its immediate neighbors. About one in four respondents indicated that they came from elsewhere in Washington or from out-of-state.

For those who indicated their last known address was in Thurston County, most had lived in Thurston for several years before they became homeless. Of the 258 respondents who indicated Thurston as their last permanent address, 191 (74%) answered that they had lived in Thurston County at least one year before becoming homeless. 135 (52%) of people had lived in Thurston County for more than 5 years, many for all their lives.



Chronic Homelessness

The Federal definition of “chronic homelessness” is someone who has experienced homelessness for at least a year – either 12 months or more in a row, or several shorter experiences of homelessness that add up to a year - while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability. As a Balance of State County, Thurston County

depends on the Department of Commerce to conduct an analysis of the data and determine the number of people who can be categorized as chronically homeless in our community.

For 2020, the Department of Commerce determined that 272 (27%) individuals met the criteria for chronic homelessness in Thurston County. Best practices for reducing homelessness among people with disabilities includes building supportive housing options that prioritize this community. “By prioritizing people experiencing chronic homelessness for existing supportive housing, and by creating opportunities to bring new units online, communities have made many more units available for people experiencing chronic homelessness with the highest needs. Communities are also strengthening their assertive outreach and engagement, lowering barriers to emergency housing and services, and quickly linking people to permanent housing in order to bring the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness to as close to zero as possible.”¹⁰

Snapshots of Jurisdictions

Thurston County acknowledges the independent character and specific needs of the jurisdictions who participate in the PIT each year. These cities add vital knowledge and expertise to our examination of homelessness, and a deeper understanding of conditions unique to their city. The PIT data helps to inform local jurisdictional action while operating within the county’s regional homeless crisis response system.

Lacey: The City of Lacey increased their outreach and engagement efforts during the PIT this year. In coordination with their new full-time liaison from Community Action Council, the City had more than 20 volunteers and staff to survey streets, encampments, and families on January 23. Forty unsheltered individuals were counted.

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	31	0-17*	Suppressed	Yes	4
Female	9	18-24*	3	No	26
Non-Binary/Transgender	0	25-48	21	Not collected	10
		49-65	13		
		Over 65	3		
		Not collected	1		

¹⁰ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, <https://www.usich.gov/goals/chronic/>

WHERE SLEPT		RACE		DISABILITIES	
Out of Doors	19	White	28	Mental Health	12
Vehicle	11	Multiple Races	2	Physical Disability	14
RV/Boat	7	Not collected	4	Developmental Disability	4
Abandoned Building	3	American Indian/Alaska	3	Substance abuse	10
		Black/African Amer.	2		
		Asian	1		
TOP 10 CAUSES		INCOME SOURCES		LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	
Eviction/Loss of housing	20	SSI/SSDI	15	Thurston	23
Job Loss/unemployment	16	TANF	11	Lewis/Mason/Pierce	7
Family Rejection/Kicked out	10	Medicare/Medicaid	5	Other WA	4
Alcohol/substance abuse	8	Seasonal/Farm	4	Out of State	3
Physical health/disability	7	Panhandling	3	not collected	3
Mental Illness	4	PT Employment	2		
Domestic Violence	4	Relatives/Friends	2		
Discharged Justice	4	VA	2		
Unable to work	3	Temp Disability/ ABD	1		
Abuse/Neglect	2				

Olympia: Olympia continues to have the highest concentration of homeless individuals in Thurston County. As stated before, this is largely because Olympia hosts the majority of homeless services. Nearly all shelter and transitional counts are also in Olympia. Olympia had an outpouring of staff and community support and volunteers to engage in the PIT. Olympia counted 314 unsheltered individuals.

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	199	0-17*	54	Yes	31
Female	107	18-24*	17	No	239
Non-Binary/Transgender	5	25-48	203	Not collected	44
Not collected	3	49-65	78		
		Over 65	8		
		Not collected	11		
WHERE SLEPT		RACE		DISABILITIES	
Out of Doors	212	White	236	Mental Health	142
Vehicle	79	Not collected	26	Physical Disability	121
RV/Boat	20	Multiple Races	18	Substance abuse	113
Abandoned Building	3	Black/African Amer.	16	Developmental Disability	14

	American Indian/Alaska Islander/Hawaiian	14			
	Islander/Hawaiian	3			
	Asian	1			
TOP 10 CAUSES		INCOME SOURCES		LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	
Eviction/Loss of housing	110	TANF	108	Thurston	179
Job Loss/unemployment	99	SSI/SSDI	79	Lewis/Mason/Pierce	30
Family Rejection/Kicked out	91	Medicare/Medicaid	35	Other WA	34
Alcohol/substance abuse	69	Panhandling	20	Out of State	53
Mental Illness	58	PT Employment	12	Not collected	18
Physical health/disability	55	Relatives/Friends	12		
Domestic Violence	43	Seasonal/Farm	7		
Unable to work	39	Temp Disability/ ABD	6		
Discharged Justice	22	FT Employment	5		
Abuse/Neglect	21	VA	4		
		Unemployment	4		

Tumwater: Capturing data on homelessness in Tumwater proved challenging because of the widely dispersed houseless population. City of Tumwater staff teamed with Together!, a small non-profit working with youth and families in Tumwater, to survey people already accessing services. With a 7-day count of families and street outreach on PIT day, Tumwater counted 9 people living unsheltered.

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	5	0-17*	Suppressed	Yes	1
Female	4	18-24*	2	No	7
Non-Binary/Transgender	0	25-48	5	Not collected	1
Not collected	0	49-65	3		
		Over 65	0		
		Not collected	1		
WHERE SLEPT		RACE		DISABILITIES	
RV/Boat	4	White	9	Mental Health	3
Out of Doors	3	Not collected	0	Physical Disability	3
Vehicle	2	Multiple Races	0	Substance abuse	2
Abandoned Building	0	Black/African Amer.	0	Developmental Disability	0
		American Indian/Alaska Islander/Hawaiian	0		
		Islander/Hawaiian	0		
		Asian	0		
TOP 10 CAUSES		INCOME SOURCES		LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	

Eviction/Loss of housing	4	TANF	7	Thurston	7
Physical health/disability	3	Medicare/Medicaid	6	Lewis/Mason/Pierce	0
Job Loss/unemployment	3	SSI/SSDI	3	Other WA	0
Unable to work	2	Panhandling	2	Out of State	0
Discharged Justice	2	Relatives/Friends	1	Not collected	2
Illness	2				
Family Rejection/Kicked out	2				
Mental Illness	1				
Alcohol/substance abuse	1				
Abuse/Neglect	1				

Yelm: A small group of dedicated individuals planned and implemented outreach and an event for the PIT this year. Yelm counted 30 people unsheltered.

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	21	0-17*	Suppressed	Yes	2
Female	8	18-24*	1	No	26
Non-Binary/Transgender	1	25-48	20	Not collected	2
Not collected	0	49-65	7		
		Over 65	2		
		Not collected	0		
WHERE SLEPT		RACE		DISABILITIES	
Vehicle	17	White	25	Mental Health	10
Out of Doors	7	American Indian/Alaska	2	Physical Disability	6
RV/Boat	3	Multiple Races	1	Substance abuse	6
Abandoned Building	3	Black/African Amer.	1	Developmental Disability	4
		Not collected	1		
TOP 10 CAUSES		INCOME SOURCES		LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	
Eviction/Loss of housing	16	TANF	12	Thurston*	19
Family Rejection/Kicked out	14	Medicare/Medicaid	11	Lewis/Mason/Pierce	9
Job Loss/unemployment	11	SSI/SSDI	8	Other WA	1
Physical health/disability	10	Panhandling	4	Out of State	1
Unable to work	7	Relatives/Friends	4	Not collected	0
Alcohol/substance abuse	7	Seasonal/Farm	1		
Discharged Justice	4	PT Employment	1		
Illness	4	Under the table	1		
Medical Costs	4				
Domestic Violence	3				

*Yelm is the location of last permanent address for 16 respondents.

The Data in Context

Thurston County continues to evolve the PIT process while learning from the work done before and the emerging best practices around the country. It is important to take a moment to define what the 2020 PIT results look like in this larger context, and to look for places of improvement, what challenges remain, and what can be learned from other communities about effective use of the PIT to make demonstrative headway in our fight against homelessness.

Population Counted	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Out of Doors	189	166	320	394	541
Shelters	223	242	333	236	295
Transitional Housing	174	171	182	170	159
Subtotal – PIT Homeless	586	579	835	800	995
Jails & Medical Facilities	ND	ND	154	251	242*
Staying with Friends & Family	47	ND	64	93	101
Total	633**	579**	1,053	1,144	1,463
PIT Youth under 18	3	68	190	164	202
Households with Children	209	77	320	281	323
Households without Children	377	231	505	519	672
PIT 65 & over	13	6	42	55	35
Veterans – Sub-Total	50	56	39	55	57
Mental Illness	119	58	98	239	258
Drug and Alcohol	30	12	98	123	172
Chronically Homeless	158	106	229	264	272

ND = No Data

* Reported by Olympia (8), Thurston County (132) and Nisqually (102) Jails. No persons were counted in medical facilities, as Covid prevented participation this year by hospitals.

Totals do not contain missing data elements * Years 2016-2017 presented limited data.

Comparing the PIT results from 2019 to 2020, the most noticeable changes are the increases in unsheltered individuals counted and in people under 18 years of age. While changes in methodology can somewhat account for the larger number of unsheltered folks counted, we cannot ignore the

reality of unsheltered homelessness increasing in Thurston County. Each year presents a new opportunity to improve methodologies and community participation for a more precise count. Further, tracking PIT data over time highlights population trends supporting long-term planning efforts.

The increase in persons counted in shelters this year is a result of including Union Gospel Mission (UGM) emergency shelter data, which was not included in the shelter count in 2019. UGM does not receive federal or county funding for their programs and as such are not required to participate in entering data into HMIS. Consequently, including UGM's shelter population for the PIT requires a hand count of persons sleeping there.

SUPPLEMENTAL SOURCES OF DATA ON HOMELESSNESS

While the Point in Time census is designed to help communities learn more about people who are unsheltered, sheltered, and living in transitional housing, there are many additional sources of data that can help deepen the understanding of homelessness in Thurston County. In this section, additional data is utilized to create a more complete report. Further information on each of these data sources is available from [Thurston County PIT team](#), the [Thurston Thrives PIT web page](#), or through other [State agencies \(OSPI\)](#).

Homelessness in Public Schools

Each year, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) collects information on all students enrolled in public schools in Washington State. OSPI is mandated by the Federal government to include data on homeless students in this collection process. In 1987, the US Congress passed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in a bi-partisan bill sponsored by Washington Senator Tom Foley (D- Spokane, WA). This legislation aimed “to provide urgently needed assistance to protect and improve the lives and safety of the homeless, with special emphasis on elderly persons, handicapped persons, and families with children.”¹¹

The McKinney-Vento Act requires States who receive Federal funding to track all children who are in public school who meet the criteria for homelessness according to the Act:

1. Children sharing housing due to economic hardship or loss of housing
2. Children living in "motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations"
3. Children living in "emergency or transitional shelters"
4. Children whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc.)
5. Children living in "cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations"

The primary difference between the McKinney-Vento definition and the HUD definition used for the PIT is McKinney-Vento’s inclusion of the category of - “sharing housing due to economic hardship”.

¹¹ Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McKinney%E2%80%93Vento_Homeless_Assistance_Act

This criterion, which is also referred to as “doubling up”, makes OSPI counts more inclusive. For many years, advocates have been petitioning HUD to align their definition of homelessness to match the McKinney-Vento definition in order to include youth, couch surfing and doubled up families, and those fleeing domestic violence officially in the PIT count.

2018-2019 OSPI Homeless Data for Thurston County

In the 2018-2019 school year, OSPI and the McKinney-Vento teams embedded in Thurston public schools counted 1736 children as homeless. This number is only for the children, not their families or caregivers.

School District	Doubled Up	Hotel/Motel	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total Homeless
Griffin (Olympia)	<10	0	0	0	13
North Thurston (Lacey)	688	35	35	121	879
Olympia	170	17	47	37	271
Rainier	12	0	0	0	14
Rochester	100	12	<10	<10	125
Tenino	Suppressed	0	<10	<10	38
Tumwater	167	32	23	28	250
Yelm	121	<10	18	<10	146
TOTAL	<1268	<106	<143	<216	1736

Additionally, in the Tenino school district the number of students “doubled up” was suppressed as sensitive data. Nonetheless, evidence can be derived that homelessness in Thurston County is a larger issue for families and children than the numbers PIT enumerates.

The OSPI numbers tell a compelling story about the challenges facing Thurston County families. Tumwater school district has nearly as many homeless students as Olympia, but Tumwater has only 60% the population of Olympia. The Tumwater PIT team collected 9 surveys of unsheltered households, yet the OSPI data suggests there are at least 250 students experiencing housing instability. Rochester and Yelm, with significantly smaller populations than Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater have more than 100 students experiencing homelessness, respectively. Most startlingly,

North Thurston school district in Lacey has a staggering number of students experiencing homelessness, 879.

These numbers from OSPI highlight the need for more innovative outreach efforts for future PIT counts to more effectively connect with students and their families who are experiencing homelessness.

People Temporarily Staying with Friends or Family

People who are doubled up, couch surfing, or staying with family or friends because they do not have their own home are not included in the official PIT. To make sense of what the PIT data shows about individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Thurston County, it is important to include supplemental data sources to better understand the enormity of the issue. In the 2020 PIT, surveys were collected from 101 people who identified as temporarily staying with friends or family.

GENDER		AGES		LATINX/HISPANIC	
Male	41	0-17	41	Yes	15
Female	60	18-24	5	No	84
Non-Binary/Transgender	0	25-48	41	Not collected	2
Not collected	0	49+	14		
CURRENT CITY		RACE		DISABILITIES	
Olympia	35	White	75	Mental Health	39
Lacey	7	Multiple Races	14	Physical Disability	21
Yelm	5	Black/African Amer.	9	Substance abuse	17
Rochester	2	American Indian/Alaska	2	Developmental Disability	11
Tumwater	1	Not collected	1		
Not collected	51				
TOP 10 CAUSES		INCOME SOURCES		LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	
Eviction/Loss of housing	24	SSI/SSDI	23	Thurston	32
Domestic Violence	20	TANF	17	Lewis/Mason/Pierce	5
Physical health/disability	19	PT Employment	8	Other WA	8
Family Rejection/Kicked out	16	Medicare/Medicaid	6	Out of State	8
Job Loss/unemployment	16	FT Employment	3	Not collected	48
Mental Illness	13	Relatives/Friends	3		
Alcohol/substance abuse	11	VA	1		
Unable to work	10				
Abuse/Neglect	8				
Discharged Justice	6				

People in Jail or Medical Facilities

On the night of PIT, 242 people in jail had no permanent address when they were admitted. This number represents people incarcerated at City of Olympia Jail, Thurston County Jail, and Nisqually Jail. We did not include numbers for individuals staying in medical facilities, as Covid19 prevented gathering this data from hospitals this year. We can look at numbers from 2019; there were 120 individuals who were in a medical facility with no permanent address. It is likely it remained consistent, but that cannot be confirmed.

People who Chose not to Participate

While nationally, every participating jurisdiction does its best to collect as many surveys as possible, it is impossible to survey every unsheltered person. As discussed previously, people experiencing homelessness are most often people who have experienced trauma (homelessness itself is a trauma), and consequently are less likely to participate in the PIT. While Thurston County sought to ameliorate this distrust with Trauma Informed Care training for volunteers, diversification of survey crews, and implementing 'known neighbor' practices in approaching the unhoused, many individuals declined to participate.

To that end, we included in each PIT survey binder a tally sheet on which volunteers were instructed to tally each person that they engaged with who a) could reasonably be expected to be homeless, and b) declined to participate in the unsheltered survey. PIT volunteers were asked to use HUD's criteria to estimate if someone was homeless; that they were staying in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. tent, vehicle, building alcove, etc.). After the PIT census, the tallies were calculated, and 350 persons were marked as likely homeless but not participating. This data is anecdotal, as it cannot be de-duplicated. However, it is supplemental data that can help create a more complete understanding of the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Thurston County.

With the official PIT count of 995, if 101 persons temporarily staying with friends or family, and the 350 people who are likely homeless but not willing to be surveyed are included, we come to the number 1446. If the 242 people staying in jails on January 23 who are likely to be released to homelessness are added, the total is 1688 persons. When the homeless student count from OSPI is included, the number increases even more significantly for a grand total of 3424. While this number cannot be verified, it helps fill in the picture of those experiencing homelessness in Thurston County.

CONCLUSION

In June 2018, the Thurston County Board of Health declared homelessness a public health crisis; a recognition of the growing numbers of unsheltered individuals, unsanctioned encampments, and vehicle/RV camping in places it had not previously been seen. This helped create a position for a Homeless and Affordable Housing Coordinator, who took on creating a 5-year Homeless Crisis Response Plan (2019-2024) with the mission statement, “We collaborate to reduce harm and ensure homelessness in Thurston County is brief, rare, and one time only.”

Examining the PIT results does not paint a picture of homelessness in Thurston County being brief, rare, or one time only. Covid-19 has only complicated and worsened the situation for houseless neighbors, while the associated economic downturn has increased housing instability. Shelter capacity across the County has decreased, to ensure safe physical distancing. Hygiene services such as water, portable toilets, handwash stations, and dumpsters have been made available to help support unsanctioned encampments, to help stop the spread of the virus, but also in recognition there is not systemic capacity at this point to shelter everyone.

As Thurston County continues to strive towards the goal of eliminating homelessness there are exciting opportunities and conversations happening regionally to address these issues. As this report is finalized in September 2020, jurisdictions across the county are formally creating the Regional Housing Council to guide affordable housing and homelessness policy. The City of Olympia recently released its One Community Plan, a strategic outline of how Olympia plans on moving forward addressing these issues. The City of Lacey has also formed its Community-Based Committee on Homelessness. Lacey’s effort is intended to be a year-long planning process with a 30-member committee making final recommendations to the Lacey City Council about how to best address homelessness in that community.

Though the numbers of unsheltered people have increased and there is more visible homelessness across the county, increased efforts are being made to address these issues regionally. The PIT helps serve as a reference point, a Point in Time, for us to look at where we have been, where we are, and to look forward to where we need to go.

THANK YOU THURSTON COMMUNITY!

An amazing number of people used their time and energy to help make our efforts successful. To show due respect, we would like to thank everyone for their efforts. Please thank them if you see them around!

State of Washington

Representative Beth Doglio, Brian Fullerton, Cheryl Smith, George Carter III, Tommy Mollas

Thurston County

Commissioner Gary Edwards, County Manager Ramiro Chavez, Schelli Slaughter, Keylee Marineau, Tom Webster, Arielle Benson, Francisca Hoffman, Alisa Everson, Carrie Hennon, Joe Wolfe, Liz Davis, Jason Keyes, Chris Hawkins, Edith VanderWal, Shauna Abbenhaus, Tami Edwards & Son

City of Olympia

Councilman Clark Gilman, Assistant City Manager Keith Stahley, Cary Retlin, Ilan Weitzen, Amy Buckler, Teal Russell, Katherine Davis, Max DeJarnett, Brandon Ault, Nathan Lomas, Regina Adams, Woody Shaufler, Megan Kendig, Anne Larsen, Rachel Ashton

City of Lacey

Jessica Brandt, Terrence "Mitch" Mitchell, Officer Alex Ficek, Donna Feliciano, Rick Walk

City of Tumwater

Mayor Pete Kmet, Council member Charlie Schneider, Heidi Cerniwey – Behrens, David LaGarde, Shawn Crimmins, Tom Olivia, Brad Medrud, Erich Warner, Mike Matlock, Jule McGarva, Kelly Wallace, Katherine Braseth

Camp Count Team

Tyler Gundel, Robert Bruce, Robin Degollado, Anthony Degollado, Jackie Taylor, Opie Taylor, Veronica Hardy, Jaclyn Reade, James Joy, Jessica Mae, Ashley Westlund, Jason Bates, Elvis Lambert, Shelly Lambert, Mickey Nelson, Beth, Brittany, Guam, Sean, Joel, Lexi, Aileen, Melissa, Anthony, Robin, Mountain Man, Karma

Nisqually Tribe

Joe Kautz, Natosha Kautz, Larry Sanchez

Yelm Team

Port Commissioner EJ Zita, Debra Larson, Pam Gotcher, Suzie Le Furgey, Gregg Thompson, Madeline Bishop, Sara Steinberg, Jennifer Levy-Peck, Stephen A (Tony) Wilson

Familiar Faces & Crisis Response Team

Charles Wilkins, Katja Hurt , Keith Whiteman

Capitol Recovery Center & BUPE Clinic

Meta Hogan, Andrea Mandt, Tamara Heinz, Sean Wright, Mika NC

Safeplace

Cecily Dorsey

Haircuts donated by Gatsby's & Olympia Barber School

Amber Todd, Kylie LaBranche, Michael Reid, Michael Kim Jr, Mars James, Alex Picard, Nalasia Jordan, Russell Steplight

CIELO

Carolina Gutierrez, Charo Portado, Victoria DeCillo

Senior Services for South Sound

Eileen McKenzie, Dolores Blueford, Maria Masse, Sarah Hannapel, Chris Quimby

Family Support Center

Executive Director Trish Gregory, Natalie Skovran, Doris Sanchez, Olivia Alberts, Rene Malecki, Michelle Venida, Tara Jackson, Amanda King, Justia Madnigal, Bri Winslow, Candace Jenkins, Julian Avila, Maya Glasier-Lawson

Together!

Executive Director Meagan Darrow, Lindsay Bates, Irene Strada, Ariel Rogers, Cynthia Brandt, Courtney Prothero

St. Martin's University Students, Staff, Faculty

Crystal Cardona, Alexis Skinner, Jayci Gomes, Naelah Cruz, Amanda Lyyski, Carlos S Legoreta, Will Stadler, Julia Chavez, Robert Hoskins, Anthony Sexton, Richard Ordos, Jason Jones, Will Stakelin, Arnold Vasquez, Carrin A Perez, Lori Sirs, Saul Gurrola

Evergreen State College Center for Community Based Learning & Action

Ellen Short-Sanchez, Jackson LeMessurier, Kate Murphy, Sheridan Turner

Donations/ Sponsors

Big Tom's Eastside Burgers, Olive Garden, Grocery Outlet West Olympia, Goodwill Industries Tacoma, Molina Healthcare, Thurston County Food Bank

Our Outstanding Community Volunteers!

Khadija Hassan, Allison Zusi , Mary Beth Janzten, Jaycie Ostereberg, Chris Vasser , Britt Smith, Althea GodFrey, Joy Gerchak, Lisa Allison , Barbara Lane, Mark Tips, Stephanie Taylor, Clayton Mccrary , Jen Butti, Glenn Baldwin, James W Stanton the 3rd, Kathy Mead, Ken Adney, Kim Adney. Stephanie Reinauer, Crystal Snore , Joe Mantione, Julie Wagner, Issac Colavecchio, Francine Stauffer, Larry Dzieza, Deven Zipp, Paul E Peck, Melinda (Mindy) Chambers, Brian Muckian, Tom Boyer, Margaret L Janis, Sarah Colavecchio, Stephanie Gilstrom, Karen Anderson, Betsy Loyer, Lisa Gillotti, Andrea Mandt, Carrie Graf, Anthony (Tony) Santolla, Jennifer L Fortin, Dan Eiksm, Paul Perz, Susan Spinell, Antonio Jackson, Amy McCallum, Theresa Haung, Susan Spinelli, Paul Spivak., Mackenzie McCall, Sherry Waller, Heidi Gould, Jordan Glander, Beth Lamieux Glander, Calvin Wynn, Jason Ritcher, Lisa Gilotti, Allison Osterberg, Elizabeth Able, Tom Best, Alejandra Guzman, Sarah Sorensen, Brittany McAferty, Shanda L De Anda, Brad Morrill, Patricia Harrigan, Jalene Smith, Leslie Owen, Emily Delaney, Alisa Everson , Robin Partington, Carl Bond, Jon Ceazow, Julie Holmguis, Ian Davis, Debra Doig, Kimberly Johnson, Shannon Pardee, Miles Sundsten, Kathryn Murphy, Jack Zeigh, Chester L Baldwin, George Carter 3rd, Tomy Mollas, Teresa Fristoe, Ailene Pierce, Benjamin B, Edwards Hatchett, Rob Kirkwood, Emily Clouse, Sara Eve Sarlike, Sheridan Turner, Charlotte Peusons Danielle Saftner, Joni Brill, Lawrence W Naputi, Jessica Mal, Anthony Jurgens, Robert, Jason Bates, Mickey Nelson, Sharon Tanbel, Veronica Hardy, Chelsea Greenwood, Rachelle Eastbrook, Elvis Lambert, Jaclyn Reade, Jacklyn Taylor, Beth Hayes, Alexiz Casus, Ashley Westland, Shaun Galsgow, Brittney Stansbury

Appendix A: Thurston County 2020 PIT Survey

POINT IN TIME SURVEY 2020

THURSTON COUNTY, WA

Thank you for helping to gather surveys for the PIT! Please use the script and methods contained in your PIT folder.

Where is this survey being taken? City _____ Area _____ Time _____

ARE YOU OR ANYONE IN YOUR FAMILY GROUP CURRENTLY FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, or under the age of 13 without a parent or guardian? If yes, skip **all** questions in grey boxes. (Same for anyone who doesn't want to give a name)

1. First name _____ Last Name _____

2. Date of Birth _____

3. Where did you sleep last night? (circle the answer that best applies)

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. On the street or sidewalk family | e. Temporarily staying with friends/ family |
| b. In a vehicle | f. Hospital or Detox facility |
| c. Abandoned building | g. Emergency Shelter |
| d. In an RV or boat lacking power/water | h. In an outdoor encampment |

4. Where was your last PERMANENT address? City _____ State _____

a. If Thurston, how long had you lived in Thurston County when you became homeless _____

5. Have you or anyone in the household been continuously without housing for a year or more?

Yes (skip to Question 9) **No**

6. Have you or anyone in the household been without housing 4 or more times in the last 3 years?

Yes **No** (skip to Question 9)

7. Do these times without housing, added together, amount to a year or more? **Yes** **No**

8. Does any person who answered yes for either 6 or 7 have a disability? **Yes** **No**

9. Does any person in your family group identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer? **Yes/No**

10. Please answer the following for ALL people in this family group:

Male (M), Female (F), Transgender (T), Gender Non-Conforming or Non Binary (N), Refused (R)
White (W), Black or African-American (B), Asian (A), American Indian or Alaska Native (I), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (H),
Refused (R)

a. Survey taker: **Gender** _____ **Race** _____ **Hispanic** Y/ N **Veteran** Y/N **Mental Health** Y/N

Chronic Substance Abuse Y/N **Physical Disability** Y/N **Developmental Disability** Y/N

b. Person 2: Name _____ Relationship to survey taker _____

Gender _____ Race _____ DOB ___/___/___ Hispanic Y/ N Veteran Y/N Mental Health Y/N
Chronic Substance Abuse Y/N Physical Disability Y/N Developmental Disability Y/N

c. Person 3: Name _____ Relationship to survey taker _____

Gender _____ Race _____ DOB ___/___/___ Hispanic Y/ N Veteran Y/N Mental Health Y/N
Chronic Substance Abuse Y/N Physical Disability Y/N Developmental Disability Y/N

d. Person 4: Name _____ Relationship to survey taker _____

Gender _____ Race _____ DOB ___/___/___ Hispanic Y/ N Veteran Y/N Mental Health Y/N
Chronic Substance Abuse Y/N Physical Disability Y/N Developmental Disability Y/N

11. What circumstances led to your homelessness? (Circle ALL that apply – more choices on next page)

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Job loss/ unemployment | i. Mental illness |
| b. Aged out of foster care | j. Physical health/ disability |
| c. Eviction/ loss of housing | k. Alcohol/substance abuse |
| d. Lack of job training/ unable to work | l. Family rejection/ kicked out of home |
| e. Medical/discharged from hospital | m. Abuse/neglect |
| f. Discharged from criminal justice system | n. Guardian mental illness/substance abuse |
| g. Medical costs | o. Illness |
| h. Lack of childcare | p. Domestic violence (if current, do not identify) |

12. Sources of household income or benefits (Circle ALL that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. TANF | g. Part time employment |
| b. VA | h. Full time employment |
| c. SSI/SSDI | i. Seasonal / farm employment |
| d. Unemployment | j. Panhandling |
| e. Temporary Disability/ABD | k. Relatives/ friends |
| f. Medicare/Medicaid | l. None |

Client Release of Information and Informed Consent

This agency participates in the Washington State Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by collecting information, over time, about the characteristics and service needs of people facing homelessness. RCW 43.185C.180 and RCW 43.185C.030

- To provide the most effective services in moving people from homelessness to permanent housing, we need an accurate count of all people experiencing homelessness in Washington State. In order to ensure that clients are not counted twice, we need to collect four pieces of personally identifying information. Specifically, we collect: name, birth date, and race/ethnicity. You may also choose to provide your social security number. However, signing this form does not require you to do so. Your information will be stored in our database for 7 years after the last date of service. If you have questions about collection of data or your rights regarding your personally identifying information, contact the HMIS System Administrator at: (360) 725-3028
- We use strict security policies designed to protect your privacy. Our computer system is highly secure and uses up-to-date protection features such as data encryption, passwords, and two-factor authentication required for each system user. There is a small risk of a security breach, and someone might obtain and use your information inappropriately. If you ever suspect the data in HMIS has been misused, immediately contact the HMIS System Administrator at: (360) 725-3028

- The data you provide may be combined with data from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Education Research and Data Center for the purpose of further analysis. Your name and other identifying information will not be included in any reports or publications. Only a limited number of staff members, who have signed confidentiality agreements, will be able to see this information. Your information will not be used to determine eligibility for DSHS programs. Washington State HMIS system administrators have full access to all information in HMIS. This includes the Department of Commerce staff, designated HMIS system administrators, and the software vendor.
- By signing this form, you acknowledge and allow Department of Commerce staff to obtain additional records of information from other state agencies with which there is a data sharing agreement (DSA) on file between Commerce and the other agency. Our DSA guides data transfer and storage security protocols. If DSAs are in place, Commerce is authorized by you to obtain, add to HMIS, and use for evaluation purposes any other data you have provided to other Washington state agencies.
- Your decision to participate in the HMIS will not affect the quality or quantity of services you are eligible to receive from this agency, and will not be used to deny outreach, assistance, shelter, or housing. However, if you do choose to participate, services in the region may improve if we have accurate information about homeless individuals and the services they need. Furthermore, some funders MAY require that you consent to provide your personally identifying information in HMIS in order for you to receive services from that funding source.

I understand the above statements and consent to the inclusion of personally identifying information in HMIS about me and any dependents listed below, and authorize information collected to be shared with partner agencies. I understand that my personally identifying information will not be made public and will only be used with strict confidentiality. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by filing a 'Client Revocation of Consent' form with this agency. I understand that I may obtain a copy of my signed consent form from this Agency (including forms signed electronically).

Dependent children under 18 in household, if any (Please print first and last names):

Client Signature (Parent/Guardian)

Date

Appendix B: Data Overview

Thurston County - Full 2020 PIT Homeless Census Data - At a Glance					
Surveys Completed	674	Consent Refused	198	Unsheltered	541
Total Individuals	995	Transitional Housing	159	Emergency Shelter	295
Male	570	Children 17 & under	202	Unaccompanied Minor	13
Female	404	Adults 18-24	81	Veteran	57
Transgendered	8	Adults 25-45	400	Households w/children	310
Gender Non-Conforming	13	Adults 46-65	285	Households w/o children	672
		Adults 66+	27		
Current Living Situation - Where did you sleep last night? (541 respondents)					
Abandoned Building		12	Hospital/Detox/Jail*		247
Out of Doors		272	Vehicle/RV/Boat		257
Emergency Shelter		295	Transitional Housing		159
Staying with Friends or Family* (*not officially included in total PIT)					103
Causes of Homelessness (702 respondents)					
Eviction/Loss of Housing		167	Job Loss/Unemployment		148
Family Rejection		131	Substance Dependency		95
Physical Disability		90	Lack of Job Training/Unable to Work		63
Mental Health		77	Domestic Violence		55
Abuse/Neglect		29	Discharged from Jail/Juvenile Detention		40
Illness		28	Discharged from Medical Facility		23
All Sources of Household Income (583 respondents)					
Income?	Yes	403	Social Security/Social Security Disability		117
	No	180	Temporary Disability/ABD		9
Unemployment		8	Veteran Pension		11
TANF		175	Medicare/Medicaid		66
Seasonal/Farm		14	Panhandling		32
Family/Friend		22	Employment: Full Time		5
Under the Table/Informal		1	Employment: Part Time		17
No reply/refused					412
Disabilities as Self-Reported (708 respondents)					
Physical (permanent)		205	Developmental		101
Mental Health		258	Alcohol or Drug Addiction		172
Chronic Health Condition		49	No reply/refused		287
Race & Ethnicity (888 respondents)					
White/Caucasian		659	American Indian/Alaska Native		36
Black/African American		69	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		23
Asian		5	Multi-Racial		96
Hispanic/Latino		100	Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino		746

No reply/refused			107
Length of Time Homeless & Episodes of Homelessness			
Less than 1 year Homeless	818	Less than 4 episodes in 3 years	203
More than 1 year Homeless	135	More than 4 episodes of homelessness in 3 years	89
No reply/refused	42	No reply/refused	703
Chronically Homeless			272