



DATA BRIEF:

Allegheny County 2015 Point-in-Time Homelessness Data

January 2016

Each year, Allegheny County collects Point-in-Time (PIT) homelessness data during the last 10 days of January utilizing street outreach teams, data from the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), case management records, and interviews to calculate the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population.

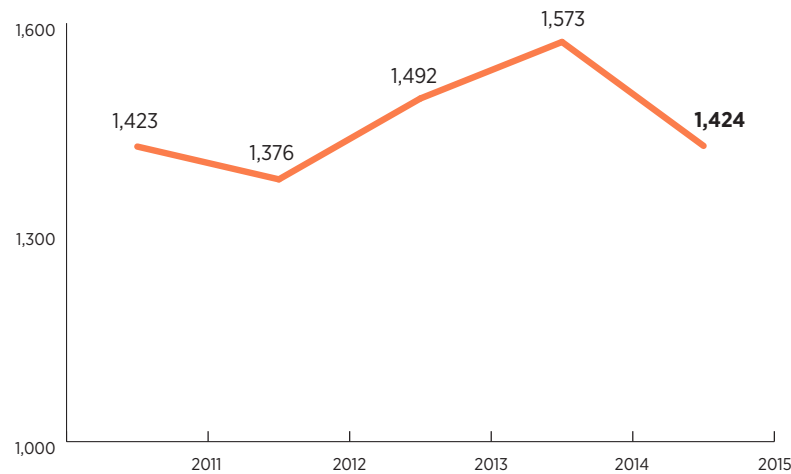
This data brief focuses on the 2015 PIT count. For an analysis of 2010 through 2014 PIT data and more information about the annual data collection process, see a related report by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Research/Basic-Needs.aspx>.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PIT COUNT

Guidelines for conducting annual PIT counts are issued by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) each year; variations in count methodologies over the years may contribute to artificial increases or decreases year to year. In addition, fluctuations in the number of volunteer data collectors, weather conditions, shelter vacancies, service funding and resource availability may result in variations across time. Certain populations that are in unstable housing but not considered literally homeless by HUD's definition are not included in the PIT count; it also does not include those who are in danger of becoming homeless in the near future, living in doubled-up situations or in permanent supportive housing.

TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION IN 2015

During the 2015 PIT count, 1,424 homeless people were identified. **Figure 1**, below, shows the total PIT count for the past five years. Fluctuations in the total count year to year are expected due to the changes in weather and count methodologies described above.

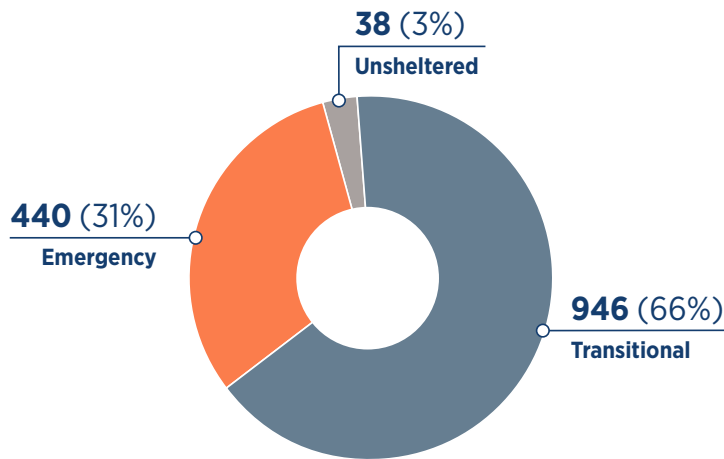
FIGURE 1: Total PIT Count, 2011 through 2015**TYPES OF HOUSING**

The majority of those counted (66%) were residing in transitional housing, which is designed to provide shelter and facilitate movement to independent living within a reasonable amount of time, usually 24 months.

Thirty-one percent were residing in emergency shelters, which include both year-round facilities and temporary severe weather emergency shelters (SWES), open only when conditions include freezing rain, heavy snowfall or severe wind chill, or when the temperature is predicted to fall below 25°F. On the night of the 2015 PIT, which was a night with temperatures below 25°F, SWES facilities housed 86 individuals, some of whom might have been unsheltered on a warmer night.

Three percent (38 people) were unsheltered on the night of the count, meaning that they were living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as on the street, in an underpass, in a park or in an abandoned building.

FIGURE 2: Homeless Population by Housing Type

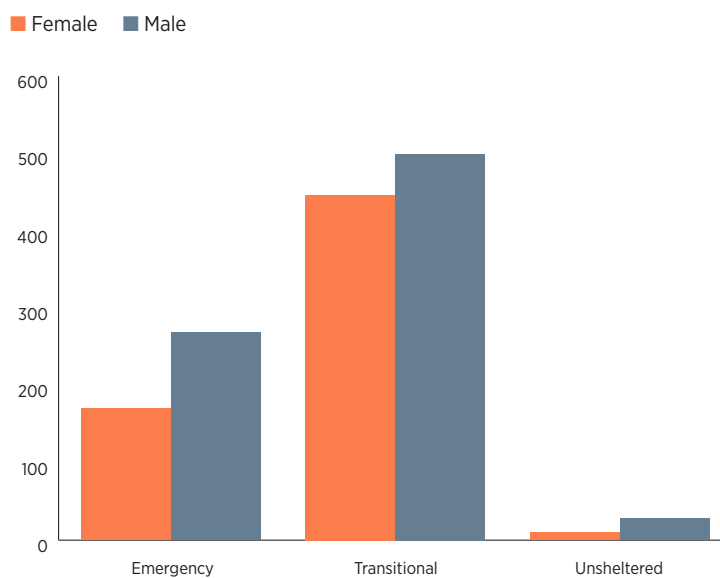


DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Gender

There were 796 males (56% of the homeless population) and 628 females (44%) recorded during the PIT count. Both genders were represented proportionally in transitional housing, while males disproportionately resided in emergency shelters and unsheltered situations, accounting for 61 percent of the emergency shelter population and 74 percent of the unsheltered population.

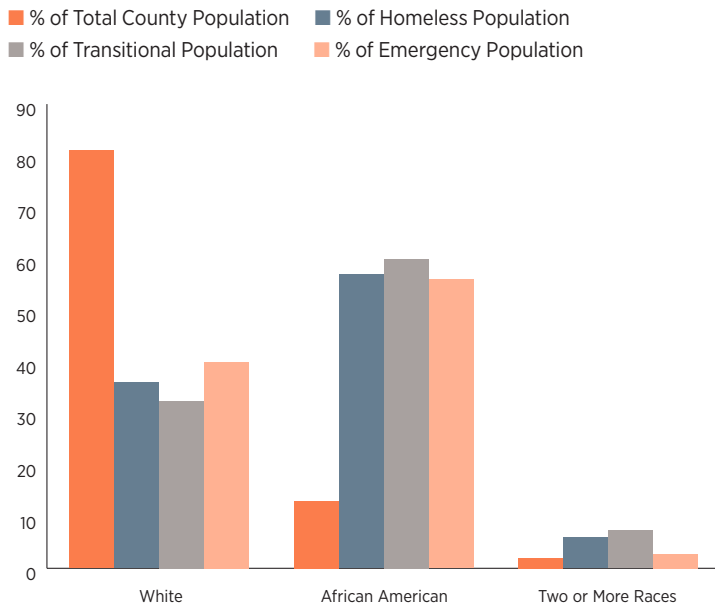
FIGURE 3: Gender of People Experiencing Homelessness



Race

The largest race represented was African American (819), with white second (515) and mixed race third (80). As shown in **Figure 4**, African American people made up a disproportionately large percentage of homeless people compared to their proportion of the total population of Allegheny County. As of 2013, African Americans accounted for approximately 13 percent of Allegheny County residents, but represented 57 percent of the 2015 PIT count.

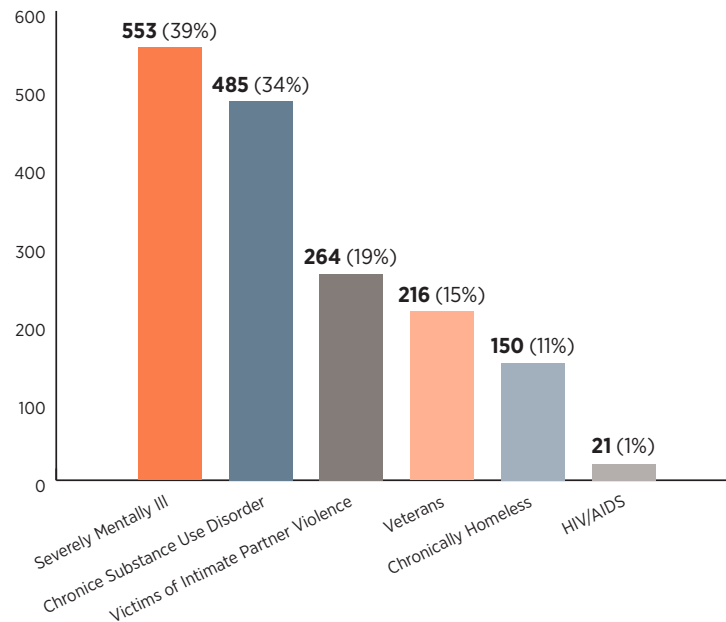
FIGURE 4: Racial Demographics of Homeless Population vs. County Population



Homeless Subpopulations

As shown in **Figure 5**, many people experiencing homelessness were also experiencing other challenges simultaneously. The largest subpopulation was people with serious mental illness, who made up 39 percent of the total PIT population. Since these categories are self-reported, some of these subpopulations may in reality be even larger than what is presented here.

FIGURE 5: Homeless Subpopulations (Duplicated Counts)



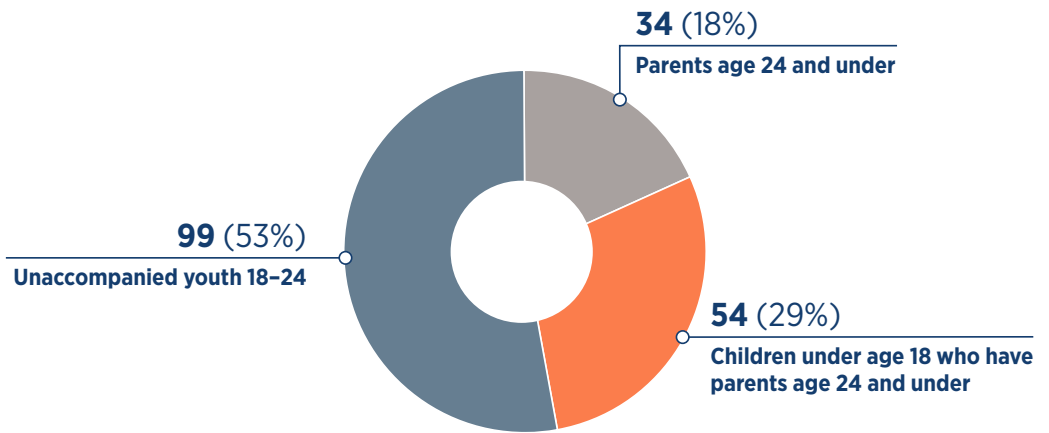
Note: Percentages indicate the size of the subpopulation as compared to the total number of homeless people identified by the PIT count.

HOMELESS YOUTH

In 2015, Allegheny County gave special attention to counting homeless youth age 24 and younger. This age group is difficult to quantify because they tend to stay in places like friends' houses or motels, locations not included in HUD's PIT count guidelines. Those youth who do fall within HUD's definition of technically homeless often prefer to stay disconnected from social services agencies, with whom they may have had poor experiences in the past.

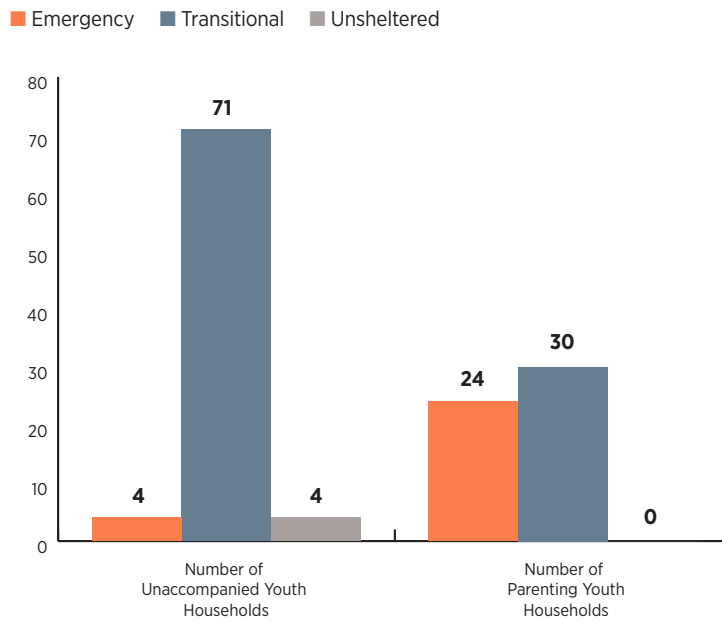
The total number of youth (24 and younger) counted was 187, which comprised 99 unaccompanied homeless youth, 34 parents age 24 or younger, and 54 children residing with parents in this age group. There were no unaccompanied youth under age 18 counted, which is consistent with DHS's child welfare practices.

FIGURE 6: Homeless Youth and Families



Most youth — both those with children and those without — were in transitional housing, while youth with children made use of emergency shelters more than youth without children did, as shown in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7: Youth Households and Types of Housing



NEXT STEPS

Allegheny County continues to work toward collecting accurate and comprehensive homelessness data. This is especially true for homeless youth who may be in need of services but are under-counted by traditional count methods because of the tendency of this population to “double-up” with friends and to make less use of formal homelessness services. A survey that collected information about both homeless youth and youth at-risk for homelessness¹, completed in June of this year, has added to the County’s understanding of this population’s particular needs and will aid in improving future count methodology.

¹ For a detailed look at DHS’s survey of homeless youth, see the data brief, “Allegheny County YOUTH Count 2015” at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Research/Basic-Needs.aspx>.

DATA COLLECTION

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