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2017 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness in Oregon

Every two years, during the last ten days of January, there is a nationwide effort to count every homeless person across the country.¹ This Point-in-time count attempts to capture both sheltered and unsheltered homeless people to provide a snapshot of homelessness in the United States. In 2017, staff from homeless assistance agencies, county and city employees, and hundreds of volunteers across Oregon conducted a street count of the unsheltered population², and data were collected on the homeless population living in emergency shelters and transitional housing throughout the state. Along with the total number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, information was gathered on a wide range of characteristics of the homeless population such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, and disability status. Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) obtained data from every Continuum of Care (CoC) in the state and provides these estimates at the county and state level here and in an interactive dashboard available at <http://tabsoft.co/2vDk00L>.

According to this year's PIT survey, the number of homeless people in Oregon increased by 6%, from 13,176 in 2015 to 13,953 in 2017. There were increases in both the number of sheltered (3%) and unsheltered (8%) people experiencing homelessness. This increase in homelessness is likely the result of a number of economic and demographic factors that have led to more Oregonians struggling to find housing they can afford. According to the latest Census Bureau data, Oregon was the 6th fastest growing state in the nation in 2016 and more than three-quarters of this growth came from people moving into the state. However, housing production declined dramatically from 2005 through 2010 and has only recently begun to recover, leading to a critically low housing supply. A low housing inventory coupled with a growing population has led to some of the lowest rental vacancy rates in the country. Furthermore, from 2008 to 2015, family median incomes decreased 1.8 percent while median rents increased 9.8 percent (in 2015 inflation-adjusted dollars). Tens of thousands of people are simply unable to afford these rising housing costs and have had to sleep in shelters, in their cars, or on the street.

Point-in-Time counts are an important source of information about neighbors who cannot find a permanent place to call home on a given night, but they do not tell the full story of homelessness in our communities. Due to the difficulties of attempting to count people who are living in places not meant for habitation in the coldest months of the year, it is likely that these numbers are an undercount of the homeless population on a given night. This year proved especially difficult due to the severity of the Oregon winter. Furthermore, some homeless families are not in shelter or on the streets, but are living

¹ A Point-in-Time count is conducted every year, but HUD only requires counts of the unsheltered population every other year. Comparisons in this report are only done for odd-numbered years for this reason. Although required by HUD to conduct this count in the last 10 days of January, this year, some CoCs received a waiver to move their Point-in-Time count to February due to extreme winter weather conditions in parts of the state.

² Unsheltered is defined by HUD as people who are staying in places not meant for people to live such as in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, and on the street.

with friends and family. Many CoCs go beyond a count of sheltered and unsheltered individuals and also count the number of people who are living doubled up with friends or families and are considered “precariously housed”. Others are able to provide more information on how many individuals and families are accessing services over the course of a year, rather than just on a single night. For more information about a particular CoC’s counts, methodologies, and the local initiatives being taken to address homelessness, please see the contacts at the end of this report.

On a single night in 2017:

- The number of people experiencing homelessness in Oregon was 13,953. Forty-three percent or 5,986 were sheltered, and 57% or 7,967 were unsheltered.
- Seventy percent of this population were people living in households without children, 43% of whom were sheltered and 57% of whom were unsheltered (Figure 1).
- One out of four homeless people were in households with children, and were more likely to be sheltered, with 48% in shelters and 52% living in unsheltered locations (Figure 1). The remaining four percent of the homeless population, or 605 people, consisted of unaccompanied children under the age of 18. These children are overwhelmingly living in unsheltered locations, with just 18% living in shelters and the remaining 82% on the streets, cars, or other uninhabitable places.
- The number of homeless people increased from 13,176 in 2015 to 13,953 in 2017, an increase of 6%. The unsheltered population grew at a rate of 8%, while the sheltered population increased by 3%.
- There were 3,387 chronically homeless people, making up 24% of the total homeless population.³ Nearly three-quarters (74%) of the chronically homeless individuals counted were unsheltered.⁴

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³ Chronic homelessness is defined by HUD as a homeless individual or head of household with a disability who: lives in a place not meant for human habitation, in an Emergency Shelter, or a Safe Haven; AND has been homeless continuously for at least 12 months (stays in an institution of fewer than 90 days do not constitute a break); OR has been homeless on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions total at least 12 months (occasions are separated by a break of at least 7 nights).

⁴ It is important to note that within some counties, there were data entry errors related to data points that are critical to determining if an individual meets the HUD definition of chronic homelessness. Due to this, many unsheltered individuals who may be chronically homeless were not captured in the data. Therefore, the number of unsheltered chronically homeless individuals reported here is likely an undercount.

Figure 1: Homelessness by Household Type, 2017

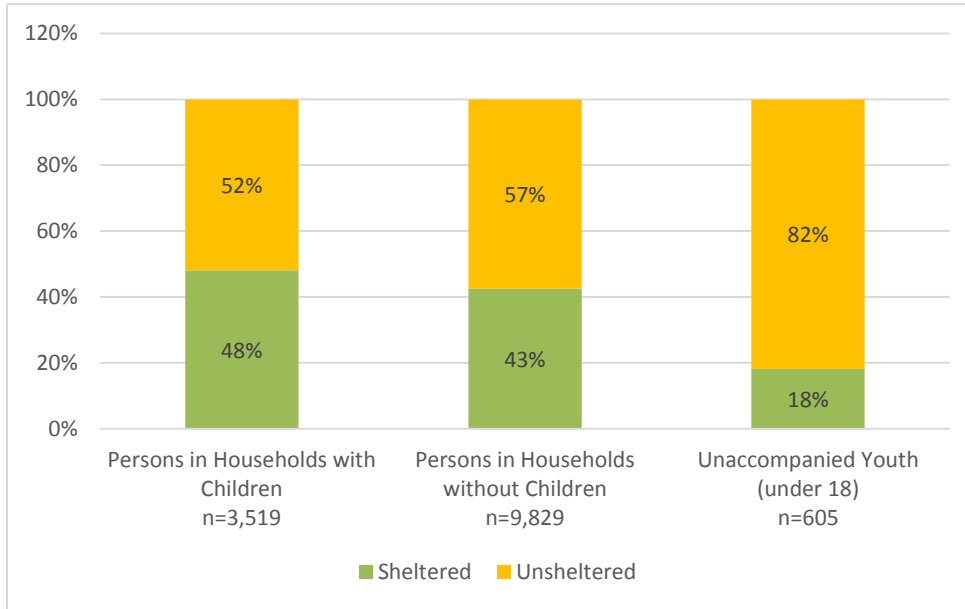
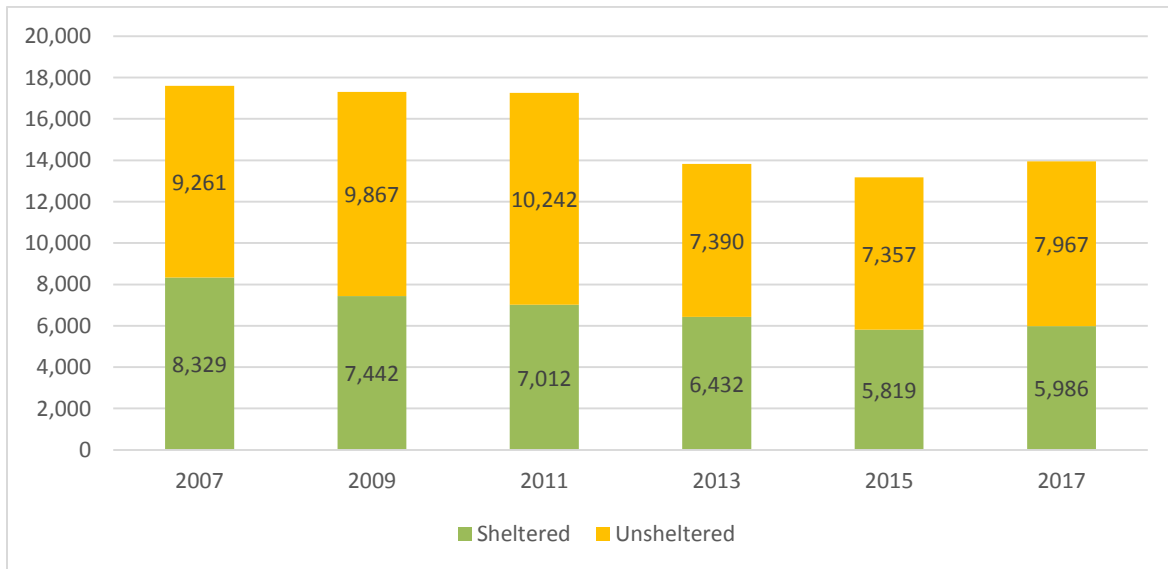


Figure 2: Estimates of the Homeless Population, by Sheltered Status, 2007-2017⁵



⁵ Caution should be taken when identifying trends in the number of people experiencing homelessness over time. Many factors affect the results of the Point-in-Time count including changes in methodology, volunteer availability, agency staff involvement, and weather conditions.

Selected Demographics of the Homeless Population:

- The majority of homeless people (73%) were over the age of 24, while 19% were under 18 and 8% were 18-24.
- Men made up 60% of the homeless population, women represented 39% of all homeless people, and transgender people made up 0.5% of the homeless population.
- 1,494 homeless people (11%) identified as Hispanic or Latino and the remaining 89% were Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino.
- The breakdown of the homeless population by race shows that 81.1% were White, 6% were African American, 4.2% were Native American, 0.6% were Asian, 1.2% were Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and the remaining 6.8% were multiple races.
- All homeless people of color, except Native Americans and those identifying as multiple races, were more likely than white homeless people to be sheltered than unsheltered. For example, 68% of African American homeless people were sheltered compared to 41% of white homeless people.
- All people of color, except Asians, are overrepresented in the homeless population. For instance, African Americans make up just 2% of the population in Oregon, but make up 6% of the homeless population in Oregon and Native Americans make up 1.1% of the total population and 4.2% of the homeless population (Table 1).

Table 1: Homeless Population and Overall Population in Oregon, by Race, 2017

Race	% of Homeless	% of Total
White	81.2%	88.1%
African American	6.0%	2.0%
Asian	0.6%	4.5%
Native American	4.2%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian	1.2%	0.4%
Multiple Races	6.8%	3.8%
Other Race*	0.0%	0.2%
Ethnicity**		
Hispanic/Latino	11.0%	12.3%

* American Community Survey data includes an "Other Race" category not included in the Point-in-Time count, so this is not an exact comparison.

**Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, not a racial group, by the Census Bureau. This means that Hispanic individuals also identify as a race and therefore these percentages will not add up to 100%.

Source: 2017 Point-in-Time Count and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015 5-year estimates

Homeless Veterans

- There were 1,251 homeless veterans in Oregon, according to this year's PIT count. This is 9% of the entire homeless population. Forty-seven percent of these homeless veterans were sheltered and 53% were living in unsheltered locations.
- The vast majority (90%) of homeless veterans were men, but 120 were women, 6 were transgender and the remaining 3 do not identify as female, male, or transgender.

- The number of homeless veterans decreased by 121 people or 9% from 2015.
- Homeless veterans are more likely than the overall homeless population to be chronically homeless, with 36% of homeless veterans experiencing chronic homelessness, compared to 25% of the overall homeless population.

Homelessness among Subpopulations

- Fourteen percent of all homeless people in Oregon have a serious mental illness and 12% have substance abuse disorder.⁶
- Homeless individuals with a serious mental illness or a substance abuse disorder are very likely to be unsheltered. Sixty-eight percent of those with a substance abuse disorder and 72% with a serious mental illness are living in unsheltered locations.
- Sixty-five homeless people reported that they have HIV/AIDS; 60% were unsheltered.

Unaccompanied Youth and Parenting Youth

- There were 1,731 unaccompanied youth and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in 2017.
- Unaccompanied youth make up 84% of this population (1,462 people) and most of these unaccompanied youth (65%) are adults aged 18-24, while the remaining 35% are children under 18.
- The number of unaccompanied youth increased by 14% from 2015 while the number of Parenting Youth decreased by 8%.
- A significant majority (81%) of unaccompanied youth under 18 are unsheltered, compared to 56% of unaccompanied youth aged 18-24.
- All but two of the 125 parents in parenting youth households are adults aged 18-24 and the remaining two parents are under age 18. They are parents to 144 children under 18.
- Parenting Youth are more likely than unaccompanied youth to be sheltered, with 74% living in shelters.
- Unaccompanied youth are more likely than the overall homeless population to be women and to be transgender. Forty-four percent of unaccompanied youth are women and 1.4% are transgender, compared to 39% and 0.5% of the homeless population overall.

Homelessness by County

- Multnomah County had 4,177 people experiencing homelessness, representing 30% of the state's homeless population. The counties with the largest homeless populations after Multnomah were Lane (1,529), Marion (1,049), Deschutes (701) and Clatsop (682).
- There were five counties with a Hispanic homelessness rate of more than 15%: Malheur (41%), Umatilla (22%), Jefferson (18%), Wasco (17%) and Hood River (17%).
- Four counties have a higher percentage of African American homeless people than the state average of 6%: Multnomah (14%), Harney (10.5%), Washington (9%) and Polk (8%).

⁶ This is based on self-reported data from clients, and is likely an undercount. Furthermore, these two numbers should not be added together to identify this combined population since many individuals reporting having a serious mental illness also report having a substance abuse disorder.

- Jefferson County's chronically homeless individuals make up 62% of the homeless population. Baker County, Crook County, and Lane County have the next three largest rates of chronically homeless people at 43%, 42%, and 42% respectively.
- The largest numbers of homeless veterans are in Multnomah county (444), Lane county (164) and Jackson county (95).
- The county with the largest percentage of unaccompanied youth and parenting youth is Curry (79%).

We want to thank the following Continuums of Care for providing OHCS with the data necessary to complete this analysis. The people listed below can be contacted for more information about the counts in their regions and local initiatives to prevent and end homelessness:

Central Oregon CoC (Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties): Hope Browning, NeighborImpact; hopeb@neighborimpact.org

Press Release: <http://www.cohomeless.org/pdf/PressRelease-HUDHomlessPIT-May2.2017.pdf>

Clackamas County CoC: Abby Ahern, Clackamas County; AbbyAhe@clackamas.us

Press Release: <http://www.clackamas.us/communitydevelopment/documents/hmis2017.pdf>

Eugene, Springfield/Lane County CoC: Pearl Wolfe, Lane County; Pearl.Wolfe@co.lane.or.us

Press Release: <http://www.lanecounty.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=6095987>

Hillsboro, Beaverton/Washington County CoC: Annette Evans, Washington County Department of Housing Services; Annette_Evans@co.washington.or.us

Press Release: <http://www.co.washington.or.us/Housing/EndHomelessness/upload/2017-PIT-and-HIC-Homeless-Summary.pdf>

Medford, Ashland/Jackson County CoC: George Jarvis, Jackson County Homeless Task force/ACCESS; gjarvis@accesshelps.org

Oregon Balance of State CoC: Joann Zimmer, Beyond the Box Strategies, LLC/Community Action Partnership of Oregon; jozimmer@comcast.net

Portland, Gresham/Multnomah County CoC: Denis Theriault, Multnomah County; Denis.Theriault@multco.us

Press Release: <https://multco.us/multnomah-county/news/2017-point-time-count-more-neighbors-counted-homeless-2015-more-sleeping>