



The Way Home

THE WAY HOME CONTINUUM OF CARE
2023 HOMELESS COUNT &
SURVEY ANALYSIS

March 2023

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Photos courtesy of our PIT Count volunteers, The Way Home partners, and Allison Zapata, CFTH

Background

The Way Home is the name for the local Continuum of Care (CoC), TX-700. It is the collective effort to prevent and end homelessness in Houston and throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, Texas. The Way Home is made up of more than 100 partners, including homeless service agencies, local governments, public housing authorities, the local Veterans Affairs office, and other nonprofits and community stakeholders. The partners of The Way Home work to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in our region.



The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County (CFTH; www.homelesshouston.org), a 501c3 nonprofit organization, is the leader of The Way Home. The CFTH acts as a catalyst, uniting partners and maximizing resources to move people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing with supportive services.

Between 2021 - 2022, Continuums of Care (CoCs) across the nation were faced with the possibility that conducting an unsheltered count would not be feasible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducting a count of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness requires hundreds of community volunteers. Additionally, volunteers gather in groups and approach people that may be experiencing homelessness to collect data. This activity poses challenges in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Due to these challenges, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) issued waivers that allowed CoCs to opt out of conducting an unsheltered homeless count in 2021. For those that chose to move forward with the count, there were additional waivers that provided flexibility in methodology and timing of the count.

In 2022, HUD notified CoCs that the 2022 homeless count would not be waived. However, due to the increasing threat of the Omicron variant, HUD put out additional notifications that CoCs could choose to postpone the 2022 count until February 2022.

However, for both years, the CFTH decided to move forward with conducting both the sheltered and unsheltered count.

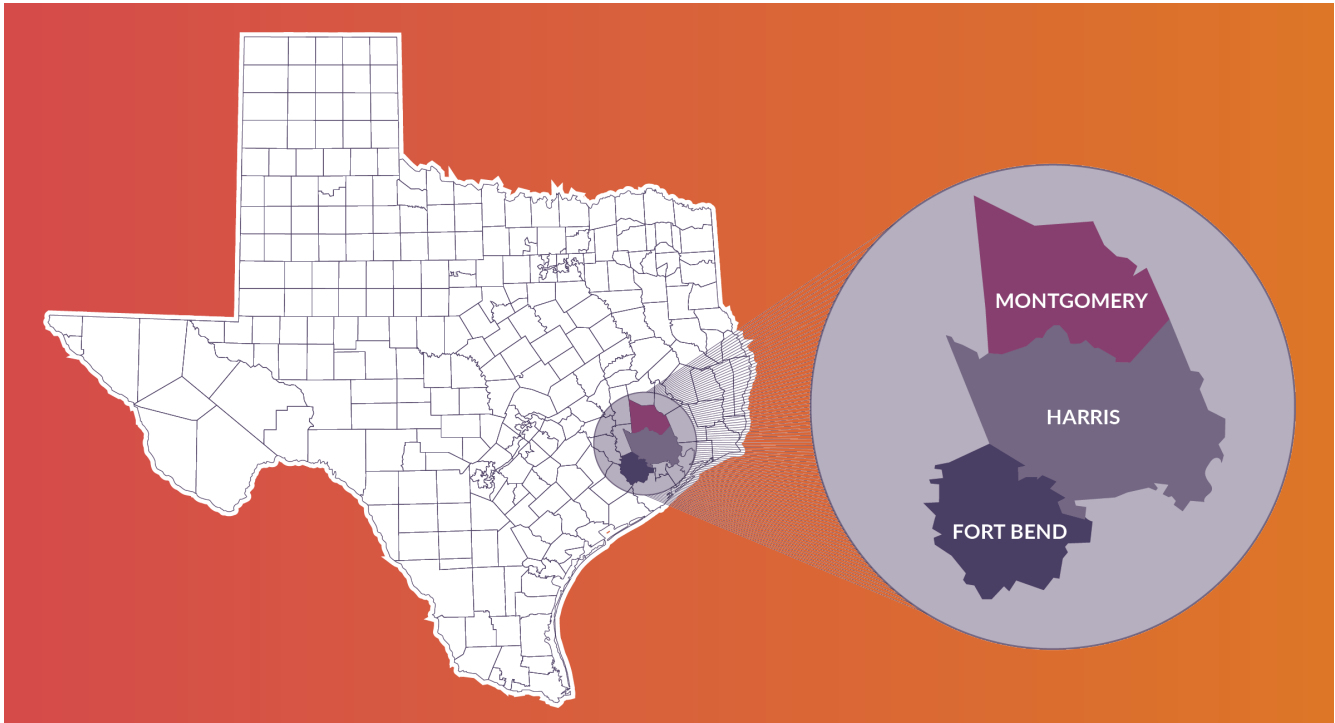


This year (2023) the unsheltered portion of the count occurred over a three-day period and returned to the methodology used prior to the pandemic. Some of the changes implemented during the pandemic years were kept due to the preference of partners and volunteers. Staging locations were held virtually and volunteers were required to “check in” every morning of the count. Teams were not assigned, but volunteers could opt to form their own teams when registering online. Volunteers were also allowed to select the region(s) of their preference and the maps for those regions were sent directly to the Counting Us app on their phones; no physical maps were used. Prior to the days of the Count, three Homeless Count Trainings were provided on Jan. 10, Jan. 12, and Jan. 18.

The official “night of record” for the count occurred on the night of Jan. 23, 2023. The unsheltered count occurred from Jan. 25-27 with over 450 volunteers. Houston is one of the few CoCs that attempts face-to-face interviews during the unsheltered count (as opposed to headcounts) thus providing additional information characterizing those experiencing homelessness. Those interviewed were asked where they slept on the night of Jan. 23 and that location determined whether or not they were counted this year as experiencing homelessness.

Methodology

The Way Home CoC covers a vast geographic region (3,740 sq. miles, including all of Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties) with a large dispersed unsheltered population.



Due to the size of the geographic area covered by the Count and complications related to the pandemic and other natural disasters, we know that not all unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness can be identified in a short period of time (though we are more confident about counting the number of those experiencing homelessness who are sheltered). However, the homeless count remains a good way to capture year-to-year homeless trends. It gives us valuable information that helps us to hone the homeless response system, and it helps us identify where progress has been made and where we still need to focus our efforts. It also helps us to identify and connect the most vulnerable individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness with housing and vital services.

The 2023 sheltered Count included individuals staying in a total of 50 projects comprising emergency shelters (31 different projects), transitional housing units (18 different projects), and safe havens (1 project) on the night of 23 January based on reports received from the projects and data entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness (those sleeping on the streets or in other places not meant for human habitation) were counted over a three-day period with the night of 23 January used as the official night of the Count. Direct engagement and interviews when possible were used to elicit information and observation if not. Teams walked under bridges, along the bayous, and to other areas where encampments of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness

had been identified. They also investigated abandoned buildings where persons experiencing homelessness may have been residing if it was safe to do so.



There is a danger of counting people twice or mistaking them as unsheltered when counting over multiple days, as someone on the street during the day may have been in a shelter the night before or approached twice during the three-day period. We guarded against this in several ways:

- Interviewees were asked if they had been questioned previously and, if so, they were not included more than once in the Count.
- Interviewees were asked where they slept on the night of 23 January 2023 (the official night of the Count) and were classified as experiencing unsheltered homelessness only if they slept in a place not meant for human habitation on that night, per HUD guidelines. This assured that we did not double count someone who was included in the HMIS shelter count that night and that we did not include those who appeared as if they were experiencing homelessness but were not, according to HUD guidelines.
- When reviewing data from the Count, a search for potential duplicate entries was performed and, if found, the duplicate entry was deleted.
- Names of unsheltered interviewees were compared to HMIS records to ensure they were not counted during the sheltered Count.

SimTech Solutions' (San Diego, CA) Counting Us software, a mobile application that can be readily implemented to help count persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, was used for the Count. The use of a mobile application survey had several advantages. All individuals and families who were identified as experiencing chronic homelessness, young adults (18-24 years), or U.S. military Veterans were assessed for housing and/or documented for follow-up by trained Coordinated Access Assessors & Outreach Staff. Thanks to GPS mapping technology included in the mobile application, the Count execution and data could be monitored in real-time, and locations of interviews recorded. Volunteers could be tracked while conducting surveys based on the user IDs assigned.

All emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens that are part of the CoC were contacted and



inventoried. Shelter providers were trained on entering data and assessments into HMIS and given the opportunity to confirm the data assessed on the night of the Count. Shelters that do not use HMIS, such as domestic violence shelters, were asked to report their numbers on 23 January using the Housing Inventory Count.

TOTAL NUMBER OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY INTERVIEW LOCATION

SHELTERED, HARRIS COUNTY	1,803	57.7%
SHELTERED, MONTGOMERY COUNTY	178	2.9%
SHELTERED, FORT BEND COUNTY	47	1.4%
UNSHelterED, HARRIS COUNTY	1,186	36.3%
UNSHelterED, MONTGOMERY COUNTY	36	1.1%
UNSHelterED, FORT BEND COUNTY	20	0.6%

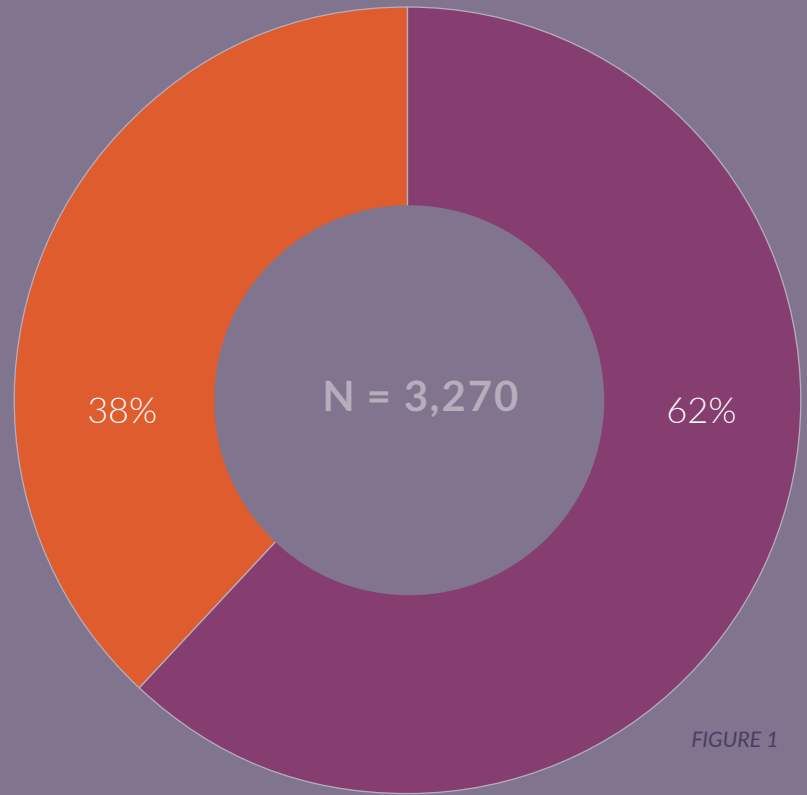


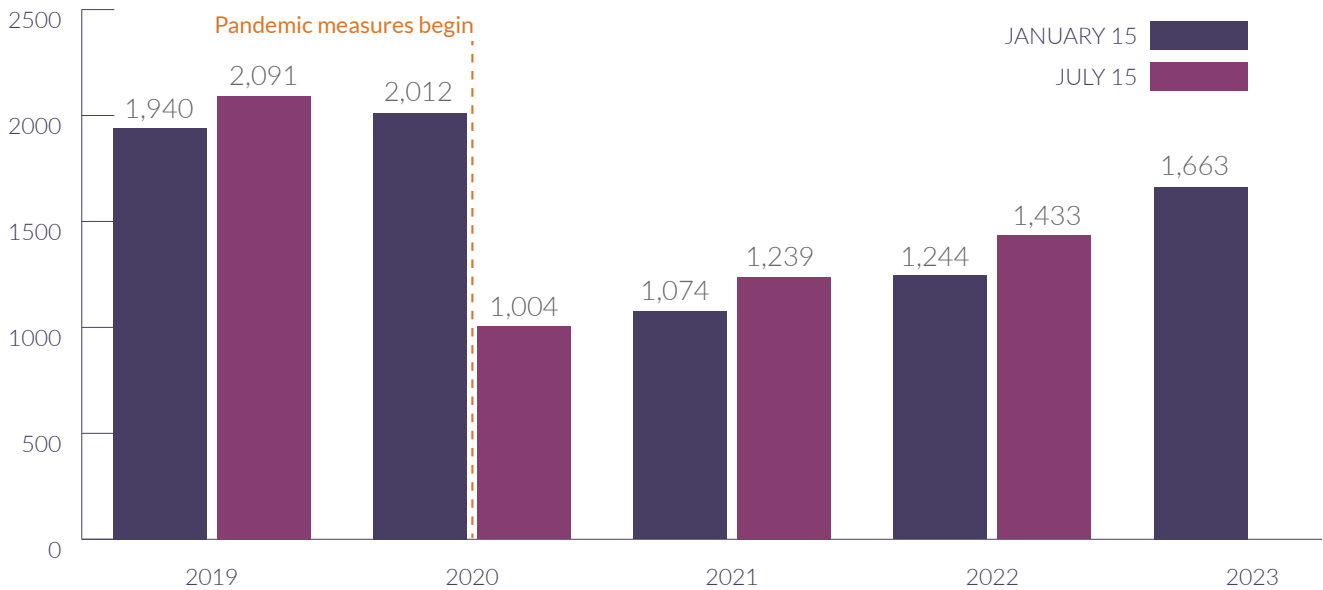
FIGURE 1

2023 Key Findings

Data collected show a total of 3,270 sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness (per HUD’s definition¹; only HUD homeless categories 1 and 4 are used for the homeless count) in the Harris County/Fort Bend County/Montgomery County region on the night of the Count (Figure 1). The 2020 U.S. Census showed a total of 6,174,367 persons in Harris, Montgomery, and Fort Bend counties. We found that with this year’s count of 3,270 persons experiencing homelessness, we estimate that one out of 1,888 of those living in the three-county area were experiencing homelessness on the night of the Count.

Breaking down the location of those experiencing homelessness, we determined that most were in Houston/

Harris County (91%) with 2% counted in Fort Bend County and 7% located in Montgomery County. It is important to note that, for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness on the night of 23 January, geographical assignment was determined by where they were interviewed during the day, which may be near where they seek services but not necessarily where they sleep. The same is true of the sheltered population which may move from one county to another, particularly in counties where there is a lack of shelters for specific groups. For example, there are no shelters for single adults in Fort Bend County. Therefore, the location of both the unsheltered and sheltered populations may not reflect where they were living before experiencing homelessness.



HMIS SHELTER OCCUPANCY - 2019-2023

FIGURE 2

Persons experiencing homelessness can be found in one of four settings – places not meant for human habitation (i.e., unsheltered), emergency shelters, transitional housing, or safe havens². The locations of those experiencing homelessness by county in 2023 are shown in Figure 3. Within the total population, almost half (47%) of persons experiencing homelessness were in emergency shelters on the night of the Count. This is an increase over that found in 2022, likely due to relaxation of pandemic restrictions on maximum shelter bed occupancy levels. Figure 2 compares the HMIS shelter occupancy on two dates each year pre and post-pandemic.

Fifteen percent of the total number of persons experiencing homelessness were in transitional housing, similar to that found in 2022. Last year there was no occupancy in Safe Havens while this year, 14 persons (0.4%) were so located.

In 2023, 38% of those experiencing homelessness were found on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation, compared to 46% in 2022. (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows the downward trend of the number of those experiencing homelessness since 2011. The blip in 2018 was most likely due to ramifications of flooding during Hurricane Harvey.

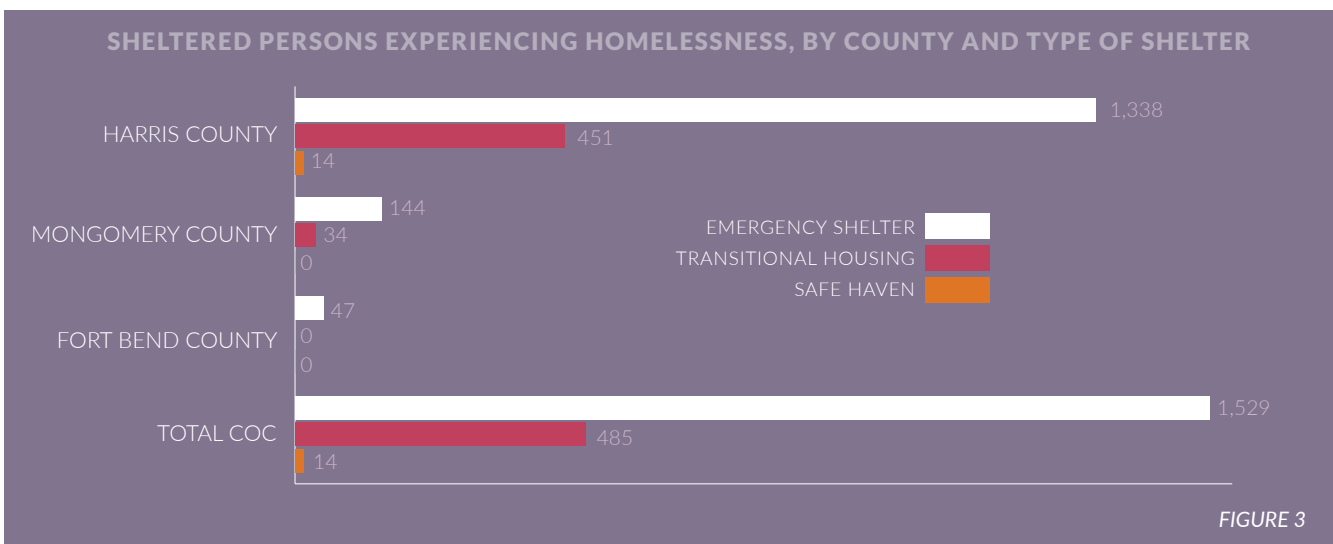


FIGURE 3

COMPARISON OF PIT COUNTS, 2022 & 2023

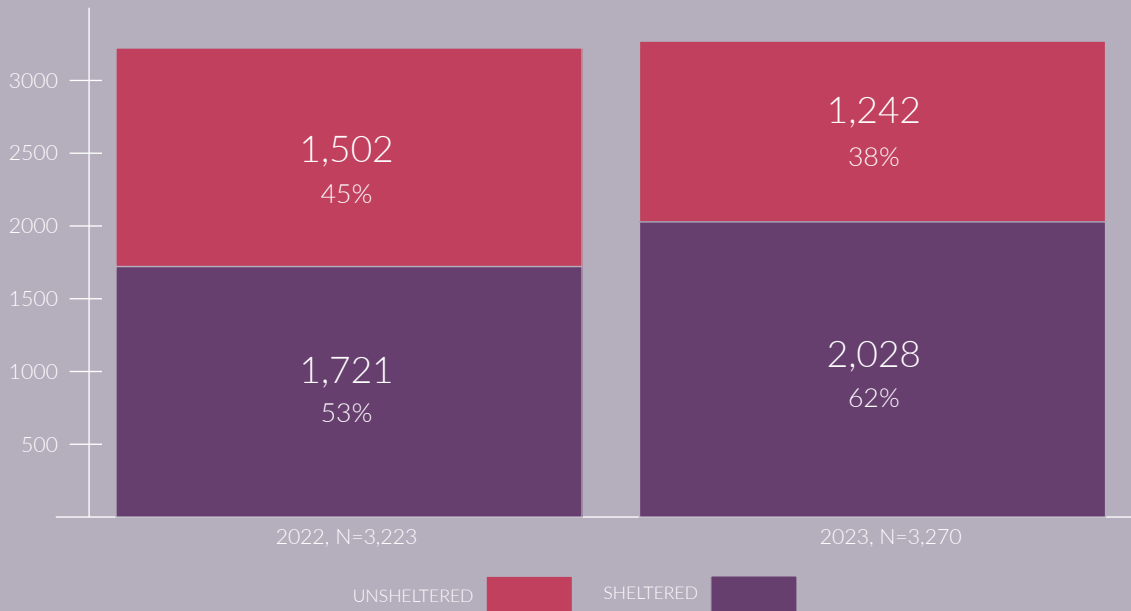
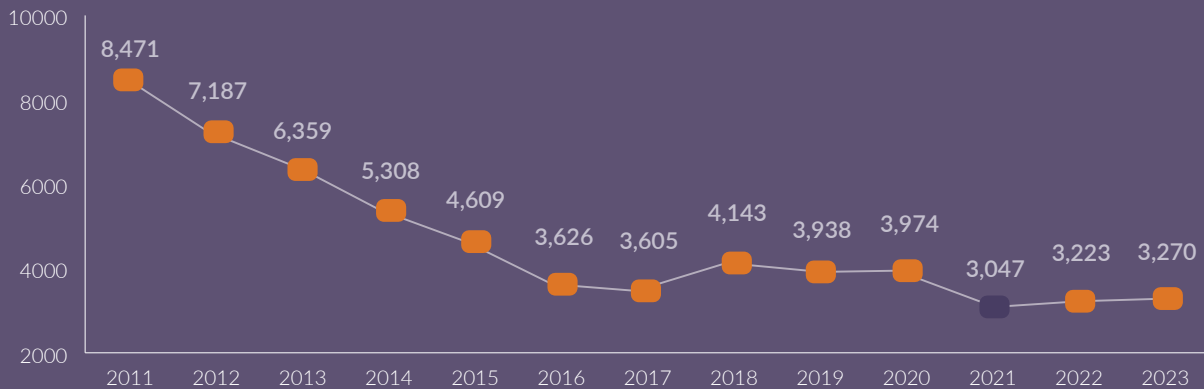


FIGURE 4



Data collected show a total of 3,270 sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness.

COMPARING THE COUNTS: 2011 - 2023



Note: Counts prior to 2017 include Harris and Fort Bend counties only. Counts 2017 and after also include Montgomery County.

2021 Count employed different methodology due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 5

Characteristics of Those Experiencing Homelessness

Persons experiencing homelessness are classified into three household types: persons in households without children (HHWOC), persons in households with children under age 18 years (HHWC), and children-only households (under the age of 18 years). Figure 6 shows the breakdown of these groups between the sheltered and unsheltered populations while Figure 7 graphs these data in a way to show among each household type, what number/percent were in emergency shelter, transitional

housing, and safe haven. All 1,242 unsheltered persons counted except three were in households without children. One-third (34%) of sheltered persons were in households with children while ten children-only households were found among the sheltered population (a decrease from seventeen children-only households found in 2022). Among the unsheltered, no children-only households were counted.

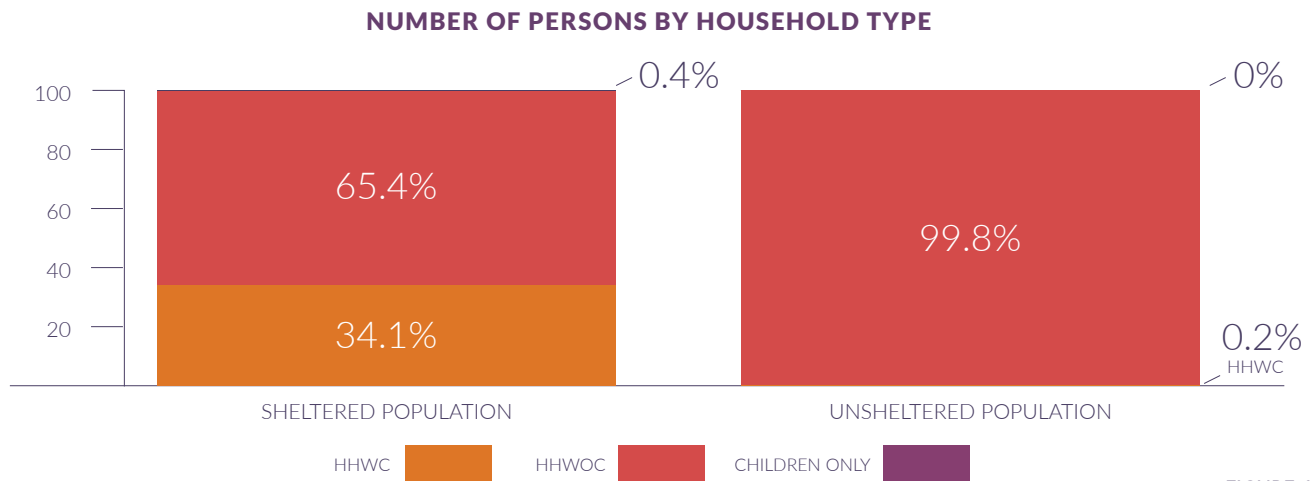


FIGURE 6

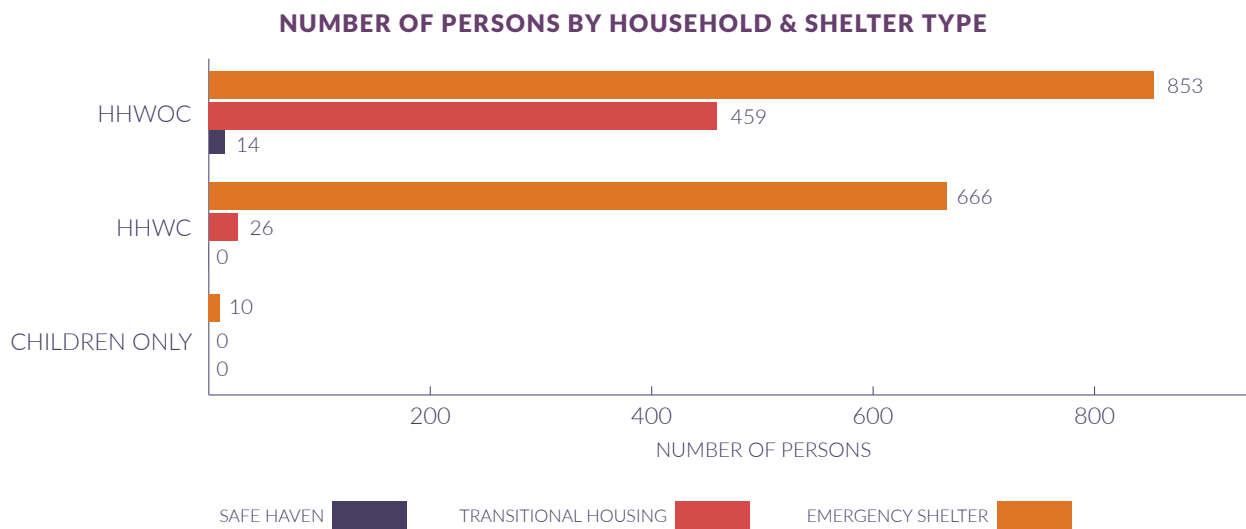


FIGURE 7

TIME EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS - INTERVIEWS ONLY

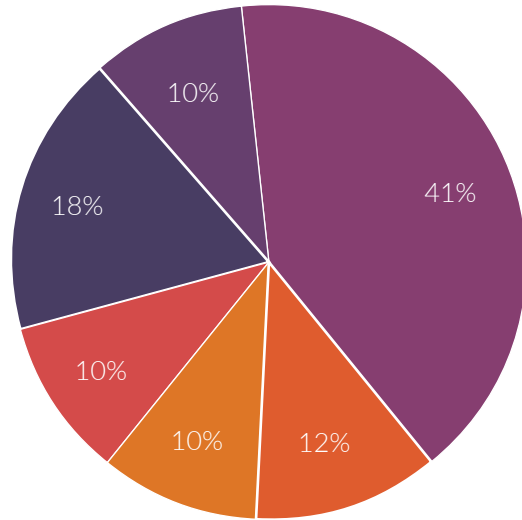


FIGURE 8

For 42% of unsheltered persons, this was their first-time experiencing homelessness, slightly higher than the 40% found in 2022. We were able to capture overall length of time of homelessness (this episode) for unsheltered individuals who were interviewed (Figure 8). Forty-one percent of unsheltered persons had been homeless for three years or longer while 12% were newly homeless (three months or fewer). It's important to understand that the information is self-reported by the individual being interviewed. Actual documentation and verification of this for the purposes of determining chronicity and eligibility for permanent supportive housing (PSH) happens once the individual is referred to a housing program.

When asked what was the primary cause of their homelessness (Figure 9), one-third said loss of job or loss of income. Another 9% of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness indicated they were homeless due to the SARS-CoV 2 (COVID-19) pandemic with the vast majority citing loss of job or reduction in hours and/or eviction as the precipitating event. The second most common reason given (21%) was family conflict. In a separate question, 8% of unsheltered individuals indicated they were homeless due to a natural disaster. Of those answering yes, 60% cited Hurricane Harvey, another hurricane, or flooding as the reason and most of the other respondents indicating the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNSHELTERED

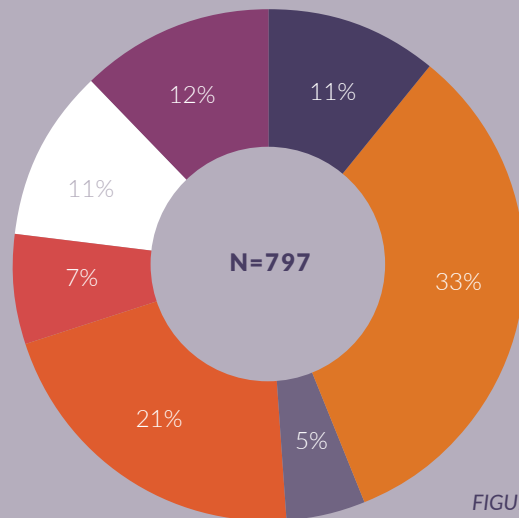
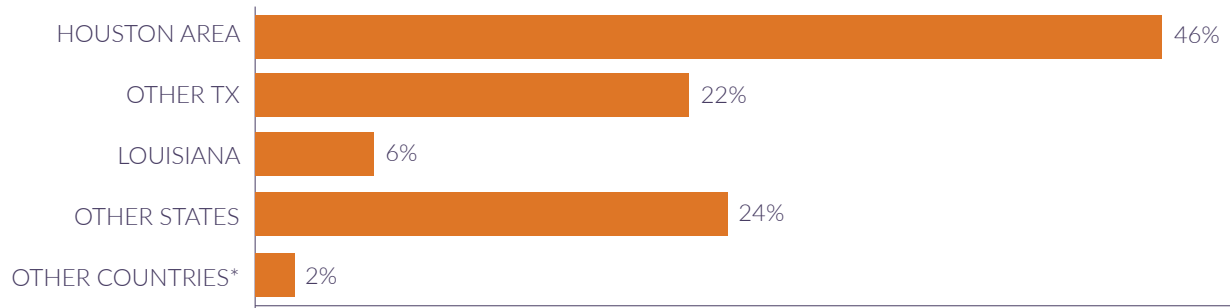


FIGURE 9

The next figure (10) catalogs the geographic location where unsheltered participants first lost housing. Almost half (46%) reported the Houston area and another 22% from other Texas cities.

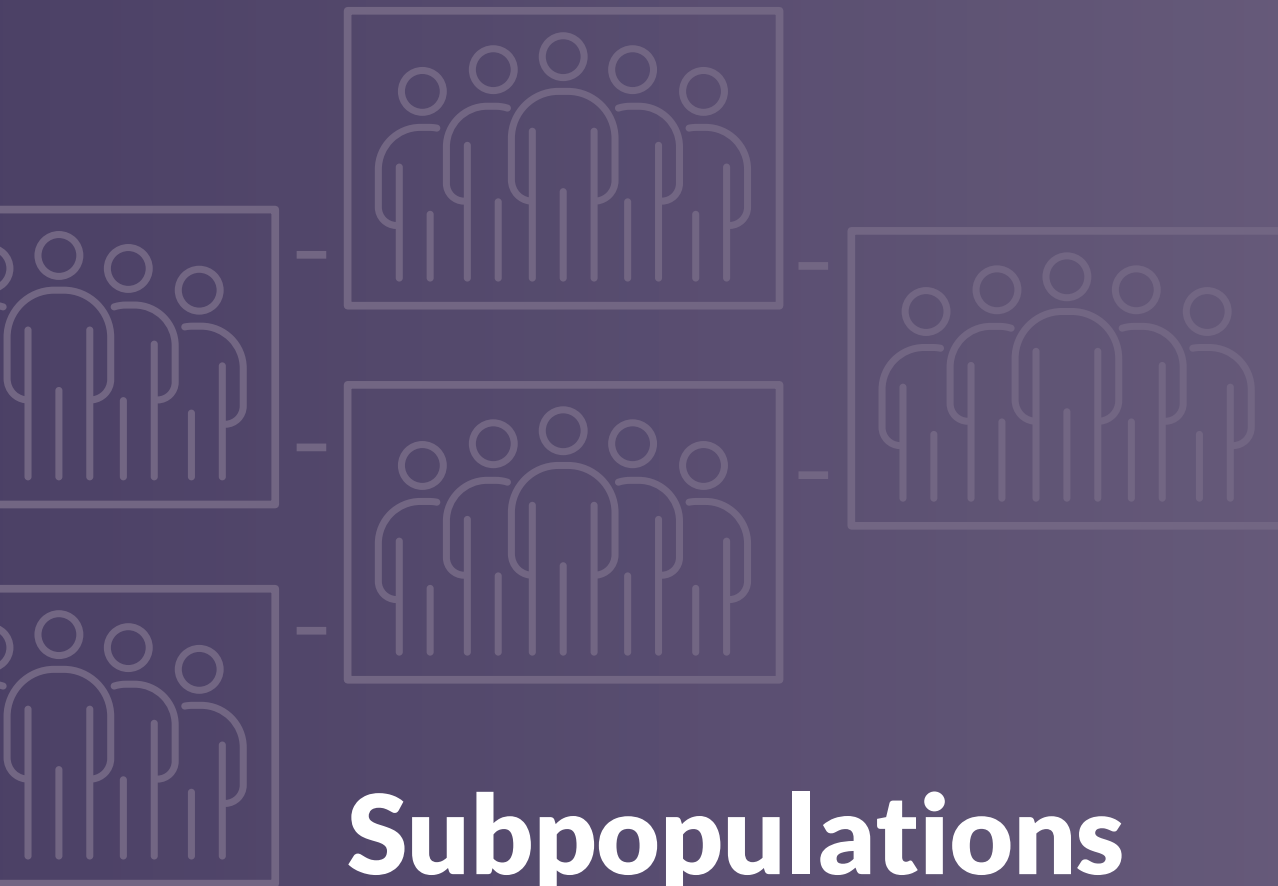
**WHERE UNSHELTERED PARTICIPANTS FIRST BECAME HOMELESS,
N = 190**



*Honduras (1), Portugal (1), Vietnam (2)

FIGURE 10





Subpopulations

HUD requires that certain subpopulations of persons experiencing homelessness be counted along with the total number of persons experiencing homelessness. These subpopulations include:

- U.S. Military Veterans
- Individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness³
- Individuals who are survivors of domestic violence
- Persons with HIV/AIDS
- Persons with serious mental illness
- Individuals experiencing chronic substance use disorder (alcohol and/or drugs)
- Unaccompanied young adults and parenting young adults

This information can be captured by HMIS for those in shelters. If data were missing, the characteristic was assumed to be negative. This may have the effect of artificially lowering percentages in a specific category as some of the persons with missing answers may truly have had that characteristic. Conversely, extrapolating for missing data could have the effect of artificially raising the percentages. Since the vast majority of sheltered responses were actual interviews rather than observations, the decision was made not to extrapolate for missing values during this year's count.

It is more difficult to get this information on the unsheltered population as these characteristics cannot be determined by observation. Volunteers attempt to interview everyone but could not if the presumably unhoused person refused, was sleeping, or there were safety issues that would have made it dangerous for the volunteer to approach. In this situation, the interviewer entered presumed race, ethnicity, age range, and gender into the database. This year there were 859 interviews of those unsheltered (69%; a slight increase over the 67% interviewed in 2022), leaving data from 31% obtained by observation only. However, it is important to note that data are not complete on all persons who were surveyed; many people did not answer every question, and some responded “don’t know” or refused to answer. In addition, information collected was based on self-reporting and so may not represent the true proportions in the population experiencing homelessness. There is potential over-reporting in some categories (e.g., veterans) or underreporting due to fear of stigmatization

in others (e.g., HIV/AIDS, mental illness, substance use disorder). Nonetheless, Houston is one of the few CoCs that conducts actual interviews during the unsheltered count (as opposed to headcounts) providing additional information characterizing those experiencing homelessness.

The age range of the total population experiencing homelessness and by sheltered or unsheltered status is shown in Figures 11a-c. In the total population, most of those experiencing homelessness (80%) were over the age of 24 years with all but one of those under age 18 in sheltered situations. The elderly (65 years and older) represented 6% of those interviewed, with a higher percentage among the unsheltered. The population living unsheltered was older with 97% aged 25 years or older. Of the 2,028 persons in safe haven, emergency shelter, or transitional housing, 23% were younger than 18 years and another 8% ages 18-24 years. Most of those under 18 years of age (96%) were in emergency shelter.

This year there were 859 interviews of those unsheltered leaving data from 31% obtained by observation only.



AGE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL POPULATION EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

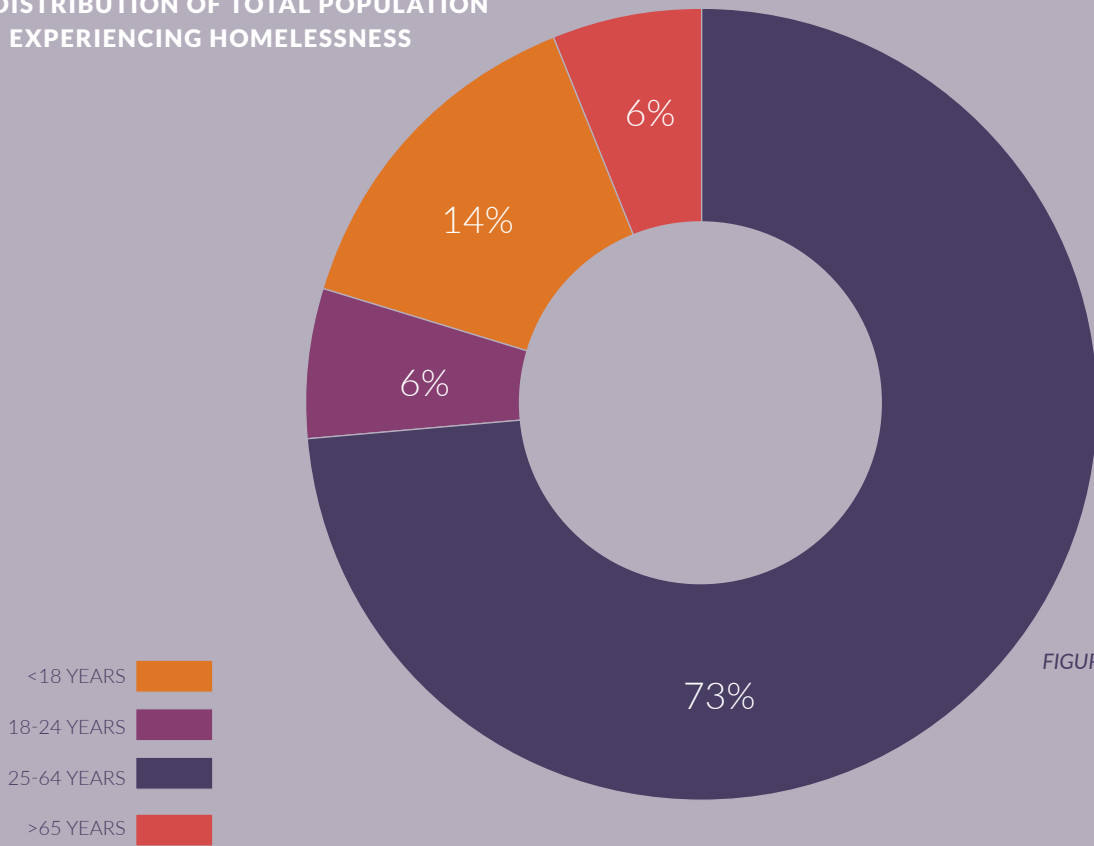
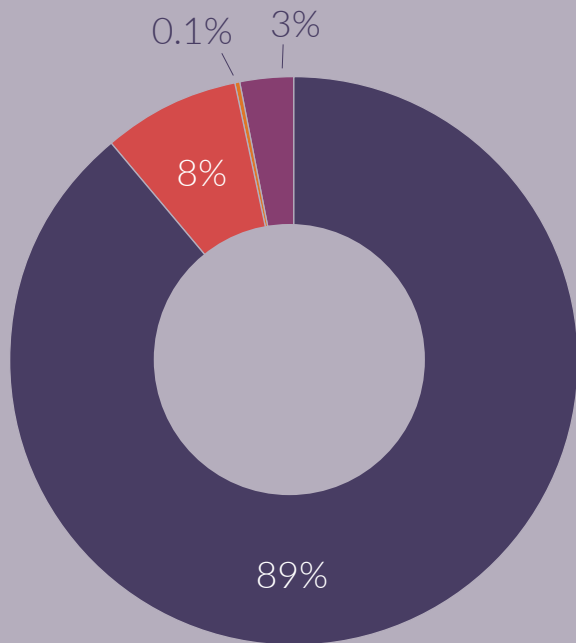
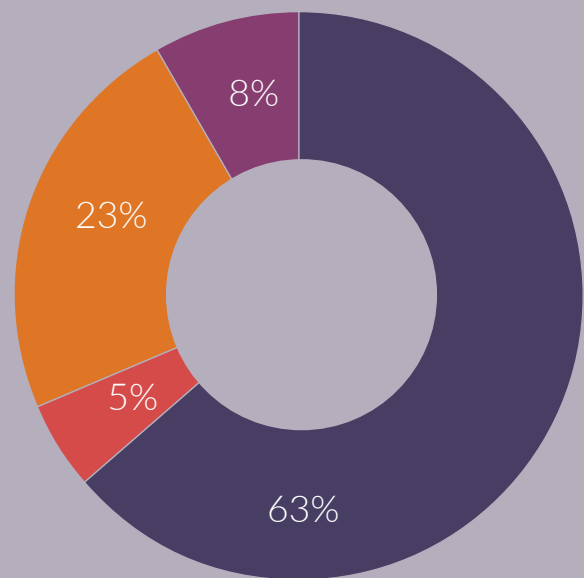


FIGURE 11A



AGE DISTRIBUTION OF UNSHELTERED POPULATION EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

FIGURE 11B



AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SHELTERED POPULATION EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

FIGURE 11C

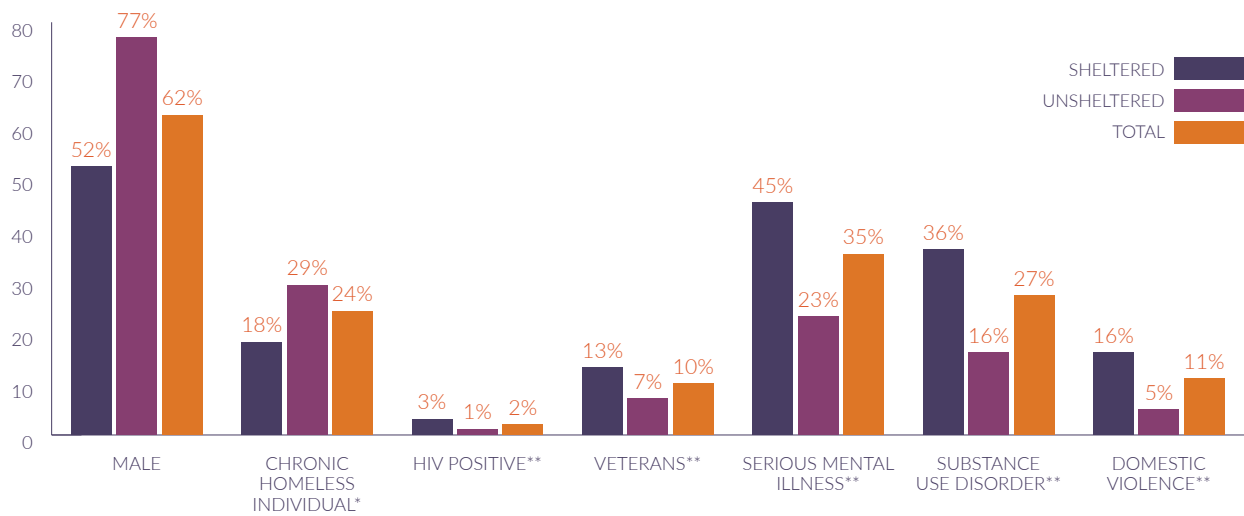
Subpopulations for the total population experiencing homelessness as well as a breakdown by sheltered and unsheltered status are shown in Figure 12. Overall, 62% of the total population experiencing homelessness were male with a higher percentage in the unsheltered population (77%). Four persons experiencing homelessness (all sheltered) self-identified as transgender.

Persons who are experiencing chronic homelessness represent a particularly vulnerable population and are prioritized for permanent supportive housing. We determined that nearly one-quarter (24%) of the unhoused met the HUD definition of experiencing chronic homelessness, an increase from last year's finding of 20%. There was a higher percentage of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness among the unsheltered (29%). Outreach teams have been dispatched to individuals in these locations in order to confirm chronic homeless status and present housing options. (Actual documentation and verification of chronicity for the purposes of determining eligibility for PSH happens once an individual is referred to a housing program.). The Way Home is close to ending chronic homelessness. The GPS coordinates for

unsheltered individuals experiencing chronic homelessness have been mapped and shared with outreach partners for continued engagement and, ultimately, housing.

Another subpopulation of particular interest is U.S. military Veterans. This year we found 282 Veterans experiencing homelessness with two-thirds (69%) in a sheltered situation. This compares to 267 Veterans counted in 2022. Of these 282 Veterans, one-fifth (21%) were classified as chronically homeless, a decrease from that found in 2022 (25%) and in 2020 (38%). Of the chronically homeless Veterans counted in 2023, 69% were unsheltered. There were no unsheltered Veteran households with children and one sheltered Veteran in a household with children. The Way Home remains at functional zero for Veteran homelessness, with an annual steady state volume of between 1,200 and 1,400 homeless Veterans based on opposing actions of successful housing efforts versus returning Veterans and those falling temporarily back into homelessness. Our findings this year are still well below that number. Regardless, The Way Home CoC has a housing option for any Veteran, no matter their discharge status.

SUBPOPULATIONS OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, 2023



*Sheltered individuals experiencing chronic homelessness must be >18 year and in emergency shelter

**Among adults only

FIGURE 12

RACE OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, 2023

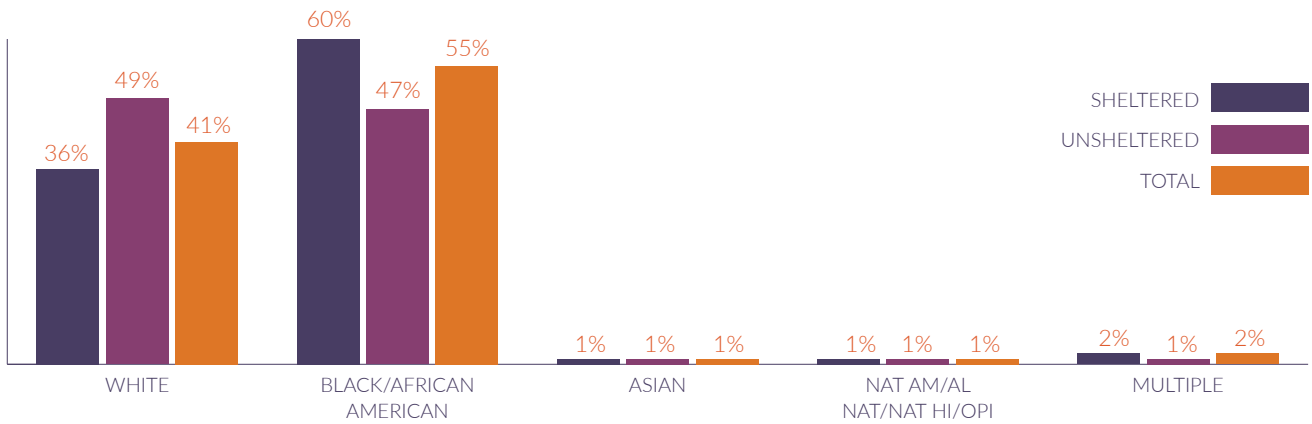


FIGURE 13

Other subpopulations reported in the total adult population experiencing homelessness include high percentages self-reporting serious mental illness (35%) and one of four reporting substance use disorder (27%; alcohol and/or other drugs). These conditions are self-reported, and may be artificially low as persons may not want to disclose their condition due to stigma. We cannot ascertain, however, whether the condition (mental illness and SUD) came first and led to homelessness or is a result of the stresses of being unhoused. A needs assessment is planned for this summer which will provide additional information to answer this question (as well as others).

Few individuals of the total population experiencing homelessness self-reported as HIV-positive (2%) although

the true percentage may be higher since many may not have been tested and therefore do not know their status or do know their status but do not want to share that information due to stigma. Overall, 11% of those experiencing homelessness had experienced domestic violence. This percent was higher in the sheltered population (16% vs 5% among unsheltered), indicating the availability of shelter beds specifically dedicated to survivors of domestic violence.

Figures 13 & 14 show the racial and ethnic self-classification. The vast majority of those experiencing homelessness were Black/African American (55%) or white (41%). Sheltered persons interviewed were also asked if they considered themselves Hispanic with 15% answering yes.

ETHNICITY OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, 2023

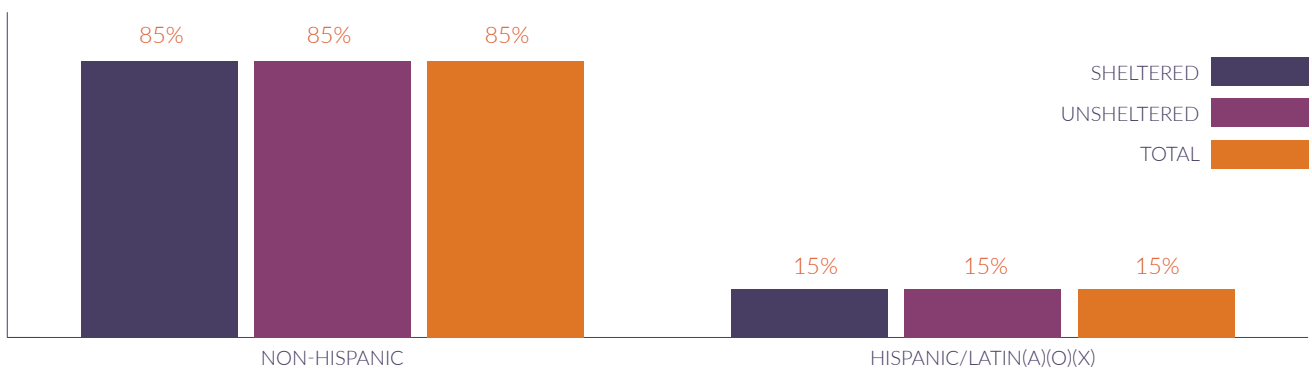


FIGURE 14

Finally, Figure 15 shows the number of sheltered and unsheltered young adults (ages 18-24 years) experiencing homelessness. These are further divided into unaccompanied young adults and parenting young adults. All parenting young adults were sheltered, with 30 children under the age of 18 years in these parenting young

adult households. Of the 117 unaccompanied young adults (18-24 years) who were in emergency shelter, six were classified as chronically homeless while seven of the 38 unsheltered unaccompanied young adults were so classified.

PERSONS IN YOUTH HOUSEHOLDS

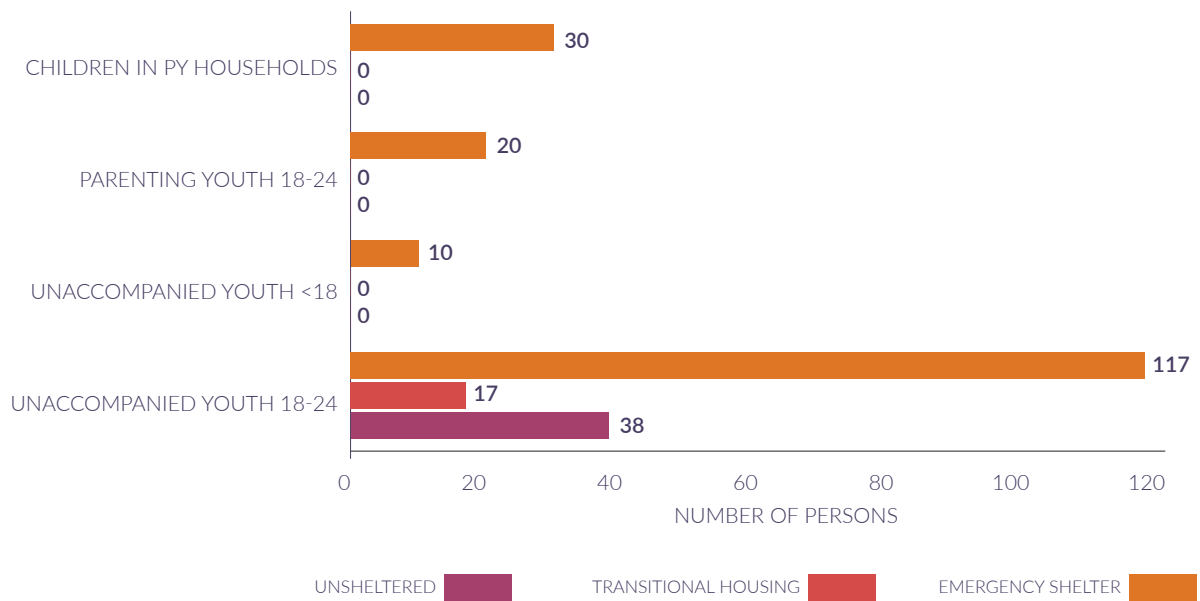


FIGURE 15

Note: Youth = 18-24 years



Discussion

A total of 3,270 persons experiencing homelessness were counted in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties during the 2023 Point-In-Time Count. This is an 18% decrease compared to 2020, the last count conducted prior to the pandemic. Compared to the 2022 Point-in-Time Count, we found a very slight increase of 1%, well within the margin of error. The unsheltered Count is by its nature not precise given the limitations and challenges in reaching everyone staying in a place not meant for human habitation. Those counts can fluctuate depending on many variables including the weather (people may be more likely to be staying in hospital waiting room, cars, buses or trains when the weather is inclement), parts canvassed within the huge geographic area of the tri-County, etc. Therefore minor variations in the total number of those experiencing homelessness are not significant. Overall, the region has seen a 61% reduction in total homelessness since 2011. While it is clear there has been a significant reduction in number of persons experiencing homelessness, the methodology has changed during this 13-year period and so the actual percent reduction is an estimate.

Of those counted this year, 1,242 were unsheltered (staying in a place not meant for human habitation), a 17% reduction from 2022



Of those counted this year, 1,242 (38%) were unsheltered (staying in a place not meant for human habitation), a 17% reduction from 2022. However, the percent of the total population found in a sheltered situation did significantly increase over that found in 2022, 62% vs. 53%, most likely due to increased number of shelter beds because of easing of pandemic restrictions on occupancy levels. During the height of the pandemic, shelters had to de-densify and impose social distancing, and some shelters closed completely. In addition, persons experiencing homelessness may have been reluctant to stay at a shelter due to fear of the virus.

Most of these individuals were interviewed in Harris County. However, it is important to note that the persons living unsheltered were classified where they were interviewed or spotted, which may not have been where they slept the night of the Count. People move around

during the day and may congregate near services. Within the total CoC area, almost half (47%) were in emergency shelters. Only one child (under age 5 years old) was counted among the unsheltered population, but one-quarter (23%) of the total sheltered population was under age 18.

Among the unsheltered population, 41% had been homeless for three years or longer, similar to the percentage found in 2022 (38%). This year's findings of 12% newly homeless (0-3 months) also was similar to last year's finding of 14%. The chronically homeless comprised almost one-fourth of the total population, an increase over 2022's findings (17%) with a higher percentage among the unsheltered. The Way Home and the CFTH are working to find and help those individuals as they are a priority population for housing.

One cause of homelessness found after interviewing those who were unsheltered was a natural disaster, most commonly Hurricane Harvey even though this occurred more than five years ago. Other individuals reported that they were homeless due to the COVID pandemic. However, when asked the primary reason for their homelessness, most reported that reduction in hours, job loss, and family conflict led to homelessness. While only 7% of those unsheltered listed eviction as a primary cause of their homelessness, we know that job and income loss, as well as higher rents and other inflation-related increases, can lead to housing instability. As documented in the book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (Matthew Desmond, author), any of these issues can be a proximate cause of homelessness.

Subpopulation analysis showed that the number of Veterans remained basically stable (282 vs. 267) with the percent of Veterans classified as chronically homeless increasing slightly (21% vs. 17%). The majority of Veterans (69%) were in unsheltered situations, as found in 2022. Those self-identifying as Veterans were not asked about their eligibility for VA benefits. Dishonorable discharges may be affecting Veterans' ability to qualify for housing through the VA. However, the CoC has a housing option for every Veteran regardless of discharge status.



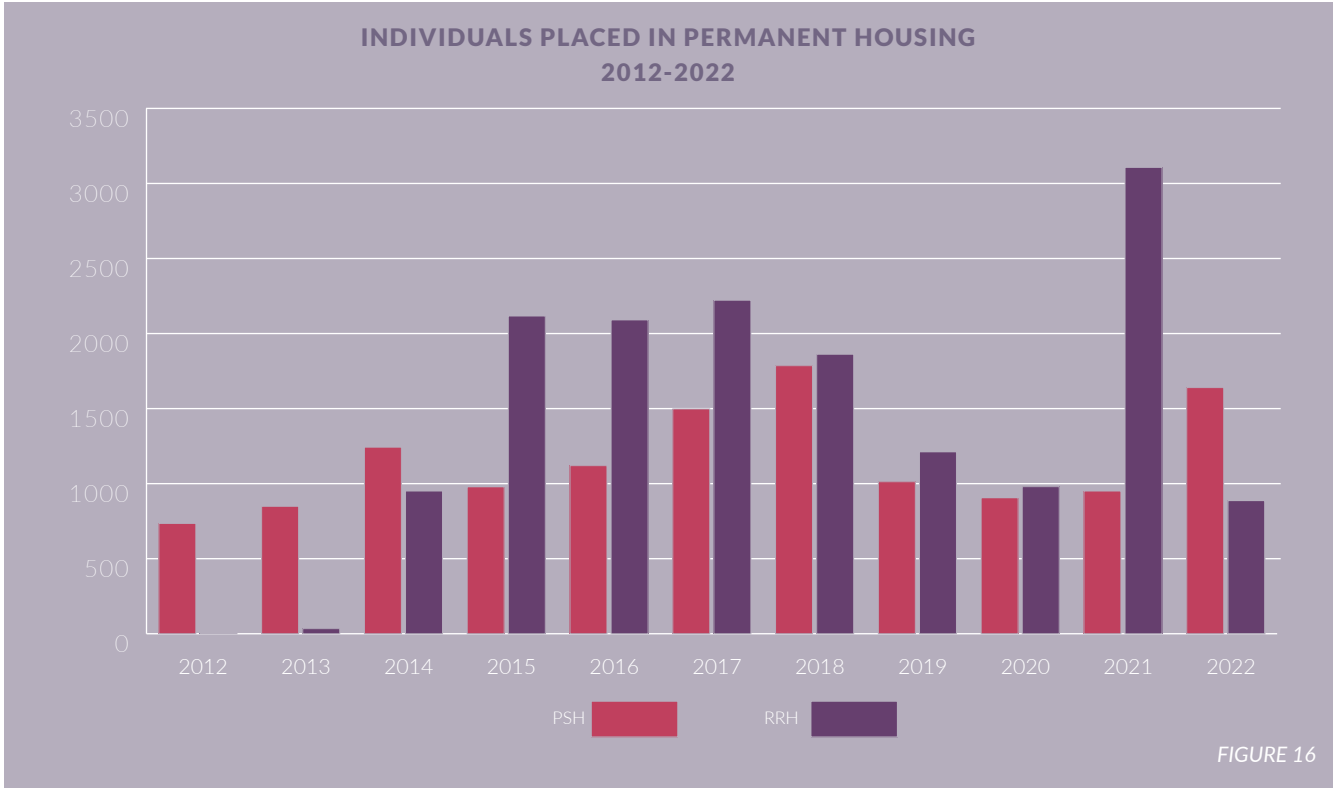
We found high rates of serious mental illness (44%) and substance use disorder (35%), similar to other years. Interestingly, higher rates were found in the sheltered versus the unsheltered population. Overall, 11% of those

experiencing homelessness were victims of domestic violence. This percent was higher in the sheltered population (16% vs 5% among unsheltered), reflecting shelter beds specifically dedicated to survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, the majority of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness are men, and men are less likely to report domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness.



A total of 192 unaccompanied young adults (18-24) or parenting young adults (20 out of the 192) were among those experiencing homelessness, with 30 children under the age of 18. All parenting young adults were in Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing.

As seen with many other social determinants of health, there were major racial disparities among those experiencing homelessness⁴. While Blacks/African Americans represent 20% of the composition of the total population of Harris County, they comprised over 50% of those experiencing homelessness. CoC data has shown that Blacks/African Americans also return to homelessness at higher rates. A recent study of the CoC's Housing Prioritization Tool by Dr. Ben King at the University of Houston School of Medicine indicated that unsheltered white males scored an average of 1 point higher. However, this trend equalizes when individuals are referred to housing. The Way Home will be conducting a full CoC equity analysis as part of its current Five Year Strategic Plan.



The Way Home has been extremely successful in housing persons experiencing homelessness, especially those who are chronically homeless. Figures 16 and 17 show the numbers of people (by year and total) placed in permanent supportive housing (PSH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH).

Since 2012, more than 28,000 people have been placed in either PSH or RRH. Figure 18 compares the number of individuals housed each year with the number residing in a housing program on a single night.



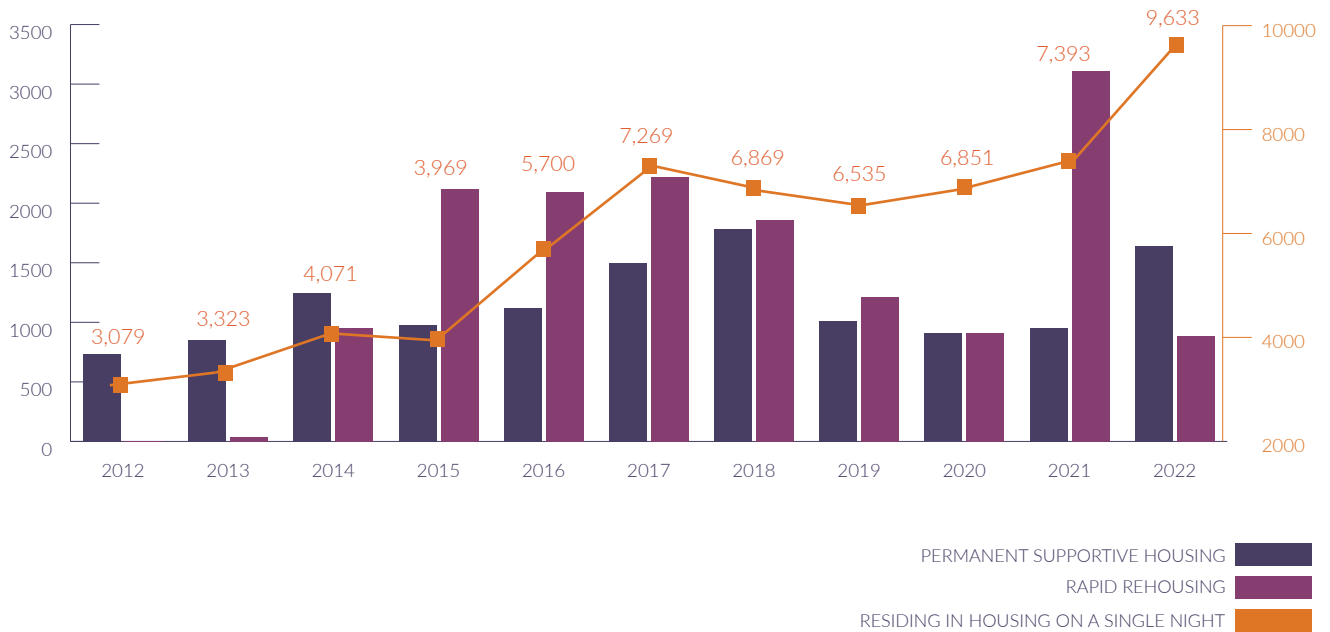


FIGURE 18

The Way Home housing initiatives

Since 2012, the partners of The Way Home have been committed to housing the most vulnerable individuals first. This commitment has allowed Houston to become a national model on addressing homelessness.

Permanent housing isn't only an apartment or a check for rent. Permanent housing is like a "three-legged stool:" a physical unit, funding for rental assistance, and funding for professional case management and other supportive services are all necessary components.

Over the past decade, the partners of The Way Home have undertaken several initiatives to accelerate access to housing. Most recently, with investments from the City of Houston and Harris County as well as private philanthropy the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP) allowed us to use temporary federal COVID relief funds to place people in permanent housing. The funding also enabled us to "decommission" encampments,

and the City's new Housing Navigation Center has been a crucial piece of the work as well.

When the COVID pandemic hit Houston, the CFTH led the charge alongside the City of Houston and Harris County to ensure that federal COVID relief resources were invested to maximum effect – to build the capacity of the homeless response system, rather than use those funds for a "quick fix" to put people temporarily in hotels and motels. This initiative was called the Community COVID Housing Program (CCHP). Since September 2020, The Way Home has housed or diverted from homelessness more than 14,000 people. With evictions at an all-time high⁵, the availability of affordable housing shrinking, and looming inflation, the investment of COVID relief funds into permanent housing have likely helped the community prevent even more inflows into homelessness.

Thanks to the resources of CCHP, the CFTH was able to lead the work on the ground to “decommission” encampments alongside the City of Houston, Harris County, and numerous other partners of The Way Home. Since early 2021, the partners of The Way Home have decommissioned more than 80 encampments at nearly 40 sites by offering a housing option to every one of the nearly 500 people living in those encampments. Of those, more than 350 have gotten on the path to housing and more than 80 have self-resolved – an almost 90% success rate.

Crucial to this effort was the opening in January 2023 of the City’s housing navigation center in the Fifth Ward. (In 2021 and 2022, people living in encampments had the opportunity to move into a temporary navigation center operating out of a hotel, which was also funded by the City.) Operated by the nonprofit Harmony House, the navigation center is a low-barrier, temporary place for people with housing referrals to live while they work with the partners of The Way Home to move into their own home. The Navigation Center is also unique in that people living there can bring their pets or their opposite-sex partner. Key services like healthcare, mental

healthcare, and substance use disorder services are available onsite.

At the time of publication of this report, 41 people had already “graduated” from the center and moved into permanent housing.

Figure 19 shows over 9,300 individuals were housed in a program of The Way Home on the night of the homeless count. It is likely that the 2023 count would have been higher had these housing initiatives not been underway.

As we look to the future, we know many challenges still exist. Without adequate stock of affordable housing and landlords willing to relax their tenant criteria, we would not be able to continue to house our clients. The CFTH is working with partners of The Way Home and other community stakeholders to pilot new programs to get the homeless response system access to more affordable housing units, and to get people experiencing homelessness into those units faster. We also know that, after 2024, the additional federal funding streams related to COVID will end, and we are looking for alternative, sustainable, sources of funding to maintain our progress.

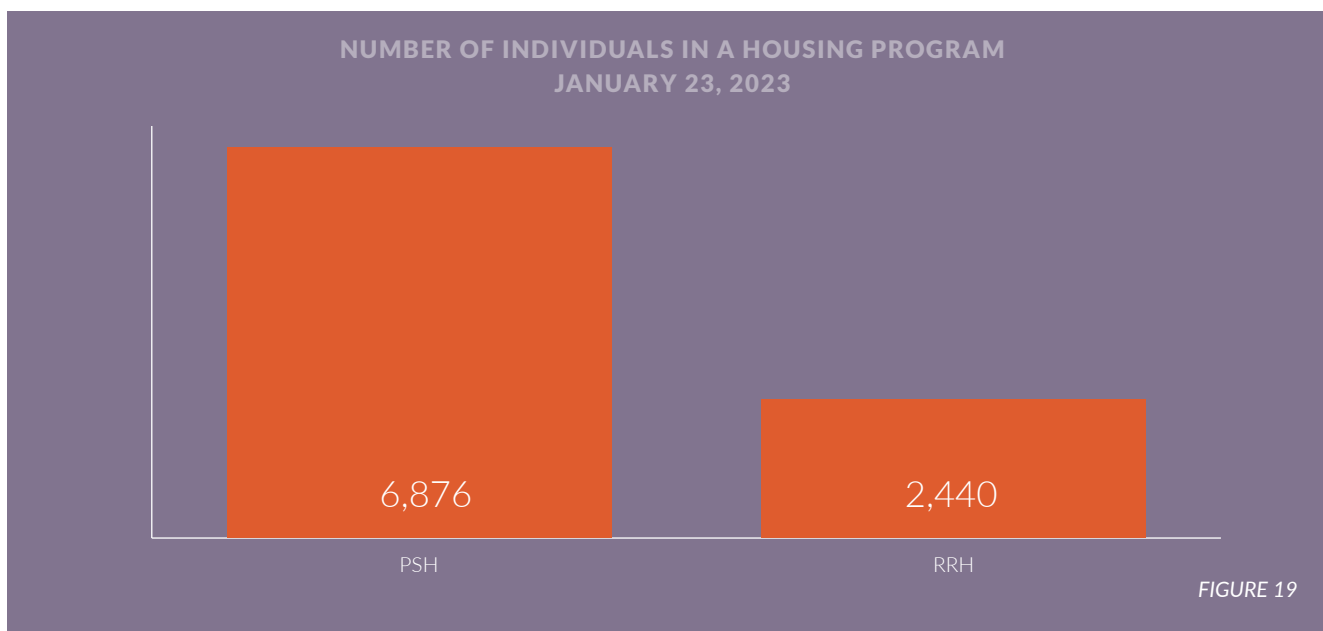


FIGURE 19

Citations:

1. HUD Homeless Definition: 1) Individual or family who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence such as a place not meant for human habitation, a publicly or privately operated shelter, or is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution or (4) An individual or family who is fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1974/criteria-and-recordkeeping-requirements-for-definition-of-homeless/> accessed 3/29/2023.
2. Safe Haven: A safe haven is a form of supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who are on the street and have been unable or unwilling to participate in supportive services. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2719/safe-haven-fact-sheet/>.
3. HUD's definition of chronic homelessness: Four or more occasions of homelessness within the past three years for a total of 12 months or longer or one or more current consecutive years of homelessness. In addition, the individual must have a disabling condition which makes daily activities difficult (e.g., medical, psychological, substance abuse) and prevents them from holding a job. A chronically homeless family meets the above definition with at least one child under the age of 18 years living with his/her parent(s). For sheltered individuals, they must be staying in emergency shelter or safe haven, but not in transitional housing.
4. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/harriscountytexas> accessed 28 March 2023.
5. <https://www.januaryadvisors.com/a-scary-new-era-for-evictions-in-harris-county/>

Appendix A: Survey Questions

The Way Home

2023 Unsheltered Survey

1. Have you already been interviewed **previously** for the Homeless Count? Yes No (If Yes --- STOP)
2. Where were you sleeping on the **night Monday, January 23rd**? (If option in bold is selected, continue with the survey)

<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned building	<input type="checkbox"/> Under bridge/ overpass	<input type="checkbox"/> Jail
<input type="checkbox"/> Bus/ Train station	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle/ Boat / RV	<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/Hotel paid for w/ own \$
<input type="checkbox"/> Motel/Hotel paid for by agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor encampment	<input type="checkbox"/> House or apt – rent/own	<input type="checkbox"/> Treatment program
<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/> w/ friend or family (couch surfing)
<input type="checkbox"/> Street or Sidewalk	<input type="checkbox"/> In a place being evicted from	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

- a. What type of vehicle or structure are you sleeping in?

<input type="checkbox"/> Car	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat	<input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned Building
<input type="checkbox"/> RV	<input type="checkbox"/> Tent	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Van	<input type="checkbox"/> Makeshift Shelter	

- b. Please provide details on the condition of the RV:

Disrepair No access to sewer, water, or electricity Parked in an unusual place Habitable

- c. Including yourself, how many people are sleeping in this vehicle or structure? _____

3. What is your name?
 - a. First Name (or Initial): _____ Last Name (or Initial): _____ Person Refused
 - b. If hesitant, ask "What are your initials?" _____

4. What is your gender?
HUD Data Standards response options

5. What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy) ___/___/____ Person doesn't know Person Refused
If refused to answer date of birth, ask "How old are you?" _____
If refused to answer age, "What age range do you fall into?"
 <5 5-12 13-17 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-61 62+

6. What is your race? (select all that apply)
HUD Data Standards response options

7. Are you Hispanic/Latino? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

8. Is this the first time you have been homeless? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

9. What would you say is the primary cause of your homelessness?

The Way Home

Job loss Financial Eviction Family conflict Illness Mental illness Substance use Person doesn't know Person Refused

10. How long have you been homeless **this time**? (Only include time in shelters and/or streets)

0 to 3 months 4 to 6 months 7 to 11 months 1 to 2 years 2 to 3 years 3 years or more

11. How many months did you stay in shelters or on the streets over the **past 3 years**?

0 to 3 months 4 to 6 months 7 to 11 months 1 to 2 years 2 to 3 years 3 years or more

12. How many separate times have you stayed in shelters or on the streets in the past 3 years?

Fewer than 4 times 4 or more times Person doesn't know Refused

13. How long in months have you been where you are currently residing?

0 to 3 months 4 to 6 months 7 to 11 months 1 to 2 years 2 to 3 years 3 years or more

14. What city/town were you living in when you became homeless this time? _____

15. Are you homeless as a result of a natural disaster? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

a. Which natural disaster led to your homelessness? Hurricane Fire / Mud Flood Other: _____

b. If Hurricane, Harvey (Houston TX area) Florence (East Coast/ North Carolina)
 Michael (Southeastern US/ Florida panhandle) Other Hurricane

c. If Fire, 2020 Fire 2019 Kincadee fire (CA) Other 2019 Fire 2018 Hill/Woolsey (CA)
 2018 Camp (CA) 2018 Carr (CA) 2018 Thomas (CA) Other 2018 fire
 Wildfires in 2017 Fire prior to 2017

16. Are you experiencing homelessness as a direct result of COVID-19?

Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

If yes, what was the specific reason(s) (choose all that apply) Job loss Hours reduced Eviction

Illness Person doesn't know Person Refused

DISABLING CONDITIONS

17. Do you have a Substance Abuse Disorder No Alcohol Abuse Drug Abuse Both Alcohol and Drug Person Doesn't Know Person Refused

If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?

Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

18. Do you have a Chronic Health Condition? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?

Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

19. Do you have a Mental Health Disorder? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?

Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

20. Do you have a Physical Disability? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

If yes, is this a long-term disability that impairs your ability to hold a job or live independently?

Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused

The Way Home

21. Do you have a Developmental Disability? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused
22. Do you receive disability benefits? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused
23. Do you have HIV/AIDS? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused
24. Are you currently experiencing homelessness because you are fleeing Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking? Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused
25. Are you a veteran? (served in the US Armed Forces OR been called into a duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist): Yes No Person Doesn't Know Person refused
26. Notes: _____

Appendix B: Additional Data

HHWC

	ES	TH	SH	US	TOTAL
Total # of HH	213	8	0	1	221
Total # of Persons	666	26	0	3	692
# of children <18	442	18	0	1	460
# of YA (18-24)	33	0	0	0	33
# of adults (25-34)	132	8	0	2	140
35-44	49	0	0	0	49
45-54	9	0	0	0	9
55-64	1	0	0	0	1
65+	0	0	0	0	0

GENDER (ALL)

Female	424	15	0	1	439
Male	242	11	0	2	253
Transgender	0	0	0	0	0
Questioning	0	0	0	0	0
Gender N/C	0	0	0	0	0

ETHNICITY (ALL)

NH/NL	518	26	0	3	544
H/L	148	0	0	0	148
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

RACE (ALL)

White	168	14	0	1	182
B/AA	458	9	0	2	467
Asian	3	0	0	0	3
AI/AN	9	0	0	0	9
NH/PI	2	0	0	0	2
Multiple Race	26	3	0	0	29
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

CHRONIC HHS	10	0	0	0	10
CHRONIC PERSONS	32	0	0	0	32

HHWC

	ES	TH	SH	US	TOTAL
Total # of HH	213	8	0	1	221
Total # of Persons	666	26	0	3	692
# of children <18	442	18	0	1	460
# of YA (18-24)	33	0	0	0	33
# of adults (25-34)	132	8	0	2	140
35-44	49	0	0	0	49
45-54	9	0	0	0	9
55-64	1	0	0	0	1
65+	0	0	0	0	0

GENDER (ALL)

Female	424	15	0	1	439
Male	242	11	0	2	253
Transgender	0	0	0	0	0
Questioning	0	0	0	0	0
Gender N/C	0	0	0	0	0

ETHNICITY (ALL)

NH/NL	518	26	0	3	544
H/L	148	0	0	0	148
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

RACE (ALL)

White	168	14	0	1	182
B/AA	458	9	0	2	467
Asian	3	0	0	0	3
AI/AN	9	0	0	0	9
NH/PI	2	0	0	0	2
Multiple Race	26	3	0	0	29
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

CHRONIC HHS	10	0	0	0	10
CHRONIC PERSONS	32	0	0	0	32

HHONLYC

	ES	TH	SH	US	TOTAL
Total # of HH	10	0	0	0	10
Total # of Persons	10	0	0	0	10
# of children <18	10	0	0	0	0
# of YA (18-24)	0	10	10	0	10
# of adults (25-34)	0	0	0	0	0
35-44	0	0	0	0	0
45-54	0	0	0	0	0
55-64	0	0	0	0	0
65+	0	0	0	0	0

GENDER (ALL)

Female	0	0	0	0	0
Male	10	0	0	0	10
Transgender	0	0	0	0	0
Questioning	0	0	0	0	0
Gender N/C	0	0	0	0	0

ETHNICITY (ALL)

NH/NL	9	0	0	0	9
H/L	1	0	0	0	1
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

RACE (ALL)

White	6	0	0	0	6
B/AA	3	0	0	0	3
Asian	0	0	0	0	0
AI/AN	0	0	0	0	0
NH/PI	0	0	0	0	0
Multiple Race	1	0	0	0	1
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0

CHRONIC PERSONS 0 0 0 0 0

Figures 6, 7, 11, 13-14

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH (UAY) HH

	ES	TH	SH	US	TOTAL
Total # of Unaccompanied Youth HH	127	17	0	38	182
Total # of Persons	127	17	0	38	182
# of unaccompanied youth (under 18)	10	0	0	0	10
# of unaccompanied youth (18-24)	117	17	0	38	172
					0

GENDER (UAY ONLY)

Female	65	5	0	14	84
Male	62	12	0	24	98
Transgender	0	0	0	0	0
Gender non-conforming	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0
					0

ETHNICITY (UAY ONLY)

Non Hispanic / Non Latino	107	15	0	26	148
Hispanic / Latino	20	2	0	12	34
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0
					0

RACE (ALL)

White	33	5	0	21	59
Black or African American	89	12	0	17	118
Asian	0	0	0	0	0
American Indian or AN	1	0	0	0	1
Native Hawaiian or PI	0	0	0	0	0
Multiple Race	4	0	0	0	4
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0	0	0
					0

CHRONIC PERSONS	6	0	0	7	13
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PARENTING YOUTH (PY) HH

	ES	TOTAL
Total # of Parenting Youth (PY) HH	20	20
Total # of Persons in PY HH	50	50
Total # of PY (youth parents only)	20	20
Total# of children inPY HH	30	30
# of PY under 18	0	0
Children in HH with PY under 18	0	0
# of PY 18-24	20	20
Children in HH w/ PY 18-24	30	30

GENDER (PY ONLY)

Female	31	31
Male	19	19
Transgender	0	0
Gender non-conforming	0	0
Don't Know/Refused	0	0

ETHNICITY (PY ONLY)

Non Hispanic / Non Latino	41	41
Hispanic / Latino	9	9
Don't Know/Refused	0	0

RACE (PY ONLY)

White	10	10
Black or African American	39	39
Asian	0	0
American Indian or AN	0	0
Native Hawaiian or PI	0	0
Multiple Race	1	1
Don't Know/Refused	0	0

CHRONIC HHs	1	1
CHRONIC PERSONS	2	2

Figure 15 (both)

SUBPOPULATIONS

	ES	TH	SH	US	TOTAL
Adults w/Serious Mental Illness	420	274	7	287	988
Adults w/Substance Abuse Disorder	261	291	3	202	757
Adults w/HIV/AIDS	19	30	0	17	66
Survivors of Domestic Violence	285	13	0	61	359
Veterans	50	130	14	88	282

Figure 12

FOR THE UNSHELTERED (INTERVIEWED) ONLY

TIME EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS						
0-3 mos	4-6 mos	7-11 mos	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	>3 yrs	Blank
100	84	83	152	81	343	399

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS						
Mental Health	Job loss/No income	Illness	Family conflict	Eviction	Alcohol use	Other/Blank
89	265	38	175	54	88	533

WHERE PARTICIPANTS FIRST BECAME HOMELESS						
Houston area	Other Texas	Louisiana	Other States	Other Countries	Blank	
711	50	11	44	3	423	

Figures 8-10

Appendix C : Fort Bend County Totals

FORT BEND COUNTY TOTALS

	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
Total # of HH	25	20	45
Total # of persons	47	20	67
# of children (under 18)	22	0	22
# of young adults (18-24)	5	3	8
# of adults (25-34)	20	3	23
35-44	0	1	1
45-54	0	8	8
55-64	0	2	2
65+	0	3	3

GENDER (ALL)

Female	38	6	44
Male	9	14	23
Transgender	0	0	0
Questioning	0	0	0
Gender Non-Conforming	0	0	0

ETHNICITY (ALL)

Ethnicity (ALL)	38	6	44
Male	9	14	23
Transgender	0	0	0

RACE (ALL)

White	17	9	26
Black or African American	23	11	34
Asian	2	0	2
American Indian or AN	3	0	3
Native Hawaiian or PI	2	0	2
Multiple Race	0	0	0
Don't Know/Refused	0		0
Chronic HH	0	7	7
Chronic Persons	0	7	7

FORT BEND COUNTY TOTALS (CONTINUED)

	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
SUBPOPULATIONS			
Adults w/SMI	0	7	7
Adults w/SUDs	0	6	6
Adults with HIV/AIDS	0	0	0
DV Survivors	47	1	48
Veterans	0	1	1
Homeless due to natural disaster	N/A	0	0
Homeless due to COVID	N/A	0	0
First time homeless	N/A	3	3
Top cause of homelessness	0	Family conflict	4
		Income	3

Appendix D: Montgomery County Totals

MONTGOMERY COUNTY TOTALS

	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
Total # of HH	53	36	89
Total # of persons	94	36	130
# of children (under 18)	41	0	41
# of young adults (18-24)	7	1	8
# of adults (25-34)	34	4	38
35-44	0	12	12
45-54	0	9	9
55-64	1	8	9
65+	1	2	3

GENDER (ALL)

Female	68	11	79
Male	26	25	51
Transgender	0	0	0
Questioning	0	0	0
Gender Non-Conforming	0	0	0

ETHNICITY (ALL)

Non Hispanic / Non Latino	68	32	100
Hispanic / Latino	26	4	30
Don't Know/Refused	0	0	0

RACE (ALL)

White	40	33	73
Black or African American	35	2	37
Asian	0	0	0
American Indian or AN	1	1	2
Native Hawaiian or PI	1	0	1
Multiple Race	17	0	17
Don't Know/Refused			0
Chronic HH	11	5	16
Chronic Persons	39	5	44

MONTGOMERY COUNTY TOTALS (CONTINUED)

	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
SUBPOPULATIONS			
Adults w/SMI	14	7	21
Adults w/SUDs	5	7	12
Adults with HIV/AIDS	0	0	0
DV Survivors	50	1	51
Veterans	7	3	10
Homeless due to natural disaster	N/A	1	1
Homeless due to COVID	N/A	4	4
First time homeless	N/A	5	5
Top cause of homelessness	N/A	Family conflict	6
		Income	5

COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

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