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Snohomish County Releases 2022 Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness

Return of full count shows an increase in shelter capacity

EVERETT, Wash., May 16, 2022 – Snohomish County’s Annual Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) count, designed to provide a snapshot of households experiencing homelessness on a single night, was conducted on February 22, 2022. While PIT counts traditionally occur in January, this change from previous counts was the result of a COVID-19 related extension granted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This survey was supported by the efforts of 204 volunteers, county personnel, and partnering agency staff. The unsheltered PIT count was not conducted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2022 count identified 1,184 people in 953 households residing in shelter, transitional housing, or living without shelter in Snohomish County the night of February 21, 2022, the highest number since 2012.

“There are far too many members of our community who have no home and are traumatized daily by their lack of shelter,” said Director of Snohomish County Human Services Mary Jane Brell Vujovic. “This count allows us to quantify this community challenge and give us a better perspective on what is taking place across the county. We are committed to doing all we can to relieve suffering and help our neighbors transition to a more stable and sustainable life.”

The PIT count is required by state and federal funders and is used in program planning. It includes people residing in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and living without shelter. Because the unsheltered count relies on volunteer survey takers who visit encampments, food banks, community resource locations, and known areas where people who are unsheltered congregate, the previous methodology was prone to undercounting families experiencing homelessness. Snohomish County’s continued commitment to increase the usability and accuracy of the PIT count data led to a change in methodology for locating homeless households in 2019 and included a new strategy to locate households experiencing homelessness.

Snohomish County continues to mitigate limitations by using the extensive data in the Coordinated Entry system to locate and actively reach out to obtain surveys from households that have been historically undercounted. Additionally, due to an expected decrease in volunteers this year due to the pandemic, the count utilized partnerships in the community with Law Enforcement Embedded Social Workers, First Responders, Tribal Service Providers, Social Services Agencies and Human Services employees.

As with the last unsheltered count conducted in 2020, a service-based count was conducted in the six days following the initial count. The service-based count gave service providers an opportunity to survey individuals they contacted after the count about their situation on the night of February 21. Navigators

in the Coordinated Entry system also contacted the households with whom they work to conduct surveys. Surveys were de-duplicated by the HMIS Data and Program Analyst team.

The Data Behind the PIT Count

Despite increased efficiencies and investments across the system which continue to assist more households each year, the total PIT count—including individuals residing in shelter, transitional housing, and living without shelter—is the highest it has been since 2012. From its low point in 2015, when 829 people were identified, the PIT count increased 42.8% to 1,184 in 2022 and represents an increase of 52 individuals from 2020 when the last complete count was conducted. Within that overall count, the number of people living unsheltered decreased by 13.2% from 673 in 2020 to 584 in the 2022 count.

Conversely, the sheltered count (600) is a reflection of system capacity and is the highest it has been since 2013. This increase of 30.7% over the number in 2020 (459) is due to an increase in shelter capacity including cold weather shelters which were open the night of the count.

The count varied in important ways from previous years. The number of households with children experiencing homelessness (92) did not change from the last full count in 2020, but the number of households experiencing sheltered homelessness increased 52.4% (168 to 256) while unsheltered households with children decreased 73.3% (116 to 31). There was also a decrease in the number of households with children experiencing chronic homelessness from 2020 (37) to 2022 (29). Households with only children also decreased by 50% (30 to 15). The total number of households without children experiencing unsheltered homelessness changed very little from 2020 to 2022, but there was an increase in households without children experiencing chronic homelessness (448 to 499). This means that more than 50% of all households without children experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County are chronically homeless.

Of note, there was a decrease in the number of people whose race is Black, African American, or African from 11.2% in 2020 to 6.4% in 2022. In contrast, the number of people who are Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x) showed a slight increase from 10.6% to 11.23%. The number of households with a veteran increased from 41 to 46. The percentage of people having a gender of female or male remained relatively unchanged, but there was a slight increase in the number of people who are transgender, questioning, or who have a gender that is not singularly female or male (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender) from .97% to 1.44%.

While an imperfect measure, the PIT count is one of the tools used to inform priorities for federal, state, and local funding. It also helps identify trends and craft solutions for the needs of vulnerable individuals and families. The analysis and overall trend data are utilized by the Snohomish County Partnership to End Homelessness as one of many tools to track progress toward goals to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness. Additional historical Snohomish County PIT information can be explored at <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/2857/Point-In-Time>.

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