San Francisco

YOUTH HOMELESS COUNT AND SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.

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Thank you to the youth service providers who facilitated the process of homeless peer enumeration by recruiting youth count workers, assisting in the administration of surveys, and opening the doors of their facilities to host training sessions, deploy count workers, and distribute surveys. They include:

- At the Crossroads
- Homeless Youth Alliance
- Larkin Street Youth Services
- LYRIC
- Third Street Youth Center and Clinic

Most importantly, we would like to thank the team of currently and formerly homeless youth count and survey workers, as well as the survey respondents, whose efforts are reflected throughout the findings of this report.

Introduction

Every two years, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of their homeless population during the last ten days of January. These counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community and collect information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as people sleeping on the streets and in cars, abandoned properties, and other places not meant for human habitation.

Beginning in 2013, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) asked all communities conducting Point-in-Time Counts to gather information on the number and characteristics of unaccompanied children (under 18) and youth (ages 18-24) in order to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness. Communities were encouraged to conduct unique youth counts, and San Francisco rose to the challenge using best practice strategies for outreach and enumeration of homeless youth.

The 2019 Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count of unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth was conducted as part of the broader Point-in-Time Count of all unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons living in San Francisco. This dedicated count is part of a nationwide effort, established and recommended by HUD, to improve our understanding of the scope of youth homelessness. Trained youth enumerators who currently or recently experienced homelessness conducted the count in specific areas where young people experiencing homelessness were known to congregate.[1]

In 2019, the dedicated youth street count was conducted on the evening of January 24 from approximately 8:00 p.m. to midnight and focused on areas of San Francisco where youth were known to congregate. Youth count teams also counted Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach between 10:00 a.m. and noon on January 24. The general street count was also conducted on January 24, 2019 from approximately 8:00 p.m. to midnight and covered all 47 square miles of San Francisco. A shelter count was conducted that evening and included all individuals staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.

This report focuses on the number and characteristics of unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth experiencing homelessness identified during the 2019 San Francisco Homeless Point-in-Time Count.

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[1] Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2019 to ensure unaccompanied children and youth were not captured in both the youth and general street count efforts. For more information on these efforts and the overall count methodology, please see Appendix A.

FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

This study uses the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count, which includes individuals and families:

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide a temporary living arrangement; or

- With a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND GOALS

The 2019 Youth Planning Committee identified several important project goals:

- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2017 San Francisco Homeless Youth Count & Survey, and to track progress toward ending youth homelessness;

- To define the extent of homelessness among unaccompanied children and youth in San Francisco; and

- To identify the primary causes of homelessness, patterns of service usage, and programming needs among unaccompanied homeless children and youth

The results of this research will help service providers, policy makers, funders, and local and federal government entities better understand and serve the population of young people experiencing homelessness.

Youth Point-in-Time Count

Due to the often hidden nature of youth homelessness, there are limited data available on unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, current federal estimates suggest there are 35,686 unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth on the streets and in public shelters across the country.[2] Young people experiencing homelessness have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment due to the stigma of their housing situation, lack of knowledge of available resources, and a dearth of services directed towards young people.[3]

The federal strategic plan to end homelessness, *Home, Together,* features specific strategies to address the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless children and transitional-age youth. As part of this effort, the federal government has placed an increased focus on gathering data on unaccompanied homeless children and youth during the Point-in-Time Count.

In a sustained effort to improve data on the extent of youth homelessness, San Francisco conducted a Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count similar to the ones conducted since 2013. The 2019 effort included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly or privately sheltered unaccompanied youth. The youth street count was conducted on January 24, 2019 from approximately 8:00 p.m. to midnight and covered specific areas of San Francisco where unsheltered youth were known to congregate.[4] The shelter count was conducted on the same evening and included all youth staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and domestic violence shelters. The count is then followed by a survey of a sampling of the total homeless youth population in order to better understand the characteristics of young people experiencing homelessness. Information collected from the survey is used to fulfill HUD reporting requirements and to inform local service delivery and strategic planning efforts.

For more information regarding the dedicated youth count methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

[2] Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2016). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved from https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

[3] National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved from http://www.nationalhomeless.org.

[4] For safety reasons, Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach were counted on the morning of January 24th. See *Appendix A: Methodology* for details.

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SAN FRANCISCO

On the night of January 24, 2019, a total of 8,035 homeless individuals were counted in the City of San Francisco. Among those persons, 1,145 were unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth.

While the overall number of people counted in the Point-in-Time Count increased by 17% between 2017 and 2019, the number of unaccompanied children and youth decreased by 10% over the same period. Unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth accounted for approximately 14% of the individuals counted in the 2019 Point-in-Time Count, compared to 19% in 2017.

The majority (95%) of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness were transitional-age youth between 18 and 24 years old. Young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco were frequently unsheltered; over three-quarters (76%) of unaccompanied children and 83% of transitional-age youth were sleeping on the streets or in tents, vehicles, or abandoned properties.

Figure 1.   TOTAL NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH WITH TREND, 2013-2019
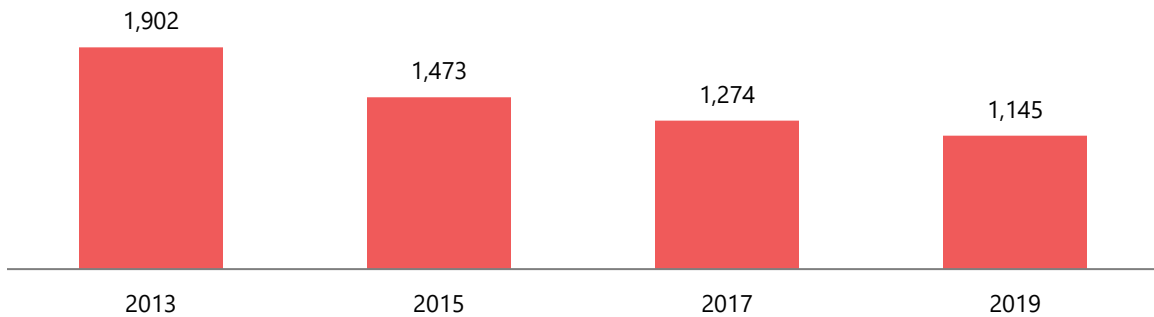

Figure 2.   TOTAL NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH POPULATION BY POINT-IN-TIME COUNT COMPONENT, 2013-2019
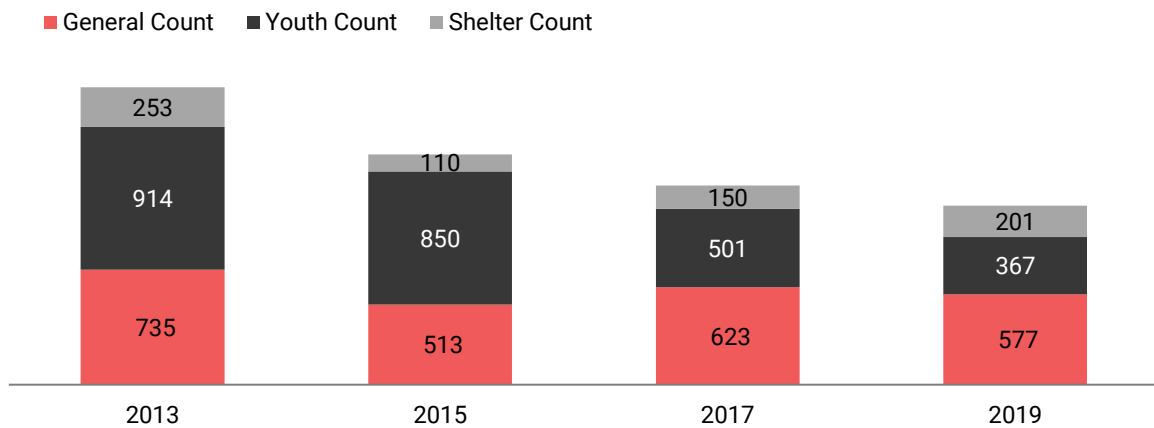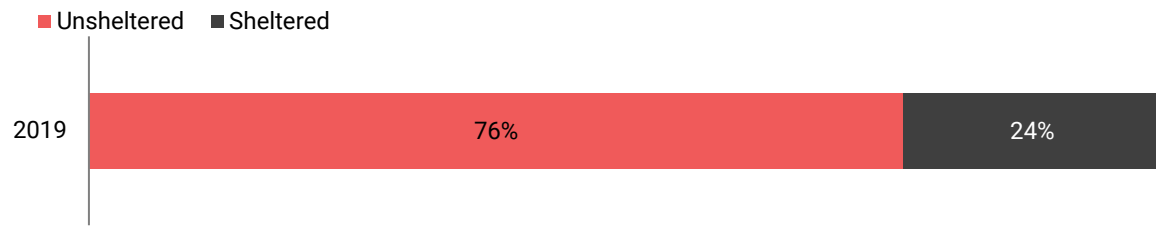
Figure 3.   UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN BY SHELTER STATUS
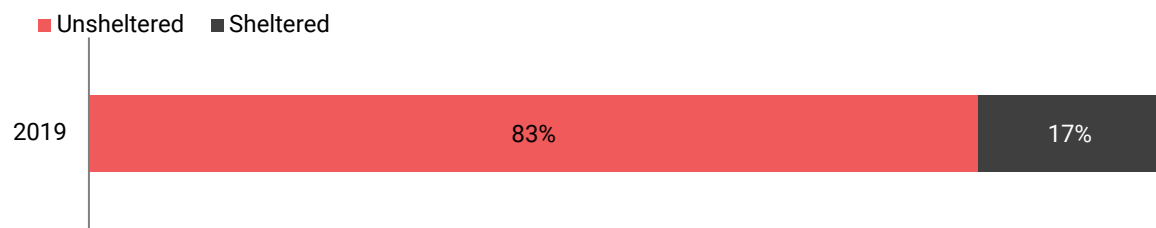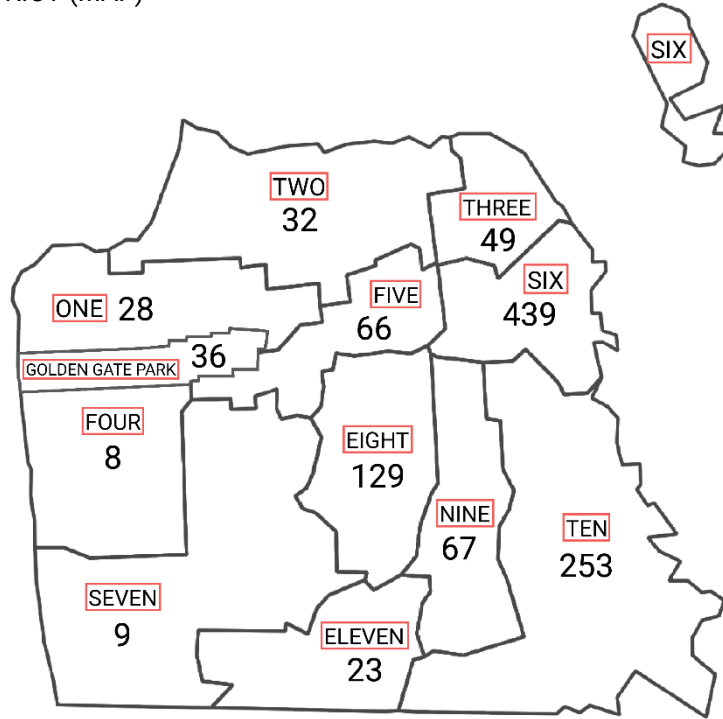
■ Unsheltered   ■ Sheltered

2019	76%	24%

n=54

Figure 4.   TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH BY SHELTER STATUS

■ Unsheltered   ■ Sheltered

2019	83%	17%

n=1,091

While the general Point-in-Time Count effort covers the entire city, the supplemental youth count focuses on specific neighborhoods of San Francisco where unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth are known to congregate. These areas were identified by youth with current or recent experience of homelessness and by knowledgeable youth service providers. While the supplemental youth count focused on districts 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and Golden Gate Park, unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth were identified in all districts in addition to areas of Golden Gate Park. Of the 944 unsheltered youth counted in 2019, the supplemental youth count identified 367 youth.

Figure 5.   NUMBER OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH BY DISTRICT (MAP)

Note: An additional 6 sheltered youth were residing in confidential or scattered site sheltered locations in San Francisco on the night of the Point-in-Time Count.

The table below displays data on all unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth counted across both the general street count and youth count efforts. The largest number of unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth were identified in District 6, followed by Districts 10 and 8.

Figure 6.   TOTAL UNSHELTERED AND SHELTERED SAN FRANCISCO POINT-IN-TIME COUNT UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH UNDER 25 POPULATION BY DISTRICT

District	2015 Unaccompanied Youth	2017 Unaccompanied Youth	2019 Unaccompanied Youth
1	36	35	28
2	0	5	32
3*	38	30	49
4	0	7	8
5*	198	67	66
6*	609	437	439
7	2	7	9
8*	179	87	129
9*	72	96	67
10*	151	359	253
11	28	6	23
Confidential/ Scattered Site Locations in San Francisco	7	6	6
Golden Gate Park*	153	132	36
Total	1,473	1,274	1,145

*Note: * Denotes areas where the supplemental youth count took place.*

Youth Survey Findings

The 2019 San Francisco Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count & Survey included the administration of surveys to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between January 28 and February 13, 2019. This effort resulted in 184 unique surveys were conducted with young people currently experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,145 unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth experiencing homelessness, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 184 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 7% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within seven percentage points of the current results. Data are presented on both the adult and the unaccompanied youth survey population where available.

Please note that survey data presented in this section features respondents who were unaccompanied and does not include parenting youth households. Survey data from young families is included in the *2019 San Francisco Homeless Point-in-Time Count & Survey Comprehensive Report.*

In order to respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values were intentionally omitted from the survey results. Therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys conducted. For more information regarding the survey methodology, please see *Appendix A: Methodology*.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The gender breakdown of the youth population experiencing homelessness was different than that of the adult population experiencing homelessness. Less than half (48%) of youth respondents under the age of 25 identified as male, compared to 61% of respondents age 25 and older. Forty percent (40%) identified as female, 8% as transgender, and 4% as genderqueer/gender non-binary.
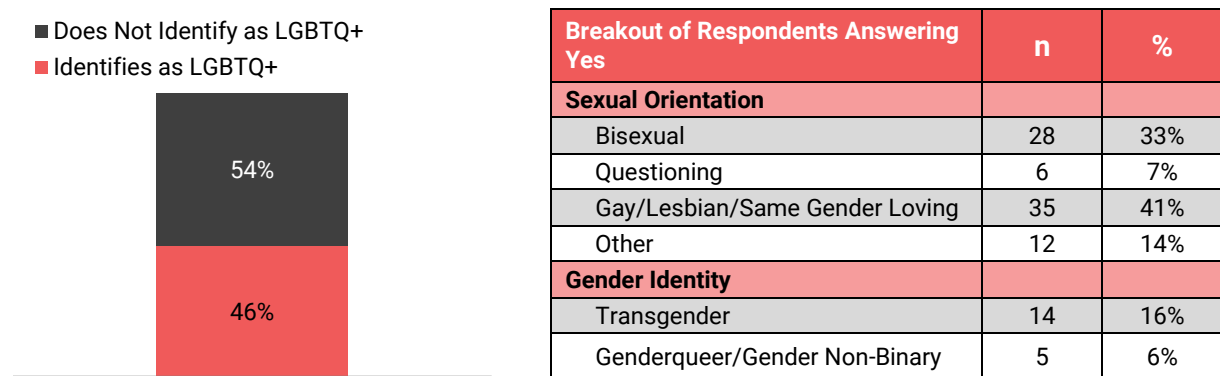
It has been estimated that, nationally, 40% of homeless youth self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ+)—a disproportionately higher percentage than in the general population (10%).[5] Forty-six percent (46%) of youth survey respondents identified as LGBTQ+, compared to 23% of the adult population.

Figure 7.   GENDER
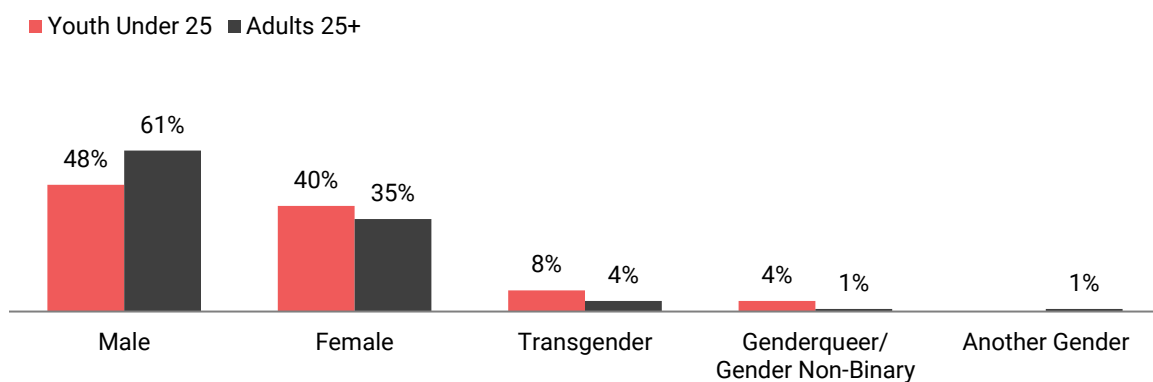
Under 25 n = 183; Over 25 n = 820

Figure 8.   SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AMONG LGBTQ+ RESPONDENTS

| Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	n	%
Sexual Orientation		
Bisexual	28	33%
Questioning	6	7%
Gay/Lesbian/Same Gender Loving	35	41%
Other	12	14%
Gender Identity		
Transgender	14	16%
Genderqueer/Gender Non-Binary	5	6%

n = 184; Breakout n = 85
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

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[5] Durso, L. & Gates, G. (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. Retrieved 2017 from http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Similar to the U.S. Census, HUD gathers data on race and ethnicity via two separate questions. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of youth survey respondents identified as Hispanic or Latinx, compared to 16% of respondents 25 years and older. Youth respondents most frequently identified their race as Multi-racial (41%), followed by Black or African American (29%) and White (23%).
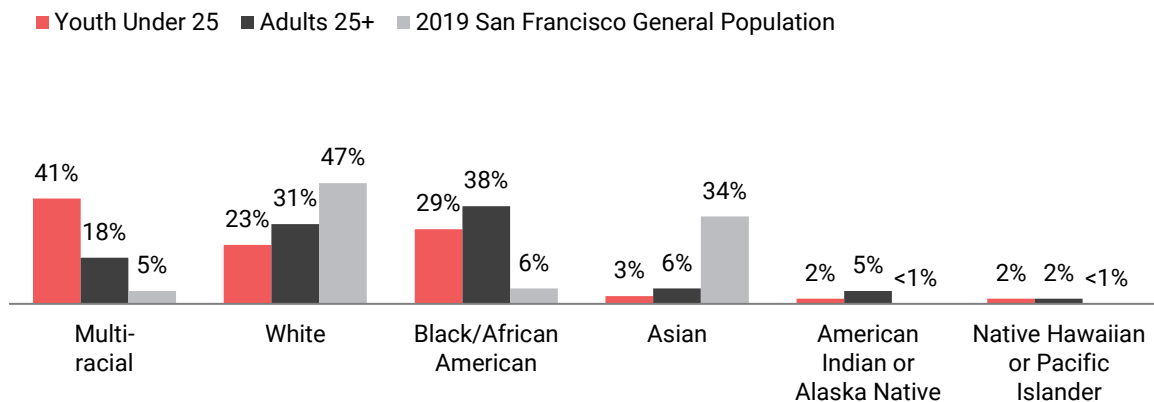
Figure 9.   ETHNICITY
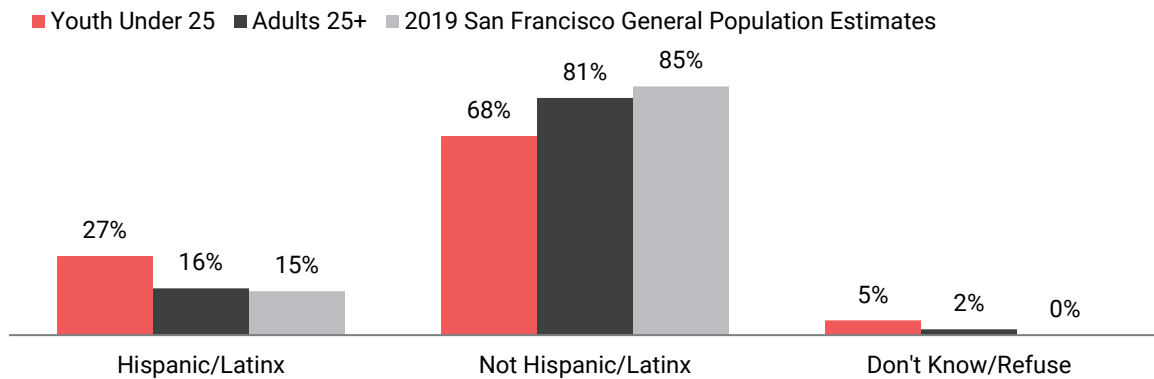
Under 25 n = 183; Over 25 n = 820
Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 10.   POPULATION BY RACE AND AGE

Under 25 n = 180; Over 25 n = 820
Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

RESIDENCY

Forty-eight percent (48%) of youth survey respondents reported living in San Francisco at the time they most recently became homeless. Thirty-eight percent (38%) reported moving to San Francisco from another county within California, including Alameda (12%), Santa Clara (4%), and Sonoma (4%) counties. Fourteen percent (14%) moved to San Francisco from out of state, compared to 7% of respondents age 25 and older. Nearly two-thirds (66%) reported living in San Francisco year-round.

Figure 11.   PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS

| San Francisco | Other County in California | Out of State |
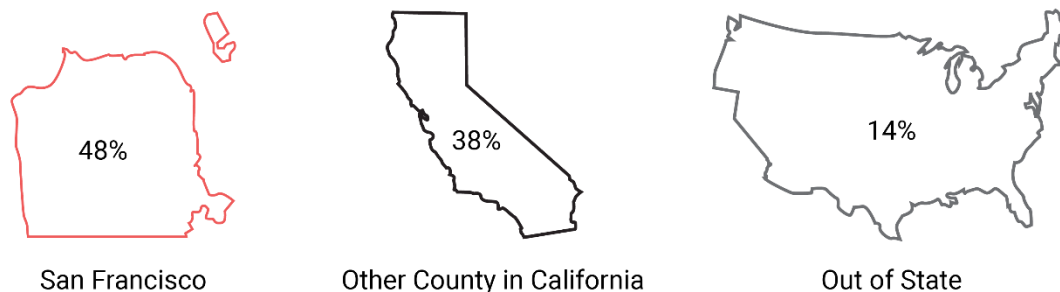
n= 162

PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The type of living arrangements maintained by youth before experiencing homelessness provides a look into what types of prevention and intervention services might be offered to help young people maintain their housing. Thirteen percent (13%) of youth respondents reported living with both parents prior to experiencing homelessness; 26% lived with a single mother and 7% with a single father. Sixteen percent (16%) reported living with a friend, 13% with a stepparent or legal guardian, 11% with a foster family, and 5% in a group home.

HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE

It has been estimated that one in five former foster youth experiences homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.[6] In 2019, twenty-nine percent (29%) of youth respondents reported a history of foster care. Over one-third (34%) of youth with a history of foster care reported living in foster care immediately before becoming homeless and 17% reported aging out of foster care as the primary cause of their homelessness. While respondents were not asked where they were living while they were in care, 51% of youth with a foster care history reported living in San Francisco at the time they became homeless.

Figure 12.   EXPERIENCE WITH FOSTER CARE

■ Youth Under 25   ■ Adults 25+
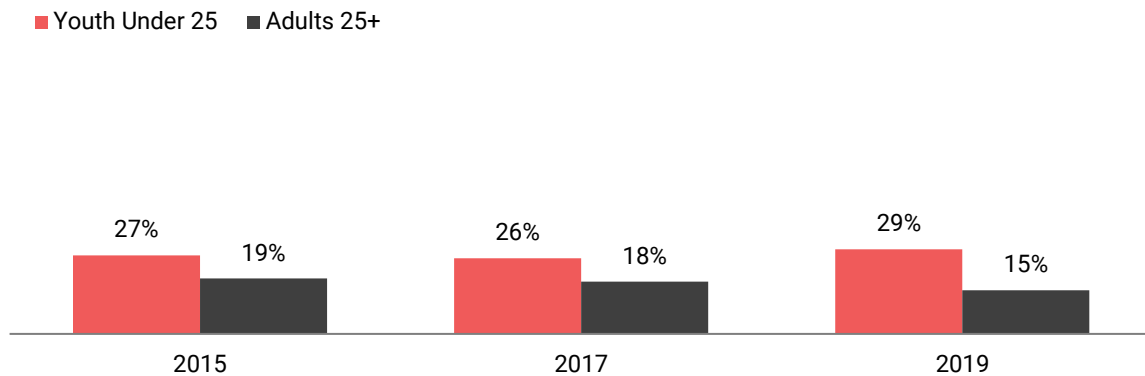
2015 Under 25 n = 160; 2015 Over 25 n = 736; 2017 Under 25 n = 208; 2017 Over 25 n = 817; 2019 Under 25 n = 180; 2019 Over 25 n = 805
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

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[6] Fernandes, AL. (2007). Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics, Programs, and Emerging Issues. Congressional Research Services, January 2007, http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/1451

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH

In California, 19% of community college students reported experiencing homelessness in the past year and 60% reported experiencing housing insecurity.[7]

While the majority of youth respondents in this survey were over the age of 18, over one-quarter (26%) had not completed high school or received a GED compared to 5% of the general population of youth 18 to 24 in the City of San Francisco.[8] Fifty-three percent (53%) of youth respondents reported completing high school or receiving their GED, 2% attained an associate's degree, and 1% completed college. Fifty-two percent (52%) of youth reported being currently enrolled in some form of education or vocation program.

It is important to note that many youth who are sleeping outside are attending school. Among youth respondents who were enrolled in school, over half (55%) were unsheltered.

Figure 13.   EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
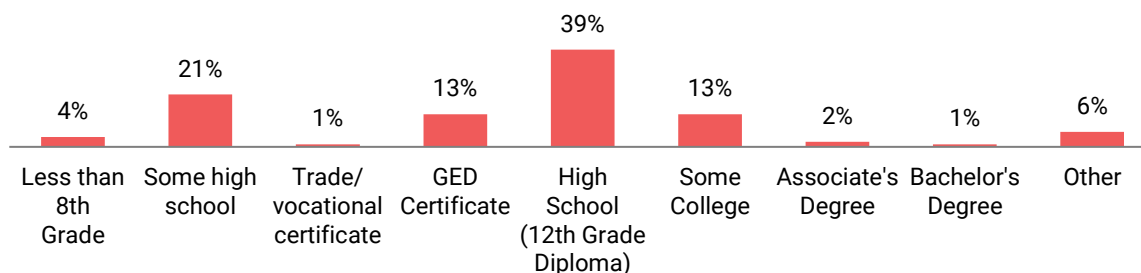
n =173
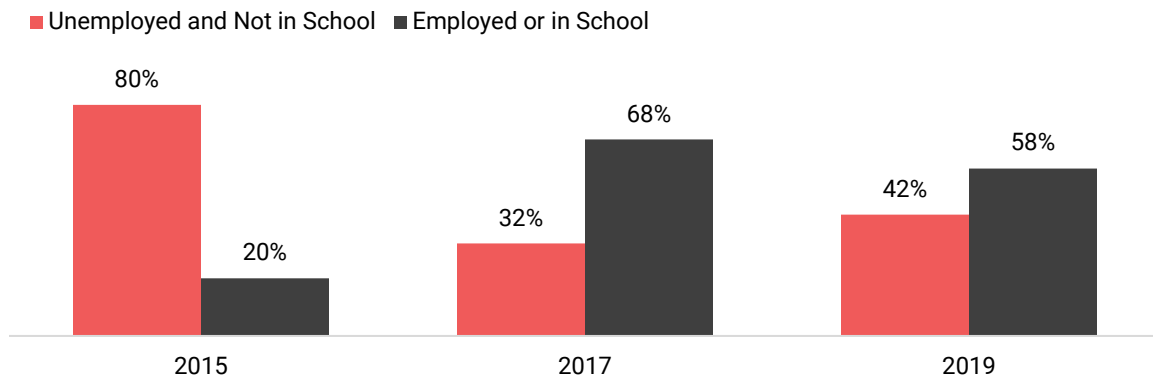*Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.*

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[7] Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., & Looker, E. (2019). California Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RealCollege-CCCCO-Report.pdf

[8] U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501. Retrieved from www.census.gov

EMPLOYMENT

Youth who are delayed in obtaining their first job are less likely to progress in their career, more likely to earn less, and experience delayed benefits such as health care and retirement. Many people who experience extended joblessness during youth are seen by employers as lacking basic skills and experience.[9] Fifty-eight percent (58%) of youth respondents reported currently being enrolled in some sort of education or vocation program, or having a job, paid internship, or other type of employment.

Figure 14.   EMPLOYMENT STATUS

■ Unemployed and Not in School   ■ Employed or in School

2015 n = 147; 2017 n = 173; 2019 n = 184
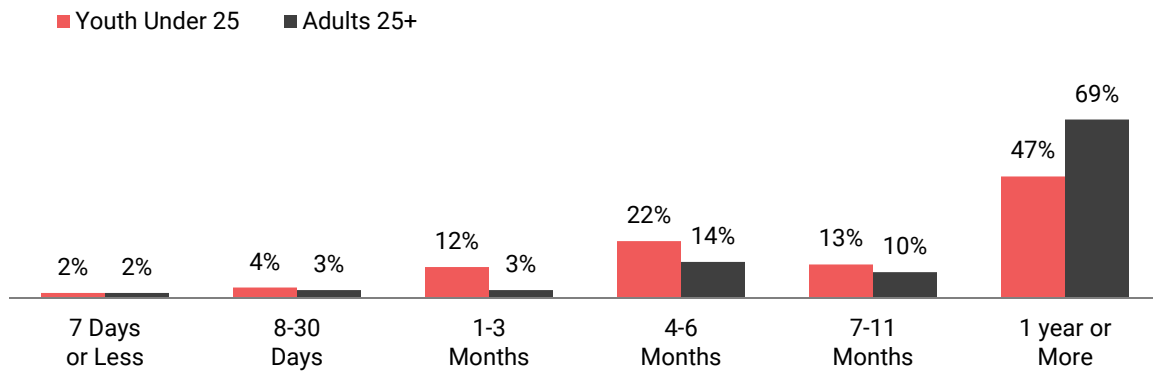*Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.*

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[9] Ferguson, K. Youth Society. Employment Status and Income Generation among Homeless Young Adults Results from a Five-City, Mixed-Methods Study. September 2012 vol. 44 no. 3 385-407

DURATION AND RECCURENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions, poverty, housing scarcity, and many other issues lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. For many youth, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability. Despite their young age, 64% of youth respondents reported experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness. Over one-third (36%) of youth respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time, compared to 30% of adult respondents.

Forty-seven percent (47%) of youth respondents reported currently experiencing homelessness for a year or longer.

Figure 15.   LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

Under 25 n = 181; Over 25 n = 861
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer—or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months in the last three years—and also has a disabling condition that prevents them from maintaining work or housing.

In 2019, one-fifth (20%) of unaccompanied youth were experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco compared to 42% of single adults age 25 and older. Unaccompanied youth experiencing chronic homelessness identified as Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander at higher rates than unaccompanied youth experiencing non-chronic homelessness. While chronically homeless youth identified as Multi-racial or White at a similar rate when compared to non-chronically homeless youth, they identified as Black/African American at a slightly lower rate (24% compared to 31%).

Sixty-five percent (65%) of young people experiencing chronic homelessness identified as LGBTQ+, compared to 42% of youth survey respondents who were not experiencing chronic homelessness. Over one-third (36%) of chronically homeless youth identified as bisexual and over one-quarter (27%) identified as transgender.

Figure 16.   PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

■ Youth Under 25   ■ Adults 25+

Under 25 n = 1,145; Over 25 n = 6,254

Figure 17.   CHRONICALLY HOMELESS YOUTH BY RACE

■ Chronic Youth Under 25   ■ Non-Chronic Youth Under 25
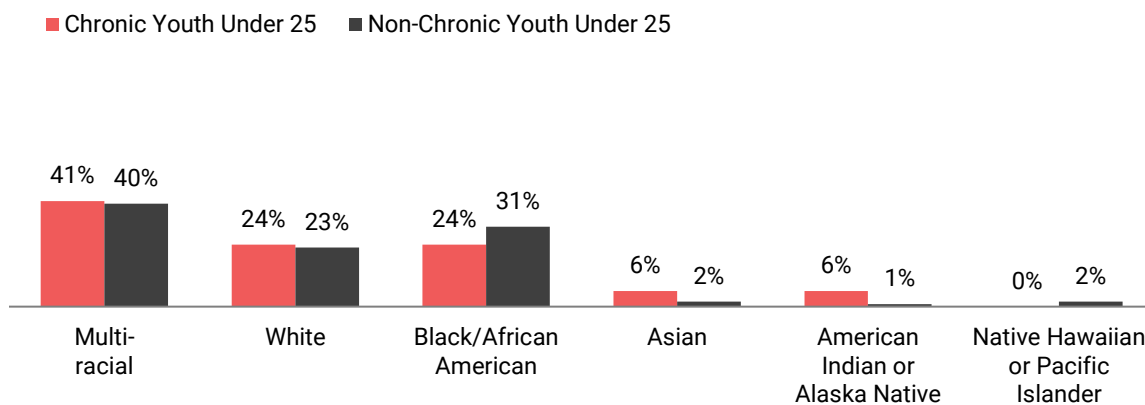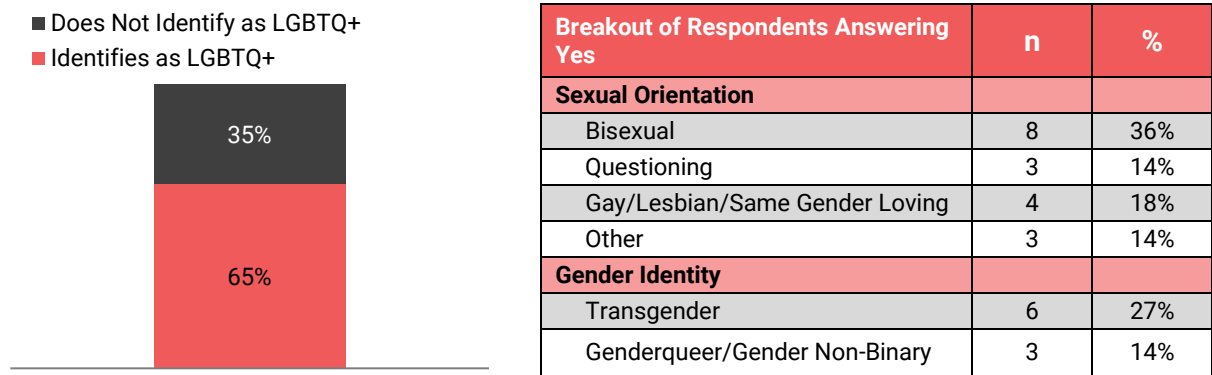

Chronic Youth Under 25 n = 34; Non-Chronic Youth Under 25 n = 146
Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

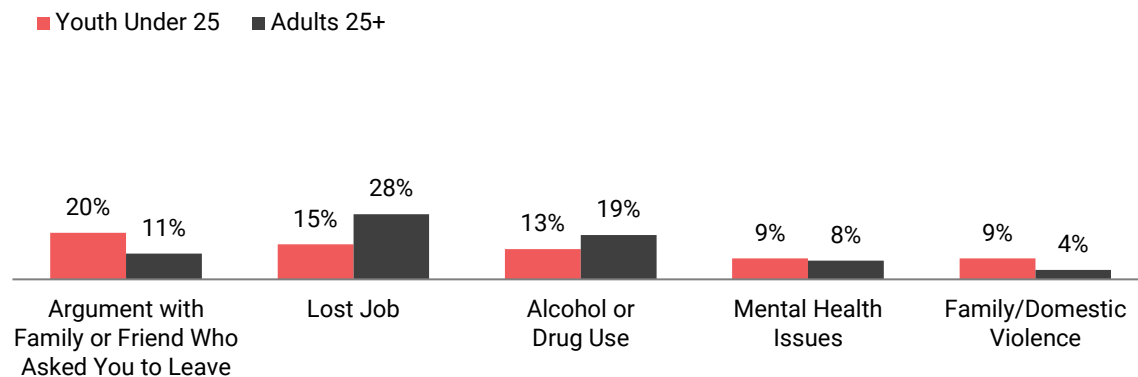Figure 18.   LGBTQ+ IDENTITY AMONG CHRONICALLY HOMELESS YOUTH

■ Does Not Identify as LGBTQ+
■ Identifies as LGBTQ+

Breakout of Respondents Answering Yes	n	%
Sexual Orientation		
Bisexual	8	36%
Questioning	3	14%
Gay/Lesbian/Same Gender Loving	4	18%
Other	3	14%
Gender Identity		
Transgender	6	27%
Genderqueer/Gender Non-Binary	3	14%

Chronic Youth Under 25 n = 34; Breakout n = 22
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

Youth survey respondents attributed their homelessness to different causes compared to all other survey respondents. Twenty percent (20%) of youth reported an argument with a friend or family member who asked them to leave as the primary cause of their homelessness, compared to 11% of respondents age 25 and older. Fifteen percent (15%) of youth respondents cited job loss, compared to 28% of all other respondents. Alcohol or drug use (13%), mental health issues (9%), and family/domestic violence (9%) were also among the most commonly reported causes of homelessness among youth respondents.

Figure 19.   PRIMARY CAUSE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)

■ Youth Under 25   ■ Adults 25+

	Argument with Family or Friend Who Asked You to Leave	Lost Job	Alcohol or Drug Use	Mental Health Issues	Family/Domestic Violence
Youth Under 25	20%	15%	13%	9%	9%
Adults 25+	11%	28%	19%	8%	4%

Under 25 n = 178; Over 25 n = 861
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

Youth respondents were also asked to identify other factors contributing to their homelessness. Young people most frequently cited emotional abuse (49%), followed by financial issues (44%), physical abuse (37%), mental health issues (30%), and sexual abuse (28%).

Figure 20.   CONTRIBUTING CAUSES TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)
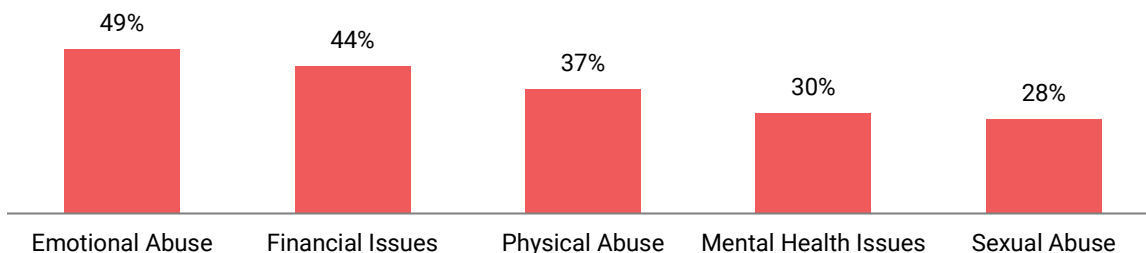
Unn= 156
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add to 100.

OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Forty-seven percent (47%) of youth reported no expectation of obtaining stable housing within the 12 months following the survey. When asked about barriers to permanent housing, 48% reported that they could not afford rent, followed by 35% who cited not having a job or enough income. Twenty percent (20%) reported that not enough housing was available, followed by 17% who felt the housing process was too difficult and 12% who could not afford moving costs.

Figure 21.   OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)
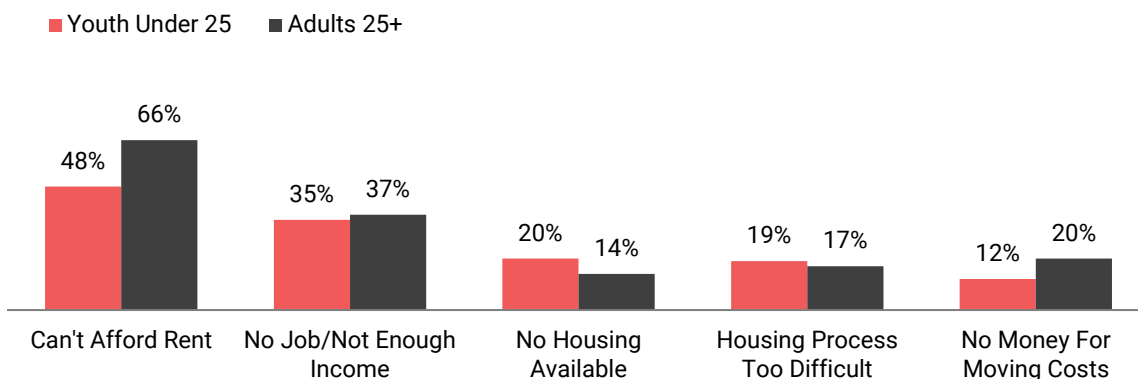
Under 25 n = 176; Over 25 n = 856
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

EXPERIENCES WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Due to their experiences on the street, homeless youth often interact with law enforcement more frequently than the general population. Some homeless youth are involved in the criminal justice system, which creates barriers to employment and housing and places them at greater risk of homelessness.

Twenty-four percent (24%) of youth reported involvement with the justice system before turning 18, and 8% were on probation or parole at the time they most recently became homeless. Ten percent (10%) reported being on probation or parole at the time of the survey. Six percent (6%) reported incarceration was the primary cause of their homelessness and 6% reported their criminal record was preventing them from obtaining permanent housing, compared to 7% and 9% of all other survey respondents, respectively.

Figure 22.   CURRENTLY ON PROBATION OR PAROLE

■ Youth Under 25   ■ Adults 25+

Under 25 n = 163; Over 25 n = 833
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

SAFETY AND WELLBEING

VICTIMIZATION

National research suggests that homeless youth are more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrators.[10] In San Francisco, over half (52%) of youth respondents reported feeling "a little unsafe" or "very unsafe" in their current living situation, compared to 33% of youth respondents in 2017.

In addition to feeling unsafe, 55% of youth reported their safety had been threatened at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey. Forty percent (40%) of youth reported they had been assaulted or physically attacked in the year prior to the survey.

Youth experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of exploitation, including trading sex or drugs for basic needs. National research has shown that an estimated 60% of commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) are homeless.[11] In San Francisco in 2019, thirty-four percent (34%) of youth respondents reported trading drugs for a place to stay, compared to 26% in 2017.

Figure 23.   EXPERIENCES WITH CRIME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS
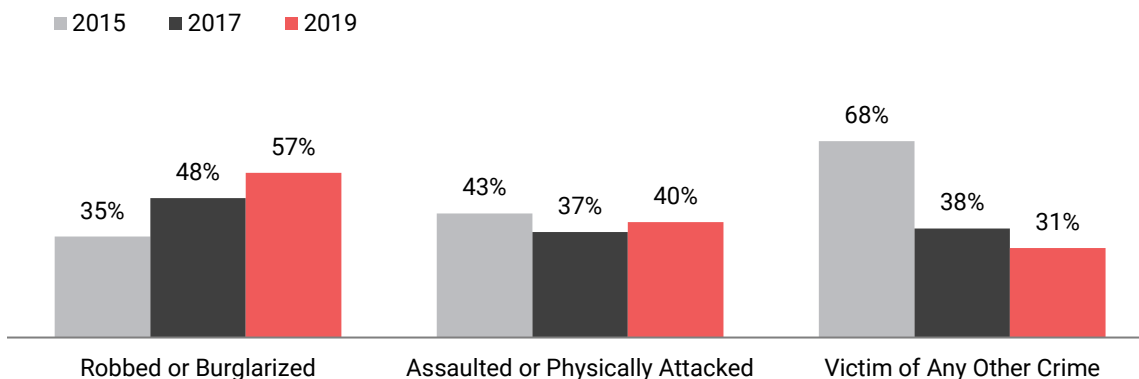
2015 n = 142-145; 2017 n = 180-185; 2019 n = 174-176
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

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[10] Gaetz, S. (2004). Safe Streets for Whom? Homeless Youth, Social Exclusion, and Criminal Victimization. Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice. University of Toronto Press. 46, 4, 423:456.

[11] Gaetz, S. (2004). Safe Streets for Whom? Homeless Youth, Social Exclusion, and Criminal Victimization. Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice. University of Toronto Press. 46, 4, 423:456.

HEALTH STATUS

Thirty-six percent (36%) of youth respondents rated their physical health as "good" or "very good." Seventeen percent (17%) of youth rated their physical health as "poor" or "very poor."

Sixty-five percent (65%) of youth reported living with one or more health conditions, including psychiatric and emotional conditions (48%), post-traumatic stress disorder (43%), and drug or alcohol use (31%). Forty-one percent (41%) of youth reported that their health condition prevented them holding a job, living in stable housing, or taking care of themselves.

Figure 24.   HEALTH CONDITIONS
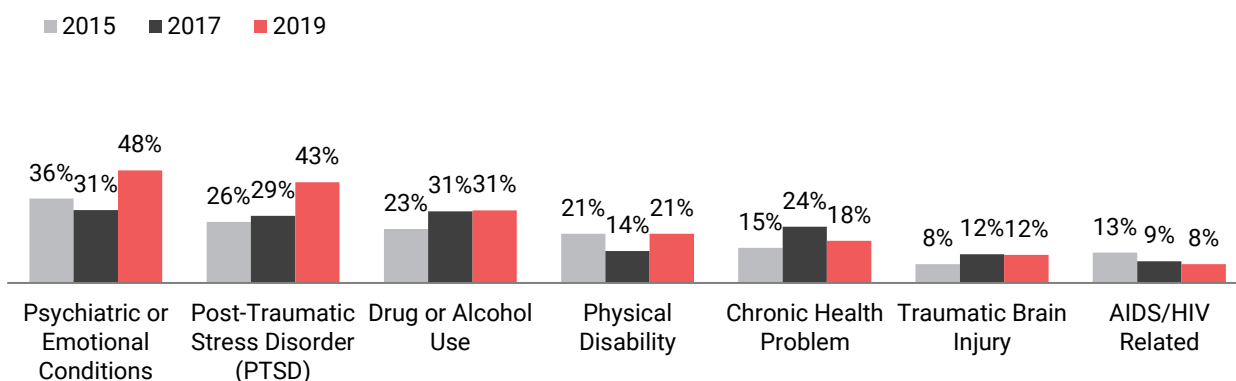
2015 n = 163-166; 2017 n = 212-217; 2019 n = 184
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

San Francisco benefits from a number of agencies dedicated to serving unaccompanied children and youth experiencing homelessness. While youth have access to services in San Francisco and many are eligible for assistance, it is young people's perception of the service system that may matter most. If youth believe that they cannot access services or are ineligible, they will be less likely to seek assistance or support.

Nearly half (49%) of youth respondents reported accessing youth specific services "often" or "always" in the 12 months prior to the survey, while 12% reported that they never accessed youth specific services.

When asked about barriers encountered trying to access services and housing, 30% of youth reported transportation barriers and 27% cited the lack of an ID or personal documentation. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of youth reported that their age prevented them from receiving permanent housing, and 31% felt their age prevented them from obtaining employment.

SERVICE NEEDS

Youth reported their greatest service needs were food (67%), clothing (55%), dental care (45%), health care (42%), and shelter/housing (41%). Compared to all other survey respondents,

Figure 25.   CURRENT NEEDS OF YOUTH (TOP TEN RESPONSES)
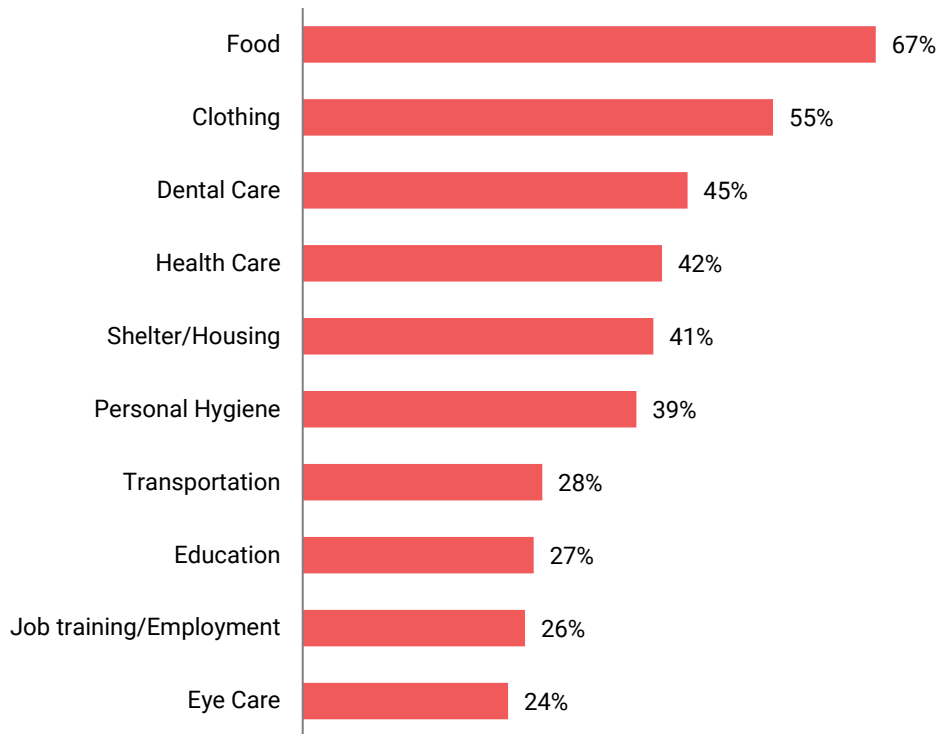
n = 172
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Fifty-two percent (52%) of youth reported receiving some form of government benefit, compared to 88% of adult respondents. Thirty-two percent (32%) of youth reported receiving food stamps and 20% reported receiving Medi-Cal.

Among those youth not receiving government assistance, 43% did not want government assistance, 23% never applied, 11% reported the paperwork was too difficult, and 11% had their benefits cut off.

Figure 26.   GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE RECEIVED (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)
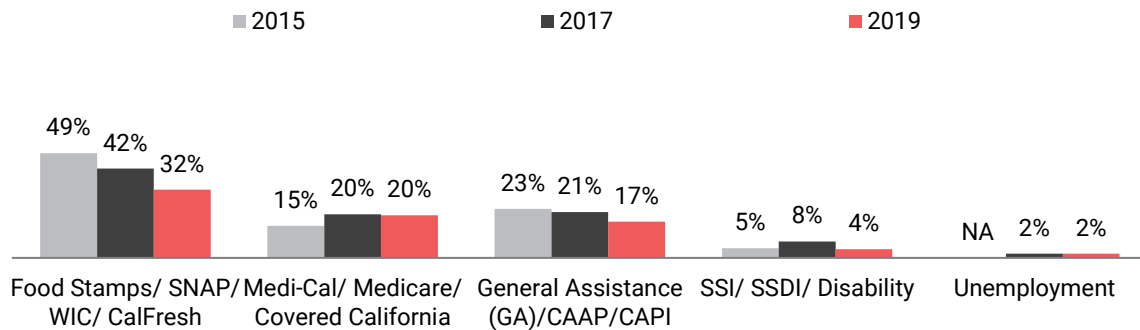

2015 n = 155; 2017 n = 196; 2019 n = 173

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100. "Unemployment" was not added to the survey until 2017.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND ASSETS

Responses to youth homelessness have continued to stress the need for connecting young people with family and community members who can support their transition into adulthood.

Fifteen percent (15%) of youth respondents reported trying to move back in with their parents or family members. Fourteen percent (14%) of youth reported being in contact with their parents or family "a couple times a year," while 26% reported having contact at least "a few times a month." Nine percent (9%) of youth respondents reported that their parents were also currently experiencing homelessness. Forty-two percent (42%) of youth reported having a supportive adult in the Bay Area.

Figure 27.   SUPPORTIVE ADULT IN THE BAY AREA
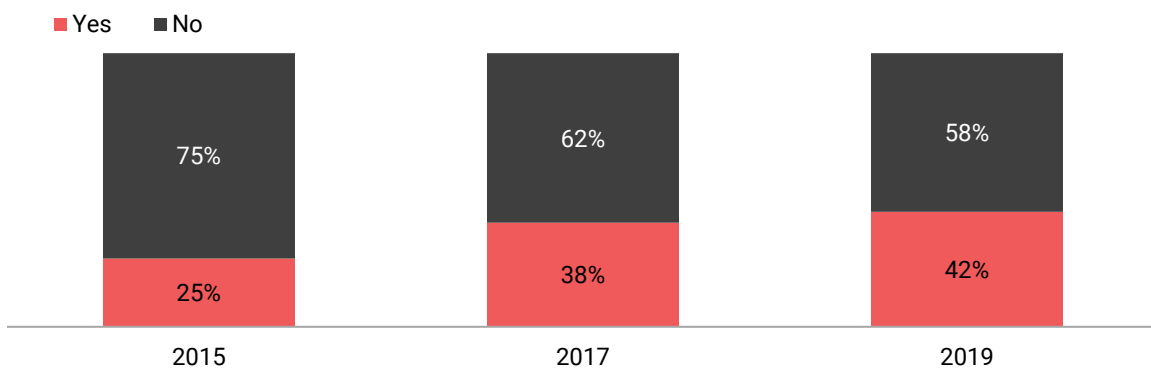
2015 n = 150; 2017 n = 192; 2019 n = 176

Appendix A: Methodology

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2019 San Francisco Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count & Survey was to produce a point-in-time estimate of unaccompanied young people under the age of 25 experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. The results of the general street count and youth street count were combined with the results from the shelter count to produce the total estimated number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in San Francisco on a given night, using the HUD definition of homelessness for the Point-in-Time Count. The subsequent, in-depth qualitative survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those counted. A more detailed description of the Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count methodology follows.

For additional information regarding the general street count, during which youth were also enumerated, please refer to the *2019 San Francisco Homeless Point-in-Time Count & Survey Comprehensive Report*.

COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS YOUTH COUNT METHOD

The Youth Point-in-Time Count & Survey methodology used in 2019 had three primary components:

- Youth street count: a targeted enumeration of unsheltered youth under the age of 25 between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and midnight on January 24, and at Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach between 10:00 a.m. and noon on the morning of January 24;

- Shelter count: an enumeration of sheltered homeless youth on same night as the street count; and

- Survey: an in-person survey of unsheltered and sheltered youth conducted by peer surveyors and program staff in the weeks following the general street count.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated on community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical plans, methodological decisions, and interagency coordination efforts. ASR provided technical assistance for these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 19 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the HUD publication, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*, as well as in the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago publication, *Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit*.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates have been valued partners in the planning and implementation of this and previous youth counts. The Local Homeless Coordinating Board (LHCB), the lead entity of San Francisco's Continuum of Care, was invited to comment on the methodology and

subsequently endorsed it. The planning team was comprised of staff from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and consultants from ASR. Throughout the planning process, the planning team also requested the collaboration, cooperation, and participation of several youth service provider agencies that specifically serve young people experiencing homelessness and possess considerable expertise relevant to the youth count. Young people with lived experience of homelessness also served as collaborators during the planning process.

YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of unsheltered homeless persons was used:

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train stations, airport, or camping ground.

GOAL

The goal of the 2019 dedicated youth count was to improve representation of unaccompanied homeless children and transitional-age youth under the age of 25 in the Point-in-Time Count. Many homeless children and transitional-age youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Since 2013, planning for the supplemental youth count has included homeless youth service providers and youth with lived experience of homelessness. Local service providers identified locations where youth experiencing homelessness were known to congregate and recruited youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate other youth experiencing homelessness to serve as guides for the count.

As in past counts, the locations corresponded to areas in the neighborhoods of the Haight, Mission, Tenderloin, Union Square, Castro, SOMA, the Panhandle, Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, the Bayview, and the Embarcadero.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Service providers familiar with the map areas identified in each neighborhood were asked to recruit currently homeless youth to participate in the count. At the Crossroads, Homeless Youth Alliance, Larkin Street for Youth Services, LYRIC, and the Third Street Youth Center and Clinic recruited approximately 70 youth to work as peer enumerators, counting homeless youth in the identified areas of San Francisco on January 24, 2019. Youth workers were paid $15 per hour for their time, including time spent in training prior to the count. Youth and youth service provider staff members were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.

In order to participate in the count, all youth workers and service provider staff were required to attend an hour-long training held immediately before the count on January 24, 2019. Training took place from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and in addition to the presentation given by lead staff at the dispatch center, youth count teams received printed instructions detailing how to count unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness. Training covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homelessness, how to identify homeless individuals, potential locations of homeless individuals, how to safely and

respectfully conduct the count, how to use the tally count sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered, and other tips to help ensure an accurate count.

DATA COLLECTION

The youth count was conducted at the same time as the general street count, from 8:00 p.m. to midnight on January 24, 2019. Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach were also covered by youth count teams between 10:00 a.m. and noon on January 24. Youth worked in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth provider staff. Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and deduplicated by examining location, gender, and age. In total, 49 persons under the age of 25 were identified as duplicates and removed from the final data set.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Parks considered too big or densely wooded to inspect safely and accurately in the dark on the night of the count were enumerated by youth count teams the morning of Thursday, January 24, and included Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach.

DEPLOYMENT CENTERS

To achieve complete coverage of the areas identified for the youth count, the planning team identified two deployment centers on the night of the count: Larkin Street Youth Services and 3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic. Teams were assigned to a deployment center based on their agency affiliation and/or convenience. To facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field, the planning team divided up the enumeration routes and assigned them to the teams most familiar with the coverage areas. On the night of the count, city and ASR staff supported the deployment centers, greeting volunteers and guides, distributing instructions, maps, and supplies to enumeration teams, and collecting data sheets from returning teams. ASR staff also reviewed all maps and tally sheets returned by youth count teams to ensure map areas were canvassed and tally sheets were completed correctly.

LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION

Youth count teams canvassed routes of approximately 6 to 30 blocks in teams of two to four, with teams coordinated by youth provider staff. Each team received a map that demarcated the area to be canvassed and clearly showed the boundaries of the counting area. Two smaller inset maps showed the approximate location of the route within the broader context of San Francisco and pinpointed the location of known hotspots for homelessness. Deployment center staff provided each team with tally sheets to record the number of homeless youth observed and basic demographic and location information. Deployment center staff also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment log sheet.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as diverse as San Francisco. Point-in-Time Counts are "snapshots" that quantify the size of the homeless population at a given point during the year. Hence, the count may not be representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the homeless population seasonally or over time. Youth in particular are among the most difficult to identify during homeless enumerations.

For a variety of reasons, young people experiencing homelessness generally do not wish to be seen and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of the homeless youth will inevitably result. The methods employed in a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers, the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy.

Many factors may contribute to missed opportunities, including the difficulty in identifying and enumerating persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.

Even though the Point-in-Time Count is likely an undercount of the homeless youth population, the methodology employed—coupled with the homeless survey—is the most comprehensive approach available.

SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY

GOAL

The goal of the HUD shelter and institution count is to gain an accurate count of youth temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across San Francisco. These data are vital to gaining an accurate, overall count of the homeless population and understanding where homeless youth receive shelter.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of sheltered homelessness for Point-in-Time Counts was used. This definition includes youth living in a supervised publicly- or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The occupancy of emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and safe haven programs with beds dedicated for individuals experiencing homelessness was documented for the night of January 24, 2019. A dedicated staff person from each facility provided submitted their data for the night of January 24, 2019 via the web-based Shelter Count Survey. For these programs, all homeless persons in the facility on the night of the count were included in the Point-in-Time Count per HUD reporting requirements.[12]

A designated staff person provided the count for each of these facilities; clients were not interviewed. Data was submitted via the web-based Shelter Count Survey.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

In 2019, increased outreach to service providers by City staff resulted in improved representation of programs serving persons experiencing homelessness across San Francisco. Data from 61 programs were included in the official HUD reports, of which 13 were new participants. These 13 new programs accounted for 455 sheltered homeless individuals reported in the count. Additionally, the shelter count transitioned from a paper-based tally form to a web-based survey in order to streamline data collection activities, improve data quality, and collect additional demographic and subpopulation details when available.

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[12] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Planning and Development. (2018). Notice for 2019 Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Point-in-Time Count (PIT) Data Collection for Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A survey of 184 unique youth experiencing homelessness was conducted between January 28 and February 13, 2019 to yield qualitative data about young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning.

The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, duration and recurrence of homelessness, nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. While the survey instrument implemented for the youth survey collected the exact same information as the adult survey effort, youth were also asked several additional questions designed to better understand the unique experiences of young people. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of youth homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by youth survey workers with lived homeless experience who were referred by local service providers. Training sessions were facilitated by ASR, City staff, and community partners. Potential interviewers were led through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information as well as detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Youth survey workers were compensated at a rate of $7 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily obtained if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. McDonald's gift cards in the amount of $5 were provided as an incentive for youth participating in the 2019 homeless survey. The gift cards were easy to distribute, had wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

- The 2019 San Francisco Homeless Youth Survey was administered by the trained survey team between January 28 and February 13, 2019.

- In all, the survey team collected 184 unique and valid surveys

SURVEY SAMPLING

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 1,145 unaccompanied homeless children and transitional-age youth, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 184 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 7% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within seven percentage points of the current results.

The 2019 youth survey was administered in shelters, transitional housing facilities, and on the street. In order to ensure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach youth living in these programs.

Strategic attempts were also made to reach youth in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as minority ethnic groups. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. Since 2013, the ASR youth survey methodology has prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an "every third encounter" survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach every third person they considered to be an eligible survey respondent. If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed.

DATA COLLECTION

Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the street or shelter location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to be candid in their responses and were informed that these responses would be framed as general findings, would be kept confidential, and would not be traceable to any single individual.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey requested respondents' initials and date of birth so that duplication could be avoided without compromising the respondents' anonymity. Upon completion of the survey effort, an extensive verification process was conducted to eliminate duplicates. This process examined respondents' date of birth, initials, gender, ethnicity, length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other survey questions. This left 184 valid youth surveys for analysis. Due to the sensitive nature of the survey, respondents were not required to answer every survey question, and respondents were asked to skip questions that were not applicable. For this reason, the number of respondents for each survey question may not total 184.

SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The 2019 San Francisco Homeless Survey methodology relies heavily on self-reported data collected from peer surveyors and program staff. While self-report allows individuals to represent their own experiences, self-reported data are often more variable than clinically reported data. However, using a peer-to-peer interviewing methodology is believed to allow respondents to be more candid with their answers and to help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Further, service providers and City staff members recommended young people who would be the best suited to conducting interviews and these youth received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. Service providers and City staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted, the process for which included reviewing individual surveys submitted by surveyors and assessing patterns in survey responses for inconsistencies.

It is important to recognize that variations between survey years may result from shifts in the demographic profiles of surveyors and accessibility to certain populations. Survey confidence intervals presented indicate the level of variability that may occur from year to year when interpreting findings. While every effort was made to collect surveys from a random and diverse sample of sheltered and unsheltered individuals, the hard-to-reach nature of youth experiencing homelessness prevents a true random sampling. Recruitment of diverse and geographically dispersed surveyors was prioritized. However, equal survey participation across all populations may be limited by the participation and adequate representation of subpopulations in planning and implementation processes.

Consequently, survey data and data derived from survey responses may shift from year to year. It is for this reason Point-in-Time Count data should be used in conjunction with other community sources of data on youth experiencing homelessness to gather a comprehensive understanding of the community.

Appendix B: Definitions and Abbreviations

Chronic homelessness – Defined by HUD as an unaccompanied individual or head of a family household with a disabling condition who has either continuously experienced homelessness for a year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months, in the past three years.

Disabling condition – Defined by HUD as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including an impairment caused by alcohol or drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or Traumatic Brain Injury that is expected to be long-term and impacts the individual's ability to live independently; a developmental disability; or HIV/AIDS.

Emergency shelter – The provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 180 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for survivors and their children.

Family – A household with at least one adult and one child under the age of 18.

Homeless – Under the Category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

HUD – Abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Sheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

Single individual – An unaccompanied adult over the age of 18.

Transitional-age youth – Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

Transitional housing – Housing in which homeless individuals may live up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services – which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination –may be provided by the organization managing the housing or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

Unaccompanied children – Children under the age of 18 who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian and are not a parent presenting with or sleeping in the same place as their own child(ren).

Unsheltered homeless individuals – Individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.

Appendix C: Table of Figures

Appendix D: Figure Sources

All Point in Time Count Data: The figure source for the data is Applied Survey Research, (2013-2019) San Francisco Homeless Count.

All Homeless Survey Findings: The figure source for the data is Applied Survey Research, (2013-2019) San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey.

 All Subpopulation Data: The figure source for the data is Applied Survey Research, (2013-2019) San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey.

All U.S. Census Data: The figure source for the data is Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov.

San Francisco

YOUTH HOMELESS COUNT & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

2019