

A Snapshot of Homelessness in the Bay Area

**THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE
ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING**

AUGUST 2, 2013

BACKGROUND

The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) has focused for over two decades on estimating the number of homeless people in each county and the region. We have often discussed the challenge of finding data to back the trends that providers see every day in shelters, housing and service centers. Early efforts centered on capturing a census of bed use and turn-aways. Statistical efforts using the AFDC-HAP program were done annually during the 1990's. With more wide-spread use of technology, and after substantial review of research methodologies, HUD began requiring that jurisdictions receiving federal funding for homeless assistance through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act conduct a point-in-time (PIT) homeless count every two years. But how much do these PIT counts reflect what we see in our communities? And how do they fit with the other data we see, from HMIS, national studies, and other sources?

The RSC has discussed completing the homeless census and evaluating the resulting data several times over the years. In June 2002, we discussed methodologies and the cost-effectiveness of counting the homeless. In May 2004, we looked into the value of HMIS in this effort. In November of the same year, HomeBase presented a briefing memo to the RSC on HUD's suggested methodologies for conducting homeless counts. In March 2005, April 2007, and March 2009, and January 2010 the RSC discussed the homeless count results for those years and provided feedback and impressions of the counts conducted in members' communities. In July 2007, we discussed methodologies for enumerating the homeless population. In 2012, HUD began requiring CoCs to conduct sheltered point-in-time counts in even-numbered years in addition to the existing biennial sheltered/unsheltered count; the RSC discussed approaches to sheltered point-in-time counts in that year. Most recently, in May of this year, we debriefed community processes for the 2013 point-in-time and housing inventory counts as well as plans for 2014. This memo provides an updated snapshot of homelessness in the Bay Area and other local communities based on point-in-time count data.

HOMELESS CENSUS

HUD requires that jurisdictions that receive federal funding for homeless assistance through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act conduct a point-in-time count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families every two years. Jurisdictions must conduct the count within one 24-hour period during the last 10 days of January. In 2012, HUD began also requiring point-in-time counts of sheltered homeless individuals in even-numbered years in addition to the biennial census. Because it is difficult to compare data from the sheltered point-in-time counts to more comprehensive point-in-time data and because 2012 was the first year in which the sheltered-only count was required, this memo does not include data from the 2012 sheltered counts.

HUD requires that communities count the number of homeless persons who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of “homeless,” which allows HUD to aggregate the data to understand national trends in homelessness. Some communities choose to count using a broader definition of homeless in order to inform community decisions and allocations of resources, and then parse the data for HUD reporting requirements.

HUD allows each community to determine its own enumeration technique within certain boundaries. Strategies differ across communities. In recent years, communities have begun using the same methodology from year to year and are able to more accurately compare the data they collect. The tables below show PIT count numbers as reported to HUD from a few nearby counties (though 2013 data is not yet available from all communities):

TOTAL PERSONS (SHELTERED AND UNSHELTERED)

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
Contra Costa	2,268	3,824	4,274	3,798	-11%	+67%
San Francisco	5,171	5,823	5,610	6,776	+21%	+31%
Santa Clara	7,202	7,086	7,067	7,631	+8%	+6%
Sonoma	1,314	3,247	4,541	4,280	+6%	+225%
Napa	365	314	230			-37%
Marin	1002	1,026	862	693	-20%	-30.8%
Solano	1,956	829	569			-71%
Alameda	4,838	4,341	4178			-14%
San Mateo	1,798	1,567	1,926	2,281	+18%	+10.5%
Santa Cruz	2,789	2,265	2771			-0.6%
Sacramento	2,452	2,800	2,358	2,538	+8%	+3.5%
Monterey*	1,402	2,407	2,507	2,590	+3%	+84.7%
Los Angeles	68,608	42,694	45,422			-34%

* Table cells have been crossed out where 2013 data is not available for that community.

** In 2011, San Benito County merged with the Monterey County CoC. Because joint San Benito County and Monterey County data is only available for 2011, we have not included that information here for consistency and comparability.

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
Contra Costa	227	414	1307	858	-34%	+227%

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
San Francisco	194	178	233	229	-2%	+18%
Santa Clara	366	285	232	349	+50%	-5%
Sonoma	149	165	190	153	-19%	+3%
Napa	32	16	19			-40%
Marin	52	85	86			+65%
Solano	475	157	69			-86%
Alameda	653	379	90			-86%
San Mateo	126	120	148	180	+22%	+30%
Santa Cruz	127	145	115			-9%
Sacramento	163	185	203	249	+23%	+53%
Monterey	79	117	251	221	-12%	+180%
Los Angeles	6,238		3,035			-51%

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
Contra Costa	1,086	394	467			-57%*
San Francisco	532	514	635	679	+7%	+28%
Santa Clara	1,257	1,008	617	1,067	+73%	-15%
Sonoma	426	488	567	451	-20%	+6%
Napa	129	53	59			-54%
Marin	156	259	236			-51%
Solano	1,138	361	193			-83%
Alameda	1,812	1,570	1,136			-37%
San Mateo	410	416	501			+25%
Santa Cruz	381	450	380			-0%
Sacramento	487	543	604	801	+33%	+64%
Monterey	253	498	483	550	+14%	+117%
Los Angeles	16,643	9,763	9,218			-45%

* Comparison to 2011 numbers

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
Contra Costa	1,182	2,365	1,947	1,161	-40.4%	-1.8%
San Francisco	4,639	5,309	4,937	5,963	+21%	+29%
Santa Clara	5,945	6,078	6,240	6,361	+2%	+7%
Sonoma	888	2,216	3,974	3,552	-11%	+300%
Napa	236	261	171			-28%
Marin	846	767	626			-26%
Solano	818	468	376			-54%
Alameda	3,026	2,771	3,039			+0%
San Mateo	1,388	1,151	1,425			+3%
Santa Cruz	2,408	1,815	2,391			-1%
Sacramento	1,965	2,257	1,727	1,729	+0%	-12%
Monterey	887	1,909	1,927	2,025	+5%	+128%
Los Angeles	51,965	37,171	35,838			-31%

From the 2007 to the 2013 (or 2011) PIT counts, there is a slight trend among these communities toward a decrease in the total number of people experiencing homelessness. This is reflected particularly in the number of people in family households, which decreased in the majority of communities. However, this change could be attributed to changes in family size. A slight majority of communities showed an increase in the populations of individual adults experiencing homelessness.

In 2013, HUD guidance for the sheltered count instructed CoCs to only include persons in programs that verify homeless status based on HUD’s definition of homelessness. Because definitions of “homeless” vary widely between funding stream (and many programs may not verify homeless status), many programs (most notably many Rescue Missions) serving homeless persons were excluded from the sheltered point-in-time count for the first time this year. In communities where this is true, there may be a significant false drop in the number of homeless persons reported to HUD between 2011 and 2013.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If 2013 data is not yet public for your community, what are you seeing on the ground with respect to your community’s family, unaccompanied children, and individual adult populations?

What has been your experience with the PIT count numbers versus what you are seeing in your communities and programs?

Communities have recently begun reporting data on unaccompanied children (under 18 years) and youth (aged 18-25), either as part of the overall point-in-time count or through a special youth count. The following table shows the population of unaccompanied minor children for communities reporting that data:

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY CHILDREN (<18 YEARS OLD)

	2007 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2009 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2011 POINT IN TIME COUNT	2013 POINT IN TIME COUNT *	% CHANGE 2011-13	% CHANGE, 2007 - 13 (OR MOST RECENT YEAR)
Contra Costa	77	40	1	11	+1000%	-86%
San Francisco	26	10	38	134	+252%	+415%
Santa Clara	162	63	210	203	-3%	+61%
Sonoma	3	92	264	277	+5%	+91%
Napa	0	28	0			+0%
Marin	23	12	1			-96%
Solano	56	92	8			-86%
Alameda	62	3	3			-95%
San Mateo	20	20	7	9	+29%	-55%
Santa Cruz	10	17	88			+89%
Sacramento	9	35	27	8	-70%	-11%
Monterey	52	18	97	15	-85%	-71%
Los Angeles	1,288	638	366			-72%

In some communities, the numbers of unaccompanied children experiencing homelessness decreased dramatically, while the numbers increased just as dramatically in other communities. It is difficult to discern a trend in the population of unaccompanied children based on the limited data available. It may be that changes in the number of unaccompanied children counted are due to evolving methodologies as communities learn how best to count this population.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do the numbers of unaccompanied children reflect your experience with this population in your communities and programs? Do you know of any challenges your community has faced in counting unaccompanied children and youth?

If no data on unaccompanied children is presented for your community, what are you seeing in terms of numbers of children experiencing homelessness outside of family households?

CONTEXTUALIZING OUR SCALE OF NEED

When the total populations of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin,

Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma) are combined (for a total of 7.1 million people at the 2010 census), the Bay Area is comparable in population size to Los Angeles or New York City (which held 9.8 million and 8.2 million people, respectively, in 2010). Los Angeles and New York City are the highest impacted areas for homelessness in the United States. The table below shows how the Bay Area compares to these areas. There is no 2013 comparison as 2013 data is not yet available for several communities.

TOTAL PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

	2007	2009	2011	% CHANGE, 2007-11
Bay Area Total	30,062	28,137	27,493	- 8.5 %
Los Angeles	68,608	42,694	45,422	- 33.8 %
New York City	50,372	50,261	51,123	+ 1.5 %

HISTORICAL TRENDS

To put this all in perspective, we can look at the historical trends of homelessness in the Bay Area and LA. Again, the table below does not reflect data from 2013, because that information is not yet available for all communities.

	SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA	LOS ANGELES COUNTY
Late 1980s	Estimated 160,000 over the course of a year	Estimated 100,000-160,000 over the course of a year
Early 1990s	Estimated 74,000 over the course of a year	Estimated 62,000 - 107,000 over the course of a year
Mid 2000s	24,950 at a point in time	83,347 at a point in time
Late 2000s	28,137 at a point in time	42,694 at a point in time
Early 2010s	27,493 at a point in time	45,422 at a point in time

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
 What are your thoughts on the historical trends that we see for the Bay Area, L.A. and New York?

 Do the historical trends represent incredible progress in all the housing and services we have built and created? Or is the decrease just the result of different methods yielding different results?

THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING AUGUST 2, 2013

HomeBase intern Eli Hamilton contributed to this memo. For more information please contact Ashley Hart McIntyre, Staff Lawyer at Ashley@homebaseccc.org or 415.788.7961 ex. 306.