



DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELESSNESS AND
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

SAN FRANCISCO 2024 YOUTH HOMELESSNESS POINT-IN-TIME COUNT & REPORT

Prepared by
Applied Survey Research



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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:

- Five Keys Charter Schools and Programs
- Homeless Youth Alliance
- Larkin Street Youth Services
- San Francisco LGBT Community Center
- Third Street Youth Center and Clinic

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

We thank Larkin Street Youth Services, Third Street Youth Center and Clinic, and Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 Community School for providing use of their facilities as dispatch centers on the night of the count.

We thank Five Keys Charter Schools and Programs, Homeless Youth Alliance, Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco LGBT Community Center, and the Third Street Youth Center and Clinic who assisted with the recruitment, training, and oversight of the youth count enumerators.

We appreciate the following organizations that provided data for the shelter count:

Participating Organizations

Hamilton Families, Huckleberry Youth Programs, Larkin Street Youth Services, Salvation Army, SF SafeHouse, Raphael House, Homeless Prenatal Program, Swords to Plowshares, Bay View Hunters Point Multipurpose Senior Services, Metropolitan Fresh Start House, Dolores Street Community Services, HomeRise, Asian Women's Shelter, Episcopal Community Services (ECS), La Casa de Las Madres, North Beach Citizens, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Five Keys Charter Schools & Programs, Rafiki Coalition for Health and Wellness, Positive Resource Center (PRC), Community Forward SF, Department of Public Health, Providence Foundation, Hospitality House, Bayview Hunters Point Foundation for Community Improvement, 3rd Street Youth Center and Clinic, San Francisco Community Health Center, Urban Alchemy, Lutheran Social Services of Northern California, Compass Family Services, Asian Women's Resource Center, WeHope, Berkeley Food and Housing Project, Acceptance Place, Adult Residential Tx, Adult WM, Ashbury House, Avenues, Baker Street House, Cameo House, Carroll House, Chinese Hospital, Clay St, Cortland House, CPMC- Davies Campus, CPMC- Mission Bernal Campus, CPMC- Van Ness Campus, Dore Residence, Dorine Loso House, Ferguson Place, Friendship House, Grove Street House, Jelani Family Residential Step-Down, Jo Ruffin Place, Joe Healy Medical Detox, La Amistad, La Posada, Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center, Medical Center In-Patient, Mission Bay Campus, Mount Zion Campus, Parnassus Campus, Progress House, Robertson Place, Rypins House, San Jose Place, Shrader House, The Epiphany Center- Adult Recovery Program, The Epiphany Center- Broderick House, Zuckenburg San Francisco General Hospital.

Teams of trained, current and formerly homeless surveyors administered surveys on the streets of San Francisco and at various service locations. We thank them for their excellent work. We also thank the Gubio Project, St. Vincent de Paul, Downtown Streets Team, Urban Alchemy, SFHOT, Homeless Youth Alliance, and Larkin Street Youth Services for their support in recruiting these surveyors.

Finally, we thank the staff of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) for providing feedback and assistance throughout the project on many aspects, including project methodology, survey development, participation in the count, data entry coordination, review of this report, and the presentation of findings.

INTRODUCTION

Per requirements from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Continuums of Care (CoC) across the country report the findings of their local Point-in-Time (PIT) Count in their annual funding application to HUD. Currently, the San Francisco CoC receives approximately \$62 million dollars annually in federal funding.

The 2024 Homeless Youth PIT Count was conducted as part of the broader PIT 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

For the purposes of this report, “homeless youth” refers to unaccompanied children under the age of 18 and unaccompanied transitional-age youth, or young adults, age 18 to 24. These youth are reported to HUD within the “households without children” and “households with only children” household types. Transitional-age youth and children that are part of families, categorized by HUD as “households with at least one adult and one child” are excluded from this analysis.

San Francisco has partnered with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct its Point-in-Time Census since 2009. The reports maintain a similar methodology, ensuring as much consistency as possible from one year to the next. ASR is a locally based social research firm that has over 23 years of experience in homeless enumeration and needs assessments, having conducted homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in the standard process 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*.

Project Overview and Goals

The 2024 Youth Planning Team identified several important project goals:

- To measure changes in the numbers and characteristics of the homeless population since the 2022 San Francisco Homeless Youth Count and Survey, and to track progress toward ending youth homelessness;
- To define the extent of homelessness among homeless youth in San Francisco; and
- To identify the primary causes of homelessness, patterns of service usage, and programming needs among homeless 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.

¹Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2022 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. This definition includes individuals and families:

- Living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); 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.





YOUTH POINT-IN-TIME COUNT & SURVEY

Due to the often-hidden nature of youth homelessness, there is limited data available on unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth experiencing homelessness. Although largely considered an undercount, current federal estimates suggest there are approximately 35,000 homeless 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 2024 San Francisco Youth Point-in-Time Count and Survey represents a complete enumeration of all sheltered and unsheltered unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. It consists of two primary components:

Targeted Street Count of Unaccompanied Children and Young Adults: A daytime count of unsheltered unaccompanied children under 18 and unaccompanied youth 18-24 years old on January 30, 2024 from approximately 8:00 p.m. to midnight. The youth count was conducted at the same time as the general street count, and data from both efforts were compared and de-duplicated by examining location, gender, age, and dwelling type.

General Shelter Count: A count of homeless individuals and families staying at publicly and privately operated shelters on the night of February 30, 2024. This included youth staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and domestic violence shelters.

The Youth Point-in-Time Count and Survey also included a supplemental survey component:

Homeless Survey: An in-person interview of sheltered and unsheltered homeless youth under the age of 25 conducted by youth outreach surveyors in the weeks following the youth street count. The homeless survey consisted of the general survey and supplemental youth questions. Data from the survey were used to refine the Point-in-Time Count youth estimates.

This section of the report provides a summary of the results of the Youth Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Results from prior years are provided to better understand the trends and characteristics of youth homelessness over time.

For more information regarding the dedicated youth count methodology, please see [Appendix A: Methodology](#).

²Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2023). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

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

SAN FRANCISCO

2024 YOUTH POINT-IN-TIME COUNT & SURVEY

Every two years, during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local homeless populations in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each local Continuum of Care.

The 2024 City and County of San Francisco Point-in-Time Count was a community-wide effort conducted on January 30th, 2024. While the entire county was canvassed by teams of volunteers, teams led by young people with lived experience of homelessness conducted a supplemental count of youth under the age of 25. In the weeks following the street count, a survey was administered to 157 unsheltered and sheltered unaccompanied youth in order to profile their experiences and characteristics.



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESSNESS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



TOTAL YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS:

1,196



31%

Sheltered
n=373



69%

Unsheltered
n=823

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN + PARENTING YOUTH TREND LINES



TOTAL POPULATION BY AGE



93%

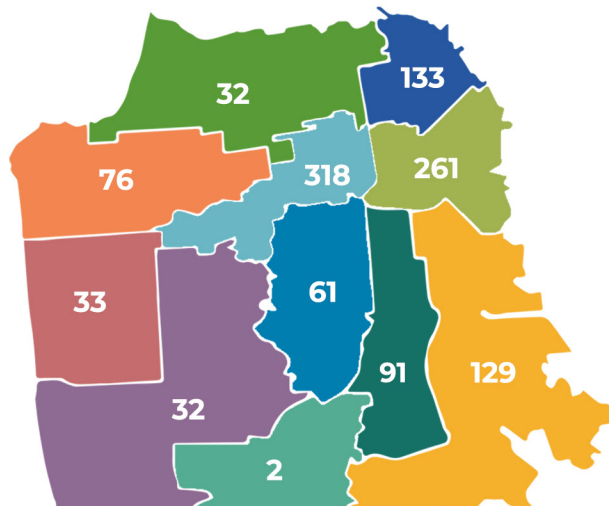
7%

Under 18

18-24

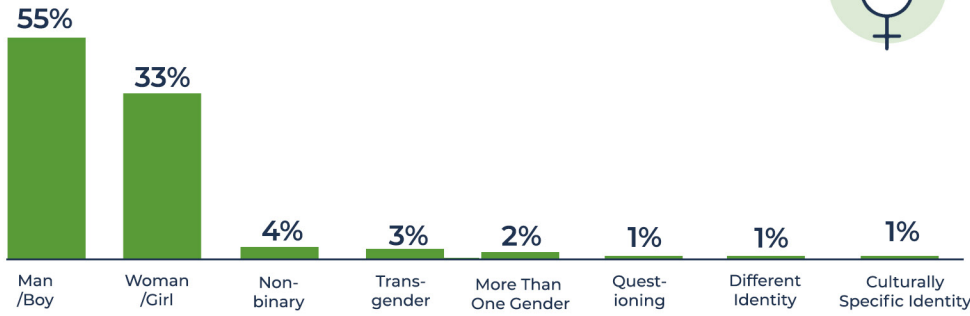
TOTAL POPULATION BY DISTRICT

District	Total
1	76
2	32
3	133
4	33
5	318
6	261
7	32
8	61
9	91
10	129
11	2
Confidential/Scattered Site	28
Total	1196

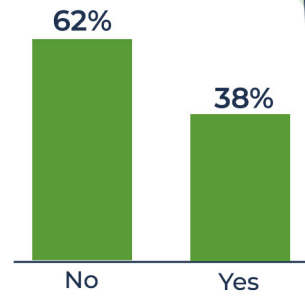


DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER



LGBTQ+ STATUS

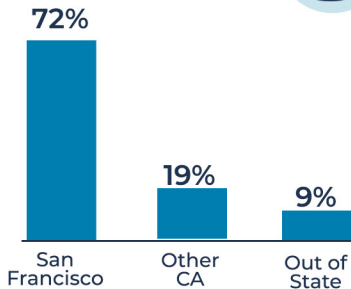


RACE/ ETHNICITY

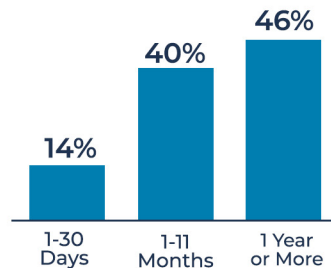


DATA PORTRAITS [□]

LOCATION WHERE LAST HOUSED



DURATION OF CURRENT HOMELESSNESS



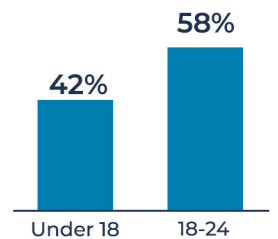
FIRST EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

18%



Reported their current episode of homelessness as being their first

AGE AT FIRST EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



PRIMARY CONDITION THAT LEAD TO HOMELESSNESS

(Top 5 Responses)



22%

Lost Job

16%

Argument with family/friend who asked you to leave

14%

Eviction

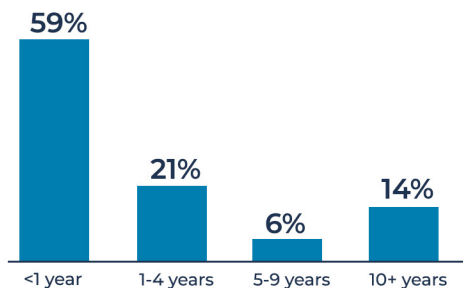
12%

Family/Domestic Violence

12%

Mental Health Issues

LENGTH OF TIME HOUSED IN SAN FRANCISCO BEFORE MOST RECENTLY BECOMING HOMELESS



JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVED



24%

of survey respondents spent one or more nights in jail/prison/juvenile hall in the past year.

FOSTER CARE



34%

of survey respondents have been in the foster care system

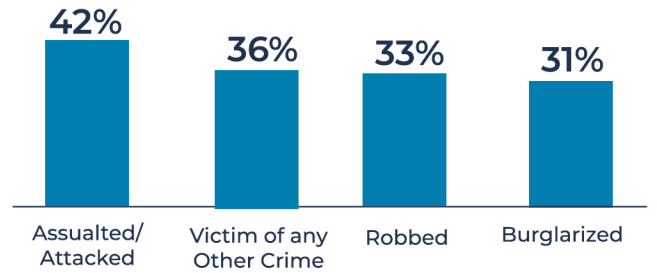
ADULT SUPPORT

54%

Reported having a supportive adult in the Bay Area



EXPERIENCE WITH VIOLENCE IN THE PAST YEAR



CONTRIBUTING CAUSES TO HOMELESSNESS

(Top 5 Responses)



39%

Financial Issues

36%

Emotional Abuse

34%

Mental Health Issues

28%

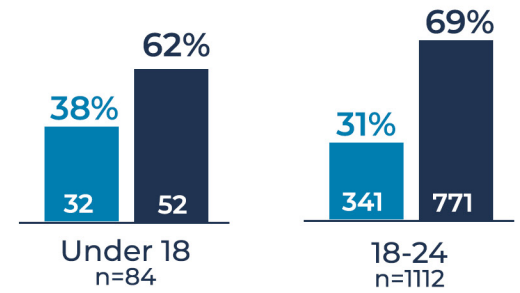
Addiction

23%

Physical Abuse

SHELTER BREAKDOWN BY AGE

Sheltered Unsheltered



SELF-REPORTED HEALTH ¹

Current health conditions that may affect the housing stability or employment of those experiencing homelessness.

PSYCHIATRIC OR EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS



44%

Report having a psychiatric or emotional condition

CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEM/CONDITION



27%

Report having a chronic health problem/condition

DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE



26%

Report having abused drugs or alcohol

PHYSICAL DISABILITY



19%

Report having a physical disability

RECEIVED SPECIAL EDUCATION



16%

Report having received special education

HIV/AIDS RELATED ILLNESS



3%

Report having an HIV/AIDS related illness

DISABLING CONDITION

A disabling condition is defined by HUD as a developmental disability, HIV/AIDS, or a long-term physical or mental impairment that impacts a person's ability to live independently but could be improved with stable housing.

29%



of survey respondents report having at least one disabling condition



GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE [□]



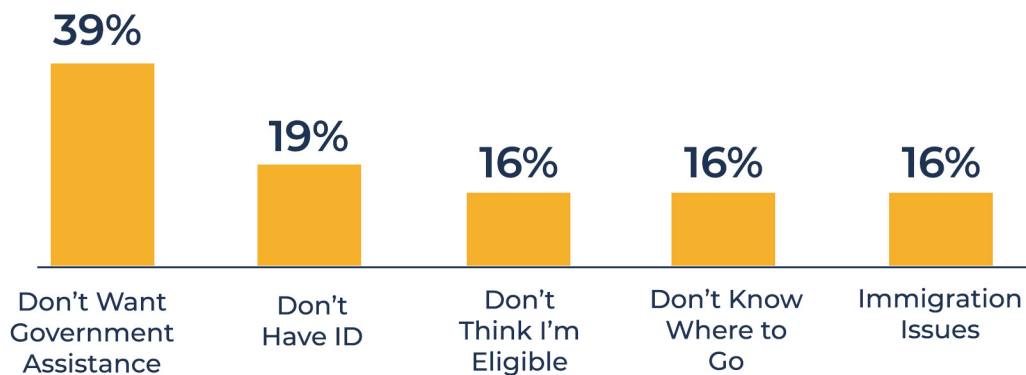
73%

Of survey respondents reported receiving government benefits.

SERVICES CURRENTLY ACCESSING (TOP 5 RESPONSES)



REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE* (TOP 6 RESPONSES)



DEFINITION OF UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH/YOUNG ADULTS

Youth under the age of 18 and young adults from the ages of 18 to 24 years old (TAY) who are experiencing homelessness and living without a parent or legal guardian.

+ Multiple response question, results may not add up to 100%.

* Only displaying top responses, all responsive data will be available in full report.

□ Source: 2024 San Francisco Homeless Youth Survey, N=157

Note: Some percentages have been rounded so total percentage will equal 100%.

YOUTH POINT-IN-TIME COUNT FINDINGS

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

On the day of January 30, 2024, a total of 8,323 homeless individuals were counted in San Francisco. Among those persons, 1,196 were unaccompanied or parenting youth experiencing homelessness.

The overall number of people counted in the Point-in-Time Count increased by 7% between 2022 and 2024 and the number of homeless youth increased by 11% over the same period. Unaccompanied children and transitional-age youth accounted for approximately 14% of the individuals counted in the 2024 Point-in-Time Count, which is similar to the 2022 Point-in-Time Count.

The majority (93%) of youth experiencing homelessness were transitional-age youth between 18 and 24 years old. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of transitional-age youth and 62% of children were sleeping on the streets or in tents, vehicles, or abandoned properties.

Figure 01

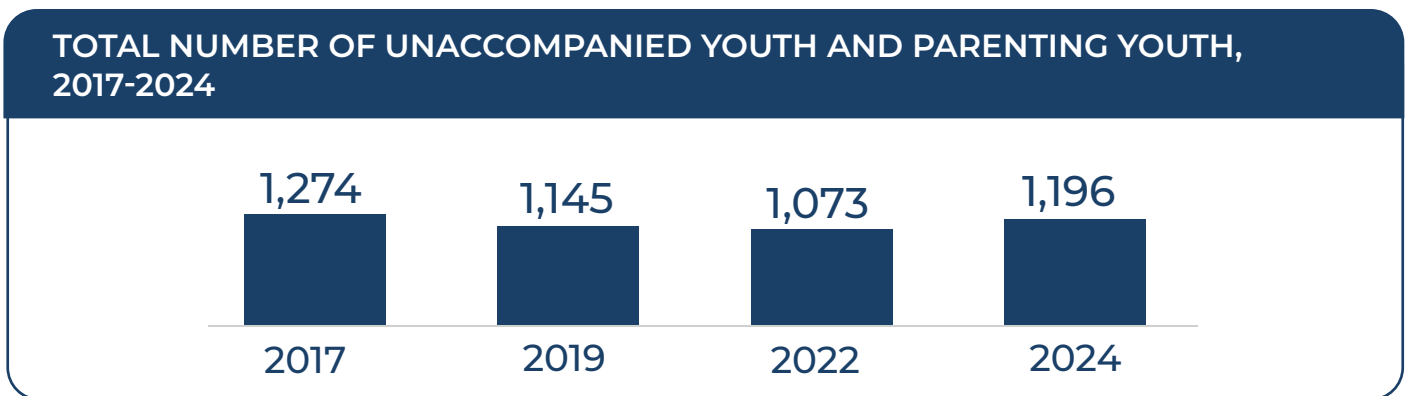
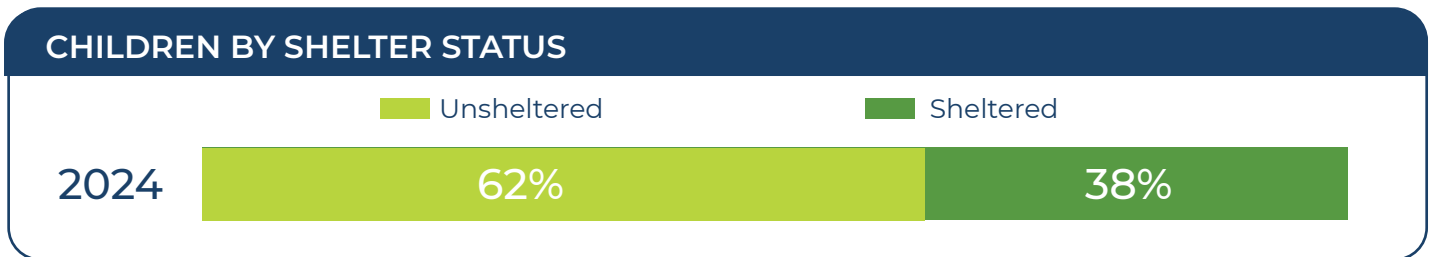
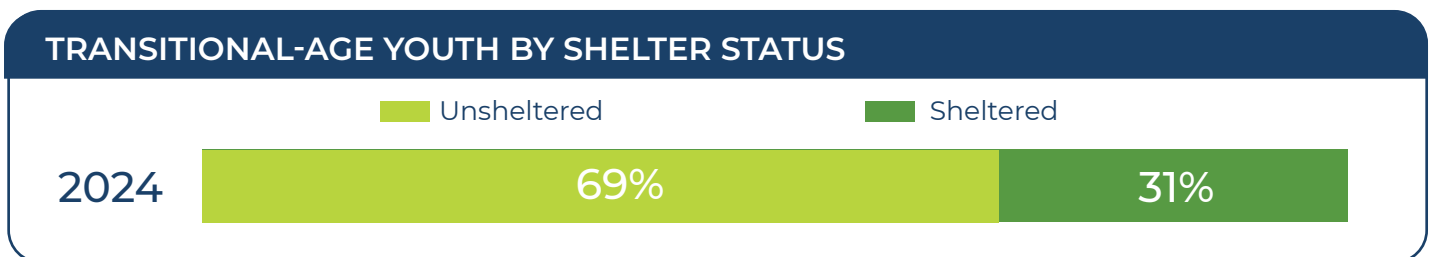


Figure 02



n = 84

Figure 03

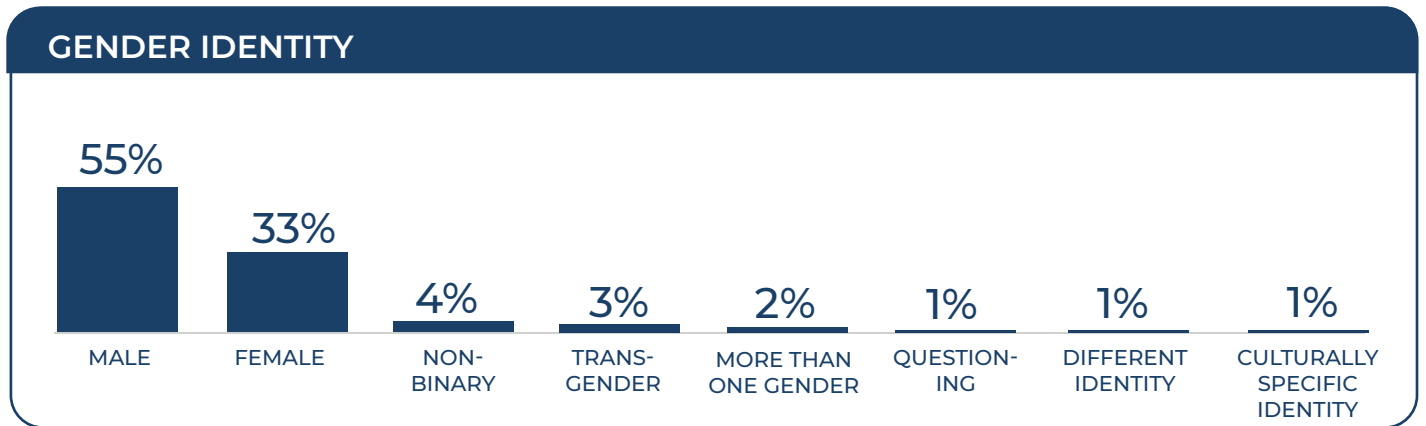


n = 1,112

GENDER IDENTITY

When asked about their gender identity, the majority (55%) of youth under the age of 25 identified as male. One-third (33%) identified as female, 4% as non-binary, and 3% as transgender.

Figure 04

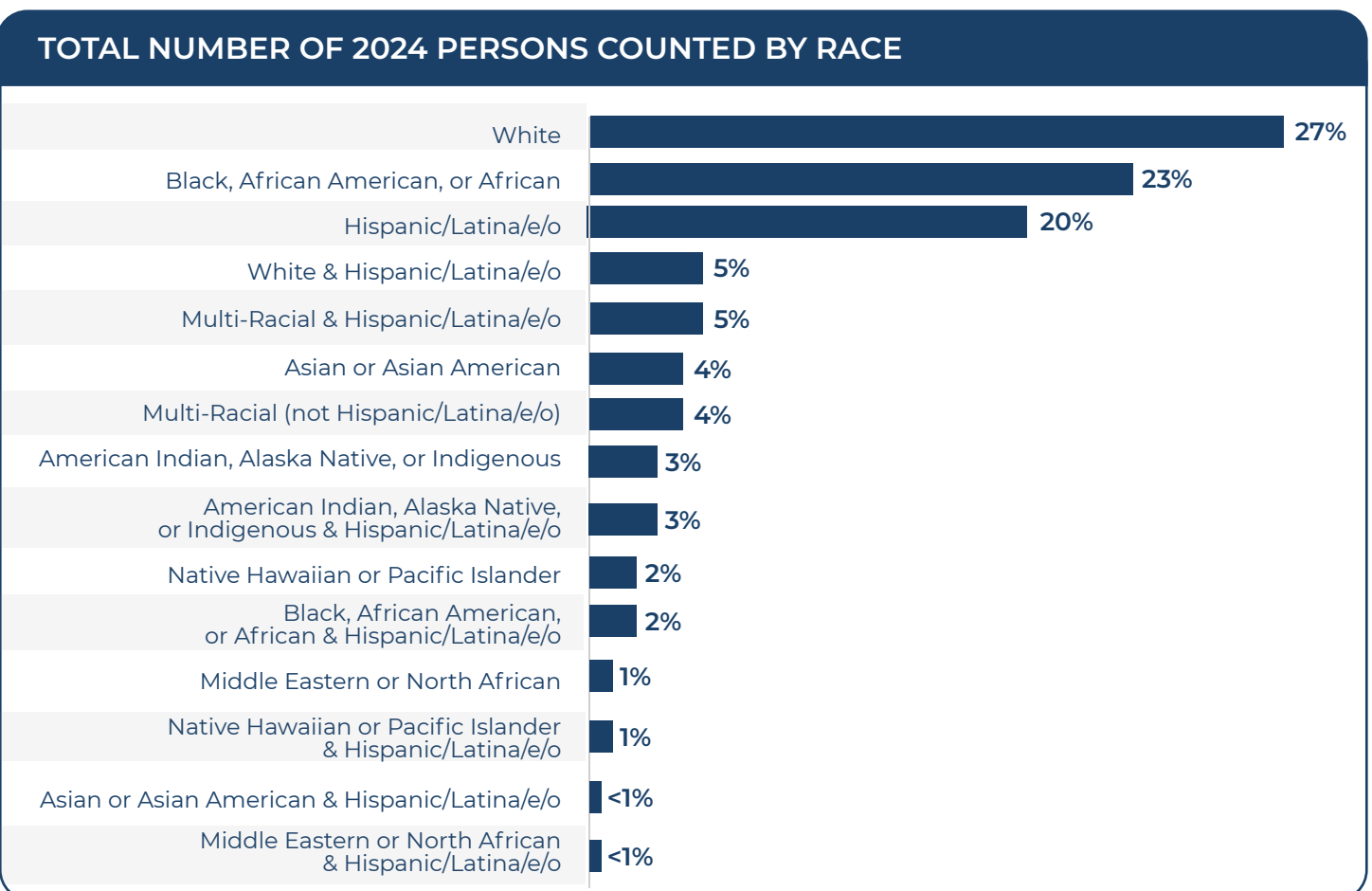


n = 1,156

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

RACE & ETHNICITY

Figure 05

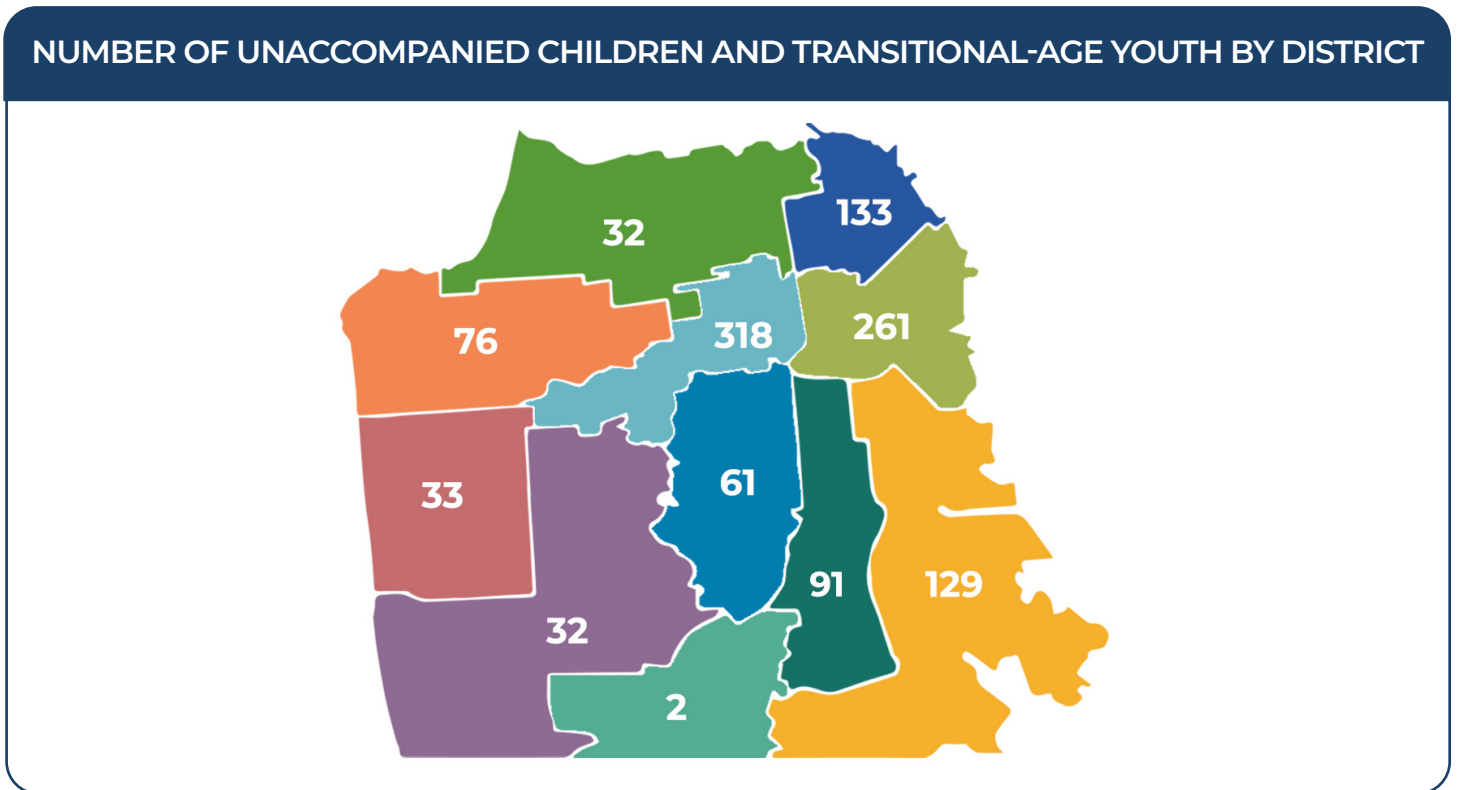


n = 1,196

TOTAL NUMBER OF UNSHELTERED AND SHELTERED YOUNG PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY DISTRICT

While the general Point-in-Time Count effort covers the entire City, the supplemental youth count focuses on specific neighborhoods of San Francisco where homeless 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 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Lake Merced and Park Merced/Lakeside, homeless youth were identified in all districts.

Figure 06



Note: An additional 28 sheltered youth were residing in confidential or scattered site sheltered locations in San Francisco on the night of the Point-in-Time Count.

Note: The map displays data per 2022 Supervisorial District lines.



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 5, followed by Districts 6 and 3.

Figure 07

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

District	Total
1	76
2*	32
3*	133
4*	33
5*	318
6*	261
7*	32
8*	61
9*	91
10*	129
11	2
Confidential/ Scattered Site	28
Total	1196

* Denotes areas where the 2024 supplemental youth count took place.
Note: The table displays data per 2022 Supervisorial District lines.



YOUTH HOMELESSNESS SURVEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the youth survey component of the 2024 San Francisco Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count and Survey. Surveys were administered between February 20 and March 26, 2024 to a randomized sample of individuals experiencing homelessness. This effort resulted in 157 complete and unique surveys, a subset of the total 767 general surveys conducted with people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.

Based on a Point-in-Time Count of 1,196 young persons experiencing homelessness, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 157 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 7.3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be 95% confident that the results would be within 7.3 percentage points of the current results. For the sheltered population, data from direct surveys to homelessness providers and data from San Francisco's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) were combined to meet the HUD reporting requirements of the sheltered population. The count, demographic information and household compositions of unsheltered persons were primarily reported from survey data and basic observational data.

To respect respondent privacy and to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to answer all survey questions. Missing values are intentionally omitted from the survey analysis. Therefore, the total number of responses for each question do not always equal the total number of surveys conducted.

For more information regarding the survey methodology, please see [Appendix A: Methodology](#).

Note: There were 157 youth under age 25 who responded to the general survey, and 118 who responded to the youth supplemental survey.

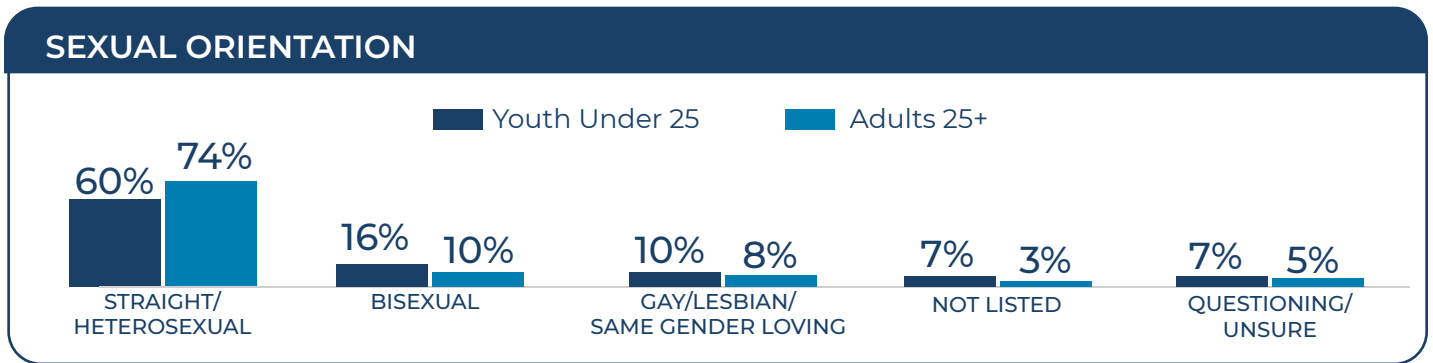


SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Sixty percent (60%) of youth respondents under the age of 25 identified as straight/heterosexual, compared to 74% of respondents ages 25 and older. Sixteen percent (16%) identified as bisexual, and 10% as gay, lesbian, or same gender loving. Seven percent (7%) identified with a sexual orientation not listed in the survey, while 7% reported that they were questioning or unsure of their sexual orientation at the time of the survey.

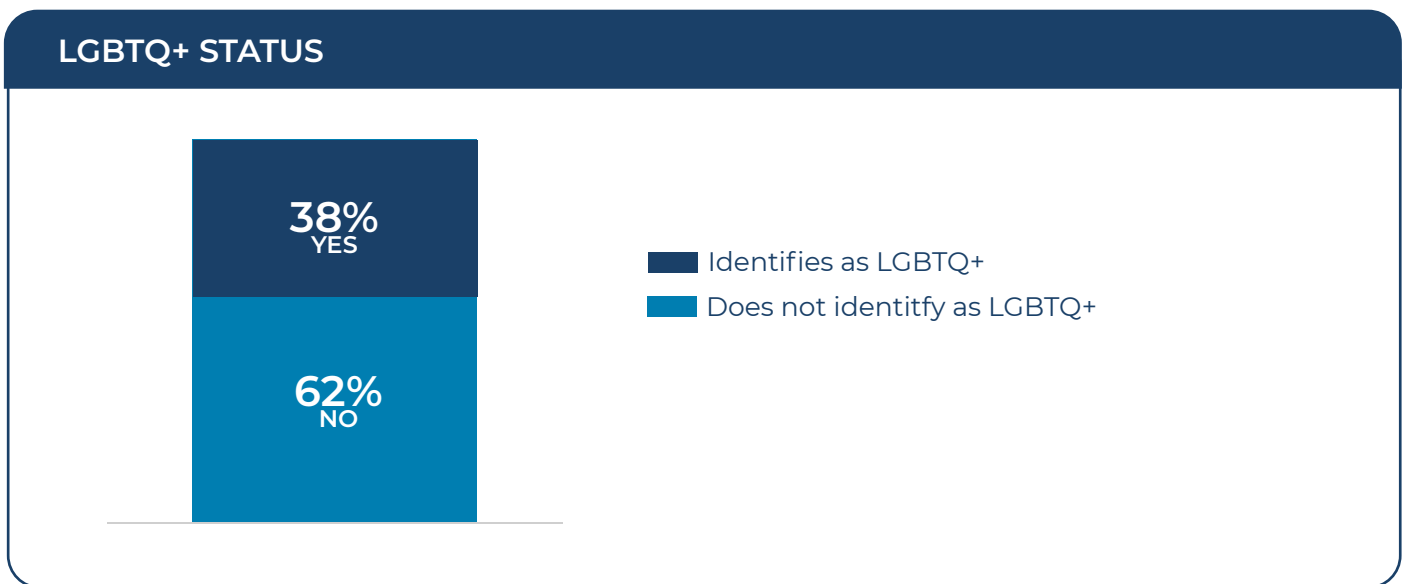
Figure 08



Under 25 n =154; Over 25 n = 746
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of youth survey respondents in San Francisco identified as LGBTQ+, compared to 28% of the adult population. This is similar to national survey data that found that young people who identify as LGBTQ+ represent up to 40% of the approximately 4.2 million youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. LGBTQ+ young people also face higher levels of adversity than their non-LGBTQ+ peers, including discrimination and physical violence. ⁴

Figure 09



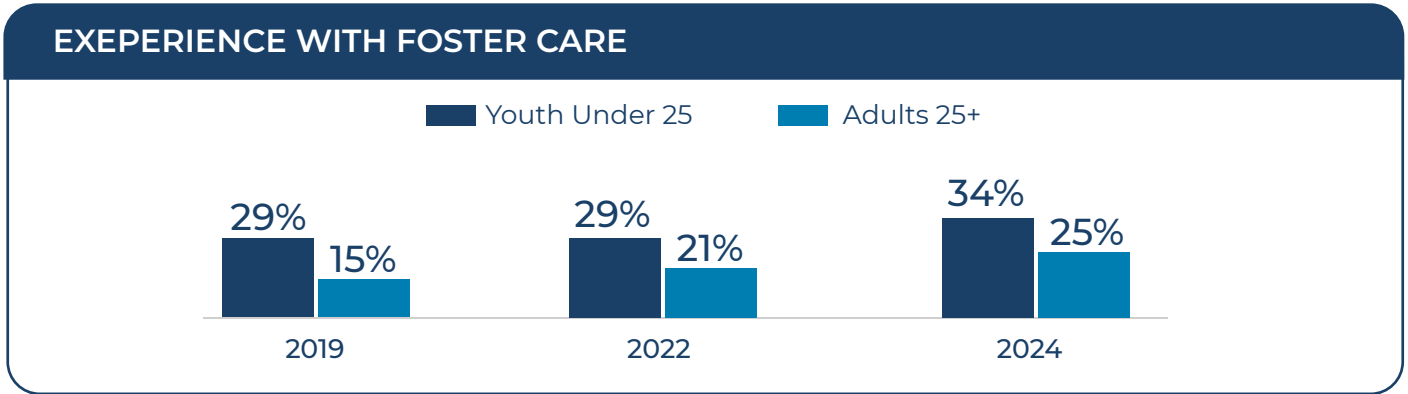
n =150

⁴Morton, M.H., Samuels, G. M., Dworsky, A., & Patel, S. (2018). Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE

Estimates indicated that an average of one in four youth in foster care will experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.⁵ In 2024, 34% of youth respondents reported a history of foster care. Seven percent (7%) of youth reported living in foster care immediately before becoming homeless and 3% reported aging out of foster care as the primary cause of their homelessness.

Figure 10



2019 Under 25 n = 180; 2019 Over 25 n = 805; 2022 Under 25 n = 130; 2022 Over 25 n = 565; 2024 Under 25 n = 138; 2024 Over 25 n = 730

⁵Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. (2015). The Facts of Foster Care. Retrieved from <https://nfyi.org/issues/homelessness/>



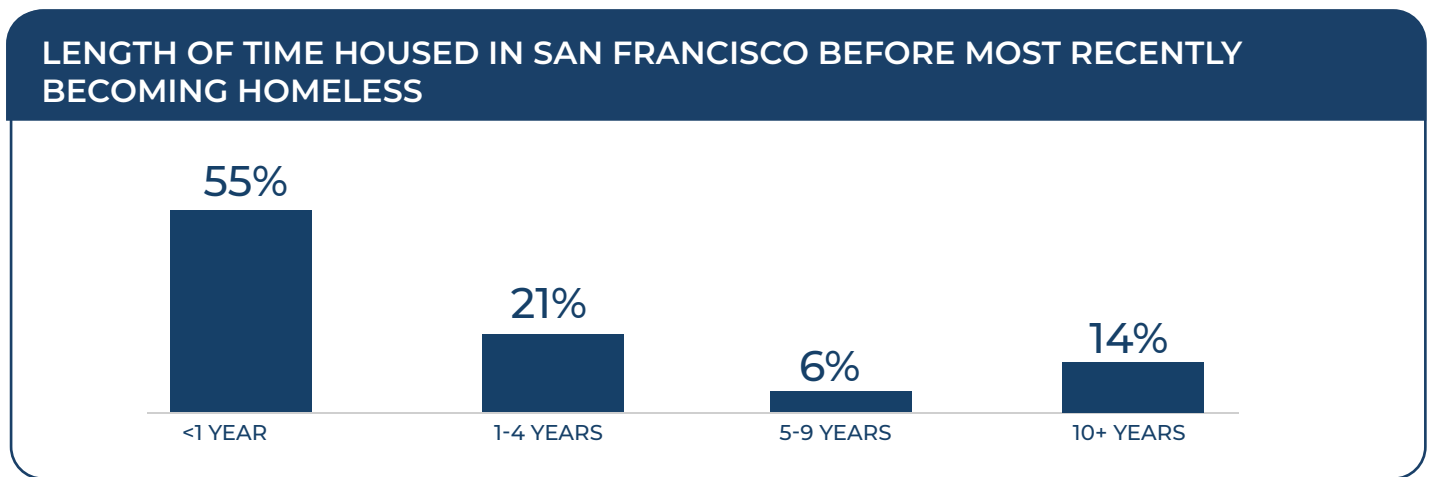
LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

RESIDENCY

Where persons have lived since experiencing homelessness impacts how they seek services and their ability to access support from friends or family. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and to opportunities for systemic improvement and homelessness prevention services.

Fourteen percent (14%) reported living in San Francisco for 10 or more years. 55% reported living in San Francisco for less than one year.

Figure 11



n = 81

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. Thirty percent (30%) of youth respondents reported living with a single parent prior to experiencing homelessness. Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents reported they were living with friends prior to experiencing homelessness, while 8% were living with roommates and 13% were living with other family members. Twelve percent (12%) were living with a foster family, 3% in juvenile hall or another institution, 3% with a stepparent, 3% with a legal guardian, 1% in a group home, and 11% in a situation not listed on the survey.

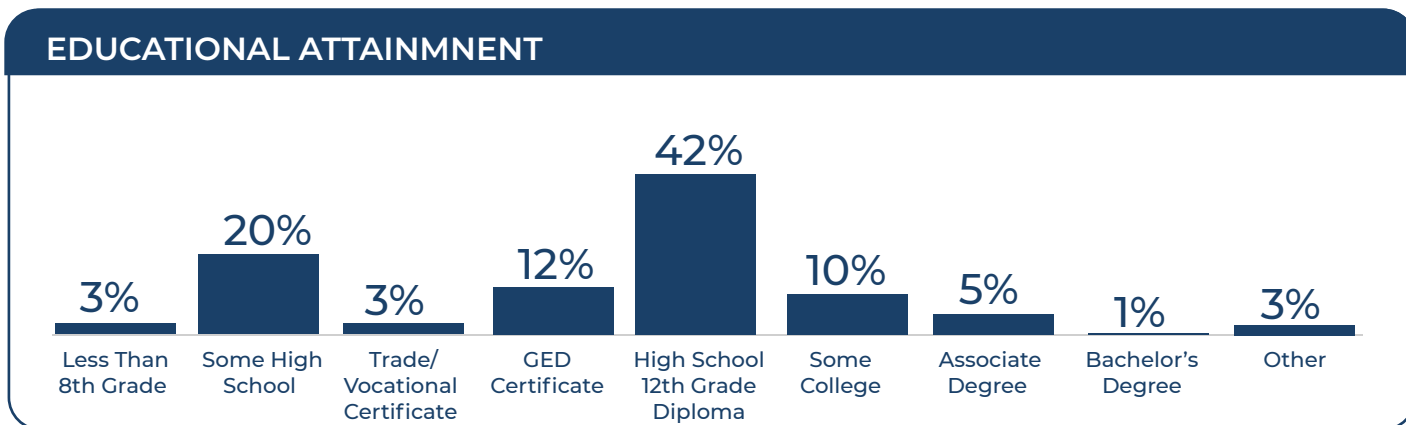


EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITIONAL-AGE YOUTH

While the majority of youth respondents in this survey were over the age of 18, twenty-six percent (26%) had not completed high school or received a GED compared to 5% of the general population of youth 18 to 24 in San Francisco. Fifty-four percent (54%) of youth respondents reported completing high school or receiving their GED, 5% attained an associate's degree, and 1% completed college.

Figure 12



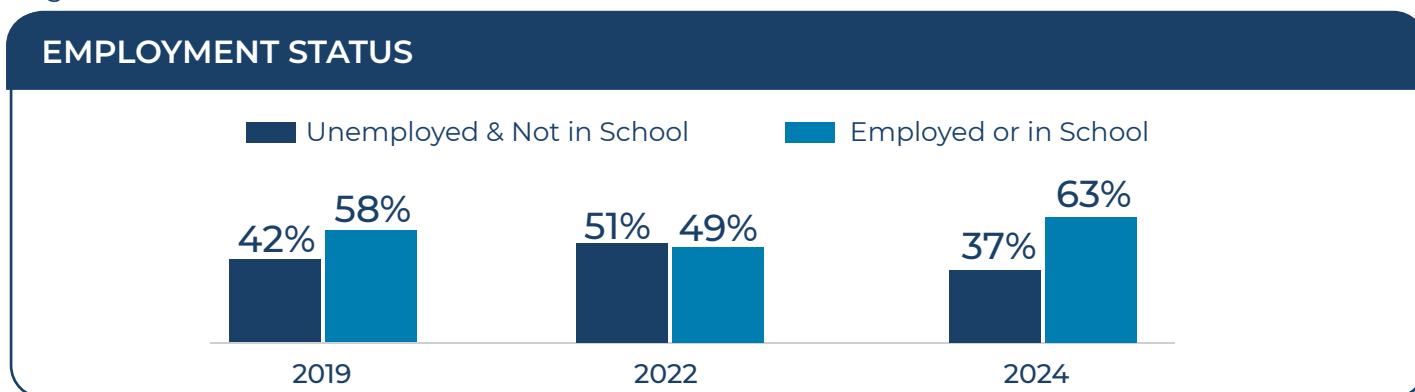
n = 116

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth experiencing homelessness are disadvantaged in seeking and obtaining employment due to multiple and overlapping barriers, including being disconnected from educational and vocational settings and not having had the opportunity to gain job skills and training. Sixty-three percent (63%) 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 13



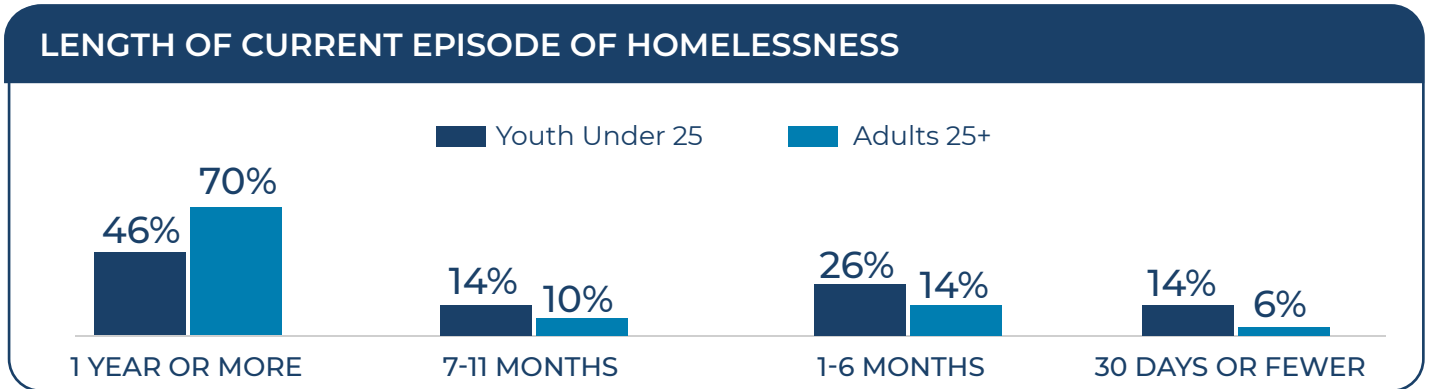
2019 n = 184; 2022 n = 155; 2024 n = 105

⁵Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. (2015). The Facts of Foster Care. Retrieved from <https://nfyi.org/issues/homelessness/>
6U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

DURATION & HISTORY 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, 82% of youth respondents reported experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness. Eighteen percent (18%) of youth respondents reported experiencing homelessness for the first time, compared to 23% of adult respondents. Forty-six percent (46%) of youth reported their current episode of homelessness has lasted at least one year.

Figure 14



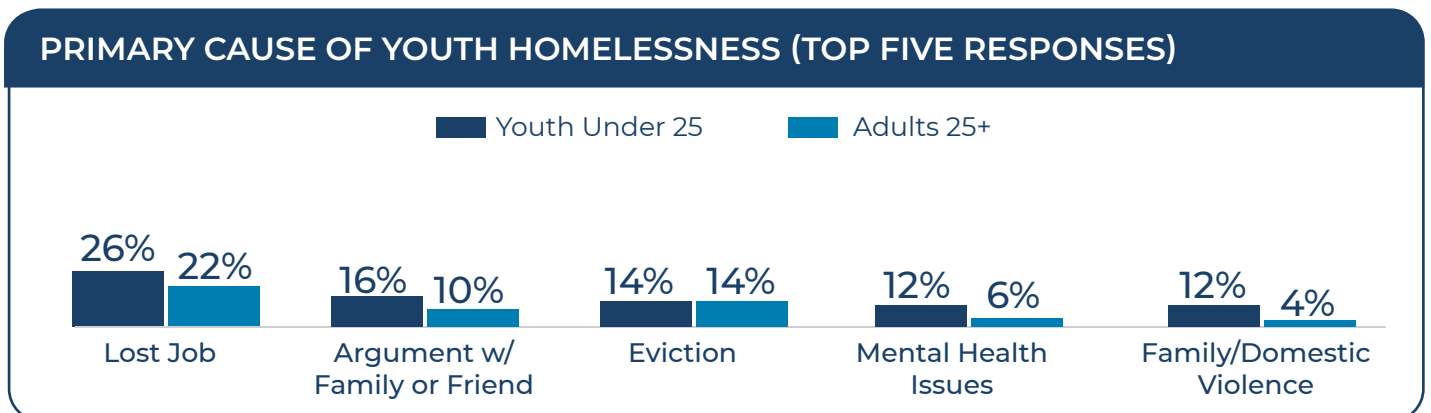
Under 25 n = 145; Over 25 n = 781

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

Youth survey respondents had a few notable differences in the rates at which they identified causes of homelessness compared to respondents ages 25 and over. Sixteen percent (16%) of youth respondents cited an argument with a friend or family member who asked them to leave, compared to 10% of all other respondents. Youth were also slightly more likely to cite job loss (26%), mental health issues (12%), and family/domestic violence (12%) than adult respondents.

Figure 15

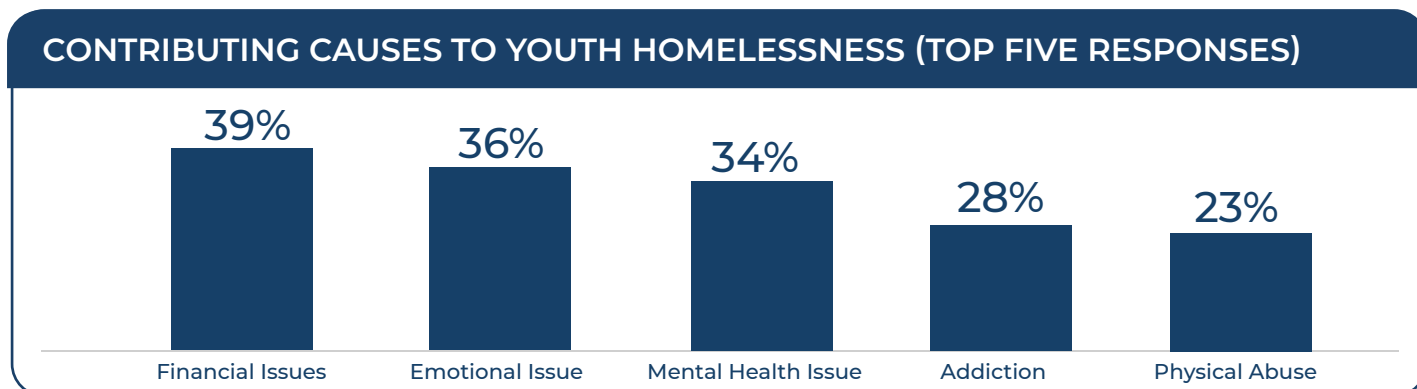


Under 25 n = 143; Over 25 n = 765

Note: Not all response options are displayed above. Survey offers 18 response options. Percentages may not add up to 100

Additionally, youth respondents were asked to identify other factors contributing to their homelessness. Young people most frequently cited financial issues (39%), followed by emotional abuse (36%), mental health issues (34%), addiction (28%), and physical abuse (23%).

Figure 16



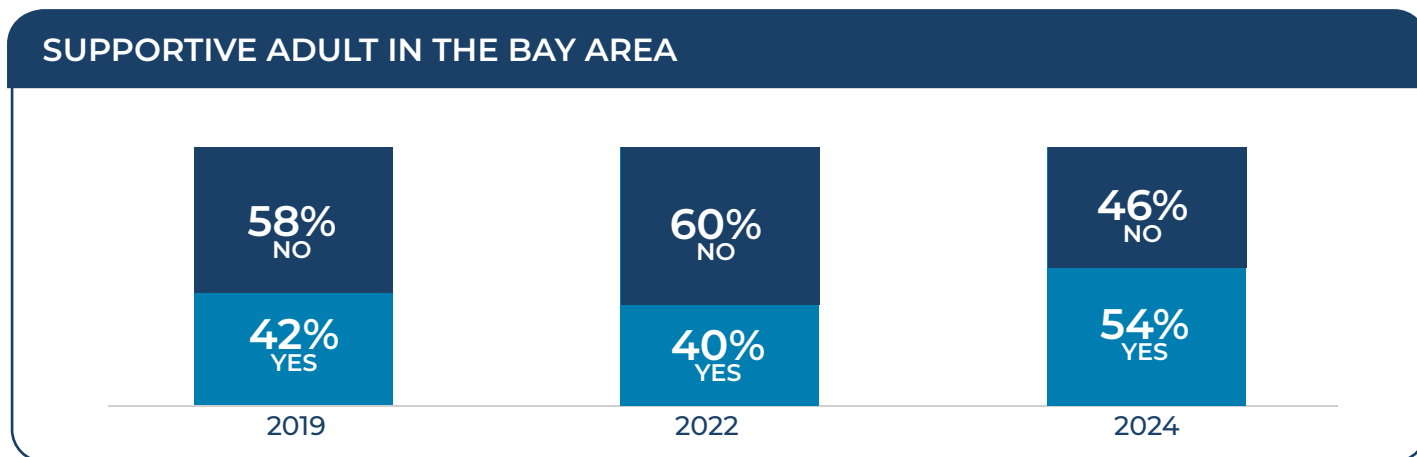
n= 109 respondents offering 306 responses
 Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

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.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of youth respondents reported trying to move back in with their parents or family members. Eight percent (8%) 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.” Thirty-two percent (32%) of youth respondents reported that their parents were also currently experiencing homelessness. Fifty-four percent (54%) of youth reported having a supportive adult in the Bay Area.

Figure 17



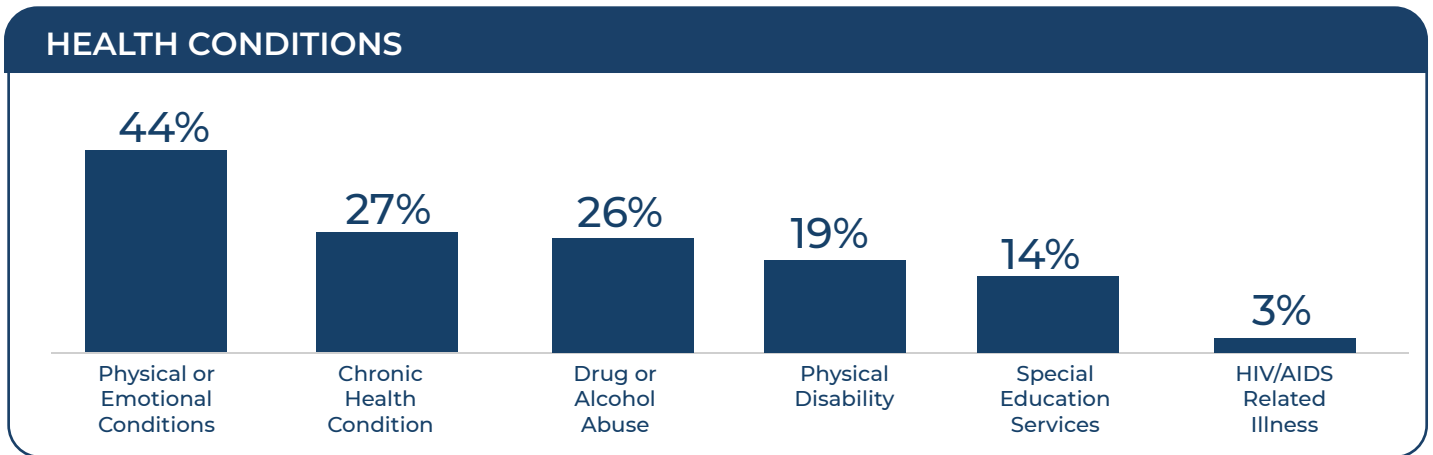
2019 n = 176; 2022 n = 104; 2024 n = 118

HEALTH

Forty-seven percent (47%) of youth respondents rated their physical health as “good” or “very good.” Thirteen percent (13%) of youth rated their physical health as “poor” or “very poor.”

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of youth reported living with one or more health conditions, including psychiatric and emotional conditions (44%), chronic health conditions (27%), and drug or alcohol abuse (26%).

Figure 18



2019 n = 184; 2022 n = 154-155; 2024 n = 150

Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.



APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2024 San Francisco Homeless Youth Point-in-Time Count and 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 and Survey methodology follows. For additional information regarding the general street count, during which youth were also enumerated, please refer to the 2024 San Francisco Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey Comprehensive Report.

Components of the Homeless Youth Census and Survey

The methodology used in the 2024 Youth Point-in-Time Count and Survey had three primary components:

Targeted Street Count of Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults: A nighttime count of unsheltered unaccompanied youth under 18 and young adults 18-24 years old on January 30, 2024 between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and midnight, and at Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Ocean Beach, Lake Merced and Park Merced/Lakeside between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on the morning of January 30. This was led by special youth teams who canvassed specific areas where unaccompanied children and youth were known to congregate. Upon completion, data from this targeted count was carefully reviewed against the results from the general street count to ensure that any possible duplicate counts were removed.

General Shelter Count: A count of homeless individuals and families staying at publicly and privately operated shelters on the night of January 30, 2024. This included youth staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and domestic violence shelters.

Homeless Survey: An in-person interview with 157 unique sheltered and unsheltered unaccompanied youth conducted by youth outreach surveyors between February 20 and March 26, 2024 throughout San Francisco. Data from the survey were used to refine the Point-in-Time Census youth estimates, and then used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the demographics and experiences of unaccompanied youth

The Planning Process

To ensure the success and integrity of the count, many City departments 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 23 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

Local homeless and housing service providers and advocates were valued partners in the planning and implementation of this count. 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 approved it. The planning team was comprised of staff from the HSH and consultants from ASR. Throughout the planning process, the planning team also requested the collaboration, cooperation, and participation of several government agencies and nonprofit providers that regularly interact with homeless youth 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 2024 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 2024 supplemental youth count 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 homeless youth 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, the Panhandle, Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Ocean Beach, Lake Merced, Park Merced/Lakeside areas, the Bayview, and the Embarcadero. Service providers familiar with the map areas identified in each neighborhood were asked to recruit currently homeless youth to participate in the count.

Data Collection

Youth worked in teams of two to three, with teams coordinated by youth street outreach workers. The youth count was conducted at the same time as the general street count, from 8:00 p.m. to midnight on January 30, 2024. Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Ocean Beach, Lake Merced, and Park Merced/Lakeside were also covered by youth count teams between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on January 30.

Street Count De-Duplication

Data from the supplemental youth count and general street count were compared and de-duplicated by examining location, gender, and age.

Enumeration Team Recruitment and Training

In 2024, Homeless Youth Alliance, Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco LGBT Community Center, Five Keys, and the Third Street Youth Center and Clinic recruited approximately 50 youth to work as peer enumerators, counting youth experiencing homelessness in the identified areas of San Francisco on January 30, 2024.

Youth outreach and program staff did recruitment of persons with lived experience to act as guides for the count in 2024. Guides experiencing homelessness were paid \$20 for online training as well as \$20 per hour worked on the day of the count.

In order to participate in the count, all volunteers and guides were requested to view a 20-minute training video before the count. Additionally, targeted trainings were held for multiple groups throughout the county who were able to convene a large enough group of attendees. Training covered all aspects of the count:

- definition of homelessness;
- how to identify homeless individuals;
- how to conduct the count safely and respectfully;
- how to use the smart phone app and also access the smartphone app training video;
- how to use the route maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered;
- tips to identify vehicles; and
- other tips to help ensure an accurate and safe count

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 dedicated youth outreach teams on the morning of January 30, including Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Ocean Beach, Lake Merced and Park Merced/Lakeside. The majority of parks, however, were deemed safe and counted on the night of the count. Law enforcement agencies were notified of pending street count activity in their jurisdictions. In census tracts with a high concentration of homeless encampments, specialized teams with knowledge of those encampments were identified and assigned to those areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take every safety precaution possible, including bringing flashlights and maintaining a respectful distance from those they were counting.

Logistics of Enumeration

On the morning of the street count, teams of two persons and no more than three people were created to enumerate designated areas of San Francisco for the street count. Each team had a lead and were provided with their assigned census tract maps, smart phone access information and training, field observation tips and guidelines, including vehicle identification criteria. Teams were all assigned unique tract numbers and were instructed to text a central PIT count dispatch center to confirm they were on route and on task for enumeration of their route assignments.

All accessible streets, roads, parks, and highways in the enumerated routes were traversed by foot or car. The San Francisco Survey 123 smartphone app was used to record the number of homeless persons observed in addition to basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center staff also verified that teams had started their route assignments and checked out as soon as their routes were completed, and all data had been entered in the Survey 123 smartphone app. Teams covered the entirety of their assigned areas.

Methodological Improvements

This is the second year ASR and HSH has used a mobile application to complete the general street count and youth street count. Enumerators used GPS-enabled smartphones to submit data in a mobile application called ESRI Survey 123 developed and customized by ASR. This new process limited the need to exchange physical materials and met HUD's data collection requirements.

Point-in-Time 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. Therefore, 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. It can be challenging to visually identify the age of unsheltered homeless persons and accurately distinguish between adults, transitional-age youth, and minors. For this reason, it is critical to leverage the expertise of homeless youth providers and lived experience guides when conducting the count.

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 youth experiencing homelessness 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 shelter 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 youth experiencing homelessness 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 shelters designated to provide temporary living arrangement, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, or Safe Haven facilities.

Research Design

The occupancy of emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and safe haven programs with beds dedicated to individuals experiencing homelessness was documented for the night of January 30, 2024. Information was collected for programs operating in San Francisco and reportable per HUD guidance. Data was collected on household type, age, gender, race and ethnicity, veteran status, chronic status, and if individuals had certain health conditions.

Data Collection

To collect data on individuals staying in shelters, ASR worked with HSH staff. HSH collected data on all emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and Safe Havens operating in San Francisco. Where possible, data on clients served in temporary housing situations was pulled from HSH's administrative data systems: the Online Navigation and Entry (ONE) System, and the San Francisco's HUD-compliant Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

Shelter programs that do not maintain client enrollment data in the ONE system were asked to submit data. A dedicated staff person from each facility submitted their data for clients served on the night of January 30, 2024, via a web-based Shelter Count Survey administered by HSH. A designated staff person provided the count for each of these facilities; clients were not interviewed. For these programs, all persons experiencing homelessness were included in the Point-in-Time Count per HUD reporting requirements.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Planning and Implementation

The data collected through the survey 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. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by peer survey workers with lived homeless experience who were referred by local service providers. Training sessions were facilitated by ASR 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. Survey workers were compensated at a rate of \$10 per completed survey.

Consistent with prior years, 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. Socks and in some cases McDonalds gift certificates were provided as an incentive for participating in the 2024 Homeless Survey. The socks and cards were easy to distribute, had broad appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. The incentives proved to be widely accepted among survey respondents.

Survey Sampling

Based on a Point-in-Time Count estimate of 1,196 homeless children and transitional-age youth, with a randomized survey sampling process, the 157 valid surveys represented a confidence interval of +/- 7.3% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in San Francisco.

The 2024 survey was administered in shelters, transitional housing facilities, and on the street. Strategic attempts were also made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless children and youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence survivors, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer survey workers. The planning team worked closely with local service providers to identify their places of expertise and had survey locations correspond to the neighborhoods of peer survey workers.

As in past counts, the locations corresponded to areas in the neighborhoods of the Haight, Mission, Tenderloin, Union Square, Castro, the Panhandle, Golden Gate Park, Buena Vista Park, Ocean Beach, Lake Merced, Park Merced/Lakeside areas, the Bayview, and the Embarcadero. Service providers familiar with the map areas identified in each neighborhood were asked to recruit currently homeless youth to participate in the count. This was especially successful this year with the greater number of lived experience surveyors that were employed in 2024.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an “every third encounter” survey approach. 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. In more remote cases where respondents were sparser this survey interval was modified.

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 to avoid duplication 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 159 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 159.

Survey Challenges and Limitations

The 2024 San Francisco Homeless Survey methodology relies heavily on self-reported data collected from peer surveyors. While self-reporting 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. Furthermore, service providers 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 also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted; the process 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. This includes persons living in vehicles, who are historically difficult to enumerate and survey.

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.

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 in 1980 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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