2026 Knoxville-Knox County Point in Time Count Report

October 2026

Prepared by the Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability

Office of Housing Stability

www.knoxtnhousing.org

Executive Summary

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count takes place each year during the last ten days of January in communities across the country. HUD requires that CoCs (Continuum of Care geographic areas) conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness. It offers a one-night snapshot of three groups: people staying in emergency shelters, people in transitional housing, and people living in places not meant for human habitation. While the PIT Count is not a complete measure of homelessness, it gives the community a chance to survey the people who can be found living unsheltered about their experiences, needs, and challenges. When combined with data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and local programs, these results help Knoxville and Knox County better understand homelessness, correct common misunderstandings, and guide planning and response efforts.

During the January 2026 PIT Count, staff and volunteers counted 941 people experiencing homelessness in Knoxville and Knox County. Of those, 583 people were staying in emergency shelter, 119 were in transitional housing, and 239 were living unsheltered. Between the 2025 and 2026 PIT Counts, the number of people staying in emergency shelter dropped by 231, from 814 to 583. This change mainly reflects the difference in shelter availability on the two PIT Count nights, not a major decrease in homelessness. Church-based emergency warming centers were open during the 2025 PIT Count but were not activated on the night of the 2026 count. The number of people in transitional housing stayed nearly the same, increasing slightly from 115 in 2025 to 119 in 2026, though transitional housing has declined overall since 2013 due to changes in federal funding. The number of people living unsheltered also remained stable, decreasing slightly from 245 in 2025 to 239 in 2026.

PIT and HMIS data provide different but helpful views of homelessness. The PIT Count shows a portion of the people experiencing homelessness who can be found on one night and gives the community a chance to survey people who may or may not use homeless services.

Executive Summary

HMIS, in contrast, shows information about people who use participating service providers over time. For example, while the 2026 PIT Count found 239 people living unsheltered on one night in January, HMIS shows that 1,611 different people lived unsheltered at some point during the first quarter of 2026 in Knoxville and Knox County. When used together, these sources offer a more complete picture of both the size and experience of homelessness in the community.

The 2026 data also highlights trends in youth homelessness and the community's growing response. While the total number of youth experiencing homelessness has not decreased, fewer youth stayed in emergency shelter in 2026. This shift reflects Knoxville and Knox County's major expansion of housing-focused services for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Over the past two years, new resources have included housing navigation, homelessness prevention, transitional housing, temporary rental assistance, case management, and permanent supportive housing. These programs support youth in a wide range of situations, including those with behavioral health needs and those transitioning out of state custody via the foster care system.

Changes in youth homelessness show important progress. The community is creating more pathways to stable housing and long-term support. However, youth continue to experience homelessness, including unsheltered homelessness, and additional work is still needed.

Overall, the 2026 PIT Count offers an important snapshot of homelessness in Knoxville and Knox County. When combined with HMIS and program data, it helps show how homelessness changes over time. Differences in shelter availability can greatly affect PIT numbers from year to year, while HMIS shows the much larger number of people who experience homelessness over weeks and months. Survey responses from the PIT Count add more detail by helping the community understand who is experiencing homelessness, what led to their housing instability, and what barriers they face. Using all these sources together allows the community to move beyond any single number and better understand the scale of homelessness and where targeted investments and system improvements are having an impact.

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Background of Homelessness in Knoxville-Knox County

The joint Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability (OHS) was established in 2023 to coordinate homeless services across the community. The Office has taken major steps to address homelessness, increasing emergency shelter and warming center availability during winter and helping coordinate partners to reduce the volume of 911 calls from the Mission District by 32%.

The Knox Housing Continuum Board is Knoxville and Knox County's steering committee for addressing homelessness. It is made up of local leaders in healthcare, behavioral health, law enforcement, homeless services and other sectors, as well as individuals with lived experience, all critical voices in addressing homelessness. The Office of Housing Stability provides administrative support for the work of this board and for local nonprofits who have been awarded federal homelessness funds.

This work is done in close partnership with the City, County, and Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition - a group of key partners that come together to coordinate and advocate around local homeless services.

As the Knox Housing Continuum's lead agency, OHS is accountable (per federal code 24 CFR 578) for coordinating the local homeless services system, including implementing and coordinating the annual Point in Time (PIT) count. OHS staff facilitated the PIT Steering Committee and decisions about the count were made collectively.

Community data on homelessness is not simply quantitative. Though the PIT survey provides key insights through numerical data, it also offers a window into the experiences of those experiencing homelessness. It is the work of OHS and the community at large to understand the context of homelessness locally, so that we can move more households to stability and self-sufficiency.

2026 Count Overview

The 2026 Point in Time Count was a community-wide effort, leveraging an engaged base of volunteers to survey people living unsheltered and organizations to host "Come and Be Counted" sites.

Unlike 2025, the weather on PIT night in 2026 did not dip to 25 degrees, so warming centers were not in operation. This means there was a significant reduction in shelter capacity on the PIT night compared to the previous year. The unsheltered portion of the count can happen over seven days, however, for the Housing Inventory Count - as well as for those staying in Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing - counts were conducted on a single night, January 21st, consistent with federal guidance.

The PIT Steering Committee was made up of homeless service providers, OHS, and KnoxHMIS. This group helped determine the overall approach to the count, as well as the content of the survey.

The count would not have been possible without key partnerships with local event hosts, and service providers hosting regular events being offered during the PIT week.

Volunteer Spotlight

The United Way Volunteer East TN platform played a critically helpful role in engaging and communicating with volunteers. The easily accessible sign-up function made sharing the volunteer opportunity easy, and ensured that PIT Count organizers had the information needed to successfully manage a large number of volunteers.

Overall the platform extended the scope and scale of communications about this volunteer opportunity, and that was crucial to creating a successful count. There were numerous individuals who learned of adjacent opportunities, especially around the warming centers, which helped stabilize those operations even further.

Good Neighbor Bags

Good Neighbor Bags were a new effort launched in 2026 to supplement the small cash incentives distributed to unhoused neighbors participating in the count. Donations were accepted in person in partnership with Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) and through direct coordination with OHS staff.

The community at large donated:

- 200 fully equipped Good Neighbor bags donated, ranging in contents.
- Thousands of individual items were donated, including winter hat and glove sets, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, dry shampoo, combs and hairbrushes, body wipes, bar soap, first aid kits, and much more.

From the Office of Housing Stability:

- 400 fully equipped Good Neighbor Bags.
- The joint Office provided hygiene items, cold weather clothing, first aid supplies and more.

The request for donations was pushed out to volunteers, through social media, the OHS website, and across various listservs.

WHAT WE'RE ACCEPTING:

- **Hand/feet/body warmers**
- **Thermal blankets**
- **Granola bars, trail mix, and other nutrient dense foods**
- **Candy and Candy Bars**
- **Water bottles and sports drinks**
- **Wet wipes**
- **Dry shampoo packets**
- **Toothbrush and toothpaste**
- **Deodarant**
- **1 gallon ziploc bags**

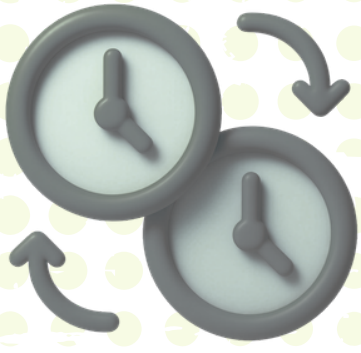
Point in Time Count: A Brief History

While Knoxville-Knox County follows federal methodology for the Point in Time Count, there are still minor variations from year to year as leads implement lessons learned from past years and adapt to changing local conditions.

Historically in Knoxville and Knox County, the count has allowed for direct observation, giving volunteers the option of documenting a visual record without directly engaging with the people they are counting. Direct observation can be useful if direct engagement is unsafe or if individuals are asleep or clearly under the influence. However, this approach makes it difficult to ensure individuals are only counted once.

Direct observation has the advantage of requiring relatively fewer volunteers to conduct the count, and also requires a narrow time window to reduce the chances of duplicate observations.

In 2026, for the first time, the count did not include an observation component, and volunteers were widely solicited from across the community to help support and engage with the effort. Every person counted was also surveyed, unless they refused to take the survey. While this required more volunteers, it also expanded the scope and depth of the data collected.

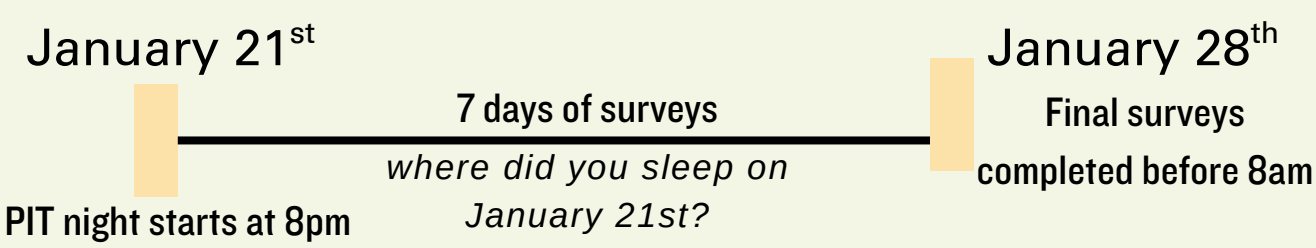


Methodology

In 2026 the implementation of the count remained fairly similar to previous years, with some notable differences:

- A focus on "Come and Be Counted" Sites with advance communication and marketing. These largely coincided with existing service offerings from different providers during the week of the count to maximize opportunities to conduct the survey.
- A shift to a broader base of volunteers. This required additional training and increased flexibility from staff to more thoroughly administer the process.
- A Good Neighbor Bag drive to coincide with the count, in order to distribute survival supplies to unsheltered neighbors. Many thoughtfully crafted bags were donated, and we saw increased engagement directly as a result of having more to offer than a $5 incentive.
- Survey questions were changed and expanded, to better capture a quick snapshot and understanding of who and how people are experiencing homelessness across the community. There are few other direct sources of similar data.

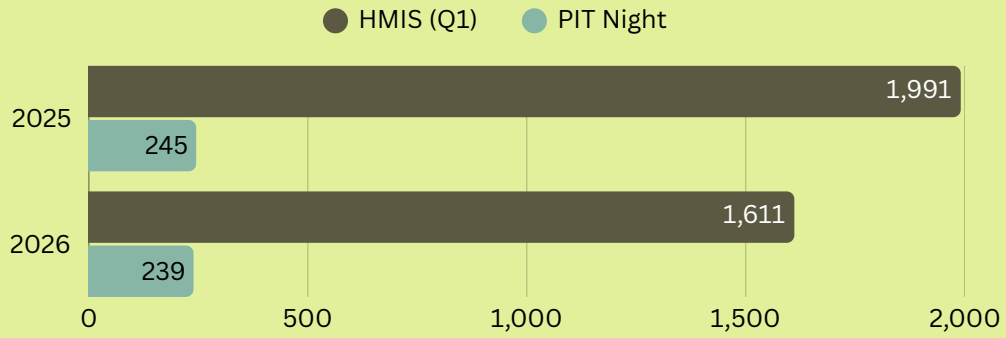
All seven days were utilized for the count, starting on the night of January 21st. Survey responses were deduplicated utilizing three core markers including initials, age/Date Of Birth, and sex and/or race. Additional factors were considered if needed in order to reliably ensure no duplication in count totals.



Community Data in Context

The Point in Time Count is one measure of homelessness, and is not the complete picture within any community. It cannot be, as it measures homelessness during a very limited timeframe at the end of January each year. The local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), as a shared database across service providers and program types allows for a much broader and more comprehensive understanding of the state of homelessness in the community. The PIT is narrowly focused on those living unsheltered, pulling data from HMIS for shelter and transitional housing. It also provides a unique opportunity to better understand the experiences of our unsheltered neighbors.

The Difference between HMIS and the PIT in Knox County



The HMIS numbers in this chart reflect clients with some evidence of being on the street during the quarter, including street outreach, but also in CHAMP (Coordinated Entry), and other project types which show folks entering from or exiting to a place not meant for habitation.

The difference between the number of unsheltered individuals captured on one night during the PIT count, and those captured during the Ist quarters of the same years is significant. The PIT count has incredible qualitative value, and at the same time, extrapolating quantitative community wide statistics based on it would be unwise. We recommend reviewing and engaging with the data on our local HMIS data dashboard, which is updated by the quarter, to reflect real time system changes in the community.

Community Data in Context

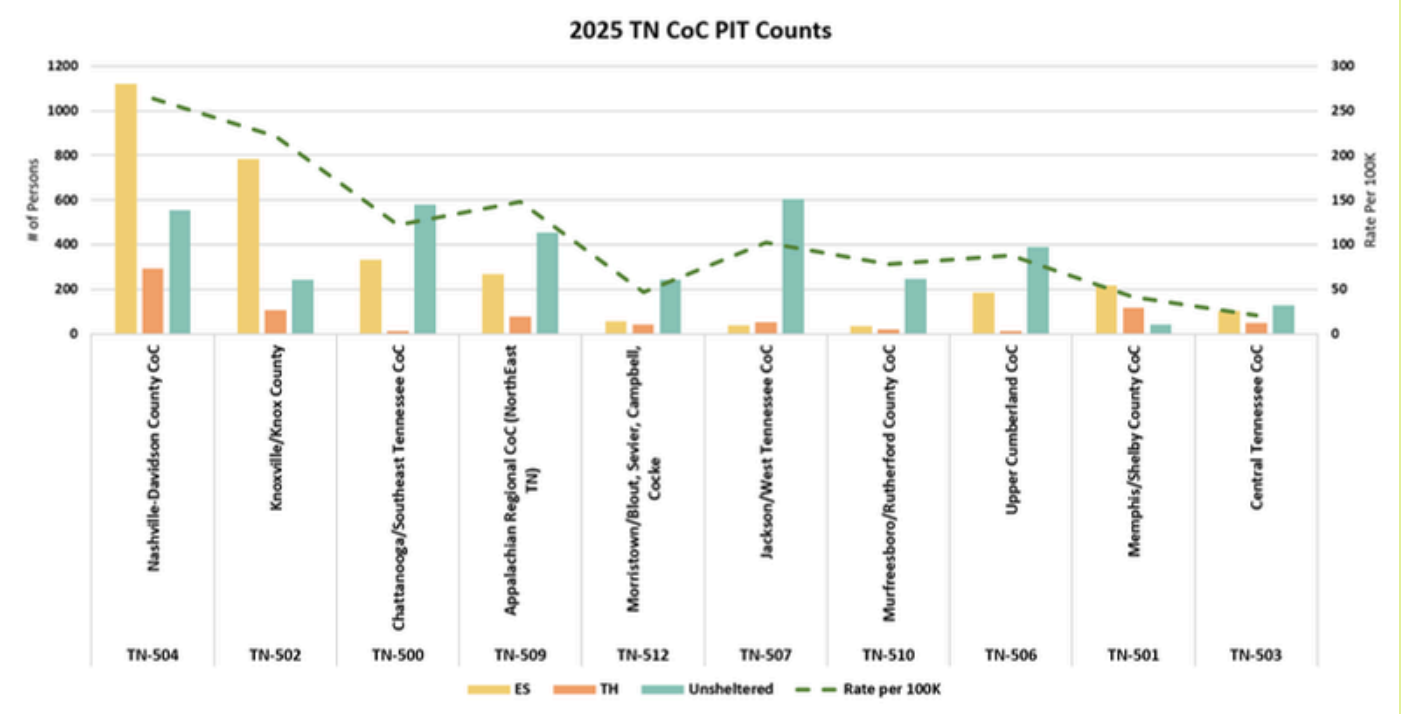
The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects Point-in-Time Count data from across the nation each year and publishes an aggregate report called the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR). In the 2025 AHAR, they report that:

- Across the United States 46% of the total homeless population is unsheltered, compared to 25% in Knox County.
- Households made up of a single adult were the most prevalent population, at over 80% in Tennessee. 51% of single households were unsheltered across the state.
- In four states, at least one in every four homeless families with children were unsheltered: Idaho (52%), Oregon (38%), Arkansas (25%) and Tennessee (25%).

Statistics for Tennessee:

- There was a 6.9% increase in homelessness across the state from 2024 to 2025.
- Overall there has been a statewide decrease in homelessness of -21.1% from 2007.
- 12 in every 10,000 people experienced homelessness in 2025.
- Tennessee saw one of the largest increases in homeless veterans across the country, at 15.6% from 2024 to 2025.

East Tennessee Rates of Homelessness

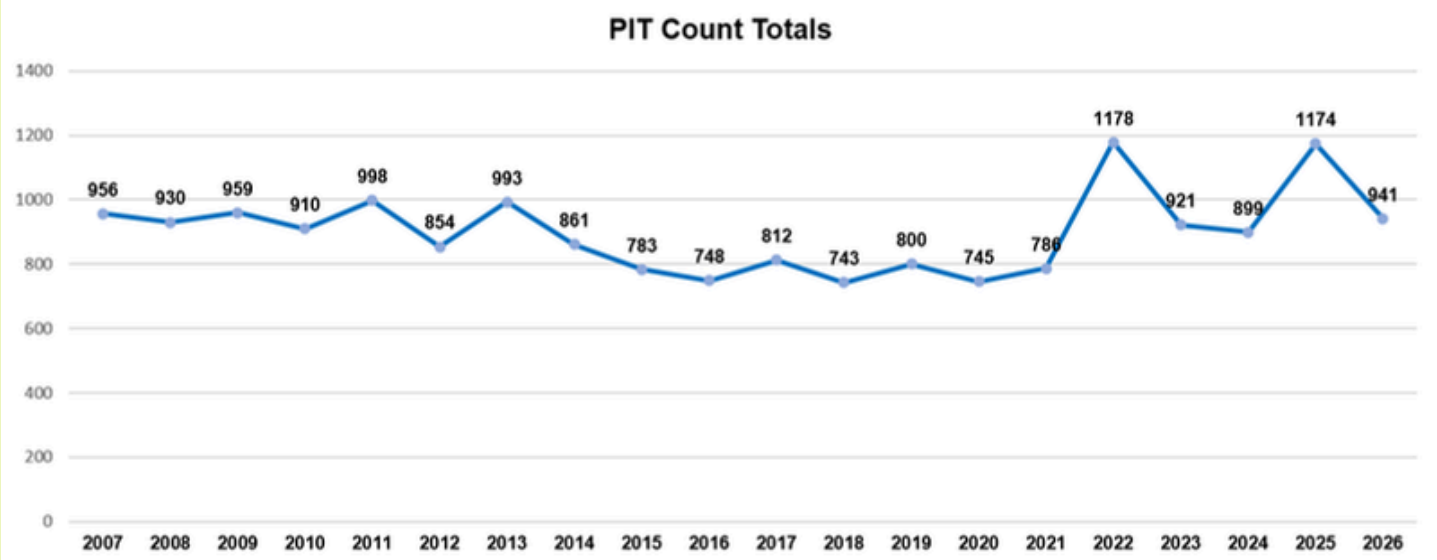


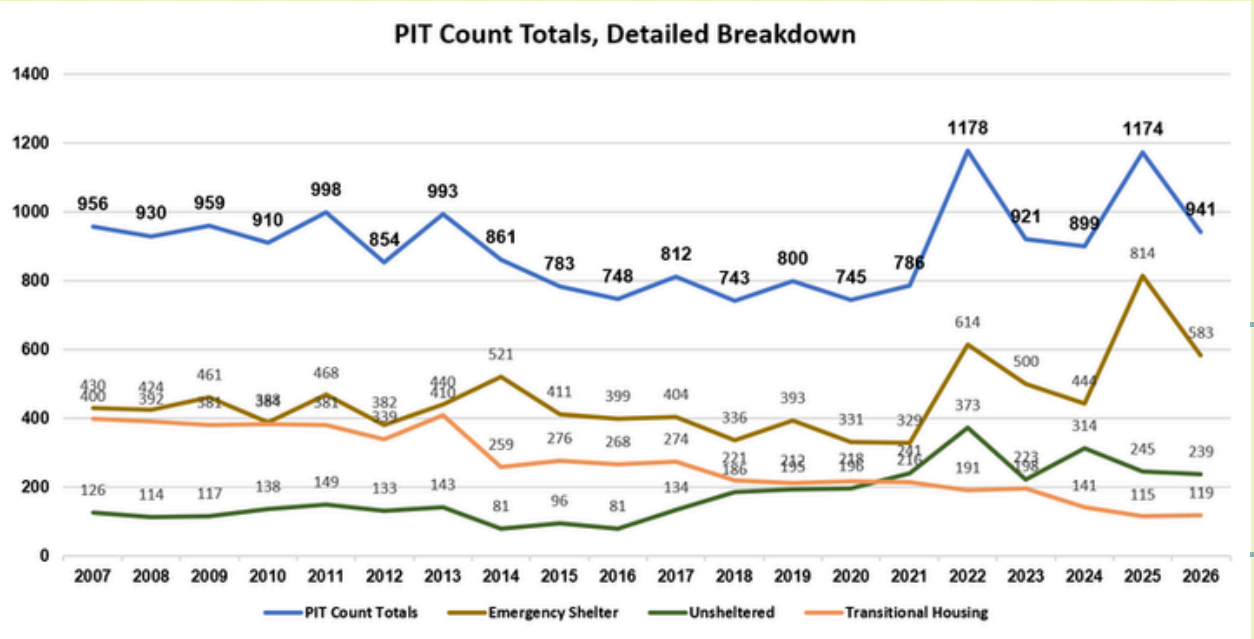
This graph shows the total number of persons counted during the 2025 Point in Time Count across each Continuum of Care in TN. The total is broken down by where people stayed the night of the Count: emergency shelter (ES), transitional housing (TH), or unsheltered. The dashed line reflects the PIT count total per 100K population, as reflected in the March 2025 Census dataset: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html

Community Data in Context

Knox County PIT Counts

The PIT Count began in 2007, and the 2026 Count reveals nearly the same number of homeless individuals, down just 1.5%. The 2025 Count saw a sharp increase as the warming centers were open the night of the Count, which nearly matched the highest count on record which occurred in 2022 during the COVID 19 pandemic. The PIT Count is not a perfect snapshot and does not capture inflow and outflow: the number of people/households becoming homeless and the number finding housing.

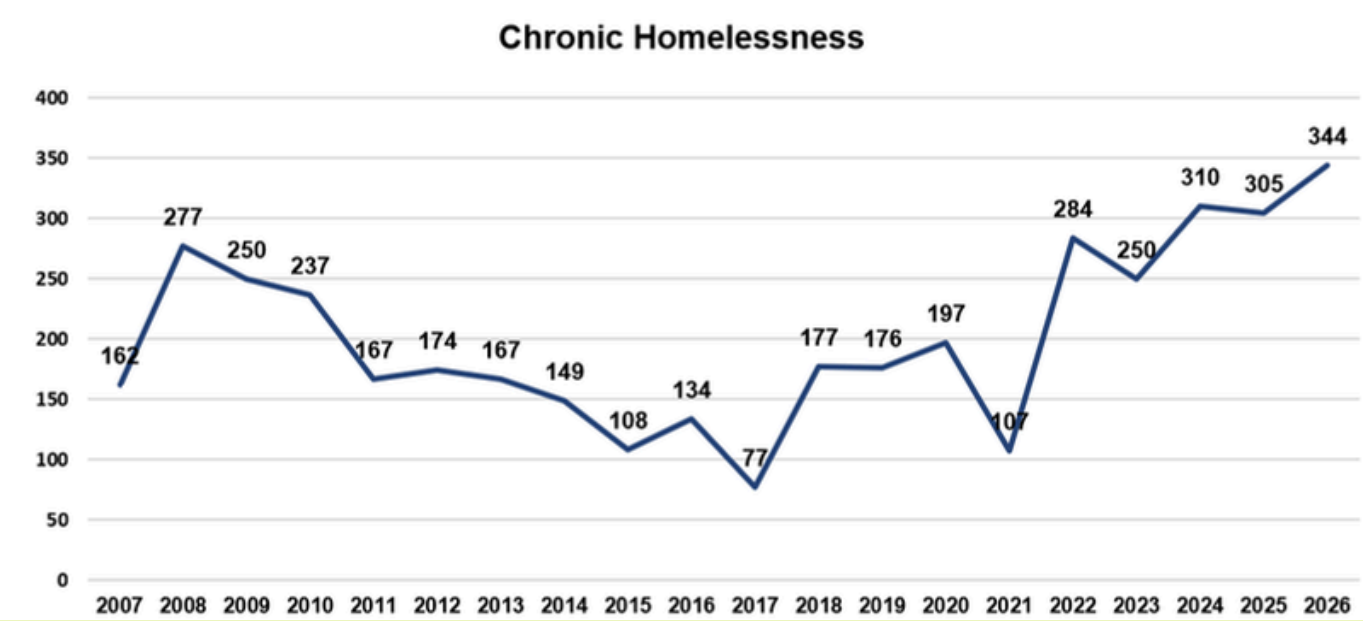




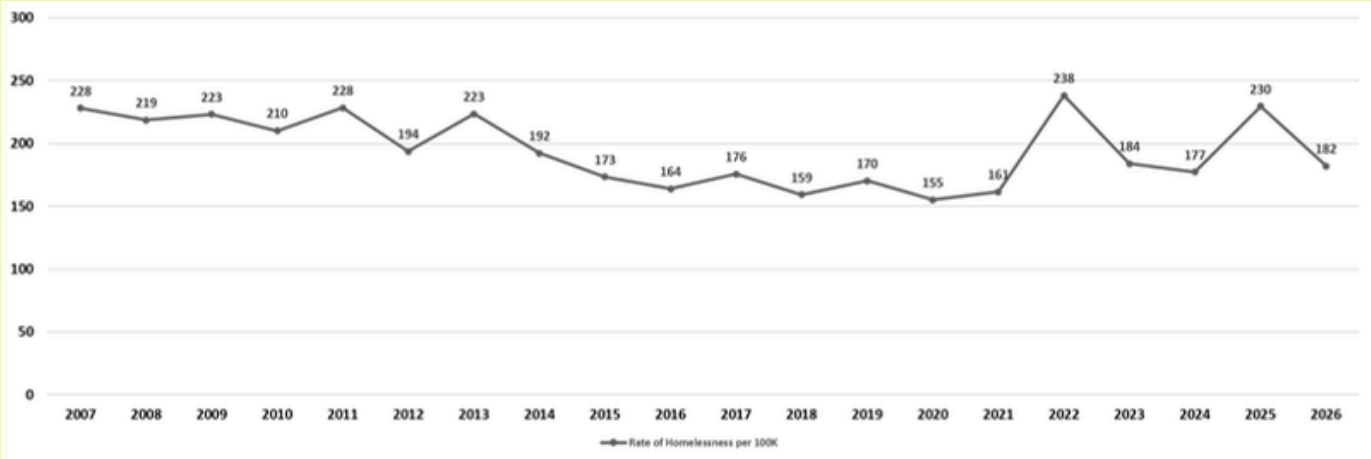
These numbers show how many people stayed in various settings on PIT night.

Chronic Homelessness

Chronic homelessness means a person has been homeless for at least one year and has at least one disabling condition. It's an important community indicator: higher levels of chronic homelessness can point to long wait times for housing, and an increased need for additional supportive services and long-term supports.



Knox County PIT Count per 100,000 population



Knox County's population has seen considerable growth over the last 20 years, as between 5,000-10,000 new individuals each year enter the community. Even with this unprecedented growth, homelessness is trending upward faster than overall population increases since the pandemic.

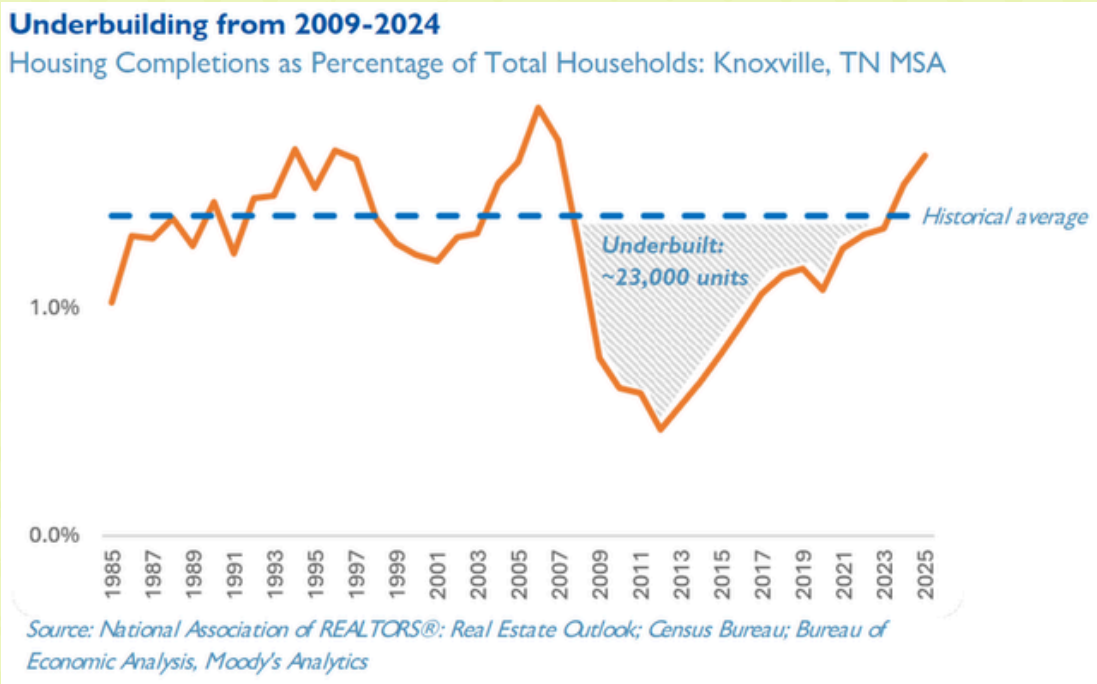
Knox County Housing Data

To better understand the context of individuals living without housing, one place to look is at the local housing and job markets. If housing is accessible and affordable, then we need to further elevate additional areas of system inflow to homelessness. These could be individuals reentering from institutions, youth, individuals unable to work due to disability, and others. In the case of the Point in Time Count, as it is a census, thinking about the growth in the community as well as overall economic investments is critical to understanding the current situation and historical context that brought the numbers to where we see today.

- Population has grown nearly 100K in the last 20 years, at a very steady rate.
- Mortgages, even with generous down payment assistance programs are often inaccessible to young and low-income renters. The average listing price in Knox County is now over $500K.
- The unemployment rate has remained low since the Great Recession in 2008 ended.
- The rate of households considered to be in poverty has reliably gone down since 2007.
- The number of housing units being listed has continued to rise consistently since 2023.

Homeownership for new and first time buyers is challenging, and wages have not been consistent in their distribution, leaving large portions of the community unable to achieve social mobility. Many have also experienced increased financial pressures and strain, leading to evictions, displacement, and an ongoing inflow of homelessness.

Knoxville Building Trends: 2009-2024



This chart reflects a significant period where building steeply declined across Knoxville following the financial crisis in 2008. While housing supply has been increasing, the market is still working to accommodate the increase in population, as well as the need for deeply affordable housing.

Chart: East TN Realtors, 2026 State of Housing Report. https://www.etnrealtors.com/2026/07/27/stateofhousing/

Average Home Listing Price

Housing affordability of the median priced home

Housing affordability change from 2024 to 2025

HOME PURCHASE COSTS	2024	2025	CHANGE 2024-2025
Interest rates	6.85%	6.15%	-0.70%
Median sales price	$ 367,500	$ 370,582	$ 3,082
Down payment & closing costs	$ 47,775	$ 48,176	$ 401
Monthly principal & interest payment	$ 2,167	$ 2,032	$ (135)
Total monthly owner costs	$ 2,596	$ 2,465	$ (131)
Annual income needed	$ 103,856	$ 98,598	$ (5,258)

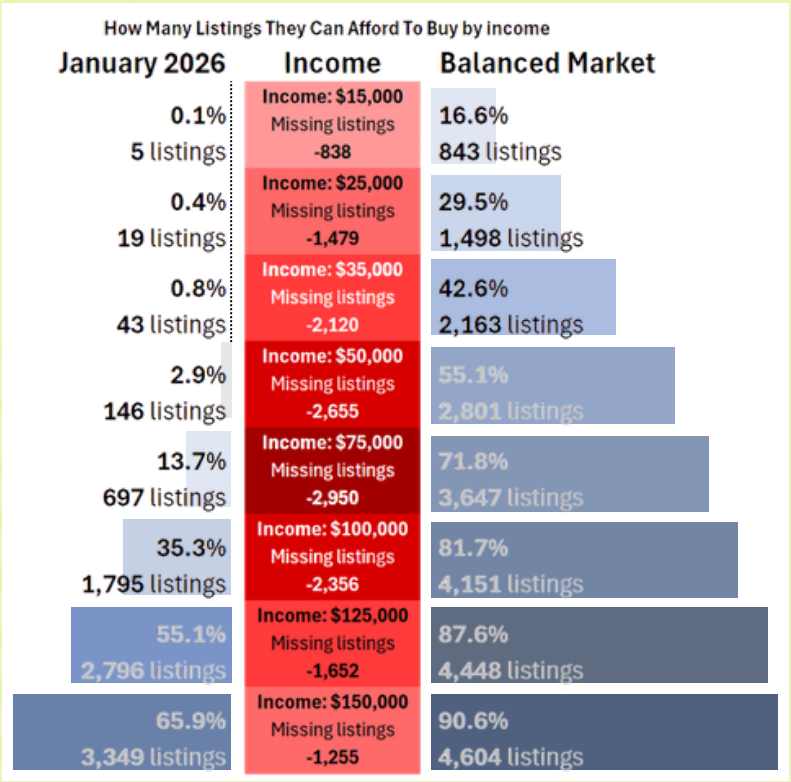
Source: Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, Federal Housing Finance Agency, ETNR, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Author's calculations. Estimates assume a 10% down payment on a 30-year fixed-rate loan with zero points, 3% closing costs, 0.5% property taxes, 0.4% property insurance, 0.558 private mortgage insurance, maximum 30% debt to income ratio

On a $370,582 mortgage, with a minimum down payment and closing costs ($48,176), in 2025 a household would need an income of at least $98,598 per year.

This may allow some households to enter the housing market, but is focused more towards those with income well above 80% AMI, which for a household of 2 is currently $63,600*.

*https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html

Housing Availability by Income Bracket



When people enter the market well below 80% AMI, they are extremely limited in housing options. If you add any type of additional barrier, such as a criminal conviction, poor credit history, or homelessness, re-entering the housing market at any level can be extremely challenging. What this graph helps reflect is that there is considerable room for the overall inventory to catch up to the population as it has grown, especially focused on household incomes at or below $100,000.

Charts: East TN Realtors, 2026 State of Housing Report. https://www.etnrealtors.com/2026/07/27/stateofhousing/

2026 PIT Count Totals

Unsheltered Findings - A Summary

The unsheltered count includes those who indicated they stayed outside, in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. an abandoned building), a vehicle, or public facility not meant for overnight residence such as a bus station. The PIT count presents a unique opportunity to canvas across the entire community, and engage with individuals outside of the standard homeless crisis response system. PIT surveyors are able to directly engage with a highly mobile population, many of whom are not accessing mainstream homeless services.

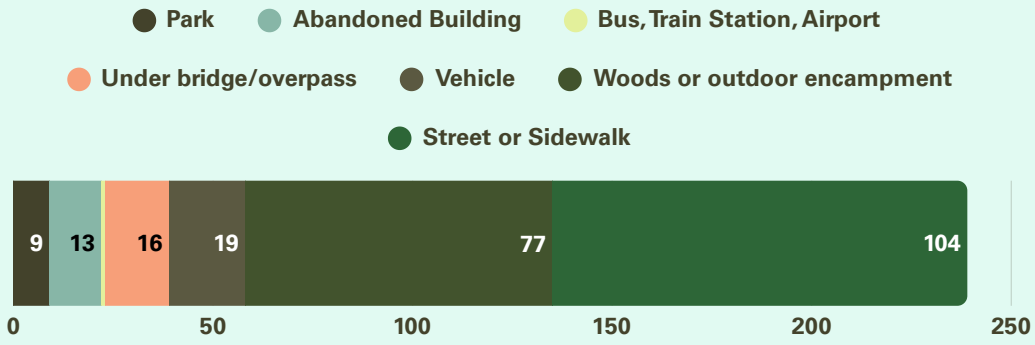
The PIT is not a perfect snapshot, as individuals across the broad geographic area - all of Knox County - are inevitably missed, but it helps paint a portrait of the experience of homelessness in the community in a unique way. For 2026 some additional questions were added to the survey to try to better understand systemic gaps, and where individuals living unsheltered who are not directly accessing homeless services are coming into contact with formal elements of the system, such as first responders, churches, or homeless outreach.

Unsheltered - Survey Data

- The number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness that was surveyed in 2026 was nearly the same as in 2025, 239 in 2026 compared to 245 in 2025 (down just over 2%).
- Far fewer individuals were surveyed who stayed in their vehicles: 19 in 2026 compared to 43 in 2025.
- A higher percentage of individuals reported their last permanent residence was in Knox County, 70% in 2026 compared to 61% in 2025.
- A slightly higher percentage of veterans was surveyed this year; 8% in 2026 compared to 5.7% in 2025.
- 45.6% of individuals identified as having a disability in 2026 compared to 32.2% in 2025.
- 55% reported using substances or drinking alchol in 2026, up slightly from 50% in 2025.

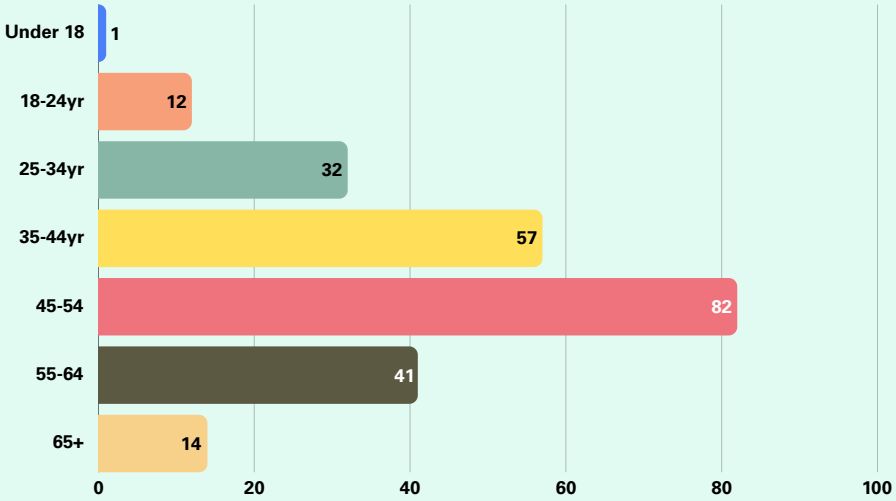
Where neighbors stayed

The majority of those surveyed stayed on the street or sidewalk, while only 8% counted were in their vehicles. Car and vehicle homelessness across Knoxville/Knox County is not well documented, but likely far exceeds this figure.



Age

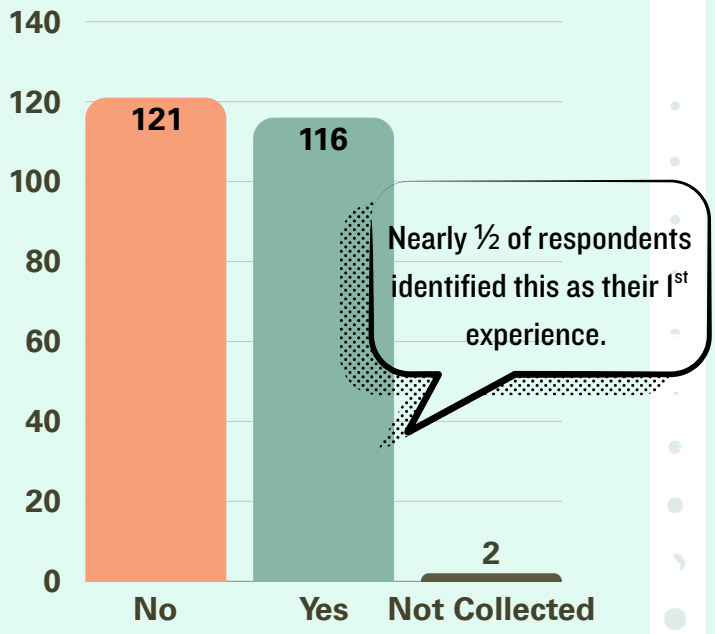
This distribution highlights a decrease in youth homelessness, with a slight increase in the average age of those experiencing homelessness, with 57% aged 45 or older.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

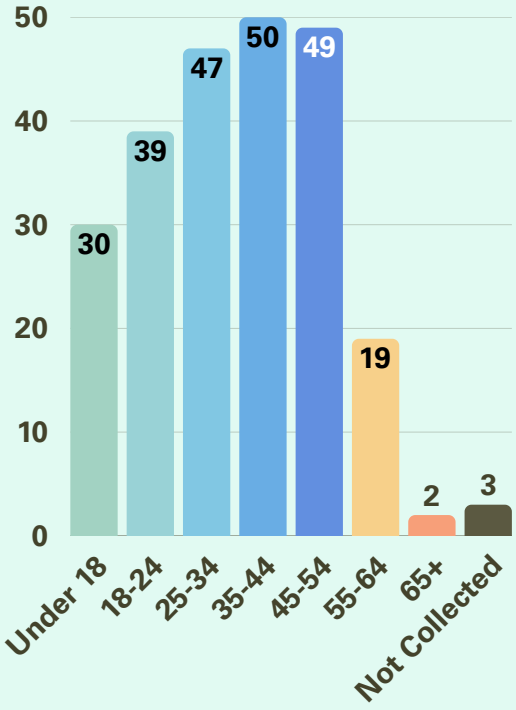
Ist Time Homeless

The percentage of individuals who are homeless for the first time helps us understand inflow into the system, and overall system pressures. Locally we see a nearly 50% split, indicating that there is a steady source of inflow and also many cases of unresolved and long-term homelessness.



Age First Time Homeless

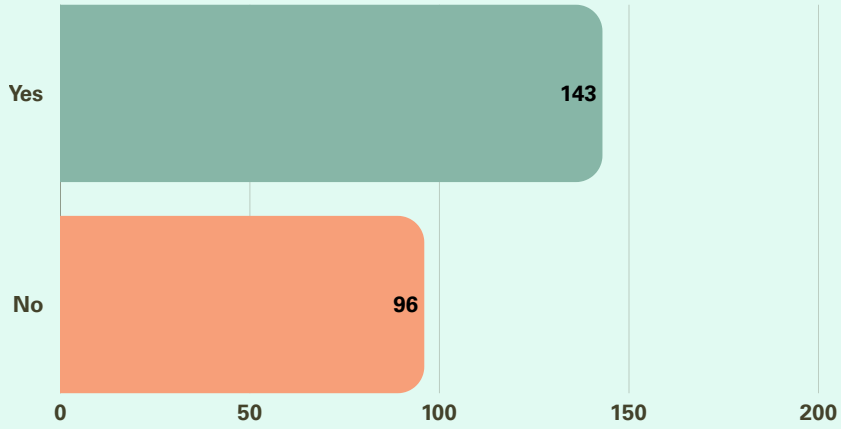
The age an individual first experiences homelessness can help indicate the level of services that may be needed, and can point towards upstream community factors contributing to the risk of homelessness for specific populations.



Chronic Homelessness

Chronic homelessness is defined as experiencing homelessness for I year or longer within the last 3 years and simultaneously having a disabling condition.

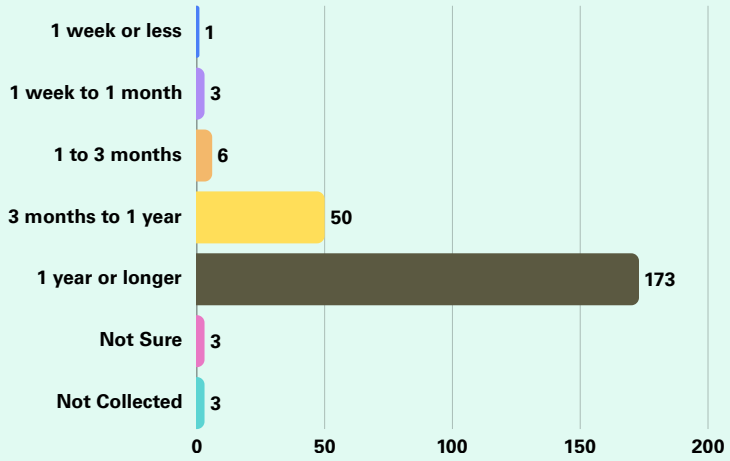
Once chronically homeless, it becomes much harder to house individuals through lower levels of intervention alone.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

Homelessness Duration

The longer the duration of homelessness, the more individualized support is needed to help lift individuals into stable and permanent housing. Patterns of survival become challenging to redefine as habits are cemented over time. The longer someone is homeless, the easier it is for them to feel stuck, and to experience a loss of hope.



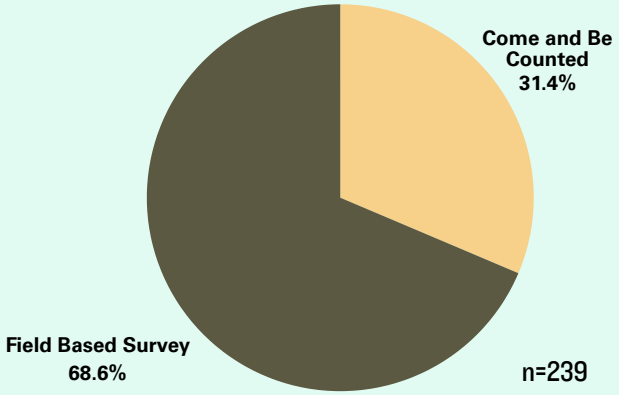
Times/Months Homeless within last 3 years

This is an effort to better understand the length of time people are experiencing homelessness, and if it meets the definition of chronic homelessness. It also points to the level at which the population has been successful at resolving their own homelessness over time.

Times Homeless/ Months Homeless	Less than 12 months	12 or more Months
Once	24	50
4 or more times	7	36

Survey Location

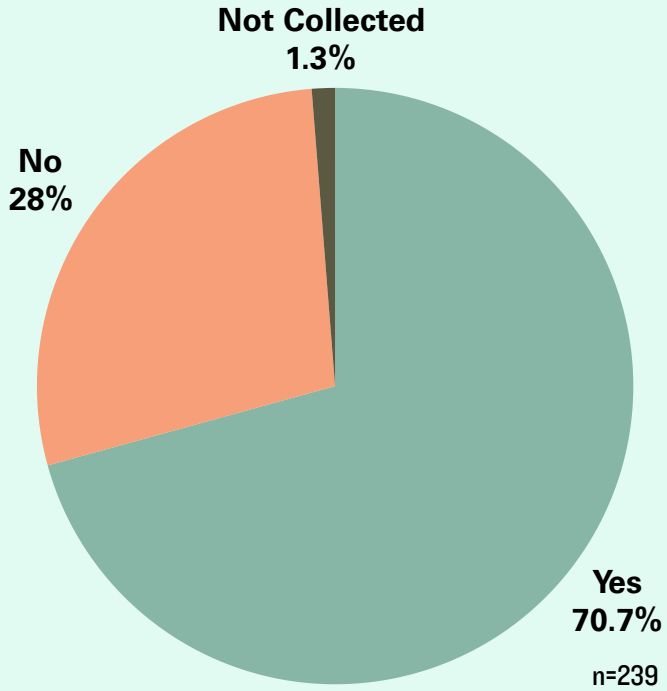
The majority of surveys conducted were Field Based Surveys, which means they were completed outside of a regular service event. This indicates that the dataset is likely to be fairly broad and representative, which is more likely than if the majority of surveys were captured at one or two service providers' events.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

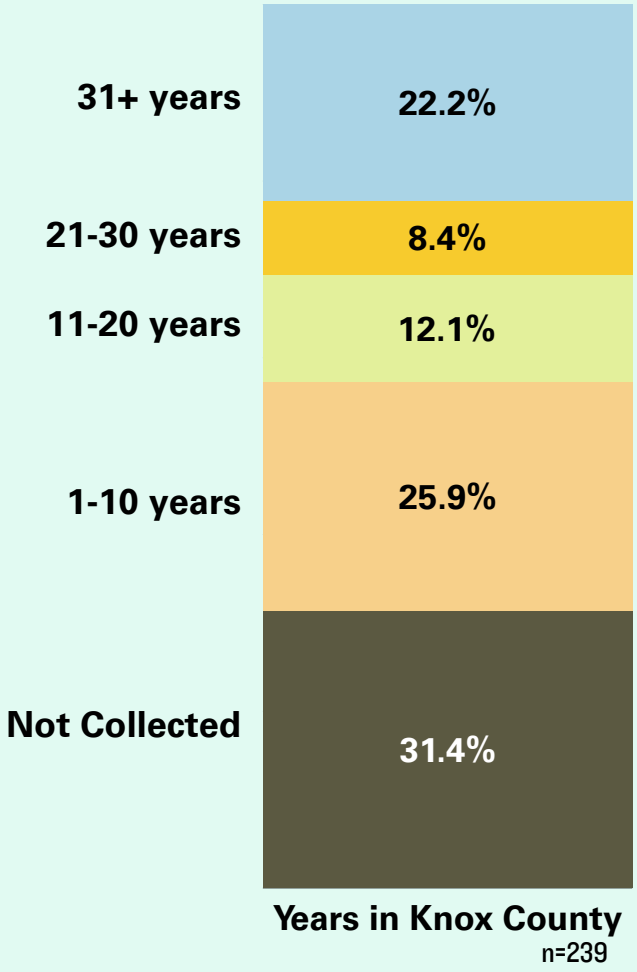
Last Permanent Address

The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness here became homeless here in Knoxville-Knox County. This means their last permanent address was here, and they lost their housing here.



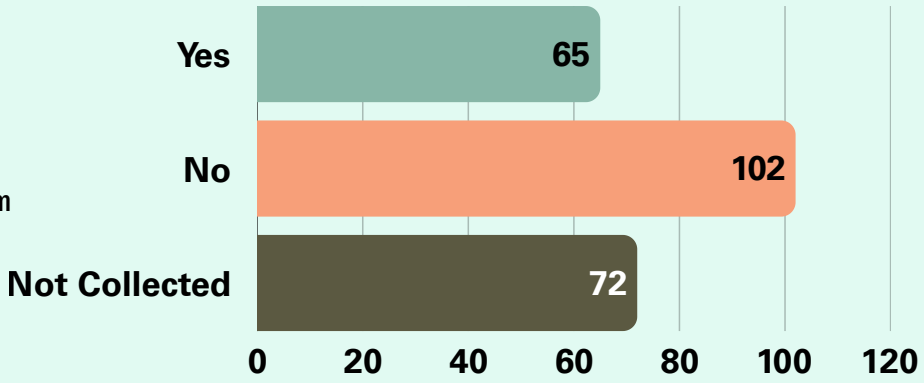
How long in Knox County?

Nearly 43% of respondents identified as having lived in Knox County for II years or more.



Most Recent Housing Loss Due to Eviction?

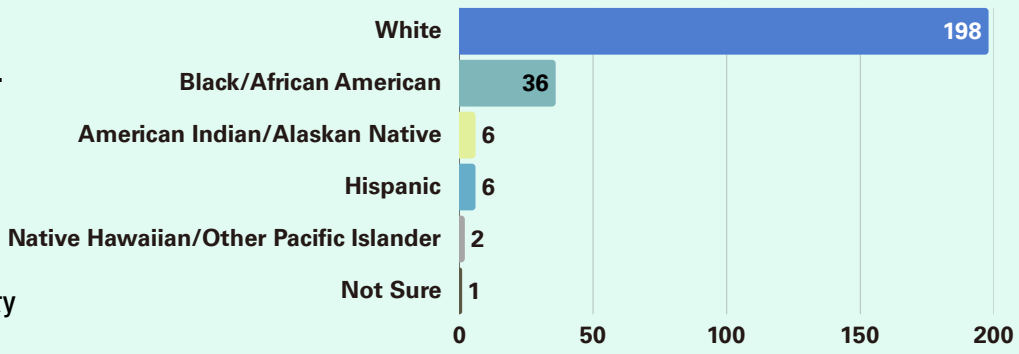
27% of individuals surveyed reported that their most recent loss of housing was tied to an eviction. Homelessness Prevention programs, targeted at providing short-term assistance to preserve a household's existing housing, can help prevent evictions from taking place, saving public resources by diverting people from the homeless services system.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

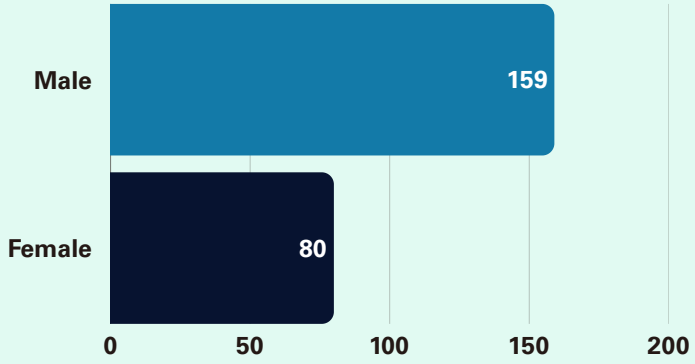
Race

The majority of those surveyed identified as either white or as white in addition to another race. The 2nd most predominant were those who identified as Black/African American (36 or 15%). In the most recent US census*, 8.5% of the Knox County population identified as Black/African American.



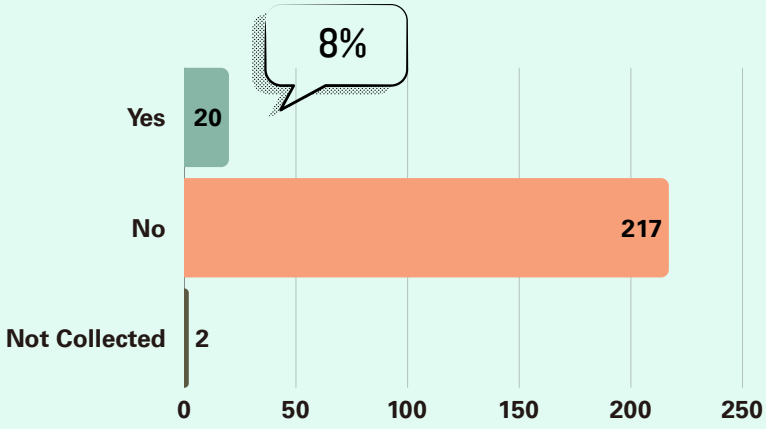
Sex

Twice as many males were surveyed as females. This means that while the survey may be representative of the unhoused population, it is largely skewed towards males and their experiences. System data show that among individuals accessing homeless services in the community, about 53% are male, and 45% are female.



Veteran

Twenty individuals self-identified as United States Military veterans. This is consistent with service system data, which indicates that about 9% of the homeless population in Knoxville-Knox County are veterans.

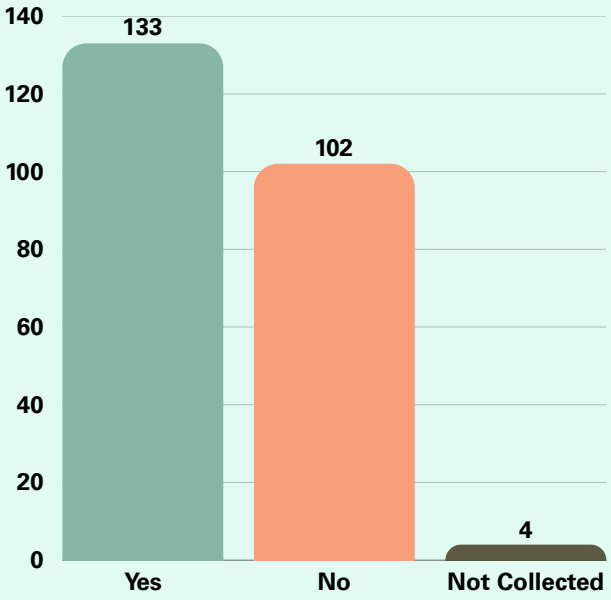


*https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/knoxcountytennessee/PST045224

Unsheltered - Survey Data

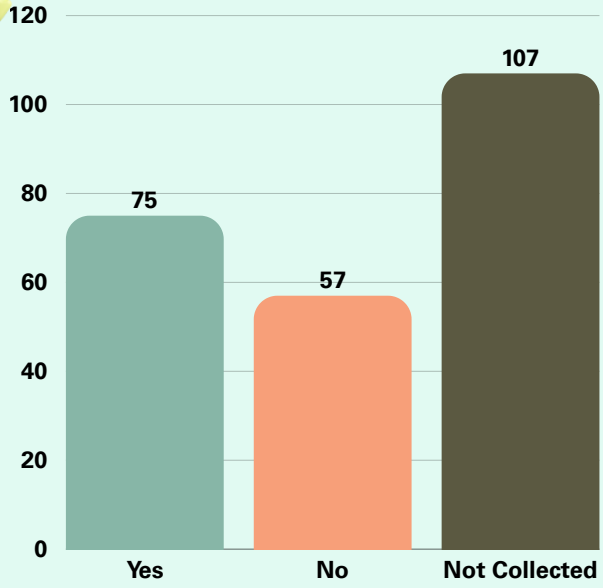
Drink Alcohol or Use Drugs - Substance Use

Just over half of respondents identified as using substances or alcohol. Substance Use Disorder can be exacerbated by the experience of homelessness, which can make it challenging for people to enter and maintain recovery.



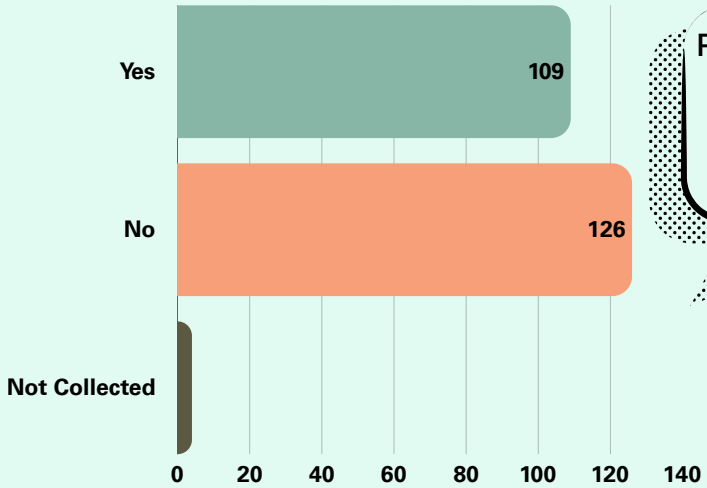
Has your drinking or drug use worsened since becoming homeless?

Of those that identified as using substances, over half indicated that their usage had worsened since becoming homeless. This aligns with surveys from across the country, that show many individuals do not start using drugs or alcohol until after they experience homelessness for the first time.



Physical Disability

Just under half of individuals identified as having a disability that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities. Medical outreach and the nested clinic at KARM have made positive impacts on access to wound and healthcare.

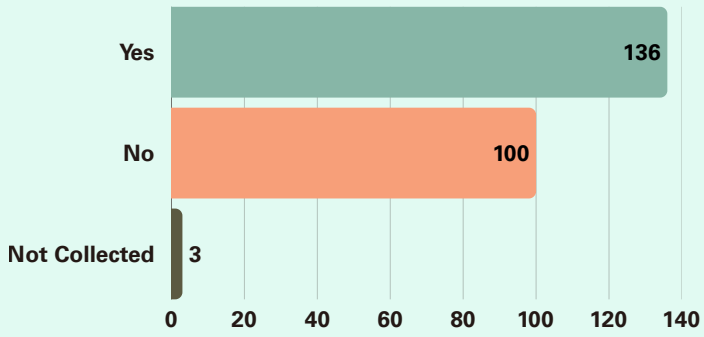


Physical activities people are limited in include: walking, climbing stairs, reading, lifting, and carrying.

Unsheltered - Survey Data

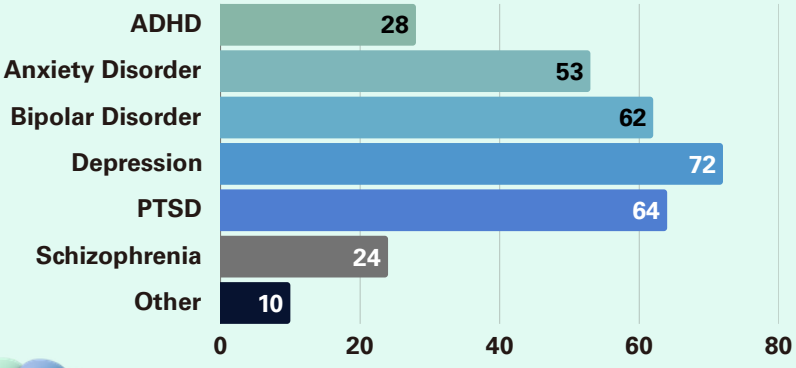
Mental Health Condition

This question focuses on actual mental health diagnoses: “Have you been diagnosed with a mental health condition?” The question below on Mental Health Concern just asks if individuals are concerned about their mental health. In both cases, the majority indicated struggling with some form of mental health diagnosis or concern.



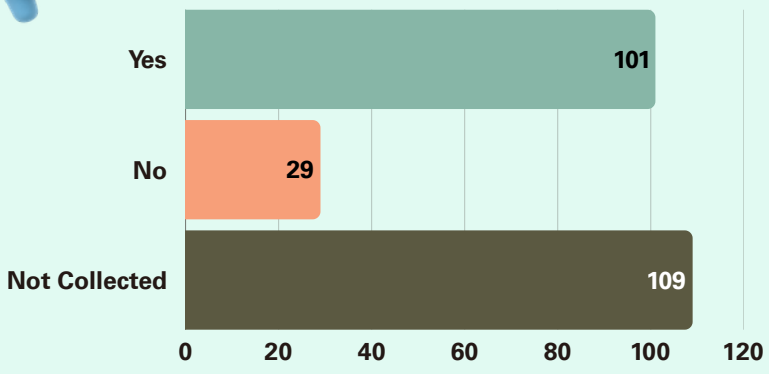
If Yes, What Diagnoses?

Individuals could select more than one diagnosis. Depression was the most common identified, followed by PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and Bipolar Disorder. Mental Health Conditions can be exacerbated by lack of treatment, as well as the stress and trauma of the experience of homelessness itself.



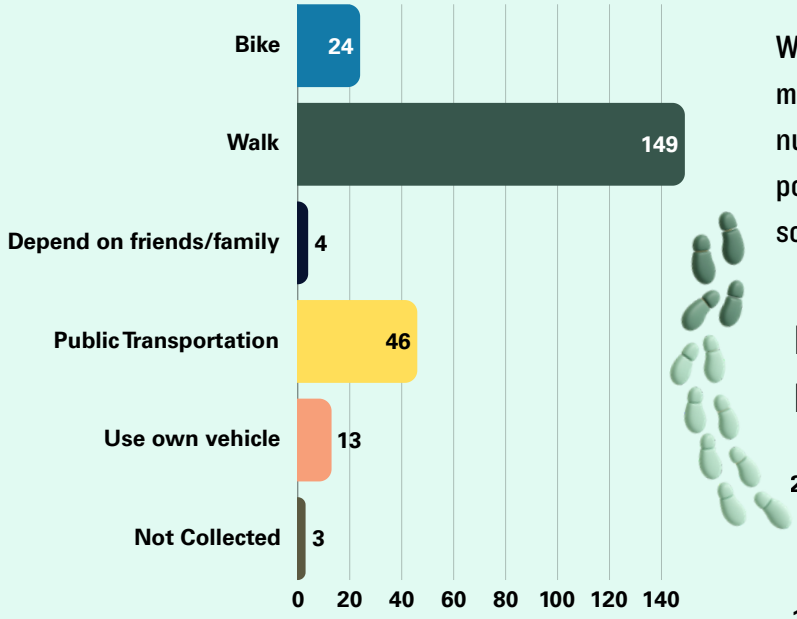
Mental Health Concern

Far fewer individuals answered this question than on condition, however, of those that did, there are significantly more who identified as being concerned with their mental health than not. Within the context of homelessness, healing can be very challenging.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

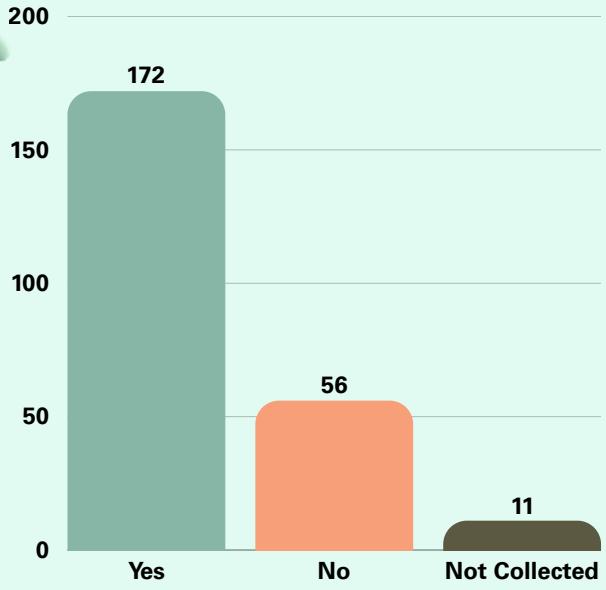
Main Mode of Transportation



Walking, public transit, and biking were the top three methods neighbors utilize to get around. A small number reported using their own vehicle, though this population is more difficult to find and survey, and so may be underreported.

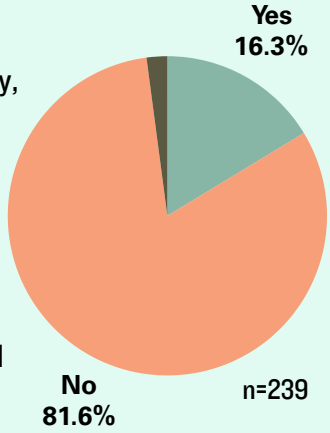
Nearly 72% of neighbors indicated that their main mode of transit - primarily walking - makes it harder for them to achieve self-sufficiency. Knoxville and Knox County are challenging to navigate without motorized transportation, and even more so for individuals without a stable place to secure their belongings and important documents.

Impact of Transportation: Has it been harder to pursue work or education?



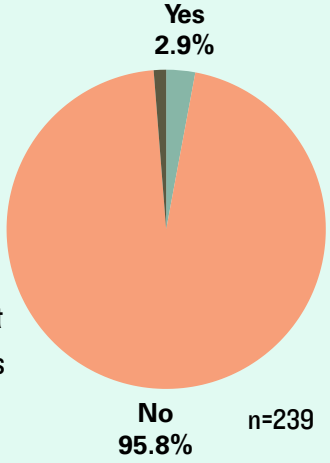
Developmental Disability

Over 16% of neighbors identified having a developmental disability, which can directly impact the ability to maintain employment and housing. It can also impact the way individuals present at shelter and for services, if they are unable to readily engage and advocate for themselves.



HIV/AIDS

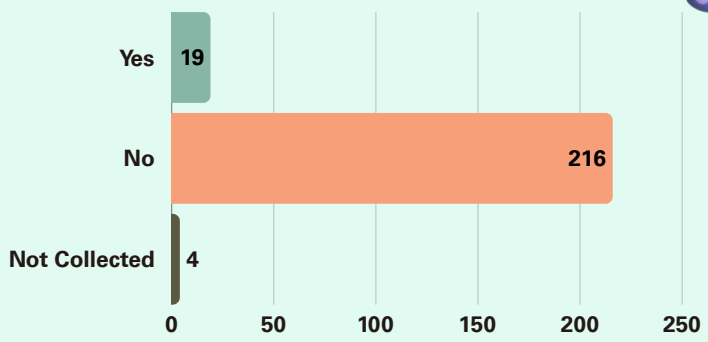
Nearly 3% of those surveyed indicated that they have HIV or AIDS. Homelessness can severaly impact a person's ability to engage in the long-term treatment needed to manage this condition. All but I individual who answered yes are currently taking medication.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

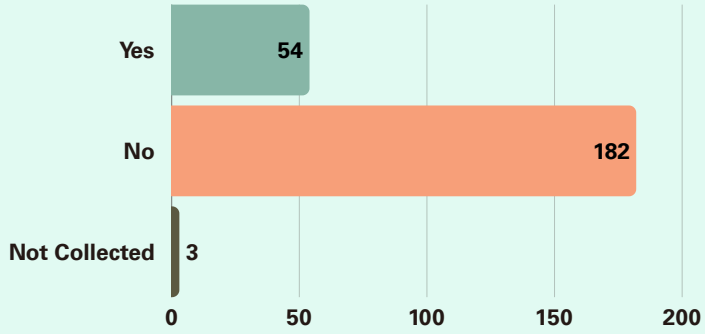
Are you experiencing homelessness because you are currently fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking?

When asked specifically about experiencing domestic violence, only 19 individuals identified that they had. One individual answered Yes to this question, but No to the next question - otherwise all 18 are represented in the total of 54 in the next chart.



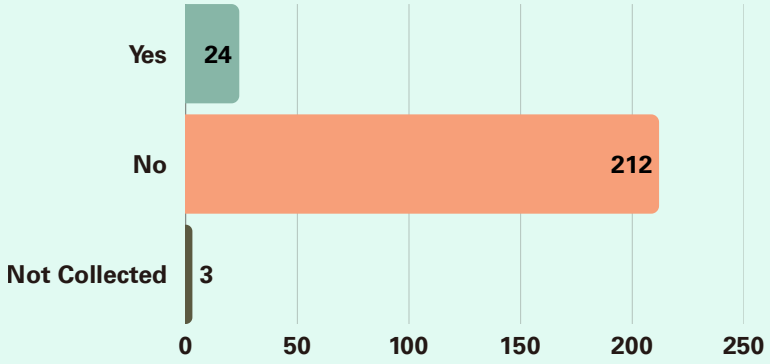
Are you experiencing homelessness because you left a situation in which any of the following were occurring: intimidation, manipulation, humiliation, isolation, frightening, terrorizing, bullying, threatening, blaming, hurting, injuring, or wounding you?

A total of 23% of individuals surveyed identified fleeing a situation in which key indicators of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking were present. This question was added in 2026 to get a better understanding of DV in the homeless population, as there has been a historical reluctance of victims to identify.



Are you routinely pressured to do things that someone else profits from, or that makes you uncomfortable (including working for free or sexual acts)?

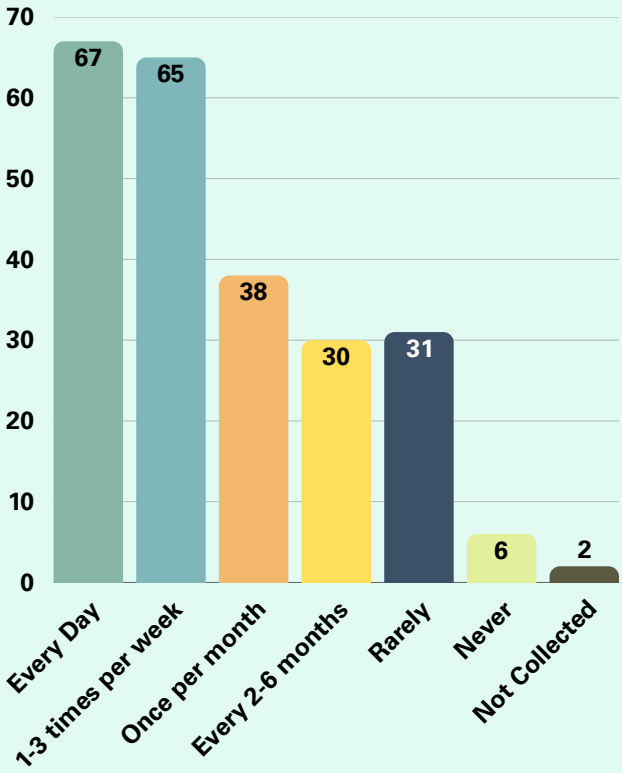
10% of neighbors identified experiencing key indicators of human trafficking. The Community Coalition Against Human Trafficking (CCAHT) provides training and resources for homeless services agencies to help recognize, and better meet the needs of individuals experiencing trafficking.



Unsheltered - Survey Data

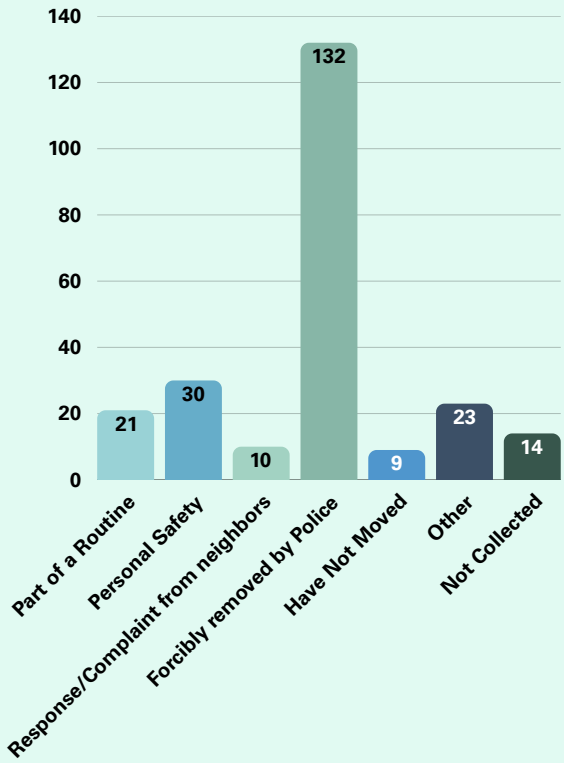
How Frequently do you Move?

Over half of the neighbors surveyed indicated they move where they are sleeping at least once per week. This is a high level of mobility, which can make staying connected to service providers, health appointments, and key identification documents much more challenging.



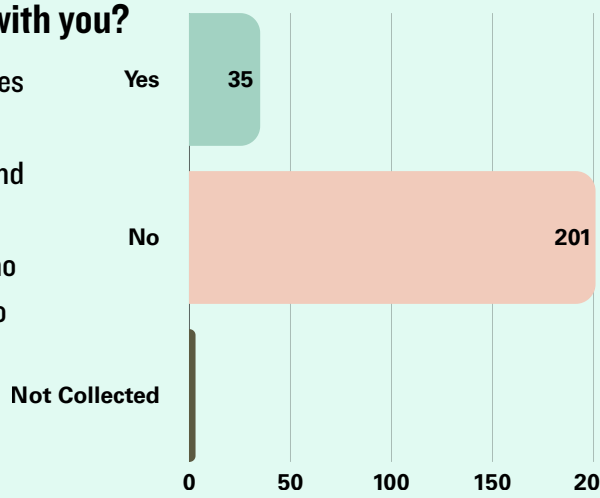
Reasons neighbors move their sleeping location

55% of neighbors indicated the last reason they moved was due to police action. Police enforcement of anti-camping laws in Knoxville-Knox County is directed by complaints from residents.



Do you have a pet living with you?

Having a pet, whether it qualifies as a service animal, can be an important emotional comfort and support for the owner. People experiencing homelessness who own a pet are often reluctant to enter housing programs if they cannot bring their pet.

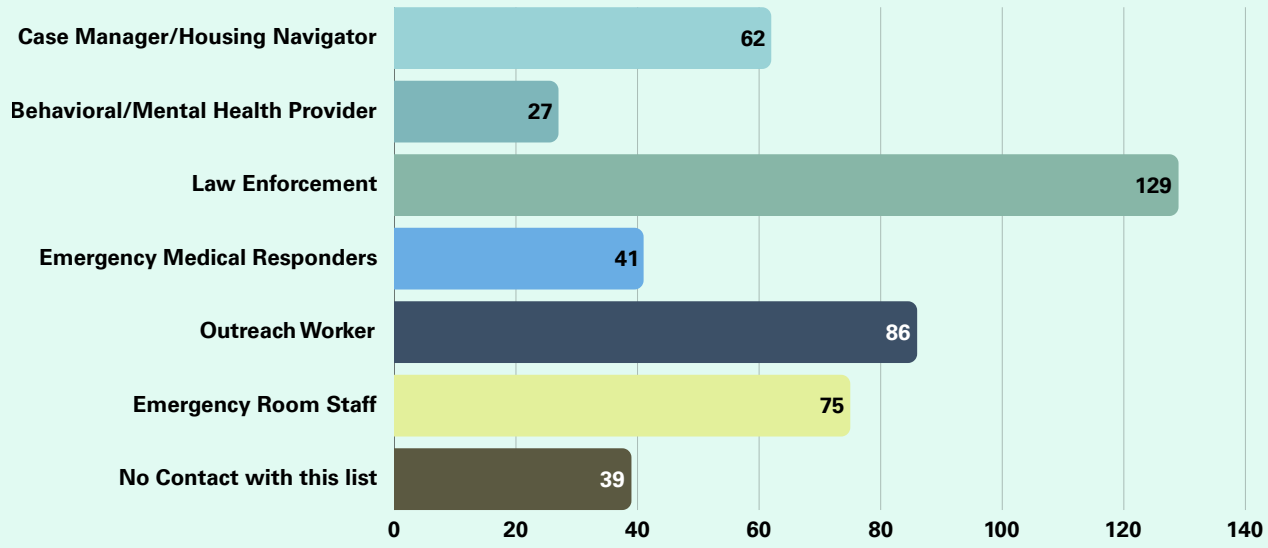


Nearly 15% of neighbors identified as living with a pet.

Unsheltered - Survey Data

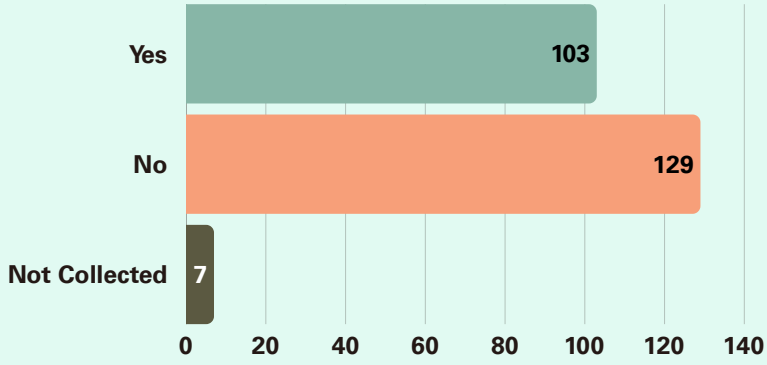
In the last 3 months have you had any contact with the following?

Survey respondents could select all options that applied. Law Enforcement, Outreach, and Emergency Room Staff were the three most common system staff that neighbors reported contact with over the previous three months. This question was designed to illuminate which systems homeless individuals are engaging with the most frequently. Engagement with law enforcement and emergency medical systems are responsible for some of the highest costs of homelessness to the community at large.



Anyone else stay with you last night?

Understanding whether homeless neighbors are regularly sharing spaces can help service providers better target supportive services and outreach for a variety of needs. This question is also helpful during the PIT Count in locating additional individuals to survey.



Sheltered Findings - A Summary

The sheltered portion of the PIT Count includes those who stayed in Emergency Shelter or in Transitional Housing. Transitional Housing is time-limited housing, generally two years, where individuals have access to case management and critical supportive services. Emergency Shelter can operate as continuous stay, where individuals have a guaranteed spot each night, or as night-by-night, which is effectively a first come, first serve drop-in model. The community's largest shelter, with a capacity of 330, is operated by Knox Area Rescue Ministries. Other providers such as the Salvation Army also offer smaller numbers of shelter beds. In 2025, the nonprofit ReLaunch began operating nightly seasonal shelter, which increased overall system capacity during the most dangerous months of winter weather.

Church-based warming centers have been centrally coordinated since the winter of 2023-2024, and count as Emergency Shelter in the PIT Count. However, they were not open on the night of the 2026 PIT count, as it was above the operational temperature threshold, which means fewer people were counted in Emergency Shelter and fewer people in the count as a whole. In 2025, there were 814 people in Emergency Shelter the night of the PIT Count, including warming centers. In 2026 there were 583, showing the sizable impact of warming centers on shelter capacity. The majority of those who stay in warming centers tend to be service-averse, and previous PIT Counts have provided an insightful window into their experiences that other data sources cannot.

Data Highlights

- There was an increase of 12 families in Transitional Housing (4 in 2025 to 16 in 2026).
- There was a similar increase, from 8 families in 2025 to 15 families in Emergency Shelter in 2026.
- Overall increase in Transitional Housing from 115 to 119 from 2025 to 2026.
- The % of individuals age 55 or older in Emergency Shelter dropped from 46% in 2025 to 38% in 2026.
- The % of veterans in Emergency Shelter decreased from 5% in 2025 to 3% in 2026.
- Chronic homelessness in Emergency Shelter stayed about the same; 32% in 2025 and 33% in 2026.
- Those reporting substance use in shelter increased slightly, from 9% in 2025 to 15% in 2026.
- The self identification of serious mental illness in Emergency Shelter also increased, from 19% in 2025 to 32% in 2026.

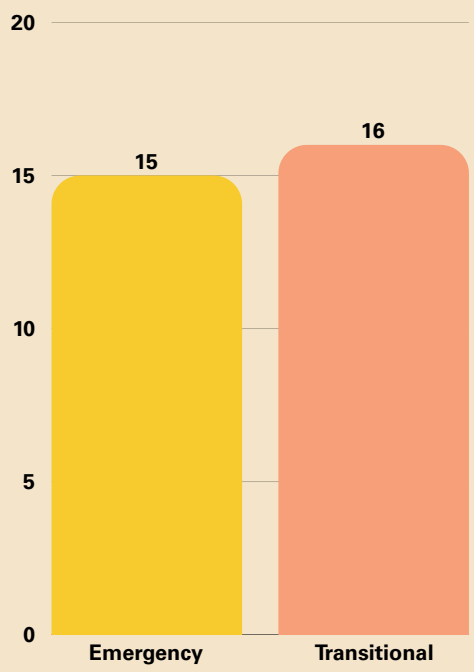
Sheltered Findings - Families & Children

Number of Families in Shelter & Transitional Housing

A Family Household consists of at least one adult and one child, though may contain more.

Family homelessness is inherently complicated, and can be incredibly challenging to navigate, especially with young children. Knox County Schools has a liaison who helps support school age children and their families, but academic progress can still be impacted over the short and long-term.

Having multiple shelter and housing options dedicated to families, including survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking is critical to keeping people inside and preventing families from experiencing unsheltered or vehicular homelessness. Providing families with wraparound services in Transitional Housing can help people regain their footing, and maintain stability in the long term.

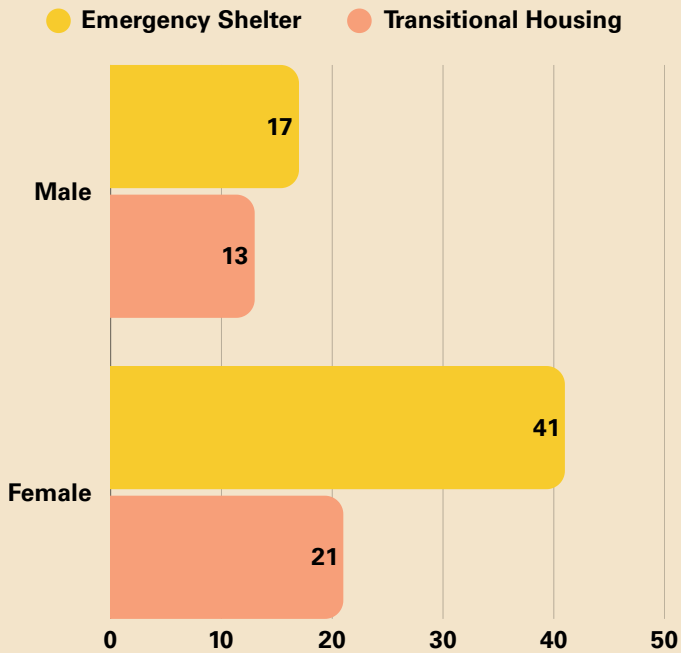


*count by head of household, not by individual.

Sex

Slightly more females than males, including children, were counted in families in shelter and transitional housing. There are a limited number of dedicated family shelter and transitional housing units across the community, including some specifically prioritized for women and children.

When shelter or housing is unavailable, individuals with children will often turn to friends and family first, or choose to sleep in their vehicle rather than outside or in an encampment. The PIT data only identified one family household living in their vehicle, though it is likely there are more. This population is incredibly difficult to survey, as fear of mandatory reporting and children being brought under care of the state remains prevalent.

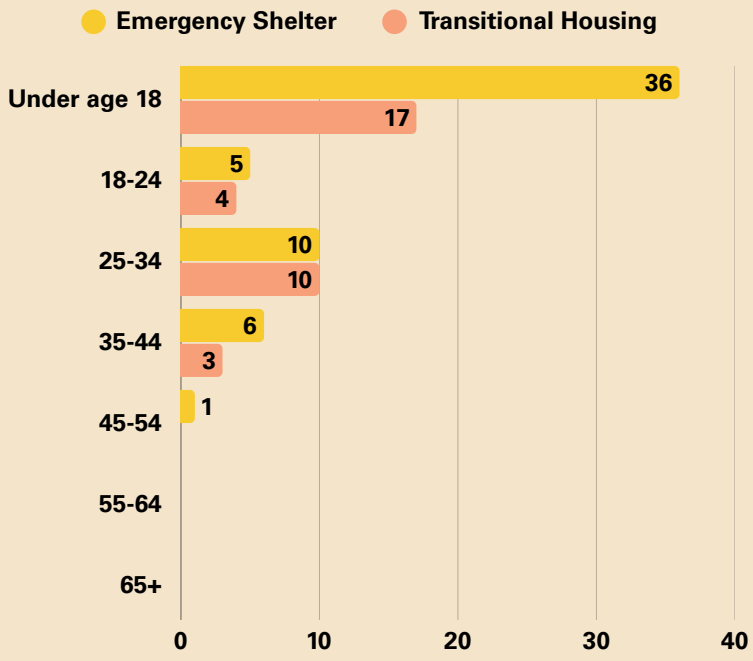


Sheltered Findings - Families & Children

Age

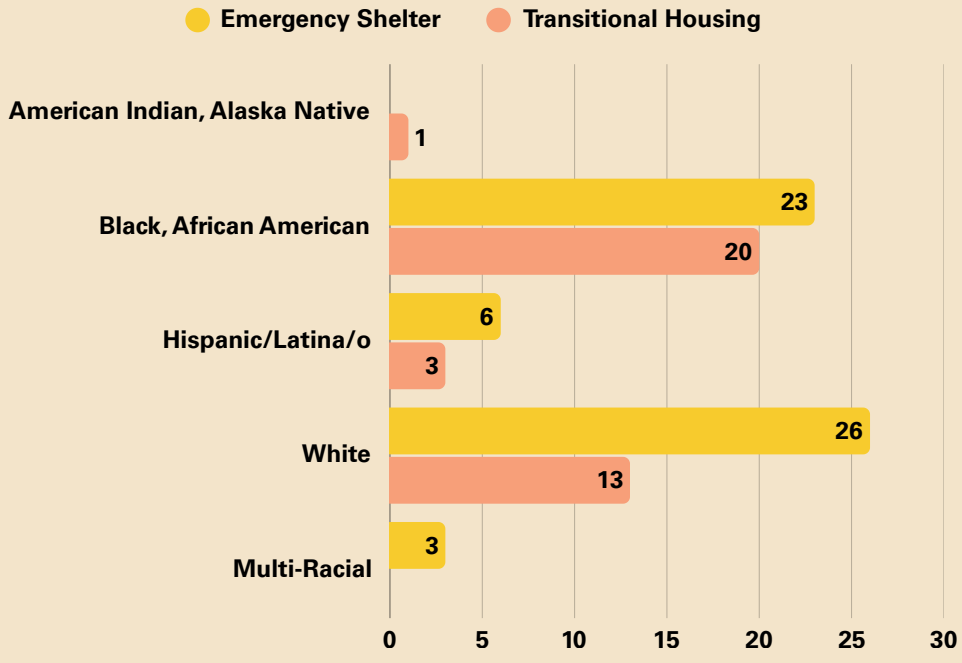
The majority of those in families in shelter were children and youth under age 24. The next largest population were those 25-34 (born from 1992-2001).

This tells us that the majority of those in families in shelter and transitional housing are in young families, with one or more children likely to be under 10 years old. For those who have employment, case management and financial counseling can help, as can targeted assistance for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.



Race

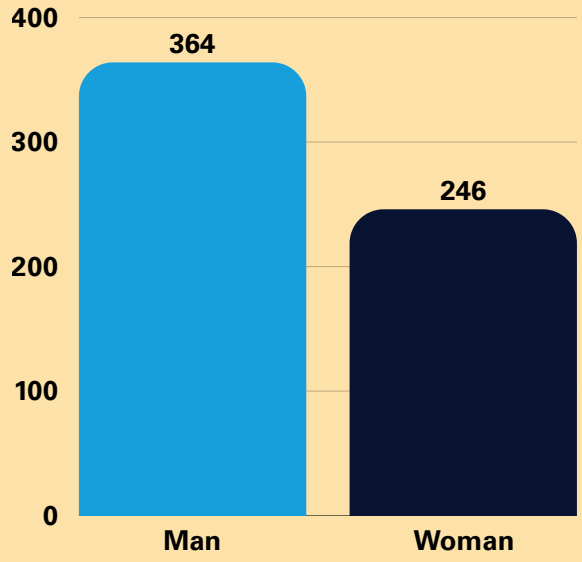
The two most represented groups are those who identify as Black or African American, and White. Individuals are able to select all that apply, so the totals are not directly representative of total individuals.



Sheltered Findings - Single Adults

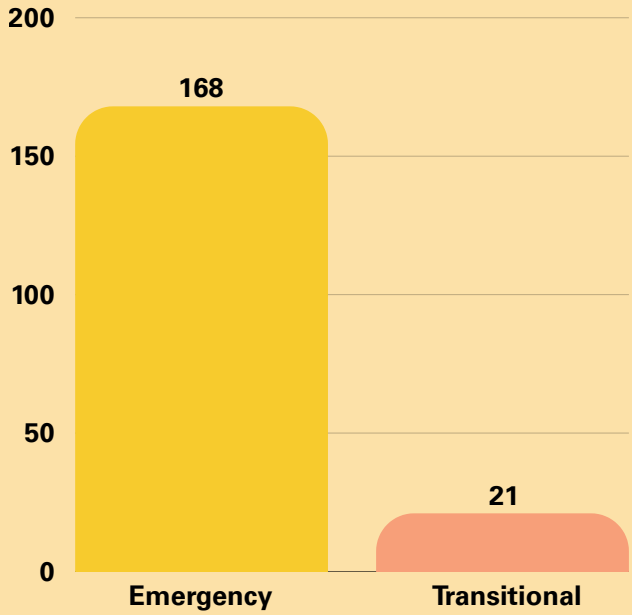
Sex

There were significantly more single men counted in shelter than women. This proportion aligns with the findings of the unsheltered count, and the community has more shelter and transitional housing resources for men than for women.



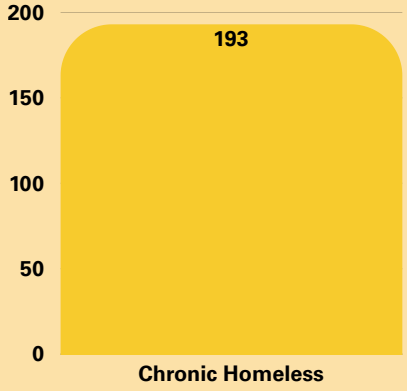
Domestic Violence

A significant number of individuals across both shelter and transitional housing experienced domestic violence, nearly 29%. In 2024 according to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 71% of victims whose sex is known are female. Services prioritized specifically for survivors can help individuals and families navigate dangerous and challenging circumstances more safely.



Chronic Homelessness

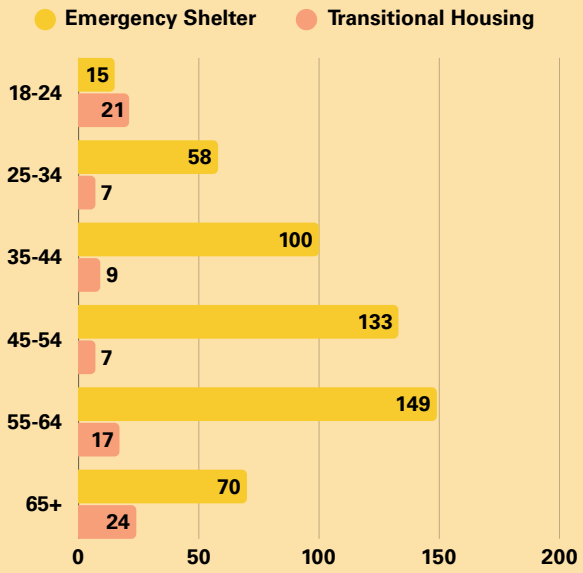
There were no individuals experiencing chronic homelessness counted in transitional housing, but nearly 33% of those in emergency shelter met the conditions for chronic homelessness. This difference is expected because transitional housing tends to serve individuals at a medium vulnerability level, whereas people experiencing chronic homelessness tend to have a high vulnerability level and are more likely to utilize lower-barrier resources such as emergency shelter.



Sheltered Findings - Single Adults

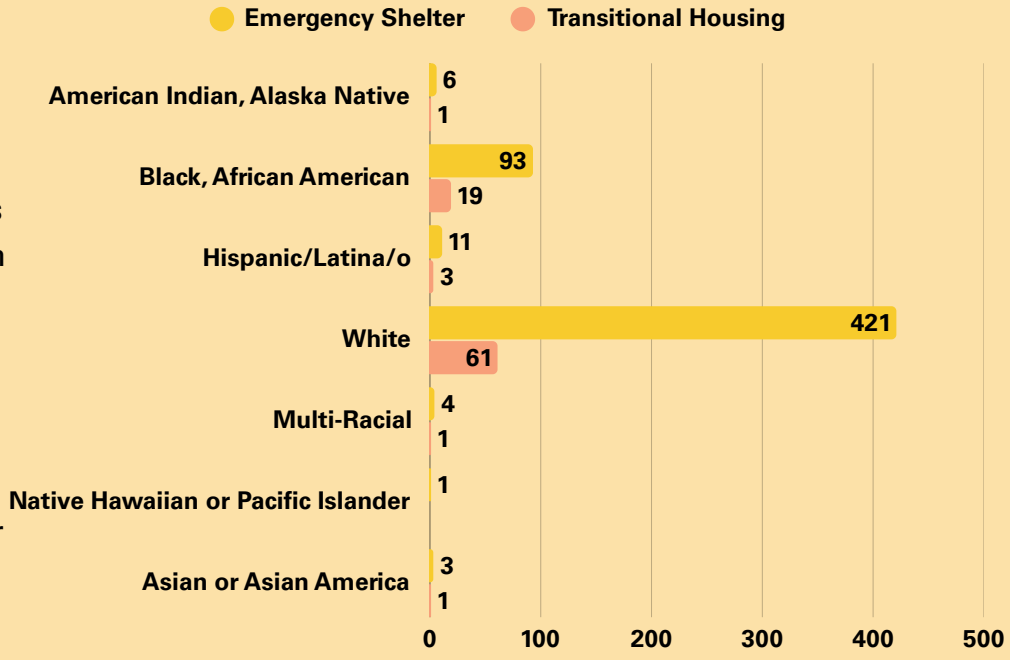
Age

The age of those in shelter continues to increase on average, with nearly 43% of those in emergency shelter and transitional housing at or over age 55. This shift is already affecting the types of social and medical services needed in the homeless services sector, such as increased demand for care for cognitive decline and physical disabilities. The increase in age is also affecting the types of housing needed. If individuals have no other form of income and qualify for SSI (Supplemental Security Income), finding market rate rental housing can be incredibly difficult and unaffordable. In 2026 the annual monthly income for someone on SSI was under $1000.



Race

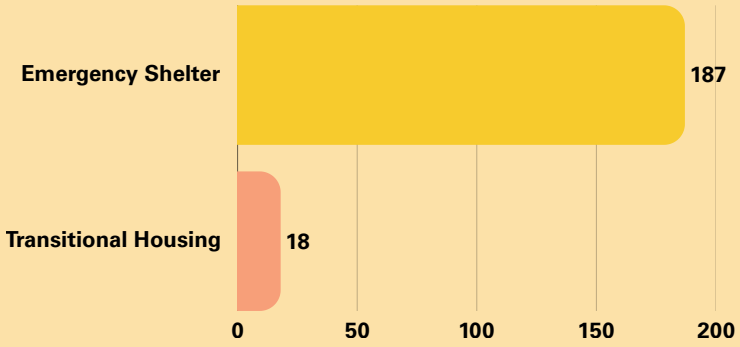
Individuals could identify all that applied to them, so the cumulative totals may not be consistent. Those who identify as White were the highest number in emergency shelter, followed by Black or African American, and Hispanic/Latina/o. Roughly the same percentage of those who identify as Black or African American were counted in shelter (16%) as unsheltered (15%).



Sheltered Findings - Single Adults

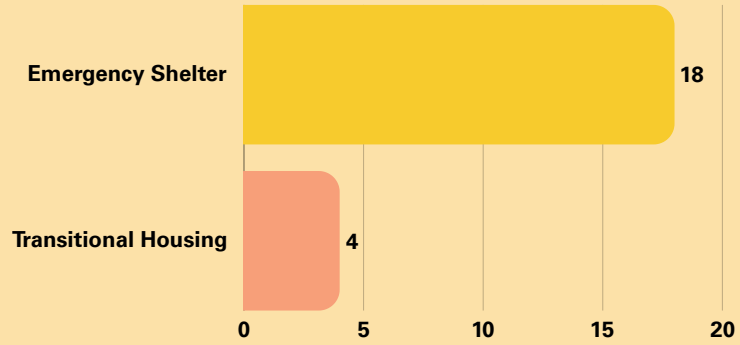
Mental Illness

32% of those in emergency shelter reported experiencing a mental illness. The root causes of homelessness are often complex, and mental illness can play a key role. Likewise it can make it more challenging for individuals to maintain stable housing and employment once housed, if they do not have proper ongoing care and supports.



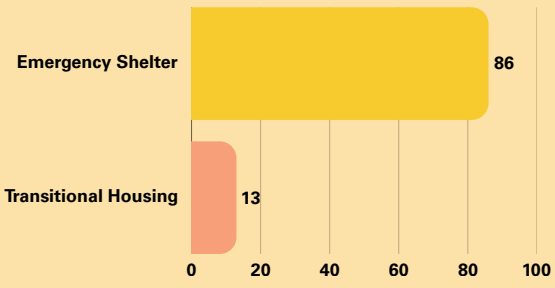
Veterans

Twenty-two veterans were identified in emergency shelter or transitional housing. Ending veteran homelessness is a stated goal in the community strategic plan to address homelessness, and regional providers are aligning to achieve it.



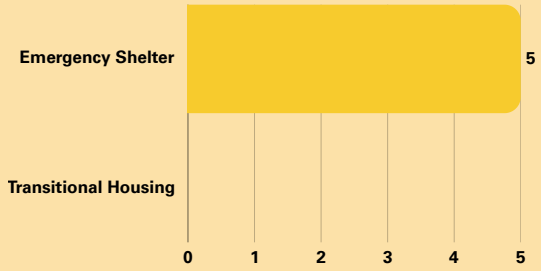
Substance Use

About 15% of those in emergency shelter reported substance use, and a much smaller percentage in transitional housing.



HIV

The number of individuals with HIV or AIDS experiencing homelessness is small, but this group requires specialized care and services.

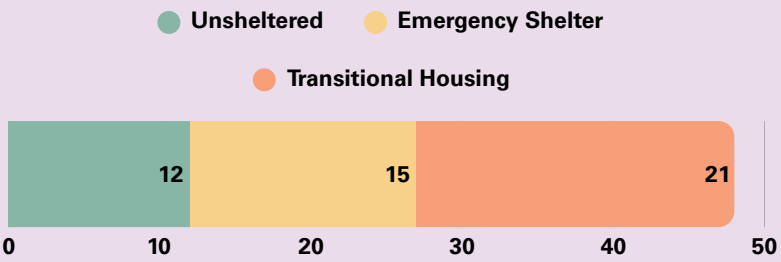


Youth & Young Adults - A Summary

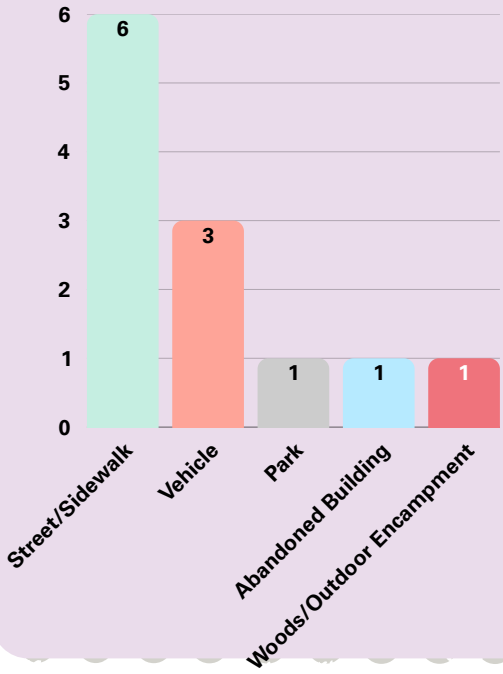
The term 'youth and young adults' refers to individuals between the ages of 18 and 25, who often have specific service needs distinct from those of adults or minor children. Between the 2025 and 2026 PIT Counts, our community saw a 49% reduction in the number of homeless youth counted: from 94 to 48 individuals. This remarkable improvement follows the advent of several new homeless youth-serving projects in the community: federally funded programs at the Community Action Committee (CAC) and Knox Pride for housing navigation, transitional housing and rapid rehousing, and 18 beds of youth-specific permanent supportive housing at Lumen Flats.

Services and policies around homeless youth have also become more coordinated through groups like the Homeless Youth Council, which meets monthly to coordinate work directly related to supporting youth experiencing homelessness across the community. It is attended by housing providers, city and county representatives, healthcare, outreach, navigation, social services, and workforce development agencies to help build stronger and more cooperative system pathways for youth. The Youth Action Board, a representative group of youth with lived experience locally plays a key role in statewide coordination, and ensuring that youth have a strong voice in the trajectory of the services being designed to serve them.

Where youth stayed on January 21st



Unsheltered youth mainly slept on the street or sidewalk.



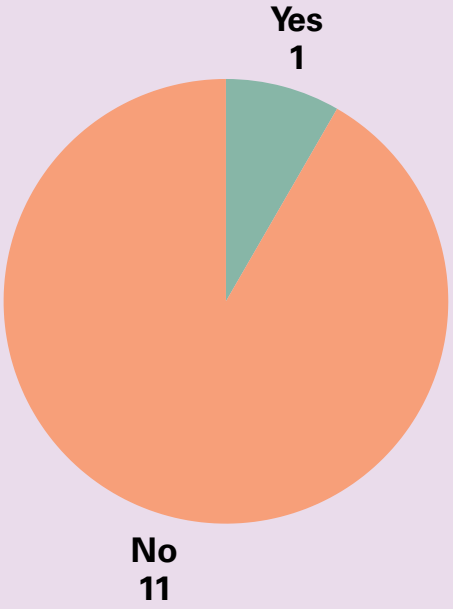
The majority of youth counted were in emergency shelter or transitional housing, with a small number remaining unsheltered. It has been reported by some youth that they feel safer staying outside than in shelters because of the risk of victimization by adults. There are currently no dedicated emergency shelter beds for youth in the community.

Youth experiencing homelessness can often benefit from specialized resources and dedicated programming.

Youth & Young Adults - Unsheltered Survey Results

Have you been staying with a parent or caregiver?

The majority of youth surveyed had not been staying with their parent or caregiver. For those youth not being supported by family, working with youth navigators and case management plays a critical role in ensuring they are best utilizing their access to system resources.

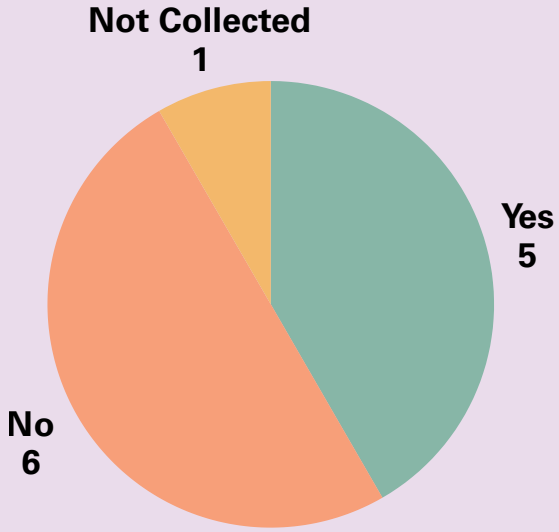


Were you forced by a parent or guardian to leave home?

Nearly half of unsheltered youth surveyed indicated that they had been forced to leave their home. Survey questions do not delve into the reasons youth were asked to leave.

Local youth diversion programs work to assist youth in reconnecting and reconciling with family, if possible. For some youth, mediation, case management, or funding can help them return home, in many cases the ideal scenario for the entire family.

In cases where that is not possible, youth can be prioritized into transitional housing, rapid re-housing, or permanent supportive housing projects as appropriate and available.

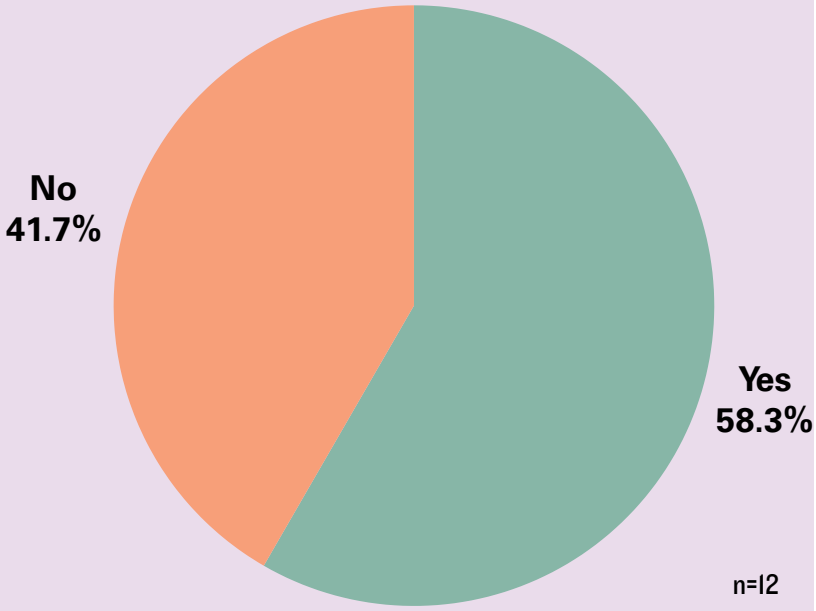


Youth & Young Adults - Unsheltered Survey Results

Diagnosed with Mental Health Condition?

Nearly 60% of youth surveyed reported having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Mental health can impact the attainment and retention of education, employment and housing, as well as the ability to successfully navigate complex systems of care to gain access.

Those with mental health conditions may need additional supports to be successful in programming, such as medication management and mental health treatment and counseling.

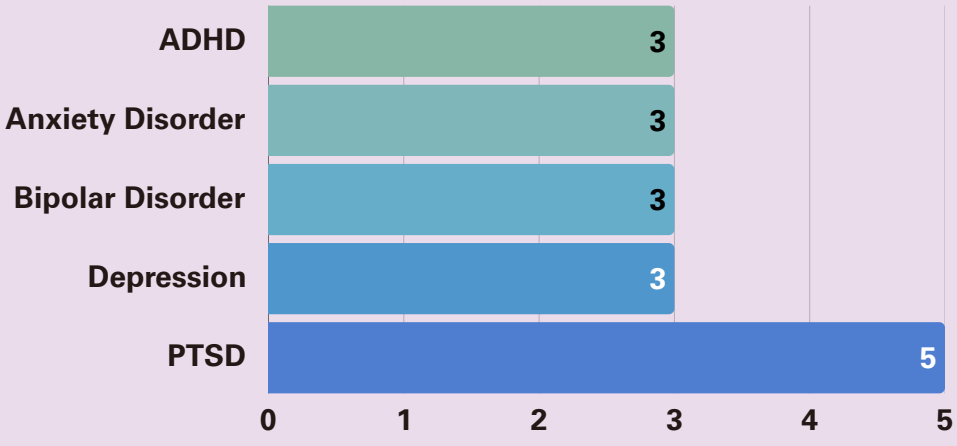


n=12

If yes, which one?

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), inclusive of C-PTSD (Complex PTSD), was the top identified diagnosis. PTSD can result from a single traumatic event, or from a series of traumatic instances (such as ongoing childhood abuse).

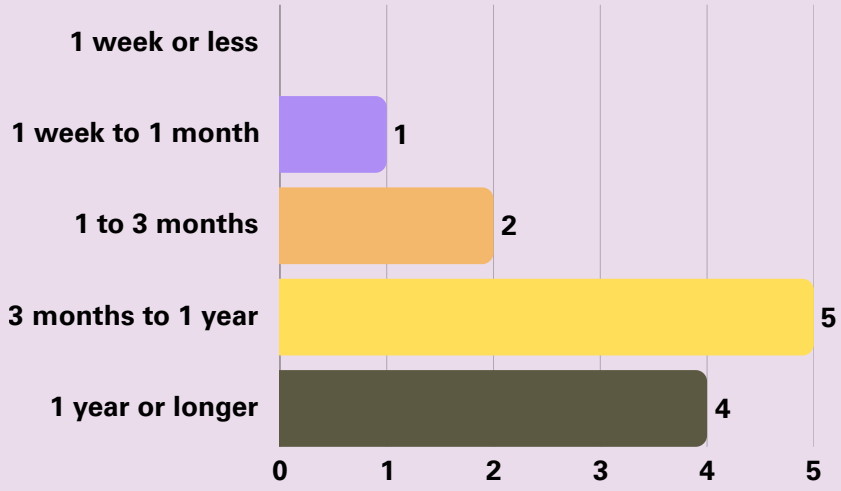
PTSD and other mental health issues can impact relationships, employment, school, and housing, and even increase the risk of homelessness.



Youth & Young Adults - Unsheltered Survey Results

Duration of Homelessness

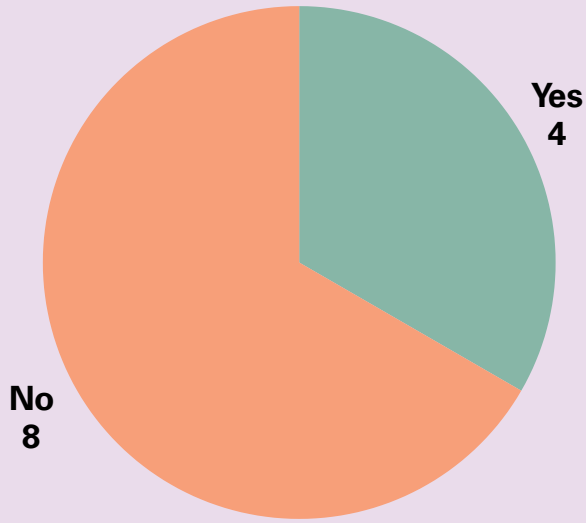
33% of youth surveyed indicated that they had been homeless for I year or more. One of the main predictors of adult homelessness is youth homelessness, and the longer a person is homeless, the stronger the predictive effect.



Chronic Homelessness

In order to meet the definition of chronic homelessness, individuals must have been homeless for one year or more (or across multiple experiences totaling at least one year within the last four years), and also have a chronic condition that is expected to be of long-term duration, and directly impacts their ability to conduct the regular activities of living.

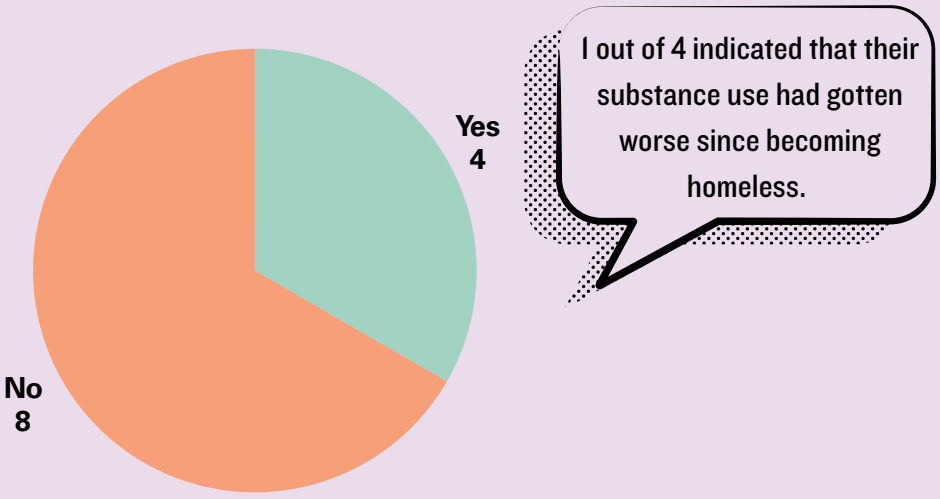
Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness can deteriorate in their condition while homeless, with reduced and irregular access to healthcare and other needed medications and supports.



Youth & Young Adults - Unsheltered Survey Results

Substance Use

Nearly 70% of youth surveyed indicated that they did not misuse substances or alcohol. Substance use can impact housing and employment possibilities, as well as individual safety and security.

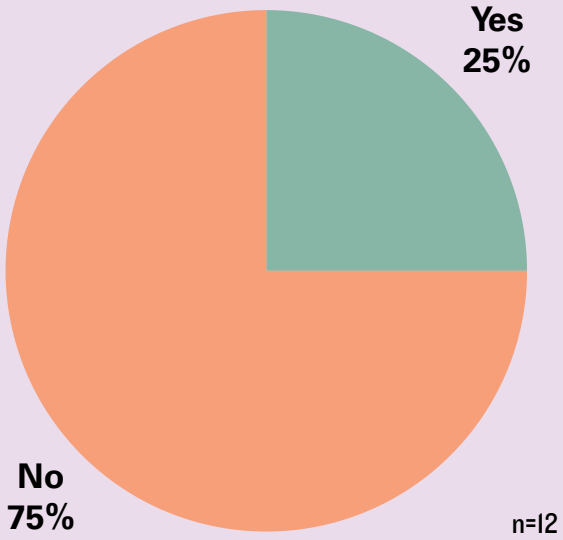


Domestic Violence

I in 4 youth and young adults identified that the reason they were no longer housed was due to acts associated with domestic violence, partner violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Youth and young adults often do not yet have extensive savings or networks in place to bounce easily when confronted with interpersonal violence, and situations that challenge stable housing.

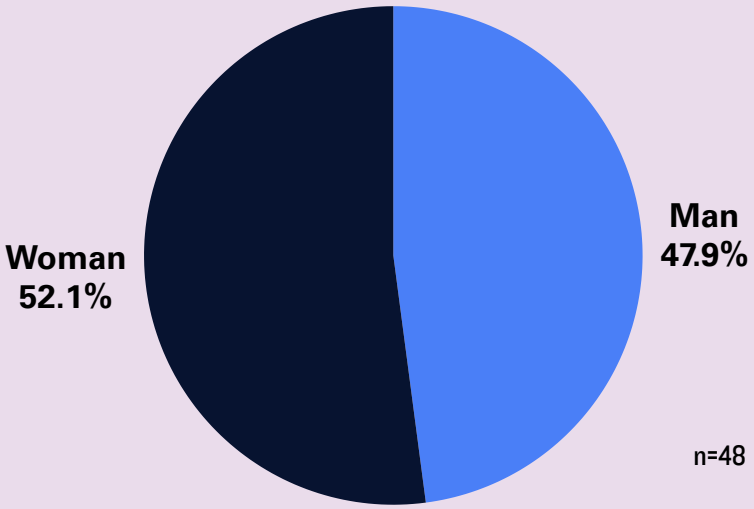
Dedicated domestic violence projects can help individuals access needed supports in a way that protects their identity and safety while participating, including housing.



Youth & Young Adults - Unsheltered & Sheltered YYA Combined

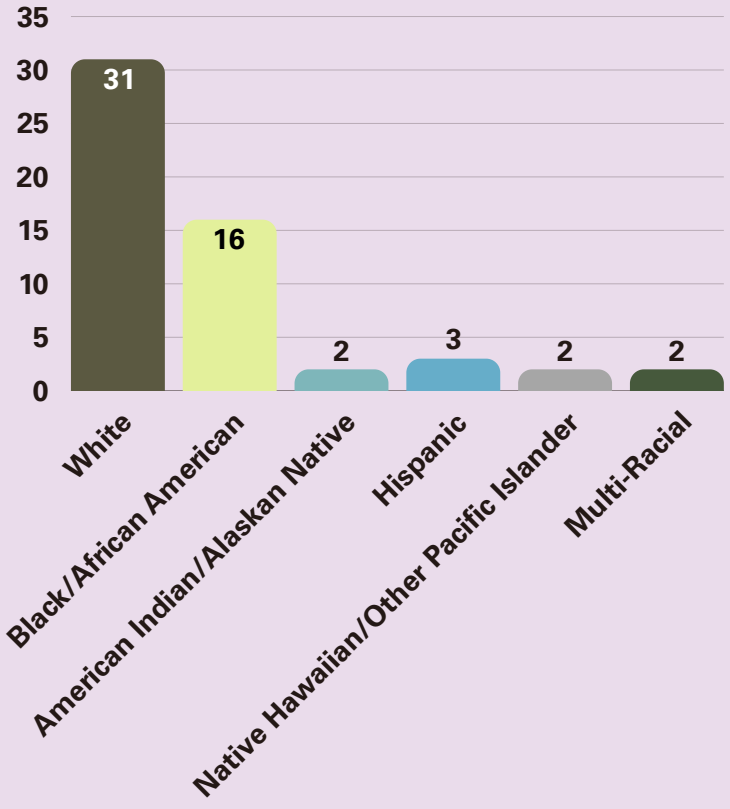
Sex

Slightly more youth and young adults identified as female than male. This tracks with the family data, though is the reverse of the unsheltered and sheltered populations - which reflected significantly more men than women.



Race

The majority of youth identified as white, with Black and African American as the second-highest population. This tracks with the other population data, with those who are Black and African American being overrepresented across all demographics compared to their relative population according to the census.



Housing Inventory Count

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is an accounting of all operational Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter beds across the Continuum of Care on the night of the PIT Count. The HIC includes only beds dedicated to individuals experiencing homelessness.

The HIC coincides with the Point in Time Count, and both together serve as an overall systems gap analysis. On the night of the PIT Count, there were 38 emergency shelter beds and 42 transitional housing beds available, and at least 239 people unsheltered (a significant undercount). This points to a clear gap in system capacity numbering in the hundreds.

Emergency Shelter

Name of Project	Total Beds Available	Total Beds on PIT night	Victim Service Provider	% Capacity
KARM Overnight	372	372	No	100%
Salvation Army Joy Baker Center	26	27	No	104%
Family Promise of Knoxville	11	9	No	82%
McNabb Center - Family Crisis Center	32	23	Yes	72%
Catholic Charities East TN	13	13	No	100%
McNabb Center - Runaway Host Homes	4	0	No	0%
Salvation Army - Bridge of Hope	30	23	No	77%
KARM Family Emergency Services	8	7	No	88%
Keenan Grimes	15	15	No	100%
McNabb Center Family Crisis Center Offsite	1	0	Yes	0%
ReLaunch	109	94	No	86%

Transitional Housing

Name of Project	Total Beds Available	Total Beds on PIT night	Victim Service Provider	% Capacity
Catholic Charities East TN	39	33	No	85%
McNabb Center - Family Crisis Center	25	14	Yes	56%
Salvation Army Bootstrap	23	7	No	30%
Community Action Committee - YHDP	14	15	No	107%
Bryant's Bridge	5	6	No	120%
KARM Serenity (Non-Part)	44	33	No	75%
Water Angel Transitional Housing	11	11	No	100%

Definitions

Chronically Homeless Individual
An individual with a disability who has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of home-lessness in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless on those occasions is at least 12 months.

Congregate Shelter
An emergency shelter where the residents share a common sleeping area, and may have other communal facilities.

Continuum of Care (CoC)
A local planning body re-sponsible for coordinating the full range of homeless-ness services in a geograph-ic area. The great Knoxville-Knox County region repre-sents CoC TN-502.

Disability
A self-identified physical, mental, and/or behavioral health condition that impacts an individual's ability to per-form certain daily activities. No verification of disability is required for the PIT.

Emergency Shelter
A facility with the primary purpose of providing tempo-rary shelter to homeless people. Can be either night-by-night or continuous stay.

Encampment
An outdoor area, either private or public, where multiple tents, man-made structures, or other impromptu dwellings are situated.

Homeless
A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC)
Provides an annual inventory of beds that assist people in the CoC who are experiencing or leaving homelessness.

Homeless Management In-formation System (HMIS)
A federally mandated information system that allows for the secure and private sharing of project participation data.

Occupancy Rate
The percentage of available beds that are occupied on the night of the PIT count.

People in Families with Children
Are people who are experiencing homelessness as part of a household that has at least one adult (age 18 and older) and one child (under age 18).

Sheltered Homelessness
Refers to people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens.

Transitional Age Homeless Youth (18-24)
Are people under age 24 who are not in a family with other children (under age 18) or accompanied by a parent or guardian during an episode of homelessness.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (under 18)
Are people under age 18 in households with only children who are not part of a family with (other) children or accompanied by a parent or guardian during an episode of homelessness.

Unsheltered Homelessness
Refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for peo-ple (e.g. abandoned building, doorway, vehicle, park).

Vehicle/RV
Any car or recreational vehicle, whether self-powered or towable that is utilized as a primary place of habitation. Also called livea-boards, or homestead vehicles.

Veteran
Refers to anyone who self-identifies as having served in the United States armed forces. Veri-fication of Veteran status is not required for the PIT, however may be required for veteran specific homeless services.

Citations

- https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/knoxcountytennessee/PST045224
- https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-total.html
- East TN Realtors 2026 State of Housing Report: https://www.etnrealtors.com/assets/pdf/2026+ETNR+State+of+Housing+Report
- https://fred.stlouisfed.org/categories/29849
- https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2025-AHAR-Part-I.pdf
- https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/filter_Year=2025&filter_Scope=CoC&filter_State=TN&filter_CoC=&program=CoC&group=PopSub
- https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html
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