

**Yakima County
2018 Homeless Point-in-time Count
Process and Survey Results**



May 2018

Produced by ACR Business Consulting in partnership with the
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

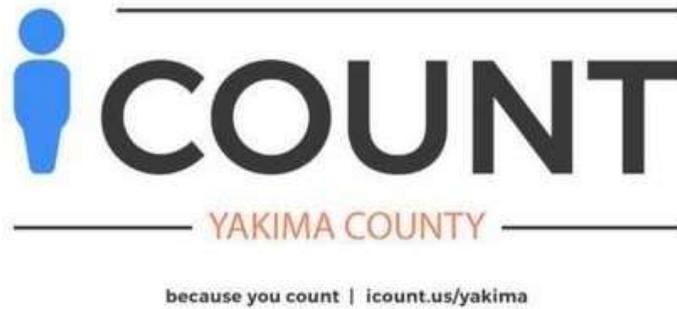


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Questions / comments:

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The Homeless Point-in-time Count: Overview¹

The Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a requirement by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD requires communities to submit a count of the homeless population in their area as well as information on specific sub-populations, including chronically homeless persons, veterans, and unaccompanied youth.

A PIT count is composed of two parts: a *sheltered* PIT count, which is required every year, and an *unsheltered* PIT count, which is required at least every other year. Communities submit this data annually through their Continuum of Care (CoC) applications for Homeless Assistance Grants. The Washington State Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act ([ESSHB 2163 - 2005](#)) requires each county to conduct an annual PIT count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons in Washington State in accordance with the requirements of HUD². The count takes place in January each year with the date set by HUD. For 2018, the date of the count was Thursday, January 25.

Many communities, including Yakima County, develop their sheltered count from their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data. Yakima County also facilitates in-person surveys to add additional demographic detail beyond just a number. HUD does not prescribe the survey method to use but does provide guidance on survey techniques.

The unsheltered count is more complicated and costly to conduct than the sheltered count, and HUD is stricter about the acceptable methodologies for performing this count. Because unsheltered persons are not generally recorded in HMIS, communities have much more planning to do to account for unsheltered individuals. There are 3 accepted methodologies provided by HUD to conduct an unsheltered count:

1. **Street counts.** Community volunteers visit the streets and locations where they expect to find homeless individuals and count them based on observation over a very specific period (usually between dusk and dawn on a single night). This method is relatively easy to organize, train volunteers to conduct, and carry out. However simple to carry out, this method invariably misses some people, and little information is gained beyond the total number of unsheltered persons.
2. **Street count with an interview.** With this approach, count participants are trained to interview every person they encounter who appears to be unsheltered. The sample-with-interview approach yields a much richer level of data to the community, but tends to be more complicated to de-duplicate.
3. **Service-based count.** The community counts people as they receive homeless services during the specific count period. Service-based counts can extend beyond 1 day, but cannot exceed 7 days after the date of the count. Communities using the service-based approach will often plan a specific event that is likely to attract homeless persons such as a special breakfast or healthcare-related offering. Although this method requires the community to carefully determine who has already been counted, it tends to reach a particular homeless population that chooses to use the supportive services available, including soup kitchens, drop-in centers, and street outreach teams, and who would otherwise be difficult to count because of where they choose to sleep.

To determine the most appropriate methodology to use, communities need to evaluate, among many things, their climate, size, and availability of resources. The number of anticipated participants in the count and the size of the area often drive the method that is chosen. However, several communities use a combination of these methodologies.

¹ Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer12/highlight2.html>

² Washington State Department of Commerce: <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Programs/housing/Homeless/Pages/Annual-Point-In-Time-Count.aspx>

In addition to homeless population data, HUD requires communities to submit subpopulation data on chronically homeless individuals and families, veterans, severely mentally ill individuals, chronic substance users, persons with HIV/AIDS, those fleeing domestic violence, and unaccompanied children (under 18). When the subpopulation data is incomplete, communities use sampling and extrapolation methods to derive their counts.

The Homeless Point-in-time Count: iCount Yakima County

For the 2018 Homeless Point-in-time (PIT) Count, Yakima County partnered with ACR Business Consulting to facilitate the PIT Count. ACR Business Consulting has facilitated prior PIT Counts for Thurston County and worked with the City of Olympia on homeless strategy. The firm aims to collaborate with agencies and organizations that work with homeless neighbors, and utilizes the overarching brand “iCount” to build local community support for volunteers, donations, and outreach efforts.

The goals for the 2018 PIT count in Yakima County were to:

- 1) Maximize the scope of the one-day count through county-wide outreach efforts utilizing a thorough and cost effective approach
- 2) Implement tools to assist with census efforts for future years
- 3) Pursue high quality data collection
- 4) Collect and report relevant information to inform and educate local community citizens, policy makers, and funders.

Maximize the Scope of the One-day Count

Yakima County has a strong network of homeless service agencies. Together these agencies have typically facilitated Project Homeless Connect Events as the backbone of the annual PIT Count. For the 2018 PIT Count, ACR Business Consulting focused on utilizing the strength of the service network to facilitate **street counts with an interview** and **service-based counts** to connect with both sheltered and unsheltered homeless neighbors throughout Yakima County. This approach was designed to minimize the cost to facilitate the PIT Count and align efforts with agencies making connections with homeless neighbors through normal service activities.

The county was divided into 3 areas – Upper Valley, Mid Valley, South Valley – and partner agencies and community volunteers were identified within each area. Volunteers were paired with agency leads to serve as roving teams throughout the areas, looking to connect with as many unsheltered neighbors as possible. However, due to the sensitivity and potential safety concerns, the PIT Count did not include going into homeless encampments or wooded areas.

Implement Tools to Assist with Census Efforts for Future Years

ACR Business Consulting efforts were designed to build off of the strong community involvement across Yakima County already in place. The iCount brand established a [Facebook presence](#) for the Yakima County PIT for community members to continue to post and share information on issues related to homelessness. A [dedicated webpage for PIT](#) volunteer recruitment, sponsorship and donations was also established. This page is intended to assist in outreach and recruitment efforts which will help in preparing for the count in future years. Additionally, through the iCount Yakima County platform, the team recruited over 35 community volunteers and raised over \$1200 in community donations to be used to purchase sleeping bags to handout to survey participants.

Pursue High Quality Data Collection

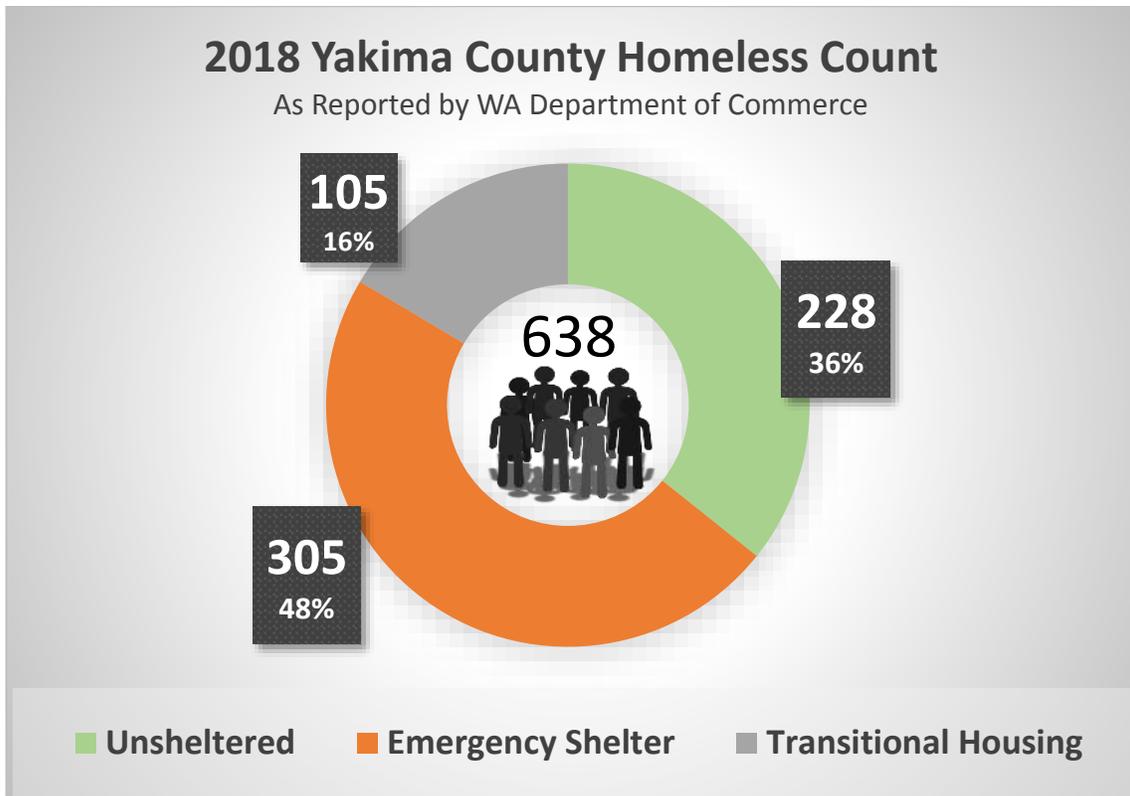
To maintain data consistency and quality, [revamped surveys](#) were utilized by iCount Yakima County volunteers and agencies for the 2018 PIT Count. As always, survey data quality relied on participants authorizing the use of their information by way of signature. This allows duplicate surveys to be identified, and it significantly reduced the likelihood of double entry into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) across the unsheltered and sheltered counts. For 2018 PIT Count, local agencies and the iCount Yakima County team of volunteers did a tremendous job connecting with homeless neighbors to gather complete surveys. Throughout the County, **443 surveys were collected encompassing 646 individuals.**

Collect and Report Information to Inform Local Community Citizens, Policy Makers, and Funders

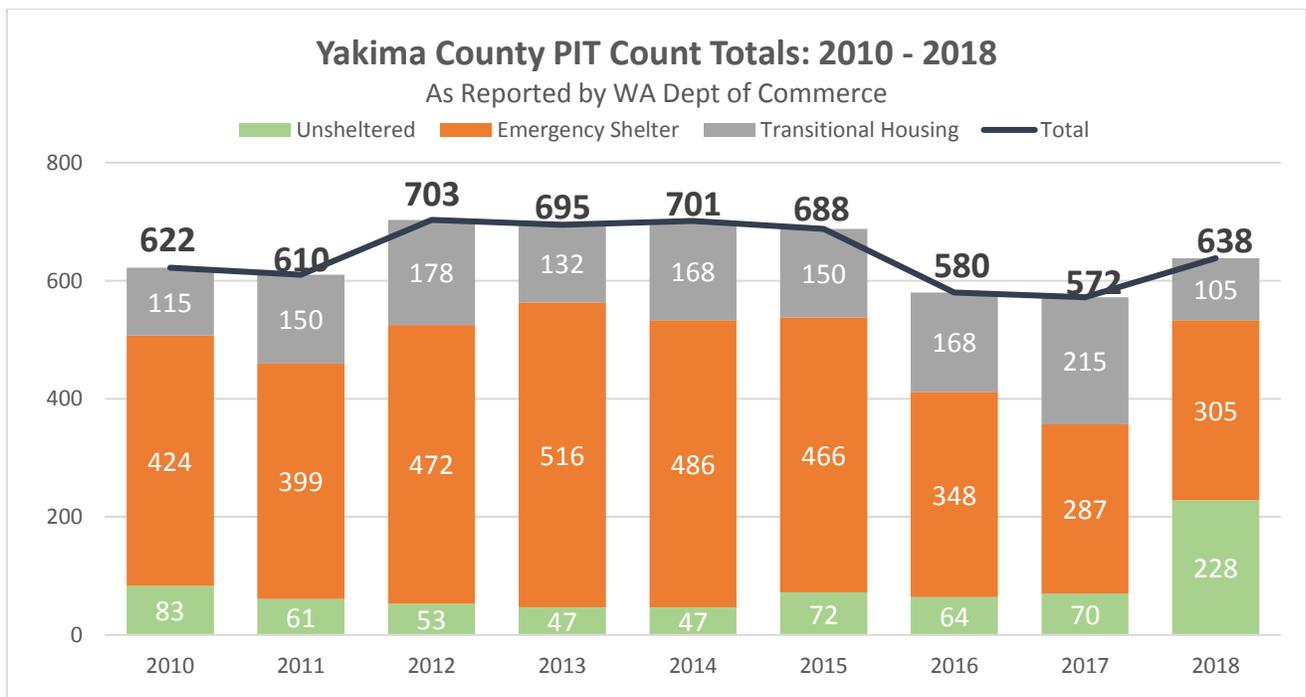
The 2018 PIT Count utilized the single census form for both sheltered and unsheltered survey participants. The form is designed to make it easier for survey collectors to gather necessary information from census participants and provide a consistent and wider sample set of data for analysis and reporting. The facilitation of the PIT count is a HUD requirement and takes real time, energy, and resources to be inclusive and impactful. Beyond the federally mandated survey questions there is relevant information that can be collected utilizing the efforts already required to facilitate the PIT Count. For the 2018 PIT Count, questions about the most critical services benefiting homeless neighbors as well as questions on housing search efforts and household income levels were incorporated. The topic of housing affordability and access is currently a major focal point across the United States and in Yakima County. With median home prices continuing to rise and accessibility for low and no income neighbors becoming more difficult, questions were added to the survey this year to gauge efforts by homeless neighbors to secure housing, and to better understand the reality of barriers these households face in finding stability. The results of this data are attached to this report as a 1 page info graphic.

The following charts and graphs represent key data that was collected through the 2018 PIT census efforts. The underlying data set has been submitted to the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments and is available for additional analysis as needed. The goal of this report is to support the efforts of public agencies and nonprofit service providers in securing and expanding funding for programs assisting homeless neighbors in Yakima County. Hopefully this information can also be used as an educational tool for the community to work together to understand the reality of who is facing homelessness in Yakima County, and the efforts these neighbors pursue and barriers they face in returning to stable housing.

Yakima County 2018 PIT Count Results



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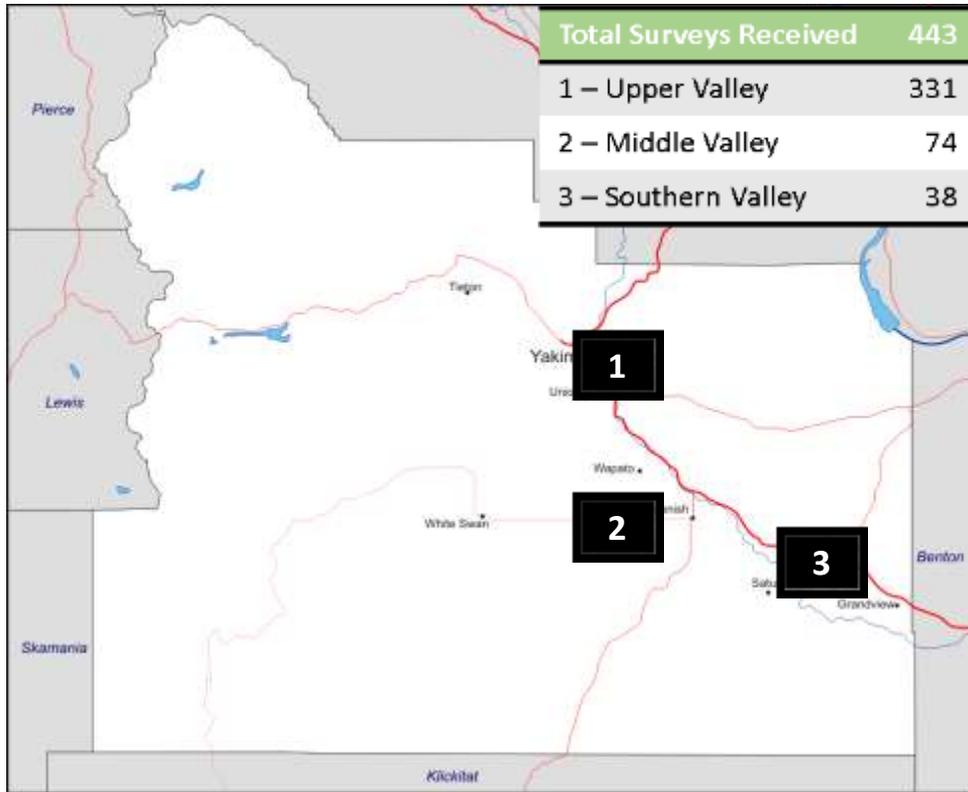


³ Total PIT Count is the result of data derived from the combination of Surveys, HMIS Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing entries on January 25, 2018 and de-duplicated in HMIS by the WA State Department of Commerce.

2018 PIT Count: Demographic Data from 443 Surveys Collected

The following section provides a look at key results from the surveys collected.

2018 PIT Count Census Map and Counts⁴



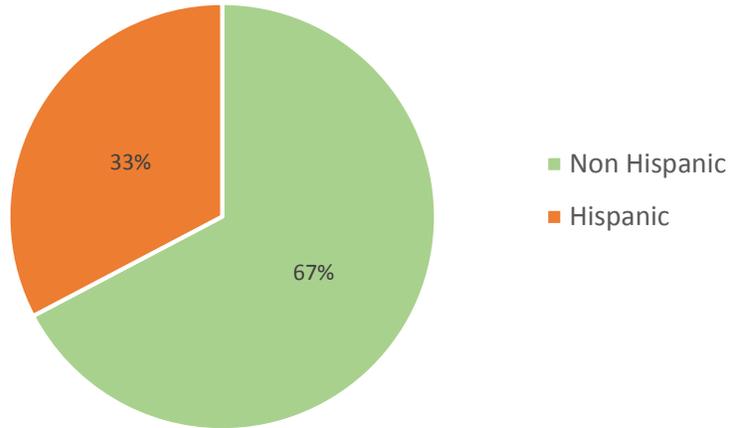
2018 PIT Count Key Demographic Data reported from Surveys and Compared with HMIS Data from WA Department of Commerce

	Surveys	HMIS
Unaccompanied Youth <18	4	14
18 - 24 YR	35	46
Singles +24	342	445
Families with children	61	134
Dependents < 18	140	147
Seniors +55	136	N/A
Veterans	56	47
Chronic Homeless (total household members)	203	324

⁴2018 PIT Count List of Locations and Surveys Collected at each can be found at the end of this report.

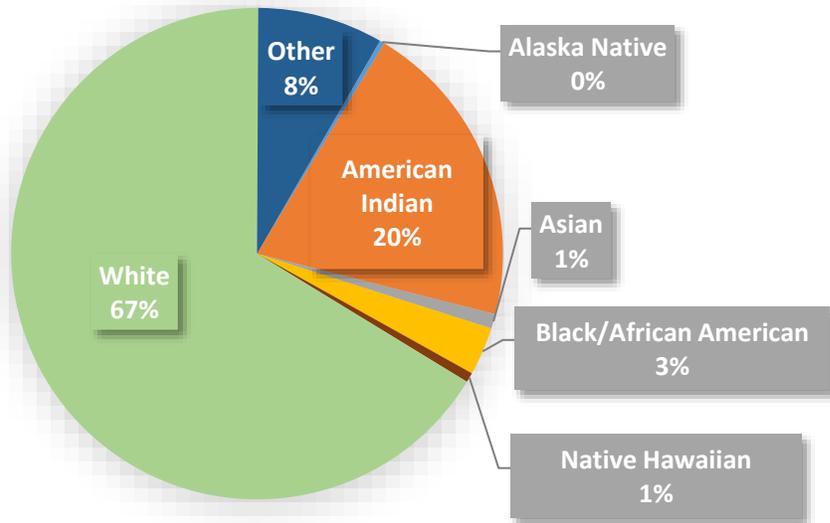
2018 Yakima County PIT Count Ethnicity Reported

Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys (321 responses)

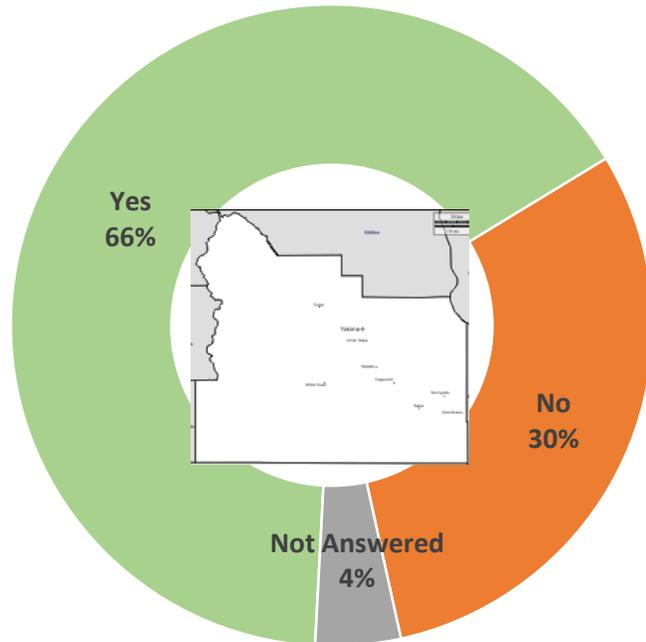


2018 Yakima County PIT Count Race Classification

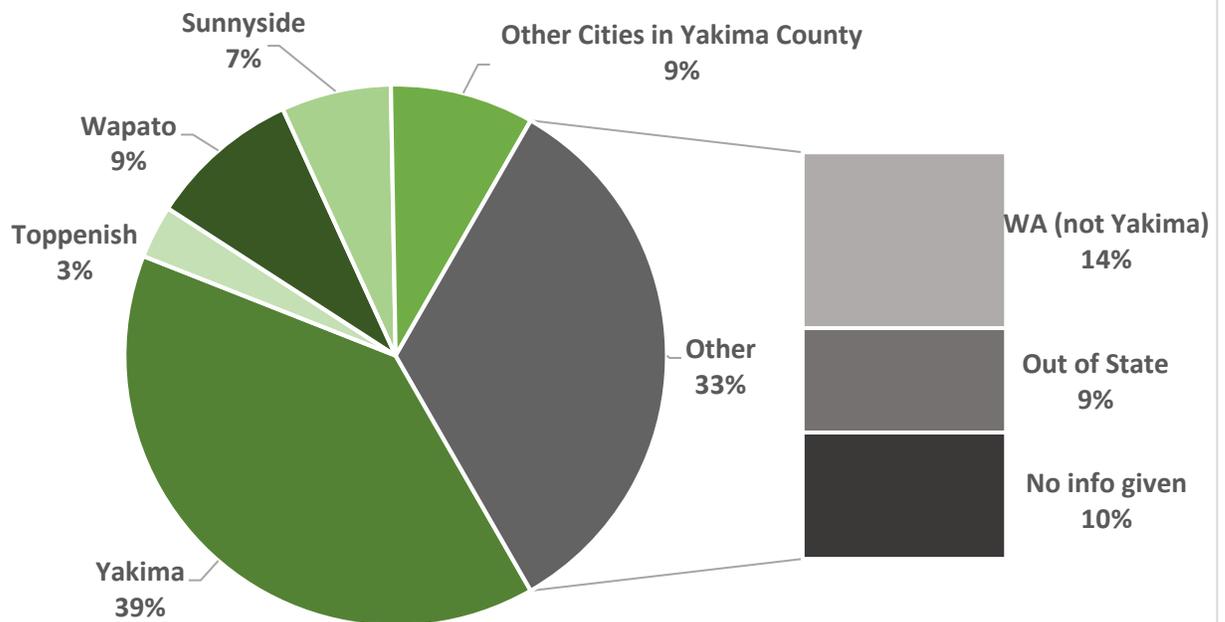
Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys (315 responses)



2018 Yakima County PIT Count
Homeless Neighbors Originally from Yakima County
 Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys

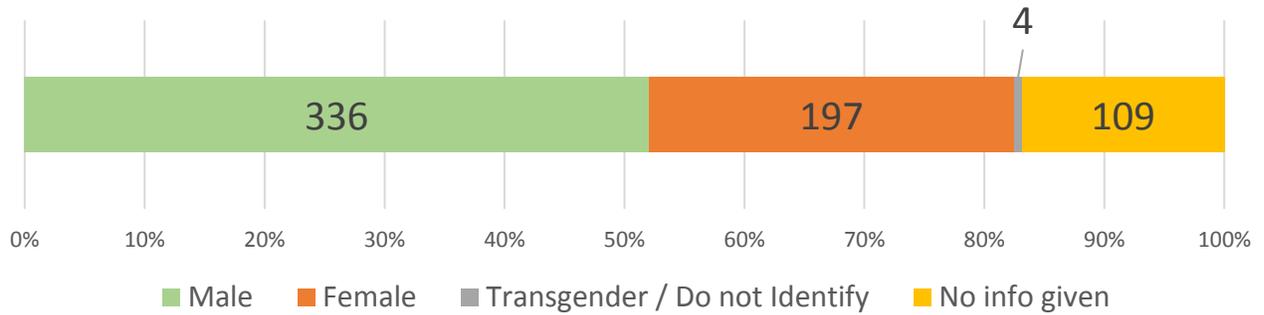


2018 Yakima County PIT Count
Last Address of Those Currently Homeless in Yakima County
 Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys



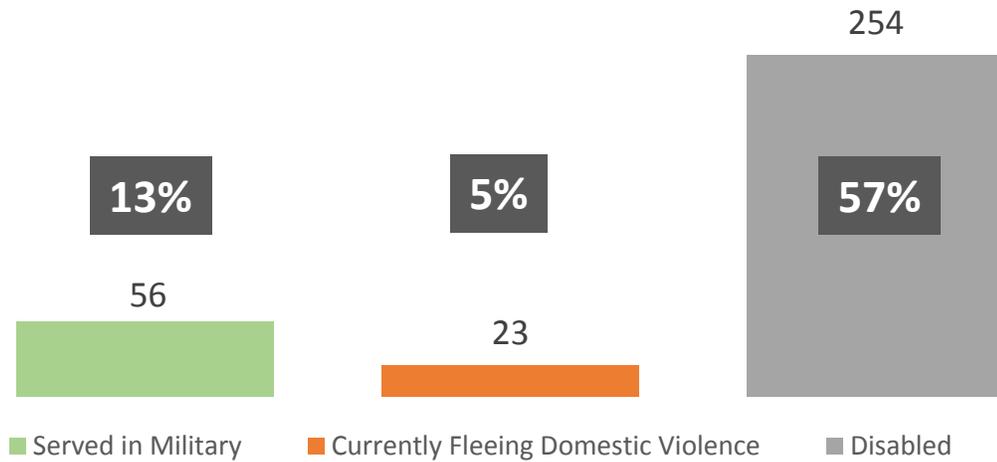
2018 Yakima County PIT Count Gender Classification of Homeless Neighbors

Data From 646 Total Individuals Included in Surveys



2018 Yakima County PIT Count

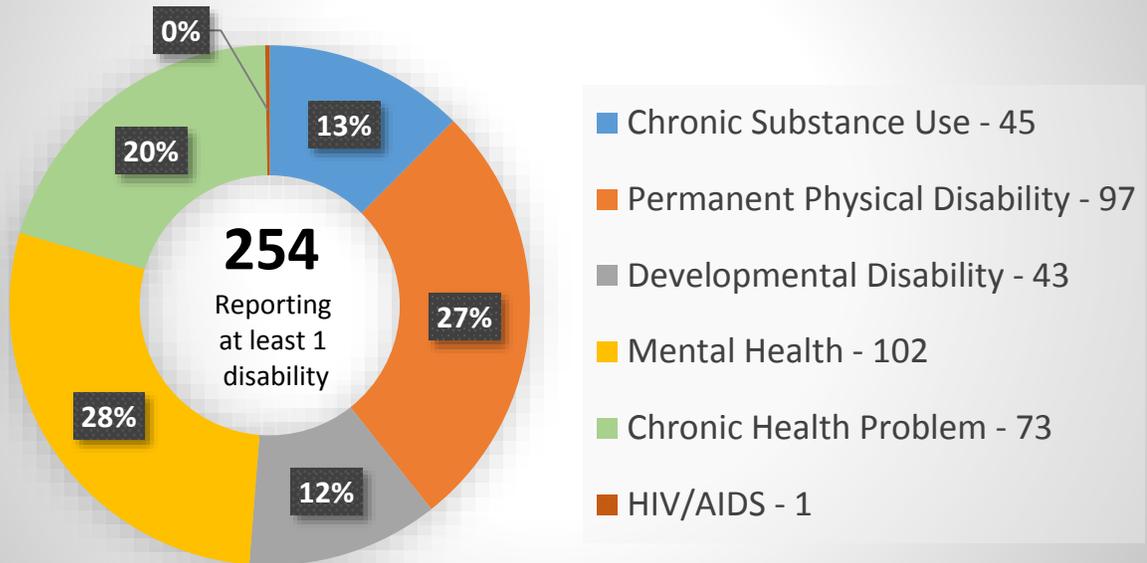
Homeless Neighbors Citing Veteran Status / Fleeing Domestic Violence / Disability
by Sub-Grouping Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys



2018 Yakima County PIT Count

A Closer Look at Disabilities Reported by Homeless Neighbors

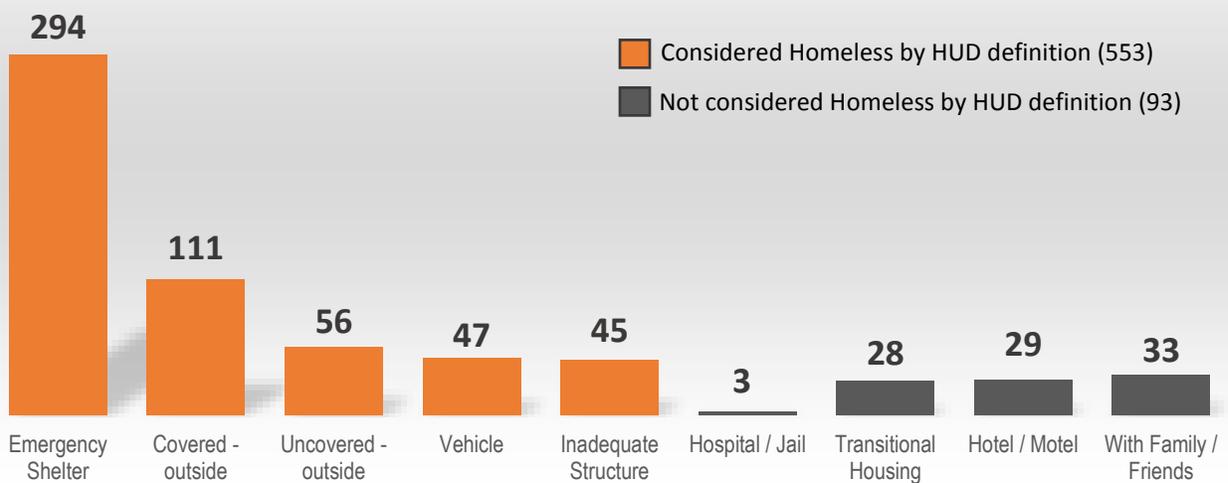
Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys



2018 Yakima County PIT Count

Where Homeless Neighbors Slept the Night Prior to the Count

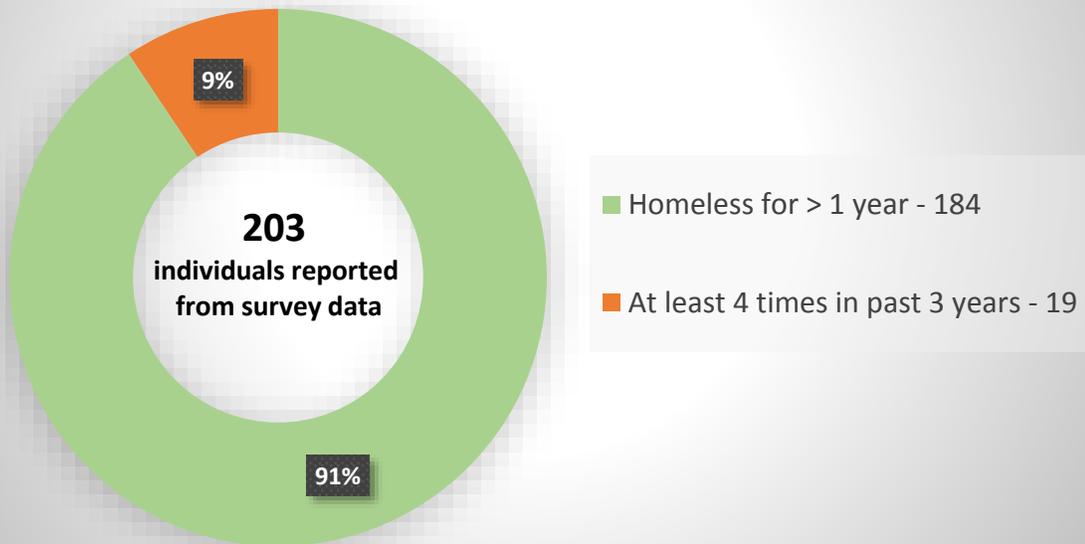
Totals Include Head of Household, Partner/Spouse and Dependents Data from 443 Surveys



⁵ This chart represents prior night locations identified by homeless neighbors who participated in the survey. The Department of Commerce reported a total emergency shelter count of 305, an unsheltered count of 228, and a transitional housing count of 105 for a total count of 638 homeless neighbors the night of the PIT Count.

2018 Yakima County PIT Count Chronically Homeless Neighbors

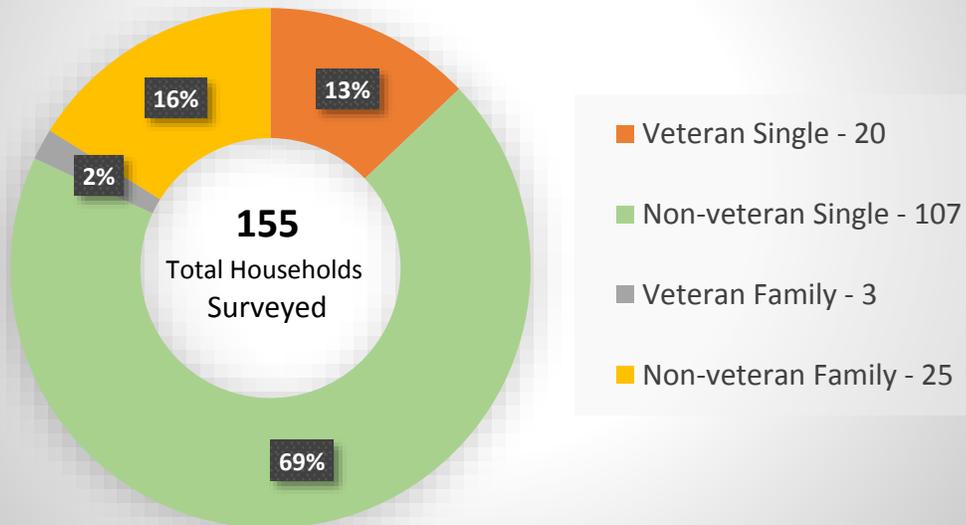
443 Surveys Totaling 646 Individuals



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2018 Yakima County PIT Count Chronically Homeless Households

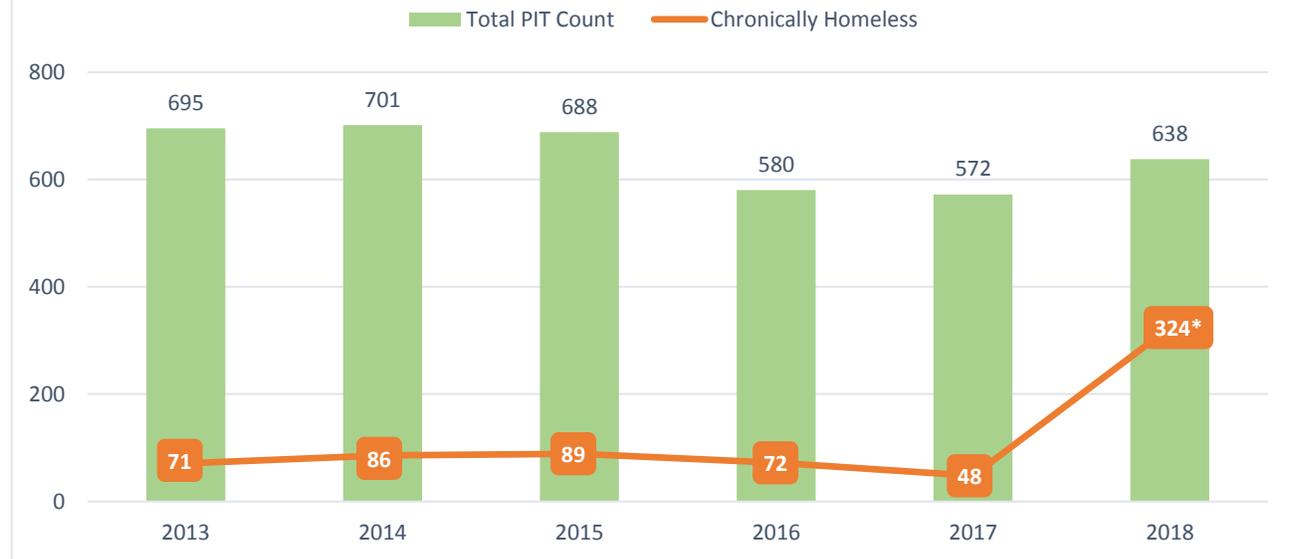
by Sub-Population - Head of Household Data from 443 Surveys



⁶ The Department of Commerce reported 324 total individuals classified as chronically homeless the night of the 2018 PIT Count based on HMIS data. This would indicate that approximately 50% of all homeless neighbors included in the night of the PIT Count are chronically homeless.

Department of Commerce HMIS Reporting: Chronically Homeless Neighbors: 2013 - 2018

Based on Annual PIT Count Data from HMIS Reported by Department of Commerce



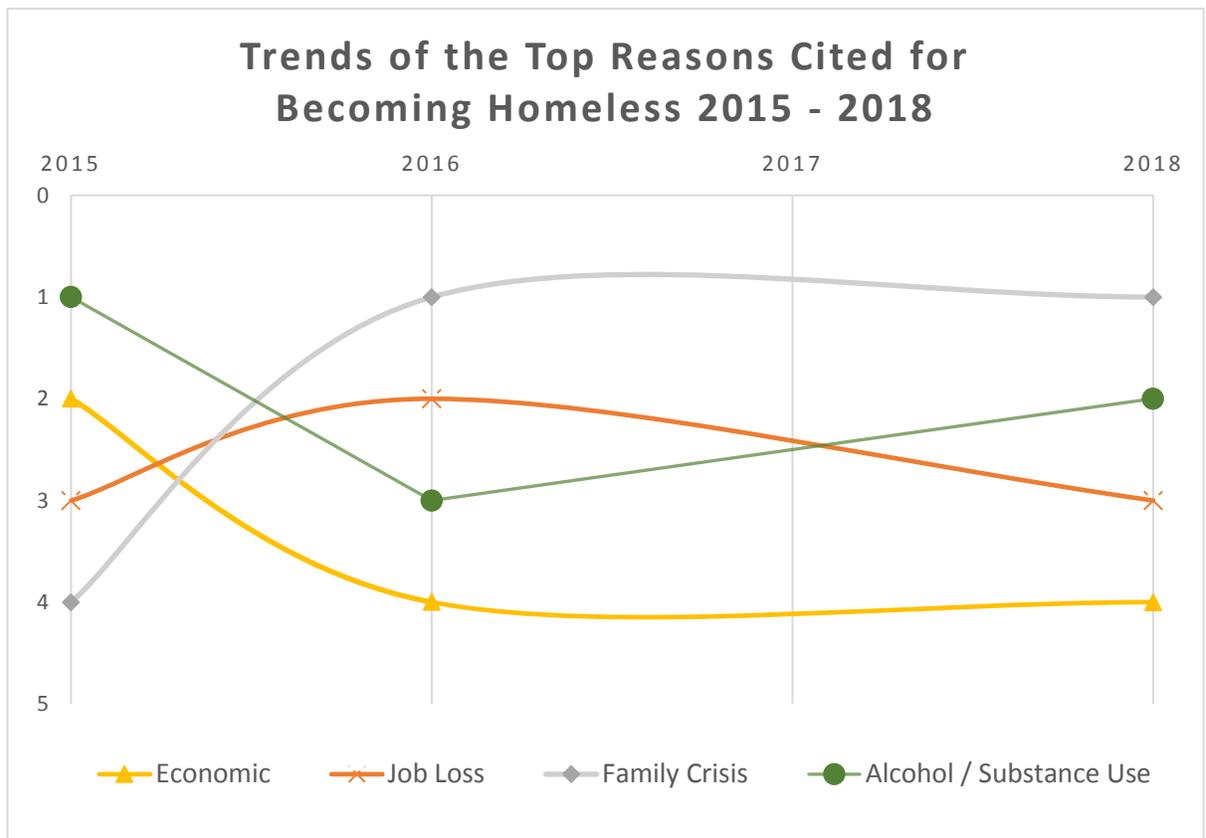
*2018 Data includes all members of a household considered to be chronically homeless by HUD definition

2018 PIT Count: Top Reasons Cited as Cause of Homelessness

(Participants could select more than one reason)

	Number of Responses
1. Family Crisis	136
2. Alcohol / Substance Use	109
3. Job Loss	108
4. Economic	108
5. Lost Temporary Living Situation	97
6. Physical / Mental Disability	94
7. Mental Illness	86
8. Illness / Health Related	80
9. Eviction	74
10. Kicked Out / Left Home	65

11. Personal Choice	56
12. Domestic Violence	50
13. Lacking Job Skills	48
14. Released from Jail	41
15. Medical Costs	31
16. Aged out of Foster Care	29
17. Lack of Childcare	6
18. Language Barrier	6

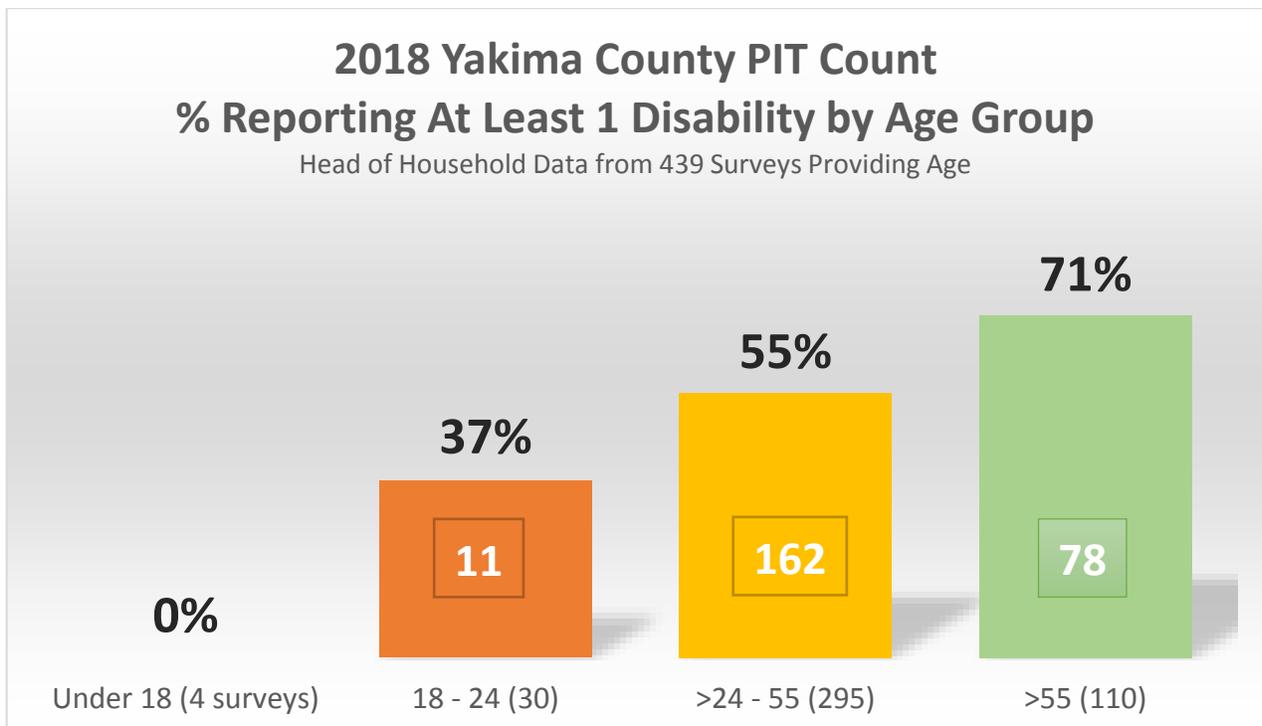
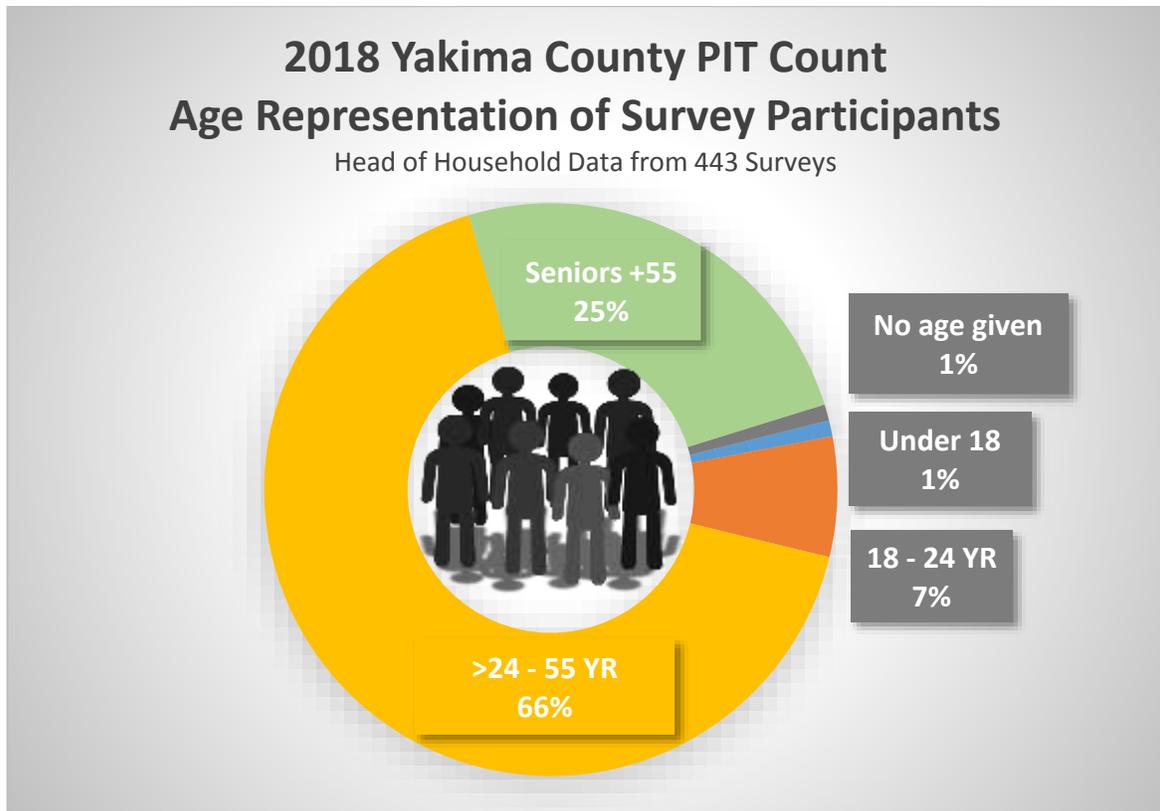


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The graph above shows the ranking of the top reasons cited for becoming homeless each year since the 2015 PIT Count. A ranking of 1 is the most cited reason. There are certainly a number of variables affecting the data validity, nonetheless, this trend analysis provides an interesting look at the leading causes of homelessness in Yakima County over the past four years. Since 2015, "Alcohol/Substance Use", "Economic", "Job Loss", and "Family Crisis" continue to be the 4 most cited reasons for the occurrence of homelessness in Yakima County.

⁷ Data collected from Yakima County prior year census reports. No data available for 2017 PIT Count.

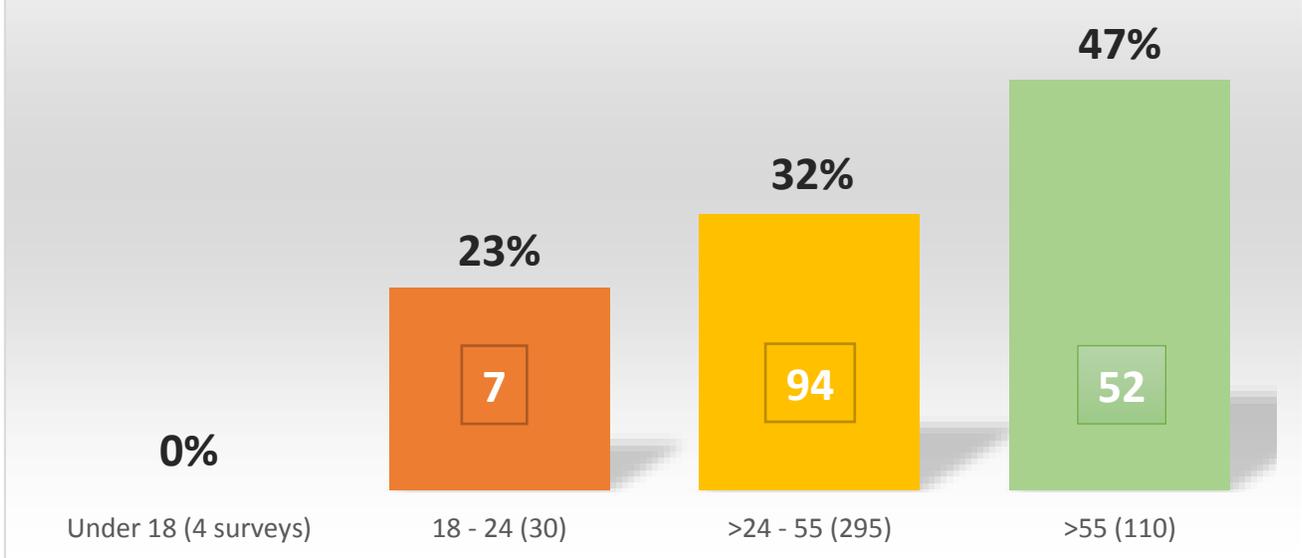
2018 PIT Count: Age Specific Analysis



2018 Yakima County PIT Count

% Classified as Chronically Homeless by Age Group

Head of Household Data from 439 Surveys Providing Age

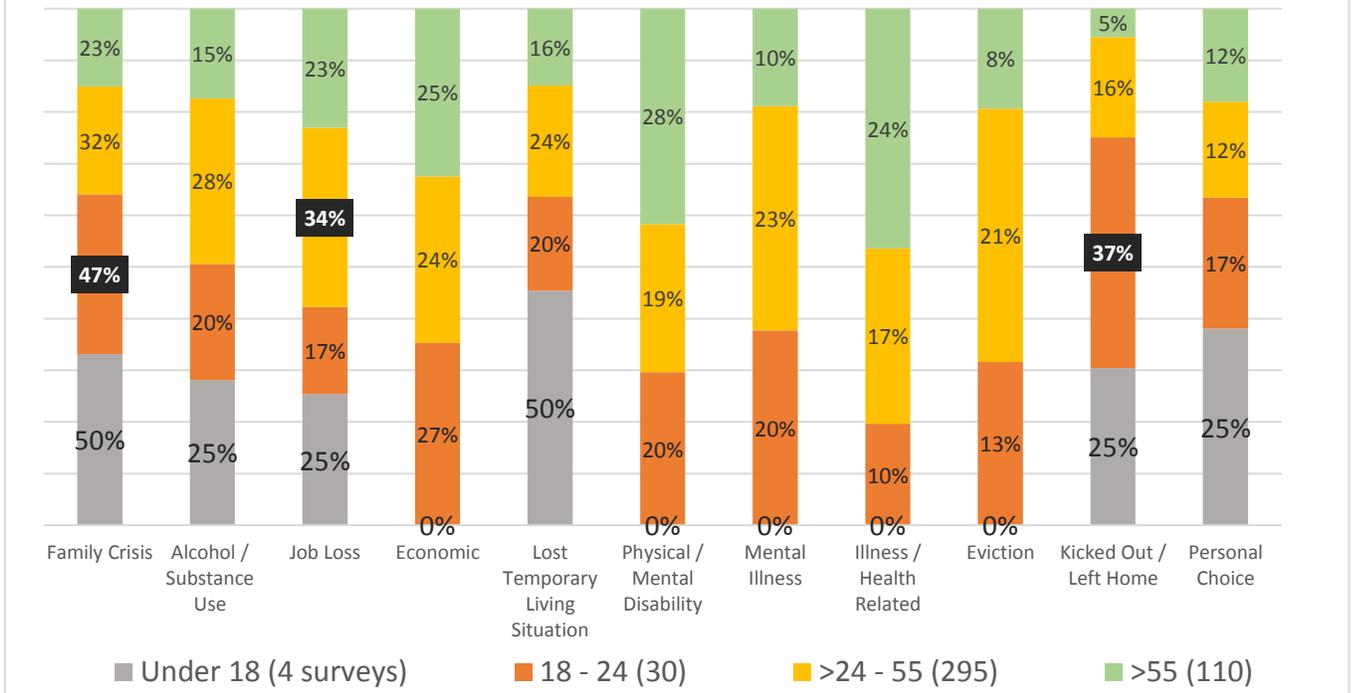


The above 2 charts demonstrate that roughly 2 out of every 3 homeless neighbors living with a disability are chronically homeless regardless of age group.

2018 Yakima County PIT Count

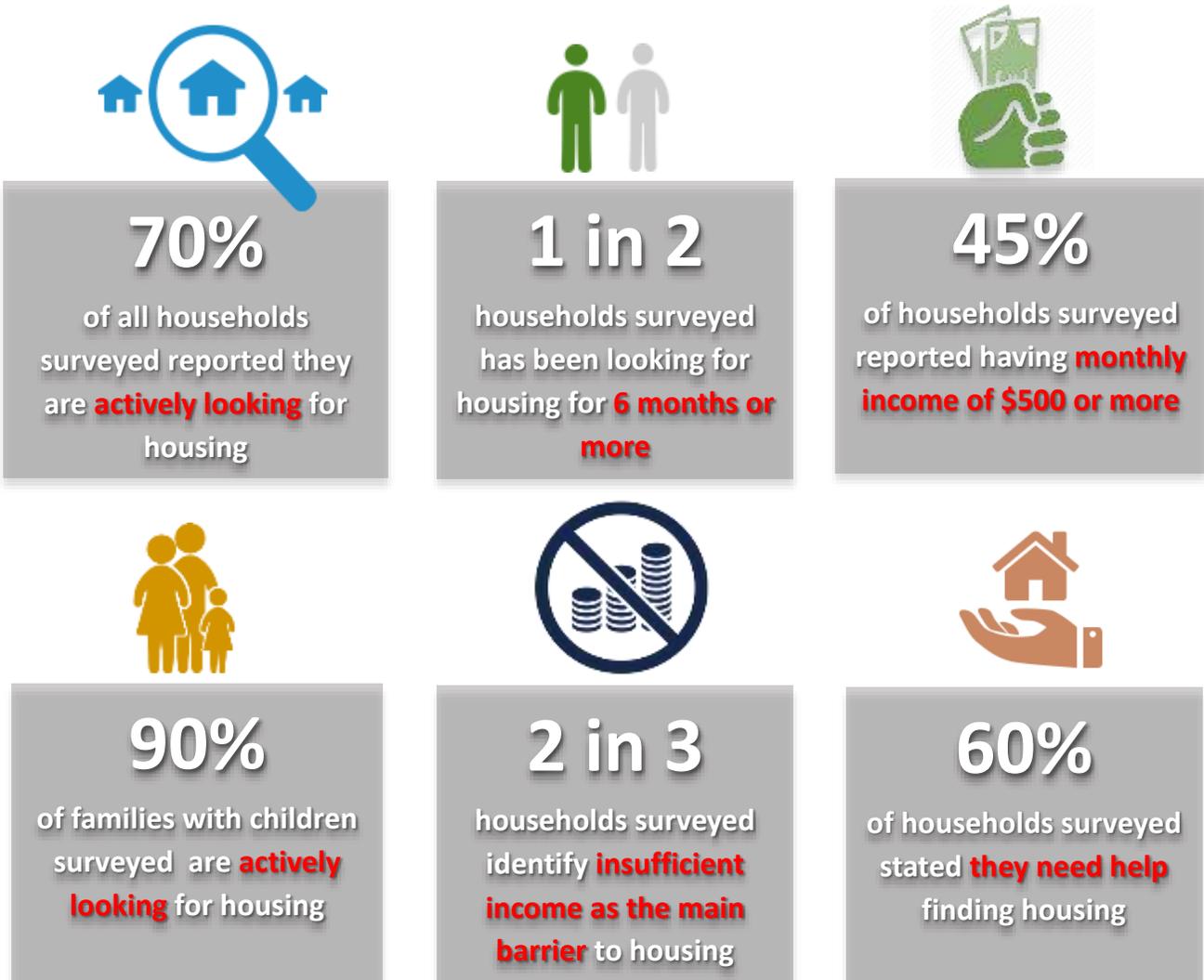
Top Reasons Leading to Homelessness - Cited by Age Group

Head of Household Data from 439 Surveys Providing Age



2018 PIT Count: Income and Housing Data

For the 2018 PIT Count, additional questions regarding income relative to housing search efforts were asked to survey participants in an effort to glean further insights from the broad macro-economic factors cited as the leading causes of homelessness over the past several years. The following graphics illustrate profiles of homeless neighbors who are seemingly “locked-out” of access to stable housing due to income levels. This sample size reinforces the notion that the disparity between market rate and affordable housing is perhaps the greatest influencer in the ability for homeless neighbors to return to stable housing in Yakima County. These survey findings may motivate a deeper look at the prevailing perception of the profile of homeless individuals and families in the Yakima County community and the actual support they need to maintain or return to housing stability.



Factors Affecting the PIT Count

As with all data collection, there are challenges regarding the validity of the data collection and reporting process. For the 2018 PIT count, gathering survey participant signatures significantly decreased the likelihood of data duplication on reported information. However, as has been the struggle in previous years, the following variables must be acknowledged as it relates to data integrity:

1. *Known sections of homeless neighbors not surveyed.* Excluding entering into camps (even those that are known) for safety reasons decreases the population surveyed and reduces the number of homeless that are accounted for on the day of the PIT count. The 2018 PIT Count efforts included volunteer assistance from formerly homeless individuals currently affiliated with Entrust. These census facilitators had knowledge of areas to go and trust established to connect with homeless neighbors that may have been reluctant to participate or even be identified. Even with this strategy, the total number reported is still viewed by service providers as only about one-third of the **actual** number of unique individuals and households seeking homeless services. This tends to be supported by HMIS reports that are pulled quarterly by agencies showing total new entries into the service system.
2. *Rural Communities and the Yakama Nation lacking service agencies with which to partner.* Facilitators of the 2018 PIT count worked to partner with as many agencies as were willing across the county. Some communities had only 1 agency that served homeless neighbors, while others did not have any agency representation. Despite the collaboration from service providers, in most cases, survey volunteers were restricted to working within the business hours on the day of the count. In the case of the Yakama Nation, a known overnight shelter was not included in the PIT efforts. It is worth noting that contact was established post PIT Count and the goal is to have the shelter staffed with survey facilitators next year. These factors most likely reduced the reporting in those communities.
3. *HUD classification of "Inadequate Structure" as homeless not necessarily aligning with people's own perception of their circumstance.* HUD classifies those living in structures without any of the following: heat, running water, the ability to cook hot food, the ability to bathe, as homeless. There is a high likelihood that individuals in these circumstances do not equate themselves as being homeless and therefore are not seeking services nor participating in PIT count activities. There were some survey participants who identified their own home as an inadequate structure, but a very small number relative to the likely potential of qualified dwellings.
4. *School district homeless youth reports differ from qualified HUD PIT count numbers.* School districts report the number of students living in unstable housing circumstances through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). However, a broader definition of "homeless" is used including students who are living "doubled up" and "couch surfing." While the PIT Count may connect with some of these individuals, the number [reported through OSPI](#) has historically been much larger than the PIT counts. According to the report released by OSPI **in 2017, school districts in Yakima County reported 2,549 students K – 12 as homeless**. Of this number, approximately 7.5% (190 students) reported living in an emergency shelter or unsheltered and would therefore qualify within the HUD definition of homeless. The number of homeless students enrolled in Yakima County school districts in 2018 has not been reported yet.

Summary and Recommendations

In reviewing the information that was collected, the Yakima County 2018 PIT Count follows the historical trends for much of the demographic data reported in prior year PIT counts. One notable exception is the increase in the number of chronically homeless identified in the survey efforts. This may be due to increased efforts to have roving survey facilitators as well as incorporating formerly homeless individuals as survey facilitators. The general consistency of data collected over the past several years may be showing the Yakima County community that the profile of homeless

neighbors is perhaps becoming less speculative. This allows the County and service providers to begin to look at the efficiency and effectiveness of the homeless service system in Yakima County as it relates to serving specific homeless subpopulations. Continued efforts are underway to evolve the homeless service system through refinement of the Coordinated Entry process and other initiatives as outlined in the [County's revised 5 year plan](#) to address homelessness and affordable housing.

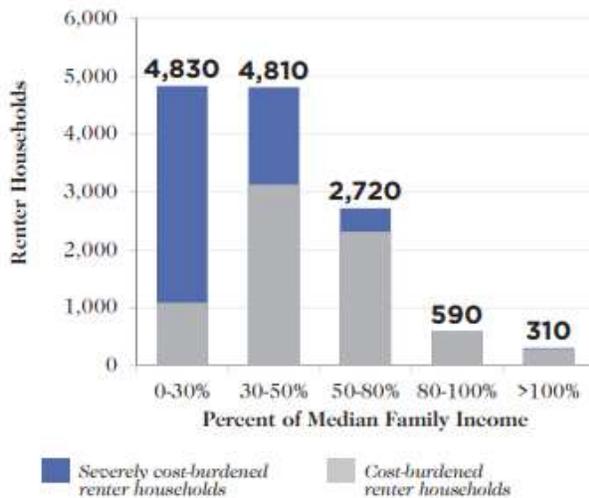
The trends in the data about causes cited for homelessness is one area that may benefit from being further explored. Within the top reasons continually cited, those of "Economic," "Family Crisis," and "Job Loss" present opportunities to formulate hypothesis and target more specific data collection. For example: 1) insights into more exact "economic" reasons that make this category a top cited reason, 2) data regarding time between the moment of job loss or family crisis and seeking homeless service assistance, 3) identifying particular reasons that may benefit from more targeted prevention. Furthermore, breaking these reasons down by age provides additional insight into causes and circumstances that may have a greater impact on certain age groups.

Of course the single greatest "reason" affecting community members at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness continues to be the lack of [affordable housing in Yakima County](#). The two charts below provide context for the large number of households in Yakima County (approximately 26,000) that are classified as cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened⁸. This means that these households pay more than 30% or 50% respectively of gross wages towards housing and are considered "unstably housed." About 33% of all households in Yakima County are unstably housed and at risk of becoming homeless. Affordable housing inventory for households making 50% or less of the median family income is about 40% of what is needed. This means that 6 out of 10 low-to-no income households cannot find an affordable home in Yakima County based on their income levels.

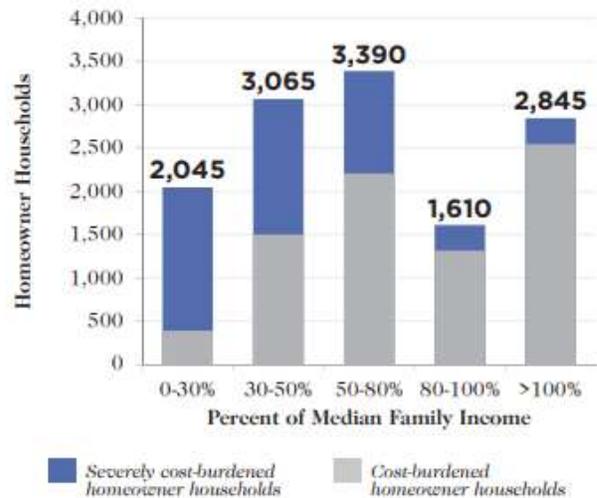
2015 Washington State Housing Needs Assessment: Yakima County

Cost Burden

Cost-Burdened **Renter** Households



Cost-Burdened **Homeowner** Households



This profile of struggling households fundamentally redefines the perception of the circumstances facing people at risk of becoming homeless, and supports the PIT Count trends of "Economic" and

⁸ Data presented is from a 2015 Affordable Housing Needs Assessment conducted by the WA Department of Commerce

“Job Loss” as consistent reasons leading to homelessness. At this level of need for affordable housing, government resources available to the homeless and affordable housing service system are insufficient. Any viable strategy to address homeless and affordable housing in Yakima County will need to explore and consider solutions involving private investment and public-private partnerships in addition to funding provided by federal, state, and local governments.

The results of the 2018 PIT Count continue to illustrate the pursuit of more coordinated efforts throughout the homeless service system to define both demographic data for trend analysis as well as system performance metrics that look at the effectiveness of services and prioritization of limited funding.

2018 PIT Count Partner Agency / Roving Locations and Surveys Collected at Each

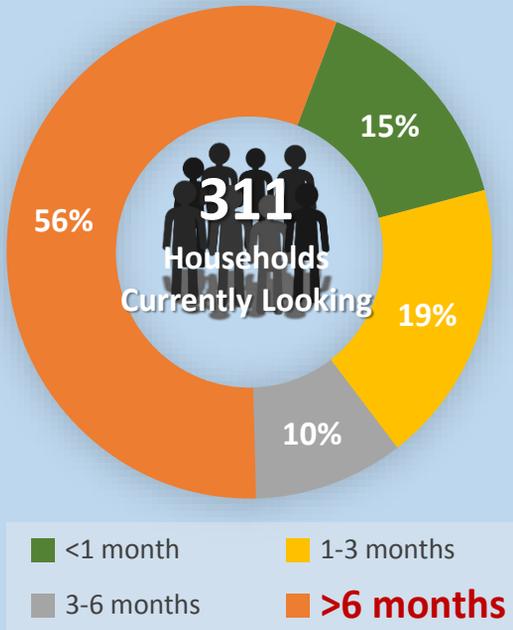
Location	Surveys Collected	Area
Union Gospel Mission	127	1
Camp Hope	63	1
YNHS Depot (Yakima)	44	1
Yakima Rovers	29	1
Sunrise Outreach	26	1
Rod's House	16	1
Yakima DSHS	16	1
Triumph Treatment Center	9	1
Village of Hope (Toppenish)	1	1
Noah's Ark	50	2
Toppenish Community Chest	17	2
The Compound (Toppenish)	7	2
Entrust (Sunnyside)	16	3
YNHS (Sunnyside)	10	3
The Underground (Sunnyside)	9	3
South Valley Rovers	3	3
Total Surveys Collected	443	

7 in 10

Homeless Neighbors Surveyed in Yakima County are Currently Trying to Find Housing



Time Spent Searching for Housing

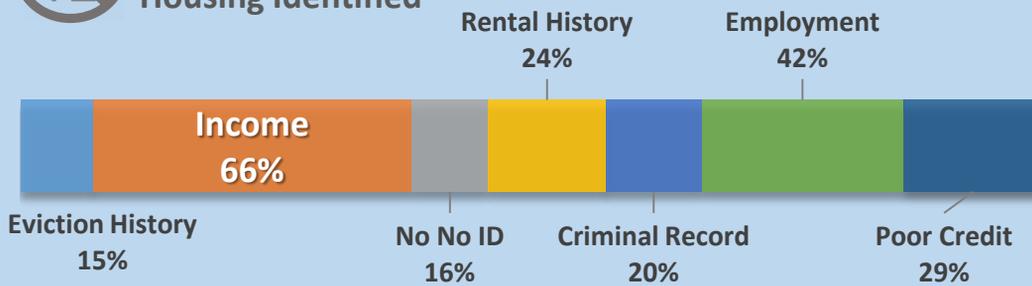


Most Requested Services

Service	Count	Percentage
Home Search Help	263	59%
Hot Shower	224	51%
Laundry	219	49%
Safe Storage	216	49%
Access to a Restroom	193	44%
Day Center	178	40%
Job Search Help	162	37%
Dental Care	158	36%
Medical Care	139	31%
Counselor	102	23%
Utility Assistance	76	17%
Pet Care	68	15%
Support w/ Landlord Disputes	39	9%
Home Weatherization Help	33	7%



Biggest Barriers to Housing Identified



Education Completed

419 total responses

- Masters - 4
- Bachelors - 18
- Associates - 16
- Some College - 60
- HS / GED - 147
- Some HS - 147



1 in 7

Households with monthly income over \$1000



3 in 4

Chronically Homeless Households looking for housing for 6 months +

“REMEMBER WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE EXCLUDED SO THAT YOU CAN HELP BUILD A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE IS INCLUDED.”

LISA FRIEDMAN; REMOVING THE STIMULUS BLOCK