HOMELESSNESS IN INDIANAPOLIS
2018 Point-in-Time Count

For more than a decade, the IU Public Policy Institute (PPI) and the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) have collaborated to conduct the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of Marion County. Per the requirements of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), PPI and CHIP conduct an annual count of sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness on one night during the last week of January. The 2018 PIT Count took place on January 24, 2018. The data and findings from the PIT Count highlight issues facing individuals who experience homelessness. These findings can inform policymaking, service provision, and public opinion.

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1, 1,682 individuals experienced homelessness on the night of the PIT Count. The majority of these individuals (64%) were staying in emergency housing, followed by transitional housing (24%), unsheltered locations (8%), and Safe Havens (4%). The number of individuals surveyed the night of the 2018 PIT Count decreased 6% from the number in 2017. This decrease is in spite of an increase in both unsheltered individuals and those residing in safe havens. The largest percentage decrease was in the transitional housing count, which dropped by nearly 22% since 2017 and by 34% since 2016. HUD shifted funding away from transitional housing in 2016, resulting in the loss of a number of local transitional housing programs. Even more significant was a reduction in Grant Per Diem (GPD) beds through the U.S Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) that resulted in 73 less beds that would have been accounted for in the 2018 PIT Count. Although there was an increase in Veterans accessing emergency shelter, this increase would not account for the total loss of GPD beds.

It should also be noted, one emergency shelter, which housed 81 individuals during the 2017 PIT Count, had all but 8 residents participating in programming during the 2018 PIT Count. This also played a significant role in the overall PIT Count Reduction.

*On the night of January 24, 2018,
8 people reported staying in vehicles.*

TABLE 1. Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons in Marion County (January 2014-2018)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2017-2018
Low temperature night of the Count	-3°F	15°F	23°F	37°F	27°F	-
Persons in emergency shelters	991	817	877	1,131	1,082	-4.3%
Persons in transitional housing	810	715	600	505	396	-21.6%
Persons in Safe Havens*	22	23	12	21	68	+223.8%
Persons unsheltered	74	111	130	126	136	+7.9%
Total	**1,897**	**1,666**	**1,619**	**1,783**	**1,682**	**-5.7%**
Number of families	161	136	156	158	128	-19%
Number of veterans	370	389	326	328	261	-20.4%

* According to HUD, a Safe Haven is a form of supportive transitional or permanent housing serving hard to reach people with severe mental illness who are in unsheltered locations and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 2 shows the gender and age of those experiencing homelessness on the night of the 2018 PIT Count. Consistent with previous Counts, most adults over age 24 and experiencing homelessness were male, while the majority of youth, age 24 and under, were female. The number of transgender individuals experiencing homelessness increased by three from 2017 and by seven from 2016.

Table 3 displays the race and ethnicity of those experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT Count. Similar to previous Counts, the majority of individuals staying in shelters were Black/ African American, while the majority of unsheltered individuals were White/Caucasian. The total number of Hispanic/Latino individuals experiencing homelessness increased since the previous Count. However, Hispanic/Latino individuals remain under-represented compared to PIT Count data from other cities.

SUBPOPULATIONS

Table 4 displays subpopulations identified in the 2018 PIT Count. More than a quarter of adults (26%) experiencing homelessness reported a substance abuse disorder, and over a third (34%) reported having a serious mental illness. At least 15% of adults were fleeing domestic violence on the night of the PIT Count, and at least 18% had prior felony convictions.

These conditions can make it difficult for individuals to achieve housing stability. Finding shelter and navigating various resources (e.g., food stamps) can be a difficult process, especially for individuals with serious mental illness, physical or developmental disabilities, or other chronic health conditions. Having felony convictions limits individuals' options for government assistance with food or housing.

HUD considers individuals chronically homeless when they have: a disabling condition, either been continuously homeless for at least a year or have had at

TABLE 2. Gender & Age of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

GENDER	AGE			
	Under 18	18-24	Over 24	Total
Male	117	39	937	1,093
Female	134	50	396	580
Transgender	0	2	7	9
Gender Nonconforming	0	0	0	0
Total	251	91	1,340	1,682

TABLE 3. Race & Ethnicity of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

	Hispanic/ Latino (Any Race)	White/ Caucasian	Black/ African American	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	Multiracial	TOTAL
Unsheltered	7	87	37	1	2	0	9	136
Sheltered	67	592	909	12	7	2	24	1,546
Emergency	45	373	678	5	6	2	18	1,082
Transitional	19	185	199	7	0	0	5	396
Safe Haven	3	34	32	0	1	0	1	68
Total	74	679	946	13	9	2	33	1,682

TABLE 4. Count Results by Subpopulations Experiencing Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

Persons 18 and Older

	Emergency Shelters	Transitional Shelters	Safe Havens	Unsheltered	TOTAL
Substance abuse disorder*	90	205	34	44	**373**
Serious mental illness	241	129	54	64	**488**
HIV/AIDS	8	2	1	2	**13**
Physical disability	159	50	20	38	**267**
Developmental disability	53	5	16	27	**101**
Other chronic health condition(s)*	120	74	41	47	**282**
Fleeing domestic violence**	146	53	0	15	**214**
Felony conviction(s)*	99	68	33	53	**253**
Foster care experience*	20	7	5	31	**63**

*   This is a conservative estimate, as not all shelters provided/collect these data.
** Per changes to HUD requirements, this number reflects only those who were fleeing domestic violence on the night of January 24. This is not representative of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness who have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.

TABLE 5. Chronic Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

	Emergency Shelters	Safe Havens	Unsheltered	TOTAL
Chronically homeless persons	111	48	46	205
Chronically homeless families	5	0	0	5
Persons in chronically homeless families	12	0	0	12
Chronically homeless veterans	12	2	6	20
Chronically homeless youth	7	0	5	12

least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years, and been staying in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or unsheltered location not meant for human habitation. As Table 5 indicates, 205 (approximately 12%) of individuals experiencing homelessness met the criteria for chronic homelessness. The number of chronically homeless veterans and unaccompanied youth both increased by one person from the 2017 Count. While the majority of chronically homeless individuals (54%) stayed in emergency shelters, over a third of the unsheltered population were chronically homeless.

The number of chronically homeless persons should be considered a conservative estimate, as some shelters did not provide full data on substance abuse or "other chronic health conditions," which are qualifying conditions.

FAMILIES & CHILDREN

Table 6 shows the breakdown of families experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT Count; 128 families with 383 individuals were found on the night of the Count, a 19% decrease in the number of families since 2017. Additionally, four women reported being pregnant; all of them were sheltered.

To complement the data gathered from HMIS and the PIT Count surveys, CHIP collected data from Marion County school districts to determine the number of school-aged youth served under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This Act aims to ensure

TABLE 6. Families Experiencing Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

	Emergency Shelters	Safe Havens	Unsheltered	TOTAL
Total number of families	98	30	0	128
Total number of persons in families	296	87	0	383
Number of children in families	196	55	0	251
Number of persons age 18-24 in families	20	5	0	25
Number of persons over age 24 in families	80	27	0	107

TABLE 7. Marion County School-Aged Individuals Experiencing Housing Instability (January 2018)

School District/School	8 & under	9-12	13-16	17 & older	TOTAL	Percentage of Students*
Emmerich Manual High School	0	0	16	23	39	5.3%
Franklin	12	6	14	4	36	0.4%
Howe	0	3	28	6	37	7.6%
Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS)	253	254	148	58	713	2.6%
Lawrence	84	115	100	43	342	2.1%
Perry	24	22	31	15	92	0.6%
Pike	39	63	51	43	196	1.7%
Speedway	3	2	6	2	13	0.7%
Warren	190	175	129	43	537	4.3%
Washington	53	81	75	32	241	2.1%
Wayne	37	130	180	96	443	2.7%
Total	**695**	**851**	**778**	**365**	2,689	

*   *Percentages based on 2017-2018 enrollment data from Indiana Department of Education*

that homeless youth and children of homeless individuals receive educational opportunities equal to housed youth through funding assistance for school registration and transportation. The McKinney-Vento data use the U.S. Department of Education's definition of homelessness, which differs from HUD's definition by including children who are "doubled up," or living in shared housing with friends or family members other than their parents.

Since doubled up families are not counted in the PIT Count, neither the PIT data nor Department of Education data include families with children not of school age who are doubled up. The data also exclude families with school-aged children who do not report their homelessness to the school. Therefore, the data does not capture the full extent of the number of families at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Table 7 shows the number of students in Marion County receiving McKinney-Vento services. Under McKinney-Vento, youth who are "doubled-up" (e.g., youth who are staying with friends to whom they are unrelated, multiple family households, etc.) are eligible to receive services. Of the 2,689 youth experiencing housing instability, approximately 82% were doubled-up.
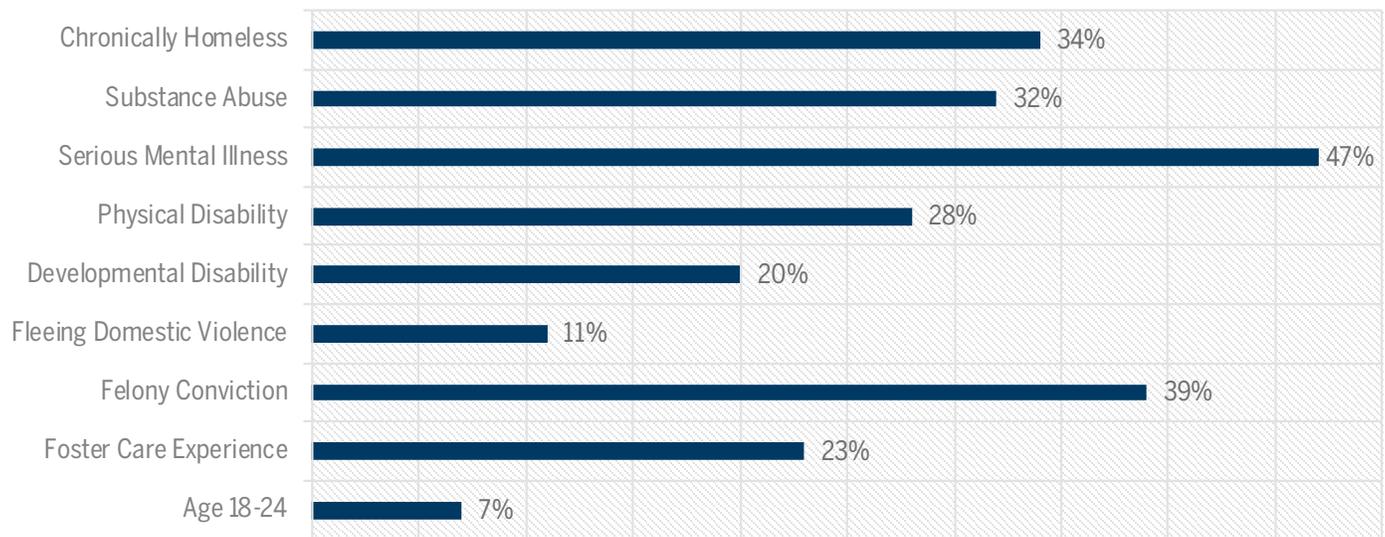
VETERANS
As Table 8 indicates, 261 veterans were experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT Count, a 20% decrease from 2017. While the number of veterans

TABLE 8. Veterans Experiencing Homelessness in Marion County (January 2018)

	Emergency Shelters	Transitional Shelters	Safe Havens	Unsheltered	TOTAL
Total number of veterans	80	167	2	12	261
Veteran family households	0	2	0	0	2
Children in veteran households	0	3	0	0	3
Chronically homeless veterans	12	0	2	6	20

FIGURE 1. Characteristics of Unsheltered Adults in Marion County (January 2018)

in emergency shelters increased by 38% (to 80), the number of veterans in transitional housing (167) decreased by 34%. The total number of unsheltered veterans decreased by three from 2017, and the number of veterans in safe havens remained the same. Lastly, the number of veterans experiencing chronic homelessness increased by one from the previous year's PIT Count.

UNSHELTERED

As previously noted, 136 individuals experiencing homelessness were without shelter on the night of the PIT Count, an increase of nearly eight percent from the previous year. Figure 1 above displays the characteristics reported among unsheltered adults. Nearly half of the unsheltered adults surveyed reported a serious mental illness, nearly 40% had a previous felony conviction, almost a third had a substance abuse disorder, and over a quarter had a

physical disability. Thirty-seven individuals specified having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and 19 reported having experienced severe head trauma (approximately 27% and 14% of unsheltered adults, respectively). Compared to 2017, the number of unsheltered individuals reporting felony convictions, foster care experience, HIV/AIDS, serious mental illness, and substance abuse all increased.

Having to leave behind a pet is a barrier to entering a shelter for many people experiencing homelessness. In 2018, 17 total households reported 44 total pets: 19 dogs and 25 cats.

METHODOLOGY

Prior to the 2018 Count, PPI, CHIP, and representatives from local outreach teams met to discuss logistics for the Count, including identifying the locations of known homeless camps. PPI and CHIP developed a survey to collect data from both sheltered and unsheltered homeless neighbors that reflected updated HUD requirements for 2018. In addition, the locations of these camps helped establish geographic boundaries in which outreach teams conducted surveys on the night of the PIT Count. All volunteers received training on how to administer the survey and use the tablet for data collection.

On the night of the Count, volunteer teams met at Horizon House and then reported to their respective locations to conduct surveys. Teams included a team leader and volunteers, and one volunteer on each team conducted the surveys. Volunteers included outreach workers, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officers, IUPUI students, and community volunteers. Veteran's Affairs staff were on hand to assist any unsheltered veterans experiencing homelessness, and outreach workers offered to link residents experiencing homelessness to services. Volunteers also distributed supply kits including blankets and cold weather apparel.

To help ensure that we do not miss locations, the PIT Count included five randomly selected census tracts. To randomly select census tracts, a map of all census tracts in Marion County was overlaid with a map of

FIGURE 2. Map of Random Census Tracts (2018)
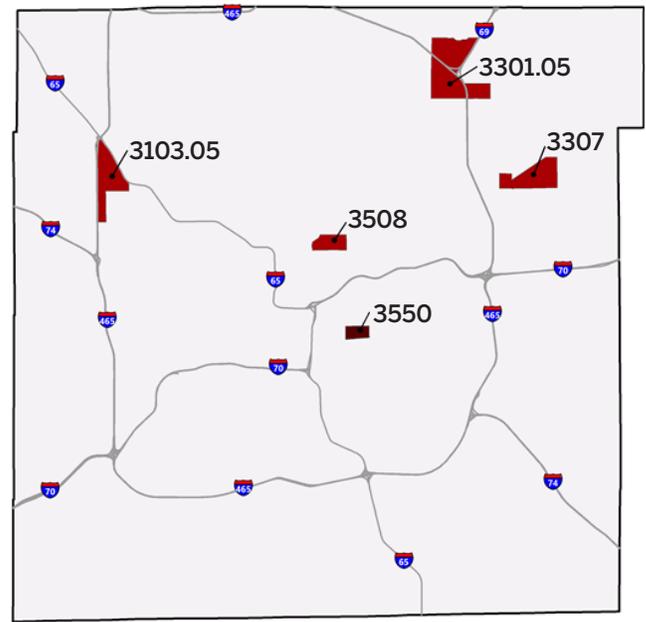
known homeless camp locations. All census tracts containing known camp locations were removed, and a random number generator was used to select two of the remaining census tracts. Each tract, which did not hold any previously known homeless camps, had one outreach team assigned to it. These teams explored the full census tract (i.e., all roads, railways, underpasses, parking lots, etc.). Of the five randomly selected tracts, only the team in tract 3550 (pictured above) found individuals experiencing homelessness. That tract is adjacent to tracts where camps were previously located, so finding people was not unexpected.

The **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** defines emergency shelters as facilities with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for homeless people. HUD defines transitional housing as providing people experiencing homelessness with a place to stay combined with supportive services for up to 24 months. Safe Havens are projects that provide private or semi-private long-term housing for people with severe mental illnesses.

HUD defines homelessness as individuals or families that meet one of two conditions:

1. Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes a subset for an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

2. Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.

While outreach teams collected data from unsheltered individuals, shelters (emergency, transitional, and safe haven) provided most of the information about sheltered individuals directly to PPI and CHIP, through data extraction from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or administration of the survey to homeless neighbors at the shelter site.

THOUGHTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Two hundred and five individuals experienced chronic homelessness on the night of the 2018 Count, the same number of individuals in 2017 despite the decrease in total number of individuals found. This increase corresponds with the number of individuals who reported barriers to achieving sustainable housing. A substantial proportion of adults surveyed on the night of the Count reported having a serious mental illness (over one third), a substance abuse disorder (over a quarter), a prior felony conviction (18%), or HIV/AIDs (13 adults). Another 15% reported they were actively fleeing domestic violence.

The city has made efforts to address this challenge. Opened in 2017, the Reuben Engagement Center offers shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness who have substance abuse disorders and/or mental illness in an effort to divert them from the criminal justice systems or emergency rooms. Additionally, the Indianapolis Homelessness Outreach and Services Team (iHost) has been funded to coordinate services for homeless neighbors experiencing substance abuse and/or mental illness. Sustained and increased efforts such as these may have positive impacts both on the condition of individuals experiencing homelessness and annual costs to the city.

Another critical component of solving homelessness is investing in options for individuals to maintain or access permanent housing. On the night of the Count, there were 128 families experiencing homelessness and 205 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. In 2016, annual costs related to chronic homelessness in Indianapolis (including costs of health care service providers, emergency shelter, hospital and ambulance care, and the criminal justice system) totaled approximately $18.1 million.[2] Comparatively, if the community chose to invest in permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless, there would be over $4.2 million in annual savings.[2] The cost savings from providing housing would far exceed the costs of individuals remaining homeless. The same is true for families. Providing permanent supportive housing (Rapid Rehousing) interventions to families would save the community $6.7 million annually.[2]

Policy changes have the potential to address these barriers to housing and their costs to the city. In Indiana, felony convictions involving drugs (possession, use, or distribution) can result in ineligibility from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (a 10-year period) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (lifetime ineligibility). Those with felony convictions also face difficulties in accessing government-assisted housing. Removing or easing the restrictiveness of these policies could increase these individuals' ability to achieve housing sustainability, thus reducing the burden on existing homeless services.

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1. *"HIV Cost-Effectiveness." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed 27 April 2018 at:* *https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/programresources/guidance/costeffectiveness/index.html*

2. *Littlepage, L. & Roll, A. Estimated Costs of Homelessness in Indianapolis IN 2016. IU Public Policy Institute. Issue 17-C21.*

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