



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY



# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

REPORT PRODUCED BY ASR

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*Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit, social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning, and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement, initiative sustainability, and program success are closely tied to assessment needs, evaluation of community goals, and development of appropriate responses.*

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- Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)/ Aaron Lewis and Shawn Ison
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- Prado Day Center
- San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services/ Laurel Weir
- Continuum of Care San Luis Obispo/ Amber Nichols
- San Luis Obispo County Office of Education/ Jessica Thomas
- Mountain Brook Abolitionists/ Luke Hickman-Adams
- San Luis Obispo County Administrative Office/ Morgan Torell





# Executive Summary

Every two years, during the last 10 days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of their homeless population in order to measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community. Communities collect information on individuals and families sleeping in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as people sleeping on the streets, in cars, in abandoned properties, or in other places not meant for human habitation.

These biennial Point-in-Time counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of all applicant Continuums of Care (CoC) receiving federal funding to provide housing and services for homeless individuals and families.

CoC's report the findings of their Point-in-Time count in their annual funding application to HUD and the data collected helps the federal government better understand the nature and extent of homelessness nationwide. The biennial Point-in-Time counts are the primary source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

San Luis Obispo County worked in conjunction with Applied Survey Research (ASR) to conduct the 2015 San Luis Obispo Homeless Count and Survey. ASR is a non-profit social research firm with extensive experience in homeless enumeration and research.

The San Luis Obispo homeless count had two primary components: a Point-in-Time enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals and families (those sleeping outdoors, on the street, in parks, or vehicles, etc.) and a Point-in-Time enumeration of homeless individuals and families who have temporary shelter (those staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or using stabilization rooms).

The 2015 San Luis Obispo Point-in-Time Count was a county-wide effort. With the support of community volunteers and homeless individuals led by the ASR planning team, the entire county was canvassed between daybreak and 10 AM on January 26, 2015. This resulted in a visual count of unsheltered homeless individuals and families residing on the streets, in vehicles, makeshift shelters, encampments and other places not meant for human habitation. Shelters and facilities reported the number of homeless individuals and families who occupied their facilities on the night of January 25, 2015.

The San Luis Obispo Point-in-Time team also conducted a dedicated count of unaccompanied children and youth under the age of 25 years old on the afternoon of January 26th, after the general unsheltered count. This dedicated count was part of a nation-wide effort, established and recommended by HUD, to understand the scope of youth homelessness. The youth count was conducted between the hours of 12 PM and 4 PM, later in the day when unaccompanied children and youth were more likely to be visible. The count was conducted by trained youth enumerators who were experiencing or had recently experienced homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

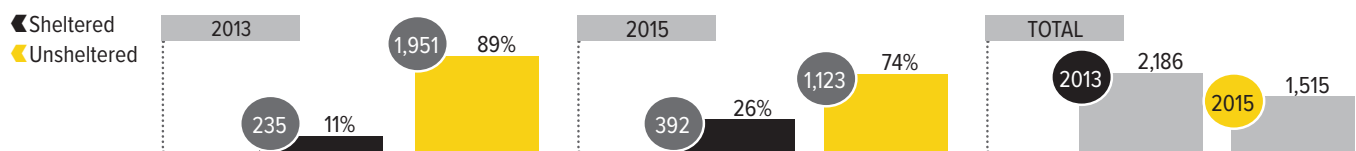
In the weeks following the street count, an in-depth survey was administered to 399 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals of all ages. The survey gathered basic demographic details as well as information on service needs and utilization. The survey sample was stratified by geography, shelter status, family status, and age group to the best of ASR's ability.

This report provides data regarding the number and characteristics of people experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County on a single night. Special attention is given to specific subpopulations including chronically homeless, veterans, families, unaccompanied children under the age of 18, and unaccompanied youth, also known as Transitional Age Youth (TAY), between the ages of 18-24.

To better understand the dynamics of homelessness over time, results from previous years are provided where available and applicable. While Applied Survey Research provided technical assistance for the 2013 Point-in-Time Count, the 2015 Point-in-Time Count was directly managed by ASR's experienced staff.

The 2015 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey reports that for a single point-in-time on January 26, 2015 there were 1,515 homeless persons who met the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness. This represents a decline of 671 persons (approximately 31%) from the similar Census and Survey effort performed in 2013.

#### NUMBER OF PERSONS COUNTED IN THE POINT IN TIME COUNT – 2013 VS. 2015



It is beyond the scope of this report to address all the factors that contributed to this change. We do know, however, that there are a number of factors that are important to note:

- County Office of Education (COE) Homeless Data** - COE data is available on homeless students in K-12 and that data is reported to the State in the fall of every school year. Only a subset of students reported by the COE are eligible for inclusion in the HUD definition used for the PIT Count, and those students must have their accommodation status and family profiles verified for the night before the Count. While this was partially accomplished in 2013 (a total of 316 persons were reported as unsheltered homeless through a

<sup>1</sup> Significant deduplication efforts were made in 2015 to ensure unaccompanied children and youth were not captured in both the youth and general street count efforts. For more information on these efforts and the overall count methodology, please see Appendix 1.

validated check by school district personnel), it was not accomplished by the school districts in 2015 despite data collection attempts. Therefore, without verification of housing status for the night of the count, no COE data for 2015 could be reported. It is believed by the research team at ASR however that had the school district housing status verification been done in 2015 in a comparable effort to the way it was done in 2013, there would have been similar numbers reported. The COE reported baseline (unverified and without other family members included) number was 200 students in 2013 and 229 students in 2015, as reported to the State Department of Education through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). **This COE data omission, therefore, could account for around half of the changes from the 2013 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census as it is comparatively reviewed.**

- **Methodology** – While the core methodology was the same in 2015 than 2013, ASR performed the direct planning and oversight for all data collection and local planning in 2015. In 2013, the effort was more decentralized and ASR performed a more limited and technical assistance and reporting role. New HUD household reporting requirements also resulted in more data integrity. Additionally, many participants were more experienced after working with the methodology and took quality control and improvement steps to ensure data fidelity.
- **Shelter Increases** – An increase in shelter capacity was documented in 2015 with 157 persons added to shelter results from 2013 findings (235 persons in shelter in 2013 and 392 persons in shelter in 2015). The increase in sheltered persons from 2013 to 2015 can be attributed to two factors: the increase in shelter beds at the El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) shelter in North County, which increased its capacity from 32 beds in 2013 to 50 beds in 2015, and the new CalWORKs Housing Support Program, which was sheltering 61 homeless families with children in motels on the night of the 2015 Count.

The following sections describe the findings of the 2015 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey in greater detail. This report can be downloaded at [www.slohomeless.com](http://www.slohomeless.com). A shorter, infographic executive summary can also be viewed at the same website.





# Point-In-Time Census

The 2015 Point-in-Time count included a complete enumeration of all unsheltered and publicly sheltered homeless persons. The general street count was conducted on January 26, 2015 from daybreak to 10 AM and covered all regions of San Luis Obispo County. The shelter count was conducted on the evening of January 25, 2015 and included all individuals staying in: emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, domestic violence shelters, jails, hospitals and treatment facilities. The general street count and shelter count methodology were similar to those used in 2013.

## FEDERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS FOR POINT-IN-TIME COUNTS

In this study, HUD's definition of homelessness for Point-in-Time counts was used. The definition includes:

- An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals), or
- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.<sup>1</sup>

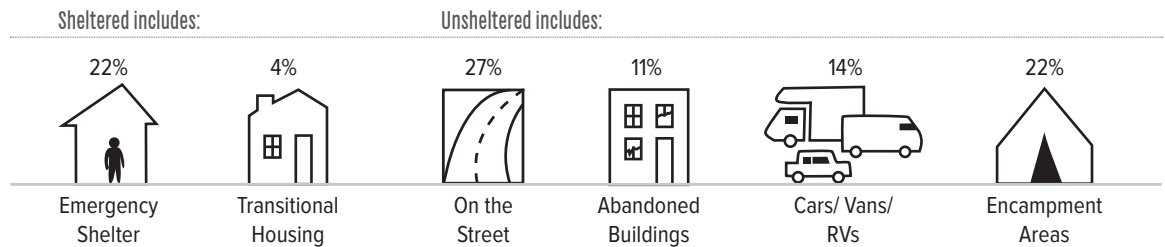
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (December 2012). Housing Inventory Count and Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons: Data Collection Guidance Version 1.1.

## NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

The number of individuals counted in the 2015 general street count and shelter count was 1,515. Compared to 2013, this was a decrease of 671 individuals (See Figure 2). A four year trend of comparable Point-in-Time data from general count efforts identified a 29% decrease in the number of persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo between 2011 and 2015.

Approximately 74% of all individuals counted in the 2015 San Luis Obispo Point-in-Time Count were unsheltered, a decrease from 89% in 2013 (See Figure 3). Ninety-eight (98%) percent of unaccompanied children and youth under the age of 25 were unsheltered in 2015 (See Figure 4).

**FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

392 individuals were counted in the shelter count (See Figure 1). Five percent (5%) of the homeless population were housed in jails and hospitals and residential programs on the night of January 26, 2015.

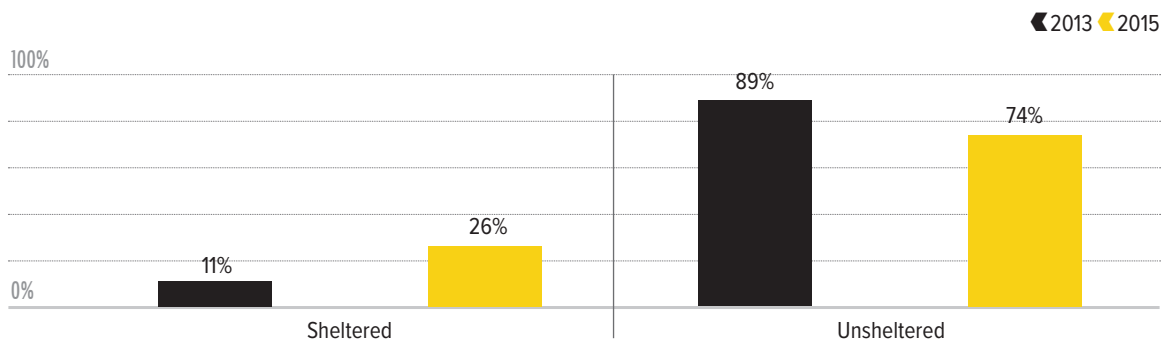
**FIGURE 2. TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.



**FIGURE 3.** TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED DURING THE POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS CENSUS WITH TREND AND SHELTER STATUS



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census. Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

Among the four San Luis Obispo County regions, the North County region experienced the largest increase between the 2013 and 2015 Point-in-Time count (466 individuals in 2013 and 629 individuals in 2015) (See Figure 4).

In 2013, the total count included 316 homeless individuals from the McKinney-Vento database of the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education. In 2015, that data could not be verified for the night of the PIT count and therefore, per HUD unsheltered street count guidelines, the McKinney-Vento homeless students were not included in the overall count number for San Luis Obispo County.

**FIGURE 4.** TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY REGION AND SHELTER STATUS

SHELTER STATUS	NORTH COUNTY		COAST		SAN LUIS OBISPO		SOUTH COUNTY		TOTAL SLO COUNTY	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
Unsheltered	393	452	141	141	602	324	815	206	1,951	1,123
Sheltered	73	177	0	5	148	158	14	52	235	392
Total	466	629	141	146	750	482	829	258	2,180	1,515

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census. Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

Note: North County region consists of Atascadero, Paso Robles, San Miguel, and Templeton. Coast region includes Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, and Morro Bay. San Luis Obispo includes only the City of San Luis Obispo. South County includes Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Nipomo, and Oceano.

Note: Please see the Appendix 1 Section on Methodology regarding the data limitations that arise from the lack of San Luis Obispo COE data.

**FIGURE 5. TOTAL HOMELESS CENSUS POPULATION BY REGION**

SLEEPING ACCOMMODATION	NORTH COUNTY		COAST		SAN LUIS OBISPO		SOUTH COUNTY	
	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015
Emergency Shelter	15%	28%	0%	3%	13%	28%	<1%	20%
Transitional Housing	1%	0%	0%	0%	7%	5%	1%	0%
On the Street	45%	21%	74%	35%	47%	23%	46%	47%
Encampment Areas	20%	27%	16%	18%	5%	16%	13%	22%
Cars/Vans/RVs	17%	12%	9%	42%	25%	12%	31%	10%
Abandoned Buildings	2%	12%	0%	1%	1%	17%	4%	0%
Park Areas	<1%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.

Note: Regional Percentages may not add up to 100. Total Homeless Census Population by Region and Shelter Status

San Luis Obispo (312) and Paso Robles (235) had the greatest number of unsheltered homeless individuals. Another 152 unsheltered persons were identified in Atascadero (See Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. JURISDICTIONAL BREAKDOWN OF THE POPULATION, BY SHELTER STATUS**

JURISDICTION	UNSHELTERED	SHELTERED	TOTAL
Arroyo Grande	4	6	10
Atascadero	152	92	244
Grover Beach	140	18	158
Morro Bay	87	4	91
Paso Robles	235	55	290
Pismo Beach	30	17	47
San Luis Obispo	312	152	464
Unincorporated	163	48	211
Total	1,123	392	1,515

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census.



# Homeless Survey Findings

The methodology used for the 2015 homeless count is described by HUD as a “blitz count” in that it is conducted by numerous people over a very short period of time in an effort to avoid duplicate enumeration. As this method is conducted in San Luis Obispo County, the result is an observation based count of individuals and families who appear to be homeless. The count is followed by a face-to-face representative survey. The survey sample is then used to profile and estimate the condition and characteristics of San Luis Obispo County’s homeless population and subpopulations for the purposes of HUD reporting and local service delivery and strategic planning.

This section provides an overview of the findings generated from the 2015 San Luis Obispo Homeless Survey. Surveys were administered to a randomized sample of homeless individuals between February and April, 2015. This effort resulted in 399 complete and unique surveys. Based on a Point-in-Time count of 1,515 homeless persons, with a randomized survey sampling process, these 399 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo. In other words, if the survey were conducted again, we can be confident that the results would be within 4 percentage points of the current results for countywide data.

In order to ensure the safety and comfort of those who participated, respondents were not required to complete all survey questions. Missing values have been intentionally omitted from the survey results; therefore, the total number of respondents for each question will not always equal the total number of surveys.

The following table is a brief overview of the homeless census population and the survey population.

**FIGURE 7. SURVEY AND CENSUS POPULATIONS**

	COUNT POPULATION	SURVEY POPULATION
Less than 25	16%	16%
25 and older	84%	84%
Families	113 families	60 family surveys
Sheltered	26%	13%
Unsheltered	74%	87%

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey.

Note: Families were challenging to survey in part due to their shelter placement with hotel/motel voucher programs and therefore less accessible.

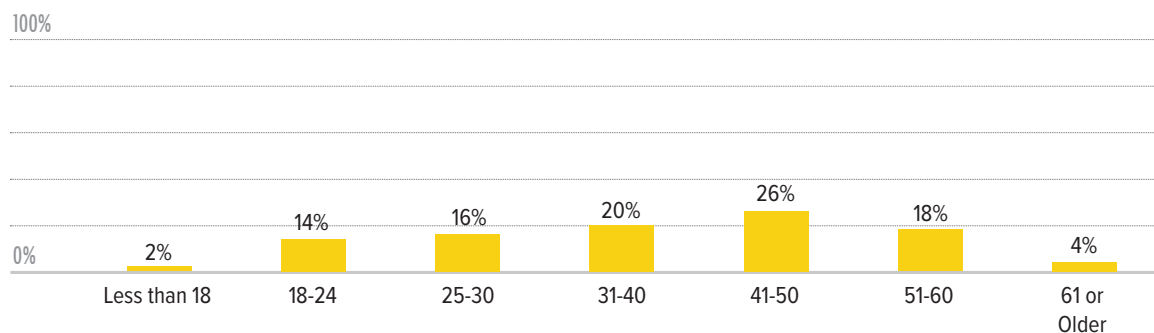
### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of homeless residents in San Luis Obispo County, respondents were asked basic demographic questions including age, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

#### AGE

Sixteen percent of the San Luis Obispo survey respondents indicated they were under the age of 25. Twenty-two percent of respondents were over the age of 50 (See Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8. AGE**

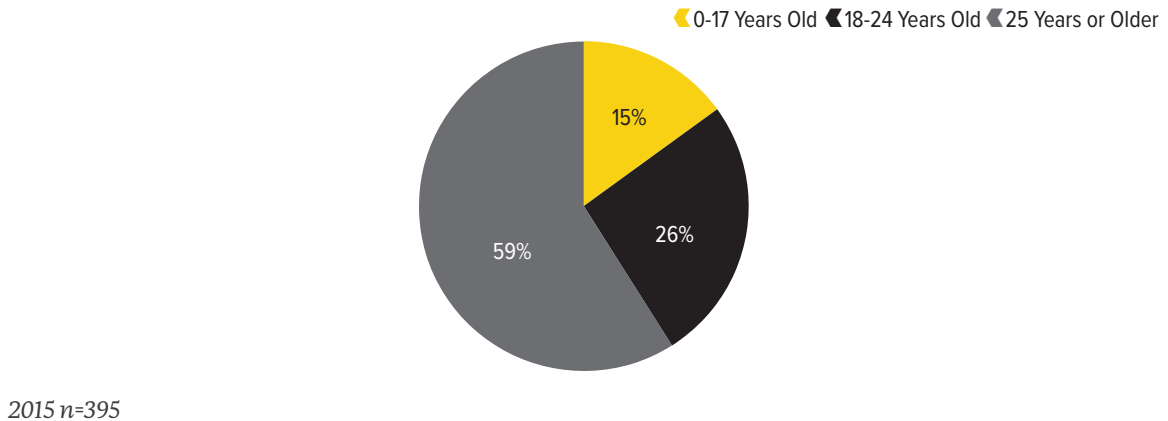


2015 n=399

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

Respondents were asked how old they were the first time they experienced homelessness, 15% reported they were under the age of 18, 26% reported they were between the ages of 18-24, 59% reported they were over the age of 24 (See Figure 9).

**FIGURE 9. AGE AT FIRST EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS**

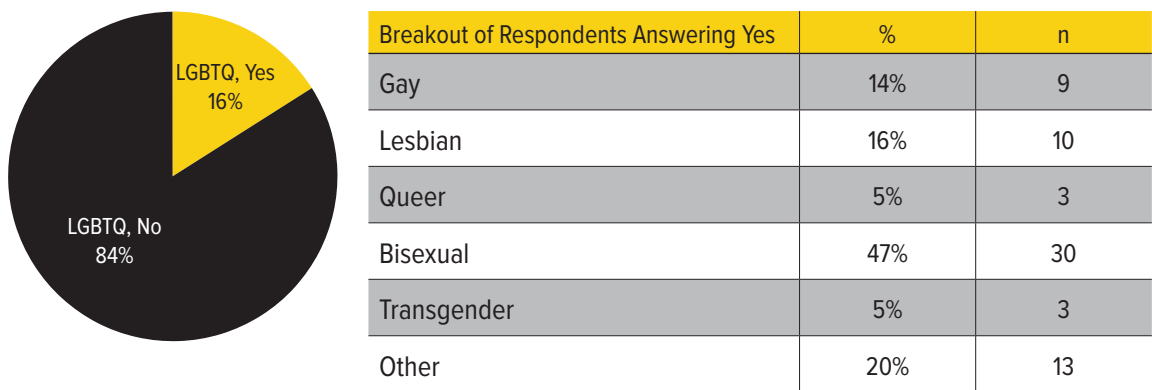


Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey. Watsonville, CA

**GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Just over one third of survey respondents (35%) identified as female, 65% male, and less than one percent identified as transgender. While there is limited data on the number of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals experiencing homelessness, available data suggest LGBTQ individuals experience homelessness at higher rates, especially those under the age of 25. Survey data suggests that 39% of youth respondents identified as LGBTQ, compared to 12% of adult respondents.

**FIGURE 10. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND LGBTQ IDENTITY**



LGBTQ n=399; Breakout n= 64 respondents offering 68 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

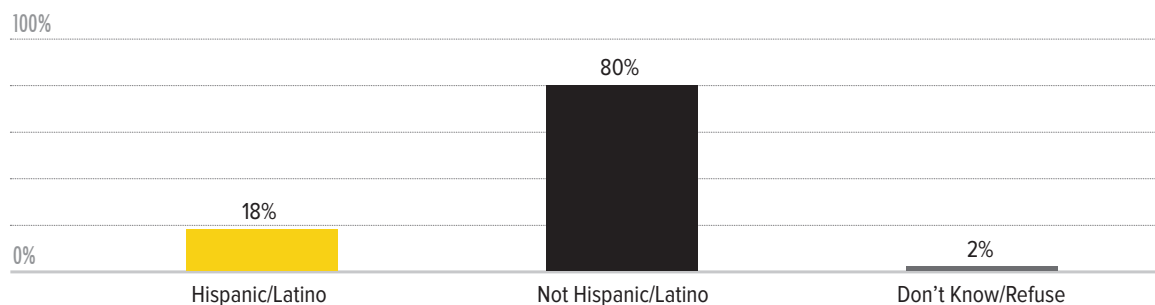
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

**RACE/ETHNICITY**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gathers data on race and ethnicity in two separate questions, similar to the US Census. When asked about their ethnicity 18% of homeless survey respondents reported they were Hispanic or Latino (See Figure 11). In regards to race, 75% identified as White, 6% Black or African American, 3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% Asian, and 17% multi-racial or other (See Figure 12).

There are disparities between racial and ethnic groups as represented in the general population and those experiencing homelessness. In comparison to the general population of San Luis Obispo, a slightly lower percentage of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino (18% compared to 22%). In terms of race, a much lower percentage of survey respondents identified as White, 75% compared to 87% of the general population. Six percent of homeless respondents identified as Black or African American, compared to 3% of the general population.

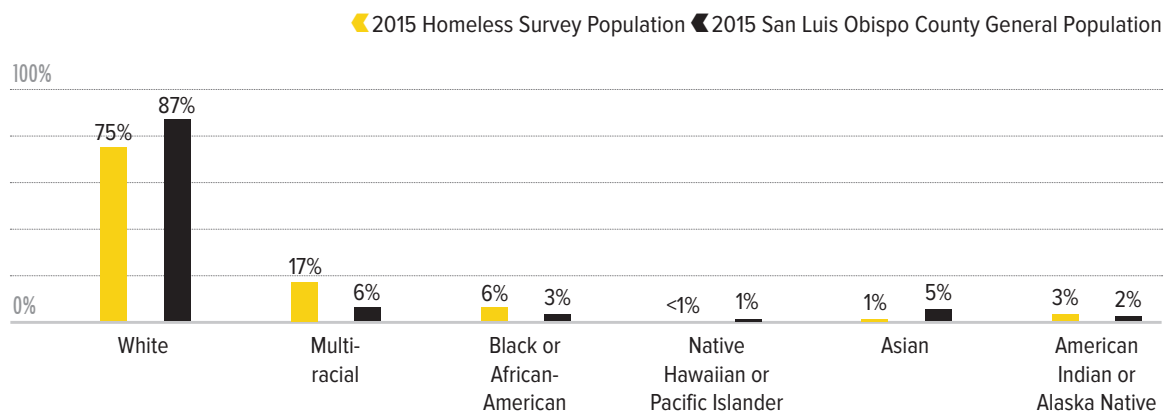
**FIGURE 11. HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY**



2015 n=395

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

**FIGURE 12. RACE**



2015 n=376

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey. U.S. Census Bureau. (April 2015). American Community Survey 2011-2013 3-Year Estimates. Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

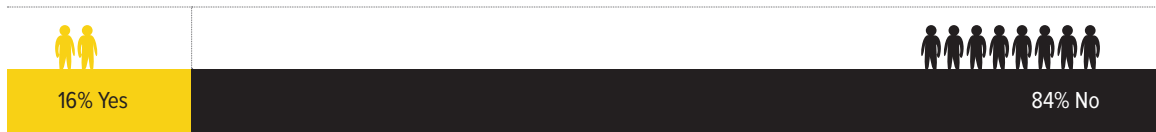
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

**FOSTER CARE**

It has been estimated that one in four former foster youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting the foster care system.<sup>3</sup> In the State of California, foster youth are now eligible to receive services beyond age 18. Transitional housing and supportive services for youth 18-24 are provided by two programs, Transitional Housing Placement-Foster Care for youth 18-21 and Transitional Housing Placement-Plus for youth ages 18-24 aging out of foster care. It is intended that these additional supports, implemented since 2012, will assist foster youth with the transition to independence and prevent them from becoming homeless.

In 2015, 16% of respondents reported a history of foster care, no change from 2013 (See Figure 13). Two percent of survey respondent's indicated that prior to becoming homeless they were in foster care, while less than 1% of respondents felt that aging out of the foster care system was the primary event or condition that led to their homelessness.

**FIGURE 13. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE**



2015 n=375

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

<sup>3</sup> United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2012). *Opening Doors: Homelessness Among Youth*. Washington: D.C.



## LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS

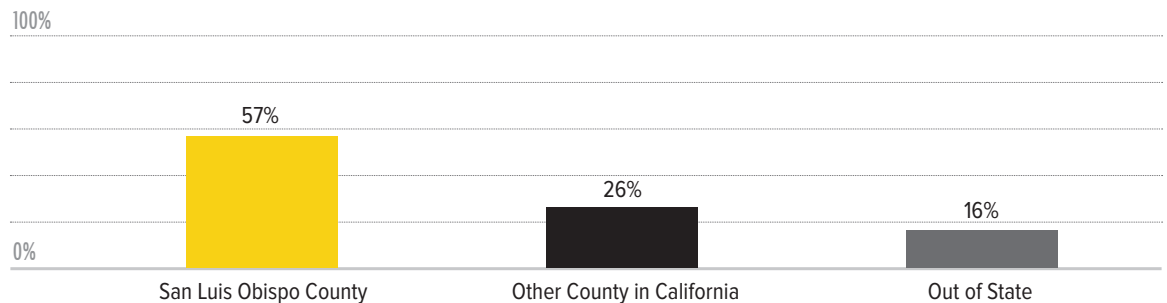
The way in which an individual seeks services as well as their ability to access support from friends or family is affected by where they lived prior to experiencing homelessness. Previous circumstances can also point to gaps in the system of care and opportunities for systemic improvement and homeless prevention. Survey respondents reported many different living accommodations prior to becoming homeless, though most lived in or around the San Luis Obispo area with friends, family, or on their own in a home or apartment.

### PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Fifty-seven percent of residents reported they were living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they most recently became homeless, a decrease from 71% in 2013 (See Figure 14). Of those, over half (53%) had lived in San Luis Obispo for 10 years or more. Nine percent had lived in San Luis Obispo for less than one year.

Sixteen percent of respondents reported they were living out of state when they became homeless, 26% reported they were living in another county in California (See Figure 14).

**FIGURE 14.** PLACE OF RESIDENCE AT TIME OF HOUSING LOSS



2015 n= 390

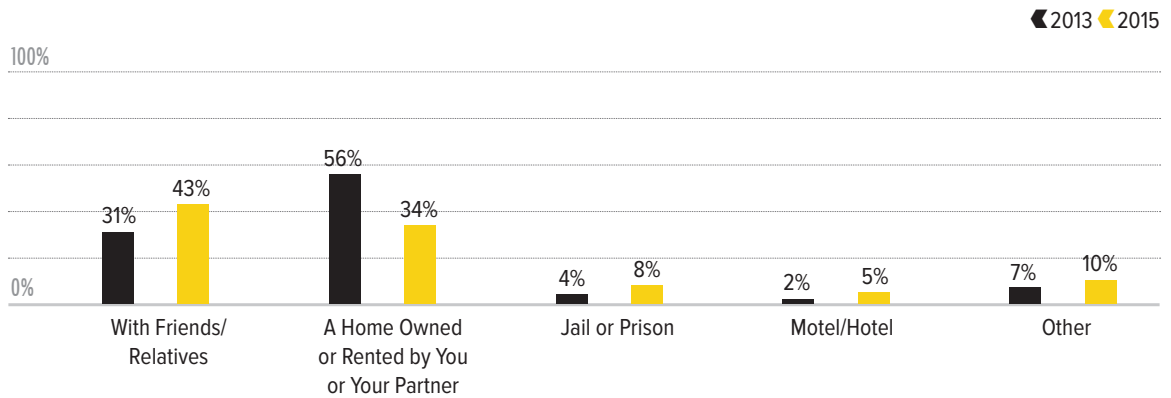
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.



**PRIOR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

Forty-three percent of respondents reported staying in a home owned by friends and relatives immediately prior to becoming homeless. Thirty-four percent reported living in a home owned or rented by themselves or their partner, a decrease from 56% in 2013. Eight percent reported they were living in jail or prison. Five percent were staying at a motel or hotel. Two percent of respondents reported they were in a subsidized housing or permanent supportive housing facility prior to becoming homeless and another two percent reported they were staying in a hospital or treatment facility (See Figure 15).

**FIGURE 15. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO BECOMING HOMELESS THIS TIME (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**



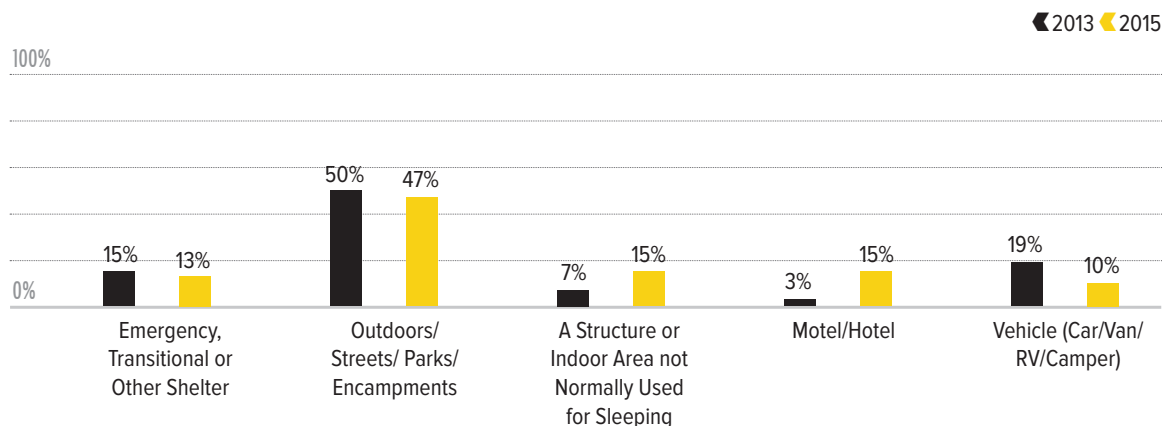
2013 n=373; 2015 n=389

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey*. Applied Survey Research. (2013). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey*.

### CURRENT LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Nearly half (47%) of survey respondents reported currently living outdoors, either on the streets, in parks or encampment areas. Fifteen percent of respondents reported they were sleeping in foyers, hallways or other indoor areas not meant for human habitation. Ten percent reported staying in their vehicles. Thirteen percent of respondents reported staying in a public shelter (emergency shelter, transitional housing facility or alternative shelter environment) (See Figure 16).

**FIGURE 16.** USUAL PLACES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT



2013 n=384; 2015 n=387

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey. Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

### DURATION AND RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

Unstable living conditions often lead to individuals falling in and out of homelessness. Two out of three survey respondents (67%) reported they had experienced homelessness previously. For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of housing instability.

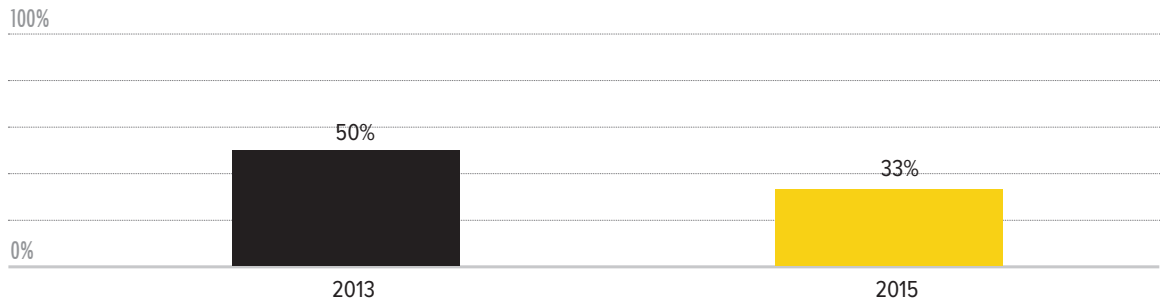
#### DURATION OF HOMELESSNESS

More than half (66%) of survey respondents reported they had been homeless for a year or more, an increase from 2013 (47%). Six percent of respondents reported that they had been homeless for less than one month, similar to 2013 (5%) (See Figure 18).

**RECURRENCE OF HOMELESSNESS**

Thirty-three percent of respondents were experiencing homelessness for the first time (See Figure 17). Three percent of respondents reported they had experienced homelessness four or more times in the past year. This was much lower than in 2013, when 13% of respondents reported 4 incidents or more of homelessness in the previous year. When asked how many times they had been homeless in the past three years, 23% reported they had been homeless 4 or more times (See Figure 18). Prevention is a crucial component of a quality homeless response effort.

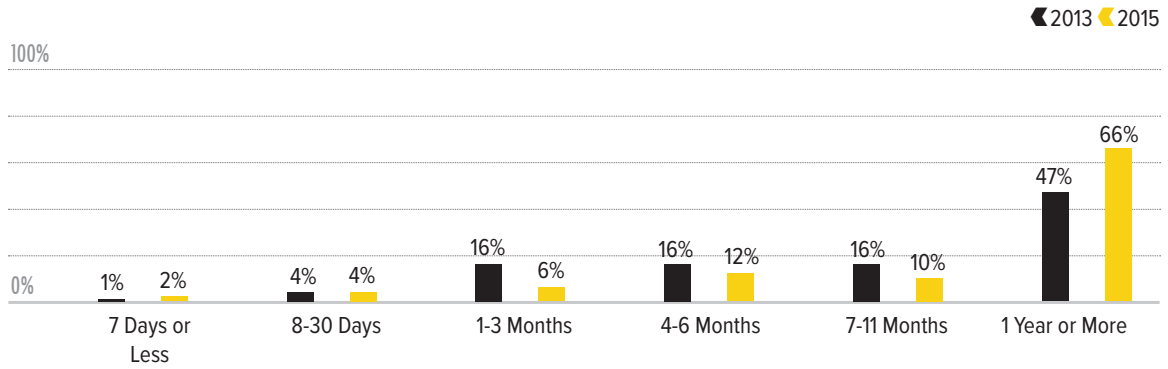
**FIGURE 17.** PERCENT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS FOR THE FIRST TIME (RESPONDENTS ANSWERING “YES”)



2013 n=385; 2015 n=398

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

**FIGURE 18.** LENGTH OF CURRENT EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS



2013 n= 364; 2015 n= 398

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

## PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

The primary cause of an individual's homelessness is not always clear. It is often the result of multiple and compounding causes.

Nearly a third (23%) of respondents reported job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, down from 28% in 2013. Seventeen percent reported drugs or alcohol, up from 9% in 2013. Twelve percent reported a divorce, separation, or break up, while 11% reported an argument with family or friend who asked them to leave as a primary event that led to their homelessness (See Figure 19).

Ten percent of respondents reported eviction was the primary cause of their homelessness, 2% reported their landlord raised rent, and 3% reported foreclosure.

**FIGURE 19.** PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)

2013	2015
Lost Job or Loss of Income (28%)	Lost Job (23%)
Could Not Afford Rent (12%)	Alcohol or Drug Use (17%)
Alcohol or Drug Use (9%)	Divorce/Separation/Breakup (12%)
Divorce/Separation/Breakup (8%)	Argument with Family or Friend (11%)
Argument with Family or Friend (8%)	Eviction (10%)

2013 n=380 respondents offering 418 responses; 2015 n=396 respondents offering 464 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

### OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING

Respondents were also asked what prevented them from obtaining housing. The greatest percentage (67%) reported they could not afford rent. Most other respondents reported a mixture of other income or access related issues, such as a lack of income (52%), no money for moving costs (29%), and bad credit (21%). A lack of housing availability continues to be a barrier to permanent housing as 16% of respondents indicated that a lack of housing availability was keeping them from getting permanent housing (See Figure 20).

**FIGURE 20.** OBSTACLES TO OBTAINING PERMANENT HOUSING (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)

2013	2015
Can't Afford Rent (61%)	Can't Afford Rent (67%)
No Job/No Income (48%)	No Job/No Income (52%)
No Money for Moving Costs (38%)	No Money for Moving Costs (29%)
Bad Credit (20%)	Bad Credit (21%)
No Transportation (20%)	No Transportation (20%)

2013 n=367 respondents offering 915 responses; 2015 n=388 respondents offering 1,057 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

## SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

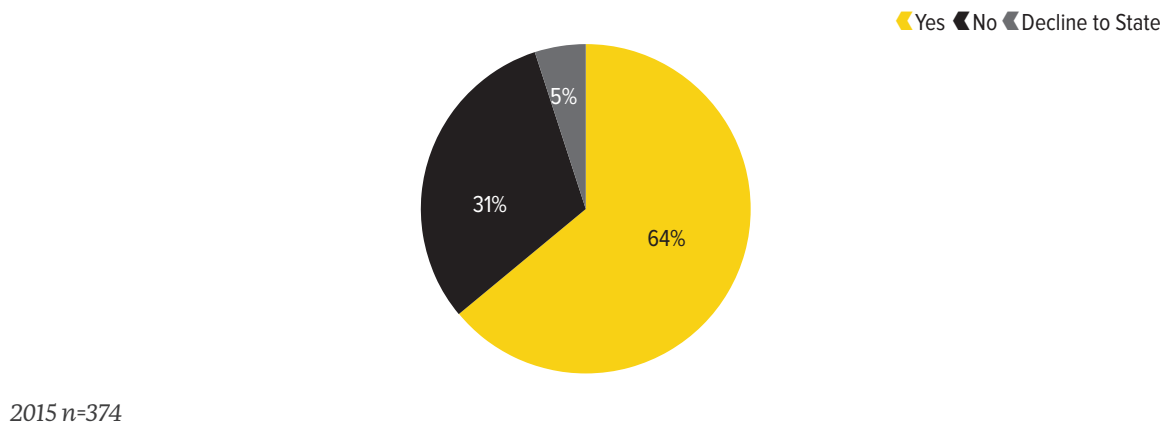
San Luis Obispo provides services and assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness through federal and local programs. Government assistance and homeless services work to enable individuals and families to obtain benefits and support. However, many individuals and families do not apply for services. Many believe that they do not qualify or are ineligible for assistance. Connecting homeless individuals and families to these support services helps them create the bridge to mainstream support services and helps to prevent future housing instability.

### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Just under two-thirds (64%) of respondents in 2015 reported they were receiving some form of government assistance, similar to 2013 when 60% were receiving some form of government assistance (See Figure 21).

Of those who reported they were not receiving any form of government support, the greatest percentage report they did not want government assistance (40%). Respondents also reported challenges applying for services, 10% reported they did not have required identification, 12% reported no permanent address to use for applications and 8% reported the paperwork was too difficult. Less than 6% reported they did not know where to go to seek assistance (See Figure 22).

FIGURE 21. PERCENT RECEIVING ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

**FIGURE 22. REASONS FOR NOT RECEIVING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**

2015	
Don't Want Government Assistance (40%)	Paperwork Too Difficult (8%)
Don't Think I Am Eligible (24%)	Applied and Waiting for Response (7%)
Never Applied (14%)	Don't Know Where to Go (6%)
No Permanent Address (12%)	Turned Down (6%)
Don't Have ID (10%)	Benefits Were Cut-Off (5%)

2013 n=105 respondents offering 187 responses; 2015 n=110 respondents offering 149 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

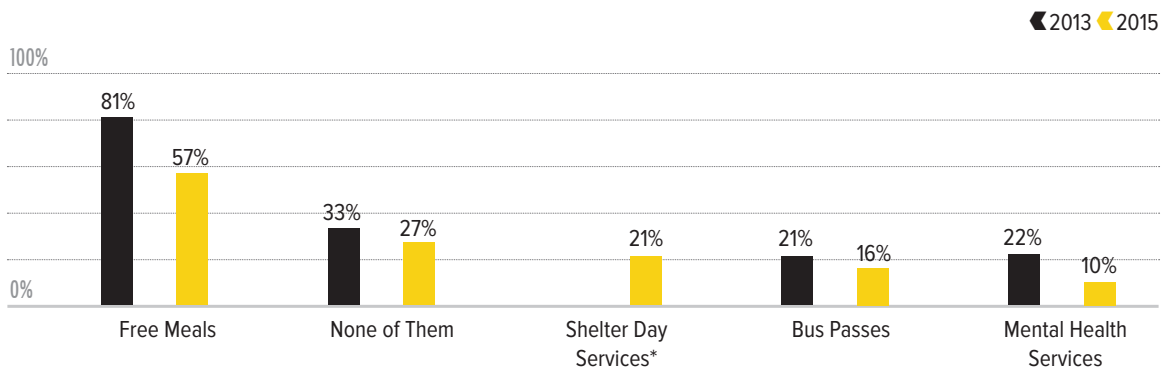
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

Note: Only responses of 5% or greater were shown.

**SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

A large majority of respondents reported using meal services (57%). The use of shelter day services was the second most frequently used service response with 21% of respondents indicating that they used this service. Mental health services (10%) and alcohol/drug counseling (8%) were also frequent responses. Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they were not currently using any services available to them (See Figure 23).

**FIGURE 23. SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (TOP FIVE RESPONSES)**



2013 n=372 respondents offering 738 responses; 2015 n=347 respondents offering 515 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.  
Applied Survey Research. (2013). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

Note: Shelter day services was not an available response option in 2013.

Note: Shelter day services include supportive services such as showers, laundry, and health services. The support services sometimes include free meals as well.

## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

While the majority of homeless survey respondents reported being unemployed, some had part-time or full-time work. Many were receiving an income, either public or private. Yet, data suggest that employment and income were not enough to meet basic needs.

### EMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in San Luis Obispo in January 2015 was at 5.4%, down from 7.9%, in 2013.<sup>4</sup> It is important to recognize that the unemployment rate represents only those who are unemployed and actively seeking employment. It doesn't represent all joblessness. The unemployment rate for homeless respondents was 80%, up slightly from 75% in 2013 (See Figure 24). Twenty percent of respondents reported working full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, or casual employment.

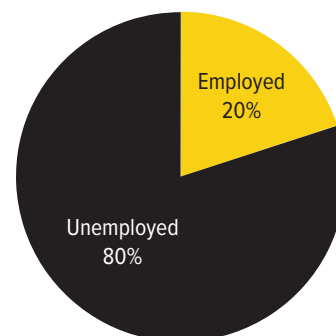
Of those who were unemployed, 46% reported they were looking for work, 31% were not looking for work, and 23% indicated that they were unable to work.

### INCOME

Income, from all sources, varied between those with regular employment and those who were unemployed. Thirty-two percent of unemployed respondents reported an income of less than \$99 per month, in comparison to 5% of those who were employed. Unemployed income is typically from government services, benefits, recycling, or panhandling. Sixty-one percent of employed respondents reported making \$100-\$749 per month, and an additional 11% were making \$1,100 and up (See Figure 24).

FIGURE 24. EMPLOYMENT AND MEAN MONTHLY INCOME

	EMPLOYED		UNEMPLOYED	
	%	n	%	n
\$0-\$99	5%	4	32%	95
\$100-\$449	26%	19	33%	99
\$450-\$749	35%	26	16%	47
\$750-\$1,099	23%	17	14%	40
\$1,100-\$1,499	7%	5	3%	9
\$1,500-\$3,000	1%	1	1%	4
More than \$3,000	3%	2	1%	2



2015 employment status n=378; Income employed n=74; Income unemployed n=296

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

<sup>4</sup> State of California Employment Development Department. (2013). Unemployment Rates (Labor Force). Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov>



## HEALTH

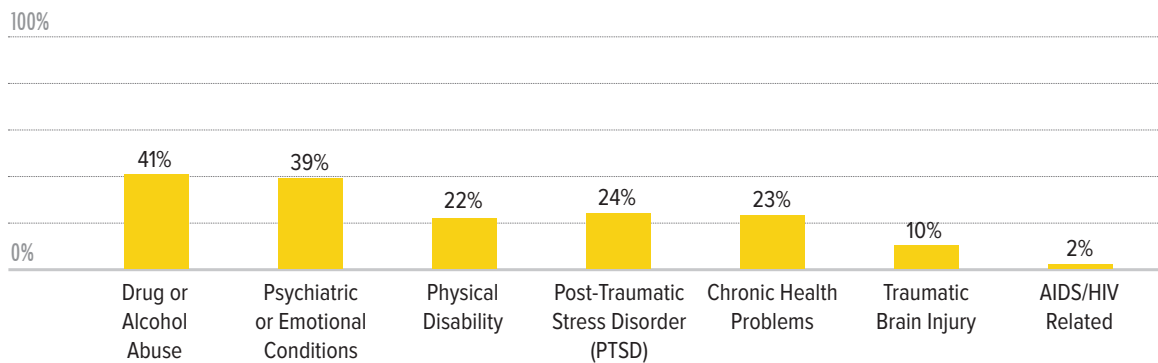
The average life expectancy for individuals experiencing homelessness is 25 years less than those in stable housing. Without regular access to health care, individuals experience preventable illness and often endure longer hospitalizations. It is estimated that those experiencing homelessness stay four days (or 36%) longer per hospital admission than non-homeless patients.<sup>5</sup>

### PHYSICAL ILLNESS AND DISABILITIES

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) reported one or more health conditions. These conditions included chronic physical illness, physical disabilities, chronic substance abuse and severe mental health conditions.

The most frequently reported health condition was drug or alcohol abuse (41%), followed by psychiatric or emotional conditions (39%). Of those that reported a health condition, twenty-three percent reported a chronic health problem or medical condition. Twenty-two of respondents reported experiencing a physical disability (See Figure 25).

FIGURE 25. HEALTH CONDITIONS



*Drug or alcohol abuse n=384; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n=375; Physical disability n=372; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n=377; Chronic health problems n=380; Traumatic Brain Injury n=379; AIDS/HIV related n=373*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.*

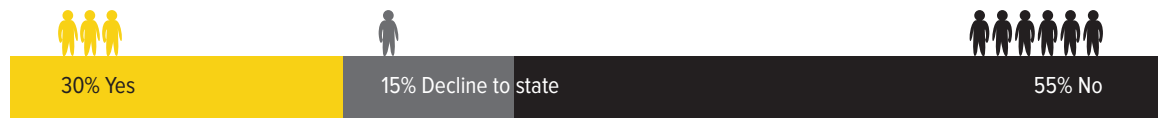
<sup>5</sup> Sharon A. Salit, M. E. (1998). Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 338, 1734-1740.

## DOMESTIC/PARTNER VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends asking about physical, emotional, or sexual abuse over a lifetime. Two percent of all survey respondents reported they were currently experiencing domestic/partner violence or abuse, a decrease from 3% in 2013.

Thirty percent said yes they had experienced some sort of abuse in their lifetime and 15% declined to state (See Figure 26). Domestic violence varied by gender, 44% of female respondents reported experiencing domestic violence at some point in their lifetime, compared to 22% of men. Of the respondents that have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused, 9% indicated that family/domestic violence was the primary event that led to their homelessness.

FIGURE 26. HISTORY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



2015 n=378

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

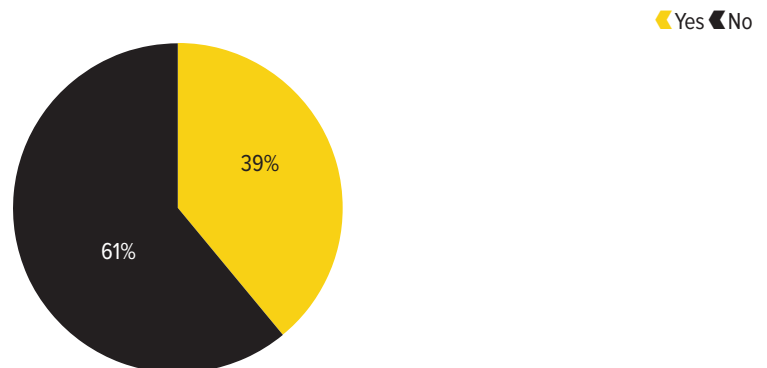
## CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Individuals recently released from the criminal justice system often face housing challenges that may contribute to their homelessness.

### INCARCERATION

Twenty-four percent of respondents reported they were on probation or parole at the time of the survey, up from 20% in 2013. Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported that they have spent a night in jail in the last 12 months, similar to previous years (See Figure 27).

FIGURE 27. SPENT A NIGHT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



2015 n=383

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.



# Homeless Subpopulations

*Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* outlines national objectives and evaluative measures for ending homelessness in the United States. In order to adequately address the diversity within the population experiencing homelessness, the federal government identified four subpopulations with particular challenges or needs. The following sections look at each of these populations to identify the number of people counted during the Point-in-Time count on January 26th and the characteristics of each population.

The following section details the number and characteristics of individuals included in the San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Count and Survey who meet the definition of each subpopulation. These data include those individuals found in residential programs, jails and hospitals.

Of the 399 surveys completed in 2015, the results represent 388 chronically homeless individuals, 130 by homeless veterans, 358 individuals in homeless families, and 395 by unaccompanied children and transition age youth.

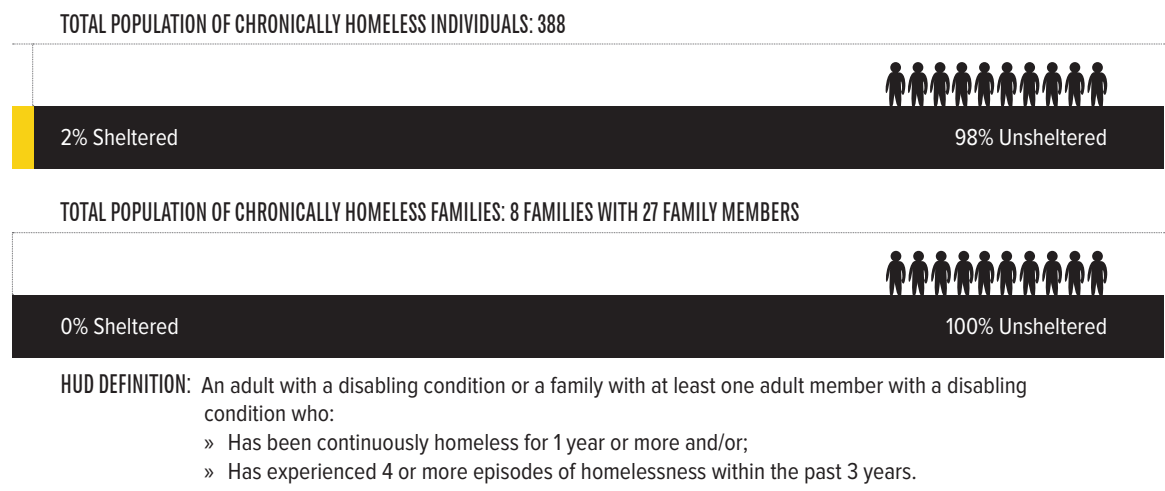
## CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless individual as someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and also has a condition which prevents them from maintaining work or housing. This definition applies to individuals as well as adult household members.

The chronically homeless population represents one of the most vulnerable populations on the street. Mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population. Data from communities across the country has shown that the public cost incurred by those experiencing extended periods of homelessness include emergency room visits, interactions with law enforcement, incarceration, and regular access to social supports and homeless services. These combined costs are often significantly higher than the cost of providing individuals with permanent housing and supportive services.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) reported that roughly 15% of the national homeless population was chronically homeless in 2014 or 84,291 chronically homeless individuals.<sup>6</sup> Chronic homelessness has been on the decline in recent years, as communities across the country increase the capacity of permanent supportive programs and prioritize those with the greatest barriers to housing stability. While the decrease in national chronic homelessness seems promising, federal budget constraints have limited the amount of money available to support housing programs and services, especially in the coastal region where housing affordability is among the highest in the nation. As a result, *Opening Doors*, which began with a goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015, has extended the plan to 2017.<sup>7</sup>

**FIGURE 28.** CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey*.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015). Annual Update 2014. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

<sup>7</sup> Cavallaro, E. (2015). Ending Chronic Homelessness, Now in 2017. National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved 2015 from <http://www.endhomelessness.org>

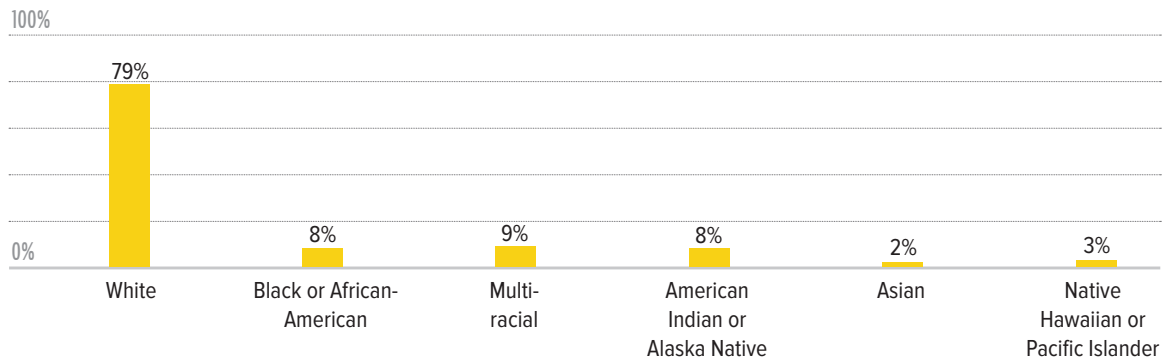
### PREVALENCE OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness in San Luis Obispo County has decreased since 2013. Based on the 2015 Point-in-Time Count data in 2015 there were 388 chronic homeless individuals and 8 chronically homeless families, compared to 571 individuals and 26 families in 2013 (See Figure 28).

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

Approximately three quarters (73%) of chronically homeless individuals were male, slightly higher than the non-chronically homeless population at 60%. Twelve percent of chronically homeless respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino, and the majority identified as White (79%) (See Figure 29). Seventeen percent of chronically homeless respondents identified as veterans.

**FIGURE 29.** RACE AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n=135

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

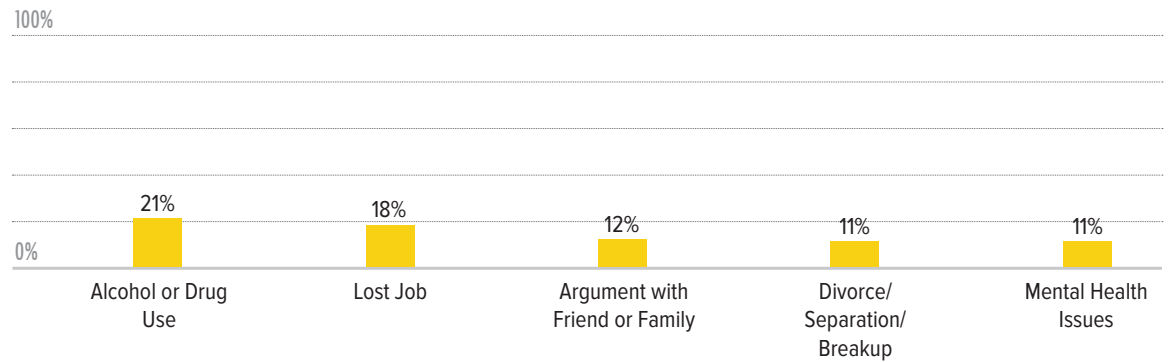
Note: Multiple response question. Percentages may not add up to 100.

### PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Twenty-one percent of chronically homeless respondents reported that alcohol or drug use was the primary cause of their homelessness, while 18% stated it was job loss that led to their homelessness (See Figure 30).

When asked what was preventing them from obtaining permanent housing, there were similar responses for the chronically homeless population as there were for the non-chronic population. Sixty-nine percent of the chronically homeless respondents stated it was due to an inability to afford rent. An additional 50% of chronically homeless individuals indicated a lack of employment or not enough income was preventing them from securing permanent housing.

**FIGURE 30.** PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS



2015 n=140 respondents offering 164 responses

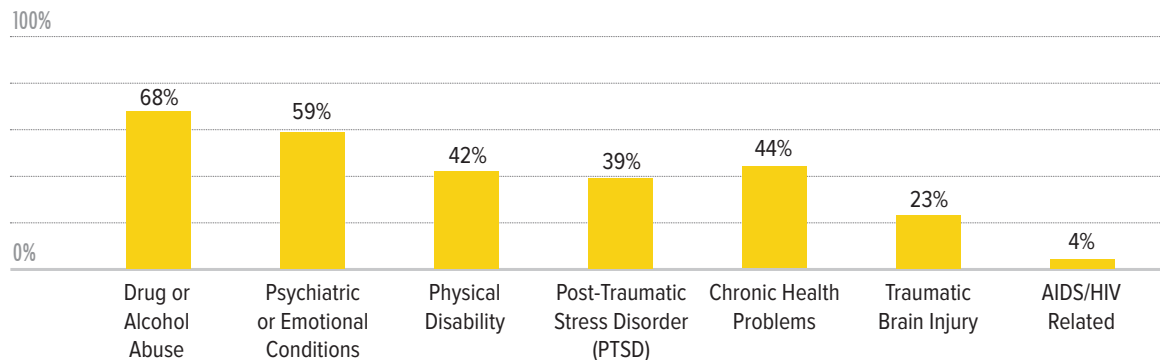
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Of the chronically homeless respondents in 2015, 68% reported alcohol or substance abuse and 44% reported suffering from a chronic health problem or medical condition. Forty-two percent are experiencing a physical disability, and 59% of chronically homeless respondents suffer from a psychiatric or emotional condition (See Figure 31).

**FIGURE 31. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**



*Drug or alcohol abuse n=138; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n=137; Physical disability n=136; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n=136; Chronic health problems n=138; Traumatic Brain Injury n=138; AIDS/HIV related n=135*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.*

### ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Seventy-three percent of the chronically homeless survey respondents reported using some sort of local homeless service, similar to the non-chronic population. There were a higher percentage of chronically homeless respondents than non-chronically homeless respondents who reported using shelter day services (23% to 19%, respectively) and mental health services (14% to 7%). Fifty-six percent of the chronically homeless are receiving free meals, and 18% have access to free bus passes.

Twenty-eight percent of chronically homeless respondents reported they were not receiving any form of government assistance, which is a decrease from the 2013 respondents who were not receiving government assistance (40%).

### INCARCERATION AMONG THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

A higher percentage of chronically homeless respondents reported they had spent one or more nights in jail or prison in the 12 months prior to the survey, 51% compared to the 32% of non-chronic respondents. Fourteen percent of chronically homeless respondents were on probation or parole at the time they most recently became homeless.

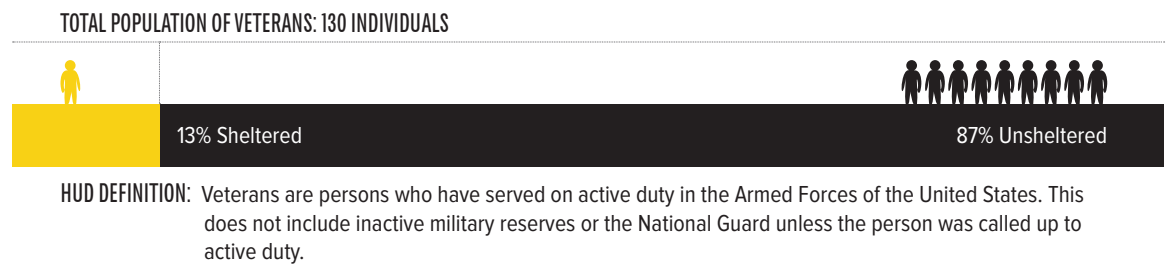
## HOMELESS VETERAN STATUS

Many U.S. veterans experience conditions that place them at increased risk for homelessness. Veterans have higher rates of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), sexual assault and substance abuse. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the street than in shelters and often remain on the street for extended periods of time.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a broad range of benefits and services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. These benefits can include different forms of financial assistance, including monthly cash payments to disabled veterans, health care, education, and housing benefits. In addition to these supports, the VA and HUD have partnered to provide additional housing and support services to veterans currently experiencing homelessness or in danger of becoming homeless.

Between 2009-2014, nationwide data shows that there has been a 33 percent decrease in the number of homeless veterans. According to data collected during the 2014 Point-in-Time Count, 49,933 veterans experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2014.<sup>8</sup>

FIGURE 32. HOMELESS VETERAN POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey*.

## NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS

The estimated number of homeless veterans in San Luis Obispo decreased between 2013 and 2015. There were an estimated 130 veterans in San Luis Obispo in 2015, compared to 239 in the 2013 count, representing a decrease of over 45% (See Figure 32).

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS VETERANS

Ninety-one percent of the homeless veterans in San Luis Obispo were male, compared to 62% of the non-veteran population. When asked which racial group homeless veterans identified with, 71% stated they were White, 10% were Black or African American, 5% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 5% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Nineteen percent of veteran homeless respondents stated they were Hispanic or Latino (See Figure 33).

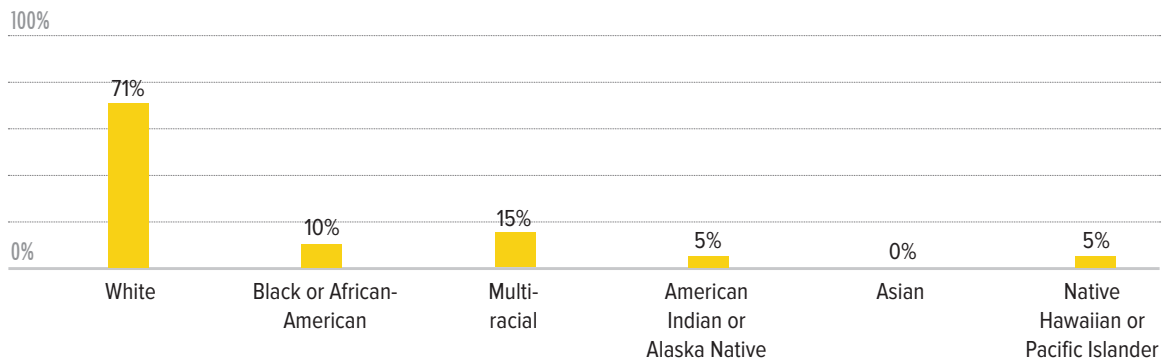
Sixty percent of homeless veterans were living in San Luis Obispo County at the time they most recently became homeless, similar to the non-veteran population at 57%.

The greatest percentage of veterans reported they were living in a home owned or rented by friends or relatives prior to experiencing homelessness (36%), lower than the non-veteran population (44%). Ten percent stated they were living in a motel or hotel, compared to 5% of non-veterans.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>



**FIGURE 33. RACE AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



2015 n=41

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

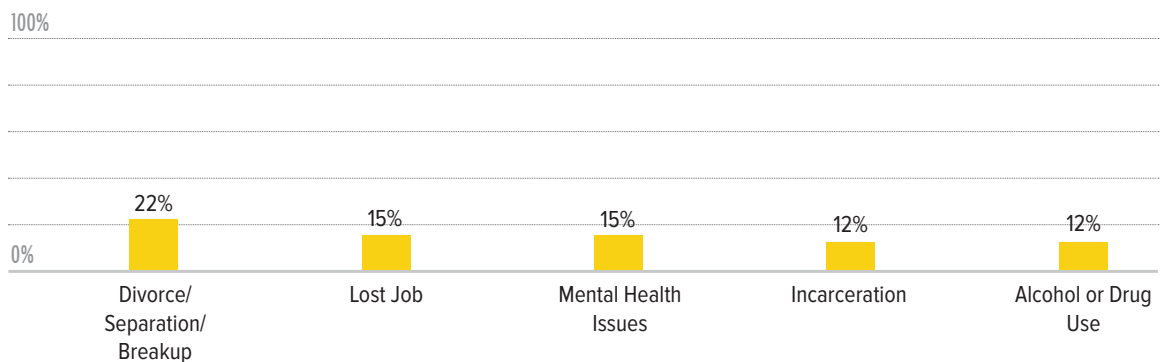
**LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

Twenty-eight percent of veteran homeless respondents indicated this was their first time experiencing homelessness. When asked about the length of their current episode of homelessness, 2% of veterans reported they had been on the street for a week or less, yet 81% reported they had been on the street continuously for a year or more.

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**

The most frequently cited cause of homelessness among veterans was divorce, separation or break-ups (22%), which differed as the most commonly cited cause for the non-veteran survey respondents of job loss at 23%. Fifteen percent of veteran respondents attributed their homelessness to job loss or mental health issues and 12% reported it was due to incarceration, alcohol or drug use, or an illness or other medical problem (See Figure 34).

**FIGURE 34. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS**



2015 n=41 respondents offering 49 responses

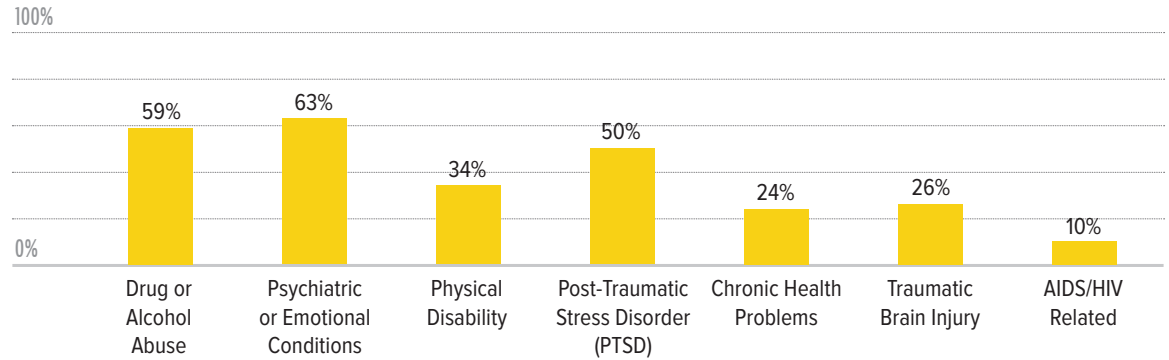
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

A higher percentage of veteran respondents reported having one or more disabling conditions, 70% compared to 45% of non-veterans. Sixty-three percent of veteran respondents reported suffering from a psychiatric or emotional condition, compared to 36% of non-veterans. Of the veteran survey respondents, 24% reported chronic health problems, 50% reported PTSD, and 59% reported using alcohol or drugs. A little over one quarter of veterans (26%) reported suffering from a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), compared to 7% of non-veterans (See Figure 35).

**FIGURE 35.** HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



*Drug or alcohol abuse n=41; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n=41; Physical disability n=41; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n=40; Chronic health problems n=41; Traumatic Brain Injury n=42; AIDS/HIV related n=41*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.*

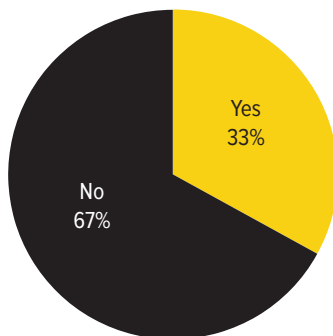
### ACCESS TO SERVICES AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

Seventy-eight percent of homeless veterans were receiving some sort of government assistance. Of the local, mainstream benefits offered in San Luis Obispo County, the most commonly accessed service by homeless veterans was free meals at 50%. Twenty-nine percent of veteran homeless respondents reported utilizing shelter day services, 16% to mental health services, and 21% were receiving free bus passes.

### INCARCERATION AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS

One third of veteran homeless respondents had spent at least one night in jail in the last 12 months (See Figure 36). This is less than the 40% of the non-veteran survey respondents who had spent a night in jail in the last 12 months.

**FIGURE 36.** A NIGHT SPENT IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS AMONG HOMELESS VETERANS



2015 n=40

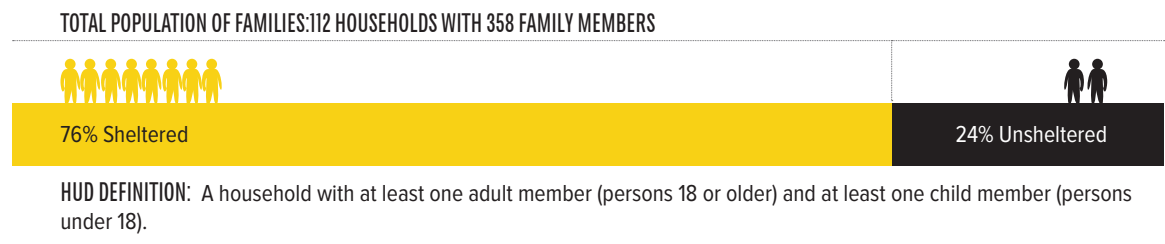
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

## HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

National data from 2014 suggest that 37 percent of all people experiencing homelessness are persons in families. Very few families experiencing homelessness are unsheltered; in San Luis Obispo County the number of unsheltered persons in families was 85, or almost 24%. Public shelters serve 90% of homeless families in the United States, a significantly higher proportion of the population compared to other subpopulations, including unaccompanied youth. Data on homeless families suggest that they are not much different from families in poverty.

The risk of homelessness is highest among single female-headed households and families with children under the age of 6.<sup>9</sup> Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.<sup>10</sup>

**FIGURE 37. HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN POPULATION ESTIMATES**



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey*.

## NUMBER OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Data from the San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time Count showed a decrease in the number of homeless individuals in families. In 2015 there were 112 households with 358 persons, while in 2013 there were 199 homeless families with 438 individual persons. It is important to remember that the 2015 data does not include numbers from the McKinney-Vento County Office of Education. Twenty-four percent of the homeless families in 2015 were unsheltered. This is an improvement from 2013 when 79% of homeless families with children were unsheltered (See Figure 37).

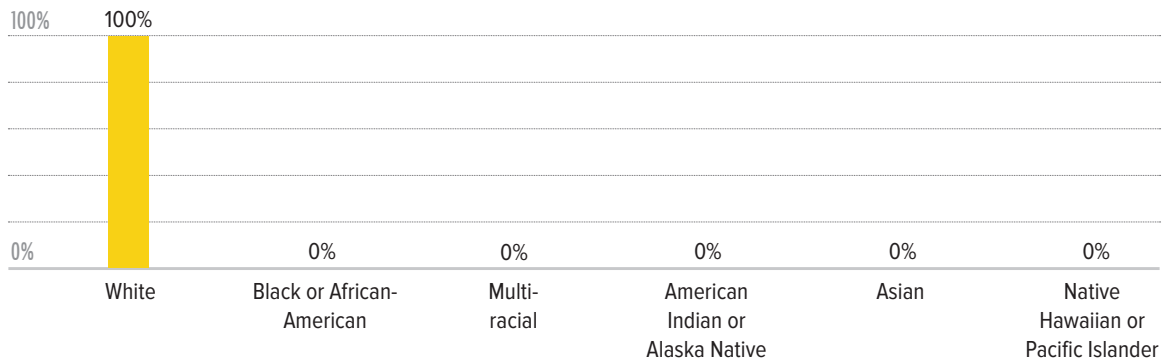
## DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Eight out of the 12 survey respondents in families were female. Of the survey respondents in families, 2 out of 11 identified as Hispanic or Latino.

<sup>9</sup> U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2013 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

**FIGURE 38. RACE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



2015 n=11

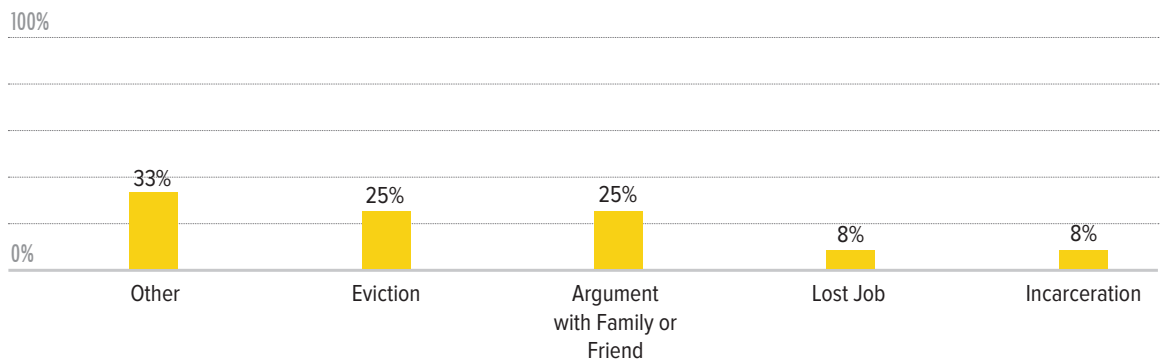
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

Three out of 12 respondents in families with children reported the primary cause of their homeless was due to eviction or an argument with family or a friend that asked them to leave, one family stated it was due to the loss of a job, and one family stated it was due to incarceration (See Figure 39).

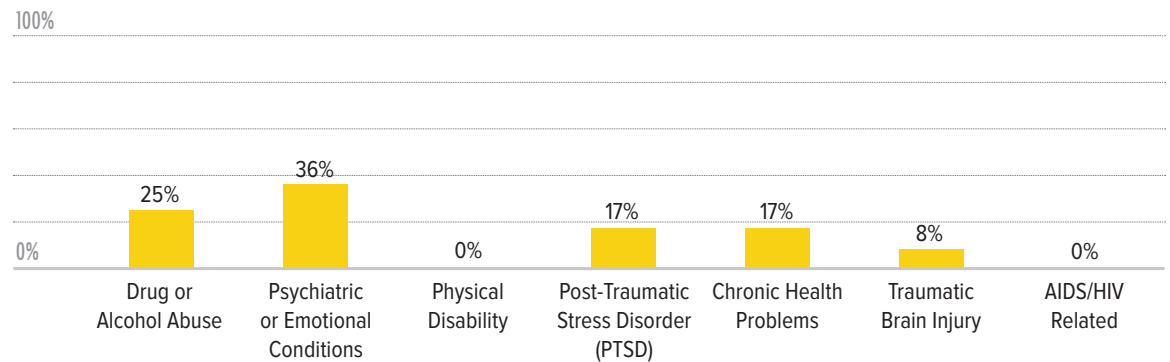
**FIGURE 39. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**



2015 n=12 respondents offering 12 responses

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

**FIGURE 40. HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN**

*Drug or alcohol abuse n=12; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n=11; Physical disability n=12; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n=12; Chronic health problems n=12; Traumatic Brain Injury n=12; AIDS/HIV related n=11*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.*

#### LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Six out of 12 survey respondents in families reported they were experiencing homelessness for the first time, compared to 33% of single individuals. Nine out of 12 respondents in families had been without housing for 6 months or more. Half of respondents reported they were living in a home they or a partner owned when they became homeless (50%), and four out of 12 were living in a home owned or rented by a family member.

#### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AMONG HOMELESS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Fifty-eight percent of respondents in families reported receiving some sort of government assistance.

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

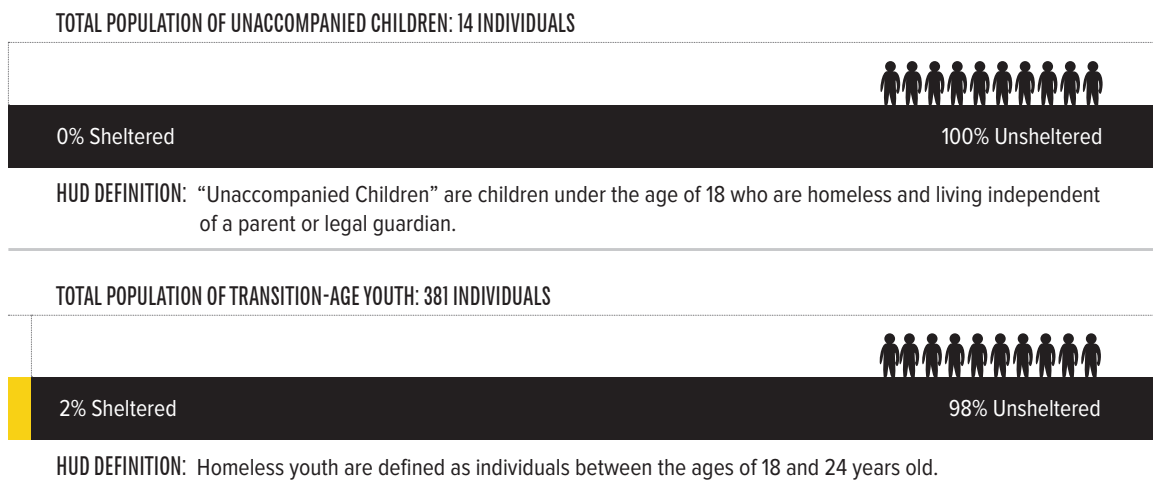
There are limited data available on homelessness among unaccompanied children and youth nationally and locally. Current federal estimates suggest there are 45,205 children and youth on the streets and in public shelters.<sup>11</sup> Homeless youth have a harder time accessing services, including shelter, medical care, and employment.<sup>12</sup>

In 2012, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness amended the federal strategic plan to end homelessness to include specific strategies and support to address the needs of unaccompanied homeless children and transition age youth. As part of this effort, the Department of Housing and Urban Development placed increased interest on gathering data on unaccompanied homeless children and youth during Point-in-Time counts.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Of the population of youth respondents under age 25, 32 were male and 24 were female.<sup>13</sup> Thirty-nine percent of youth respondents identified as LGBTQ. Less than a quarter of the respondents (12) identified as Hispanic/Latino. Over half of the youth respondents were living in San Luis Obispo County when they became homeless (59%).

**FIGURE 41.** UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH POPULATION ESTIMATES



Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). *San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census & Survey*.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015). Annual Assessment Report to Congress. Retrieved 2015 from <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2014-AHAR-Part1.pdf>

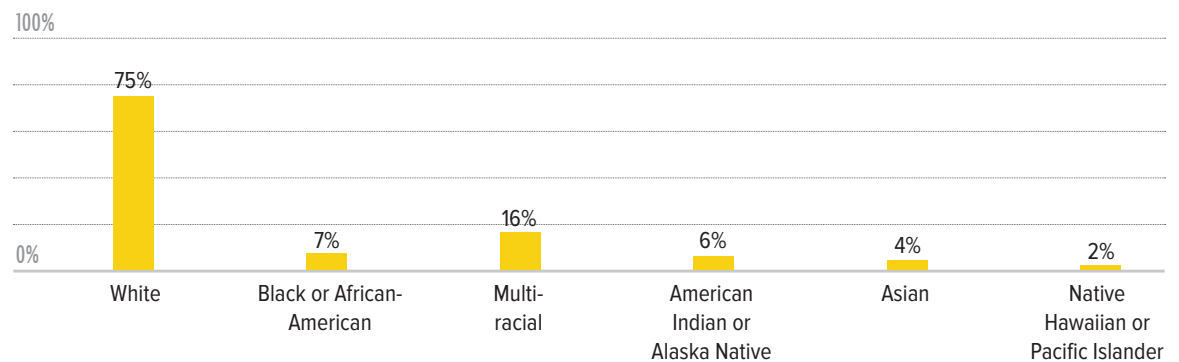
<sup>12</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless. (2011). Homeless Youth Fact Sheet. Retrieved 2011 from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>.

<sup>13</sup> Each respondent left some survey questions blank, so not every section will add up to 22.

### PREVALENCE OF UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

The number of unaccompanied children in San Luis Obispo County in the 2015 Point-in-Time count decreased from previous years while the number of transition-aged youth increased. In 2015, there were 14 unaccompanied children (under 18) and 381 transition-aged youth (18-24) (See Figure 41). In 2013, there were 31 unaccompanied children and 153 transition-aged youth. Variation in the unaccompanied youth populations may be a result of the deduplication and outreach efforts, respectively implemented in 2015.<sup>14</sup> Please note that the decrease in the number of unaccompanied children counted may have been a result of the decline in participation by local schools, which are some of the agencies most likely to encounter unaccompanied minors. Additionally, youth enumerators reported that on the day of the count there were an abnormally fewer amount of youth and children on the street for unknown reasons.

**FIGURE 42.** RACE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



2015 n=55

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

<sup>14</sup> For additional information on youth count methods and deduplication efforts please see Appendix A.



**INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Thirteen of 53 respondents reported that they had been in the foster care system, but only one respondent felt aging out of foster care was the primary cause of their homelessness (See Figure 43).

Eighteen, or about one third, of the youth reported they had spent at least one night in jail in the last 12 months, and 7 respondents were on probation at the time of the survey.

**FIGURE 43. HISTORY OF FOSTER CARE AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE-YOUTH**



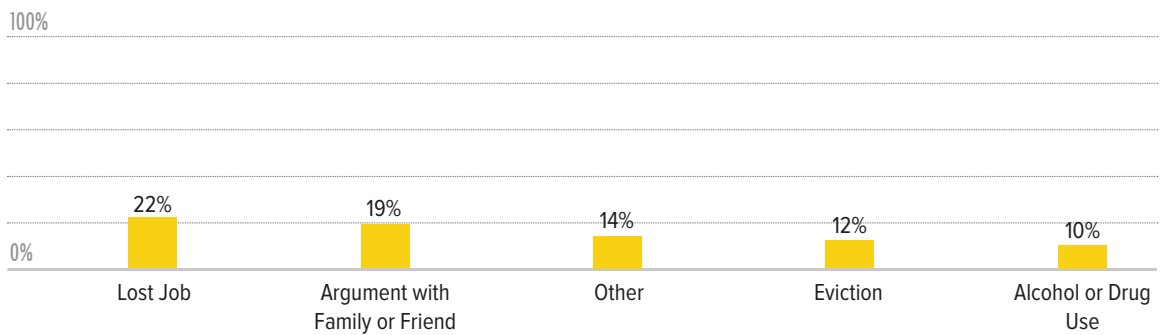
2015 n=53

Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

**PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**

Homeless youth survey respondents reported similar causes of homelessness to those 25 and older. Almost one quarter of youth reported the loss of a job. A higher percentage of youth respondents (19%) reported an argument with family or a friend who asked them to leave as the primary cause of their homelessness, as compared to those ages 25 and older (10%) (See Figure 44).

**FIGURE 44. PRIMARY CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS (TOP FIVE RESPONSES) AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH**



2015 n=59 respondents offering 62 responses

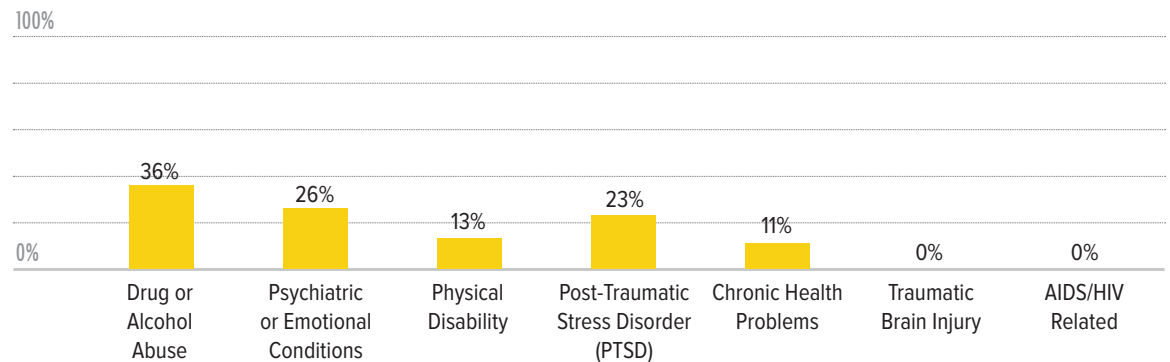
Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.

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

### HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

The most frequent health condition reported among unaccompanied children and transition-age youth was drug and alcohol abuse, at 36%. Psychiatric or emotional conditions (26%) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (23%) were the two other most frequently reported health conditions among unaccompanied children and transition-age youth (See Figure 45).

**FIGURE 45.** HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH



*Drug or alcohol abuse n=56; Psychiatric or emotional conditions n=55; Physical disability n=54; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) n=57; Chronic health problems n=57; Traumatic Brain Injury n=57; AIDS/HIV related n=56*

*Source: Applied Survey Research. (2015). San Luis Obispo County Homeless Survey.*

### SERVICES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS AMONG UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS CHILDREN AND TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

The majority of the youth survey respondents were using one or more types of local support services; the most commonly accessed services by respondents was free meals at 47%. Bus passes (10%), shelter day services (8%), job training/employment (4%), and mental health services (4%) were the other support services unaccompanied children and transition-age youth reported using. Forty-three percent of respondents stated they were not using any services.



# Conclusion

The 2015 San Luis Obispo County Homeless Census and Survey was another exceptional community-wide effort to profile the extent and characteristics of homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. The results of the 2015 San Luis Obispo County homeless census indicate there are 1,515 homeless persons, a 671 person reduction (31%) since the last study in 2013 where 2,186 persons were found.

While the census result showed a possible reduction in homelessness, the census and survey effort also provided additional insights into homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. The number of unsheltered persons was noted to be 1,123 persons with 27% living on the street, 11% in abandoned buildings, 14% in vehicles and 22% in various encampments. Most (57%) homeless had lived in the County prior to becoming homeless persons and there was a big drop in first time homelessness from 50% in 2013 to 33% in 2015. Lost employment was cited as the most common reason for their homelessness and respondents reported economic reasons such as housing affordability, employment, savings, credit and lack of transportation as the greatest barriers to securing permanent housing. Health also continued to be a big issue with 48% reporting they had one or more disabling condition. A life experience of some form of abuse (30%) and interaction with the criminal justice system (24% reported they were currently on probation or parole and 39% had spent a night in jail in the last year) were common experiences for the County's homeless population. Chronic homeless and veteran homelessness decreased significantly, 32% and 45% respectively.

The North region saw an increase (466 persons in 2013 to 629 in 2015), the Southern region shifted significantly (829 persons in 2013 to 258 in 2015), the greater San Luis Obispo area decreased (750 persons in 2013 to 482 in 2015) and the Coastal area stayed the about the same (141 persons in 2013 to 146 in 2015). Many factors could have affected these changes.

Some of the apparent reduction may also reflect the expansion of housing programs for homeless veterans, a new Housing First program for chronically homeless persons that was created after the 2013 count, the re-opening of the Housing Choice Voucher (federally funded

housing subsidies for low-income persons) waiting list in 2014, and additional Housing Choice Vouchers set aside for homeless persons by the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo in 2014. In particular, the substantial increase in the number of Housing Choice Vouchers for homeless veterans under the Housing and Urban Development- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program from 2013 to 2015, appears to have played a role in the reduction in the number of homeless veterans in the County. Also, several new initiatives were launched in the County around the time of the count, including SSVF and a Rapid Rehousing Program for homeless families, that may have contributed to a small portion of the apparent decline but were too new to have fully explained the difference. There continues to be more to do but the County appears to be poised to continue making progress in its efforts to reduce homelessness in San Luis Obispo County.



# Appendix 1: Methodology

## OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2015 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey was to produce a Point-in-Time estimate of people who experience homelessness in San Luis Obispo, a region that covers approximately 3,616 square miles. The results of the street count were combined with the results from the shelter and institution count to produce the total estimated number of persons experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo on a given night. The subsequent, in-depth qualitative survey was used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and demographics of those counted. A more detailed description of the methodology follows.

## COMPONENTS OF THE HOMELESS CENSUS METHOD

The Point-in-Time count methodology had three primary components:

- The general street count roughly between daybreak and 10 AM – an enumeration of unsheltered homeless individuals
- The youth street count between the hours of 12 PM and 4 PM – a targeted enumeration of unsheltered youth under the age of 25
- The shelter count for the night before the street count – an enumeration of sheltered homeless individuals.

The unsheltered and sheltered homeless counts were coordinated to occur within the same time period in order to minimize potential duplicate counting of homeless persons.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

To ensure the success of the count, many county and community agencies collaborated in community outreach, volunteer recruitment, logistical planning, methodological decision-making, and interagency coordination efforts. Applied Survey Research (ASR), a nonprofit social research firm, provided technical assistance and direct management with these aspects of the planning process. ASR has over 16 years of experience conducting homeless counts and surveys throughout California and across the nation. Their work is featured as a best practice in HUD's publication: *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People*.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Local homeless service providers and advocates have been active and valued partners in the planning and implementation of this and previous homeless counts. Applied Survey Research invited feedback and discussion on the methodology in order to have a county-wide endorsement of the count.

## STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### DEFINITION

For the purposes of this study, the HUD definition of unsheltered homeless persons was used:

- An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.

### METHODOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The 2015 street count methodology followed a mature, HUD approved methodology that Applied Survey Research has used since 1999. Applied Survey Research began working on the San Luis Obispo Count in 2013 and has taken a greater role in the planning and implementation each year. In 2015 there was a dedicated youth count added to the methodology in order to have a more comprehensive canvass of youth homelessness in San Luis Obispo County. A clearer picture of the youth count methodology can be found in a following section.

In the 2015 Count, there was more collaboration with service providers in the coastal region who ensured that the enumerators covered the areas along the coast all the way up to the County border. Applied Survey Research worked closely with the Guerrilla Gardening Club out of Morro Bay who did all of the enumeration in the coastal region on the day of the count. The Guerrilla Gardening Club provided competent teams and workers who were confident that the enumeration in their area represented an accurate display of homelessness in the coastal region. Greater participation and planning with the 5 Cities Coalition and ECHO resulted in more thorough and systematic canvassing of their service regions.

Additionally the California Valley was also canvassed thoroughly. While there were reports of homeless vehicle encampments by CDF personnel, this could not be confirmed. A County sheriff led community meeting communicated no active homeless persons.

## **VOLUNTEER AND GUIDE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

Many individuals who live and/or work in San Luis Obispo turned out to support the County's effort to enumerate the local homeless population. In order to have a successful enumeration effort of this magnitude, it is crucial to have volunteer and homeless persons who have an intimate knowledge of the local areas. Approximately 63 homeless individuals and 50 community volunteers participated in the 2015 general street count. Outreach efforts were conducted, targeting local non-profits that serve the homeless and local volunteer programs. Local shelters and service providers recruited the most knowledgeable and reliable homeless individuals to participate in the count. Homeless persons were paid \$10 an hour for the training that they received. They were also paid \$10 for each hour they spent out on the day of the count.

All homeless individuals and volunteers who participated in the count were asked to attend a one hour training prior to the day of the count. Trainings were held in a few locations throughout the county. This training covered all aspects of the count, including the definition of homeless and how to recognize homeless individuals, potential locations homeless individuals may be located at, and how to safely and respectfully approach them, and how to use the tally sheets and maps to ensure the entirety of the assigned area was covered.

## **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

Every effort was made to minimize potentially hazardous situations. Every volunteer participated in a training session that educated individuals on how to enumerate people who were homeless without any contact. High-volume areas and encampments were covered by specifically trained teams who were comfortable with the areas. Enumeration teams were advised to take all safety precautions possible, including bringing along flashlights and by not disturbing those persons whom they were counting. Local law enforcement was made aware of the count, but they were not brought in to participate. No official reports were received regarding unsafe or at-risk situations occurring during the street count in any area of the county.

## **STREET COUNT DISPATCH CENTERS**

To achieve complete coverage of San Luis Obispo County within the four-hour timeframe, the planning team identified five areas for the placement of dispatch centers on the morning of the count in Paso Robles, Atascadero, Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo, and Arroyo Grande. Volunteers selected their dispatch center at the time of registration, based on familiarity with the area or convenience. The planning team divided up the enumeration routes and assigned them to the dispatch center closest or most central to the coverage area to facilitate the timely deployment of enumeration teams into the field.

## **LOGISTICS OF ENUMERATION**

On the morning of the street count, two or more person teams were created to enumerate designated areas of the county for the street count. Each team was ideally comprised of one trained volunteer and one trained homeless guide, and they were provided with their assigned census tract map area, tally sheet, training guidelines and other supplies. All accessible streets, roads, and highways in the enumerated tracts were traveled by foot or car. No direct contact with enumerated homeless people was made during the census enumeration. Homeless enumerators were also instructed to include themselves on their tally sheets for the street count if they were not going to be counted by the shelter count. Dispatch center volunteers provided each team with tally sheets to record the number of homeless persons observed and basic demographic and location information. Dispatch center volunteers also verified that at least one person on each team had a cell phone available for their use during the count and recorded the number on the volunteer deployment log sheet. Teams were asked to cover the entirety of their assigned areas, staying out for as long as it took to cover the entire route.

## DATA LIMITATIONS

While significant efforts were made by the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education to include data on homeless children in schools, time constraints and resources prevented these efforts by the McKinney-Vento district liaisons. The County Office of Education gathers information on homeless children at the beginning of the school year to provide assistance to children through McKinney Vento programs and funding. Based upon August enrollment data, 2,771 homeless children are estimated to live in the county. The majority of these students (2,247) are “doubled-up” and live with family or friends so they do not fall under HUD’s narrow PIT count definition of homelessness. In addition to the “doubled-up” students, there were 128 children who were “sheltered” in public or private homeless facilities and therefore likely included in the shelter count reporting. There was a reported total of 229 unsheltered students, meaning an additional 229 homeless individuals who, per the McKinney-Vento data, could have fallen under the PIT count definition of homelessness and may or may not have been included in the PIT count results. Unfortunately due to the timing of school intake and limitations to verifying the location of the children on the specific night of the January Point-in-Time Count, these 229 individuals were not included in the final unsheltered report per HUD restrictions.

## YOUTH STREET COUNT METHODOLOGY

### GOAL

The youth count was developed in order to be more inclusive of homeless children and youth under the age of 25. Many homeless children and youth do not use homeless services, are unrecognizable to adult street count volunteers, and may be in unsheltered locations that are difficult to find. Therefore, traditional street count efforts are not as effective in reaching youth. In 2015, the goal was to produce an effective way to enumerate how many youth are living on the streets in San Luis Obispo County.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

When planning for the youth count, Applied Survey Research was unable to find any youth specific homeless service providers to help facilitate the process, so the county helped find some organizations who had connections with youth in the County. Local providers identified locations where homeless youth were known to congregate. Local service providers also identified youth currently experiencing homelessness with knowledge of where to locate and enumerate youth experiencing homelessness. The planning team met a week before the count to determine the best locations to enumerate youth on the day of the count.

It has been recognized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as the US Interagency Council on Homelessness that youth do not commonly co-mingle with homeless adults and are not easily identified by non-youth, so the planning team took this into account when planning for the youth count in San Luis Obispo.

On the day of the count the youth arrived to the deployment center in downtown San Luis Obispo and split up the areas for enumeration. There were three separate teams; two teams covered the downtown area and the surrounding areas and the third team covered the South County area and 5 Cities region. There was also a fourth team who worked out of Atascadero and covered all of the North County regions. In addition, the Coastal region was covered by a couple of members of Guerrilla Gardening Club. The teams were instructed to count only youth who were under the age of 25 and were given tally sheets and some guidelines to reference while out enumerating. Youth workers were paid \$10 per hour for their time, including the training conducted prior to the count. Youth were trained on where and how to identify homeless youth as well as how to record the data.



When recruiting youth to help with the San Luis Obispo youth count, one volunteer came into contact with a few students from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. These students reported that there are a number of college students who are homeless and find shelter in the campus library. The volunteer worked with one of the homeless students on campus who was able to fill out a tally to include all of the homeless students he saw staying on campus in the library on the night of the count.

#### **DATA COLLECTION**

It was determined that homeless youth would be more prominent on the street during the afternoon hours, rather than in the evening when the general count was conducted. The youth count was conducted from approximately 12 PM to 4 PM on January 26, 2015.

#### **SHELTER COUNT METHODOLOGY**

##### **GOAL**

The goal of the shelter and institution count was to gain an accurate count of persons temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across San Luis Obispo County. These data were vital to gaining an accurate overall count of the homeless population and understanding where homeless persons received shelter.

##### **DEFINITION OF SHELTERED PERSONS**

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

##### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Shelter data was collected by the County of San Luis Obispo from their Housing Inventory Chart. Applied Survey Research also collected data from shelters, to ensure that the data was compared to reflect the most accurate number.

##### **CHALLENGES**

There are many challenges in any homeless enumeration, especially when implemented in a community as large and diverse as San Luis Obispo County. Point-in-Time counts are “snapshots” that quantify the size of the homeless population at a given point during the year. Hence, the count may not be representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the homeless population seasonally or over time.

### POINT-IN-TIME UNDERCOUNT

For a variety of reasons, homeless persons generally do not want to be seen and make concerted efforts to avoid detection. Regardless of how successful outreach efforts are, an undercount of the homeless population will result, especially of hard-to-reach subpopulations such as families and youth.

In a non-intrusive visual homeless enumeration, the methods employed, while academically sound, have inherent biases and shortcomings. Even with the assistance of dedicated homeless service providers the methodology cannot guarantee 100% accuracy. Many factors may contribute to missed opportunities, for example:

- It is difficult to identify homeless persons who may be sleeping in vans, cars, recreational vehicles, abandoned buildings, or structures unfit for human habitation.
- Homeless families with children often seek opportunities to stay on private property, rather than sleep on the streets, in vehicles, or makeshift shelters.

Even though the Point-in-Time count is most likely to be an undercount of the homeless population, the methodology employed, coupled with the homeless survey, is the most comprehensive approach available.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The survey of 399 homeless persons was conducted in order to yield qualitative data about the homeless community in San Luis Obispo County and about subpopulations in particular. These data are used for the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance funding application and are important for future program development and planning. The survey elicited information such as gender, family status, military service, length and recurrence of homelessness, usual nighttime accommodations, causes of homelessness, and access to services through open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple response questions. The survey data bring greater perspective to current issues of homelessness and to the provision and delivery of services.

Surveys were conducted by homeless workers and shelter team members, who were trained by Applied Survey Research. Training sessions led potential interviewers through a comprehensive orientation that included project background information and detailed instruction on respondent eligibility, interviewing protocol, and confidentiality. Homeless workers were compensated at a rate of \$5 per completed survey.

It was determined that survey data would be more easily collected if an incentive gift was offered to respondents in appreciation for their time and participation. Socks were given as an incentive for participating in the 2015 homeless survey. The socks were easy to obtain and distribute, were thought to have wide appeal, and could be provided within the project budget. This approach enabled surveys to be conducted at any time during the day. The gift proved to be a great incentive and was widely accepted among survey respondents.

### SURVEY ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

- The 2015 San Luis Obispo Homeless Survey was administered by the trained survey team between February 9, 2015 and March 2, 2015.
- In all, the survey team collected 399 unique surveys.

### **SURVEY SAMPLING**

Based on the Point-in-Time count of homeless persons with a randomized survey sampling process, the 399 valid surveys represent a confidence interval of +/- 4% with a 95% confidence level when generalizing the results of the survey to the estimated population of homeless individuals in San Luis Obispo County.

The 2015 survey was administered in both transitional housing facilities and on the street. In order to assure the representation of transitional housing residents, who can be underrepresented in a street-based survey, survey quotas were created to reach individuals and heads of family households living in these programs. Individuals residing in emergency shelters were reached through street surveys during the day when emergency shelters were closed.

Strategic attempts were made to reach individuals in various geographic locations and of various subset groups such as homeless youth, minority ethnic groups, military veterans, domestic violence victims, and families. One way to increase the participation of these groups was to recruit peer surveys workers. The 2015 survey also prioritized a peer-to-peer approach to data collection by increasing the number of currently homeless surveyors.

In order to increase randomization of sample respondents, survey workers were trained to employ an “every third encounter” survey approach. Survey workers were instructed to approach every third person they encountered whom they considered to be an eligible survey respondent. If the person declined to take the survey, the survey worker could approach the next eligible person they encountered. After completing a survey, the randomized approach was resumed. It is important to recognize that while efforts are made to randomize the respondents, it is not a random sample methodology.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

Care was taken by interviewers to ensure that respondents felt comfortable regardless of the street or shelter location where the survey occurred. During the interviews, respondents were encouraged to be candid in their responses and were informed that these responses would be framed as general findings, would be kept confidential, and would not be traceable to any one individual.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

In order to avoid potential duplication of respondents, the survey requested respondents’ initials and date of birth, so that duplication could be avoided without compromising the respondents’ anonymity. Upon completion of the survey effort, an extensive verification process was conducted to eliminate duplicates. This process examined respondents’ date of birth, initials, gender, ethnicity, and length of homelessness, and consistencies in patterns of responses to other questions on the survey.

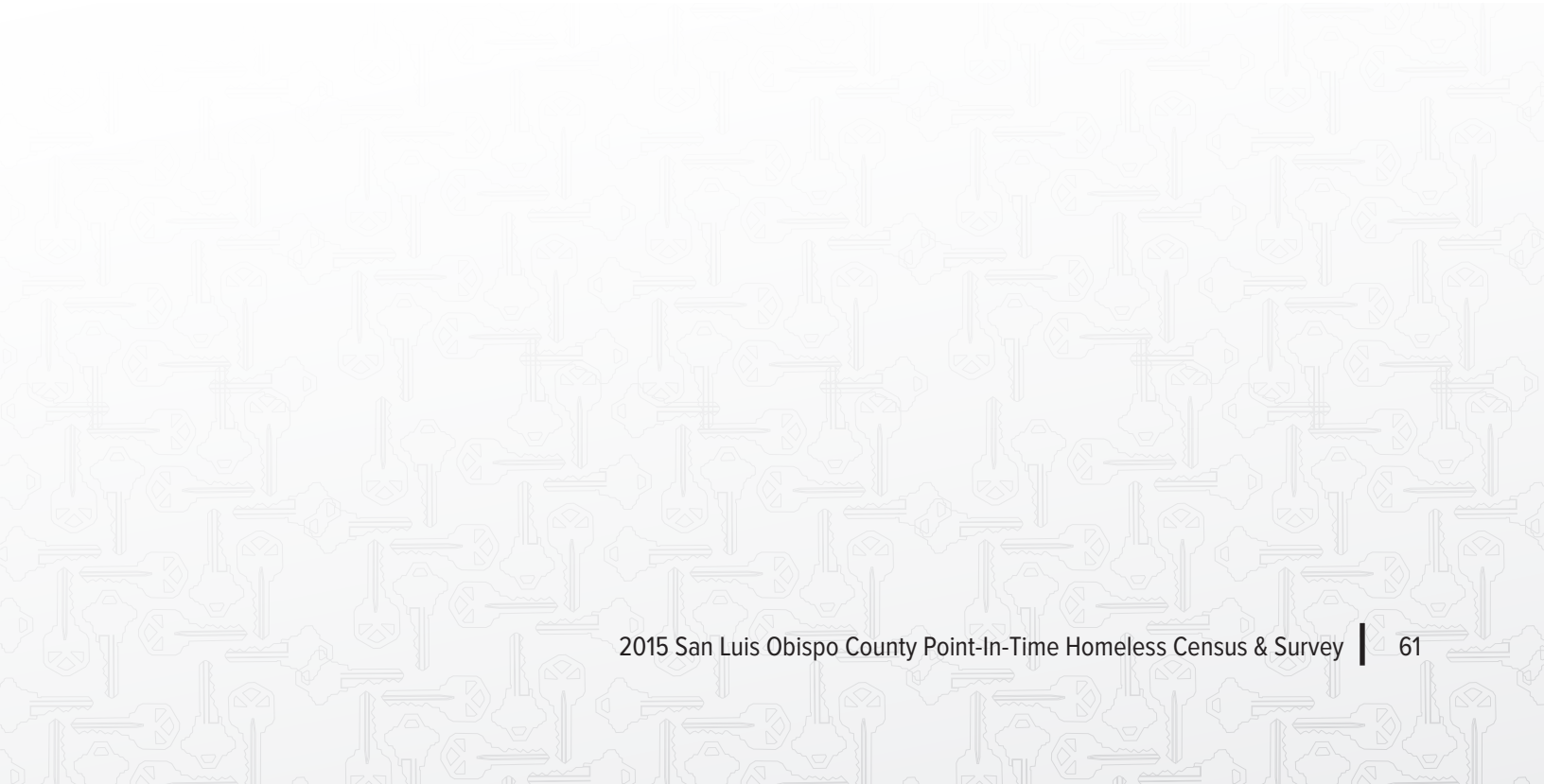
### **SURVEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The 2015 San Luis Obispo County Survey did not include an equal representation of all homeless experiences. For example, a greater number of surveys were conducted among transitional housing residents than in previous years. However, this provided an increased number of respondents living in families and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the overall population.

There may be some variance in the data that the homeless individuals self-reported. However, using a peer interviewing methodology is believed to allow the respondents to be more candid with their answers, and may help reduce the uneasiness of revealing personal information. Further, service providers and County staff members recommended individuals who would be the best to conduct interviews and they received comprehensive training about how to conduct interviews. The service providers and County staff also reviewed the surveys to ensure quality responses. Surveys that were considered incomplete or containing false responses were not accepted.



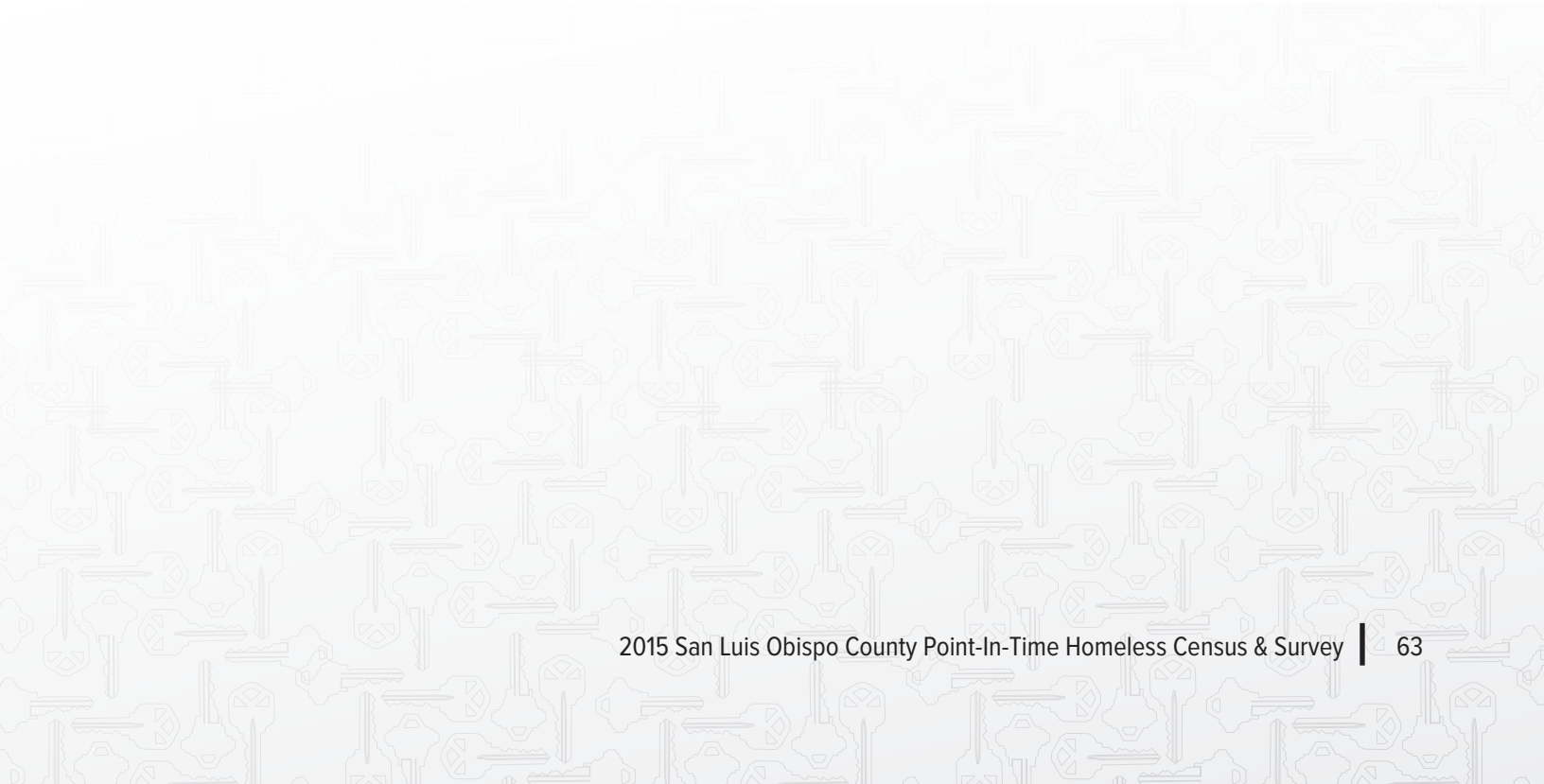
# Appendix 2: Definitions & Abbreviations



- **Chronic homelessness** is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”
- **Disabling condition**, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or a developmental disability.
- **Emergency shelter** is the provision of a safe alternative to the streets, either in a shelter facility, or through the use of stabilization rooms. Emergency shelter is short-term, usually for 90 days or fewer. Domestic violence shelters are typically considered a type of emergency shelter, as they provide safe, immediate housing for victims and their children.
- **Family** is defined as a household with at least one adult and one child under 18.
- **Homeless** under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.
- **HUD** is the abbreviation for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- **Sheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living in emergency shelter transitional housing programs, and those who are temporarily housed in motels with vouchers paid for by public or private non-profit agencies.
- **Single individual** refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth.
- **Transition-Age Youth (TAY)** refers to an unaccompanied youth aged 18-24 years.
- **Transitional housing** facilitates the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. It is housing in which homeless individuals may live for up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. Supportive services – which help promote residential stability, increased skill level or income, and greater self-determination – may be provided by the organization managing the housing or coordinated by that organization and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures at one site, or in multiple structures at scattered sites.
- **Unaccompanied children** refers to children under the age of 18 who do not have a parent or guardian present.
- **Unsheltered homeless individuals** are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation.



# Appendix 3: Surveys



# 2015 San Luis Obispo County Housing

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Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood or City: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section A: Demographics

- What are your initials? 

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 First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ 

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- What is your birth date? 

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 Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your gender?  
 Male  Female  Transgender male to female  
 Transgender female to male  Other
- Are you Hispanic or Latino?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse
- Which racial group do you identify with most? (Shade all that apply)  
 White  Black or African American  Asian  
 American Indian or Alaska Native  Other  
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Do you consider yourself...?  
 Straight  Lesbian  Bisexual  
 Gay  Queer  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you currently pregnant?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse
- Have you ever been in a foster care?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse

## Section B: Veterans Status

- Have you served in the U.S. Armed Forces? (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard)  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse
- Were you ever called into active duty as a member of the National Guard or as a Reservist?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse
- Have you ever received health care or benefits from a VA (Veterans Administration) center?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse
- What is your discharge status?  
 Honorable  Dishonorable  
 General  Don't know/Refuse  
 Other than honorable  Does not apply
- Is anyone else in your household a Veteran?  
 Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse



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## Section C: Accommodation

- Where were you staying on the night of January 25th? (Shade 1)  
 Backyard or storage structure  
 Outdoors/streets/parks  
 Motel/hotel  
 Emergency shelter 

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 Transitional housing  
 A place in a house not normally used for sleeping (kitchen, foyer, hallway) or unconverted garage  
 Public facility (train station, transit center, bus depot)  

<input type="radio"/> Automobile <input type="radio"/> Camper/RV/ Van <input type="radio"/> Abandoned building <input type="radio"/> Encampment <input type="radio"/> Other: _____	1a. How many people, including yourself, usually stay there? _____
--	---
- Is this the first time you have been homeless?  
 Yes  No
- How long have you been homeless this current time? (Shade 1)  
 7 days or less  4-6 months  1 year  
 8-30 days  7-11 months  More than 1 year  
 1-3 months
- In the last 12 months, how many times have you been homeless including this current time? (Shade 1)  
 1 time  3 times  5 times  
 2 times  4 times  6 or more times
- How many different times have you been homeless in the past 3 years, including this current time? (Shade 1)  
 1 time  3 times  5 times  
 2 times  4 times  6 or more times
- Have you been living in an emergency shelter and/or on the streets (including bus stations, underpasses, encampments, abandoned buildings, etc.) for the past year (12 months) or more?  
 Yes  No
- In addition to right now, how long would you say you have stayed in these kinds of places total?  
 Days \_\_\_\_\_ Weeks \_\_\_\_\_ Months \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_
- How old were you the first time you experienced homelessness?  
 0-17 years old  18 -24 years old  25 years or older





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 Not Like This--> ⊗

Interviewer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section D: Household Members**

1. Do you live alone?  Yes ==> Skip to Section E  
 No

2. How many people are in your household, excluding yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Were they all staying with you on the night of January 25th?  Yes  No  Don't know/Refuse

*I am going to ask you a few questions about the people in your household that were staying with you on January 25th. I'll ask about each person, one at a time. In order for us to keep track of who we are talking about I am going to ask you for the first and last initial of each person.*

What are their initials?	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
	F _ L _	F _ L _	F _ L _	F _ L _	F _ L _	F _ L _
<b>4. How are they related to you?</b>						
Child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non-married partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other non-family member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>5. How old are they?</b>						
Under 18	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18 - 24	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25 or older	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>6. How do they identify their gender?</b>						
Male	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transgender male to female	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transgender female to male	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>7. Are they Hispanic or Latino?</b>						
Yes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know/Refuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>8. Which racial group do they identify with most? (Shade all that apply)</b>						
White	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Black or African American	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
American Indian or Alaska Native	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Don't know/Refuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section E: Residency**

1. Where were you living at the time you most recently became homeless? (Shade 1)
  - San Luis Obispo County
  - Other County in CA
  - Out of State
2. How long have you lived in San Luis Obispo County?
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1-4 years
  - 5-9 years
  - 10 years or more
3. Immediately before you became homeless, where were you living? Shade 1)
  - A home owned or rented by you or your partner
  - Subsidized housing or permanent supportive housing
  - A home owned or rented by friends/relatives
  - Hospital or treatment facility
  - Foster care
  - Juvenile Justice Facility
  - Jail or prison
  - Motel/hotel
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section F: Cause and Prevention**

1. What do you think is the primary event or condition that led to your homelessness? (Shade 1)
  - Lost job
  - Eviction
  - Foreclosure
  - Incarceration
  - Alcohol or drug use
  - Illness/medical problem
  - Divorce/separation/break up
  - Landlord raised rent
  - Argument with family or friend who asked you to leave
  - Family/domestic violence
  - Mental health issues
  - Hospitalization/treatment
  - Aging out of foster care
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't know/decline to state
  - Probation/parole restrictions
2. What is keeping you from getting permanent housing? (Shade all that apply)
  - Can't afford rent
  - No job/not enough income
  - No money for moving costs
  - No housing available
  - No transportation
  - Criminal record
  - No ID/Paperwork
  - Medical/health issues
  - Bad credit
  - Eviction record
  - Restrictions from probation/parole
  - Housing process is too difficult
  - Child care costs
  - Immigration issues
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. If safe, affordable permanent housing was available, would you want to move in?
  - Yes, with supportive services
  - Yes, with no supportive services
  - No (Skip to section G)
  - Unsure
4. If yes, are you interested in accessing services to help you make this transition?
  - Yes
  - No

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**Section G: Income and Employment**

1. What is your total monthly income from all sources?
  - \$0-\$99
  - \$100-\$449
  - \$450-\$749
  - \$750-\$1,099
  - \$1,100-\$1,499
  - \$1,500-\$3,000
  - More than \$3,000
- 2a. What is your current employment status? (Shade 1)
  - Unemployed
  - Employed full-time
  - Employed part-time
  - Employed seasonal/sporadic

==> Skip to Question 3
- 2b. Are you currently...
  - Unable to work
  - Looking for work
  - Not looking for work
3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - Less than high school
  - High school/GED
  - Some college or Associates
  - Bachelors degree
  - Graduate degree (Masters, PhD, JD)



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**Section H: Health**

1. Do you experience any of the following:

2. Does it keep you from holding a job, living in stable housing or taking care of yourself?

a. Any chronic health problem or medical condition (diabetes, cancer)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
b. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
c. Any psychiatric or emotional conditions (depression, schizophrenia)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
d. A physical disability	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
e. A traumatic brain injury to your brain from a bump, blow or wound to the head?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
f. Drug or alcohol abuse (including prescription drugs not prescribed for you)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse
g. An AIDS or an HIV related illness?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Refuse

3. If you live with a spouse, a significant other or parent, do any of the following conditions prevent them from maintaining work or housing?

- Chronic health problem
- PTSD
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Physical disability
- Traumatic brain injury
- Psychiatric or emotional condition
- None of the above

4. Are you currently experiencing home/domestic violence or abuse?

- Yes
- No
- Decline to state

5. Have you ever been physically, emotionally or sexually abused by a relative, or another person you have stayed with (spouse, partner, sibling, parent)?

- Yes
- No
- Decline to state

6. Do you receive any disability benefits such as Social Security Disability Income, or Veterans Disability Benefits?

- Yes
- No
- Decline to state

10. Since you became homeless this last time, have you needed medical care and been unable to receive it?

- Yes
- No, I have received care
- No, I haven't needed care

11. Since you became homeless this last time, have you needed dental care and been unable to receive it?

- Yes
- No, I have received dental care
- No, I haven't needed dental care

12. Where do you usually get medical care?

- Hospital ER
- Urgent care
- Public health clinic
- VA hospital/clinic
- Free/community clinic
- Private doctor
- Friends/family
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know

13. In the past 12 months how many times have you used emergency room for any treatment?

\_\_\_\_\_ Times

**Section J: Criminal Justice System**

1. Have you spent a night in jail in the last 12 months?

- Yes
- No

2. Are you currently on probation/parole?  Yes  No

3. Were you on probation/parole at the time you most recently became homeless?  Yes  No

**Section I: Services and Assistance**

1. Are you currently using any of the following services/assistance? (Shade all that apply)

- Emergency shelter
- Free meals
- Bus passes
- Shelter day services
- Legal assistance
- Transitional housing
- Immigration services
- Job training or employment assistance
- Health services
- Mental health services
- Alcohol/drug counseling
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Not using any services

2. Are you currently receiving any form of government assistance (Social security, Food Stamps, Disability, CalWorks, VA benefis)

- Yes
- No
- Decline to state

3. If you are not receiving any government assistance, why not? (Shade all that apply)

- Don't think you are eligible
- Don't have ID
- No permanent address
- Never applied
- Benefits were cut-off
- Immigration issues
- Paperwork too difficult
- Don't know where to go
- Turned down
- Applied and waiting for response
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't want government assistance

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2015 San Luis Obispo Youth Survey

Refusals \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's (Your) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Neighborhood : \_\_\_\_\_

(Interviewer: Read question & answers to the respondent)

Shade Circles Like This--> ●
Not Like This--> ⊗

1. Does your age prevent you from receiving any of the following? (Shade all that apply)

- Permanent housing       Transitional shelter
- Employment               Government assistance
- Emergency shelter

2. In the past 12 months, how often have you accessed youth specific services?

- Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Always

3. Did any of the following contribute to your homelessness? (Shade all that apply)

- Emotional abuse       Sexual identity
- Physical abuse         Legal issues
- Sexual abuse           Financial issues
- Addiction               Fight or conflict with parents/guardians
- Mental health issues    Parent/guardian moved or relocated
- School issues          Parent/guardian became ill or died
- Pregnancy              Gang violence/activity

4. What are your current needs? (Shade all that apply)

- Food                       Shelter/housing
- Clothing                 Transportation
- Personal hygiene       Job training/employment
- Education               Substance abuse treatment
- Health care             Counseling/Mental Health Care
- Dental care             Other

5. How would you rate your general physical health?

- Very good    Good    Fair    Poor

6. Do you have a supportive adult in San Luis Obispo County?

- Yes    No

7. How many nights in the past 2 weeks have you stayed in the homes of friends/family?

\_\_\_\_\_ Nights 

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8. Do you usually stay with the same person/people?

- Yes    No

9. Do you stay in this County year round?

- Yes    No

10. If no, what is the primary reason you leave San Luis Obispo County?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you traded sex or drugs for a place to stay? (Shade all that apply)

- Sex    Drugs    Neither

12. Are you currently attending or enrolled in school?

- Yes    No

13. Do you currently have a job, paid internship or other type of employment?

- Yes    No

14. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?

- 9th grade or less
- 10 or 11th grade
- GED certificate
- High School (12th grade diploma)
- Some College
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree/ Post-secondary training
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you expect to have stable housing in the next 12 months?

- Yes    No

16. Before becoming homeless, did you live with:

- Both parents               Friend(s)
- Single mom                 Foster family
- Single dad                  Juvenile hall or other institution
- Step parent(s)             Group Home
- Other family members    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. In the last 12 months, on average how often have you had contact with your parents or other family members?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Times per  Day    Week    Month    Year

18. Are your parents currently homeless?

- Yes    No 

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19. Have you tried to move back in with your parents/family?

- Yes    No

20. How safe do you feel in your current living situation?

- Very safe    Somewhat safe    Not at all safe

21. How many times in the past 30 days has your safety been threatened?

\_\_\_\_\_ Times 

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22. Since becoming homeless, how often do you experience:

- |                    | Never                 | Rarely                | Sometimes             | Very often            | Always                |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Physical abuse  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Sexual abuse    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Emotional abuse | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

23. Before becoming homeless, how often did you experience:

- |                    | Never                 | Rarely                | Sometimes             | Very often            | Always                |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Physical abuse  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Sexual abuse    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Emotional abuse | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

24. In the past 12 months, have you been:

- a. Burglarized (having someone break into your space or take your property)       Yes    No
- b. Robbed (having something taken by someone who threatened violence)       Yes    No
- c. Assaulted or physically attacked       Yes    No
- d. Victim of any other crime       Yes    No

25. Before you were 18, were you involved in the justice system?

- Yes    No

26. Have you recently experienced any of the following issues trying to get help or access services in the community? (check all that apply)

- Lack of transportation
- Did not have an ID or personal document
- Did not know where to go for help
- Did not qualify for the service I wanted
- Did not follow through or return for services
- Language barrier
- Could not access/find services for people my age
- I have not experienced any issues
- Some other reason: \_\_\_\_\_



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

# HOMELESS

POINT-IN-TIME CENSUS & SURVEY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

# 2015

