

2013 San Benito County

HOMELESS

P O I N T - I N - T I M E

CENSUS & SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction

The 2013 San Benito County Homeless Census and Survey is the second biennial Point-in-Time count conducted in San Benito County. It was completed with the help of the Homeless Coalition of San Benito County, the Monterey County Coalition of Homeless Service Providers, United Way of Monterey County, and Applied Survey Research (ASR) a non-profit social research firm with extensive expertise in homelessness. ASR is involved in the training of currently homeless individuals who were trained to help both count and survey other individuals who were experiencing homelessness.

Methodology

The 2013 Homeless Census, much like the 2011 Census, was conducted using the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommended practices. The study included four parts:

1. A visual count of homeless individuals living in San Benito County on the morning of Jan. 23, 2013;
2. A phone call with those currently on shelter waitlists, confirming their location during the morning count;
3. A shelter count of those staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing on the night of Jan. 23;
4. A survey conducted in the four weeks following the census resulting in responses from 49 individuals experiencing homelessness.¹

Data are presented from 2013 with comparisons to the 42 surveys conducted in 2011 when appropriate and available.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

This study uses the HUD's definition of homelessness for Point-in-Time counts. The definition includes individuals and families:

- » living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement, 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

Census Results

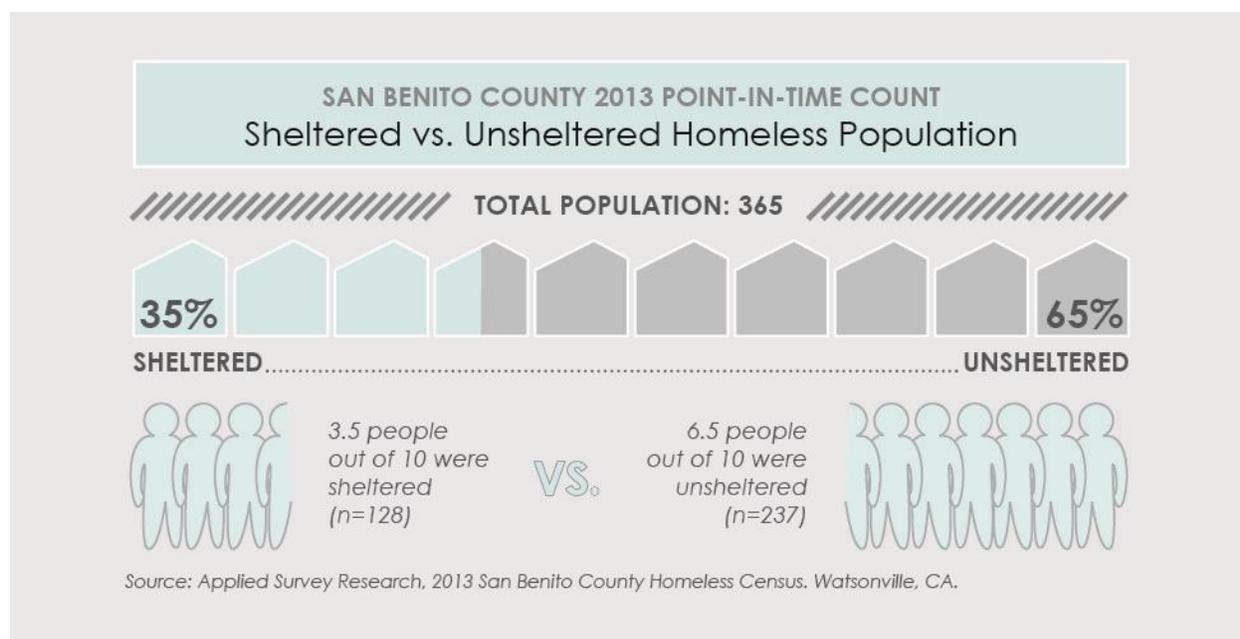
Point-in-Time Count

There were 365 individuals counted in 2013, an increase from 193 in 2011. It is estimated that 1,153 persons would experience homelessness annually in San Benito County, up from 817 in 2011.²

San Benito has three emergency shelters that provide services to those experiencing homelessness. Of those counted on Jan. 23, 2013, 35% were staying in an emergency shelter while 65% were unsheltered, living on the streets, in vehicles, or encampment areas.

UNSHeltered AND SHeltered POINT-IN-TIME COUNT POPULATION

	Single Individuals	Persons in Families	Total
Unsheltered	228	9	237
Sheltered	24	104	128
Total	252	113	365
Percent of Total	69%	31%	-



Homeless Subpopulations

The federal government identified four primary subpopulations to focus on in order to move towards the goal of ending homelessness. The subpopulations were identified in the federal plan known as Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness included the chronically homeless, veterans, families and youth. The following section shows the prevalence of individuals in San Benito County who meet the definition of each of these defined subpopulations.

**SAN BENITO COUNTY 2013
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

Chronic Homelessness

HUD
DEFINITION

An adult with a disabling condition or a family with at least one adult member with a disabling condition¹ who:

- » Has been continuously homeless for 1 year or more.
- » Has experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness within the past 3 years.



CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

185

50%

SHELTERED

50%

UNSHELTERED

¹ For the purposes of this study, a "disabling condition" was defined as a physical disability, mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, chronic health problems, or developmental disability. Those living in transitional housing are not considered by HUD to be chronically homeless.
² The chronic definition excludes those residing in transitional housing.
 Source: Applied Survey Research, 2013 San Benito County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

**SAN BENITO COUNTY 2013
POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

Veterans

HUD
DEFINITION

Veterans are persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.



VETERAN STATUS

21

14%

SHELTERED

86%

UNSHELTERED

Source: Applied Survey Research, 2013 San Benito County Homeless Census. Watsonville, CA.

Veterans

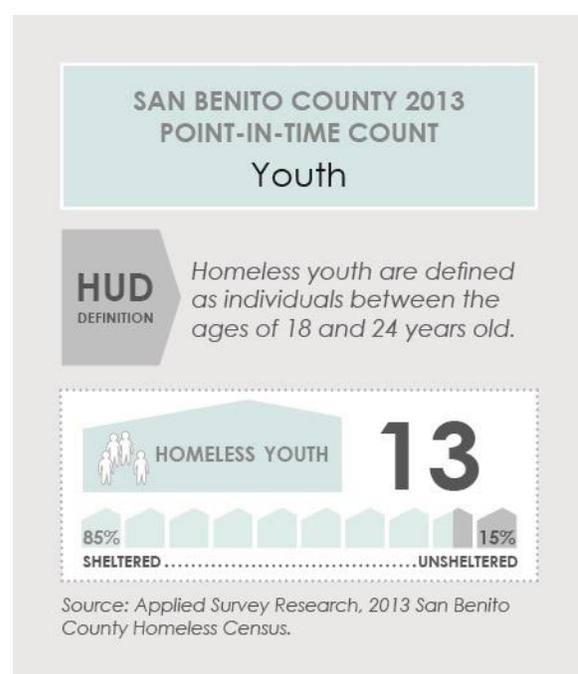
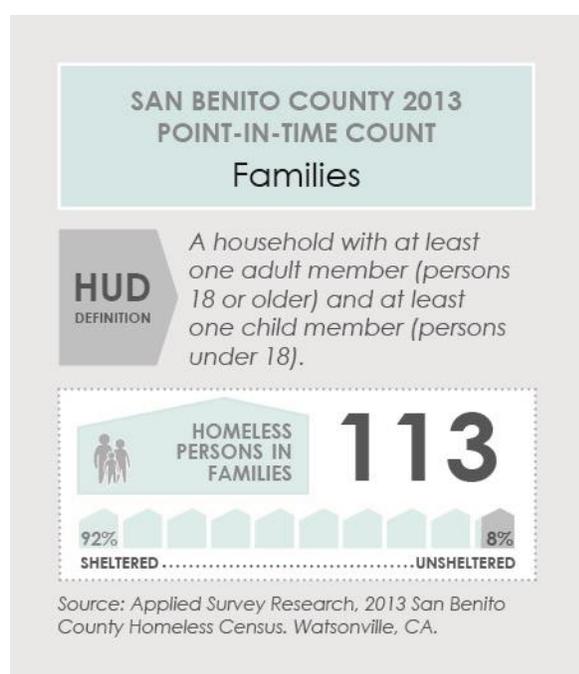
Many U.S. veterans suffer conditions that increase their risk of homelessness. Veterans have higher rates of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, sexual assault and substance abuse. Veterans experiencing homelessness are more likely to live on the street than in shelters and often remain on the street for extended periods of time.⁴

In San Benito County, 21 adults were identified as Veterans of the U. S. Armed Forces. They represent 6% of the county's homeless population.

Chronic Homelessness

National data show the mortality rate for those experiencing chronic homelessness is four to nine times higher than the general population.³

While chronically homeless persons represent 19% of the national homeless population, chronically homeless persons represented 51% of the San Benito homeless population.



Families

Homelessness among families often affects families with young children; the risk of homelessness is highest among children under the age of six. 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.⁵

There were 113 individuals in families in San Benito County in 2013; this was 31% of the County’s homeless population. Nearly all families were living in shelters.

Unaccompanied Youth

While there is little documentation of the extent of homelessness among children and youth, there is evidence to suggest a growing national subpopulation. In 2013, there were 13 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years old identified in San Benito County.

Survey Results

Introduction

Forty-nine people were interviewed about their history of homelessness, their health and mental health, their children, employment, education, as well as services and support that they may have received.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

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

Half of respondents (51%) were Hispanic/Latino in 2013, similar to 2011. More than half identified as female (51%) and 47% identified as male. Ten percent of all respondents reported they had been in the foster care system at some point in their lives.

Most individuals were living in San Benito County when they lost their housing.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents (42 individuals) lived in San Benito County at the time they became homeless, most of them in Hollister (73%). More than half (56% or 27 individuals) had lived in San Benito County for ten years or more. When asked what brought them to San Benito County, thirty-two percent (or 15 individuals), indicated it was because they were born or grew up in the county, and 28% (or 13 individuals) moved to San Benito County because they had family or friends there.

Half of all survey respondents were living alone

Half of respondents lived alone (49% or 24 individuals), and half lived with someone else, usually a child (68% or 17 individuals) and/or a spouse/significant other (56% or 14 individuals).

Half of respondents were experiencing homelessness for the first time.

For many, the experience of homelessness is part of a long and recurring history of residential instability. Individuals may fall in and out of homelessness as they assemble different subsistence strategies and housing opportunities.

Half of San Benito homeless survey respondents (53% or 26 individuals) reported that this was their first time being homeless, similar to 2011 at 57%. Half (53% or 25 respondents) had been homeless for more than a year.

Job loss was the most commonly cited cause of homelessness.

An individual's experience with homelessness is often the result of multiple and compounding causes originating at both the individual and societal level.

Respondents were asked about the primary cause of their homelessness. The top response was loss of a job, reported 27% (or 13 individuals) of those surveyed. That was considerably less than in 2011, when 56% of respondents ranked job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness. Another 17% of those surveyed said a conflict with family or housemates led to their homelessness, while 10% reported divorce or a breakup and 10% pointed to a loss of income as the primary cause of their homelessness.

Many survey respondents reported having unmet medical needs.

Without regular access to health care, individuals suffer preventable illness, longer hospitalizations, and a higher rate of premature death. A study conducted by the National Health Care for the Homeless found that the average life expectancy for a person without permanent housing was between 42 and 52 years. That's more than 25 years younger than the life expectancy of the average person in the United States.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents (20 individuals) reported currently needing dental care, 53% needed eye care (16 individuals), 47% needed medical care (14 individuals), and 27% needed substance abuse treatment (eight individuals).

Eighteen individuals (38%) reported using the emergency room in the last 12 months.

Forty-four percent of respondents (20 individuals) reported having a disabling condition, the most common being chronic depression (28% or 13 individuals), a physical disability (22% or 10 individuals), and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (15% or 7 individuals). Seven individuals (15%) reported receiving mental health care in the past 12 months.

Many were unemployed and were facing significant economic challenges.

Seventy-seven percent (36 individuals) of those surveyed were unemployed. Five people (11%) reported they worked part-time, four (9%) said they worked full-time and two (4%) were seasonally employed. Half (51% or 20 individuals) of respondents said that a lack of jobs was preventing them from obtaining employment. Of those who reported having any income from either private or governmental sources, the average monthly income was \$579.

Some individuals were receiving benefits and needed services.

Many respondents (87% or 41 individuals) reported receiving food stamps. However, less than one-third reported Medi-Cal or Medicare benefits (28%), and even fewer reported receiving cash aid/TANF/CalWORKs (15% or 7 individuals).

Summary

San Benito County saw an increase in the overall number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the county between the 2011 and 2013 Point-in-Time counts. Nearly two-thirds of those experiencing homelessness were unsheltered. The majority of persons sheltered in county shelters were persons in families.

Based on survey sample data, the majority of those experiencing homelessness in San Benito County were residents of the county prior to experiencing homelessness. Respondents pointed to economic issues and the challenges of social relationships as the primary causes of their homelessness. Respondents were challenged by the current medical and mental health conditions and many of them reported the need for medical, vision, and dental services.

Overall, people seemed well connected to certain support services, like food stamps, but were not connected to other support programs such as MediCal or cash aid that may help them meet their basic needs.

Families experiencing homelessness in San Benito County seem well connected to services, as the majority of those living with children were sheltered in County shelters. Homeless veterans and those experiencing chronic homelessness were largely unsheltered and may need increased outreach.

Acknowledgements

The Homeless Coalition of San Benito County, the Monterey County Coalition of Homeless Service Providers, United Way of Monterey County, and Applied Survey Research (ASR) would like to thank the service providers who facilitated the process of homeless peer enumeration by recruiting census workers and assisted in the administration of surveys. Special thanks go to Community Services & Workforce Development staff who called over 300 families to verify their needs on the night of the count. Finally, Homeless Coalition of San Benito County, the Monterey County Coalition of Homeless Service Providers, United Way of Monterey County, and Applied Survey Research (ASR) would like to thank the homeless census and survey workers, as well as the survey respondents, whose efforts are reflected throughout the findings of this report.

¹ Due to the low number of surveys, it's important to recognize that this is a snapshot of homelessness in the county, and that the data should be analyzed with some caution.

² The Corporation for Supportive Housing outlines a formula for calculating an annual estimate of homelessness. This estimate is based on the number of individuals who experience shorter periods of homelessness over the course of a year and therefore may not be accounted for in a Point-in-Time Count.

³ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Annual Update 2012. Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

⁴ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2013). Opening Doors: Homelessness Among Veterans. Retrieved 2013 from [http://www.usich.gov/22-USICH-\(2013\)-Annual-Update-2012](http://www.usich.gov/22-USICH-(2013)-Annual-Update-2012). Retrieved 2013 from <http://www.usich.gov/>

⁵ U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). Characteristics and Dynamics of Homeless Families with Children. Retrieved 2013 from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/>