Homelessness in Pierce County—A Single Night

2018 POINT-IN-TIME (PIT) COUNT

TESS COLBY | MANAGER, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION
3 APRIL 2018 | TESS.COLBY@CO.PIERCE.WA.US
In Pierce County, rapid increases in market-rate rents are making housing unaffordable.

1 of 10
Number of affordable rental units compared to the number of people who need them

49%
Increase in median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Pierce County, 2012-2017

1 of 5
Tacoma: one of five cities in the nation with highest year-over-year rent increases (News Tribune, April 2017)

Wages are not keeping up with housing costs, especially for those working in lower-wage jobs.

78 hours/week
Hours an individual earning minimum wage ($11.50) needs to work to spend 30% of their income on a one-bedroom apartment

4.4%
Increase in median household income in Pierce County, 2011-2015

52%
Proportion of Pierce County renters who spend >30% of their income on rent

Poor behavioral health, coupled with gaps in care, make it difficult to keep a house and a job.

2.8
Inpatient psychiatric beds per 100,000: the lowest ratio of all urban counties in Washington

75%
Proportion of Pierce County residents who cannot access publicly funded outpatient care for serious behavioral health issues

41/51
National rank of Washington in terms of mental health (rank 1 refers to fewer cases of mental illness and substance abuse)
Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

- Annual count of literally homeless people:
  - unsheltered,
  - in emergency shelter, or
  - in transitional housing

- Historically conducted by volunteers via paper survey of consenting individuals

- Sheltered data collected digitally from Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
New in 2018

• Conducted surveys via mobile app – Counting Us
• Surveyed encampments in the middle of the night
• Continuously reached out to encampments to ensure people were aware of the upcoming count
• Additionally, conducted an observation count of unsheltered people who didn’t consent to a survey
2018 Results

1,628
Homeless persons counted in one night

38%
Female

9%
Veterans

22%
Chronically homeless

25%
Households with children

48%
People of color*

6%
Unaccompanied youth & young adults

*However, people of color make up only 24% of the Pierce County population. (U.S. Census Bureau 2015)
Not all people experiencing homelessness sleep outside

- 46% Emergency shelter
- 33% Out of doors (street, tent, etc.)
- 8% Transitional housing
- 13% Vehicle, abandoned building, other

Most told us they lived in Pierce County before they became homeless

- 78% Pierce County
- 5% Other WA counties
- 7% King County
- 10% Outside WA
The main causes of homelessness are economic and housing-related

Survey respondents shared many causes for becoming homeless. These are the top three:

1. Lack of affordable housing
2. Inadequate income or employment
3. Eviction

Many people experiencing homelessness have an income

40% of people who are homeless in Pierce County report at least one source of income.

Mental illness is the most commonly reported disability

Here is the breakdown of the most commonly reported disabilities. Some people reported having multiple disabilities.

- Mental illness: 31%
- Physical disability: 25%
- Chronic health condition: 24%
- Substance use: 18%
- Developmental disability: 9%

Pierce County Human Services
The unsheltered population in Pierce County

Darker shapes indicate more PIT surveys/observations

Total unsheltered PIT Count: 750
Comparing PIT and HMIS

1,628
Homeless persons counted in one night

- 38% Female
- 9% Veterans
- 22% Chronically homeless
- 25% Households with children
- 6% Unaccompanied youth & young adults

9,487
Homeless persons counted over the course of 2017

- 47% Female
- 8% Veterans
- 10% Chronically homeless
- 52% Households with children
- 9% Unaccompanied youth & young adults

Pierce County
Human Services
Outcomes

• The 2018 PIT Count represents a more accurate snapshot of homelessness in the County, compared to past measurements

• Use of a mobile app helped increase accuracy and uniformity of surveys (and decreased paper use and data-entry time)

• Continuous outreach to encampments connected people to housing and behavioral health services (and alerted them of the upcoming count)
We can’t control who experiences homelessness, but we can control what happens when someone does.

Over the past five years, Pierce County has overhauled its homeless crisis response.

**Outreach to encampments** helps more people access available resources and makes the camp-to-housing pipeline more efficient.

**Prioritizing the most vulnerable** clients for housing interventions means the people most in need of housing are rapidly rehoused.

**Supporting and empowering clients** to find their own housing solutions ends housing crises quickly and cost-effectively.

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**THEN vs. NOW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>THEN 2012</th>
<th>NOW 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered clients entering a permanent housing intervention</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,095</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance rate of referrals to housing interventions</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of people who resolved their housing crisis with supported problem-solving</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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Housing ends the crisis of homelessness.
Jobs and healthcare help people keep a roof over their heads.

Pierce County helps people regain housing:

- Coordinated Entry Location
- Street Outreach
- Emergency Shelter

RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS

- Housing Solutions Support
- Priority Pool

JOBS
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Chronically homeless with a disability

HEALTH
- Rapid Rehousing
- Families with children
- Households without children
- Unaccompanied youth (13-24)

HOUSING FIRST

Self-Resolved Housing
As we’ve applied this new approach, we’ve helped more people leave homelessness for permanent housing.

9,480 People who experienced homelessness for at least one day in Pierce County, 2017

4,690 People who ended their experience with homelessness by moving into housing, 2017

571 People who returned to homelessness within one year (after moving into housing in 2016)

Homelessness data retrieved from HMIS
While Pierce County is making progress, the crisis isn’t over for everyone.

To help keep the roof on, we need more affordable housing, more living wage jobs, and access to behavioral health care.

And for the most vulnerable to receive the help they need, we need more permanent housing with support services. That’s how we right-size our response.