



2017 Youth Point-in-Time Count Finds

Disproportionate Impact to African Americans and Women

In July 2017, in cooperation with the Indiana University Public Policy Institute (PPI), the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) conducted a Marion County Point-in-Time Count for Youth experiencing homelessness (Youth Count). The goal of Youth Count was to determine the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless youth on a single day, July 10, 2017, and to shed light on the homeless youth population in Indianapolis for policy makers and service providers. The Youth Count does not capture an annual number of youth experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis, but only on one day. For the purposes of Youth Count, youth had to be literally homeless (not doubled-up) and ages 18 to 24 or under 18 without a parent or guardian.

Each January, CHIP, in collaboration with PPI, conducts a Point-in-Time Count to determine the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless in Indianapolis on one day. During this process, strategies to identify and count youth are also implemented. The July 2017 Youth PIT was the first youth-specific count conducted in Indianapolis. When possible, Youth Count data will be compared to the January 2017 Point-in-Time data, both in general and specifically with youth counted.

Methodology

With the goal of attracting youth who might not usually interact with providers, three magnet events occurred during Youth Count week: Youth Create, held July 10 at Tube Factory artspace; Youth Play, held July 12 at Broad Ripple Park; and Youth Speak, held July 13 at the Harrison Center for the Arts. Youth Create allowed youth to create their own art and contribute to a larger collage focused on their vision of Indianapolis. Youth Play included a series of “Minute to Win It Games,” arts and crafts, and interactive card and board games. Youth Speak encouraged youth to express themselves in an open mic night, and included stand-up comedy, rap, poetry, and other forms of spoken word. These events provided free dinner and included giveaways, such as bus passes, hygiene kits, and gift cards. Prior to the events, planning meetings were held with CHIP, the Homeless Youth Taskforce, and service providers.

Data also was obtained from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and from shelter providers not in HMIS, such as Julian Center, Coburn Place, and Wheeler Mission. HMIS data included sheltered and unsheltered homeless youth on July 10, 2017. Sheltered data was collected for July 10, and all unsheltered homeless were surveyed by trained volunteers. The survey included the question: “Where did you sleep on July 10?” The data below will be compared to data collected for the overall homeless population and the youth experiencing homelessness in January 2017 in the Marion County Point-in-Time



Count (PIT Count) for the full homeless population. (Teal & Littlepage, 2017) Because we were unable to obtain data from the shelters Good News Mission, Shepherd’s Pathway, and Queen of Peace for Youth Count, we did not include data from youth who stayed at those facilities in January (a total of 13 youth) in our comparisons.

Tables 1 through 5 reflect data available from all sources. Tables 6 through 15 reflect data that was not collected by all service providers.

Findings

A total of 78 youth were counted in the January 2017 PIT Count. In comparison, Youth Count found 87 youth experiencing homelessness, an increase of 12 percent or 9 youth. During Youth Count, almost all of the youth were ages 18 to 24 and most were sheltered (Tables 1 and 2). This is similar to the youth identified in the January PIT Count.

Table 1: Age of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Age	Number	Percentage
Under 18	2	2%
18 – 24	85	98%
Total	87	100%

Table 2: Location of homeless youth, Marion County, July, 2017

Location	Number	Percentage
Shelter	79	91%
Vehicle	1	1%
Street / Park / Other open space outside	4	5%
Other	2	2%
Did not disclose	1	1%
Total	87	100%



Research shows that youth of color are overrepresented among homeless youth (Taylor et al, 2012). In a study by Noelle Leonard and colleagues, both focus groups and anonymous surveys were conducted with homeless youth with 17 percent of respondents identifying as Hispanic in focus groups and 32 percent in surveys (Leonard et al, 2017). A sample of homeless youth in a Los Angeles County study was comprised of approximately 22 percent Hispanic or Latino youth (Moskowitz, et al, 2013). Marion County population is approximately 10 percent Hispanic or Latino (U. S. Census Bureau, 2016). The reported 2 percent Hispanic or Latino youth (Table 3) found here was inconsistent with research in other communities, but consistent with adult populations experiencing homelessness in Marion County. It was lower than the 3.8 percent found in youth during the January PIT Count.

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino	2	2%
Non-Hispanic or Latino	81	93%
Unsure	1	1%
Did not disclose	3	3%
Total	87	99%*

*Does not add to 100% due to rounding

For decades, African American individuals have been disproportionately homeless compared to Caucasian individuals (Carter, 2011; Taylor et al, 2012). A study by the US Conference of Mayors found that 42 percent of homeless individuals in the U.S. were African American and 39 percent were non-Hispanic Caucasians, despite the fact that they comprised 11 percent and 76 percent of the overall population, respectively (2006). Marion County’s population is approximately 29 percent African American and 65 percent Caucasian (U. S. Census Bureau, 2016). Homeless youth identified during the Youth Count, however, were 62 percent African American and 31 percent Caucasian. This is consistent with previous research studies and the adult population experiencing homelessness in Marion County. Youth counted during the January PIT Count were more likely to be Caucasian (46 percent), but still underrepresented compared to the general population.



Table 4: Race of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Race	Number	Percentage
Black or African American	54	62%
White or Caucasian	27	31%
Other	5	6%
Did not disclose	1	1%
Total	87	100%

The overrepresentation of African American youth in the homeless population should be considered in both service provision and in policy making. Research has shown that not only do Caucasian and African American youth “experience homelessness” differently, but the two groups enter homelessness from different paths and exhibit different patterns of drug use and service utilization while homeless (Auerswald & Puddefoot, 2012). Homeless youth who also are racial minorities face stigma and discrimination for both their race and homeless status. Such adversity has been associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. These symptoms, and suicidality, are prevalent among African American homeless youth (Gattis & Larson, 2016; Gattis & Larson, 2017).

As Table 5 indicates, the majority of youth experiencing homelessness surveyed in Youth Count were female. This contrasts the adult population and to youth counted during the PIT count where the majority were male. The percent of transgender is similar to both the adult and youth population.

Table 5: Gender of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	50	57%
Male	33	38%
Transgender	2	2%
Data not collected	2	2%
Total	87	99%*

*Does not add to 100% due to rounding



Tables 6 through 15 reflect data that was not collected by all service providers, resulting in the smaller response totals than the previous totals. Data such as sexual orientation, educational plans, and special education were only collected via surveys distributed at Youth Count events. Wheeler Mission provided racial/ethnicity information, age, and gender data only. Julian Center provided information on age, race/ethnicity, gender, abuse, and parental status.

In Table 6, of the 22 respondents who indicated that they had children, eight reported having one child, six reported having two children, and two reported having four children. In contrast, during the PIT Count, 19 percent of youth had children. This difference can possibly be attributed to the fact that during the January PIT Count, using federal guidelines, the children must be present to be counted, which was not required during the Youth Count. In the adult homeless population, there were 160 families among 1,783 homeless individuals.

Table 6: Parental status of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017		
Parental Status	Number	Percentage
Yes, has children	22	44%
No, does not have children	28	56%
Total	50	100%

As Table 7 indicates, 11 percent of the female respondents reported being pregnant, which is higher than the 3 percent reported by youth in the January PIT Count. High rates of pregnancy and parental status may be indicative of high-risk sexual behaviors, which are associated with longer periods of homelessness (Edidin et al, 2012). One study found that homeless female youth are 2.3 to 7.8 times more likely than non-homeless youth to have ever been pregnant (Beharry, 2012). This same study reported that the average age of sexual intercourse among homeless youth is 12 to 13 years old and that HIV is three times more prevalent among homeless youth.

Table 7: Pregnancy status of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017		
Pregnancy status	Number	Percentage
Pregnant	3	11%
Not pregnant	23	82%
Unsure/Prefer not to answer	2	7%
Total	28	100%



As Table 8 indicates, approximately half of the youth experiencing homelessness during Youth Count reported having some form of chronic condition, similar to the youth in the January PIT Count. Specifically, more than a quarter of the youth experienced a form of mental illness (e. g. bipolar, schizophrenia, depression, etc.), and almost one-sixth experienced chronic substance abuse. This is consistent with reports that both mental illness and substance abuse are prevalent among homeless youth, yet slightly lower than the adult homeless population.

Table 8: Chronic conditions among youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Condition	Number	Percentage
Alcohol-related	3	6%
Drug-related	4	8%
Physical disability	1	2%
Mental illness	13	25%
Other chronic condition	5	10%
None reported	25	49%

Research suggests that homeless youth are nearly twice as likely as non-homeless youth to have a psychiatric disorder in their lifetime, and an estimated one-third meet the criteria for PTSD (Beharry, 2012). The consequences can be deadly; shelter-based youth have been found to be more likely to ideate and attempt suicide or inflict self-harm (Beharry, 2012; Perlman, et al 2014).

Youth substance use is related to both mental illness and abusive situations. In a study of substance-using homeless youth, 60 percent also had one or more mental health diagnoses (Slensnick & Pretopnik, 2005). A more recent study found that homeless youth with a higher frequency of substance use were more likely to have experienced more physical abuse, sexual abuse, and increased types of partner violence (Tyler & Melander, 2015). Drug use among caregivers and family also is common among homeless youth, as high as 93 percent in one study (Tyler & Schmitz, 2013). These findings are indicative of the pressing need of mental health facilities for homeless youth, as well as appropriate follow-up upon release from mental health services. One study found that nearly a third of youth discharged from such care were homeless again within five years (Hodgson et al, 2013).



As Table 9 indicates, a high percent (34 percent) of youth did not have at least a high school degree. Of the small number who provided information, only a few were planning on attending school in the fall. (Table 10). This is consistent with research that has shown that low educational attainment increases the likelihood of homelessness among youth (Craig & Hodson, 1998). More homeless adults reported having either a high school degree/equivalency or Bachelor’s degree (77 percent and 9 percent, respectively). Among youth who provided the information during the Count, a high percent (36 percent) had received special education services, which is higher than the 13 percent of the youth in the January PIT Count. (Table 11).

Table 9: Highest grade completed of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Grade completed	Number	Percentage
K-8 th grade	1	3%
Some high school	10	31%
High School graduate or HSE	13	40%
Some college	2	6%
Information unavailable/refused	6	19%
Total	32	99%*

*Does not add to 100% due to rounding

Table 10: Education plans of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Plans for school	Number	Percentage
Plan to attend school in fall	2	18%
Do not plan to attend school in fall	5	46%
Unsure/Prefer not to answer	4	36%
Total	11	100%



Table 11: Special education among youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Special education services	Number	Percentage
Received special education services for more than six months at any time	4	36%
Have not received special education services	7	64%
Total	11	100%

As Table 12 indicates, 28 percent of homeless youth responding to the survey were employed, consistent with the adult homeless population and the youth in the January PIT Count. Having a job is not necessarily sufficient to provide for stable housing. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, decreasing job security, underemployment, stagnating wages, and increased non-standard work are contributing factors to the working homeless (2007).

Table 12: Employment status of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Employment Status	Number	Percentage
Employed	11	28%
Unemployed	28	70%
Unsure/prefer not to answer	1	2%
Total	40	100%

As Table 13 indicates, 40 percent of homeless youth identified in Youth Count reported experiencing a form of abuse, a higher rate than among homeless adults and higher than the youth reported in the January PIT Count (27 percent). While causation cannot be determined from Youth Count data, various studies show that family conflict, including abuse, is one of the primary antecedents of youth homelessness. Family conflict, particularly abuse, is the leading cause of youth homelessness (Embleton et al, 2016), with one survey finding as many as 95 percent of homeless youth citing it as the cause of their homelessness (Tyler & Schmitz, 2013). This same study found youth commonly experienced both physical and sexual abuse (78 percent and 33 percent, respectively). A 2015 study also found positive correlations between sexual abuse and being female and between experiencing partner violence and being female or non-Caucasian (Tyler & Melander, 2015). Consistent with these findings, a higher percentage of youth who were present at the Youth Count and reported abuse were female than male, consistent with youth in the January PIT Count.



Abuse history	Number	Percentage
Experienced abuse, including physical, mental, or sexual abuse	20	40%
Have not experienced abuse	29	58%
Unsure/Prefer not to answer	1	2%
Total	50	100%

As Table 14 indicates, fifteen percent of the youth identified during Youth Count had at one time been part of the foster care system, similar to youth in the January PIT Count. A higher percent of homeless youth reported having been in the foster care system than homeless adults who responded to the most recent PIT Count. It is important to consider specifically homeless youths’ history of foster care, as many foster youths become homeless upon their transition out of the system, facing increased rates of incarceration and poorer educational outcomes (Davison & Burris, 2014). One study found that 28 percent of youth who “aged out” of foster care experience homelessness within a year, with increased likelihood for youth who were parents, were African American, and had been involved with the juvenile justice system (Shah et al, 2016). Consistently, of those who reported on both their race and foster care history, African American youth had the highest percentage of foster care history (approximately 42 percent). Research has also found that among homeless youth, those with a history of foster care tend to report increased childhood maltreatment as well as increased periods of homelessness (Bender et al, 2015).

Foster Care	Number	Percentage
Have been part of the foster care system	6	15%
Have not been in foster care system	33	85%
Total	39	100%



As Table 15 indicates, seven youth indicated that they had been arrested. The above arrest rate may be underestimated, if some of the 28 respondents who reported *not* being convicted of a felony had otherwise been arrested. The frequency of arrests is not unexpected considering previous research. A 2008 survey found that homeless youth reported interacting with the police often. Seventy-two percent of the youth said police interactions occurred monthly, 12 percent weekly, and 5 percent daily, with over 10 percent of these interactions typically ending in arrest (Hyatt & Reed, 2015). In this same survey, none of the homeless youth reported approaching police for help when they needed it. A 2012 survey of homeless youth found that 39.4 percent of homeless youth had no arrest activity and about 60 percent reported arrest activity (Ferguson et al, 2012). According to the January PIT Count, 31 percent of adults and 12 percent of youth reported a felony conviction.

Arrest history has been correlated with other characteristics among homeless youth. Homeless youth who are arrested have increased likelihood of frequent drug use, have typically been homeless for longer periods of time, and are more likely to report symptoms of mental illness (Fielding & Forchuk, 2013). Consistent with this study, 50 percent of the youth who reported on both their arrest record and mental health reported having both been arrested and having a mental illness.

Arrest record	Number	Percentage
Have been arrested	7	18%
Have not been arrested	32	82%
Total	39	100%

*The survey of unsheltered youth asked if they had been arrested, while data available from HMIS indicates if they have been convicted of a felony.



As Table 16 indicates, 27 percent of youth surveyed in Youth Count identify as LGBT+, consistent with studies that have found approximately 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBT+. There are important considerations for addressing the LGBT+ homeless population. Sexual and gender minority youth, especially those of color, are overrepresented in homeless youth populations (Choi et al, 2015; Ray, 2006). These youth tend to experience longer periods of homelessness and more mental/physical health issues than non-LGBT+ youth (Choi et al, 2015). Similar to other homeless youth, LGBT+ youth most commonly enter homelessness due to family conflict, specifically due to family rejection (Durso & Gates, 2012). Another study found that sexual orientation is related to self-blame regarding homelessness (Kidd, 2005).

Table 16: Sexual orientation of youth experiencing homelessness, Marion County, July, 2017

Sexual orientation	Number	Percentage
Straight	8	73%
Gay/Lesbian	0	0%
Bisexual	3	27%
Total	11	100%

Considerations for Policy Makers and Service Providers

The majority of the findings from Youth Count correspond with previous research. Racial minorities are overrepresented in the population, and there is a prevalence of abuse and arrest history, substance use, and mental illness. Various traits such as race, sexuality, parental status, mental health, substance use, and arrest record are often interrelated among homeless youth. In order to effectively meet the needs of Indianapolis’ homeless youth, service providers and policy makers must recognize the heterogeneous nature of the population. Programming should aim to address the multiple facets that contribute to youth’s experience with homelessness.

Youth Count demonstrated the importance for culturally sensitive programming and outreach. African Americans and females were overrepresented compared to the adult population in the January PIT Count. LGBT+ populations were also high, as were pregnant and parenting youth. Service providers may need to consider these implications when implementing programs. Youth Count identified low numbers of Hispanic or Latino homeless youth, which may indicate the need to enhance outreach and education to these populations.



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