



HOMELESSNESS IN INDIANAPOLIS

2019 Marion County Point-in-Time Count

BACKGROUND

For over a decade, the IU Public Policy Institute (PPI) and the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) have collaborated with local organizations to conduct Marion County's annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. As mandated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the PIT Count reports the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The 2019 PIT Count took place on January 30, 2019. This brief highlights key findings and takeaways from the count in order to inform policymaking and service provision.

METHODOLOGY

The 2019 PIT Count included a number of methodological changes from prior years in an effort to improve accuracy. Providers collaborated to develop an up-to-date web-based map of the homeless camps with which they are familiar. Project leaders used this map to develop geographic boundaries for survey teams to scan on the night of the count. Previously, volunteer surveyors included random census tracts in the geographical boundaries they visited. Since this method yielded little additional information on the Marion County homeless population, the extra census tracts were not included this time. Volunteers instead scanned the entirety of the geographical areas within which homeless camps were located. Teams also conducted surveys at various locations throughout the county, including libraries, churches, and meal providers. The following day, two teams conducted surveys at Horizon House and Cathedral Kitchen

KEY FINDINGS

Compared to 2018, the 2019 PIT Count revealed:

- The total number of individuals experiencing homelessness decreased by 7 percent.
- Of the overall PIT population, 10 percent was experiencing homelessness for the first time.
- The number of unsheltered individuals decreased by 23 percent. Sheltered individuals decreased by 5 percent.
- The number of families experiencing homelessness decreased by 5 percent.
- Individuals in families comprised 26 percent of the homeless population, a 3 percent increase from 2018, indicating an increase in family size.
- Chronic homelessness decreased by 39 percent.
- There was a slight increase in veterans experiencing homelessness but the number of unsheltered veterans reached a five-year low.
- Single adults experiencing homelessness decreased by 11 percent.
- The proportion of unsheltered individuals reporting mental illness, substance abuse, physical disabilities, or HIV/AIDs increased.
- The proportion of unsheltered individuals who reported a felony conviction reached a five-year high of 52 percent.
- There is a significant and persistently disproportionate rate of black individuals making up the homeless population.

to target individuals missed during the prior day's count. The 2019 count also included targeted, increased coverage around unsheltered youth and young adults.

PPI and CHIP developed surveys for both sheltered and unsheltered individuals following HUD guidelines. Project leaders hosted a training session for volunteers to learn about the count, proper survey methods, and to practice administering the survey with other volunteers. Volunteers gathered at Horizon House on the evening of the 2019 count, met with their teams, and collected information packets detailing the boundaries within which they were required to survey. Due to extremely cold temperatures on the night of the count, volunteer teams received paper surveys and pencils in addition to tablets in case tablets did not function for data collection. Volunteer teams included outreach workers, CHIP employees, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officers, and other community volunteers recruited by CHIP.

After the count, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data provided from homeless serving organizations was combined with the PIT survey data. The HMIS datasets include information on all persons who meet the definition of literal homelessness and stayed in shelters on the night of the count. The survey data included shelter providers that do not utilize HMIS, and survey responses from individuals who were unsheltered on the night of the count.*

Homelessness is defined as individuals or families meeting one of the following conditions:

- Individuals and families lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes individuals residing in shelters or places not meant for human habitation.
- Individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous conditions.

Project types included in sheltered data include emergency shelters, transitional housing, and safe havens. Emergency shelters include agencies with a primary purpose of providing temporary shelter for those experiencing homelessness. Transitional housing involves providing individuals experiencing homelessness with shelter and supportive services for up to 24 months. Safe havens are “supportive housing that serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who come primarily from the streets and have been unable or unwilling to participate in housing or supportive services.”¹

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1, the 2019 PIT Count found 1,567 individuals experiencing homelessness in Marion County, an overall decrease of 7 percent from the previous year. Similar to 2018, the majority of these individuals (66 percent) stayed in emergency shelters, followed by transitional housing (26 percent), unsheltered locations (7 percent), and safe havens (1 percent).**

TABLE 1. Marion County Point-in-Time Count (2015-2019)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	CHANGE 2018-2019
Low temperature	15°F	23°F	37°F	27°F	-11°F	-38°F
Sheltered	1,555	1,489	1,657	1,546	1,462	-5%
Unsheltered	111	130	126	136	105	-23%
Total	1,666	1,619	1,783	1,682	1,567	-7%

* It should be noted that two agencies were excluded from the Housing Inventory Count during 2019. Individuals in these projects were therefore excluded from the 2019 PIT.

** See Appendix I for counts.

FIGURE 1. PIT Count comparison (2018-2019)

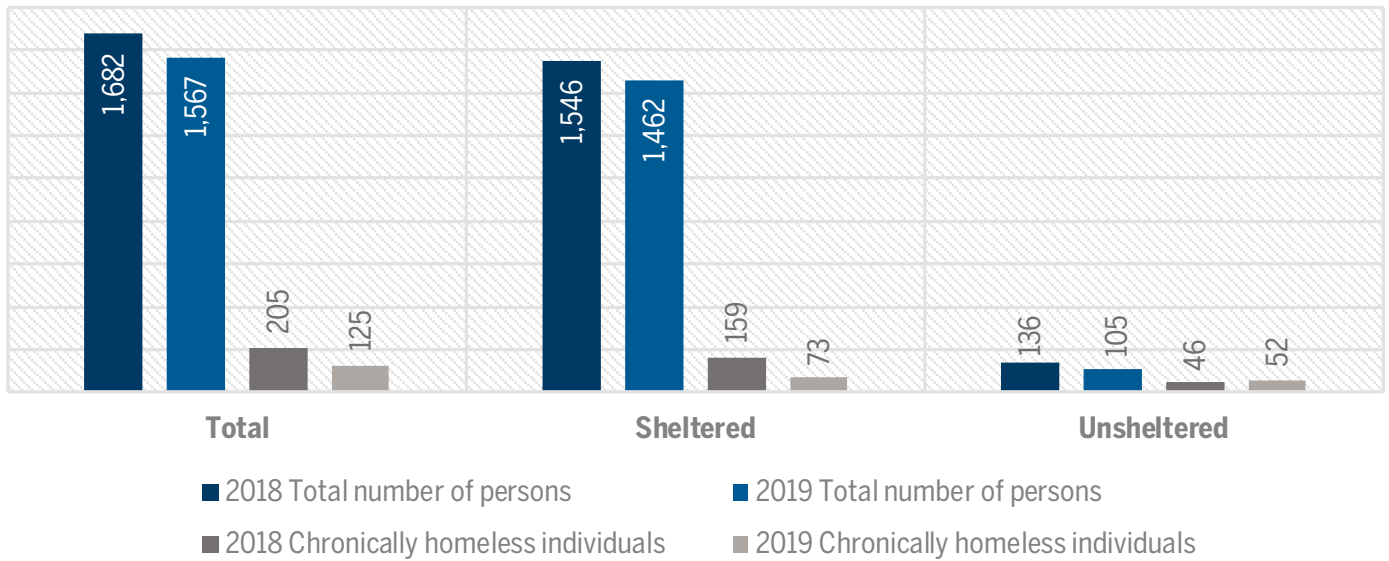
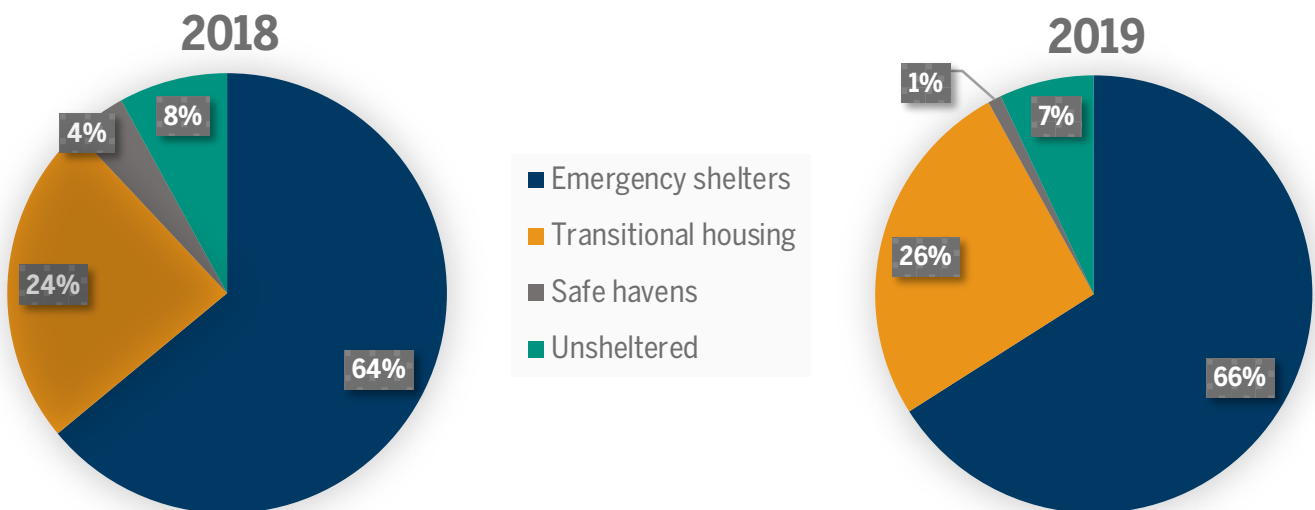


Figure 1 compares the overall PIT Count populations between 2018 and 2019. Compared to last year, the overall number of individuals found during the count decreased from 1,682 to 1,567. There was an overall decrease in chronically homeless individuals from 205 to 125. While this decrease in chronic homelessness was drastic among sheltered individuals (a decrease of 86 since 2018), there was an increase in chronically homeless unsheltered individuals. There were 125 individuals in shelters and 37 unsheltered individuals who reported they were experiencing homelessness for the first time (162 individuals total). These

individuals comprised approximately 10 percent of the overall PIT population.

Figure 2 compares the 2018 and 2019 locations where individuals experiencing homelessness stayed on the night of the count. A higher proportion of individuals were staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing compared to last year, with 2 percent increases in both locales. There was a 3 percent decrease in the proportion of individuals staying in safe havens and a 1 percent decrease in the proportion of individuals who were unsheltered.

FIGURE 2. Locale comparison (2018-2019)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 2 shows the reported gender by locale of individuals experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT Count. Similar to the 2018 PIT Count, the majority of individuals were male (67 percent), followed by female (33 percent), and transgender individuals (less than 1 percent).

Figure 3 displays age groups represented in the PIT count over time. While the number of young adults (ages 18–24) decreased from the previous year, this age group still comprised approximately 5 percent of the overall population. Comparatively, the number of

youth under age 18 rose from 251 to 275, increasing children’s proportion of the homeless population from 15 percent to 18 percent.

Table 3 displays the reported race and ethnicity of those experiencing homelessness. The majority of individuals found during the PIT Count were black or African American (61 percent), with white individuals comprising more than a third (35 percent) of the homeless population. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show differences in reported demographics from 2018 to 2019.

TABLE 2. Reported gender of individuals experiencing homelessness (2019)

	EMERGENCY SHELTER	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	SAFE HAVENS	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL	% OF POPULATION
Female	378	111	4	22	515	32.9%
Male	647	299	19	80	1,045	66.7%
Transgender	2	2	0	3	7	0.4%
Gender non-conforming	0	0	0	0	0	-
Total	1,027	412	23	105	1,567	100%

FIGURE 3. Count of reported age of individuals experiencing homelessness (2015-2019)

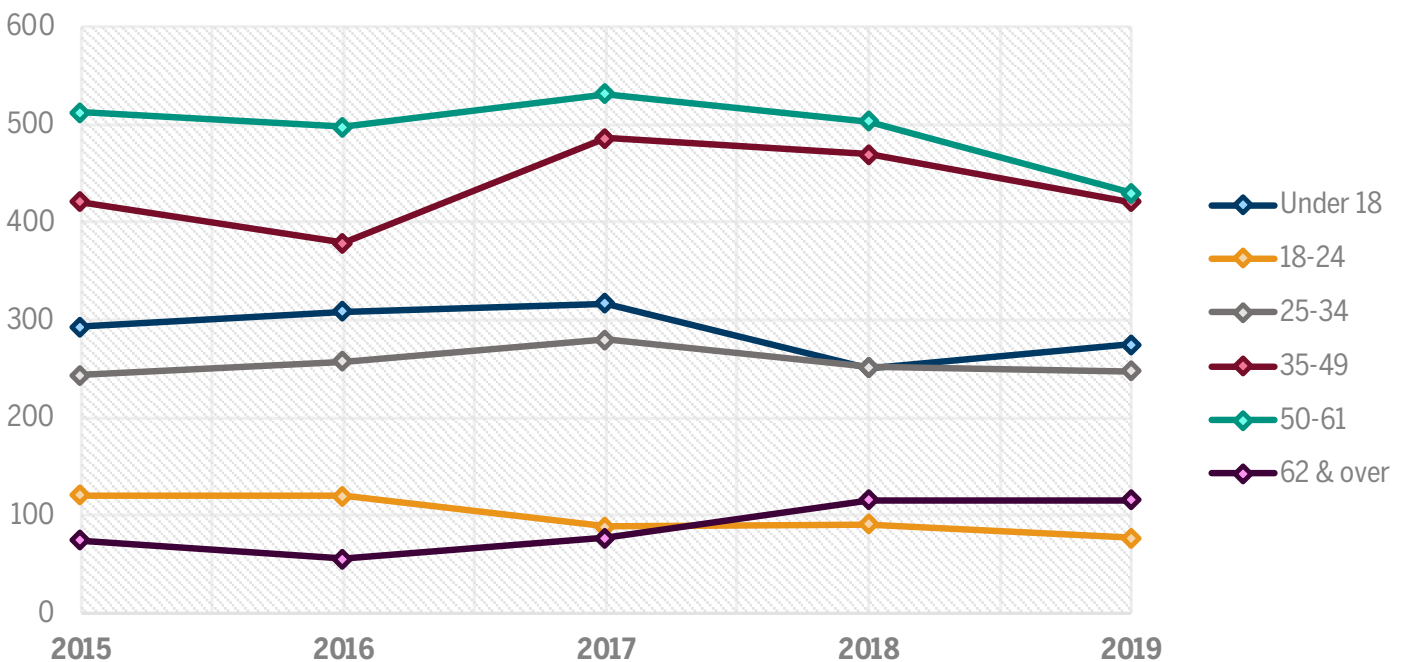


TABLE 3. Reported race and ethnicity of individuals experiencing homelessness (2019)

	EMERGENCY SHELTER	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	SAFE HAVENS	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL	% OF POPULATION
American Indian / Alaskan Native	2	1	0	2	5	0.3%
Asian	6	2	0	2	10	0.6%
Black / African American	671	245	13	27	956	61.0%
Multiracial	19	5	0	13	37	2.4%
Native Hawaiian/ other Pacific Islander	4	1	0	0	5	0.3%
White	325	158	10	61	554	35.4%
Total	1,027	412	23	105	1,567	--
Ethnicity: Hispanic/Latin(x) [any race]	22	12	2	7	43	2.7%

FIGURE 4. Reported race as a percentage of the population (2018-2019)

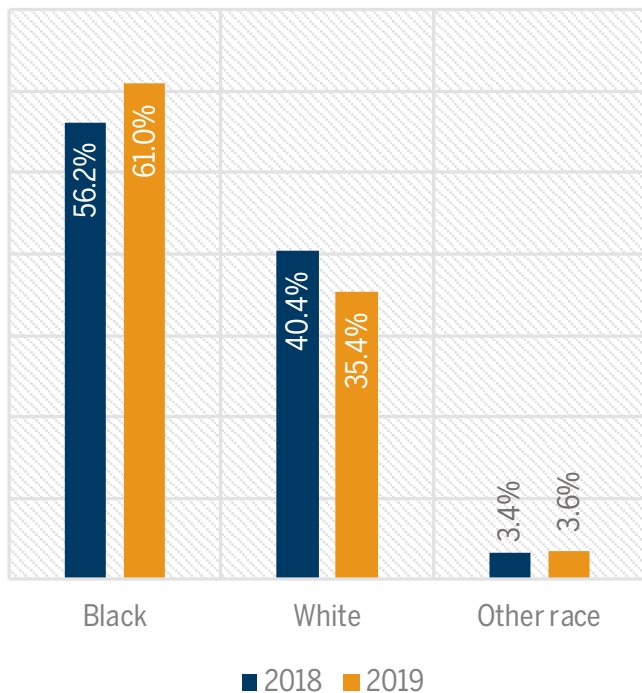


FIGURE 5. Reported age as a percentage of the population (2018-2019)

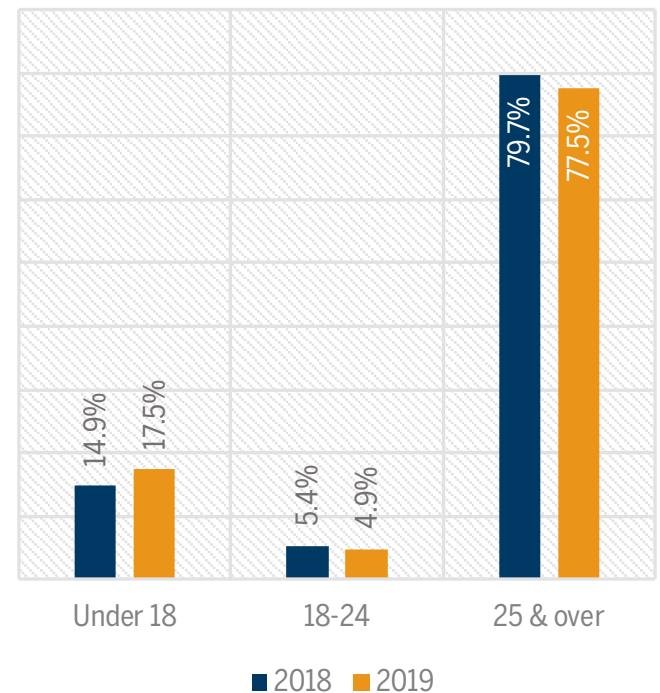
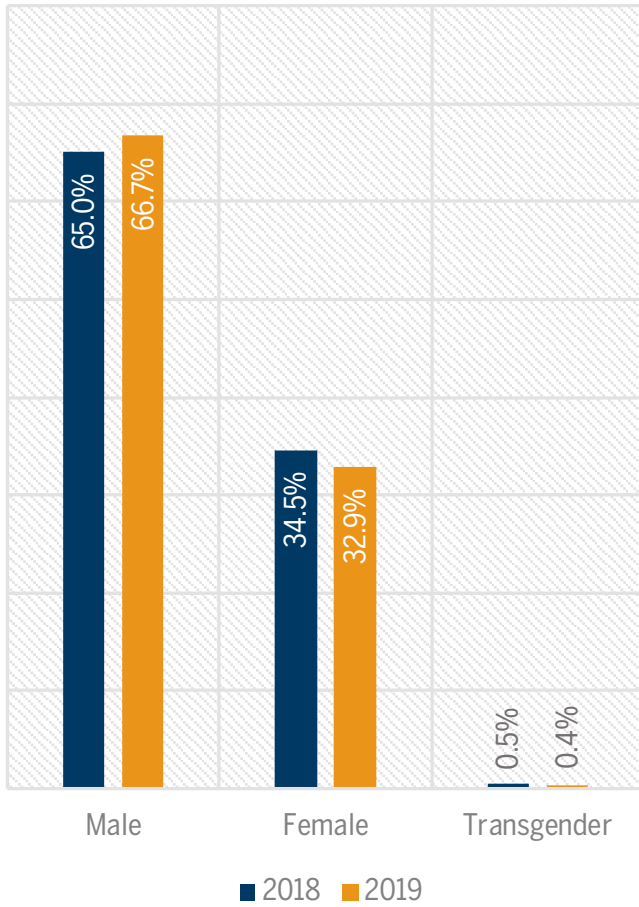


FIGURE 6. Reported gender as a percentage of the population (2018-2019)

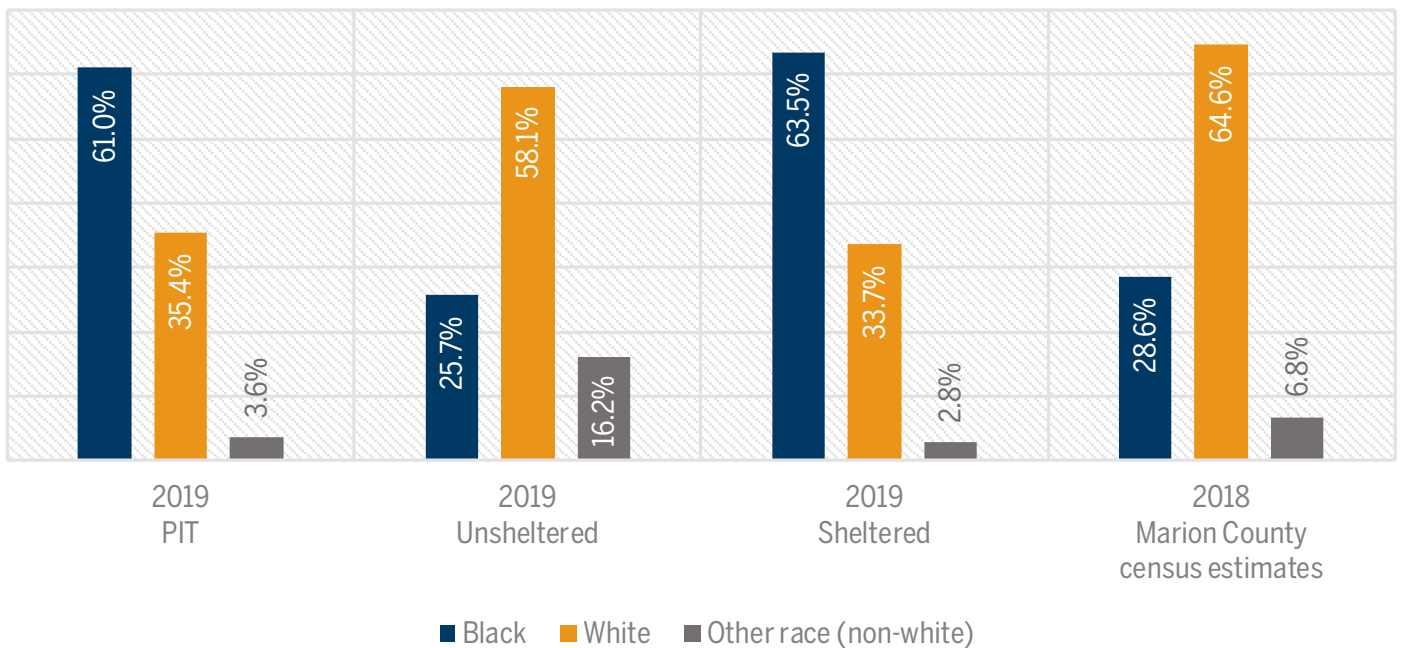


RACIAL DISPARITIES

As illustrated by Figure 7, black individuals disproportionately experience homelessness compared to white individuals. Despite accounting for just 29 percent of the overall Marion County population, black individuals make up nearly 61 percent of the 2019 PIT Count population. Black individuals make up 64 percent of the 2019 sheltered population. Among the unsheltered population, the proportion of black and white individuals more closely aligns with 2018 census estimates.

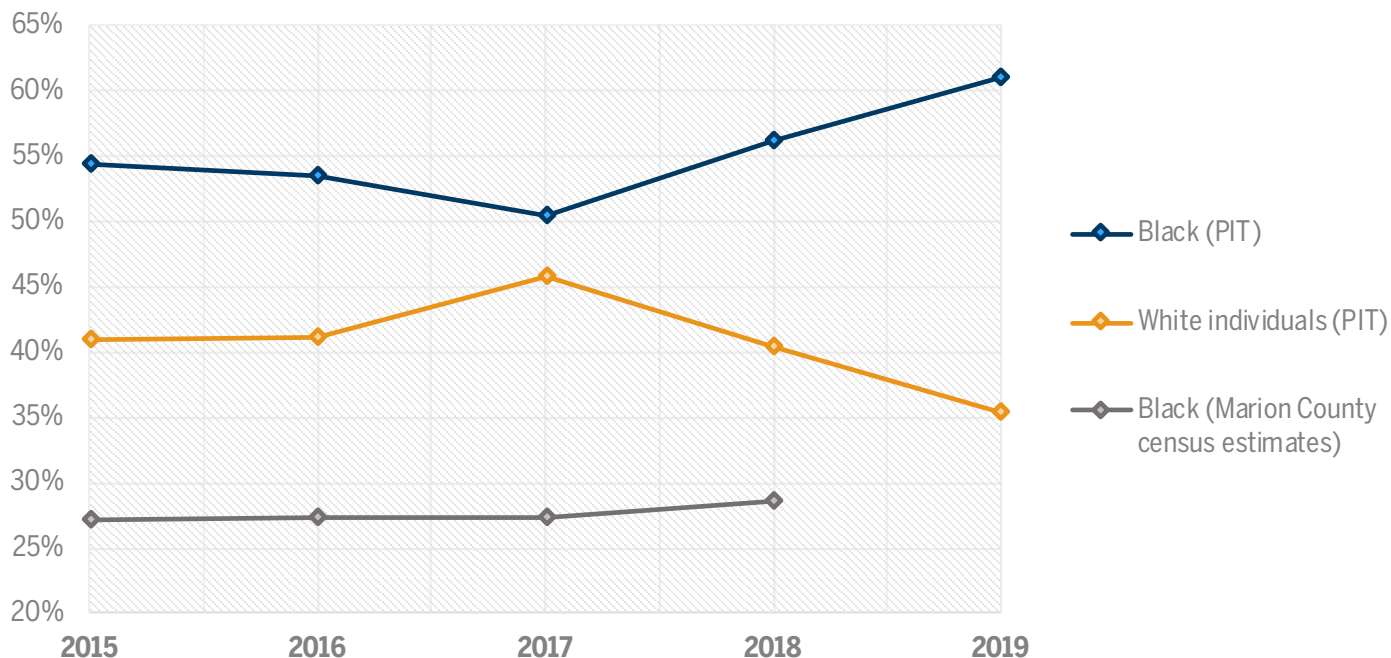
Overrepresentation of black individuals in the homeless population is not a new phenomenon for Marion County. Figure 8 shows the proportion of black individuals and white individuals among PIT Counts during the last five years. During this time, black individuals have consistently represented the majority of those experiencing homelessness. With the exception of 2017, black individuals made up 53 percent or more of the PIT Count population. Even in 2017, black individuals were overrepresented, making up 51 percent of the population. The 2019 PIT Count includes the highest rate of racial disparity in the PIT Count population in the last five years, with 61 percent being black individuals.

FIGURE 7. Reported race among Marion County homeless population (2019)



Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey

FIGURE 8. Reported race among homeless population (2015-2019)



Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Table 4 displays the count of chronic homelessness among sheltered and unsheltered individuals. Individuals are considered chronically homeless when they meet the following conditions:

- At least one disabling condition (e.g. substance abuse disorder, mental illness, developmental disability, chronic physical illness or disability)

AND

- Have been homeless consecutively for at least a year

OR

- Have been homeless at least four times in the past three years, with a cumulative time homeless of at least one year

Chronic homelessness among sheltered individuals decreased from last year's count of 159. Chronic homelessness among unsheltered individuals increased by a count of six from 2018, despite an

TABLE 4. Chronic homelessness of individuals in Marion County (2018-2019)

	2018 PIT	2019 PIT	CHANGE 2018-2019
Chronically homeless (sheltered)	159	73	-86
Chronically homeless (unsheltered)	46	52	+6
Chronically homeless (total)	205	125	-80
Percentage of PIT population	12.2%	8.0%	-4.2%

overall drop in the unsheltered population. In 2018, nearly 34 percent of unsheltered individuals met the conditions for chronic homelessness, compared to nearly 50 percent in 2019.

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Table 5 displays the breakdown of families experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT Count. During the count, 121 families reported homelessness, equaling 412 individuals. The majority of these individuals (66 percent) were youth under the age of 18. Overall, all but five individuals in families were sheltered, with 73 percent of these individuals in emergency shelters. Two families were unsheltered on the night of the count, reporting two adults and three children.

While the total number of households decreased by seven since 2018, the number of individuals in families increased by 29. The number of chronically homeless families remained the same as 2018. However, the number of people in chronically homeless families

increased by 13. Overall, individuals in families comprised 26 percent of the homeless population found during the count, compared to 23 percent in 2018. In addition, 11 women reported being pregnant, 10 of whom were sheltered.

To complement data from the PIT Count, CHIP gathered information from local school districts on housing instability among school-age youth. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) defines homelessness in a way that includes individuals who are doubled-up or living in shared housing with friends or family members other than their parents.

Table 6 displays data using the DOE definition of homelessness. Marion County school districts provided data related to youth served under the

TABLE 5. Families experiencing homelessness in Marion County (2019)

	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL	CHANGE 2018-2019
Total number of households	119	2	121	- 7
Number of children (under 18)	270	3	273	+ 22
Number of persons (Age 18-24)	16	0	16	- 9
Number of persons (Age 24+)	121	2	123	+ 16
Chronically homeless households	4	1	5	No change
Persons in chronically homeless households	23	2	25	+13

TABLE 6. Marion County McKinney-Vento data on the night of the PIT Count (2019)

HOUSING STATUS	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	% OF YOUTH
Don't know	2	-	2	0.1%
Doubled-up	1,034	1,067	2,101	79.1%
Shelter/temporary housing	109	92	201	7.6%
Hotel/motel	128	141	269	10.1%
Unaccompanied/unattached	39	36	75	2.8%
Unsheltered	3	6	9	0.3%
Total	1,315	1,342	2,657	100%

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which aims to ensure that school age children receive equitable educational opportunities regardless of their housing status.

Of the children served under the McKinney Vento act, 79 percent were doubled-up, with 10 percent staying in hotels or motels, and about 8 percent staying in shelters. School districts reported nine students as unsheltered, triple the number of children found on the night of the PIT Count.

Neither the PIT Count nor the DOE data includes doubled-up families without school-age children. Additionally, there are families who may withhold their housing status from schools. As such, data presented here does not capture the full extent of those at risk of literal homelessness.

VETERANS

As shown in Table 7, 269 veterans experienced homelessness on the night of the PIT Count, an increase of eight individuals from 2018. Despite an overall increase, a higher proportion (97 percent) of homeless veterans were in shelters compared to last year (95 percent). Among the 261 sheltered veterans, 70 percent stayed in transitional housing, 30 percent stayed in emergency shelters, and less than 1 percent stayed in safe havens.

TABLE 7. Veterans experiencing homelessness in Marion County (2018-2019)

	2018 PIT	2019 PIT	CHANGE 2018-2019
Sheltered	249	261	+5%
Unsheltered	12	8	-33.3%
Total	261	269	+3.1%
Percentage of PIT population	15.5%	17.2%	

Even with the slight increase in the number of homeless veterans, the number of chronically homeless veterans remained unchanged since last year.

BARRIERS AND DISABLING CONDITIONS

Figure 9 compares the proportion of adults experiencing additional barriers between 2018 and 2019. Barriers are conditions that are associated with a higher risk of chronic homelessness. The proportions of adults experiencing additional barriers decreased or remained the same. The largest decrease was in reported substance abuse,

FIGURE 9. Proportion of adults experiencing homelessness and additional barriers (2018-2019)

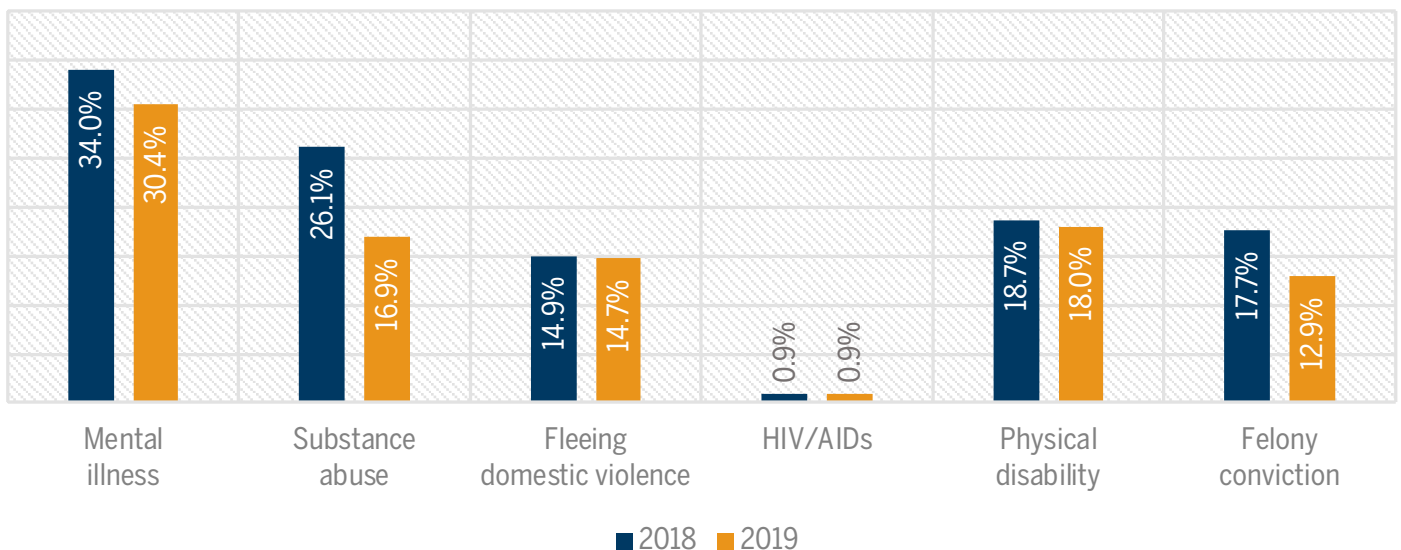
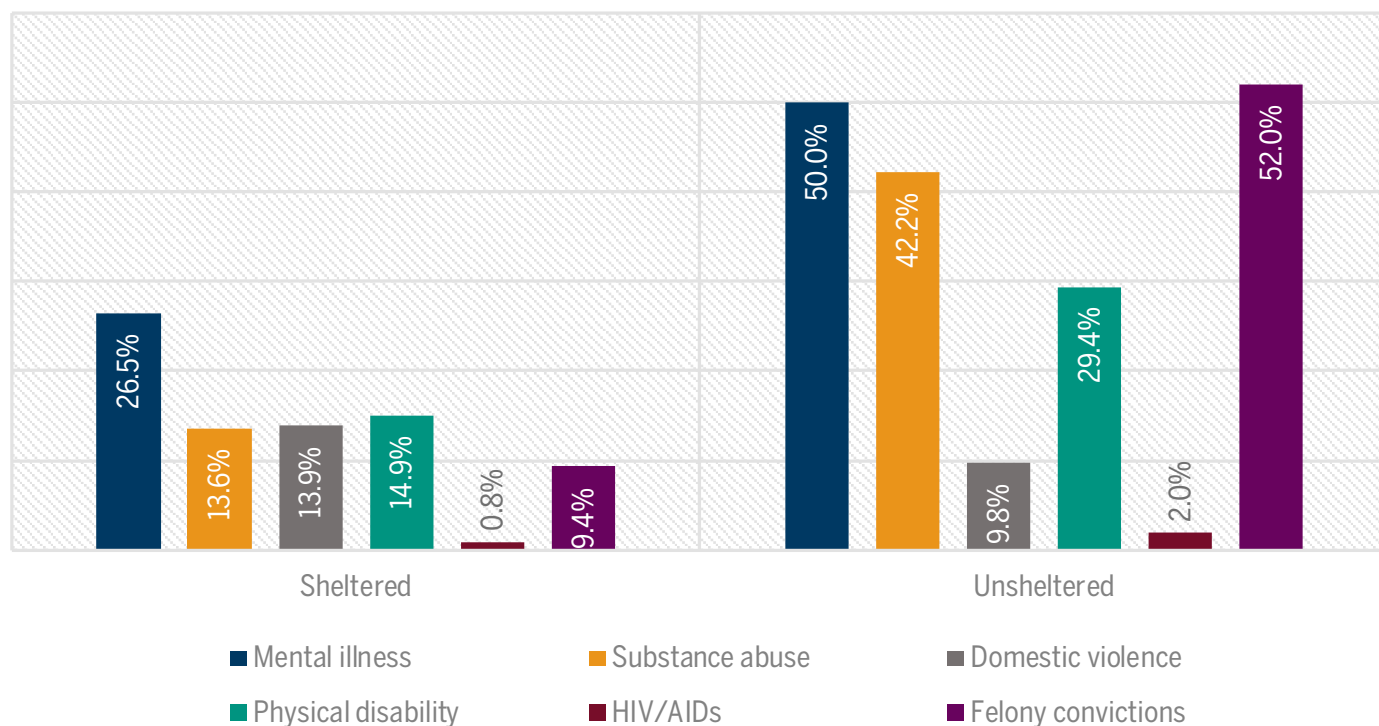


FIGURE 10. Proportion of sheltered and unsheltered adults reporting additional barriers and disabling conditions (2019)



which dropped from approximately 26 percent to 17 percent.

Among the overall adult PIT population, the most frequently reported barriers were mental illness (30 percent), physical disability (18 percent), and substance abuse (17 percent), followed by flight from domestic violence (15 percent), felony convictions (13 percent), and HIV/AIDS (1 percent).

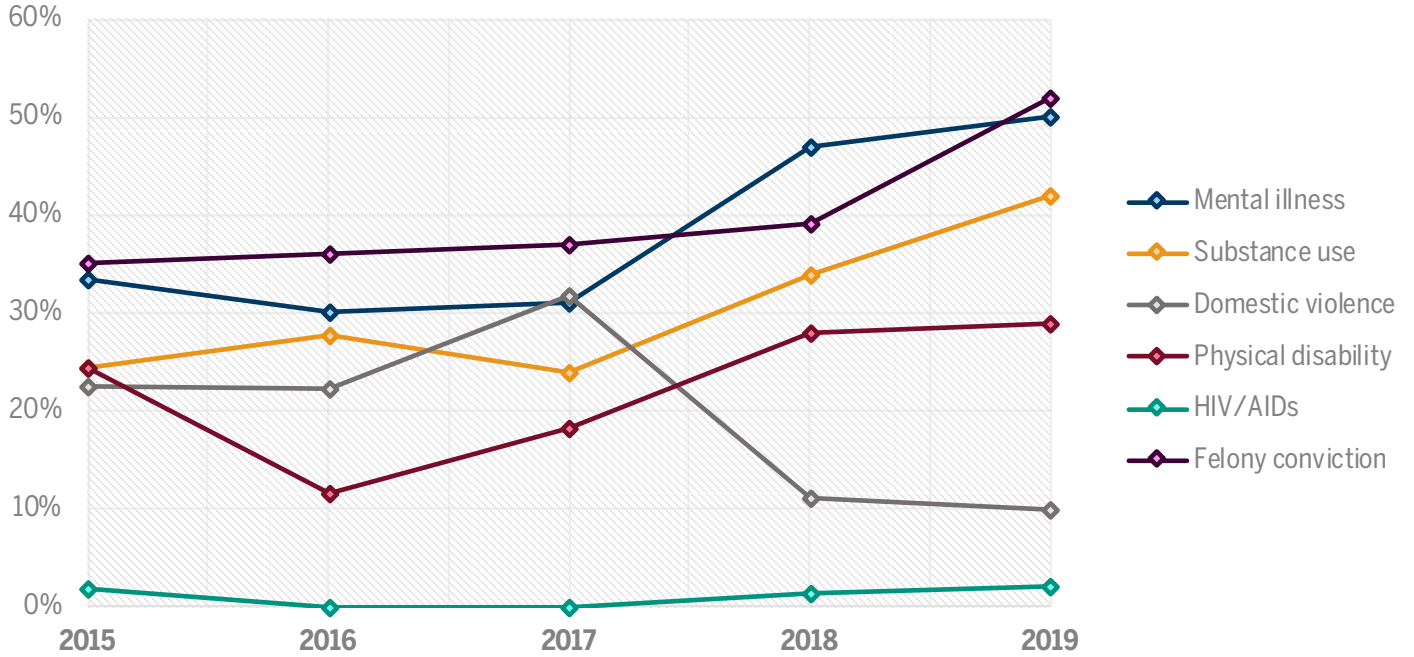
However, there is a distinct difference in the reporting of additional barriers between those with shelter and those without shelter. Unsheltered individuals were more likely than sheltered individuals to report additional barriers and disabling conditions. Figure 10 shows that, compared to sheltered individuals, those without shelter had higher rates of mental illness, substance abuse, physical disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and prior felony convictions. The proportion of unsheltered individuals reporting each of these conditions increased since 2018, and all reporting rates except physical disabilities increased for the second year in a row. There is a particularly high rate of

felony conviction among the unsheltered population (52 percent). While rates of additional barriers were much lower among sheltered individuals, sheltered rates are likely underreported.

As Figure 10 shows, 2019 is not the first year for higher reporting of barriers and disabling conditions among unsheltered individuals. The proportion of unsheltered individuals reporting mental illness, substance use, and physical disability has increased three times in five years (see Figure 11). The proportion reporting HIV has increased twice. Reporting of felony convictions among the unsheltered population has risen every year since 2015, peaking this year at 52 percent of the unsheltered population.

It is important to note the apparent decrease in domestic violence is due to a change in questioning. In 2018, the information gathered was on those experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence. Prior years gathered information on individuals who had ever experienced domestic violence, regardless of whether it was the cause of their homelessness.

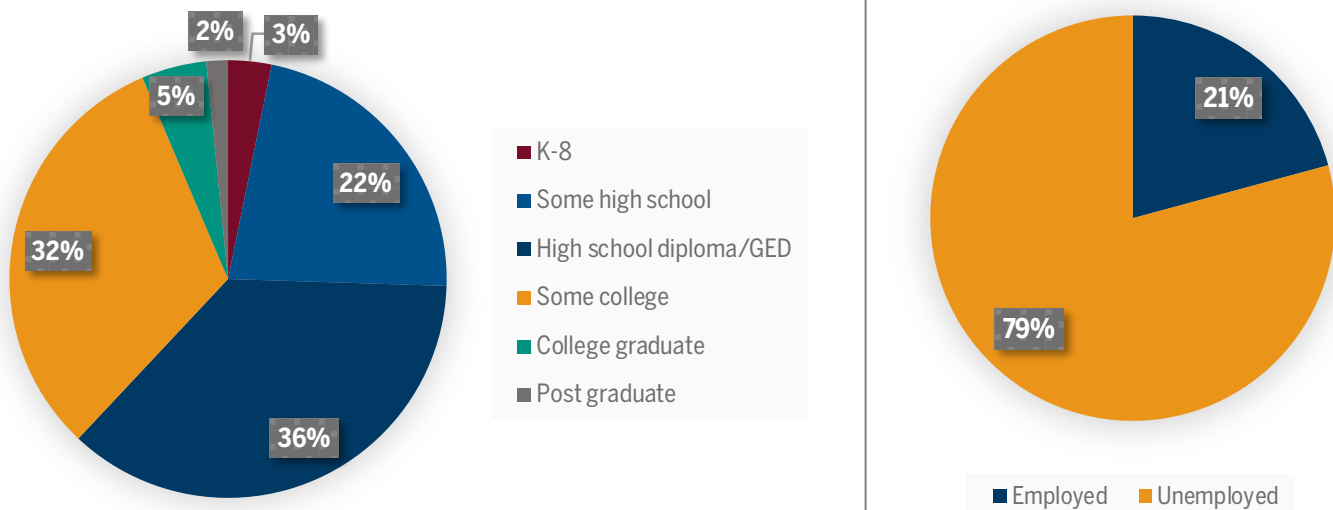
FIGURE 11. Barriers and disabling conditions among unsheltered individuals (2015-2019)



As such, the 2018 and 2019 domestic violence rates should not be considered representative of individuals' overall experience with domestic violence. Compared to 2018, the proportion of adult females experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence increased from 39 percent to 44 percent. Further, four of the seven transgender individuals (57 percent) reported they were experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence.

In addition to these barriers, employment is low among the overall homeless population despite high rates of educational attainment. Among individuals who reported on educational attainment, 36 percent had at least a high school diploma, 32 percent had some college experience, and 7 percent had graduated college or were post graduates (Figure 12). Despite this high educational attainment, only 21 percent of the individuals experiencing homelessness reported being employed.

FIGURE 12. Reported education and employment among adults (2019)



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS PREVENTION

Future research and programming should consider underlying factors that contribute to homelessness, including the unique factors that impact specific homeless subpopulations, including veterans, youth, families, and single individuals.

One particular practice that influences rates of homelessness is eviction. A recent study showed that eviction rates in the state of Indiana are higher than U.S. rates overall. Rates of eviction are much higher in Marion County than the overall rate in Indiana.² In particular, black women are evicted at higher rates than other groups of people across the U.S.³ Efforts to curb eviction are key to reducing the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis, and may particularly impact disproportionately represented subpopulations of the homeless community.

RACIAL DISPARITIES

The persistence of racial disparities among those experiencing homelessness was a key finding of the 2019 PIT Count report. Notably, black individuals are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. Future research should consider underlying factors and policies that lead to the highly disproportionate representation of black individuals among the homeless population. Practitioners and policymakers should consider the unique challenges faced by black individuals that lead to homelessness, like high eviction rates in their communities.

CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND BARRIERS AMONGST THE UNSHELTERED

The 2019 PIT Count found that chronic conditions and additional barriers are prevalent in the homeless community, particularly among those who are unsheltered. In some instances, those experiencing homelessness have difficulty adhering to the rules and customs of shelters, or have other reasons for not seeking refuge in a shelter. Given the high and rising rates of barriers found this year among the unsheltered, it will be important to advocate for more

housing options with few barriers to entry. Housing First models aim to support people experiencing homelessness by providing housing with very few obstacles for a person to overcome.

Felony convictions were found to be a major barrier among the unsheltered homeless population in 2019, with an all-time high rate of 52 percent. Practitioners and policy makers should consider the unique barriers to housing experienced by persons with a felony record, and the extent to which this is the leading cause of their homelessness.

INCREASE IN YOUTH AMONG FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The 2019 PIT Count found that, while the total number of households decreased from last year, the number of people in families experiencing homelessness increased by 29; 13 of those 29 were found to be chronically homeless. Most of this increase is due to families with more children. Parents with larger families may struggle to support the entire family and are at a higher risk of becoming homeless when combined with other risk factors like poverty or eviction. Future research and programming should consider the unique needs of larger families and develop targeted diversion strategies so the number of children in families experiencing homelessness does not continue to increase.

REFERENCES

1. Glossary of HUD Terms | HUD USER. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/glossary/glossary_all.html. Accessed April 1, 2019.
2. Merritt, B. et. al. (2019). Homelessness Prevention in Indianapolis: Trends, Strategies and Recommendations. Indiana University Public Policy Institute.
3. Desmond, M. (2015). Unaffordable America: Poverty, housing, and eviction. Institute on Research and Poverty. 22. 2-6.

APPENDIX I: Additional tables

TABLE A. Marion County Point-in-Time Count, comparison of sheltered population (2015-2019)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	CHANGE 2018-2019
Low temperature	15°F	23°F	37°F	27°F	-11°F	-38°F
Sheltered	1,555	1,489	1,657	1,546	1,462	-5%
Emergency shelters	817	877	1,131	1,082	1,027	-5%
Transitional housing	715	600	505	396	412	+4%
Safe havens	23	12	21	68	23	-66%
Unsheltered	111	130	126	136	105	-23%
Total	1,666	1,619	1,783	1,682	1,567	-7%



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

The Indiana University Public Policy Institute (PPI) produces high-quality applied research and data analysis for leaders to effect positive change and a better quality of life in their community.

Our faculty, researchers, and analysts partner with community leaders and organizations to deliver policy guidance, unbiased research, and data-driven, objective, expert analysis to help public, private, and nonprofit sectors in Indiana and throughout the nation make important decisions that directly impact quality of life. As a multidisciplinary institute within the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental affairs, we also support the Center for Health & Justice Research (CHJR), the Center for Research on Inclusion & Social Policy (CRISP) and the Indiana Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (IACIR).

PPI thanks the many people who volunteered and helped make the 2019 Point-in-Time Count a success. We are grateful to Horizon House for acting as Count headquarter. We also wish to thank the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) for their financial and technical support. Both PPI and CHIP especially want to thank the Professional Blended Street Outreach Team and Faith Based Street Outreach workers from local organizations. Finally, we thank the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and the Central Indiana Community Foundation for significant annual support of CHIP and the PIT Count.

334 North Senate Ave, STE 300
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

policyinstitute.iu.edu

Phone: (317) 278-1305

Follow us on Twitter
[@IUPublicPolicy](https://twitter.com/IUPublicPolicy)

AUTHORS

Abe Roll, Graduate Research Assistant
Katie Bailey, Research Project Manager

