



**Contact:**

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:  
2019 POINT IN TIME COUNT**

**When is the Point in Time Count?**

The most recent Count took place in February 2017. This year's Count is set to start Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2019, and will last through Jan. 29. During that time period, volunteers and outreach workers will ask people experiencing homelessness where they slept on the night on Jan. 23, which serves as the designated "point in time" referenced in the Count.

Federal officials require a basic count of people in shelters and on the streets at least every two years and they determine the date of the Count. Our region has kept to the every other year schedule since holding its first Count in 2005. This year's Count will be our region's eighth.

**Why do we have a Count?**

The Count is required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition of eligibility for federal homelessness funding. The data collected helps us learn more about the individuals and families experiencing homelessness on any given night in Multnomah County — and the need for services.

It captures a snapshot of neighbors who are "unsheltered" — sleeping outside, in a car, in an abandoned building, or in other places not meant for human habitation.

It also provides information on people sleeping in emergency shelters, motels and transitional housing — as well as those receiving rent assistance and permanent supportive housing who would otherwise be homeless without the subsidy.

Surveys track ages, ethnicities, how long someone's lived in the County, their recent experiences with homelessness, whether they have experienced domestic violence, their veteran status, income sources, and whether they have any disabling conditions.

**What does the Count NOT tell us?**

Because it's focused only on where someone slept on a given night, the Point in Time Count can't tell us how many people enter and exit homelessness over the course of a year. That number is much higher than the number counted on any given night.

As fast as our housing placement and outreach workers are helping people off the streets and out of our shelters, high housing costs and stagnant wages for low-income residents are still pushing even more individuals and families onto our streets.

The Count also doesn't tell us why people become homeless, how they're leaving homelessness when they do, what barriers might be preventing them from leaving homelessness or directly show the success of our strategies to provide shelter and housing assistance. Our outcomes, which aren't point in time measurements, are at [ahomeforeveryone.net/services-spending-dashboard](http://ahomeforeveryone.net/services-spending-dashboard).

The Count is also still technically an "undercount" that won't capture everyone who's homeless. People's circumstances change quickly as they move in and out of homelessness, and physical locations may be overlooked.

### **What about people who are couch-surfing or doubled up?**

People who are doubled up or couch-surfing represent a significant portion of the individuals and families experiencing housing instability and homelessness in Multnomah County. Culturally specific providers tell us that people of color are disproportionately represented in these populations.

But federal and state guidelines for the Point in Time Count do not include those populations. The Count includes only people who slept in shelter, in transitional housing or without shelter. That means the total number of people counted also does not include those populations.

Instead, for local planning purposes, we ask that the report include data collected by partner organizations, including school districts, to provide estimates about who might be experiencing homelessness while doubled up.

### **Who coordinates the Count?**

Technically, two counts are combined into a single Point in Time Count.

The 2019 Street Count is being coordinated by the Regional Research Institute at Portland State University.

The 2019 One Night Shelter Count is coordinated by the Joint Office of Homeless Services and gathers information on people sleeping in emergency shelters, motels, and transitional housing.

It is conducted on the same night as the Homeless Street Count. Providers of shelter and transitional housing will share their bed Counts for the night of Jan. 23 with the Joint Office.

A report sharing the results of the Point in Time Count is typically available by early summer.

### **How does the Street Count come together?**

Scores of professional outreach workers, familiar with the far-flung sites they're surveying and the people who inhabit them, make up the backbone of the effort. This year, they'll be formally assisted by people with lived experience, who are helping serve as team leads.

The Count has traditionally relied on people with lived experience as well as key partners from agencies such as law enforcement, parks and public utilities, to identify camps throughout the County.

Outreach workers then divide Multnomah County into sections and methodically work through each site, sometimes making multiple passes. Outreach teams also keep a Count of people who decline to participate — data that's reported in an appendix but isn't included in the official report because it's impossible to identify those people and make sure they haven't been double-Counted..

To reach additional people, volunteers also will take shifts at shelters, day centers and other sites that serve people without shelter, across the community, where they will obtain survey data from clients.

Organizations participating in the One Night Shelter Count also collect street Count data from those turned away from a shelter, motel, or transitional housing on the night of the Count who plan to sleep outside.

Overall, Portland State has trained 229 people, including site staff, outreach workers, and public volunteers over the course of two weeks, with 136 public volunteers currently registered to collect survey data at sites around the County.

### **How will the Count intersect with campsite cleanups?**

To avoid displacing people during the Count, the city of Portland's Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP) has suspended all cleanup actions that would require campers to move from Saturday, Jan. 19, through Sunday, Jan. 27.

The suspension is necessary to ensure as many people without shelter are counted as possible — ensuring officials have the most accurate understanding how many people are surviving without shelter as they make policy and budget decisions on how best to address the crisis.

Workers will still be working to provide cleanup services to camps during this period, collecting trash and passing out trash bags. But no camps will be moved.

HUCIRP will resume posting two-day notices for cleanup actions that require campers to move on Friday, Jan. 25. Those kind of cleanup actions will then resume, weather-permitting, on Jan. 28.

To learn more about HUCIRP's work, see the program's online toolkit [here](#).

### **What did the 2017 Count reveal?**

The Count in 2017 showed a 10 percent increase in overall homelessness compared to those counted in 2015 — but a 12 decrease in those counted experiencing unsheltered homelessness. That was rare among West Coast communities, which saw substantial increases in counts of both overall and unsheltered homelessness.

For the first time, we counted more people sleeping in Multnomah County shelters instead of without shelter.

We also saw key reductions in unsheltered homelessness for populations whose numbers spiked in 2015: women, African Americans and veterans.

That followed efforts since 2015 to expand shelter, and invest more in homelessness prevention and housing placement. We also prioritized services for communities of color, women, veterans and others.

We also continued to see no evidence that the services provided in Portland and Multnomah County are drawing people to the region, despite the so-called "magnet myth" in the community.

Crucially, just 83 out of 1,668 people without shelter — fewer than 5 percent — reported coming here while homeless because of our services. Most people, whether homeless or not when they came here, listed friends and family as a lead reason for coming.

Overall, two-thirds of people surveyed without shelter were either natives to the County or here for many years. Just 447 out of the 1,668 said they were transplants who arrived while also experiencing homelessness.