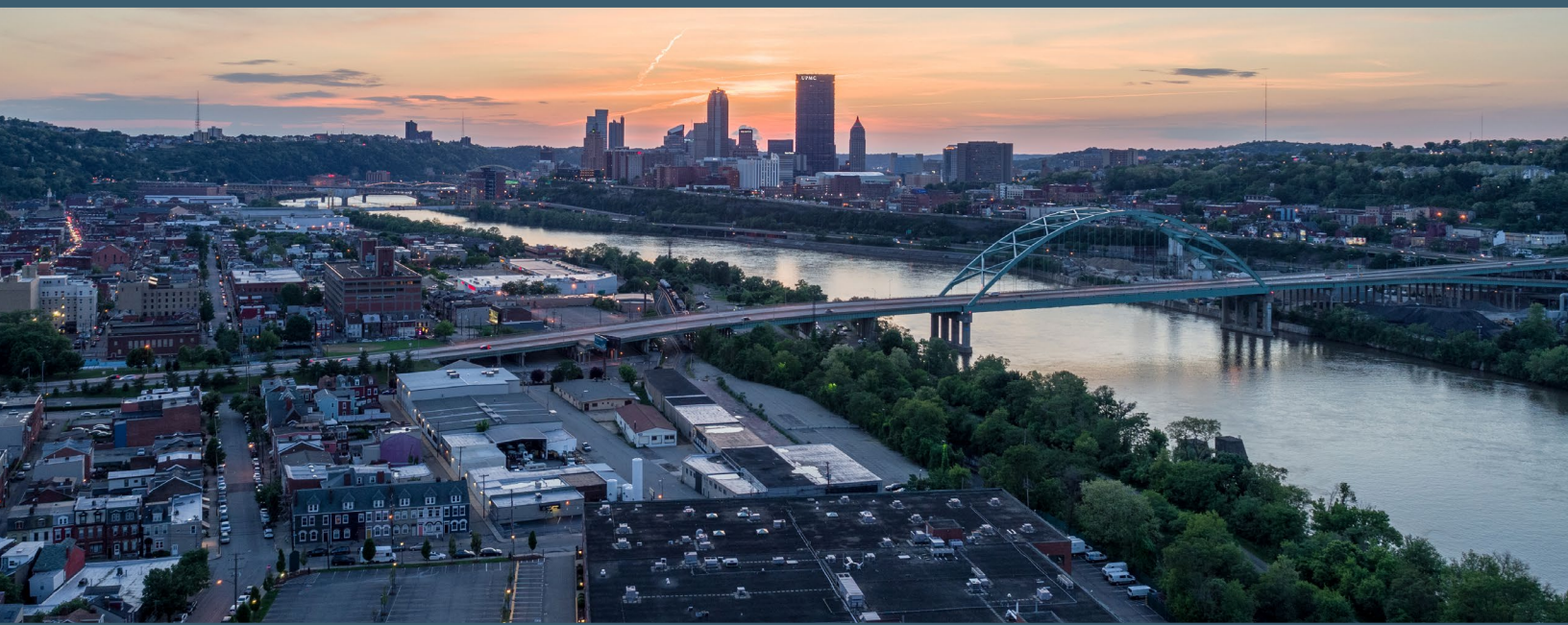


Allegheny County 2025 Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness



May 2025



The Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

<https://analytics.alleghenycounty.us/>

INTRODUCTION

Allegheny County conducts an annual Point-in-Time count of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night, as required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition of eligibility to receive federal McKinney-Vento homeless housing funds. The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) manages the Allegheny County Continuum of Care's (CoC) Point-in-Time count. The count includes individuals who are sheltered (residing in emergency shelters), unsheltered (residing in places not meant for human habitation), or participating in a short-term housing program (bridge and safe haven). HUD mandates that counts occur during the last 10 days of January. The data collected are submitted to HUD and included in HUD's yearly homelessness assessment report presented to Congress. (For more information, see HUD's website [here](#).)

Allegheny County's 2025 count was conducted on January 28, 2025. The number of people counted as unsheltered showed a significant (66%) increase over the 2024 unsheltered count; the count was also 40% greater than the weekly numbers of unsheltered individuals working with street outreach teams and in contrast to a large decrease in tent camping in public places since 2024. Specific areas of the County (e.g., South Side and North Side) showed large increases in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. These increases do not align with DHS's real-time data collection (from street outreach and weekly monitoring of tents), which indicated stable or even downward trends in unsheltered homelessness.

Unable to explain these contradictory results, we began a review of the methodology used for the Point-in-Time count. Our review found that the process for the January count was not clearly documented and that some practices were misaligned with HUD recommendations, making interpretation of the results challenging. We decided to repeat the count, with a clearly documented methodology based more closely on HUD guidance, on March 18, 2025. The March count showed a 44% increase in unsheltered homelessness from last year (19% greater than the weekly numbers of unsheltered individuals working with street outreach teams).

We consulted with representatives from street outreach teams and members of the Homeless Advisory Board (HAB) to discuss results and for assistance in interpreting patterns in the data. This report provides a description of both 2025 Point-in-Time methodologies and the results of each count, as well as changes over time. Also included are preliminary interpretations of the results and next steps.

HUD GUIDELINES

HUD requires that the annual Point-in-Time count include people who are staying in emergency shelters, those who are unsheltered, and those participating in bridge and safe haven housing programs. HUD published guidance in 2014 on how to conduct Point-in-Time counts (read more [here](#)). This guidance recommends that jurisdictions conduct the count either through a census count or through a sampling methodology (counting a smaller group of people who are selected from the larger homeless population or a subset—such as homeless youth—and using it to estimate the number and characteristics of the entire homeless population or a subset within the CoC).

Census counts require jurisdictions to do a complete census of everyone in the entire area or a complete census of specific known locations. HUD recommends that jurisdictions use existing homeless management information systems (HMIS) to conduct a complete census of individuals using emergency shelter, bridge housing and safe haven housing programs on a night when data are available and accurate.¹ For unsheltered counts, jurisdictions may choose to do a complete census of known locations, identifying places where people who are unsheltered sleep and sending enumerators to count them. If choosing known locations, jurisdictions can supplement with a random sample of other areas by sending enumerators to do a street-by-street canvass of these areas and/or by conducting a service-based count of social service locations to identify (and include) people who were unsheltered but not counted on the night of the count. The main limitation of a service-based count is that, unless it is coupled with a street count, it is likely to miss unsheltered people who do not use any services.

HUD recommends that jurisdictions use a primary ‘night of count’ approach that runs from sunset on the date of the count through sunrise the following day and strongly recommends that service-based counts (counts of people after the night of the count) only be used to supplement ‘night of the count’ approaches. Both methods involve face-to-face interactions with people experiencing homelessness and a completed survey for all unsheltered individuals counted.²

METHODOLOGY USED IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Sheltered Count

DHS conducts a complete census of people using emergency shelters on the night of the Point-in-Time count. Most community-based shelter providers use HMIS to record client enrollment, demographics and other information. Domestic violence shelters, which do not use HMIS, provide the number and demographics of clients (adults and children) served on the night of the Point-in-Time count. Starting in 2023, DHS changed how it publicly communicates Point-in-Time data by separating the numbers of those in bridge and safe haven housing from those who are unsheltered or staying in emergency shelters. This change provides a clearer picture of the number of individuals who are experiencing an immediate housing crisis versus those enrolled in bridge and safe haven programs. These programs provide temporary housing and supportive services that typically last up to two years; safe haven programs are specifically for veterans. While housing experts and HUD officials consider people in these programs to be homeless, the public likely does not.

¹ A 2024 update says “CoCs are strongly encouraged to use HMIS to generate PIT count data for projects with 100 percent of their beds participating in HMIS...PIT count data that may need to be derived from HMIS, rather than reported directly from a data field include: gender, chronically homeless status, substance use disorder, serious mental illness, and domestic violence.”
This applies to places with ‘beds.’

² Due to the pandemic, for the 2021 unsheltered count, HUD allowed CoCs more flexibility, including a longer data collection period for those using an interviewing approach and the use of HMIS data in lieu of a count if CoCs could demonstrate its accuracy.

Unsheltered Count

Allegheny County has attempted to use a ‘known location’ census-based approach to count those who are unsheltered. In an effort to improve the accuracy of the count, our approach has varied over the years in terms of the composition of the team of surveyors (number and combination of volunteers, DHS staff and outreach workers), which locations are surveyed, and the surveying window of time. The entity responsible for coordination of the annual count has also changed from over time; as a result, we do not have detailed methodological documentation for every year. Like many jurisdictions across the country, Allegheny County experienced disruptions to the annual unsheltered portion of its count during the COVID pandemic and began to rely more on a growing network of street outreach workers and their data to assist in the count.

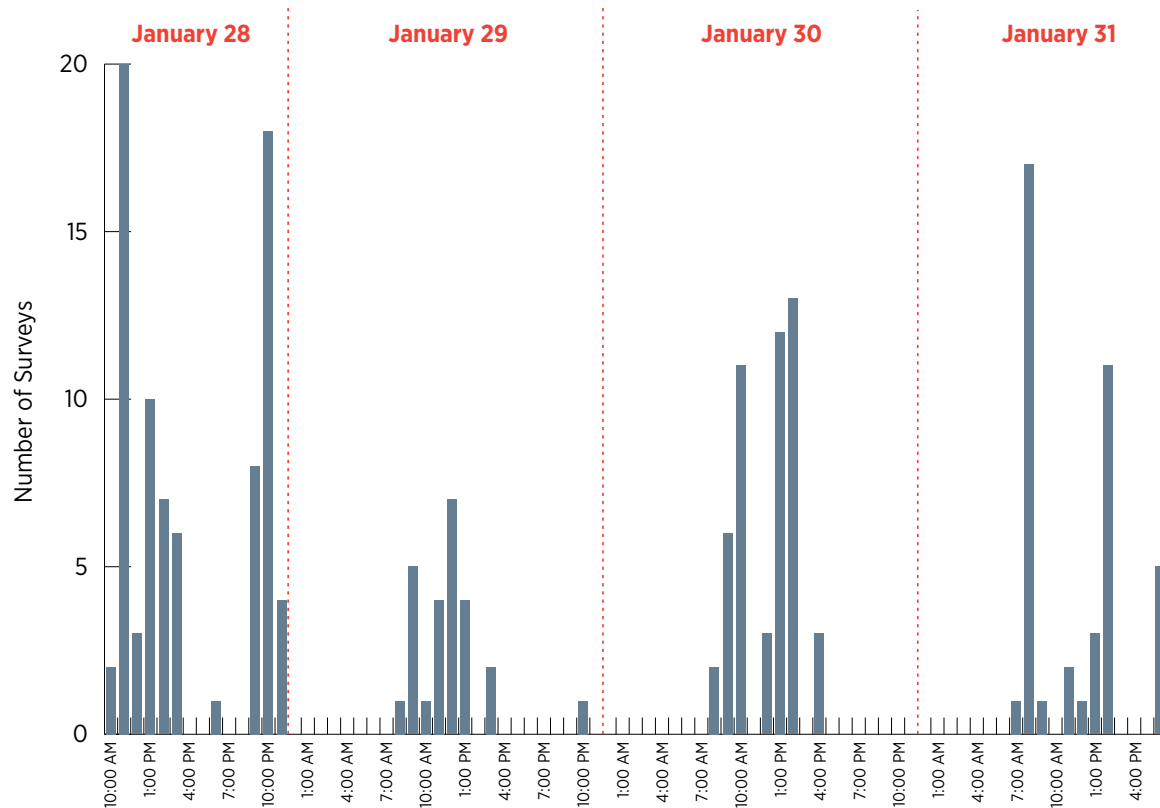
From 2022 through the first (January) 2025 count, DHS coordinated street outreach teams, homeless system partners and volunteers to identify geographic locations where enumerators were deployed. In some areas, teams engaged in street-by-street canvassing. In other areas, teams prioritized locations with known encampments, unsheltered individuals, or individuals who panhandle/frequent specific intersections. Additionally, surveyors went to drop-in centers to ask people where they planned to stay or did stay on the night of the Point-in-Time count. The final counts in 2023, 2024 and January 2025 included a combination of people surveyed and people who were working with street outreach staff who verified their unsheltered status on the night of the count. “Working with street outreach” means they were either part of a case-conferencing list (2023, 2024) or enrolled in a street outreach program recorded in HMIS (January 2025). Upon completion of data collection, DHS staff began a comprehensive de-duplication process to ensure that individuals were not counted more than one time in the unsheltered count or as part of the sheltered count.

January 2025

In January 2025, surveyors completed a survey for 70% of the final count; the other 30% were those enrolled in a street outreach program and verified as unsheltered. We used this combined approach to reduce the burden of completing a survey for unsheltered clients and to take advantage of existing data sources but combining the two data sources made for a more complicated survey analysis.

Surveying in January 2025 took place over the course of four days. Fewer than 15% of those counted were surveyed during the sunset to sunrise period (**Figure 1**). Some surveyors began asking before noon on the day of the count “where will you sleep tonight?”

FIGURE 1: January 2025: Survey Times*



* Qualtrics Survey “End Date” (when survey was complete); represents all surveys included in the final unsheltered count. Does not include duplicates or people who reported being sheltered.

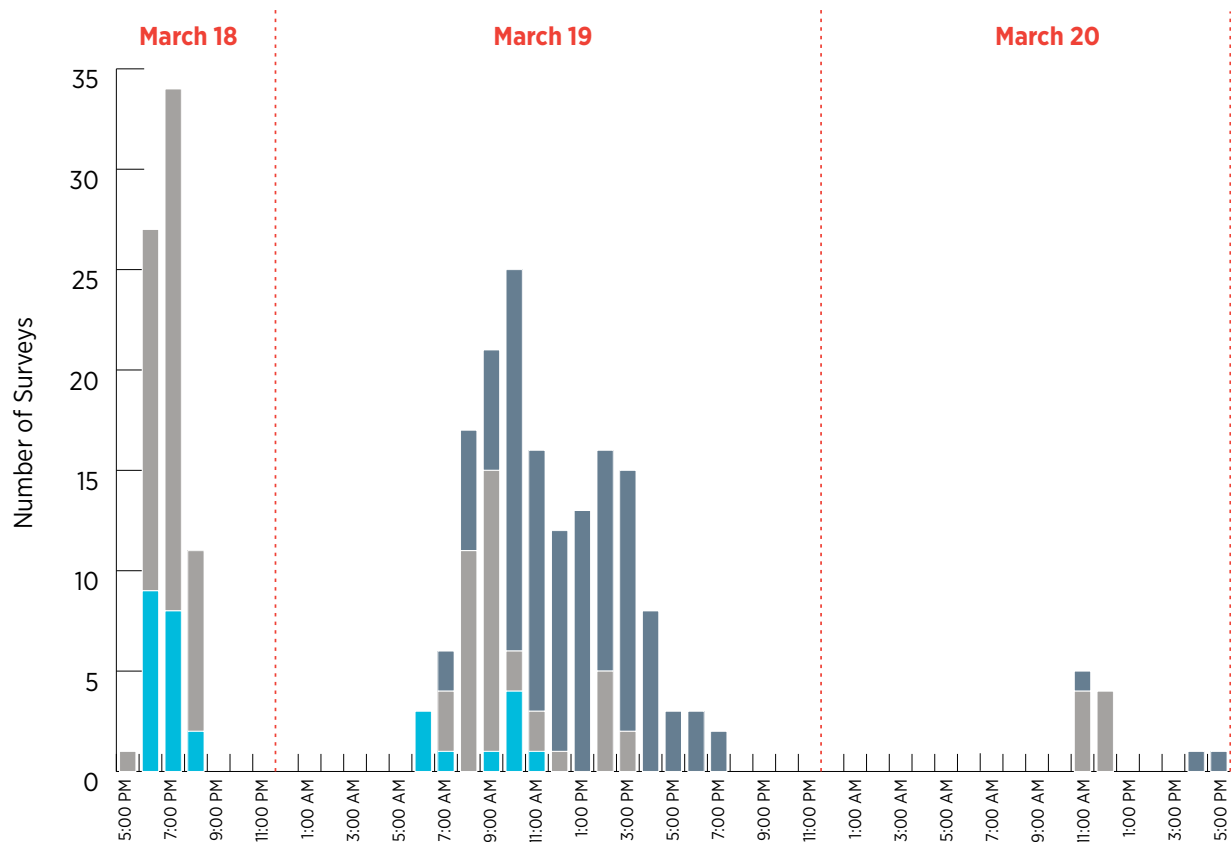
March 2025

There were a number of changes in approach between the January and March counts; in addition to a much shorter planning and coordination period leading up to the count, the most significant changes were:

1) *The data collection window.* As illustrated in **Figure 2**, March data collection continued for three days but was concentrated in the evening of the count and the following day, resulting in an approach that was closer (but not yet fully in line) with HUD guidance about focusing on night of count. The March survey prompted data collectors to indicate if they were counting someone who was sleeping, interviewing someone who was outside, or interviewing someone at a service-based location following the night of the count. The shorter window meant fewer duplicate surveys and more certainty around a person's unsheltered status on the actual night of the count.

FIGURE 2: March 2025: Survey Times*

■ Counting — “Night of” ■ Interviewing — “Night of” ■ Interviewing — “Service Based”



* ArcGIS Survey123 “Creation Date” (when a survey record is created); represents all surveys included in the final unsheltered count, not duplicates or those for people who reported being sheltered. “Night of counts” were supposed to stop at 10 am the next day but some surveyors incorrectly selected “night of.”

2) *The percentage of the count for whom a survey was completed.* In March, surveyors completed a survey for every person counted. Twelve percent (n=29) of people were not interviewed only because they were sleeping at the time of the encounter.

Additionally, in March:

- We explicitly defined known locations (with help from outreach workers) and engaged in a complete census of those areas.
- We improved geographic data collection (helping to more quickly validate the results).
- More enumerators did their work in teams.

Table 1 compares several aspects of the January and March contexts and methodologies. Weather and shelter capacity are important contexts for the Point-in-Time count, as they can influence how many people are staying in shelter versus staying outside on any given night. We would expect warmer weather and lower shelter capacity to mean more people staying outside relative to shelter beds. We included only adult shelter capacity here because no families with children were observed outside. **Table 1** also summarizes how the January and March unsheltered counts differed in terms of approach and number of surveyors. For more information about the survey instrument and method, see **Appendix A**.

TABLE 1: Context and Approach, January vs. March 2025 Point-In-Time Counts

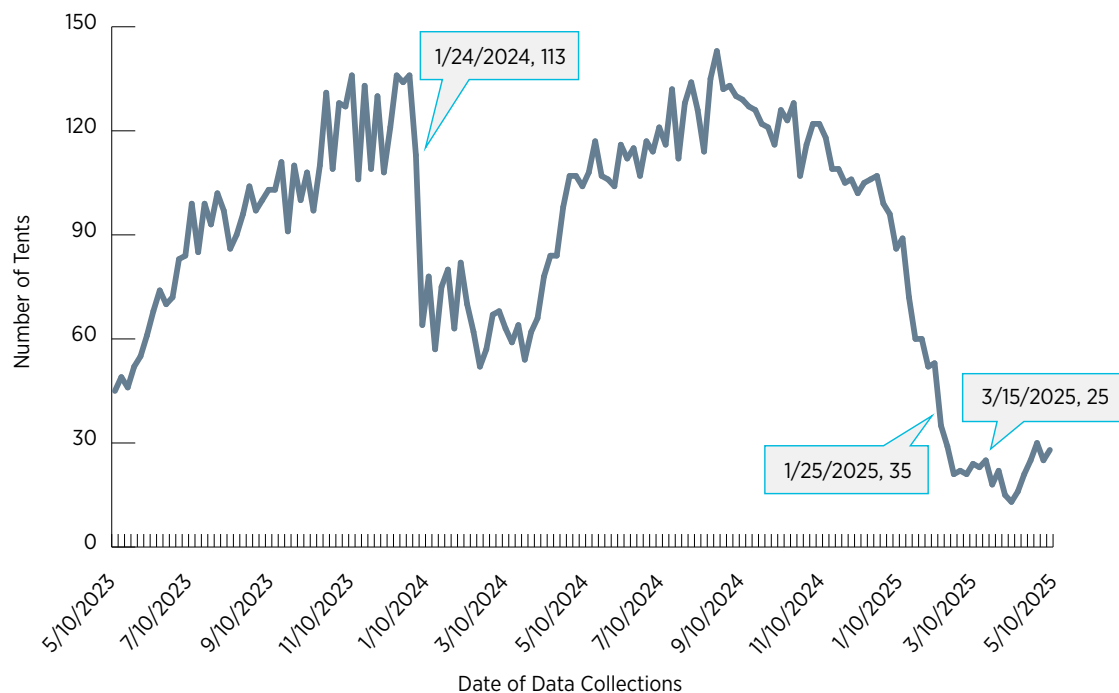
	JANUARY 28, 2025	MARCH 18, 2025
Context		
High temperature (day of)	42 degrees	68 degrees
Low temperature (overnight)	39 degrees	49 degrees
Adult shelter capacity	659 beds	659 beds, with limitation on new entries to 117 winter overflow beds
Approach		
Surveyors	7 organizations, 54 surveyors (DHS & provider street outreach staff plus provider shelter & drop-in center staff)	6 organizations, 42 surveyors (same as January plus DHS volunteers)
Survey Platform	Qualtrics	ArcGIS Survey123
Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned outreach workers to regions • Visited drop-in centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned outreach workers to regions to conduct full census of documented known locations • Visited drop-in centers
Data Sources	Surveys plus a list of those enrolled in street outreach and verified as unsheltered on night of the count	1 survey per person — people could be counted (if sleeping) or interviewed

DHS'S REAL-TIME DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS

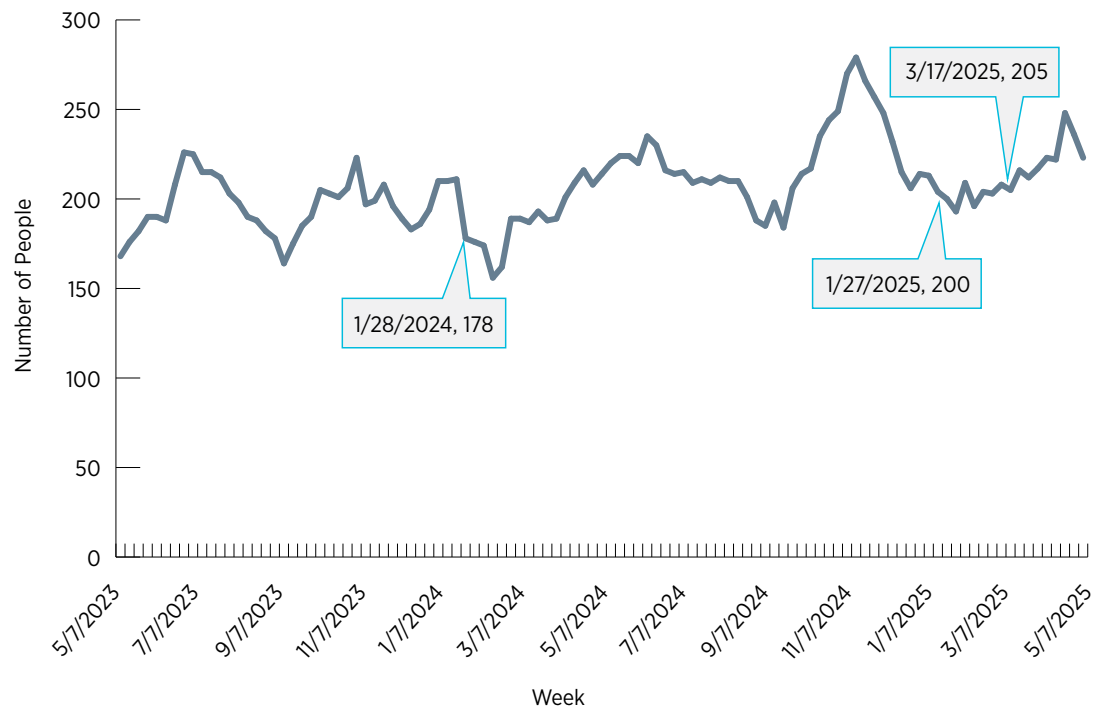
Point-in-Time counts are intended to be a snapshot of homelessness at a single point in time and should be supplemented with regular data collection to better address the full scope of homelessness. DHS uses real-time data—including monitoring of weekly counts of tents/structures, people using emergency shelters and people working with street outreach—to understand what is changing and how to best support this population.

DHS monitors the number of tents in frequented, public areas in parts of Downtown Pittsburgh and North Side and South Side riverfront trails. Surveyors follow a pre-defined route and document the location and conditions of tent encampments on an ongoing basis, typically once or twice a week. One tent or structure does not necessarily equal one person and we do not use tents as a proxy for number of people. Rather, it is a distinct data point that helps DHS and other stakeholders understand how tent encampments change over time and provide targeted outreach. Figure 3 shows a decline in the number of tents beginning in fall 2024.

FIGURE 3. Count of Tents, Selected Dates



In addition, DHS tracks the number of people enrolled in street outreach programs on a weekly basis. Prior to September 2024, dashboard weekly counts were based on a shared file, which was used for coordination among teams. Since September 2024, *Bridge to the Mountains* and the *DHS Field Unit* enter data on enrolled clients into HMIS. Individuals are counted on our public dashboard if they have an active enrollment in a street outreach program, their location is recorded as 'staying in a place not meant for human habitation' and their last known location was updated within 45 days ([Click here](#) for the public dashboard). Although we have seen increases from 2024 to 2025 in the number of people working with street outreach, the increases are much smaller than we saw with year-over-year Point-in-Time increases (**Figure 4**).

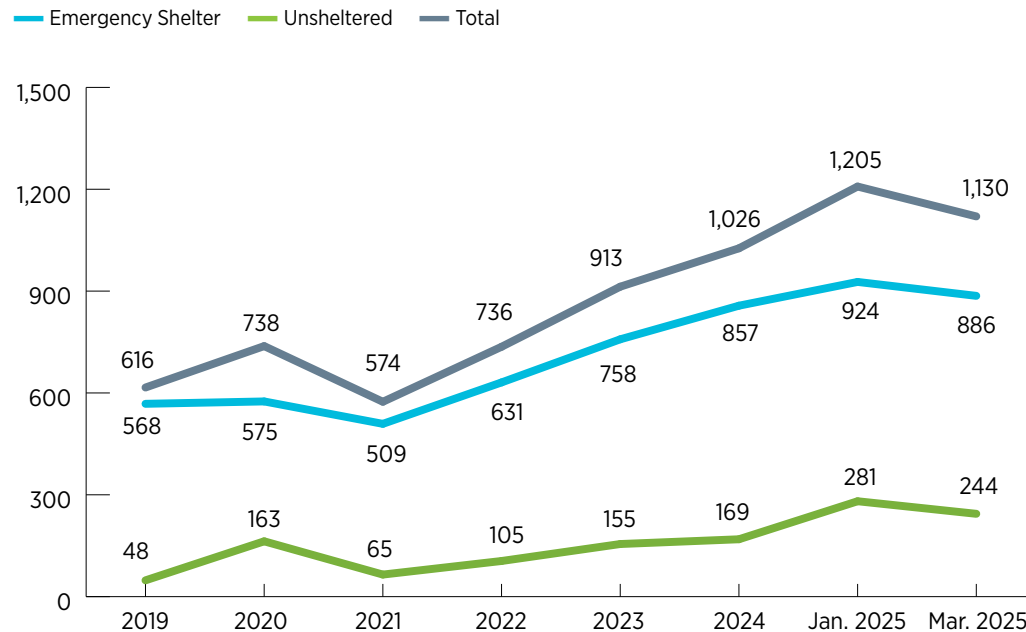
FIGURE 4: Number of Individuals Working with Street Outreach, Selected Dates*

*The increase in fall of 2024 coincides with a transition to HMIS as the dashboard's source.

RESULTS

The number of people counted as experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County on the night of the Point-in-Time count has risen steadily since 2021 (see **Figure 5**). Although the March 2025 count was lower than the January 2025 count, both were still higher than in recent years. Since 2021, the proportion of those sleeping outside relative to those using shelter has also increased. In 2021, the unsheltered population made up 11% of those counted as homeless on the night of the count; in 2025 counts, the proportion was closer to 23%.

FIGURE 5: Allegheny County Point-in-Time Count, 2019 through March 2025



In January 2025, in addition to those in emergency shelter and unsheltered, 152 individuals were staying in bridge housing and 33 were staying in safe haven housing; in March, 174 individuals were in bridge housing and 28 were in safe haven housing. HUD includes these programs in the Point-in-Time sheltered count.

The remainder of this report consists of a brief analysis of those using emergency shelter during the 2025 counts and a more detailed description of the unsheltered count. We differentiate between adult-only households and adult-child households, as these groups differ demographically and in how they access and use shelter; moreover, no children were observed outside during the counts.

Emergency Shelter

More adults and individuals in families with children were staying in shelter during both 2025 Point-in-Time counts than in the 2024 count, although increases were relatively small, ranging from 3–7% for individuals in adult-only households and 4–9% for individuals in adult-child households. In January 570 adults and 354 individuals in families with children were in shelter. In March 550 adults and 336 individuals in families with children were in shelter. During the 2025 counts, shelter capacity, including all domestic violence shelters, was 1,077 beds, a slight increase over capacity during the 2024 count (1,011 beds).

The demographic profile of those using shelter looks nearly identical to last year's Point-in-Time count (see **Table 2**). Black individuals were overrepresented among all household types, especially in family shelters, and men were overrepresented in adult-only households. One noteworthy change is an increase in the number and proportion of Hispanic/Latino individuals using family shelters: 6% (n=20) in 2024 versus 13% (n=47) and 16% (n=53) in January and March 2025, respectively.

TABLE 2: Selected Demographics by Household Type³

	ADULT-ONLY				ADULT-CHILD			
	JAN 28 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=570 INDIVIDUALS)		MARCH 18 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=550 INDIVIDUALS)		JAN 28 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=354 INDIVIDUALS)		MARCH 18 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=336 INDIVIDUALS)	
	#	% AMONG ADULTS USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG ADULTS USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG FAMILIES USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG FAMILIES USING SHELTER
Gender								
Female	197	35%	200	36%	221	62%	202	60%
Male	366	64%	340	62%	133	38%	134	40%
Transgender	3	1%	4	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-binary or gender not singularly male or female	4	1%	6	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Race/ethnicity								
Black alone	276	48%	266	48%	216	61%	198	59%
White alone	256	45%	248	45%	67	19%	66	20%
Multiracial	21	4%	16	3%	15	4%	16	5%
Another race alone	11	2%	16	3%	9	3%	3	<1%
Latino (of any race)	6	1%	4	1%	47	13%	53	16%
Age								
Under 18	0	0%	0	0%	215	61%	204	61%
18–24	41	7%	49	9%	27	8%	21	6%
25–34	98	17%	91	17%	46	13%	56	17%
35–44	127	22%	116	21%	52	15%	40	12%
45–54	137	24%	126	23%	12	3%	12	4%
55–64	119	21%	116	21%	2	<1%	3	<1%
65+	48	8%	52	9%	0	0%	0	0%

Table continued on following page

	ADULT-ONLY				ADULT-CHILD			
	JAN 28 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=570 INDIVIDUALS)		MARCH 18 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=550 INDIVIDUALS)		JAN 28 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=354 INDIVIDUALS)		MARCH 18 EMERGENCY SHELTER (N=336 INDIVIDUALS)	
	#	% AMONG ADULTS USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG ADULTS USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG FAMILIES USING SHELTER	#	% AMONG FAMILIES USING SHELTER
Other*								
Veteran	22	4%	23	4%	1	1%	2	2%
Adult Survivor of Intimate Partner Violence	12	2%	18	3%	23	17%	23	17%

*Denominator in this section is limited to age 18+

Unsheltered

Although the January 2025 unsheltered count was higher than the March 2025 count, both reflect considerable increases from last year's count. The January 2025 count showed a 66% increase from the January 2024 count, while the March count showed a 44% increase (see **Table 3**). Such a significant increase diverged from trends in other points of reference for unsheltered homelessness. As described above and demonstrated in **Table 3**, a public dashboard of weekly counts of people enrolled in street outreach programs showed much smaller increases from 2024 and an observational survey of tents in frequented areas was trending downward.

TABLE 3: Percent Changes in Unsheltered Point-in-Time Count since 2024, Compared to Other Unsheltered Points of Reference

	1/2024	1/2025	3/2025	% CHANGE FROM 1/2024 TO 1/2025	% CHANGE FROM 1/2024 TO 3/2025
# People Unsheltered, Point-in-Time Count	169	281	244	+66%	+44%
For reference: Week of count from unsheltered dashboard ⁴	178	200	205	+12%	+15%
For reference: Week of count # tents in frequented areas	113	35	25	-69%	-78%

The remainder of this section provides more detail on the results of the unsheltered counts in January and March 2025.

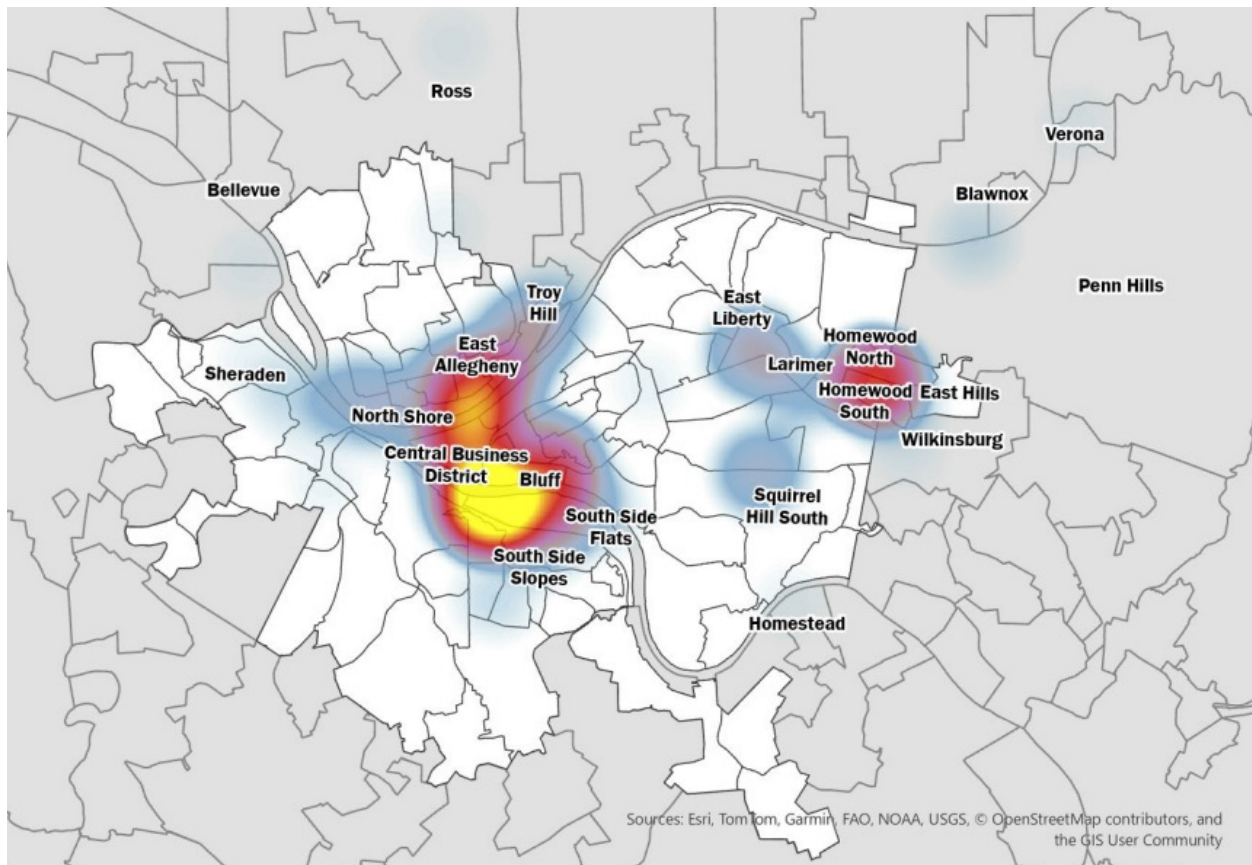
³ For submission of Point-in-Time data, HUD requires CoCs to estimate demographic information (age, race, gender) if it is unknown, based on proportions in the known demographic data. This table shows the adjusted data, as per this requirement.

⁴ Prior to September 2024, dashboard weekly counts were based on a shared file, which was used for coordination among teams. Since September 2024, Bridge to the Mountains and the DHS street outreach team consistently use HMIS and follow the same guidance for when to enter and exit clients.

Geography

Point-in-Time count data suggest that Allegheny County's unsheltered population is concentrated in the City of Pittsburgh, although that might be skewed because surveyor coverage was more extensive in the City of Pittsburgh. Outside of City limits, surveyors must contend with a much larger, spread-out geography, which will require a different methodology going forward. Since the 2024 count, parts of the East End, North Side and South Side saw the largest increases in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. **Figures 6 and 7** provide more detail on where people were located during the March 2025 count.

FIGURE 6: Allegheny County Map of Sleeping Locations, March 2025



MAP KEY

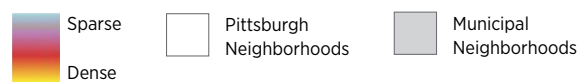
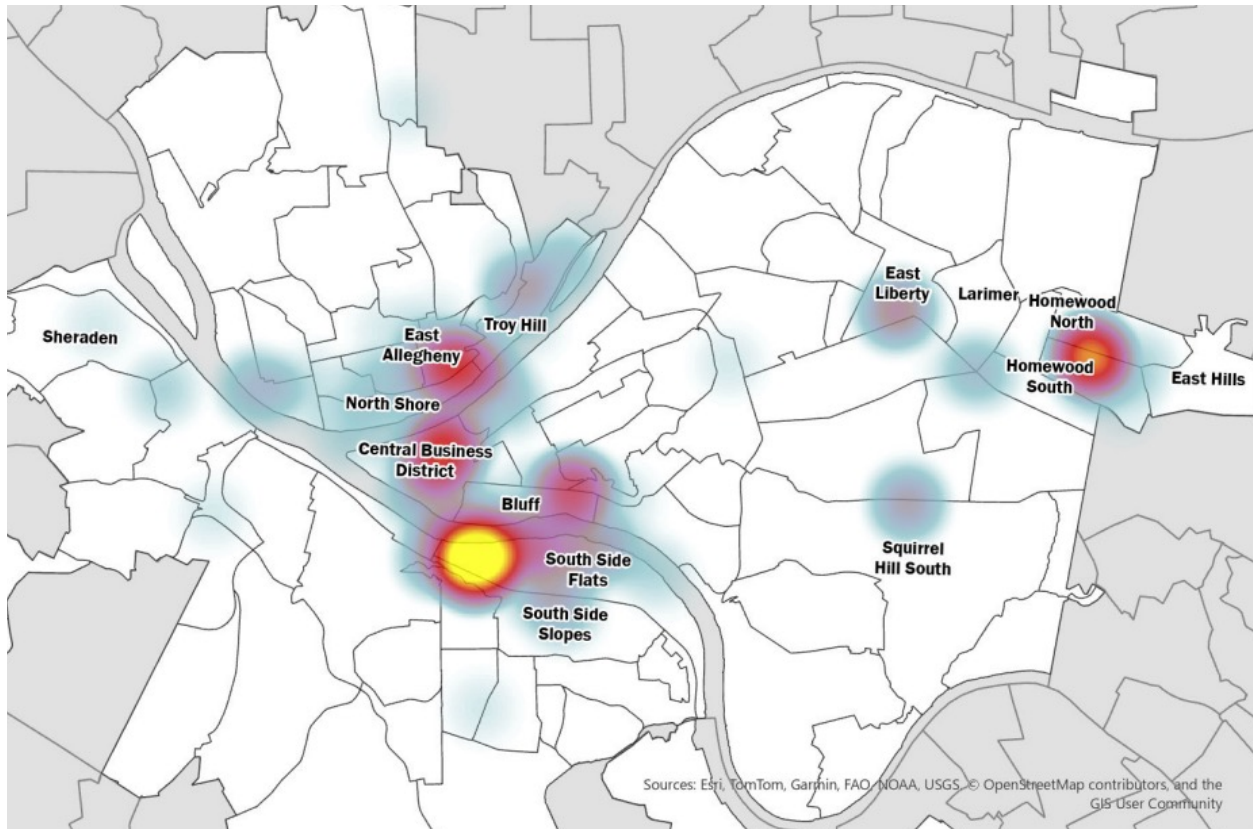
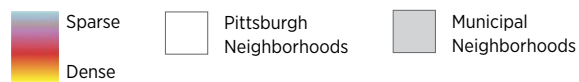
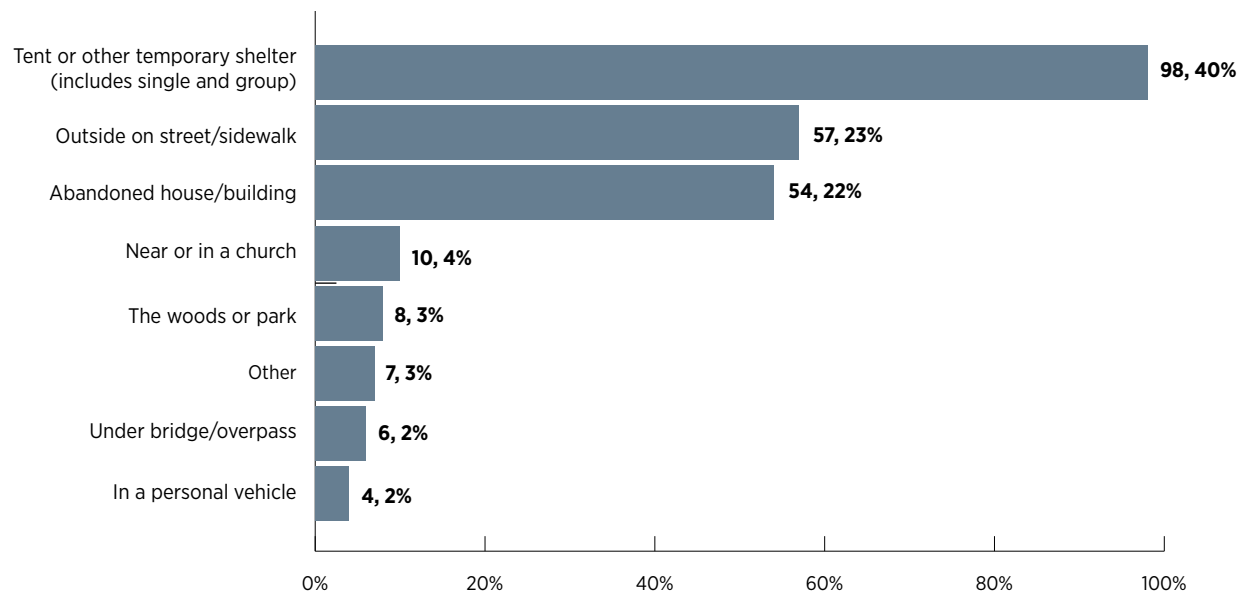


FIGURE 7: City of Pittsburgh Map of Sleeping Locations, March 2025**MAP KEY**

Unsheltered Location Type

During both 2025 counts, most people reported sleeping in an outside location (e.g., a tent, in the woods, on the street/sidewalk, under a bridge/overpass). A small number of people were sleeping in their vehicle or a public building/space like a church or bus. Those who reported that they slept in an abandoned house or building accounted for 20% to 30% of those surveyed. For comparison, 31% of those surveyed in the 2024 count reported staying in an abandoned building. **Figure 8** features the March 2025 survey results, in which every person had a survey record. See **Appendix B** for the January 2025 breakdown.

FIGURE 8: Unsheltered Location Type, March 2025 (n=244)



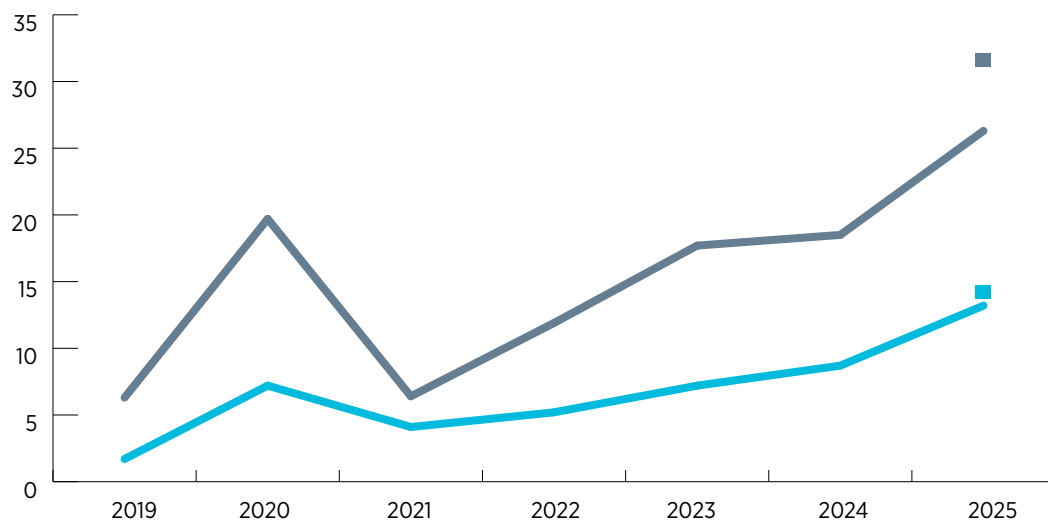
People who reported staying in a tent or temporary shelter, alone or as part of an encampment, were concentrated in the North Side and the South Side, whereas people staying in abandoned properties were more likely to be in the East End. People scattered throughout Downtown Pittsburgh (central business district) most often described their sleeping location as outside on the street or sidewalk.

People

January and March counts looked very similar demographically. The largest age group was 35 through 44 (more than 40%). Very few young adults and older adults were represented; those 18 through 24 and 65+ together made up about 5% of those staying outside. See **Appendix C** for more detailed demographic information. Nearly 70% of those staying outside were men and rates of unsheltered homeless men in Allegheny County are consistently higher than those of women (see **Figure 9**).⁵

FIGURE 9: Annual Rates of Unsheltered Homelessness per 100K Allegheny County Residents Since 2019,⁶ by Gender

■ Rate per 100k Male January 2025 ■ Rate per 100k Female January 2025
— Rate per 100k Male (March 2025) — Rate per 100k Female (March 2025)

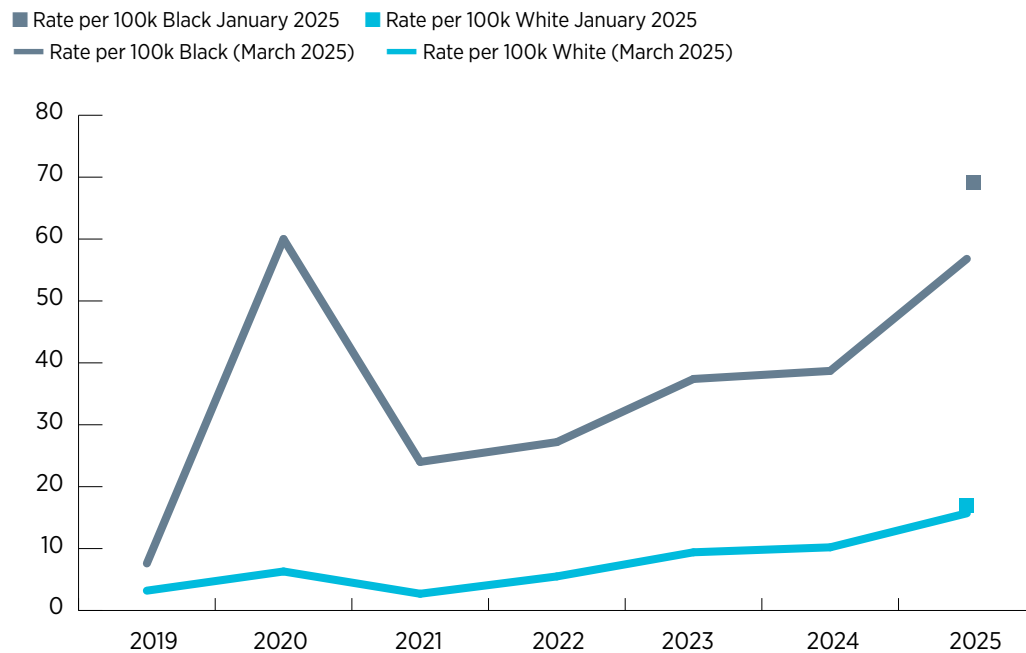


⁵ Allegheny County gender and race data: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates (most recent available)

⁶ Starting in 2019 allows us to show a pre-COVID baseline, since COVID was disruptive in so many ways. 2019 looked similar to the few years leading up to it in terms of the overall unsheltered count.

About 60% of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness were White, but rates of unsheltered homelessness are higher among Black individuals (**Figure 10**).

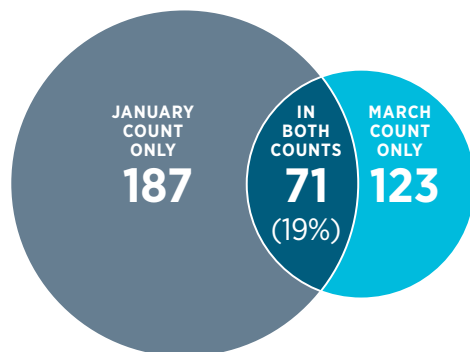
FIGURE 10: Annual Rates of Unsheltered Homelessness per 100K Allegheny County Residents Since 2019, by Race



How many people were in both counts?

A full name is required to match individuals across counts and to service utilization. In January and March, we were able to match 84% of people (381 out of a total of 454). Only 71 (19%) were counted in both January and March, suggesting a remarkably high and quick turnover rate for people sleeping outside (see **Figure 11**).

FIGURE 11: Overlap of identified individuals in PIT counts, January and March 2025



⁷ Percentages are of those who provided full names. 8% (23) of those counted in January did not provide a full name. In March, 20% (n=50) were not matched; 23 people were

counted (not interviewed) because they were sleeping and 27 (11% of total) did not provide a full name.

Most (82%, n=58) of the people who were counted in both January and March were enrolled in Bridge to the Mountains or DHS street outreach programs. For people who were counted in only one count (n=310), only 36% (n=112) were enrolled with street outreach from January to March and only 45% (n=138) were engaged in any homeless and housing service during this period (see **Table 4**).

TABLE 4: Rates of Involvement in Homeless Services, January and March 2025

PEOPLE WHO WERE COUNTED...	ENROLLED IN STREET OUTREACH (HMIS)		ENGAGED IN ANY HOMELESS AND HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE (HMIS)		TOTAL PEOPLE*
	N	% OF TOTAL	N	% OF TOTAL	
In January only	74	40%	86	46%	187
In March only	38	31%	52	42%	123
Only in one count	112	36%	138	45%	310
In both counts	58	82%	60	85%	71
In any count	170	45%	198	52%	381

*Includes the 84% of individuals counted who reported a full name

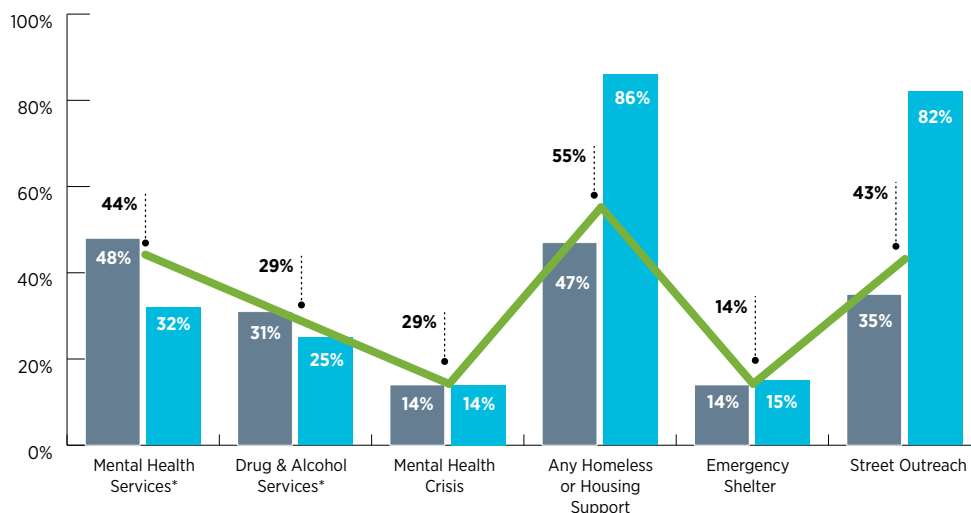
Other service involvement

Sixty-seven percent (n=257) of identifiable individuals accessed a DHS service in the six months prior to the count. As shown in **Figure 12**, the most common services accessed were homeless and housing supports (particularly engaging with street outreach) and behavioral health services (mental health and/or drug & alcohol services). It should be noted that we were only able to observe behavioral health service usage for individuals enrolled in Medicaid and only 63% (n=241) of those counted were enrolled. People who were counted in only one count were much less likely to be enrolled in Medicaid than those in both counts (60% vs. 79%).

There were higher rates of engagement in behavioral health services among those counted in only one count (57%) than among those involved in both (43%). Fewer than half accessed any homeless and housing supports in the six months prior to the count.

FIGURE 12: Behavioral Health or Housing Involvement Within Six Months of Count

■ In Only One Count (N=310) ■ In Both Counts (N=71) — In Any Count (N=381)



Note: Six-month look-back period is from March 2025

As shown in **Table 5**, the majority (64%) of individuals included in the count and enrolled in Medicaid visited an emergency department in the six months prior to the count. Fewer than one in five people had an inpatient stay for physical health reasons, but in the year prior to the count, 19 people had an involuntary mental health commitment. Twenty percent had a jail booking in the six months prior to the count and 17 were parents involved in a child welfare case (see **Table 5**). Most were receiving some form of income or income supports, with 14% having recorded employment in the six months prior to the count.

TABLE 5: Other Service Involvement Within Six Months of Count

	IN ONLY ONE COUNT (N=310)	IN BOTH COUNTS (N=71)	IN ANY COUNT (N=381)
Income and income supports			
Public benefits (TANF, SNAP)	76%	93%	79%
Medicaid enrollment	60%	79%	63%
Employment (Labor and Industry)***	15%	12%	14%
Assisted Housing (Housing Choice Voucher or Low-Income Public Housing)	4%	1%	3%
Physical Health involvement			
Emergency Department Visit*	64%	64%	64%
Physical Health Inpatient stay*	19%	18%	19%
Other mental health service involvement			
Involuntary Commitment**	5%	6%	5%
Mental Health residential program	0%	0%	0%
Other			
Child welfare as a parent	3%	10%	4%
Jail booking	20%	23%	20%

*Of those enrolled in Medicaid

**Within 1 year of count

***Out of those with data. 77% (N=293) of people had data available from Labor and Industry (91% in both and 74% in only one count)

DISCUSSION

We consulted with representatives from street outreach teams and members of the HAB to discuss the increase in unsheltered homelessness and for assistance in interpreting the results. A few themes emerged:

- 1) We have greatly expanded outreach, likely yielding a more comprehensive count.** The City of Pittsburgh and the County have invested in outreach workers in recent years to help deal with rising homelessness. *Bridge to the Mountains* is the largest DHS-funded street outreach agency. The *DHS Field Unit* acts as a mobile Allegheny Link (coordinated intake unit), providing assessments for housing programs along with other outreach services. Other teams participating in 2025 counts were: *Reaching Out on the Streets* (ROOTS), *Operation Safety Net* and the *University of Pittsburgh's Street Medicine team*. Utilizing these outreach workers to conduct the Point-in-Time count ensured pre-existing knowledge of locations frequented by unsheltered individuals. Another possible reason for the increase is that some teams not only expanded their staff capacity, but their geographic scope as well, meaning that they were engaging with more people and learning more about where people stay even if they were not actively engaged with outreach. *ROOTS* and *Bridge to the Mountains*, for example, recently expanded their presence in the East End and suggested that increases in those areas may be at least partially explained by increases in street outreach capacity.
- 2) There are high rates of turnover in the unsheltered population.** Overlap between the counts just a few months apart (for those we were able to match) was relatively low; fewer than 20% of people were counted in both January and March. Street outreach representatives reported seasonal patterns (new people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the spring) and intermittent unsheltered homelessness (people with whom they do not interact at all and/or those with whom they are not connected long enough to enroll in outreach programs). Almost two-thirds of those counted in only one count were not enrolled with street outreach programs that use HMIS during this period.
- 3) Using “people working with street outreach” as a proxy for a count of unsheltered individuals results in an incomplete picture.** The 2025 Point-in-Time counts illustrated that the proxy we used for estimating people experiencing unsheltered homelessness—working with street outreach—misses people experiencing short or intermittent episodes of unsheltered homelessness. Street outreach workers do not enroll someone until they have seen them a few times and established the requisite rapport and trust. A benefit of conducting two counts in such proximity was that we were able to see the volume and scope of short-term and infrequent unsheltered homelessness.
- 4) The Point-in-Time count of unsheltered people has increased, but changes in approach make interpretation of the results challenging.** January and March counts showed an increased number of people sleeping outside compared to 2024 and—even as shelter capacity has increased—an increase in the proportion of those sleeping outside relative to those using shelter. In 2021, the unsheltered population accounted for 11% of those counted as homeless on the night of the count; in the 2025 counts, the proportion was closer to 23%. However, identifying increases or decreases in unsheltered homelessness year-over-year is problematic given changing methodologies over time. This means that we cannot confidently attribute these changes to real changes in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness versus changes in how we are counting people.

NEXT STEPS

HUD provides guidance to jurisdictions on how to conduct Point-in-Time counts, but the guidance is not prescriptive. Localities have flexibility to structure their methodologies to meet local needs, geographies and resources. Allegheny County has changed the way it counts individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness over time, including increasing/decreasing the number of volunteers used, canvassing more/fewer areas of the County, and counting over several days versus more of a 'night of count' approach; this also includes intentional inconsistencies in how the January and March 2025 counts were conducted. In addition to methodology changes, changes in temperature and season may result in more or fewer people sleeping in unsheltered locations. These fluctuations make it challenging to compare year-over-year trends and to compare the January and March counts.

To solve for this, DHS is partnering with Bloomberg Associates, experts in Point-in-Time count methodologies. The Bloomberg Associates team includes individuals who were the first in the country to create an annual count (in New York City); their methodology was later adopted by HUD. Bloomberg Associates has helped jurisdictions throughout the world implement methodologies with fidelity. They will work with us to examine the January and March methodologies and help interpret the results. They will also work with DHS to facilitate a diverse workgroup of stakeholders to evaluate the methodology we have employed, compare that to best practices in other jurisdictions, provide recommendations for improvements, and create a methodology that they will help us implement in January 2026. They will also externally validate our fidelity to the new methodology.

We expect that the methodology employed in the January 2026 count will differ from what we have used in the past. It may include the use of a larger and more diverse set of volunteers, a more explicit way to choose the locations to canvass throughout the County and/or a more intentional plan to survey people on the night of the count. Because of anticipated differences, the newly designed methodology will serve as our baseline going forward. We will make the new methodology available publicly.

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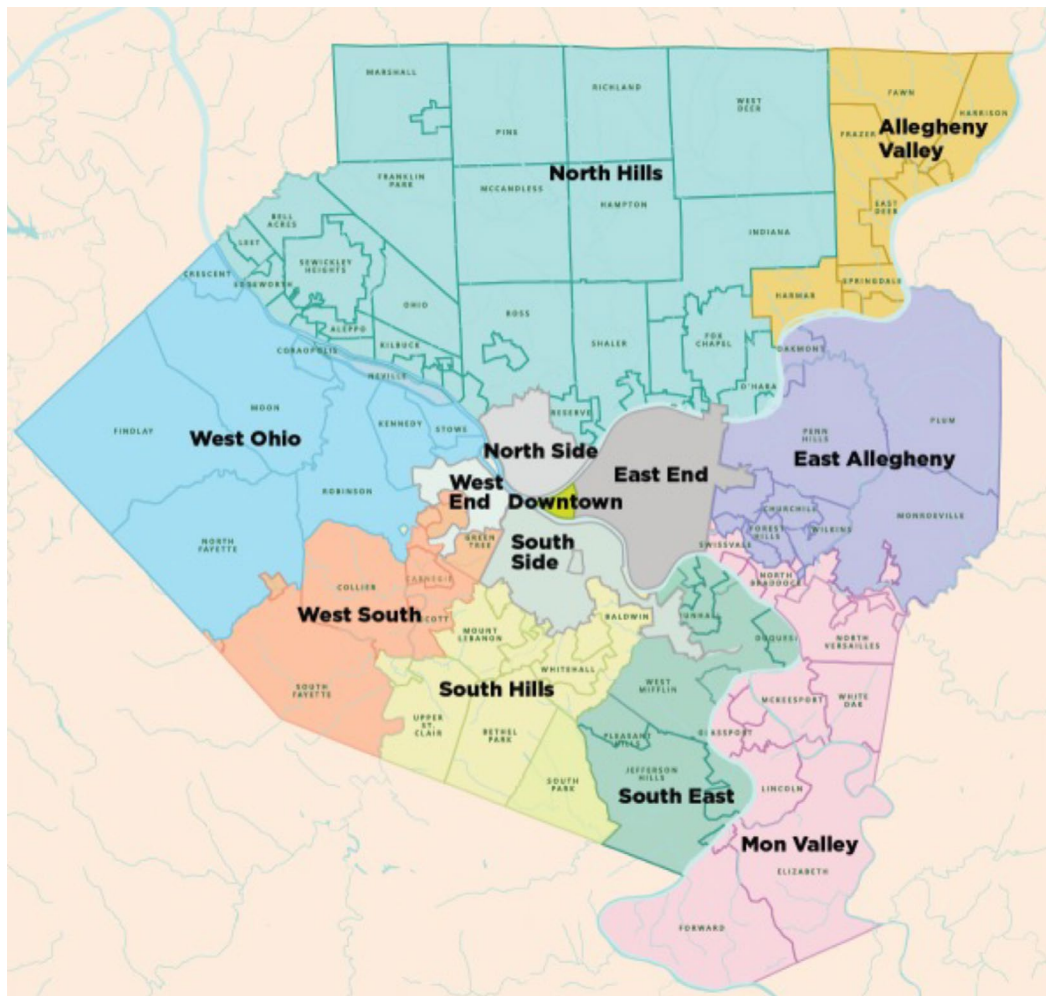
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APPENDIX A**APPENDIX A: 2025 SURVEYS**

The January and March 2025 surveys included a number of identical questions—confirming that a respondent was sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and what type of place best describes their sleeping location, demographics, veteran status, chronic homelessness and health—but differed in how they incorporated geographic information and in how they differentiated between type ('night of' versus service-based) and format (counting versus interviewing).

The January count was recorded in Qualtrics. The surveyor selected a region from this map image and then either selected from a list of known locations in that region or entered another location.



APPENDIX A

The March count was recorded in ArcGIS Survey123. Surveyors were prompted to select a survey type ('night of count' or service-based) and survey format (interviewing or counting).

Survey Type*

☐ "Night of count" (Tuesday March 18 or Wednesday March 19 6am-10am)

☐ Service-based count (Wednesday March 19, 7am-6pm)

Surveying Format*

Are you interviewing the person, or just counting them? (e.g. counting someone you see asleep outside)

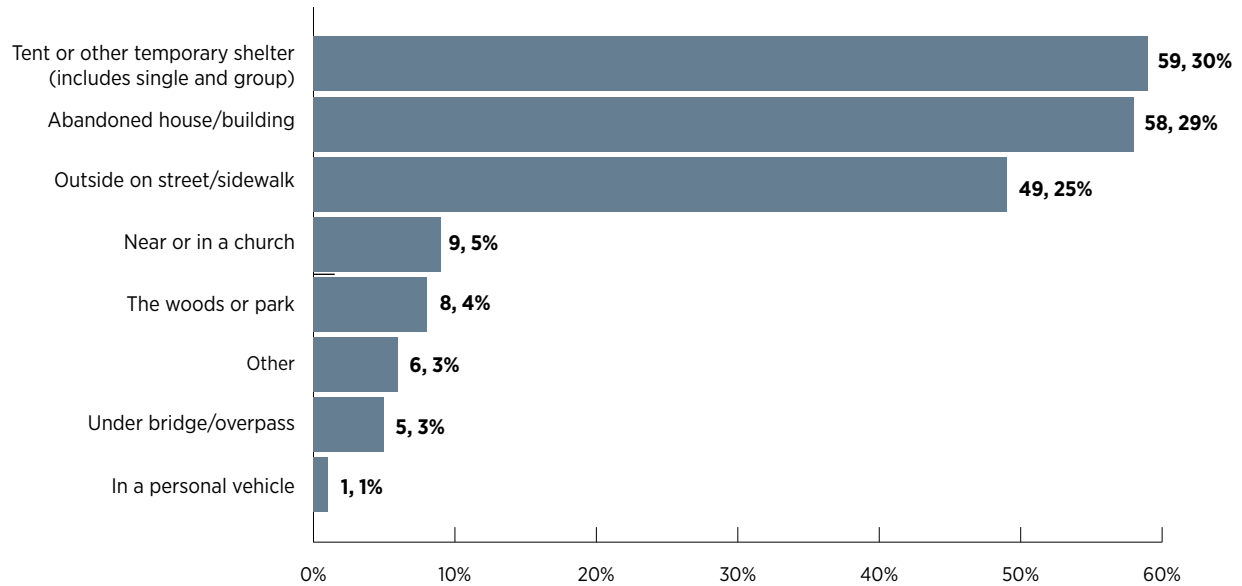
☐ Interviewing

☐ Counting

Surveyors also used the map image above to select a region, then identified sleeping location and provided open-ended location details. The March survey prompted only those surveyors who were interviewing people to ask questions about name, demographics, veteran status, chronic homelessness and health; surveyors counting but not interviewing did not see those questions.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B: UNSHELTERED LOCATION TYPE, JANUARY 2025 (N=195)**



**% out of those who completed surveys; 1 person used a paper survey and location type was left blank.

APPENDIX C

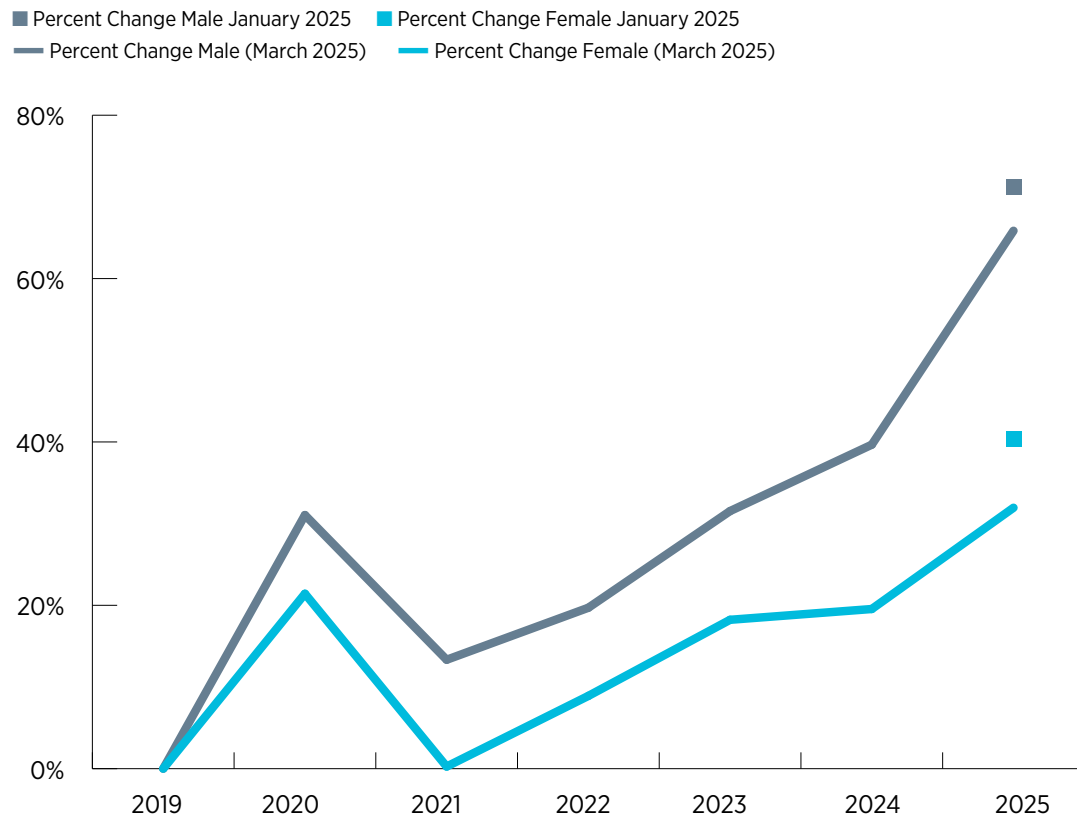
APPENDIX C: TABLE 1: 2025 UNSHELTERED COUNTS, DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION⁸

	1/28/2025 UNSHELTERED (N=281 INDIVIDUALS)		3/18/2025 UNSHELTERED (N=244 INDIVIDUALS)	
	#	% AMONG UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS	#	% AMONG UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS
Gender				
Female	90	32%	84	34%
Male	191	68%	159	65%
Non-binary or gender not singularly male or female	0	0%	1	<1%
Race/ethnicity				
Black alone	109	39%	88	36%
White alone	162	58%	150	61%
Multiracial	7	2%	1	<1%
Latino (of any race)	3	1%	5	2%
Age				
18-24	7	2%	7	3%
25-34	58	21%	47	19%
35-44	116	41%	108	44%
45-54	61	22%	34	14%
55-64	31	11%	38	16%
65+	8	3%	10	4%
Other				
Veteran	5	2%	8	3%
Chronically Homeless	147	52%	142	58%

APPENDIX C

Although White men make up the largest group of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, increases in the rates of women and Black individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness since 2019 has outpaced that of White men.⁹

FIGURE 1: Annual Percentage Change in Rates of Unsheltered Homelessness per 100K Allegheny County Residents Since 2019, by Gender



⁸ AFor submission of Point-in-Time data, HUD requires CoCs to estimate demographic information (age, race, gender) if it is unknown, based on proportions in the known demographic data. This table shows the adjusted data, as per this requirement.

⁹ Allegheny County gender and race data: 2019-2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates (most recent available)

APPENDIX C

FIGURE 2: Annual Percentage Change in Rates of Unsheltered Homelessness per 100K Allegheny County Residents Since 2019, by Race

■ Percent Change Black January 2025 ■ Percent Change White January 2025
— Percent Change Black (March 2025) — Percent Change White (March 2025)

