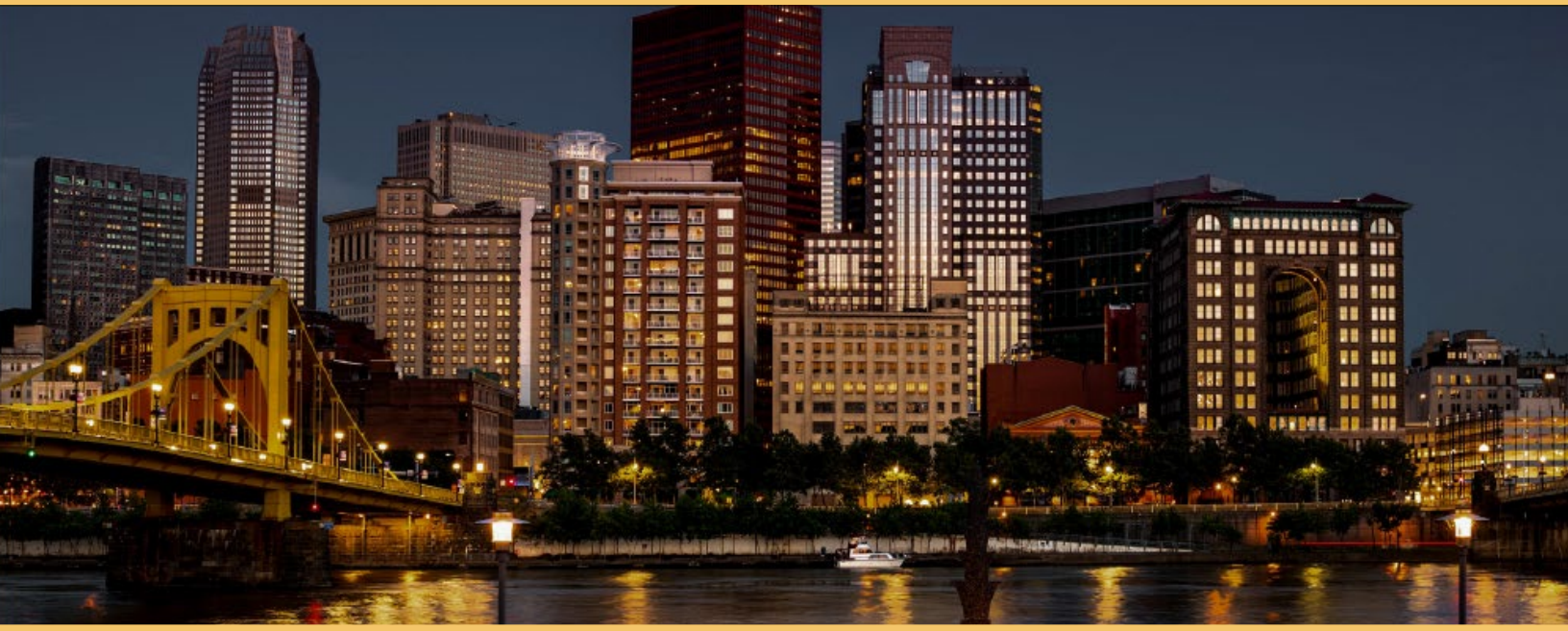
Community Counts

Allegheny County Department *of* Human Services

Allegheny County 2026 Community Counts: Point-in-Time Estimate of People Experiencing Homelessness



MAY 2026

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GLOSSARY

Continuum of Care: a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Continuums of Care represent communities of all kinds, including major cities, suburbs and rural areas.

Emergency shelter: Any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations and a primary purpose of providing temporary shelter

Sheltered homelessness: Situations in which individuals are living in temporary supervised public or privately-operated shelters

Unsheltered homelessness: Situations in which individuals are living in places not meant for human habitation, such as on the street, in encampments or in abandoned buildings

Street outreach teams: Teams of professionals who engage people experiencing homelessness, particularly those staying in unsheltered locations, for the purpose of building trust, assessing needs, and connecting them to shelter, housing, healthcare and other support services

Street medicine teams: Teams of licensed medical professionals who provide healthcare services in unsheltered settings to people experiencing homelessness who may not be able to access traditional healthcare. Services can include primary care, wound care, behavioral health support and care coordination

INTRODUCTION

As required by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Allegheny County conducts an annual Point-in-Time count of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night. The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (ACDHS) manages this annual count for the Allegheny County Continuum of Care. The count identifies 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 this count occurs during the last 10 days of January.[1] Data collected are submitted to HUD for inclusion in its yearly homelessness assessment report presented to Congress.[2]

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 consistently used enrollment data for its sheltered count but has changed the way it counts individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness over time; changes include 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. These fluctuations make it challenging to compare year-over-year trends.

To address this challenge, this year marked the start of "Community Counts," a new approach to Allegheny County's Point-in-Time count. ACDHS worked with national experts in Point-in-Time count methodologies to ensure that the unsheltered count:

- reflects input from local street outreach teams, service providers and stakeholders.
- emphasizes geographic coverage, representative sampling and replicability.
- uses targeted and statistically valid methods to address areas with known and unknown unsheltered homelessness.
- incorporates a safety-informed, phased survey approach (night-of and early morning).
- balances rigor with feasibility, ensuring the count is both meaningful and manageable.

Due to a major snowstorm at the end of January 2026, Allegheny County's 2026 count was delayed by one week and conducted on the night of Tuesday, February 3rd into the morning of Wednesday, February 4th. The overnight low temperature was 13 degrees and the region remained snow-covered. On that night, 930 people were staying in emergency shelters.[3] An estimated 178 people were unsheltered.

This report summarizes the methodologies used for counting sheltered and unsheltered individuals, presents and interprets the results of the sheltered count and unsheltered estimate, and shares next steps.

1 HUD allows for some exceptions to this timeframe for "good cause," such as inclement weather or a natural disaster.

2 For more information, see HUD's Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count.

3 An additional 115 people were staying in bridge or safe haven housing programs.

METHODOLOGY

Sheltered Count

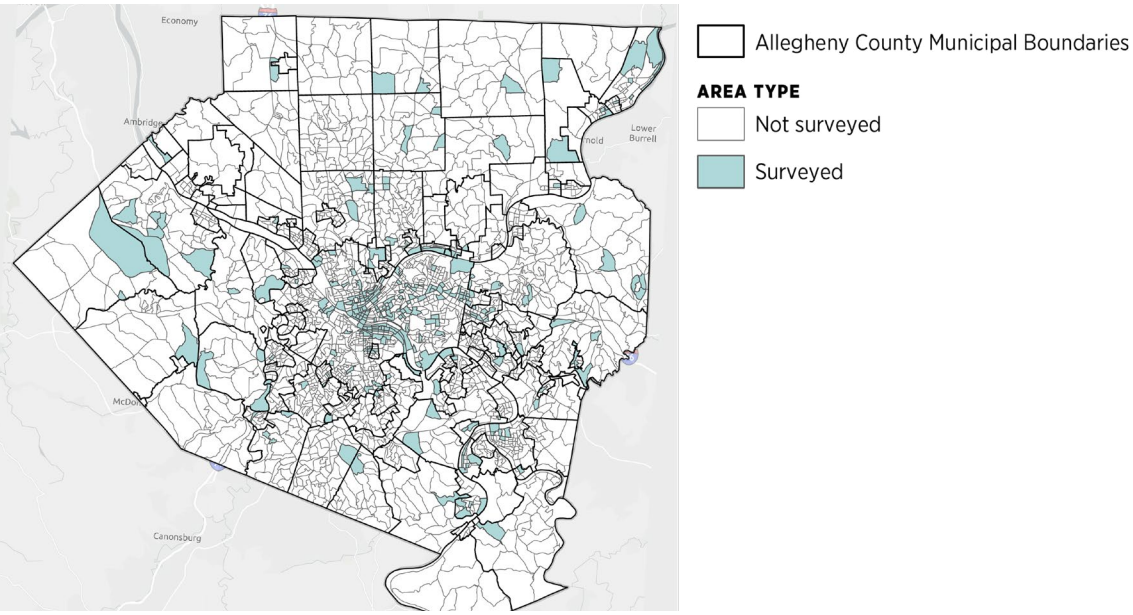
ACDHS conducts a complete census of people using emergency shelters on the night of the Point-in-Time count. Most community-based shelter providers use the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to record client enrollment, as well as demographic data and other information. Domestic violence shelters, 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, ACDHS 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 experiencing an immediate housing crisis versus those enrolled in bridge and safe haven programs, which provide temporary housing and supportive services that typically last up to two years (locally, safe haven programs serve veterans).

Unsheltered Count

A research team at ACDHS divided Allegheny County into "survey areas," some walkable and others drivable depending on density and geography. The team consulted with street outreach professionals and used other homeless data sources to identify which areas have **known** unsheltered homelessness, that is, places where people regularly sleep unsheltered. Of the remaining areas with **no known** unsheltered homelessness, the survey team pulled a statistically valid random sample (for more information, see **Appendix C**).

Nearly 250 people formed almost 90 teams to survey 269 areas. Survey areas were scattered throughout 61 municipalities outside the City of Pittsburgh (representing 48% of municipalities outside of Pittsburgh) and 53 neighborhoods within the City of Pittsburgh (representing 60% of Pittsburgh neighborhoods) (**Figure 1**). See **Appendices B & C** for volunteer details and full list of places surveyed.

FIGURE 1: **Survey Areas Covered**



Community Counts volunteers canvassed all selected areas—known and random sample—in their entirety, covering all locations that were accessible to the public (e.g., sidewalks, parks). Teams were trained to canvass their assigned survey areas and approach everyone they encountered to ask about their housing situation for the night. If an individual was asleep, appeared bedded down for the night, or was otherwise unapproachable, teams completed an observational survey for them.

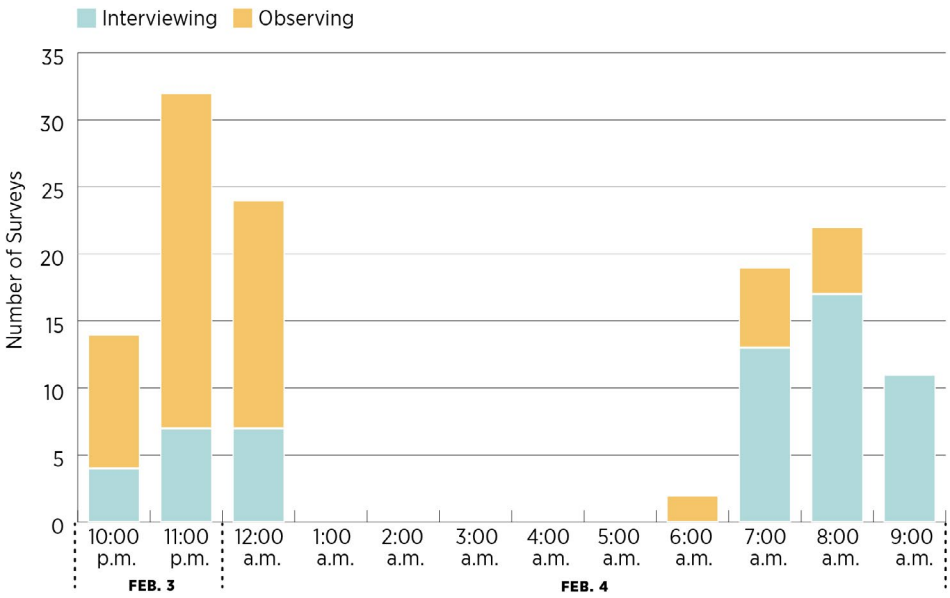
Surveyors used a digital, location-based survey to record information. For interviews, surveyors asked for an individual's initials, month and year of birth, and other demographic questions. Collecting this information helps to make sure a person is not counted more than once and informs the demographic estimate that HUD requires. All surveys—interviewing and observational—include information on type of sleeping location (e.g., tent, abandoned property, vehicle) as well as the interviewer's or observer's location (see survey questions in **Appendix A**).

Following HUD recommendations and best practices in other jurisdictions, ACDHS used a "night of count" approach. Nearly all teams canvassed between 10:00 pm and 2:00 am because: there is reduced foot traffic during that time (i.e., fewer people for surveyors to approach); that time ensures that people planning to sleep in emergency shelters are in for the night (most have a 10:00 pm curfew) and the later time allows for most people to know where they will be sleeping that night (if they are not already asleep).

Special street outreach-led teams covered a small number of survey areas deemed unsafe—due to physical inaccessibility or because of the prevalence of abandoned buildings where people sleep—early the next morning (from 6:00 am until 10:00 am). Individuals who sleep in those areas would most likely still be asleep or close to where they slept, increasing the chances that they were counted as unsheltered and reducing the likelihood of duplicate counting.

Night volunteer teams were more likely to observe people who were unsheltered, whereas morning surveyors were more likely to conduct interviews. At night, teams canvassed until nearly 2:00 am, although they did not encounter anyone unsheltered after 12:45 am (**Figure 2**).

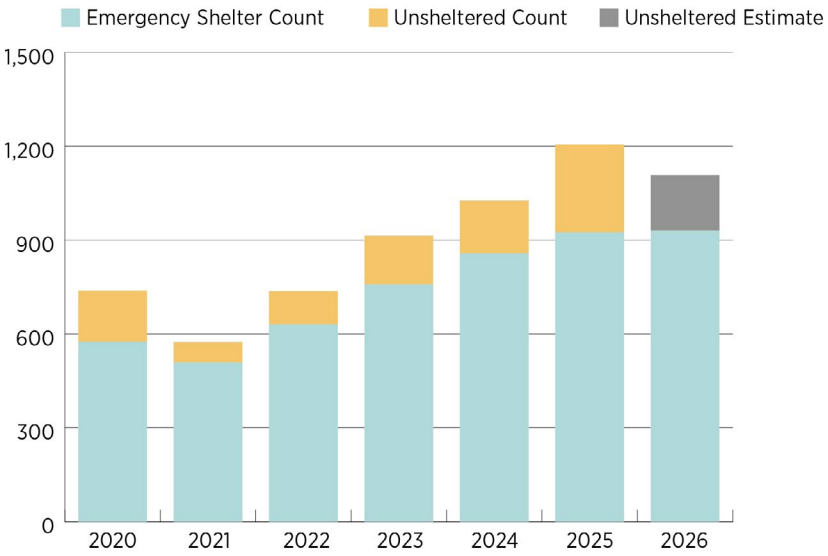
FIGURE 2: Survey Times by Interviewing vs. Observing (includes only valid responses coded as unsheltered)



RESULTS

The number of people counted as experiencing homelessness in Allegheny County on the night of the Point-in Time count rose steadily from 2021 through 2025 (see **Figure 3**).[4] This year, an estimated 1,108 people were experiencing homelessness on the night of the count and most of them were staying in emergency shelters (84%, n=930). The estimated unsheltered population (n=178) made up 16% of those experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. Due to this year's new methodology for the unsheltered count, we are refraining from making comparisons to previous unsheltered counts.

FIGURE 3: **Allegheny County Point-in-Time Count, 2020 through 2026**



An additional 85 individuals were staying in bridge housing and 30 were staying 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 and a more detailed description of the unsheltered estimate. We differentiate between adult-only households and adult-child households, as these groups differ demographically and in how they access and use shelter; no children were counted as unsheltered.

Emergency Shelter

The number of people staying in emergency shelter on the night of February 3, 2026 (n=930) was nearly the same as the number in January 2025 (n=924). During the 2026 count, 573 adults and 357 individuals in families with children were in shelter. Shelter capacity that night, including all domestic violence shelters, was 1,108 beds, slightly higher than the capacity during the January 2025 count (1,077 beds).

4 Allegheny County conducted two counts in 2025 – one in January and another in March. More detail is available in the 2025 data brief available at Allegheny Analytics. **Figure 3** features only the January 2025 numbers, which the ACDHS submitted to HUD.

The demographic profile of people staying in shelter on the night of February 3rd closely mirrors the January 2025 count (see **Table 1**). More men than women were staying in adult shelters, while family shelters served more women than men (primarily due to female-headed households). Black individuals continued to be overrepresented across the shelter system. While they make up 12% of Allegheny County's population, they accounted for 43% of those in adult shelters and nearly 60% of those in family shelters. The proportion of Latino individuals in family shelters was consistent with the County-wide Latino population (3%), but this is a sharp decline compared to last year (from 13% to 3% or 36 people).

Within adult shelters, the youngest and oldest adults continued to account for the smallest age groups. However, the number of older adults increased slightly since the January 2025 count (+18 people, from 8% to 12%).

TABLE 1: Selected Demographics by Household Type[5]

	ADULT-ONLY (N=573)		ADULT-CHILD (N=357)	
DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES AND SUBGROUPS	**COUNT** OF INDIVIDUALS IN ADULT SHELTER	**PERCENTAGE** AMONG INDIVIDUALS IN ADULT SHELTER	**COUNT** OF INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILY SHELTER	**PERCENTAGE** AMONG INDIVIDUALS IN FAMILY SHELTER
Gender[6]				
Woman (Girl, if child)	211	37%	207	58%
Man (Boy, if child)	359	63%	149	42%
Transgender	2	<1%	0	--
Non-binary or gender not singularly male or female	1	<1%	1	<1%
Race/ethnicity				
Black alone	245	43%	212	59%
White alone	264	46%	72	20%
Multiracial	26	5%	41	11%
Latino (of any race)	24	4%	11	3%
Another race alone	14	2%	21	6%
Age				
Under 18	0	--	225	63%
18–24	54	9%	21	6%
25–34	97	17%	46	13%
35–44	120	21%	52	15%
45–54	112	20%	10	3%
55–64	124	22%	2	1%
65+	66	12%	1	<1%

In addition to the above characteristics, among all adults (n=705), regardless of shelter type, 4% (n=25) were veterans and 13% (n=91) reported being survivors of intimate partner violence.

5 For submission of Point-in-Time data, HUD requires Continuum of Cares to estimate demographic information if it is unknown, based on proportions in the known demographic data. This table shows the adjusted data, as per this requirement.

6 If gender data was missing from HMIS, we used data from the Allegheny County Data Warehouse, which comes from multiple sources. Due to differences in how this information is captured, it may not consistently equate to individuals' self-reported gender identity.

Unsheltered Estimate

This year's methodology allowed us to estimate the total unsheltered population. It also provides information about where people were staying throughout the City and County and the types of places where they were sleeping (e.g., in tents, abandoned buildings, outside with no tent).

An estimated 178 people were unsheltered on the night of February 3, 2026. Men were overrepresented, as they made up an estimated two-thirds of the unsheltered population but only about half of Allegheny County's population. Black and White individuals each made up nearly 50% of the estimated unsheltered population, followed by a small proportion of Hispanic/Latino individuals. As with the sheltered population, Black individuals were overrepresented in this group.

Nearly 40% of the estimated population was 35 through 44, followed by those 45 through 54. The youngest (18 through 24) and oldest (65+) adults made up the smallest proportions (**Table 2**). See **Appendix C** for more detail on these estimates.

TABLE 2: **Selected Demographics of Estimated Unsheltered Population**

DEMOGRAPHICS	ESTIMATED COUNT OF UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS	ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE AMONG UNSHELTERED INDIVIDUALS
Gender		
Woman	60	34%
Man	118	66%
Race/Ethnicity		
Black alone	88	49%
White alone	84	47%
Latino (of any race)	6	3%
Age		
18–24	4	2%
25–34	18	10%
35–44	67	38%
45–54	45	25%
55–64	31	17%
65+	13	7%

Geography

The survey recorded geographic data during interview or observation. Data collected during Community Counts show that Allegheny County's unsheltered population was concentrated in the City of Pittsburgh, particularly in parts of the South Side and south hilltop area, Homewood, the Central Business District, and East Allegheny on the North Side (**Figures 4 and 5**). In some cases, an individual may have slept in a different location than where they were counted. **Tables 3 and 4** provide more detail on where interviews or observations took place during Community Counts.

FIGURE 4: **Location of Interview/Observation, Allegheny County, 2026**

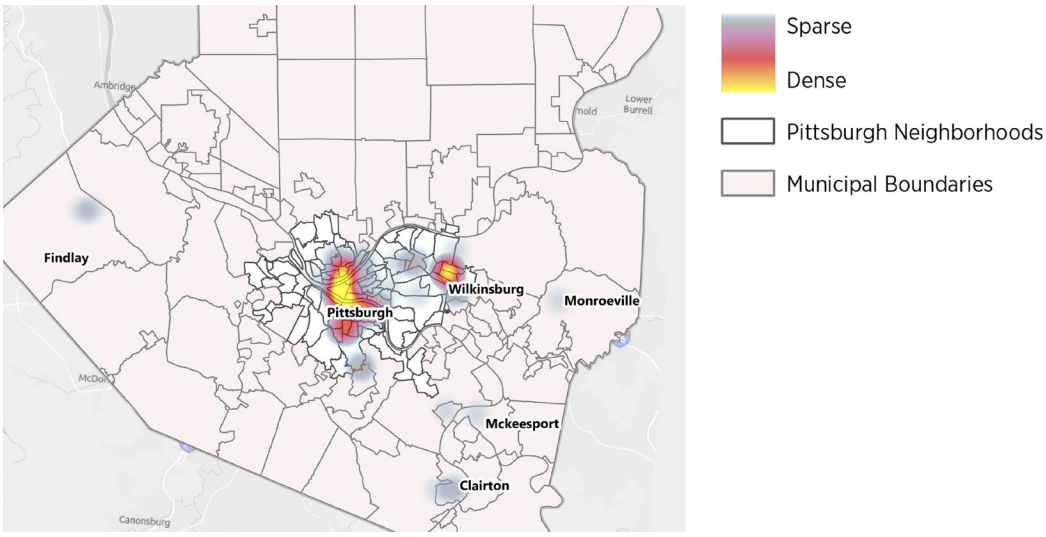


TABLE 3: **Location of Interview/Observation, by Allegheny County Municipality, 2026**

MUNICIPALITY	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Pittsburgh	112
Wilkinsburg	3
Clairton	3
Findlay	2
Dravosburg	1
Penn Hills	1
Monroeville	1
McKeesport	1
County-Wide Total[7]	124

7 Raw count, before estimate. See **Appendix C** for more details.

FIGURE 5: Location of Interview/Observation, City of Pittsburgh, 2026

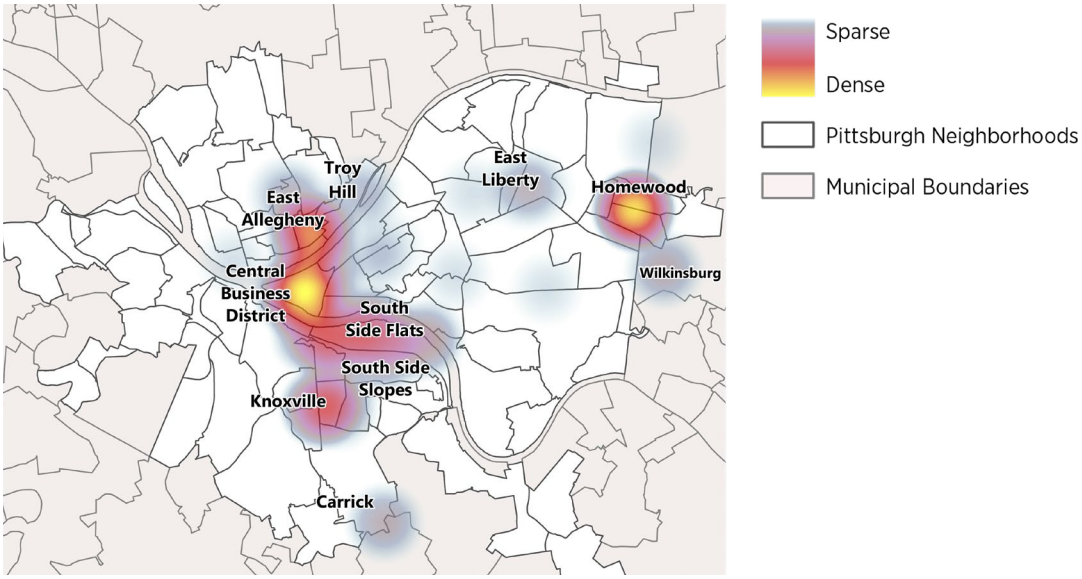


TABLE 4: Location of Interview/Observation, by City of Pittsburgh Neighborhood, 2026

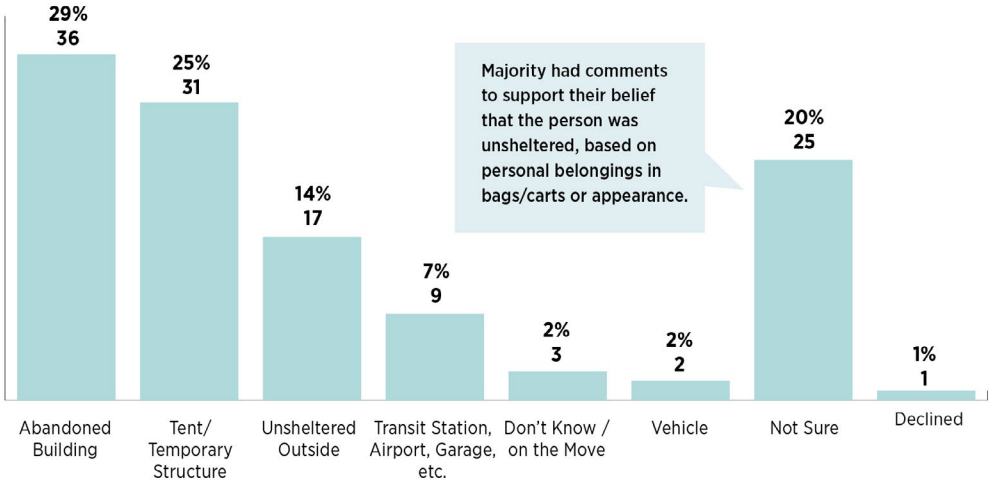
CITY OF PITTSBURGH NEIGHBORHOOD	COUNT OF PEOPLE
Central Business District	24
South Side Flats	19
Homewood South	18
East Allegheny	14
Knoxville	12
South Side Slopes	8
East Liberty	3
Carrick	3
Fineview	3
Troy Hill	2
Bloomfield	1
Chateau	1
Middle Hill	1
Squirrel Hill North	1
North Oakland	1
Bedford Dwellings	1
City-Wide Total[8]	112

8 Raw count, before estimate. See **Appendix C** for more details.

Nearly 30% of those counted as unsheltered were staying in abandoned houses/buildings. A quarter were sleeping in a tent or temporary structure, and 14% slept outside with no tent or structure. A small number of people slept inside a garage, a bus depot, or the airport. A special team led coverage of the latter two locations, as they required a divergence from general volunteers' training to cover only public pedestrian-accessible spaces.

If a surveyor approached someone who was awake but unwilling to engage, the survey became an observational one and the surveyor had to decide if the person was likely unsheltered or not, based on what they could see. The training provided examples of signs that a person was unsheltered, such as carrying personal belongings and/or being in an outside place where it appeared they were planning to sleep. Similarly, if a person was awake but still unapproachable for some reason, surveyors determined their status based on observation. In these cases, surveyors would have selected "not sure" for the person's sleeping location. Most of these responses included comments to support their belief that the person was unsheltered, often referring to appearance or personal belongings in bags/carts. **Figure 6** features these sleeping location survey results.

FIGURE 6: **Reported or Observed Unsheltered Sleeping Locations, 2026**



As shown in **Table 5**, most people staying in abandoned buildings were found in Homewood and Knoxville. Tents or temporary structures were most common in the South Side (Flats and Slopes) and the North Side, particularly East Allegheny. The Central Business District is where people were most likely to sleep in unsheltered locations without a tent or structure. The Central Business District, East Allegheny and the South Side Flats were also places with the largest number of people with unknown sleeping locations.

TABLE 5: **Neighborhoods with the Largest Numbers of People Unsheltered, by Sleeping Location, 2026**

Neighborhoods	Abandoned Building	Tent/ Temp Structure	Unknown or Did Not Disclose	Unsheltered Outside	Transit Station, Garage, etc.	Do Not Know/ On the Move	Total
Central Business District	1	3	8	8	4		**24**
South Side Flats		11	6		1	1	**19**
Homewood South	17				1		**18**
East Allegheny		7	5			2	**14**
Knoxville	12						**12**
South Side Slopes	1	6		1			**8**
Total	**31**	**27**	**19**	**9**	**6**	**3**	**95**

DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS

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 and changes over time. This year's count occurred amidst a weeks-long streak of extremely cold temperatures and followed a blizzard that left more than a foot of snow across the region, likely factors in the number of people using shelter as opposed to staying outside that night. For help interpreting this year's count data, the research team consulted with colleagues from ACDHS's Office of Community Services, representatives from street outreach/medicine teams, and members of the Homeless Advisory Board Executive Committee. This section summarizes takeaways from this year's count and presents some next steps.

1) **Most (84%) of Allegheny County's total estimated homeless population on the night of the count were in shelter as opposed to staying outside.** Although the County had sufficient capacity to serve more people in shelter, some people remained outside despite the frigid temperatures and snow. Individuals may stay outside for many reasons, including lack of alignment between available shelter and individual needs (e.g., location and accessibility), concerns related to safety or prior negative experiences within congregate shelter settings, behavioral health challenges, or barriers related to partners, pets and/or personal belongings. Street outreach teams continue to work with those individuals to build trust over time, understand barriers to coming indoors, and, when they are ready, provide connections to services.

2) **This year's estimated unsheltered population of 178 people is a new baseline.** Using the same methodology next year will allow us to begin to compare year-over-year trends. Street outreach data in HMIS allow for a point of comparison, albeit an imperfect one; not all street outreach teams use HMIS, but those that do are required to update a client's living situation every 30 days. HMIS data show that as of February 2, 2026, 155 street outreach clients had experienced unsheltered homelessness at some point in the last 30 days.[9]

9 ACDHS recently updated their public-facing dashboard on unsheltered trends. To learn more, visit Trends in people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.

3) **The unsheltered population appears to have been concentrated in the same general regions within the County as last year, but in some cases, shifted within those areas.** Survey data suggest: a shift toward the South Side Hilltop and away from the South Side Flats; a more concentrated North Side unsheltered population, with most people encountered in East Allegheny; and, within the downtown region, fewer people sleeping outside in areas like Uptown or the Strip District compared to within the Central Business District. These trends can inform our vision for a new street outreach network, expressed in a recent solicitation, wherein outreach providers will be dedicated to key geographic areas but still able to respond to reports of unsheltered individuals anywhere in the County.
4) **Abandoned buildings and tents/temporary shelters were the most common unsheltered sleeping locations.** Twenty percent of those counted as unsheltered had an unknown sleeping location as they were not yet bedded down when surveyors observed or attempted to interview them. To improve information gathering on this subject, the research team is considering changes in training, surveying times and/or the survey itself.
5) **We have more to learn about where people are unsheltered.** Surveyors identified a small number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness outside of known areas even with a simple random sample. With this approach, every survey area without known unsheltered homelessness was equally likely to be a part of the random sample. The research team is exploring ways to stratify next year's random sample to reflect that some areas and types of places are less likely to have people sleeping unsheltered.

After the count, we held multiple feedback sessions to document successes, challenges and ideas for next year. Those sessions were attended by staff who supported and trained volunteers, marketing and recruitment teams, and street outreach-led teams that surveyed in the morning. Additionally, we sent out an experience survey to all volunteers through text and email. Highlights from the survey:

- 84% of respondents had never before participated in a count.
- 90% of respondents said they would volunteer again next year.
- Respondents were likely to recommend the event to a friend (average score eight out of 10).

The survey allowed for open-ended suggestions, which often aligned with ideas that arose during feedback sessions. For next year's Community Counts, we plan to make improvements to the following:

- **Training:** Share more information on the rationale behind the surveying hours, the survey areas and the random sampling; provide more direction on approaching and counting people in vehicles; and distribute more training materials that volunteers can absorb before the night of the count.
- **Survey area maps:** Explore ways to make maps digital and possibly integrate with the survey itself. Additionally, give teams suggestions on routes, if possible, and more time to plan with their teams before going outside.
- **Supplies:** Increase the number of supplies (especially bus passes) to hand out to people who are unsheltered; consider additional items (e.g., hats, gloves, healthier snacks).
- **Volunteer logistics:** Divide the central hub into two hubs and do not have more than 15 teams assigned to each hub; increase the number of hub staff to manage check in/check out; allow special morning teams more flexibility in their start times; make waivers digital and have volunteers sign in advance.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Moving Community Counts from concept to reality was no small task. So many people contributed to the success of this year's plan and count. We would like to recognize them here.

- Project manager Morgan Bryson and the Core Team of staff from multiple ACDHS offices, who met regularly for months to make important decisions and to implement every aspect of Community Counts, determining the right geographic survey areas, testing the survey instrument, making sure coffee was available at every hub and so much more
- Consultants from Bloomberg Associates and Marist University who were by our side from the very first stakeholder meetings through review of this report, providing advice and reassurance at every step
- The Executive Team at ACDHS, whose commitment to this effort was evident from start to finish – securing recruitment partners, encouraging volunteers, showing up to volunteer themselves
- Street Outreach Teams, who were critical to implementing this year's methodology (which required a huge shift from the way we've done things in the past) and whose commitment to the people they serve helped to shape this effort with care
- Allegheny County's Marketing Team, who managed to capture the essence of this effort with their branding and imagery, media kit, video and photography
- Recruiting Partners from higher education, healthcare and the nonprofit sector, who helped us achieve our goals and were willing to promote this volunteer experience despite its atypical nature
- All the volunteers and morning surveyors, including several elected officials, who gave up sleep to work in the hubs, braving the frigid temperatures and residual snowbanks to be a part of this collective effort
- Last but not least, everyone who was willing to be counted as part of this effort, even when it meant talking to a stranger with a clipboard at midnight

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT[10]

This paper survey should only be completed if ALL of the following are true:
- the electronic survey fails
- you are observing or interviewing a person who is sleeping in a place where people are not meant to sleep (e.g. outside, in a tent, abandoned building, transit station, etc.),
- the person has not already completed the survey.

Comments can be written on the back of this paper.

Community Counts

Surveyor location: _____
(include detailed description of cross streets, neighborhood, and landmarks)

Surveyor name: _____

◯ Interviewing (COMPLETE Q1 to Q12)
◯ Observing (COMPLETE Q1, Q8, Q9, Q13)

1. Which of the following best describes where you are sleeping tonight?
◯ Tent/temporary structure
◯ Abandoned building
◯ Non-abandoned building (airport, train station, etc.)
◯ Unsheltered outside (without tent)
◯ Vehicle
◯ Does not know/plans to be on the move
◯ Declined to answer

2. Is this your first time experiencing homelessness?
◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Don't know/prefer not to answer

3. How long have you been homeless?
◯ Less than 1 year ◯ More than 1 year ◯ Unsure/prefer not to answer

4. In total, how much time over the past 3 years have you spent sleeping in shelters, outside, or in other places not meant for people to sleep?
◯ Less than 1 year
◯ 1-2 years
◯ Over 2 years
◯ Don't know/prefer not to answer

5. Household Number: _____
Note: If the person is staying alone, write "1". If you are interviewing multiple people who share a household, complete a survey for each of them and record the total household number in each survey. For example, if you encounter two people who share a household, you should complete two surveys, each with a "2" for household number.

6. Do you have a disability?
◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Unsure/prefer not to answer

7. Did you serve in the military?
◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Unsure/prefer not to answer

8. Gender:
◯ Man ◯ Woman ◯ Non-binary ◯ Other (please describe) _____ ◯ Unsure/prefer not to answer

9. Race/ethnicity:
☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Middle Eastern or North African
☐ White
☐ Other (please describe)_____
☐ Unsure/prefer not to answer

Note: Initials and birth month/year help us keep track of whether we're talking to the same people twice.

10. Respondent's initials (first, middle, last): _____
11. Respondent's birth month: _____
12. Respondent's birth year: _____
13. If you are observing, estimate age in years:
◯ <17 ◯ 18-24 ◯ 25-34 ◯ 35-44
◯ 45-54 ◯ 55-64 ◯ >65 ◯ Unsure

10 Volunteers used a digital version of this survey.

APPENDIX B: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Our goal was to recruit 300+ volunteers for Community Counts. Eleven organizations (non-profit, healthcare and university) agreed to act as recruitment partners for the event, helping to spread the word and encourage sign-up. ACDHS and Allegheny County's marketing team recruited broadly—through social media, media advisories, and provider alerts—and with a more targeted approach to boroughs and municipalities, election workers, and County and City of Pittsburgh employees. We also informed public safety officials throughout the County about the event.

Volunteers reported to six hubs throughout the County at 9:00 pm on the night of the event. The hubs served as check-in, training and check-out locations. Each survey team had two to four volunteers and was identifiable by at least one person on the team wearing a safety vest as well as "Community Counts" branded hats.

ACDHS staff worked as trainers and support staff at each hub. At least one person at each hub was part of the Community Counts core team and knowledgeable about the survey methodology and survey areas. All trainers and hub staff had to watch a short volunteer training video and participate in training specific to their role prior to the count.

The special street outreach/medicine teams were also required to watch the training video and to participate in a training session prior to the count. The session was tailored to the morning coverage and served as a test run for the night of the count.

Volunteers who participated at night were required to watch the short training video prior to the count and received an additional briefing with more details when they arrived at their assigned hub. To ensure that volunteers received standardized information and followed the same methodology, all trainers read a training script verbatim and used the same slides. Volunteers also had a chance to practice the survey with a partner. Hub staff assigned volunteers to teams and survey areas on the night of count, and all teams had supplies and resources to hand out to people they encountered.

TABLE: **Check-in location**

CHECK-IN LOCATIONS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	NUMBER OF TEAMS
Central Hub	78	29
North Hub	43	13
South Hub	38	13
East Hub	20	8
West Hub	14	6
Southeast Hub	21	8
Subtotal: Night Volunteers	**214**	**77**
Morning Surveyors	29	10
Hub Staff	24	N/A
TOTAL: Night volunteers, morning surveyors and hub staff	**267**	**87**

APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY AND DATA CLEANING PROCESS

Survey Areas and Sampling Strategy

ACDHS used New York City's Point-in-Time methodology (Homeless Population Estimate or HOPE, NYC) as a model when developing this year's approach. Because of the size of Allegheny County, a complete unsheltered census that covers every area is not feasible. Instead, we divided the County into 2,551 "survey areas" using a combination of tools in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). As census block groups were too large for survey teams to cover, the research team had to create a more feasible geographic unit. Survey areas are a cluster of census blocks, which are the smallest geographic unit defined by the US Census Bureau. For reference, there are 24,787 census blocks in Allegheny County. The average survey area is less than one square mile. For denser locations (mostly within the City of Pittsburgh) the largest area surveyed was around 0.8 square miles, and in less dense areas, which surveyors typically covered via car, the largest area surveyed was 6.5 square miles. By merging census blocks to create survey areas, we ensured that these areas were comparable based on their population, not necessarily their land area.

Over the course of several months, the research team worked with seven street outreach/medicine teams and spoke with seven additional service partners to identify "known" survey areas, or places where people regularly sleep unsheltered (n=184). Engagement with street outreach/medicine teams involved looking together at maps, revisiting those maps once the survey areas were more defined, and soliciting feedback on the final known survey areas. Additionally, the teams' experiences serving this population informed which areas would be best to cover in the morning.

Known areas were surveyed in their entirety. Of the remaining areas with no known unsheltered homelessness, the survey team pulled a statistically valid simple random sample (n=85).

TABLE: **Sampling Approach Summary**

"SURVEY AREAS"	TOTAL	CITY	COUNTY
Total	2,551	668	1,883
Surveyed	269	148	121
"Known"	184	129	55
Random Sample	85	19	66
Random sample, NOT surveyed	*2,282*	*520*	*1,762*
% survey areas covered, among all surveyable areas	11%	--	--

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TABLE: Survey Areas Canvassed by Pittsburgh Neighborhood

CITY OF PGH NEIGHBORHOOD	NUMBER OF SURVEY AREAS CANVASSED
Allegheny Center	4
Allegheny West	1
Allentown	2
Bedford Dwellings	1
Beechview	2
Bloomfield	5
Bluff	1
Brighton Heights	3
Brookline	1
Carrick	2
Central Business District	17
Central Lawrenceville	2
Central Oakland	2
Chateau	1
Crawford-Roberts	3
East Allegheny	6
East Liberty	4
Elliott	4
Fineview	1
Glen Hazel	1
Greenfield	1
Hazelwood	3
Highland Park	1
Homewood North	5
Homewood South	5
Homewood West	1
Knoxville	5
Larimer	2
Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar	1
Lower Lawrenceville	1
Marshall-Shadeland	1

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CITY OF PGH NEIGHBORHOOD	NUMBER OF SURVEY AREAS CANVASSED
Middle Hill	4
Mount Washington	2
New Homestead	1
North Oakland	3
North Shore	3
Overbrook	1
Perry South	2
Polish Hill	1
Shadyside	2
South Oakland	2
South Shore	1
South Side Flats	17
South Side Slopes	4
Spring Garden	1
Squirrel Hill North	2
Squirrel Hill South	3
Strip District	2
Terrace Village	1
Troy Hill	4
Upper Hill	1
West End	1
West Oakland	1
Grand Total	**148**

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TABLE: Survey Areas Canvassed by Allegheny County Municipality

COUNTY MUNICIPALITY	NUMBER OF SURVEY AREAS CANVASSED
Aspinwall	2
Baldwin	2
Bethel Park	1
Brackenridge	1
Braddock Hills	1
Brentwood	1
Bridgeville	1
Carnegie	1
Castle Shannon	1
Cheswick	1
Clairton	4
Collier	3
Dormont	2
Dravosburg	2
East McKeesport	1
Elizabeth	1
Emsworth	1
Etna	1
Findlay	2
Forest Hills	1
Fox Chapel	1
Frazer	2
Glassport	5
Hampton	3
Harrison	4
Homestead	1
Indiana	1
Jefferson Hills	1
Kennedy	1
Leetsdale	1
Marshall	1
McKees Rocks	1
McKeesport	5
Monroeville	3
Moon	6

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COUNTY MUNICIPALITY	NUMBER OF SURVEY AREAS CANVASSED
Mount Lebanon	1
Mount Oliver	2
Munhall	1
North Braddock	1
North Fayette	1
North Versailles	1
O'Hara	1
Penn Hills	4
Pitcairn	2
Plum	5
Reserve	2
Richland	2
Robinson	1
Ross	3
Scott	1
Shaler	4
Sharpsburg	2
South Park	1
Stowe	1
Tarentum	3
Upper St. Clair	2
Versailles	1
West Deer	1
West Mifflin	3
Wilkins	1
Wilkinsburg	8
Grand Total	**121**

Population & Demographic Estimates

Since we surveyed all areas considered "known," the estimate of the number of unsheltered persons in the known areas is simply the total number of unsheltered persons counted within known areas (122).

For the number of unsheltered persons in the unknown areas, an unbiased estimator of the unknown population total is:

$$\hat{t} = N\bar{y} = \frac{N}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i$$

- $\hat{t}$ = sample estimate of the population total of unsheltered persons in unknown areas
- N = total number of unknown areas (2367)
- n = random sample size (85)
- y_i = number of unsheltered persons counted in each randomly sampled unknown area
- $\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i$ = sum of all unsheltered persons counted in randomly sampled unknown areas (2)
- $\bar{y}$ = sample mean of unknown areas i.e., the sample average of unsheltered persons per unknown area (0.0235)

$$\bar{y} = \frac{1}{n} * \sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i = \frac{1}{85} * 2 = 0.0235$$

Estimate of the unknown population total:

$$\hat{t} = \frac{2367}{85} * 2 = 55.7 \approx 56$$

(This calculation produces an estimated total of approximately 56 unsheltered individuals across unknown areas.)

Confidence Interval for the Estimate

The sample variance $Var(y)$ = 0.0232[11] is approximately equal to the sample mean $\bar{y}$= 0.0235, which supports that y_i is Poisson distributed. The sum of independent Poisson random variables is itself a Poisson random variable, therefore $\sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i$ is also Poisson distributed.

Calculating the 95% confidence interval bounds, for $\lambda = \sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i = 2$

$$Lower\ Bound: \frac{1}{2}\chi^2(0.025, 2\lambda) = \frac{1}{2}\chi^2(0.025, 4) = \frac{0.484}{2} = 0.242$$

$$Upper\ Bound: \frac{1}{2}\chi^2(0.975, 2(\lambda+1)) = \frac{1}{2}\chi^2(0.975, 6) = \frac{14.45}{2} = 7.22$$

The exact Poisson confidence interval calculations for the total count across the randomly sampled unknown areas result in a lower bound of 0.242 and an upper bound of 7.22.

Dividing both bounds by n=85, the confidence interval for the number of unsheltered individuals found within a single unknown area is [0.00285, 0.0850]. When scaled to the total number of unknown areas by multiplying both bounds by N=2367, this translates to a confidence interval of [6, 202] for the total population of unsheltered persons in unknown areas.

Calculating Demographic Estimates

Just over half of the unsheltered count came from observations (52%) and the remainder (48%) came from interviews. Interview data were more complete than observational data across all demographic categories (age, gender, race/ethnicity). The main purpose of collecting observation data (e.g., perceived age, gender, race/ethnicity) was to assist in the de-duplication process so no one was counted twice. To translate the count into full unsheltered population demographic estimates, the research team ultimately imputed (i.e., estimated all missing values) based on interviewing data only. The team came to this decision after multiple comparisons—between interview and observation data, between interview data and HMIS street outreach client data, and between interview + observational data and HMIS street outreach client data. Unfortunately, no single approach most closely aligned with HMIS for all demographic categories.

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$$Var(y) = \frac{\Sigma(y_i - \bar{y})^2}{n-1}$$

$$Var(y) = \frac{2 * (1 - 0.0235)^2 + 83 * (0 - 0.0235)^2}{85 - 1} = \frac{1.91 + 0.0460}{84} = 0.0232$$

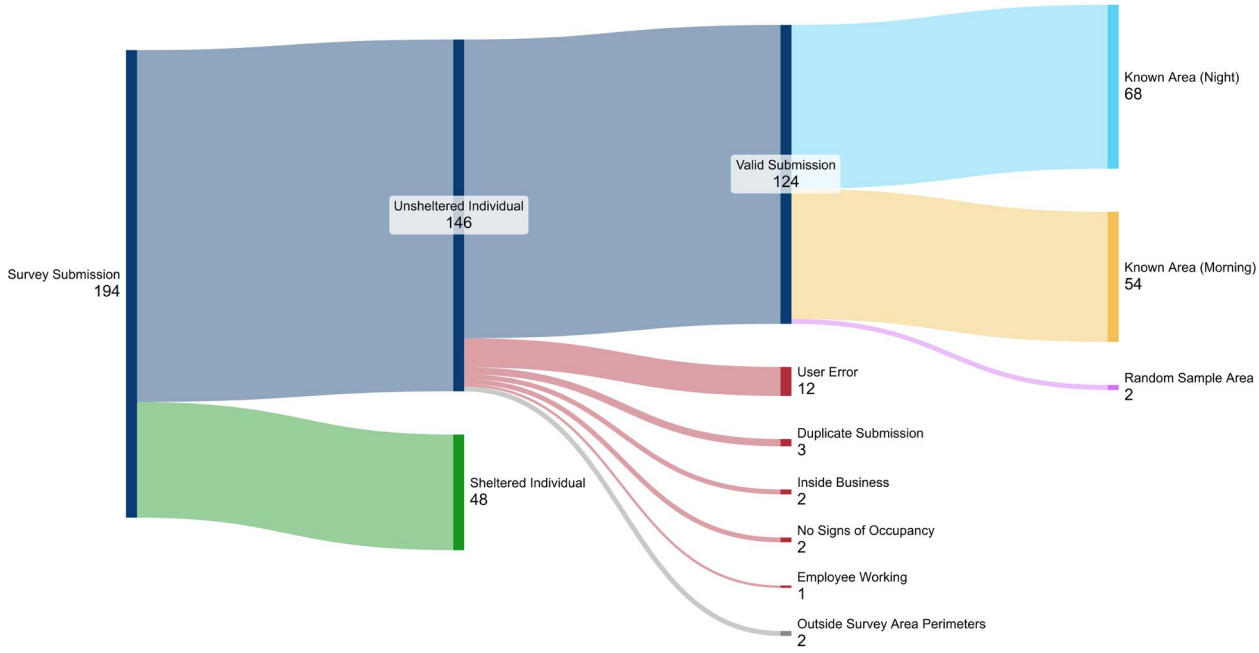
Data Cleaning Process

We rigorously cleaned and analyzed survey data through the following steps:

- Merge morning and night survey data (the surveys differed in asking "where will you sleep?" versus "where did you sleep?")
- Remove test responses
- Add unique survey group identifiers (which linked each team to its assigned survey areas) to all responses
- Identify all responses as within either a known or random sample area
- De-duplicate using initials, demographic info, location and surveyor comments
- Flag open text fields (comments, observations) from survey that did not align with training or raised questions for analysis
- Investigate confusing/geographically misaligned responses by contacting teams (emailed or called 17 teams)

The following diagram illustrates the progression of the analysis, moving from real survey submissions (not tests) to a valid count of people identified as unsheltered. Conferring with survey teams allowed us to remove several types of invalid responses from the count. The red and grey stems represent responses that we eventually removed.

Data Cleaning Steps Progression



- *User error:* Four teams misunderstood that "observing" assumed observing someone unsheltered and instead selected "observing" + "not sure of sleeping location" for anyone team observed; after following up, those teams confirmed that they did not think those 12 people were unsheltered
- *Inside business:* Two teams observed and recorded individuals as unsheltered even though they were on the patio of or inside (open) businesses
- *No signs of occupancy:* Two teams commented that while a tent or structure was observed, there were no clear signs of occupancy
- *Employee working:* One team shared a location and description indicating that the person was likely an employee resting
- *Outside survey area perimeters:* One team counted two individuals in an area that was neither a known nor a random sample survey area. This year's methodology used the random sample to estimate the number of people in unassigned areas such as this one.