

Marin County 2013 Point in Time Count Preliminary Summary

Introduction

On January 24, 2013, Marin County Health & Human Services in partnership with housing and service providers, faith based groups and Marin schools conducted a biennial census of persons experiencing homelessness in Marin County.

The census, also known as the Point in Time Count, provides valuable information about those experiencing homelessness or who at risk of homelessness. The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires communities across the country that receive federal funding to conduct a biennial one day count of unsheltered and sheltered persons experiencing homelessness. Specifically HUD requires communities to:

- Gather statically reliable, unduplicated counts or estimates of homeless persons living in places not meant for human habitation (streets, cars or living outdoors), emergency shelters and transitional housing locations on a single day.
- Identify how the data was gathered for the count.
- Conduct a one day count every two years of *both* sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness during the last 10 days of January.

In addition to meeting federal mandated requirements, Marin County uses the Count as an opportunity to gather information not formally recognized by HUD. This “Community Count” is a broader census that includes individuals and families living in hotels or motels, jails, hospitals or boats or other structures with no plumbing or electricity as well as those at risk of becoming homeless.

This report is designed to provide readers with preliminary findings from 2013 the Point in Time Homeless Count and is based on initial calculations from primarily survey data. A comprehensive report with full results is expected to be released by July 2013.

Methodology

Marin follows HUD-approved methodology for counting shelter and unsheltered populations. Multiple data collection methods were used to count Marin’s homeless population. These include: conducting a brief housing survey, utilizing data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), using information collected by special outreach teams who worked to identify persons living in encampments, and incorporating data from teams that work among the day laborer population.

Count Limitations

The Count is intended to provide a one-day **snapshot** of unduplicated numbers of homeless families and individuals in sheltered, unsheltered and other locations in Marin County and is in no way a comprehensive or complete measure. Research has shown that one-day counts often underestimate the number of people experiencing homelessness. Homelessness by nature is not static. Some people who had housing on the night of the count may later become homeless at other times during the year.

Counting the number of people experiencing homelessness is also difficult for other reasons. Marin is an especially challenging place to count the homeless population due to its geography, which includes various places not easily accessible (forests, open space, etc.). Due to safety concerns related to entering these areas at times when people are likely to be present (early in the morning or late in the evening when it is still dark); the large geographic distances between sites; and the limited number of volunteer outreach teams, our ability to count persons in these isolated and encampment areas has always been particularly challenging.

In addition, the stigma of homelessness often prevents people from accessing services and/or self-identifying as homeless. Many individuals with prior knowledge of the count often stay isolated on the day of the count or refuse to participate in the survey. Participation of survey respondents at drop-in and dining hall sites was lower in this year's count compared to 2011. However, this is not consistent with the number of people that sought services on other days during the week of the Count. Improved strategies for capturing the number of people who are unsheltered is being explored and planning for the subsequent Counts will soon take place among community and service providers.

One day counts offer only a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness and often underestimate the extent of homeless in a community.

Key Preliminary Findings

2013 Community Count			
Count Year	2009	2011	2013
Unsheltered and other homeless populations	1,044	687	405
Sheltered	726	533	519
Total	1,770	1,220	924
At Risk of Homelessness	3,095	4,103	3989

The number of sheltered, unsheltered and other homeless populations counted in 2013 was 924.

- This represents a decline of 24% compared to the number counted in 2011. In 2011, 1220 were counted compared to 1770 in 2009, representing a decrease of 31% between those two years.

Of the total, 703 met HUD’s definition of homelessness.

- **184** were unsheltered. This included people counted living in cars, campsites or other places not meant for human habitation.
- **519** were sheltered people reported by emergency shelters, transitional housing and the domestic violence programs. The sheltered population represents 56 % of the total homeless population counted.

An additional 221 people were counted as part of the broader definition of homeless.

- The Community Count includes a broader census of those experiencing homelessness which includes those residing in hospitals or jail but homeless prior to entry, motels, and living temporarily with friends/family due to housing loss. These groups are excluded from HUD’s definition of homeless. However, we include them in our local count of homeless persons in order to more effectively develop plans to prevent or end homelessness for these households.

The following table provides the living situation breakdown for this year’s and the previous count. (See Exhibit 1 and 2).

Location	2011	2013
Boat w/out plumbing	32	22
Car/Van/Other Vehicle	60	37
Emergency Shelter	221	192
Hospital	3	15
Hotel/Motel	14	18
Jail	84	27
Other	143	109
Outdoor/Camps	251	147
Temp w/friends or family	100	30
Transitional Housing Program	312	327
	1220	924

- The numbers in each location type decreased in most categories. People who were living in places not meant for human habitation (outdoor or vehicles) declined by 41%.

There were 190 Children (17 years and under) counted. 148 sheltered and 42 counted as unsheltered and other homeless populations. (See Exhibit 3)

- The number of households with children under the age of 17 was 93 this year compared to 155 households with children in 2011.
- Family homelessness has declined according the preliminary findings, however, the proportion of families at risk of homelessness increased significantly since 2011.

The number of persons found to be precariously housed was 3,989. This number represents a slight decrease in the number of people who are at risk of losing their homes.

- Although the number of precariously housed decreased slightly, there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of families who were precariously housed compared to 2011. Families with children make up 90% of at risk households compared to 69% in 2011.

An estimated 23% (136) of those counted were identified as chronically homeless.

- This represents a slightly lower percentage change in the number of estimated chronic homeless persons counted in 2011, which was 25% (226).

The majority of those counted in 2013 (57%) were living in Marin when they first became homeless.

- This percentage is slightly higher the 56% counted in 2011 who reported they were living in Marin when they became homeless.

The primary reasons stated for cause of homelessness was loss of job, lack of affordable housing and lack of income.

- Lack of income, lack of affordable housing and job loss were also cited as the top three reasons for homelessness in the previous two counts.

Under the Housing First program, 25 chronically homeless individuals have moved into permanent housing. This represents 11% of the chronically homeless counted in 2011.

The number of those counted decreased from 1,220 in 2011 to 924 in 2013. This decrease may be attributed to multiple factors.

- There have been collective efforts to reduce the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness through various initiatives and housing assistance programs. Housing First, for example, is a nationally recognized model for providing permanent housing for those who have experienced homelessness for more than a year. Since the program's inception in 2011 in Marin, there have been 25 individuals moved into permanent housing, which accounts for 11% of the chronically homeless persons counted in 2011.
- Other initiatives and coordinated efforts to reduce the number of homeless persons in Marin including: a small number of new housing options coming online each year, improved coordination among providers and agencies as a result of a charrette and a 10 year planning process.

- There are many signs that the recent recession is impacting fewer households in Marin, including decreases in unemployment since 2010.
- Although the overall methodology of counting did not change significantly since 2011, the survey and reporting tools were refined to improve data collection. This likely contributed to the reduced number of families with children counted. For example, in this year's count, some school districts were able to provide additional descriptive data that improved identifying families experiencing homeless versus at risk of homelessness.

Summary

The preliminary count findings suggest that as a community, Marin has made some strides in addressing homelessness. Through the work and commitment of community partners, service providers and advocates, efforts to reduce the number of those experiencing homelessness may have contributed to the progress made. Various initiatives and housing assistance programs continue to demonstrate promising results as well.

Though this year's count findings indicate we've turned a corner in addressing homelessness in Marin, there is still much more work to be done. It is also important to recognize that a one-day count provides only a snapshot of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and many may be uncounted due to limitation inherent in one day counts.

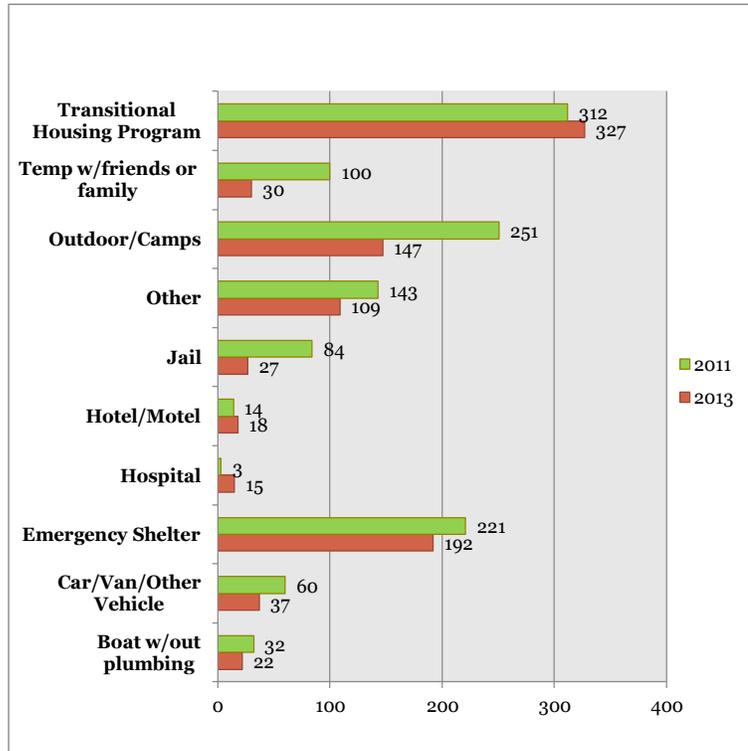
Exhibits

EXHIBIT 1

Living situation 2011 and 2013 breakdown:

- 184 People were living in places not meant for human habitation (outdoor/vehicles) which represents a 41% decline from the 2011.
- Declines in most categories. Hospitals one exception, where 5 times the number of people were counted than in 2011.

- Where people stayed on the night prior to the Count?



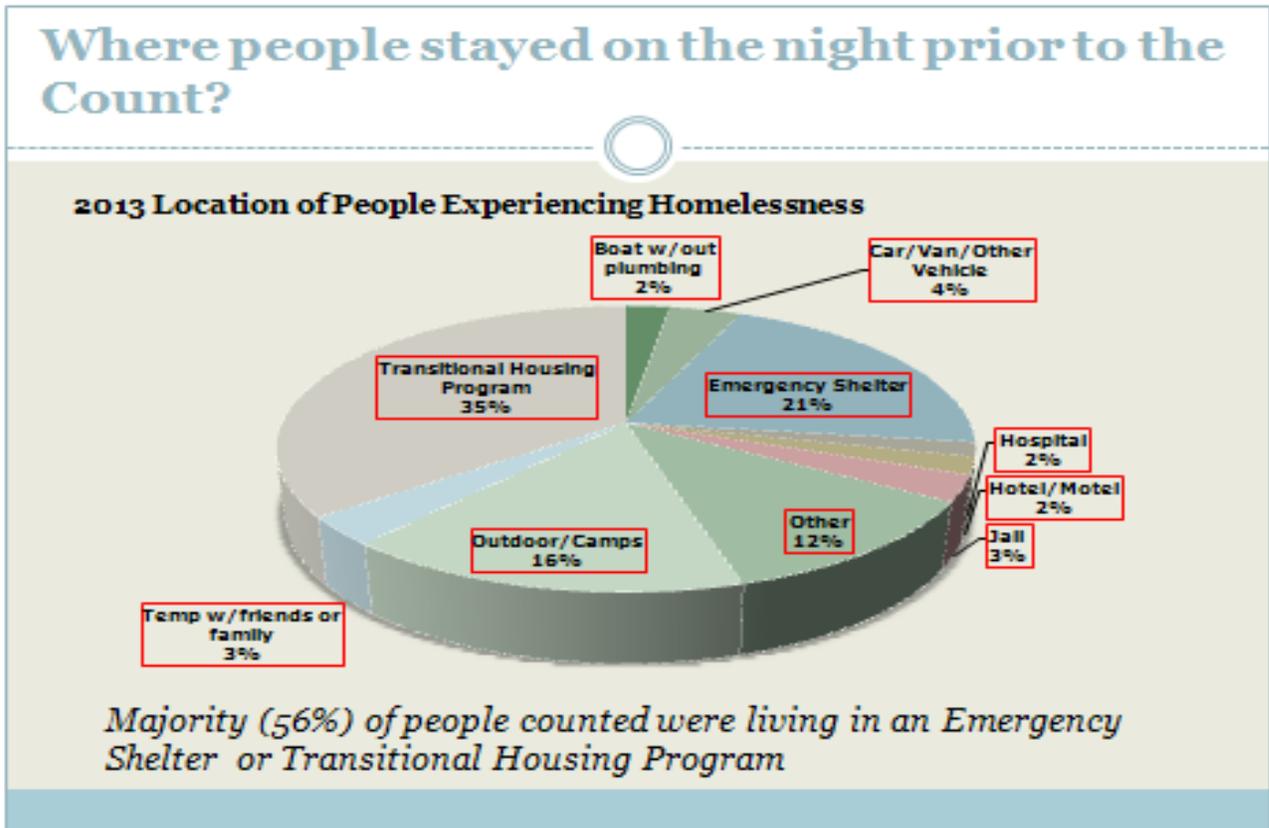


EXHIBIT 4: Preliminary Count Summary Table

Key Count Highlights	2011	2013	% +/-
Number of Homeless Point in Time*	1220	924	-24%
Number of Precariously Housed	4179	3989	-5%
Number of households with children	155	93	-40%
Chronically Homeless**	226 (25%)	136 (23%)	-8%
Domestic Violence (Adults)	138 (14%)	156 (21%)	+50%
Veterans	78 (8%)	66 (9%)	-15%
Top 3 Reasons for Homelessness	Loss of Job; Lack of Income; Lack of Affordable Housing	Loss of Job; Lack of Income; Lack of Affordable Housing	-----