



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2022-0997, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Board of Supervisors of Sonoma County and Board of Commissioners of the Community Development Commission

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Community Development Commission

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Michael Gause, (707) 565-1977

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Results of the February 25, 2022, Point in Time (PIT) Count in Sonoma County

**Recommended Action:**

Receive a report on the February 25, 2022, Sonoma County Homeless Point-in-Time (PIT) Count and Survey.

**Executive Summary:**

Jurisdictions across the US conduct Point in Time (PIT) Counts typically annually at the direction of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The PIT Count is an attempt to determine who is homeless and either sheltered or unsheltered in that certain jurisdiction at any one point in time, usually in the last week of January each year.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sonoma County did not conduct a PIT Count in 2021. In 2022, the Count was delayed from the last week in January 2022, with approval from HUD, to Friday, February 25, 2022, due to the surge in the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The Count was conducted differently than in years past to ensure that appropriate safety measures were in place for the over 150 community volunteers who are paired with paid guides (individuals experiencing homelessness to maximize knowledge of areas canvassed). This shift in safety methodology, with all training virtual and the deployment itself done virtually (i.e., there was not a specific check-in point) rather than more in-person logistics, likely had an effect on the Count's accuracy in 2022, resulting in greater fluctuations in subpopulation and census tract data.

The count of unsheltered persons is conducted from 5 a.m. to 9 a.m. across all census tracts in the county. The count of sheltered persons consists of data pulled from shelters and transitional housing during that point in time. In 2022, 2,893 individuals were counted, an increase of 5% from 2,745 individuals in 2020. 32% of respondents indicated that their current homeless episode was their first. In 2020, 31% indicated to be experiencing their first episode.

The 5% increase is in part due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with housing more difficult to obtain and more individuals negatively impacted by financial impacts from COVID-19. Fortunately, survey information indicated that 57% of individuals had received their COVID vaccine, a testament to community outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness.

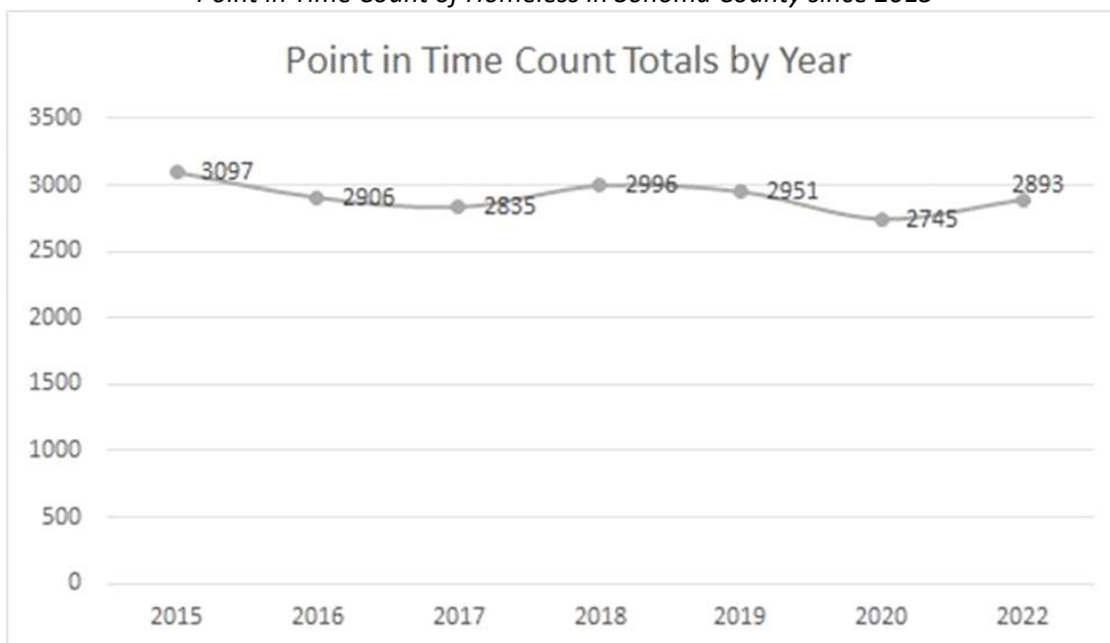
**Discussion:**

As Lead Agency to the Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC), the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) conducts the annual PIT Count to track progress towards ending

homelessness in Sonoma County. US HUD requires a local PIT Count of any CoC to enable participating agencies to access HUD’s CoC funding (in 2022, this is about \$4.1 million). Additionally, some State agencies use PIT Count data to formulate funding allocations. Further, when combined with the regularly inputted data from our Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the Count informs the County’s homeless housing needs.

The 2022 PIT Count of the number of homeless individuals identified in one night suggests that the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Sonoma County (unincorporated County and 9 cities) has increased slightly since the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic by approximately 5% or 148 individuals to 2,893 individuals. The number of individuals in unsheltered circumstances grew from 1,702 in 2020 to 2,088 in 2022. Conversely, the number of individuals in sheltered circumstances dropped from 1,043 in 2020 to 805 in 2022. This reduction in sheltered individuals is likely caused by reduced sheltered capacities due to COVID-19 safety protocols, as well as concerns of living in congregate shelters during a pandemic. There are numerous possible causes of the modest overall increase. Table 1 shows the trend over time for Sonoma County.

Table 1  
*Point in Time Count of Homeless in Sonoma County since 2015*



Service providers had reduced capacity due to the impacts of COVID-19, permanent housing was less available and more difficult to access, and the economic slowdown likely contributed to more individuals losing housing. 23% of individuals said that the loss of a job was the primary reason for becoming homeless (this was the top cause of homelessness in 2022). This compares similarly to data from the 2020 PIT Count (where 22% of respondents said job loss was their reason for homelessness).

Each year, following the PIT Count, surveys are conducted with individuals and families experiencing homelessness (both sheltered and unsheltered). This is done to gain insight on demographics and experience of single adults, families, and transition-age youth experiencing homelessness. These surveys, over 400 in

total, are conducted in a peer-to-peer fashion in the two weeks after the PIT Count and include key information on homeless subpopulations, which HUD has identified as key to ending homelessness overall, as well as underlying causes of homelessness. Subpopulations of individuals experiencing homelessness include individuals experiencing chronic homelessness (defined generally as at least one year continuous of homelessness with a disability), Transition-Age Youth (TAY) between ages 18-24, homeless families with children, and Veterans. Within these subpopulations:

- 725 individuals experienced chronic homelessness, a 29% increase from 508 in 2020.
- 48 families (having at least one adult over 18 with one child under 18) totaling 155 individuals, were almost all found in sheltered circumstances. This is a decrease of 40% from 80 families in 2020 and a continued overall decrease in families from an all-time high of nearly 200 families in 2013.
- 23 unaccompanied children (persons under the age of 18 without parents) and 498 TAY ages 18-24 were counted for a total of 521 youth, an increase of 67% from 304 in 2020.
- In 2022, 191 Veterans were counted, an increase of 37% from 139 in 2020.

By definition, the PIT Count only provides a snapshot of homelessness during a single point in time. It is a valuable tool but may not adequately reflect subpopulation data, due to methodology changes from impacts of COVID-19 (virtual trainings and less in-person guidance). However, these results indicate that the increase in our most vulnerable populations (chronic homelessness) as well as youth who have little credit history and a more difficult time on the rental market, are likely due to impacts on services and housing availability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional key findings from the PIT Count and survey included:

- 68% of those experiencing homelessness became homeless while living in Sonoma County, an apparent decrease from any previous year. In years past, this percentage has been 80% or more. Staff believes that this may be attributed to a statistically errant over-sampling of individuals who did not become homeless in Sonoma County. We note that 50% of individuals indicated they had lived in Sonoma County 10 years or more.
- 23% of individuals cited job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, and 63% of individuals cited unaffordable rent as an obstacle to securing permanent housing. Another 45% cited no job or not enough income as an obstacle.
- 89% of individuals who were unsheltered or staying in emergency shelter stated that they would move into permanent housing if it were available. 54% of individuals preferred housing without preconditions (“Housing First” settings).
- 25% of individuals identified as Latino/a/x, 8% identified as Black, and 9% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Some of this data continues to reflect specific racial and ethnic disparities that exist in Sonoma County’s homeless population (i.e., where specific ethnicities are overrepresented in the homeless population when compared to the general population).

The comprehensive report (Attachment 1) has more information about the people who are living in a place not meant for human habitation or in a shelter for homeless persons in Sonoma County, as well as those who are unstably housed in Sonoma County.

**Other CoC PIT Counts in 2022.** Attachment 2 is a results summary (done by Joe Colletti of Hub for Urban Initiatives) of other CoCs across California. Colletti reports that “collectively, the 2022 total homeless count for all the CoCs reveal:

- A 13% increase when compared to their collective 2019 total homeless count; and
- A 6% increase when compared to their collective 2020 total homeless count.”

Other Bay Area CoC’s counts’ changes showed (when 2020 data is compared to 2022):

- A 4.4% increase in Santa Clara County
- A 4.6% decrease in San Francisco City and County
- An 8.6% increase in Marin County
- A 6.5% increase in Napa County
- A 15% increase in San Mateo County

The staff presentation (Attachment 3) will summarize the report’s findings and give your Board the opportunity to ask questions about the state of homelessness in Sonoma County in 2022.

**How does the 2022 PIT Count guide future action?** Even as it is disappointing to see the 5% increase, we also have seen progress. This includes:

- The Board’s action to set up and fund Los Guilicos Village, safe parking, and other non-congregate shelters as an alternative to COVID-19 impacted congregate shelters.
- The region’s full embrace of Project Homekey-1 and -2 efforts. These will add significantly to our inventory of interim housing (in Rohnert Park and Healdsburg) and permanent supportive housing (in Petaluma, at the Gold Coin in Santa Rosa, and at George’s Hideaway in the River area).
- The Caritas Center (at Caritas Village in Santa Rosa) will significantly expand both beds and services for our chronically homeless and homeless families.
- More funding than ever is entering the system, to assist with both capital efforts and with funding supportive services for persons in need.
- Better alignment and relationships between the region’s two housing authorities, between our CoC and our cities and County government, and internally to the County government’s own service delivery function (i.e., consolidating homeless services within the Department of Health Services) all make reaching “Functional Zero” in homelessness a more attainable goal.
- One unified Strategic Plan embarked upon by the CoC Board in partnership with the County, cities, and service providers (which is set to be completed in late 2022).

Information from the 2022 PIT Count will be used in each of these activities and strategies to refine the end products and actions.

### **Strategic Plan:**

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan by adding to our knowledge that informs our strategies relating to homelessness. It is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Healthy and Safe Communities

**Goal:** Goal 4: Reduce the County’s overall homeless population by 10% each year by enhancing services through improved coordination and collaboration.

**Objective:** Objective 5: Continue to collaborate with local partners, including Continuum of Care, to advance planning and policies to address homelessness.

**Prior Board Actions:**

- July 12, 2022: Item #44 - Housing and Homelessness Update, CARE Court, Los Guilicos Village and Related Agreements and Authorizations
- July 7, 2020: Item #34 - Update on County Efforts to Address Homelessness, COVID-19 Homeless Response, and Proposal for Future Strategies to End Homelessness
- August 6, 2019: Item #23 - 2019 Homeless Count Presentation

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 22-23 Adopted</b>	<b>FY23-24 Projected</b>	<b>FY 24-25 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

No fiscal impacts with the annual report.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1 - County of Sonoma 2022 Point in Time Count Results

Attachment 2 - Summary of Other CoC Count Data

Attachment 3 - Presentation

**Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:**

None