

What is the PIT count?

The unsheltered [PIT Count](#) is conducted every two years within Sacramento County. It provides the [Sacramento City and County Continuum of Care](#) (CoC) and the community with a snapshot of how many people may be experiencing unsheltered homelessness on any given night.

CoCs nationwide are required by the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) to conduct this biennial count of unsheltered persons at the end of January. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting this count in the usual fashion is problematic, primarily due to the heavy reliance on volunteers to undertake the counting and surveying in the field.

The [2019 PIT Count](#) indicated that 5,570 persons were experiencing homelessness on a given night. Of those individuals, 30 percent - 1,670 individuals - were sheltered. The remaining 70 percent - 3,900 individuals - were unsheltered.

Lead agencies involved in the administration and release of the 2019 PIT count were [Sacramento Steps Forward](#) and the [Institute for Social Research](#) (ISR). Each agency offers data analysts, researchers, and trained staff to complete this large federally-mandated survey.

Additionally, a count of persons who are utilizing Sacramento County's shelter services on a given night in January is conducted each year. This count of persons who are currently in shelters will be conducted in a traditional fashion in 2021.

How was the 2019 PIT Count conducted?

Significant in-person participation from partner organizations and community members was required for the 2019 PIT Count.

SSF and its partner, ISR, enlisted nearly 1,000 volunteers to conduct the count over two nights in January 2019.

Over the course of those two nights, large groups of volunteers coalesced at two deployment sites. They were grouped randomly into teams of three to four people. Those teams were largely composed of volunteers from different households.

Those teams visited 171 individual sites, conducting 550 in-person interviews.

Will there be a traditional unsheltered PIT count this year?

No.

Many California communities are opting to not count unsheltered populations in 2021 given the risks of collecting data during the pandemic.

Ultimately, SSF staff, researchers, and the CoC determined that safety is the most important consideration to protect both our unhoused community members and our volunteers.

This Dec. 9 CoC decision was the result of a careful due diligence review by the CoC and SSF, including a series of CoC committee meetings, discussions with HUD, the ISR research team, as well as public CoC board meetings that included stakeholders and key partners, including advocates and interested parties in the community.

We recognize the critical importance of collecting this data. Although it is not required to conduct the next unsheltered PIT Count until 2023, the CoC approved a plan to assess the feasibility of conducting a traditional unsheltered count in 2022.

At that time, conditions may be more conducive to holding a large community event to help collect detailed information about people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. SSF is looking forward to the opportunity to engage the community in a traditional count when it is safe and feasible.

Will anything be done to understand more about homelessness in Sacramento?

The CoC Board voted on Dec. 9 to partner with ISR to examine existing data and to design sampling methods to estimate the number of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness in our community.

SSF will work with ISR to analyze data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which captures information about homelessness in our community. HMIS data is collected throughout the year and aggregated into a By-Name List, a list of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community who are currently connected to homeless services.

This list is generated from the information entered [by the more than 50 providers who are participating in HMIS](#) and is the basis for the recently released [Sacramento Homeless System Dashboard](#).

In addition to this analysis, a limited number of field surveys will be conducted by trained staff from several nonprofit agencies to help better understand the current state of unsheltered homelessness in relation to the By-Name List data.

How will this information be used?

Although we are not undertaking a traditional PIT Count, this effort will provide a better understanding of our unsheltered population, help identify ways to more efficiently maintain year-round data, and determine trends about who's connected to homeless resources in the community.

The new survey results will help researchers determine the consistency of the HMIS data that already exists in the By-Name List and will help our organization better understand the gaps we need to improve upon.

In addition, the work that we are doing to enhance our ongoing system-level data will ultimately improve our real-time information about unsheltered homelessness.

While the unsheltered PIT Count usually culminates in the publication of a formal report by July of every count year, we do not anticipate producing a traditional report for 2021. Instead, findings will be used to improve existing data systems.

Any results of this research will be available as part of the periodic updates of the [Sacramento Homeless System Dashboard](#).

What are other communities doing?

The following communities have already received approval for their request for exemption not to complete an unsheltered count:

- Ventura;
- Fresno/Madera;
- Los Angeles;
- Pasadena;

- San Bernardino

As of this date, we are aware that 11 other communities are also planning to submit a request for exemption not to complete an unsheltered count.

What are the potential funding implications?

Although nothing has been changed officially, state and federal partners have indicated that given the pandemic and difficulty in conducting traditional counts, funding approaches and reliance on 2021 unsheltered PIT counts will likely be considered by legislative bodies in the coming year.

SSF has submitted written inquiries to HUD and to relevant state agencies regarding funding. We will continue to monitor the situation.