

## News Release

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## **Count Us In shows significant reduction in veteran homelessness, small overall increase in homelessness for Seattle/King County**

### **Summary**

Count Us In, the January 2018 point-in-time count for Seattle and King County, found a total of 12,112 people experiencing homelessness countywide, including 5,792 people (48%) sheltered and 6,320 people (52%) unsheltered. This represents an overall increase of four percent compared to 2017, although the numbers of homeless veterans, unaccompanied minors, and families with children all declined, according to a report issued today by All Home.

### **Story**

The 2018 Count Us In report found 12,112 people experiencing homelessness across the region on January 26, 2018, including 5,792 people sheltered in emergency shelters, safe havens and transitional housing and 6,320 people on the streets, in vehicles or staying in tents or encampments (both sanctioned and unsanctioned). The count includes a 15 percent increase in unsheltered people and a four percent increase overall, the smallest increases in homelessness in the region in the past four years.

The biggest improvement was a 31 percent reduction in veteran homelessness, the result of increased investments and strong collaboration across federal, state, county and local governments and local non-profit agencies. This coordination includes weekly conferencing among the partners utilizing a by-name list to connect each veteran to appropriate services and housing to achieve and maintain stability. Local housing authorities and local landlords are also partners in this effort.

Similar collaboration, including support from local business and philanthropy and successful prevention and diversion programs helped to reduce homelessness among minors (under age 18) by 22 percent and family homelessness by 7 percent.

“Count Us In was a community effort and reflects the manner in which we must address this growing crisis,” said Kira Zylstra, Acting Director of All Home. “Though the overall count increased, the pace is slowing and there is tremendous progress in reducing veteran homelessness. Now is the time to double down on our efforts to ensure the same progress for the 12,112 people without housing today and the thousands more who experience homeless over the course of the year.”

The report showed several changes among the unsheltered population, including a 14 percent reduction in people staying in tents and a 46 percent increase in people sleeping in vehicles. The largest increases in homelessness were among single adults. Nearly all individuals experiencing homelessness – 98 percent – said they would immediately move to housing if it were available, underscoring the urgent need to address the lack of affordable housing countywide.

“In just four years, we more than doubled the number of people who moved from tents, shelters, and vehicles into stable housing, yet the pace of people falling into homelessness continues to overload our services and resources,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine. “As a region, we must redouble our efforts to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, and create the necessary housing to ensure that people of all incomes have a safe and secure place to call home.”

"We must continue to take urgent action on the homelessness crisis with holistic, regional solutions. The reduction in veterans who are experiencing homelessness shows we can have an impact with focused strategies. But there is much work to be done, especially to address the root causes of homelessness," said Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan. "I am committed to getting more people off the streets and into safer spaces while investing in prevention, behavioral health and affordable housing. The data shows that we can make real progress when we tackle this complex issue together and collaborate on all fronts: with more data-driven, targeted investments in enhanced shelters, tiny homes, critical services, prevention programs, and affordable housing."

## Homelessness in Seattle-King County

Highlights from the comprehensive Count Us In report include the following:

- **Veteran homelessness declined by 31%**, including a decrease in chronic homelessness among veterans of 23%, thanks to collaboration and additional resources.
- **Youth/young adult homelessness remained largely the same (1% increase), unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness was reduced 22%, and family homelessness decreased by 7%** - largely due to dedicated efforts by philanthropy and local service providers and new funding from Best Starts for Kids.
- **Unsheltered homelessness increased by 15%**, including a 46% increase in vehicle residency. The highest increases were among single adults and chronic homelessness (which rose by 28%).
- **Homelessness disproportionately impacts people of color.** The majority of the local homeless population surveyed identified as people of color.
- **People experiencing homelessness in King County are our neighbors:** 94% are from Washington State and of those, 83 percent reported living in King County at the time they became homeless. Only 6 percent reported a last address out of state.
- **Of the unsheltered population, 71% was in Seattle;** 15% was in SW King County.
- **History of domestic violence or partner abuse remains prevalent;** more than a third (36%) said they had experienced abuse.
- **About 70% reported living with at least one health condition and over half reported a disabling condition.** Most mentioned were mental illness, substance use disorder, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- **Lack of housing affordability (21%) and loss of job (25%)** were the most reported causes of homelessness.
- **Rental assistance and affordable housing were the top two supports needed to end the experience of homelessness.**

## Making progress

All Home, the City of Seattle and King County together with their partners are moving more people from homelessness to permanent housing – and doing so faster than ever. Over the past year:

- **6,851 homeless households were housed in 2017, double the number housed in 2013.**
- **Regional investments in flexible supports are making a difference.** Almost 2,000 households were diverted from homelessness in 2017 and connected with housing outside of the homeless system.
- **Youth and Family Homeless Prevention Initiative kept over 4,000 people from becoming homeless in 2017;** 94% have stayed housed.
- **Rapid re-housing** is shortening the time people are experiencing homelessness.
- **New enhanced shelters opened in 2017,** linking safe beds to housing-focused case management and pathways out of homelessness, including new family shelters in White Center and Kenmore, the Seattle Navigation Center, and Seattle's new shelter on First Hill.
- **More inpatient treatment beds (46) for people with mental illness** opened to improve access to mental health and crisis services. **New opioid and other drug treatment** services and facilities opened in 2017, including 40 medication-assisted treatment sites countywide and a new Seattle detox facility – improving access to treatment. A new secure detox facility opens in South King County in 2018.

## Looking ahead

The count provides a snapshot of homelessness on one night. However, data shows that approximately 30,000 individuals enter the homeless system throughout the course of a full year. The rate at which people are becoming homeless is outpacing the ability to house them within existing resources.

Earlier this year, Executive Constantine, Mayor Durkan and Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus convened One Table, a regional effort focused on the root causes of homelessness: the shortage of affordable housing, lack of access to behavioral health treatment, child welfare issues, involvement in the criminal justice system, and wages not keeping pace with the cost of housing. One Table is comprised of leaders from local businesses, philanthropy, government, behavioral health, housing and homeless services and persons with lived experience who have been meeting since January to develop regional strategies to address the root causes and prevent people from becoming homeless.

This is the second year All Home has coordinated the annual point-in-time count. Applied Survey Research (ASR), a research firm with nearly 20 years of experience managing point in time counts nationwide, worked with All Home to conduct the count and prepare the final report. The count utilized a nationally recognized count methodology, a volunteer-led countywide canvas of all King County census tracts, and a person-to-person survey of people experiencing homelessness. The results help to inform regional planning.

The full *Count Us In 2018 Report* is available on the [All Home website](#).

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**All Home** is the lead agency for the Seattle/King County Continuum of Care, which annually applies for Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds and reports required data to the federal government on behalf of the continuum. All Home partners include King County, City of Seattle, United Way of King County, other cities, philanthropic funders, housing and homeless service providers, faith communities, advocates and persons who have experienced homelessness who together are working to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time.