



# 2024 Unsheltered PIT Methodology Seattle/King County

## Background

In 2022, HUD granted King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) a methods exception for the unsheltered Point In Time count (PIT). Rather than the traditional single-night count, KCRHA and its partners utilized Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) to estimate the total count and demographic breakdown of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness in King County. The 2022 estimates were based on 671 interviews administered across 9 “hub” sites spread around King County.

RDS served two purposes in 2022: it provided a statistical sampling that allowed us to estimate the total number of people experiencing homelessness, and a sampling method for qualitative data collection. These were two different research projects combined into one.

For the 2024 Unsheltered PIT, KCRHA will again utilize RDS. To improve the efficiency and accuracy of the count, a few key methodological changes will be made this year:

- Unlike 2022, there will be no qualitative data collection. Participants will only be required to provide the HUD-mandated data in a digital survey. This change is due to challenges that large scale qualitative research project entails and lack of staff available to conduct at this time.
- The data collection periods will be the same for each hub. This will allow for a larger sample of respondents in the same time period, thus increasing the statistical validity of the extrapolations.
- The count will be conducted in the month of January rather than March. Collecting data in January means the PIT will provide insight into how many people are living outside during a consistent period as other CoCs.

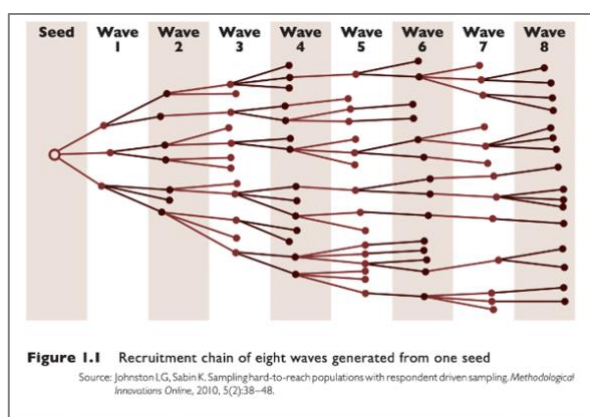
- The KCRHA will have a deeper partnership with a research team from the University of Washington with experience in this area. In 2023, this team performed an unofficial count not related to the CoC using RDS. They tested out different mechanisms for data collection, wave tracking, and compensation we will build from in our 2024 count.

## Respondent Driven Sampling Overview

Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) is a popular method of conducting surveys in hard to reach populations that can provide a framework for valid statistical inferences. RDS has been used to sample a variety of hard to reach populations such as drug users, homeless or people with AIDS/HIV. RDS leverages a type of "snowball sampling" (getting individuals to refer those they know, these individuals in turn refer those they know and so forth)

### Seeding

Seeding is used to sample as much of the target population as possible. The first respondents at each hub site are known as "seeds". Each "seed" receives three "coupons" at the conclusion of their survey. Each "seed" can then distribute their coupons to others experiencing unsheltered homelessness in their network. Anyone who receives a coupon can then show up at their designated hub and take the survey. They too will receive three coupons to distribute, thus creating the potential for a wide-reaching referral tree that relies on pre-existing relationships and in theory reaching areas of the population that are farthest from those that are service connected.



## Extrapolation

Using this procedure, it is possible to build a probability sample/sampling weights to acquire statistical estimation of the sub-population size (e.g. homeless who are not using services or shelters). The key is that this probability/weighted sample can be combined with known information (e.g. number of people using shelters) to provide high quality point estimates of the total population of interest even when there is not a classic sampling frame (e.g. housing address). In this methodology, we will also be collecting data from those that are receiving services through shelters and will be using this data to preform the extrapolation. Once the data is validated, those numbers of those sheltered will be dropped from the total, leaving with the statistical estimate of the number of people that are unsheltered to submit for the final numbers to HUD. The process to complete the extrapolation will take about two weeks once the final data is submitted.

## Overview for 2024

### Community Engagement and Communication Management

The CoC Advisory board oversees the methodology development and approves the approach, the final data to submit to HUD from the unsheltered data. They provide recommendations and assist with outreach to subpopulations. Once the methodology is approved, KCRHA will begin reaching out to the unsheltered community through service providers and community organizations and governmental bodies to determine site locations of the hubs and areas for seeding and identifying key staff for management of the hubs.

Before hubs begin, the KCRHA team will produce materials to alert the community of the hub locations and details about the project. They will have contact information of the researchers for any questions and how to sign up for more information and results of the survey. This will be posted to the KCRHA website, distributed to community meetings, outreach provider meetings, governmental departments, and local businesses.

Once the unsheltered PIT data is submitted to HUD, a detailed report will be generated and available to community on the KCRHA website and distributed to local media sources, our listserv, and any additional community members who requested the information.

### Respondent Driven Sampling Process



Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) requires physical hubs where people experiencing unsheltered homelessness can be referred to for their survey. These hubs have a team of researchers for a set time each day for up to two weeks. These teams are made up of KCRHA staff, community volunteers, and folks with lived experience of homelessness who receive stipends for their time.

## Explanation of Hub Locations

Hubs are selected based on proximity to services, transportation, accessibility and proximity to the other hub locations. The goal is to collect information in areas of the county that are rural, suburban, and urban as well as a safe place for people to congregate. In 2022, we selected 9 sites. These sites were located in: Aurora (Seattle), Auburn, Bellevue, Bothell, Burien, Georgetown (Seattle), North Bend, Redmond, and Renton.

We received feedback from community members, especially our lived experience researchers, that we could improve where we site hubs in 2024. This was especially true in South King County. As we move to solidifying site locations, we are taking this into consideration. This year, we will also likely be adding at least one additional rural site.

In addition to physical sites, this year we will also offer an over the phone option for families with minor children. In King County we have a centralized family shelter intake line as well as a centralized domestic violence shelter line. “Seeds” will start with staff at these two locations giving instructions for families to call another number to complete the survey over the phone. Staff will be available during the call times to answer the phone and complete the survey. Those without minor children calling will be referred to the physical location to conduct their interview. This technique may also be used for a smaller island community in King County.

## Dates of Operation

The hubs and call-in center will operate Monday through Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> to February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The time of operation of each hub will be partially determined by the host site. This will enable a collection period more aligned with when PITs are traditionally collected. This will also be when we conduct our sheltered PIT and HIC.

King County has unpredictable weather from January through March. In the case where snow or extreme cold pose a risk for transportation, we will need to push back the unsheltered count. We will use the National Weather Service’s forecast for King County to determine if that is needed at least 5 days before the start of the count. Any change in



date will be communicated directly to HUD. A later start date would still allow sufficient time to complete the statistical modeling for a full enumeration.

Our University of Washington partners have identified that a two-week data collection period allows for sufficient network penetration to model the full population. In their 2023 method well as allow for a good length of time for appropriate seeds. In their 2023 methods, they found that this was the upward bound of necessary data collection and that they were able to get sufficient network penetration in some locations in as little as three days.

## Population Specific Seeding

Using data from 2022 on sampling for sub populations, it was determined that there was not an ideal number of participants from some key sub populations. Therefore, there is an additional targeted approach that is designed to improve the sampling size for these sub populations that is added this year. Approaches were designed by representatives of the community and population specific service providers.

### Native American Population

We are in early planning conversations with some of our providers that focus on Native American homelessness in King County to ensure better data collection for that population. The current recommendation is that we work with them to identify key areas to start seeds and ensure that our hubs are accessible from some of the key service sites that our Native community use, such as the Chief Seattle Club drop-in center.

### Youth Population

Youth Providers, the Youth Action Board, and developers of the By Name List for Youth have been contacted to determine the best approach to youth populations. It was determined to host a site that was near a popular youth serving program, and to have the youth programs and youth outreach service providers to be able to start seeds during their operations.

### Veteran Population

We are working with our Veteran service groups in order to best identify a solution for this population. Current thinking is to ensure we have a hub located near or at a VA facility that Veterans experiencing homelessness frequent or do heavy seeding at such a location.

### Families with Minor Children (including Minor Parents)



As mentioned above, families are least likely to come to a hub location, therefore we will be offering the ability to conduct interviews over the phone during the same hours that the HUBs will be open. This will also allow the ability to use language translation for interpretation.

### Rural Areas

King County has Rural areas that have a large number of people who are unsheltered, and far from resources. To better survey this population, we will be adding an additional hub location in a rural area. We will be engaging with local services, libraries and churches to start the seeds in these areas as well as searching the area for indications of unhoused individuals to engage with a few weeks before the HUB is open.

## Data Collection

2024 data collection will be focused on questions required by HUD and those required for measuring network connections. HUD requests the following information as part of its PIT count:

- Household Type (Household without children, Household with at least one child and one adult, Household with only children, Veteran household, Youth only household)
- Age
- Gender (Woman, Man, Culturally Specific Identity, Transgender, Non-binary, Questioning, Different Identity)
- Race/Ethnicity (American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, Asian or Asian American, Black/African American/African, Hispanic/Latina/e/o, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White, Multiple Races)
- Veteran (yes, no)

These questions will be asked of each person and household members (as required depending on age) by trained surveyors. All surveyors will also have access to the translation “Language Line” and be trained to use the services.

### Hardware

Each hub will have iPads and Surface Notebooks that will be used to conduct the survey. We will also have wireless hotspots and printers to print QR codes for the ticket for tracking network connections. Site leads will be issued cell phones to contact a support



person if there are any issues with the hardware or software. Each site will have highspeed internet, either through the host site or a KCRHA hot spot.

Those at the phone bank will be situated at KCRHA main office where there will be RHA-issued cell phones and computers.

## Software

We will be using a custom App built in the Microsoft 365 environment to collect meta data about the survey and surveyor and to manage the ticketing system and distribution of gift cards. This app will be secured using standard data security protocols built into the system. The application was built by our University of Washington partners and used with success in their 2023 work.

We are currently working with our legal counsel to determine what level of release of information will be required to be embedded in the application. We will be using Qualtrics for the HUD survey questions. Volunteer data will be collected using online software, “When to Help” to track volunteers at each site and manage schedules. Sign Up tools for volunteers to sign up for shifts will also be used. Our University of Washington partners will use R to analyze the sampled data to get to a full enumeration.

## Data Storage, Analysis and Retention

Data from Qualtrics will be downloaded and stored on a secured KCRHA cloud server. This has safety and privacy built into the software to maintain security and safety. Analysis will be conducted by the University of Washington team and will be shared using secure methods (SFTP or multi factor authentication for access to the secured server).

The University of Washington team will enter into a Data Sharing agreement with KCRHA. Once analysis is completed, all data from the University of Washington will be destroyed. Raw data will be held for 7 years and then destroyed in accordance with other agency protocols on data storage and retention.

# HUB Management

## Transportation and Incentive Items



Transportation will be provided to those who access the site in the form of metro bus tickets. There will be survey coupons given to the participant, as well as bus tickets for transportation. Each participant will be given three recruitment coupons to give to people in their network who experience unsheltered homelessness.

Participants are given a \$20 visa gift card when they complete their survey. They will receive an additional \$5 gift card for each person they refer who also completes a survey. The University of Washington research team used this approach in 2023 to great success. They were able to deliver the additional \$5 gift cards either over email or text.

Families will receive a larger gift card for participation. We are currently estimating that amount at \$40 and are engaging with Family service providers to identify if this will be a sufficient amount to recruit families.

## Community Resources for Program Participants

This engagement is not meant to connect people experiencing homelessness to services. People working at the hubs will not be making direct referrals to services. They will, however, have a list of resources located near hub locations with which to give participants if they are interested.

## Accessibility

All written engagement materials will be available in Spanish as well as English. The survey will be available in English and Spanish. We will put forth every effort to have at least one bilingual staff person available at each location. All hub locations and phone lines will be equipped with Language line and all volunteers will be trained to use the software and communicate effectively with a translator.

All sites are chosen to have physically accessible entrances and features. They will have quiet spaces for people to have their interview completed.

## Community Communication

Staff will notify relevant community members, government jurisdictions and neighborhood businesses where hubs will be located to make sure that they are aware of the survey prior to opening the hub for the survey period.

## Staff and Volunteer Roles





The following positions are identified as needed to support data collection and data verification process: Data support, Administration support of supplies and incentive items, Volunteer Manager, Outreach, Hub leads, and Surveyors.

### **Data Support**

Data support will monitor the data as it is being collected in the app, verifying that the data is not duplicated, is accurate and complete and is meeting validations. They will support the hub lead with any onsite questions, including use of software and validation of data collected. They will work closely with the administration positions to ensure proper issuing of gift cards. They will also support any participants with questions regarding how to use the gift cards.

### **Administration**

This position will support the hub leads with supplies, bus tokens, and incentive items. They will make sure each site is fully stocked and is securely storing all incentive items and inventorying incentive items at the end of the day. They will make sure all supplies from the sites are returned at the end of the collection period.

### **Volunteer Manager**

This is a centralized role at the KCRHA. The volunteer manager will oversee all aspects volunteers and non-RHA staff, including but not limited to: training, scheduling, and troubleshooting logistical challenges. They will make adjustments to the schedule as needed. They will also oversee the incentive pay for volunteers who have lived experience or expertise.

### **Hub Leads**

This person oversees their site. They will be on site to assist with traffic flow at each location, answering questions from the surveyors, responding to emergencies, monitoring the site for safety, and printing the QR codes for the tickets. They will open the site and close the site each day and inventory all incentive items and submit daily reports to the Administration.

### **Surveyors**

This person is on-site every day. They will be greeting the participants, assisting with making them feel comfortable, assessing if there are any accessibility needs, and conducting the survey.



## Outreach

Outreach folks will seed the first waves of survey participants in the field. They will do this over the first couple of days of data collection. Key locations will be identified at for each hub for outreach locations. This may include intentional outreach to a subpopulation, such as Veterans.

## Hub Staffing Levels

Each hub site will be labeled either High, Medium, or High traffic hub. In addition to the below staffing, each site will have someone for Data Support and Administration. Depending on hub size, a lead may double as Data Support or Administration.

High – Expected 50+ surveys per day. We would have 4 leads, and 7-10 surveyors

Medium - Expected 25 to 50 surveys per day. We would have 2 leads, and 5-8 surveyors

Low – Expected less than 25 surveys per day. We would have 1 lead, and 2-3 surveyors

Phone Line – Expected 25-50 surveys per day, we will have 2 leads, and 5-8 surveyors.

Surveyors will sign up for one hub site or phone line and will be at that site for the duration of the two weeks. Volunteers must sign up for one week at a time, and plan on attending all 5 days. There will be a stipend available for all volunteers who have Lived Experience or Expertise with homelessness through the KCRHA's stipend program.

Staffing for hubs will be available for sign-ups starting the first week of November. Volunteers will be notified of their selection in December, with training scheduled for the first two weeks of January. Staff will be from local service providers, University of Washington School of Social Work volunteers, community members, and governmental workers.

## Hub Staff Training

All volunteers will be required to attend PIT Survey Training. This will include safety training on de-escalation and first response, cleaning and sanitizing. Surveyors will be trained in survey and conversation best practices, use of the software, survey questions and using the language line. Surveyors will conduct some mock interviews and be provided with training and troubleshooting manuals. Hub leads will receive additional training on management of the hub, how to run the ticketing, crowd control, and management of volunteers.



Service providers that are starting seeds in the field will receive a separate training on the overview of the PIT this year, and how to talk to potential participants, transportation tickets, and questions or concerns that may arise. Service providers must attend training prior to providing seeding.

## Meetings

All hubs will be assigned their volunteers at the beginning of January. Each hub will have a required walk-through training with their HUB lead prior to opening the hub.

When hubs are open, there will be a pre-start meeting to go over any details, discuss meal breaks, and any new information. At the end of the day, there will be an online meeting with all sites to discuss any issues, review data, receive supply lists with the entire PIT team.

## Key Timeline Dates for 2024 PIT

**Hub Sites Locations and Phone Banking Sites Confirmed – October 31st**

**Budget Finalized – October 31st**

**Final Methodology Review with CoC Advisory Board – November 8th**

**Volunteers Secured – November 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Volunteer Training Completed – January 12th**

**Data Collection – January 22<sup>nd</sup> to February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Data Validated – March 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Submission to HUD – April 30<sup>th</sup> (assumed)**



# References

## [Respondent Driven Sampling](#)

Feehan, D. M., & Salganik, M. J. (2016). Generalizing the network scale-up method: a new estimator for the size of hidden populations. *Sociological methodology*, 46(1), 153-186.

Fellows, I. E. (2022). On The Robustness Of Respondent-Driven Sampling Estimators To Measurement Error. *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*.

Gile, K. J., & Handcock, M. S. (2010). 7. Respondent-driven sampling: An assessment of current methodology. *Sociological methodology*, 40(1), 285-327.

