



Unsheltered Point-in-Time Count

January 22 to February 2, 2024

KCRHA is conducting an unsheltered Point-in-Time (PIT) Count in January 2024. The count is required every other year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The 2024 count will take place over two weeks, using a Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) methodology approved by HUD and consistent with what was used in 2022. RDS has been shown to be effective in reaching people who are not already connected to services, providing a data point that supplements client data in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and other systems. RDS is a sampling methodology that only requires us to engage with a small number of people living outside to extrapolate the overall number of people living unsheltered.

KCRHA is working with researchers at the University of Washington and people with lived experience to ensure validity in design, data collection, and analysis. We will work with these researchers to have the final methodology approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and results will be peer reviewed for publication. Data will be collected using a digital survey and will not include qualitative interviews like the 2022 count.

The PIT Count is an important tool to help track demographics and illuminate year-over-year trends for the region. While the RDS methodology provides a more accurate snapshot than the traditional one-night street count, it is still likely an undercount.

For planning and accountability purposes, KCRHA will continue to work towards a system that is responsive to the 53,000 people who experience homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered, over the course of a year in King County.

Respondent Driven Sampling

RDS, sometimes called “snowball” sampling, uses a physical “hub” location, and “seeds” a series of referrals that rely on peer relationships among people living unsheltered.

This methodology is intended to reach people who are not already connected to services and who would not be represented in administrative databases like HMIS. After the direct survey of this sample, KCRHA will analyze the data with UW researchers to reach an estimate of the total number of people living unsheltered.

Trained interviewers at hub locations reach out to individuals living unsheltered to “seed” the sample by asking those people to refer three people for an interview. Those individuals refer people they know, and then those individuals in turn refer people they know, creating a “snowball” effect. Each interviewee is provided with metro bus tickets for transportation and is compensated for their time with a gift card.

Up to 12 hubs, where the interviews will take place, will be in accessible locations across King County, in urban, suburban, and rural areas. While interviewers do not make referrals to services, hub locations will have a list of local resources available. Locations have not been finalized yet.

In addition to the physical locations, KCRHA will pilot a call-in option for families with children. KCRHA is also working to ensure better data collection with specific communities, including American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, youth, veterans, families with children, and rural areas.

Data Collection

Using a custom, secure app on tablet computers, trained interviewers will collect the demographic data required by HUD, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, parental status, veteran status, whether a person has experienced domestic violence, serious mental illness, substance use disorder, and whether a person is chronically homeless as defined by HUD.

All interviewers are required to attend PIT Survey Training which includes survey and conversation best practices, trauma informed care, use of the software, survey questions and using the "Language Line." They will also receive safety training on de-escalation and first response.

How You Can Help

Volunteer interviewers will be recruited from local homelessness service providers, the UW School of Social Work, government partners, and community members.

You can also support people experiencing homelessness by donating directly to shelters, food banks, and other service providers. Visit the resources page on our website for ideas on how to help.

