



KCRHA 2024 Point-in-Time Count | Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Point-in-Time Count?

The Point-In-Time (PIT) count is a one-night estimate of both sheltered and unsheltered populations experiencing homelessness. Cities and counties nationwide conduct the count during the last week of January. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the PIT count to be conducted every two years to receive federal funding.

How does this data compare to other estimates of homelessness in King County?

The Point-in-Time Count seeks to estimate the number of people who experience homelessness on a single night of the year. Over an entire year, KCRHA serves substantially more people, and the PIT count is broadly understood to be an undercount. As such, KCRHA also heavily relies on the Washington Department of Commerce's estimate (derived from information in dozens of administrative databases ranging from unemployment insurance to Medicaid) that nearly 54,000 people experienced homelessness in King County over the course of a year.

How did you collect this information?

The KCRHA received approval from HUD to conduct the 2024 unsheltered count using a methodology called Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS). This methodology, consistent with the 2022 PIT Count, has a proven track record for reaching people who are not already connected to services. It provides a valuable data point that supplements client data in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and other systems. RDS has been endorsed by numerous studies by academic researchers and the World Health Organization, confirming its effectiveness in producing high-quality demographic and population estimates.

The count took place from January 22 – February 2, 2024. KCRHA staff and more than 130 volunteers conducted interviews at 19 hub sites in urban, suburban, and rural parts of King County. People experiencing homelessness answered questions about their living situation and health and provided demographic information. Each person referred others in their network to a hub site for the same process. KCRHA worked with an expert statistician at the

University of Washington to advise on sampling design and statistical modeling. We pulled the sheltered count from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data on January 25, 2024.

A [video](#) of Owen Kajfasz, KCRHA's Chief Community Impact Officer, explaining the methodology is available on our YouTube channel.

How is RDS better than the traditional volunteer PIT Count?

The traditional unsheltered Point-In-Time count relied on volunteers to spread out across the county on one night in January and count the number of people that they physically see living unsheltered, multiplied by a number that's meant to estimate the people they didn't see (such as people in abandoned buildings). Because it relies on what volunteers see during a few hours in the early morning, in a neighborhood or area that may be unfamiliar to them, recorded on a paper tally sheet, at a time when there may be heavy rain or cold, there are many ways for data to be missed. Most people in the data science and homeless services sector agree that this traditional hand count results in an undercount, which may mask the full scale of the problem.

What's the difference between sheltered and unsheltered?

Sheltered homelessness refers to people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens. Unsheltered homelessness refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation—for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks.

How did the 2024 numbers change compared to 2022?

The number of people experiencing homelessness overall in King County is 23% higher than our 2022 report. Here's a breakdown.

Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
2022	5,683	7,685	13,368
2023	6,464	N/A	
2024	6,575	9,810	16,385

Youth and family homelessness is lower than in 2022 (see one-pager).

Why are the numbers higher?

This is a complex question. Homelessness is up across the country. We recommend reading the [latest publication](#) from the Federal Interagency Council on Homelessness to learn some



key facts about homelessness in our country and some key strategies that are being applied in communities like King County.

Homelessness is a housing problem, and the lack of affordable options is impacting King County residents. A recent [report](#) from the Department of Commerce emphasized the lack of affordable housing options has reached critical levels: "Nearly half of the new homes required in the coming decades must be affordable to households earning less than 50% of area median family income. This shortage of affordable housing contributes to homelessness, housing instability, and increasing costs for low- and moderate-income families." Also, while people are exiting homelessness, more people are entering homelessness.

KCRHA also expanded the number of hub sites and added sites in locations recommended by community feedback, leading to more completed surveys.

Were there substantial shifts in the demographics of people experiencing homelessness?

The results indicate a substantial increase in the share of people who report as White among people experiencing homelessness. Our more detailed report, which will be released this summer, will examine whether that change is a result of the following:

- The methodology for conducting the count.
- The impact of a change in how the Census Bureau dictates [how we collect](#) racial and ethnic identity.
- A fundamental shift in who is experiencing homelessness in King County.
- Or some other factor.

Were there changes in the number of people from groups or populations experiencing homelessness that are notable?

More detailed data and analysis will be released later.

How many people are experiencing homelessness in my area?

KCRHA will share a geographic breakdown of the count later.

