

2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Reflects 50% Increase

The Kern County Homeless Collaborative (aka Bakersfield/Kern County Continuum of Care) reports that 1,330 unduplicated homeless people were counted countywide in shelters and on the streets on the night of January 30, 2019. This amounts to a 50% increase over the 885 homeless people counted in January 2018.

This increase reflects a 118% increase in the number of homeless people—typically single adults—who were unsheltered on the night in question. By comparison, there was only a modest 2% increase in the numbers of people sleeping in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs.

The Homeless Collaborative attributes the size of the increase to a near 49% increase in the number of volunteers participating in the count, from about 150 volunteers in 2018 to 300 volunteers in 2019. Rural cities and communities also increased their participation in the Count. Additionally, like other California cities and counties, Bakersfield and other Kern County areas are currently experiencing a rise in the homeless population due to a statewide shortage of affordable housing.

Other Key Findings:

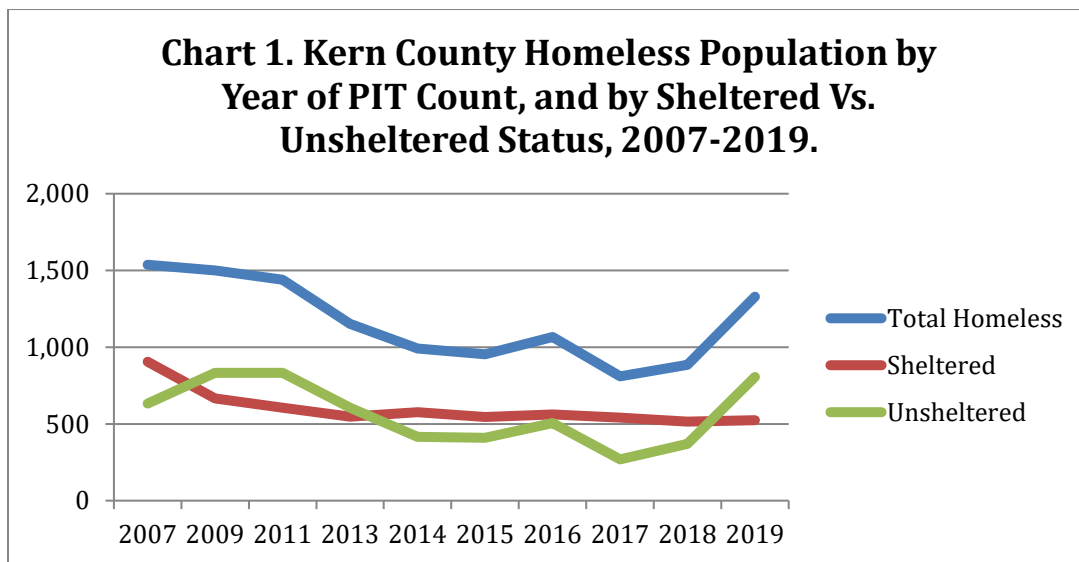
- 80% of Kern County’s homeless population was located in Metro Bakersfield, 20% in rural cities and communities outside of Bakersfield.
- 44% of Bakersfield’s homeless population had shelter on the count night, 56% were unsheltered. Only 11% of rural homeless people had shelter.
- Homelessness in Metro Bakersfield rose by 42% over the previous year, driven by a 108% jump in the number of unsheltered homeless people. Rural homelessness rose by 131%.
- Countywide, 85% of homeless families with children had shelter; 69% of single adults were unsheltered.
- Countywide, families with children accounted for 16% of the homeless population. Children constituted almost 11% of homeless people counted.

PIT Counts. The PIT Count is a one-night count and survey of unduplicated homeless people conducted nationwide in the last week of January in communities that receive funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is used to track national, state and local homeless population trends for planning and funding purposes, and to keep the public informed about the work being done to end homelessness.

The Kern County Homeless Collaborative has conducted 10 PIT counts since January 2007. Begun on a biennial basis, these counts have been done annually every January since 2013, as recorded in Table 1 and shown in Chart I.

Table 1. Kern County Homeless Population on January 30-31, 2019

By Area and Shelter Status	Adults	Adults w/ Children	Children	Total Persons	% Change Jan. 2018	Jan. 2018 Count
Metro Bakersfield-Sheltered	329	57	121	507	+2%	498
Regional Sheltered	<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>	+6%	<u>17</u>
Total County Sheltered	343	59	123	525	+2%	515
Metro Bakersfield Unsheltered	623	10	10	643	+108%	309
Regional Unsheltered	<u>149</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>162</u>	+166%	<u>61</u>
Total County Unsheltered	772	15	18	805	+118%	370
Total Metro Bakersfield	952	67	131	1,150	+43%	807
Total Regional (Rural)	<u>163</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>180</u>	+131%	<u>78</u>
2019 Combined Total	1,115	74	141	1,330	+50%	885
2018 Combined Total	715	63	107	885	+9%	
2017 Countywide Total	633	62	115	810	-24%	
2016 Countywide Total	875	71	121	1,067	+12%	
2015 Countywide Total	733	71	150	954	-4%	
2014 Countywide Total	725	89	178	992	-14%	
2013 Countywide Total	924	79	149	1,152	-20%	
2011 Countywide Total	1,220	79	140	1,439	-4%	
2009 Countywide Total	1,251	88	160	1,499	-2%	
2007 Countywide Total	1,248	97	192	1,537		



Where the Homeless Slept

Shelters. Of the 525 homeless people who sought shelter on January 30, 74% used an emergency shelter, as shown in Table 2. Seventy one percent (71%) of these individuals and families stayed in one or the other of Bakersfield’s two largest emergency shelters, which had a combined occupancy rate of 96%. The others were housed in three domestic violence shelters, two of which are located in rural communities

Table 2. Shelter Usage by Type Shelter

Type Shelter	Bakersfield	Rural	Total
Emergency Shelter (ES)	359	0	362
ES -Domestic Violence	<u>13</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>28</u>
Total Emergency	372	18	390
Transitional Housing	101	n/a	101
TH-Domestic Violence	12	0	12
TH-Bridge Housing	<u>22</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>22</u>
Total Transitional	135	18	135
Grand Total Sheltered	507	18	525

Twenty-six percent (26%) of those sheltered stayed in one of the county’s nine transitional housing programs, including one domestic violence program. Of these, 16% were in bridge housing, which is a new kind of transitional housing consisting of short-term hotel or motel stays for individuals or families awaiting placement by an agency into permanent housing.

Unsheltered. Of the 805 unsheltered people counted, 80% were found in Metro Bakersfield, 20% in rural areas. Of the 643 unsheltered people counted in Bakersfield, 35% were found in Southeast Bakersfield, but Central and Southwest Bakersfield and Oildale also had high concentrations, as shown in Table 3. These distributions are similar to last year’s, except for a significant increase in the portion of unsheltered homeless people found in Southwest Bakersfield (up from 3% to 16%).

Of the 162 unsheltered people counted outside Bakersfield, 67% were counted in West Kern, 33% in East Kern. The largest concentrations of unsheltered rural homeless people were found in the Delano/McFarland, Taft and Kern River Valley areas.

Table 3. Regional Breakdown of Unsheltered Homeless People

Region	Adults	People in Households with Children	Total People	Percent Region
Metro Bakersfield	623	20	643	(80%)
Oildale	97	1	98	15%
Central Bakersfield	134	13	147	23%
Northwest Bakersfield	33	0	33	5%
Northeast Bakersfield	40	2	42	6%
Southwest Bakersfield	101	0	101	16%
Southeast Bakersfield	218	4	222	35%

Rural Areas	149	13	162	(20%)
<u>West Kern</u>	98	11	109	67%
Delano/McFarland	38	7	45	28%
Wasco/Shafter	11	4	15	9%
Taft	31	0	31	19%
Frazier Park	5	0	5	3%
Arvin/Lamont	10	0	10	6%
Lost Hills	3	0	3	2%
<u>East Kern</u>	51	2	53	33%
Tehachapi	5	0	5	3%
Rosamond/Mojave	7	0	7	4%
Cal City/ Boron	9	0	9	6%
Ridgecrest	8	0	8	5%
Kern River Valley	22	2	24	15%

Demographic Characteristics of Homeless Population

Household Status. As shown in Table 4, The 1,330 homeless persons counted were living in 1,111 separate households, including households with at least one adult and one child (i.e., families with children), households with only children, and households without children. Families with children accounted for 6% of all households, and averaged about two children per family. Most were single parent families. Only one unaccompanied minor was found on the streets of Bakersfield. Adults without children averaged about 1.1 persons per household.

Table 4. Household Status of Homeless Population

Type Household	Households		Adults		Children		All Persons	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
At least one Adult and one Child	66	6%	72	6%	140	99%	212	16%
Children only (no adults)	1				1	1%	1	
Adults without Children	1,044	94%	1,117	94%			1,117	84%
Total	1,111	100%	1,189	100%	141	100%	1,330	100%

Gender. The percent of females in the homeless population has risen gradually since the mid-2000s from about 25% to 30% in recent years. Somewhat surprisingly, 51% of females were unsheltered in 2019 compared to 34% in 2018. Sixty-seven (67%) percent of homeless females were in households without children and, of these, 69% were unsheltered.

Table 5. Gender and Sheltered Status of Homeless Population

Gender	Number	Percent	Percent Unsheltered
Male	934	70.1%	64%
Female	397	29.8%	51%
Transgender	1	0.1%	100%
Gender Non-Conforming	0	00%	
Total	1,332	100%	

Age. The percentages of children, youth and adults composing the homeless population are similar to those in previous years, although the numbers are higher due to the increase in homelessness in 2019, as shown in Table 6. This year saw an increase in the percentage of children who were unsheltered (14%) from the previous year (3%). All but one of these unsheltered children was accompanied by an adult(s).

Table 6. Age Breakdown of Homeless Population

Age Group	Number	Percent	Percent Unsheltered
Children (under 18)	141	11%	13%
Youth (18-24)	100	8%	60%
Older Adults (over 24)	<u>1,089</u>	<u>82%</u>	66%
Total	1,330	100%	

Homeless youths (18-24 years) account for about 8% of the homeless population. Many of these youths have experienced traumatic childhoods and/or recently exited the foster care or juvenile justice systems. Sixty-percent (60%) were unsheltered during the count. Twenty-eight percent (28%) were female, 72% male. Of the females, 9% were mothers with a total of 15 small children between them.

Ethnicity and Race. African American people are significantly overrepresented in the homeless population (15%), compared to their proportion in the Kern County population (6%), as shown in Table 7. Forty-seven percent (47%) of African Americans were unsheltered.

Table 7. Age and Ethnicity

	Number	Percent
Ethnicity:		
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	938	71%
Hispanic/Latino	392	29%
Race:		
White	978	73%
Black/African American	205	15%
Asian	10	1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	59	4%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	10	1%
Multiple Races	70	5%

Homeless Subpopulations

Military Veterans. Veterans accounted for 10% (123 people) of all homeless adults (1,189 people) in January 2019, down from a high of 14% in 2011. Forty-nine percent (49%) of veterans had shelter, typically in emergency shelter or transitional housing provided by the California Veterans Assistance Foundation. Eighty-nine percent (89%) were male, 11% female. Four veterans headed households with a least one child. Ten percent (10%) of veterans were chronically homeless, all but one of who were unsheltered. A higher percentage of veterans were unsheltered this year (51%) than last (8%), probably related to the increased number of homeless counted.

Chronically Homeless. HUD defines chronically homeless people as individuals and families who have been homeless for at least a full year or four times in the last three years, and in which cases the individual or adult family head has a chronic mental or physical disability or substance use disorder. Chronically homeless people, especially those who are unsheltered, are extremely needy and vulnerable due to multiple health issues, exposure and length of homelessness.

Of the 1,189 homeless adults counted in 2019, 15%, or 178 adults, met the definition of being chronically homeless, including 8 adults who were heads of households with children. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of chronically homeless adults was unsheltered. Despite the higher number of homeless counted this year, the percentage who are chronically homeless continues to go down from earlier rates of around 17% to 20% several years ago. This is due to a concerted effort by the KCHC to outreach and prioritize this subpopulation for placement in permanent supportive housing.

Other Subpopulations.

Other subpopulations of homeless people tracked by the Homeless Collaborative include adults with a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, and survivors of domestic violence, as shown in Table 8 and Chart 2.

Mental Illness. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of homeless adults reported a history of treatment or hospitalization for a serious mental illness, 62% of who were unsheltered. This percentage is higher than found in previous counts, which have ranged from 12% to 25%, but is more in line with state and national studies showing about one-quarter to one-third of homeless adults with a serious mental illness.

Substance Use Disorders. Fifty-one percent (51%) of homeless adults reported having experienced and/or been treated for a substance use disorder. This rate is believed to be more accurate than previous count results, but is still considered an underestimate of the extent of substance use disorders in the population because many homeless persons are reluctant to reveal this information. A high percentage (68%) of this subpopulation was unsheltered.

Table 8. Other Homeless Subpopulations

Adult Subpopulation	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total	% All Adults
	#	%	#	%		
Serious Mental Illness	133	38%	217	62%	350	29%
Substance Use Disorder	194	32%	411	68%	605	51%
HIV/AIDS	3	50%	3	50%	6	0.5%
Domestic Violence Survivors	50	44%	64	56%	114	10%

HIV/AIDS. Six homeless adults reported that they had HIV/AIDS, one half of who were unsheltered. This was two people more than were counted the previous year.

Domestic Violence Survivors. Almost 10% of adults reported that they were homeless now as a result of being a victim of domestic violence, about the same percentage as the previous year. A total of 43 people, including 29 adult women and 14 children were staying in domestic violence shelters on the night in question.

