



KERN COUNTY POINT IN TIME COUNT 2026 REPORT



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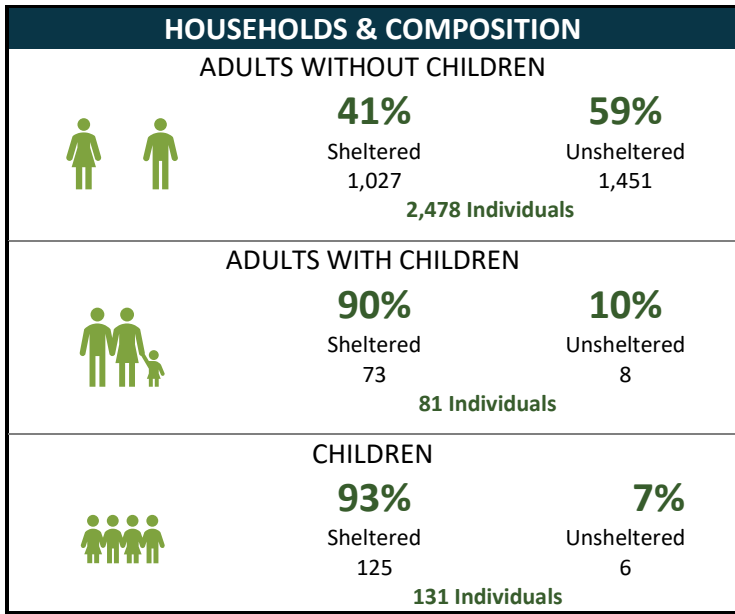
Akido Labs • Aging and Adult Services • Bakersfield American Indian Health Project • Bakersfield College • Be Finally Free • California State University Bakersfield • California Veterans Assistance Foundation • City of Delano • Delano Police Dept. • City of Arvin • City of Bakersfield • City of Ridgecrest • City of Wasco • City Serve • Clinica Sierra Vista • Community Action Partnership of Kern • Community College Services • County of Kern • Kern Probation • Department of Human Services • Department of Veterans Affairs • Employers' Training Resource • Flood Ministries • Garden Pathways • Greater Bakersfield Legal Association • Housing Authority of the County of Kern • Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services • Kern County Assessor • Kern County Superintendent of Schools • Kern Health Systems • Kern High School District • Kern Medical • Mercy House • Pathways • The Dream Center • The Open-Door Network • United Way of Central Eastern California • Wasco Free Will Baptist Church • Women's Center High Desert • St. Vincent De Paul • Bethany Christian School • Richland School District • District Attorney's Office • Kern County Library • Heritage Bible Church • Kern County Black Wallstreet • Bakersfield City School District

Kern County 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Summary

The 2026 Point-in-Time Count was an endeavor taken on by a dedicated group of individuals and volunteers through a community-wide effort to cover Kern County. The count conducted from January 27th through 28th comprised a single-night shelter count and a three-day unsheltered count.

2022 – 2026 HOMELESS POPULATION COUNTS				
	ADULTS W/O CHILDREN	ADULTS W/ CHILDREN	CHILDREN	TOTAL
2026	2,478	81	131	2,690
2025	2,348	86	172	2,606
2024	2,446	86	137	2,669
2023	1,747	76	125	1,948
2022	1,361	75	167	1,603

2026 KERN COUNTY SHELTERED / UNSHELTERED POPULATIONS	
46%	54%
SHELTERED 1,225 individuals	UNSHELTERED 1,465 individuals

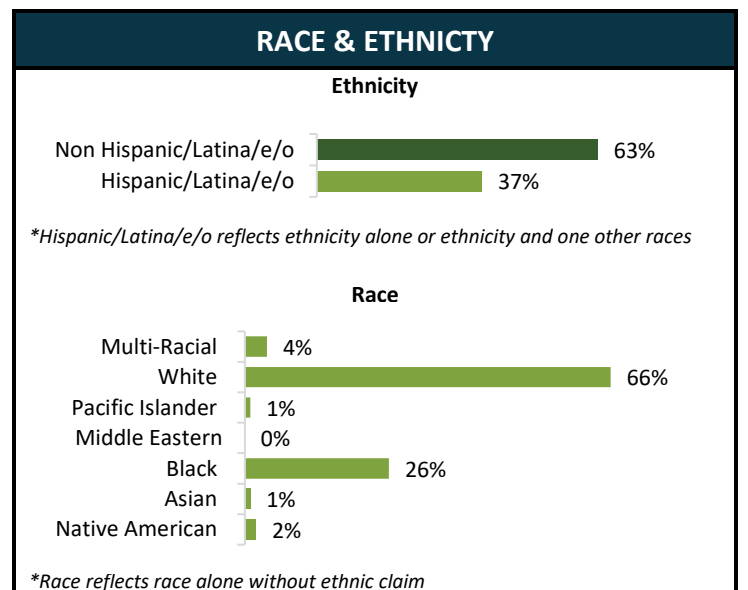


SUB-POPULATIONS

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS	69% Sheltered 479 Individuals	31% Unsheltered 217 Individuals
VETERANS	56% Sheltered 55 Individuals	44% Unsheltered 44 Individuals
TRANSITIONAL YOUTH	45% Sheltered 77 Individuals	55% Unsheltered 94 Individuals

AGE

Under 18 years	5% – 131 individuals
18 – 24	6% – 171 individuals
25 – 34	21% – 568 individuals
35 – 44	30% – 816 individuals
45 – 54	20% – 540 individuals
55 – 64	12% – 323 individuals
65 years and older	5% – 141 individuals
TOTAL	2,690 individuals



Introduction

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as individuals and families who lack the resources and support networks necessary to obtain and maintain permanent housing. This definition includes individuals who are literally homeless, those imminently at risk of homelessness, unaccompanied youth, families with children, and individuals or families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other life-threatening conditions.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a federally mandated, unduplicated count of both sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night during the last ten days of January. Conducted annually by the Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative (BKRHC), the PIT Count serves as a foundational component of federal reporting requirements and provides critical data to inform local planning, funding prioritization, and system-wide performance evaluation across the Continuum of Care (CoC).

Spanning more than 8,100 square miles, Kern County encompasses a diverse range of urban, suburban, and rural communities. These geographic conditions present both logistical challenges and important contextual considerations in accurately identifying, engaging, and counting individuals experiencing homelessness throughout the region.

While HUD requires Continuums of Care to conduct the PIT Count on a biennial basis, BKRHC has elected to complete the count annually to ensure consistency in data collection and to better monitor trends within the local homeless response system. This annual approach enhances year-over-year comparability and supports timelier, data-driven decision-making.

It is important to note that the PIT Count represents a point-in-time estimate rather than a comprehensive census of all individuals experiencing homelessness. Data collected through the PIT Count is analyzed alongside other system-level data sources, including the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), to support coordinated planning efforts aimed at making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The 2026 PIT Count reflects a continued commitment to balancing data completeness with field-based realities. While core demographic and household information was collected to the greatest extent feasible, certain data elements may be limited due to non-response, observational enumeration methods, or access constraints within unsheltered environments. In alignment with best practices, this report prioritizes data integrity and transparency; where data is incomplete, it is presented as such rather than supplemented through estimation methodologies.

This report presents the findings from the 2026 PIT Count, including population trends, demographic characteristics, and key insights into the conditions and experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness in Kern County. These findings are intended to inform coordinated

planning efforts among public agencies, service providers, and community partners, and to guide strategic investments across the local homeless response system.

Methodology

The 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count was conducted in alignment with guidance established by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), ensuring a consistent, comparable, and methodologically sound approach. The effort included both sheltered and unsheltered populations and was designed to generate an unduplicated, point-in-time estimate of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Kern County.

Count Design & Implementation

The sheltered count was conducted on the night of January 27, 2026, and included individuals residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and other temporary housing interventions. Sheltered data was collected through coordinated provider reporting and standardized data collection processes to ensure accuracy and completeness.

The unsheltered count was conducted on January 28, 2026, and was supplemented by targeted outreach efforts over subsequent days to better capture individuals residing in encampments, riverbed areas, and rural locations that are not easily accessible within a single-day count. These extended efforts were implemented to enhance coverage and minimize undercounting in geographically dispersed and hard-to-reach areas.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using the ArcGIS Survey123 platform, enabling standardized survey administration and real-time geospatial tracking of responses. Trained volunteers and outreach teams conducted in-person surveys with individuals experiencing homelessness across Kern County.

When individuals were unable or unwilling to participate in a survey, observational counts were conducted in accordance with HUD guidance. These counts were utilized in situations where direct engagement was not feasible due to safety concerns, accessibility constraints, or participant refusal, ensuring more complete coverage of the unsheltered population.

Deduplication & Data Quality Controls

To ensure an accurate and unduplicated Point-in-Time (PIT) count, a comprehensive set of data quality control measures was implemented in accordance with guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During data collection, trained surveyors utilized standardized screening questions to identify whether individuals had already been counted, minimizing the risk of duplication in real time.

Following collection, survey responses were systematically reviewed and cross-checked using available identifying information, including combinations of name, date of birth, age, gender, household composition, and geographic location. These elements were used to identify and reconcile potential duplicate records while maintaining data integrity and confidentiality.

A structured data cleaning process was conducted post-collection, which included deduplication, validation, and error checking in alignment with HUD PIT and Homeless Data Exchange (HDX) data quality standards. Records were reviewed for internal consistency, completeness, and logical accuracy, including verification of household relationships, demographic fields, and housing status classifications.

Prior to submission, the dataset was prepared in accordance with HUD HDX 2.0 reporting requirements and underwent final validation checks, including resolution of data warnings and errors identified through HDX system protocols. These combined efforts ensured the final dataset reflects a reliable, high-quality, and unduplicated estimate of individuals experiencing homelessness in Kern County.

Demographic Data & Reporting Approach

Demographic data, including age, gender, and other HUD-defined characteristics, were collected to the extent feasible during survey administration. Due to the nature of unsheltered data collection and reliance on voluntary participation, not all demographic fields were completed for every individual counted. Consistent with HUD guidance and a data integrity-first approach, missing or incomplete demographic information was not estimated or extrapolated; instead, such instances are reported as unknown or not reported. This methodology prioritizes accuracy and transparency over modeled completeness and reflects the inherent limitations of field-based data collection efforts, particularly among unsheltered populations.

Limitations

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count represents a single-night estimate and is inherently subject to several limitations. Certain populations may be undercounted due to the transient and often hidden nature of homelessness, particularly among unsheltered individuals residing in isolated, rural, or concealed locations. External factors such as weather conditions, accessibility challenges, and participant non-response may further impact the completeness of the data.

Additionally, the use of observational counts—while necessary in certain circumstances—limits the ability to collect detailed demographic and experiential information for a portion of the population. As a result, some data elements may be incomplete or underrepresented.

Despite these limitations, the methodology employed is consistent with guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and reflects a comprehensive, coordinated effort to produce the most accurate and reliable estimate of homelessness in Kern County at a specific point in time.

Current and Comparative Data

During the 2026 PIT Count, a total of 2,690 individuals were counted, of which 1,225 were comprised of sheltered individuals, and 1,465 unsheltered individuals. This is a 3.2% increase compared to 2025 and has resulted in flattening the curve of homelessness in Kern County (Appendix C and Table 6).

The year-over-year change resulted in an approximate 1% increase in sheltered individuals while the unsheltered individual count increased by 5%.

Figure 1. Total homeless population by PIT year.

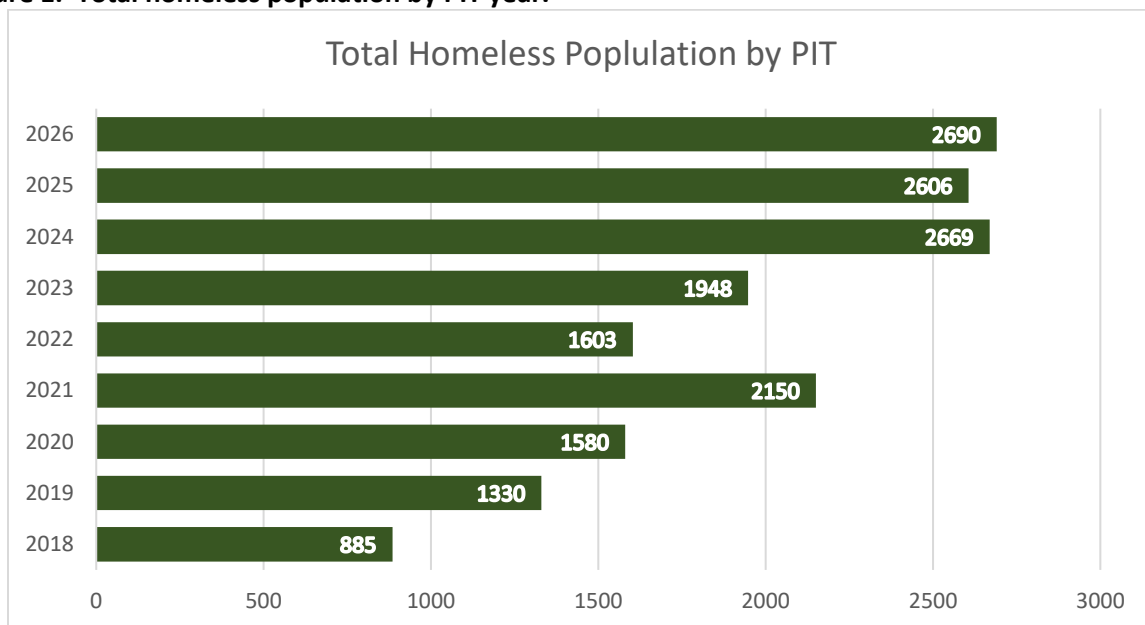
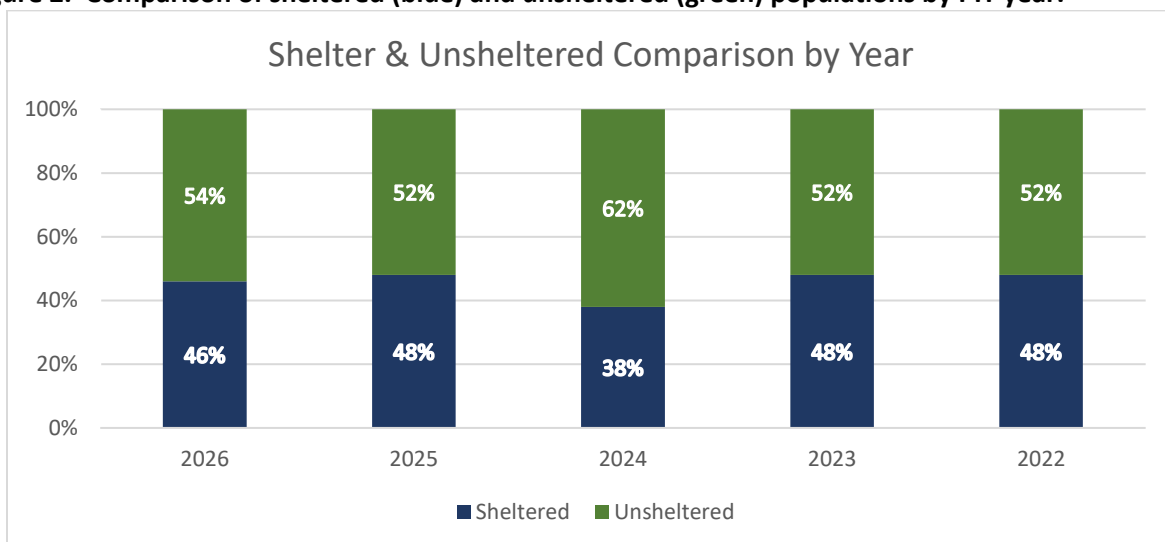


Figure 2. Comparison of sheltered (blue) and unsheltered (green) populations by PIT year.



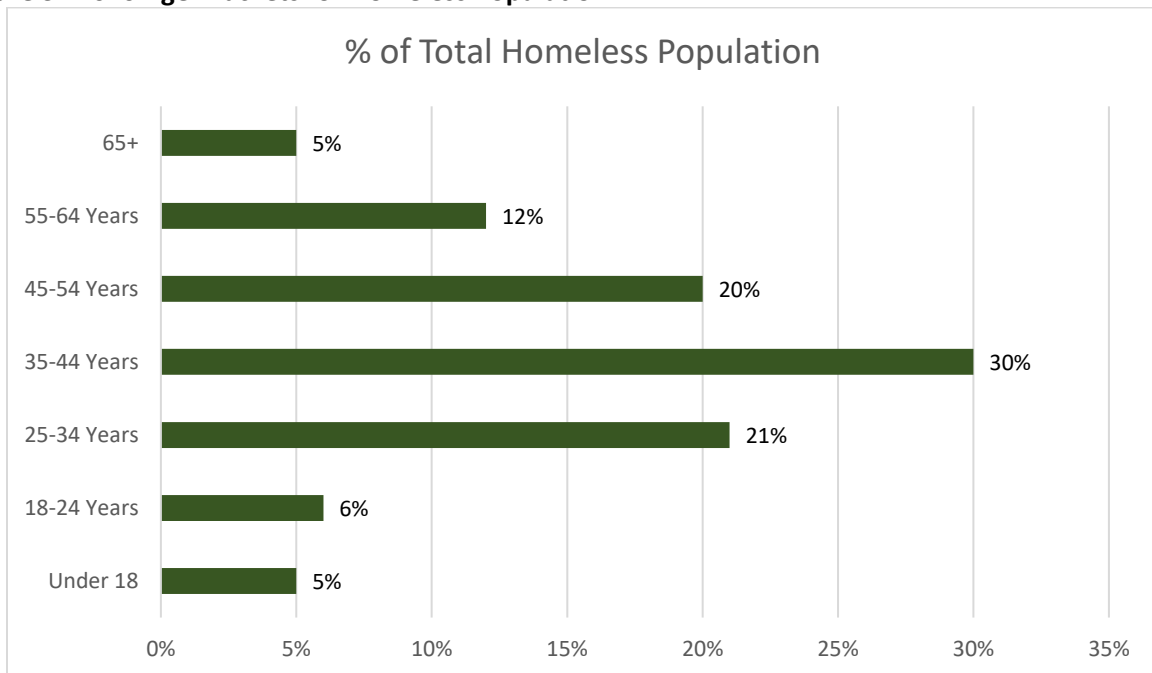
Key Findings

Population Demographics

Age

From 2025 to 2026, the age distribution shows a shift toward a slightly older and more concentrated working-age population. The largest group in 2026 is ages 35–44 (30%), indicating a stronger concentration in mid-career adults compared to 2025. The 18–24 group declines noticeably from 9% in 2025 to 6% in 2026, suggesting fewer younger adults in the population. Older age groups (55–64 and 65+) have decreased slightly from 15% to 12%, and 7% to 5%, respectively from 2025. Overall, 2026 shows a more defined middle-age concentration and reduced representation of younger adults compared to 2025.

Figure 3. 2026 Age Brackets for Homeless Population



Race

During their last review of PIT count collection criteria, HUD made the decision to consolidate the ethnicity and race categories to be more inclusive and indicative of individuals' specific ethnic and racial representation. The result is a combination of ethnicity and race where specific combinations could include the ethnicity and race alone, the ethnicity and race with included Hispanic/Latina/e/o representation, or multiple selections.

Table 1. Race Breakdown Among Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless Population

Race	Sheltered	Unsheltered	All People
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous (only)	1%	2%	1%
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	1%	1%	1%
Asian or Asian American (only)	1%	1%	1%
Asian or Asian American & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	0%	0%	0%
Black, African American, or African (only)	21%	13%	16%
Black, African American, or African & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	1%	0%	1%
Hispanic/Latina/e/o (only)	15%	31%	24%
Middle Eastern or North African (only)	0%	0%	0%
Middle Eastern or North African & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (only)	0.5%	1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	0.2%	0%	0.1%
White (only)	37%	45%	41%
White & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	19%	2%	10%
Multi-Racial & Hispanic/Latina/e/o	1%	3%	2%
Multi-Racial (all other)	2%	2%	2%

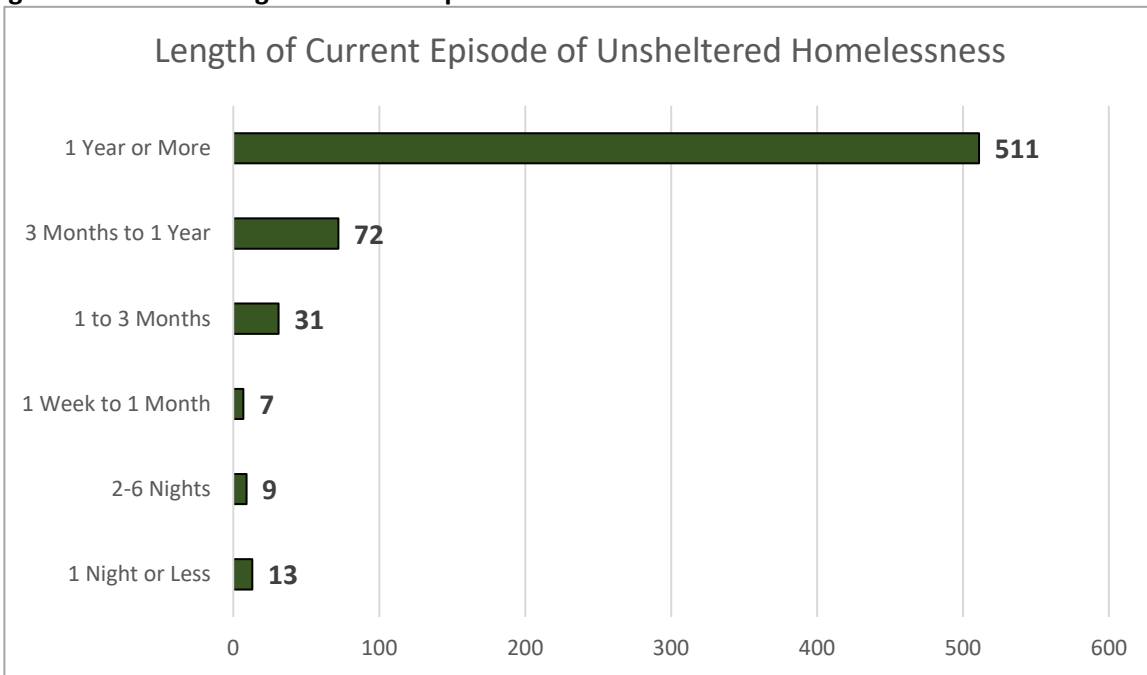
Living Accommodations and Duration for Unsheltered Homeless Population

Among unsheltered individuals who provided information on their current living situation, the majority reported residing outdoors in places not intended for human habitation. These locations include parks, freeway underpasses, riverbeds, abandoned buildings, and areas along canals and alleyways. In addition, some unsheltered individuals encountered during the PIT Count reported staying in vehicles, garages, or other makeshift or temporary structures. These findings highlight the prevalence of outdoor living conditions and the limited availability of safe, stable alternatives for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Kern County.

Length of Current Episode of Unsheltered Homelessness

There were 330 individuals who experienced homelessness for the first time and were also interviewed during the unsheltered homeless count. As for the length of the current episodes for unsheltered homelessness, those who have been homeless for a year or more had the highest number (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Count of length of current episode of unsheltered homelessness



Perceived Causes of Unsheltered Homelessness

Analysis of the 2026 Point-in-Time datasets indicates that homelessness is primarily driven by a combination of structural and economic factors. Across both datasets, a substantial share of individuals—representing hundreds of people—are experiencing chronic homelessness, highlighting significant long-term system gaps such as a shortage of permanent supportive housing and limited pathways to stable housing exits. The data also shows that the majority of individuals are working-age adults without children, indicating that economic instability and housing affordability are key drivers. These patterns suggest that many individuals are entering homelessness due to job loss, underemployment, or an inability to keep up with rising rental costs.

At the same time, individual and situational factors contribute to both the onset and persistence of homelessness. The unsheltered dataset, which includes over a thousand individuals, reflects higher vulnerability, with many individuals likely facing behavioral health challenges that make it difficult to access or remain engaged in services. The presence of a significant number of older adults (ages 45 and above) further points to fixed-income limitations as a contributing factor. Additionally, smaller but important subpopulations—including youth, families, and individuals exiting institutions—suggest that life disruptions such as domestic violence, family breakdown, or system transitions serve as common entry points into homelessness. Together, these counts reinforce that homelessness in the region is sustained by the intersection of economic pressures, service gaps, and barriers to accessing housing and care.

Health and Unsheltered Homelessness

There was a total of 112 individuals who self-reported health conditions within the unsheltered population ranged from a single disease or morbidity to as high as three (3) co-morbidities. These diseases include asthma, diabetes, heart disease, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, and valley fever.

Table 2. Morbidity and Co-Morbidity within the Unsheltered Homeless Population

Number of Self-Reported Diseases (Morbidity)	Count
1	88
2	18
3	6

Health insurance data was again included as part of the survey questions for this year's PIT count. Access to healthcare is a major social determinant of health, and access to healthcare insurance is an important factor in resolving one's homelessness. During this year's count, the number of individuals who responded regarding health insurance decreased (574 in 2025 versus 390 in 2026). The data revealed a decrease in the number of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness who have Medi-Cal or Medicare compared to last year.

Table 3. Insurance Among the Unsheltered Homeless Population

Insurance Type	
Medi-Cal	345
Medicare	21
COBRA	1
Veterans' Administration	3
TRICARE	2

Special Populations of Interest

Three populations of interest within the overall homeless population include individuals who are chronically homeless, those with current or prior military service, and individuals aged between 18 – 24 years (youth). The count for these populations is listed below.

Table 4. Count of Homeless Populations of Interest

Homeless Populations of Interest	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Chronically homeless	524	558
Veterans	55	40
Youth	56	42

Additional Homeless Populations

Other populations of focus for individuals experiencing homelessness include those with self-reported mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and those who identify as survivors of domestic violence (see Table 5).

Mental Illness

There was a total of 650 adults who self-reported a serious mental illness. More sheltered individuals reported a serious mental illness than their unsheltered counterparts.

Substance Use Disorder

429 individuals in the homeless population self-reported substance use disorder with the majority also being unsheltered. Substance use disorders range from alcohol, drug, or alcohol and drug use.

Table 5. Count of Additional Homeless Populations

Additional Homeless Populations	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Adults with a serious mental illness	438	212
Adults with substance use disorder	261	168
Adults with HIV/AIDS	12	8
Adults Survivors of Domestic Violence	80	50

Conclusion

The Continuum of Care (CoC), along with the City of Bakersfield and the County of Kern, has made significant progress in combating homelessness, aiming to reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is a vital tool for understanding the scope of homelessness and for creating strategies to improve outcomes, making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. BKRHC utilizes PIT Count data to guide collaborative planning with the city, county, and service provider organizations to efficiently allocate resources focused on designing a system of supportive services, shelter and permanent housing. The PIT Count underscores the power of community collaboration and highlights our collective alignment to enhance the quality of life for all Kern County residents.

Appendix A: Definitions

Adult

An individual who is aged 18 and older.

Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative (BKRHC)

The primary entity charged with responsibility for overseeing CoC functions as mandated by HUD, including submission of the annual CoC Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), HMIS oversight, Point In Time Count, Housing Inventory Chart, as well as other annual reports.

Child

An individual who is under the age of 18.

Chronically Homeless Individual

An individual or family head of household with one or more disabling conditions who has been continuously homeless for 1 or more years and/or experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years.

Families

A household that consists of at least one adult who is 18 years of age or older and at least one child who is under 18 years of age.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The U.S. Department that funds low-income and affordable housing initiatives, including the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, through the HUD Continuum of Care Program and Emergency Solutions Grant Program.

Point In Time (PIT) Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of people experiencing homelessness who are sheltered and unsheltered on a single night in January.

Sheltered Homelessness

A state of homelessness where an individual is currently residing in an emergency shelter, navigation center, or transitional housing.

Unsheltered Homelessness

A state of homelessness where an individual is currently residing in a place not meant for human habitation, including vehicles, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, parks, freeway underpasses, or encampments.

Unaccompanied Youth

Youth under the age of 18 and individuals between 18 through 24 years of age experiencing homelessness and without a parent or legal guardian.

Veteran

An individual who has served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States

Appendix B: Historical PIT Count Data by Household Composition

Table 6. Historical PIT Count Totals by Household Composition and Percent Change

Year	Adults w/o Children	Adults' w/ Children	Children	Total Persons	% Change From Previous Count
2026 Total	2,478	81	131	2,690	+3.22%
2025 Total	2325	121	165	2611	-2.36%
2024 Total	2450	85	134	2669	37.01%
2023 Total	1747	76	125	1948	21.52%
2022 Total	1361	237	5	1603	-25.44%
2021 Total	1633	174	343	2150	36.08%
2020 Total	1359	79	142	1580	18.80%

**Note: A 2021 PIT Count was not conducted in person due to COVID, HMIS data used.*

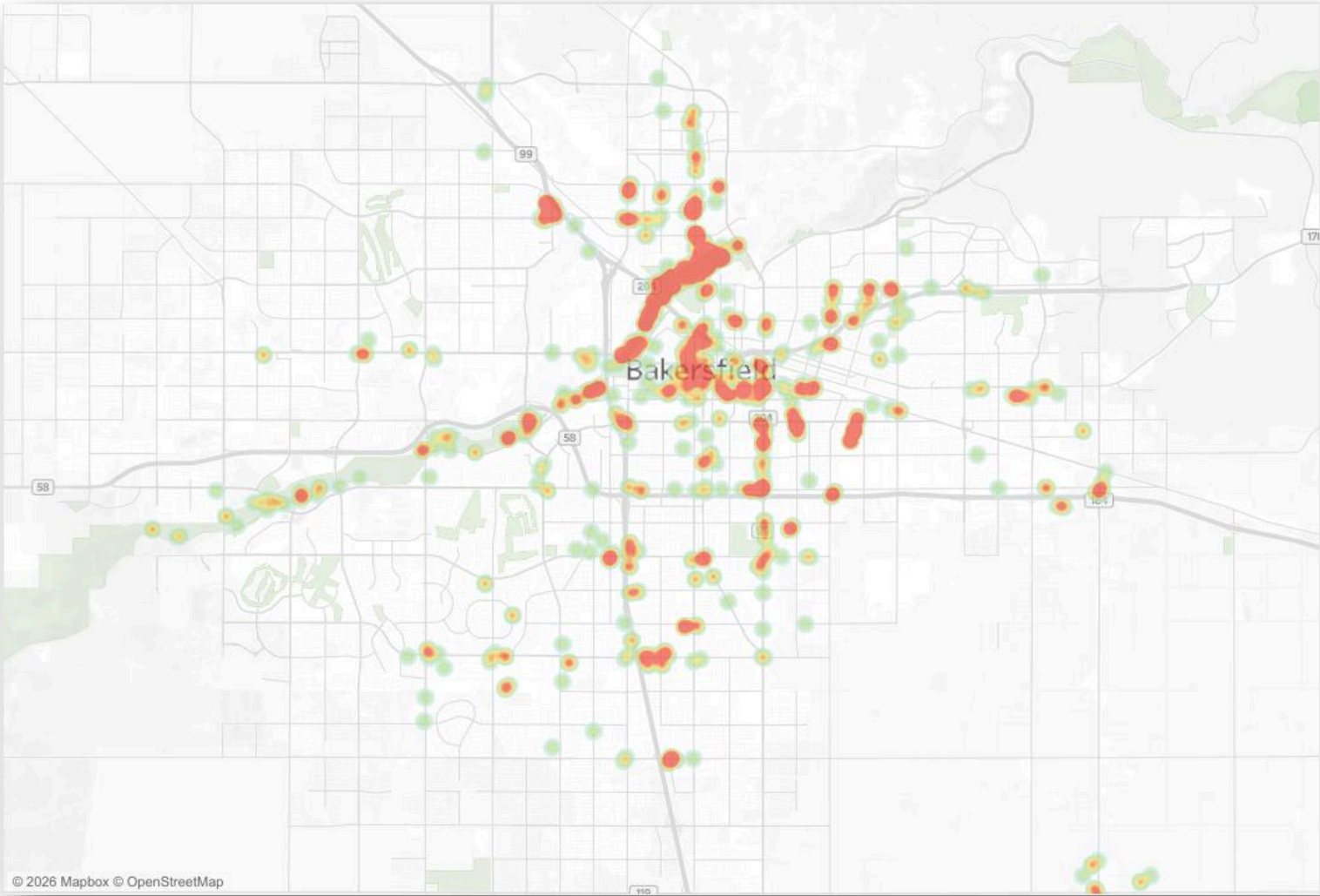
Appendix C: Unsheltered PIT Count Totals by City

Table 7. Unsheltered PIT Count Totals by City

City	2025 Unsheltered Count	2026 Unsheltered Count
Arvin	19	21
Bakersfield	1083	1006
Bodfish	2	4
Buttonwillow	0	2
California City	3	5
Delano	91	51
Fellows	0	1
Ford City	1	0
Frazier Park	1	0
Inyokern	0	0
Kernville	0	2
Lake Isabella	18	12
Lamont	17	43
Lost Hills	1	1
Mojave	7	21
Mountain Mesa	0	14
McFarland	0	1
Oildale	102	181
Onyx	0	1
Ridgecrest	10	12
Rosamond	2	10
Shafter	3	5
Taft	13	40
Tehachapi	3	6
Wasco	12	25
Weldon	0	1
Wofford Heights	0	0

Appendix D: 2026 Metropolitan Bakersfield Unsheltered Count Density Map

Figure 5. 2026 Metropolitan Bakersfield Unsheltered Count Density Map



Appendix E: 2026 Kern County Unsheltered Count Density Map

Figure 6. 2026 Kern County Unsheltered Count Density Map

