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NJ
2016
Counts!

Somerset County's 2016 Point-In-Time Count of the Homeless

January 26, 2016

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This report was prepared for
The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
by
Monarch Housing Associates

I. Introduction

NJ Counts 2016

NJ Counts 2016, New Jersey's annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count of the Homeless, provides a statewide snapshot of homeless households in our communities; where they find shelter, what their needs are, and what factors contribute to making them homeless. The 2016 Count reveals important demographic and other information about families and individuals who were homeless on the night of Tuesday, January 26th, 2016 and was carried out with the help of government agencies, community-based organizations, and local volunteers.

In New Jersey, each County's count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally, and the information gathered enables each community to better allocate housing resources and services in order to prevent and end homelessness. The PIT Count is the only opportunity throughout the year for most communities to take a comprehensive look at the total homeless population, and is especially crucial in assessing the needs of the unsheltered homeless.

Acknowledgements

Monarch would like to thank all Point-In-Time Coordinators, homeless service providers, agencies, and volunteers who participated in NJ Counts 2016. Monarch would also like to specifically thank Bergen County for providing a Spanish translation of the 2016 paper survey tool.

Finally, a special acknowledgement is given to all the respondents who were willing to share personal information about themselves and their households' experiences in order to help our communities better understand and assist the homeless.

Funding for coordinating New Jersey's 2016 Point-In-Time and producing this report was provided by New Jersey's Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA).

This Report

The findings in this report are presented in the following sections:

1. Total homeless population;
2. Those experiencing chronic homelessness (families and individuals that have been homeless for a year or longer, or who have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years in which the episodes equal at least 12 months, and have a disabled head of household); and
3. Unsheltered families and individuals;

The structure of this report is intended to provide not only an overall snapshot of the homeless population counted in the Point-In-Time, but also to focus attention on the homeless subpopulations that are the most in need, and those that represent federal funding priorities set forth by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In addition to the main findings presented in the body of this report, Appendix A includes charts illustrating the responses to all survey questions that were part of the 2016 Point-In-Time Count.

II. Data Collection and Methodology

Requirements for the Count

As part of its Continuum of Care (CoC) application for homelessness funding, HUD requires that jurisdictions across the nation conduct a statistically reliable and unduplicated count of the homeless for one overnight period during the last 10 days of January. New Jersey's Continuums of Care (regional networks of organizations, agencies, and community stakeholders that plan local efforts to help the homeless) conduct an annual count of sheltered homeless persons (i.e. persons in emergency shelter, transitional housing for the homeless, and Safe Haven programs) and at least a biennial count of unsheltered homeless persons.

In their Point-In-Time Count, CoCs must count and report all individuals and families who meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(i) of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 91.5 of HUD's Homeless Definition Rule on the night designated for the count. This includes individuals and families who are:

- **Sheltered**, or “living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals),” or
- **Unsheltered**, “with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground.”

Because this report focuses on those respondents who meet HUD's definition of homeless, it does not include information about those who may be at risk of homelessness, precariously housed, or considered homeless under other federal statutes. Persons who, on the night of the count, were living doubled up with another household, living in illegal or overcrowded units, being discharged from a jail or health facility with no subsequent residence, scheduled to be evicted, or paying for its own motel unit were not considered

homeless. All survey information collected for respondents who were at risk of homelessness or precariously housed was preserved and shared with each community for local planning purposes, but is not included in this report unless otherwise noted.

Data Collection Methods

Monarch Housing Associates provided each of New Jersey's 21 counties with in-person training, online video and print training guides, a practice online survey tool, and technical assistance to aid in the data collection process for New Jersey's 2016 Point-In-Time Count. Point-In-Time Coordinators in each county disseminated PIT training materials and helped facilitate local planning around implementation of the PIT count in their communities.

For the third year, the count of homeless persons who were sheltered on the night of the point in time was primarily taken from New Jersey's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), while the count for the unsheltered and those sheltered by non-HMIS programs was conducted using a Paper Survey tool, personal interviews, and agency client records. This strategy was designed in accordance with HUD guidance regarding conducting both sheltered and unsheltered Point-In-Time Counts.

The 2016 PIT Survey tool closely mirrors information collected in HMIS so that the data was comparable for important factors such as household characteristics, income, services needed, and factors contributing to homelessness. Agencies updated all HMIS data to accurately reflect the night of the count, and those with programs that were non HMIS-participating submitted information from interviews utilizing the Paper Survey tool through SurveyMonkey.

Limitations

1. HUD requires a count of sheltered homeless persons and families annually, but only a biennial count of those who are unsheltered. Even though New Jersey conducts both a sheltered and unsheltered count each year, the comprehensiveness of the unsheltered count may be influenced during the non-HUD required full count years. This report includes comparison data from 2012 to 2016. 2012, 2014 and 2016 were not HUD required full reporting years while 2013 and 2015 were.
2. The information presented in this report is based on survey interviews and agency HMIS records. In some cases, survey respondents did not answer every question completely, and homeless provider agencies did not report all client information on the night of the count. For this reason, all charts presented in this report will be based on the responses received, while all percentages will be based on the total households or individuals served and may not equal 100% in each category due to possible missing data.
3. Because the Point-In-Time Count represents only one night during the last ten days of January, it is widely accepted that the PIT will undercount the overall homeless

population. Undercounting may occur due to difficulty finding those living on the street, incomplete information for people who do not agree to complete the survey, a shortage of volunteers to cover a geographic area, or homeless persons choosing not to seek housing services on the night of the count. This data should not be viewed as a comprehensive measurement of all families and individuals who experience homelessness throughout the year, but rather as a minimum number of persons who experience homelessness in New Jersey on a given night.

De-duplication

Monarch Housing Associates collected and merged all HMIS and SurveyMonkey Point-In-Time data from each community into its combined database. Monarch generated two unique identifiers, one more general and one more in-depth, based on the identifying information for each individual record. Using a formula, these unique identifiers were compared to all identifiers for other records in the database to identify potential duplicates.

All duplicates detected through comparison of unique identifiers were then de-duplicated by the following process:

1. Multiple HMIS records where all fields match – a single record was preserved, and all duplicates were removed;
2. Multiple SurveyMonkey records where all fields match – a single record was preserved, and all duplicates were removed;
3. Comparing HMIS to SurveyMonkey records where unique identifiers, disabilities, income sources, household size, and location on the night of the count all match – the HMIS record was preserved and the SurveyMonkey duplicates were removed.

Following this de-duplication of the data, communities were given preliminary data to review all identified duplicates and records with missing data. Communities were then able to update records with missing information and/or request any additional de-duplication they determined prudent. Monarch then updated and removed additional records based on community feedback prior to completing its final analysis and report.

III. Findings for Total Homeless Population

Key Findings

- On the night of January 26th, 2016 a total of 184 households, including 218 persons, were experiencing homelessness in Somerset County, according to the 2016 Point-In-Time Count.
- A total of 1 household, with 1 person, was identified as chronically homeless.
- 9 unsheltered homeless persons were counted.

Total Homeless Population

On the night of January 26th, 2016, a total of 218 persons, in 184 households, were experiencing homelessness in Somerset County, according to the 2016 Point-In-Time Count. This is a decrease of 124 persons (36.3%) and 95 households (34.1%) from 2015. Somerset County had 2.4% of New Jersey's statewide homeless population in 2015.

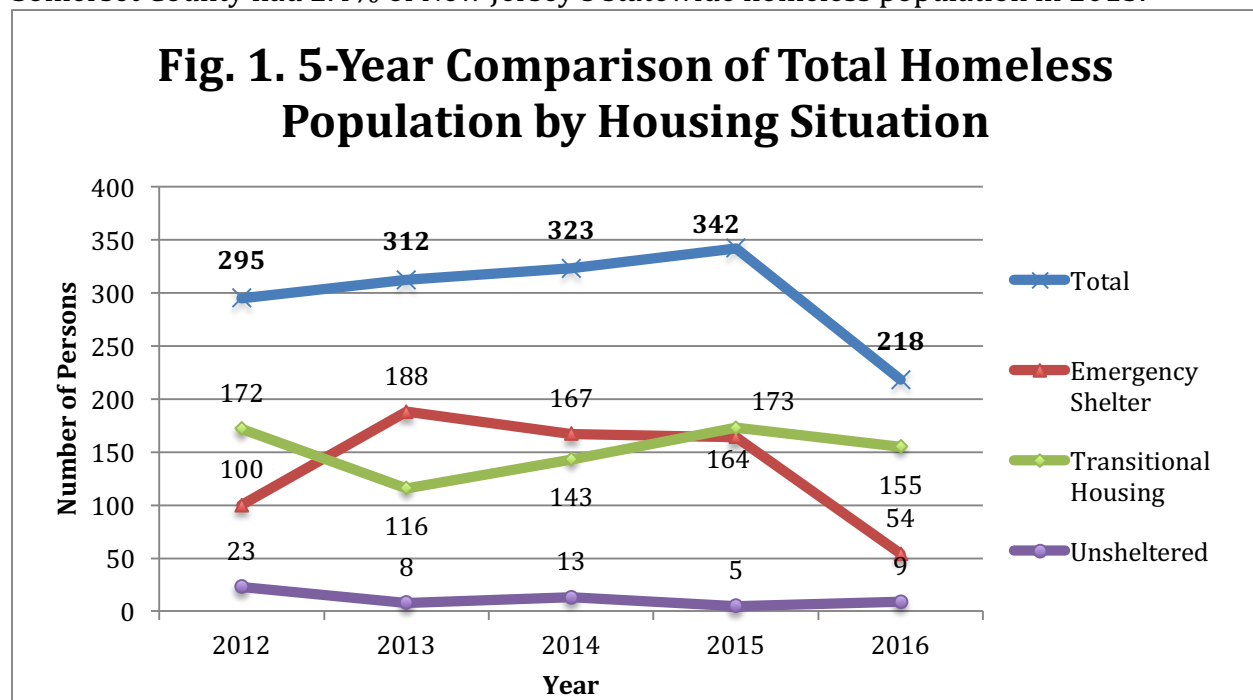
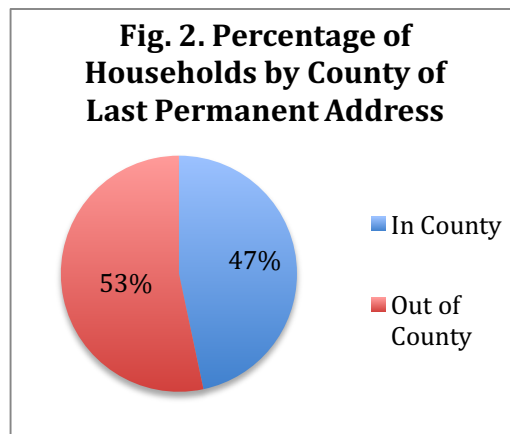


Figure 1 shows that, in 2016, 54 homeless persons stayed in emergency shelters, 155 stayed in transitional housing, and 9 were living unsheltered on the night of the count. The total number of those counted in emergency shelters showed a reduction of 110 persons (67.1%) from 2015, while transitional housing saw a reduction of 18 persons (10.4%). While this is true, the number living unsheltered increased by 4 persons (80%) when compared to 2015.

Figure 1 also shows that, while the total number of homeless persons was increasing from 2012 to 2015, it fell in 2016, showing the lowest count in five years. Overall, the total

homeless population decreased by 26.1% (77 persons) from 2012 to 2016. A major contributing factor to this change is the reclassification of the VA's Domiciliary program. At the end of 2015, HUD and the VA announced that VA Domiciliary programs would no longer be classified as an emergency shelter but would instead be classified as a treatment program, changing the homeless status for all veterans in that program to not homeless.

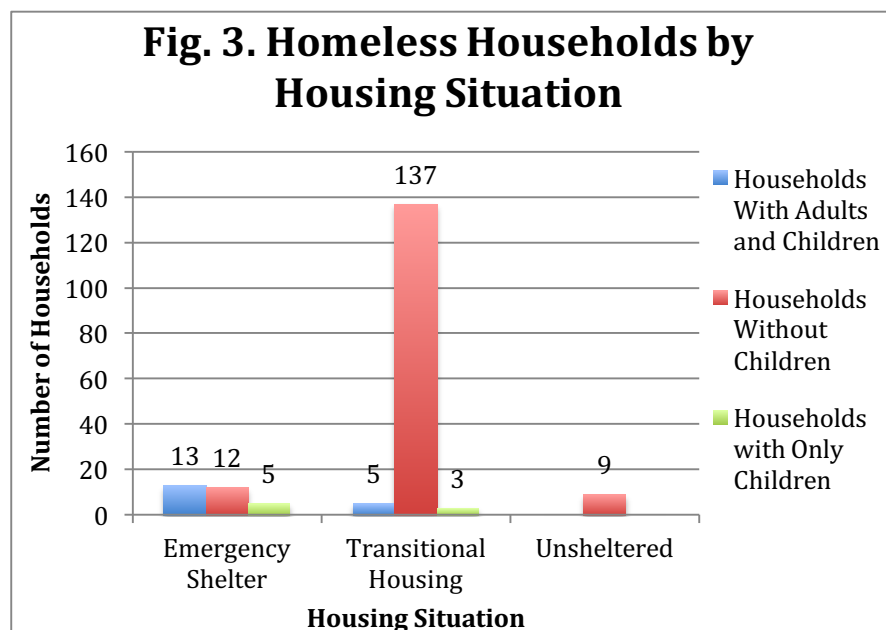
As Figure 2 shows, 53% of homeless households in Somerset County reported that their last permanent address prior to becoming homeless was outside of the county.



Homeless Families and Individuals

When reading the data regarding different types of homeless households, it is important for the reader to remember that, in this report, 'household' means "any group of persons who, if they were able to attain permanent housing, would choose to live together; and, shared the same sleeping arrangements on the night of the count." Three different types of households are discussed below: households with adults and children under 18 ('families'), households without children ('individuals'), and households with only children under 18 ('unaccompanied youth').

Of the 184 homeless households counted in Somerset County in 2016, 18 (9.8%) were families with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult, 15 less (45.5%) than 2015. These families included 51 persons, including 30 children under age 18, and 21 adults. The average family size was 3 persons. Figure 3 shows that 13 families (72.2%) were staying in emergency shelter, and 5 (27.8%) were in transitional housing on the night of the count. Similar to 2015, there were no unsheltered families in Somerset County on the night of the count.



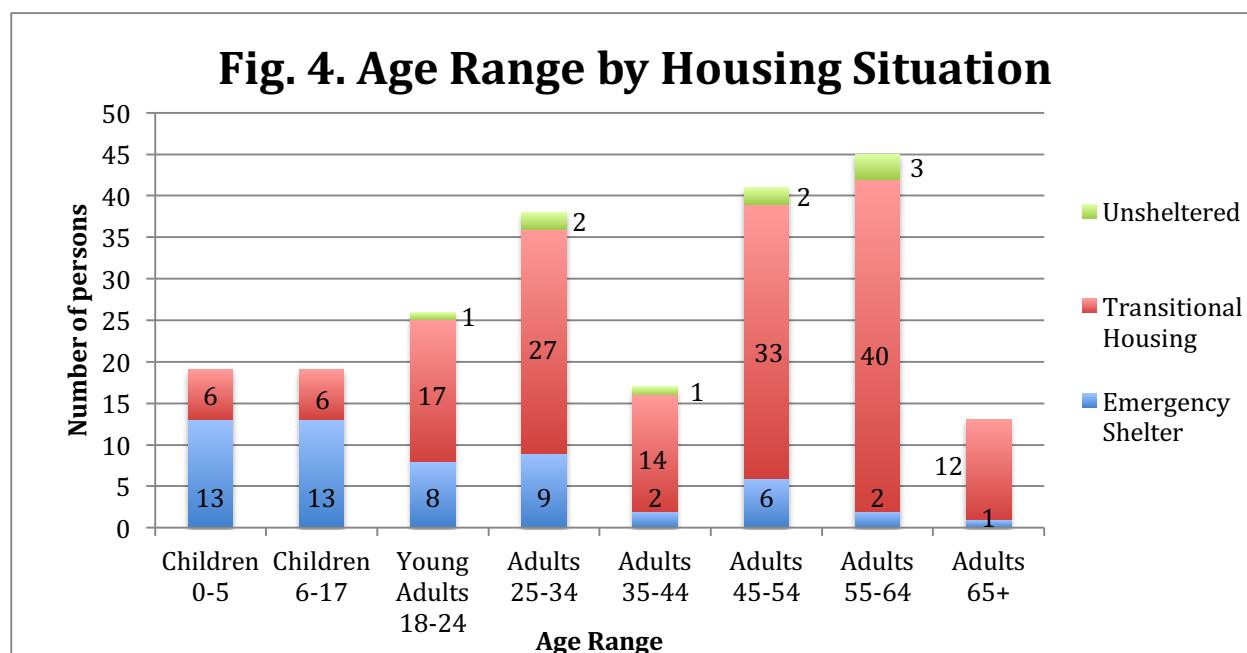
85.9% (158) of the homeless households counted in Somerset County were households without children under 18, and they were composed of 157 adult individuals and 1 adult

couple. 12 (7.6%) of these adult-only households were staying in emergency shelters, 137 (86.7%) were in transitional housing, and 9 (5.7%) were unsheltered. Somerset County has seen the number of adult-only households decrease by 76 (32.5%) since 2015.

As Figure 3 indicates, there were 8 youth only households reported in 2016, a decrease of 4 from 2015. All of these households were one-child households. 5 unaccompanied youth were staying in emergency shelters (62.5%), and 3 (37.5%) were in transitional housing on the night of the count.

Demographics

The majority (154 persons, 70.6%) of those experiencing homelessness in Somerset County on the night of the count were adults over age 24. There were a total of 26 (11.9%) homeless young adults between 18 and 24 years old, and 38 (17.4%) children under 18 years old as well. As Figure 4 shows, the age range most represented, with 45 persons and 20.6% of the total homeless population, was adults between 55 and 64, matching the trend found in 2015.

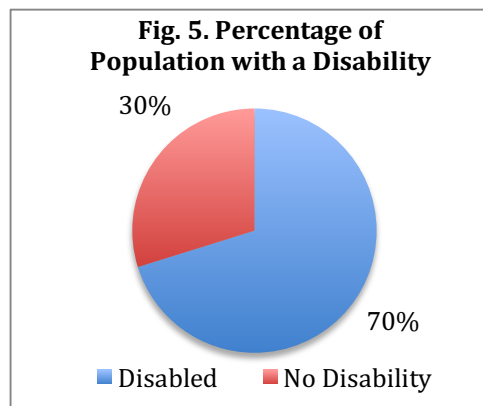


56.9% (124) of homeless persons counted were male, and 42.2% (92) were female.

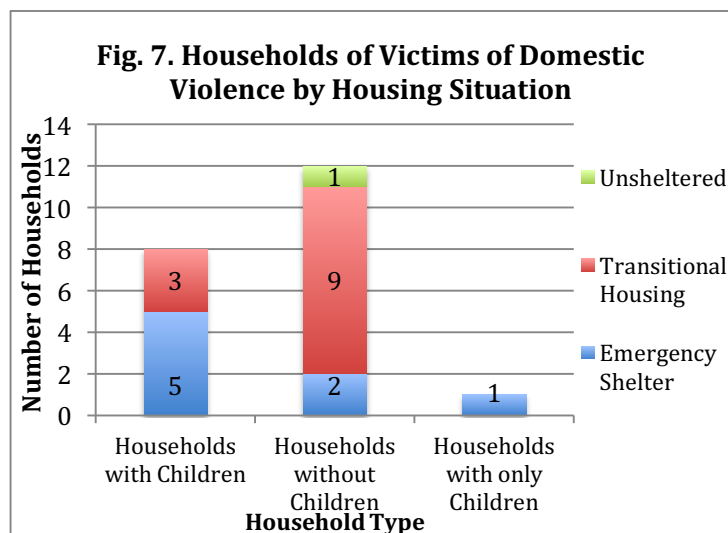
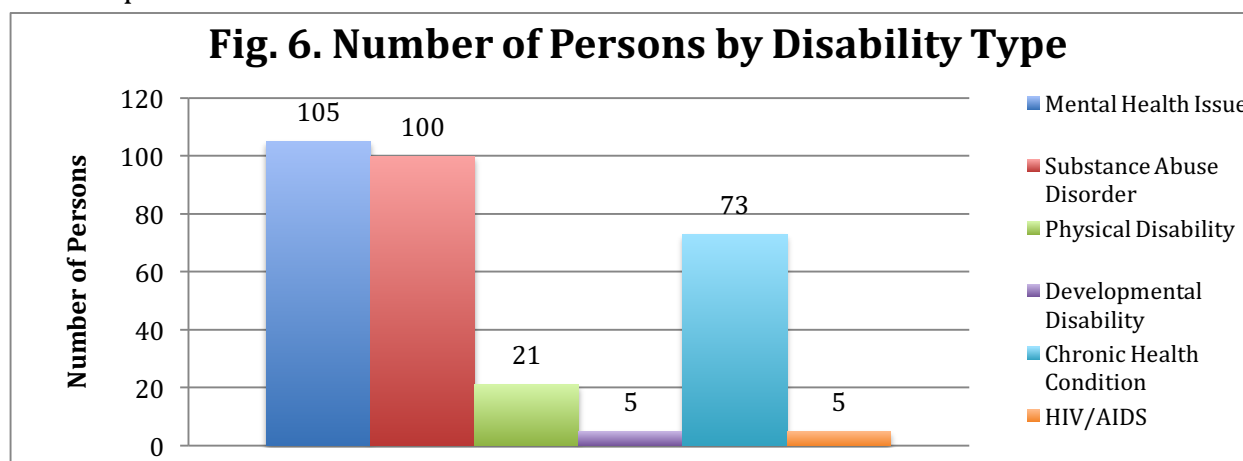
51.8% (113) of homeless persons identified their race as Black or African American, making that the largest racial subgroup of homeless persons reported. The next largest group self-identified as White (40.8%, 89 persons), followed by those identifying as Multi-Racial (4.1%, 9 persons). With regard to ethnicity, 11% of persons identified themselves as Hispanic.

Disabilities

Figure 5 illustrates that 70.2% of homeless persons reported having some type of disability. 80.6% of adults 18 or older reported some type of disability compared to 21.1% of children. Figure 6 shows the number of the homeless persons that identified as having various disabilities. The most prevalent disabilities were mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and chronic health conditions.



Among disabled adults, 69.7% reported mental health issues making this the most prevalent disability; representing 56.1% of the total adult homeless population. 67.6% of disabled adults reported a substance abuse disorder. Among disabled homeless children, 50% reported a mental health issue.



Victims of Domestic Violence

On the night of the count, in Somerset County, 21 homeless households reported having a victim of domestic violence. Figure 7 shows that the majority (57.1%) of these households were adult-only households. 8 (38.1%) were families with at least 1 adult and 1 child under the age of 18. 1 (4.7%) unaccompanied homeless youth also reported being a victim. 38.1% of domestic violence households were in emergency

shelters, while 57.1% were in transitional housing. Similar to 2015, only 1 domestic violence household was unsheltered on the night of the count.

Veterans

In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending homelessness among veterans by 2015. Many communities in New Jersey have also been working hard to end homelessness among our country's servicemen and women.

Fig. 8. Number of Veterans by Housing Situation

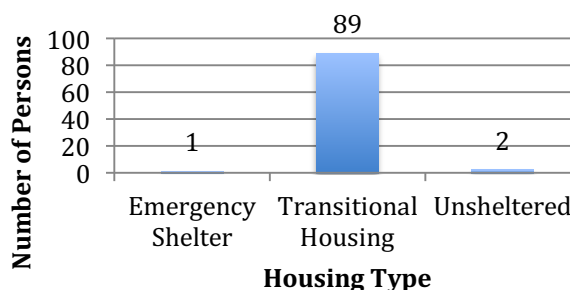
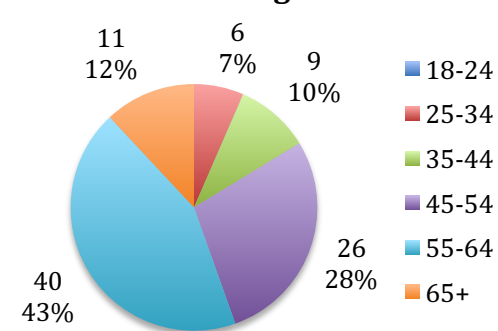


Fig. 9. Veterans by Age Range



92 homeless veterans were counted on the night of the count, 70 less (43.2%) than 2015. All were members of adult-only households. The two unsheltered veterans show an increase of 2 from 2015, as there were no unsheltered veterans in the 2015 count.

92.4% of all veterans experiencing homelessness in Somerset County were male, and 7.6% were female. The most common racial background identified among veterans (48.9%) was White, while 46.7% identified as Black or African-American. Figure 9

illustrates the percentage of homeless veterans by age range.

1 homeless veteran reported being a victim of domestic violence and 86 of the 92, 93.5%, reported having some kind of disability. The most common disabilities cited were chronic health conditions (77.9%), mental health issues (75.6%) and substance abuse issues (75.6%). 1 veteran reported receiving Veteran's Pension, 12 (13%) identified receiving Veteran's disability income and 88 (95.7%) reported being connected to VA Medical Benefits.

Income and Benefits

Among all households experiencing homelessness on the night of the count, 45.1% had no source of income, and 17.4% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common source of cash income among homeless households after earned income was General Assistance (14.1%).

Fig. 10. Number of Households by Income Type

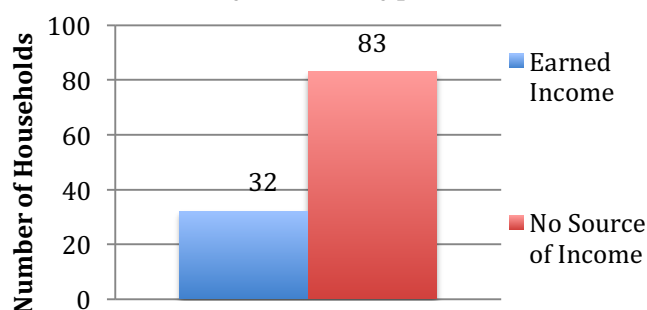


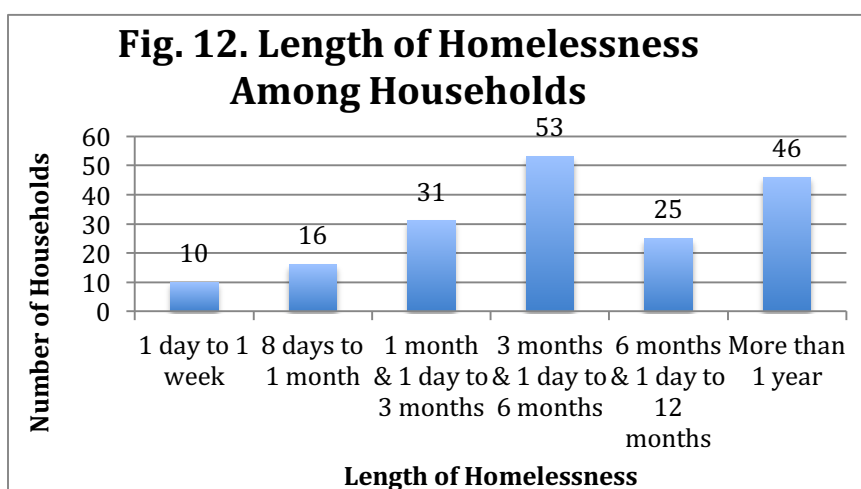
Figure 11 shows the average monthly income for all homeless households.

Figure 11. Average Monthly Income For Households by Housing Situation			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered
Average for All Households	\$435.33	\$818.55	\$539.78

7.6% of households reported that their household was receiving no kind of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. VA Medical Benefits were the top reported non-cash benefit, and were received by 47.8% of households. 35.3% were connected to Medicaid benefits, and 32.1% were also receiving Food Stamps, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Length of Homelessness

Figure 12 shows the range lengths of homeless episodes experienced on the night of the count by households in Somerset County. The largest grouping of households reported their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted between 3 months and 1 day to 6 months (53 households, 28.8%).

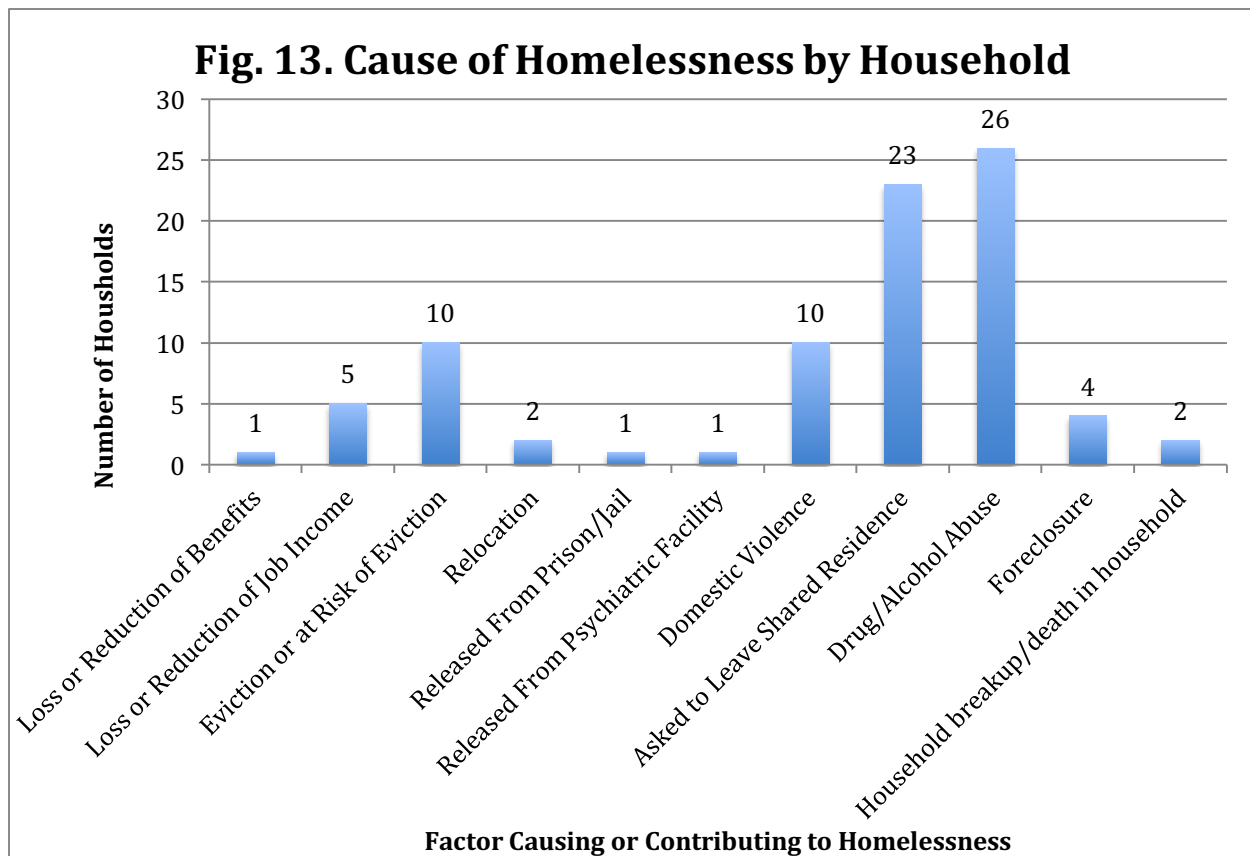


This is a slight shift from 2015 where the most commonly reported length was 6 months and 1 day to 12 months.

Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to drug or alcohol abuse (26 households, 14.1%) than any other cause. As Figure 13 shows, the other common factors reported were being asked to leave a shared residence (12.5%), eviction (5.4%) and domestic violence (5.4%).

When homeless households were asked 'what was your residence prior to your current living situation?' more reported residing in transitional housing projects (27.7%) than any other type of residence. 24.5% said they were staying or living with friends or family, and 13% reported residing in an emergency shelter prior to their current living situation.



IV. Findings for the Chronically Homeless

Someone with a long-term disabling condition, who has been continually homeless for a year or more, or at least four times in the past three years, meets HUD's definition of chronically homeless. Any family with one adult that meets this definition is considered a chronically homeless family. This definition has been updated since the 2015 point in time, in such that in order for a household to meet the episodic definition of chronically homeless, the 4 episodes must equal at least 12 months, which may lead to a decrease in the number of households that qualify as chronically homeless.

HUD currently has a goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2017. This goal reflects the urgency of helping to house those persons who have not been able to remain stably housed over the course of an extended period of time. Chronically Homeless persons are among the most vulnerable homeless groups, and providing effective supportive services and case management may be required in order to help some stay in the housing they need. Prioritization of new Continuum of Care funding opportunities has recently been giving some communities in New Jersey new resources for housing this subgroup.

Total Chronically Homeless Population

1 household, made up of 1 person, was chronically homeless in Somerset County, according to the 2016 Point-In-Time Count. This is a decrease of 33 persons (97.1%) from 2015. The rate of chronic homelessness as a percentage of overall homelessness sharply decreased from 9.9% in 2015 to .46%.

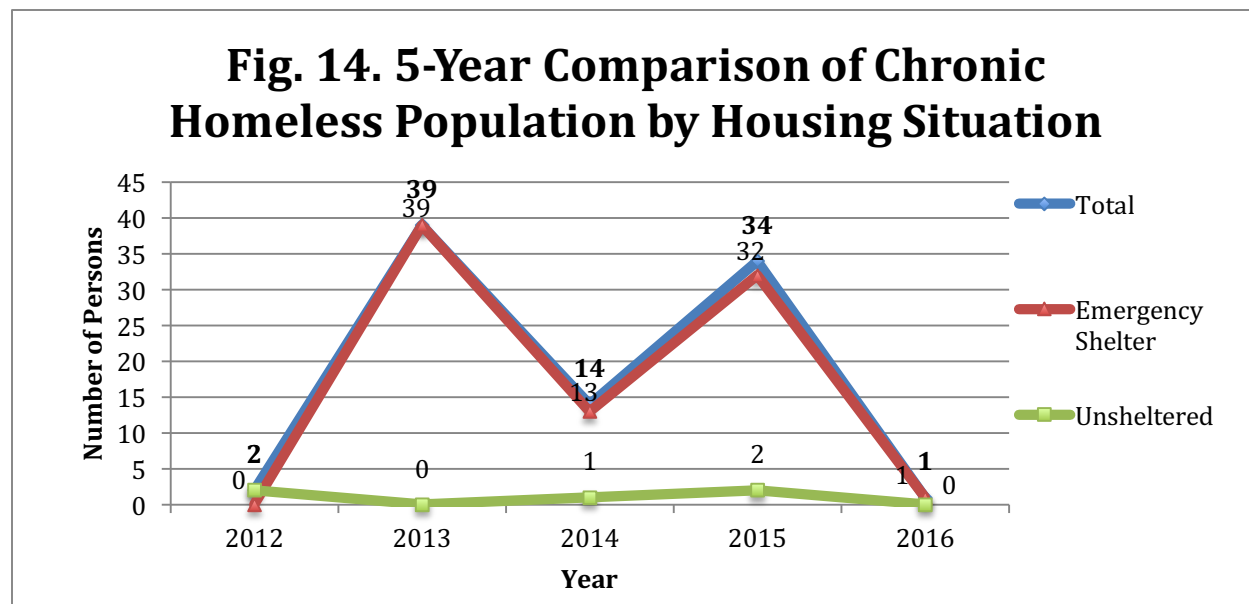


Figure 14 shows the number of chronically homeless persons who were in emergency shelter or living unsheltered in Somerset County from 2012 to 2016. Over the past five years, the overall number of chronically homeless persons has fluctuated depending on the count year, but has overall decreased by 1 person compared to 2012. The number of unsheltered chronically homeless persons has decreased by 2 since 2012. As mentioned in the total population section, this decrease from 2015 to 2016 seems to have a correlation to the reclassification of the VA Domiciliary program and the decrease in persons that are considered homeless under that definition.

Families and Individuals

The 1 chronically homeless household counted in Somerset County in 2016, was an adult individual household that was being served in an emergency shelter program. There were no chronically homeless families counted in 2016, a decrease of 1 from 2015.

Demographics

The chronically homeless person counted was an adult male between the ages of 55 and 64. He identified his race as Black or African American and identified his ethnicity as Non-Hispanic.

Disabilities

In order to meet the definition of chronically homeless, at least one adult in each household must have some kind of disability. The 1 chronically homeless household counted in Somerset County in 2016, identified as having a physical disability.

Subpopulations

The chronically homeless individual in Somerset County did not report being a victim of domestic violence or a veteran.

Income and Benefits

The chronically homeless individual identified on the night of the count reported receiving SSDI and being connected to Food Stamps (SNAP). They reported having a monthly income of \$649.

Length of Homelessness

The 1 chronically homeless household identified in Somerset County reported their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted for more than 1 year.

Cause of Homelessness

Loss or reduction of job income was identified as the cause of homelessness for the chronically homeless household counted in Somerset County.

V. Findings for the Unsheltered Homeless

HUD's definition of "unsheltered homeless" applies to any individual or family "with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground."

Unsheltered homeless individuals and families are among those with the most critical housing needs in a community. The unsheltered are especially vulnerable in the cold weather and the elements, which are in evidence at the end of January when the Count takes place. The Point-In-Time survey can play an important role in helping communities understand why some of the homeless remain unsheltered, and who is included in this group.

Total Unsheltered Homeless Population

9 households, made up of 9 persons, were living unsheltered in Somerset County, according to the 2016 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 5 households (125%), and 4 persons (80%) from 2015.

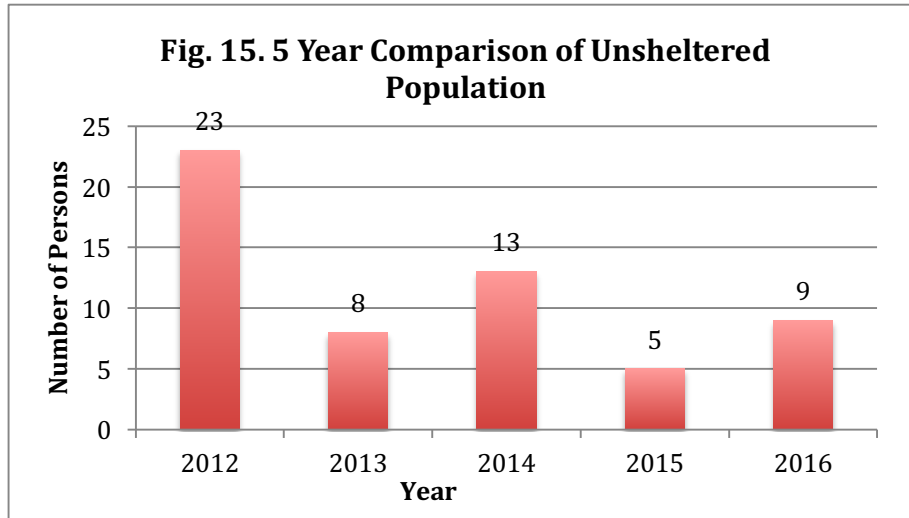


Figure 15 shows the number of unsheltered persons from 2012 to 2016. While the numbers have fluctuated over the years, overall the unsheltered population has trended downward from 2012 to 2016 (14 persons, 60.9%).

Families and Individuals

Similar to 2015, there were 0 unsheltered households with children in 2016. All 9 of the unsheltered households counted were individual adult households.

Demographics

As Figure 22 shows, the largest portion of the 9 unsheltered persons counted in 2016, 33.3%, was between 55 and 64 years old, a shift from 2015 where the highest concentration was found in persons aged 35 to 44.

77.8% of the unsheltered persons counted were male, while 2 were female. 66.7% identified their race as White and 33.3% identified as Black or African-American. 11.1% of the unsheltered persons identified themselves as Hispanic.

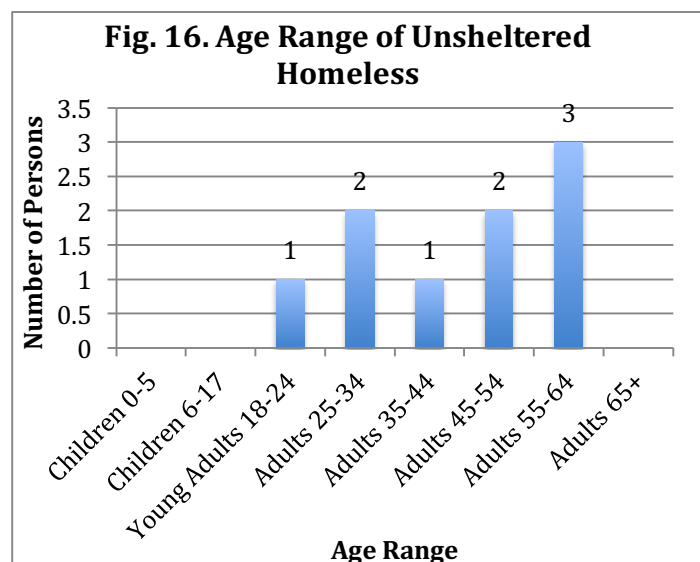
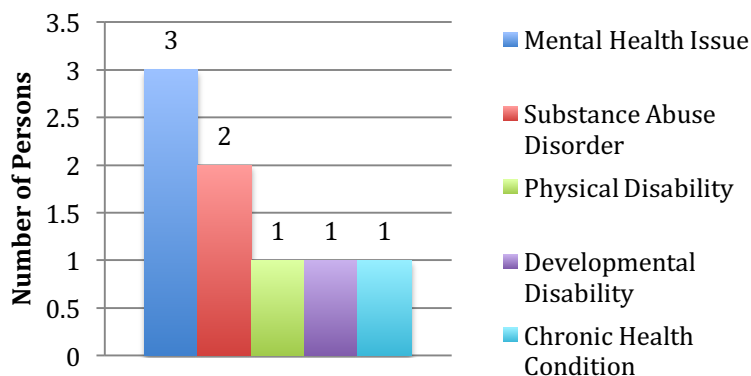


Fig. 17. Number of Unsheltered Persons by Disability Type



Disabilities

6 of the 9 unsheltered persons (66.7%) reported having some disability. The disability most commonly identified was mental health issues (3 persons, 50%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the unsheltered can be seen in Figure 17.

Subpopulations

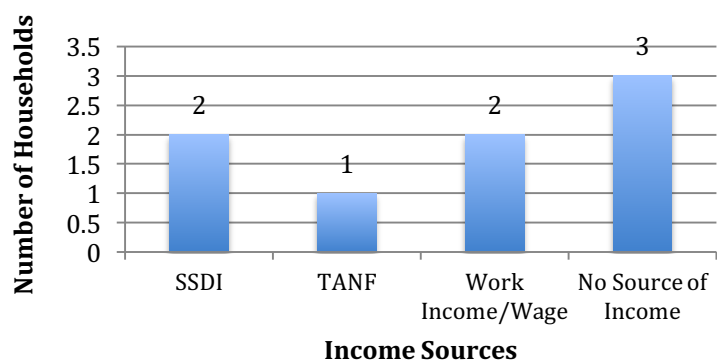
On the night of the count, 1 unsheltered homeless person in Somerset County reported being a victim of domestic violence, matching what was found in 2015.

There were 2 unsheltered veterans on the night of the count, an increase of 2 from 2015.

Income and Benefits

Among all unsheltered households on the night of the count, 3 (33.3%) reported having no source of cash income. The average monthly income reported among unsheltered households was approximately \$540. 22.2% of unsheltered households reported earned income, and another 22.2% were receiving SSDI. Figure 18 shows all sources of income received.

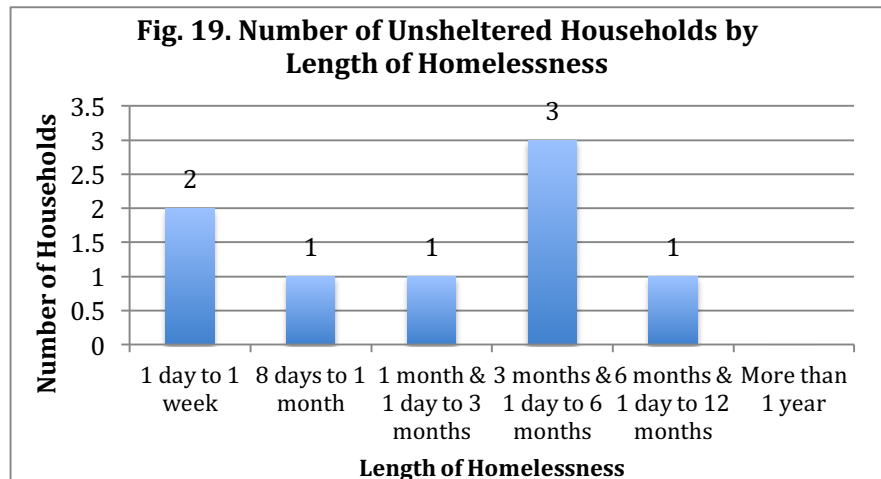
Fig. 18. Number of Unsheltered Households by Income Source



3 unsheltered households (33.3%) reported they were not receiving any type of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. Food Stamps (SNAP) was the top reported non-cash benefit among unsheltered households, with 33.3% receiving this benefit. In addition, 22.2% were connected to Medicaid benefits.

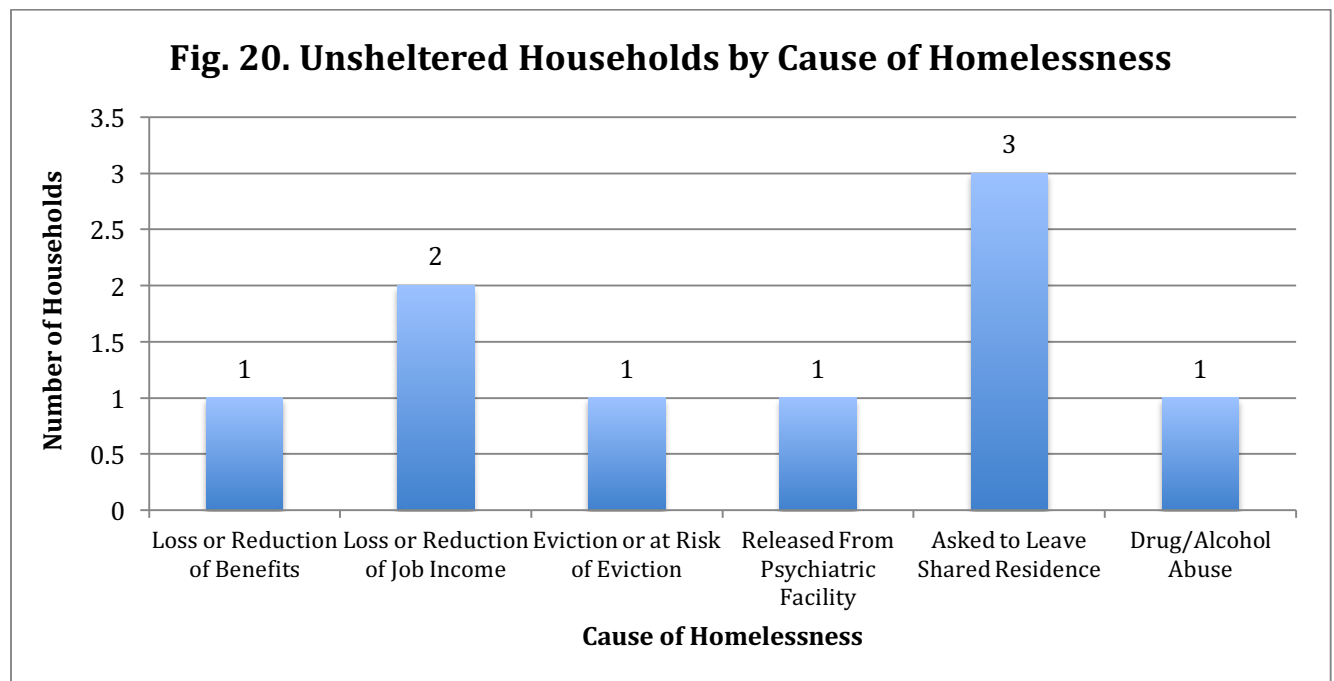
Length of Homelessness

As shown in Figure 19, more unsheltered homeless households (3, 33.3%) reported their most recent, continuous episode of homeless had lasted 3 months and 1 day to 6 months.



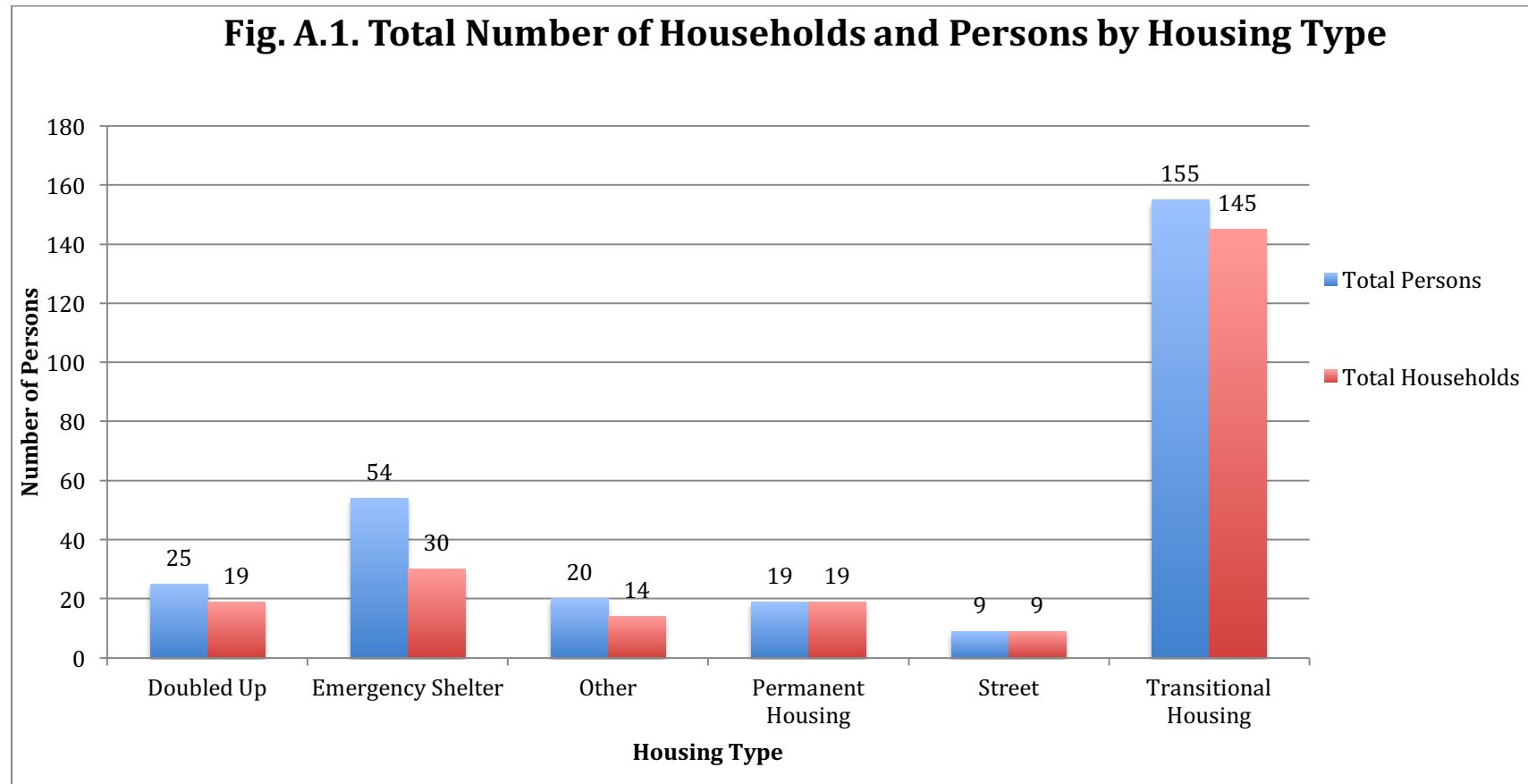
Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more unsheltered households reported being asked to leave a shared residence (33.3%) than any other factor. Figure 20 shows the full breakdown for unsheltered households.



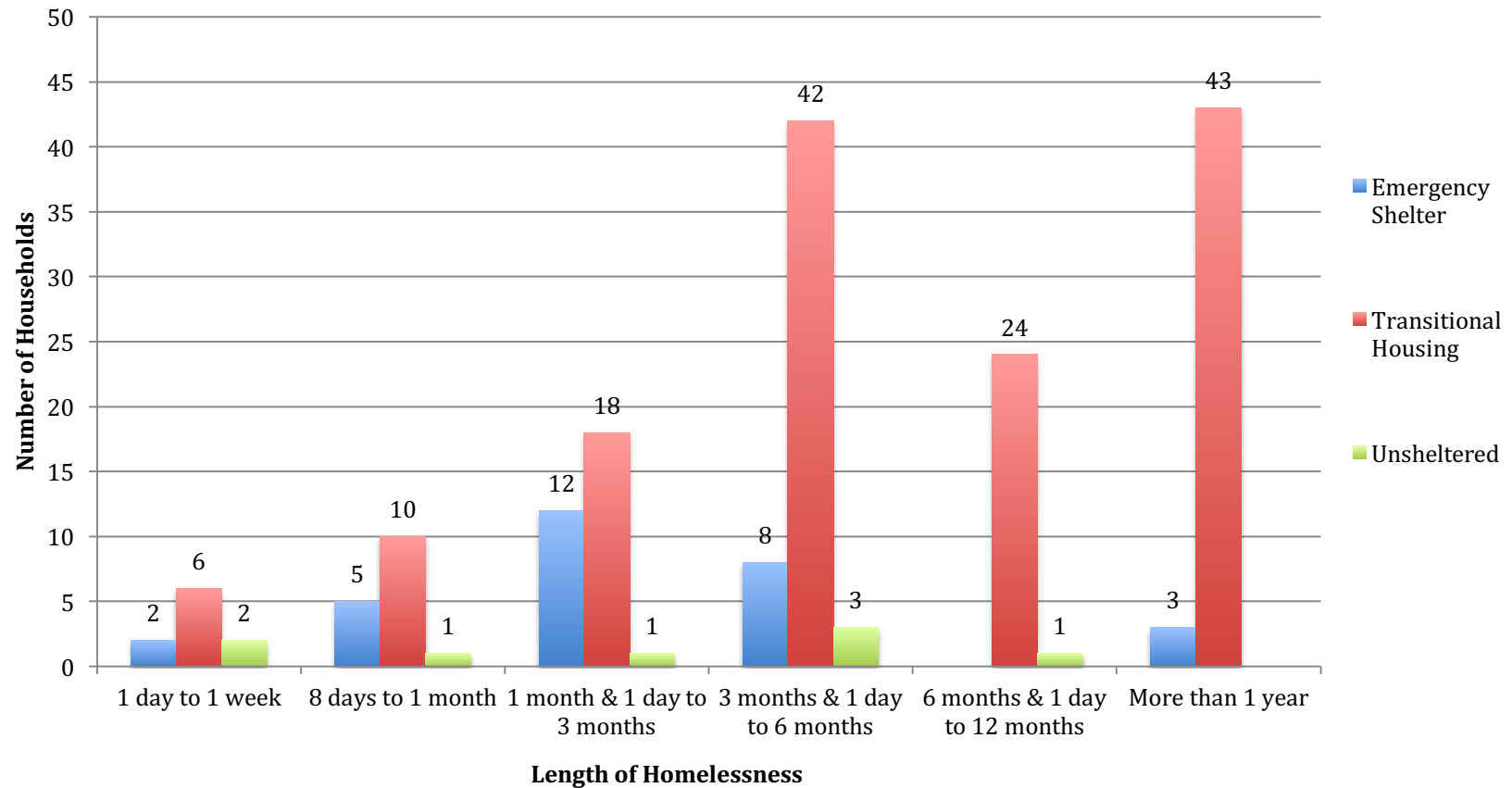
VI. Appendix

Where did you spend the night of Tuesday, January 26, 2016?



How long have you been in your current living situation?

Fig. A.2. Homeless Households by Length of Homelessness and Housing Type



Who was homeless with you on the night of January 26th?

Fig. A.3. Number of Persons by Age Range and Housing Type

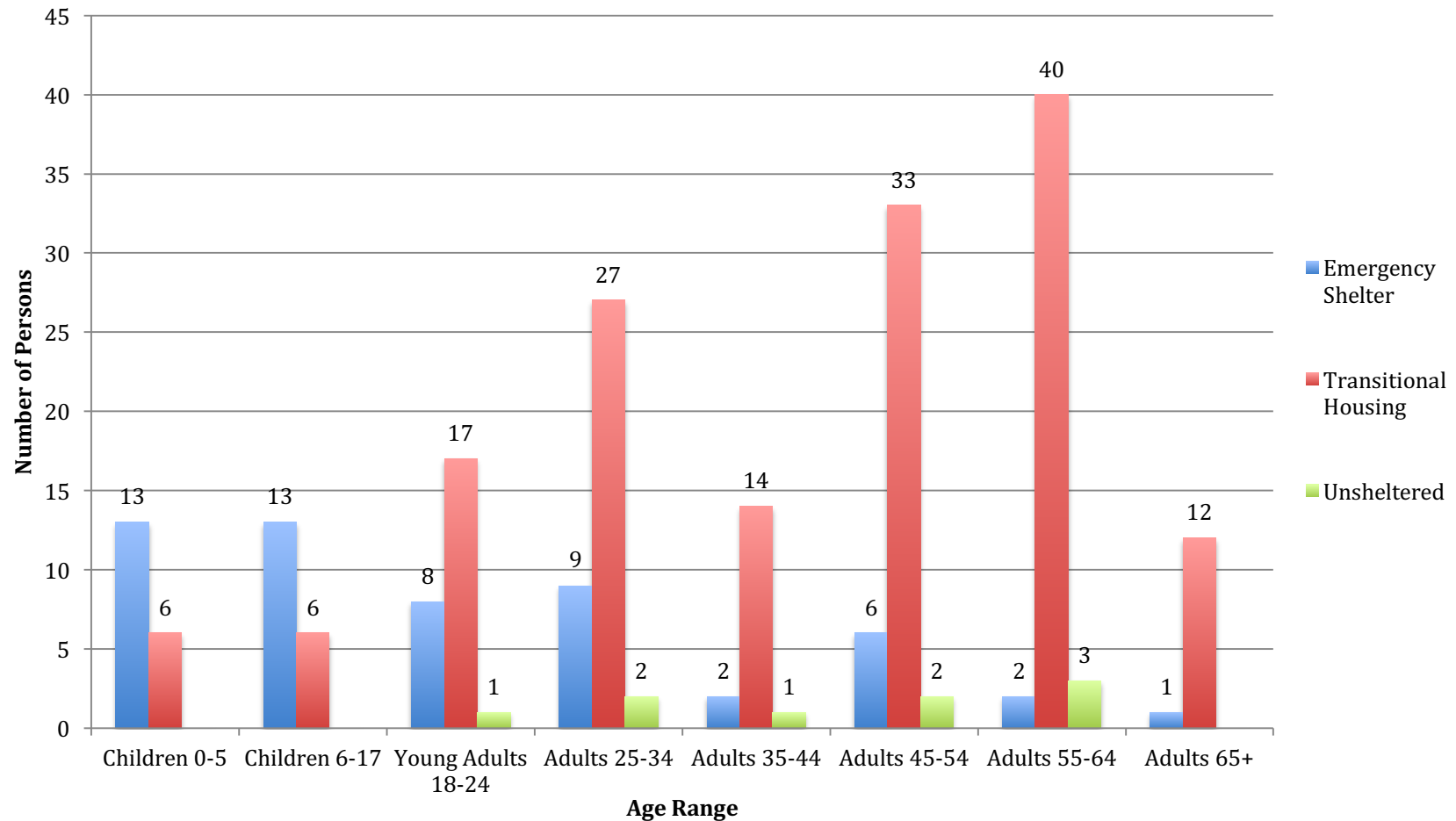


Fig. A.4. Number of Persons by Gender and Housing Situation

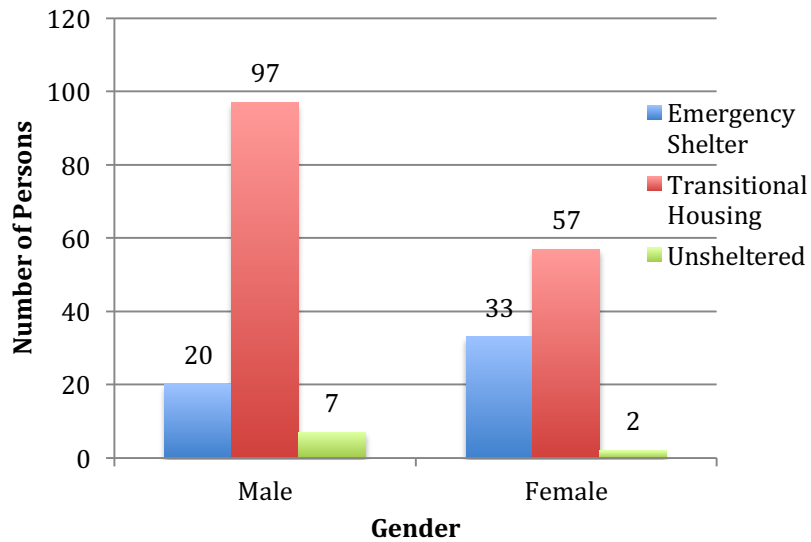


Fig. A.5. Number of Homeless Persons by Race

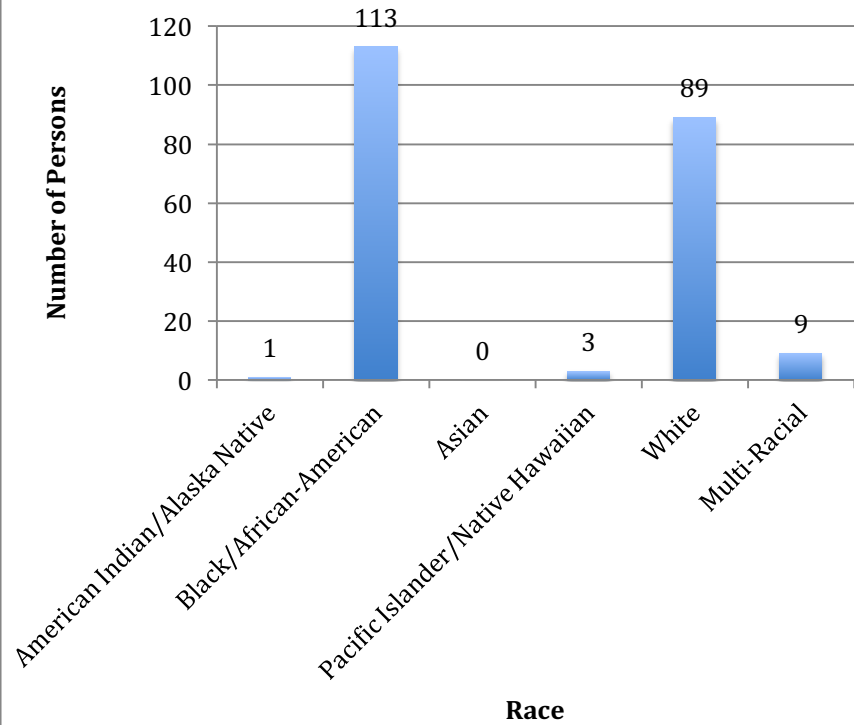
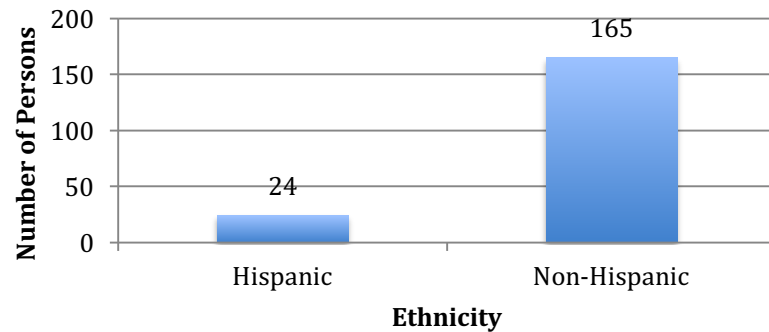
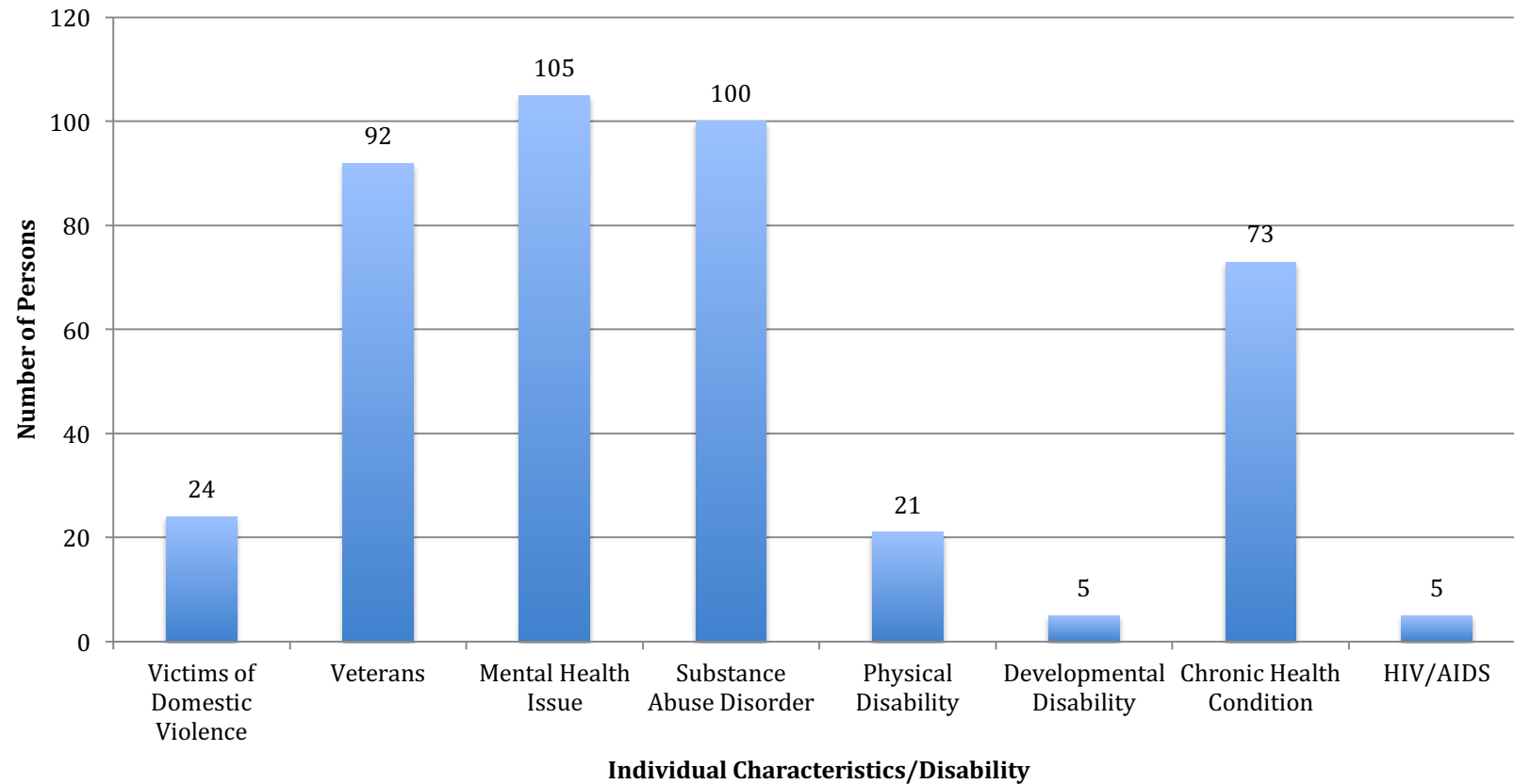


Fig. A.6. Number of Homeless Persons by Ethnicity



Household Characteristics – check all that apply to each person

Fig. A.7. Number of Homeless Persons by Victims of Domestic Violence, Veteran Status, and Disability

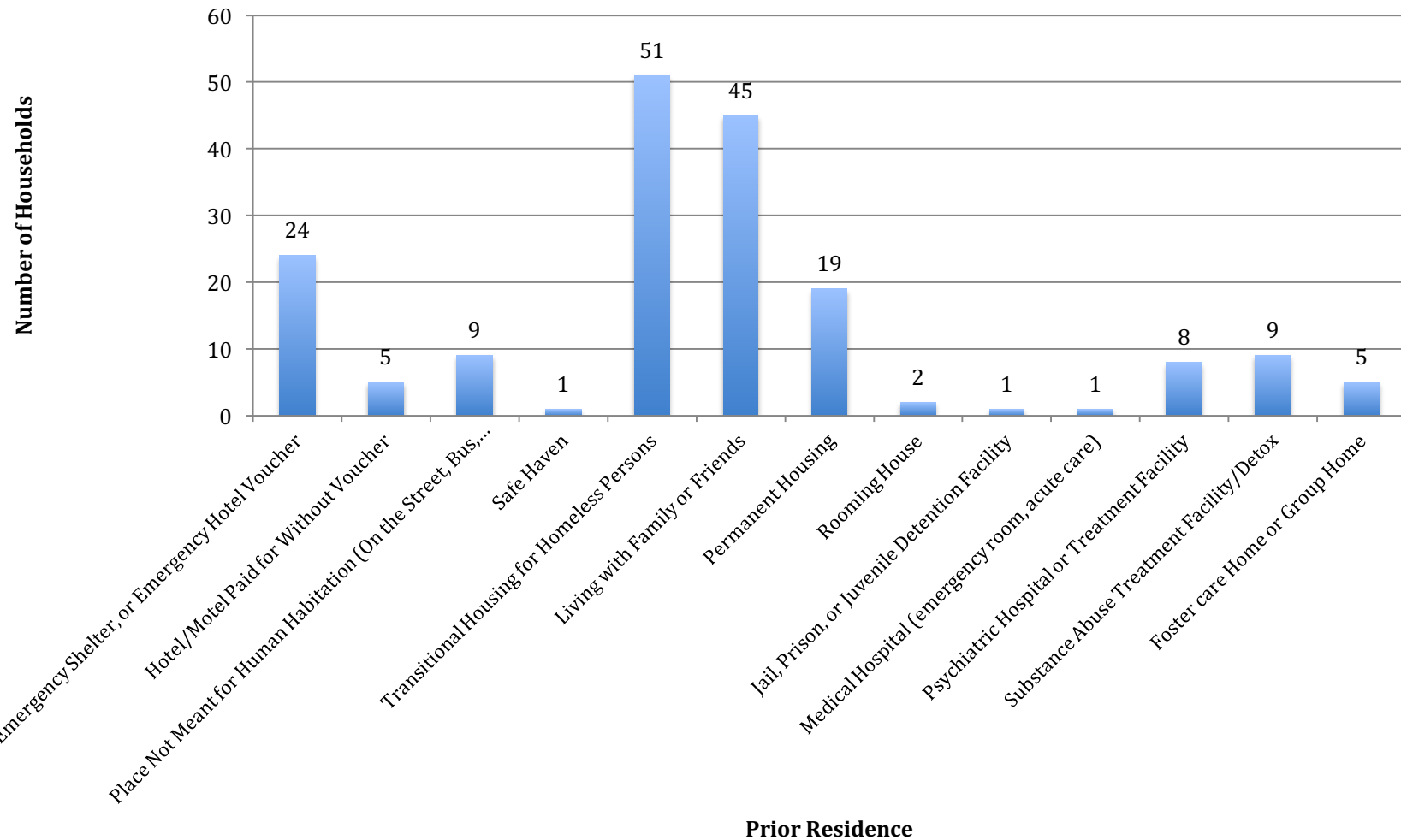


Where was your last permanent address before becoming homeless?

Fig. A.8. Number of Homeless Households by County, State or Country of Last Permanent Address	
Last Permanent Address - County/State	Number of Households
Atlantic County	2
Bergen County	2
Camden County	1
Essex County	4
Gloucester County	1
Hudson County	1
Hunterdon County	1
Mercer County	11
Middlesex County	5
Monmouth County	2
Morris County	3
North Carolina	2
Ocean County	3
Passaic County	4
Pennsylvania	1
Somerset County	42
Union County	4
Warren County	1

What was your residence prior to your current living situation?

Fig. A.9. Number of Homeless Households by Prior Residence



Which of the following sources of income or non-cash benefits do you, or anyone in your household, receive?

Fig. A. 10. Number of Households by Source of Cash Income

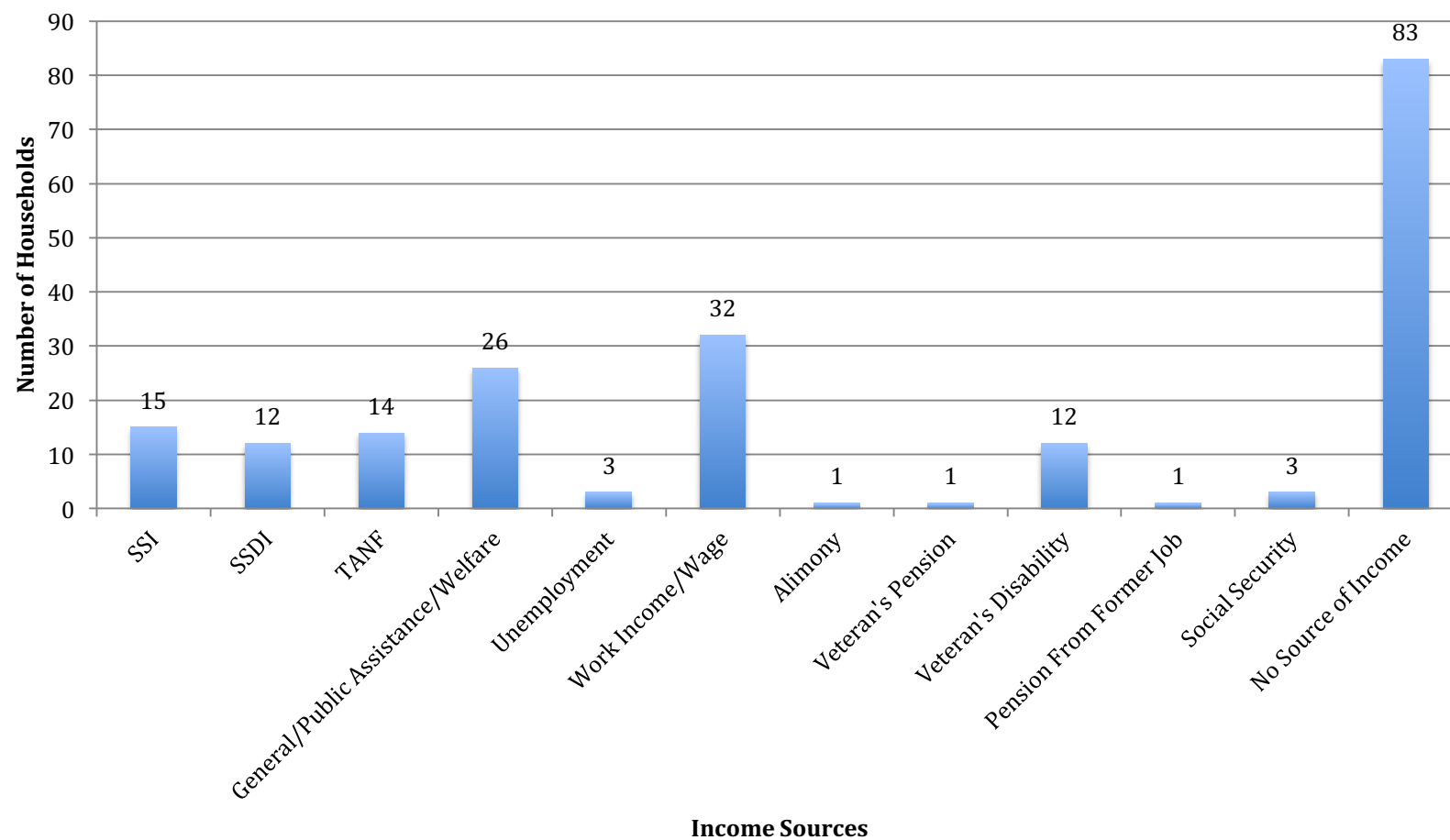
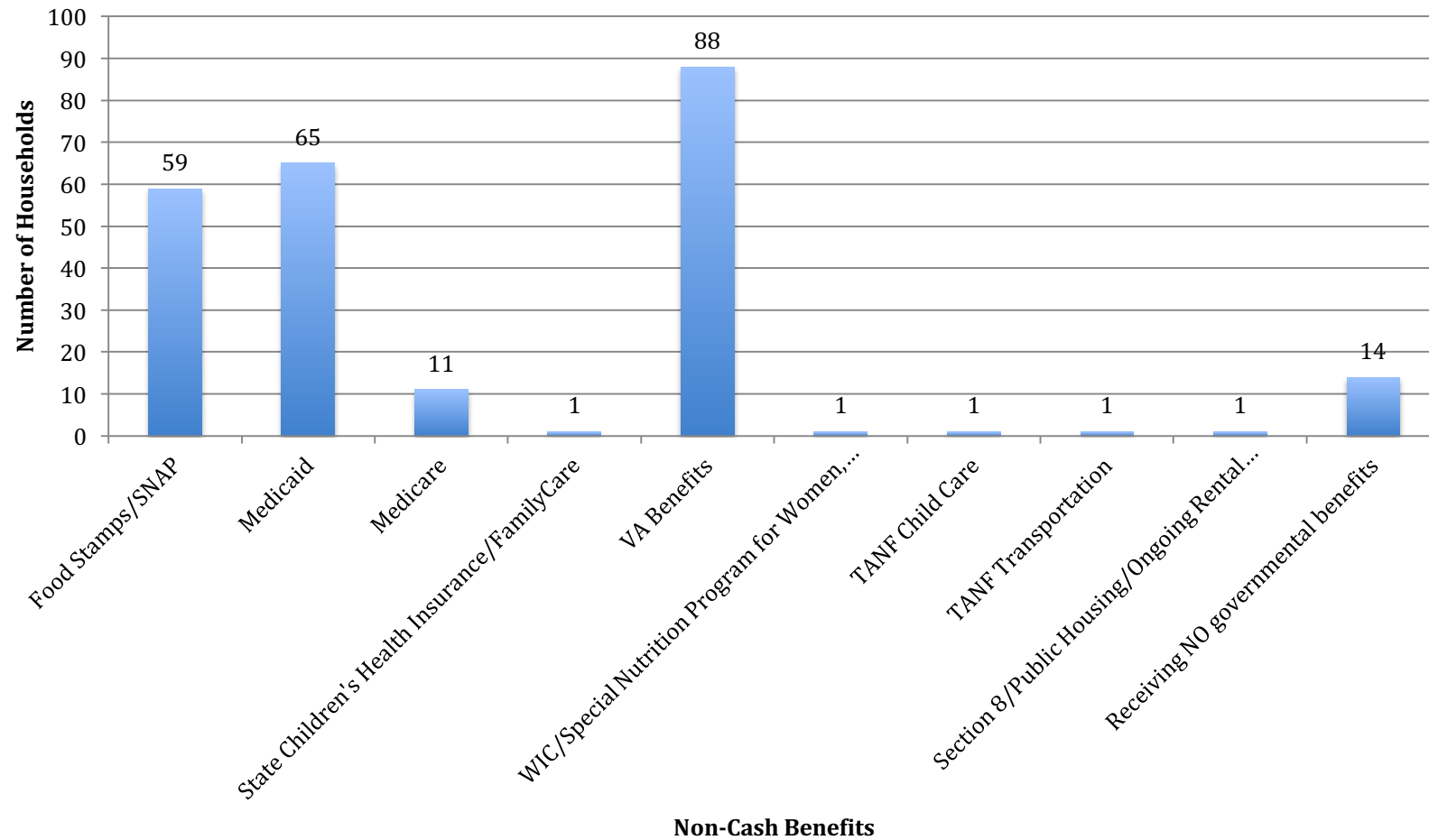
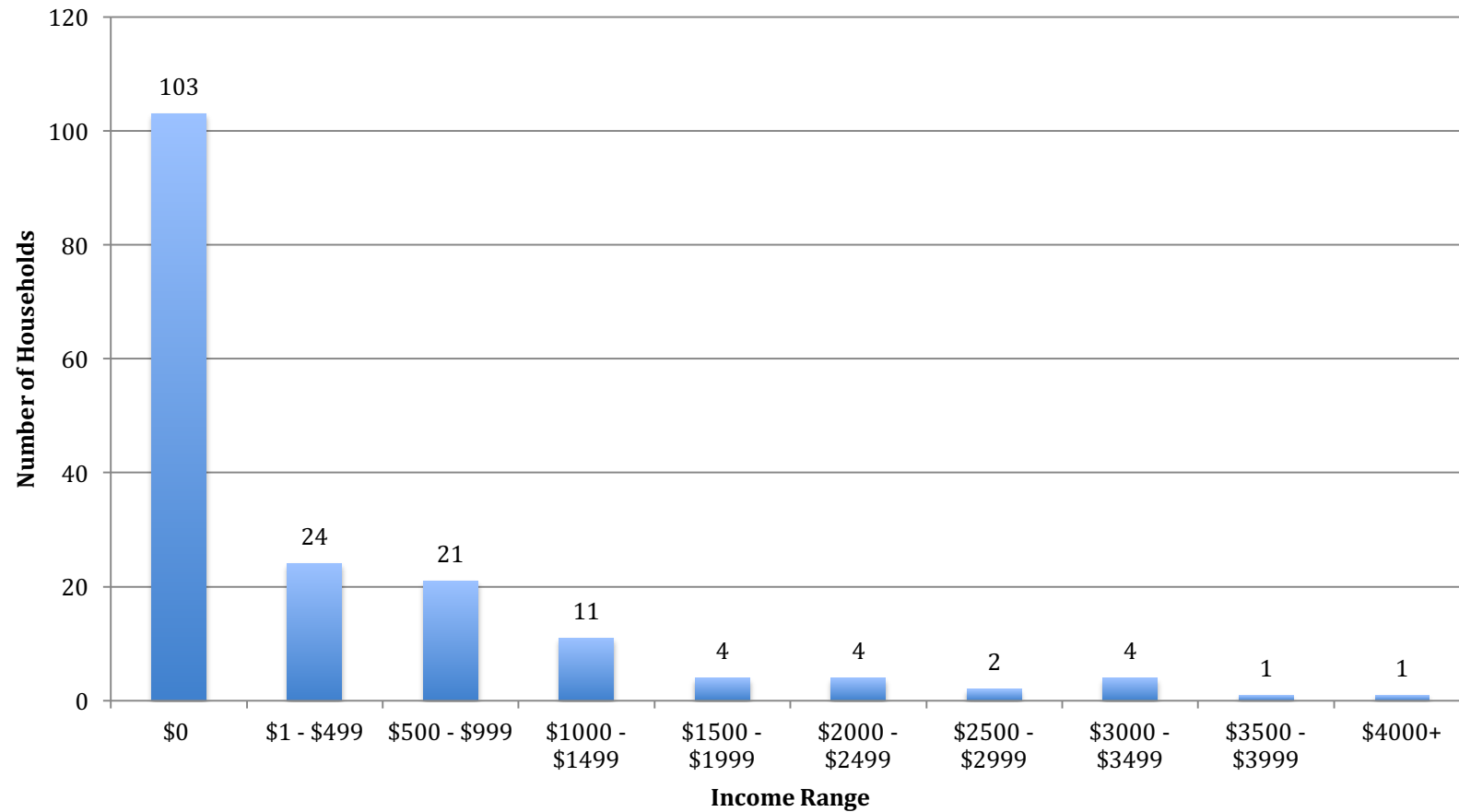


Fig. A. 11. Number of Households by Sources of Non-Cash Benefits



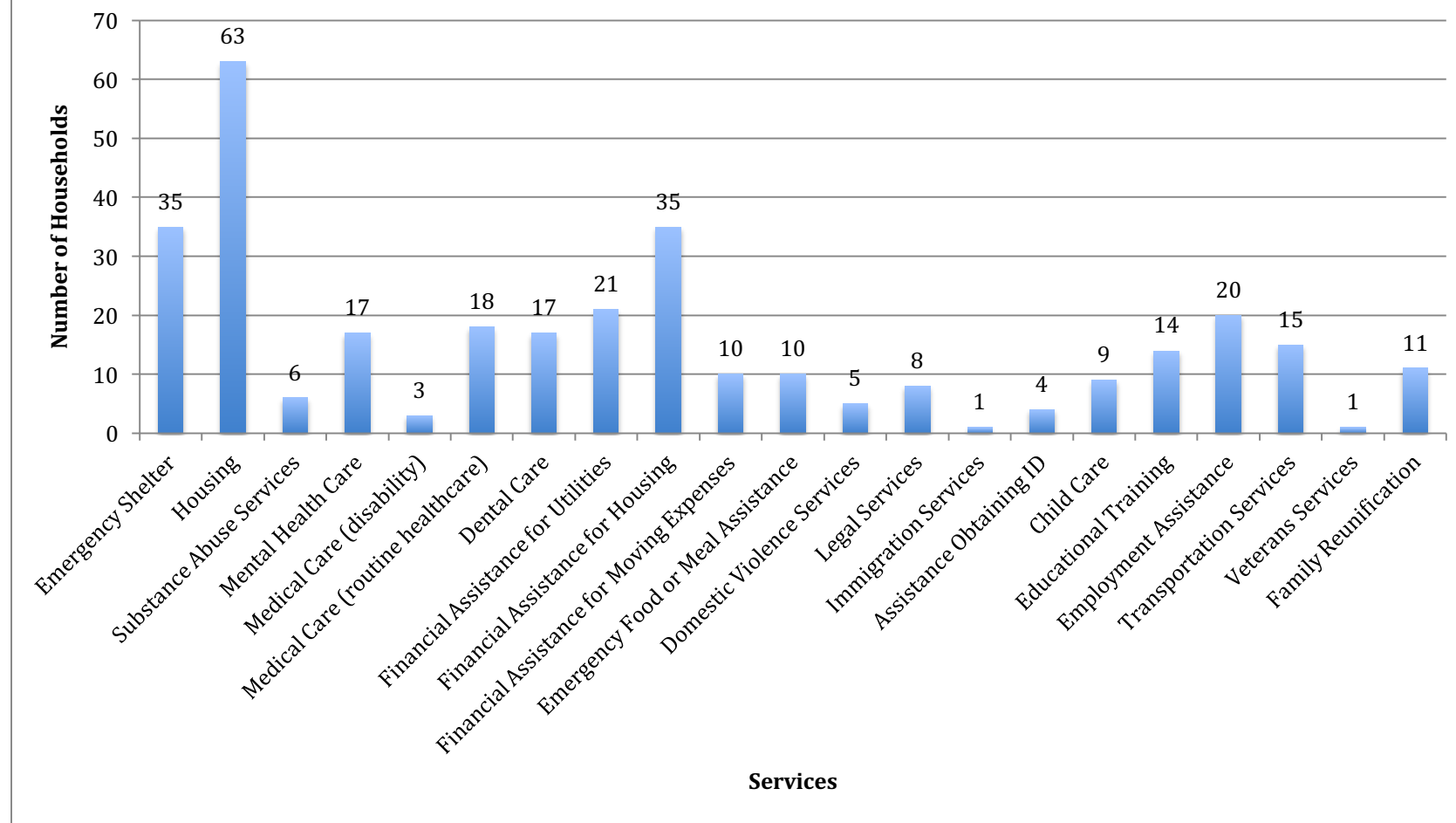
What is your monthly household income?

Fig. A.12. Number of Homeless Households by Monthly Income Range



Would you, or anyone in your household, like to receive any of the following services?

Fig. A.13. Number of Homeless Households by Services Needed



What was the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, your current living situation?

