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NJ
2017
Counts!

Somerset County's 2017 Point-In-Time Count of the Homeless

January 24, 2017

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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 2017

NJ Counts 2017, 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 2017 Count reveals important demographic and other information about families and individuals who were homeless on the night of Tuesday, January 24th, 2017 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 primary 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 2017. Monarch would also like to specifically thank Bergen County for providing a Spanish translation of the 2017 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 2017 Point-In-Time Count 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 totaling 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 2017 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 2017 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 fourth 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 2017 PIT Survey tool closely mirrors information collected in HMIS so that the data was comparable for important factors such as duration and episodes of homelessness, 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 2013 to 2017. 2014 and 2016 were not HUD required full reporting years while 2013, 2015, and 2017 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 24th, 2017 a total of 199 households, including 244 persons, were experiencing homelessness in Somerset County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count.
- A total of 3 households, with 3 people, were identified as chronically homeless.
- 5 unsheltered homeless persons were counted.

Total Homeless Population

On the night of January 24th, 2017, a total of 244 persons, in 199 households, were experiencing homelessness in Somerset County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 26 persons (11.9%) and 15 households (8.2%) from 2016. Somerset County had 2.9% of New Jersey's statewide homeless population in 2017.

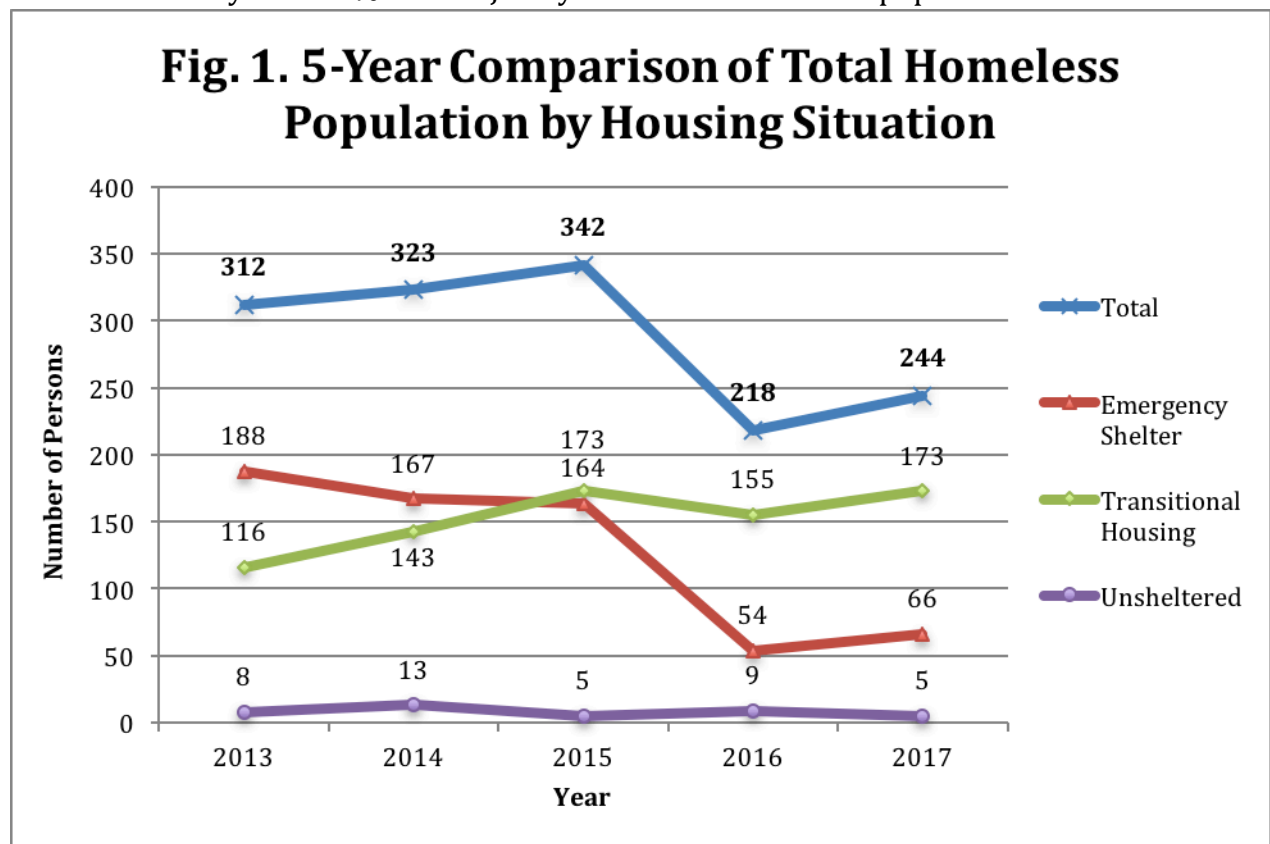


Figure 1 shows that, in 2017, 66 homeless persons stayed in emergency shelters, 173 stayed in transitional housing, and 5 were living unsheltered on the night of the count. The total number of those counted in emergency shelters increased by 12 persons (22.2%) from 2016, transitional housing saw an increase of 18 persons (11.6%) in 2017, while the number living unsheltered decreased by 4 persons (44.4%) when compared to 2016.

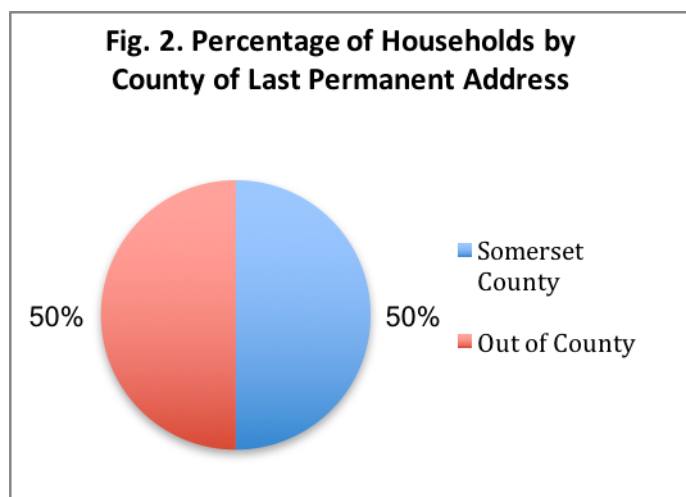


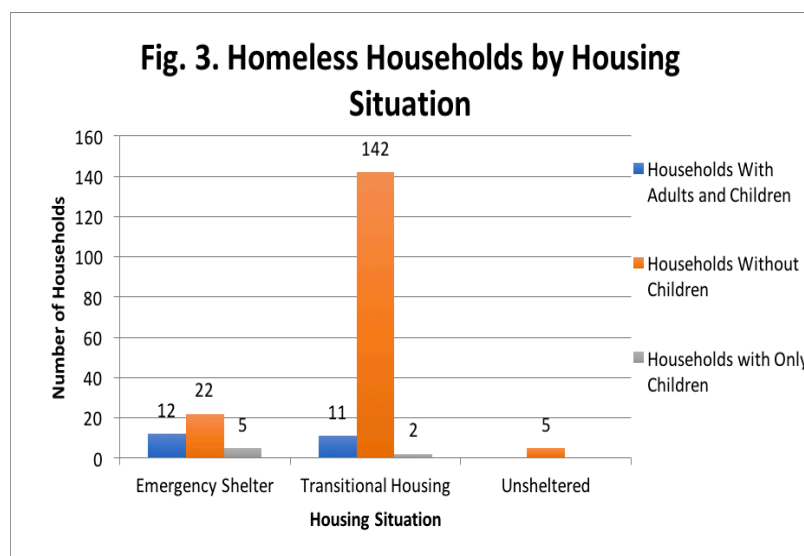
Figure 1 also shows that, while the total number of homeless persons was increasing from 2013 to 2015, it fell in 2016, showing the lowest count in five years. Overall, the total homeless population decreased by 21.8% (68 persons) from 2013 to 2017.

As Figure 2 shows, 50% 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 199 homeless households counted in Somerset County in 2017, 23 (11.6%) were families with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult. This represents 5 more homeless families than 2016. These families included 68 persons, 44 children under age 18, and 24 adults. The average family size was 3 persons. Figure 3 shows that 12 families (52.2%) were staying in emergency shelter, and 11 (47.8%) were in transitional housing on the night of the count. There were no unsheltered families in Somerset County on the night of the count.

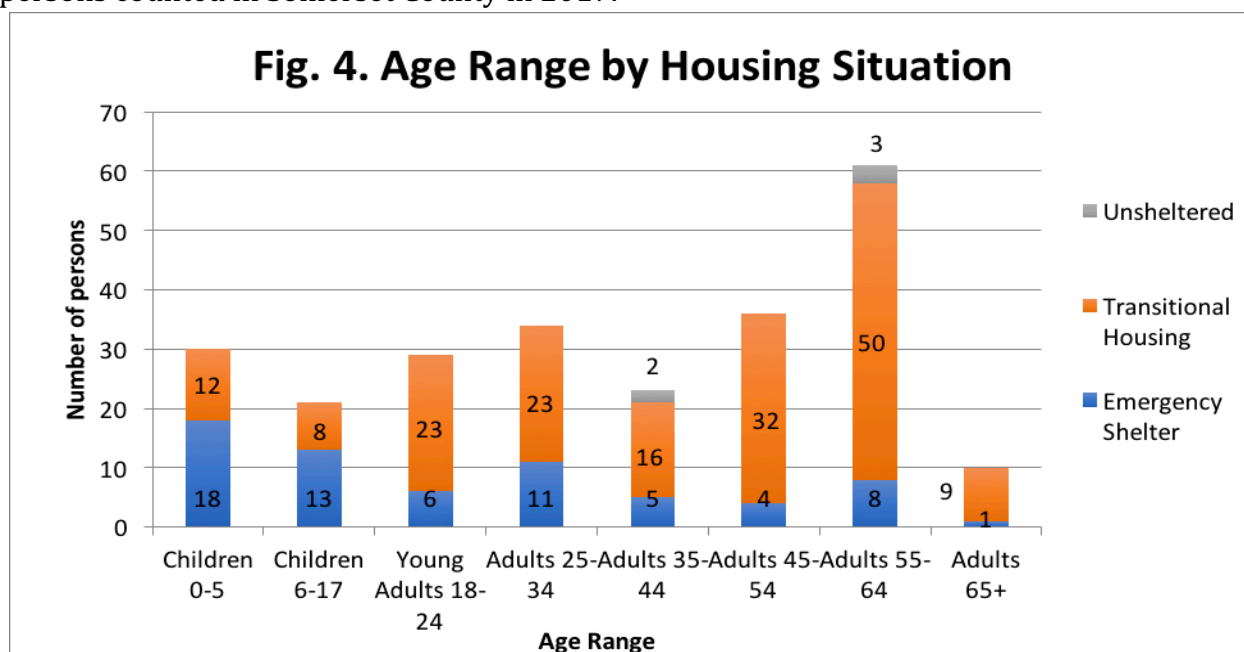
84.9% (169) of the homeless households counted in Somerset County were households without children under 18, and they were composed of 167 adult individuals and 1 couple

household. 22 (13%) of these adult-only households were staying in emergency shelters, 142 (84%) were in transitional housing, and 5 (2.9%) were unsheltered. Somerset County has seen the number of adult-only households increase by 11 (7%) since 2016.

As Figure 3 indicates, there were 7 youth only households reported in 2017, a decrease of 1 from 2016. All of these households were one-child households. 5 unaccompanied youth were staying in emergency shelters, and 2 were in transitional housing on the night of the count.

Demographics

The majority (164 persons, 67.2%) of those experiencing homelessness in Somerset County on the night of the count were adults over age 24. There were a total of 29 (11.9%) homeless young adults between 18 and 24 years old, and 51 (20.9%) children under 18 years old as well. The age range most represented, with 61 persons and 25% of the total homeless population, was adults between 55 and 64. Figure 4 shows the age ranges of all persons counted in Somerset County in 2017.



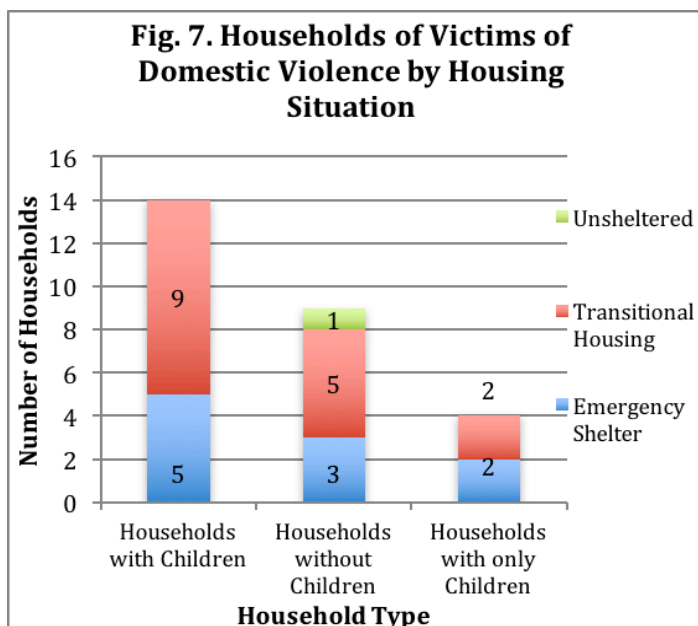
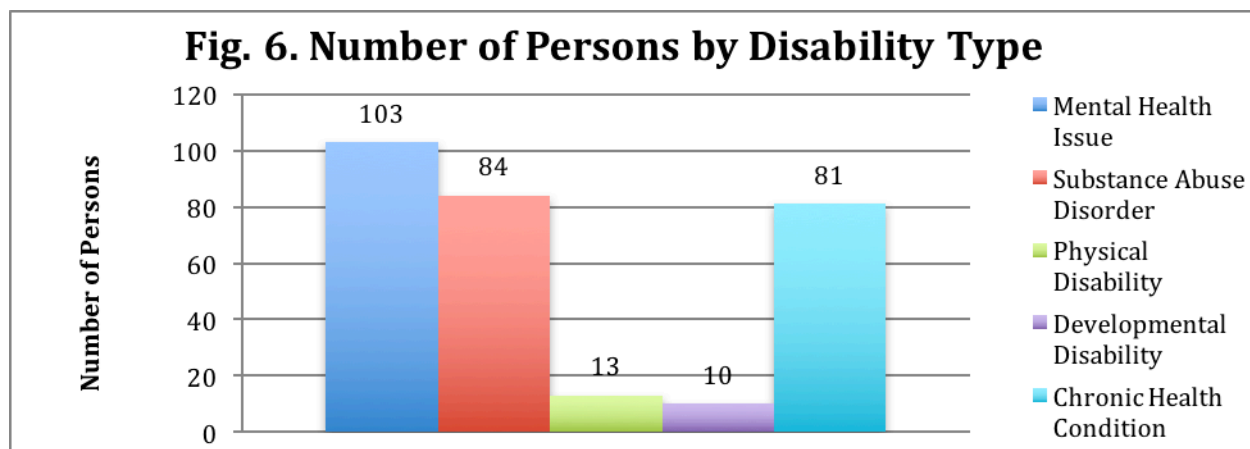
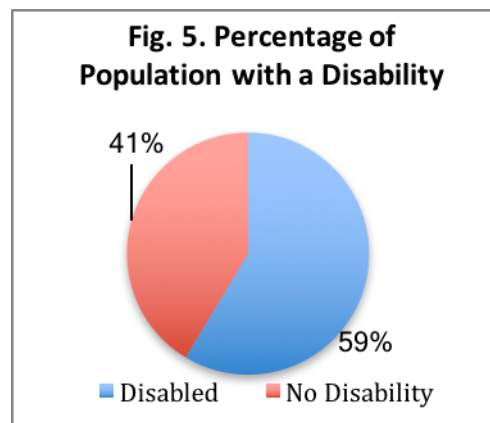
60.7% of homeless persons were male, and 38.5% were female. 2 persons identified as transgender.

50.4% of homeless persons identified their race as White, making that the largest racial subgroup of homeless persons reported. The next largest group self-identified as Black or African-American (41.4%), followed by those identifying as Multi-Racial (2%). With regard to ethnicity, 12.3% of persons identified themselves as Hispanic.

Disabilities

Figure 5 illustrates that 58.6% of homeless persons reported having some type of disability. 69.4% of adults 18 or older reported some type of disability compared to 17.6% 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 and substance abuse disorders.

Among disabled adults, 74.6% reported mental health issues making this the most prevalent disability; representing 51.8% of the total adult homeless population. 62.7% of disabled adults reported a substance abuse disorder. Among disabled homeless children, 44.4% reported a developmental disability, while 33.3% reported a mental health issue.

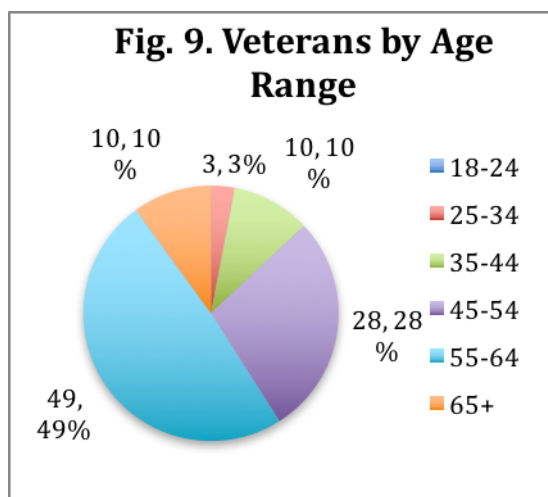


Victims of Domestic Violence

On the night of the count, in Somerset County, 27 homeless households reported having a victim of domestic violence. Figure 7 shows that the majority (51.9%) of these households were families with at least 1 adult and 1 child under the age of 18. 9 (33.3%) adult-only households and 4 (14.8%) were unaccompanied homeless youth that reported being a victim. 59% of domestic violence households were in transitional housing, and 1 domestic violence household was unsheltered.

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 2016. Many communities in New Jersey have also been working hard to end homelessness among our country's servicemen and women.

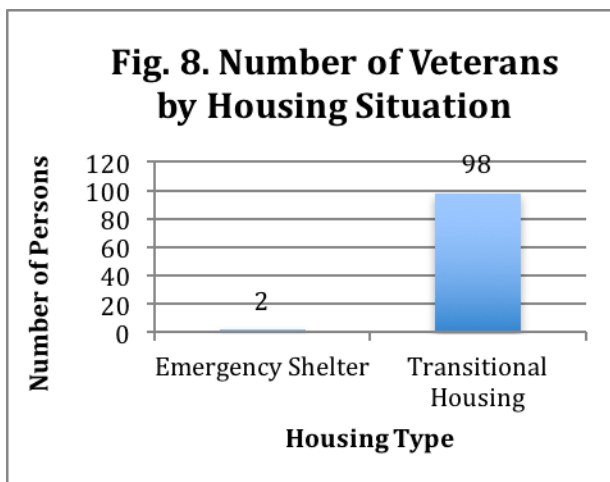


background identified among veterans (56%) was White, while (43%) identified as Black or African-American. Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of homeless veterans by age range.

No homeless veterans reported being victims of domestic violence. 95 of the 100, 95%, reported having some kind of disability. The most common disabilities cited among these were chronic health conditions (72.6%), mental health issues (70.5%) and substance abuse issues (70.5%). 1% of veterans were connected with VA pensions while 26% were connected with VA disability benefits. 93% of veterans were connected to VA healthcare benefits.

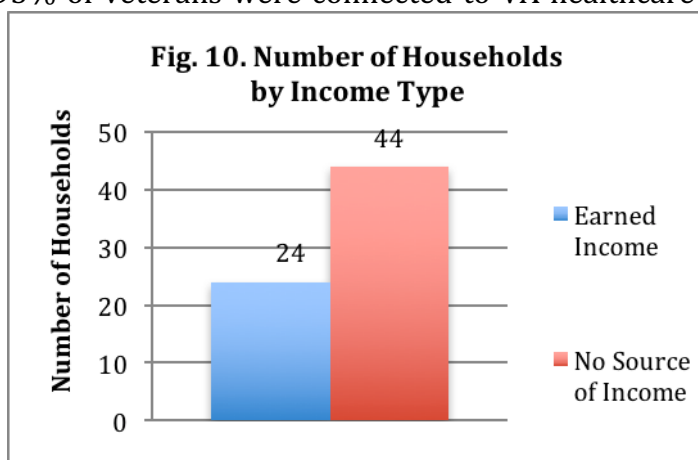
Income and Benefits

Among all households experiencing homelessness on the night of the count, 22.1% had no source of income, and 12.1% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among homeless households were SSI



100 homeless veterans were counted on the night of the count, 8 more (8.7%) than 2016. All were members of adult-only households. The largest contingent of homeless veterans was staying in transitional housing (98%). In addition, 2 were in emergency shelter. There were no unsheltered veterans counted in 2017

93% of all veterans experiencing homelessness in Somerset County were male, and 6% were female. 1 homeless veteran identified as transgender. The most common racial



(19.1%) and Veteran's Disability (13.1%).

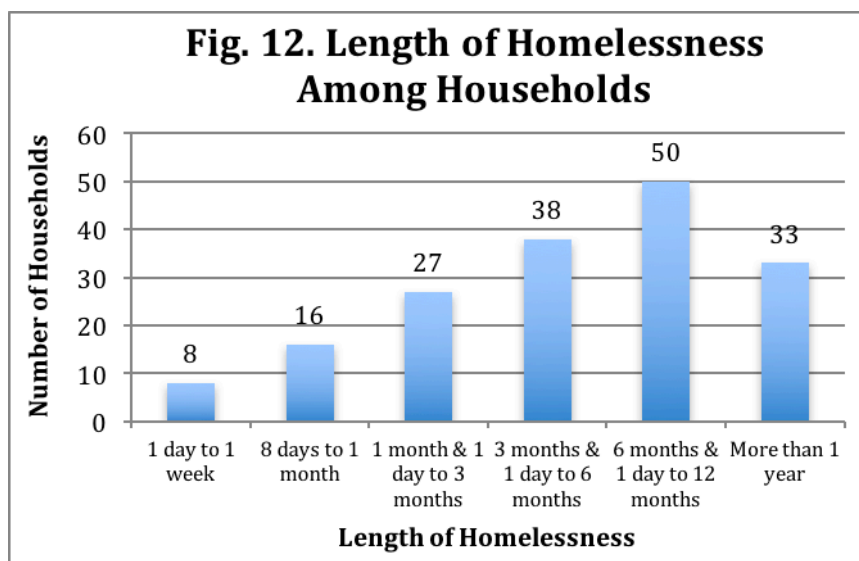
| Figure 11. Average Monthly Income For Households by Housing Situation | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Emergency Shelter | Transitional Housing | Unsheltered |
| Average for All Households | \$394.17 | \$864.76 | \$438.25 |

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

7.5% of households reported that their household was receiving no kind of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. VA Medical Benefits was the top reported non-cash benefit, and was reported by 46.7% of households. 28.6% of households were also receiving Food Stamps (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. 50 households (25.1%) reported that their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted 6 months and 1 day to 12 months.

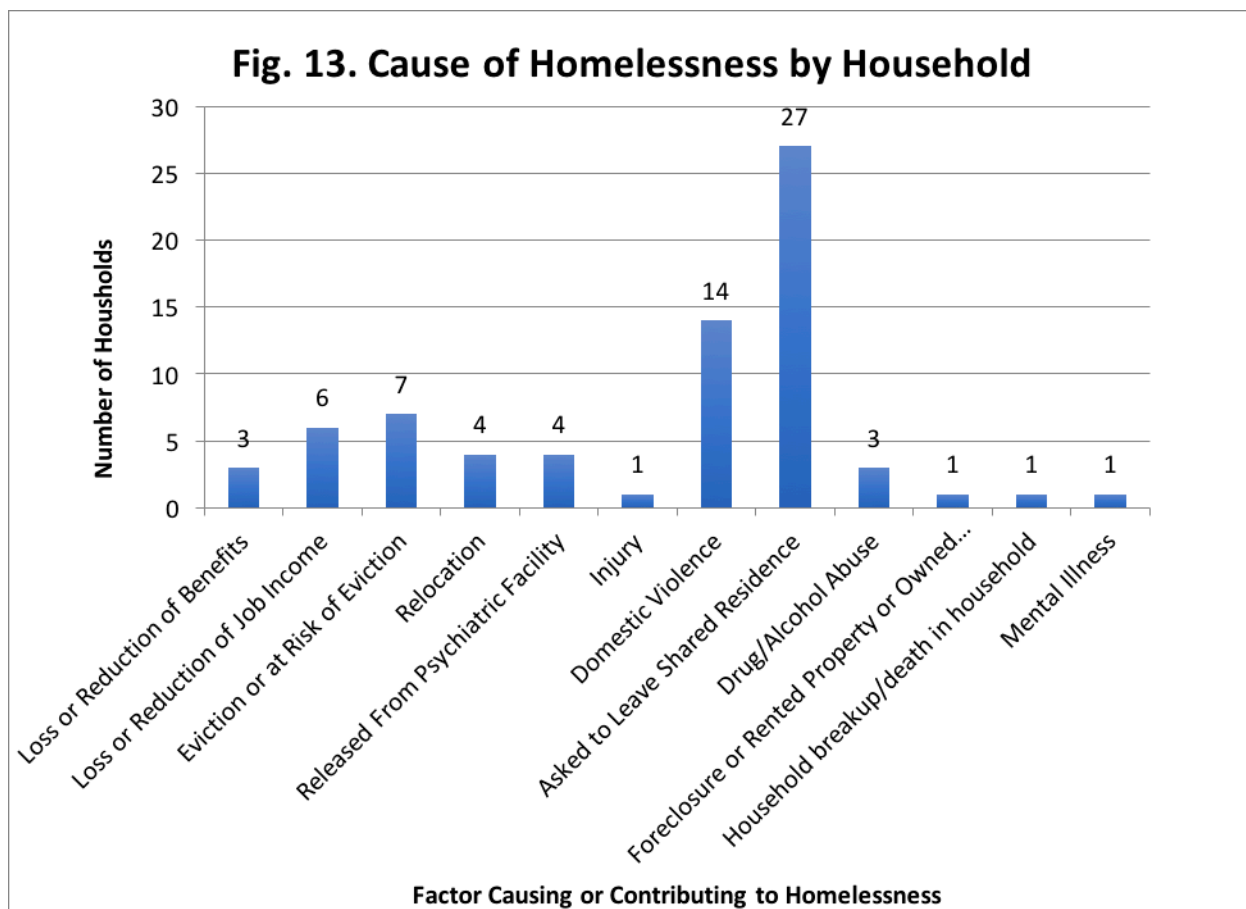


The trend seen in Figure 12 is slightly different than 2016, where the largest grouping of households (28.8%) reported being homeless for 3 months to 6 months.

Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (27 households, 13.6%) than any other cause. As Figure 13 shows, the other common factors reported were domestic violence (7%), and eviction (3.5%).

When homeless households were asked 'what was your residence prior to your current living situation?' more reported residing in emergency shelter (19.1%) than any other type of residence. 14.1% said they were staying or living with friends or family, and another 14.1% reported residing in a transitional housing project prior to their current living situation.



IV. Findings for the Chronically Homeless

HUD issued its final rule on the definition of chronic homelessness in 2015. Under this definition, 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 where the length of time in those episodes add up to a year or more, meets HUD's definition of chronically homeless. Any family with a head of household that meets this definition is considered a chronically homeless family.

HUD has established 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

3 households, made up of 3 persons, were chronically homeless in Somerset County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 2 persons from 2016. The rate of chronic homelessness as a percentage of overall homelessness increased from 0.46% in 2016 to 1.2% in 2017.

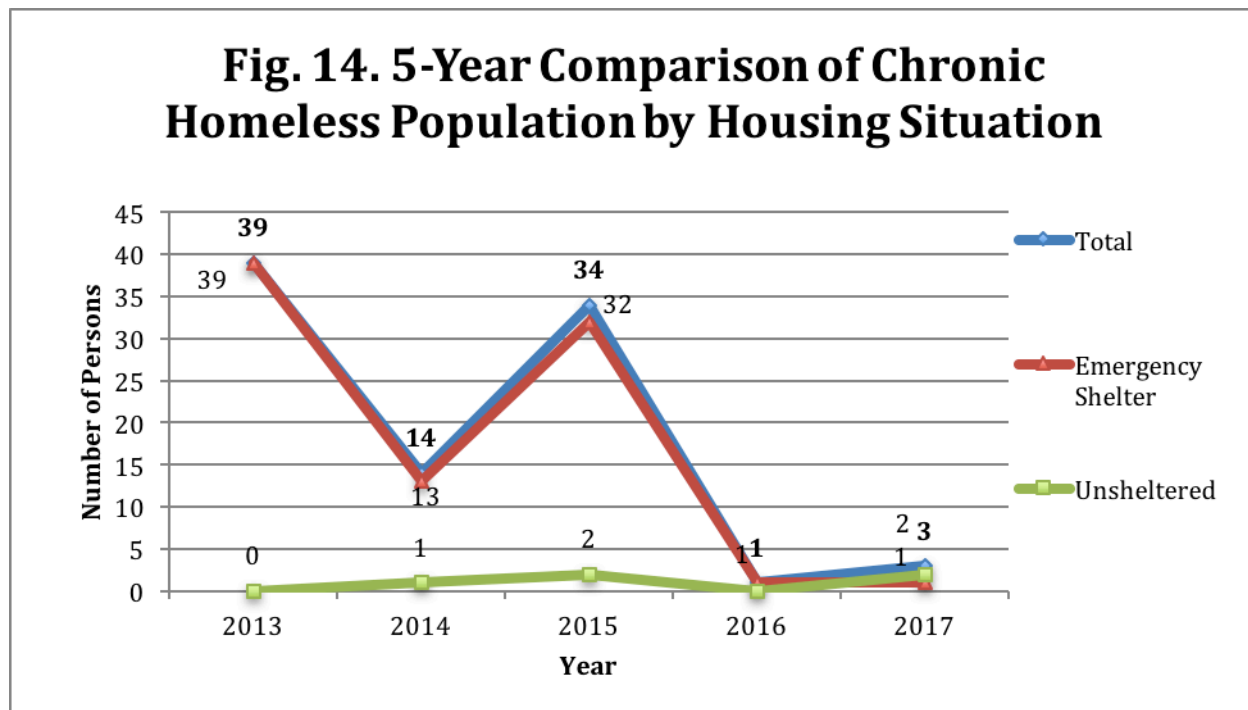
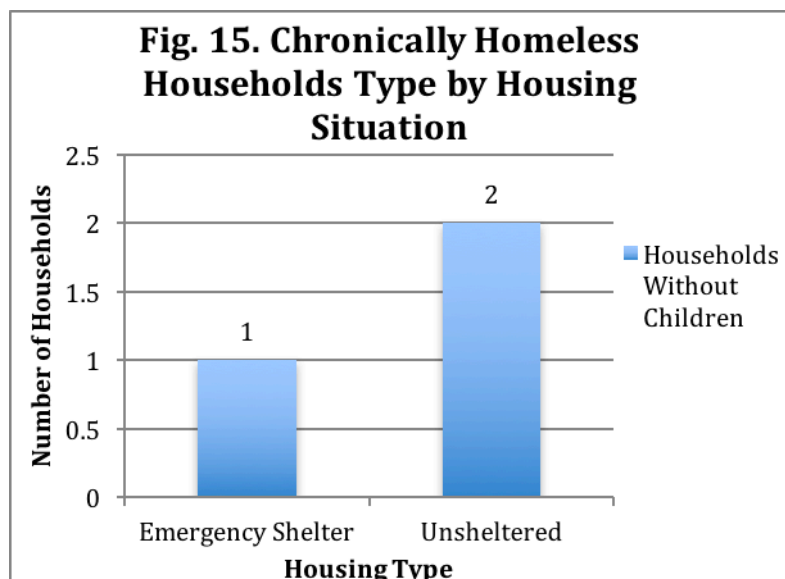


Figure 14 shows the number of chronically homeless persons who were in emergency shelter or living unsheltered in Somerset County from 2013 to 2017. Over the past five years, the overall number of chronically homeless persons has fluctuated depending on the count year, but has overall decreased by 36 persons (92.3%) from 2013 to 2017.

Families and Individuals

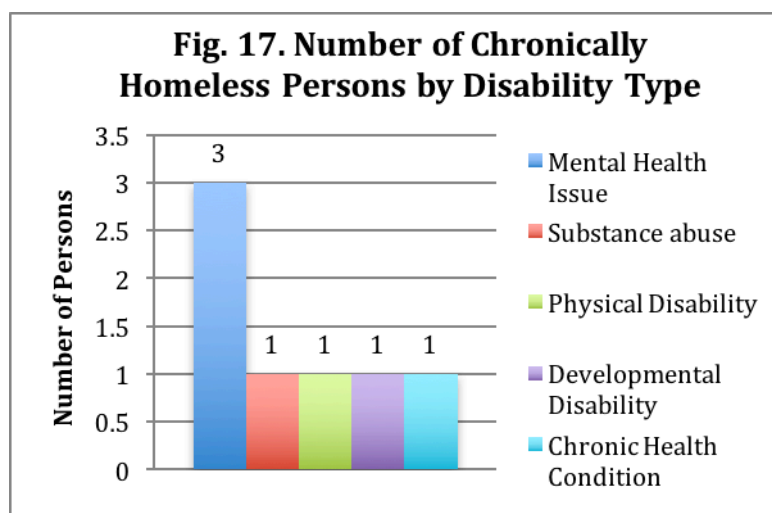
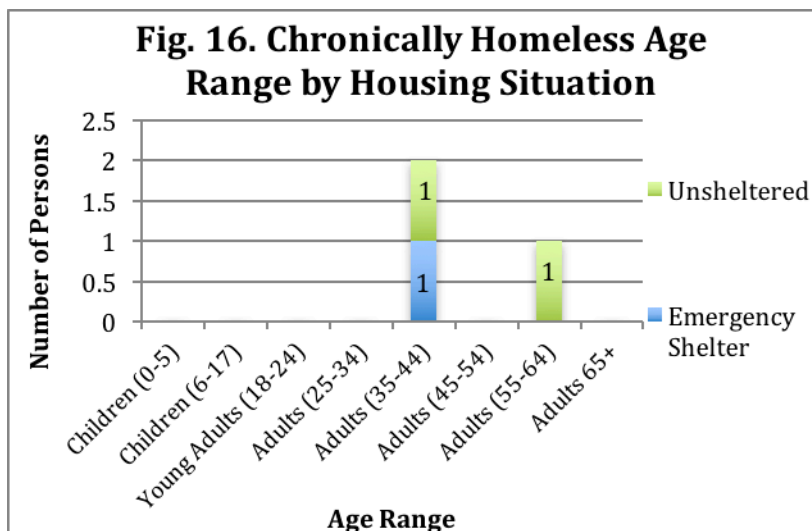
All 3 chronically homeless households counted in Somerset County in 2017, were adult individual households. 1 of these adult households was served in an emergency shelter, while the remaining 2 were unsheltered on the night of the count. Similar to 2016, there were no households with children counted as chronically homeless.



Demographics

2 of the 3 chronically homeless persons were between the ages of 35 and 44, as shown in Figure 16.

2 of the chronically homeless individuals were female, while the third was male. 66.7% of chronic households identified their race of White, while the last identified as Black or African-American.



Disabilities

In order to meet the definition of chronically homeless, at least one adult in each household must have some kind of disability. The most common disability reported was a mental health issue, which was reported by all 3 chronically homeless individuals. Figure 17 shows the full list of disabilities reported.

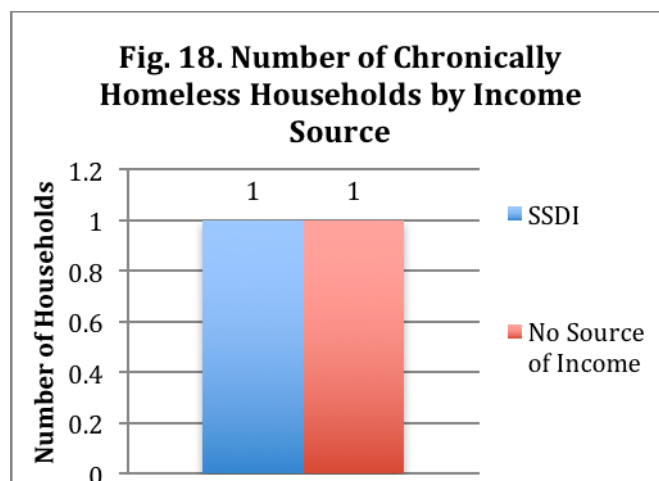
Subpopulations

1 of the 3 chronically homeless individuals counted in Somerset County reported being a victim of domestic violence. This person was unsheltered on the night of the count.

No chronically homeless veterans were identified on the night of the count.

Income and Benefits

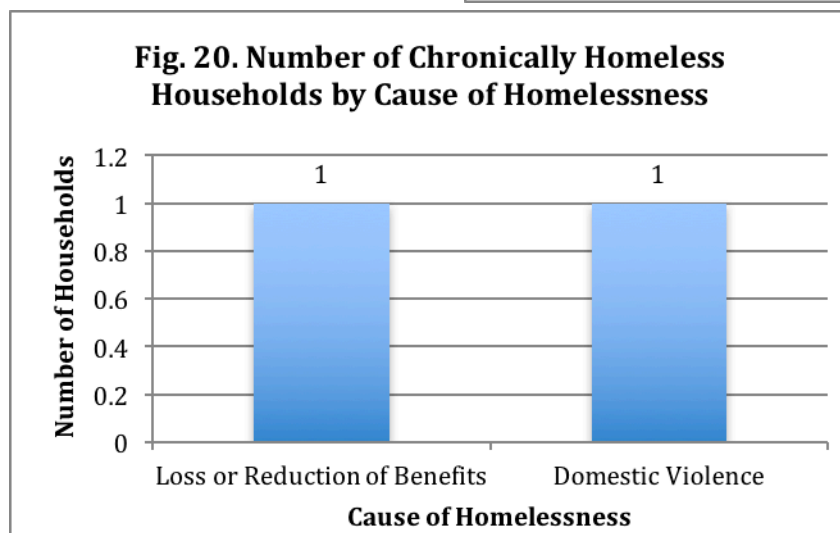
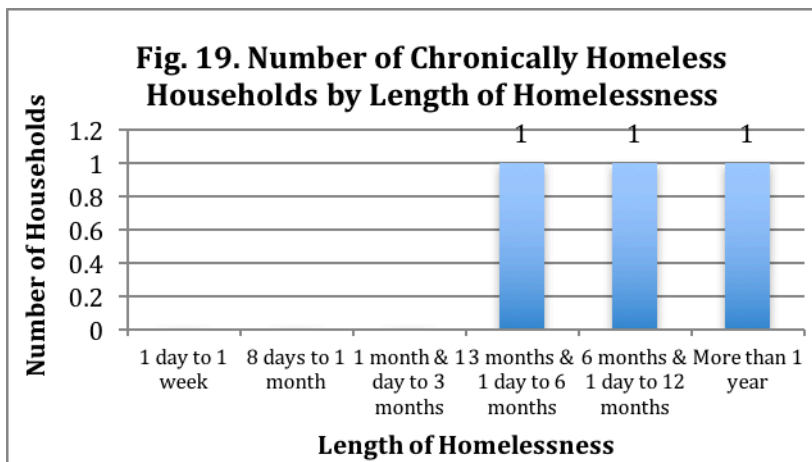
1 chronic homeless individual counted in 2017 reported no source of income. The list of reported income is shown in Figure



18. 66.7% of chronically homeless reported receiving Food Stamps (SNAP), and 33.3% reported connecting to Medicaid.

Length of Homelessness

All 3 chronically homeless individuals reported different lengths of homelessness, as shown in Figure 19, with only 1 reporting their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted for more than 1 year.



Cause of Homelessness

Of the two causes of homelessness that were reported, 1 chronically homeless individual identified a loss or reduction of benefits as their cause, while the other identified domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness.

V. Findings for the Unsheltered Homeless

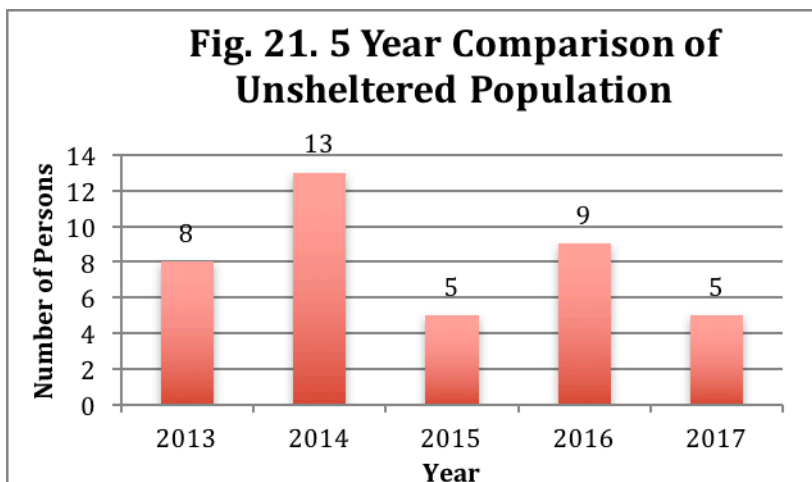
HUD's definition of "unsheltered homeless" applies to any individual or family "with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station,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

5 households, made up of 5 persons, were living unsheltered in Somerset County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is a decrease of 4 households and 4 persons (44.4%) from 2016.

Figure 21 shows the number of unsheltered respondents from 2013 to 2017. While the numbers have fluctuated over the years, overall the unsheltered population has trended downward since 2013 (3 persons, 37.5%).



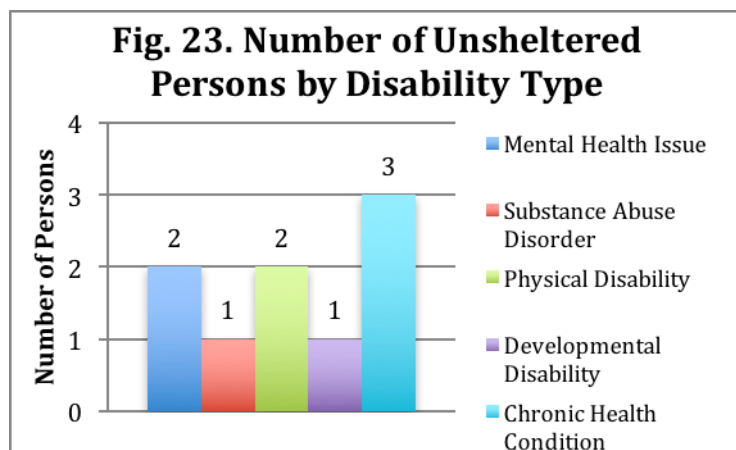
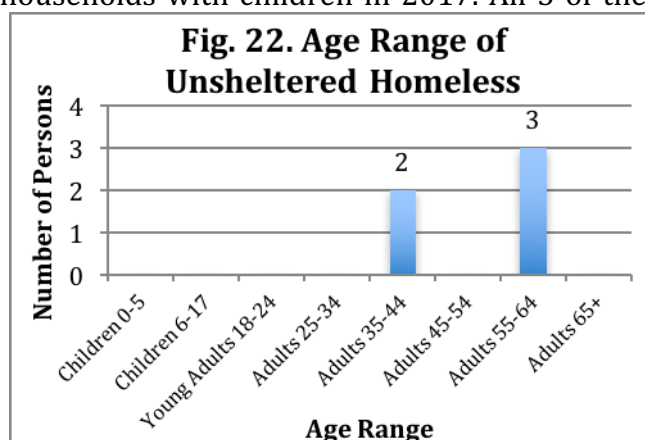
Families and Individuals

Similar to 2016, there were 0 unsheltered households with children in 2017. All 5 of the unsheltered households counted were individual adult households.

Demographics

The largest portion of the 5 unsheltered persons counted in 2017, 60%, was between 55 and 64 years old.

Most of the unsheltered persons were male (80%) while 1 was female. 60% identified their race as White and 40% identified as Black or African-American. None of the unsheltered persons identified themselves as Hispanic.



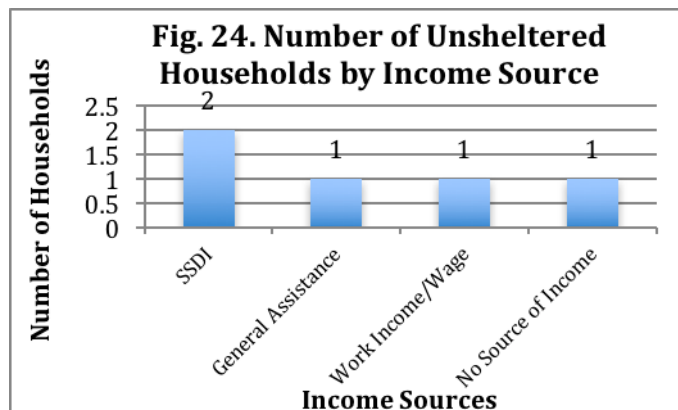
Disabilities

4 of the 5 unsheltered persons (80%) reported having some disability. The disability most commonly identified was chronic health conditions (3 persons, 75%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the unsheltered can be seen in Figure 23.

Subpopulations

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

There were no unsheltered veterans on the night of the count.



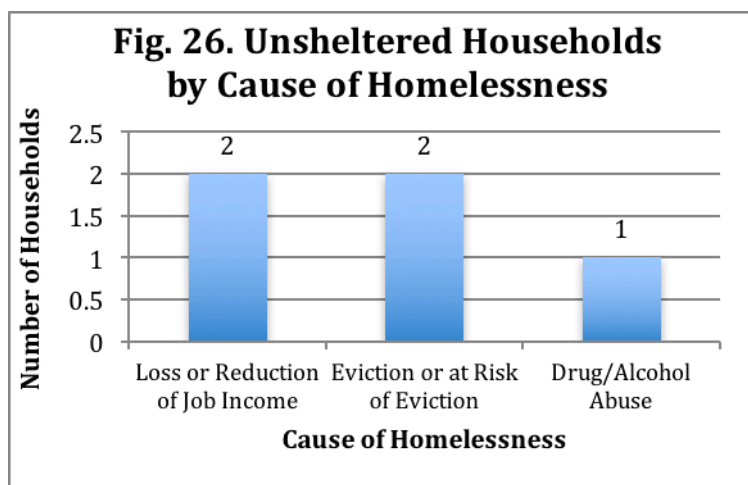
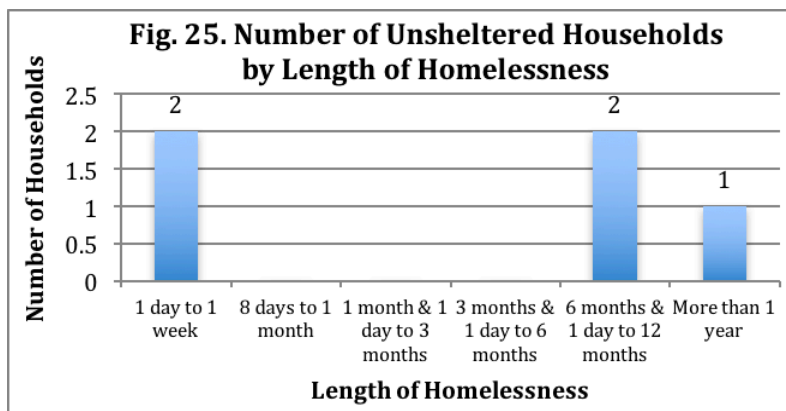
Income and Benefits

Among all unsheltered households on the night of the count, 1 (20%) reported having no source of cash income. The average monthly income reported among unsheltered households was approximately \$438. 40% of unsheltered households reported SSDI.

1 unsheltered household reported receiving no mainstream benefits in the 2017 Point in Time Count. 3 households receive Food Stamps (SNAP) benefits (60%).

Length of Homelessness

Figure 25 shows the lengths of homelessness reported by unsheltered households counted in 2017.

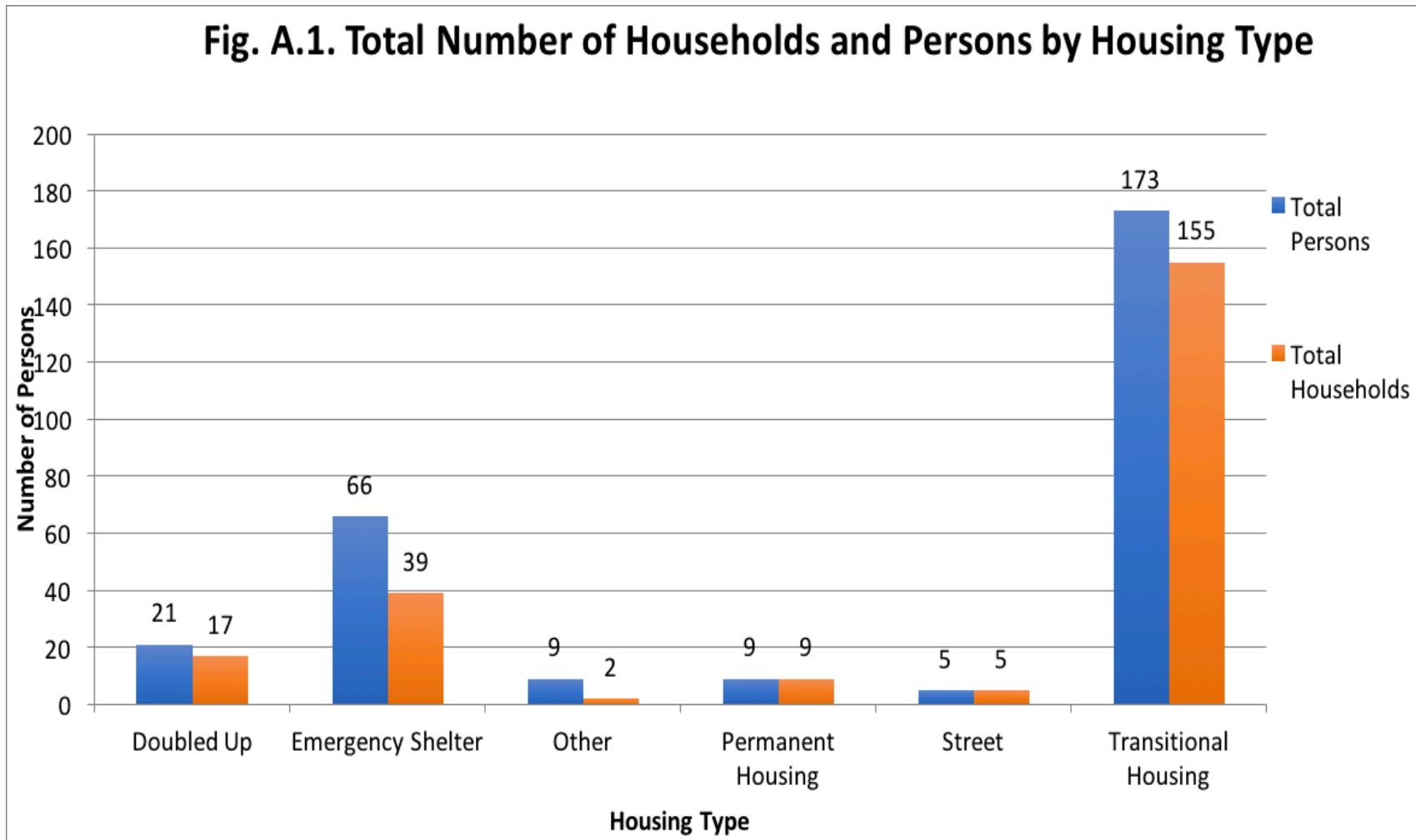


Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, the largest portion of unsheltered households reported a loss or reduction of benefits or job income (80%) as the primary factor that led to their homelessness, as seen in Figure 26.

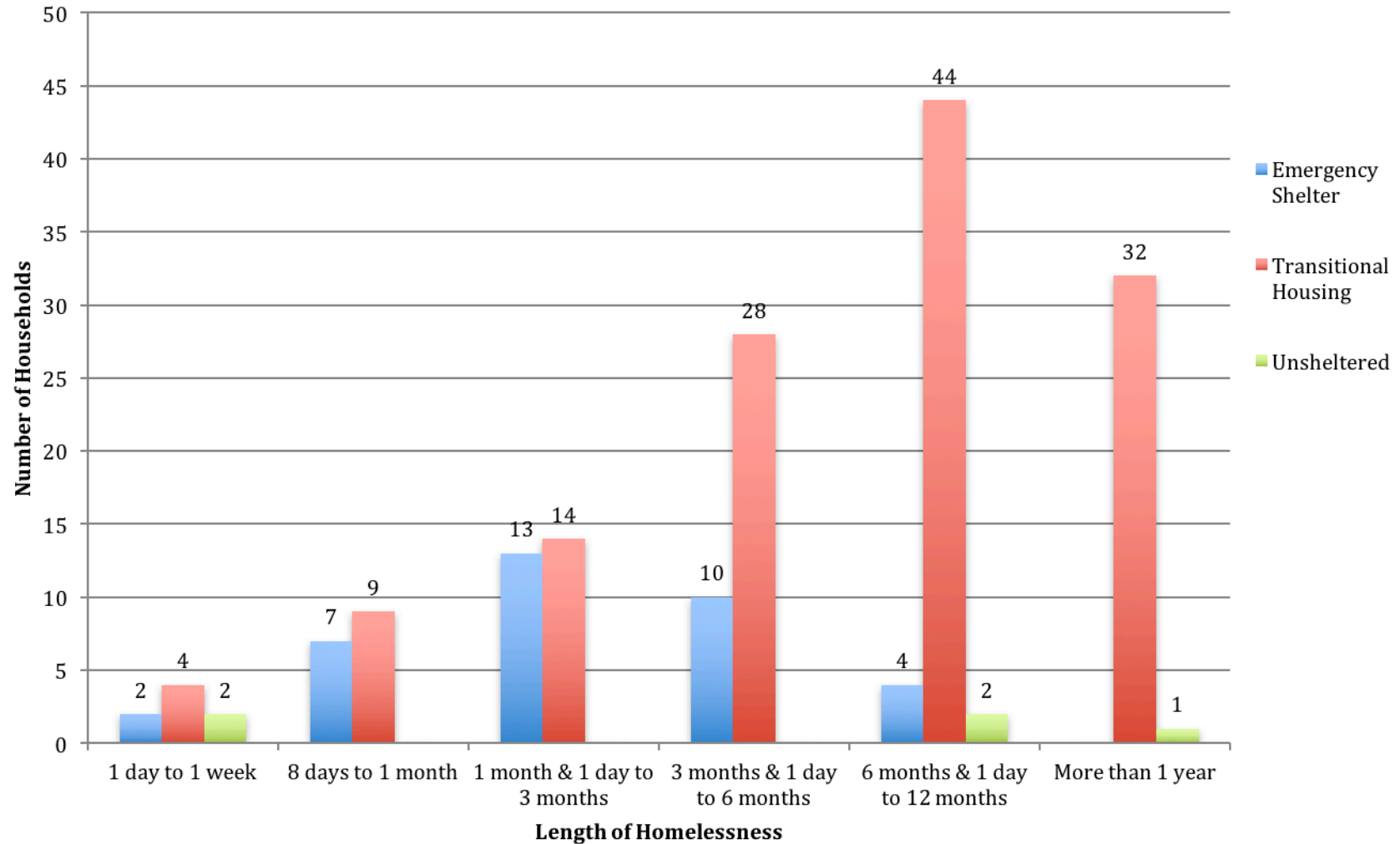
VI. Appendix

Where did you spend the night of Tuesday, January 24, 2017?



How long have you been in your current living situation?

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



Who was homeless with you on the night of January 24th?

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

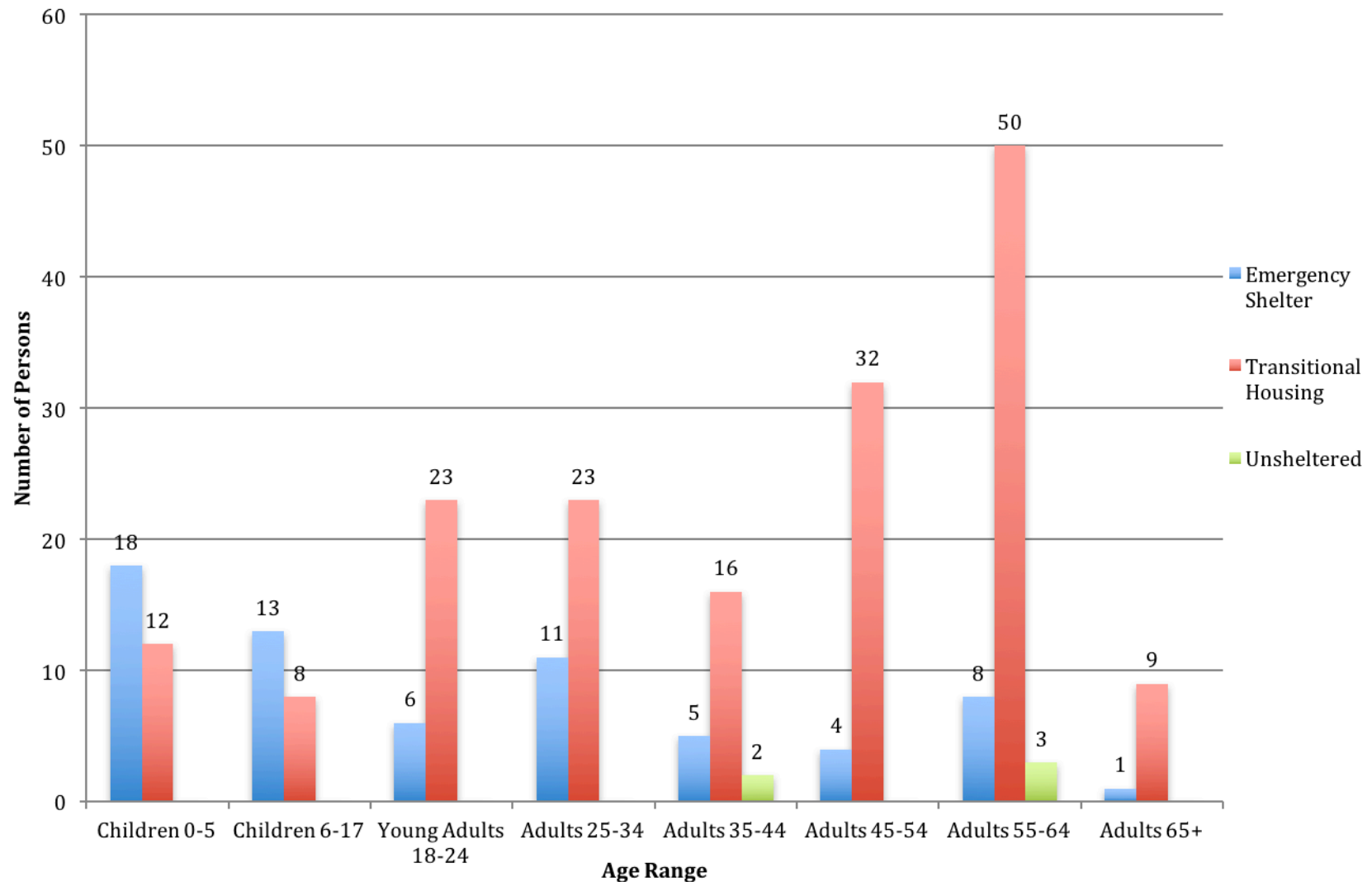


Fig. A.4. Number of Persons by Gender and Housing Situation

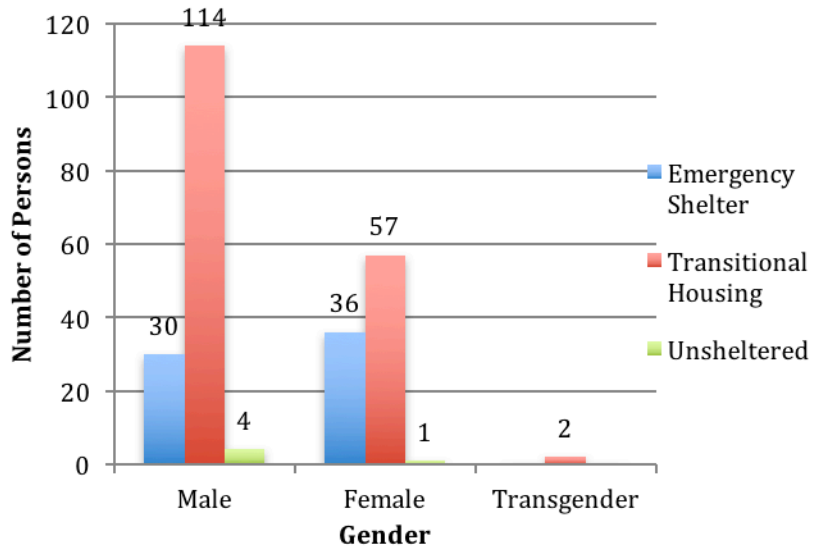


Fig. A.5. Number of Homeless Persons by Race

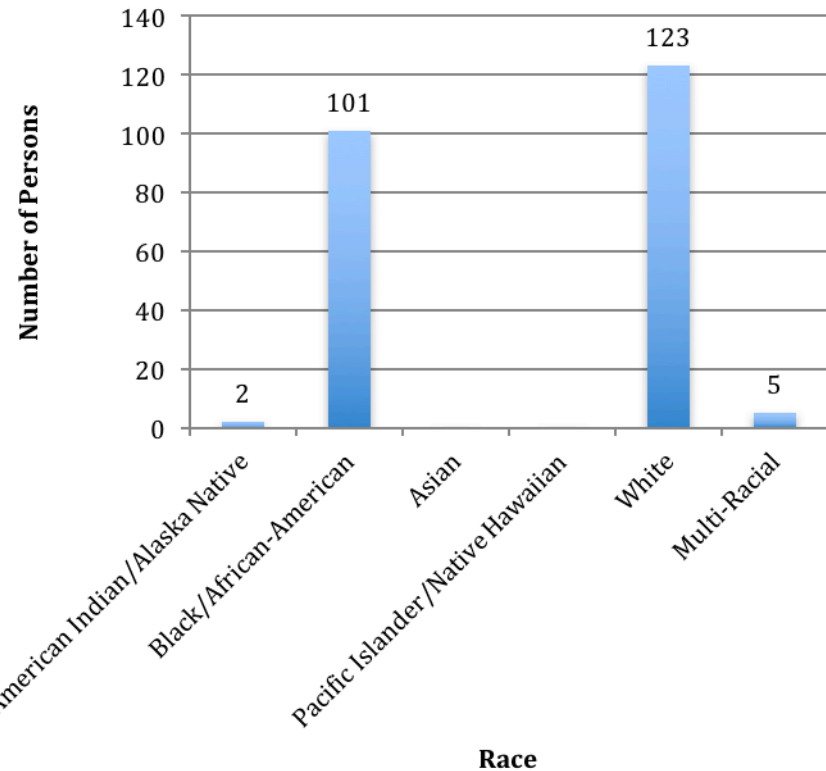
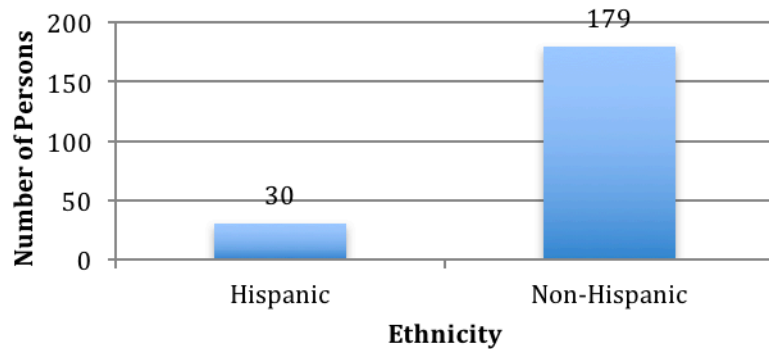
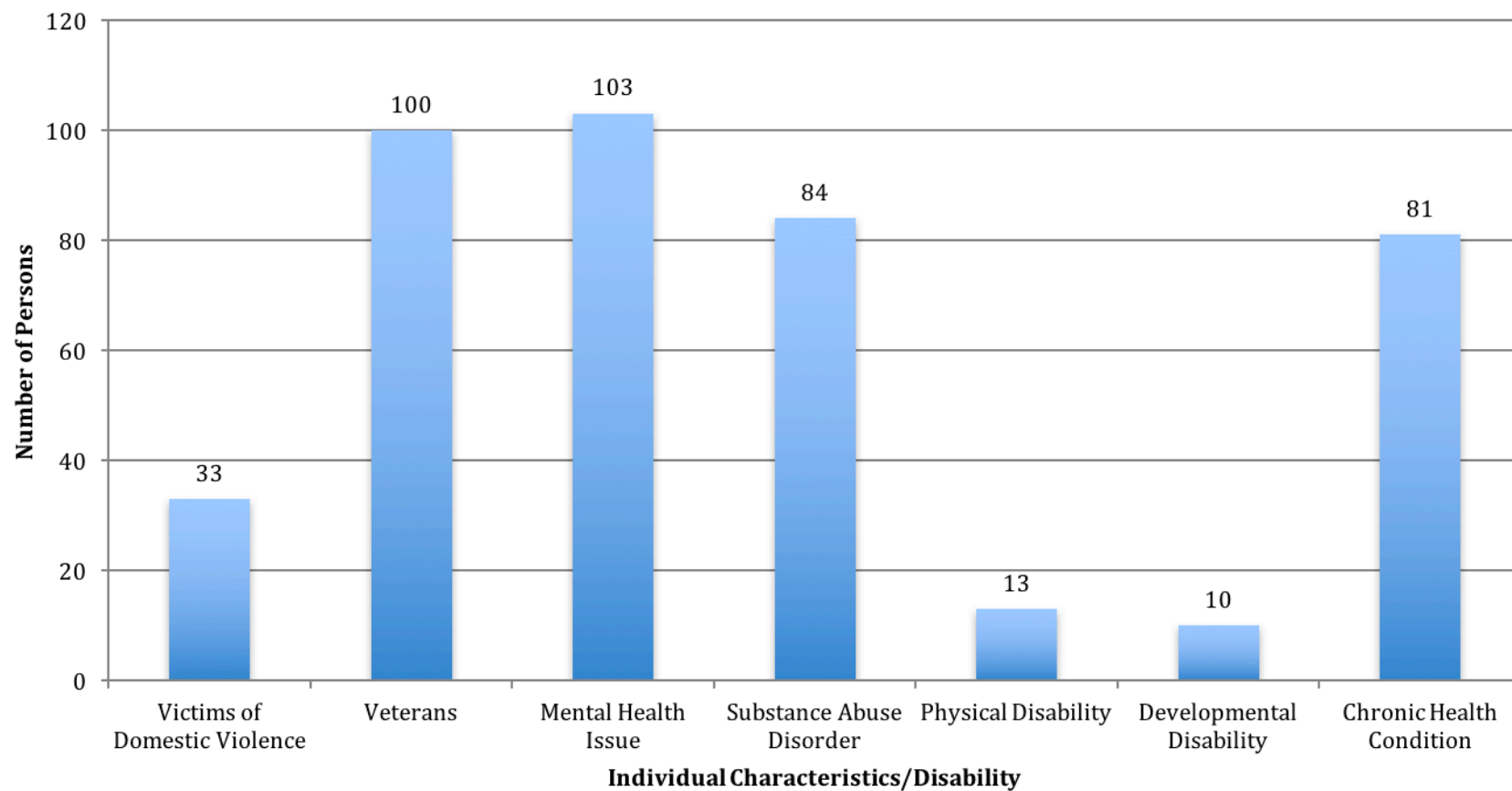


Fig. A.6. Number of Homeless Persons by Ethnicity



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

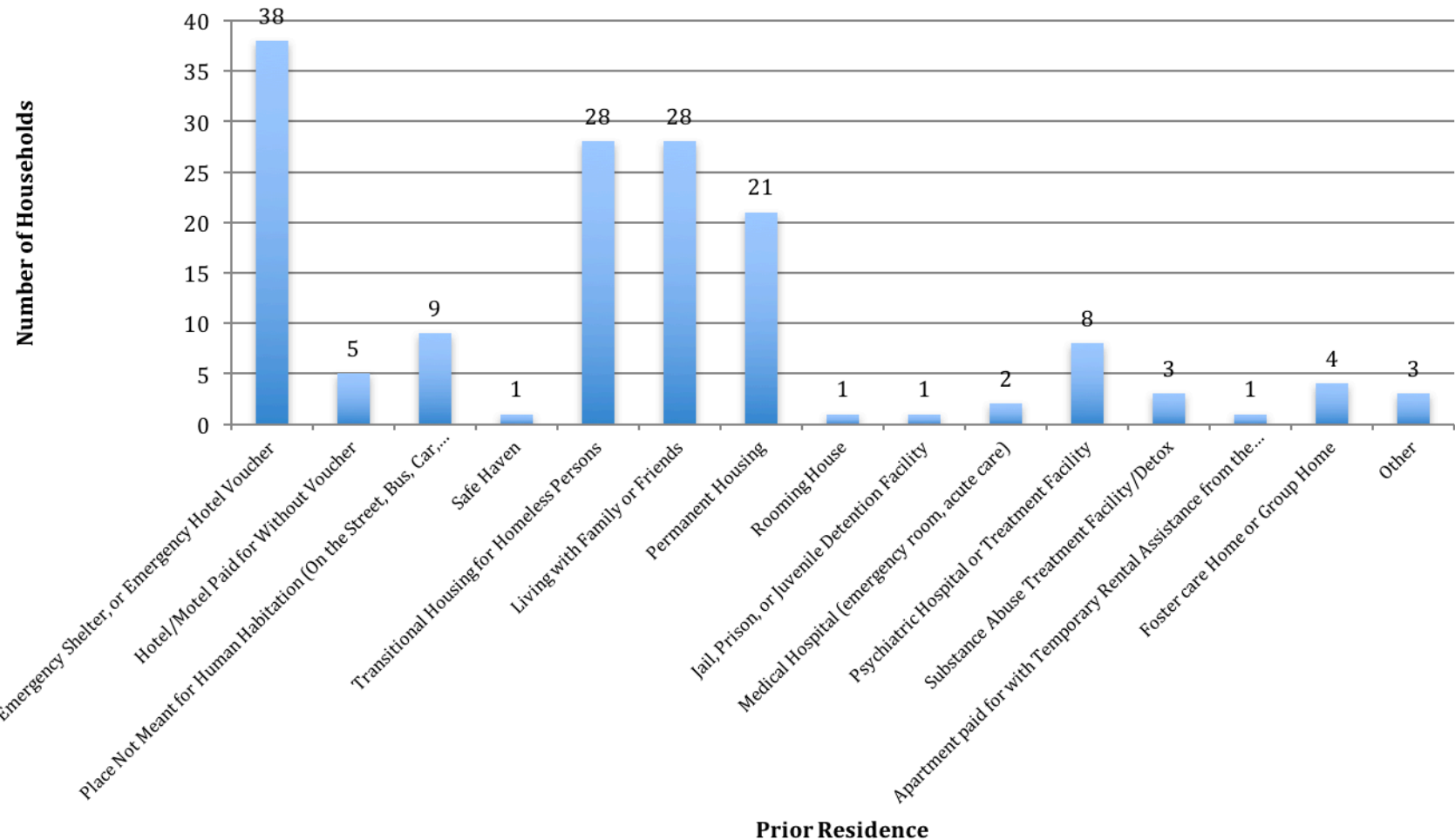


Where was your last permanent address before becoming homeless?

| Fig. A.8. Number of Homeless Households by County, State or Country of Last Permanent Address | |
|---|----------------------|
| Last Permanent Address | Number of Households |
| Bergen County | 1 |
| Burlington County | 1 |
| Essex County | 5 |
| Hudson County | 1 |
| Hunterdon County | 1 |
| Mercer County | 5 |
| Middlesex County | 5 |
| Morris County | 3 |
| Passaic County | 1 |
| Somerset County | 32 |
| Union county | 7 |
| Warren County | 2 |

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?

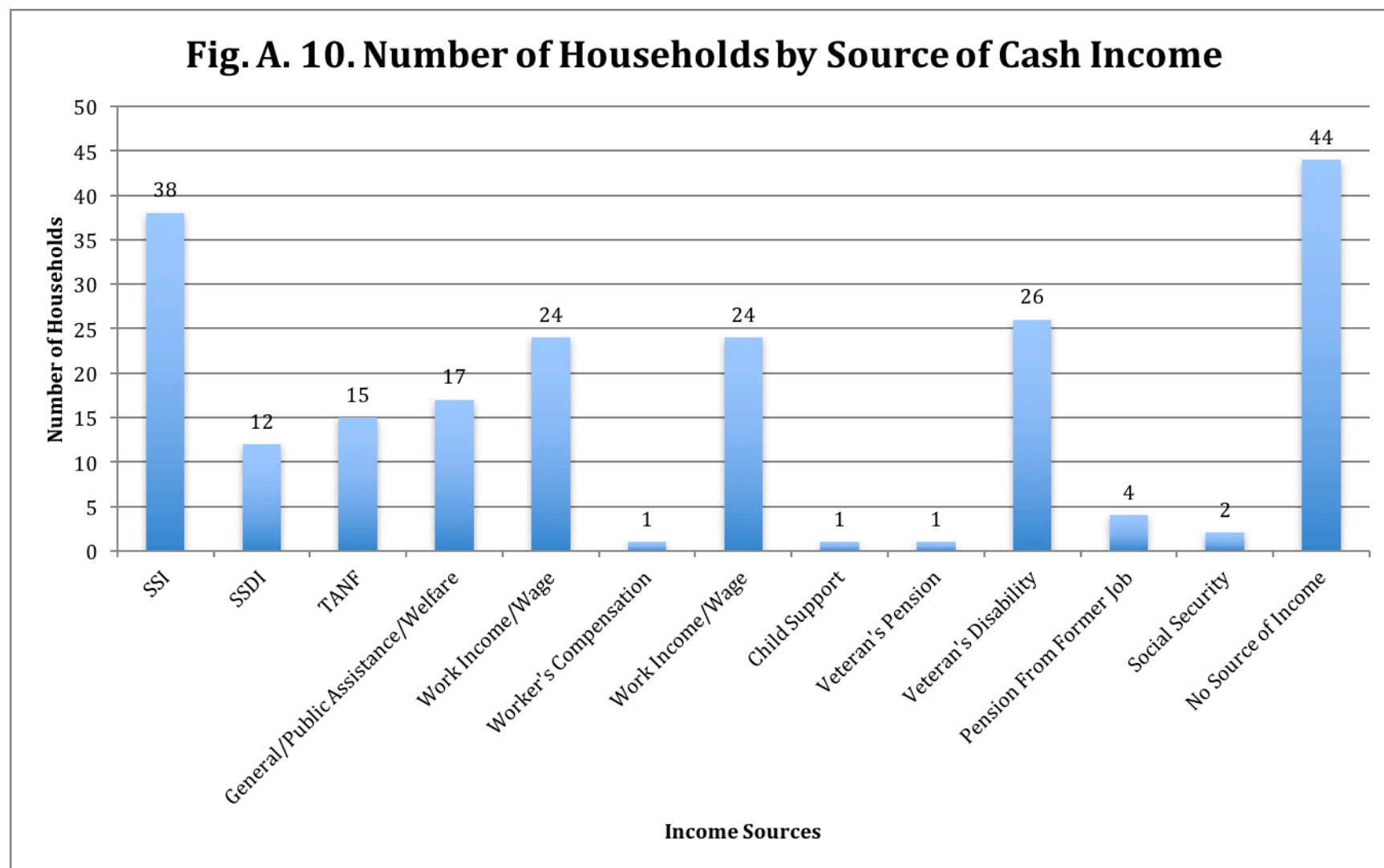
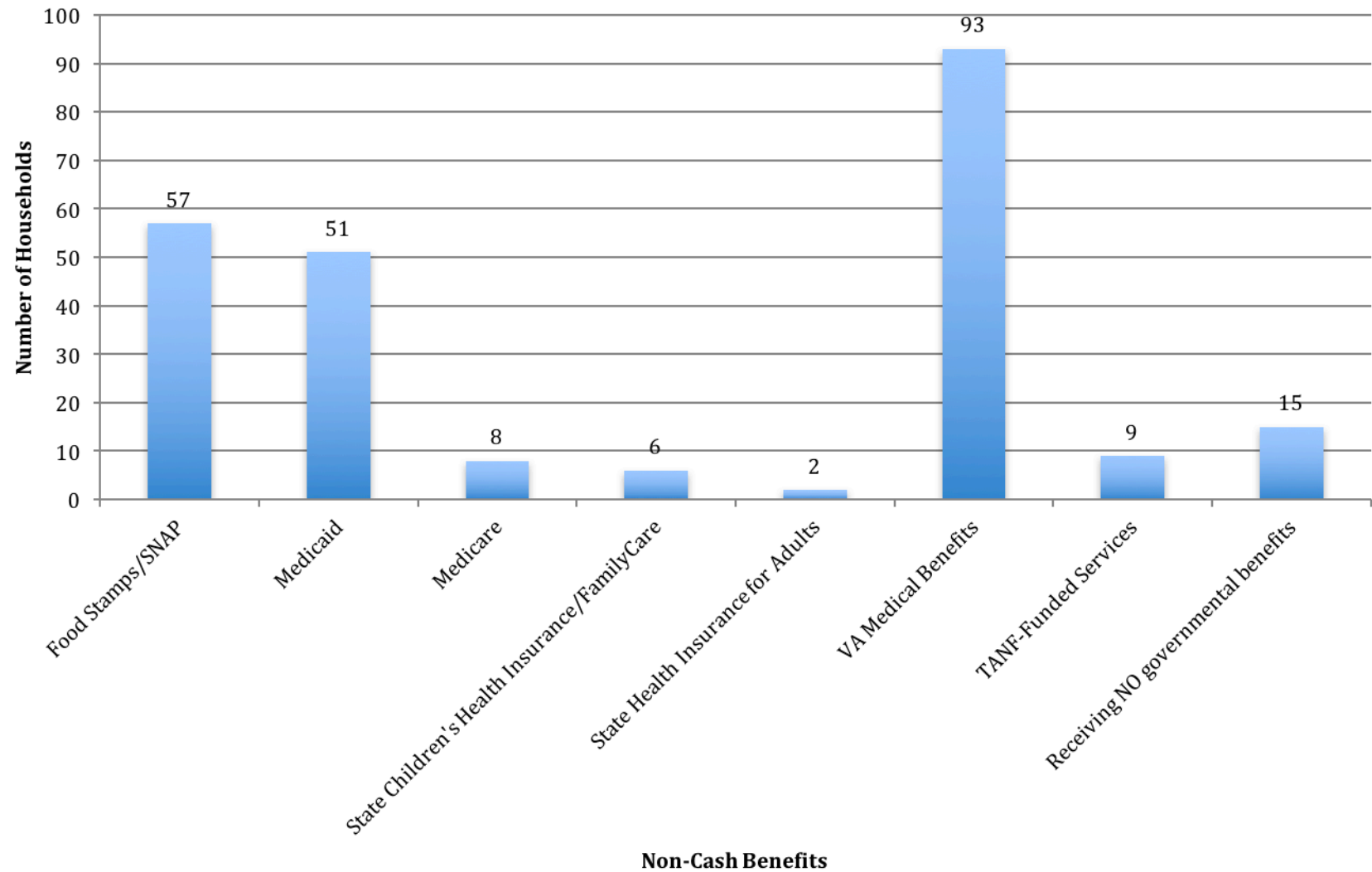
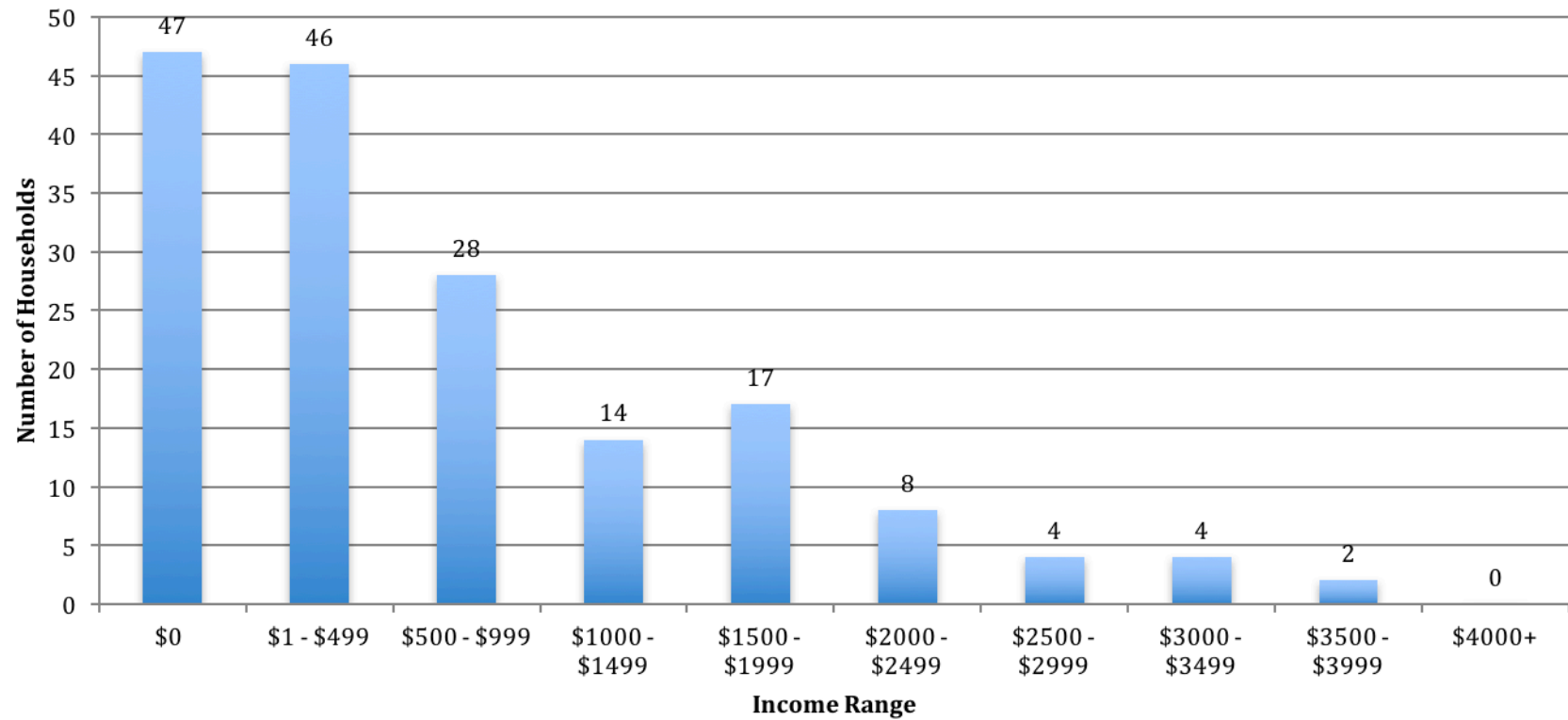


Fig. A. 11. Number of Households by Sources of Non-Cash Benefits



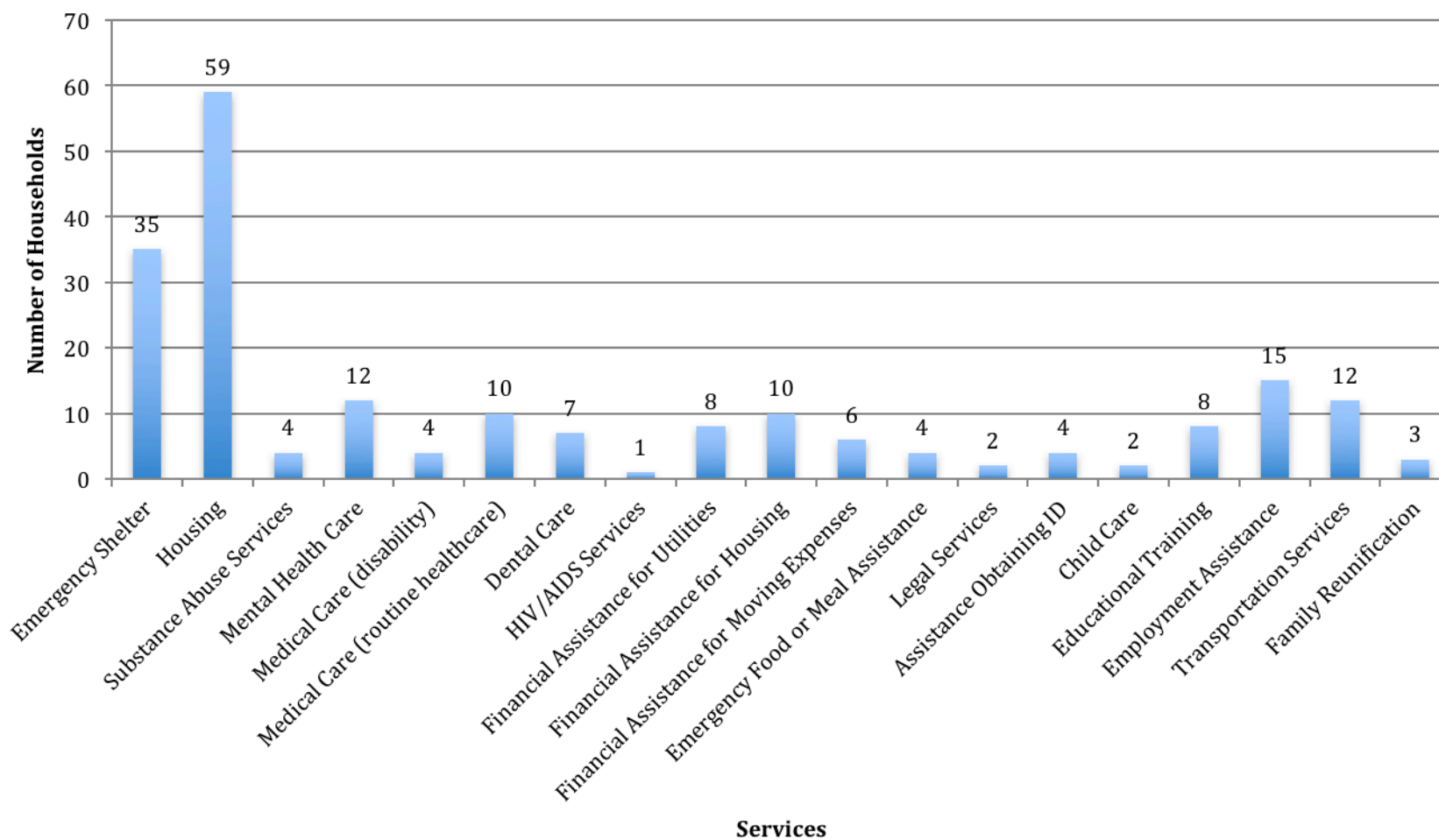
What is your monthly household income?

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?

