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**NJ**  
**2017**  
**Counts!**

# Union 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 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a total of 291 households, including 475 persons, were experiencing homelessness in Union County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count.
- A total of 43 persons in 43 households were identified as chronically homeless.
- 50 households, including 55 persons were unsheltered on the night of the count.

#### Total Homeless Population

On the night of January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, a total of 475 persons, in 291 households, were experiencing homelessness in Union County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is a decrease of 37 persons (7.2%) and 37 households (11.3%) from 2016. Union County had 5.6% of New Jersey's statewide homeless population in 2017.

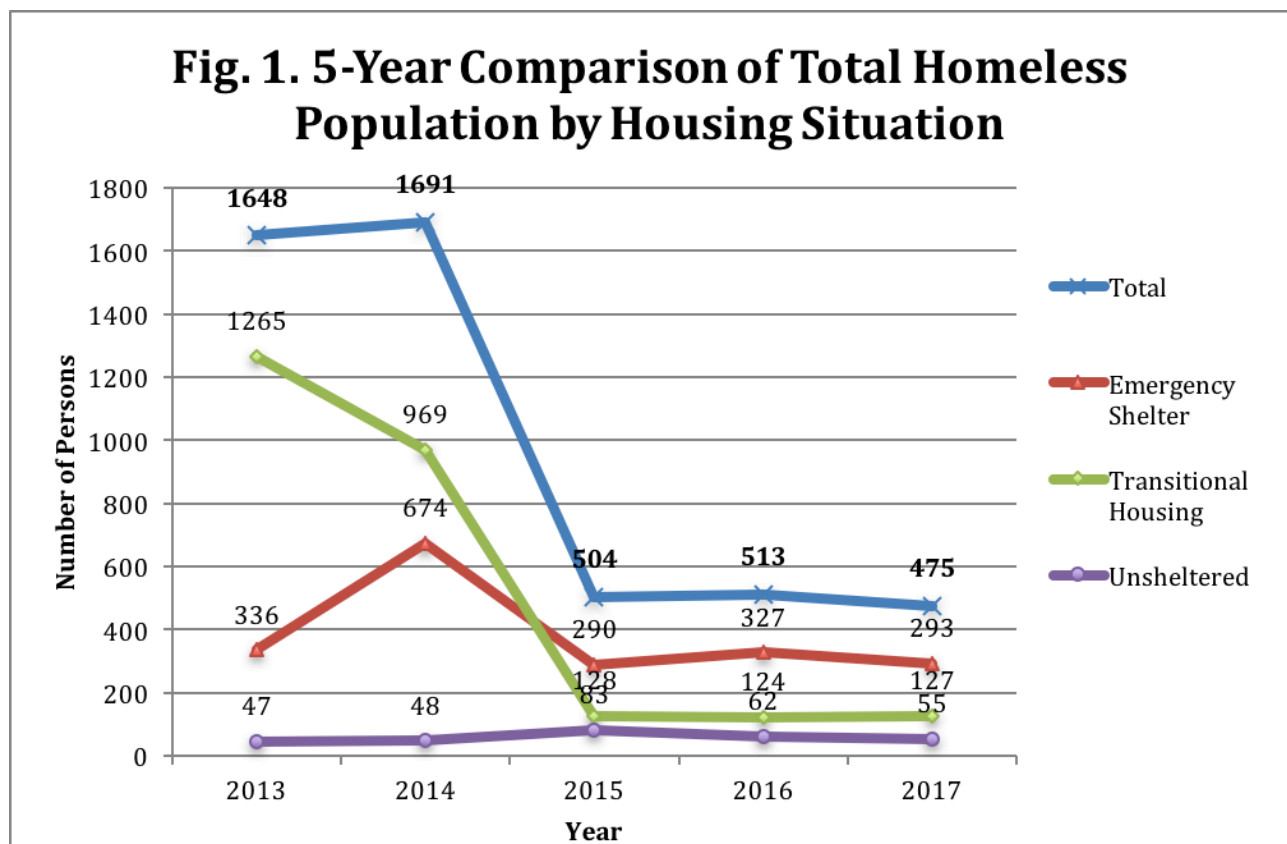


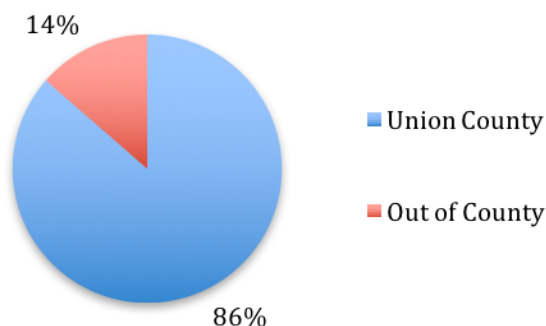
Figure 1 shows that, in 2017, 293 homeless persons stayed in emergency shelters, 127 stayed in transitional housing, and 55 were living unsheltered on the night of the count. A decrease was seen in the number of persons counted in emergency shelters (34 persons, 10.4%), and those unsheltered (7 persons, 11.3%) from 2016. While this is true, there was a slight increase in the number of persons in transitional housing (3 persons, 2.4%).



Figure 1 also shows that, overall, the total number of homeless persons has seen a significant decrease since 2013 (1,173 persons, 71.2%). The largest decrease is seen in the number of persons served in transitional housing programs (1,138 persons, 90%).

As Figure 2 shows, 14% of the homeless households in Union County in 2017 reported that their last permanent address prior to becoming homeless was outside of the county.

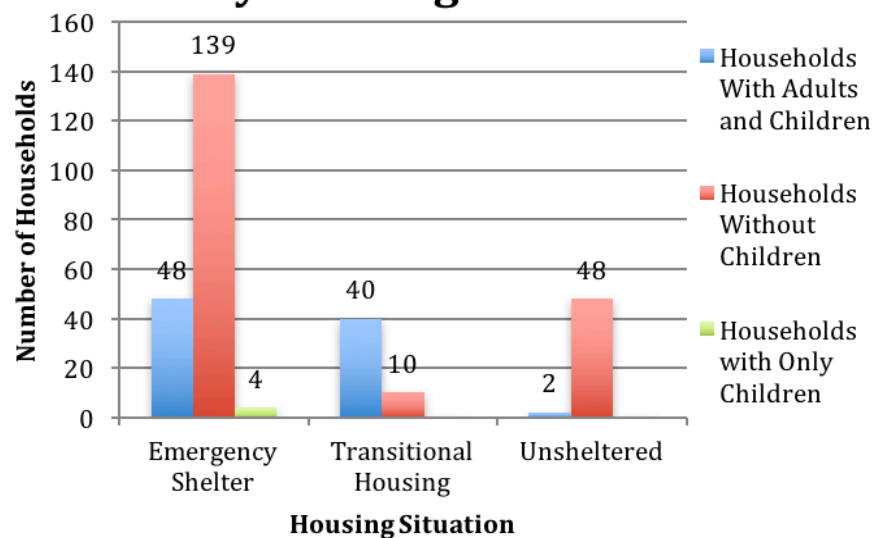
**Fig. 2. Percentage of Households by County of Last Permanent Address**



### 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’).

**Fig. 3. Homeless Households by Housing Situation**



Of the 291 homeless households counted in Union County in 2017, 90 (30.9%) were families with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult. These families were composed of 271 persons, including 164 children under age 18, and 107 adults. The average family size was 3 persons. Figure 3 shows that 48 families were staying in emergency shelter (53.3%), and 40 were in transitional housing programs (44.4%). There were 2 unsheltered families, consisting of 5 persons, counted in 2017, a decrease of 2 less homeless families from 2016.

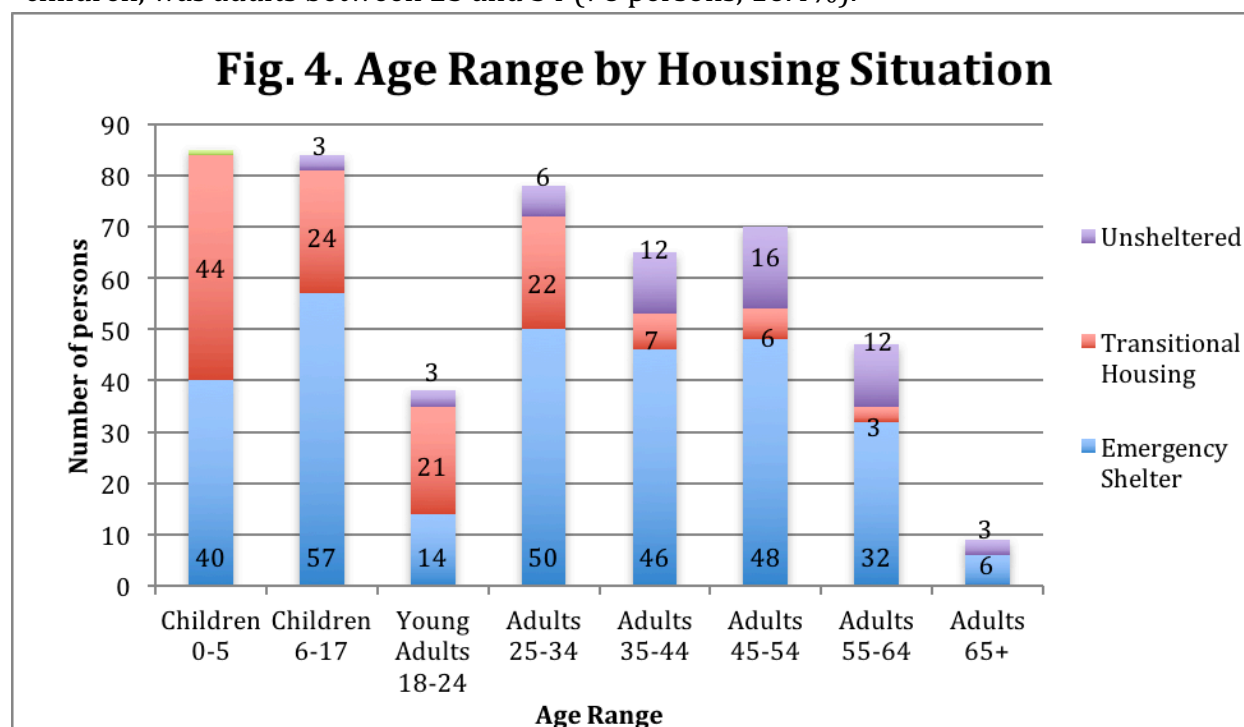
(44.4%). There were 2 unsheltered families, consisting of 5 persons, counted in 2017, a decrease of 2 less homeless families from 2016.

67.7% (197) of the homeless households in Union County were households without children under 18, and they were composed of 200 adults. 139 (70.6%) of these adult-only households were staying in emergency shelters, 10 (5.1%) were in transitional housing, and 48 (24.4%) were unsheltered. Union County has seen the number of adult-only homeless households decrease by 39 (16.5%) since 2015.

In 2017, there were 4 households with only children under 18, an increase of 4 from 2016 where no youth only households were counted. All these households were in emergency shelter on the night of the count.

## Demographics

There were a total of 38 (8%) homeless adults between 18 and 24 years old, 269 (56.6%) adults over age 24, and 168 (35.4%) children under 18 years old experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. Figure 4 shows that of the homeless children who were under the age of 18 they were evenly split between between those 0 and 5 years of age and those 6 to 17 years of age (84, 17.7% each). The age range most represented after children, was adults between 25 and 34 (78 persons, 16.4%).



51.8% of homeless persons were male, and 47.6% were female.

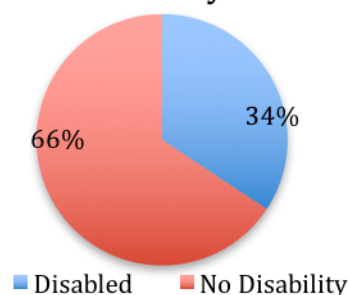
56.4% of persons identified their race as Black or African-American, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest group self-identified as White (39.4%). With regard to ethnicity, 26.5% of persons identified themselves as Hispanic.

## Disabilities

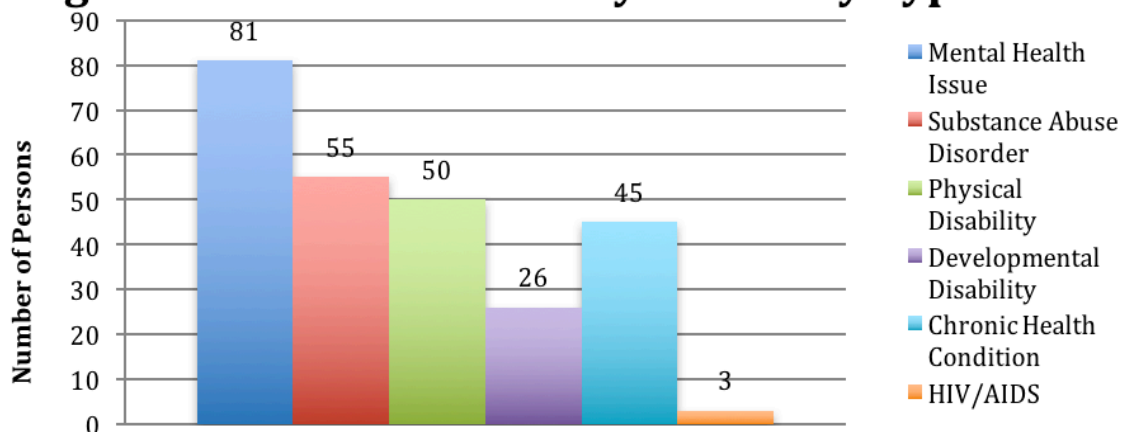
Figure 5 illustrates that 34.3% of homeless persons reported having some type of disability. 50.5% of adults 18 or older reported some type of disability compared to 4.8% of children. Figure 6 shows the number of the homeless persons that identified as having various disabilities. The most common disabilities included mental health issues and substance abuse disorders.

Among disabled adults, 51.6% reported a mental health issue, making this the most prevalent disability, representing 26.1% of the total adult homeless population. An additional 34.8% of disabled adults reported a substance abuse disorder. Among disabled children, 62.5% reported a developmental disability.

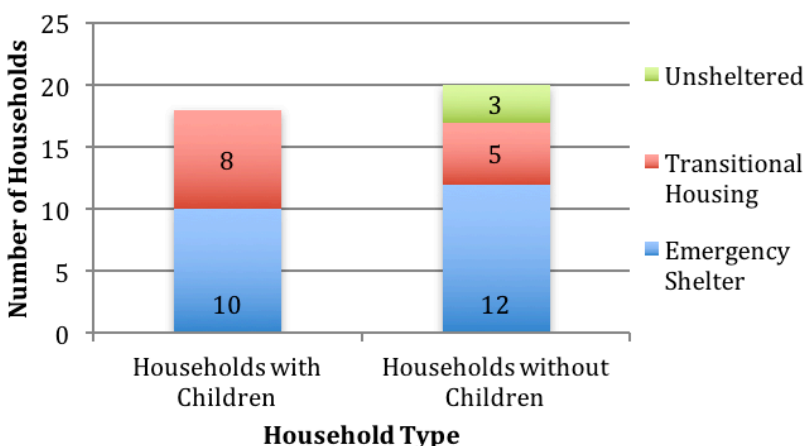
**Fig. 5. Percentage of Population with a Disability**



**Fig. 6. Number of Persons by Disability Type**



**Fig. 7. Households of Victims of Domestic Violence by Housing Situation**



## Victims of Domestic Violence

On the night of the count, in Union County, 38 homeless households (13.1%) identified having a victim of domestic violence, matching the number counted in 2016. 52.6% of these households were adult only households. 57.9% of domestic violence households were served in emergency shelter programs in 2017.

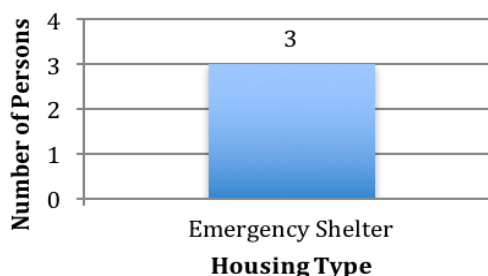


## Veterans

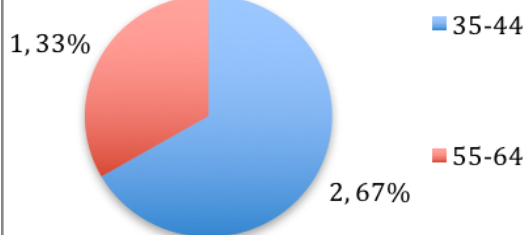
In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending homelessness among veterans by 2015. Many communities in New Jersey have also been working hard to end homelessness among our country's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

3 homeless individual veterans were identified on the night of the count. This represents a decrease of 4 veterans (57.1%) as compared to 2016. All of the homeless veterans counted were in emergency shelter programs.

**Fig. 8. Number of Veterans by Housing Situation**



**Fig. 9. Veterans by Age Range**



All of the veterans experiencing homelessness in Union County on the night of the count were male and all 3 identified as White. Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of homeless veterans by age range.

1 of the 3 veterans, 33.3%, reported having some kind of disability. This veteran reported both a substance abuse disorder and chronic health condition. None of the homeless veterans counted were connected to Veteran's Pension, Veteran's Disability or VA Medical Benefits.

## Income and Benefits

Among all homeless households on the night of the count 40.5% had no source of income and 13.1% reported having earned income. The most common sources of income, outside of earned income, among households were SSI (17.2%) and TANF (14.4%).

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

**Fig. 10. Number of Households by Income Type**

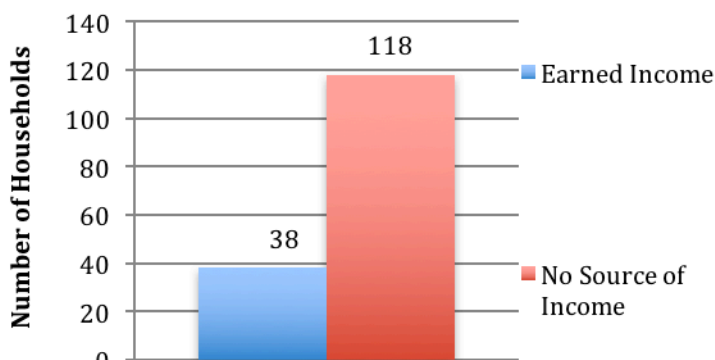
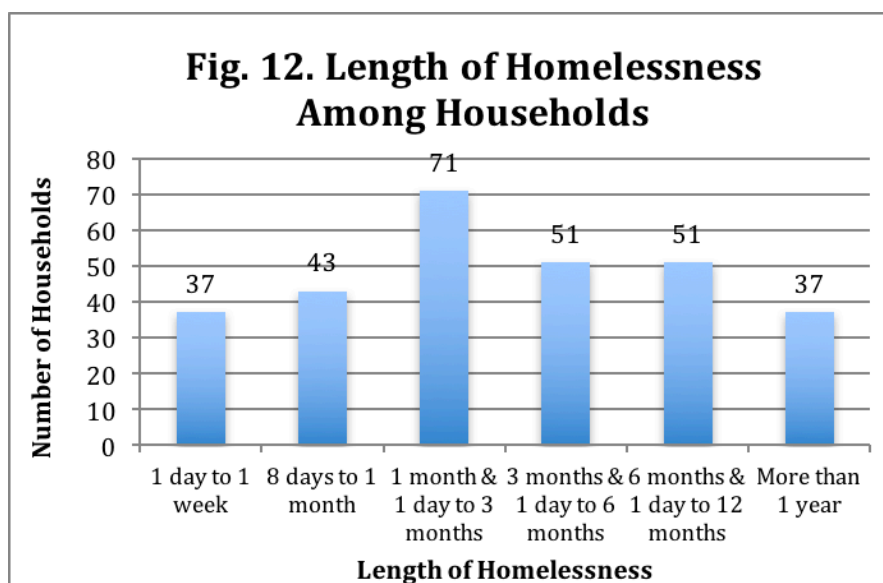


Figure 11. Average Monthly Income For Households by Housing Situation			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered
Average for All Households	\$320.75	\$695.76	\$298.82

15.5% of homeless households reported receiving no kind of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. The top reported non-cash benefits were Medicaid (69.1%) and Food Stamps (SNAP) (48.1%).

### Length of Homelessness

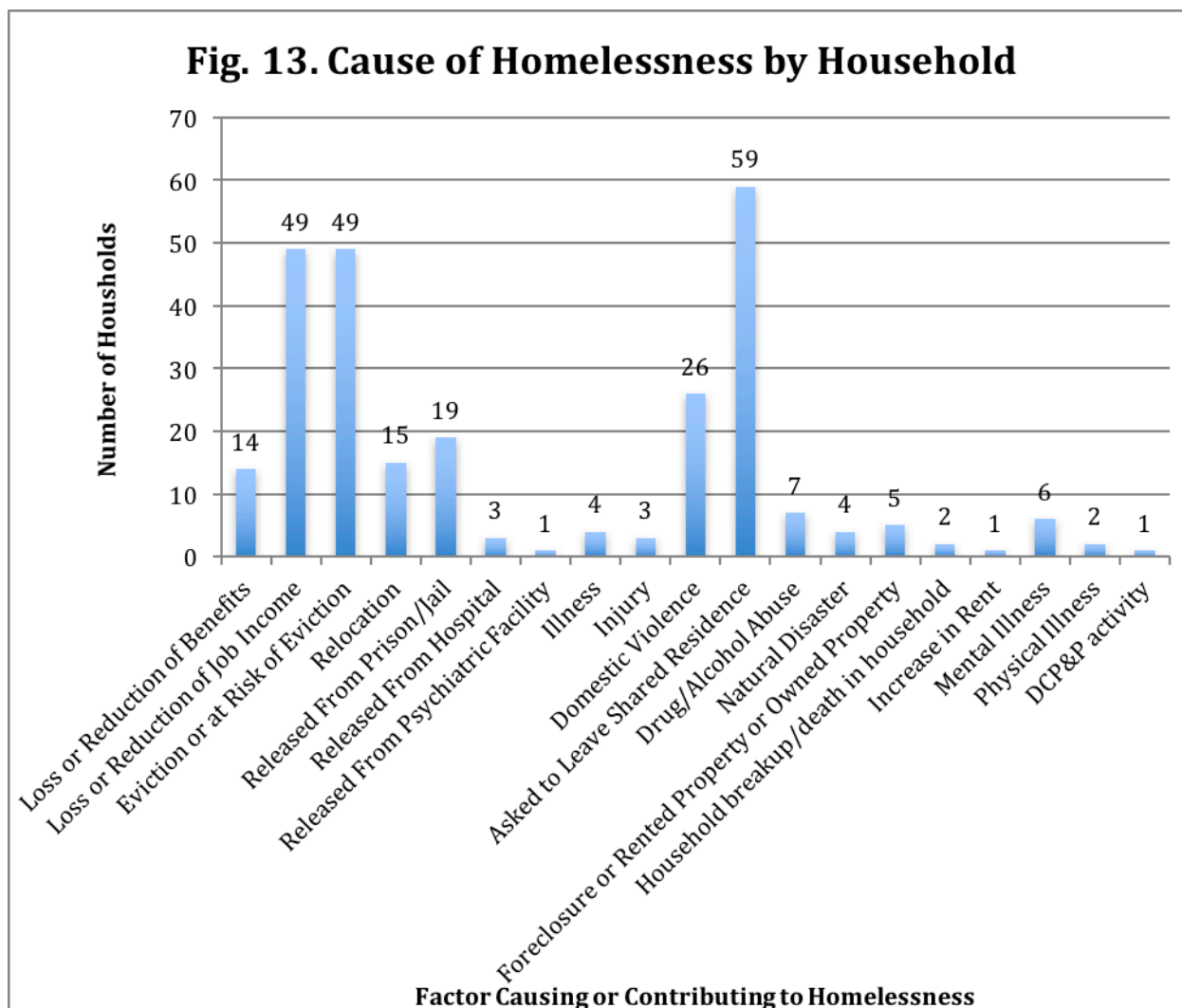
As Figure 12 shows, the largest number of homeless households (71 households, 24.4%) reported that their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted from 1 to 3 months. Only 12.7% of households reported their homelessness lasting for more than 1 year.



### 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 (20.3%) than any other cause. As Figure 13 shows, the next most common factors included eviction (16.8%) and a loss or reduction of job income (16.8%).

When respondents were asked ‘what was your residence prior to your current living situation?’ more said they were in permanent housing (26.1%) than any other type of residence. 21.3% reported staying in living with friends or family prior to their current living situation, and another 11.7% reported staying in emergency shelter.



#### 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.

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

43 households, made up of 43 persons, were chronically homeless in Union County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 24 persons and households (126.3%) from 2016. The rate of chronic homelessness as a percentage of overall homelessness increased from 3.7% in 2016 to 9.1%.

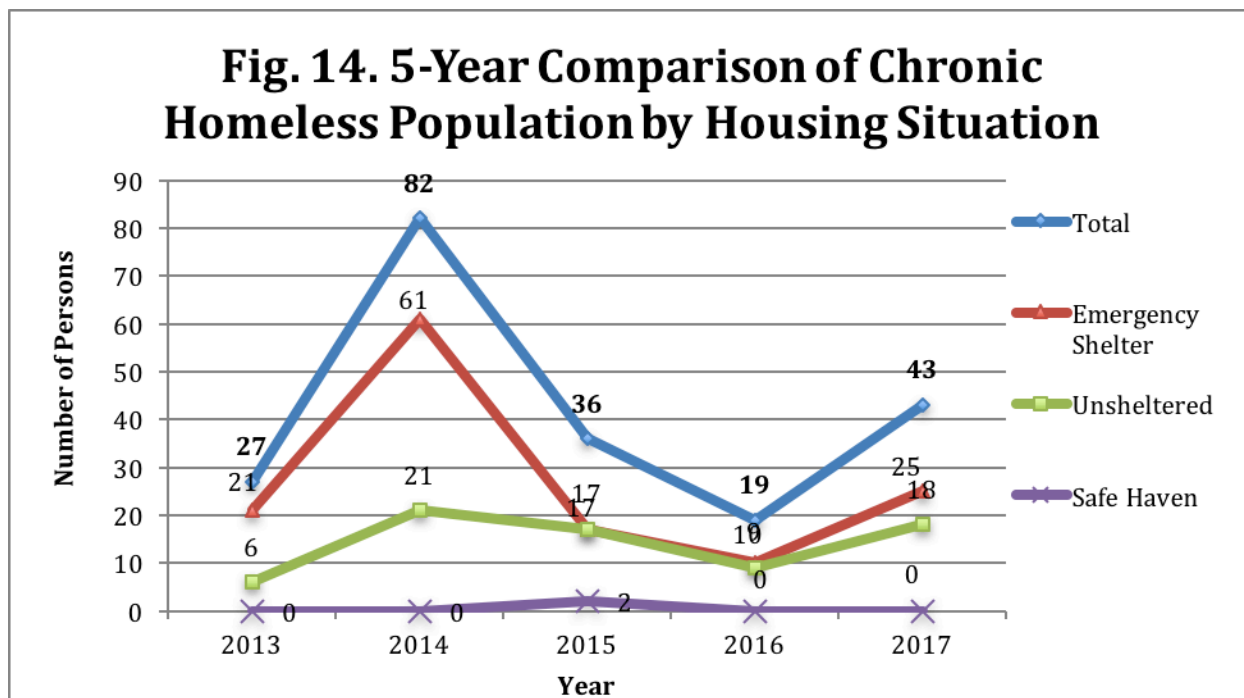
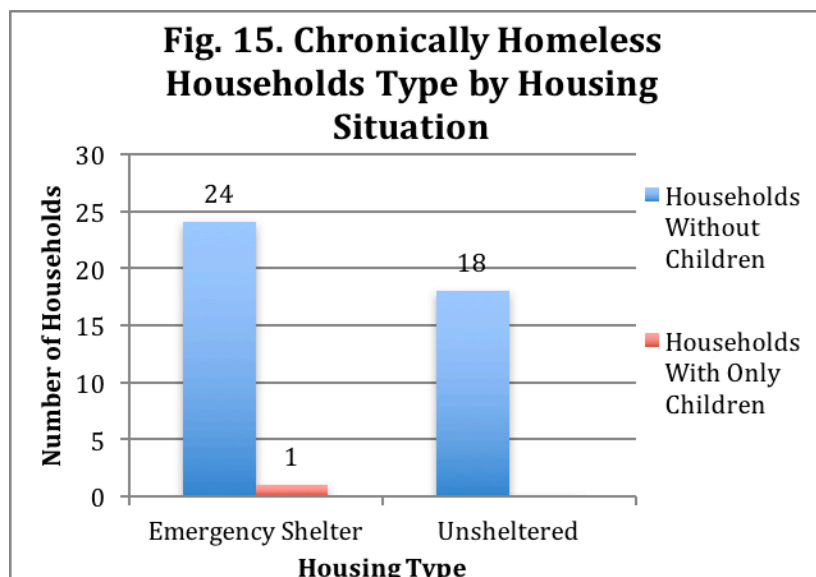


Figure 14 shows the number of chronically homeless persons who were in emergency shelters, safe havens or living unsheltered in Union County from 2013 to 2017. While the numbers have fluctuated, overall, over the past 5 years the total number of chronic homeless has increased by 16 persons, 59.3% since 2013. The largest increase from 2013 is was seen with households who were unsheltered (12 persons, 200%).

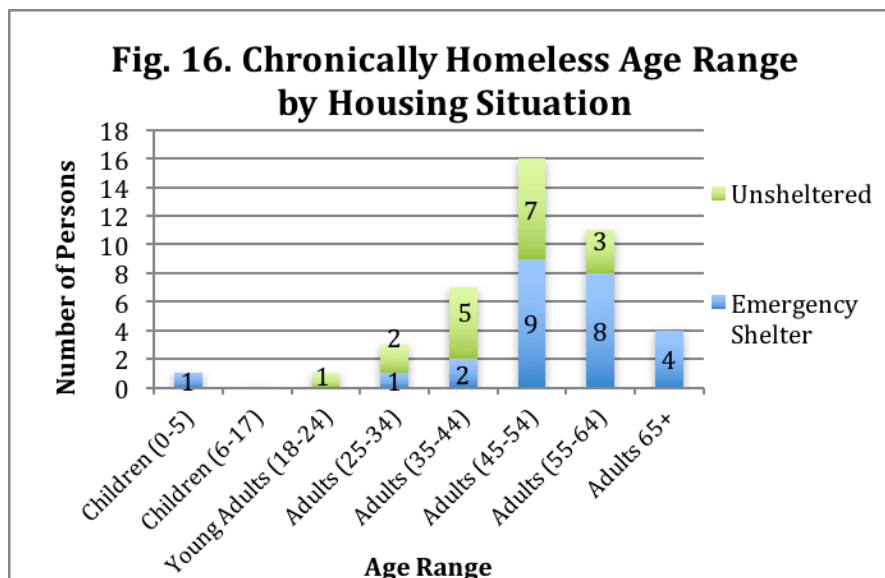


## Families and Individuals

42 of the 43 chronically homeless households counted in 2017, were adult individuals, while the remaining was an individual youth. There were no chronically homeless families counted in 2017, matching what was found in 2016.

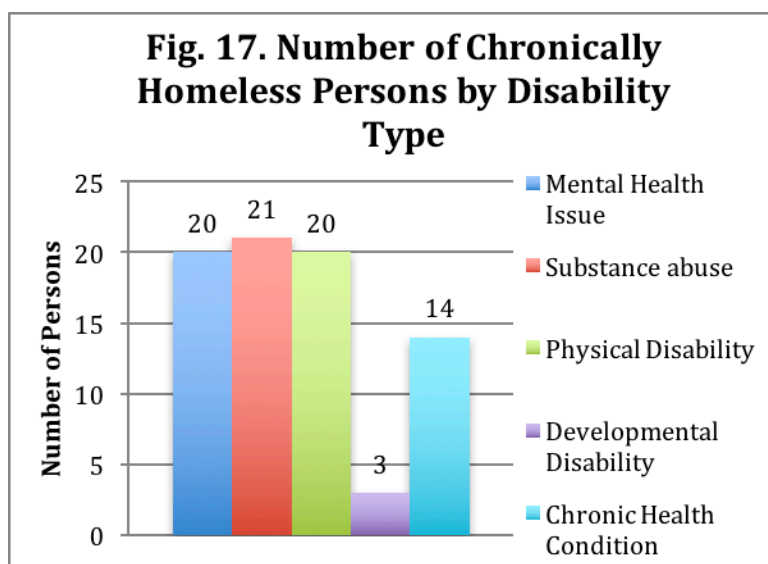
## Demographics

Of the 43 total chronically homeless persons, the largest number of chronically homeless persons (16, 37.2%) in a single age category fell between the ages of 45 and 54 years of age. Figure 16 shows the full list of age ranges reported by all chronically homeless persons.



72.1% of chronically homeless respondents were male, and 25.6% were female.

The largest racial subgroup of homeless persons reported their race as White (51.2%). The next group self-identified as Black or African-American (46.5%). With regard to ethnicity, 23.3% of chronically homeless persons identified themselves as 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 disabilities most commonly identified were substance abuse issues (48.8%), mental health issues (46.5%), and physical disabilities (46.5%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the chronically homeless can be seen in Figure 17.

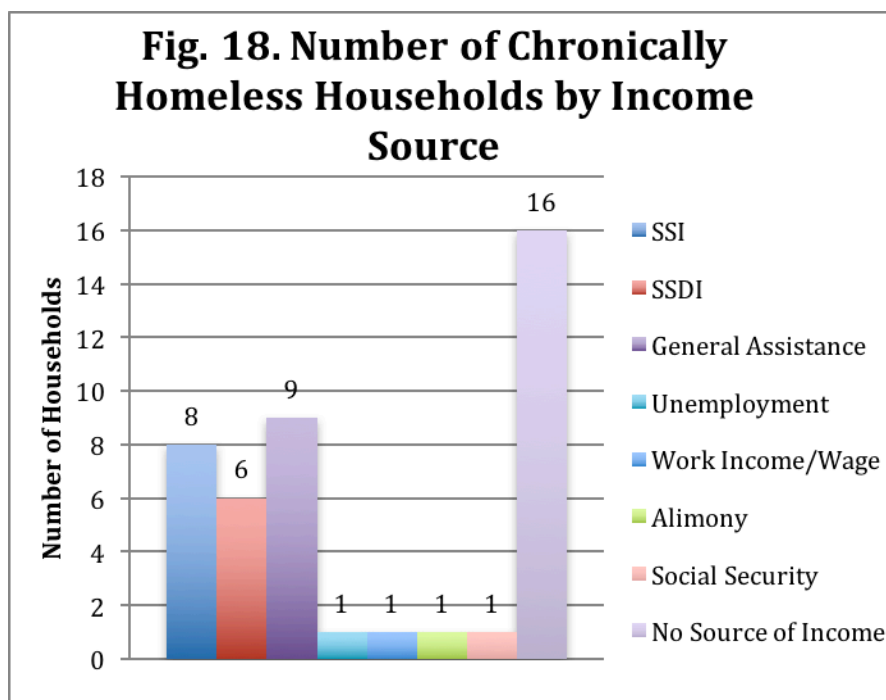
## Subpopulations

On the night of the count, 2 chronically homeless persons in Union County reported being victims of domestic violence. 1 was unsheltered and 1 was in an emergency shelter.

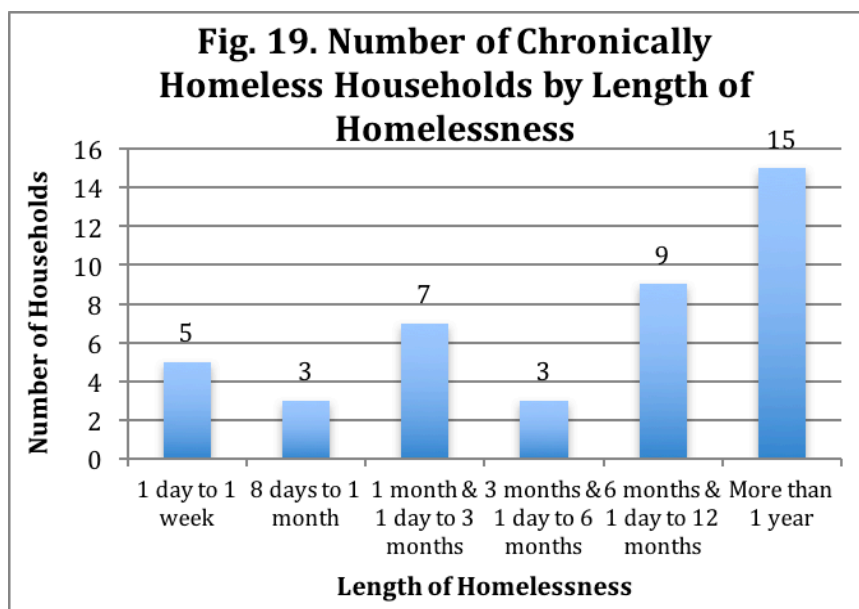
There were no chronically homeless veterans identified in Union County on the night of the count.

### Income and Benefits

Among all chronically homeless households on the night of the count, 37.2% reported receiving no type of cash income. Figure 18 shows the sources of income received. The most common source of cash income among all chronically homeless households was General Assistance, which was received by 20.9%. 1 household (2.3%) reported having earned income.



7 (16.3%) of the chronically homeless households reported they were not receiving any type of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. Medicaid and Food Stamps (SNAP) were the top benefits among this population with 55.8% and 48.8% receiving each, respectively.



### Length of Homelessness

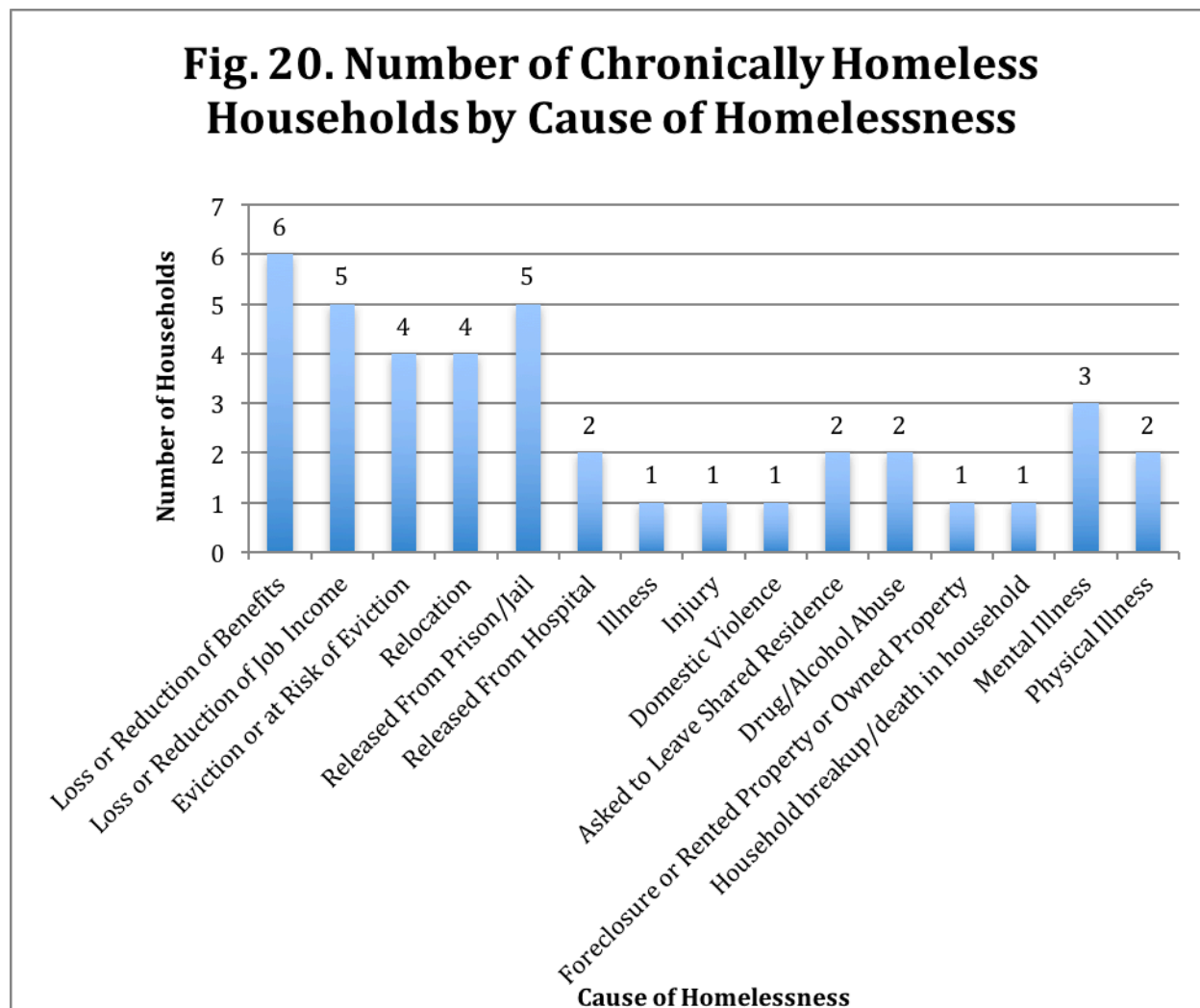
Figure 19 shows that 15 chronically homeless households (34.9%) reported that their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted for more than 1 year. 3 of these 15 households (20%) reported their homelessness lasted for longer than 5 years.

### Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more chronically homeless households cited a loss or reduction of benefits (14%). As



shown in Figure 20, the next most common response was a loss or reduction of job income and being released from prison or jail, with 11.6% each.



## V. Findings for the Unsheltered Homeless

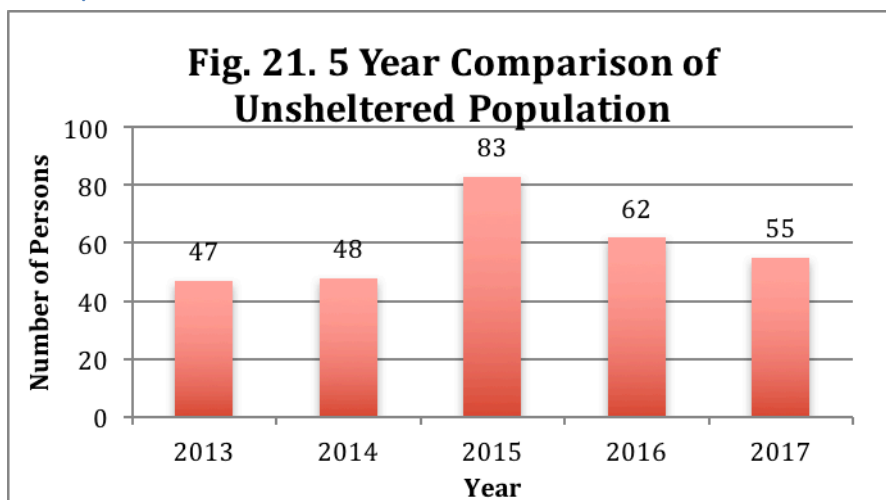
HUD’s definition of “unsheltered homeless” applies to any individual or family “with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station,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

50 households, made up of 55 persons, were living unsheltered in Union County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 1 household (2%), but a decrease of 7 persons (11.3%) from 2016.

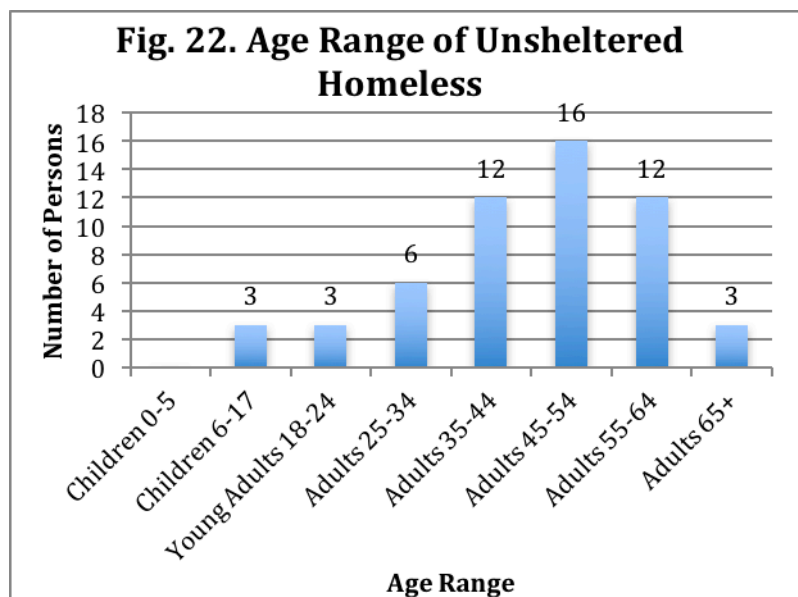
Figure 21 shows the number of unsheltered persons from 2013 to 2017. Overall since 2013, Union County has seen an increase of 8 unsheltered persons (17%), but has been trending downwards since 2015.



## Families and Individuals

Of the 50 unsheltered households counted in 2017, 2 (4%) were households with at least 1 adult and 1 child. These unsheltered families were comprised of 5 persons, which includes 2 adults and 3 kids. This represents a decrease in unsheltered families as compared to 2016, where 4 families were identified.

The remaining 48 unsheltered households (96%) were adult-only households, and they included 50 persons. This is an increase of 1 household (2%) from 2016.



## Demographics

The largest portion of the 55 unsheltered persons counted in 2017 were adults between 45 and 54 years old (16 persons, 29.1%). The full list of age ranges reported can be seen in Figure 22.

72.7% of unsheltered persons were male and 23.6% identified as female. 56.4% identified their race as Black or African-American and 36.4% identified

as White. 29.1% of unsheltered persons identified their ethnicity as Hispanic.

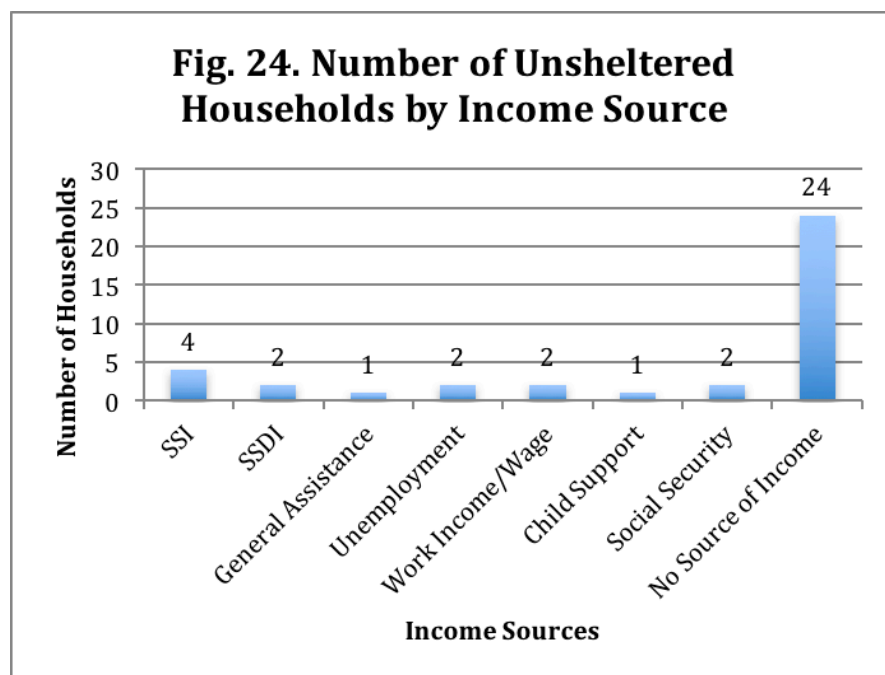
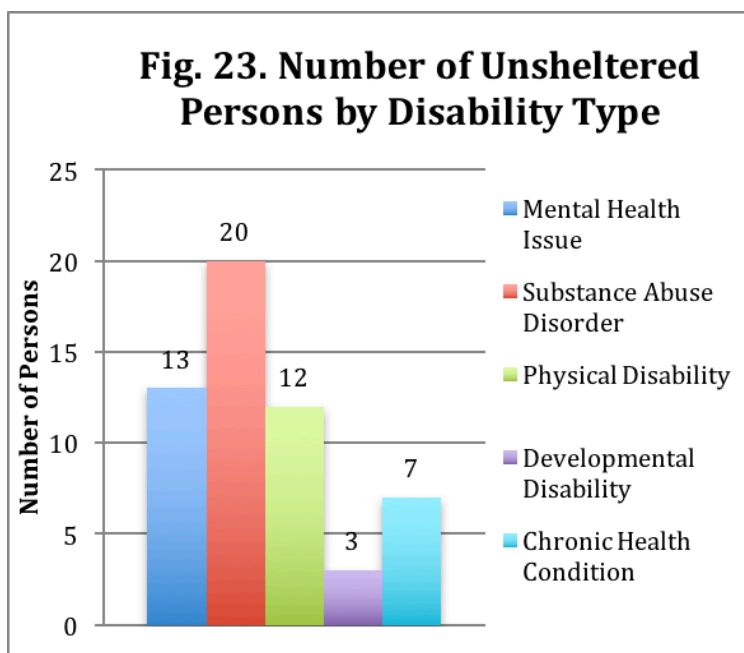
## Disabilities

Of the 55 unsheltered persons, 32 (58.2%) reported having some kind of disability. The disabilities most commonly identified were substance abuse disorders (62.5%) and mental health conditions (40.6%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the unsheltered can be seen in Figure 23.

## Subpopulations

On the night of the count, 3 unsheltered homeless households in Union County reported being victims of domestic violence. All of the domestic violence households were adult individuals.

There were no unsheltered veterans identified on the night of the count, same as 2016.



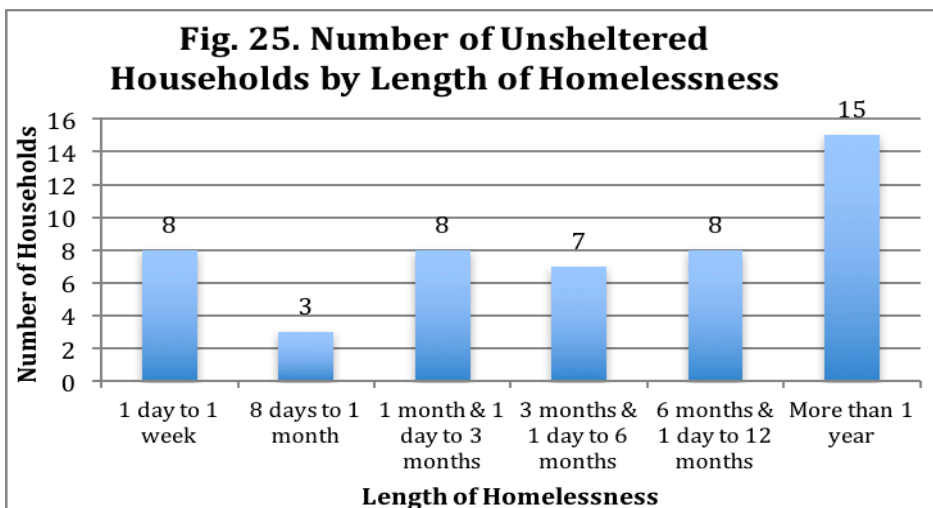
## Income and Benefits

Among all unsheltered households on the night of the count, 24 (48%) reported having no source of income. The average monthly income among unsheltered households was \$298.82. 8% of unsheltered households received SSI and 4 % each reported having earned income. Figure 24 shows all sources of income received.

18 unsheltered households (36%) reported they were not receiving any type of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. Medicaid and Food Stamps were the top reported non-cash benefit among this group, with 22% and 20% receiving each of these benefits, respectively.

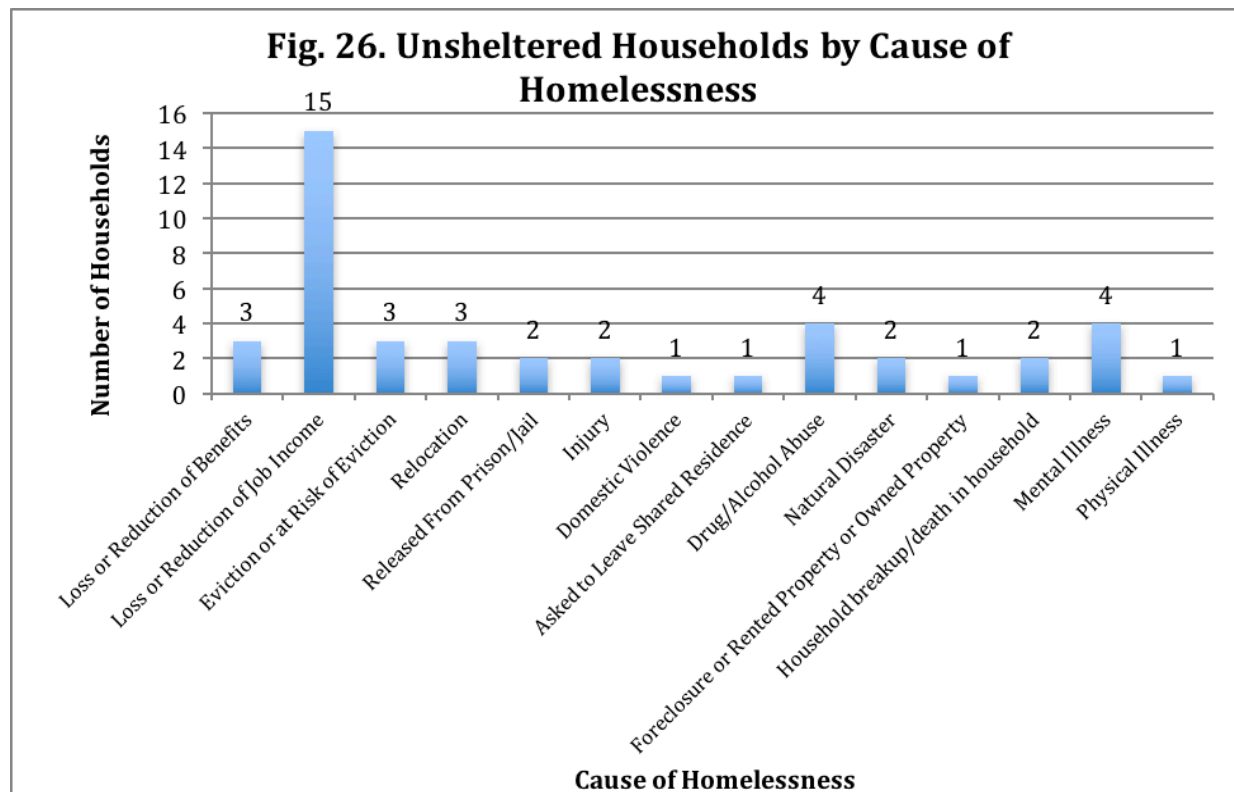
## Length of Homelessness

As shown in Figure 25, more unsheltered homeless respondents reported that their households' most recent, continuous episode of homelessness was for more than 1 year (30%) than any other. Of these households, 30% (3 households) reported their length of homelessness lasting longer than 5 years.



## Cause of Homelessness

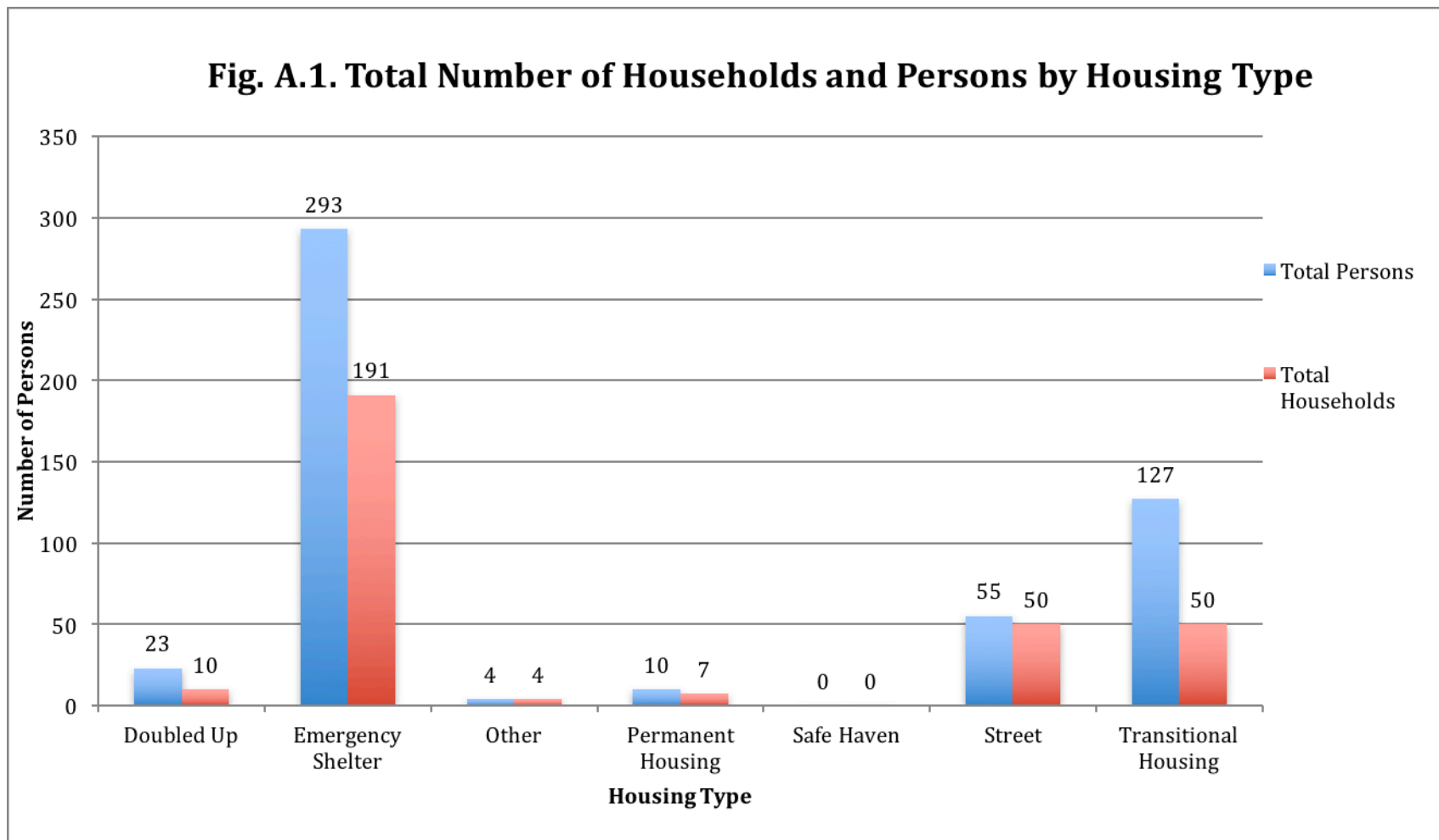
When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, the most common responses was a loss or reduction of job income, reported by 30% of unsheltered households. Figure 26 shows the full list of causes of homelessness reported by unsheltered persons.





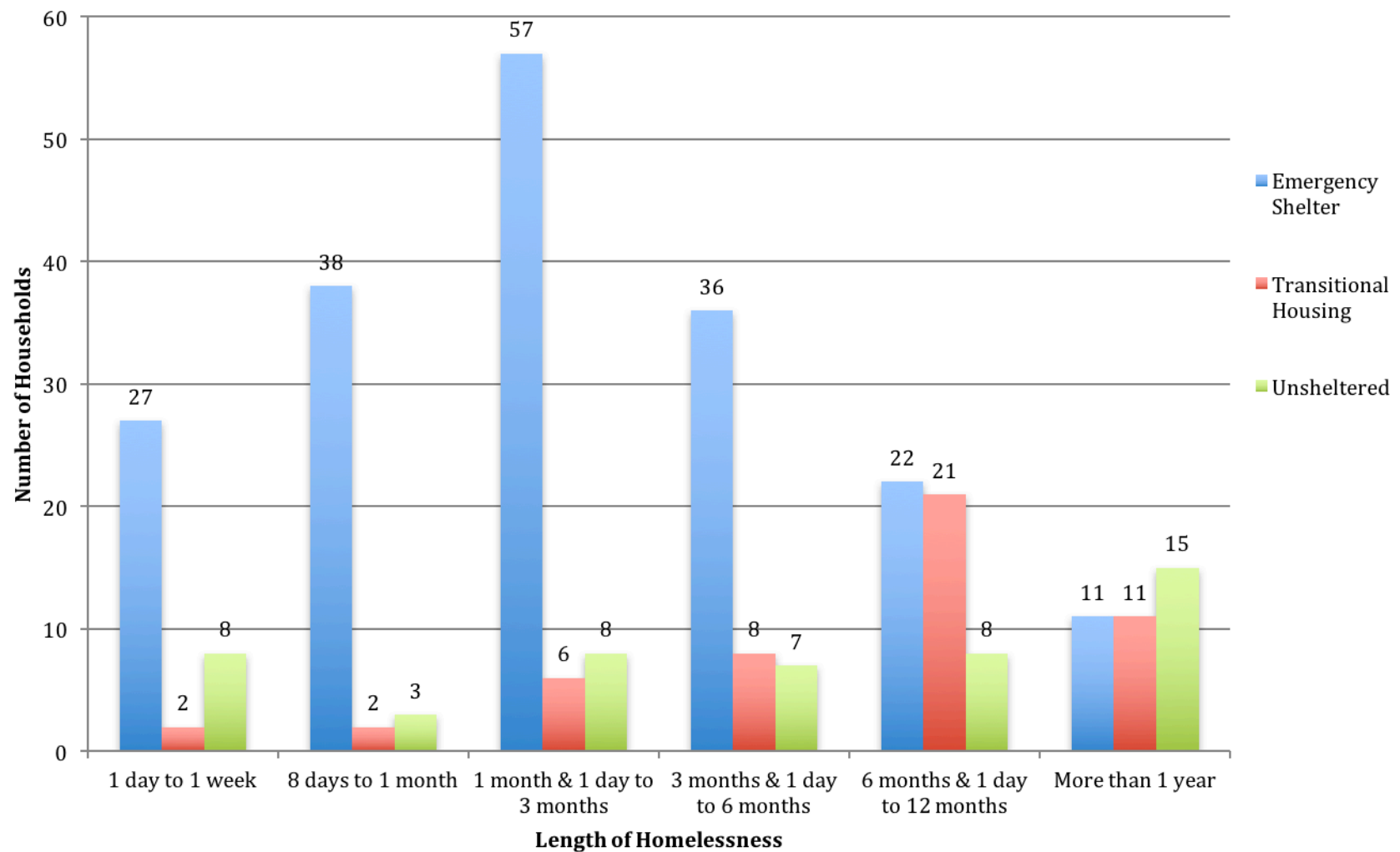
## VI. Appendix

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



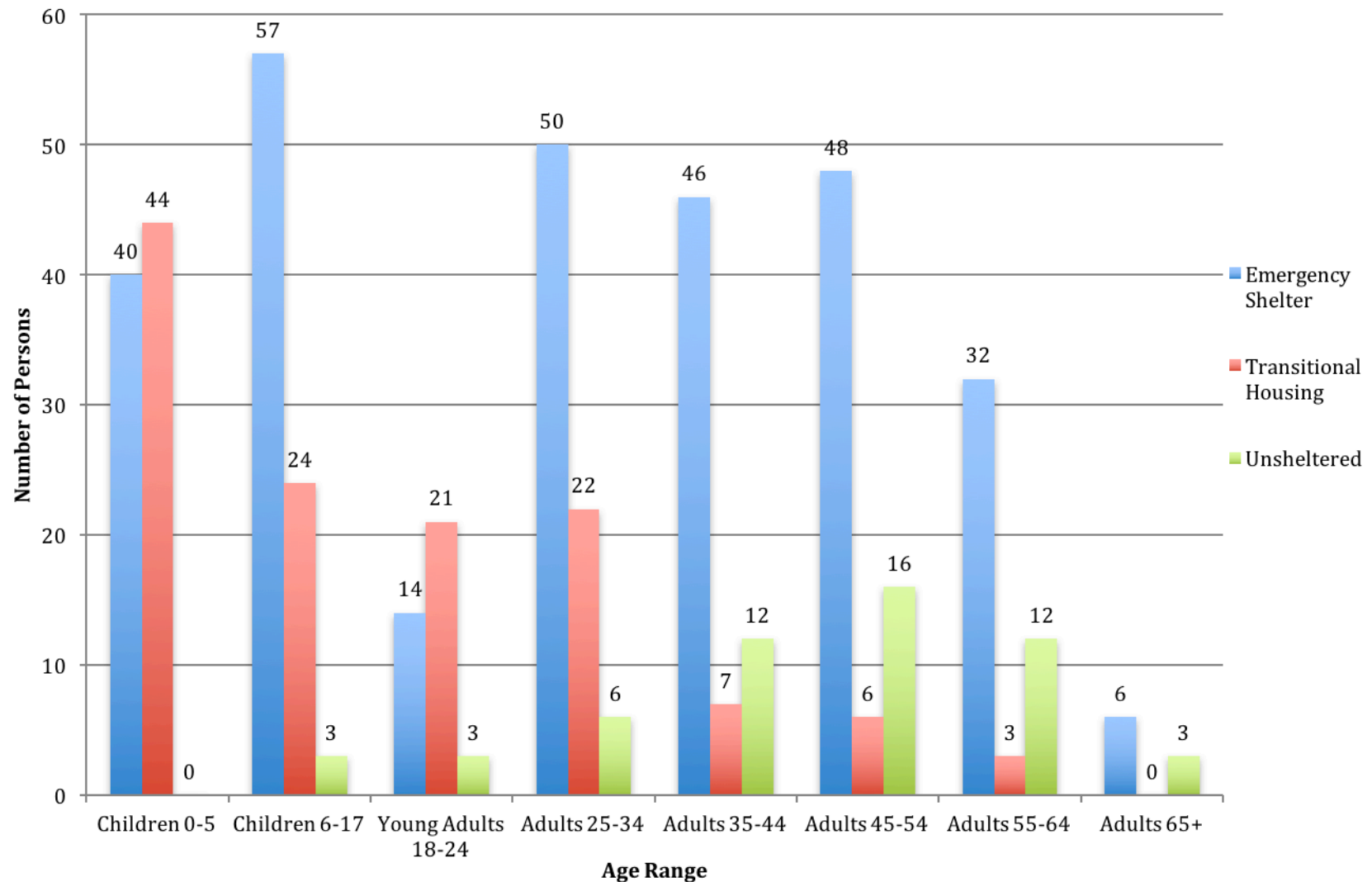
How long have you been in your current living situation?

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

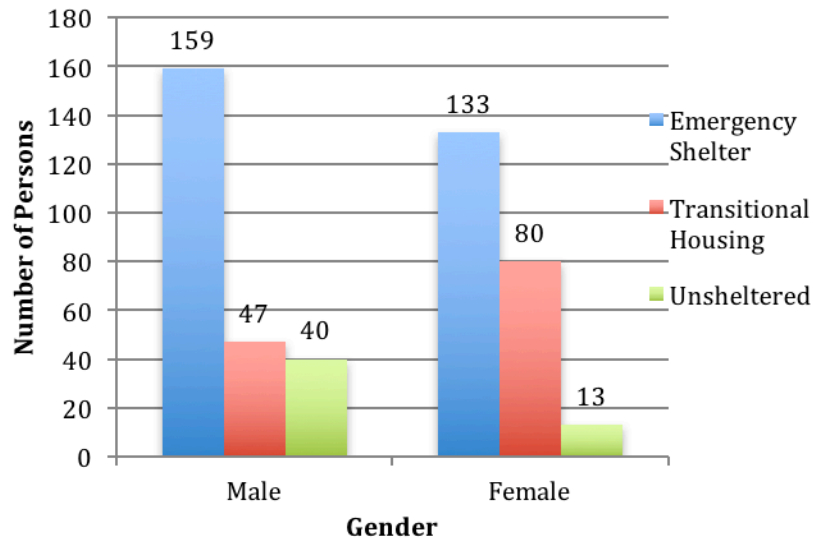


Who was homeless with you on the night of the January 24<sup>th</sup>?

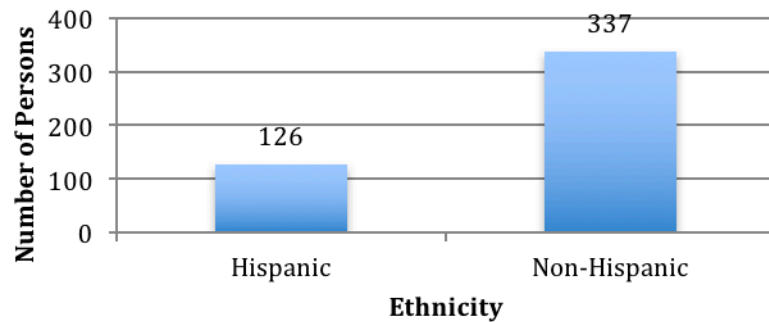
**Fig. A.3. Number of Persons by Age Range and Housing Type**



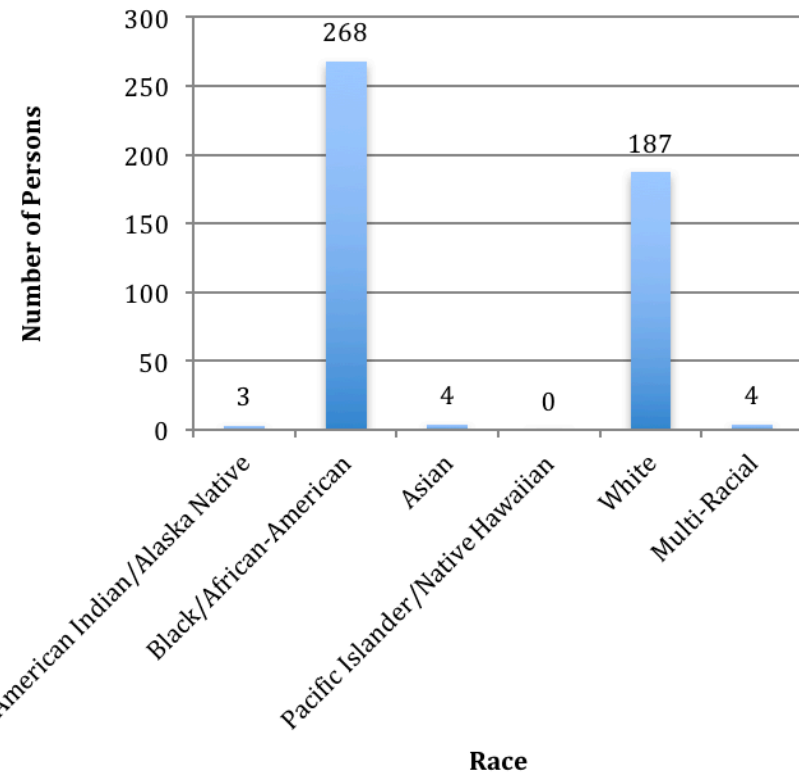
**Fig. A.4. Number of Persons by Gender and Housing Situation**



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

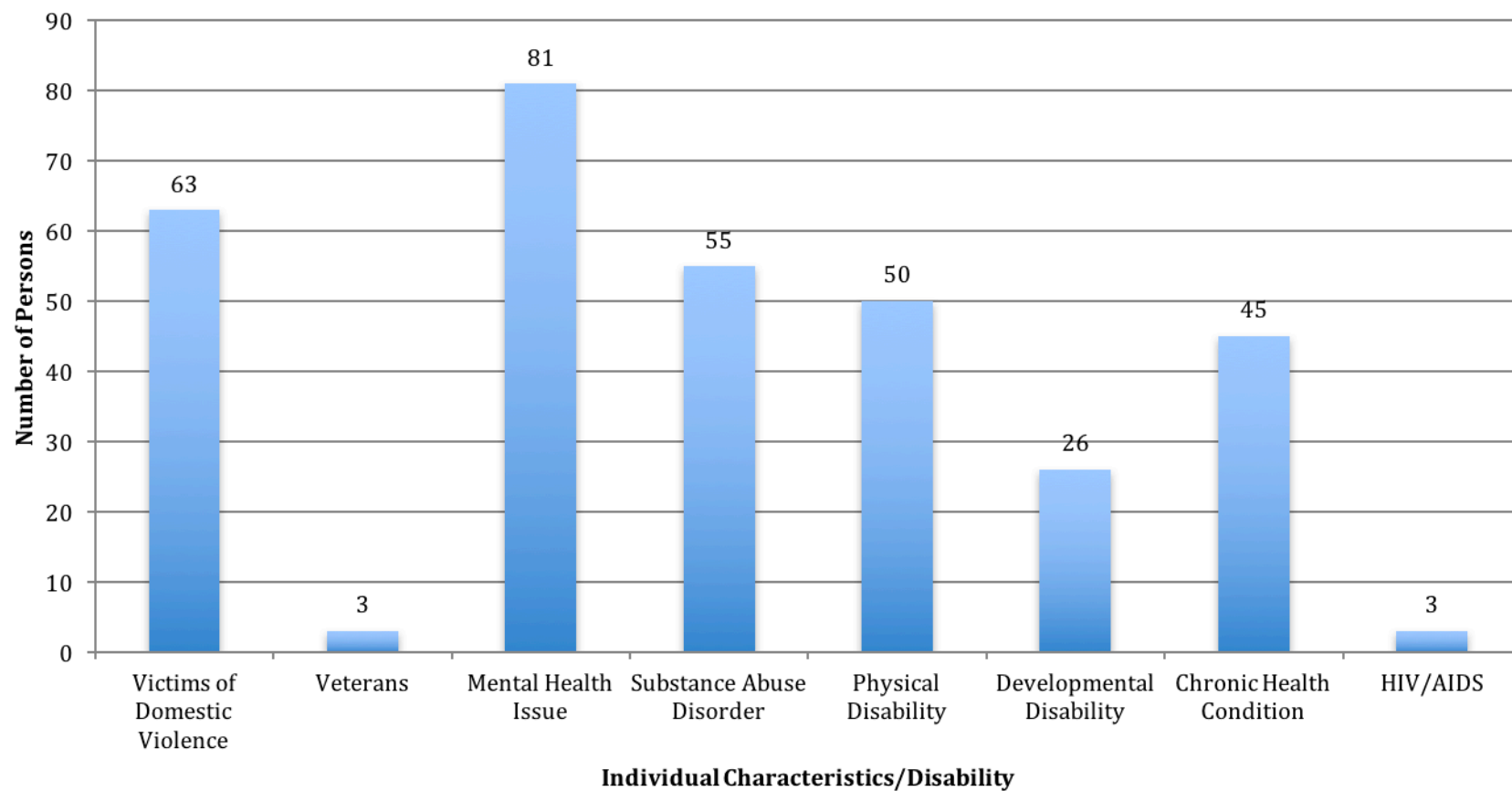


**Fig. A.5. Number of Homeless Persons by Race**



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**



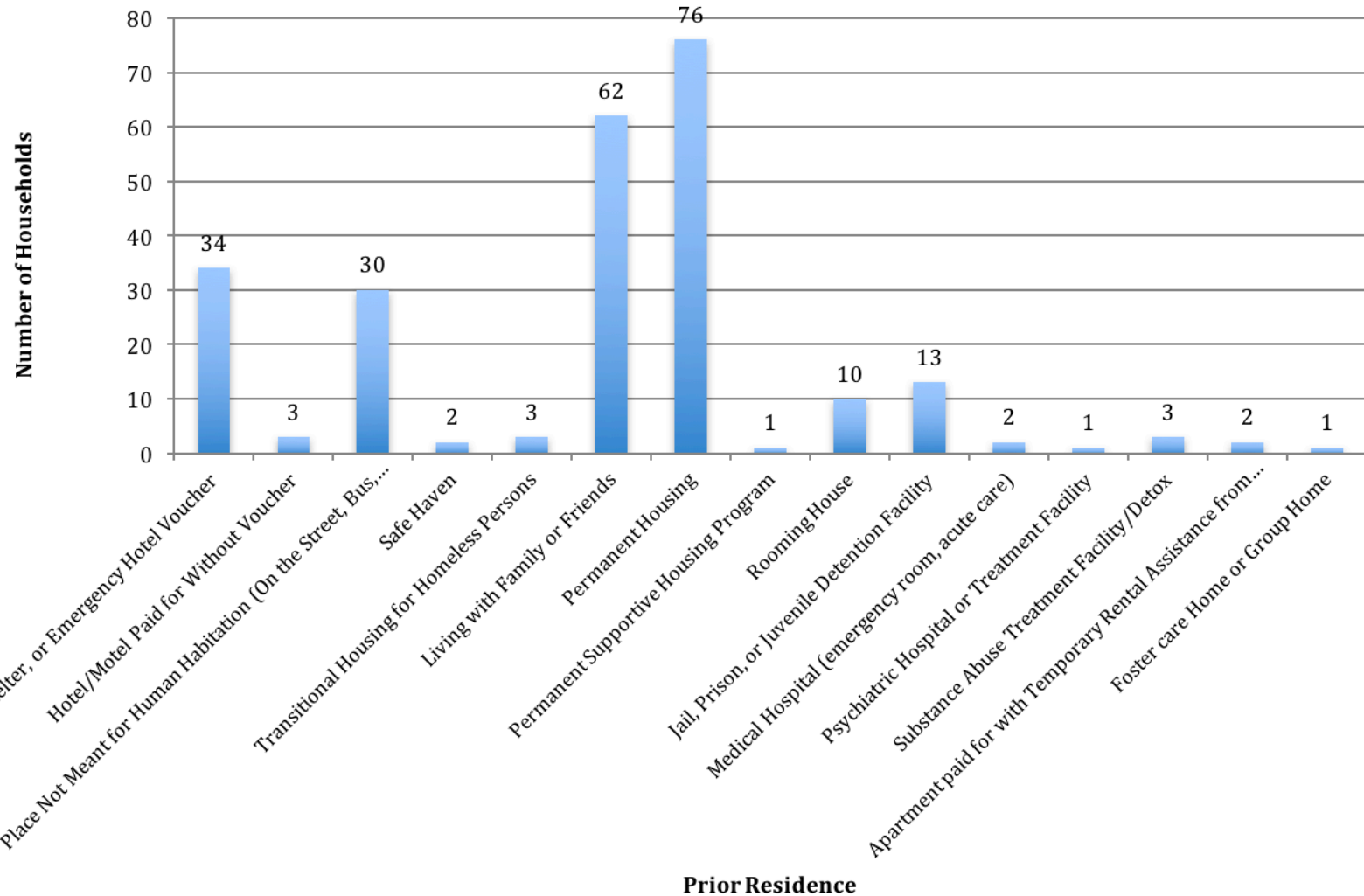


**Where was your last permanent address before becoming homeless?**

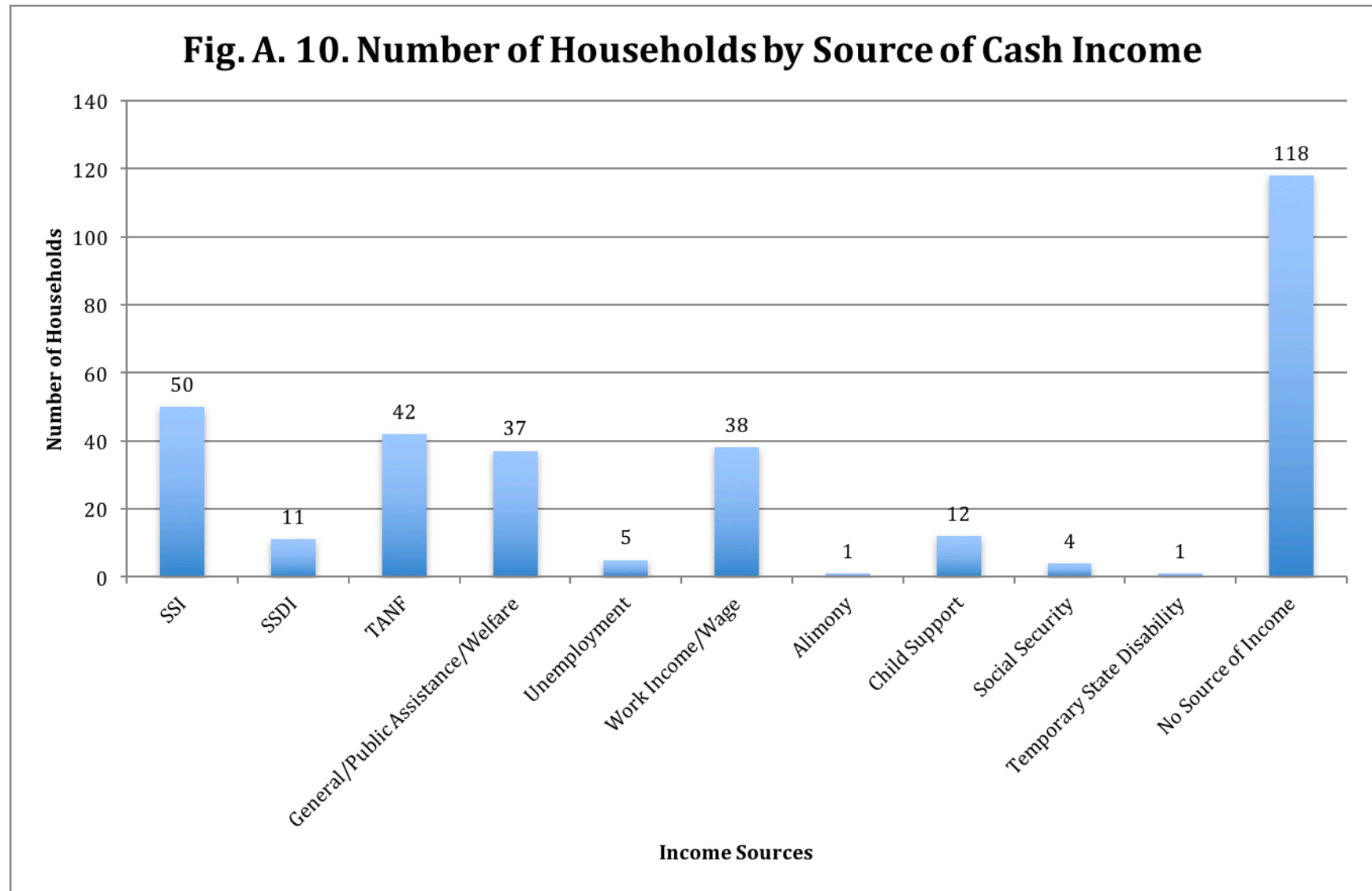
Fig. A.8. Number of Homeless Households by County, State or Country of Last Permanent Address	
Last Permanent Address – State	Number of Households
Bergen County	1
Burlington County	2
Cumberland County	1
Essex County	12
Hudson County	1
Mercer County	2
Middlesex County	7
Monmouth County	1
Ocean County	1
Somerset County	1
Sussex County	1
<b>Union County</b>	<b>223</b>
Kentucky	1
North Carolina	2
Pennsylvania	2
Denmark	1

What was your residence prior to your current living situation?

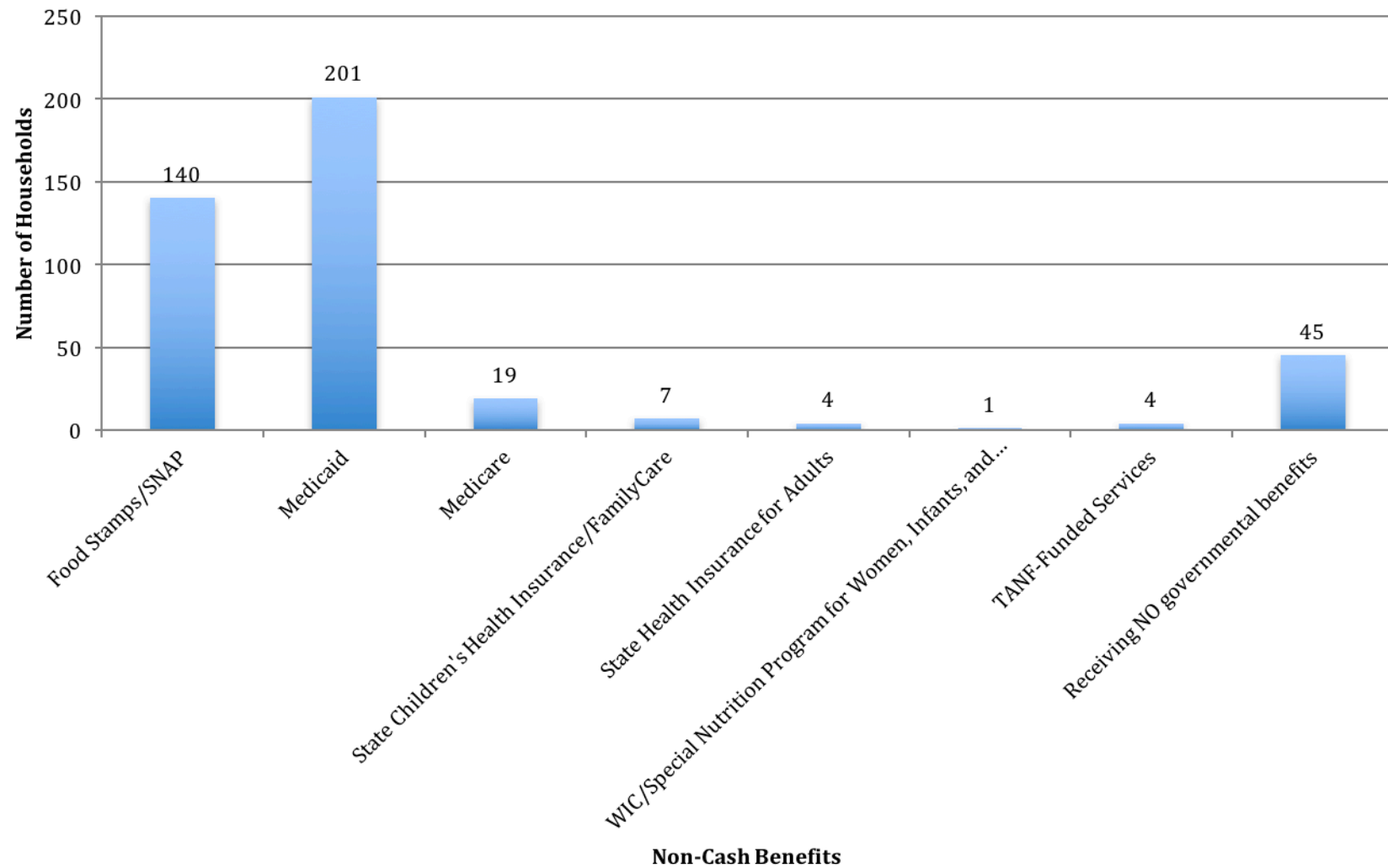
**Fig. A.9. Number of Homeless Households by Prior Residence**



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

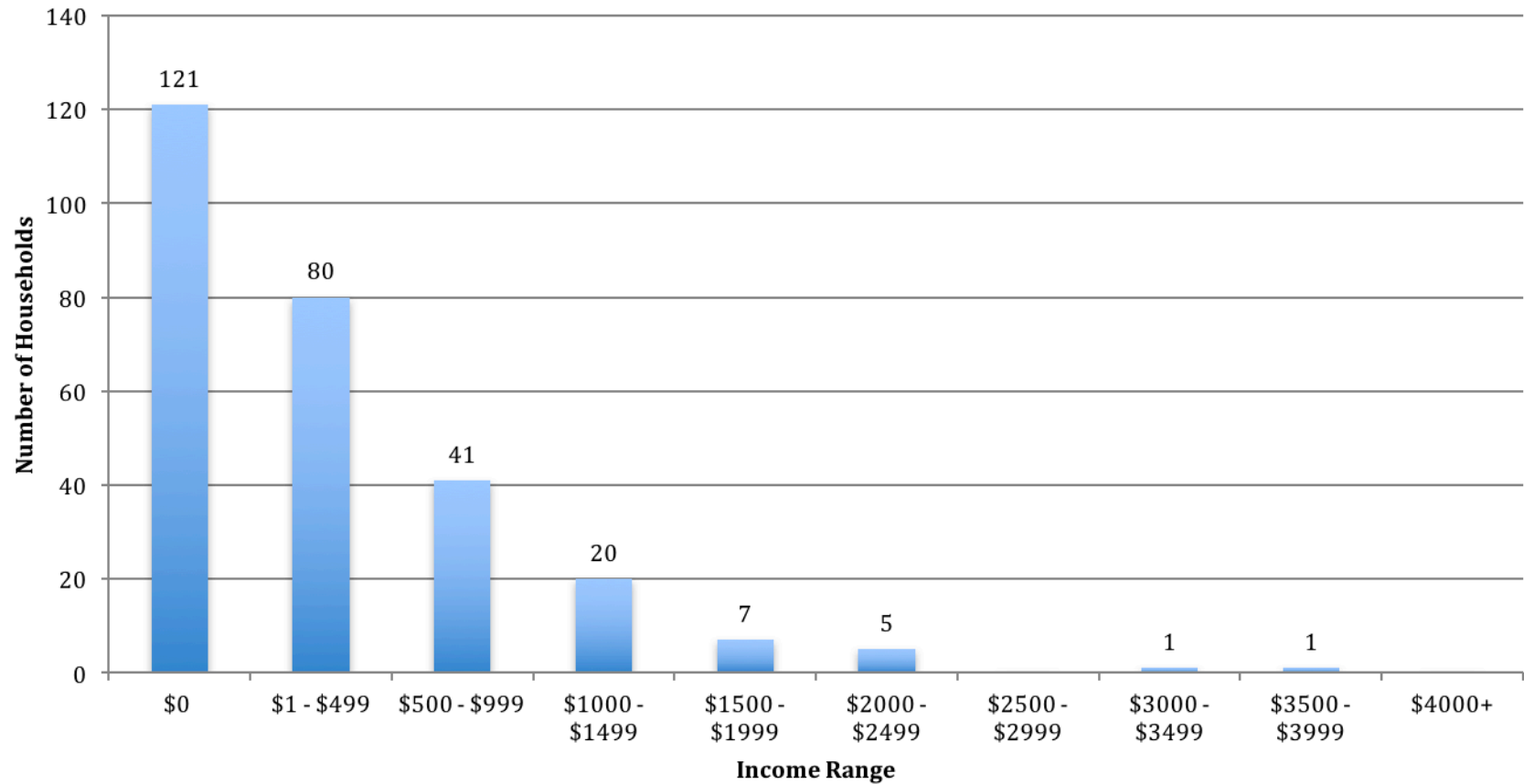


**Fig. A. 11. Number of Households by Sources of Non-Cash Benefits**



What is your monthly household income?

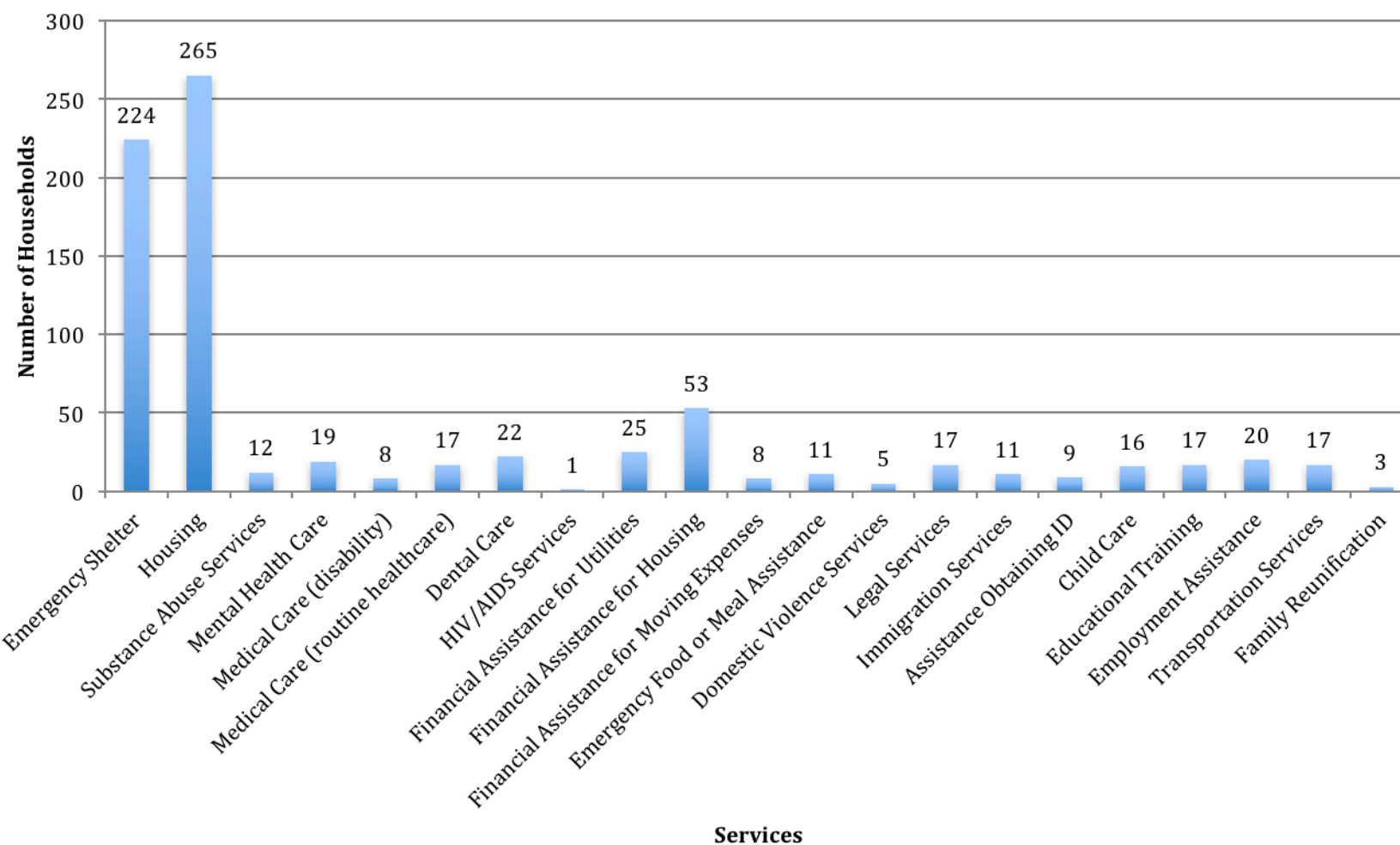
**Fig. A.12. Number of Homeless Households by Monthly Income Range**





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?

**Fig. A.14. Number of Households by Cause of Homelessness**

