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NJ
2017
Counts!

Essex 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.

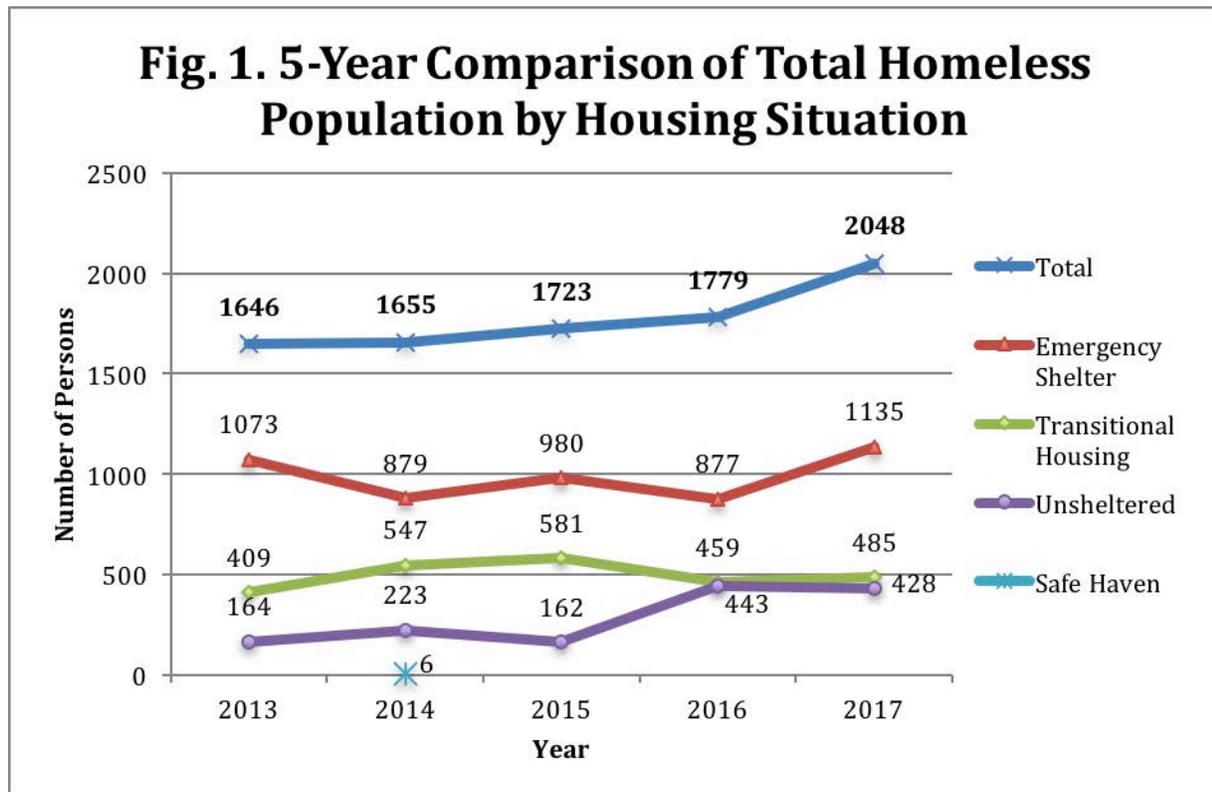
III. Findings for Total Homeless Population

Key Findings

- On the night of January 24, 2017 a total of 1,507 households, including 2,048 persons, were experiencing homelessness in Essex County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count.
- A total of 177 households, with 182 persons, were identified as chronically homeless.
- 419 households, with 428 persons were unsheltered on the night of the count.

Total Homeless Population

On the night of January 24, 2017, a total of 2,048 persons, in 1,507 households, experienced homelessness in Essex County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 269 persons (15.1%) and 158 households (11.7%) from 2016. Essex County

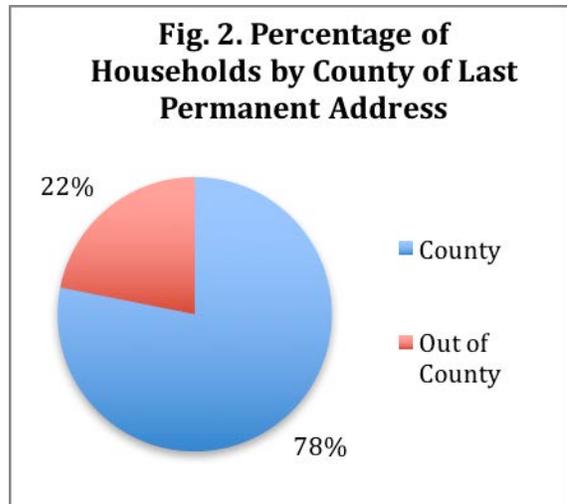


had 24% of New Jersey’s statewide homeless population in 2017.

Figure 1 shows that, in 2017, 1,135 homeless persons stayed in emergency shelters, 485 stayed in transitional housing, and 428 were living unsheltered. When compared to 2016, the number of those in emergency shelters increased by 258 persons (29.4%) and those in transitional housing increased by 26 persons (5.7%), but the number of unsheltered persons decreased by 15 persons (3.4%).

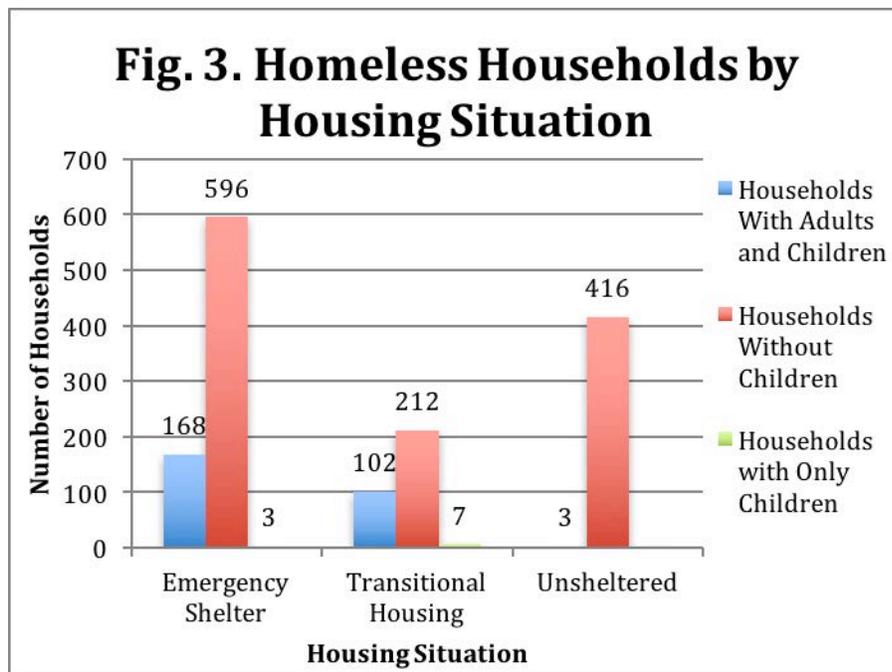
As illustrated in Figure 1, over the last 5 years, the overall the homeless population in Essex County has been growing at an average rate of 5.8% each year, with the total increase of 402 persons (24.4%) since 2013. The largest increase is seen in the number of persons who are living unsheltered (264 persons, 161%) between 2013 and 2017.

Figure 2 shows 22% of the homeless households in Essex County in 2017 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 1,507 homeless households counted in Essex County in 2017, 273 (18.1%) were families with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult. These families included 795 persons, 465 children under age 18, and 330 adults. The average family size was 3 persons. Figure 3 shows that 168 families (61.5%) were staying in emergency shelter, and 102 (37.4%) were in transitional housing

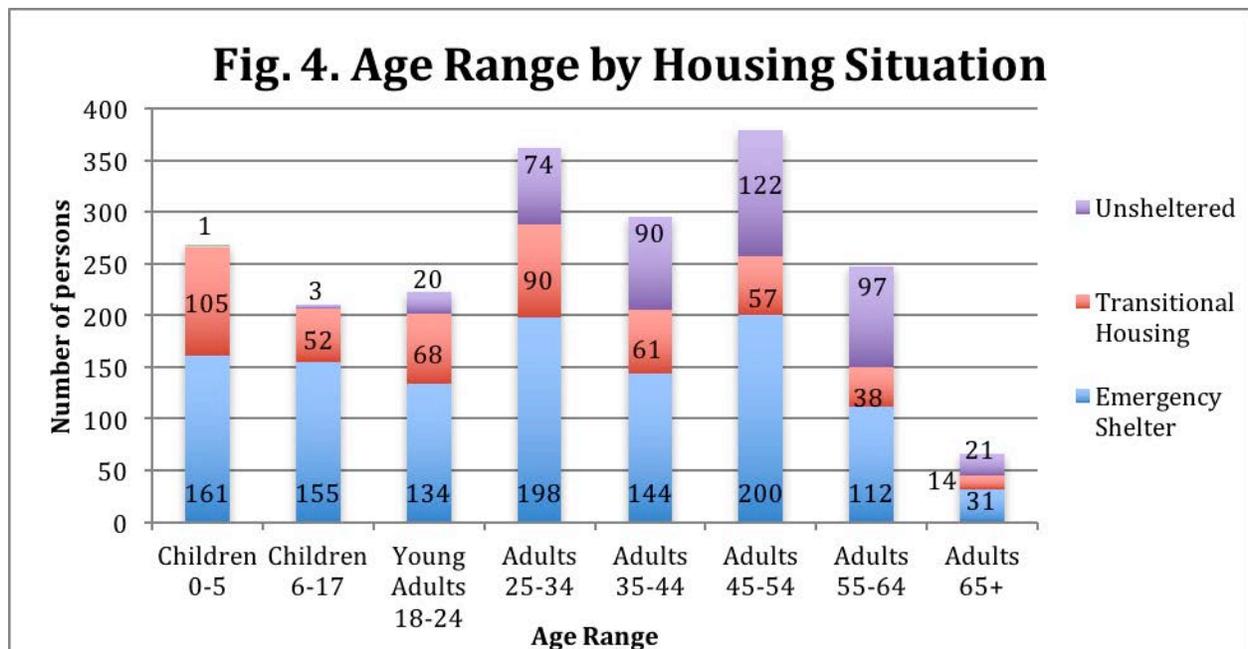
programs for the homeless. There were 3 unsheltered families identified on the night of the count, matching the number of unsheltered families counted in 2016.

81.2% (1,224) of the homeless households in Essex County were households without children under 18, and they were composed of 1,241 adults. 596 (48.7%) of these adult-only households were staying in emergency shelters, 212 (17.3%) were in transitional housing, and 416 (34%) were unsheltered. Essex County has seen the number of adult-only homeless households increase by 98 (8.7%) since 2016.

As Figure 3 indicates, there were 10 (0.7%) households, with only children under 18 years old were reported in 2017. These households were composed of 12 youth, and represented a decrease of 4 youth only households (28.6%) from 2016. The majority of unaccompanied youth (70%) were in transitional housing program.

Demographics

There were a total of 222 (10.8%) homeless adults between 18 and 24 years old, 1,349 (65.9%) adults over age 24, and 477 (23.3%) children under 18 years old experiencing homelessness on the night of the count. Figure 4 shows that 267 (55.9%) of homeless children who were under the age of 18 were between 0 and 5 years of age. The age range most represented were adults between 45 and 54 (379 persons, 18.5%).

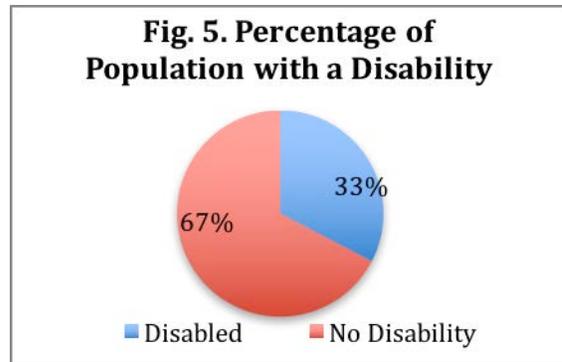


59.6% (1,220 persons) of homeless persons were male, 39.8% (816) were female, and 8 (0.4%) were transgender.

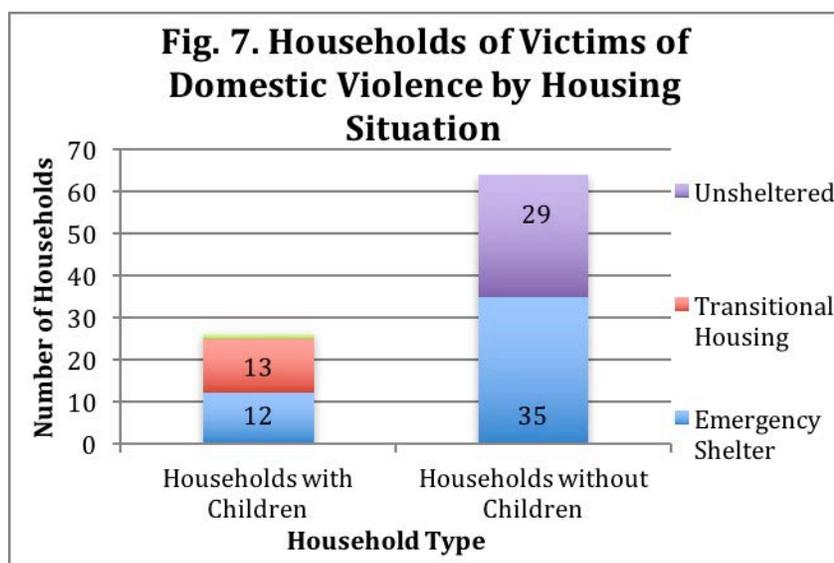
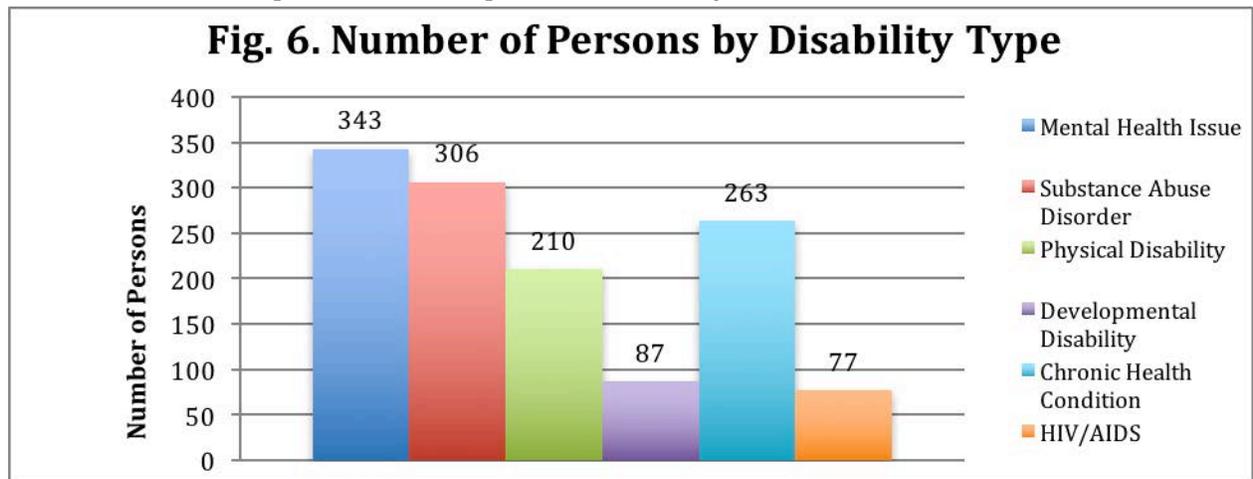
64.1% of persons identified their race as Black or African-American, making that the largest racial subgroup of homeless persons reported. The next largest subgroup self-identified as White (19.1%), followed by those identifying as American Indian/Native American (1.3%). With regard to ethnicity, 17.7% of respondents identified themselves as Hispanic.

Disabilities

Figure 5 illustrates that 32.7% (669 persons) of homeless persons reported having some type of disability. 41.4% of adults 18 or older reported some type of disability compared to 4% 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, 52% reported mental health issues making this the most prevalent disability. This group represented 21.5% of all homeless persons over the age of 18. Another 46.5% of disabled adults reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 47.4% reported a developmental disability.



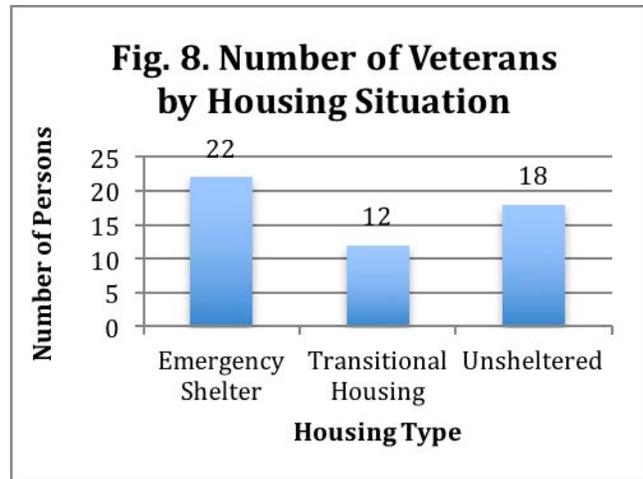
Victims of Domestic Violence

On the night of the count, in Essex County, 89 homeless households (5.9% of all households) identified as victims of domestic violence, 3 more than were counted in 2016. As seen in Figure 7, the majority (71.9%) of these households were adult-only households. 52.8% of victim households were in emergency shelter.

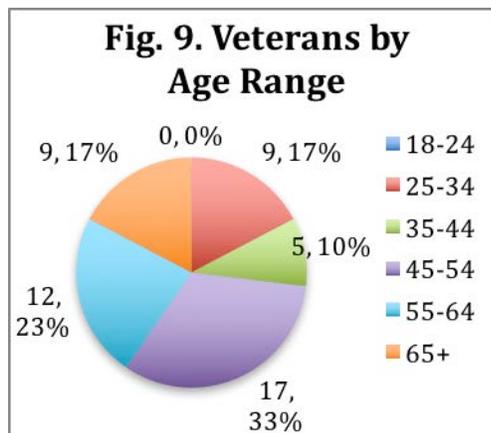
There were 29 adult-only households (32.6%) living unsheltered on the night of the count.

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.



52 homeless veteran households were counted on the night of the count, matching the number of veterans counted in 2016. 6 households were veteran families with children under 18, composed of 15 persons. The remaining 46 households were individual adult only households. Figure 8 shows that 22 veteran households (42.3%) were staying in emergency shelter on the night of the count, 12 (23.1%) were in transitional housing, and 18 (38.5%) were unsheltered.



Veterans experiencing homelessness in Essex County were predominantly male (94.2%), and the most common racial background identified among them (37 veterans, 71.2%) was Black or African American; 14 (26.9%) identified as White. Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of homeless veterans by age range.

1 veteran reported being a victim of domestic violence, and 35 of the 52 veterans (67.3%), reported having some kind of disability. The most common disabilities among these were mental health issues (71.4%) and physical disabilities (51.4%). When looking at veteran services, 5.8% of veteran households were connected to Veteran's Pension and 3.8% were connected to VA disability benefits. In addition, 23.1% of veterans reported being connected to VA Medical Benefits.

Income and Benefits

Among all homeless households on the night of the count, 42.9% had no source of income, and 9.2% reported receiving earned income from a job. The most common sources of income among households were SSI (24.1%) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (12%).

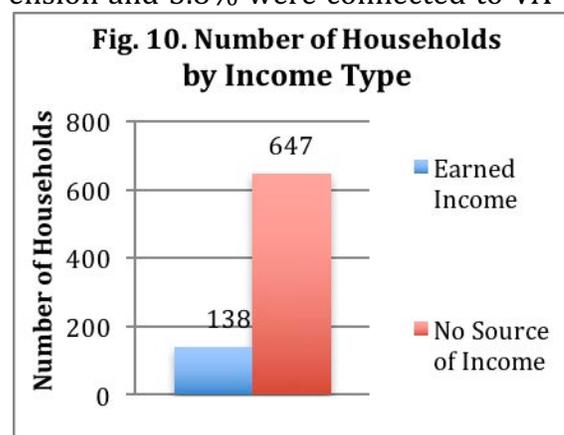


Figure 11 shows the average monthly income for all homeless households by housing situation.

Figure 11. Average Monthly Income For Households by Housing Situation			
	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Unsheltered
Average for All Households	\$396.09	\$393.21	\$491.34

20.4% of respondent households reported that they were not receiving any kind of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. Medicaid, was the top reported non-cash benefit, and was received by 49% of households. Food Stamps (SNAP), was second most reported non-cash benefit received by 38.8% of homeless households.

Length of Homelessness

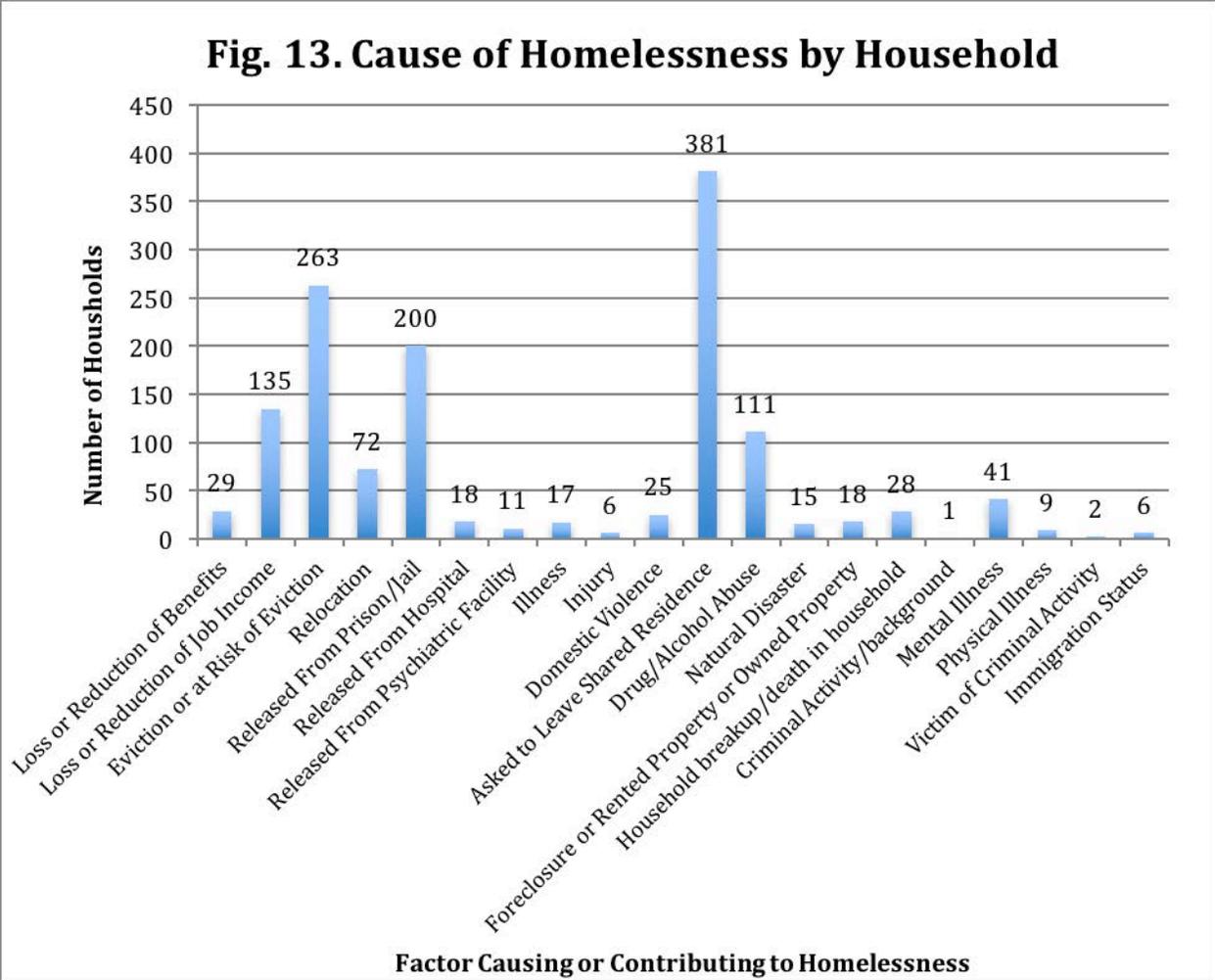
As Figure 12 shows, 354 (23.5%) of the homeless households reported that their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted for more than 1 year. Another 306 households (20.3%) said they had been homeless 6 months or longer.



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 (381 households, 25.3%) than any other cause. As Figure 13 shows, the next most common factor reported was eviction (17.5%) followed by released from jail (13.3%).

When households were asked ‘what was your residence prior to your current living situation?’ more said they were staying or living with friends or family (21.6%) than any other type of residence. Another 17.7% reported residing in permanent housing 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.

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

177 households, made up of 182 persons, were chronically homeless in Essex County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 83 households (88.3%), and 83 persons (83.8%) from 2016. The rate of chronic homelessness as a percentage of overall homelessness increased from 5.6% to 8.8% in 2017.

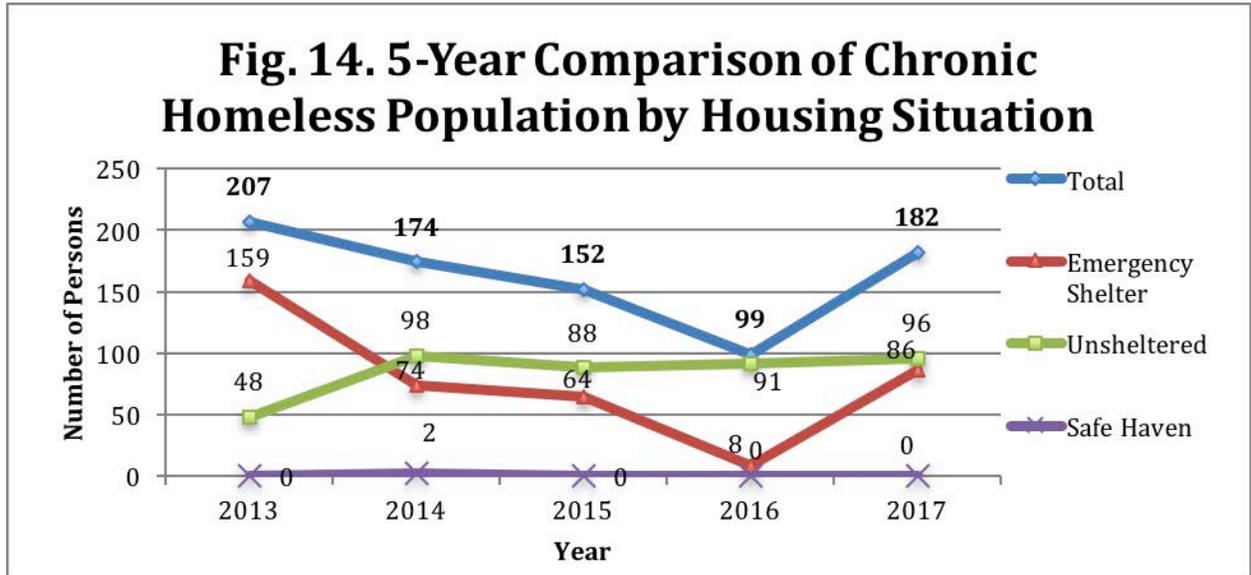
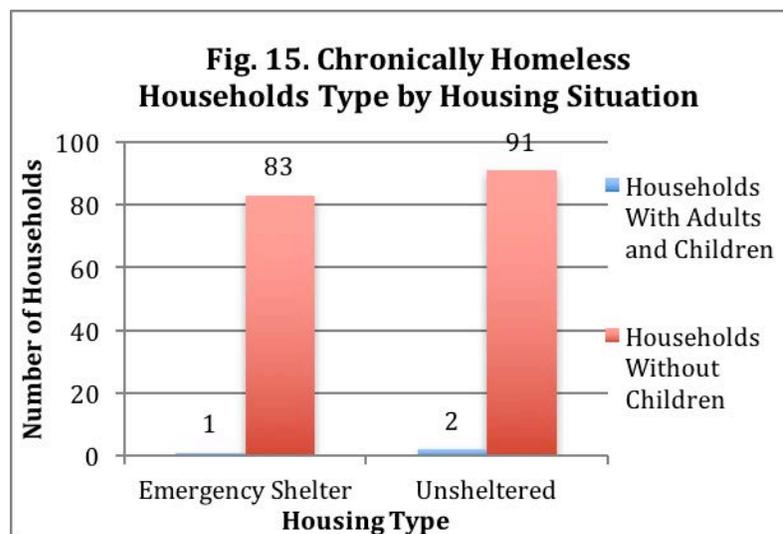


Figure 14 shows the number of chronically homeless respondents who were in emergency shelters or living unsheltered in Essex County from 2013 to 2017. Over the past five years, while the numbers have fluctuated, the total of chronically homeless persons has decreased overall by 25 persons, 12.1% since 2013. During this five-year period there was a 45.9% decrease in the sheltered chronically homeless population, but a 100% increase (48 persons) in the number of unsheltered chronically homeless since 2013.

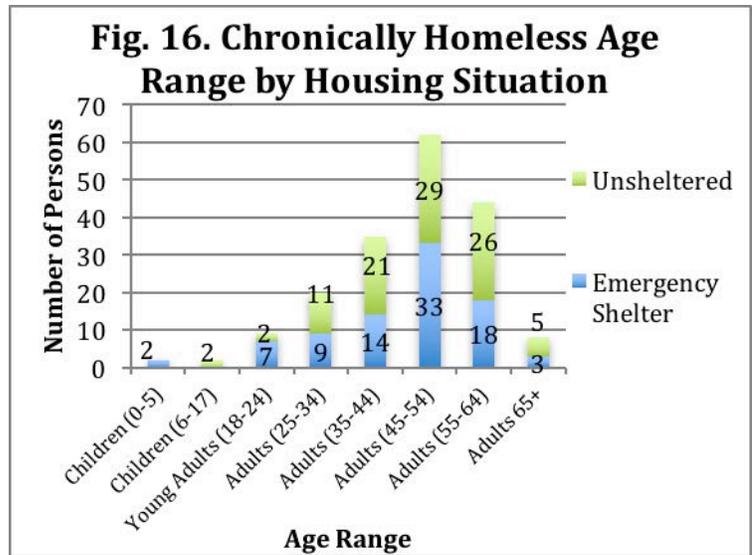
Families and Individuals

Of the 177 chronically homeless households counted in 2017, 174 were adult-only households with no children. 91 (52.3%) of these households were living unsheltered, while the other 83 (47.7%) were in emergency shelters on the night of the count. Three chronically homeless family, composed of 4 children and 3 adults were counted in 2017, an increase of 2 chronically homeless families from 2016. 2 households (66.7%) were unsheltered and 1 household was in an emergency shelter the night of the count.



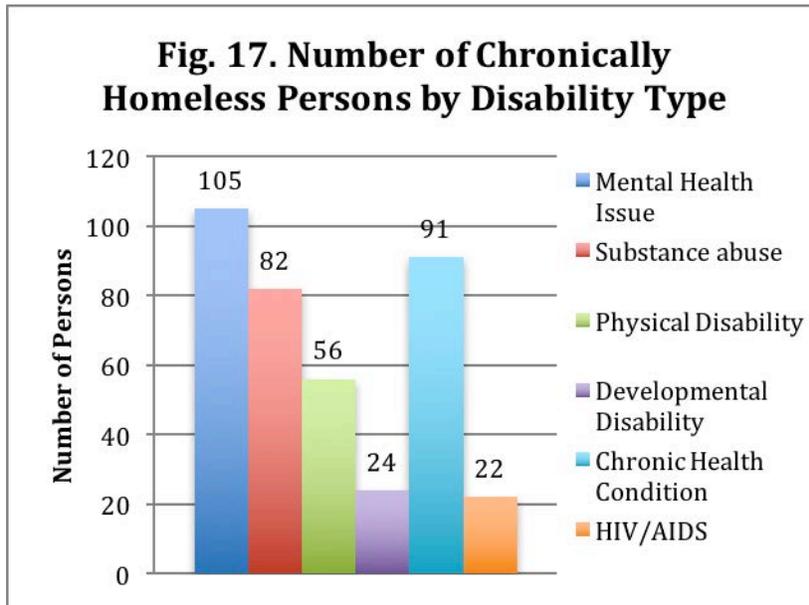
Demographics

Of the 182 total chronically homeless persons, 9 (4.9%) were between 18 and 24 years old, 4 (2.2%) were children under 18, while the remaining 169 (92.9%) were adults over the age of 24. The largest number of chronically homeless persons (62, 34.1%) in a single category fell between the ages of 45 -54.



69.2% of chronically homeless persons were male, 30.2% were female, and 0.5% were transgender.

The largest racial subgroup of chronically homeless persons reported their race as Black or African-American (70.3%), followed by those that self-identified as White (24.2%). With regard to ethnicity, 16.5% 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 mental health issues (57.7%) and chronic health conditions (50%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the chronically homeless can be seen in Figure 17.

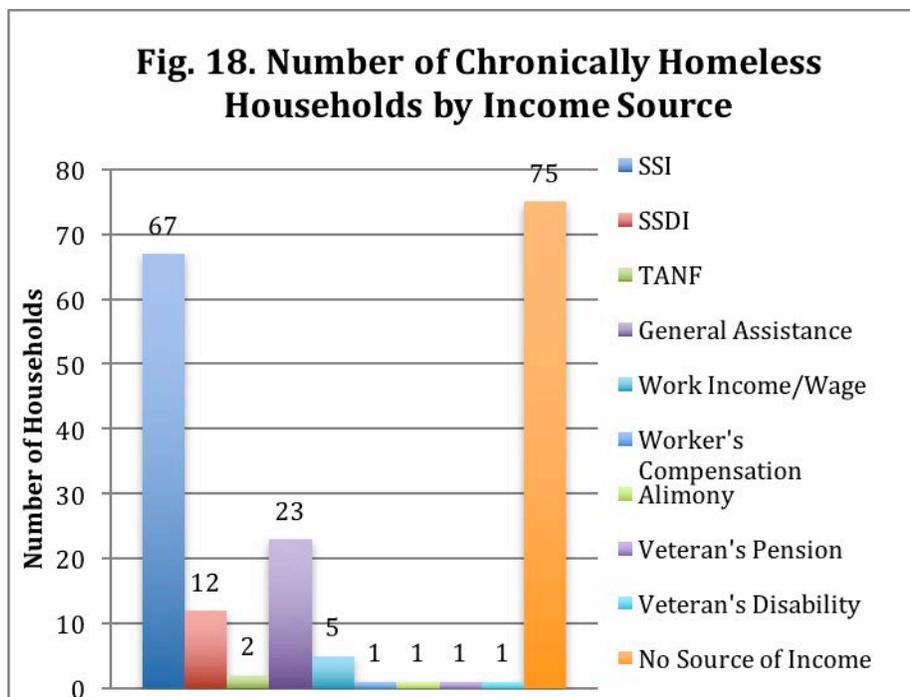
Subpopulations

On the night of the count, 18 chronically homeless households in Essex County reported being victims of domestic violence (9.9%). 13 (72.2%) of these victim households were unsheltered, and 5 households (27.8%) were staying in an emergency shelter.

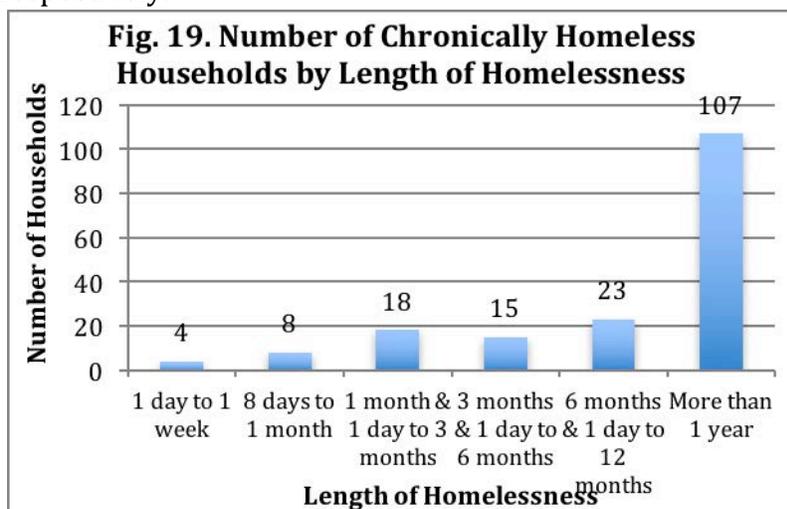
There were 9 chronically homeless veterans (5%) identified on the night of the count, 5 more than were counted in 2016.

Income and Benefits

Among all the chronically homeless households on the night of the count, 75 (42.4%), 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 SSI, which was received by 37.9%. 5 chronically homeless households (2.8%) reported having earned income from a job.



9% of 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 reported non-cash benefits among this population, received by 50.8% and 41.8% respectively.



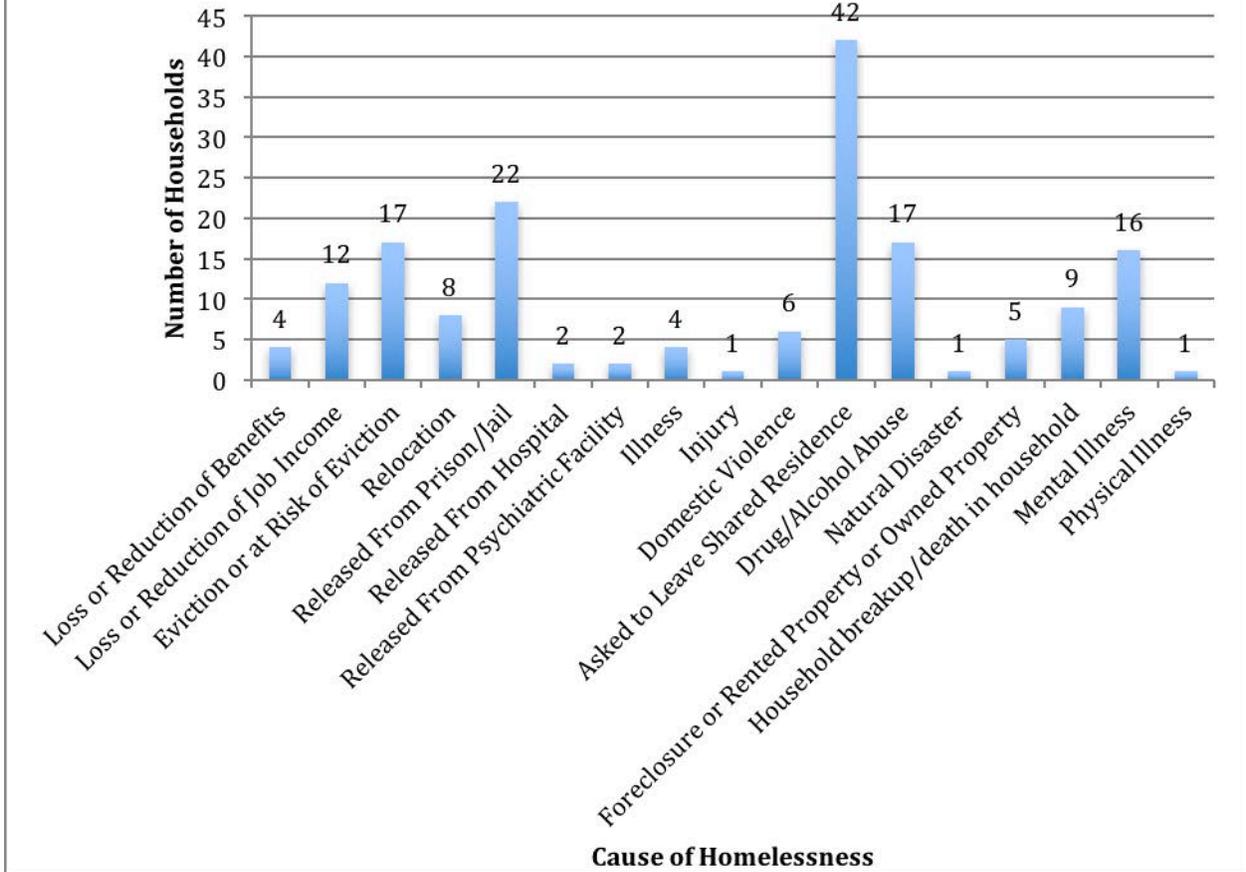
Length of Homelessness

Figure 19 shows that 107 chronically homeless households (60.5%) reported that their most recent, continuous episode of homelessness had lasted for more than 1 year. Of these 107, 40 (37.4%) reported their homelessness lasting more than 5 years.

Cause of Homelessness

When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more chronically homeless households identified being asked to leave a shared residence (23.7%) than any other factor. Figure 20 shows the full list of causes of homelessness as reported by chronically homeless households.

Fig. 20. Number of Chronically Homeless Households by Cause of 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

419 households, made up of 428 persons, were living unsheltered in Essex County, according to the 2017 Point-In-Time Count. This is an increase of 5 households (1.2%), but a decrease of 15 persons (3.4%) from 2016.

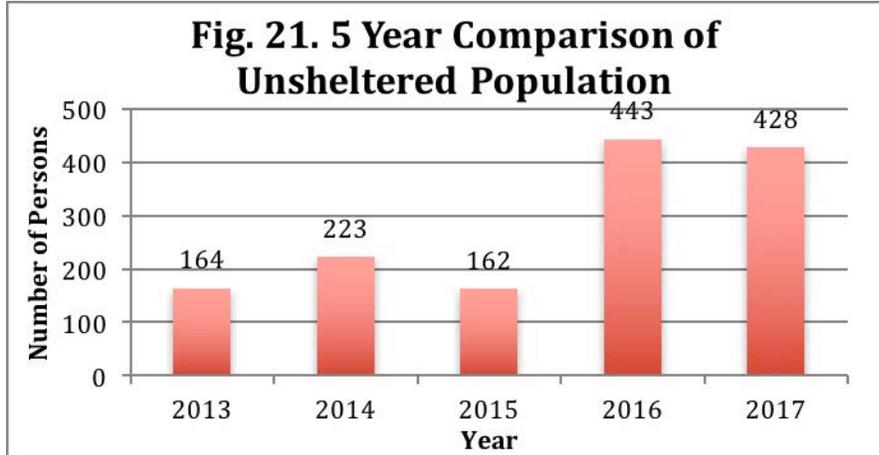


Figure 21 shows the number of unsheltered respondents from 2013 to 2017. Since 2013, the number of unsheltered homeless persons has gone up by 264 persons (161%).

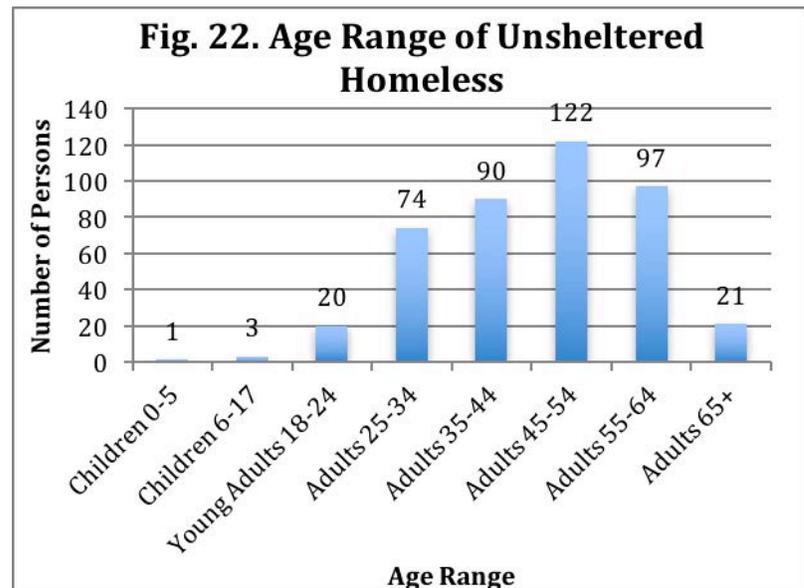
Families and Individuals

The large majority of unsheltered households were adult-only households (99.3%) made up of 421 persons. There were 3 unsheltered homeless families with children under the age of 18 consisting of 7 persons on the night of the count, and there were no youth only households counted as unsheltered.

Demographics

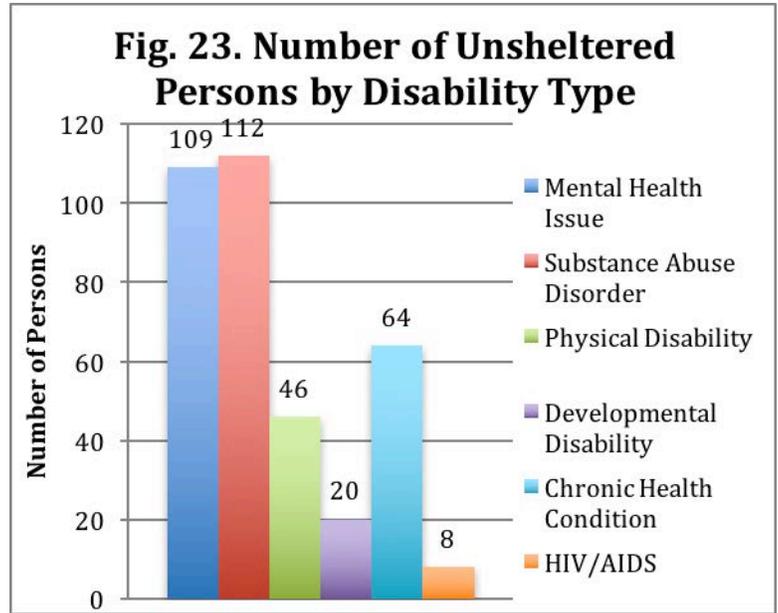
The largest portion of the 428 unsheltered persons counted in 2017, 28.5%, were between 45 and 54 years old. Figure 22 provides the full list of age ranges reported by those unsheltered on the night of the count.

329 of the 428 unsheltered persons were male (76.9%), 97 (22.7%) were female, and 1 (.2%) was transgender. 137 (32%) identified their race as Black or African-American and 66 (15.4%) identified as White. 18.5% of respondents identified as Hispanic.



Disabilities

162 of the 428 unsheltered persons (37.9%) reported having some disability. The disabilities most commonly identified were substance abuse disorders (69.1%) and mental health issues (67.3%). The complete numbers of reported disabilities among the unsheltered can be seen in Figure 23.



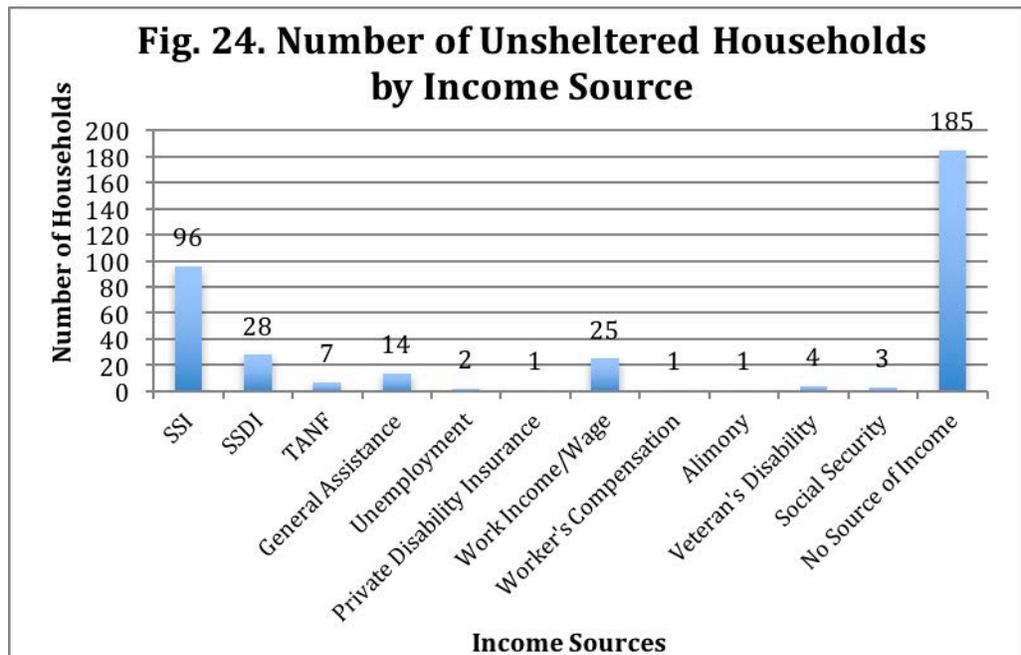
Subpopulations

On the night of the count, 30 unsheltered households in Essex County (7%) reported being victims of domestic violence.

There were also 18 unsheltered veterans identified on the night of the count (4.2%).

Income and Benefits

Among all the unsheltered households on the night of the count, 185 (44.2%) reported having no source of cash income. The average monthly income among



unsheltered households was \$491.34. 22.9% of unsheltered households reported receiving SSI, making it the most common source of income. Figure 24 shows all sources of income reported by unsheltered households.

56 unsheltered households (13.4%) reported they were not receiving any type of non-cash benefit on the night of the count. 81 households (19.3%) reported receiving Medicaid and 78 households (18.6%) reported Food Stamps (SNAP).

Length of Homelessness

As shown in Figure 25, 58% of unsheltered homeless households reported that their most recent continuous episode of homelessness had lasted more than 1 year, with

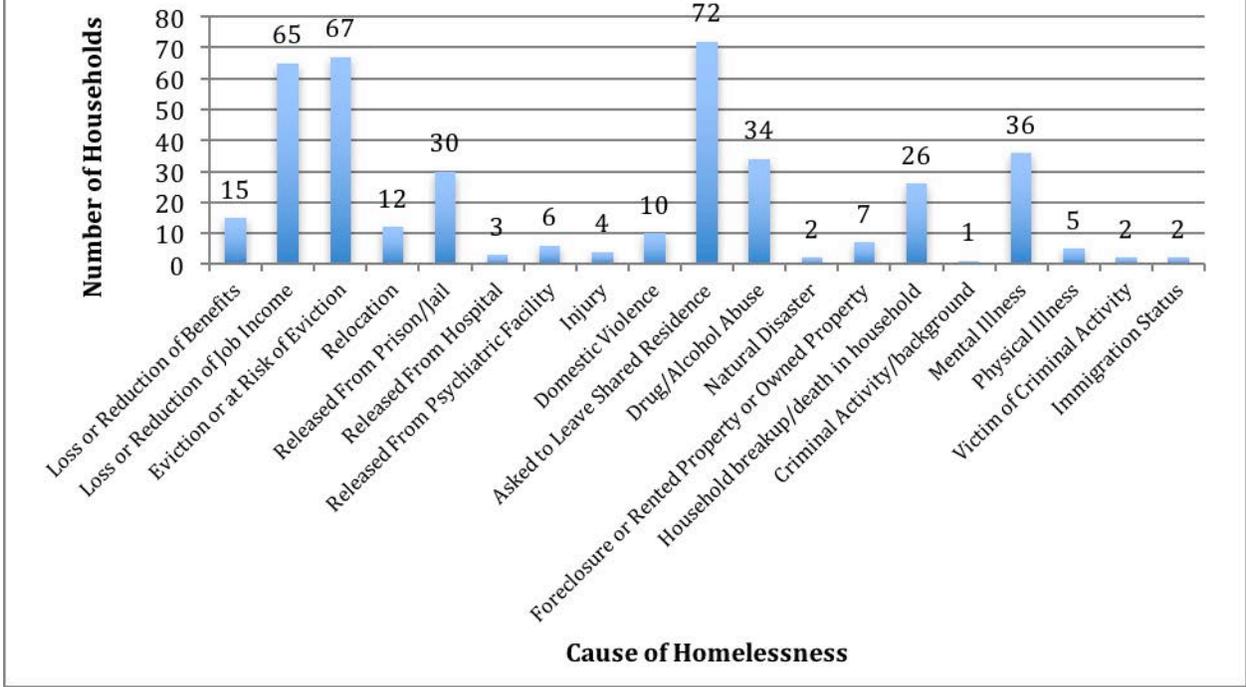
87 of those (35.8%) reported their homelessness as lasting more than 5 years.



Cause of Homelessness

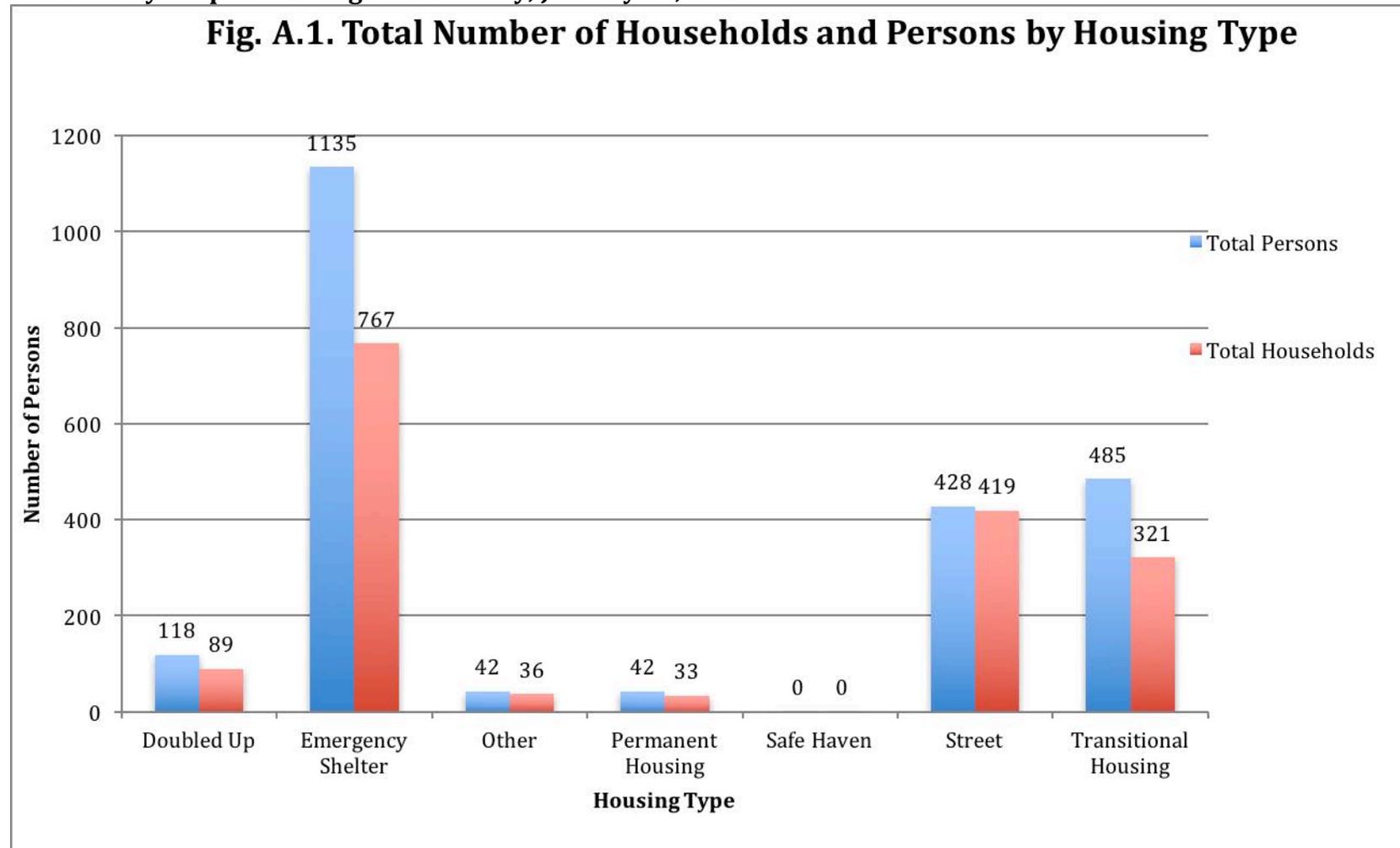
When asked to share the primary factor that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more unsheltered households identified being asked to leave a shared residence (17.2%) than any other factor. As Figure 26 shows, other common factors included eviction (16%), and a loss or reduction of job income (15.5%).

Fig. 26. Unsheltered Households by Cause of Homelessness



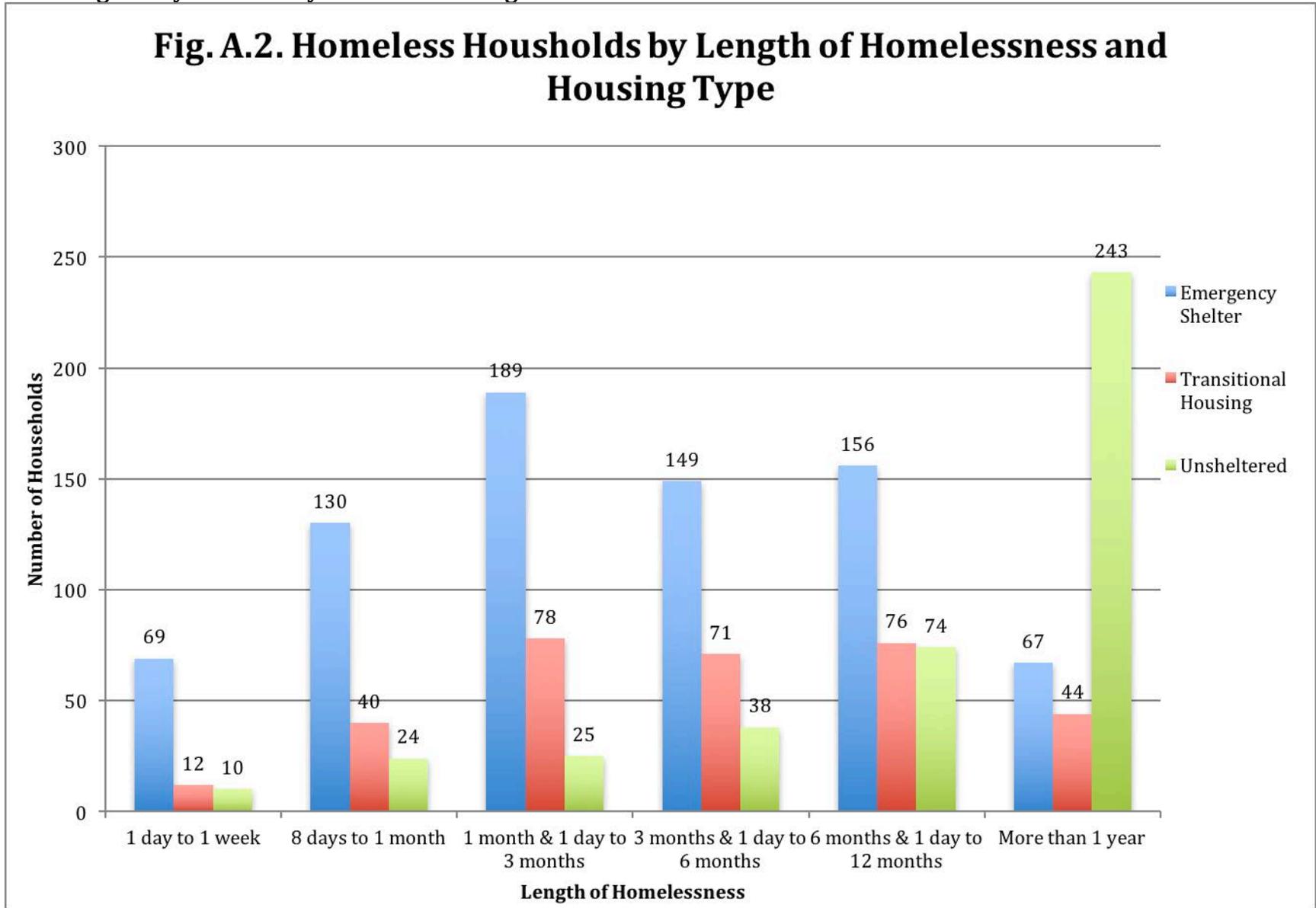
VI. Appendix

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

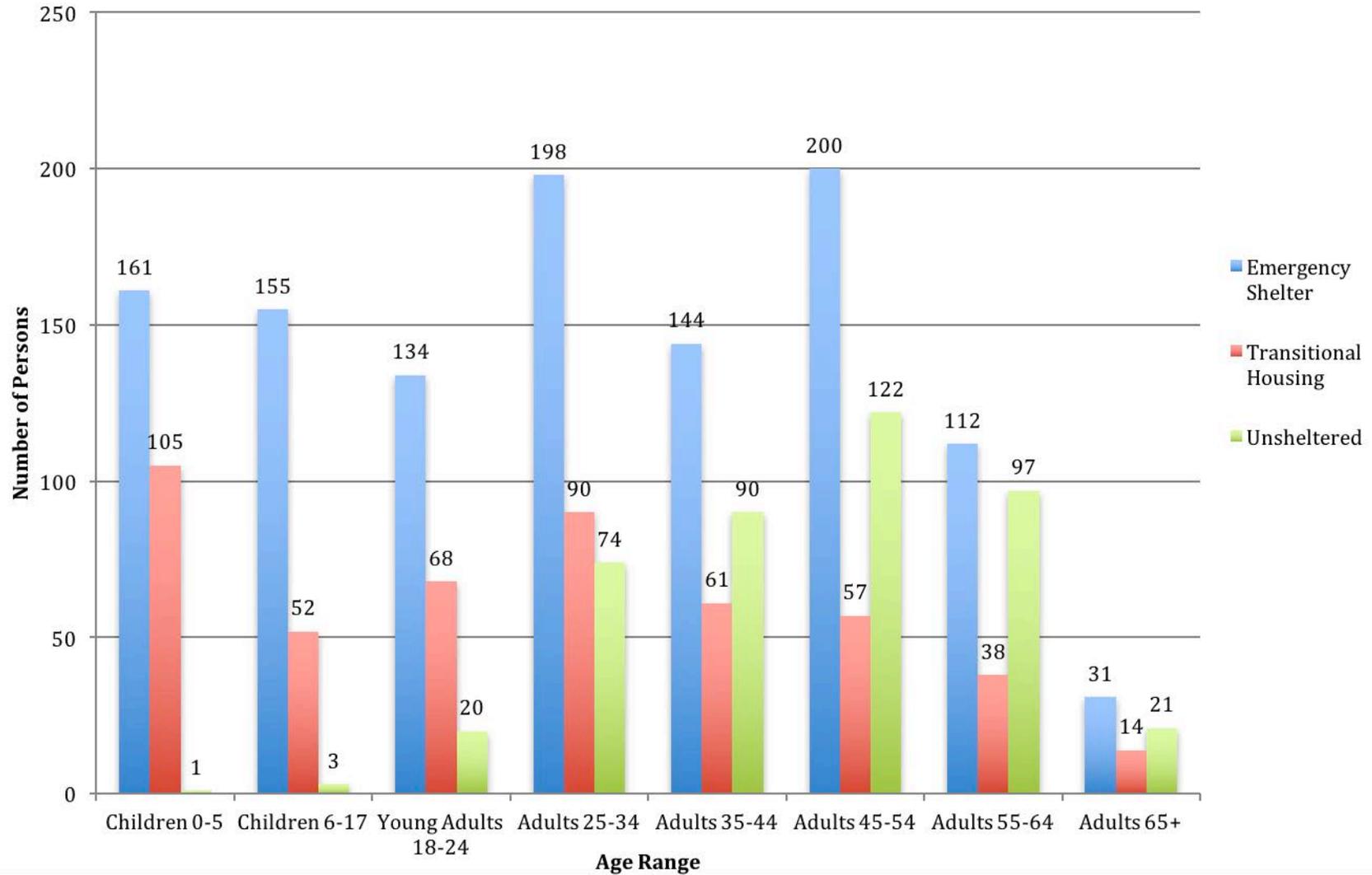


Fig. A.4. Number of Persons by Gender and Housing Situation

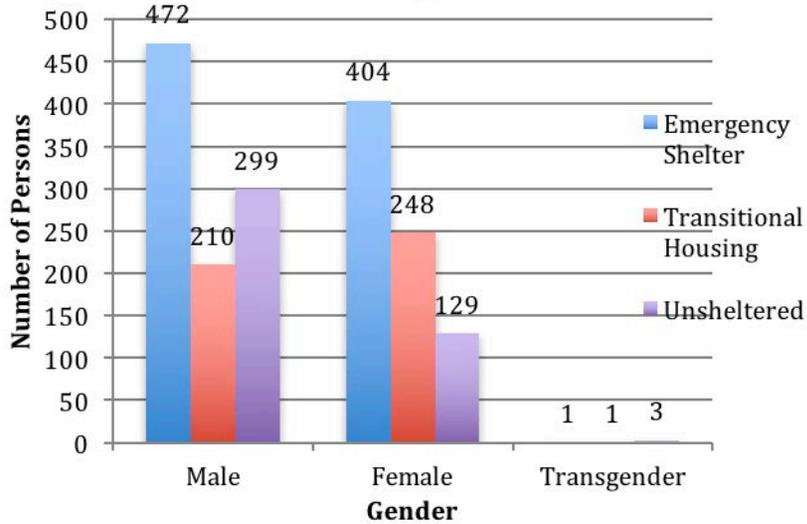


Fig. A.5. Number of Homeless Persons by Race

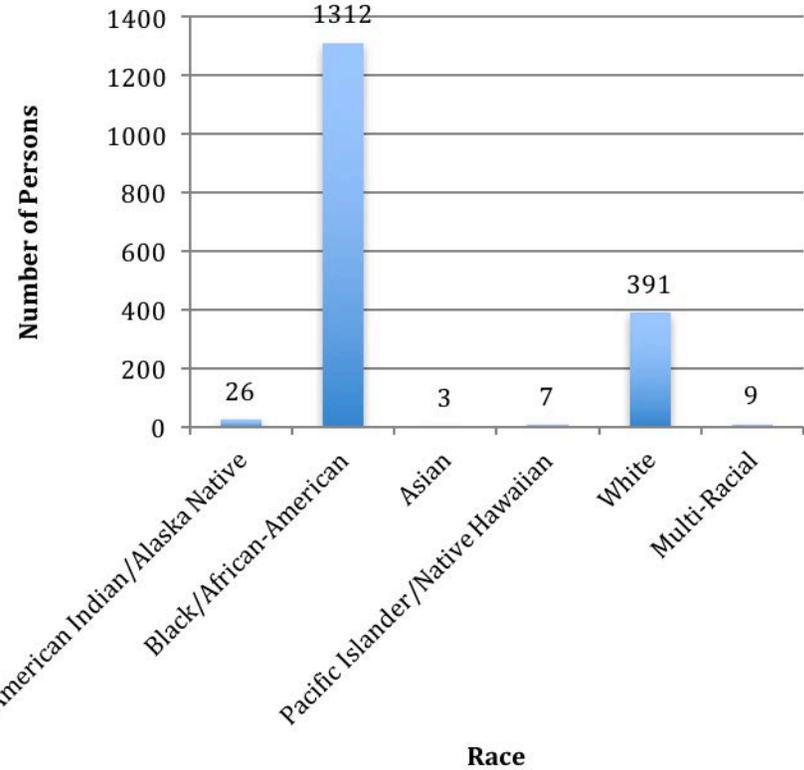
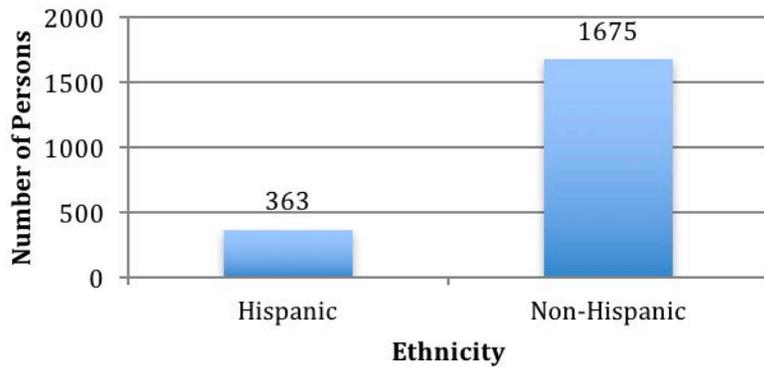
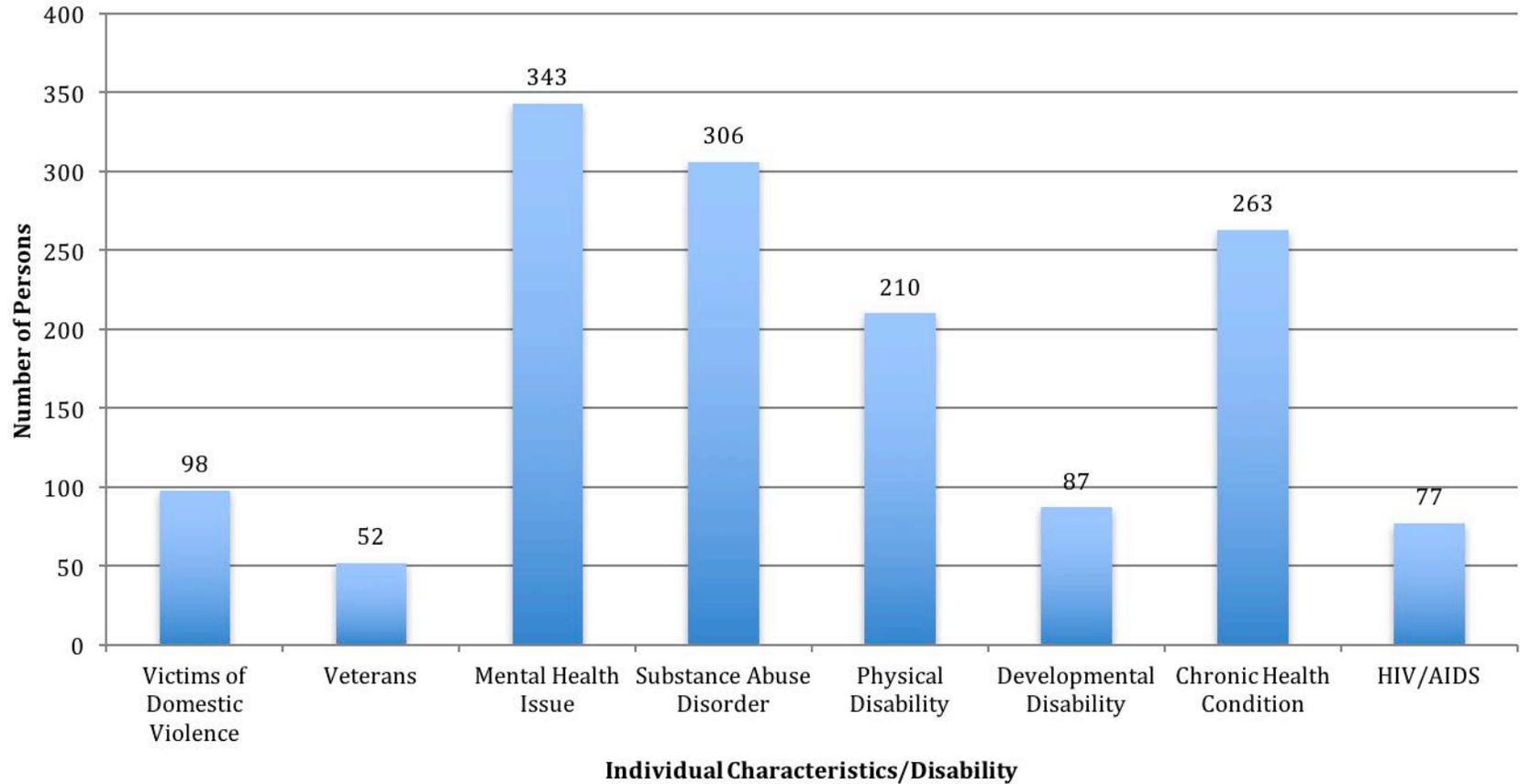


Fig. A.6. Number of Homeless Persons by Ethnicity



Household Characteristics – check all that apply to each person

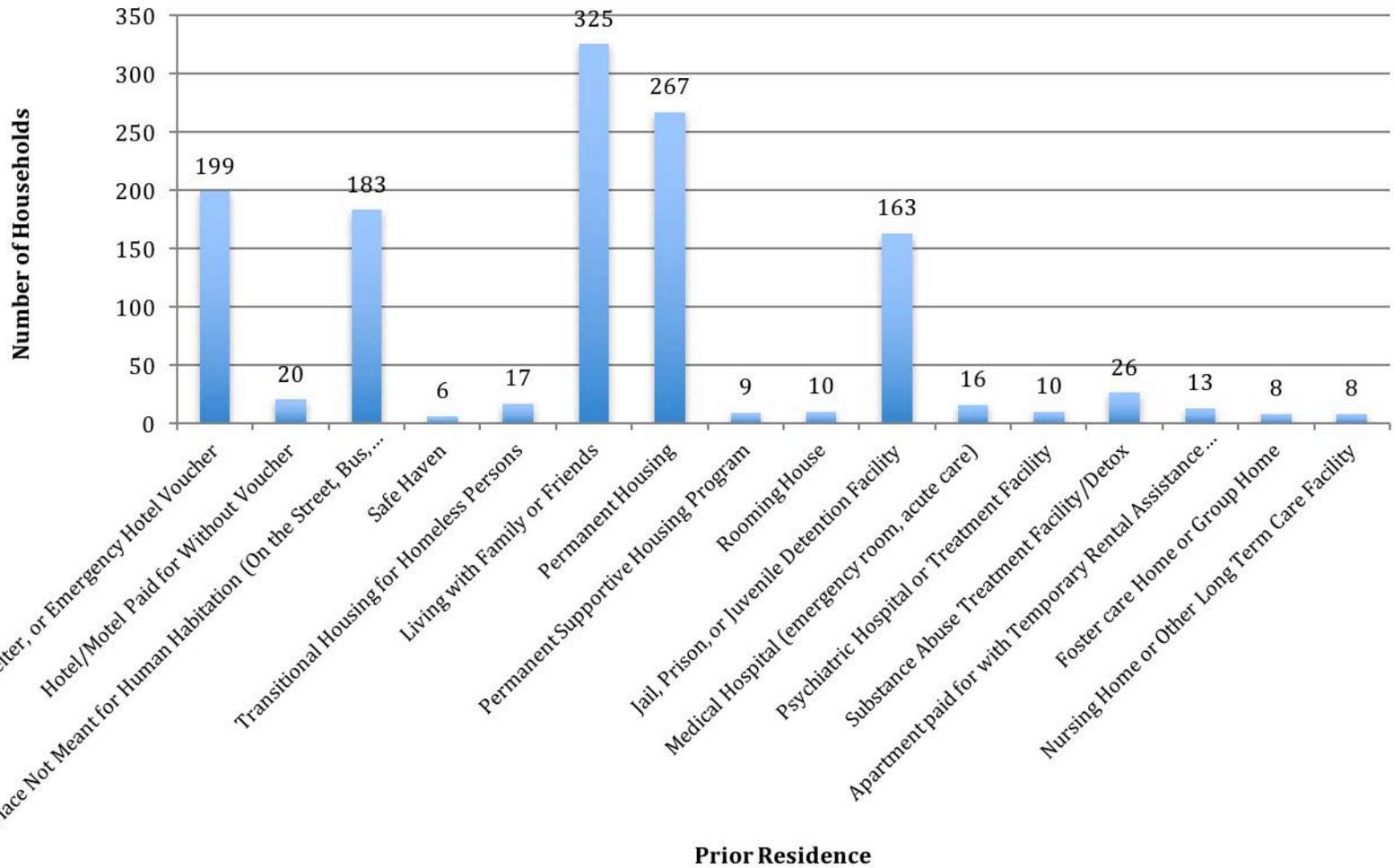
Fig. A.7. Number of Homeless Persons by Victims of Domestic Violence, Veteran Status, and Disability



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 – State	Number of Households
Atlantic County	2
Bergen County	6
Burlington County	4
Camden County	2
Cumberland County	3
Essex County	998
Gloucester County	1
Hudson County	54
Hunterdon County	3
Mercer County	7
Middlesex County	18
Monmouth County	6
Morris County	7
Ocean County	5
Passaic County	25
Salem County	1
Somerset County	3
Sussex County	1
Union County	71
Warren County	1
Connecticut	4
Florida	3
Georgia	4
Massachusetts	2
Nevada	1
New York	17
North Carolina	7
Ohio	2
Pennsylvania	14
South Carolina	2
Texas	2
Virginia	2
Puerto Rico	1

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



What was your residence prior to your current living situation?

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

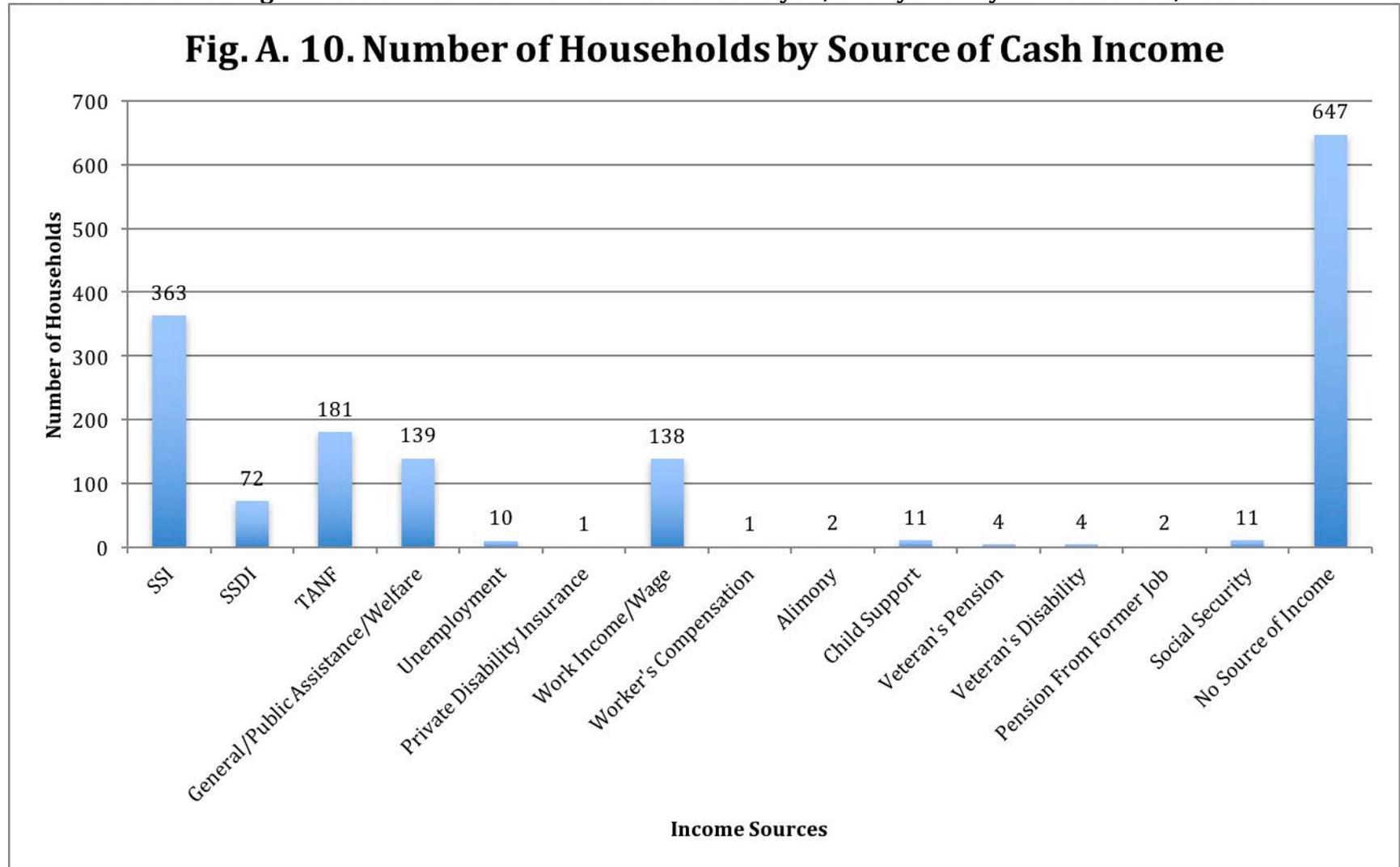
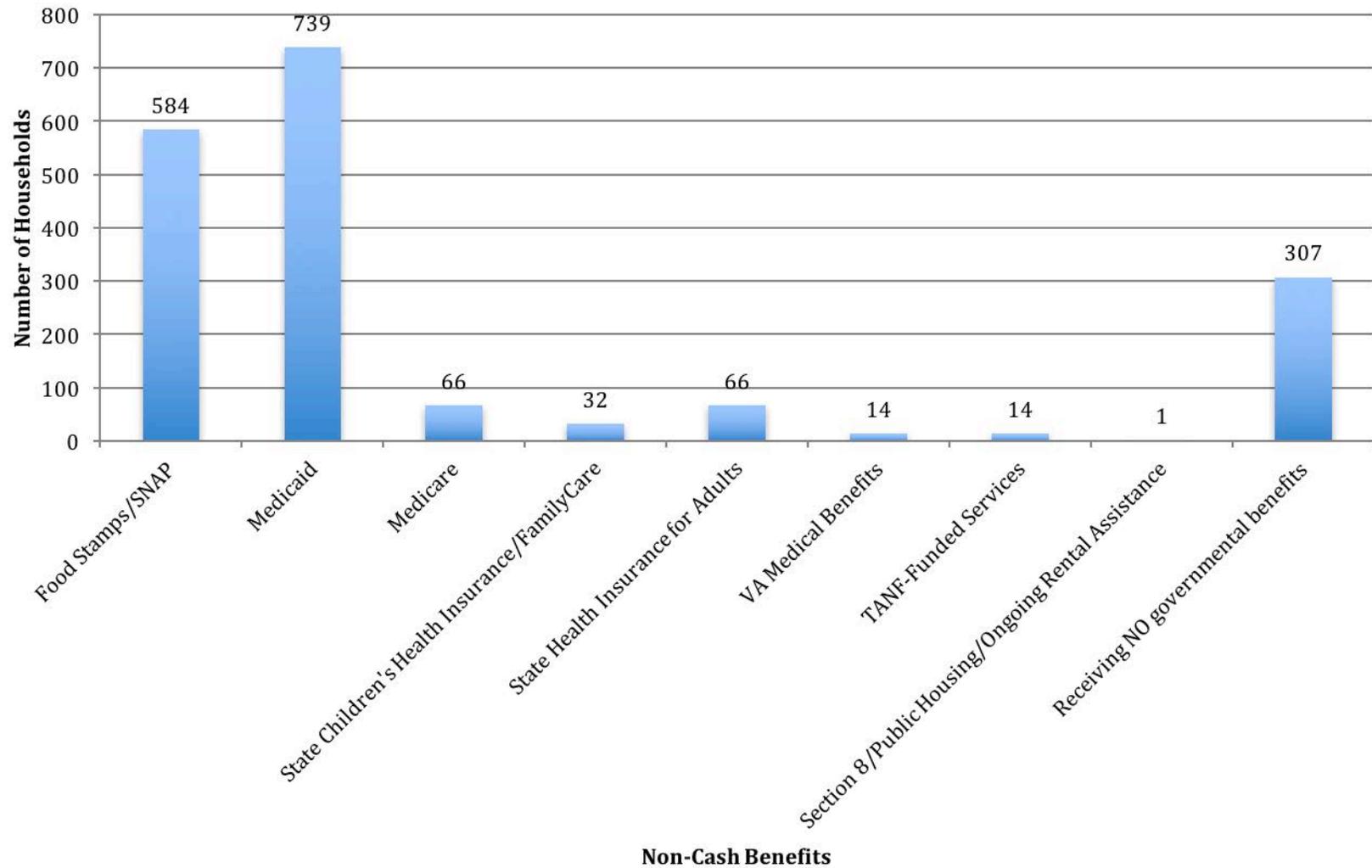
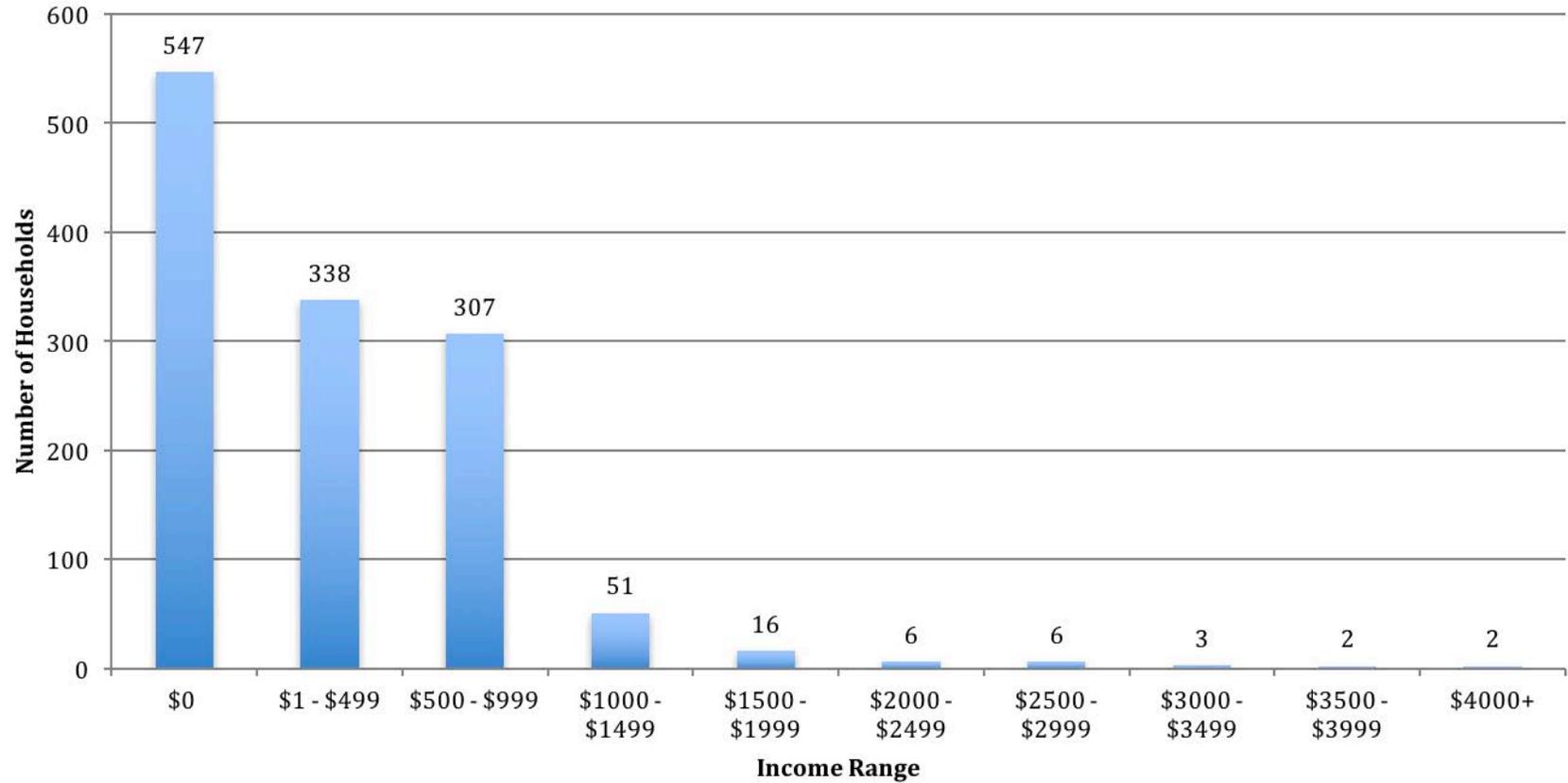


Fig. A. 11. Number of Households by Sources of Non-Cash Benefits



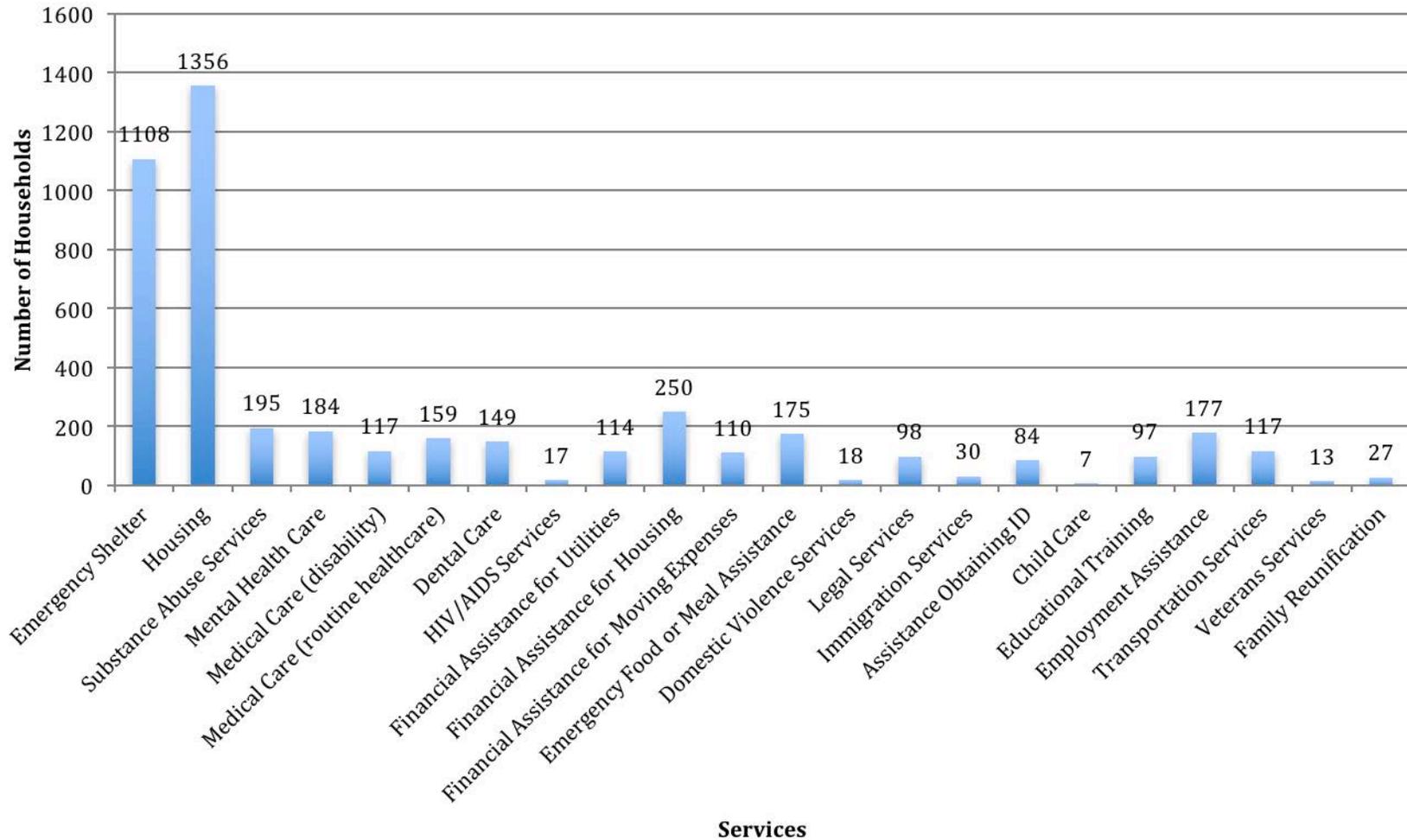
What is your monthly household income?

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

