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# **HUMBOLDT HOUSING AND HOMELESS COALITION**



## **Point In Time Count**

**2013 Report**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Every two years, the Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition (HHHC) conducts a Point In Time Count of the county's homeless population. This count is not a scientific survey but does provide the HHHC with general knowledge about trends and emerging problems for planning purposes. These counts are required by HUD in order to receive funding under the Continuum of Care program.

The HHHC has conducted four counts: in 2005, 2009, 2011 and 2013. The counts all describe the individual's or family's status on a specific night in late January that is selected by HUD. While the interviews may occur after this date, the responses are about that night, hence "Point In Time."

Community and agency volunteers do the count. In 2013, two coordinators managed counting crews in two areas of Humboldt County: north and south. In response to community concerns, particular efforts were made in southern areas of the county and improvements were made in the count of homeless youth. Teams visited outlying communities to get a more complete picture of the circumstances of homeless individuals and families.

## **NOTES ON METHODOLOGY**

Over 30 agencies and trained volunteers participated in gathering data for the 2013 PIT Count using a survey that can be self-administered or administered as a structured interview.

The survey was voluntary and was administered to homeless individuals who were contacted by volunteers on the streets, in rural encampments, and through local agencies and service providers. The survey asks homeless individuals about their current living situation, geographic location, length of time they have been homeless, age, gender, race/ethnicity, income and education, veteran status, recent discharge from institutional settings and overall physical, social, and mental health. To avoid duplicating respondents and to ensure privacy, each completed survey was given a unique identifier consisting of the first two letters of the respondent's last name and his or her date of birth.

The PIT Count indicated the number of individuals or families who were homeless on the night of Monday, January 28, 2013. Homeless respondents were surveyed over the course of six days: January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. Survey results were entered and analyzed at Humboldt State University, using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Additional data analysis was provided by Redwood Community Action Agency and the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services.

Changes in data from year to year could be due to various factors other than actual changes in population and demographics. Differing methods of data collection from one year to the next affect data results. For example, collection of data at different locations, different times of the day/week/month can provide different results as locations that are highly trafficked

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at one time of the day/week/month may be very lightly trafficked at a different time of the day/week/month.

Survey questions have changed over time so some data elements are unable to be compared from one year to another. Some of the changes are to collect data HUD requests. Other changes are to explore areas of interest to members of the HHHC and to inform its efforts to end homelessness. In general, the surveys of 2011 and 2013 asked consistent questions but were slightly different in some instances from the 2009 survey.<sup>1</sup> These instances will be noted in the charts and graphs on the following pages.

Participation in the survey is voluntary and participants have the right to decline to answer any specific question. As a result, only a certain percentage of those interviewed responded to any given question. Questions left blank where “decline to state” was not selected were treated as “missing.” “Decline to state” is a valid data response.

The 2013 PIT Count had a high rate of missing answers on multiple questions. Volunteers were trained to complete the surveys but field conditions and individual sensitivity to asking or responding to probing questions can cause differences in actual practice. The PIT Count is an entirely volunteer effort and the surveyors are not paid for their time or mileage. Expenses such as printing, cell phones and incentives for respondents (new pair of socks) are paid through the generosity of local foundations and some participating agencies.

For the first time, the 2013 report includes some data on school-age children. Since children could not be surveyed individually, this data is not included in the charts. Instead, there is a separate report on the number of homeless children in each school district. The designated homeless liaison in each school was polled on the number of homeless children attending that school.

Humboldt County is rural in nature, with a population of 134,623, and is spread over 3,573 square miles, or 37.7 persons per square mile. The low population density presents a unique challenge to our methodology of in-person, full survey taking of the whole homeless population. Thus, accurate PIT results are often contingent on how many volunteers are able to search for and survey the homeless.

Finally, the PIT Count uses HUD definitions for terms such as “chronically homeless,” “homeless” and “shelter.” These definitions may differ from many readers’ understanding of the terms. For example in 2013, an individual living in a trailer designed for human habitation, regardless of current condition, is not considered homeless. However, a person living in a tent or automobile is considered homeless. The PIT survey (attached) distinguishes between “unsheltered homeless” and “sheltered homeless.”

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on changes from 2009 to 2011 survey, please refer to “Humboldt County 2011 Point-in-Time Count Executive Report”. This and other documents can be found on the HHHC website at [www.humboldthousing.org](http://www.humboldthousing.org).

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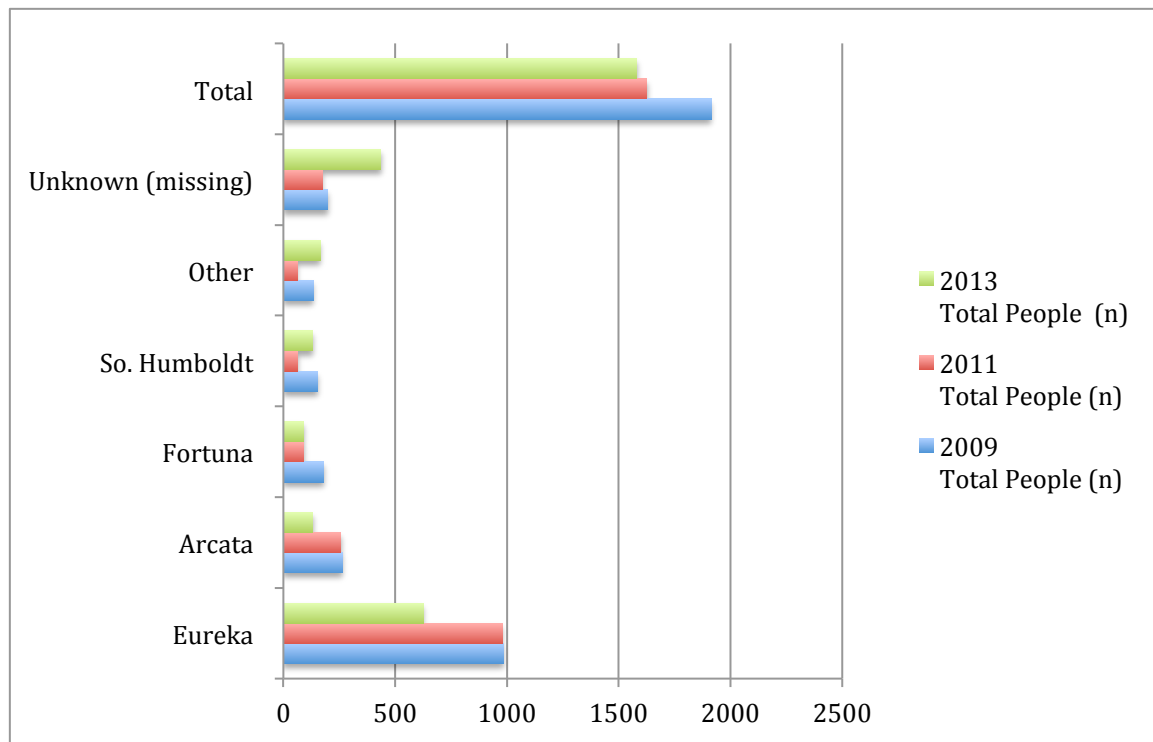
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## RESULTS

The 2013 PIT Count counted 1,579 people as homeless. Of the 1,579 people counted, 1,054 responded to the survey. The people that did not respond to the survey were primarily family members of respondents. Some people were known to be homeless by the interviewer but declined to participate in the survey. In 2009, 1,913 people were counted and in 2011, 1,626 people were counted. While this appears to indicate a decline in the number of homeless people in Humboldt County, that may not be the reality because of the variations in locations visited and the declining number of volunteers involved in the count.

There were some shifts in the demographics of the homeless population that was counted in 2013 when compared to that in 2011. Some comparisons can also be made to 2009 where questions were the same.

### *Geography*

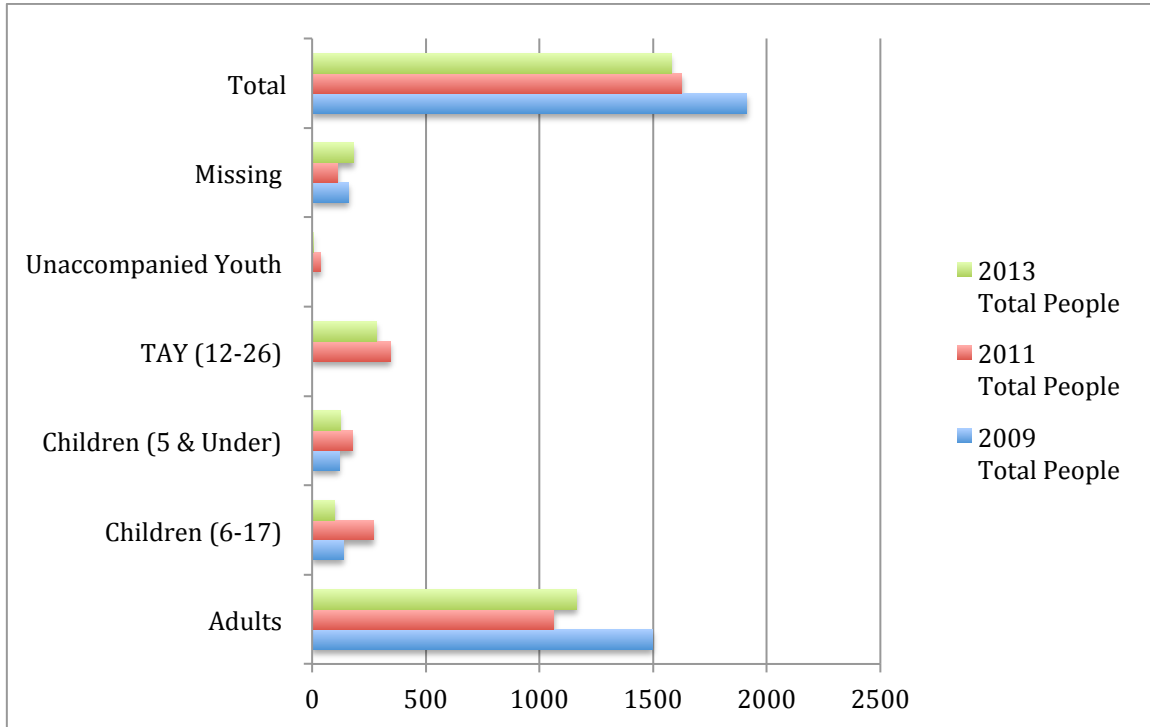


The chart above compares the last three counts of homeless people. While it appears that Eureka, Fortuna and Arcata have reduced the number of homeless people while Southern Humboldt and Other have increased homelessness, there are likely other reasons for this difference. First, nearly 25% of the surveys left this answer blank, hence the high rate of “Unknown (missing).” Second, extra efforts were made this year to count people in outlying areas of Humboldt County and in Southern Humboldt.

Eureka continues to have the highest proportion of homeless people. Anecdotal evidence suggests that reasons for this are availability of sleeping sites close to commercial areas,

proximity to human services and public transportation, opportunities for part-time, casual or seasonal employment, greater availability of motels, largest city in county, and discharge from institutions to streets of Eureka. No survey or study has been undertaken to determine the validity of these or other reasons.

**Age**

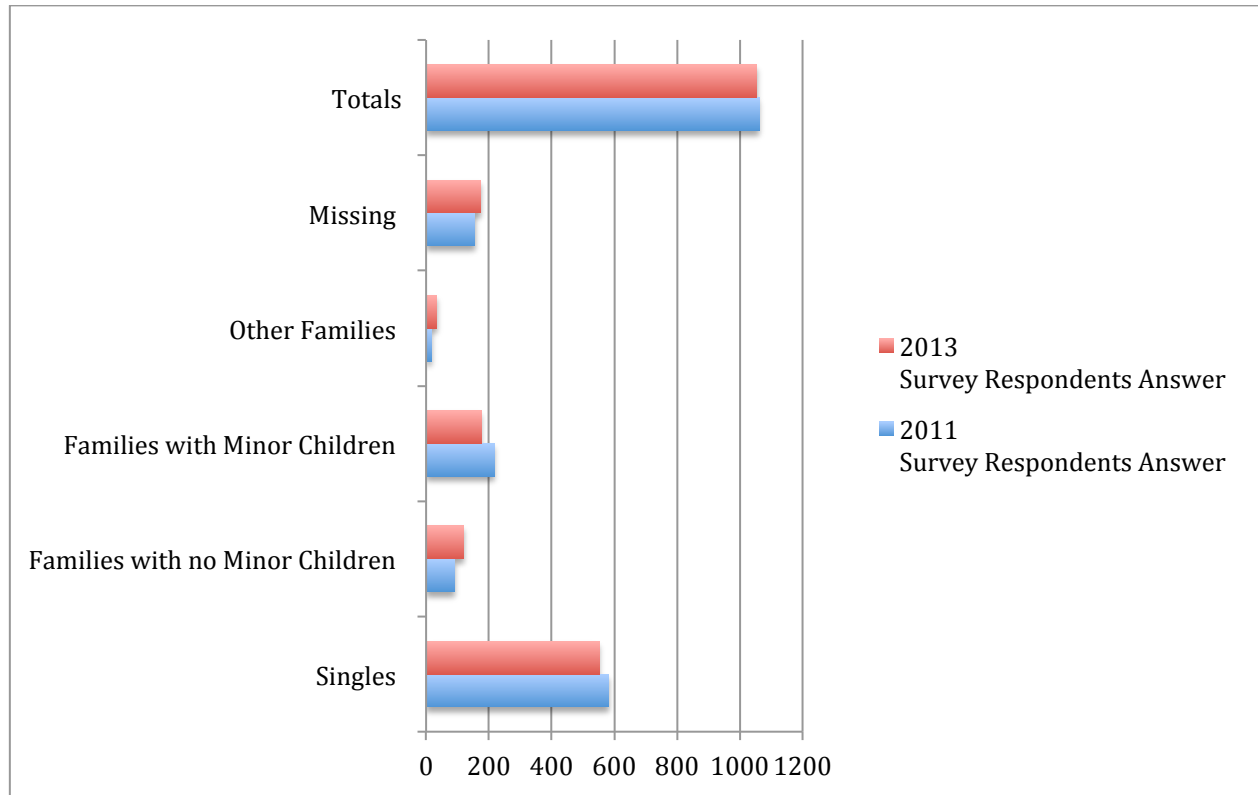


The chart above gives an age breakdown of homeless people in the years 2009, 2011 and 2013. The survey in 2009 did not break out the detail on “Unaccompanied Youth” (minors without parent or guardian) or “TAY” (transition age youth between the ages of 12 to 26). Since Unaccompanied Youth would likely fall into the Children (6-17) group and TAY would also be in that group or Adults, it would be risky to try to compare the 2009 data to other years. The differences between the age groups in 2011 compared to 2013 do differ significantly in some age bands. In general, the proportion of Adults increased from 65% of Total People to 74% of Total People while Unaccompanied Youth (numbered 39 in 2011 and 8 in 2013), Children (5 & Under) declined 31% from 2011 to 2013, and Children (6-17) declined 63% from 2011 to 2013.

**Households**

The chart below may help to explain the decline in homeless children described in the previous section on Age. The proportion of Singles stayed about the same from 2011 to 2013. But the percentage of Families with Minor Children declined by 20% in the same period. Families with no Minor Children increased by 32% from 2011 to 2013. More research would be required to explain this, but several agencies of the HHHC focus on

housing families with minor children: Arcata House Partnership, RCAA Multiple Assistance Center, and Humboldt County DHHS Social Services. The North Coast Veterans Resource Center has housing vouchers and supportive services for Veterans and their families.



***Living Situations on Night of PIT Count***

Reporting on this demographic category is challenged by the data collected in the years 2009, 2011 and 2013. Different populations were included in different years in the Living Situations Summary (LSS) and the Living Situations Detail (LSD). In 2009, data for LSS was not collected; in 2011, data was collected for the Total People but not Survey Respondents; and in 2013, data was not collected for Total People but was collected for Survey Respondents. For LSD, data was collected for Total People in 2009 and 2011, but not 2013. In 2013, data was collected for Survey Respondents.

The following tables present the data collected. Since the Total People number is greater than the Total Survey Respondents, it may be more useful to compare percentages rather than numbers.

Living Situations Summary	2009 No Data	2011 Total People	2011 Percent of Total People	2013 Survey Respondents	2013 % Survey Respondents
Unsheltered	X	536	33%	458	43%
Sheltered	X	1007	62%	580	55%
Missing	X	83	5%	16	2%
Totals	X	1626	100%	1054	100%

The Living Situation for a greater percentage of homeless people was “Unsheltered,” which means camping on a street, in an abandoned building, outdoors, etc., or living in a car.

Details of Living Situation on the Night of the PIT Count are presented in the Table below. As the column headings show, the different populations of “Total People” and “Survey Respondents” were used. The missing data elements in 2009 were also high making 29% of the total, adding to difficulties of comparison across years.

Living Situations on Night of PIT Count DETAILS	2009 Total People	2009 % Total People	2011 Total People Answer	2011 Percentage of Total People	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 % of Survey Respondents Answer
Emergency Shelter	111	6%	124	8%	105	10%
Transitional Housing	113	6%	138	8%	57	5%
Camping	387	20%	319	20%	351	33%
Vehicle	128	7%	189	12%	84	8%
Friends/Family	220	12%	327	20%	183	17%
Clean/ Sober						
Crossroads	54	3%	72	4%	25	2%
Motel	129	7%	283	17%	109	10%
Serenity Inn	85	4%	36	2%	23	2%
Other Sheltered	130	7%	27	2%	77	7%
Other Unsheltered	5	0%	28	2%	23	2%
Missing	551	29%	83	5%	17	2%
Totals	1913	100%	1626	100%	1054	100%

### ***Gender, Race and Ethnicity***

The charts below show that there were some significant differences in the proportions of survey respondents in some races and ethnic groups. As in the previous discussion, some comparisons of 2011 and 2013 with earlier data from 2009 are complicated by the changes in questions asked and the difference in populations of “Total People” vs. “Survey

Respondents.” In 2009, data was reported for “Total People” but for 2011 and 2013 the data was for “Survey Respondents.”

Gender	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 Survey Respondents Answer %	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer %
Male	604	57%	596	57%
Female	339	32%	307	29%
Transgender	5	0%	2	0%
Other	3	0%	0	0%
Missing	111	10%	145	14%
Totals	1062	100%	1050	100%

Gender of the homeless persons that completed the survey was similar in years 2011 and 2013.

Race	2009 Total People	2009 Total People	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 % of Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 % of Survey Respondents Answer
White	873	46%	542	51%	619	59%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	259	14%	99	9%	57	5%
Black or African- American	36	2%	13	1%	31	3%
Asian	6	0%	9	1%	3	0%
American Indian/Alaskan Native and White			66	6%	55	5%
Asian and White	14	1%	58	5%	1	0%
Black/African American and White	13	1%	13	1%	8	1%
American Indian/Alaska Native AND Black or African American			13	1%	32	3%
Other	16	1%	41	4%	73	7%
Missing	696	36%	208	20%	175	17%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1062</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>100%</b>



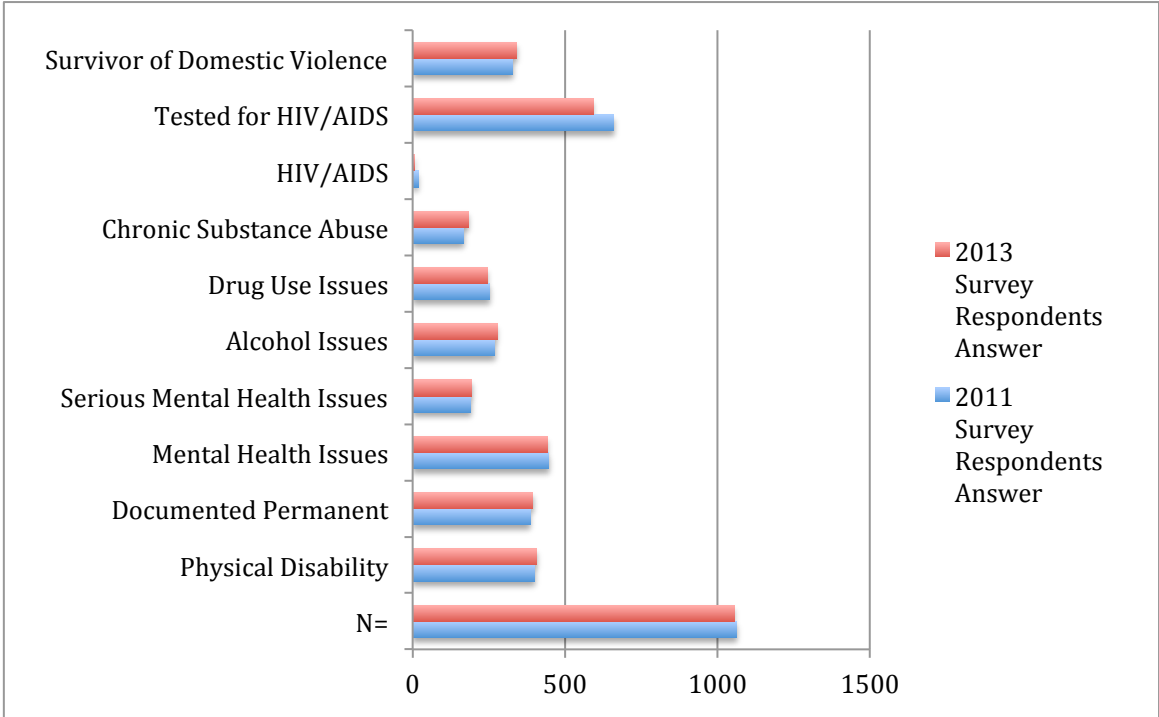
The proportion of persons reporting White has increased, while those reporting as American Indian/Alaskan Native have decreased. Note that two new categories of Race were added to the 2011 and 2013 surveys. Some of the categories have very few respondents.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>2009 Total People</b>	<b>2009 Total People</b>	<b>2011 Survey Respondents Answer</b>	<b>2011 % of Survey Respondents Answer</b>	<b>2013 Survey Respondents Answer</b>	<b>2013 % of Survey Respondents Answer</b>
Hispanic	53	4%	59	6%	110	10%
Non-Hispanic			633	60%	673	64%
Missing			370	35%	271	26%
<b>Totals</b>			<b>1062</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>100%</b>

There were similar increases from 2011 to 2013 in the proportion of people reporting as “Hispanic” and “Non-Hispanic.”

**Health**

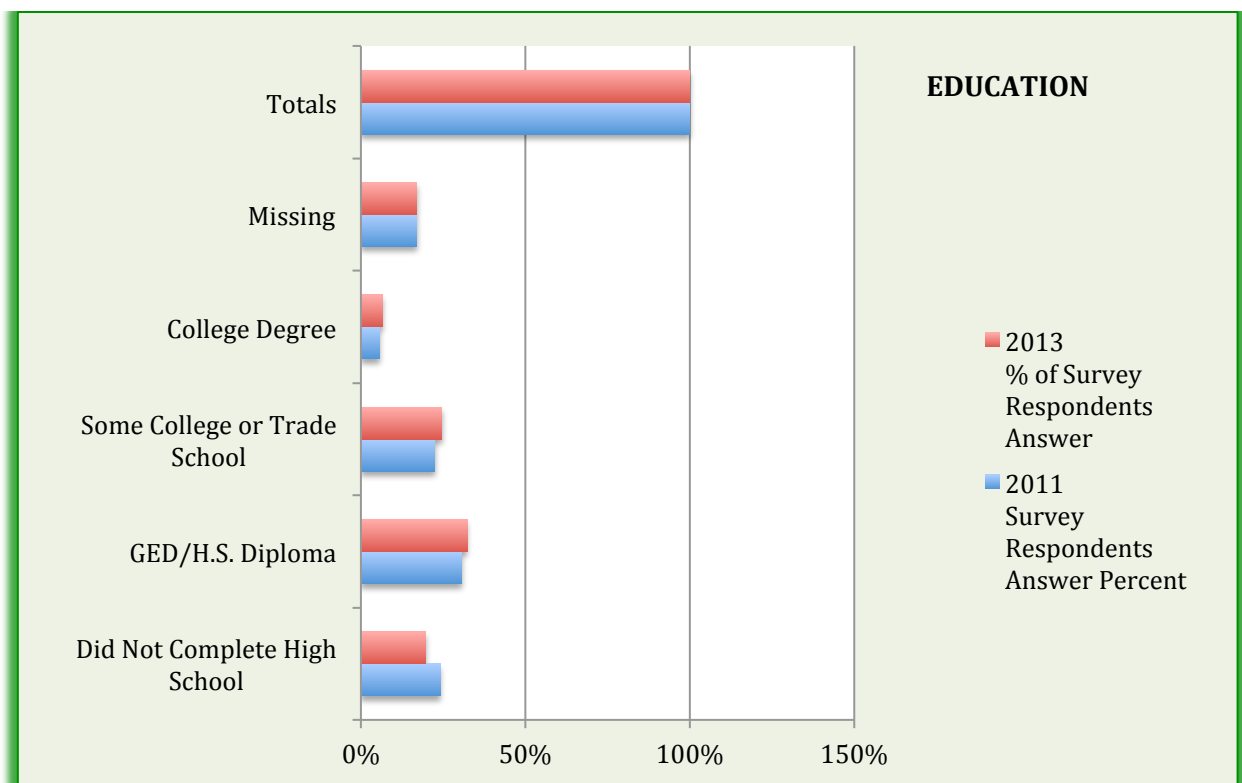
Survey questions about health status were detailed in 2011 and 2013. The proportions of survey respondents reporting specific health conditions were consistent from one reporting year to the next. Some respondents reported multiple health issues.



Many people experiencing homelessness report behavioral health issues. Approximately one third of the survey respondents in 2011 and 2013 are survivors of domestic violence. More than a third have a documented physical disability.

**Education and Income**

There was a significant decrease in the proportion of people who did not complete high school in 2013 compared to 2011. In 2011, 24% of survey respondents did not complete high school. In 2013, that dropped to 20% of survey respondents with slight increases in the proportions of survey respondents with GED/High School Diploma or education beyond high school. The chart below compares percentages of survey respondents as they responded in 2011 and 2013.

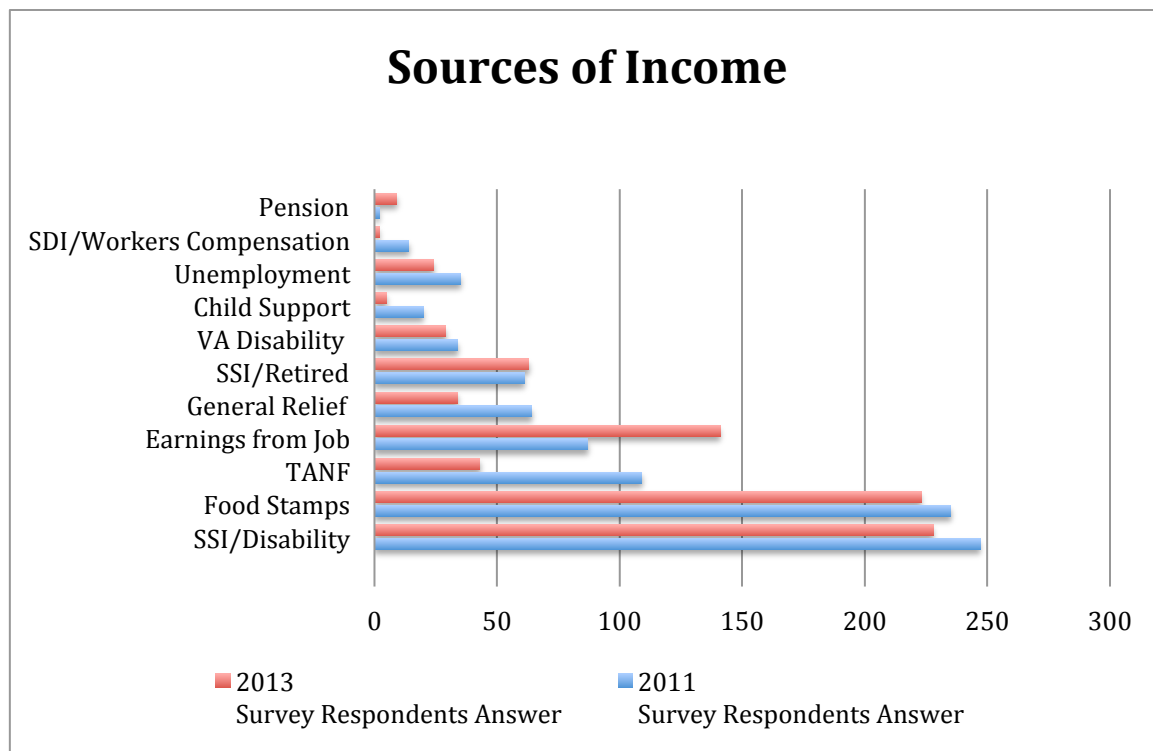


Income bands for all three PIT Counts were very similar except that there was a significant increase in the proportion of persons reporting the lowest level of income: \$0 to \$100 per month. This group was 19% in 2009 and 2011 and increased to 29% in 2013.

The following table illustrates these changes but note that in 2009 the data group is Total Persons and in 2011 and 2013 it is Survey Respondents.

Income	2009 Total People	2009 Total People %	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 % of Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 % of Survey Respondents Answer
\$0-\$100 Per Month	367	19%	205	19%	301	29%
\$101-\$400 Per Month	159	8%	85	8%	99	9%
\$401-\$600 Per Month	69	4%	57	5%	50	5%
\$601-\$800 Per Month	131	7%	93	9%	86	8%
\$801-\$1000 Per Month	261	14%	196	18%	177	17%
\$1001-\$1500 Per Month	84	4%	65	6%	75	7%
\$1501 or More Per Month	30	2%	34	3%	28	3%
Missing/Other	812	42%	327	31%	238	23%
Totals	1913	100%	1062	100%	1054	100%

Detail on Income Source was collected in 2011 and 2013. The number of survey respondents receiving SSI/Disability, SSI/Retired and Food Stamps stayed about the same. Survey respondents receiving TANF (CalWORKS) and General Relief declined while those reporting Earnings from Job increased. Some respondents reported multiple categories as they had more than one source of income. The number of survey respondents or “N” was similar in the counts: 1,062 in 2011 and 1,054 in 2013.



**Homelessness**

In this section, the condition of homelessness experienced by individual survey respondents in 2011 and 2013 (and where possible the total population counted in 2009) will be described. Factors such as length of time homeless, residence at onset of current episode of homelessness, length of time in Humboldt County, release from institutional care, veteran status and experience in the nation’s foster care systems will be summarized.

As discussed previously, the PIT Count is not a scientific survey and variations in data from count to count may not be reflective of actual changes in the characteristics of the homeless population in Humboldt County. PIT Count data can change from year to year due to factors such as number of volunteer counters, locations visited, time of day surveys are conducted, weather conditions, people’s willingness to participate in surveys and skill and enthusiasm of interviewers.

**Discharge from Institutions**

One of the areas of program development identified in the federal plan to end homelessness is to develop strategies at the community level to prevent the discharge of homeless people from institutions to the street. The HHHC has an active Discharge Planning Committee that focuses on this issue and started collecting detail in 2011. The table below compares data from survey respondents in 2011 (N=1,062) and 2013 (N=1,054).

In the Past 6 Months Released to Streets from	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 Survey Respondents Answer Percent	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer Percent
Jail/Prison	187	18%	185	18%
Hospital	132	12%	119	11%
Clean/Sober Facility	59	6%	47	4%
Mental Health Facility	58	5%	49	5%
Foster Care	5	0%	1	0%

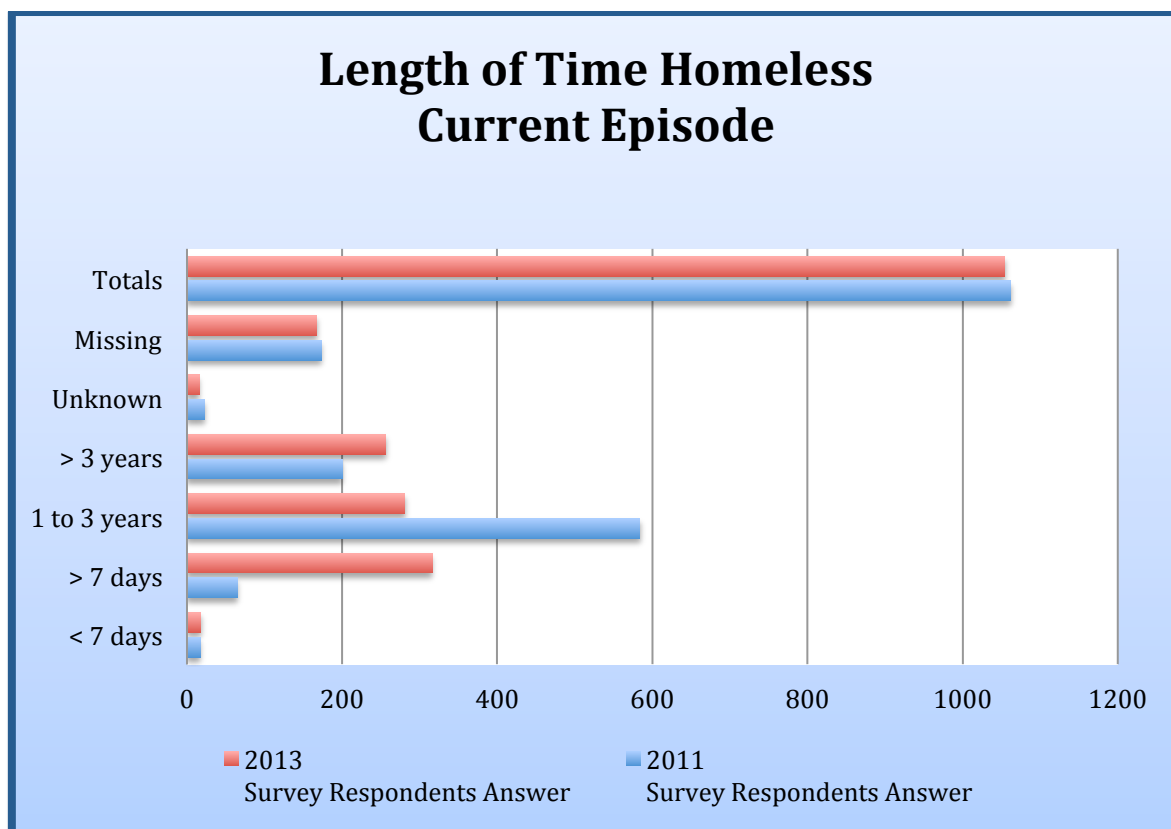
**Length of Time Homeless**

In 2011 and 2013, detail was collected from survey respondents on the length of time of their current episode of homelessness. HUD provides funding for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for “chronically homeless” individuals or families. To be considered

“chronically homeless,” the individual (or family member) must have a disabling condition AND have been homeless for more than a year in the current episode OR have been homeless for 3 episodes in the last 4 years AND currently homeless.

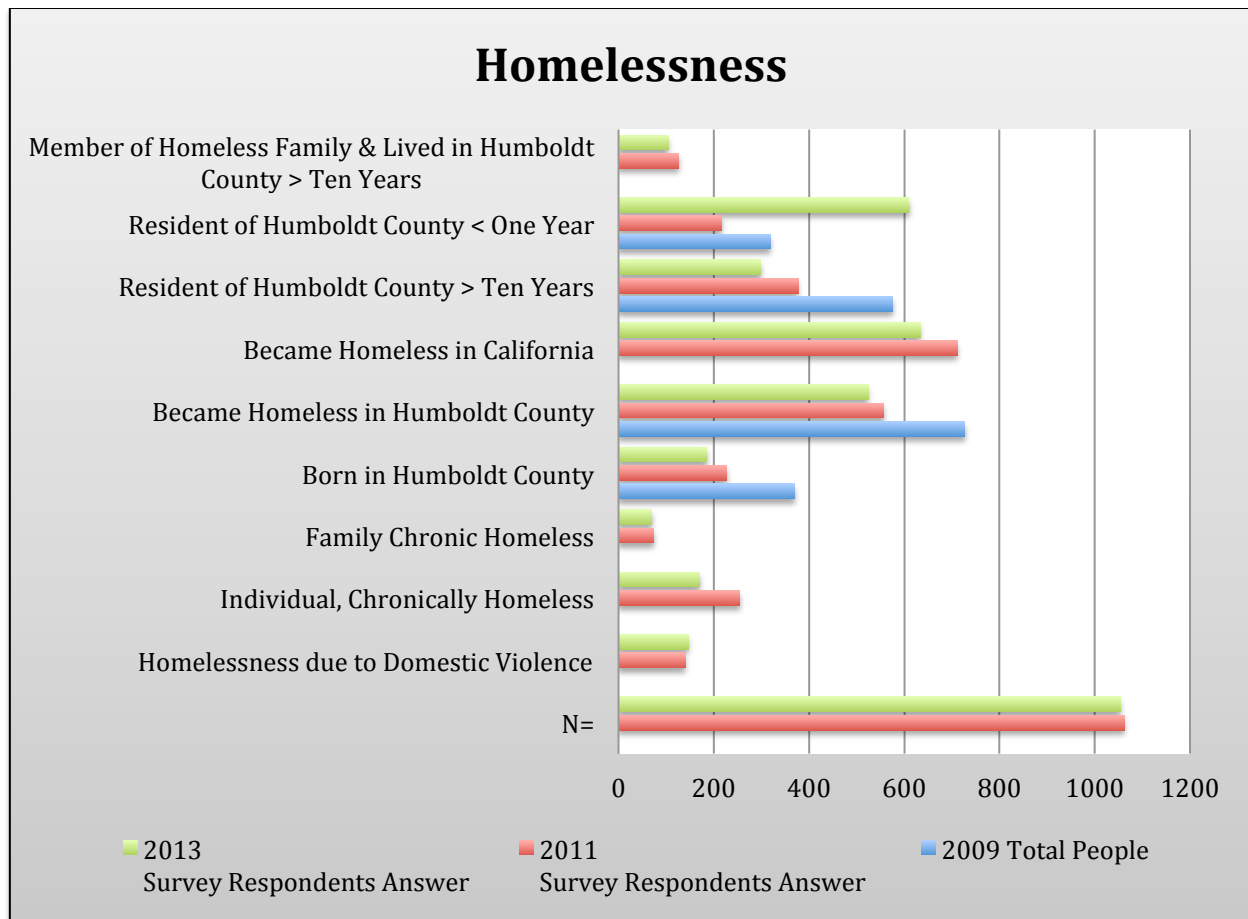
Permanent Supportive Housing (also known as Housing First) provides a subsidy for rent (based on annual Fair Market Rent limits) above 30% of the client’s income and all the support services (case management, counseling, substance abuse treatment, etc.) necessary to keep the individual or family housed. PSH is becoming the solution of choice for chronically homeless individuals (families) and HUD is encouraging funding recipients to move to this model and away from emergency shelters and transitional housing.

The chart below describes Length of Time Homeless for PIT Counts of 2011 and 2013.



## Homeless; what happened?

The table below reports detail on homelessness due to domestic violence and residence data for survey respondents in 2011 and 2013. Respondents may have reported in multiple categories so percentages will not add to 100%. In 2009, only four responses were available compared to nine responses in 2011 and 2013. This further complicates any interpretation of data since none of the categories are exclusive to all others. And again, variation in PIT Count from one count to the next may not be reflective of actual changes in the characteristics of homeless people in Humboldt County, but instead related to inconsistencies in the PIT Count process.



## Veteran Status

The table below reports the number of survey respondents in 2011 and 2011 that were veterans. 2009 data from the Total Population is also included, although in 2009 the data was not collected in the categories “male” and “female.”

Veterans experiencing homelessness are a federal priority and Humboldt County is fortunate to have a strong support program, North Coast Veterans Resource Center, which has joined in collaboration with the Housing Authority of the City of Eureka and County of

Humboldt to initiate and operate a housing voucher program for veterans. This project currently has 50 housing vouchers in operation supporting veterans and their families.

The North Coast Veterans Resource Center also offers a Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) that provides social services and counseling on many issues.

Veterans	2009 Total People	2009 Total People %	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 Survey Respondents Answer Percent	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer %
N=			1062		1054	
Yes	170	11%	174	16%	176	17%
Male			158	15%	160	15%
Female			10	1%	14	1%

### Foster Care

One of the issues of homelessness nationwide is the large number of homeless youth and adults that have been involved in the foster care systems of various states. Estimates ranging from 25% to 35% of currently homeless adults were former foster youth. Humboldt County has many programs and initiatives in place to reduce this problem for our youth. Examples include RCAA's Youth Services Bureau Raven and Launch Pad programs, and the services of Humboldt County DHHS Transition Age Youth Division and Independent Living Skills program. Both College of the Redwoods and Humboldt State University participate in events that encourage foster youth to continue education beyond high school. Humboldt County was recently awarded a two-year planning from the federal Administration on Children and Families grant in recognition of this strong foundation. The grant will allow participants from agencies, foster care homes, and current and former foster youth to research the issue in detail and build a strategy for further improvement.

Foster Care	2011 Survey Respondents Answer	2011 Survey Respondents Answer Percent	2013 Survey Respondents Answer	2013 Survey Respondents Answer Percent
N=	1062		1054	
Yes	222	21%	187	18%
Male	112	11%	111	11%
Female	101	10%	68	6%
Transgender	3	0%	2	0%

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## ***School Report on Homelessness***

The 2013 PIT Count Planning Committee had good representation from the local school system. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL100-77) and amendments of the subsequent HEARTH Act contain many requirements for local educational agencies (LEA) when it comes to educating children that are experiencing homelessness. Schools must designate a staff member to be a liaison for homeless families and children to assure that their special needs are met.

The Humboldt County Office of Education has a Homeless Education Coordinator that works with school liaisons. School liaisons were polled by the Homeless Education Coordinator to get a count of homeless children enrolled at each school site.

Children could not be individually surveyed, so the numbers are not included in the PIT Count data presented above. However, it is possible that the PIT Count crews at a site away from the school could have surveyed any one or more of the families by coincidence. Therefore, the counts from the school liaisons cannot be added to the previous data on numbers of children and youth.

The table below provides a count of homeless school-age children enrolled in the following schools.

<b>Alder Grove Charter: 8</b>	<b>Green Point: 0</b>	<b>McKinleyville Elementary: 4</b>
<b>Arcata Elementary: 0</b>	<b>HCOE: 59</b>	<b>Northern Humboldt: 37</b>
<b>Big Lagoon: 19</b>	<b>Headstarts: 11</b>	<b>Orick: 2</b>
<b>Blue Lake: 9</b>	<b>Hydesville: 0</b>	<b>Pacific Union: 8</b>
<b>Bridgeville: 6</b>	<b>Klamath-Trinity: 6</b>	<b>Pacific View Charter: 7</b>
<b>Cutten: 0</b>	<b>Laurel Tree: 0</b>	<b>Peninsula: 0</b>
<b>Eureka: 280</b>	<b>Loleta: 7</b>	<b>Rio Dell: 8</b>
<b>Fortuna Elementary: 63</b>	<b>Maple Creek: 0</b>	<b>South Bay: 9</b>
<b>Fortuna High: 61</b>	<b>Mattole: 0</b>	<b>Southern Humboldt: 30</b>
<b>Garfield: 0</b>		
		<b>Total number of homeless students: 632</b>

## **IN CONCLUSION**

As in previous years, data collected during the PIT Count of 2013 raises many questions and provides no answers. It is tempting to look at what appears to be a positive trend, such as the decline in the number of disabled SSI recipients that are homeless, and conclude that



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aggressive Permanent Supportive Housing strategies are making a difference. Or that the decline in number of respondents that were families with children means that fewer families are homeless in Humboldt County.

The count is useful in pointing to issues that need further research before developing a strategy to address a problem that may not really be there. An example of this is what appears to be an overall reduction in income coupled with a greater number of people reporting income from employment.

HUD recognizes that communities struggle with interpreting the data collected in PIT Counts and is actively working to make counts easier and more uniform across the country.<sup>2</sup> The HHHC has a PIT Committee starting to work on the January 2015 Count that is open to anyone interested.

The HHHC would like to thank many individuals and organizations that helped with the 2013 PIT Count. We are also grateful to First 5 of Humboldt County, the North Coast Grant-Making Partnership, and St. Joseph Health System Foundation for contributing funds to support expenses related to the count.

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### **PIT Count Committee for 2013**

Dawn Watkins, WISH  
Jacqui Brennan, RCAA Raven  
Rachel Fuentes, Arcata House Partnership  
Stephanie Johnson, Arcata House Partnership  
Johnny Calkins, HCOE  
Liza Brlansky, Arcata House Partnership  
Jeannette Hurst, United Way 2-1-1  
Marco Ramirez, DHHS TAY Division  
Qaiel Peltier, DHHS TAY Division  
Estelle Mitchell, DHHS TAY Division  
Nick Vogel, DHHS Mobile Outreach  
Kim Krajewski-Clark, VA  
Dennis McMullen, Open Door Mobile Health  
Brian Olson, St. Joseph Health System Community Resource Center, Eureka  
Patti Rose, Cedar Street Apartments, Garberville  
Georgia Trehey, RCAA, HMIS Administrator

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<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of these efforts, including a demo of an electronic survey for a smart phone or tablet for 2015 Counts, please visit <https://www.onecpd.info/hdx/guides/pit-hic/>.