As of Georgia's BoS CoC Point in Time Count in January 2017, which covered 152 Georgia counties, it was determined that 3,716 people were literally homeless -- a 36% decrease from 2015.

2017 Report on Homelessness

Balance of State Continuum of Care Point in Time Homeless Count Report

September 2017

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

2017 Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care Point in Time Homeless Count Report

Introduction

Every other year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development tasks communities with enumerating their homeless populations in order to assess need and measure progress. As mandated by the McKinney Vento Act, all homeless service providers must conduct a regular homeless census, which must be conducted during the last ten days of January in odd years.[1] This is called a point in time count, or PIT count. A PIT count consists of counting both sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons. While there are various definitions used to describe housing situations, HUD's housing definitions, required for the count and listed below, are used throughout this report.

HUD Housing Status Definitions

- **Literally Homeless**
  - Sheltered Homeless Persons: People who reside in an emergency shelter or in transitional/supportive housing for homeless persons designated to provide temporary living arrangements.
  - Unsheltered Homeless Persons: People 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.

- **Imminently Homeless**: People who are facing loss of housing within two weeks, have no subsequent residence identified, and lack the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

- **Stably Housed**: People who are in a stable housing situation and are not facing imminent loss of housing.

- **Other**: People who are in jail, a hospital, or a detox program, for example.

Methodology

A census of homeless persons and families in shelters is done annually, in conjunction with a housing inventory count. The goal of each housing inventory is to account for all emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing beds in the CoC, regardless of whether the project is funded by the state or federal government. Each January, data is collected from all homeless service providers about the number and type of beds (emergency, transitional, or permanent supportive) provided, along with information on how many people were utilizing the beds on a single specified night. This is referred to as the sheltered count.

In Georgia, the local CoCs typically rely on a street count or canvassing methodology to collect their PIT count data for the unsheltered homeless population. These CoCs are considered more urban; however, the Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS CoC) consists of 152 predominantly rural counties in Georgia. This coverage area is 96% of the state's geography, and because of that, the CoC must approach this task in a different way than urban areas traditionally do. In rural Georgia, the homeless population can be more difficult to see than in more urban areas. Rather than sleeping on the street, on the steps of a church, or in a public park where one could be seen more easily, households experiencing unsheltered homeless in rural areas may be staying in an abandoned farm house, camping in the woods, or sleeping in a

car. In order to capture information on this population, the Balance of State Continuum of Care utilizes a service-based methodology for the PIT count. This service-based methodology utilizes surveys collected at locations where individuals and families experiencing homelessness are seeking services, such as a day center, food bank, public library, or other service provider. The surveys are collected during the week-long period, but questions are focused on a single point-in-time.[2] For the 2017 PIT count, surveys were collected from January 24th through the 31st, but respondents were asked about where they were sleeping on the night of January 23rd.

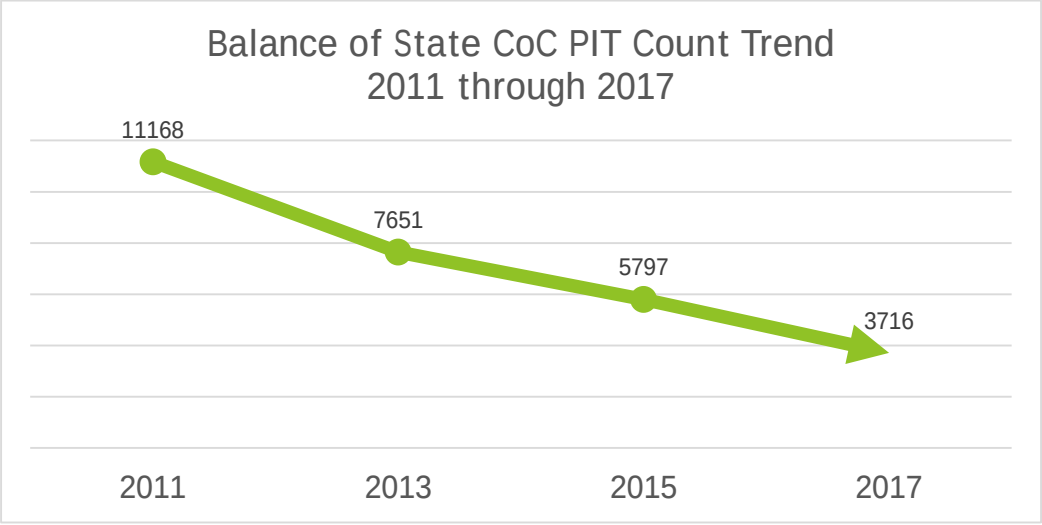
Another issue that the BoS CoC faces for this project is a lack of homeless service providers in all 152 counties. It is nearly impossible for the CoC to canvas all 152 counties, so homeless service providers partner with the CoC and participate in the counties that they serve. The information collected during canvassing is used to build a regression model that predicts the rate of homelessness in the counties in which no count was completed. This prediction model is used for estimating the unsheltered homeless population and the imminently homeless population. [3,4] In 2017, these sample data were also used to build estimations of the unsheltered veteran and unsheltered chronically homeless population by county.

Results

As of the Point in Time Count in January 2017, it was determined that 3,716 people were literally homeless in the Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care – a 36% decrease from 2015. Appendix A includes county level point-in-time counts.

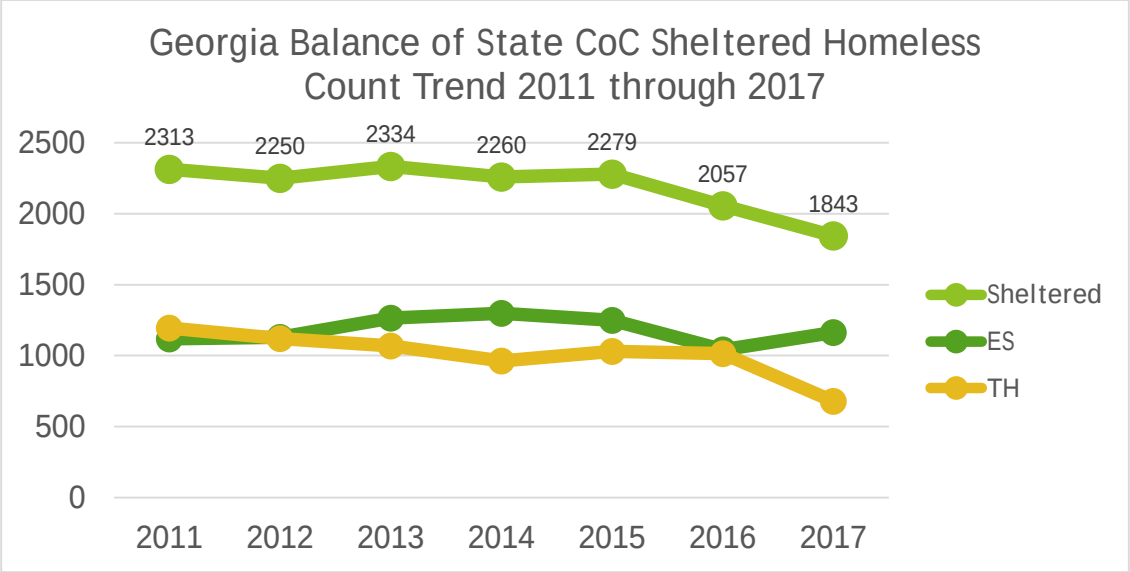
Table 1: Georgia's Literally Homeless Population: Single Night (Point in Time Count)

	Number of Individuals per Year		
Housing Status	2013	2015	2017
Unsheltered	5,317	3,518	1,843
Sheltered	2,334	2,279	1,873
Total	**7,651**	**5,797**	**3,716**
Change from previous count (%)	-32	-24	-36



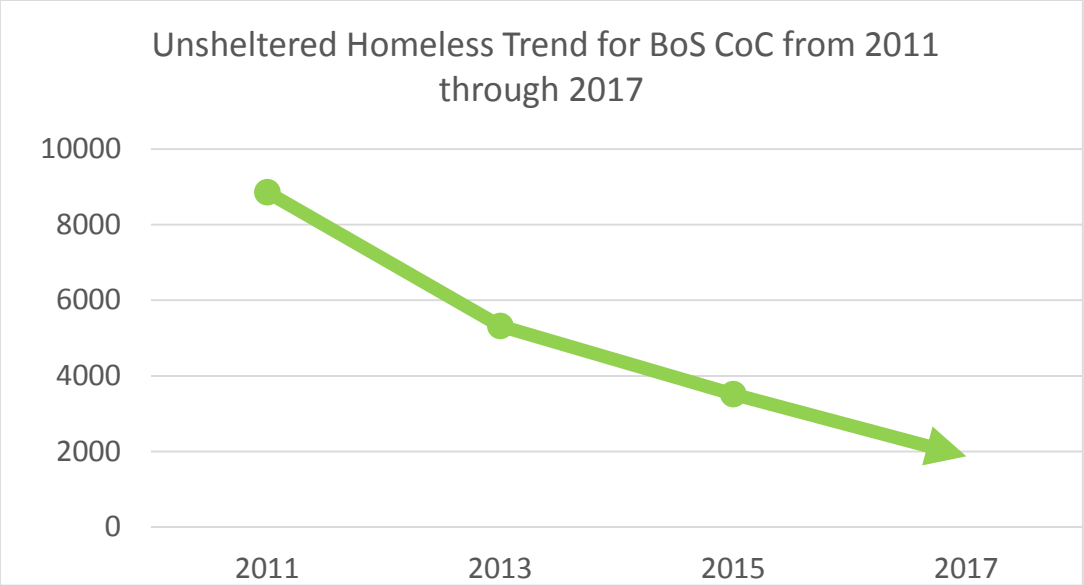
The number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness on a single day, including both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations, has been steadily declining in the Georgia Balance of State CoC over the past several years. The Georgia Balance of State CoC observed 3,716 people experiencing homelessness during the PIT, which is a 36% decrease from the homeless count in January of 2015.

Sheltered Homeless

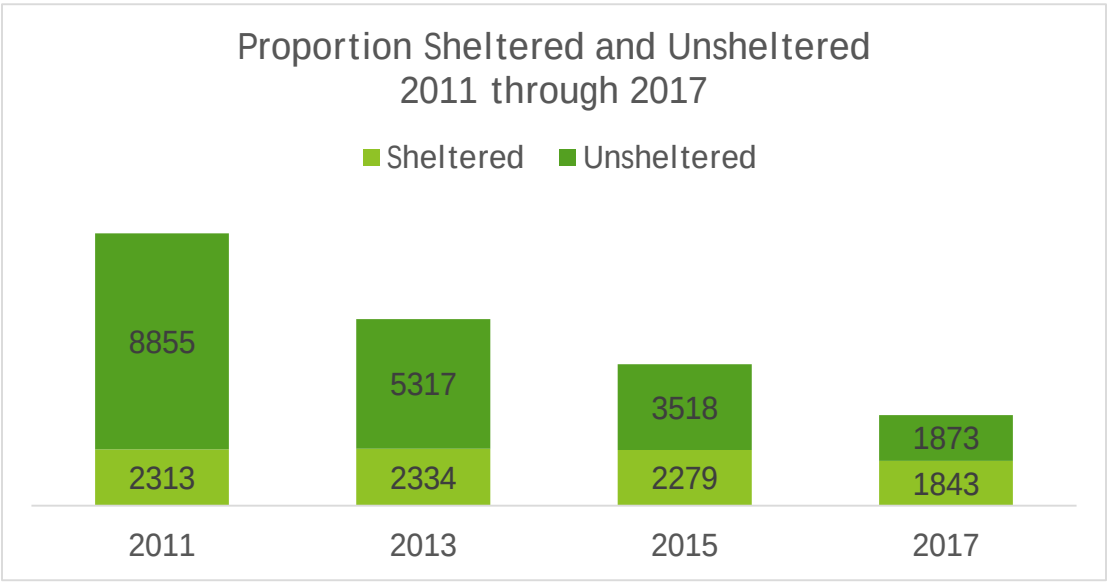


The sheltered homeless counts in the BoS CoC have remained fairly constant over the past 7 years, but there have been some fluctuations this year; the BoS CoC experienced an 11.7% increase in the number of people staying in emergency shelters in our CoC on PIT night. The BoS CoC experienced a 33.1% decrease in the number of people staying in transitional housing. This is largely due to 15 programs with a total of 410 beds closing over the course of this year. Overall, the BoS CoC has experienced a 19% decrease in the number of people staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing in our CoC on PIT night from 2015 to 2017 (2,279 in 2015 to 1,843 this year).

Unsheltered Homeless

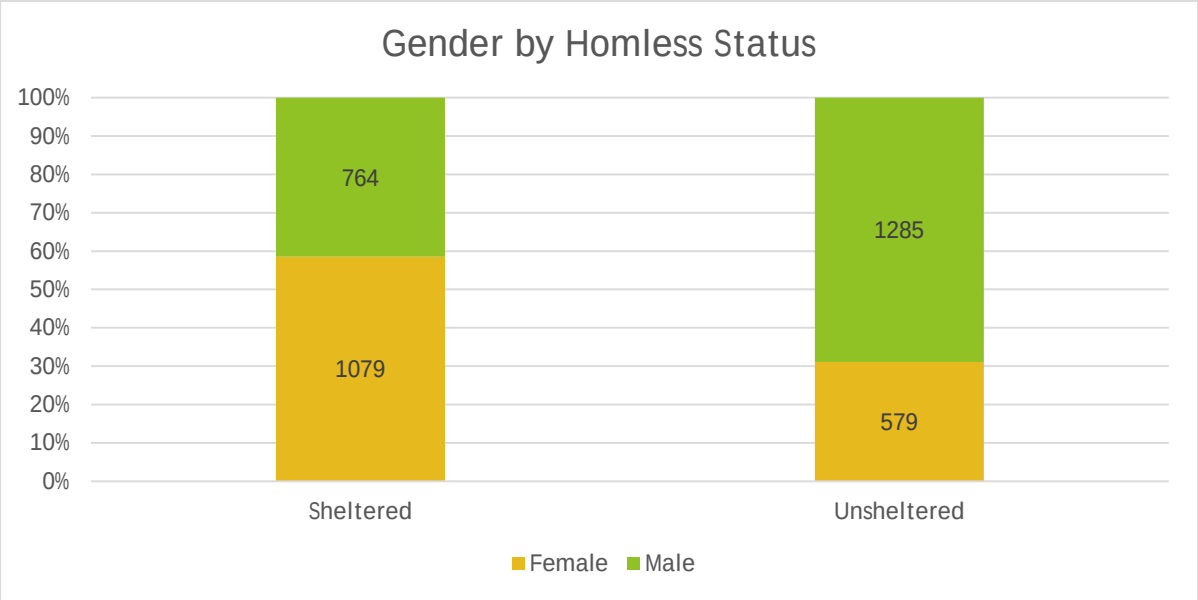


From 2013 to 2015, there was a 34% decrease in the number of unsheltered homeless. This downward trend has continued, and for the 2017 count we experienced a decrease in the number of unsheltered homeless in the Balance of State CoC by 47%. We are excited about these results and are pleased to see that our homeless count numbers are continuing in a downward trend.

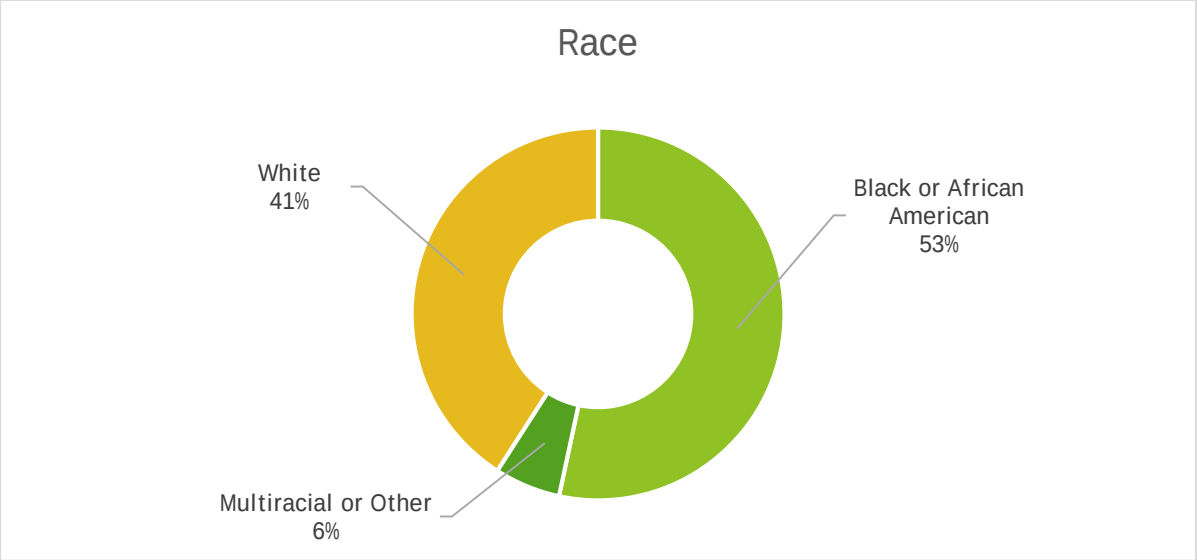


Another positive outcome to highlight is that the proportion of unsheltered homeless is decreasing. In 2017, 50% of the homeless population was unsheltered, which is the smallest proportion of unsheltered homelessness observed in a PIT count for the BoS CoC thus far.

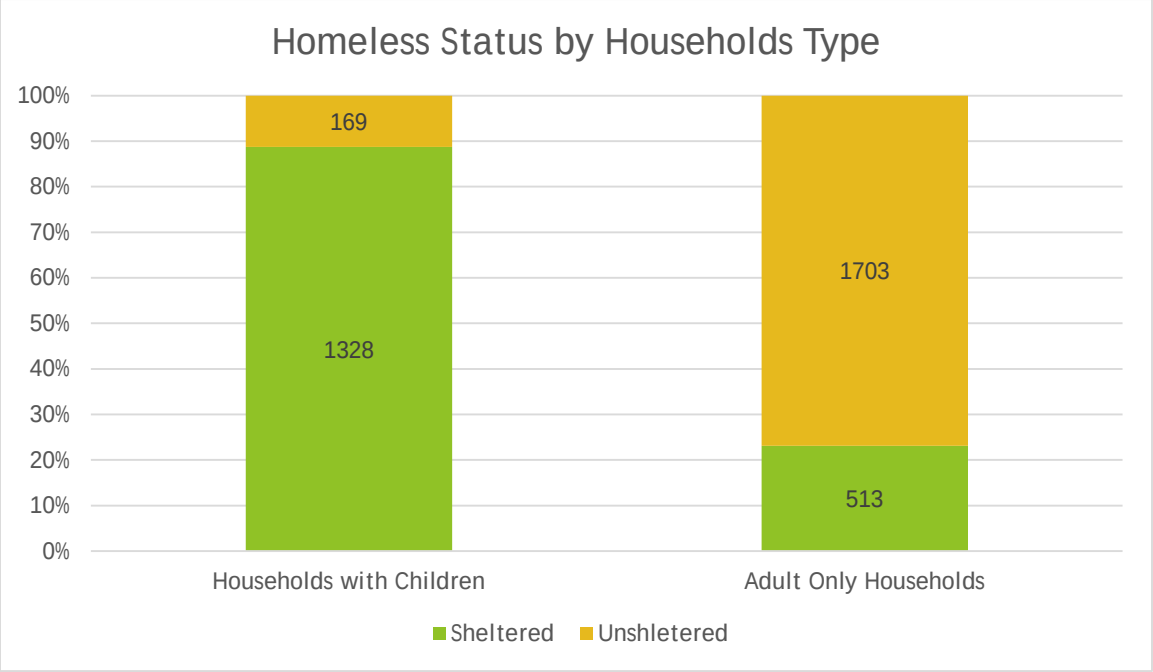
Basic Demographics



Fifty-five percent of the total homeless population in the BoS CoC is male; however, that percentage does differ when it is broken down by homeless status. Men are more commonly experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This could be skewed due to the fact that there are more shelters in the BoS that serve predominantly female victims of domestic violence, than there are shelters that serve men specifically.



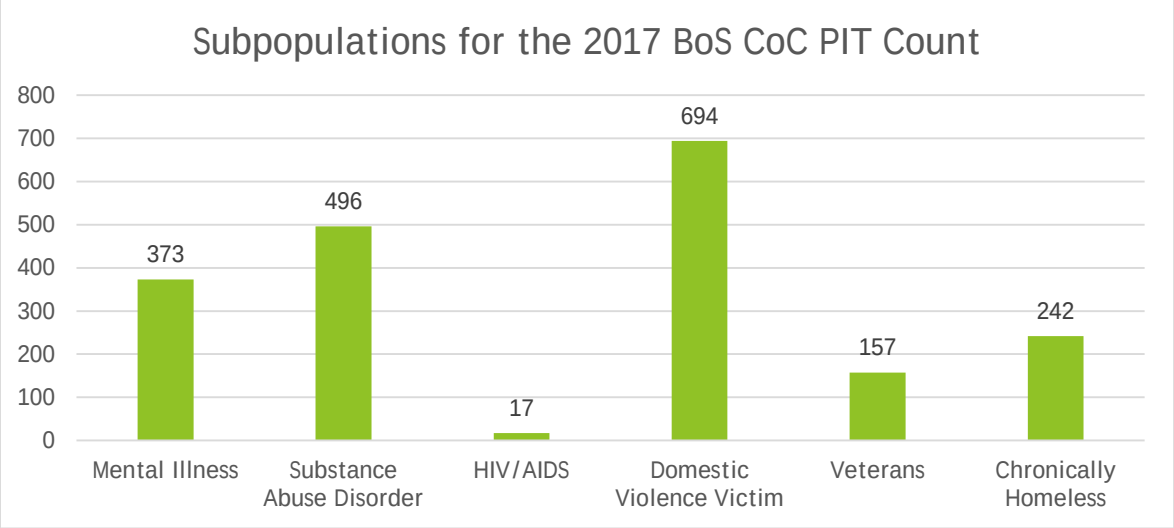
The majority of the CoC's homeless population identifies as Black or African American. Six percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Children under the age of 18 comprise 23% of the homeless population, and 8% are between the ages of 18 and 24.



Household type can also vary by homeless status. A larger proportion of households with children are sheltered than unsheltered, and a smaller proportion of adult-only households are sheltered than unsheltered.

Homeless Subpopulations

People with special needs are the most vulnerable subset of the homeless population. According to the data collected for the 2017 PIT count, 6.5% of people experiencing homelessness are chronically homeless, meaning that they have a disability and have been homeless for at least one year, or 4 times in the past 3 years. Four percent of the homeless population observed in January of 2017 were veterans.



Georgia Housing Status Survey

The data for the unsheltered portion of the PIT count is collected using the Georgia Housing Status Survey. Due to the nature of the survey methodology, the questions included, and the relatively small target population, a large portion of the data collected is from respondents in various housing situations. While the information garnered from this survey can be useful for planning purposes, please note that the sample that was surveyed was, in many cases, not a complete nor representative sample because not every person in these populations (imminently homeless, unsheltered homeless, stably housed) was surveyed and no method of randomization was utilized. During the 2017 PIT Count in the BoS CoC, 2,989 surveys were collected. The majority of these surveys (48%) completed were for respondents who were considered stably housed.

Table 2: Respondent Housing Status	
Stably Housed	1439
Unsheltered Homeless	559
Sheltered Homeless	407
Imminently homeless	370
Other	157
Missing	57

Table 2 shows frequencies for each housing status type. Table 3 further breaks down these housing status categories to show the frequencies for the locations of respondents in the night of the count.

Table 3: Respondent Location on January 23rd, 2017	
Abandoned building	118
Bus or train station, airport	3
Detox Facility	11
Emergency Shelter or Domestic Violence Shelter	240
Group Home	49
Hotel or Motel	460
In a car, truck, or van	138
In the woods or campsite	138
Jail or Prison	79
Medical or Psychiatric Hospital	14
Missing/No Response	57
My own house or apartment	547
On the street	142
Other	4
Permanent Supportive Housing	21
Transitional Housing	167
Under a bridge	20
With friends or family	781

Imminently Homeless

Imminently homeless households, defined as households that are facing imminent loss of housing within 14 days, comprised 12% of the surveys. These households tended to be younger with the average age of 38 for the head of household. 36% were families with at least one child. The majority of imminently homeless households (53%) were Black or African American, and 58% of heads of household were women. 6% of households surveyed were veterans and 13% have at least one disabling condition. 59%indicated that their current housing situation was caused by unemployment, while 29% had employment income and 31% of households were receiving SNAP benefits.

Unsheltered Homeless

19% of the surveys collected were for unsheltered homeless households. The average age for these heads of household was 47 with only 4% of those households being families with children. The majority of these households were male (68%) and White (52%). 13% were veterans and 20% had at least one disabling condition. 63% of unsheltered respondents indicated that unemployment lead to their current homeless episode with substance abuse disorders (indicated as a factor for 18% of unsheltered respondents) and mental illness (indicated as a factor for 14% of respondents) also contributing to their current homeless episode. 18% were earning income through employment and 39% were receiving SNAP benefits.

Limitations

There are certainly limitations to be conscious of when utilizing these data. These data were collected by agencies that had varying levels of experience executing this type of point-in-time count and had varying degrees of coverage in their community. Although all agencies received the same PIT count training from DCA staff, each agency was responsible for organizing the count in the best way for their respective community. No two PIT counts looked identical, leading to possible inconsistencies in the administration of surveys, the target locations for data collection, and populations surveyed. Of the 2,989 surveys returned, 559 of surveys (19%) were completed for households who were unsheltered homeless on the night of the count; this is an indication that agencies are not accurately surveying the target population.

The "imminently homeless" data (both the prediction and the data that was physically collected) does have some significant limitations that should be considered when utilizing the data. One major limitation is that there is no way for anyone to obtain a complete census of the imminently homeless population. The idea behind using, this prediction model for the unsheltered homeless population is that some of the counties are able to collect a complete census by counting every single unsheltered homeless person within county lines; because we know the true population for those counties, we are able to build a prediction model with those numbers and then use that model to estimate the true population in other counties that did not obtain a complete census. Thus for the imminently homeless population, because there is no complete census, the predictions made using those samples are an underestimation of the true imminently homeless population.

Because the Georgia Balance of State CoC covers 152 counties, estimation techniques based on count data collected in a sample of counties are used. Beginning in 2008, the Georgia Balance of State CoC has used a sampling methodology and predictive model developed by statistics faculty at Kennesaw State University.[4] In 2017, the data used for the model came from survey counts conducted in 91 counties.[4] A limitation to note here is that these sample counties were a convenience sample. These were counties that had a service provider able to participate in the coordination of the PIT count in their area; this may or may not lead to an accurate

representation of the unsheltered homeless population in other counties that do not have such service providers. Additionally, the counts conducted in the Balance of State were done using surveys collected at locations where people receive services and in places where homeless persons are known to congregate and stay. However, as mentioned previously, only a small percentage of the surveys collected were representative of the unsheltered homeless population, and not all counties covered were able to obtain a complete census of their unsheltered homeless population, which could skew the data.

Another factor that contributes significantly to the prediction model itself is how confident a count coordinator is that he or she was able to survey 100% of the unsheltered homeless population in the county or coverage area. Logically, if a count coordinator does not feel that the entire unsheltered homeless population for that county was surveyed, we cannot build a model using that data because it is incomplete. After the conclusion of the PIT count survey week, count coordinators fill out a debriefing survey regarding the respective counts and how they were conducted. If a count coordinator is confident that he or she covered the entire county thoroughly, the data is used to build the model. The coordinators complete this survey before they know the results of their count, which prevents a certain degree of bias; however, there is a possibility that although the count coordinator is confident, he or she still may not have covered the county well enough and missed part of the sample population. Also, in 2017, there were count coordinators who were confident that they surveyed all unsheltered homeless, but after the data was processed, there were no unsheltered homeless individuals or families in that county. Traditionally, DCA has not included zeros in the prediction model because it is far better to overestimate homelessness than to underestimate. The same process was used this year, but in the reported data below there are counties for which we are reporting zero because of the level of confidence that the count coordinator had in the coverage of that county.

Special Thanks

The 2017 Point in Time Count and this report would not have been possible without the efforts and dedication of many people and organizations across Georgia:

- Anitra Douglas, Milledgeville Housing Authority
- Chad Cheshire, Volunteers of America Southeast
- Christy Storey, Kennesaw State University, AL Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research
- Diane Rogers, Concerted Services, Inc.
- Francis and Freddie Phillips, Faith Community
- Jeff Clark, Safe Harbor Children's Shelter
- Jennifer Priestly, Kennesaw State University
- Jennifer Shearin, Dalton-Whitfield CDC
- Jessica Mitcham, Good Neighbor Homeless Shelter
- Jodie Goodman, Carrollton Housing Authority
- John Winchester, Harris County Family Connection
- Kimberly Brooks, South West Georgia Regional Commission
- Kristin Bryant, City of Hinesville
- Lynda Barrs, CSRA EOA
- Margaret Schuelke, Project Community Connections, Inc.
- Marilyn McCreary, HOPE Atlanta
- Marvin Nesbitt, Action Ministries
- Michael Ellison, Cusseta Chattahoochee Family Connection
- Naomi Ladson, Macon Coalition to End Homelessness
- Paul Vaughn, Kennesaw State University, AL Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research
- Randall Lane, Coastal Plain Area EOA
- Sharon Edwards, Community Outreach Training Center, Inc.
- Shawn Howell, Ninth District Opportunity
- Taqiyyah Holloway-Walker, House of Dawn
- Vanessa Flucas and Kelly Strozier, Valdosta City's Neighborhood Development Department's Fair Housing Committee

References

[1] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of Community Planning and Development. August 2001. *Report to Congress: HUD's Strategy for Homeless Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting*.

[2] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of Community Planning and Development. October 2004. *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People.*

[3] Jennifer Lewis Priestley. May 2008. *Every Georgian Counts: Final Report on Sampling and Modeling*. Kennesaw State University, Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

[4] Jennifer Lewis Priestley. April 2017. *Every Georgian Counts: 2017 Estimates of Homelessness in Georgia.* Kennesaw State University, Center for Statistics and Analytical Services.

APPENDIX A

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons (Counts and Predictive Model)[4]	Sheltered Homeless Persons (Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing)	Total Homeless Persons	Total Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds	Imminently homeless (Counts and Predictive Model)[4]	Unsheltered Veterans (Counts and Extrapolation)	Unsheltered Chronic Extrapolation (Counts and Extrapolation)
APPLING	7	0	7	0	2	0	0
ATKINSON	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
BACON	4	0	4	0	11	0	0
BAKER	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
BALDWIN	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
BANKS	3	0	3	0	15	0	0
BARROW	29	35	64	56	80	0	0
BARTOW	16	26	42	47	44	5	3
BENHILL	0	0	0	0	12	0	0
BERRIEN	0	0	0	0	14	0	0
BIBB	174	136	310	147	3	23	8
BLECKLEY	5	0	5	0	14	1	1
BRANTLEY	7	0	7	0	1	0	0
BROOKS	0	0	0	0	28	0	0
BRYAN	2	0	2	0	34	0	0
BULLOCH	14	19	33	21	2	0	0
BURKE	11	0	11	0	4	0	0
BUTTS	9	0	9	0	25	1	1
CALHOUN	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
CAMDEN	20	9	29	23	55	4	3
CANDLER	4	0	4	0	11	0	0
CARROLL	21	47	68	62	6	3	3
CATOOSA	26	0	26	0	71	3	3
CHARLTON	2	0	2	0	0	1	1
CHATHAM	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CHATTAHOOCHEE	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
CHATTOOGA	12	0	12	0	51	0	1
CHEROKEE	67	211	278	202	5	6	1
CLARKE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CLAY	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
CLAYTON	150	100	250	173	21	0	2
CLINCH	3	22	25	22	2	0	0
COBB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
COFFEE	16	0	16	0	1	2	0

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons (Counts and Predictive Model)	Sheltered Homeless Persons (Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing)	Total Homeless Persons	Total Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds	Imminently Homeless (Counts and Predictive Model)	Unsheltered Veterans (Counts and Extrapolation)	Unsheltered Chronic Extrapolation (Counts and Extrapolation)
COLQUITT	0	16	16	38	1	0	0
COLUMBIA	35	0	35	0	1	0	0
COOK	0	0	0	0	12	0	0
COWETA	27	0	27	0	8	1	8
CRAWFORD	6	0	6	0	24	1	0
CRISP	8	0	8	0	15	0	1
DADE	7	0	7	0	19	0	0
DAWSON	1	0	1	0	12	0	0
DECATUR	4	0	4	0	2	1	2
DEKALB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DODGE	8	0	8	0	22	1	1
DOOLY	5	0	5	0	14	1	1
DOUGHERTY	20	40	60	96	4	7	1
DOUGLAS	27	104	131	115	2	0	0
EARLY	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
ECHOLS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EFFINGHAM	22	0	22	0	3	0	0
ELBERT	7	0	7	0	1	0	1
EMANUEL	8	0	8	0	15	0	0
EVANS	4	0	4	0	11	0	0
FANNIN	10	24	34	26	28	0	0
FAYETTE	29	21	50	21	10	0	1
FLOYD	37	25	62	57	1	0	0
FORSYTH	6	19	25	39	4	0	0
FRANKLIN	9	0	9	0	25	1	1
FULTON	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
GILMER	11	0	11	0	30	1	1
GLASCOCK	1	0	1	0	6	0	0
GLYNN	68	44	112	62	41	11	15
GORDON	22	9	31	6	60	2	3
GRADY	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
GREENE	7	8	15	12	31	0	0
GWINNETT	84	179	263	204	107	6	10
HABERSHAM	3	33	36	34	9	0	0
HALL	45	78	123	87	12	5	16

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons (Counts and Predictive Model)	Sheltered Homeless Persons (Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing)	Total Homeless Persons	Total Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds	Imminently Homeless (Counts and Predictive Model)	Unsheltered Veterans (Counts and Extrapolation)	Unsheltered Chronic Extrapolation (Counts and Extrapolation)
HARALSON	11	0	11	0	30	1	1
HARRIS	14	0	14	0	1	0	0
HART	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HEARD	6	0	6	0	26	0	0
HENRY	42	34	76	39	3	2	12
HOUSTON	29	20	49	42	3	2	3
IRWIN	0	0	0	0	17	0	0
JACKSON	24	0	24	0	66	2	3
JASPER	6	0	6	0	26	0	0
JEFFDAVIS	6	0	6	0	16	0	0
JEFFERSON	7	0	7	0	4	0	0
JENKINS	2	0	2	0	9	0	0
JOHNSON	4	0	4	0	18	0	0
JONES	13	0	13	0	34	0	0
LAMAR	7	0	7	0	1	1	1
LANIER	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
LAURENS	17	23	40	32	33	0	2
LEE	0	0	0	0	33	0	0
LIBERTY	8	34	42	34	4	0	1
LINCOLN	3	0	3	0	15	0	0
LONG	7	0	7	0	1	0	0
LOWNDES	5	67	72	76	2	2	4
LUMPKIN	0	10	10	10	3	0	0
MACON	6	0	6	0	25	0	0
MADISON	13	0	13	0	54	0	1
MARION	3	0	3	0	1	0	0
MCDUFFIE	8	0	8	0	15	0	0
MCINTOSH	5	0	5	0	1	0	0
MERIWETHER	10	0	10	0	42	0	1
MILLER	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
MITCHELL	1	0	1	0	7	0	0
MONROE	13	0	13	0	35	0	0
MONTGOMERY	3	0	3	0	8	0	0
MORGAN	7	0	7	0	2	0	0
MURRAY	6	0	6	0	0	1	2

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons (Counts and Predictive Model)	Sheltered Homeless Persons (Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing)	Total Homeless Persons	Total Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds	Imminently Homeless (Counts and Predictive Model)	Unsheltered Veterans (Counts and Extrapolation)	Unsheltered Chronic Extrapolation (Counts and Extrapolation)
MUSCOGEE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NEWTON	41	33	74	65	4	0	3
OCONEE	12	0	12	0	4	0	0
OGLETHORPE	7	0	7	0	19	0	0
PAULDING	49	9	58	23	1	0	0
PEACH	5	0	5	0	1	0	1
PICKENS	12	0	12	0	1	2	2
PIERCE	8	0	8	0	1	0	0
PIKE	8	0	8	0	22	0	0
POLK	7	8	15	14	0	1	3
PULASKI	4	0	4	0	11	1	1
PUTNAM	9	0	9	0	38	0	0
QUITMAN	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
RABUN	5	12	17	12	10	1	0
RANDOLPH	3	0	3	0	13	0	0
RICHMOND	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ROCKDALE	17	65	82	70	1	0	0
SCHLEY	2	0	2	0	10	0	0
SCREVEN	6	0	6	0	3	0	1
SEMINOLE	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
SPALDING	32	7	39	32	13	1	2
STEPHENS	5	7	12	9	8	0	1
STEWART	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
SUMTER	11	0	11	0	21	0	2
TALBOT	3	0	3	0	14	0	0
TALIAFERRO	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
TATTNALL	10	0	10	0	1	0	0
TAYLOR	4	0	4	0	16	0	0
TELFAIR	3	0	3	0	0	0	1
TERRELL	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
THOMAS	10	20	30	23	7	0	4
TIFT	0	26	26	52	2	0	0
TOOMBS	5	8	13	26	1	0	0
TOWNS	0	0	0	0	12	0	0
TREUTLEN	3	0	3	0	14	0	0

COUNTY	Unsheltered Homeless Persons (Counts and Predictive Model)	Sheltered Homeless Persons (Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing)	Total Homeless Persons	Total Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds	Imminently Homeless (Counts and Predictive Model)	Unsheltered Veterans (Counts and Extrapolation)	Unsheltered Chronic Extrapolation (Counts and Extrapolation)
TROUP	27	96	123	126	74	3	4
TURNER	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
TWIGGS	4	0	4	0	18	0	0
UNION	0	13	13	15	25	0	0
UPSON	10	0	10	0	19	0	1
WALKER	26	17	43	14	71	4	3
WALTON	34	0	34	0	93	3	4
WARE	13	11	24	14	1	0	2
WARREN	2	0	2	0	4	0	0
WASHINGTON	9	0	9	0	39	0	1
WAYNE	7	12	19	12	9	0	0
WEBSTER	1	0	1	0	5	0	0
WHEELER	3	0	3	0	8	0	0
WHITE	3	0	3	0	31	0	1
WHITFIELD	17	106	123	132	2	1	4
WILCOX	4	0	4	0	16	0	0
WILKES	4	0	4	0	3	0	0
WILKINSON	4	0	4	0	18	0	0
WORTH	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
TOTAL	**1873**	**1843**	**3716**	**2422**	**2334**	**117**	**168**