2016 Homeless Needs Assessment

City of Seattle
Human Services Department
More than 1,050 unique surveys with individuals experiencing homelessness in the city of Seattle in November 2016.

6 targeted focus groups, held with roughly 80 individuals representing different subpopulations:

- Youth
- Families with children
- People in authorized encampments
- People in unsanctioned encampments
- People in emergency shelters
- People who sleep in vehicles
Who is Homeless?

Where are people from?

Around 70% lived in Seattle or King County when they were last stably housed.
Why did people come to Seattle?

Over 50% of homeless have been in Seattle more than 5 years

Looking for opportunity or because friends/family live here

Slightly more unsheltered came for family and friends

Slightly more sheltered came to access homeless services and/or VA services

Comparing sheltered and unsheltered

Why Seattle?
Who is Homeless?

Homelessness Affects Minorities Disproportionately

- Latinos/Hispanics
- Black/African Americans
- Native Americans

Slightly more Whites and Black/African Americans in shelter

Slightly more Native Americans, Asians and Latinos living unsheltered
Who is Homeless?

28% of people living outdoors are 30 years or younger

28% of survey respondents identify as LGBTQ

3.4% identify as transgender

Figure 4. Sexual Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=1,037 respondents offering 1,053 responses.
41% of respondents work in some capacity (full-time, part-time, temporarily, or seasonally)

35% of respondents had some college or a college degree

**Figure 6. Educational Attainment**

- Less than High School: 39.3%
- High School/GED: 45.7%
- Some college or Associate’s Degree: 23.1%
- College Degree: 11.9%

N = 1,037

**Figure 7. Employment Status**

- Unemployed: 39.0%
- Unable to work: 20.0%
- Employed seasonally/temporary: 15.0%
- Employed full time: 13.0%
- Employed part time: 13.0%

N = 1,034
20% listed housing issues as the primary event leading to their homelessness.

12% were connected to an institution or system immediately prior to experiencing homelessness.
Housing Affordability Contributes to Homelessness

What would help them obtain permanent housing?

- **68%** reported rental assistance
- **65%** reported that an increase in affordable housing

93% of respondents said they would move into safe and affordable housing if it were offered.
1 in 4 foster youth experience homelessness within 4 years of exiting the foster care system. 23% of all survey respondents reported a history of foster care. 40% of respondents under the age of 25 reported a history of foster care.

“Focus group participants, especially those in the youth and family groups, identified the lack of support for youth transitioning out of foster care, combined with previous experiences of instability and abuse in foster care homes, as causes of homelessness for this vulnerable population”

— Focus Strategies Needs Assessment 2017
Housing Affordability Contributes to Homelessness

Rental assistance and more affordable housing were the top two responses regarding what was needed to obtain permanent housing.

Over 70% of respondents could afford a monthly rent of less than $500.
Roughly 50% of respondents had been homeless for a year or more.

30% were chronically homeless.

44% respondents reported they were experiencing homelessness for first time.

These findings are similar to other West Coast communities.

Chronically homeless is defined as homeless 365 days living outside and with a disabling mental or physical condition.

15% meet the same definition nationally.
There is a higher prevalence of drug use among people living unsheltered vs those sheltered

45% reported they do not engage in drug use

29% reported using alcohol

35% reported use of hard drugs (meth, heroin, crack)

13% reported alcohol or drug use as primary cause of homelessness

13% reported they were accessing drug or alcohol counseling services

“Before I was homeless I was two or three years clean, but within my first week of being homeless, I was using again. I was using meth and all that. I never would have thought I would have been back doing that, but then the only reason why I was doing that, so I could stay warm and literally forget the fact that I was homeless.”
Mental Healthcare Needs Addressing

Mental Health tops List of Conditions

51% reported going to ER in past year
Large Veteran Population Remains Homeless

14% of the population were identified as veterans.

55% of veterans were unsheltered.

Of the unsheltered, 19% were living in encampments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever served in the US Armed Forces?</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever received health care or benefits from the VA? (Veterans)</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 1,011 (US Armed Forces); n = 143 (Health Care or Benefits from VA)
Domestic Violence Adds to Homelessness Among Certain Populations

42% of survey respondents reported they had an experience of Domestic Violence (DV).

5% reported it was the primary cause of their homelessness.

More than half (51%) of youth under 25 reported experiences of DV or abuse.

58% of female respondents reported experience with DV.

30% of males reported experience with DV.

63% Transgender respondents who reported DV

78% People who identified as a gender other than male, female, or transgender who reported DV.
Summary of key findings

- Seattle’s homeless are generally ‘local’ to the area and come to the city for opportunity
- Significant number of encampments all over the city
- 30% of respondents are chronically homeless
- High percentage of foster youth
- Large number of homeless veterans
- Significant demand for mental and behavioral health and rehab services
- Large number of employed homeless
- High rates of domestic violence and trauma
- Need for more qualified and peer-sourced outreach workers
- Strong client perception that coordinated entry, case management and referral system is not working
- Large numbers of vehicularly housed