

Facts Behind the Faces: Data Regarding Homelessness in Colorado Springs/El Paso County

1. *What is the Point In Time (PIT) count?*

During the last days of January, organizations across the United States count and survey people in emergency shelters, transitional housing projects and those who are considered unsheltered. Locally, the Colorado Springs/El Paso County Continuum of Care conducts the count, and to ensure strong data all known agencies providing housing for people experiencing homelessness were asked how many beds they had on the night of January 26, 2014, and how many of those beds were occupied.

2. *How is homelessness defined?*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as: “an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” For example, people sleeping in cars, parks, alleyways, abandoned buildings or regularly in a camp ground are considered homeless. Also included are people living in shelters and other programs on a temporary arrangement.

3. *Are there more homeless people in our community this year?*

Yes, when considering only HUD defined homeless data from the night of January 26, 2014, Point In Time.

- a. 1,219 total individuals were counted as homeless; that’s an increase of 4% – 48 more people – compared with the previous year.
- b. 269 of them were unsheltered with only 20 emergency beds open across community.
- c. The 20 open emergency beds were all beds for females: 9 reserved for victims of family violence and 11 at the RJ Montgomery center; there were no open beds for men.
- d. 166 of the unsheltered are considered chronically homeless, an increase of 13% from 147 last year. This figure reflects the 13% decrease of emergency shelter and warming beds in our community from 2013 to 2014.
- e. 70% of unsheltered homeless people reported their last permanent address as in El Paso County.

4. *What are the demographics of people experiencing homelessness locally?*

- a. 397 people in the count were in households with children
- b. 254 of the individuals were children under the age of 18
- c. 116 were youth and young adults between ages 18 – 24
- d. 150 people were veterans (46 unsheltered)
- e. 64% of the people were male; 36% were female; but 82% of the unsheltered were male
- f. 1 person self-identified as transgender
- g. 74% self-identified as White
- h. 16% self-identified as Black/African American
- i. 10% self-identified in other racial categories

5. *How accurate is the PIT?*

The PIT is valuable when considered the minimum number of people in homelessness because it is a single night snapshot of homelessness. The PIT also has limitations. It counts those who are seen or who seek services on the day of the count. It does not include homeless persons who are doubled up with family/friends; these are considered “at risk.” It also does not include people who do not seek services, are not found on the day of the count,

or who refuse to take the survey or do not identify as homeless. Families and youth most often are among the undercounted because they go to great efforts not to appear homeless. For this reason, our fact sheet also includes data from sources other than the PIT.

6. *What other data should be considered?*

Knowledge from the collaborative of many nonprofit agencies within the Continuum of Care, the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, the Pikes Peak United Way and state agencies provide a fuller spectrum of information about homelessness in our region. For example:

- Colorado Department of Education data show that in El Paso County there were 2,564 students – including 49 students in Academy District 20, 1,917 students in School District 11, and 113 students in District 2 – who were experiencing homelessness during the school year 2012-2013. (The CDE counts the number of public school K-12 students who are living in shelters or transitional housing, awaiting foster care, staying in hotels/motels, doubled up with other families and those who are unsheltered.)
- One of our community's leading transitional housing agencies, Partners in Housing, works to lift families out of homelessness into self-sufficiency. All housing units were occupied on the night of the count covering 66 adults and 105 children. During the 3 months prior to the PIT count, PIH received 187 applications for the 60 housing units that it operates for its homeless transitional housing program.
- The number of people contacted in 2013 by service agency street outreach teams includes: Aspen Pointe – 503; and Urban Peak Colorado Springs – 387.
- The CSPD Homeless Outreach Team made 2,465 contacts with homeless people in the 2013 calendar year and 1,208 referrals to service providers (this figure includes multiple contacts with individuals).
- The Colorado Springs Housing Authority's wait lists for affordable housing as of March 2014 were:
 - Section 8 – 2,583 people
 - Public Housing – 1,313 people
 - All other programs – 2,573

7. *What is the Housing Inventory Count (HIC)?*

The HIC determines the number of beds in our community available through emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing programs for people experiencing homelessness.

8. *Are there enough beds for people experiencing homelessness in our community?*

Nearly all of our beds for the homeless were occupied. Of the 1616 emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing beds across programs, 1535 – or 95% – were filled on the night of January 26, 2014. Openings were due largely to turnover or staffing shortages.

There are only 16 affordable and available housing units for every 100 people who are categorized economically as very low income in our city. (City of Colorado Springs Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, 2014)