



BRIDGING THE GAP 2020 NEIGHBOR ISLANDS' POINT IN TIME COUNT TOPLINE REPORT

OVERVIEW

What is the Point in Time Count? A point-in-time (PIT) count provides an unduplicated snapshot of how many people experienced homelessness in a community on a given night, or a “point in time.” On the Neighbor Islands, there are three designated communities: Hawai‘i County, Maui County and Kauai County, who each conduct their counts independently. However, these three communities, and every community across the nation, inquiries about the same point in time, which, this year in our community, was January 26. The count includes both sheltered (living in congregate homeless shelters) and unsheltered (living on the streets or in areas unfit for human habitation) populations. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that communities receiving federal funds from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program conduct an annual sheltered count during the last week of January and a biannual unsheltered count. However, in the interest of having the most current data, our community elected to conduct unsheltered counts annually.

Unsheltered counts are conducted by homeless outreach workers and volunteers, who canvas our community to count the people who appear to be living in places not meant for human habitation. This includes individuals and families living in parks, beaches, cars, and tents. This year, housing advocates and volunteers canvassed areas like these across the neighbor islands, asking, “Where did you sleep on January 26th?” People experiencing sheltered homelessness (meaning they reside in a county-recognized homeless shelter) are counted through data collected from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is the database used by homeless service providers to keep track of those who utilize services.

This annual count is one tool used to track progress, inform public opinion, increase public awareness, and attract resources to effectively address homelessness in our communities. The PIT Count helps communities plan services and programs to appropriately address local needs, measure progress in decreasing homelessness, and identify strengths and gaps in a community’s current homelessness assistance system. While the PIT Count should not be confused with service utilization reports, it does provide a one-night snapshot of homelessness experiences on Hawai‘i Island, Maui, and Kaua‘i. The collected data is compared county to county and year to year and

provides benchmarks to help stakeholders understand homelessness in their respective communities.

Bridging the Gap (BTG), which represents Hawai'i County, Maui County and Kaua'i County, is the Neighbor Islands' Continuum of Care (CoC). A CoC consists of members who represent a variety of public and private agencies that work together to plan and promote a community-wide commitment to ending homelessness. Data collected in each county's Count is analyzed and aggregated to determine the total CoC results. The major findings of each jurisdiction's PIT Count are required and reported in its annual funding application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Results from the 2020 neighbor islands' PIT Counts, conducted on January 26, 2020, revealed the following:

- **Overall homelessness experienced a slight increase of less than 1%, from 1,995 persons in 2019 to 2,010 in 2020.**
- **Family homelessness rose by a modest 4%, from 177 families in 2019 to 184 in 2020.**
- **Veteran homelessness increased by 9%, from 121 veterans in 2019 to 132 in 2020.**
- **Youth homelessness escalated 55%, from 40 unaccompanied youth households in 2019 to 62 in 2020.**

The moderate increase of less than one percent of total homelessness across three counties can be attributed to a 16% increase on the island of Hawaii. In contrast, Kauai achieved a four percent decrease in total homelessness, while Maui declined nine percent overall which provided some offset for the increase in Hawaii.

The overall increase was prompted by a five percent increase in unsheltered homelessness, from 1,304 persons in 2020 compared to 1,237 in 2019. Unsheltered homelessness escalated on two of the Neighbor Islands, Hawaii (17%) and Kauai (six percent); and declined six percent on the island of Maui. This is the first annual increase in total unsheltered homelessness since 2016.

The count of homeless persons living in emergency or transitional shelters decreased seven percent from 758 to 706 persons, with decreases registering on Maui and Kauai. In December 2019, the new Keolahou emergency shelter opened in Hilo, Hawaii, which accounted for 24 of the sheltered homeless. This shelter opened as part of the Ohana Zones initiative and was included in the 2020 sheltered count. (In 2018, the Hawaii State Legislature appropriated \$30 million in Ohana Zone funds to address homelessness statewide. Projects receiving Ohana Zone funds are required to have a connection to state and county land and provide services to assist homeless individuals and families to access permanent housing.

NEIGHBOR ISLANDS STATISTICS AND TRENDS

The sections that follow provide summary statistics in aggregate and specifically for each of the three neighbor islands that supplied data in 2020. Table 1 summarizes the total number of

sheltered and unsheltered homeless over the last five years, while also providing the proportion of each component relative to the total.

Table 1: BTG Summary, 2016-2020

	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total
	#	%	#	%	#
2020	706	35.1%	1,304	64.9%	2,010
2019	758	38.0%	1,237	62.0%	1,995
2018	705	34.6%	1,330	65.4%	2,035
2017	785	34.7%	1,476	65.3%	2,261
2016	846	28.4%	2,135	71.6%	2,981

HAWAII COUNTY

2020 Regional Summary of Total Unsheltered Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Hawai'i County:

Region	Individuals		Family Individuals		All Individuals		Family Households	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1: North Kohala	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
2: Hamakua	19	4.4%	0	0.0%	19	3.6%	0	0.0%
3: North Hilo	1	0.2%	3	3.5%	4	0.8%	1	4.5%
4: South Hilo	185	42.4%	21	24.7%	206	39.5%	6	27.3%
5: Puna	66	15.1%	14	16.5%	80	15.4%	5	22.7%
6: Ka'u	11	2.5%	15	17.6%	26	5.0%	3	13.6%
7: South Kona	1	0.2%	5	5.9%	6	1.2%	1	4.5%
8: North Kona	132	30.3%	27	31.8%	159	30.5%	6	27.3%
9: South Kohala	21	4.8%	0	0.0%	21	4.0%	0	0.0%
Total	436	100.0%	85	100.0%	521	100.0%	22	100.0%

As a result of media and community interest in the numbers of recent arrivals to Hawai'i experiencing homelessness, Hawai'i County elected to add two questions to its 2020 unsheltered PIT survey.

- Did you move to Hawai'i within the past year?
- What led to your current living situation?

Thirty-seven (37) households, or 9%, indicated that they had moved to Hawai'i in the past year. These results are not surprising, as they are consistent with annual utilization data captured in our countywide homeless management information system (HMIS). Approximately 25% of recent arrivals reported that they would be interested in returning home.

As for the second question “*What led to your current living situation?*” This question allowed for only one selection per household, which was intended to be the primary reason that each household was living unsheltered on the night of the count. The most prevalent response leading to homelessness was family/relationship conflict, followed by the inability to pay rent. In total, these comprised two thirds of the responses.

While the 2019 to 2020 snapshot comparison reveals an increase in homelessness, **671 individuals (or 276 households) moved into housing since 2019’s count.** That is a housing placement rate of 65% during this timeframe.

Hawai’i County Summary Highlights

From 2019 to 2020:

1. Overall homelessness increased by 16% (from 690 persons in 2019 to 797 in 2020).
 - a. Unsheltered homelessness went up by 17% from the previous year (from 447 persons in 2019 to 521 in 2020).
 - b. Sheltered homelessness increased 14% (from 243 persons in 2019 to 276 in 2020).
2. Family homelessness increased by 24% (from 55 families in 2019 to 68 in 2020).
3. Chronic homelessness saw an upsurge of 42% (from 216 individuals and individuals in households in 2019 to 306 in 2020).
4. Veteran homelessness increased 24% (from 49 veterans in 2019 to 61 in 2020).

MAUI COUNTY

2020 Regional Summary of Total Unsheltered Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Maui County:

Region	Individuals		Family Individuals		All Individuals		Family Households	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1: Central Maui	144	41.6%	30	44.1%	174	42.0%	9	47.4%
2: Lower Waiehu	20	5.8%	15	22.1%	35	8.5%	3	15.8%
3: Up Country	34	9.8%	0	0.0%	34	8.2%	0	0.0%
4: Lahaina	73	21.1%	12	17.6%	85	20.5%	4	21.1%
5: Kihei	75	21.7%	11	16.2%	86	20.8%	3	15.8%
6: Hana	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	346	100.0%	68	100.0%	414	100.0%	19	100.0%

Maui is the only county in the State which has shown a consistent decline in total homelessness for four consecutive years since 2016. Cohesive, coordinated efforts in Maui ensured that individuals and families were triaged and assessed for appropriate levels of service.

1. Overall homelessness counts shrank by 9% (from 862 persons in 2019 to 789 in 2020).
 - a. Unsheltered homelessness experienced a 6% decline over the previous year (from 442 persons in 2019 to 414 in 2020).
 - b. Sheltered homelessness diminished by 11% (from 420 persons in 2019 to 375 in 2020).
2. Family homelessness decreased by 8% (from 90 families in 2019 to 83 families in 2020).
3. Chronic homelessness increased by 4% (from 250 individuals and individuals in households in 2019 to 259 in 2020).
4. Veteran homelessness experienced a moderate increase of 4% (from 46 veterans in 2019 to 48 veterans in 2020)

KAUA'I COUNTY

Regional Summary of Total Unsheltered Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Kaua'i County:

Zone	Individuals		Family Individuals		All Individuals		Family Households	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1: West	62	23.0%	53	53.0%	115	31.2%	13	50.0%
2: South	5	1.9%	0	0.0%	5	1.4%	0	0.0%
3: South Central	107	39.8%	32	32.0%	139	37.7%	9	34.6%
4: East	64	23.8%	6	6.0%	70	19.0%	2	7.7%
5: North	31	11.5%	9	9.0%	40	10.8%	2	7.7%
Total	269	100.0%	100	100.0%	369	100.0%	26	100.0%

After undergoing a dramatic increase of the total homeless count in 2019 from the previous year, the County of Kaua'i has executed its 2020 PIT Count with considerably more oversight and planning. The county leadership is confident that the 2020 count is a more realistic and accurate representation of the extent of homelessness on the island.

1. Overall homelessness decreased by 4% (from 443 persons in 2019 to 424 in 2020).
 - a. Unsheltered homelessness realized a moderate increase of 6% (from 348 persons in 2019 to 369 in 2020).
 - b. Sheltered homelessness markedly declined by 42% (from 95 persons in 2019 to 55 in 2020).
2. Family homelessness increased by a slim margin of 3% (from 32 families in 2019 to 33 in 2020).
3. Chronic homelessness was reduced by 10% (from 161 individuals and individuals in households in 2019 to 144 in 2020).
4. Veteran homelessness dropped by 12% (from 26 veterans in 2019 to 23 in 2020).

COMMUNITY ACTIONS TO ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS

Our State's economy is in a desperate descent sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The State's key economic engines, particularly the tourism and hospitality industries, as well as small businesses, have been severely impacted by closures and reduction of services. The domino effect is in full force across the State. Vital COVID 19 safety measures have been mandated, leading to layoffs or decreased hours for those who remain employed, resulting in the inability to pay for rents, mortgages, and necessities of everyday living.

While BTG's focus remains on housing the houseless, this unprecedented pandemic compels us to ramp up preventative measures for those without income, awaiting unemployment insurance benefits, and unable to make rent or pay their mortgages. Without intentional resources on this front, the resulting impact could exacerbate homelessness in our community. While State conversations are currently focused on potential budget cuts across the board and including social services, we implore State leadership to at a minimum, maintain current level of funding for outreach, emergency sheltering, rapid re-housing and housing first programs. At times when our State experienced reductions and budget cuts, homelessness in our State was at its worst.

BTG endorses the following actions to alleviate the extraordinary state of affairs presented by COVID-19:

1. EXPAND AND ENHANCE STREET OUTREACH

Individuals experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of exposure to a variety of infectious diseases including influenza and COVID-19. Street Outreach staff are often the only connection to high-risk persons living in encampments or places not meant for human habitation across the island. Health care professionals in partnership with Housing Navigators must be deployed as "Street Medicine Teams" to encampments to assess, treat and educate patients in need of medical assistance, and provide follow up evaluation and care as needed, delivering care directly to them in their own environment. It is the first essential step in achieving higher levels of medical, mental health, and social care and towards a pathway to securing housing and residential stability.

2. EXPAND HOMELESS PREVENTION & DIVERSION STRATEGIES

We must strengthen practices and increase system capacity to divert families from falling into homelessness. Homeless prevention resources are critical to assist households who may continue to need assistance when federal and state moratoria on evictions are lifted to avoid families from falling into homelessness. With the sudden spike of unemployment and an unknown time period of economic recovery, many families recently laid off in our communities will need access to rent, mortgage and utility assistance including arrears, short term and medium-term rent assistance.

3. INCREASE RAPID RE-HOUSING (RRH) & RENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families exit homelessness quickly and return to permanent housing by providing three core program

activities including housing identification, time limited financial assistance and housing-based case management services. Due to the lack of affordable housing in our community, households in Hawaii need long term rent subsidies.

4. INCREASE PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAMS

It is critical to prevent loss of housing among people who are living in permanent supportive housing or being served by rapid rehousing programs. For chronically homeless individuals (those with a disability and long history of homelessness), stable housing and supportive services is the foundation for stability. Permanent supportive housing programs are project-based, clustered, or scattered site permanent housing linked with supportive services that help residents maintain housing. This housing program is the right intervention for persons with the deepest needs where they may stay in this program indefinitely with temporary or long-term rental assistance and/or supportive services. This resource depleted by April 2020 in Maui and Hawaii Counties.

5. BUILD AND ACQUIRE AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

Hawai'i must continue to dedicate itself to increasing the supply of housing and creating new housing opportunities. BTG continues to prioritize movement to permanent housing, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Without increasing affordable housing opportunities, the flow becomes stagnant and creates a bottleneck at the shelters.