



2020 HAWAI'I COUNTY 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 Hawai‘i Island, 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).

HAWAI'I COUNTY STATISTICS AND TRENDS

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).

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

Table 1: Hawai'i Summary, 2016-2020

The 2020 PIT count demonstrates the reality of what our 2019 count should have reflected following the aftermath of two natural disaster disruptions in 2018. While a year-to-year comparison shows Hawai'i County experiencing a 16% overall increase in the last year, the data trend still holds steady with an 8% decrease from 2018.

	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Hawaii Total
	#	%	#	%	#
2020	276	34.6%	521	65.4%	797
2019	243	35.2%	447	64.8%	690
2018	200	23.0%	669	77.0%	869
2017	275	28.9%	678	71.1%	953
2016	271	19.4%	1,123	80.6%	1,394

Table 2: 2020 Hawai'i Household Configuration Summary: presents the sheltered and unsheltered household configuration statistics for Hawai'i County.

	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Hawai'i Total
	#	%	#	%	#
Individuals	117	21.2%	436	78.8%	553
Family Individuals	159	65.2%	85	34.8%	244
Adults	76	67.9%	36	32.1%	112
Children	83	62.9%	49	37.1%	132
All Individuals	276	34.6%	521	65.4%	797
Family Households	46	67.6%	22	32.4%	68

Regional Summary

Table 3: 2020 Regional Summary of Total Unsheltered Persons Experiencing Homelessness (specific to Hawai'i County regions identified for the PIT Count, see attached map)

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%

Additional Survey Questions

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 the following questions to its 2020 unsheltered PIT survey.

- Did you move to Hawai'i within the past year?
 - If Yes, what State/Country did you come from?
 - If Yes, are you interested in returning home?
 - If Yes, why did you come to Hawaii?
- 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 fairly 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.

Table 5 presents the data from the 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 a family/relationship conflict, followed by the inability to pay rent. In total, these comprised two thirds of the responses. The table below includes modified categories that differ from the choices on the final unsheltered survey tool. This provides more detail on the 170 “Other” responses which were collected during the unsheltered canvassing.

Table 5: What led to your current living situation? (Select one)

	Family Households with Minor Children	Individual Households	Total
Choose to Live Unsheltered	1	28	29
Chronic Disability	0	5	5
Family/Relationship conflict	8	155	163
Incarceration	0	9	9
Kilauea eruption	1	6	7
Lack of Affordable Housing	1	13	14
Lost my job	0	13	13
Medical emergency	1	16	17
Mental Illness	0	4	4
Other	1	9	10
Substance Use	0	9	9
Unable to pay rent	8	105	113
Unknown	1	21	22
Total	22	393	415

Discussion of Unsheltered Results

This year’s count saw an increase in unsheltered homelessness. Natural disasters have likely played a role in increasing the numbers of people experiencing homelessness. In 2018 Hawai‘i County was hit by two major disasters — The Kilauea eruption, Hurricane Lane, both of which damaged and/or destroyed a significant number of homes, with damage from the eruption concentrated in an already struggling area of Puna. With last year’s count held shortly after the Kilauea eruption that destroyed over 700+ homes and mass land coverage, areas in lower puna where encampments existed were now covered by lava and or areas inaccessible. While data showed a decrease of homelessness last year in that region, we suspect a continued rise in those living unsheltered because of these disasters, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another factor considered for the increase in unsheltered homelessness is the varying weather in 2019 to 2020. Although Homeless Outreach staff often have relationships with members of such camps, the members often do not have working cell phones to contact staff, and for those who do,

informing homeless outreach staff of their change in location likely is not a priority during a move to avoid danger. It should be noted that much of the 2019 Count was conducted during downpour rain throughout the week, while the weather was mostly clear for the 2020 Count.

Another possible factor that accounts for the increase was a modification in counting methods, to ensure we count people who otherwise would be difficult to contact. While in past years, volunteers have generally counted each area only once per day, in the early morning hours, this year volunteers visited hotspots frequented by people experiencing homelessness in the evening as well. Hotspots included downtown Hilo from the lighthouse to Wailoa State Park, the civic industrial area, and from Reed's Bay to Kings Landing in Hilo, as well as the stretch between the Old Kona Airport and the end of Ali'i Drive. In addition, with the pilot of the new Street Medicine program where health care professionals provided medical attention where they lived, advocates and volunteers likely engaged with people who otherwise wouldn't have been present, or would have avoided unfamiliar survey takers.

Discussion of Sheltered Results

An increase in sheltered homelessness by thirty (30) people is a direct outcome of the opening of the neighbor islands' first Ohana Zone project, Keolahou Emergency Shelter. This shelter provides twenty-five (25) new emergency shelter beds for adult men at a county owned facility known to locals as the Old Hilo Hospital.

Looking Ahead in Hawai'i County

Although we are facing the greatest health pandemic in modern history, we are committed to continuing our work to ensure that homelessness on Hawai'i Island is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. The County of Hawai'i partnered with Neighborhood Place of Puna and HOPE Services to construct Hale Hanakahi, a community of thirty-two (32) temporary micro-shelters for elderly or immunocompromised individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the County of Hawai'i and HOPE Services have partnered with the Holiday Inn Express and Kamuela Inn to offer hotel rooms for high-risk individuals as well. Several other projects are also in the works, including the construction of eighteen (18) additional micro-shelters for temporary emergency shelters due to COVID-19 response; additional twenty five (25) emergency shelter capacity at Keolahou upon the County's completion of additional shower, laundry and kitchen equipment in the Summer of 2020; a transition to a gender specific emergency shelter for persons identifying as female; sixteen (16) new emergency shelters in Kailua-Kona (Kukuiola) and an additional fifty (50) new supportive housing units at two locations in Pahoa (Sacred Heart Community) and Hilo (Keolahou). The County of Hawaii also plans to set aside one hundred (100) Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8) and provide a preference to households referred by the county's Coordinated Entry System.

COMMUNITY ACTION 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.