



County of San Luis Obispo

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

COMMUNITY REPORT

2026

CA-614 Continuum of Care



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to the 261 volunteers whose time, energy, and dedication made the 2026 San Luis Obispo County Point-in-Time (PIT) Count possible. The success of this effort reflects the strength of collaboration across our community and the shared commitment to addressing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County, and the Cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo for their continued partnership and support.

We also thank the organizations that provided leadership and guidance for the PIT Count including the Point-In-Time Count Committee, the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC), Office of Education, and the County Board of Supervisors. Conducting the Count using local resources would not have been possible without their support and the technical expertise of departments under their direction including the Department of Social Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology Department GIS team.

Thank you to the student interns of California Polytechnical Institute- San Luis Obispo, including Yaneli Cruz, Isreal Perez Pedraza, Brooksley Pruitt, Nina Radovanovic, Manikandan Ravi, Miguel Serrano Vazeuez, and Edwin Majana Villalobos. Their energy and fresh perspectives provided were a welcome addition to the planning, execution, and data analysis of the 2026 PIT Count.

Special appreciation is extended to the homeless service providers and staff who supported the 2026 PIT Count survey efforts, including 5 Cities Homeless Coalition, Center for Family Strengthening, Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO), Good Samaritan, El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), Family Care Network, Lumina Alliance, Oxnard Family Circle and Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA).

We also recognize and thank the individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness who contributed their insight, guidance, and support throughout the Point-in-Time Count process, including those who served on the PIT Count Committee and volunteered as survey guides.

Finally, we extend our deepest appreciation to our neighbors experiencing homelessness who shared their stories and experiences with us. Their voices remain central to this work and continue to guide our collective efforts toward lasting solutions to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

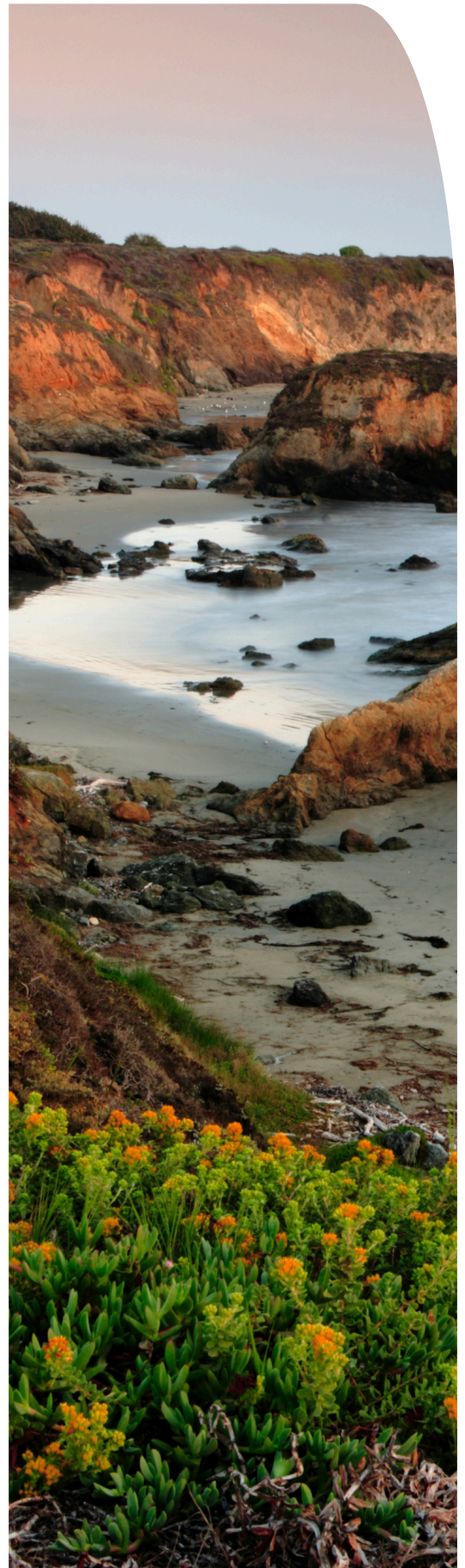


Table of Contents

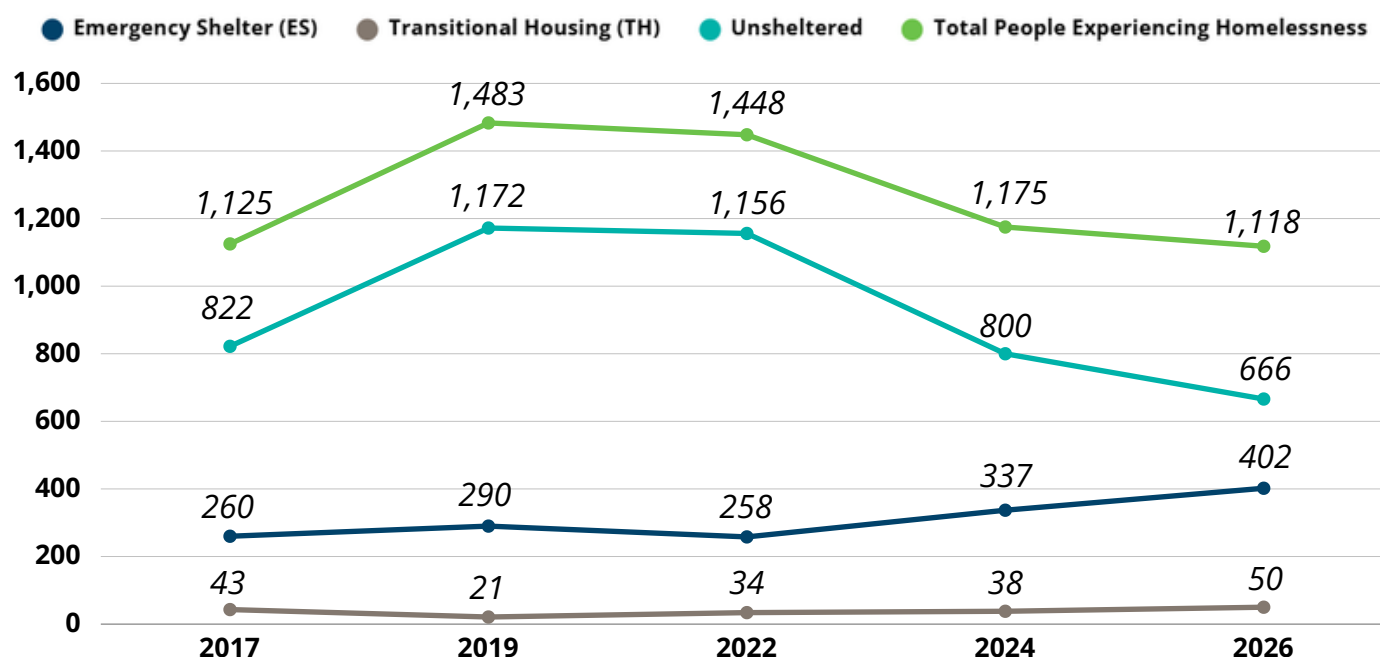
<i>Executive Summary</i>	4
<i>Background</i>	6
<i>2026 Point-in-Time: By the Numbers</i>	7
<i>Regional Breakouts</i>	10
<i>Household Types</i>	11
<i>Demographics</i>	12
<i>Sleep Accommodations & Time in County</i>	19
<i>Housing Inventory Count</i>	20
<i>Overall Analysis</i>	23
<i>Methodology</i>	24
<i>Limitations</i>	26

Executive Summary

The 2026 Point-in-Time Count demonstrates meaningful and measurable progress in addressing homelessness in the County of San Luis Obispo, and this progress becomes even more compelling when viewed across a longer timeline. While the County saw encouraging gains between 2024 and 2026, the broader trend from 2022 to 2026 tells a powerful story. There was a 42% reduction in unsheltered homelessness and a 22% reduction in total homelessness over four years. These outcomes reflect the cumulative impact of sustained outreach, strengthened housing programs, and deepening community collaboration.

Compared to 2024, the County continued to see substantial reductions in unsheltered homelessness and a significant decline in Veteran homelessness. These results underscore the effectiveness of coordinated engagement strategies and targeted housing interventions.

Figure 1 - San Luis Obispo Biennial Point in Time Count, All Project Types 2017-2026



Executive Summary (cont.)

Despite these positive trends, the data also highlights persistent challenges among individuals with the highest service needs. Nearly one-third (29 percent, or 327 individuals) met the federal definition of chronic homelessness, and 84 percent of interviewed unsheltered individuals reported experiencing homelessness for more than one year. Behavioral health concerns remain prevalent, with 194 adults reporting a serious mental illness, 269 reporting a substance use disorder, and 155 reporting they were fleeing domestic violence.

The Housing Inventory Count identifies areas where the system can strengthen performance. While the County has invested in a broad array of housing resources, existing capacity may not be fully utilized. This indicates opportunities to streamline referrals, reduce barriers, and improve placement pathways to maximize available housing programs.

Looking ahead, continued momentum will require expanding permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness, reinforcing behavioral health and substance use treatment partnerships, improving engagement strategies to reduce observation-only data collection during unsheltered counts, increasing utilization of current housing resources, and deepening collaboration with education partners to better understand and respond to youth and family homelessness.

Overall, the 2026 Point-in-Time Count reflects real progress and a multi-year trend of meaningful improvement. It also reinforces the importance of sustained, coordinated, and data-driven efforts to make homelessness in the County of San Luis Obispo increasingly rare, brief, and non-recurring.



Background

The Annual Point-in-Time and Housing Inventory Count (PIT/HIC) are federally mandated submissions to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) utilized to monitor national and local progress towards preventing and ending homelessness. The annual Point-In-Time (PIT) only provides counts of individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness.

The biennial Point-in-Time (PIT) provides counts of Sheltered and Unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness broken out by household type(s) and/or subpopulation(s).

Sheltered Homelessness refers to individuals or families experiencing homelessness who reside in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens on the night of the PIT Count and have accessed temporary housing assistance.

Unsheltered Homelessness denotes individuals or families experiencing homelessness who are living in places not meant for human habitation, such as streets, parks, abandoned buildings, vehicles, or other locations not designed for residential purposes. They lack access to emergency shelter or transitional housing

The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is a companion to the PIT and is an inventory of organizations within the Continuum of Care (CoC) that provide residential beds and units dedicated to serving persons experiencing homelessness.

It should be noted, that the PIT/HIC is a count of persons experiencing homelessness **on a single night** in SLO County and do not reflect the total number of persons served by the homeless services system over the course of the year. The data in this report primarily focuses on the County trends for PIT counts, but also makes references to quarterly datasets that more accurately represent subpopulations over time. For additional insight into the homeless services data over time, community members are encouraged to access the [HMIS Quarterly Homelessness Dashboard](#).



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

The County of San Luis Obispo 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count was conducted on Monday, January 26, 2026. This date aligns with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data collection requirements to count during the last ten days of January.

During the PIT Count, a total of 1,118 individuals were identified as experiencing homelessness in the County of San Luis Obispo. There were 666 individuals counted who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Data collected from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or a comparable database identified 452 individuals who were experiencing sheltered homelessness and residing in either emergency shelter or transitional housing.

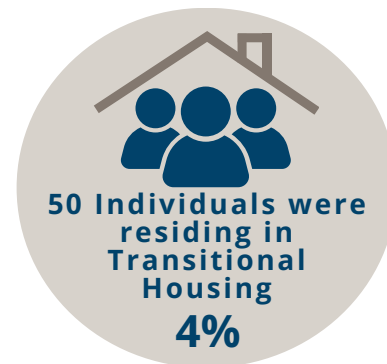
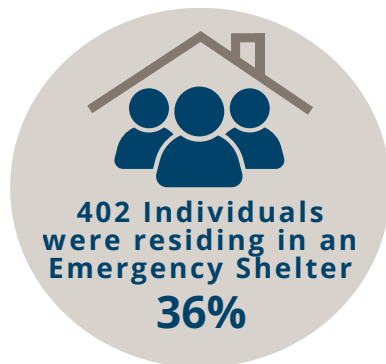


County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers



Out of the 1,118 individuals counted, 40% were residing in emergency shelters or transitional housing



Out of the 1,118 individuals counted, 60% were experiencing unsheltered homelessness

Figure 2 - Sheltered & Unsheltered Trends 2022 - 2026

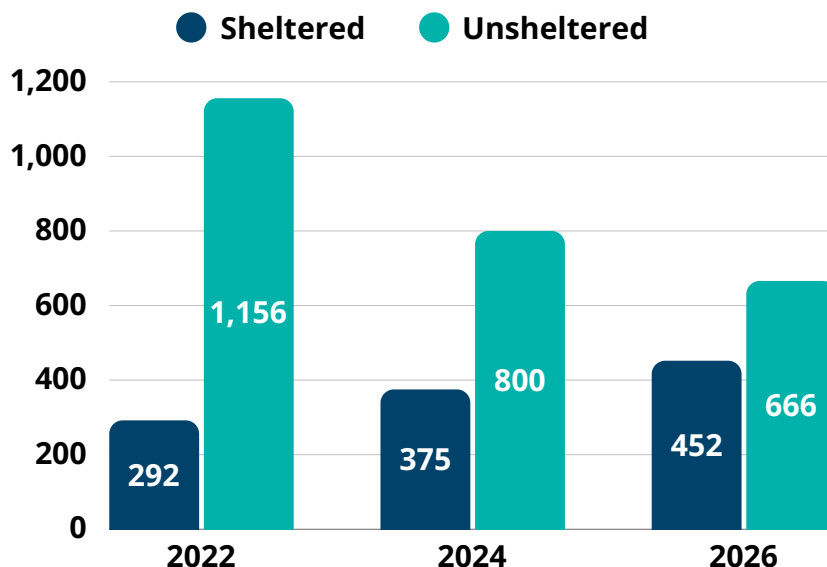


Figure 2 – Sheltered & Unsheltered Trends 2022-2026 illustrates a 5% decrease in the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness in SLO County since 2024, including a 17% reduction in the unsheltered count. There was an increase of 4% in the sheltered count since 2025.

Inclement weather shelters were activated on the night of the count on January 26, 2026.

Note: An increase in the sheltered count is a positive increase for the community, demonstrating the expansion of local resources that can accommodate individuals seeking shelter.

County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

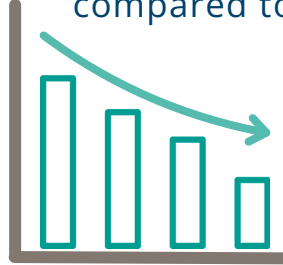


17%

Total **unsheltered** decrease compared to 2024

Individuals identified as experiencing **unsheltered** homelessness on January 26, 2026

666

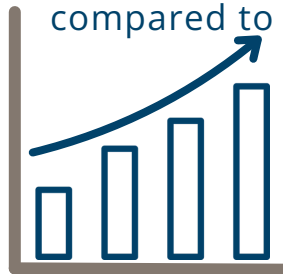


4%

Total **sheltered** increase compared to 2025

Individuals identified as experiencing **sheltered** homelessness on January 26, 2026

452



5%

Total decrease in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness since 2024



25

Local homeless services projects contributing data to the 2026 **sheltered** count



Households **without children**

87%

13%

Households **with both adults & children**



Households with **children only**

0%

County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

Logistic centers were established during the PIT Planning process. Data from the count was then aggregated by these geographical locations: SLO, North County, South County and Coastal.

- **SLO**
 - City of San Luis Obispo
- **North County**
 - Santa Margarita
 - Atascadero
 - Templeton
 - Paso Robles
 - San Miguel
- **Coastal**
 - Los Osos
 - Morro Bay
 - Cayucos
 - Cambria
- **South County**
 - Avila Beach
 - Pismo Beach
 - Grover Beach
 - Arroyo Grande
 - Oceano
 - Nipomo

Figure 3 - Total Percent by Region

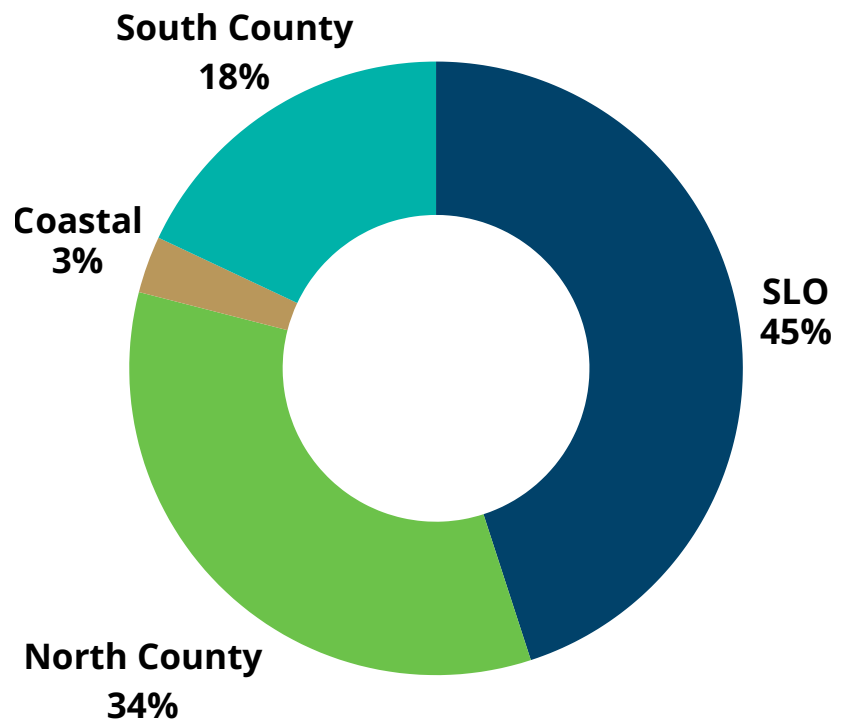
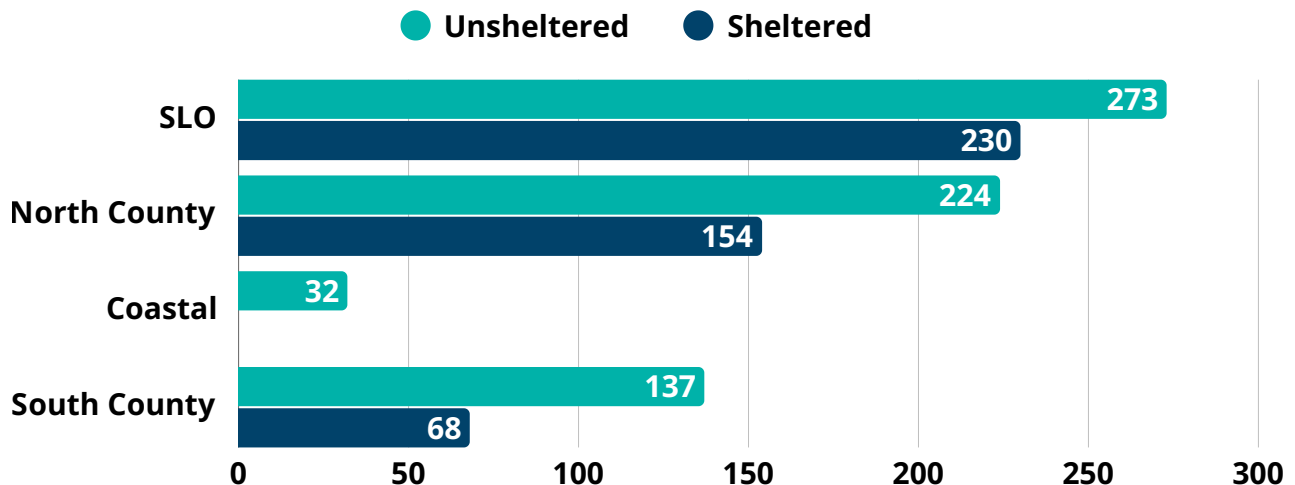


Figure 4 - Persons Experiencing Homelessness by Region



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

HOUSEHOLD TYPES

The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness, across both sheltered and unsheltered populations, were members of households without children (87%). Thirteen percent of all individuals experiencing homelessness were in households composed of adults and children, defined as groups including at least one person aged 18 or under.

No households with adults and children were identified as unsheltered. Additionally, none of the individuals counted (0%) were in households with children only, defined as households in which all members were under the age of 18.

Figure 5 - Persons by Household Type

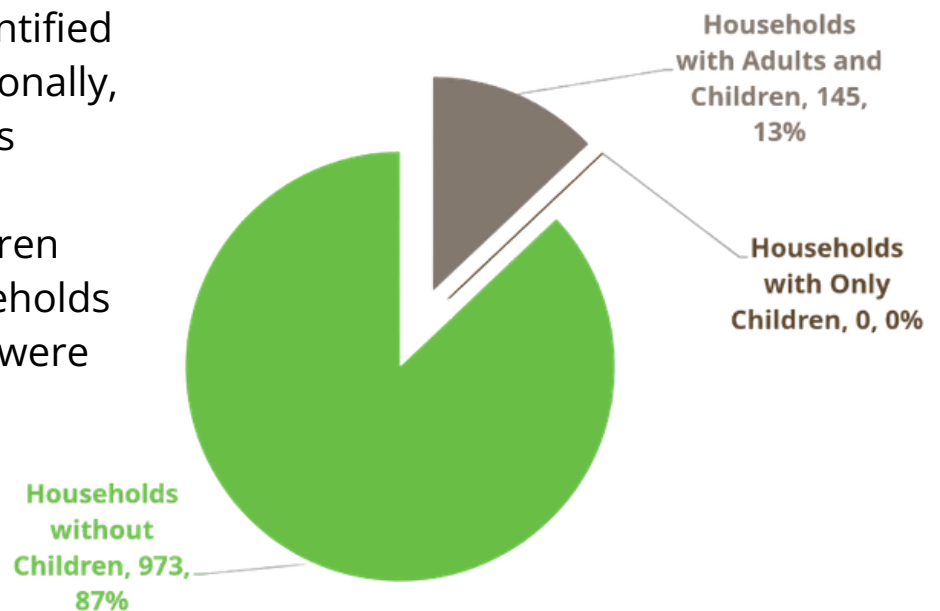
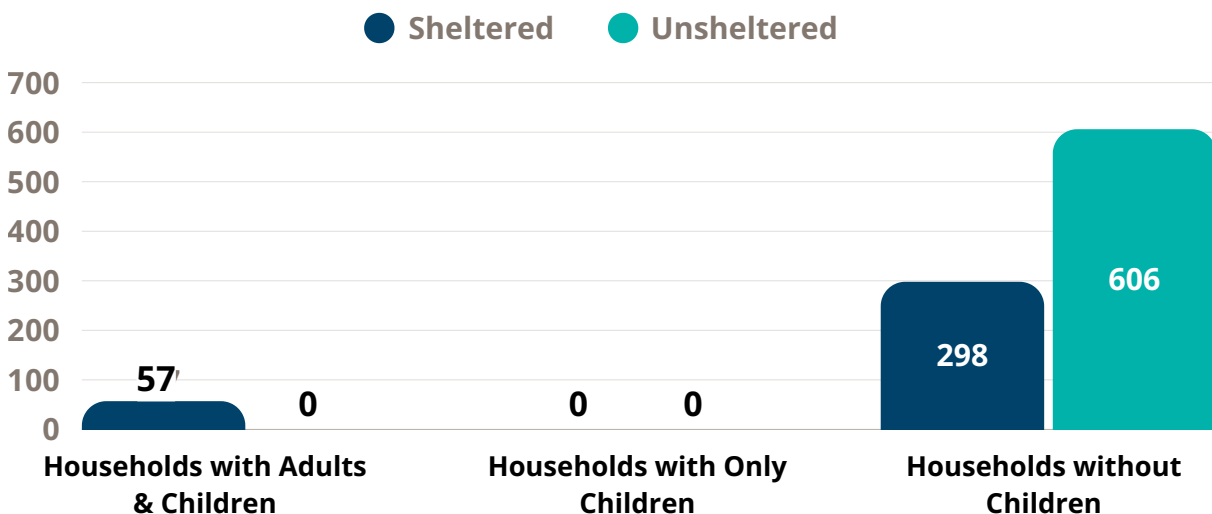


Figure 6 - 2026 Sheltered & Unsheltered Persons by Household Type



County of San Luis Obispo

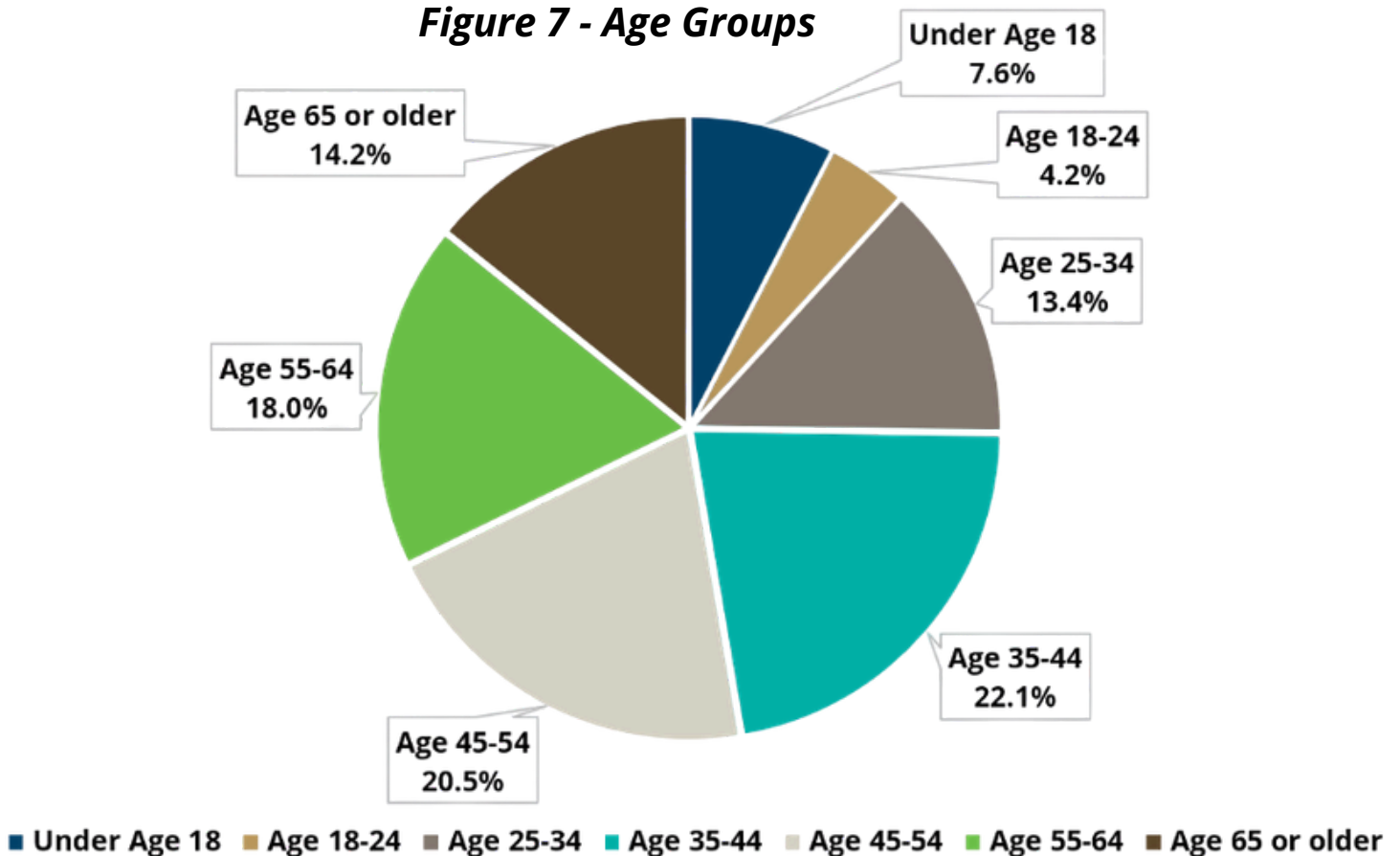
2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Age

The age distributions of all individuals experiencing homelessness in the 2026 PIT count are detailed in *Figure 7- Age Groups* below. On the night of the count, 32.2% of individuals were aged 55 or older, with 14.2% of those individuals age 65 or over.

Figure 7 - Age Groups



Race & Ethnicity

Figure 8 – Reported Race & Ethnicity shows the extrapolated data collected for race and ethnicity. The majority of all individuals identified as White (61%) or White and Hispanic (6%). Additionally, 15% identified as Hispanic only, 6% identified as multi-racial, and another 1% as both multi-racial and Hispanic. Of the surveyed individuals, 5% identified as American Indian, Alaska Native or Indigenous with another 1% including Hispanic in this category. Three percent (3%) identified as Black, African American, or African.

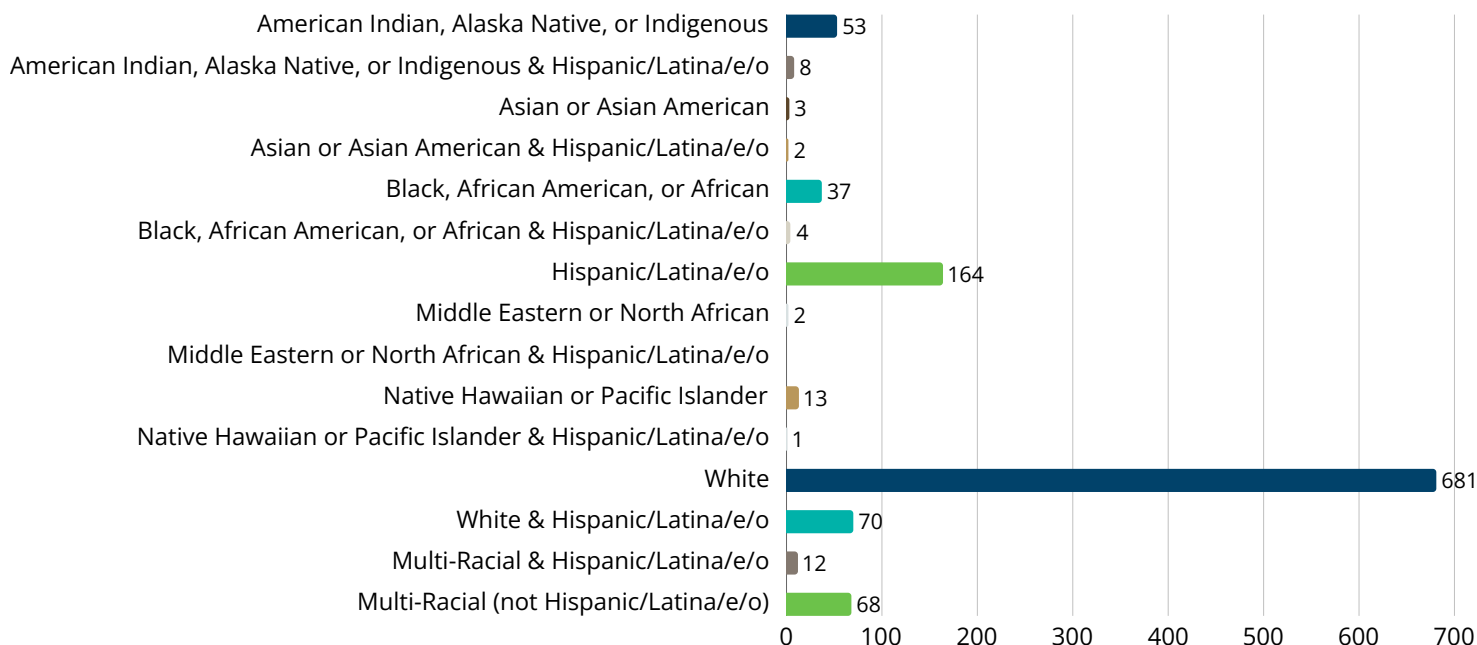
County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

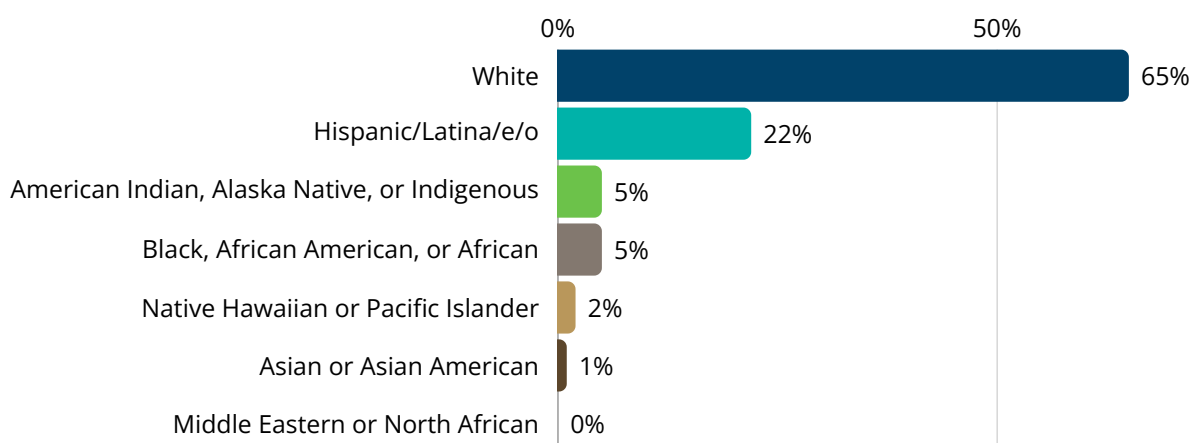
Race & Ethnicity *continued*

Figure 8 - Reported Race & Ethnicity



The State of California's Interagency Council on Homelessness (CA-ICH) published expanded methodology for race and ethnicity calculations to minimize how the grouping of "Multiple Races" obscures groups. The CA-ICH breakout methodology is shown in *figure 9*. The breakouts further identify individuals who selected multiple races by including them in each category selected. This expands the total data set and identifies individuals in each group they self-identified with, rather than collapsing them into the HUD defined categories. We can see from this analysis, that individuals identifying as Black, African American or African, Hispanic/ Latina/o, Asian or Asian American, American Indian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander are clearly identified in the population.

Figure 9 - CA-ICH Racial Breakout Percent



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Chronic Homelessness

In the 2026 PIT Count, 29% of the 1,118 individuals counted (327 people) met [HUD's definition of chronic homelessness](#). *Figure 10* shows chronic homelessness among groups that qualify as chronically homeless, with 47% of individuals and families in emergency shelters meeting the criteria, compared to 21% of those who were unsheltered.

Since 2024, the data shows a 50% decrease in unsheltered chronically homeless individuals and a 150% increase among those in emergency shelter programs, demonstrating the system's increased capacity to serve those most vulnerable. When these groups are combined, the overall change reflects an 8% decrease in chronic homelessness on the night of the PIT Count.

These PIT Count percentages are notably lower than those reported in the [San Luis Obispo County Quarterly Homelessness Dashboard for Quarter 4 of 2025](#), which shows that 41% (628 of 1,515) of people served in homeless programs were experiencing chronic homelessness.

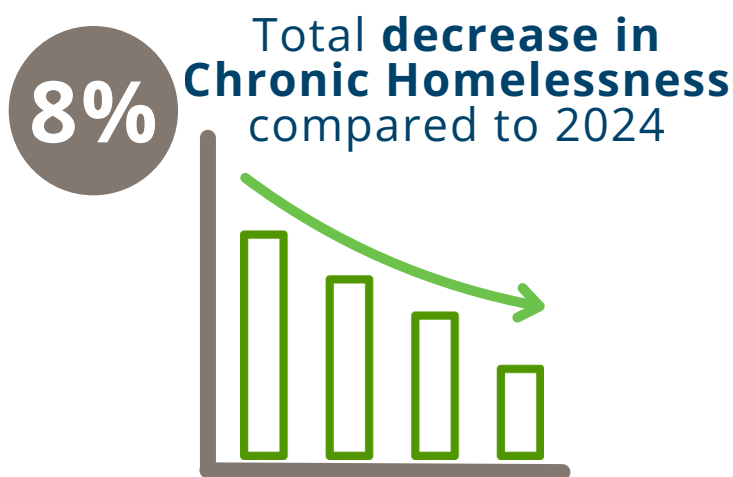
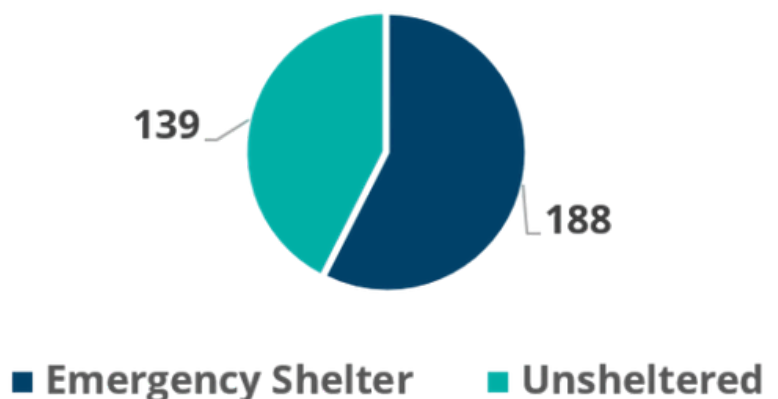


Figure 10 - Individuals Experiencing Chronic Homelessness



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Veterans

In 2026, there were 25 Veterans identified in the PIT count. *Figure 11 – Veterans Experiencing Homelessness* demonstrates these totals. Since 2024, Veteran homelessness has declined by 47%, as shown in the totals in *Figure 12- Veteran Homelessness Trends*.

The CoC and Veterans Affairs (VA) collaborate to ensure that Veteran case conferencing occurs regularly. Additionally, Supportive Services for Veteran Families and HUD VASH Permanent Housing programs have contributed to this significant decline.

Figure 11 - Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

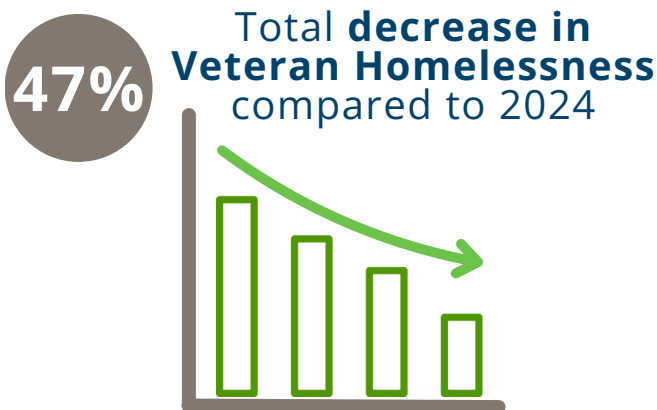
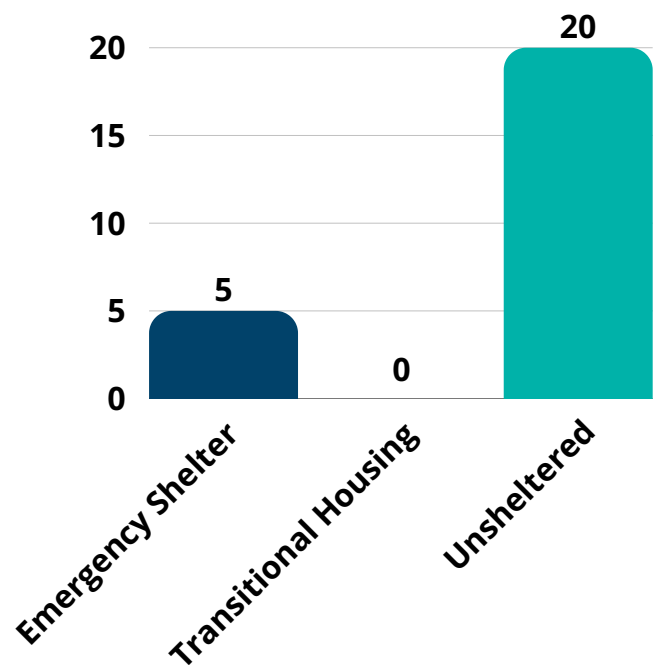
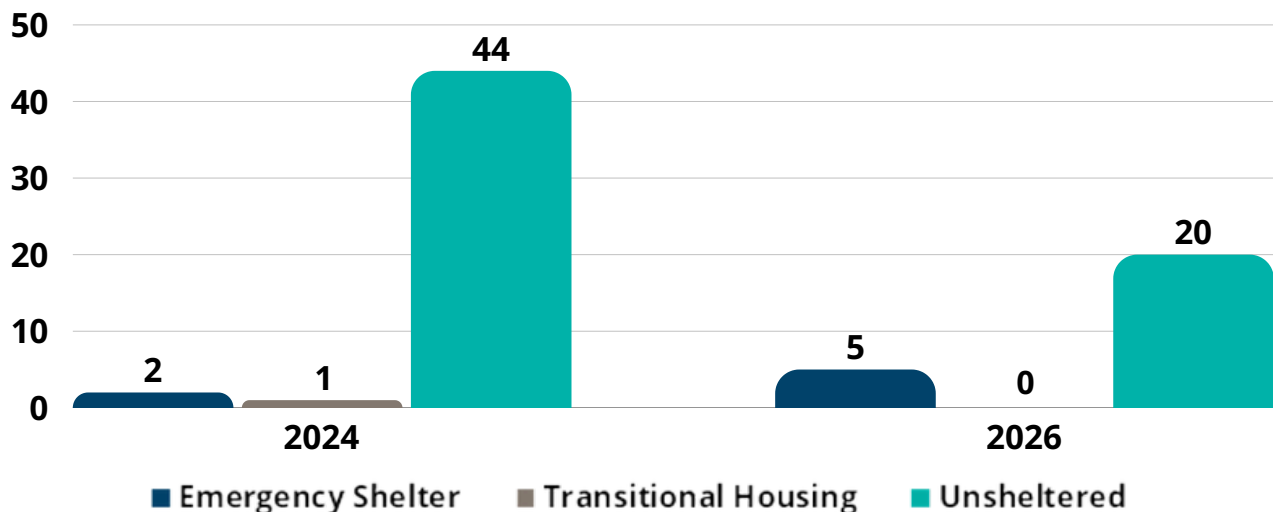


Figure 12 - Veteran Homelessness Trends



County of San Luis Obispo

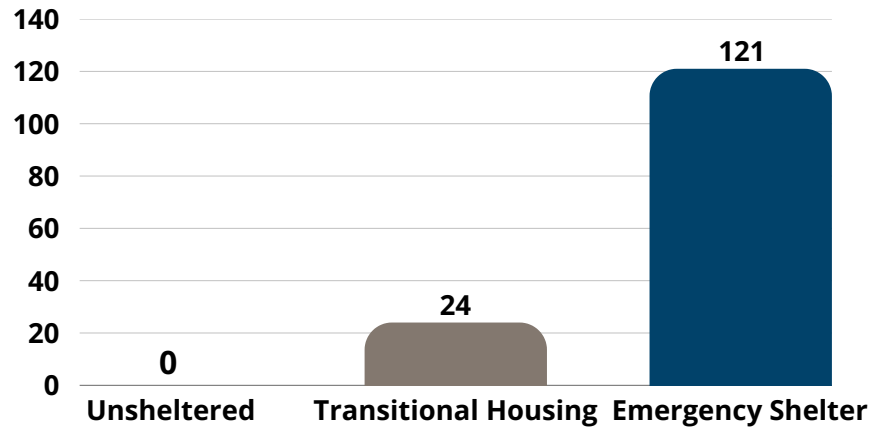
2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Adults with Children

Figure 13 – Persons in Households with both Adults and Children demonstrates that zero households were identified in the unsheltered count. There were 24 persons in families served in transitional housing and 121 residing in emergency shelter on the night of the count.

Figure 13 - Adults with Children

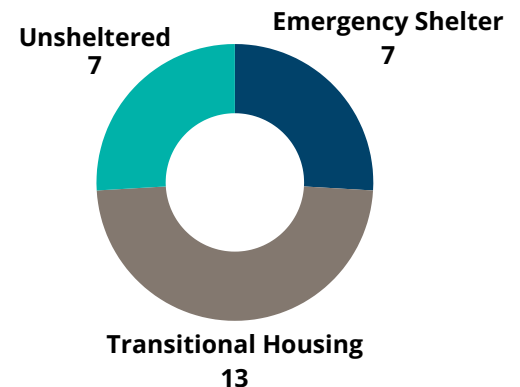


Unaccompanied Youth

Individuals between the ages of 18-24 who are unaccompanied by anyone over the age of 25 or are under the age of 18 are categorized as unaccompanied youth. *Figure 14 – Unaccompanied Youth* shows 2% (27 out of 1,118) of individuals in the total PIT count meeting these criteria, which is consistent with the 2024 PIT count.

The [San Luis Obispo County Quarterly Homelessness Dashboard for Quarter 4 of 2025](#) identified 9% of all individuals to be unaccompanied youth. While there were no individuals under the age of 18 identified as unaccompanied in the 2026 PIT count, the San Luis Obispo School District identified 3,959 students as homeless during their enrollment in 24-25 School Year. Of those students, 5.4% of them were in temporary shelters and another 7.6% were temporarily unsheltered. This subpopulation is a special area of focus for Continuum of Care planning efforts and funding from both state and federal grants are being sought out to further support this subpopulation.

Figure 14 - Unaccompanied Youth



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Additional Subpopulations

HUD requests additional subpopulation data as shown in *Figure 15 - Additional Subpopulations*. **NOTE:** These responses are self-reported from those who agreed to be surveyed and may not represent every person experiencing homelessness.

● Emergency Shelter (ES) ● Transitional Housing (TH) ● Unsheltered

Figure 15.1 - Number of Adults with a Serious Mental Illness

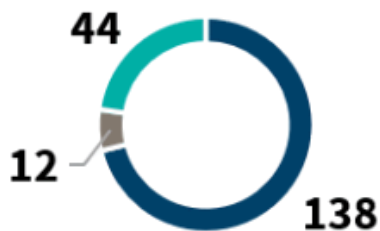


Figure 15.2 - Number of Adults with a Substance Use Disorder

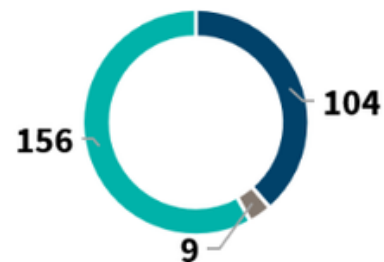


Figure 15.3 - Number of Adults Fleeing Domestic Violence (DV)

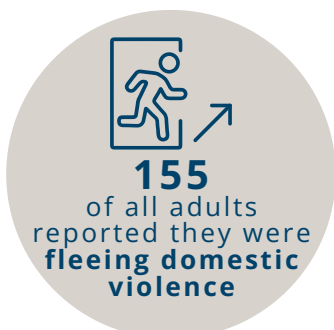
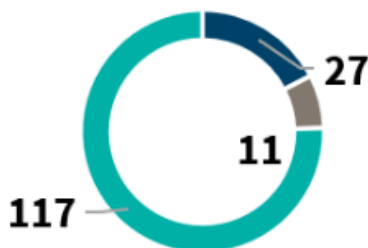
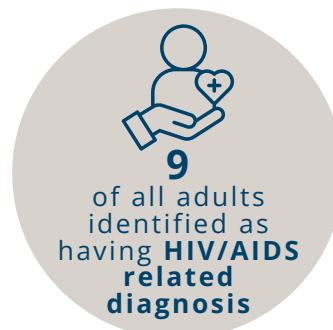
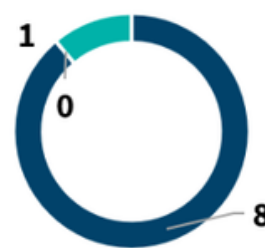


Figure 15.4- Number of Adults with HIV/AIDS



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

Duration and Recurrence

Unsheltered clients in the community tend to have extensive homeless histories. These clients often experience long-term homelessness (more than 12 months) at significantly higher rates compared to those in other living situations (i.e. shelter, temporary housing, etc.). The 2026 PIT Count found that 84% (285) of individuals had been experiencing homelessness for more than 12 months.

Figure 16 - Duration and Recurrence & Figure 17 - Percent of Individuals Identifying as First Time Homeless below show the responses of those with interview responses in the unsheltered count. Of the individuals included in the unsheltered count, 51% of them were included with observational data only and those individuals were excluded from this graph.

Figure 16 - Duration and Recurrence

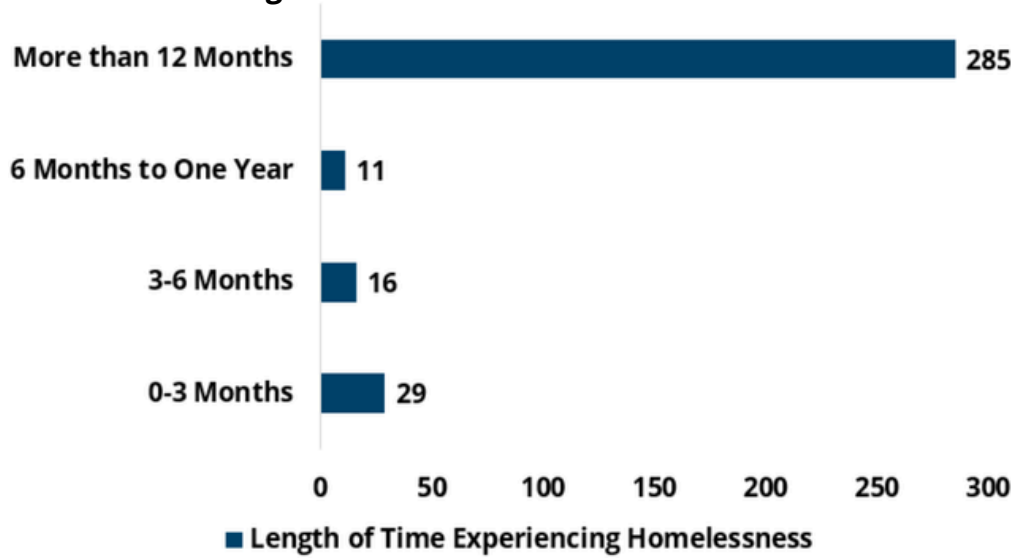
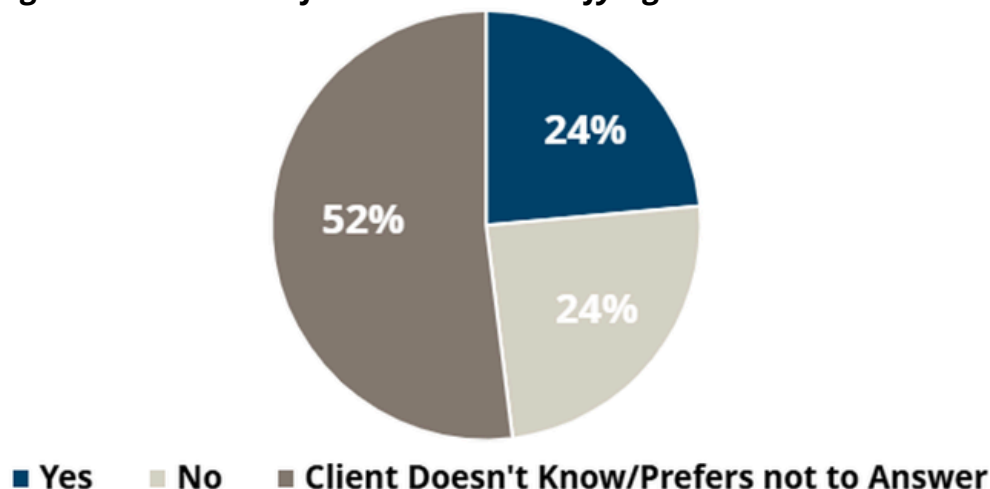


Figure 17 - Percent of Individuals Identifying as First Time Homeless



County of San Luis Obispo

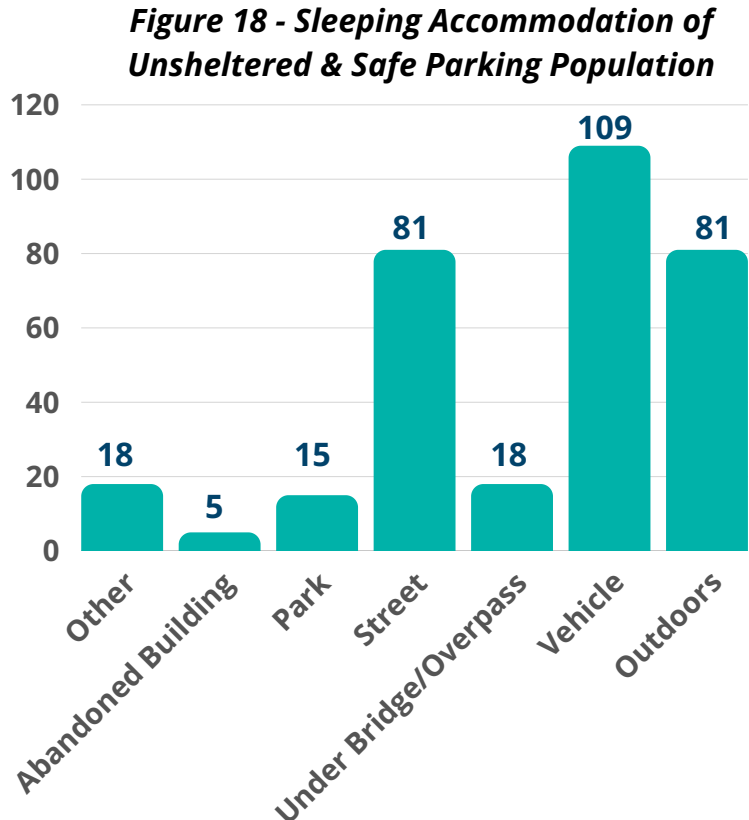
2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

SLEEP ACCOMMODATIONS & TIME IN COUNTY

Sleep Accommodations

The persistent, but narrowing gap in the available shelter beds compared to those experiencing homelessness in San Luis Obispo County was evidenced by the number of unsheltered individuals (n=666) exceeding those who were in shelter or transitional housing (n=452).

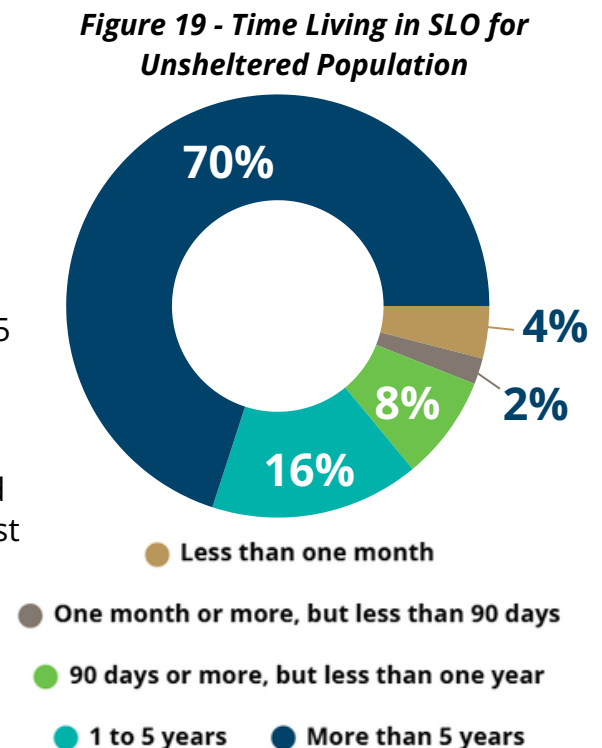
Those unsheltered locations can be broken down into the categories in the figure below, with vehicular homelessness exceeding other single categories. However, a 59% (n=195) majority of sleeping locations were reported to be outside of any structure or vehicle on the night of the PIT Count.



County Residency

Over the past decade of enumerating the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County, the Continuum of Care has sought to understand the degree to which the homeless population has ties to the area. Going back to the 2015 PIT Count, surveyors asked respondents one or more questions about length of time in the County and location at the point of loss of housing. In the 2015 survey, over half of respondents lived in the County for 10 years or more.

In the 2022, 92% of the 292 respondents indicated they were living in the county at the time they most recently became homeless. Similarly, in the 2026 survey, 86% of respondents have lived in the county for a year or more, with the majority of those in the county for more than 5 years.



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

HOUSING INVENTORY COUNT

Bed Inventory

The annual Housing Inventory Count (HIC) is an opportunity to review the utilization of current bed capacity within project types. In addition to the total number of available beds (bed inventory) for the project, the total client count for the night of the PIT count is reported for each project.

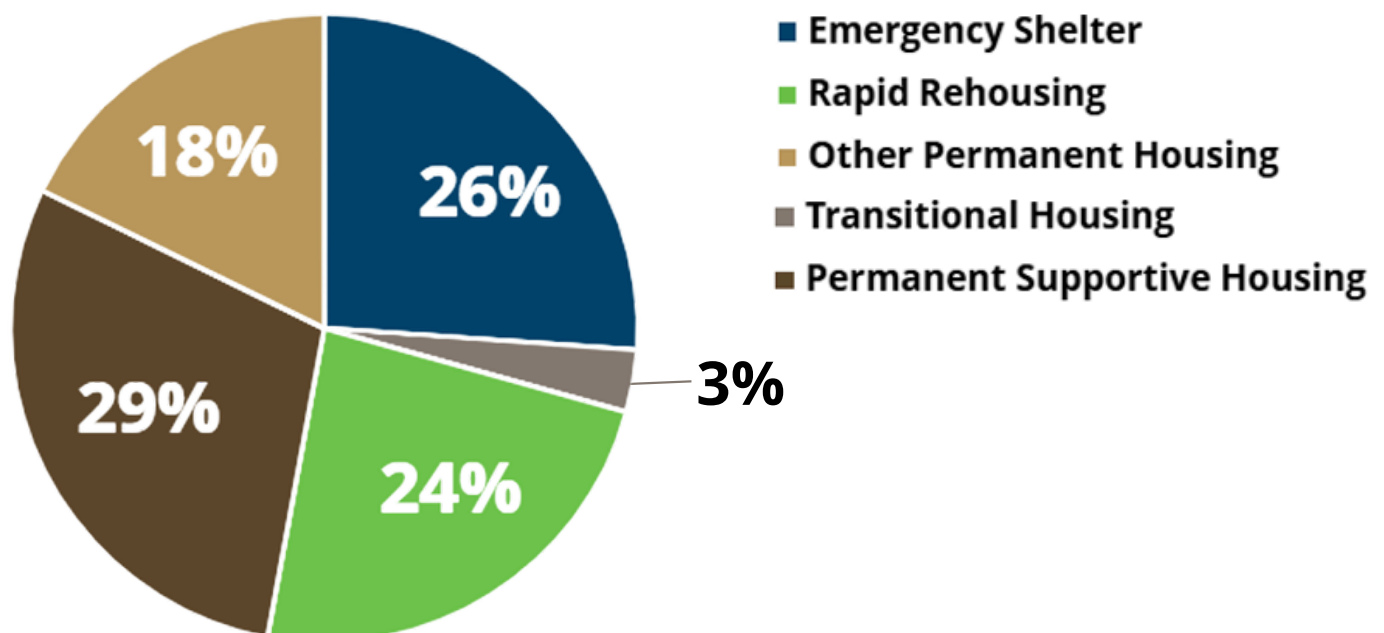
NOTE: For emergency shelter and transitional housing projects below, the client count includes the total number of individuals residing in the project on the night of the PIT count.

For permanent housing, permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing and other permanent housing projects, the total client count includes only individuals **housed** on the night of the count; additional clients enrolled into the projects who had not obtained housing or moved into a unit by the night of the PIT count are not included in the counts below.

All Housing Inventory

Figure 20 - *Housing Inventory Distribution* below represents the distribution of the CoC's residential projects dedicated to serve individuals experiencing homelessness. The data below show significant investments in permanent housing (permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing and other permanent housing) over emergency shelter and transitional housing beds.

Figure 20 - Housing Inventory Distribution



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

HOUSING INVENTORY COUNT

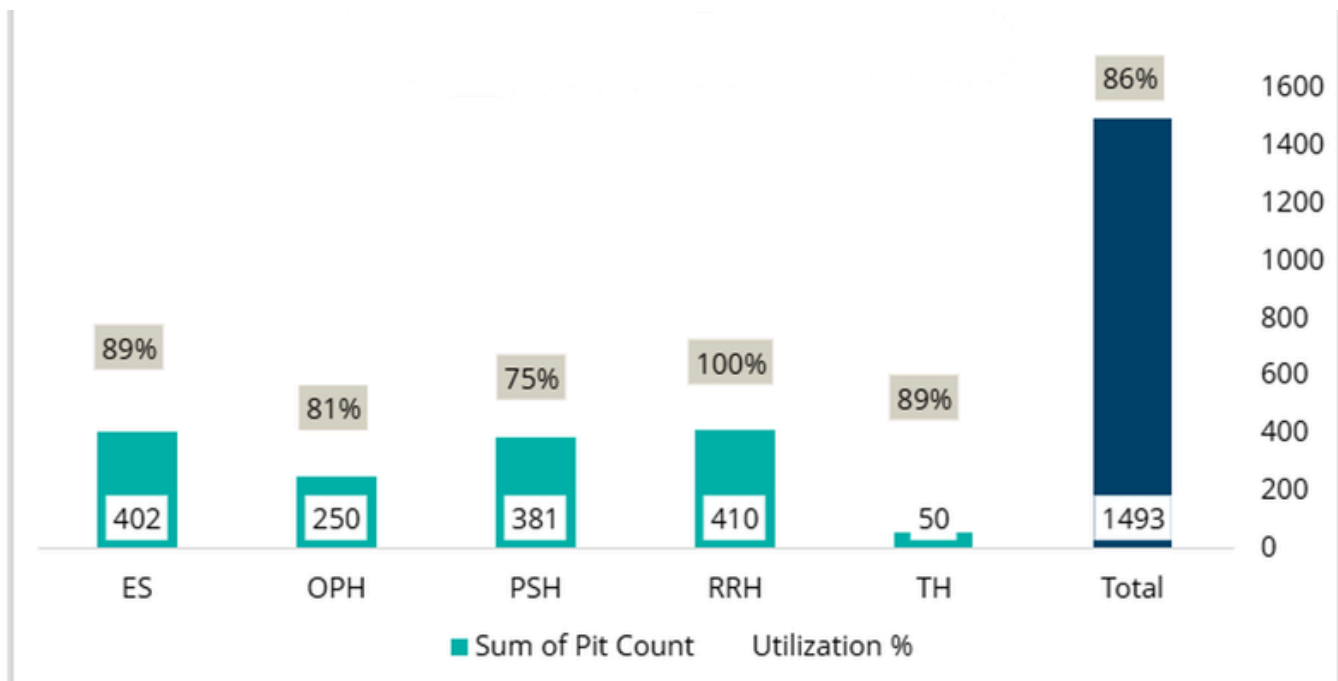
Utilization

Utilization percentages for each project type are illustrated in *Figure 21 - 2026 Housing Inventory and Utilization*. Eighty-nine (89%) percent of emergency shelter beds and 89% of transitional housing beds were utilized on the night of the PIT count.

For permanent housing providers, 75% of PSH beds were occupied and 81% of the “other” type permanent housing beds were occupied on the night of the count.

Note: clients who were referred to or approved for PSH/ OPH but not yet moved into their designated unit are not included in these totals.

Figure 21 - 2026 Housing Inventory and Utilization



County of San Luis Obispo 2026 Point-in-Time Count By the Numbers

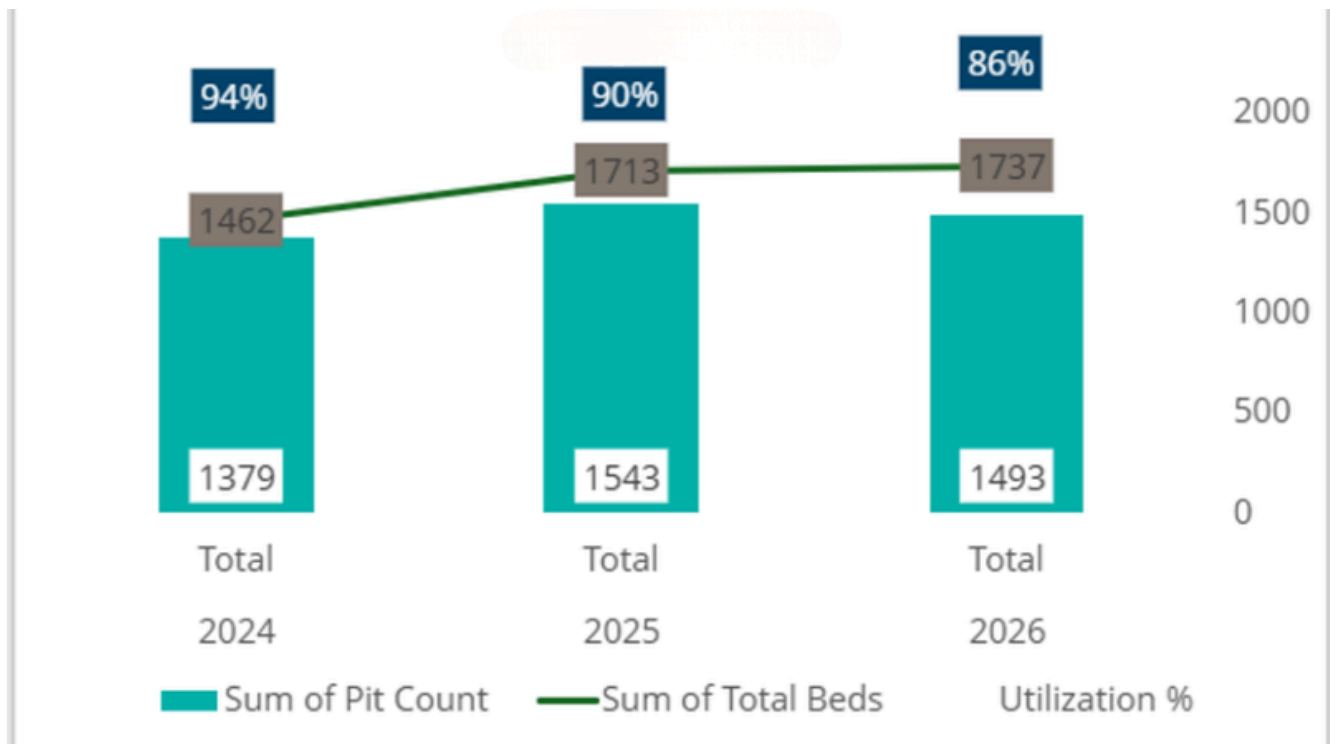
HOUSING INVENTORY COUNT

Utilization Trends

The utilization of beds in the 2026 count was 86%. This is lower than previous years. The trend data in the *Figure 22 - Total HIC Trends* show utilization since 2024. Capacity at both emergency shelters and permanent housing projects has grown with the planned expansion of operations across project types.

In particular, winter or weather dependent shelter beds were expanded in North and South County areas along with the completion of permanent housing projects in the City of San Luis Obispo. The under utilization of permanent supportive housing units may indicate a need for review of project selection criteria.

Figure 22 - Total HIC Trends



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified **1,118 individuals experiencing homelessness** in San Luis Obispo County, **representing a 5% decrease in overall homelessness since 2024.**

This modest progress can be attributed to the work reflected in [the annual updates to the Five Year Plan to Address Homelessness](#). In the time since the last Point-in-Time count, over 300 additional affordable housing units were completed, funding for local warming shelters granted, and the Coordinated Entry System data was integrated into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This trend is validated against reported Housing Inventory data that show an increase in the number of beds available, but a decrease in overall bed utilization on the night of the PIT. These hopeful indicators show that while homelessness in the County remains characterized by significant complexity and persistent challenges among those with the highest service needs, progress is possible through collaboration and adequate funding.

The most notable trend in the 2026 count was the **17% decrease in unsheltered homelessness compared to 2024**, with 666 individuals identified as living in places not meant for human habitation. This reduction may reflect the combined impact of expanded outreach efforts, increased coordination among service providers, targeted housing interventions, and improved access to emergency shelter resources. The [Quarterly HMIS dashboard](#) also indicated a small drop in number of Street Outreach enrollments during the final quarter of 2025, where enrollments peaked at 593 in the month of September and fell to 494 by December 2025.

However, interpretation of this decline should be approached cautiously. Surveyors recorded 51% of unsheltered adult-only household data through observation rather than direct interviews, limiting the amount of demographic and experiential information available for analysis. Additionally, PIT counts provide only a snapshot of homelessness **on a single night** and may not fully capture fluctuations occurring throughout the year.

Although unsheltered homelessness declined, **452 individuals were residing in sheltered settings**, accounting for 40% of the total PIT population. The sheltered count remained relatively stable, suggesting that emergency shelters and transitional housing programs continue to play a critical role in the local homeless response system.

For more comparisons to prior Point-in-Time Counts, community members can find detailed historical information online through [the Department of Housing and Urban Development](#).



County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count

METHODOLOGY

To provide additional context for the 2026 PIT, the following section details the methodology used for data collection and analysis. The methodology for both the sheltered and unsheltered PIT counts align with the standards set forth in the [Point-in-Time Methodology Guide](#) published by HUD.

Following the same approach as the 2024 unsheltered count, Homeless Services Division staff relied on guidelines set by HUD while expanding the use of local expertise and resources. Community-driven decision-making was prioritized via the PIT Planning Committee that began meeting over three months in advance of the Count. To take action on recommendations from the 2024 and 2026 Committees, new resources were incorporated with additional County GIS staffing and student interns recruited from local colleges and universities.

Following the preparation and data collection phases of the project, survey responses from both the sheltered and unsheltered counts were subsequently entered into the HUD PIT Data Extrapolation tool to statistically determine missing values for age, race, and ethnicity per HUD guidelines.

All individuals from both the sheltered and unsheltered count were subsequently entered into the HUD PIT Data Extrapolation tool. Breakout values for missing data in both age and race and ethnicity were determined based on the extrapolated values across the total PIT population.

Unsheltered Count

The CoC invests significant effort in planning and conducting the unsheltered count. The overall methodology was similar to the previous unsheltered count in 2024, however, the County Homeless Services Division staffed all aspects of the count rather than hiring out a third party contractor. This decision allowed more local expertise to be included in the planning phase.

The methodology conducted is a “night of the count” census, canvassing the entire geography of the CoC based on Arc GIS maps generated by the County. Staff and volunteers were divided into Logistic Centers and individuals were trained on a data entry application (Survey 123) to collect client level data electronically on mobile devices. Two survey methods were utilized in the count, interview and observational data.

The data from the unsheltered count was deduplicated by comparing PII, reviewing unique client identifiers, surveying clients to determine if they had already been interviewed for the count and canvassing all of the different areas during the same timeframe during the day (6:00am - 12:00pm).

County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count

METHODOLOGY

Sheltered Count

The CoC conducts the sheltered count using a complete census count methodology. Data from twenty-five HMIS Participating providers and non-HMIS participating providers are aggregated into the total sheltered count.

HMIS Participating providers are required to review and verify their HMIS PIT and HIC data for the submission. HMIS client personally identifying information (PII) is also compared to client interview data from the unsheltered count in an effort to deduplicate the client data.

Victim Service Providers (VSP) are prohibited from sharing client level data. PIT data collection workbooks are provided and completed by VSP's and any other non-HMIS participating providers. These workbooks include count validations to ensure that the data provided align with the required submission format specified by HUD.

The HMIS Lead Agency continues to encourage HMIS Participation for all shelter providers across the CoC to minimize the number of data sets required to generate the PIT count annually.

Housing Inventory Count

Housing inventory count methodology aligns with the PIT data collection. The totals each shelter project reports in the PIT count must add up to the totals included in the HIC count. Shelter and transitional housing agencies along with permanent housing providers dedicated to formerly homeless individuals receive a report of all bed inventory for their projects. This communication verifies any changes to the inventory, subpopulations the units or beds are reserved for, and funding sources. PIT counts are also reviewed with bed data to ensure that projects are utilizing available beds. Projects are flagged if they are overutilized (> 100%) or under-utilized (<65%).

The housing inventory data is stored in HMIS, regardless of the HMIS participation status of the agency or project. This data is updated in HMIS and is then uploaded to HDX and any data errors or warnings are resolved prior to the submission of the final report to HUD.

Changes to 2026 PIT Demographic Data Collection

[HUD's FY2026 HMIS Data Standards](#) were officially released in October 2025. Revisions impacting the PIT/HIC data set included:

- Updated label in Race and Ethnicity option from Hispanic/Latina/e/o to Hispanic/Latina/o.
- Retired Gender data element.

County of San Luis Obispo

2026 Point-in-Time Count

LIMITATIONS

The most significant limitation of any Point-in-Time and Housing Inventory Count is that they reflect only a single night of the year. One single night's snapshot cannot illustrate the total number of people who are served by the homeless services continuum throughout the year. By design, individuals who are served by the homeless services should flow through the system, and exit into permanent housing. This flow is not captured by the Point-in-Time data. For a view into the homeless services data over time, community members are encouraged to access the [HMIS Quarterly Homelessness Dashboard](#).

Observation vs. Survey

The 2026 count revealed another key limitation to implementing a census count where data quality, safety, and a client-centered approach all must be weighed to obtain data on human experiences. In adult-only households that were experiencing unsheltered homelessness, 51% were counted through observation only. While this is an allowable method for counting clients in hard-to-reach areas, the client demographics become limited and exclude all personally identifiable information. The percentage of observations submitted for unsheltered, adult-only households exceeded the threshold level set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for statistically reliable extrapolation. Without a high level of demographic detail, our ability to draw conclusions for this population is limited. Examination of strategies to reduce observation-only submissions should be reviewed by decision-makers and stakeholders.

Weather Dependent

On the night of the 2026 PIT count, warming shelter beds were included in order to capture the community's full bed capacity. This method has been applied locally in prior years, with the exception of the 2025 shelter count. One warming shelter was not activated in 2025 due to miscommunication, so comparisons in shelter beds between 2025 and 2026 should remain limited.

Encampment Clearing

County of San Luis Obispo staff and the SLO PIT Count Committee coordinated efforts with local law enforcement agencies as in prior years to ensure that little to no action was taken to clear areas of unhoused residents in the month leading up to the PIT Count. Cooperation of these agencies was much appreciated to help ensure the count is complete and accurately reflects the conditions on that night. **Note:** the Santa Maria Riverbed underwent an encampment clearing on the morning of the SLO County PIT count, therefore no volunteers were deployed to this area and no clients from this identified encampment were observed or surveyed on the night of the count.