



San Francisco 2021 Sheltered Point-in-Time Count

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Background: The Point-in-Time Count

Every two years during the last ten days of January, communities across the country conduct comprehensive counts of the local population experiencing homelessness. Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts measure the prevalence of homelessness in each community and collect information on individuals and families residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing, as well as people sleeping on the streets, in cars, abandoned properties, or other places not meant for human habitation. The PIT Count is the only source of nationwide data on sheltered and unsheltered homelessness and is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for all jurisdictions receiving federal funding for homelessness-related services. The count also helps inform strategic planning and capacity building at the federal, regional, and local levels.

COVID-19 Challenges in 2021 - In January 2021, due to the impact of COVID-19, the San Francisco Local Homelessness Coordinating Board unanimously voted to apply for an exception waiver for the unsheltered component of the 2021 PIT Count, which HUD approved. In the absence of a full 2021 PIT Count, the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH) conducted the sheltered component of the 2021 PIT Count in line with HUD requirements. HSH and the Local Homelessness Coordinating Board decided that HSH would conduct a full PIT Count in 2022 (as well as the regularly scheduled count in 2023) to make up for the absence of the unsheltered count in 2021.

This report contains results from the sheltered component of the 2021 PIT Count, adding a useful data point to our information about the populations residing in temporary shelter. The 2022 count will provide extensive information about both sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing

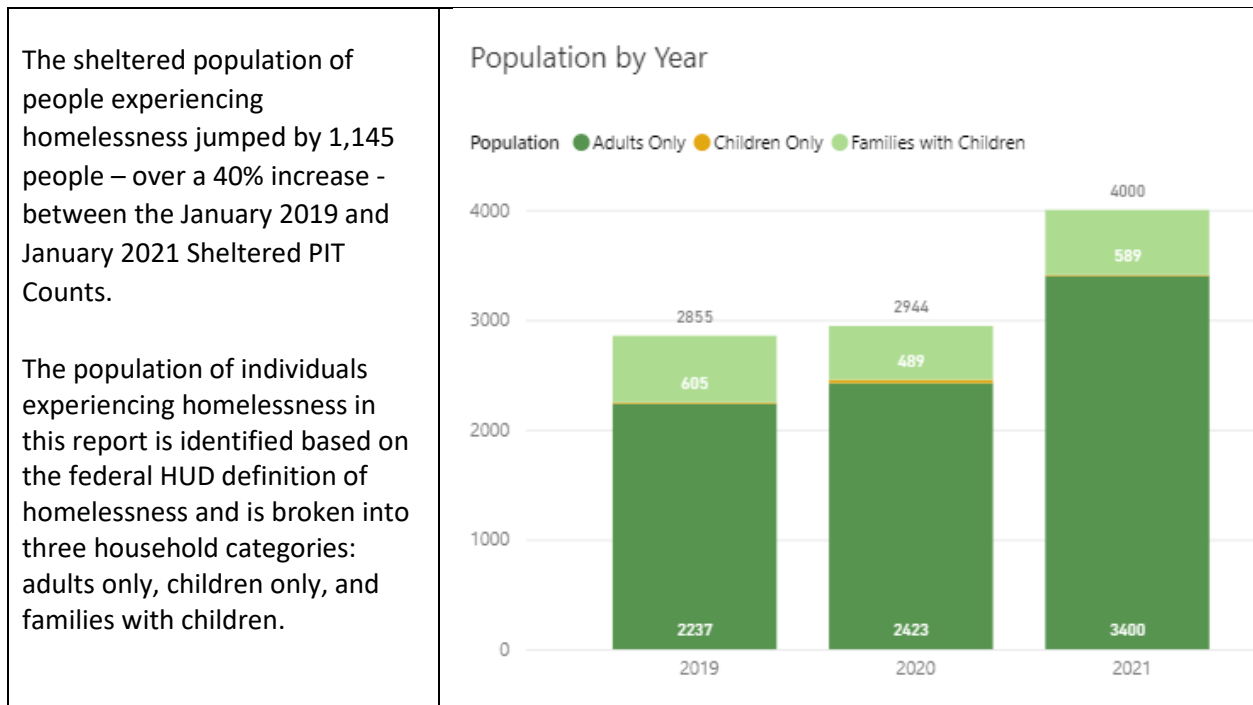


homelessness. To get a sense for the scope of the information that will be included in the 2022 report, please [see the 2019 San Francisco PIT Count](#).

Overview: 2021 Sheltered Count Data

In the months leading up to the 2021 PIT Count, San Francisco’s shelter system expanded rapidly due to the Mayor’s 1,000 New Shelter Beds Initiative and the expansion of non-congregate shelter opened in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, the City’s congregate shelter system capacity decreased by over 70% due to social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: Number of Sheltered People, 2019-2021



These categories follow HUD’s reporting and are defined below:

- (1) Adults only – this category includes individuals from all households with individuals only over the age of 18, including Transitional Age Youth.¹
- (2) Families with children – this category counts all individuals in families with at least one parent over the age of 18 and at least one child under the age of 18.²
- (3) Children only – this category encompasses individuals from households with only people under the age of 18, including unaccompanied minors or families with minor parents.³

¹ In HUD reporting, this category is defined as “households without children.”

² In HUD reporting, this category is defined as “households with at least one adult (over 18) & one child (under 18).”

³ In HUD reporting, this category is defined as “households with only children.”



Table 1: Number of Sheltered People by Household Type

Population	2019	2020	2021
Adults Only	2,237	2,423	3,400
Transitional Aged Youth (18-24)	188	203	179
Over age 24	2,049	2,220	3,221
Families with Children	605	489	589
Under age 18	53	38	43
Transitional Aged Youth (18-24)	235	172	221
Over age 18	317	279	325
Children Only	13	32	11
Total	2,855	2,944	4,000

The adults-only sheltered population, which constituted 85% of individuals sheltered in 2021, accounted for the increase of the sheltered population in the years between 2019 and 2021. This 51% increase in the number of sheltered adults is likely due to the intentional targeting of older and medically vulnerable people experiencing homelessness for placement in COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place hotels. Although the number of sheltered adults over the age of 24 increased significantly, the number of sheltered Transitional Aged Youth from adult-only households remained relatively steady.

The number of sheltered people in families with children, who accounted for 15% of the sheltered population in 2021, decreased by 3% between 2019 and 2021.

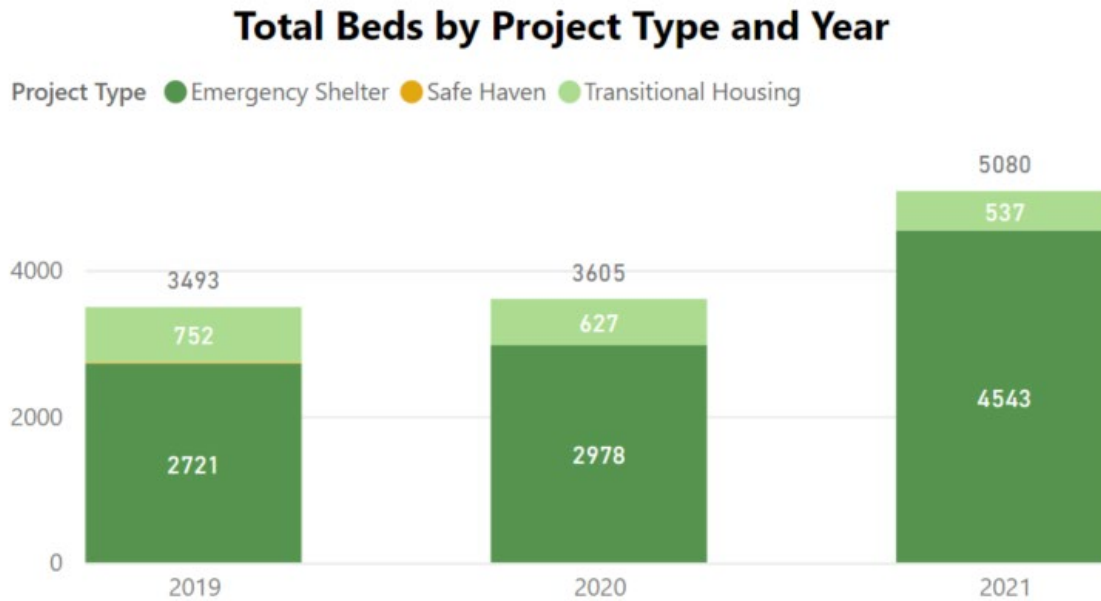
The number of individuals in children-only households has remained very low since 2019 and constituted just 0.3% of the sheltered population in 2021.

Temporary Shelter Resources - San Francisco significantly expanded the City’s temporary shelter capacity between January 2019 and January 2021, increasing available beds from 3,493 beds to 5,080 beds. The Department offers two main kinds of shelter: emergency shelter and transitional housing.

- Emergency shelters include congregate shelters and other temporary lodging and services. Certain non-congregate shelters (i.e., Shelter-in-Place hotels) were considered emergency shelter in this count.
- Transitional housing provides people who have significant barriers to housing stability with a place to live and intensive social services for up to two years while they work towards housing stability.



Figure 2: Total Temporary Shelter Beds



Source: 2019, 2020 and 2021 [Housing Inventory Counts \(HIC\)](#). These totals include a small number of beds that are not funded or managed by HSH, since the HIC includes all resources dedicated to individuals experiencing homelessness regardless of funding source. The HIC Count is conducted the same night as the PIT Count.

**Please note: the 2019 count includes 20 Safe Haven beds, which served hard-to-reach people experiencing homelessness with severe mental illness. There were no Safe Haven beds in 2020 and 2021 since HUD is not funding new projects under the Continuum of Care Program.*

Two key initiatives drove this increase: Mayor London Breed’s 1,000 Shelter Beds Initiative and the City’s COVID-19 response. The [1,000 Shelter Beds](#) initiative, announced in October 2018, significantly increased the number of beds in operation by January 2021. As part of this shelter expansion initiative, the City opened beds at a variety of types of shelter, including Navigation Centers and family shelters.

The COVID-19 response prompted the City to open alternative shelter resources to increase available shelter and make up for reduced capacity at existing congregate shelters. Shelter-in-Place (SIP) hotels were the largest category of beds, accounting for 2,263 of the beds the night of the 2021 count. These beds will be phased out in FY21-22. San Francisco also opened a 200-bed congregate shelter at Moscone West and a non-congregate RV/Trailer program with 120 units during the pandemic.

Additionally, the City opened Safe Sleeping sites that had capacity for approximately 260 tents at full operation. These sites were not included in the Housing Inventory Count since they do not meet HUD’s definitions for temporary shelter. Safe Sleep guests were not included in the Sheltered PIT Count.



2021 Demographic Information: Sheltered Count

This year, since HSH only conducted the sheltered portion of the PIT Count, our information on demographics come solely from this shelter count. We did not conduct the survey portion of the PIT Count, which elicits additional information about the population of people experiencing homelessness every two years (for example, history of foster care or previous living accommodations). The sheltered count data contain basic demographic information, but not other contextual information that is typically pulled from the survey.

Figure 3: Sheltered Individuals by Gender

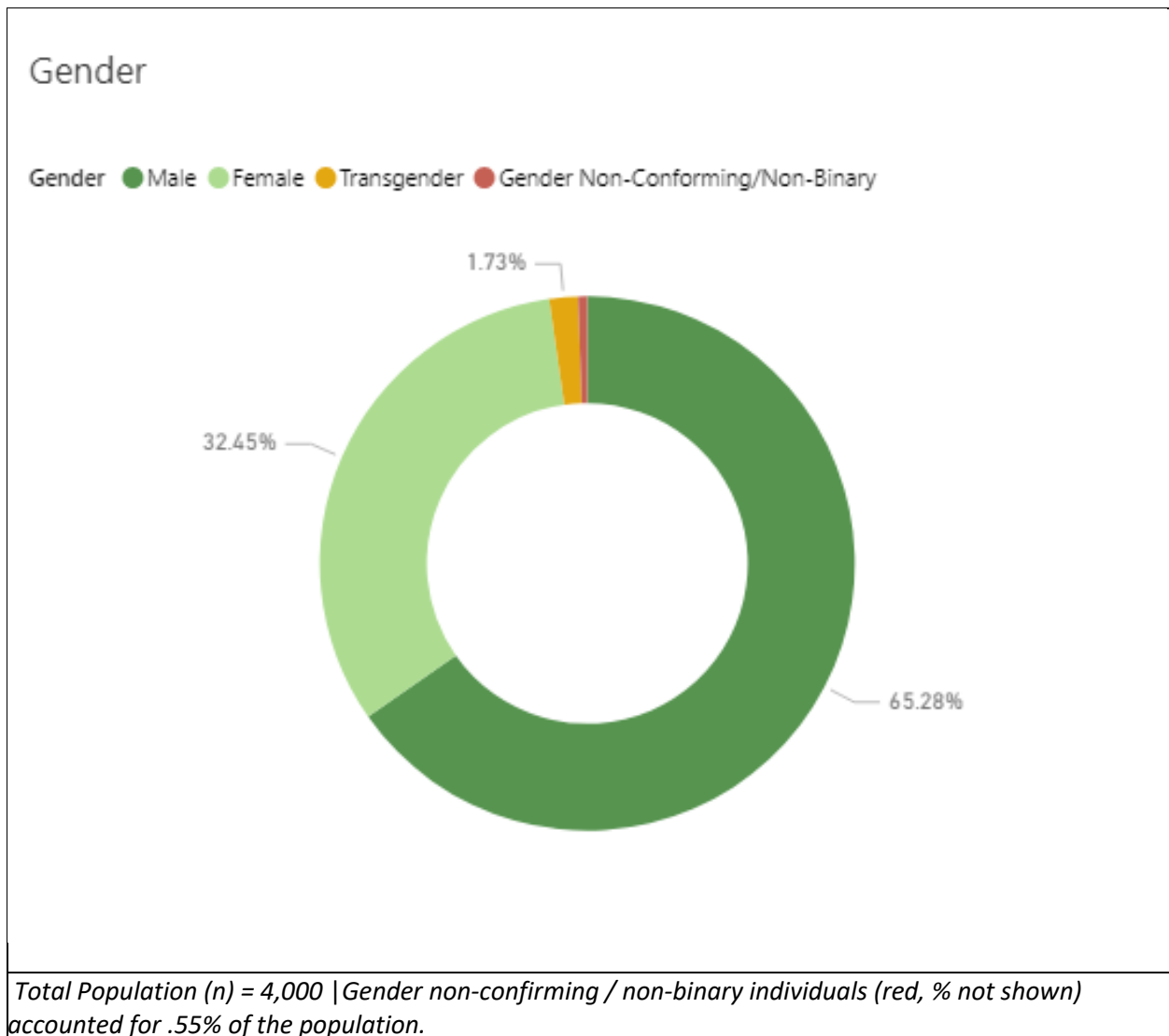


Figure 4: Sheltered Individuals by Race

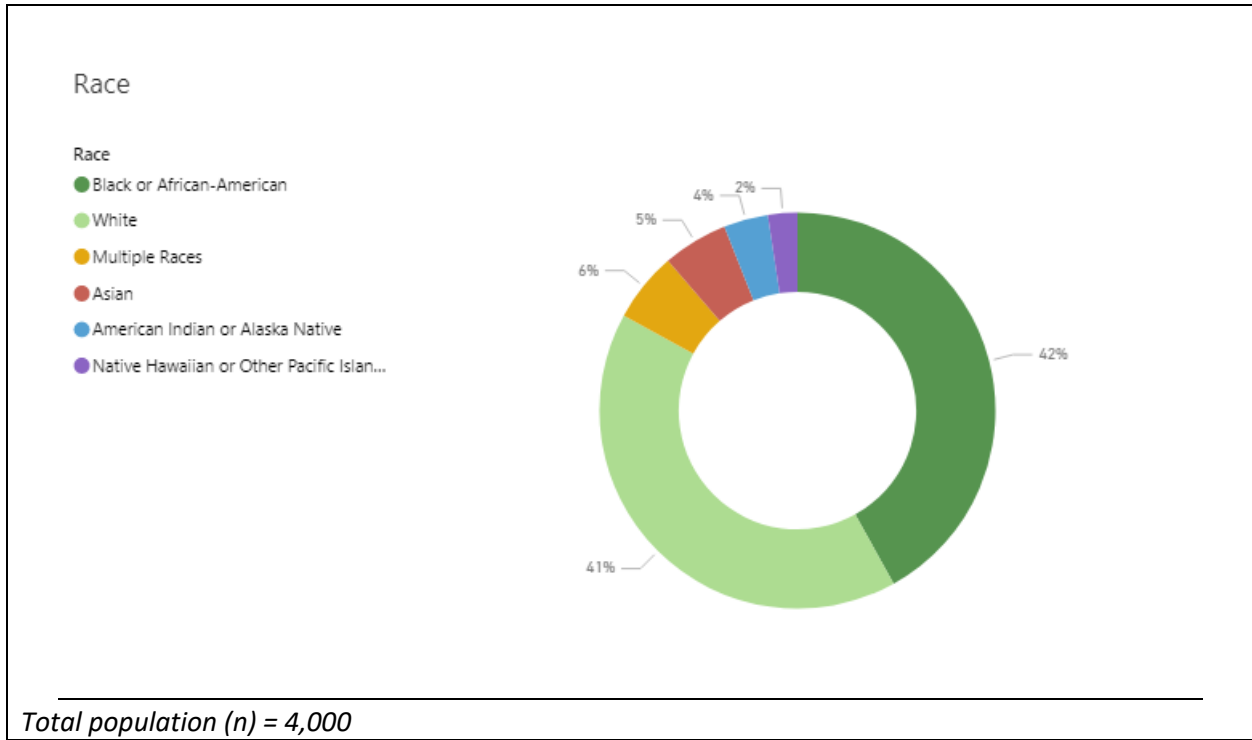


Figure 5: Sheltered Individuals by Ethnicity

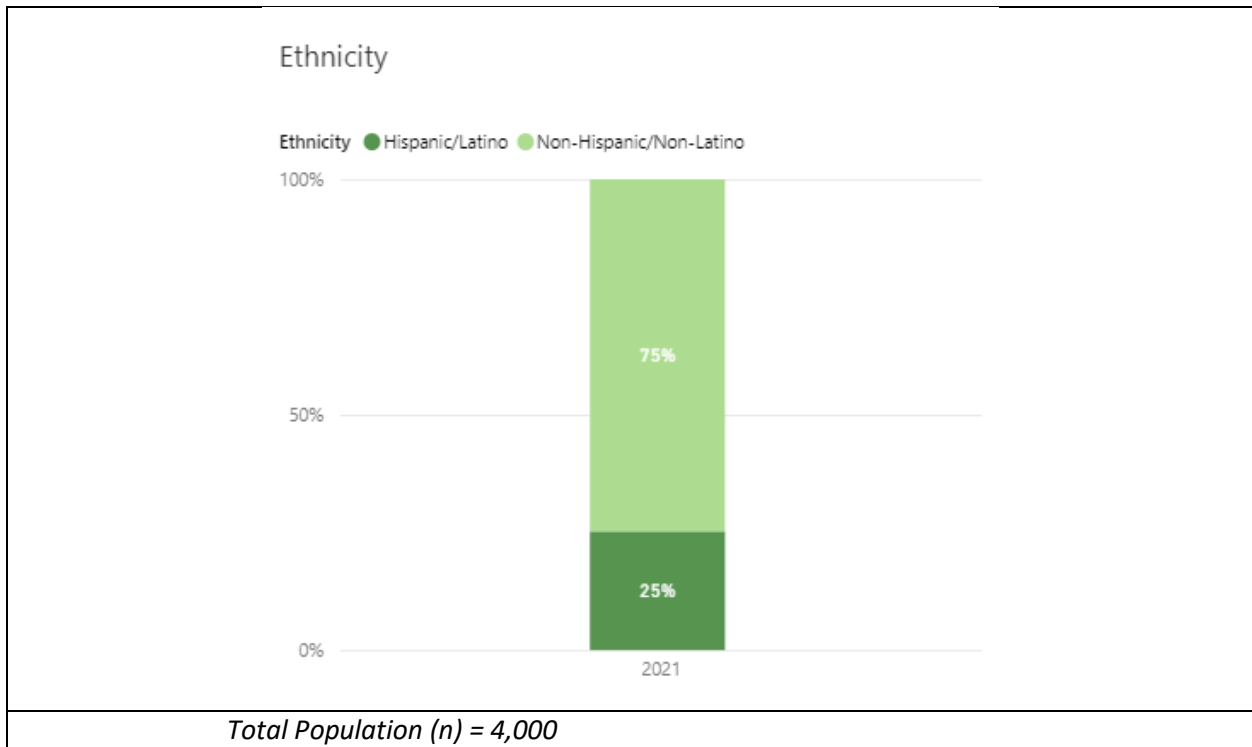


Figure 6: Percent of Sheltered Population - Chronically Homeless

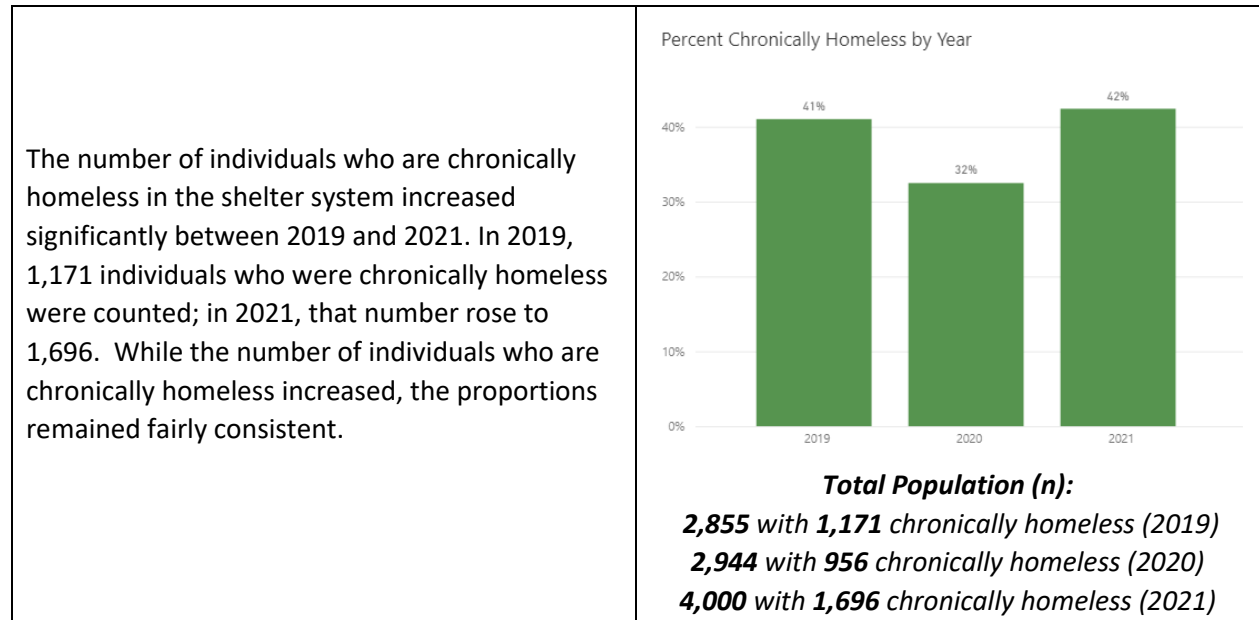
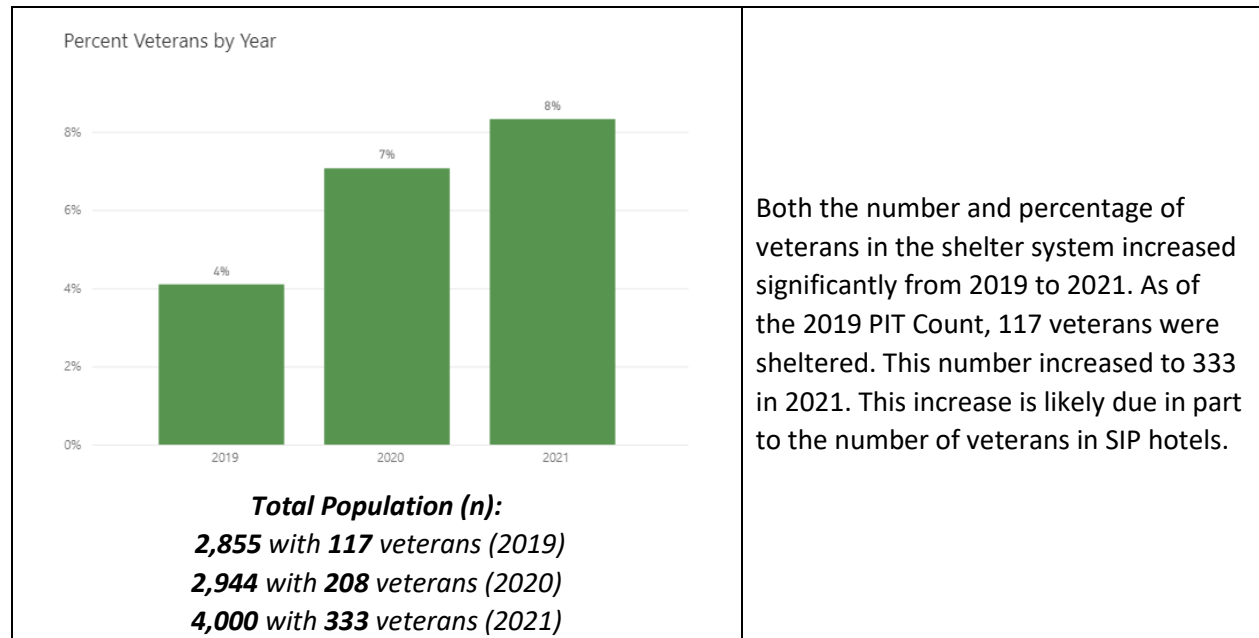


Figure 7: Percent of Sheltered Population - Veterans



Additional 2021 Data: Supplemental Count

The City and County of San Francisco uses an expanded definition of homelessness from the federal definition that is used in this report. San Francisco includes people who are “doubled-up” in the homes of family or friends; individuals staying in jails, hospitals, or rehabilitation facilities; and families living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units. Historically, the City has made an effort to include individuals in these living situations by surveying known jails, hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities to identify individuals believed to otherwise be experiencing homelessness. People “doubled up” and families living in SROs have not been included in the supplemental count due to the difficulty of reaching these populations comprehensively and accurately.

Figure 8: People Experiencing Homelessness in Jails, Hospitals, and Rehabilitation Facilities

Category	Number of People
Total unaccompanied individuals	1,091
Total individuals in families	60
<i>Total number of families</i>	28
Total number of people	1,151

Methodology

HUD Data - The goal of the PIT sheltered count is to gain an accurate count of people experiencing homelessness, as defined by HUD, who are temporarily housed in shelters and other institutions across San Francisco. The occupancy of emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and programs with beds dedicated for people experiencing homelessness was documented the night of January 28, 2021. To collect this information, HSH pulled client information stored in our existing databases and utilized a web-based provider survey. Eighty-eight percent of our data came from our databases, including 75% from our Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS), the ONE System. Twelve percent of data came from web-based surveys sent to providers. For these programs, all people experiencing homelessness in the facility on the night of the count were included. Guests were not interviewed, and information is based on information provided in shelter records.

Point-in-Time Counts are snapshots that quantify the size of the population of people experiencing homelessness at any given point during the year. Since the shelter count was conducted on a single night, it is not representative of fluctuations and compositional changes in the population of people experiencing homelessness seasonally or over time.

HUD Methodological Improvements in 2021 – HUD identifies the use of data from an HMIS as a general best practice for pulling client information, since an HMIS may be a more cost effective and accurate data source for sheltered population and subpopulation information than provider or client surveys.⁴ Since 2019, the percentage of data for the sheltered count pulled from our databases has increased

⁴ See HUD’s 2012 [“A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People,”](#) pg. 9.



significantly. In 2019, HSH collected 100% of the sheltered count data from a provider survey. In 2020, we collected 28% from a survey, 16% from our HMIS and 56% from other databases. In 2021, we decreased the survey percentage to 12% and increased the percentage of data from our HMIS to 75%. The remaining 13% of data came from other city databases. The increased percentage of information from our HMIS marks a methodological improvement in this year's PIT Count. The Department will continue to work towards our goal of increasing the percentage of data in our HMIS in the years to come.

Additional Data – HSH requested data on individuals staying in jails, hospitals, or rehabilitation facilities to obtain the supplemental information presented in the “Additional Data” section about sheltered people covered under the City and County of San Francisco’s expanded definition of homelessness. Appropriate staff at hospitals and treatment centers were identified prior to the Point-in-Time Count and asked to complete a survey detailing the number of individuals experiencing homelessness they served on the night of January 28, 2021. HSH worked closely with the Sheriff’s Office to obtain data from County jails about the number of inmates in jail the night of January 28, 2021, that were experiencing homelessness at the time of arrest. These data are not incorporated in the main portion of our report, which focuses on the HUD definition of homelessness and allows for greater consistency and comparability between our data and other data nationwide.

Conclusion

The sheltered component of the 2021 Point-in-Time Count reflects the City’s continued investment in shelter and the massive amount of resources stood up as part of the COVID-19 response. These unique circumstances allowed the City of San Francisco to provide shelter for 1,145 more people in 2021 than at the time of the last full PIT Count in 2019.

HSH hopes the 2021 Sheltered Point-in-Time Count helps provide context for the work of all agencies and partners serving people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco as we continue to recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your support, flexibility, and patience – we look forward to providing a more complete picture in 2022.

