



2026 WeAllCount Volunteer Training

The 2026 WeAllCount will be conducted
on Thursday, **January 29, 2026**



Housing Keeping

- Volunteer Registration
 - Individual Registration
 - Site Location and address
- Volunteer Groups
 - assigned vs. unassigned
- Prior to Count
 - Email from site coordinator (At least 3 days prior to count)

For all PITC questions:

- Contact us at: pitc@rtfhdsd.org

WeAllCount Volunteer Training Agenda



RTFH

- What is RTFH?

PITC 101

- PITC Count: What, Who, and Why?

What to Expect

- Volunteer Responsibilities
- Safety & Engagement

Surveys

- Unsheltered Person Survey
- Unsheltered Person Observation Tally

FAQ

- Q&A: Common questions

RTFH

What is RTFH?
What is a Continuum of Care?

RTFH

PIT Count 101

What to Expect

Surveys

FAQ

What is RTFH

- 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization
- Homeless policy expert and lead coordinator for the introduction of new models and implementation of best practices in the San Diego region
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) System Administrator
- Coordinated Entry System Operator
- Lead Agency for the San Diego Region's Continuum of Care

What is a Continuum of Care?

- A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.
- Responsible for: Continuums of Care (CoCs) are required to conduct a Point-in-Time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness at least every other year.



RTFH
SAN DIEGO'S
REGIONAL LEADER
ON HOMELESSNESS

PITC 101

What is the PIT Count?
Who is counted in the PIT Count?
Why do we do a PIT Count?

RTFH

PITC 101

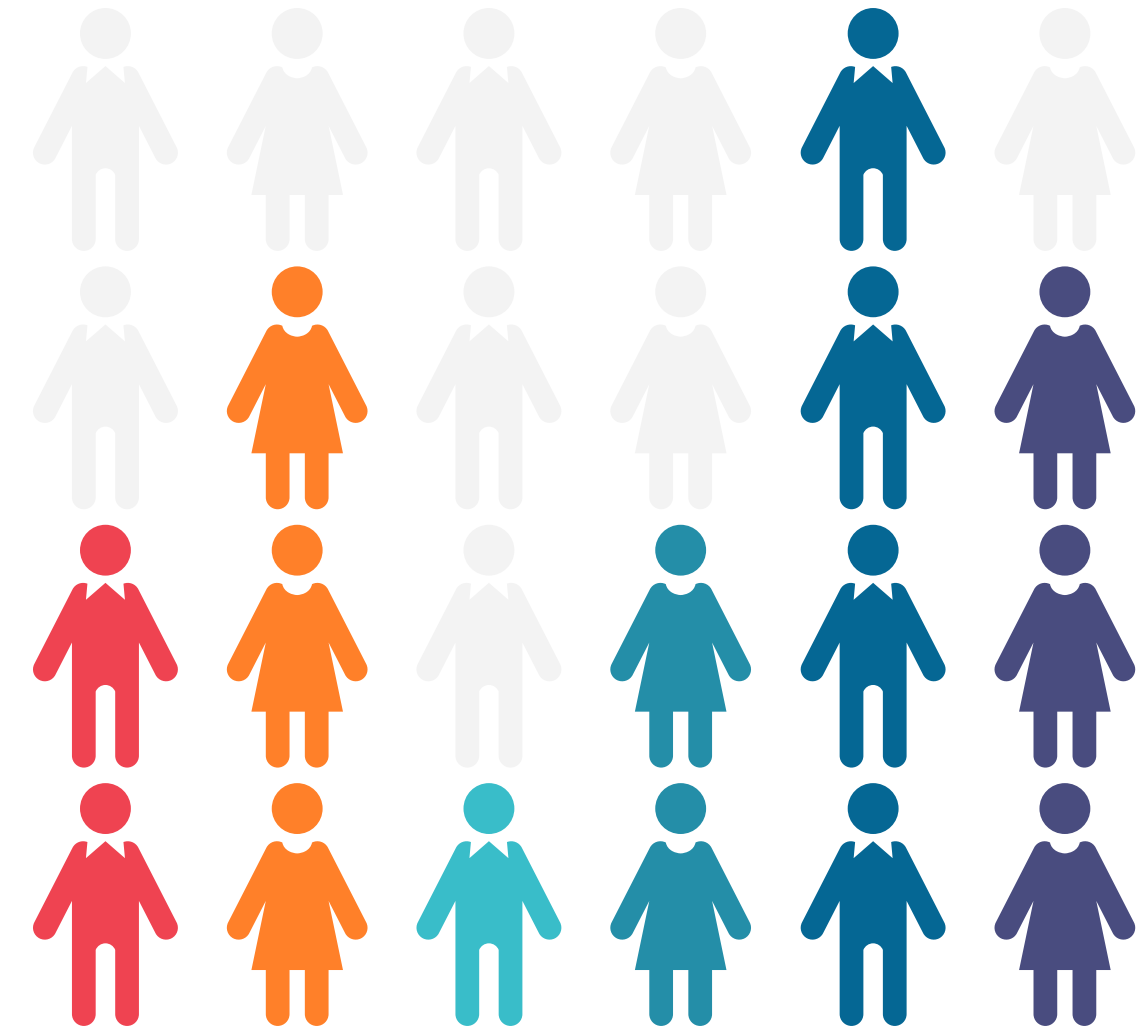
What to Expect

Surveys

FAQ

What is the Point-In-Time Count?

- A literal count of all the people experiencing homelessness in our community on a single night (i.e., at a **point in time**)
- Conducted by every community nationwide in the last 10 days of January at least every other year
- A “snapshot” of homelessness on this one night in our community



Who is counted in the PIT count?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) [definition of "homeless,"](#) includes two main types of homelessness. For the purpose of the PIT count:

- **Unsheltered:** Individuals or families whose primary nighttime residence is a public place not meant for human habitation
- **Sheltered:** Individuals or families residing in a place dedicated to serving people who would otherwise be unsheltered



Who is counted in the PIT count?



Sheltered PIT Count

- Emergency shelters (including those using hotel and motel vouchers)
- Transitional housing
- Safe Havens



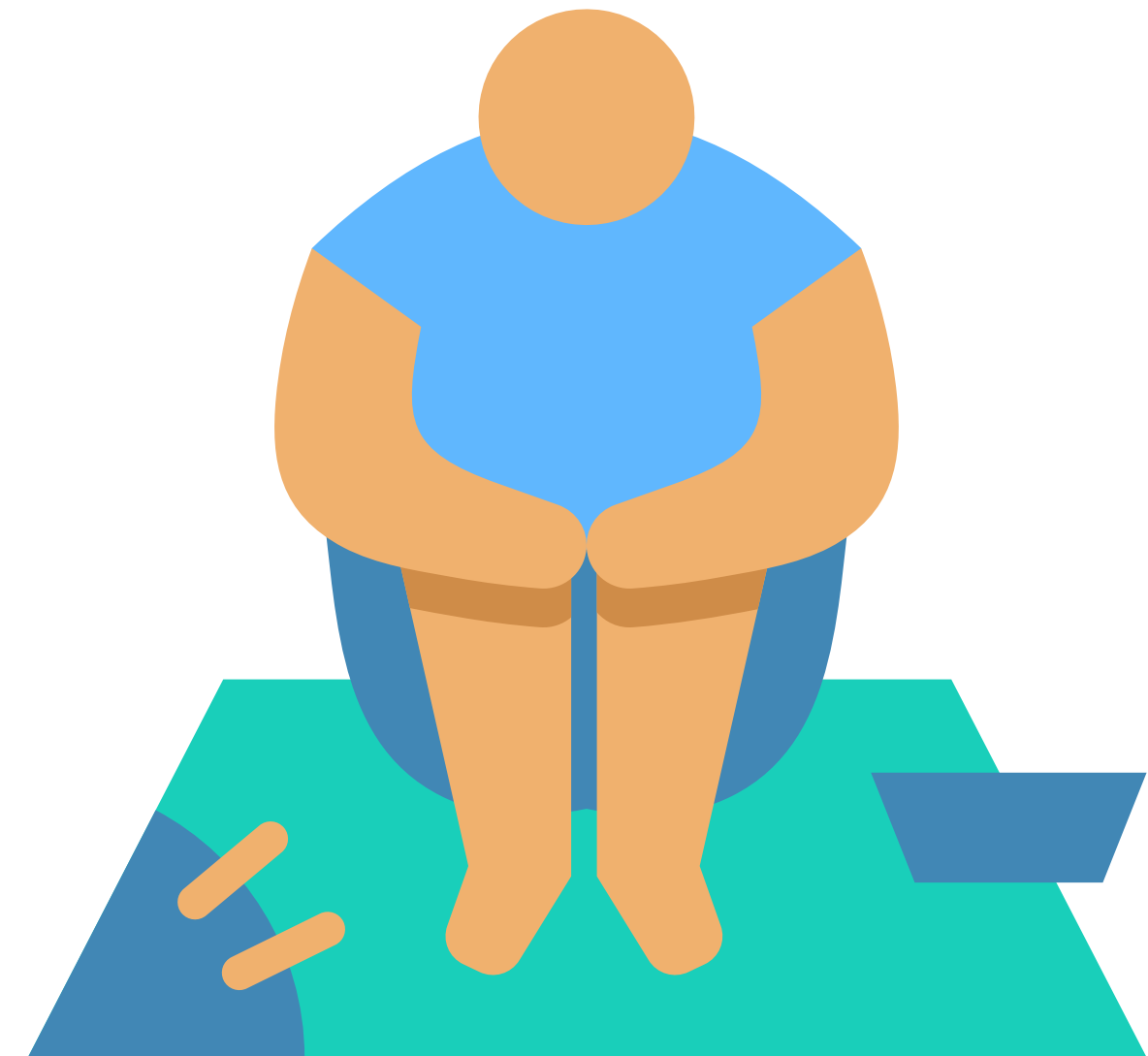
Unsheltered PIT Count

- Car
- Park
- Abandoned building
- Bus or train station
- Airport
- Camping ground
- Parking Lot

Today's focus: Unsheltered PIT Count

Unsheltered PIT Count

- Car
- Park
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Local Homelessness Data

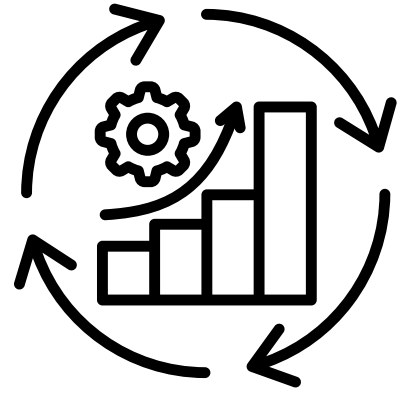
Local Data Sheltered + Unsheltered

	2024 Total	2025 Total	2024-2025 Overall Change
Region	Total	Total	% of Total
San Diego Region	10,605	9,905	-7%

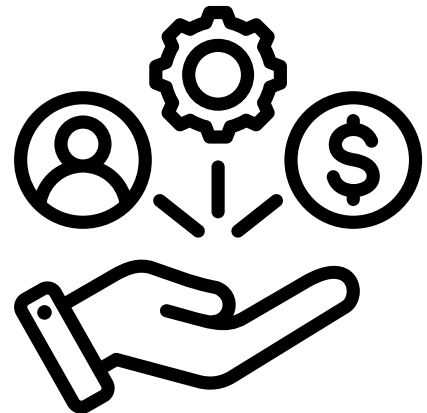
Regional Breakdown Sheltered + Unsheltered

	% of the Region	Total Homeless Persons
City of San Diego	59.2%	5,866
North County Inland	9.5%	943
North County Coastal	7.7%	769
South County	9.2%	911
East County	14.3%	1,416

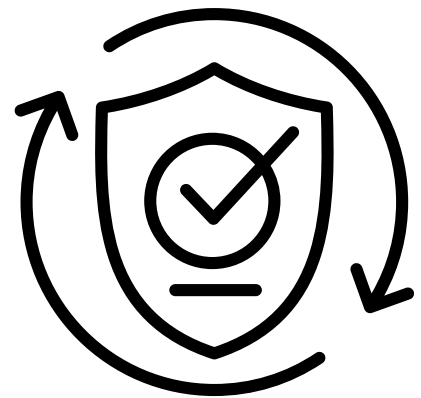
Why do we do a PIT count?



To measure and monitor trends and changes in homelessness on local and national levels



To help our community understand what resources we need and strategize the best ways to use them to end homelessness



To comply with federal regulations and requirements

What to Expect

Your Role
Schedule
Materials
Safety & Engagement

RTFH

PIT Count 101

What to Expect

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FAQ

Role of Volunteers

After checking into the site. Volunteers will be assigned to a team of 3 or 4 people. Below are the roles within the team.

Each group will consist of:

- Someone who will drive the area of the Census Tract.
- A Map Reader to guide the group through the census tract.
- An interviewer that enters survey responses into the Counting Us App
- Someone to handle and distribute the gift cards and socks.

In your group, you may be responsible for any one or more of these tasks.



Schedule

Morning Count Sites (4am-8am)

- **3:30 am** - Arrive at your site and check-in with your site coordinator.
- Meet with your assigned volunteer group
- Retrieve site materials and have phone charged upon arrival
- **4:00 am** - Look for unsheltered individuals in your assigned census tracts and conduct engaged interviews as a team
- Return **all** materials to your site coordinator by 8am.
 - Leftover socks
 - Leftover gift cards
 - Flashlights (if provided)
 - Vests (if provided)
 - bags
 - maps

Note: Some sites may start at different times

Evening Count Sites (6:30 pm – 9:00 pm) (Safe Parking and Safe Sleeping ONLY)

- **6:30 pm** - Arrive at your site and check-in with your site coordinator.
- Site coordinator will provide further instructions on:
 - Engagement
 - Using the Counting Us App
 - Use of site materials (gift cards/socks)
- Return site materials to site coordinator once count is completed
 - Leftover socks
 - Leftover gift cards
 - bags
 - maps

Note: Count is completed when all individuals are counted and no later than 9pm.



#WeAllCount Materials

Participant Incentives

Items that can be handed out to individuals who participated in the count



Gift Cards



Socks



Resource Guides

Volunteer Materials

Items to be used by volunteers to transport incentives, navigate census boundaries, and for personal safety



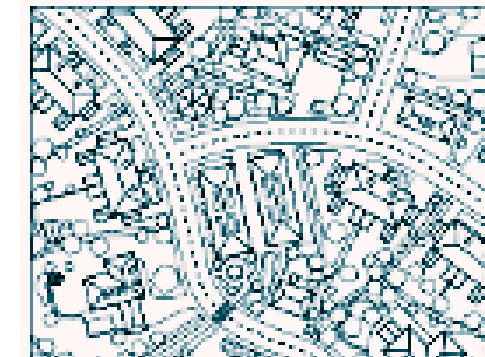
Bags



Flashlights



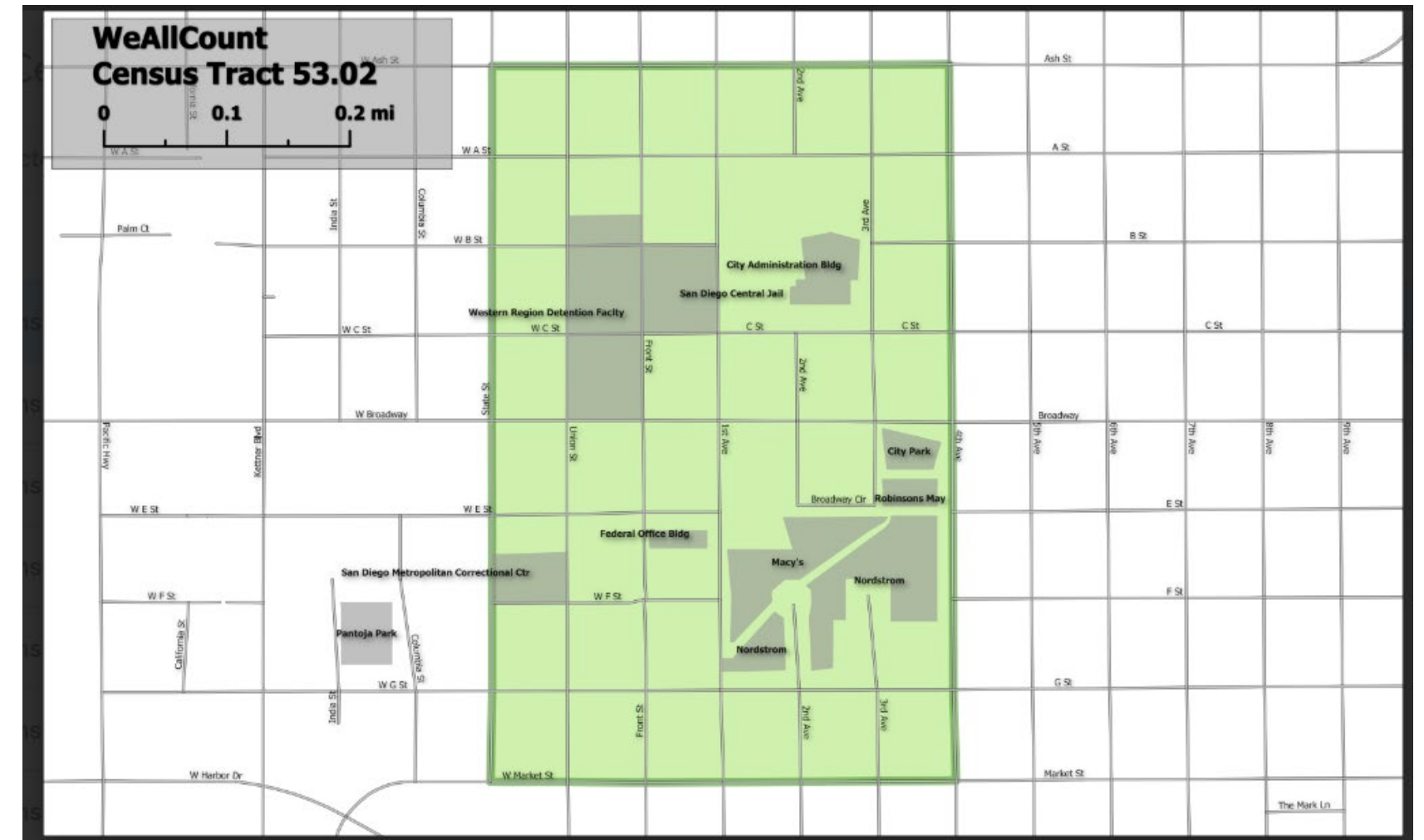
Safety Vests



Census Tract Maps

Unsheltered Street Census Tract Map

- Surveyors led by an outreach worker or an experience volunteer will walk or drive in groups around their assigned census tracts and look for any unsheltered individuals.
- Once you encounter anyone who is unsheltered, you will then complete an Unsheltered Person Survey.



Note: Outreach workers availability may be limited by site

Safety & Engagement

Prioritize Your Safety

Physical Safety

- Do Not Ignore Potential Dangers
- Approach in Groups of 2 or More
- Remain Standing
- Aware of Surroundings
- Do Not Enter an Area IF:
 - There is Police Activity
 - There is Gang Activity
 - The Area is Dark or Secluded
 - There is One Exit or Entry

Safety During Engagement

- Keep A Conversational Distance
- Be Aware of Body Language
- **IF** squatting is necessary, keep your balance
- If asked who you are or what this is about:
"We are a part of a national project to count people whom are experiencing homelessness"

**If there is ever a risk of danger,
immediately call 911**



Engagement & Interview Practice

- You are **NOT** required to report any illicit activities unless they are endangering themselves or another person.
 - Interviewers must be trusted, so be respectful.
- Please do not share personal information about participants with anyone.
 - Emphasize that the information will *only* be shared with the Regional Task Force on Homelessness staff.
- Be aware of your tone, body language, etc.
- Stay calm, non-judgmental and polite as participants share personal information.
- Encourage participants to answer if they can, but not if they are distressed.
- It is OK (and recommended) to redirect the conversation when needed.
- Make sure you are dressed comfortably and have a fully charged phone!



Surveys

2026 WeAllCount Surveys

How to survey people residing in vehicles

How to record interviews and observations

Count Reminders

RTFH

PIT Count 101

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FAQ



Counting Us App: 2026 WeAllCount Surveys

2026 WeAllCount Surveys

3 WeAllCount Surveys:

- If you are a volunteer who has **registered** for the count via the volunteer registration portal you will work in only 2 surveys:
 - **Unsheltered Person Survey**
 - **Unsheltered Person Observation Tally**
- **Youth Survey- 2026**
 - This survey will only be used by volunteers supporting the Youth Count. Youth Count volunteers consist of youth provider staff*.

What is the Youth Count?

The Youth Count Initiative is a strategically executed count for the purposes of gaining a better understanding of youth homelessness in our community. Data is collected over a 1 week period with the support of local youth service provider staff.

- Target: Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) 18-24 years old who are unsheltered or reporting housing instability on the night of the count.

Unsheltered Person Survey

Unsheltered Person
Observation Tally

Youth Survey 2026

*** If you are a youth provider task supporting the Youth Count their will be a separate training for you.**

Unsheltered Person Survey

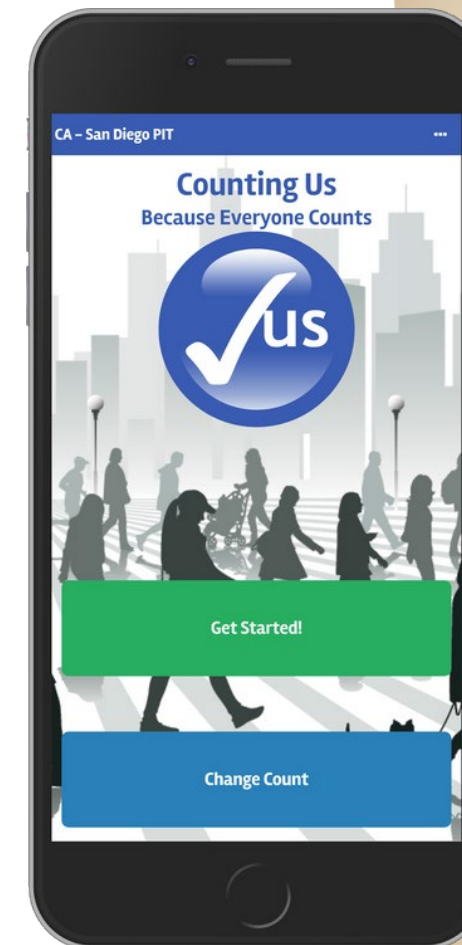
Unsheltered Person Survey

The **Unsheltered Person Survey**: Main survey used to record all engaged encounters of unsheltered individuals and households.

What is considered an engagement?

When an individual or household says “yes” to being interviewed or surveyed for the count. Engagement includes full responses and partial responses.

Note: We will provide more details on how to conduct an Observation Tally in the next slide.



Survey Tips:

Make sure to have location services enabled before arriving at your count site.

Please reference the FAQ for Volunteer if you need assistance in turning on location services on your device. It can be found on the RTFH WeAllCount page.

If a person is willing, record as much demographic information as possible. Helps determine how to allocate resources for various subpopulations (veterans, families, youth, victims of domestic violence, and the chronically homeless)

Unsheltered Person Observation Tally

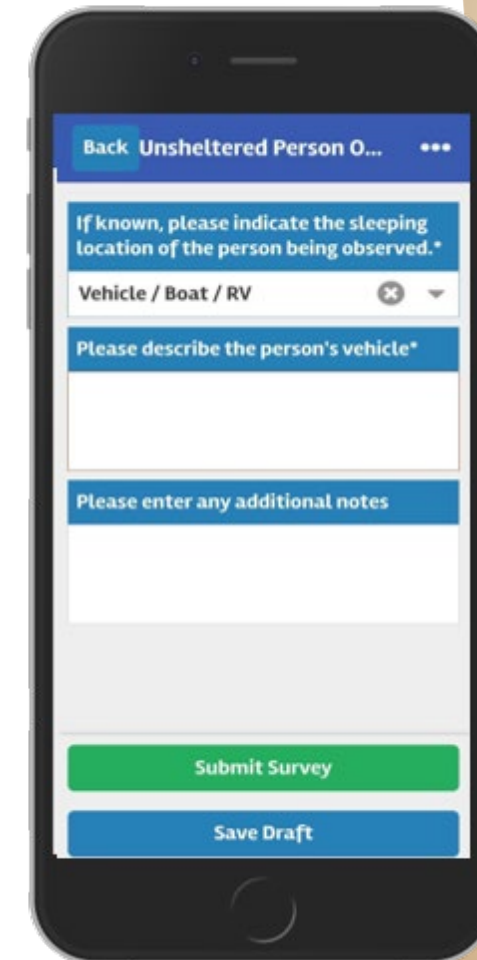
Unsheltered Person Observation Tally

Is to be completed when:

- When an individual or household is unwilling or unable to complete a survey.
 - Declines to be interviewed
 - Does not have the capacity to respond to questions
 - An individual or household is residing in an area that presents a safety concern for a volunteer

An Unsheltered Person Observation Tally Survey is submitted based on:

- immediately obvious visual information of unsheltered individuals and households.



Survey Tip:

Include as much detail as possible in the notes section:

- where the person is
- what they look like
- what they are wearing
- what they have with them
- why there was no survey completed
- what makes you think an individual is experiencing homelessness. This will help RTFH to determine if the observation can be included in the PIT Count.

Survey Approach

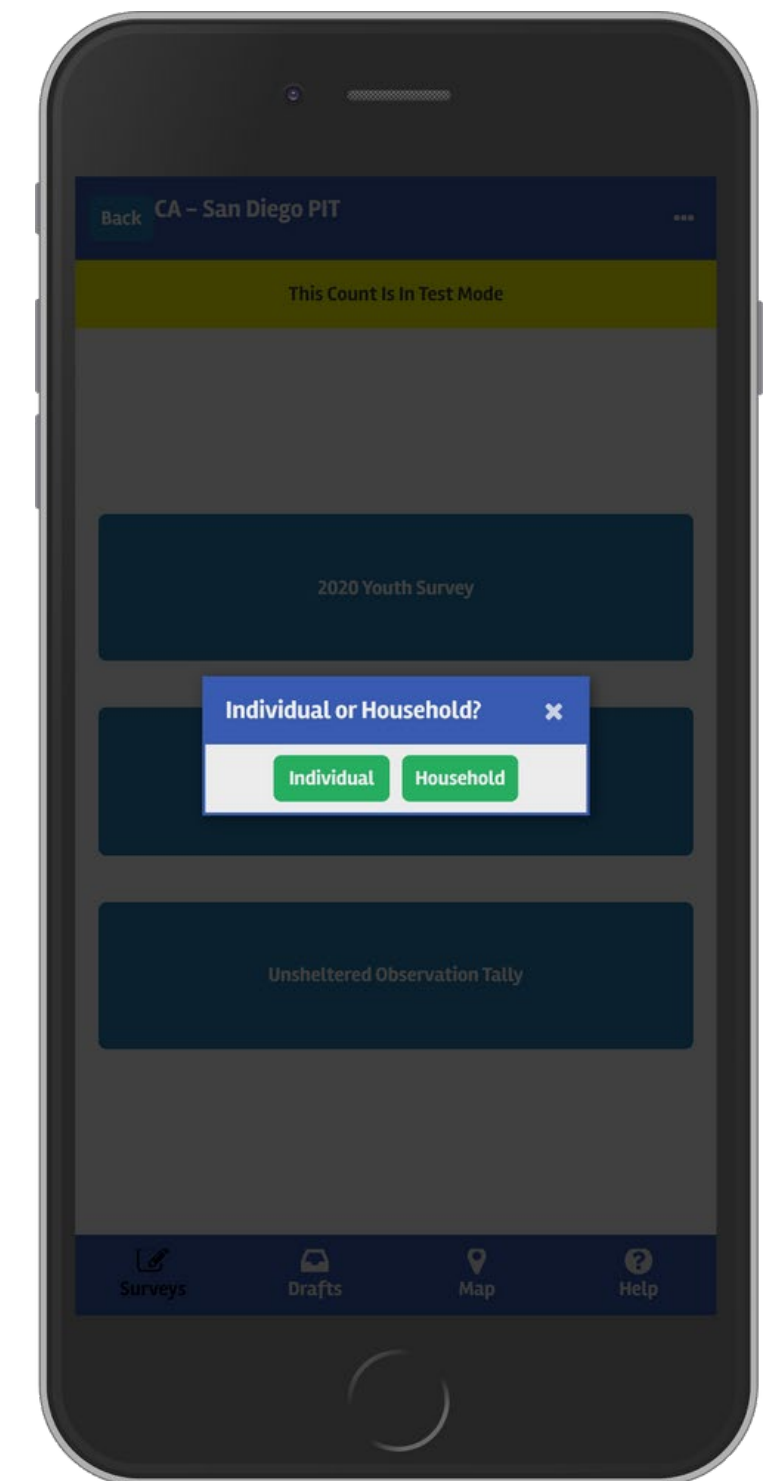
Because the count is occurring early in the morning, it is likely that many of the individuals you will be surveying will be asleep. Regional efforts will be made to alert the homeless population that anyone asleep outside during the night of the count may be awakened in order to conduct a survey.

When waking someone up:

1. Politely approach and greet the individual or group.
2. Observe if you are engaging an **individual** or **household** and press the button in the Counting Us app as to which one. If the individual agrees to be interviewed click next step.

Then continue on to Question 1.

NOTE: If they ask if they will get anything for it, tell them about the incentives. Otherwise, wait to see if they qualify for the survey.



Surveying people residing Vehicles: Cars & RVs

Step 1: Visual Assessment

- **Look for signs for habitation**
 - Fogged windows
 - Electrical connections /light on
 - Generators
 - Screens or window coverings
 - Items (household items, bags, clothing, shoes) inside and outside of the vehicle
 - Sounds of music or talking from inside the vehicle
 - Known safe parking locations or known vehicles
- **Determine if the vehicle is occupied**
 - Conduct a walkabout around the vehicle
 - Were individuals observed in the vehicle?

Step 2: Engagement

■ **Knock and Engage**

Politely approach the vehicle: Gentle knock, address yourself, and purpose

■ **Approaching individuals**

Verify the individual is currently experiencing homelessness

Sample Script:

Hello, my name is [your name] and I'm a volunteer with the [organization name] conducting a homeless count this [morning/evening]. Are you currently experiencing homelessness? If so, would you like to participate in this year's census?

“Count people not vehicles”



Data Collection on people residing in Vehicles: Cars & RVs

Step 3: Data Collection

- If the individual/household is eligible and wants to complete a survey, please record all responses under the “Unsheltered Person Survey.”
- If an individual or household was **unable to be engaged** or **preferred not to participate** in the count, then submit an “Unsheltered Person Observation Tally” survey

Vehicle Info:

- **Vehicles License Plate #**
- A **brief description** of where the vehicle was found (parking lot, cross streets, etc. in the additional notes box. What visual parkers were seen and identified?

Individual Info:

- Was the person sleeping in the vehicle or present in the vehicle (with visual markers)



Recording Answers in the Counting Us App

Recording Answers and Self-Report

- Record EXACT answer the person provides

Probing for Clarification

- Probing vs. Interpreting
- You can give examples, help reword questions, but do not lead them to answer in a specific way.
“Do you have a physical disability, like vision impairment?” is ok. “You have a physical disability, right?” is not ok.
- Only probe if you are comfortable with doing so, and in a sensitive manner.

Making Corrections

- Please don't leave any questions blank, as the survey will not let you submit it (empty fields will be highlighted in red). Certain questions will allow you to enter text (Client refused, client doesn't know)



Recording Households & Personal Information

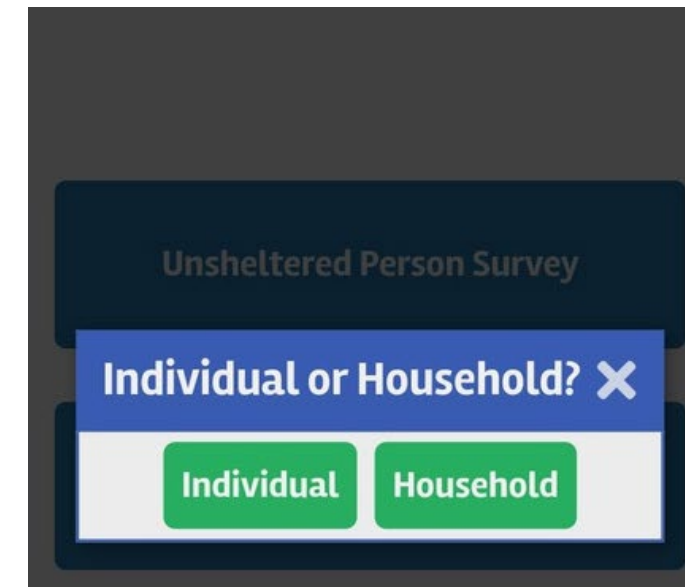
Surveys

When recording an interview with a household through the “Unsheltered Person Survey,” you will first:

- Identify if more than one person is sleeping in the same location on the night of the count (including adults and children) and confirm if they are part of the same household. If so, select:
 - Household button
 - Record # of household members
 - Record location (drop pin)
 - Complete survey questions for each household member (oldest to youngest)
 - Provide each household member who is present with a gift card (if available)

A survey participant may submit household information for household members who are not present as long as they were residing in a place not meant for human habitation

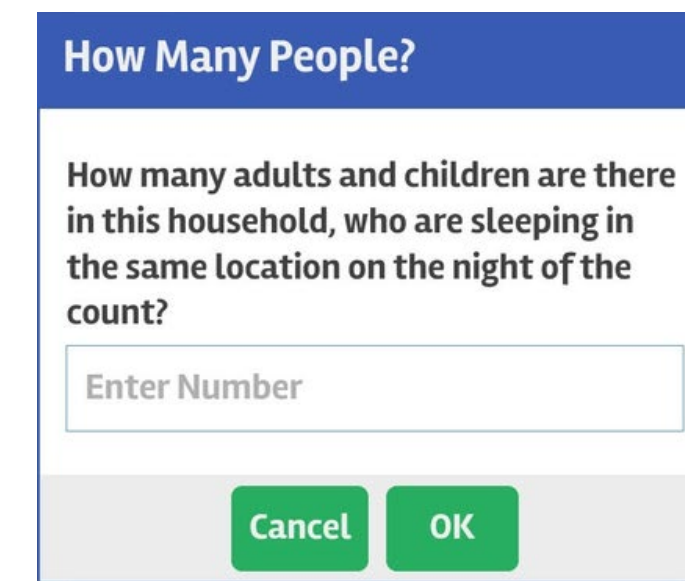
Note: Some personal information may be asked for deduplication purposes. Individuals can refuse to answer.



Unsheltered Person Survey

Individual or Household? X

Individual Household

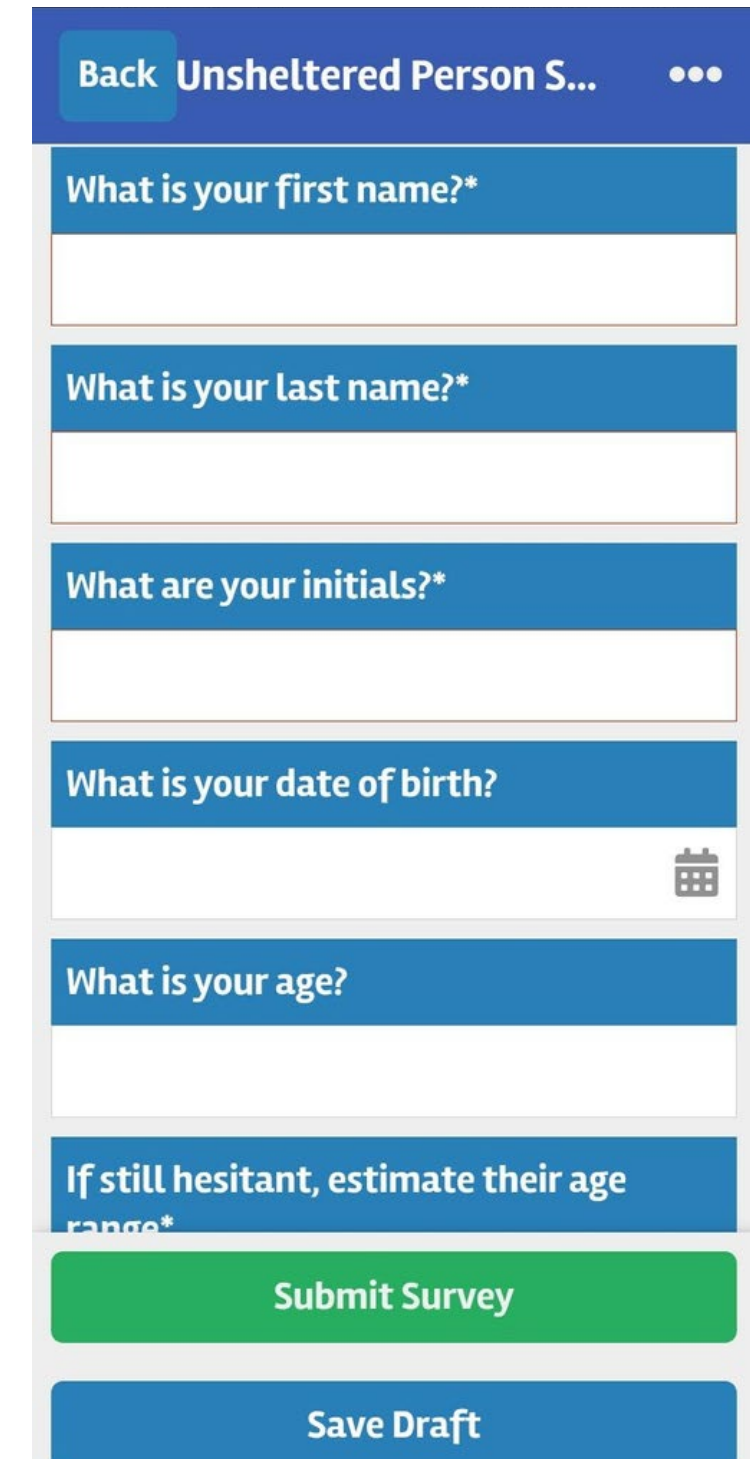


How Many People?

How many adults and children are there in this household, who are sleeping in the same location on the night of the count?

Enter Number

Cancel OK



Back Unsheltered Person S... ⋮

What is your first name?*

What is your last name?*

What are your initials?*

What is your date of birth?

What is your age?

If still hesitant, estimate their age range*

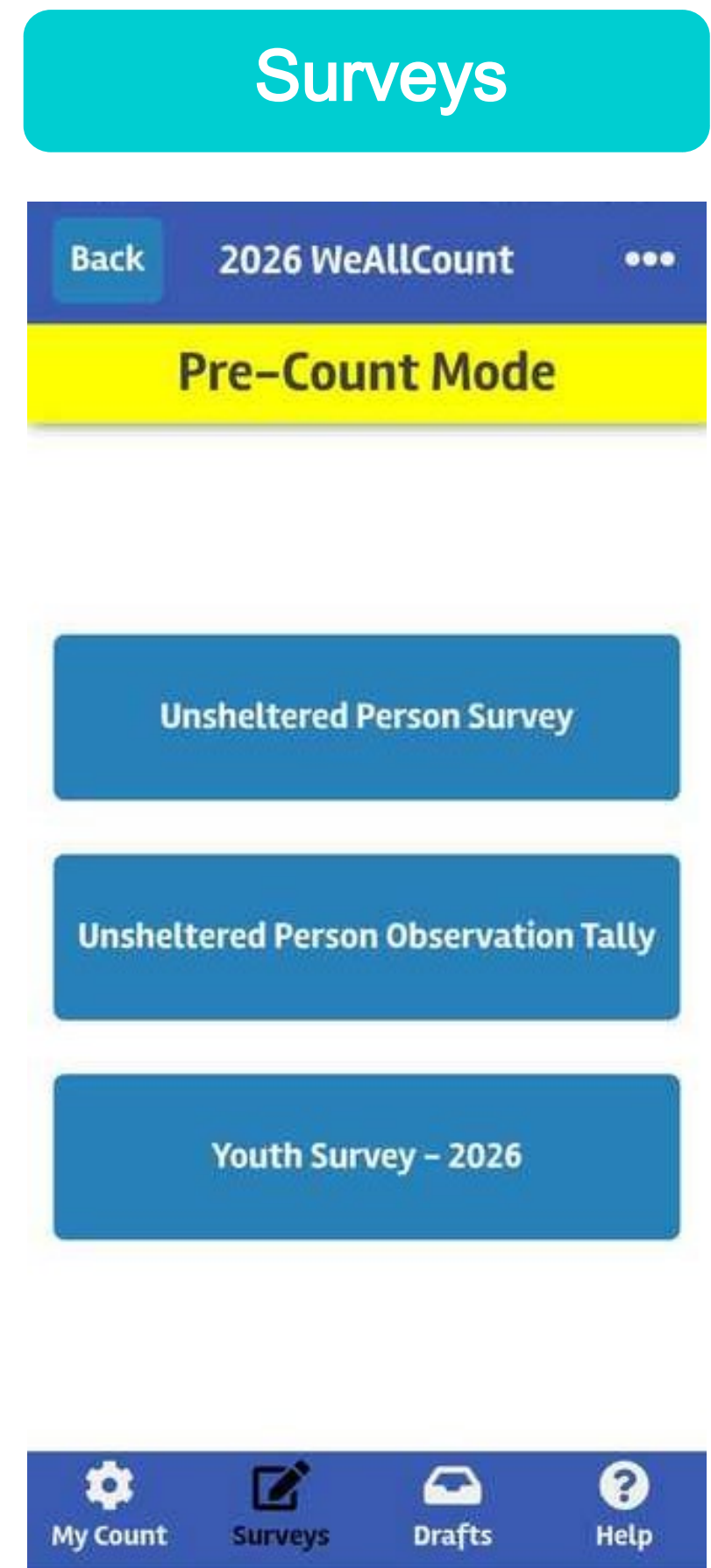
Submit Survey

Save Draft

To Do's

1. Before heading to your count site please make sure to **enable location services on your device**. Refer to the “2026 WeAllCount FAQ for Volunteers” document on the RTFH website.
1. Remember to **arrive at least 30 minutes before your count’s start time**. For evening sites, you will check in and arrive at your count site at 6:30 pm with a fully charged phone.
1. For most, the count will end at 8:00 am for all morning sites and at 9 pm for all evening sites. If you were not able to cover all your census tracts or are not able to complete all engagements, you must **stop** your count by 8 am (morning shift) or 9 pm (evening shift) to conclude your volunteer shift.

4. When returning to your count site, please return ALL site materials
 - leftover socks
 - leftover gift cards
 - flashlights
 - vests
 - bags
 - maps
5. Make sure to check your “Drafts” inbox and submit all surveys completed in the Counting Us App.
6. My Count “Bulletin Board”- Please check for any important messages from your site. Found under “My Count” and Count Assignment.



FAQ

Common Questions

RTFH

PIT Count 101

What to Expect

Survey Practice

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the PIT count take place during the last 10 days in January?

- For consistency in data collection across the United States and to monitor year-to-year trends
- During the winter month's CoCs increase shelter capacity making it easier to census more sheltered persons
- Easier identification of persons unable to access shelter or other crisis response assistance
- End of month counts helps to ensure people who can't afford temporary stays (hotels) can be counted

Why does San Diego choose to conduct a majority of the count in the early morning?

it's generally recommended to count in the early morning hours as this is when most people experiencing homelessness are likely to be sleeping in their usual location (unsheltered count). Sheltered data is collected based on data reported in the Homeless Information System (HMIS) and is further verified by all homeless shelter providers in the Continuum of Care (CoC) for the night of the count. However, our site based counts sites tend to count in the evening hours due to availability of safe parking services. More individuals and families can be engaged in the evening when households are required to check-in for the night.

What should I bring with me to the Count?

- a charged mobile device
- warm and comfortable reflective clothing and good walking shoes
- a flashlight if your site is unable to provide one per group
- a vehicle if you can drive a census tract
- yourself!



Frequently Asked Questions

Can minors volunteer for the count?

Yes, anyone under the age of 18 is allowed to volunteer as long as they have been registered and have obtained parent or legal guardian written consent. The 2026 Minor Release Form must be signed and sent to pitc@rtfhdsd.org or provided to your site coordinator via email or in person.

Would the Point-In-Time Count move forward if there is bad weather?

The count will be conducted rain or shine. If a natural disaster prevents the CoC from moving forward with its scheduled count, the CoC will contact volunteers. The CoC will need to obtain HUD approval for postponement. Postponed Counts tend to be approved for the last 10 days in February.

Can I bring a friend?

Volunteer assignments are determined based on volunteer registration submissions in the volunteer portal. For site coordination and capacity purposes, only registered volunteers should attend. Volunteer need and capacity varies per count site due to the coverage area. Some sites are smaller than others.

Why are people experiencing homelessness?

For **most people**, homelessness is a short-term occurrence primarily driven by financial and relational crises (e.g., eviction, job loss, divorce, DV). For **a small but persistent minority**, it is a long-term experience exacerbated by disabling conditions (e.g., physical health, behavioral health, traumatic brain injuries). Homelessness is not a “one size fits all” concept. It varies greatly from person to person, with diverse reasons for their housing instability and unique needs for support; it's important to recognize the individual complexities within the broader category of homelessness



For more information

[RTFH website](#)

[WeAllCount Page](#)

[Reports & Data](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X\(Formerly Twitter\)](#)

[LinkedIn](#)