2023

Homeless Count Report

MERCED COUNTY
CONTINUUM OF CARE

APRIL 2023

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- Merced County Human Services Agency

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The 2023 Merced County Continuum of Care
Homeless Count and Survey was
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NOTE: Please contact Phil Schmauss concerning any volunteer or agency that was mistakenly omitted.

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Key Findings

- There were 784 adults and children under age 18 who were homeless on Thursday, February 23, 2023, which was the day of the count. In 2022, 855 adults and children were counted. A comparison of these two counts reveals that 71 less persons were counted in 2023, which represents a decrease of 8.3%.

- Of the 784 persons counted, 389 adults and 1 child were unsheltered and 317 adults and 77 children were sheltered.

- The number of children experiencing homelessness has decreased by 73 children in 2023.

- The number of adults and children under age 18 who were unsheltered increased from 368 in 2022 to 390 in 2023 representing a 5.9% increase.

- The number of sheltered adults and children in families decreased from 487 in 2022 to 394 in 2023 representing a decrease of 19.1%.

- 43% of sheltered persons and 29% of unsheltered persons were female.

- 16% of sheltered adults and 24% of unsheltered adults were age 55+.

- 37% of sheltered adults and 35% of unsheltered adults were chronically homeless.

- 47% of sheltered persons and 37% of unsheltered persons were Hispanic/Latino/Latina.

- Nearly three-fourths (72.8%) of persons counted as sheltered and unsheltered were in the City of Merced.

- 60% of unsheltered persons are aware of the housing and homeless services available in Merced County.

- 27% of unsheltered persons were told by a doctor or other medical professional that they had a chronic health condition that is life-threatening such as heart, lung, liver, kidney or cancerous disease.

- 27% of unsheltered persons became homeless for the first time during the past 12 months.

- More than half (56.7) of unsheltered adults had no income.

I. Background Information Concerning the Homeless Count

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as part of its requirements for local jurisdictions to continue to receive continuum of care funding for homeless persons, asks local jurisdictional applicants to conduct a "one-night point-in-time" homeless count every other year during the last 10 days of January.

HUD requires all CoCs that receive CoC Program funding to complete a sheltered count every year and an unsheltered count during the last 10 days of January every other year. The Merced County CoC conducts an unsheltered count every year.

1. When Was the Count Conducted?

The unsheltered count was conducted on Thursday, February 23, 2023. The sheltered count was conducted overnight on February 23 in shelters and transitional housing programs. The Merced County CoC requested and received approval from HUD to conduct the unsheltered and sheltered count on February 23 because of experiencing severe storms with flooding during the last 10 days of January.

2. Who was Counted?

A person was considered homeless, and thus counted, only when he/she fell within the following HUD-based definition by residing in one of the places described below:

- In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings;
- In an emergency shelter; and
- In transitional housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter.

HUD does not consider the following persons to be homeless—persons who are "doubled up," or persons who are "near homelessness"—but considers them to be at-risk of homelessness. Following HUD's guidelines, such persons were not included in the county's homeless count.

The County of Merced, like many other counties, has a substantial number of households that are at-risk of becoming homeless. Approximately 22% (21.9%) of Merced County residents were living below the poverty level according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts data. This means that approximately 63,000 of the 286,461 County residents representing around 21,000 households are at risk of becoming homeless on a day like today.

Households living below the poverty level are at risk of becoming homeless. Because of their limited income, they frequently have to choose between paying their rent or mortgage and other daily living costs such as child care, clothing, food, health care, and transportation. The generally accepted standard for housing affordability is that households should not spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent and utilities.

Many households can become homeless because of social structural issues such as increases in rent, loss of job, and rising health care costs. In addition, personal experiences such as domestic violence, physical disabilities, mental illness, and substance abuse can cause members of a low-income household or an entire household to become homeless as well. Often, one or more of these experiences factor into a household's homelessness experience.

3. Who Conducted the Count?

There were 144 counters that carried out the unsheltered count on February 23 of which 44 were persons with lived experience. They consisted of a wide-range of local representatives from various public and private organizations that included:

- Businesses;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Homeless and Formerly Homeless individuals;
- Local government; and
- Non-profit agencies.

In addition, staff from shelters and transitional housing programs counted residents in their respective programs.

II. Total Number of Homeless Persons

There were 784 adults and children who were counted as homeless on Thursday, February 23, 2023. In 2022, 855 adults and children were counted. A comparison of these two counts reveals that 71 less persons were counted in 2023, which represents a decrease of 8.3%.

Table 1. Comparison of 2021 and 2022 Homeless Counts

	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
2022 Homeless Count	487	368	855
2023 Homeless Count	394	390	784
Difference:	-93 (19.1%)	+22 (5.9%)	-71 (-8.3%)

Of the 784 persons counted, 389 adults and one child were unsheltered and 317 adults and 77 children were sheltered.

The following chart shows that the number of persons counted as homeless increased between 2018 and 2023. There were 783 persons counted in 2023, which is an increase of 269 persons or 52% when compared to the total number of 514 persons counted in 2018.

Chart 1.
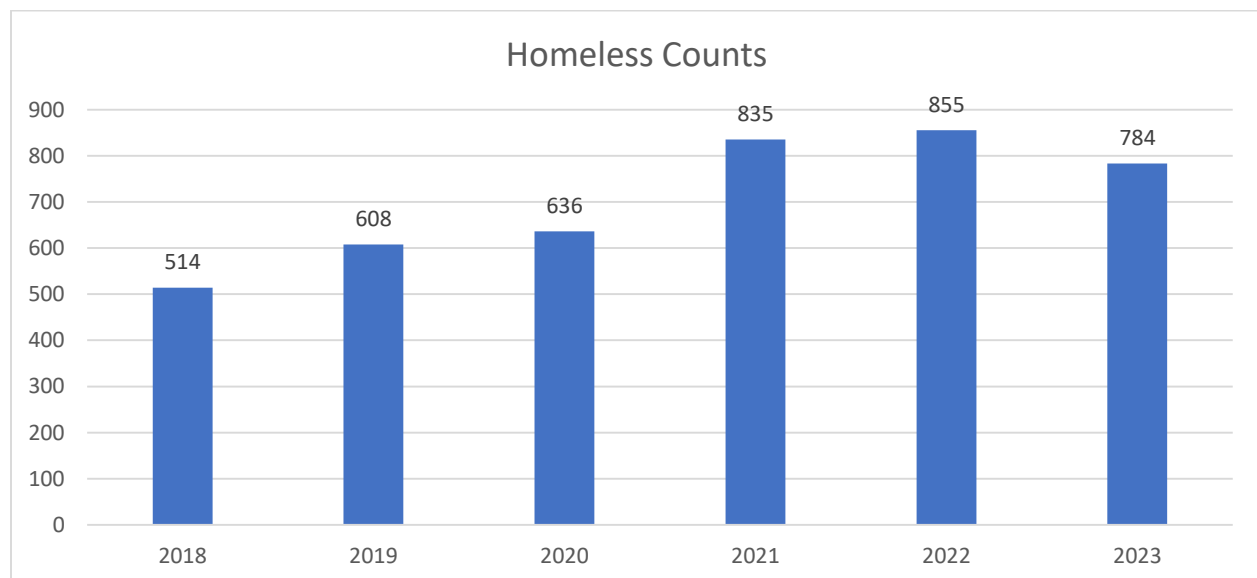
It is important to note that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) limits the count to persons who are defined as

- Homeless persons living in a place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans (these persons must be counted as unsheltered); and
- Persons living in emergency shelters and transitional housing projects (these persons must be counted as sheltered).

Regarding sheltered homelessness, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that

- *CoCs must count all individuals or families who meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(ii) of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 578.3. This includes individuals and families **"living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals)"** on the night designated for the count. This includes individuals residing in Safe Haven projects.*

Regarding unsheltered homelessness, HUD states that

- *CoCs must count all individuals or families who meet the criteria in paragraph (1)(i) of the homeless definition in 24 CFR 578.3. This includes individuals and families **"with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground"** on the night designated for the count. RRH-assisted households who are still unsheltered on the night of the count (e.g., staying in an encampment and being assisted by an RRH project to obtain housing) must be included as part of the unsheltered count.*

Table 2 provides a breakdown of total number of unsheltered and sheltered persons counted in 2023 by jurisdiction. Nearly three-fourths (72.8%) of persons counted were in the City of Merced.

Table 2. Total Number of Unsheltered and Sheltered Persons Counted in 2023 by Jurisdiction

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Unsheltered Count		Sheltered Count		Total Count	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Atwater	27	6.9	9	2.3	36	4.6
Cressey	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Delhi	3	0.8	0	0	3	0.4
Dos Palos	15	3.9	2	0.5	17	2.2
El Nido	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Gustine	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Hilmar	0	0.0	2	.5	2	0.2
Le Grande	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Livingston	6	1.5	0	0	6	0.7

Los Banos	78	20.0	35	8.9	113	14.4
Merced	227	58.2	344	87.3	571	72.8
Planada	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Santa Nella	13	3.3	0	0	13	1.7
Snelling	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
South Dos Palos	6	1.5	0	0	6	0.8
Stevinson	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Winton	15	3.9	2	0.5	17	2.2
County-wide (including DV programs)	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Total:	**390**	**100**	**394**	**100**	**784**	**100.1**

Table 3 provides a 2022 and 2023 comparison of unsheltered and sheltered persons by jurisdiction. The City of Merced had the largest total number. The total number of persons counted as unsheltered was slightly higher (1%) in 2023. The total number of sheltered persons, however, increased by 33%. The total number of persons counted as unsheltered and sheltered in 2023 was 18% higher when compared to 2022.

Table 3. 2022 - 2023 Comparison of Unsheltered and Sheltered Persons by Jurisdiction

Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas	Total Number of Unsheltered Persons				Total Number of Sheltered Persons				Total Number			
	2022	2023	Difference		2022	2023	Difference		2022	2023	Difference	
	#	#	#	%*	#	#	#	%*	#	#	#	%*
Atwater	15	27	+12	+80	**18	9	-9	-50	59	36	-23	-39
Cressey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Delhi	0	3	+3	*	0	0	0	0.0	0	3	+3	*
Dos Palos	11	15	+4	+36	7	2	-5	-71	11	17	+6	+55
El Nido	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Gustine	0	0	0	0	7	0	-7	*	0	0	0	0,0
Hilmar	3	0	-3	*	0	2	+2	+200	3	2	-1	-33
Le Grande	0	0	0	0	3	0	-3	*	0	0	0	0.0
Livingston	9	6	-3	-33	**15	0	-15	-100	35	6	-29	-83
Los Banos	51	78	+27	+53	**60	35	-25	-42	125	113	-12	-10
Merced	224	227	+3	+1	**258	344	+86	+33	482	571	+89	+18
Planada	6	0	-6	*	0	0	0	0.0	6	0	-6	*
Santa Nella	18	13	-5	-28	0	0	0	0.0	18	13	-5	-28
Snelling	0	0	0	0	2	0	-2	-100	0	0	0	0.0
South Dos Palos	4	6	+2	+50	0	0	0	0.0	4	6	+2	*
Stevinson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0
Winton	27	15	-12	-44	0	2	+2	+200	27	17	-10	-37
County-wide***	0	0	0	0	10	0	-10	-100	12	0	-12	-100
Total:	**368**	**390**	**+22**	**+6**	**380**	**394**	**+14**	**+3.7**	**855**	**784**	**-71**	**-8.3**

*Percentages were only provided for differences that were 200% or less.

**Includes proportional distribution of households who received motel vouchers, but whereabouts unrecorded.

***DV programs.

III. Unsheltered Persons

1. Methodology

A homeless count and subpopulation survey instrument was used to gather unsheltered data by counters. The survey data was gathered primarily by utilizing Simtech Solutions, Inc.'s "Counting Us" mobile app. Volunteers entered survey questions on their mobile devices where survey data was instantly submitted to a regional command center. The survey questions were focused on gathering demographic information and subpopulation as required by HUD. The survey instrument focused on gathering responses to determine the number of persons for each subpopulation required by HUD. The survey instrument also gathered responses to other questions that were used to create a unique identifier that was used to determine if any persons were counted more than once. Each person was only included once in the total number of persons counted. All information gathered through the survey instrument remains confidential. HUD requires the total number of unsheltered adults and children under age 18 to be broken down by the following subpopulation categories

- Age;
- Ethnicity;
- Gender; and
- Race

Of the 390 persons counted as unsheltered, 389 were adults and one was a child under age 18. The one unsheltered family included two adults and one child.

2. Age

Table 4. Unsheltered Adults and Children by Age

Age	#	%
Under Age 18	1	0.3
Ages 18 - 24	11	2.8
Age 25 - 34	91	23.3
Age 35 - 44	109	28.0
Age 45 - 54	87	22.3
Age 55 - 64	79	20.2
Age 65+	12	3.1
Total:	**390**	**100**

3. Ethnicity

Table 5. Unsheltered Adults and Children by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	#	%
Hispanic or Latino	146	37.5
Southeast Asian	0	0.0
All Others	190	48.7
Unknown	54	13.8
Total:	**390**	**100**

4. Gender

The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of unsheltered adults and children by gender.

Table 6. Unsheltered Adults and Children by Gender

Gender:	#	%
Male	265	67.9
Female	114	29.2
Transgender	2	0.6
Questioning	0	0.0
Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	0	0.0
Unknown	9	2.3
		100
Total:	**390**	**100**

The next table provides a breakdown of the total number of unsheltered adults and children by ethnicity. Concerning ethnicity, HUD only requires that Hispanics or Latinos be noted. However, the Merced CoC included Southeast Asian (Hmong, Cambodian, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.).

5. Race

The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of unsheltered adults and children by race.

Table 7. Unsheltered Adults and Children by Race

Race	#	%
African American or Black	58	14.9
American Indian or Alaska Native	12	3.1
Asian	5	1.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.5
White	207	53.1
Multiple Races or Other	63	16.1
Unknown	43	11.0
Total:	**390**	**100**

6. Families

HUD requires the following information regarding the total number of families and chronically homeless families and the total number of persons in families:

- One (1) family included three persons of which two were adults and one was a child under age 18.
- The family was not chronically homeless.

7. Subpopulations

HUD requires the total number of unsheltered adults to be broken down by the following homeless subpopulation categories, which are noted in the next table:

- Adult Survivors of Domestic Violence (optional);
- Adults with HIV/AIDS;
- Adults with a Serious Mental Illness;
- Adults with a Substance Use Disorder;
- Chronically Homeless Individuals;
- Single Individuals; and
- Veterans.

The next table also provides the breakdown of the total number of unsheltered adults by

- Developmental Disability
- Physical Disability

The next table breaks down the total number of unsheltered adults by subpopulations based on the information gathered by the homeless count App, which included questions that were asked of each unsheltered adult counted.

Table 8: Estimates of Unsheltered Subpopulations

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Total Unsheltered Adults:	389	100
Chronically Homeless Persons	137	35.1
Persons with Developmental Disabilities	44	11.3
Persons with HIV/AIDS	5	1.2
Persons with Serious Mental Health Problems	81	20.8
Persons with Physical Disabilities	90	23.2
Substance Users (on-going problem)	90	23.2
Veterans	19	4.8
Victims of Domestic Violence	39	10.1
Currently experiencing homelessness because you are fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking	*	

*These persons are included under victims of domestic violence

Local Survey Questions

The next table breaks down the total number of unsheltered adults by local survey questions that were asked of each unsheltered adult counted. Local survey questions are not required by HUD. They are questions that were prioritized by the local CoC.

Local Survey Questions	#	%
	n=389	
Is this the first time you have been homeless?	199	51.2
Did you become homeless for the first time during the past 12 months?	107	27.4
Has a doctor or other medical professional ever told you that you have a chronic health condition that is life-threatening such as heart, lung, liver, kidney or cancerous disease?	90	23.2
Do you receive disability benefits?	56	14.3
Are you aware of the housing and homeless services available in Merced County?	235	60.3
Have you ever been placed in foster care?	9	2.4

Are you currently in foster care?	0	0.0
Have you ever lived in a group home?	5	1.2
Are you currently living in a group home?	0	0.0
Are you currently enrolled in school trade school/vocational program or college?	2	0.6

One other local question focused on monthly income. The question was "How much is your monthly income?

The following chart notes that more than half (56.5) of unsheltered adults had no income. More than two-thirds (67.7%) of them had a monthly income of $500 or less.
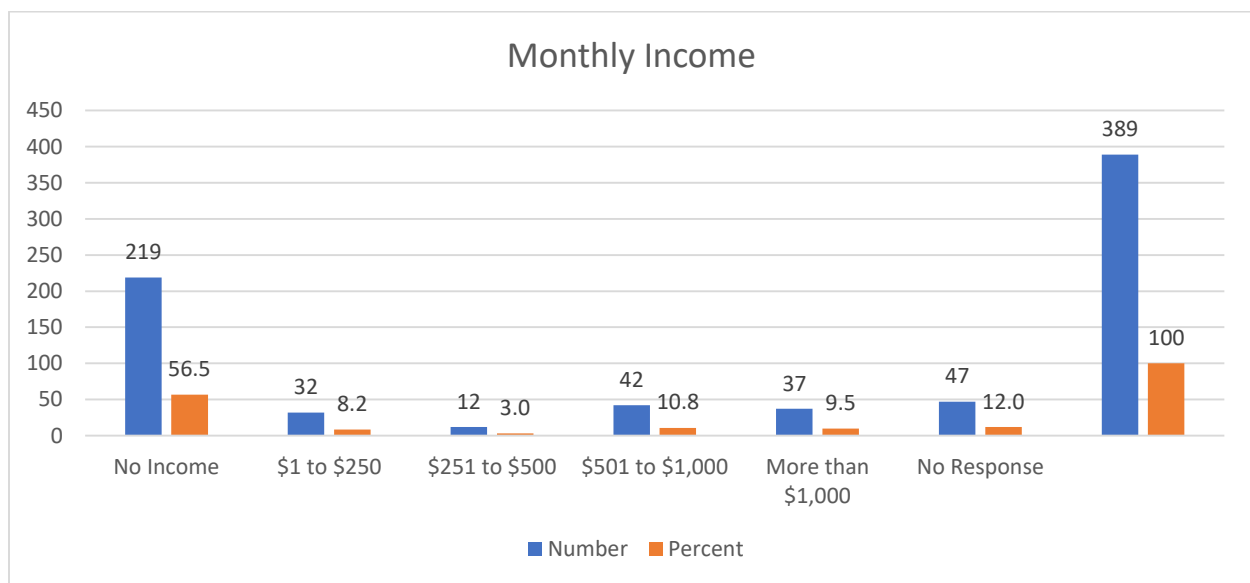
8. **Appendix A**

See Appendix A for a breakdown of unsheltered persons by subpopulations for cities with an unsheltered count of 50 or more persons.

IV. Sheltered Persons

As required by HUD, the sheltered count included the number of persons and households sleeping in emergency shelters (including seasonal shelters), transitional housing, and Safe Haven programs (of which the County has none) that were listed on the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). In addition, any persons staying in hotels or motels because of receiving a voucher from a social service agency were included in the sheltered count per HUD's instructions and the voucher program was listed on the HIC.

1. Methodology

HUD encourages the use of Homeless Management Information Services (HMIS) data to generate sheltered counts and subpopulation data for programs with 100% of beds participating in HMIS. Thus, HMIS was used to gather the total number of occupied beds and a breakdown of the number of sheltered adults and children by subpopulation (see Tables 10 – 13 below) for nearly all sheltered programs. Program data was used for programs not participating in HMIS.

Table 9 provides the total number of persons counted by sheltered program.

Table 9. Total Shelter Count by Program

Facility	Program:	Total # of Persons
Shelters:		
Community Action Agency	D Street Shelter	48
Healthy House	Emergency Shelter	19
Merced County Human Services Agency	Motel Vouchers	129
Merced County Rescue Mission	Hope Respite Care Merced	27
Merced County Rescue Mission	Hope Respite Care - Los Banos	5
Merced County Rescue Mission	B Street Navigation Center	54
Merced County Rescue Mission	Bridge Housing - Merced	23
Merced County Rescue Mission	Bridge to Hope – Los Banos	4
Merced County Rescue Mission	Bridging Housing- Los Banos	10
Valley Crisis Center	Domestic Violence Shelter	3
	Sub-Total:	**322**
Transitional Housing:		
Merced County Rescue Mission	Hope for Women	12
Merced County Rescue Mission	Hope for Men	13
Merced County Rescue Mission	Transition to Hope – Merced	46
Valley Crisis Center	Domestic Violence Transitional	1
	Sub-Total:	**72**
	Total:	**394**

HUD requires the total number of sheltered adults and children under age 18 be broken down by the following homeless subpopulation categories

- Ethnicity;
- Gender; and
- Race.

Of the 394 persons counted as sheltered, 317 were adults and 77 were children.

2. Ethnicity

The next table provides a breakdown of the total number of sheltered adults and children by ethnicity. Concerning ethnicity, HUD only requires that Hispanics or Latinos be noted. However, the Merced CoC included Southeast Asian (Hmong, Cambodian, Taiwanese, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.).

Table 10. Sheltered Adults and Children by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	#	%
Hispanic or Latino	186	47.2
Southeast Asian	0	0.0
All Others	208	52.8
Total:	394	100

3. Gender

The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of sheltered adults and children by gender.

Table 11. Sheltered Adults and Children by Gender

Gender	#	%
Male	226	57.4
Female	168	42.6
Transgender	0	0.0
Non-Conforming (i.e. not exclusively male or female)	0	0.0
Total:	394	100

4. **Race**

The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of sheltered adults and children by race.

Table 12. Sheltered Adults and Children by Race

Race	#	%
African American or Black	66	16.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	7	1.8
Asian	5	1.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	0.5
White	302	76.7
Multiple Races or Other	12	2.9
Total:	394	100

5. **Age**

The following table provides a breakdown of the total number of sheltered adults and children by age

Table 13. Sheltered Adults and Children by Age

Adults:	#	%
Under Age 18	77	19.6
Subtotal:	77	
Ages 18 – 24	29	7.4
Age 25 – 34	66	16.8
Age 35 – 44	92	23.5
Age 45 – 54	67	17.1
Age 55 – 64	45	11.5
Age 65+	18	4.1
Unknown		
Subtotal:	317	
Total:	394	100

6. Subpopulations

HUD requires the total number of sheltered persons to be broken down by the following homeless subpopulation categories for the unsheltered adult population except for chronically homeless families and families:

- Adult Survivors of Domestic Violence (optional);
- Adults with HIV/AIDS;
- Adults with a Serious Mental Illness;
- Adults with a Substance Use Disorder;
- Chronically Homeless Individuals;
- Veterans; and
- Youth Age 18 – 24.

Table 14: Sheltered Adults by Selected Subpopulations

Subpopulation (Adults Only):	#	%
Total Sheltered Adults:	394	100
Chronically Homeless Persons	129	32.7
Persons with HIV/AIDS	2	.5
Persons with Serious Mental Health Problems	118	30
Substance Users (on-going problem)	124	31.5
Veterans	10	2.5
Victims of Domestic Violence	4	1
Youth Age 18 to 24	29	7.4

7. Families

HUD also requires the following information regarding the total number of families and chronically homeless families and the total number of persons in families:

- 45 families included 113 persons of which 58 were adults and 75 were children.
- 9 chronically homeless families included 20 persons of which 9 were adults and 11 children.

Appendix A

Merced

Total Number of Unsheltered Persons: <u>227</u>

Total Unsheltered Adults: <u>227</u>

Demographic Information	n=227	
	Number	**Percent**
Age:		
18 to 24	7	3.0
25 - 34	38	16.8
35 – 44	67	29.7
45 – 54	43	18.8
55 - 64	61	26.7
65+	11	5.0
Unknown	0	0.0
Gender:		
Male	155	68.3
Female	65	28.7
Transgender	0	0.0
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e., not exclusively male or female)	0	0.0
Questioning	0	0.0
Unknown	7	3.0
Ethnicity:		
Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)	83	36.6
Race:		
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	7	3.0
Asian or Asian American	0	0.0
Black, African American, or African	49	21.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
White	94	41.6
Multiple Races	72	31.6
Unknown	5	2.0

Aware of Housing and Homeless Services Available in Merced County	128	56.4
Chronic Health Condition That Is Life-Threatening Such as Heart, Lung, Liver, Kidney, or Cancerous Disease	67	29.7
Chronic Homelessness	85	37.6
Developmental Disability	25	10.9
Disability Benefits	38	16.8
Enrolled in Trade School	0	0.0
Experiencing Homelessness Because Fleeing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking	25	10.9
First Time Homeless	108	47.5
Became Homeless for First Time During Last 12 Months	67	29.7
Foster Care – Ever Placed	5	2.0
Foster Care – Currently In	0	0.0
Group Home – Ever lived In	5	2.0
Group Home – Currently Living	0	0.0
HIV/AIDS	5	2.0
Monthly Income		
No Income	117	51.5
$1 - $250	27	11.9
$251 - $500	11	5.0
$501 - $1,000	30	12.9
More than $1,000	20	8.9
Unknown	22	9.8

Mental Health Problem	54	23.8
Physical Disability	58	25.7
Substance Use Problem	61	26.7
Veteran	11	5.0

Los Banos

Total Number of Unsheltered Persons: <u>78</u>

Total Unsheltered Adults: <u>78</u>

Demographic Information	n=78	
	Number	**Percent**
Age:		
18 to 24	0	0.0
25 - 34	14	18.2
35 – 44	18	22.7
45 – 54	32	40.9
55 - 64	14	18.2
65+	0	0.0
Unknown	0	0.0
Gender:		
Male	46	59.1
Female	25	31.8
Transgender	3	4.5
Gender Non-Conforming (i.e., not exclusively male or female)	3	4.5
Questioning	0	0.0
Unknown	1	0.1
Ethnicity:		
Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x)	32	40.9
Race:		
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	3	4.5
Asian or Asian American	0	0.0
Black, African American, or African	0	0.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
White	43	54.5
Multiple Races	18	22.7
Unknown	14	18.3
Aware of Housing and Homeless Services Available in Merced County	57	72.7
Chronic Health Condition That Is Life-Threatening Such as Heart, Lung, Liver, Kidney, or Cancerous Disease	7	9.1
Chronic Homelessness	32	40.9

Developmental Disability	11	13.6
Disability Benefits	11	13.6
Enrolled in Trade School	0	0.0
Experiencing Homelessness Because Fleeing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking	11	13.6
First Time Homeless	43	54.5
Became Homeless for First Time During Last 12 Months	25	31.8
Foster Care – Ever Placed	0	0.0
Foster Care – Currently In	0	0.0
Group Home – Ever lived In	0	0.0
Group Home – Currently Living	0	0.0
HIV/AIDS	0	0.0
Monthly Income		
No Income	43	54.5
$1 - $250	3	4.5
$251 - $500	0	0.0
$501 - $1,000	3	4.5
More than $1,000	7	9.1
Unknown	21	27.4
Mental Health Problem	25	31.8
Physical Disability	18	22.7
Substance Use Problem	21	27.3
Veteran	3	4.5