

# COUNT US IN

## King County's Point-In-Time Count of Homeless & Unstably Housed Young People

2013 Update

February 20, 2013



## SUMMARY

This is a preliminary report of the data from the 2013 Count Us In, King County's annual effort to count homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults ages 12-25. **The numbers provided by Safe Harbors, the county's homeless management information system (HMIS) are preliminary only. A deeper analysis will be conducted once all numbers from the count are finalized.**

In King County, Washington, 776 youth and young adults were counted as homeless or unstably housed on January 24, 2013. The count was conducted by a group of youth service providers and key community partners from across the county. As described in greater detail below, data was gathered through surveys and HMIS to create a profile of youth homelessness in King County.

Of the 776 youth and young adults identified as homeless and unstably housed, 447 were staying in shelter or transitional housing programs and enumerated through HMIS, and 329 were identified through surveys administered at agencies and places that homeless youth frequent. Of the 329 youth identified through surveys, 114 were unsheltered, 115 were imminently losing their housing and 100 were at risk of losing their housing.

Of the 776 youth and young adults, 12% were under 18 years old, 51% were female, and 60% were people of color.

Count Us In documents the nature and extent of homelessness among youth in King County, and builds better understanding about this unique population, their reasons for experiencing homelessness, and their needs. Data from Count Us In will inform the comprehensive plan to end youth and young adult homelessness by 2020, helping us understand the scope of the problem and whether we are making progress toward solving it. The Count Us In collaboration will continue to improve outreach and survey methods for future counts.

## INTRODUCTION

### What is Count Us in?

Count Us In is our community's count of homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults. The count on January 24, 2013 was our third Count Us In event.

A steering committee consisting of staff from King County, the City of Seattle, the United Way of King County and agencies serving youth and young adult organizes Count Us In.

In 2013, Count Us In took place alongside our community's One Night Count, an annual point in time count of people who are experiencing homelessness mandated by HUD and organized locally by Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH).

### What is the USICH Youth Count Pilot?

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) launched a 2013 Youth Count Pilot to learn more about effective strategies for counting homeless youth. Nine locations were selected across the country – including King County and the balance of Washington State – to test creative methodologies to count homeless youth and young adults and to participate in a cross-site evaluation. USICH plans to use this information to develop national guidance around the inclusion of homeless youth in future point in time counts. **The cross-site evaluation is anticipated in spring 2013 and will inform a second, final report on Count Us In.**

### Methodology for 2013 Count Us In

King County homeless youth and young adult providers surveyed young people as part of Count Us In during the day and early evening of January 24, 2013. Surveys were conducted with young people known to be unstably housed or homeless over the telephone, in public areas where youth congregate, drop in centers and meal programs for homeless youth. The King County Library System and Seattle Public Library System were new partners in 2013, surveying youth at a total of twelve library branches. The library branches were selected based on the reported prominence of homeless youth at the library location. Seattle Parks and Recreation surveyed youth at events in several recreation centers. School Districts in King County directed youth to the closest count location via posters displayed at middle and high schools. Surveys were administered by agency staff and volunteers, all trained prior to the count. United Way of King County provided a small stipend to each participating provider

agency. Each provider used the stipend to support their agencies' participation in the count, including in some locations providing incentives (such as food or bus tokens) to encourage youth participation.

In King County, the One Night Count takes place between 2am and 5am. As the day of January 24<sup>th</sup> drew to an end and the overnight One Night Count began, agencies serving homeless youth hosted youth "sleepover" events during the night/early morning of January 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>. Youth who would otherwise be sleeping on the streets were encouraged to gather at these locations from 2am to 5am in order to complete a Count Us In survey and to be counted as part the One Night Count.

Finally, additional data on the number of youth and young adults in shelters and transitional living programs on the night of January 23<sup>rd</sup> was pulled from Safe Harbors, King County's HMIS.

A unique element of Count Us In is the interdisciplinary partnership between agencies in the homeless youth continuum of care and agencies serving youth and families without an explicit focus on homelessness. Efforts are ongoing to ensure count methodology is appropriate and inclusive for all youth, regardless of housing status or self-identification as homeless.

### **Limitations**

The methodology used in this year's Count Us In effort continued to build on a growing understanding of how to effectively count young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability in our community. This report is based on HMIS data and a survey conducted by a broad range of youth service providers in many parts of the County. It documents a minimum count of youth in specific kinds of housing situations in our community.

Limitations involve conclusions that can be drawn from the demographic profile of youth included in this data. The data reflects, in part, the profiles of youth who use participating programs. This might result in omitting youth who do not access services, are outside the target demographic or geographic reach of these programs, and those who did not respond to the outreach methods employed. The addition of King County and Seattle public library branches as count locations in 2013 is an effort to address some of these limitations.

The dataset includes a large sample of homeless and unstably housed youth in King County and therefore the demographic profile is meaningful. While there is certainly some bias toward youth connected in some way with this set of count locations, the number of youth covered by

this data represents over 2/3 of previous estimates of homeless youth in our community. It is reasonable to use this demographic data as the best representation available of the profile of our homeless/unstably housed youth and young adult population.

## TERMINOLOGY

*YYA*—youth and young adults

*Shelter Youth*—all YYA between 12-25 years of age who stayed in shelter on the night of January 23, 2013, as reported by HMIS.

*Transitional Housing Youth*—all YYA between 12-25 years of age who stayed in transitional housing on the night of January 23, 2013, as reported by HMIS.

*Survey Youth*—YYA who completed the Count Us In survey on January 24, 2013 and met the following criteria:

- Were between 12-25 years of age
- Were either at risk of losing housing, imminently at risk of losing housing, or unsheltered.
- Did not stay in shelter or transitional housing the night of January 23, 2013. Surveys of youth who stayed in shelter or transitional housing on the night of January 23<sup>rd</sup> were removed from the eligible data to avoid duplication of HMIS data.

*Unsheltered*—housing status of YYA who slept in one of the following locations: outside, tent, car/RV, hotel/motel, abandoned building.

*Imminently at risk of losing housing*—housing status of YYA who a) did not stay in shelter or transitional housing and b) could not stay in the same place as the night of January 23<sup>rd</sup> for the following month.

*At risk of losing housing*—housing status of YYA who a) did not stay in a shelter or transitional housing and b) did not know whether they could stay in the same place as the night of January 23<sup>rd</sup> for the following month.

*Unstably housed*—YYA either imminently at risk of losing housing or at risk of losing housing.

### **A note on terminology:**

The terminology used in this preliminary report differs the terminology of last year's Count Us In Report. To avoid confusion with the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of "literally homeless", this year's report uses "unsheltered" instead of "literally

homeless” to describe youth who slept outside, or in a tent, car/RV, hotel/motel or abandoned building.

**DISTINCTION: Survey vs. HMIS****Survey Youth: Overall Count Us In Survey Statistics by Site**

Over 1400 surveys were completed for Count Us In. Surveys not eligible to be included in the analysis indicated that youth had already completed a survey, had stayed in a shelter or transitional housing program, were stably housed, or were not within the valid age range. We collected 329 surveys indicating that a youth was unsheltered or unstably housed. The 329 eligible surveys from youth who were unstably housed or homeless are included in the remaining analysis.

Location	# Eligible	Total Surveyed	% Eligible
Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS)	8	13	62%
Atlantic Street Center (ASC)	24	92	26%
Auburn Youth Resources (AYR)	26	105	25%
CONSEJO Counseling and Referral Services (CONSEJO)	9	50	18%
Friends of Youth (FOY)	29	120	24%
King County Public Library--Auburn (KCLS-A)	3	6	50%
King County Public Library--Burien (KCLS-Bu)	4	5	80%
King County Public Library--Foster (KCLS-F)	0	8	0%
King County Public Library--Renton (KCLS-R)	1	7	14%
Lifelong AIDS Alliance HEYO outreach (HEYO)	12	23	52%
Neighborcare Health- 45th Street Youth Clinic (45th)	2	10	20%
New Horizons (NH)	13	28	46%
POCAAN/CURB	17	60	28%
Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets (PSKS)	29	39	74%
Renton YouthSource (RYS)	7	25	28%
ROOTS (ROOTS)	1	9	11%
Seattle Parks & Rec-Jefferson Comm. Center (SP-JCC)	4	99	4%
Seattle Parks & Rec-Rainier Comm. Center (SP-RCC)	3	58	5%
Seattle Parks & Rec-SW Teen Life Center (SP-SW)	3	51	6%
Seattle Parks & Rec-Van Asselt Comm.Center (SP-VaCC)	1	29	3%
Seattle Public Library-Ballard (SPL-B)	0	5	0%
Seattle Public Library-Capitol Hill (SPL-Cap)	1	1	100%
Seattle Public Library-Central (SPL-Cen)	0	15	0%
Seattle Public Library-Northgate (SPL-NG)	2	33	6%
Teen Feed (TF)	32	78	41%
Therapeutic Health Services (THS)	26	150	17%
Union Gospel Mission (UGM)	5	132	4%
YMCA Young Adult Services (YMCA)	15	60	25%
YouthCare's Orion Center (YC)	52	106	49%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>1417</b>	<b>23%</b>

## Youth in Shelters and Housing Programs: HMIS Data

Data from the Safe Harbors HMIS was also pulled for the night prior to the count to correspond with the “where you stayed last night” question on the survey. A total of 447 people ages 12-25 and unaccompanied by a parent or guardian were in shelter, transitional housing or permanent supportive housing for homeless people on the night of January 23rd.

## RESULTS

### All Youth and Young Adults: Demographic Profile

On the night of January 23, 2013, 776 YYA, ages 12 to 25 were homeless, at imminent risk of homelessness or at risk of homelessness in King County.

Of the total 776 YYA, 329 were unsheltered, at imminent risk of homelessness or at risk of homelessness. 145 YYA were in emergency shelter, and 302 were in transitional housing programs.

Total Survey, Shelter, Transitional Housing Youth	#	%
Survey Youth	329	42%
HMIS	477	58%
Total	776	100%

51% of all YYA counted were female, 46% were male. 13 YYA counted in the survey were transgendered. Data on transgendered YYA in shelters and transitional housing is not collected by HMIS and therefore not reflected in this report.

Gender	#	%
Female	397	51%
Male	354	46%
Transgender (survey only)	13	2%
Other/Unknown	12	1%
Total	776	100%

*Age*

Youth under 18 years of age represented 12% of all youth and young adults identified as being unsheltered or unstably housed. 18-20 year olds represented 33%. Young adults over 21 years of age represented 37%.

Age (years)	Number of Youth	Percent of Total
12	3	<1%
13	2	<1%
14	16	2%
15	10	1%
16	34	4%
17	31	4%
<b>Total youth</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>12%</b>
18	74	9%
19	85	11%
20	104	13%
21	101	13%
22	106	14%
23	77	10%
24	74	9%
25	59	8%
<b>Total young adults</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Ethnicity*

12% of all YYA were Hispanic.

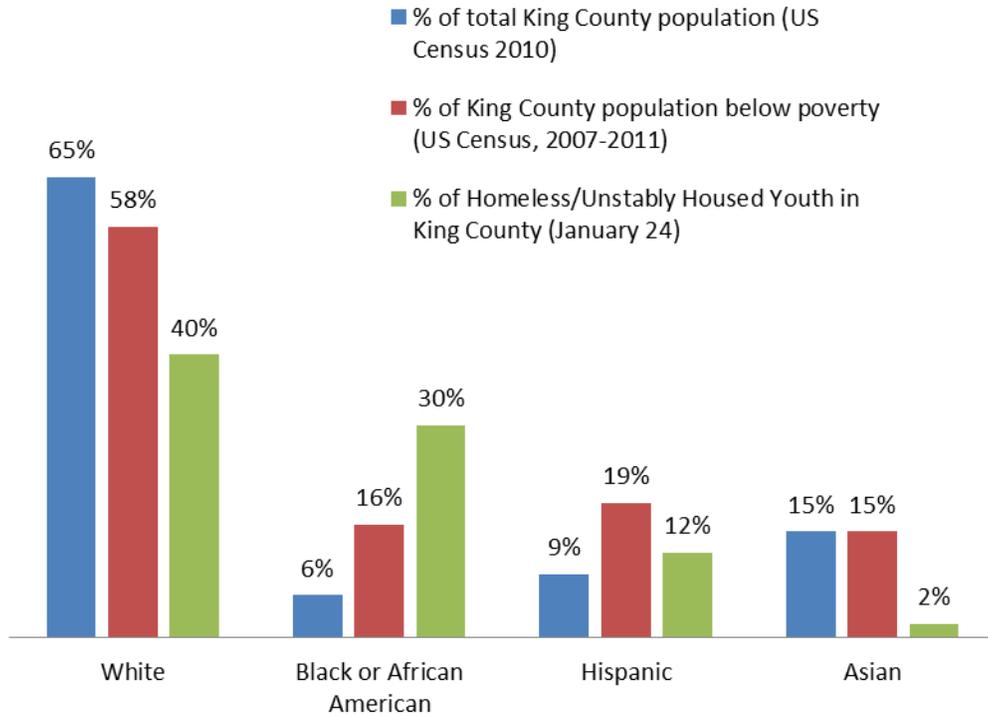
Ethnicity	#	%
Hispanic	91	12%
Non-Hispanic	660	85%
Unknown	25	3%
Total	776	100%

Race

Race	#	%
Asian	13	2%
African-American	236	30%
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	22	3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	34	4%
Caucasian/White	309	40%
Multi-Racial	91	12%
Hispanic (survey only)*	20*	2%
Other/Unknown	51	7%
Total	776	100%

\*Number not included in Total

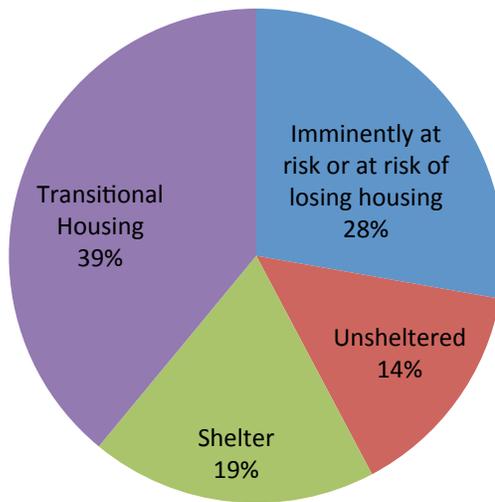
**People of color experience poverty and homelessness at rates disproportionate to their representation in the total population in King County.**



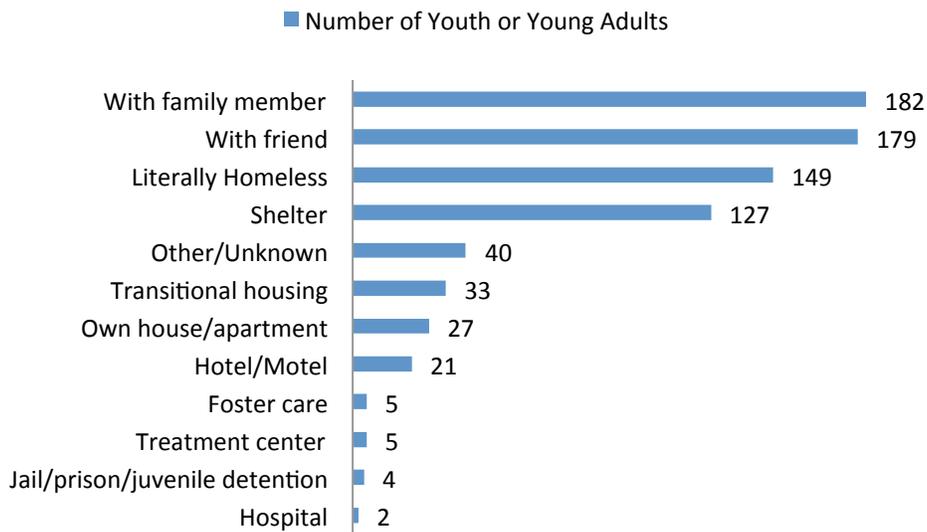
*Housing Status*

Housing status is based on the nature of the place where the youth stayed on the night before taking the Count Us In Survey; or on the night before entering a shelter or housing program. Definitions of terminology are provided on page 5.

**Housing Status of Youth and Young Adults, 1/24/13. n=776**



**Place slept before survey or program entry**

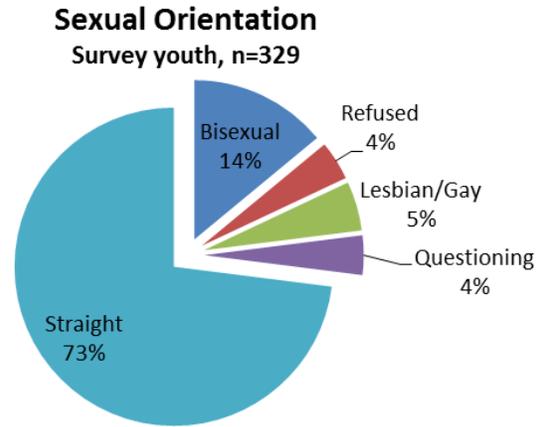


**SURVEY YOUTH ONLY: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The following is representative of eligible survey youth only as shown on page 6. No HMIS data is included. 329 surveys indicated that a youth was unsheltered, at imminent risk of homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. Of the 329 surveyed youth, 114 were unsheltered, 115 were imminently losing their housing and 100 were at risk of losing housing.

*Sexual Orientation.*

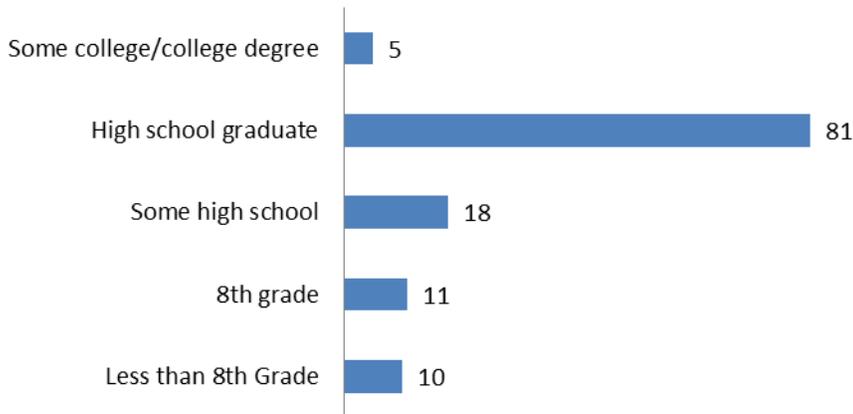
Of the 329 youth surveyed, 241 individuals responded were straight, 15 were lesbian or gay, 48 were bisexual, 12 were questioning their sexuality, and 13 refused to respond.



*Education*

325 youth reported their highest level of educational attainment. 18% of the 208 youth not enrolled in school on January 24<sup>th</sup> did not graduate from high school. 117 youth respondents reported being currently enrolled in school. 34 of the 117 youth were enrolled in higher education.

**Highest level of educational attainment**  
Survey youth NOT currently enrolled in school, n=208

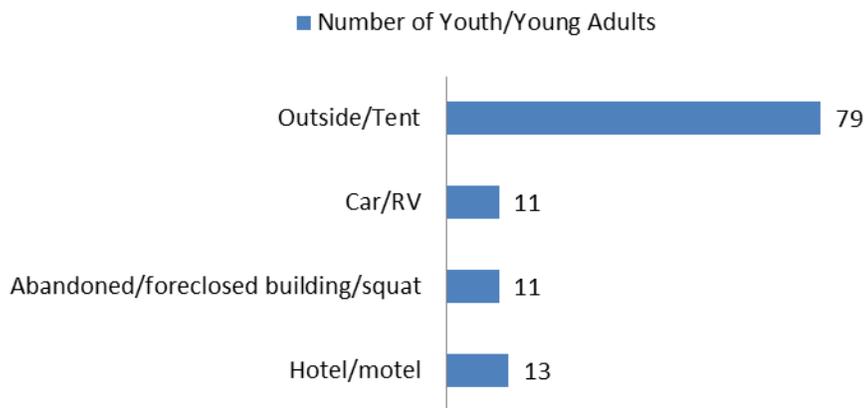


## *Housing Status*

### **Unsheltered**

On the night of January 23, 2013, 114 YYA survey respondents reported being unsheltered. Definitions of terminology are provided on page 5.

#### **Unsheltered youth/young adults: Place slept night before survey, n=114**



### **DISCUSSION**

This data tells us that 776 YYA are homeless or unstably housed in King County, including at least 329 youth are without stable housing or access to shelter/housing services. A large number of youth are unsheltered and many more are in need of prevention services to avoid time on the street with all its risks for vulnerable young people. Minors make up a larger portion of the survey population than has been documented in the past decade. Youth of color are disproportionately represented in the data compared to their representation in the general King County population.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2013 Count Us In point in time count was successful in capturing a more complete picture of youth and young adult homelessness in Seattle and King County. Certainly many youth who are in unstable living situations or unsheltered were not reached by the survey, so ongoing development of survey methods is important and recognition of the limitations of the data must be emphasized.

Based on this dataset, much can be learned about the nature and extent of homelessness among young people. Further analysis of the data will provide information on the housing history and service needs of survey youth as well as the nature of homelessness for various segments of the population. This information will be used to inform planning for an effective response to youth homelessness.

Given the expansion of count partners and locations this year, we view this count as the establishment of a new baseline in our understanding of youth and young adult homelessness in King County. Particular attention will be paid to identifying the strengths and opportunities of the 2013 Count Us In effort as seen through the USICH's cross site evaluation, anticipated in spring 2013.

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Count Us In Steering Committee:

The City of Seattle Human Services Department, King County Department of Community and Human Services, Teen Feed, YouthCare, Friends of Youth, and survey agency partners:

Asian Counseling and Referral Service  
Atlantic Street Center  
Auburn Youth Resources  
Consejo Counseling and Referral Service  
Friends of Youth  
King County Public Library  
Lifelong AIDS Alliance HEYO  
Neighborcare Health - 45th St. Clinic  
New Horizons  
Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets  
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