

SECTION 1. SURVEY BACKGROUND, RATIONALE, AND METHOD

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The Alameda County-wide Shelter and Services Survey

The 2003 Alameda County-wide Shelter and Services Survey (ACSSS) was designed to provide a reliable estimate of the number of homeless persons in Alameda County and to study the characteristics, service use, and unmet needs of the homeless population of Alameda County as well as those of non-homeless individuals using services targeted towards extremely low income residents, many of who are thought to be homeless. During the last week of February and the first three weeks of March 2003, the Alameda County-wide Homeless Continuum of Care Council conducted a survey of clients of homeless assistance providers in Alameda County. The Council was assisted in this effort by statisticians at the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and researchers at the Public Health Institute. During the four-week period, 1461 complete interviews were conducted by 155 volunteers at shelters, transitional housing programs, food pantries, soup kitchens, and drop-in centers and at outdoor locations on the routes of mobile outreach vans.

The ACSSS was conducted to collect detailed information about the County homeless population in order to better secure and most effectively allocate public and private resources. In part, the effort to obtain an estimate of the number of homeless people was motivated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's mandate that local communities receiving federal funding for homeless services and housing complete such a count. Program evaluation research has demonstrated the efficacy of different housing and service models for homeless individuals who share certain characteristics. For example, a study by Dennis Culhane, Stephen Matraux, and Trevor Hadley (1999) shows that homeless persons placed in supportive housing experience significant reductions in shelter use, hospitalizations (of all types), length of stay per hospitalization, and time incarcerated.

In order to initiate such programs or to shift more resources towards them, it is necessary to know the number of individuals who would likely benefit from such services and where within the County the programs should be located. This information can only come from a county-wide

survey that produces client-level information about mental health, family history, history of homelessness, and other salient topics.

On a larger scale, different departments and agencies within the County are currently developing a community-wide integrated housing plan for homeless people and people with special needs. Participants include the Continuum of Care Council and County Departments of Behavioral Health Care Services, Public Health, and Housing and Community Development. This project is informed by research like that of Dennis Culhane and associates (1994), who showed that the total cost to the community of housing and serving people with severe mental disorders in supportive housing programs is roughly the same as the cost to the community of those same individuals living on the streets and in shelters and using hospitals, veterans services, psychiatric inpatient services, jails, and other community resources. The planning process requires detailed information about the characteristics and needs of the County's homeless population.

Survey strategy

Several metropolitan areas have compiled information about homeless persons to support decisions about homeless services. To accomplish this goal policy-makers have relied on "counts" as well as surveys. The latter can be implemented using several types of survey design, including those relying on stratified random and block sampling.

Historically, the most commonly used method for determining how many people are homeless in a jurisdiction is conducting a one-night street and shelter count. This method is an attempt to count directly the homeless population rather than relying on sampling and surveying. This approach has been used on an annual basis by the cities of Boston (Homelessness in the City of Boston 2002) and San Francisco (City and County of San Francisco 2002) to quantify the number of homeless individuals. Teams of volunteers go out on the same evening, each with a prescribed area to cover. The volunteers attempt to locate and identify all the homeless individuals in their assigned areas and conduct a head count, sometimes also recording some basic demographic information such as race or gender. The results of all the different teams are tallied together and combined with counts from shelters. The result provides a lower-bound estimate for the number of people homeless on that evening. While the value of a homeless

population size estimate is obvious, the lack of any individual-level data collection limits the usefulness of this type of census for determining policy direction.

The ACSSS adopted a different strategy by surveying clients of homeless assistance providers. Information is collected by sampling and interviewing clients at sites that provide assistance to homeless individuals. This method was used previously in two national studies, the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC) (Burt et al. 1999), and a 1987 survey conducted by the Urban Institute (Burt et al. 2001), as well as on a local scale in the Denver area (James 1991). The national studies utilized professional interviewers and extensive interviews, while the Denver research utilized a much shorter questionnaire and volunteer interviewers. The survey of clients of homeless assistance programs methodology is based on the finding that most homeless individuals utilize shelters, soup kitchens, or other services at least weekly, and that these services provide a good opportunity for randomly sampling and interviewing clients. A Los Angeles study (Koegel et al., 1996) estimated two-thirds coverage of the total homeless population would be obtained from a one-day survey of shelter and food service clients. Using national data Burt et al. (2001) found a substantial increase in the number of homeless persons contacted with a week-long rather than a one-day survey. The ACSSS benefited both from staying in the field substantially longer than one day and from surveying persons in contact with additional types of services, beyond shelter and food service sites.

A third approach for surveying the homeless, geographical block sampling, is exemplified by the Los Angeles Skid Row studies of Audrey Burnham and Paul Koegel (Koegel et al. 1996), the D. C. Metropolitan Area Drug Study of Michael Dennis and colleagues (1993), and Peter Rossi's (1989) research in Chicago. Block sampling studies are valuable for estimating the size and general characteristics of the service and non-service using segments of the homeless population, the latter of which is the group that will be omitted from surveys of clients of services for the homeless. In this methodology, locations such as census blocks are randomly selected for street "sweeps", and then an attempt is made to screen all the individuals found in each area for housing status and survey those persons who are homeless. By sampling the entire population, rather than just those who utilize services for homeless individuals, this method makes contact with and surveys additional homeless persons beyond those reached through a services-based survey.

Since Alameda County wanted more information than a “count” could provide, and the block sampling method was judged to be unsuitable for Alameda County because of the large geographic area of the County and also the much greater expense of this type of survey¹, the ACSSS utilized a stratified random sample of persons found at services directed at the needs of homeless persons. All interviews were conducted in-person, with responses recorded on a paper questionnaire.

Survey methodology

Preparation. Initial planning for the survey was undertaken by the Continuum of Care Council Coordinator and an intern at the Continuum of Care Council, in conjunction with research staff at the Public Health Institute. Continuum of Care Council staff compiled information about services used by homeless individuals in Alameda County. The resultant provider list was then used by statisticians at the Survey Research Center (SRC), University of California, Berkeley, to design the sampling strategy, draw a sample of programs selected for inclusion in the survey, and create site-level weights for survey data. The questionnaire was developed by the Public Health Institute with community input through the Continuum of Care Council, and the volunteer training curriculum was developed by the Continuum of Care Council, the Public Health Institute, and consultants who conducted the training sessions. Another Continuum of Care Council official solicited volunteer field researchers and scheduled data collection at the selected sites.

Sampling. The target population for the survey was all adults and unaccompanied youth (those youth not residing with a parent or guardian) who were served by facilities in Alameda County providing services to the homeless, during the last week of February and the first three weeks of March, 2003.

¹ Michael Dennis calculated the expected costs of interviewing clients via different methodologies based on his experience conducting an in-depth study of homeless people in Washington, D. C. The “expected costs are \$54 per interview in shelters, \$59 per interview in soup kitchens, and \$847 per interview in street locations” (Dennis 1991). By “street locations” Dennis refers to a block sampling methodology. Dennis lists costs for interviews conducted by professional interviews. It is extremely doubtful that a block sampling survey could be carried out with volunteers, but the *relative* expense of this method in comparison to others would remain the same in either case.

The sample was what is termed a stratified two-stage cluster sample. The first stage of the sample was a selection of facilities serving the homeless (and others). Prior to selection, facilities were ordered into clusters by type of site: (1) shelter, (2) food service, and (3) outreach and drop-in. Within type of site, facilities were further ordered by language of clients and by section of the county. Facilities were then selected from the ordered list by systematic selection with probability proportional to the number of client contacts in a week. In total, about 16 percent of the 473 service sites were selected for the survey. (Details on sampling procedures and calculation of weights can be found in Appendix 1.)

In the second stage of selection, one or more days of the week were selected for each facility, and field workers were sent to the facility to interview a proportion of the clients served that day. Days of the week for each facility were selected based on hours of operation (for example, many meal programs are only open one or two days per week) and scheduling needs (i.e. sites in a given geographic region were spread throughout the interviewing period to insure adequate coverage by interviewers and site coordinators). The number of days per week selected for each facility depended upon the proportion of hours of operation to number of clients accessing the service. For most sites, about 25 completed interviews were expected. However, where the size of the program was not large enough to facilitate 25 interviews on one day, where possible, then, two or more days of interviewing were conducted. Conversely, very large sites were accessed more than once to ensure that the service users were adequately represented.

Volunteer field researchers serving as site coordinators used systematic random sampling² to select clients for interview, using a predetermined selection interval. Rates of selection were lower at the larger sites, which balanced out the higher first-stage probability of selection of these sites so that the overall probability of selection of any individual service utilization was roughly the same across all the different sites in each stratum. This procedure reduced the unwanted design effects of the sampling strategy and also facilitated scheduling and implementation because approximately the same number of interviews was then conducted at each selected site.

² In brief, systematic random sampling means picking every xth person from a line or list, starting with the yth person, where y is a randomly chosen number from one to x (Kalton, 1983).

Interviewers, site coordinators, and training. Volunteers served as interviewers and/or site coordinators at the interview locations. Many of the interviewers and site coordinators were upper and middle management government officials, other city and county staff, non-profit executives, community and faith-based volunteers, graduate students, and currently and formerly homeless individuals. Sixteen (10%) of the volunteers were currently or formerly homeless, and this group conducted at least 20 percent of the total interviews. Forty-seven of the volunteers (30%) were line staff, program-level staff, or managers currently working for non-profits or local governments in a job that related to homelessness. Additional volunteers included a number of officials and executives whose work responsibilities included the development and implementation of policy and programs concerning homelessness but whose schedules currently allowed for little regular time spent with homeless people. In other words, most volunteers were either homeless, formerly homeless, or had experience with homeless programs and related public policy analysis.

Interviewers were trained in four-hour sessions that explained the purpose of the survey and the importance of confidentiality, reviewed the survey instrument in detail, and prepared the volunteers for addressing potential problems in conducting interviews. As part of the training the volunteers interviewed each other and role-played challenging situations. Site-coordinators attended eight-hour trainings that included the material for interviewers as well as instructions for setting up locations for interviewing, conducting sampling at the sites, approaching potential respondents, and matching respondents with interviewers. They also checked interviews for completeness, gave thank-you gifts to respondents, recorded the number and characteristics of non-responders, and were responsible for all data from the sites until they were collected by Continuum of Care Council staff.

Recruitment. At most food and drop-in sites, the majority of service sites in the sample, respondents were selected and approached as they waited in queues to receive services. As they approached potential survey respondents, site coordinators briefly described the survey and its purpose and asked clients if they would be willing to participate. Once agreeing to participate in the survey, participants might be interviewed immediately or, as in the case of those waiting their turn to eat a meal, following receipt of the service. Respondents were given either transit bus passes or grocery gift certificates as a thank-you gift for participation in the survey. These gifts

were chosen after consultation with community groups and with a panel of homeless individuals. In both cases the value of the gift was around \$8.

Description of questionnaire. Questionnaire topics included information on demographics, education, background of institutionalization, housing, household composition, length of time homeless, and city of residency; employment, income, health insurance and other benefits; personal status in key barrier and risk areas, such as alcohol and other drug use, mental health, family violence and personal victimization, and physical health, hunger, and disability status; and access to and use of health and other services. The questionnaire was designed with the constraint that the average interview length needed to be under 30 minutes in order not to make an unreasonable request for time from service users, who might have other demands on their time, and to enable the pool of volunteers to conduct over 1,400 interviews during the survey period. This necessitated that each questionnaire section be pared down so that some topics were covered with relatively few questions, and a few areas of concern were left unexplored. Because interviewer practice time in training sessions was short, researchers simplified the questionnaire by reducing the number of skip patterns that otherwise would have been used, leaving a limited number of redundancies in the instrument. The questionnaire, and interviewers with appropriate language skills, were available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cantonese. (Appendix 4 provides the English survey instrument and Appendix 3 information on question sources.)

Interviewing. On average, interviews lasted 27 minutes (unweighted calculation, $n = 1175$), and 73 percent of all interviews were completed in half an hour or less. The longest recorded duration from beginning to end of interview was 1 hour 40 minutes. For 33 interviews the interviewer recorded a pause or break during which time the respondent obtained medical care, ate a meal, tended to laundry, or checked on children. Barring simple errors in recording start or stop times, it seems likely that longer interview periods included unrecorded breaks.

At a few sites, particularly outreach vans, it was difficult to conduct the full half-hour interview. Interviewers accompanied van drivers during evening deliveries of food and bedding. Since the vans operated in the evening, often encountering clients as they were about to go to sleep, the survey instrument was structured to accommodate abbreviated interviews. Hence in 13 percent of the interviews ($n = 179$), clients were only asked basic demographic information, housing

status, and enough service-use information to permit the researchers to calculate client-level weights for purposes of estimating the count of homeless persons. These short interviews, based on nine examples for which times were recorded, appear to have taken just over 15 minutes.³ Interviewers estimated that subsequent short interviews required less than 10 minutes.

A one-week fieldwork timeframe was originally chosen because clients could, reasonably accurately, report on personal service usage for the past week. However, the full number of expected surveys was not completed in the first week. Therefore, fieldwork was extended for three more weeks of interviewing. Because service use is extremely similar week to week given similar weather conditions, it was assumed there was no real difference across the four weeks of time within the sites or clientele. The mathematical weights associated with each respondent account for history of service use, which reflects each individual's use of the overall system of services. For more discussion, including how we weighted respondents using services multiple times during the interview period, see Appendix 1.

Response rates (site-level and individual-level). Providers ultimately participated in the survey at 51 out of the 75 selected sites. Eight of the sites were unavailable because they were closed or duplicated other sites, for a site-level response rate of 76 percent. Duplication of sites occurs when multiple programs operate out of the same physical location; in cases where another program at the facility was selected as part of the sample, the duplicated site was not included as a sample site, although the program's clients may have had an opportunity to be included in the survey through the other selected program. Individual response rates were 85 percent at shelters, 67 percent at outreach and drop-in sites, and 56 percent at food sites, for an overall client-level response rate of 64 percent (see Figure 1-1). Response rates were higher for shelters because shelter clients stayed at the sites and were more amenable to spending time being interviewed or waiting to be interviewed in that setting, while at other sites clients were more likely to have time constraints that competed with participation. Food sites exert a big influence on the overall response rate because more than half of the interviews were conducted at food sites.

Site coordinators were provided a space on the questionnaire to record the reason that a selected person did not complete an interview (question A8). Interviewers could also record reasons that

³ The pace for short interviews was so quick, with respondents waiting in the open air, that interviewers stopped recording times.

an interview was not conducted or was not completed (question V2). Table 1-1 shows the reasons for non-response and the percent of non-respondents with that reason. The most common reasons given for non-participation included refusal to participate (n = 487), walking away without interview after agreeing to participate (n = 205), and having to leave for something else (n = 42). Another 99 individuals selected for interview stating that they had already completed the survey were not interviewed again, and 28 persons selected were determined ineligible for one of several reasons. For health, mental health, and other reasons, including interview site conditions that precluded interviews, another 39 individuals could not successfully be interviewed.

Figure 1-1: Client-level response by service type

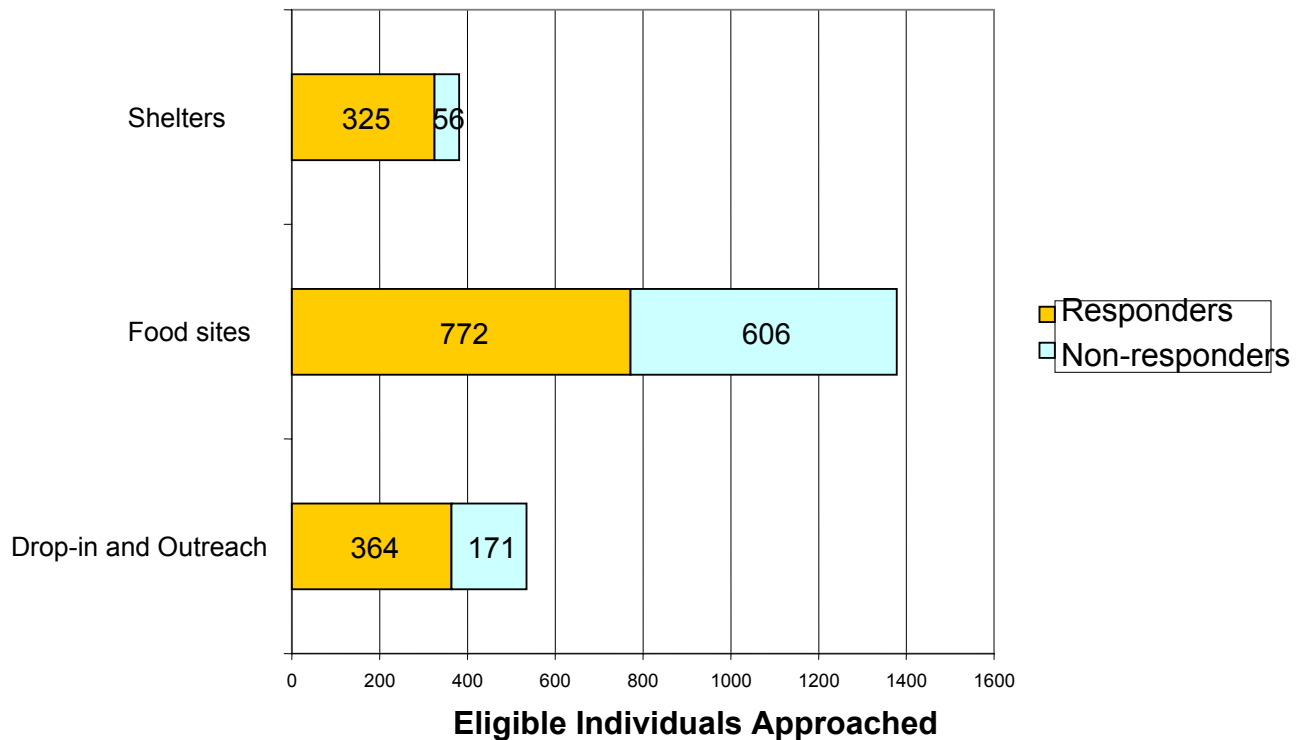


Table 1-1: Reasons for non-response¹

Reason	N	% of non-respondents (n = 829)
Respondent refused	487	58.7
Respondent agreed, but left without interview and without explanation	205	24.8
Previously selected, not re-interviewed	99	11.9
Had to leave for work or to go elsewhere or busy with something else	42	5.1
Language barrier or communication problem	36	4.4
Potential respondent ineligible		
Minor, accompanied (ineligible)	22	2.7
Minor, living at home (ineligible)	5	0.6
Ineligible for interview, other reason	1	0.1
Unable to complete interview, other reasons		
Selected person mentally or physically unable to interview	11	1.3
Conditions at site precluded interview	11	1.3
Selected person alcohol or drug intoxicated	4	0.5
Selected person angry and unwilling to continue	2	0.2
Other, unspecified	11	1.3
Missing (no reason reported)	34	4.1

¹ Questions A8 and V2 permitted multiple responses, generating 970 reasons recorded for 829 respondents. For another 34 non-respondents, no reason was recorded (total non-respondent n = 863).

Representativeness of sample. Using the information recorded by site coordinators on the questionnaire cover sheet as service users were selected for interview, non-responders (n = 863) were compared to interviewed persons (n = 1461; see Table 1-2). Site coordinators did not record a recruitment language for about one-tenth (11.2%) of non-respondents. In some cases, an unrecorded recruitment language indicates an inability to communicate, which contributed to non-response. Males, once selected for interview, were somewhat less likely to be interviewed than females. Respondents were more likely to be Black (65%) than non-respondents (56%), and correspondingly less likely to be of any other race (for non-respondents, race was recorded as observed by study personnel).

Table 1-2: Comparing observed gender, race and language of recruitment for selected respondents and non-respondents

	Respondents (n = 1461)		Non-respondents (n = 863)	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender*				
Female	560	38.3	247	28.6
Male	876	60.0	580	67.2
Unknown	1	0.1	---	---
All recorded	1437	98.4	827	95.8
Missing	24	1.6	36	4.2
Race*				
White	316	21.6	196	22.7
Black	951	65.1	487	56.4
Asian	27	1.8	28	3.2
Other/mixed	125	8.6	87	10.1
All recorded	1419	97.1	798	92.5
Missing	42	2.9	65	7.5
Language of recruitment				
English	1345	92.1	732	84.8
Spanish	35	2.4	21	2.4
Vietnamese	3	0.2	1	0.1
Cantonese	1	0.1	12	1.4
All recorded	1384	94.7	766	88.8
Missing	77	5.3	97	11.2

* Respondents and non-respondents differ significantly ($p < 0.01$).

Differences in gender, race and language between respondents and non-respondents appear to be larger than we would expect by chance alone.⁴ When interpreting the findings in this report, we need to keep in mind that the analysis sample may contain relatively more women, more Blacks, and more persons who speak English than the general population of persons who use shelters, transitional housing, food pantries, soup kitchen, drop-in services and mobile outreach services. Similarly, the analysis sample probably under-represents individuals who are employed, who would be less likely to be recruited at meal programs and other day-time activity sites. The

⁴ P-values from simple, unweighted Pearson Chi-square comparisons between respondents and non-respondents are less than 0.001 for gender and less than 0.01 for race. Language of recruitment does not differ statistically, but the difference for English appears large enough to matter

sample may also under-represent certain sub-groups engaged in treatment, whose appointments take them away from interview sites. At the same time the sample would over-represent the sub-group of individuals actively engaged in use of services that are located *at* interview sites.

Data entry. Responses recorded on paper were transferred to an electronic file by a process of double data entry. In this procedure two different data entry clerks type responses into a database. Discrepancies detected on reentry are resolved by reference to the original paper document or by a list of decision rules which accumulated as data entry progressed.

Weighting. The two-stage random sample design used for the survey requires special analysis techniques for calculating population estimates and evaluating the amount of error in those estimates. With the exception of the non-response analyses in this section, all data presented in subsequent sections of this report are generated by weighted analyses, using individual weights. Development of the weights is discussed in Appendix 1. Confidence intervals are calculated with survey analysis procedures that take into account the complex sample design.⁵

Strengths and limitations

Several essential decisions about study design as well as characteristics of a voluntary survey influence the quality of study findings. We mention inherent biases of point-prevalence studies such as the ACSSS, strengths and weaknesses from reliance on volunteer staff, limitations inherent in a short interview, and possible bias attributed to self-selection for interview.

Point-prevalence studies. Cross-sectional, or point-in-time, studies such as the ACSSS yield much lower estimates of the number of homeless persons and overemphasize some segments of the homeless population compared to studies that cover longer periods of time. While it is important to characterize the Alameda County homeless population at a given moment, it would also be useful to know the number of individuals who experience episodes of homelessness over a longer period, such as a year, and the characteristics of that larger population. Unfortunately, this information cannot be extrapolated reliably from the results of a single cross-sectional survey. Other researchers, however, have made comparisons of longitudinal and point-in-time

⁵ SPSS version 11.0 was used to prepare data for analysis. Stata version 8 survey procedures were used for population estimates.

studies of homeless populations that suggest the direction of bias of point-in-time estimates with respect to longer-term studies.

Longitudinal studies yield higher estimates of homeless populations simply because many individuals move in and out of homelessness over time. For example, Culhane et al. (1994) found that, “While public shelters in Philadelphia and New York City have average daily utilization rates of 0.16 and 0.31 percent of the population, respectively, on an annual basis the rates approach 1 percent in Philadelphia and exceed 1 percent in New York City. These annual homelessness rates are three times greater than rates previously documented for either city by point-prevalence studies (Burt 1992; U.S. Department of Commerce 1991).”

Individuals experiencing protracted episodes of homelessness are more likely to be captured in point-in-time studies than those who are homeless for shorter periods. For example, a person who has been homeless for several years is more likely to be counted during a four-week survey like the ACSSS than someone who was only homeless for a month out of the past year. Thus cross-sectional studies tend to overstate the average length of homeless spells for the population as a whole, and the characteristics of those experiencing longer spells of homelessness – whatever they might be – also tend to be over emphasized.⁶ This limitation is of significance for a jurisdiction interested in program planning since erroneous descriptions of homeless persons’ characteristics may result in the mis-estimation of the kinds of services that a jurisdiction needs to establish to meet service needs for *all* homeless persons. For example, a point-in-time estimate may emphasize the need for services for single, disabled individuals with long-term histories of homelessness and thereby under-emphasize the need for services for persons experiencing shorter bouts of homelessness, perhaps, for example, homeless families. At the same time, a point-in-time estimate may serve well the planning needs of jurisdictions wanting to develop programs to serve the most chronically homeless individuals and those using the most services.

The use of volunteer field researchers and site coordinators. One salient characteristic of the Alameda County-wide Shelter and Services Study is that volunteers conducted the field work.

⁶ Link and Phelan (1999) studied homelessness by conducting telephone surveys in order to find individuals who were formerly homeless, thereby avoiding the biases inherent in point-in-time surveys. They estimate that the average duration of a homeless spell is around 3 months, which is one-fifth to one-thirteenth of the average length estimated by point-in-time studies.

This limited the size of budget required and created unanticipated benefits for the Continuum of Care Council as well as the homeless care professionals, students, and community members who participated. The effect on data quality was mixed.

First, because of their understanding and rapport with homeless individuals, most ACSSS interviewers probably secured more valid data than might have been the case with professional interviewers.⁷ Nevertheless, despite the fact that volunteer interviewers with limited training required a less complex questionnaire than would have been feasible with professional interviewers, volunteer interviewers were probably more likely than professional interviewers to omit questions and incorrectly record responses. Finally, overall, volunteer site-coordinators were probably not as effective as experienced surveyors in soliciting participation from potential respondents, contributing to non-response.

Short interview format. The necessity to keep the interviews to no more than about 30 minutes meant that the interviews were not as comprehensive as we would otherwise have desired. Respondents were not asked for details that might better have explained their situations. Additionally, with as little redundancy as possible in the questionnaire, there was limited ability to address possibly ambiguous responses and confirm respondents' statuses.

Bias Attributed to self-selection for interview. Perhaps most significant in terms of limitations was the reliance on service sites to secure interviews. In many cases potential respondents refused to participate in the interview because of work schedules or appointments. Accordingly, results may be biased by not reflecting fully the full range of experiences of persons utilizing services. This appeared especially to be problematic with regard to employed persons who dropped by a food service site for a quick lunch before returning to their work site.

Data preparation for analysis

The trainers instructed interviewers *not* to pursue inconsistency in client responses but simply to focus on asking the question exactly as written and accurately recording responses. Some surveys therefore contained logically inconsistent or impossible responses, e.g. clients who stated

⁷ “A guiding assumption of survey methodology is that similarity between interviewers and respondents on important social characteristics increases the validity of the information obtained in the interview” (Hurtado 1994).

that they lived alone and then listed the ages of children living with them. Rather than letting such inconsistencies and impossibilities remain in the data the data analysts chose to look carefully at such cases and determine the underlying logic of the responses, if possible.⁸ The data were then “cleaned” so that each respondent’s data reflected a history that was internally consistent and within the bounds of possibility.

Because data on utilization of sampled services (food sites, shelters, drop-in services and mobile outreach) were necessary for calculation of the individual weights used in all survey estimates, these data were cleaned most carefully. Each service contact reported by the respondent represents an opportunity for selection into the survey. Persons with multiple selection opportunities contribute less weight to population estimates because each of those opportunities represents only a fraction of an unduplicated person. It was important to get the number of selection opportunities for each respondent as “right” as possible, neither too high nor too low.

Several sources of confusion in services utilization data had to be addressed. (1) Some respondents reported no use of any sampled services. In cases without further information, a minimum of one service contact was assigned for the type of service at which the interview occurred. (2) Some respondents were unclear on whether they were using an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. Where possible, the data were changed to correspond to the kind of service at which the interview occurred. (3) Some respondents appear to have double-reported services used, for example snacks consumed at drop-in centers were also reported as soup-kitchen meals. Apparent duplicate reports were resolved by eliminating or reducing the frequency of the service that was not the service type of the interview location. (4) Although most shelter programs serve one or more meals per day, respondents in shelters often reported they had eaten those meals in soup kitchens. For most respondents interviewed in shelters or reporting shelter use, breakfast and supper were eliminated from the list of soup kitchen meals for the number of days of shelter use. (5) Many respondents seemed to be reporting use of services in a conceptual way, rather than reporting actual service use over a one-week period. For example, “I never miss a meal!” appeared in the data as seven breakfasts, seven lunches, and seven dinners eaten in soup kitchens. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to find breakfast,

⁸ For example, in the above case, data from other questions, verbatim responses and margin notes (if any) related to family status might lead to the conclusion that the respondent did have children, but the children were not living with the respondent.

lunch, and dinner, seven days per week, at soup kitchens in Alameda County. Council staff assisted with data cleaning by preparing a grid for the maximum of several types of services available in various regions of Alameda County. (The “maximum usage grid” is included as Appendix 2.) In the final steps of data cleaning, for some cases, reported service use for each type of service was reduced to the maximum available in the region where the respondent was interviewed, or resided. Final cleaned data on usage of sampled services range from 1 to 26 service contacts in a one-week period. For more detail, see Appendix 2.

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SECTION 2. PROJECT SAMPLE

This section describes the demographic make-up of the sample, highlighting differences between housed and homeless users of homeless services.

Guide to reading tables

The title of most tables ends with parentheses giving the survey question number, which was the primary source of the information in the table rows. The full questionnaire is found in Appendix 4. Table headers, the top row of each table, explain the contents of the columns, and the left-most column explains the contents of the rows (see, for example, Table 2-1). Table headers contain the numbers of observations (n) and population estimates (N) for the largest survey subset in the analyses reported in the table; in this case, the entire sample and thus the entire service user population. In most tables in this section, the columns will include unweighted numbers of respondents (sometimes called observations), n; the total number of persons we estimate the survey represents, or the weighted population, N; and the weighted percent, which is the population estimate for the row divided by the population estimate for that section of the table. In the case of Table 2-1 (Gender), for the row labeled “Female”, the number of female respondents (572) yields an estimated population of 5,532 service users (the weighted N), and the weighted % is the weighted N of females (5,532), divided by the entire service user population weighted N (10,420), or 53.1 percent. The table also lists a final row with some additional information that may be useful for interpreting results; in this case, it gives the number of respondents for whom gender assignment was based on interviewer observation.

Sample characteristics

While six out of ten survey respondents were male, males tended to utilize services more frequently than females; therefore, males were down-weighted in estimating the size of the County population utilizing services for homeless persons. County-wide, we estimate that 53.1 percent of the individuals utilizing homeless services are females (Table 2-1).

Similarly, members of the Oakland and Berkeley sub-samples tended to use services more frequently than did members of the Mid & North and the South & East County sub-samples. While 64.0 and 17.5 percent of interviews took place in Oakland and Berkeley, respectively, the

weighting procedures explained in Section 1 adjust the proportion of services users in those cities to 56.0 and 10.5 percent of estimated service users County-wide. As a result, data from Oakland and Berkeley respondents tend to be weighted *down*, while data from the rest of the County are weighted *up*. Differences in weighting across interview locations do not, in themselves, affect the quality of the data.

The differences in numbers of respondents across interview locations can have a large impact on certainty around population estimates. For most characteristics of interest, Oakland and Berkeley, with larger samples, have sufficient numbers of respondents to give reliable estimates. The smaller interview locations, Mid & North and South & East, often have too few respondents to yield reliable estimates for a given characteristic, and the higher weights per person sometimes contribute to exaggerated percentages. We suggest caution in interpreting findings from the smaller interview locations, even in tables where findings differ significantly by locations and thus are shown.

Users of homeless services are older than the average for the general population, with 48.7 percent at least 45 years of age (Table 2-2). Half (51.5%) are black, one-fifth (20.3%) are white, and one in eight (12.5%) is Hispanic (Table 2-3). While interviewers were prepared to administer the survey in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cantonese, relatively few interviews were conducted with respondents whose preferred language was other than English or Spanish (Table 2-4).

Tables 2-5 and 2-6 display the distribution, by residence locality and by study jurisdiction, where survey respondents reported that they regularly sleep and where they were interviewed. The majority of respondents – whether using an unweighted or weighted measure – reported sleeping in Oakland, with sizeable proportions residing in Berkeley, Fremont, San Leandro and Castro Valley, Livermore, Alameda, and Union City. In total, more than 18 cities and areas were mentioned.

Table 2-1: Survey respondents by gender (Question B1)

Gender categories	Weighted %	Weighted N 10,420	Unweighted n 1,461
Female	53.1	5,532	572
Male	46.7	4,862	883
Transgender	0.3	26	6
Imputed from observed gender			9

Table 2-2: Survey respondents by age (Questions B2, B3)

Age categories	Weighted %	Weighted N 10,420	Unweighted n 1,461
0 – 17 years	0.3	28	1
18 - 21 years	1.7	178	24
22 – 24 years	1.5	158	37
25 – 34 years	16.4	1,690	176
35 – 44 years	31.4	3,233	489
45 – 54 years	26.4	2,714	478
55 – 64 years	11.6	1,195	173
65 years and over (65+)	10.7	1,101	68
Missing			15

Table 2-3: Survey respondents by race/ethnicity categories (Question B4)

Race, HUD categories, plus Hispanic and Hispanic combinations	Weighted %	Weighted N 10,420	Unweighted n 1,461
Amerindian, Alaska Native	2.8	293	34
Asian	2.9	306	24
Black, African American	51.5	5,371	909
Hispanic	12.5	1,300	106
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	1.4	149	12
White	20.3	2,117	243
Amerindian and Black	1.5	157	36
Amerindian and White	2.0	212	22
Asian and White	0.1	11	1
Black and White	< 0.1	54	8
Hispanic and Amerindian	0.8	78	8
Hispanic and Black	0.4	44	8
Hispanic and White	1.7	179	13
Black, White and Amerindian	0.7	76	16
Other	0.7	70	21
Imputed from observed race	1.7	172	53

Table 2-4: Survey respondents by preferred language (Question B5)

Language¹	Weighted %	Weighted N 10,324	Unweighted n 1,421
English	89.5	9,240	1,353
Spanish	11.4	1,180	92
Tagalog (Philippines)	1.3	135	7
Cantonese	1.1	113	9
Vietnamese	0.2	18	2
Mandarin	< 0.1	7	2
Russian	< 0.1	2	1
Other		280	29
Imputed from recruitment language, for subsequent categories	0.9	96	40

1 Respondents could specify more than one language

Table 2-5: Detail of residence location (Question C2)

City, locality ¹	Weighted %	Weighted N 10,420	Unweighted n 1,461
Alameda	4.3	443	86
Albany	0.2	22	2
Berkeley	9.8	1,001	225
Dublin	0.3	34	3
Emeryville	0.4	42	7
Fremont	8.8	903	85
Hayward	1.7	177	28
Livermore	5.2	529	50
Newark	0.8	84	4
Oakland	56.8	5,802	852
Piedmont	0.8	78	8
Pleasanton	0.5	50	3
San Leandro (and unincorporated Castro Valley area)	8.8	894	60
Union City	3.6	371	16
Richmond (Contra Costa County)	0.6	60	20
Other county, mainly San Francisco and Contra Costa	0.8	84	13
No regular place	0.5	55	3
Other	2.3	236	26
Missing data		445	60

1 Respondents could specify more than one residence location (sleeping place). Write-in responses were coded to existing questionnaire categories, if possible, and were assigned new categories if necessary. For 60 respondents, no residence location was given, presumably because interviewers skipped question C2, after the respondent responded “No” to question C1, Do you have a place in Alameda County, inside or outside, where you sleep regularly?

Table 2-6: Survey respondents by interview location (Cover sheet)

	Interview Location				Total
	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & Other North County	South & East County	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	157	1,461
Unwtd. percent	64.0	17.5	7.8	10.7	100.0
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Wtd. percent	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0

SECTION 3. HOMELESSNESS

Defining homelessness involves terms that, technically and in terms of policy considerations, are complicated. Accordingly, survey respondents were not asked directly if they were homeless. Instead, the housing status of each person interviewed was assigned during analysis, based on responses to several questions used for classifying respondent housing status.

Survey questions used in the definitions of homelessness included the following (see survey instrument in Appendix 4):

Cover sheet – service site where interview occurred and service site type

X2A – X2E –utilization in the past 7 nights of a shelter, transitional housing, voucher hotel or permanent supportive housing bed, or sleeping “on the streets” in places not meant for human habitation

E1 – Who do you live with now, or who lives with you?

E6 – What kind of place do you live in now?

E7 – How long can you stay there, before you get asked to leave or move?

E12 – In the place you are living now, do you sleep in a bedroom?

Any relevant verbatim responses explaining respondent situations “Other” than those precoded in the questionnaire. For example, a respondent may have stated he/she was living in a van in response to Question X2g: Other, where ____? He or she was then classified as homeless (tallied in row 5 in part A of Table 3-1).

Margin notes supplied by interviewers.

Homelessness – operational definitions

To estimate the numbers of persons who were homeless, PHI used the collected data to construct two operational definitions of homelessness, one approximating criteria used by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and one relying on the Alameda County-wide Homeless Continuum of Care Council’s community-defined criteria. The HUD category includes persons living on the streets, including in abandoned buildings, or residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels paid by service agency vouchers, in a vehicle, in a place not meant for human habitation or a room not meant for sleeping. The community

definition also includes persons whose living situation is transient or precarious and those who lack a place of their own or for whom homelessness may be imminent.

Brief descriptions of the criteria for both definitions, the weighted numbers and percent of service users to whom each criterion applies, and the (weighted) cumulative proportion after adding each criterion are included in Table 3-1. The unweighted number of sampled persons is also shown immediately after the criterion description, to indicate the number of persons contributing to the statistical analysis. In subsequent tables data columns will tend to display weighted numbers and/or percents, although some tables will provide columns with unweighted numbers to alert the reader to sensitivity concerns in interpreting small numbers. See, for example, Table 4-2.

Persons meeting one or more of the six criteria approximating the HUD definition of homelessness constitute 34.6 percent of the estimated population of service users. The four criteria for precarious housing status add another 8.2 percent to the HUD criteria, bringing the total estimate of homeless persons by the community definition to 42.8 percent of service users.

The majority of interviewed service users were homeless persons; however, the survey estimate reveals that the majority of the unduplicated population of service users were housed persons. Homeless respondents used more services, or used services more often than did housed persons, and thus are weighted down in analyses. Therefore, each interview with a homeless respondent represents a smaller proportion of an unduplicated user than does an interview with a housed respondent. Thus, homeless client interviews have less weight in the final analyses. In the weighted population estimates, homeless client interviews added up to a smaller number of unduplicated service users than did housed client interviews.

Table 3-1. Classification of survey respondents as homeless¹

Situation or criterion	Weighted		
	N	Category %	Cumulative %
A. HUD definition, survey data			
1. Emergency shelter: Reported use now or any time in the seven-day period before interview, or interviewed at emergency shelter site (hhud1, n=410)	927	8.9	8.9
2. Transitional housing: Reported use now or any time in seven-day period before interview, or interviewed at transitional housing site (hhud2, n=136)	666	6.4	15.0
3. Voucher-paid hotel: Reported hotel stay paid by voucher any time in the seven-day period before interview (hhud3, n=10)	101	1.0	15.7
4. “On the streets”: Reported staying in an abandoned building, place of business or anywhere else “outside” now or any time in the seven-day period before interview (hhud4, n=447)	1,629	15.6	29.0
5. In a vehicle: Reported staying or living in a vehicle now or any time in past 7 days (hhud5, n=66)	352	3.4	30.1
6. Place not meant for human habitation: Sleeping in other than a bedroom at time of interview (hhud6, hhud16; n=473)	1,958	18.8	34.6
B. Community definition adds to above, survey data			
1. Can’t stay 30 days: Day of interview, staying in own or someone else’s place, but cannot stay there for 30 days or more (own30, friend30; hcom1, hcom17; n=37)	320	3.1	36.2
2. Hotel/motel, short stay: in hotel or motel paid by respondent, but cannot stay more than 30 days (room30; hcom2, hcom18; n=21)	168	1.6	37.7
3. Moving around, no regular place to stay (hztyp5 = 12; hcom3, hcom19; n=24)	131	1.3	42.8
4. Other precarious living arrangement, not limited to 30 days (owntemp, roomtemp, frndtemp; hcom4, hcom110; n=57)	668	6.4	42.8

1 Unweighted number of survey respondents = 1,461.

Chronic homelessness

The HUD Chronic Homelessness definition is tightly focused on a hard-to-serve subpopulation of homeless persons, those currently homeless, living unaccompanied, disabled and either

continuously homeless for a year or more or homeless for at least four times in the last three years. Table 3-2 briefly illustrates the criteria used to operationalize the HUD Chronic Homeless definition, showing a step-down from all persons meeting the HUD criteria for homelessness to the target subpopulation. The table also defines two additional, stricter interpretations of duration of homelessness to illustrate the effect of differing operational criteria on the estimated count of chronically homeless persons.

About 18.7% of homeless service users, who were also unaccompanied, met the duration of homelessness criterion we selected for the HUD Chronic Homelessness operational definition (Table 3-2, row 3). They represent 1,734 adults using services in Alameda County. About 14.3% of service users classified themselves as disabled,¹ thus meeting all criteria for the HUD chronically homeless subpopulation. This subpopulation constitutes about half of all persons meeting the HUD definition of homelessness; furthermore, about 76% of HUD homeless persons meeting the chronicity criterion are also disabled. It is important to note that the more stringent definitions of chronic homelessness have relatively little impact on percent chronic homelessness (rows 4 and 5).

The *confidence interval* around an estimated value identifies the range in which we are sure, with 95% probability, that the true population value falls. For most of these estimates, confidence intervals are quite wide. Thus, our survey-based estimate of 14.3 percent of services users meeting the HUD criteria for chronic homelessness – which includes disability as one condition – could represent a true population value as low as 9.6 percent (the lower bound, or LB) or as high as 20.8 percent (the upper bound, or UB). There is only a 5% chance that the true value is outside that range.

An additional 711 persons, shown in the grayed-out row, met some of the criteria for HUD Chronic Homelessness designation, being both single and homeless, but their duration of homelessness or their disability status was unknown due to missing data. Data were missing for two reasons. First, interviews conducted literally on the street were kept short, with the result that disability information was not collected for 179 persons. Second, the section on duration of

¹ Disability, briefly described in the glossary, includes physical disability, developmental disability, learning disability, blindness, deafness, mental illness, and disability due to alcohol or drug abuse. Analyses elaborating on health and disability, presented in Section 8 of this report, also incorporate information coded from open-ended responses. Short interviews (n = 179) did not include information on disability.

homelessness began with “Were you ever homeless ...” and permitted those answering “No” to skip the duration questions. The skip generated missing data for, coincidentally, 179 persons whom we later assessed as homeless. Those service users assessed as disabled constitute another 2.6 percent of the population.

In subsequent tables in this section, grayed-out rows will be used to present estimates derived from survey data which differ from the analytical criteria for the table as a whole, but which add information helpful for interpreting results.

Table 3-2. Chronic homelessness, HUD definition

Chronically homeless criteria: HUD definition	Wtd. N	Wtd. %	Confidence Interval		Disabled %
			LB	UB	
Weighted number in analysis	9,276	100.0			
Unweighted number in analysis	1,282 ¹		LB	UB	1,114 ²
1. Currently homeless, by HUD definition (n=829)	2,866	30.9	23.4	38.4	22.2
2. Currently homeless and living alone (n=653)	2,107	22.7	16.3	29.1	17.1
3. Currently homeless & living alone and either current homeless spell one year or more or homeless for at least 12 months in past 3 years (n=520)	1,734	18.7	13.0	24.4	14.3 LB 9.6 UB 20.8
4. Currently homeless, living alone, and (currently homeless for one year or more or homeless at least 18 months in past 3 years) (n=494)	1,606	17.3	11.9	22.7	13.1
5. Currently homeless, living alone, and (currently homeless for one year or more or homeless at least 24 months in past 3 years) (n=486)	1,591	17.2	11.8	22.5	12.9
Single & homeless by HUD definition but inadequate information about history of homelessness or disability to determine if “chronic” (n=302)	711	4.8	2.9	6.7	2.6

1 Questions on duration of homelessness (questions E9 and E10) were asked in all interviews, but data were missing or insufficient to categorize 179 respondents, leaving 1282 in the analysis.

2 Missing values for duration of homelessness, combined with uncollected values on disability, leave 1114 persons available for the analysis.

The popular understanding of chronic homelessness differs from the HUD definition, restricted to only single, disabled persons. In community terms, anyone who has been homeless a long time or many times would be called chronically homeless, without regard to whether they live alone or with others or whether they are disabled. By self-report, 40.6% of *service users* had experienced twelve or more months of homelessness within the past three years (Table 3-3). Furthermore, 68.4 percent of those classified as *currently homeless* by the community definition had been homeless a year or more of the past three years (figure not presented tabularly). We offer this definition of long-term homelessness, homeless for a year or more of the past three years, as the criterion for a community definition of chronic homelessness. This definition includes persons who may not be currently homeless, but who nevertheless have a recent history of homelessness or episodic homelessness totaling a year or more of the past three years.

Table 3-3 estimates the numbers of homeless persons who meet four increasingly strict criteria for long-term and/or episodic homelessness, without regard to family status or disability. For comparison with the HUD definition, the table also shows the proportion of homeless persons at each level of chronicity, who are also disabled. Under the lens of the community definition, almost one-third (29.2%) of the service user population was both chronically homeless and disabled.

The numbers of chronically homeless persons by the community definition (40.6%) are more than double the estimate based on the HUD criterion for chronicity alone (18.7%). When disability is also considered (not required for the community definition) the estimate for the community definition, plus disability (29.2%), is again more than twice the HUD estimate (14.3%). The community definition generates the additional numbers of persons by including among the chronically homeless persons who may not be currently homeless but who have accumulated a history of episodic homelessness, as well as couples and families with long histories of homelessness.

Table 3-3. Chronic homelessness, community definition

Chronically homeless criteria: Community definition	Wtd. N	Wtd. %	Confidence Interval		Disabled %
			LB	UB	
Weighted number in analysis	9,276	100.0			
Unweighted number in analysis	1,282 ¹		LB	UB	1,114 ²
1. Homeless for at least 12 months in past 3 years (n=786)	3,766	40.6	33.8	47.4	29.2
2. Homeless for at least 18 months in past 3 years (n=718)	3,141	33.9	26.0	41.7	24.4
3. Homeless for at least 24 months in past 3 years (n=697)	3,076	33.2	25.4	41.0	23.9
4. Currently homeless for one year or more (n=566)	2,150	23.2	16.8	29.6	17.2
Currently homeless by community definition, duration unknown (n=179)	1,144	11.0	8.0	14.0	5.3

- 1 Questions on duration of homelessness (questions E9 and E10) were asked in all interviews, but data were missing or insufficient to categorize 179 respondents, leaving 1282 in the analysis
- 2 Short interviews (n = 179) did not include information on disability. Missing values for duration of homelessness, combined with uncollected values on disability, leave 1114 persons available for the analysis.

Counting the Homeless

A primary purpose of the Alameda County-wide Shelter and Services Survey was to estimate the numbers of homeless persons in the County. Such a count is a crucial basis for planning and evaluating the effectiveness of services intended to meet the needs of homeless Alameda County residents. Of course, homeless persons are a disparate group with a wide variety of individual needs, but they share the common characteristic that they all need housing. The number, size, and type of housing units needed depends on the household composition and disability status of homeless persons and families.

Table 3-4 reports the numbers of persons meeting the HUD criteria for homelessness by family status – single individuals, person in couple, or adult accompanied by children – with confidence intervals for each estimate. The table also presents the estimated number of children currently living with homeless adults, according to respondent reports of the numbers of children with them (interview question E3).

An estimated 3,603 adult service users met the HUD definition of homelessness at the time of the survey, including 2,601 single individuals and 233 persons who were part of a couple. In addition, 769 homeless adults were accompanied by about 1,477 homeless children, for a total estimate of 5,080 homeless individuals. Among the single adults a little less than half, 1,280, met the disability criteria and duration of homelessness criteria for HUD chronic homelessness.

An additional 254 persons seem likely to meet the HUD Chronic Homelessness criteria, but there is not enough information on duration of homelessness to be certain.² As noted above, absent from these calculations are figures for individuals residing in permanent supportive housing or in institutions such as those incarcerated in jails and prisons or temporarily or permanently residing in hospitals or other institutions.

Table Count 3-4. Counting the homeless by family type

	Wtd. N	Confidence Interval	
		LB	UB
HUD definition (n = 1461)			
Adults			
Single individuals (n=769)	2,601	2,009	3,193
Person in couple (n=61)	233	85	381
Adult accompanied by children (n=156)	769	452	1,085
<i>Survey subtotal, adults</i>	3,603	2,546	4,659
<i>Children with surveyed adult (n=156)</i>	1,477	841	2,112
<i>Survey Total</i>	5,080	3,387	6,771
Chronically homeless, HUD (n = 1114) ¹			
Single individuals, disabled (n=310)	1,280	801	1,759
<i>Homeless, single & disabled, length of time homeless unknown</i> ² (n=76)	254	146	362

1 Number with no missing (and/or uncollected) data on duration of homeless and disability status.

2 Based on the number of persons for whom disability status is known (n = 1282)

² We also used an alternative method to estimate the added numbers of HUD Chronic Homeless persons who could not be classified because of missing data. Using only persons with no missing data, we calculated two values: the proportion of single homeless persons who were also disabled (41%) and the proportion of single homeless persons who were also met the duration of homelessness test (80%). Multiplying those two proportions by the number of single homeless persons with missing data (711) yielded an estimate of 244 persons likely to meet the HUD Chronic Homeless criteria (data not tabulated), very similar to the simpler calculation (254 persons) shown in Table 3-4.

Table 3-5 presents similar information for community definitions of homelessness, chronic homelessness, and disabled and chronic homelessness. By the community definition, the estimated number of homeless adults in Alameda County is 4,460, some 936 of whom are accompanied by 1,755 homeless children. With the community definition, we estimate that 3,766 adults, accompanied by 1,554 children, are chronically homeless. Given the extent of missing data on duration of homelessness, in fact, the figures could be larger.³

For planning purposes, the numbers of disabled, chronically homeless persons seem particularly important. The survey identifies an estimated 2,611 chronically homeless, disabled adults, including 380 living as part of a couple and 476 accompanied by children, a remarkable 58.5 percent of all homeless adults. Details about disabling characteristics are found in Section 7 below.

Limitations of survey count estimates

The survey method used for the Alameda County-wide Shelter and Services Survey is capable of generating valid and very complete estimates of the numbers of homeless persons. The survey sample design, based on a sample of specific types of services, supports accurate estimation of the numbers of persons who use those kinds of services. However, there were a few ways that the numbers of homeless persons may have been underestimated.

First, as noted above, a number of potential “service sites” were not included in the sampling design. These included jails, prisons, mental institutions, residential treatment centers, and group homes for disabled persons. Homeless persons who were incarcerated or housed in any of these settings during the survey were unlikely to be using services at sampled service sites, and thus probably missed being counted by this survey method. Persons residing in permanent supportive housing, who meet the HUD, but not the community, definition of homelessness, were not sampled, because the number of residents in such housing units is known.

Second, homeless persons who did not choose to use any of the sampled services – food pantries, soup kitchens, outreach or drop-in services, and shelters or transitional housing – were also missed by the survey. Persons temporarily living and eating with others were invisible to this

³ Since the community definition of chronic homelessness does not require *current* homelessness but covers a retrospective period, the number could, in fact, be greater than the number homeless at any point in time.

survey methodology. Persons camping away from central city locations or avoiding contact with the service system were also hidden from the survey. Thus, the survey probably underestimates the number of marginally housed persons, many of whom would fit within the community definition of homelessness, as well as missing persons purposively avoiding homeless services sites.

Third, it appears that some interviewed persons may not have been classified as homeless, when, in fact, they were homeless at the time. Despite the best efforts of the survey designers and their community advisors, some respondents were unable to recognize their housing situations in the brief questionnaire descriptions of housing programs for homeless persons. In some cases, we suspect, their responses to the housing questions led to their classification as housed, rather than homeless, persons. The most telling indication of such an undercount is this: The survey estimate of numbers of persons in transitional housing is lower than the numbers of transitional housing beds known to be in use during the survey period.

Fourth, specific subpopulations may be undercounted. One such subpopulation is chronically homeless, disabled persons, which we have surely undercounted due to missing and uncollected data necessary for classification. Another is homeless youth. Since it is reported that most homeless youth do not utilize sites frequented by adults and families, youth-oriented service sites were specifically included in the sampling frame. The fact that there are somewhat fewer youth in the sample than anticipated probably reflects the fact that one of the sites selected for sampling was closed during the survey due to a funding crisis, and the other, a new facility, was only partially filled.

These survey limitations – sampling only the most used types of service locations, missing persons who do not use the sampled services, perhaps undercounting homeless persons in the surveyed sample, and perhaps undercounting specific subpopulations – all contribute to an estimated number of homeless persons that is very likely somewhat smaller than the actual numbers in Alameda County.

Table 3-5. Counting the homeless, community definition, by family type

	Wtd. N	Confidence Interval	
Community definition (n = 1461)			
Adults			
Single individuals (n=807)	2,975	2,308	3,642
Person in couple (n=72)	549	138	959
Adult accompanied by children (n=171)	936	615	1,258
Survey subtotal, adults	4,460	3,061	5,859
<i>Children with surveyed adult (n=171)</i>	1,755	1,097	2,413
<i>Survey Total</i>	6,215	4,158	8,272
Chronically homeless, community definition (n = 1282)			
Adults			
Single individuals (n=600)	2,536	1,866	3,206
Person in couple (n=67)	437	146	728
Adult accompanied by children (n=119)	793	446	1,141
Survey subtotal, adults	3,766	2,458	5,075
<i>Children with surveyed adult (n=119)</i>	1,554	849	2,259
<i>Survey Total</i>	5,320	3,307	7,334
Missing data on duration of homelessness ¹			
Adults (any family status) (n=179)	1,144	736	1,552
<i>Children with surveyed adult (n=36)</i>	526	256	795
Disabled and chronically homeless by community definition (n=1114)			
Adults			
Single individuals (n=366)	1,755	1,219	2,290
Person in couple (n=45)	380	88	672
Adult accompanied by children (n=69)	476	191	761
Survey total, adults	2,611	1,498	3,723

1 Numbers for persons with unknown duration of homelessness are based on the full sample (n = 1461).

Analyses by jurisdiction

The remaining tables in this section convey results separately for each of four interview locations or jurisdictions within Alameda County, as well as for the County as a whole. In each table we emphasize Oakland results by use of **bold** font. Because information by jurisdiction has obvious utility for planning type and location of future services for homeless persons, most of the analyses in the rest of the report also follow this pattern.

Guide to reading tables

The tables in this section begin a pattern followed for almost all tables in the remainder of the report. As in previous tables, the left-most column explains the contents of the rows and the headers, the top row of each table, explain the contents of the columns. From here on, most headers identify separate columns for Oakland and three other interview locations (jurisdictions). A fifth column provides the total of all four jurisdictions. The header row also shows in each jurisdiction column and the total column, for the largest segment of the sample described in the table, the number of respondents interviewed (n), the estimated service user population (N), and, in most tables, the weighted percent of the service user population in that column.

In this section, the next sets of tables (Tables 3-6 and 3-7, Homeless count estimates and Homeless count by family type) show in the rows estimated numbers of persons (N) by jurisdiction. After those, the next sets of tables, beginning with Table 3-8 (Percent of service users who were homeless), show in the rows, instead, weighted percents, derived by dividing weighted N by population total estimated N *for each column*. In tables showing percentages, within each section of the table, if all rows are shown, percents add up to 100 percent. However, in many tables, only rows of particular interest are shown, for example persons for whom the answer is “yes” are shown, and those for whom the answer is “no” are not shown. Except where otherwise noted, definitions of homelessness and chronic homelessness used are the community definitions (see, for example, the columns in Table 5-2).

Analysis by interview location, or jurisdiction, has several implications for the interpretation of results. It is theoretically possible to analyze results by any variable, or combination of variables, in the data set. However, as the data are subdivided – by housing status, by jurisdiction, by family type, by disability status, or other characteristic – the numbers of persons

underlying the statistical estimate in each table cell become smaller and smaller. Weighting up to population numbers can easily mask the fact that only 2, or 5, or 10 sampled persons provide the basis for the estimated value. One good general rule to keep in mind is: the fewer the number of persons underlying an analysis, the less reliable the estimate. This is particularly true for estimates reported as percentages. Disregarding sample weights for the moment, when only two persons enter an analysis, only three percentage values can be generated – 0%, 50% or 100%. None of these may be an accurate representation of the true value, for which we would have preferred 20, 30 or 50 or more persons in the table cell.

For this reason, in subsequent report sections many tables include grayed-out *columns* or parentheses (like those found in the *row* descriptions of Table 3-1) showing the unweighted number of persons entering the analysis for that row of the table. For some complex tables, to make the table more readable, the unweighted numbers are not shown; however, the number of observations will usually have been shown in a nearby, preceding, table. The reader must keep in mind that each jurisdiction *column* represents only a fraction of the total individuals in each *row*.

Where the number of persons underlying a row of analyses is large, as for the numbers of single homeless persons, further subdivision may have little effect on the reliability of the estimates. The confidence intervals will be somewhat wider for each subdivision, but the estimates will be sound. Where the number of persons underlying a row is small, as for the number of persons living with a partner (as a couple), columnar analyses may vary widely simply due to lack of sufficient data for a good estimate. In every case, the most reliable estimates will be the ones based on the largest number of surveyed individuals, the Oakland and county-wide estimates. As a reminder of the greater reliability of larger cells, in each table presented by jurisdiction the County-wide, or “total”, column is presented in bold-face type.

Estimates by Jurisdiction

The survey design stratified Alameda County into three regions from which the service sites were sampled. Results are presented by four jurisdictions. The cities of Oakland and Berkeley, both in the Northern region of Alameda County, stand alone in their own right. For statistical reasons, the city of Emeryville was folded in with the Mid- and North-County area including

Alameda, Castro Valley, Hayward, and San Leandro. South and East County cities include Dublin, Fremont, Livermore, Newark, Pleasanton, and Union City.

Tables 3-6 and 3-7 present estimates for numbers of homeless and chronically homeless persons by jurisdiction using, first, the HUD definitions, and second, the community definitions. In both tables, the final column, in bold type, reflects the County-wide totals presented in preceding tables.

In Table 3-6, we see that the numbers of service users and homeless persons are unevenly distributed across jurisdictions and family types. Oakland interview sites yielded an estimated 5,838 *service users*, over one-half (56.0%) of the population of 10,420 *service users*. Homeless persons interviewed in Oakland, and the children with them, totaling 2,450 persons, constitute about half (48.2%) of the survey-estimate of 5,081 *homeless persons* in the county. Thus, it appears that Oakland programs serve more persons overall, and almost more homeless persons, than the rest of the County combined.

Table 3-6. Homeless count estimates, HUD definition, by family type and interview location

	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Totals
n	935	255	114	157	1,461
N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Homeless, HUD definition (n = 1461)					
Adults					
Single individuals	1,444	707	241	210	2,601
Person in couple	170	20	0	43	233
Adult accompanied by children	307	46	195	221	769
Survey subtotal, adults	1,921	773	436	474	3,603
<i>Children with surveyed adult</i>	529	48	489	411	1,477
<i>Survey Total</i>	2,450	821	925	885	5,081
Chronically homeless, HUD (n = 1114)					
Single individuals, disabled	627	529	45	79	1,280
<i>Single, disabled, time homeless unknown</i>	111	45	59	39	254

When we examine the numbers homeless by the community definition (see Table 3-7), there is a similar uneven distribution of homeless persons and family types across jurisdictions, with somewhat higher total numbers in comparable table cells. Again, the majority of service users and homeless adults were interviewed in Oakland. The estimated number of homeless persons

living with a partner, as a couple, under the community definition is more than twice the HUD-definition estimate.

Where 6,215 persons (adults and children) meet the community definition of homelessness, 5,321 – or six-sevenths of that number – meet the community definition of *chronic* homelessness (which can include persons not *currently* homeless). In Oakland, 95 percent, or virtually all, of those meeting the community definition of homelessness are also defined as chronically homeless. Using the community definition, we estimate that a little less than half of the total homeless persons (3,056 of 6,215, or 49.2%), and a little more than half of the chronically homeless (2,905 of 5,321, or 54.6%) rely on services in Oakland.⁴ The proportion of chronically homeless persons in couples interviewed in Oakland who are also disabled (324 of 365, or 88.7%) is higher than that of other family types.

⁴ Individuals may also utilize services in other jurisdictions as well.

Table 3-7. Homeless count, community definition, by family type and interview location

	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Totals
n	935	255	114	157	1,461
N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Homeless, community definition (n = 1461)					
Adults					
Single individuals	1,753	719	241	262	2,975
Person in couple	389	20	69	71	549
Adult accompanied by children	334	47	222	334	936
Survey subtotal, adults	2,475	785	532	668	4,460
<i>Children with surveyed adult</i>	581	50	532	592	1,755
<i>Survey Total</i>	3,056	835	1,064	1,260	6,215
Chronically homeless, community definition (n = 1282)					
Adults					
Single individuals	1,412	699	224	202	2,537
Person in couple	365	23	0	49	437
Adult accompanied by children	429	30	174	160	793
Survey subtotal, adults	2,206	752	398	411	3,767
<i>Children with surveyed adult</i>	699	34	481	340	1,554
<i>Survey Total</i>	2,905	786	879	751	5,321
Missing data on homelessness duration ¹					
Homeless adults (inc. singles, coupled)	591	57	231	265	1,144
<i>Children accompanying homeless adult</i>	86	4	88	348	526
Disabled and chronically homeless by community definition (n=1114)					
Adults					
Single individuals	827	589	173	166	1,755
Person in couple	324	19	0	37	380
Adult accompanied by children	262	27	91	96	476
Survey total, adults	1,413	634	264	299	2,611

¹ Numbers for persons with unknown duration of homelessness are based on the full sample (n = 1461).

Tables 3-8 and 3-9 echo the findings in the previous tables, presenting the results in the form of *percentages* of the population of service users in each jurisdiction and County-wide. The percentages in each cell are the proportion of service users who are homeless for the jurisdiction, placing each column on an equal footing and making proportions easier to compare.

Table 3-8 presents findings for the HUD definitions of homelessness and chronic homeless. Oakland interviews represented an estimated 56 percent of the population of service users. Considering only homeless persons, in Oakland 32.9 percent of service users and 44.0 percent of single service users were homeless by the HUD definition, figures far beyond the 16.0 percent for persons in couples, and the 20.6 percent for service users who had children living with them.

In Oakland, 12.6 percent of service users met the HUD chronically homeless criteria. Considering chronically homeless persons as a percent of HUD homeless persons, in Oakland 47.1 percent of HUD homeless service users were also chronically homeless.

Given the high percentage of the service user population interviewed in Oakland, it is not surprising that these proportions are very similar to County-wide proportions; that is, Oakland proportions dominate the sample average.

Table 3-8. Percent of service users who were homeless, HUD definition, by family type and interview location

	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total
N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Wtd. %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0
Homeless, HUD definition (n = 1461)					
Adults					
Single individuals	44.0	72.2	36.0	26.7	45.6
Person in couple	16.0	35.4	0.0	17.2	15.2
Adult accompanied by children	20.6	82.5	27.9	23.7	24.2
Survey total, adults	32.9	70.8	28.6	24.1	34.6
Chronically homeless, HUD (n=1114)					
Single individuals, disabled (n = 310)	12.6	51.5	35.5	4.7	14.3
<i>Single, disabled & homeless (n=76), duration of homelessness unknown¹</i>	1.9	4.2	3.9	2.0	2.4
Percent of HUD homeless who are chronically homeless and disabled (n=1114) <i>Note alternative denominator</i>	47.1	73.8	17.9	24.3	48.8

1 Based on the number of persons for whom disability status is known (n = 1282).

Table 3-9 presents percentages of adult homeless service users by jurisdiction, using the community definition of homelessness. The broader definition of community homelessness, by including the precariously housed, somewhat changes the picture with respect to homeless families, compared to the previous table presenting the HUD definition of homelessness. Homeless adults who have children living with them comprise a larger proportion of the county-wide sample by the community definition (22.3% vs. 20.6% by the HUD definition). Perhaps the most profound difference between HUD and community definitions, as exhibited in Tables 3-8 and 3-9, is the percent chronically homeless: 50.8 percent under the community definition but 12.6 percent according to HUD criteria.

Table 3-9. Percent of service users who were homeless, community definition, by family type and interview location

	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total
N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Wtd. %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0
Homeless, community definition (n = 1461)					
Adults					
Single individuals	53.5	73.4	36.0	33.4	52.1
Person in couple	36.4	35.4	43.8	28.3	35.8
Adult accompanied by children	22.3	83.6	31.8	35.9	29.5
Survey total, adults	42.4	72.0	34.9	34.0	42.8
Chronically homeless, community definition (n=1282)					
Adults					
Single individuals	50.8	75.4	40.0	27.8	50.8
Person in couple	34.9	42.7	0	22.5	31.1
Adult accompanied by children	30.2	56.8	26.9	21.2	27.8
Survey total, adults	42.0	72.7	30.7	24.2	40.6

Disability among chronically homeless persons

Earlier in this section, we reported that 76 percent of single homeless respondents meeting the HUD chronicity of homelessness criterion were also disabled (discussion preceding Table 3-2). Table 3-10 presents the proportions of community definition chronically homeless persons who were also disabled. There appears to be a strong association between disability and chronic homelessness, for all segments of the homeless population. In Oakland, 69.4 percent of single chronically homeless service users were also disabled, somewhat lower than the HUD chronically homeless estimate County-wide. Among chronically homeless persons in couples, 94.0 percent were disabled. Considering chronically homeless persons with children, 62.0 percent were also disabled.

Table 3-10. Percent of chronically homeless service users, community definition, who were disabled by family type and interview location (n = 1114)¹

	N	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total
	Wtd. %	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
		56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0
Adults						
Single individuals		69.4	84.3	77.1	82.4	75.8
Person in couple		94.0	80.3	0	76.0	91.1
Adult accompanied by children		62.0	88.8	52.6	59.8	60.5
Survey total, adults		72.1	84.4	66.4	72.8	74.2

1 Number with no missing data on duration of homelessness or disability.

Length of time homeless

Question E8 asked, “Were you ever homeless, or ever had to stay with someone else to avoid being homeless?” If the respondent answered “yes,” the interviewer continued with Question E9, asking when, if the respondent was currently homeless, “was the last time that you had a place of your own for 30 days or more in the same place?” E10 asked, “How much of the past 3 years were you homeless, or without a regular place to stay, in total, counting time in shelters, but not counting any time in jail or prison?”

More than half of those in Oakland assessed by the survey as currently *housed* report having “ever” been homeless, or doubled up with someone else to avoid homelessness (Table 3-11, 51.5%). Only 8.0 percent of *currently homeless* persons (community definition), as defined by the survey, report never having been homeless. This finding begins to make evident the need to assess homelessness in some way other than just asking the respondent. On the other hand, almost no one meeting the HUD chronically homeless criteria doubts that they had ever been homeless.

Among service users we defined as homeless, 17.4 percent did not or could not tell us how long they had been homeless. However, as displayed in the second panel of Table 3-11, for 18.2 percent of respondents length of time homeless ranged five years or longer, and 5.4 percent said they had never had their own place. For those defined as chronically homeless under HUD’s perspective, the comparable figures are 21.9 percent homeless five years or longer and 12.4 percent never having had their own place.

Table 3-11: Ever homeless and length of time since housed by survey-assessed housing status and interview location (Questions E8, E9, E10)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S&E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,835	1,087	1,525	1,967		10,413
Weighted %	56.0	10.4	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	933	253	114	157		1,457
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Were you ever homeless or doubled up?***						10,319
Housed						5863
“Yes”	51.5	71.1	50.4	52.4	52.5	3079
“No”	48.5	28.9	49.6	47.6	47.5	2784
Homeless, community def.*						4457
“Yes”	92.0	96.4	71.4	86.2	89.4	3986
“No”	8.0	3.6	28.6	13.8	10.6	471
HUD Chronic Homeless* (n = 310)						1280
“Yes”	99.8	99.6	100.	100.	99.7	1277
“No”	0.3	0.4	0	0	0.3	3
If homeless, how long since housed?***						10018
Housed						5748
“Never homeless”, skipped	49.2	28.9	50.8	48.0	48.1	2767
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	37.6	65.7	41.1	42.1	40.6	2332
Under 3 months	4.3	0	0	0	2.5	141
3 months to under a year	0.5	0	0	0	0.3	17
1 year to under 2 years	3.4	0	0	3.2	2.6	150
2 years to under 3 years	1.2	0	0.8	2.3	1.3	74
3 years to under 5 years	1.9	1.0	0	2.3	1.6	93
5 years to under 10 years	0.1	3.9	7.3	0	1.4	82
10 years or more	0.8	0.5	0	2.3	1.0	55
“Never had own place”	1.1	0	0	0	0.6	36
Homeless, community def.*						4270
“Never homeless”, skipped	8.0	2.8	30.2	13.9	10.6	453
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	17.4	2.7	19.7	31.1	17.2	733
Under 3 months	7.9	7.2	2.4	7.1	7.0	298
3 months to under a year	16.4	12.0	12.5	29.4	17.2	733
1 year to under 2 years	8.9	13.9	7.7	0.8	8.4	359
2 years to under 3 years	11.7	8.7	6.5	11.9	10.6	453
3 years to under 5 years	6.1	9.4	5.3	2.7	6.1	259
5 years to under 10 years	7.8	12.2	4.5	1.7	7.3	310
10 years or more	10.4	7.3	0	0.8	7.1	303
“Never had own place”	5.4	24.0	11.1	0.7	8.7	370

Table 3-11, continued

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S&E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,835	1,087	1,525	1,967		10,413
Weighted %	56.0	10.4	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	933	253	114	157		1,457
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
HUD Chronic Homeless* (n = 304)						1266
“Never homeless”, skipped	0	0	0	0	0	0
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	2.0	1.5	10.7	0	2.0	25
Under 3 months	8.9	2.8	3.5	0	5.6	71
3 months to under a year	8.0	3.0	0	43.1	7.8	99
1 year to under 2 years	18.9	16.1	37.8	2.2	17.4	220
2 years to under 3 years	13.9	8.3	17.2	29.1	12.6	159
3 years to under 5 years	14.1	10.8	0	12.0	12.1	153
5 years to under 10 years	11.6	17.1	30.8	7.2	14.3	181
10 years or more	10.3	9.7	0	5.1	9.4	118
“Never had own place”	12.4	30.6	0	1.2	18.9	239
How much of past years homeless?***						9960
Housed	n = 254	n = 24	n = 40	N = 62	n = 380	5612
“Never homeless”, skipped	51.0	29.4	53.4	47.7	49.5	2780
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	17.2	14.6	29.2	23.8	20.4	1146
Under 3 months	5.1	5.2	9.0	5.3	5.8	324
3 months to under a year	6.1	11.6	2.6	10.5	6.8	382
1 year to under 2 years	12.5	0.6	5.0	5.2	9.1	510
2 years to under 3 years	4.6	25.5	0	5.3	5.1	286
3 years or more	3.5	13.1	0.9	2.2	3.3	184
Homeless, community def.*	n = 638	n = 220	n = 70	N = 88	n = 1016	4348
“Never homeless”, skipped	7.6	3.5	29.0	13.8	10.4	451
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	12.8	0.5	10.3	13.4	10.4	453
Under 3 months	4.6	4.4	4.5	15.6	6.2	271
3 months to under a year	18.9	11.3	12.3	29.6	18.4	801
1 year to under 2 years	18.4	21.1	14.0	8.4	16.8	732
2 years to under 3 years	12.0	9.3	21.0	15.0	13.1	568
3 years or more	25.8	49.9	9.0	4.3	24.7	1073
HUD Chronic Homeless* (n=307)	n = 177	n = 106	n = 9	n = 15	n = 307	1271
“Never homeless”, skipped	0	0.2	0	0	0.1	1
“Was homeless”, unkn. time	0.5	0.2	0	0	0.3	4
Under 3 months	0.9	0.4	0	0	0.6	7
3 months to under a year	10.1	0.3	10.5	15.0	6.3	81
1 year to under 2 years	31.3	26.9	30.8	13.0	28.3	360
2 years to under 3 years	17.3	8.7	9.1	47.9	15.3	194
3 years or more	40.1	63.3	49.6	24.1	49.1	624

* Significant differences (p < 0.05): housed vs. homeless and HUD Chronic Homeless vs. all others.

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

SECTION 4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSED AND HOMELESS SERVICE USERS

In this section, we describe the sample and estimated population of service users in terms that can be compared with other surveys, at other times or for other locations.

Guide to reading tables

In this and subsequent sections of the report, most titles of tables end with parentheses enclosing the number of the survey question that generated the data, for example, “Table 4-1: Gender by housing status and interview location (Question B1)”. Where the data are derived from many questions, a footnote refers the reader to the Glossary or to other sections of the report.

Tables in this section begin some new conventions, selective display and grayed out cells. First, we list some reasons for selective display: 1) In cases where the difference between homeless and housed persons is not statistically significant and showing results by housing status would be misleading, separate breakdown may not be shown in the table at all (Table 4-3). Grayed out cells can have several meanings: 2) In cases where the numbers of respondents by jurisdiction are too low to yield reliable estimates the cells for results by jurisdiction may be left empty and grayed out (Table 4-7), or 3) When there are no significant differences by jurisdiction, cells for results by jurisdiction may be left empty and grayed out (Table 4-6), although results for the total of all jurisdictions will be shown in bold. Grayed out rows (Table 4-10), as in previous report sections, indicate information that should be interpreted with care.

Gender. The findings displayed in Table 4-1 demonstrate that, among persons using homeless services in Oakland, whether using the community or the HUD definition of homelessness, a larger proportion of homeless service users are males. Among *housed* persons utilizing service sites, however, the situation is reversed, with females more prevalent than males. Among the HUD chronically homeless there are two males for every female (68.4% versus 31.6%). In part this figure reflects the HUD criterion *unaccompanied*. Women with children, by definition, are not chronically homeless for HUD’s purposes.

Table 4-1: Gender by housing status and interview location (Question B1) ¹

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,461	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Gender**						
Housed						
Female	54.1	27.9	71.1	64.0	57.7	3,384
Male	45.9	72.1	28.9	36.0	42.3	2,481
Homeless, community def.*						
Female	43.8	19.5	72.2	70.5	46.9	2,093
Male	56.2	80.5	27.8	29.5	53.1	2,369
HUD homeless*						
Female	38.8	19.7	66.1	64.3	41.4	1,490
Male	61.2	80.3	33.9	35.7	58.6	2,113
HUD chronically homeless*						
Female	31.6	14.3	55.5	16.4	24.4	312
Male	68.4	85.7	44.5	83.6	75.7	968

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

1 Nine persons gave no information about gender. For those nine, we imputed the gender recorded by the site coordinator during recruitment.

Age. Relatively few of the survey respondents were young. Rather, when interviewed, most were ages 35 – 54 (Table 4-2). Mean age of all service users, whether housed or homeless, is in the 40s, with the homeless sub-population, however defined, significantly younger than the housed group. Using the community definition of homelessness, homeless service users in Oakland were, on average, 44.8 years compared to 48.8 years of age for housed service users.

Table 4-2: Age¹ by housing status and interview location (Question B3)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,461	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Age**						
Housed						
Under 22	0.1	0	2.3	3.2	1.2	66
22-24	0.4	0	2.3	0	0.6	36
25-34	17.0	1.6	25.1	17.9	17.8	1,022
35-44	30.9	18.0	13.2	33.0	27.7	1,594
45-54	21.5	48.6	39.7	15.2	24.6	1,414
55-64	14.8	12.5	15.2	9.6	13.6	783
65 and over	15.4	19.3	2.4	21.1	14.6	843
Homeless, community def.*						
Under 22	2.6	0.5	7.6	4.9	3.2	140
22-24	1.8	3.6	8.7	0.5	2.7	122
25-34	14.2	11.2	11.6	23.1	14.7	654
35-44	30.8	45.6	25.5	52.0	36.0	1,599
45-54	33.3	27.4	31.9	10.8	28.7	1,276
55-64	11.0	11.5	1.5	0.5	9.0	401
65 and over	6.2	0.2	13.1	4.2	5.7	252
Average age (years)**						
Housed	48.8	53.2	43.7	48.0	48.0	5,758
Homeless, community def.*	44.8	42.7	43.1	39.7	43.4	4,443
HUD homeless*	43.8	42.6	38.4	39.8	42.4	3,584
HUD chronically homeless*	44.2	42.5	44.7	43.7	43.5	1,274
Total	47.1	45.5	43.6	45.0	46.0	10,295

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

1 Fifteen persons gave no information about age, not even a partial birth date in the unique identifier composed of the first two initials of the last name and the last four digits of the social security number, or, alternatively, the two-digit month and year of birth. In cases where the birth date, or partial birthdate were provided, we calculated age. In cases where the respondent provided both age and birthdate, we could compare the reported age and calculated age. There was little difference between the two, which is one indication of data quality and evidence of respondent cooperation.

Race/ethnicity. The racial/ethnic distribution of Alameda County homeless service users differs from the general Alameda County population.¹ Blacks constitute the majority of service users, followed by whites and Hispanics (Table 4-3). Compared to County population, service users are half as likely to be White, 3.6 times as likely to be Black or African American, 7.7 times as likely to be Amerindian or Alaska Native, and less likely to be Asian, Hispanic, or of another race/ethnic group. For Oakland, the HUD chronically homeless sub-population has proportionately more Blacks than the service user population as a whole.

Table 4-3: Race/ethnicity by housing status and interview location (Question B4)¹

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
All Service Users**						10,420
Amerindian, Alaska Native	3.3	4.4	6.7	8.5	4.9	506
Asian	0.7	0.9	6.6	8.3	3.1	318
Black, African American	70.6	47.1	41.3	20.0	54.3	5,658
Hispanic	10.9	3.4	18.9	32.4	15.4	1,602
White	13.5	42.3	23.6	25.7	20.3	2,117
Other	0.9	2.1	2.9	5.1	2.1	220
Imputed from observed race					1.7	172
HUD chronically homeless**						1,280
Amerindian, Alaska Native	1.9	4.9	0	5.1	3.3	42
Asian	0	0	0	29.3	1.8	23
Black, African American	86.1	28.1	63.2	11.4	56.7	726
Hispanic	2.6	0.6	0	28.0	3.2	41
White	8.3	64.7	36.8	26.3	33.7	431
Other	1.2	1.8	0	0	1.3	17
Imputed from observed race					3.2	116

** Significant differences exist among interview locations ($p < 0.05$).

1 This table first displays figures for all service users, then for HUD chronically homeless. Figures are not displayed for homeless versus housed due to lack of significant differences.

¹ Census data derived from California Census Data Center, Census 2000, Summary File 1 General Profile 1: Persons by race, age, & sex; households and families by race and by type, Alameda County. Available at <http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/SF%201/Alameda.pdf>. Accessed 1/28/2004.

Preferred language. The distribution of language differs significantly, between homeless and housed sub-groups (Table 4-4). Thus, a larger proportion of the housed, versus homeless, persons speak Spanish (10.4% versus 0.9%).

Table 4-4. Preferred language by housing status and interview location (Question B5)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,461	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Language						
Housed						5,865
English only	80.3	78.4	78.6	68.4	77.4	4,538
Spanish only	10.4	0	11.3	15.9	11.2	657
English & Spanish	7.2	0.2	2.3	0.5	4.6	268
English, Spanish & Other	0.2	0	0	0	0.1	8
Asian/Pacific Islands	0.8	0	0	7.5	2.1	122
English & Asian/Pacific Is.	0	2.4	0	2.2	0.6	35
English & other language(s)	1.0	19.0	7.9	5.6	4.0	237
Imputed					0.1	7
Homeless, community def.*						
English only	92.9	94.3	83.6	88.9	91.4	4,078
Spanish only	0.9	0.5	0.5	4.9	1.4	60
English & Spanish	6.0	3.7	0.5	0.8	4.1	185
English, Spanish & Other	< 0.1	0.5	0	0.1	0.1	6
Asian/Pacific Islands	0	0	13.0	4.2	2.2	97
English & Asian/Pacific Is.	0.2	< 0.1	0.9	0.9	0.4	16
English & other language(s)	< 0.1	1.0	1.5	0.1	0.4	18
Imputed					2.0	88

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

City of residence and where served. Almost all members of the housed group have a regular place to sleep in Alameda County, while significantly fewer members of the homeless sub-group do (Table 4-5; 95.6% housed, 83.9% homeless). Almost all housed and homeless respondents interviewed in Oakland (88.1% and 87.1%) report that they also *reside* in Oakland. Only two-thirds (69.3% and 66.4%) of respondents interviewed in Mid and North County reside there, with most of the remainder residing in Oakland. About one-fourth of housed respondents interviewed at Berkeley sites reside instead in Oakland or Mid and North County (26.5% or 21.6%). One in nine (11.0%) homeless persons interviewed in Berkeley resides in Oakland.

Table 4-5. City of residence by housing status and interview location (Question C2 & coversheet)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,291	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,445	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Has regular place to sleep in Alameda County?						
Housed						5,852
Yes	95.6	100.0	97.7	96.7	96.4	5,640
Homeless, community def.*						4,439
Yes	83.9	90.9	89.9	90.4	86.8	3,854
City/locality**						
Housed						
Oakland	88.1	26.5	30.8	0	56.7	3,325
Berkeley	3.9	51.8	0	0.8	5.0	293
Oakland & Berkeley	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mid-county & other North	5.8	21.6	69.3	2.2	16.4	959
South & East	0.7	0	0	94.8	20.6	1,209
Other county	0.7	0	0	2.2	0.9	50
Missing	0.8	0	0	0	0.5	28
Homeless, community def.*						
Oakland	87.1	11.0	21.7	0	52.9	2,358
Berkeley	0.7	77.6	1.0	1.8	14.4	643
Oakland & Berkeley	1.5	3.7	0	0	1.5	65
Mid-county & other North	5.5	2.1	66.4	8.4	12.6	562
South & East	< 0.1	1.2	0	88.7	13.5	603
Other county	1.2	2.7	0	0	1.1	49
Missing	4.1	1.8	10.9	1.2	4.1	181

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** There are significant differences among age categories (p < 0.05).

Education. Generally, service users constitute an educated group, and one in eight persons was engaged in additional school or training at the time they were interviewed (Table 4-6). The proportion of homeless service users engaged in education or training decreases significantly with increasing age. Three-quarters or more of all service users have completed high school, secured a GED, or continued on with post-high-school education. Nevertheless, the housed and homeless subgroups differ significantly. The housed group includes a greater prevalence both of those who did not complete high school *and* those who have done at least some college work.

Table 4-6: Education by housing status and interview location (Question G1)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N ¹	S&E ²	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,013
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,276
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Highest education achieved						
Housed						5,816
Elementary grades					8.6	502
Jr. High – 12th grade					16.2	944
High School graduate/GED					33.9	1,972
Jr. College - AA degree					31.1	1,810
College graduate or higher					10.1	588
Homeless, community def.*						4,197
Elementary grades					0.8	31
Jr. High – 12th grade					21.8	913
High School graduate/GED					41.5	1,741
Jr. College - AA degree					30.0	1,257
College graduate or higher					6.1	254
In school or training now?						
Yes					12.0	1,192
School now by age category**						9,895
Under 22					37.5	77
22 – 24					19.2	30
25 – 34					19.9	325
35 – 44					13.5	425
45 – 54					11.4	294
55 – 64					5.1	57
65 and over					0.8	8

* Differs significantly from housed ($p < 0.05$).

** There are significant differences among age categories ($p < 0.05$).

Institutionalized as child and under age 30. Homeless persons using services are twice as likely as housed persons to have had histories of foster home, group home, or other institutionalization prior to age 18 (Table 4-7). One in eight homeless individuals (13.6%) had been in foster care, one in fourteen (6.8%) had been in a group home, and one in seventeen (5.6%) had been in another institution. In total, one in eight, or 20.0 percent, had been in one institution or another prior to age 18. For housed persons, the comparable figures are 6.9, 1.3, and 2.6, or a total of 9.9 percent.

In light of concern that in recent years the connection between institutionalization and homelessness may have increased, we continue to examine the topic by restricting the analysis to the younger cohort of service users, those under age 30 (n = 125). Whether currently homeless or housed, this younger group is substantially more likely to have been institutionalized prior to age 18. One in three (36.8%) of the younger homeless individuals and one in six (15.5%) of the younger housed individuals experienced a child welfare system placement prior to age 18. Many had been housed in more than one institution.

Table 4-7: Child welfare system institutionalization before age 18 by housing status and interview location (Question D1)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,291
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,300
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd % Wtd. N
Ever in institution before 18?					10,013
Housed					5,800
Yes					9.9 574
Homeless, community def.*					4,213
Yes					20.0 841
Type of institution (before 18)					
Housed					
Foster home					6.9 401
Group home					1.3 77
Another institution					2.6 150
Homeless, community def.*					
Foster home					13.6 574
Group home					6.8 287
Another institution					5.6 236
Under age 30, in inst. before 18 (n=125)					798
Housed					303
Yes					15.5 47
Homeless, community def.*					495
Yes					36.8 182
Under age 30, type of institution before 18					
Housed					303
Foster home					12.3 37
Group home					3.9 12
Another institution					7.2 22
Homeless, community def.					495
Foster home					31.2 154
Group home *					25.7 127
Another institution					5.8 29

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

Jail or prison experience. For many persons, lack of adequate shelter increases exposure to arrest and detention on any of a number of charges. Thus, it may not be surprising that three-quarters (76.5%) of homeless service users interviewed in Oakland report they have been jailed or imprisoned (Table 4-8). Perhaps even more remarkable, until we recall that many housed persons can themselves be classified as chronically homeless, is the fact that 45.5 percent of housed service users have also served time in jail or prison. Homeless persons are not only more likely to have experienced jail or prison, but their experiences are also more recent. Among service users, 11.7 percent of homeless persons, compared with 4.9 percent of housed persons, were released from jail or prison within the last 30 days.

Table 4-8: Ever in jail or prison in the US and length of time since release by housing status and interview location (Questions D2 and D3)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,017
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,309
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Ever in jail or prison in US**						10,013
Housed						5,800
Yes	45.5	61.9	46.1	23.3	41.7	2,421
Homeless, community def.						4,218
Yes	76.5	74.5	50.3	56.7	69.7	2,940
How long since last release**						(n = 833)
Housed						2,312
In the last 30 days	4.9	16.9	0	0	4.4	101
Between 30 days and a year	8.5	3.4	18.1	23.4	11.5	265
More than a year ago	86.6	79.7	81.9	76.6	84.2	1,946
Homeless, community def.*						2,918
In the last 30 days	11.7	20.9	10.0	8.3	12.9	377
Between 30 days and a year	19.3	10.7	16.4	5.2	15.5	453
More than a year ago	69.0	68.4	73.6	86.5	71.5	2,088

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

Household composition by housing status. Table 4-9 documents the wide variety of family compositions among study households. The table also suggests major differences in household composition associated with housed or homeless status. Compared with housed persons,

homeless persons interviewed in Oakland are almost twice as likely to be solo adults (52.5% versus 27.5%) and far less likely to be in two-parent or compound families.

Table 4-9: Household composition by housing status and interview location (E1-E4)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,326	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,452	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Household composition**						
Housed						
						5,865
Solo adult	27.5	72.7	11.4	16.4	24.8	1,452
Couple	19.3	12.1	2.4	10.7	14.3	839
Two-parent family	11.1	0	15.8	21.3	13.5	792
One-parent family	11.1	3.1	22.0	13.3	12.9	759
Compound family	13.7	4.9	11.3	18.0	13.8	808
Couple, plus other(s)	1.0	0	6.8	0.9	1.9	110
Adult with kin	8.5	2.4	13.9	12.1	9.8	577
Adult with other(s)	7.9	4.9	16.4	7.2	9.0	528
Homeless, community def.*						
						4,461
Solo adult	52.5	83.0	25.8	17.4	49.4	2,206
Couple	15.5	2.5	13.0	10.7	12.2	545
Two-parent family	0.7	1.4	2.9	4.7	1.7	75
One-parent family	9.7	3.1	31.1	42.3	16.0	713
Compound family	3.1	1.4	7.7	3.0	3.4	150
Couple, plus other(s)	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	4
Adult with kin	4.3	5.3	13.3	9.6	6.3	283
Adult with other(s)	14.0	3.3	6.2	12.3	10.9	487
Number in nuclear family**						
Housed						
						5,865
One person	45.1	84.8	41.7	38.0	45.0	2,640
Two persons	33.3	12.1	17.6	21.2	27.1	1,586
Three to four persons	16.8	3.1	24.9	32.1	20.7	1,215
Five or more persons	4.8	0	15.8	8.7	7.2	424
Homeless, community def.*						
						4,461
One person	71.1	91.6	45.7	39.3	66.9	2,986
Two persons	21.5	6.8	24.5	37.2	21.6	965
Three to four persons	6.2	1.6	22.9	19.4	9.4	417
Five or more persons	1.2	0.1	6.8	4.2	2.1	94

* Differs significantly from housed ($p < 0.05$).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations ($p < 0.05$).

Children with and not with respondent. In essentially equivalent proportions, about one-half of housed and of homeless service users have children under age 22. Depending on their situations, options, and personal histories, parents can be with all of their children, none of their children, or some of their children. The first panel of Table 4-10 shows that, compared with housed persons using the same services, 37.5 percent of homeless persons utilizing Oakland service sites who have children (under age 22) have children who are not with them, compared with 18.9 percent for housed service users. Seen from the other direction, housed are twice as likely as homeless persons to have all their children with them (25.5% versus 10.3%). Two possibilities come to mind. First, homeless persons accompanied by their children may be more likely to be provided with housing – hence no longer being homeless – than counterparts without children. Second, homeless persons with children may be more likely to have been separated from their children, for financial, social, or health reasons.

The distribution of ages of children with survey respondents is quite similar for both housed and homeless individuals (last panel, Table 4-10). The plurality is between 6 and 12 years of age, about one-third are from 13 to 21 years old. Smaller proportions are under age 6.

Additional table panels provide detailed information on the distribution of children with, and not with, adult survey respondents, broken out by housing status.

Although the questionnaire was not designed to provide this level of detail, interviewers recorded examples in margin notes of complex child custody and care arrangements. A few children were reported in unexpected categories, such as with respondents who were classified as not having children or having no children with them. Children who did not fit into expected categories were grandchildren or stepchildren, children spending days with a housed friend and nights in a parent’s vehicle, children in shared custody arrangements with the respondent parent only part of the time, and so on. The table section reporting mean numbers of children does not show miscellaneous occurrences of children in unexpected categories, to avoid confusion and to avoid reporting essentially unreliable statistics. However, estimated *numbers* of children in unexpected categories are shown (in gray cells), to illustrate the kind of complexity volunteered in margin notes.

Table 4-10: Location, number, and age of children under 22 by housing status and interview location (Questions E2 - E4)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,326
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,452
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Location of children < 22**						
Housed						
No children under 22	55.6	77.6	32.9	47.9	51.4	5,865
Children not with respondent	10.9	19.3	18.0	4.5	11.1	3,011
Some children with, some not	8.0	0.6	4.5	7.3	6.9	652
All children with respondent	25.5	2.4	44.6	40.3	30.7	404
Homeless, community def. *						
No children under 22	52.2	71.2	51.9	33.5	52.7	4,461
Children not with respondent	34.6	22.9	6.8	16.5	26.5	2,351
Some children with, some not	2.9	3.0	7.8	12.9	5.0	1,183
All children with respondent	10.3	2.9	33.5	37.1	15.8	223
Average number of children^{1,2}						
With respondent						
Housed						
Some children with, some not	1.6	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.8	5,864
All children with respondent	2.4	3.0	2.4	2.2	2.3	404
Homeless, community def. *						
Some children with, some not	1.9	1.1	2.7	1.8	1.9	4,461
All children with respondent	1.7	1.1	2.4	1.8	1.9	223
Not with respondent						
Housed						
Children not with respondent	2.4	4.4	1.9	1.5	2.3	5,861
Some children with, some not	2.4	1.0	1.0	1.6	2.1	652
Homeless, community def. *						
Children not with respondent	2.4	2.0	2.9	2.4	2.4	4,446
Some children with, some not	1.9	1.1	1.9	1.8	1.8	1,183
Total number of children^{1,2}						
With respondent						
Housed						
Children not with respondent	52	2	0	53		5,018
Some children with, some not	428	6	110	182		107
All children with respondent	2,019	22	1,025	1,120		725
Homeless, community def. *						
No children under 22	2	0	0	0		4,185
Children not with respondent	178	16	24	0		1,975
Some children with, some not	138	25	113	155		2
All children with respondent	442	25	419	437		218

Table 4-10, continued

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,326	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,452	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Total numbers of children^{1, 2}						
Not with respondent						
Housed						
Children not with respondent	860	252	334	81	2,370	
Some children with, some not	654	2	44	143	1,528	
Homeless, community def. *						
Children not with respondent	2,074	357	107	269	3,207	
Some children with, some not	136	27	80	158	2,806	
Age of children w/ respondent						
Housed						
0 – 2 years					10.1	498
3 – 5 years					11.0	541
6 – 12 years					47.5	2,332
13 – 21 years					30.4	1,491
Unknown					1.0	50
Total children with R					100.0	4,912
Homeless, community def. *						
0 – 2 years					10.5	184
3 – 5 years					14.3	250
6 – 12 years					41.8	733
13 – 21 years					32.6	572
Unknown					0.9	15
Total children with R					100.0	1,754

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

1 Very small numbers of children in “No children” or “Children not with” not tabulated.

2 Estimated numbers of children in unexpected categories are shown, although results may be statistically unreliable.

Military service. Homeless services users, whether categorized as chronically homeless or not, were almost twice as likely as housed services users to have served in the United States military (Table 4-11, 19.1% or 19.3% versus 10.3%).² Based on discharge information provided by study

² Since homeless persons were also more likely to be missing veteran information, it is possible that the prevalence of military service among the homeless group is higher than estimated.

participants, it appears that very few service users with military experience are ineligible for services provided by the Veterans Administration.

Table 4-11: Veteran status by housing status and interview location (Questions G4 and G5)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients	
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,324	
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0	
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,451	
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Ever served in US military						
Housed						5,865
Yes					10.3	602
No					87.9	5,153
Not asked					1.9	111
Homeless, community def.*						4,459
Yes					19.1	853
No					74.4	3,318
Not asked					6.5	288
Homeless, HUD definition*						3,600
Yes					19.3	694
No					73.5	2,647
Not asked					7.2	260
Eligible for VA services?						
Housed						9,922
Not a veteran of US military					89.6	5,153
Discharge type eligible					10.3	595
Discharge type ineligible					0.1	4
Unknown					0	0
Homeless, community def.*						4,171
Not a veteran of US military					79.6	3,318
Discharge type eligible					19.5	815
Discharge type ineligible					0.2	10
Unknown					0.7	28
Homeless, HUD definition *						3,341
Not a veteran of US military					79.2	2,647
Discharge type eligible					19.6	656
Discharge type ineligible					0.3	10
Unknown					0.8	28

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

SECTION 5. REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

There are many reasons for homelessness, some of them based at the social or economic level, and others perhaps focused at the level of the individual. In the words of one observer of social policy in Alameda County who also provides services to homeless and other poor individuals, “In my experience, there is usually a four-tiered explanation for homelessness: i) the precipitating cause (e.g., an eviction), ii) the underlying cause (loss of benefits or a job), iii) the (often unreported) fundamental personal limitation at issue (e.g., mental health issues, substance abuse, lack of education, lack of job skills), and iv) (often unreported) contributing societal factors (racial discrimination, an unresponsive welfare system, the labor market structure for low wage workers, etc.)”.

The survey questionnaire was designed to capture reasons for homelessness salient to respondents at the time of the survey. It did not specifically ask about larger social issues, although some respondents thought to mention those in the verbatim comments. The questionnaire did specify a broad range of potential causes, including a number of sensitive, personal issues, on the empirically based theory that people very often respond to direct questions with direct and honest answers. Thus, the responses reported here provide a snapshot of the complex and multiple layers of individual issues and experiences that might call for helping services. These findings should add to, not replace, research and policy-making on larger social issues such as the availability of affordable housing, living wages, and integration of needed services with meaningful work.

Survey responses

Survey respondents provide multiple explanations for their most recent episode of homelessness (see Table 5-1). Half (51.5%) report inadequacy of income, and this group probably includes persons whose benefit checks were stopped or reduced (13.5%) as well as those with a reduced income from work (32.7%). About one-third indicated that they had broken up with a spouse or partner, or otherwise experienced a change in family (33.3%). Almost one-third endorsed the explanation that their family, partner, or roommate made them move (27.8%). Respondents also reported evictions (19.4%), releases from jail, prison, or hospital (12.2%), use of alcohol (11.0%), drug use (14.1%), and closures of buildings as unsafe (5.2%) as explanations for their

homelessness. Finally, one in five (20.7%) said that their homelessness was due to the fact that they had moved to a new area and had no money, friends, or family. Additional details provided under the category “some other reason” reveal an array of other difficulties as well: domestic violence victimization, mental health problems, physical or medical health problems or injury, change in building ownership, death within the family, loss of Section 8 support or other benefit, and mishandling of finances (see Table 5-2). In short, services users bring to mind a combination of factors – employment problems, family problems, problems with benefits programs, physical and behavioral health problems, and lack of social capital – to explain homelessness, rather than a single reason.

Variation across jurisdictions was evident for three response sets (Table 5-1). Evictions were more prevalent in Oakland and Mid and North County. Individuals moving to a new area without the benefit of friends, money, or family, are most noticeable in Berkeley and least evident in South and East County. Finally, releases from institutions are reported to leave more Oakland and Berkeley residents homeless, compared to those residing in Mid and North and South and East County.

Table 5-1. Reasons for homelessness for current or last time homeless by interview location (Question E11 a-m)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5838	1,083	1528	1967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	157		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Any response to E11**						10,326
Housed						5,865
Yes (n = 248)	49.4	76.6	52.8	47.8	51.0	2,993
Homeless, community def. *						4,461
Yes (n = 960)	92.0	94.7	71.4	86.3	89.2	3,978
Precoded responses, a – m (n = 1216)						7,063
a. My benefit check(s) were stopped or reduced					13.5	955
b. My income from work dropped or stopped					32.7	2,309
c. My total income is not enough to afford housing					51.5	3,638
d. I had no income					37.5	2,650
e. My family, partner or roommate made me move					27.8	1,961
f. I broke up with a spouse/partner, or other family change					33.3	2,349
g. The building was closed by the government as unsafe					5.2	370
h. I was evicted from my place**	21.9	8.5	28.8	12.9	19.4	1,369
i. I moved to a new area, had no money, friends or family**	20.1	36.1	25.5	6.7	20.7	1,461
j. I was released from jail, prison or a hospital**	14.5	18.7	4.6	5.5	12.2	864
k. Because I was using alcohol					11.0	777
l. Because I was using drugs					14.1	998
m. Some other reason ¹					22.5	1,591
DON'T KNOW (n = 5)					0.5	33
REFUSED (n = 3)					< 0.1	3
"NOT HOMELESS" (n = 5)					0.3	22

* Significant differences exist between housed and homeless persons (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

¹ See detail in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2. Additional reasons for homelessness by housing status (Write-in responses for Question E11m, “Some other reason”¹)

Brief description of response	Homeless			Housed		
	Wtd. %	Wtd. N	Obs. n	Wtd. %	Wtd. N	Obs. N
Null responses						
-66 Not homeless	0	0	0	5.3	37	5
-7 Respondent refused further explanation	4.9	46	13	20.2	141	5
0 Already recorded in precoded choices, no additional information	1.7	16	10	6.1	42	4
Health reasons						
55 Domestic Violence	9.8	92	18	5.2	36	3
57 Mental health	4.4	41	14	0.3	3	2
58 Disability	1.0	9	5	2.1	15	2
59 Physical or medical health problems or injury	12.3	116	19	0.1	1	1
61 Pregnancy	3.6	34	2	0	0	0
595 Someone else's (family member's) physical or medical problems	1.6	15	3	0	0	0
577 Appears to be Mental health related	1.2	12	1	2.3	16	2
			62			10
Housing reasons						
71 Could afford, but couldn't find; or just couldn't find	0.2	2	2	0	0	0
73 Apartment was unsanitary, dangerous, had roaches	1.1	10	5	0	0	0
77 Fire (or water) destroyed house	2.3	22	10	4.3	30	3
81 Waiting for apartment or application, apartment not ready	0.2	2	1	0.9	6	2
85 Temporary housing arrangement ended, not on lease	2.3	22	3	0	0	0
86 Dispute with landlord or other authority, evicted, or landlord discontinued Section 8	9.8	92	11	7.1	49	4
87 Illegal eviction	0.1	1	2	0	0	0
88 Building ownership changed	9.8	92	19	8.4	59	8
89 Program rules	0.6	6	3	1.7	12	1
			56			18
Family reasons						
63 Has animals	0.3	3	1	0	0	0
66 Death in <i>family</i> , broadly considered	2.5	23	16	1.7	12	1
69 Trouble with family member, broke up with partner, family asked to leave, ran away from home	6.1	58	19	6.8	47	4
92 Move to area, stayed with friends, family -- doubled up	0.1	1	1	22.4	157	6
95 Due to other people's lack of concern	0.6	6	2	0	0	0
125 Family member, relative, partner, roommate were AOD users	0.8	7	4	2.4	16	1
44 Homeless in part from own choice	0.9	8	4	0.3	2	2
			47			14

Table 5-2, continued

Brief description of response	Homeless			Housed			
	Wtd. %	Wtd. N	Obs. n	Wtd. %	Wtd. N	Obs. N	
Insufficient income, financial reasons							
11	Benefit money not enough for housing	3.3	31	2	0	0	0
21	No work, no income, perhaps no skills; no sign that ever <i>was</i> employed	4.8	45	7	0	0	0
22	Lost job, fired; job ended, or left work voluntarily; <i>had</i> job, but no more	1.8	17	13	1.7	12	1
23	Lost other kind of personal income	1.3	12	5	0	0	0
24	Lost Section 8 or lost (or interrupted) other kind of benefit or settlement income	3.7	35	10	2.6	18	2
25	To save money to get own place	0.0	0	1	0	0	0
33	One-time overwhelming expense	0.2	2	1	0	0	0
35	Money was stolen from R, or someone else messed up/mishandled money	0.9	9	5	0	0	0
37	Rent was too high, out of reach	0.9	13	5	0.2	1	1
			49				4
Legal reasons							
101	Did something illegal, consequence thereof (including other people's subsequent prejudice)	1.9	18	9	1.7	12	1
102	Financial/legal problem caused by past behaviors	0.5	5	2	0	0	0
111	Selling drugs	1.1	10	2	0	0	0
			13				1
Social capital							
99	Lack of education, upbringing	3.1	29	3	0.2	1	1
130	Too old to be hired	0.3	3	1	0	0	0
570	Negative self-evaluation	1.0	10	4	0	0	0
			8				1
Miscellaneous							
711	Unusual story	1.7	16	7	0.7	5	1
811	Social comment	2.8	27	2	0	0	0
			9				1

1 n = 306 individuals with write-in responses. For some, multiple codes were assigned.

SECTION 6. HUNGER

The survey instrument asks respondents if, within the past 30 days, they had been hungry but not eaten because they could not afford to get food. Those indicating hunger were then asked how many days in the last 30 they had been hungry. All respondents living with any of their children were also asked whether there had been a time in the last 30 days that their children did not have enough to eat because the respondent could not afford enough food.

Among both the homeless and housed service users hunger is far more prevalent than in American households generally. County-wide, almost half of the homeless population (48.0%) was hungry but failed to eat within the past 30 days (Table 6-1). Remarkably, half of that group was hungry at least one week of the month, with 14.4 percent reporting hunger almost every day. Even among those who were housed, hunger affected more than one-quarter of respondents (27.9%). While frequency of hunger was lower than among homeless respondents, nevertheless one in five housed survey respondents (20.7%) reported being hungry about one week in the last month. These monthly figures contrast markedly with national data for the United States. During the year 2002, in any single month, 2.7 percent of U.S. households had one or more members hungry because they could not afford enough food. For persons in poverty, the U.S. average was 10.4 percent in the previous 30 days.¹

As a social measure, hunger is taken most seriously when applied to children. Respondents with children report that 17.8 percent had a child who had gone hungry in the last 30 days. Nationally, the figure is 0.7 percent hunger *annually* for children. It seems particularly noteworthy that the prevalence of child hunger is greatest among respondents for whom some, but not all, of their children accompany them. That is, the risk of child hunger appears greatest in situations of parents whose families have been split up.

Table 6-2 considers the hunger context further by examining the association of hunger with family type. Without taking into account housing status, hunger is far more prevalent among persons living alone, as opposed to those living in a couple and/or with children.

¹ Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. Household Food Security in the United States, 2002. Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Report No. (FANRR35). October 2003. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr35/>. Accessed February 16, 2004.

The analysis displayed in the second panel of Table 6-2 examines hunger by type of interview site. Here we see that hunger is common among those interviewed at shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in services, and food pantries. No one interviewed at transitional housing sites reports hunger.²

² Many respondents reported use of multiple types of service sites. Analysis by *any* use of each type of site, whether or not the respondent was interviewed there, would also be interesting. However, the analysis data file resulting from project data cleaning procedures designed to establish individual weights and to assess homeless status altered usage data for many respondents and left such an analysis problematic. (See discussion of data cleaning in section 1.) Thus, interview site type provides a more secure basis for comparison.

Table 6-1. Hunger in past 30 days by housing status and interview location (Questions P1-3)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,478	1,083	1,489	1,897		9,947
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	790	254	110	154		1,278
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Hungry**						9,881
Housed						5,711
Yes	25.7	28.2	30.7	31.3	27.9	1,591
Homeless, community def. *						4,170
Yes	44.4	69.2	37.6	42.6	48.0	2,001
How many days hungry? (n = 535)						3,587
Housed						1,623
Less than a week					66.8	1,084
About a week					20.7	335
Two to three weeks					9.0	146
Almost every day					2.7	43
Homeless, community def. *						1,964
Less than a week					48.7	956
About a week					18.0	353
Two to three weeks					18.6	365
Almost every day					14.4	282
Children not enough to eat, couldn't afford enough food (n = 369 accompanying adults)						3,369
Yes					17.8	599
By location of children (< 22)						
Some with respondent					38.9	214
All with respondent					19.1	354

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

Table 6-2: Hunger by family type, survey site type, and interview location (Questions P1-3)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S&E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,478	1,083	1,489	1,897		9,947
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	790	254	110	154		1,278
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Hungry by family type***						9,946
Single, alone	37.0	60.6	36.4	45.1	42.4	5,344
Coupled	28.4	39.6	27.7	9.5	26.0	1,451
One-parent	38.0	20.5	37.4	28.3	34.9	2,099
Two-parent (n = 70)					26.4	1,051
Hungry by survey site type***						9,946
Soup kitchen	39.0	81.0	---	18.2	42.1	2,001
Food pantry	30.3	46.9	21.7	38.8	32.8	4,758
Drop-in, some food	34.1	61.1	---	---	41.3	1,036
Drop-in	---	48.2	39.0	---	41.0	1,020
Outreach (not asked P1)	---	---	---	---	---	~ 297
Emergency shelter	48.8	54.5	62.2	47.7	52.3	560
Transitional housing	0	10.5	27.3	22.4	15.0	325
Family shelter or transitional	14.8	39.9	20.1	29.3	26.8	247

*** There are significant differences among both row variables and interview locations ($p < 0.05$).

SECTION 7. WORK, INCOME, AND BENEFITS

Respondents were asked a series of questions about paid work, including how secure the work was and number of hours of work per week (G7 - G8). These questions were followed by questions concerning sources and amounts of income or benefits received in the past 30 days by the respondent and/or others in respondent's family unit (H2 & H3, a -n). Family unit was defined as the people living and sharing their income with the respondent. These questions also permitted us to ascertain the number of people in each family unit (H1).

Work. Among Oakland service users, homeless respondents were 50 percent more likely than housed persons to have worked at something for pay in the past 30 days (Table 7-1; 40.2% of homeless and 25.9% of housed respondents). This finding could reflect differences between the two groups in mean age, gender, number and age of children, and other characteristics.

County-wide, among the housed, 58.7 percent of those working in the past 30 days had held the same job for three months or more. Among the homeless, job stability was significantly less prevalent (39.6%). Pan-handling, street sales, and self-employment were more prevalent among the homeless, compared with the housed, group. In both groups, substantial numbers were engaged in temporary and occasional or pick-up work. Although not statistically significant, it appears that more of the homeless persons who do work, engage in work relatively few hours weekly: 32.3 percent of homeless respondents reported working no more than 15 hours weekly, compared with 18.7 percent for housed respondents.

Table 7-1. Paid work in past 30 days by interview location (Questions G6 – G8)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,539	1,090	1,502	1,957		10,088
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	764	255	113	155		1,287
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Working**						9,994
Housed						5,818
Yes	25.9	32.8	39.6	36.2	30.7	1,788
Homeless, community def. *						4,176
Yes	40.2	17.4	36.2	40.1	35.4	1,479
Duration and kind of work (n = 381)						3,223
Housed						1,776
Same job more than 3 mos.					58.7	1,043
Less than 3 mos., continuing					6.9	123
Temporary, less than 3 mos.					13.0	231
Occasional or pick-up labor					20.9	371
Pan-handling, street sales					3.0	53
Self-employed					2.7	49
Other					2.6	46
Homeless, community def. *						1,448
Same job more than 3 mos.					39.6	574
Less than 3 mos., continuing					14.8	214
Temporary, less than 3 mos.					17.9	259
Occasional or pick-up labor					24.7	357
Pan-handling, street sales					10.7	155
Self-employed					6.5	94
Other					1.3	19
Hours usually work*** (n = 378)						
Housed						
Not working now					8.4	148
15 hours/week or less					18.7	328
16 to 30 hours/week					29.2	511
31 to 39 hours/week					15.1	264
40 or more hours/week					28.5	499
Homeless, community def.						
Not working now					6.4	93
15 hours/week or less					32.3	467
16 to 30 hours/week					20.8	300
31 to 39 hours/week					5.0	72
40 or more hours/week					35.6	514

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

*** Statistically significant differences among interview locations are based on too few respondents.

Household composition. We asked respondents how many people were in their “family unit”, the number with whom they were living and sharing income. The number of persons respondents reported as sharing income in the family unit ranged from 1 to 14. The most frequent response – “1”, reported by 59.6 percent of homeless persons interviewed in Oakland and 41.2 percent of housed persons – signifies a respondent living alone (Table 7-2). The 20 – 35 percent of persons who reported a family unit of size “2” include respondents who also report living as a couple, a parent with a child, or an adult respondent living with a parent or other kin.

Income sources. Of the 1,265 persons who report how many people share their household income, virtually all also respond to one or more of a series of 14 questions about sources of income (Table 7-3). Most of those who give any information about sources of income give some response to all 14 sources, in most cases a “no” response. To give a common denominator to all sources of income, we recoded to “0” (“No”) those who did not reply to any single source of income, and report percentages for all 1,289 persons who were asked about sources of income.

In Oakland, 92.8 percent of homeless persons report any income, while 90.0 percent of housed persons report income. Interestingly, housed and homeless persons report the same average number of income sources (Table 7-4, 1.8).

Noteworthy proportions of the family units of both homeless and housed respondents received work income, SSI/SSDI, Food Stamps, General Assistance, Pan-handling or other marginal sources, and help from family or friends. Only one source of income differs in prevalence for housed versus homeless service users, *Other retirement payment*, which is over twice as likely among housed as contrasted with homeless persons (Table 7-3; 6.0% versus 2.5%).

Among residents of Oakland who utilize services designed to address problems of homeless persons, there is no consistent association between income source and homelessness, at least at the point in time of this survey. Rather, as would be expected, it appears that homeless family units – and their housed peers who use the same services – utilize a great many income sources in an effort to support themselves.

Table 7-2. Size of family unit by housing status and interview location (Question H1)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Number sharing income** (n = 1265)						9,817
Housed						5,706
One (living alone)	41.2	73.3	40.4	28.1	40.0	2,285
Two	32.1	14.6	15.0	16.7	25.1	1,434
Three or four	20.5	12.1	25.0	31.7	23.2	1,321
Five or more	6.1	0	19.6	23.4	11.7	666
Homeless, community def. *						4,111
One (living alone)	59.6	89.6	29.5	30.6	57.1	2,347
Two	21.8	3.7	16.2	40.2	20.5	842
Three or four	16.0	6.1	45.0	22.6	18.7	770
Five or more	2.7	0.6	9.4	6.6	3.7	152

Table 7-3. Sources of family unit income by housing status and interview location (Question H2)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Reporting any income**						9,993
Housed						5,812
One or more sources “Yes”	90.0	85.4	95.5	97.8	92.3	5,367
Homeless, community def.						4,180
One or more sources “Yes”	92.8	64.3	93.5	94.0	87.7	3,667
Income sources (n = 1289)						10,086
Housed						5,812
Pay for working, any kind**	26.8	39.8	41.4	48.8	34.6	2,011
SSI	23.1	48.0	14.5	13.0	20.8	1,208
SSDI	11.8	23.1	17.7	8.1	12.6	730
Either SSI or SSDI**	30.5	59.2	29.9	18.5	29.3	1,702
Food Stamps	19.5	16.0	29.3	19.5	20.9	1,215
GA	10.1	15.3	9.5	2.1	8.5	496
CALWORKS (“Welfare”)	9.8	3.1	11.4	11.5	10.1	586
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ¹	19.4	18.6	15.4	5.6	15.7	914
Help from family/friends	20.5	5.6	10.5	22.3	18.5	1,074
Unemployment benefits	6.6	0.2	9.2	4.4	6.3	364
Social Security retirement	14.8	19.3	5.3	19.5	14.5	842
Other retirement payment	6.0	0	6.9	4.5	5.5	321
Veteran’s benefits	3.2	0	4.6	4.3	3.5	204
Child support or alimony	3.8	0	2.3	3.4	3.3	191
Some other benefit ²	6.5	0.7	5.7	6.9	6.1	356
Homeless, community def.						4,180
Pay for working, any kind**	29.0	16.2	33.8	48.2	30.2	1,264
SSI	24.0	19.4	18.5	11.0	20.4	852
SSDI**	6.4	16.7	1.4	6.1	7.7	320
Either SSI or SSDI	28.0	33.3	19.0	16.5	26.0	1,088
Food Stamps**	25.0	7.2	32.8	21.6	22.1	922
GA**	10.3	3.2	2.5	2.1	6.7	279
CalWORKs (“Welfare”)**	5.3	2.6	24.2	15.3	8.7	363
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ¹ **	29.2	10.9	14.8	22.8	23.0	962
Help from family/friends	22.3	13.1	15.3	24.2	20.0	836
Unemployment benefits	8.3	2.4	14.5	6.3	7.6	318
Social Security retirement	9.3	3.3	13.6	4.2	7.9	328
Other retirement payment	2.5	0.4	4.3	4.2	2.6	109
Veteran’s benefits	4.7	2.7	1.3	4.3	3.9	162
Child support or alimony	2.6	0.2	5.9	0.5	2.2	93
Some other benefit ²	4.3	2.5	6.1	9.4	5.0	208

1 This category seems likely to include self-employment, flea-marketing, and other casual employment, as well as more marginal sources of income.

2 Responses included, in order of frequency, retirement, annuity, earnings on investment, or inheritance; workers’ compensation, state disability, or other disability payment; WIC or other in-kind food source; EITC or other tax refund; in-kind medical benefits; school loans or other school-related benefits; housing subsidy; and a variety of other sources of income or in-kind benefits.

** Significant differences exist among interview locations (p < 0.05).

Table 7-4. Number of family unit income sources by housing status and interview location (Question H2)

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Number of income sources**						9,993
Housed	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.8	5,812
Homeless, community def. *	1.8	1.0	1.9	1.8	1.7	4,180

* Differs significantly from housed ($p < 0.05$).

** Significant differences exist among interview locations ($p < 0.05$).

Amount of income. For each income *source* supporting the family unit in the last month, respondents were asked the amount of income.¹ About two-thirds of the respondents provide some information about income amounts, even if only “Don’t know” (n = 886 of 1,289 full-length interviews). The amounts of income from each source are presented in Table 7-5. In most cases, the average monthly income, for family units receiving that form of income, ranges between about \$600 and \$800. Noteworthy exceptions are the value of Food Stamps, averaging \$153 monthly, income from panhandling and other casual or marginal employment, averaging \$94 monthly, and income from other benefits, \$991 monthly.

Although the *prevalence* of income sources does not differ for homeless and housed service users, the total *amount* of income is significantly lower for homeless clients, averaging \$727 monthly, compared to \$1,022 for housed persons.

¹ One trade-off in designing the survey to collect information on amount of income source-by-source, rather than asking for total income and documenting whatever amount of detail the respondent volunteered, is the possibility that that fewer persons reported amount of income from each source, than would have reported total income and named whatever sources came immediately to mind. Thus, it may be that we have better information from those who responded, even if we have less information for the sample as a whole. Of course, time permitting, asking both ways would be preferable.

Table 7-5: Monthly family unit income by source and total income from all reported sources (Question H3)

Income source	Average		Number Unwtd. n	Minimum Unwtd. \$	Maximum Unwtd. \$
	Wtd \$	Wtd. N			
Pay for working, any kind	844	2,413	258	3	5,500
SSI	698	1,504	208	20	2,143
SSDI ³	812	641	86	60	1,906
Sum of SSI and SSDI	797	1,971	262	20	2,143
Food Stamps ³	153	1,532	224	10	624
GA	279	566	105	19	548
CalWORKs (“Welfare”)	603	661	101	122	2,800
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ^{1,3}	94	1,532	219	1	1,000
Help from family/friends ^{2,3}	161	1,226	148	3	2,100
Unemployment benefits	623	495	53	71	1,604
Social Security retirement	657	753	49	75	1,550
Other retirement payment	625	217	19	44	2,700
Veteran’s benefits ³	584	246	38	7	2,600
Child support or alimony ³	582	168	25	19	1,500
Some other benefit ³	991	334	36	10	3,000
Total income from all sources	901	7,002	879	1	10,628
Housed	1,022	4,139	262	9	5,500
Homeless, community def. *	727	2,863	617	1	10,628

- 1 This category likely includes self-employment, flea-marketing, and other casual employment, as well as more marginal sources of income.
- 2 Mean excludes one amount of “\$9999”, the largest value that could be entered in a 4-digit field.
- 3 Weighted mean, calculated with other statistical software due to insufficient number of sample sites.
- * Differs significantly from housed ($p < 0.05$).

Access to benefits – selected subpopulations. Table 7-6 compares sources of *household* income for housed vs. homeless persons in three special populations of service users – disabled persons (including physical disability, developmental disability, learning disability, blindness, deafness, mental illness, and disability due to alcohol or drug abuse², $n = 881$), families with children (adult respondents accompanied by children under the age of 22, $n = 291$), and veterans (persons reporting having served in the U.S. military, $n = 271$).³

² Short interviews ($n = 179$) did not include information on disability.

³ Respondents could be included in more than one sub-population group, if not logically mutually exclusive.

Membership in a *special population* is a more important predictor of income *source* than housing status. Disabled persons are much more likely to report SSI or SSDI as a household source of income than the rest of the sample ($p < 0.001$). They are also more likely to report marginal income sources ($p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, only 35 to 38 percent of those whom we classify as disabled report SSI or SSDI as a source of household income, while 24 to 26 percent report marginal income sources. Families are more likely than the rest of the sample to report household income from Food Stamps (38%, $p < 0.001$) or CalWORKs (28%, $p < 0.001$). However, fewer than half of the families in the sample have *either* source of income. Similarly, veterans are most likely to report a VA cash benefit or pension as a source of income ($p < 0.001$), but only 17 percent of those reporting a US military service history also report a VA cash benefit or pension.

In the comparison of income sources across subpopulations, there is only one significant difference between housed and homeless persons: among the disabled sub-population, housed persons are about half-again as likely to report pay for working, as compared with homeless respondents.

Several large differences between housed and homeless persons do not achieve statistical significance, but nevertheless may be important to service providers, such as that for SSI or SSDI among veterans. Housed veterans are more likely to report household income from SSI or SSDI than homeless veterans (25.6 vs. 19.8, difference not significant). Similarly, homeless families are *more* likely (difference not significant) to report household income from Food Stamps, as well as from CalWORKs.

Table 7-6: Last month household income sources for selected sub-populations of service users by interview location (Question H3)¹

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967	10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9	100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147	1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd % Wtd. N
Disabled (n =881)					5,779
Housed					1,208
Either SSI or SSDI					38.0 1,078
SSI					25.3 719
SSDI					18.4 522
Food Stamps					22.6 641
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					24.4 692
Pay for working, any kind					32.7 928
Homeless, community def.					2,863
Either SSI or SSDI					34.5 986
SSI					27.0 773
SSDI					9.9 282
Food Stamps					18.5 531
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					26.2 749
Pay for working, any kind*					21.6 619
Families (children < 22) (n =291)					3,161
Housed					2,234
Food Stamps					35.3 788
CalWORKs (“Welfare”)					24.5 546
SSI or SSDI					19.0 424
Help from family/friends					17.2 385
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					13.5 301
Pay for working, any kind					38.0 848
Homeless, community def.					927
Food Stamps					45.0 417
CalWORKs (“Welfare”)					35.3 327
SSI or SSDI					26.7 247
Help from family/friends					11.4 106
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					18.1 167
Pay for working, any kind					35.4 328

Table 7-6, continued

Interview location	Oakland	Berkeley	Mid & N	S & E	Total	clients
Weighted N	5,838	1,090	1,525	1,967		10,420
Weighted %	56.0	10.5	14.6	18.9		100.0
Unweighted n	935	255	114	147		1,461
	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd %	Wtd. N
Veterans (n = 271)						1,452
Housed						599
Veteran's benefits					17.5	105
SSI or SSDI					25.6	153
Food Stamps					13.1	79
Help from family/friends					12.1	73
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					14.2	85
Pay for working, any kind					30.4	182
Homeless, community def.						853
Veteran's benefits					16.5	141
SSI or SSDI					19.8	169
Food Stamps					13.6	116
Help from family/friends					9.0	77
Pan-handling, recycling, sale of blood, hustling, other ²					14.8	126
Pay for working, any kind					40.2	343

1 Income data were available for 1289 respondents.

2 This category seems likely to include self-employment, flea-marketing, and other casual employment, as well as more marginal sources of income.

* Differs significantly from housed (p < 0.05).