



*Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc.*

**COMING HOME OF MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
2021 POINT IN TIME (PIT) SURVEY  
COMING HOME DATA ANALYSIS**



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## **Introduction to the Point in Time Survey**

Annually across the country, communities conduct the Point in Time (PIT) survey (sponsored by the federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)) of homeless individuals and families on the last Wednesday in January. Surveys are created locally, with guidance from HUD, and are administered via paper survey to homeless persons encountered on the street or at social service agencies and other institutions. In New Jersey, the same data is also collected from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for homeless individuals physically residing in emergency housing.

## **Literally Homeless vs. Precariously Housed**

For the purpose of the official PIT survey, HUD only counts individuals who are “literally homeless,” i.e., those in emergency housing or on the street.

Middlesex County also chooses to gather information on those who are “precariously housed,” i.e., individuals who are staying in a hotel at their own expense and those staying temporarily with friends or family, since their housing status can, and does, change to “literally homeless” at a moment’s notice.

For additional definitions of terms used throughout this document, please refer to Appendix A.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on the Point in Time & the Homeless Population**

The data gathered from the 2021 Point in Time reflects additional challenges faced by persons experiencing homelessness. The leadership and frontline staff of homeless service agencies had to reexamine the way in which individuals were prioritized for scarce resources. Those who were once the “most vulnerable,” i.e., typically long-time homeless men residing on the street with serious mental health and addiction issues, were now still vulnerable, but perhaps not AS vulnerable as the elderly individual with COPD sleeping in a shelter, exposed to 40 other vulnerable individuals in close quarters. We revised our prioritization criteria to ensure that we were paying attention to the additional risk factors presented by COVID-19.

The pandemic also presented increased difficulties in locating apartments for our clients. Eviction moratoria, put in place by both federal and state governments, prevented the onslaught of newly homeless persons. However, it also reduced the availability of affordable rental units. Transportation for clients to view apartments was also limited due to safety measures, and many landlords were reluctant to show apartments in person. **Nevertheless, we assisted 40 chronically homeless individuals and 11 chronically homeless families to secure permanent housing in 2020. In addition, we housed 22 other individuals and families who, while not chronically homeless, were prioritized because of COVID vulnerabilities, such as seniors and those with underlying health issues. In total, this rate of housing the most vulnerable was comparable to 2019.**

Due to the unprecedented changes in the community as a result of the pandemic, we may not be able to reliably compare changes in the 2021 PIT data to prior years or use it to generalize or predict a trend. In general, fewer families with children reported experiencing literal homelessness. However, individuals who did experience homelessness tended to stay homeless for a longer period of time.



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## Summary of Survey Responses

**Total: 628** individuals (457 “Households”<sup>1</sup>) reported being homeless on the night of the PIT. Of this total, **491 individuals** (78% of all homeless persons), including 138 children, were **sheltered** in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, or Hotel Placement. **Since 2016, the PIT homeless count had been steadily rising, notably corresponding with improved PIT survey methodology and the institution of the Coordinated Assessment process. However, in 2021, there was a decrease of 5.7% in overall homelessness, largely due to a drop in families with children experiencing homelessness. This is most likely due to the impact of COVID-19, the eviction moratoria, and families with children being able to maintain their residences or the ability to stay with relatives or friends in the midst of the pandemic.**

- **Sheltered Households without Children - 242 households.** Most homeless households were sheltered, single adults, couples without children, or parents with adult children (230 single adults, and 5 couples, plus 6 households with adult children, and 1 sibling pair).
- **Sheltered Households with Children, or “Families” - 83 homeless households,** comprised of 236 individuals (including 138 children). This represents a **19% decrease in homeless households with children** from 2020. The majority of all Sheltered Families (79.5%) were headed by female single parents.
- **Unsheltered households - 132 (137 persons),** comprised of 127 individuals and 3 couples, 1 sibling pair, and 1 parent with an adult child. 82% of the Unsheltered individuals were men.
- **Men comprise the majority of homeless adults without children at 72%, while women represent 76.5% of adults in households with children (families). Children comprise 22% of the total homeless population.**
- **“Chronically Homeless” (homeless long term and with a disability) – 134 Chronically Homeless households,** comprised of 162 individuals, representing 29% of total homeless households. **This represents a 67.5% increase in Chronically Homeless households from last year. Despite a deliberate and coordinated effort to focus on the Chronically Homeless population in our community, the pandemic paralyzed the housing market, and clients were unable to secure permanent housing, even though many had been awarded housing subsidies.** Approximately 70% of Chronically Homeless adults are male, and 35% of Chronically Homeless adults are unsheltered.
- **Homeless Youth (age 18-24, unaccompanied by parent) - 21 without children** (all single young adults), which accounts for 5.6% of all homeless Households without Children. Additionally, there were 18 youth single mothers, 1 single father, and 1 youth parenting couple, accounting for 24% of homeless Families.
- **Veterans – 30 veterans,** which account for 6.6% of all homeless households, or 4.8% of total homeless persons, demonstrating a slight increase from the prior year.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, unless indicated otherwise, numbers and percentages will be based on number of “households,” rather than individuals, represented in a given category. This will allow for the most accurate comparisons between household types, and will strive to prevent overrepresentation by families (who have more persons in each household). “Household” refers to individuals who would be occupying a house together should they have one.



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## Changes in Homeless Populations

While there was a slight decrease this year in the overall number of homeless persons surveyed in Middlesex County on the night of the PIT, there are some considerations to note. Despite this decrease, our chronically homeless numbers rose throughout the pandemic. While the rest of the county “stayed at home,” our outreach teams and shelter staff continued to work to engage and serve the most vulnerable. The community agencies dedicated to homeless services continued to successfully identify and engage homeless individuals, including through increased street outreach efforts and continued maintenance of a By Name List (BNL) of homeless individuals and families. By doing so, we were able to observe a reduction in families with children experiencing homelessness; an increase in individuals on the streets, and a tremendous increase in the amount of time it took for homeless individuals to secure permanent housing. Families with children likely benefited from the eviction moratoria in order to prevent homelessness, while others were likely able to stay longer with relatives and friends than in the past due to a shared sense of turmoil. This same eviction moratoria highlighted the insufficiency of affordable apartments in the state. While our system continued to prioritize and refer homeless individuals for available permanent housing subsidies, there were fewer apartments available for those individuals. This may suggest that housing available in previous years was a result of turnover due to evictions, which were stalled during the pandemic.

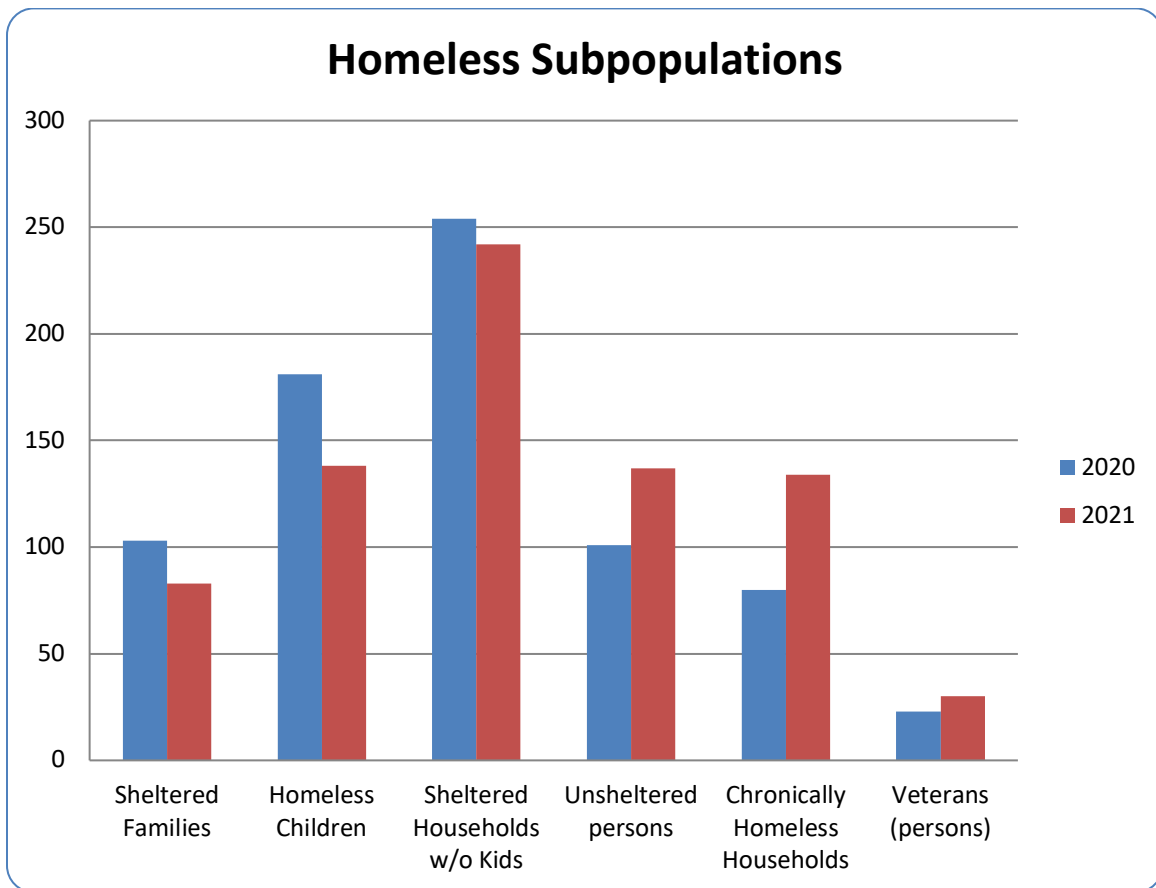


Figure 1 - Homeless Subpopulations



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## Last Permanent Address – All Homeless Persons

Survey respondents were asked, “Where was your last permanent address before becoming homeless?”

Municipality	Last Permanent Address
Carteret	10
Cranbury	0
Dunellen	4
East Brunswick	14
<b>Edison</b>	<b>27</b>
Helmetta	0
Highland Park	3
Jamesburg	2
Metuchen	3
Middlesex	0
Milltown	2
Monroe Twp	2
<b>New Brunswick</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>North Brunswick</b>	<b>8</b>
Old Bridge	6
<b>Perth Amboy</b>	<b>59</b>
Piscataway	11
Plainsboro	0
Sayreville	13
South Amboy	9
South Brunswick	11
South Plainfield	2
South River	6
Spotswood	1
<b>Woodbridge</b>	<b>34</b>
Out of County	62
Out of State	50
Puerto Rico	0
Middlesex County (unspecified)	0
Out of Country	5
Unknown/No Response	7

- Individuals experiencing homelessness continue to report **New Brunswick** as their last permanent address before becoming homeless **more than any other municipality**.
- There was some fluctuation of last permanent address locations in the 2021 PIT compared to the 2020 PIT. Most notably, there was a significant decrease in persons reporting North Brunswick as their last permanent address, while there was an increase in Edison and Woodbridge.
- In 2021, for all homeless persons, there was a significant increase in households from Out of State, which increased by 67%.



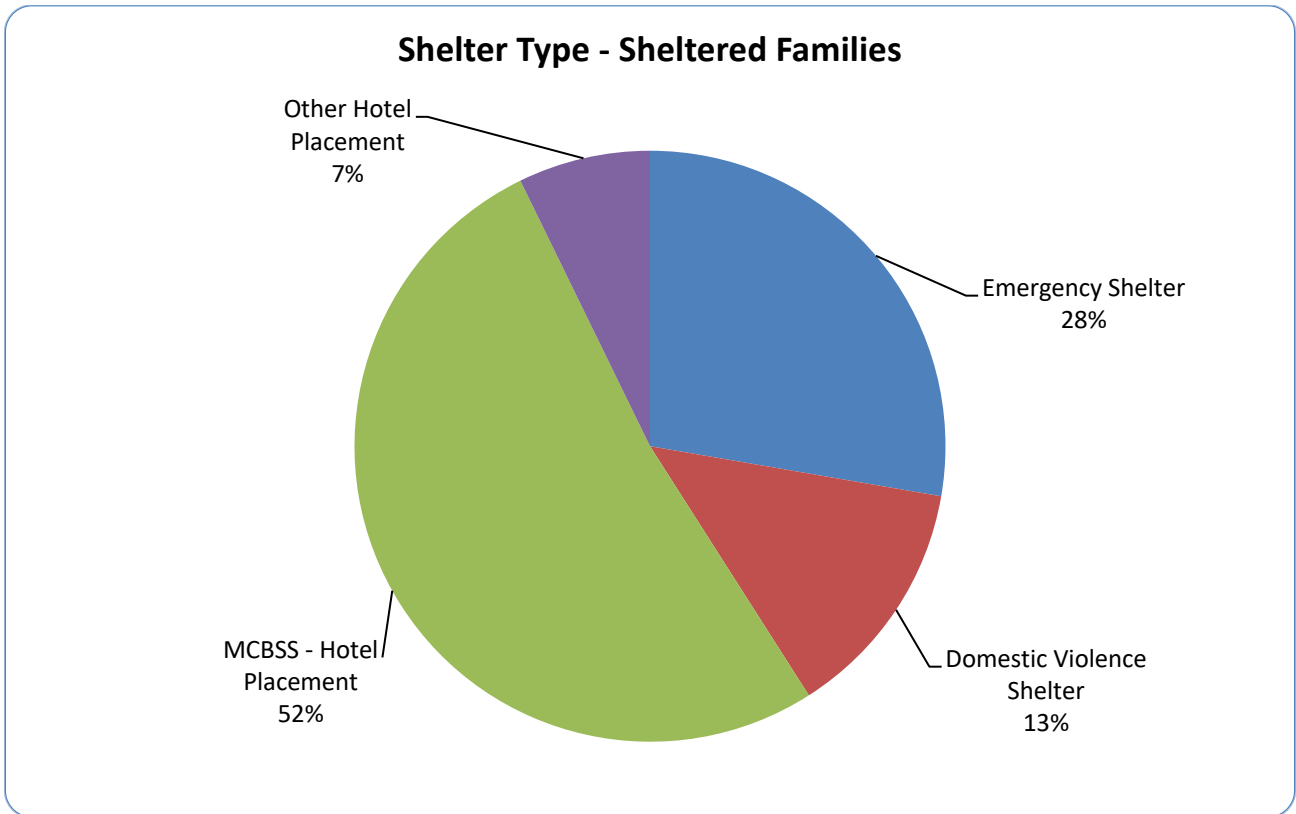
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## Sheltered Households

Throughout the pandemic, federal funding, and state and federal policies, were geared toward **sheltering** as many homeless households as possible, in order to ensure that vulnerable individuals and families were not subjected to increased risk to COVID by being unsheltered or living in close quarters with relatives or friends. Emergency shelters reduced capacity in communal areas, including decreasing numbers of beds in some cases, and utilized funding to place individuals in hotels when possible. In addition, domestic violence agencies also utilized more hotel placements to accommodate the marked increase in reports of domestic violence.

## Sheltered Families

This year's PIT revealed 83 Sheltered Families, totaling 236 individuals, representing a 24% decrease in households with children from 2020. These families were comprised of 66 single mothers, 8 single fathers, and 8 two-parent households, as well as 1 grandparent-led household.



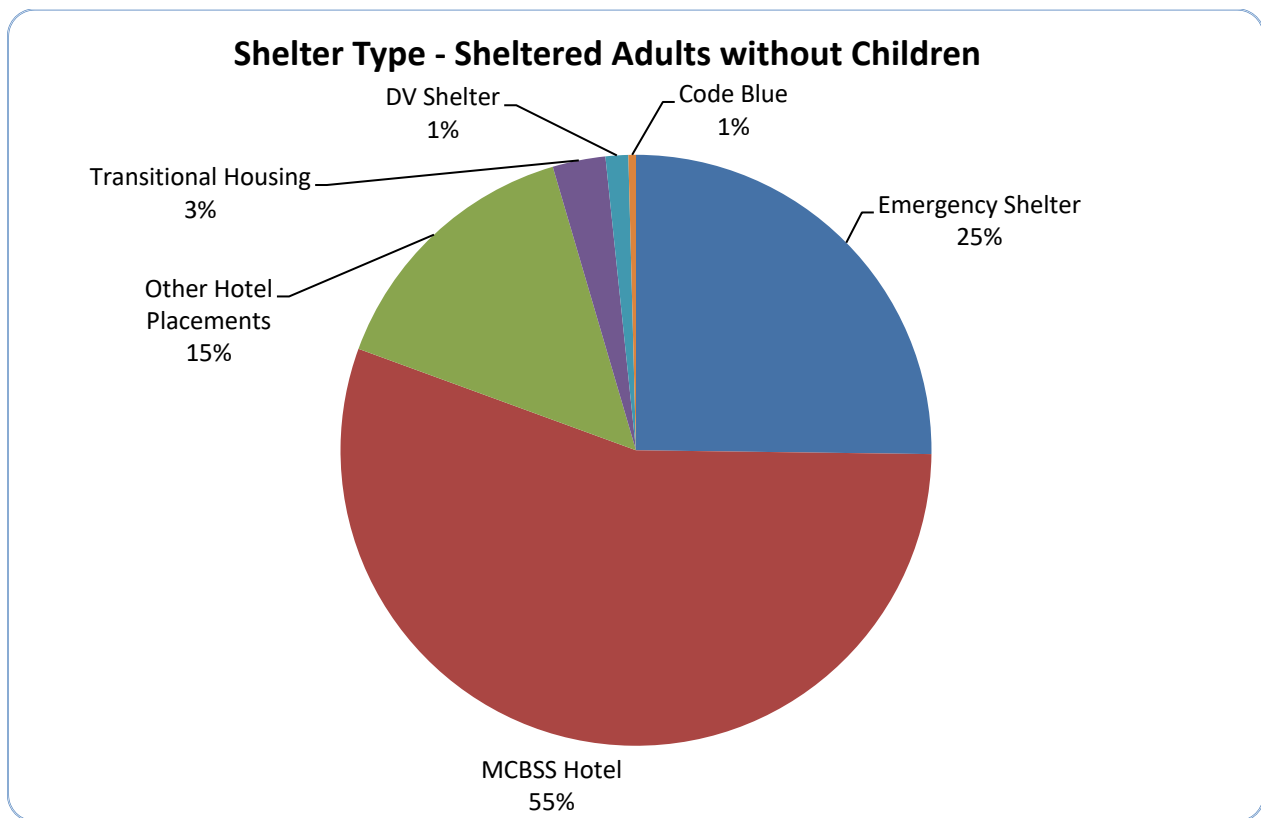


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## Sheltered Adults without Children

The majority of the **242 Sheltered Adult Households without Children** (255 individuals) were located in Emergency Shelter and Hotel placements (70%). Of note in 2021, was the increased utilization of hotel placements for adults who would otherwise have been unsheltered, and a significant decrease in Transitional Housing and Code Blue. The 60% increase in hotel placements was due to the increased funding available and need to decongest the shelters. In addition, one transitional housing project serving ex-offenders had a 77% reduction in utilization due to lack of referrals from its sole referral source (parole) during the pandemic. There was also no Code Blue in effect on the night of the PIT in 2021.

Most sheltered adults without children were single adults, and there were 5 couples, 6 multigenerational households (parents with their adult children), and 1 pair of siblings.







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## Disabilities<sup>2</sup>

The percentage of Sheltered families who report having at least one disability decreased slightly in 2021, with 43% of adults in families and 15% of children having a disability (6% decrease for adults). Similarly, Unsheltered individuals reporting a disability also decreased by 6.5%, and sheltered adults without children reporting decreased by 3%. The chart below represents the total number of adults in each category reporting a disability, with the last column representing the number of adults reporting multiple disabilities. The disability reported the most frequently by an adult in any cohort is mental illness and/or dual diagnosis (mental health & substance abuse disorder). There are more homeless Adults without Children with at least one disability than there are Adults with Children, with 81% of childless Sheltered and Unsheltered adults reporting having at least one disability compared to only 43% of Sheltered Adults in Families. Only 15% of children are living with disabilities, primarily developmental disabilities.

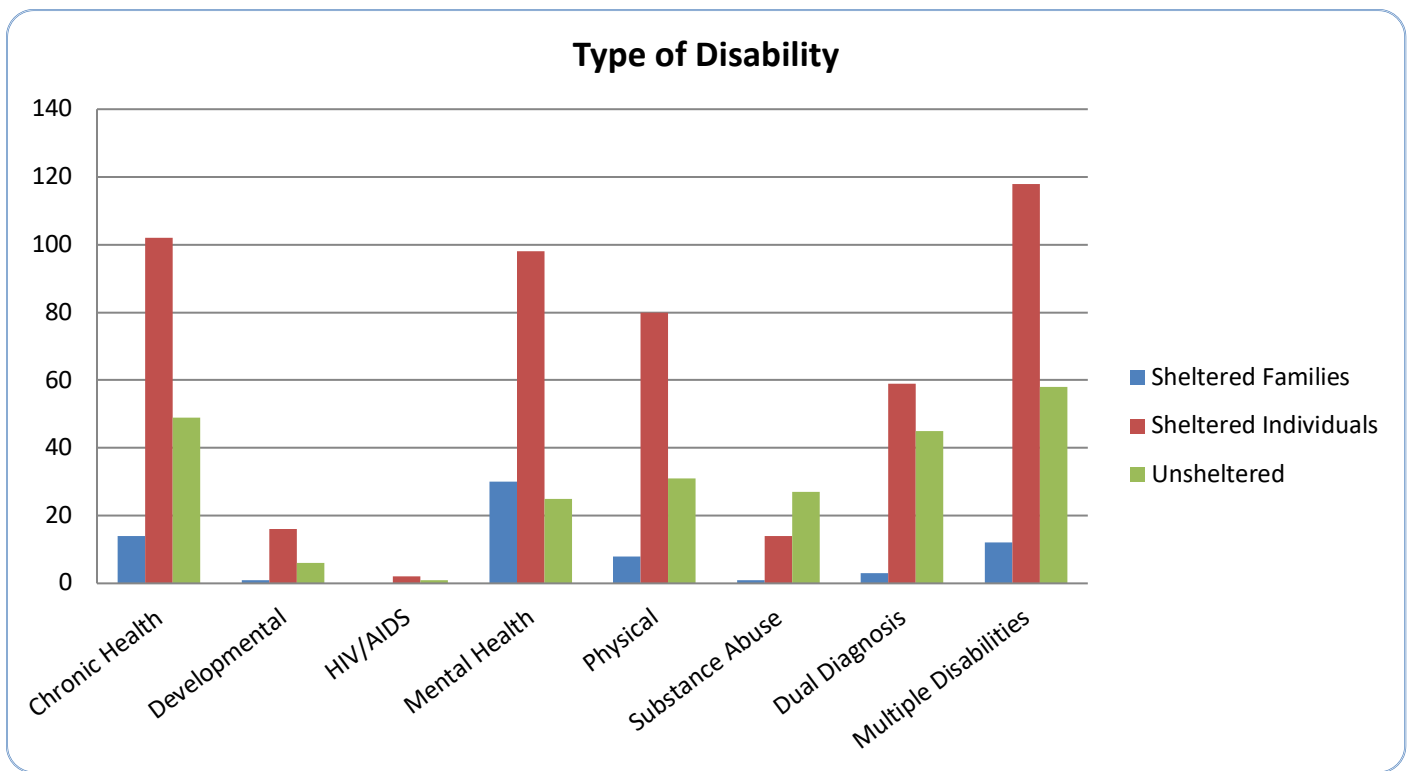


Figure 2 - Adults with Disabilities

Due to the impact of the pandemic, there was a 48% increase in sheltered adults reporting a chronic health condition as a disability. These individuals were outreached and prioritized for shelter and hotel placement, because of their increased vulnerability to the effects of Covid-19.

<sup>2</sup> The data in this graph represents each individual adult, not the household.



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## Income

The unaffordability of housing in Middlesex County continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing homeless individuals and families.

### Sheltered Households

In 2021, 50% of Sheltered Families received TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and 34% of childless Adult households received GA (General Assistance) through the MCBSS. Only 20% of Families and 10% of childless Adults reported receiving employment income. For Families, this demonstrates a slight decrease in employment income, but for Adults without children, this reflects a curious increase of 9% from 2020, since it is the first increase in five years. Only 7% of Families reported child support income, decreasing for the fourth year in a row. Both employment and child support enforcement are areas that the system will continue to explore to improve self-sufficiency and sustainability for persons experiencing homelessness once they secure housing.

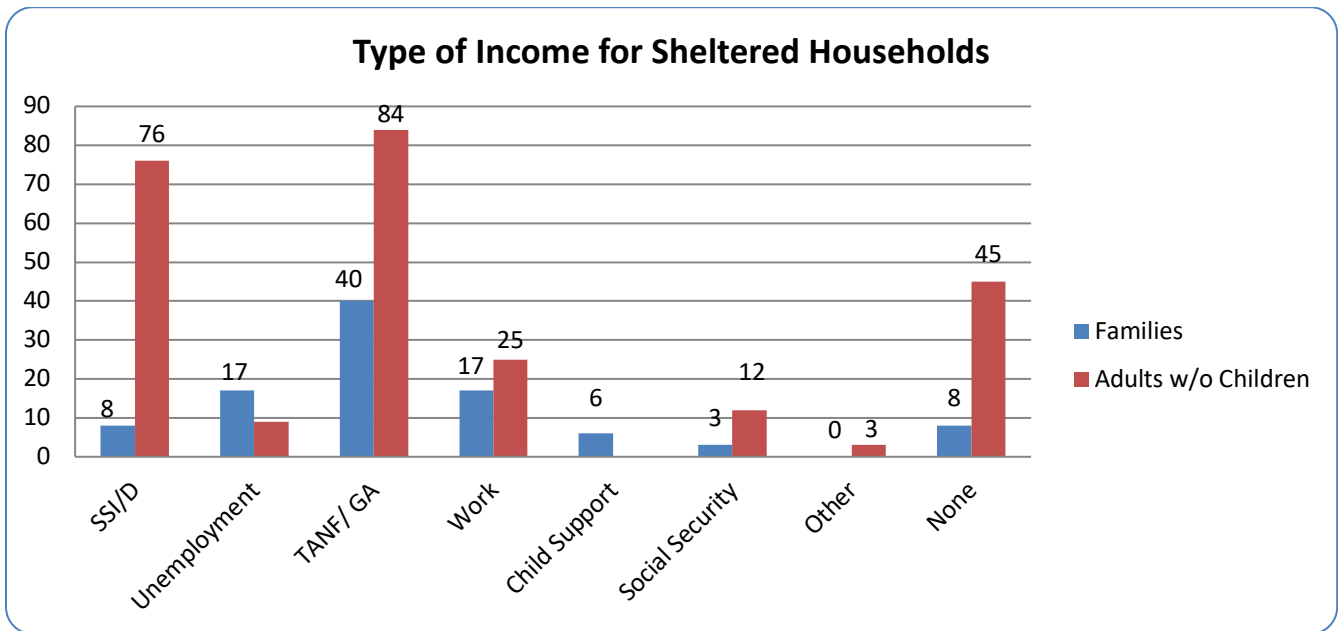


Figure 3 - Income Sources

In addition, approximately 19% of families with an adult with a disability report disability income (SSI, SSD, or other disability income), and 36% of childless Adults have disability income. Only a few more in each cohort have pending applications or applications in the appeal process. While not all individuals with disabilities meet the criteria for receiving SSI or SSD, there is still a substantial gap between those who may be eligible for these benefits and those who are receiving them. While there has been an increase in eligible childless Adult households receiving benefits, there was a significant decrease for families. This gap has been noted historically and is still an area that requires attention.



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## Income and Housing

In 2021, Fair Market Rent (FMR) for apartments in Middlesex County indicates that permanent housing continues to be out of reach for homeless households. The standard of affordability is that persons can spend 30% of their income on rent.

Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom
\$1,204	\$1,371	\$1,753	\$2,187

The majority of **all homeless Families** (78%) reported an income of less than \$1,500 per month, making even a 1 bedroom apartment unaffordable for them. Approximately 22% of Families reported a monthly income over \$1,500, but only 12% reported \$2,200+/month.

Based on household size, the following chart represents the minimum housing needs of **homeless Families**:

### Rationale

- 1 bedroom: appropriate for 2 adults without children, or for 1 adult + 1 child
- 2 bedrooms: appropriate for 1 adult + 2-4 kids, or 2 adults & 1-2 kids
- 3 bedrooms: appropriate for 1 adult + 4+ kids, or 2 adults + 3+ kids
- 4 bedrooms: appropriate for larger families, and multi-generational families

1 Bdrm (\$1,371)	2 Bdrm (\$1,753)	3 -4 Bdrm (\$2,187-2,492)
43	32	8

The majority (79%) of **homeless childless Adult households** reported an income of less than \$1,000 per month, making even an Efficiency/Studio apartment unaffordable. Even the going rate for an SRO at \$700-750/month is unaffordable to 72% of this population, whose monthly income is at or under \$825 (SSI amount). Only 7% of these households reported a monthly income between \$1,000-1,500, and an additional 13.6% reported an income over \$1,500/month.

Based on household size, the following chart represents the minimum housing needs of **homeless childless Adults** (including Unsheltered households):

### Rationale

- Room (SRO): suitable for a single adult
- Studio/Efficiency: Suitable for a 1-2 adults
- 1 bedroom: appropriate for 2 adults without children

SRO or Efficiency (\$700-1,204)	1 Bdrm (\$1,371)	2 Bdrm (\$1,753)
230	6	1



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## Non-Cash Benefits

Non-cash benefits include food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, WIC and other public benefits. The most frequently reported benefits received by homeless persons are food stamps and Medicaid. There was a significant increase in all cohorts receiving non-cash benefits in 2021, which may reflect the federal government’s expanded eligibility criteria for food stamps during the pandemic. Approximately 92% of all Sheltered households receive some form of non-cash benefits, which is almost a 10% increase since 2020. For Sheltered Families, 88% of households are receiving food stamps, but only 71% of Sheltered childless Adults and 27% of Unsheltered persons are receiving this benefit. Despite the increase for all cohorts in 2021, the data demonstrates that Sheltered Families have more success in accessing these benefits than homeless adults without children. While this may represent changes in the eligibility criteria for Food Stamps, the system will need to increase outreach efforts to engage childless Adults in order to ensure that all homeless individuals are able to access mainstream benefits for which they are eligible.

## Causes of Homelessness<sup>3</sup>

The top three causes of homelessness varied between homeless cohorts. For Sheltered Families, the top 3 causes of homelessness were: Asked to Leave Shared Residence (36%), Domestic Violence (30%), and Loss/Reduction of Job Income (28%). For childless Sheltered Adults, the top causes were: Asked to Leave Shared Residence (30%), Mental Illness (26%), and Substance Abuse (13%). Lastly, for Unsheltered persons, the top causes were: Substance Abuse (26.5%), Mental Illness (26%), and Loss/Reduction of Job Income (22%). When all cohorts are combined, Asked to Leave Shared Residence rose to the top cause of homelessness.

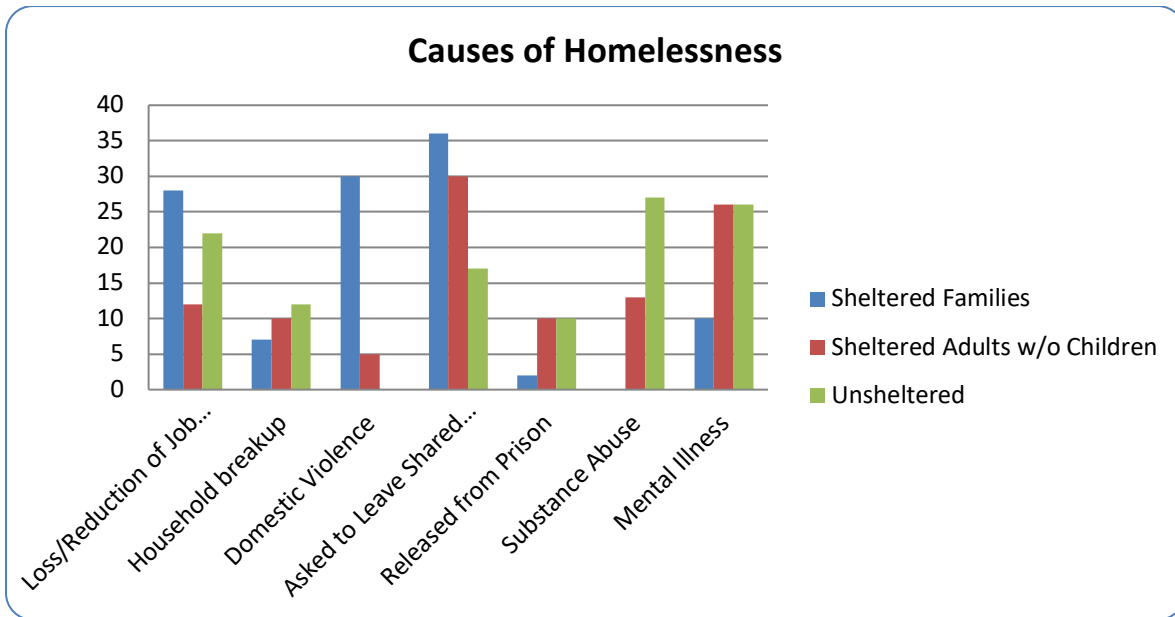


Figure 4 - Cause of Homelessness (%)

<sup>3</sup> In 2021, the question around Cause of Homelessness allowed for multiple answers instead of only one response. Despite this change, the trend in answers is similar to prior years.



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## Unsheltered

- On the 2021 PIT night, 132 households (137 adults) were Unsheltered, which represents a 33% increase in households from 2020;
- Of the unsheltered, men outnumber women approximately 5:1;
- Of the men, the majority (46%) are between 30 – 49 years of age; 33% are age 50 – 59. Lastly, 13% are 60 years and older, representing a 28% decrease in this age group in 2021;
- Of all Unsheltered adults, only 4 qualify as “homeless youth” (18-24);
- Code Blue was not in affect in 2021 on the PIT date, unlike 2020. Code Blue sheltered 44 individuals in 2020 who would otherwise have been unsheltered, which may explain the increase in 2021.

Despite the funding and policy priorities to place individuals in shelters and hotels during the pandemic, there was a dramatic increase in individuals on the streets in 2021. This may reflect a change in PIT methodology during the pandemic. We conducted surveys over a longer period of time, in order to avoid the need for congregating in any one area on one specific date. We also used 100% paid staff to conduct the surveys, instead of volunteers, which increased the data quality of the surveys. Lastly, since we conducted surveys over a period of a couple of weeks instead of on one day, we increased our de-duplication efforts, including comparison with HMIS, in order to increase data quality. In addition, we continued to increase outreach efforts and build relationships with social service agencies, such as mental health and addiction treatment providers, which has resulted in increased Unsheltered numbers.

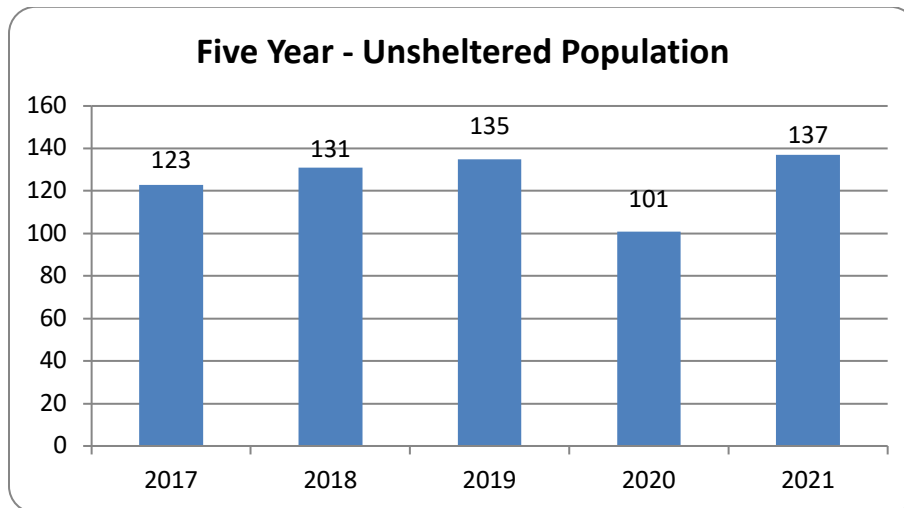


Figure 5 - Unsheltered 2017-2021



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### **Last Permanent Address of the Unsheltered**

The PIT survey includes questions asking for the household's Last Permanent Address and household's current location (In what town did you spend the night?), as depicted in the two graphs below (Figure 6 & Figure 7).

- 30% of unsheltered households reported New Brunswick as their last permanent address, decreasing from 36% in 2020; 24% reported Perth Amboy (demonstrating a dramatic increase from 16% in 2020 and 8% in 2019), and 24% reported an address out of the County or out of State (increasing from 20% in 2020) as their last permanent address.
- The majority of households reported that they spent the night of the survey in New Brunswick (57%), however, this is a slight decrease from 59% in 2020. Perth Amboy was reported as the city with the second highest number, with 30% spending the night there (rising approximately 35% since 2020).
- These shifts in Perth Amboy should be monitored as they may indicate a rising homeless population in the city. In 2019, the sheltered number had risen for Perth Amboy due to the implementation of Code Blue. The Perth Amboy Code Blue location continued to operate in 2020, and, despite this, the unsheltered number grew in the city. In 2021, despite not having a Code Blue site open, there continued to be a rise in overall homelessness in the city.
- Compared to prior years, fewer unsheltered households remained in their home town (only 32% in 2021, compared to 60% in 2020).

## Unsheltered Households

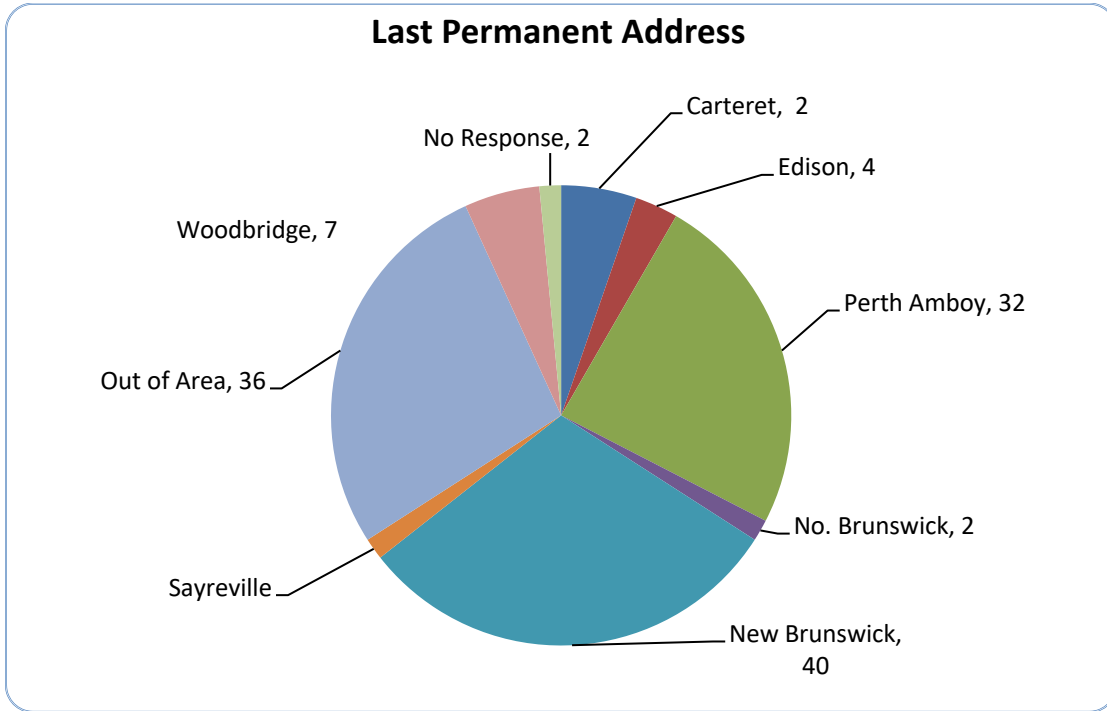


Figure 6 - Last Permanent Address of Unsheltered Households

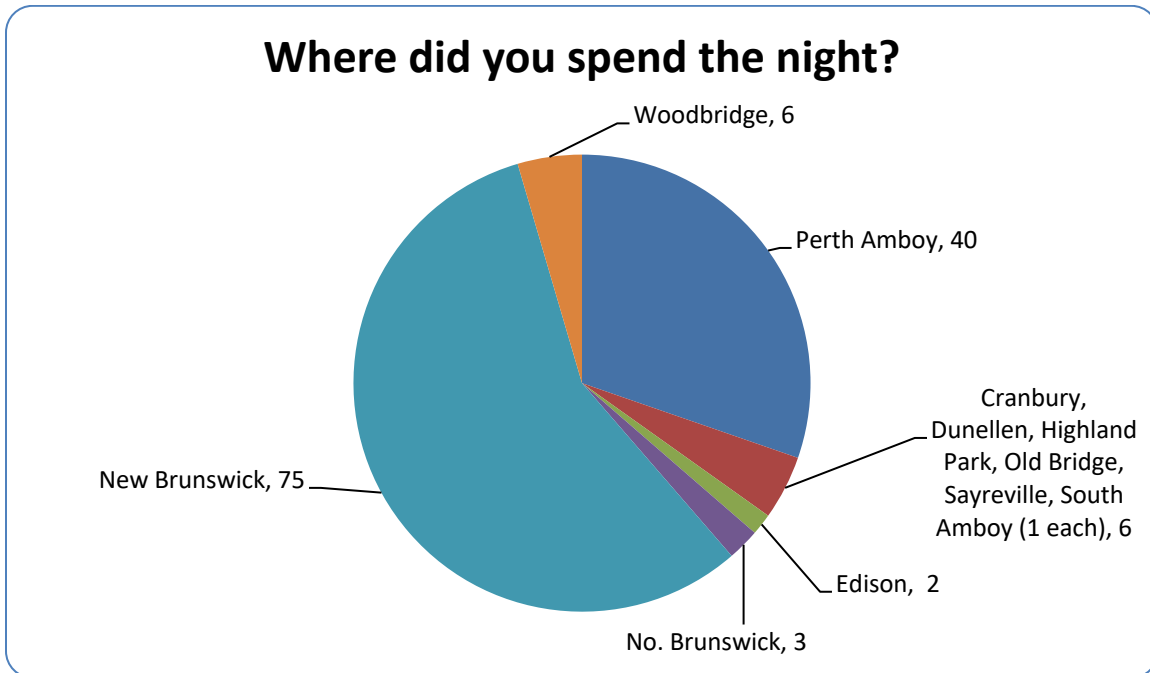


Figure 7 - In what town did you spend the night?



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## Income & Non-Cash Benefits – Unsheltered

Of the Unsheltered households, **61%** reported receiving no income and 20% reported receiving employment income, (up from 15% in 2020). Of those with employment income, 7 earned enough to afford an SRO in a rooming house, 2 others reported enough income to support an efficiency apartment, and 5 reported income sufficient to support a 1 bedroom apartment.

There is a high rate of adults with disabilities in the Unsheltered cohort with 79% reporting at least one disability, down from 85% in 2020. However, only 7 Unsheltered households reported receiving welfare benefits, and almost 10% reported receiving disability benefits (a significant decrease from 14% in 2020 and 29% in 2019). **Based on reported income, about 88% of Unsheltered households would be eligible for food stamps and Medicaid, but 52% of these households reported not receiving any non-cash benefits.**

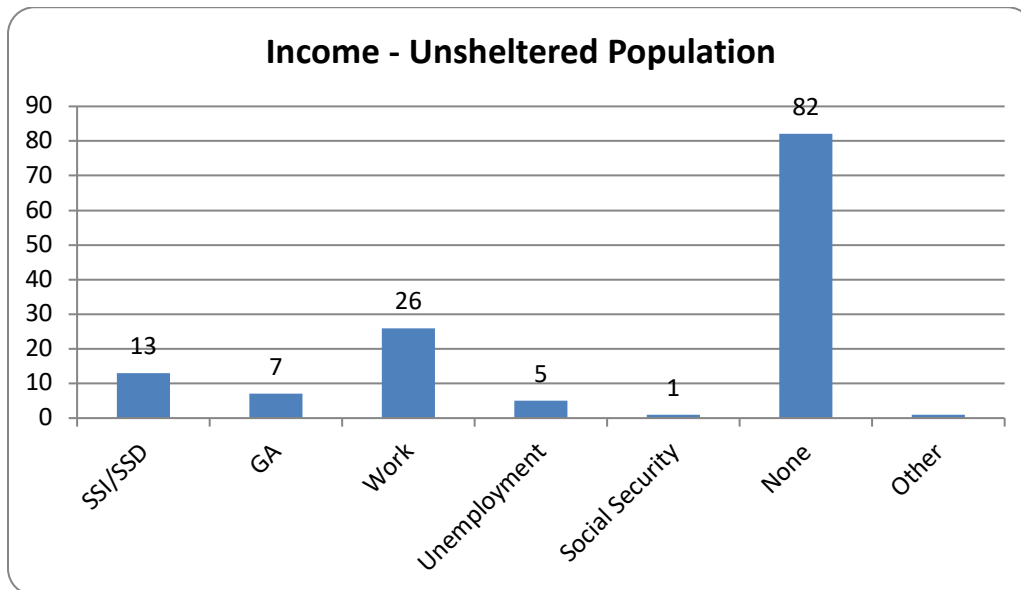


Figure 8 - Income - Unsheltered





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### **Chronic Homelessness**

In Middlesex County, 29% of all homeless households are Chronically Homelessness (CH), representing a 61% increase from last year. As noted above, homeless service providers in Middlesex County, especially through Outreach projects, are actively working with the vast majority of the CH population, who, through the Coordinated Assessment process, are prioritized for Permanent Supportive Housing. Through a targeted and coordinated approach to housing CH households, using case conferencing, Middlesex County homeless service providers were able to house 40 CH households in 2020, and an additional 22 COVID vulnerable adults. As previously noted, due to the eviction moratoria, there was a stagnation in the rental housing market, so while CH individuals were provided with subsidies in order to secure apartments, there were not enough available apartments to meet the need, resulting in individuals staying homeless for longer and other individuals “aging into” chronic homelessness.

- In total, there were 122 Households without Children, and 12 Families who were Chronically Homeless, for a total of **134 CH households**, comprised of 162 persons.
- 54 Chronically Homeless households were Unsheltered, while 68 were childless Sheltered Adults and 12 were Sheltered Families.
- Of the CH Unsheltered and Sheltered childless Adults, 98 are men and 33 are women. CH Families were headed by 7 single mothers, 1 single father, 1 grandmother with her grandchild, and 3 were 2 parent families.
- Among the CH households, there were only 2 single Homeless Youth (ages 18-24).
- 75% of all Chronically Homeless adults (87) have multiple disabilities. 90% (104) of the CH population have a mental health diagnosis, 49 of whom also reported a substance abuse disorder. Another 23 adults reported a substance abuse disorder without a coinciding mental health disorder (see Figure 9 below).
- Of the 5 CH Veterans, 2 were not previously known to the homeless system, 1 was housed shortly after the PIT, and 2 are known to the system and agencies are attempting to engage them in services.
- All of the CH Families were prioritized for permanent supportive housing, and most have moved into their housing since the night of the PIT. In addition, many of the Unsheltered and Sheltered childless CH Adults have received vouchers and/or are housed. Of the remaining CH adults, most are known to the Outreach teams; more than half have completed the Coordinated Assessment, and the remaining individuals continue to decline services.



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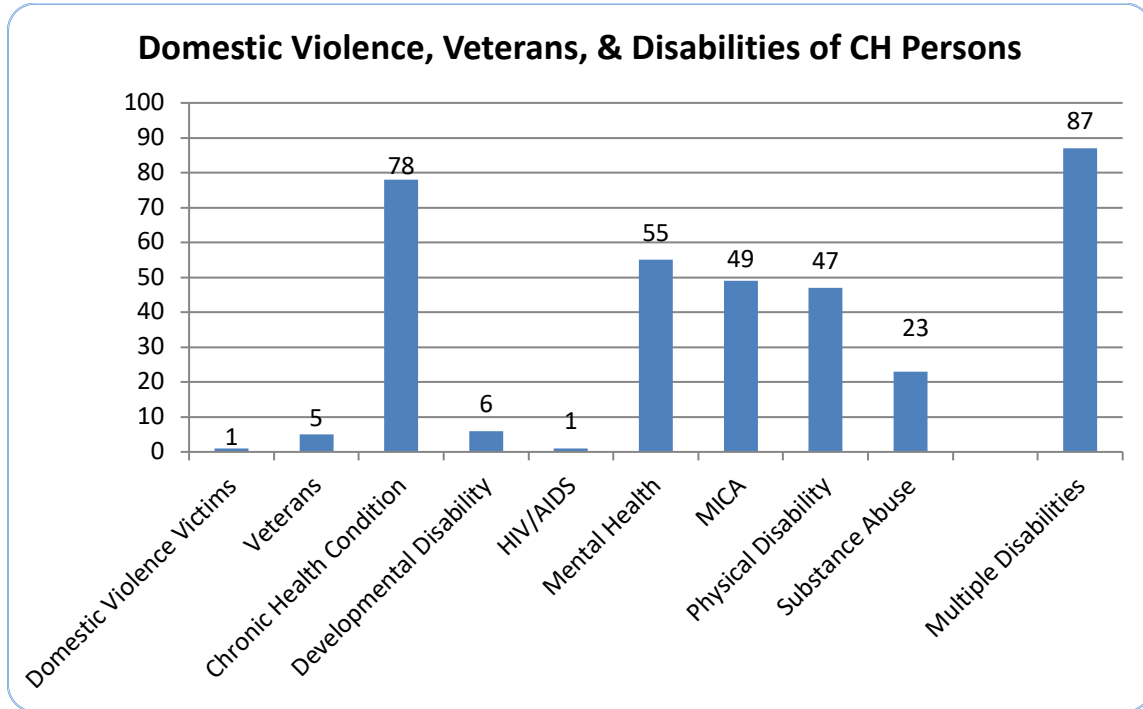


Figure 9 – Chronically Homeless – DV, Vets, & Disabilities

## Chronically Homeless - Income & Non-Cash Benefits

Approximately 1/3 of CH households report having no income and approximately 21% report having no non-cash benefits. Of the households reporting some income, only 8 Adult households (6%) report sufficient income to pay for an SRO, and none of the Families have sufficient income to afford even an Efficiency or 1 bedroom unit. Approximately 73% of CH Adults report receiving Medicaid or Medicare, while 100% of the Families have these health benefits.

Income for the Chronically Homeless has increased slightly, and there has been a slight increase in those receiving non-cash benefits. The outreach teams continue to work towards engaging those individuals in services, assisting them in obtaining mainstream benefits and income, and working toward securing permanent housing.



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### **Homeless “Youth”**

Homeless Youth are a subpopulation of all Sheltered Families, Sheltered Adults without Children, and the Unsheltered cohorts. On the night of the 2021 PIT, 21 unaccompanied young Adults without Children (all single) and 20 Sheltered Families headed by young adults, ages 18-24, reported being homeless.

- In the 20 Sheltered Families, 18 young single mothers, 1 single father, and 1 young couple were accompanied by 29 children, ranging in age from 0-5 years old. 62% of these young adults were African American, 24% were Latinx, 9% were Caucasian, and 5% were Asian. Six young women (33%) reported being victims of domestic violence.
- Of the 21 Adults without Children, 4 were Unsheltered. Two of the Unsheltered and 14 Sheltered young adults were male (76%), 33% were Latinx, 33% were African American, 19% were White, 5% were Asian, and 10% were Biracial.

### **Cause of Homelessness**

Approximately 49% of Homeless Youth households reported their cause of homelessness as being Asked to Leave a Shared Residence, followed by Domestic Violence (22% - all households with children), and Mental Illness (20%). While 33% (above) identified as fleeing domestic violence, only 22% identified this as a cause of their homelessness, suggesting that there were other factors for some of these individuals that they considered to be more prevalent causes of their housing crises. Without additional information, it is unknown why these individuals were asked to leave the shared residence in which they were living. For example, they may have had a disagreement with their parents, or they may have been living with a friend or other family member and been unable to contribute financially to the household expenses due to their low income. It is something our youth agencies will pursue.

### **Income & Non-Cash Benefits**

Homeless Youth reported very low income, with 22% reporting no income and another 51% reported less than \$1,000/month. However, 71% of Sheltered Homeless Youth without children and 100% of young Families receive at least Medicaid and/or Food Stamps. Of those with income, only 3 of the childless Sheltered Homeless Youth and 1 of the Unsheltered households can afford an SRO, and 2 Families can afford housing to meet their household size.

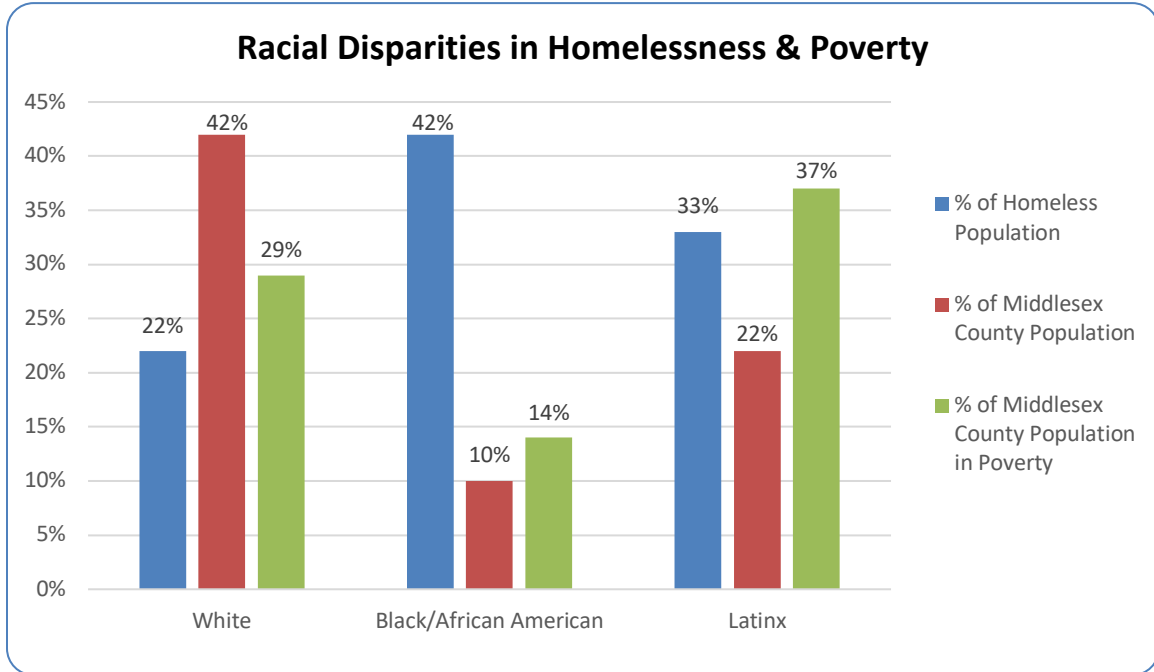
### **Disabilities – Homeless Youth**

Approximately 48% of the Homeless Youth reported having at least one disability, and 4 reported having multiple disabilities. The most prevalent disability within this cohort was Mental Health issues, with 45% (19 individuals) reporting a Mental Health condition, 2 of whom also reported a co-occurring Substance Abuse problem.



**Racial Disparity in the Homeless Population**

As in years past, there continues to be an overrepresentation of minority populations experiencing homelessness and poverty in Middlesex County.



**Figure 10 – Racial Disparities**

The data clearly indicates a significant overrepresentation of Black/African Americans and Latinx persons experiencing homelessness and poverty in Middlesex County. Based on the American Community Survey 2019, only 10% of the County’s population identifies as Black/African American, and 22% identify as Latinx, but 42% of the homeless population is Black/African American and 33% is Latinx. For the Black/African American population, this demonstrates a slight increase compared to 2020.



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## Precariously Housed

HUD only counts the “literally homeless,” *i.e.*, on the streets or in shelter, each year in their Point in Time census. Middlesex County adopts a broader definition of homelessness, including people who do not have permanent housing, and whose shelter is temporary and uses the term “Precariously Housed (PH)” to refer to them. Most of these households reported staying temporarily with friends or family, while others reported staying in a hotel that they paid for without assistance or being in jail or a hospital. HUD considers these households to be “at risk” of homelessness; however, they are presenting themselves for financial and housing assistance to Middlesex County homeless service providers.

- On the night of the 2021 PIT, there were 113 Households who were Precariously Housed: 36 Households without Children (39 adults) and 77 Families (102 adults and 151 children) who fell within the “precariously housed” (PH) cohort.
- This represents a 41% decrease from last year in the number of households reporting being Precariously Housed. This is likely due to the impact of the pandemic and a reduction in the number of households presenting for assistance or participating in the survey.
- 4 Families were headed by single mothers who qualify as Homeless Youth (ages 18-24) and 2 families were young couples. There are also 3 young Adults (18-24) without Children.
- 11 women in families and 2 individuals reported being victims of domestic violence.
- The majority of households (73%) reported that they were staying “Temporarily with Friends or Family.”
- Of the 77 families, 82% were single mothers, 4% were single fathers, 13% were two parent households. By comparison, 80% of literally homeless families were headed by single mothers, 10% were single fathers, and 10% were two parent households.

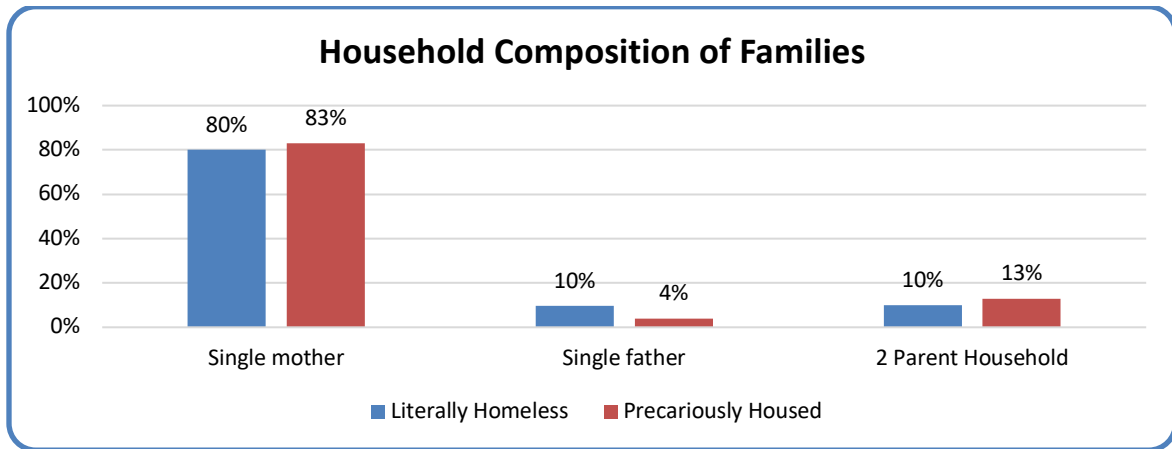


Figure 11 – Household Composition of Families

### Cause of Homelessness

The top cause of homelessness for PH households was economic, *i.e.* Loss of Job/Reduction of Income. Other factors, such as being Asked to Leave a Shared Residence and Household breakup or death also indicate probable financial problems or loss of income leading to homelessness. In 2021, Domestic Violence rose to the third cause of homelessness for those who were precariously housed. Overall, the cause of homelessness for PH households was similar to that of literally homeless households, although there was a significantly higher percentage of literally homeless households reporting Release from an Institution, Mental Illness, and Substance Abuse.



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### **Income & Employment**

Approximately 20% of all PH households reported no income at all, as compared to 30% of literally homeless households, and 32% of PH households had an income at or below \$1,000. Approximately 23% of PH households reported employment income compared to only 15% of literally homeless households. The household income for PH households was generally higher than the literally homeless households with employment, with about 21% of PH households reporting an income of over \$1500/month, in comparison to only 13% of literally homeless households. Despite higher reported income for PH families, approximately 86% reported an income level below what would be sufficient to support a 2-3 bedroom apartment, which for most of these families would be the minimum apartment size needed. For PH Adults without Children, about 70% are unable to afford an SRO, and an additional 12% can afford an SRO, but not an efficiency apartment.

### **Disabilities**

There was a lower number of adults living with disabilities (46%) in PH households, as compared to 74% of literally homeless adults. Despite the fact that both cohorts demonstrated decreased percentages reporting a disability, the difference in this gap has increased since 2020, but it is unknown if this is due to the impact of COVID on survey participation among the PH group. One possible reason for the change in the gap is that fewer surveys were received for PH households, likely due to the pandemic and fewer households presenting for services in the community.



# Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc.

## SERVICE NEEDS

### Homeless Households

Generally, the service needs reported by homeless persons have remained consistent year to year and across the specific populations. The top services requested by homeless adults in the 2021 PIT varied slightly across cohorts, but typically included: housing, financial assistance for housing (i.e. rental/utility assistance), emergency food, mental health treatment, shelter and transportation. Other higher ranking needs included substance abuse treatment and employment, with employment rising 51% for sheltered families and 69% for sheltered adults without children.

Sheltered Families	Sheltered Adults without Children	Unsheltered	Chronically Homeless
Housing (96%)	Housing (98%)	Housing (98%)	Housing (84%)
Financial Assistance with Housing (93%)	Financial Assistance with Housing (84%)	Financial Assistance with Housing (67%)	Financial Assistance with Housing (83%)
Utility Assistance (90%)	Utility Assistance (81%)	Emergency Shelter (67%)	Utility Assistance (79%)
Employment (59%)	Emergency Food (53%)	Utility Assistance (64%)	Emergency Food (48%)
Emergency Food (40%)	Mental Health Treatment (29%)	Mental Health Treatment (39%)	Mental Health Treatment (40%)
Mental Health Treatment (34%)	Employment (27%)	Emergency Food (37%)	Emergency Shelter (34%)

### Precariously Housed Households

PH households requested the same top 3 services: Housing, Financial Assistance for Housing, and for Utilities.

Adults without Children	Families
Housing (89%)	Housing (53%)
Financial Assistance with Housing (72%)	Financial Assistance with Housing (44%)
Utility Assistance (69%)	Utility Assistance (27%)
Emergency Shelter (31%)	Employment (18%)
Emergency Food (28%)	Mental Health Treatment (13%)

Precariously housed households prioritized the same needs as the homeless households, with housing and food. However, homeless households also reported the need for transportation, mental health and substance abuse treatment more often than PH households.



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## **APPENDIX A – Definitions**

**Chronically Homeless** – pursuant to HUD, a homeless person with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR who has had 4 episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years, is considered “Chronically Homeless.” The individual must have been on the streets or in an emergency shelter (not transitional housing) during their homeless episodes.

**Code Blue** - the protocol in place in the state for municipalities to open overnight locations for unsheltered persons to get protection from extreme cold. The protocol is activated when the temperature drops below 32 degrees or there is more than 6” of snow on the ground.

**Coordinated Assessment** – the process, or system, by which homeless individuals are uniformly assessed and prioritized for permanent housing solutions, generally prioritizing those with longer lengths of homelessness and greater service needs for the most intensive resources, such as Permanent Supportive Housing.

**Emergency Shelter** – a facility that houses groups of unrelated individuals or families who are literally homeless. This includes a single agency with shelter buildings, or a network of religious institutions, where homeless individuals rotate between the institutions each week. This also includes facilities that open as “Code Blue” sites. Typically, the average length of stay in an Emergency Shelter is 60-75 days, but since the start of the pandemic, the average length of stay in shelter has increased significantly.

**HMIS** – the County’s Homeless Management Information System. In Middlesex County, this system is administered by Coming Home. This is a HUD required system and allows for the County to manage data on the homeless population for planning, operational, and reporting purposes. All County-funded emergency housing and permanent supportive housing programs enter data in to HMIS.

**Household** – any individual or a group of individuals that reside together. A household could be a single adult, a couple without children, a group of adults who live together (often related), or a family with minor children. A household could also be a “child-only” household, in which no adults are present.

**Family** - a household in which minor children are present, i.e. a single parent with children, a two-parent family (married or unmarried), or another guardian with minor children.

**Single Adult or Couples without children** – Single adults and adults living together (married or not) without children are all considered single adults by HUD.

**Homeless “Youth”** – unaccompanied homeless persons under the age of 25 *and* without a head of household older than 24. This would be a sub-group of homeless households within the either the Family or Adults without Children and Unsheltered cohorts. If a young adult has a child, and does not have a partner over the age of 24, he/she is considered a Parenting Homeless Youth. If a young couple, both age 24 and under, are parenting, they are both considered Parenting Homeless Youth.

**Literally Homeless (or Homeless)** – households who were sheltered and staying in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Hotel Paid for by an Agency, and those who were unsheltered, i.e. who reported being “On the Street or in a Place not meant for human habitation.”





## *Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc.*

**MCBSS - Middlesex County Board of Social Services** – the public welfare agency for the County for individuals and families with no income. MCBSS provides General Assistance (GA) for adults without minor children, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) for families with minor children, Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Emergency Assistance (EA) for those receiving GA, TANF or SSI (Supplemental Security Income for disabled children or adults with little to no work history). MCBSS also administers additional assistance for welfare recipients, including Child Support, Child Care, Transportation, and WorkFirst NJ (to help individuals find employment).

**Emergency Assistance** – households receiving GA, TANF, or SSI may be eligible for additional Emergency Assistance if they are experiencing a housing crisis, including financial assistance to pay a utility bill, past due rent, security deposit, or for homeless households, hotel placement or Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA). EA can also be used to pay Emergency Shelters a per diem rate for homeless clients who may be placed in the shelter. Households are eligible for up to 12 months of EA in a lifetime.

**Hotel Placement** – in Middlesex County, the MCBSS may pay for a hotel placement for eligible individuals and families (i.e. receiving GA, TANF, or sometimes SSI) who are experiencing homelessness, if the existing shelters are full, or if someone in the household is unable to live in a shelter setting due to a medical reason.

**Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA)** – a short term (up to 12 months) rental subsidy for eligible households.

**Precariously Housed** – households who reported “Temporarily Staying with Friends/Family”, in a “Hotel that they paid for” without assistance, “Jail”, “Medical Hospital”, or other location on the night of the count. HUD does not consider individuals living in these circumstances to be “homeless,” although Middlesex County recognizes that these households can become literally homeless at any time.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO)** – single rooms in a multi-tenant building, in which tenants typically share bathroom and kitchen facilities. Sometimes called a Rooming House or Boarding House.

**Transitional Housing** – refers to programs that are designed to house individuals or families in small apartments, while providing case management on site. The average length of stay in these programs is approximately 18 months, and they are typically used for households that require some additional assistance in areas of life skills, parenting, education, or employment beyond the timeframe that is possible to address at an Emergency Shelter. In Middlesex County, the only transitional housing is one project designated for single male ex-offenders coming out of prison and one project for single male homeless youth .



## *Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc.*

### **APPENDIX B – Methodology**

On January 27, 2021, Middlesex County conducted its annual Point in Time (PIT) survey (sponsored by the federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)) of homeless individuals and families residing in Middlesex County. Unlike prior years, the pandemic caused us to modify our strategy around the administration of the surveys, in order to ensure safety for surveyors and persons experiencing homelessness. In prior years, surveys were primarily administered to respondents at multiple locations, including “Project Homeless Connect (PHC)” sites, as well as through street outreach activities throughout the County. In 2021, we were unable to host the PHC sites, so as to not promote congregating indoors. Instead, our community increased our street outreach activities over a longer period of time. We also relied solely on professional staff to conduct the surveys, rather than utilizing volunteers. The surveys were read to the respondents, and their responses were recorded on the paper survey. Due to the pandemic, HUD allowed for surveys to be conducted for a longer period of time. In Middlesex County, street outreach teams collected data for a 14 day period in January. Follow up was conducted to ensure the data collected was accurate on the actual date of the PIT, and additional strategies were implemented to avoid duplication.

Additionally, homeless service providers, government agencies addressing homelessness, school homeless liaisons, police departments and other entities throughout the County were sent copies of the surveys to gather information from individuals and families experiencing homelessness with whom they had contact. These entities may have interviewed their consumers/clients, or they may have recorded information for the survey based on previous information they had gathered from their consumers. Additionally, data was gathered on the sheltered homeless from Middlesex County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). In past years, for Middlesex County Board of Social Services (MCBSS) clients, paper and electronic records were reviewed for individuals receiving Emergency Assistance benefits, and data was recorded on the survey tool from the records. In 2021, Coming Home staff called all individuals receiving emergency hotel placement from MCBSS in order to complete the survey by telephone. For individuals who were unable to be reached, MCBSS staff provided the necessary data from the clients’ records. Lastly, our community utilized the master By Name List of homeless individuals which is maintained daily by Coming Home of Middlesex County, as the lead agency of Coordinated Entry, in order to ensure that every person was counted, as well as conducting the PIT with all callers to the homeless hotline on the night of the PIT and for the following 7 days.

All of the paper survey responses were transferred to an online database administered by Monarch Housing Associates, Inc. (Monarch), the entity contracted by the New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency to oversee the administration of the PIT statewide, either by the survey taker or Coming Home staff. The raw data was then pulled from the database and sent to Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. (CHM or Coming Home), as the PIT Coordinator. This document is a summary analysis of the raw data, after correcting for data entry errors when compared with the paper surveys, and eliminating duplicate surveys and surveys indicating that the respondent was “Permanently Housed,” i.e. not homeless.