



PRESS RELEASE

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Sonoma County saw 22 percent decrease in homelessness, annual Point-in-Time count shows

SANTA ROSA, CA – Sonoma County saw an overall 22 percent decrease in the area’s homeless population last year including a 24 percent decline in those identified as being chronically homeless, according to preliminary results of the 2023 Sonoma County Point-in-Time count in January.

The annual one-day snapshot found a total of 2,266 individuals experiencing some form of homelessness. The official results from the 2022 count were 2,893. The 22 percent decrease in homelessness is the largest reduction since a 27 percent decrease in 2015. The 2023 PIT Count occurred on Friday, Jan. 27.

Meanwhile, the number of homeless individuals in unsheltered circumstances decreased from 2,088 in 2022 to 1,291 in 2023. Conversely, the number of individuals in sheltered circumstances increased from 805 in 2022 to 975 in 2023 (see Chart 1 at the end of this document). The reduction in unsheltered individuals reflects an overall increase in the number of beds available at new housing projects in the county. *(See Table 1)*

“Unsheltered” individuals are defined as those who live in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks and abandoned buildings. “Sheltered” homelessness pertains to those who live in an emergency shelter or transitional housing.

“These numbers are incredibly encouraging and are a reflection of the hard work of many across Sonoma County who, through innovative programs and partnerships, are helping homeless residents get off the streets,” said

Supervisor Chris Coursey, chair of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. “These efforts, including the passage of Measure O by county voters, are truly making a difference and changing lives. As the report notes we have more work to do but we are moving in the right direction.”

Preliminary results are in line with an overall downward trend since 2011, with the exception being in early 2022 when, during a COVID pandemic surge, the county saw a 5 percent increase in homelessness. Projects such as Homekey, new safe parking and interim housing sites, housing vouchers and rental assistance have continued to play a pivotal role in the decrease throughout Sonoma County.

“This progress comes from focus and coordination,” said Tina Rivera, Director of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services. “The county team and our partner cities have pushed hard to place more housing units in operation and to provide strong supportive services to help keep people housed. While we’re thankful for these numbers, we still have 2,266 people to move into housing,” she continued.

Some of the housing programs that came online between the 2022 and 2023 counts are:

- Project Homekey:
 - L&M Village in Healdsburg with 22 units, which opened in November 2022 as an interim housing site.
 - Labath Landing in Rohnert Park with 60 units, which opened in October 2022 as an interim housing site.
 - Caritas Center in Santa Rosa began accepting clients in October 2022, including 40 units of interim housing.
- New Interim or Non-Congregate Shelter:
 - Horizon Shine, a safe parking location in Sebastopol that shelters 18 persons.
 - Petaluma People’s Village, an NCS shelter in Petaluma (25 units).
 - The Roberts Lake managed encampment, an NCS location in Rohnert Park (up to 60 persons sheltered at one time).
 - Santa Rosa’s safe parking location at its city field office (up to 50 RV or car spaces).
- Housing Voucher Programs

- Emergency Housing Vouchers assigned to the Sonoma County Housing Authority and the Santa Rosa Housing Authority from US HUD have provided housing for more than 200 individuals.

Three more homekey sites are pending or have opened since the 2023 Point-in-Time count:

- The Studios at Montero in Petaluma includes 60 units of permanent supportive housing. This project has started a phased opening as of May 8, 2023.
- George's Hideaway in Guerneville is currently under design for construction, with a goal of occupancy in late 2023 or early 2024. The site will include 21 units of permanent supportive housing.
- The Commons in Santa Rosa is under development and will have 50 units of permanent supportive housing.

More affordable housing is underway, too, including housing for the county's most vulnerable residents. For example, Caritas Village in Santa Rosa comprises two developments: Caritas Center and Caritas Homes. Caritas Center, which opened in 2022, includes a housing support service center and emergency family shelter, developed and operated by Catholic Charities. Caritas Homes' Phase I will accept its first residents as soon as June 2023, with 30 of 64 units reserved for persons who were chronically homeless. Phase II is identical and is in the process of securing funding commitments.

Meanwhile, Shiloh Terrace in Windsor, 414 Petaluma Apartments in Petaluma and a senior housing project in Santa Rosa are also currently under construction. More than 100 units of housing will be made available through these projects alone.

The count's preliminary numbers include homeless subpopulations, many of which saw significant reductions in 2023. (See Chart 2 for a graphic representation of these changes). The count found:

- 550 individuals experiencing "chronic homelessness," defined as those who have been homeless for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the previous three years (and who have one or more disabling conditions). The total represents a 24 percent decrease from the 726 individuals identified in 2022.
- 110 homeless veterans, a decrease from 191 in 2022.
- 62 families (identified as having at least one adult over 18 with at least one child under 18) without permanent housing, totaling 207 individuals. Almost all were found to be in sheltered settings in 2023.

(Note: Overall, this represents an increase of 22 percent from the 48 families identified in 2022. This is likely due to the increase in shelter capacity for families at locations such as Catholic Charities' Caritas Center.)

- Four unaccompanied children (persons under the age of 18 without parents) and 290 transition-age youth for a total of 294 youth. This represents a decrease of 45 percent from the 530 youths counted in 2022.

At the time of this year's count, about 40 individuals were sheltered within 35 trailers located on Sonoma County Fairgrounds property. Another 55 homeless were housed at Los Guilicos Village. These 90 individuals were counted as *sheltered* homeless individuals. Those encamped on the Joe Rodota Trail as of Jan. 27, many of whom later would be offered housing at the county's emergency shelter site, were counted as *unsheltered* homeless.

Unlike the 2022 count, the 2023 census was conducted in a manner similar to pre-COVID counts. All deployments were in person, and maps were chosen ahead of time by city and nonprofit partners in all areas of the county where individuals experiencing homelessness were known to be. Community volunteers also were involved in selecting maps to ensure countywide coverage.

The PIT count is based on visual observations of unsheltered individuals and groups, as well as a census of people in shelters, and as a result, only provides a snapshot of homelessness during a single point in time. It is a valuable count, but county officials note that it may not adequately reflect the total number of people experiencing homelessness throughout the year.

A more detailed breakdown of the count by cities and regions, as well as demographic data, will be made available this summer.

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Table 1 – Changes in Sonoma County Housing Inventory

	2022	2023	Change
ES	886	940	6%
OPH	178	228	28%
PSH	1051	1271	21%
RRH	402	494	23%
TH	371	370	0%
Total	2888	3303	14%

The Housing Inventory is a listing of known Emergency Shelter beds (ES), Other Permanent Housing (OPH) units, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, rapid rehousing (RRH) beds, and Transitional Housing (TH) beds at any one time

Chart 1 - Comparing Overall Count Data - Sheltered Homeless and Unsheltered Homeless

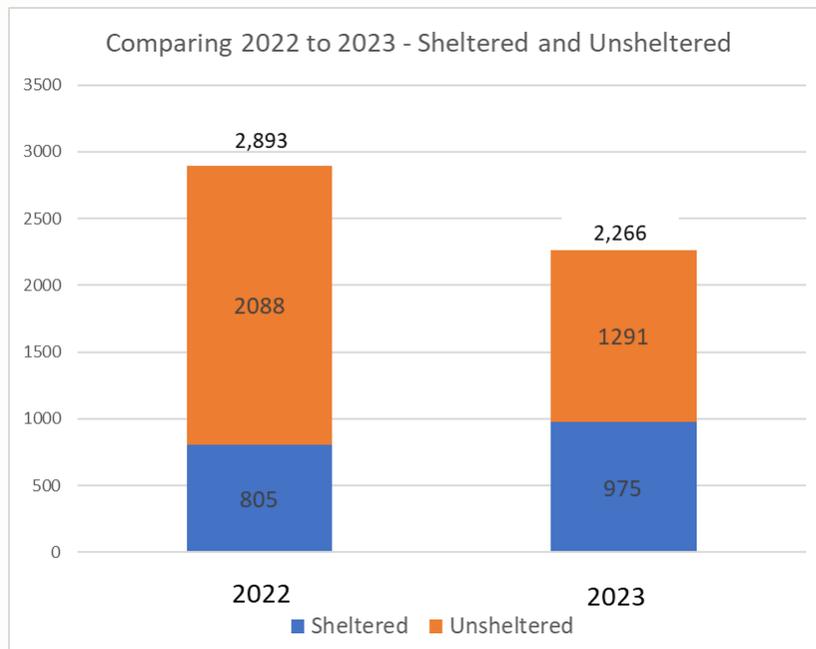


Chart 2 – Changes in Subpopulations

