

**Community Partnership's  
Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness  
Unsheltered Point in Time Report  
January 2018**



Report prepared by Colette Kramer and Tim Knapp of the Missouri State University Sociology Program, in collaboration with Community Partnership of the Ozarks.



## Introduction

Every January communities across the country conduct Point in Time Counts of individuals and families in their communities who are experiencing homelessness on a given night. Point in Time Counts not only meet federal mandates set forth by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, but also provide an important snapshot view of each community's homeless population. Locally, this effort is led by the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness, which serves as the Continuum of Care for Springfield/Greene, Christian, and Webster Counties.

The 2018 Point in Time Count provided information about 235 individuals who were unsheltered. Information was gathered by trained personnel at multiple locations.

Locations: Of the 235 individuals counted, 168 people answered surveys at a magnet event for adults held at The Shrine Mosque in Springfield. Seven of those people provided information both about themselves and about nine additional individuals who were in their household. Thus, information was gained for about 177 individuals experiencing homelessness at the magnet event (75% of people in the sample). Data was gathered on 20 people (9% of the overall sample) at Harbor House, and from 18 people (8% of the sample) at The Rare Breed. Information on an additional 20 people (9% of the sample) came from observations of people in camps and other public places. Data was gathered on three people in Christian County and on 232 people in Springfield/Greene County.

Dates: Information on 197 people was gathered at the magnet event and via observations on Thursday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. Data on 38 individuals was gathered the next day, Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Forms of data gathering: Responses at the magnet event were entered electronically while the interview was being conducted. Paper surveys were administered at Harbor House and The Rare Breed; Community Partnership (CPO) staff then entered the responses into the electronic portal. Personnel who had been trained prior to the count recorded their observations of individuals at camps and other public places on paper surveys. This information was later added to the data set by CPO staff. Data for 75% of respondents came from face-to-face interviews at the magnet event, and 16% of information was gathered on face-to-face paper-and-pencil questionnaires at other agencies. The other 9% of data came from observations that were recorded on questionnaires.

Data cleaning and organization: Information was entered by trained volunteers and Community Partnership staff into an online survey portal administered by the Institute for Community Alliance. At the end of the survey collection period, data was exported into a Microsoft Excel data file, which was password protected. First and last names, dates of birth, and contact information were gathered from most participants. All individuals who worked with the data signed a "Confidentiality of Client Information" form. Using last names and dates of birth, researchers identified 18 duplicate entries that were then deleted. Contact information, names, and any potentially identifying data then were deleted from the Excel file.

An answer code sheet was written, and the Excel text responses were changed into numerical answer codes. A randomly selected set of responses were checked for coding accuracy, and no

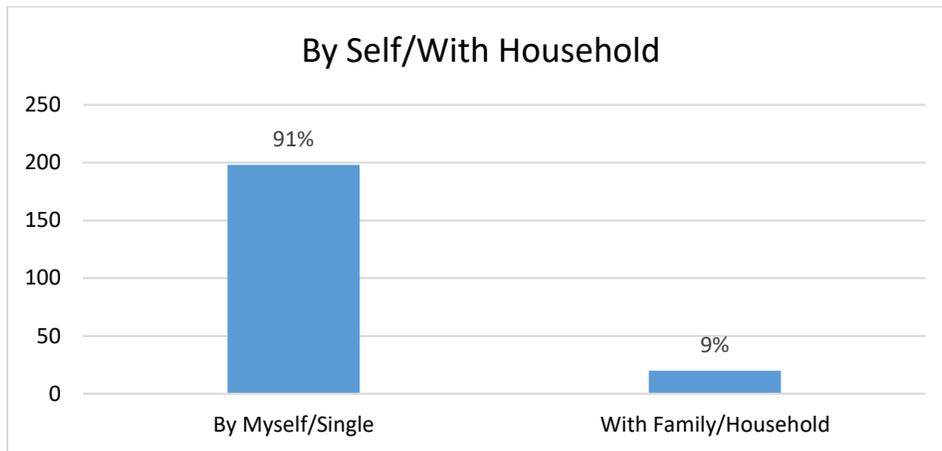
mistakes were found. Variable names were created and a second, scale, age variable was established, and then the Excel file was imported into an SPSS data set.

\*Not every person answered all questions. Therefore, the frequencies presented in this report are valid percentages, which use the number of people that provided information as the denominator in calculating percentages.

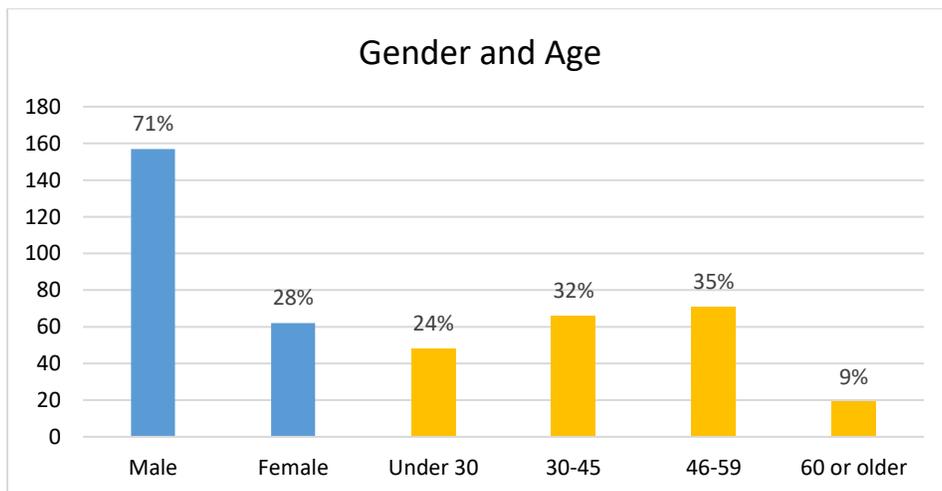
## Demographics of the Sample

### General Demographics

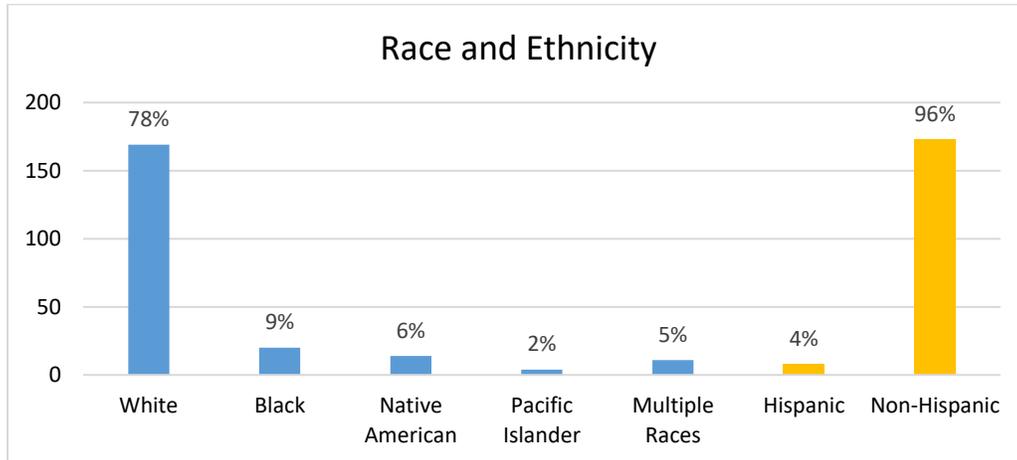
Of 218 individuals who provided information about their household status the night before the survey (Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>), 198 of them (91%) were by themselves, while twenty of them (9%) reported being with a family/household. There were three married couples and five non-married domestic partnerships. Three of these families/partnerships included children.



Out of those who provided information about their gender, 157 (71%) were male, while sixty-two (28%) were female, and one was transgender (0.5%). Of those who gave details about their age, forty-eight individuals (24%) were under thirty years old. Sixty-six individuals were between the ages of 30-45. Seventy-one people were between the ages of 46-59, and nineteen people (9%) were sixty years of age or older. The youngest person for whom age information was gathered was seven years old. He was a child in a homeless household. Two individuals were 71 years of age. The age range thus was seven to 71 years. The mean age of unsheltered homeless persons was 42 years, and the median age was 44 years old.

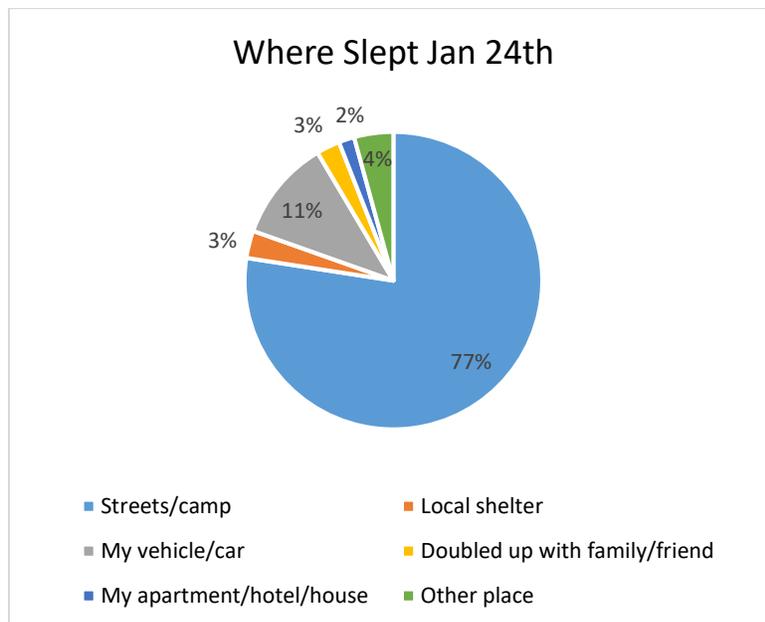


Of those who provided information about their racial category, 169 (78%) were White, twenty (9%) were Black, fourteen (6%) were Native American, four (2%) were Pacific Islander, and eleven (5%) were multiple races. When asked about their Ethnicity, ninety-six percent of subjects identified as non-Hispanic, and four percent identified as Hispanic.

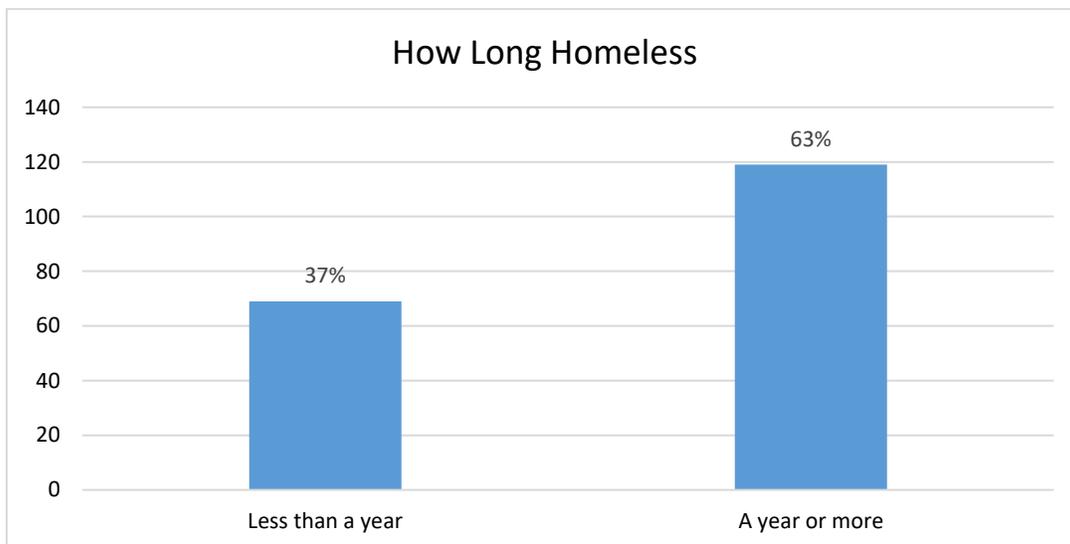


### Homelessness

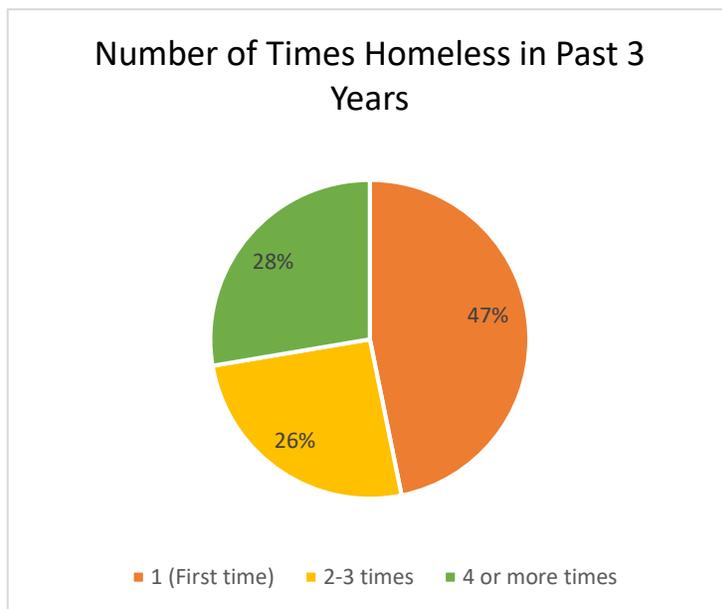
235 people provided information on where they slept on the night of January 24<sup>th</sup>. 182 (77%) individuals said they had slept on the streets or in a homeless camp. Twenty-six people (11%) slept in their vehicle, seven individuals (3%) slept in a local shelter, six (3%) doubled up with a family/friend, and four (2%) slept in an apartment/hotel/house. Ten individuals (4%) slept in a location other than those previously listed.



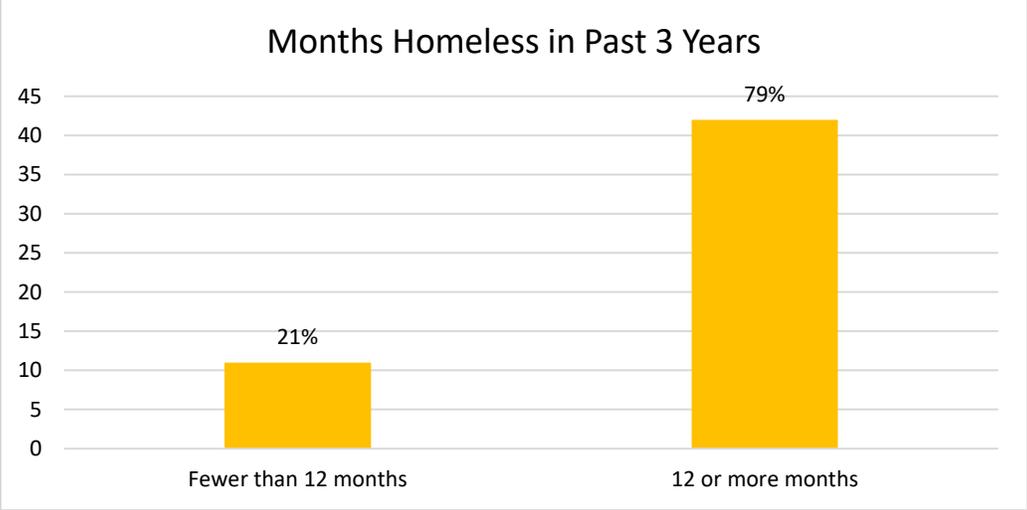
When asked how long they had been homeless (this time), sixty-nine individuals (37%) stated that it had been less than a year. The remaining 119 (63%) stated they had been homeless for a year or more, this time.



When prompted, eighty-eight individuals (47%) said that this was the first time that they had been homeless in the past three years. Forty-eight individuals (26%) stated they had been homeless two or three times, and fifty-two (28%) said they had been homeless four or more times during the past three years.

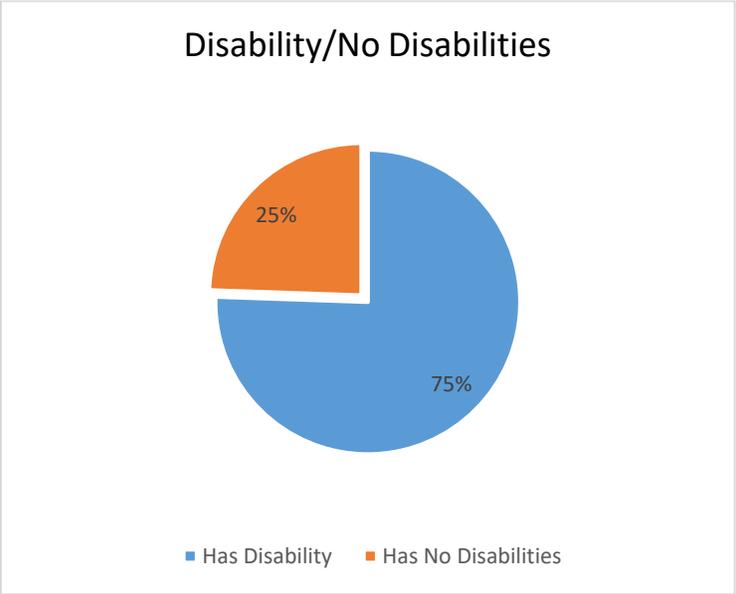


Of those who provided information, nearly four of five respondents (79%) stated that they had been homeless for 12 or more months during the past three years. One in five individuals (21%) said they had been homeless for fewer than 12 months in the past three years.

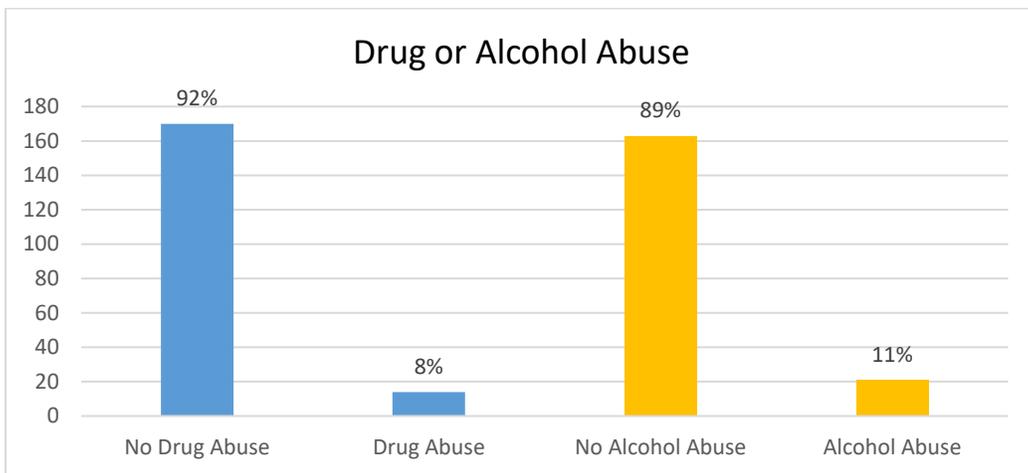


Disabling Conditions

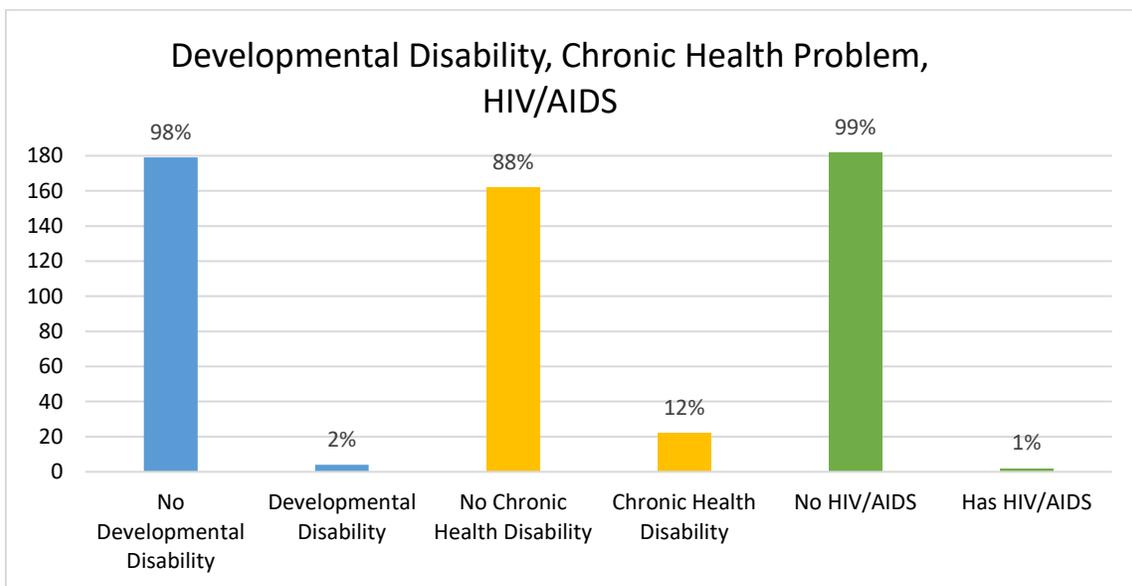
There was a prevalence of disabilities within the homeless population that is noticeable throughout the data. 139 individuals (75%) said they had some form of disability, while only forty-five (25%) stated they had no disabilities.



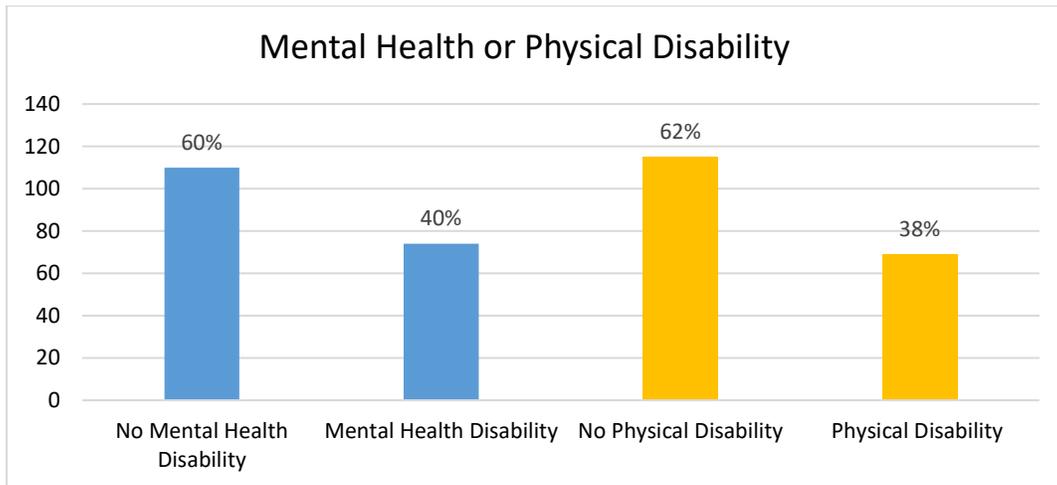
One of the first disabilities asked about was drug abuse. Fourteen respondents (8%) stated they had a drug abuse problem, while 170 (92%) stated they did not. When asked about problems with alcohol abuse, twenty-one (11%) of those who responded stated they had issues with alcohol abuse. The remaining 163 (89%) stated they did not have a problem with alcohol abuse.



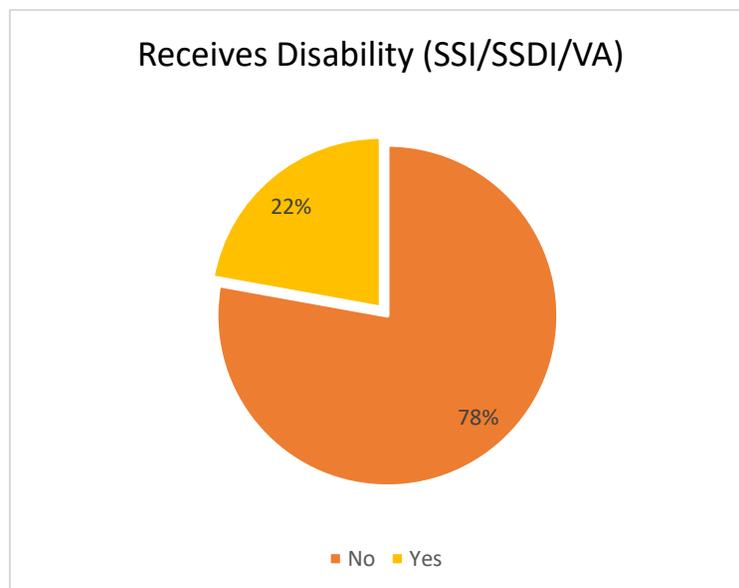
When asked if they had a developmental disability only four individuals (2%) responded positively, the remaining 179 (98%) stated that they did not have said disability. Another disability that was looked at were Chronic Health disabilities. Twenty-two individuals (12%) responded that they had a Chronic Health disability, while the remaining 162 (88%) stated they did not. Another disability asked about was the prevalence of HIV/AIDs. Only two people (1%) responded that they had HIV/AIDs, while the remaining 182 people (99%) did not.



When prompted, seventy-four individuals (40%) stated they had a Mental Health Disability. The remaining 110 people (60%) stated they did not have a Mental Health disability. When asked, sixty-nine individuals (38%) stated that they had a physical disability of some sort. The remaining 115 individuals (62%) responded that they did not have a physical disability of any kind.

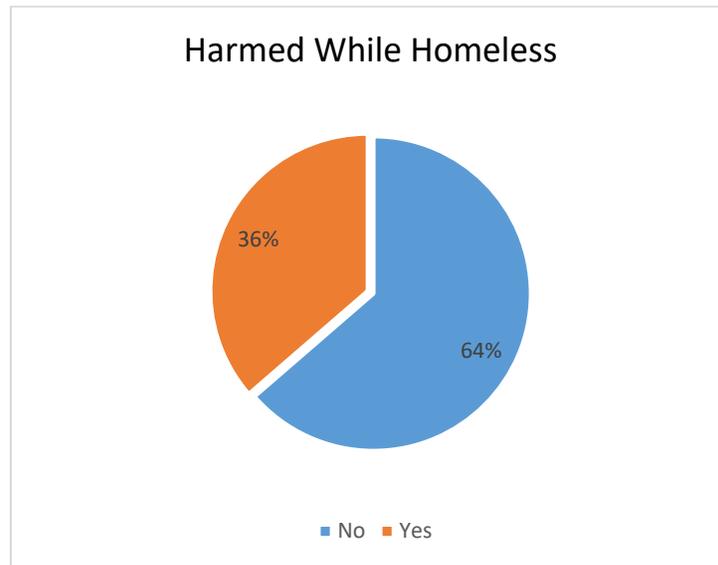


When asked about disability payments, 137 individuals (78%) stated that they did not receive any form of disability check from the government. The remaining thirty-nine (22%) individuals stated that they did receive some form of disability payment from the government (SSI/SSDI/VA).

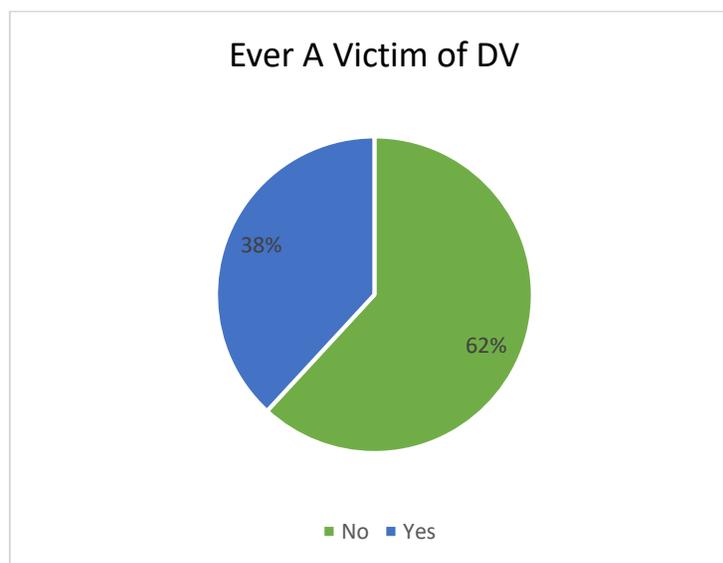


## Victimization

Another aspect of homelessness that is often observed is the victimization of homeless people. When asked, sixty-eight individuals (36%) stated that they had been harmed while homeless, while 119 (64%) said they had never been harmed while homeless.

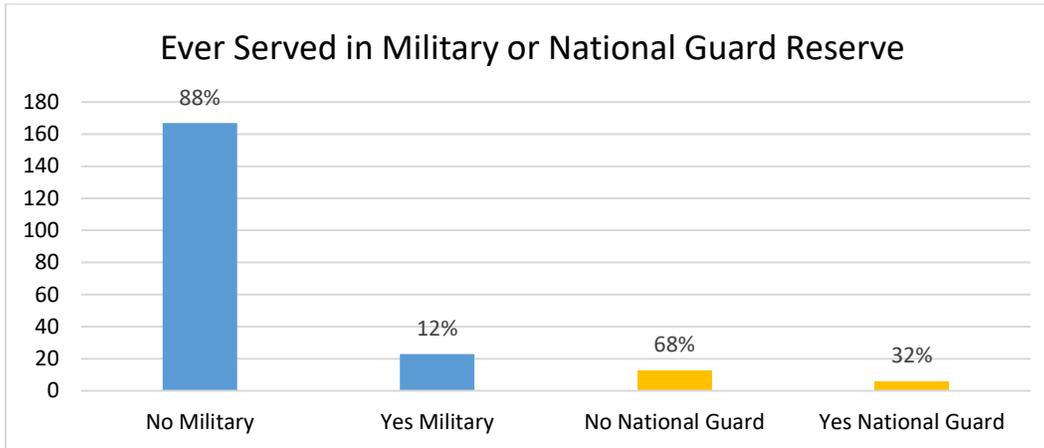


When prompted, seventy-four people (38%) stated they had been a victim of domestic violence in the past. The remaining 120 (62%) stated they had never been a victim of domestic violence. Of those who stated they had been a victim of domestic violence, fifteen people (20%) stated that they were currently fleeing domestic violence, while fifty-eight individuals (80%) said this was not the case.



## Veterans

We also looked at the predominance of Veterans throughout the homeless population. Of those we asked, 23 people (12%) said they had served in the military, while 167 (88%) stated they had not. Of those who said they had served in the military, six (32%) stated they had served in the National Guard/Reserve, while thirteen people (68%) did not.



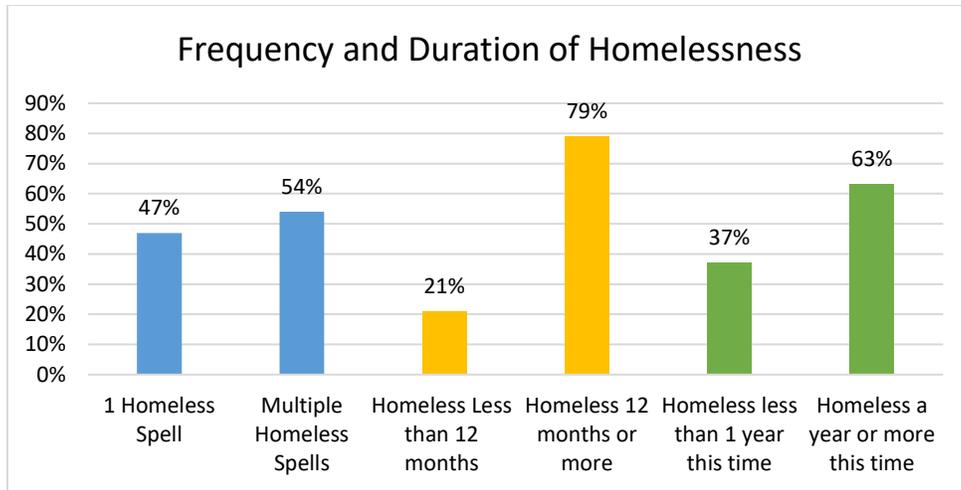
## **Frequency, Duration, and Chronic Status of homelessness**

### Frequency

The frequency of homelessness was measured by one question; namely, whether respondents had been homeless one time, two or three times, or four or more times over the past three years. Eighty-eight people, 47% of those who provided information, had been homeless only once in that time period. Forty-eight individuals, 26%, had been homeless two or three times, and fifty-two subjects, 28%, had experienced four or more bouts of homelessness in the past three years. Combining the latter two response categories to create a binary variable shows that while 47% of people had been homeless one time in the past three years, 54% had experienced multiple spells of homelessness during that time.

### Duration

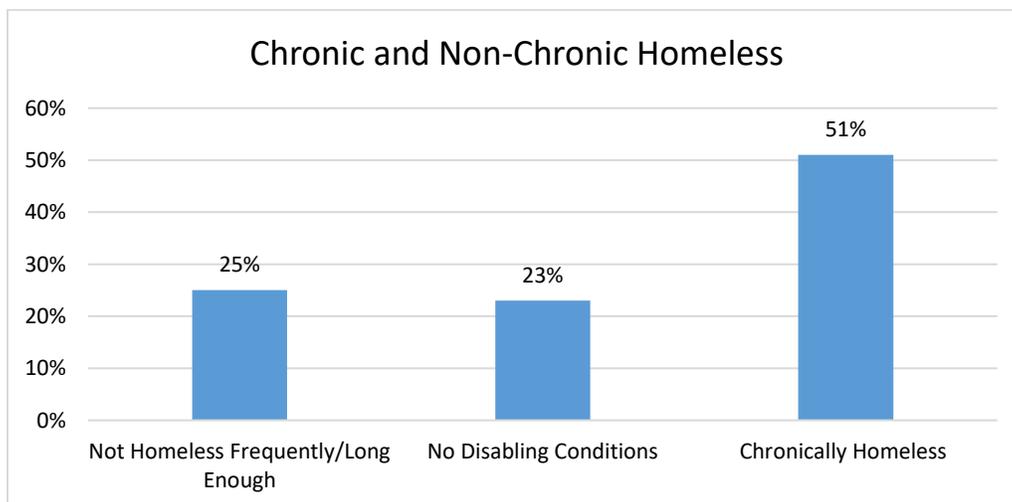
The duration of homelessness was measured by two items. The first question asked subjects how many total months in the past three years they had been in shelters or on the streets (fewer than twelve months, or twelve months or more). Twenty-one percent of respondents had been homeless for fewer than twelve months, and 79% had been homeless twelve or more months during the past three years. The other question asked whether people had been homeless this time, for less than a year or for a year or more. This item measured the duration of people's current spate of homelessness. Thirty-seven percent of individuals had been homeless this time for less than a year, and 63% of them had been homeless a year or more during their current spell of homelessness.



### Chronic Homelessness

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a chronically homeless person as an individual with a disabling condition who either (a) has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or (b) has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. One hundred seventy-one individuals provided enough information to assess whether or not they were chronically homeless.

Forty-three individuals had neither been homeless for a year or more during their current spell of homelessness, nor had they been homeless four or more times in the past three years. The other 128 people met the first HUD criteria for chronic homelessness. Of that group 40 people did not have a disabling condition, while 88 persons had one or more disabling conditions (physical disability, mental illness, developmental disability, drug or alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, or a chronic health condition). Thus among the subsample of 171 people who provided adequate information, 43 individuals (25%) were not homeless long enough or frequently enough to be defined as chronically homeless. Another 40 persons (23%) did not have a disabling condition. Eighty-eight subjects (51%) met HUD's two-part definition of being chronically homeless.



## **Homelessness, Disabilities, and Violence Across Groups**

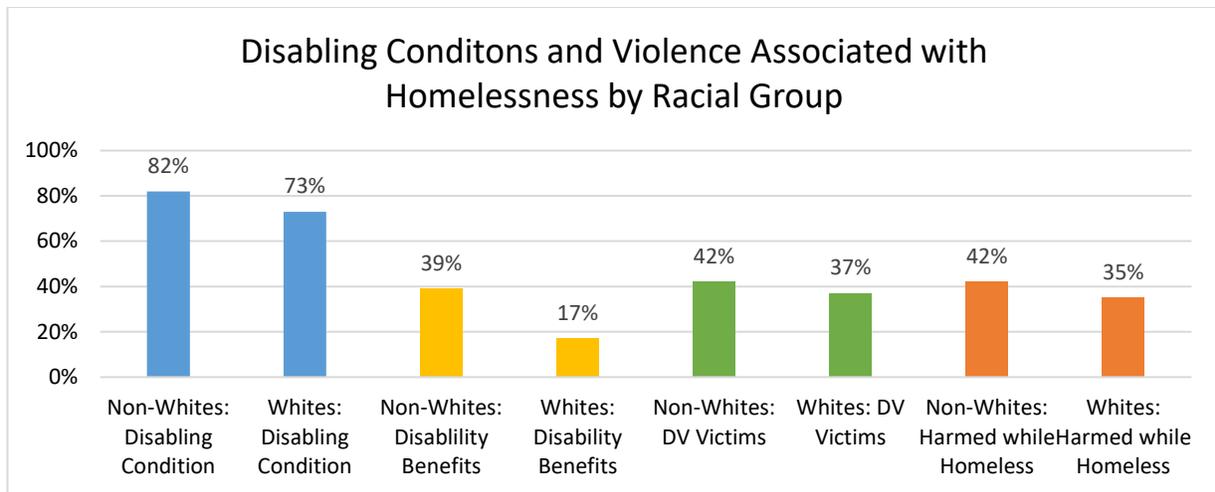
National studies show that types of homelessness, prevalence of disabling conditions, and experiences of violence related to homelessness vary across groups. We were able to investigate possible differences across racial groups, age categories, females and males, and Veterans and non-Veterans.

### **Racial groups**

As was explained above, 78% of survey respondents identified as being white, and 22% of individuals said that they were from other racial groups. The overall population of Springfield is 85% white, with 15% of residents being of other racial backgrounds (<http://www.city-data.com/city/Springfield-Missouri.html>). This suggests that locally homelessness may occur among non-whites at a somewhat higher rate than among whites. There were insufficient numbers of people in specific racial minority groups to allow for cross-group comparisons, so we combined the racial minority categories to create a binary (white, non-white) racial group variable to investigate possible group differences. The 169 white individuals made up 78% of the sample, and 49 non-whites constituted 22% of respondents.

There were no white/non-white group differences in where people had slept the night before the survey, in the frequency of homeless spells, or in either measure of the duration of homelessness. Analyses of disabling conditions produced an interesting and initially confusing finding. First, a higher proportion of non-whites than whites had at least one disability, 82% to 73%. However, separate analyses of the seven different disabling conditions measured in the survey showed that more whites than non-whites had a drug abuse problem (9% to 5%), a physical disability (39% to 34%), or an alcohol abuse problem (13% to 7%). There were no racial group differences for developmental disabilities, mental illness, chronic health problems, and HIV/AIDS. Closer analysis revealed that while slightly fewer whites (73%) had any disabling condition compared with non-whites (82%), whites were more likely to have multiple disabling conditions than were non-whites.

A higher proportion of non-whites said that they receive disability benefits, 39% to 17%. Non-whites were somewhat more likely than whites to have been the victim of domestic violence, 42% to 37%. Similarly, a higher proportion of non-whites (42%) than whites (35%) had been physically, emotionally, or sexually harmed by someone they had been staying with while homeless.



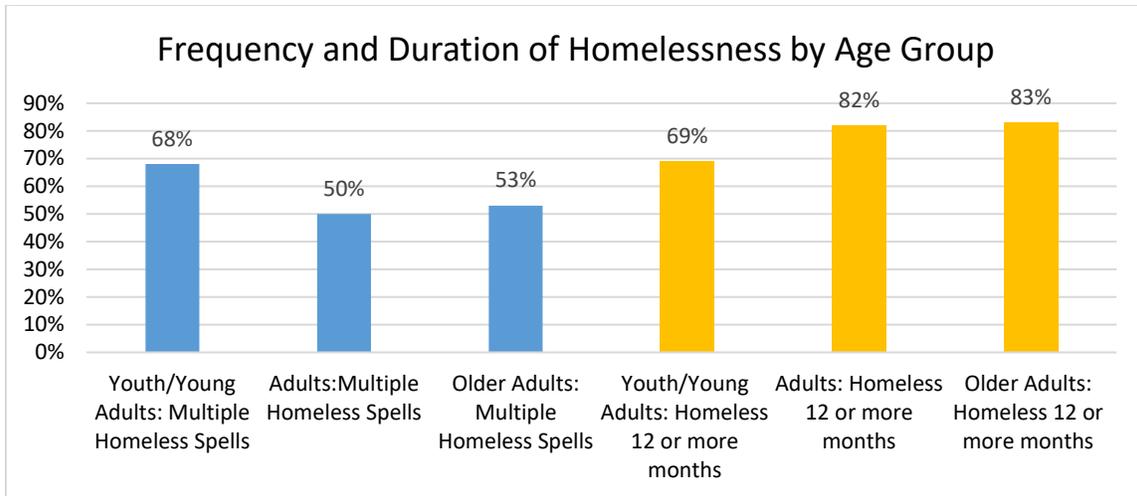
There was no difference across white/non-white racial groups in Veteran status. Non-white subjects tended to be younger than whites. One-third of non-whites in our sample were 29 years or younger, compared with 21% of whites. Sixty-two percent of whites were between ages 30 and 55, while 44% of non-whites were in the middle age category.

#### Age groups

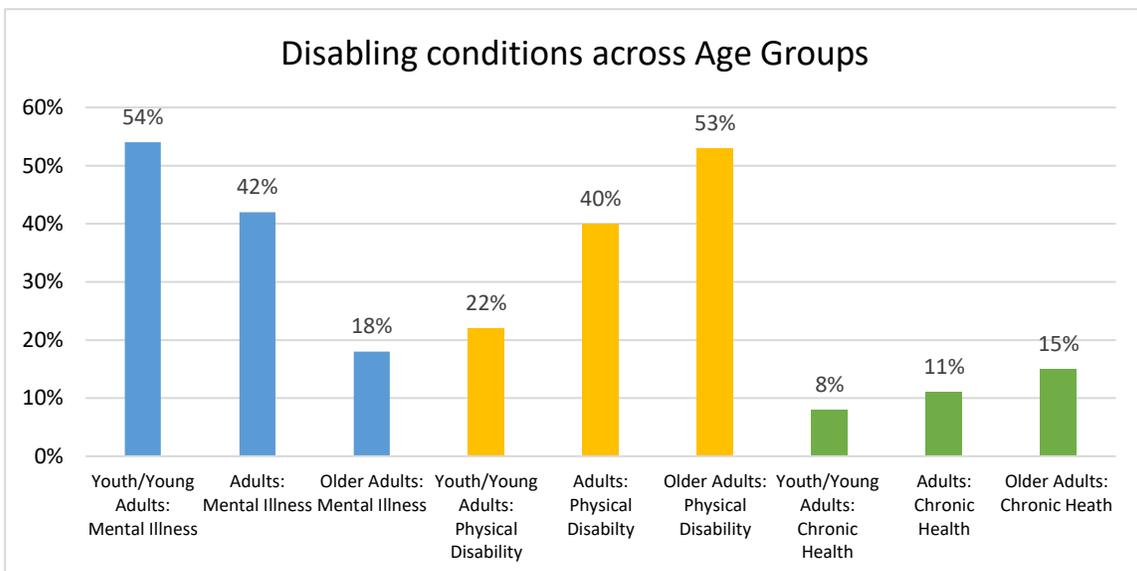
To facilitate analyses of possible age differences, we created three categories. Youth and young adults were age 7 to 29. Adults were between 30 and 54 years old, and older adults were age 55 or older. There were 48 youths and adults (24%), 116 adults (57%), and 40 older adults (20%) in the sample.

A higher proportion of youths and young adults, 17%, than adults, 12%, and older adults, 10%, had spent the previous night in a vehicle. Five percent of older adults spent the night prior to the survey in their own apartment, hotel, or house. Only 2% of adults had slept in their own residence, and no youths or young adults had slept in their own place.

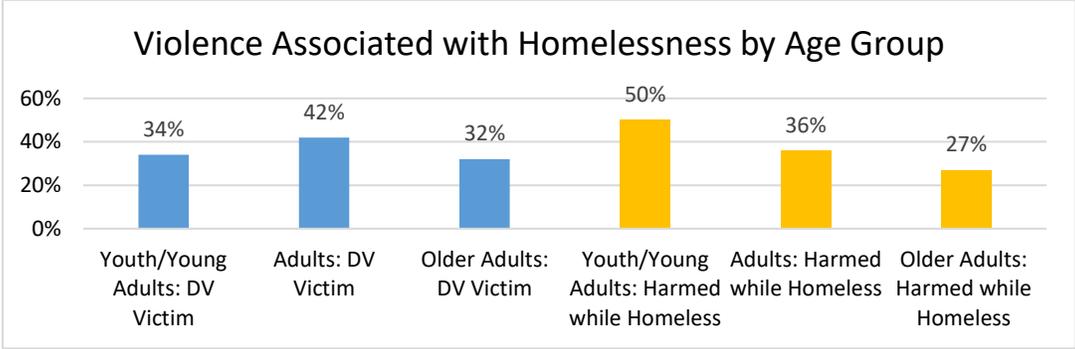
Over 68% of youths and young adults had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness in the past three years, while only half of adults and 53% of older adults had been homeless multiple times over that time frame. So, younger homeless adults experienced more frequent, episodic homelessness than older persons. However, 82% of adults and 83% of older adults had been homeless for twelve or more months during the past three years, while only 69% of youth and young adults had. Thus, adults and older adults experienced longer durations of homelessness compared with younger persons in our sample.



There was no difference across the three age groups in the percentage that had a disabling condition, as approximately three-quarters of youth and young adults, adults, and older adults said that they had at least one disability. Several noticeable differences, however, did exist for specific disabling conditions. Fifty-four percent of youth and young adults reported having a mental health problem, compared with 42% of adults and 18% of older adults. Conversely, 53% of older adults reported a physical disability, compared with 40% of adults and 22% of youth and young adults. Drug abuse was slightly more common among youth and young adults (11%) than adults (8%) and older adults (6%). Similarly, 14% of youth and young adults said that they had an alcohol abuse problem, compared with 11% of adults and 6% of older adults. Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of older adults (15%) reported having a chronic health problem compared with adults (11%) and youth and young adults (8%). While one quarter of older adults and adults receive a disability benefit, 13% of youth and young adults do as well.



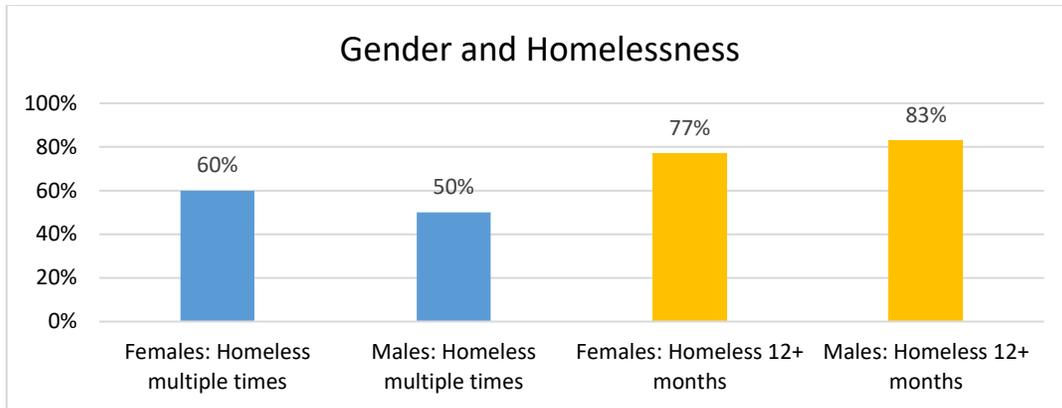
Forty-two percent of adults reported that they have been the victim of domestic violence, which is somewhat higher than for youth and young adults (34%) and older adults (32%). Half of youth and adults said that they had experienced physical, emotional, or sexual harm by a person they were staying with while homeless, while 36% of adults had been harmed while homeless, and 27% of older adults had been harmed. So, middle-aged individuals had the highest rate of experiencing domestic violence, and youth and young adults had the highest rate of being harmed by someone they were staying with while they were homeless.



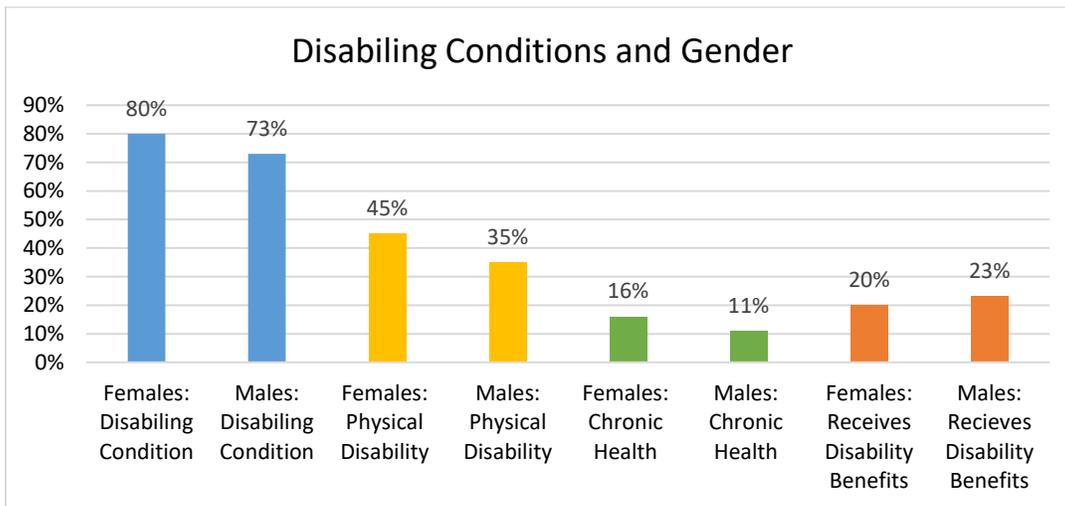
Homeless youth and young adults was the most racially diverse age group, with one third being non-white. The adult group of homeless individuals was the least diverse, with 18% being non-white. Females made up the largest proportion of homeless individuals in the adult group (34%). Twenty-six percent of homeless youth and young adults were females, and 23% of older adult homeless people were female. Veterans made up 18% of older adult homeless persons, 14% of adult homeless individuals, and 3% of homeless youth and young adults.

Gender

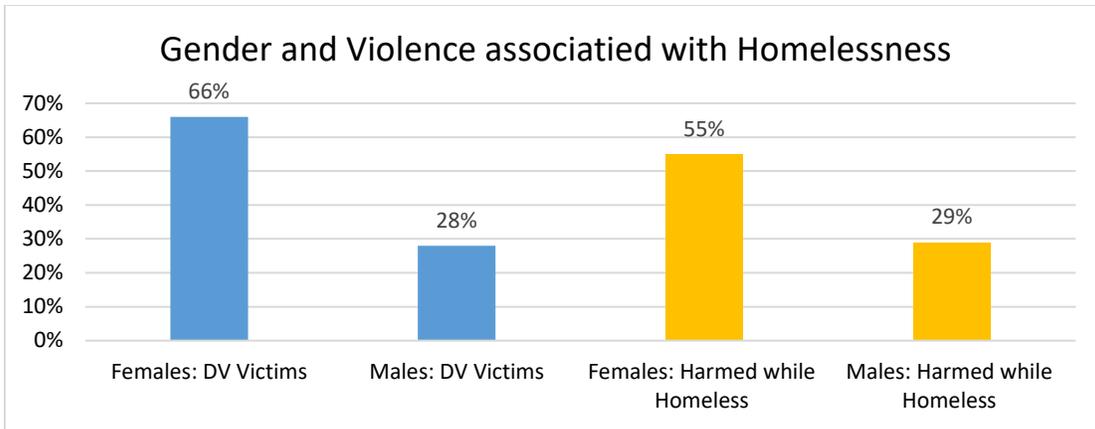
Survey respondents were predominantly male. There were 157 males (72%) and 62 females (28%) in the sample. There were no differences between females and males in where they had slept the night prior to the survey. More females (60%) than males (50%) had been homeless multiple times during the past three years. However, somewhat more males (83%) than females (77%) said that they had been homeless for more than twelve months in the last three years. Reoccurring, episodic homelessness appears to be a bit more common among females, while the duration of homelessness seems to be a bit longer for males.



Eighty percent of females reported having at least one disabling condition, which was somewhat higher than the 73% of males who had such a condition. More females (45%) than males (35%) said that they have a physical disability. Forty-three percent of females reported having a mental health problem, which is a bit higher than males – 39%. And, more females (16%) than males (11%) said that they have a chronic health condition. While more females had at least one disabling condition, slightly more males (23%) than females (20%) receive a disability benefit.



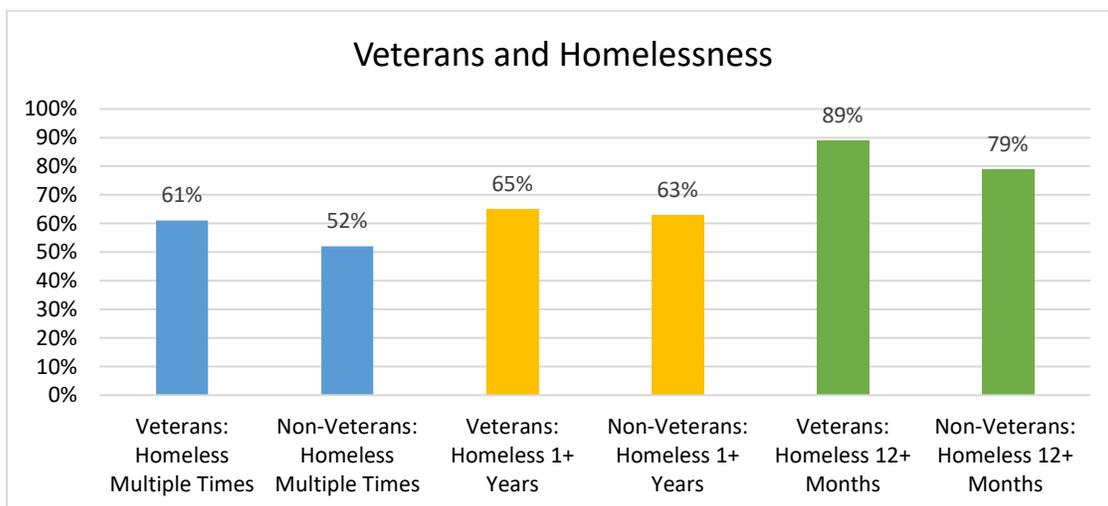
Females were twice as likely as males to have experienced violence. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of females had been the victim of domestic violence, while 28% of males had been. Fifty-five percent of females had been harmed by someone they were staying with while homeless, compared with 29% of males who had been harmed while they were homeless.



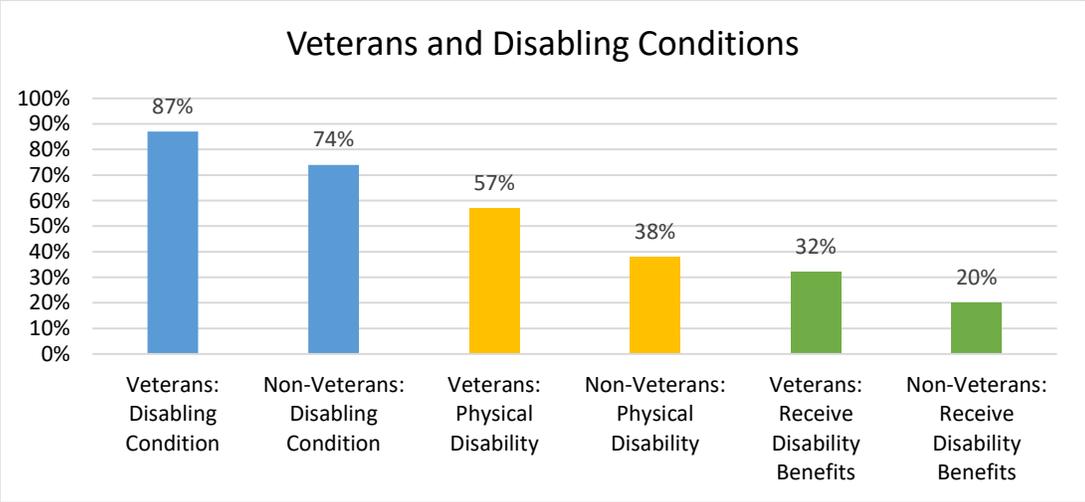
Females and males were about equally diverse, as 23% of homeless females were non-white, and nearly 22% of homeless males were non-white. Veterans constituted 13% of the male homeless population, while those who have served in the military made up 7% of homeless females. A larger proportion of homeless females than males was in the adult age category, 70% to 53%. More homeless males (22%) were in the older adult group than the proportion of homeless women (8%) in the oldest age category.

### Veterans

Twenty-three respondents (12%) identified as Veterans and the remaining 167 individuals (88%) did not. There was only one slight difference in where people had slept the night before the survey: 17% of Veterans had slept in a vehicle or car, compared with 13% of non-Veterans. More Veterans (61%) than non-Veterans (52%) experienced multiple spells of homelessness in the past three years. Slightly more Veterans (65%) than non-Veterans (63%) had been homeless a year or more, this time. 89% of Veterans had been homeless 12 or more months during the past three years, compared with 79% of non-Veterans. Thus, Veterans were more likely to experience multiple episodes of homelessness in the past three years and to endure longer durations of homelessness than non-Veterans.



Overall, more Veterans (87%) than non-Veterans (74%) reported that they had at least one disabling condition. No Veterans reported having drug or alcohol abuse problems; however, 9% of non-Veterans abused drugs, and 14% of non-Veterans reported an alcohol problem. The major difference in disabling conditions was that 57% of Veterans reported having a physical disability, compared with 38% of non-Veterans. Thirty-two percent of Veterans receive disability benefits, and 20% of non-Veterans do. While 20 of the 23 Veterans (87%) reported having a disabling condition, only six of them (26%) had received benefits from a VA medical center.



Seventy-eight percent of Veterans experiencing homelessness were white, and 22% were non-white. Eighty-two percent of Veterans experiencing homelessness were male, and 18% were female. Sixty-eight percent of people experiencing homelessness who served in the military were in the adult age group, 27% of these were older adults, and 5% were youth or young adults.

**Trends in recent unsheltered Point in Time Counts**

It is important to keep in mind that several factors can affect the number of people who are counted as literally homeless, including temperature patterns before the count day and weather conditions on the day of the survey. Given that caution, we looked at trends and patterns over the past three unsheltered surveys. Surveys for years prior to 2016 used a substantially different survey tool and did not separate unsheltered from sheltered respondents. Thus, prior surveys did not provide comparable information. (Unless otherwise noted, sequences of numbers presented below are from the 2016, 2017, and 2018 surveys in that order.)

The number of unsheltered adults was 223, 174, and 235. Males constituted a strong majority in all three surveys: 71%, 68%, and 71%. The median age of unsheltered homeless adults was 49 years old, 39 years of age, and 42 years old. The proportion of unsheltered adults who were Veterans was pretty consistent: 13%, 16%, and 12%.

In 2016 and 2017, the most common place that people had slept the night prior was in the woods or a camp (29% and 33%, respectively). The 2018 instrument had the combined answer category "streets/camp," and 77% of respondents said that that was where they had slept the prior night.

The proportion of unsheltered adults that were homeless for the first time has risen: 34%, 43%, and 47%. The percentage of respondents who have been homeless four or more times in the past three years has fluctuated: 53%, 57%, and 28%. The proportion of the sample that are chronically homeless also has varied: 49%, 60%, and 51%. Results from the past two years suggest that local homeless adults may be experiencing a bit more episodic homelessness, and a bit less chronic homelessness. This pattern should be checked in future Point in Time Counts.

The most common disabling condition has been mental health problems: 56%, 63%, and 40%. While strong majorities of respondents have at least one disabling condition, the percentage of unsheltered homeless adults that receive disability assistance is consistently low: 23%, 19%, and 22%. A final stable pattern is that unsheltered women were at a high risk of being physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed by someone while they were homeless: 51%, 52%, and 55%. Men are about half as likely as women to be victimized while they were homeless: 26%, 25%, and 29%.

Past reports and additional information on homelessness in our community can be found at [www.cpozarks.org/endhomelessness](http://www.cpozarks.org/endhomelessness).