

# WHITTIER HOMELESS CENSUS

November 2019

Results and  
Findings



City Net

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

The Whittier Homeless Census<sup>1</sup> was organized and executed by City Net under contract with the City of Whittier for the purpose of:

1. identifying a baseline number of individuals living without housing against which to measure all homelessness prevention and intervention efforts, and
2. determining the demographics, assets, and other special characteristics of individuals without housing to better inform resource allocation.

The street census was conducted on the early morning November 25<sup>th</sup>, and late evening of November 26<sup>th</sup>. This was the first survey-based homeless census in Whittier. Results will inform resource allocation, programmatic implementation and community investments toward the goal of reducing homelessness in the city.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **231 UNSHELTERED** – The census identified 231 unsheltered homeless individuals in Whittier.
- **COMPOSITE** – Viewed as a composite of the highest-frequency responses, the typical unsheltered homeless individual in Whittier is a man in his 50's who identifies ethnically as "Hispanic/Latino," has been homeless 1-5 years and is almost as likely to have a disability as not.
- **DISABILITIES** – 52% of those surveyed reported having a permanent disability or health condition. 37% stated they struggle with mental health concerns, and 32% with substance abuse.
- **CHRONIC HOMELESS** – 108 individuals (63% of respondents) are chronically homeless (have been homeless for more than a year, and have a permanent disability, substance abuse or mental health concerns.)
- **RESOURCES** – 51% of individuals have no income, 50% are not receiving CalFresh and 16% do not have health insurance.
- **TIES TO WHITTIER** – 98% of surveyed individuals reported that they primarily sleep in Whittier, and 55% reported their last permanent address was in Whittier.
- **CHILDREN PRESENT** – 1 respondent was accompanied by a teenager, in shelter.
- **LENGTH OF HOMELESSNESS** – 44% of respondents have been homeless for 2 years or less.
- **DESIRED RESOURCES** – 62% of respondents requested additional linkages to permanent and affordable housing.

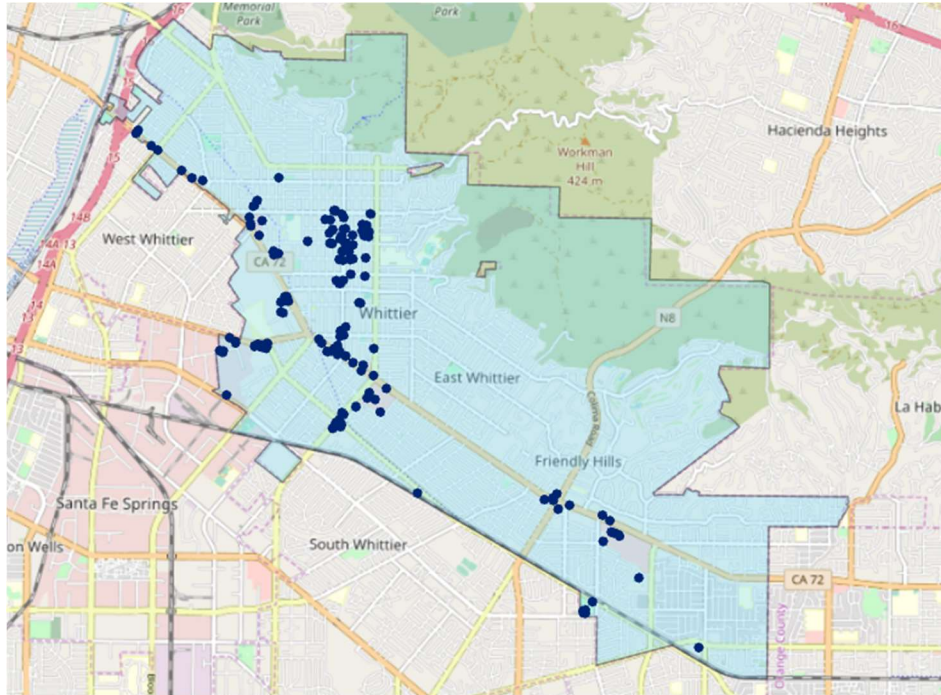
## SPECIAL THANKS

*City Net and the City of Whittier would like to thank the Whittier Police Department for their help conducting this census and for their diligent efforts to support and empower our homeless neighbors. We also appreciate the compassionate City of Whittier staff which advocate and achieve solutions for homeless neighbors in the city. Thank you for your participation.*



<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references to Whittier in this document refer to the city and not unincorporated regions surrounding the city limits of Whittier.

# HOMELESS DISTRIBUTION ACROSS WHITTIER



**TOTAL HOMELESS: 231 INDIVIDUALS**

*Note: Each black dot represents a location where unsheltered homeless individuals were counted during the census.*

## METHODOLOGY

City Net executed the 2019 Whittier Census on the early morning of November 25<sup>th</sup>, and late evening of November 26<sup>th</sup>. Each surveyor's area was indicated on a map, and specific locations within that mapped area where homeless individuals were known to sleep were highlighted. Because the goal of this project was a comprehensive census—not a representative sample—even those areas on the teams' maps where no homeless individuals were known to sleep were visited. Additionally, because of the comprehensive approach, all of Whittier was mapped and included in the census, including residential areas where homeless individuals are very rarely seen.

Teams were deployed from Whittier Police Station. The city's geographic area was covered completely twice by the teams, with some high-density areas covered three times. Homeless individuals who did not wish to answer the survey questions were simply counted. Responses from homeless individuals who participated in the survey were entered in Survey123 for ArcGIS. Duplicates were then removed after the completion of the census by comparing names, age ranges, gender, race/ethnicity and location of survey.

The Whittier Cold Weather shelter was surveyed on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. During the session, 14 individuals were encountered and added into the data final set. 3 Individuals who were active clients of a partnering agency and known to reside within the city boundaries of Whittier were also included in the final data set. The survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The 2019 census identified 231 unsheltered individuals. Adults were surveyed, and 1 minor of the age of 16 who contributed her own responses. The number of respondents for each survey item is indicated in the charts below as "n = [number of respondents]."

# RESULTS

## Demographic Comparisons

See Appendix B for the Table of Demographic Data

Chart 1: Age

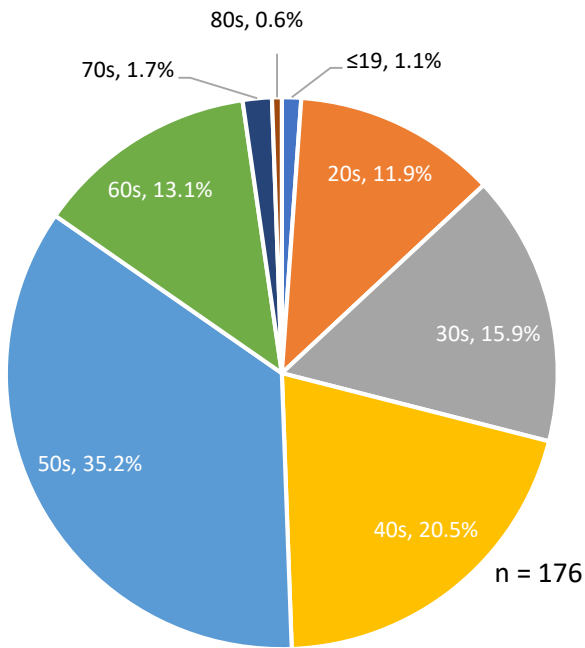


Chart 2: Ethnicity

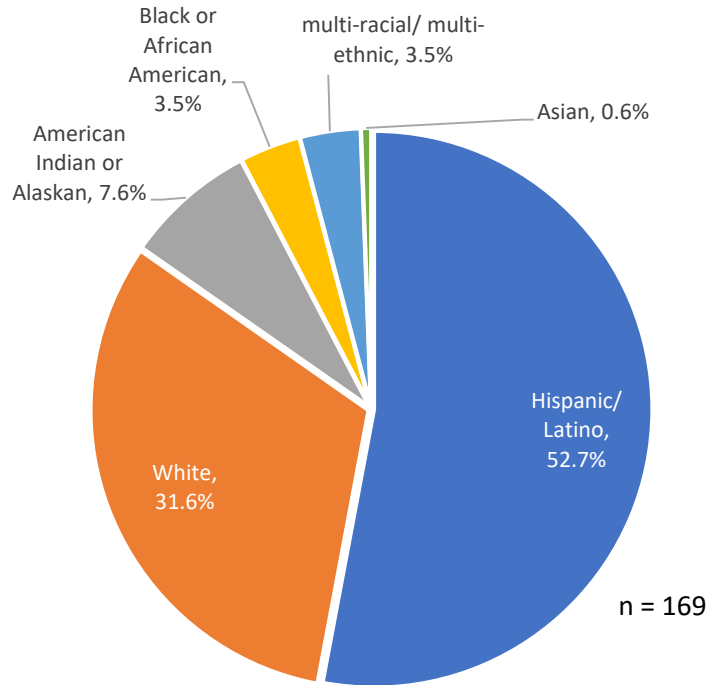


Chart 3: Gender

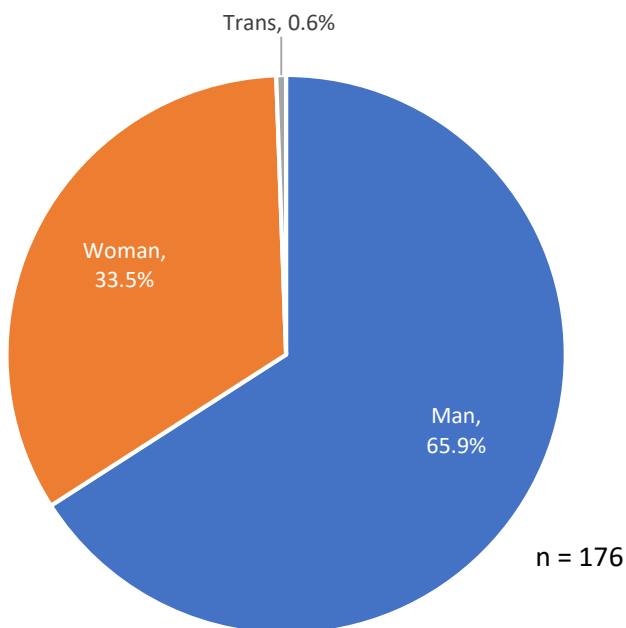


Chart 4: Children Present

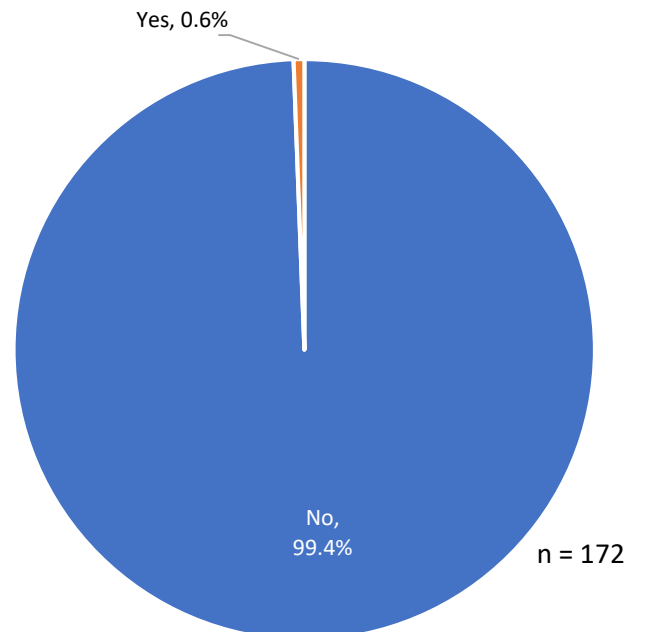




Chart 5: Preferred Language

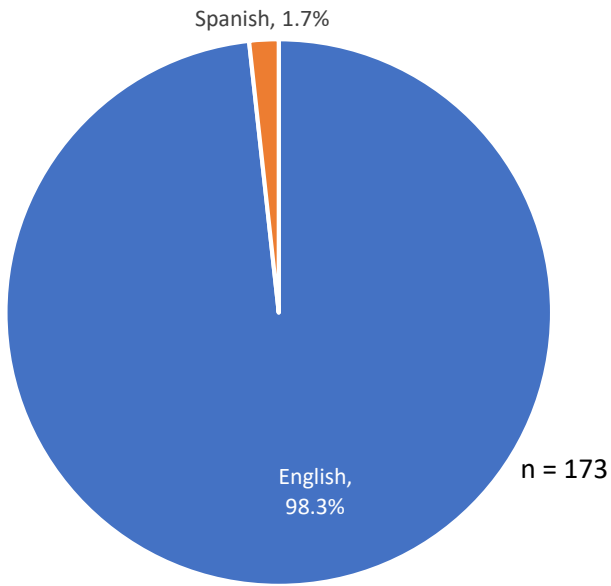
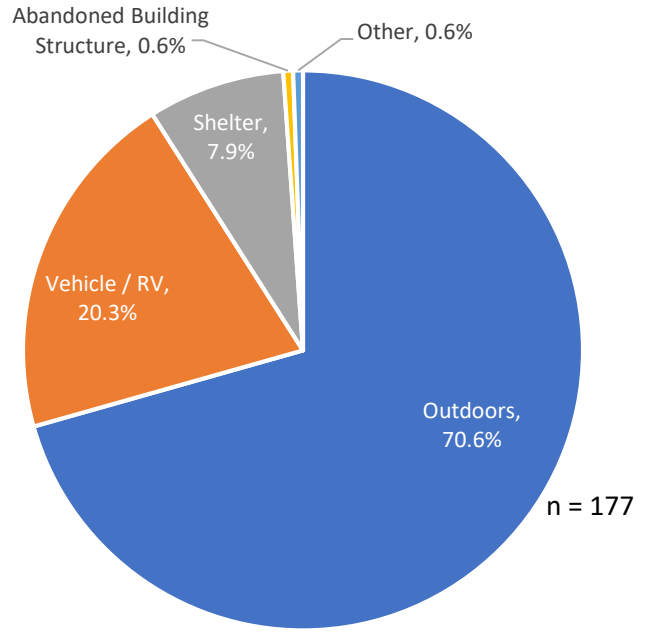


Chart 6: Primary Sleeping Situation



# Comparison of Assets

See Appendix C for the Table of Asset Data

Chart 7: Income, CalFresh, and Health Insurance

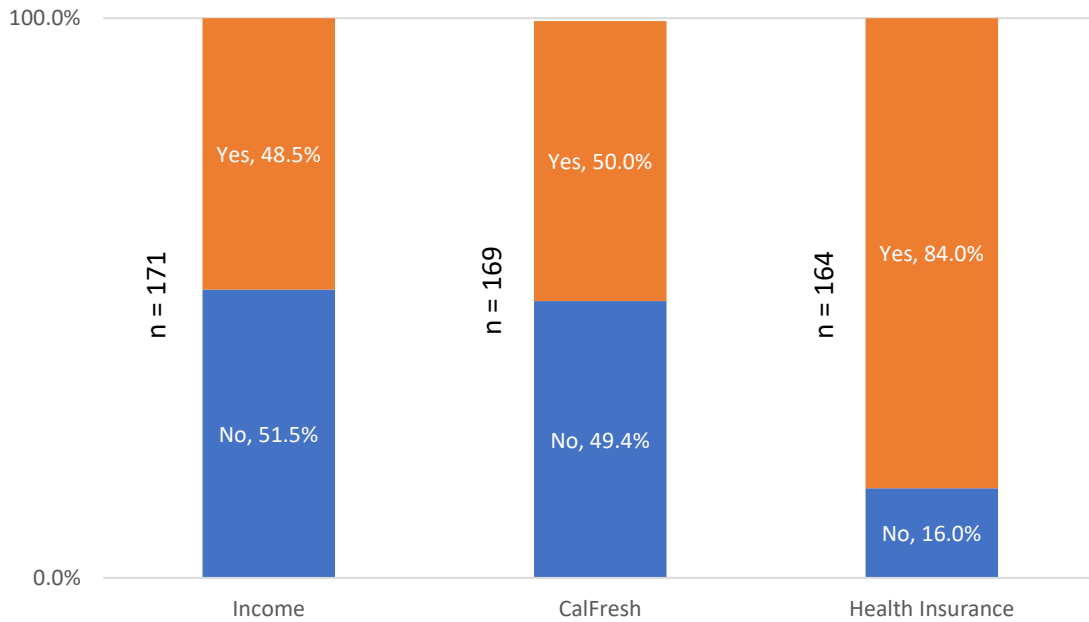


Chart 8: Gross Income

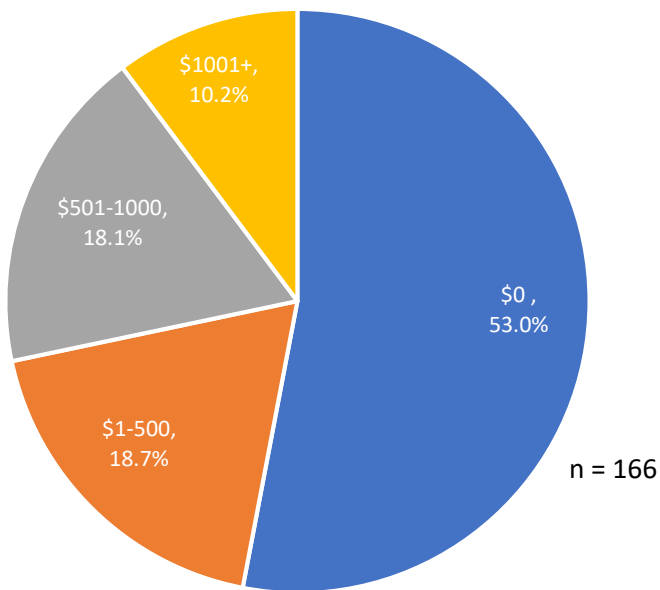
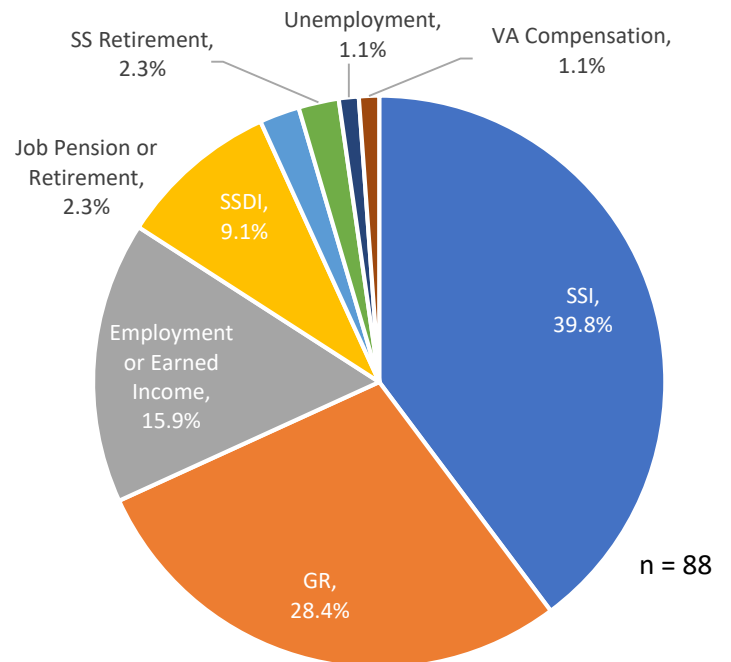


Chart 9: Sources of Income



# Comparison of Special Characteristics

See Appendix D for the Table of Special Characteristics Data

Chart 10: Disabilities, Mental Health Concerns and Substance Abuse

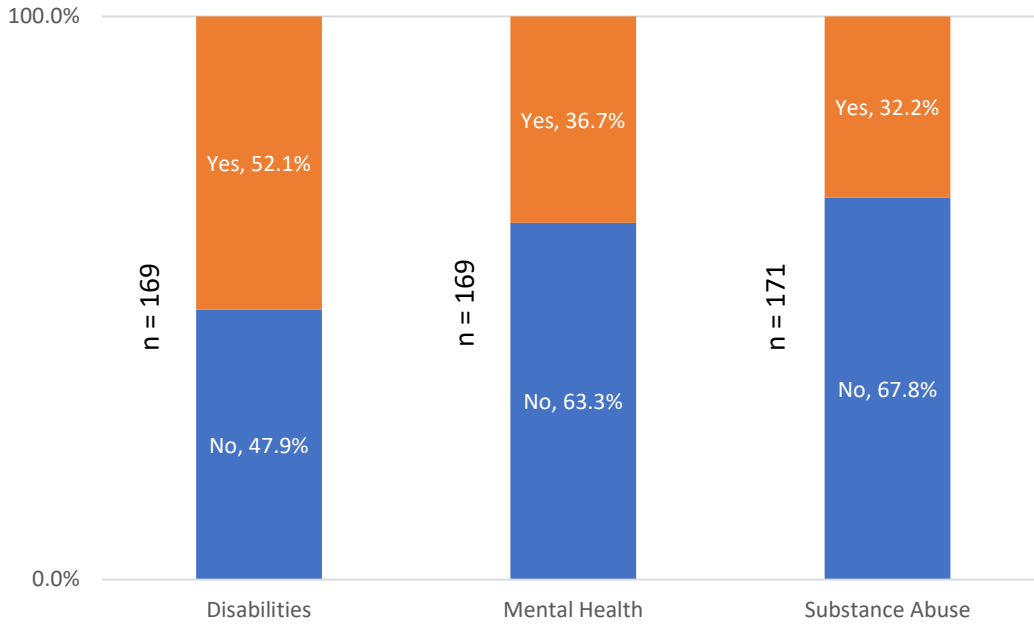


Chart 11: Domestic Violence

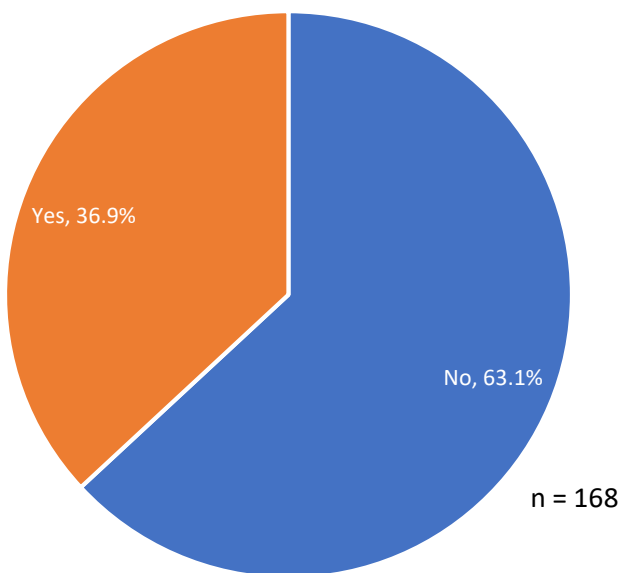
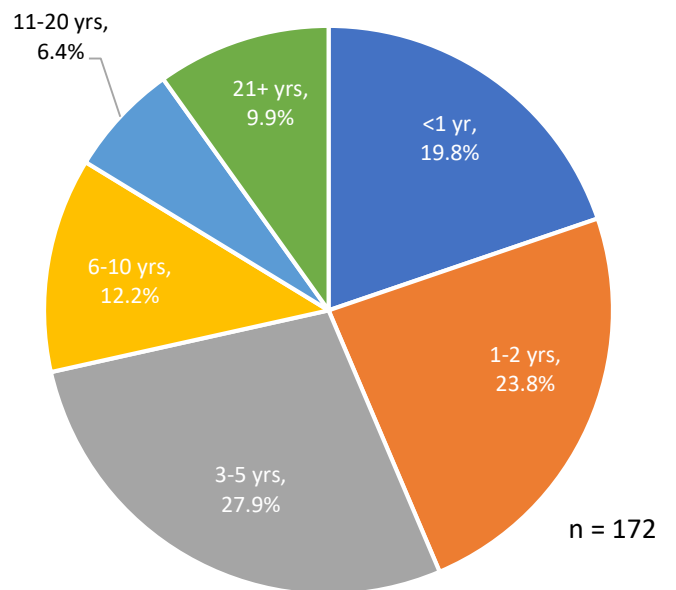


Chart 12: Duration of Homelessness



# Community Ties

See Appendix E for the Table of Homelessness Data

Chart 13: Usually Sleeps In

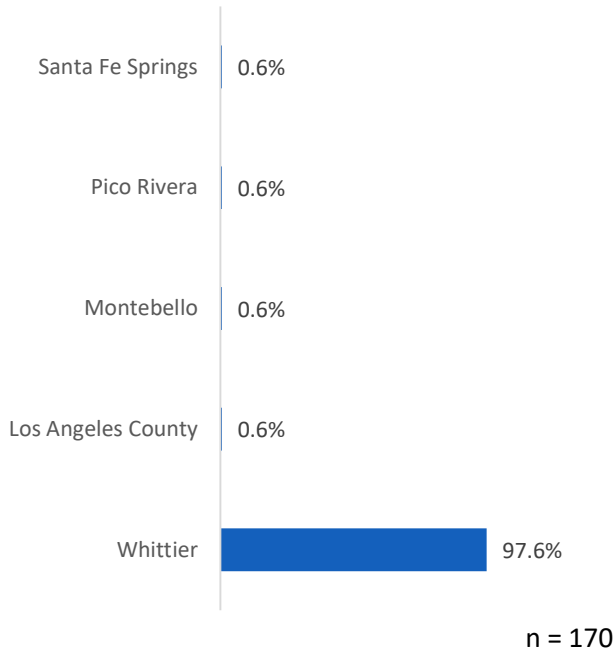


Chart 14: Last Permanent Residence

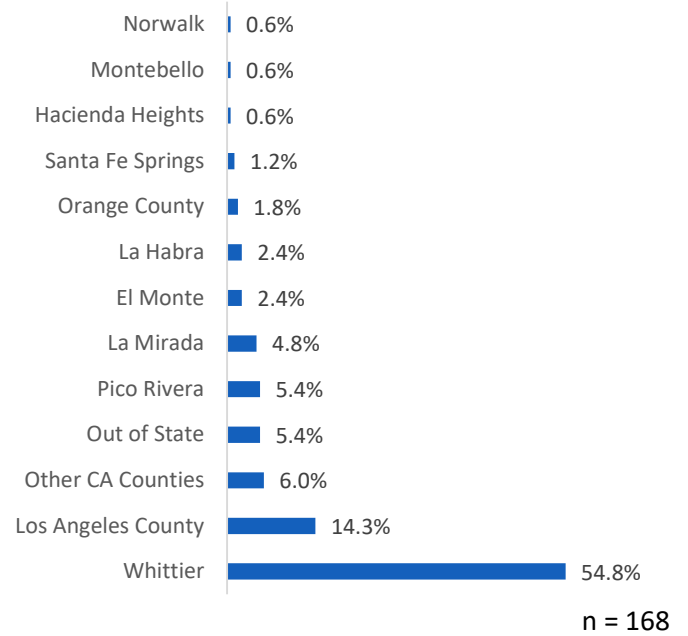


Chart 15: High School/Primary School

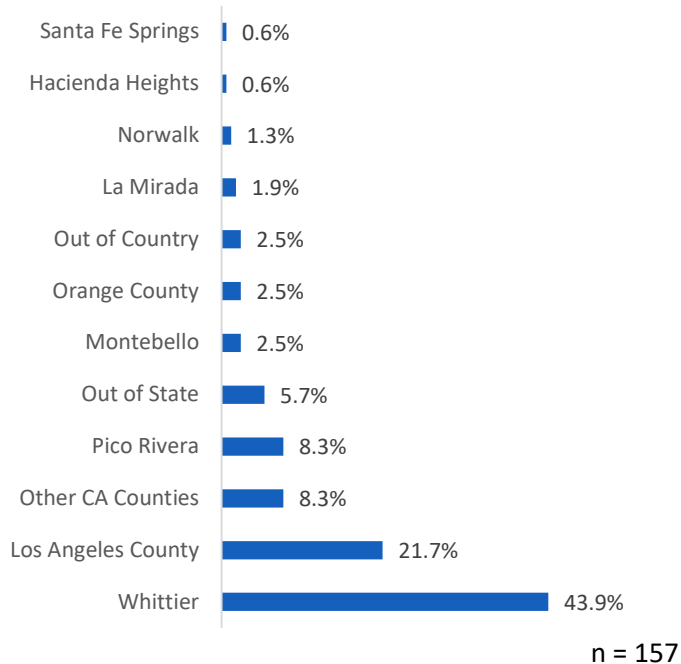
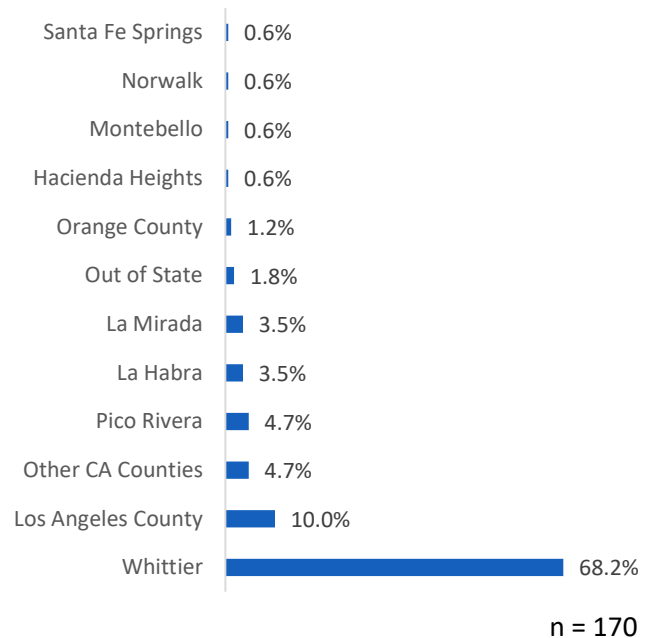


Chart 16: City In which Homelessness began





# Veteran Responses

See Appendix F for the Table of Other Data

Chart 17: Veteran Status

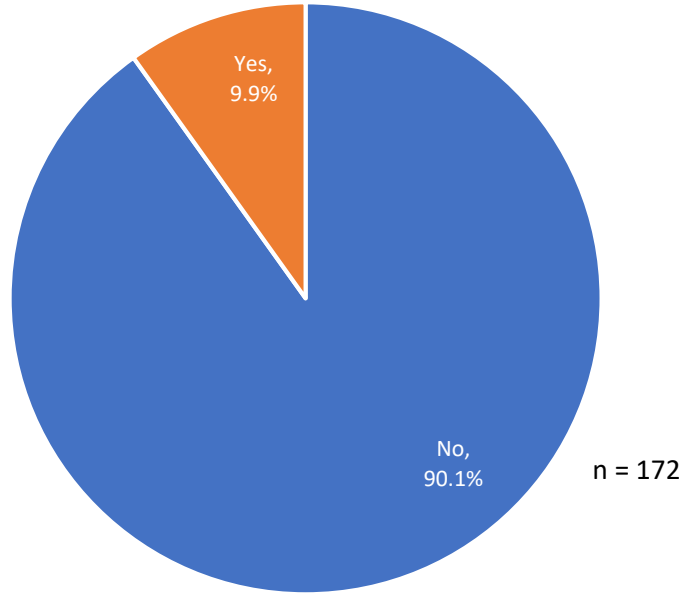


Chart 18: Military Discharge Status

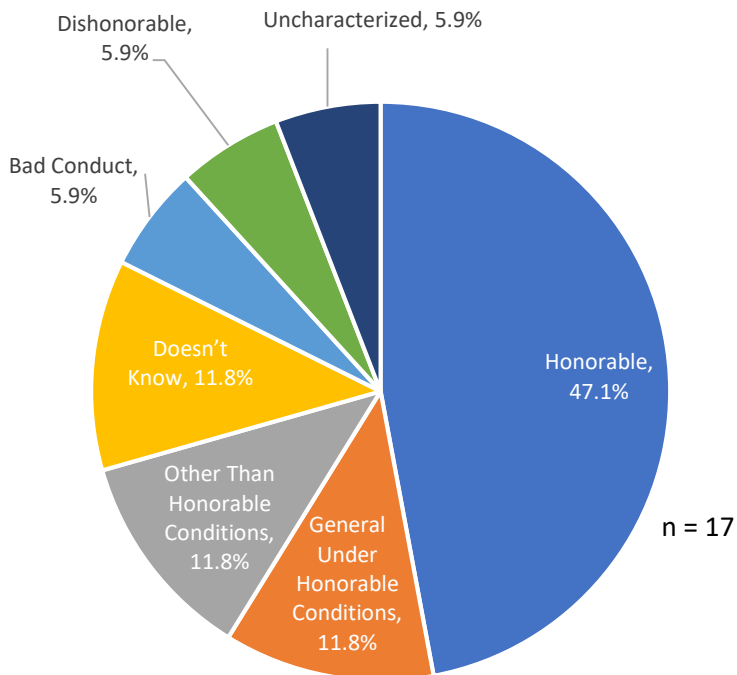
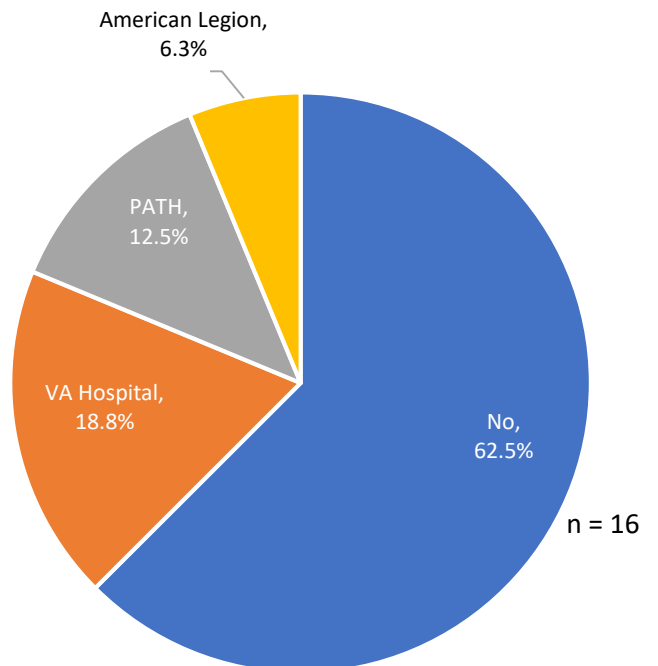


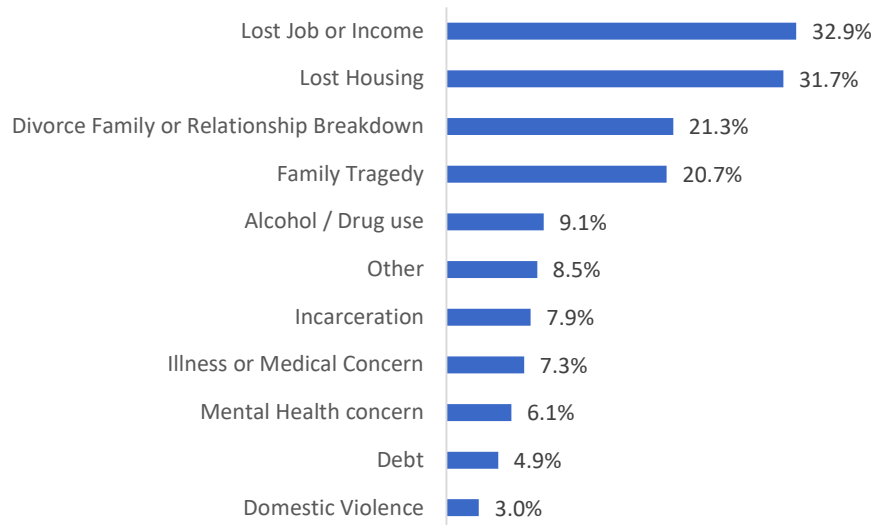
Chart 19: Connection to Veteran Services



## Other Comparisons

See Appendix G for the Table of Other Data

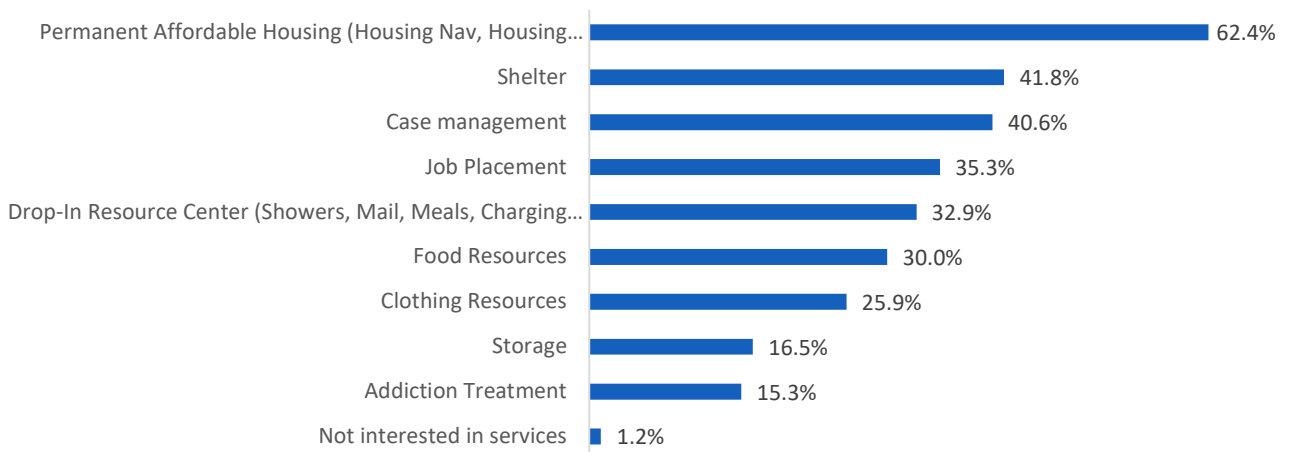
Chart 20: Events or Conditions that led to Homelessness\*



n = 164

\*Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Chart 21: Interest in Services/Resources\*



n = 170

\*Respondents were able to select multiple responses.

# SHELTER SUMMARY

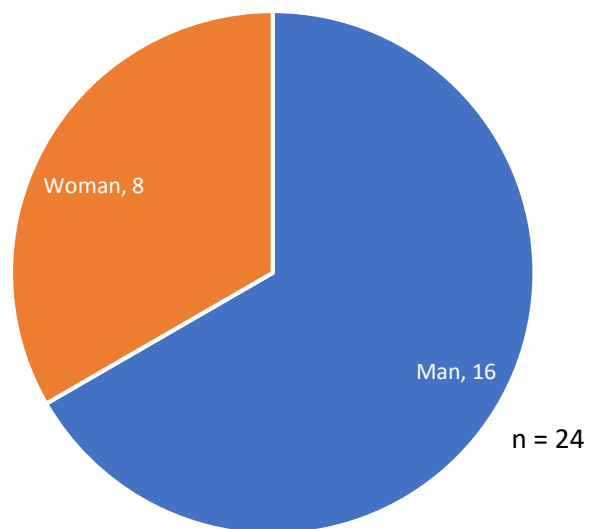
See Appendix H for the Table of Data for Charts 22-28.

## Whittier Cold Weather Shelter

Chart 22: Total at Cold Weather Shelter



Chart 23: Gender at Cold Weather Shelter



*\*1 Female teenager residing at shelter was surveyed.*

Individuals staying at the Whittier Cold Weather Shelter were surveyed on the evening of December 9<sup>th</sup>. During the session, 24 individuals agreed to complete a survey. 10 participants had previously been encountered during the unsheltered street count, on November 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019. A total of 14 individuals were identified as experiencing homeless in the city of Whittier.

Shelter operators explained that the total occupancy for the Cold Weather Shelter is set to 40 single adults. The shelter will also accept a family set on an emergency basis, or work with partnering agencies to setup a short-term alternative when available.

# The Whole Child

Chart 24: Total Families at The Whole Child

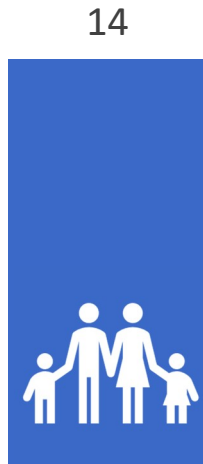
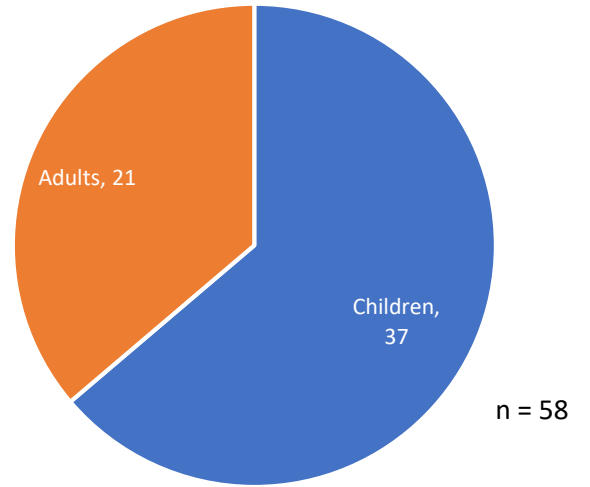


Chart 25: Children and Adults at The Whole Child

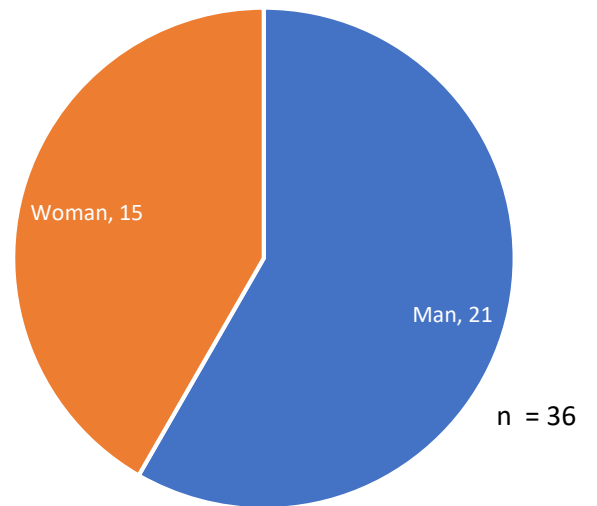


# Whittier First Day

Chart 26: Occupants at Whittier First Day Shelter



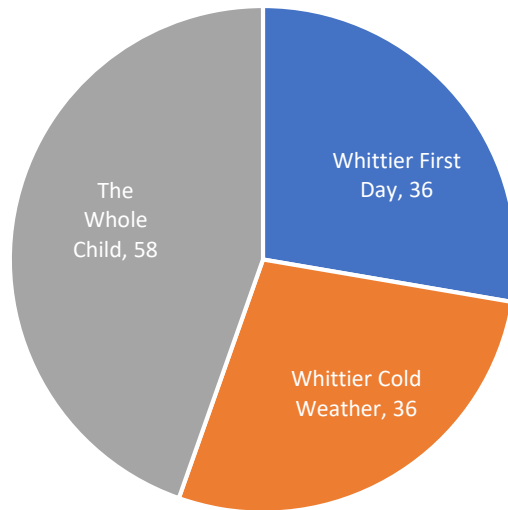
Chart 27: Gender at Whittier First Day Shelter



# All Shelters: Whittier First Day, The Whole Child, and Whittier Cold Weather Shelter

Chart 28: Total Sheltered Occupants at Whittier Shelters

*Total Count: 130*



## Motel Vouchers

All known community agencies that provide motel stays for the Dates of November 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>.

Salvation Army	No motel stays provided
1st Christian Church	No motel stays provided
St Vincent De Paul	No motel stays provided
St. Bruno's	No motel stays provided
Jovenes	No motel stays provided

# CONCLUSION

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the Whittier census suggest that specific investments in shelter and programmatic resources could greatly decrease the negative impacts of homelessness on individuals and communities. The recommendations that follow are intended to spur collaborative conversations on solutions and are offered fully acknowledging limitations in resources and the many other challenges in ending homelessness.

**Veterans.** Ending Veteran Homelessness in Whittier is a realistic goal with 17 respondents reporting past military experience. Veterans-specific outreach workers who can screen for eligibility for VA healthcare, VASH voucher eligibility and additional resources for Whittier's veteran population would be an effective investment.

**Low-threshold emergency shelter and bridge housing.** An increase in low-threshold emergency shelter and bridge housing would be greatly valued, especially bridge housing that targets the demographic most represented among the Whittier homeless population—single men with little to no income who may have disabilities. The data suggests limited availability (especially when the cold-weather shelters are closed) of low threshold beds available to the local homeless population. Shelters referred through LA CES have lengthy waitlists due to shelters at full capacity.

As expected, housing and shelter were deemed by respondents as the most helpful resources needed, with 62% requesting additional housing resources and 42% requesting shelter beds.

**Services for Disabled Homeless Population.** Respondents with disabilities such as physical disabilities (52%), substance abuse (32%) and/or mental health concerns (37%) would likely benefit from connections to targeted resources such as programs to help with access to public benefits, housing for disabled populations and additional behavioral health outreach and engagement workers.

Because 80% of respondents reported living in homeless conditions for one year or more, providing services that target those with significantly deteriorated physical health, mental health, and social skills (from years spent living in homeless conditions) may help Whittier's homeless neighbors reintegrate into society.

**Drop-in Resource Center.** Respondents shared that services such as showers, mail service, meals, charging stations, case management, legal assistance, as well as to other resources and referrals would be helpful tools in the community. A multi-functioning drop-in resource center could provide a variety of these types of services to the community. This resource could also strengthen community workforce development services (51% reported no current income).

**Outreach to geographic regions.** The locations of encounters revealed the Whittier homeless population is concentrated in a few key geographic regions of the city (see map on Page 3). We recommend targeted outreach efforts at high-density locations such as Parnell Park and the Uptown Whittier Commercial Region.



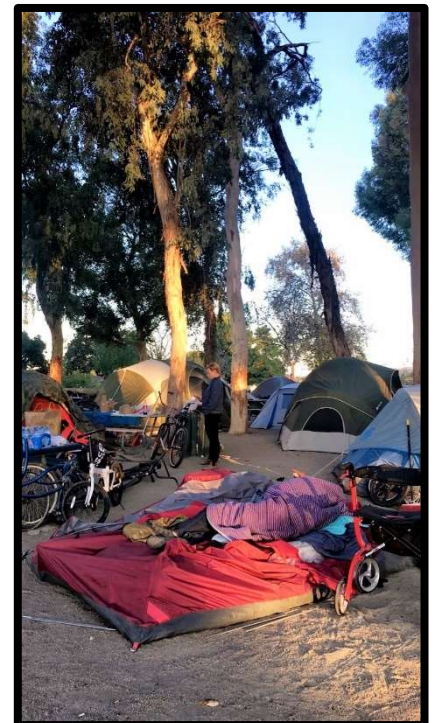
**Prevention and Diversion Coordination.** The data suggest many Whittier residents are vulnerable to homelessness, with 44% of unsheltered respondents reporting their episode of homeless began within the last 24 months. Community investments in collaborative efforts to coordinate prevention and diversion services to prevent homelessness are needed. These activities (such food, clothing and other emergency services, as well as utilities assistance, rental support, etc.) often are generated by faith communities and civic groups and are not well-coordinated with government efforts to address homelessness.

## LIMITATIONS

The term “addiction” (i.e. substance abuse concern) was not defined in the survey, and thus the responses in this category do not represent a diagnosable condition but only respondents’ self-perceptions of the condition. Also limiting this study is the fact that the only way to identify duplicates in the unsheltered count was to compare available data including names, age ranges, gender, race/ethnicity and location of survey from those who chose to complete the survey questionnaire. Because the census occurred over multiple days, unsheltered individuals who chose not to complete the survey may have been counted multiple times, and artificial inflation of the count cannot therefore be ruled out. Artificial inflation may also have resulted from the addition of 3 homeless individuals from partner agency’s case management roster after the completion of the census. While those on the roster who completed the survey were not added to the count, some individuals on the roster may have been encountered during the census and chosen not to take the survey. As a result, they may be represented multiple times in the count. The margin of error for all data points ranges from 3.57% to 24.52%, with an average margin of error of 5.57%.

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information about this report and/or the results presented, please contact City Net at [www.citynet.org](http://www.citynet.org).



# APPENDIX A

## Whittier Homeless Census Questionnaire

- 1 **Location:** ArcGIS utilizes geotagging for the location
- 2 **Client Name (First, Last)** \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 3 **Refused Survey?**  No (Continue survey, go to 4)  Yes (End Survey)
- 4 **What is your current primary sleeping situation?**  Vehicle/RV  Outdoors (e.g. in a tent)  Abandoned Building  Shelter  
 Motel paid for by 3rd party (e.g. homeless service agency)  Other  Doesn't Know  Refused
- 4a If Shelter: Which Shelter: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4b If Other: Describe Situation: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 **Gender (Select one)**  Man  Woman  Trans  Other  Doesn't know  Refused
- 6 **What is your age?** \_\_\_\_\_  Refused
- 7 **What race/ethnicity do you identify with? (Select all that apply)**  
 American Indian or Alaska Native  Asian  Black or African American  Hispanic/Latino  Pacific Islander  White  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Doesn't know  Refused
- 8 **What language do you feel most comfortable speaking? (Select one)**  English  Spanish  Vietnamese  Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 9 **Have you ever served in any branch of the US military? (Select one)**  No (go to 10)  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 9a If yes: What was your discharge status? (Select one)  Honorable  General under honorable conditions  Other than honorable conditions (OTH)  
 Bad conduct  Dishonorable  Uncharacterized  Unverified  Doesn't know  Refused
- 9b If yes: Are you currently connected to any Veteran Services?  No (go to 10)  Yes
- 9c If yes: Which agencies are you receiving services from?  Agencies: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 **Are you currently receiving any income? (Select one)**  No (go to 11)  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 10a If yes: What are the sources of your income? (Select all that apply)  Employment/earned income  Unemployment  Supplemental Security Income (SSI)  
 Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)  VA Compensation  VA Pension  Worker's Compensation  General Relief  Social Security Retirement  
 Job pension/retirement  Child support  Alimony or spousal support  Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 10b And: What is your total gross monthly income? (Select one)  \$1-\$500  \$501-\$1000  \$1001+  Doesn't know  Refused
- 11 **Are you currently receiving CalFresh (foodstamps)? (Select one)**  No  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 12 **Do you have health insurance? (Select one)**  No (go to 13)  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 12a If yes: Where do you get your insurance? (Select all that apply)  MediCal (Medicaid)  Medicare  VA Medical Services  
 Employer-provided health insurance  Private pay health insurance  Indian Health Services Program  Other: \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 13 **How long have you been homeless? (Select one)**  Less than 1 year  1-2 yrs.  3-5 yrs.  6-10 yrs.  11-20 yrs.  21+ yrs.  Doesn't know  Refused
- 14 **When you initially became homeless, what city were you living in? (Select one)**  
 City of Industry  El Monte  Hacienda Heights  La Habra  La Mirada  Montebello  Norwalk  Pico Rivera  Santa Fe Springs  Whittier  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 15 **What city do you usually sleep in? (Select one)**  
 City of Industry  El Monte  Hacienda Heights  La Habra  La Mirada  Montebello  Norwalk  Pico Rivera  Santa Fe Springs  Whittier  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 16 **What city was your last permanent residence in? (Select one)**  
 City of Industry  El Monte  Hacienda Heights  La Habra  La Mirada  Montebello  Norwalk  Pico Rivera  Santa Fe Springs  Whittier  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 17 **In what city did you graduate from High School? (or last grade of primary school) (Select one)**  
 City of Industry  El Monte  Hacienda Heights  La Habra  La Mirada  Montebello  Norwalk  Pico Rivera  Santa Fe Springs  Whittier  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 18 **Do you have any minor children who are staying here with you? (Select one)**  
 No (go to 19)  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 18a If yes: How many children? (Select one)  1  2  3  4  5  6  Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 18b And: What are their ages? (Separate ages with a comma) \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused
- 19 **Do you have a permanent disability or health condition (for example, long-term physical or health concerns that significantly limit your ability to take care of yourself)? (Select one)**  No  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 20 **Do you have any mental health concerns (including, for example, anxiety or depression that lasts longer than a few days)? (Select one)**  No  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 21 **Do you struggle with alcohol or drug addiction? (Select one)**  No  Yes—just alcohol  Yes—just drugs  Yes—drugs and alcohol  Doesn't know  Refused
- 22 **Have you ever been the victim of domestic violence? (Select one)**  No  Yes  Doesn't know  Refused
- 23 **What would you identify as the main events or conditions that led you to becoming homeless? (Select all that apply)**  
 Lost job/income  Lost housing (landlord dispute, could not afford, foreclosure)  Debt  Alcohol/drug use  Illness or medical concerns  
 Mental health concerns  Domestic Violence  Divorce/family or relationship breakdown  Incarceration  Family tragedy (death, illness of a family member)  
 Other (not a fill-in)  Doesn't know  Refused
- 24 **What services or resources would be helpful to your current situation? (Select all that apply)**  Shelter  Case Management  Permanent Housing  
 Addiction Treatment  Food Resources  Clothing Resources  Job Placement  Storage  Drop-in Resource center (showers, mail, meals, charging station)  
 Not interested in services or resources  Other \_\_\_\_\_  Doesn't know  Refused

## APPENDIX B

### Table of Demographic Data

Age (Table 1)		
	Count	Percentage
Under 19	2	1.1%
20s	21	11.9%
30s	28	15.9%
40s	36	20.5%
50s	62	35.2%
60s	23	13.1%
70s	3	1.7%
80s	1	0.6%
Ethnicity (Table 2)		
	Count	Percentage
Hispanic / Latino	89	52.7%
White	54	32.0%
American Indian Or Alaskan	13	7.7%
Black or African American	6	3.6%
Multi-Racial / Multi-Ethnic	6	3.6%
Asian	1	0.6%
Gender (Table 3)		
	Count	Percentage
Man	116	65.9%
Woman	59	33.5%
Trans	1	0.6%
Children Present (Table 4 )		
	Count	Percentage
No	171	99.4%
Yes	1	0.6%
Language (Table 5)		
	Count	Percentage
English	170	98.3%
Spanish	3	1.7%
Primary Sleeping Situation (Table 6)		
	Count	Percentage
Outdoors	125	70.6%
Vehicle / RV	36	20.3%
Shelter	14	7.9%
Abandoned Building Structure	1	0.6%
Other	1	1.0%

**APPENDIX C**  
*Table of Asset Data*

Income (Table 7a)		
	Count	Percentage
No	88	51.5%
Yes	83	48.5%
CalFresh (Table 7b)		
	Count	Percentage
Yes	85	50.3%
No	84	49.7%
Health Insurance (Table 7c)		
	Count	Percentage
Yes	137	83.5%
No	27	16.5%
Gross Income (Table 8)		
	Count	Percentage
\$0	88	53.0%
\$1-500	31	18.7%
\$501-1000	30	18.1%
\$1001+	17	10.2%
Sources of Income (Table 9)		
	Count	Percentage
SSI	35	39.8%
GR	25	28.4%
Employment or Earned Income	14	15.9%
SSDI	8	9.1%
Job Pension or Retirement	2	2.3%
SS Retirement	2	2.3%
Unemployment	1	1.1%
VA Compensation	1	1.1%

## APPENDIX D

### *Table of Special Characteristics Data*

Disabilities (Table 10a)		
	Count	Percentage
Yes	88	52.1%
No	81	47.9%
Mental Health (Table 10b )		
	Count	Percentage
No	107	63.3%
Yes	62	36.7%
Substance Abuse (Table 10c)		
	Count	Percentage
No	116	67.8%
Drugs	29	17.0%
Alcohol	15	8.8%
Both	11	6.4%
Domestic Violence (Table 11)		
	Count	Percentage
No	106	63.1%
Yes	62	36.9%
Duration of Homelessness (Table 12)		
	Count	Percentage
Less Than One Yr	34	19.8%
1-2 Yrs	41	23.8%
3-5 Yrs	48	27.9%
6-10 Yrs	21	12.2%
11-20 Yrs	11	6.4%
21+ Yrs	17	9.9%

## APPENDIX E

### Table of Homelessness Data

Sleeps In (Table 13)		
	Count	Percentage
Whittier	166	97.6%
Los Angeles County	1	0.6%
Montebello	1	0.6%
Pico Rivera	1	0.6%
Santa Fe Springs	1	0.6%
Last Permanent Residence (Table 14)		
	Count	Percentage
Whittier	92	54.8%
Los Angeles County	24	14.3%
Other CA Counties	10	6.0%
Out of State	9	5.4%
Pico Rivera	9	5.4%
La Mirada	8	4.8%
El Monte	4	2.4%
La Habra	4	2.4%
Orange County	3	1.8%
Santa Fe Springs	2	1.2%
Hacienda Heights	1	0.6%
Montebello	1	0.6%
Norwalk	1	0.6%
High School (Table 15)		
	Count	Percentage
Whittier	69	43.9%
Los Angeles County	34	21.7%
Other CA Counties	13	8.3%
Pico Rivera	13	8.3%
Out of State	9	5.7%
Montebello	4	2.5%
Orange County	4	2.5%
Out of Country	4	2.5%
La Mirada	3	1.9%
Norwalk	2	1.3%
Hacienda Heights	1	0.6%
Santa Fe Springs	1	0.6%



APPENDIX E, Continued  
*Table of Homelessness Data*

Initial City of Homelessness (Table 16)		
	Count	Percentage
Whittier	116	68.2%
Los Angeles County	17	10.0%
Other CA Counties	8	4.7%
Pico Rivera	8	4.7%
La Habra	6	3.5%
La Mirada	6	3.5%
Out of State	3	1.8%
Orange County	2	1.2%
Hacienda Heights	1	0.6%
Montebello	1	0.6%
Norwalk	1	0.6%
Santa Fe Springs	1	0.6%

APPENDIX F  
*Table of Veteran Data*

Military (Table 17)		
	Count	Percentage
No	155	90.1%
Yes	17	9.9%
Discharge Status (Table 18)		
	Count	Percentage
Honorable	8	47.1%
General Under Honorable Conditions	2	11.8%
Other Than Honorable Conditions	2	11.8%
Doesn't Know	2	11.8%
Bad Conduct	1	5.9%
Dishonorable	1	5.9%
Uncharacterized	1	5.9%
Connection to Veteran Services (Table 19)		
	Count	Percentage
No	10	62.5%
VA Hospital	3	18.8%
PATH	2	12.5%
American Legion	1	6.3%

## APPENDIX G

*Table of Other Data*

Events or Conditions that Led to Homelessness (Table 20)		
	Count	Percentage
Lost Job or Income	54	32.9%
Lost Housing	52	31.7%
Divorce Family or Relationship Breakdown	35	21.3%
Family Tragedy	34	20.7%
Alcohol / Drug use	15	9.1%
Other	14	8.5%
Incarceration	13	7.9%
Illness or Medical Concern	12	7.3%
Mental Health Concern	10	6.1%
Debt	8	4.9%
Domestic Violence	5	3.0%
Interest in Services and Resources (Table 21)		
	Count	Percentage
Permanent Affordable Housing (Housing Nav, Housing Support)	106	62.4%
Shelter	71	41.8%
Case Management	69	40.6%
Job Placement	60	35.3%
Drop-In Resource Center (Showers, mail, meals, charging station)	56	32.9%
Food Resources	51	30.0%
Clothing Resources	44	25.9%
Storage	28	16.5%
Addiction Treatment	26	15.3%
Not Interested in Services	2	1.2%



APPENDIX H  
*Table of Sheltered Data*

Shelter Occupancy Data (Table 22)		
	Count	Data collected
Whittier First Day	36	21 men, 15 women
Whittier Cold Weather Shelter	36	16 men, 8 women
The Whole Child	58	14 Family-sets, 21 Adults, 37 children