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For
Zero.****April 12, 2023**

Joint Office reaches Built for Zero milestone

Releasing data from a by-name list of people experiencing chronic homelessness

The Joint Office of Homeless Services is excited to share some big news related to our work on Built for Zero, a framework for measurably ending homelessness with a data-driven approach. (Don't know what Built for Zero is? Learn more about it [here](#).) After extensive work by our



data team, **we are releasing our first data to come from a quality by-name list of people experiencing chronic homelessness in Multnomah County.** This is foundational for accomplishing the other aspects of Built for Zero, and is a major milestone in our overall work to implement Built for Zero, which we launched in 2021.

"We're excited to see Multnomah County reach this important milestone as they continue efforts at system transformation."

—**Kristy Greenwalt, Built for Zero Consultant for Community Solutions**

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level, our community will be able to use the data to track the changing size, composition and dynamics of our chronically homeless population. **This information will enable us to prioritize resources, test changes to our system and understand whether our efforts are truly helping solve chronic homelessness.**

“We're excited to see Multnomah County reach this important milestone as they continue efforts at system transformation,” said Kristy Greenwalt, Built for Zero consultant for [Community Solutions](#). “The design of workflows and protocols to develop and maintain a comprehensive, quality by-name list of individuals experiencing homelessness is a major undertaking, especially in large, complex communities with an ever-changing landscape.”

There is still a lot of work ahead, including continual refinement of our process and expanding our data collection. But we wanted to share this special announcement and let you know that from this point forward, the Joint Office will be providing [monthly data updates on our Built for Zero webpage](#) and sending out quarterly newsletters (like this one) providing updates and the latest data as we continue implementing Built for Zero.

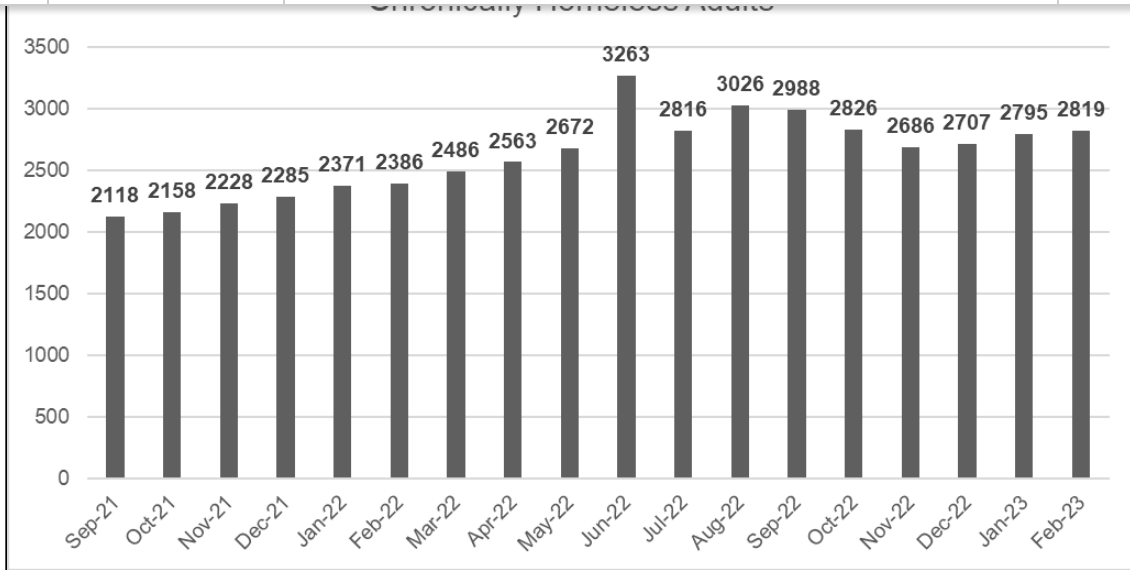
Key takeaways from our February 2023 data

Takeaway 1: As of February 2023, 2,819 adults are known to be chronically homeless in Multnomah County.

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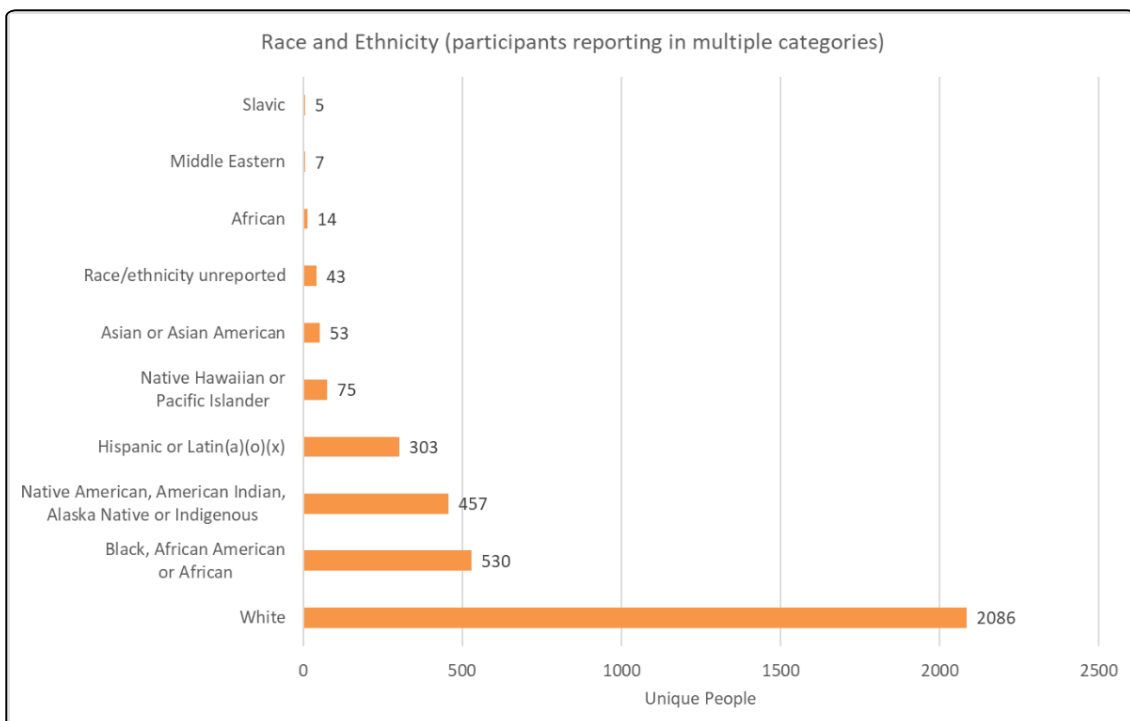
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(Note: This is using the “Population A” definition of chronic homelessness, which is more expansive than the definition used by HUD. For more information, scroll down to the “Defining ‘chronic homelessness’” section).

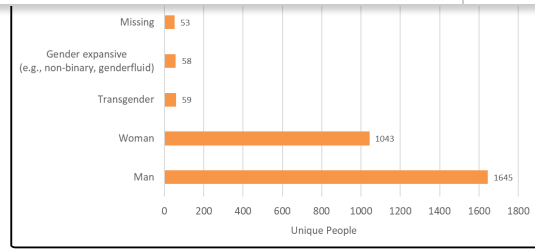
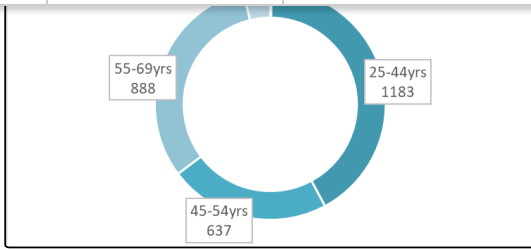
Takeaway 2: The majority of people meeting our definition of chronically homeless identify as white (74%), male (60%) and between 24-54 years old (64%).



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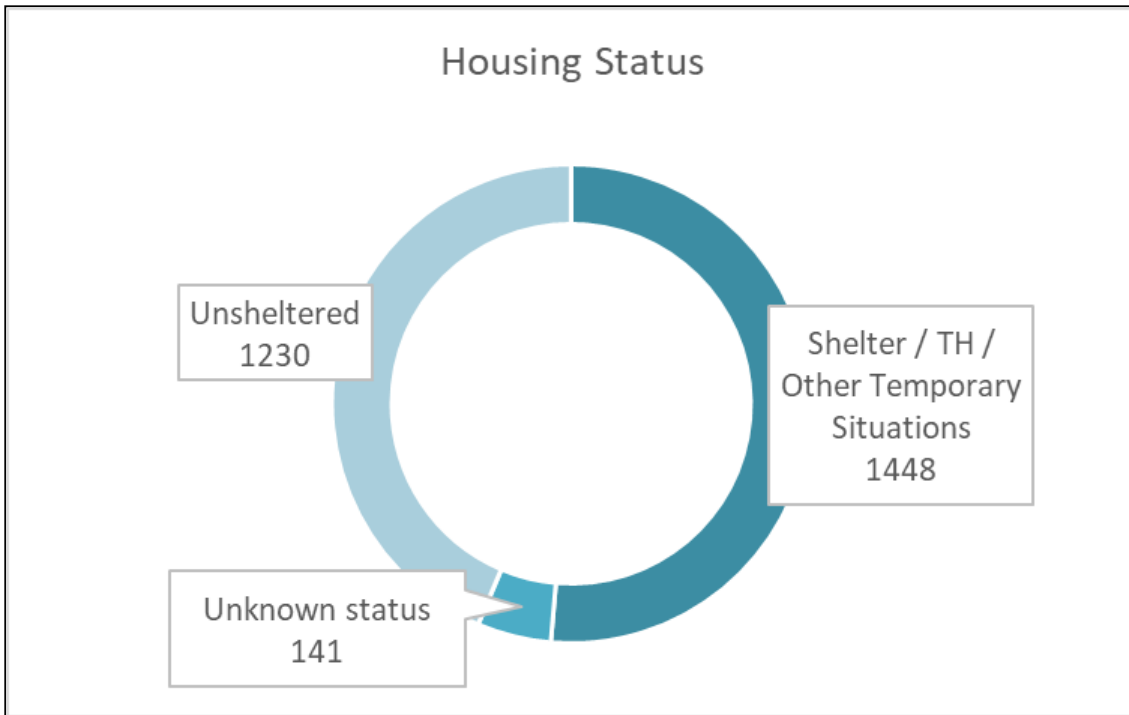
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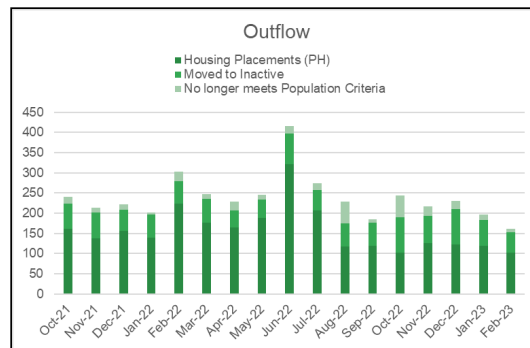
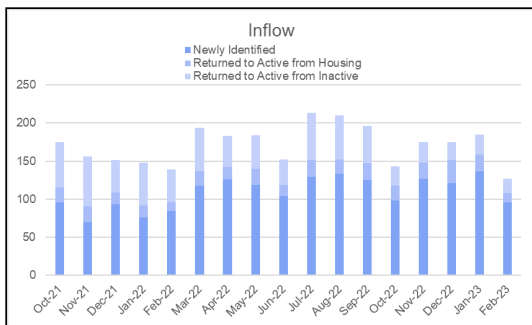
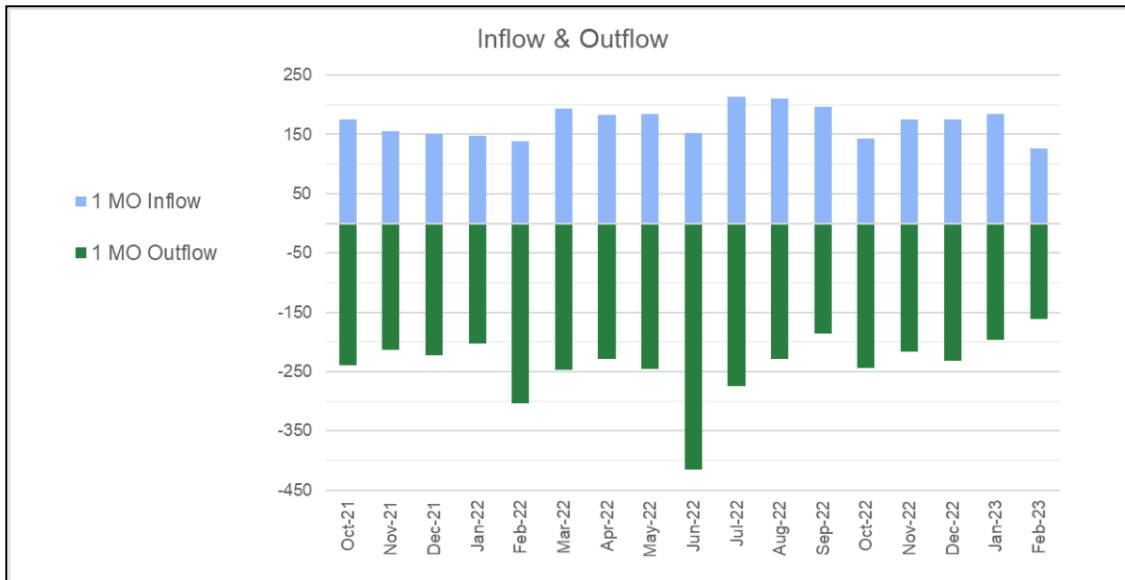


(Note: Quality by-name list data represents adults-only households. Individuals ages 18-24 are only included if they are in a household with another adult aged 25+.)

Takeaway 3: About half (51%) of the chronically homeless people in Multnomah County included in our by-name list are living in sheltered situations, including transitional housing.



However, this percentage is likely not quite accurate — as it is now, unsheltered people are likely underrepresented in our by-name list. We are still doing the work to build out our by-name list, and it will take time to ensure we are truly representing everyone who is unsheltered and chronically homeless in our data.



The by-name list tracks the number of people entering and leaving the definition of chronic homelessness — called inflow and outflow. Examining the data also reveals that newly identified individuals are the largest inflow category by far.

The ability to study inflow so dynamically presents new opportunities for the JOHS. Understanding why people are becoming chronically homeless — and at what rate — is crucial for creating effective solutions.

(Note for reading charts: “Active” means someone is actively experiencing homelessness in Multnomah County; “inactive” means someone with no verifiable presence in the community for more than 90 days, or someone who has been in an institution for 90 days and expects to remain for more than 12 months).

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How is this different from the Point-in-Time Count?

Before the creation of our by-name list, our primary source of data on homelessness in Multnomah County was the biennial [Point-In-Time Count](#), a HUD-mandated process that involves an intensive street count of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night of the year.



The Point-in-Time Count is a complicated process that often results in an undercount, but it is still a critical exercise to understand the current landscape of homelessness in our region. While the real-time data provided by our quality by-name list will be the foundation of much of our data-driven work, the Point-in-Time Count can still help identify any gaps in our real-time data. And, since the point-in-time count is not just focused on people experiencing chronic homelessness, it also will continue to provide a snapshot of a broader population than is tracked in our quality by-name list.

See below for a more detailed comparison between the by-name list and the Point-in-Time Count.

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By-Name List

- Real-time data assessed and reviewed monthly for data quality and completeness
- Reporting period for each snapshot reflects calendar month, and is flexible to any time period
- Ongoing data collection built into service delivery including outreach and engagement

Point-in-Time Count

- One-time count completed once every two years
- Reporting period is a single day
- One-time effort requiring significant coordination

Population Focus

By-Name List

- Data shows how many individual adults are experiencing chronic homelessness with the ability to see changes in the community over time

Point-in-Time Count

- Data provides a one-time snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness overall (not just adult chronic homelessness)

Purpose of the Data

By-Name List

- Client-level data used to better coordinate service delivery and connection of housing solutions
- Data can be used to design solutions to homelessness and evaluate outcomes at the population level.

Point-in-Time Count

- Aggregate data with no built in mechanism to connect those experiencing homelessness to services
- Data set disconnected from service delivery, providing only limited understanding of overall

Defining ‘chronic homelessness’

Our by-name list uses a more expansive definition of “chronic homelessness” than the [definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#). The definition we’re using, also called “Population A,” was created by the Metro Supportive Housing Services Program.



The Population A definition of chronic homelessness is: **“Extremely low-income households with one or more disabling conditions experiencing/at imminent risk of experiencing long-term literal homelessness.”** (Disabling conditions can include a physical, psychological or cognitive disability, a chronic illness or an addiction.)

Unlike the HUD definition, Population A does not require a person to get a third-party diagnosis of their disabling condition to be considered chronically homeless. Additionally, the Population A definition has fewer parameters about length of homelessness and types of living situations than the HUD definition.

Using a more expansive definition of chronic homelessness supports the work outlined in the [Multnomah County Metro Supportive Housing Services Program Local Implementation Plan](#) and represents the intentional inclusion of all adult households experiencing or at imminent risk of long-term homelessness, not just those identified under HUD’s definition of Chronic Homelessness.

Using this different definition does, however, mean the Joint Office’s data won’t be directly comparable to data on chronic homelessness that uses the HUD definition.

How reliable is our by-name list data?

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[Solutions](#), the organization behind Built for Zero. Meeting these standards will be a continual process — put simply, every time we begin a new program or we expand data collection, it can take some time to ensure new systems are established and training is completed.

Data reliability is tracked by the Joint Office in collaboration with Community Solutions. Though some fluctuation each month is expected, the Joint Office continues to work toward improving reliability. Community Solutions tracks data reliability by measuring the difference between the most recent active count and what we would have expected the count to be based on the inflow since the previous month and outflow during the current month. Tracking how reliable our data is ensures we have a consistent and reliable baseline. Community Solutions' standard for good data reliability is that there is no more than a 15% difference between the expected and actual counts, tracked month to month and quarter to quarter. For the past six months of data reporting, both our one- and three-month data reliability has met these standards.

For more information on our data reliability, see our latest progress report on our [Built for Zero webpage](#).



[Find out more](#) about the national initiative of [Built for Zero](#) to end homelessness — city by city, person by person — through building and maintaining quality by-name lists.

What's next?

In the next quarter we aim to move toward expanded data collection and better alignment between our quality by-name list and our [Coordinated Access](#) system.

We will continue sending out a quarterly newsletter, but in the meantime, keep checking [the Built for Zero webpage](#) for monthly updates!

-The Joint Office Data Team