

YWCA Greater Newburyport

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One Night Homeless Count

Full Report

March 2021

Our Mission

YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

YWCA Greater Newburyport is a part of an international women's movement. Across the globe, we have more than 25 million members in 122 countries, including 2 million members in 230 local associations in the United States.

Locally, we address the injustices within our community through safe, affordable and supportive childcare and youth development, housing and wellness opportunities.

Introduction

The YWCA Greater Newburyport conducted the One Night Homeless Count on Wednesday, January 27th, 2021. The goal of the count was to raise awareness of homelessness within the community, as well as to supply HUD with information about the population of homeless individuals in Newburyport, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury and Amesbury. The One Night Homeless Count is performed throughout the country by volunteers and agencies committed to reducing the pain caused by homelessness and ultimately, eliminating homelessness. The count is currently conducted on the last Wednesday of January.

The One Night Homeless count consists of volunteers going out into the community to places known to be inhabited by homeless individuals and families, such as local hotels and motels, and tent encampments. These locations are provided mostly by the local police departments and the local food pantry, Our Neighbors Table. Volunteers also reach out via phone to local housing providers who shelter homeless households, including both shelters and transitional housing programs, local social service agencies and local school districts for their compiled McKinney-Vento data. Typically, we partner with the Amesbury Council on Aging to conduct our count and gather data, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided it was not necessary this year. We utilized volunteers from the YWCA Greater Newburyport community to help make phone calls and acquire the data that was needed. We usually have a group of volunteers go out to the locations provided by police departments to gather data for those group of people who may be living outside in tents or in their cars. However, HUD waived the requirement and given the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic, we did not send out volunteers to do the survey. Instead, we relied on the data and information provided by the police departments for an idea of what an unsheltered count would have looked like.

By using all of these different data points, it is our hope to be able to fully evaluate the scale of the homeless crisis in our area and with these data points, provide a better understanding and context of the crisis. We acknowledge that there may be some duplication using this method instead of the strict HUD method. The greatest potential for duplication comes in the use of the data from the school districts. Therefore, we exclude those school age children identified in the hotels, motels, and transitional housing programs from the count, as they are presumably counted in the school's data.

The official HUD One Night Homeless Count excludes data collected from the school districts and any person living in a hotel or motel who pays for their room, as that doesn't fit their definition of homeless. Most housing advocates would include people living in hotels as homeless for two reasons; the first being that the room may not have a kitchen, which means it is not fit for human habitation, and the second being that the person has no tenancy rights and therefore, can be asked to leave at any time. Both of these reasons would, under other circumstances, define the person as homeless. However, HUD has decided that if a person pays for the room on their own, as opposed to a state voucher, they are not considered homeless.

While our counting method is as comprehensive as possible given time and resources, there is an acknowledgement in our community that the numbers reported here are lower than the actual number of homeless households. We are unable to determine the number of households living in "summer cottages" who will lose their housing come spring, nor are we able to determine the number of individuals "couch surfing." We do believe that by using the data from the schools and social service agencies that we have captured some of these households. For example, we were able to identify individuals who are "couch surfing"/living doubled up with family from our local food pantry, veteran's office, and school districts. However, it is important to remember that school data is limited to children enrolled in school and probably excludes

high school students who are adept at hiding their homeless status. Many adults may also not report their homeless status to an agency and therefore, we lose what could be important data to capturing the bigger picture of homelessness.

Data Report Findings

Reported by Amesbury, Newburyport and Triton School District (Triton numbers only reflect the Salisbury Elementary School)	213
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		Total	Pre-Children	School Aged Children	Women	Men	Older Adults	Veterans
Amesbury	Police Department	0						
	Jeannie Geiger Crisis Center	0						
	ROOF Overhead	4		2	2			
	Emmaus, Inc.	0						
	Amesbury COA	5				5	5	
	Amesbury Veterans Services	2					2	2
	Our Neighbor's Table	4				1	3	
Totals		15	0	2	3	8	7	2
Newbury	Newbury Veterans Services	0						
	Newbury Police	2				2	1	
	Totals		2	0	0	0	2	1
Newburyport	Newburyport Veterans Services	0						
	Newburyport COA	3			1	2	3	
	ROOF Overhead	5		3	2			
	Jeannie Geiger Crisis Center	5	2	2			1	
	Salvation Army	1						
	Newburyport Police	0						
Totals		14	2	5	3	2	2	0
Rowley	Rowley Police	2						
	Rowley Veterans Services	0						
	Totals		2	0	0	0	0	0
Salisbury	Salisbury Veterans	1					1	1
	Salisbury Police	20						
	Salisbury COA	0						
	Hotels/Motels	37		2	5	19		
Totals		58	0	2	5	19	1	1
Chart Totals		91	2	9	11	31	11	3

The number of homeless individuals counted this year was slightly lower than the number of individuals in prior years, 304 compared to 333 in 2020. However, as we stated previously, we typically don't include the children reported from hotels/motels or transitional housing programs, as they are most likely already included in the school data. Therefore, the official count is 293.

We usually compare our numbers to Pettengill House as a test since, in years past, the census from the one night homeless count was close to the number reported by Pettengill. This year, Pettengill reported a number of 607, which is double the number we collected.

Even though the number of homeless adults is slightly lower this year, we did find evidence of some camps in two of the communities (Newbury and Salisbury) reported by the local police departments, however we were not able to go out and witness these communities ourselves. Most of the time if the encampments are not out, they have found a temporary shelter in the local hotel/motels or shelters, especially during the winter season. The other numbers reported by the police departments include those living in their cars.

Police Departments	
Amesbury Police Department	0
Newburyport Police Department	0
Salisbury Police Department	20
Newbury Police Department	2
Rowley Police Department	2
Totals	24

The continuing cooperation that we get from the local agencies and police departments is in part due to conducting the one-night homeless count consistently over time. In general, we now have better relationships with the hotels and motels and while we still undercount the number of people living there, since managers typically insist there are no children in the rooms (which we know from school data to be untrue). Our improved relationship with the hotel/motel managers means that they are more willing to share who is in the rooms. This year, one motel revealed that there are two children currently living in their rooms. However, we know there to be more

children living in hotel/motels due to the information provided from the school districts, as seen in this chart.

3 School District Combined Numbers (Triton, Amesbury, and Newburyport)	Total	In community school in community	Live in community transported out	Out of community transported into community
Live in Shelters/Transitional	0			
Live in Hotels/Winter Rentals	8	4	2	2
Live w/ another family	4			
Living on street or car	0			
Unaccompanied youth	0			
Temp Custody	0			
Other - state placement	0			
Total: Unspecified	201			10
Totals	213	4	2	12

The schools reported 213 homeless students this year which is a lower number of homeless children than in previous years. We assume this is due in part because the schools were working remotely during the time when the census for McKinney Vento was established and had less access to screen children for homeless status.

There was a decrease in our numbers for homelessness in the veteran population, from a count of 6 last year to 3 total this year. Newbury/Rowley veteran services had reported 2 homeless individuals last year but none this year because they were able to get them housed.

Veterans Services	
Newburyport/Amesbury/Salisbury	3
Newbury/Rowley	0
Totals	3

However, there was an increase in the number of homeless older adults reported from local Councils on Aging, from 5 last year to 8 this year. This increase could be due to more

awareness with this population, as well as the lack of affordable housing for older adults. Many local housing authorities have long wait lists and older adults may encounter a situation that requires them to leave their home before they are ready or able to find public housing. Market rate apartments are often too expensive for the type of income they have and assisted/independent living facilities can be quite expensive. In Newburyport, senior households' income were reported at less than half the median income of younger populations. The population of older adults has also increased, as shown in both Newburyport and Salisbury's Housing Production Plan. In Newburyport alone, older adults make up 20% of the population and Salisbury found a 17% increase in adults aged 65 and older between 2000-2015.

Councils on Aging	
Amesbury COA	5
Salisbury COA	0
Newburyport COA	3
Other reported	5
Totals	13

Conclusion

In conclusion, compared to last year, there was a decrease in the number of homeless households, we were able to count across the board, except for the hotels/motels and the Councils on Aging, but that is most likely due to challenges in data collection stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to also keep in mind that Pettengill's number increased from last year's number of 405 to 607. As we already stated, their number is usually the most accurate and therefore, is telling of the gap in our numbers as well as the need for more resources in our community. We have heard, anecdotally that more people are living in their cars. We were unable to verify this because of our inability to conduct a street survey. It is probable that the pandemic forced many more people to seek services from Pettengill than in the past. This demonstrates the challenges in collecting data on homeless individuals and families using the HUD one day method. Many of these households are hidden in cars, living temporarily with friends and families and can only be counted when they self-identify.

There is clearly a need for more affordable housing and emergency shelters, as well as funding for housing vouchers. All of the local housing authorities have extremely long waitlists of up to 2 years and more in some place, and the same goes for housing vouchers. The closest emergency shelters are located in Haverhill (outside the scope of our report). Many shelters are located in bigger, urban cities, and the lack of shelters available, especially for those in emergency situations, as well as affordable housing, seems to push people living in these towns to resort to living in their car, in encampments, or in motels.