

2022 San Joaquin County Cost of Homelessness Survey Summary Report

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Medical Center



**United Way
of San Joaquin County**

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A Letter from Report Sponsors

Understanding that the true cost of homelessness is ultimately immeasurable, especially as it pertains to the amount of emotional trauma experienced by the individuals experiencing homelessness, our agencies recognize the importance and the benefits in the effort to quantify the systematic impact of homelessness in San Joaquin County. Our collective intent for this study was to establish insights that many residents question yet lack the ability to answer.

This report brings enlightening insights regarding the financial impact across the multiple service sectors within the community of care when individuals are unhoused. We were delighted to partner with the University of the Pacific's Center for Business and Policy Research department, who produced a thorough assessment and has provided our community with a relevant baseline of data that can be sourced for future reference and inform future studies.

Moreover, this study outlines opportunities to improve data collection for more meaningful reporting and collective strategic planning. It is a beginning.

The greatest accomplishment that this study demonstrates is the commitment to care from our local community stakeholders. From both public and private sectors, it is clear that significant investments to care for our community members are being made and that the opportunity to leverage the learnings from this study are equally important. Our hope is that all community stakeholders will continue the dialogue created from this evaluation so that we can begin to shift dollars from late interventions to more prevention-related resources and collectively develop solutions to foster economic growth along with health and prosperity for the community members we mutually care for.



Donald J. Wiley
President & CEO
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Kristen Birtwhistle
President/CEO
United Way of San Joaquin

Executive Summary

Understanding the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County allows us to better assess the current situation and determine need, track trends, compare changes over time, evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches, and compare costs. This data can also contribute to policy changes, inform grant applications and strategies, and help groups advocate for more funding and support to address homelessness. To that end, we conducted the first San Joaquin County Costs of Homelessness survey, the results of which are contained in this report. Over 140 organizations assisting people experiencing homelessness were contacted and asked to submit data. Their efforts and responses, along with extrapolated data, provided valuable information on the local costs of homelessness.

Homelessness inflicts serious damage on individuals of all ages, families, and entire communities, both financially and in other ways. Such costs include physical, psychological, productivity, and opportunity costs with no certain monetary equivalent. In California, the government, nonprofits, and healthcare providers have spent billions of dollars to address the issue of homelessness. As of January 2020, it is estimated that 161,500 people are homeless in California, which is 28% of the nation's homeless population. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, California was projected to spend \$7.2 billion on 30 different programs to address homelessness in 2021-2022. This comes to about \$45,000 per person who is homeless.¹

Historically, most spending on homelessness has taken place at the local level, but recent expenditures from the state and federal government reflect their playing a larger role than in the past. This includes one-time funding to local governments, such as that supporting the conversion of former hotels into housing units to be owned and operated locally. To make the most of such investments, a handful of regions throughout the state have conducted cost studies to analyze the amount of money spent addressing homelessness. These studies have enabled further comparison of cost effectiveness, such as between the per-person cost of reactive expenditures to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness on an ad hoc basis, and the per-person cost of proactive expenditures, such as focusing on prevention and the Housing First model, which provides unconditional housing linked to additional services. These studies often demonstrate the effectiveness of investing in such housing.

This report estimates the total monetary cost of homelessness in San Joaquin County in fiscal year 2021 to have been somewhere between \$131.8 million and \$160.2 million. This cost was calculated by conservatively accounting for direct economic costs incurred by local government, nonprofits, and healthcare providers. With just over 2,300 people experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County, the estimated average cost per person was between \$56,800 and \$69,100. In order to improve the accuracy and utility of future cost estimates, this report calls for community stakeholders to track expenditures by intervention and client type. It is through commitment to human dignity, inclusion, and collaboration that we can move closer to achieving zero functional homelessness in San Joaquin County.

¹ <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4521>

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Glossary

Homelessness	A situation in which individuals or families reside in places not meant for human habitation, or in emergency, transitional or supportive housing when they came from the streets, or when they have been evicted from private dwellings, discharged from an institution, or are fleeing domestic violence without the resources or networks needed to obtain housing. ²
Chronic Homelessness	A situation in which the individual experiencing homelessness is living with a disability and homeless for at least 12 months “or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described.” Or the individual experiencing homelessness “has been residing in an institutional care facility for less, including jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria of this definition before entering that facility.” Or a “family with an adult head of household (or, if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.” ³
Permanent Supportive Housing	“Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is permanent housing in which housing assistance (e.g., long-term leasing or rental assistance) and supportive services are provided to assist households with at least one member (adult or child) with a disability in achieving housing stability.” ⁴

²https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

³<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/definition-of-chronic-homelessness/>

⁴<https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-program-components/permanent-housing/permanent-supportive-housing/>

Introduction

Estimating the economic and individual costs of homelessness is challenging, especially because of the tremendous variability in the experiences of those living with homelessness, the different methods of defining and accounting for such costs, the difficulty of collecting diffusely distributed data from the variety of organizations making relevant expenditures, and the fundamental challenge of attempting to monetize the social, physical, medical, behavioral, and personal costs of homelessness that may or may not have a financial equivalent. Still other factors contributing to the difficulty of cost estimation in this field include the diversity of perceived needs and desirable outcomes among those individuals experiencing homelessness, those providing assistance and services to homeless individuals, and those of the community at large. While numbers often prove valuable to help determine the best use of limited resources, the purpose of collecting this information stems from a concern for people and the unquantifiable violence of homelessness in this society. Despite the incompleteness of quantitative analyses, a measure of the costs associated with people experiencing homelessness is a necessary component to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of homeless services. Of course, the more reliable of a measure, the more effective it can be in evaluating and enhancing interventions.

While acknowledging the many difficulties and limitations associated with any measure of the costs of homelessness, this study provides an initial estimate of the costs associated with homelessness in San Joaquin County. We have undertaken to provide this estimate because of the importance of addressing homelessness and a belief that this effort can form the beginning of processes to rigorously monitor resources as well as advance more informed decision making and planning around homelessness. In our focus on potential economic and financial benefits to ending homelessness, we clearly recognize that a fundamental reason behind supporting and funding services for people experiencing homelessness is to alleviate suffering and to improve the lives of people in need. However, we also believe that measurement of the effectiveness of homeless services can assist in ensuring public and private dollars make the greatest impact.

This report begins with a more detailed discussion of the scope and limits of the present analysis through reflection on the findings from other studies on the costs of homelessness. Following that reflection, we present our findings and estimates regarding the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County. The report concludes with discussion of some of the needs for future studies around the costs of homelessness, which will further improve the accuracy and utility of such studies in San Joaquin County.

Studying the Costs of Homelessness

At the outset, it's important to recognize that how we define homelessness determines its measurement. In this project's assessment, and in the literature that we discuss herein, we adopt the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition.⁵ In addition to different categories within HUD's definition, homelessness can be defined in several other ways, including a range of definitions used by other U.S. federal agencies.⁶ However, we use the HUD definition because of its statutory importance, its use in the Point-in-Time Count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness,⁷ and its adoption in many of the more significant grant programs that provide assistance to address homelessness.

Cost studies of homelessness may be utilized in a variety of ways to help resolve and alleviate homelessness, including gaining a better understanding of the current system of services and assistance, informing program and project assessments, and assisting community efforts to secure additional funding to address homelessness. In that context, this study sought to determine a basic initial estimate of the overall costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County.

There are a wide range of studies about the costs of homelessness. For example, a 2009 study, *Where We Sleep: The Costs of Housing and Homelessness in Los Angeles*, focused on studying "the public costs for people in supportive housing compared to similar people that are

⁵ The HUD definition of the literally homeless was defined in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, passed in 2009 available at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-A/part-91>

⁶ For a discussion of the definitions of homelessness see Sullivan, A.A. (2022) "What Does it Mean to be Homeless? How Definitions Affect Homelessness Policy", *Urban Affairs Review*, May 3, 2022. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874221095185>

⁷ <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/>

homeless” in order to understand the effectiveness of the status quo versus investing in more supportive housing.⁸ The *Where We Sleep* study actually involved a quantitative element that engaged with information regarding over 10,000 people experiencing homelessness, as well as a qualitative element that focused on an in-depth analysis of four people experiencing homelessness.⁹ The quantitative study found that while the public expended about \$2,897 per person, per month on individuals experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County, public expenditures when providing supportive housing typically cost \$605 per person, per month—about 1/5th the costs.¹⁰ The qualitative study similarly found improvements in the quality of life for the four individuals and societal cost savings through provision of permanent supportive housing compared to the costs of leaving individuals unsheltered or in emergency shelters.¹¹ Thus, among other, related findings, the 2009 study determined that “[p]ublic costs go down when individuals are no longer homeless” and, resultantly, recommended that Los Angeles County “[i]ncrease the supply of supportive housing.”¹² Thus, the *Where We Sleep* study concluded that “permanent supportive housing is the most effective way to end chronic homelessness.”¹³ Indeed, studies regularly find that people experiencing chronic homelessness “are the most costly and present the most complex challenges of all the homeless populations.”¹⁴

A 2015 study, *Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness In Silicon Valley*,¹⁵ provides another example of cost benefits from providing permanent supportive housing to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. The *Home Not Found* study sought to identify characteristics of the homeless population “to guide strategies for stabilizing their lives, improving their wellbeing and reducing public costs for their care.” The study analyzed “comprehensive cross-sector information about the entire population of residents who

⁸ <https://economicrt.org/publication/where-we-sleep/>

⁹ <http://homeforgoodla.org/app/uploads/2021/03/2009-Homelessness-Cost-Study.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://economicrt.org/publication/where-we-sleep/>

¹¹ <http://homeforgoodla.org/app/uploads/2021/03/2009-Homelessness-Cost-Study.pdf>

¹² <https://economicrt.org/publication/where-we-sleep/>

¹³ <http://homeforgoodla.org/app/uploads/2021/03/2009-Homelessness-Cost-Study.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://homeforgoodla.org/app/uploads/2021/03/2009-Homelessness-Cost-Study.pdf>

¹⁵ Daniel Flaming, Halil Toros, and Patrick Burns (2015) of the Economic Roundtable, with support from staff at Destination: Home and in a variety of other non-profit and governmental entities

experienced homelessness in Santa Clara County at any point during a six-year period – a total of 104,206 individuals.” With records “linked across all justice system, health care, social service, nonprofit, and housing agencies,” the study recognized that “this is the largest and most comprehensive body of information that has been assembled in the United States to understand the public costs of homelessness.”¹⁶

Further, a June 2017 report, *Homelessness in Orange County: The Costs to Our Community*,¹⁷ provided some inspiration for this study of the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County. The study recognized that, “[i]n addition to the devastating and traumatizing physical and psychological costs of homelessness to those individuals and families who experience it, homelessness imposes considerable economic costs on the communities in which it exists.”¹⁸ Ultimately, the *Homelessness in Orange County* study focused on the economic costs of homelessness.

Indeed, the *Homelessness in Orange County* study sought to serve two purposes: 1) “to estimate the economic expenditures on homelessness that have accrued to the county, its 34 municipalities, and its nongovernmental service agencies, including hospitals and non-profits providing services to this population;” and 2) “to assess the extent to which the costs of serving the homeless vary across the spectrum of those living on the streets and in shelters versus those living in alternative forms of housing.” The study collected data from 5 main sources: 1) the County of Orange, 2) local municipalities within the county, 3) hospitals operating within the county (through the Hospital Association of Southern California and Cal Optima), 4) a sample of non-governmental agencies, and 5) a sample of individuals experiencing homelessness. Whereas questionnaires were sent to the various organizations, the study conducted structured, in-person survey interviews with a sample of 252 individuals experiencing homelessness to better understand causes, service utilization, and costs at an individual level. As recognized in the study, “[g]iven the breadth and volume of data assembled,

¹⁶ https://destinationhomesv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/er_homenotfound_report_6.pdf, page 2.

¹⁷ Reference David A. Snow and Professor Rachel E. Goldberg (2017).

¹⁸ <https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/united-way-cost-study-homelessness-2017-report.pdf>, page 5.

this is clearly one of the most comprehensive studies of the public costs of homelessness in the United States.”¹⁹

All these studies support the idea that permanent supportive housing appears more cost effective for the most “vulnerable and acutely distressed individuals” experiencing homelessness and that a range of housing and support interventions are necessary for the variety of individuals experiencing homelessness, including housing subsidies, bridge housing, rapid re-housing, emergency shelters, and transitional housing. The cost savings and program needs of an individual and/or family vary considerably depending on their situation. Understanding those needs and the context of the demand for other supportive services is therefore an important dimension to assessment of the costs of homelessness.

Unfortunately, as an initial effort, the present study was not able to assess the different needs of homeless individuals receiving various services in the community. Instead, this analysis’ scope was limited to compiling information on the expenditures currently being made to alleviate and assist all types of homelessness. While the resulting data lacks the specificity of other methodologies, it demonstrates significant costs and suggests a need to pursue and invest in more nuanced interventions rather than expanding ad hoc services alone.

Estimated Costs of Homelessness in San Joaquin County

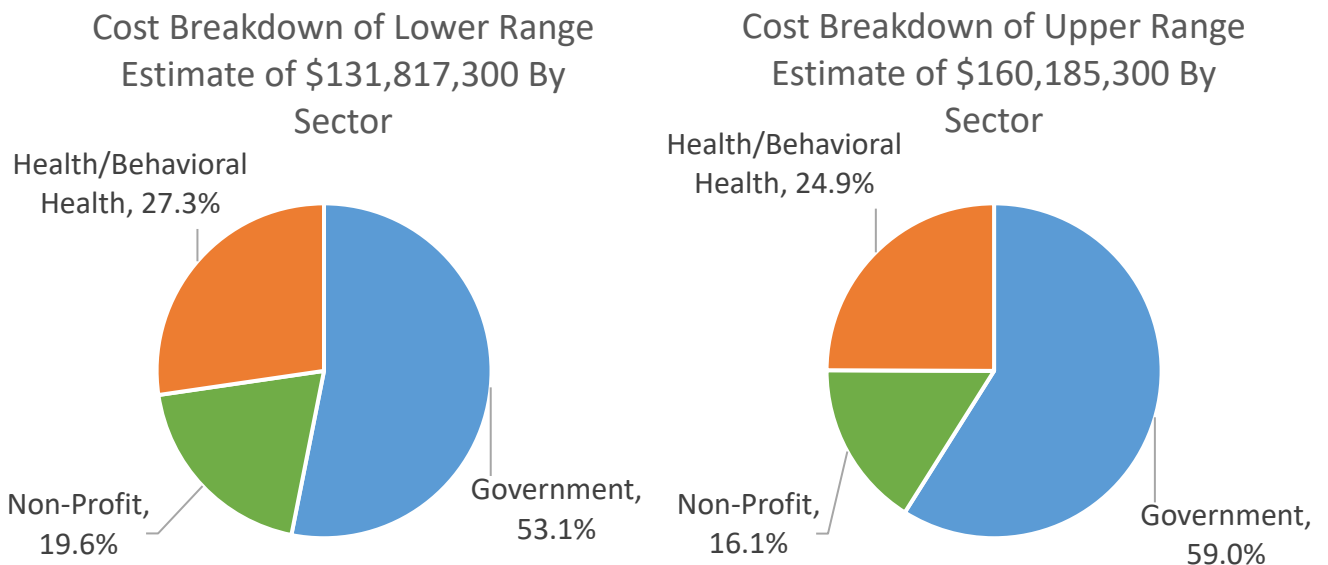
Although the population varies over time, homelessness remains a significant issue in San Joaquin County—and understanding the costs associated with this population remains important for many reasons. This study of the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County commenced in December 2021 and involved contacting over 140 organizations serving people experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County and requesting that they complete an online survey. After several months of data collection, this study received a total of 69 survey responses, 41 of which were complete. Thus, the survey realized a nearly 30% response rate, which should be improved in future surveys. Governmental entities other than health/behavioral health facilities comprised about 34 percent of complete survey responses

¹⁹ <https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/united-way-cost-study-homelessness-2017-report.pdf>, pages 5-6.

(14), non-profit organizations other than health/behavioral health facilities comprised about 54 percent of complete survey responses (22), and about 12 percent of complete survey responses came from health/behavioral health facilities (5).²⁰

In terms of governmental entities, three cities responded to the survey, including two of the largest in the county. Multiple San Joaquin County agencies responded to the survey as well. While several hospitals and other health service providers responded to the survey, responses had to be estimated for others. Similarly, although many other non-profit organizations assisting homeless individuals also responded, more organizations did not respond to the survey. Thus, while this analysis provides useful insights from a snapshot of organizations assisting people experiencing homelessness in the community, it is a qualified estimate based on a limited sample and, as such, we recognize the provisional nature of its estimated total costs of homelessness within San Joaquin County.

Still, the responses received demonstrate the large value of expenditures from just a sample of organizations in the area, and, using a variety of methods, we have attempted to extrapolate findings to estimate a range of costs incurred from homelessness in San Joaquin County overall. It is important to note that even the range of estimated costs does not include all costs of homelessness. (For example, costs do not include productivity and opportunity costs,



²⁰ See the Appendix for a list of survey respondents.

reductions in property values, decreased revenue from reduced shopping and tourism, and private property damage related to homelessness.)

Overall, after adding reported costs of between \$107,448,900 and \$125,439,900 with extrapolated costs of between \$24,368,300 and \$34,745,400, this study estimates the cost of homelessness in San Joaquin County as falling somewhere between \$131,817,300 and \$160,185,300.

The 2022 San Joaquin Continuum of Care Point-in-Time Count found that 2,319 individuals experienced homelessness in San Joaquin County—1,355 of whom were unsheltered— during the final ten days of January 2022.²¹ Therefore, assuming 2,319 people experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County, the estimated average annual cost incurred per person is between \$56,800 and \$69,100, which is slightly more than \$45,000 per person estimated by United Way in their study examining the cost of homelessness in Orange County, California five years ago.²²

While multiple organizations providing housing options for people otherwise experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County were contacted for per person cost estimates of a variety of housing options, this study was unable to secure reliable cost estimates for these options at this time. Still, the overall per person cost estimates for people experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County exceeds the *Homelessness in Orange County* study's estimated \$51,587 average per person cost of permanent supportive housing, which further supports the potential cost effectiveness of investing in more permanent supportive housing in San Joaquin County, particularly for chronically homeless people who incur a disproportionate amount of overall costs. At \$51,587 per person, it would cost \$119,630,253 to support the estimated 2,319 individuals experiencing homelessness with permanent supportive housing, which is between \$12,187,000 and \$40,555,000 less than the costs incurred under the status quo.

²¹ <http://www.sanjoaquinoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PIT-Count-Report-2022-FINAL.pdf>

²² <https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/united-way-cost-study-homelessness-2017-report.pdf>

That said, permanent supportive housing or other housing options may not provide the most cost-effective option for all people experiencing homelessness, and future studies should identify the costs associated with a variety of housing and support options for the diversity of needs of people experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County. To better understand the diversity of needs, future studies of the costs of homelessness should work with people currently experiencing homelessness, such as through surveys, interviews, or focus groups that develop an understanding of their experiences, needs, and suggestions for addressing homelessness in the county. Policy options and investment priorities should be developed with multiple community stakeholders and experts in this area.

For now, according to a 2020 study of costs of various housing options in Kern County, the average annual per bed cost of permanent supportive housing was estimated at \$7,530, which suggests the potential for even more cost savings than with the 2017 estimate of such costs in Orange County. The 2020 Kern County study also suggests cost savings with an average annual per bed cost of \$5,534 for rapid re-housing, \$10,857 for transitional housing, \$6,246 for emergency shelter, and \$13,140 for bridge housing.²³

Further, a 2021 study of the costs of a variety of housing types across the United States found that the modal cost of providing shelter was \$14,064 per bed for single adults and that providing services along with shelter, such as behavioral and mental health services, case management, or legal services, cost an average of \$25,806 per bed in 2015. Additionally, the study found that permanent supportive housing cost, on average, \$32,511 per unit.²⁴ All of the aforementioned costs, even when adjusted for inflation to 2022, appear much less than the average annual per person cost of homelessness of between \$56,800 and \$69,100 currently estimated in San Joaquin County. Thus, the potential cost savings of providing more housing options suggest that future studies should aim to develop a better understanding of the costs

²³ <https://bkrhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CBA-Report.pdf>

²⁴ <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Estimated-Revenue-of-the-Nonprofit-Homeless-Shelter-Industry-in-the-United-States-Implications-for-a-More-Comprehensive-Approach-to-Unmet-Shelter.pdf>

of a variety of housing options in San Joaquin County to compare with the costs of the status quo, which may help develop more cost-effective investments and policy options.

Estimating Governmental Costs

While government is estimated to have incurred between 53 and 59 percent of costs, non-profit respondents incurred between 16 and 20 percent, and health/behavioral health facilities is estimated to have incurred between 25 and 27 percent of costs. With regard to reported expenditures from agency budgets for fiscal year 2021, for a variety of reasons, many respondents mentioned difficulty obtaining reliable information. The COVID-19 pandemic certainly caused some organizations to not have data consistent with prior years, and other organizations do not possess the ability to distinguish costs spent on homelessness. While likely a significant underestimate of governmental spending in San Joaquin County, governmental entities that responded to the survey reported spending over \$38 million. Additionally, agencies reported spending approximately \$18 million in additional funding, such as Community Development Block Grants, federal COVID-19 relief funds, state CARES grant funds, and other grants, although not all agencies reported one-time expenditures. Thus, agency respondents estimated spending over \$56 million overall on homelessness.

Still, many agencies did not respond to the survey, and many of the agencies that did respond reported difficulties obtaining data. For example, one agency reported expenditures for the 2021-2022 year instead of 2020-2021, and another agency excluded one-time COVID funding and provided 2020 calendar year expenditures rather than expenditures in the 2021 fiscal year. Thus, while the reported data no doubt improves the understanding of the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County, a standardized data collection and reporting methodology would enhance accuracy and provide the ability to make more accurate estimates and related policy recommendations. Similar to some of the more robust studies of the costs of homelessness, this study recommends that future studies consult with an advisory committee made up of experts and practitioners from a variety of organizations involved in addressing homelessness in San Joaquin County, which can assist with development of a standard data collection and tracking system. Additionally, individuals experiencing homelessness must be

included in future studies, such as through focus groups, interviews, and/or a community advisory board to help direct, review, contextualize, disseminate, and utilize study findings.

For now, to help supplement the reported costs of homelessness from the survey, this study extrapolated reported data to jurisdictions that did not report and included data from a prior study of the costs of homelessness completed by the County of San Joaquin government. With regard to the method of extrapolating data regarding the costs of homelessness in cities that did not respond to the survey, including those that did not have the ability to estimate costs, this study added together the reported costs of homelessness in the respondent cities, then divided this cost by the total number of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness in the respondent cities according to the 2022 San Joaquin Continuum of Care Point-in-Time Count. Depending on whether reported one-time funding is included, this method produced a cost of between about \$17,454 and \$35,145 per person experiencing homelessness, which is in line with prior studies of the costs of homeless.²⁵ Applying this range to the counted homeless population of other cities produced a total cost of between about \$6,318,500 and \$12,722,400.

The County of San Joaquin government previously completed an analysis of spending on homelessness during the 2021 fiscal year, which found total expenditures of \$30,540,195. The County's prior study included a different sample of organizational costs, including some expenses not captured within responses to the survey produced for this report (e.g., Sheriff, Public Works, grant expenditures from county government). To incorporate the County's findings, this report utilized the County's \$30,540,195 cost estimate as a base for calculations of costs incurred by county government. Responses from County departments that responded to the survey were added to the base from the prior study when they were not already expressly included in the \$30,540,195 figure. Ultimately, this method produced a total cost for the county government of \$45,800,306. Thus, after adding estimated county government costs with other estimated and extrapolated local government costs in San Joaquin County, overall total

²⁵ <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/grandjury/reports/2009-2010/HomelessReport.pdf>

estimated costs of homelessness incurred by local government in San Joaquin County ranges from about \$69,870,000 to \$94,264,900, depending on whether one-time funding is included.²⁶

At the state level, to estimate the costs incurred by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), this study estimated the costs incurred per unsheltered person by dividing the reported \$10,040,000 in costs incurred by Caltrans in 2017²⁷ by the reported number of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness statewide in 2017 (91,642).²⁸ (This resulted in a statewide Caltrans cost of \$109.56 per unsheltered homeless person.) To estimate the fiscal year 2021 expenditures by Caltrans in San Joaquin County, this study multiplied the \$109.56 estimate by the number of unsheltered persons last counted prior to fiscal year 2021, which was 1,558 people in 2019.²⁹ Ultimately, this produced a conservative cost estimate of \$170,689 in expenditures by Caltrans for homelessness in San Joaquin County, which is in line with the \$160,000 in such expenditures reported in 2017.³⁰ This study does not include any other state or federal costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County; however, future studies may benefit from working with federal and state stakeholders to secure such information.

Estimating Non-Profit Costs

Regarding non-profit expenditures on homelessness, non-profit organizations responding to the survey reported serving over 190,000 clients experiencing homelessness in San Joaquin County.³¹ The non-profit respondents reported spending an estimated total of \$25,786,310 on homelessness.

Table 1 Percent of San Joaquin County Non-Profit Respondents Offering Service

Type of Service	% Offering	Type of Service	% Offering
Clothing / Clothes Closet	81.8%	Health Services	45.5%
Personal Hygiene Services/ Supplies	77.3%	Transitional Housing	40.9%
Referral Service	77.3%	Meal Center / Dining Center	36.4%

²⁶ State and federal government costs are not directly included in these costs.

²⁷ <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/risk-strategic-management/documents/mile-marker/mm-2018-q1-homeless-camps-a11y.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.sanjoaquinccoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/San-Joaquin-Continuum-of-Care-Report-on-the-2019-Point-in-Time-Count.pdf>

³⁰ <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/stockton/cal-trans-fencing-off-property-around-stockton-freeway-homeless-forced-out/103-501170957>

³¹ Rather than representing over 190,000 unique individuals, there could be significant overlap between the organizations' counts of clients served.

Food Pantry / Food Bank	59.1%	Rapid Re-Housing	27.3%
Crisis Service	59.1%	Permanent Supportive Housing	22.7%
Laundry/Cleaning	50.0%	Ltd Duration Rehabilitative Housing	18.2%
Shelter/Emergency Shelter	50.0%	Health Services	45.5%

The survey provided insight into the services provided by non-profits, as well as utilization rates for the services. For example, the survey found that eight of the nine organizations who provide transitional housing note that this service is utilized by persons experiencing homelessness. All of the respondents who offered laundry and cleaning services noted that this service was utilized by people experiencing homelessness; however, half of all survey respondents noted that this was not a service they provided.

Regarding services offered by the majority of non-profit respondents, about 82 percent of non-profit respondents reported providing utilized clothing/clothes closet supplies and services (one respondent provides the service but reported that it goes unutilized by people experiencing homelessness), 77 percent reported offering a utilized referral service, 77 percent reported offering utilized personal hygiene services or supplies, 59 percent offered a utilized crisis service, 59 percent reported offering utilized food pantry/food bank services and supplies, and 50 percent reported offering utilized shelter/emergency shelter services.

Additionally, a few non-profit organizations mentioned offering utilized services that were not included in the survey, such as intensive case management, hotel vouchers for those who have children and cannot get into a shelter, financial support for reunification with family, street outreach, identification and transportation services, and services for homeless youth and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking/sexual exploitation. Subsequent surveys might benefit from including these additional services in order to determine the extent to which they are offered and utilized to facilitate assessment of the availability/adequacy of the services being provided relative to demand.

Estimating Health/Behavioral Health Care Facility Costs

Health/behavioral health care facility respondents reported serving nearly 260,000 patients, including an estimated 13,737 who were experiencing homelessness.³² Unfortunately, most health/behavioral health care facility respondents did not provide patient counts and average costs per patient for each service. As mentioned above with regard to governmental entities, this study recommends that future studies form an advisory committee to help with data collection efforts, as well as a community advisory board made up of individuals experiencing homelessness and organizational representatives from a variety of non-profits working in this space. Still, from what was reported, the estimated average costs per patient varied regarding the variety of services.

Overall, health/behavioral health care facility respondents reported spending an estimated total of \$18,111,100 on homelessness, with \$2,292,900 of this spent on emergency/crisis services, \$13,311,400 spent on inpatient/24-hour services, \$1,329,300 spent on outpatient/clinic services, \$525,000 spent on field services (e.g., EMS, Home Visiting, Mobile Response), and \$652,400 spent on other health and behavioral health services.

Since a majority of hospitals did not respond to the survey, this study adapted the cost estimate methodology utilized by United Way in their 2017 study examining the cost of homelessness in Orange County, California.³³ First, we developed average cost estimates for inpatient and emergency services from 2020 and 2021 data reported to the California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) by each non-respondent hospital, then multiplied those average costs by the number of patients experiencing homelessness reported to the HCAI by each non-respondent hospital in 2021.³⁴ This methodology was repeated with respondent hospitals in order to compare the calculated results with the results reported by respondent

³² Similar to the number of clients, the number of patients could reflect significant overlap between the organizations' counts of patients served rather than representing 13,737 unique individuals experiencing homelessness.

³³ <https://www.unitedwayoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/united-way-cost-study-homelessness-2017-report.pdf>

³⁴ <https://report.hcai.ca.gov/>

hospitals, which ultimately found that the two methodologies produced a similar cost estimate overall (+/- less than 10 percent of a difference).

Thus, for non-respondent hospitals, the calculated estimated costs were adjusted by +/- 10% to account for estimated variance and then added to the other health care expenditures. It is important to reemphasize that the reported expenditures represent a fraction of total costs of homelessness. Many organizations did not respond to the survey, and many organizations that did respond did not report data that could be included or reported incomplete data for a variety of reasons.

Lessons for Future Studies of the Costs of Homelessness

Homelessness is a major challenge. Fortunately, progress is being made and, “[s]ince 2019, there have been unprecedented local investments in the expansion of shelter, supportive housing, and services” according to the 2022 San Joaquin Continuum of Care Point-in-Time Count Local Report.³⁵ Further, since the adoption of the San Joaquin Community Response to Homelessness San Joaquin County Strategic Plan in 2020, communities have collaborated for “coordinated emergency and winter shelter efforts in Lodi, Manteca, and Tracy,” for “over 250 new units of affordable housing,” and for “788 new shelter beds” countywide.³⁶ And, in pertinent part, the April 2022 Impact Report regarding the San Joaquin Community Response to Homelessness San Joaquin County Strategic Plan called for a study to “[i]dentify costs of homelessness v. costs savings through best practices,” which this report aims to commence.³⁷ Ultimately, while this report recognizes the need to improve data collection processes and enhance overall study methodology in the future, the preliminary estimates of this report advance the April 2022 Impact Report’s goals and plans.

Although over 140 organizations were identified and invited to respond to the survey, many organizations making expenditures on homelessness were likely not identified and contacted.

³⁵ <http://www.sanjoaquinccoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PIT-Count-Report-2022-FINAL.pdf>.

³⁶ <http://www.sanjoaquinccoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SJCoC-Strategic-Plan-Impact-Report-2020-2021.pdf>.

³⁷ <http://www.sanjoaquinccoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SJCoC-Strategic-Plan-Impact-Report-2020-2021.pdf>.

Even if all relevant organizations were contacted, however, the study's 30% response rate could be improved, and additional costs of homelessness could be included in future surveys. Due to the inherent difficulty in estimating, coupled with the limitations of the survey methodology utilized for this study, the significant personal, familial, and societal cost, including physical, psychological, productivity, and opportunity costs of homelessness, were not estimated or discussed in detail, nor were direct costs incurred by federal government and state government, other than the estimated expenditures of Caltrans.

As a matter of practicality, this study focused on public costs of homelessness experienced by local governmental entities, a selection of non-profit organizations, and healthcare providers operating within San Joaquin County. Future renditions of the survey might incorporate some of the lessons learned from this iteration, such as by including more organizations (e.g., federal and state agencies), by accounting for more costs (e.g., personal cost assessments informed by interviews with individuals experiencing homelessness), by using different means to encourage participation and engage stakeholders (e.g., a community advisory board, technical advisory committee), by collecting data regarding costs experienced by category of homelessness and by category of intervention, and by recognizing and surveying for additional services provided by non-profit organizations to determine the extent to which they are offered and utilized in order to make some assessment of the availability/adequacy of the services being provided relative to demand (e.g., intensive case management, hotel vouchers for those who cannot get into a shelter and have children, financial support for reunification with family, street outreach, identification and transportation services, and services for homeless youth and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking/sexual exploitation). Prior studies also highlight the need to better "identify homeless residents, understand homeless trends, and identify high-cost, persistently homeless residents who should be given priority access to housing," such as by recommending that service providers (e.g., hospitals, jails) "should make systematic, pro-active efforts to assess and document the housing status of patients and inmates."³⁸

³⁸ https://destinationhomesv.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/er_homenotfound_report_6.pdf, page 4.

Indeed, a standardized data collection and reporting methodology would enhance accuracy and provide the ability to make more accurate estimates and related policy recommendations. Further, future studies of the costs of homelessness should learn from people currently experiencing homelessness, such as through a community advisory board, surveys, interviews, or focus groups that develop an understanding of their experiences, needs, and suggestions for addressing homelessness in the county. In addition to expanding the scope of organizations surveyed and surveying people experiencing homelessness as well, future surveys should consider methods of improving response rates. For example, similar to the best practices of more robust studies, this study recommends that future studies form an advisory committee made up of experts and leaders in a variety of organizations operating in this space to assist with data tracking and collection, as well as a community advisory board made up of individuals currently or formerly experiencing homelessness and practitioners working in this space to direct, review, contextualize, disseminate, and utilize study findings. Beyond studying overall costs, identifying the most cost-effective options for a variety of populations of people experiencing homelessness is an important component for incorporation into future studies.

The estimated range of costs this study provides is likely a conservative estimate that will become more accurate with greater data tracking, stakeholder engagement, and improved response rates. Nonetheless, with fiscal year 2021 expenditures on homelessness in San Joaquin County estimated to be somewhere between \$131,817,300 and \$160,185,300, the scale of resources warrants a considered reflection on ways to leverage areas that are working well and improve those that are not.

APPENDIX: List of Survey Respondents

In addition to thanking the County of San Joaquin government for sharing results of their prior study regarding the costs of homelessness, we would like to thank the following organizations for responding to the survey and for helping to increase the understanding of the costs of homelessness in San Joaquin County.³⁹ This report would not be possible without their voluntary assistance and informative contributions.

Public Agency Survey Respondents

1. City of Tracy
2. City of Stockton
3. Housing Authority County of San Joaquin
4. San Joaquin County Human Services
5. San Joaquin County Superior Court
6. San Joaquin County Department of Child Support Services
7. San Joaquin County Employment and Economic Development Department/WorkNet
8. Office of Emergency Services - San Joaquin County
9. San Joaquin County Health Care Services Administration
10. San Joaquin County Public Defender
11. San Joaquin County Environmental Health Department
12. City of Escalon
13. Registrar of Voters
14. Parks & Recreation

Non-Profit Survey Respondents

1. Stockton Shelter for the Homeless
2. HOPE Ministries
3. Compassion Residio Services Inc
4. Women's Center-Youth & Family Services
5. The Salvation Army, Lodi Corps & Hope Harbor Shelter
6. Second Harvest of the Greater Valley
7. Stockton Self-Help Housing

³⁹ Please note organizational names are listed as reported on survey responses.

8. Love INC of Manteca
9. Valley Community SDA
10. Stockton 209 Cares
11. MGRM (Manteca Gospel Rescue Mission)
12. The Good Samaritan Training Center
13. Central Valley Low Income Housing Corp.
14. Strong Foundational Affordable Living, LLC
15. McHenry House Tracy Family Shelter
16. Gospel Center Rescue Mission, Inc.
17. Wings Of Healing Ministries
18. San Joaquin AIDS Foundation
19. Pregnancy Help Center of Manteca
20. Alpha Omega Ministries
21. Tracy Interfaith Ministries
22. Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin

Health/Behavioral Health Care Facility Survey Respondents

1. Community Medical Centers, Inc.
2. Kaiser Permanente - Manteca Medical Center
3. Behavioral Health Center St Joseph's
4. St Joseph's Medical Center
5. ProTransport-1