

Counting People in Structures for the PIT Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of households and people experiencing homelessness. When counting people sleeping in recreational vehicles (RVs), tents, or other locations that have low visibility, the CoC must derive an estimate based on how many people are sleeping in those situations. There are two primary methods for gathering this information:



Method 1 - Census. Talk to every household sleeping in structures to determine whether they are homeless and how many people are sleeping in that situation.



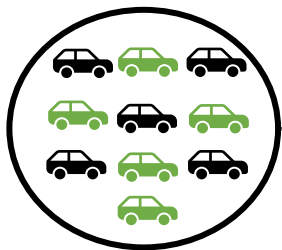
Method 2 - Sampling Approach. Sample each type of sleeping situation and extrapolate based on a sample to determine a PIT count estimate.

Many CoCs may choose to use **Method 2** to estimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in RVs, tents, and other locations with low visibility due to safety or logistical considerations. To implement **Method 2**, CoCs should work with a local university or researcher to develop a sampling approach as it is critical this is done correctly.

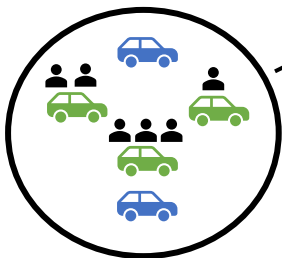
CoCs can follow the steps listed below when setting standards for how to count structures for the PIT count. These standards apply to vehicles but can be adapted to other sleeping locations, like tents or sheds:

1. Identify criteria that can be used to determine when a vehicle might be housing a household experiencing homelessness. These criteria can be factors such as where the vehicle is parked, whether the windows are covered, whether it appears to be full of household belongings and living necessities (e.g., clothing), etc.
2. Establish an approach for count enumerators. For example, knock on the window of every other vehicle. This should be done by more experienced enumerators who can use good judgment about when and how to safely approach a vehicle.
3. Determine how many vehicles that met the criteria for being counted had people in them and in how many of *those* vehicles people were experiencing homelessness.
4. Count all vehicles that meet the criteria for inclusion and then extrapolate based on the data derived from steps 1-3.

Below is an example of using the four steps to count vehicles:

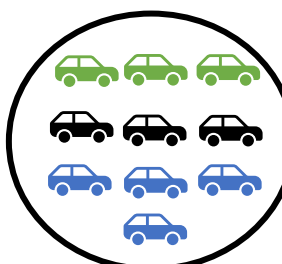


Suppose there is an area in a CoC with a lot of parked cars. On the night of the count, that area has 10 cars that meet the CoC's criterion (*Step 1*). PIT count enumerators are instructed by the CoC to survey **every other car** (*Step 2*).



After surveying those five cars, enumerators determine that **one car** is empty, and **one car** has people in it who are not experiencing homelessness (*Step 3*).

The other **three cars** have one, two, and three people in them experiencing homelessness. The average household size of the sample of three cars is two people.



Since two in every five cars surveyed were empty or did not have people experiencing homelessness, the CoC should **exclude two of every five cars that meet the CoC's criterion in this area**. From the 10 cars identified in this area, this means **four are excluded**. This leaves six cars: **three that were surveyed** and **three that were not**.

The CoC can use all this information to extrapolate the total PIT count for these cars which is **12 people** (*Step 4*): six (the extrapolated number of cars with people experiencing homelessness) multiplied by two (the sample's average household size).

Do you have questions about counting structures on the PIT count?

Email your questions to HICPITCount@hud.gov.