A Snapshot of

UNACCOMPANIED WOMEN

Experiencing Homelessness in the District

All data, unless noted, is from the 2017 Point-in-Time Enumeration for the District of Columbia.

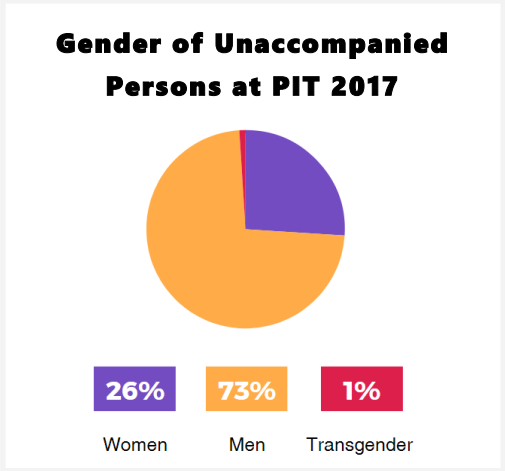
UNACCOMPANIED WOMEN, adult women who are single and who are not experiencing homelessness as part of a family unit, make up **26% or just over one quarter of all unaccompanied persons**. There were 882 unaccompanied women counted during the 2017 Point-in-Time (PIT) Enumeration in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and in unsheltered locations across the District.

AGES

- **79%** of unaccompanied women are over the age of 45.
- 31% are between the ages of 45 to 55;
- 28% are between the ages of 55 to 61; and
- 20% are 62 years old or older.

DISABILITY & HEALTH

- **69%** of unaccompanied women report at least **one disabling condition**; 24% have one condition, 19% have two, and 25% have three or more conditions.
- Unaccompanied women report **severe mental Illness** at higher rates than their male counterparts, with **49%** of women compared to 30% of men.
- Rates that unaccompanied women report **physical disability** (20%), **a chronic health problem** (20%), or that they **are living with HIV/AIDS** (4%) are comparable to their male counterparts.



EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO THIS EPISODE OF HOMELESSNESS

- **42%** report a history of **domestic violence**.
- **11%** report they are homeless **because they fled domestic violence**.
- 27% report they have lived in an institutional setting at some point.
- 18% report having been in foster care at some point in their childhood.

Women's Dedicated Inventory

The total number of shelter beds and housing units for unaccompanied women has increased, though the **share dedicated to women** out of the total system capacity **has gone down**.

One-quarter of emergency shelter beds dedicated to women for FY2017 are only activated during **hypothermia season** (Nov. '16 to March '17).

Year	Emergency Shelter (ES) Beds	% of Total ES Capacity	Transitional Housing (TH) Beds	% of Total TH Capacity	Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Units	% of Total PSH Capacity	Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Units	% of Total RRH Capacity	Total Women's Dedicated Capacity	% of Total Capacity
2012	354	30.2%	272	9.2%	146	2.2%	-	-	**772**	**5.2%**
2013	358	8.1%	241	8.6%	130	2.0%	-	-	**729**	**4.9%**
2014	358	6.0%	251	11.8%	122	1.9%	-	-	**731**	**4.3%**
2015	378	6.9%	237	10.9%	158	2.7%	-	-	**773**	**4.7%**
2016	378	5.5%	241	10.8%	158	2.3%	10	.3%	**787**	**3.4%**
2017	393	5.9%	194	11.9%	241	3.7%	10	.2%	**838**	**3.9%**

The above table, Women's Dedicated Inventory by Year, displays housing and shelter inventory from the Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) for the District. The HIC is required by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Continuum of Care grants.

How the Gender Breakout Affects Population-Level Reporting

The table below displays the following: (1) the percent share for each subpopulation or disability indicator out of the total number of unaccompanied adults experiencing homelessness; and (2) the rates of each indicator within each gender.

These data highlight a problem when examining disability and subpopulation characteristics in the population of unaccompanied adults as a whole, as they do not adequately describe the experiences of unaccompanied women. In particular, women are experiencing notably higher rates of mental illness and much higher rates of experiences with domestic violence than men. Additionally, 11% of women report that domestic violence is the cause of their current episode of homelessness as compared with only 2% of men.

Disabilities and Subpopulations for Unaccompanied Persons at PIT 2017

	Total Adults	Men	Women
Chronic Substance Abuse (CSA)	29%	31%	18%
Severe Mental Illness (SMI)	35%	30%	47%
Dual Diagnosis (experiencing both CSA & SMI)	14%	28%	17%
Chronic Health Problem	20%	20%	20%
Living With HIV/AIDS	4%	4%	4%
Physical Disability	20%	22%	20%
Domestic Violence (DV) History	20%	1%	42%
Homeless Due to DV	8%	2%	11%
Limited English Proficiency	9%	10%	8%
U.S. Military Veterans	9%	12%	3%

Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault, and Trafficking

Data on domestic violence are self-reported and collected during the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) survey of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These data are from responses to two questions on the survey: "Are you a survivor of domestic violence?" and "What was the primary reason that led to this episode of homelessness?". The PIT survey does not ask about intimate partner violence or other types of violence or sexual assault from a person other than a domestic partner, nor does it collect information on trafficking.

National studies and surveys from other communities can help us better understand the intersection between homelessness and violence against women. In a 2016 assessment[1] of homeless women in Downtown Los Angeles, women who were surveyed experienced sexual assault at a rate of nearly twice that of the general population. Further, a national point-in-time census[2] of domestic violence hotlines and centers conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence indicated that 66% of the unmet needs on that day were for housing.

Addressing the Needs of Unaccompanied Women

In order to better understand the experiences and needs of unaccompanied women, the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) for the District has assembled a Women's Services Task Force to collaborate with women's homeless services providers, domestic violence providers, and other community stakeholders on this important issue. The Women's Services Taskforce is currently reviewing:

- Women's ability to access safe and stable housing in the District;
- The shortage of temporary shelter accommodations set aside for Women; and
- The intersection between domestic/intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and trafficking.

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[1] Kassenbrock, R. (2016, October 25). *Downtown Women's Needs Assessment*. http://www.downtownwomenscenter.org/needsassessment

[2] National Network to End Domestic Violence. (2017, May 11). *11-th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report.* http://nnedv.org/projects/census/5716-domestic-violence-counts-11th-annual-census-report.html