

2025 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Volunteer FAQs

Here are some answers to FAQs about volunteering for the Santa Clara County 2025 Point-in-Time Count:

1. What is the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count?

The PIT Count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that Continuums of Care conduct the count annually for sheltered people and every-other year for unsheltered people. The data from the count are used to determine federal funding allocations and to create national estimates of homelessness.

2. When and where is the 2025 PIT Count taking place?

The 2025 PIT Count in Santa Clara County will occur on **Wednesday, January 22nd and Thursday, January 23rd**. Volunteer opportunities are available throughout the county. Shifts are generally between the hours of **6:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.**

3. How can I volunteer?

To sign up to volunteer, complete the volunteer registration form at this link: <https://santaclara.pointintime.info/>. You can indicate on the registration form if you want to work with a specific group.

There are several ways to get involved in the count, including:

- Interviewing people experiencing homelessness using the Counting Us mobile app
- Leading a team of volunteers to conduct surveys
- Managing incentive supplies and helping support volunteers at various deployment centers
- Spreading the word about volunteering for the Count

4. Where can I find training for volunteers?

A recording of the required training and the slides from the training are available at this website: <https://pointintime.info/volunteer/SantaClara-county-point-in-time/>. Specifically [here](#).

5. When will I receive the maps for my assigned area?

The jurisdictional leads will be distributing the maps with the assigned census tracts as soon as possible. The maps will also include known locations where people experiencing homelessness stay.

6. When will I find out the exact start and end times and the meeting location for my volunteer shift?

Jurisdictional leads will provide volunteers with more specific information about start times, meet-up locations, and other logistics. Volunteers should contact their jurisdictional lead with any questions.

7. How will I get in touch with my jurisdictional lead?

They will be getting in touch with you in the next few days. Jurisdictional leads will also be sending out their contact information.

8. What is expected of me as a volunteer?

There are three different types of volunteer roles, described in these documents:

[Survey Volunteer PDF](#)

[Non-Surveying PDF](#)

[Team Lead PDF](#)

9. What should I bring when I volunteer?

Volunteers should bring a portable phone charger and wear hard-soled shoes. Backpacks are a good idea for carrying gift cards and water for survey participants. Follow any guidance provided by the local jurisdictional leads. Remember, safety is always the most important thing.

10. What is the Counting Us mobile app?

The Counting Us mobile app will be used to conduct the surveys. You can download the app here:

- Google Play: https://bit.ly/Counting_Us_Google
- Apple Store: https://bit.ly/Counting_Us_Apple

11. How do I get access to the count in the app?

The count will be available in the app after you register on the volunteer registration portal and create a password. Use the same email address for both the app and the volunteer registration portal. If the app isn't recognizing your email, use the "Forgot Password" link in the app.

You will not need a setup key to access the count until the day of the count.

12. What if I don't have cell service while I'm conducting the count?

If you don't have service while you are using the app, you can save the surveys as drafts to submit later when you do have service.

The Counting Us app can be used offline. However, you will not be able to submit surveys or observations until you are back online. **You should make sure your phone is fully charged before heading out.** You may want to bring a portable charger.

13. If I'm assigned to a tract with a team, should we only go to the known location pins dropped on the map, or should we canvas the entire assigned tract area?

No, you are not just going to the known location pins. **Teams are expected to canvas the entire assigned census tract area.** This means driving or walking around the entire area to ensure comprehensive coverage. The known location pins are helpful as a reference but do not replace the need to survey the entire tract.

14. What if someone I'm trying to interview appears to be experiencing acute mental health symptoms or under the influence of a substance?

If you encounter someone who appears to be experiencing acute mental health symptoms or under the influence of substances and you feel unsafe, walk away. If you are already in conversation with someone and they become volatile or aggressive, try to politely exit the conversation.

Do not approach anyone if you feel unsafe. You can record an observation on the app instead. If you feel unsafe, you should remove yourself from the situation.

15. Could I knock on the window of a vehicle?

Volunteers should NOT knock on the windows of vehicles if they cannot see someone awake inside.

Observation Surveys: If it is not possible to conduct a survey, volunteers can use the app to record observations of individuals or vehicles/makeshift shelters.

16. How should we approach language barriers?

The survey is available in the Counting Us app in both **English and Spanish**. You can use Google Translate to translate the survey into other languages.

17. How long does it take to complete a survey?

The surveys generally take **5-10 minutes**, but usually closer to 5 minutes to complete.

18. What incentives are being offered to those who complete a survey?

People who complete a survey will receive a \$10 gift card or donation items, such as portable chargers, flashlights, tarps, or hand warmers.

19. If I am conducting a household survey and there is more than one person, do I complete one survey for the entire household?

If you are able to speak to every adult in the household, you should complete a survey for each individual adult. If there is a minor living in the household, the head of household would provide the information for the minor. We do not survey minors directly.

If you are unable to speak to everyone but can visually identify more than one person, you should complete an observation tally for each individual. If you cannot see anyone, but there

is evidence that someone is living in the structure or vehicle, complete a vehicle/makeshift shelter tally.

20. Is a name required on the survey?

First and last names are asked, but they are not required. Try to at least get initials to help deduplicate the data. For individuals who decline to participate or are unable to be surveyed, observation tallies can be used.

21. What if I don't know someone's age?

Age range is a required question. If you cannot get a response to that question, make your best estimate based on your observations.

22. If someone doesn't complete the entire survey, do they still receive an incentive?

Yes, anyone who partially completes a survey will still receive a gift card. Any information that is collected is helpful.

23. If I'm volunteering and don't have a phone, how can I participate?

You will need to use a phone or tablet to conduct the surveys. You can partner with someone who does have a phone or tablet to do the interview and have your partner enter the answers into the app. If you are a volunteer with lived experience without a phone, your jurisdictional leads will ensure that you are placed in a group with members who have a phone to use for the survey.

24. Will volunteers receive gas reimbursement?

No.

25. Are people experiencing homelessness aware that the PIT Count is taking place?

Outreach workers are encouraged to let people they work with know that the PIT Count is happening. Awareness of the count within the unhoused community varies. The County and partners have been working to get the word out through social media and outreach teams.

26. How will we be working in groups?

No one will be going out to conduct the count alone. The jurisdictional leads are creating teams and assigning volunteers to teams. Volunteers who sign up without a team will be assigned to one. You can indicate in the registration form that you would like to work with a specific group.

Volunteers will be on teams with at least one other person. Team leads are responsible for guiding their team members.

27. Will I be able to see the results of my surveys?

Jurisdictions will have access to the surveys and notes that are collected. All data are protected by privacy safeguards to ensure the security of individual data collected.

28. Can I start conducting surveys now?

You are encouraged to download the Counting Us app now and practice conducting surveys and observations. However, any data collected before the official start time the morning of January 22nd will be archived and will not be included in the official count.

29. What does PEH stand for?

PEH stands for Person(s) Experiencing Homelessness.

30. Will those living in RVs be included in the count?

Car/Other Structure Tally (Used if you've identified a vehicle, tent, car, RV or other structure that you believe may in use as a place someone is staying)

- Click on "I am observing a vehicle or structure" to start the observation
- Provide the information about the structure following the prompts in the app
- If you can engage with the occupants of the vehicle, use the Unsheltered Survey "I'm interviewing a person"
- If you can see people in the structure who don't want to engage, use the Observation Tally "I'm observing a person"
- If you see a structure, but cannot determine if anyone is in the structure, use the Car/Other Structure Tally "I'm observing a vehicle or structure"

This tally survey will ask you to justify why you believe the structure to be in use by someone experiencing homelessness

31. What constitutes a household?

Two or more people who consider themselves to be a household or family constitute a household.

32. What are the Safety and Ethical Considerations during the Count?

- No volunteer will be working alone.
- Volunteers should be aware of their surroundings and take appropriate safety precautions.
- Follow local guidance regarding personal protection items.
- Volunteers are encouraged to be respectful, compassionate, and culturally sensitive when interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Volunteers are reminded of the importance of respect, privacy, and consent when interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness.

33. Where can I find additional resources?

You can find additional resources, including information about cultural humility, at this website: <https://pointintime.info/volunteer/SantaClara-county-point-in-time/>.