What is the One Night Count? Here in King County we have one of the best-established point-in-time counts in the nation. The total number comes from these two main sources:

1. A count of people who are inside (in shelter or transitional housing).
   Information about people who have shelter or transitional housing is compiled by staff in King County’s Community and Human Services Division through a combination of provider surveys and Safe Harbors.

2. A count of people who are outside (without shelter or in a place not fit or meant for people to live).
   People who have no shelter are counted by the Coalition on Homelessness through the street count and other methods (see below).

Who counts as homeless during the One Night Count? People who lack fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residences; are in a shelter or transitional living situation designed to be temporary; or are in a public or private place not meant to be a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. (This is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness.)

Who is NOT counted as homeless during the One Night Count? People who are doubled up or couch surfing; people who can pay for a motel that night; children in foster care; people in the hospital; people in jail; and others whose circumstances may be very unstable but who on that night are not homeless. Because people outside are counted only in select areas in King County, not everyone is included. The total count is thus a bare minimum.

How does the Coalition document homelessness during the One Night Count?

- The Coalition organizes and carries out the count of people who are homeless and without shelter. Sometimes this is called the Street Count. We organize hundreds of volunteers into teams to carry out a head-count of people they observe between 2.00 and 5.00 a.m. in parts of Auburn, Bellevue, Bothell, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Kent, Kenmore, Kirkland, Redmond, Renton, Seattle, Shoreline, Vashon Island, White Center, and Woodinville. Teams count in publicly-accessible areas such as streets, alleys, parks, parking lots, shopping centers, wooded areas, and waterfront. Each team has a trained captain and stays in established boundaries.

- Our Coalition also takes special care to include people in certain circumstances:

1. Special teams count people who are riding overnight on Metro’s “Night Owl” buses around the region;
2. We survey staff in emergency departments of major hospitals in our Count areas that are open that night, including people who are in the waiting area and likely homeless, but not seeking medical care;
3. Staff at the Dutch Shisler Sobering Center report about people in their facility overnight;
4. We work with organized Tent Cities and Safe Parking programs to count people living in those locations;
5. Special overnight events help us include youth, young adults, and people who are squatting;
6. Key informants answer our surveys to document special groups of people outside overnight: veterans, families with children, and people who are chronically homeless, based on HUD’s definition;
7. Our special Everyone Counts project happens the day after the Count, and helps demonstrate how many Veterans are homeless and living outside, as well as basic demographics of people who were unsheltered the night of the Count.