

Survey Data on Homelessness in Downtown

In 2016/17 a Snapshot of Homelessness in Downtown Olympia used available data to estimate the composition of the highly visible street dependent population in and around downtown Olympia:

- On any given day approximately 200 street dependent neighbors spend considerable time in downtown Olympia
- Approximately 4 in 10 of these street dependent neighbors are single adults
- Approximately 2 in 10 of these street dependent neighbors are under the age of 25
- Approximately 4 in 10 street dependent individuals report having a mental health challenge

Best available data on the “source” of homeless neighbors spending time in and around downtown Olympia:

- Over the last six Point in Time Counts (2011 – 2016) an average of 44% of survey responders sited Olympia as their last known permanent address. In 2018, 37% responded Olympia.
- In 2018, an average of 22% of survey responders sited other cities in Thurston County as their last known permanent address.
- The remaining 41% of survey responders sited outside of Thurston County as their last known permanent address.

Homelessness in Downtown: 2015 Business & Community Survey Responses

Two surveys were conducted in the fall of 2015 focusing on issues related to Downtown Olympia. The first, conducted by the Economic Development Council, surveyed downtown business owners. The second, facilitated by the City of Olympia, was open to community members and focused on downtown safety. The following table shows overlapping responses and areas of concern for downtown Olympia expressed in both surveys:

2015 Downtown Business Owner Survey	2015 OlySpeaks – Downtown Safety Survey
Total participants: 104 businesses	Total participants: 100 community members
Greatest areas of concern based on survey responses (top concerns ranked highest to lowest)	
Vagrancy (survey term used, will not be used again)	Visible homelessness
Parking	Visible drug use and evidence of drug use
Need for police presence and walking patrol	Current use of the Artesian
Need for market rate housing and density	Need for police presence and walking patrol
Greater level of cleanliness	Greater level of cleanliness
Pedestrian friendliness	Bike lanes
Public restroom availability	Pedestrian friendliness / aggressive driving
Increased festivals and events	Increased lighting throughout downtown
Improve communication for development	Public restroom availability

This data highlights that homelessness and topics related to street dependency in downtown are of concern to businesses and the broader community. While general concerns overlap, there are also differences in how people perceive the issue and potential solutions. Understanding these differences is an important step to holding space for solution-minded dialogue. Action plans should include a broad range of stakeholder perspectives, and address the dual issues of housing affordability and current homelessness.