



CENTER FOR STUDIES IN DEMOGRAPHY & ECOLOGY
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

SHORT REPORT

**King County, WA Point-in-Time Data:
People Living in Vehicles, 2026**

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About the data

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is the HUD-mandated annual snapshot of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in late January. Since 2022 the University of Washington and King County Regional Homelessness Authority have surveyed the unsheltered population with a peer-referral, respondent-driven design, weighting responses to represent the whole community (Almquist et al. 2025). Vehicle residents are split into *small vehicles* (cars, trucks, vans) and *large vehicles* (RVs, trailers, boats), reported for *Seattle Metro* and the *rest of King County*.

Key findings

- **Countywide total.** An estimated **3,967** people lived in vehicles across King County on a single night in 2026 and about **5,460** over a full year.
- **Change over time.** Countywide, people living in small vehicles increased from **1,436** in 2022 to **3,047** in 2026, while large-vehicle residents decreased from **928** to **753**; overall, Seattle Metro followed the same pattern.
- **Vehicle size and occupancy.** Most people live in small vehicles such as cars or vans rather than larger vehicles like RVs. Vehicles often carry more than one person; the number of vehicles is smaller than the number of residents they represent, with an estimated **2,467** in the county, which breaks down to **944** occupied vehicles in Seattle Metro and **1,523** in the rest of the county.
- **Geographic concentration.** Vehicle residency is a larger share of the unsheltered population outside Seattle Metro (**45%** versus **23%**), but Seattle Metro's much larger unsheltered population keeps the counts close, at **1,484** in Seattle Metro and **2,483** in the rest of the county.
- **Families with children.** About **647** families with minor children (**2,224** people) are unsheltered countywide, roughly three-quarters of them in vehicles, and they are concentrated in South King County.
- **Health and long-term homelessness.** In King County, **52%** of vehicle residents report a disabling condition, **40%** meet the HUD definition of chronic homelessness, and **24%** report domestic violence; in Seattle Metro, **57%** report a disabling condition, **52%** meet the chronic-homelessness definition, and **22%** report domestic violence.
- **Service needs.** At the places they park, vehicle residents most want heat or cooling (**42%**), drinking water (**32%**), and a restroom (**20%**), the services a sanctioned safe-parking site provides; about **33%** keep a pet, pointing to pet-friendly parking.

Recommendations

- **Safe-parking capacity.** Expand sanctioned safe parking inside and outside Seattle Metro, since vehicle residency is a countywide need, and equip sites with hygiene centers, RV waste dump stations, and pet-friendly accommodations.
- **Family support.** Expand family-specific safe parking and vehicle-to-housing programs where unsheltered families are concentrated, in South King County in particular, sized for larger family households.
- **Large-vehicle accommodation.** Ensure some sites can accommodate large vehicles, such as RVs and trailers, with the sanitation and utility hookups needed to make them habitable.
- **Health and housing services.** Pair safe parking with health and behavioral-health services, and provide permanent supportive housing for the large share experiencing chronic homelessness.
- **Domestic-violence response.** Provide confidential, trauma-informed options for the substantial share of vehicle residents surviving domestic and gender-based violence.

Vehicle residency over time

The number of people living in vehicles has grown since 2022, and the mix has shifted toward smaller vehicles (Figure 1). Across King County, the number living in small vehicles more than doubled between 2022 and 2026, while the number living in large vehicles such as RVs declined. Seattle Metro followed the same pattern, with growth in small vehicles and a decline in large vehicles over the three counts.

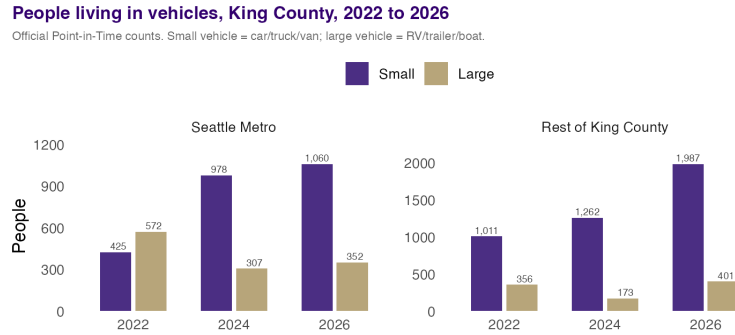


Figure 1: People living in small and large vehicles, King County, 2022 to 2026 (official Point-in-Time counts).

Vehicle residency in 2026

Table 1 and Figure 2 give the estimated number of people living in vehicles and the number of vehicles they occupy, by geography and vehicle size, as both single-night and annual figures.

Table 1: People living in vehicles and the number of vehicles, King County, 2026, by geography and vehicle size. We estimate the number of people living in vehicles and the number of vehicles using the RDS methodology. Annual estimates apply the Burt–Wilkins multiplier (Seattle 1.32×, rest of county 1.41×).

Geography	Vehicle	People		Vehicles	
		Point-in-time	Annual	Point-in-time	Annual
Seattle Metro	Small	1,107	1,462	684	903
	Large	377	497	260	344
	Total	1,484	1,959	944	1,247
Rest of King County	Small	2,224	3,136	1,358	1,915
	Large	259	365	165	232
	Total	2,483	3,501	1,523	2,147
King County	All	3,967	5,460	2,467	3,394

Who lives in vehicles

Vehicle residents are mostly single adults and are older on average than the unsheltered population as a whole. In total, an estimated 2,308 men and 1,659 women live in vehicles. In Seattle Metro, about 65% are men, and roughly 44% are aged 45 or older; in the rest of the county, the figures are 60% and 53%. Race and ethnicity are counted inclusively, so a person is counted in every group they identify with. Countywide, the five most common racial and ethnic identities among vehicle residents are White (42%), Black (34%), Hispanic/Latino (20%), American Indian or Alaska Native (13%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4%). Compared with other unsheltered people, women make up a larger share of vehicle residents, though they remain a minority overall. Among people living outside, in tents, or in other non-vehicle situations, about 24% are women, compared with 43% of small-vehicle residents and 37% of large-vehicle residents, higher by about 19 and 13 percentage

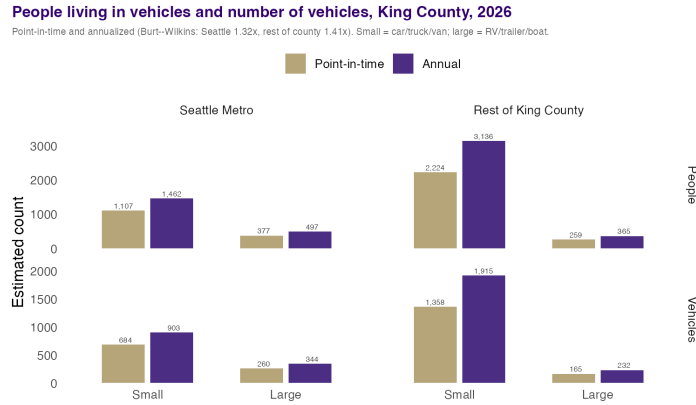


Figure 2: Point-in-time and annualized estimates of people living in vehicles and the number of vehicles, by geography and vehicle size.

points. Women are more likely to be in a small vehicle than a large one, but still more likely to be in a vehicle than in a tent or outside.

Families with minor children

There were 647 unsheltered family households (2,224 people) in King County in 2026, about three-quarters of them living in vehicles. As with other vehicle residents, most are in small vehicles: 388 households (60%) live in a car, truck, or van and 97 (15%) in an RV or trailer. These families are concentrated in South King County (61%, 1,350 members). We find that in Seattle Metro (31%, 690 members) there are about 150 families with minor children (516 people) living in vehicles.

Annualization

While we do not have a direct estimate of the total number of people living unsheltered over a year, we can extrapolate it using the Burt–Wilkins adjustment (Burt and Wilkins 2005) for the PIT data. Here, we specifically estimate it for those living in vehicles. The Burt–Wilkins adjustment estimates the annual count from the weekly rate at which people newly experience homelessness and the share of those who had experienced homelessness before, giving a multiplier of $1.32\times$ for Seattle Metro and $1.41\times$ for the rest of the county (Table 2). This follows the same method used in the Los Angeles Point-in-Time count (see Flaming, Toros, and Burns (2018)).

Table 2: Point-in-time and annualized estimates of people living in vehicles, King County, 2026.

Geography	Point-in-time	Annualized	Multiplier
Seattle Metro	1,484	1,959	$1.32\times$
Rest of King County	2,483	3,501	$1.41\times$
King County	3,967	5,460	

Health, chronic homelessness, and domestic violence

As with many people experiencing homelessness, those living in vehicles also report issues around health and long-term homelessness. Here we report the standard HUD definitions of disabling conditions (physical and mental), as well as issues around fleeing from domestic violence and gender-based violence. In the county, we see 52% report a disabling condition, 40% meet the HUD chronic-homelessness definition, and 24% report surviving or fleeing domestic violence. Broken down between Seattle Metro and the rest of the county, we see about 57% report a disabling condition,

52% meet the HUD chronic-homelessness definition, and 22% report surviving or fleeing domestic violence in Seattle Metro; in the rest of the county, the corresponding rates are 54%, 36%, and 23%. Table 3 provides the rates, counts, and annualization metrics by vehicle size.

Table 3: Estimated people living in vehicles with a disabling condition, meeting the HUD chronic-homelessness definition, and reporting domestic violence, King County, 2026, by geography and vehicle size. Rates are computed by geography among vehicle residents and applied to the small and large vehicle people-totals; annual columns apply the geography multiplier.

Geography	Vehicle	Domestic violence		Disabling condition		Chronic	
		PIT	Ann.	PIT	Ann.	PIT	Ann.
Seattle Metro	Small	239	316	626	826	579	765
	Large	81	108	213	281	197	260
Rest of King County	Small	504	711	1,206	1,700	793	1,118
	Large	59	83	140	198	92	130

Service needs and pets

Vehicle residents were asked what they would need at the places they park, a question that was asked only of people living in vehicles. Among those who responded, the most common were heat or cooling (42%), drinking water (32%), and a restroom (20%), with smaller shares wanting somewhere to cook (16%) or bathe (9%); about 40% reported no additional needs. These are the core services a sanctioned safe-parking site can provide. Asked separately what would help them move indoors, vehicle residents named a private room (45%), clean facilities (37%), and help finding permanent housing (30%). About 33% of vehicle residents have a pet, mostly dogs, so pet-friendly capacity is an important amenity for this group.

Data note. The point-in-time data come from the UW/KCRHA partnership that has conducted the count since 2022, and all estimates follow the methodology of Almquist et al. (2025). Full references appear below.

References

- Almquist ZW, Kahveci I, Hazel A, Kajfasz O, Rothfolk J, Guilmette C, Anderson MC, Ozeryansky L, Hagopian A. Innovating a Community-driven Enumeration and Needs Assessment of People Experiencing Homelessness: A Network Sampling Approach for the HUD-Mandated Point-in-Time Count. *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2025;194(6):1524–1533. doi:10.1093/aje/kwae342
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- Flaming D, Toros H, Burns P. Escape Routes: Meta-Analysis of Homelessness in L.A. Los Angeles, CA: Economic Roundtable; 2018.