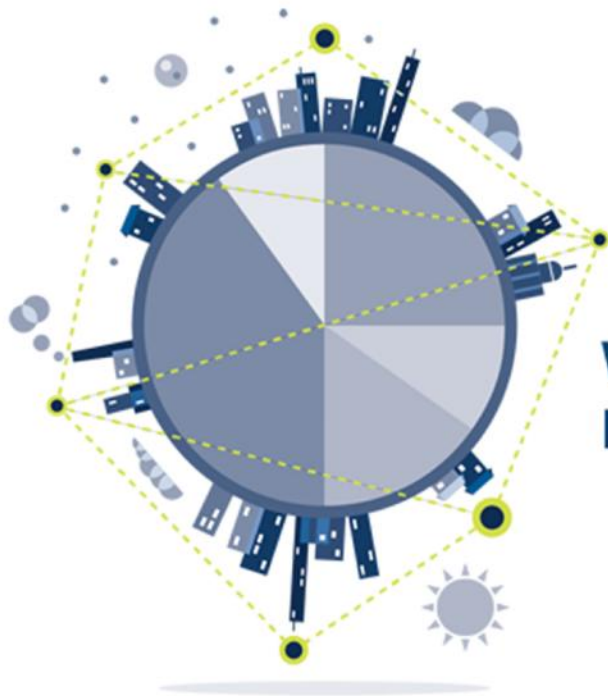


**Beyond the Count:  
Developing a high quality demographic survey  
through the integration of software and  
community planning**  
Lorin Kinney



**What's Next:  
In Data, Leadership, and Community**



# About me

Lorin Kinney, Senior Analyst Data & Research

- 2 and a half years of experience working on the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count
- Designed the 2016 and 2017 Demographic Survey
- Also helped design the 2016 and 2017 Housing Inventory Count data collection tool, using LAHSA's own application, MyOrg



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- Ask the right questions

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- A lesson in good logic
- Pilot your survey
- Apply what you know to other tools for data collection



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# **Introduction to the Demographic Survey**



## What is the Demographic Survey?

### The Homeless Count

- Gives a snapshot of homelessness in LA
- Answers key questions about homelessness in LA
  - How many people?
  - What are the demographics?
  - What is the distribution across the County?
  - Where are people experiencing homelessness staying?
- The Homeless Point-In-Time Count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



## What is the Demographic Survey?

### The Demographic Survey

- Survey sampling the unsheltered population of adults
- Demographic characteristics of the unsheltered population
  - Age, gender, race, ethnicity, health conditions, chronic homeless status
  - Household size, and how many live in cars, vans, campers/RVs, tents, and makeshift shelters
  - Experiences that may have led to loss of housing such as release from the hospital, jail or prison, self reported reasons, income, government benefits



## Survey Methodology

### Sample across our Continuum of Care

- Selection of Census Tracts
  - Sample selected allows for accurate estimates of the total homeless population, as well as subpopulations
  - In 2017, 415 census tracts sample out of the 2,160 in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (over 4k mi.<sup>2</sup> total area)
- Survey samples derived from several strata within the 8 regions of Los Angeles County plus Venice, Hollywood, and Skid Row
  - Areas of high concentration of people
  - Large encampments or concentration of vehicles or encampments
  - Areas where families may be located



## Survey Instrument

Electronic survey with offline app

- Allows for highly controlled design to improve accuracy and overall better quality data
- Offline app
  - Data collection anywhere with the use of a tablet or other mobile device
  - Data can be submitted once data or Wi-Fi is available
  - Online link and paper survey available in case of technical difficulty

Preview for Demographic Survey: [bit.ly/2hH166d](https://bit.ly/2hH166d)





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# How to make a better survey instrument

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## Know your HUD definitions

Read the updated HIC-PIT

Collection Notice

- Seemingly minor revisions can have a huge impact.
  - Chronically homeless definition
- Results can be affected.
  - “Apples to apples”
  - Changes should be equivalent to the ones made for sheltered populations in HMIS



The screenshot shows the HUD.GOV website for the Homelessness Data Exchange. The header includes the HUD.GOV logo, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Secretary Ben Carson. Below the header, there are navigation links for Home, Login, and Create an Account. The main content area features a collage of images showing diverse people, including a woman, a child, and a man. To the right of the images, there is text explaining the data's purpose and providing instructions for submitting requests. The text includes a disclaimer, a request submission process, and a list of reports available on the site.

HUD.GOV  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Secretary Ben Carson

Homelessness Data Exchange  
Home Login Create an Account

Welcome to the Homelessness Data Exchange website

Data from this website is intended for HUD and comm the specific Continuum of Care.

Requests to make edits to HIC and/or PIT submitted To submit your request, select HDX (PIT, HIC, AHAR, choose either HIC or PIT as the topic and subtopic. P

**The Homelessness Data Exchange (HDX)**

The Homelessness Data Exchange is an on-line tool Housing and Urban Development for:

- [The Annual Housing Inventory Count](#)
- [Homeless Point-in-Time Counts](#), and
- [The Annual Homeless Assessment Report](#)
- [System Performance Measures](#)

These reports are based primarily on data collected a Users who are the designated contact for submitting t To view and test the HIC, PIT, and AHAR data collecti



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Greater  
Los Angeles  
Homeless  
Count

## Ask the experts

Homeless Count Advisory

Board

- Experts in survey research
- Experts in outreach and with experience working with people experiencing homelessness
- People with lived experience
- A careful balance between the interests of all groups

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## Know your sample population

### Questions to consider

- Do the questions make sense to the respondent?
- Where will the survey be conducted?
- How long is too long?
- What is the compensation? Is it worth it?





**IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS, have you lived in any of the following situations?** *List each category below, and check the appropriate box. If they have not lived in the situation, do not check the box.*

*Note: a makeshift shelter is a structure made of available materials that is not meant for human habitation.*

Have you lived in a Car?

Have you lived in a Van?

Have you lived in a RV/Camper?

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## Ask the right questions

How many people live with you in your RV/Camper?

- Creating a “multiplier” for the campers counted on the street
- Attention to detail critical for getting good responses
- Response rate is also important



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In each of the following situations, can you tell me how many other people lived with you, **NOT including yourself?** *Leave text boxes blank if respondent does not know or declines to answer. If the respondent lived alone, please enter 0 (zero).*

RV/ Camper

<<

>>

## Ask the right questions

How many people live with you in your RV/Camper?

- Creating a “multiplier” for the campers counted on the street
- Attention to detail critical for getting good responses
- Response rate is also important



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# Improving data quality with intelligent survey questions



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## Build a better survey flow

### Determining eligibility

- Shelter status
  - Cost effective and efficient surveys filter out ineligible respondents
- Age
  - Youth Count Survey for eligible respondents



### Then Branch If:

If This question determines  
Edit Condition

Or This question determines  
center or airport Is Selected

Or This question determines  
Edit Condition





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Now I'm going to ask you some questions about people who live with you. Depending on how many people you live with and who they are, I may ask additional questions about them.

**NOT including yourself, how many adults and children are currently living with you in your household?** *Only fill in answers if the person is living with at least one other person.*

|                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Adults over 24    | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Adults 18 to 24   | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Children under 18 | <input type="text" value="0"/> |

## A lesson in good logic

### Skip logic

- Family households
  - Only ask for family demographics for relevant families by HUD definition
- Things to consider
  - Will the questions make sense to the respondent
  - Is the data required or optional?



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## A lesson in good logic

### Display logic

- Veteran Status
- Jail or Prison involvement
- Employment

Were you called into ACTIVE DUTY as a member of the National Guard or as a reservist?

Yes

No

Declined

Don't know

<<

>>



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## A lesson in good logic

### Display logic

- Veteran Status
- Jail or Prison involvement
- Employment

Were you called into ACTIVE DUTY as a member of the National Guard or as a reservist?

Yes

No

Declined

Don't know

What is your discharge status? *If none of the below answers are given, select Unverified.*

Honorable

General



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Which years did you serve? *Wait for response and choose ALL that apply.*

1940-1947 (World War II)

1947 - 1950 (Between WWII and Korean War)

1950 - 1955 (Korean War)

1955 - 1964 (Between Korean War and Vietnam)

1964 - 1975 (Vietnam)

1975 - 1991 (Post-Vietnam)

## A lesson in good logic

### Content validation

- Veterans – Era of Service
- Text, number, and other character content rules



The person's age is not compatible  
with this response.

Which years did you serve? *Wait  
for response and choose ALL that  
apply.*

1940-1947 (World War II)

1947 - 1950 (Between WWII and  
Korean War)

**1950 - 1955 (Korean War)**

1955 - 1964 (Between Korean War  
and Vietnam)

1964 - 1975 (Vietnam)

1975 - 1991 (Post-Vietnam)

## A lesson in good logic

### Content validation

- Veterans – Era of Service
- Text, number, and other character content rules



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## A lesson in good logic

### Why logic is so important

- Missing data
  - Stability of estimates improved with more complete data
- Contradictory responses are missing data
  - E.g., homeless for more than one year; 3 episodes or more but not totaling 1 year
  - Preventing “junk” data from being entered in the first place saves time, and makes more out of each survey

IN THE PAST YEAR, including this time, how many separate times have you experienced homelessness, on the street, in a vehicle or in shelters? *For example, if the respondent has been housed one time for a short period in the past year and they were homeless before and after that, that means two separate episodes or experiences of homelessness took place.*

1 time

2 to 3 times

4 or more times



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## Pilot your survey

Test everything



- Check your logic!
- Questions might make sense until you actually start asking them to real people
- Feedback from respondents is a critically important resource

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## Apply what you know to other tools for data collection

### Housing Inventory

- MyOrg
  - Web form built by LAHSA to collect data from shelters and permanent housing projects not in HMIS
  - HDX conditions and logic applied to questions and responses to the HIC form

Adult Families; please include **only** the **members** of households with at least one adult over 24 and one child under 18

*The total below must equal the total members. There must be at least one child under 18 in each family.*

|                                     |                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Adults over 24                      | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Parents 18 to 24                    | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Young adults 18 to 24 (non-parents) | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Parents under 18                    | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| Children under 18                   | <input type="text" value="0"/> |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <input type="text" value="0"/> |





## Closing

- Survey design is just as important to data quality as any other component
- Strategies can be applied to any type of data collection
- Continuums should share insights to improve data collection nationally



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