

The Oregonian

Portland Police Haven't Evaluated Hiring Process to Diversify Force

*By Maxine Bernstein
October 31, 2018*

The Portland Police Bureau wants to attract more women and minorities to its force but hasn't met its goals, partially because it can't pinpoint possible barriers in its hiring process, an independent review found.

Despite repeated pledges by chiefs to diversify the bureau's ranks, 84 percent of Portland officers are white.

In the last 10 years, the bureau hired 379 officers. Of these, 77 percent, or 292, were white, and 16 percent, or 62, were women.

The bureau must create a database to track candidates' progress and identify stumbling blocks to hiring, the city's Independent Police Review division concluded in a new report made public Wednesday.

The bureau also should survey applicants to find out what challenges they've encountered, the report recommended.

Part of the problem is that the bureau doesn't have access to demographic data on its applicants, the report found. A different city office, the Bureau of Human Resources, controls that information and doesn't share it, citing possible legal concerns. That's despite the fact that a human resources employee runs the police bureau's personnel division.

"Without that information, the Police Bureau is less likely to achieve its goal of a diverse workforce," the report said. "The Police Bureau does not have any systems in place to accurately analyze its hiring process to identify and address significant barriers."

It could take two years before police can get that database operating with sufficient information on applicants and the testing process to recognize trends, police supervisors said.

Applicants must first take a test given by the National Testing Network and then apply online. A series of interviews follows, a physical aptitude test and a background check with a 34-page personal history questionnaire.

An applicant recently contacted the The Oregonian/OregonLive and reported that she was disturbed when a background investigator called and asked her about the specific type of pornography she watched, based on her answer to the questionnaire. The investigator asked if she viewed pornography involving a man and a woman, two women or two men, the applicant said. She didn't want her name used because she still is applying elsewhere for police jobs.

Sgt. Christopher Burley, police spokesman, said investigators were instructed in May 2017 to no longer ask such questions. He didn't say what prompted the change. The questionnaire still contains questions asking if an applicant viewed, received or sold pornography, but those are restricted to "potential criminal or common workplace policy violations," he said.

Applicants won't be considered if they've used marijuana in the prior year, demonstrated a history of poor judgment or are found to have lied on their paperwork.

Some applicants interviewed by the report writers said it took too much time or was too expensive to compile all the required documentation or transcripts for the application.

Among the documents required are performance evaluations from all employers for the past 10 years, copies of college transcripts, any traffic accident reports, federal and state tax returns for the prior four years, any civil court actions and police reports involving the recruit and color photos of any tattoos.

Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said she agrees with the report's recommendations and outlined other steps the bureau is taking to try to attract more minority officers.

The bureau's Training Division will hold a Women's Public Safety Fair on March 30. It's recruiting students from criminal justice programs, such as the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York or the University of Southern Mississippi, as well as regional community and four-year colleges. This summer, the bureau hosted six college interns from the Southern and Eastern U.S. for 30 days and plans to continue the internships next summer.

"Recruiting should be natural and organic," Outlaw wrote in a response to the report. "Every moment of the working day of each Portland police officer should be an opportunity for recruitment."

This fall, the bureau also will have applicants accompany officers on a walking tour of Portland neighborhoods and attend meetings with community members who will relay the expectations they have for their officers.

The bureau plans to hold oral interviews outside Portland to reach a more diverse group of recruits. This also will help eliminate the expense of applicants having to travel to Portland for a brief interview. It's also re-examining the bureau's physical abilities test to make sure it doesn't place "unreasonable expectations" on candidates, the chief said.

The bureau, which is authorized 1,003 officers, currently has 86 vacancies to fill.

It's also struggling to attract police supervisors for vacancies in the higher ranks. For example, a promotional exam for the captain's rank scheduled this year has been postponed until February over "lower than expected interest," an assistant chief recently wrote to officers.

79 Homeless People Died in Portland in 2017. Here's What It Means.

*By Molly Harbarger
October 30, 2018*

The number of homeless people who died on the streets of Multnomah County has remained the same for the past two years, according to newly released numbers.

Multnomah County and Street Roots, a newspaper sold by people who experience homelessness, put together a report every year that aggregates information from the medical examiner's office about people who die without permanent addresses. In 2017, 79 people died while homeless.

[Eighty people were counted in 2016.](#)

In the past couple years, the number of homeless deaths soared. In the first five years studied, the highest yearly count was 56. That was in 2012. But 2015 and 2016 both saw 80 deaths.

So far in 2018, 49 people have died while homeless.

They died in plain sight, often in Portland's downtown. They also died in hospitals, inside cars and campers, other people's homes, homeless shelters – and two drowned in the Willamette River.

As the county and city allocate more funding to homeless services and boast of the increase in people helped, two statistics show that the problem is still dire in Portland: a rising count of people who have no permanent home and a death rate that won't go down.

"We mourn them, we mourn all of them," said Multnomah County Chairwoman Deborah Kafoury. "But through this report, we honor them by doing everything to end this man-made crisis."

Nearly 60 percent of the deaths in 2017 happened during one of the harshest winters in Portland history. Five of those deaths were caused by hypothermia, and they captured the city's attention.

Most of the deceased experienced mental health issues that caused them to isolate themselves from help when they most needed it. An Oregon task force has used the example of Karen Batts, one of the women who died of hypothermia, to help inform a new approach to civil commitment laws.

As temperatures drop and the wind chill sharpens, debates are reigniting over how best to balance the civil liberties and the safety of people whose mental conditions render them unable to make good decisions. In Oregon, with a population of 4 million, about 600 people are required to receive treatment for mental illness against their will each year. That is a low rate compared with that of other states.

The report, *Domicile Unknown*, does not account for mental health issues.

It does count addiction as one of the causes of death. As in past years, drugs and alcohol took the most people. About 60 percent of all 2017 deaths of homeless people were caused by overdoses or complications from drug or alcohol addiction.

Methamphetamine made up the bulk of those at 58 percent, followed by non-prescription opioids, like heroin. Only two people died from prescription opioids and one from fentanyl, a highly powerful and addictive synthetic opioid.

People who sleep on the street often wake to find their belongings stolen. Many turn to meth as a way to stay awake all night to avoid theft or violence. A Portland police officer said that a flood of Mexican meth has brought the cost down, but that the high is briefer than in the past, leading people to use more often.

Kafoury said Tuesday that this report has led the county to train people on how to use naloxone, which can reverse an overdose, and distribute it.

She pointed to an effort to build supportive housing -- permanent housing where someone can live while receiving services for mental health, addiction or physical problems -- as a way to reduce the numbers in future reports.

The last count of homeless people reported more than 4,000 people who live in cars, shelters or on the street. The city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services doubled the number of shelter beds last year and has made more investments in trying to stop people from becoming homeless.

Central City Concern CEO Rachel Solotaroff said that the nonprofit has found that people are 10 times more likely to complete addiction treatment if they have stable housing. People access primary care services three times more often.

"The underlying issue is, if you don't have a place to call home, all the other issues will not be addressed," Kafoury said.

The data can also show where health services might be needed. People died along Interstates 84 and 205 far from social services in the downtown core, according to the 2017 report.

Paul Lewis, health officer for the tri-county area, said that this and other efforts should be credited with the death rate staying even. He said Tuesday that in other places that count deaths, the number of people who die while homeless has risen more than in Portland.

However, he also cautioned that these numbers are a minimum -- there are likely several people who were not counted.

While the numbers fluctuate significantly between years, the number of medical examiner investigations of deaths of homeless people has steadily increased since 2011. In the seven years since the report began, 438 people have died on the street.

As in past years, the majority of people who died while homeless were white men. About 9 percent were black, followed by Hispanic people at 5 percent.

Women made up 25 percent of the deaths.

The vast majority of the people counted in the report died much earlier than people who have stable housing. The average age of people who died was 41 to 48.

Last year had the largest gap in ages of any prior report. In 2017, people less than a year old to 81 years old died while homeless.

The infant was a baby boy who died of natural causes indoors, Lewis said. He declined to elaborate on the circumstances. However, that indicates it was not the child born to a woman in mental health crisis in 2017. That newborn was ruled to have never breathed by the Multnomah County medical examiner.

The medical examiner's office investigates 2,300 cases per year. The Domicile Unknown cases make up a small portion of total investigations -- almost 9 percent at the peak in 2015. But homeless people are at most well below 3 percent of Multnomah County's population.

"It's important people across our county know that this is an issue of life and death," said Kaia Sand, Streets Roots executive director.

Biketown Rides Will be Free on Election Day

By Andrew Theen

October 29, 2018

Portland voters will be able to ride a Biketown bike to the ballot box for free on Election Day.

Motivate, which operates the Biketown system in partnership with the city, said Portland is one of nine metro areas where it plans to make all rides free on Nov. 6.

"We want to make it easier than ever to pedal to the polls this Election Day," Julie Wood, Motivate's spokeswoman, said in a statement. "Too many Americans don't vote because they lack reliable and affordable transportation options. As voters make their plans for Nov. 6, we encourage the millions living in cities served by our bike share networks to take advantage of free rides and use bike share to get to and from the polls."

Oregon, of course, has vote-by-mail, but many voters still elect to drop off their ballots on Election Day.

The company cited a Tufts University study that found transportation was a "significant barrier" for young people who choose not to vote, regardless of their demographics or educational background.

Motivate is the largest bike rental company in the country and it runs the systems in Washington D.C., New York City, Chicago, Boston, the Bay Area and Portland.

Users can use BIKE2VOTE in the Biketown app to receive 30 minutes of free ride time on Nov. 6.

The Portland Tribune

Eudaly Releases Controversial Canvassing Map

By Jim Redden

October 31, 2018

Republicans accuse commissioner of breaking the law by organizing Portland workers to go door to door urging voters to return their ballots.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly has released a map showing this Friday's city-funded get-out-the-vote will focus on East Portland, where turnout has traditionally lagged.

The Multnomah County Republican Party has filed a complaint about the door-to-door canvassing by Portland employees on public time organized by Eudaly. Chair James Buchal says it is an illegal attempt to help re-elect Democratic Oregon Gov. Kate Brown over Republican state Rep. Kate Buehler in the Nov. 6 General Election. Democrats currently outnumber Republicans in the county by a margin of 268,906 to 62,784.

"This is a transparently partisan misuse of city funds to aid Kate Brown's losing campaign, but it is also plainly illegal," says Buchal

The chapter requested the Multnomah County Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission investigate the use of city funds to support the door-to-door canvass on Nov. 2. The complaint argues the spending violates state tax laws because the City Council did not specifically authorize funds for the canvassing in the current budget.

"With rising problems of disorder and decay, even the city council has not been so foolish as to budget scarce tax funds for marching city workers door-to-door to collect Democratic ballots," Buchal said in a Monday press release. "That makes the use of funds illegal, and the law will make Councilwoman Eudaly personally liable for these expenditures."

The commission will investigate the complaint, but may not be able to complete its work by Friday.

"We will investigate as required by the statute and report publicly on the investigation. I do not have a timeline yet," Executive Director Craig Gibbons said at press time.

Portland City Attorney Tracy Reeves says the spending is legal, however.

"We believe this activity is legal. State law prohibits the use of any city resources to advocate for or against any candidate or measure. As you know, the city "Get Out the Vote" effort is

nonpartisan and is directed solely to increasing voter participation in precincts with historically low turnout rates," says Reeves.

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office has declined to investigate complaints against the event because it has not already happened.

In addition to the city paying the employees who participate, Eudaly's office has also spent several thousand dollars on door hangers reminding voters who are not home to return their mail-in ballots before election day.

Eudaly's office says the door-to-door canvassing will be non-partisan and targeted at parts of town where voter turnout has been historically low. The map Monday showing most precincts to be canvassed are east of 82nd Avenue, where turnout averaged below 50 percent in the last three elections. It was prepared by the Office of Community and Civic Life, which Eudaly oversees.

The map shows a stark difference in voter turnout on either side of 82nd. On the west side, turnout was below 50 percent in only a handful of precincts, and more than 60 percent in some. On the east side, turnout was above 50 percent in only a handful of precincts, and below 40 percent in several.

"Our office is grateful for the additional attention to the importance of voting that the complaint has generated and we are confident that the effort complies with the spirit and letter of the law," said Marshall Runkel, Eudaly's chief of staff.

The canvassing is scheduled to begin with a 2:30 p.m. rally on Oct. 2 outside City Hall. The event was first reported by Willamette Week.

Not everyone on the council supports the idea. Commissioner Nick Fish does not want any employees in bureaus he oversees to be paid by the city for participating in the canvassing. At his direction, the interim director of Portland Parks & Recreation has told its employees they need to use vacation time to participate in it.

And a Portland landlord has accused Eudaly of using the workers to help activist Jo Ann Hardesty defeat Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith in the general election race to succeed outgoing Commissioner Dan Saltzman. Eudaly has endorsed Hardesty. The both support rent control, while Smith says she supports "renter protections."

"I pay taxes in Portland and don't want my tax money going to influence the election," says King, who also owns a real estate office. She is planning to file a complaint with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office, and has emailed people she knows encouraging them to do the same.

Runkel says that Smith also has supporters in East Portland, however.

Report: More services, housing needed to address homeless crisis

*By Jim Redden
October 31, 2018*

Commissioner Fish praises report for recommended policies needed to effectively reduce homelessness.

Homelessness in the greater Portland region could increase 26 percent over the next four years unless the public and private sectors work together to increase more services and housing of all kinds.

That is the conclusion of a report by ECONorthwest, the Pacific Northwest's largest independent economic research firm, released last Wednesday. It was commissioned by Oregon Community Foundation.

The report, "Homelessness in the Portland Region," suggests that the magnitude of the region's current homelessness dilemma is the result of two converging crises. One is an inadequate housing supply that is leaving tens of thousands of Oregon children and families at risk of becoming homeless. The other is a smaller population of chronically homeless people with personal challenges, including mental health, illness, physical disabilities and substance abuse.

"Many caring, highly competent service providers have been delivering nation-leading work in Portland for years to help Oregon's homeless population. These professionals have simply been overwhelmed by a broader housing market crisis," says John Tapogna, president of ECONorthwest.

According to the report, the homeless population in the region declined between 2009 and 2015, but then increased from 2015 to 2017. If nothing more is done and rents grow 14 percent as predicted over the next four years, the number of homeless will increase 26 percent — from 6,597 in 2017 to 8,297 by 2022.

The report says local and national factors are driving homelessness and housing insecurity in the region. At the core of the problem:

- A population of under 2,000 individuals facing highly personal challenges who are chronically homeless and need sustained, intensive support to remain housed. While challenging, this crisis can and should be solved by existing social service agencies and local governments, the report says.
- A severe shortage of housing that is affecting tens of thousands of cost-burdened households. This crisis results from many years of underproduction of housing of all kinds, including government-supported affordable housing, that is driving up rents. This crisis requires action by a much broader set of public, private, local, state, and federal partners, and particularly, policies that spur the creation of more housing, the report says.

"The underproduction of housing has contributed to the region's rising rents, which — in turn — have increased the severity of the homelessness crisis. The region created seven new housing units for every 10 additional households formed during 2010-2016. Underproduction has put upward pressure on housing costs," the executive summary of the report reads.

"Rising housing costs, driven primarily by an undersupply of housing stock, have pushed many people in our communities, particularly low-income residents and communities of color, into greater financial instability. For some, this has meant moving away out of their neighborhoods

and living further from family, employment, and basic amenities. For others, it has meant the loss of a stable home altogether," says Max Williams, CEO and president of the Oregon Community Foundation.

The report praises public officials in the region who have committed to increasing the supply of so-called Supportive Housing — affordable housing with services — that is considered necessary to keeping the chronically homeless from returning to the streets. The Portland City Council has pledged to build 2,000 Supportive Housing units over the next 10 years. Metro officials say many supportive units will be built by their \$684 million affordable housing bond if it passes at the Nov. 6 general election.

"We agree with ECONorthwest's conclusion that more energy must be focused on chronically homeless populations, particularly those with untreated or undertreated complex health issues, including mental illness and substance use disorders," said Heather Lyons, Northwest director of the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

Commissioner Nick Fish, who pushed for the Supportive Housing commitment, praised the report.

"It confirms what we've been saying. It takes housing with intensive services to move people into permanent housing, and we need to build more homes, including affordable housing," Fish said.

The report includes five recommendations:

1. Expand and add analytic rigor to the effort to end chronic homelessness.
2. Identify populations — in addition to chronically homeless single adults — that supportive housing models could serve cost effectively.
3. Recognize that shallow, temporary subsidies require additional evidence, and enter into partnerships to identify next-generation, low-cost alternatives to existing housing vouchers.
4. Increase the supply of affordable housing units.
5. Expand the scope of plans to end homelessness to include goals for regional housing production and accelerate housing supply at all price points.

"The clear-eyed solutions this report urges — such as adding Supportive Housing and building an even bigger public-private partnership — offer hope. Those recommendations spring from A Home for Everyone's current plan for addressing homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County," said Marc Jolin, director of the city-county Joint Office of Homeless Services. "The report notes our strategies are 'nation-leading' and have averted a local crisis that should be even worse, based on our community's high rents and low vacancy rates."

The report does not estimate the cost of fulfilling its recommendations.

You can read the report at tinyurl.com/yd7fhvqe.

The Oregon Community Foundation has used donated money to improve the lives of all Oregonians for nearly 45 years. You can learn more at www.oregoncf.org

The Portland Mercury

Nearly 80 Homeless People Died in Multnomah County in 2017

*By Alex Zielinski
October 30, 2018*

At least 79 people who were homeless in Multnomah County died last year, according to a report released by the county this afternoon. That's nearly two people every week.

"This is hard information to know," said Kaia Sand, the director of Street Roots, at an afternoon press conference.

The county's annual "Domicile Unknown" report uses data collected by the state and county medical examiners to tally the number of people who died without a home address (marked "domicile unknown" on their death certificate). This year's number is nearly unchanged from 2016, when the county reported 80 deaths of people who were homeless at the time they died.

"I'm going to quote you some numbers, but everyone knows that the numbers are individuals," said Paul Lewis, the Multnomah County health officer. "Seventy-nine people... it's like having a large overnight shelter collapse."

According to Lewis, 79 is the "absolute rock-solid minimum" of how many people actually died while homeless in 2017.

He noted that the age range of all 2017 deaths—from under one year old to 81—is the widest he's seen since the county began collecting this data in 2011.

"The average age [of death] is in the forties—decades before one would expect a housed person to die," Lewis said.

In Oregon, the leading cause of death is cancer or heart disease. The leading cause of death for the majority of the homeless who died last year, is drug or alcohol consumption. Of those substance-related deaths, nearly half of them were linked to methamphetamine use. Seventy-five percent of those who died were men, and 81 percent were white.

This is the first year meth use surpassed opioid use as cause of death. Portland Police Officer Carlos Pagan, an investigator in the police bureau's Drugs and Vice Division, attributed that spike to the low cost and high purity of meth that's being imported to the US from Mexico. Pagan said he's spoken with a number of homeless people who began using meth to replace sleep.

"They told me, if they don't have a place to lay their head and they're cold and they're hungry, it's best if they don't go to sleep," Pagan said. "So they wander the streets, and try to stay awake."

Nearly 40 percent of the 2017 deaths took place in public spaces. Sixteen percent died in a hospital and eleven percent were found in a car or camper.

The majority of these deaths were marked "accidental," either from drug or alcohol use, physical trauma, asphyxiation, or hypothermia. Portland's extremely cold winter of 2017 contributed to five people dying of hypothermia in January 2017. Six people died from suicide.

Multnomah County began tracking this annual number in 2011, a year with 47 recorded homeless deaths. In total, 438 homeless people have died in Multnomah County in the past seven

years. Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury said the reason the county continues to record this number is simple.

"No one should have to die alone and on the streets because they do not have a home," Kafoury said, then paused. "No one should have to die alone and on the streets because they do not have a home."

OPB

Chloe Eudaly Has Portland Workers Getting Out The Vote — Is That Legal?

*By Amelia Templeton
October 30, 2018*

Portland Commissioner Chloe Eudaly has invited city workers to go door to door Friday to encourage people to vote in parts of East Portland with a record of low turnout.

City workers aren't obligated to participate in the canvassing effort, but some who do will get paid for their time.

While public officials often encourage people to vote online or during debates, the door-knocking campaign is unusual and likely the first of its kind in Oregon. The fact that it is, in effect, funded by taxpayers has raised legal and ethical questions.

It's part of a shift in direction Eudaly is charting for the city's Office of Community and Civic Life, formerly known as the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. She wants the bureau to engage more directly with questions about who is represented and counted in Portland.

"When people feel disenfranchised and afraid to participate, whether it's voting or being counted in the Census, they lose, and really we all lose," Eudaly said.

Here's everything you need to know about the voter turnout campaign.

Wait, isn't it illegal for public employees to engage in political campaigning while they're at work?

Public employees cannot advocate for specific ballot measures or candidates during work hours, but they can provide members of the public with neutral information, such as the basics on how to cast a ballot.

Eudaly's office says the canvassing event complies with that law because it will be non-partisan and content-neutral. Workers will hand out up to 5,000 fliers with information about ballot drop locations and how to access voting assistance for people with disabilities. A city attorney will brief participants about what is and isn't allowed.

"We are bending over backward to make sure that employees understand how to participate in this effort without violating any rules," Eudaly said. "For instance, they cannot wear campaign T-shirts or buttons. They cannot engage in conversations with voters that would encourage them to vote one way or another."

Where is this happening?

Eudaly's office is leaving the door-hangers in five East Portland precincts that had the lowest turnout in the past three citywide elections.

For you politicians, that's Multnomah County precincts 4710, 4804, 4808, 5101, 5102.

Would an increase in turnout in these particular neighborhoods benefit any particular candidate or measure?

Willamette Week has raised questions about whether higher voter turnout in these areas could benefit candidates or measures that Eudaly has endorsed. Based on past election results, the targeted areas aren't necessarily strongholds for the local candidates she supports. But they are areas where increased turnout may favor Democrats over Republicans.

For example, while Jo Ann Hardesty won virtually every precinct in Portland in the May City Council primary, her opponent, Loretta Smith, came in first in three of the five East Portland precincts the canvassers will visit. Eudaly has endorsed Hardesty.

But an increase in turnout in East Portland could benefit Democratic incumbent Gov. Kate Brown in the governor's race. All five precincts being canvassed went solidly for Democratic Gov. John Kitzhaber in the 2014 election.

Who's participating?

Ten city workers have signed up so far. Eudaly is hoping a few dozen more will join. Staff at the two bureaus Eudaly oversees, the Office of Community and Civic Life and the Bureau of Transportation, can participate during paid work hours.

Staff at the Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services are not being recruited to participate, because the utility bureaus are funded by water and sewer rates and are subject to additional restrictions.

Staff at the Office of Equity and Human Rights, overseen by Commissioner Amanda Fritz, and the Parks Bureau, overseen by Commissioner Nick Fish, have been told they can participate on their own time but won't be paid.

Who's challenging it?

The Multnomah County Republican Party has filed a complaint about the door-to-door event, but not on grounds that it violates election law.

Instead, they're arguing that Eudaly has run afoul of a state law that bars public officials from spending tax money for unauthorized purposes, because the canvassing project was not explicitly authorized in the city's budget.

The Republicans have petitioned an obscure state agency, the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission, to investigate.

"Can a City Council member just do whatever they want with city resources, regardless of what they asked for the money for?" said James Buchal, the Multnomah GOP chair.

The Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission consults with municipal governments on budget issues and serves as a watchdog over local budgeting practices.

The agency says this is the first citizen complaint it has received in more than 10 years, and it is evaluating whether it has jurisdiction to launch an investigation.

Eudaly said she's consulted with the city attorney and is confident the door-to-door campaign will pass legal muster — and some independent experts think she's right.

“Local governments provide flexibility in the budget process to accommodate for these kinds of situations,” said Chad Jacobs, a municipal attorney who’s represented dozens of cities in the Northwest.

Jacobs said Eudaly’s office will also have to establish that the canvassing project serves a public purpose; he said encouraging people to vote almost certainly clears the bar.

“It’s the foundation that’s going to keep our democracy alive and well,” Jacobs said.

79 People Who Were Homeless Died In Multnomah County Last Year

*By Kristian Foden-Vencil
October 30, 2018*

Multnomah County said Tuesday that 79 people who were homeless died last year — one fewer than in 2016.

Multnomah County is the only county in Oregon, and one of only a few in the nation to track such deaths. It’s not a politically popular statistic to keep and it costs money to put together.

But county chair Deborah Kafoury said the report honors those who died and encourages an end to what she calls, “this man-made crisis.”

“No one should have to die alone and on the streets because they do not have a home,” Kafoury said. “Every single person we’ve lost is a member of our community who once had a family and a future.”

Drugs, alcohol or a combination contributed to more than half of homeless deaths. Methamphetamine was the most abused drug this year.

Portland drugs and vice officer Carlos Pagan said meth is more available and cheaper than ever before. In the last three years, he said, meth related seizures in Portland increased 300 percent.

Accidents were responsible for half of the deaths. Natural causes accounted for 29 percent. The rest were suicides, homicides or of an undetermined cause.

About 40 percent of the deaths happened outdoors, while 20 percent were in the hospital, 14 percent in cars or campers, 9 percent at homes and 8 percent in hotels or shelters.

Three-quarters of the deaths were among men. About 81 percent were white, 9 percent black and 5 percent Hispanic.

“Every year, we report on homeless deaths. Every year, the deaths are too many, the people are too young and the causes too preventable,” said Tri-County Health Officer Dr. Paul Lewis. “In every case, a lack of housing played a role.”

Lewis said public and private efforts do a lot to prevent deaths in Multnomah County, but added he was “still ashamed at the number we continue to report every year.”

The figures are part of the 2017 Domicile Unknown report, a project of the Multnomah County Health Department in partnership with Street Roots. The project began in 2012 as a way to drive policy and funding decisions on housing, health and homelessness.

“When you’re a drug addict, death is always going on. People are always dying,” said Art Garcia, a longtime Street Roots volunteer. “It was really often that people overdosed and you’d

wake up and someone would be dead. You're talking to the guy, and the next morning you wake up and they're gone. On the streets, it's like that, every day."