



Homelessness in Greater New Orleans:

*A Report on Progress toward Ending Homelessness
In the Years after the Nation's Largest Housing Disaster*

Introduction

The 2011 Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish took place on February 21, 2011, utilizing the staff of more than 50 of the 63 agencies that make up the New Orleans/Jefferson Parish Homeless Continuum of Care. Surveys were administered on the streets and in homeless programs and other locations asking homeless people where they had stayed the night of February 21 and asking certain demographic information. In addition, a statistically significant, random sample survey of census blocks was conducted in which all unsecured abandoned buildings were searched by UNITY's Abandoned Buildings Outreach Team in order to count bedrolls in active use, and these numbers were then extrapolated to the census blocks not counted.

The Point in Time Count is done to provide as comprehensive a count as possible of how many persons are homeless in emergency shelter, in homeless transitional housing, and in places not meant for human habitation on any given night. The Point in Time survey provides information with which to gauge the need for resources to end and prevent homelessness and the type of resources needed, and to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness in the New Orleans area. The Count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be done at least every other year. The last official Point in Time Count was conducted in January 2009.

The Point in Time Count is coordinated by UNITY of Greater New Orleans, a nonprofit organization designated by HUD to lead the Homeless Continuum of Care of housing and services for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish. Founded in 1992, UNITY's mission is to coordinate community partnerships to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. In partnership with HUD, the City of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish government, UNITY secures and distributes to its member agencies nationally competitive grants to provide housing and services to the homeless. UNITY also trains its member agencies on best

practices, oversees homeless outreach on the streets and abandoned buildings, helps the public locate affordable housing, and advocates for public policy to end homelessness. In 2010, the UNITY collaborative was selected from 9,000 organizations nationwide by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the premier organization in the field, to receive its Nonprofit Sector Award in recognition of its accomplishments in the post-Katrina environment.

In addition to the Point in Time Count, UNITY also provides other data on local homelessness. First, UNITY also provides a Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate, an estimate of all persons meeting the HUD definition of homelessness on any given night. The Point in Time Count – as directed by HUD -- includes only those who are homeless in emergency shelter, in homeless transitional housing, and in places not meant for human habitation. In contrast, the Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate includes those groups plus all other categories of homelessness recognized by HUD: those being evicted by landlords or acquaintances with no resources or place to go; homeless people temporarily in hospitals and jails; people being discharged from hospitals and jails with no resources or place to go; and formerly homeless people now living in Permanent Supportive Housing for the homeless.

Second, in partnership with member agency VIA Link, UNITY maintains a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in which all of its funded agencies are required to enter data on every homeless person served. HMIS data can provide information on how many homeless people are served over a longer period of time, as opposed to one night, but it does not include data on homeless people who are not served. Many homeless persons are not served either because they do not seek services or because programs are filled to capacity.

Summary of Findings

- Homelessness remains a daunting problem in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, 5 ½ years after the nation's largest housing disaster when the levees

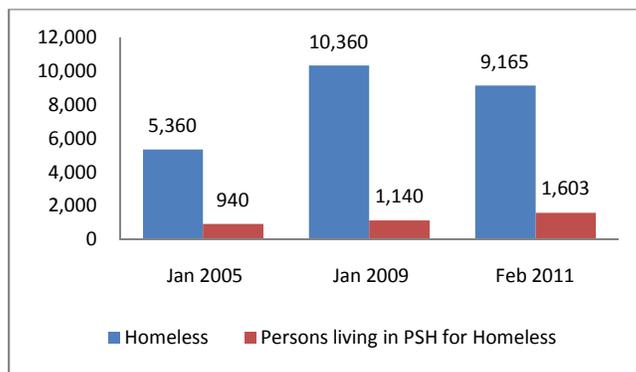
failed following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Despite the fact that the city of New Orleans has only about 80 percent of its pre-Katrina population, 9,165 people, excluding those now living in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), now meet the HUD definition of homelessness on any given day in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, compared to 5,360 in 2005 before Hurricane Katrina, according to the PIT Comprehensive Estimate. Over the course of a year, the number of homeless people is far larger than the PIT, as some people exit homelessness quickly while others take their place. The UNITY collaborative served over 21,000 people meeting the HUD definition during calendar year 2010, as opposed to about 10,000 in 2004, according to HMIS data.

- However, significant progress has been made in tackling the problem. This year's PIT Comprehensive Estimate of homeless people, excluding those living in PSH, is 12 percent lower than 2009, and the PIT Count of those in the most acute homeless situations – living on the streets, abandoned buildings, emergency shelter, or homeless transitional housing -- is 23 percent lower than 2009. This is due in great part to the creation of 441 additional units of Permanent Supportive Housing for the homeless– the nationally proven practice of ending chronic homelessness of disabled people by providing them affordable housing linked to case management services, and to the successful Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program – a federal, state and local stimulus program providing short-term rent assistance coupled with case management for those who are homeless or being evicted.
- 61% of the local homeless population is chronically homeless, compared to 35% nationally. The homeless in New Orleans are more disabled than the national average and have spent more time homeless.
- The largest share of homeless people in New Orleans are living in abandoned buildings. New Orleans now has 38,382 abandoned commercial and residential buildings, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, and the PIT Count found that 4,767 homeless people are living in those abandoned

buildings. About 75 percent are survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate of Homelessness

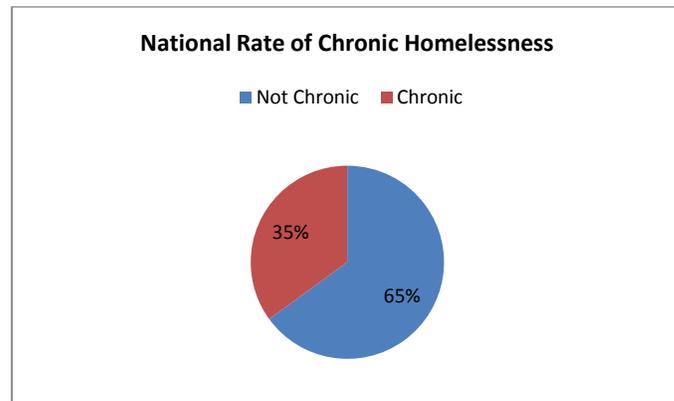
(all persons meeting HUD definition of homelessness)



HUD's definition of homelessness includes persons a) in places not meant for human habitation; b) in emergency shelters; c) in homeless transitional housing; d) people being evicted by landlords, family or friends from housing with no place to go and no resources to obtain housing; e) homeless people temporarily in hospitals, jails, and other institutions; f) people being discharged from hospitals and jails with nowhere to go and no resources to obtain housing; and g) people who were formerly homeless but are now living in Permanent Supportive Housing for the homeless.

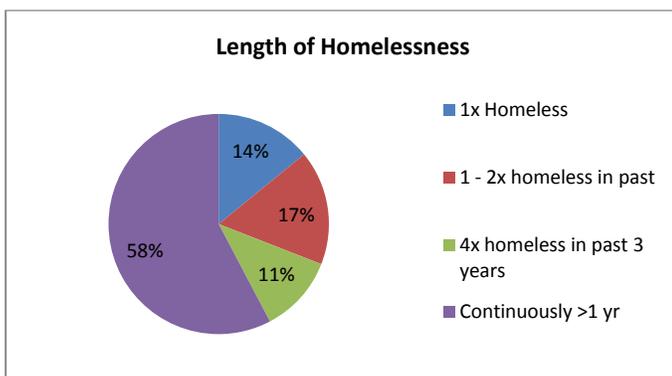
Point in Time Homeless Count

All of the charts below reflect the Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count. Please note that the PIT Count, in contrast to the PIT Comprehensive Estimate, only measures homelessness in emergency shelters, transitional housing and places not meant for human habitation, but does not recognize other types of homelessness set forth in the HUD definition of homelessness, such as persons facing eviction, which is reflected in the PIT Comprehensive Estimate chart, above. As a result, the PIT Count of homelessness is **6,687 homeless persons** on any given night in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish.



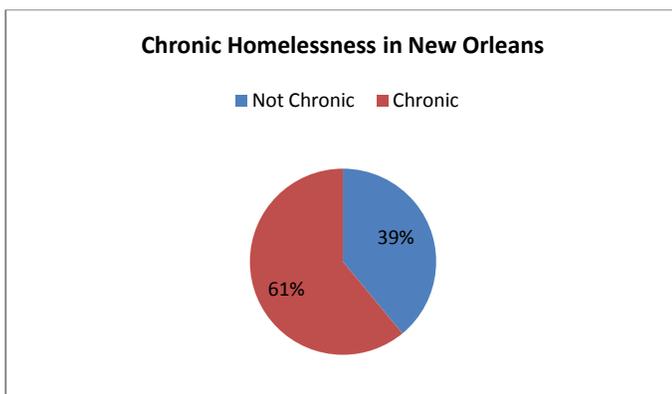
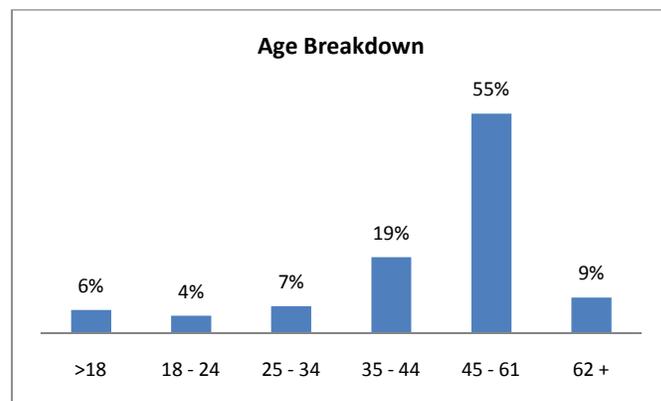
Chronic Homelessness

Chronic homelessness continues to be a huge problem in the area, with 61% of the homeless – **4,087 persons** – considered chronically homeless on any given night. To be considered chronically homeless, an individual or family must be disabled, and have been homeless in emergency shelter or places not meant for human habitation for over one year or at least four times in the past three years.



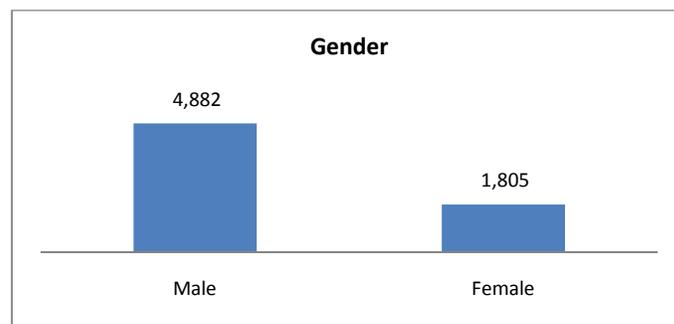
Age

The majority of homeless persons in New Orleans are between the ages of 45 and 61, which correlates to national data regarding homelessness and age. However, the percentage of persons over the age of 62 experiencing homelessness is over four times the national average of 2%.



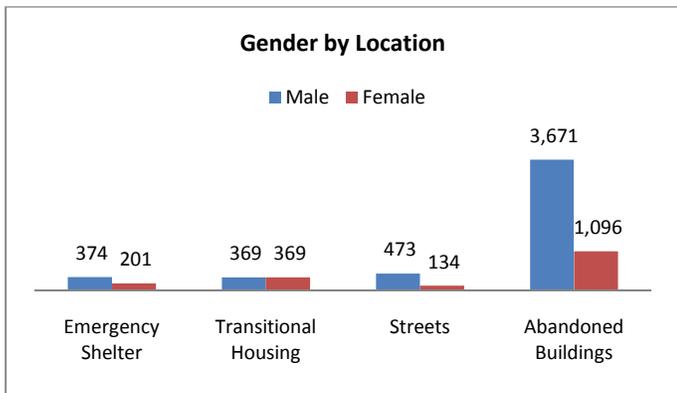
Gender

The gender ratio in New Orleans is consistent with the national average.



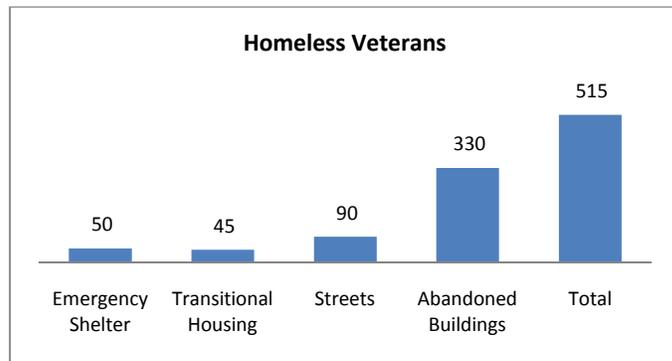
Nationally, only 35% of the homeless population is considered chronically homeless.

Although they only account for 22% and 23% respectively, the **1,230** women on the street and in abandoned buildings are at great risk of assault and sexual violence.



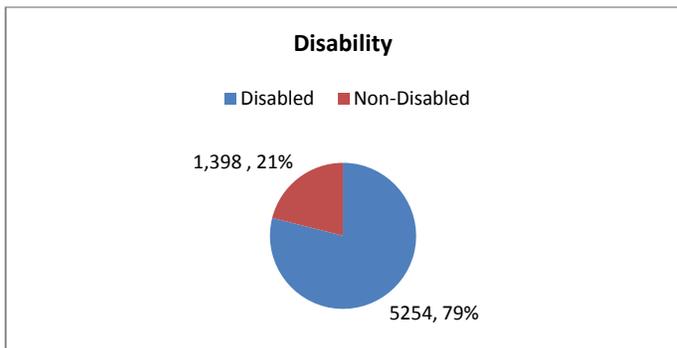
Veterans

There are over 500 homeless veterans on any given night. 15% of the street homeless population is comprised of Veterans.



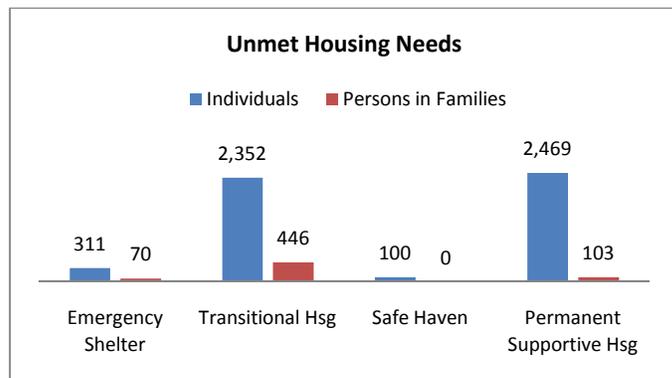
Disability

The level of disability in the local homeless population is shocking at 79%: almost double the national rate of 40%. There are currently **5,254** homeless persons experiencing at least one disability on any given night in New Orleans.

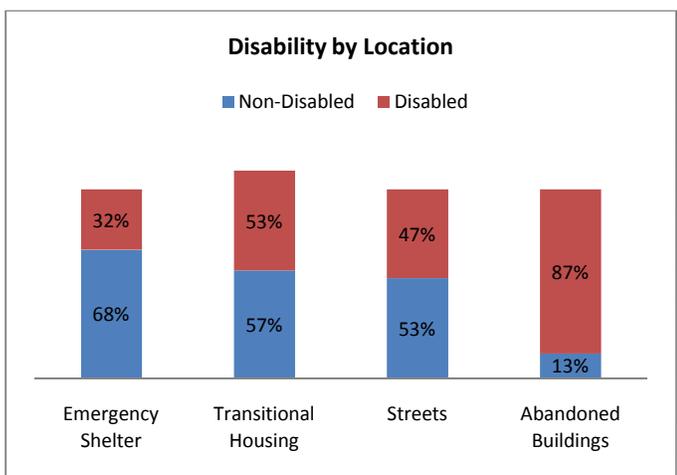


Unmet Housing Needs

In order to adequately address the needs of the homeless population in Greater New Orleans, the Collaborative needs to add thousands of beds to its current housing inventory, particularly Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) beds and Rapid Rehousing rental assistance (categorized within transitional housing in the chart below).

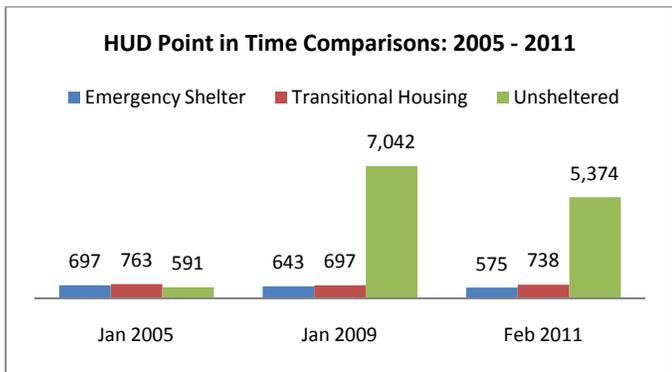


The level of disability is most severe in the street and abandoned building populations.



Point in Time Homeless Count Comparisons

There has been a huge increase in homelessness since Hurricane Katrina. Comparisons of the 2005, 2009 and 2011 Point in Time Counts show the increase in homelessness as a result of Katrina and the impact of intense efforts to address it.

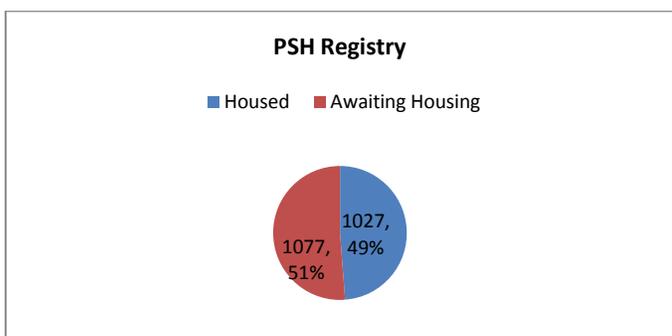


Factors Leading to Increase in Homelessness

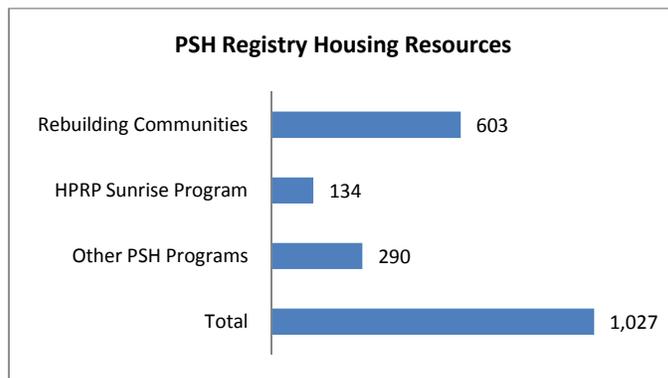
Hurricane Katrina destroyed 70% of the housing stock in New Orleans, including 51,000 rental units. Rents quickly escalated and still remain 47% higher than pre-Katrina levels. However, wages remain largely the same. As a result, New Orleans is now the most rent-burdened community in the nation, with more of New Orleanians' income going toward rent than even traditionally high-cost cities such as New York or Las Vegas. This is particularly devastating for low-income people with disabilities. The current Fair Market Rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in New Orleans is \$850, while a person on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) receives \$674. Additionally, the devastation of the healthcare infrastructure, documented continuing adverse impacts on physical and mental health, and the loss of the extended network of family and neighborhood supports have had a significant impact on homelessness.

Housing Accomplishments

In 2007, UNITY established the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Registry as a systematic method of prioritizing those most in need of housing. Since its inception, 1027 disabled persons living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, and emergency shelters have been housed from the PSH Registry. Of these, 892 persons have been housed within the last two years.



The majority of these persons were housed through the Rebuilding Communities Shelter Plus Care program, a program developed through advocacy efforts led by the UNITY collaborative. The collaborative has also used a variety of other resources to effectively house the most vulnerable.



Permanent Housing Outcomes

In addition to the emphasis on re-housing the most vulnerable people with disabilities in the most dire homeless situations, the UNITY collaborative of agencies works daily on the task of finding permanent housing solutions for people in all categories of HUD-recognized categories of homelessness, including those facing imminent eviction from housing or discharge from institutions with no resources to obtain housing. During the years 2009 and 2010 the collaborative achieved permanent housing outcomes for 10,905 people meeting the HUD definition of homelessness.

