



Homelessness in Greater New Orleans:

A Report on Progress toward Ending Homelessness

May 2012

Introduction

The 2012 Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish took place on January 23, 2012, utilizing the staff of more than 50 of the 65 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 January 23 and asking certain demographic information. In addition, a statistically significant sample of 189 census blocks in Orleans Parish was canvassed by UNITY's Abandoned Buildings Outreach Team, during which all unsecured abandoned buildings were searched in order to count bedrolls in active use. Canvass results were then extrapolated to the census blocks not counted, in order to determine the number of abandoned building dwellers across the city.

The Point in Time Count is conducted 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 Count 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). The last official Point in Time Count was conducted in February 2011.

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 (the "Continuum") 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; and people being discharged from hospitals and jails with no resources or place to go.

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

- **The number of people living in literal homelessness in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish – in temporary homeless shelters or without any shelter at all – is still very high at 4,903.** This number is 2.4 times higher now than before Hurricane Katrina, even though the area has a smaller general population than before, according to the Point in Time Count. However, steady improvement is being made, with the number of people living in those conditions dropping 58 percent since January 2007. Before Katrina, only 2,051 people lived in literal homelessness on any given night. That number shot up to 11,619 in January 2007, but then declined to 8,725 in January 2009, dropping to 6,687 in February 2011, and then to 4,903 by January 2012. This year's number is 27 percent lower than last year's.
- **7,130 people, excluding those now living in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), now meet the HUD definition of homelessness on any given day.** The number of people who meet HUD's broader definition of homelessness, which includes those being evicted by acquaintances or landlords or being discharged from jails or hospitals with no place to go, is much higher than before Katrina but declining steadily. 7,130 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, is still higher than the 5,360 in 2005 before Hurricane Katrina, according to the PIT Comprehensive Estimate. This year's number, however, is 22 percent lower than in 2011.
- **The UNITY collaborative served 21,676 people meeting the broad HUD definition of homelessness during calendar year 2011.** Over the course of a year, the number of people experiencing homelessness is far larger than the PIT, as some people exit homelessness quickly while others take their place. 21,676 individuals were served in 2011– 9,713 were served in 2004.
- **The largest share of homeless people in New Orleans are living in abandoned buildings.** The PIT Count found that 2,811 homeless people were living in New Orleans' approximately 42,000 abandoned buildings on any given night. Forty-eight percent of the local homeless individuals are chronically homeless, compared to 35% nationally. The homeless in New Orleans are more disabled than the national average and have spent more time homeless.
- **This year's progress in reducing homelessness can be attributed to five major factors: the City of New Orleans' Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program; expansion of the UNITY collaborative's work; new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) beds; 80 persons were permanently housed from the Calliope Street homeless camp; and increased rental opportunities.**
- **First, the City of New Orleans's massive Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program, a federal stimulus program, prevented or ended the homelessness of 1,913 families or single individuals by providing short-term rent assistance and case management services.** That program ends June 30, 2012.
- **Second, the agencies in the UNITY homeless collaborative have greatly expanded the amount of work they do, serving more than twice as many clients in 2011 as they did in 2004.** They have significantly increased their effectiveness in attaining permanent housing outcomes, with 6,660 clients placed in permanent housing in 2011, mostly by leasing apartments with landlords in the private rental market or reuniting with family, compared to only 1,470 clients having permanent housing outcomes in 2004. Ninety percent of the clients in the collaborative's 27 transitional housing programs attained permanent housing last year. In contrast, HUD's national standards require only 65 percent of transitional housing clients to attain permanent housing outcomes, and the national average is 73 percent.
- **Third, 471 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) beds have been added during 2011 – providing affordable apartments to homeless people with disabilities, typically through voucher programs.** All of these new beds are in Housing First programs targeted at the most vulnerable homeless people. PSH is proven effective in ending chronic homelessness, especially the homelessness of people with the most complex problems. Since Katrina, the

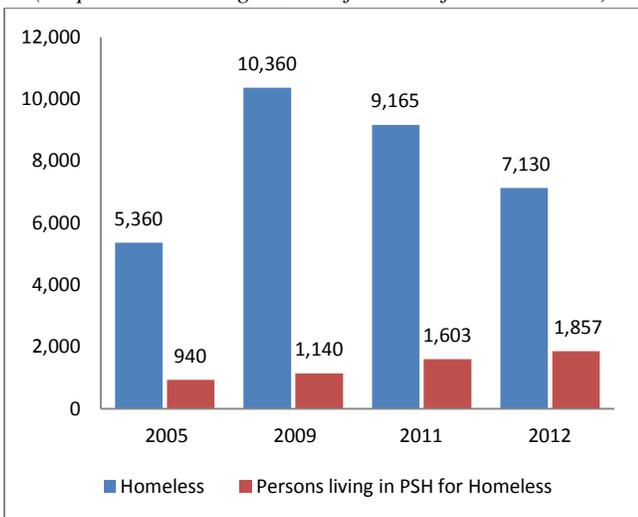
Continuum has created 1,191 new homeless-designated Permanent Supportive Housing beds, for a total of 2,116 Permanent Supportive Housing beds for the homeless. There were only 925 PSH beds for the homeless before Katrina.

- **Fourth, in an intensive effort by the City of New Orleans, the Continuum of Care, the State of Louisiana, Metropolitan Human Services District, and other nonprofits, about 80 persons were permanently housed from the Calliope Street homeless camp last fall, in some cases using state mainstream resources beyond homeless programs.**
- **Finally, as the City continues to rebuild after Katrina, affordable housing continues to be created.** As new affordable rental housing units are being developed, including the construction of the Big Four public housing re-developments, and a steady trickle of modest-income homeowners continue to finish the repairs on their homes, rental opportunities are continuing to expand and the extended family networks of New Orleans are being strengthened, thereby creating housing for those who are homeless or would have otherwise fallen into homelessness.

Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate

The Comprehensive Estimate of Homelessness counts all people who meet HUD’s 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; and f) people being discharged from hospitals and jails with nowhere to go and no resources to obtain housing. This research found that there are 7,130 people meeting this criteria and an additional 1,857 in Permanent Supportive Housing. The number of homeless people decreased over 22% from last year. Additionally, the number of people accessing PSH increased almost 16%.

Point in Time Comprehensive Estimate of Homelessness
(all persons meeting HUD definition of homelessness)

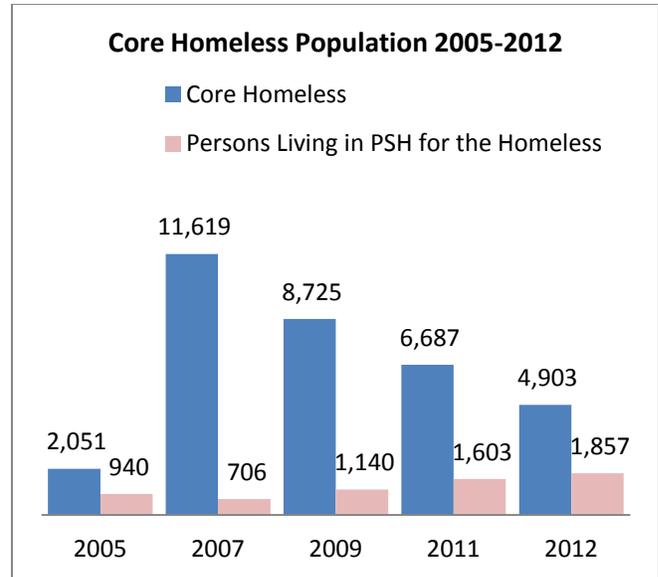


Point in Time Homeless Count

All of the charts below reflect the 2012 Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count. Please note that the PIT Count, in contrast to the PIT Comprehensive Estimate, measures only 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 **4,903 homeless**

persons on any given night in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish. The chart that follows refers to these 4,903 persons as the “core homeless” – those living in temporary shelter for the homeless or no shelter at all.

The number of “core homeless” on any given night has decreased 58 percent since 2007, while the numbers of persons in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) have steadily increased, from 940 persons to 1,857 persons on any given night.



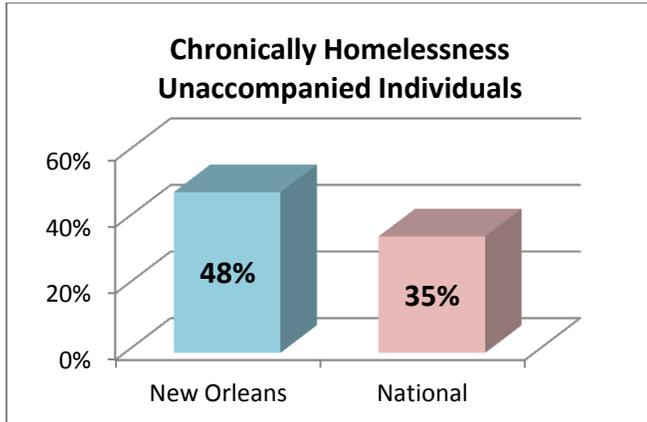
The majority of homeless people, 57%, stay in abandoned buildings rather than on the streets or other types of shelter.

Number of Homeless Persons by Location				
Location	Individuals	Persons in Families	Unaccompanied Youth	Total
Emergency Shelter	524	69	8	601
Transitional Housing	371	464	13	848
Streets	657	10	2	669
Abandoned Buildings	2742	35	7	2784

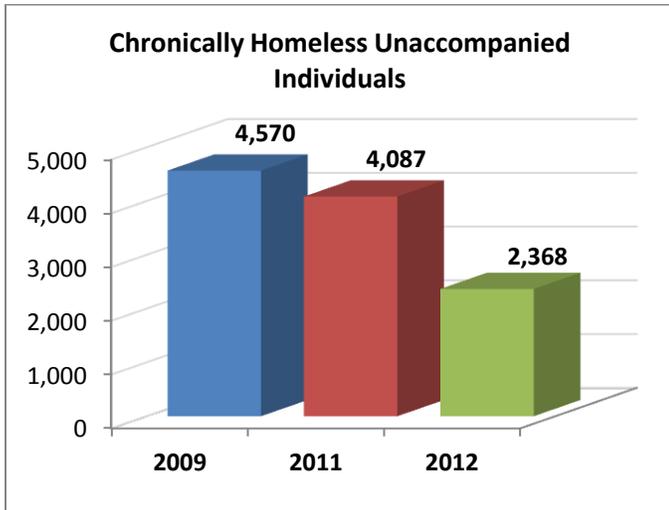
Chronic Homelessness

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. Chronic homelessness continues to be a large problem in the area, with 48% of the homeless individuals in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes – **2,368 individuals** – considered

chronically homeless. Individuals are identified as unaccompanied adults; in addition this study found that there were 54 people in chronically homeless families, bringing the total to 2,422. The rate of chronic homelessness is higher in New Orleans than nationally. Across the nation, chronically homeless individuals comprise only 35% of the homeless population.

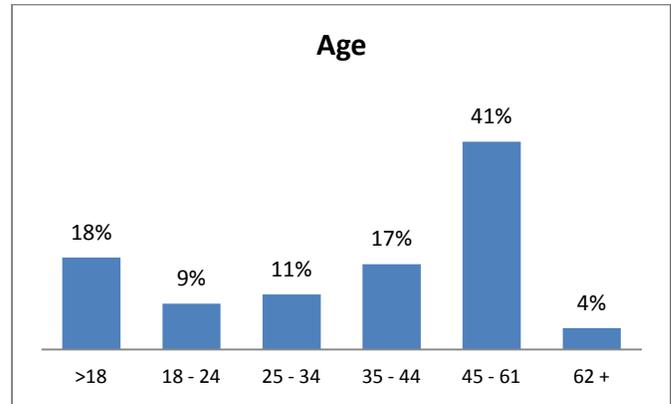


Nonetheless, the number of chronically homeless individuals in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes has decreased by 48% from 2009 to 2012.



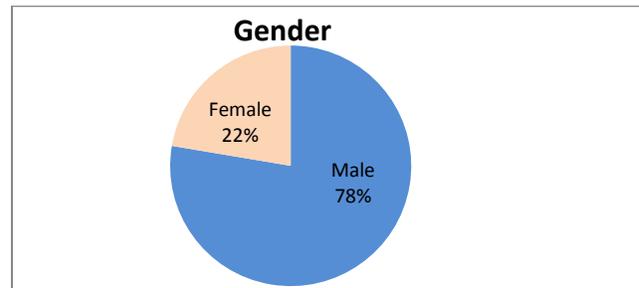
Age

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

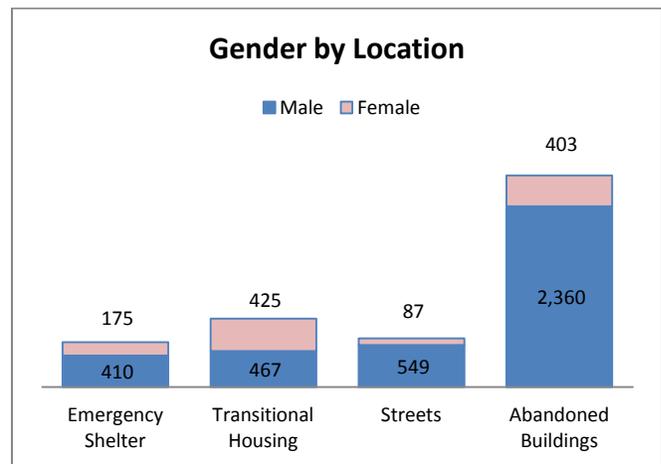


Gender

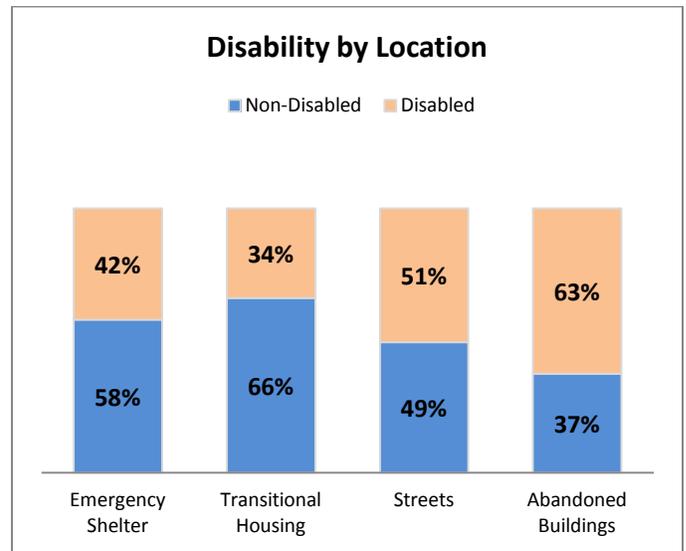
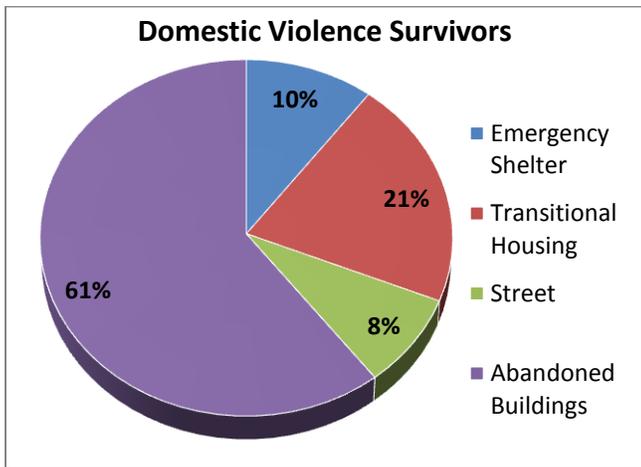
The gender ratio in New Orleans is consistent with the national average. Women represent 22% of the homeless population.



Homeless women and transgendered individuals experience unique risks and vulnerabilities. Although women only account for 14% of the street homeless population and 15% of abandoned building dwellers, these 1,090 women are at great risk of assault and sexual violence.



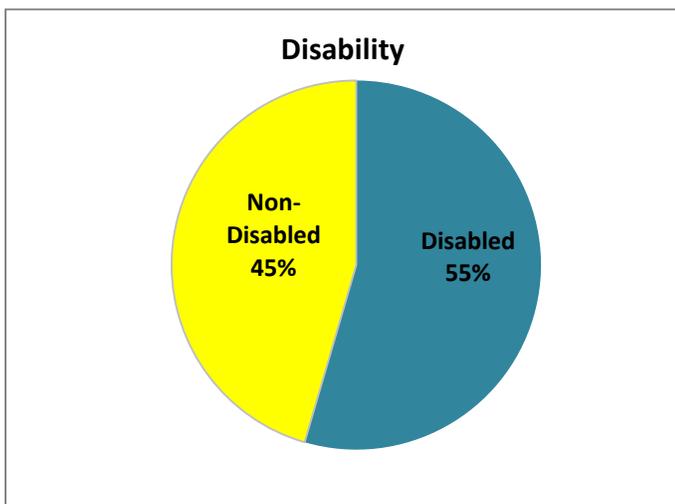
Domestic violence can be a contributing factor to homelessness, especially for women. Of those who indicated they were a victim of domestic violence, 69 percent are unsheltered, with 8 percent living on the street and 61 percent living in abandoned buildings.



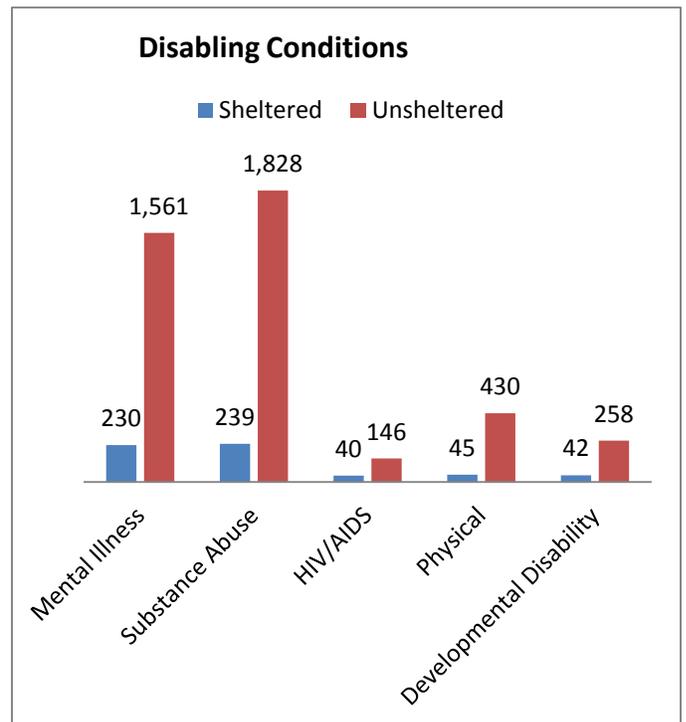
Disability

Fifty-five percent of the local homeless population is disabled, a much higher percentage than the national rate of 40%. There are currently 2,697 homeless persons experiencing at least one disability on any given night in New Orleans.

Substance abuse and mental illness are the most common disabling conditions for homeless people in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. The numbers in the graph below add up to more than the total number of people with disabilities due to some people experiencing more than one condition.

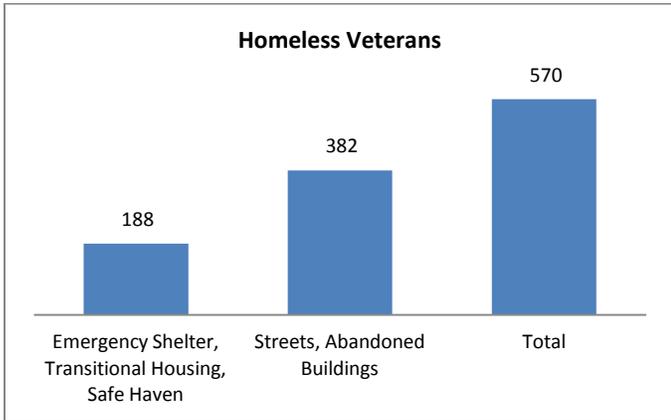


The level of disability is most severe in the street and abandoned building populations.

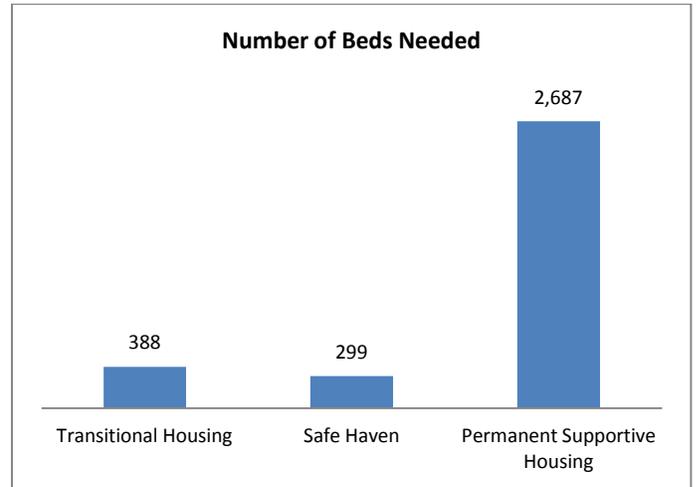


Veterans

There are 570 homeless Veterans on any given night, 67% without shelter.

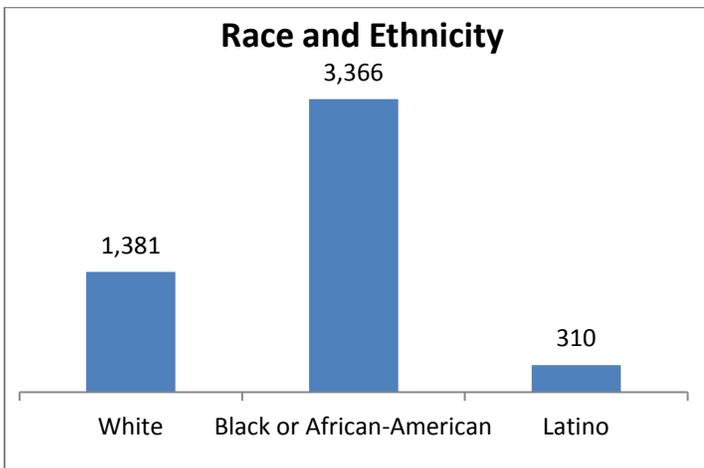


rental assistance (categorized as transitional housing in the chart below), Safe Haven beds for unsheltered persons with mental illness needing low demand settings while they await Permanent Supportive Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing beds targeted to the chronically homeless and most vulnerable homeless.



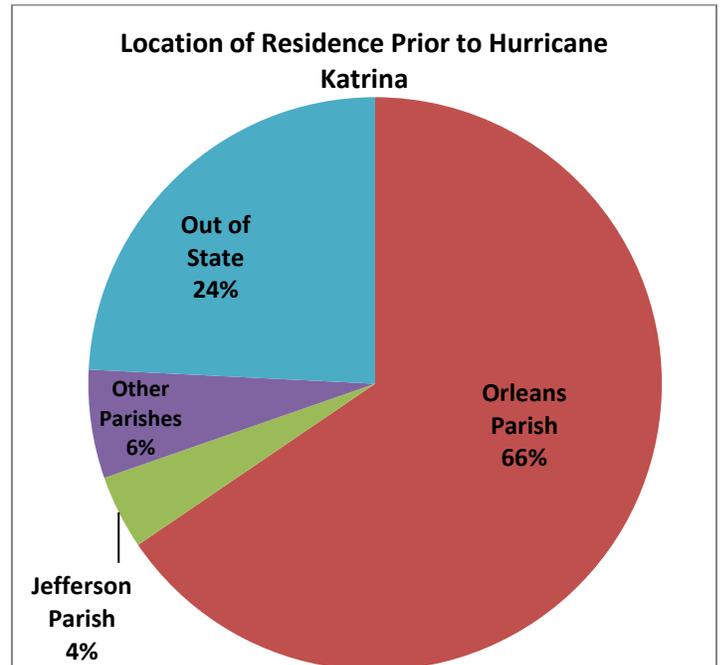
Race and Ethnicity

The majority of people experiencing homelessness are people of color, mostly Black or African-American. The numbers in the chart below total more than the PIT count as some individuals identified more than one race and/or ethnicity. While the survey included more options than those shown below (including Asian, Native American, Native Pacific Islander, and others) these numbers were not statistically significant.



Housing Status Prior to Katrina

The majority of currently homeless individuals in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes lived in the area before Hurricane Katrina.



Unmet Housing Needs

In order to end homelessness in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, the Collaborative needs to add hundreds of beds to its current housing inventory, particularly Rapid Rehousing

62% of the homeless persons surveyed (does not include abandoned housing dwellers) were not homeless before

Hurricane Katrina, and had been living in their own home or apartment or with family or friends.

Factors Leading to Increase in Homelessness following Hurricane Katrina

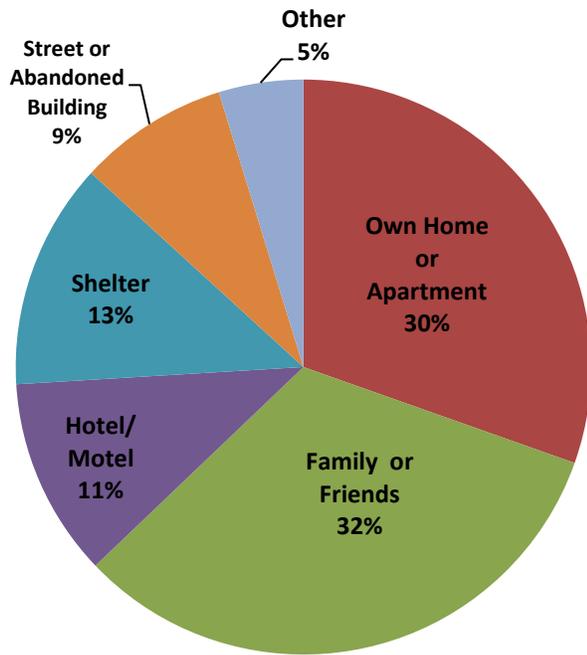
Hurricane Katrina destroyed 70% of the housing stock in New Orleans, including 51,000 rental units. Rents quickly escalated and still remain 40% higher than pre-Katrina levels. However, wages remain largely the same. As a result, New Orleans is now the most rent-burdened community in the nation, with 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 \$811, while a person on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) receives \$698. 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.

Factors Contributing to Ongoing Decrease in Homelessness

We believe that there are six main contributing factors that have led to the decrease in the PIT homeless count.

1. **The City of New Orleans’s massive Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program**, a federal stimulus program, prevented or ended the homelessness of 1,913 families or single individuals by providing short-term rent assistance and case management services. That program ends June 30, 2012.
2. **The agencies in the UNITY homeless collaborative have greatly expanded the amount of work they do, serving more than twice as many clients in 2011 as they did in 2004.** They have significantly increased their effectiveness in attaining permanent housing outcomes, with 6,660 clients placed in permanent housing in 2011, mostly by leasing apartments with landlords in the private rental market or reuniting with family, compared to only 1,470 clients having permanent housing outcomes in 2004. Ninety percent of the clients in the collaborative’s 27 transitional housing programs attained permanent housing last year. In contrast, HUD’s national standards require only 65 percent of transitional housing clients to attain permanent housing outcomes, and the national average is 73 percent.

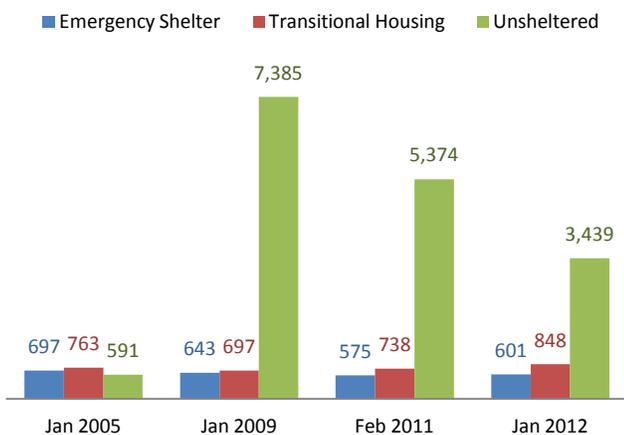
Housing Status Prior to Hurricane Katrina



Point in Time Homeless Count Comparisons

There has been a huge increase in homelessness since Hurricane Katrina. Comparisons of the 2005, 2009, 2011 and 2012 PIT Counts show the increase in homelessness as a result of Katrina and the impact of intense efforts to address it.

HUD Point in Time Comparisons: 2005 - 2012



3. **471 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) beds have been added in 2011 – providing affordable apartments to homeless people with disabilities, typically through voucher programs.**

All of these new beds are in Housing First programs targeted at the most vulnerable homeless people. PSH is proven effective in ending chronic homelessness, especially the homelessness of people with the most complex problems. Since Katrina, the Continuum has created 1,191 new homeless-designated Permanent Supportive Housing beds, for a total of 2,116 Permanent Supportive Housing beds for the homeless. There were only 925 PSH beds for the homeless before Katrina.

4. **In an intensive effort by the City of New Orleans, the Continuum of Care, the State of Louisiana, Metropolitan Human Services District, and other nonprofits, about 80 persons were permanently housed from the Calliope Street homeless camp last fall, in some cases using state mainstream resources beyond homeless programs.**

5. **As the City continues to rebuild after Katrina, affordable housing continues to be created.** As new affordable rental housing units are being developed, including the construction of the Big Four

public housing re-developments, and a steady trickle of modest-income homeowners continue to finish the repairs on their homes, rental opportunities are continuing to expand and the extended family networks of New Orleans are being strengthened, creating housing for those who are homeless or would have otherwise fallen into homelessness.

6. In all our work, UNITY strives to utilize the most current and accurate data. In order to count abandoned building dwellers, we conducted searches of abandoned buildings on a statistically significant sample of 189 census blocks, and then utilized abandoned building statistics and data from public sources to arrive at a city-wide extrapolated count of bedrolls in abandoned buildings. For the 2011 PIT count we used data from the 2010 U.S. Census, and for 2012 we used Postal Service data. While these numbers were not significantly different, we do believe both are over estimates of the total number of abandoned buildings in Orleans and Jefferson Parish. As a result for this 2012 count we surveyed 189 census blocks and determined a count of abandoned buildings that excluded vacant lots and demolished housing units. This slight change in methodology may have impacted the final count estimates.