Trends in Homelessness in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish

The 2018 Point in Time Count

UNITY
OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

April 25, 2018

Background

ABOUT THE POINT IN TIME SURVEY: The 2018 Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish took place on January 22, 2018, utilizing more than 200 staff and volunteers of the nearly 60 agencies that make up the New Orleans/Jefferson Parish/City of Kenner Homeless Continuum of Care.

The Point in Time Count is conducted each January in order to provide as comprehensive and accurate a count as possible of how many persons are homeless during one 24-hour period in emergency shelter, in homeless transitional housing, and in places not meant for human habitation on any given night. The Count is required, and its scope and methodology governed, by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The intent is to provide information with which to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness in the New Orleans area, and to provide information with which to gauge the need for resources to end and prevent homelessness and the type of resources needed.

Staff and volunteers fanned out across the City and Jefferson Parish to administer surveys on the streets and parks and in homeless programs and other locations where homeless people are known to gather, asking homeless people where they had stayed the night of January 26 and asking certain demographic information. In addition, in areas of the City known to have a history of people squatting in abandoned buildings, all unsecured abandoned buildings were searched in order to count bedrolls in active use.

In addition to the annual Point in Time survey, UNITY of Greater New Orleans and its partners also do street surveys at other times of the year. In partnership with its member agency, VIA Link, UNITY also maintains a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in which all of its funded agencies, as well as those funded by the City of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish under their HUD Emergency Solutions Grant programs, and many VA-funded programs, enter data on all clients. HMIS data can provide information on how many homeless people are served over a longer period of time, which is a larger number than that on any given night, since most homeless people are only homeless for a matter of days, weeks, or months. But HMIS data typically does not include people who have not received services.

ABOUT UNITY: The Point in Time Count is coordinated by UNITY of Greater New Orleans, a nonprofit organization designated by the federal government to lead the Homeless Continuum of Care of housing and services for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, a collaborative of about 60 nonprofit and governmental agencies. 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, Jefferson Parish government and the City of Kenner, 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 and oversees the work of the collaborative.

In partnership with Mayor Landrieu and his City Hall team, the VA, the Housing Authority of New Orleans, and the CoC agencies, UNITY coordinated the implementation of the successful effort to make New Orleans the first city to reach a "functional zero" in veteran homelessness by housing all homeless veterans who would accept housing and instituting a Rapid Response System for Homeless Veterans that ensures, to this day, that any newly homeless veterans are housed in apartments within an average of 30 days of being found on the street or shelter.

In May 2016, the UNITY collaborative reached a similar feat for family homelessness, making New Orleans and Jefferson Parish the first community known to have reduced the average length of time that families with children spend homeless to 40 days or less. These rapid-rehousing standards are maintained by daily coordination of master lists of all homeless veterans and homeless families in the community and weekly meetings of all agencies working with those veterans and families.

ABOUT CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS: The collaborative's current stretch goal is to end the homelessness, by the end of 2018, of all chronically homeless people with disabilities who will accept housing, assuming sufficient resources for the necessary rent assistance and case management can be secured. The chronically homeless are defined by HUD as people with mental and/or physical disabilities who have been sleeping on the street or in emergency shelter for more than a year. Studies have shown that chronically homeless people typically are at high risk of premature death. Moreover, because they frequently are found in jail on minor homeless-related offenses and in hospital emergency rooms, studies have shown that the cost to provide them with Permanent Supportive Housing (rent assistance tied to case management services, often provided in the home) is less than the cost of keeping them homeless.

Permanent Supportive Housing using a "Housing First" approach, in which permanent housing is provided as the first action step, and not conditioned on compliance with abstinence or medication regiments, is the nationally recognized gold standard for ending a person's chronic homelessness.

Summary of the 2018 Point in Time Findings

- The number of homeless people is down 9 percent since January 2017. There are 113 fewer homeless people on any given night. The one-night count was 1301 persons in 2017, and this year was 1188 persons.

  The primary reason for this decrease is the provision of Permanent Supportive Housing to chronically homeless persons.

- Overall, homelessness is down by 90 percent since 2007. The levee failures in the aftermath of Katrina sparked a longstanding crisis of homelessness, due to destruction of 80 percent of the city's housing stock, the devastation of extended family and neighborhood networks, and widespread deterioration of mental and physical health. The primary reasons for the decrease are (1) the provision of Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-housing rent assistance and case management programs and (2) the overall recovery of the city, which brought more apartments on-line and more people back to the city who could take in or provide assistance to vulnerable relatives, friends and neighbors.

- The problem of chronic homelessness, defined as people with mental and physical disabilities living on the streets or in emergency shelter for more than a year, was more than halved in the past year. The number of people who are chronically homeless went from 404 last year to 193 this year, a reduction of 52 percent. Since 2009, chronic homelessness has been reduced by 96 percent. The primary reason is the provision of Permanent Supportive Housing by the collaborative, especially during an intense campaign, Home for the Holidays, which permanently housed 182 chronically homeless people in the last three months of 2017 alone.

- Overall, the problem of chronic homelessness has been reduced by 96 percent since 2009. What made that possible is an increase in Permanent Supportive Housing beds (rent subsidies with supportive services). PSH beds increased from 519 in January 2005 to 3032 in 2017, due to the collaborative's successful lobbying of Congress to provide 3000 vouchers to the state for the most vulnerable survivors of Katrina and Rita and its securing of new competitive HUD grants over the years.

- Family homelessness is down 28 percent since 2016, as a result of the collaborative's intense campaign to speed up the time it takes to place homeless families in permanent housing. In May 2017, we have reduced the average length of time it takes to house homeless families from about four months to 39 days. Since then, by close overseeing of every case to ensure housing is rapidly provided, we have maintained an average length of time to house all homeless families in their apartments to an average of 40 days or less.

- We have also maintained functional zero in veteran homelessness for the third straight year, meaning that newly homeless veterans are placed in apartments with case management services within an average of 30 days of being found on the street or in shelter. The number of literally homeless veterans living on the street or in emergency shelter on any given night was 29 in January 2018, down from 33 in 2017 and 470 in 2011.

- This year, the proportion of homeless people living in shelter was exactly even with the proportion of homeless people living unsheltered on the street or in abandoned buildings or cars. There were 594 people in each category. This was a marked change from 2017, when 776 people were in homeless shelter and 525 were unsheltered. However, most of this change was temporary, as the New Orleans Mission had temporarily closed most of its beds due to renovation, or cosmetic, due to a change in count methodology, in that UNITY implemented improvements in the training of the Point in Time volunteers to ensure that all homeless people, including those who refused to participate in answering questions, were nonetheless counted. In addition to those two primary factors, there is some evidence that a small portion of the increase in unsheltered homelessness is due to increasing numbers of newly homeless persons, primarily due to people losing their housing because of inability to pay rent.

- New Orleans' per capita rate of unsheltered homelessness (people sleeping on the street or in abandoned buildings), when compared to the general population, has decreased, but is still higher than Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The proportion of our homeless population that does not live in shelters – 50 percent -- is much higher than many cities. The primary reason for this is that we do not have a sufficient number of emergency shelter beds.

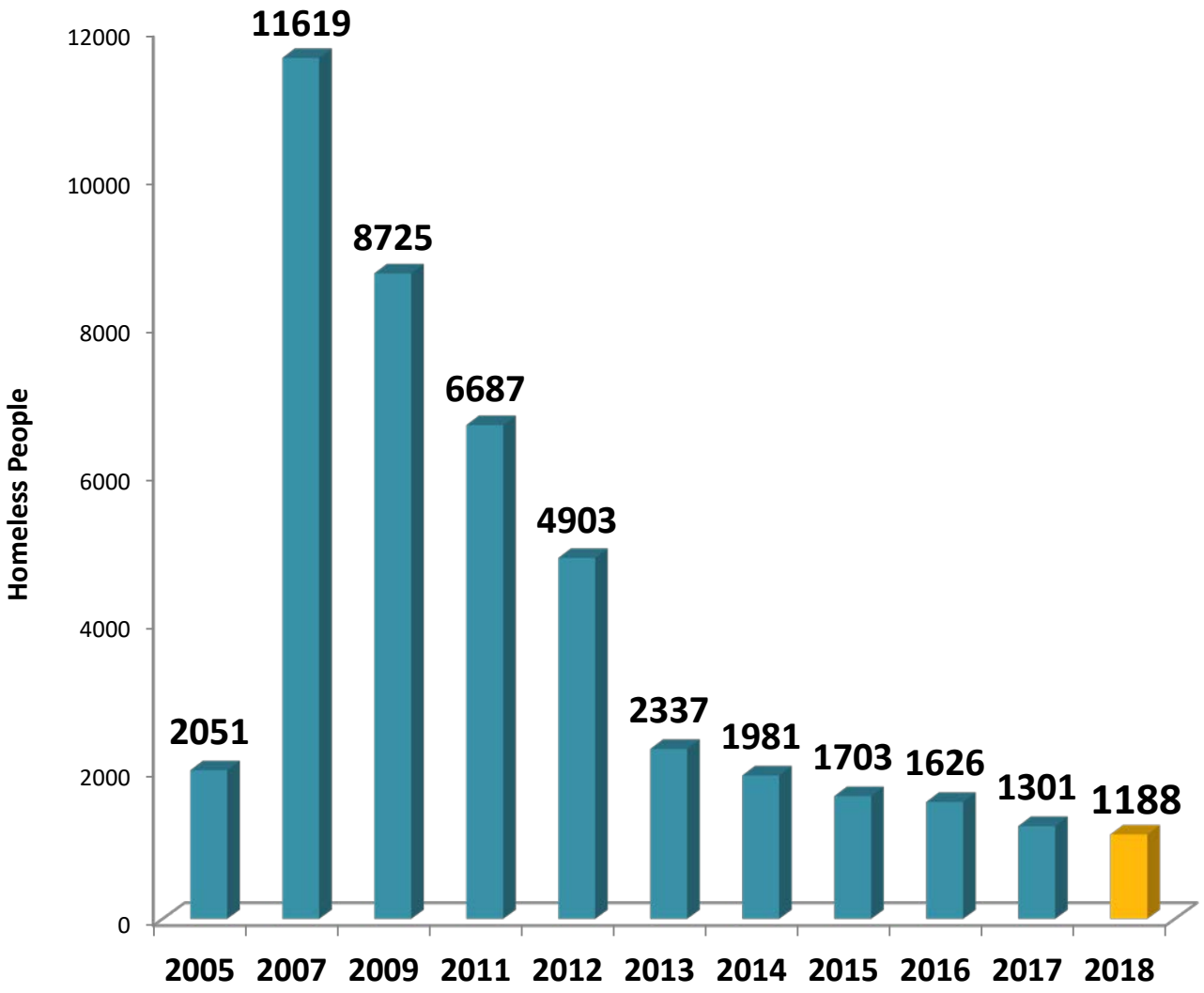
Recommendations

- **Do everything possible to prevent the most vulnerable homeless people from dying by providing more Permanent Supportive Housing resources to end their homelessness**. All local and state funders, both private and governmental, should participate in identifying and gathering as many resources as possible to provide more Permanent Supportive Housing, in the form of long-term rent vouchers and supportive services, to chronically homeless people and to other vulnerable homeless people with disabilities who are assessed as being at risk of dying soon.

- **Use city and private resources to provide permanent housing assistance to occupants of the new Low Barrier Shelter, to create a flow that allows the shelter to get many more homeless people off the street.**

- **Make affordable housing a part of every major housing development, and a significant portion of the City's budget, in order to prevent the rising tide of new homelessness that is engulfing many Western cities where rents are sharply increasing as they have in New Orleans.**

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish
2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count
Annual Counts of Homeless People



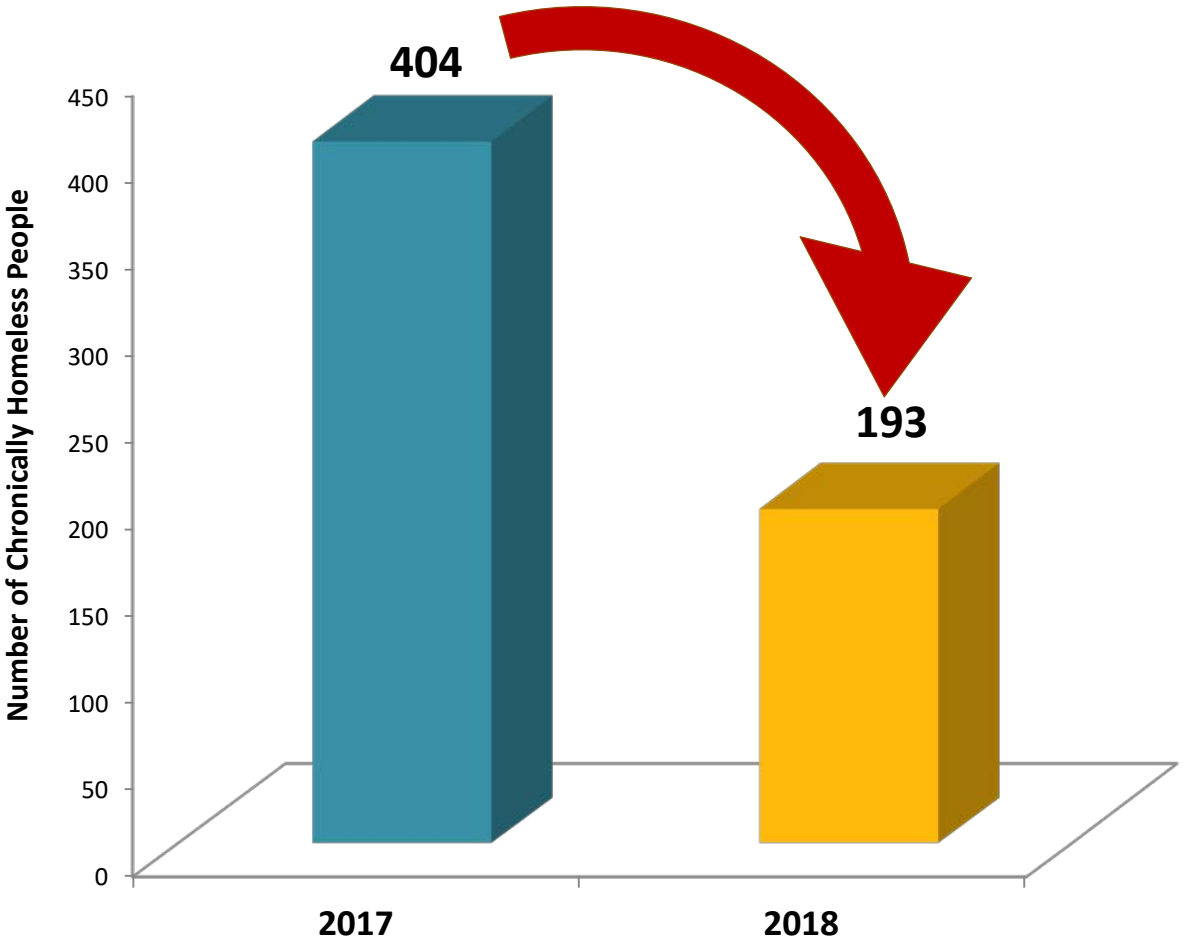
Homelessness is down

- 90% since 2007
- 9% since 2017

Counts are performed in January.
There were no counts in 2006, 2008, or 2010.

UNITY
OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

The Number of Chronically Homeless People Has Declined by 52% in Past Year

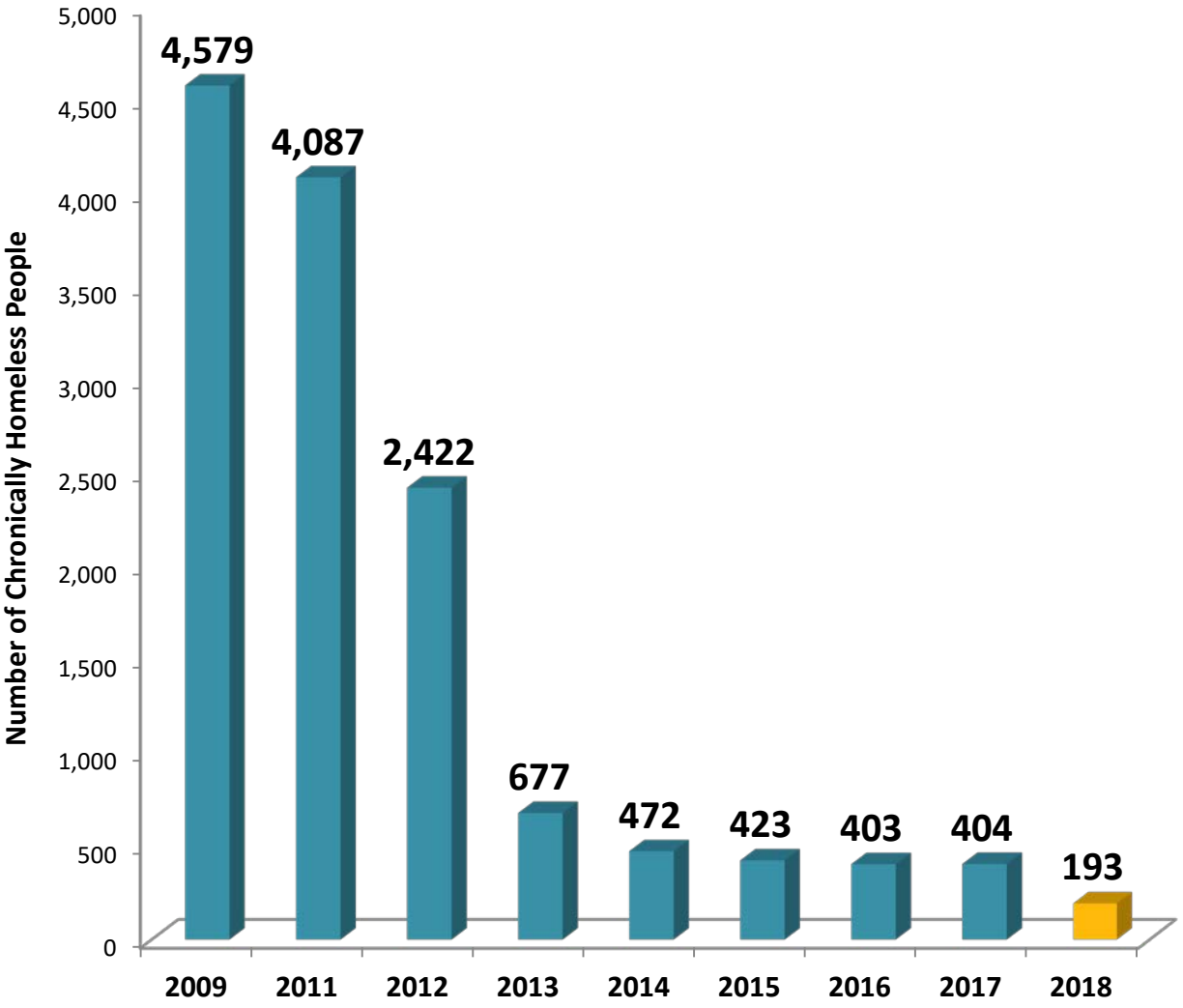


- **Chronically homeless people are those with disabilities who have been living on the street or in shelter for over a year.**
- **The problem of chronic homelessness has been halved in the past year, with 52% fewer chronically homeless people now compared to a year ago, primarily due to an intense campaign to provide them with Permanent Supportive Housing so that they are no longer homeless.**
- **Chronically homeless people are 16% of the homeless population in New Orleans-Jefferson Parish.**

UNITY
OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

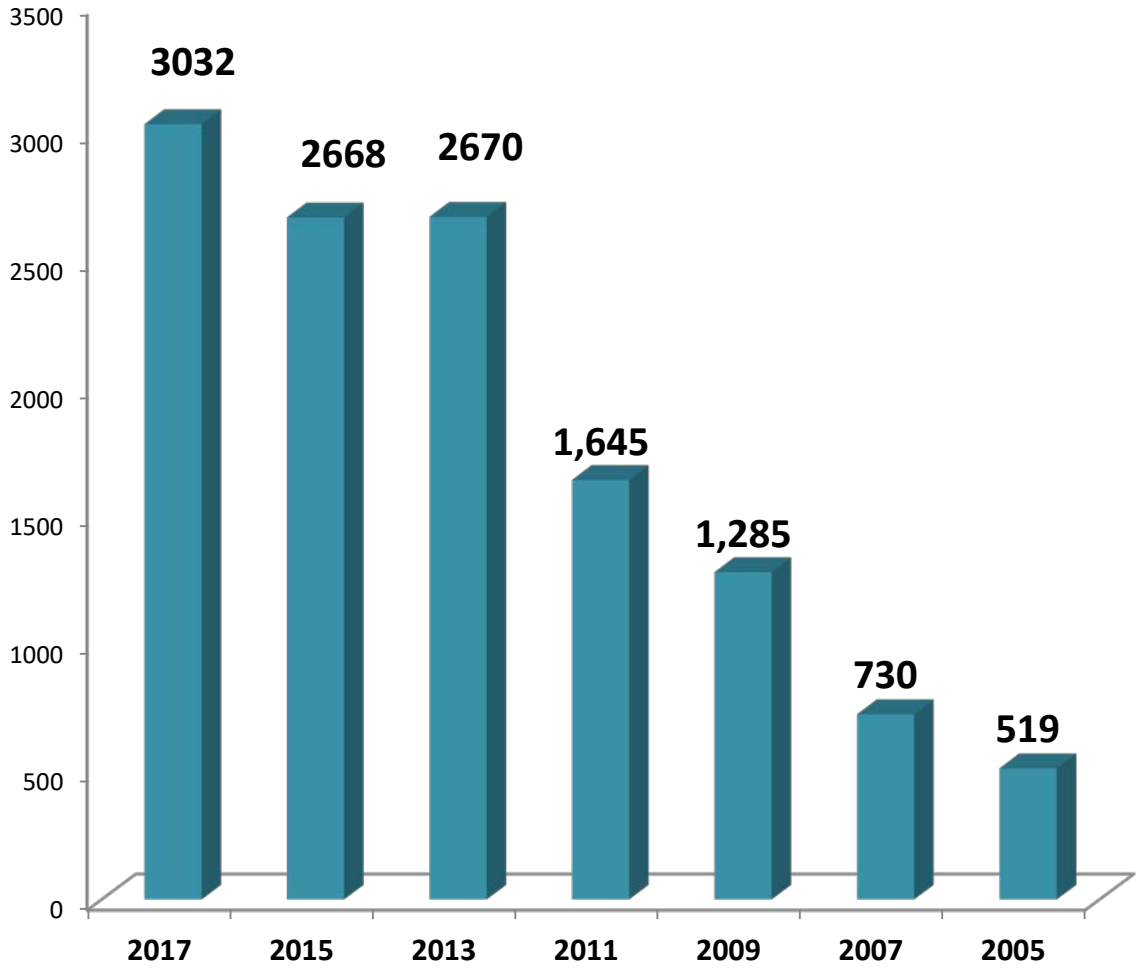
Chronic Homelessness 2009-2018



Chronic homelessness is down 96% since 2009.

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

Permanent Supportive Housing Beds for the Homeless in New Orleans

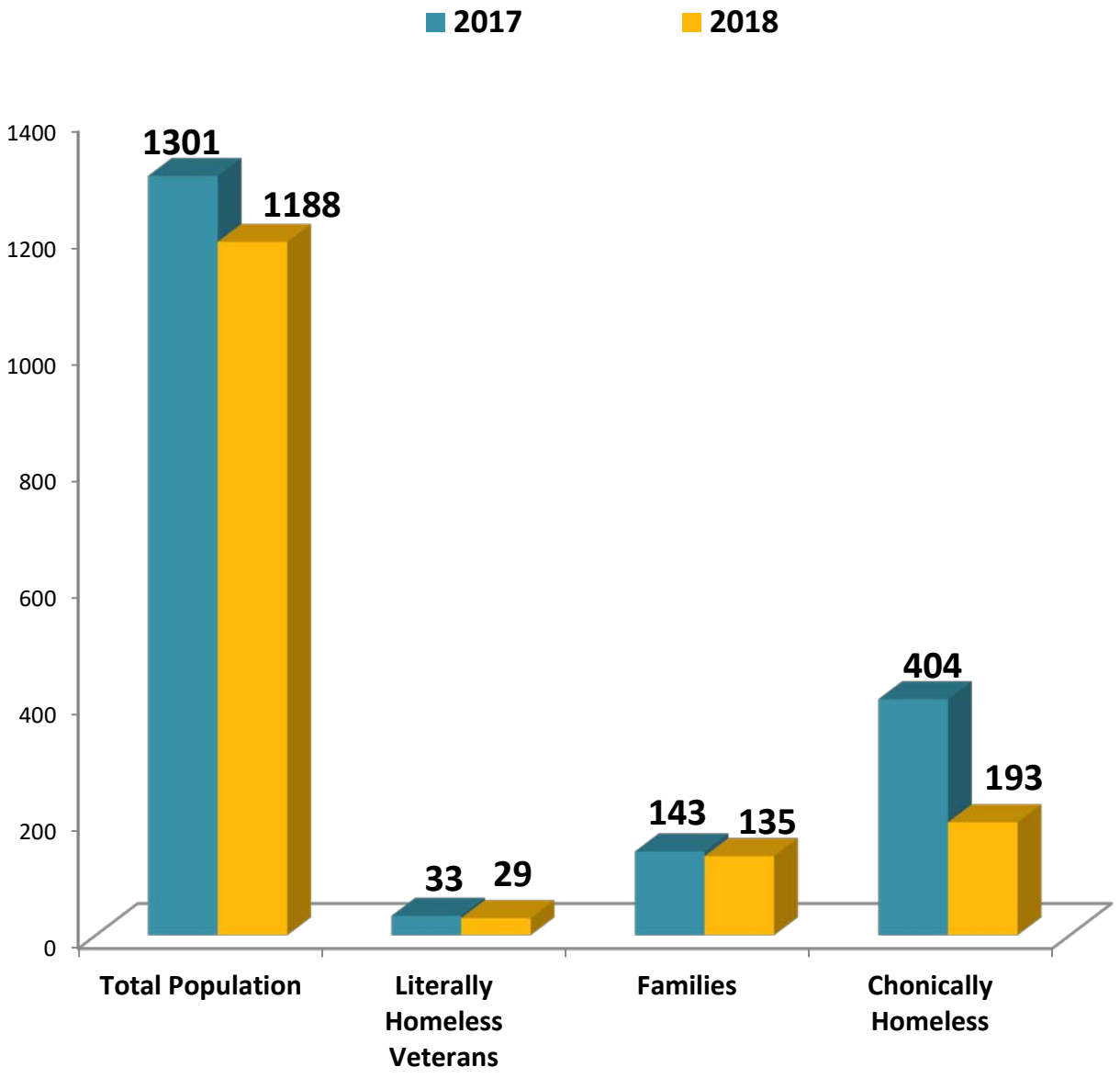


The supply of rent subsidies with supportive services has significantly increased, due to the collaborative's lobbying of Congress for Katrina vouchers for homeless people with disabilities and the securing of competitive HUD grants.

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

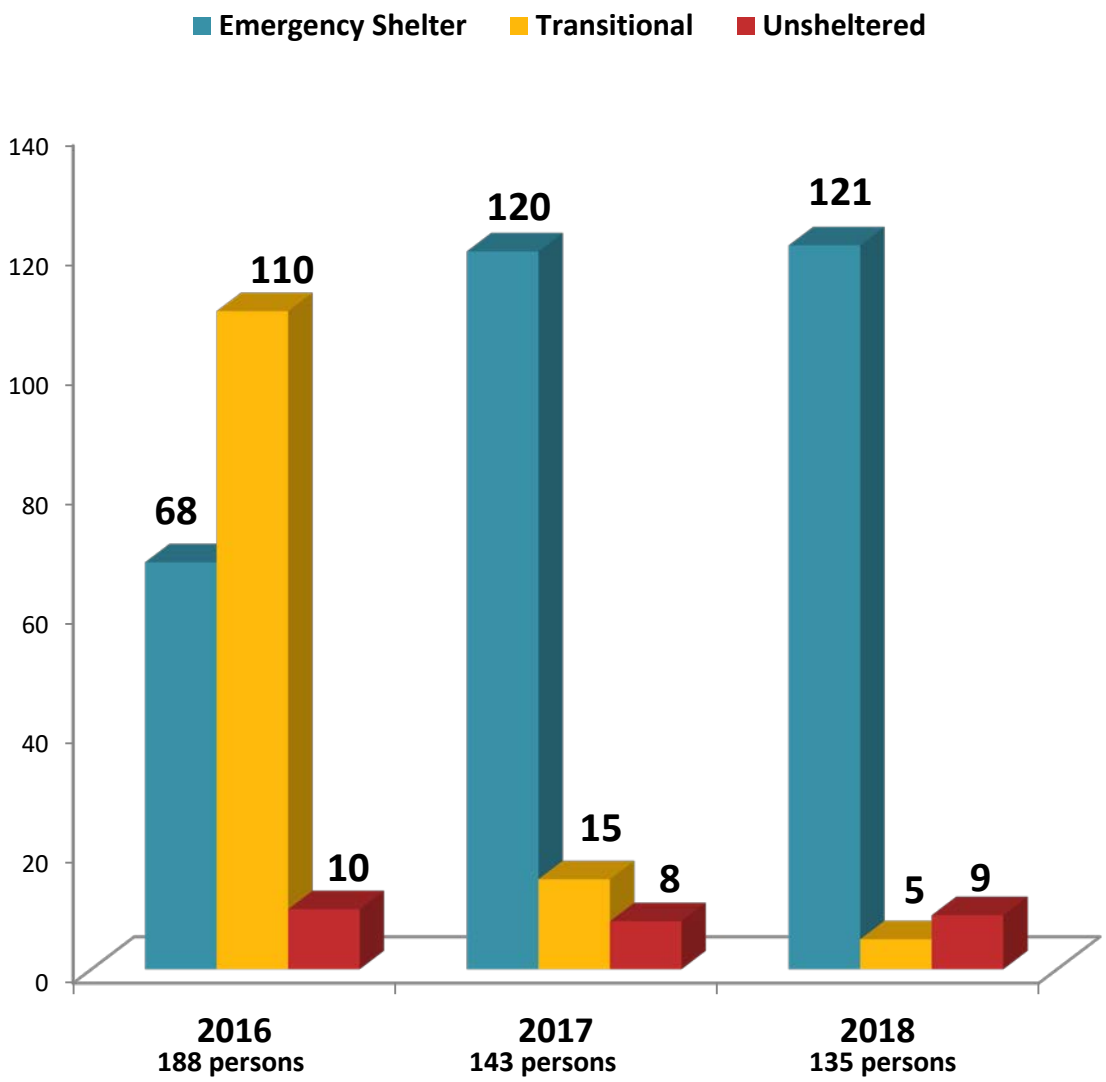
Overview of Homeless Population



UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Homeless Families
2016-2018

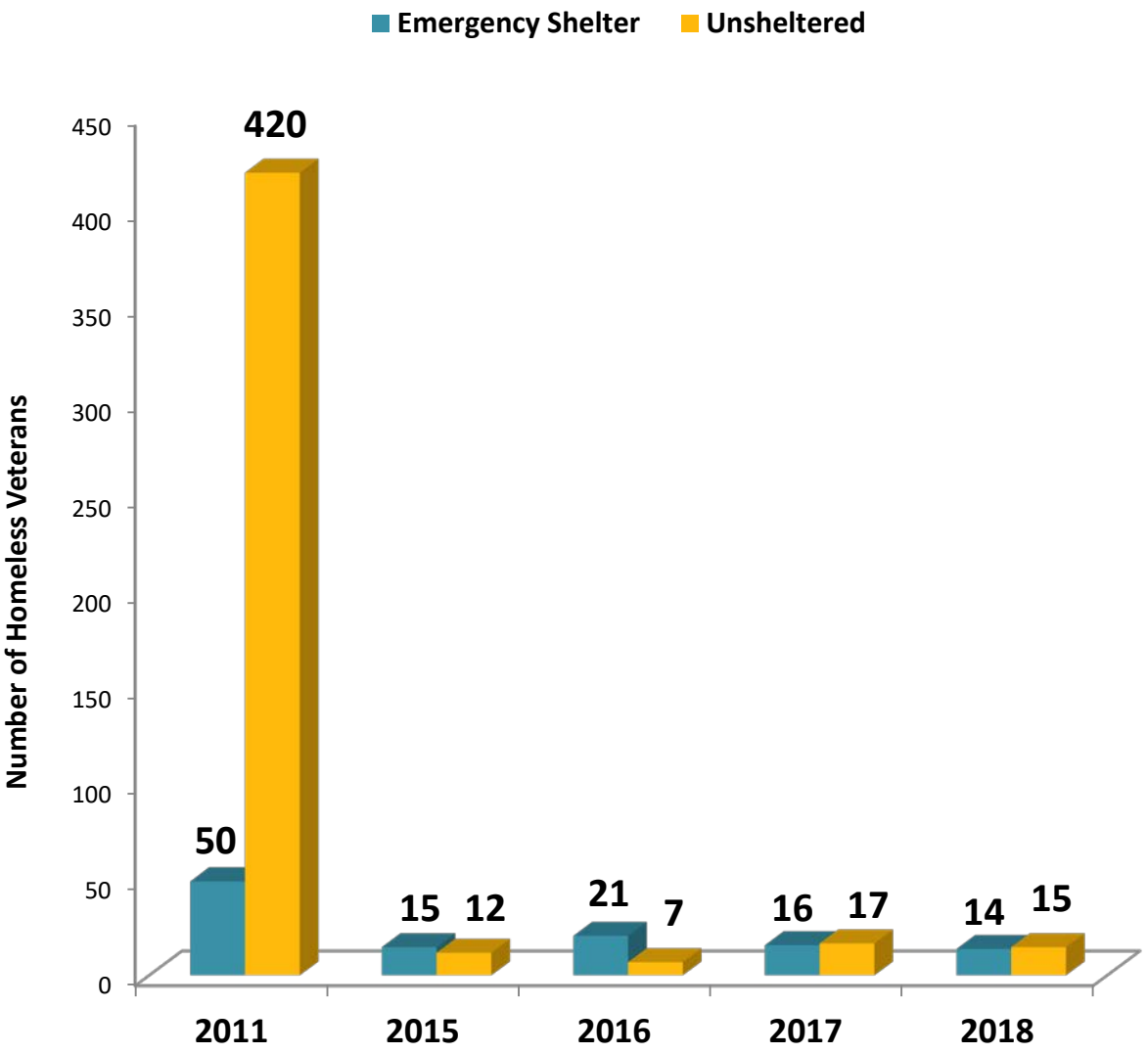


Family homelessness is down 28% since 2016. This decrease is due to the collaborative's intensive campaign to speed up the time it takes to place homeless families in permanent housing. Since May 2017, we have maintained an average of no more than 40 days to house each homeless family in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, by placing each family in their own apartment, with rent assistance and case management services provided in the home.

UNITY
OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Veteran Homelessness Remains at Functional Zero

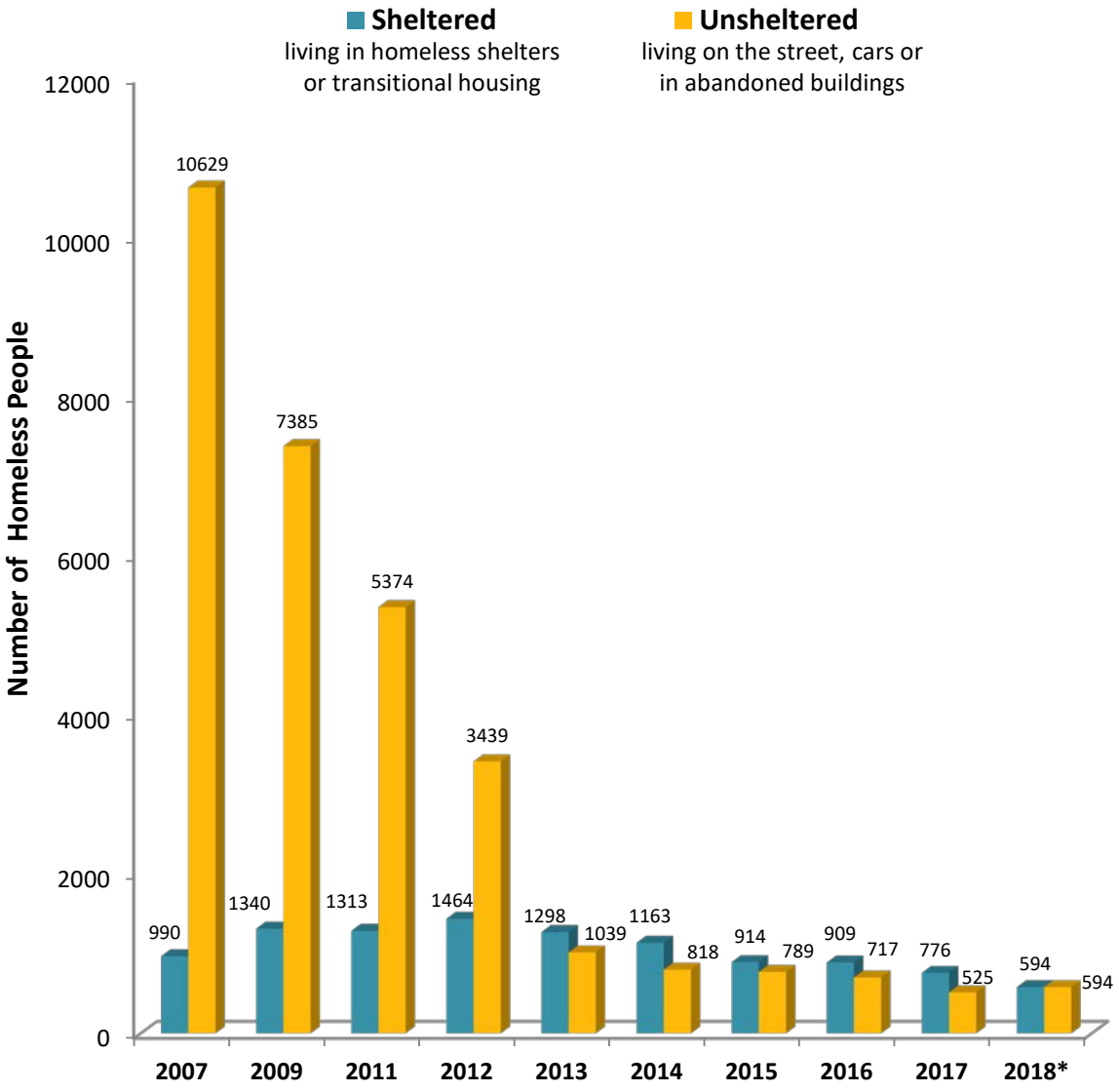


- **Literal homelessness (living on the street or in emergency shelter) among veterans has decreased by 94 percent since 2011.**
- **Since January 2015, upon completion of the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, the UNITY collaborative, in partnership with the City, VA and providers VOA, Start Corp. and Hope Center, have maintained "functional zero" in veteran homelessness by housing every veteran found on the street or shelter within an average of 30 days or less, if they will accept housing.**

UNITY
OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2018 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Homelessness 2007-2018

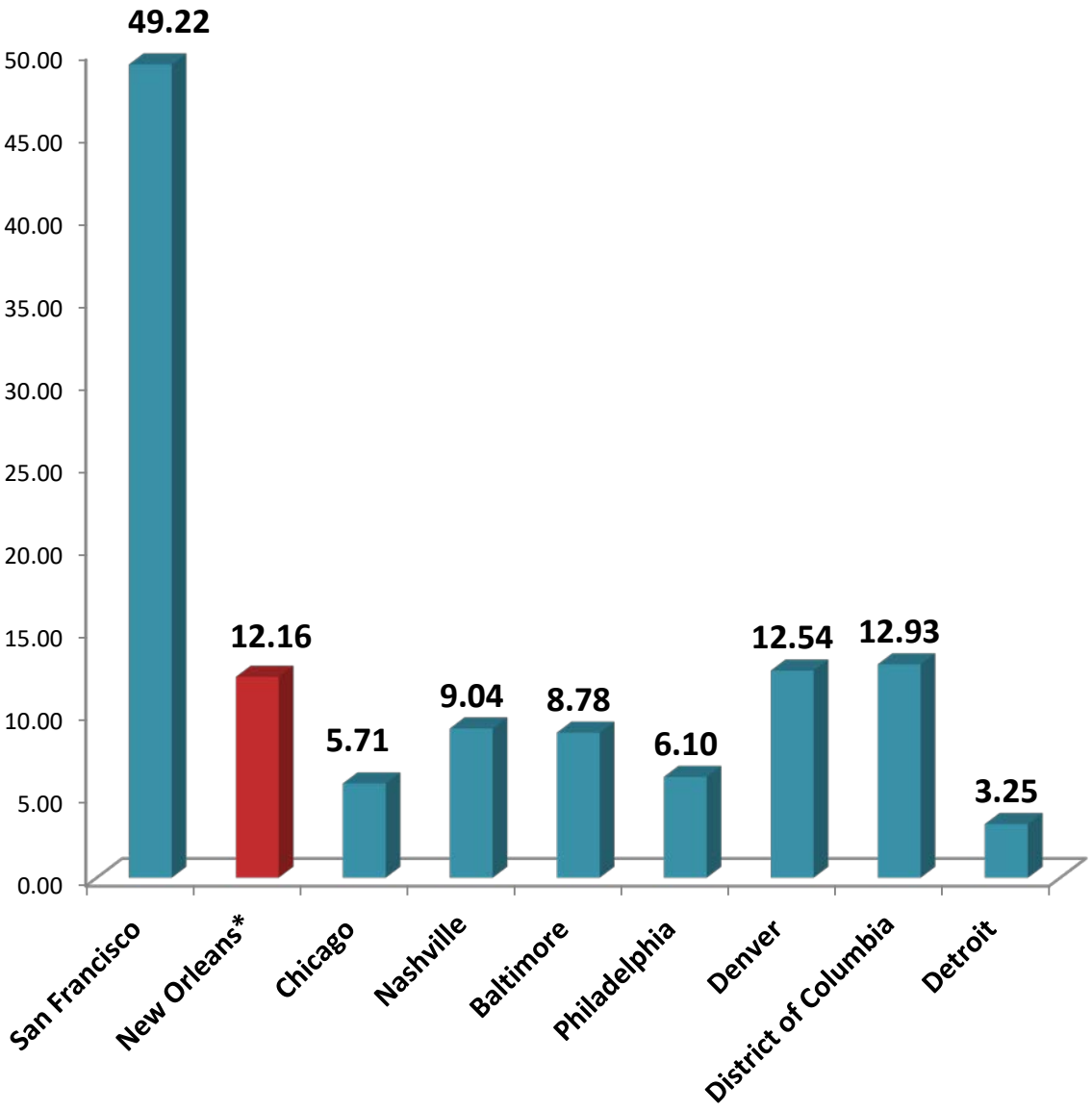


***This year's proportion of homeless people who are sheltered went down, while the proportion of unsheltered people went up, primarily because of the temporary closure of the New Orleans Mission for repairs, and also because of improvements in the training of volunteers for the Point in Time street count.**

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans' Per Capita Rate of Unsheltered Homelessness

Number of People Sleeping on the Street, in Cars, or Abandoned Buildings per 10,000 General Population

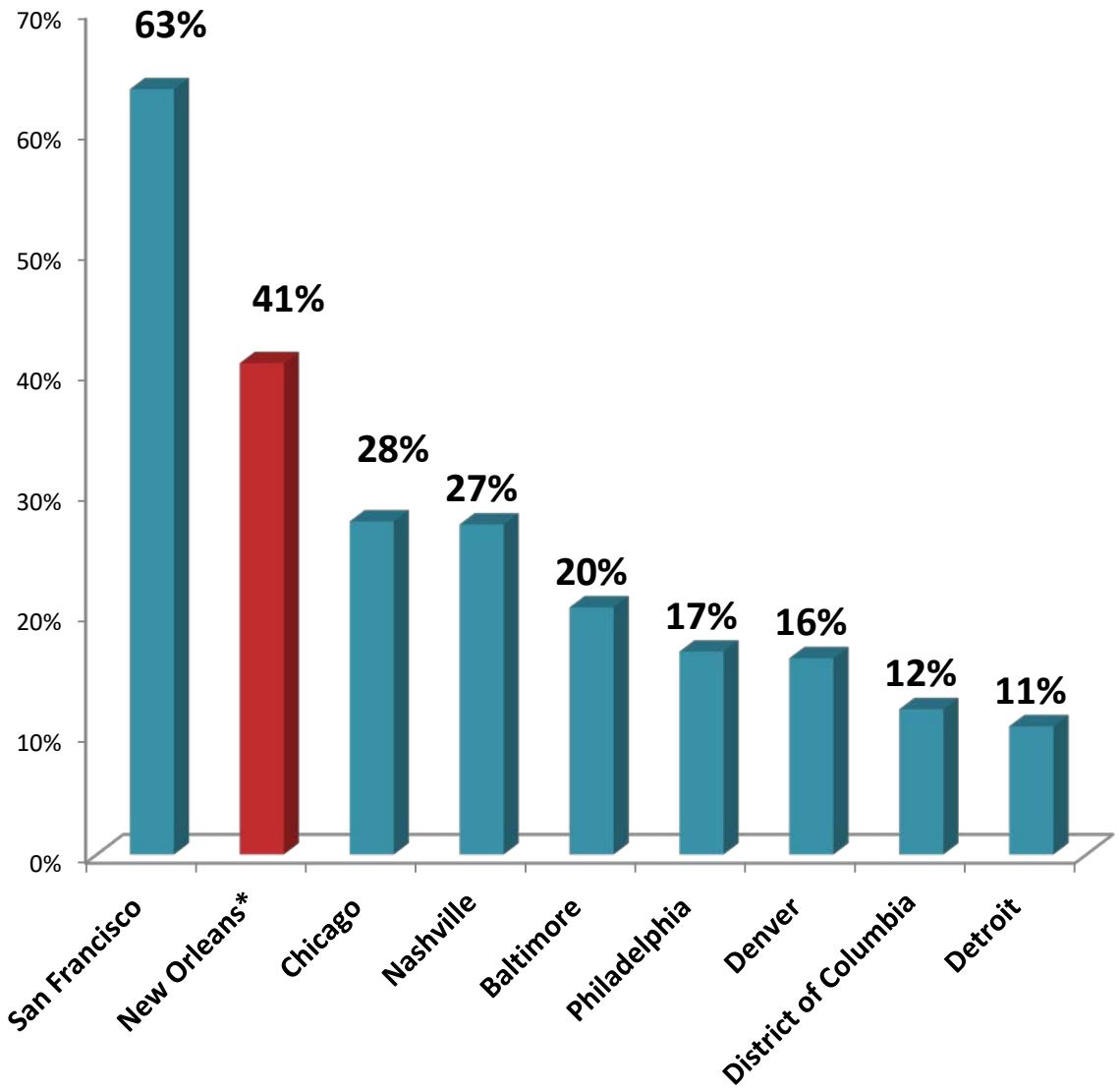


Rates calculated using Point in Time data and the U.S. Census population estimates for 2017.

*Jefferson Parish data has been removed from New Orleans data

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

Proportion of Homeless Population that Does Not Live in Shelters (2017)

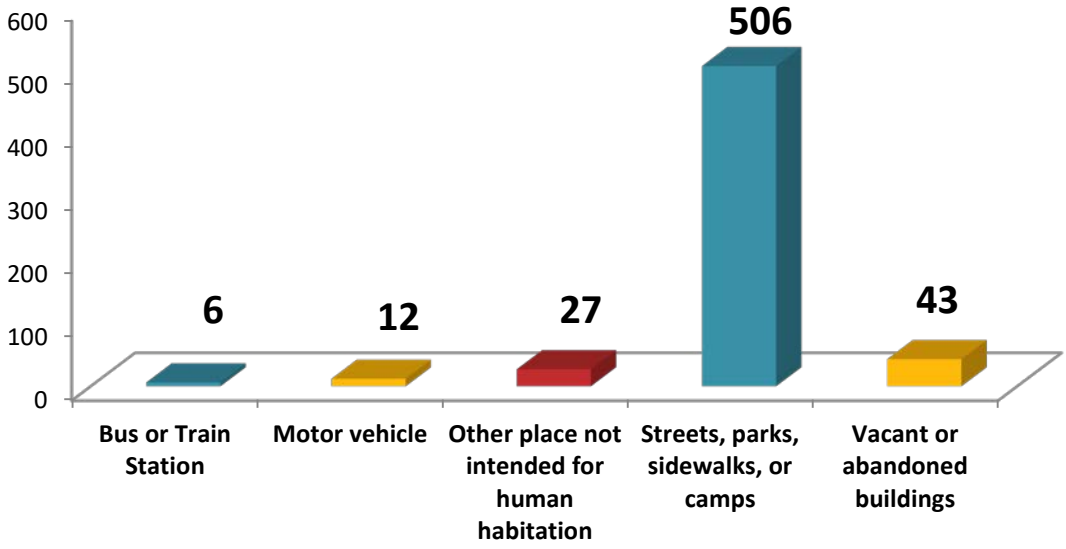


In New Orleans, 41% of homeless people live on the street, abandoned buildings, or in cars, while 59% live in homeless shelters or homeless transitional housing.

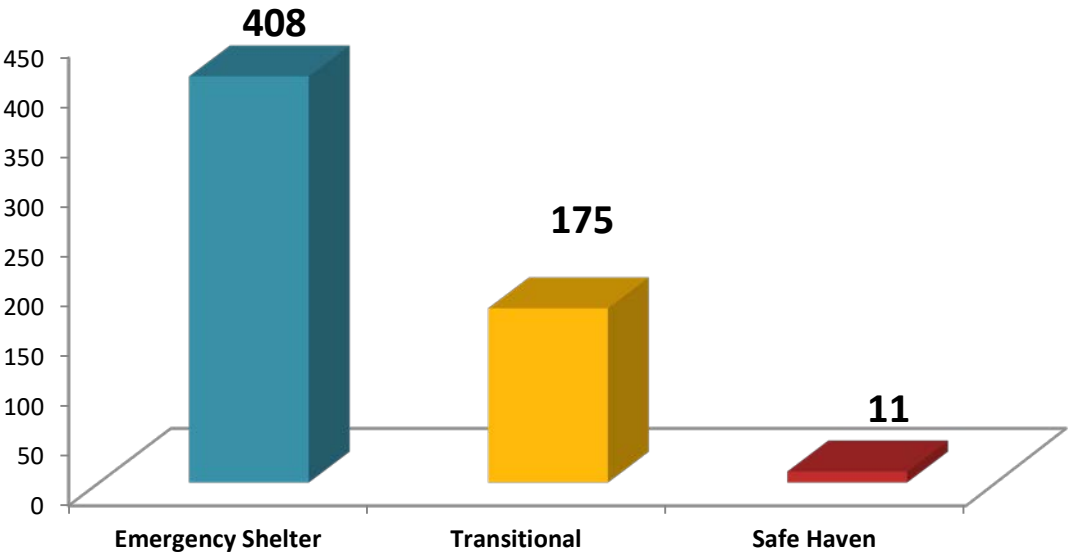
*Jefferson Parish data has been removed from New Orleans data

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

Where Unsheltered Homeless People Live (2018)

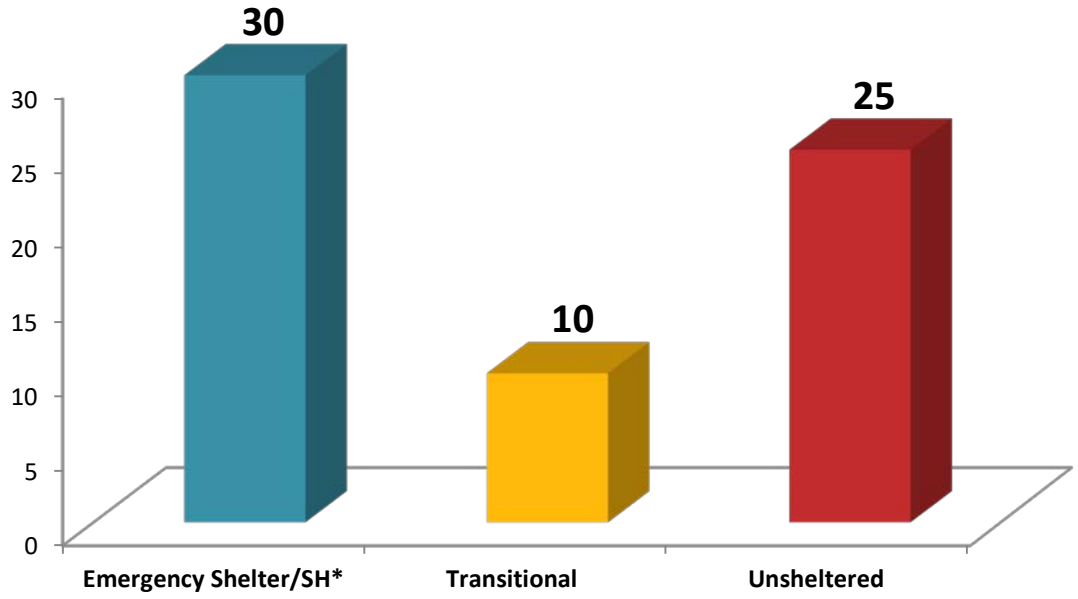


Where Sheltered Homeless People Live (2018)



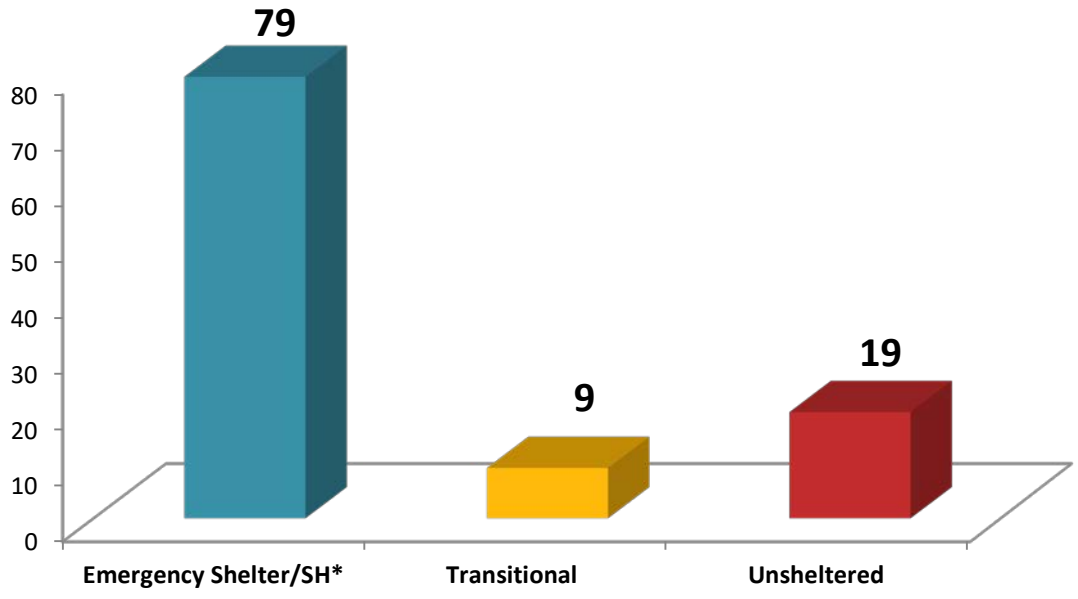
UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

Elderly = 120 Persons Age 62 and over (2018)



*Includes Women's Safe Haven Beds

Youth = 107 Persons Age 18 to 24 (2018)



*Includes Women's Safe Haven Beds

UNITY OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS