Homeless in Chicago

2007 Numbers and Demographics

Point-In-Time Analysis

Assessing the number of homeless people who live in the City of Chicago is a challenging task. The population is highly transient and some individuals purposely avoid detection. In addition, opinions vary on the definition of who is homeless.

However, to understand the scope of homelessness in our city and develop effective ways to respond, we need a numeric base.

On the night of January 25th, 2007, the City of Chicago and partner agencies conducted a point-in-time count and survey of the homeless population in Chicago. The objective was to record the number of people residing in temporary shelters as well as those who were unsheltered or staying in public space including streets, viaducts, parks, abandoned buildings, public transportation and the airports.

While the shelter census was definitive with each facility providing a head count, estimates on the unsheltered population were arrived at through extrapolation. Physical counts in the public areas provided valid samples used to project overall totals.

A previous count conducted in January of 2005, established a baseline for comparison. We are able to measure the 2007 outcomes against 2005 to evaluate how well we are progressing in the effort to end homelessness.

This report highlights information that was collected through the 2007 census and survey of homeless people and draws comparisons with 2005. The data represents the best documentation available to date.

Notes of Consequence

- Both the 2005 and 2007 counts employed the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness. That definition includes people who are residing in temporary shelters or public space that is not fit for human habitation. The definition does not include individuals or families doubled up in homes or apartments.

- All demographic data were self-reported. Homeless people who agreed to participate in a survey on the night of the count volunteered information about themselves.

- Both the 2007 and 2005 count results represent a point-in-time. All data for the 2007 project were collected on January 25th, between the hours of 7pm and 2am. The report provides a snapshot of the homeless population one cold winter night. It does not represent the total number of homeless people who reside in the City during the course of a full year.

Research Objectives

- Obtain information (numerical and demographic) about the homeless population in Chicago that will contribute to development of more effective housing programs and support services.

- Gauge the progress of Chicago's Ten-Year Plan To End Homelessness.

- Provide data required by the federal government (HUD) to ensure continued funding of homeless programs and services in Chicago.

Methodology

Data presented in this report were collected at homeless shelters and public areas across the city including streets, viaducts, parks, abandoned buildings, public transportation, and other 24-hour public facilities. Head counts were conducted and willing homeless participants answered survey questions. Shelters provided a precise count of residents at their facility. Final projections about the number of homeless in public areas were derived through extrapolation.

Independent research consultants processed the raw data and developed the extrapolation.

Shelters

On January 25th, 2007, 93 homeless shelters in the City of Chicago reported head counts for the evening. In addition, each shelter surveyed 10 percent of their clientele.

Public Areas (Unsheltered Homeless Population)

Hundreds of trained volunteers fanned out across the city between the hours of 9pm and 2am on the night of January 25th, 2007. The City was divided into ten geographic areas and each area was assigned to a lead agency. Agencies dispatched volunteers to count and survey homeless people in streets, alleys, viaducts and late-night establishments.

Abandoned Buildings
Chicago Police visited more than 650 abandoned buildings to observe the number of homeless people who had taken up residence in or around them.

Public Housing
Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) covered the grounds of 6 residential developments known to attract homeless individuals.

Buses and Trains
Volunteers boarded Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus and train lines to count homeless passengers. All 6 train lines and 9 bus routes selected by CTA were covered.

Parks
140 parks likely to harbor homeless people were covered in the count.

Airports
Counts were conducted at both Midway and O'Hare airports.

2007 Key Findings

- The total number of homeless people in the City of Chicago has **decreased 12%** in two years. The 2007 Count reported a total of **5,922 individuals** compared to 6,715 in 2005.

- The number of homeless families (adults with children up to age 21) has decreased most significantly. **The 598 families reported in 2007 represent a 24 % decrease** from 785 families counted in 2005.

- Most homeless families with children have found assistance in the shelter system. **Of 598 families, only 22 were counted among the unsheltered**. In addition, the majority of homeless families were in Interim Housing, a new shelter model with the primary goal to rehouse clients.

- While the overall homeless population has decreased, the percentage of individuals identified as the "chronic homeless" ***** has increased. In 2007, **26% of the homeless population met the federal definition of chronic homelessness** compared with 20 % in 2005. These statistics underscore the known challenge and additional resources required to help this segment of the population achieve and sustain housing.

- The number of **homeless veterans increased in 2007 to comprise 16%** of the total homeless population, up from 11% in 2005.

***** The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Chronic Homelessness as a single adult with a disability who has been homeless for more than one year or experienced four episodes of homelessness within three years. Disability includes mental illness, substance abuse HIV/AIDS and other conditions.

Homeless Data

Numbers and Demographics from the 2007 Count

Charts presented here highlight information about Chicago's Homeless population gathered during the 2007 point-in-time count conducted on January 25th, 2007. Data from the 2005 count are provided for comparison. Demographic information was self-reported by homeless people who agreed to answer survey questions the night the count took place.

1. Total Number of Homeless People

Year	Sheltered	Percent Decrease	Unsheltered	Percent Decrease	Total	Percent Decrease
2007	4,346	13 %	1,576	9%	5,922	12%
2005	4,988	NA	1,727	NA	6,715	NA

2. Number of Homeless Families with Children up to Age 21

Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	Percent Decrease
2007	576	22	598	24%
2005	774	11	785	NA

3. Number of Individuals In Homeless Families

Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	Percent Decrease
2007	1987	65	2052	23%
2005	2651	26	2677	NA

4. Number of Individuals Not In Homeless Families

This data includes 33 homeless youth under the age of 18 who were not accompanied by an adult in 2007.

Year	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	Percent Decrease
2007	2359	1,511	3870	4%
2005	2337	1,701	4038	NA

5. Location of Unsheltered Homeless Individuals in 2007 Count

Location	Estimated Number
Street	784
CTA	464
CHA grounds	227
Abandoned Buildings	47
Parks	38
Airports	16
TOTAL	1,576

6. Gender of Homeless Individuals (Percentage of Total Homeless Population)

Gender	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total	
Male	2007 65%	2005 59%	2007 82%	2005 78%	2007 68%	2005 66%
Female	35%	41%	18%	22%	32%	34%

7. Age of Homeless Individuals

Age	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Percent of Total Homeless Population	
0-5 years	2007 14%	2005 16%	2007 0.4%	2005 1%	2007 11%	2005 12%
6-12 years	11%	14%	0.1%	0.3%	8%	10%
13 – 17 years	8%	6%	0.4%	1%	6%	4%
18 – 21 years	4%	4%	2%	4%	4%	4%
22 to 40 years	28%	25%	48%	41%	33%	29%
41 to 60 years	35%	34%	49%	47%	38%	37%
Over 60	3%	3%	6%	4%	4%	3%

8. Race of Homeless Individuals

Race	Sheltered (18 yrs. and older)		Unsheltered (18 yrs. and older)		percent of Total Homeless Population (18 yrs. and older)	
Black	2007 76%	2005 73%	2007 74%	2005 73%	2007 75%	2005 73%
White	15%	12%	18%	17%	16%	14%
Hispanic	6%	8%	5%	7%	6%	7%
Asian	0.4%	1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.4 %	0.6 %

9. Individuals That Meet Federal Definition of "Chronic Homelessness"

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Chronic Homelessness as a single adult with a disability who has been homeless for more than one year or experienced four episodes of homelessness within three years. Disability includes mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and other conditions.

Year	Percent of Sheltered	Percent of Unsheltered	Percent of Total
2007	16%	43%	26%
2005	13%	33%	20%

10. Homeless Individuals Who Are Veterans

Year	Percent of sheltered	Percent of Unsheltered	Percent of Total
2007	14%	19%	16%
2005	9%	16%	11%

11. Characteristics of Homeless Individuals

Characteristic	Sheltered (18 yrs. and older)		Unsheltered (18 yrs. and older)		Percent of Total (18 yrs. and older)	
Mental Illness	2007 27%	2005 27%	2007 41%	2005 47%	2007 32%	2005 34%
Substance Abuse	39%	37%	63%	74%	48%	49%
HIV/AIDS	3%	5%	6%	8%	4%	6%
Victim of Domestic Violence	27%	31%	21%	28%	25%	30%

12. Homeless Individuals Receiving Government Benefits

Benefit	Sheltered (18 yrs. and older)	Unsheltered (18 yrs. and older)	Percent of Total (18 yrs, and older)	
SSI	2007 11%	2007 11%	2007 11%	2005 13%
SSDI	6%	5%	5%	5%
Medicaid or Medicare	36%	8%	26%	24%
Food Stamps	57%	28%	47%	56%
WIC	9%	1%	6%	8%
Kid Care	7%	0%	5%	4%
TANF	13%	1%	8%	12 %
Unemployment	4%	3%	4%	5%

13. Percent of Homeless Individuals Who Have Spent Time in Jail or Prison

Gender	Sheltered (18 yrs. and older)		Unsheltered (18 yrs. and older)		Percent of Total (18 yrs. and older)	
Male	2007 53%	2005 54%	2007 70%	2005 69%	2007 59%	2005 60%
Female	25%	25%	55%	39%	31%	28%

14.Percent of Homeless Individuals Currently Employed

Year	Sheltered (18 yrs. and older)	Unsheltered (18 yrs. and older)	Percent of Total (18 yrs. and older)
2007	20%	13%	17%
2005	NA	NA	NA