

The 2009 City of Chicago Homeless Point-In-Time Count

Executive Summary

Overview

A point-in-time (PIT) count and survey of unsheltered and sheltered homeless persons in Chicago took place the night of January 27, 2009. The intent was to produce a comprehensive count and survey of the homeless in Chicago that helps the city to develop a better understanding of:

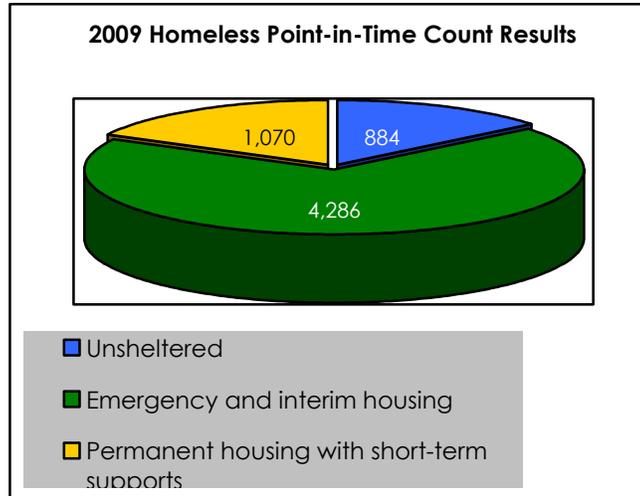
- The number of people who are unsheltered on any given night in Chicago, including chronically homeless persons, their housing and service needs;
- The number of people sheltered on a given night in Chicago, their housing and service needs.

In addition, the data will be used to:

- Estimate the resources needed to continue reducing the number of people who experience homelessness;
- Track Chicago's progress at reducing the number of people who experience homelessness; and,
- Fulfill a federal funding requirement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Count was organized and led by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), Homeless Services Division, in consultation with the University of Illinois at Chicago's Natalie P. Voorhees Center. Over 400 volunteers participated in the 2009 Count, with additional support from the Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Police Department, Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago Park District, and the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness. Individual homeless services providers participated as "lead agencies" that managed teams of volunteers, identified known locations of unsheltered homeless persons, and were responsible for collecting and submitting data to DFSS.

The 2009 Count enumerated homeless individuals and families living on the street, in abandoned buildings (including CHA properties), on CTA trains, and in emergency shelters and transitional housing. For the first time, the Count included individuals and families living in scattered-site, private market apartments that are supported by HUD's transitional housing subsidies. The homeless definition does not include individuals or families doubled up in homes or apartments, formerly homeless people living in permanent housing units, those residing in treatment facilities, detention facilities, mental health facilities and/or chemical dependency facilities.



Changes from 2007 to 2009

The 2009 Count was conducted in significantly different ways from the 2007 Count. In the 2009 shelter count component, 31 new sites were included that were not reflected in 2007, thereby increasing the count of sheltered individuals. For the 2009 unsheltered count, the CTA train count was conducted in a different manner and buses were not included.

Description of Changes to 2009 Shelter Count

Included in the 2009 Count were 31 new program sites not surveyed in the 2007 Point-In-Time Count. The majority (17) of these new sites included in 2009 were added due to a change in guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In prior years, Chicago did not include in its Point-in-Time Count programs that provided 2-year rental assistance programs in scattered-site, private market apartments. Chicago considers these sites to be permanent housing, but because these programs use HUD transitional housing funding (non-permanent subsidies) the City was instructed to include the programs in the 2009 shelter count. Another fourteen programs are interim housing and/or transitional shelter programs that either did not exist in 2007 or chose not to participate. With an increase of new sites, there is a natural increase in the number of sheltered homeless individuals and households.

Description of Changes to 2009 Unsheltered Count

In 2009, CTA counts were produced by having staff on platforms at heavily used train station platforms identify and tally homeless people at the station and/or getting on or off trains. This was done in conjunction with the CTA's own effort to count homeless people using trains and stations during extremely cold weather. Based on the CTA's own report, the locations were selected because they are typically where the majority of homeless people are located. In 2007, volunteers rode CTA trains and tallied homeless individuals in the cars, not at stations. Both are valid forms of counting, and the 2009 train figures are included in the overall count.

Bus counts were not completed in 2009. As a result of the difference in approach, CTA bus counts are not included in the 2007 to 2009 comparison of Chicago's overall homeless count.

As a result of the different methodologies, two datasets have been produced, one that shows a comparison between 2007 and 2009, and one that shows complete 2009 figures that will be officially reported to HUD.

Key Findings – “2007 Comparable”

- The “comparable” count was determined by limiting the count to the shelter sites participating in both 2007 and 2009, and the unsheltered locations that used the exact methodology in 2007 and 2009.
- Based on the estimates of a “2007 comparable” table there were 5,170 homeless people in the City of Chicago in 2009. This is lower than the estimated 5,775 individuals in 2007 (-10% change).
- The number of homeless families (adults with children up to age 21) increased slightly (1% in shelters; 604 families total in 2009) when comparing to comparable 2007 sites.
- There was a slight decrease (-3%) in the number of homeless individuals in families (1992 total in 2009) when compared to 2007 sites, but a 1% increase in the number of family households (604 family households in 2009).
- There was an overall 18% decrease in the number of single individuals not in families (3,161 total in 2009) when looking at 2007 comparable sites. When looking only at a street homelessness comparison, there was a 47% reduction among single individuals.

Key Findings – 2009 “Official” Count

- Based on the estimates from the Point-in-Time count “2009” table there were 6,240 homeless people in the City of Chicago in 2009. This is 318 persons higher than the estimated 5,922 individuals in 2007 (5% increase). It should be noted that this increase is in direct correlation to the increased number of sites participating in the 2009 Count.
- The number of homeless families (adults with children up to age 21) increased substantially (45% in shelters; 870 families total) when including the new sites.

Key Findings – Similar in Both Analyses

- Regarding age, the largest portion of people homeless are in the 41-60 year old range (35%) followed by 22-40 year old (29%) and then youth age 17 and under (28%). This distribution has remained relatively stable since 2005. When comparing sheltered to unsheltered, the portion of youth increase in shelters to 34% and drops to 2% among unsheltered. Among unsheltered adults, most (53%) are age 41-60, a slight increase (4%) since 2007.
- For all homeless individuals, two-thirds of males and one-third of females report having spent time in jail or prison. Among homeless adults in shelter, there was a 6% increase in males who had been in prison or jail and a slight increase in females (2%). Among unsheltered homeless adults, there appears to be a significant increase in females (20%) and small increase in males (7%).

- Among all homeless individuals, counted and/or surveyed, there appears to be a substantial decrease in mental illness (-13%), substance abuse (-20%) and a small decrease (-6%) in the number of homeless veterans.
- Employment among homeless individuals was 24% for those in shelter and 12% for those unsheltered; both are relatively unchanged from 2007.
- There was no change in the rate of “chronic homelessness” among the population of homeless single adults. In 2007 26% of Chicago’s homeless population met the federal definition of chronic homelessness and in 2009 the rate was 25.9%.
- The majority of homeless adults continues to be African American (79%). There was a 5% increase in the Hispanic population, representing 11% of the homeless population in 2009 compared to 6% in 2007.