

Homeless in Whatcom County



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How Many Individuals Are Homeless?

- On January 28, 2010 in Whatcom County there were around 1,332 individuals without a home*
- Out of those 1,332 individuals, 905 of those are families/households*

*Data collected from 2010 Whatcom Homeless Count: A Point-In-Time Census of Homeless Resident

What Are the Reported Reasons?

- Most people have three or more reported reasons according to the data collected by the Homeless Count
- It is the second year that the amount of individuals who reporting mental health issues and been discharged from institutions (like jail, prison, psychiatric hospitals) as their main reason for being homeless is down.
 - People reporting mental illness down from 30% in 2008 to 21% in 2010 as the cause of their homelessness
 - People being discharged from institutions down from 16% in 2008 to 7% in 2010
 - This may be due to the opening of City Gate Apartments

Main Reasons...

- 33% Alcohol or drug abuse
- 31% Lost job
- 29% Unable to pay rent or mortgage
- 25% Family break-up
- 21% Mental illness
- 19% Victim of domestic violence
- 18% Medical problems
- 15% Temporary living situation ended
- 14% Convicted of a felony
- 13% Poor credit rating
- 10% Lack of job skills
- 7% Discharged from an institution

Ages of the Homeless

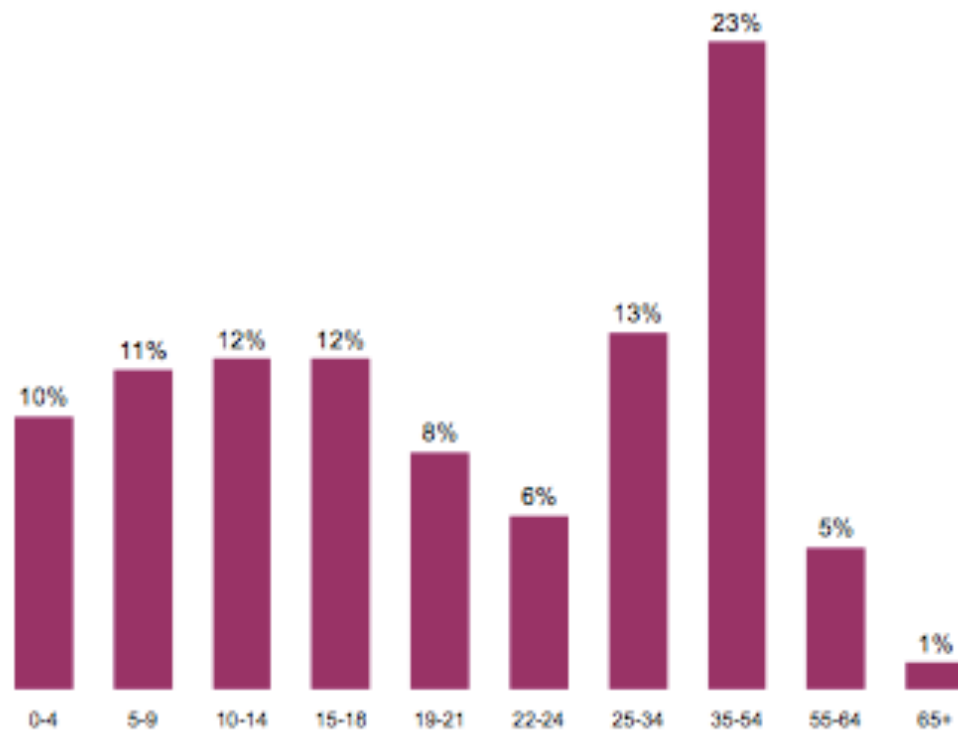


Figure 1 Age distribution of homeless persons

The 515 minors counted this year comprise 39% of the homeless population, with 267 children under 10 years old accounting for 20% of all homeless persons (Figure 1). Seniors, age 65 and older make up just 1% of the homeless population.

Disabling conditions

Homeless count survey respondents were asked to list which of ten disabilities applied to each member of their household. The most prevalent disabling conditions were mental illness (27%), substance abuse disorders (19%), permanent physical disabilities (17%), and dental problems (16%) (Figure 2).

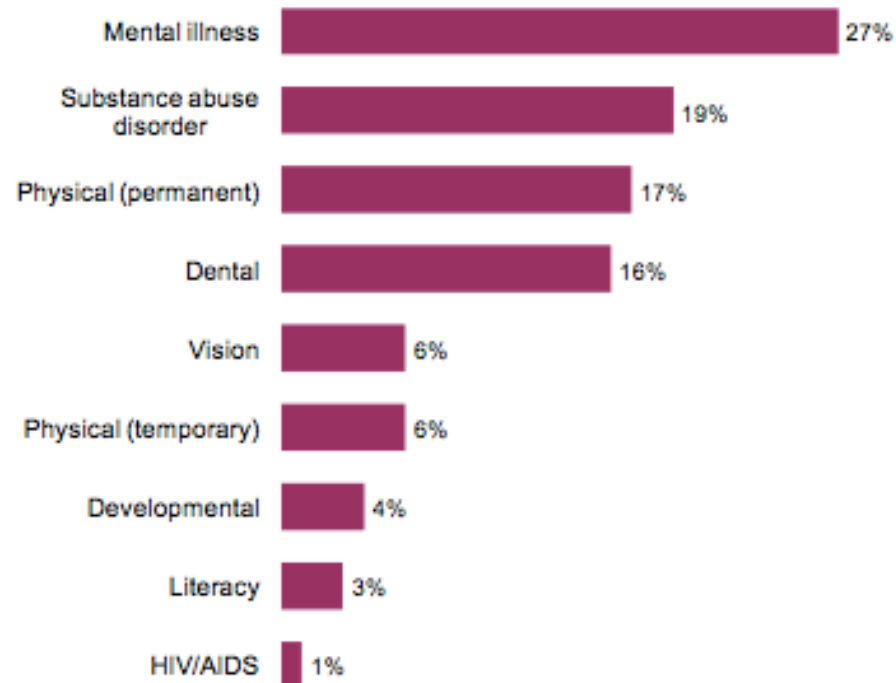
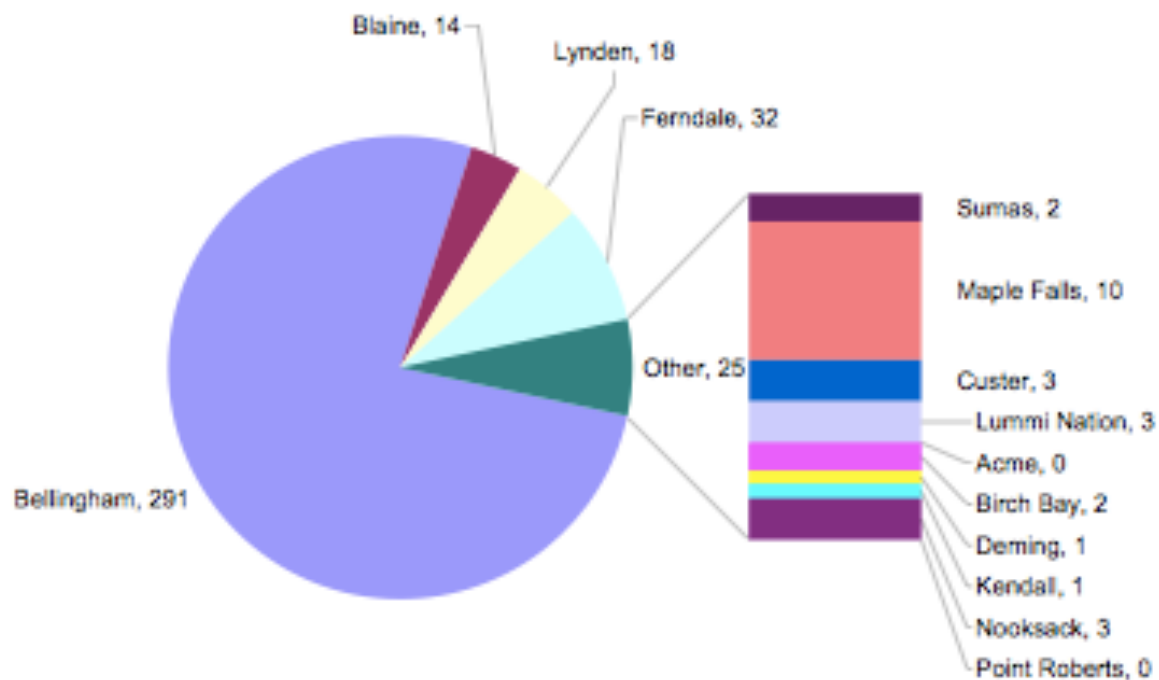


Figure 2 Homeless persons with disabling conditions

Additional analyses show that a substantial number of homeless persons face the challenges of co-occurring disorders (Figure 3). Those who report a mental illness disability are three times as likely (29%) to also report a substance abuse disorder compared to those with no reported mental illness (9%).

Geographic distribution: location of previous residence

Respondents were asked to say where they last had stable housing for six months or more. Only 564 of the 880 households answered this question. Of those who answered, 30% listed a location outside Whatcom County. Of the 396 households that listed a Whatcom County location, 291 had last lived in stable housing in Bellingham (Figure 4). Ferndale (32), Blaine (14), and Lynden (18) were the next most frequently cited locations of last stable housing.



In 2010, homeless households found shelter primarily with other households (42%), in a transitional housing facility (23%) or an emergency shelter (13%) (Figure 5). Smaller proportions are housed temporarily in a motel (1%) as a form of emergency shelter. Homeless households are considered unsheltered if they spend their nights out of doors (10%), in a vehicle (8%) or in an abandoned building (1%). A few individuals had just been released for jail or juvenile detention.

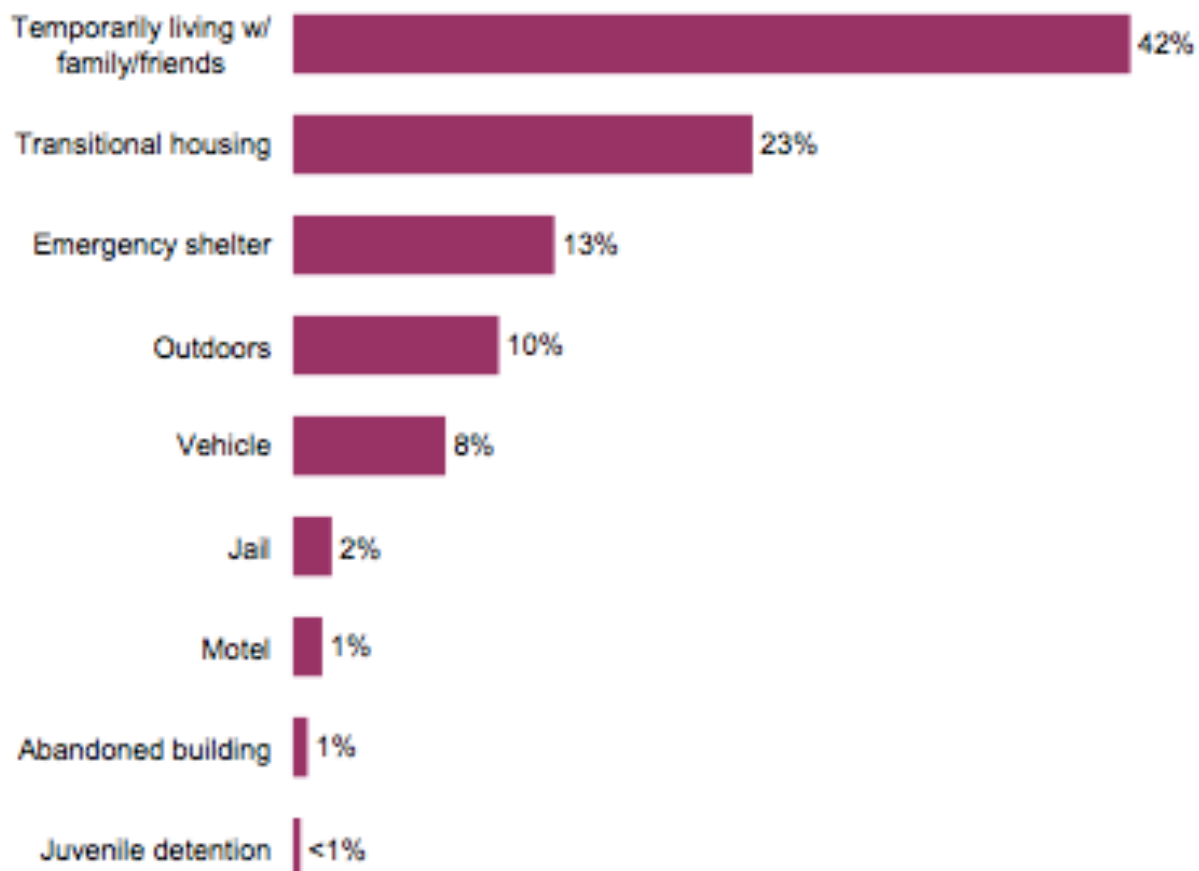
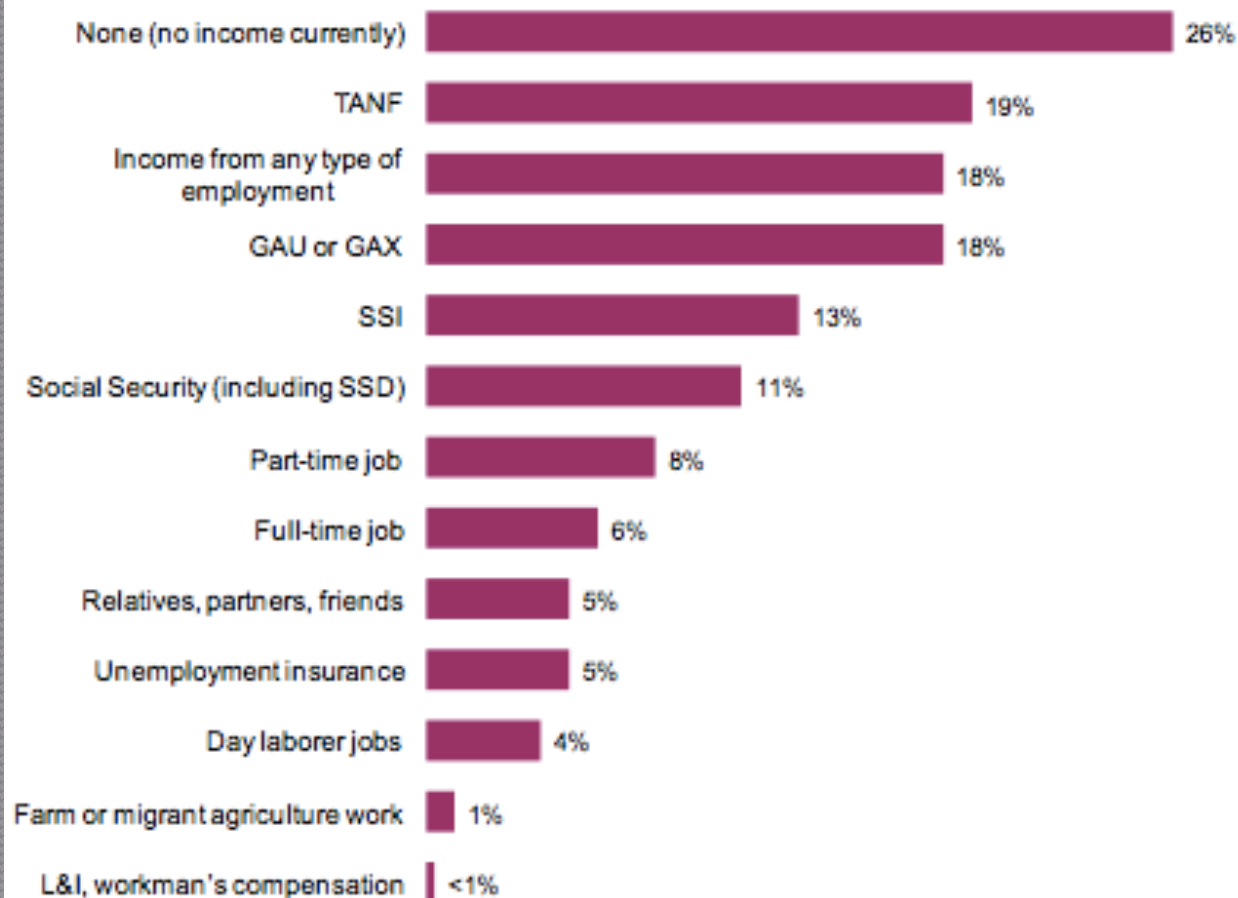


Figure 5 Source of shelter the night before the homeless count

Sources of income

The percentage of homeless households who reported income from any type of employment decreased from 25% in 2009 to 18% in 2010. Nearly one in four (23%) households report that they have no income at all (Figure 7). The most common sources of public assistance income for homeless households include: TANF (19%), General Assistance - GAU/GAX (18%), and SSI (13%).



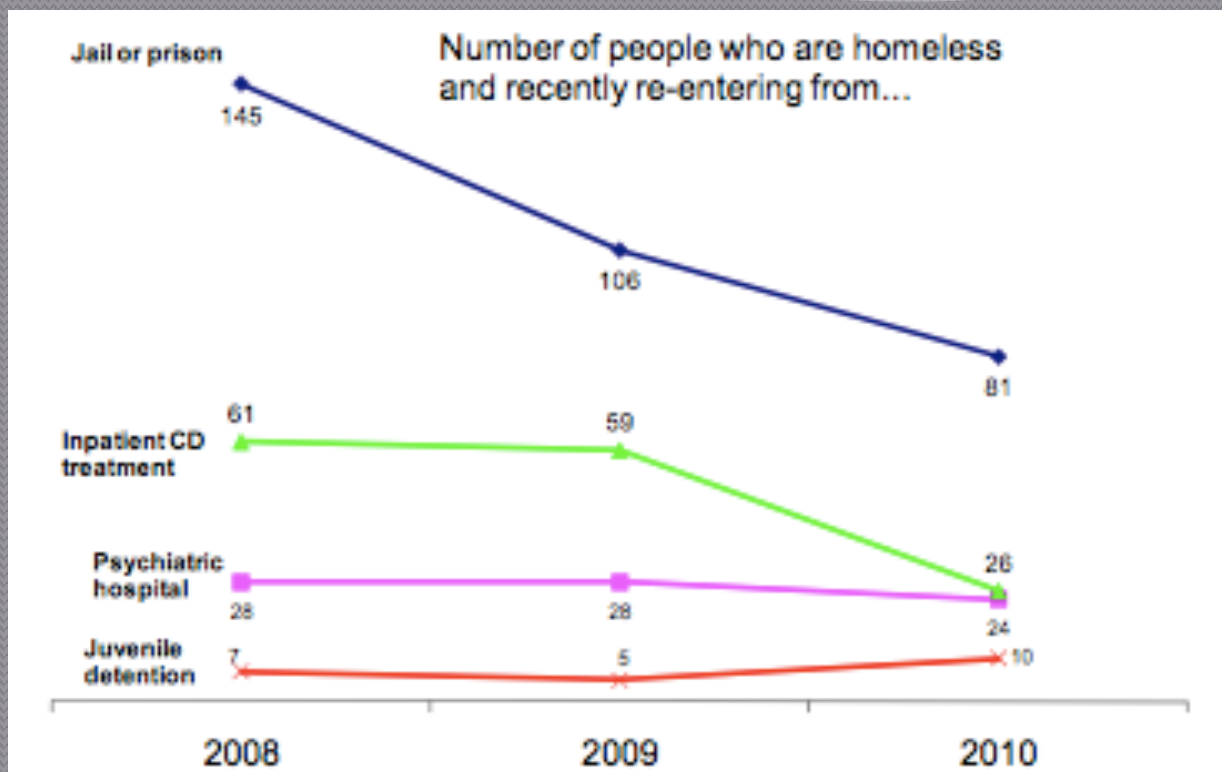


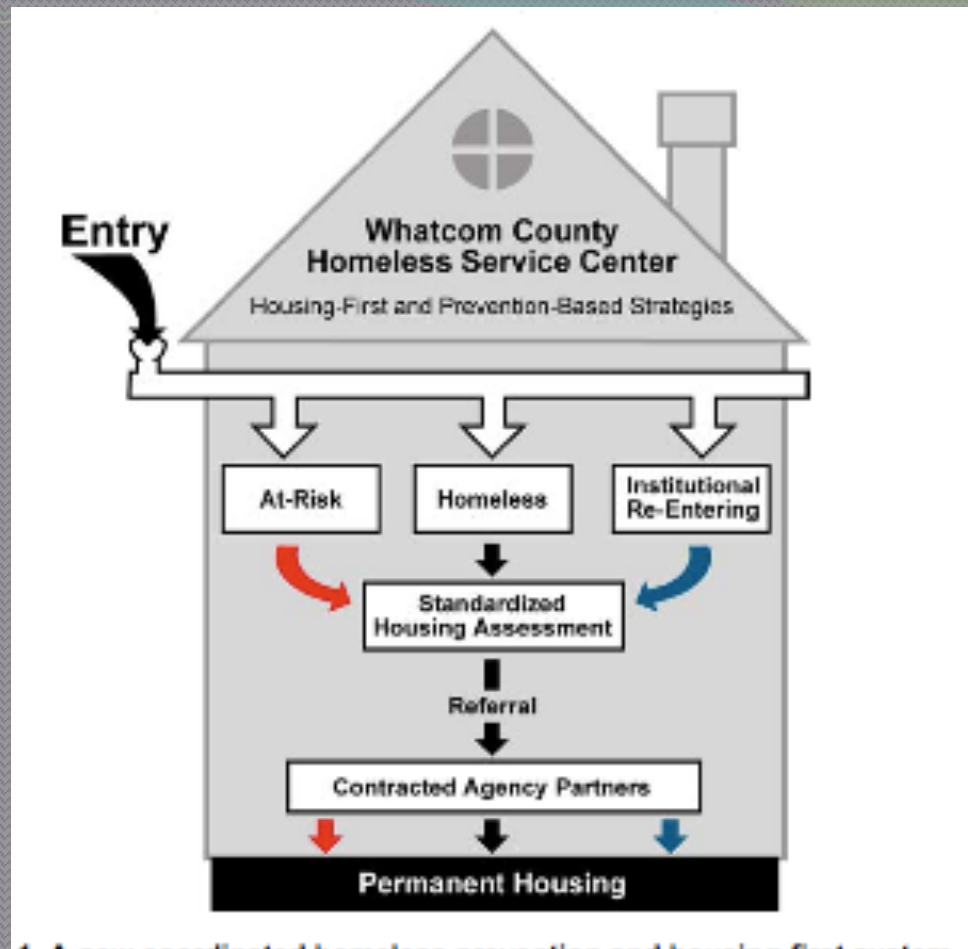
Figure 8 Institutions from which re-entering respondents were discharged. NOTE: Some respondents had been released recently from multiple types of institutions, so simply adding up the number of releases for any given year will not accurately count the number of persons represented. For example, in 2010, 125 persons had a total of 141 releases ($81+26+24+10 = 141$)

The Chronic Homeless

- HUD defines the chronic homeless as “anyone who is an unaccompanied individual who has been homeless for 12 months or more OR has had more than 3 episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years. AND has been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation or in emergency shelter, AND has one of the following disabling conditions (mental disorder, substance abuse disorder, permanent physical or developmental disability).
- According the Whatcom Count, 6% of the our homeless population falls under the term chronic homeless. Whatcom County is much lower compared to the national average of 18%

Study Issues...

- Is a point-in-time study which is limited to a specific time and ignores seasonal patterns
- It is difficult to access where individuals reside in unconventional shelters



- Collected from the A Home For Everyone: 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Whatcom County

Squatting...

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVYIBikzwmk>
- Obama
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LM7nkdaxGoo>