

Homeless in LA

Final Research Report

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Executive Summary

In Los Angeles County in 2002, the estimated number of homeless residents on a typical day, the length of time they were homeless, and the total annual homeless population were as follows (some totals are affected by rounding error):

Time Interval of Estimate	Family Members				Single Individuals				GRAND TOTAL
	<7 Months	7-11 Months	12+ Months	Total Family Members	<7 Months	7-11 Months	12+ Months	Total Single Individuals	
Point-in-Time Homeless	29,300	1,500	3,100	33,900	29,700	5,000	9,900	44,700	78,600
Total Annual Homeless	114,100	1,900	3,100	119,100	118,600	6,000	9,900	134,900	253,900

WHERE AND HOW PEOPLE BECOME HOMELESS

- Los Angeles has become a seedbed of homelessness for other regions, sending out one and one-half times as many homeless people as it receives.
- Roughly one-quarter of residents in acute poverty (income less than half of the poverty threshold) experience homelessness over the course of a year.
- Homeless services are highly concentrated in the urban center of Los Angeles but sparse in the area of greatest need – South Los Angeles, and acutely under-developed in the Antelope and San Gabriel valleys.
- Drugs and alcohol are the most frequently reported causes of homelessness.
- Sixty percent of homeless single adults and 53 percent of families come into Winter Shelter after having been in the care of another organization. Better post-release planning and advocacy would reduce homelessness.
- An upsurge in family homelessness appears to occur at the start of the year.
- On a typical night 10 percent of homeless residents are doubled up with friends or relatives, 11 percent in rehabilitation facilities, jails or hospitals, 24 percent in shelters, and 55 percent in places not meant for human habitation.
- Mentally ill homeless residents are over-concentrated in the downtown area.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- Homeless residents are younger than the overall population. Many are children under 5 and young mothers 18 to 29 years of age.
- Over half of the 1,000 foster youth emancipated each year are estimated to become homeless, and over half of homeless youth enter the justice system.
- African Americans are over-represented by a factor of 5 in the county's homeless population. All other ethnic groups are under-represented.
- Seventeen percent of homeless adults report a history of active military service. This is nearly double the 9 percent rate for the rest of the county.

- Forty-two percent of homeless residents report some type of disability.
- Homeless residents are 50 percent more likely to lack a high school diploma and 50 percent less likely to have attended college than the overall county.

HOMELESSNESS AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

- Eighty-five percent of homeless receive some form of county public assistance.
- Two-thirds of homeless welfare recipients are in families, one-third are single.
- Two-thirds of homeless families have had a recent break in welfare benefits.
- Over half of General Relief recipients are homeless.

CONNECTIONS TO WORK AND SUSTAINABLE EARNINGS

- Two-thirds of homeless residents are working-age adults.
- The most frequent source of income before the onset of homelessness is a job.
- Most homeless adults have histories of work, but not of sustainable earnings.
- Homeless workers are concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations, many of which do not offer prospects for advancement to a sustainable wage.
- With more intensive and effective training and supportive services, 35 to 38 percent of homeless adults might become self-sufficient through work.

COSTS AND RESOURCES TO END HOMELESSNESS

- It is not financially feasible to end homelessness unless the flow of new entrants into homelessness is curtailed dramatically.
- Local jurisdictions spend an estimated \$404 million annually on homeless services and housing, with an additional \$115 million in private outlays.
- More effective efforts to help homeless residents re-enter the labor force and obtain public benefits will reduce costs by an estimated 16 percent.
- Reducing the flow of people being cared for by major social institutions into homelessness will reduce costs by an estimated 47 percent.
- Providing housing is by far the greatest cost in ending homelessness – accounting for two-thirds to three-quarters of total costs.
- Even with highly effective strategies it will be necessary to take additional steps to improve how resources are used and to bring in new resources.
- Current expenditures already equal 35 to 59 percent (depending on the year) of the estimated annual cost of an effective strategy to end homelessness over the next ten years. With full participation of all local, state and national stakeholders there are adequate resources to end homelessness in 10 years.

This report brings together the Economic Roundtable's research for "Bring LA Home," a strategic planning initiative to end homelessness in Los Angeles County. It expands and completes a preliminary report that was released in November 2003. New material included in this final report is listed at the end of Chapter 2.