



HelpHopeHome

Ending Homelessness in Southern Nevada

2014 Southern Nevada Homeless Census & Survey



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In collaboration with Bitfocus Inc., The Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC) - Committee on Homelessness (CoH) conducted the 2014 Southern Nevada Point-in-Time Homeless Census and Survey. All components of the project were conducted according to the requirements and standards of practice outlined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).¹³

This project included a comprehensive enumeration, or Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, of the homeless population of Clark County, Nevada (hereafter referred to as Southern Nevada). This enumeration was conducted on the night of January 29, 2014. In order to optimize resource utilization, extraneous census tracts were removed from the 2014 enumeration effort. More specifically, census tracts that yielded zero enumeration in 2011 and 2013 were overlaid with data from first responder calls for homeless persons, and those census tracts that previously yielded both zero enumeration and zero first responder calls were removed from the 2014 census tract canvassing. This resulted in census tract coverage of 80%.

A universal and inherent shortcoming of any PIT count is its inability to capture an accurate number of homeless persons in a particular region for the given year. In many areas, levels of homelessness are in constant flux, characterized by seasonal changes as well as changes caused by unpredictable economic factors. In addition, many homeless persons experience short episodes of homelessness throughout the year, at times other than the PIT count.

Thus, the annual estimate presented at the end of this section was calculated to provide the approximate amount of homeless persons in Southern Nevada over the course of the year. This estimate compensates for these biases, and reduces the degree of underrepresentation of the true number of homeless persons at any given point in time during the year.

In the weeks immediately following the PIT Count, 948 surveys were administered to homeless persons throughout Southern Nevada. A detailed account of the methodology for the 2014 PIT Count and the 2014 Southern Nevada Homeless Survey can be found in *Appendix VI*, the Street Census Instrument in *Appendix I*, and the Survey Instrument in *Appendix II*.

Both the PIT Count and the Southern Nevada Homeless Survey were designed to obtain comprehensive and targeted data, highlighting the prevalence and characteristics of the general homeless population, and specific subpopulations within the general homeless

population. The survey was designed to unveil additional details in regards to the scope of homelessness in Southern Nevada.

The 2014 Southern Nevada PIT Count indicates that between 2013 and 2014, the total amount of homeless persons increased from 7,355 to 9,417, respectively. The amount of unsheltered homeless persons (including the hidden homeless population) increased from 4,435 to 5,468 respectively during this time period.

2014 HOMELESS CENSUS & SURVEY: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- The 2014 PIT Count and Southern Nevada Homeless Survey indicate a 28.0% increase in the number of homeless persons enumerated as compared to 2013.
- 9,417 homeless persons were enumerated during the 2014 PIT Count.
- It is estimated that 36,718 members of the Southern Nevada population experience homelessness annually.
- The annual estimate of homelessness in Southern Nevada represents approximately 1.9% of the total population of Southern Nevada.

Figure 1: Point-in-Time Homeless Census & Annual Estimate of Homelessness Data

Response	2009	2011	2013	2014	2013 to 2014 Net Change	2013 to 2014 Percent Change
Unsheltered - Street	3,027	4,241	3,034	3,494	460	15.2%
Unsheltered - Hidden	3,307	1,429	1,401	1,974	573	40.9%
Sheltered	7,004	3,762	2,920	3,949	1,029	35.2%
Total Point-in-Time Count	13,338	9,432	7,355	9,417	2,062	28.0%
Annual Estimate	52,458	43,294	33,882	36,718	2,836	8.4%

Source:

Applied Survey Research (2009, 2011) 2009, & 2011 Southern Nevada Homeless Census
 Bitfocus, Inc.,(2013, 2014) 2013 & 2014 Southern Nevada Homeless Census

The 2014 annual estimate for the number of homeless people in Southern Nevada was 36,718. This represents an 8.4% increase (2,836 persons) from the 2013 annual estimate of 33,882 persons.

In 2013, 1.7% of the total Nevada population (based on 2010 census data) was homeless. In 2014, this percentage increased to 1.9% (also based on 2010 census data)

Conditions: Sheltered/Unsheltered

58.0% of homeless persons in Southern Nevada were unsheltered.

- 58.0% of homeless persons in Southern Nevada were unsheltered. Between 2013 and 2014, unsheltered homelessness increased by 23.3% (1,033 persons). However, when comparing the unsheltered totals to the overall homeless total relative to their year, there was a 2.2% *decrease* since 2013. In 2013, unsheltered homeless represented 60% of the entire homeless population (7,355 persons). In 2014, unsheltered homeless represented 58% of the entire homeless population (9,417 persons).
- 36.1% of the unsheltered population was considered “hidden” homeless, and the remaining 63.9% were classified as street homeless. 41.9% of the persons enumerated in the PIT Count were in sheltered facilities.
- Between 2013 & 2014, sheltered homelessness increased by 35.2% (1,029 persons). In Southern Nevada, on the night of January, 29, 2014, 10 persons were in safe havens, 794 persons were in transitional housing, and 3,145 persons were in emergency shelters (including the FAS beds from Clark County Department of Social Services)
- There was a substantial increase (53.5%, 1,098 persons) in Emergency Shelter utilization between 2013 and 2014, but a decrease in Safe Haven utilization (50.0%, 10 persons) between 2013 and 2014. Transitional Housing utilization decreased only slightly (6.9%, 59 persons) between 2013 & 2014.

Demographics

The majority of homeless individuals in Southern Nevada identified as White/Caucasian, were of male gender, and were between the ages of 51 and 60.

- 71.4% of respondents identified as male. 27.8 % of respondents identified as female. 0.8% of respondents identified as transgender.
- The majority (27.8%) of respondents were between the ages of 51 and 60. 9.6% of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21, this more than doubles the amount of homeless persons in this category in 2013 (4.7%).
- The majority of respondents identified their racial group as White/Caucasian (47.3%) or Black/African American (39.4%). The least amount identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native (1.6%).
- 30.0% of respondents identified their ethnic group as Hispanic/Latino. 70.0% of respondents identified their ethnic group as Non Hispanic/Latino.
- The majority of survey respondents (73.9%) reported living in Southern Nevada when they most recently became homeless.

HUD-Defined Households*

In 2014, there were 355 households with at least one adult and one child; homeless Veterans comprised 0.3% (1 household) of this population. There were 7,370 households without children; homeless Veterans comprised 16.6% (1,227 households) of this population. There were 762 households with only children.

- **Households With At Least One Adult & One Child:** In 2014, 62.3% of the homeless population living in households with at least one adult and one child were under the age of 18, 7.1% were between the ages of 18-24, and 30.5% were over the age of 24. Per HUD, the collection of age data was not required for Veterans.

* For the purposes of this report, persons in a household without children will be referred to as **Individuals**; persons in households with at least one adult and one child (under 18) will be referred to as a **Family**; and persons in households composed of only children will be referred to as **Only Children**.¹⁰

- **Households Without Children:** In 2014, 9.3% of the homeless population living in households without children was between the ages of 18-24, and the remaining population was over the age of 24.
- **Households With Only Children:** In 2014, there were 758 one-child households and 4 multi-child households, with a total of 9 children in multi-child households.

Veterans

Definition: This subpopulation category includes persons who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States. This does not include inactive military reserves or the National Guard unless the person was called up to active duty.¹³

In 2010, *Opening Doors* outlined the national goal to end homelessness among Veterans by 2015.²⁶ Nationally since 2010, there has been nearly a 35% decrease in veteran homelessness. The 2013 AHAR explains that the 16 percent decrease in veterans that occurred between 2012 and 2013 was largely due to reductions in the number of unsheltered veterans.²

In 2011, HUD and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) began to use the PIT Count as the definitive federal estimate of Veteran homelessness. In 2013, HUD extended the definition of homeless Veterans to specify between male and female veterans. 2014 marks the first year that this population has been excluded as an official HUD-defined subpopulation; instead it has been included in the HUD-defined households.

In Southern Nevada:

- 17.0% (158 persons) of survey respondents were veterans, and of these veterans, 6.4% (10 persons) were female, and 1.9% (3 persons) were transgender.
- The largest percentage of homeless Veterans reported they are White/Caucasian (57.2%) and 82.5% of Veteran respondents are Non-Hispanic / Non-Latino.
- 71.3% of Veteran respondents reported Honorable Discharge.
- 35.6% reported at least one disabling condition.

Causes, Occurrence, and Duration of Homelessness

- 50.1% survey respondents cited job loss as the primary cause of their homelessness, making it the primary cause of homelessness for the majority of this population. 0.8% of survey respondents cited aging out of foster care as their reason for homelessness.
- 45.8% of survey respondents reported that they were homeless for the first time, and 38.3% of survey respondents reported that they had been homeless four or more times in the last three years. 41.1% of the 2014 survey respondents reported that they had been homeless for a year or more since their last housing situation; this is one criterion included in the HUD definition of chronic homelessness.
- The majority of survey respondents (73.9%) reported living in Southern Nevada when they most recently became homeless, and the majority (43.9%) of survey respondents reported that they were renting a home or apartment prior to becoming homeless.

Income, Employment, & Circumstances Preventing Permanent Housing

- 82.1% of survey respondents reported they were experiencing unemployment at the time of the survey. *No Transportation* was the leading barrier to obtaining employment (27.4%), closely followed by *No Permanent Address* (23.4%).
- 15.3% of survey respondents claimed to be receiving more than \$500 per month in government income benefits, and 49.5% reported to be receiving no money from government benefits. 70.5% of survey respondents claimed to be receiving no money from private non-government income sources, and 93.7% of survey respondents were receiving \$500 or less from private non-government income sources.
- The majority of respondents cited *No Job/No Income* (63.1%) or *Inability To Afford Rent* (41.0%) as their primary obstacle to obtaining permanent housing.

Utilization of Government Assistance & Programs

- In 2014, the most commonly used service/assistance was *Free Meals* (41.2%). In regards to Government assistance and programs, 73.6% of 2014 survey respondents reported receiving some sort of government benefits.
- Of the respondents receiving government assistance, 62.4% were receiving food stamps, 7.1% were receiving SSI/SSDI assistance, and 6.6% were receiving social security.

Nighttime Accommodations

51.7% of survey respondents reported sheltered living accommodations (emergency shelter, transitional housing, other shelter). The census data indicated that 916 persons of the unsheltered (street) population was found to be living in cars/vans/RVs, abandoned buildings, encampments, and parks.

Medical

In 2014, 28.5% of homeless respondents indicated that since they most recently became homeless, they had needed medical care but had been unable to receive it.

From 2013 to 2014, the amount of homeless individuals reporting chronic health conditions decreased from approximately 28.2% to 21.0%, representing a 7.2% decrease.

According to the federal government, multiple physical and mental conditions are considered disabling to homeless individuals, preventing them from obtaining work or housing. These conditions include:

- Physical disabilities
- Mental illness
- Severe depression
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Chronic health problems
- HIV/AIDS
- Tuberculosis
- Hepatitis C
- Trauma
- Developmental disabilities.

- 56.9% of homeless survey respondents reported they had at least one disabling condition. 30.5% of the population surveyed had a physical disability.

Incarceration

6.6% of survey respondents reported they were incarcerated immediately before becoming homeless this time, and 12.0% of respondents cited incarceration as one of the top three reasons for their homelessness. 7.3% of homeless respondents who indicated their criminal record was preventing them from securing permanent housing, and 13.0% indicated that their criminal record was preventing them from obtaining employment.

The majority (74.8%) of survey respondents had spent no nights in jail or prison during the 12 months prior to the survey. 9.1% spent more than 50 nights in jail or prison during the 12 months prior to the survey, 11.8% of survey respondents reported spending one separate term in jail or prison during the 12 months prior to the survey, and 1.8% of survey respondents reported spending six or more separate terms in jail or prison during the 12 months prior to the survey.

HUD-Defined Homeless Subpopulations

Chronically Homeless Individuals

Definition: An unaccompanied homeless adult individual (persons 18 years or older) with a disabling condition (see Appendix VII for official definition of disabling condition) who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four separate occasions of homelessness in the past three years. To be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency shelter/Safe Haven during that time.¹⁸

- On any given night in 2014, it is estimated that approximately 760 chronically homeless individuals are present in Southern Nevada. This represents a 9.4% increase from 2013, when there were approximately 695 chronically homeless individuals in Southern Nevada.
- In 2013, 15.2% of all homeless individuals *nationwide* were considered chronically homeless.² The estimated number of chronically homeless individuals in Southern Nevada in 2014 represents 8.1% of the total 2014 Southern Nevada point-in-time homeless population.

Adults with Serious Mental Illness

Definition: This subpopulation category includes persons with mental health problems that are expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impairs the person's ability to live independently.¹²

- Overall, 44.9% of survey respondents reported experiencing mental illness, depression, or PTSD, or any possible variation thereof.

Adults with Substance Use Disorder

Definition: This category includes persons with a substance abuse problem (alcohol abuse, drug abuse, or both) that is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impairs the person's ability to live independently.¹²

- On any given night in 2014, it is estimated that approximately 843 homeless persons suffering from chronic substance abuse are present in Southern Nevada. This represents a 26.0% increase from 2013, when there were approximately 669 homeless persons suffering from chronic substance abuse present in Southern Nevada.

Co-Occurring Disorders

Definition: Although this category is not considered a HUD-defined homeless subpopulation, it is still of great concern and interest to the community and policy-makers. This category includes persons who experience substance abuse paired with mental illness, depression, PTSD, or any combination thereof, that keeps them from obtaining work or housing.

- 5.6% of survey respondents reported co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse that prevented them from obtaining work or housing.
- 7.5% of survey respondents reported co-occurring depression and substance abuse prevented that prevented them from obtaining work or housing.
- 2.5% of survey respondents reported co-occurring PTSD and substance abuse that prevented them from obtaining work or housing.

Adults With HIV/AIDS

Definition: This subpopulation category includes persons who have been diagnosed with AIDS and/or have tested positive for HIV.¹²

- On any given night in 2014, it is estimated that approximately 62 homeless persons suffering with medical conditions associated with HIV/AIDS are present in Southern Nevada. This represents a 12.7% decrease from 2013, when there were approximately 71 of these homeless individuals present in Southern Nevada.

Victims of Domestic Violence

Definition: This subpopulation category includes adults who have been victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking at any point in the past.¹²

- On any given night in 2014, it is estimated that approximately 815 of homeless persons who are considered victims of domestic violence are present in Southern Nevada. This represents a 4.9% increase from 2013, when approximately 777 homeless persons considered to be victims of domestic violence were present in Southern Nevada.

Conclusion

The 2014 Southern Nevada Homeless PIT Count identified 9,417 homeless persons in Southern Nevada. Of these persons, 42% (3,949 persons) were sheltered, and 58% (5,468 persons) were unsheltered. Of the unsheltered homeless population, 36.1% were classified as “hidden” homeless, and 63.9% were classified as “street” homeless.

Inherent difficulties are associated with any methodology that is applied to enumerating homeless persons, and these difficulties warrant careful consideration when evaluating totals such as those presented in this report. For example, many homeless persons (especially women and children) are eliminated from the total count as they typically do not want to be located, often for safety reasons. Thus, many reside in locations that make them undetectable to enumeration teams. Even the most systematic and comprehensive

methodologies fall short of gathering entirely representative numbers that reflect the true homeless population.

The same careful consideration should be applied to the analysis of the Homeless Survey data. While the extrapolation method has proven to be reliable, and is considered the standard method of estimating the subpopulation totals, it must be emphasized that this method produces estimates that vary in their representativeness of the actual sample population.

However, despite these challenges, the 2014 Southern Nevada Homeless Census and Survey provides both valid and useful data, creating a more comprehensive view of the nature and scope of homelessness in Southern Nevada in 2014. The fact that the same methodology, characterized by the same difficulties, (with minor adjustments resulting in no statistical significance) has been used since 2007 enables Southern Nevada to continue tracking key patterns and trends amongst their homeless population. This consistent approach continues to highlight the changing conditions of homelessness in this region, so that necessary action can be taken to improve the livelihood of these homeless persons. Through it's impact on the policy-makers in Southern Nevada, this report will allow for more constructive and innovative solutions to be applied to the problem of homelessness.

Homelessness is an interpersonal issue, with varied catalysts. Likewise, the contributing factors that reduce and successfully address the issue is multi-faceted with many variables such as; employment rates, access to physical and mental health care, housing assistance programs and community planning/growth.



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