

City of Chicago

2015 HOMELESS

Point-in-Time Count & Survey Report

Prepared by the Voorhees Center for Neighborhood &
Community Improvement, University of Illinois at Chicago



CITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY
AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Chicago through its lead department, the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), conducted a point-in-time (PIT) count of homeless persons on the night of Thursday January 22nd, 2015. The collaborative effort included coordination among local governmental entities, local policy and advocacy groups, service providers, other essential partners, and over 400 volunteers and staff. This report highlights the data from the 2015 PIT count, paying particular attention to homeless subpopulations in the city and how figures have changed over time.

METHODOLOGY

Using methodology developed in 2007, DFSS brought together input from its collaborative partners to conduct the 2015 PIT count. The count includes both a comprehensive tally of all persons residing in emergency or transitional shelters on that evening and a count of individuals residing unsheltered on the streets, on public transportation, in parks, cars, and other locations not meant for sleeping. The PIT also includes a survey component that collects demographic, social service, and other information from a subset of homeless individuals.

Sheltered Homeless

DFSS program staff worked with all shelters to conduct a comprehensive count of all homeless persons in Chicago’s emergency shelters and transitional housing that evening. All shelters were provided tally sheets and a set of surveys, each with a unique number. A designated staff person or volunteer was responsible for counting all homeless people staying at the shelter that evening using the tally sheet. In addition to the PIT count, shelters were also instructed to administer a survey interview to no less than 10% of individuals and/or families in the shelter on the evening of the count randomly selected following DFSS guidelines. Data from the surveys were weighted and extrapolated to produce figures for the entire sheltered population.

Unsheltered Homeless

Counting and surveying of the unsheltered homeless population was conducted using trained volunteers to provide a comprehensive sweep of city locations. When possible, interview surveys were administered to unsheltered individuals. Volunteer enumerators

were dispatched to a subset of CTA vehicles. Tallies from those vehicles were extrapolated based on the number of CTA vehicles in circulation that evening to produce a total estimate of unsheltered persons.

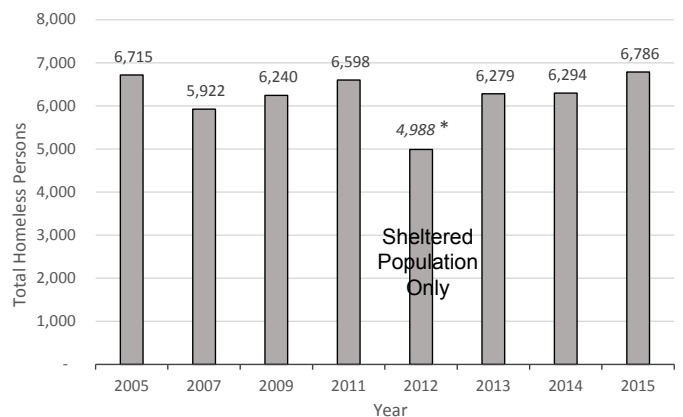
Weather Conditions

Temperatures on the evening of the PIT count were fairly temperate for January in Chicago, remaining above 30°F. This likely resulted in a greater number of persons remaining outside, particularly when compared to last year’s count which occurred during dangerously frigid conditions.

RESULTS

The number of homeless persons identified in the 2015 street and shelter count was 6,786. This marks an 8% increase from the previous year. (See Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Total Homeless Population



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts

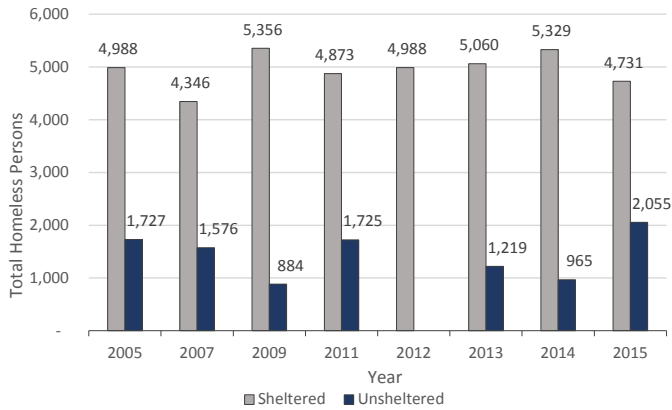
*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

SHELTERED VERSUS UNSHELTERED

Homeless individuals were counted as either sheltered (staying in emergency shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing the evening of the count), or unsheltered (residing in a place not meant for sleeping such as a park, street, abandoned building, or on public transportation). In 2015, 70% of homeless persons counted (4,731) were located within shelters while 30% (2,055) were unsheltered. This marks a decrease in the sheltered population and increase in the unsheltered population from last year’s figures, which comprised 85% and 15% of the homeless

population respectively in 2014. This shift is likely the result of temperate weather, which resulted in more people outside. This increase also reflects a much larger number of persons counted on CTA vehicles than last year. (See Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Total Homeless Population

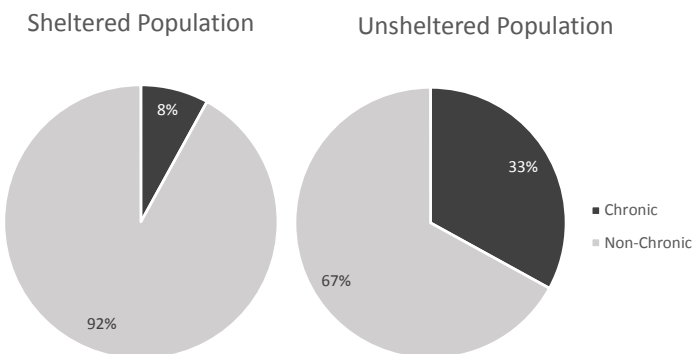


Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts
 *2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Chronic homelessness is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as persons or families who have been continuously homeless for at least one year **or** on at least four separate occasions in the past three years. At the time of the 2015 count, there were an estimated 1,050 chronically homeless individuals in Chicago of whom 373 were living in shelters and 677 were unsheltered. This represents 8% of the sheltered population and 33% of the unsheltered population. (See Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Chronic Homelessness



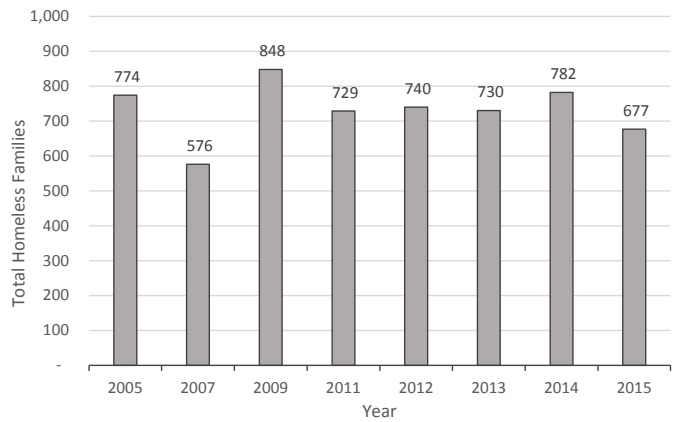
Source: 2015 PIT Count/Survey

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

Number of Families with Children

The number of families with at least one adult and at least one child living in shelters decreased 13% from 782 in 2014 to 677 in 2015. This marks the lowest number of families in shelters since 2007. (See Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Number of Families in Shelters

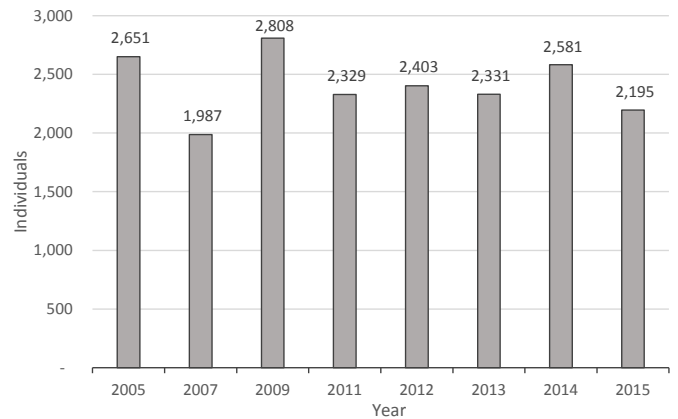


Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

Individuals in Families

Concurrent with a decrease in the total number of family households, the number of persons living in families also decreased. In 2015 there were 2,195 persons living in shelters with other family members—a 15% decrease from 2014. This marks the lowest number of sheltered persons in family households since 2007.

Fig. 5: Number of Individuals in Families

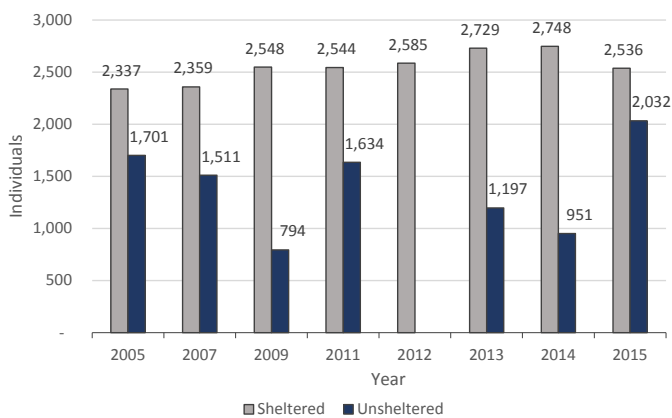


Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

Individuals Not in Families

The 2015 PIT identified 2,536 people staying in shelters who were not accompanied by another family member—an 8% decrease from 2014. (See Fig. 6). For the unsheltered population, there were an estimated 2,032 persons on the streets without a family member, which is more than double last year’s figure. Temperate weather combined with higher counts on the CTA likely contributed to this shift, which marks a change in trends from previous years in which the sheltered population had been increasing.

Fig. 6: Number of Individuals not in Families



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Homeless Youth

At the time of the 2015 PIT count, there were 1,422 homeless individuals under the age of 18. The vast majority of homeless children were accompanied by one or more adult family members and were located in a shelter. Six children were accompanied by neither an adult nor other child family member. Children make up roughly one-third of those living in shelters, but only 23% of Chicago’s population.¹

POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic, social service, health, and other information was obtained from responses to surveys administered to subsets of both the sheltered and unsheltered population. When information could not be obtained from an individual, tabulators were instructed to fill in any observable characteristics (i.e. gender, age, and race). Survey responses represent

a sample of the homeless population. Therefore, demographic, social service, health, and other figures reflect an estimate of the total population characteristics.

Gender

68% of all homeless persons were male, 32% were female, and 0.3% identified as transgender. Gender breakdown among homeless individuals has remained fairly consistent since 2005 with a few fluctuations. 2015 was marked by an increase in the proportion of unsheltered males and decrease in the proportion of females. (See Fig. 7 and Fig. 8).

Fig. 7: Sheltered Population by Gender

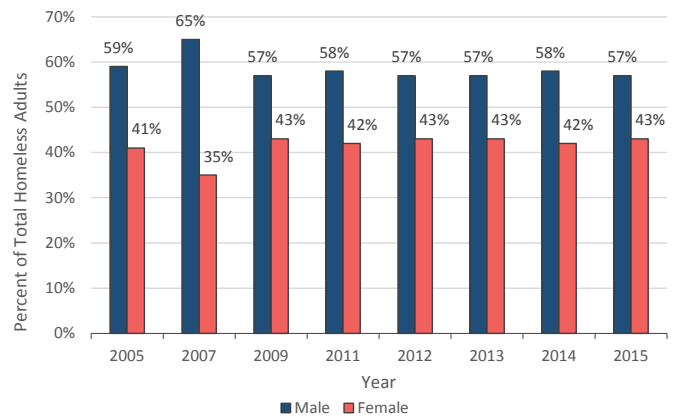
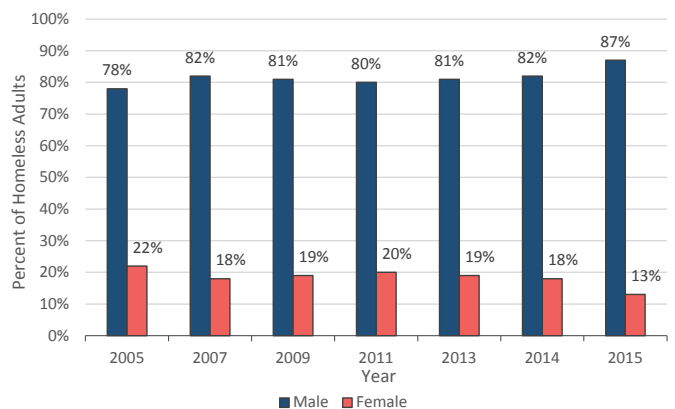


Fig. 8: Unsheltered Population by Gender



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

¹ 2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

Age

Age distribution for the homeless population remained consistent with figures in previous years. (See Fig. 9).

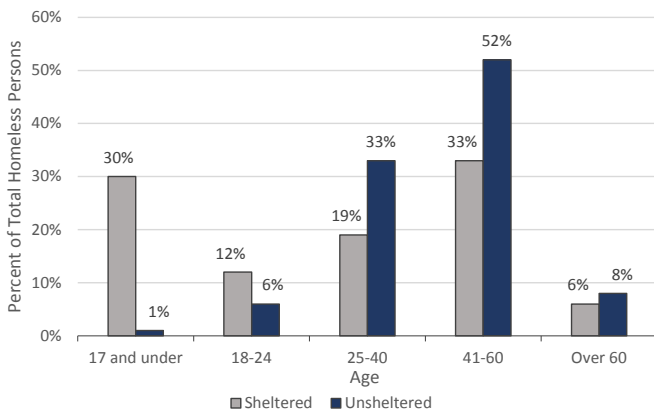
Among the sheltered population:

- 30% are children under 18
- 33% are middle-age adults age 41 to 60
- Persons age 60 and older represent 6%

Among the unsheltered population:

- More than half were age 41 to 60
- Persons age 24 to 40 represent 33%
- Those age 60 and older comprise 8%

Fig. 9: Homeless Population by Age



Source: 2015 PIT Count/Survey

Race & Ethnicity

While African Americans make up roughly one third of the city’s population (32%)², they comprised three quarters of both the sheltered and unsheltered population (76% and 72% respectively). Whites, who comprise 49%³ of the city’s population (when including white Hispanics), were the second largest racial group of both the sheltered and unsheltered population (21% and 23% respectively). (See Fig. 10 and Fig. 11).

Individuals of Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) comprise 29%⁴ of Chicago’s total population and 10% of the sheltered and 11% of the unsheltered population (see Fig. 12).

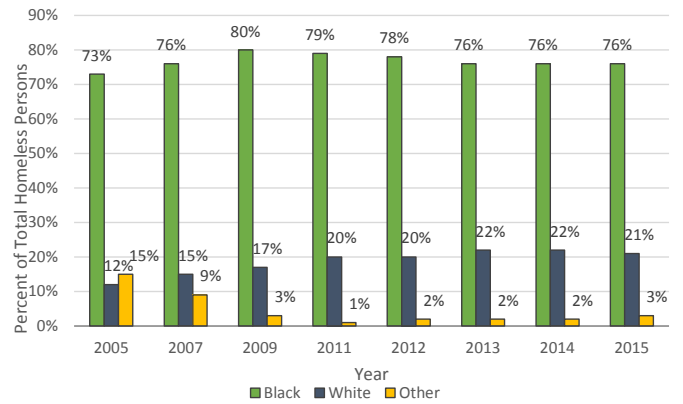
² 2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

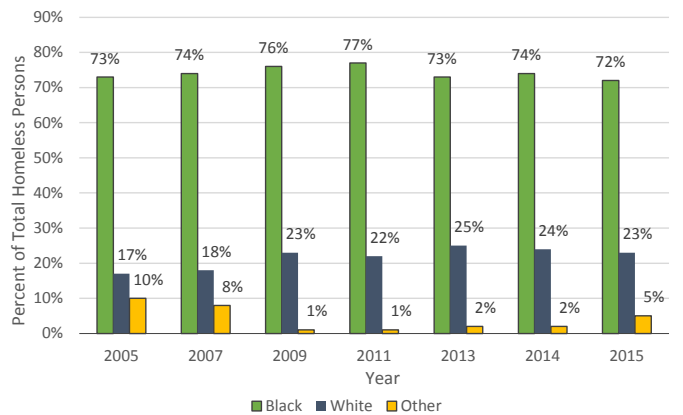
⁵ Ibid.

Fig. 10: Sheltered Population by Race



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

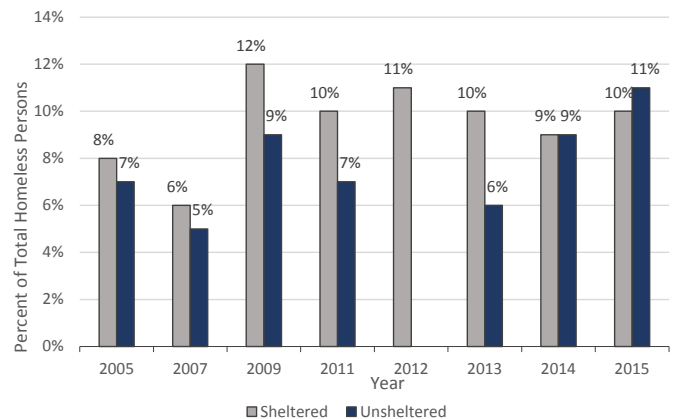
Fig. 11: Unsheltered Population by Race



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Fig. 12: Hispanic or Latino Origin



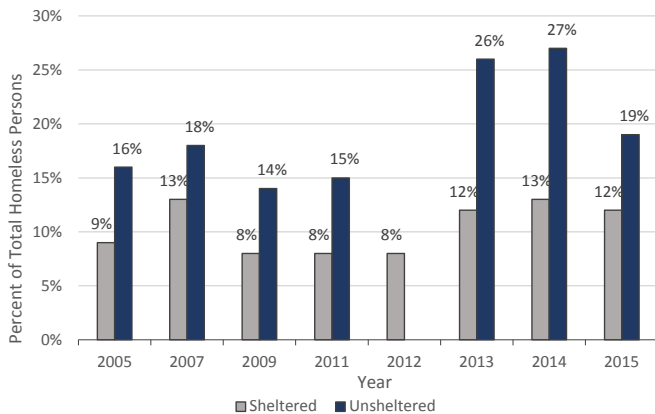
Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Veterans

Veterans comprise a disproportionate share of the homeless population. 4.4% of the Chicago population are veterans⁵, yet veterans represented an estimated 15% of the homeless population. 12% of the sheltered population and 19% of the unsheltered population identified as veterans. (See Fig. 13).

Fig. 13: Homeless Veterans



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys
 *2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

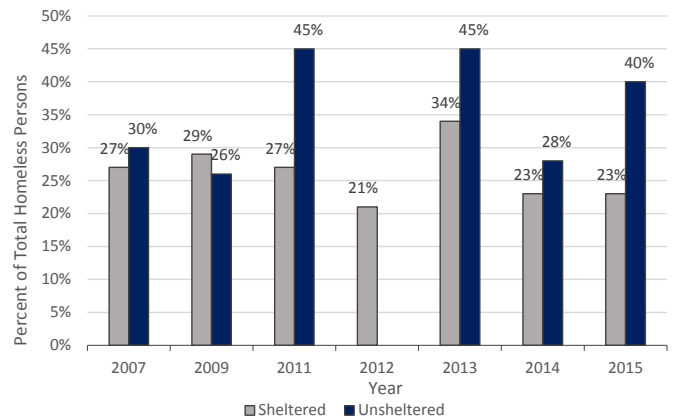
CHALLENGES TO HOUSING ACCESS

The PIT survey contains a series of questions related to physical and mental health conditions and service access. The purpose of these questions is to understand challenges and needs among the homeless population. It is important to note that these data are self-reported by the individual being interviewed and represent a subset of the total homeless population.

Substance Use

Similar to last year's figures, 29% of homeless individuals reported a current or past substance use issue. This figure was higher among the unsheltered population at 40%. (see Fig. 13). As noted above, it is important to note that these figures are self-reported by the individual being interviewed.

Fig. 14: Substance Use

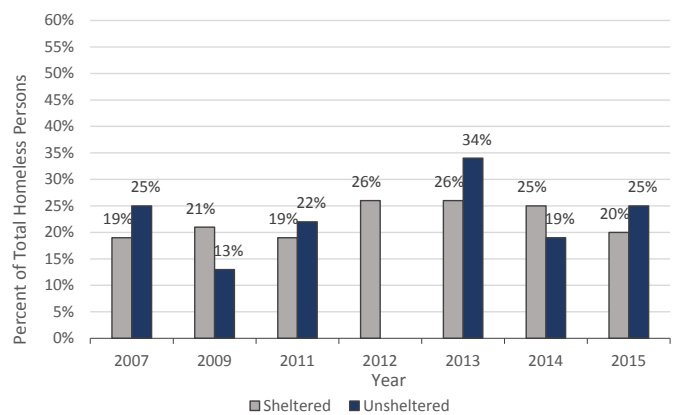


Source: 2007 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys
 *2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Mental Health Condition

Since 2005, the proportion of individuals reporting a current or past mental health condition varied, particularly among the unsheltered population. In 2015, 20% of the sheltered population reported receiving services for a current or prior mental health condition, which is similar to figures for the past few years. 25% of the unsheltered population reported receiving mental health services, which is up from 2014 but down from the preceding year. (See Fig. 15).

Fig. 15: Use of Mental Health Services



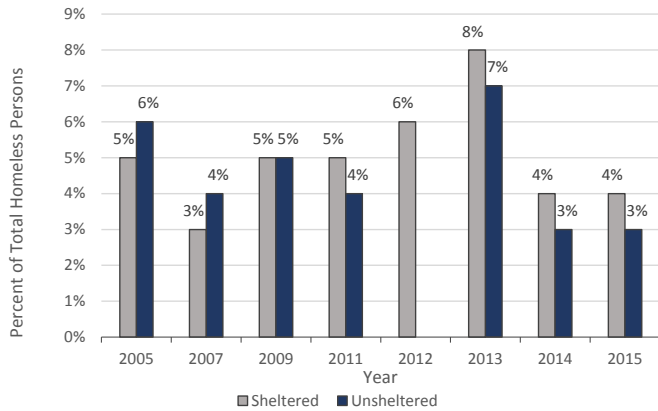
Source: 2007 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys
 *2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

HIV/AIDS

Similar to figures in the previous year, four percent of sheltered survey respondents and three percent of unsheltered respondents reported having AIDS or being HIV positive. (See Fig. 16).

⁵ 2013 Five-Year American Community Survey

Fig. 16: HIV/AIDS



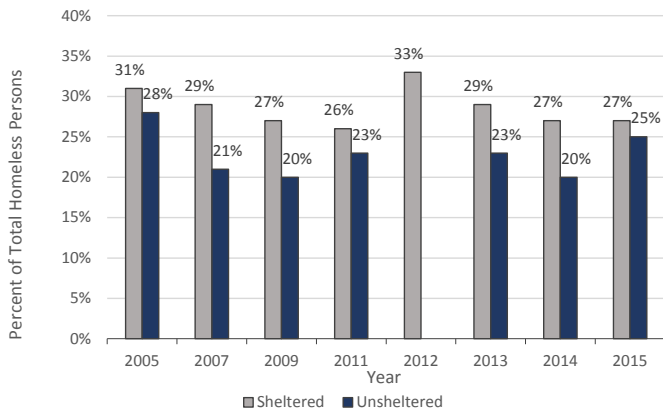
Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Domestic Violence

Over 25% of the surveyed homeless population reports being a victim of domestic violence. Victims constituted 27% of the sheltered and 25% of the unsheltered population. (See Fig. 17).

Fig. 17: Victims of Domestic Violence



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

Incarceration

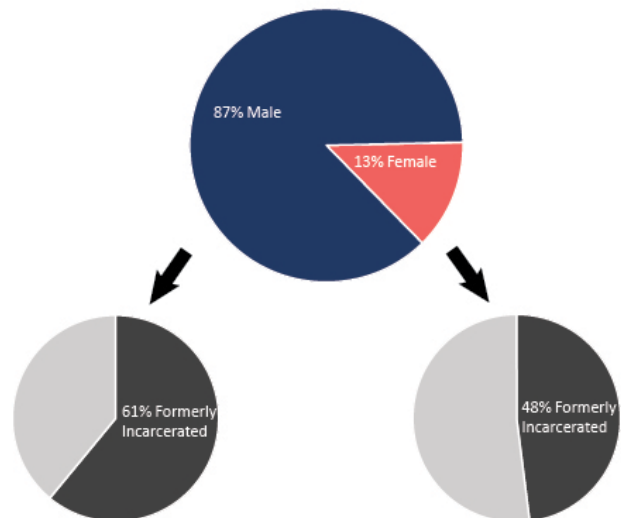
56% of all homeless males and 29% of all homeless females surveyed reported having spent time in jail or prison. Figures were higher among the unsheltered population. 51% of males in shelters and 25% of females in shelters were formerly incarcerated. 61% of unsheltered males and 48% of unsheltered females report being formerly incarcerated. (See Fig. 18 and Fig. 19).

Fig. 17: Former Incarceration, Sheltered Population



Source: 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

Fig. 18: Former Incarceration, Unsheltered Popul.

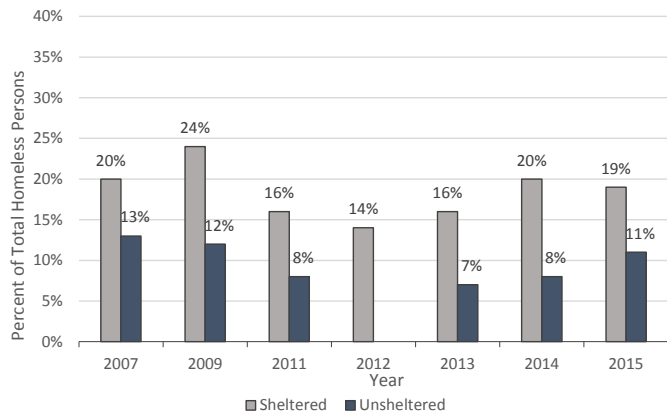


Source: 2015 PIT Counts/Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Of those surveyed, 19% of the sheltered and 11% of the unsheltered population report being employed. These figures are fairly consistent with those in the previous year. (See Fig. 20).

Fig. 20: Employment Status



Source: 2005 - 2015 PIT Count/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

The PIT survey also includes a series of questions about access to government and social services. Like other figures, data on access to services are self-reported by survey respondents. There are several trends of note among the access to services figures (see Fig. 21):

Fig. 21: Percent of Homeless Population with Access to Government Services/Benefits

Sheltered	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
SSI	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	12%
SSDI	5%	6%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Medicaid or Medicare	24%	22%	25%	19%	23%	43%
Food Stamps/SNAP	60%	69%	68%	74%	72%	73%
WIC	7%	8%	9%	5%	6%	9%
Kid Care	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	8%
TANF	9%	11%	9%	10%	10%	11%
Unemployment	3%	5%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Unsheltered	2009	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
SSI	11%	9%	na	9%	10%	14%
SSDI	5%	2%	na	9%	8%	8%
Medicaid or Medicare	3%	5%	na	3%	3%	11%
Food Stamps/SNAP	18%	33%	na	41%	33%	41%
WIC	.4%	2%	na	1%	2%	1%
Kid Care	0%	4%	na	0%	1%	.4%
TANF	.4%	1%	na	1%	2%	2%
Unemployment	2%	7%	na	0%	2%	2%

Source: 2009 - 2015 PIT Counts/Surveys

*2012 did not include a count of the unsheltered population.

- Access to Medicaid, Medicare, and Kid Care increased significantly from last year for both the sheltered and unsheltered population. This

is likely the direct result of changes implemented with the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

- With the exception of unemployment benefits, rates of access increased for all programs across the board among the sheltered population when compared to last year’s figures.
- Access to/use of SSI, Medicare/Medicaid/Medicare, Food Stamps, and unemployment benefits increased among the unsheltered population when compared to last year’s figures.
- WIC, Kid Care, and TANF access was higher among the sheltered population, which is largely the result of significantly higher proportions of homeless families with children (those eligible for such services) residing in shelters rather than on the streets.
- Use of Food Stamps/SNAP was notably higher among the sheltered population. However, access increased for both populations when compared to last year’s figures.

CONCLUSION

The number of homeless persons identified in the 2015 Point-in-Time Count increased by 8% from last year’s count. This increase is typical of fluctuations in previous years. Where this year’s population differs is in their location. The total number of persons in shelters was lower than figures in previous years, which had been increasing since 2011. Concurrently, the unsheltered population was higher than in previous years. This increase can in part be attributed to more temperate weather on the night of the count, which allowed more persons to remain outdoors and identifiable to enumerators. This year, volunteers also identified a higher number of persons on CTA vehicles, which in turn comprises a high proportion of the total estimated number of unsheltered persons.

Survey results continue to confirm long-standing disparities among the homeless population. Chicago’s population remained overwhelmingly African American and outpaced the city population in its proportion of children and veterans. Mental illness, substance use, unemployment, domestic violence, former incarceration and other challenges continue to be prevalent among the homeless population and pose challenges to obtaining and maintaining stable housing.

EXTENDED YOUTH COUNT

In 2015, DFSS extended the hours of the count for the purposes of identifying homeless youth. The supplemental youth count began at 3pm on the day of the PIT count and continued until dusk the following evening. DFSS trained youth enumerators to identify their peers. During the designated hours of the youth count, they were deployed to youth drop-in centers and other places youth may be found to conduct surveys. Persons identified during the official hours of the PIT count (9pm to 2am) were including in the PIT count numbers reported in the other sections of this document. The following subsection describes the data collected specifically by youth enumerators during the extended hour period.

Youth enumerators surveyed a total of 157 people. Of these, 15 were surveyed during the hours of the general PIT count and are included in the PIT figures and analysis.

Age

The majority, but not all of the persons surveyed by the youth enumerators were youth. Most (81%) were age 18 to 24. (See Fig. 22).

Fig. 22: Youth Count, Age

Age	Count	Percent
Under 18	3	2%
18-24	127	81%
25 and older	23	14%
Unknown	4	3%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Demographic data in the remainder of this subsection will focus only on youth (age 24 or younger) who were surveyed by the youth enumerators.

Gender

Similar to the general PIT count, males outnumbered females. (See Fig. 23). Where figures differ significantly is among the high number of transgender persons. 8% of those surveyed

identified as transgender compared to less than one percent of all persons in the general PIT.

Fig. 23: Youth Count, Gender

Gender	Count	Percent
Female	44	35%
Male	70	55%
Transgender	13	8%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Race & Ethnicity

The majority of youth surveyed were Black/African American. 17% reported being of multiple races, which outpaced figures for the general PIT count (3%). 23% were of Hispanic or Latino origin, which is double that of the general PIT count (11%). (See Fig. 24).

Fig. 24: Youth Count, Race & Ethnicity

Race & Ethnicity	Count	Percent
White	8	6%
Black/African American	88	69%
Other	15	12%
Multiple Races	20	17%
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	29	23%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Where Homeless Youth Were Going to Stay

The majority of youth surveyed during the extended hours count were housed indoors. 50% of all youth surveyed said they were going to stay in an emergency or transitional shelter that evening. 20% were staying with family or friends, but were not permanently living there. 12% were in permanent housing for homeless or very low income 'at risk' persons. Six did not know where they were going to stay. The remainder (14%) were staying in places not meant for human habitation such as on Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) vehicles, at a police station, in a 24-hour restaurant or other establishment, or in a hospital or emergency room. (See Fig. 25).

Fig. 25: Youth Count, Location that Evening

Location	Count	Percent
Permanently with parents, relatives, friends, or guardians	1	1%
Permanent housing for homeless or very low income persons	15	12%
Emergency or Transitional Shelter	65	50%
With friends/family but not living there	26	20%
Unsheltered (CTA, police station, 24-hour establishment, outside, etc.)	18	14%
Don't know	6	5%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Population Characteristics

Rates of substance use, mental health issues, disability, and former incarceration were lower among the surveyed youth population when compared to the general PIT count. 35% reported time spent in foster care, which is three times that of the general PIT figure. Domestic violence and HIV/AIDS rates were also higher. (See Fig. 26). No surveyed youth were veterans.

Fig. 26: Youth Count, Pop. Characteristics

Population Characteristics	Count	Percent
Physical Disability	6	5%
Substance Use	22	17%
HIV/AIDS	9	7%
Mental Health Issue	15	12%
Developmental Disability	1	1%
Domestic Violence Victim	35	28%
Veteran	0	0%
Time in Jail/Prison	40	32%
Time in Foster Care	45	35%
Employed	28	22%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Access to Government Services & Benefits

With the exception of Medicaid/Medicare, access to services was slightly lower among the youth

population when compared to the general PIT figures. Much of this reflects eligibility criteria. (See Fig. 27).

Fig. 27: Youth Count, Access to Government Services & Benefits

Population Characteristics	Count	Percent
SSI	4	3%
SSDI	1	1%
Medicaid/Medicare	46	36%
Food Stamps	74	58%
WIC	5	4%
TANF	5	4%
Kidcare	4	3%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count

Location Before Homelessness

Youth were asked where they were staying before they most recently became homeless. More than half of respondents were staying with family for friends. 18% were living in an apartment or home they owned or rented, and 6% were staying on the CTA. (See Fig. 28).

Fig. 28: Youth Count, Location Before Homelessness

Location	Count	Percent
Own home/apartment	23	20%
With family/friends	63	55%
Hospital or medical facility	3	3%
Jail/prison	5	4%
Foster/group home	5	4%
On the CTA	7	6%
In a shelter/transitional housing	5	5%
Other	3	3%

Source: 2015 Extended Youth Count