

Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Advisory Council On Homelessness

Winter Shelter Survey Report January 2008

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2008 Winter Homeless Survey Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing and Street Count

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Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Advisory Council on Homelessness 2008 Winter Shelter Survey

Introduction

In Virginia, every year each jurisdiction participates in a point in time count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. In the Commonwealth, the annual point in time count is conducted in January. Last year's point in time count identified 9,644 homeless people in Virginia. Typically, the number of people experiencing homelessness over a one year period is four times to five times greater than the point in time count. In Virginia's case that translates into an estimated 38,000 to 48,000 individuals who experienced homelessness in 2007. According to the Virginia Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2007 Report, about 44% of these individuals were in emergency shelters, 34% were in transitional programs and 22% were unsheltered.

In the Roanoke region, during the past year, the number of homeless people and the issue of homelessness have received increased public attention. With the release of last year's 2007 Point in Time Survey Report showing a 363% increase over a twenty year period, concerned policymakers asked homeless service providers to come together to examine the existing ten year plan to end homelessness and recommend revisions and near term actions to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Roanoke. Recommendations developed by the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Advisory Council and the Continuum of Care are scheduled to be released in late April 2008.

The results of the 2008 Point in Time Survey show an 11% decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness this year over last. While the decrease in numbers is a move in the right direction, it is not the purpose of this report to show or claim any causal relationship between a decrease in numbers and efficiencies of services or combinations of services provided. Survey data are not intended to answer all the questions regarding homelessness in the region. These data do, however, offer a snapshot of a complex, multidimensional social problem.

The Advisory Council continues to make every effort to ensure the accuracy of survey data collection. Improvements to survey collection methodology are on-going. For example, this year surveyors conducted interviews and recorded responses as opposed to using paper surveys for respondents to record answers to survey questions thus ensuring more accurate responses to

questions. Realizing that the actual number of individuals and families without permanent housing is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain and that numbers vary depending on definitions of homelessness, the Advisory Council continues to concentrate on individuals and families who rely on or are in need of emergency and transitional housing. The Advisory Council acknowledges, but is unable to realistically count or estimate, the sub-population of the hidden homeless who are sharing living space with friends and family, as well as those who remain anonymous and do not wish to be located or assisted.

Finally, the Advisory Council understands that the homeless population is multifaceted and that no single snapshot of a homeless person, or group of homeless people, is representative of the entire homeless population.

Methodology

The procedures utilized to collect information were as consistent as possible with those used in prior surveys. The 2008 survey was changed slightly to a shorter survey, therefore some questions that were asked in prior surveys were not asked in January 2008. Daily adult occupancy totals were collected at participating shelters during the week of January 20-26, 2008. Average nightly totals for the week were 504 individuals experiencing homelessness. Of these 504 individuals two hundred and sixty-five adults (n=265) participated in the survey. Children under the age of 18 were not surveyed. It should be noted that data charts will not always total 265 due to non-response or multiple response by clients. Homeless adult clients were surveyed by agency staff, the Homeless Assistance Team and other volunteers. Shelters were contacted for permission to survey clients with 100% of shelters electing to participate in the survey. These shelters are:

Overnight shelters: Rescue Mission, Salvation Army Red Shield Lodge, TRUST House, Total Action Against Poverty Transitional Living Center (TAP-TLC), Roanoke Valley Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN), Firebase Hope, Salvation Army Turning Point, Safehome Systems and YWCA.

Day shelters: Roanoke Area Ministries (RAM) and Samaritan Inn

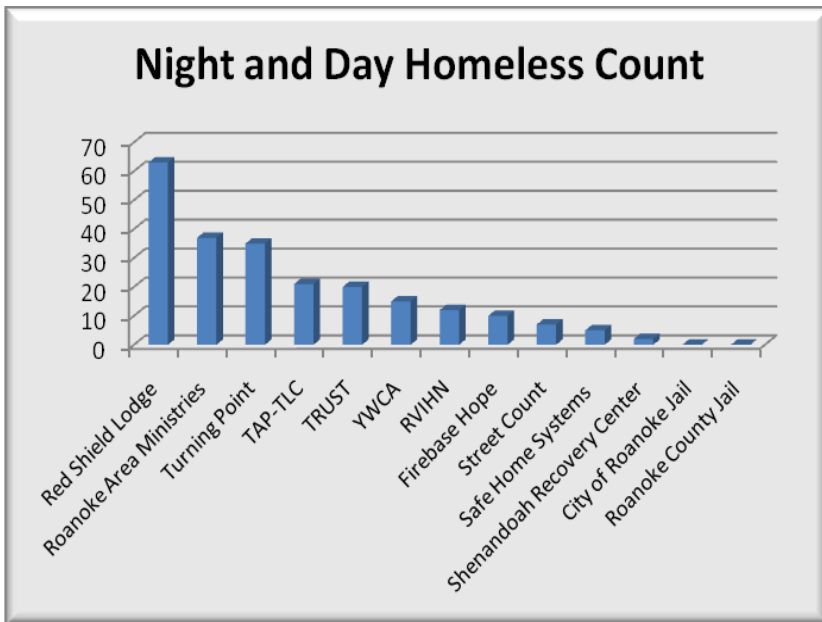
Other facilities: Shenandoah Recovery Center, Roanoke City and County Jail

Street count: Unsheltered (Homeless Assistance Team)

Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Advisory Council on Homelessness
2008 Winter Homeless Survey
Key Findings

- 265 Survey responses were collected. Only adults older than 18 were surveyed.
- Nightly Occupancy Averages decreased this year over last by 11%.
- 61.5% of Homeless surveyed were male
- 64.5% of Homeless surveyed were white – 28.7% Black/African American
- 28% of Homeless surveyed were veterans (an increase of more than 8% over last year)
- 72.9% reported being homeless for less than one year
- More than half (71.7%) reported sleeping in a shelter last night
- 43.4% reported never having been homeless before
- 18.9% reported inability to pay rent/mortgage as reason for current homelessness
- 16% reported having children with them on night of survey
- 25.7% are currently receiving mental health services
- 39.6% reported having received mental health services in the past
- 30.9% reported having received alcohol abuse treatment at some point
- 79.7% had high school/GED education or more
- 46.4% were employed full time or part time
- 23% received food stamps
- 39.2% were actively looking for work
- Inability to find work; affordable housing; medical problems and substance abuse were the 4 greatest challenges experienced by homeless

Night and Day Homeless* – January 25, 2008



Rescue Mission	277	54.9%
Red Shield Lodge	63	12.5%
Roanoke Area Ministries	37	7.3%
Turning Point	35	6.9%
TAP-TLC	21	4.2%
TRUST	20	3.9%
YWCA	15	2.4%
RVIHN	12	2.4%
Firebase Hope	10	1.9%
Street Count	7	1.4%
Safe Home Systems	5	0.9%
Shenandoah Recovery Center	2	0.4%
City of Roanoke Jail	0	0.0%
Roanoke County Jail	0	0.0%
Total	504	

*Includes homeless at Roanoke Area Ministries [RAM], Samaritan Inn and those who are on the street.

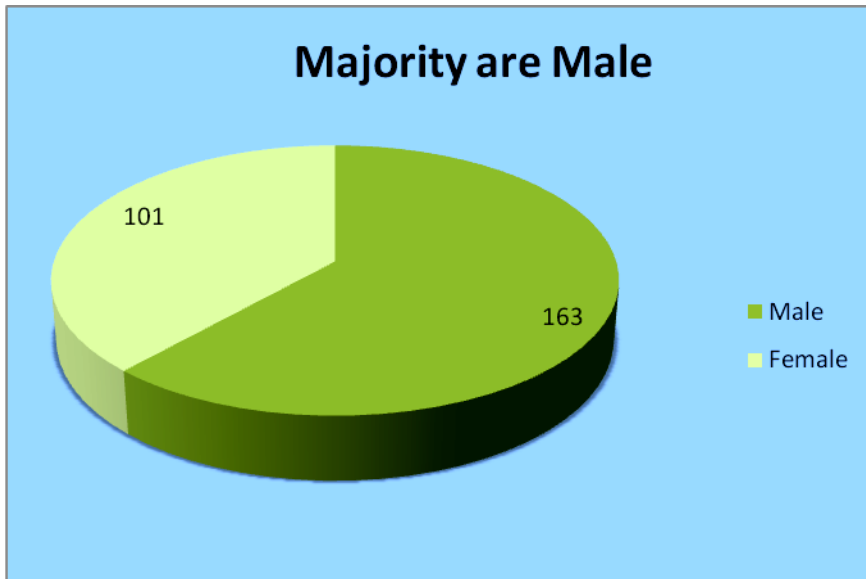
Nightly Averages – 1987 thru 2008

Jan-87	122
Jan-89	151
Jan-91	215
Jan-93	194
Jan-95	281
Jan-97	291
Jan-99	309
Jul-99	340
Jul-00	310
Jan-02	327
Jun-03	416
Jan-05	397
Jan-06	408
Jan-07	566
Jan-08	504



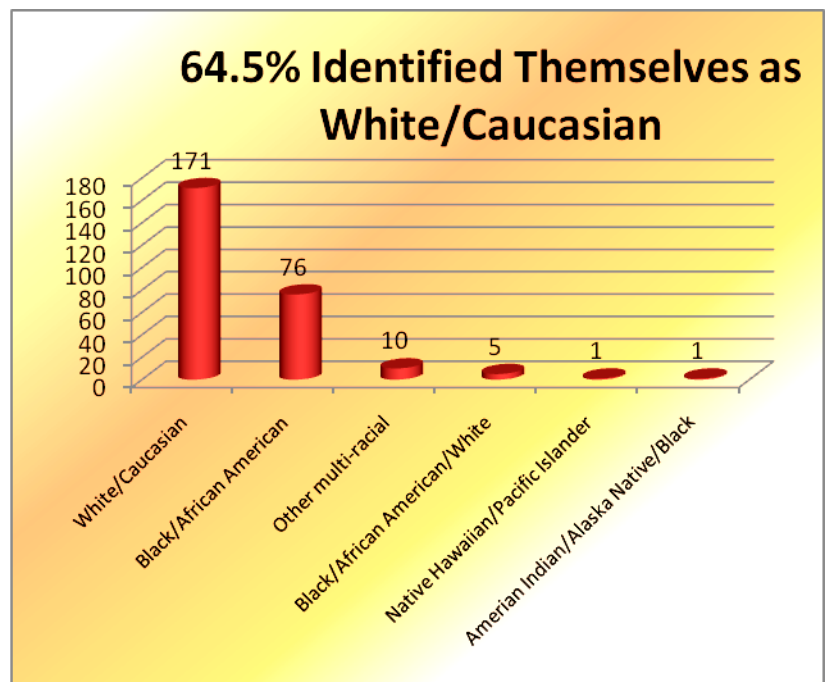
Demographic Results of the 2008 Point in Time Survey-265 Participants

The Majority are Male



What racial/ethnic group do you identify with the most?

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White/Caucasian	171	64.5%
Black/African American	76	28.7%
Other multi-racial	10	3.8%
Black/African American/White	5	1.9%
American Indian/Alaska Native/Black	1	0.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0.4%
Asian/White	1	0.0%



What Year Were You Born?

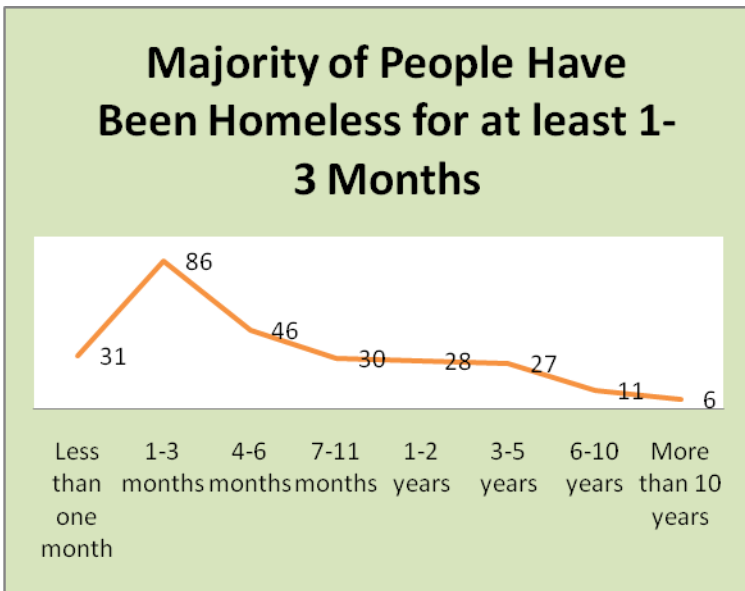
Youngest Respondent 19
 Oldest Respondent 72

69%- 182 of those surveyed were between the ages of 35 and 56

Results – 265 participated in the survey-

[Missing data is not reported and questions may have multiple answers thus percents may not total 100.]

1. How long has it been since you had a place to live?¹



	Number	Percentage
Less than 1 month	31	11.7%
1-3 months	86	32.5%
4-6 months	46	17.4%
7-11 months	30	11.3%
1-2 years	28	10.6%
3-5 years	27	10.2%
6-10 years	11	4.2%
10 + years	6	2.3%

2. Please tell us why you are homeless?

	Number	Percentage
Unable to pay rent/mortgage	50	18.9%
Evicted /unrelated to payment	33	12.5%
Victim of domestic violence	24	9.1%
Family problems	34	12.8%
Institutional discharge	16	6.0%
Other*	130	39.6%

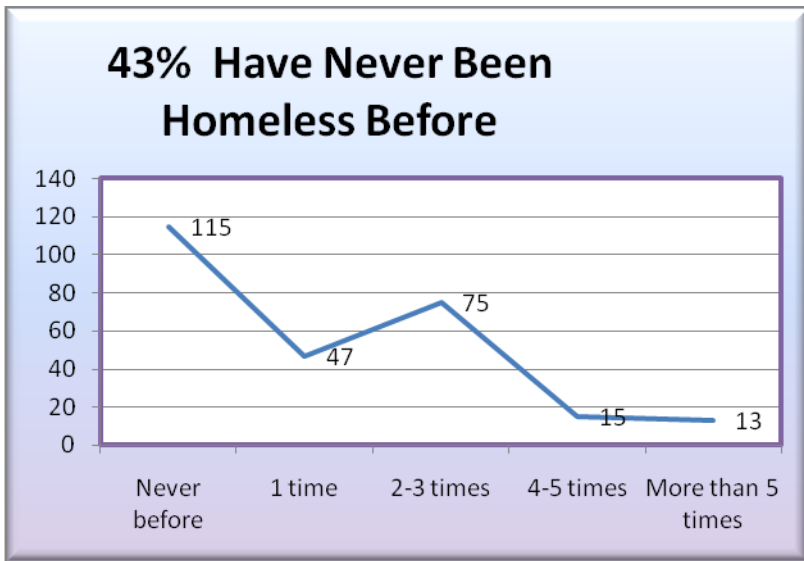


*Two Themes Emerged in- Other Responses.

Monetary-Included responses: Unemployment, No Work, No Income, etc. [30]

¹ HUD defines a chronically homeless person as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) 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 homeless shelter during that time."

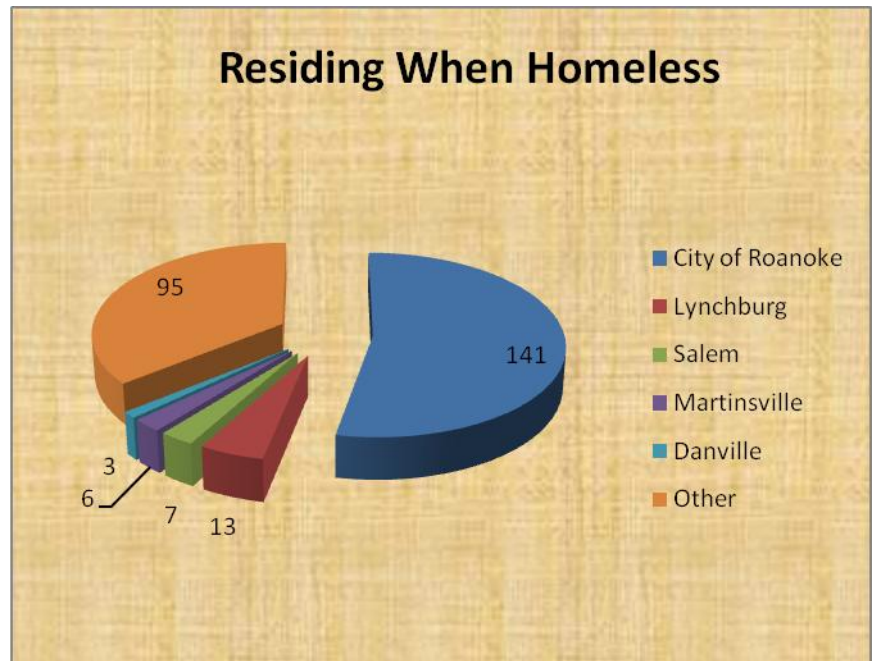
3. How many times have you been homeless before?



	Number	Percentage
Never before	115	43.4%
1 time	47	17.7%
2-3 times	75	28.3%
4-5 times	15	5.7%
More than 5 times	13	4.9%

4. Where Were You Residing When You Became Homeless?

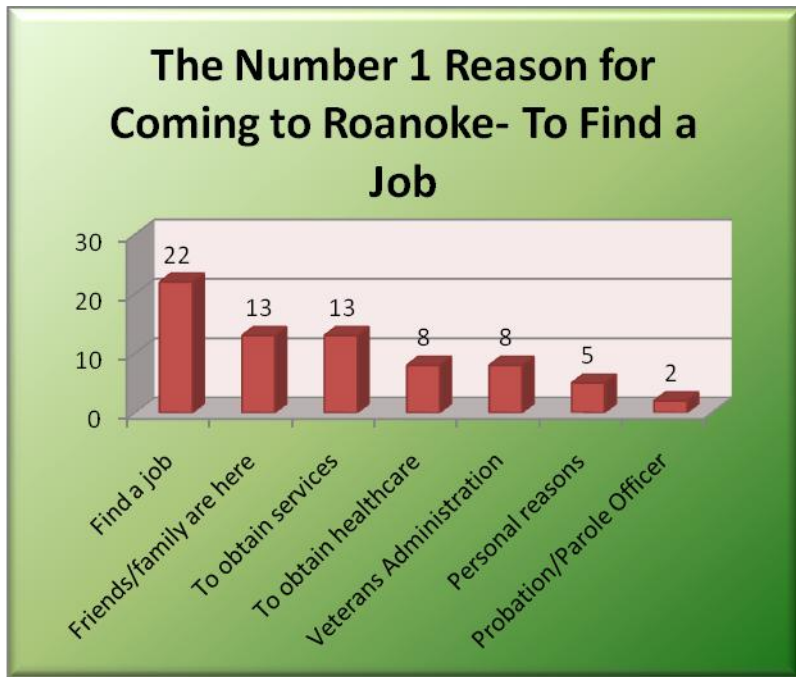
City of Roanoke	141	53.2%
Roanoke County	5	2.0%
Botetourt County	1	.4%
Franklin County	1	.4%
Bedford	3	1.1%
Vinton	4	1.5%
Rocky Mount	1	.4%
Lynchburg	13	4.9%
Salem	7	2.6%
Martinsville	6	2.3%
Danville	3	1.1%
Other*	95	30.1%



The Other* That Accounted for 30.1% Were As Follows:

Virginia	North Carolina	Others
Bassett [1]	Chapel Hill [1]	Alaska [1]
Blue Ridge [1]	Charlotte [1]	Arizona [1]
Buffalo Springs [1]	Fayetteville [1]	Baltimore [1]
Chester Richmond [1]	Greensboro [3]	Colorado [1]
Christiansburg [2]	North Carolina [1]	Conneticut [1]
Dixie Caverns [1]	Reedsville [1]	DC [1]
Fairfax [1]		Florida [3]
Floyd County [1]		Georgia [2]
Fredricksburg [1]		Maryland [1]
Galax [1]		Michigan [1]
Glasgow [1]		New Jersey [2]
Gretna [1]		New Mexico [1]
Harrisonburg [1]		New York [1]
Henry County [2]		Ohio [1]
Montgomery County [1]		Oklahoma [2]
Portsmouth [2]		Pennsylvania [2]
Richmond [4]		South Carolina [1]
Rockbridge County [1]		Texas [1]
South Boston [1]		West Virginia [3]
Stafford [1]		
Staunton [1]		
Tazwell [1]		
Troutville [1]		
Virginia Beach [2]		
Waynesboro [2]		
Wirtz [1]		
Wytheville [1]		

5. If You Became Homeless Somewhere Other Than Roanoke, Why Did You Come To Roanoke?

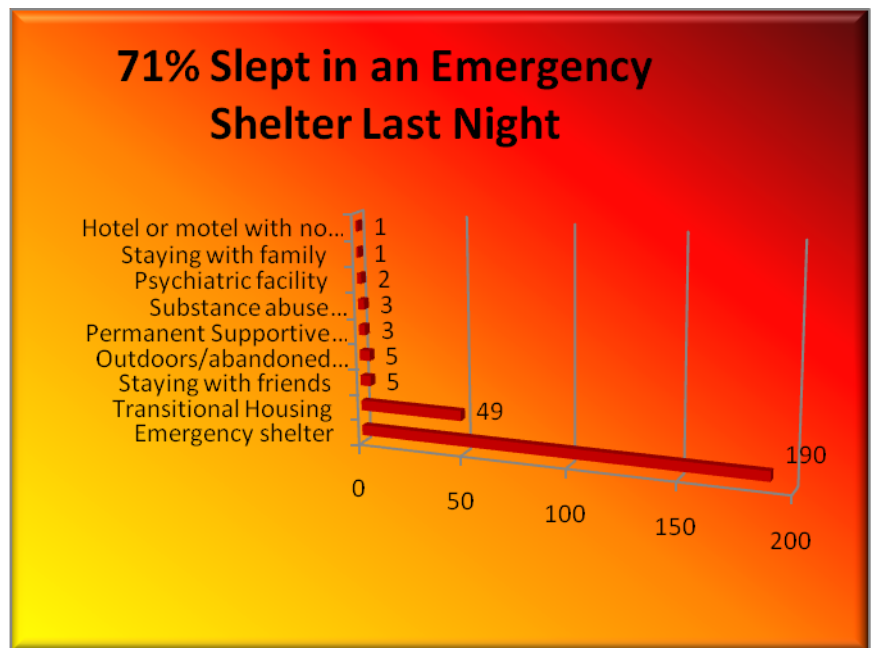


Reason	Number	Percent
Find a job	22	8.3%
Friends/family are here	13	4.9%
To obtain services	13	4.9%
To obtain healthcare	8	3.0%
Veterans Administration	8	3.0%
Personal reasons	5	1.9%
Probation/Parole Officer	2	0.8%
Other*	31	11.7%

*Other-
 [8] of these responses were recommended
 or referred by a counselor, etc.

6. Where Did You Sleep Last Night?

Place	Number	Percent
Emergency Shelter	190	71.7%
Transitional Housing	49	18.5%
Staying with friends	5	1.9%
Outdoors/abandoned building/bridge	5	1.9%
Permanent Supportive Housing	3	1.1%
Substance abuse treatment center/detox	3	1.1%
Psychiatric facility	2	0.8%
Staying with family	1	0.4%
Hotel or motel with no voucher	1	0.4%
Other	3	1.1%



7. Have You Been Denied a Bed at a Shelter in the Last 12 Months?



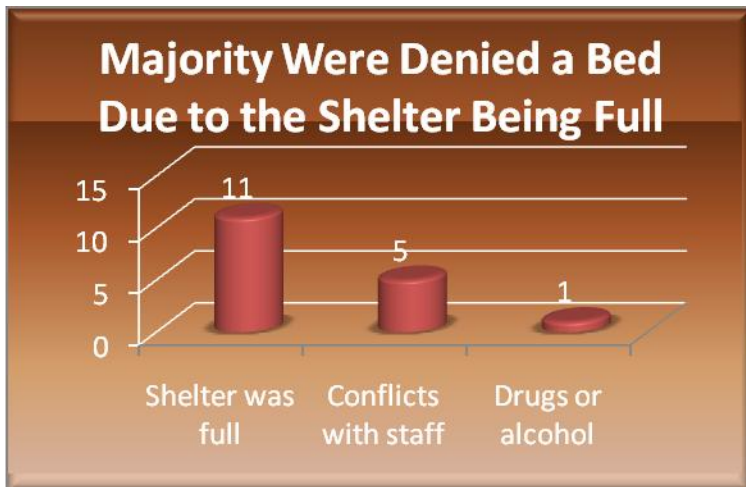
	Number	Percent
Yes	23	8.7%
No	242	91.3%

10. If Yes, at What Location?

Place	Number	Percent
Rescue Mission	11	4.2%
Salvation Army Red Shield Lodge	6	2.3%
TRUST	3	1.1%
Salvation Army Turning Point	1	0.4%



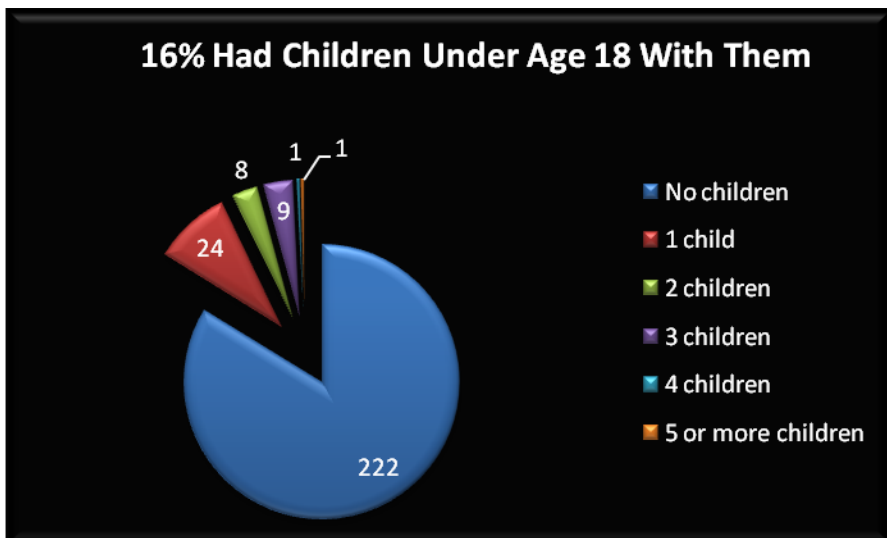
11. If Yes, Why Were You Denied a Bed?



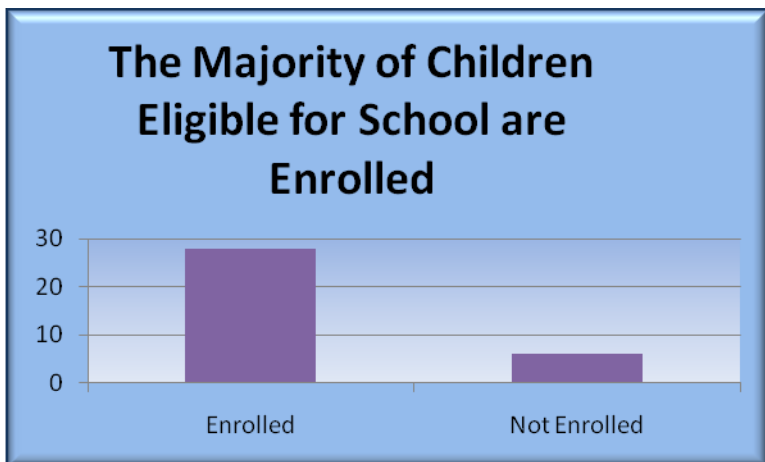
Reason	Number	Percent
Shelter was full	11	4.2%
Conflicts with staff	5	1.9%
Drugs or alcohol	1	0.4%
Other	8	3.0%

12. Do You Have Children Under Age 18 With You?

No children	222
1 child	24
2 children	8
3 children	9
4 children	1
5 or more children	1



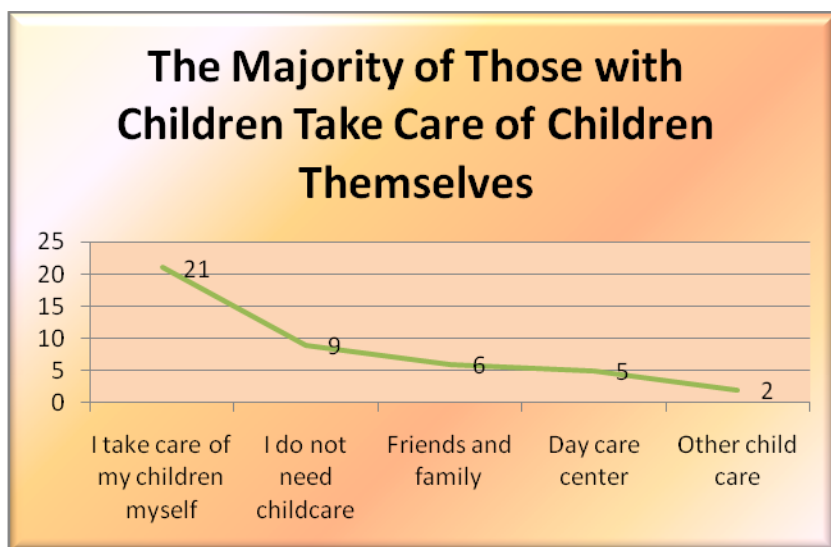
13. How Many Eligible Children With You Are Enrolled in School?



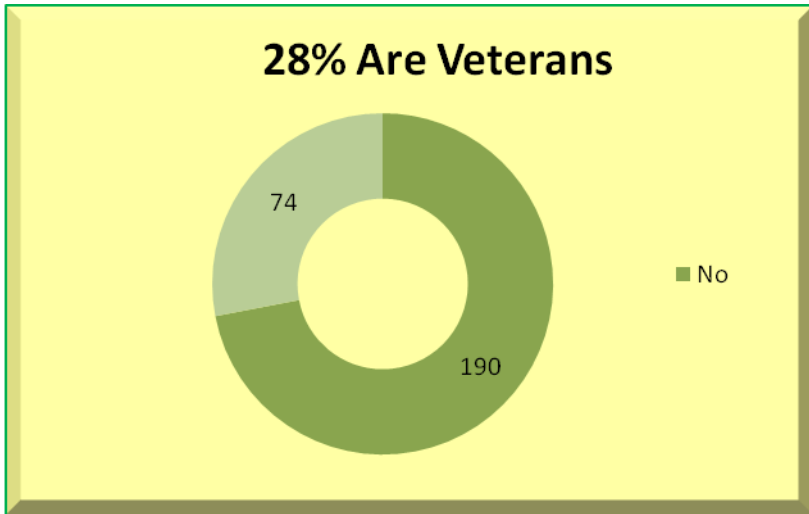
	Number	Percent
Enrolled	28	10.6%
Not Enrolled	6	2.3%

14. How Do You Handle Child Care?

	Number	Percent
I take care of my children myself	21	7.9%
I do not need childcare	9	3.4%
Friends and family	6	2.3%
Day care center	5	1.9%



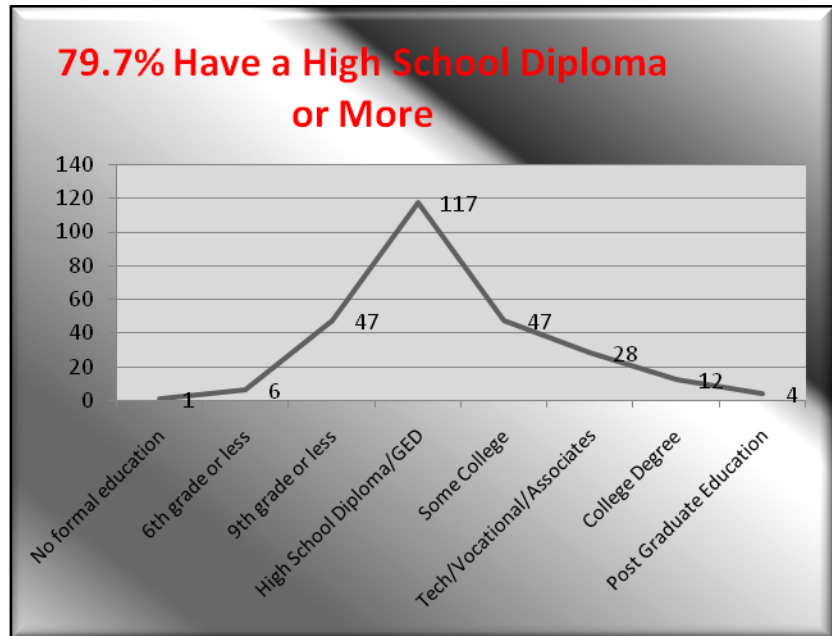
15. Are You a Veteran of the U.S. Military?



	Number	Percent
No	190	71.7%
Yes	74	27.9%

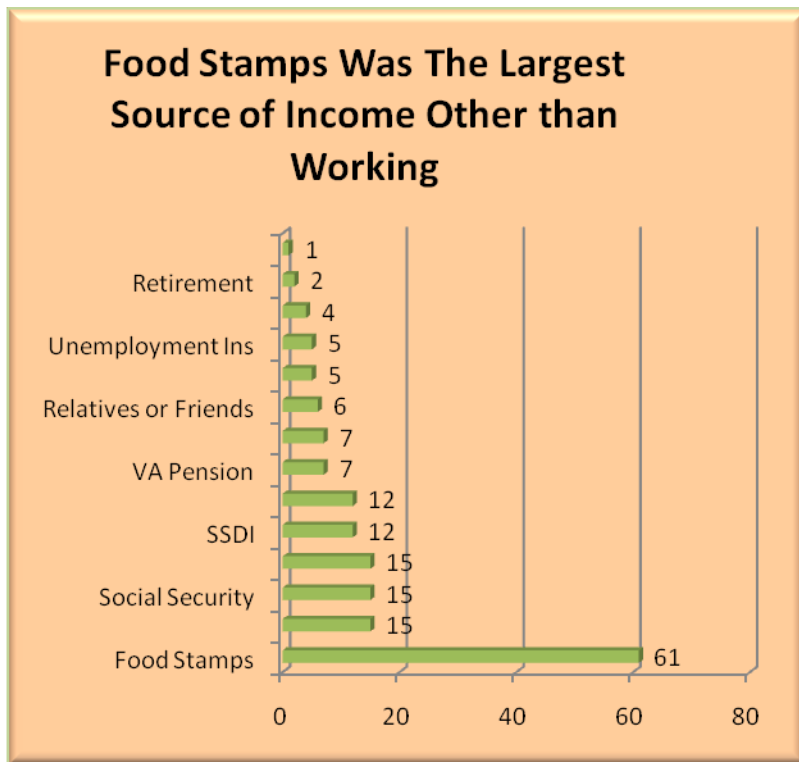
16. What is the Highest Level of Education You Completed?

	Number	Percent
No formal education	1	0.4%
6th grade or less	6	2.3%
9th grade or less	47	17.7%
High School Diploma/GED	117	44.2%
Some College	47	17.7%
Tech/Vocational/Associates	28	10.6%
College Degree	12	4.5%
Post Graduate Education	4	1.5%



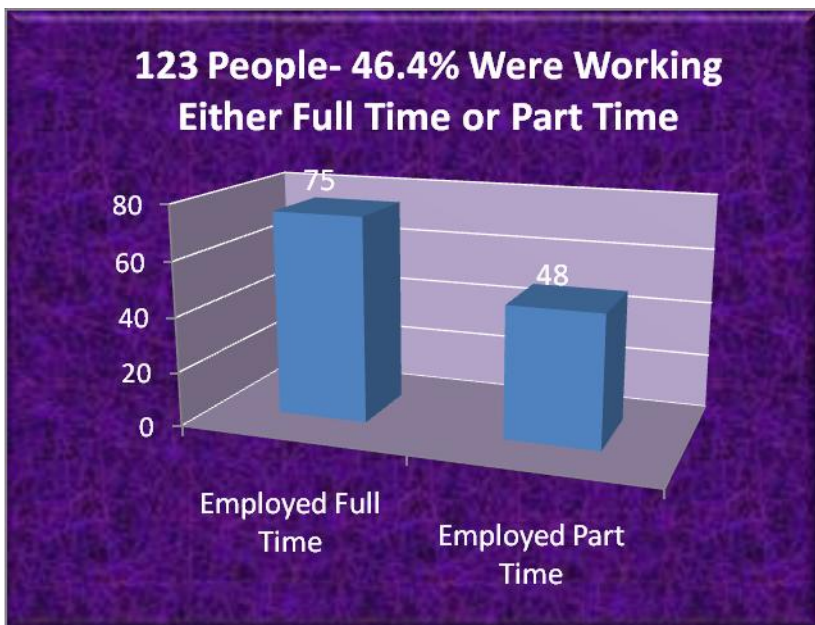
17. What Sources of Income Have You Had in the Last 12 Months?

	Number	Percent
Food Stamps	61	23.0%
TANF	15	5.7%
Social Security	15	5.7%
SSI	15	5.7%
SSDI	12	4.5%
General Relief	12	4.5%
VA Pension	7	2.6%
Child Support	7	2.6%
Relatives or Friends	6	2.3%
Savings	5	1.9%
Unemployment Ins	5	1.9%
Asking for money from the public	4	1.5%
Retirement	2	0.8%
Workers Comp	1	0.4%
Other*	31	17%



*Other responses included: [10] None, [7] Temporary Work, [5] CWT VMAC & [4] Disability.

18. Are You Working Now?

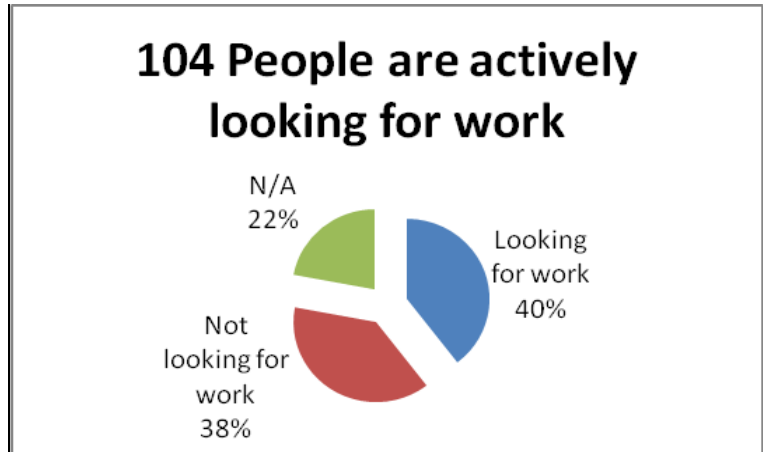


	Number	Percent
Employed Full Time	75	28.3%
Employed Part Time	48	18.1%

19. If Working, What is Your Hourly Wage? Median Income= \$7.88 /hr Range \$2.15 - \$20.00

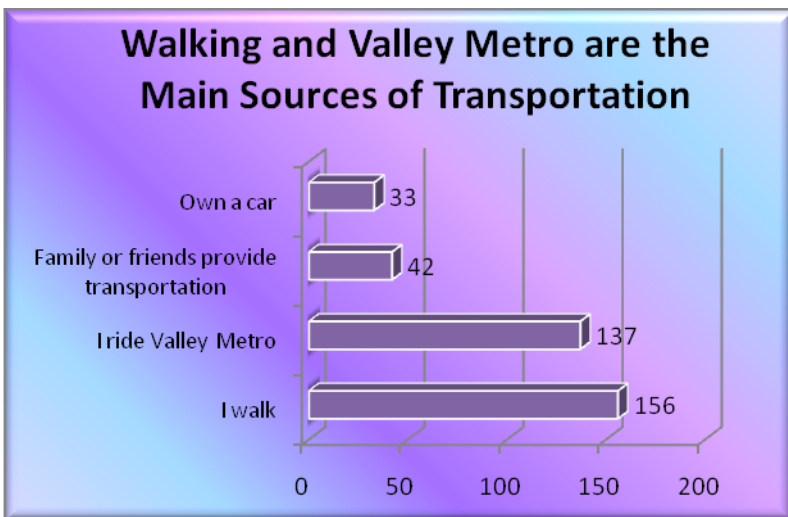
20. Are You Actively Looking for Work?

Looking for work	104
Not looking for work	101
*N/A	58



*N/A signifies those who indicated they were employed and not looking for work or were in rehabilitative services skills development programs

21. How Do You Get Around?



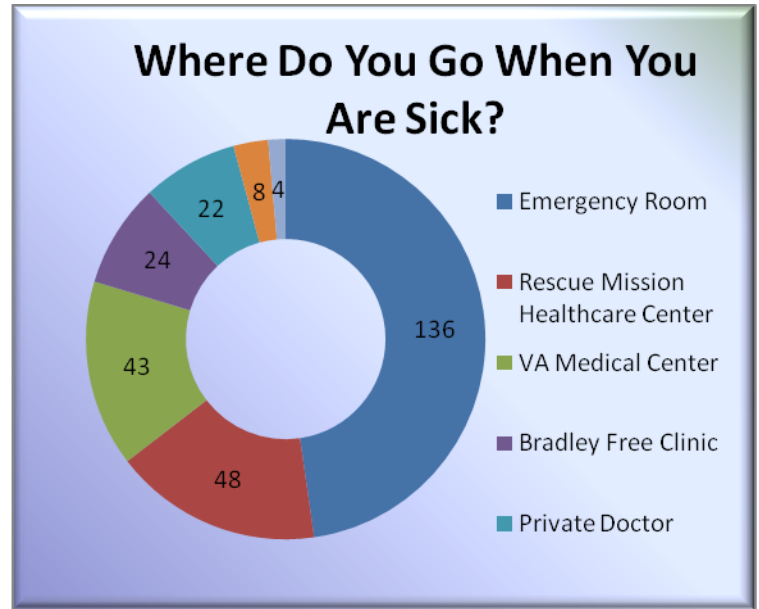
	Number	Percent
I walk	156	58.9%
I ride Valley Metro	137	51.7%
Family or friends provide transportation	42	15.8%
Own a car	33	12.5%
Other*	23	9%

*Other responses included- Bicycle and Rescue Mission Transport.

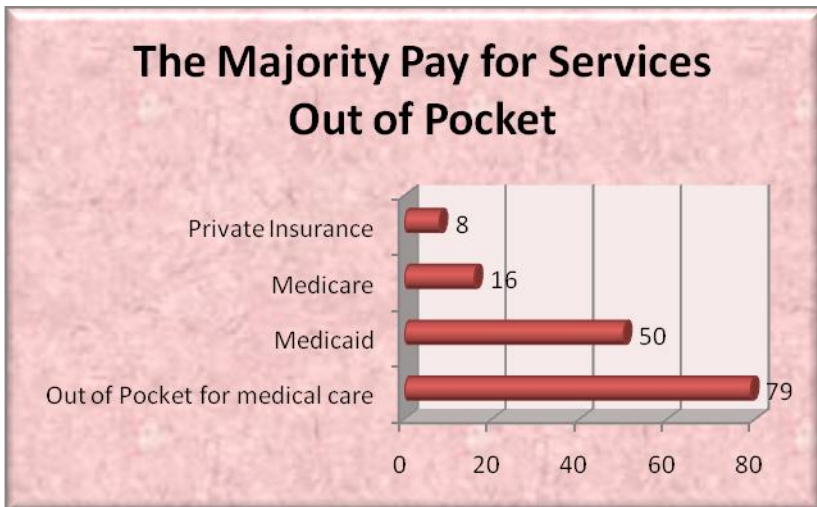
22. If You Get Sick, Where Do You Go for Medical Treatment?

	Number	Percent
Emergency Room	136	51.3%
Rescue Mission Healthcare Center	48	18.1%
VA Medical Center	43	16.2%
Bradley Free Clinic	24	9.1%
Private Doctor	22	8.3%
New Horizons	8	3.0%
Health Department	4	1.5%
Other*	30	11.3%

*Other -9 responses that reported Hospitals.



23. How Do You Pay for Medical Care?



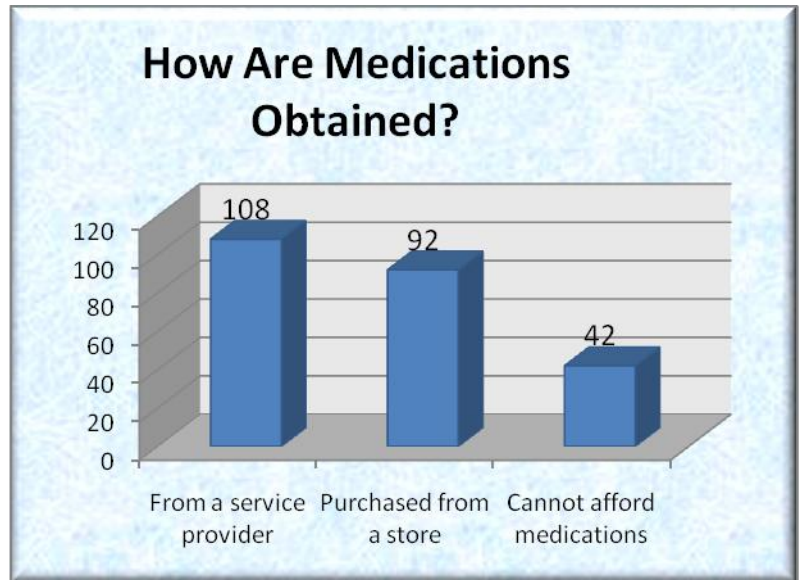
	Number	Percent
Out of Pocket for medical care	79	29.8%
Medicaid	50	18.9%
Medicare	16	6.0%
Private Insurance	8	3.0%
Other*	37	46%

* Other Comments- [37] Responses included VA, VAMC or VA Medical Centers; [20] Don't Pay/Can't Pay; [16] Clinics and [6] Charity.

24. How Do You Obtain Your Medications?

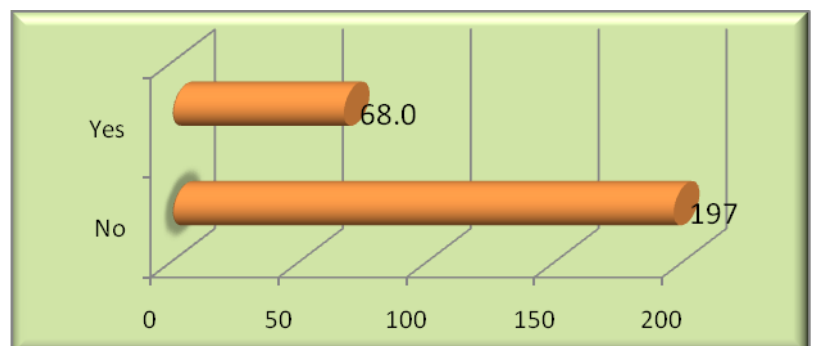
	Number	Percent
From a service provider	108	40.8%
Purchased from a drug store	92	34.7%
Cannot afford medications	42	15.8%
Other*	32	8.7%

* Other- [22] were VA, VAMC or VA Medical Center.

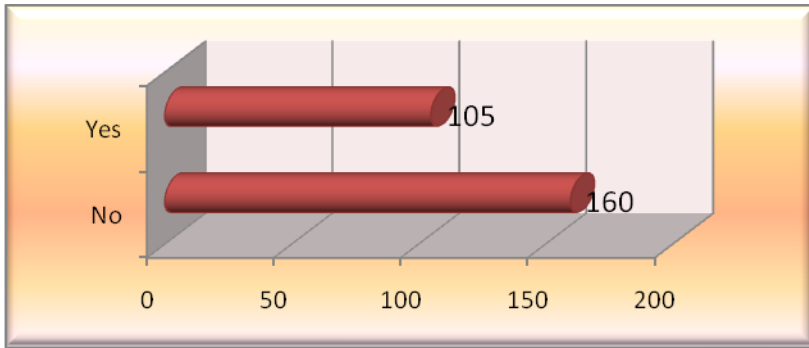


25. Are You Currently Receiving Mental Health Services?

Yes	68	25.7%
No	197	74.3%



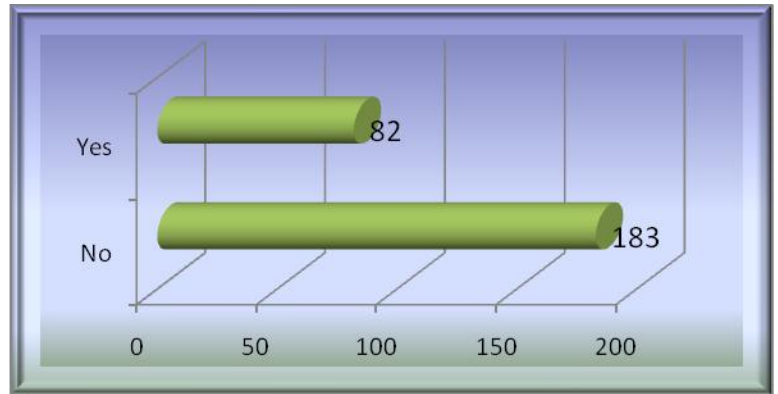
26. Have You Previously Received Mental Health Services?



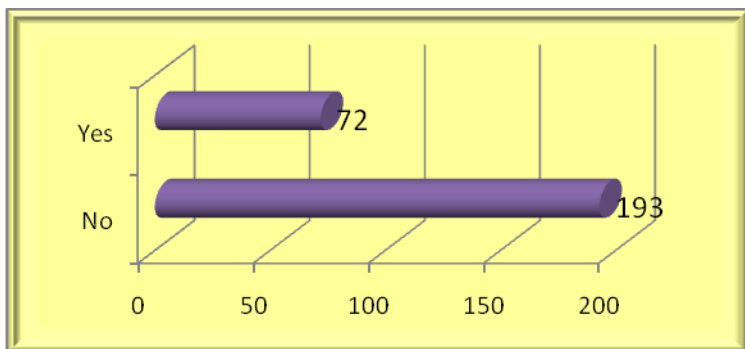
Yes	105	39.6%
No	160	60.4%

27. Have You Ever Received Treatment for Problems Related to Alcohol?

Yes	82	30.9%
No	183	69.1%

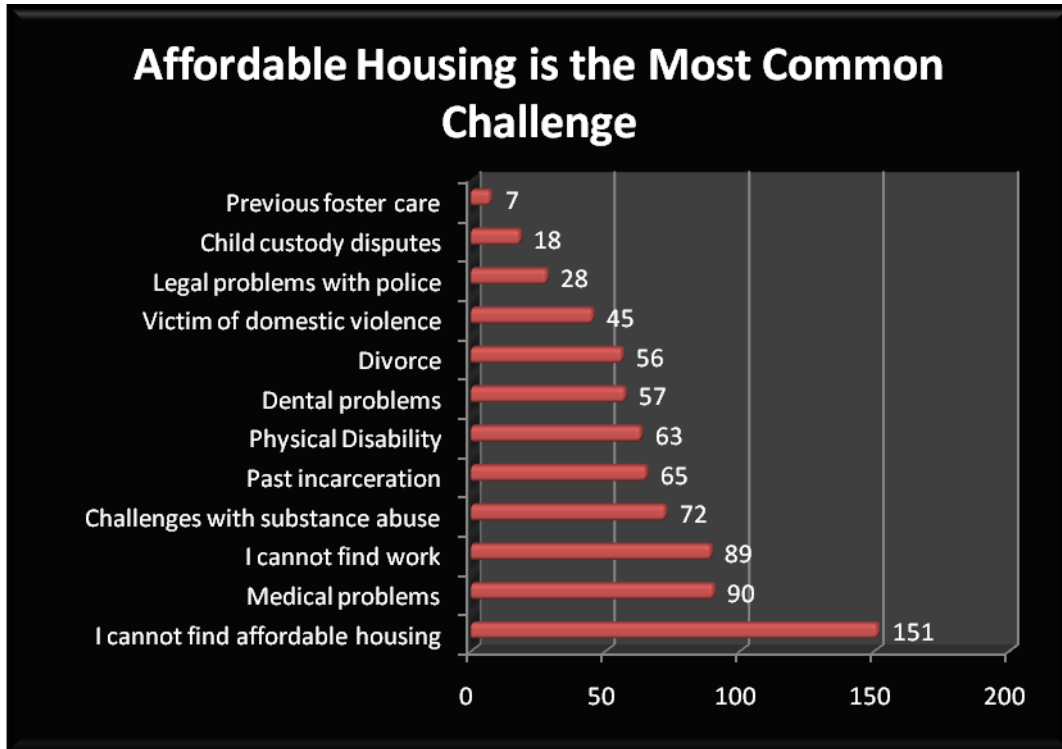


28. Have You Ever Been Treated for Drug Dependency?



Yes	72	27.2%
No	193	72.8%

29. Common Characteristics and Challenges Experienced by Those Without a Home.



	Number	Percent
I cannot find affordable housing	151	57.0%
Medical problems	90	34.0%
I cannot find work	89	33.6%
Challenges with substance abuse	72	27.2%
Past incarceration	65	24.5%
Physical Disability	63	23.8%
Dental problems	57	21.5%
Divorce	56	21.1%
Victim of domestic violence	45	17.0%
Legal problems with police	28	10.6%
Child custody disputes	18	6.8%
Previous foster care	7	2.6%

*Other Response- PTSD (1)

Comments or Thoughts about Living without Housing

1. Can't do anything without an ID; no immediate family members
2. Conviction makes it hard to find a job.
3. HAT is doing a real good job for me.
4. Section 8 needs to help clients find apartments.
5. Depressing, stressful, aggravating
6. Stereotyped as being trash; doesn't like what he sees on TV and media; police always on their case.
7. Would like to get a better job and find my own place
8. I am very sad to be homeless
9. Rescue Mission helped her when she has needed help; family issues irreconcilable, cannot go back to live with her parents. Really need help.
10. Only affordable housing I can find are all in drug infested areas.
11. It is abundant life as the Lord Christ said; the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.
12. It is hard work being homeless.
13. Too hard to fall back on drinking with housing, it relieves pressure of every day hassle and I am able to concentrate on working and staying sober and also putting my family back together.
14. Being fairly young, it is depressing and demoralizing to not be able to take care of yourself.
15. Very depressing.
16. No one likes to be homeless. Wish for better programs for those that are disabled.
17. Just trying to flow with it...trying not to think about it.
18. Will have place in Tidewater when court date with family.
19. Would really appreciate a home to live in.
20. I appreciate somewhere to go to get out of the cold.
21. Awaiting disability; do not like the way that system handles homeless.
22. I am 48 years old and have spent 27 years in prison. Have alcoholic issues.
23. Miserable!
24. A lot of people need more help getting around. They need a place to provide bus passes. We need additional help to help people clear debt to get in home faster. There needs to be a program that provides help like once every 10 years to help clear debt.
25. Concerned that the Rescue Mission said they would help her find an apartment and they are waiting so long.
26. Need help with Medicare
27. Wouldn't wish it on anyone. Mission is a good place to be. Help with transportation – possibly provide a shuttle.
28. It sucks. Mission caters to drug/alcohol dependency, not domestic violence.
29. It's a serious problem. We need housing like everyone else.
30. Love Rescue Mission because they put a roof over my head. There are staff problems – they are not consistent with regulation of rules.
31. I will be glad when I'm not homeless anymore. I won't do it again!
32. It is miserable.
33. The Mission is great but not like having your own home.
34. It sucks!
35. I am about to get housing and am very happy about that.
36. Being homeless destroys your stability and mental health and over time you believe that you can never get out of it.
37. Treatment program has been the best thing she has ever experienced.

38. Need more services pertaining to dental services and prescriptions. Feels like the system is failing her. She has many medical needs which is why she is homeless. Feels like there is a stereotype that goes with being homeless that is not always fair.
39. Temporary child care onsite to help with children while parent is looking for housing.
40. Glad the rescue mission has the recovery program for women. Been clean for 8 months (crack).
41. Difficult to find clean/safe living environment; landlords doesn't seem to want to keep things updated; limited income; very difficult to find good safe housing.
42. Really want housing after completion of program.
43. Being homeless sucks. It causes a lot of conflict.
44. This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me.
45. More help for homeless w/jobs, transports, and housing
46. Grateful for help the HAT Team is giving him
47. Need substantial support system for work for someone who can counsel me about specifics
48. Need I.D.
49. Depressing
50. Want to have own place
51. Do not judge us. Give us a chance. We're smarter than you think.
52. Please help me get my own apartment. Please
53. Feels safe at TP. Son feels safe.
54. It very tough. But Thanks to the Turning Point and all their help and support. I have now found my own place. If it weren't for them I don't think I could have done it.
55. I am not from this area. I moved here with my ex. I am glad I could find assistance in a city where I know no one.
56. The Turning Point helps women like me to become a better person. I wish they had helped to be able to do more.
57. I am very thankful for the Turning Point being available for me and my children. I wish the housing waiting lists were not so long. I feel like I've been waiting forever.
58. I have flown domestic violence. It's better for me to stay here and safe then I've where I used to
59. I don't like it
60. I feel that as long as I stay in recovery, one day at a time, that a lot of doors will open up for me!
61. I want this to be the last time I am homeless!
62. It is probably the most demoralizing experience I have ever had. I have taken months (literally) to overcome fear that has kept me from thinking (positively) and therefore I made false/slow starts getting on my feet in transitional housing seeking permanent work, and finishing school. The positive side: I am getting assessments that evaluate me capabilities and vocational aptitude so when I get a job, it will be the most compatible career-oriented I have had in me life. I have people I can talk to when I get afraid again and have counseling available for my daughter to understand this devastating
63. I feel helpless and ashamed and most of the time I feel like a failure because I let me family down. I was their main support.
64. I would like to add that not all homeless people are drug or alcohol addicts. I lost my house in a fire last year 2 days after Christmas and yes I currently had a drug problem but that is not why in this situation. I've been in Roanoke since June and I have gotten my GED I started college in January and I have signed up for all of the RRHA apt. And have received no replys. So not all homeless people in this situation b/c they want to be or b/c it's a easy free ride b/c that isn't the case. Some of us have had a couple of turns of bad luck and are trying to get out of this situation for our children and ourselves.
65. Problems with potential landlords not wanting to rent to someone who says "shelter" when asked about prior living situation. Perceptions that homeless people are helpless.
66. Transitional Housing geared only for adults

67. Very scared for both my daughter and I. She's trying to finish her senior in high school and this has been very traumatic for both of us. But because of the TLC staff and certain friends we have made it has been easier with time
68. I miss having a place for my grandson and I
69. It is mentally exhausting and a constant stress on your emotional well-being.
70. Being homeless has taught me to be dependent on others for help and hopefully I can get the help I need to get housing!
71. Can't really stand not having own place.
72. Does not find affordable housing. Cannot afford housing.
73. I would to someday have a place of my own soon.
74. Lack of privacy would like to entertain more need more space
75. I am thankful that places like this are available. Without this place, I would be probably still been in a violent relationship with nowhere to turn, and with n one to help me.
76. I do not find it very enjoyable however I created this situation so that is no one to blame but me
77. I am saving money to be able to afford my own house or apartment.
78. I am residing at a stable place provided by VFW/DAV sponsors. It is a viable place for preparation to obtain permanent housing and financial stability through saving. Would like to see more facilities such as this to help more veterans.
79. I am working toward being clean/sober for 1 year before going back to work
80. Being without housing makes me feel so sad at times because it makes me think back on all the opportunities I've had in my life that I hadn't taken advantage of. But with the help of the VA and Firebase Hope programs hopefully my situation will change.
81. Don't have an ID, cant get a job.
82. Help with disability.
83. I will end.
84. Just can't find work.
85. No use to it.
86. Client said it "sucks" – not having any success – people not giving him a chance.
87. Stressful, humiliating – takes away your ability to function as an adult.
88. The area needs more affordable housing for those on fixed income
89. I wish affordable housing was more available.
90. I am accustomed to it.
91. We need help.
92. Trying to get out of these
93. Do what you have to do – have no rights.
94. Treatment from the mkt bldg – overstep boundaries because homeless people are not welcome.
95. Don't like being the situation
96. They need a room for the elderly.