
Home Again

*A 10-year plan to end homelessness in
Portland and Multnomah County*



Report on the 2007 Street Count



Portland/Gresham/Multnomah County Homeless Person Street Count January 24, 2007

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During the week of January 22-26th, 2007 the City of Portland's Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) led a county-wide count of families and individuals in our community who were homeless and slept outside on **Wednesday night January 24, 2007**. This was the fifth count in the last 6 years, with the first occurring in 2002. More information about homelessness in Multnomah County and the City's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness can be found at www.portlandonline.com/bhcd.

The 2007 Street Count was an expansion of previous year's counts and coincided with the One Night Shelter Count (ONSC), which is coordinated by Multnomah County, as well as Portland Homeless Connect. More than 1,600 persons were counted, of whom 1,438 were unduplicated. This included 28 families with children, 71 couples, 4 unaccompanied youth under 18, and 1,235 individuals (adults). This report does not contain data about the number of people who were in shelter or transitional housing on that night.

Purpose and information about the count

The City of Portland, BHCD used HUD's (Housing and Urban Development) definition of homeless, sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, and chronically homeless households, homeless for a year or longer and with a disability, to define the persons counted.

Data from the Street Count helps to better assess the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. It also supports tracking goals, progress and achievements within Portland's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. Additionally, information collected benefits in raising public awareness about homelessness and generating public support to fund solutions.

External factors greatly influence the count. Both the ONSC and Street Count occur at the end of January, with a selected date federally mandated by HUD. Counting at the end of the coldest month captures data when shelter use peaks due to the weather, and gathers information on those who may cycle on and off the street, reliant on benefits and resources to make rent at the beginning of the month. Temperatures and precipitation during 2005 and 2007 street counts were similar and typical of January weather in Portland, between 45 and 50 degrees with trace amounts of rain degrees (according to National Weather Service data).

Due to the inherent difficulties of obtaining an accurate head count of everyone, this Street Count represents an approximation of persons sleeping outside. Reasons prohibiting us from having an absolutely accurate count include; a) some people sleeping outside inevitably do not want to be found and b) not having enough time and census takers to accurately collect data on every person who fit the definition. Portland's Street Count occurred annually until 2005, when, with direction from HUD, the community decided to conduct a count on the same night, every two years. Changing methodologies may affect the accuracy of the count as well. During the 2005 count, limited demographic data was collected, with more responses from fewer providers. The 2007 count contacted more programs and service providers, with fewer overall count numbers. The 2007 count also gathered demographic data, and more accurate data regarding chronic homelessness. Information on nearly 200 households who did not wish to disclose information is included in Appendix B. These households were not counted in the final tally due to an inability to unduplicate the data because of lack of specific data fields.

METHODOLOGY

Portland combined five methods to obtain a snapshot number of those experiencing homelessness on the street.

(1) Extra effort by outreach workers from January 23-29, 2007

Outreach workers who regularly go on the street to engage homeless people in services made an extra effort during this week to visit new camps and seek out new people for the count. Homeless persons were counted on the 24th in addition to some surveys on the 25th, when it was more convenient to ask of whereabouts on the previous night. Survey forms were completed for each household, including demographic data on individuals and children in each household.

(2) Data from social service agencies/programs that serve people on the street

Nearly 200 agencies and sites that serve homeless persons were contacted to participate in the Street Count. Of these, approximately 57 programs, including the Project Homeless Connect event, returned street count information. Each site received a letter explaining the count, as well as the Street Count survey form via e-mail, mail or hand delivery. At the various sites, data was collected by outreach workers who go out into the field to record homeless persons, and at front desks at agencies. Additionally, some agencies ran reports from databases and asked staff to confirm clients living on the street as of January 24, 2007. Participants in the Outreach and Engagement Workgroup acted as liaisons to their respective agencies and other community providers through collecting forms and answering questions. This workgroup was also instrumental in creating survey forms and recommending count procedures.

(3) Longer survey of approximately 229 homeless households

In addition to the short Street Count form, an extended survey was offered during the week. This extended version was designed and approved by the Outreach & Engagement Workgroup. Information obtained included race/ethnicity, health status, sources of income, interest in potential services/resources, and barriers to housing. The extended survey was conducted both during Portland Homeless Connect (January 23, 2007) and with participating social service agencies to obtain a range of samples. Households surveyed were individuals, families, couples, and youth. 229 extended surveys were completed, with 181 households identified sleeping on the street, in a car or abandoned building the January 24th.

The following programs participated in the extended survey to provide a range of samples: CBS Team, Coalition for Homeless Families, Community Transition School, JOIN, My Father's House, NARA, Project Respond, New Avenues for Youth, Road Warriors/Yellow Brick Road, and Street Roots. Member agencies from the Coalition for Homeless Families surveyed families who were on the street, as well as other homeless or precariously housed families – prioritizing those whose information may not be in existing databases. Households who were willing to be surveyed received a \$10 Fred Meyer gift card.

(4) Coordination with One-Night Shelter Count: Turn-away information:

The 2007 Street Count was more closely coordinated with the State's One-Night Shelter Count and Turn-Away count (ONSC) than in previous years. Staff of Multnomah County's Department of School and Community Partnerships organized the ONSC. The ONSC collected data from

those turned away from shelter, transitional housing or short-term rent assistance and who would therefore be sleeping outside on January 24th. If services were not provided, clients indicated where they would be staying that night.

Turn-Away information was entered into HMIS and checked against existing Street Count entries to avoid duplication. 61 individuals reported being turned away from shelter, of whom 19 were experiencing chronic homelessness.

2007 Shelter Turn-Away	
Ages	Individuals
0-18	8
19-24	2
25-51	41
52+	4
null	6
Total	61

(5) Portland Homeless Connect

The third Portland Homeless Connect (PHC) event, which connects volunteers and services with homeless people, occurred on January 23, 2007. Since this event coincided with the street count, we had the benefit of adding data on people who might not otherwise have been counted. Of the 826 persons who completed information forms at the event, 190 identified as homeless and on the street. Several of these people were identified through other sites. However, 43 individual's data was only captured at the Portland Homeless Connect event.

Avoiding Duplication

In order to obtain an unduplicated count of homeless persons, some basic identifying information was collected for each person. This included the first letter of their first name, the first three letters of their last name, age and gender. Duplicates were not included in the total if they matched across all three 3 fields.

Of 1,634 persons counted the night of January 24th, 2007, 1,438 of those surveyed provided sufficient identifying information to avoid duplication. If outreach workers were unable to interview individuals, wished not to disturb someone sleeping or unable to enter a site, as much information as possible was collected on the back side of Street Count survey forms. This included the location and approximate number of people who appeared to be experiencing homelessness. Because the needed information to avoid duplication could not be collected (initials, age and gender), this data is included in Appendix B. This represents 196 individuals.

Couch-surfing, doubled up, and living with friends/family

Many families, couples and individuals throughout the county are "couch-surfing" — staying with friends or relatives for a few nights or weeks here and there. Those "doubled up" for the night in addition to those living in substandard housing or hotels/motels are not included in the Street Count.

From these five methods 1,634 individuals were counted, with 1,438 unduplicated persons providing identifying information. Below is the breakdown of returned surveys not including the 196 unidentified individuals counted.

Street Count Survey forms:	1,083
Extended Street Count survey forms	251
Shelter Turnaway	61
Project Homeless Connect	43
Total unduplicated persons	1,438

FINDINGS

The following numbers of people were counted as sleeping outside, in a vehicle or an abandoned building in Multnomah County on January 24, 2007. Information from the January 2005 street count is included below because it coincides with the first month of the City and County's 10-year plan to end homelessness.

Total Homeless

Year	Total persons unduplicated	Chronically Homeless	Percent Chronically Homeless
2005	2,355	1,284	55%
2007	1,438	386	27%

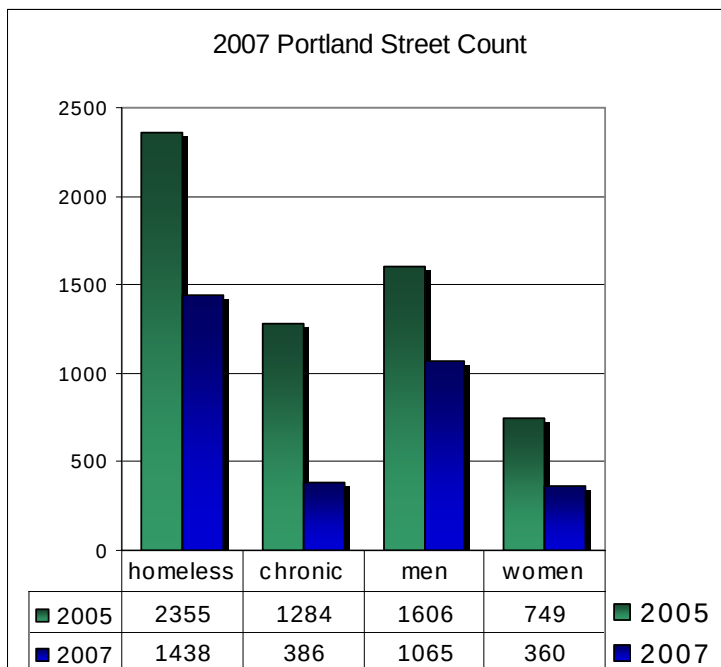
2007: Total Persons: 1,634

Un-duplicated Count: 1,438

Identified as experiencing Chronic Homelessness 386

Both the 2005 and 2007 counts used HUD's definition of "chronically homeless" as: an

unaccompanied individual with a disability who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.



However, the 2007 count relied more heavily on individuals self-identifying these criteria (i.e. having a disabling condition). Only those single individuals who identified both as experiencing this extent of homelessness **and** a disabling condition were tallied. Some individuals may have been reluctant to identify either of these, or as "chronically homeless" and this may have resulted in an under-count of chronically homeless persons.

The unduplicated count of people experiencing homelessness on the street, car, or abandoned building dropped from 2,355 to 1,438 during the past two years. This is a **39% decrease**, or 917 fewer people. Of 1,284 experiencing chronic homelessness in 2005, there was a **70% decrease**, to 386 in 2007, or 898 fewer people.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender

	Gender	Count	Percent
2007	Male	1065	74%
	Female	360	25%
2005	Male	1606	68%
	Female	749	32%

Household Types

Families

Many individuals surveyed reported living on the street with friends, or a street “family.” For the 2007 Street Count, “family” was defined as one or more adult(s) with one or more dependent children. Those reporting living with family without dependents were counted as individuals.

In 2005, nearly 15% of the population identified themselves as part of a homeless family (defined as adult (s) with minor(s) 18 or under). This amounted to 351 individuals.

In 2007, 70 individuals reported as homeless families. This is a significant drop of 15% in 2005, to less than 1% in 2007.

Household Demographics	Number of households	Number of individuals
Unaccompanied Youth (17-)		4
Single Adult (18+)		1235
1-parent Family w/children	12	29
2-parent Family w/children	16	41
Couple w/out Children	71	113
Other	12	16
Total	111	1,438

Youth

Less than one percent of total persons counted in 2005 (11 individuals) were unaccompanied youth ages 17 and under. In 2007, of 42 youth counted, 4 were identified as unaccompanied youth ages 17 and under.

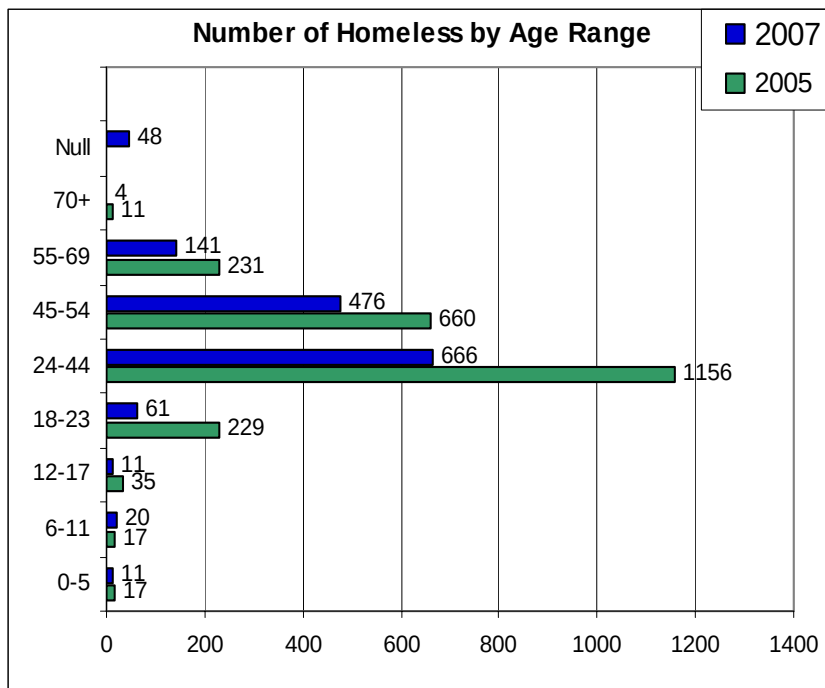
Multnomah County School Homeless Liaisons were contacted prior to the count to obtain information on students and their families, known to be experiencing “street” homelessness. Liaisons reported all students were sheltered on the night of January 24th. School districts contacted included: Centennial, Corbett, David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, Portland, Reynolds and Riverdale.

Age Ranges

The ages of respondents were put into groupings, the following charts/tables indicates the findings:

The majority of those on the street January 24th, 2007 were single individual adults over the age of 18.

Age Range	2005	2007	2007 females	2007 males
0-5	17	11	5	6
6-11	17	20	9	11
12-17	35	11	6	5
18-23	229	61	14	47
24-44	1156	666	196	465
45-54	660	476	101	372
55-69	231	141	20	121
70+	11	4	1	3
Null		48	16	30



Race and Ethnicity

Minorities are often over-represented in the homeless populations. This trend held true in the Street Count as well. Below is inclusive information from all Street Count unduplicated responses:

	General Population Multnomah County*	Homeless Population 2007 Street Count
White/Caucasian	79.2 %	67 %
Black/ African American	5.7 %	5.1 %
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1 %	4.9%
Asian	5.7 %	<1 %
Native Hawaiian or Pac. Islander	0.4 %	3.5 %
Other-multi racial	8.1 %	5.8 %
Hispanic	7.5 %	9%

Street Count Individuals by race

(results include only those who responded to the question):

Race	Total
Black/African American	74
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	50
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	71
Asian	1
Other	83
White	966
Total	1245

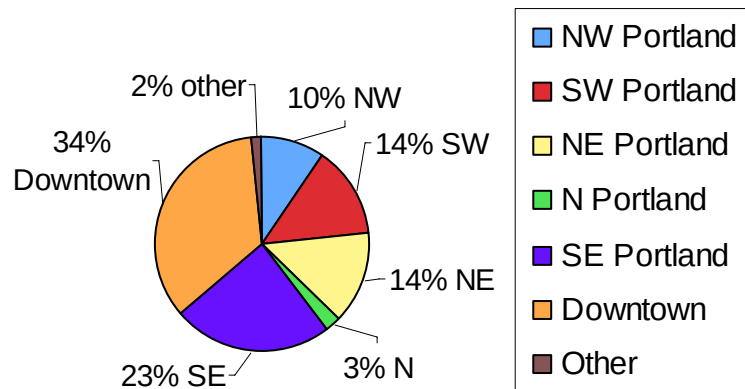
Race: Chronically Homeless	Total
Black/African American	21
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3
American Indian/ Native Alaskan	32
Asian	1
Other	21
White	251
Total	329

Location:

Surveyors noted locations where 720 homeless persons were sleeping on January 24th, 2007. 252 persons were sleeping downtown, 18 in North Portland, 98 in NE Portland, 70 in NW Portland, 172 in SE Portland and 99 in SW Portland. 11 “other,” responses included: riding Max, East Burnside, East Portland, and Gresham.

Location distribution information was not collected during 2005.

location distribution



Information on individuals who reported location is shown in the following table. Note: “Chronically Homeless Individuals” is a sub-category of individuals. Also, only 1,220 provided or exhibited enough information to determined location.

Ages	Abandoned Building	Camp	Car/Truck/Van	Forest/Woods	Street
0-5			4		4
6-11			7		9
12-17		2			8
18-23	3	4	6	1	45
23-44	7	24	33	4	569
45-54	4	15	19	6	419
55-69	1	1	8	1	127
70+			1		3
Null			6		36
Totals	15	46	84	12	1220
Chronically Homeless Individuals					
	7	21	17	5	317

Domestic Violence

112 households reported experiencing domestic violence during the past year. This represented 8.5% of total households. 168 individuals, including persons in families or couples, reported experiencing domestic violence during the past year, 11.7% of the Street Count.

Veterans

10.4% of adult men (103) and 1.4% of adult women (5) identified themselves as veterans. Overall, 108 individuals, representing 7.7% of adults were veterans.

CONCLUSIONS

While there are many external factors that may have an effect on reduced numbers of people sleeping outside (i.e., lower unemployment rate, increased capacity in some state funded services), the data from the 2007 Street Count correlates to the outcomes of the City of Portland and Multnomah County's 10-year plan to end homelessness. In the first two years of the plan, homeless agencies placed place nearly 800 families and more than 1,000 chronically homeless people in permanent housing. Additionally, Federal Agencies (HUD, Health and Human Services, and Department of Labor) the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the Housing Authority of Portland, and the Portland Development Commission partnered to provide resources that opened 480 new units of permanent supportive housing, that offers homeless people a place to live and the services needed to keep them housed. An additional 380 are currently under development.

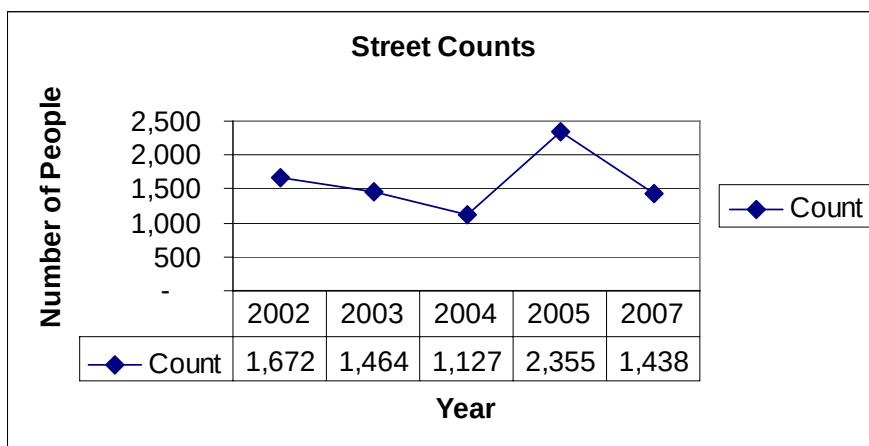
Historical Data on Street Counts

Portland began County-wide counts of street homeless populations beginning in 2002. However, the most comprehensive counts have occurred in the last two counts, in 2005 and 2007.

Increased agency participation and coordination, different methodologies and external factors have affected these counts, making it difficult to speculate on trends since 2002.

Methodologies were most similar in the last two counts, with the 2007 count being the most comprehensive to date. .

JOIN conducted street counts and provided reports for all counts prior to 2007.



In counts prior to 2005 each person was counted as an individual; as a result, families and household demographics are not available for these years. Numbers spiked in 2005 with a more comprehensive count. Additionally, reports showed increased numbers in emergency shelter use and households turned away from services. External factors such as unemployment, availability of affordable housing, and Oregon Health Plan budget cuts also played a role. Possible duplication from providers counting both unsheltered and individuals “doubled up” were also reported.

JOIN's outreach workers used their in-depth knowledge of sleeping locations and the homeless community they work with on a daily basis in calculating the number of people outside. Prior to 2005, counts were held in the spring, and numbers were not derived from interviews, but from head count of these individuals. The 2007 count required interviewing individuals and households to provide data to avoid duplication

Housing goals and achievements in reducing homelessness have been tracked as part of the City's 10 year plan to end homelessness. Housing placement results from the first two years of the plan are shown below:

Percent of Goals Reached – Year To Date

Outcome	2 Year Goal	Cumulative	% achieved
Chronically homeless who have homes	565	1,039	184%
Families housed	500	770	154%
(high resource using families)	150	369	246%
Permanent supportive housing opened*	260	480	185%
(added to pipeline)*	420	379	90%

2006 Results

- 379 chronically homeless people moved into permanent housing, over 40% from the streets
- 310 homeless families moved into permanent housing, including 134 high-resource families.
- 164 units of permanent supportive housing opened and 267 units were added to the development pipeline.

Prior to 2005, the City and County did not have a comprehensive reporting of individuals and families housed.

Appendix A: Long Survey Results

229 long survey forms were completed during the week of January 22-26th 2007. Of those surveys, 181 forms were completed by households on the street, in a car or abandoned building the night of the 24th. From those households, 221 individuals responded they were on the street that night. 76 individuals reported experiencing chronic homelessness. Demographic information is included in the following charts

Gender	Number of Individuals
Males	148
Females	72
Unknown	1
Total	221

Household Type	Number of Individuals	Number of Households
1 Parent Family w/children	23	8
2 Parent Family w/children	26	10
Couple without children	17	10
Other	3	3
Single Adult (18+)	150	150
Unaccompanied Youth (17 or under)	2	2
Total	221	183

Ages	Number of Individuals
0-6	5
6-11	10
12-17	6
18-23	17
24-44	109
45-54	44
55-69	18
70+	1
null	11
Total	221

Location: Answers “where did you spend the night”	Number of Individuals	Percent
Abandoned building	6	2.7 %
Camp	17	7.8 %
Car/Truck/Van/Camper	42	19 %
Forest/Woods	4	1.8 %
Other	17	7.8 %
Street	131	59 %
Shelter Turn Away to Street	3	1.4 %
Null	1	<1 %
Total	221	

Individuals reporting experiencing domestic violence in the home during the past year	61
Veterans	15

Race	Number of Individuals	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	23	10 %
Black or African American	28	13 %
Native Hawaiian or Other Pac. Islander	1	<1 %
Other	3	1.4 %
Other-Multi-Racial	21	9.5 %
White	114	52 %
Null	31	14 %
Total	221	

Responses to the question: “If you were offered housing for which you’re eligible, are there reasons you might turn it down?”

Of the 126 households who answered this question, 59 respondents provided reasons they might turn down housing if it was offered. Some of the reasons that respondents gave for not accepting housing are shown below. Most were concerned about being able to afford housing over the long haul, have criminal backgrounds, or might turn down housing because of its location. (The number below indicates that more than one person reported the same answer.)

- 8: Would turn it down, no reason specified
- 7: Area or Location/Don’t want to live downtown
- 6: Couldn’t afford it over the long haul/Bills and finances
- 6: Criminal Records/convictions
- 5: Concerns about transitioning off street/being indoors/“I don’t do well indoors”/don’t like to be confined/ Claustrophobic; need housing that opens to ground floor or has porch; no high rises/“I don’t like living around people”
- 5: Excessive or invasive rules: If curfews or strings were attached/ If it was a locked or gated facility/Don’t want to be controlled /Disrespectful management/ “Pushy people”
- 3: Condition of housing: “If drugs were around”/Violence in place/ Unsafe or unclean
- 3: Substance Issues/“If I was made to stop drinking”
- 2: Don’t want free handouts/ I would like to pay for myself
- 2: Street family/“I will not leave my street brother out on the streets alone”
- Already in program awaiting housing
- Don’t want bad/crazy roommates
- Family issues
- Health Issues
- Homophobic relations/attitudes
- Leaving state after parole
- Non-smoking
- Not allowing pet/animals
- Surveillance or cameras in lobby
- There are people that need it more
- Too long of a wait/takes too long
- Transportation: if it were difficult to get to using public transportation

In answer to “how many people would live in acceptable housing with you?” the majority responded they would live alone, 16 answered they would live with 2 other people, 6 said they would live in a household of 4, 1 would live with 6 others 1 would live with 8 people and 1 with 12 other people.

Respondents checked off the following answers (all that applied) of barriers to obtaining housing	
Affordability/ Lack of income	151
Criminal Record	81
Eviction history	47
Drugs or alcohol use	40
Legal issues	39
Suitability of housing/ shelter	37
Health	25
Pets/Companion animals	14
Domestic violence	10
Seasonal worker	8
Language barriers	6
Lack of childcare	6

Other (blanks filled in):
Allergies
Bad credit
No credit
Waiting for veterans disability pension
Chronic mental illness
Family issues
Feel confined indoors
Homophobic discrimination
No rental history
No phone call back number
Religious beliefs
Transportation
Challenges transitions from chronic homelessness

Number of individuals receiving resources(multiple responses accepted)			
Food stamps	151	Unemployment Insurance	6
No financial resources	54	Social Security	4
Medicaid/OHP	40	Earned Income Full Time	4
TANF	24	Self employment wages	4
Prefer not to disclose	18	Child Support	2
Earned Income Part Time	16	Veteran's disability payment	2
SSDI	12	VA medical services	1
Money from family/friends	11	Pension from former job	1
SSI	9		

Number individuals reported interest in the following services if they were voluntary and available (multiple responses accepted)			
Help finding housing	179	Mental health support	75
Health care	126	Education/GED	69
Help finding a job	123	Social activities	69
Help applying for benefits	87	Chemical dependency support	47
Case management	79	Family reunification	34

Appendix B

Below is information collected from outreach workers who were unable to enter a site, could not conduct a survey, or wished not to disturb someone sleeping. 196 persons were counted who appeared to be experiencing homelessness the night of January 24th, 2007. The data includes information from individuals surveyed who did not want to disclose their initials, who could not be counted in the unduplicated data.

Approximate Ages	Number of Individuals
<18	7
18-55	167
55+	8
Unable to determine age	14

Situation	Number of Individuals
Street	80
Bridge	71
Camp	14
Empty Lot	10
Null	9
Park	5
Car/Vehicle	3
Other	2
Forest	2
Totals	196

Household Composition	Number of Individuals
Individuals	142
Couples	9
Families	0
unable to determine family status	45

Area	Number of Individuals
Downtown	94
SW	31
SE	26
NW	24
N/NE	17
Gresham	2
Other	2

Gender	Number of Individuals
Male	150
Female	31
Unable to Determine	15

Comments

The following likely affected the accuracy of the Street Count:

- Time, place and weather: Neither the 2005 nor 2007 counts occurred on “severe weather” nights. According to the National Weather Service, count night January 25th 2005 was 50°F high and 34°F low. January 24th, 2007 was 54°F high and 30°F low.
- Many families reported living with friends/”couch-surfing” for the night and were not included in the count.
- Possible duplication in 2005 numbers: With changing definitions for chronic homelessness and different survey forms in 2007, the 2005 numbers may reflect an inflated number of those on the streets. Including all fields of initials, age and gender was required to avoid duplication in 2007.
- Due to HIPPA concerns, hospitals and emergency care clinics could not release all data for every homeless patient.
- Portland Police agreed not to conduct street sweeps this year, as had occurred in previous years.

Recommendations

- The 2005 and 2007 approaches relied heavily on services/programs serving those experiencing homelessness. While the range of programs in our community is diverse, the count assumes someone experiencing homelessness is accessing services on January 24th or made contact with an outreach worker. Switching to an enumeration strategy with coordinated outreach and volunteer effort with a set time line and geographic boundaries could account for those not accessing services that night but who are outside. This would require an enormous volunteer coordination effort, larger budget, and changes in count methodology. Currently homeless persons and outreach workers should be engaged early in the planning process for this approach. Data results could be processed faster if data entry was coordinated with enumerators that same night.
- Media: Editorials and informational flyers should be published, more word of mouth info about the count would be helpful (possibly at meal sites) as well as continued support of the Police Bureau to avoid doing “sweeps” of camps and those on the street during the week of the count.
- Many individuals on the street associate with “street family” and reported their households as their street family. The “family” indicator should continue to clarify between household types and family.

Acknowledgements

The coordinated effort of the Street and Shelter count would not be possible without the efforts and input from the Outreach and Engagement Workgroup and the following individuals and agencies who participated in the counts:

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