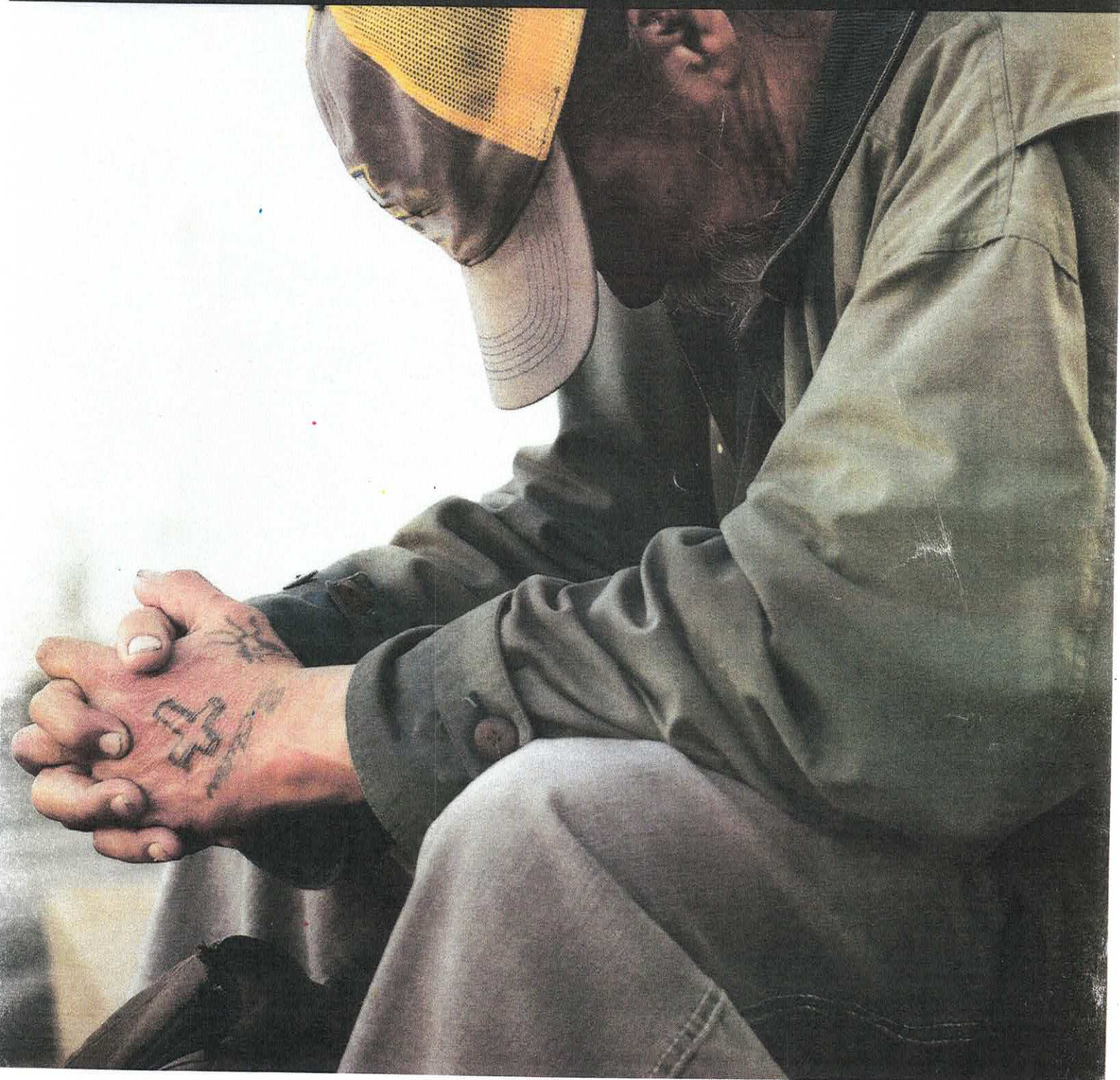


CROSSROADS: Will New Orleans Move Forward or Backward on Homelessness?

An Analysis of the 2019 Point in Time Count of Homeless Persons



April 26, 2019

Background

ABOUT THE POINT IN TIME SURVEY: The 2019 Homeless Point in Time (PIT) Count for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish took place on January 28, 2019, utilizing more than 200 staff and volunteers of the nearly 60 agencies that make up the New Orleans/Jefferson Parish/City of Kenner Homeless Continuum of Care.

The Point in Time Count, conducted by UNITY of Greater New Orleans and its partner agencies, is the annual comprehensive survey of all homeless persons in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish. It is conducted each January in order to provide as comprehensive and accurate a tally as possible of how many persons are homeless during one 24-hour period in emergency shelter, in homeless transitional housing, and in places not meant for human habitation on any given night. The Point in Time Count is required, and its scope and methodology governed, by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The intent is to provide information with which to better understand the nature and extent of homelessness in the New Orleans area, and to provide information with which to gauge the need for resources to end and prevent homelessness and the type of resources needed.

Staff and volunteers fanned out across the City and Jefferson Parish to administer surveys on the streets and parks and in homeless programs and other locations where homeless people are known to gather, asking homeless people where they had stayed the night of January 28 and asking certain demographic information. In addition, in areas of

the City known to have a history of people squatting in abandoned buildings, all unsecured abandoned buildings were searched in order to count bedrolls in active use.

In addition to the annual Point in Time survey, UNITY of Greater New Orleans and its partners also do street surveys at other times of the year. In partnership with its member agency, VIA Link, UNITY also maintains a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in which all of its funded agencies, as well as those funded by the City of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish under their HUD Emergency Solutions Grant programs, and many VA-funded programs, enter data on all clients. HMIS data can provide information on how many homeless people are served over a longer period of time, which is a larger number than that on any given night, since most homeless people are only homeless for a matter of days, weeks, or months. HMIS data typically does not include people who have not received services, whereas the PIT Count includes those not receiving services.

ABOUT UNITY: The Point in Time Count is coordinated by UNITY of Greater New Orleans, a nonprofit organization designated by the federal government to lead the Homeless Continuum of Care of housing and services for New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, a collaborative of about 60 nonprofit and governmental agencies. Founded in 1992, UNITY's mission is to coordinate community partnerships to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. In partnership with HUD, the City of

- BRIGHT SPOT: There were bright spots in the data, one being that “chronic homelessness” – the long-term homelessness of people with disabilities -- declined by 24 percent in one year, and by 64 percent over the past two years. “Chronic homelessness” is defined by HUD as people with disabilities living outside or in emergency shelter for over a year; they are considered the most vulnerable homeless adults. There were 404 chronically homeless people in 2017, 193 in 2018, and only 146 in the 2019 PIT Count. The reduction is primarily due to an intense targeted campaign to provide Permanent Supportive Housing – long-term rent assistance plus case management services – to the chronically homeless.
- However, the number of other homeless adults – those not “chronically homeless” -- increased by 20 percent over the past two years – from 747 persons in 2017 to 898 in 2019. This is the influx that is the greatest concern, and the most likely cause is the scarcity of affordable rental housing.
- BRIGHT SPOT: Although the Continuum of Care has not yet been able to meet its longstanding goal of ending altogether the phenomenon of people with disabilities being homeless long-term on the streets or shelter, chronic homelessness is down 97 percent since the phenomenon first started getting tracked in the PIT Count in 2009. Correspondingly, the number of people being served in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for the homeless in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish has risen from 1285 persons in 2009 to 3462 persons in 2019 as a result of the Continuum’s work in persuading Congress to allocate funds for vouchers for homeless Katrina survivors and in winning competitive federal grants over the years. At any given time, these PSH vouchers are already in use by persons rescued from chronic homelessness months and years ago in order to prevent a relapse into homelessness and are therefore not available to people currently homeless.
- BRIGHT SPOT: The number of unsheltered homeless people – those living on the streets, in cars and in abandoned buildings, as opposed to in homeless shelters – fell by 28 percent, from 594 people in 2018 to 430 in 2019. Unsheltered homelessness is considered the most dire, life-threatening living situation. This reduction in unsheltered homelessness was primarily due to the launch in August 2018 of the City’s Low-Barrier Shelter, which primarily takes people off the street, and to the restoration of the New Orleans Mission, which because of a renovation had most of its beds out of operation during the 2018 Count but had all of its beds back in service for the 2019 Count. Even with this marked reduction, however, New Orleans continues to grapple with one of the nation’s highest rates of unsheltered homelessness compared to the size of our general non-homeless population. The proportion of our homeless population that does not live in shelters – 43 percent -- is much higher in than many cities. The primary reason for

effective action to create a sufficient supply of affordable rental housing for the residents of our community, state and nation. Affordable rental housing should be a major part of the budget for the use of locally generated tax revenue.

- In addition, we ask philanthropies, compassionate individuals, faith congregations and community groups to join government partners in creating a fund to provide “Rapid Resolution” services to assist people who are seeking to enter homeless shelters from having to do so, by helping them with problem solving, mediating disputes with landlords and family members, and providing short-term financial assistance to overcome their housing crises. Rapid Resolution services are an emerging best practice that prevents homelessness at a low cost.
- We support Mayor Cantrell’s plan to expand the supply of indoor Low-Barrier Shelter beds in order to continue reducing unsheltered homelessness. While shelter in itself does not end homelessness, it does end unsheltered homelessness, which is the most dire living condition. If each shelter can be assisted to provide permanent housing assistance to occupants, that will create a flow that will take more people off the street and end their homelessness altogether.
- Each private shelter in the community should also be encouraged to become Low-Barrier and focus on reducing unsheltered homelessness.

UNITY of Greater New Orleans gratefully acknowledges the hard work of Robbie Keen, Valerie Coffin, Clifton Harris and the staff of VIA-Link in overseeing the Point in Time Count and compiling the data and research in this report. We thank all of the CoC agencies and the staff of UNITY for all that you do for homeless people all year long and for participating in the count. We thank Della Wright for contributing research for this report and Ian Ellis for designing the cover.

ⁱ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development, “The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment (AHAR) to Congress,” December 2018, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

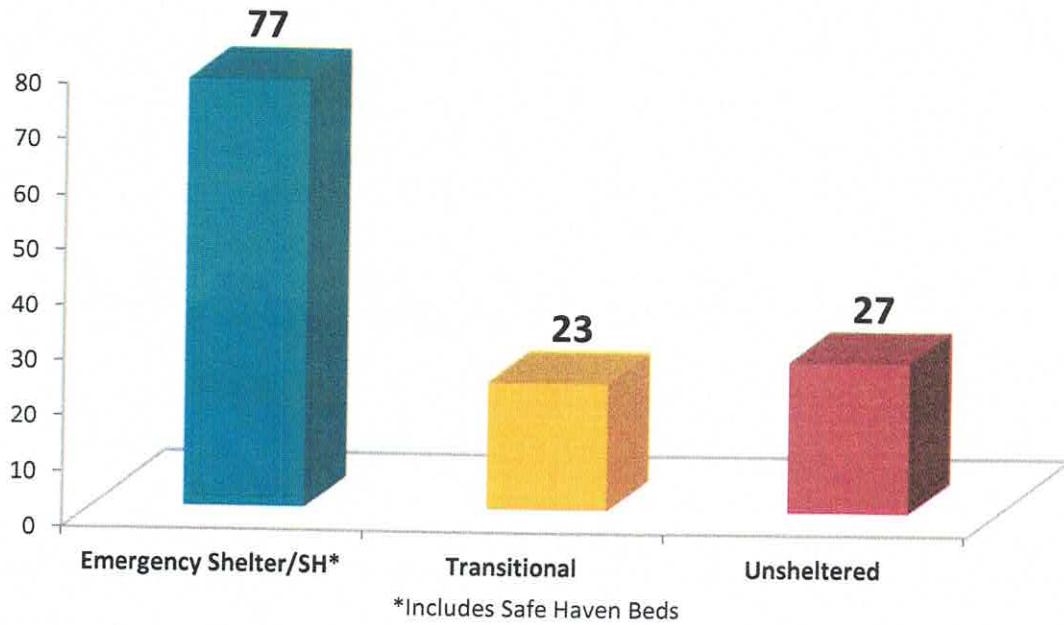
ⁱⁱ John M. Quigley and Steven Raphael, “The Economics of Homelessness: The Evidence from North America,” *European Journal of Housing Policy* (2001); Barrett A. Lee, Townsend Price-Spratien & James W. Kanan, “Determinants of Homelessness in Metropolitan Areas,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* (2003); Chris Glynn and Alexander Casey, “Priced Out: Homelessness Rises Faster Where Rent Exceeds a Third of Income,” www.zillow.com/research/homelessness-rent-affordability-22247/

ⁱⁱⁱ Alan Mallach, “Where Will People Live?: New Orleans’ Growing Rental Housing Challenge,” New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, March 2016, <https://www.nola.gov/nora/sources/nora-rental-housing-report/>.

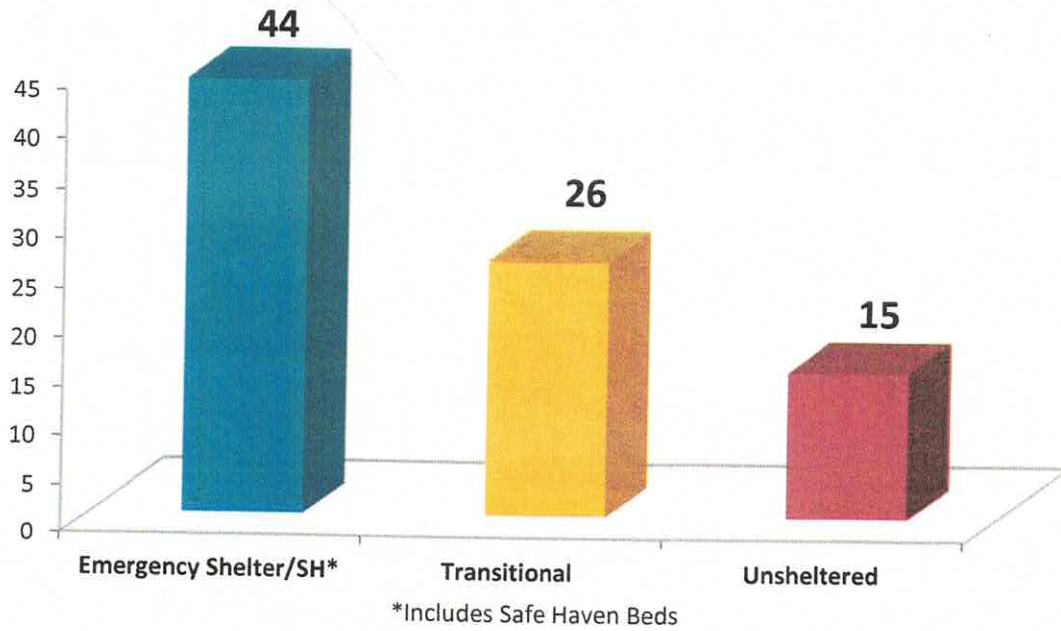
^{iv} The Data Center, “Who Lives in New Orleans and Metro Parishes Now?,” Jan. 26, 2018, <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/data-resources/who-lives-in-new-orleans-now/>.

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

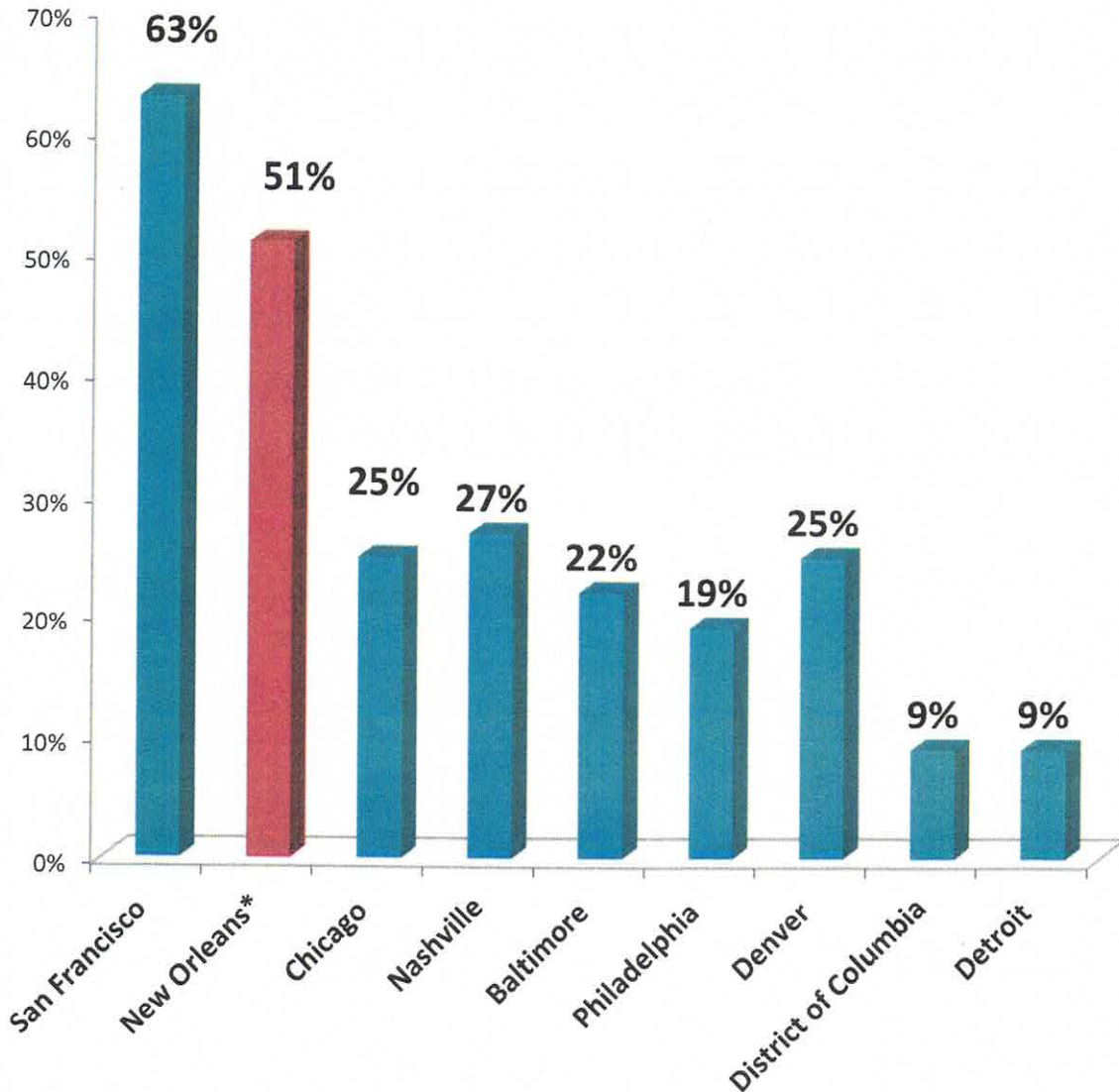
Elderly = 127 Persons Age 62 and over (2019)



Youth = 85 Persons Age 18 to 24 (2019)



Proportion of Homeless Population that Does Not Live in Shelters (2018)

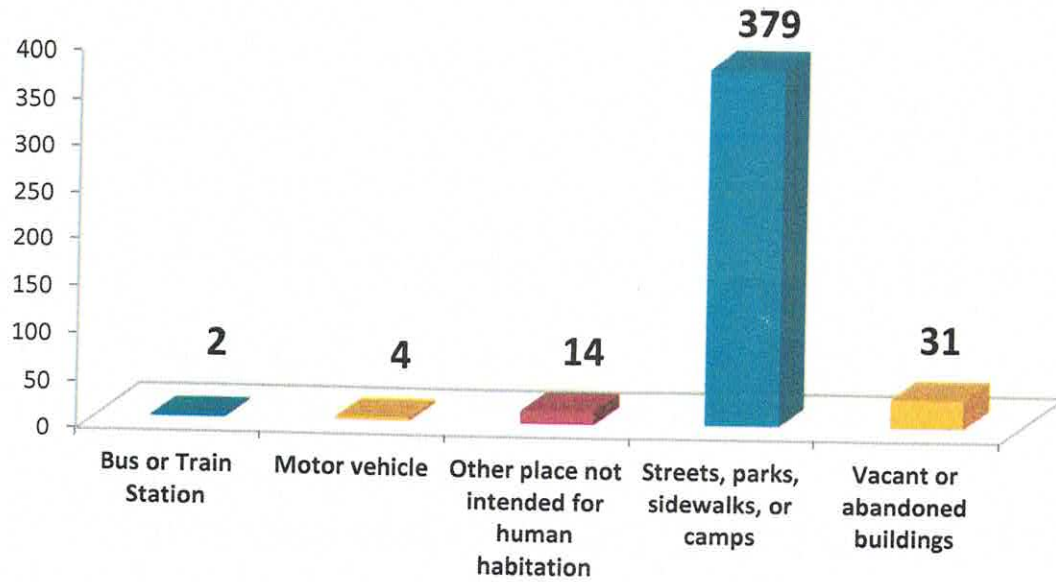


In New Orleans, 51% of homeless people live on the street, abandoned buildings, or in cars, while 49% live in homeless shelters or homeless transitional housing.

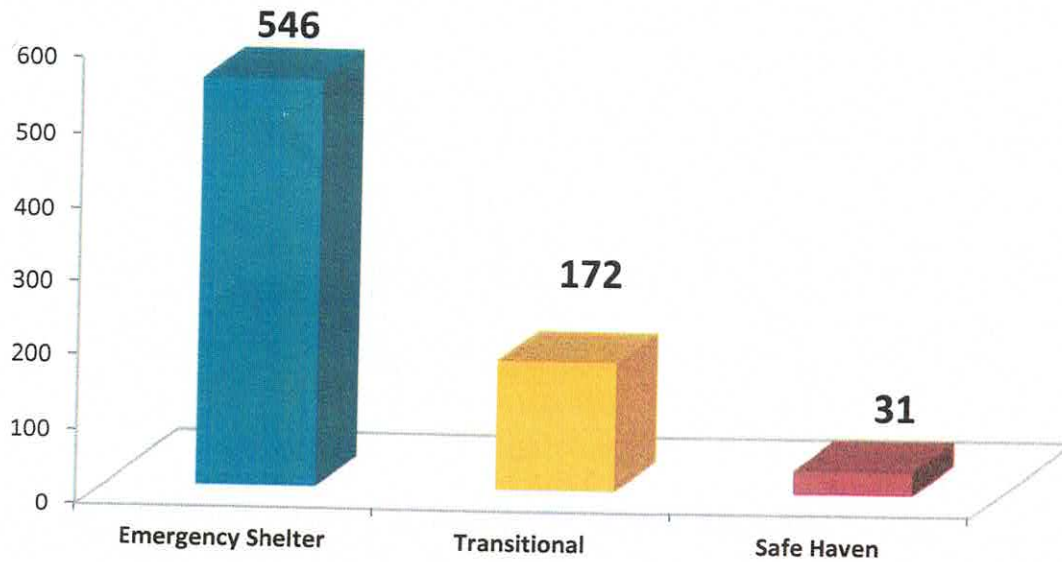
*Jefferson Parish data has been removed from New Orleans data

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Where Unsheltered Homeless People Live (2019)

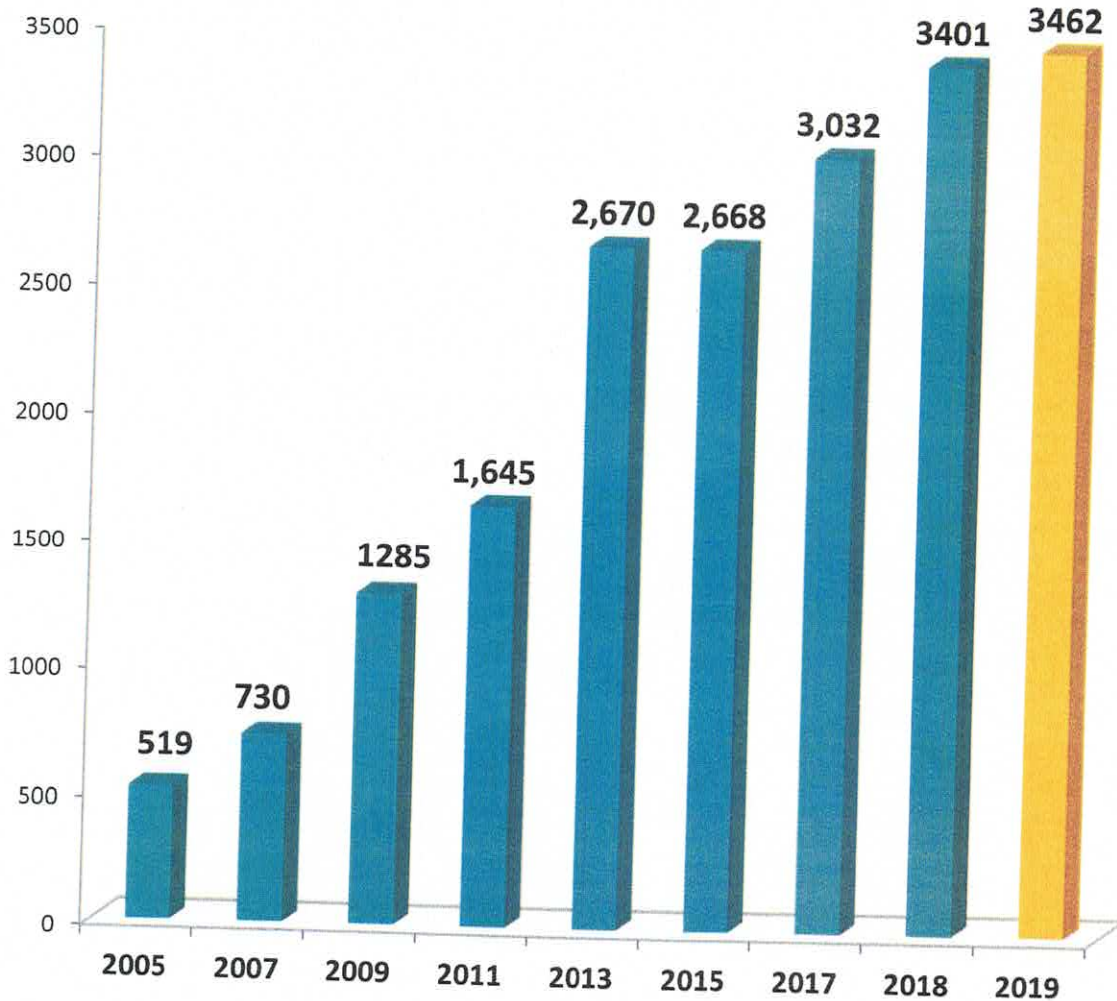


Where Sheltered Homeless People Live (2019)



New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Housing Inventory Count

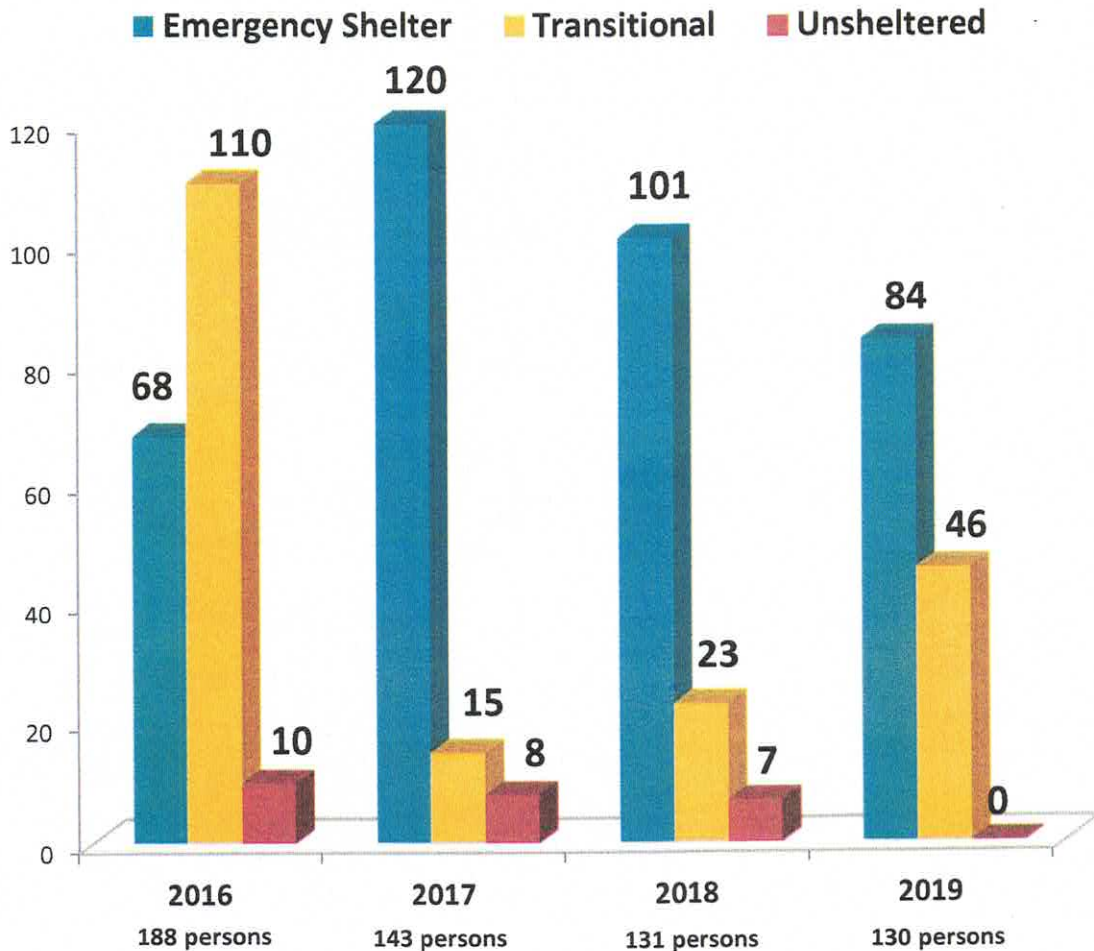
**Permanent Supportive Housing Beds
for the Homeless in New Orleans**



The supply of rent subsidies with supportive services has significantly increased, due to the collaborative's lobbying of Congress for Katrina vouchers for homeless people with disabilities and the securing of competitive HUD grants.



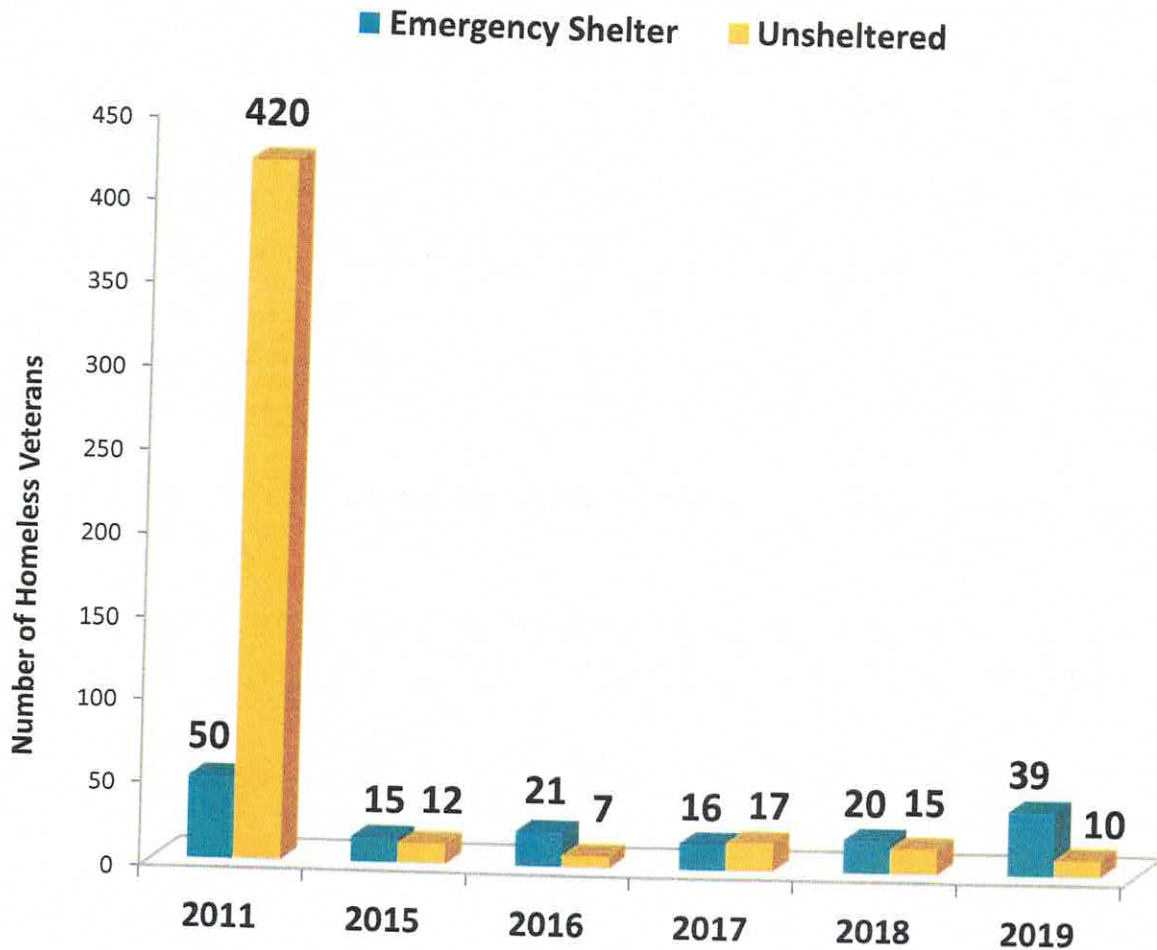
Homeless Families 2016-2019



- Family homelessness is down 31 percent since 2016. This decrease is due to the collaborative's intensive campaign to speed up the time it takes to place homeless families in permanent housing. Since May 2017, we have maintained an average of no more than 41 days to house each homeless family in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, by placing each family in their own apartment, with rent assistance and case management services provided in the home.
- We are believed to be the only community in the nation to meet a new federal standard of housing homeless families within 45 days or less.

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

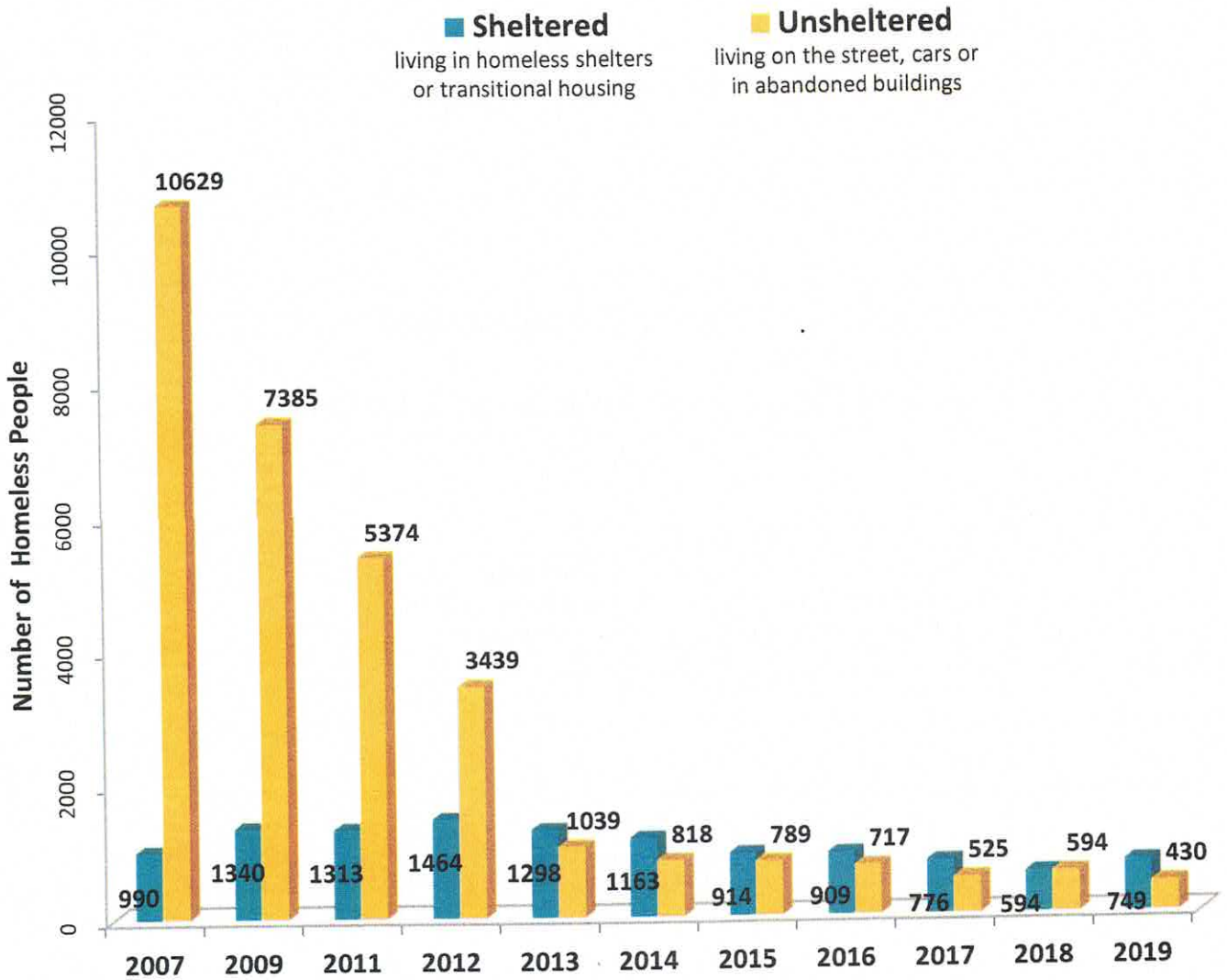
Veteran Homelessness Remains at Functional Zero



- Literal homelessness (living on the street or in emergency shelter) among veterans has decreased by 90 percent since 2011.
- Since January 2015, upon completion of the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, the UNITY collaborative, in partnership with the City, VA and providers VOA, Start Corp. and Hope Center, have maintained "functional zero" in veteran homelessness by housing every veteran found on the street or shelter within an average of 30 days or less, if they will accept housing.
- However, as a result of a decision by HUD and VA to re-classify a transitional housing facility as Safe Haven, the number of literally homeless veterans rose by 40 percent over last year.

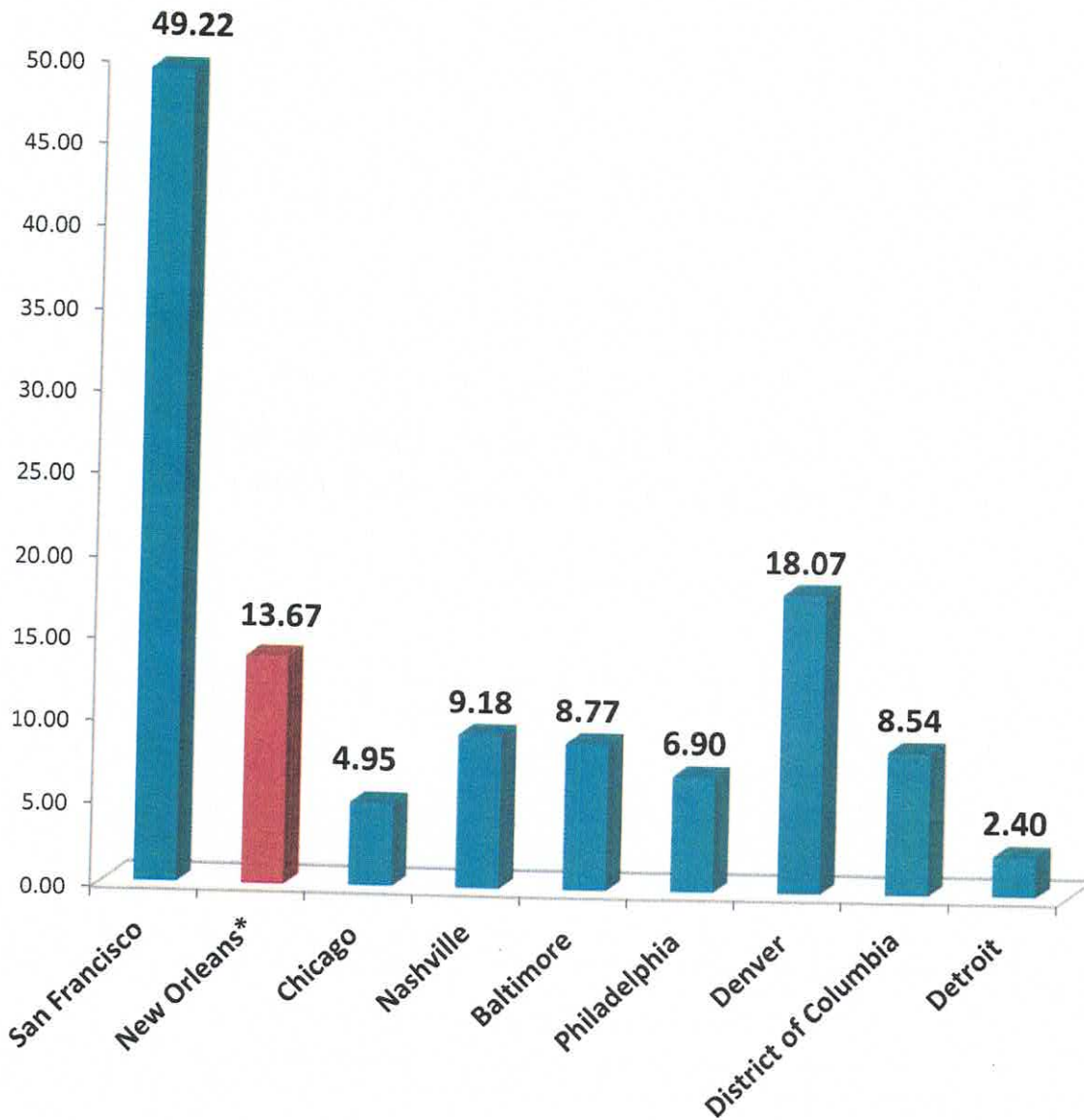
New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Homelessness 2007-2019



New Orleans' Per Capita Rate of Unsheltered Homelessness

Number of People Sleeping on the Street, in Cars, or Abandoned Buildings per 10,000 General Population

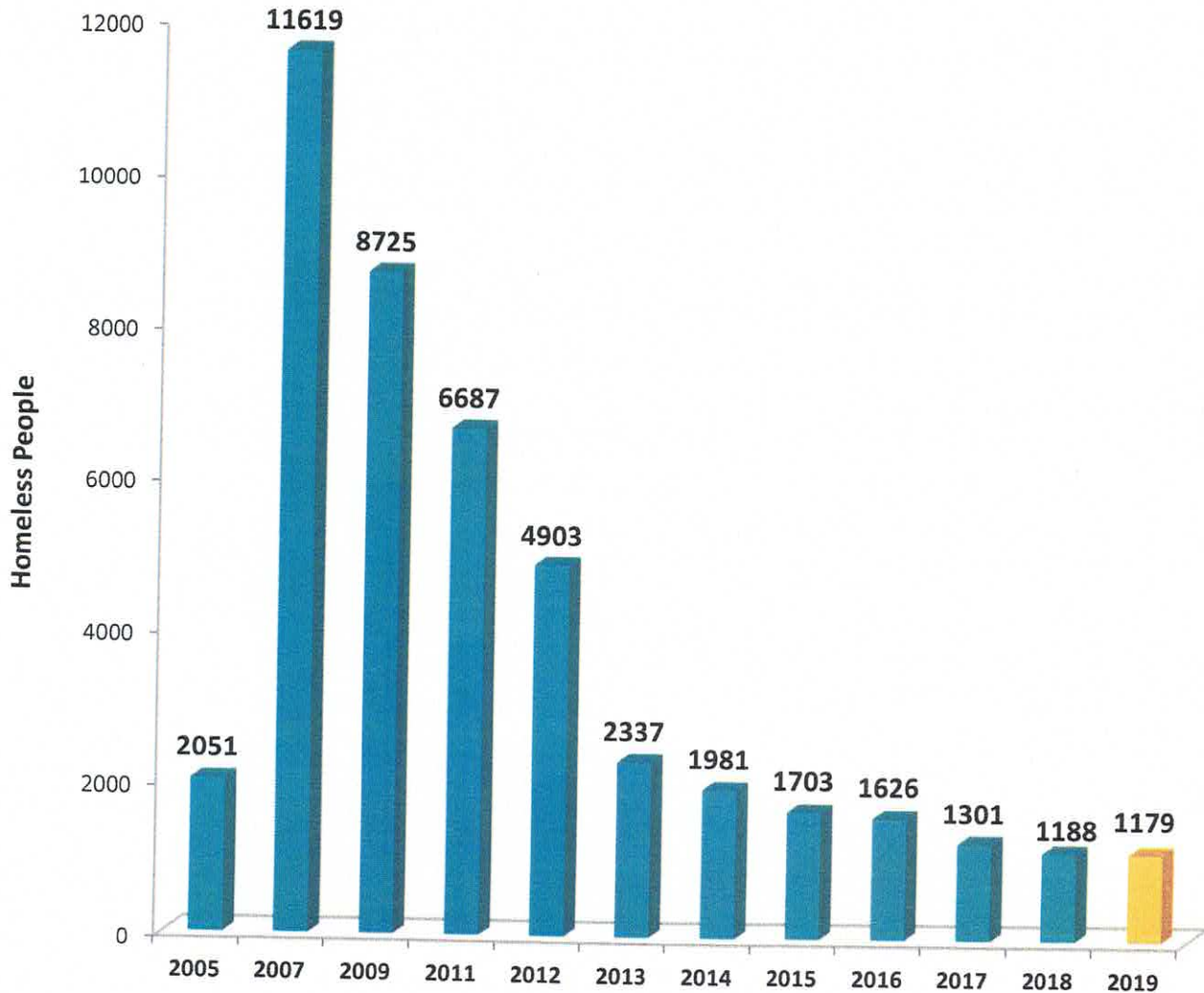


Rates calculated using Point in Time data and the U.S. Census population estimates for 2018.

*Jefferson Parish data has been removed from New Orleans data



New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count Annual Counts of Homeless People



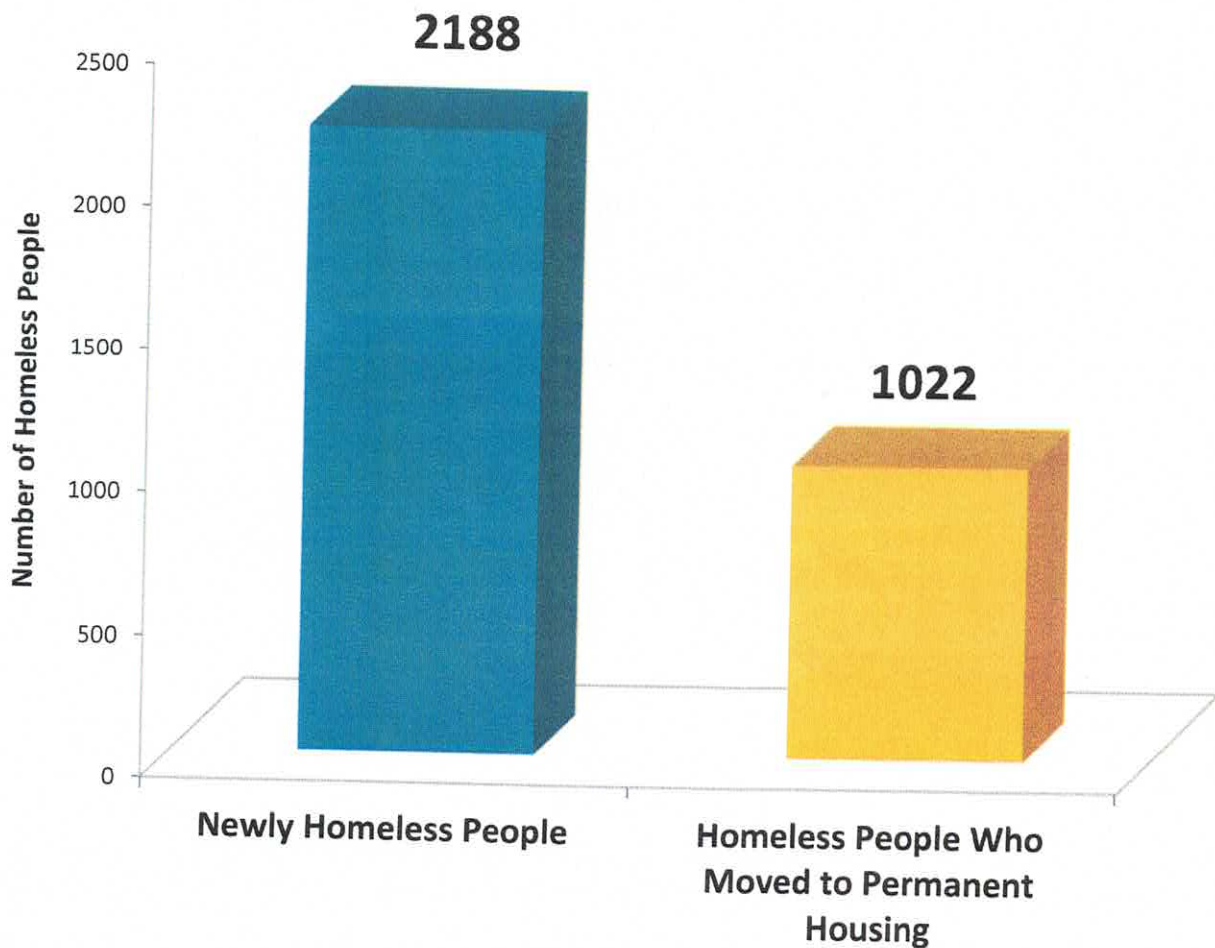
Homelessness is down 90 percent since the post-Katrina high in 2007. But after 11 years of significant annual decreases, progress is at a virtual standstill, with homelessness down less than 1 percent since a year ago – a decrease of only 9 persons.

Counts are performed in January.
There were no counts in 2006, 2008, or 2010.



The Number of People Falling into Homelessness Exceeds the Number Being Housed

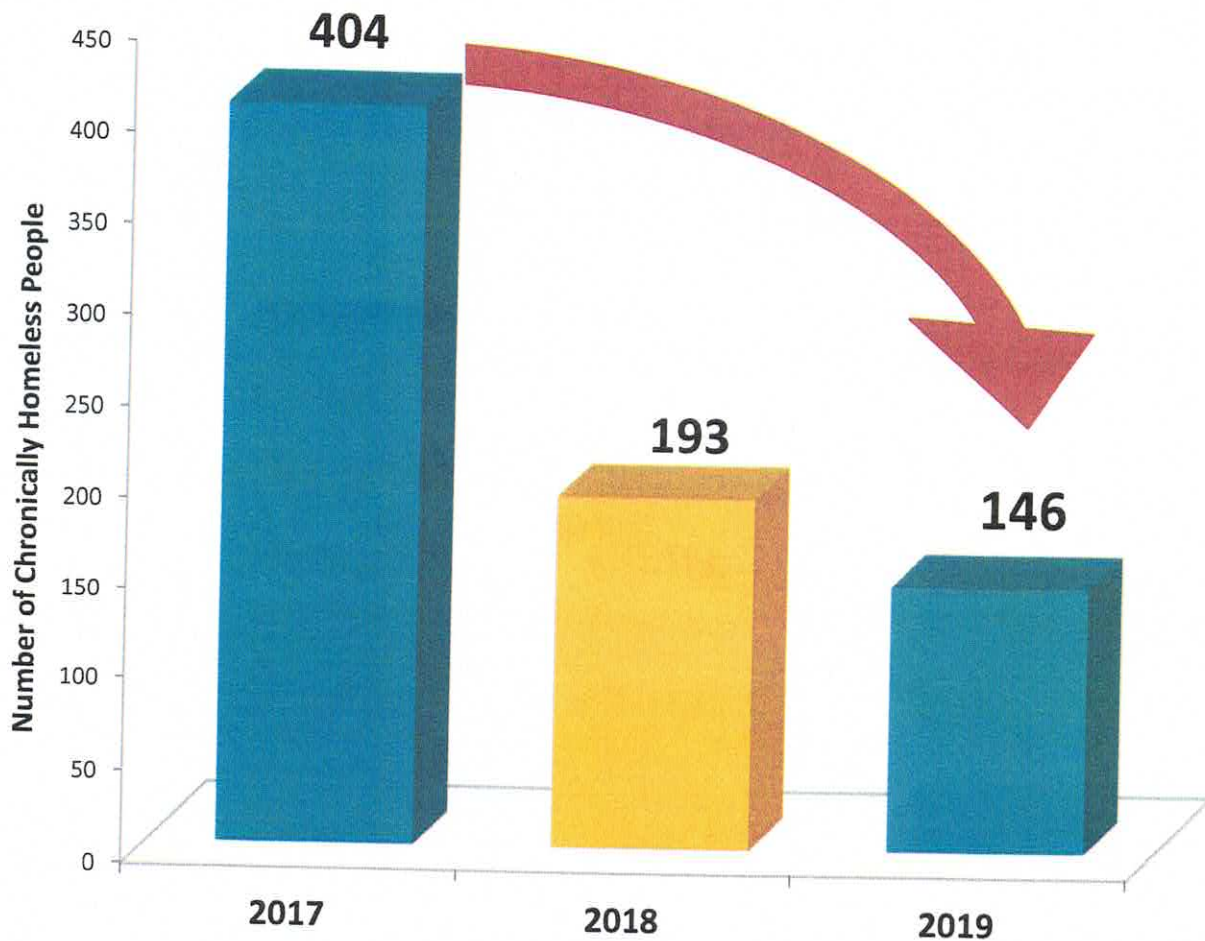
April 1, 2018 - March 30, 2019



Source: UNITY Homeless Management Information System



The Number of Chronically Homeless People Has Declined by 64%

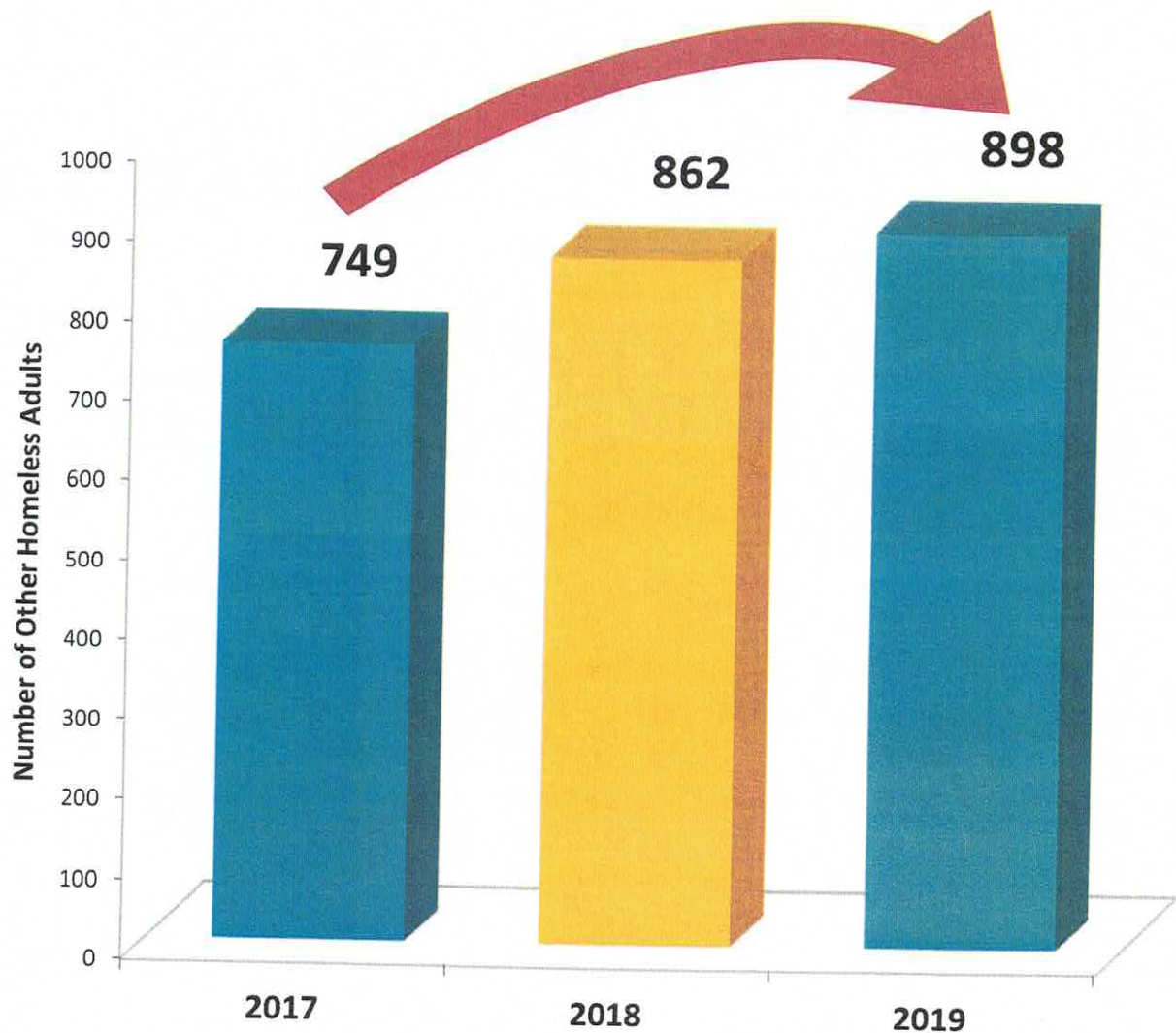


- “Chronically homeless people” are defined as people with disabilities who have been living on the street or in shelter for over a year. They are generally considered the most vulnerable.
- The problem of chronic homelessness has been reduced by 64 percent in the past two years, primarily due to an intense campaign to provide chronically homeless people with Permanent Supportive Housing – rent assistance and case managers – so that they are no longer homeless.

Source: New Orleans-Jefferson Parish Annual Point-in-Time Count



But the Number of Other Homeless Adults Has Increased by 20%

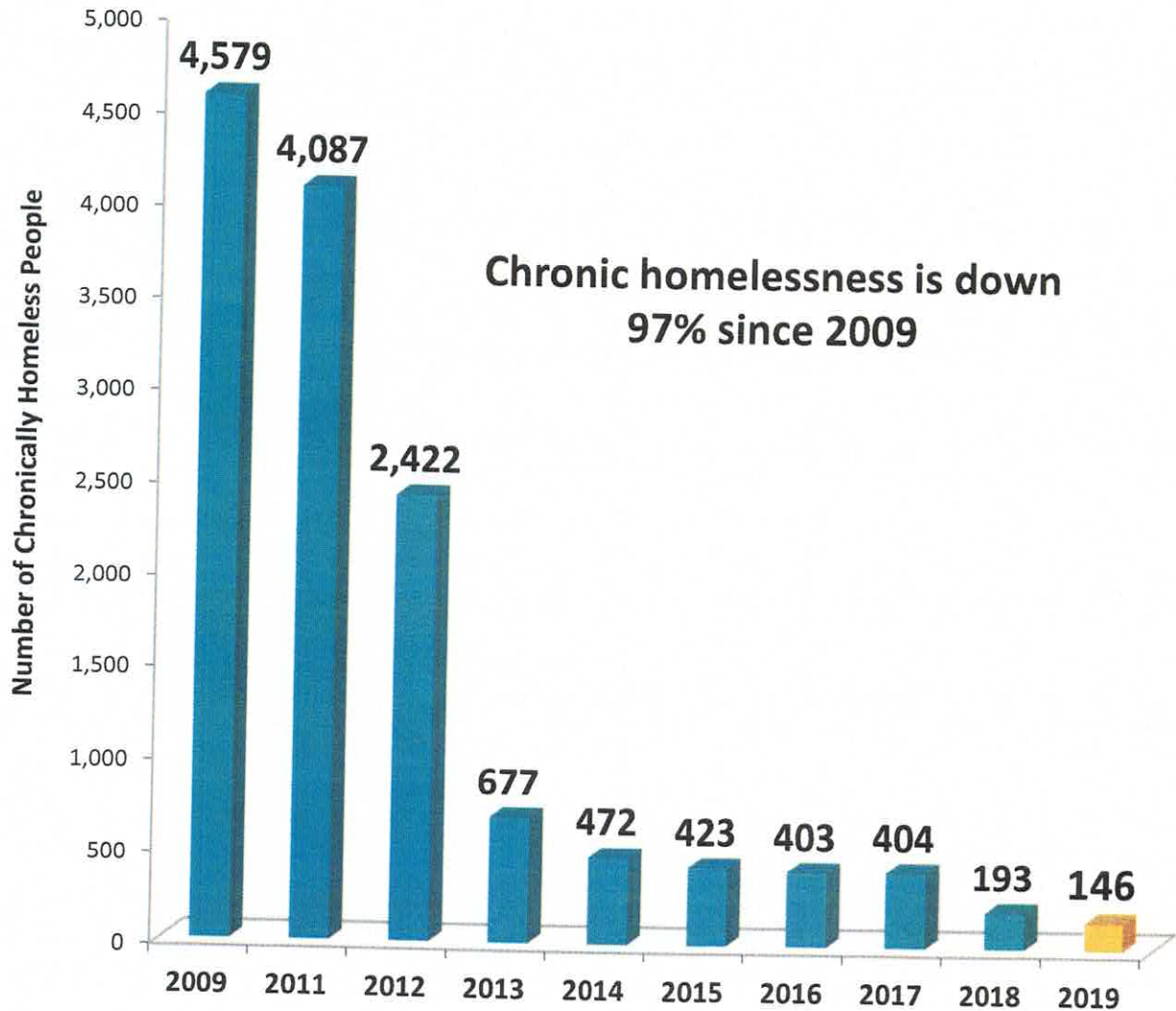


“Other homeless adults” are defined as people who do not have children with them and do not meet the definition of “chronically homeless”.

Source: New Orleans-Jefferson Parish Annual Point-in-Time Count

New Orleans-Jefferson Parish 2019 Homeless Point-in-Time Count

Chronic Homelessness 2009-2019



“Chronically homeless people” are defined as people with disabilities who have been living on the street or in shelter for over a year. They are generally considered the most vulnerable.