

# 2009 GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNT REPORT



Photo: Zach Behrens/LAist.com

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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## **SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority\* (LAHSA) would like to acknowledge the County of Los Angeles and City of Los Angeles as funders of this project.

LAHSA would also like to acknowledge the following project partners:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Dr. Robert Agans and Dr. William Kalsbeek, Survey Research Unit/Department of Biostatistics at the University of North Carolina

Abt Associates

Martha Burt, Urban Institute

The Los Angeles Continuum of Care members and coalition leaders

The United Way of Greater Los Angeles

The cities and communities that participated as part of the Opt-In Program

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

LAHSA would also like to thank the thousands of volunteers, service providers, and County and City departments for their assistance and support of the 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.

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\*LAHSA is a Joint Powers Authority created and managed by both the City and County of Los Angeles and is the lead agency for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care.

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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of the 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count was to determine how many people are homeless on a given day within the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all Continuum of Care systems funded by HUD to complete a homeless count no less than every other year. There are approximately 43,000 (42,694) homeless people within the Los Angeles CoC of which two-thirds were unsheltered.

The Los Angeles CoC includes all of Los Angeles County, excluding the cities of Glendale, Long Beach, and Pasadena who administer and operate their own respective Continuum of Care systems. If the reported numbers for those cities (5,359 homeless people) were totaled with the Los Angeles CoC system, the homeless population of Los Angeles County on a given day would be 48,053 people.

The 42,694 persons counted within the Los Angeles CoC includes 4,885 individuals that are members of families. Additionally, of the total number, 24,915 or 58% were counted within the City of Los Angeles.

**Table 1: Homeless Counts for Los Angeles Continuum of Care, Cities, and County**

Area	Total # of Homeless Persons
Los Angeles Continuum of Care*	42,694
<i>City of Los Angeles (24,915)</i>	
Cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena	5,359
Los Angeles County	48,053

\*Includes City of Los Angeles.

The 42,694 persons counted in 2009 represents a decrease of 38% when compared to the total number of homeless persons included in the 2007 Homeless Count. This marks a significant decrease in the number of homeless persons in the Continuum of Care, which is very encouraging. While many factors likely contributed to this decline, it is important to acknowledge new and expanded programs implemented by the Los Angeles CoC network of housing and service providers. Many of these new programs are funded by the County and City of Los Angeles, including the County's \$100 million Homeless Prevention Initiative, the City Permanent Supportive Housing Program, and the expanded Section 8 voucher programs that specifically target homeless individuals and families. Most importantly, local housing and service providers are making an important paradigm shift - now more than ever, programs are centered on housing placement of homeless families and individuals and providing the tools and skills they need to stay housed.

The City and County have embarked on an unprecedented expansion of collaborative efforts to reduce homelessness in recent years and the results reflect their success. Additionally, while the methodology for the 2009 homeless count remained consistent with previous counts, enhancements to the data collection process such as the increased number of volunteers, expansion of census tracts covered, and the reduction of possible counting biases, have collectively enabled researchers to extrapolate more detailed information.

As in past years, the homeless count had to be conducted during the last 10 days of January as required by HUD. The 2009 Homeless Count was conducted from January 27 – 29. Persons were considered homeless and included in the count if they fell within HUD’s definition of homelessness as follows:

*“A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the three following places: 1) places not meant for human habitation such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings; 2) an emergency shelter; or 3) transitional housing for homeless persons and who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter.”<sup>1</sup>*

The following table reveals the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons for the Los Angeles CoC by Service Planning Area (SPA). The total number of homeless persons is 42,694 of which 14,050 or 33% were sheltered and 28,644 or 67% were unsheltered. The total number of homeless persons in the City of Los Angeles was 24,915 of which 9,145 or 37% were sheltered and 15,770 or 63% were unsheltered.

**Table 2: Los Angeles Continuum of Care by Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons**

Area	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total #
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>	
Los Angeles Continuum of Care*	14,050	33	28,644	67	42,694
Antelope Valley (SPA 1)	444	18	1,975	82	2,419
San Fernando Valley (SPA 2)	1,515	46	1,797	54	3,312
San Gabriel Valley (SPA 3)	1,010	36	1,770	64	2,780
Metro Los Angeles (SPA 4)	5,121	46	5,972	54	11,093
West Los Angeles (SPA 5)	1,707	31	3,831	69	5,538
South Los Angeles (SPA 6)	2,157	25	6,357	75	8,514
East Los Angeles (SPA 7)	1,236	27	3,281	73	4,517
South Bay (SPA 8)	810	21	3,144	79	3,954
Unknown SPA	50	9	517	91	567

\*Includes City of Los Angeles.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, “A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People Second Revision,” January 15, 2008, p. 5.

A survey was conducted between March and May of 2009 to gather information about the various subpopulations of homeless persons. Results below are provided for the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles CoC. The City numbers are also included in the overall Continuum of Care numbers.

**Table 3: Subpopulation Survey of Los Angeles Continuum of Care and City of Los Angeles**

Subpopulation*	Continuum		City	
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Chronic Homeless	10,245	24	6,195	25
Families (Members of)**	4,885	11	2,951	12
Individuals (Single)	37,809	89	21,964	88
Persons with AIDS or HIV-Related Illness	1,064	2	650	3
Persons with Mental Illness	10,387	24	6,056	24
Persons with Substance Abuse Problems	17,419	41	10,554	42
Veterans	6,540	15	4,107	16
Victims of Domestic Violence	3,762	9	2,206	9
Youth - Unaccompanied (Under 18)	638	2	311	1

\*Only families and individuals are mutually exclusive and add up to 100% of the total homeless population. Other subpopulations are not mutually exclusive and a given person may fall into more than one subpopulation category.

\*\*The total number of families in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care was 1,840.

Approximately two-thirds of the total number of homeless persons were males and nearly one-third were females.

**Table 4: Gender**

Gender	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Adult Male	25,862	60%
Adult Female	13,730	32%
Male Children (Under 18)	2,026	5%
Female Children (Under 18)	1,076	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>42,694</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Black/African American	19,886	47
Hispanic/Latino	12,631	29
White/Caucasian	8,924	21
American Indian/Alaskan Native	783	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	470	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>42,694</b>	<b>100</b>

Nearly half (47%) of the total number of homeless persons were Black/African American and more than one-fourth (29%) were Hispanic/Latino. Whites/Caucasians, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, and Asians/Pacific Islanders represented a little less (24%) than one-fourth of homeless persons.

A copy of this report can be obtained at [www.lahsa.org](http://www.lahsa.org).

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) will provide more detailed demographic information on its web site in the weeks ahead.

<sup>1</sup>All percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

## B. HOMELESS COUNT FINDINGS

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The primary purpose of the 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count was to determine how many people are homeless on a given day within the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC) system. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires all Continuum of Care systems funded by HUD, which includes the Los Angeles CoC, to complete a homeless count at least every other year during the last 10 days of January. HUD requires this in order to get a point in time assessment of homelessness nationwide. Thus, the 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count was conducted from January 27-29, 2009. As in past years, persons were considered homeless and included in the count if they fell within HUD's definition of homelessness as follows:

*“A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the three following places: 1) places not meant for human habitation such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings; 2) an emergency shelter; or 3) transitional housing for homeless persons and who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter.”<sup>1</sup>*

The 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count was implemented by using HUD recommended practices for counting homeless persons that included a 1) street count of unsheltered homeless persons; 2) shelter count of sheltered homeless persons; 3) hidden homeless telephone survey; and 4) a separate street count for homeless youth which was conducted in collaboration with several Los Angeles CoC service providers. Detailed information about these practices can be found in Section D, pages 12 - 19.

### TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS PERSONS

The total number of homeless persons within the Los Angeles CoC is 42,694.

The Los Angeles CoC includes all of Los Angeles County, excluding the cities of Glendale, Long Beach, and Pasadena who administer and operate their own respective Continuum of Care systems. If the reported numbers for those cities (5,359 homeless persons) were totaled with the Los Angeles CoC, the homeless population of Los Angeles County on a given day would be 48,053 people.

The next table notes that 24,915 or 58% of the 42,694 homeless persons counted were within the City of Los Angeles.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, “A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People Second Revision,” January 15, 2008, p. 5.

**Table 6: Homeless Counts for Los Angeles Continuum of Care, Cities, and County**

Area	Total # of Homeless Persons
Los Angeles Continuum of Care*	42,694
<i>City of Los Angeles (24,915)</i>	
Cities of Glendale, Long Beach and Pasadena	5,359
Los Angeles County	48,053

\*Includes City of Los Angeles.

The 42,694 persons counted in 2009 represents a decrease of 38% when compared to the total number of homeless persons included in the 2007 Homeless Count. This marks a significant decrease in the number of homeless persons in the Continuum of Care, which is very encouraging. While many factors likely contributed to this decline, it is important to acknowledge new and expanded programs implemented by the Los Angeles CoC network of housing and service providers. Many of these new programs are funded by the County and City of Los Angeles including the County's \$100 million Homeless Prevention Initiative, the City Permanent Supportive Housing Program, and the expanded Section 8 voucher programs that specifically target homeless individuals and families. Most importantly, local housing and service providers are making an important paradigm shift - now more than ever, programs are centered on housing placement of homeless families and individuals and providing the tools and skills they need to stay housed.

The City and County have embarked on an unprecedented expansion of collaborative effort to reduce homelessness in recent years and the results reflect their success. Additionally, while the methodology for the 2009 Homeless Count remained consistent with previous counts, enhancements to the data collection process such as the increased number of volunteers, expansion of census tracts covered, and the reduction of possible counting biases have collectively enabled researchers to extrapolate more detailed information.

**Table 7: Greater Los Angeles Homeless Counts Comparison**

Year of Homeless Count	Total # of Homeless Persons	% of Increase/Decrease
2009	42,694	-38
2007	68,608	-17
2005	82,291	n/a

The Los Angeles CoC was not the only area to experience a decrease in their homeless count between 2007 and 2009. The decline in the numbers for Los Angeles appears consistent with similar national decreases seen in areas like New York (-30% in street homelessness), Indianapolis (-22%), and Riverside County (-22%), which have also experienced significant reductions in homelessness between 2007 and 2009.

In fact, nearly half of other continuums throughout the country have experienced decreases in their homeless population between 2007 and 2009. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, nearly half (44%) of local homeless counts reported decreases in local homeless populations (see <http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/data/interactivemaps/2009countsmap>). In addition, HUD’s “Homelessness Pulse Project,” which was conducted “to gain a better understanding of the impact of the current economic crisis on homelessness,” revealed a decrease of 7.7% in the total homeless population among the nine jurisdictions that participated in the project when their 2007 homeless counts were compared to their 2009 homeless counts.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATION OF HOMELESS PERSONS

The total number of persons who are homeless during the course of a year within the Los Angeles CoC is 96,169. As previously noted, the total number of persons who were homeless during January 27 – 29 was 42,694. However, other people become homeless during the 12 months that surround a homeless count. This happens because some people cycle in and out of homelessness and others become homeless for a period of time (such as a few weeks or a few months) that may not overlap with the nights a point in time homeless count is conducted.

## SHELTERED AND UNSHELTERED PERSONS

The following table estimates the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons for the Los Angeles CoC. The total number of homeless persons is 42,694 of which 14,050 or 33% were sheltered and 28,644 or 67% were unsheltered. The total number of homeless persons in the City of Los Angeles was 24,915 of which 9,145 or 37% were sheltered and 15,770 or 63% were unsheltered.

**Table 8: Los Angeles Continuum of Care and City of Los Angeles by Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons**

	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>	
Los Angeles Continuum of Care*	14,050	33	28,644	67	42,694
City of Los Angeles	9,145	37	15,770	63	24,915

\*Includes City of Los Angeles.

The table below provides a breakdown of the Los Angeles CoC by Service Planning Areas (SPAs) for Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons.

**Table 9: Los Angeles Continuum of Care by Sheltered and Unsheltered Persons**

Area	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total #
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>	
Los Angeles Continuum of Care*	14,050	33	28,644	67	42,694
Antelope Valley (SPA 1)	444	18	1,975	82	2,419
San Fernando Valley (SPA 2)	1,515	46	1,797	54	3,312
San Gabriel Valley (SPA 3)	1,010	36	1,770	64	2,780
Metro Los Angeles (SPA 4)	5,121	46	5,972	54	11,093
West Los Angeles (SPA 5)	1,707	31	3,831	69	5,538
South Los Angeles (SPA 6)	2,157	25	6,357	75	8,514
East Los Angeles (SPA 7)	1,236	27	3,281	73	4,517
South Bay (SPA 8)	810	21	3,144	79	3,954
Unknown SPA	50	9	517	91	567

\*Includes City of Los Angeles.

<sup>1</sup>All percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

## C. HOMELESS SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey was conducted between March and May of 2009 to gather information about the various subpopulations of homeless persons. Results below are provided for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC), the County Service Planning Areas (SPAs), and the City of Los Angeles. It is important to note that the City of Los Angeles numbers are also included in the overall continuum numbers.

### SUBPOPULATIONS OF HOMELESS PERSONS

**Table 10: Subpopulation Survey of Los Angeles Continuum of Care and City of Los Angeles**

Subpopulation*	Continuum		City	
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Chronic Homeless	10,245	24	6,195	25
Families (Members of)**	4,885	11	2,951	12
Individuals (Single)	37,809	89	21,964	88
Persons with AIDS or HIV-Related Illness	1,064	2	650	3
Persons with Mental Illness	10,387	24	6,056	24
Persons with Substance Abuse Problems	17,419	41	10,554	42
Veterans	6,540	15	4,107	16
Victims of Domestic Violence	3,762	9	2,206	9
Youth – Unaccompanied (Under 18)	638	2	311	1

\*Only families and individuals are mutually exclusive and add up to 100% of the total homeless population. Other subpopulations are not mutually exclusive and a given person may fall into more than one subpopulation category.

\*\*The total number of families in the Continuum of Care was 1,840.

**Table 11: Subpopulations by Los Angeles Continuum of Care and Service Planning Areas**

	Los Angeles Continuum of Care	Antelope Valley (SPA1)	San Fernando Valley (SPA2)	San Gabriel Valley (SPA3)	Metro Los Angeles (SPA4)	West Los Angeles (SPA5)	South Los Angeles (SPA6)	East Los Angeles (SPA7)	South Bay (SPA8)
Chronic Homeless	10,245	445	723	399	3,153	1,779	2,134	994	618
Families (Members of)*	4,885	150	515	370	1,290	329	605	371	369
Individuals (Single)*	37,809	2,269	2,797	2,410	9,803	5,209	7,908	4,146	3,585
Persons with AIDS or HIV-Related Illness	1,064	62	83	70	278	140	216	115	100
Persons with Mental Illness	10,387	752	961	602	2,902	1,501	1,907	1,020	742
Persons with Substance Abuse Problems	17,419	635	1,482	957	5,095	2,400	3,816	1,531	1,503
Veterans	6,540	372	490	412	1,652	891	1,373	722	628
Victims of Domestic Violence	3,762	202	312	252	1,047	489	734	393	334
Youth – Unaccompanied (Under 18)	638	134	78	115	170	47	23	38	33

\*Due to the exclusion of the persons in the Unknown SPA from this table, the sum of individuals and family members by SPA does not equal the Los Angeles Continuum of Care total.

## GENDER

Approximately two-thirds of the total number of homeless persons in the Los Angeles CoC were males and one-third were females.

**Table 12: Los Angeles Continuum of Care—Gender**

Gender	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Adult Male	25,862	60%
Adult Female	13,730	32%
Male Children (Under 18)	2,026	5%
Female Children (Under 18)	1,076	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>42,694</b>	<b>100</b>

## ETHNICITY

Nearly half (47%) of the total number of homeless persons in the Los Angeles CoC were Black/African American and more than one-fourth (29%) were Hispanic/Latino. Whites/Caucasians, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, and Asians/Pacific Islanders represented a little less (24%) than one-fourth of homeless persons.

**Table 13: Los Angeles Continuum of Care—Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Black/African American	19,886	47
Hispanic/Latino	12,631	29
White/Caucasian	8,924	21
American Indian/Alaskan Native	783	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	470	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>42,694</b>	<b>100</b>

## COMPARISON OF HOMELESS SURVEY FINDINGS

As in the past, a survey instrument was designed to determine the percentage and number of several predetermined subpopulations that included: chronic homeless persons, families (members of), individuals (single), persons with mental illness, substance abusers, veterans, victims of domestic violence, persons with AIDS or HIV-related illness, and unaccompanied youth. These subpopulations were chosen because HUD requires applicants to provide such data as part of its Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Application.

**Table 14: A Comparison of Subpopulations in Los Angeles Continuum of Care**

Subpopulation*	2005		2007		2009	
	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>	#	% <sup>1</sup>
Chronic Homeless	34,512	50	22,376	38	10,245	24
Families (Members of)	19,882	24	16,643	24	4,885	11
Individuals (Single)	62,409	76	51,965	76	37,809	89
Persons with AIDS or HIV-Related illness	2,880	4	1,235	2	1,064	2
Persons with Mental Illness	29,293	42	24,505	42	10,387	24
Persons with Substance Abuse Problems	43,920	64	24,740	42	17,419	41
Veterans	15,420	22	8,453	14	6,540	15
Victims of Domestic Violence	9,463	14	7,192	12	3,762	9
Youth - Unaccompanied (Under 18)	1,394	2	1,288	2	638	2

\*Only families and individuals are mutually exclusive and add up to 100% of the total homeless population. Other subpopulations are not mutually exclusive and a given person may fall into more than one subpopulation category.

The table above provides the numbers for each subpopulation from the Los Angeles CoC homeless counts in 2005, 2007, and 2009 and the percentage they represent of the overall total of homeless persons. Please note that the numbers and percentages for each subpopulation except Families (Members of) are based upon adults (which was 68,993 in 2005, 58,508 in 2007, and 39,592 in 2009) and do not include children under 18 whether they were accompanied by an adult(s) or not.

<sup>1</sup>All percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

## A SUMMARY OF THE 2009 HOMELESS SUBPOPULATIONS FOLLOWS:

- 1. Chronic Homeless\***  
24% of the homeless population was chronically homeless per HUD's definition.
- 2. Families (Members of)**  
11% of the homeless population was a member of a family.
- 3. Individuals (Single)**  
89% of the homeless population was either single, divorced, separated, or widowed.
- 4. Persons with AIDS or HIV-Related Illness**  
2% of the homeless population had experienced or been diagnosed with AIDS or HIV-related illness in the last 12 months.
- 5. Persons with Mental Illness**  
24% of the homeless population had experienced or been diagnosed with mental illness (e.g., bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.) in the past 12 months.
- 6. Persons with Substance Abuse Problems**  
41% of the homeless population had experienced or been diagnosed with alcohol problems or dependency or been diagnosed with drug problems or dependency in the past 12 months.
- 7. Veterans**  
15% of the homeless population (men and women) was in the military, National Guard, or reserves, or they were a combat veteran, or provided a discharge status, or stated they were receiving veteran disability income. Of the adult men, 23% stated that they were in the military, national guard, or reserves.
- 8. Victims of Domestic Violence**  
9% of the homeless population (men and women) reported they had been physically abused by a spouse or partner. Of the adult women, 19% stated that they were a victim of domestic violence.
- 9. Youth - Unaccompanied (Under 18)**  
2% of the homeless population were youth under age 18 and unaccompanied by an adult(s).

\*According to HUD, a chronically homeless person is "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. Disabling condition is defined as "a diagnosable substance (abuse), serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions." Also, to be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) or in an emergency homeless shelter during that time."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Office of Community Planning and Development, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, "Defining Chronic Homelessness: A Technical Guide for HUD Programs." p. 3.

## D. 2009 GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNT METHODOLOGY

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### HOMELESS COUNT METHODOLOGY

#### WHY WAS THE COUNT CONDUCTED?

Since 2003, HUD has required each jurisdiction to report the number of people who are homeless in its CoC geographic area. LAHSA has served as lead agency on behalf of the Los Angeles CoC since the annual CoC grant submissions to HUD began in 1995. During this time, tens of millions of dollars have been received on behalf of approximately 200 public agencies and local private non-profit agencies to support homeless assistance and housing programs within the Los Angeles CoC.

In 2004, HUD asked jurisdictions to describe the community's plans for a one day, point-in-time homeless count to be conducted during the last week of January 2005 and every two years afterward during the same period of time. More specifically, HUD wanted jurisdictions to design and implement a methodology to ensure that sheltered and unsheltered persons were included in the count. In order to help with compliance, HUD published two manuals—one that focused on counting unsheltered persons and the other sheltered persons—that included various methods for counting homeless people.

In response to the HUD mandate, LAHSA designed and implemented a methodology that included sheltered and unsheltered persons in a continuum-wide count based upon HUD-recommended practices. The process included field enumerations, field surveys, telephone surveys, and a sophisticated statistical analysis used to project homelessness in the Los Angeles CoC. These practices are described below. The first continuum-wide homeless count was completed during the last week of January, 2005. The second biennial count was conducted during the last week of January, 2007 and, for this report, during the last week of January, 2009.

#### WHO CONDUCTED THE HOMELESS COUNT?

LAHSA and the Survey Research Unit at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) collaborated in the design, implementation, and analysis of the homeless count. UNC's responsibilities were to provide methodology and process direction, to design and select all required samples, to develop estimation strategies, and to produce all project estimates. Additionally, UNC utilized their survey call center to conduct an extensive hidden homeless

telephone survey of Los Angeles households. LAHSA's roles included managing all other data collection tasks, including conducting the street and shelter counts, establishing the content of survey questions and forms, administering the demographic survey, compiling the estimates for presentation, and conducting the youth count (all as described below).

## WHO WAS INCLUDED IN THE COUNT?

Persons were considered homeless and included in the count if they fell within HUD's definition of homelessness which is as follows:

"A person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the three places described below:

1. places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings;
2. an emergency shelter; or
3. transitional housing for homeless persons and who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter."<sup>1</sup>

## WHO WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COUNT?

HUD has instructed Continuum of Care systems not to include persons who are precariously housed. These are people on the edge of becoming literally homeless who may be doubled up with friends and relatives or paying extremely high proportions of their resources for rent. The group is often characterized as being at imminent risk of becoming homeless.<sup>2</sup>

Other persons that were not included in the homeless count were those living in highly inaccessible places such as abandoned buildings, areas where safety issues prevented enumerators from entering, and forested or desert areas. Finally, some specific groups – such as youths, families, and the migrant homeless – who tend not to be as visible among the general homeless population, are challenging to enumerate and were likely undercounted. Though challenging, LAHSA and UNC have tried to minimize any undercount or misrepresentation.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, "A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People Second Revision," January 15, 2008, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

## HOW WAS THE COUNT CONDUCTED?

The 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count was implemented by using HUD recommended practices for counting sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons. Taking these recommendations into account, LAHSA completed a street count of unsheltered homeless persons and a shelter count of sheltered homeless persons. To further capture the unsheltered population in the Los Angeles CoC, LAHSA completed a hidden homeless telephone survey and a street count for homeless youth which was conducted in collaboration with several Los Angeles CoC service providers. These numbers are included in the final count estimates for the Los Angeles CoC.

### **1. Street Count of Unsheltered Homeless Persons**

Two-to-three person teams were created to conduct street counts. Trainings were conducted in the weeks leading up to the street count that clearly stated how to do a visual enumeration of homeless persons. Team members were also trained on the night of the count, just prior to leaving their deployment center, and were given maps with instructions that outlined the census tract (or part of a census tract) assigned to them. Enumerators were given strict instructions to count only within the boundaries of selected tracts. Additionally, street count teams were provided census tally sheets, referral cards, key contact phone numbers, homeless count apparel, and other supplies

Over the three-day count period, a random sample of 754 census tracts was enumerated which represents 40% of the 1,888 total census tracts that fall within the Los Angeles CoC. This is a 50% increase from the number of census tracts counted in prior years. Random selection was used at every step in choosing the sample census tracts used in enumerating the homeless as part of the street count.

Random selection was also done to assure a broad representation of the homeless population at the Los Angeles CoC and the Service Planning Area levels. This was also done to avoid biasing data that occurs when only counting areas where there are a large number of homeless persons or only interviewing in popular homeless areas such as hot spots. Hot spot census tracts were those census tracts tagged as areas within the Los Angeles CoC in which there were significant concentrations of homeless. Such census tracts were identified in the 2007 homeless count and updated for use in 2009. Street outreach workers helped update the 2007 list and also identified other hot spot areas. As part of the study design, census tracts that were considered hot spot census tracts were over sampled, and had a greater likelihood of being selected as part of the randomized census tract selection process.

Because one of the objectives for the homeless count was to provide a more accurate count for smaller geographic regions within the Los Angeles CoC, stratification was used. The Los Angeles CoC sampling frame was subdivided into important subsets called “strata.” For the

purposes of this count, sampling strata were defined by the eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) that make up Los Angeles County, by hot spot designation, and by several cities that requested full enumeration (i.e., opt-in cities). A separate sample of census tracts was selected in each stratum to produce the best possible estimated street homeless count for the Los Angeles CoC.

The Opt-In City Program was designed and completed as part of the homeless count process in order to provide local jurisdictions with homeless count numbers specific to their area or city. Jurisdictions wanted local homeless count information in order to more effectively address local homelessness and to be able to report to federal, state, and county agencies that required progress reports in order to continue to receive funding from these public sources. Prior to the 2009 homeless count, the count methodology did not support this need. However, in 2009, the study methodology was enhanced and made it possible for opt-in cities to coordinate a homeless count within their borders using volunteers recruited from their local public and private agencies.

Although individual city results are not detailed in this report, this program provided local jurisdictions within the Los Angeles CoC the opportunity to obtain city specific homeless counts. Fifteen (15) cities and the community of Hollywood enumerated all of their census tracts. Combined with results from the LAHSA shelter count, these cities will be able to estimate a point-in-time number of homeless that are sheltered and unsheltered in their jurisdictions. The following is the list of jurisdictions that participated in the Opt-In City Program.

**Table 15: Jurisdictions Who Participated in Opt-In City Program**

Jurisdictions	# of Census Tracts Counted	Service Planning Area	Supervisorial District	Los Angeles City Council Districts
Claremont	7	3	5	-
Covina	10	3	5	-
Culver City	9	5	2	-
Diamond Bar	9	3	1,4	-
Duarte	4	3	5	-
El Monte	21	3	1,5	-
Glendora	14	3	5	-
Hermosa Beach	4	8	4	-
Hollywood	29	4	2,3	4,13
La Verne	7	3	5	-
Lynwood	12	6	2	-
Monrovia	6	3	5	-
Pomona	25	3	1	-
San Dimas	6	3	5	-
Santa Monica	19	5	3	-
West Hollywood	5	4	3	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>3, 4, 5, 6, 8</b>	<b>1,2,3,4,5</b>	<b>4,13</b>

## 2. Shelter Count of Sheltered Persons

The 2008 Housing Inventory Chart of emergency shelters, transitional housing and safe havens from the October 2008 SuperNOFA application was used as a base for compiling a complete shelter list in the CoC. It was vetted with input from homeless coalitions, shelter providers, and LAHSA staff.

The night a facility reported its numbers was dependent upon where that facility was located. Agencies with programs located in Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 1, 2, and 5 performed their counts on the night of January 27<sup>th</sup>; SPAs 3, 7, and 8 were performed on January 28<sup>th</sup> and SPAs 4 and 6 were performed on January 29<sup>th</sup>. These nights corresponded with the nights of the street count. Quality checks comparing capacity to occupancy, zero count reports, prior count reports, as well as other measures were taken to improve response accuracy.

In all, 452 shelters were included for the point-in-time shelter census. The response rate was 100%.

## 3. Hidden Homeless Telephone Survey

In an effort to locate the hidden homeless of Los Angeles County, UNC conducted a telephone survey of Los Angeles CoC residents. A random sample of Los Angeles CoC households (minus the cities of Long Beach, Glendale and Pasadena) were interviewed via the telephone in order to estimate the number of homeless persons who were not counted during the street and shelter counts (excluding youths). Persons were classified as hidden homeless if they were sleeping on private property outside a place or residence, such as a car, van, carport, unconverted garage, camper, or encampment. These persons were included in the unsheltered homeless count for the Los Angeles CoC.

HUD worked with LAHSA to develop a definition of hidden homeless and confirmed that individuals or families who are precariously housed or at risk of literal homelessness should not be included in the unsheltered homeless estimate for the Los Angeles CoC. The working definitions determined by HUD are as follows:

1. Precariously housed – A person who is staying with the household because he or she has no other regular or adequate place to stay due to a lack of money or other means of support and who is sleeping inside the house will be allowed to stay for 8-90 days;
2. At-risk of literal homelessness – A person who is staying with household because he or she has no other regular or adequate place to stay due to a lack of money or other means of support and who is sleeping inside the house, and will have to leave in 7 days or less.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> These working definitions were agreed upon by experts from the following agencies: HUD, Urban Institute, Abt Associates, Abt SRBI, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and Marketing Systems Group.

The telephone sample was identified from a disproportionately stratified split-frame (directory-listed and non-directory list-assisted Random Digital Dialing) sample of landline telephone numbers within the Los Angeles CoC. Stratification was by various characteristics thought to be predictive of hidden homelessness, with the general strategy being to oversample telephone numbers of households that were thought to be more likely to have hidden homeless persons present based on these predictors.

All totaled, 28,394 telephone numbers were placed in calling and 4,288 households responded to the hidden homeless interview which represents a fourfold increase in phone interviews over the 2007 homeless count. It was estimated that nearly 10,000 persons (9,968) were living on private property not meant for human habitation. Calling took place over a three month period (March 8 to June 1, 2009) and each number was called a minimum of 12 times over several weeks and at different times of the day (daytime, evenings, and weekends). The response rate was 31 percent.

#### **4. Homeless Youth Count**

LAHSA conducted an unsheltered youth count separate from the unsheltered street count during the day hours of March 10 – 13, 2009 in order to include homeless youth who are not typically captured in night counts. A 2007 local field test confirmed that conducting an unsheltered youth count during the day would likely improve the Los Angeles CoC's ability to document youth homelessness with little risk of duplication. It is generally believed that homeless youth are undercounted during the biennial homeless census effort because they do not travel in the same networks as other homeless persons and are unlikely to be observed by the standard enumeration process.

Active leadership and commitment from each youth provider and participating agency was critical to the success of the Youth Count. Eight youth providers agreed to participate in the Youth Count. All youth workers and team supervisors were trained at the same time on the day of the count. Neighborhoods were pre-selected based on the youth workers' and providers' knowledge of hot spot areas that homeless youth tend to frequent. In most cases, teams were comprised of five youth workers and were assigned to team supervisors from the youth's sponsoring agency. Homeless youth were enumerated in areas where they typically reside or receive services under the supervision of homeless youth providers and LAHSA staff. Youth workers were told to use their best judgment in determining a person's homeless status and age.

Also, during each day of the count, youth providers with drop in programs were contacted for their total number of youth served. In areas with multiple providers, such as Hollywood, providers compared lists to eliminate duplication. Additionally, the youth workers were

included in the count totals based on their sponsor organization's location. Unlike the Unsheltered Street Count, no extrapolations were made from youth count data. The count data was simply used to supplement unsheltered count data.

## HOMELESS DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### WHY WAS THE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY CONDUCTED?

A demographic survey of homeless persons was conducted in order to estimate the size of various subpopulations of the homeless. These subpopulations included those that HUD has listed for several years as part of the "Point-in-Time Homeless Subpopulations" section of its annual continuum of care grant application. These subpopulations include: chronic homeless persons, chronic substance abusers, families (members of), individuals (single), persons with HIV/AIDS, severely mentally ill, unaccompanied youth (under 18), veterans, and victims of domestic violence. Information about subpopulations is included in this report (see page 11 in this report).

Other information was gathered to address the service needs and related issues of the county's homeless population. For example, information on education, foster care, health care, incarceration, income, social service needs, and subsidized housing was gathered as part of the demographic survey.

### WHO WAS INCLUDED IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY?

A sample of 3,073 adults participated in the homeless survey and provided detailed information about themselves and, when applicable, their children.

### HOW WAS THE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY CONDUCTED?

To obtain a representative sample of homeless persons, two samples were prepared—a street sample and a shelter sample. The street sample was randomly chosen among census tracts within the Los Angeles CoC which were included in the street count and thereby assured adequate representation by Service Planning Area. Within each chosen census tract, field interviewers were to begin at a random starting point and walk along a predetermined path to attempt interviews with homeless persons along the way. This approach resulted in 2,236 interviews. The shelter sample was randomly chosen among shelters that participated in the January homeless counts and included adequate representation by Service Planning Area. To minimize selection bias, homeless persons were randomly chosen from shelter rosters before interviewing took place. A total of 837 shelter interviews were completed in this fashion.

All interviewers who participated in the street and shelter survey were trained by LAHSA staff. Using trained interviewers to administer the survey increased the opportunity for collecting complete and accurate answers to the questions as well as provided an opportunity to receive useful evaluation information from the interviewers such as refusals and other reasons for non-response among the homeless population.

## WHEN WAS THE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY CONDUCTED?

The survey was conducted from March 2009 through May 2009.

## E. CONCLUSION

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The Los Angeles CoC has made great progress in implementing new and effective programs over the last couple years. The 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count provides valuable information specific to the current magnitude and demographics of those who continue to live on our streets and in our local shelters. The numbers and subpopulation data provided in this report is intended to help local communities better plan and deliver the programs and services necessary to see reductions in these numbers over time. With continued partnership with leaders from the local jurisdictions that make up the Los Angeles CoC, more cities will be able to better understand homelessness in their own communities.

This report provides count information and subpopulation information for the Los Angeles CoC, local Service Planning Areas, and the City of Los Angeles. Additional geographic estimates will be provided and specific to Los Angeles County Supervisorial Districts and City Council Districts for the City of Los Angeles. Further, with additional analysis of the demographic survey results, LAHSA will be able to provide better insight into how effectively homeless persons access health care, utilize public benefits, and other systems of care. The Los Angeles CoC will also be able to better understand the causes of homelessness and the most effective interventions in ending homelessness as articulated by those who participated in the demographic survey. This information will be posted to the LAHSA website in the weeks following the release of this report.

For more information and to access additional analysis from the 2009 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, please visit [www.lahsa.org](http://www.lahsa.org).

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