

Employment, Affordable Rent, and Willingness to Share Housing among Ventura County's Homeless Population



Spring 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each year the Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition conducts a survey of the homeless population. This survey captures information on how much rent people can afford and identifies obstacles to becoming housed.

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2011 Homeless Survey Data Analysis:

Over the course of the semester, five students from California State University of Channel Islands surveyed a total of 267 homeless individuals in Ventura County, which was nearly twenty percent of the homeless population in the county. The survey asked a variety of questions which will contribute to the Ventura County Housing and Homeless Coalition's (VCHHC) ten year plan to end homelessness within Ventura County. The information surveyed included the demographic and personal information that participants need in order to get into permanent housing. This information will greatly benefit the nonprofit organizations that are willing to help the homeless throughout the county by presenting their instantaneous needs.

The following are comparative charts of the gender, age and ethnicity of the homeless that were surveyed in the homeless count of 2011 and the surveys completed in spring 2011.

Age	2011HC
18-24	6.00%
25-61	87.00%
62+	6.00%

Age	2011S
Under 18	0.00%
18-29	13.62%
30-41	21.01%
42-53	38.91%
54-65	23.74%
65+	2.72%

Ethnicity	2011HC	2011S
American Indian	2.56%	6.98%
Asian	1.42%	1.94%
Black	5.80%	8.91%
Latino	25.06%	23.26%
White	62.33%	56.20%
Other	2.84%	2.71%

Gender	2011HC	2011S
Male	31.78%	32.14%
Female	68.22%	67.86%

How long have you been homeless?

The surveys revealed that the majority of the homeless population has been homeless for at least one year. This includes

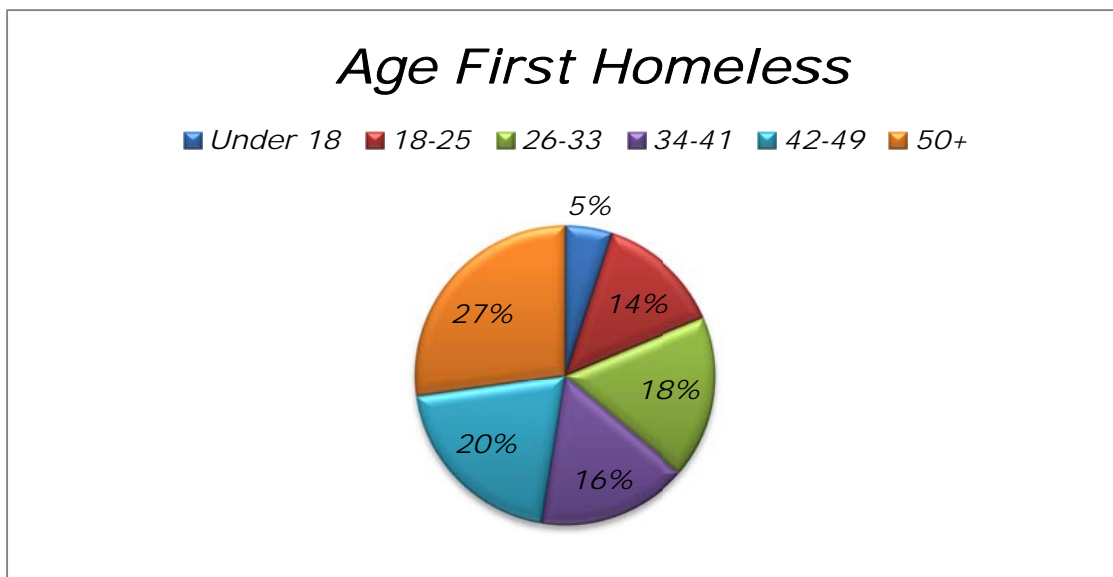
- 23.3% who have been homeless for one to two years;
- 12.7% between 3 and four years; and
- 22.5% who have been homeless for five or more years.

The most recent 41.4% of homeless population have become homeless within the past year. Thirteen individuals, which is equivalent to 5%, have been unable to afford housing within the last month, and 21.7 % became homeless within the last six months.

At what age did you first become homeless?

The ages at which these individuals first became homeless are displayed in Exhibit 1. The majority of the homeless have not become homeless until they are over the age of forty, while 27% of these individuals did not first become homeless until the age of fifty. On the opposite end of the spectrum, almost twenty percent of the homeless who were surveyed have first become homeless before turning twenty five

Exhibit 1



What is your most immediate need?

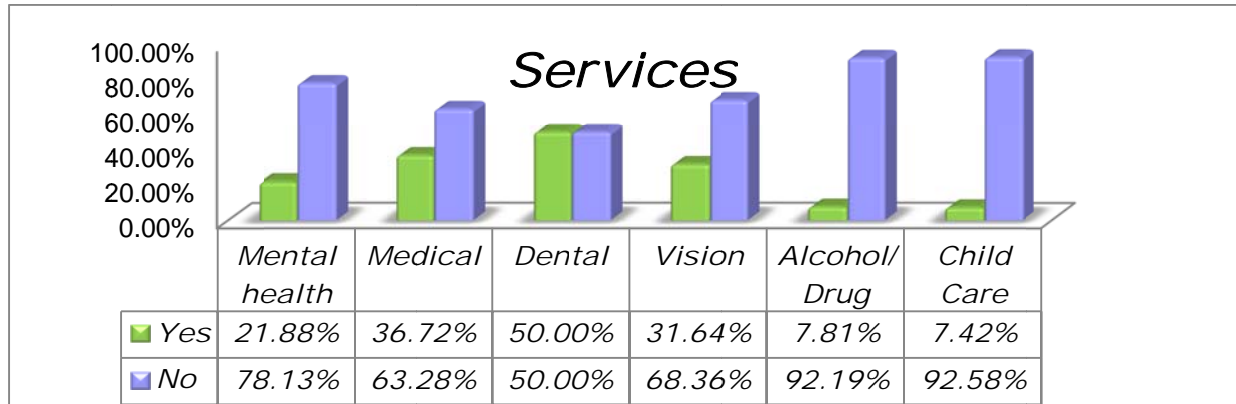
The surveys have concluded that the following needs are urgent for the homeless population in Ventura County. The participants have chosen the most important issues in their current lives. They are as follows:

- 45% stated housing
- 42% stated employment
- 13% stated transportation
- 10% stated food.

Are you in need of any of the following services?

To understand more about the person needs of the surveyed individuals and the get a clearer picture on how they can be helped, we sought to find out the services that can be beneficial to them. It is evident from Exhibit 2 below that the most important current need is help with dental services. Closely following the need for dental is the desire for medical and vision examinations.

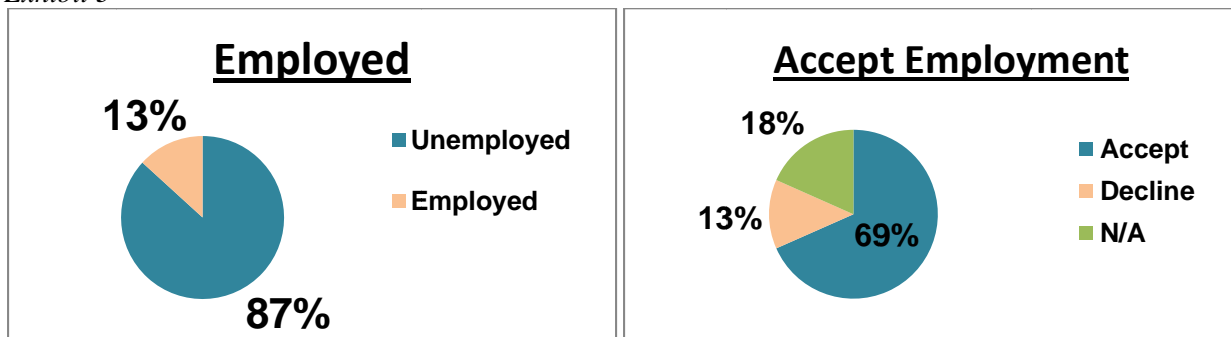
Exhibit 2



Are you currently employed?

We were able to discover that only thirteen percent of the homeless population is actually employed. In addition to asking the surveyed sample if they were employed, we discussed whether or no they would accept employment if it were offered to them today. The results indicated that 13% of the population would not accept employment, which is equivalent to the percent of already employed individuals. It is evident to that the majority of individuals who would not accept employment many already have a job. There was also an additional 18% of the sample who are not able to accept employment for other reasons discussed below in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3



Reason(s) you cannot accept employment?

The participants were given a variety of reasons in which they would not like employment. 13.95% of the homeless in the sample are disabled, 1.16% have children with no other option for care, 0.38% have no transportation, 0.77% are a caretaker for another individual, and 3.87% are receiving government assistance prohibiting them from accepting employment. Some expressed other reason in which they could not accept employment, which are listed below:

- Receive CalWorks and food stamps
- Want to finish vocational training, WIA
- Stay in the same field of work, no jobs
- Probably wouldn't be paid desired wage
- Too old/Retired

Which category best describes the last job you held?

Listed in Exhibit 4 are the results of the fields of employment that each person worked most recently. It is safe to say that the majority of Ventura County's homeless population worked in the laborer field for their last occupation.

Exhibit 4

Laborer	36%
Office	8%
Sales	7%
Retail	7%
Cashier	5%
Medical	3%
Teacher	3%
Never Employed	0%
Other	2%
Decline to answer	4%

What is the lowest wage you would accept?

There was 16.27 % of participants would accept a wage of less than eight dollars per hour. The most common answer was eight dollars per hour, which is California minimum wage; 30.23% chose this option. 7.36% indicated that they were willing to work for nine dollars per hour, and 23.6% will accept a wage of ten or more dollars per hour. The remaining 22.54% either cannot accept employment due to the reasons stated above, or they are already employed.

When were you last employed?

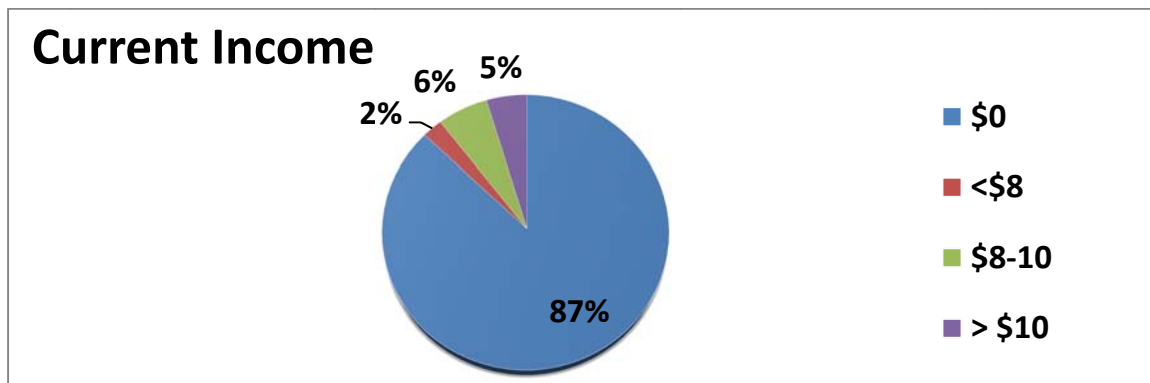
There were many recently unemployed individuals in the sample, including 4.26% who had lost their jobs less than one month ago, while 12% have lost their jobs in the last one to five months. The following displays the time frame in which these homeless individuals have been unemployed.

<u>TIME UNEMPLOYED</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
>1 months	4 %
1-5 months	12 %
6 months -1year	24 %
1 -2 years	11 %
2-5 years	38 %
N/A	10 %

How much are you currently making?

The data suggests that only 13% of the homeless sample is receiving any sort of income, with two percent of these individuals making less than minimum wage. Exhibit 5 shows the vast percentage who have no source of income.

Exhibit 5

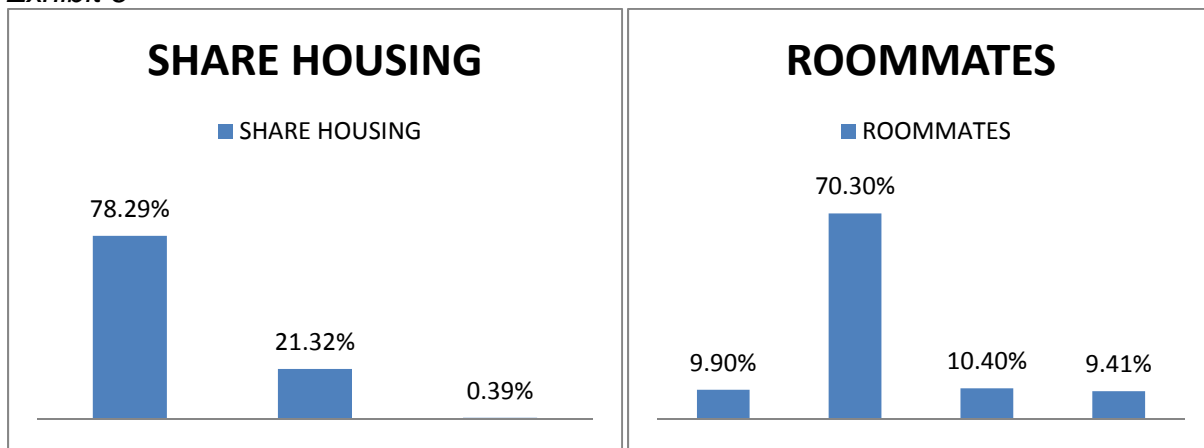


If housing were available today, how much rent could you afford to pay each month?

An overwhelming number of individuals, including 68.60% of those who we involved in this survey, cannot afford to pay over \$300.00 each month for rent. Nearly 14% of the homeless in this Ventura County survey can only afford to pay between \$300.00 and \$499.00 for rent each month, while a little over 13% can afford to pay between \$500.00 and \$999.00. Finally, 2.33% of the homeless accounted for could pay over \$1,000.00 for rent.

Would you be willing to share housing and how many roommates would you be willing to live with?

Exhibit 6



One important finding noted in the left chart indicated that almost 80% of the homeless involved were willing to live with roommates and only one individual was uncertain.

Of these individuals who are willing to share housing, the majority, at 70%, are willing to live with two to three roommates as noted in the chart on the right. The second most popular choice was higher than 10% with four to six roommates, followed by one roommate at nearly 10%. Lastly, almost ten percent of those willing to share housing were willing to share housing with over 6 individuals.

Have you been discharged from any of the following?

The list below displays the percent of individuals who have been discharged from one of these institutions sometime within their lives. Also listed below is the number of people whose discharges caused them to become homeless.

<i>Institution</i>	<i>% discharged</i>
Jail	40%
Hospital	27%
Prison	21%
Mental Facility	12%
Sober Living Home	8%
Foster Care	4%
Caused Homelessness	45%
Did Not Cause Homelessness	55%

What do you need to make it possible to live in permanent housing?

Exhibit 7 displays the findings of what the necessities are to get these displaced individuals into permanent housing.

Exhibit 7

