

2008 Survey of
Persons in Shelter
In Ventura County
California

Houseless...
not Homeless

Sponsored and conducted by



Ventura County Homeless & Housing Coalition

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This survey is available at www.vchhc.org

The following programs participated in the 2008 Shelter Survey:

Coalition to End Family Violence – (805) 983-6014
Conejo Winter Shelter Program – (805) 497-6207
County of Ventura Behavioral Health Department – (805) 981-4200
Interface – (805) 485-6114
Khepera House – (805) 653-2596
Lighthouse Women & Children’s Shelter – (805) 385-7200
Lighthouse Women & Children’s Mission – (805) 385-7200
Miracle Recovery Centers – (805) 648-4783
Ojai Valley Family Shelter – (805) 640-3320
Our Place Shelter, Turning Point Foundation – (805) 652-2151
PADS, Simi Valley – (805) 579-9166
Prototypes Women’s Center – (805) 382-6296
RAIN Transitional Living Center – (805) 398-3308
River Haven, Turning Point Foundation – (805) 652-0596
Salvation Army Transitional Living Center – (805) 648-4977
St Vincent de Paul (Armory Cold Weather Shelter) - (213) 229-9963
Stoll House, Many Mansions – (805) 497-4102
Transition House, Project Understanding – (805) 652-1326
Ventura County Rescue Mission Recovery – (805) 487-1234
Ventura County Rescue Mission Men’s Shelter – (805) 487-1234
Wooley House, Turning Point Foundation – (805) 652-0596

About the 2008 Shelter Survey

Each year, HUD requires an enumeration of persons in shelter. This data is utilized in the application for Continuum of Care funds.

In Ventura County we have also used the shelter survey as an opportunity to go beyond the basic HUD requirement. We have captured additional data about persons in shelter and their special needs in order to improve the delivery of services. We have eleven years worth of surveys (1997-2008).

In 2007, VCHHC conducted both a street and shelter count of the homeless population and an in-depth survey that targeted 20% of the homeless population in each jurisdiction. The 2007 survey contains information both of persons in shelter and persons residing outside of shelter. Both the 2007 Homeless Count and 2007 Homeless Survey are on our website: www.vchhc.org.

The 2008 Shelter Survey was carried out in partnership with staff, faculty and students at California State University Channel Islands. Capstone students enrolled in the sociology department in the Fall 2007 semester created the survey forms for both emergency shelters and for transitional and treatment programs.

The surveys were conducted on January 29, 2008 by staff and volunteers in the facilities listed on page 3. The original data sheets were then collected from the facilities.

Capstone students enrolled in the sociology department for the Spring 2008 semester did the data entry for all the surveys, adhering to the guidelines required by the Institutional Review Board.

Whereas in prior years treatment facilities were broken out in the data collection, the loss of several programs in the past months made it more feasible to combine this data with the transitional programs. In every case where you see “transition” or “transitional” as a column title or survey comment, treatment programs are included in this data.

Because two separate survey forms were used (one for emergency, one for transition/treatment) the questions were not exactly the same on the forms. You will notice two different question numbers on some pages. Also, some questions were asked only of one or the other population. This will be clear to the reader, as the responses are labeled.

Only adults were surveyed. Mathematical calculations involve only the adult populations.

Houseless, not Homeless

When the topic of shelter or affordable housing is broached, a frequent objection is “If we provide such a service, it will attract homeless people to our area.”

Data collected over the last 10 years by the Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition definitively proves that the homeless populations are long term residents of our community.

This table provides a look at the answer to the question “How long have you lived in Ventura County?” over the last 10 years of surveys.

Survey year	2008	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
under 1 year	13%	12%	15%	12%	13%	13%	15%	20%	13%	16%
1-2 years	7%	6%	6%	9%	4%	10%	5%	2%	4%	8%
2-5 years	14%	14%	12%	12%	16%	13%	9%	19%	17%	12%
6-9 years	5%	7%	4%	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%	8%	6%
10-15 years	9%	10%	9%	10%	9%	10%	9%	9%	12%	14%
16-25 years	16%	15%	18%	21%	20%	15%	25%	7%	7%	8%
26-35 years	16%	16%	19%	17%	16%	16%	14%	11%	15%	16%
over 35 years	21%	20%	17%	16%	16%	18%	17%	27%	24%	18%

In 2007 there was no specific question concerning the client's length of residency in Ventura County. Clients were asked whether they considered themselves to be a resident of the County. 96% stated that they considered themselves residents.

10+ years residency	62%	61%	63%	64%	61%	59%	65%	54%	58%	56%
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The majority of those who find themselves living without a fixed address are long term members of our community. They may be without a house or apartment or room, but they are home.

Key Findings:

- **Women and children continue to be a growing part of the homeless population.** Of those surveyed on January 29, 2008, women and children comprised 53% of shelter residents.
- **The majority are Caucasian:** 60.8% identified themselves as “white”. According to the US Census (2006 data), 52.9% of Ventura County residents are “white persons not Hispanic”.
- **The majority reside in West County:** 67.4% identify their home as Oxnard, Port Hueneme or Ventura.
- **The homeless population is educated:** 70.8% have a high school diploma or education beyond high school.
- **Both ends of the spectrum are seen in length of time on the street:** 37% have been homeless for less than a year. Another 33% have been homeless for three or more years.
- **The primary reasons people reported becoming homeless is problems with drugs/alcohol (100 reports) or losing their job (99 reports).** Eviction was the 3rd most reported reason at 44 reports.
- **Most homeless persons have income:** 60% report regular income, 22% are employed full time or part time.
- **Disabilities and addiction are commonplace among the homeless population:** There were 383 reports of a physical or mental problem or addiction among the 426 adults surveyed (89.9%). It should be noted that these conditions are not mutually exclusive.
- 32% of clients surveyed have been **hospitalized in the last year.**
- **When the shelters are not open 61% sleep out of doors or in their car.**

SURVEY POPULATION**Emergency Shelter Programs**

	Men	Women	Children	Total
VC Rescue Mission	25	0	4	29
Lighthouse	0	13	19	32
Our Place	8	1	0	9
VC Behavioral Health	5	2	0	7
Domestic Violence Shelters	0	10	17	27
Armory Winter Shelter	82	19	1	102
Conejo Winter Shelter	18	4	9	31
PADS, Simi Valley	13	2	0	15
Ojai Valley Family Shelter	19	4	1	24
Total: Emergency Shelters	170	55	51	276

Transitional and Treatment Programs

VC Rescue Mission	68	0	12	80
Lighthouse	0	10	6	16
River Haven	6	4	0	10
Project Understanding	0	5	10	15
Salvation Army TLC	1	9	12	22
Wooley House	3	3	0	6
Stoll House	2	4	8	14
RAIN	5	15	24	44
Prototypes	0	28	12	40
Miracle Recovery	0	13	0	13
Khepera House	25	0	2	27
Total Transition/Treatment	110	91	86	287

Total: Emergency + Transitional & Treatment	280	146	137	563
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2. Age:

age	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
18-24	17	16	33	7.8
25-35	36	60	96	22.6
36-45	59	63	122	28.7
46-55	70	47	117	27.5
56-64	34	14	48	11.3
65 and older	7	0	7	1.6
no response	2	1	3	0.1
n=	225	201	426	

While most shelter guests are in their prime earning years, keep in mind that there were also 137 persons under age 18 in the shelters, a group larger than any of those broken out in this chart. Children constituted 24% of the shelter residents reported on this night.

3. Ethnicity:

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total responses	%
African American or Black	11	13	24	5.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	6	8	1.9
American Indian/Alaskan	2	3	5	1.2
Hispanic or Latino	64	48	112	26.3
White	133	126	259	60.8
Multi-Racial	5	4	9	2.1
Other	8	1	9	2.1
N=	225	201	426	

The White population continues to be the largest ethnic group among homeless persons, with Hispanic or Latinos following close behind. This parallels the ethnic breakdown in the overall population.

4) Marital Status

	Emergency	Transitional & Treatment	Total responses	%
	# of Responses	# of responses		
Single	136	111	247	58
Married	15	18	33	7.7
Partnered	4	5	9	2.1
Separated	10	9	19	4.5
Divorced	48	50	98	23
Widowed	10	6	16	3.8
Other	2	2	4	0.9
n=	225	201	426	

The majority of clients seeking emergency or transitional/treatment services are single or divorced.

5) Do you have minor children with you in the shelter?

	Emergency	Transitional & Treatment	Total	%
yes	22	54	76	17.8
# of children	51	86	137	

It should be noted that children made up 24% of the residents on the date the survey was taken. This is consistent with shelter surveys from prior years.

6) Do you have minor children not with you?

	Emergency	Transitional or Treatment	Total
yes	66	79	145
# of children	127	139	266

It should be noted that #5 and #6 are not mutually exclusive. A resident could be accompanied by children in shelter and also have children living elsewhere.

7) Was data gathered for the Ventura County Office of Education and sent directly to them.**8) What was the last grade you completed in school?**

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Elementary	18	4	22	5.1
Some High School	52	45	97	22.8
High School Graduate	47	60	107	25.1
GED	22	22	44	10.3
Some College	59	50	109	25.6
College Graduate	19	16	35	8.2
Post Graduate	6	1	7	1.6
No Response	2	3	5	1.2
n =	225	201	426	

Over 70% of those who took part in the shelter survey this year had a high school education or beyond. 35.4% completed high school or GED requirements. Another 35.4% had been to college, completed college, or had participated in post graduate studies.

9) What city do you live in?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Camarillo	2	10	12	2.8
Fillmore	0	1	1	0.2
Moorpark	1	2	3	0.7
Ojai	20	4	24	5.6
Oxnard	84	72	156	36.6
Port Hueneme	7	4	11	2.6
Santa Paula	2	4	6	1.4
Simi Valley	16	12	28	6.6
Thousand Oaks	13	5	18	4.2
Ventura	59	61	120	28.2
Los Angeles	2	8	10	2.3
Other CA city	4	11	15	3.5
Other US State	9	7	16	3.8
Mexico	2	0	2	0.5
No response	4	0	4	0.9
n=	225	201	426	

The cities with winter shelter programs are Oxnard/Ventura, Ojai, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks. Year round shelter may also be found in Oxnard and Ventura. Where these sites are available, they are used. Refer to the Local Emergency Shelter Strategy at www.vchhc.org for more information on shelter programs and transitional/treatment programs.

10) How long have you lived in Ventura County?

	Emergency # of response	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Less than 1 month	11	5	16	3.8
1-3 months	8	10	18	4.2
4-6 months	7	9	16	3.8
about a year	11	19	30	7
2-5 years	35	19	54	12.7
6-9 years	11	7	18	4.2
10-15 years	22	16	38	8.9
16-25 years	34	39	73	17.1
26-35 years	34	43	77	18.1
36+ years	51	33	84	19.7
no response	1	1	2	0.5
n=	225	201	426	

The title of this report “Houseless not Homeless” speaks to the length of time that those who find themselves without a fixed address have called this community home. In this year’s survey, 63.8% have lived in Ventura County for ten or more years.

11) Did you serve in the military?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	45	15	60	14.1
No	177	184	361	84.7
No response	3	2	5	1.2
n=	225	201	426	

The percentage of Veterans has not changed significantly during the past three years. This year (2008) a total of about 14% of emergency and transitional respondents stated they had served the in the military. In 2007 the response was 15% and in 2006 it was at 12%.

12) How long have you been homeless?

	Emergency # of responses	Emergency %	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Transitional & Treatment %	Combined Responses	Combined %
Less than a month	30	13.3	29	14.4	59	13.8
4-6 months	56	24.9	43	21.3	99	23.2
About a year	31	13.8	41	20.4	72	16.9
2 years	19	8.4	19	9.5	38	8.9
3 years	17	7.6	16	8	33	7.7
4-8 years	33	14.7	23	11.4	56	13.1
9-10 years	9	4	2	1	11	2.6
over 10 years	27	12	7	3.5	34	8
No Response	3	1.3	21	10.4	24	5.6
n=	225		201		426	

This chart has been enhanced to show the length of time respondents reported being homeless by both numbers and percent in each category, and then combined for both emergency and transition/treatment programs.

By definition, a treatment program is limited to two years of residency, so the totals across both types of programs are influenced by this limitation.

The definition of “chronic” homelessness is living on the streets for a year or more and having a disability. While this chart does not cross reference for disability, it is interesting to note that persons reporting being homeless for 2 or more years is almost one half (46.7%) of those in emergency shelter and over one third (35.7%) of those in transitional/treatment programs. If we factor in the “about a year” response the numbers are much more alarming: 60.5% of those in emergency shelters and 53.8% of those in transitional or treatment programs reported being homeless for a year or longer.

13) What age were you when you first became homeless?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Younger than 18	15	12	27	6.3
18-25	36	32	68	16
26-35	44	53	97	22.8
36-45	67	49	116	27.2
46-55	45	30	75	17.6
56-65	14	6	20	4.7
over 65	3	0	3	0.7
No response	1	19	20	4.7
n=	225	201	426	

The majority of respondents became homeless during their adult years.

14) Do you remember being homeless as a child?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	24	13	37	8.7
No	186	179	365	85.7
No Response	15	9	24	5.6
n=	225	201	426	

Almost 9% of respondents recall being homeless as a child.

15) What first led to your becoming homeless?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Lost job	56	43	99	21
Divorce	21	9	30	6.4
Evicted	29	15	44	9.3
Major illness	12	5	17	3.6
Went to jail	13	24	37	7.8
Drugs/alcohol	26	74	100	21.2
Mental illness	10	2	12	2.5
Domestic violence	4	6	10	2.1
Death of spouse or parent	7	3	10	2.1
No money	17	5	22	4.7
Other	34	23	57	12
No response	21	13	34	7.2
n=	250	222	472	
respondents =	225	201	426	

Thirty respondents gave more than one reason for becoming homeless, so there are more reasons recorded than the number of adults interviewed.

50% of homelessness is attributed to three reasons by those who were surveyed: drug/alcohol addiction; loss of a job, and eviction.

16) Have you ever stayed in an emergency shelter?

	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	%
Yes	74	36.8
No	115	57.2
No response	12	6
n=	201	

This question was asked only of those in transition or treatment programs, so the data reflect that.

16a) If YES, where?

	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	%
In Ventura County	61	81.3
In CA, but outside Ventura County	7	9.3
Outside CA	7	9.3
n=	75	

Of the 74 respondents who answered affirmatively above, one person had stayed in emergency shelter both in Ventura County and in another California shelter.

These responses track with the data we present earlier in this document: persons who are without a fixed address are long term residents of Ventura County.

17) Where do you sleep when you don't stay at a shelter?

	Emergency # of responses	%
On the streets	99	40.9
Business/outside	6	2.5
Another shelter	13	5.4
Car/van	31	12.8
Friend	17	7
Relative	10	4.1
Motel	12	5
Rented Room	10	4.1
Other	5	2.1
No response	39	16.1
n=242	242	
# of respondents =	225	

This question was asked only of those in emergency shelters on the night of the survey. Several clients gave multiple responses. All the responses were captured.

Over half the respondents (56.2%) report that they sleep out of doors when the shelters are closed.

17) How long have you been staying in this center?

	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	%
A week or less	24	11.9
2 weeks-1 Month	28	13.9
2 months	34	16.9
3-4 months	41	20.4
5-6 months	11	5.5
7-8 months	21	10.5
9-10 months	11	5.5
11-12 months	9	4.5
1 year +	14	7
No response	8	4
n=	201	

This question was asked only of those enrolled in transitional or treatment programs. Transitional programs by definition limit residents to a period of two years or less.

From this chart, it is clear that most residents of these programs are moving out of the programs far more quickly than the maximum allowable time, with 68.7% exiting the program within 6 months.

18) What are your sources of income?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
None	69	97	166	34.4
General Relief	6	2	8	1.7
SSI/SDI	25	20	45	9.3
Social Security Veterans	10	4	14	2.9
Benefits	7	0	7	1.4
CalWork	9	27	36	7.5
Part time job	48	23	71	14.7
Full time job	14	23	37	7.7
Food Stamps	18	28	46	9.5
Other	15	11	26	5.3
No Response	27	0	27	5.6
n=	248	235	483	
respondents =	225	201	426	

60% of those surveyed have income, and 22% are employed either full or part time.

It should be noted that many transitional/treatment programs have restrictions on working, especially in the initial phases, so the larger number of persons reporting no income in these programs is not unusual.

19) When was the last time you rented a room/apartment?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
1 week ago or less	14	7	21	4.9
About 1 month ago	21	12	33	7.7
3-6 months ago	55	35	90	21.1
About a year ago	26	48	74	17.3
2-4 years ago	31	45	76	17.8
5-7 years ago	12	19	31	7.2
8-10 years ago	7	5	12	2.8
over 10 years ago	17	15	32	7.5
No response	29	15	44	10.3
Other response	13	2	15	3.5
n=	225	201	426	

For 52.6% of respondents it has been a year or more since they rented their own place to live.

20) Where do you get your food when the shelter is not open?

	Emergency # of responses	%
Hot meals	61	23.2
Sack lunch	39	14.8
Meals in park	28	10.6
Food pantry	27	10.3
Friends/Family	16	6.1
Fast food restaurant	13	4.9
Grocery store	25	9.5
Other	32	12.2
no response	22	8.4
n=	263	
respondents =	225	

This question was asked only of residents in emergency shelter. Several respondents gave multiple answers. All responses were recorded.

The most important sources of food when the shelters are closed are the meal programs (top three lines) which provide food for almost one half of those surveyed (48.6%).

“Other” was the third most popular answer. Reviewing the data sheets revealed that food stamps were what the respondents had in mind.

Combining “other” with grocery stores and fast food restaurants, purchased food is the second most utilized food source at 26.6% of responses.

20) What do you need to make the move to permanent housing possible?

	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	%
Job/Better job	99	25.4
More money	51	13.1
Affordable Rental/Section 8	115	29.6
Repair Credit	33	8.5
Transportation	17	4.3
Better health	10	2.6
Sobriety	41	10.5
Other	9	2.3
No response	14	3.6
n=	389	
respondents =	225	

This question was asked only of those in transitional/treatment programs. Many clients gave multiple responses.

The greatest needs identified were for 1) an affordable place to rent and 2) a job or better job.

21) Do you have a health problem you are concerned about?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
yes	94	91	185	43.4
No	84	100	184	43.2
No response	16	10	26	6.1
Other	31		31	7.2
n=	225	201	426	

Respondents were equally divided in whether there was a health issue of concern to them.

21a) If YES, what?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Arthritis	32	14	46	12
Asthma/lungs	21	15	36	9.4
Back	22	24	46	12
Cancer	7	7	14	3.7
Dental	20	29	49	12.8
Seizures	12	1	13	3.4
High BP	23	16	39	10.2
Kidney/liver	9	17	26	6.8
Feet/legs	16	15	31	8.1
Visions	5	19	24	6.3
Other	26	33	59	15.4
n=	193	190	383	

43% of the shelter population on the night of January 29, 2008 reported concerns about health problems. Those concerns are detailed in this chart.

Of the health issues that respondents were concerned about, dental care was ranked #1. Few resources are available to address this concern.

22) Do you have a Physical Disability?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	77	34	111	26
No	126	142	268	62.9
No Response	22	25	47	11
n=	225	201	426	

22) Do you have a mental disability?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	61	28	89	20.8
No	112	145	257	60.3
No Response	31	28	59	13.8
Other	21		21	4.9
n=	225	201	426	

22) Do you have an alcohol or drug problem?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	71	112	183	43
No	132	77	209	49
No Response	22	12	34	8
Other				
n=	225	201	426	

23) Have you ever been in outpatient treatment?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	71	75	146	34.3
No	132	118	250	58.7
No Response	22	8	30	7
n=	225	201	426	

23a/24) Have you ever been in residential treatment?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	48	116	164	38.5
No	167	81	248	58.2
No Response	10	4	14	3.3
n=	225	201	426	

24/25) Have you ever been a victim of physical violence?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	95	87	182	42.7
No	125	107	232	54.5
No Response	5	7	12	2.8
n=	225	201	426	

Too difficult to discern the responses in emergency shelter clients. Some answered y or no so could not categorize as adult/child.

95 ES answered yes to phys violence, but only 59 indicated as adult or child.

25/26) Have you ever been a victim of sexual abuse?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	47	48	95	22.3
No	169	141	310	72.8
No Response	9	3	12	2.8
Other		9	9	2.1
n=	225	201	426	

26/27) Have you been in a hospital in the last 12 months?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	72	65	137	32.2
No	143	130	273	64
No Response	10	6	16	3.8
n=	225	201		

26a/27a) If YES, where?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Ventura County Medical Center	28	34	62	42.8
St. John's Hospital	12	14	26	17.9
Simi Valley Hospital	3	1	4	2.8
Los Robles Regional Medical Center	6	2	8	5.5
Community Memorial Hospital	7	5	12	8.3
Other	16	17	33	22.8
	72	73	145	

27/28) Have you ever used the services of a free clinic or the Health Care for the Homeless Clinic?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Yes	101	107	208	48.8
No	106	86	192	45
No Response	18	8	26	6.1
n=	225	201	426	

27a/28a) If YES, where?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Project Understanding In Oxnard on "C" Street	28	31	59	27.8
RAIN Free Clinic of Simi Valley	40	57	97	45.6
Conejo Free Clinic	0	5	5	2.4
Other	17	5	22	10.4
No response	10	5	15	7.1
n=	1	8	9	4.2
	5	0	5	2.4
n=	101	111	212	

28/29) What are your two greatest needs right now?

	Emergency # of responses	Transitional & Treatment # of responses	Total	%
Affordable housing	147	127	274	37.3
Job/better job	62	96	158	21.5
More money	40	57	97	13.2
Car/transportation	21	39	60	8.2
Counseling/rehab	13	45	58	7.9
Health care	13	18	31	4.2
Food/clothing	12	3	15	2
Education/training	12	11	23	3.1
Other	11	7	18	2.5
n=	331	403	734	
# of respondents	225	201	426	

Many clients answered with more than two needs. All the responses were recorded.

The need for affordable housing mirrors responses in # 20, where 29.6% of clients indicated affordable rent or Section 8 voucher as their greatest need to achieve permanent housing.