

Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless 2010 Homeless Street Count Report Pima County, Arizona



2010 Homeless Street Count Report
Pima County, Arizona
Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless
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Summary

A total of 1,561 unsheltered homeless individuals were documented in Pima County through the 2010 Homeless Street Count, January 26, 2010 – 16% more than the 2009 total of 1,348. The local weather-related emergency shelter program, Operation Deep Freeze, was in effect for the night of January 27th.

The count was conducted by 157 individuals, as opposed to 139 volunteers last year which was an increase of 13% more volunteers this year than last year.

Volunteers surveyed the same quadrants identified in previous years. To better reflect the homeless individuals in rural areas of Pima County who cannot be surveyed by direct observation, the number of unduplicated persons requesting food boxes from rural Pima County Food Banks during January 2009 was added to the observed total. Noteworthy results included the following.

- A total of 765 persons, 30%, were deemed chronically homeless, a significant reduction from the 55% and 65% observed respectively in 2008 and 2009.
- A total of 143 homeless youth were observed compared to 119 in 2009, an increase of 20% over 2009. The increase better reflects, but does not equal, the number of requests for service experienced by area agencies serving homeless youth. The numbers themselves do not explain whether there is a significant increase in youth homelessness, but are cause for concern.
- Totals by quadrant show a significant overall shift from South Tucson to the southeastern part of the city. Last year there were 232 homeless persons counted in South Tucson. This year 65 were counted. This appears to be due to the fact that no homeless persons regularly attend a morning feeding site at Casa Maria in South Tucson, and then attend an evening feeding site in the southeast part of town.
- The total number of unsheltered homeless persons increased despite Operation Deep Freeze being in effect, which has previously resulted in lower numbers of unsheltered individuals being observed.

The 16% increase in homeless individuals observed combined with a four-year decrease in the number of chronically homeless individuals observed lends weight to the predictions that the nation's current economic and foreclosure crises are creating a sharp increase in homelessness, and particularly in first-time homelessness.

Background and Methodology

The annual homeless street count in Pima County is organized by Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless (TPCH), the area's continuum of care coalition. A workgroup of TPCH members met in November and December 2009 to plan the 2010 Homeless Street Count and in February, 2010 for a street count wrap-up and preliminary look at the street count numbers.

Background and Methodology cont'd.

The workgroup resolved to: change the time of the count from early morning to evening (unanimously accepted); significantly increase the number of volunteers by expanding recruitment; increase the number of trainings for volunteers and improve training accessibility; try to have an experienced outreach worker on each team; survey the already identified geographical quadrants in the Tucson Metropolitan area; and continue to ask enumerators to record where they observed homeless persons in order to provide guidance for future volunteers. A total of five trainings, were conducted at four locations in different parts of the Tucson area. Four trainings, including one evening training, were held prior to the count. A final training was held on the night of the count at Sullivan -Jackson Employment Center, from which the count was staged. Team Leaders were identified and encouraged to survey their quadrants in advance of the actual count to identify locations where homeless people sleep or gather.

The workgroup also recognized and addressed these challenges from previous street counts: identifying a chronically homeless person by observation only; observed numbers of homeless youth that were far below the numbers of homeless youth served by local agencies; and probable under-reporting of homeless persons in rural areas due insufficient volunteers to directly observe throughout Pima County's 2,000 square miles. Per workgroup recommendations, the following occurred. More time was spent in trainings explaining the definition of a chronically homeless person. Each team that included an experienced outreach worker allowed that outreach worker to determine chronic homelessness. All unaccompanied homeless persons who appeared to be between the ages 13 and 22 were counted as homeless youth. The challenge of reporting on rural homelessness was addressed by requesting from Tucson's Community Food Bank an unduplicated number of self-identified homeless individuals who requested food boxes from their partner in the rural Pima County communities of Ajo, Amado, Catalina, Robles Junction, Green Valley, Marana and Picture Rocks. (The number of individuals represented by each request was not available.)

Results and Observations

Detailed results of the 2010 Homeless Street Count are reported in the attached spreadsheets. The statistical results in brief are:

- The 1,561 total individuals reported in 2010 are 16% more than in 2009.
- 30% of all documented individuals in quadrants were deemed chronically homeless, down significantly from the previous two years (55% and 65%).
- A total of 143 homeless youth were observed compared to 119 in 2009, an increase of 20% over 2009. The increase better reflects, but does not equal, the number of requests for service experienced by area agencies serving homeless youth. The percentage increase is far greater than the percentage increase in the number of volunteers observing. The numbers themselves do not indicate whether there is a significant increase in youth homelessness, but are cause for concern.
- Significantly, Operation Deep Freeze, the Tucson area emergency plan for sheltering everyone in need on nights of severe weather conditions, was in effect the evening of January 26, 2010.
- This year we had 22 Census Bureau workers participate in the street count.

Results and Observations continued

Volunteers offered the following anecdotal observations in addition to the numbers presented.

- Because of rain on several nights previous to the street count, washes were running and homeless persons previously observed to sleep in the washes were harder to find.
- Convenience store personnel showed compassion for and knowledge of their homeless neighbors.
- The census workers who volunteered were very eager to learn about where homeless persons live in order to conduct a better census of homeless individuals.

Recommendations for 2011

The TPCH 2010 Street Count Workgroup developed the following recommendations for the 2010 Homeless Street Count.

- Increase the number of volunteers per quadrant in order to allow for thoroughly observing each quadrant.
- Identify Team Leaders and notify volunteers of the quadrant assignments earlier in order to allow for more thorough surveying of the quadrants prior to the count.
- Continue to increase the number of homeless and formerly homeless volunteers.
- Continue to seek better ways to document the number of homeless persons in rural Pima County, and, if possible, obtain the total number of persons in the household represented by the unduplicated requests to rural food banks.
- Consider a second count in summer

Conclusions

The 16% increase in homeless individuals observed combined with a four-year decrease in the number of chronically homeless individuals observed lends weight to the predictions that the nation's current economic and foreclosure crises are creating a sharp increase in homelessness, and particularly among first-time homeless individuals. The TPCH 2010 Street Count Workgroup concluded that the 2010 Homeless Street Count findings indicate a need for increased volunteerism and increased availability of basic needs services in our community.

2010 Participating Homeless Street Count Organizations

Arizona Department of Economic Security
Arizona Department of Economic Security Child Support Services
Arizona Department of Veterans Services
Caridad-de Porres
Casa Maria
Census 2010
Census 2010 TNSOL Project
Christian Faith Center
Comin' Home
CPSA
Gospel Rescue Mission
Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless
Jackson Employment Center
La Frontera Center, Inc.
La Frontera RAPP Team
La Paloma Family Services
LeCroy & Milligan Associates
New Beginnings for Women and Children
Old Pueblo Community Services
Open Inn
Our Family Services
Pima County
SAAF
SAGA
SAVAHCS
Southside Presbyterian Church
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Stand Up for Kids
The Giving Tree
The Primavera Foundation
Tucson Preparatory School
Tucson Rural Census
Tucson Weekly
UA Social Justice League
University of Arizona Social Justice League
Wingspan
Youth On Their Own

Homeless Street Count Year-to-Year Comparison

Quad	2006 Total	2007 Total	2008 Total	2009 Total	2010 Total	# Change 2009-2010	% Change 2009-2010
A	22	101	84	98	13	-85	-87%
B	66	107	45	62	18	-44	-71%
C	58	22	45	25	36	11	44%
D	71	78	53	79	65	-14	-18%
E	77	98	124	331	327	-4	-1%
F	40	31	17	8	51	43	538%
G	9	75	73	36	47	11	31%
H	8	10	53	55	25	-30	-55%
I	7	54	105	232	65	-167	-72%
J	145	146	81	25	269	244	976%
K	34	61	120	46	91	45	98%
L	48	14	90	38	46	8	21%
M	not surveyed	80	90	0	not surveyed	0	0%
N	9	included in G	25	1	11	10	1000%
O	15	23	55	14	185	171	1221%
P	Inc'd in K & L	110	59	64	30	-34	-53%
Q	22	27	13	36	117	81	225%
R	18	19	33	30	4	-26	-87%
S	not surveyed	0	not surveyed	0	1	1	0%
T	not surveyed	9	30	53	34	-19	-36%
U	not surveyed	8	0	0	not surveyed		
Y	not surveyed	4	0	0	not surveyed		
Hospitals	not surveyed	13	3	0	not surveyed		
County Jail	not surveyed	9	0	0	not surveyed		
Primavera R&R	not surveyed	not surveyed	not surveyed	26	not surveyed		
Open Inn	not surveyed	not surveyed	not surveyed	22	not surveyed		
Rural Food Banks (Ajo, Amado, Catalina, Robles Junction, Green Valley, Marana, Picture Rocks, unduplicated individuals o)	not surveyed	not surveyed	not surveyed	67	126		53%
TOTAL	642	1,099	1,108	1,348	1,561	213	16%
CHRONICALLY HOMELESS	53%	67%	65%	56%	30%		