

BrainGain@PEC

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This BrainGain@PEC continues a series of reports on data collected by the homeless services system with the intention of informing practitioners and policy makers. The causes of homelessness are complex and no one set of data has been satisfactory in answering the question ‘is homelessness increasing or decreasing?’ Together, these reports will help policy makers understand certain aspects of homelessness in Pennsylvania.

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State of Homelessness in America and in Pennsylvania

The State of Homelessness in America 2013: A Research Report on Homelessness, by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, April 2013.

This BrainGain@PEC summarizes [The State of Homelessness in America 2013](#) and what it reports on Pennsylvania. The State of Homelessness in America is a series of annual reports by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH). It discusses a variety of data sets focused on describing state and national trends in homelessness in conjunction with economic, housing, demographic, and household factors that affect people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This BrainGain@PEC will focus on only a portion of the report with emphasis on Pennsylvania’s data.

State of Homelessness in America 2013 uses the most recently available national data from a variety of sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and National Association of State Budget Officers. All data on homelessness is based on the Point In Time Count (PIT)ⁱ estimates measured in 2011 and 2012.

Key Overall Findings:

- Nationally, the homeless population decreased by less than one percent between 2011 and 2012.
- The number of people experiencing homelessness as part of a family increased slightly.
- The number of individuals experiencing “chronic homelessness” decreased 6.8 percent.
- The number of those identified as “veterans” decreased 7.2 percent.
- The NAEH credited increased federal investment in providing effective housing solutions to those populations, including more permanent supportive housing opportunities, for the decreases in the percentages of the above categories.

PEC Commentary: Readers are cautioned when using these descriptive statistics to consider if homelessness is increasing or decreasing. The PIT is but one method for measuring homelessness. Numerous factors affect the PIT, including the available number of beds in emergency or transitional housing and how fast people move of shelter. If funding cuts reduce the number of available beds, it is likely that the number of homeless persons will also be less.

Key Pennsylvania Findings:

- The number of persons in poor households living doubled up (living temporarily with family or friends) increased by 9.4 percent nationally and by 17.1 percent in Pennsylvania. The report revealed that close to 236,000 poor persons in Pennsylvania were living doubled up.
- Pennsylvania’s homeless population decreased by 2.4 percent, according to the “Point in Time Count.”
- The number of homeless family households in Pennsylvania increased by 3.3 percent.
- The state’s rate of homelessness was 11.6 persons per 10,000 persons, lower than the U.S. rate.

Homelessness in the United States Compared to Pennsylvania, 2011-2012						
Findings	2011		2012		Change in % 2011-2012	
	U.S.	PA	U.S.	PA	U.S.	PA
Poor People Living Doubled Up	6.8M	201,421	7.4M	235,822	9.4%	17.1%
Homeless Population	636,017	15,096	633,782	14,736	-0.4%	-2.4%
Homeless Family Households	77,186	2,396	77,157	2,476	0.0%	3.3%
Homeless People in Families	236,181	7,229	239,403	7,441	1.4%	2.9%
Chronic Homeless Population	107,148	1,508	99,894	1,564	-6.8%	3.7%
Homeless Veteran Population	67,495	1,392	62,619	1,456	-7.2%	4.6%
Individual Homeless Population	N/A				-1.4%	-7.3%
Unsheltered Homeless Population	243,701	1,060	243,627	1,076	0.0%	1.5%
Rate of Homelessness per 10,000 People	21	12	20	11.6		

Other Findings:

- According to the annual “Point in Time Count,” the nation’s homeless population decreased by 0.4 percent between 2011 and 2012.
- The number of persons in homeless families increased 1.4 percent nationally and increased 2.9 percent in Pennsylvania.
- Although the number of chronically homeless individuals and veterans significantly decreased nationally, the number of chronically homeless individuals increased by 3.7 percent and the number of homeless veterans increased by 4.6 percent in Pennsylvania.
- The number of homeless individuals decreased by 7.3 percent in Pennsylvania.
- The national rate of homelessness was 20 homeless persons per 10,000 in the general population. This is a decrease from the 2011 figure of 21 homeless persons per 10,000.
- The majority of all persons identified as homeless were staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing, but 38 percent were unsheltered. The size of the unsheltered population remained basically unchanged between 2011 and 2012.

Housing and Household Factors:

Housing and household factors are included in the report because they provide the context to which households in the United States are attaining and maintaining housing stability. The State of Homelessness report includes more factors than are listed here.

- Pennsylvania experienced a 3.9 percent increase in the number of poor renter households with severe housing cost burden, compared to 5.5 percent nationally.
- In Pennsylvania, close to 247,000 households need to spend more than 50 percent of their estimated monthly income for housing expenses.

Changes Among Indicators Comparing United States and Pennsylvania, 2010-2011						
	2010		2011		2010-2011 Change in %	
	U.S.	PA	U.S.	PA	U.S.	PA
Median Income	\$51,144	\$50,548	\$50,502	\$50,228	-1.26%	-0.63%
Persons in Poverty	46.2M	1.6M	48.5M	1.7M	4.8%	2.9%
Unemployed Persons	14.8M	540,922	13.8M	506,817	-6.9%	-6.3%
Poor households Experiencing Severe Housing Cost Burdenⁱⁱ	6.2M	237,618	6.5M	246,887	5.5%	3.9%
Poor Family Households Headed by a Single Adult	4.6M	174,701	4.8M	182,205	3.8%	4.3%
Poor Adults Accessing Safety Net Benefits	13.6M	532,172	15.2M	585,586	11.5%	10.0%

*Please note: All data describing economic and housing factors and demographic and household factors are from a different reporting period than the homelessness data—2010-2011.

The **People's Emergency Center's** mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change in West Philadelphia. Through a community of more than 200 housing units and four educational centers offering job training, parenting and early childhood education, and technology coursework, PEC seeks to change the life trajectory for the women and children who seek its services and inspire them to aspire to new heights. This report was written by Caroline Morgan and Joe Willard. All inquires can be sent to policy@pec-cares.org.

ⁱ The Point in Time Count (PIT) and the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) are data collection methods used by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in partnership with county-based entities known as "Continuum of Care" programs. People were counted as homeless if they were living in emergency or transitional housing, on the street, or in such locations as cars and abandoned buildings. Although PIT has limitations, communities use the data as a guide to organize responses to homelessness and make decisions on allocating resources.

ⁱⁱ Households spending 50 percent or more of their income on housing expenses are considered to be experiencing severe housing cost burden.