

# Northern New Jersey Regional Homeless Assessment Report

## I. Introduction

In May of 2009, Congress passed the Homelessness Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH). The HEARTH Act challenges communities to move from addressing homelessness to ending it through focusing on data driven planning, system analysis and monitoring, and setting performance standards/goals. Federal resources for homeless programs will be tied to a community's ability to effectively reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and implement programs and processes that can successfully end homelessness. Use of local data on the homeless population and the programs within a community will play a critical role in planning and program development in order to end homelessness and will be essential for basic compliance with HEARTH Act regulations.

This report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in the Northern New Jersey region. While this report provides very basic information about the homeless population in Northern New Jersey, it may serve as the foundation of a more in depth review of the population and its needs. Communities in New Jersey are well positioned to move towards data driven planning with the wealth of information available through HMIS. We hope this report will serve as an example of how to take the first step in using data to transform the system.

## II. Key Findings

- A total of 6,830 households were housed in HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing programs during the January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011 report period
- There are 108 emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in Northern New Jersey.
- A total of 390 people were identified as chronically homeless
- Persons of Black/African American descent were disproportionately homeless compared to other races (Similar to findings from the 2010 National Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR).)
- Individuals experienced a higher incidence of first-time homelessness compared to families.
- Among the children sheltered as part of a family, more than half, almost 60%, were under the age of six.
- Less than 20% of both individual adults and adults in families were disabled.

### III. Data Source

This Regional Homeless Assessment Report for Northern New Jersey analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), the HMIS Lead Agency. In New Jersey, NJHMFA utilizes software developed by Foothold Technology as the primary HMIS system for the state. Data analyzed included that from all Northern New Jersey homeless programs for Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union and Warren Counties.

Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress was also analyzed as a comparison to the regional data. The AHAR provides estimates of the number and characteristics along with service patterns of all people who participated in residential programs for the homeless during the 2010 federal Fiscal Year (October 2009-September 2010).

This Regional Homeless Assessment Report is based on information about unduplicated homeless and formerly homeless families and individuals who used emergency shelter and transitional housing during the 10-month period from January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011, as reported in HMIS.

Data was collected in the following categories:

1. total number served
2. total number of adults vs. children
3. total number of persons homeless for the first time
4. length of homeless episode prior to program entry
5. average length of program stay emergency shelter vs. transitional housing
6. causes of homelessness
7. disabling condition
8. veteran status
9. race
10. ethnicity
11. gender
12. age range
13. chronically homeless

The data in this report was analyzed according to four reporting categories that are organized based on shelter type and individual/family type.

- Families in Emergency Shelters
- Families in Transitional Housing
- Individuals in Emergency Shelters
- Individuals in Transitional Housing

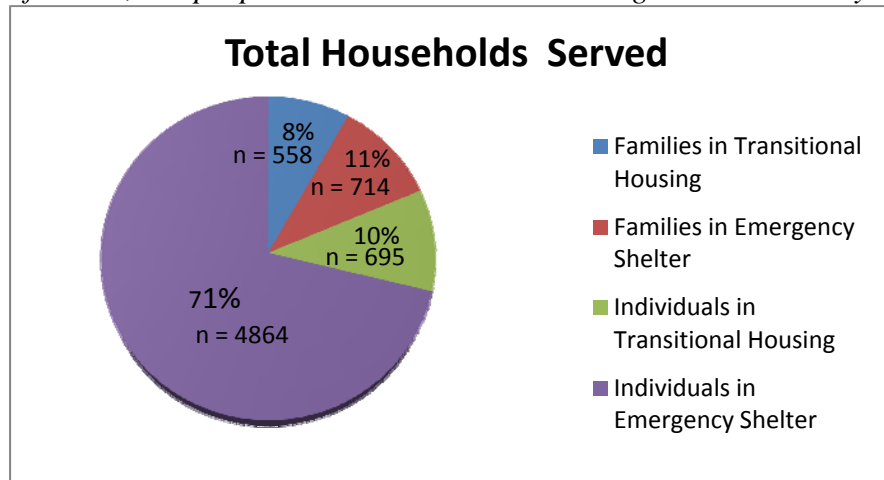
Families include households with at least one child age 17 or younger and at least one adult age 18 or older. All others were considered homeless individuals.

#### IV. Findings

The following section provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of homeless households in the Northern New Jersey region.

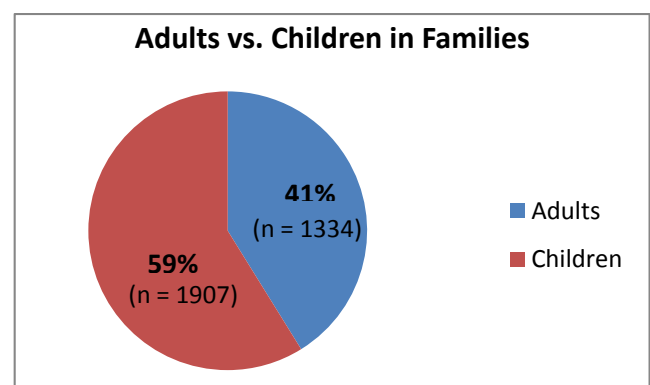
**Total Homeless Population.** A total of 6,830 households involving 8,800 people were housed in Northern Region HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing programs during the January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011 report period. This represents 53% of all 12,981 households and 52% of all 17,100 people who were homeless throughout New Jersey during the report period.

Out of those identified as homeless in the Northern Region, 714 (10.5%) were families served in emergency shelters and 558 (8.5%) were families served in transitional housing. 4,864 (71%) of the total northern population were individuals served in emergency shelters and 695 (10%) were individuals served in transitional housing.



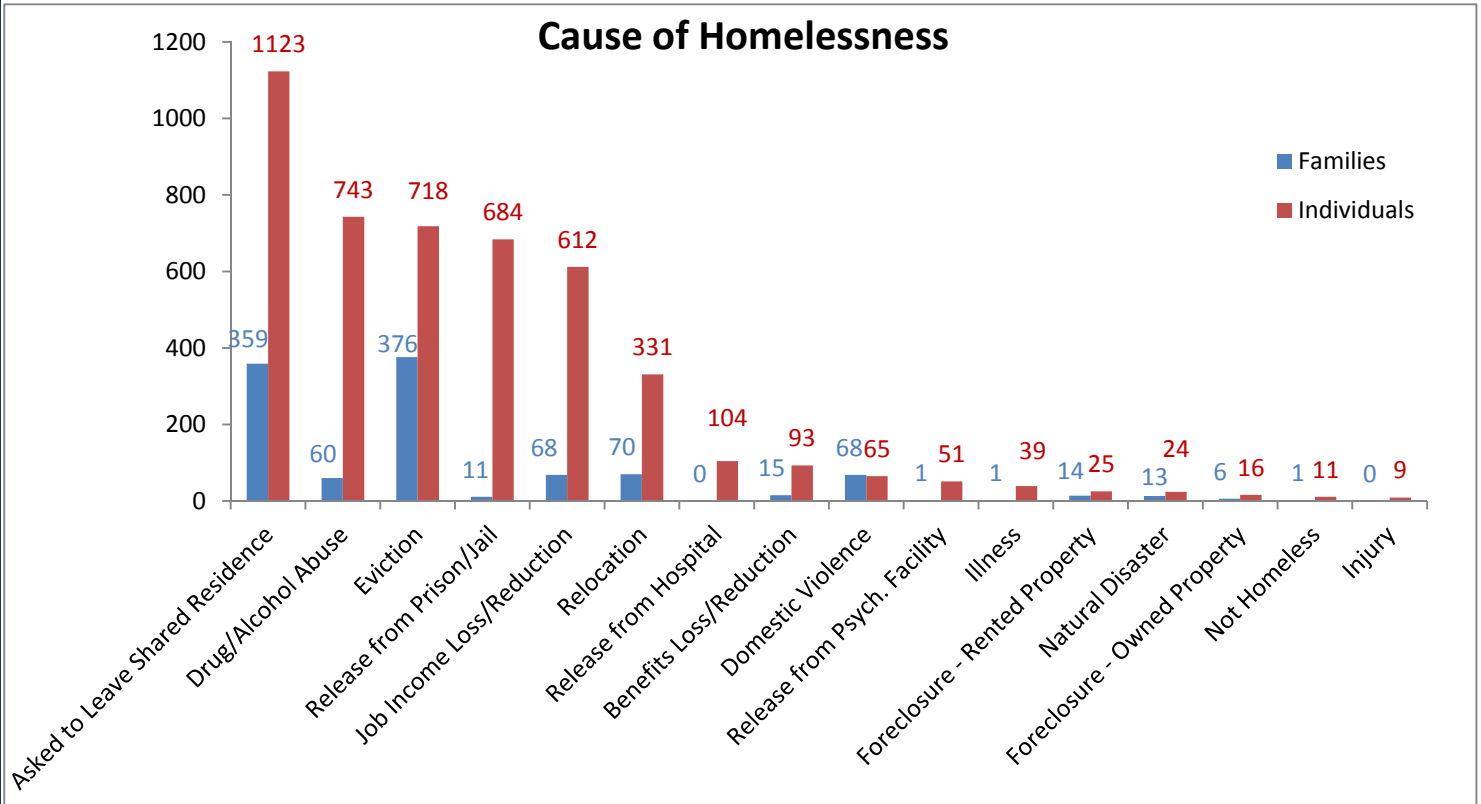
	Northern New Jersey	New Jersey	National
Total Persons served	8,800	17,100	1,540,151
Emergency Shelter	6,708	13,041	1,268,068
Individuals	4,864	8,547	859,426
Families	1,844	4,494	408,642
Transitional Housing	2,092	4,059	272,083
Individuals	695	1,745	137,992
Families	1,397	2,314	134,091

**Adults vs. Children in Families.** The average size of a homeless family sheltered in emergency shelter in Northern New Jersey is 3 persons while the average size of a family sheltered in transitional housing is 2 persons. Children represented 59% of persons sheltered as part of a family in both emergency shelters and transitional housing. Very few persons, less than 5%, sheltered as part of a family were over the age of 50. Among the children sheltered in the family population, more than half were under the age of six:



- 654 (59%) of the 1,104 children in emergency shelters were under age 6
- 473 (59%) of the 803 children in transitional housing were under age 6

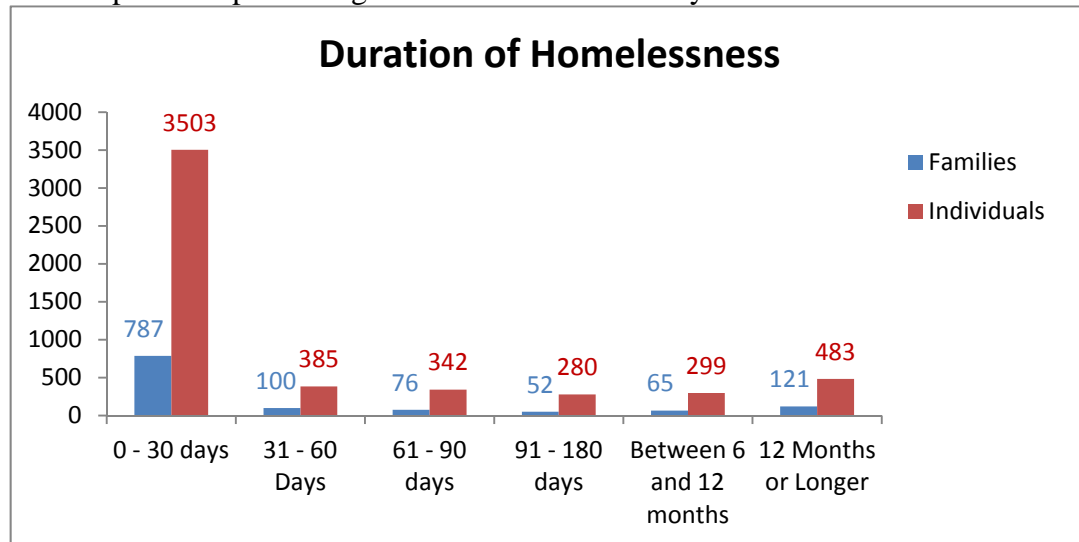
**Cause of Homelessness.** In both emergency shelter and transitional housing, the most reported cause of homelessness for individuals was being asked to leave a shared residence, which accounted for nearly one-quarter of all responses provided. For families, both in emergency shelter and transitional housing, eviction was the most reported cause, accounting for more than one-third of the responses.



For individuals, those asked to leave shared residence (24%) was followed by drug/alcohol abuse (16%), eviction (15%), release from prison/jail (15%) and job income loss/reduction (13%).

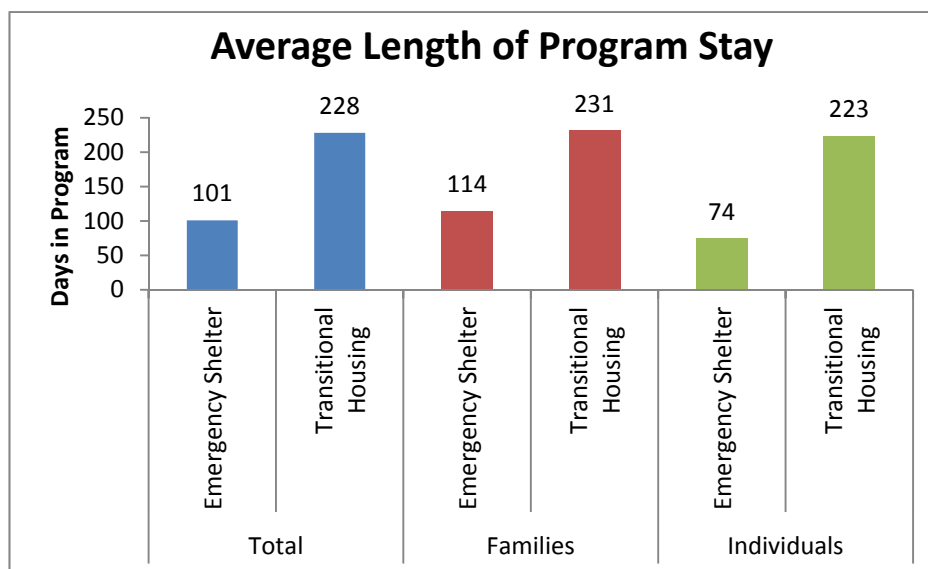
For families, eviction (35%) was followed by asked to leave a shared residence (34%), relocation (7%), domestic violence (6%), job income loss/reduction (6%) and drug/alcohol abuse (6%).

***Length of homeless episode prior to program entry.*** For both families (65%) and individuals (66%), most had become homeless very recently, within a month or less. 10% of families and 9% of individuals reported experiencing homelessness for over a year.

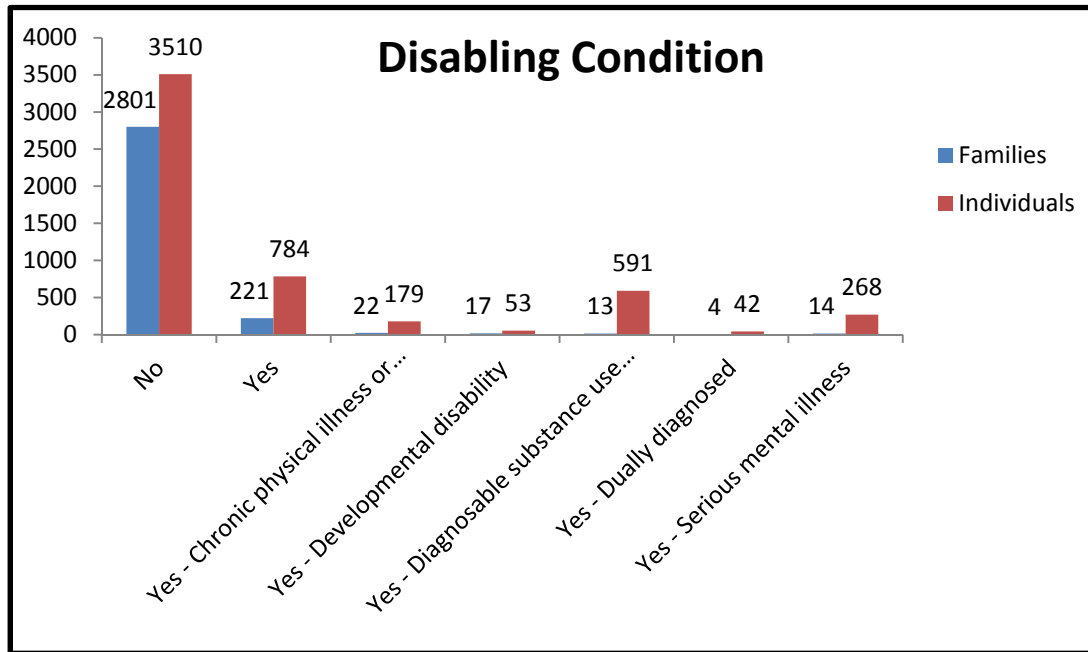


***Average Length of Program Stay.***

On average, families had longer program stays in both emergency shelter and transitional housing as compared to individuals. This difference was most evident for families in emergency shelters, who had stays that were almost twice as long as individuals' program stays in emergency shelter.



**Disabling Condition.** 2,208 persons (26% of total), including children, who were homeless in Northern New Jersey indicated having a disability. 36% of the individuals identified themselves as having a disabling condition compared to 9% of the families. The most prevalent disabling condition reported by families was chronic physical illness or disability, while the most prevalent condition for individuals was a diagnosable substance use disorder.



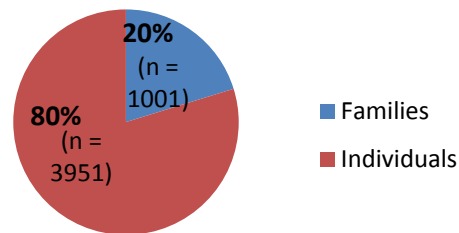
For those indicating a disabling condition, the breakdown is as follows:

Disabling Condition	Individuals	%	Families	%
Yes	784	41%	221	76%
Yes - Chronic physical illness or disability	179	9%	22	8%
Yes - Developmental disability	53	3%	17	6%
Yes - Diagnosable substance use disorder	591	31%	13	4%
Yes - Dually diagnosed	42	2%	4	1%
Yes - Serious mental illness	268	14%	14	5%
Total	1917	100%	291	100%

- 76% of families and 41% of individuals indicated a disabling condition however the specific disability was not provided.
- Among those reporting a disabling condition, diagnosable substance use disorder was significantly higher for individuals at 31% than families at 4%.
- Of those reporting a disabling condition, 14% of individuals had a serious mental illness compared to 5% of families.

**Homeless for the first time.** A total of 4,952 persons experienced homelessness for the first time during the report period. Individuals experienced a higher incidence of first-time homelessness (80%) compared to families (20%).

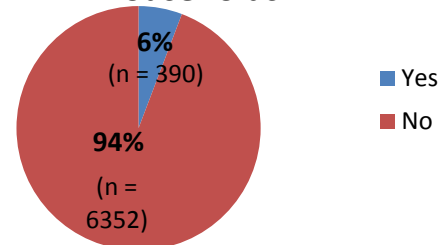
#### Homeless for the First Time



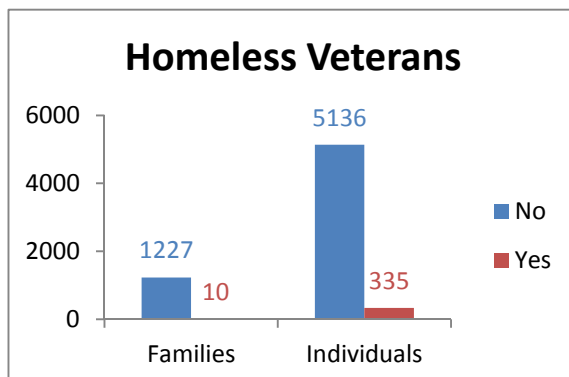
**Chronically Homeless and Veterans.** Chronic homelessness is defined as a person with a disabling condition being homeless for 12 months or longer or having 4 episodes of homelessness in 3 years.

Based on HMIS information, 6% of individuals served were identified as chronically homeless. This is slightly less than national results which indicate the chronically homeless population account for 10% of the total homeless population. It should be noted that the chronically homeless in this chart are only individuals. Due to the fact that the “chronic homeless” definition has recently changed, the HMIS system does not automatically generate information for chronically homeless families.

#### Chronically Homeless Households



#### Homeless Veterans

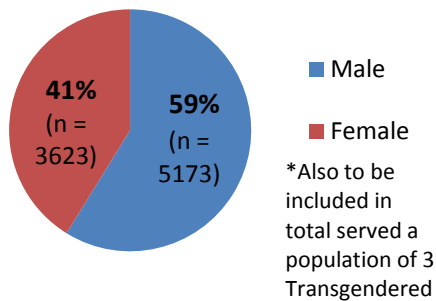


Very few adults sheltered as part of a family during this report period were identified in HMIS as veterans (.8%). On the other hand, 6% of individual adults accessing emergency shelters and transitional housing were identified as veterans. This is slightly lower than national estimates which indicate homeless veterans account for 11.5% of the total adult homeless population (Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report).

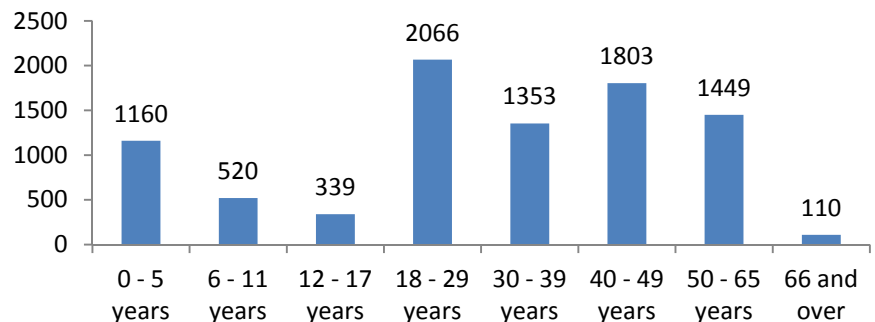


**Gender and Age Range.** More than half (59%) of homeless persons in Northern New Jersey were male, with women representing 41% of the population. This is slightly lower than the national trends which show a higher proportion of homeless males who represent 62.3% of the population, with women representing 37.7%. The average age of the individuals was 29 with almost half of the homeless population under the age of 30. 28% of those individuals 30 years or younger were under 6 years of age. 36% of the people were 30-49 years of age and only 18% were 50 years of age and over.

### Gender

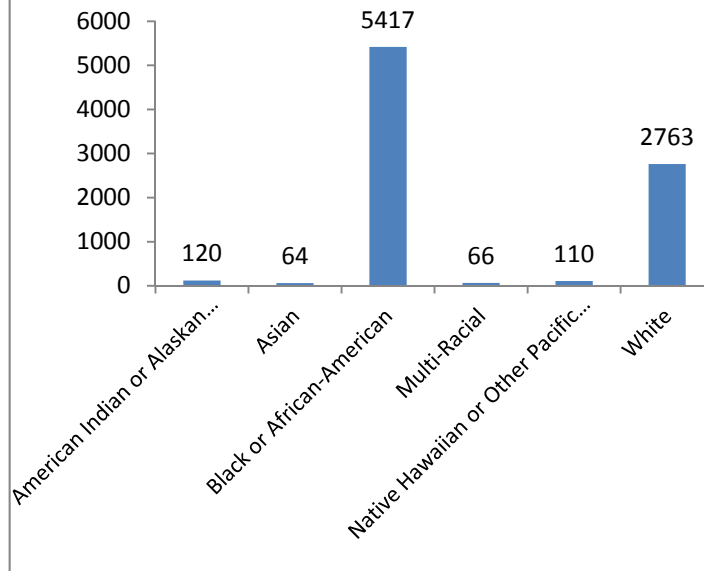


### Age Range



**Race and Ethnicity.** Most homeless persons reported their race as Black or African American (63%). The next largest racial group was White (32%), followed by American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%). Nationally, Black or African Americans represent 37% of the homeless population and Whites represent 41%. Regarding ethnicity, 79% of homeless persons self-identified their ethnicity as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino, which is comparable to 83% nationally.

### Race of Total Served



### Ethnicity for Total Served

