



# HOMELESSNESS IN ALABAMA STATEWIDE DATA REPORT 2007

THE GOVERNOR'S STATEWIDE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

## AUTHORS

The Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness prepared this report. The Council is extremely grateful to Jariel Rendell and Ginger Norling, AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members, for their tireless efforts in gathering, compiling, and publishing this data.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council thanks the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives for providing the resources to make this report possible. The Council also thanks each Alabama continuum of care (CoC) that provided point-in-time study data, each organization that hosted focus groups for the collection of qualitative data, and each Council member's agency that assisted with the preparation of this report. In addition, the Council thanks the YWCA of Central Alabama for providing several of the photographs used in this report.

## COVER PHOTOGRAPH

The cover photograph was taken under an overpass in Huntsville, Alabama.

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# LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR

My Fellow Alabamians:

Homelessness is difficult to imagine for those of us blessed with safe homes and comfortable beds where we sleep sheltered from the elements. Often, we are unaware that there are people who sleep in cars, parks, and woods. Yet, national research and the data in this report demonstrate that there are people right here in Alabama who have no shelter. The people described in this report are not merely statistics. Many of them led stable lives until a difficult or tragic circumstance resulted in the loss of their home. Situations such as the death of a spouse, unemployment, development of a mental or physical illness, fleeing domestic violence, or a natural disaster can shift a person or an entire family into homelessness.



As you will see in this book, many individuals and families are striving to overcome homelessness. Despite this daunting challenge, Alabama is blessed with many effective nonprofit organizations and compassionate citizens. These faith-based and community groups often provide a bridge to housing and assist individuals to regain their dignity by once again becoming active, contributing members of society. Although this report profiles homelessness across the state, inevitably the most promising solutions will come from caring people at the local level who craft innovative solutions.

Preventing and ending homelessness in Alabama will be impossible without collaboration by government agencies, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based and community partners. Just as vital are the caring people of this State who assist the homeless by partnering with these community groups. Only by harnessing the compassion within each of us will we be able to adequately confront this issue. I invite you to join in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Governor

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Fellow Alabamians:

On behalf of the Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness, I am pleased to present the Council's first statewide data report on homelessness in Alabama. Too often, homeless individuals remain hidden in the darkest corners of our communities. Too many homeless Alabamians sleep on park benches, in abandoned buildings, or in jails. This report recognizes their struggles and outlines the scope of homelessness in Alabama. In the following pages, you will find not only the numbers and demographics of these people, but also their individual stories.

Governor Bob Riley created the Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness with the signing of Executive Order #31 on August 11, 2005. He charged the Council to develop and implement a plan to prevent and end homelessness in Alabama. In the plan, the Council identified compilation of accurate statewide data on homelessness as a pressing need. Like all data, the information in the report is limited in certain areas. Collecting data on homelessness is inherently difficult because collection techniques vary widely, but the Council's report presents a snapshot of homelessness across the state.

It is the hope of the Council that this information will serve as a foundation for all stakeholders striving to address the complicated issue of homelessness. Armed with better information and a renewed commitment to returning these individuals to more stable lives, government and private organizations can better partner with local faith and community-based groups to develop far reaching solutions.

Sincerely,



Chair

Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness

# DATA SOURCES

Collecting accurate numerical data on homelessness is challenging for a variety of reasons.<sup>1</sup> In Alabama, data on adult, youth, and child homelessness are generally collected and reported differently across regions. Therefore, numerical data on homelessness were based on information from multiple sources. Because aggregate numerical data can fail to capture qualitative factors, such as the personal experiences associated with homelessness, data were also collected from qualitative sources.

Quantitative sources were (1) point-in-time homeless population and subpopulations data reported to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by each continuum of care (CoC) as part of the 2007 CoC application process,<sup>2</sup> (2) additional CoC point-in-time study data for year 2007, (3) data from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau's Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) for the year 2006, and (4) school year 2005-2006 data on homeless children and youth reported by the Alabama State Department of Education to the United States Department of Education.

Qualitative data were collected from two sources: (1) focus groups with currently or previously homeless individuals across the state conducted by AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) members from the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) and (2) individual stories of homelessness collected by VISTAs from the GFBCI.

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1 The National Alliance to End Homelessness' report *Homelessness Counts* summarizes some of the key challenges associated with homelessness data collection. It is available online at the following address: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1441>.

2 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, Exhibit 1, Part II, Section K.

# LIMITATIONS

Data were collected from multiple sources, each of which has specific limitations; as a result, both the collected data as a whole and the individual underlying data have numerous specific limitations. Most importantly, the point-in-time data reflect the number of homeless individuals counted by each Alabama continuum of care (CoC) on a given night. It does not represent the number of individuals who experience homelessness in Alabama during the course of a year, which is certainly much larger. Below is a list of the other important limitations of the data reported here:

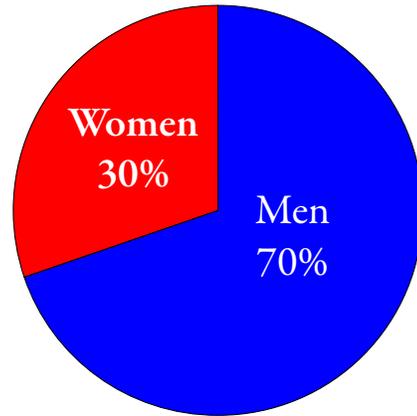
- Each Alabama CoC collects its point-in-time data differently, and each faces unique challenges. The sophistication and accuracy of the CoC point-in-time studies vary widely across the state.
- Data from each CoC vary in breadth and quality. Unavailable or compromised data were not reported, and, as a result, the amount of data reported for each region differs.
- Because data were drawn from multiple sources, it is likely that some individuals were counted more than once.
- Data from the various sources should be compared with caution because time frames and definitions may differ. Point-in-time data reflect the number of individuals homeless on one night. Information on runaway and homeless youth reflects one year's worth of data. Education data defines homelessness more broadly and reflects the number of children and youth in the school system who experienced homelessness during one school year.

# STATEWIDE DATA

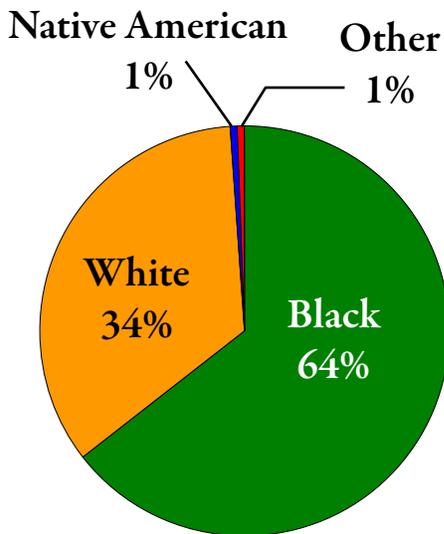
On any given night in 2007,

# 5,391

Alabamians are homeless.



Homelessness By Gender



Homelessness By Race



# STATEWIDE DATA

Of them,  
1,027 are chronically homeless,  
2,177 are chronic substance abusers,  
1,077 are in families with dependent children,  
205 are persons with HIV/AIDS,  
1,494 are severely mentally ill,  
57 are unaccompanied youth,  
1,659 are unsheltered,  
974 are veterans, and  
403 are victims of domestic violence.



(Photos: YWCA Central Alabama)

Note: The subpopulation data above were calculated using regional data. Because two continua of care did not report certain data, the actual numbers of homeless Alabamians in certain subpopulations may be higher than reported above. See Regional Data for more detailed information.

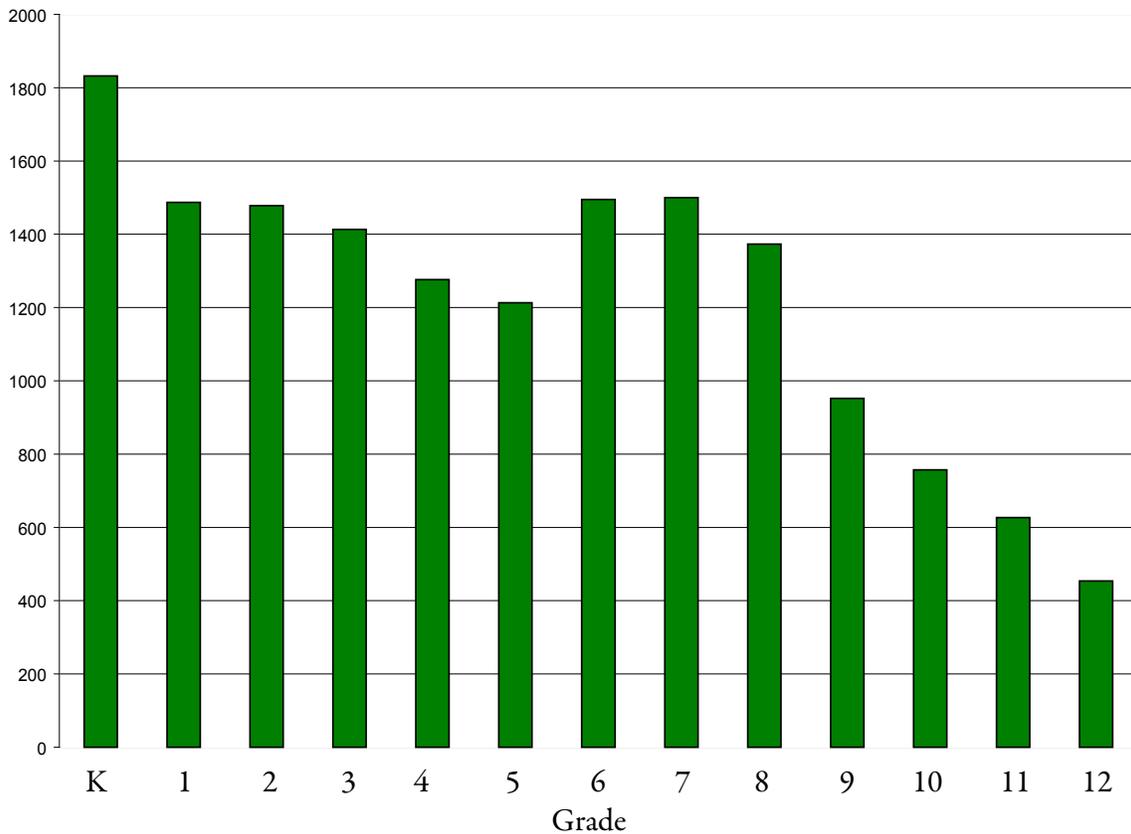
# STATEWIDE DATA

During the 2005-2006 school year,

# 15,857

Alabama public schoolchildren experienced homelessness.

### Children Homeless By Grade In 2005-2006



Note: This number refers to non-duplicate children who experienced homelessness at an individual school. However, if a child had two or more episodes of homelessness in different schools, that child would likely have been counted once for every episode of homelessness at each school.

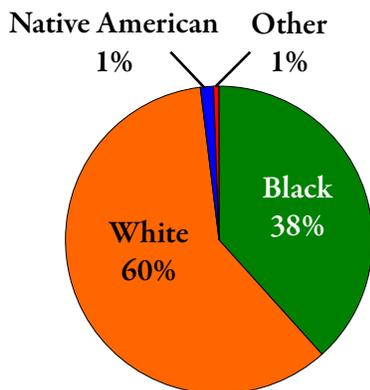
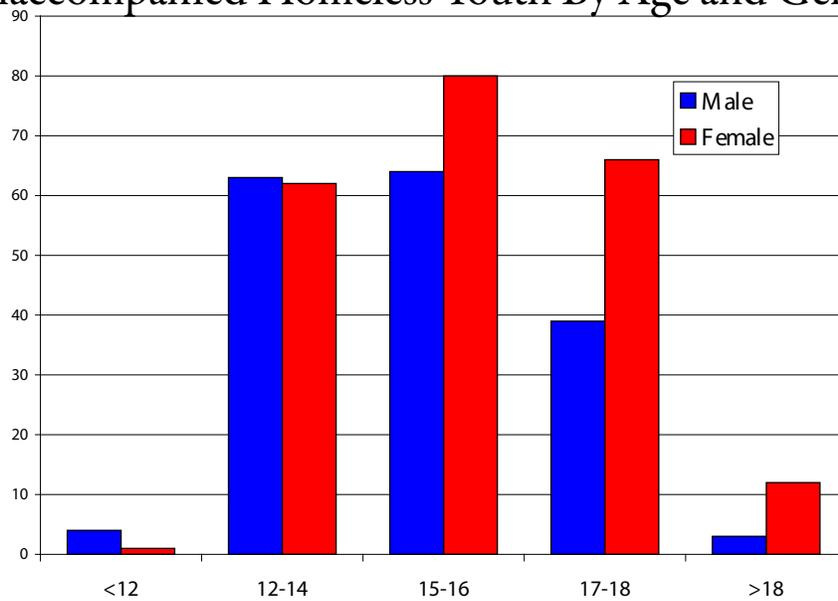
# STATEWIDE DATA

In 2006,

# 394

unaccompanied Alabama youth experienced homelessness.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth By Age and Gender



Previous Living Situation

	Shelter	On Street	With Parent/Guardian	Foster Home	Residential Program	Other
Male	1	11	122	6	14	19
Female	9	22	147	4	14	25

# HOMELESS SUBPOPULATIONS



Veterans Robin, “Sarge,” and Donnie are joined by Gail Scott, Executive Director of First Stop, in their camp under an I-565 overpass in Huntsville, Alabama.

# CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a chronically homeless individual as one who is unaccompanied, has a disability (which can be defined as a physical disability, mental illness, or a substance abuse disorder), and who has been continually homeless for at least a year or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years.<sup>3</sup> Nationwide, between 10 and 20% of the overall homeless population are considered chronically homeless.<sup>4</sup> However, they utilize a disproportionate share of services because of the challenges faced in serving them. Resources that have been targeted as overused by the chronically homeless include shelter nights, emergency medical care and jail nights. There is a national effort to address this issue through the continued creation of permanent supportive housing units.

In Alabama, 19.7% of the homeless are characterized as chronically homeless, representing a total of 1,027 individuals.

## VOICES OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

“After being out here a long time, it gets to you mentally. You have to look over your shoulder all the time for people sneaking up on you, wanting to tear up your camp for fun. Basically, what we’re doing is surviving. Figuring out what we have to do to get to the next minute.”

“Your self-esteem suffers. I don’t believe I can hold down a full-time job. Who’s going to hire me? And how am I going to get there? I try to get assistance, but I just keep getting denied. They just keep knocking me down. It’s like a cycle.”

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3 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. SuperNOFA for Continuum of Care Programs: Fiscal Year 2006. Washington, D.C.

4 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Chronic Homelessness Brief*, March 2007.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence can lead to homelessness because a victim often has nowhere to go when fleeing an abusive situation. Unfortunately, lack of viable housing options can sometimes force a victim back to her or his abuser.<sup>5</sup> Finding housing as a victim of domestic violence can be complicated by problems of bad credit and unsteady job histories that stem from the abuse.<sup>6</sup> The victim leaving a domestic violence situation is often accompanied by children, creating a financial burden on the victim alone to provide for the family. The vast majority of domestic violence victims are female and represent every race, education level, class, and religion. Nationwide, family homelessness is caused by domestic violence an estimated 13% of the time.<sup>7</sup>

In 2004, 13% of violent offenses in Alabama were incidents of domestic violence.<sup>8</sup> The 2007 regional count of the homeless revealed that, at any given time, 403 of the homeless in the state are victims of domestic violence, representing 7.5% of Alabama's homeless population.

## VOICE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS

“I stayed with my husband for longer than I should have because I didn't know where else to go. But the verbal abuse turned to physical abuse, and I was scared for the safety of my babies, so I had to get out of there.”

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5 Correia, Amy, *Housing and Battered Women*. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, March 1999.

6 Reif, Susan and Krishner, Lisa, *Subsidized Housing and the Unique Needs of Domestic Violence Victims*, National Center on Law and Poverty (2000).

7 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Policy Focus Areas: Domestic Violence*, July 2007.

8 *2004 Domestic Violence in Alabama*, State of Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center.

# FAMILIES

A growing number of families across the country are experiencing homelessness due to the growing gap between wages and cost of housing. An estimated 600,000 families in America experience homelessness in a given year, including 1.35 million children.<sup>9</sup> Making the housing market more accessible to America's poor will serve to decrease family homelessness, as the differences between families experiencing poverty who are homeless versus impoverished families who are housed are negligible.<sup>10</sup>

On any given night in 2007, there are 444 Alabama families with dependent children experiencing homelessness. In those homeless families, there are a total of 1,077 adults and children, representing 20% of Alabama's total homeless population. Of them, 291 spend the night unsheltered.

## VOICE OF HOMELESS FAMILIES

“One of the challenges for me was to reassure my children that we were going to be OK. I needed to rebuild that trust – that we were still a family. That we didn't need to have a house to be a family.”

9 Culhane, Dennis. *Family Homelessness: Where to From Here?* National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference on Ending Family Homelessness, October 14, 2004.

10 National Alliance to End Homelessness. *FactChecker: Family Homelessness*. February 2007.

## MENTAL ILLNESS

It has been estimated that about half of Americans who experience homelessness have a mental illness, with half of those individuals characterized as seriously mentally ill.<sup>11</sup> These conditions serve to exacerbate the stress experienced by homeless individuals. Mental illness can also act to cause homelessness. The movement to close mental health facilities in the latter half of last century coincided with rising living costs in cities.<sup>12</sup> The rate at which homeless who were mentally ill were released from mental health facilities far outpaced the rate at which supportive housing units for them were created.



In Alabama, 27.7% of the homeless population is mentally ill, amounting to 1,494 individuals.

### VOICE OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND HOMELESSNESS

“Three years ago, I was working for the city government at a good job. I had been fighting depression and all kinds of stuff for 20 years and I was just in denial. Then I started falling more and more behind. I was able to keep it together at work, but my private life was gone. My house was filthy and I started going to work not being as clean as I should be until I got fired. But I was still in denial. I had no job, no house, and I didn’t know where I’d go the next day...where I’d stay.”

11 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Policy Focus Areas: Mental Health and Physical Health*, July 2007.

12 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Chronic Homelessness Brief*, March 2007.

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Chronic substance abuse, which includes the use of either or both alcohol and illicit drugs, occurs in approximately half of all homeless adults in America.<sup>13</sup> Chronic substance abuse can both cause and result from homelessness. In the homeless population, chronic substance abuse is often comorbid with mental illness.<sup>14</sup> Veterans have a particularly high rate of co-occurring mental illness and drug or alcohol abuse, with estimates ranging from one-third to one-half.<sup>15</sup> Abusing drugs and alcohol makes it difficult to maintain housing, avoid the criminal justice system and stay healthy.

There are a total of 2,177 homeless Alabamians who have a chronic substance abuse disorder, representing 40.4% of the total population.

## VOICES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND HOMELESSNESS

“Drugs are what led to my homelessness. I wound up in jail. I lost my home and my family. The clothes I had on my back when I came to my place had my state number on them.”

“Staying clean is what got me out of homelessness. Using took the focus off of what was going on. Even though the problems were still there...they ain’t going nowhere...when you use or drink it makes the problem worse, but in my mind I was thinking that I didn’t have to deal with anything right now. But I’m just adding problems on top of problems. When I’m using, I’m just getting myself in deeper and deeper.”

13 LeFauve, Charlene, Ph.D., *Substance Abuse and Homelessness*. Presented at the National Alliance to End Homelessness Annual Conference, July 18, 2006.

14 Ibid.

15 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Blueprint for Change: Ending Chronic Homelessness for Persons with Serious Mental Illnesses and Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders*, 2003.

# VETERANS

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), there are as many as 200,000 homeless individuals nationwide who have served in the Armed Forces, making up about one-third of the total homeless population.<sup>16</sup> The same factors leading to homelessness in the general population cause homelessness among veterans; however, these problems can often be compounded by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) acquired while serving in combat.<sup>17</sup> There are homeless veterans representing many conflicts, including World War II, Korea, Vietnam and, most recently, Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Although the VA provides many services for these individuals, homeless veterans also must rely on community-based organizations for assistance.<sup>19</sup>

974 of Alabama's homeless on any given night have served in the military. This accounts for 18.1% of the overall homeless population in the state.

## VOICE OF HOMELESS VETERANS

“We need services tailored to our needs, our mindsets. We don't fit in with the rest of the homeless people. We've seen and done things that can't be talked about. It's important to have the support of people who have had the same experiences as you.”

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- 16 United States Department of Veterans Affairs, *Homeless Veterans: Overview of Homelessness*, July 2007.  
17 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, *Background & Statistics*, July 2007.  
18 National Alliance to End Homelessness. *Policy Focus Areas: Veterans*, July 2007.  
19 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, *Background & Statistics*, July 2007.

# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

In America, an estimated 5 to 7.7% of youth experience homelessness.<sup>20</sup> The causes of homelessness are often the same for youth as they are for adults. However, there are additional factors that can lead to homelessness among youth. Leading causes for youth homelessness include family breakdown, release from foster care, and discharge from a juvenile detention facility.<sup>21</sup> Youth homelessness is a particularly pressing problem because of the increased risk the unhoused young face in terms of mental illness, physical and sexual assault,<sup>22</sup> and exploitation, including prostitution.<sup>23</sup>

The school system uses a different definition than HUD to define homelessness to include all children not living in a stable environment. By this definition, there were 15,857 who experienced homelessness at some point during the 2005-2006 school year. Additionally, between 2005 and 2006, Alabama's youth shelters served 394 runaway and homeless young people. On any given night in 2007, 57 unaccompanied youth are homeless, representing 1.1% of Alabama's homeless population.

## VOICE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

“Being young and homeless, I feel it’s harder to fit in because everyone is older. I feel out of place at the shelter...plus, it’s harder to get a job when you’re young. It just makes me feel even more alone and aggravated and depressed.”

20 Robertson, M.J., and Toro, P.A.. *Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, Policy. National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., 1998.

21 National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Fact Checker: Youth Homelessness*, June 2007.

22 Healthcare for the Homeless Clinician's Network, *Protecting the Mental Health of Homeless Children and Youth*. Healing Hands, 4(1), Feb. 2000.

23 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The StreetWorks Collaborative: A Continuum of Care for Homeless Youth*. Office of Policy Development and Research, December 2002.

# REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS



(Photo: YWCA Central Alabama)

# HOMELESSNESS REGIONS

The following pages report data on homelessness from each of the state's regional continua of care (CoC).

Alabama Continuum of Care County Map



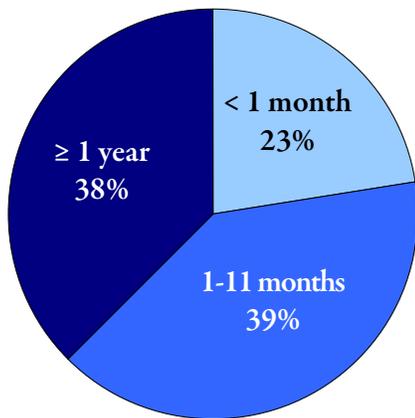
# GULF COAST

BALDWIN AND MOBILE COUNTIES

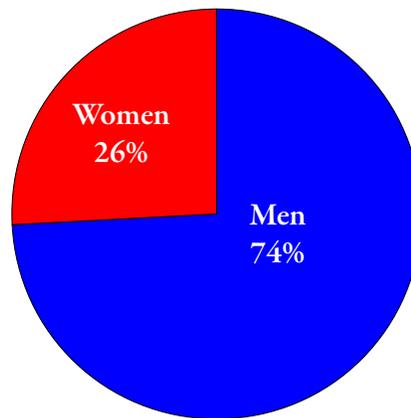
**621** people are homeless on any given night in Alabama's Gulf Coast region.

- 84 are chronically homeless
- 135 are chronic substance abusers
- 122 are in families with dependent children
- 22 are persons with HIV/AIDS
- 47 are severely mentally ill
- 0 are unaccompanied youth
- 239 are unsheltered
- 128 are veterans
- 119 are victims of domestic violence

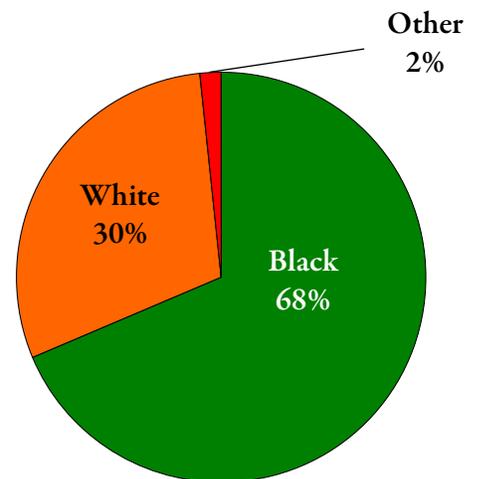
Length of Homelessness



Homelessness By Gender



Homelessness By Race



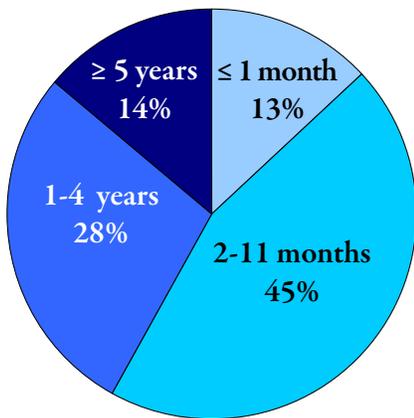
# METROPOLITAN BIRMINGHAM

JEFFERSON, SHELBY, AND ST. CLAIR COUNTIES

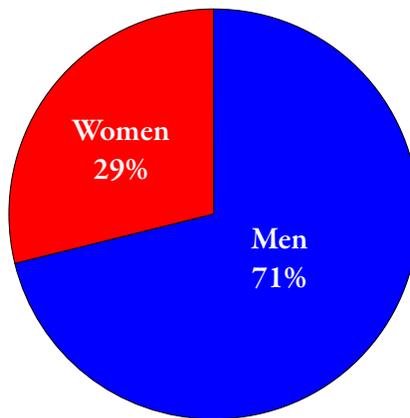
**2,104** people are homeless on any given night in Metropolitan Birmingham.

- 516 are chronically homeless
- 1105 are chronic substance abusers
- 575 are in families with dependent children
- 155 are persons with HIV/AIDS
- 810 are severely mentally ill
- 34 are unaccompanied youth
- 864 are unsheltered
- 433 are veterans
- 130 are victims of domestic violence

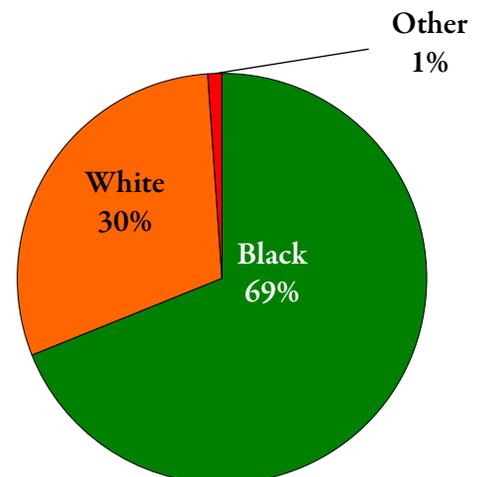
**Length of Homelessness**



**Homelessness By Gender**



**Homelessness By Race**



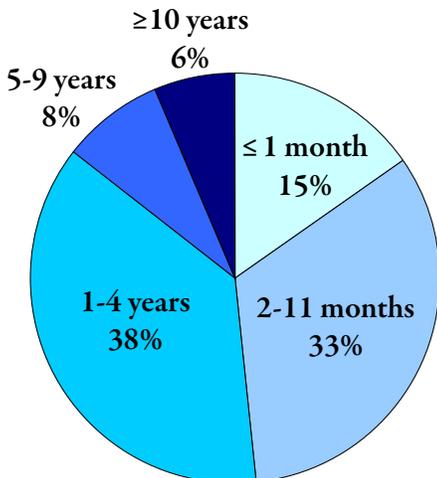
# MID-ALABAMA

BULLOCK, ELMORE, LOWNDES, AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

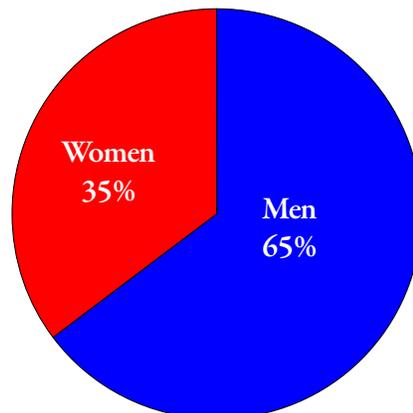
**456** people are homeless on any given night in the Mid-Alabama region.

- 108 are chronically homeless
- 187 are chronic substance abusers
- 64 are in families with dependent children
- 4 are persons with HIV/AIDS
- 148 are severely mentally ill
- 1 is an unaccompanied youth
- 125 are unsheltered
- 63 are veterans
- 27 are victims of domestic violence

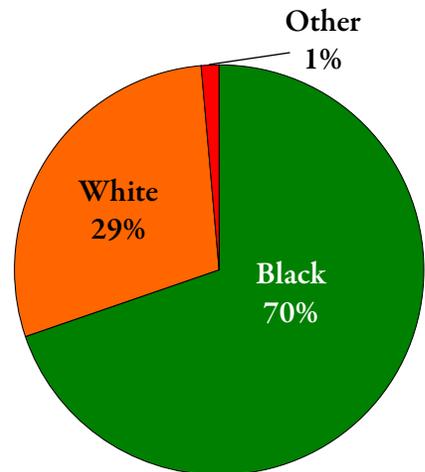
Length of Homelessness



Homelessness By Gender



Homelessness By Race



# NORTH ALABAMA

LIMESTONE, MADISON, AND MORGAN COUNTIES

**830** people are homeless on any given night in the North Alabama region.

215 are chronically homeless

594 are chronic substance abusers

69 are in families with dependent children

0 are persons with HIV/AIDS

290 are severely mentally ill

9 are unaccompanied youth

74 are unsheltered

260 are veterans

25 are victims of domestic violence

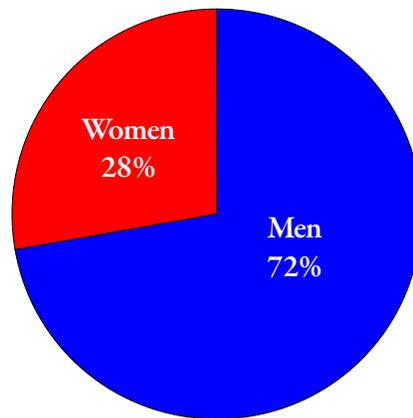
# NORTHEAST ALABAMA

CALHOUN, CHEROKEE, DEKALB, AND ETOWAH COUNTIES

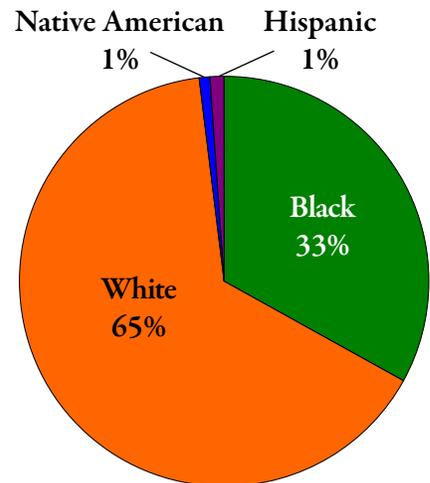
**119** people are homeless on any given night in the Northeast Alabama region.

- 14 are chronically homeless
- 49 are chronic substance abusers
- 16 are in families with dependent children
- 19 are persons with HIV/AIDS
- 35 are severely mentally ill
- 11 are unaccompanied youth
- 15 are unsheltered
- 15 are veterans
- 21 are victims of domestic violence

Homelessness By Gender



Homelessness By Race



# NORTHWEST ALABAMA

COLBERT, FRANKLIN, LAUDERDALE, LAWRENCE,  
MARION, AND WINSTON COUNTIES

**265** people are homeless on any given night in  
the Northeast Alabama region.

3 are chronically homeless

56 are chronic substance abusers

122 are in families with dependent children

1 is a person with HIV/AIDS

19 are severely mentally ill

0 are unaccompanied youth

134 are unsheltered

2 are veterans

36 are victims of domestic violence

# RURAL ALABAMA

## BALANCE OF STATE

**478** people are homeless on any given night in the Rural Alabama region.

43 are chronically homeless

23 are chronic substance abusers

109 are in families with dependent children

3 are persons with HIV/AIDS

28 are severely mentally ill

2 are unaccompanied youth

103 are unsheltered

6 are veterans

23 are victims of domestic violence

# RUSSELL COUNTY

## RUSSELL COUNTY

**203** people are homeless on any given night in the Russell County region.

An unknown number are chronically homeless

An unknown number are chronic substance abusers

An unknown number are in families with dependent children

An unknown number are persons with HIV/AIDS

An unknown number are severely mentally ill

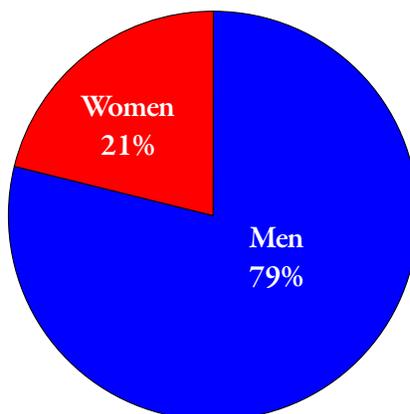
An unknown number are unaccompanied youth

89 are unsheltered

An unknown number are veterans

5 are victims of domestic violence

### Homelessness By Gender



# TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

## TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

**315** people are homeless on any given night in the Tuscaloosa region.

44 are chronically homeless

28 are chronic substance abusers

An unknown number are in families with dependent children

1 is a person with HIV/AIDS

117 are severely mentally ill

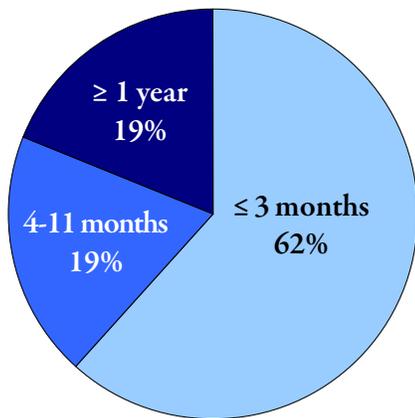
An unknown number are unaccompanied youth

16 are unsheltered

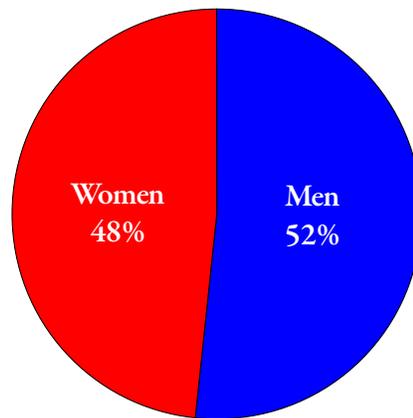
67 are veterans

17 are victims of domestic violence

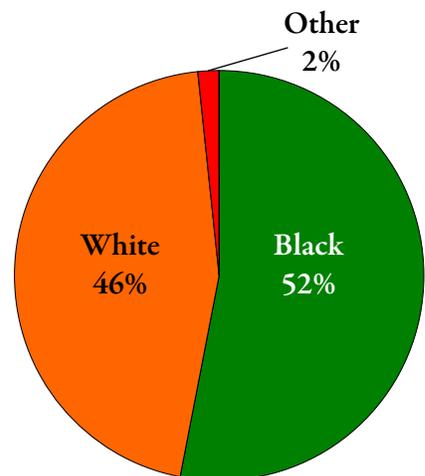
Length of Homelessness



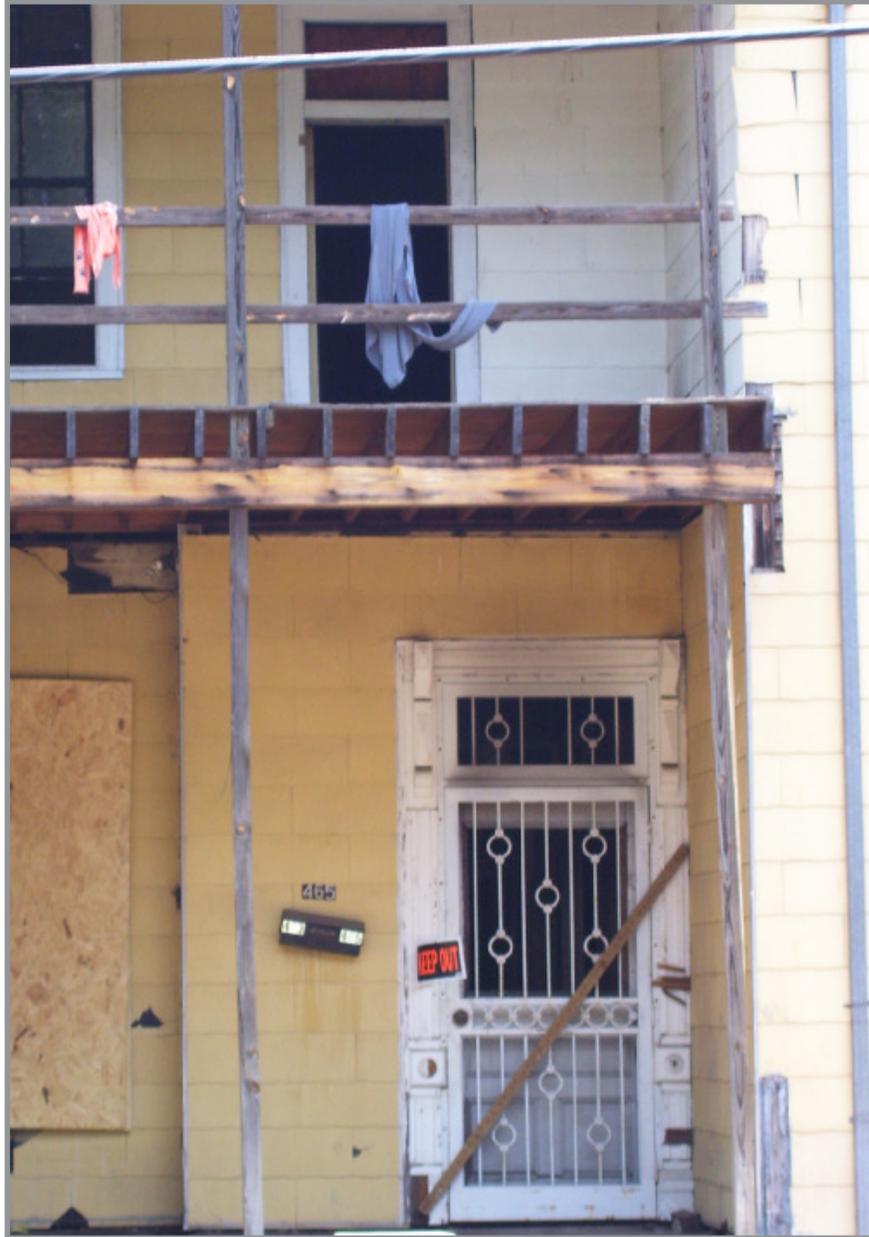
Homelessness By Gender



Homelessness By Race



# SOLVING HOMELESSNESS



## CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

	Gulf Coast (%)	NE Alabama (%) <sup>a</sup>	Tuscaloosa Co. (%)
By choice	2.1	*	1.6
Divorce/family break up	2.5	14	1.6
Domestic violence	12.5	10	4.3
Eviction	8.2	17	10.5
House burned down	*	*	0.3
Hurricane	3.9	*	*
Inadequate income	8.6	28	5.4
Kicked out by family or others	5.9	6	1.9
Loss of benefits	0.4	*	*
Loss of spouse	0.4	*	*
Medical problem(s)	3.9	110	1.2
Mental illness	3.6	45.3	10
Other	5	17	5
Physical disability	*	*	0.8
Ran away from home	0.4	*	*
Released from hospital	0.7	*	*
Released from jail	3.6	15	2.3
Released from psychiatric institution	*	0.8	*
Released from treatment program	0.7	*	*
Substance abuse	23.2	42	16.7
Unemployment	14.3	21	2.3

<sup>a</sup>The sum of percentages in this column is larger than 100% because Northeast Alabama, recognizing that there is often no single cause for an individual's homelessness, allowed its homeless residents to select more than one cause.

\* Data not collected.

Note: Information on causes of homelessness is only available for Alabama's Gulf Coast, Northeast Alabama, and Tuscaloosa County regions. Such data were not collected in other regions of the state.

# HOMELESS NEEDS

	Gulf Coast (%)	Metropolitan Birmingham (%)	Mid-Alabama (%)	NE Alabama (%)
A place to receive mail	*	*	15.9	*
A place to shower	*	*	14.8	*
A place to store belongings	*	*	18.1	*
Case management	18.8	17	*	19
Child care	5.3	4.3	4.8	6
Clothing	17.9	24.2	*	15
Dental care	*	*	51.2	*
Development disability services	*	4.1	*	*
Emergency shelter	19.1	11.7	*	14
First aid	*	10.6	*	11
Food assistance	17.9	46.6	*	20
Help finding a job	*	*	34.2	*
Help signing up for gov't programs	*	*	23.7	*
Help obtaining identification			7.7	
Help with a physical disability	10.6	7.4	*	8
Housing placement	*	30.2	*	30
Job skills/job training	*	*	24.9	24
Job training/employment assistance	22.6	24.6	*	*
Legal assistance	10.3	13.4	*	16
Life skills training	10	13.5	*	15
Medical care	17.3	10.6	36.5	16
Medicine	*	*	18	36.6
Mental health services	11.1	13.4	39.6	16
Other	2.1	*	4.1	8
Permanent supportive housing	*	33.9	*	30
Rental/utilities assistance	21.4	11	*	*
Substance abuse treatment	12.6	14.3	31.8	8
Transitional housing	38.7	17.7	*	24
Transportation	19.9	24.5	32.9	31

\* Data not collected.

Note: The sum of the percentages are greater than 100% because any individual may have multiple needs. Data are reported only for the continuums of care that collected needs data.

## ALABAMA'S RESPONSE



Governor Bob Riley signs Executive Order #31 at the YWCA in Birmingham on August 11, 2005. Behind him are Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and Bob Young, Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness was created on August 11, 2005, with the signing of Executive Order #31 by Governor Bob Riley and is housed within the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. From its inception, the Council's goal was to develop and implement a plan to prevent and end homelessness in Alabama, bringing together 28 representatives from state agencies, businesses, and the nonprofit sector to achieve this goal.

## THE PLAN

In June 2006, the Council submitted its *Blueprint Towards a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Alabama* to Governor Riley. The Plan cites fiscal optimization, evaluation of available services, public awareness, increasing access to permanent housing, and developing comprehensive and accessible statewide data on homelessness as keys to creating a successful foundation upon which progress to eradicate homelessness can be built. It is this last component of the plan which is the motivation for this data summary. The Council will use this data to refine the Plan and to tailor it to the needs of this state's homeless and near homeless, as well as to make Alabamians aware of the struggle that too many of their neighbors face.

Alabama's Plan recognizes the importance of using the Housing First model, supported by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. National research indicates the Housing First model, which provides rapid access to housing for homeless individuals, reduces costs and improves outcomes. The cities of Montgomery and Mobile have also developed local plans, and several other areas of the state are currently in the planning process.

## MORE INFORMATION

More information about the Council is available on its website at [www.ServeAlabama.gov/Homelessness](http://www.ServeAlabama.gov/Homelessness). Electronic versions of Executive Order #31, Alabama's state and local plans to address homelessness, and this report are available online. Also available is a full list of the Council's members, Council news, and homelessness resources. Detailed information on the data reported here, including electronic copies of regional data and a full report on the Council's statewide homeless focus groups, are also posted.

## WHAT HOMELESS ALABAMIANS WANT YOU TO KNOW:

**“We’re not all uneducated.”**

“We don’t want a handout. We want a hand up.”

**“Anyone can become homeless  
under certain circumstances.”**

*“We are human beings.”      “We’re not all the same.”*

“You could be working alongside someone who is homeless.”

“THERE SHOULD BE MORE GRATITUDE FOR HOMELESS  
VETERANS.”

*“Not everyone is homeless because of a bad decision.”*

**“I work **two jobs** and still can’t get  
out of homelessness.”**

“You don’t have space of your own when you’re homeless.”



“I feel that if I were to tell someone I’m homeless, they’d assume I’m lazy, living in a cardboard box, but that’s **not true at all.**”

**“We want to flourish just as much as you do.”**

**“There are people from many different walks of life who are homeless.”**

“IT’S DANGEROUS OUT HERE.”      *“People don’t ask to be homeless.”*

“Homeless people need **volunteers** to help them.”

“Homelessness could happen to anyone very quickly because of a health problem or a disaster.”

**“A lot of us aren’t on drugs or alcohol.”**

*“Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, whether homeless or not.”*

Note: These quotes come from homeless individuals across Alabama responding to the focus group question, “What is most important for Alabamians to understand about homelessness?”



GOVERNOR'S STATEWIDE  
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL  
— ON —  
HOMELESSNESS

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