

City of Cambridge: 2015 Census of Persons Experiencing Homelessness

OVERVIEW

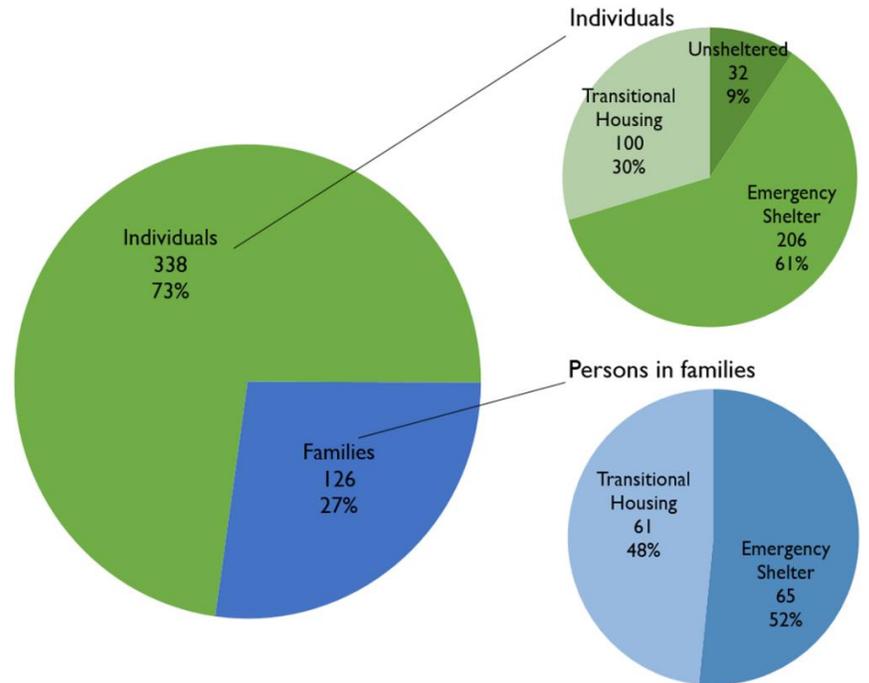
On the night of February 25, 2015, staff from the Department of Human Service Programs, partner agencies, and community volunteers completed the annual count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The census is conducted in accordance with requirements outlined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and includes a count of individuals and families staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing, and an overnight count of unsheltered individuals. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that the annual count occur during the last ten days of January, but due to historic snowfall in 2015, HUD granted a waiver allowing the count to be postponed until the end of February.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Cambridge counted 464 persons experiencing homelessness during the night between February 25 and February 26, 2015. Single individuals made up the majority of persons counted (73%), and persons in family households represented less than one third (27%) of the total count. The total count of 464 persons includes:

- 50 families (126 persons)
 - 26 in emergency shelter (65 persons)
 - 24 in transitional housing (61 persons)
- 338 individuals
 - 32 unsheltered
 - 206 in emergency shelter
 - 100 in transitional housing

Persons experiencing homelessness the night of Feb. 25, 2015



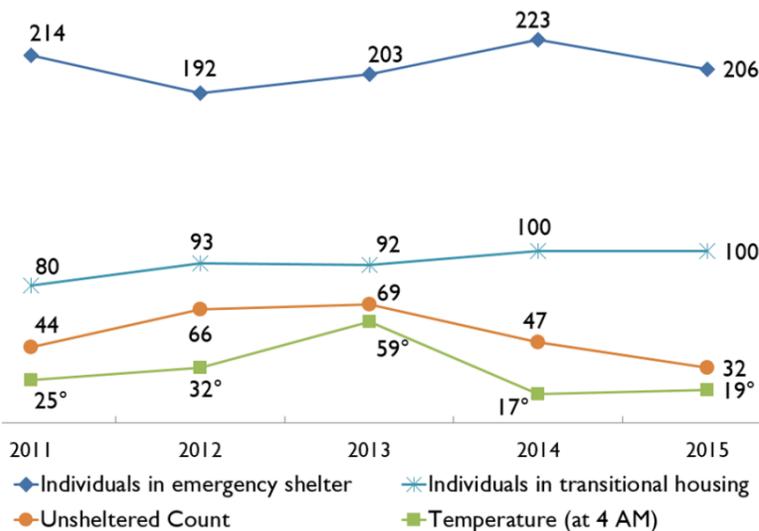
COMPARISON TO 2014

The 2015 total count decreased by 87 persons from 551 in 2014 to 464 in 2015. The primary factor resulting in this decrease was a reduction in capacity of transitional beds for families after a 15 unit transitional project converted to a permanent housing project (formerly homeless persons residing in permanent housing units no longer meet the HUD definition of homeless and are not counted in the census). In 2014, Cambridge counted 107 persons in 35 families staying in transitional units on the Point-in-Time (PIT) count night. In 2015, because the transitional units were now permanent units, the persons in those units are not homeless and therefore not included in the count leading to a total in the transitional category that was 46 persons lower than last year.

Another factor contributing to the decrease in the total count was the comparatively low unsheltered count of 32 individuals due to extreme weather conditions. Specifically, the record amount of snowfall in Cambridge in the weeks leading up to the count resulted in large snowbanks and very limited accessibility to areas where persons might sleep outdoors (alleys, door wells, spaces under outdoor stairwells, parks, benches, bridges, etc.). Unsheltered count volunteers commented that many areas where persons have been counted in past years were simply uninhabitable, and street outreach workers commented that throughout the winter the visibility of unsheltered clients decreased considerably.

The historic trend in Cambridge is that when the unsheltered count is low, the sheltered count is high, but the trend did not continue with the 2015 count. The sheltered count for individuals was slightly lower than last year, which indicates that several unsheltered clients were not found by census volunteers on the PIT night or that some people who might otherwise have been outside sought shelter outside of Cambridge although there were available shelter beds that night in Cambridge.

Individual sheltered and outdoor count: 2011-2015



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HOMELESS SUBPOPULATIONS

The table below shows the demographic characteristics of the 464 persons counted on Feb. 25, 2015. The census includes basic demographic information extracted from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Subpopulation data for

unsheltered persons were extrapolated using survey data from the City's two street outreach programs collected during the week following the count.

	Sheltered				Unsheltered		Total	
	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		N	%	N	%
	N	%	N	%				
Total	271	58%	161	35%	32	7%	464	
Household type								
Single individuals	206	76%	100	62%	32	100%	338	73%
Households with children	65	24%	61	38%	0	0%	126	27%
Age								
Children (under 18)	39	14%	32	20%	0	0%	71	15%
Age 18-24	19	7%	15	9%	2	6%	36	8%
Over 24	213	79%	114	71%	30	94%	357	77%
Gender								
Female	71	26%	76	47%	6	19%	153	33%
Male	200	74%	85	53%	26	81%	311	67%
Transgender	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Ethnicity								
Non-Hispanic/Latino	218	80%	76	47%	30	94%	324	70%
Hispanic/Latino	53	20%	85	53%	2	6%	140	30%
Race								
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Asian	4	1%	4	2%	2	6%	10	2%
Black or African-American	98	36%	70	43%	4	13%	172	37%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pac. Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
White	162	60%	81	50%	24	75%	267	58%
Multiple Races	6	2%	6	4%	2	6%	14	3%
Veteran Status								
Veteran	10	4%	4	2%	3	9%	17	4%
Not a veteran	261	96%	157	98%	29	91%	447	96%
Youth Households¹								
Parenting youth	10	4%	3	2%	0	0%	13	3%
Unaccompanied youth	6	2%	6	4%	2	6%	14	3%
Other Subpopulations (18+ only; persons may be counted in multiple categories)								
Serious mental illness	35	15%	21	16%	26	81%	82	21%
Substance use disorder	48	21%	59	46%	28	88%	135	34%
HIV/AIDS	0	0%	10	8%	0	0%	10	3%
Victim of domestic violence	29	13%	26	20%	0	0%	55	14%

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

While the annual report to HUD focuses on persons who meet HUD's category 1 definition of homeless², counts of formerly homeless persons demonstrate the progress the City and service providers have made in placing clients into permanent housing. On the night of the 2015 census, 430 formerly homeless individuals and 33 formerly homeless families were living in Permanent Supportive Housing (housing with services available), including 121 veterans utilizing HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers administered by the VA Boston Health Care System and the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Additionally, numerous households are prevented from falling into homelessness through work supported by the City and the federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program based at the Multi-Service Center. Since the ESG prevention program began in 2012, 148 households have received homelessness prevention services, including assistance with back rent, eviction prevention, and stabilization case management. Please visit cambridgecoc.org for additional information about homeless services in the City.

¹ Youth households included in this report are 18-24 year old parenting or unaccompanied youth who meet HUD's category 1 definition of homelessness.

² "An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which includes a primary nighttime residence of: place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation; publicly or privately operated shelter or transitional housing, including a hotel or motel paid for by government or charitable organizations." See https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf