

Summary of 2013 Homeless Census

Jan. 30 – Jan. 31, 2013

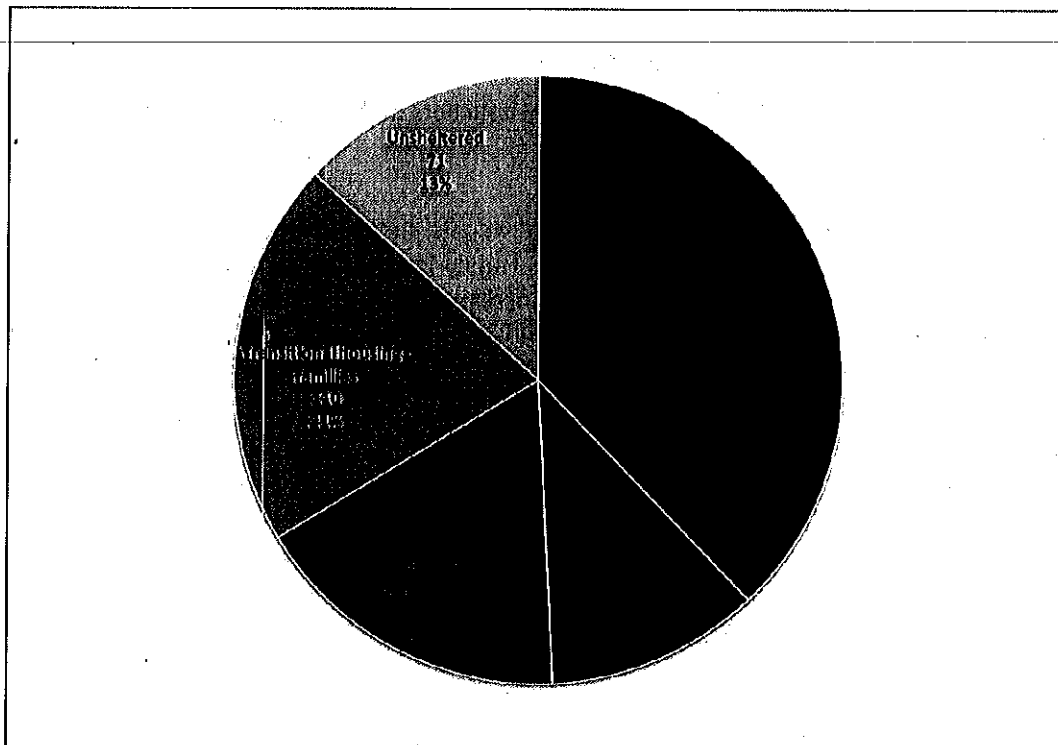
Overview

In its January 30-31, 2013 overnight program and street census, the Cambridge Continuum of Care counted 366 individual homeless persons and 61 homeless families (171 persons) – a total of 537 persons experiencing homelessness. Of the 366 individual homeless persons, 203 were staying in emergency shelter, 92 were in transitional housing, 69 were counted on the street and 2 were hospitalized. The 61 homeless families included 61 women, 10 men, and 100 children. Twenty-six of those 61 families were residing in emergency shelters, and 35 were staying in transitional housing programs.

Table 1: Summary Table - 1/31/2013 Census

	Sheltered		Unsheltered		Total
	Emergency shelter	Transitional housing	Street	Hospital ¹	
Individuals	203	92	69	2	366
Female	30	39	9	1	107
Male	172	53	37		234
Unknown			23	1	24
Families	26	35			61
Persons in families	61	110			171
Adult Female	25	36			61
Adult Male	1	9			10
Child	35	65			100
Total	263	202	69	2	537

Figure 1: Census overview – number of persons counted in each housing type



¹ The 2013 hospital count includes reports from Mt. Auburn Hospital and Cambridge Rehab but does not include all Cambridge Health Alliance beds. Hospitalized individuals are included in the unsheltered count.

Comparison to past years

The 2013 count of sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness produced results very similar to the 2012 count. When comparing data for the Point-in-Time (PIT) count and the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) across years, the following notes should be considered:

- Individuals –
 - The Salvation Army's renovations were completed in spring 2012. The 2013 point-in-time counts for the Emergency Shelter and UMOJA transitional program reflect expanded capacity for the shelter (53 participants reported in 2013 compared to 36 reported in 2012) and UMOJA (20 participants reported in 2013 compared to 12 in 2012).
 - The unseasonably warm (50 degrees), but also very windy and rainy, weather conditions during the overnight Census have not occurred on Census nights in the past, so we do not have results from similar nights to compare to.
 - CASPAR's ACCESS program was previously counted as Emergency Shelter. Given increasing program definition and capacity, ACCESS's 18 beds are counted as transitional housing, and ESC capacity is reported as 92 beds in the 2012 and 2013 counts;
- Families –
 - Heading Home's Family Opportunity Subsidy (FOS) transitional program has been operating for three years, but has not been included in the count until the 2013 Census. Notes from past years indicate that this program may have been mistakenly excluded because staff thought it was the same program as Heading Home's other transitional program for families – both programs are partnerships with the Housing Authority and are similarly named. The inclusion of the FOS program in 2013 results in an increase in the number of homeless, transitionally housed families counted (35 families in 2013 compared to 21 families in 2012).
 - The State stopped placing families in Cambridge motel in 2010 – this explains the large drop in sheltered families counted in Cambridge between 2009 and 2012;
 - The 10 percent decrease in families staying in emergency shelter is due to family composition, not reduced capacity.
- Shift in data collection method for the sheltered count and HIC starting in 2012; and
- Inclusion of 91 Section 8 Moderate Rehab SROs in the HIC and 125 VASH vouchers in the HIC (prior to 2012 these housing types were omitted).

The 2013 Census total of 537 persons, including persons in families and single individuals, shows a ten percent increase over the 2012 total of 485 persons. This increase is a result of the inclusion of the FOS Family Transitional program described above. This program reported 14 families with 53 persons and accounts for the increase in transitionally housed families and the overall count of persons experiencing homelessness. Comparing the 2012 and 2013 counts of individuals only shows very similar results over the past two years – 357 individuals (sheltered and unsheltered) in 2012 and 366 individuals in 2013.

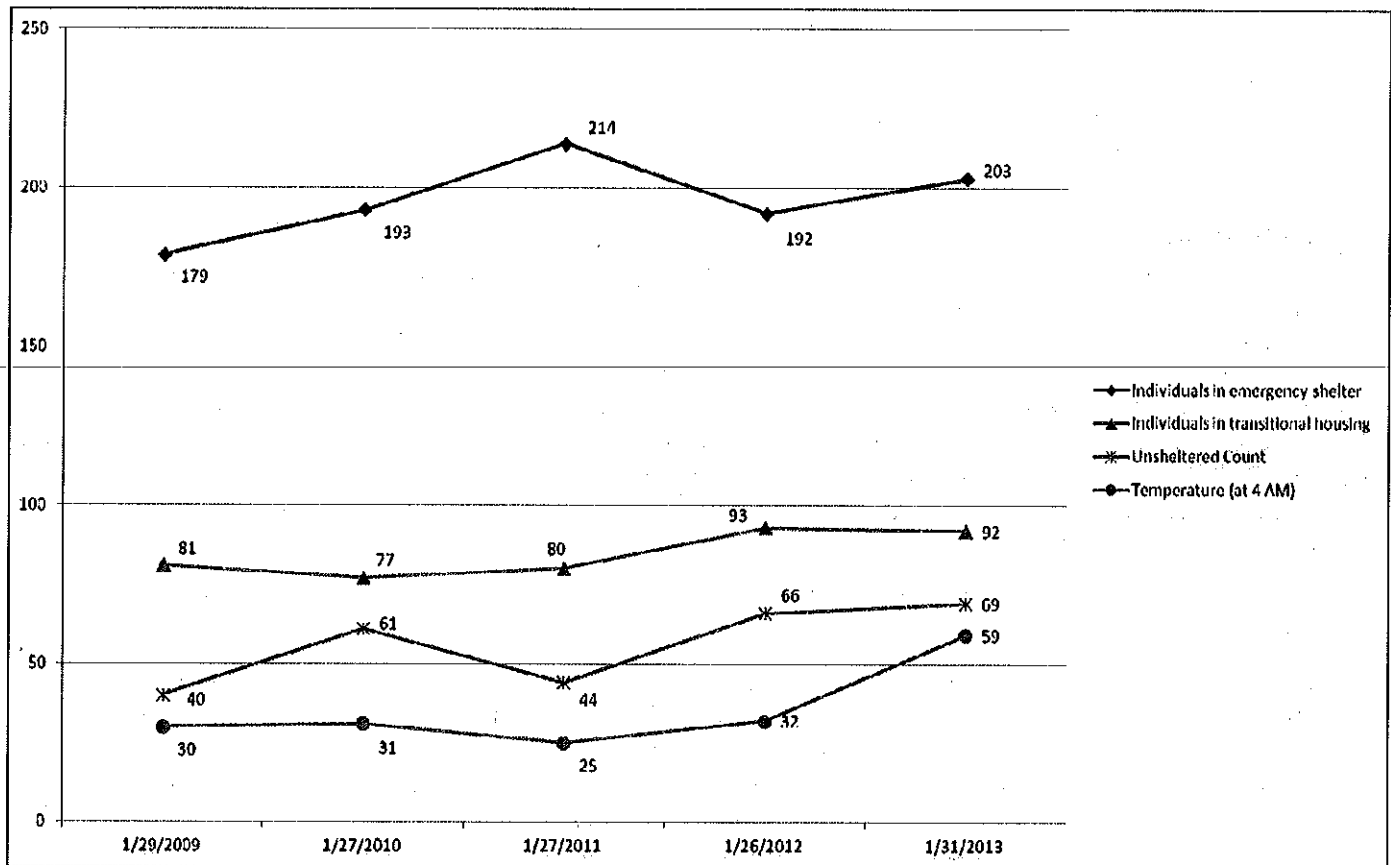
Historical trends show that when it is warmer outside, street counts go up and sheltered counts go down, and that when it is very cold and stormy outside, street counts go down and sheltered counts go up. This year's census night was both unseasonably warm (50 degrees) and stormy – a combination of the different conditions that generally indicate whether street counts will be high or low compared to past years. The 2013 census showed slight increases in both the sheltered and unsheltered count; the count of unsheltered individuals was 69, three more than in 2012, and the count of individuals in emergency shelter was 203, eleven more than in 2012. This slight increase in the sheltered count may be due to the Salvation Army's increased capacity for overflow beds after their renovation (36 beds plus 24 overflow reported in 2013 compared to just 36 beds available in 2012).

The number of persons counted on the street increased by just 3 persons in 2013 – from 66 people counted on the street in 2012 to 69 in 2013. The 2013 count of 69 is consistent with the 2012 count of 66 and the 2010 count of 61 persons, when the weather was milder than in 2011 (just 44 persons counted on the street). Likewise, the 2011 count of 44 people was consistent with the 2009 count of 40 people; the weather on the Census night in both 2009 and 2011 was very cold and inclement;

Table 2: Cambridge PIT, 2009 – 2013

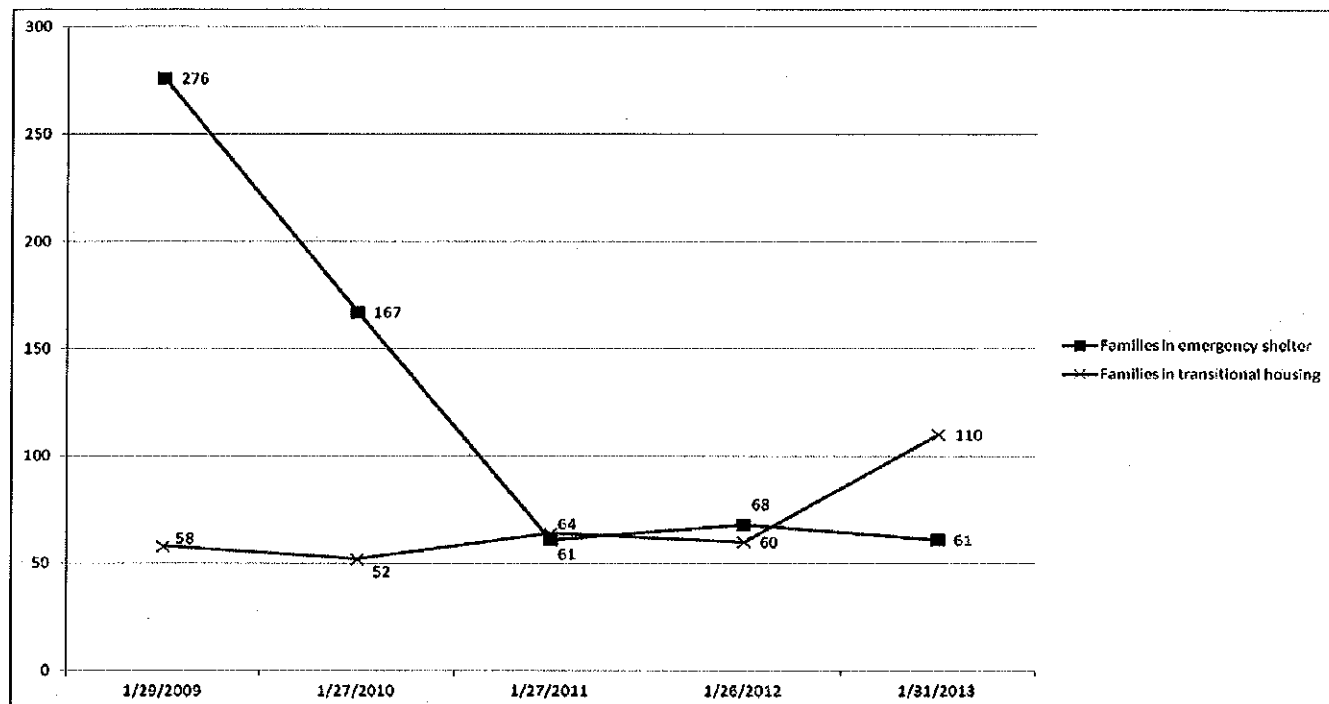
	1/29/2009	1/27/2010	1/27/2011	1/26/2012	1/31/2013	% change - 2012 - 2013
Individuals in emergency shelter	179	193	214	192	203	5.7%
Families in emergency shelter	276	167	61	68	61	-10.3%
Individuals in transitional housing	81	77	80	93	92	-1.1%
Families in transitional housing	58	52	64	60	110	83.3%
Unsheltered Count	40	61	44	66	69	4.5%
Temperature (F) ²	30	31	25	32	59	
TOTAL COUNT	637	559	471	485	537	10.7%

Figure 2: Cambridge PIT, Individuals, 2009 – 2013



² Temperatures listed were recorded at Boston Logan Airport at 3:54 AM for each PIT date and were accessed using the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's Quality Controlled Local Climatological Data available at <http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/qclcd/QCLCD>

Figure 3: Cambridge PIT, Families, 2009 – 2013



Subpopulation data

Subpopulation data on individuals and families are collected as part of the sheltered PIT count process. These data on chronically homeless persons, veterans, domestic violence victims, and persons with various disabilities are generally consistent with past years' counts, but there are notable discrepancies. The discrepancies highlighted below are likely a result of changes to the data collection method and/or general data quality issues related to inconsistent application and recording of various HUD defined subpopulations (most shelters are not required to maintain specific disability information in HMIS but are required to provide a count for the Census night). As HMIS utilization grows and data quality monitoring improves, these subpopulation data will become increasingly more reliable. For now, the data provide some indicator of changes over time, but, as mentioned above, much of the fluctuation is likely due to changes in the types of data collected, the method of collected, and the consistency with which it is reported.

- The count of chronically homeless persons decreased from 191 in 2012 to 175 in 2013. The count of 175 is consistent with the count of 170 in 2011;
- The number of veterans counted in the Census decreased significantly in 2013. The Emergency Services Center utilized HMIS records as opposed to staff estimates and the count for the shelter decreased from 31 in 2012 to 7 in 2013, which is the primary cause of the drop between years. This is likely an undercount because several client records are missing veteran status data, but as HMIS utilization requirements and data quality continues to improve, this count will become increasingly reliable moving forward.
- The number of seriously mentally ill persons counted in 2013 increased significantly compared to the 2012 count; it is consistent with counts in 2009-2011;
- The count of persons with chronic substance abuse increased significantly in 2013;
- The number of people with HIV/AIDS increased slightly compared to the 2010-2011 counts; however, these totals are likely undercounts of the actual number of persons with HIV/AIDS in our Continuum given the reluctance of shelter staff to ask guests (and guests' reluctance to share this information) about this topic on the night of the PIT count; and
- The number of domestic violence victims is consistent with the 2011 and 2012 counts, which showed a large increase over the 2009 and 2010 counts. This may be partially a result of increased DV program capacity.

Table 3: Census subpopulations summary, 2009 - 2013



Conclusion

Cambridge is part of the Metro Boston region, and homelessness in Cambridge is part of the larger problem of homelessness in Metro Boston. Homeless individuals routinely cross municipal boundaries to visit friends or family or to access services. Individuals and families from one community may receive services in multiple other communities and may obtain placement housing in still another community. Shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing thus act as regional resources; when a vacancy arises, the person or family that fills that vacancy may have "come from" anywhere in that region. As long as individuals and families continue to become homeless somewhere in the region -- or manage to find their way to metro Boston after they become homeless -- shelter utilization will remain consistently high, and as one person or family gains housing, another homeless person or family will fill their shelter slot.

A few facts about the Cambridge Continuum of Care's homeless services and approach to addressing homelessness are not represented in the Census data described above:

- In addition to numerous supportive services available in the City, Cambridge funds CASPAR's First Step Street Outreach program and Eliot's First Step Mental Health Expansion Street Outreach program, which provide 80 hours of dedicated street outreach focused on identifying and engaging with unsheltered persons, encouraging acceptance of services, and assisting in accessing those services;
- Bread & Jams, On the Rise, and Youth on Fire operate very low threshold drop-in programs that target unsheltered persons, offer clinical and case management services, and access to basic needs including food, clothing, phones and showers; and
- The Cambridge Continuum of Care maintains and continues to develop funding for Permanent Supportive Housing beds for formerly homeless individuals; on the night of the January 2013 PIT count, there were 424 formerly homeless persons (individuals and persons in families) living in Permanent Supportive Housing in Cambridge. Over 40 percent of those (174 people) were chronically homeless upon entry into permanent housing.