

2007 Facts About Homelessness in the Lehigh Valley

The Lehigh Valley Coalition on Affordable Housing presents its 2007 Lehigh Valley Shelter Census containing statistical data on homeless families and individuals who were housed at the nine shelters participating in this study. The information is provided to the community to promote discussion and understanding of the region's homelessness problem. The following are some of the most significant facts from the report:

- Homeless Population: 2,584 men, women, and children were housed in the Lehigh Valley's nine emergency and short-term transitional shelters.
- Children: 996 (38.5%) of the residents in the shelters were children, with those under the age of 5 representing 39.9% of the total number of children.
- Adults: 1,588 adults were housed in shelters, with 1,424 housed in family programs and 1,227 housed in individual programs. Of those, 702 were females and 886 were males. The age group with the largest number of shelter residents was the group between the ages of 38-42. A total of 61.6% of adults were single, 8.7% were married, 13.7% were divorced, and 12.7% were separated.
- Average Number of Days Spent in Shelter: Children spent an average of 39.6 nights in a shelter, adults spent an average of 25.8 nights.
- Size of Family: 65.3% of families had two or fewer children.
- Age of Mother at First Child's Birth: 41.4% of the mothers had their first child before the age of 19 and 8% had their first child before the age of 16 years.
- Racial/Ethnic Background: Sheltered adults identified their racial/ethnic backgrounds as: 47.6% Caucasian, 24% African American, 22.8% Latino/Hispanic, 2.7% Multi-Racial, 1.5% Asian American, 0.6% Native American, and 0.3% Other. Racial/ethnic backgrounds of children were identified as: 43.6% Latino/Hispanic, 22.9% African American, 21.9% Caucasian, 10% Multi-Racial, 0% Native American, 0.8% Asian American, and 10% Other.
- Education: 50.6% of adults had attained a high school diploma or GED, 9.3% had attended some college, 4% achieved an Associates Degree, and 1.6% had obtained a Bachelor's Degree. A total of 31.6% did not graduate from high school or obtain a GED.
- Employment: 20.7% of all shelter residents were working. 25% of shelter residents who were heads of households were working to support their families. Care of young children was the primary reason for unemployment for heads-of-households.
- Income: 40.7% of shelter residents had no income at the time that they entered the shelter.
- Places of Former Residence: 41.8% of shelter residents indicated that they had formerly lived in one of the suburban municipalities, 72.8% had formerly lived in Allentown, 29.6% had formerly lived in Bethlehem, and 20.6% had formerly lived in Easton.
- Reason for Leaving Former Residence: The primary reason for leaving place of former residence was non-payment of rent. In addition, 67 persons owned their home two years prior to shelter use.