

# 2014 FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

The **2014 Lehigh Valley Shelter Census** contains 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:** Approximately 2,305 men, women, and children were housed in the Lehigh Valley's nine emergency and short-term transitional shelters.
- **Children:** 644 (27.9%) of the residents in the shelters were children, with those age 5 and under (325) representing 50.5% of the total number of children.
- **Adults:** 1,661 adults were housed in shelters, with 371 housed in family programs and 1,290 housed in individual programs. Of those, 578 were females and 1,083 were males. The most frequent age of adults was 22 and 23 which together include 101 people. A total of 65.2% of adults were single, 5.3% were married, 4.7% were unmarried cohabitating couples, 15.7% were divorced, 6.6% were separated, and 2.4% were widowed.
- **Average Number of Days Spent in Shelter:** Children spent an average of 45.3 nights in a shelter, adults spent an average of 43.4 nights.
- **Family Size:** Families had an average of two children.
- **Age of Mother at First Child's Birth:** 41.5% of the mothers had their first child before the age of 19 and 15.4% had their first child before the age of 16 years.
- **Racial/Ethnic Background:** Sheltered adults identified their racial/ethnic backgrounds as: 47.8% Caucasian, 25.2% Latino/Hispanic, 24.8% African American, 1.5% Multi-Racial, 0.3% Asian American, 0.4% Native American, and 0.1% Other. Racial/ethnic backgrounds of children were identified as: 39.8% Latino/Hispanic, 22.7% Caucasian, 23.2% African American, 11.5% Multi-Racial, 1% Native American, .4% Asian American, and 1.4% Other.
- **Education:** 50.9% of adults had attained a high school diploma or GED, 13.7 had attended some college, 5.5% achieved an Associate's Degree, and 3.3% had obtained a Bachelor's Degree or higher. A total of 26.6% did not graduate from high school or obtain a GED.
- **Employment:** 24.5% of all shelter residents were working. 47.3% of shelter residents who were heads of households were working to support their families. The top three reasons indicated for unemployment were "mentally ill, in treatment" (21.4%), "lack skills/training" (20.3%), and "functionally disabled" (18.7%).
- **Income:** 16.4% of shelter residents had no income at the time that they entered the shelter. 18.2% of residents used Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as food stamps) as their income source.
- **Places of Former Residence:** 29.1% of shelter residents indicated that they had formerly lived in one of the suburban municipalities, 49.7% had formerly lived in Allentown, 29.3% had formerly lived in Bethlehem, and 14.4% had formerly lived in Easton.
- **Reason for Leaving Former Residence:** The primary reason for leaving place of former residence on the night before entering a shelter was doubling up with family or friends. The primary reason for leaving place of former residence three months prior to entering the shelter was that they were asked to leave the residence.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) lists the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the Lehigh Valley for 2014 as \$974 for a 2-bedroom unit. The income needed to afford the FMR for a 2-bedroom unit is \$38,880. The hourly wage needed to afford a 2-bedroom FMR is \$18.69 per hour.



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