

**HOMELESS ENUMERATION
FOR THE
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN REGION
2006**

Prepared by:

**The Homeless Services Planning and
Coordinating Committee**

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Introduction

Since 2001 the Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) has conducted a regional enumeration of the homeless population.

This report tracks the number of people found on the streets, in emergency shelters, in transitional and permanent supportive housing, or otherwise homeless and in need of a safe shelter. These data represent persons served by what is commonly called the “Continuum of Care” (CoC), which refers to three competitively-funded HUD programs based on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for comprehensive service provision. The enumeration is a point-in-time snapshot of persons served by nine jurisdictions in the metropolitan Washington region that have received HUD grants for providing Continuum of Care. The City of Bowie data is included in the count for Prince George’s County; the data for Falls Church and the City of Fairfax are included in the Fairfax County count; and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park are included in the Prince William County count.

More specifically, the report includes a count of people who are:

- Living in permanent housing;
- Residing in transitional housing that is in most cases indistinguishable from any other rental-type housing;
- Living in emergency shelters, where many go back into the streets during the day;
- On the streets all the time;
- Seeking shelter but are unable to find it.

How Many Homeless?

On January 25, 2006 the COG Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee, in its sixth point-in-time enumeration of the homeless population since the first was conducted in 2001, counted **12,085** homeless persons across the nine CoC jurisdictions. The number of homeless persons ranged from less than one per every 1,000 persons in Loudoun County to more than ten per every 1,000 persons in the District of Columbia. Across the region, slightly less than three persons out of every one thousand were homeless on this date.

A Precise Picture of the Problem *and* its Solution

In 2004 this report established two baselines to answer two questions:

1. “How many are homeless?” ***THE PROBLEM***, and
2. “How many are now housed who once were homeless?” ***THE SOLUTION***.

The emerging solution of permanent housing for people once mired in homelessness is expected, over time, to reduce the number of those who remain homeless. The Committee thus decided to track both figures separately so that the COG Board and an interested public could observe trends in both the problem and its solution.¹

Changes Since 2004

Table 1 compares baseline data from 2004 and 2005 with what the committee discovered in the 2006 regional point-in-time enumeration, paying special attention to changes recorded for homelessness compared with permanent housing. Nine CoCs reported in 2005 and 2006 and eight reported in 2004 (Frederick County did not submit data in 2004). There has been a small but steady increase across all the jurisdictions in the number of persons who are permanently housed by the CoCs. The percentage of people who are now permanently housed has risen since 2004, from 23.6% to 26.5% in 2006.

The table shows fewer homeless families in 2006 compared with 2004 and 2005, while more families are now permanently housed by the CoCs. At the same time, the table shows homelessness among single adults is still on the rise. There are more beds in permanent housing for formerly homeless adults, but the development of these units and beds is not keeping pace with the increasing numbers of homeless individuals. In general, the regional Continuum of Care is moving in the right direction for families, but is falling short on providing for the permanent housing needs of adults.² (At the end of this report is “Table 1A, by Jurisdiction” which provides these same data broken out by each of the nine Continua.)

This is the second year the committee has collected the data in Table 1, which is intended to help track trends in reducing homelessness and the increasing stock of permanent supportive housing, which the Committee hopes will reduce homelessness over time.

COG REGION		Homeless			Housed (Formerly Homeless)			Percent Housed within CoCs		
		All	Individuals	Persons in Families	All	Individuals	Persons in Families	Among All in CoC	Among Individuals	Among Persons in Families
Year	2006	12,085	7,137	4,948	4,349	2,320	2,029	26.5%	24.5%	29.1%
	2005	11,419	6,321	5,098	4,020	2,345	1,675	26.0%	27.1%	24.7%
	2004	11,109	5,887	5,222	3,428	2,030	1,398	23.6%	25.6%	21.1%

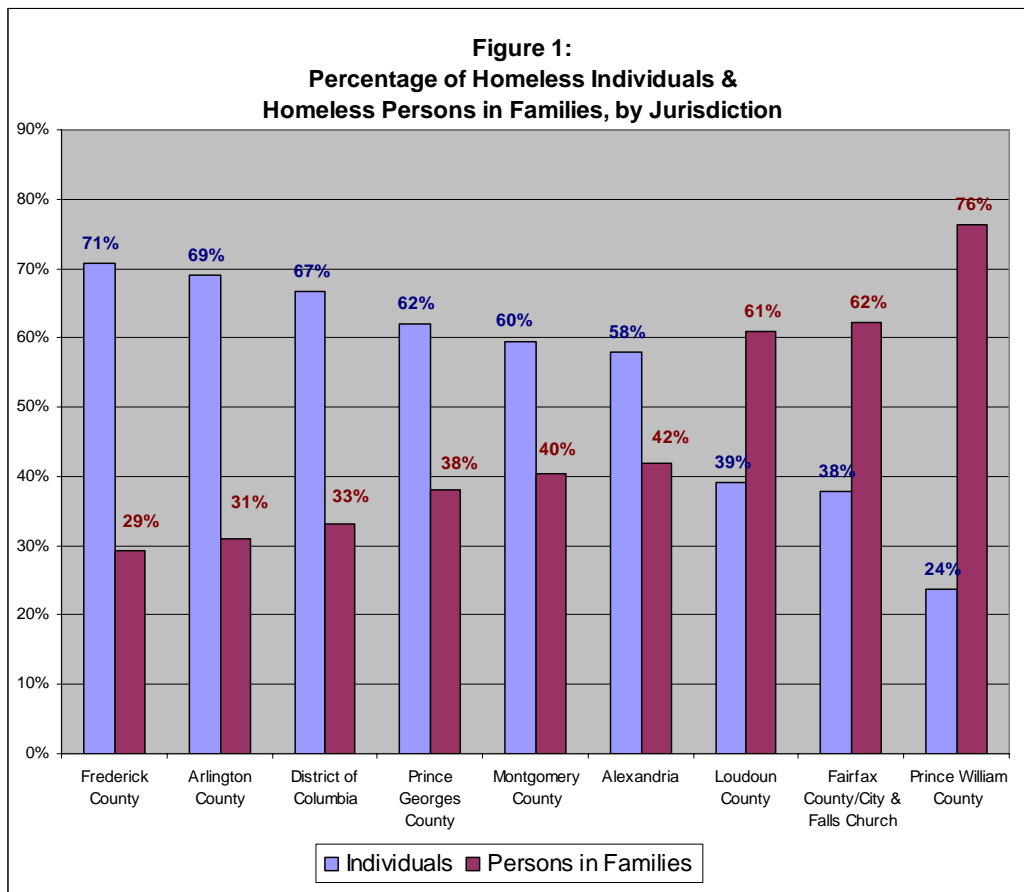
Table 2 compares the change in homelessness overall – by aggregating homeless individuals and persons in families – over the last two years (or one year in the case of Frederick County). Two jurisdictions (Alexandria and Frederick) reported a significant reduction in homelessness, while three (Prince William County, District of Columbia and Fairfax/Falls Church) remained about the same, reporting changes of less than 6% over two years. All other CoCs in the region reported double-digit increases. Surprisingly, Loudoun County, one of the region’s most affluent jurisdictions where the median household income is over \$80,000,⁴ reported the number of homeless persons at twice what it was two years ago (a 100% increase).

Table 2: Tracking Number of Homeless 2004-2006			
Jurisdiction	Counted		% Change
	2004	2006	2004-2006
District of Columbia	5,828	6,157	5.6%
Montgomery County	1,036	1,164	12.4%
Prince George’s County	1,111	1,291	16.2%
Alexandria	414	336	-18.8%
Arlington County	408	477	16.9%
Fairfax County/City & Falls Church	1,700	1,766	3.9%
Loudoun County	92	184	100.0%
Prince William County	520	498	-4.2%
Sub-total	11,109	11,873	6.9%
Frederick County – (One-year change)			
	2005	2006	% Change
Frederick County	271	212	-21.8%
TOTAL Homeless in 2006 =		12,085	

Since Frederick County did not submit data in 2004, this report can only compare the overall change in homelessness across the last *two years* for the other eight CoCs. These reported an overall increase in homelessness of 6.9%. As noted in Table 1, the increase is occurring primarily among single homeless adults who in all but three CoCs (Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties) comprise the majority of homeless persons (see Figure 1 below).

Who is Homeless?

In terms of household composition, homelessness manifests itself quite differently in each of the nine COG jurisdictions, ranging from single adults and unaccompanied youth (“Individuals”) who make up almost three out of four homeless persons in Frederick County to “Persons in Families” (parents and their children) who make up slightly more than three out of four homeless persons in Prince William County. Figure 1 shows the range of household composition across the nine CoCs. These data show that each CoC must tailor its planning to end homelessness to meet the oftentimes different needs of single adults and families. The composition of each CoC’s population in the 2006 count reflects how each CoC has built up its homeless system to *manage* the homeless problem; but these data also indicate that different affordable housing, supportive housing and mainstream services strategies will be needed to *end* homelessness over the next ten years.



The Chronically Homeless

In keeping with national policy, the nine COG jurisdictions that receive Continuum of Care grants from HUD are working to reduce the number of “chronically homeless” persons.⁵ Even in many CoC plans that focus on ending all homelessness – an especially important objective in areas where families make up most of the homeless population – ending chronic homelessness is a current priority in obtaining competitive federal resources.

Table 3 shows that the number of chronically homeless persons counted in the COG region appears to have risen over the past two years, but given the inexact means used to measure this population⁶ the numerical change needs to be taken with a grain of caution. Until a counting method based on Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data is universally established, these data are at best a good estimate.

With that caveat in mind, Table 3 compares the number of single persons counted as chronically homeless in 2006 with the numbers counted in 2004 and 2005. These data are important because a body of research shows that chronically homeless adults comprise about one-half of all adults in emergency shelters at any given time, but account for only about 10% of all persons experiencing homelessness. Thus the chronically homeless use about half of all emergency shelter resources while also exacting a great cost on other public systems as well.⁷ Since this is a relatively static population of people who tend to remain homeless over several years, providing permanent housing will relieve the burden on emergency shelters, reduce the human tragedy of people living in the streets, and reduce public costs such as those indicated in Figure 2 below.⁸

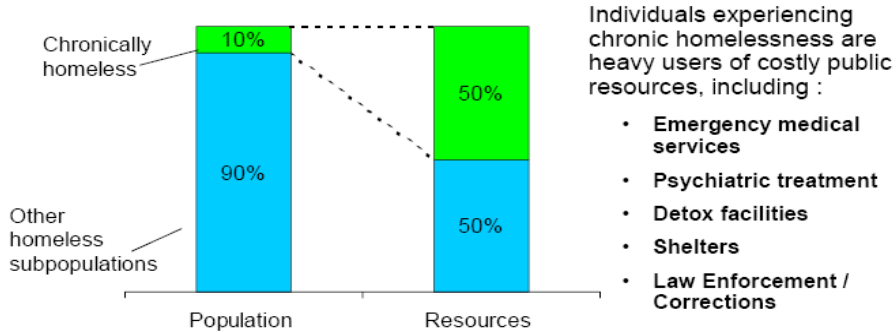
Table 3: Chronically Homeless							Previous Years	
Jurisdiction	Total Chronic	Chronic Unsheltered	Chronic in Emergency Shelters	% Chronic of all Individuals counted in Emergency Shelters	Chronic as % of Homeless Individuals	Chronic as % of ALL Homeless Persons	2004	2005
District of Columbia	1,891	275	1,616	56%	46%	34%	1,505	1,773
Montgomery County	206	65	141	46%	30%	18%	132	144
Prince Georges County	239	169	70	37%	30%	19%	71	194
Alexandria	76	68	8	14%	39%	23%	42	91
Arlington County	182	137	45	51%	55%	38%	139	100
Fairfax County/City & Falls Church	401	207	194	71%	60%	23%	293	258
Loudoun County	16	15	1	5%	22%	9%	12	23
Prince William County	27	18	9	29%	23%	5%	6	34
Frederick County	39	12	27	44%	26%	18%	n/a	77
All COG CoCs	3,077	954	2,076	53%	43%	27%	2,200	2,694

Table 3 and Figure 2 on the following page show that 50% of single adults in emergency shelters were counted as chronically homeless, which indicates that the 2006 count is consistent with data from other sources that are usually based on emergency shelter records.

Figure 2

INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS USE A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF RESOURCES

10% of the homeless population consumes over 50% of the resources

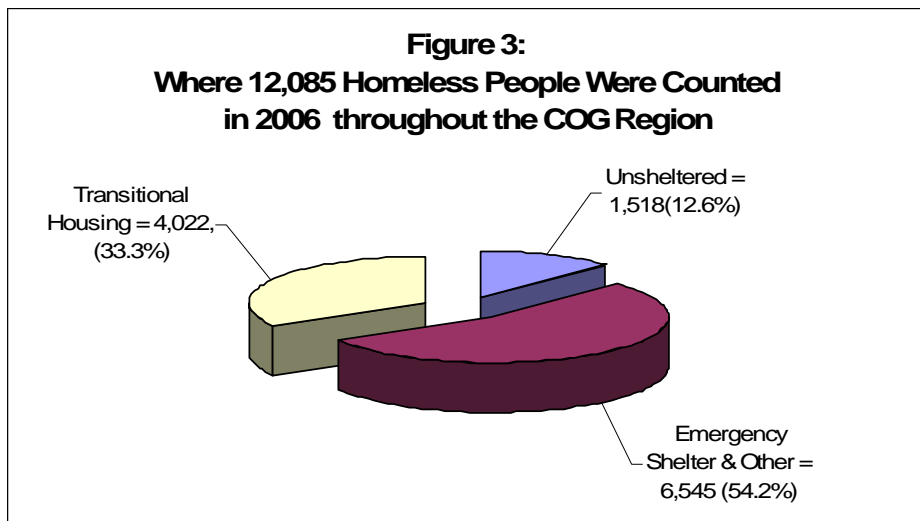


Burt, Martha R., Laudan Y. Aron and Edgar Lee. 2001. Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing? Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press. Kuhn, R. & Culhane, D.P. (1998). Applying cluster analysis to test of a typology of homelessness: Results from the analysis of administrative data. The American Journal of Community Psychology, 17 (1), 23-43. Community Shelter Board. Rebuilding Lives: A New Strategy to House Homeless Men. Columbus, OH: Emergency Food and Shelter Board.

Tracking the region's success in ending homelessness will require a focus on what happens to the more than 3,000 chronically homeless persons over the next few years as housing with supportive services is created with enough capacity to bring them inside.

Unsheltered Homeless

The unsheltered, or "street," persons who best represent the widespread public image of homelessness continue to be a relatively small part of the homeless population. Counter to the prevailing public image of homelessness, most homeless persons in 2006 were sheltered and not on the streets; however, a substantial number (1,518 persons representing 12.6% of all homeless) were counted as unsheltered.



The Washington Region's Continuum of Care

The region's inventory of facilities to shelter the homeless has moved well beyond the 1980's focus on "emergency" shelters to provide a multi-faceted Continuum of Care.

Table 4 shows the 2006 distribution of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing beds for individuals and persons in families, both in the winter months when the point-in-time enumeration is done and during the warmer months (April-October). The table compares the distribution of beds in 2006 to the distribution of beds in 2004 and 2005.⁹ By tracking beds in this manner it should be possible to record over time the growth of permanent supportive housing inventory within CoCs and the expected diminishment of emergency shelter beds, both winter-only and warm-weather (or year-round) beds.¹⁰ There is some evidence in this table that this is happening, with the number and percentage of permanent beds across the nine CoCs growing from 26% of year-round (warm weather) CoC beds in 2004 to 31% of year-round beds in 2006. The CoCs report a slight decrease in transitional housing beds from 38% of the CoC in warm weather months in 2004 to 33% of warm weather beds in 2006. Emergency shelter beds in both 2006 and 2004 comprised 36% of year-round, warm weather beds across all the CoCs.

Overall, the nine CoCs' response to homelessness has grown over the past two years. More beds are available in the regional CoC, with the largest increase in beds (over 1,000) showing up in the inventory of permanent supportive housing.

Table 4							
Continuum of Care Changes Since 2004 :							
Winter and Year-Round Inventory of Beds in the Washington Region							
		Beds for Persons in Families	All Beds: Winter	% Beds Distribution in Winter	All Beds: Warm Months	% Beds Distribution in Warm Months	
Hypothermia, Overflow & Other	2006	1,074	159	1,233	8%		
	2005	1,525	186	1,711	11%		
	2004	1,037	493	1,530	10%		
Emergency Shelter Beds	2006	3,569	1,715	5,284	33%	5,284	36%
	2005	2,945	1,551	4,496	29%	4,496	33%
	2004	3,225	1,667	4,892	32%	4,892	36%
Transitional Housing Beds	2006	1,874	3,015	4,889	31%	4,889	33%
	2005	1,876	3,015	4,968	32%	4,968	36%
	2004	1,711	3,418	5,129	34%	5,129	38%
Permanent Supportive Housing Beds	2006	2,440	2,125	4,565	29%	4,565	31%
	2005	2,418	1,794	4,212	27%	4,212	31%
	2004	2,429	1,135	3,564	24%	3,564	26%
TOTALS	2006	8,957	7,014	15,971		14,738	
	2005	8,764	6,546	15,387		13,676	
	2004	8,402	6,713	15,115		13,585	
Percent Change Since 2004		6.6%	4.5%	5.7%		8.5%	

Conclusion and Recommendations

As large as the numbers look in this report, they are not as daunting when viewed in context of the region's total population, as well as the populations of individual jurisdictions. Table 5 points out that the number of homeless persons in the region is relatively small -- only 2.7 out of every 1,000. No more than 2.5 of every 1,000 people are homeless in every jurisdiction except the District of Columbia, where 10.7 of every 1,000 are homeless.¹¹ When the District is taken out of the calculation, there are just 1.5 homeless persons per thousand in all the other jurisdictions combined.

	COG 2003 Housing Data Survey (Population Estimate)	Homeless Count in 2006	Homeless as % of Total Population	As % of Regional Incidence	Homeless Persons per 1,000 People
District of Columbia	575,000	6,157	1.07%	394%	10.7
Montgomery County	914,900	1,164	0.13%	47%	1.3
Prince George's County	844,190	1,291	0.15%	56%	1.5
Frederick County	217,653	212	0.10%	36%	1.0
Alexandria	135,000	336	0.25%	92%	2.5
Arlington County	196,925	477	0.24%	89%	2.4
Fairfax County/City & Falls Church	1,022,611	1,766	0.17%	64%	1.7
Loudoun County	221,746	184	0.08%	31%	0.8
Prince William County	321,570	498	0.15%	57%	1.5
Region with D.C.	4,449,595	12,085	0.27%		2.7
Region without D.C.	3,874,595	5,928	0.15%		1.5

The Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee believes that, with the right vision, ending homelessness is an achievable goal for the region. Whether it is 2.7 or 1.5 persons, it is easy to imagine these individuals and families as members of a mid-size church or citizens of small town of 1,000 persons. If that were the case, it seems obvious what would happen when it became clear that these few people did not have a home. That church or town would pull together the needed resources to take care of its own homeless.

There is of course some progress being made, as Table 4 indicates, with more than 1,000 new permanent housing beds in the past two years. But the pace is slow and the number of people using emergency shelters is still rising, and there are more than 3,000 chronically homeless people who are mostly "stuck" where they are.

More needs to be done. At the 2006 COG homeless conference held last fall, elected and appointed officials, along with local providers, looked at what it would take for each COG jurisdiction to commit to providing enough housing for homeless singles, especially its chronically homeless, and persons in families. It was evident that those gathered at the conference consider the end of homelessness to be both a moral and economic imperative. During a presentation by the Corporation for Supportive Housing, conference attendees

discussed the enormous public resources expended to maintain persons in a state of homelessness. Fairfax County Chairman Gerald Connolly stated at the April 2006 summit of Fairfax government and business leaders to craft a comprehensive plan to end homelessness:

“We can reach only so many people by saying we should do something simply because it’s the right thing to do, but when you explain things in terms of dollars, more people will notice. When you look at the actual numbers, it makes not only moral sense to attack this issue, but also an economic one.” – Gerald Connolly¹²

Fairfax County will publish its 10-year plan later this year. Montgomery County and the District of Columbia have issued ten-year plans that commit to, respectively, the creation of 1,000 and 6,000 new units of affordable and supportive housing. Both plans, if carried through, will create more new beds in housing per 1,000 people than the number of homeless persons these jurisdictions are counting each year in this report. They offer real hope for ending homelessness in Montgomery County and the District. But while recent actions by individual jurisdictions are increasing funds available for housing production and subsidies, jurisdictional plans and resources by themselves will not be enough in a dynamic, inter-related metropolitan area.

In December, 2001 COG published “*Finding a Way Home: Building Communities with Affordable Housing*” – a report and regional policy statement committing its members to place a high priority on the production of affordable housing. The report notes that homelessness is a *regional* affordable housing issue, and also recommends that housing be developed specifically for “addressing the plight of the homeless.”

On the occasion of this sixth issue of the “Homeless Enumeration for the Washington Metropolitan Region,” the Homeless Services Planning and Coordinating Committee wishes to say that reports tabulating the numbers and describing “the plight of the homeless” cannot be all that we as a region do to address homelessness. An annual briefing about the scope of homelessness, even one that shows some progress in the numbers of persons now housed in permanent supportive housing, only helps to sharpen our attention on the issue.

In addition to continuing the annual enumeration of the homeless, the Committee recommends that COG undertake an annual review of local and regional efforts to achieve the affordable housing goals of “*Finding a Way Home*” and that a portion of that assessment should be specific to an analysis of the supply of housing dedicated to ending homelessness. The Committee also recommends that COG’s Human Services Policy Committee lead this effort, soliciting from the housing committees of COG the data necessary to undertake an annual assessment of efforts to achieve the goals of “*Finding a Way Home*.”

Table 1A, by Jurisdiction		Homeless			Housed			Total	Percent Housed in CoC		
		All	Individuals	Persons in Families	All	Individuals	Persons in Families		Among All	Among Individuals	Among Persons in Families
District of Columbia	2006	6,157	4,112	2,045	3,212	1,772	1,440	9,369	34.3%	30.1%	41.3%
	2005	6,026	3,794	2,232	2,951	1,826	1,125	8,977	32.9%	32.5%	33.5%
	2004	5,828	3,605	2,223	2,425	1,466	959	8,253	29.4%	28.9%	30.1%
% Change over past 2 years		5.6%	14.0%	-8.0%	32.5%	20.9%	50.2%	13.5%	16.7%	4.2%	37.1%
Montgomery County	2006	1,164	693	471	581	190	391	1,745	33.3%	21.5%	45.4%
	2005	1,068	616	452	562	199	363	1,630	34.5%	24.4%	44.5%
	2004	1,036	500	536	464	172	292	1,500	30.9%	25.6%	35.3%
% Change over past 2 years		12.4%	38.6%	-12.1%	25.2%	10.5%	33.9%	16.3%	7.6%	-15.9%	28.6%
Prince Georges County	2006	1,291	801	490	159	22	137	1,450	11.0%	2.7%	21.9%
	2005	939	462	477	148	24	124	1,087	13.6%	4.9%	20.6%
	2004	1,111	482	629	260	153	107	1,371	19.0%	24.1%	14.5%
% Change over past 2 years		16.2%	66.2%	-22.1%	-38.8%	-85.6%	28.0%	5.8%	-42.2%	-88.9%	50.3%
Alexandria	2006	336	195	141	32	24	8	368	8.7%	11.0%	5.4%
	2005	433	240	193	32	22	10	465	6.9%	8.4%	4.9%
	2004	414	213	201	35	25	10	449	7.8%	10.5%	4.7%
% Change over past 2 years		-18.8%	-8.5%	-29.9%	-8.6%	-4.0%	-20.0%	-18.0%	11.6%	4.3%	13.3%
Arlington County	2006	477	329	148	10	10	0	487	2.1%	2.9%	0.0%
	2005	410	289	121	10	8	2	420	2.4%	2.7%	1.6%
	2004	408	279	129	0	0	0	408	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% Change over past 2 years		16.9%	17.9%	14.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	19.4%	2.1%	2.9%	0.0%
Fairfax County/City & Falls Church	2006	1,766	667	1,099	311	267	44	2,077	15.0%	28.6%	3.8%
	2005	1,675	564	1,111	274	236	38	1,949	14.1%	29.5%	3.3%
	2004	1,700	615	1,085	226	198	28	1,926	11.7%	24.4%	2.5%
% Change over past year		3.9%	8.5%	1.3%	37.6%	34.8%	57.1%	7.8%	27.6%	17.4%	53.0%
Loudoun County	2006	184	72	112	10	10	0	194	5.2%	12.2%	0.0%
	2005	93	40	53	10	10	0	103	9.7%	20.0%	0.0%
	2004	92	36	56	8	6	2	100	8.0%	14.3%	3.4%
% Change over past 2 years		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	25.0%	66.7%	-100.0%	94.0%	-35.6%	-14.6%	-100.0%
Prince William County	2006	498	118	380	10	10	0	508	2.0%	7.8%	0.0%
	2005	504	152	352	8	8	0	512	1.6%	5.0%	0.0%
	2004	520	157	363	10	10	0	530	1.9%	6.0%	0.0%
% Change over past 2 years		-4.2%	-24.8%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-4.2%	4.3%	30.5%	0.0%
Frederick County	2006	212	150	62	24	15	9	236	10.2%	9.1%	12.7%
	2005	271	164	107	25	12	13	296	8.4%	6.8%	10.8%
% Change over past 1 year		-21.8%	-8.5%	-42.1%	-4.0%	25.0%	-30.8%	-20.3%	20.4%	33.3%	17.0%

Figure 4

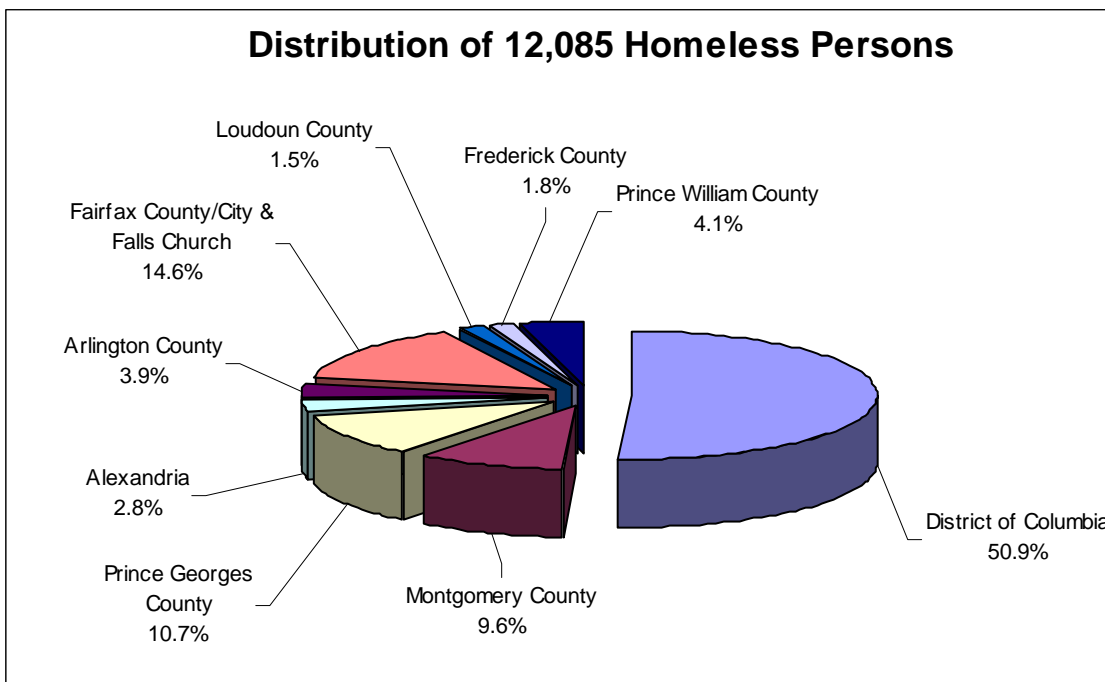


Figure 5

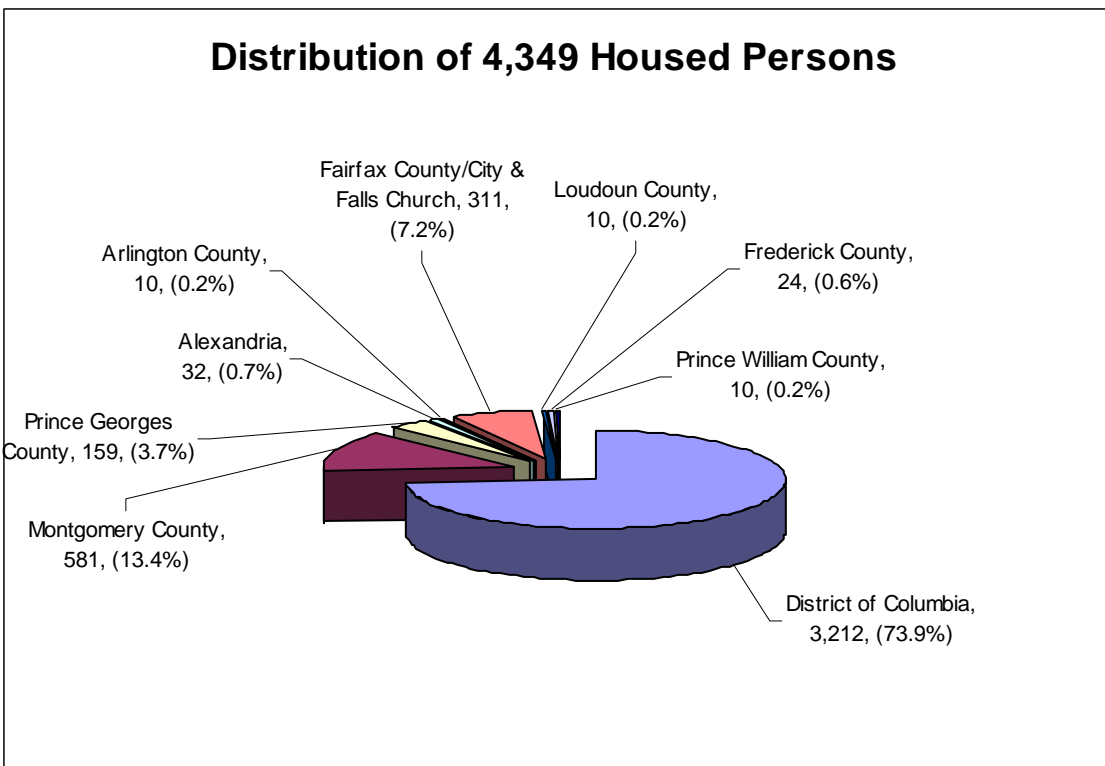


Figure 6

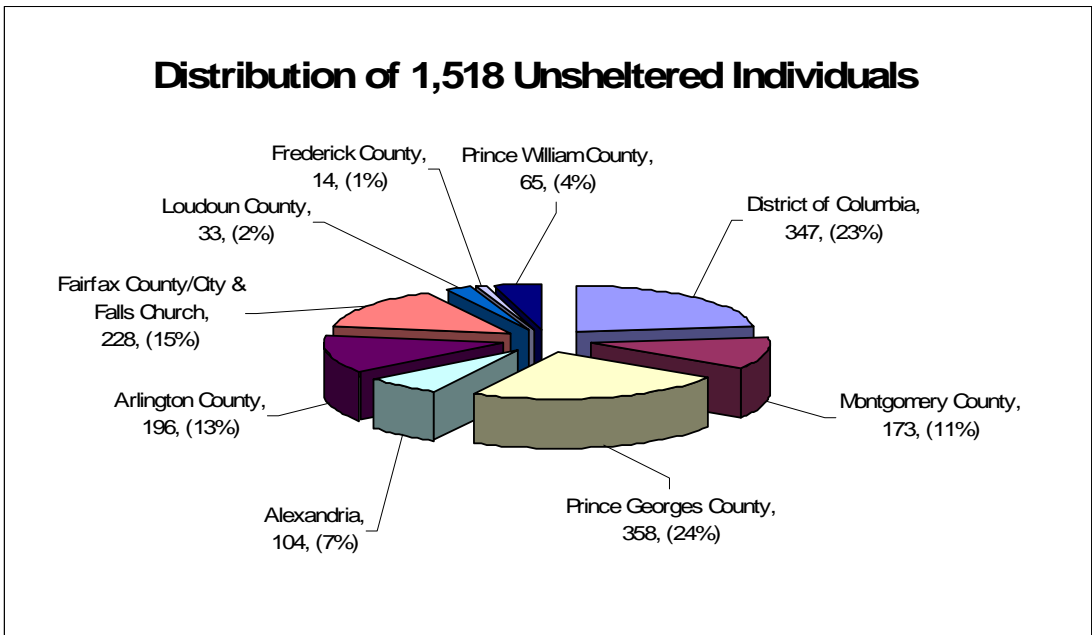


Figure 7

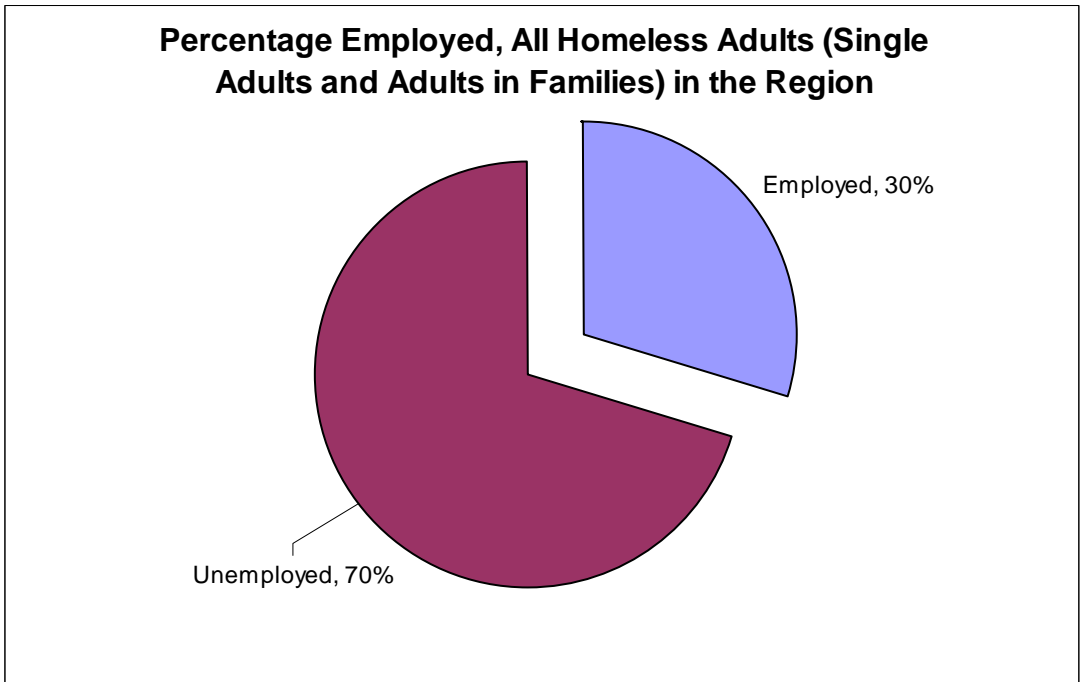


Figure 7A

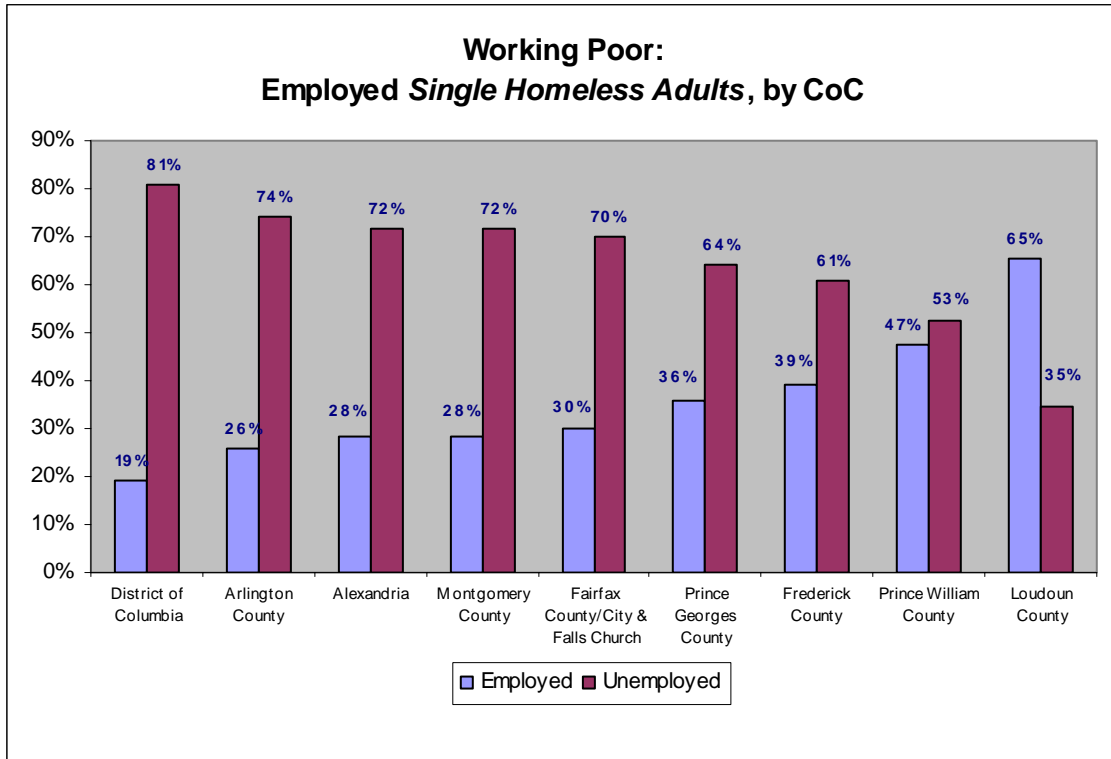


Figure 7B

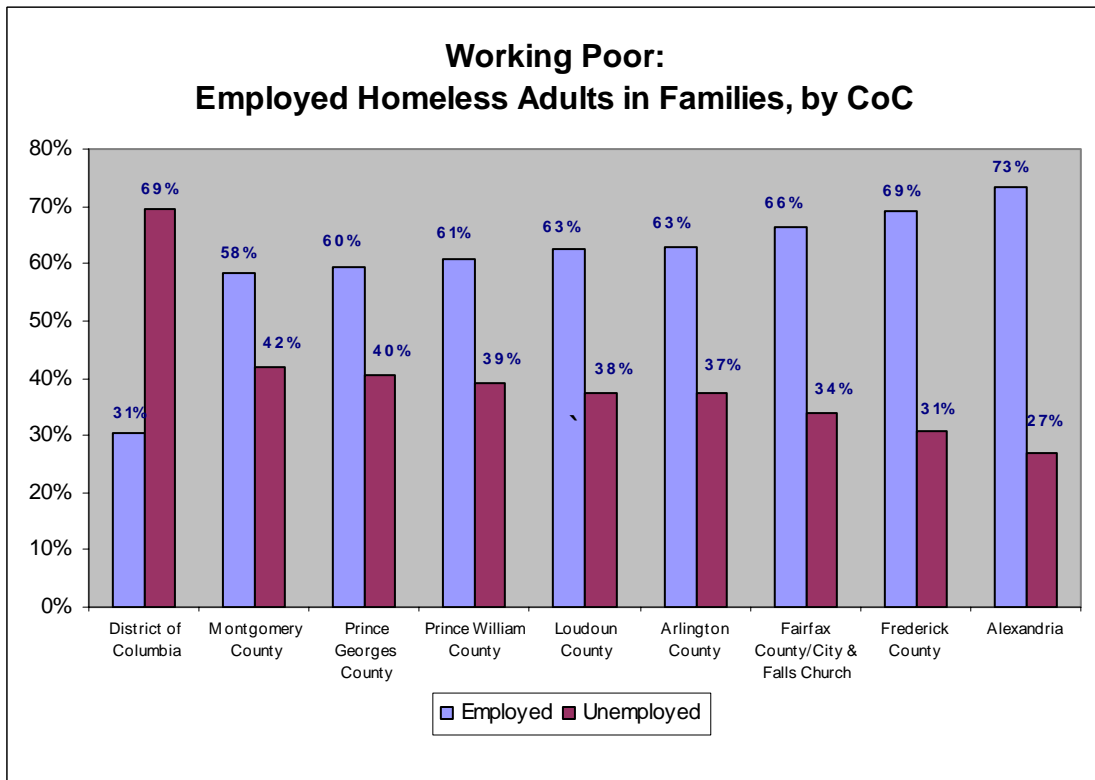


Figure 8

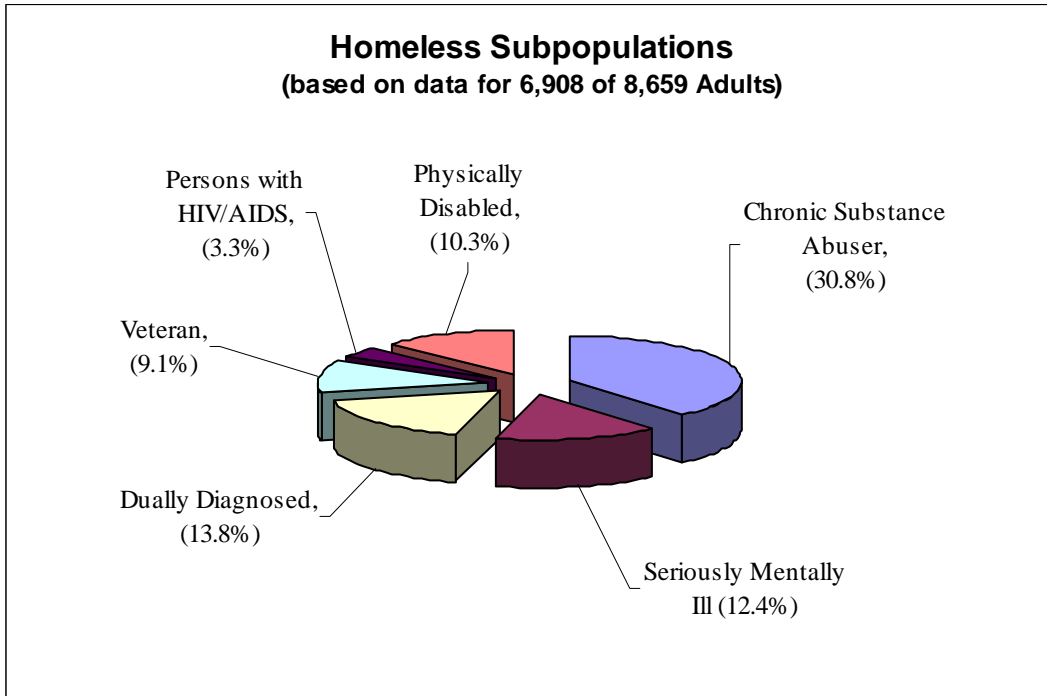
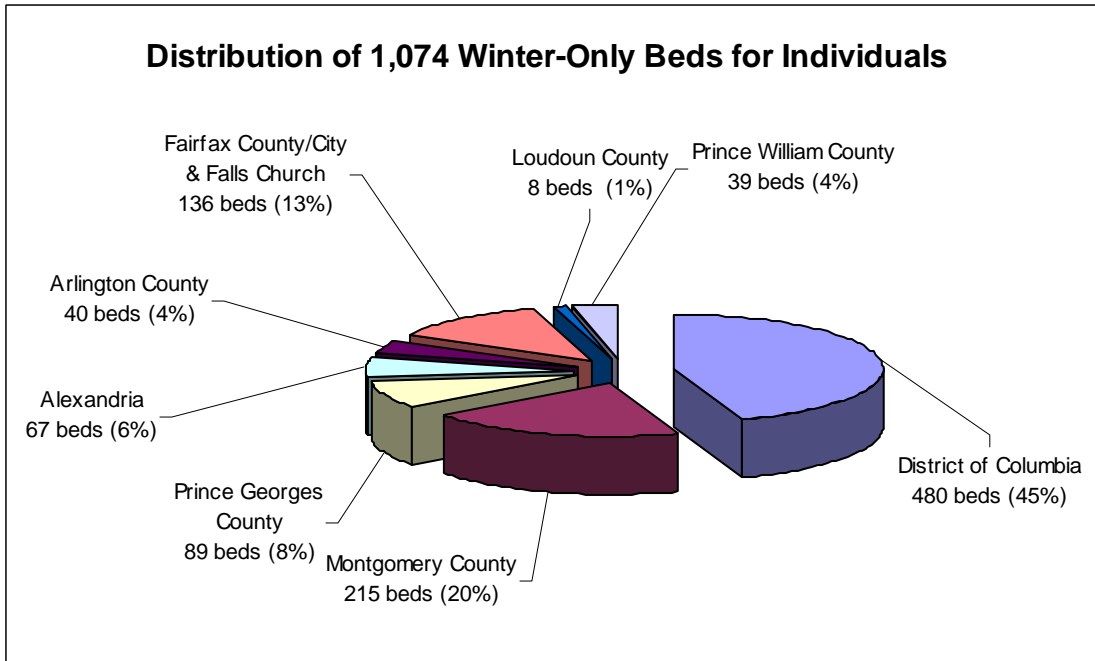


Figure 9



Notes

¹ “Homeless” are persons found in one of the following situations:

- They had NO shelter at all, or
- They were in emergency shelters temporarily, or
- They were in transitional housing temporarily, or
- They were in precarious housing and at imminent risk of losing it.

² Permanent housing figures need to be taken with a measure of caution because they can be difficult to track. There is the general problem of distinguishing Continuum of Care permanent housing from special needs housing. There is also not one standard as to what gets included in the count. Are the units strictly for persons who have been homeless or are they units that house persons with disabilities who would become homeless? Or are they “housing first” units with a temporary subsidy that leads to a permanent subsidy or the client being self-sufficient in permanent housing? In addition, to the extent that these are not always “brick and mortar” units but client-specific units with rental subsidies, the number can rise and fall with participation in programs and annual budgets supporting such scattered-site rental subsidy programs.

³ “Table 1A, by Jurisdiction” provides these same data broken out by each of the nine Continua.)

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau 2000 data Fact Sheet; <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

⁵ HUD defines a chronically homeless person as “An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years.”

⁶ In the point-in-time enumeration providers are given the HUD definition of “chronically homeless” and asked to count a person in this category based on staff observation more so than hard, longitudinal data located either in their HMIS or case files. The assumption is that emergency shelter and street outreach staff are in a position to know if a client has been around for one or more years and appears to be disabled.

⁷ See the landmark study: “The Impact of Supportive Housing for Homeless Persons with Severe Mental Illness on the Utilization of Public Health, Corrections and Emergency Shelter Systems: The New York/New York Initiative” in Housing Policy Debate, May 2001.

⁸ Slide from a Power Point presentation by Michael Shank, Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, and Nikki Nicholau, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, presented December 9, 2004 at the Governor’s Conference on Self-Determination, Empowerment and Recovery. Available online at <http://www.dmhmsas.virginia.gov/adm-conferenceMaterials.htm>

⁹ This table includes the inventory of Frederick County CoC in 2004. Although Frederick County did not submit data for the 2004 COG enumeration, its inventory figures were reported as part of the HUD Exhibit 1 for the annual SuperNOFA competitive grant application. Those figures were added to the 2005 figures for the other eight CoCs so that a complete picture of the regional CoC inventory could be seen.

¹⁰ This table aggregates inventory figures supplied by all COG jurisdictions as part of the point-in-time enumeration, which represents the most current data available about the inventory of each jurisdiction and the region as a whole.

¹¹ Population data from US Census 2003 Housing Data Survey, used in Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ 2003 Housing Data Survey. Other population figures in this paragraph are drawn from the same source except for Frederick County which is taken from the US Census 2004 estimate of the county’s population.

¹² Quoted at http://www.examiner.com/a-72102~Fairfax_County_leaders_discuss_homeless_plan.html