



City of Boston

35th Annual Homeless Census

Emergency Shelter Commission

On the night of February 25, 2015, Mayor Martin J. Walsh, city and community leaders, 300 volunteers and homeless provider agencies conducted Boston's **35th annual homeless census**. On that night there were **7,663** homeless men, women and children in the City of Boston, a **5.6% increase** from the **7,255** men, women and children counted in the prior census. Key findings and a summary table follow below:

Executive Summary of Findings:

- The number of unsheltered homeless adults living on the streets was **139**, a decrease of **22.8%** from the total of **180** the prior year. No families were staying on the street on the night of the count.
- The number of individual homeless adults decreased **8.9%** from **3,714** last year to **3,383** this year.
- The number of adults in emergency shelter increased **10.9%** from **1,511** last year to **1,676** this year.
- The number of homeless families increased **25%** from **1,234** to **1,543** households this year.
- The total number of persons in families, i.e., all homeless men, women and children, increased by **20.9%** from **3,541** to **4,281** persons.
- The number of homeless children in all programs increased by **18.7%** from **2,056** to **2,440** this year.

Highlights of the 2015 Homeless Count include the following:

- Boston continues to see **low numbers of homeless adults living on the streets** compared to most major cities. The street population this year was approximately 1.7% of the total homeless count.
- Despite the Long Island bridge closure in October, Boston's homeless provider community ensured that **the adult emergency shelter system was able to meet a substantial increase in demand** for the third consecutive year during an extremely cold winter that set a new snowfall record.
- The number of **families sheltered in motels** in Boston increased slightly this year, an improvement over two years ago when Boston saw a **24.5% increase** in motel families.

Key Sub-population Analysis:

Families

Homeless families were the fastest growing population. The **25%** increase in the number of family households reflects substantial increased demand for emergency shelter and transitional housing, as rents continue to rise in Boston while and the kind of deep rental assistance extremely low-income families need remains scarce.

- A **44.3%** increase in households in congregate shelter from **354 families** with **819** women, children and men to **511 families** with **1,190** women, children and men. The Commonwealth increased this type of shelter in an effort to reduce reliance on motels as shelter overflow. To date, rapid expansion of congregate shelter units has not resulted in the hoped for reduction of families in motels.
- A **45.3%** increase in family households in transitional housing programs, from **108** households with **272** women, children and men to **157** households with **377** women, children and men.

- A **13.9% increase** in family households in scattered site shelter units, from **534** families with **1812** women, children and men to **608** families with **2,057** women, children and men.
- The number of families sheltered in motels increased **16.5%** from **151** households to **176** households. The total number of women, children and men in families in motels in Boston increased from **448** persons last year to **474** persons this year.

Homeless Adults

The total number of individual homeless adults **decreased by 8.9%** to **3,383** from **3,714** the previous year. This reduction was influenced by several factors, including:

- A **44% decrease** in adults in Mental Health residential programs from **268** to **150** men and women. This reflects more accurate data on homeless persons in the mental health system.¹
- A **25.1% decrease** in homeless adults in transitional beds, primarily due to the closure of two Pine Street Inn programs, Anchor Inn and Men's Transitional, in August 2014 and a reduced census in beds relocated after the Long Island bridge closing.
- A **17.88%** decrease in homeless adults in substance abuse treatment from **747** to **614** individuals. Most of this decrease is due to the interruption of services in the wake of the closure of the Long Island bridge.²
- A **7.1%** decrease in the number of homeless adults in **emergency rooms or inpatient hospital or medical respite beds**, from **253** last year to **235** this year.
- The number of adults in emergency shelter increased by **10.9%**, from **1,511** to **1,676** men and women. Boston shelters continue to see both increased seasonal and regional demand.

Homeless Youth and Young Adults

- The number of homeless youth increased **35%** from **40** youth, young adults and children on the night of the previous count to **54** this year. This figure does not reflect all homeless youth and young adults who are homeless, only those in dedicated Runaway and Homeless Youth beds.

¹ A Metro Boston Department of Mental Health review of residential program bed utilization in Boston determined that along with homeless persons with mental illness coming from shelters or the streets, that system serves many persons coming from homes, long-term psychiatric care or inpatient hospitalization.

² Bay Cove's Andrew House detoxification program, the Boston Public Health Commission's Transitions program, Victory Programs Joelyn's House and Hello House Women's Transitional program all temporarily suspended operations until suitable new sites could be identified. The Transitions program re-opened during the week of April 13, 2015 on the Mattapan Public Health Campus.

City of Boston Annual Homeless Census - February 2015 compared to December 2013

| CATEGORY | December 16, 2013 | | February 25, 2015 | | % Change |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| City of Boston Grand Total All Homeless | 7,255 | | 7,663 | | + 5.6% |
| Total Individual Adults (Street, Shelters, Transitional, Treatment & Young Adults) | 3,714 | | 3,364 | | -9.1% |
| Adult Homeless Breakdown | | # of Adults | | # of Adults | % Change |
| Unsheltered Homeless/Street Count | | 180 | | 139 | -22.7% |
| Emergency Shelter | | 1,511 | | 1,676 | +10.9% |
| Transitional Housing Programs | | 685 | | 509 | -25.7% |
| Detox/Substance Abuse Program | | 747 | | 614 | -17.8% |
| Hospitals and Medical Respite | | 253 | | 235 | -7.1% |
| Mental Health Facilities ³ | | 268 | | 150 | -44% |
| Single Adults in Family Programs | | 23 | | 6 | -73.9% |
| Domestic Violence Shelter | | 19 | | 14 | -26.3% |
| Homeless/Runaway Youth | | 28 | | 40 | +42.9% |
| Total Individual Homeless Adults | | 3,714 | | 3,383 | -8.9% |
| | Number of Families | Persons in Families | Number of Families | Persons in Families | % Change # of Families |
| Total All Homeless Families | 1,234 | 3,541 | 1,537 | 4,247 | 24.6% |
| Family Homeless Breakdown | Number of Families | Persons in Families | Number of Families | Persons in Families | % Change # of Family Households |
| Congregate Shelter | 354 | 810 | 511 | 1190 | 44.3% |
| Scattered Site Shelter | 534 | 1,812 | 608 | 2,057 | 13.9% |
| Transitional Housing Programs | 108 | 272 | 157 | 377 | 45.3% |
| Families in Motels in Boston | 151 | 448 | 176 | 474 | 16.5% |
| Domestic Violence Programs | 54 | 125 | 51 | 104 | -5.5% |
| Homeless Youth with Children | 6 | 12 | 8 | 15 | 33.3% |
| Families in Hospitals | 2 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 50% |
| Detox/Other Substance Abuse | 25 | 57 | 29 | 55 | 16% |
| Total All Homeless Families | 1,234 | 3,541 | 1,543 | 4,281 | 25.0% |

³ In order to be classified as homeless, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers only those persons who have been admitted to inpatient hospital settings or long-term care facilities for less than 90 days and *who were living in emergency shelters or on the streets prior to their admission*. This revised definition has been used to obtain a more accurate count of homeless persons in psychiatric care facilities that also serve persons with mental illness coming from long-term hospitalization, group homes, family residences and other housing, rather than from shelters or the streets.