

January 2012 Snapshot of Panhandlers

Experiencing Homelessness in the Richmond Region

The following data were collected in Homeward's 14th winter (January 26, 2012) count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the Richmond region. A total of 909 adults and 131 children were counted, and 79.2% of adults experiencing homelessness completed the Homeward point-in-time survey. The statistics reported below represent the 10.1% of adults who indicated that they had gotten money in the past year from "panhandling or asking strangers for money."

- 91.3% are males, and 8.7% are females. Most panhandlers (52.9%) are single, never married adults. 47.1% are or have been in families, including those who are married, as well as those who are separated, widowed, or divorced.
- Only one person reported having children living with them.
- The highest percentage of respondents report that they are White (50.0%), followed by African-American (38.6%). 3.2% indicated that they are Hispanic.
- The average age for adults is 42.4 years.
- 62.3% have only a high school education or GED. 14.5% attended some college, and 5.8% have a college degree.
- 15.9% are veterans.
- The majority (86.6%) served some time in jail and/or prison. Out of all individuals surveyed (including those who have not served time in jail and/or prison), 50.7% reported serving time in jail, 3.0% reported serving time in prison, and 32.8% indicated that they had served time in both jail and prison. Of those who served time in jail and/or prison, 50.0% indicated that they were homeless when they last went to jail/prison, and 62.1% indicated that they were homeless upon release.
- 31.9% have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime. Of those experiencing domestic violence, 47.6% had experienced it in the past year.
- 64.3% report having a problem with alcohol sometime in their lifetime. Of those reporting a problem with alcohol, 68.2% are currently in recovery.
- 65.2% report having a problem with drugs sometime in their lifetime. Of those reporting a problem with drugs, 80.0% are currently in recovery.
- 42.9% report having a mental health problem sometime in their lifetime. Of these, 44.8% are currently being treated and 46.7% are taking medication for mental health problems.
- 69.7% report having a long-term disability. Of those reporting a long-term disability, 72.7% indicated that their disability was drug or alcohol abuse; 64.7% indicated that their disability was a mental illness; and 56.8% indicated that their disability was a physical disability. (Note that respondents could select all, some, or none of these options.)
- 7.1% are employed.
- The median length of time respondents have lived in Greater Richmond is 3.5 years; 35.7% have lived in the area for 15 years or more.
- The largest percentage of respondents (39.7%) reported having their last housing in Richmond. Others indicated previous housing in Henrico (4.4%), Chesterfield (11.8%), and Hanover (2.9%). 25.0% of respondents last lived elsewhere in Virginia, and 13.2% lived in other states.
- In the past three years, most homeless persons have been homeless once (44.1%) or twice (16.2%); 39.7% have been homeless three or more times during this time period.
- A little more than half (49.2%) of homeless persons have been homeless for eight months or more.

For more information:

Margot Ackermann, Ph.D. ♦ Research and Evaluation Director
(804)343-2045 x11 ♦ mackermann@homewardva.org

