

From the Register-Pajaronian: www.register-pajaronian.com

A look inside the numbers of the county's homeless

October 22, 2005

BY REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF

To provide a current profile of homelessness, 402 homeless people were interviewed throughout Santa Cruz County in March and April. Findings of the survey are as follows:

Frequency of homelessness

- More than 49 percent had been homeless only once within the past 12 months.
- Almost 10 percent had been homeless six or more times in the past 12 months.

Length of homelessness

- Approximately 59 percent had been homeless for one year or more.
- More than 32 percent had been homeless for three years or more.

Sleeping arrangements

- Although 39 percent usually slept outdoors, nearly 29 percent usually spent the night in transitional housing or emergency or other types of shelters.
- Approximately 13 percent stayed in a car, van or camper.
- Nearly 18 percent were marginally housed, meaning their usual sleeping arrangements were in a garage, backyard storage structure or a place other than the outdoors not meant to be used as shelter for human beings.
- Slightly more than 1 percent slept in a hotel or motel room, and an additional 1 percent slept in an abandoned building.

Shelter access

- Almost 25 percent had tried to access a shelter or transitional housing facility in Santa Cruz County in the past 30 days but had been turned away.
- Approximately 21 percent were turned away from a shelter in the 2000 survey.
- The most common reason for being turned away from a shelter was a lack of available beds (63 percent), followed by alcohol or drug problems (11 percent) and not knowing why they were turned away (7 percent). Lack of beds was only cited by 45 percent of respondents in 2000.

Education

- Nearly 37 percent had not received a high school diploma or GED.
- Approximately 32 percent had received their high school diploma or equivalent.
- More than 12 percent had received an associate's, bachelor's, or higher degree.

Unemployment

- Approximately 88 percent were unemployed.
- The two leading causes of unemployment were not having a permanent address (33 percent) and a lack of transportation (31 percent).

Government assistance

- More than 46 percent indicated they received no government assistance.
- Of those not receiving government assistance, the most common reason was they did not think they were eligible (30 percent).

Children and families

- Nearly 12 percent reported living with their children, while an additional 3 percent indicated they were living with their spouse and children.
- Of the respondents who were living with their children and/or spouse, 100 percent indicated they had children under the age of 18 living with them.
- Approximately 5 percent living with children also had children in foster care.

Domestic violence

- Approximately 21 percent of females respondents were currently experiencing domestic violence.
- Approximately 11 percent of all respondents were experiencing domestic violence at the time of the survey.