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## Results of street census released

*Majority of county's homeless population are white*

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**By EMILY SACHS, Staff Writer**

San Bernardino County's first census of its homeless population reveals that the typical case is a 39-year-old white man who has a high school diploma and has never been homeless. He has children to support, he is hungry and he wants a job.

The numbers are large. According to the homeless count conducted last year by the homeless themselves, on any given day in the county they number from 5,270 to 8,351 or more. Over a year, 23,549 or more populate shelters or live in the streets.

On the negative side, our typical homeless person is depressed, he smokes and he may drink, but he's not a binge drinker. He's got health problems that he's not receiving treatment for.

"The stereotype of the shopping-cart person pushing around their life's belongings is one that is no longer accurate," said Peter Connery of Applied Survey Research, the Watsonville-based firm that oversaw the census.

Using surveys completed by 1,723 homeless people in November and early December, researchers found, among other things, that local homelessness is primarily the result of a lack of jobs, followed by the high cost of housing. Drugs and alcohol were cited as primary factors by only 17 percent of responders.

When asked what services they most needed, those surveyed said job training and affordable housing.

Matching racial makeup of the county's homeless to the county population as a whole found that 52 percent of the homeless were white, compared with 50 percent of the general population; 20 percent of the homeless were black, compared with 9 percent of the county; and 20 percent were Latino, compared with the county's 35 percent. No explanations were offered for the disparities.

Most 67 percent were living on the streets, and only 33 percent were in various shelters. Because the shelters were frequently full 53 percent had been turned away it appeared to indicate a need for more shelters in the county.

More than one-fourth said they needed health care in the survey year and didn't receive it.

"Many health problems remain untreated until they become emergencies," said Jennifer Panetta, a research analyst for Applied Survey Research.

Ninety percent fall below the federal poverty line of \$750 a month, and 66 percent do not receive any form of government assistance.

The final census report is still being printed, but a selection of statistics was unveiled to about 75 homeless service providers Monday morning at the San Bernardino County Government Center.

Among the findings:

76 percent have lived in San Bernardino County for at least three years.

54 percent have at least a high school diploma.

49 percent have children; of those with dependent children, 40 percent said the children live with them.

16 percent are employed in some way.

15 percent said they are military veterans. Of those, 73 percent fought in a war.

14 percent are younger than 18.

Almost 12 percent were once in foster care.

Slightly more than half 53 percent of the homeless were counted in the San Bernardino-Bloomington-Redlands metro area. Roughly 30 percent of the county's homeless were in San Bernardino itself. Another 18 percent were in the High Desert.

The intention of the census and survey was to get better information about the state of homelessness in the county and provide better direction for planning. Another benefit could be state and federal grants to help ease the problem; the more thoroughly needs are documented, the more likely it is they will be matched with dollars, officials said.

Since its first homeless census in 1999, Monterey County has brought in more than \$11 million in funds for the homeless, including a \$1 million shelter.

Public, community and faith-based providers of homeless services in the audience for the report said they were disappointed that those with the power to enact change weren't there to hear the results. Barstow Mayor Lawrence Dale was the only elected official present.

The Rev. David J. Kalke, executive director of the Central City Lutheran Mission in San Bernardino, said he was struck by many of the figures, including those showing that so many homeless people want to work, something politicians aren't addressing.

"Hopefully, reports like this can help us have the conversation with them and show them there's a real need," he said.

Reached later by telephone, San Bernardino Councilwoman Susan Lien Longville was surprised to hear her city has such a large share of the homeless.

"If this is accurate,' she said, "it only proves how much more resources we need to deal with the emergency shelter needs in our community.

... Definitely more needs to be done. The problem, I would tend to agree, is bigger than anybody imagined.'

The statistics, she said, may well arm her with inspiration to do more.

When the full report is distributed sometime in the next week or so, officials said, it will also be placed on the county's Web site, [www.sbcounty.gov/csd](http://www.sbcounty.gov/csd), and at [www.appliedsurveyresearch.org](http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org).