

A look inside the numbers of the county's homeless

Homeless 2000

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 per-

cent). 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

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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.

— Register-Pajaronian staff