

Homelessness in Norwich-New London



Last year, Connecticut's emergency shelters served more than 11,000 people, including over 1,500 children. The number of people in shelters and transitional housing programs increased 3% from 2009 to 2010 and shelters have been operating over 100% capacity for almost two full years.

Homeless Persons: Connecticut and Norwich-New London ¹

	In Connecticut	In Norwich-New London
Total People	4,465	289
Adults Without Children	3,073	141
Adults in Families	513	59
Children in Families	824	89

Of the 4,465 total people counted during a one-day snapshot of Connecticut homelessness in 2011, 289 were counted in Norwich-New London. About one-half (51%) of all people counted in Norwich-New London were in families with children. Close to half (49%) of those counted were adults without children.

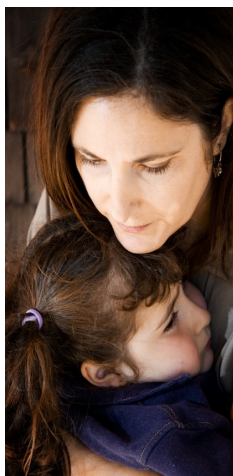
Homeless people in Norwich-New London are relatively well-educated. The average among adults in families with a high school education or higher has remained around fifty percent (50%) over the past three years. In 2010, an additional one-quarter (24%) of homeless adults reported further education in technical, college and graduate schools. ²

Nearly four of every ten (37%) people counted in the Norwich-New London shelters on one night in January 2010 had never before been homeless.

Approximately two-tenths (19%) adults with children reported working at the time of their homelessness. Adults without children were somewhat less likely than families to have worked (12%). Since 2008, both groups have show decreasing rates of employment. People who have served in the military comprised more than one-tenth (13%) of the homeless population in Norwich-New London.

Nationally and across the state, adults without children are much more likely to experience chronic

homelessness than families. While nearly half (49%) of adults without children in Norwich-New London experienced chronic homelessness during *CT PIT 2010*, while only eight percent (8%) of families were found to be chronically homeless.³ Well over half (57%) of all adults in families reported no disabling health issues.



Family Homelessness in Connecticut

Families headed by young, single women of color are overrepresented in family shelters across the state. Family homelessness is typically part of a longer period of economic strife and separation.

It is common for families to stay with friends and family members out of economic need. Nationally, families are more likely to enter shelter from a doubled up housing situation than from anywhere else.

In one day alone, 484 homeless families were counted in Connecticut. Fifty-six of those families, including 86 children, were from Norwich-New London.



Why People Are Homeless in Norwich-New London

People who become homeless are those with the fewest resources and multiple barriers to economic and health security. In addition to inadequate income and high cost of housing as forces of homelessness, interpersonal violence, disabling health conditions, as well as re-entry and criminal justice involvement are complex contributing factors. *In Connecticut, rent problems and domestic violence were the most common reasons people had left their last place of residence.* In Norwich-New London, well over one-half (60%) of adults in families cited domestic violence as a contributing cause of homelessness, and almost one-quarter (24%) of families reported rent problems or eviction as the reason they left their last residence. Criminal justice involvement was the most commonly reported contributing factor to homelessness among adults without children (43%).

Shortage of Affordable Housing

In the combined Norwich-New London metropolitan area, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,007.⁴ In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$19.37 hourly or \$40,280 annually. A minimum wage worker earns \$8.25 hourly. In order to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment, a minimum wage earner must work 92 hours per week. Or, a household must include more than two minimum wage earners in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.⁵

Income Instability and Poverty

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Connecticut saw an average unemployment rate of 9.1% in 2010, as unemployment in the Norwich-New London metropolitan area averaged at 8.7% in the same year.⁶ The unemployment rate in this part of the state has nearly quadrupled in the past ten years, while the cost of living remains among the highest in the nation. In 2010, Connecticut was ranked the most expensive state to buy groceries, the second most expensive state in the price of utilities, the fifth most expensive state in housing expenses, and the sixth most expensive state in health care costs.⁷ Census reports show 8.4% of Connecticut's population living below the federal poverty level (FPL), a rate higher than that of Norwich-New London, where 6.7% of the population lives below the FPL.⁸ This figure does not include those struggling to earn enough income to meet their basic needs.

Healthcare Issues

For individuals and families already struggling to pay for basic needs, a serious illness or disability can begin a cascade of lost wages, depletion of assets, and eventual eviction. About one-third (34%) of adults who were homeless in Connecticut and over one-third (37%) of homeless adults in Norwich-New London had been hospitalized in the past for mental health conditions. Nearly one-quarter (24%) of adults experiencing homelessness in the state reported a need for substance abuse services, and approximately the same percentage (22%) of homeless adults in Norwich-New London reported a need for such services. Healthcare represents an important component in ending homelessness. As we look to the issues of inability to work, interpersonal violence, trauma and disability, we make the connection between appropriate and relevant mental, behavioral and physical health and housing stability.

¹ Norwich-New London data presented are provided by the *CT PIT 2011*, a one-day snapshot of homelessness conducted on January 27, 2011. *CT PIT 2011* was conducted in shelters, housing programs, and included a street count. *CT PIT* data underestimates the extent of homeless, as it does not capture numbers of people turned away or who do not seek shelter, or those living in doubled up and other precarious housing situations.

² From *CT PIT 2010*, a one-day snapshot of homelessness conducted on January 27, 2010. *CT PIT 2010* was conducted in shelters and housing programs only and did not include a street count.

³ "A Chronically Homeless Person or Family is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition or a family with at least one adult member who has a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years. The term homeless in this case means a person sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets), in an emergency homeless shelter, or in a Safe Haven as defined by HUD." <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/chronic.cfm>.

⁴ FMRs are the monthly amounts "needed to rent privately owned, decent, safe, and sanitary rental housing of a modest (non-luxury) nature with suitable amenities." Federal Register. HUD determines FMRs for localities in all 50 states.

⁵ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2011*. See <<http://www.nlihc.org>>.

⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010). *Economy at a Glance*. See http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ct_norwich_mn.htm

⁷ Missouri Economic Research and Information Center. http://www.missourieconomy.org/indicators/cost_of_living/index.stm

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, Five Year Estimates; American FactFinder. See <http://factfinder.census.gov>.