

Homelessness in Stamford-Greenwich



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 Stamford-Greenwich ¹				
	In Connecticut		In Stamford-Greenwich	
	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Total People	3,770	695	270	53
Adults Without Children	2,419	654	173	49
Adults in Families	496	17	42	2
Children in Families	800	24	50	2

Of the 4,465 total people counted during a one-day snapshot of Connecticut homelessness in 2011, 323 were counted in the Stamford-Greenwich area. Nearly one-third (31%) of all people counted in the Stamford-Greenwich area were in families with children. More than two-thirds (69%) of those counted were adults without children.

Homeless people in Stamford-Greenwich are relatively well-educated. Over half (56%) of adults experiencing homelessness in 2010 had a high school education or higher.² This average among adults without children and in families has remained above fifty percent (50%) over the past three years. In 2010, an additional sixteen percent (16%) of homeless adults reported further education in technical, college and graduate schools.

Approximately one-third (30%) of adults in families reported having work as an income source at the time of their homelessness. Adults without children were slightly less likely than families to have worked (27%), but showed an eleven percent (11%) increase in employment since 2008. People who have served in the military comprised one-tenth of the homeless population in the Stamford-Greenwich area.

More than four of every ten (42%) people counted in the Stamford-Greenwich area shelters on one night in January 2010 had never before been homeless.



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.

Nationally and across the state, adults without children are much more likely to experience chronic homelessness than families. In the Stamford-Greenwich area, thirty-five adults counted during *CT PIT 2010* experienced chronic homelessness; thirty-three were adults without children (31%) and two were in families (50%).³ Well over half (60%) of adults in families reported no disabling health issues.

In one day alone, 484 homeless families were counted in Connecticut. Thirty-six of those families, including 50 children, were from Stamford-Greenwich.



Why People Are Homeless in Stamford-Greenwich

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 powerful and complex contributing factors. *In Connecticut, rent problems and domestic violence were the most common reasons people left their last place of residence.* Over half (51%) of adults without children and about one-quarter (27%) of families in Stamford-Greenwich cited rent problems or eviction as a contributing cause of homelessness. Half of adults in families responded 'yes' when asked if they 'had been in a relationship where they had been physically hurt or felt threatened; 40% said domestic violence contributed to their homelessness.

Shortage of Affordable Housing

In the combined Stamford-Norwalk metropolitan region, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,811.⁴ In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn \$34.83 hourly or \$72,440 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 168 hours per week. Or, a household must include more than four 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 Stamford-Norwalk-Bridgeport metropolitan area averaged at 8.4%.⁶ The unemployment rate in this part of the state has quadrupled over 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) in 2010, a rate slightly lower than that of Stamford (10.2%) yet higher than that of Greenwich (3.6%).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 slightly less than a third (30%) of homeless adults in the Stamford-Greenwich area 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, while two in ten (20%) homeless adults in Stamford-Greenwich 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 Stamford-Greenwich 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 and 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.nlich.org>>.

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