

# Polk County Point in Time Homeless Count

for people experiencing homelessness who received support services,  
lived on the streets, emergency shelter or transitional housing

on January 27, 2010

Prepared for the Polk County Housing Continuum  
by the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances

## **2010 Homeless Summary**

The 2010 point in time was conducted January 27<sup>th</sup>. The total count of Des Moines homeless, including sheltered and unsheltered persons in emergency shelters, transitional shelters and HPRP programs was 1087. The point in time count of homeless provides an accurate and reliable demographic description of Des Moines' homeless population for that night.

This report meets requirement of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and is required to be conducted at a specified time of year.

This year saw a number of important changes. One of Des Moines' large established transitional housing programs disappeared. The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program was established, adding new beds.

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 there were 1087 persons homeless in Des Moines. 64% were unaccompanied individuals, while the remaining 36% were homeless in families. Emergency shelters housed 27.3% of those people, while 60.6% visited transitional shelters. 6.2% were in HPRP programs and 5.9% were unsheltered.

This suggests an overall decline of homelessness between the unique day of January 28<sup>th</sup> 2009 and the unique day of January 27<sup>th</sup> 2010 of 3.7%. An implication of that decline pertinent to the overall picture of homelessness in Des Moines may not be validly drawn. For example, inventory of beds also was lower by 3.4% (and if HPRP beds are removed, DSM lost 8.5%) from 2009.

The following data provides an accurate and reliable description of the demographic qualities of the homeless population of Des Moines on January 27<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Point in time data has limitations and cannot be used to validly extrapolate details regarding the homeless population served throughout an entire year. Reliability of the description declines significantly as implications are applied to nights further from January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Comparisons are often made between years, but it is important to note that circumstances (weather, beds capacity, etc.) change from year to year which make a simple comparison less reliable. For further detail analysis or complete annual reports, please contact the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances.

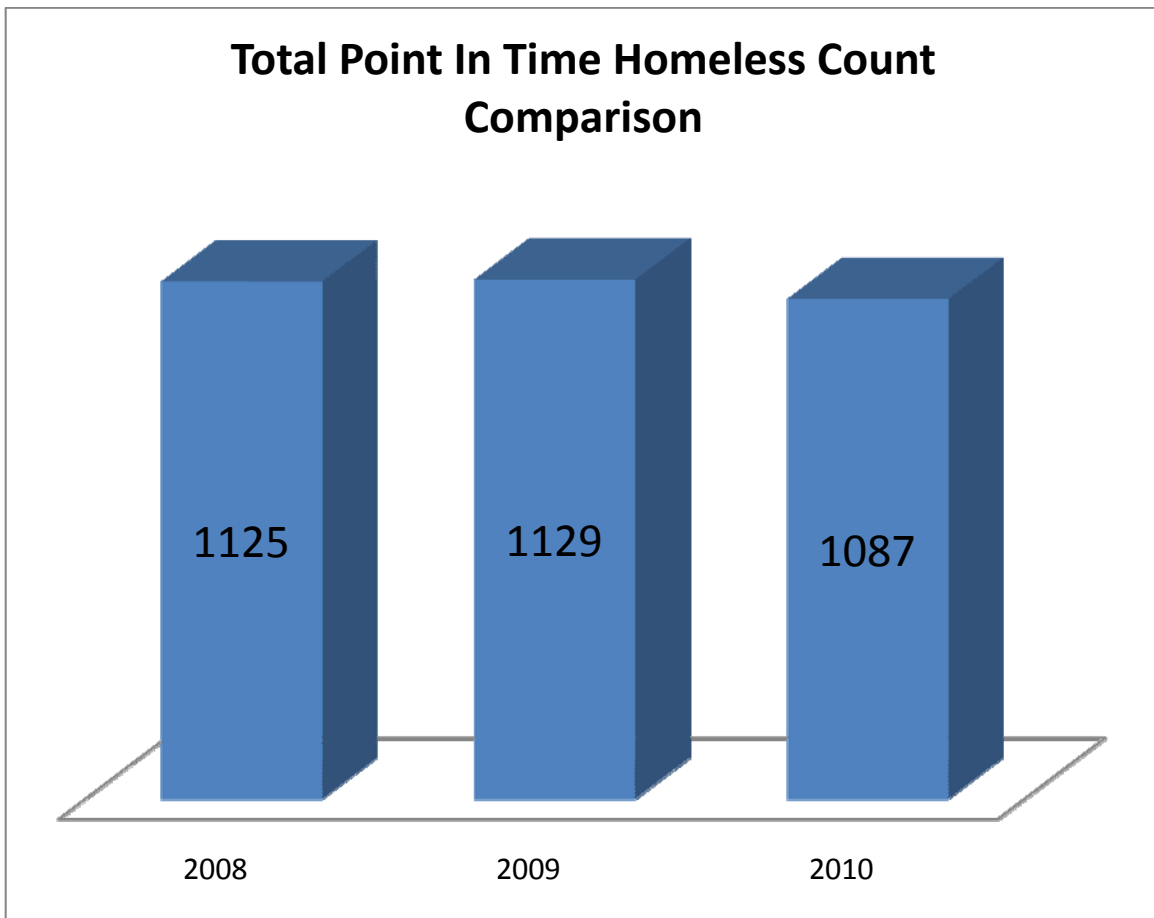
Household Status

Individuals	695
Persons in Families	392
<b>Total Count</b>	<b>1087</b>

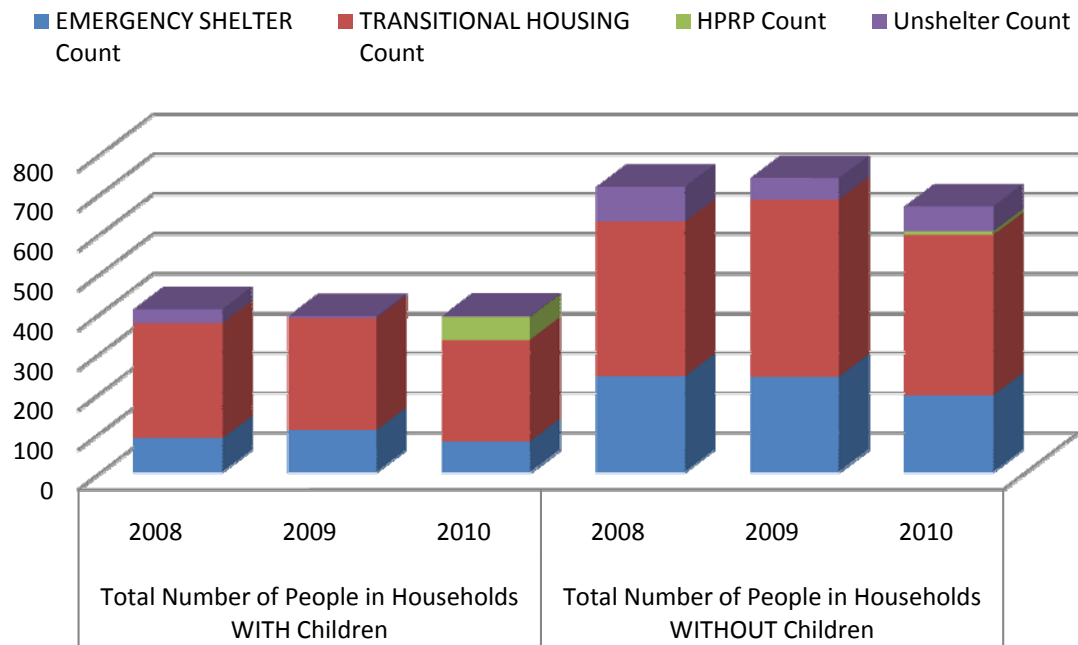
Service Type

Persons Served in Emergency Shelter	297
Persons served in Transitional Housing	659
Persons served by HPRP	67
Persons unsheltered	64

Three Year Comparison



## Program Type Comparison by Household Type

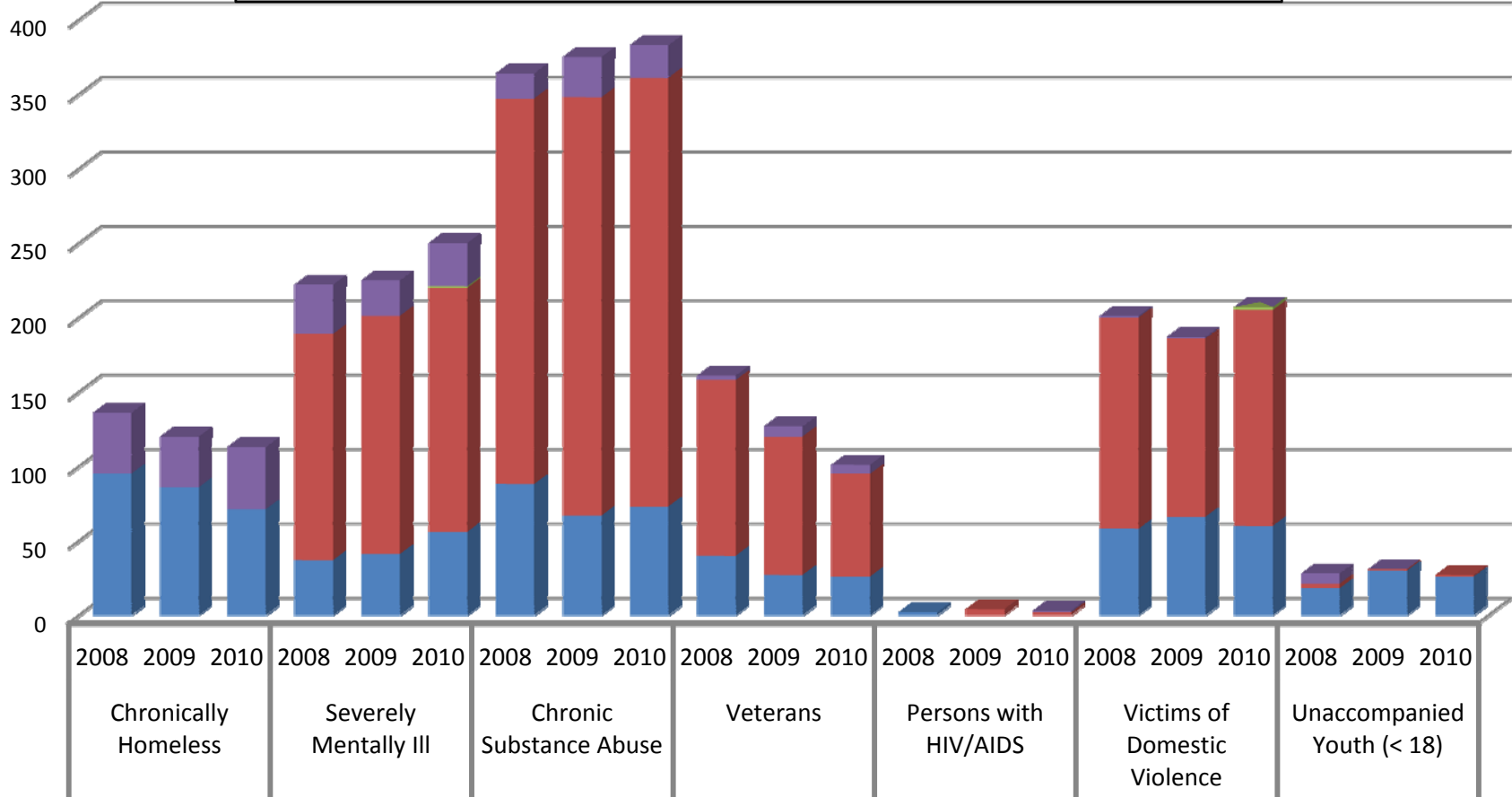


### Sub-Population Detail

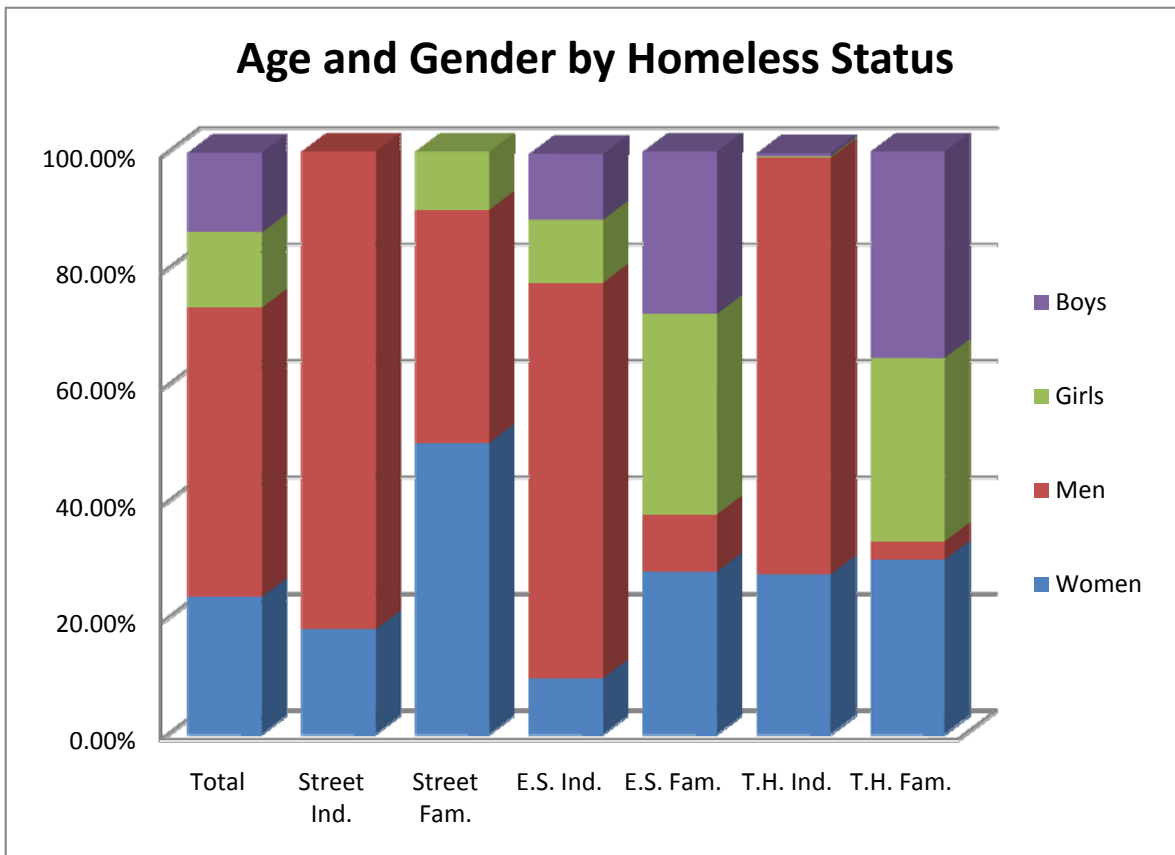
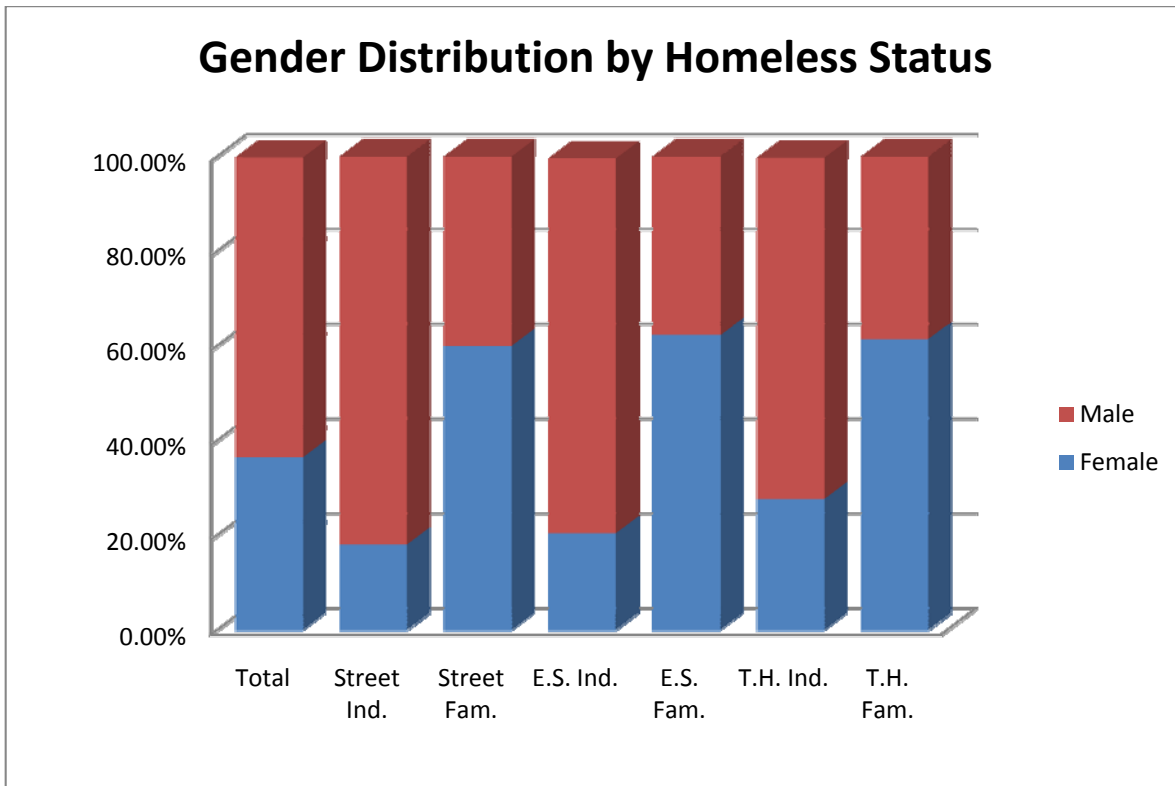
<b>Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations</b> (Adults only, except item 7)		<b>ES Count</b>	<b>TH Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Subtotal</b>	<b>HPRP Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Total</b>	<b>Unsheltered Count</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>
1	Chronically Homeless	71		71		71	42	113
2	Severely Mentally Ill	56	164	220	1	221	29	250
3	Chronic Substance Abuse	73	288	361	0	361	22	383
4	Veterans	26	69	95	0	95	6	101
5	Persons with HIV/AIDS	0	2	2	0	2	1	3
6	Victims of Domestic Violence	60	145	205	2	207	0	207
7	Unaccompanied Youth (< 18)	26	1	27	0	27	0	27

Sub-Population Comparison

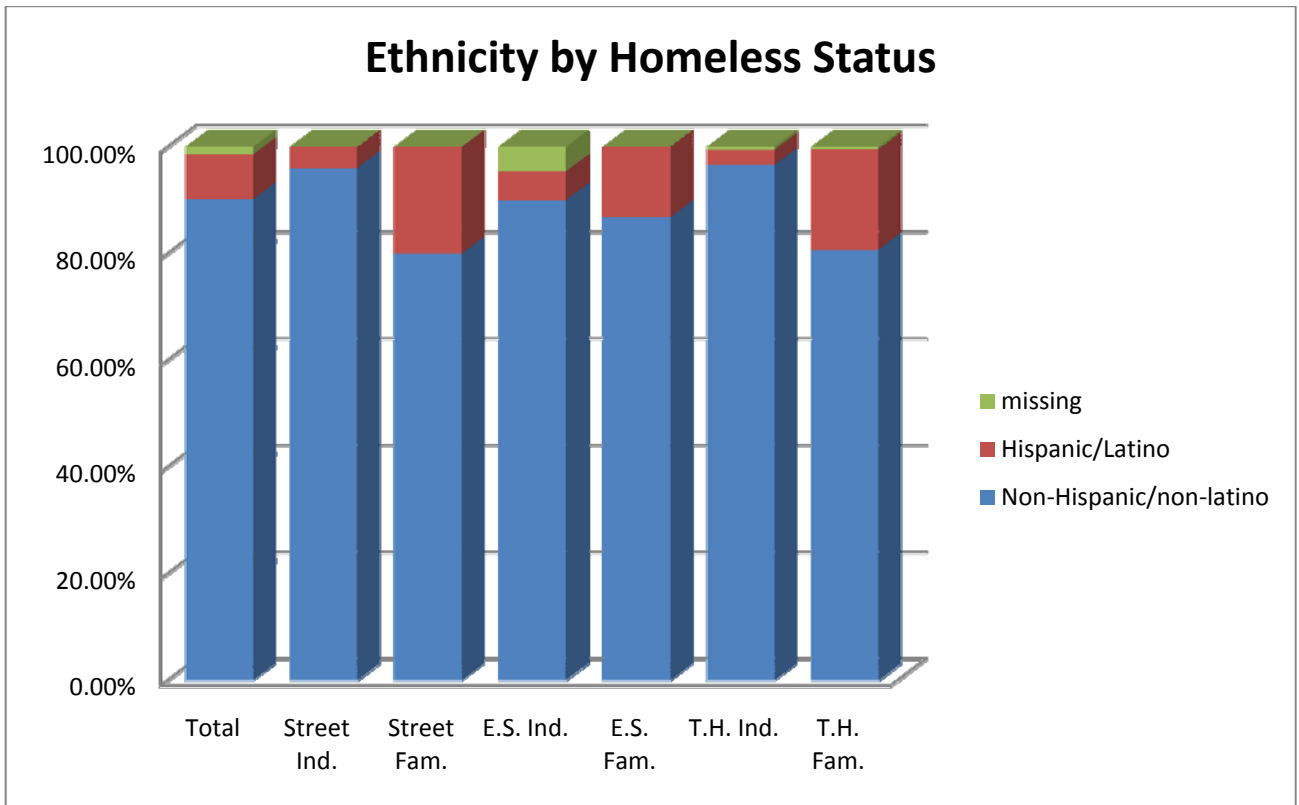
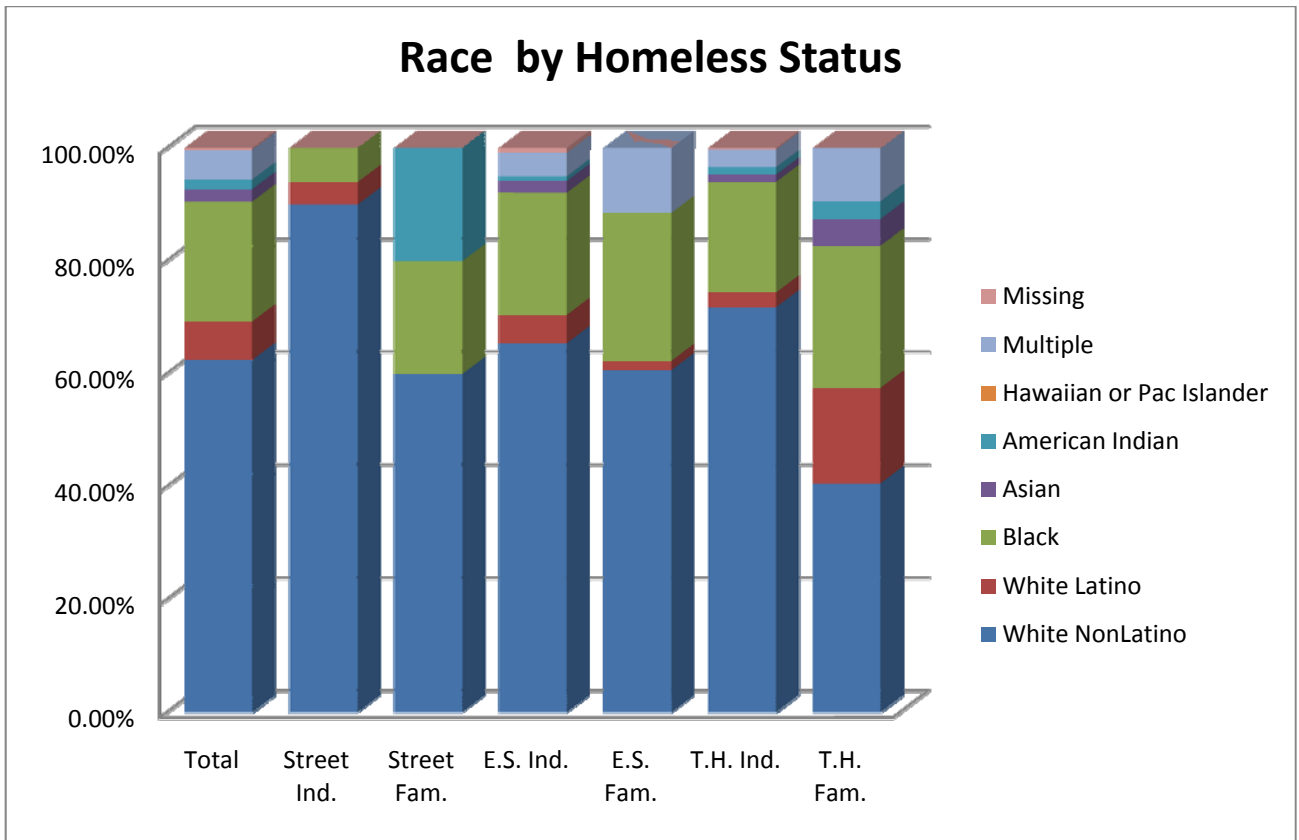
## Sub-Populations of Persons Experiencing Homelessness 2008-2010



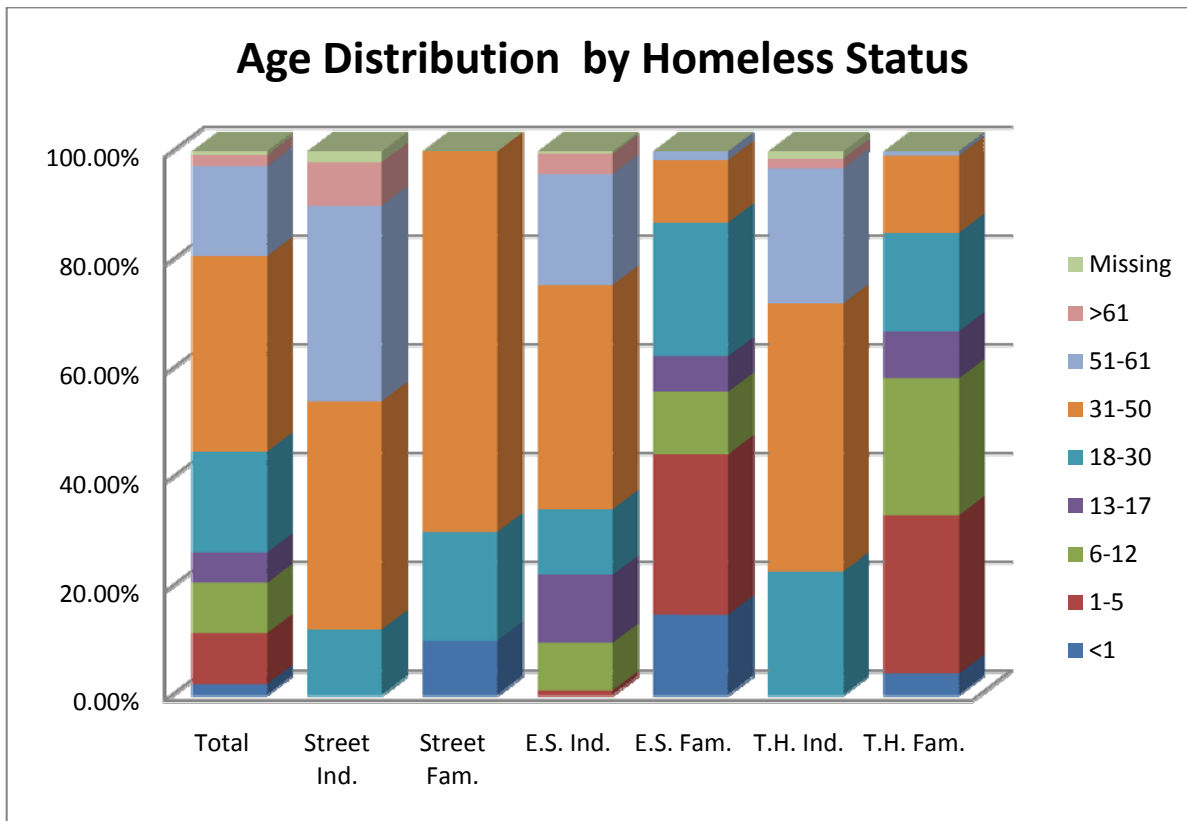
Gender Detail



Race / Ethnicity Detail



## Age Distribution



## Using Point In Time Data

The practice of selecting a single day, even from the HMIS system, for a longitudinal analysis, results in a circumstance where nearly every number shows significant change, yet none are meaningful. Looking at the changes in counts used for the annual report to congress we see that picking four dates and pulling counts for those four dates, 26 of 48 data points show significant change. Either this can be seen as a telling indication of the turbulent nature of homelessness or it can be seen as the low reliability of this particular methodology. Though homelessness is certainly turbulent, in this case there is serious doubt as to the reliability or validity of comparing single days longitudinally. This is particularly true given the available of daily totals.

### Sheltered Point In Time Count and Available Beds

	Emergency & Transitional Client Count	Point In Time Bed Utilization	HPRP Client Count	Point In Time Bed Utilization	Total Beds	Bed Utilization	Unit Utilization
2010	1169	81.35%	65	100.00%	1234	82.33%	87.05%
2009	1277	83.87%	0		1277	83.87%	65.17%
2008	1271	78.91%	0		1271	78.91%	80.43%

The effort to provide housing and to understand the relationship of demand to available beds is a complicated process employing the daily numbers. Beds are constantly being moved or reallocated to fit the need seen at the door of the shelter. Trying to understand these things with any certainty or clarity from point-in-time numbers is unnecessarily murky.

This year saw the introduction of the HPRP program in mid October. That brought with it 65 new beds comprising 15 units. Without those beds we see a 2.52% decline in available beds, largely explained by the loss of a major transitional housing program. With them included the utilization rate declines by only 1.64%.

The distinct nature of the shelters and their entry requirements affects the willingness of certain clients to use those beds, leaving some bed ratios low. Other less restrictive beds are full constantly. The shelter beds without restriction, for homeless men in any condition regardless of religiosity or sobriety, saw 100% utilization.

Some beds remain unoccupied as a part of a family unit where the family does not perfectly match the beds in the room. Unit utilization in 2010 shows 84.68% without HPRP or 87.05% with HPRP.

Still this is misleading and may lead to the conclusion that homelessness is declining in Des Moines. Whether this is true is not a conclusion that can be reliably derived from the data provided.

Summary Data Table

**State of Iowa Point in Time Homeless Count      January 27, 2010**  
**Totals for Des Moines/Polk County CoC**

<b>Part 1: Homeless Population</b>		<b>EMERGENCY SHELTER Count</b>	<b>TRANSITIONAL HOUSING Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Subtotal</b>	<b>HPRP Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Total</b>	<b>UNSHELTERED Count</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>
1	Number of <b>Households</b> WITH Dependent Children:	26	79	105	16	121	1	122
1a	Total Number of <b>People</b> in Households WITH Children	77	255	332	58	390	2	392
3	Number of <b>Households</b> WITHOUT Dependent Children	192	393	585	7	592	57	649
3a	Total Number of <b>People</b> in Households WITHOUT Children	194	403	597	9	606	62	668
3	Number of <b>Households</b> WITH ONLY Children	26	1	27	0	27	0	27
3a	Total Number of <b>People</b> in Households WITH ONLY Children	26	1	27	0	27	0	27
<b>TOTAL PEOPLE</b>		<b>297</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1087</b>

<b>Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations</b> (Adults only, except item 7)		<b>ES Subpopulation Count</b>	<b>TH Subpopulation Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Subtotal</b>	<b>HPRP Subpopulation Count</b>	<b>SHELTERED Total</b>	<b>Unsheltered Subpopulation Count</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>
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Note: A new column was added for 2010 for Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing (HPRP) clients. Numbers in the HPRP column represent clients who were homeless when entering the rapid rehousing program, and were receiving HPRP rental assistance on the night of the count.