

# Community Fact Sheet

## The Changing Face of NWA's Homeless: More Results from the 2013 Homeless Census

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### Who Are They?

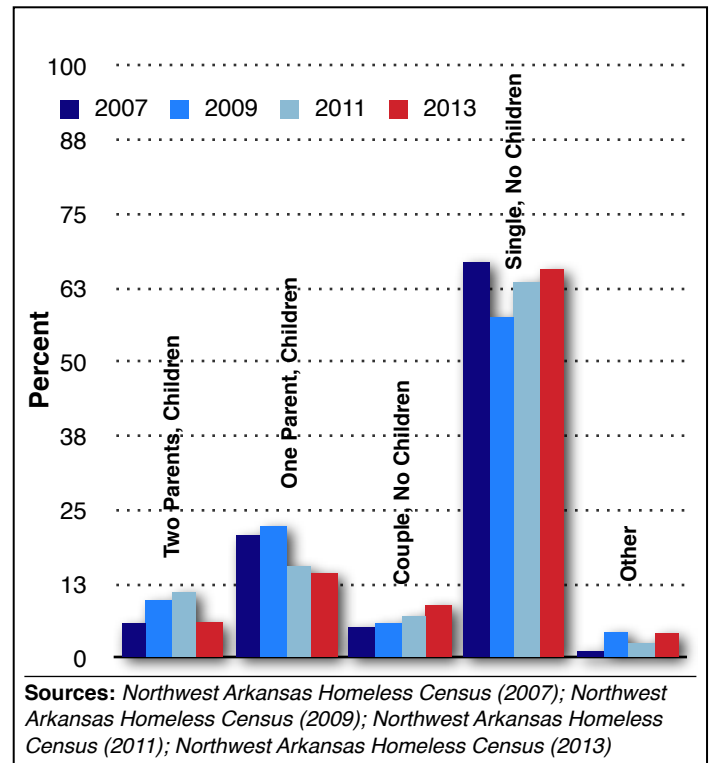
On any given night, it is estimated that over 2,400 adults and youth are without their own place in Washington and Benton Counties. Results from the 2013 Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census of interviewed adults (n=443), revealed that 63 percent were male, 80 percent were White/Caucasian, and 66 percent single. The median age was 43 years of age. This demographic profile mirrors much of what was found in the 2011 Northwest Arkansas Point-in-Time Homeless Census.

In the 2013 census (see Figure 1), nearly two-thirds of those persons interviewed were single. That number increased slightly since 2011 while the number of homeless adults who said they were either a single parent or a member of a two-parent family with children declined slightly (26% in 2011 vs. 20% in 2013).

In 2007, 59 youth under 18 were reported to be accompanying their adult parents who were interviewed during the 24-hour period; by 2009 that

number increased to 90 youth and jumped to 112 (20% increase) in 2011. That number increased again in the 2013 census with 121 children being reported to be part of homeless families (7.4% increase). Similar to the rest of the nation, women with children are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in Northwest Arkansas; more than 75 percent of adults who reported being a single parent were female. For those not single, fifty-five percent said they currently have family members living with them now, and in some cases that meant as many as two or three children.

**Figure 1. Current Family Situation**  
Benton and Washington Counties



### Where Are They? For How Long?

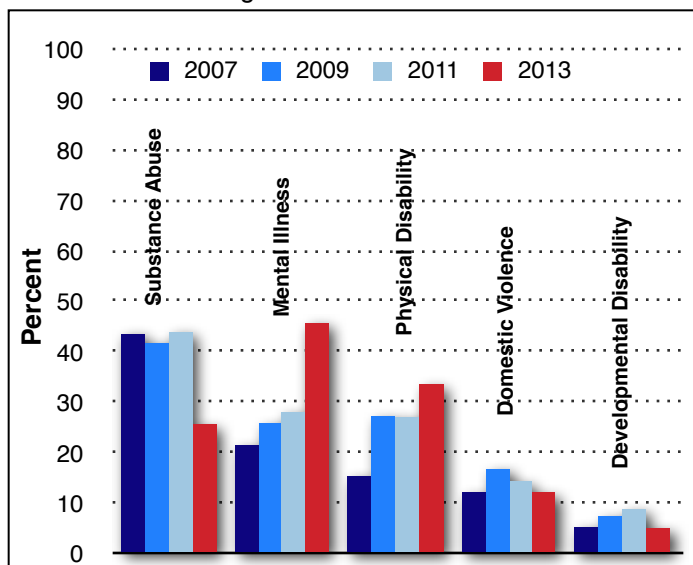
Of homeless persons interviewed, 35 percent said they lived in emergency or transitional shelters in 2013. Roughly one-quarter of all adults interviewed said they were doubling up with friends/relatives; this invisible homeless is in part been the carry-over from an economic crisis that continues to have a profound impact on the American family. This group of “invisible” homeless continues to be both an enigma and challenge to service providers in the region and throughout the country.

The median time spent homeless in 2007 was 3 months. In 2009 and 2011 the median time homeless was 5 months. In 2007, 52 percent of the homeless interviewed said this was not the first time they were homeless. That percentage was similar in 2009. However, in a dramatic shift, only 25 percent reported being homeless multiple times in the last three years. Nearly 75 percent of those interviewed were reporting being homeless for the first time.

### What Are Their Challenges and Needs?

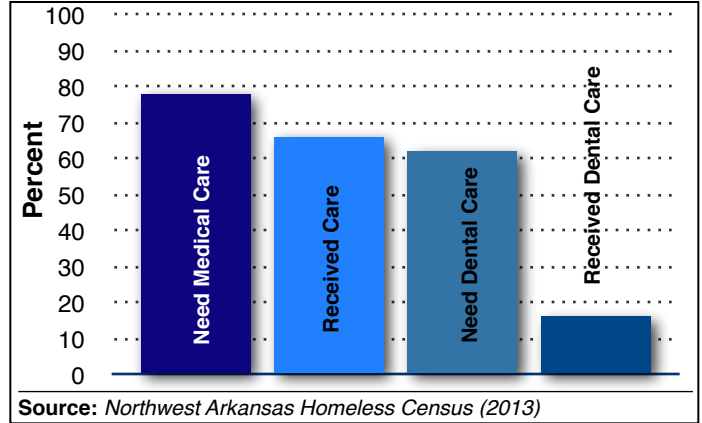
Of those homeless persons interviewed in 2013, 73 percent reported suffering from at least one of the disabling conditions listed in Figure 2. While there was a decline in those reporting substance abuse, significant increases were noted in mental illness and physical disability. These categories correspond to HUD’s definition of what characterizes the chronic homeless. In 2007, 21 percent met HUD’s definition,

**Figure 2. Self-Reported Disabling Conditions**  
Benton and Washington Counties



Sources: Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2007); Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2009); Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2011); Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2013)

**Figure 3. Self-Reported Care and Needs** Benton and Washington Counties



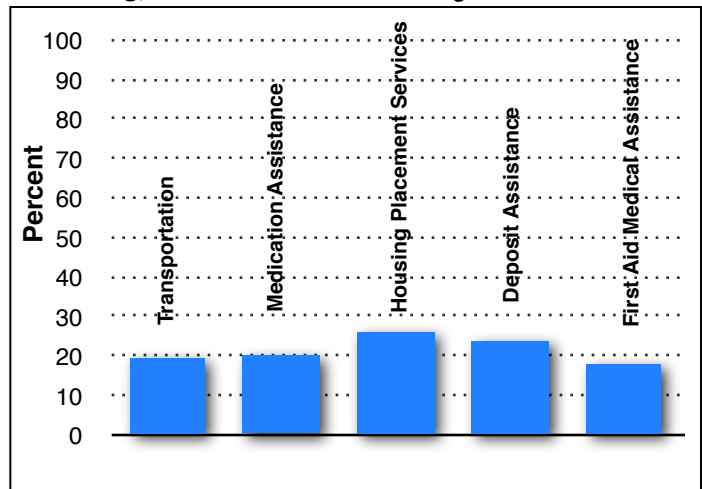
Source: Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2013)

and by 2011, the percentage of homeless reporting chronic/disabling conditions increased to 27 percent. In 2013, there were 33% of those persons interviewed that met the criterion for chronic homelessness.

Despite the efforts of local agencies and organizations, there remains a sizable gap between the needs of the homeless and the services provided to them. The most serious service gap is found with dental care. Sixty-two percent reported needing dental care in the last year, yet less than 16 percent received it; there was a much smaller gap for primary medical care.

Unfortunately, the services in short supply are also the ones best able to help people successfully transition out of homelessness. Figure 4 depicts the top five service needs reported by homeless persons in 2013. While still considerable, these service needs are lower (percent who need the service) than those reported in 2009 and 2011. Is the gap closing?

**Figure 4. Top Five Service Needs Currently Not Receiving, 2013** Benton and Washington Counties



Sources: Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2013)