

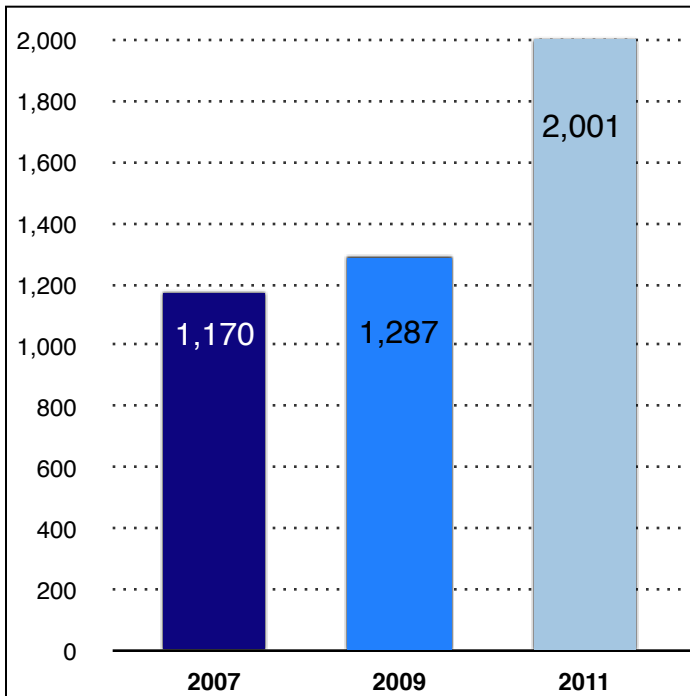
Community Fact Sheet

Counting NWA's Homeless: Preliminary Results from the 2011 Homeless Census

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Figure 1. Total Estimate of Homeless Persons
Benton and Washington Counties



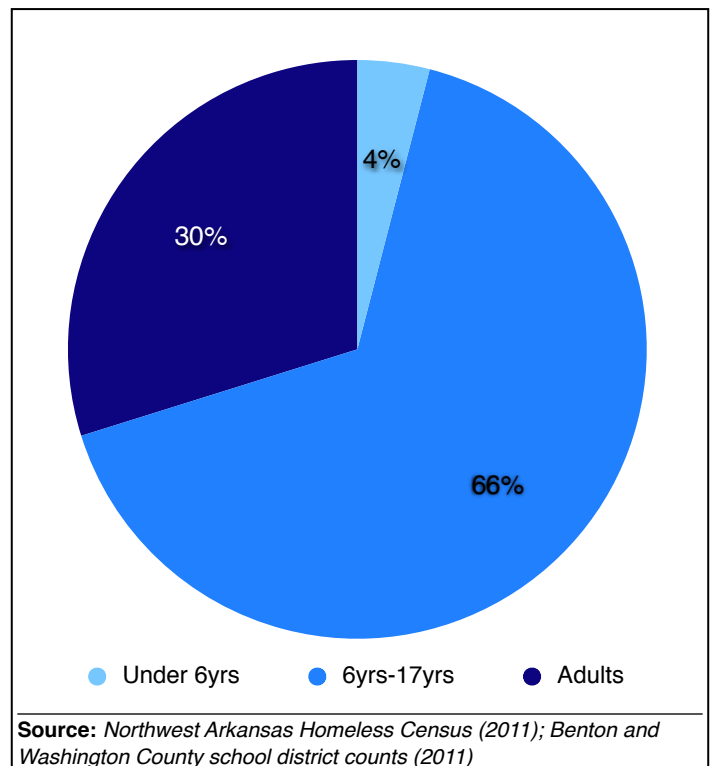
Sources: Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2007); Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2009); Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2011).

The 2011 point-in-time (PIT) homeless census in Northwest Arkansas is completed and the news, as expected, is not good. In the midst of the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression, the number of homeless in Northwest Arkansas increased from an estimated 1,287 in 2009 to 2,001 (36%) in 2011. The rise is alarming but not surprising as service providers throughout the region report record numbers of persons being served.

Youth at Risk

More than two-thirds of homeless persons in the Northwest Arkansas region are 18 and under. Nearly one-quarter of those counted in shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens, and day centers were under the age of 18, and half of those youth were under the age of 6. These youth were identified by their parent or guardian as residing with them in a variety of circumstances including shelters, hotels, homes of friends or relatives, and even the streets (car, RV, camping, etc.).

Figure 2. Age of Homeless Respondents (2011)
Benton and Washington Counties



Source: Northwest Arkansas Homeless Census (2011); Benton and Washington County school district counts (2011)

Figure 3. Total Number of Homeless Youth: K-12
Benton and Washington Counties

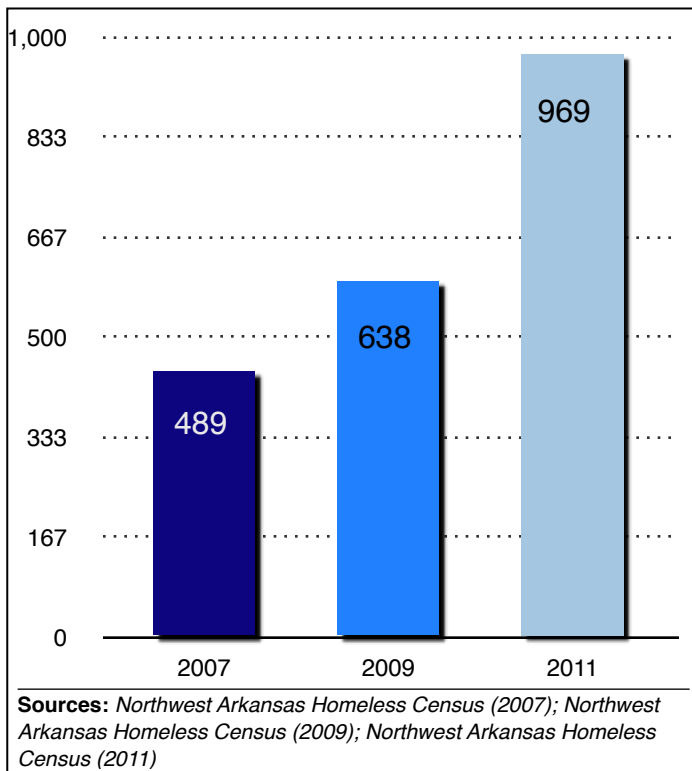
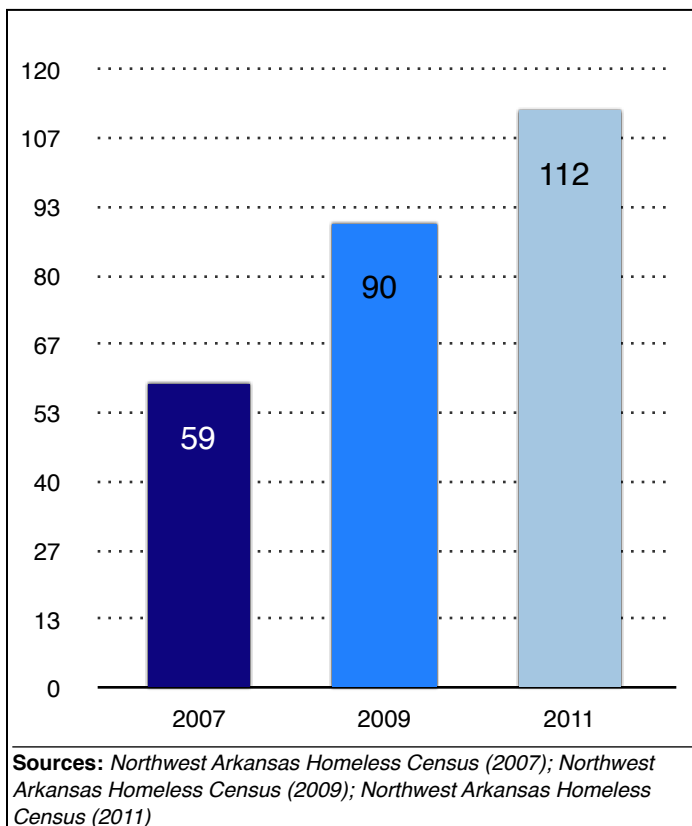


Figure 4. Total Number of Homeless Youth Residing with Interviewed Adults
Benton and Washington Counties



Clearly, the story behind the 2011 homeless census and the preliminary data presented here is the continuing growth in the number of homeless youth. As seen in Figure 3, the number of homeless youth attending school in the two largest counties in Northwest Arkansas has nearly doubled since 2007. Representing 14 districts, all the schools reported some K-12 homeless students while 5 schools reported more than 100 homeless students. The majority of school-age homeless youth reported doubling up with friends and relatives (83%). The percentage of students doubling up with friends and relatives increased since 2009 (75%).

Figure 4 shows the number of youth that were part of a family unit **identified during the interview**. In 2009, nearly half of the 90 youth identified as living in the family units (44) were under the age of 6. This number increased by more than half (52.5%) from 2007. In 2011, that number continued to climb with 112 youth identified as belonging to 67 homeless families. Importantly, many of these children were not attending day care or a pre-K program and the vast majority were headed by a single-parent, mostly females.

Methodological Note

The total number of homeless persons in Northwest Arkansas is based on three separate counts: a) a 24-hour PIT census of homeless adults and youth (under the age of 18) identified as living with them; b) counts of homeless students provided by Benton and Washington County school districts; and c) an estimate of “invisible” homeless persons derived from interviews conducted in soup kitchens, food pantries and day centers.

Summing these three counts produced an estimate of 2,001 homeless persons in Benton and Washington Counties on January 27-28, 2011. Of this number: (a) 437 were adults and 112 accompanying youth; (b) 969* youth attending local schools along with their 475** estimated parents/guardians; and (c) 61 additional “invisible” homeless estimated from the soup kitchen, day center, food pantry count.

* The estimate of 969 homeless K-12 youth represents an adjustment of school district figures, calculated as the total number of homeless youth identified by school districts (n=1,022) minus those youth ages 6 or older already counted during the PIT census (n=53).

** The estimate of 475 parents/guardians is the product of a two-step calculation. First, the total number of homeless students living **without** a parent or guardian is calculated. This value is estimated as 2.8 percent of all homeless students (n=29). The total number of these unaccompanied K-12 students is then subtracted from the total (969 - 29 = 949). The second step is to calculate the number of parents/guardians for these 949 accompanied students. This value is calculated using an estimated ratio of two students per parent, for an estimate of 474.

Details of the census and the current NWA homeless population and their needs will follow in a report that will be posted on the CFI website.