

# Iowans Experiencing Homelessness


January-December 2009 Annual Snapshot of Service and Shelter Use



A report to the Governor of the State of Iowa  
on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness

Prepared by the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances

# 23,808



38.7%  
more homeless  
than last year

23,808 Iowans were homeless and served by I-Count agencies in 2009

I-Count is the Statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) used by most homeless agencies across Iowa. Approximately 75% of Emergency and Transitional beds are included in this information network.

# This is not an estimate

These are real people, forced to seek help

23,808

homeless people

15,351

people at risk of homelessness

38,078

people in total

Each of these numbers is an unduplicated count. Though each person is counted only once within the homeless population and once within the at risk population, there is an overlap between the two populations. 1,081 people were both homeless and at risk during the year. The total unduplicated population served in 2009 was 38,078.

20.6%  
more at risk  
than last year



38,078 Iowans were

**cut out of society**

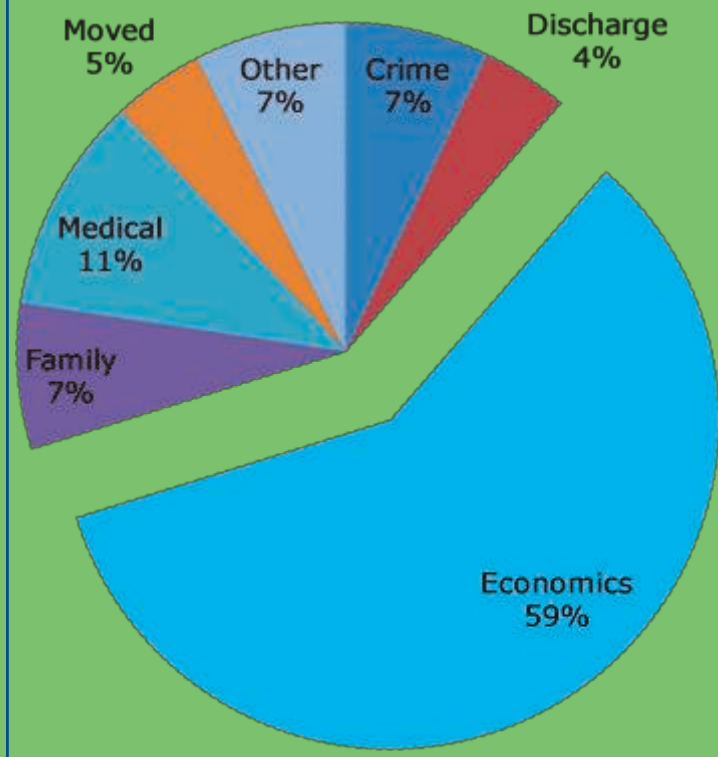
from the impacts of insecure housing  
combined with other social ills.

A **homeless person** lacked a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence or had a primary nighttime residence that was a supervised temporary shelter or a place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

A **person at risk of homelessness** sought services to prevent homelessness but did not qualify as homeless.

59% of Iowa's Homeless  
(55% among families and 64.5% among singles)  
listed Economics as either the primary  
or secondary reason they became homeless.

The remaining 41% distributed fairly  
evenly among 6 categories, with  
Medical topping the list at 11%.



At risk  
families  
only make  
15% more  
per month  
than  
homeless  
families.

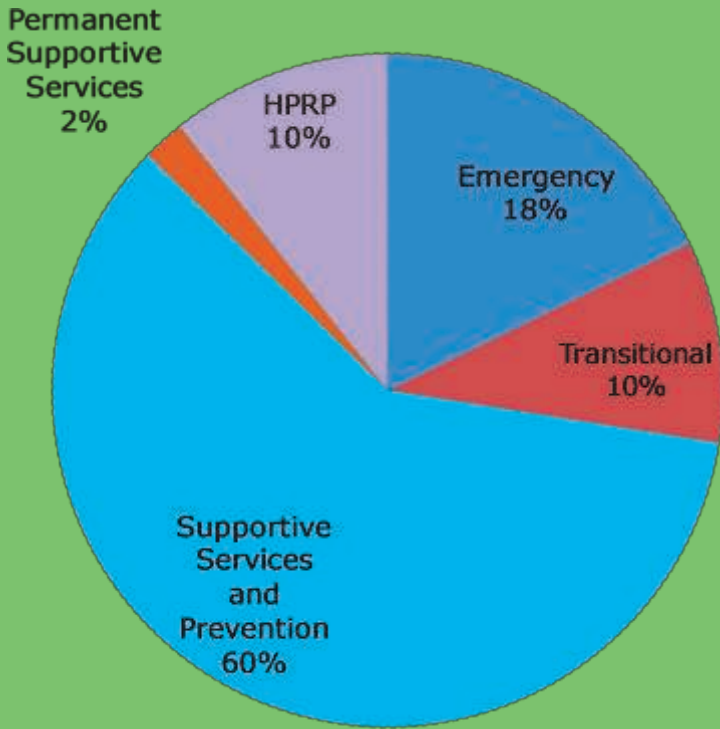
The average mortgage  
in Iowa is \$1,136/month<sup>4</sup>.  
That's 78.2% of the  
average income  
for families  
in service.

Iowa had 112,841<sup>4</sup> vacant housing units and  
23,808 homeless households.



Single adults receiving service make on average **29.8%** of what is necessary to survive in Iowa<sup>1</sup>.

Homeless families on average make **43.7%** of what is necessary to support a single parent family with 2 children in Iowa<sup>1</sup>.



Average Family Sizes (2.92<sup>4</sup> in Iowa)

Transitional	2.7
Emergency	3.2
P.S.H.	2.77
HPRP	3.09
Support	2.91

Average Children in Family

Transitional	1.79
Emergency	1.96
P.S.H.	1.66
HPRP	1.7
Support	1.71



# Homeless Families

# 14,068

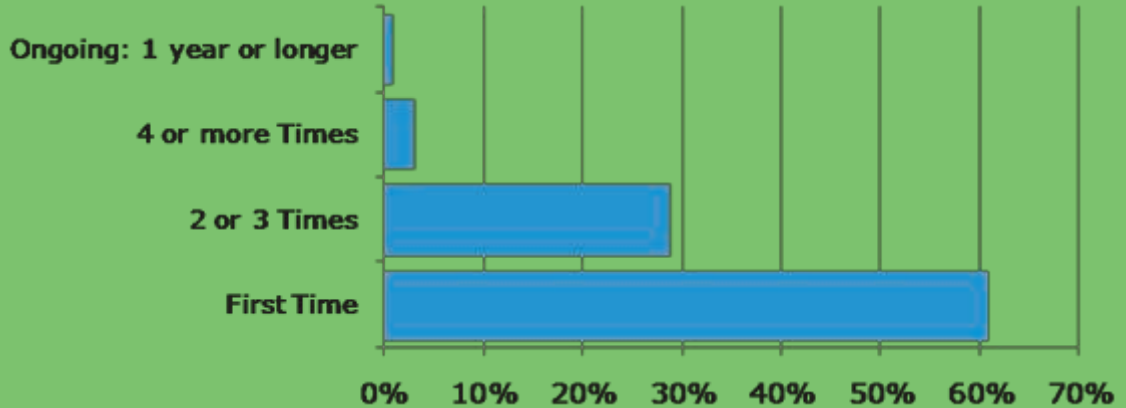
People

5% of homeless families were on the street at intake.

54% were under 18



Extent of homelessness among families



	Homeless Families (14,068)	At-Risk Families (13,153)	Iowa Population (2,984,391)
Female	58%	60%	51% <sup>4</sup>
Hispanic/Latino	8%	9%	4% <sup>4</sup>
Black	32%	34%	2% <sup>4</sup>
White	59%	63%	93% <sup>4</sup>
Adults Employed at Intake	15%	29%	95% <sup>5</sup>
Long Term Disability	25%	18%	15% <sup>4</sup>
GED or more	10%	18%	90% <sup>4</sup>

# At-Risk Families

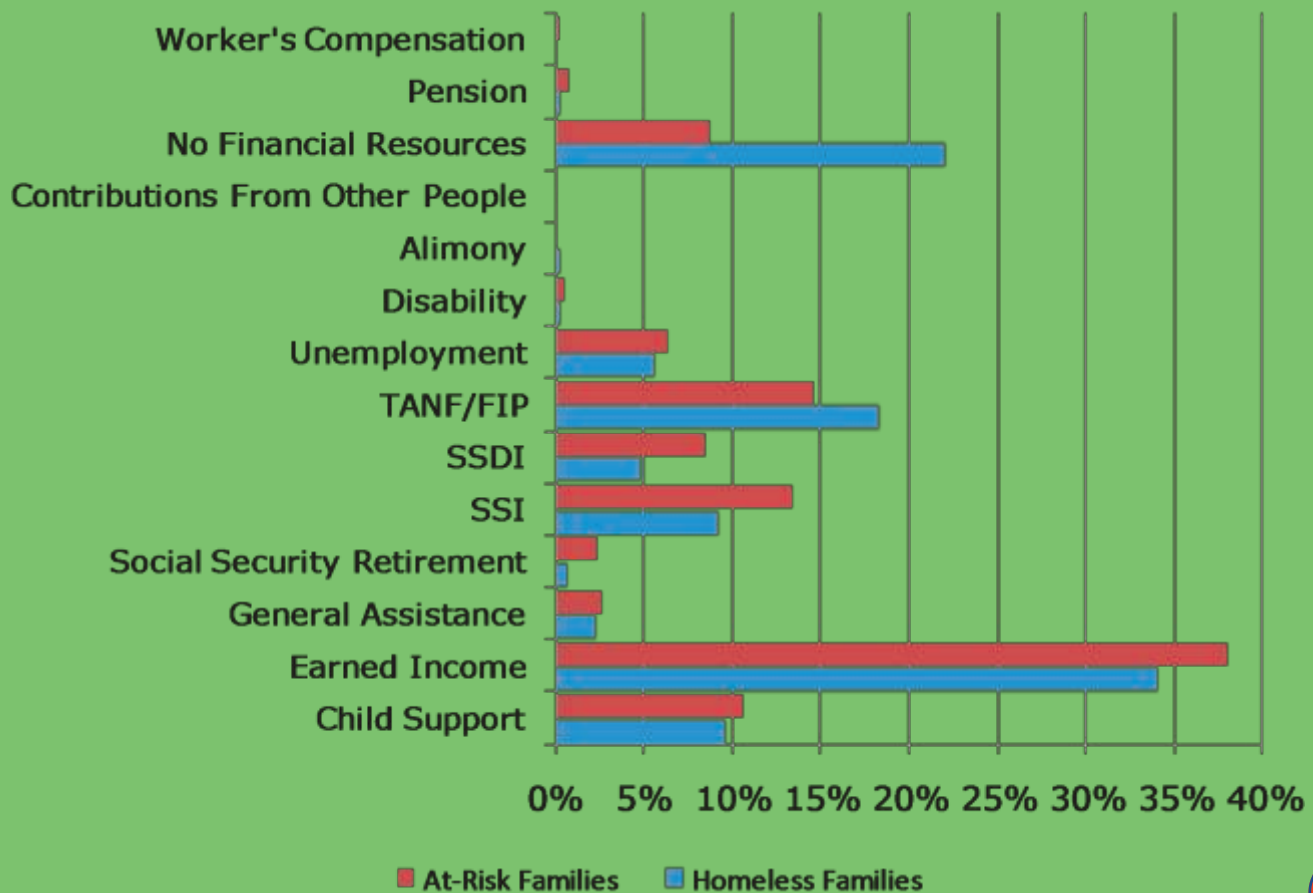
## 13,153 People



Poverty turns bumps in the road into disasters. There is no wiggle room. Any mistake has monumental consequences.<sup>2</sup>

Homeless and at-risk populations are vulnerable to disaster. They lack cushions and buffers that let other people get by in rough times.<sup>2</sup>

What money comes in?  
Families receive income from these sources...



# Homeless Alone

# 9,740

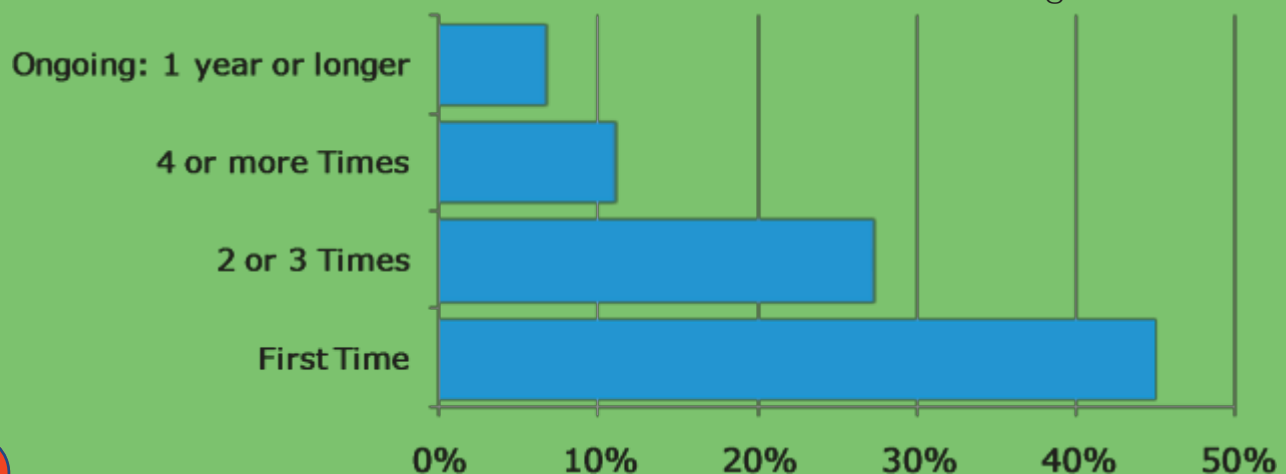
 People

13%  
were  
under 18



15% of homeless singles were living on the street at intake.

Extent of homelessness among individuals





# At Risk Alone

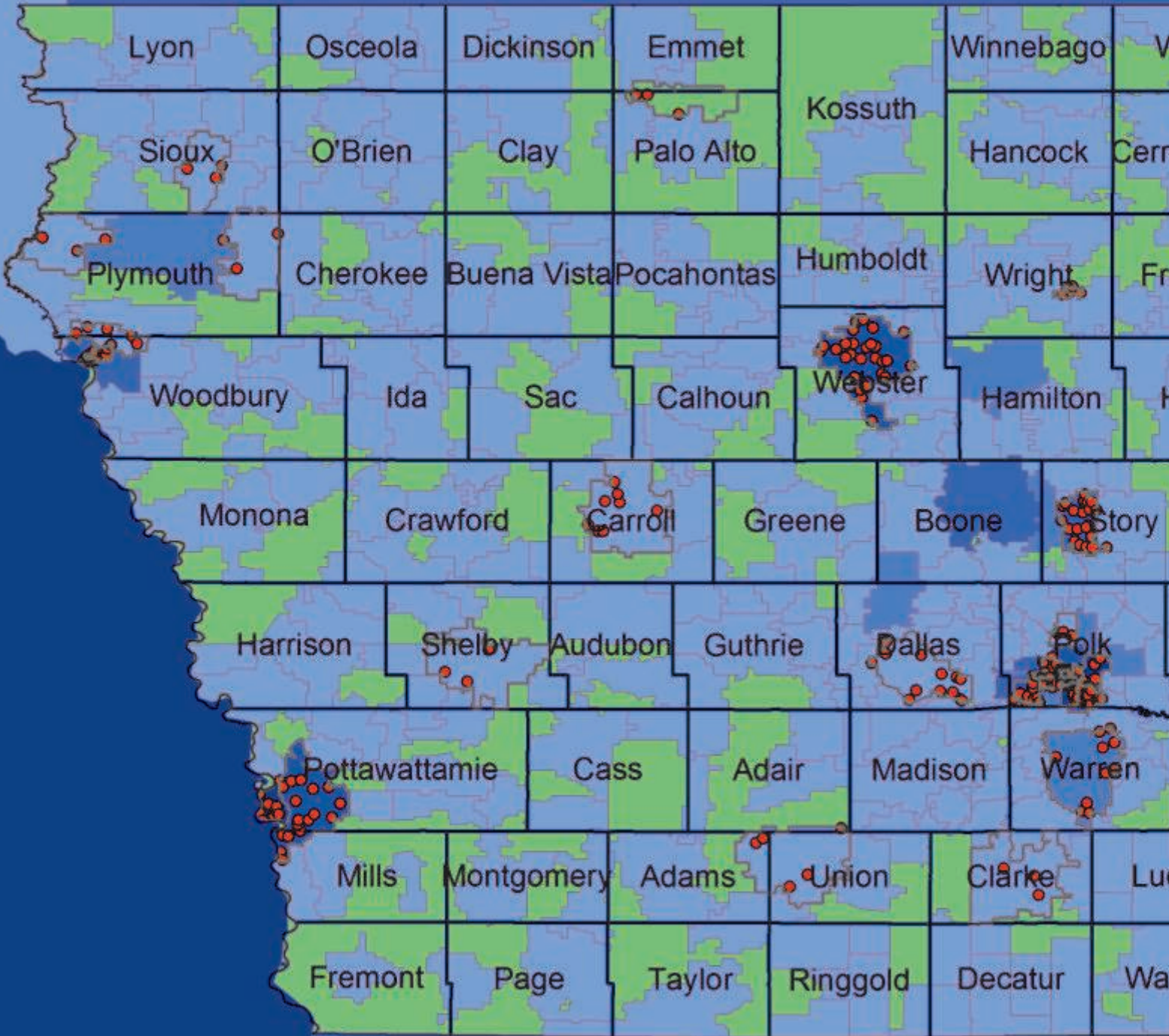
## 2,198 People



On average, an at risk single makes \$294.57 more per month than a homeless single.

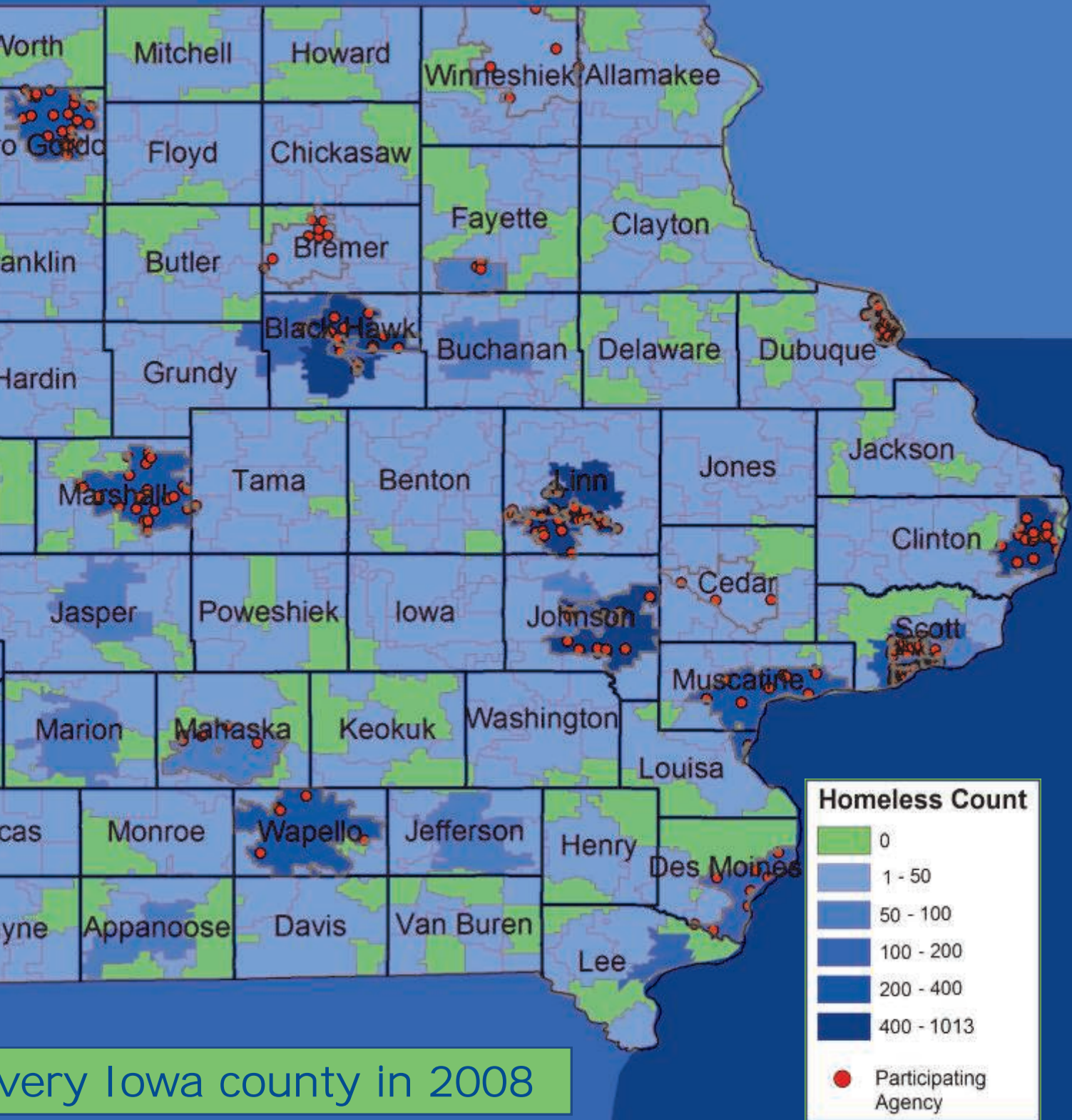
	Homeless Alone (9,740)	At-Risk Alone (2,198)	Iowa Population (2,984,391)
Female	31%	55%	51% <sup>4</sup>
Hispanic/Latino	7%	6%	4% <sup>4</sup>
Black	22%	25%	2% <sup>4</sup>
White	70%	72%	93% <sup>4</sup>
Adults Employed at Intake	16%	23%	95% <sup>5</sup>
Long Term Disability	41%	34%	15% <sup>4</sup>
GED or more	19%	17%	90% <sup>4</sup>

Last permanent zip code  
and location of homeless



Homeless people came from e

# Number of homeless people and service providers



Every Iowa county in 2008

# In Des Moines

18% of clients were employed at intake.

1/3 fewer adult clients in families were employed at intake compared to last year.

The average income of clients is down 28%.

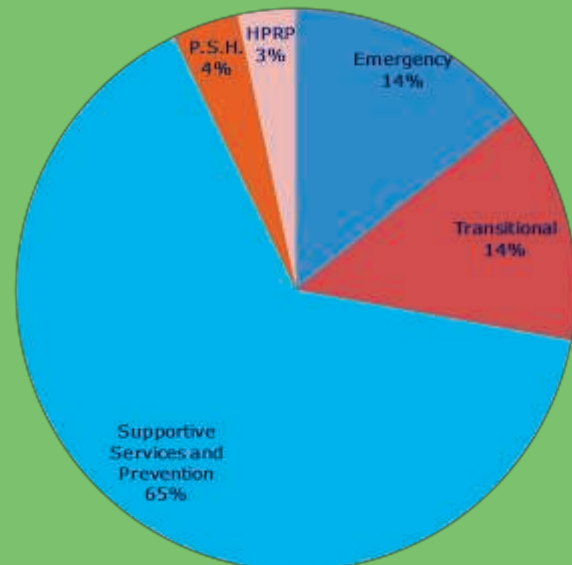
Des Moines had 7,327<sup>4</sup> vacant housing units and 5,758 homeless households.

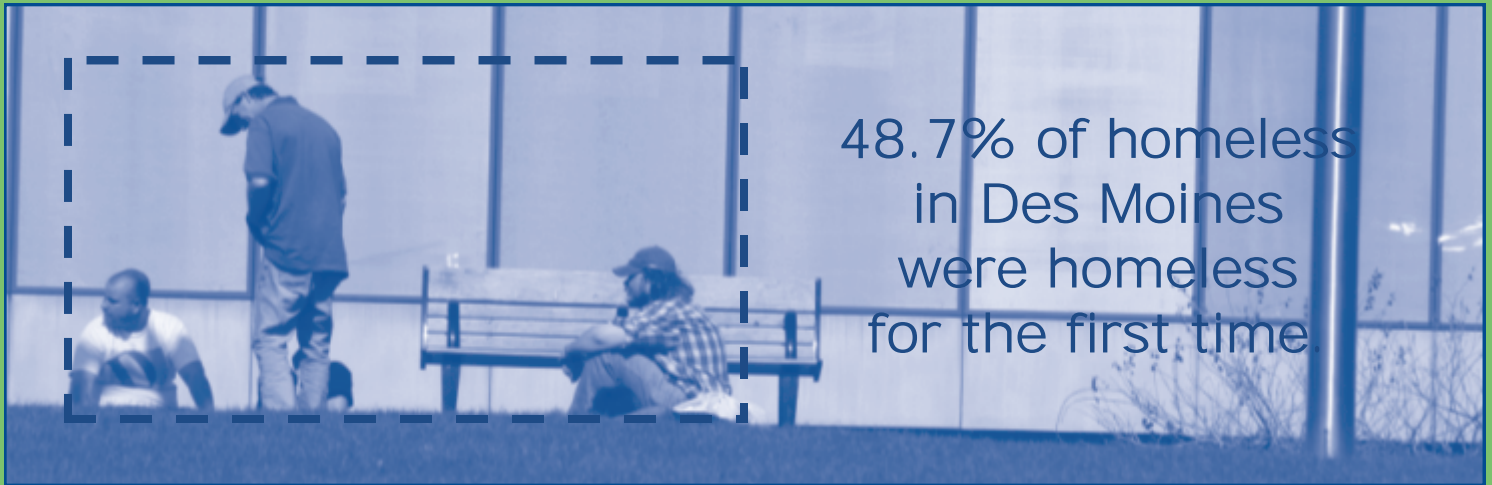
7.6%  
more  
homeless than  
last year

35% of Des Moines Clients identify medical reasons as the primary cause of homelessness.

In Des Moines 40.5% of clients suffer from a long term disability.

- 16% were medical
- 46% were drug and/or alcohol related
- 29% were mental disabilities





48.7% of homeless in Des Moines were homeless for the first time.



Des Moines clients

- 12.3% Hispanic
- 45.6% Female
- 19% have a GED or more.

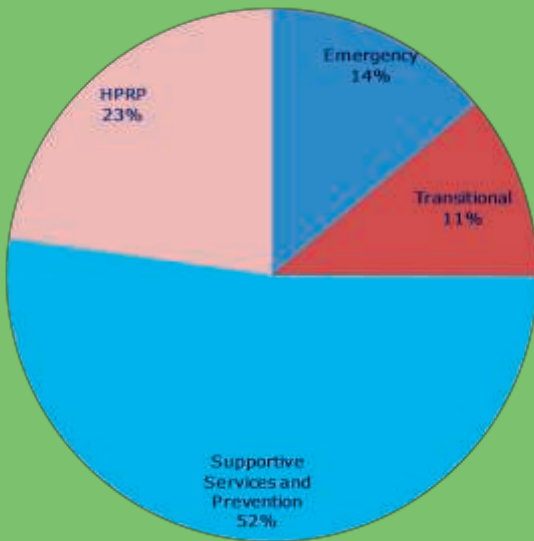
60% more at risk families than last year



16.9% of clients have no financial resources of any kind.

# In Sioux City

Distribution of Clients in Sioux City



Sioux City had 2,433<sup>4</sup> vacant housing units and 1,804 homeless households.

The average family in Sioux City makes \$4,472<sup>4</sup> per month but the average homeless family in Sioux City makes just \$719.83 per month.

The average mortgage in Sioux City costs \$1,033 per month.<sup>4</sup>

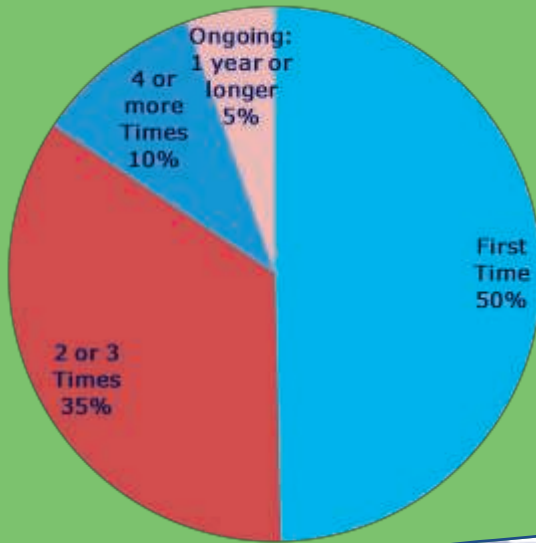


Employment at Intake has declined 47% since last year.

Income at intake has declined 57% since last year.

The percent of clients collecting unemployment has doubled in the last year.

## Extent of homelessness among clients in Sioux City



"My stay at [shelter] was five months. It had ups and downs but it taught me a lot, gave me structure and put me on a schedule. [Shelter] is a great place to grow up and be responsible."

Sioux City client

①

When a Sioux City man was ill and his wife injured, they sold their household items and furniture to buy groceries. Siouxland providers kept them housed. Both are back at work now and are very grateful for the temporary assistance during a bad time.

23% of homeless Siouxland clients list crime as a primary cause of homelessness compared to a statewide average of just 9%.

## In Cedar Rapids

5.3% of Cedar Rapids population experienced homelessness or was at risk of homelessness in the last year.

The average mortgage in Cedar Rapids cost \$14,436 per year.

**That's 48% of the income of an at risk family going to housing.**  
For a homeless family it would be 112%.

Cedar Rapids had 3,905<sup>4</sup> vacant housing units and 2,651 homeless households. **That's 1.45 houses per homeless household.**

25.9% of homeless families were employed at intake.



### Among Homeless families

75% of heads of household in Cedar Rapids emergency shelters were female.

61% of those in homeless families were children.

56.3% were homeless for the first time.

42% cited economics as the primary cause of homelessness.

51% suffered from a long term disability.



"If it wasn't for Legal Aid I would be homeless."

Pottawattamie County Client



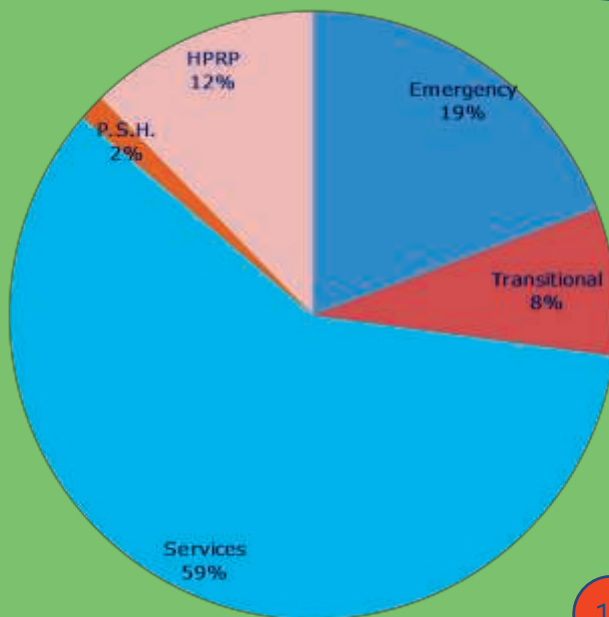
In The Balance of State  
Iowa excluding Des Moines and Sioux City

42%  
were  
under 18

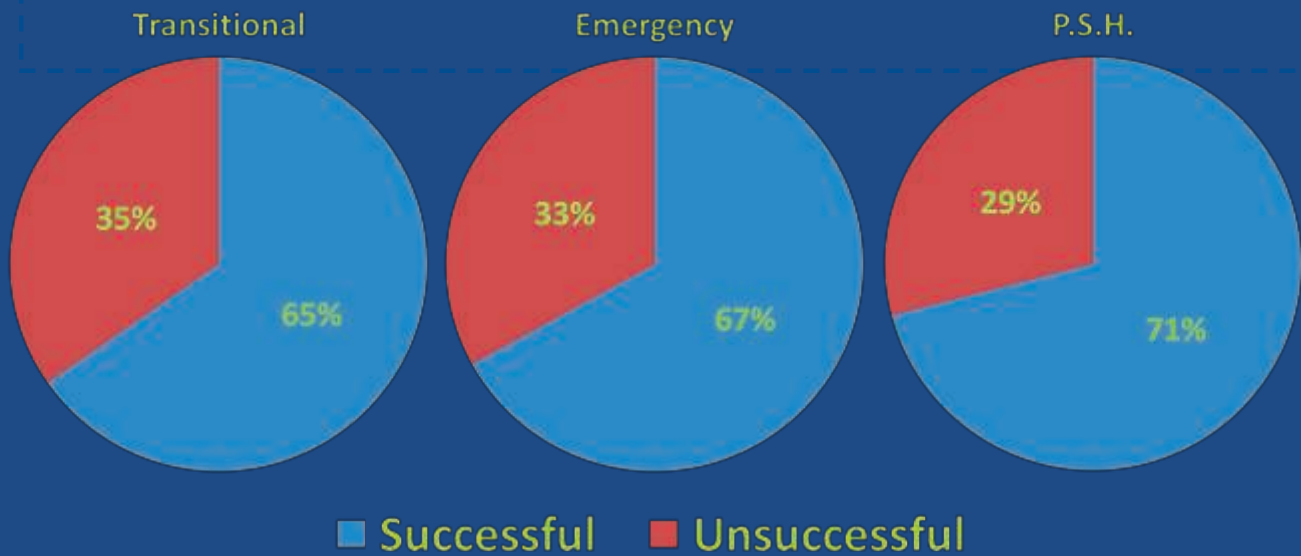
The Balance of State had 103,081<sup>4</sup> vacant housing units and 16,050 homeless households.



21% Employed at intake.  
64% have no income.  
16% have no resources at all.  
26% have a long term disability, and  
36% of those disabilities are mental.  
7.3% are chronic homeless.  
40% list economics as the  
primary cause of homelessness.



Success is measured as exiting service to a permanent living situation. The exception is emergency shelter, from which success is measured as exiting to a permanent living situation or to a transitional housing program.



"I feel empowered and confident that I will one day have my own home again."

-Deb  
at Unity Place

# Thank You...

To the service providers reporting quality information and for their hard work helping our fellow Iowans. To the volunteers that share gifts of time and financial resources to help make our programs successful. To the state officials who have continued to recognize the

impact of housing instability on Iowans. And a special thanks to the Iowa Finance Authority and the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Iowa Council on Homelessness for their support of our work.

We sincerely thank you for your efforts to end homelessness and make Iowa a great place to live for everyone.



Ribbon Cutting at Unity Place in Des Moines

## Citations

1. Cannon, Andrew and Molly Fleming, 2010. "The Cost of Living in Iowa." Iowa Policy Project
2. Donner, William and Havidán Rodríguez, 2008. "Population Composition, Migration and Inequality: The Influence of Demographic Changes on Disaster Risk and Vulnerability." *Social Forces*, 87(2): 1089-1114.
3. Stewart, Miriam J, Edward Makwarimba, Linda Reutter, Gerry Veenstra, Dennis Raphael and Rhonda Love. 2009. "Poverty, Sense of Belonging and Experiences of Social Isolation." *Journal of Poverty*, 13(2): 173-195.
4. 2008 American Community Study. "Vacant" units are habitable.  
[http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2008/usedata/2008 ACS Subject Definitions.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2008/usedata/2008%20ACS%20Subject%20Definitions.pdf)
5. March 2009 Iowa Workforce Development

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## About our Organization—

The Iowa Institute for Community Alliances has worked in partnership with service providing agencies for more than 15 years and has been involved in the science of data collection during this period. It is our hope that we can assist the service providers by giving them the tools to demonstrate their success. Please contact our organization if you have any questions regarding this report or the work that we do.

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