



Homeless Individuals Trained to Work as Census Takers and Interviewers

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Applied Survey Research

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Learning Objectives

- Homeless census (biennial HUD req.) as a case study in the effectiveness of peer-oriented community outreach.
- Participatory research approach generates informed outreach, reliable data, and community acknowledgement of results.
- Knowledge and experiences of homeless interviewers increase the comfort level of the respondents, the number of surveys collected, and the validity of the data.



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Learning Objectives

- Describe how to recruit and train homeless for participatory research.
- Describe how to work with the media and elected officials to highlight homelessness.
- Describe how the research leads to public policy changes for the homeless.



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Challenges in Homeless Research

- Lack of current, original research
- Secondary research is shelter-centric
- Outreach is challenging
- Service provider disclosure issues
- Safety issues for lay persons



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How Using Homeless Census Takers Leads to Quality Data

- Pair trained homeless “guides” with community volunteers or service providers.
- Homeless know where homeless are likely to be found.
- Homeless are better able to differentiate homeless and non-homeless people than volunteers.
- Homeless have local knowledge of street geography.



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Recruiting and Training Homeless Researchers

- Service Providers screen and refer homeless clients to training sessions.
- Establish an incentive system – personal enrichment and monetary compensation.
- Hold training sessions at a variety of service provider locations.
- Train, re-train, re-enforce.
- Quality control and accountability.



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Community Benefits of Homeless Participatory Research

- Homeless workers develop self-esteem, self-worth, and self-respect – key success factors.
- Homeless workers become windows to the diversity of the real homeless experience.
- Service provider network has more confidence in data because of their involvement.
- Attention focuses on strategic planning versus data collection methodology.



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Case Study: Las Vegas

- Service providers given 150 training referral cards to select workers.
- 2 hour training sessions for workers, volunteers, agency staff (\$20 to be paid on census day).
- Homeless workers show up on census day, are paired with volunteer/staff, and assigned territory (Paid \$10/hr).
- Over 300 persons show up.



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Case Study: Las Vegas Continued

- Homeless “participation rate” significantly higher than volunteers. Paid \$10/hour.
- Census data sheets reviewed with homeless/volunteers for data accuracy.
- Homeless workers picked to administer street-based surveys in second phase.
- Surveys administered using response incentives and per survey compensation (\$5/ 20 min survey).



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Case Study: Las Vegas Continued

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS and FAMILIES	2,488
TOTAL PEOPLE IN VEHICLES or CAMPS	1,259
- People in Cars (multiplier: 1.29)	159
- People in Vans/RVs (multiplier: 1.94)	325
- People in Encampments (multiplier: 4.59)	762
- People reported by Park Rangers	13
TOTAL UNSHELTERED PEOPLE	3,747



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Case Study: Las Vegas Continued

Homeless Subpopulations	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
1. Chronically Homeless ¹	174	1,309	1,483
2. Severely Mentally Ill	888	1,363	2,251
3. Chronic Substance Abuse	834	2,984	3,818
4. Veterans ²	835	1,486	2,321
5. Persons with HIV/AIDS	19	76	95
6. Victims of Domestic Violence	215	545	760
7. Unaccompanied Youth (Under 18 years of age)	128	152	280

¹"Sheltered" Chronically Homeless Subpopulations include persons in emergency shelter only.

²Veterans do not include people in families from Clark County Social Services Rental Assistance or people from the General Population Survey because the number of people under age 18 is unknown.

Note: These numbers are preliminary and subject to change due to on-going data analysis.



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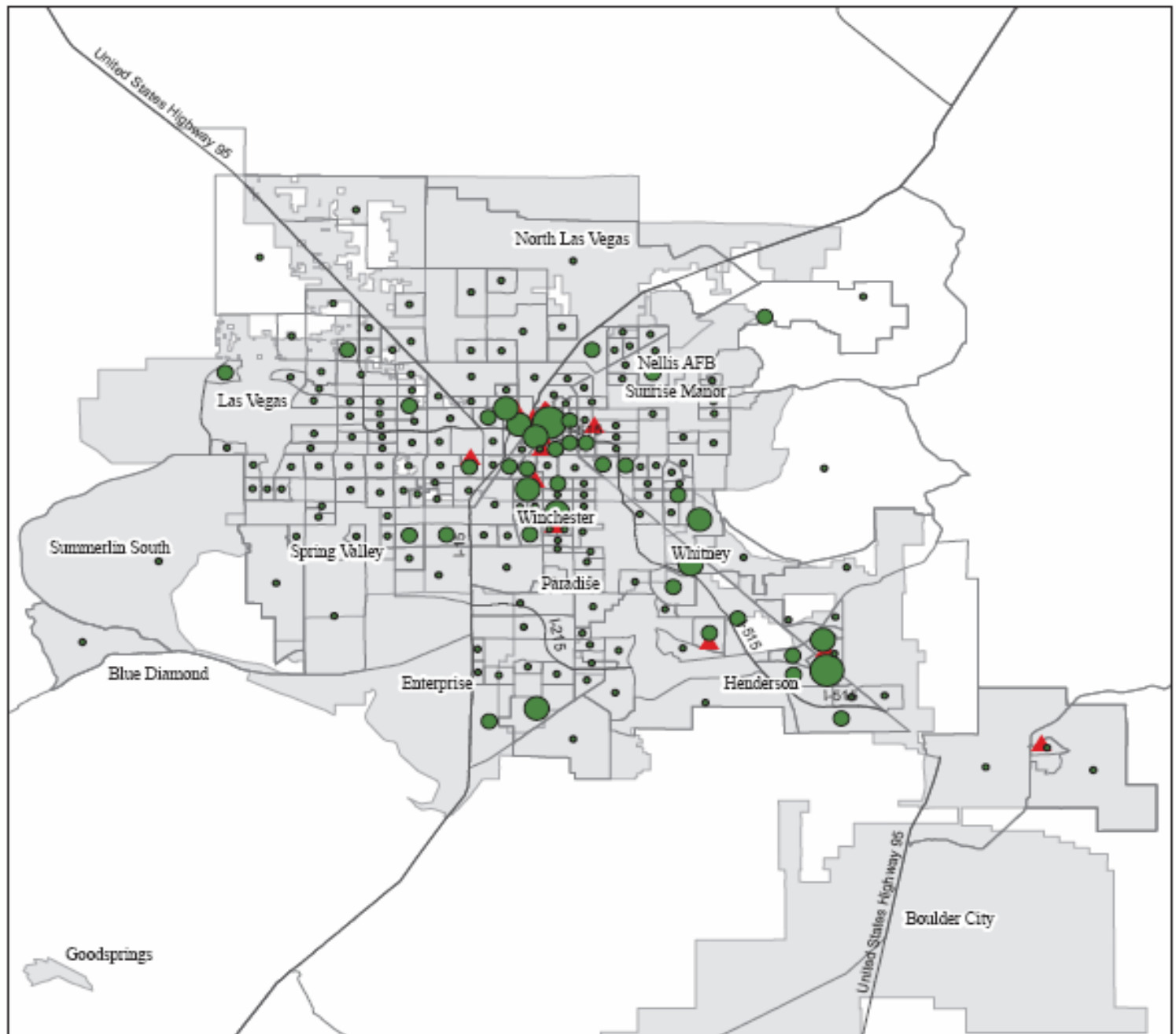
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Legend

Shelter/Street Count

- 1 - 25 People
- 26 - 75
- 76 - 300
- Over 300 People
- ▲ Shelter
- Major Road
- City
- Clark County

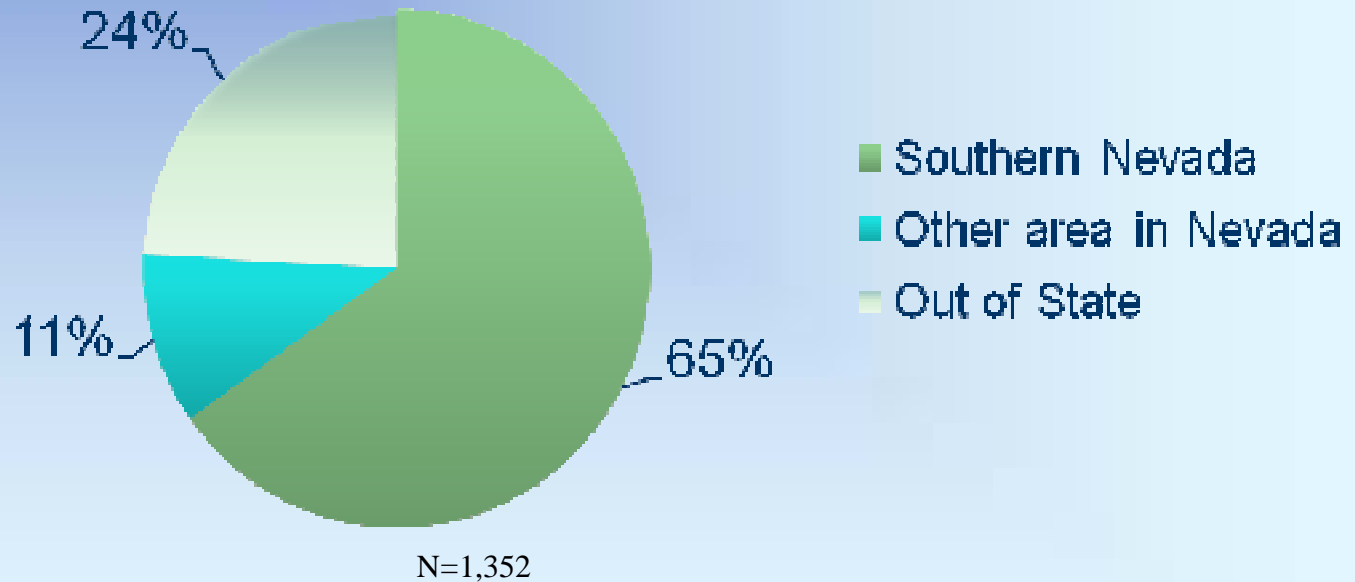
UCSC GIS Technology Lab
Geographic Information Systems





Case Study: Las Vegas Continued

Most Recent Homelessness



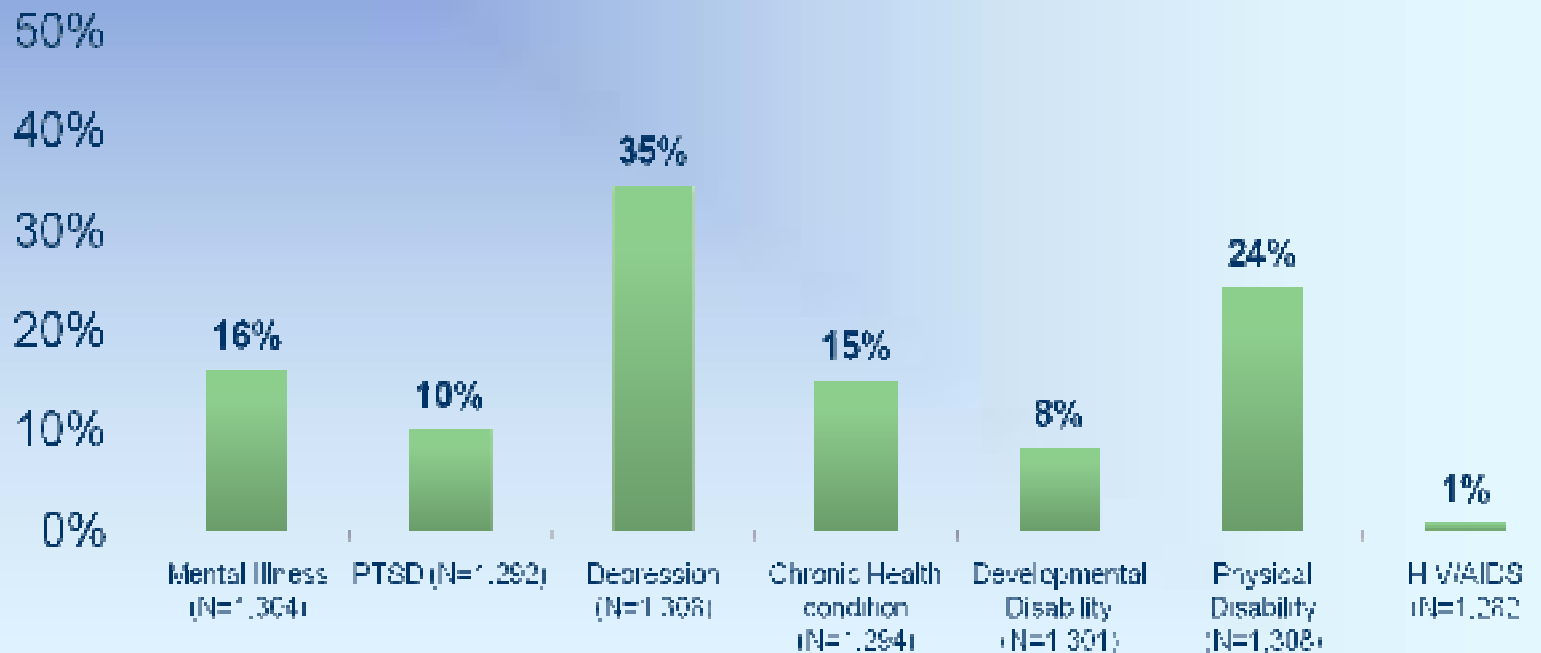
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Case Study: Las Vegas *Continued*

Respondents Experiencing Disabling Conditions



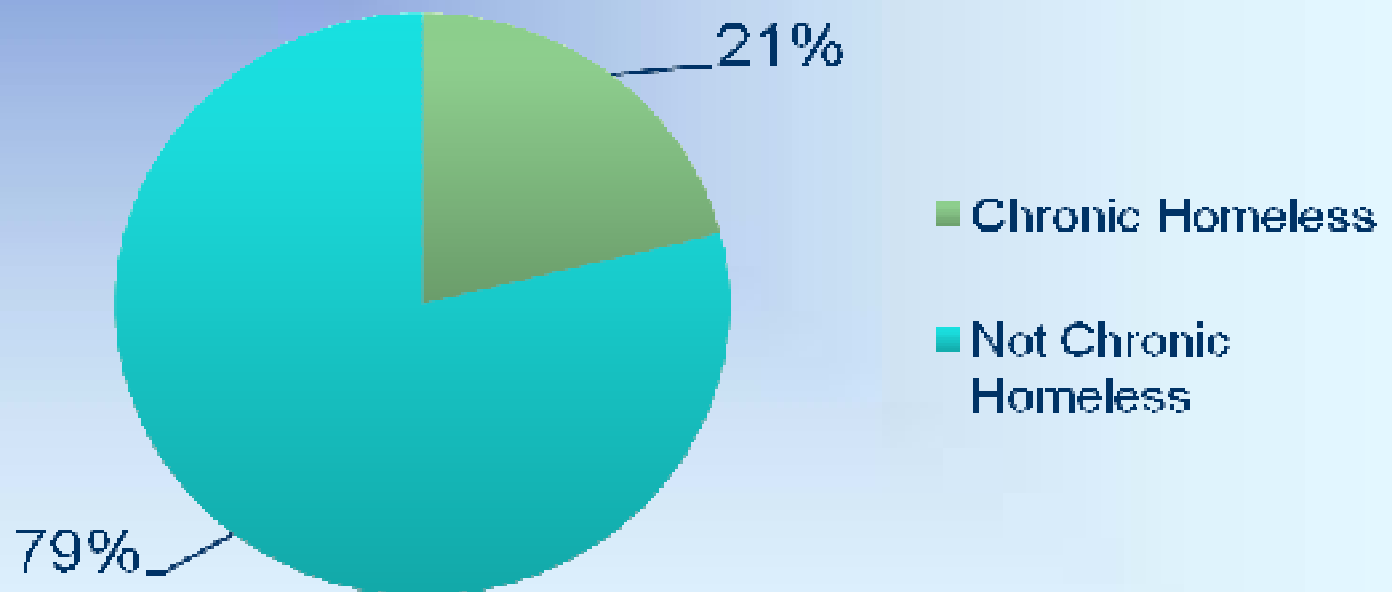
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Case Study: Las Vegas Continued

Chronic Homelessness



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Benefits of Homeless Peer Research

- Superior outreach & local knowledge.
- Credibility with respondents = quality data.
- Non-judgmental approach = < paranoia.
- Homeless interviewers working through survey distribution sites run by service providers can complete surveys quickly.
- Quality review of surveys is excellent – < 3% rejected as duplicates/incompletes.



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Working with Media and Elected Officials

- Public awareness of research goals.
- Recruitment of community volunteers.
- Buy-in and participation from county and city governments. Educate them to the limitations of data.
- Participation from local media outlets.
 - Embedded reporter (ensure confidentiality of homeless)
 - Focus on public education of homeless diversity
 - Highlight “myth busting” findings



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Creating Action

- Public awareness/education of homelessness.
- Development and support of 10-Year Plan.
- Create actionable goals – elected officials must be asked for specific response to data.
- Develop accountability and program evaluation systems.
- Improve data collection effort for next time.
- Distribute data and support additional data analysis requests.



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Creating Action – Case Study in Las Vegas

- SuperNOFA application revised to reflect data and over \$1 million in “bonus” money is now possible to apply for.
- Statewide initiative developed and legislature allocated \$600k for homeless services.
- Summer census commissioned and results determine no need for seasonal budget changes for homelessness.



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Creating Action – Case Study in Las Vegas

- Panhandling study commissioned and determines 81% of panhandlers are homeless.
- Prevalence of youth data supports critical development of Southern Nevada Committee on Youth – a powerful inter-jurisdictional group of elected officials important to regional policy change.
- Baseline homeless data are now the centerpiece of 10 year strategic homeless evaluation plan.



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To Learn More

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