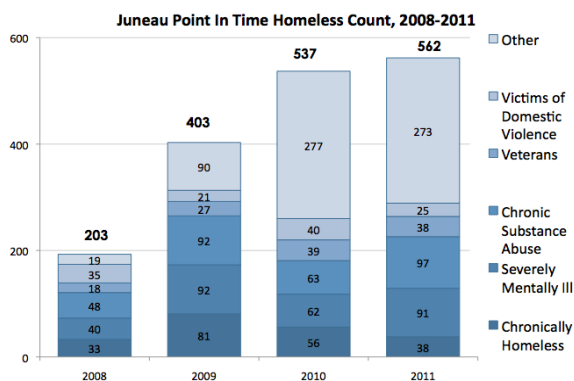


# Juneau's Most Vulnerable Homeless Population

## Homelessness in Juneau

The Juneau Homeless Coalition – an organization of twenty-four committed social service providers, non-profit housing agencies, and state and local planners –work together to further the goal of ending homelessness in our community.

In recent years the Coalition has taken steps to learn more about the local homeless population by emphasizing activities such as the annual Point In Time (PIT) Homeless Count and Project Homeless Connect.



In 2011, the Coalition determined that there were 562 persons in the community experiencing homelessness. Despite these outreach efforts, the Coalition realized that the communities most vulnerable homeless persons were not often being connected with -- either through the provision of services or through the annual PIT survey – and thus were not accounted for or being assisted.

## 100,000 Homes Campaign, Registry Week, and the Vulnerability Index Survey

In February 2012, the Juneau Homeless Coalition joined the 100,000 Homes Campaign with the goal of joining the nationwide push to house the most long-term and vulnerable homeless people in the nation.

The first step was to organize a Registry Week and carry out the Juneau Vulnerability Index Survey. On March 26-29<sup>th</sup>, 35 volunteers and Coalition members canvassed Juneau in the early morning hours to make contact with homeless people where



they stayed, to deliver basic food and amenities, and to complete surveys. In total, 55 people experiencing homelessness

completed Vulnerability Index surveys.

Coalition members estimate that this was approximately 80 percent of the known vulnerable homeless population. The other 20 percent of this target population may have found temporary shelter, been out of town or incarcerated, or simply not found during the time of the survey.

## Assessing Vulnerability in the Homeless Population

Studies have shown that people living homeless have a **3 to 4 times greater chance of dying prematurely** than the general population. Dr. Jim O'Connell, President of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program devised a system of identifying those most likely to die early on the street. The assessment takes into account factors such as:

- Age
- Length of time on the streets
- Internal illnesses such as hepatitis, liver disease, heart disease, kidney disease, cancer, HIV/Aids, and tuberculosis
- Mental Illness
- Substance Abuse
- Recent ER and Hospital Patterns

The 100,000 Homes Vulnerability Index Survey assesses each respondent's likelihood of premature death on the street on a scale of 0 to 5. While all people living without homes face challenges, those scoring >1 are identified as in highest need.

**The average rating of the 55 Juneau respondents is 1.4, with 40 of the 55 assessed as Vulnerable.**

**This means that of Juneau's more than 500 citizens living without adequate shelter, approximately 8-10% experience conditions that deem them Vulnerable.**

# Juneau's Most Vulnerable Homeless Population

## Characteristics of Juneau's Most Vulnerable Homeless Population

### Demographics

- 82% Male; 18% Female.
- Average Age: 48.
- Education: Over 50% of the respondents have either a high school diploma or GED.

### Origin

- 75% of respondents were born, went to school, worked, or had family in Juneau.
- 87% report living in Juneau year-round.

### Health

- 55% have or currently experience mental illness.
- 96% have in the past or currently experience substance abuse.
- 60% endure a serious health condition.
- 37% experience tri-morbidity, the combination of mental illness, substance abuse, and a third major health condition.
- 25% live with limited mobility.

### Historical Trauma:

- 38% of those Vulnerable are veterans.
- 60% of those Vulnerable are Native Alaskan.
- 38% of those Vulnerable have been in foster care.

## Results and Costs of Juneau's Current System of Care for the Homeless

Although Juneau's Continuum of Care – emergency shelter, affordable housing, healthcare, and other services – works for many low-income and homeless residents, it is clear that Juneau's vulnerable community is not adequately cared for by the current system.

- 62% of respondents in this survey **have been attacked violently** since becoming homeless;
- 85% of respondents are **chronically homeless** -- living without shelter for more than one year;
- **9.5 years** is the average length of time spent homelessness for Vulnerable individuals; and
- 84% of the respondents have been in jail, with **33% having been to jail 10 times or more.**

## Local Resources Utilized: Housing, Healthcare, and Income

### Housing:

- 20% report sleeping on the streets or in cars;
- 16% reside in shelters;
- 10% live either under bridges or in the forest;

### Healthcare:

- Primary care provider: 37% list the Ethel Lund Medical Center, 31% Front Street Clinic, and 13% Bartlett Regional Hospital.
- 40% of respondents have been in the emergency room 3 times or more in the last 3 months, or to the hospital 3 or more times in the last year.

### Income:

While the vulnerable population is comprised of the most impoverished Juneau residents, they are not without income.

- 36% report working off the books; and
- 16% report working on the books

The vulnerable population sees income in the form of public assistance:

- 55% receive food stamps;
- 22% receive public assistance; and
- 42% receive Social Security or Disability benefits.

## WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

**1. Permanent Supportive Housing** – Safe, stable housing is a primary need for the most vulnerable homeless population, especially housing that is targeted toward those with substance abuse/addiction issues.

**2. Adjustments/Additions to Current Treatment Efforts** Most vulnerable homeless people in Juneau are treatment resistant. An increase in treatment options, targeted case intervention, and innovation is needed to assist these individuals.

**3. Emergency Shelter** – The only current housing option for intoxicated individuals (BA of .1 or higher) that are homeless is Rainforest Recovery Center – a short-term, expensive option.

**4. Cultural Healing** – With a high rate of cultural, military, and family trauma that leads to marginalization, addiction, and homelessness -- a holistic approach to healing will be necessary to integrate the most vulnerable back into the community.