



## **State of the Homeless 2011**

**While More New Yorkers Experience Homelessness, the City Denies Shelter to More Families Than Ever**

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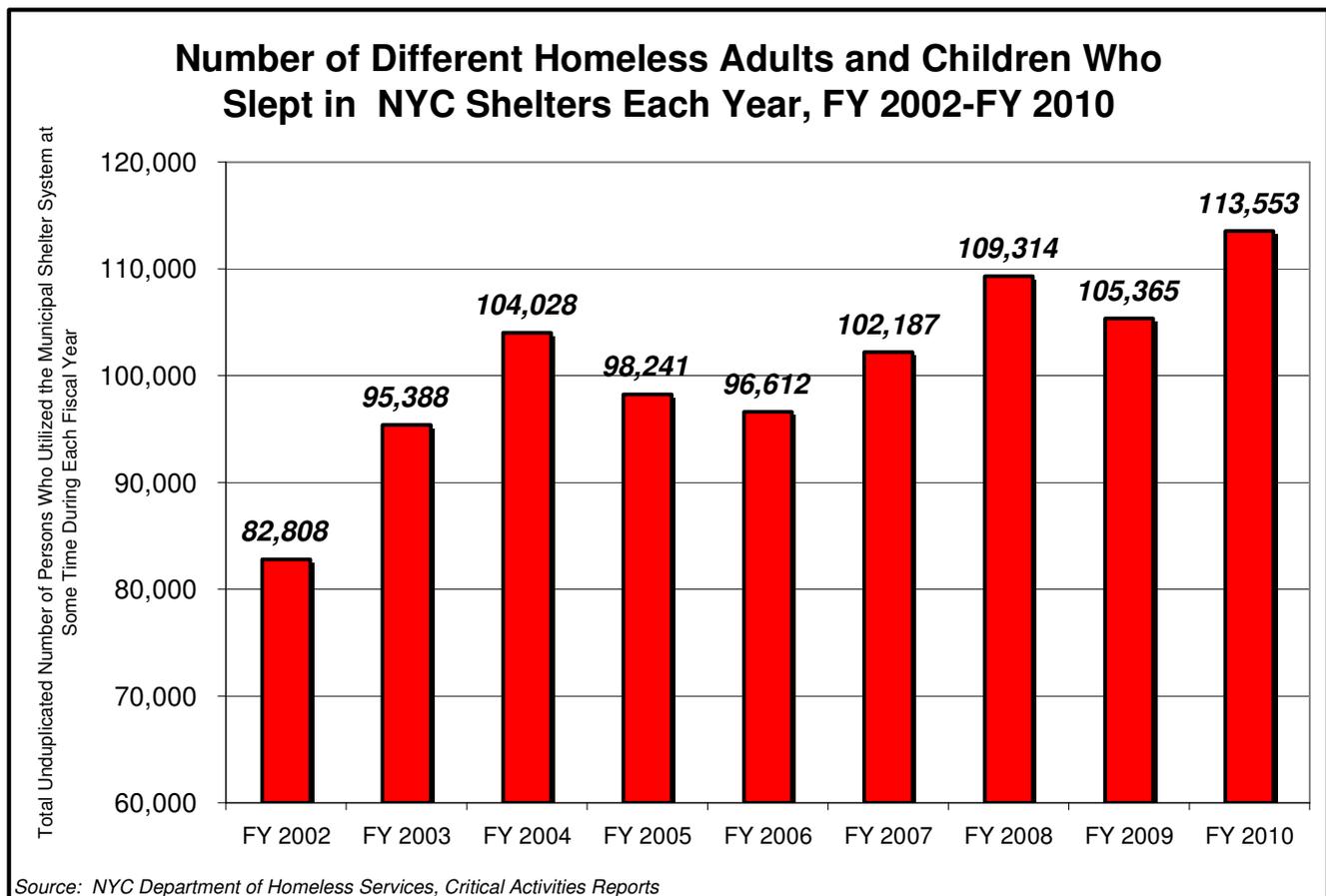
## Coalition for the Homeless State of the Homeless 2011

In the midst of high unemployment and the lingering effects of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, ***an all-time high number of New Yorkers turned to homeless shelters last year.*** However, the Bloomberg administration's response was to ***turn away a record number of families and children at the shelter door.***

***A record 113,553 homeless people slept in municipal shelters in FY 2010, an 8 percent increase from the previous year and a 37 percent increase from FY 2002 when Mayor Bloomberg took office.*** This includes a ***record 42,888 children, a 9 percent increase from the previous year and 39 percent more than when the Mayor took office.*** And by the end of January of this year, ***the nightly census of homeless adults and children in the municipal shelter system – 39,365 people – reached the highest point ever recorded.***

However, at the same time that a record number of New York City families and children were seeking shelter, City data shows that the New York City Department of Homeless Services is denying shelter to more families than ever. ***In 2010 the City denied shelter to 16 percent more families with children than the previous year, and 76 percent more families with children than four years ago.***

The following report summarizes the major trends in New York City homelessness over the past year, and highlights the alarming rise in the number of children and families turned away from shelter.

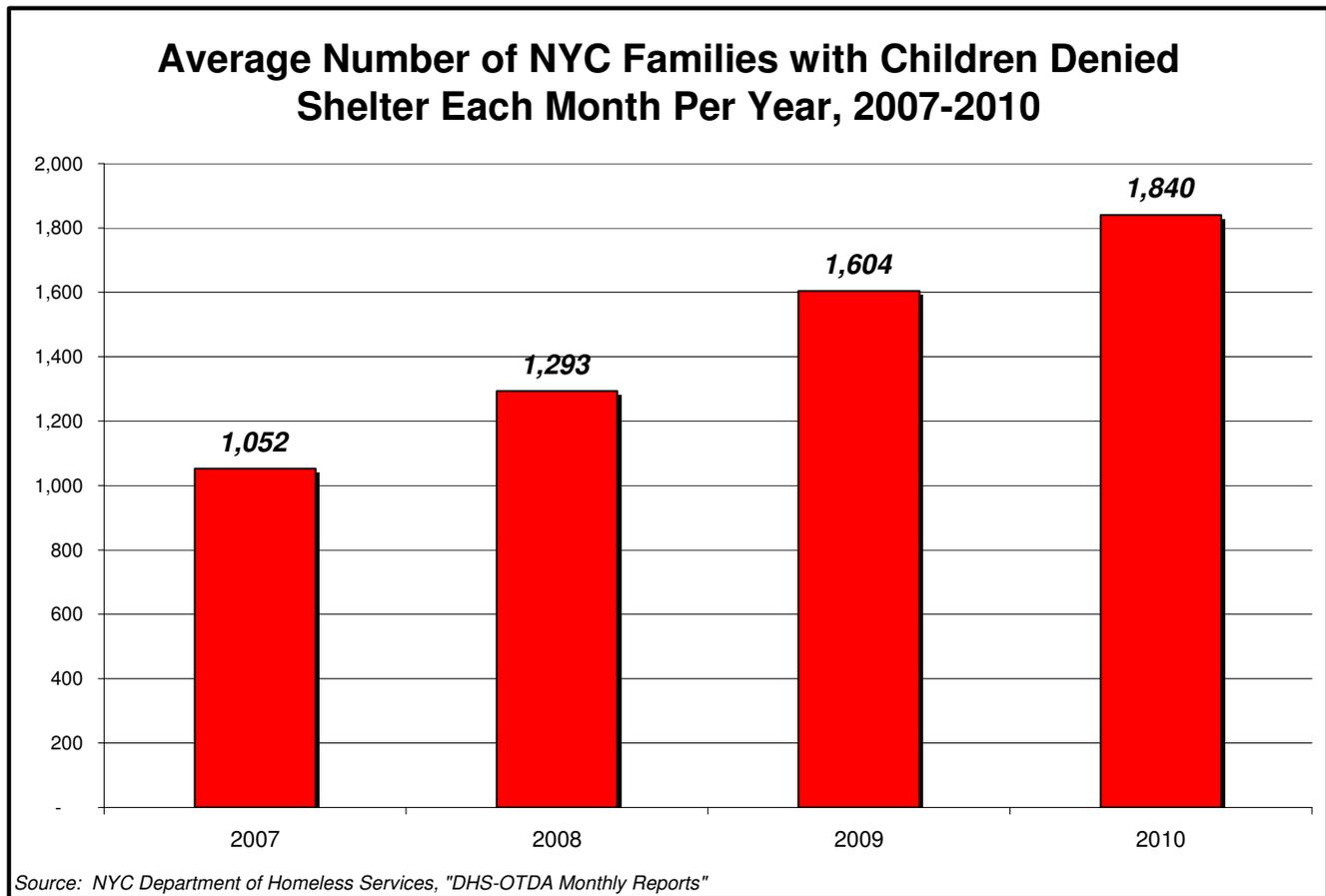


**Part I:  
New York City Denying Shelter to More Children and Families Than Ever**

During the past year, the Bloomberg administration has denied shelter to more children and families than at any time since the City began keeping records.

In 2010, according to City data, the New York City Department of Homeless Services **denied shelter to 16 percent more families with children than the previous year**, and **76 percent more families with children than four years ago**. At the same time, more families with children applied for shelter last year than at any point since the City has kept records.

**Therefore, in the midst of high unemployment and the lingering effects of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the Bloomberg administration is turning away a record number of children and families seeking help in the homeless shelter system.**



The Rising Number of New York City Families and Children Turned Away from Homeless Shelters

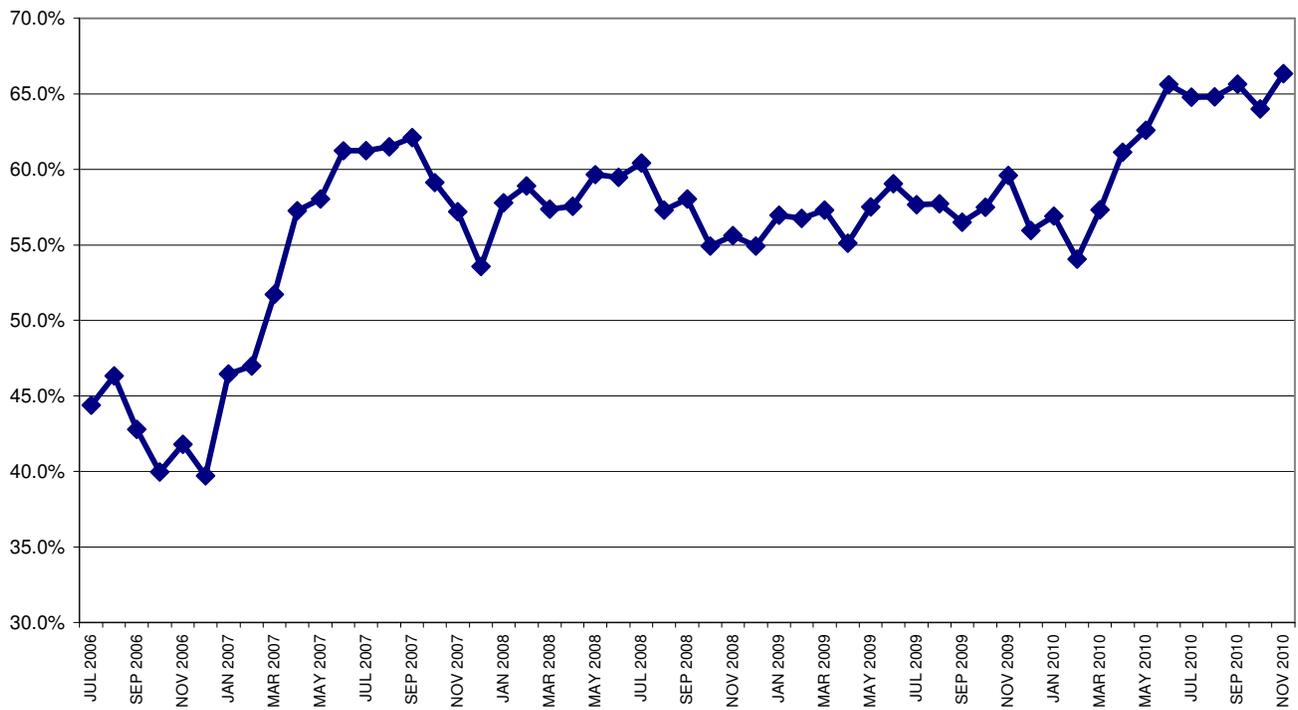
City data shows a dramatic increase both in the number of families with children denied shelter by the City of New York, and in the rate of shelter denials for families:

- **In 2010 an all-time record number of families with children applied for shelter.** Last year **an average of 2,972 families with children applied for shelter each month** at the NYC Department of Homeless Services' family intake office, **a 6 percent increase over 2009 and a remarkable 61 percent increase compared to 2006.**
- At the same time, the NYC Department of Homeless Services **denied shelter to more families with children than at any point since the City has kept records.**

<b>MORE NYC FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN SEEKING SHELTER AND DENIED SHELTER</b>			
	Average Number of Families Applying for Shelter Each Month	Average Number of Families Deemed "Ineligible" Each Month	Ineligibility Rate
2007	1,850	1,052	56%
2008	2,248	1,293	58%
2009	2,798	1,604	57%
2010*	2,972	1,855	62%
<b>Change 2007-2010</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>76%</b>	
<b>Change 2009-2010</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>16%</b>	
*Data through November 2010 Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, "DHS-OTDA Monthly Reports"			

- ***In 2010 an average of 1,855 families with children were deemed “ineligible” for shelter each month by the NYC Department of Homeless Services, a 16 percent increase over 2009.***
- The number of families with children deemed “ineligible” for shelter each month in 2010 was a remarkable ***76 percent higher than in 2006.***
- While the number of families with children denied shelter has reached record levels, ***the rate of family shelter denials has also increased at an even faster pace.***
- In November 2010 (the most recent month for which the City has released data), ***66 percent of all families with children seeking shelter was deemed “ineligible” for shelter.*** This is a dramatically higher rate than in November 2009, when 60 percent of families with children was deemed ineligible for shelter, and November 2006 – before the economic recession – when only 43 percent of families with children was deemed ineligible for shelter.
- Over the past year, the ***number of families with children denied shelter grew at a much faster pace than the number of families seeking shelter.***
- Between 2009 and 2010, ***the average number of families with children applying for shelter each month grew by 6 percent while the number of families with children deemed “ineligible” for shelter grew by 16 percent.***

## Percentage of NYC Families with Children Applying for Shelter Who Are Deemed "Ineligible" Each Month, 2006-2010



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services, "DHS-OTDA Monthly Reports"

### Why the City Denies Shelter to More Families: Systematic Errors and Deterrence Policies

For many years, Coalition for the Homeless, the Legal Aid Society, and others have documented the persistence of systematic errors in the City's handling of applications for shelter by families.

Most recently, an October 2010 New York City Council hearing uncovered the failure of the NYC Department of Homeless Services to coordinate with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) in cases where subsidized housing program rules prohibit homeless families from residing with unwilling relatives and friends.

However, recent City data shows that, if anything, a bad situation has gotten worse and the rate of error has increased.

- During the first four months of the current City fiscal year, **43 percent of all homeless families with children who were ultimately deemed eligible for shelter had to file two or more applications for shelter.**
- In FY 2010, **41 percent of all homeless families with children deemed eligible for shelter had to file two or more applications.** In comparison, in FY 2006, **only 29 percent of homeless families deemed eligible for shelter had to file two or more applications.**
- At the October 2010 City Council hearing, NYC Department of Homeless Services officials testified that they **routinely deem families "ineligible" for shelter claiming that the families can live with friends or relatives in NYCHA-administered public housing or Section 8 apartments – housing programs with strict Federal rules on occupancy.** The homeless services officials said that they require families seeking shelter to produce a NYCHA denial document in order to prove that they cannot live with relatives and friends in subsidized housing.

- However, **at the same hearing NYCHA officials testified that they will not process such requests from families seeking shelter – only from residents of NYCHA-administered housing.** And additional testimony showed that, in many cases, relatives and friends of families seeking shelter fear eviction and reprisals from NYCHA if they submit such requests – thus leaving homeless families caught between two City bureaucracies with different requirements.
- All in all, **the City places the burden on homeless families to prove their homelessness.** For instance, the City frequently find families ineligible for shelter **solely based on the fact that they have not provided enough detailed documentation about their past housing histories – whether or not this documentation is available to them – and even when no alternative housing options have been identified.**

#### How to Protect Homeless Children and Families from Wrongful Denial of Shelter

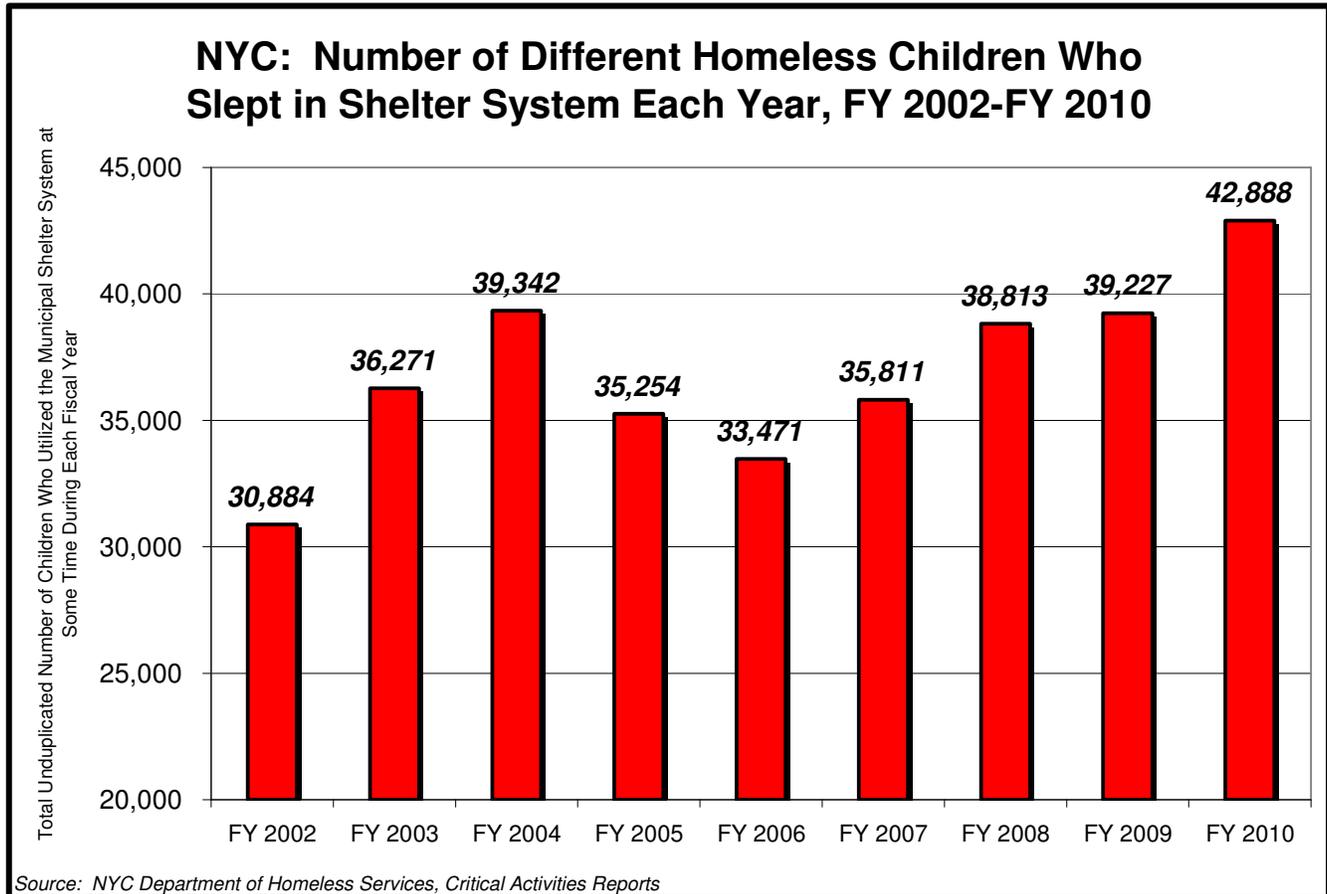
To date Bloomberg administration officials have provided no explanation for why, in the midst of high unemployment and rising poverty, the City is denying shelter to more children and families than ever. However, a series of sensible reforms of the City’s family application review policies would reduce systematic errors and ensure that vulnerable homeless children and families secure the shelter and help they need.

1. The NYC Department of Homeless Services should **re-investigate the alleged housing options of families it deems “ineligible” for shelter to ensure that the housing is both actually available and suitable to the needs of the applicant family.**
2. The City should **reform its eligibility review rules involving cases where an alleged housing option is in subsidized housing administered by the New York City Housing Authority or other public agencies.** This includes eliminating the requirement that applicant families produce NYCHA denial forms which they are, under NYCHA’s own rules, unable to obtain.
3. Reform eligibility review rules to **prevent families from being found ineligible solely because they were not able to provide detailed documentation of their housing history.**
4. Finally, in those relatively small number of cases where a dispute still exists over the alleged housing option of a family seeking shelter, **the City should have a trained worker escort the applicant family to the alleged housing and assess firsthand whether the housing is truly available and suitable, and whether the owner or primary tenant will actually allow the applicant family to stay there.**

**Part II:  
More New Yorkers Experiencing Homelessness Than Ever**

In the last City fiscal year, according to City data, *more New Yorkers slept in New York City municipal homeless shelters than at any time since the City began keeping records.* And as of January 31, 2011, *the nightly census of homeless people in the municipal shelter system – 39,365 people – was the highest ever recorded.*

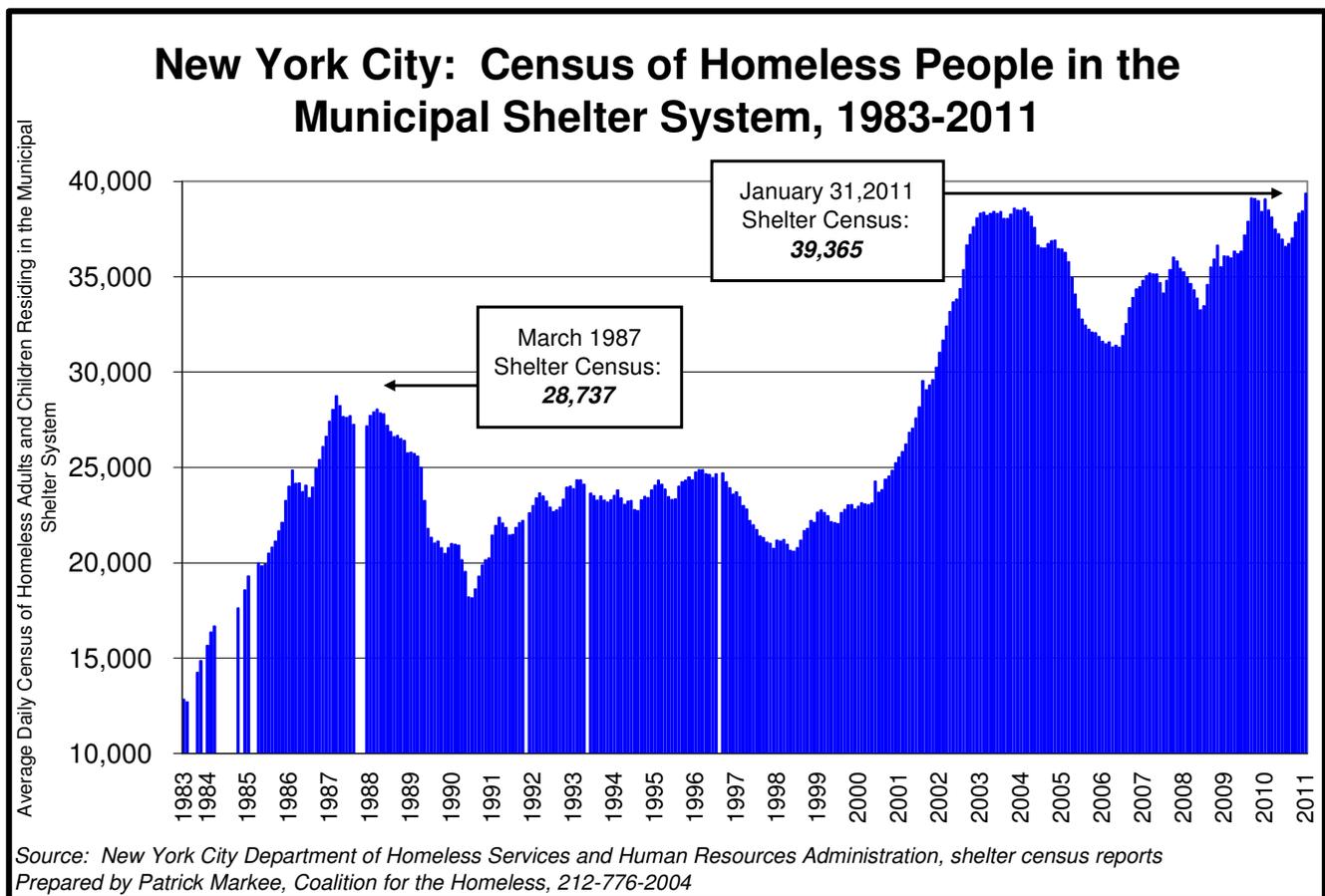
All in all, the City data indicate that *last year more New Yorkers experienced homelessness than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s.*



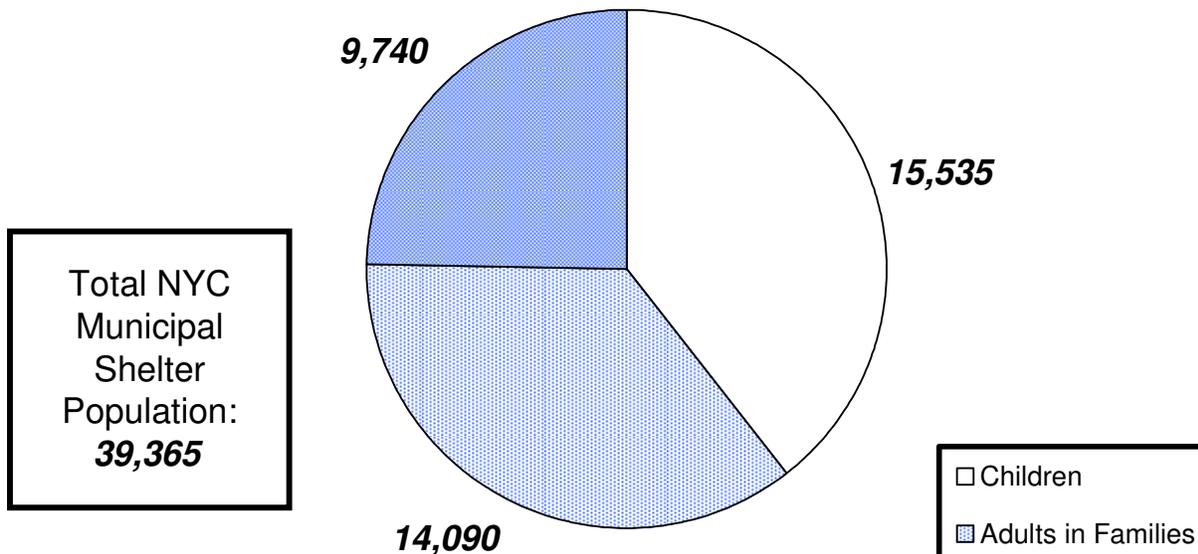
Overview of the Past Year

- *In FY 2010 a record 113,553 homeless people slept in municipal shelters, an 8 percent increase from the previous year and a 37 percent increase from FY 2002 when Mayor Bloomberg took office.*
- *During the same period a record 42,888 children slept in municipal shelters, a 9 percent increase from the previous year and 39 percent more than when the Mayor took office.*
- *On January 31, 2011, there were 39,365 homeless men, women, and children sleeping in the municipal shelter system, the highest nightly shelter census ever recorded.*
- *At the end of January there were 15,535 homeless children sleeping in New York City municipal shelters. During the past six months, the number of homeless children has increased by 7 percent.*

- At the end of January there were **9,839 homeless families sleeping in New York City municipal shelters**. During the past six months, the **number of homeless families has increased by 3 percent**.
- During the past year the number of homeless single adults in municipal shelters has soared to **the highest levels since the late 1980s**.
- During the past year, the **average nightly census of homeless single adults in the shelter system increased by 20 percent**.
- At the end of January, the number of homeless single adults in municipal shelters was **9,740 people (including 7,008 men and 2,732 women), the highest number since 1989**.
- During the past year **the number of homeless single women in the shelter system reached the highest point since the City has kept records**.
- During the past year, the **average nightly census of homeless single women in the shelter system increased by 20 percent**.



## New York City: Census of Homeless People in the Municipal Shelter System, January 31, 2011

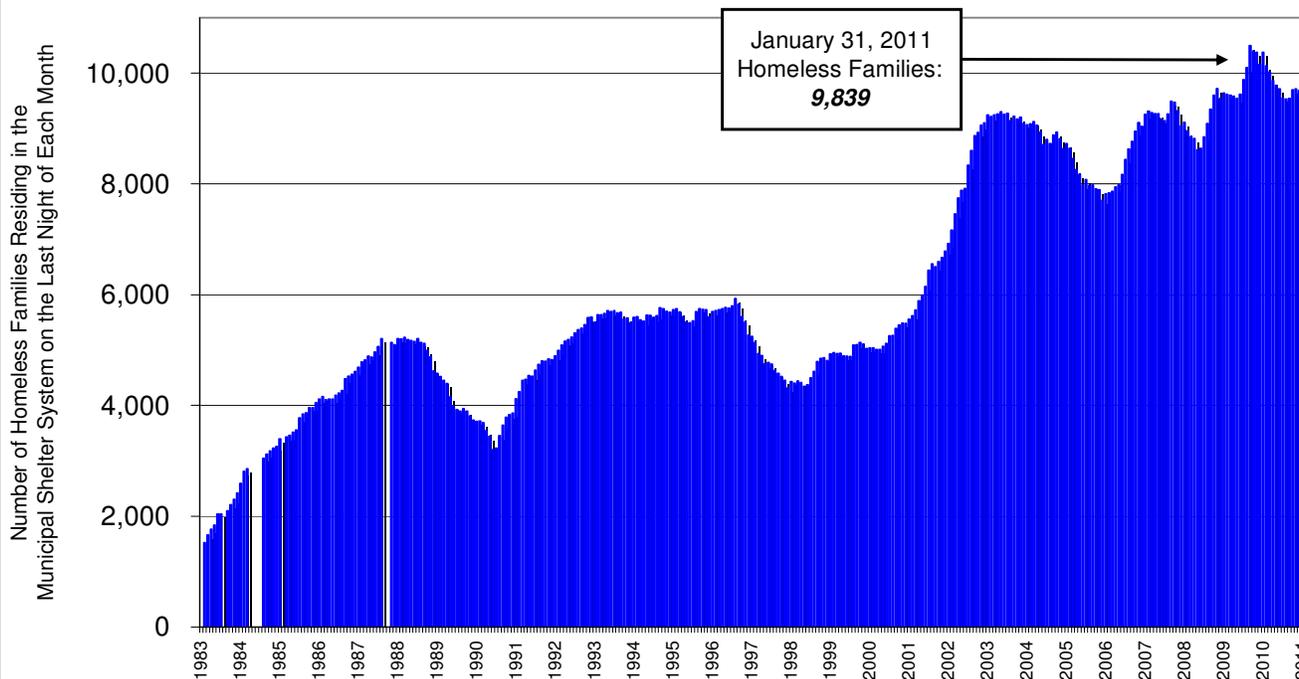


Note: Number of homeless single adults, homeless children, and homeless adult family members, residing in the municipal shelter system.

Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services, shelter census reports

Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

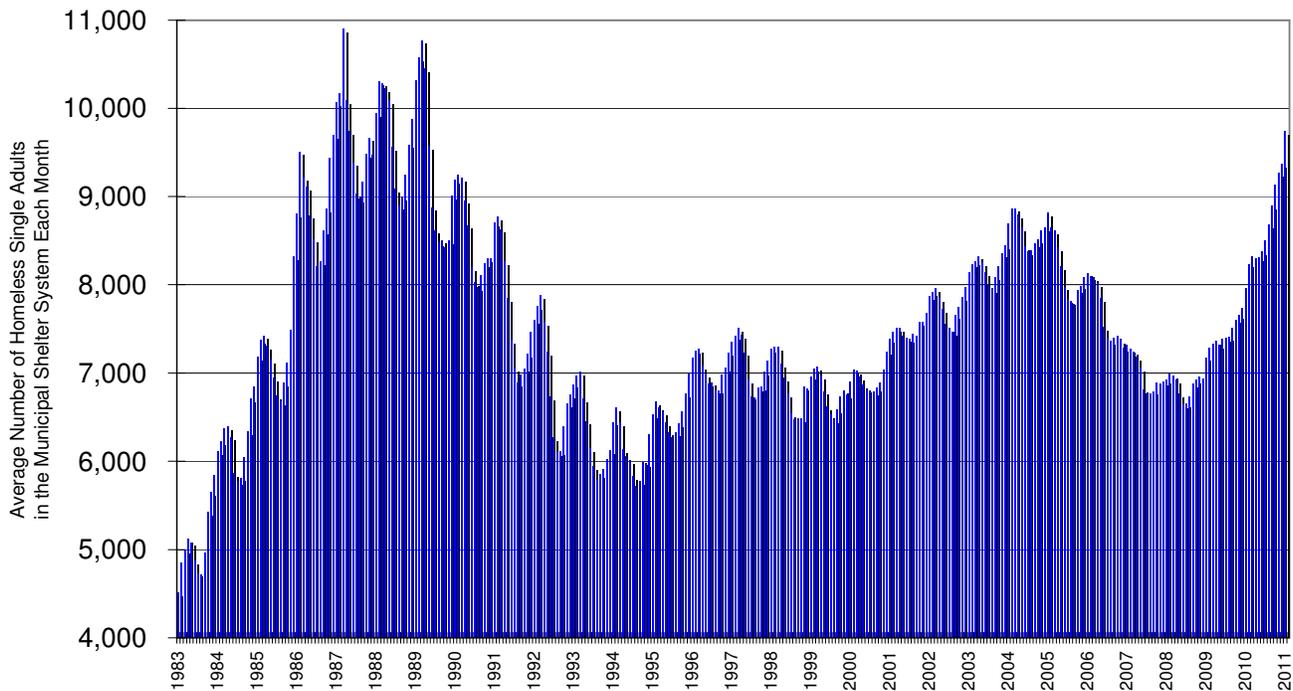
## Number of Homeless Families in the New York City Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports

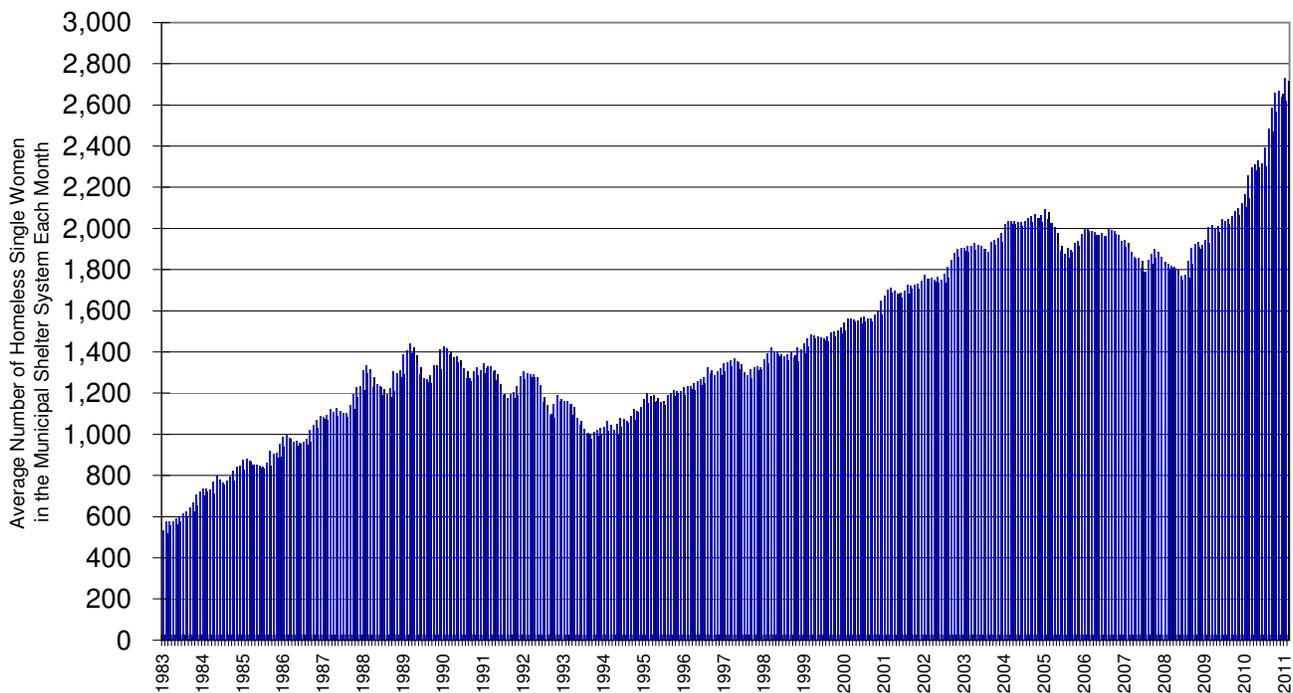
Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## New York City: Average Daily Census of Homeless Single Adults in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## New York City: Average Daily Census of Homeless Single Women in the Municipal Shelter System, 1983-2011



Source: New York City Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration, shelter census reports  
 Prepared by Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2004

## Notes on Data Sources

- Data about applications and eligibility rates for families seeking shelter is from the New York City Department of Homeless Services, “DHS-OTDA Monthly Reports,” submitted each month to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, available at [www.coalitionforthehomeless.org](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org).
- Data about the number of applications filed by homeless families deemed eligible for shelter is from the NYC Department of Homeless Services, “Critical Activities Reports,” available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/home/home.shtml>.
- Data for homeless families and children is from DHS’s “Emergency Housing Services for Homeless Families Monthly Report,” which has been published by the City since the early 1980s. This DHS monthly report includes approximately 200 families (with approximately 1,000 people) who reside in homeless shelters administered by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.
- Data for homeless single adults in municipal shelters is from three DHS reports: (1) DHS daily census reports for shelters for homeless single men and women, which have been produced daily by the City since 1982; (2) DHS census reports for shelters for homeless veterans; and (3) DHS census reports for “safe haven” shelters, which are restricted to long-term street homeless adults. (Note that the large majority of shelters for veterans and “safe haven” shelters were once included as part of the DHS daily adult shelter census report. These shelters were “converted” to different service models beginning in 2007 and were then excluded, in various stages, from DHS daily adult shelter census report and from DHS’s website.) Data for homeless single adults does not include data for homeless people sleeping in DHS “stabilization beds,” which are also restricted to chronically street homeless adults; DHS has never publicly released this data in comprehensive form, although currently there are several hundred homeless people in DHS-administered “stabilization beds” each night.

*For more information, please visit [www.coalitionforthehomeless.org](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org).*